

DeKalb County, Georgia

PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

Prepared By: Lose Design



2021 - 2031



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Special Acknowledgments

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Photo on cover page: Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve



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INTRODUCTION

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01 INTRODUCTION

The DeKalb County Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs (RPCA) recognizes the value of strategic planning and is committed to being actively involved by working with internal staff, stakeholders, and the public to ensure a successful parks and recreation master plan. A master plan is a working and flexible document that provides guidance by establishing a clear vision for the future, as well as goals and objectives regarding DeKalb County's park system. This document is shared with the public to demonstrate how the department plans to meet public needs and expectations through measurable goals and objectives.

RPCA's mission statement is:

“The Parks and Recreation Department is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life of the citizens of DeKalb County by connecting communities to exceptional parks, recreational facilities, and cross-generational programs that promote healthy and active lifestyles.”

The vision of RPCA is:

“To create and connect communities through people, parks, and programs.”

Master plans develop a comprehensive vision for a park system. This vision will serve as a framework for the long-term use and development of parks and recreation needs over the span of ten years. The purpose of this master plan is to evaluate the DeKalb County public parks and recreation system and offer recommendations based on that evaluation. The master planning process identifies the recreational needs of a community, predicts future demand, and recommends operational improvements pertaining to budget, staffing and programmatic concerns of the Department. This master plan was developed through a combination of public input, interviews, and professional analysis. The Department master plan will be regularly updated to ensure it aligns with DeKalb County and other county municipality planning documents such as the DeKalb County 2030 Plan, proposed Path and Trails Master Plan, and local municipality Parks and Recreation Plans.



BACKGROUND

DeKalb County, GA was established in 1821 from parts of Henry, Gwinnett, and Fayette counties and was named after Revolutionary War General Baron Johann DeKalb. During the Civil War (1861-1865), much of the Battle of Atlanta took place in DeKalb County, particularly along the railroad heading west toward Atlanta. By the second half of the twentieth century, the county population grew rapidly, and DeKalb became more urbanized. Today, DeKalb County is the fourth largest county in Georgia. It is also the most culturally diverse county in the southeast. With a population of 756,558, the percentage of residents increased by 9% between 2010 and 2018. DeKalb County was founded in 1822, and the City of Decatur was incorporated as the county seat in 1823. The County is located immediately east of the City of Atlanta, Georgia, and consists of a portion of the City of Atlanta, as well as the cities of Avondale Estates, Brookhaven, Chamblee, Clarkston, Decatur, Doraville, Dunwoody, Lithonia, Pine Lake, Stonecrest, Stone Mountain, Tucker, and unincorporated areas. Bordering counties include Fulton County (north and west); Gwinnett County (north), and Clayton, Henry, and Rockdale Counties are to south of DeKalb.

DeKalb County is Georgia's most diverse community. It is primarily a suburban county. It is the second most affluent county with an African American majority in the United States, behind Prince George's County, Maryland. DeKalb boasts a thriving health care community, anchored by Emory University Hospital, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Veterans Administration Hospital, and four other hospitals, making it attractive to clean, high dollar industries like bioscience and health supplies. It is home to Emory University, Mercer University, Agnes Scott College, Georgia Perimeter College (now Georgia State University), the Center for Disease Control, and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. It has four major road arteries that run through its boundaries (Interstates 20, 85, 285, and 675). The DeKalb-Peachtree Airport is the second busiest airport in Georgia. Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, the world's busiest airport, is only six miles south of DeKalb County. The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) system serves the metropolitan Atlanta area, which includes DeKalb County.

DEPARTMENT HISTORY

The first department, which was formed to service recreational needs on a county-wide basis, was called the DeKalb County Parks Department. The Parks Department was organized in 1953 during Scott Candler's administration. The department was initially part of the Department of Public Works, but in 1955 it was made a separate unit under the Commissioner of Roads and Revenues, Wheat Williams.

During its early years, the Parks Department's primary function was maintenance of existing parks, which consisted of normal upkeep, landscaping, and minor improvements (e.g., installation of picnic tables and grills, and grading of ball fields). Execution of contracts for such things as roads, buildings, and swimming pools was also administered by the Parks Department. As the department matured over the years, it began to expand.

At the Parks Department's inception in 1953, the county park system consisted of 15 parks. The first DeKalb parks were either gifts from individuals or parcels set aside during development of residential areas. Park acquisition through purchase by the county or by municipalities within the county occurred later. By 1956 DeKalb had 29 parks containing approximately 663 acres of land. In 1961, the Parks Department was reassigned to an enlarged Public Works Department and there it assumed responsibility for construction and maintenance of park improvements. An Advisory Board on Parks and Recreation was established in 1961 to help coordinate the parks program and to review proposals for further park improvements before submittal to the Board of Commissioners.

Prior to the organization of the Recreation Department, the recreational needs of the county were basically

1 - Introduction

serviced by commercial organizations and Youth Associations. The Recreation Department expanded on these services by offering programs and events that were not currently offered. The recreational programs and activities offered by the Recreation Department were provided in recreation centers. Activities ranged from arts and crafts instruction to organized basketball programs.

Until 1969, the Parks Department and Recreation Department were autonomous to each other. In June of 1969, the two departments were consolidated to form the DeKalb County Recreation and Parks Department. The consolidation occurred under the Harrison administration, and the new department was directed by James D. Cone. The Assistant Director was Mel Farrell, the Parks Maintenance Supervisor, Wayne Bryant, and the Recreation Centers Supervisor, Barbara Newell. Between the years of 1972 and 1974, the Recreation and Parks Department programmed cultural activities at the Callanwolde manor on Briarcliff Road. The cultural program grew to such limits that in 1974 a Cultural Affairs Division was added to the Recreation and Parks Department. Beginning in 1974, the department's title was expanded to the DeKalb County Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs. In 1974, Jack C. Duncan became the administrator of the Parks Division, and Wayne Bryant became the General Maintenance Superintendent. The Maintenance Section became a subdivision of the Parks Division, but it serviced all Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs maintenance needs. By 1974 there were three separate divisions within the one department. Each division continued to expand its services both in quantity and quality. As services expanded, special facilities were developed to enhance the recreational needs of DeKalb County residents. Tennis Centers, golf complexes, a firing range, and community and cultural centers are examples of facilities which were built to service growing recreational needs.

Today, the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Affairs (RPCA) plays a critical role in making DeKalb County a desirable place to live, work and play. In the past 65 years, the department grew from a 2-person staff to 94 full-time employees and 171 part-time seasonal employees. The Park System consists of 6,577.2 acres, 6,000 of which are maintained by RPCA. It includes 100 parks, 82 playgrounds, 63 pavilions, 2 golf courses, 77 tennis courts, 10 recreation facilities, 7 pools, 1 family aquatic center, 5 splash pads, 5 nature preserves, 1 horse farm, 2 performing arts centers, and approximately 30 miles of path trails. Numerous other scenic amenities, cultural attractions, and historic structures complement the county's leisurely appeal.



Mason Mill Park Naturalist Program



Mystery Valley Golf Course



DeKalb Tennis Center - pickleball

METHODOLOGY

This master plan document is based on a review of reports, data, best practices analysis, and interviews with stakeholders, focus groups, elected officials, department staff, and the citizens of DeKalb County. An inventory of existing programs, policies and services related to parks and recreational facilities was developed. The National Recreation and Park Association's (NRPA) metrics were reviewed as a high-level comparison of DeKalb County facility inventories. Finally, interviews with stakeholders provided a snapshot of the level of utilization and individual perception of the RPCA and the park system. This information is key when determining the needs of residents and for the prioritization of physical, programmatic, and operational improvements.

Recommendations designed to increase the level-of-service across the County over the next ten years are provided as part of this master plan. This plan provides recommendations regarding RPCA facilities, programming, and administration in the County from 2021 to 2030. Recommendations for future growth are based on demographics, assessing current facilities, public open houses, and interviews with elected officials, appointed officials, and county staff.

This document serves elected and appointed officials and RPCA staff as both a master plan and an action plan. The plan provides DeKalb County with guidelines and recommendations for decision making and future investment. This master plan also identifies current recreational offerings and future recreation goals to be implemented as the population grows and changes. The plan will answer the following questions:

Successful park and recreation master plans are based on a commitment to actionable outcomes. A plan adopted

1

What
recreational
programs and
facilities
exist?

2

What
recreational
programs and
facilities
are **needed?**

3

Where
should new
park facilities
be **located?**

4

How
will new and
improved
facilities
be **funded?**

1 - Introduction

for a ten-year time frame can easily end up on a shelf, with little realization of the goals and objectives identified. Changes in elected officials, county staff and board members may contribute to implementation that falls short of stated goals. In many instances, an informed public that is engaged and involved can help a plan succeed.

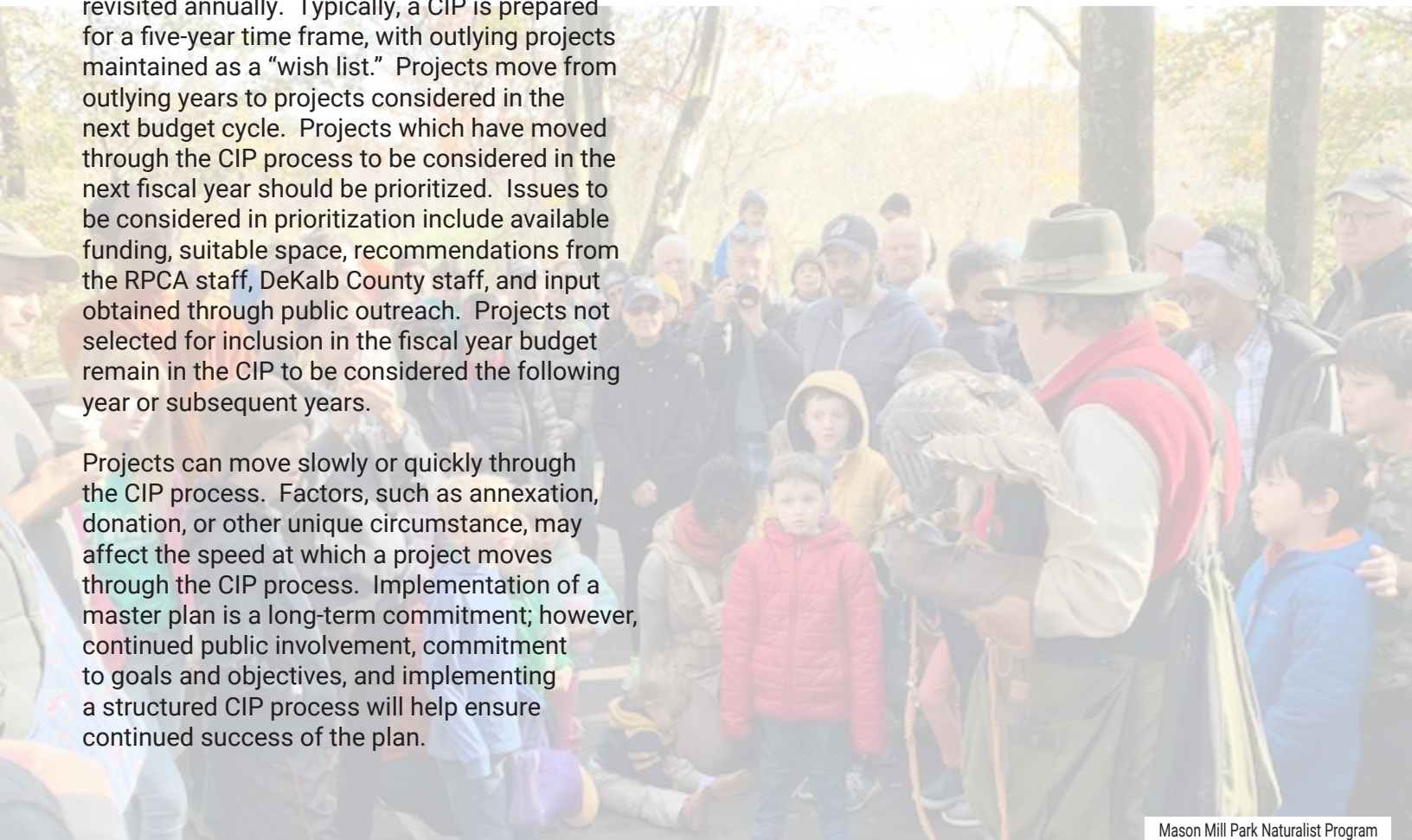
Short-term and long-term goals will be identified in this master plan. Following adoption of the plan, these goals must be prioritized based on the desires of county residents, available land, and funding opportunities. A Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is the best tool to ensure implementation of the plan.

A CIP is a fluid document, which should be revisited annually. Typically, a CIP is prepared for a five-year time frame, with outlying projects maintained as a “wish list.” Projects move from outlying years to projects considered in the next budget cycle. Projects which have moved through the CIP process to be considered in the next fiscal year should be prioritized. Issues to be considered in prioritization include available funding, suitable space, recommendations from the RPCA staff, DeKalb County staff, and input obtained through public outreach. Projects not selected for inclusion in the fiscal year budget remain in the CIP to be considered the following year or subsequent years.

Projects can move slowly or quickly through the CIP process. Factors, such as annexation, donation, or other unique circumstance, may affect the speed at which a project moves through the CIP process. Implementation of a master plan is a long-term commitment; however, continued public involvement, commitment to goals and objectives, and implementing a structured CIP process will help ensure continued success of the plan.



DeKalb County Tennis Center



Mason Mill Park Naturalist Program

OUTREACH, ANALYSIS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Assessments are performed that target different aspects of a parks and recreation system. These assessments include:

- Community profile
- Public engagement
- Level of service
- Gap analysis
- Park assessments
- Recreation assessment
- Trends report
- Partnership analysis
- Cost recovery assessment
- Organizational structure summary

Upon completion of the above referenced tasks and assessments, determinations regarding the RPCA system were made. Based on information obtained, additions or changes to programs and activities offered by the department will be made to better accommodate county needs. These address the function of the department and may be made with minimal costs or staffing changes. Physical improvements to infrastructure within the parks and recreation system will be based on gaps identified in the Facility Assessment. Additional facilities, such as land purchase, indoor courts and athletic fields, greenways, tennis courts, and aquatic improvements, could be costly and must be well-planned. Infrastructure of this nature must be implemented over time and as funding allows and must have broad support from residents and elected officials. Estimated costs and proposed locations will be included in this master plan. An all-inclusive, wide-ranging analysis with recommendations for the RPCA system will be provided.

PHASING PLAN

A timeline for implementing the recommendations is provided. Recommendations are listed by priority with associated cost estimates. This phasing plan is intended to be a tool to assist in the budget process over the time-frame of this 10-year plan.

Across America, park and recreation facilities have taken on a new role. Park facilities and programs must now serve all residents, all ages, and a variety of interests. This trend has led to a diversification of services based on research, demographic data, and market conditions. Shrinking open space, increased property values, and residents with busy schedules have collectively placed a demand for well-designed and efficient facilities, park space, and recreational opportunities that serve the wide and varied needs of DeKalb County citizens. Park facilities have become social gathering spaces, opportunities for improving health, and benchmarks for the quality of life within a community. This plan will help guide future parks and recreation improvements in the County from 2021 to 2030.

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Section 2



COMMUNITY PROFILE

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02 COMMUNITY PROFILE

The recreation needs and trends of a county are dependent on the preferences and way of life of its residents. Preference and lifestyle are often dependent on age, gender, education, and socio-economic status. Public desires can be anticipated by collecting demographic data and public input. Activities that will likely be popular as the community's demographic profile changes can also be predicted by reviewing demographic data.

Although accurate data is available every ten years from the U.S. Census, demographic factors, such as age, are constantly changing. Age is the top factor in determining recreation trends. For example, a child who is ten years old when a plan is developed may be interested in team sports like baseball or soccer; however, at the end of the plan's timeframe, they may have taken an interest in individual recreation activities, such as running or cycling. Knowledge of age and its predicted changes are useful when a large percentage of the population will soon reach an age at which their recreation preferences are likely to change. This trend is now noticeable with the large number of baby-boomers who are reaching retirement age across the country.

Demographics are the population characteristics of an area. Long-term demographic studies help local elected officials identify trends and show how a population is changing. A clear understanding of these trends is necessary to understand DeKalb County's needs. The current and projected population establishes the type of facilities and services needed in the future.

The demographic factors in this section include:

POPULATION TRENDS



POPULATION BY AGE



POPULATION BY GENDER



POPULATION BY RACE & ETHNICITY



ECONOMIC TRENDS



HEALTH TRENDS





Atlanta, GA skyline

To gain a better understanding of the park and recreational needs of DeKalb County, Georgia, a community profile has been developed. The demographic factors in this section include:

- Regional Context
- Population Trends
- Economic Trends
- Health Trends

This demographic data helps identify the quantifiable subsets of people within a population. The demographic findings are then used to compare with the results of a public input survey that will be distributed as part of this plan. If the demographics of survey respondents vary from the community profile, recommendations for outreach would adjust accordingly. For example, if the demographic data indicates DeKalb County has a large population of senior men, but few senior men respond to the public input survey, additional outreach would be recommended to understand if the county is meeting this group's park and recreation needs.

Serving the county's recreation needs is traditionally the main purpose of any parks and recreation department; however, many recreation departments will remain with the status quo because of a lack of funding, little or no communication with residents, lack of demographic data knowledge, and an incomplete understanding of how a demographic profile can be used to anticipate the county's changing needs. Making long-term decisions guided by county demographics and population projections will result in a well-planned and properly managed park and recreation system.



Downtown Decatur, GA

REGIONAL CONTEXT

PART OF THE GREATER ATLANTA REGION

DeKalb County is a member of the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC). The ARC is the regional planning and intergovernmental coordination agency for the 10-county Atlanta region. ARC works with local jurisdictions and various regional partners to address transportation planning, water resource management, community development, elderly and special needs services, business recruitment, employment services, data analysis, regional leader cultivation, and coordination with first responders. ARC is governed by a 39-member board consisting of both elected officials and citizen members that works toward world-class infrastructure, healthy, livable communities, and a competitive economy.

REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

The ARC's Research and Analytics Group recently launched an improved version of its 100 Metros Data Dashboard. The dashboard is a tool that incorporates data from the 2018 American Community Survey and other federal sources. Based on data from the dashboard, the Atlanta region is:

- **Rapidly growing:** Metropolitan Atlanta ranks fourth in total population growth since 2010 and has added the third most building permits since 2014.
- **Young and diverse:** Metropolitan Atlanta ranks 77th in the share of population identified as White. Also, the region ranks 6th in the total population of those under age 19.
- **Experiencing average income and housing characteristics:** Metropolitan Atlanta generally ranks around the middle (of the 100 metros) for most indicators of income and housing characteristics.
- **Experiencing low birth rates:** Metropolitan Atlanta ranks 87th in the birth rate of women aged 15 to 50 in 2019.
- **Experiencing higher rates of people without health insurance:** Metropolitan Atlanta ranks 92nd (low) in the percentage of adults who have health insurance.

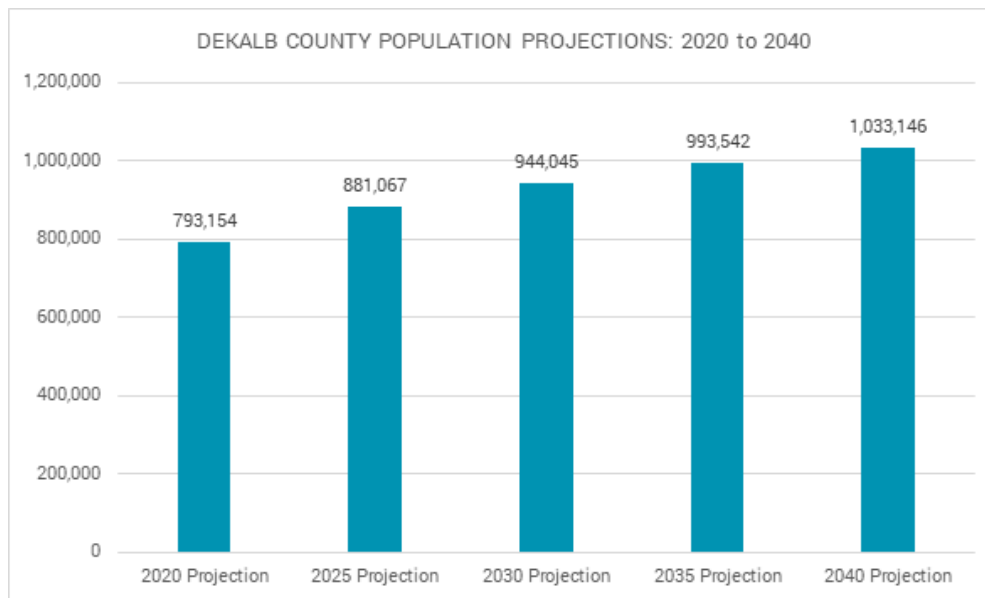


2 - Community Profile

Historic population data was gathered from the U.S. Census Bureau. Future population projections for DeKalb County were taken from the Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget.

Overall, the population of DeKalb County has increased over the past decade and is projected to increase over the next twenty years. In 2010, the population of DeKalb County was 692,572. The population continued to grow over the next eight years to an estimated 752,600 people in 2018. DeKalb County is projected to grow in population from 793,154 in 2020 to over one million in 2040 (1,033,146). This increase results in a growth rate of 30.2%. For comparison, the State of Georgia has a projected growth rate of 22.8% for the same twenty-year period from 10,833,472 to 13,298,742. A growth rate this large can possibly be attributed to factors such as proximity to Atlanta and large employment centers, access to multiple interstates, and nine colleges in the area.

Figure 2.1: DeKalb County Population Projections: 2020 to 2040

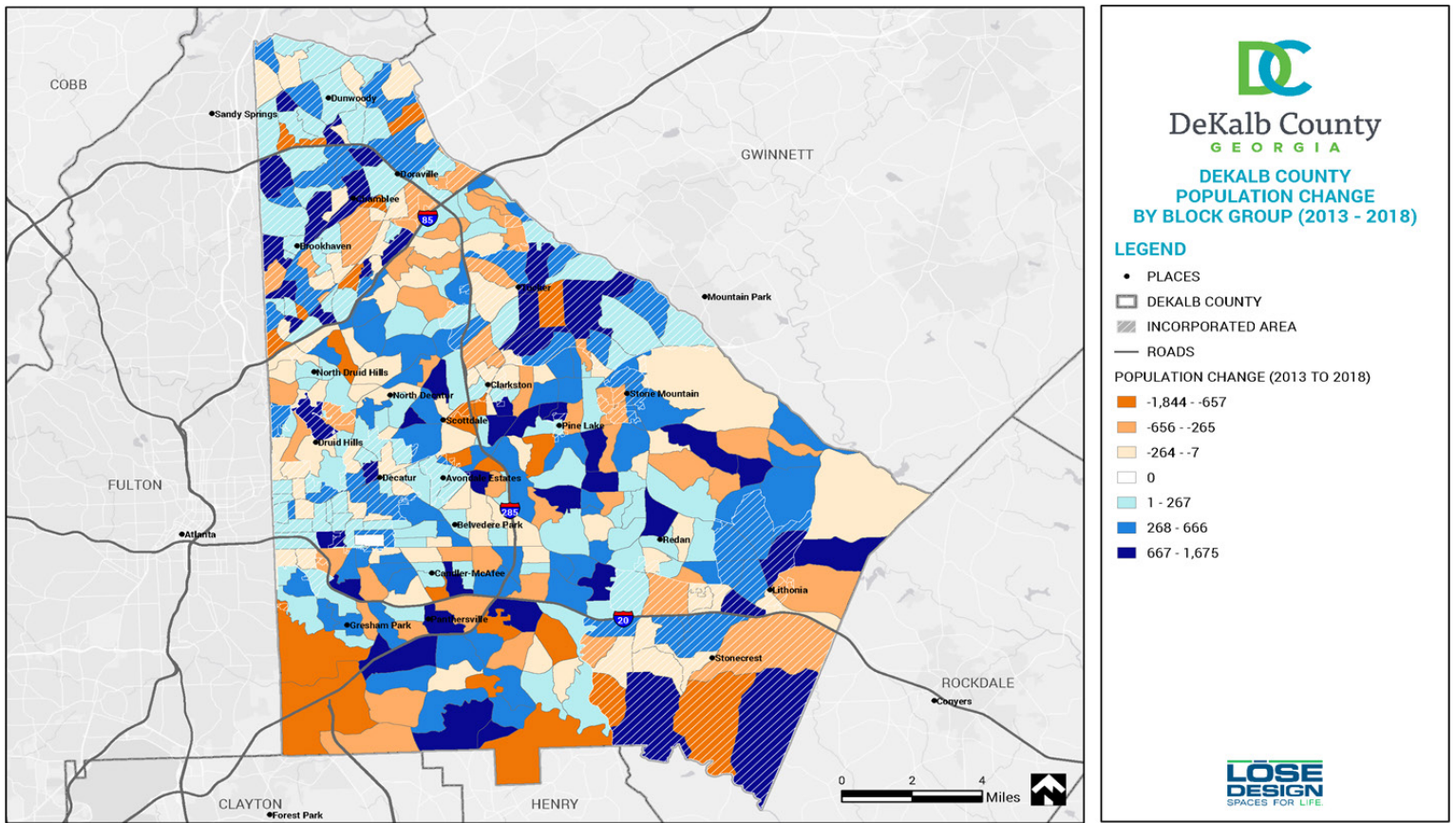


Source: <https://opb.georgia.gov/census-data/population-projections>

Between 2010 and 2018, most of the cities within DeKalb County grew as well. The three cities with the largest populations, Atlanta, Brookhaven, and Dunwoody, grew between 10% and 16% from 2010 to 2018. Stonecrest is DeKalb County's second largest city; however, Stonecrest was only incorporated in 2016 and no historic population data for it is available. Pine Lake was the only city that lost population in DeKalb County from 2010 to 2018. The remaining DeKalb County cities grew between 4% (Stone Mountain) and 195% (Chamblee). Chamblee's population went from 9,751 in 2010 to 28,748 in 2018, an increase of almost 19,000 people.

Unincorporated DeKalb County declined in population from 2010 to 2018, from 466,500 people in 2010 to 271,300 in 2018. Part of this decline is explained by Brookhaven and Stonecrest becoming incorporated during this range of time. In 2010, Brookhaven and Stonecrest were not incorporated and were a part of unincorporated DeKalb County.

Figure 2.2 : Population Change by Block Group in DeKalb County (2013 - 2018)



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles

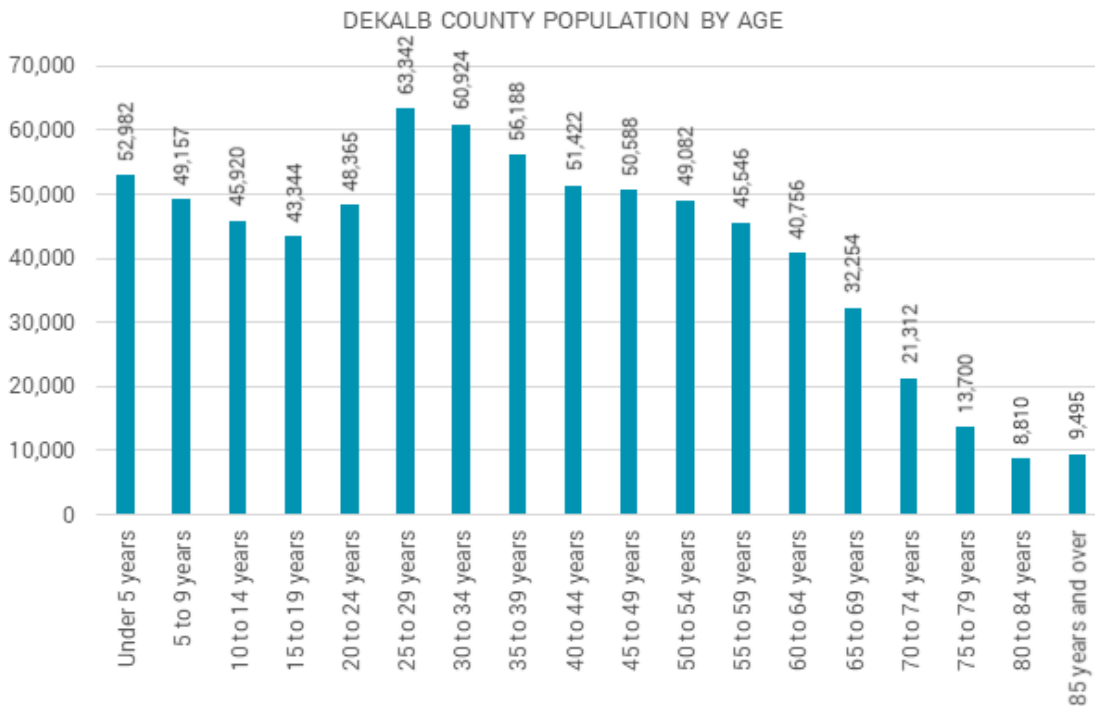
POPULATION BY AGE

COUNTY AGE GROUP DISTRIBUTION

Understanding the age distribution of residents living in DeKalb County is a critical element to providing the proper amounts and varieties of recreational programming to all age groups. Over 30% of the population in DeKalb County is comprised of adults aged 25-44. These age groups typically include working adults and young families. The relative high percentage of DeKalb residents in these age groups most likely corresponds to the relatively high numbers of children who are nine years old or younger.

Baby boomers, people between the ages of 55 to 74, comprise almost 19% of the county's population. These baby boomers are typically active and create unique needs for a parks and recreation system. Estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau suggest these age groups represent a greater share of DeKalb County's population when compared to the 2010 census data. This demographic shift may influence demand for specific types of recreation facilities and programs, if the trend continues.

Figure 2.3: DeKalb County Population by Age



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



The age range with the largest number of people in DeKalb County is the **25 to 29** year old age range.

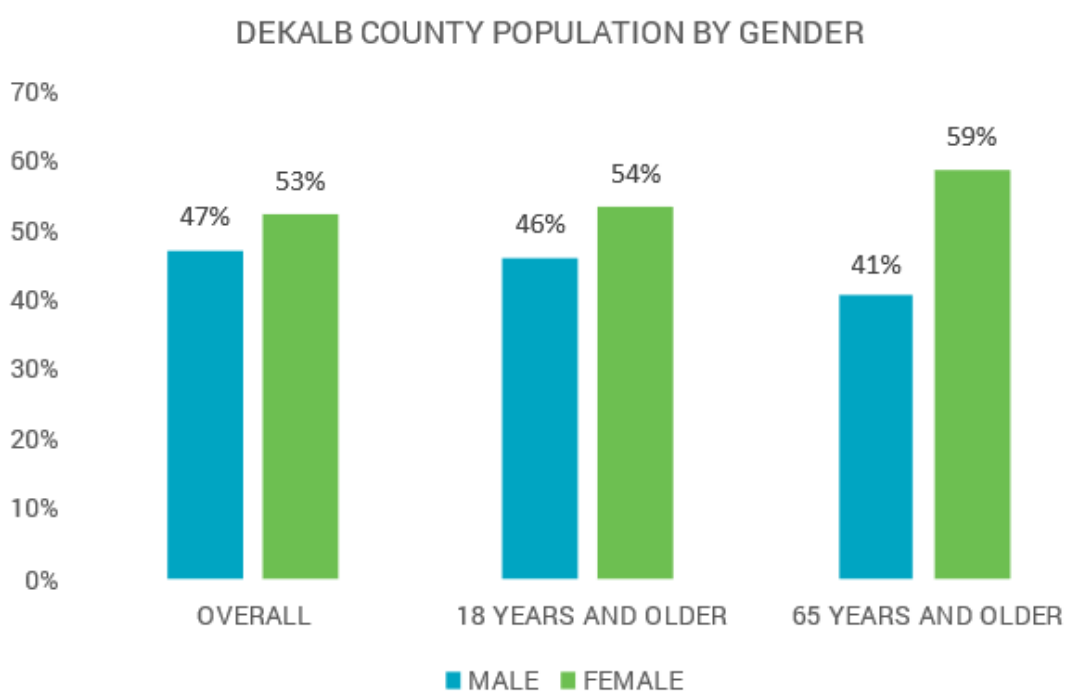


Mason Mill Park

POPULATION BY GENDER

The gender ratio of DeKalb County residents is estimated to be 47% male and 53% female. This ratio is comparable to state and national ratios. The ratio for DeKalb County residents 65 years and older is 41% male and 59% female. Typically, females exceed males in older age groups, which is true for DeKalb County as well. The trend in DeKalb County is that females outnumber males, which is the case for Georgia and the United States. In the United States, Georgia, and DeKalb County, women account for over half of the total population.

Figure 2.4: DeKalb County Population by Gender



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

POPULATION BY RACE AND ETHNICITY

COUNTY DIVERSITY

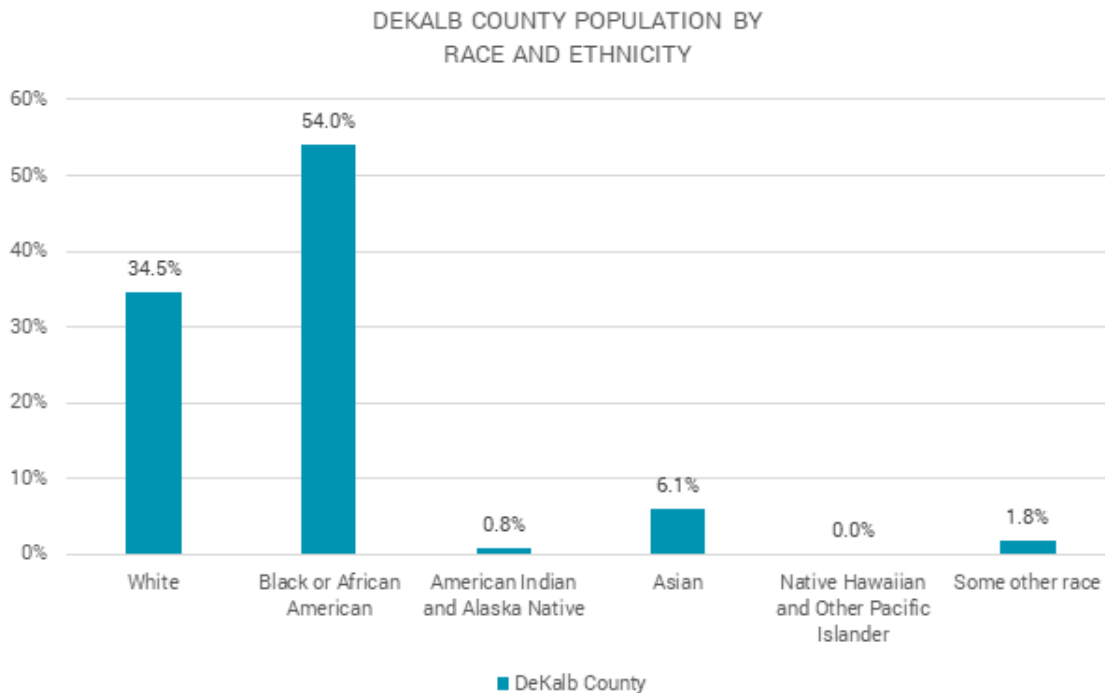
An analysis of DeKalb County race and ethnicity reveals over half of DeKalb County residents are African American. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates the County population in 2018 was 54% African American and 34% Caucasian. In comparison, the State of Georgia had a population of 32% African American and 59% Caucasian in 2018. Additionally, Hispanics comprised 9% of the population, and Asian residents comprised 6%. These percentages are comparable to state percentages. Overall, the race and ethnicity of DeKalb County is diversified and is representative of urbanized areas located near major cities. While preferences for park facilities and programs can be similar among all races and ethnicities, the DeKalb County Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs should increase outreach to minorities, if participation in recreation programs does not reflect the racial diversity observed within the community.



summer camp - Mason Mill Naturalist Program

In addition to having a large African American population, DeKalb County also has a large Caribbean population. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, DeKalb County was home to the largest population of English-speaking Caribbeans within the 10-county Atlanta region with 10,210 residents of Caribbean decent. For comparison, Cobb County was second with 2,729 residents. Fifty percent of the English-speaking Caribbean population in the Atlanta region resides in DeKalb County. This is significant because these communities often have unique needs and interests. For example, tether ball and cricket are popular among the Caribbean population. Unique cultural preferences may be important to consider when planning for future recreation facilities and programs.

Figure 2.5: DeKalb County Population by Race and Ethnicity



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles

RACE BY BLOCK GROUP

A review of minority populations at the census block group level illustrated well-defined areas where minority populations are most strongly represented. The following maps show how Caucasian ("White") and minority ("Non-white") populations are distributed across the unincorporated portions of DeKalb County. Higher percentages of Non-white residents reside in the southeast portions of unincorporated DeKalb County, according to census estimates from 2018. Conversely, White populations reside primarily in the northeast portion of the County near the communities of Druid Hills and North Decatur. This apparent divide should be taken into consideration when working to ensure equal access to recreation facilities and programs for all members of the community.

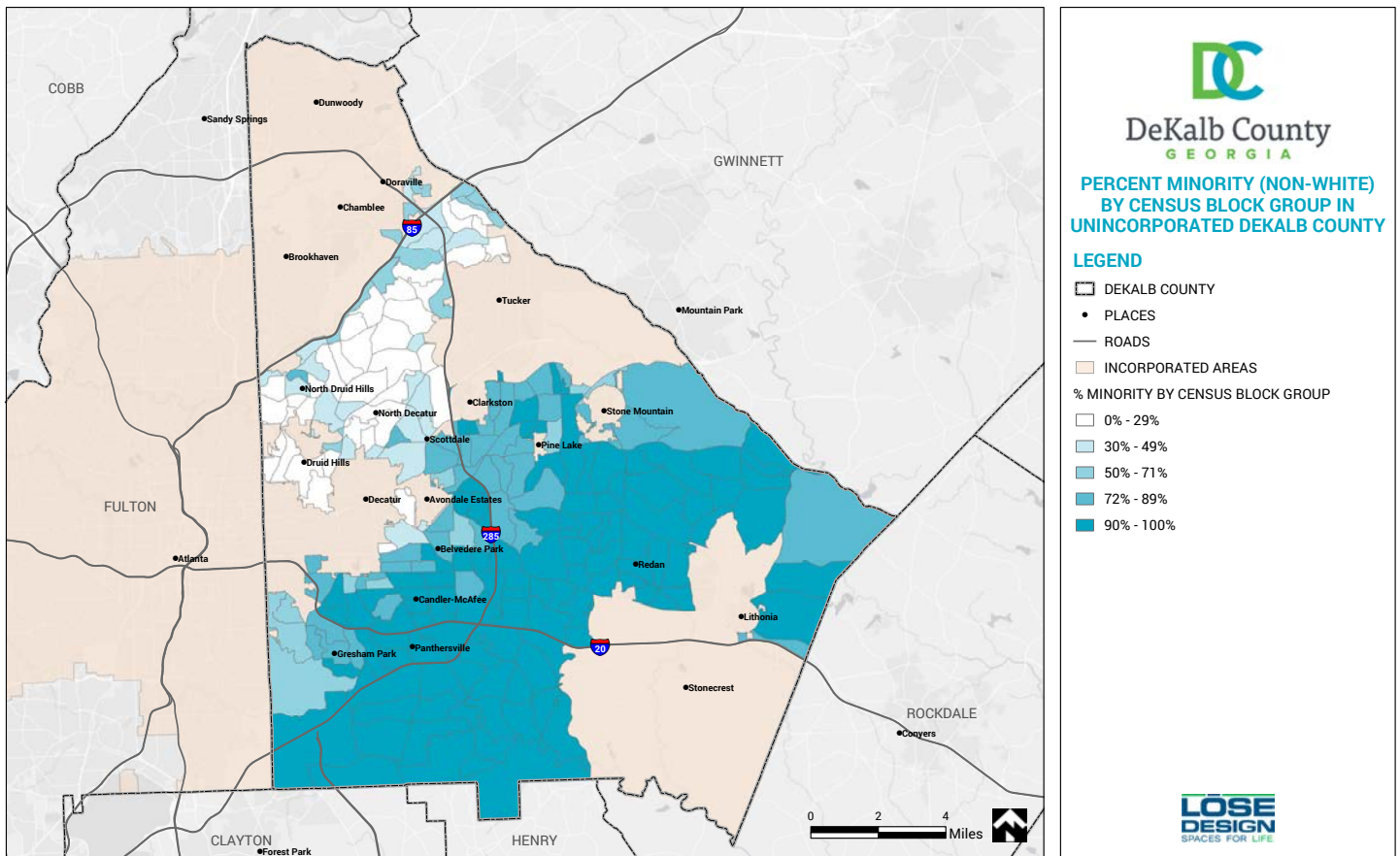
Largest Group:

54.0% BLACK or AFRICAN AMERICAN

2nd Largest Group:

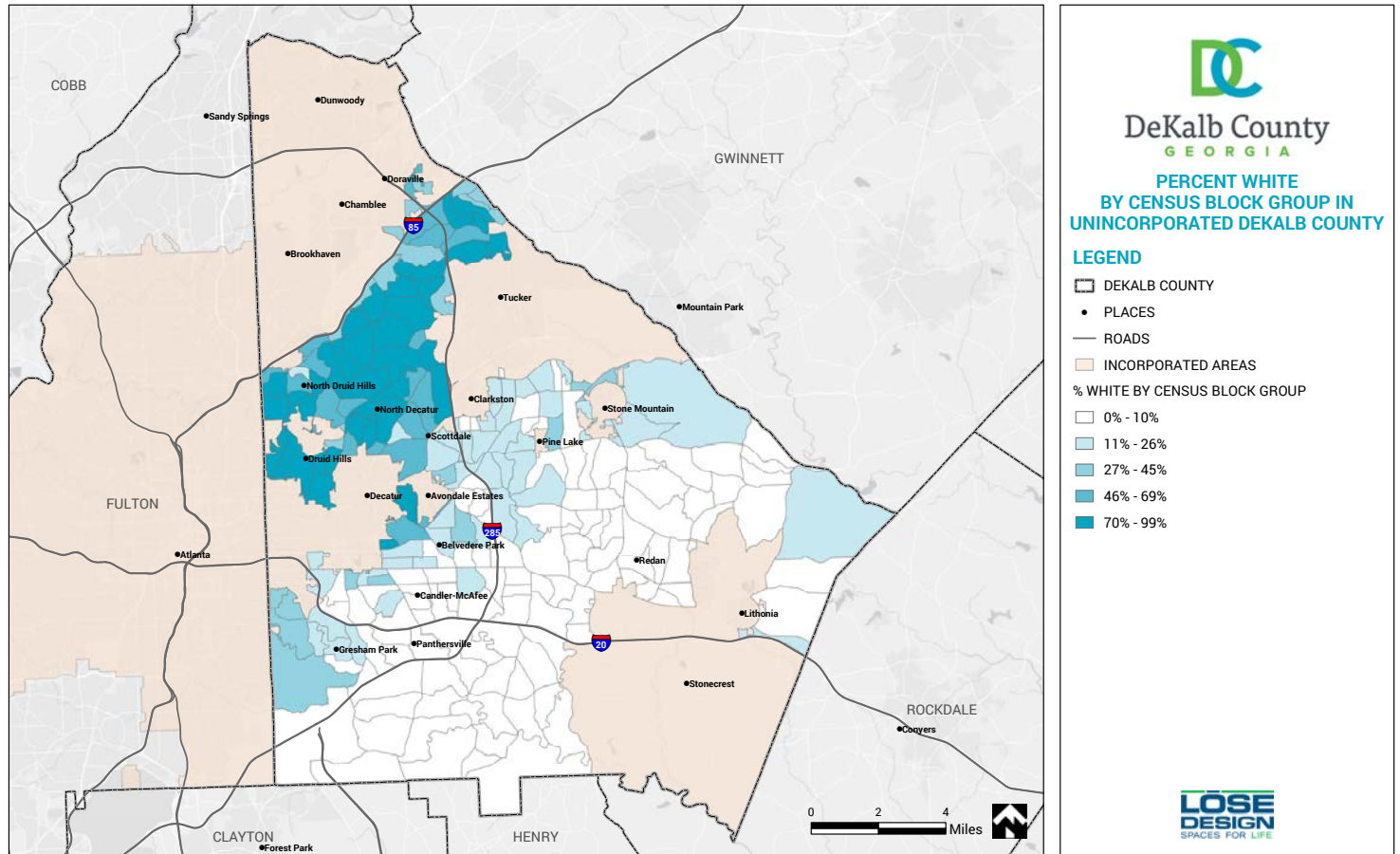
34.5% WHITE

Figure 2.6: Percent Minority by Census Block Group in Unincorporated DeKalb County



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles

Figure 2.7: Percent White by Census Block Group in Unincorporated DeKalb County



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles

CLARKSTON, GEORGIA – REFUGEE RELOCATION COMMUNITY

Over the last three decades, the quiet suburb of Clarkston, Georgia in DeKalb County, just 30 minutes northeast of downtown Atlanta, has become home to thousands of refugees, representing more than 40 nationalities speaking 60 languages. While Clarkston started attracting displaced people from Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries in the late 1970s, it did not officially become a refugee settlement site until the 1980s, after former president Jimmy Carter passed the United States Refugee Act. The law set up a framework that allowed displaced people with special humanitarian concerns (political persecution, war, and other humanitarian crises) to apply for refugee status in the United States. Clarkston's proximity to Atlanta, support services, and availability of affordable housing have been a draw for refugee families. Clarkston has become what former Mayor Ted Terry called the "Ellis Island of the South."

Clarkston demonstrates some of the exceptional diversity within DeKalb County. Participation in RPCA programs and facilities should reflect the diversity of DeKalb County.

Source: A Georgia city transformed by refugees by Maria Clark, *The American South*, February 2020.

ECONOMIC TRENDS

Median Household Income, Owner-Occupied Housing Rate, Median Value of Occupied Housing Units, and Persons Below Poverty Level were all reviewed for DeKalb’s County economic profile. These numbers are important to compare to state and national averages to understand if DeKalb County numbers are higher or lower than state and national numbers.

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

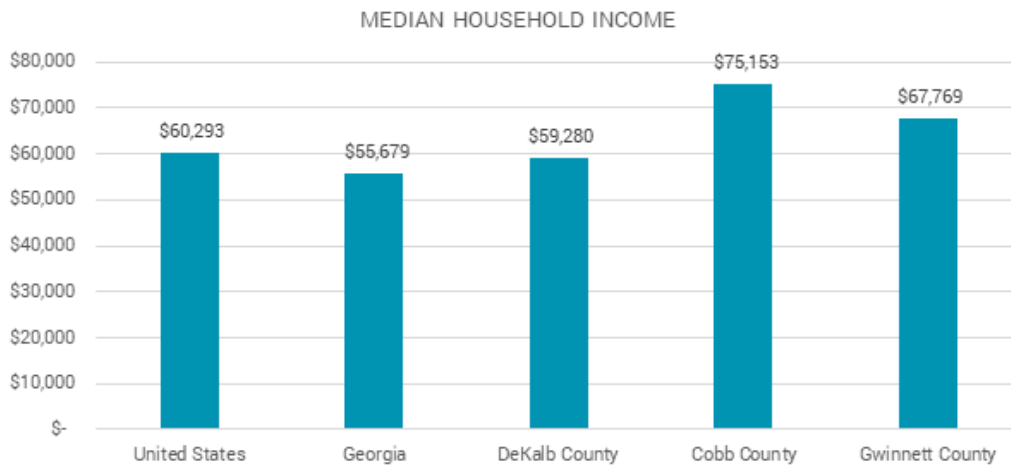
In the table below, when comparing Median Household Income and Median Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Units, DeKalb County is right in the middle of state and national numbers but is lower than surrounding counties. The Owner-Occupied Housing Rate for DeKalb County is 9% lower than the state, 10% lower than Cobb County and the nation, and 12% lower than Gwinnett County. The percentage of Persons Below Poverty Level is higher in DeKalb County than in the nation, state, and surrounding counties.

Table 2.1: DeKalb County Income and Housing Characteristics – Compared to the United States, Georgia, and Metropolitan Atlanta Counties

	United States	Georgia	DeKalb County	Cobb County	Gwinnett County
Median Household Income	\$60,293	\$55,679	\$59,280	\$75,153	\$67,769
Owner-Occupied Housing Rate	63.8%	63.1%	54.3%	64.2%	66.2%
Median Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Units	\$204,900	\$166,800	\$192,400	\$237,800	\$200,400
Persons Below Poverty Level (%)	14.1%	16.0%	16.6%	10.0%	11.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

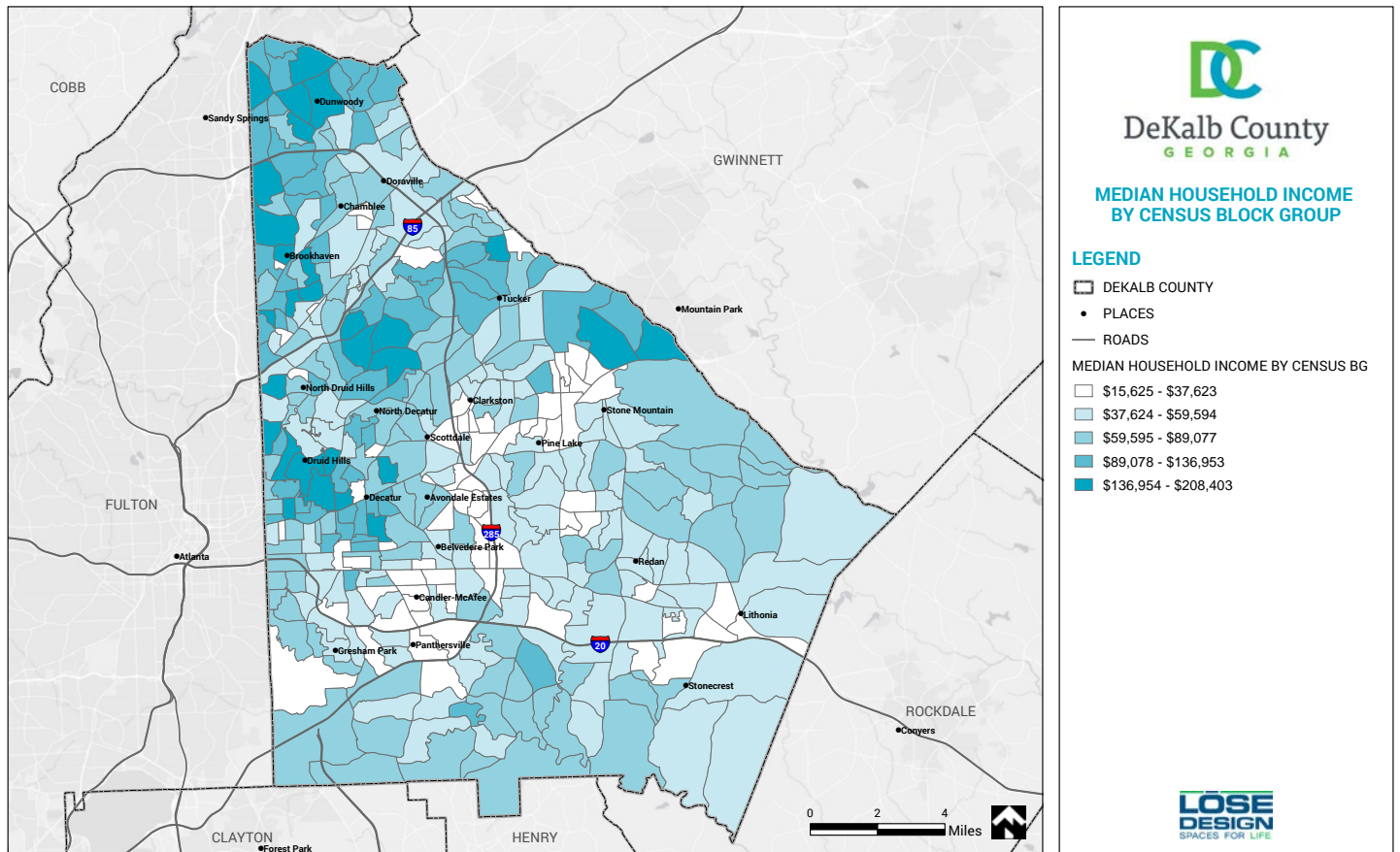
Figure 2.8: Median Household Income



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Income levels are notable because they relate to a resident’s ability to pay for participation fees and other costs related to recreation programs. In communities with low-income levels, local governments typically play a major role in meeting resident needs by providing funding to subsidize recreation programs. This information may inform decisions regarding fee structure, which should be set at rates that do not limit participation. Reduced program fees may, in turn, impact revenue recovery efforts if alternate sources of revenue are not identified.

Figure 2.9: Median Household Income by Census Block Group

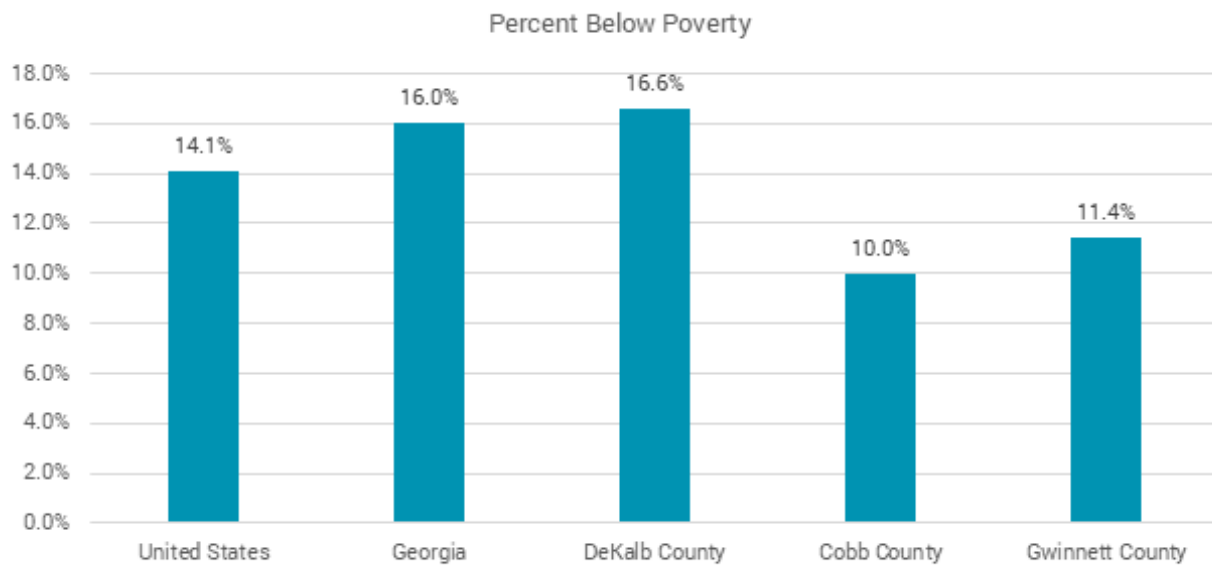


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

POVERTY

The poverty rate in DeKalb County (16.6%) appears to be comparable to the State of Georgia (16.0%); however, Cobb and Gwinnett Counties are significantly lower. Estimates from the U.S. Census suggests there may be a greater need for recreation fee reductions or waivers in DeKalb County compared to some neighboring peer communities.

Figure 2.10: Percent Below Poverty



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate



Shoal Creek Park pavillion

HEALTH TRENDS

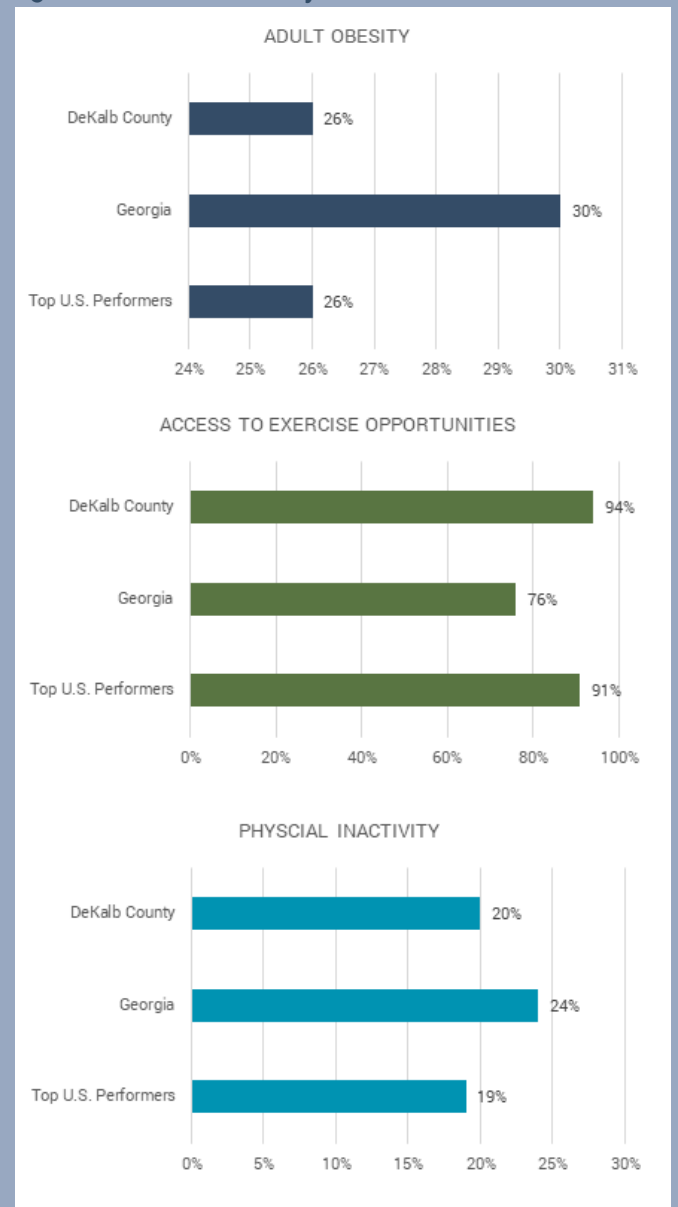
People are generally less active than in the past and tend to lead sedentary lifestyles. This inactivity has led to an obesity epidemic, which continues to grow in many parts of the United States. The most dramatic increases in obesity are in the southern United States. This affects life expectancy and has economic impacts related to medical spending and productivity in the workplace. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in 2015, “an estimated annual medical cost of obesity in the U.S. was \$147 billion in 2008 U.S. dollars; the medical costs for people who are obese were \$1,429 higher than those of normal weight.”

Physical activity not only helps maintain a healthy weight, but it also benefits mental health. According to a 2006 article from the Primary Care Companion to the Journal of Clinical Psychiatry, exercise improves mental health by reducing anxiety, depression, negative mood, and by improving self-esteem and cognitive function. Exercise has also been found to alleviate low self-esteem and social withdrawal (Source: Exercise for Mental Health by Ashish Sharma, M.D., Vishal Madaan, M.D., and Frederick D. Petty, M.D., Ph.D.). Research from the University of East Anglia (UEA) and the Centre for Diet and Activity Research (CEDAR) in 2014 also reveals that commuters who regularly walk or bicycle to work have noticeably better mental health than those who commute by car.

Elected and appointed officials, as well as residents, need to understand the risks associated with obesity and inactive lifestyles. Strong action at the community level is critical to addressing chronic disease trends by providing facilities and recreational programs that attract residents and establish healthy lifestyles at an early age. This may include youth sports, exercise programs for working adults, and passive activities for those age 65 and older. A well-rounded parks and recreation system that offers opportunities for all age groups and interests is key to establishing healthy lifestyles.

According to County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, the adult obesity rate (percentage of adults that report a Body Mass Index of 30 or greater) in DeKalb County is 26%. This rate is lower than Georgia, which has an obesity rate of 30%, and the same as the top U.S. states with obesity. The physical inactivity rate is about the same as the top U.S. states and lower than Georgia. Approximately 94% of DeKalb County residents have access to exercise options, which is higher than the top U.S. states (91%) and Georgia (76%).

Figure 2.11: DeKalb County Health Trends



Source: www.countyhealthrankings.org

Increased physical activity is associated with lower risks of Type 2 Diabetes, cancer, stroke, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and premature mortality. The built environment, which includes our streets, sidewalks, buildings, and parks, is important in encouraging physical activity. According to the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, individuals who live closer to sidewalks, parks, and gyms are more likely to exercise. Improved parks, recreation amenities, sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and greenways can help support the County's overall physical and mental health. Continued strategic investment in parks and recreation should be a priority.



Constitution Lakes Park

SUMMARY

DeKalb County is a diverse community with many strengths, including some positive health performance criteria, which compares favorably to top performing communities. There are also potential challenges in the area of household income that will need to inform future decisions. The demographic data described in the preceding text was used to formulate the recommendations contained in this document. (Note: New Census data was released after the formation of this master plan that may be helpful in future consideration of the recommendations contained here. A summary of this data is provided in Appendix H.)

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3



Section 3

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

3 - Public Engagement

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03 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public input is a critical component in developing a comprehensive master plan. Citizens of DeKalb County play an important role in the master plan, as residents are the users of the park system facilities and programs. For the master plan to be effective in improving facilities, the plan must accurately reflect the facilities and programs most desired by DeKalb County residents. The recommendations provided in this plan were driven by public input gathered through interviews, focus group sessions, and open houses. These activities allowed for spontaneous, casual conversations about park and recreation needs in a variety of settings across the County.

The public input process started with interviews that included meetings with the DeKalb County RPCA Director, park staff, and elected officials. These interviews provided an overview of how the RPCA department functions. The interviews also highlighted issues that exist within DeKalb County government and within the RPCA itself. Interviews with elected officials provided an overview of how RPCA staff interact with elected officials and how the department fits into the County's long-term vision.



Open House attendees



SUMMARY



Open House attendees

Various public engagement activities were used as part of this master plan to identify potential parks and recreation needs and priorities for DeKalb County. Efforts included a community survey, six focus group workshops, and four public open houses. Collectively, 943 residents participated in the process. While there were a variety of specific needs and desires that were mentioned, these key topics emerged:

- Improvements to existing parks and facilities are the top funding priority.
- Nature programs and trails to facilitate walking, hiking, and bicycling are highly desired.
- There is a need for neighborhood parks in particular areas of the County.
- Two thirds of survey respondents indicated that they travel outside of the County to use parks and recreation facilities.
- Open house results indicate special events, like movies in the park or summer concerts, are desired programs.



The following section provides an overview of the findings from each of the public engagement activities. These methods are designed to identify needed facilities and programs, public perception of the DeKalb County Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs (RPCA) parks and recreation system, and the level of support for improving offerings.



Open House attendees



SURVEY RESULTS

As part of the DeKalb County Comprehensive Master Parks and Recreation Plan, the A.L. Burruss Institute of Public Service and Research at Kennesaw State University was asked to conduct a community survey to gauge utilization and perceptions of the parks and recreation system. The survey is part of the overall public engagement process to ascertain if residents use the parks and why, how old the participants are, and what is their opinion of the quality, accessibility, and importance of the parks system. Another key element to utilization is whether residents will support the system with their personal time or budgetary funding. The answers to these survey questions inform the decision-makers in DeKalb County regarding the growth and expansion of park services and how best to serve the needs of their residents.

The Burruss Institute conducted both a telephone survey and an online survey. Telephone calls were placed to 300 randomly selected adult residents. To complement the telephone survey, invitations were sent to 6,000 randomly selected residents to participate in an online survey. A total of 376 residents completed the online questionnaire. Combined, 676 residents provided feedback. Information provided included monthly utilization of the parks system, budgetary support and perceptions of the quality and conditions of park facilities, as well as age, gender, and race/ethnicity. This information, coupled with in-person public outreach, including public meetings and collection of one-on-one stakeholder input, will provide a robust picture of residents' perception and rate of utilization of the DeKalb County parks and recreation system.



**KENNESAW STATE
UNIVERSITY**

A.L. BURRUSS INSTITUTE OF
PUBLIC SERVICE AND RESEARCH

SURVEY RESULTS

- » Over 9% visited a park in the last year.
- » 35% have used a park facility once a week or more.
- » For those who have not visited a park within the last year, 50% stated they were not aware of facilities or programs; and 35% stated safety was an issue.
- » 65% of participants responded the delivery of services was “good.” The options included: poor, fair, good, and high quality.
- » 15% responded that the system was “high quality.” This response is supported by the high rate of visitation. The options included: poor, fair, good, and high quality.
- » 65% responded RPCA staff was easily accessible for information regarding the parks system.



Story Walk - Mason Mill Naturalist Program

Questions were included about the perceived reputation of the DeKalb County parks and recreation system, which many feel is “above average.”

- » 9% reported a “great” reputation; 28% reported a “good” reputation; 37% of respondents reported an “average” reputation; and 9% rated the system “less than average.”

The residential sense of pride is also reflected by the feeling of common ownership of parks and recreation.

- » This is best illustrated by over 57% of participants stating they would volunteer to personally assist with making improvements in the parks and 95% supporting funding improvements within the parks system.
- » Residents are also willing to travel to recreational opportunities with just under 90% stating they would drive 30 minutes to access park facilities.
- » 60% of residents stated they would walk up to a mile; and one-third of residents stated they would bike 2-5 miles to access a park.

The variety of program offerings and facilities are important to DeKalb County residents.

- » When asked if residents travel outside of DeKalb County to access programs and facilities, two-thirds responded “yes.”
- » Commercial recreational gyms were popular with 39%. Other respondents used parks and recreation in nearby municipalities, counties, neighborhood association properties, and public or private schools.
- » Location was a major factor in this consideration, with 58% using facilities closer to home or work.
- » 41% of residents responded that RPCA did not offer the facilities they were interested in; and 41% responded that other organizations offered better quality services.
- » This is further supported by 62% of participants that stated they would be open to increased costs to improve the RPCA system, with 60% stating they would support a cost of \$15 a month to improve the RPCA system.

The A.L. Burruss Institute of Public Service and Research completed this mixed-mode survey in April 2020 to provide another method of public input from the residents of DeKalb County. The timing of the survey was especially important due to the emerging presence of COVID-19 and associated government restrictions. The margin of error for responses is +/- 4 percent and the entire survey report is included in the Appendix of this report along with graphs and tables, which provide detailed information regarding demographics of the 676 participants of the survey.

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES

In addition to the online survey, DeKalb County RPCA hosted four open house events to collect information about residents' recreation needs and priorities. The following open houses were held around the county:

- January 29, 2020 at Mason Mill Recreation Center – Decatur
- January 30, 2020 at Gresham Park Recreation Center – Decatur
- February 4, 2020 at Redan Recreation Center – Lithonia
- February 5, 2020 at Hamilton Recreation Center – Scottdale

Each open house provided opportunities for input from attendees through a series of activities and interactive maps. Participants provided comments on maps regarding various needs across the County. Comments ranged from recommendations on where parks should be located to suggested routes for greenways.

Participants were asked to complete four activities asking for recommendations on facilities, programming, activities, and funding. These activities allowed for a high level of interaction with the planning team and help inform the recommendations included in this master plan.



Constitution Lakes Park

STATION 1: PRIORITY FACILITIES, PROGRAMS, AND ACTIVITIES

Open house attendees were given stickers and asked to choose the facilities, programs, and activities they felt were needed but not provided adequately in DeKalb County. Options were extensive and included 36 types of facilities, 34 different programs, and 92 activities to choose from. Votes were recorded at each public meeting then tallied.

The combined results indicated which facilities, programs, and activities were consistently prioritized at each event. For instance, walking and hiking trails, nature parks, paved bicycle trails, outdoor pools, small neighborhood parks, and community gardens rose to the top of most wanted facility types.

The top identified program opportunities included nature programs, adult fitness and wellness, movies in the park, summer concerts, teen programs, and before and after school programs. Interestingly, athletic programs were further down the list. This may mean that participants are satisfied with the current availability of athletic programs, or it could indicate the open house participants were not interested in athletics when compared to other opportunities.

Activities were also prioritized using the same method. The list of activities was quite lengthy because activities are so varied, and options can almost seem infinite. Ninety-three different activities were included in this exercise. The top tier of results included activities consistent with the nature-based and outdoor recreation theme indicated with facility exercise. The activities receiving the highest number for votes included walk/run/jog/exercise on a paved path, ride a bicycle, stroll in a natural area, teen programs, nature programs, walk/run/jog/exercise on an unpaved path, adult fitness and wellness, special events, and tend a community garden.

The full results are shown on the following figures. Overall, results indicated strong support for nature-based activities, programs, and facilities. Additionally, programs serving community needs like before and after school programs, community gardens, and teen programs are also valued.



Figure 3.1: Open House Facility Needs

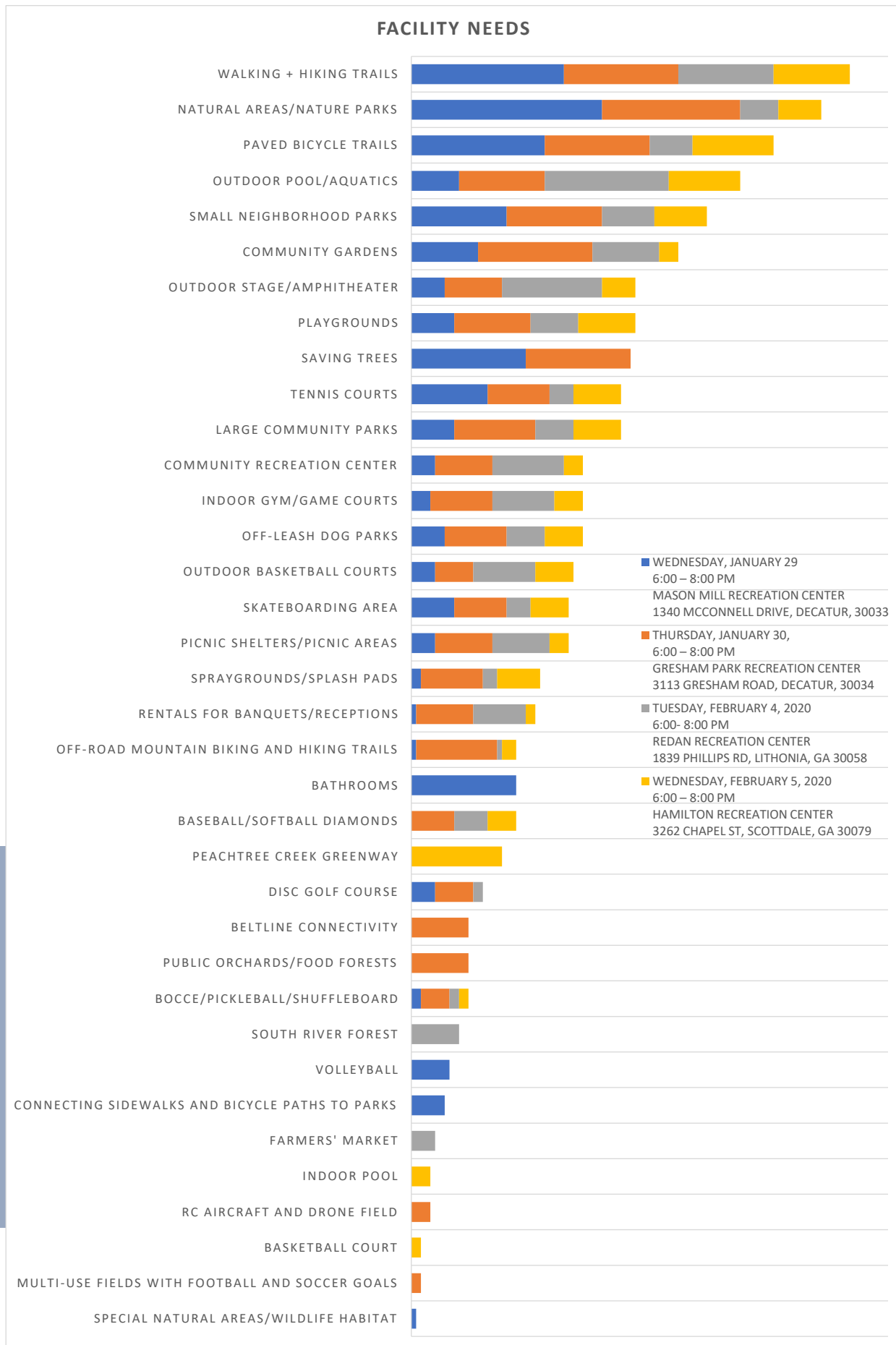


Figure 3.2: Open House Program Needs

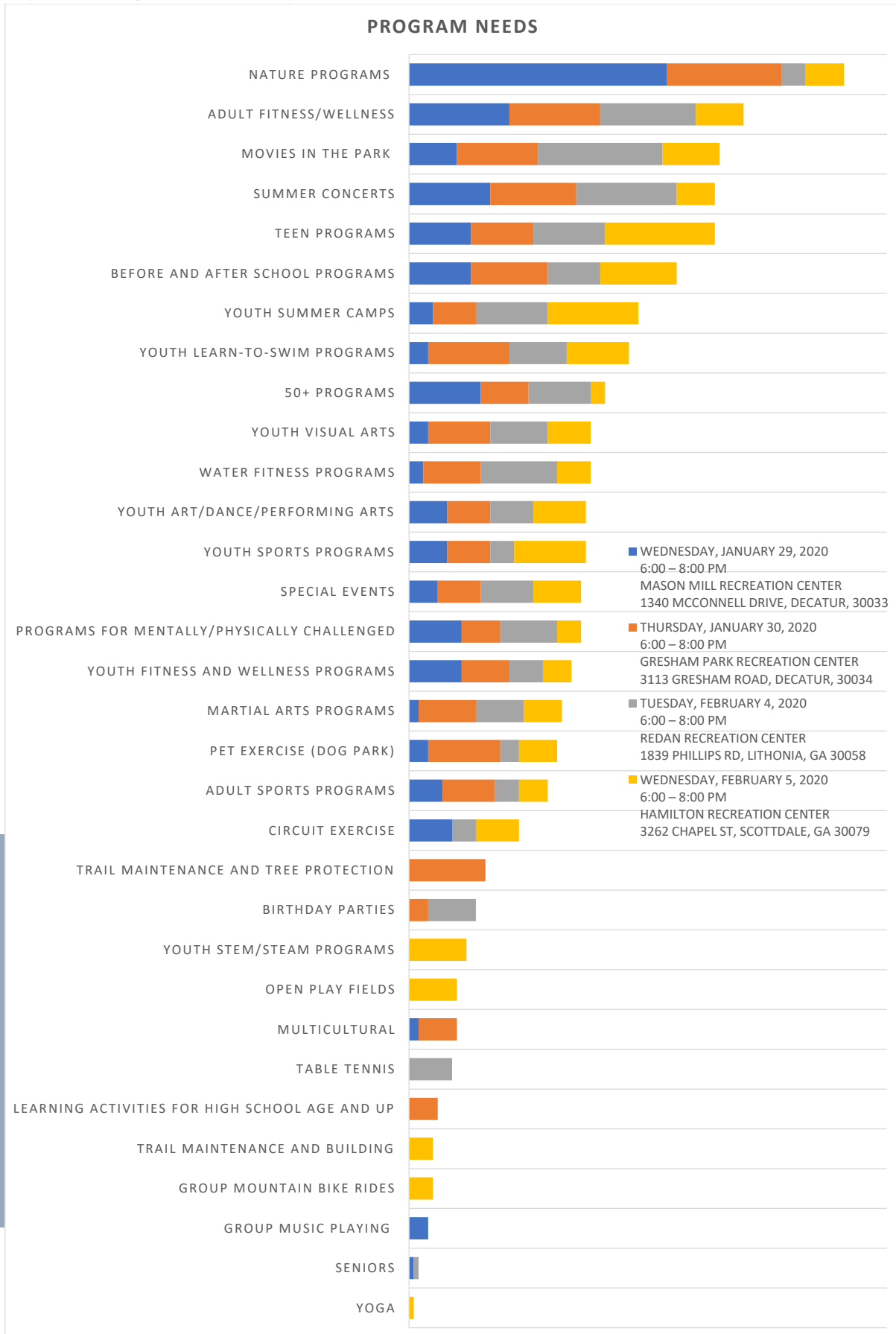
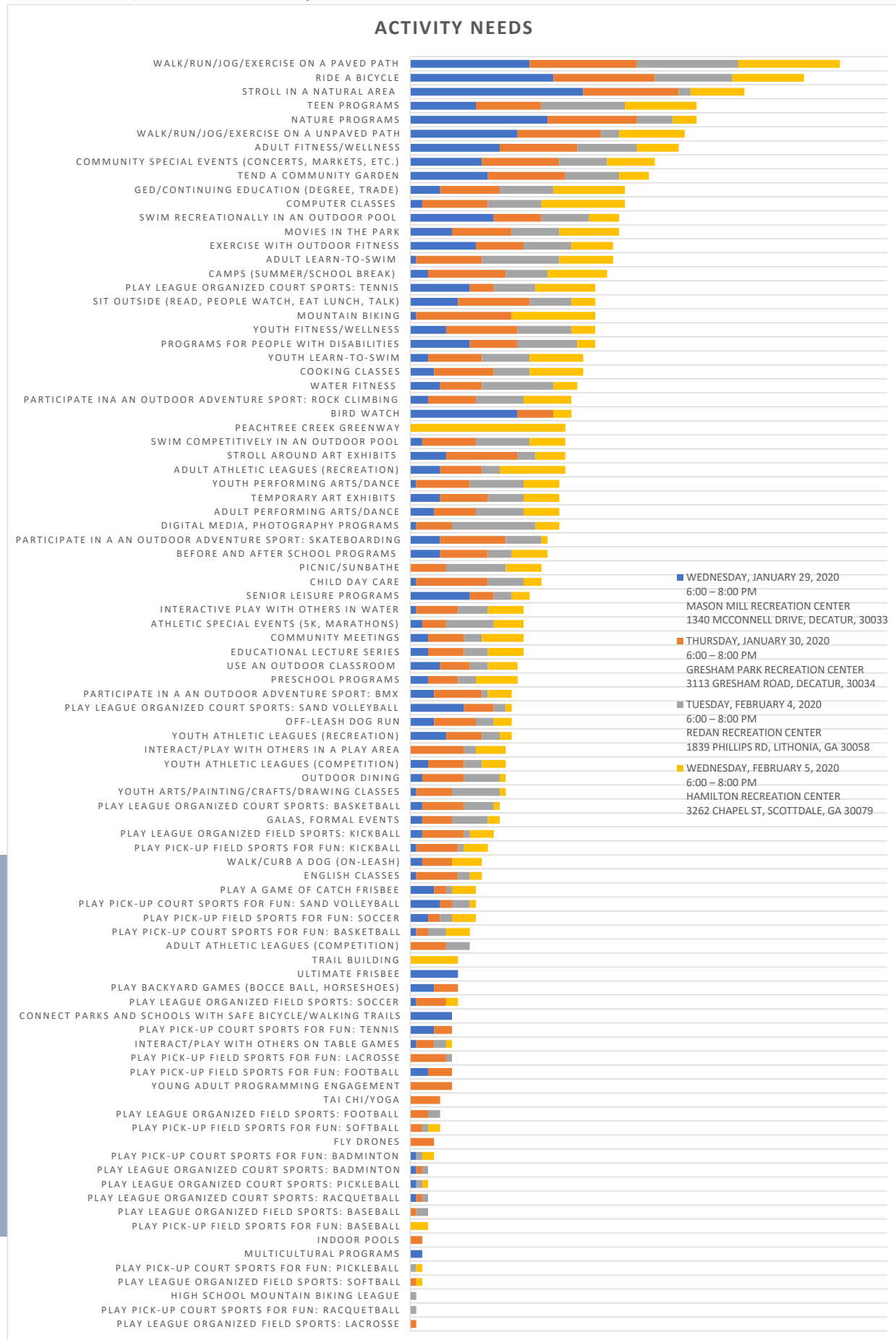


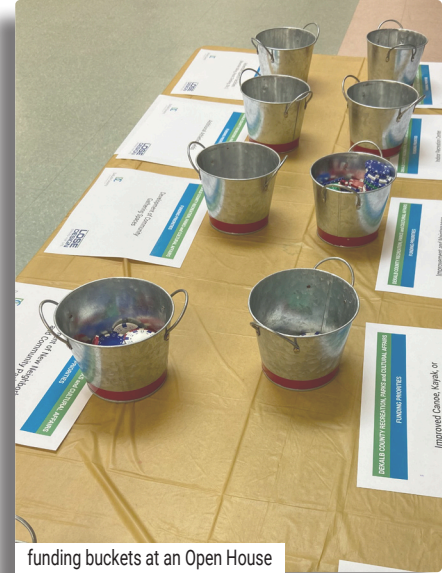
Figure 3.3: Open House Activity Needs



STATION 2: PARK IMPROVEMENTS

Open house participants were asked to review maps of select parks and offer ideas for improving these properties. The comments provided on the maps and the conversations among individual participants allowed the planning team to better understand how the public views individual park properties and the larger system.

The most common suggestion received through this exercise related to the need for increased connectivity and expansion of the trail network.



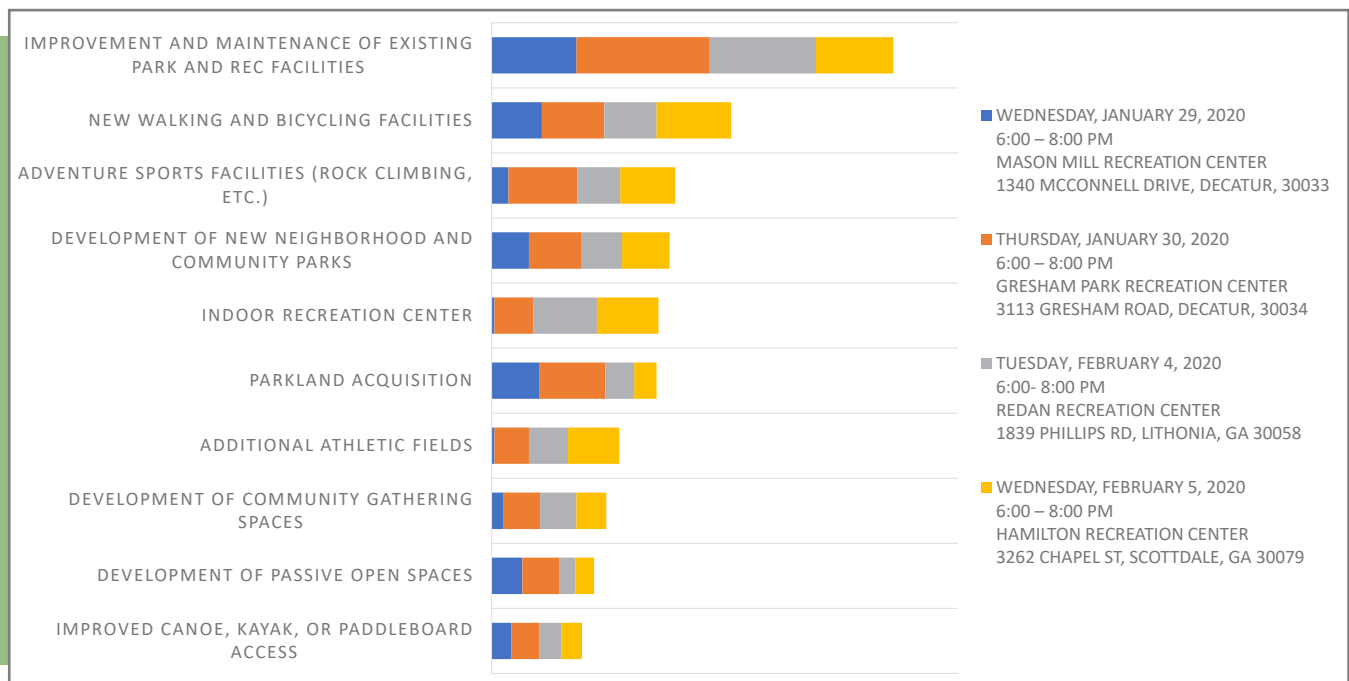
STATION 3: FUNDING PRIORITIES

Participants were given ten poker chips and asked to use the chips as hypothetical funds for ten spending categories. Participants put those chips into the corresponding bucket. Attendees could put all the chips in one bucket or divide the chips into multiple buckets. Bucket options included:

- Adventure Sports Facilities (rock climbing, etc.)
- Additional Athletic Fields
- Development of Community Gathering Spaces
- Development of New Neighborhood and Community Parks
- New Walking and Bicycling Facilities
- Development of Passive Open Spaces
- Improved Canoe, Kayak, or Paddleboard Access
- Improvement and Maintenance of Existing Park and Recreational Facilities
- Indoor Recreation Center
- Parkland Acquisition

Improvements and maintenance of existing parks received the most poker chips and was identified as the top funding priority, followed by walking and bicycling facilities. Development of passive open spaces and improved canoe, kayak, or paddleboard access were the bottom two funding priorities and received the least amount of chips.

Figure 3.4: Open House Funding Priorities



STATION 4: ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/IDEAS/CONCERNS

As a supplement to open houses, attendees had an opportunity to complete a comment card. The following themes emerged from the comments received:

- Lighting and additional rangers or police presence could improve safety.
- There are maintenance concerns for many parks especially in the southern portion of the County.
- Better marketing and communication are needed.
- Recreation centers should be improved to be more inviting.
- Appreciation for RPCA staff and the opportunity to contribute ideas.
- Calls for better funding of parks.

Overall, the open houses provided great input to the planning team. They gave clear indications of facilities, programs, and activities to evaluate further through the master plan process.



Open House attendees

FOCUS GROUPS

Over a period of two days, workshops sessions were held with 43 members with various interests. These focus groups provided information on how the county's facilities are used, interaction with RPCA staff, visions for program growth, and how working with RPCA can contribute to group goals.

Focus group workshops were held March 10 – 11, 2020 with the following focus groups:

- Athletic League Providers
- Cultural/Arts Organizations
- Municipal Recreation Agencies
- DeKalb Friends of Parks
- Conservation/Environmental Organizations

An additional focus group workshop was held on May 14, 2020 with the Arabia Mountain focus group. This meeting was held virtually due to concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the workshop sessions, these focus groups participated in a SWOT analysis of the the current park system. SWOT stands for **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats. Each group provided specific information on strengths of and opportunities for the current park system, as well as weaknesses of and threats to the current park system.

ATHLETIC LEAGUE PROVIDERS

The athletic league focus group listed several positive attributes they consider to be strengths of DeKalb County athletics. These strengths include good coaching, corporate and community support, online registrations, opportunities for national exposure, loyal followings from former players, and the ability to host large regional tournaments.

The athletic league representatives also listed several weaknesses that may be holding these leagues back. Security issues have had direct impacts on leagues due to theft, vandalism, and conflicts between parents. The fact that guns are allowed in parks has increased these concerns for some. Participants referenced difficulties raising funds because many parents are unable or unwilling to contribute. Park conditions are poor in some instances and some families would prefer to drive to a nicer facility in a nearby community rather than participate locally on fields that are in poorer condition. Gwinnett County was listed as one of these nearby agencies. Leagues feel they are losing players who are “chasing championships” in Gwinnett County. There are also operational weaknesses the group cited. The DeKalb County website was not meeting their needs, and an overall lack of communication was listed as problematic for league officers.

Six specific threats were identified by the athletic league representatives. These threats are:

- The YMCA at Wade Walker Park, which is perceived as not serving area kids due to cost of membership. The YMCA is not managed by RPCA
- Competition from neighboring park and recreation agencies and their facilities.
- Gwinnett County attracting young athletes away from DeKalb County.
- The perception that DeKalb County’s reputation is declining.
- The opinion that DeKalb County is “stuck” and not growing, changing, and improving like may surrounding communities.
- Six-month provider agreements are too short to plan and leads to uncertainty for athletic leagues.

While these issues are significant, the group also listed several opportunities to address these threats and weaknesses. They included,

- Providing an additional rectangular field at Wade Walker.
- County/School partnerships.
- Turf fields could expand opportunities.
- Strategic partnerships.
- Using Gwinnett County as a model to retain players that may leave DeKalb for other programs.
- Partnerships between providers at different parks and better communication between athletic organizations.
- Track and field programs.
- Partnerships with competing facilities: pay to use their facilities.
- Low-cost golf and tennis lessons/clinics for interested youth.
- Invest to improve facilities to keep DeKalb kids playing in DeKalb.

Overall, this group felt strongly that while interest in youth sports is significant in DeKalb County, the loss of participants to nearby communities with better facilities and stronger programs is a real threat to the longevity of athletics in DeKalb County.

ARTS AND CULTURE FOCUS GROUP

The Arts and Culture Focus Group included representatives with significant experience with the art community in DeKalb County and the Greater Atlanta area. Mr. Bill Leavell of the ART Station in Stone Mountain, Georgia, and Mr. Alan Mothner and Mr. Bob Kinzey (retired) of the Spruill Center for the Arts in Dunwoody, Georgia, attended this focus group session. The group met at the Porter Sanford III Performing Arts & Community Center.

Focus group participants provided several ideas on how to improve access to the arts within DeKalb County. Most ideas centered around more effective communication. Specifically, the group hoped for better communication between the four arts centers: Porter Sanford; Callanwolde Fine Arts Center; the Spruill Center for the Arts; and the ART Station. This would foster better cooperation and support among these facilities. The group also noted that additional marketing was needed to raise awareness of available programs and events.

This focus group had concerns about a lack of participation from younger age groups. Better marketing and a partnership with schools were suggested to address this problem.



Conservation and Green Space

The Conservation and Green Space focus group made several observations related to the overall effectiveness and health of natural areas in DeKalb County.

The group cited the habitat restoration at Mason Mill Park and the existing tree canopy and forested areas within parks as strengths. The group would like to see more of this type of effort throughout the system. Land acquisition was also seen as a strength within the County.

Overall, the group rated DeKalb County as "fair" to "poor" in terms of natural area and conservation efforts citing the following weaknesses:

- Poor waterway conditions.
- Need for more effective stormwater and erosion control along natural waterways.
- Lack of County support for waterway access.
- Lack of equity within the parks system.

The group also expressed concerns about staffing levels, training opportunities, interdepartmental communication, and the need for stronger conservation policies, including the need for an impact fee and open space dedications as new developments are approved.

Several opportunities were discussed including year-round environmental programming, expansion of green infrastructure practices, and increased connectivity and access to open space. DeKalb County's unique ecosystems and environmental features were also referenced as opportunities for rare recreation experiences.

Threats listed by the group included development adjacent to parks, public-private land swaps as policy, budget shortfalls, staff turnover, and lack of a climate resiliency plan.



Municipal Recreation Agencies

Representatives from several municipal parks and recreation agencies, along with representatives from Peachtree Creek Greenway Incorporated and the Boys and Girls Club of Metro Atlanta, participated in a focus group highlighting the relationship their agencies have with RPCA and the role their departments play in providing recreation services within DeKalb County.

The parks and recreation experience this group brought to the discussion was of great help to the planning team, as they worked to understand the evolving role of RPCA as more cities incorporate and work to develop their own parks and recreation agencies. Importantly, this group recognized RPCA leadership as a great strength. Professional coordination between the various departments is positive and mutually beneficial. Other strengths of RPCA noted by the group include the ranger program, overall improvement of the department, new partnerships, more quality staff hires, and an overall desire to make the changes necessary to improve the quality of parks and programming.

Similar to other groups, communication was noted as a weakness. Responsiveness was noted as an issue as well as “silo” mentality, and limited internal communication was perceived to be a problem. Other weaknesses pertained to DeKalb County’s ability to purchase and build a park without an effective budget source to address the maintenance needs of these facilities. The group noted this issue has been a major reason more cities are incorporating to control parks in their jurisdiction.

Several opportunities for improvement were suggested by these attendees. Public-private partnerships and relationships with organizations, like the Trust for Public Land and Friends of Parks groups, were viewed as positive ways to increase communication between the Department and various user groups. There is also potential to form a coalition to advocate and speak to issues related to parks and recreation across the community. Another interesting recommendation was for RPCA to shift away from programming and allow cities and non-profit groups to fill that need. This thought related to another suggestion to repurpose older athletic fields and facilities at additional green space, which could be maintained at lower cost and provide passive open space to residents.

The opportunities listed by these participants were viewed as strategies to deal with the threats posed by population growth, a declining reputation, and continued incorporation of cities. This group appreciates the role played by RPCA in providing recreation services within DeKalb County; however, there is concern the Department will struggle if changes are not made to address the quality of parks and improve operations.



DeKalb Friends of Parks

Members of the planning team were able to hold a focus group with representatives of several Friends of Parks groups. Again, the participants recognize the value RPCA leadership has brought to the Department. Partner organizations like Park Pride, Boy Scouts, and various civic organizations were also noted as strengths. These comments showed a good level of support across the community to come together for the purpose of caring for and improving parks.

Several weaknesses were noted that reinforce comments from other focus group sessions. Communication and marketing were again mentioned as weaknesses. The website administered by the County was viewed as unhelpful. Inconsistent maintenance standards were noted by the group. It was stated the DeKalb County calendar system was difficult to use and limits awareness of events.

Many opportunities shared by the group focused on improved communication and partnership opportunities. Leveraging common social media outlets for improved communication was suggested. A stronger partnership with Park Pride was viewed as an opportunity for better coordination with the Friends of Parks volunteers. Separately, a naturalist program was an opportunity to strengthen outdoor education programming.

The Friends of Parks participants noted several safety and crime issues as threats to the parks. Specifically, undesirable activities and crime in the parks were concerns raised by the group. Poor lighting was believed by the attendees to contribute to this issue. Several environmental threats were also raised, including invasive species, water pollution, erosion, and poor stormwater management, were listed as threats by this group. Additional concerns related to the privatization of recreation centers were conveyed.



Arabia Mountain

Arabia Mountain

The significance of Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve warranted a focus group to speak specifically to the unique nature and needs of this unique and valued property. This group shared the natural and human history of the area to provide a better understanding of the opportunities and threats that might negatively impact the park.

The group noted how rare it is to have a unique natural feature like this so close to an urban center; and the short drive allows several million people to experience Arabia Mountain very easily. This allows for unique recreational, environmental, and cultural programs for visitors to experience all the area has to offer. It was agreed by the group that RPCA leadership, staff, and volunteers provide a great deal of support to the natural area. While many parks in DeKalb County are perceived as having safety issues, Arabia Mountain has a reputation for being safe for all ages. The Arabia Alliance has proven to be a strong advocate for the natural area and seeks to continue to improve the area. Additional support has come from the City of Stonecrest who has used the zoning ordinance to prevent inappropriate development near the park.

Several weaknesses were noted as well. The group shared concerns that increased visitation was overwhelming the park. Wayfinding was discussed as being inadequate making it easy for visitors to get lost. Parking was discussed as being inadequate and, Wi-Fi is needed at the Nature Center. The remote nature of the park means that cellular service is limited. This has been a safety issue and could be resolved with additional hot spots or 5G technology that is more complementary of this remote setting. Additionally, deferred maintenance was mentioned, as in other focus groups.

Several opportunities were provided by this group, who sees a larger mission for the Davidson-Arabia Mountain area. The Lyon Farm was mentioned as an opportunity for agriculture demonstrations. This property could also be a site for sustainability education and programming that discusses the mistakes of the past and demonstrates current best practices. The Lyon Farm was also suggested as an appropriate location to discuss the legacy of slavery to encompass the complete history of the area.

Other opportunities included converting the former ranger residence to an event space or retreat facility. Potential revenue tied to bicycle or canoe/kayak rentals was also suggested. Parking fees were also discussed. This might encourage carpooling to the park. Another solution mentioned to prevent overflow parking was to provide designated parking areas with a trolley to access various sites within the park.

Major questions this focus group raised were, "What park paradigm is best for Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve? Should it be a strict preserve prioritizing an ecological mission over recreation activities? What types of activities should be allowed?" The answer to these questions have potential impacts on staffing, programming, and capital improvements. Surrounding growth will certainly bring more visitors, and there are concerns the park is unprepared to manage increased visitation. The group also mentioned the need for more effective communication with the Watershed Department, echoing concerns raised in other focus groups.

Ecological threats were raised including invasive plants, degradation of the Arabia Lake Dam, and wildlife management needs. Vandalism in the form of graffiti and scratches in the granite were also noted. Damage to manmade structures was also noted.

It was clear to the planning team that the Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve is a significant resource for RPCA and maintains strong community support through volunteers and the Arabia Alliance. Rangers at the park are highly valued and more are needed to support the mission of the park. Questions also remain for the future of the nature preserve, including: What will its role be, and how should RPCA plan for that future?

3 - Public Engagement

The public engagement effort for this master plan successfully engaged the community in numerous ways. The statistically valid survey provides a clear understanding of where parks rank in the minds of residents. The four open houses provided insight on the facility, program, and activity needs of the community. The six focus groups provided the planning team with a clearer understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing various park user groups and partners.

The following themes were common among all the public engagement efforts:

- The RPCA leadership team is valued.
- Better communication and marketing are needed.
- Walking and biking on trails and nature programs are highly desired.
- RPCA is competing with other counties like Gwinnett and other city park agencies within DeKalb County for participation.
- Safety is perceived as a real threat to visitors at many parks.
- There is strong support for parks from community groups and residents.
- Deferred maintenance is impacting the viability of programs.
- Peer counties with similar characteristics may be models for improving DeKalb County parks.

The level of participation in this effort demonstrates the level of support RPCA has within the community. The comments shared were offered in a cooperative spirit and should be received in that manner. The ideas shared in the public engagement sessions were instrumental in forming the recommendations contained in the master plan.

4



Section 4

LEVEL-OF-SERVICE & GAP ANALYSIS

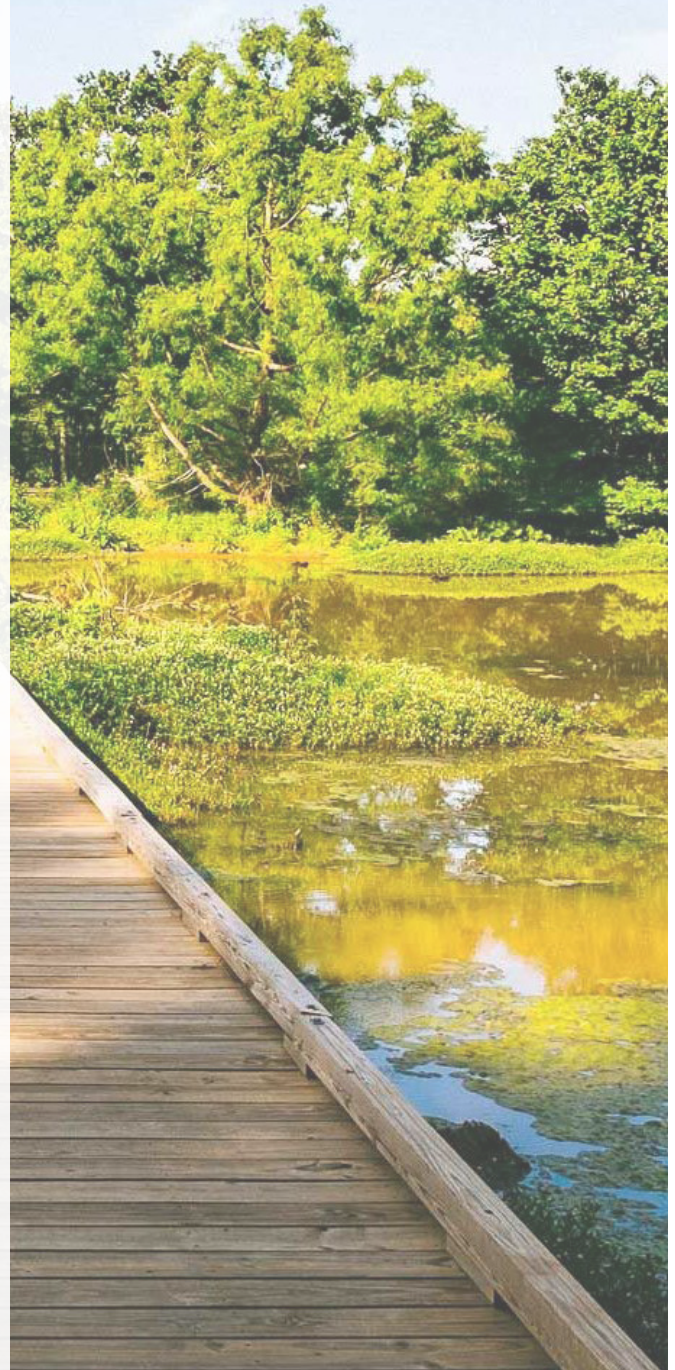
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04

LEVEL-OF-SERVICE & GAP ANALYSIS

Effective service delivery is a critical component to the success of park and recreation providers. Understanding where services are available and how to best facilitate public access allows providers to efficiently deliver recreation opportunities in an equitable manner for the community's benefit. In order to perform an assessment of a park system's service, several tools are used to determine the current status of the overall system and how to improve this system going forward.

Categorizing facilities into park typologies allows the planning team to assess the overall diversity and distribution of facilities throughout the community. Then, benchmark comparisons against national standards allow the planning team to identify surpluses or deficiencies in facility types. Next, a gap analysis is performed to determine if there are any areas in the community that are lacking in service coverage. Finally, a connectivity analysis is performed to determine if facilities are accessible to create an overall network of recreation services. This collective information allows the planning team to develop strategies for enhancing the current service delivery system and address any discovered deficiencies.



PARK CLASSIFICATIONS

In 1995, the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) published *Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines* by James D. Mertes, Ph.D., CLP and James R. Hall, CLP. The book outlined a template for typical park classifications, number of acres that a park system should have, and recommended service levels based on population size. Strictly intended as a guideline, the book does not consider the unique character of a place. Local trends and popularity of some activities often dictate a greater need for specific facilities. The guidelines outlined in *Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines* serve as a good baseline for determining a minimum standard for a parks system. These guidelines, along with individual park assessments, community input, and comparisons to similar counties, were used to develop service standards for DeKalb County.

Critical to the service delivery of any recreation system is the identification of the four basic park categories:

- Mini park
- Neighborhood park
- Community park
- Regional park

Beyond these four basic park types are:

- Special-Use park
- Sports park
- Natural resource area/preserve
- Greenway
- School park

DeKalb County Park Classifications

1. Mini Park – Example: Margaret Harris Park
2. Neighborhood Park – Example: Frazier Rowe Park
3. Community Park – Example: Redan Park
4. Regional Park – Example: Mason Mill Park/Tennis Center
5. Linear Park – Example: Zonolite Park
6. Nature Park – Example: Hidden Acres Park
7. Special-Use Park – Example: Little Creek Horse Farm

Each park is classified based on types of amenities, size, service area and how access is gained to the facility.

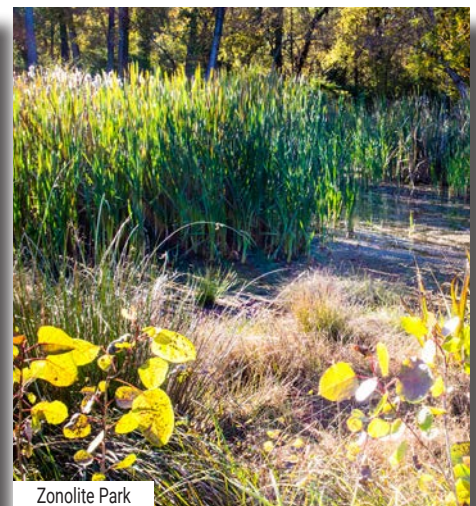


Table 4.1 shows a description of NRPA classifications along with information on desirable size and service area criteria.

Table 4.1: NRPA Park Classifications with Service Area Criteria

CLASSIFICATION	DESCRIPTION	DESIRABLE SIZE	SERVICE AREA CRITERIA
Mini Park	Small parks with limited activity that should provide seating, landscape and possibly a playground, community garden or other passive recreation activities	5 acres or less	¼-mile service radius
Neighborhood Park	Area for more intense recreational activities, such as playing fields, larger playgrounds, shelters, trails, swimming pools, restroom, etc.	5 to 20 acres	½-mile service radius
Community Park	All-inclusive facility that provides a mix of active and passive activities and attracts users of all ages, from sports fields to a community center	20 to 75 acres	1-mile to 3-mile service radius
Regional Park	Unique outdoor recreation area with various amenities, which may include boating, fishing, swimming, camping, but may also include a water park, etc.	50 to 250 acres	Varies
Special-Use Park	Special-use parks are designed to meet the needs of a specific user group, such as an aquatic center, golf course, zoo, or a museum	Varies	Varies
Sports Park	Parks that are dominated by athletic facilities	Varies	Varies
Natural Resource Area/Preserve	Land with natural resources, historic landscapes, visual beauty, biodiversity, etc.	Varies	Varies
Greenway	Linear corridors that loop and/or link to other amenities	50-feet wide	½-mile service radius
School Park	Typically found at middle and high schools with youth athletic fields that support team sports	Varies	Varies

Source: Table adapted from Mertes, J.D. and J.R. Hall. Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Guidelines. Alexandria, VA: National Recreation and Park Association, 1995

LEVEL-OF-SERVICE

Evaluating the level-of-service of a parks and recreation system helps determine whether that system is meeting the needs of the population it serves. The analysis begins with a review of existing facilities (indoor and outdoor) and the level-of-service offered by DeKalb County Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs (RPCA). Table 4.2 summarizes the inventory of indoor and outdoor facilities located in DeKalb County. The facility inventory includes 100 park properties with a total acreage of approximately 6,070 acres and 65 miles of trails.

Once the existing facilities inventory was completed, the overall number and types of facilities were compared to NRPA park metric data. NRPA collects park facility, programming, staffing, budget, and agency funding data from parks and recreation agencies across the United States. This data allows parks and recreation departments to compare facility, programming, staffing, and budget information against peer agencies and can assist parks and recreation professionals in managing resources. In addition to nation-wide comparisons, the data provided by NRPA allows agencies to perform comparisons to providers with similar sizes and functions. Recreation agencies can search for comparable agencies based on population size or agency type. For the purposes of this report, the planning team utilized metrics for similarly sized county agencies.

As noted previously in this report, DeKalb County is comprised of multiple incorporated areas that offer services for their residents. For this planning effort, the consultant team determined that a level-of-service analysis for the unincorporated segment of the County's population would provide a more realistic identification of current service levels and aid in formulating feasible goals to fill gaps in service. This approach will permit RPCA to address facility needs in a strategic manner by supporting residents who live outside of incorporated areas where services are already being provided at the local level.

The comparison of RPCA facilities to the NRPA data revealed surpluses and deficits of DeKalb County facilities. For example, DeKalb County has seven community gardens, whereas the average NRPA park metric for a county-wide recreation system is three community gardens. Therefore, DeKalb County has a surplus of four community gardens. Surpluses identified in Table 4.2 are not necessarily a negative finding. While these standards provide guidance on the quantity of facilities, they should not be used indiscriminately or without understanding facility quality, location, and considering public demand for certain types of improvements.

While these NRPA standards are good for planning, facility preferences differ from county to county. A facility assessment provides a starting point for further investigation. In order to determine demand, actual scheduling of facilities should be used as well. For example, if current sports fields are constantly programmed at full capacity, additional sports fields may need to be considered.

The largest deficiencies are softball fields (-21) and soccer fields (-18). The largest facility surpluses are playgrounds (+51) and outdoor tennis courts (+34). Addressing facility deficiencies should be weighed against the specific needs of the community. While national standards appear to indicate a significant need for additional outdoor fields, the County should evaluate program participation numbers to determine a more realistic facility need to support demand from the community. Further more, consideration should be given to develop facilities that are suited to facilitate multiple programs. For example, baseball fields that can be converted to a softball facility provides a cost-effective approach to addressing the identified facility need while also retaining existing facilities that can be used for both baseball and softball. In a similar manner, the County should evaluate facility surpluses by determining the specific community needs. For example, a community's desired level of playground facilities may be driven by specific demographics (higher levels of households with children) or ease of accessibility by reducing drive-times in urbanized areas. In the event that the County does identify a specific facility surplus as excessive, consideration should be given for renovating an existing facility to address one of the identified facility deficits. This approach will provide a significant capital savings as compared to developing additional acreage to address community needs.

Table 4.2: Facility Surplus and Deficit Analysis

	CURRENT RPCA INVENTORY	POTENTIAL NEED, UNINCORPORATED COUNTY (BASED ON NRPA DATA)	CURRENT SURPLUS/ DEFICIT	PROJECTED UNINCORPORATED DEKALB COUNTY NEED (2030)	2030 SURPLUS/ DEFICIT
INDOOR FACILITIES					
Recreation centers	9	7	2	9	0
Community centers	0	6	-6	8	-8
Senior centers	0	3	-3	4	-4
Performance amphitheaters	3	2	1	3	0
Nature centers	1	2	-1	2	-1
Stadiums	3	2	1	2	1
Ice rinks	0	1	-1	1	-1
Teen centers	0	2	-2	2	-2
Arenas	0	3	-3	4	-4
OUTDOOR FACILITIES					
Playgrounds	79	28	51	36	43
Basketball courts	26	18	8	23	3
Tennis courts (outdoor only)	70	36	34	45	25
Baseball fields	42	34	8	43	-1
Softball fields	11	32	-21	40	-29
Rectangular fields: multipurpose	4	15	-11	19	-15
Dog parks	2	3	-1	4	-2
Swimming pools (outdoor only)	7	4	3	5	2
Totlots	20	13	7	16	4
Soccer fields	15	33	-18	41	-26
Community gardens	7	3	4	4	3
Multi-use courts (basketball, volleyball)	0	9	-9	12	-12
Football fields	3	7	-4	9	-6
Skate parks	0	2	-2	2	-2
Multipurpose synthetic fields	2	5	-3	6	-4
Ice rinks (outdoor only)	0	2	-2	3	-3
Lacrosse fields	0	9	-9	11	-11
Cricket fields	1	1	0	2	-1
Field hockey fields	0	2	-2	3	-3

Sources: DeKalb County Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs; 2019 NRPA Agency Performance Review

4 - Level of Service and Gap Analysis

Some facilities listed in the inventory may fluctuate in number from year to year. For example, while cricket facilities appear to be meeting the community’s current needs, it is anticipated the County’s growth will generate a need for an additional field by 2030. It is also important to note that some facilities listed in the table are uncommon in northern Georgia. For example, indoor and outdoor ice rinks are not as common in the south as they are in other parts of the United States. While indicated as deficiencies, these facilities may not be needed for DeKalb County residents.

NRPA does not address pickleball or golf in the same manner. Therefore, it is necessary to assess the County needs for these facilities in other ways, such as the public engagement exercises described in **Section 3: Public Engagement**.

While several deficits were identified in this assessment, this inventory does not include a complete inventory of private recreation facilities offered by large neighborhoods throughout the County. These developments provide recreational opportunities to residents and members. Similarly, this inventory does not include a comprehensive list of facilities offered by the various municipalities in the County. Understanding the individual needs of each geographic area in the County and how other service providers may or may not be meeting those needs is important for RPCA going forward. It will permit the County to strategically allocate its resources to focus on where the department can best supplement services in incorporated areas or address community needs outside of municipal boundaries.

DeKalb County is below reported national averages of parkland acreage. NRPA reports an average of one park for every 2,181 residents served and 10.1 acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents. To meet or exceed these national averages for counties, DeKalb County needs an additional 218 parks and an additional 1,550 acres of parkland based on the 2018 population estimate of 752,600 people living throughout DeKalb County. When looking at just the population in unincorporated DeKalb County, the need for additional parks drop to 91 and there is an 1,868-acre surplus of parkland. Again, these benchmarks should be evaluated based on the specific needs of the County.

Current population estimates and population projections for the year 2030 were used to determine current facility deficits and surpluses in DeKalb County.

Currently, DeKalb County has a **deficit** in all **INDOOR** facilities, except recreation centers, performance amphitheatres, and stadiums.



Track and Field

Current DeKalb County **OUTDOOR surpluses** include:

- Playgrounds (+51)
- Tennis courts (outdoor only) (+34)
- Basketball courts (+8)
- Baseball fields (+8)
- Totlots (+7)
- Community gardens (+4)
- Swimming pools (outdoor only) (+3)

Current DeKalb County **OUTDOOR deficits** include:

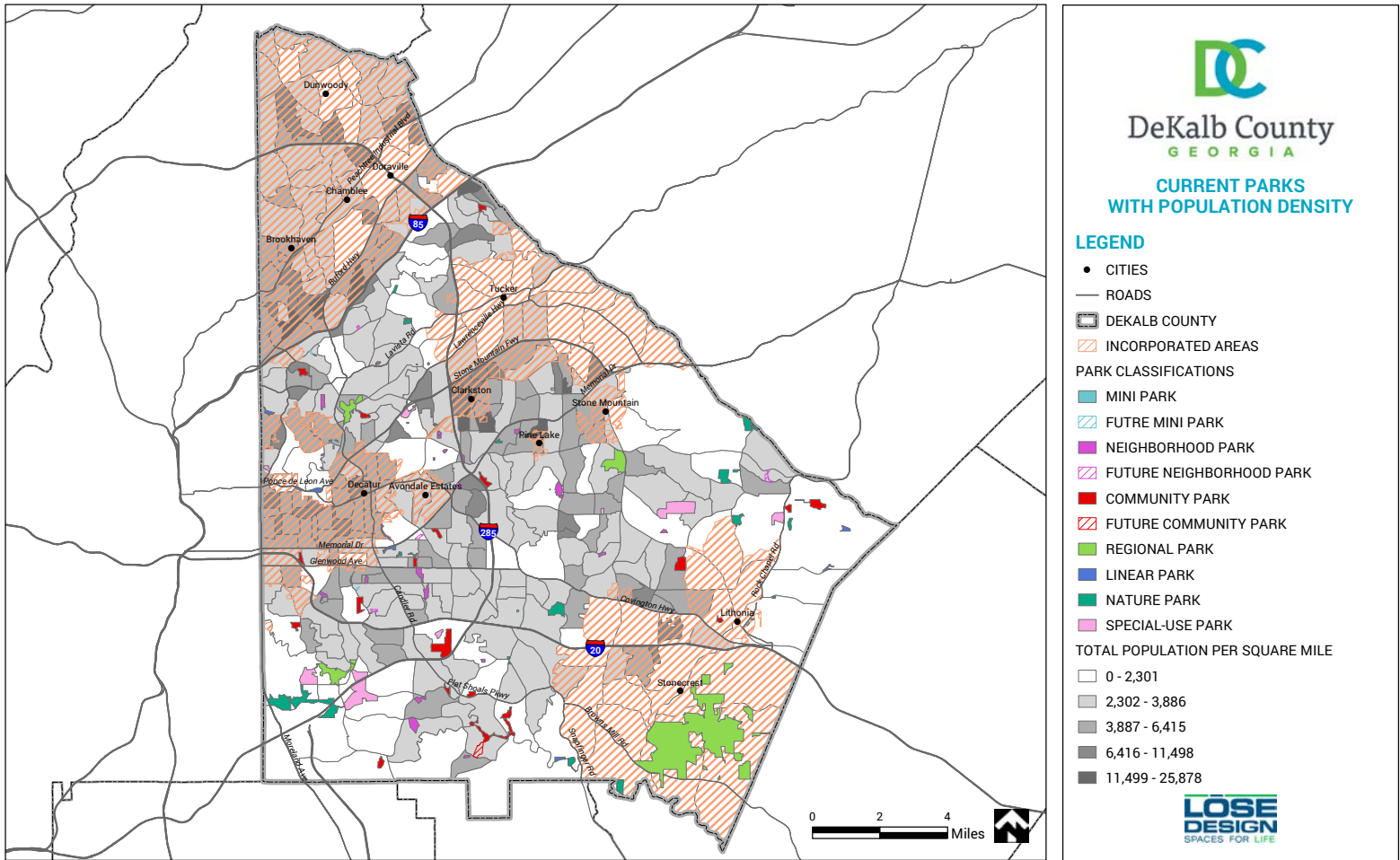
- Softball fields (-21)
- Soccer fields (-18)
- Rectangular fields: multipurpose (-11)
- Multi-use courts (basketball, volleyball) (-9)
- Lacrosse fields (-9)
- Football fields (-4)
- Multipurpose synthetic fields (-3)
- Skate parks (-2)
- Ice rinks (-2)
- Field hockey fields (-2)
- Dog parks (-1)

EXISTING PARK LOCATIONS

Currently, RPCA owns and maintains 100 park sites throughout the County. In general, these facilities are well distributed throughout the community. Current park locations and park types are shown on Figure 4.1. The distribution of these facilities is largely driven by population density, with areas of higher density having more parks, and areas with lower density having fewer. This approach continues to be an effective delivery model in that County resources are planned where areas of higher service demands are required.

Areas with higher level of service include portions of the County within the I-285 corridor, along the Highway 78 corridor, and within the unincorporated areas between I-675 and Hwy 155. These areas generally align with the higher population centers identified on the map below. Conversely, areas with potentially lower levels of service include less densely populated areas along the County’s eastern border, such as Stone Mountain and the area surrounding the Davidson- Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve.

Figure 4.1: Current Parks with Population Density



Sources: DeKalb County Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs; U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

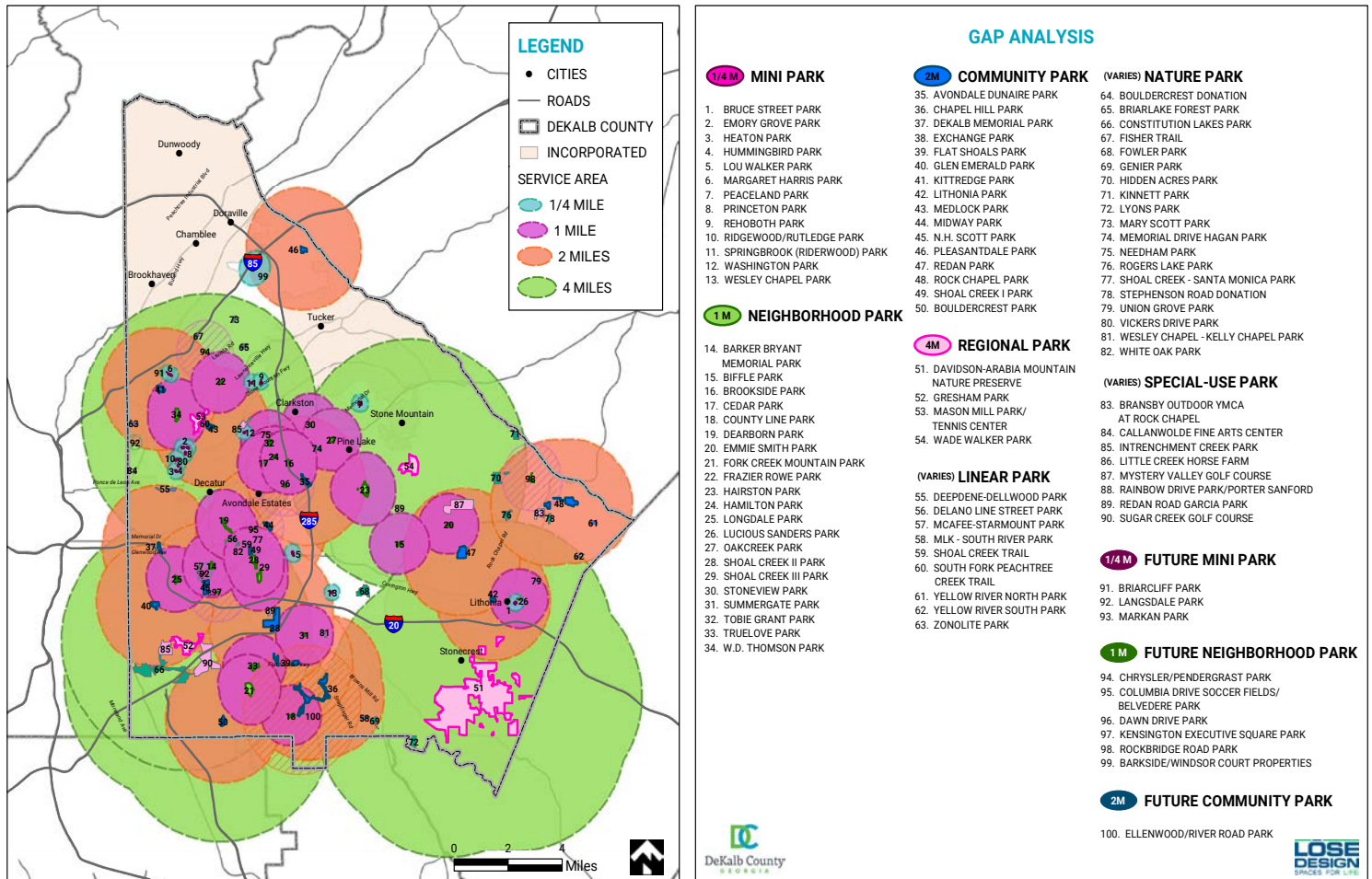
GAP ANALYSIS

A gap analysis is an assessment of the service areas related to parks and recreation facilities to determine if there are areas of a community that are under-served. Figure 4.2 identifies gaps in the overall service standard for these park categories: mini parks, neighborhood parks, community parks, and regional parks. Remaining park types (i.e., linear parks, nature parks, and special-use parks) serve regional needs, and as such, the service areas for these types of parks do not need to be mapped for this gap analysis.

The service area analysis begins by classifying existing parks using the park classifications previously discussed. All existing parks were classified based on NRPA definitions, park offerings, and size. Service areas for each category were assigned accordingly, and population distribution was reviewed to determine if park locations are accessible to most residents.

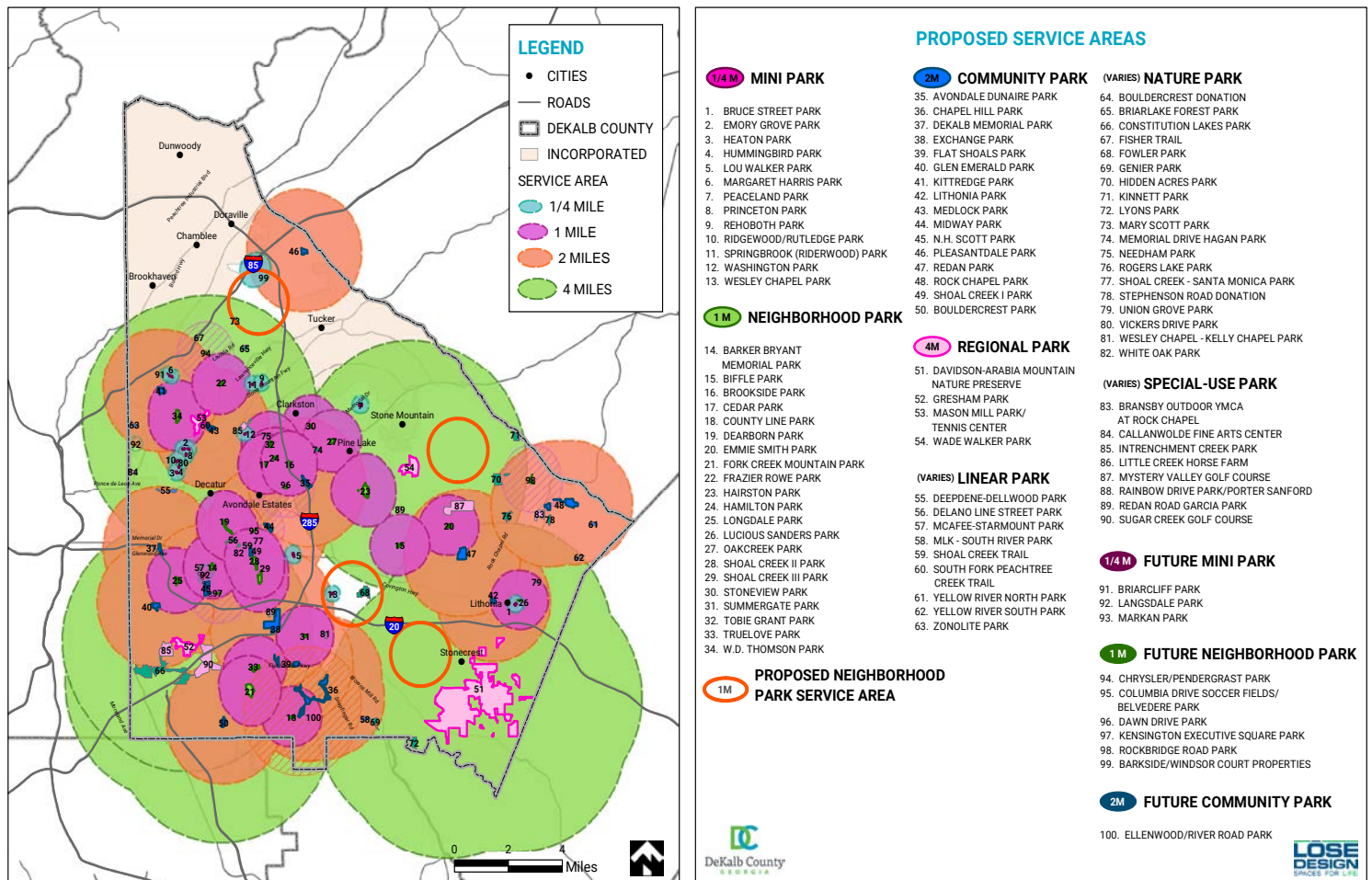
The analysis illustrated potential gaps in service in northern DeKalb County (south of I-85 and west of I-285 in the Embury Hills area) and in central DeKalb County (north of I-20 and east of I-285 between Candler-McAfee and Redan).

Figure 4.2: Gap Analysis



This gap analysis also reveals other potentially under-served areas. Eastern portions of the County appear to have service coverage from both Wade Walker Park and the Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve; however, these areas lack many of the service area overlaps that are present throughout other areas of the County. Overlapping service areas from various park classifications provide a diverse and equitable distribution of facilities and programs to the community. For example, the residents surrounding the Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve have easy access to passive recreation opportunities but lack facilities geared towards active recreation like ballfields or sport courts. Providing additional park facilities in areas identified with red circles on Figure 4.3 will enhance access to more diverse recreation opportunities and offer a more consistent service diversity with the rest of the County.

Figure 4.3: Proposed Service Areas



MUNICIPAL PARK SYSTEMS

Over the last few decades, several areas within the County have become incorporated. Currently, there are thirteen cities within the DeKalb County boundary, and each one offers parks and recreation services to their residents. Nearly all of the various city parks were once DeKalb County facilities, but they have since been assumed by the respective cities. Currently, these facilities are open to all County residents, and the programs are not restricted based on the resident's location in the County. Like many of the County's facilities, the cities' parks offer a wide variety of facility and program types.

The transition of parks and recreation services to the municipal level has permitted RPCA the opportunity to allocate its resources towards the remaining county-owned facilities. The planning team recommends that the County continue to evaluate the service offerings provided by these cities and develop strategic initiatives to provide complementary facilities and programs near incorporated areas to supplement existing or non-existent city services. For example, if a city department lacks the programming and facilities for seniors, the County should evaluate the community's need and establish a new senior center in the area, if warranted. This approach will ensure that all residents within the County have equitable access to a diverse mixture of facilities and programs without unnecessary duplication.

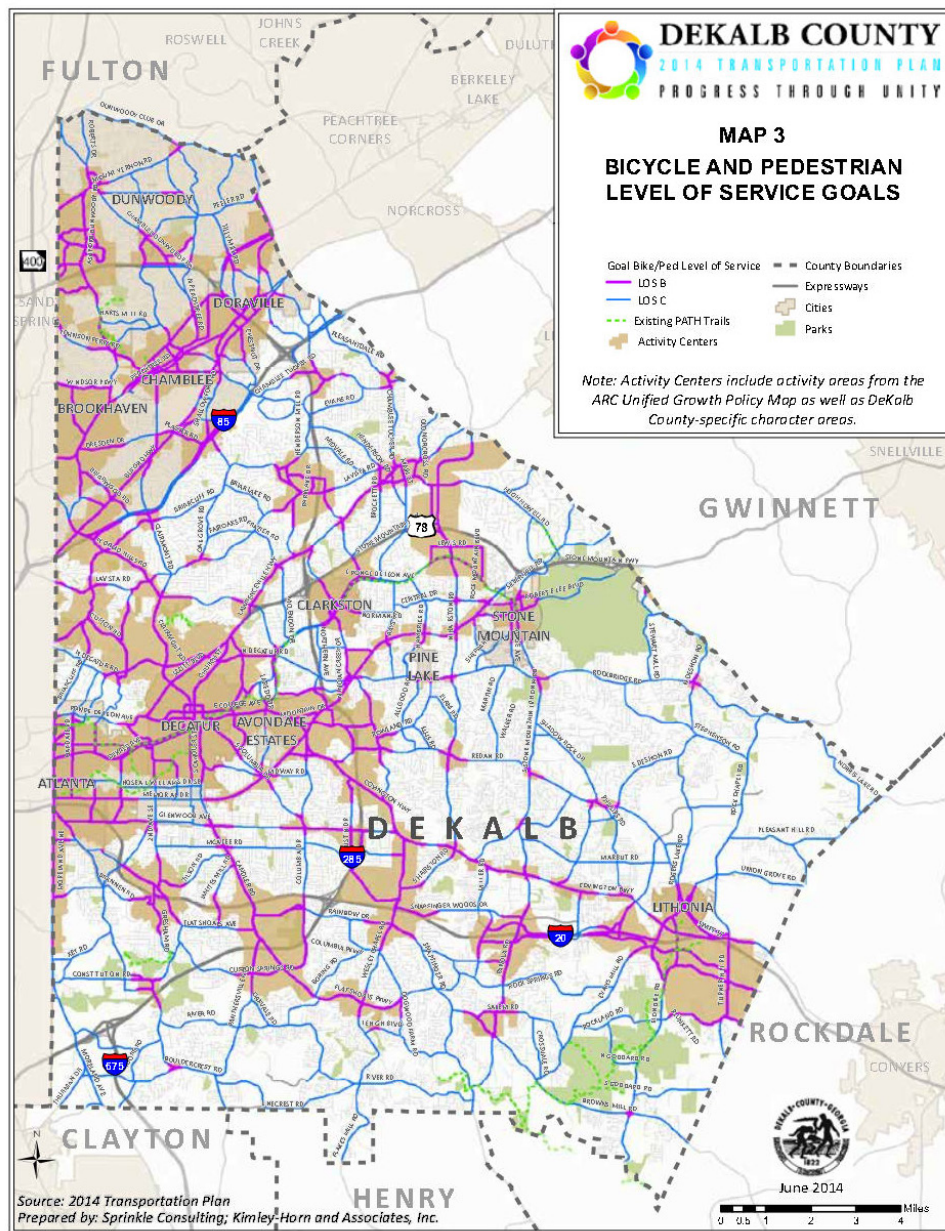


Sugar Creek Youth Tennis - Summer Youth Camp

CONNECTIVITY ANALYSIS

The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) has established the “three pillars,” which are guiding principles for creating a better life for everyone to build strong, healthy, and resilient communities. One of these pillars, **equity**, establishes the principle of ensuring all people have fair and just access to the benefits of high-quality, local parks and recreation. One way that parks and recreation providers strive to provide equitable service is to enhance the overall connectivity between public spaces, schools, places of business, and residential areas. Over the last few decades, community planners across the nation have begun a shift in mindset to facilitate this access through safe pedestrian corridors, rather than vehicular infrastructure. In keeping with this trend, DeKalb County’s 2014 Transportation plan also provides recommendations for an expanded network of multi-modal corridors or bike/pedestrian facilities to improve the overall connectivity within the County.

Figure 4.4: DeKalb County Bicycle and Pedestrian Level of Service Goals



Source: DeKalb County 2014 Transportation Plan: Progress Through Unity

4 - Level of Service and Gap Analysis

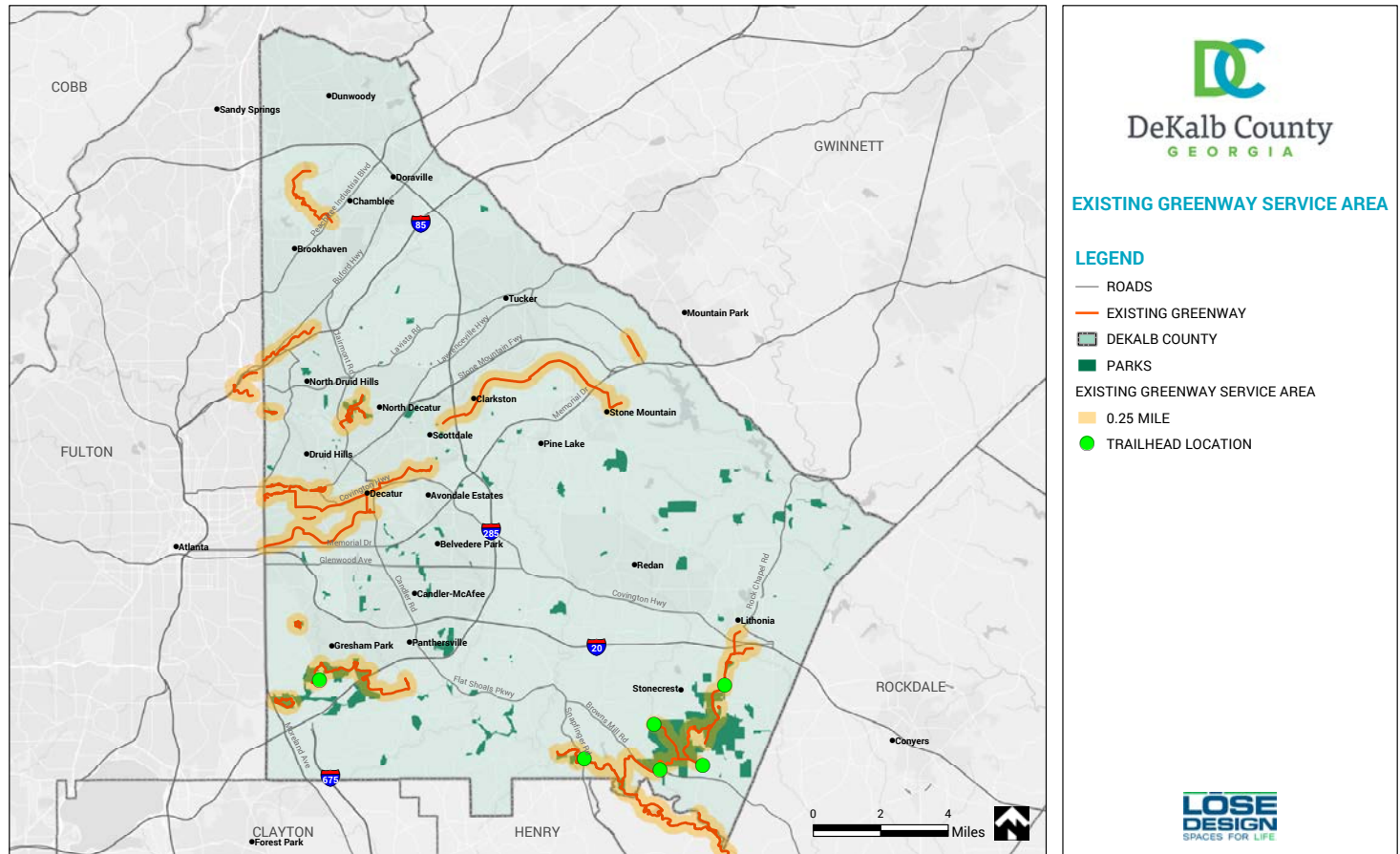
During the survey portion of the public engagement process, the planning team asked residents for input on both their current utilization of the County’s parks as well as their preferences on accessing park facilities. Over 75% of respondents reported that they have used a DeKalb County Park within the same year. The majority of this same participant group also responded that they use facilities outside of the County’s park system for recreation. Of this group, over 57% of the survey participants indicated that they recreate at non-County facilities because those other facilities are closer to their home or work. When survey participants were asked about their travel preferences to DeKalb County parks, over 60% of respondents indicated that they would walk up to one mile to visit a County facility. Participants also indicated their willingness to bike up to two miles (41%) or drive up to fifteen minutes (87%).

In order to ensure equitable access to all DeKalb County residents, the Department should take a two-pronged approach to addressing service deficiencies. Development of new or expanded park and recreation facilities in potentially under-served areas will bring recreation opportunities closer to where residents live and work. The development of these facilities should occur along existing or planned bike and pedestrian corridors to provide improved access and greater overall connectivity.

PATH FOUNDATION

The Path Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, was established in 1991 with a mission to develop a system of interlinking greenway trails through metro Atlanta for commuting and recreation. Since that time, the organization has helped plan and develop nearly 300 miles of trails in metro Atlanta, including DeKalb County. There are currently six developed PATH trails in the County, including: South Peachtree Creek Trail, Stone Mountain Trail, South River Trail, East Decatur Greenway, Nancy Creek Trail, and the Arabia Mountain Trail.

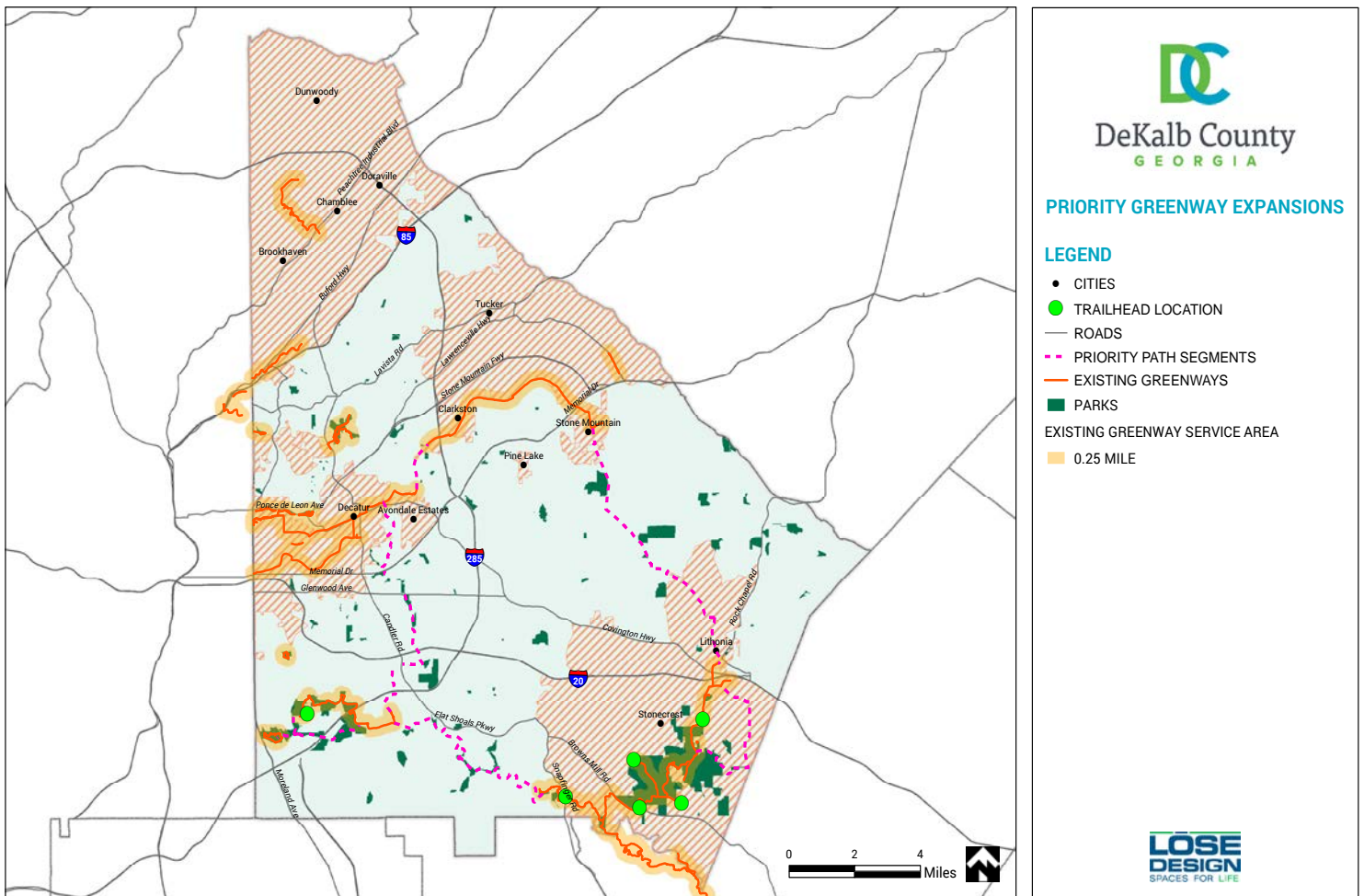
Figure 4.5: Existing Greenway Service Area



Source: PATH Foundation

In addition to the current trails, the PATH Foundation has planned proposed routes for extending this network. Some of the planned extensions include the development of new trail segments from the Stone Mountain Trail to the Arabia Mountain Trail (+/- 14 miles), South River Trail to Constitution Lake (+/- 10.5 miles), and the Georgia State Perimeter Campus to the East Decatur Greenway (+/- 7 miles). There is also a potential extension from the Stone Mountain Trail to the East Decatur Greenway. The development of these additional trail segments will effectively create a greenway loop throughout DeKalb County and provide enhanced connectivity and improved access to the County's parks. Looped greenway systems allow for riders to create long or short routes based on their individual preference. The planning team recommends that RPCA continue to coordinate with the PATH Foundation to evaluate proposed routes and consider assisting the PATH Foundation with these projects through right-of-way acquisition design or funding.

Figure 4.6: Priority Greenway Expansions



Source: PATH Foundation

Other Trail Providers

In addition to the trails that are being assumed by the PATH Foundation, many of the municipalities in the County have begun to plan or have already implemented plans for their own trail networks. The municipalities within DeKalb County represent opportunities for partnerships focused on extending other greenway routes. For instance, the I-285 and I-85 corridors may be areas where DeKalb County could work with municipal departments to create new greenways that would serve municipal and county residents alike. Also, neighboring counties such as Gwinnett and Rockdale have planned trail and greenway routes that have the potential to connect with DeKalb County as part of a larger vision for commuting and recreation throughout the Atlanta metro area. Coordination with these other agencies to collaborate on connections and routing across jurisdictions will further enhance the overall connectivity for the County.

SERVICE RECOMMENDATIONS

As noted previously in this section, DeKalb County is fortunate to have a diverse mixture of park and recreation facilities throughout their service area. Following an analysis of benchmark facility standards from NRPA data, an assessment of community needs through public engagement, and an analysis of existing service area coverage, the planning team recommends the following actions to improve the quality of RPCA services to the residents of DeKalb County:

1. Continue to focus on the needs of residents in unincorporated areas. Many of the recently incorporated Cities within the County facilitate their own park and recreation services for their citizens. There is an opportunity for the County to continue to coordinate with these agencies and provide services for residents where the cities are not meeting local needs in terms of programs and facilities.
2. Where facility surpluses have been identified, the County should assess the current utilization of these facilities to determine if they are meeting or exceeding the need by the community. Where applicable, surplus facilities should be removed from the Department's inventory and converted for other programming to address local service deficiencies.
3. Where facility deficiencies have been identified, the County should evaluate potential locations for implementation of new facilities to efficiently meet local needs. Consideration should be given to equitable distribution of new facilities to enhance accessibility to a variety of recreation opportunities throughout the County.
4. The public engagement process revealed strong interest in passive recreation facilities, such as trails and natural areas. The NRPA benchmark analysis also revealed that the County is deficient in total acreage of park land in unincorporated DeKalb County. Acquisition of greenspace and environmentally sensitive areas will aid in addressing total acreage needs while also providing opportunities to provide passive facilities and programs to meet the identified community need.
5. Residents also indicated a prioritized need for outdoor swimming pools. However, the NRPA benchmark analysis revealed a surplus of these facilities when compared to other county agencies. A review of the distribution of outdoor pools throughout the community is recommended to determine if there is sufficient access to outdoor water recreation. Where equitable distribution is lacking, consider alternative water recreation facilities such as interactive fountains and splash pads for development.
6. Two service area gaps were identified: one in the Embry Hills area and one between Redan and Candler-McAfee. In addition to these areas, the planning team noted a deficiency in overlapping coverage for the communities near the Stone Mountain and Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve. Consider developing several small neighborhood parks in these unincorporated areas to improve the County's service delivery and improve access to recreation opportunities for residents. These neighborhood parks should include a balance mixture of active and passive recreation facilities. It should be noted that small neighborhood parks was also identified as one of the top five facility needs during the public engagement process.
7. Coordinate with the PATH Foundation and other recreation agencies in the area to develop and expanded trail and greenway network to facilitate improved access to recreation opportunities and provide enhanced connectivity throughout the County.
8. Consider safety measures for trail users including lighting, call boxes, and trail patrols to improve user experience.

5



FACILITY ASSESSMENT & ACTION PLAN

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05 FACILITY ASSESSMENT & ACTION PLAN

Park and recreation agencies continuously strive to provide safe, accessible, and enjoyable recreation opportunities to enhance their community's overall quality of life. In order to ensure that this goal is being met, facility assessments are regularly performed to determine if a park is functioning as intended and what, if any, renovations are needed to improve the park user experience.

Facility assessments are performed in the field to review general park conditions in terms of facility age, overall safety, maintenance practices, and compliance with requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This information is used by the planning team to develop recommendations for repairs and renovations, as well as establishing some guiding principles to improve park quality.

This information is then used, along with the recommendations found in the Level-of-Service Analysis, to develop an Action Plan for Capital Improvements to be implemented over the term of the planning period.



Mystery Valley Golf Course

INDIVIDUAL PARK ASSESSMENTS

Throughout the public input period, residents emphasized the need to invest in existing parks. Individual park assessments were made for all park in DeKalb County. Assessments for 20 of the parks follow in this section. The remaining park assessments are included in the appendices of this report. Each park was assessed in terms of safety, convenience, park offerings, and potential for improvement or expansion.

The 20 park assessments that follow include:

1. Biffle Park
2. Brookside Park
3. Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve
4. Deepdene Park
5. Emory Grove Park
6. Fort Creek Mountain Park
7. Gresham Park
8. Hairston Park
9. Hidden Acres Park
10. Little Creek Horse Farm
11. Lou Walker Park
12. Mason Mill Park/Tennis Center
13. Medlock Park
14. Midway Park
15. Mystery Valley Golf Course
16. Pleasantdale Park
17. Rainbow Park/Porter Sanford
18. Redan Park
19. Rock Chapel Park
20. Wade Walker Park



Arabia Mountain Naturalist Program

BIFFLE PARK

LOCATION: 5221 Biffle Road, Stone Mountain, GA 30088

SIZE: 10 acres

CLASSIFICATION: Neighborhood Park

DESCRIPTION: Biffle Park is a newer park located just north of the Berean Christian Academy. The Park features a small gazebo, playground, outdoor picnic/grilling areas, and a half-mile asphalt walking trail with a boardwalk to the surrounding neighborhood. An open-lawn area is bisected by a rip rap stormwater channel. Parking is available via parallel parking on Biffle Road.

OBSERVATIONS: The gazebo, walking trail, and playground are in good condition. Due to observed usage at the park, additional covered picnic facilities are recommended. Most of the walking trail is shaded by surrounding trees, but the grill and picnic areas abutting the trail could use more shade and protection from the elements. The landscape and facilities of the park have been maintained well. There are plenty of benches and areas for seating. Striping for parking areas along Biffle appears faded. In general, the park is ADA compliant; however, ADA parking signs are not present and some isolated sections of the paved trail are not wide enough.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Biffle Park needs minimal additions including:

- Development of a second small gazebo
- Shade structures over picnic and grill areas
- More playground equipment for ages 2-5
- Provision of semi-permanent restroom facilities
- Pedestrian connectivity to the adjacent Hidden Hills community
- Restripe parking along Biffle Road
- Provide ADA parking signage at parking area
- Widen trail segments as necessary for ADA compliance



BROOKSIDE PARK



Brookside

LOCATION: 3661 N Decatur Rd, Decatur, GA 30032

SIZE: 7 acres

CLASSIFICATION: Neighborhood Park

DESCRIPTION: Brookside Park is located at the corner of I-285 and North Decatur Road. The Park features a community garden, a small picnic pavilion, a short gravel trail, and two playgrounds that accommodate children ages 2-12. An L-shaped parking lot is available with single-row 45 and 90-degree parking spots. A bridge and access drive leads to the dog park.



Brookside park signage

OBSERVATIONS: Parking and sidewalk pavements are in good condition and are ADA accessible. The facilities of the park are organized well. Tree coverage provides plenty of shade, despite there being only one shade structure. The playground equipment is showing signs of heavy use with some of the equipment being damaged or missing. The gravel trail is in good condition but is not ideal for ADA. There is a steep drop-off into Indian Creek on the southside of the property that may be a danger to some visitors. Construction is currently underway for the access drive towards the dog park.

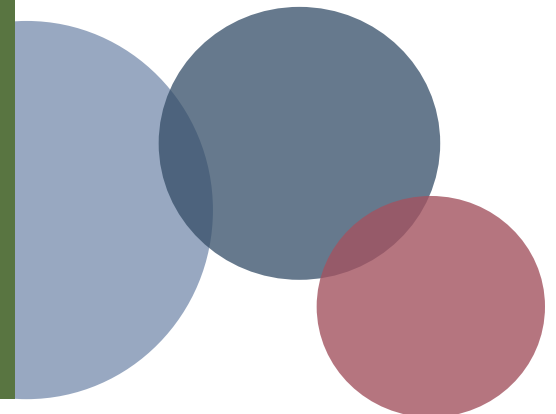


Brookside dog park

RECOMMENDATIONS: Continued maintenance of all facilities is recommended. Repair damaged or missing playground components and convert the safety surfacing from mulch to artificial turf or rubberized surfacing. Mulch and gravel areas should be top-dressed. A fence should be added along the south end of the park to protect visitors from the steep drop-off. Measures should be taken to correct drainage issues where standing water is present.



Brookside playground and garden



DAVIDSON-ARABIA MOUNTAIN NATURE PRESERVE

LOCATION: 3787 Klondike Road, Stonecrest, GA 30038

SIZE: 2705 acres

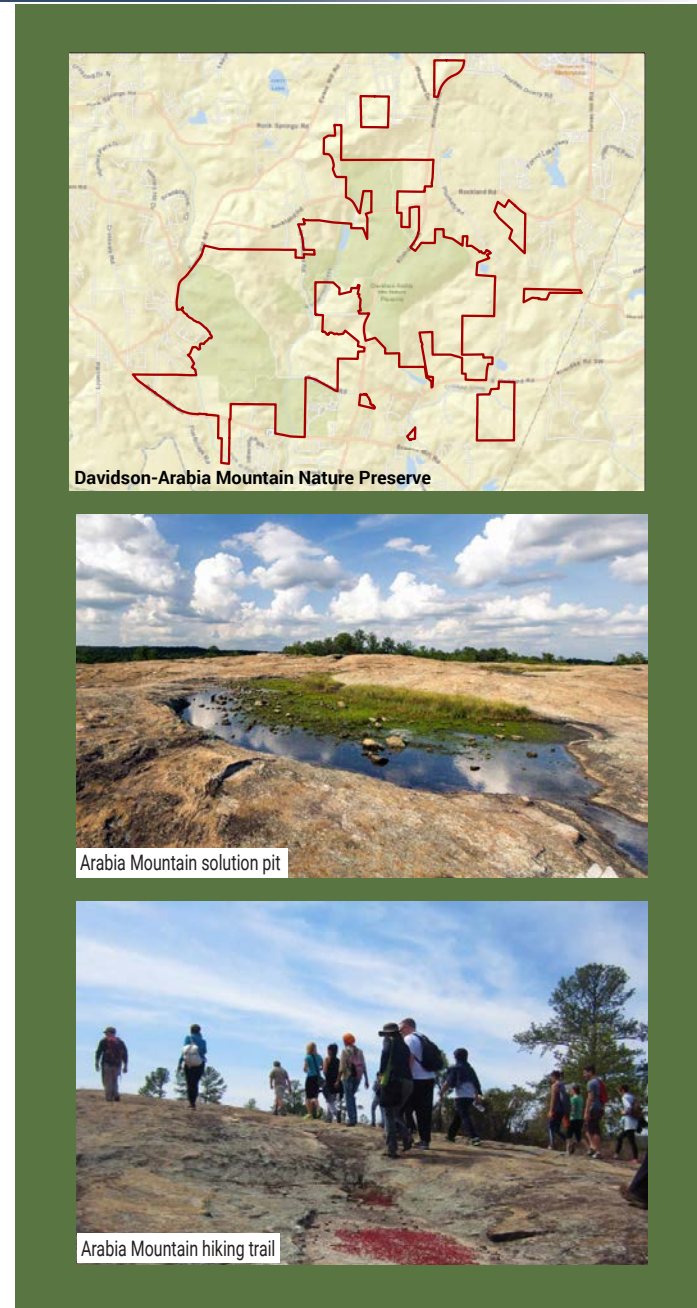
CLASSIFICATION: Regional Park

DESCRIPTION: Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve encompasses large formations of exposed granite, wetlands, forests, multiple streams, and three lakes. This 2,500 acre park includes five trail heads, over 30 miles of paved pathways, 12 miles of unpaved trails, lakes offering opportunities for fishing, and is a favorite geo caching site.

Parking and trailheads are available at the Nature Center on the north end of the site and the Wildlife Center on the south side and are connected by an extensive network of paved and unpaved trails allowing visitors to walk, bike, and hike for miles to the various ecological features. Picnic and seating areas are available near both the Nature Center and Wildlife Center. Quarrying, industrial debris, and abandoned structures lend to the Preserve's historical significance.

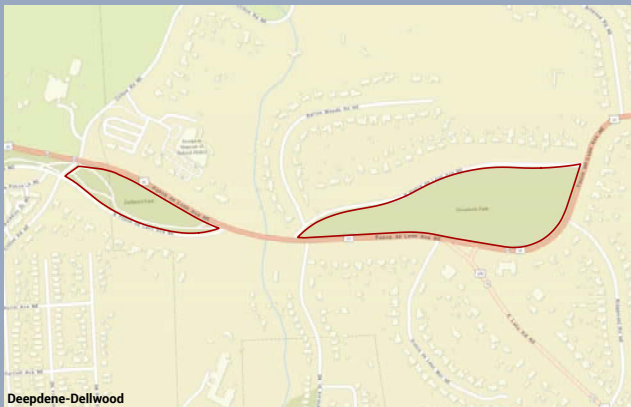
OBSERVATIONS: The Nature Center offers the largest parking area for the Preserve with two gravel lots. These lots are in decent condition, but washout is present and a lack of striping makes for inefficient parking. A wooden fence stands between the parking lot and the Nature center and fits the aesthetic of the Preserve, but is damaged in many areas. The gravel lot at the Wildlife Center shares similar issue, but offers less space for parking. Wooden picnic tables and benches show signs of vandalism and age, and the same is true for masonry walls found throughout the site. Signage is present and easy to follow. The paved walking/biking trail is in good condition for the most part, but cracks and uneven sections are present. The boardwalk bridges show signs of damage. More durable materials may decrease ongoing boardwalk maintenance.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Nature and Wildlife Center, kiosks, storage buildings, and restroom buildings are in need of a fresh coat of paint and minor repair. The bike racks at the Nature Center need to be replaced. Some of the signage needs to be replaced as well. Gravel parking areas should be paved with eco-friendly pervious pavers. Wooden fences need to be replaced, and masonry walls need to be addressed. Sections of the walking trail need to be re-paved, and the entire trail needs to be restriped. The Department needs to consider more durable materials for the boardwalks as replacement/repairs are made. Additional recommendations include installing



permanent restroom buildings at trail heads and at the South lot; creating new, pervious parking lots using DeKalb County property and expanding parking at the Nature Center; implementing a fee-based parking program at the South lot and at the Nature Center lot; enhancing the Nature Center building and possibly considering a new or expanded Nature Center; and converting the home residence (near the AWARE building) into a storage facility for equipment and supplies.

DEEPDENE PARK



LOCATION: 1999 N Ponce De Leon Avenue Northeast, Atlanta, GA 30307

SIZE: 12 acres

CLASSIFICATION: Linear Park

DESCRIPTION: The historically significant Deepdene Park forms the largest section of the Olmsted Linear Park system. North Ponce De Leon Avenue and Ponce De Leon Avenue define the borders of this irregular-shaped park. Visitors have access to paved and unpaved trails that wind through mature woods. Two bridges cross over a creek that runs through the site. A large open lawn area is situated on the east corner of the park, and a smaller, circular lawn space anchors the west corner. On-street parking is available on the adjacent residential street to access the park.

OBSERVATIONS: The park has been maintained well. Circulation within the site is strong and easily navigated. Minor amounts of litter are present in the creek bed. Benches found throughout the site provide adequate seating. Paved areas, signage, seating areas, and planting displays are all in good condition. The majority of the streams within the property show signs of erosion and streambank degradation due to high volumes of runoff from adjoining roadways.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Deepdene Park is in good condition and should continue to be maintained properly. A study and action plan for full streambank restoration is recommended to preserve and protect environmentally sensitive areas of the site. Implementation of effective stormwater management strategies coming from runoff and stormwater discharge points will be necessary for the streambank restoration program.



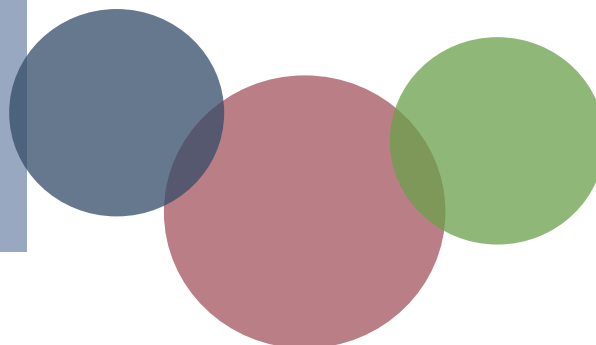
Pedestrian bridge over creek



Deepdene-Dellwood trail



Deepdene-Dellwood signage and covered seating



EMORY GROVE PARK

LOCATION: 1937 Westminister Way, Atlanta, GA 30307

SIZE: 3.5 acres

CLASSIFICATION: Mini Park

DESCRIPTION: Emory Grove Park is divided into two small parcels nestled within the Emory Grove neighborhood. The western parcel contains a large open lawn, two tennis courts, and a community garden. The eastern parcel contains a paved walking trail, small picnic pavilion, playground (ages 5-12), and seating areas.

OBSERVATIONS: Entry into the park is difficult to find and nestled between homes. Lighting is not provided at either location to facilitate intended operating hours, as well as providing comfort to adjacent residences. On-street parking is available for the park, but parking in front of homes is awkward for visitors. The park is clearly designed to be used by residents of the surrounding neighborhood. ADA accessibility for both parcels is lacking. The sidewalk entering the eastern parcel is disconnected from the walking trail within the park. The pavilion, seating areas, trail, and playground are in good condition. The drinking fountain works and is in good condition. The open lawn in the western parcel does not have an irrigation system. The tennis surface is cracked and aged, and the courts do not have lighting.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Entrance into the park needs to be more pronounced with signage and beautification. Both parcels need improved ADA accessibility via more paved trails and access points. The tennis courts need to be resurfaced and fencing replaced. The connection between both parcels should be more defined through signage, pavement markings, and other design cues.



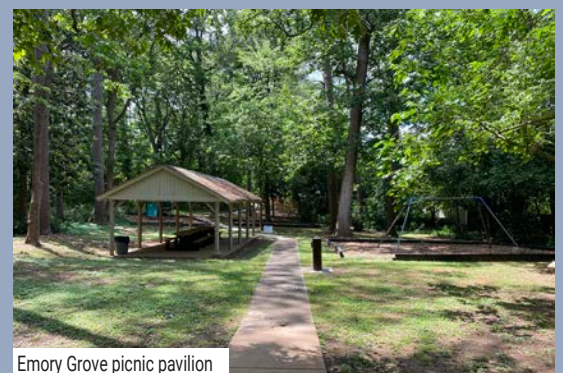
Emory Grove



Emory Grove playground



Emory Grove community garden



Emory Grove picnic pavilion



FORT CREEK MOUNTAIN PARK



Fort Creek Mountain



Fort Creek Mountain playground



Fort Creek Mountain pond



Fort Creek picnic pavilion

LOCATION: 2893 River Road, Decatur, GA 30034

SIZE: 55.7 acres

CLASSIFICATION: Neighborhood Park

DESCRIPTION: Visitors of Fort Creek Mountain Park can park at one of two small asphalt lots. The eastern lot serves a playground, small picnic pavilion, and sheltered port-a-potties. The central lot serves a community garden, two small picnic pavilions, and an open lawn area. A pond is located on the southwest portion of the site. The facilities and pond are connected by a network of concrete pathways that are ADA accessible. Much of the park is shaded by mature trees.

OBSERVATIONS: The facilities of the park are in good condition and are easily accessible. There is plenty of seating and shade for refuge from the elements. Parking is undersized for the size of the park, with some visitors parking in the turnaround for firetrucks. There is no lighting for vehicular and pedestrian areas. Nearly all trash receptacles need to be changed, and litter and debris are scattered throughout the site, even within the pond. Large areas of turf are spotty, particularly around trees and facilities, and may lend to erosion issues. Visitors were using a portion of the open lawn area for a fitness class.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Continue with ongoing maintenance and address specific areas where erosion issues are present.

Implement additional phases of developed identified in the master plan to enhance passive recreation opportunities, educational programming, and natural/cultural resources. Specific facilities for consideration include expanded parking and infrastructure, fishing pond with pier, pavilions, permanent restrooms, and interpretive signage. The County should assess if the development of the Education Activity Area is suitable for implementation in this next phase of development.

GRESHAM PARK

LOCATION:

3113 Gresham Rd S E, Atlanta, GA 30316 (Recreation Center)
2466 Bouldercrest Rd, Atlanta, GA 30316 (Athletic Facilities)

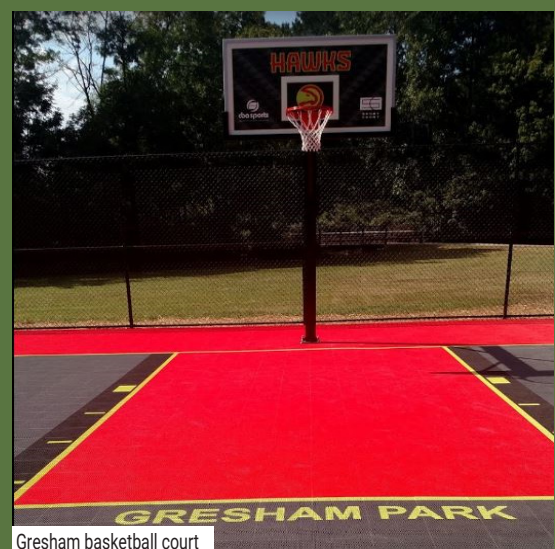
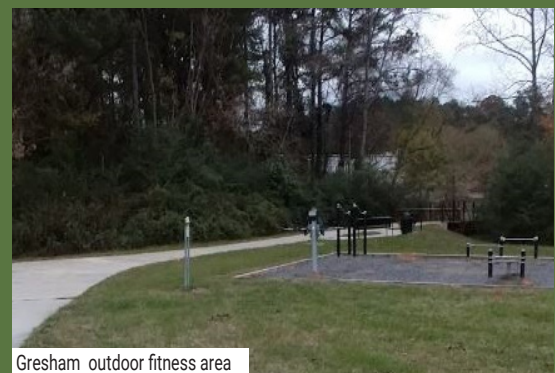
SIZE: 180 acres

CLASSIFICATION: Regional Park

DESCRIPTION: The Recreation Center houses a full gymnasium with bleacher seating, classroom/game room, kitchen, and administration offices. Parking is available at the Recreation Center. Outside the entrance of the building is a plaza with rubber surface. A large playground with swings and shade structures sits in the front lawn and is available for kids of all ages. Beside the playground is a small detention pond. Behind the Recreation center is a pool house and 25-meter pool with a dive well and splash pad. Restrooms and concessions are available at the pool house. A small, designated parking lot is located south of the pool. Further down the property lies a full basketball court and football field. On the other side of Gresham Road is another drive lane and parking area that allows visitors access to two pavilions and a large open lawn area.

The PATH Foundation's South River Trail is a 12' walking and biking trail that spans the property. The trail provides a direct connection to the Recreation Center portion of the property, but there is currently no connection from the trail to the athletic facilities.

The Center to Gresham Park Athletic Facilities is located on the southwest corner of the property about a half-mile from the Recreation Center. Visitors can access the athletic facilities via a parking lot off of Bouldercrest Road. The athletic facilities include seven baseball/softball fields and a football field. A restroom and concessions building is located between the softball fields and football field. A picnic pavilion and playground area (ages 5-12) are located on the west side of the facility. A maintenance building is directly east of the parking lot, and further east between the maintenance building and football field are batting cages.



GRESHAM PARK

OBSERVATIONS: The Recreation Center is in good condition, aside from some minor leaks. ADA parking is available, but the rest of the parking area is not ADA compliant. There is also no lighting for the parking area. The playground is in good condition. The detention pond needs repair. The pool house, pool, and splash pad are in fair condition. The pool parking lot does not have ADA parking, and the basketball court and football field are not ADA accessible.

No lighting or irrigation is present at the football field. The northern pavilion and open space area have ADA parking but no ADA access. Both pavilions are in fair condition.

Parking for the athletic facilities is in fair condition and is ADA accessible. The pavilion and playground are in good condition, but some of the mulch for the playground has been washed out. There is significant damage to the sidewalk leading from the playground to the western-most softball field. Washout from infields and standing water are present on the low points of the sidewalk. Masonry retaining walls have minor damage in some spots, and no guardrails. The dugouts, score towers, and bleachers throughout the site are in good condition. Fencing and netting for all facilities are aged or damaged and require replacement. The restroom/concessions building is in good condition. The adjacent outdoor picnic area has no relief from the sun. The maintenance building is in fair condition. The batting cages are in poor condition, and their location in relation to the ballfields is not ideal.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The recreation center needs a fresh coat of paint and minor repairs to address known leaks. All parking areas should to be resurfaced and restriped, and appropriate ADA parking modifications should be implemented. The pool and pool house need to be completely renovated, and a diving board should be installed. A sidewalk extension from the PATH trail to the adjacent football field and basketball court should be developed to provide ADA connectivity to these facilities. The planning team recommends converting the existing football field to a synthetic turf multi-purpose field to enhance playing conditions and expand programming opportunities. Spectator seating areas should be provided at both the field and the basketball court. Repairs to the basketball court fencing should also be implemented. Consider extending the South River Trail to provide enhanced access to the pavilion and open lawn area across the street.

In order to provide enhanced connectivity throughout the park, a paved connection between the South River Trail and the Athletic Facilities is recommended.

Recommendations for improvements at the athletic facilities include replacement of damaged ballfield fencing and netting, as well as addressing various drainage issues at the park. Additional repairs to damaged section of sidewalks and masonry walls are recommended. Where necessary, provide new or refurbished guardrails along walls for pedestrian safety. Consider converting the playground safety surfacing from mulch to artificial turf or rubberized surfacing. The planning team also recommends athletic field improvements such as regrading the skinned infields, restriping the football field, and providing new goal posts. Consider relocating the batting cages closer to the baseball fields and provide a shade structure at the outdoor picnic area adjacent to the restroom/concession building.

HAIRSTON PARK

LOCATION: 911 South Hairston Road, Stone Mountain, GA 30088

SIZE: 46 acres

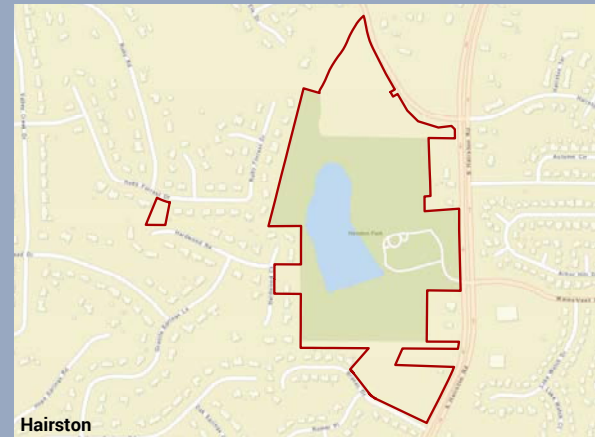
CLASSIFICATION: Neighborhood Park

DESCRIPTION: Located perpendicular to where Mainstreet Park Drive meets South Hairston Road, Hairston Park features a playground for all ages (rubber surface), an ADA accessible asphalt trail, and a dirt trail that wraps around a large pond. Parking is available upon immediate entry into the Park from which visitors can take an asphalt trail that frames a large open space. A smaller, secondary open space area sits north of the playground. Outdoor exercise equipment is scattered along the asphalt walking trail. Visitors can also enjoy fishing at the pond, which connects to the asphalt trail via a short boardwalk bridge.

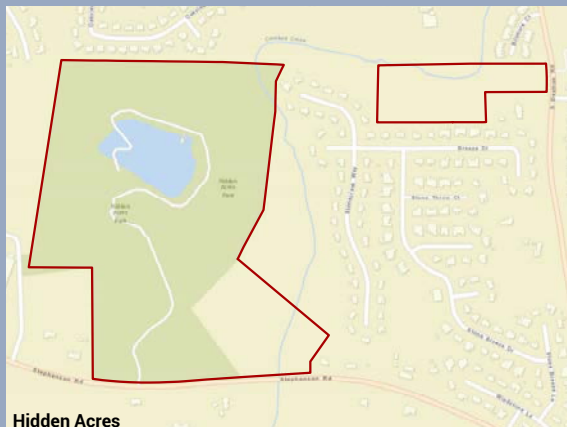
OBSERVATIONS: The Park facilities are showing signs of age. Two of the slides on the playground are cracked at the bottom. Pavement is generally in good condition, but some spots are in need of repair, and open bollard receivers present a tripping hazard. Washout from erosion is noticeable and may be affecting water quality of the pond. The Park also lacks shade structures and seating areas. The boardwalk bridge is showing moderate disrepair.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Hairston Park needs general maintenance and improved trails. A shade structure or pavilion should be added for more seating and protection from the elements.

A comprehensive study and implementation plan should be pursued to address stormwater management and erosion control issues throughout the park. Upstream improvements and repairs to the dam will provide for increased water quality and functionality of the lake. Consider development of a boardwalk loop around the lake for enhanced connectivity and recreation opportunities.



HIDDEN ACRES PARK



Hidden Acres

LOCATION: 1032 Stephenson Road, Stone Mountain, GA 30087

SIZE: 81 acres

CLASSIFICATION: Nature Park

DESCRIPTION: Hidden Acres park is located east of Stephenson Middle School and is bordered by Crooked Creek. The dominant feature of the park is Lake Ogilvie, where visitors can take a boardwalk to reach two small pavilions located on the Lake. The boardwalk connects to a unpaved trail that wraps around the Lake. A large picnic pavilion with restrooms sits southwest of the lake and is a short walk from a circular seatwall. Three small, asphalt parking lots are situated along the park entry road.

OBSERVATIONS: Trash can be found littered throughout the site, especially around parking areas. Boardwalks are dilapidated to a condition that is beyond repair, and there is not an ADA accessible route to Lake Ogilvie. The lake shows signs of heavy sedimentation and poor water quality. The restroom located at the picnic pavilion is not functioning. There is no lighting for vehicular and pedestrian areas. Most of the park property is underutilized.



Pavilion over Lake Ogilvie



Hidden Acres seatwall



Lake Ogilvie pavilion with boardwalk access

RECOMMENDATIONS: Improve and expand parking to improve circulation and overall access. Replace boardwalks and associated structures with marine grade timber or composite construction materials to reduce ongoing maintenance. A comprehensive study and implementation plan should be pursued to address stormwater management and erosion control issues surrounding the lake. These improvements will provide increased water quality and functionality of the lake. Permanently close the restrooms at the pavilion and develop new permanent restroom facilities at location that will facilitate enhanced user safety and deter vandalism. Consider developing additional nature trails as part of an overall park network, along with a trailhead. Consider development of additional open or covered picnic areas.

LITTLE CREEK HORSE FARM

LOCATION: 2057 Lawrenceville Highway, Decatur, GA 30033

SIZE: 26 acres

CLASSIFICATION: Special-Use Park

DESCRIPTION: Little Creek Horse Farm is a county-owned property that offers stables and pastureland for horses, as well as outdoor seating areas and trails for visitors. The site is accessed by a long drive that runs the length of the northwestern side of the property and leads to a large indoor riding arena and horse stables. Parking is available on the north side of the building adjacent to an outdoor material storage yard. A closed caretaker residence sits on the northern most corner of the site. South Fork Peachtree Creek bisects the property with the north half of the site having the bulk of developed land and the south half being primarily pastureland. The former includes horse pens, as well as ADA accessible seating areas and a pavilion. Both halves of the property are connected by a metal pedestrian bridge.

OBSERVATIONS: The former caretaker residence is currently underutilized. Parking is in the rear of the horse stables and is not sufficiently sized for parking trailers. Parking for persons with disabilities is available, but the parking surface is not striped. The material storage yard sits adjacent to the parking lot and is not secured/screened, which is not aesthetically pleasing and may cause conflicts for vehicles. The horse stables and dirt track are housed in a large steel building with open air ventilation that is in good condition. Seating areas and the pavilion are ADA accessible and in good condition. The trail system is limited for the size of the property. There is a potential for a secondary drive connection form Orion Drive to the back of the site. The County continues to repair and replace the fencing on the property.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Little Horse Creek Park is in need of an expanded and more efficient parking configuration that is also suitable to vehicles with trailers. Consider repurposing the former caretaker residence, or remove it from the property for alternative facility needs. ADA accessibility needs to be improved in and around the indoor horse stables. An additional internal steel bridge is needed to cross the creek and gain access to the third pasture located off of Orion drive. Consider developing a double-row perimeter fence for animal safety and continue addressing fence maintenance needs. Additional recommendations as identified in the site's Master Plan include



constructing or purchasing additional storage buildings; constructing a new manure collection and removal system; covering the existing outdoor riding arena to increase use during inclement weather; constructing pervious parking; and constructing a covered round pen.

LOU WALKER PARK



Lou Walker

LOCATION: 3569 Larkspur Terrace, Decatur, GA 30032

SIZE: 3 acres

CLASSIFICATION: Mini park

DESCRIPTION: Lou Walker Park is located in the Meadowdale neighborhood. At the center of the park is a small picnic pavilion, restroom building, and two playgrounds. The north half of the park is an open lawn area, while the south side features a full basketball court. An asphalt trail connects one end of the site to the other. The two playgrounds are separated by concrete sidewalk; one playground is for ages 2-5, and the larger playground for ages 5-12. Parallel parking is available on Larkspur Terrace. This park also serves as a location for an outdoor camp program.

OBSERVATIONS: The entry sign is in a visible location, but the masonry has been damaged. Some sections of the sidewalk are cracked and uneven. The asphalt trail is showing signs of erosion. The concrete pavers under the pavilion are showing signs of age and unevenness. Parking seems sufficient for the size of the park.

RECOMMENDATIONS: All of the pavement for the park needs to be resurfaced to address ADA and safety issues. A new, expanded playground with shade structures and artificial turf or rubberized safety surfacing is recommended to accommodate the heavy use from both camp users and other park visitors. Replace all of the site furnishings to current standards. Remove cobblestone pavers under pavilion and replace with uniform concrete pavement. Consider development of a new splash pad and half-court basketball facility. Convert existing basketball court to a pickleball court facility to provide expanded recreation opportunities for older adults in the surrounding area. Repair existing entry sign and repaint existing structures.



Lou Walker picnic pavilion and playground



Lou Walker larger playground and seating



Lou Walker benches and receptacles

MASON MILL PARK/TENNIS CENTER

LOCATION: 1406-1458 McConnell Dr, Decatur, GA 30033

SIZE: 116 acres

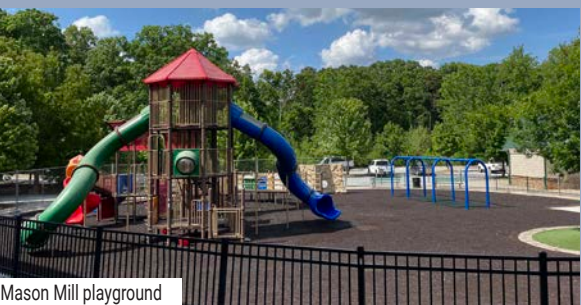
CLASSIFICATION: Regional Park

DESCRIPTION: Mason Mill Park is a large, wooded greenway with a trailhead which visitors can traverse via the South Peachtree Creek Trail or mountain biking trails. On-street parking is available on Desmond Drive. The South Peachtree Creek Trail crosses over railroad tracks via a boardwalk bridge and connects to Mason Mill Park. Mason Mill Park is home to the DeKalb Tennis Center, a 17-court facility with a 360-degree grandstand seating area. The Tennis Center sits atop the grandstand and offers retail, restrooms, and concessions. Other facilities within Mason Mill Park include a Mason Mill Recreation Center, which houses a kitchen, classrooms, administration offices, and restrooms, and the Central DeKalb Senior Center. Behind the Senior Center are two playgrounds for all ages, a pavilion, and shaded seating areas. Across the parking lot on the Northeast side of the park is a community garden, restroom building, and open lawn. Mason Mill Dog Park is located about a third of a mile northeast of Mason Mill Park and has designated parking off of North Jamestown Road.

OBSERVATIONS: Most of Mason Mill Park is ADA-accessible except for the Tennis Center. The County plans to relocate the Tennis Center and develop a central court with bleachers on all sides, as well as resurfacing the existing courts. Fencing for the tennis complex is in fair condition. The rest of the park is in good condition. The pavilion at Mason Mill Dog Park is in good condition. Fencing for the Park is aged in need of repair in certain sections. Striping for the asphalt parking lot has faded, and there are no lights. Sections of the sidewalk are in disrepair, limiting ADA accessibility. There is an opportunity to connect the dog park to the South Peachtree Creek Trail. Mason Mill Park is not ADA accessible from on-street parking, and seating areas are limited.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Implement master plan renovations, including tennis complex modifications, relocated recreation center, and development of a new parking deck and outdoor programming areas associated with the Senior Center. The recreation center should include indoor and outdoor recreation facilities and be sized appropriately to serve this densely populated area. A different property may be needed to accommodate the new recreation center.

The parking lot for the dog park needs to be striped, and fencing and sidewalk repairs should be continued. A trail should be implemented to connect the dog park to South Peachtree Creek Trail. Parking for persons with disabilities and an ADA access connection should be developed for Mason Mill Park.



MEDLOCK PARK

LOCATION: 874 Gaylemont Circle Decatur, GA 30033

SIZE: 23 acres

CLASSIFICATION: Community Park

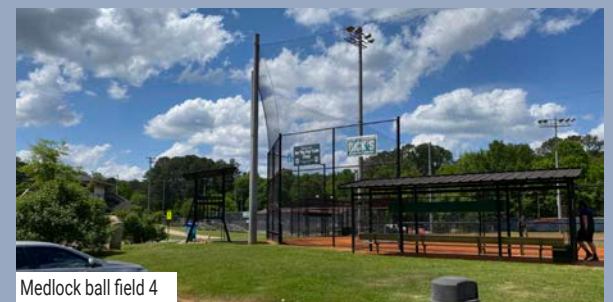
DESCRIPTION: Medlock Park is one of two parks located along the South Peachtree Creek Trail. The park includes eight softball/baseball fields, batting cages, a restroom and concessions building, two pavilions, and a playground for all ages. At the entrance of the park is a public pool with a splash pad, dive wells, and bathhouse. Shaded seating is available on a composite deck at the back of the pool. Separate parking areas are accessible from an east entry and south entry. The South Peachtree Creek Trail is accessed from the south parking lot and connects Ira B. Melton Park and Mason Mill Park.

OBSERVATIONS: Parking areas are in fair condition, but the south parking lot does not have lighting. Parking at the pool is not striped, and other parking areas are not ADA-compliant. The perimeter fencing and lighting for the pool are new. The pool facilities are in fair/good condition, but the pump house is aged and in poor condition. The baseball/softball complex is in fair condition, but some of the fields lack ADA accessibility and portions of the fencing and netting systems need repair. The batting cages are in fair condition but do not have lighting. The pavilion with timber frame and metal roof is not ADA accessible. The maintenance building is in poor condition, and the material storage yard is not secured or screened. The central restroom/concession building is in fair condition but lacks an ADA compliant route due to permitting restrictions associated with the park's location in the floodplain.

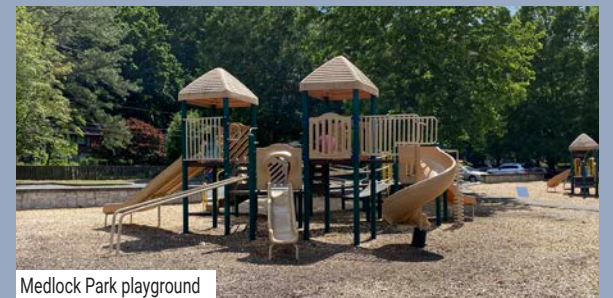
RECOMMENDATIONS: Parking areas for Medlock Park need to be resurfaced, restriped, and have lighting installed. Circulation within the park needs to be improved/expanded to allow for ADA access to the facilities, where permitted. The maintenance building, pavilions, and pool complex need to be renovated. Consideration should be given to renovate the existing restroom/concession building to improve function and appearance. Infield and outfield renovations are needed for the baseball/softball complex to address drainage and turf quality issues. Replace the existing playground areas with new equipment, including shade structures, and provide artificial turf or rubberized safety surfacing.



Medlock



Medlock ball field 4



Medlock Park playground



Medlock picnic pavilion



Medlock Park entrance signage



Druid Hills Youth Sports Center

MIDWAY PARK

LOCATION: 3181 Midway Road, Decatur, GA 30032

SIZE: 22 acres

CLASSIFICATION: Community Park

DESCRIPTION: Midway Park is bisected by Cobbs Creek and splits the property into two sides: one with the recreation center and one with athletic facilities. The athletic facility side offers two mixed-use fields, three softball/little league ballfields, two tennis courts, and a small pavilion and playground (ages 5-12). The rear portion of the recreation center side consists of undeveloped woodlands along the creek. A concessions/restroom building is located in the middle of the athletic fields and a field house at the mixed-use field off of Midway Road. A timber bridge and steel bridge provide access across the creek to both sides of the park.

OBSERVATIONS: Additional signage is needed along Midway Road to identify the two separate areas of the park. Signage is generally lacking or insufficient within the park. Effective ADA compliance circulation is lacking throughout the park, and the overall orientation and distribution of the ballfields are inefficient. The playground and pavilion area are unprotected from baseballs/softballs being hit over the fence. The larger mixed-use field combines baseball, soccer, and football, but has no striping and requires moving bleachers to switch functions. All facilities are showing signs of age and disrepair, including fencing, site furnishings, sports equipment, parking, and lighting. The recreation center and pool are in poor condition.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Consider master planning the park to provide more efficient distribution of athletic facilities. If facilities are to remain in place, implement a full renovation to replace fencing, site furnishings, sports equipment, and lighting. Resurface and restripe the existing roads and parking areas. Consider replacing the tennis courts with expanded parking to serve a new multi-purpose field with artificial turf and sports lighting at the rear of the property. Provide new safety surfacing at the playground and implement a safety netting system around the playground and pavilion. Develop a new recreation center and pool facility with improved, ADA compliant, connections to the rest of the park property. Consider opportunities to program the wooded area behind the recreation center, such as a paved trail loop.



MYSTERY VALLEY GOLF COURSE

LOCATION: 6094 Shadow Rock Drive, Lithonia, GA 30058

SIZE: 265 acres

CLASSIFICATION: Special-Use Park: Golf Course

DESCRIPTION: Mystery Valley Golf Course is an 18-hole par 72 course situated among winding groves of pine woodlands and Mystery Valley Lake. Visitors take Nell Yates Drive to the visitor center, which is located at the top of a hill and offers cart rental, sports retail, and dining services. Parking is terraced to accommodate the terrain. Directly behind the center is a storage area for golf carts. A large picnic area is located just south of the visitors center, and small covered seating areas are distributed throughout the course along an asphalt cart path. Stand-alone restroom buildings are located between holes 5 - 6 and holes 12 - 13.

OBSERVATIONS: Vehicular speed, a lack of signage, and low visibility present hazardous conditions where the asphalt cart path crosses the road. Much of the turf is in good condition, but some spots show signs of erosion. The asphalt cart path is showing signs of age with cracks and potholes. The visitor center is also showing signs of age. The area where carts are stored is aged and unsightly. Parking for the visitor center is not ADA accessible, and there are no stairs or ramps between the parking terraces. Erosion and washout are present within the landscape areas between the parking terraces.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Nell Yates Road needs speed bumps, striping, and signage where the golf carts cross the road. The asphalt cart path needs to be replaced. Shade structures and seating areas are outdated and need to be replaced. The visitor center and golf cart storage area should be renovated, and parking should be redesigned to correct erosion issues, enhance connectivity, and offer ADA accessibility. New picnic tables are needed at the picnic area, which could be developed with a pavilion for shelter and used for golf course activities and public rentals. Provide ADA accessible routes from the cart path to the stand-alone restroom buildings. Continue with planned golf course renovations to include new putting greens, parking lot resurfacing, and tree removal when necessary. The club house outside decking, seating, and railing should be renovated. Also, the landscaping around the club house should be enhanced and the building should be screened off beneath the outside deck. Four tennis courts or eight pickleball courts should be constructed.



PLEASANTDALE PARK

LOCATION: 3650 Pleasantdale Road, Doraville, GA 30340

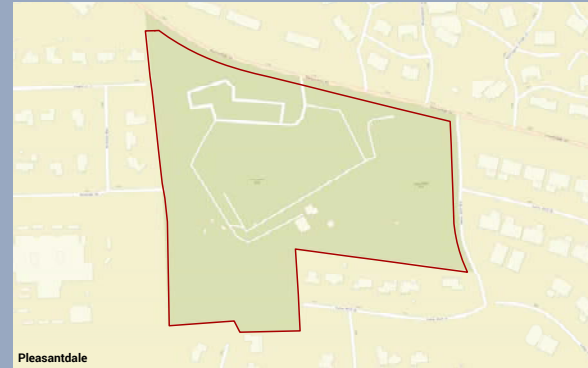
SIZE: 20 acres

CLASSIFICATION: Community Park

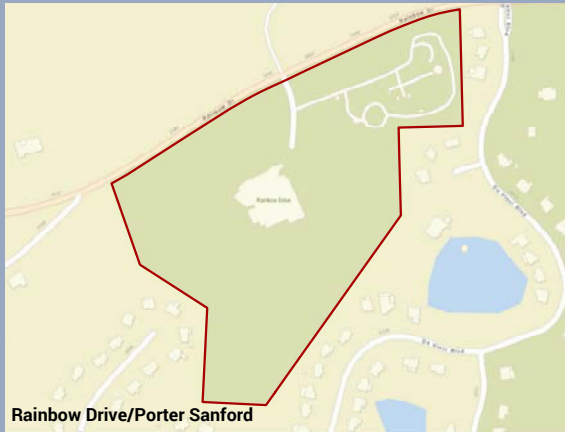
DESCRIPTION: Pleasantdale Park is located just east of Pleasantdale Elementary School and offers two soccer fields, a little league field, and a small playground for ages 2-5. Entrance into the park is shared with the Elementary school, but designated parking is available directly off of Pleasantdale Road. The largest soccer field is situated on eastern side of the park, while the second field is located to the west on a lower terrace. Directly south of the lower soccer field is a restroom and concessions building, a large storage building, and a smaller storage building. The upper field, little league field, and building complex are accessed from Valleybluff Way.

OBSERVATIONS: The entrance sign is located at a shared entrance with the school; however, no signage is present to direct visitors to the rear entrance. The front parking is new, with ADA compliant stalls and ramps, but the remainder of the sidewalk connection to the park facilities is in disrepair and not accessible. Other sidewalks throughout the park are in poor condition. Isolated erosion control issues are present at various locations in the park. The playground area is in poor condition and in need of replacement. There are no dugouts or ADA accessibility for the t-ball field, and the fencing is in poor condition. The buildings located on the site are aged and lack ADA accessibility. The soccer field and fencing are in fair condition, but the spectator area is in poor condition.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The County recently completed a phased redevelopment plan for the park. This plan identifies three new soccer fields, a new storage building and restroom/concessions building, and a new playground area, as well as improved parking and circulation. It is recommended that these renovations be implemented to address current issues and support the current programming for the site. Currently, the new soccer fields are planned to be natural grass. Consider future implementation of artificial turf playing surface for the tournament field to support additional sport programs at the park.



RAINBOW PARK/PORTER SANFORD



LOCATION: 3181 Rainbow Drive, Decatur, GA 30034

SIZE: 21 acres

CLASSIFICATION: Special-Use Park

DESCRIPTION: Located directly northwest of Renaissance, the Porter Sanford III Performing Arts & Community Center can accommodate up to 800 guests in a large theater, smaller theater, and reception lobby. The architecture of the state-of-the-art building is striking. Shared parking is available on the west and north sides of the site. East of the Center is Rainbow Park, which visitors can access via a ramp or stairs. The park is comprised of display gardens, community gardens, a pavilion, and covered seating area that are connected by a mulch trail.

OBSERVATIONS: The performing arts building and parking areas are in good condition. The paint on the handrails is chipping off. Ponding water is present directly east of the building, indicating drainage issues. In general, Rainbow Park has ongoing maintenance issues and does not facilitate the intended use for the outdoor portions of the property. The mulch trail is showing signs of washout. All the gardens seem to be unused and have varying levels of repair needs. The pavilion and covered seating area do not function as intended. Much of the stonework for retaining walls is damaged or knocked over. Various sections of fencing and deck areas are in need of replacement.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The performing arts building and surrounding pedestrian areas need minor maintenance and cleaning. The drainage issues east of the building need to be corrected. The County has developed a renovation master plan for Rainbow Park that includes a new outdoor amphitheater with covered stage, terraced lawn seating, and covered "VIP" seating areas. Other master planned improvements include a new restroom/concession building, outdoor classroom, renovated shelters, demonstration gardens, walking paths, and enhanced landscaping. Implementation of these master plan items is recommended to permit Rainbow Park to successfully facilitate the intended programming for the property.



REDAN PARK

LOCATION: 1745 Phillips Road, Lithonia, GA 30058

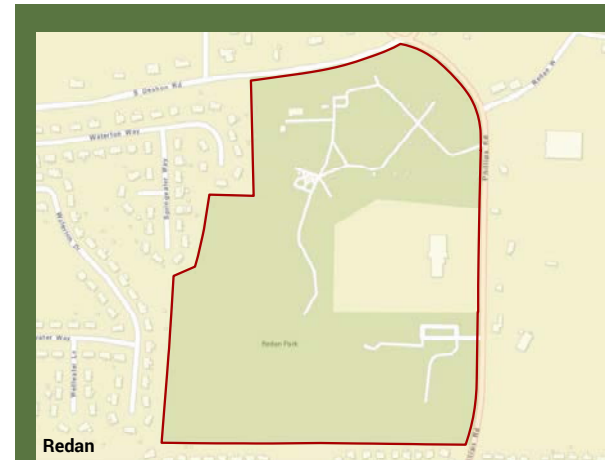
SIZE: 21 acres

CLASSIFICATION: Community Park

DESCRIPTION: Located at the corner of Phillips Road and South Deshon Road, Redan Park offers 5 baseball fields (including a mixed-use field overlay), 3 softball fields, a mixed-use field, football field, 2 tennis courts, and an 18-hole disc golf course. At the center of the site lies a pond, and located directly east of the pond is the Redan Recreation Center. A small playground is located near the softball fields. A picnic pavilion and outdoor grill area can be accessed from northern parking lot. Parking is available at 3 locations: a lot accessed by South Deshon Road on the northern end of the site, another accessed by Phillips Road to the east, and designated parking at the recreation center also on the eastern side of the park. Because of COVID-19, the recreation center has been closed to visitors.

OBSERVATIONS: The facilities of the park are showing signs of age and disrepair. Aside from the recreation center, the buildings on the site have been vandalized and require regular maintenance. Sports and play equipment are aged and outdated. Pavement areas are cracked and uneven. Pedestrian connectivity is limited around the football field and disc golf course. As for the baseball complex, patches of grass are present in the infields, and much of the fencing is in disrepair. The grandstand for the baseball/mixed-use field is in fair condition. The picnic pavilion and outdoor grill area is in poor condition. The recreation center, tennis courts, and associated parking area are newer and in good condition. Erosion issues are present along Philips Road and other parts of the site. Disc golf equipment is aged and in need of replacement. The pond is surrounded by tree coverage and is not a focal point for the park.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Aside from the recreation center and tennis courts, Redan Park requires a full renovation. In addition to renovating these existing facilities, some additional changes are recommended. Due to recurring flooding, the playground area should be relocated near the large picnic area on the north side of the property. Conversion of the football field to an artificial turf multi-purpose field with sports lighting is also recommended. Investigate the feasibility of developing a new parking lot in the vicinity of the new multi-purpose field to provide enhanced access to this facility.



Redan



Redan stair access



Redan picnic pavilion



Redan mixed-use field and grandstand



Redan ball field



Redan ball field

ROCK CHAPEL PARK

LOCATION: 1116 Rock Chapel Road, Lithonia, GA 30058

SIZE: 20 acres

CLASSIFICATION: Community Park

DESCRIPTION: Rock Chapel park sits adjacent to Rock Chapel Elementary school. The park is comprised of 4 baseball/softball fields (including a mixed-use field overlay), 3 softball fields, a restroom/concession building, and a storage building. Designated parking is available upon entry on the northern end of the site. The park facilities are connected by concrete sidewalks.

OBSERVATIONS: The parking lot is in good condition and is ADA accessible; however, the fencing atop the adjacent retaining wall is damaged. The large baseball field with multi-use overlay is generally in fair condition. Many of the infields and turf areas within the park have ongoing maintenance issues. The retaining wall between the large baseball and concessions building is in disrepair. Some sections of fencing within the park require replacement, and the scoreboards should be evaluated for replacement as well. The concessions building and storage building are in poor condition and have some accessibility issues due to the slope of adjacent paved areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS: All of the sport fields should be renovated to address deficiencies. Other site renovations to address erosion and drainage issues should also be addressed. Replacement of the restroom/concession building and storage building is recommended. Site fencing and wall repairs should be implemented as necessary. Consider development of new shade structures or picnic pavilions to enhance visitor experience.



Rock Chapel



Rock Chapel Road



Rock Chapel spectator area



Rock Chapel ball field

WADE WALKER PARK

LOCATION: 5585 Rockbridge Road, Stone Mountain, GA 30088

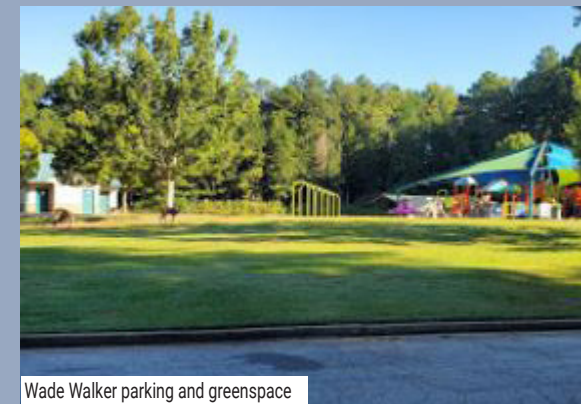
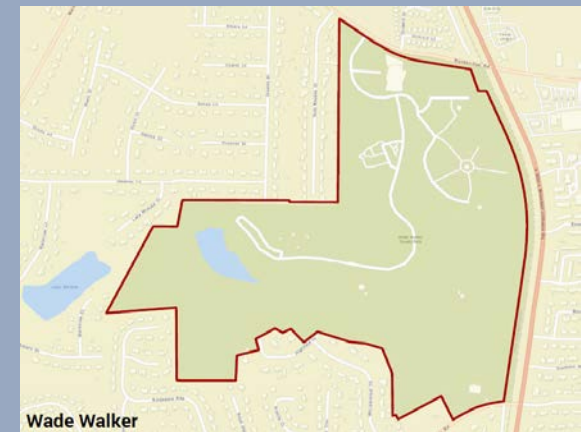
SIZE: 176 acres

CLASSIFICATION: Regional Park

DESCRIPTION: Wade Walker Park is a large regional park located in the eastern portion of the County. The majority of the property is comprised of athletic facilities including 11 soccer fields, a football field, 6 baseball/softball fields, 2 net-ball courts, and 8 tennis courts. Each sports complex and pavilion area has designated parking. Wade Walker Family YMCA, which includes an aquatic facility, is located on the north end of the site, but is not managed by the County. The tennis and net-ball complex area features a picnic pavilion, restroom building, and outdoor exercise equipment. Just east of the tennis complex is the baseball complex which features 5 fields in a circular orientation with a restroom and concessions building in the middle. A sixth baseball field (with multi-use overlay) sits just south of the associated parking lot. Directly north of the baseball complex lies a picnic pavilion and playground for all ages, as well as designated parking. Southeast of the baseball complex lies a football field with grandstands and field house building. The southern portion of the site is comprised of soccer fields that are anchored in the middle by a restroom and concessions building and small picnic pavilion. Just west of the soccer complex is a playground, picnic pavilion, and restroom area. At the far-west portion of the property is a large community playground, restroom building, pavilions and lake with a boardwalk. This area also has its own designated parking. Walking trails are also provided at Wade Walker Park.

OBSERVATIONS: All of the facilities of Wade Walker Park are showing high use of participation. Erosion and other turf issues are apparent throughout the site. All parking areas are in fair condition, but lighting is needed for soccer parking. Vehicular and sports lighting for the site are metal poles with halide lights. In general, fencing throughout the site requires replacement.

Tennis and Net-ball: Netting and fencing are in poor condition, and the court surface is cracked. Sidewalks are in fair condition. The restroom building and adjacent pavilion are newer and in great condition. Some of the outdoor exercise equipment is damaged and requires replacement. The net-ball court surfacing is cracked and buckled and requires repair. Bleachers are clean and functional. The asphalt parking lot is in fair condition and is ADA accessible.



WADE WALKER PARK

Baseball/Softball: Batting cages are functional but in need of maintenance. All fields have scoreboards and score towers that are in fair condition. The set of stairs connected to the baseball parking lot is overgrown with shrubs and the guardrail is in poor condition. The restroom and concessions building is in good condition. Sections of masonry seatwalls are damaged. The parking and facilities are ADA accessible.

Football:

The field, grandstand, and score tower are in fair condition. The perimeter fence is in fair condition with minor damage.

Soccer:

All of the fields are showing signs of erosion and drainage issues, and irrigation is needed for some of the fields. Field striping has faded. Most of the bleachers are in fair condition. While ADA parking is available, the restroom and concessions building, as well as the ballfields, are not ADA accessible. The restroom and concessions building is in good condition, but are located too far away from the parking area.

Playground/Pavilion Area 1:

Playground equipment and rubber surface is in fair condition, as well as the restroom building and pavilion. Parking for persons with disabilities is available in the adjacent lot and is generally compliant, except for missing ADA parking signage. Large bare areas are present in the lawn and are contributing to erosion issues.

Playground/Pavilion Area 2:

Playground equipment, rubber surfacing and shade structure are in good condition. The three pavilions and the restroom building are in fair condition. The large open lawn area shows some signs of erosion issues. In general, these facilities are ADA accessible but ADA parking signage is needed in the parking lot. Access to the lake is provided by both paved and improved turf walking paths. These access routes are in fair condition but are not easily identifiable as access to the lake. The lake features a small pier with a gazebo, as well as some remote seating areas along the shore. The pier is in fair condition but improved ADA access is needed to this structure, as well as the other seating areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Parking lots need to be resurfaced and restriped, and lighting needs to be installed for soccer parking. Consider expanding parking to accommodate the volume of programming at the park. Erosion and drainage issues need to be addressed throughout the park to reduce maintenance, improve overall aesthetics, and improve overall water quality. Site furnishings and athletic equipment should be replaced as needed and fencing throughout the facility should also be replaced. Athletic court surfacing should be repaired or replaced. All buildings should continue to receive regular maintenance, including fresh paint. Selective improvements to address ADA deficiencies should be implemented. Implement a turf management program for athletic fields and programmed open space to include reseeding, resodding, fertilizer, and irrigation to retain turf quality during high levels of use. Consider converting one or more athletic fields to artificial turf for expanded programming. Consider developing a large artificial turf lawn adjacent to the rear playground/pavilion area (Area 2) to support large gatherings and reduce maintenance levels. Improve access to and around the lake and expand the pier. Provide directional signage throughout the park to orient visitors to desired park facilities.

GENERAL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The facility assessment findings identified some general trends throughout the system. Overall, the facilities are in fair condition. The planning team noted that these parks have a broad range in age, maintenance levels, design standards, and compliance with current safety and ADA codes. It appears that the County regularly undertakes various renovation projects to rehabilitate old or non-functional park facilities in order to bring these facilities to more current standards and improve the overall quality of the system. Although specific needs vary between parks, several issues were found to be consistent throughout the County, including safety issues, the need for general maintenance, and ADA accessibility issues, among other items. The following summary recommendations should be evaluated by RPCA staff and implemented where feasible:

ADA Compliance

Due to the age of many of the facilities in the County's park inventory, many still contain original design elements that are not in compliance with current accessibility codes. The planning team observed multiple instances of non-compliant parking spaces and pedestrian routes to primary use areas. Many athletic facilities did not have accessible routes to team areas and lack of compliant restroom facilities was also frequently noted. In 2019, the County underwent an ADA evaluation of existing parks and facilities. This evaluation identified numerous rehabilitation projects throughout the system to address code deficiencies. Funding for many of these projects is currently in place for implementation. Re-evaluation of the total system on a recurring basis is recommended to continue to monitor park conditions for code compliance

Safety Considerations

During the facility assessments, the planning team noted various issues related to park user safety. Guardrails, fencing, and other barriers were sometimes missing or non-compliant with current standards to protect visitors from falls. Some facilities lacked appropriate lighting levels along access routes and parking lots. The planning team also noted that some of the parks have older, mature vegetation near door entries and along pedestrian pathways. This vegetation should be trimmed or removed to provide clear sight lines for users. There are also some isolated locations in the parks where paved sidewalks have up-heaved or subsided, creating tripping hazards along access routes. Trails or sidewalks that cross roads or parking areas should have pedestrian crossings that are clearly marked with striping and appropriate signage.

In 2020, the County underwent a risk assessment of existing facilities. The assessment generally focused on occupied structures and their means of access/egress. The findings in this report identified various rehabilitation projects to reduce risk and enhance user safety and many of these projects are currently funded for implementation. Additional assessments for outdoor park areas should be performed, and all safety evaluations should be updated on a recurring basis to continue to monitor park and facility conditions for potential risks.

Landscape Material and Maintenance Standards

Standards for landscape materials and maintenance give direction to maintenance crews for implementation. Well-maintained park entrance landscaping gives the community the feeling that a park is a welcoming place. Strategic plantings can provide intentional screening, direct visitors, and provide pedestrian traffic control, or can buffer sound.

DeKalb County's RPCA currently has a landscape maintenance program; however, this portion of the department's operations is likely under-funded and under-staffed. During the field assessments, the planning team noted inconsistent maintenance practices between the various facilities. While many parks appear to have their lawn and landscape areas regularly mowed and weeded, there are some facilities that do not appear to have the same frequency of care. Planners also observed multiple instances of bare spots or erosion areas in the parks.

Where feasible, the planning team recommends allocating additional funding in the department's operational budget to expand and enhance the current maintenance program implementation. Expanding this current program will permit additional staff and material resources to improve on known deficiencies, enhance the overall park experience and reduce recurring issues resulting from deferred or unmet maintenance needs. Where feasible, outsourcing these responsibilities may alleviate staff requirements for program expansion, especially for seasonal plantings and shrub trimming.

Athletic Fields and Sport Courts

Athletic field and sport court conditions vary across the park system, largely due to the age of facilities and the period of time since their last renovation. In general, athletic field turf areas appear to be in fair condition, though some bare spots and weeds were observed. Regular field maintenance to improve the quality of the playing area by addressing bare areas, weeds and improving drainage should continue to be implemented. The department should ensure that irrigation systems are operational and functioning as intended, and new irrigation systems should be installed on natural turf athletic fields where there currently are none.

Several sport courts were observed to have had recent renovations to the surfacing systems. Continue to maintain and renovate court surfacing systems to address cracking and striping. Fencing at these athletic facilities should continue to be repaired or replaced to ensure functionality of the facilities, as well as providing both player and spectator safety. Sport lighting system conditions also varied. Many recreation providers are currently converting older sport lighting systems with new LED lighting technology to reduce maintenance and overall operating costs. The County should evaluate their current lighting systems and establish a prioritized schedule for LED lighting conversion at athletic facilities. Athletic facility equipment and furnishings that are damaged or missing should be replaced with new equipment.

Many recreation service providers are currently converting their natural grass ballfields to artificial turf systems. This process extends facility availability for programming by reducing or eliminating facility shut-downs due to rain events or grass maintenance. In addition to opening up additional playing time, many providers are developing these renovated facilities to be multi-purpose. Multi-purpose athletic facilities allow more flexibility in programming and help offset facility deficits by combining multiple sports within a single facility. The planning team recommends that RPCA evaluate current field utilization and determine if conversion to multi-sport artificial turf fields will address facility deficiencies and expand current programming needs. Conversely, field utilization should also be used to determine if existing athletic field facilities are underutilized or unprogrammed. These large outdoor spaces could be repurposed to provide alternative facilities to support current programming needs.

While evaluating field utilization, the County should also observe parking patterns and how different parks respond to the parking demand. For instance, the number of cars parked inappropriately could be one measure to track



overuse of specific parks. Customer satisfaction surveys can also be used to track user experience season after season. A third metric to consider is partner satisfaction. If fields are overprogrammed, league providers may be forced to relocate to another park or system. Actively engaging with league providers would allow the County to address league concerns before they impact that program offering. The planning team recommends adopting a policy to address concern related to overuse by measuring these or similar metrics.

Recreation Centers, Pavilions and Other Structures

Many of the County's indoor facilities require frequent maintenance to address roof leaks, mechanical and plumbing systems, as well as upgrades to flooring and paint. The County should continue to address known issues, track and perform scheduled maintenance, and replace systems that have surpassed their expected service period. The planning team observed that many of the County's outdoor pavilions require new roofs and upgraded paint. In isolated incidents, some potential structural issues such as deteriorated timber supports or rusted steel framework were noted. These structures should be evaluated to determine if repairs are feasible or if replacement is required. Other structures, such as restroom buildings, concession buildings, or scorer's buildings were observed to have varying levels of need, as well. Renovations to address ADA deficiencies in restrooms, service counters, and second floor scoring areas will be required in most locations. Additional renovations to upgrade roofing systems, mechanical equipment and finishes will also be needed. The County should also continue to convert lighting systems to new LED fixtures to reduce maintenance and operating costs. It should be noted that many of the recommendations listed above had been previously identified by RPCA and are being funded by current SPLOST programs for implementation.

Aquatic Facilities

Aquatic Facilities, such as pools and spray pads continue to receive regular maintenance from the County to keep them operational. The County should continue to monitor all aquatic equipment, track and perform scheduled maintenance, and replace equipment that has surpassed the expected operational lifespan. ADA access to pool areas appears to be satisfactory; however, indoor dressing facilities and restrooms may require some renovations to bring them into compliance. Pool deck surfacing should continue to have cracks repaired, and deck replacement is recommended where drainage issues are present.

Playgrounds and Safety Standards

Another prominent issue within some park systems is the non-compliance of playground equipment with safety standards by organizations such as U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the International Play Equipment Manufacturers' Association (IPEMA). The standards proposed by these organizations are meant to serve as a guideline to help create atmospheres that are safe and pose a minimal threat of injury. Studies show that the majority of injuries sustained on public playgrounds are to the head—a result of falls from the play structure to the ground. For this reason, consideration has been given as to what the critical fall height would be in which a fatal head injury might occur.

Many of the County's playgrounds were noted as having wood mulch surfacing. Playground surface redressing does occur at the county's playgrounds, yet some playgrounds were found to need additional redressing at the time of the site visits. As playgrounds are added to the system and or older equipment is updated, the planning



team recommends using alternative surfacing systems, such as poured-in-place rubber surfacing, playground tiles, or artificial turf. While these systems have a high initial cost, they generally have lower maintenance costs and retain safety performance for longer periods of time.

RPCA has developed a Playground Safety Checklist for park staff to utilize. The department also currently has a Certified Playground Safety Inspector on staff. The planning team recommends that this checklist continue to complete regular inspections, address safety issues in a timely manner, and retain records of checklists and associated repairs. Where feasible, identify additional staff members for certification training to aid in more frequent inspections and reporting.

Standardized furnishings and equipment, both for the site and buildings, streamlines maintenance and generally makes repair or replacement quicker and more efficient. By standardizing these components, many park providers retain a stockpile of replacement equipment or components that can easily be deployed to address damaged or missing features. This form of standardization also reduces the time necessary to train staff on recommended maintenance and installation practices by limiting the amount of manufacturers and models.

Equitable delivery of recreation services is a core value shared by many service providers. Implementation of an effective design standards policy helps reinforce that a consistent level of quality is provided throughout the system, regardless of a park or facility's location. It is important to note, however, that park typologies can vary greatly, and these standards should take into consideration the unique characteristics of every system asset. For example, a picnic table that would typically be used in a plaza at an urbanized park may not have design aesthetics that would compliment the character of a picnic table that would be used at a pavilion in a nature preserve. For this reason, many park providers elect to develop design standards for individual park typologies, while still retaining a consistent level of quality.

RPCA currently has a system of design standards in place, but this system requires updating to react to newer, more effective materials and styles. Once developed, these updated standards should be deployed in a strategic approach and continue to be implemented over time.

Stormwater Management Improvements

Many of the County's park and recreation facilities were developed prior to establishment of current stormwater management regulations that are required for new development within the County. These regulations are intended to address negative impacts associated with new development, such as increased runoff due to increases in impervious surface area and poor water quality due to erosion, sedimentation and other pollutants. As the County has renovated or expanded parks within the system, they have invested capital dollars to bring these sites into compliance with these regulations. Examples of these improvements include the development of new or expanded stormwater detention facilities, the implementation of bioretention ponds, and removal of eroded sediment from ponds and lakes within their parks. As existing parks continue to be renovated or expanded, the County should likewise continue to improve and expand on current stormwater management strategies to improve the overall health and beauty of its facilities and demonstrate their commitment to being a leader in stewardship of the land.

PATH/Greenway Improvements

As with any other recreation facility, trails and greenways require maintenance and renovation to retain their functionality and provide a safe experience for their users. Repairs and replacement of damaged or missing signage, pavement resurfacing and restriping, and replacement of boardwalk decking are examples of maintenance projects that occur frequently on trails and greenways. DeKalb RPCA currently provides regular inspections to identify immediate maintenance needs as well as upcoming renovation projects. Continuing this process will help to ensure a safe and reliable trail and greenway network in the County.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PHASING PLAN

As the County continues to grow over the next ten years, RPCA will have to expand to provide additional facilities to meet programming demands and enhance service delivery to cover areas of the County where the community need may not be adequately provided. Additionally, the community has identified a need to conserve and protect natural resource areas and facilitate public access to these spaces for passive recreation and educational resources. This need for expansion coincides with an identified need to invest in existing park and recreation facilities to improve the quality of service, foster a sense of community, and enhance the overall health of residents.

The findings in Section 4- Level of Service and Gap Analysis, revealed that the County currently has multiple new facilities in the planning stage to address current community needs. Additional findings identified a potential need for four more neighborhood parks to address under-served areas in the community. At minimum, these new neighborhood parks should contain a mixture of both active and passive recreation facilities, including, but not limited to: open greenspace walking trails, pavilions, restrooms, playgrounds, and athletic facilities. Development of new parks and facilities should be weighed against the possibility of municipal annexation. Serious consideration should be given to the cost of developing a new park if one of the areas identified as needing a new park is considering forming a new municipal government or annexation by an existing community.

The connectivity analysis identified several planning efforts for expanded trails and greenways through an existing partnership with the PATH Foundation. Additional opportunities for enhanced connectivity are recommended in the County's current transportation plan but will require additional study for implementation.

A ten-year capital improvement plan (Table 5.1) has been developed to address improvements to existing parks, as well as the development of new facilities and trails. The recommended funding distribution for these projects has been broken into three prioritization levels or "tiers." Tier 1 is generally intended to address immediate needs, such as ADA access improvements, general safety renovations, urgent renovation projects, general land acquisition, and planning efforts for upcoming projects. The majority of the funding identified in Tier 1 is based on current asset depreciation and projects with existing/ planned funding that have been identified by RPCA.

Funding in shown in Tier 2 is a continuation of currently planned projects and initiatives that will be initiated in Tier 1. The timing of these projects and initiatives is once again due to asset depreciation schedules and existing/ planned funding. In addition to these projects and initiatives, Tier 2 also provides funding recommendations for continued land acquisition, including properties for new park development, to address the service area deficiencies identified in the previous section of this report.

Similar to the previous tiers, the funding in Tier 3 includes the continuation of projects and initiatives to address the needs of existing parks. This funding includes a combination of specific projects identified in the County's asset depreciation schedule as well as ongoing annual budgets for general improvements to address ongoing maintenance needs and continue overall enhancement of the County's parks and facilities. Tier 3 also includes funding for the development of the new parks that where identified in the service area analysis.

The capital improvement budgets shown are recommendations from the planning team based on experience with similar scale projects in metropolitan Atlanta. DeKalb County's capital improvement plan identifies approximately \$276 million in renovations and new facility development, with an average annual spending of nearly \$28 million. Projects in Tiers 1 and 2 have an approximate value of \$78 million and \$76.5 million, respectively. Tier 3 projects have an anticipated cost of \$121.2 million. It should be noted that land acquisition costs associated with these projects are recommended budgets only.

During the community engagement process, the planning team learned that County residents support additional investment in the County's recreation and parks system. Nearly 60% of households support additional spending of up to \$15 per household each month. Based on 2019 estimates of households in unincorporated DeKalb County, this represents potential additional capital funding of approximately \$34.5 million per year.

Dedicated investment to capital improvements allows for creation of unique facilities that can draw park users to a specific park. The community engagement efforts identified support for investment of this type. Such improvements could be a unique playground, skatepark, pump track, or special outdoor venue or space. Unique improvements are great ways to distinguish one park from the next and cater to specific user groups in a real way.

Table 5.1: Ten-Year Capital Improvement Plan

EXISTING PARK RENOVATIONS (GENERAL)	TIER 1		TIER 2			TIER 3					Future	TOTAL
	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	YEAR 6	YEAR 7	YEAR 8	YEAR 9	YEAR 10		
Buildings, Pavilions, Other Structures	\$7,620,500	\$1,736,800	\$3,445,700	\$1,836,000	\$1,618,000	\$5,974,700	\$500,000	\$286,600	\$500,000	\$8,264,300		\$31,782,600
Rec. Center Replacements/Major Renovation	\$18,481,500	\$917,800	\$2,306,500	\$6,359,100	\$3,194,900	\$6,200,000	\$7,000,000	\$7,000,000	\$7,000,000	\$7,000,000		\$65,459,800
Site Furnishings/ Amenities	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000		\$3,000,000
Outdoor Athletic Facilities	\$3,587,300	\$196,800	\$4,435,200	\$1,071,000	\$2,970,300	\$2,500,000	\$2,500,000	\$2,500,000	\$2,500,000	\$2,500,000		\$24,760,600
Playground Improvements	\$9,500,000	\$800,000	\$800,000		\$800,000		\$400,000	\$2,200,000	\$1,200,000	\$4,000,000		\$19,700,000
Stormwater Renovations	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000		\$22,000,000
ADA Renovations (Budget)	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000		\$10,000,000
Other, Misc. Improvements	\$500,000		\$500,000			\$500,000						\$1,500,000
Aquatic Facility Improvements	\$1,023,300	\$1,200,000	\$1,314,500	\$1,212,600	\$792,800	\$795,190	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000		\$15,495,100
PATH/Greenway Improvements	\$250,000		\$1,000,000			\$250,000	\$250,000		\$250,000	\$250,000		\$2,000,000
EX. PARK RENOVATIONS (GENERAL) TOTAL	\$47,262,600	\$11,151,400	\$20,101,900	\$12,778,700	\$11,926,000	\$25,426,600	\$13,450,000	\$14,786,600	\$14,250,000	\$24,564,300	\$0	\$195,698,100
EXISTING PARK (CURRENTLY IN PLANNING)												
Zonolite Expansion		\$500,000	\$500,000									\$1,000,000
Pendergrast Park	\$500,000											\$500,000
Belvedere Park/ CHARM		\$2,500,000										\$2,500,000
Ellenwood Road Park	\$800,000	\$3,000,000	\$5,000,000									\$8,800,000
Split Creek Park		\$950,000										\$950,000
TRAIL AND GREENWAY CAPITAL COSTS												
Stone Mountain Park Nature Preserve			\$1,250,000	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	\$2,600,000
Robert Wood Constitution Lake Trail			PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	\$550,000
Bransford Loop/ East Decatur Greenway			PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	\$2,500,000
Maryland East Gate Greenway			\$500,000	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	\$500,000
TRAILS AND GREENWAYS TOTAL	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
DeKalb Park			\$2,050,000									\$2,050,000
OTHER CAPITAL COSTS												
Facility Design Standards Manual	\$250,000		\$100,000	\$1,200,000								\$2,450,000
New Park Master Planning (Budget)	\$200,000		\$5,000,000									\$5,200,000
Avondale Olympic Park	\$200,000											\$200,000
ADA Renovation Cost Evaluation (Budget)	\$200,000											\$200,000
DeKalb County Park Assessment (Budget)	\$200,000											\$200,000
OTHER TOTAL	\$250,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$250,000
Stone Mountain Park	\$480,000											\$480,000
YEARLY TOTAL	\$52,467,600	\$25,551,400	\$36,261,900	\$16,878,700	\$23,426,000	\$25,676,600	\$21,200,000	\$22,536,600	\$22,000,000	\$29,814,300	\$0	\$275,793,100
EX. PARK (CURRENTLY IN PLANNING) TOTAL	\$4,095,000	\$14,150,000	\$15,250,000	\$2,550,000	\$10,600,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$47,245,000
Tier 1 and Tier 2 TOTAL	\$154,565,600											
Tier 3 TOTAL	\$121,227,600											
GRAND TOTAL												\$275,793,100
Embry Hills Area			\$650,000				\$7,500,000					\$8,150,000
Central DeKalb Area				\$650,000				\$7,500,000				\$8,150,000
Stone Mountain Area				\$650,000					\$7,500,000			\$8,150,000
2021-2030 TOTAL												\$275,793,100
Ten Year Average Spending												\$27,579,310
Embry Hills Area (not included)	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000		\$2,500,000
Stone Mountain Area (not included)	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000		\$2,500,000
NEW PARK TOTAL	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$900,000	\$1,550,000	\$900,000	\$250,000	\$7,750,000	\$7,750,000	\$7,750,000	\$7,750,000	\$5,250,000	\$32,600,000

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT FUNDING

In order to meet the capital improvement goals identified in this report, a combination of funding resources is necessary, which includes increasing revenues, considering utilization of special taxes, and securing grants and private funding. The combination of these funding sources would increase the ability to make identified improvements. A number of funding sources are available that the County should consider for increasing funding to support capital improvements of parks and recreation facilities. Historically, the main sources of capital funding for parks and recreation agencies in the State of Georgia are:

- General Fund Tax Dollars
- Dedicated Millage
- General Obligation Bond
- Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST)
- Hospitality Tax
- Impact/ Development Fees
- State and Federal Grants

General Fund Tax Dollars and Dedicated Millage

These options offer relatively stable funding for parks and recreation departments to cover operational costs and some capital improvements associated with routine maintenance projects or minor renovation projects. In general, these funding sources may not support larger initiatives, and there would likely be little support to increase funding from these sources.

General Obligation Bond and SPLOST Program

Alternative funding programs to address specific capital development programs are often a preferred source of supplemental revenue for capital parks and recreation departments. General Obligation Bonds can help support the current funding infrastructure and assist in addressing specific development goals within a set time frame. The use of a bond program would be a viable option to initiate a major capital program for parks and recreation facilities. The County could issue bonds to fund a portion of the capital projects outlined in this master plan. The bond would be paid back over a 20 or 25-year period and would allow the County to begin to meet the facility needs identified in this report.

Alternatively, a Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax program could support the County's capital funding needs over a period of four or five years. Funding through this program would be shared between residents and visitors, alike, with the opportunity for increased revenue generation. DeKalb County currently uses SPLOST for many of their capital funding efforts.

Hospitality Tax

Many parks and recreation departments utilize funding from hospitality taxes such as hotel/motel taxes and food/beverage taxes to support their capital development programs. These revenue streams are particularly beneficial to departments that enhance the local economy through tourism. Hospitality taxes perform in a similar manner as a sales tax program, but tend to rely less on local dollars and have little or no sunset requirements for the tax program to expire. Furthermore, the value of this approach tends to increase as tourism continues to grow in the community.

Regulatory Funding or Development Sources, Parkland and Greenway Easement Dedication

The employment of regulatory means to aid the development of parks and greenways is used by many cities and

county governments across the country. In the case of parks, land set aside or a fee in lieu of land set aside are common and would provide either needed park land or funds for acquisition of park land. Many communities use mandatory parkland or greenway dedication as part of land development procedures to acquire land for extensions of greenway and trails networks and to have available lands for park development. In a similar manner, many parks and recreation departments rely on impact fees or other development fees generated by the city or county to help offset costs associated with additional demand on a park and recreation systems due to development within a community.

Grants

Grant programs for parks and recreation improvements are available through various state and federal agencies. Many state agency grants allocate federal dollars for projects such as transportation enhancement grants, trails and greenways, and parks improvements. Grants are also available through non-profit and not-for-profit agencies, as well as some businesses and corporations. Because grants are typically highly competitive, any pursuit to acquire grant funding should begin with an understanding of the grant requirements, including matching fund requirements, understanding what the grant will and will not cover, the time frame for completion, and what obligations may be required in the future, such as deed restrictions, maintenance and reporting.

A few examples of alternative funding sources include the following:

- Site Development Grant Program
- Tourism Rebate Program
- Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)
- Community Improvement Districts
- Development Infrastructure Grant Program

Fundraising

Local fundraising is a mechanism that has worked effectively in communities across the country. Although a strong local effort is involved, this mechanism typically generates a vast amount of support and publicity. Local businesses, organizations, and private individuals can pledge funding over a specific period of time. In most communities, a recreation and parks advisory board plays an active role in fundraising for their department. Advisory board members can be more proactive by initiating a variety of fundraising tasks, such as collaborating with current and future "Friends of Parks" groups to promoting sponsorship of programs, seeking in-kind donations, hosting special events (e.g., golf tournaments, fundraiser dinners, events to honor volunteers, silent auctions, and themed socials) and soliciting charitable donations of money and lands.

Corporate Partner Grant Programs

Many corporations around the country offer grants to contribute to parks, recreation and cultural programming. Companies such as LL Bean, Purina, and KEEN have a history of such grant programming. Below are just three examples, but many others are available.

- **The KEEN Effect:** KEEN Footwear Company has launched a program to help fund projects designed to get people outside and responsibly enjoy the outdoors. The program supports projects and initiatives that result in an increase of responsible outdoor participation as a way to work towards building a strong community.
- **PetSafe Bark for your Park:** This grant program selects 13 communities annually to build new off-leash dog parks, and maintain and upgrade existing parks. Applications are competitive, and accepted on an annual basis.
- **KaBOOM! Playground Grants:** KaBOOM!, is the national non-profit dedicated to bringing balanced and active play into the daily lives of all kids, particularly those growing up in poverty in America. KaBOOM!, partnering with for-profit organizations and communities, provides grant opportunities for playground and play areas.

6



RECREATION ASSESSMENT

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Mystery Valley Golf Course

06 RECREATION ASSESSMENT

Introduction

As part of the master planning process, the BerryDunn consulting team was tasked with completing a Recreation Assessment for DeKalb County (County) Parks and Recreation Department (Department). The intended outcome was to develop a strategic vision for the recreation delivery process, identify program gaps, and make recommendations for strengthening program and service offerings.

The Recreation Assessment was to be divided up into four phases: Supply, Demand, Alignment, and Performance. Typically, the completion of all of these phases requires access to the following data:

- Program guides
- Program participation numbers
- Program financial information (revenue and expenses by recreation center or program area)
- Customer feedback such as comment cards, calls, and previous surveys
- Details from the community engagement process

This data was not readily available; therefore, interviews were scheduled with each community center director as well as the athletics and aquatics coordinators to learn about recreation programming provided by the County. The senior center directors and the performing arts center directors were not included in this exercise, as these facilities are in different departments.

Facility/Staff Meeting Methodology

Eleven meetings were held with recreation staff to review recreation programming within their facility or their respective area of responsibility (e.g., athletics or aquatics). In order to become familiar with DeKalb recreation programming, the following topics were discussed:

- Facility size and amenities
- Location of facility in relation to other DeKalb centers, municipal facilities, YMCAs, or Boys & Girls Clubs
- Facility hours
- Facility condition
- Core programs offered and registration rates
- Current challenges to recreation programming
- Cooperation throughout the County
- Partnerships
- And any other related topics that staff wanted to share

Following each meeting, a meeting summary was drafted to reflect the conversation, which included some recommendations for specific improvements at each specific facility. This document was then sent to the respective staff person for review and editing.

The consulting team found the recreation staff to be passionate, engaging, and keenly interested in improving programs and services for their constituents. Every single staff person mentioned how much they love what they do, and they all expressed that they are making a difference in the lives of hundreds of DeKalb County families. These ten staff members (filling eleven positions) are seasoned recreation professionals, whose total tenure with the County exceeds 142 years. This is a feel-good story worth celebrating and sharing, as several of these staff members grew up in the system they are now tasked with managing.

Exchange Recreation Center

Exchange Recreation Center is located at 2771 Columbia Drive in Decatur and is situated in the southwest section of the County. This facility is located within a few miles of two other DeKalb recreation centers: Gresham and NH Scott. The South DeKalb Family YMCA is two miles east of Exchange.

Exchange opened to the public in 2011 and is the newest of the nine DeKalb recreation centers. It includes a regulation size gym, a fitness center with a track, 2 offices, and 5 programming rooms. There are 3 full-time staff and 12 regular part-time staff employed by the County at this center.

The core recreation programs at Exchange include the following:

- After School Care (average attendance prior to COVID-19 was 95 children)
- Summer Day Camp (average attendance prior to COVID-19 was 320 children)
- School Break Camps (average attendance prior to COVID-19 was 35 children)
- Open Gym for both youth and adults (averaging 30 adults per session)
- The fitness center, which is free and well used by the surrounding community.
- Senior Programming – The senior population uses this facility every day throughout the year, attending a variety of programs as well as day and overnight trips.
- Facility rentals are very popular throughout the week for family events and parties as well as meetings – many of the area homeowners associations meet at Exchange, as they do not all have clubhouses.
- Ballet, tap, and jazz are taught by a contractor and are popular.
- Fitness classes offered include Zumba, low impact aerobics, and line dancing.

Current challenges related to recreation programming include:

- The roof has leaked since the day the building opened. The gym floods each time it rains, which negatively impacts the wood floor. It has been difficult to get this issue fixed permanently despite numerous requests.
- A splash pad was built three years ago adjacent to this facility. When the center is in full use and the splash pad is busy, finding parking can be difficult. Additional handicapped parking is needed.
- This site is considered an “intergenerational center.” A ramp leading up to the back of the building and an automatic door would aid accessibility. Parking for the seniors can be an issue on busy days. More handicapped parking behind the building is desired.
- **It has been difficult to attract teens to Exchange Recreation Center.**

Inter-Agency Cooperation:

- The center director at this site works closely with the staff from Porter Sanford Center (another DeKalb facility). The team at Exchange will assist with set-ups at Porter Sanford and, in return, the staff at Porter Sanford provide performing arts space for an end-of-camp event for parents.

Partnerships:

- The center director at this site takes the initiative to create partnerships to improve programs and services at this center. This can be a tedious process, as new partners need to be approved by a supervisor and then the board of commissioners.

Recommendations for this center include:

- Repair the roof leak
- Add a ramp to the back entrance and increase the number of handicapped parking spaces behind the facility.

Gresham Park Recreation Center

Gresham Park Recreation Center is located 3113 Gresham Road in Atlanta and is situated in the southwest section of the County. This facility is within a few miles of two other DeKalb recreation centers: Exchange and NH Scott.

Gresham is 20,152 square feet and was built in 1963 and renovated in 1991. It includes two gyms (one regulation size with a wood floor and bleachers and a smaller auxiliary gym), one office, three programming rooms, a club room which contains fridges and supplies, and a concession area. There is a public pool adjacent to Gresham Park Recreation Center. Two full-time staff and nine permanent part-time staff are employed by DeKalb County at this facility.

The core recreation programs at Gresham include the following:

- After School Care (average attendance prior to COVID-19 was 105 children with a waitlist)
- Summer Day Camp (average attendance prior to COVID-19 was 200 children)
- School Break Camps (average attendance prior to Covid-19 was 30 children)
- Youth Sports: Basketball, Soccer, and Track and Field are all popular with nearly 300 participating in youth basketball from November – March.
- Open Gym is popular for both youth and adults.
- Specialty Camps include a popular “skills & drills” program.
- Youth Chess Club is very popular.
- There are drop-in games offered for seniors the 3rd Tuesday of the month. Seniors also walk around the gym for exercise.
- For Active Adults, Zumba and Line Dancing are popular.
- Holiday special events are popular with local families.
- The facility hosts a lot of rentals for family events and meetings.
- Swim team is popular in the summer months.
- The facility has four stationary bikes that are available to the public free of charge on a first-come, first served basis.
- Some STEM classes have been offered with the Morehouse School of Medicine.

Current challenges related to recreation programming include:

- The lack of space prevents new programs from being offered at Gresham. Families in the area expect the core programs but there is little room for anything new.
- There is a wait list for After School Care but the lack of space prevents adding more children to this popular program.
- It would be helpful if the custodian assigned to the building was full-time instead of part-time as it is difficult to keep up with the cleaning and maintenance with one part-time staff person.

Agency Cooperation:

- Families that are waitlisted for After School Care are directed to NH Scott.

Recommendations for this center include:

- Although the building is not in disrepair, it could use updating.
- Consider facility expansion to increase square footage and renovations to accommodate more programs including the After Care waitlist.

Hamilton Recreation Center

Hamilton Recreation Center is located at 3263 Chapel Street in Scottsdale. The center sits just south and west of the center of the County, located between Tobie Grant (less than 2 miles south) and Midway (a few miles north). Although the residents around the center have been historically in the lower income brackets, that is starting to change.

This center used to be high school and has been converted to a recreation center. The center is large, containing a regulation size gym with built-in bleachers, 13 program rooms, and a cafeteria with a stage on one end, and a full kitchen. Half of the building is not being used, due to a Head Start program moving out. This wing is empty and locked up. Although the facility is large, challenges include a lack of centralized air conditioning, fixed windows that do not open, and floors that need replacing. The program rooms do have window AC units. The building is in needs of an overall update.

With a grade school across the street, the youth programming is strong at this facility.

The core recreation programs at Hamilton include the following:

- After School Care (average attendance prior to COVID-19 was 70 children)
- Summer Day Camp (average attendance prior to COVID-19 was 200 children)
- School Break Camps (average attendance prior to COVID-19 was 100 children)
- Open Gym is popular for both youth and adults with 50 to 60 people attending during popular time slots.
- The senior population uses this facility for walking in the gym.
- Teen programming, STEM classes, and Performing Arts are popular at this center.
- Facility rentals are very popular throughout the week for family events and parties as well as meetings.
- Community family special events are popular and include health fairs, Christmas events, Black History Month play, Fashion Show, and an Easter event.



Mason Mill Park Naturalist Programs

6 - Recreation Assessment

Current challenges related to recreation programming include:

- Although there are many program rooms, they are all general multipurpose rooms. There has been an expressed need from facility users for a dance room (with appropriate flooring, mirrors, and barres), a fitness space (with strength, cardio, and free weights), a computer lab, and a video room. These spaces, if upgraded and dedicated, would be more appropriate for specific programs and could be better utilized.
- The stage is missing a curtain, and there is no sound system for performing arts.
- With the changing demographics and gentrification occurring around the center, staff are concerned that they will not be able to keep up with expectations. Existing residents are happy with programming, but the new residents have greater expectations.
- One old van is assigned to this facility, and it is not enough to accommodate the program wait lists. There is a perception that the vans are not distributed appropriately where needed.
- There are a lot of needs for the community surrounding this center. Two examples of this include finding prom dresses for young women and attending parent/teacher conferences with families that do not speak English. It appears the Hamilton staff are providing many social services.
- There is one playground on the site that is designated for young children but the Head Start program moved out of the facility. There is a need for a playground for older children at this site.

Partnerships:

- The center director at this site takes the initiative to create partnerships where possible to improve programs and services. New senior housing was built nearby, and the center director works with the staff at the new facility to create senior programming for its residents.

Recommendations for this center include:

- Tear down the wing of the building that is not being used, as it is an attractive nuisance and unsightly.
- Renovate the multipurpose rooms into dedicated activity rooms (e.g., dance, fitness, computer lab, dedicated space for seniors).
- Evaluate the way the vans are distributed – see if it is appropriate to provide another van to Hamilton Recreation Center.



Lucious Sanders Recreation Center

Lucious Sanders Recreation Center is located at 2484 Bruce Street in Lithonia and is situated in the southeast section of the County. This facility is a few miles from Redan Recreation Center.

Lucious Sanders is a former high school, and three County groups including recreation, police, and seniors currently share the facility. The recreation space includes a gym (with a stage and one set of bleachers) and two rooms that are shared with the police department. There is a playground on the site that is used by summer camp.

There are two grade schools in the neighborhood that feed into the After School Care program. Children are bussed to the center and picked-up by parents. The center has two vans to pick up children from other schools.

The entire building needs to be renovated and updated. In addition, there are unused spaces in the basement that could be renovated to provide additional programming space.

The core recreation programs at Lucious Sanders include the following:

- After School Care (average attendance prior to COVID-19 was 40 children)
- Summer Day Camp (average attendance prior to COVID-19 was 120 children)
- Open Gym is popular for both youth (average of 25 attend each session) and adults (average of 60 attend each session).
- The youth basketball program is very popular with 240 participants last winter.
- Community family special events are popular including a fall festival and movies in the park

Current challenges related to recreation programming include:

- Lack of space
- Building is old and outdated

Recommendations for this center include:

- Renovate the spaces in the basement for programming
- Update the finishes in the entire building
- When seniors move out, repurpose those spaces for recreation programming
- Reconfigure entryway



Lucious Sanders Recreation Center youth

Mason Mill Recreation Center

Mason Mill Recreation Center is located at 1340-B McConnell Drive in Decatur and is situated in the center of the County on the far west side. This facility is less than 10 miles from two other DeKalb recreation centers: Tobie Grant and Hamilton and right next to the Central DeKalb Senior Center. There are two public facilities managed by the Decatur Parks and Recreation department within a few miles. In addition, the Decatur YMCA is less than five miles from Mason Mill. This is an area of DeKalb County where residents are very well served by a variety of public and private recreation facilities.

Mason Mill contains seven program rooms, a library, and offices – there is no gym at this facility. The building is two stories but the second floor is only accessible from an outside entrance. The surrounding park has a playground, a picnic pavilion, a garden, and tennis courts. There are two full-time staff and six regular part-time staff employed by the County at this center.

Core recreation programs at Mason Mill include the following:

- After School Care (average attendance prior to COVID-19 was 26 children)
- Summer Day Camp (average attendance prior to COVID-19 was 140 children)
- Youth computer classes and nature programs
- For active adults: Yoga, therapeutic massage, line dancing, Tai Chi, aerobics, meditation, reflexology, water colors, book club, and a Road Runners walking group
- For seniors: AARP Driving, strength training, quilting, bridge, canasta, and trips
- There is an active Garden Club at this facility that attracts 30 participants.
- This facility has a popular teen program during the summer months.
- Facility rentals are popular at this facility when space allows (primarily on Saturday).
- An outside contractor programs the tennis courts on this site.

Current challenges related to recreation programming include:

- Without a gym, programming space in this facility is very limited – Mason Mill is not large enough to host any large community special events.
- Program equipment at this facility is lacking, which prevents the offering of new programs.
- The building is old, tired, and in need of updating.
- The Senior Center that is close by is newer, more modern, and where most seniors in the area prefer to go to participate in public recreation programs.

Inter – Agency Cooperation:

- Although the adjacent senior center does all of its own programming (with little collaboration), the center director at Mason Mill does work with the staff at the senior center to coordinate events and the use of the shared parking.

Recommendations for this center include:

- Implement master plan renovations, including tennis complex modifications

If the master plan is not implemented, recommendations for this center include:

- Add a gymnasium
- Update the finishes in the building to improve the aesthetics
- Address the issue of accessing the second floor from the first floor without going outdoors

Midway Recreation Center

Midway Recreation Center is located at 3181 Midway Road in Decatur and is situated in the south central section of the County. This facility is located in the center of the triangle made up of Exchange, NH Scott, and Hamilton Recreation Centers. It is within five miles of two facilities managed by the Decatur Parks and Recreation Department: Decatur and Ebster Recreation Centers. Midway is equally distanced between the South DeKalb Family YMCA and the Samuel L Jones Boys & Girls Club. The residents around Midway live in an area that is heavily served by recreation facilities.

Midway has a gym and two classrooms. The site includes a pool, athletic fields, a playground, and a picnic pavilion. There are two full-time staff, and five regular part-time staff are employed by the County at this center.

The Core recreation programs at Midway include the following:

- After School Care (average attendance prior to COVID-19 was 45 children)
- Summer Day Camp (average attendance prior to COVID-19 with 125 children)
- School Break Camps (average attendance prior to COVID-19 with 25 children)
- Open Gym is popular with 50 adults and 25 seniors participating on a regular basis.
- Net Ball is a popular activity for woman and has been going strong for seven years.
- Youth Sports: basketball, track & field, and soccer
- Teen programming is strong at this center and the director works hard to help young adults find jobs that will prepare them for the future.
- For adults: golf instruction, yoga, and walking club
- Seasonal and holiday events are popular and well-attended.

Current challenges related to recreation programming include:

- Programming space is limited, therefore adding new programs is difficult.
- Partnerships are important but not easy to create.
- Marketing is limited – this center director calls people to remind them about programs.

Inter – Agency Cooperation:

- With a pool on-site, this center director works closely with the pool manager to offer additional programming for the community surrounding Midway Recreation Center.

Partnerships:

- The center director at this site takes the initiative to create partnerships to improve programs and services. Prior to the pandemic, he worked with five area principals to create a partnership that was beneficial for all involved. This can be a tedious process, as new partners need to be approved by a supervisor and then the board of commissioners.
- The staff at Midway Recreation Center collaborates with the Columbia Senior Residence and provide them free programs.
- A booster club has been created to help provide area children with needed items.

Recommendations for this center:

- Although the facility has been painted recently, the spaces are outdated and in need of renovation.

N.H. Scott Recreation Center

N.H. Scott Recreation Center is located at 2230 Tilson Road in Decatur and is situated in the southwest section of the County. This facility is located within a few miles two other DeKalb recreation centers: Gresham and Exchange. The Samuel L. Jones Boys & Girls Club is about five miles away.

N.H. Scott Recreation Center has a gym, five classrooms, a multipurpose space, and an office. This center sits in a large 42-acre park that includes tennis courts, athletic fields, basketball courts, and a playground. The center roof leaks and the pool on the site has been closed for ten years. There are three full-time staff and four regular part-time staff employed by the County at this center.

The core recreation programs at N.H. Scott include the following:

- After School Care (average attendance prior to COVID-19 was 50 children)
- Summer Day Camp (average attendance prior to COVID-19 was 90 children)
- School Break Camps (average attendance prior to COVID-19 was 25 children)
- Open Gym is popular for both youth and adults – there are two time slots for adults weekly while the youth play every day
- Youth sports: basketball, track & field, soccer, cricket, and baseball
- Active adults: low impact fitness and line dancing
- Rentals are popular

Current challenges related to recreation programming include:

- Located in the front of the building, the pool that has been closed for nearly ten years is the first thing people see. Some people are not aware that a thriving recreation center is also located in this park behind the empty pool.
- The facility is old, the roof leaks, and funds have been included in the budget to replace.
- The neighborhoods around N.H. Scott are changing and their expectations are increasing – requiring the need to upgrade the indoor spaces at N.H. Scott.

Partnerships:

- The center director at this site initiated a Friends of the Park support group to save the outdoor pool. This group continues to request amenities, including a fitness room and walking trails.
- Partnership agreements have been established with the Justin Lender apartment complex, the Atlanta Hawks, GRPA, and area non-profits to enhance existing programming.
- There is a desire for a partnership agreement with the local school district that would benefit both agencies. This center is across the street from a school and, prior to COVID-19, the center director started conversations with the principal to form a partnership that would be beneficial to both agencies.

Future Recommendations for this center include:

- Renovate or remove the pool
- Fix the roof leak
- Renovate a space to add a fitness room and indoor track
- Add walking trails to this large park in response to customer requests as well as the results of the public engagement sessions facilitated by the consulting team.

Redan Recreation Center

Redan Recreation Center is located at 1839 Phillips Road in Lithonia and is situated in the southeast section of the County. This facility is within five miles of Lucious Sanders Recreation Center.

One of the newest of the nine DeKalb recreation centers, Redan opened to the public in 2010. The facility includes a regulation size gym, a fitness center with a track, two offices and five programming rooms (games, dance, arts, multipurpose and computer lab), concessions, and a kitchen. There are three full-time staff and seven regular part-time staff employed by the County at this center.

The core recreation programs at Redan include the following:

- After School Care and Summer Camp programs are provided at this center by the Boys & Girls Club (with an average daily attendance of 130 prior to COVID-19)
- Open Gym for youth and adults
- Youth sports: basketball league, volleyball, indoor soccer, pickle ball, badminton, cheerleading, and martial arts
- Dance: Praise Dance, ballet, tap, and cardio drumming
- Active Adults: Silver Sneakers, line dancing, aerobics, Zumba, and self-defense
- Teens enjoy the film class and martial arts
- The holiday and family special events are popular and well attended

Current challenges related to recreation programming include:

- Advertising available programs and services at Redan is not easy. There are several schools in walking distance but only a few will distribute DeKalb County program fliers.

Partnerships:

- There is a partnership with Aetna for a local Farmers Market

Future Recommendations for this center include:

- Add a large sign at one or both entrances to increase visibility.
- Purchase laptops for the computer lab for residents to check-out.
- Add some amenities to the game room including a pool table and arcade style games.
- Replace the bleachers in the gym with a more durable version that is electronic for ease in moving in and out.
- Add key cards for a membership option at the fitness center.
- Add partitions at the front desk.
- Add touchless sanitizing and soap stations.

Tobie Grant Recreation Center

Tobie Grant Recreation Center is located at 644 Parkdale Drive in Scottdale and is situated in the center of the County. This facility is within a mile of Hamilton Recreation Center.

Tobie Grant has a capacity of 329 people and includes a gym (with banquet hall inside), a multipurpose room, library, and a kitchen. On the site, there is a pool, a softball field, 2 pavilions, and a playground. There is one full-time staff and one regular part-time staff employed by the County at this center.

The community around Tobie Grant is changing, as there is a great deal of new residential development. A new recreation center is being built on this site to replace Tobie Grant and is expected to open in 2022. The new facility will include a gym, fitness center, indoor track, computer lab, library, multipurpose space, and theatre space. It will provide many new programming opportunities for the neighborhood.

The core recreation programs at Tobie Grant include the following:

- After School Care (average attendance prior to COVID-19 was 14 children)
- Summer Day Camp (average attendance prior to COVID-19 was 50 children)
- School Break Camps (average attendance prior to COVID-19 was 5 children)
- Open Gym is popular for both youth and adults
- Youth sports: basketball and flag football
- Youth programs: chess and sign language classes
- A walking club for seniors
- Holiday and seasonal special events
- Rentals are popular on Saturday

Current challenges related to recreation programming include:

- It has been difficult to attract seniors to the current Tobie Grant building – the staff is hopeful the new facility will attract seniors once it is open to the public.

Recommendations for this center include:

- Empty or cover the pool
- Add information regarding the new community center being built on this site to DeKalb County website's "News and Current Projects" page to keep the community and staff informed of the progress. Photos could be added as the project progresses to build excitement.

DeKalb County Athletics Programming

The County plans and implements the following sports programs through the athletics department:

- Basketball (ages 5-18)
- Soccer (ages 5-12)
- Track & Field (ages 5-14)
- Adult Softball (men and coed)

All the athletic program registration is handled through the recreation centers. A recreation crew lines the fields and puts out nets and bases. The Park Maintenance crew provides the grass mowing. Officials are paid by the County.

Basketball is winter sport held at eight Recreation Centers and attracts approximately 1,400 children annually. Volunteers coach the program, and the officials are paid by the County. The County provides uniforms, which can be cumbersome to order and distribute.

Track & Field is a spring sport and the County uses middle school facilities and a high school stadium. This program attracts between 2,000 and 5,000 children annually (depending on the year). It can be difficult to use the schools, as requests need to be made with each principal. Some principals are more willing than others to share their facilities for this popular program.

Soccer is a fall sport and attracts 150 to 175 children. This is an introductory program for those that have never played before. There are multiple youth sports association that play all year round and provide a more competitive soccer opportunity. These groups permit fields through the County.

Adult Softball attracts 10 to 12 teams and is played at True Love Park. A men's league and a coed league are offered. Participation numbers are down, as the County attracted up to 20 teams in the past.

Current challenges to providing athletic opportunities in the County include:

- Program promotion is difficult, as many do not know what is offered. In the past, a seasonal brochure highlighted sports offerings but it is no longer published.
- Obtaining equipment and materials in a timely fashion can be difficult.
- Permitting the necessary space at the schools to run track & field is not easy, as every school treats the County differently.
- Staff consider this program area a "non-profit" center and that the goal is to provide for youth who cannot afford to play sports elsewhere.

Recommendations for athletics programming:

- Create an efficient process for athletics staff to purchase equipment and supplies in a timely manner.
- Create healthy relationships with all of the area schools so that obtaining space for the DeKalb track and field program is assured annually.
- Create a separate budget for the athletics department/staff so they are aware of the resources that are available to provide programs and services.

DeKalb County Aquatics Programming

The DeKalb County Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs Division manages six outdoor pools, each with a small splash pad (except at Midway), and a larger splash facility at Exchange Recreation Center. Although not open this year due to COVID-19, in a typical summer the following programs are offered at the pool facilities: leisure swims, swim lessons (group and private), swim team, aquatic aerobics, and a place for summer camps (DeKalb County and others) to swim. The pools are also rented to outside groups for parties and family events. Children between the ages of five to ten years are the most common pool guests.

There is an outdoor pool at N.H. Scott Recreation Center that has not been in operation for many years. There are indoor pools at many of the DeKalb County Schools but there is no agreement in place for shared usage. In 2019, the County ran the Browns Mill Family Aquatic Center for the last season. It has since been taken over by the City of Stonecrest.



youth swimming

Current challenges to aquatic programming include:

- All of the pools need some level of aesthetic work.
- All of the outdoor pools are now “cashless” due to past money handling issues. This has made it difficult for some guests who prefer to pay for a daily visit with cash.
- There is a maintenance contract with an outside vendor in place, and County aquatics staff are not allowed in the chemical rooms.
- It is difficult to locate information regarding outdoor swimming on the County’s website.
- Updating the website is tedious and time consuming, which can lead to inaccurate information being posted and subsequently confused customers.

Recommendations:

- There is an abandoned outdoor pool in a central County location with good parking. This might be a good joint project with either the DeKalb County Schools or a YMCA to purchase and operate. The facility could be a location for swim team training and swim meets. With the installation of a bubble, it may be able to be used year-round.
- The County should consider replacing the old pool at N. H. Scott Recreation Center. If replacing it is not an option, complete removal should be considered.
- Update the information regarding the Browns Mill Aquatic Center on the County’s website.

DeKalb County Recreation Opportunities

The map on the following page includes all of the DeKalb County recreation facilities, the recreation facilities managed by DeKalb municipalities, two YMCAs and two Boys & Girls Clubs. In addition, all of the public schools are marked with red flags. The map provides a clear picture as to where gaps are located in the County for recreation opportunities. It also identifies all of the opportunities that exist with the DeKalb County School District to partner and share spaces.

Common Themes and Recommendations

During the meetings with the center directors and coordinators, obstacles to effective programming were discussed as well as possible ideas for improvement. Several topics came up repeatedly; nearly every staff person mentioned the following:

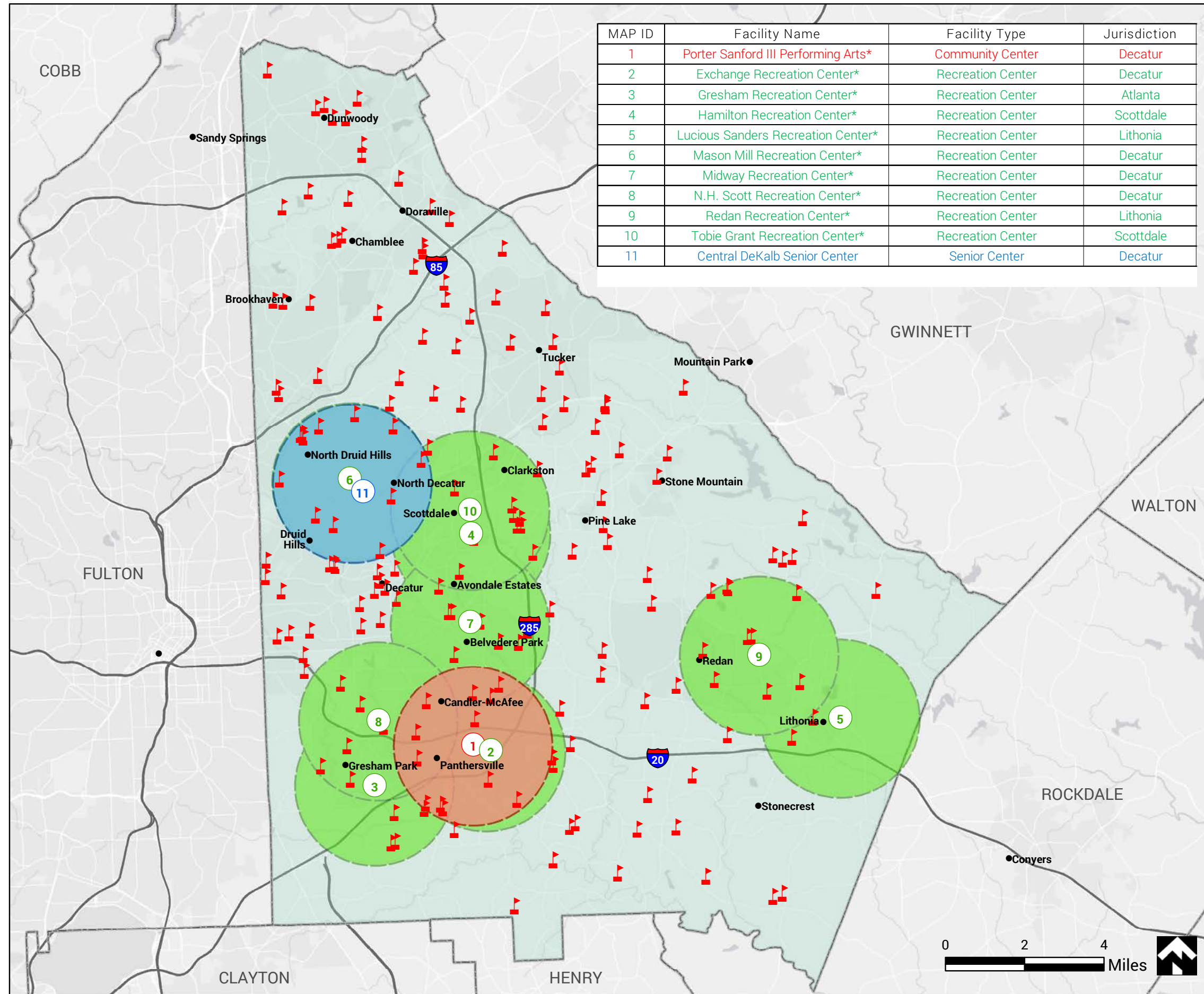
- The recreation centers are aging, maintenance can be difficult, and amenities provided are inconsistent across the County
- A need for effective County-wide partnerships
- A desire for knowledge and the ability to participate in creating the annual budget
- A more streamlined, efficient process for purchasing supplies and equipment
- The need for improved communication throughout County operations
- Increased support from the marketing department
- The need to open some centers on Sunday
- The need to charge a small fee for adult open gym and fitness center usage



Senior Olympics participants

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Figure 6.1: DeKalb County Indoor Facilities and Schools



INDOOR FACILITIES AND SCHOOLS

LEGEND

- DEKALB COUNTY
- ROADS
- INDOOR FACILITIES
- SCHOOLS
- PERFORMING ARTS CENTER SERVICE AREA
 - 2 MILES
- SENIOR CENTER SERVICE AREA
 - 2 MILES
- COUNTY RECREATION CENTERS SERVICE AREA
 - 2 MILES



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Facility Maintenance and Consistent Offerings

Six of the nine DeKalb County recreation centers are aging and are in need of renovations or replacement. Both Exchange and Redan have opened in the last ten years and construction for a new center on the same site as Tobie Grant is ongoing. At least two of the existing centers (Hamilton and Lucious Sanders) were former high schools and not designed to accommodate public recreation's space needs.

Throughout DeKalb, the recreation facilities owned and operated by the County provide an inconsistent level of amenities to the public. For example, eight of the nine have a gym and two of the nine have fitness centers and tracks. Very few have dedicated programming space for activities like dance, fitness, and art. This prevents the ability of the County to provide a consistent level of programming and equitable access across the system. Many DeKalb neighborhoods do not have access to a gym, while some areas have multiple choices from municipalities and other service providers, such as YMCAs, Boys & Girls Clubs, and/or private fitness facilities.

Several of the facilities have roof leaks and HVAC issues. Although funds are often included in the facility's annual budget for repairs, this information is not always shared with the center director. This results in the facility manager being unclear as to when issues will be addressed and staff feeling uninformed when answering the public's questions.

During the public engagement meetings held by Lose, when asked about funding priorities, the top response by far (tagged 431 times) was "improvement and maintenance of existing park and recreation facilities." The public and staff's insights align – improvement and maintenance are a high priority.

Neighborhood gentrification is occurring in some areas of DeKalb County. This is a concern of several center directors, as new residents have expressed higher expectations for programs and services than what the staff can currently provide.

Partnerships

All of the staff interviewed believe that partnerships are critical to their success as facility managers and coordinators. Staff currently create and manage these relationships independently. Some staff appear to be very comfortable and adept at reaching out to people and agencies outside of the department to create new partnerships and some staff struggle or do not know where to begin.

All staff expressed an interest in creating a formal usage agreement with the DeKalb County School District. With over 130 schools and nearly 100,000 students, an agreement would be beneficial to both agencies as well as the taxpayers who fund both. There is a perception that the Boys & Girls Clubs of DeKalb County have more access to the schools than the DeKalb County Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Department, which is a source of frustration for staff. Students across the County would benefit from facility and information sharing – especially in the areas where no DeKalb County recreation centers are present.

An internal system of formal partnership development at the leadership level would help ensure consistency across the County. Advantages of this top-down system include larger-scale collaborations, access to additional resources, less duplication of service, and a reach that is more expansive. Examples of common partnerships in large cities include professional sports teams, corporations, local non-profits, and public-private partnerships. Collaborative efforts with entities such as local YMCAs and the municipalities located within the County could help develop on a united post-pandemic service provision plan.

Budgeting

An annual budgeting process allows an agency to plan for anticipated revenue and expenses. In DeKalb County, the center directors and the coordinators are not included in the budget process and do not have any knowledge of the budget details for their facility or program area. Staff are not aware of any financial goals for their respective centers or program areas. The staff interviewed indicated that they only know if they are over budget with supplies when their supply requests are denied.

As a method by which to accurately anticipate revenue and expenses, the consulting team recommends that the County involves and trains the facility directors and the aquatics and athletics coordinators in the budget process. A typical expectation for recreation programmers and facility managers across the country is that they have budget development and management skills and understand why it is important to manage their responsibilities within the approved budget. All of the center directors and the two coordinators expressed an interest in learning about and participating in this important process.

Programming or facility management staff who participate in the budget process, learn where their program revenue comes from, and how money is spent will have a greater understanding and appreciation of the entire County's fiscal system. Participation in the process can result in more "buy-in" for expectations; revenue and expense figures can be used to hold staff accountable for fiscal performance).

To complement the increased budget skills, staff should be trained in how to generate reports from the registration software (ActiveNet) to gather program participation data. Budgeting and program participation monitoring should be managed simultaneously. Having solid knowledge of the registration software and the ability to leverage the software to generate the reports needed will provide staff the necessary tools to be able to participate in the budget process.

Supply Purchasing

In addition to not knowing budgeted amounts for supplies or uniforms, the process by which to request supplies is tedious and inefficient. At times, a supply list request gets reduced or rejected by supervisory staff making it difficult to run programs. Some staff have resorted to spending their own money in order to obtain needed supplies. If the cost for supplies exceeds what a staff person can spend out of their own pocket, some facility directors will reach out to people that they know in the community to see if they can donate funds to purchase what is needed.

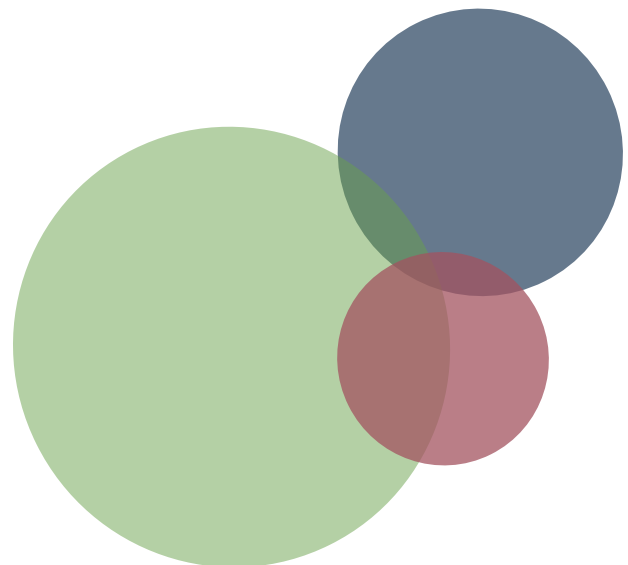
Communication and Collaboration

For many facility directors, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the County's lack of preparedness to manage a crisis. The center directors have worked together to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic with little support. These staff feel that, as an agency, the County needs to strengthen its ability to look ahead and anticipate issues before they arise, and present a unified County response when issues do arise. One facility director described a desire for more "out of the box" thinking from the leadership.

Many staff indicated they felt uninformed about many important items such as projects. Some staff were vaguely familiar with the new center that is currently under construction next to Tobie Grant Recreation Center. Keeping front-line leadership staff informed of County information could be achieved with regular communication methods, such as an email blast every two weeks. This will help ensure everyone is on the same page and communicate accurate information to the public.

Some recreation directors work together to plan programs and events; this type of collaboration could be more intentionally encouraged and facilitated. The County Performing Arts Centers and Senior Centers are housed in different departments, despite the fact the entities provide similar recreational services as the recreation centers. There is an opportunity for increased internal collaboration and synergy between the three groups of programmers, as many of the staff do not know each other, and they do not work together to provide programs and events. Quarterly inter-department meetings would facilitate the opportunity to provide updates, discuss challenges, plan events, and support continuous training.

The publication of County-wide plans would help inform internal staff as well as the public on topics such as facility renovations and/or replacements. Communication about positive topics, like new developments in the community, helps to build community pride and constituent support.



Marketing Support

Communicating all of DeKalb County Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs' programs and services is a complex task. To facilitate the communication process, the Marketing Department has requested a four-to-six-month lead time for new event and program information, which can be difficult for facility directors to adhere to in many situations. At times, the opportunity to add a new class or program presents itself, and staff do not have four to six months to wait. In these cases, the staff adds the program and attempts to advertise without Marketing's support. Sometimes they are successful with advertising for a new program independently, but often they are not.

Upon review, the consulting team identified opportunities for improvement to the County website. Overall, the site was inconsistent, not user friendly, and incomplete. For example, the home page contained links to parks, tennis, golf, and the recreation centers but not to the outdoor pools. The senior center information was included on a different department's page and there was no mention of senior opportunities on the recreation page. The consulting team struggled to find key information regarding DeKalb County programs and services. According to County staff, there have been situations where incorrect information has been posted on the website; the subsequent process to revise information was so tedious that residents obtained inaccurate information for a long period of time until information could be corrected. The consulting team recommends a website content and functionality audit from a customer-centric perspective.

To make it clear to the public what is available at each recreation center, the County might consider adding specific facility details for each site, including building size, center amenities (i.e., gym, fitness, track, multipurpose rooms), core programs, hours of operation, and amenities in the surrounding park (i.e., playground, pool, tennis courts, athletic fields, spray pad). Several center directors mentioned that it is common for people to walk in their facility and indicate that they did not know the facility was there or that the County managed it. Some additional exterior signage and way finding would be beneficial.

The website section titled "News and Current Project" would be a perfect location for photos of the new recreation center that is under construction at Tobie Grant. Building details could be included as well as a rendering or two that could build excitement for the brand-new facility that is planned to open in early 2022.

The County produced a seasonal program guide several years ago but it has since been eliminated. The guide was a useful tool for communicating information about programs and services, facility hours, and important registration deadlines. All the staff interviewed would like the County to produce a seasonal program guide to advertise County recreation programming. To offset the printing and mailing costs, many public park and recreation agencies sell advertising space in these guides.

Staff indicated that some school principals in the DeKalb are willing to deliver County flyers to their students and others are not. An agreement with the schools that covers usage, marketing, program promotion, and shared spaces was desired by every center director.

Building Hours

All of the community centers are currently open Monday – Saturday (pre-COVID-19). During the summer, the centers open early in the day to accommodate summer day camp. During the school year, the centers open a bit later to accommodate after school care.

None of the centers are currently open on Sunday, which is often a primary day for people of all ages to recreate. For centers with gyms or fitness centers (all but Mason Mill), it is recommended that the County reconsider opening on Sunday. For those centers with a fitness component (Exchange and Redan), the consulting team recommends that these centers open all day on Sunday. For those centers with only a gym (Gresham, Hamilton, Lucious Sanders, Midway, N.H. Scott and Tobie Grant), the recommendation is to open on Sunday afternoon to offer a few hours of open gym for youth and adults. As a way to offset the personnel expense, full time staff schedules could shift to cover weekend hours.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), good health is a major challenge in DeKalb County, as 30% of adults and 13% of high school students are obese. Opening up facilities and encouraging using the fitness center, a track, or attending an open gym could help to help address this health issue.

Fees and Charges

Many of the programs and services offered at the DeKalb recreation centers are free. Although fees are charged for After Care and Summer Camp, the fees are nominal and below the market rate. For comparison purposes, the fee for summer camp at DeKalb County is \$66 per week and at the Chamblee Parks and Recreation Department, the fee is \$120 per week. Most of the center directors expressed that the County's role is to provide for those who cannot afford another option. While this may be true, instead of pricing programs and services low, the County should consider increasing the fees incrementally each year and then institute a scholarship program for those who cannot afford to participate at the higher rate.

Even with a volunteer instructor or no instructor, there are overhead costs to programming, such as full-time and part-time staff costs, building maintenance, heating, cooling, and/or electricity. The County should consider implementing a small fee for adults to use of the fitness centers and attend open gym. All of the center directors firmly believe that their adult participants can afford to pay a nominal fee for these programs and services. In order to be "cashless" at each facility, the County could sell punch cards or memberships. Revenue generated through program fees could offset the expense of equipment, supplies, and facility repairs.

The current fees and charges structure has been the same for many years and is due to be reviewed and potentially increased. The fees and charges policy and its supporting philosophy should be clearly articulated to all the programming staff.

Key Performance Indicators

A key performance indicator (KPI) is a measurable value that demonstrates how effectively an organization or department is achieving its most important objectives. KPIs can be used to measure many things including efficiency, effectiveness, changes in process or procedures, and/or to detect problems, for example. Some of the benefits of using KPIs include:

- Maintain focus on, and momentum of, shared vision
- Clarify expectations
- Track performance (i.e., upward/downward trends)
- Quantify results
- Increase accountability
- Engage and empower staff
- Benchmarking

KPIs should be developed to be SMART goals (which means they should be specific, measurable, achievable, results-orientated, and time-bound). They should be easy to understand, designed to provide staff with relevant information, and shared with appropriate staff so there is buy-in.

The consulting team recommends that the Department starts tracking a small number of KPIs, and then increase the quantity of indicators measured over time. The center supervisors should collaboratively select five or six of the following metrics as a starting point and add in new metrics to track over time.

- Success rate of classes offered (or cancellation rate)
- Total revenues, total expenses, and total program net
- Participation numbers
- Program satisfaction
- Turnover rate of part-time and/or seasonal staff
- Retention rate of part-time and/or seasonal staff
- Customer retention percentage (for those programs that have multiple levels like swim lessons, the % that return, or membership based activities such as tennis or fitness centers)
- Amount of money refunded due to customer dissatisfaction
- Facility utilization rates
- % of programs in the introductory and growth stages
- % of households who participate in programs
- % of revenue from new programs
- Program capacity rate (% of the class filled, according to the class maximum)
- Customer satisfaction toward the registration process
- % cost recovery goals met
- Instructor satisfaction of working for DeKalb
- General employee satisfaction

The metrics chosen should be easy to measure, gathered, and reported on a quarterly basis. After the Department has some history of developing the measures, targets can be established. It is a good practice to include results in an annual report as well as to recalibrate the measures to make sure the Department is measuring what is most important.

RECREATION DEPARTMENT ACTION ITEMS

Facility Recommendations

Exchange Recreation Center

- Repair the roof leak
- Add a ramp to the back entrance and increase the number of handicapped parking spaces behind the facility

Gresham Park Recreation Center

- Update the interior of the facility
- Expand facility to provide more program space for programs with wait lists such as the After Care program

Hamilton Recreation Center

- Tear down the wing of the building that is not being used
- Renovate the multipurpose rooms into dedicated activity rooms (e.g., dance, fitness, computer lab, dedicated space for seniors)
- Purchase another van for this facility

Lucious Sanders Recreation Center

- Renovate the spaces in the basement for programming
- Update the finishes in the entire building
- Repurpose senior spaces for recreation programming
- Reconfigure entryway

Mason Mill Recreation Center

- Add a gymnasium
- Update the finishes in the building to improve the aesthetics
- Address the issue of accessing the second floor from the first floor without going outdoors

Midway Recreation Center

- Renovate and update interior finishes

N.H. Scott Recreation Center

- Renovate or remove the pool
- Fix the roof leak
- Renovate a space to add a fitness room and indoor track
- Add walking trails to this large park

Redan Recreation Center

- Add a large sign at one or both entrances to increase visibility
- Purchase laptops for the computer lab for residents use
- Add amenities to the game room including a pool table and arcade style games
- Replace the bleachers in the gym with a more durable, electronic version
- Add key cards for a membership option at the fitness center
- Add partitions at the front desk
- Add touchless sanitizing and soap stations

Tobie Grant Recreation Center

- Empty or cover the pool
- Add information regarding the new community center being built on this site to DeKalb County website's "News and Current Projects" page to keep the community and staff informed of the progress



Aquatic Recommendations

- Budget for each pool to get a refresh each spring prior to opening for the summer season
- Train the appropriate aquatics staff on pool operations and allow them to conduct some pool maintenance to save on costs with the contract and to increase the pride of operating a public pool



child swimming

General Recommendations

1. Create consistency between the centers as some neighborhoods have access to a gym and a fitness center whereas others do not.
2. Open all recreation centers on Sunday when people are looking for ways to recreate.
3. Create a standardized, internal system where recreation center staff could create partnerships that would enhance programming at their facility.
4. Provide comprehensive training to center staff on the entire County budget process from start to finish.
5. Train staff how to generate reports from the ActiveNet registration software so that they are able to monitor their financial progress throughout the fiscal year.
6. Improve the supply purchasing process with input from center staff and then train everyone on the new process.
7. Improve the content and increase the frequency of consistent communication to all recreation staff to keep them informed of County news.
8. Improve the County website to make it easier for constituents to find information on recreation programs, facilities, and services.
9. Increase the marketing support provided to recreation staff to better inform the community of opportunities.
10. Bring back the printed program guide to increase program promotion.
11. Update the fees and charges policy and evaluate which programs should no longer be free such as open gym and fitness in order to increase the revenue generation.
12. After the backlog of preventative maintenance and needed repairs are addressed at all of the centers, the County should conduct a feasibility study to add two large recreation centers (on opposite ends of the community) that include a large gym (divisible into smaller spaces), fitness center, group exercise studios, senior spaces, a teaching kitchen, multipurpose space, childcare, track, and an indoor pool that includes a three tanks: leisure, lap, and warm water therapy pools. These regional facilities would have the spaces to add new programming that is lacking now in the smaller centers due to limited space.
13. Work with center staff to create key performance indicators for the centers in order to monitor progress towards pre-established goals and objectives.

Summary

The information gleaned through the staff interviews helped to identify several areas where opportunities exist and provided an opportunity to celebrate existing areas of success. As already stated, the team is a passionate group of professionals that have dedicated over 142 years to the County - they sincerely want the best for their constituents.

The Department's mission statement reads "The Parks and Recreation Department is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life of the citizens of DeKalb County by connecting communities to exceptional parks, recreational facilities, and cross-generational programs that promote healthy and active lifestyles."

In order for this mission to become more of a reality at the County recreation centers, the consulting team recommends that the County leadership provide enhanced support to all of the recreation centers and their respective directors. This support can be provided through more timely building repairs, the creation of agency-wide partnerships, training and participating in the budgeting process, a more streamlined process to secure program supplies, increased communication throughout the County, and increased support from the marketing department. In addition, the County should reconsider the decision to close the recreation centers on Sunday and start to implement nominal fees for use of the fitness centers and adult open gym. To prioritize all these recommendations, the consulting team further recommends a committee of seasoned center directors be formed to work with leadership on a plan to move forward.



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Section 7



PARKS & RECREATION TRENDS

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07 PARKS & RECREATION TRENDS

The following information details parks and recreation industry trends, grouped according to categories, including:

- General
- Fitness
- Aquatics
- National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Trends
- Age-Related
- Park Design

Along with these trends, it is also important to note the significant impact COVID-19 currently has and will have in the future in parks and recreation. The design of parks and facility spaces and the management and offering of recreation programs has already significantly changed the way services are offered as of the summer of 2020. COVID-19 will continue to impact the way parks and recreation agencies will operate in the future.

General Trends

Environmental Stewardship

Parks and recreation officials embrace their roles in environmental leadership, and according to the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), most believe they should be the environmental leader within municipal government and encourage members of the community to be better environmental stewards. In the past five years, environmental stewardship has become more important to 80 percent of agencies nationwide, and there is a national trend toward providing education and awareness opportunities (classes and special events) that encourage conservation and environmental stewardship.

Environmental education activities are the most commonly planned new program addition for parks and recreation departments, with over 60% of organizations reporting that they will offer additional services to meet the need in their communities.

Recycling has traditionally been a cornerstone of conservation efforts in park and recreation agencies, but it is becoming a much more difficult with China's recycling plants closing off access to recycle paper waste materials that exceed more than 0.3 percent contamination. What happens when recycling is no longer a viable option? Park and Recreation agencies will need to reexamine the messaging that has become an important and long-standing part of the park experience to encourage stewardship in other ways. (NRPA 11/2019)



Arabia Mountain Naturalist Program

Technology

Parks and recreation agencies are consistently embracing the use of technology for a variety of purposes, including the utilization of wearable technology for fitness class instruction, monitoring park visitors, biometric identification at entrances to public facilities and programs, and scientific uses, such as surveying fire-prone landscapes and charting the spread of invasive species. Facial recognition software might be coming to parks and recreation sooner than one might think, as it already has for retail businesses and law enforcement.

Wi-Fi enabled smart parks are popping up all over the nation in municipalities of all sizes. The smart park allows digitally tethered citizens to remain connected to their critical applications while still being outdoors. Not only do municipalities benefit from higher attendance by investing in smart parks, connected visitors are more likely to share and post photos, videos, and messages of their time at the park to their social followers, which serves as free marketing, and third-party validation and can further help to increase park usage.

Some smart parks also provide on-site digital displays and mobile apps that promote park and facility features and allow guests to register for upcoming events and activities while such offerings are top-of-mind. Such conveniences are both revenue generators and attendance boosters. These types of kiosks and apps can also serve as education tools, as they can provide area history or fun facts about local flora and fauna.

At a time when it feels like every coffee shop and airport terminal is increasing the availability of charging stations, it should be no surprise that some communities are adding solar-powered charging benches to their parks.

Mobile-based games, such as Pokémon Go and other geocache and digital treasure-hunting applications, encourage socialization and outdoor recreation by challenging people to search for collectable digital tokens that they can find in their local park or preserve through geolocation technology. By engaging young people in games that are a combination of technology and outdoor recreation, parks and recreation agencies can help engage the next generation of leaders and demonstrate the importance that parks play in the community.

A technology solution created by CivicPlus called “311” is a citizen request management system that assists park staff with maintenance issues. This tool allows guests to report observed maintenance needs from any connected device. A photo can be taken and geo-tagged and then sent with the request, streamlining the repair process.

Partnerships

• Public • Private • Intradepartmental •

Burgeoning populations require access to facilities outside of the current inventory in typical parks and recreation agencies, and the ability to partner with other departments within a municipality is crucial to meeting the programming needs of a community. Forming healthy partnerships with public libraries and school districts to utilize facilities and collaborate on programs is one of the top priorities for agencies that do not currently have agreements in place. Additionally, offering cooperative, consortium-based programs with existing nonprofit and private entities allows several organizations to join partnerships to collectively offer programs in specific niche areas. For example, if one organization has the best computer labs, facilities, and instructors then they offer that program for the consortium. If another organization has largest aquatic center with trained staff then they offer aquatics programs for the consortium, potentially eliminating duplication in programming. The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the need for partnerships due to budget and staff cuts.

Niche Programming

Decades ago, recreation agencies focused on offering an entire set of programs for a general audience. Since that time, market segments have been developed, such as programming specifically for seniors. Recently, more market segments have been developed for specialty audiences such as the LGBTQ audience, retirees, military veterans, cancer patient programs, mental health and mental illness support, and inclusion for individuals with visible and invisible disabilities. Organizations are taking a much more holistic approach to program and service offerings, beyond what it typically thought of as a recreation program.

Generational Programming

There has been an increase in the number of offerings for families with children of all ages. This is a departure from past family programming that focused nearly entirely on younger children and preschoolers. Activities such as Family Fossil Hunt and Family Backpacking and Camping Adventure have proven very popular for families with teens. This responsiveness to the Generation X and Generation Y parents of today is an important step, as these age groups place a high value on family. GameTime's "Challenge Course" is an outdoor obstacle course that attracts people of all ages and backgrounds to socialize with family and friends while improving their fitness. This type of playground encourages multigenerational experiences.

Animal-Friendly Facilities

A dog park is a great way to give people an opportunity to get some fresh air, enjoy time with their dogs, and bring communities together. With 90 million dogs residing in the United States, dog parks continue to be the fastest growing type of park (according to NRPA)—especially in urban areas. Not everyone wants to live next door to a dog park, but they are desired in nearly every community.

Fitness Playgrounds

Some municipalities are installing fitness playgrounds that can be used by children and adults, such as Burke Playground's "ELEVATE® Fitness Course." With three levels of challenge and multiple options within each level, ELEVATE® offers experiences for beginner, intermediate, and advanced visitors to improve fitness and have fun.

Fitness Specific Program Trends

Each year the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) conducts a survey of worldwide fitness trends. Now in its 14th year, the ACSM circulates an electronic survey to thousands of fitness professionals around the world to determine health and fitness trends. The list below includes the top 15 fitness trends for 2020.

Wearable Technology

Wearable technology, which includes activity trackers, smart watches, heart rate monitors, GPS tracking devices, and smart eye glasses (designed to show maps and track activity), has been one of the top three trends since 2016. Examples include fitness and activity trackers like those from Misfit, Garmin, Pebble Time, Juboury, Samsung, Basis, Jawbone, Fitbit, and Apple. These devices can track heart rate, calories, sitting time, and much more. It is estimated that wearable technology is a \$95 billion industry.

High-Intensity Interval Training

HIIT Training involves short bursts of high-intensity exercise followed by a short period of rest or recovery and typically takes less than 30 minutes to perform (although it is not uncommon for these programs to be much longer in duration.) HIIT training has been a top five trend since 2014.

Group Training

Group exercise instructors teach, lead, and motivate individuals through intentionally designed, group exercise classes for more than five participants. Group programs are designed to be motivational and effective for people at different fitness levels, with instructors using leadership techniques that help individuals in their classes achieve fitness goals. There are many types of classes and equipment, from aerobics and bicycles to dance classes.

Training with Free Weights

Strength training remains popular in all sectors of the health and fitness industry and for many different kinds of clients. Free weights, barbells, kettlebells, dumbbells, and medicine ball classes do not just incorporate barbells into another functional class or activity. Instructors begin by teaching the proper form and technique for each exercise and then progressively increase the resistance. New exercises are added periodically starting with proper form and technique. Many younger clients of both community-based programs and commercial clubs train almost exclusively using weights. In today's gyms, however, there are many others (men and women, young and old, children, and patients with a stable chronic disease) whose focus is on using weight training to improve or maintain strength.

Personal Training

Personal training is a one-on-one workout with a trainer that begins with fitness testing and goal setting. The trainer then works with the client and prescribes workouts specific to their needs. The profession of personal training is becoming more accessible online, in clubs, in the home, and in worksites that have fitness facilities. Since this survey was first published in 2006, personal training has been ranked in the top 10.

Exercise is Medicine

Exercise is Medicine® (EIM) is a global health initiative that is focused on encouraging primary care physicians and other health care providers to include physical activity when designing treatment plans for patients and referring their patients to exercise professionals. In addition, EIM recognizes fitness professionals as part of the health-care team. EIM was number 10 in 2019 jumping up to number 6 in 2020.

Body Weight Training

Body weight training uses minimal equipment which makes it an inexpensive way to exercise effectively. Although most people think of body weight training as being limited to push-ups and pull-ups, it can be much more than that. This type of training first appears in the trends survey in 2013 at number 3.

Fitness Programs for Older Adults

This trend continues to stress the fitness needs of the Baby Boomers and older generations. People are working longer, living longer, and remaining active much longer. Fitness professionals should take advantage of the growing market of older adults now retiring by providing age-appropriate and safe exercise programs for this once-ignored sector of the population. The highly active older adult can be targeted to participate in more rigorous exercise programs, including strength training, team sports, and HIIT when appropriate. Even the elderly who are frail can improve their balance and ability to perform activities of daily living when given appropriate functional fitness program activities.

Health/Wellness Coaching

This type of coaching uses one-on-one (or small groups) where the coach provides support, goal setting, guidance and encouragement. The focus is on the client's values, needs, vision, and goals using changes in behavior to improve health. Health and wellness coaching has been in the top 20 trends since 2010.

Employing Certified Fitness Professionals

The importance of hiring fitness professionals who are educated and certified through fully accredited programs is becoming a trend. More certification programs have become accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies, allowing employers easy access to validate certification through the US Registry of Exercise Professionals.

Exercise for Weight Loss

Exercise in circumscribed weight loss programs has been a top 20 trend since the survey was first started. Most diet programs include some kind of exercise program into the daily plan of caloric reduction, adding the caloric expenditure of physical activity.

Functional Fitness Training

This trend involves using strength training to improve balance, coordination, muscular strength, and endurance to improve the activities of daily living for older adults as well as in clinic settings.

Outdoor Activities

Outdoor activities such as group walks, group rides, or organized hiking groups are gaining in popularity. These can be short events, day long events, or planned weeklong excursions. Typically, people meet at a local park, hiking area, or bike trail with a designated leader. This trend for health and fitness professionals to offer outdoor activities to clients began in 2010 and has been in the top 20 ever since 2012.

Yoga

There are many forms of Yoga and it has moved up and down the trends list for over 10 years. There are several certifications in the many yoga formats as well as plenty of on-demand videos.

Licensure for Fitness Professionals

Several professions in the U.S. and around the world are regulated by local, state, and national licensure. People cannot refer to themselves as a medical doctor or nurse without holding a license. In most states, this is true for physical therapists and dieticians as well. In the fitness industry, there is now a trend to pursue regulation of fitness professionals such as personal trainers and exercise physiologists. This trend first appeared on the list in 2018 (ranked 16) and it fell in 2019 (ranked 18) before jumping up to 15 this year.

Aquatic Trends

Pool Design

Municipal pools have shifted away from the traditional rectangle shape, and in many cases contain zero depth entry, play structures that include multiple levels, spray features, and small to medium slides, and separate play areas segmented by age/ability.

Water Fitness

Warm water therapy sections of indoor pools will continue to grow in popularity with the aging population, creating a shallow space for low-impact movement at a comfortable temperature enables programming options to multiply. “Endless” or current pools that are small and allow for low impact, higher intensity movement are becoming popular as well. The concept of water fitness is a huge trend in the fitness industry, where historically land-based programs like aqua yoga, aqua Zumba, aqua spin, aqua step, and aqua boot camp are popular. Whether recovering from an injury, looking for ease-of-movement exercise for diseases like arthritis, or simply shaking up a fitness routine, all demographics are gravitating to the water for fitness. Partnerships can be important such as cardiac patients from nearby hospitals, and arthritis or multiple sclerosis patients can use these the pools for therapy.

Youth Programming

Swim lessons generally include the most significant number of participants and revenues for public pool operations. Programs can be offered for all ages and levels, including private, semiprivate and group lessons. Access to swimming pools is a popular amenity for summer day camp programs.

Spray Parks

Spray parks (or spray grounds) are now a common replacement for aging swimming pools, particularly because they still provide the community with an aquatic experience without the high cost of traditional pools. Spray parks do not require high levels of staffing, require only minimal maintenance, and offer a no-cost (or low-cost) alternative to a swimming pool. A spray park typically appeals to children ages 2 – 12 and can be a stand-alone facility in a community or incorporated inside a family aquatic center.



youth swimming

NRPA Trend Predictions

Each year, the NRPA publishes an article about industry trends. In the January 2020 edition of the Parks and Recreation Magazine, Top Trends in Parks and Recreation for 2020, Richard Dolesh lists the following trends:

- Video camera surveillance in parks and facilities is expanding rapidly. The technology for video surveillance has improved and it has become much more affordable. With access to a power source no longer needed due to solar options, cameras can be placed fairly easily in remote locations.
- Recreational and commercial drones have not been welcome in many public parks, but the notion of using them for natural resource inventory, park inspections and search and rescue operations is very appealing. Amazon has applied for a patent to implement drone delivery by “intermodal” shipping, so the situation could evolve pending a few more FAA approvals.
- With the proliferation of esports and gamers hiring coaches to help them improve performance, we can expect esports coming to public recreation centers soon. Some innovative agencies are already building space for this type of activity. Dolesh predicts that in 2020, at least 50 public park and recreation agencies will begin to contract with Esports coaches and offer this type of programming.
- Due to the number of lawsuits claiming that this product caused cancer, Glyphosate (Round-Up) will soon likely be banned across the country. Some cities are already banning the use of this product leaving park and recreation agencies few alternatives to stop the spread of invasive plants and control weeds in park landscapes.
- In response to climate change, park and recreation agencies are re-evaluating their parks with a desire to increase their ability to reduce urban heat through the natural cooling of tree canopy and shade. Dolesh predicts that new parks, linear green space, and trails will be designed to cool communities, and that some agencies will keep parks open all night long to accommodate the demand for recreation at a time when the temperature drops enough to permit outdoor activities.
- As park and recreation provide before and after school care, food and nutrition assistance and address the impacts of homelessness, it’s clear the mission has expanded beyond traditional community-based recreation programming. Recreation centers are now becoming community wellness hubs, as some agencies are joining other public-sector service providers to develop a unified approach to social services, law enforcement, health, nutrition, and recreation for all ages and abilities. The National Park and Recreation Association is providing support as local agencies develop innovative models for community wellness hubs.
- “Adult Recess” is very popular in larger cities with nearly 1,000 people showing up for outdoor adult recess games like tetherball, hopscotch and kickball. Adult recess leagues have been formed in some locations. “Cause-related” programming is also successful as people want to feel like they are making a difference. A 5K event that pairs up shelter dogs with participants is very popular. People also like programs that are “Insta-worthy” so that they can take a cool photo and post to social media.
- E-scooters, e-mountain bikes and other motorized personal mobility devices may frustrate park administrators by causing conflicts with others on trails but they open new opportunities for people to get to parks and to use parks. In some areas, these devices are banned from parks. Some cities are developing shared bicycle docks to increase access for park visitors. The use of these devices will continue to grow in popularity but the impacts to public parks and recreation remain to be seen.
- With 90 million dogs residing in the US, Dog Parks continue to be the fastest growing type of park. Not everyone wants to live next door to a dog park, but they are desired in nearly every community.

Trends for Youth 13 and Under

Traditional Sport Programming

Participation in the traditional sports of basketball, football, and soccer has been trending downward across the country. Baseball participation has also experienced declines, but there is currently small upward movement. However, travel teams for these sports were strong prior to COVID-19. It is estimated that up to 50% of the private, travel sports clubs will fold, putting pressure on municipal programs to fill the gaps.

STEM or STEAM Programs

STEM or STEAM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) programs including arts programming, is another area of growing popularity. Some examples include learn to code, design video games, mod Minecraft, create with Roblox, engineer robots, print 3D characters, and build laptops.

Youth Fitness

The organization Reimagine Play developed a list of the top 10 trends for youth fitness. The sources for their trends information comes from ACSM's (American College of Sports Medicine) Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends, ACE Fitness, and SHAPE America. The top trends include:

- Physical education classes are moving from sports activities to physical literacy curriculums that include teaching fundamentals in movement skills and healthy eating
- High Intensity Interval Training classes
- Wearable technology and digital fitness media
- Ninja warrior training and gyms
- Outdoor recreational activities
- Family fitness classes
- Kids obstacle course races
- Youth running clubs

Summer and School Break Camps

Participation in park and recreation youth camp programs continues to be very strong. For some agencies, these programs are the most significant revenue producers.

Nature Related Programming

There is an international movement to connect children, their families and their communities to the natural world. The New Nature Movement, which includes adults, is having an impact. In addition to new nature programming, nature-themed play spaces are also becoming popular such as "The Mud Kitchen & Word Garden" at Morton Arboretum in Lisle, IL.

Trends for Teens/Younger Adults Ages 13-24 Years

ESports



Esports (also known as electronic sports, e-sports, or eSports) is a form of competition using video games. Forbes reported in December 2019 that Esports audiences exceed 443 million people across the world and the International Olympic Committee is considering it as a new Olympic sport. Local recreation applications include training classes, open play, tournaments, and major competition viewing.

Parkour



Parkour is a physical training discipline that challenges the participant to move their body through obstacle courses, very much like military training. Using body movements like running, jumping, and swinging, the participant moves through static indoor courses or outdoor urban environments.

Outdoor Active Recreation



This includes activities such as kayaking, canoeing, stand-up paddle boarding, snow shoeing, skiing, snowboarding, mountain biking, and climbing. There are rental opportunities for equipment in many of the activities.

Life Sports



According to LERN's "Top Trends in Recreation Programming, Marketing and Management" article "life sports" are a new priority in the recreation world, where the focus is on developing youth interests in activities that they can enjoy for a lifetime, like biking, kayaking, tennis, golf, swimming, and jogging/walking.

Holistic Health



Park and recreation's role in maintaining a holistic lifestyle will continue to grow. Opportunities to practice mindfulness, authentic living, and disconnection from electronic media are intentionally being sought out. Programs to support mental health, including those that help to combat anxiety, perfectionism, and substance abuse in youth and young adults are increasingly needed.

Trends for Adults 25-54

Aerobic Activities

For most age groups, swimming for fitness or weight training are the two most frequently mentioned activities that people indicate they would like to participate in. Running, walking, and biking for fitness continue to show strong and consistent growth. A good balance of equipment and classes is necessary to keep consistent with trends.

Fun Fitness

“Fun” fitness is a current trend. Exercises like “P90x,” “Insanity,” or “Crossfit” have proven that a lot of equipment to get fit isn’t required. Since these programs have become popular, newer versions have become available, some cutting the time in half to look and feel fit. These types of classes have been and will continue to grow in popularity at recreation departments and fitness centers.

Group Cycling

Group cycling continues in popularity as the younger fitness enthusiasts embrace this high-performance group exercise activity, though, group cycling is not projected to grow much beyond current participation numbers.

Yoga

While Pilates has shown an incredible 10-year growth trend, the past three years have seen a decline in participation. Perhaps participation migrated to Yoga, as participation is up across all levels for the year. Yoga is more class based, while Pilates is more of an individual activity. The Millennial fitness participants (ages 26 to 40) are showing a higher propensity to go with group oriented programs.

Outdoor Fitness

Many agencies around the country have added fitness equipment in parks. In Mecklenburg County, NC, their outdoor exercise sites are called Fitzones. To place the equipment in the most ideal locations, they looked at neighborhood health disparities. Utilizing numerous data points (% obesity in surrounding area, income, population density around the park, rates of diabetes, mortality rates, etc.) and GIS mapping, this data was overlaid with their parks.

Cornhole

Cornhole is a low-impact, low-cost activity that can be played by people of all ages. Young adults are signing up for leagues (which can be held indoors or outdoors and are offered all year long). It doesn’t take any skill, and it’s a social activity. Although it can be offered recreationally, some competitive leagues are offered, as well. This would be a great addition to adult programming during and following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Trends for Adults 55+

Lifelong Learning

A Pew Research Center survey found that 73% of adults consider themselves lifelong learners. Do-it-yourself project classes and programs that focus on becoming a more “well-rounded” person are popular. Phrases like, “how to” can be added to the agency website’s search engine optimization as consumers now turn to the Internet as their first source of information regarding how-to projects. Topics like safeguarding online privacy are also trending.

Fitness and Wellness

As mentioned previously, programs such as yoga, Pilates, tai chi, balance training, chair exercises, and others continue to be popular with the older generation.

Encore Programming

This is a program area for baby boomers who are soon to be retired and focuses on a broad range of programs to prepare people for transitions into retirement activities. Popular programs for 55+ market include fitness and wellness (specifically yoga, mindfulness, tai chi, relaxation, personal training, etc.) drawing and painting, photography, languages, writing, computer and technology, social media, cooking, mahjong, card games, volunteering, and what to do with your time during retirement. Howard County Maryland Department of Recreation and Parks is an example of an agency that is pursuing Encore programs.

Specialized Tours

Participants are looking for more day trips that highlight unique local experiences or historical themes. For example, a focus on authentic food, guided night walks, bike tours, concentration on a specific artist’s work, and ghost walks are among the themes being sought out.

Creative Endeavors

Improv classes are specifically targeting age groups with classes called, “Humor Doesn’t Retire.” Workshops and groups help seniors play, laugh, and let loose while practicing mental stimulation, memory development, and flexibility.

Pickleball

With 2.8 million people in the country playing Pickleball, it is a trend not to be taken lightly. Though not at its peak, Pickleball is still trending nationwide as the fastest growing sport in America with the active aging demographic, as 75% of core players are age 55 or older. It can be played as singles or doubles, indoors or out, and is easy for beginners to learn but can be very competitive for experienced players. The game has developed a passionate following due to its friendly, social nature and its multigenerational appeal.

Park Design Trends

Sustainability

Sustainability and eco-friendliness have become a priority in park design. Parks provide ideal opportunities for green infrastructure, as they are often already highly visible, multifunctional public spaces that typically include green elements. The use of green infrastructure has increased over the last decade as knowledge of its benefits has grown. High-performance landscapes with green infrastructure provide the maximum amount of benefits to communities, including:

- Green jobs
- Opportunities for recreation, education, and relaxation
- Economic growth
- Improved water and water quality
- Community resilience
- Lower urban heat island effects
- Flood risk management
- New and improved wildlife habitat

The implementation of green storm water infrastructure duplicates a natural process to prevent, capture, and/or filter storm water runoff. A survey by the Trust for Public Land found that more than 5,000 acres of parkland in 48 major cities have been modified in some way to control storm water. With community parks containing thousands of acres across the country, there is a multitude of opportunities for integrating green infrastructure into park systems nationwide.

Common green storm water infrastructure projects include bio-retention, bio swales, constructed wetlands, impervious surface disconnections, green roofs, permeable pavements, rainwater harvesting, stream restoration, urban tree canopy, land conservation, vegetation management, and vegetated buffers.

Inclusive Playgrounds

Well-designed inclusive parks and inclusive playgrounds welcome children of all abilities to play, learn, and grow together. An inclusive playground takes away the barriers to exclusion, both physical and social, providing a “sensory rich” experience for all. Accommodating physical disabilities is one component of an inclusive playground—this refers to providing wheelchair-accessible routes and ramp transfers points. Customized equipment, such as special swings, allow all kids to enjoy the playground as it is meant to be enjoyed.

An inclusive playground also provides a number of different opportunities for children to explore. They are able to integrate all the senses and the amenities encourage social play. A true inclusive playground doesn’t mean that there is a special piece of equipment in a separate area off to the side, but rather that the space is designed as a cohesive community where play opportunities are integrated throughout. These types of park facilities stress the importance of inclusion in daily activities, regardless of ability level. More and more parks and recreation agencies across the country are installing inclusive playgrounds to better meet the needs of all constituents.

COVID-19 Response

The “new normal” in the parks and recreation world will be vastly different from recent history. As parks and facilities reopen with new guidelines and programming resumes with physical distancing and smaller participant-to-instructor ratios, operational budgets will continue to take a hit. Many parks and recreation agencies that are starting to resume programming are experiencing low registration rates, as parents are hesitant to send their children to public places. Although all areas of programming will be affected, two areas that are likely to be hit very hard by the pandemic are youth sports and child care.

Youth Sports

The Aspen Institute estimates that many private and nonprofit youth sports organizations will not survive the COVID-19 pandemic. Sponsorships are likely to diminish. Many coaches who have gone without a paycheck for the past several months might have moved on, and 50% of parents fear that their children might get sick if they resume youth sports when restrictions are lifted. A total of 46% of parents fear they will become ill watching a youth sports event. Financial concerns are also a factor when considering a return to youth sports, as 54% of sports parents’ finances have been negatively impacted by the pandemic.

Travel sports are more expensive and bring a greater risk of spreading the virus. The CDC encourages organizations to limit the mixing of groups and has recommended that most organized sports not be held during social distancing restrictions. The U.S. Soccer Federation released return-to-play guidelines in early June 2020, and it is recommending no travel tournaments in different regions, even once games resume. It appears from the research that families might be looking to scale back, stay closer to home, and spend less money on youth sports experiences. All of these factors will likely put pressure on public parks and recreation agencies to provide local, affordable, equitable, and quality sports options for all children, regardless of ability.

Child Care

According to the New York Times, the value of the child care sector in the United States was \$47.2 billion prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, this is one of the industries that will be hit the hardest, as it relies on the ability of customers to safely show up day after day and to be able to pay for the privilege.

The United States had a child care crisis before COVID-19, and the pandemic will make it much worse. Currently, child care providers receive no meaningful public investment and essentially operate as small businesses. Child care providers are treated like private enterprises, like private gyms, and they rely solely on tuition fees. While there are public subsidies available to child care providers to support the enrollment of children from low-income families, federal and state government support is minimal.

Most child care providers operate on very thin margins with little cash reserves, and the complete loss of revenue has forced many of these businesses to close their doors. In Massachusetts, nonemergency child care programs were directed to close in late March and to remain closed through June 29. The estimated loss is \$250 million in private revenue per month (based on a study of the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care).

Once child care facilities are allowed to reopen, they are likely to remain unstable due to under-enrollment as many parents will not feel safe sending their child back to a group care setting. Constituents might put pressure on parks and recreation agencies to bridge the gap and provide safe, affordable child care options for residents.

As the country continues to evolve during the pandemic, trends will continue to change, as well. What was popular a year ago might never return. Parks and recreation professionals will need to stay current on trends and experiment with new programming in their community to see what works and what constituents most need.

8



Section 8

PARTNERSHIPS

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08 PARTNERSHIPS

As part of the DeKalb County (the “County”) Comprehensive Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs Master Plan, the consulting team completed a Partnership Analysis. The team worked with senior County staff to determine agencies that should be invited to focus groups. Once agencies were identified by County staff, two focus groups were scheduled: representatives from partner agencies made up the first, and representatives from municipalities within the County that offer parks and recreation services to their residents made up the second. The partner agencies invited included: Little Creek Farm Conservancy, Callanwolde Fine Arts Center, Community Achievement Center, Arabia Alliance, Park Pride, Stride Ahead, Path Foundation, Boys & Girls Club, and the DeKalb School District. Of the nine agencies invited, a total of six were represented at the focus group. The municipalities invited included the following park and recreation agencies: Tucker, Stonecrest, Stone Mountain, Dunwoody, Decatur, Brookhaven, Doraville, Chamblee, and Avondale Estates. Of the nine municipalities invited, a total of four were represented at the focus group.

PARTNERSHIPS COMPONENTS

A partnership is “a collaborative relationship between entities to work toward shared objectives through a mutually agreed division of labor.” In order for a partnership to be successful, ten key components should be in place. The BerryDunn team considered the following when analyzing the effectiveness of the existing County partnerships. Although a partnership can exist without all of these components in place, they are more successful when these are given focused attention by leaders from both organizations.

Leadership

Partnerships imply a shared leadership among respected individuals who are recognized and empowered by their own organizations and trusted by partners to build consensus and resolve conflicts. The leads (CEO, president, executive director, or principal) of the partnering organizations must be overtly supportive of the partnership.

Mutual Benefit

Both partners must feel that the benefits of the relationship are reciprocal.

Purpose

A shared common vision and purpose that builds trust and openness and recognizes the value and contribution of all members needs to exist for a partnership to flourish. Shared goals and objectives, understood and accepted as being important by each partner, lead to improved coordination. Good coordination of policies, programs, and service delivery will ultimately create better outcomes.

Flexibility

Successful partnerships are founded on mutual respect and a commitment to agreed-upon principals which evolve overtime as circumstances warrant.

Common Understanding

A common understanding of the framework, culture, values, and approach of partner organizations needs to exist. Also important is a clear understanding of individual members’ roles and responsibilities regarding the division of labor. Goals must be clearly defined and shared.

Structural Approach

Both partners must participate in coordinating efforts, and a written agreement formalizing roles and responsibilities is ideal.

Communication

If a partnership is going to succeed, strong feedback loops are required. Effective communication at all levels within the partnership and with partner organizations, sharing and accessing all knowledge and information, needs to exist. A designated liaison from each organization also helps to streamline problem solving and conflict resolution. It is inevitable that issues will arise between partners and these should be viewed as opportunities to build a stronger relationship.

Non-Interference

It is critical that there is a solid understanding of each other’s goals without attempting to influence or revise the other partner’s direction.

Performance Management

Integrated processes which allow both sides to evaluate the relationship openly and develop new directions which maximizes returns should be planned from the outset. Partners must demonstrate accountability for the actions they take and ownership of the delivery of the objectives and targets for which they are responsible.

Learning and Development

A healthy partnership promotes an atmosphere of learning. Goals, successes, failures, and constraints should all be shared openly between the partners on a regular basis—at a minimum annually, but preferably semi-annually. Investing in partner skills, knowledge, and competence needs to be highly valued within the partnership. This open mindset and spirit of facilitation creates opportunities to shape each other’s work and learn together. In this environment, people can more effectively reflect on successes and failures.

CURRENT PARTNER SENTIMENTS

The overall sentiments of the two focus groups were very different and distinct. The partners in the first focus group feel supported by the County and see themselves as true partners with new opportunities on the horizon to collaborate. The representatives from the municipalities in the second focus group do not consider themselves partners of the County as there is very little interaction between them. Currently, most municipalities do not feel valued by the County, as each organization is moving in its own direction with little communication or coordination between them.

All the municipalities represented were encouraged that they were included by County staff in a focus group to discuss County partnerships and are hopeful that changes can be made to enhance their current relationships with the County and improve collaboration in several different areas.



Medlock Park pavillion

PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS

The next section of the report will review the consulting team's analysis of each component of a successful partnership in relation to the information gathered from the partner focus group.

Leadership

Partner organizations feel supported by the new leadership at the County. Those at the top of the organization have taken the time to learn the goals and vision of each partner organization and are supportive of the relationship. Several compliments were made by partner representatives about the new leadership (specifically the executive director) and the perception that the County is moving in a positive direction.

Mutual Benefit

The partner representatives feel that there is mutual benefit to their relationship with the County. They expressed appreciation to be working with the County and see potential for more collaboration.

Flexibility

Most of the partners represented feel that the County shows flexibility with their needs. There could be more of an understanding on behalf of the County regarding Park Pride and how their work is scheduled and completed.

Common Understanding

The County and its partners share a common vision in their desires to serve the residents of the County with the provision of programs, volunteer opportunities, and the management of open space. There is a desire on the part of the partners for an annual "State of the County" meeting, where County staff could outline goals and planned projects for the upcoming year. Each partner organization could share the same information. This type of meeting would be helpful to keep everyone informed and in alignment. It would also help the partner organizations learn more about each other and how they might work together.

Structural Approach

For nearly all of the partner agencies, there is a formal agreement with the County. There could be more coordination between partners and the County; but with new leadership, partners are hopeful this will happen.

8 - Partnerships

Communication

All of the partner organizations rely on the County for a variety of items—one of those being maintenance and repairs. This is an area where the County could improve. There is a great deal of confusion regarding the work order process, and some items are accidentally omitted and require a great deal of follow-up to complete. There is a perception that there is a lack of understanding on behalf of the County regarding the urgency of some maintenance issues.

More proactive communication is desired by the partner organizations as well – including staffing changes and information regarding upcoming programs and events. The partner agencies would like to get to know each other better and seek ways to work together, such as sharing a grant writer for example. The County could participate to make this a reality. The representative from the Boys & Girls Club was not aware that the Horse Farm existed, and he would love an opportunity to expose his participants to this venue. All of the partners feel they would benefit from knowing more about County programs, services, parks, and facilities.

Non-Interference

Partner organizations feel supported by the County and they set their own priorities, goals, and objectives. Although there is collaboration, the County does not try to interfere with the mission, vision, values, and plans of each partner organization.

Constructive Problem Solving

Partner organizations feel that constructive problem solving with the County does take place. The face-to-face meetings held between the County and some partners are appreciated and fruitful. There is a desire for more collaboration and problem solving in regard to the management of Arabia Mountain between the County, the Arabia Alliance, and the city of Stonecrest.

Performance Management

This is an area that could use some focused attention. Similar to the meeting to inform partners of the County's plans, an annual evaluation of each relationship would strengthen the partnership. An evaluation could pinpoint specific communication issues, review the progress on work orders, discuss maintenance issues, and provide an opportunity for some advanced planning.

Learning and Development

In addition to the County sharing its plans and upcoming projects, each partner organization could do a better job of keeping the County informed. The BerryDunn team suggests that a specific County staff member (other than someone on the leadership team) be assigned to each partner to keep the flow of information moving back and forth between the two parties.



group walks - Mason Mill Naturalist Program



MUNICIPAL RELATIONSHIPS

The municipalities that reside within the County all have different levels of interaction with the DeKalb County Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs Department staff. For the communities who purchased acreage and facilities from the County, there was far more interaction during the transition of the assets than there is now. The only written agreement that was mentioned is one between the County and City of Dunwoody. Dunwoody has a library that the DeKalb Library System leases and operates.

The municipal organizations represented at the focus group indicate that their relationships with the County are strained. Poor communication was a hot topic during the conversation. Often emails sent to County staff go unanswered. Those municipal staff who have worked hard to create relationships with specific County staff have better luck in getting answers and information. There were positive comments about the responsiveness of the executive director, the deputy director, and the division manager of recreation, athletics, and aquatics, but the municipal staff would like lower level contacts, so that they don't have to bother a senior staff person in order to get assistance. Currently, all interaction takes place at a high level, and municipal staff do not know County programming or facility management staff. Most municipal staff shared that they are not familiar with the County staffing model and which staff are responsible for each facility and program area. Municipal staff do have healthy working relationships, however, with staff in the County Watershed Department.

There is a lack of knowledge about what programs and services the County currently offers or what properties it continues to own. The website is difficult to use and there is little promotion throughout the County regarding programs, facilities, and special events. It would benefit the County to establish specific staff to act as a liaison to each municipality to improve and streamline communication.

Proactively sharing information with municipalities would go a long way with keeping everyone on the same page with projects, program offerings, and County-wide special events.



STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

The overall sentiment gleaned from the focus groups is that the County can be a good partner, but they should take steps to enhance and expand the current relationships with partners and municipalities.

It would be helpful for all involved if the director delegated the liaison responsibilities for both partners and municipalities to lower level staff so that municipal staff and County staff could start to get to know each other. Assigning various staff throughout the County to act as a liaison to municipalities would break down existing barriers.

The following are suggestions for the County to consider as the County works to strengthen existing relationships and add new ones.

- A more collaborative approach between the County and all of the partners with the institution of an annual or bi-annual “State of the County” meeting where a County staff member from each department would provide an update on projects and goals and the partners could share similar information with each other.
- Host an annual “State of the DeKalb County Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs” meeting with recreation staff from all municipalities. Introduce all staff and outline with whom municipalities should be communicating—provide an updated staff listing and facility listing. Provide staffing changes as they arise throughout the year. Outline which parks still belong to the County and highlight any planned capital improvements. If there are capital improvements scheduled, consider asking if other improvements in the municipality are planned and see if there are economies of scale to be had.
- The County should increase and formalize its communication with partners and municipalities regarding projects, staffing changes, and any news that would be beneficial to share.
- The County could take the lead in greenways and trail connectivity throughout the County with input from municipalities (when greenways or trails go through their jurisdiction). A County-wide approach to this issue would be valued by all residents if the planning was done transparently. A possible partner for this initiative is the Trails Foundation.
- Create a committee made up of representatives from Stonecrest, Arabia Alliance, and the County to work together to provide oversight of Arabia Mountain. Stonecrest officials do not want to take over ownership, but since this amenity is located in Stonecrest, the staff would like to participate in planning and oversight.
- The County could invite the DeKalb School District to facilitate partnership opportunities. The DeKalb School District is viewed as difficult to work with by many. Chamblee wanted to have a food distribution center in a school parking lot, and staff were told they would be charged. This seems counterintuitive during a pandemic when agencies are all trying to help the same people – DeKalb County residents. There is also a desire to use school sites for summer camp, but the DeKalb School District has not been willing to discuss.

- Coordinate efforts between events staff at the County and all municipalities. Inventory all special events offered throughout the County (regardless of who provides) and check for duplication – see where partnering makes sense and schedule together annually so that there is less competition. (Streets Alive in Decatur may be an event where the County and Decatur could work together to provide.) Events could be marketed collectively as well.
- Work with municipalities on programming and maintaining infrastructure to make tax dollars go further—especially in the southern part of the County, which is less affluent and has fewer public facilities. Look to expand and share recreation programming. If something works well in one part of DeKalb at a County recreation center, it may work in another area of the County at a municipality. Getting all of the programmers together to get to know each other, brainstorm, and find ways to partner and share resources was suggested by municipal representatives. Specific programs that were suggested for partnering opportunities include adult sports, senior programming (in Chamblee at the new senior center), events and trips, and community gardens—inventory what is available and then work together to provide educational workshops for gardeners. Creating a shared database of program instructors would benefit all recreation agencies in the County.
- Revitalize the DeKalb Swim League. Reach out to all municipalities with aquatic facilities and get a brainstorming meeting scheduled. Decatur is a willing partner and there may be others.
- More transparency regarding Green Space Bonds is desired. Are there any funds left that could be used by the County municipalities?
- With public input via meetings advertised in all the municipalities, maintain and refurbish older facilities that the County currently owns instead of building new. There is a strong desire to eliminate the backlog of preventative maintenance that exists through the County system.
- Work together to provide staff development – offer lunch & learn opportunities for all municipal recreation staff in the County as a way to share information and break down barriers.
- Work together to improve technology and technology training throughout the County.
- Work with all partners and municipalities to evaluate and improve the safety and security at parks and facilities.

NEW PARTNERS

The focus group participants made the following suggestions regarding new partnership opportunities for the County.

- Reach out to the local farming community to see if there are opportunities to share composting.
- Reach out to the local 4H club to investigate possible opportunities.
- Create a program for residents to adopt a portion of the trail system to perform trash pick-up and minor maintenance.
- Contact the area universities and colleges to investigate partnership opportunities, such as the Morehouse School of Medicine, located in Atlanta.

MUNICIPALITY PROGRAMMING

In order to seek out ways that DeKalb County could work more collaboratively with the municipalities within their jurisdiction, the consulting team reviewed all of the current offerings. The table below depicts the community, population served, facilities and programming.

Table 8.1: DeKalb County Municipality Programming

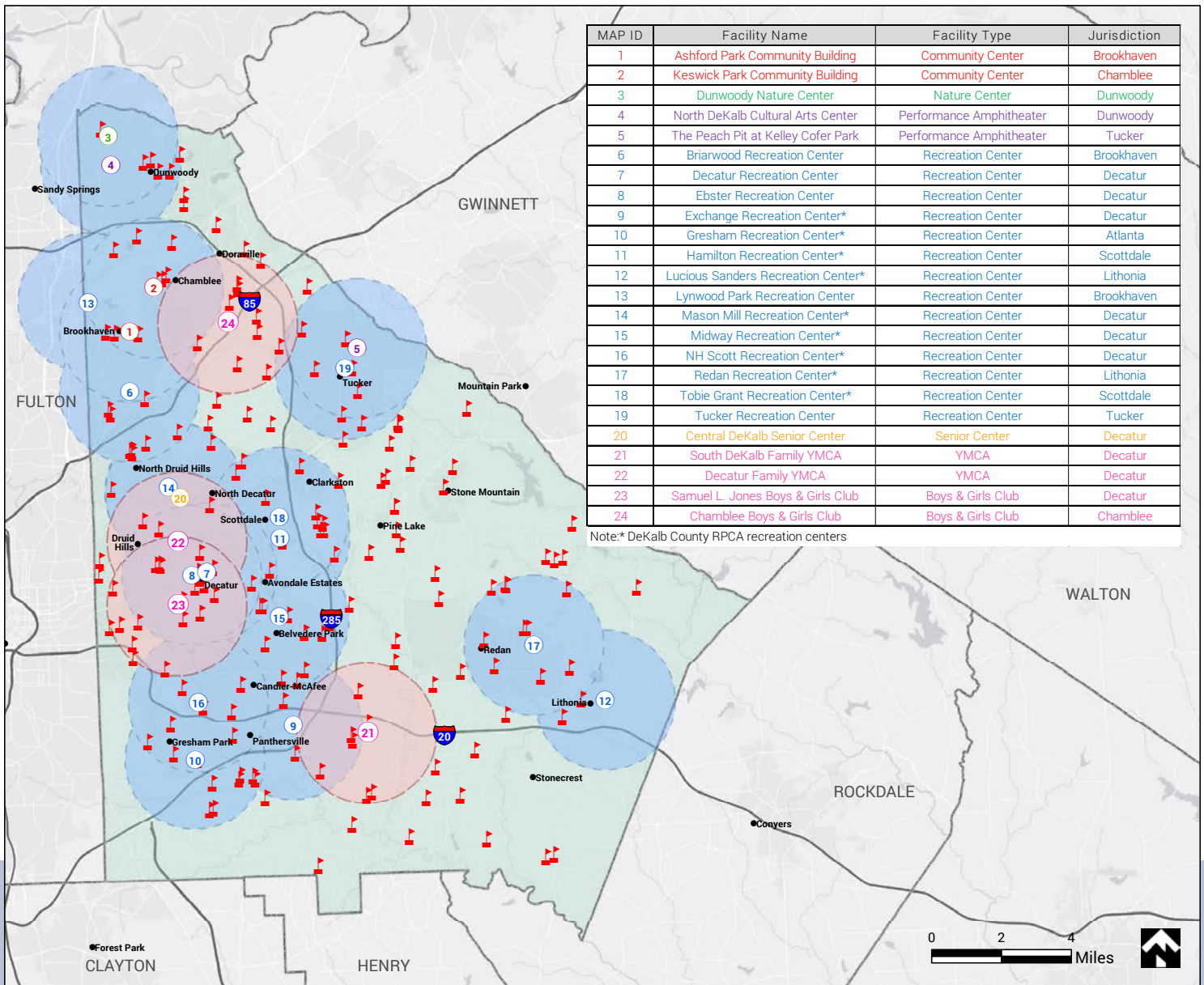
Municipality	Population	Parks & Facilities	Core Program Areas
Avondale Estates	3,150	Currently developing a park site 2 public tennis courts available at the Avondale Swim and Tennis Club	None. Lots of private clubs including the Avondale Community Club, Men's Club, Parents' Co-Op, Women's Club, Swim and Tennis Club and Garden Club.
Brookhaven	54,145	17 Parks 3 outdoor pools 2 recreation centers 1 dog park	Open Gym Youth baseball, softball, basketball, gymnastics, dance, theatre, art, Lego workshops, and cheer. Camps Tennis Adult softball, kickball, sand volleyball and flag football, fitness, and computers. Pet education Senior travel, fitness, social Special events - seasonal
Chamblee	28,306	7 neighborhood parks 2 community parks 1 community building	Summer Camps Youth: dance, martial arts, music, athletics Adult: self-defense, fitness, yoga, pickleball, softball Pet education Tennis Community gardens Special events - concerts
Decatur	25,636	28 parks with 19 playgrounds 3 community centers 1 outdoor pool 1 indoor pool 44 lighted tennis courts 1 splash pad Softball complex Tennis Complex City cemetery with trail Indoor ice complex	Youth: basketball, baseball, football, soccer, softball, archery, baton, youth symphony, aquatic instruction, swim team, and tennis instruction/camps/leagues. Adult: volleyball, basketball, softball, line dancing, clubs, fitness, and tennis leagues. Special Events: concerts, fishing tournaments.

Doraville	10,526	7 parks with 5 playgrounds 1 outdoor pool Civic Center Indoor basketball arena with seating up to 600 and 2 classrooms Boxing Club	Youth: softball, baseball, soccer, basketball, football, cheerleading and swimming. Adult: Tai Chi, Qi Gong, low impact aerobics, and water aerobics.
Dunwoody	49,459	7 parks with 4 playgrounds plus a nature playground, trails, skate park, dog park, community gardens, event pavilions, historic site available for rentals, nature preserve, Nature Center, nature classrooms, North DeKalb Cultural Arts Center, tennis courts, bocce courts	Youth: summer camps, tennis, art, and baseball. Adult: Yoga, flag football, and tennis.
Stone Mountain	6,328	4 parks with 2 playgrounds, tennis courts, 6 pavilions, football field, basketball courts, and a community garden.	Youth baseball.
Stonecrest	25,636	9 parks (acquired in 2019 from DeKalb County), 1 water park, and athletic facilities. Some playground equipment was removed. Brown Mill Recreation Center.	
Tucker	35,322	11 parks with 6 playgrounds, tennis courts, basketball courts, and soccer fields. 2 outdoor pools (acquired one from DeKalb in 2018 and another from a private bath and racquet club in 2019), and Tucker Recreation Center.	Youth: basketball leagues, STEM, ceramics, gymnastics, tumbling, cheerleading, theatre, dance, and summer camps. Adult: art studio, woodcarving, ceramics, scrapbooking, beginning piano, dance, ballroom, bridge, canasta, mahjong, capoeira, exercise, meditation, Silvery Foxes, Tai Chi, Taekwondo, Tuckercise, yoga, Zumba, and pickle ball. Open Gym.

All of the municipalities in DeKalb County that provide parks, pools, and a wide range of recreation programming account for a total of 238,604 DeKalb County residents – 31.4% of the entire County population. There are several areas around the County that are underserved (specifically east of the Exchange Recreation Center and south of Route 20) and many where there appears to be a great deal of opportunity and potential for the duplication of services (all of the area west of route 285 as well as Dunwoody). The south east side of the County is clearly underserved with only the Redan Recreation Center and the Lucious Sanders Recreation Center providing services for a very large area.

The map below depicts all of the recreation facilities in DeKalb County including County, municipal, and non-profit (YMCA). The circles around each facility represent a 2-mile radius. The public schools are also noted with the red flags. The programming gaps are very clear. Working with the schools to provide programming appears to be a reasonable solution that would not involve the construction of new facilities.

Figure 8.1: DeKalb County Municipality Programming Gaps



NON PROFIT OPPORTUNITIES

The consulting team also reviewed potential opportunities for partnerships with non-profits in DeKalb County.

South DeKalb Family YMCA, 2565 Snapfinger Road Decatur, GA 30034

The South DeKalb Family YMCA offers youth basketball leagues for ages 3-13. The South DeKalb Family YMCA has a partnership with the Atlanta Hawks, including incentives such as free tickets. Swim lessons are offered for a range of age groups (6-36 months, 3-5 years, 6-12 years, and 13+ years). Classes are offered in three different levels; starters, basics, and strokes. In addition, the South DeKalb Family YMCA offers various afterschool, summer, and teenage programming. Other sports offered includes dance and gymnastics, martial arts, and youth soccer.

Decatur Family YMCA, 1100 Clairemont Avenue Decatur, GA 30030

The Decatur Family YMCA offers youth basketball leagues for several age groups. Coed leagues are offered at preschool, 5-6 years, 11-12 years, 13-14 years, and 15-18 years. Separate girls and boys leagues are offered at 7-8 years and 9-10 years. This YMCA also has a partnership with the Atlanta Hawks. In addition, a variety of afterschool, summer, and teenage programming are offered. Other sports offered include baseball and T-ball, dance and gymnastics, soccer, swim lessons, and volleyball.

Samuel L Jones Boys and Girls Clubs, 450 East Lake Drive Decatur, GA 30030

The Samuel L Jones Boys and Girls Club offers a range of recreation programs including athletic and general recreation activities. Athletics includes basketball, soccer, and cheerleading. Some of the general recreation programming includes educational, career, and age related programs. This facility offers transportation from a number of local elementary, middle, and high schools to the Boys and Girls Club.

Chamblee Boys and Girls Club, 2880 Dresden Drive Chamblee, Georgia 30341

The Chamblee Boys and Girls Club does not currently have a program list available on their website (possibly due to COVID-19). The club offers transportation from a number of local schools. Path Academy Charter School offers transportation to the club.

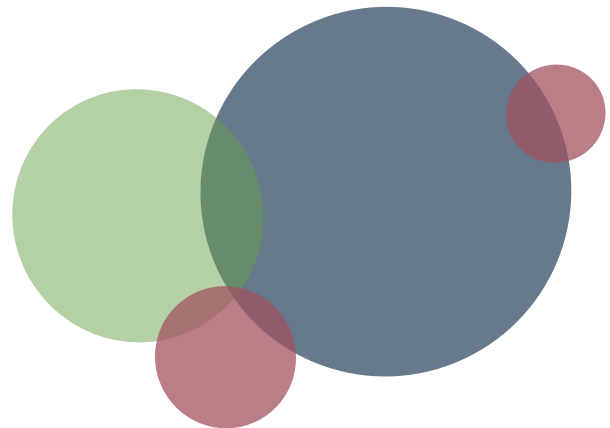


Summary

The partners and municipalities are looking forward to new partnering opportunities with the County. All representatives who attended the focus groups were encouraged to learn that the County was taking steps to evaluate existing partnerships and consider new. The details in this report will give the County a good start in working to improve, redefine, and create new partnerships that will better serve the needs of taxpayers.

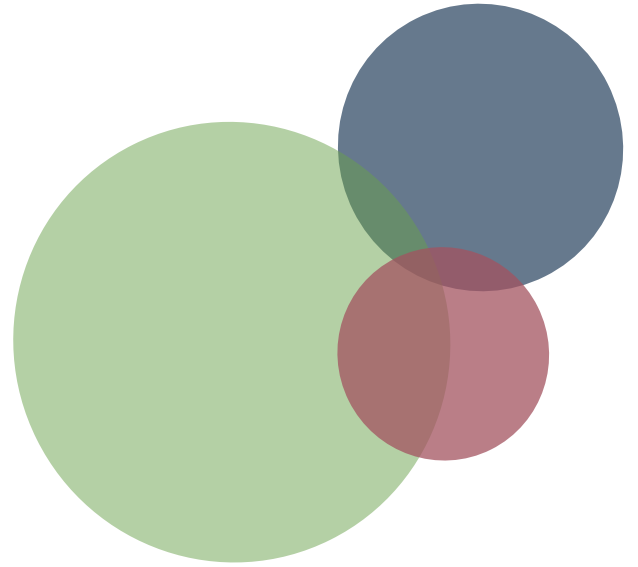
ACTION ITEMS TO IMPROVE PARTNERSHIPS

1. Assign a DeKalb County staff person to be the liaison for each existing partner, and make it clear to the partner who this person is and how they can be contacted. Consider using lower level staff members for the municipalities in an effort to break down barriers and improve communication.
2. Create a more collaborative relationship with all partners by hosting an annual or bi-annual "State of the County" meeting where a County staff member from each department would provide an update on projects and goals, and the partners could share similar information with each other. Hosting this meeting in the evening and providing dinner would allow more people to attend. You might also offer free childcare, so those with young children are able to attend.
3. Improve the relationships between County recreation staff and the recreation staff from all of the municipalities by hosting an annual "State of the DeKalb County Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs." The meeting should include:
 - Introductions
 - An outline of which County staff are responsible for each facility and program areas and who the municipalities should be contacting for specific issues
 - Provide an updated staff and facility list
 - Outline which parks still belong to the County (many are unclear)
 - Highlight any planned County capital improvements and seek information regarding projects planned in each municipality
 - Discuss the upcoming schedule of County special events and seek information on municipal events – check for duplication and see if partnering makes sense
 - Discuss the revitalization of the DeKalb Swim League. Decatur is a willing partner, and there may be others
 - Discuss recreation programming and look for ways to work together to provide better services and save tax dollars
 - Brainstorm about working together to provide staff development for both County and municipal staff
 - Discuss safety and security and see where the County and the municipalities might work together to improve conditions
4. Increase and formalize County communication to all partners and municipalities regarding projects, staffing changes, and any news that would be beneficial to share.
5. Take the lead with greenways and trail connectivity throughout the County with input from municipalities (when greenways or trails go through their jurisdiction). A County-wide approach to this issue would be valued by all residents if the planning was done transparently. A possible partner for this initiative is the Trails Foundation.
6. Create a committee made up of representatives from Stonecrest, Arabia Alliance, and the County to work together to provide oversight of Arabia Mountain.
7. Create a collaborative relationship with the DeKalb School District that will benefit the entire County. Start with introductory meetings to outline all of the existing issues and brainstorm ways the organizations could work together to provide programs and services to residents.
8. Communicate transparently with constituents regarding remaining Green Space Bonds.
9. Maintain and refurbish older facilities that the County currently owns instead of building new.
10. Create a prioritized plan to eliminate the backlog of preventative maintenance that exists through the County system.



ACTION ITEMS TO SECURE NEW PARTNERS

1. Reach out to the local farming community to see if there are opportunities to share composting
2. Reach out to the local 4H club to investigate possible opportunities
3. Create a program for residents to adopt a portion of the trail system to perform trash pick-up and minor maintenance
4. Contact the area universities and colleges to investigate partnership opportunities, such as the Morehouse School of Medicine, located in Atlanta
5. Contact nonprofit organizations in the County to see where partnering might make sense including:
 - South DeKalb Family YMCA
 - Decatur Family YMCA
 - Samuel L Jones Boys and Girls Club
 - Chamblee Boys and Girls Club



Boys and Girls Club participants

Summary

The partners and municipalities are looking forward to new partnering opportunities with the County. All representatives who attended the focus groups were encouraged to learn that the County was taking steps to evaluate existing partnerships and consider new. The details in this report will give the County a good start in working to improve, redefine and create new partnerships that will better serve the needs of taxpayers.

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Section 9

COST RECOVERY ASSESSMENT

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09 COST RECOVERY ASSESSMENT

Overview

DeKalb County Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs Department (Department) is comprised of 200 full- and part-time staff in offices across the County. The Park System consists of 6,501.60 acres, of which 6,000 is maintained by the Department. It includes 100 parks, 82 playgrounds, 63 pavilions, 2 golf courses, 77 tennis courts, 10 recreation facilities, 7 pools, 1 family aquatic center, 5 splash pads, 5 nature preserves, 1 horse farm, 2 performing arts centers, and approximately 30 miles of paths and trails.

During the Park and Recreation Master Plan development process, the BerryDunn consulting team was tasked with assessing the current cost recovery system and providing recommendations for future improvements of the process.

The consulting team met with dozens of staff members over a three week period, and conducted follow up sessions with individuals thereafter. Documents including current policies, fees and charges schedules, and current and past budgets were reviewed to provide a full spectrum of information for assessment. Detailed data typically used to provide a more in-depth analysis was not readily available. A number of key issues and opportunities were derived from documents supplied to the consulting team, and frequently repeated in responses to questions posed during meetings and work sessions.

The Agency's funding mechanisms are derived from a mix of fees and charges, property and sales taxes, and Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) funds. A budget template is created at the county level, and the Department Head and Executive Level management team refine the following year's requests for expansion or reduction. There is little to no input from most of the full-time staff regarding budget development, and this was a frequent area of concern in focus groups conducted with the group. The staff feel that often times the budgets corresponding to their areas of jurisdiction are not an accurate reflection of the needs.

As the budget year progresses, staff are given little information regarding budget usage and fund balances, which causes continuous questions about the ability to afford acquisition of supplies and services for activities that are planned throughout the year. The lack of information sharing places a burden on staff when planning for services. It is recommended that full time staff take an active role in creating the budget, so that budgets can more accurately reflect the needs of the staff for services, supplies, and personnel. It is also recommended that monthly fund balances are shared with center managers to allow for more informed planning for programs throughout the department.

Fees and charges for programs and services are proposed by executive level staff (Director and Management) and are codified annually by the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners. Fees were increased last in 2016, and most have not seen an increase since then. Fees are created through a variety of methods and philosophies, and there is a lack of consistency in the methodology across the Department.

The Department does not currently have a cost recovery policy that could be used as a guideline for setting fees and systematic resource allocation for the department. Leadership expressed a desire to adopt a department-wide cost recovery policy and philosophy to give guidance to management for prioritizing core program areas, setting fees and charges, to identify tax subsidy levels, and to allocate resources effectively within the department.

Cost Recovery Assessment and Recommendations

An agency built upon sound business principles requires the adoption of defensible financial management policy and justifying how tax dollars are spent and invested. Adopting a methodology encourages productivity and the pursuit of opportunities for efficiency and revenue growth, knowing that these efforts can help strengthen systems for the long term. Organizations enhance their chances of being financially resilient by creating fiscal policy that aligns with fiscal reality.

Incorporating cost recovery as part of a financial plan can be complex and time consuming for organizations. A cost recovery philosophy embodies a decision to generate revenues by charging fees for programs and services in relation to the total operational costs to provide them. In most cases undertaking cost recovery as part of business practice does not imply that the goal is 100% recovery of the cost; however, a target cost recovery goal is established according to a variety of organizational and community values. Typical cost recovery goals may range from 0% to more than 100% of costs, and are often associated with a community's service delivery mission and values. Adoption of a conventional, industry benchmarks are often the choice of many organizations, but it is not the most effective way to establish cost recovery goals. Given that each community's economic conditions and communal make-up, including their demographics are vastly different, benchmarking against other communities can create inaccurate comparisons.

The Department currently groups services by recreation facility or cost centers, and with more detailed data, could establish revenue, expense and bottom line goals for each facility. However, to better define cost recovery, it is recommended that the Department also create categories of services that are alike, regardless of the affiliation with a center, age, or program history. This method groups services according to level or likeness of activity (introductory, intermediate, etc., community events, merchandise for resale) and also allows for differentiation of value to the community. A sample of possible categories of services and definitions has been developed and includes the following. (See Appendix A)

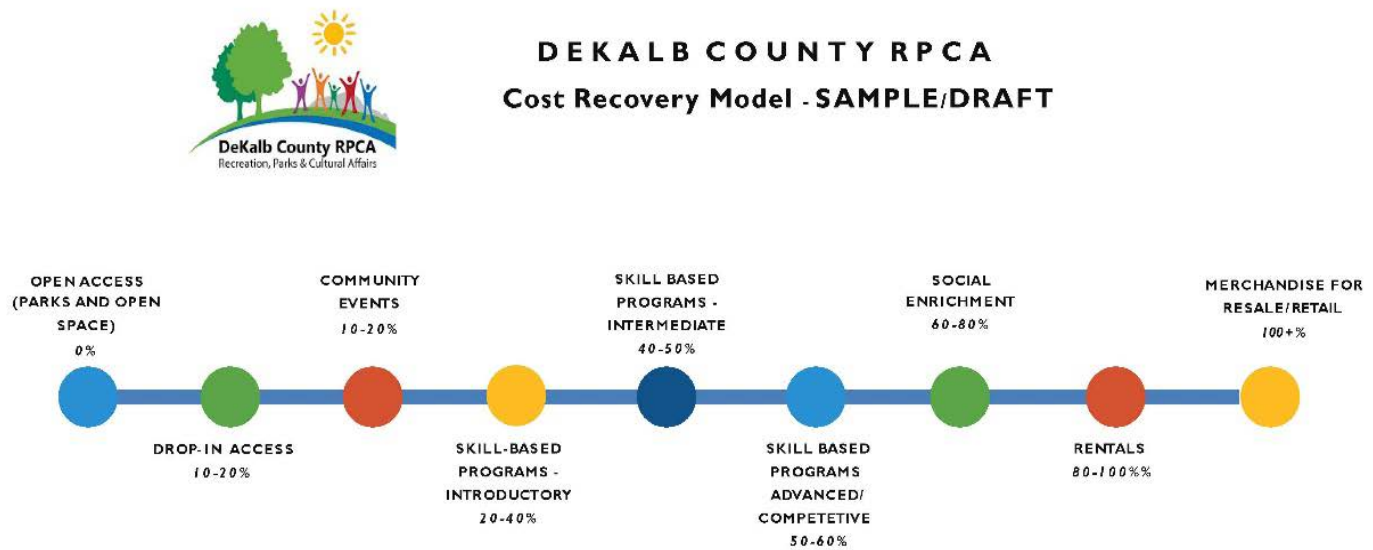
- **Open Access (Parks and Open Space):** Open, unsupervised access to parks, open spaces, and public access outdoor areas. No staff/volunteer supervision or oversight.
- **Drop in Access:** Fee-based self-directed activities that are not instructed by staff and do not require registration.
- **Community Events:** Open access events with broad community appeal and larger attendance.
- **Special Events:** Program-focused one-off events that may or may not require a fee and target specific groups.
- **Social Enrichment:** Staff supervised or instructed programs focusing on education, socialization, life skills development and personal enrichment. These programs may or may not require pre-registration or require a fee.
- **Skill-Based Programs - Introductory:** Programs for participants that are being introduced to a new skill and do not require any experience to participate.
- **Skill-Based Programs – Intermediate:** Programs for participants that have prior experience in a similar program and are looking to further improve their skill level.
- **Skill-Based Programs - Advanced:** Programs for participants who wish to master a specific skill, are competitive in nature, or are private (one-on-one) or small group instruction.
- **Rentals:** Facility and amenity rentals which provide for private and exclusive use of DeKalb County RPCA space and/or property.
- **Merchandise for Resale/Retail:** Service areas that provide individual benefit and are commercial in nature and similar to offerings made by the private sector.

9 - Cost Recovery Assessment

In many agencies activities are subsidized to greater and lesser levels based on priorities directly or indirectly identified by the codifying body. For example, activities for youth, teens, and seniors have been traditionally subsidized to a greater level than adult activities. Services targeted to low-income people have traditionally been subsidized to a greater level than those targeted to middle/higher income people. Using the newly developed categories, or similar instead of traditional categories, and after establishing a cost of service for each one of the programs offered, a cost recovery model can be developed. The model in this case reflects the mission of the agency and the community values so that subsidy can be allocated to provide a greater degree of equity in service delivery.

A sample cost recovery model was created with the sample categories of service below. See Appendix B.

Figure 9.1: DeKalb County RPCA Cost Recovery Model



Establishing a cost recovery policy and implementing the practice into routine fiscal exercises can provide the Department with a number of opportunities to improve service delivery and to align fees with the mission and priorities of the community as a whole. Establishing a formal cost recovery policy for DeKalb County Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Affairs Department will:

- Enhance accuracy in identifying the cost of providing each park and recreation service to the Department
- Identification and categorization of both direct and indirect costs
- Define the amount of tax subsidy allocated to each service
- Establish a basis of fees and rationale for the pricing structure
- Demonstrate consistency, structure, and uniformity throughout the department
- Promote transparency for the public and staff
- Provide justification for future price increases
- Articulate consistency and responsibility with the use of tax dollars and user fees
- Create a financial management system to sustain in varying economic climates

Fees and Charges

Accounting methods can vary across municipalities nationwide, especially as it pertains to the identification of indirect costs. The Department does not have a formal method of identifying direct costs associated with programs and services (i.e., staff and supplies) to establish a baseline for fees and charges. Additionally, the Department does not currently fully calculate indirect costs (i.e., overhead) which would provide a more detailed view of the cost of producing services for the Department and County. Definition of direct and indirect cost are as follows:

- **Direct Costs** – Costs associated with the particular activity (staff or contractor expense, equipment, supplies) that would not occur if the activity was not offered
- **Indirect Costs** – Although subjective, common costs include facility utility costs, permanent salaries (e.g., Director, Administrative, Human Resources), broad marketing efforts, insurance, etc.

DeKalb Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs Department's fees are currently identified by direct cost only, and are not factored as part of an overall cost recovery model, or with regard to recovering indirect costs of providing the service. Proposed fees are developed by staff, and reviewed by elected officials, on an as needed basis. Current fees for the Department were last updated in FY2016. The fee schedule is adopted by the Board as part of the annual budget submitted to the Department Director. Current policy does not allow leadership authority to add, delete or modify fees to accommodate programmatic changes throughout the year.

The following factors are currently considered by Department staff in developing proposed fees:

- Cost to offer the program (limited direct costs only)
- History of fees charged
- Perceived ability and willingness to pay
- Number of participants per class/activity
- Affordability for target audience
- Ability to attract participants

It is recommended that a more business minded approach to pricing be taken by the Department. This would include establishing a model for setting fees that encourages realistic cost of service based fees for those who have the ability to pay, while allowing for expanded subsidy (discounting) for those who have demonstrated financial need. Creating and implementing discount policies (senior, multiple family, financial aid assistance) are important components of effective operationalizing of a cost recovery process.

Pricing Strategies

There are many reasons for the department to better articulate service fees and charges. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Recover costs
- Create additional resources
- Establish value
- Influence behavior
- Promote and maintain operational efficiency

Establishing an actual price for a program can be based upon a variety of strategies. Arbitrary pricing is not encouraged, as it is difficult to justify, and does not articulate use of tax subsidy in a way that ties to DeKalb's departmental or community mission. Other strategies to consider include:

- **Arbitrary Pricing:** a fee based on a general provision such as raising all fees 5% to meet budget goals/reductions. This method does not consider market conditions and cost recovery goals
- **Market Pricing:** a fee based on demand for a service or facility or what the Department thinks a participant is willing to pay for a service. Private sector businesses commonly use this strategy. One consideration for establishing a market rate fee is determined by identifying all similar providers (i.e. private sector providers, municipalities, non-profit sector etc.), and if has been determined that the service has excellent position in the market, establishing a fee that is higher than other similar providers.
- **Competitive Pricing:** a fee based on what similar service providers are charging. One consideration for establishing a competitive fee is determined by identifying all providers of an identical service (i.e. private sector providers, municipalities, non-profit sector providers, etc.), and establishing a fee that is at mid-point or lower
- **Cost Recovery Pricing:** a fee based on cost recovery goals within cost recovery goal percentage ranges. This method uses cost recovery goals as a primary pricing strategy, followed by either market pricing (for services with low alternative coverage – few if any alternative providers) or competitive pricing (for services with high alternative coverage – other alternative providers offer similar or like services).
- **Differential Pricing:** fees that are grounded in the idea that different prices are charged for the same service when there is no real difference in the cost of providing the service. The same service may be offered at a more desirable time, location, or have other factors that attract a following, which may drive a higher price point. Alternatively, there may be services that are offered that are struggling to maintain a minimum and need a boost to stimulate more interest, driving a lower initial cost. The Department may wish to expand use of this pricing strategy:
 - To stimulate demand for a service during a specified time
 - To reach underserved populations
 - To shift demand to another place, date, or time

Alternative Funding Sources

In general, there has been a decrease in the amount of tax support available to public parks and recreation departments across the nation. The Department has experienced this and is forward thinking in its planning. The need to look at alternative funding sources as a way to financially support services has become commonplace and is done well in many communities. It is an area that is recommended for DeKalb County Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs to research, create new relationships, and implement in the near future. Alternative funding sources are plentiful and can include:

- Gifts
- Grants
- Donations
- Sponsorships
- Collaborations
- Volunteer contributions

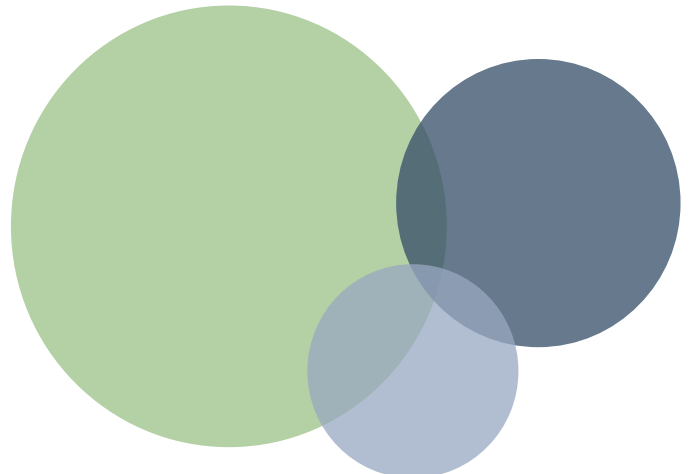
It is to be noted that a separate, more detailed partnership analysis was completed by consultants for inclusion in the final Master Plan Report.



Discounting

The Department currently has a sliding scale fee system for families with more than one child registered in a program. Beyond this policy, the Department does not currently have discount policies that formally outline reduction of fees for residents who do not have the ability to pay in whole or in part for services. It is recommended that formal policies with accompanying guidelines and procedures be developed to create equitable distribution and consistency in discounting of fees throughout the department. Additionally, policies should tie to specific dollar amount or percentage caps established in the operating budget. This will allow the Department to closely monitor the amount of funding awarded so as to aid resource distribution in future budget years. Development of at least the following policies should be considered:

- General Financial Aid (Scholarships)
- Seniors (Active Agers and above)
- Military



Sugar Creek Golf Course and Tennis Center

Sugar Creek Golf Course and Tennis Center features an 18-hole course with driving range, 10 hard surfaced tennis courts, and four clay surfaced tennis courts. The property also includes a club house with restaurant and is open to the public. The golf course is operated by the County and maintained by a private contractor. The restaurant and tennis center are also operated by private contractors, and formal agreements have been created to guide the operations for the County.

The County should begin a process to develop a business plan for Sugar Creek Golf Course with special attention given to developing and expanding revenue producing programs and activities and leveraging recommendations outlined in the June 2018 National Golf Foundation report. Furthermore, in the spirit of what is often characterized as best management practices or principles, Sugar Creek management should begin to plan for the future of the course by adopting and implementing financial controls and practices that will provide course managers and staff with the budgetary and financial insight needed to operate the course as efficiently and effectively as possible while maintaining the superior level of play and service customers desire.

In addition to implementing best practices needed to generate and review adequate financial information, course management should develop an effective performance measurement program whereby course “core” functions are rigorously and continuously reviewed and assessed. Insight gained from effective performance management programs can be invaluable to managers and staff, allowing for a solid foundations for decision making and implementation of change management where necessary.

A plan should also be developed to make use of financial and transactional data and information generated. Course management should continue to conduct a yearly comprehensive fee analysis for all activities, programs and services offered at Sugar Creek Golf Course. A detailed analysis of operational revenues and expenses coupled with a peer benchmarking of fees, with comparable golf courses in the area, will provide a defensible foundation to consider appropriate fee adjustments, or the implementation of new fees. Implementing recommendations outlined in a comprehensive fee analysis can often help to stabilize cash flows, leverage the major capital improvements made, and provide a foundation for policy development for an establishment of a reserves fund for future capital improvement needs or other unforeseen circumstances. The following major categories should be considered when assessing and developing fees:

- Greens fees
- Driving range fees
- Private and semi-private lessons
- Golf shop and merchandise
- Other instructional or tournament and league related fees; and
- Other programmatic offering unique to Sugar Creek Golf Course

Finally, effectively generating and leveraging financial and performance data is not the sole criteria necessary guaranteed to bring about success. Institutional knowledge gained from discussions with course managers, staff, customers, and partners should be tapped and used as an added informational layer and consulted when making decisions related to the daily operation and the long-term success of the Sugar Creek Golf Course.

Tennis Operation Management:

The Department should review annually contract terms and conditions and well as periodically review program performance by way of participant feedback. The Department should be sure it has accurate and timely financial information to review and assess, and that adequate investment is being made in the daily maintenance and long-term capital needs of all tennis facilities as well as adequate revenue is being generated for the Department via programming offerings and pricing.

In addition to detailed financial reviews, periodic review of participant feedback will give management insight into the quality of instructional programs and the ability to review tennis offerings and teaching methodology, ensuring innovative instruction is being delivered and that customer satisfaction is evident.

Little Creek Horse Farm:

Little Creek Horse Farm is a large barn that boards 45 horses and includes an indoor arena used for regular riding lessons, an outdoor arena used for hunter-jumper riding, 14 acres of pastures, and an additional 14 acres of walking and riding trails. Boarders pay a monthly fee, and other funds come from both DeKalb County and the Little Creek Farm Conservancy. The County purchased the forty acre farm in 2004 as green space. The property was a dairy farm until the 1950s, when it became a horse farm. The County and the Little Creek Farm Conservancy (LCFC) entered into an annually renewable Letter of Understanding in May, 2020, formalizing the relationship between the two entities.

The agreement is an excellent framework for the Department to continue to work with LCFC, but further work should be done to stabilize the finances of the center for future sustainability. The County should begin to develop and implement best management practices and financial controls to better understand the cost for doing business for the 40-acre farm and park. Providing top tier equestrian services requires management to thoroughly understand the cost of providing those services. Steps should be taken to implement controls and practices whereby revenues and expenses and tracked in detail to provide daily insight into subsidy, or any other structural issues or strengths that become evident. Such a plan is needed to allow for a comprehensive review of current fees to take place and a construct of a defensible foundations to make fee adjustments if necessary. Furthermore, operating a financially sound farm and park will provide the local residents who walk and/or picnic at the site a more pleasant experience and potentially allow for investments in facility improvements, new amenities, or increased class offerings and programming in the future making Little Creek Horse Farm and Park a popular and successful year-round destination.



Little Creek Horse Farm

RECOMMENDATIONS

Budget and Finance

- Department leadership need to take a more intentional role in disseminating financial and budget information to the staff. An assessment of the current communication methods should be conducted to determine where there are areas of concern are, and a strategy for improvement should be developed
- Full-time staff should take an active role in developing the annual budget so that budgets can more accurately reflect the needs of the staff for services, supplies, and personnel.
- Monthly fund balances should be shared with center managers to allow for more informed planning for programs throughout the department.

Cost Recovery

- Adopt a department-wide cost recovery policy and philosophy to give guidance to management for prioritizing core program areas, setting fees and charges, to identify tax subsidy levels, and to allocate resources effectively within the department.
 - Develop a cost recovery philosophy that incorporates cost of service, impact to community and assign cost recovery percentages to promote equity of resources

Fees and Charges

- There is no formal methodology for pricing of programs and activities. Currently, the Department does not have a formalized method of calculating cost of service. It is recommended that a cost of service analysis should be undertaken in the immediate future including at least the following elements:
 - Formalize a method of identifying direct costs associated with programs and services (i.e., staff and supplies) to establish a baseline for fees and charges.
 - Calculate indirect costs (i.e., overhead) to provide a more detailed view of the cost of producing services for the Department and County
- Adopt a fees and charges policy that allows leadership the authority to add, delete or modify fees to accommodate programmatic changes throughout the year
- Consider differentiated pricing for programs and services

Alternative Funding Sources

- Research alternative funding sources as a way to financially support services that are being subsidized by tax dollars
- Develop and implement a formalized discount policy that is consistent throughout the department and that ties a specific dollar amount or percentage caps to each division so as to allow for equitable distribution of resources

Sugar Creek Golf and Tennis Center

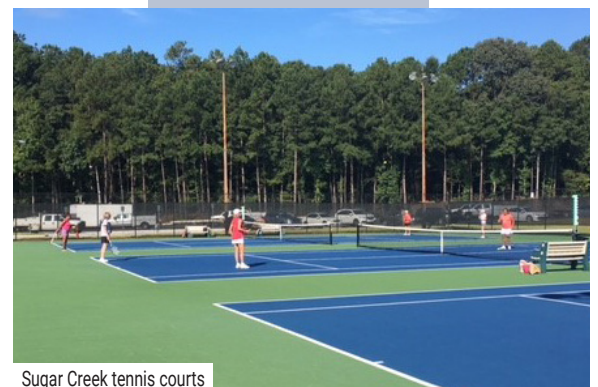
- Create a business plan for Sugar Creek Golf Course with special attention given to developing and expanding revenue producing programs and activities and leveraging recommendations outlined in the June 2018 National Golf Foundation report including:
 - Conducting a market assessment to determine competition, market position, and traction in the region
 - Conducting a comprehensive fee analysis
- Adopt and implement financial controls and practices that will provide course managers and staff with the budgetary and financial insight needed to operate the course as efficiently and effectively as possible

Tennis Operation Management

- Conduct a full cost of service analysis for operations
- Review annual contract terms and conditions and assess fee for contractor annually to adjust for cost of doing business
- Conduct independent assessment of customer satisfaction annually

Little Creek Horse Farm

- Conduct a full cost of service analysis for operations
- Adjust fees to more fully recover cost of operations
- Implement standards of financial controls to better track revenues and expenses



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10



ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

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10 ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE



Mason Mill Park Tennis Center

Organization Structure Review

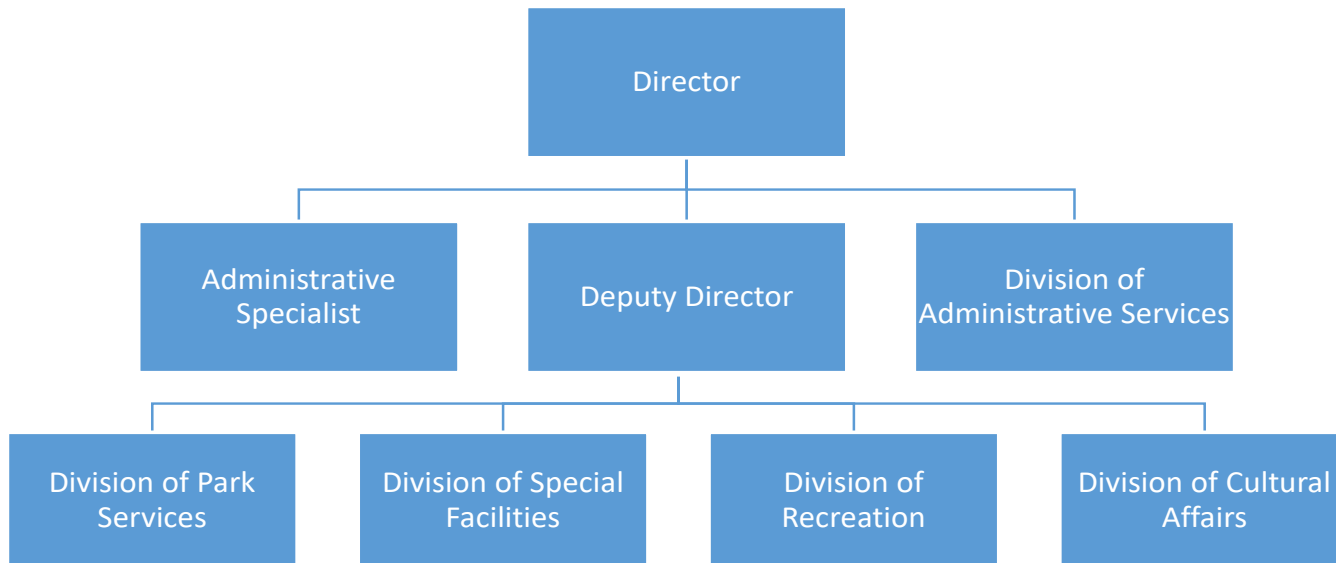
One of the elements of the Master Plan process included a review of the organizational structure. The full report is included in a separate document. The following narrative provides a high-level summary of the organization structure review process.

Seven employee focus groups from all levels and Divisions of the Department were facilitated to ensure employees' ability to provide input into this review. Approximately 40 employees attended these meetings.

This review included an analysis of senior level positions, specifically at the Division Manager level and the positions reporting to the Division Managers. Generally, the overall structure of the Department follows effective operating principles, including a logical functional design, hierarchy, and span of control.

The Department includes five major Divisions:

- Division of Administrative Services
- Division of Park Services
- Division of Special Facilities
- Division of Recreation
- Division of Cultural Affairs



The organization of the Divisions is logical and provides a clear sense of mission and purpose for each Division. Clear roles and responsibilities exist among the five Divisions.

Division of Park Services

The Division of Park Services includes a Division Manager who currently supervises six direct reports, which is an effective span of control. There are two park superintendents.



The project managers oversee contracts. They manage projects, oversee master plan work, land acquisition, etc. Construction work is contracted as there are no in-house crews.

Many times, within park and recreation agencies, project and planning functions exist in a separate planning division. Whereas, for DeKalb, the project managers reside within the Division of Park Services. This provides beneficial collaboration between planning and maintenance functions. Having park services involved in the design of parks results in effective decisions for ongoing maintenance. A future challenge will occur because of continued SPLOST funding and the ability of the Department to adequately maintain new assets. Two Greenspace Manager positions existed previously, but these positions are currently not filled.

At one time, the Division had three geographical districts and a dedicated field crew. Now, just two districts exist - an East and West Division. In the employee focus groups, many employees commented about the need for additional staff in the Division. Because of the area of specialty represented by athletic field maintenance, park and recreation departments typically have a specialized field crew, which the Department does not have.

There are eight park services supervisors, seven construction supervisors, and one contract inspector. The construction supervisors are not involved in construction activities. This is a job title used throughout the county. Their main responsibilities include overseeing a crew of five employees who are responsible for all elements of park maintenance of two parks and oversee the maintenance of between five and ten, depending upon park size that are managed by contractors. Maintenance tasks include trash, restrooms, playgrounds, pavilions, ball fields, landscaping, mowing, blowing, and weed eating.

There is a county-wide special projects crew with a supervisor and four employees. They work out of the West shop and report to the West Superintendent. They perform tasks such as ribbon cuttings, groundbreaking events, general repairs, and other miscellaneous tasks. There are two heavy equipment operators, one in each district.

Currently, only one level of park maintenance worker exists; previously the Department had four levels. A lack of advancement opportunities creates a challenge with retention of employees.

The operations inspector is a combined three positions and helps with connecting with vendors, landscape, painters, etc. and performs playground inspections. The Supply Specialist does all the ordering of supplies. The administrative specialist does payroll, backs up the Supply Specialist, manages the accreditation process, and manages the Division Manager's schedule.

Park rangers previously worked in the Division of Special Facilities, but now are a part of the Division of Park Services.

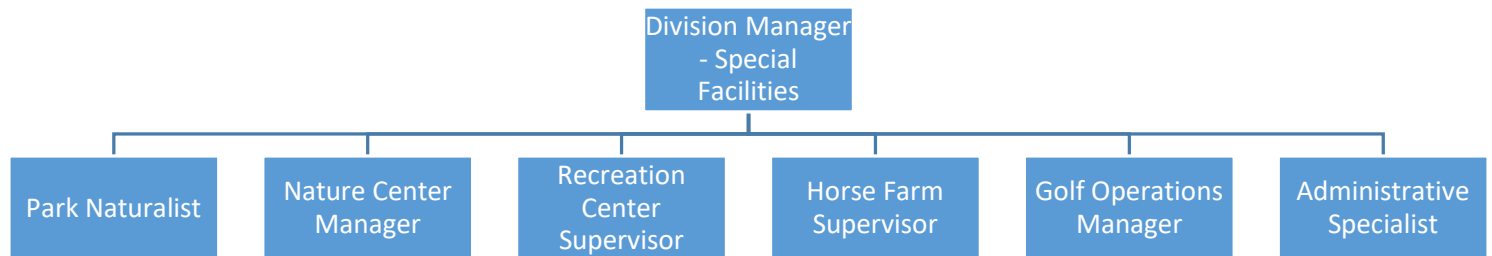
There is not a dedicated trails position. This could be an additional position as trail development and trail maintenance will become more important, along with population growth of the County.

Division of Special Facilities

Previously, the Division of Arabia Mountain, Horse Farm, Golf and Tennis (Division of Special Facilities) and the Division of Recreation, Athletics, and Aquatics (Division of Recreation) were one Division. Recently, the Divisions were split into two and a new Division Manager hired overseeing special facilities. The split primarily organizes specialized facility operations into one division and recreation, aquatics, and athletics into another division. As the name implies, this Division includes special facilities and parks such as Mason Mill, Arabia Mountain, and recreation center (tennis).

In speaking to the incumbent Division Managers, roles and responsibilities are clearly defined between the managers, but this did not necessarily hold true for the employees lower in the organizational structure, as silos were mentioned as a challenge for the Divisions.

Positions reporting to the Division Manager of Special Facilities include a Park Naturalist, Nature Center Manager, Recreation Center Supervisors, Horse Farm Supervisor, Golf Operations Manager, and an Administrative Specialist that splits time between the two Divisions.



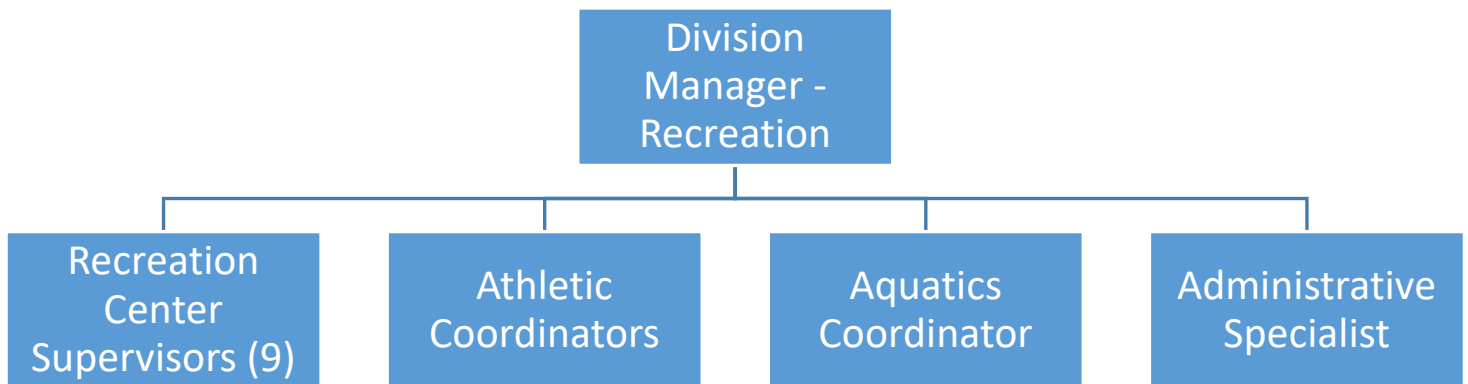
At one time the park ranger group reported to the Department Director, but now the group is part of the Division of Special Facilities (which is not shown in the above chart). While the park ranger responsibilities extend beyond one division and represent a system-wide function, they now report to Special Facilities.

There is a combination of in-house and contractual facility management. The Sugar Creek Tennis Center is operated by staff. On the other hand, the DeKalb Tennis Center is contracted. For the two golf courses, Mystery Valley has both operations and maintenance contracted. A different company manages the maintenance at Sugar Creek. Golf operations are managed in-house at Sugar Creek.

Staff reported that the Arabia Mountain front desk is not staffed during all open hours. This has had a negative impact on customer service.

Division of Recreation

This Division focuses on recreation center operations and programming. The Division includes nine recreation center operations, six outdoor pools and splashpad, and several athletic field complexes. The Division Manager directly supervises 12 staff, with one staff position shared with the Division of Special Facilities (Administrative Specialist). Currently, nine Recreation Center Supervisors report to the Division Manager. The structure of the Division follows:

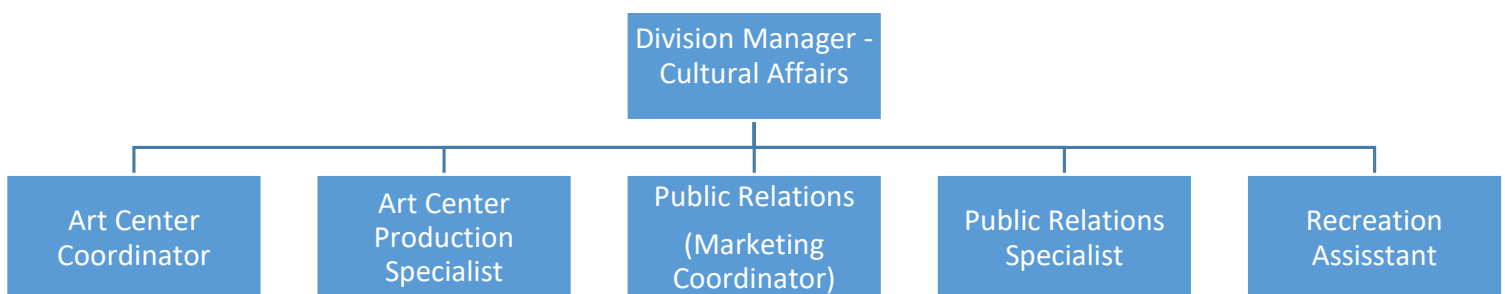


At one time the Department had two athletic coordinators, and now there is just one. The aquatics area includes the operation of six outdoor pools and a splashpad. As a result of the aquatics operation's seasonal nature, the Aquatics Coordinator assists the Athletic Coordinator during the off-season.

Supervising nine Recreation Center Supervisor positions is challenging, given the large span of control. It limits the Division Manager's ability to be involved in more strategic activities. Ideally, this span of control could be reduced by having two positions (superintendents) overseeing the Recreation Center Supervisors with five centers reporting to one position and four centers reporting to the other position.

Division of Cultural Affairs

There is an expansive list of responsibilities within the Division of Cultural Affairs, Special Events, and Marketing. This Division is led by a Division Manager, who directly supervises four full-time positions and a part-time Recreation Assistant, as follows:



10 - Organization Structure

While five positions are shown on the organization chart, the Division Manager actually supervises 10 staff members, which is another example of a large span of control. These positions, with part-time positions designated, include:

- Arts Center Coordinator
- Arts Center Coordinator –part-time
- Community Outreach –part time
- Front desk – part-time
- Sound tech--part-time
- Arts Center Production Specialist
- Public Relations
- Public relations/Graphics
- Volunteer coordinator - Workforce development-part-time
- Housekeeping--part-time

To reduce the span of control of the Division Manager, the Arts Center Coordinator and Arts Center Production could directly supervise the part-time staff currently reporting to the Division Manager.

During the facilitated employee meetings, several staff mentioned the need for additional positions for this Division. The Division Manager is routinely pressed into service to answer the phone as there is no receptionist.

Currently, the Art Center Coordinator position is supported by part-time Recreation Assistants. The coordinator has responsibility for bookings, client meetings, volunteers, logistics, managing contractors, and a variety of other responsibilities. The Division Manager believes that two full-time members should handle this area, not one full-time staff, given the demand for performances.

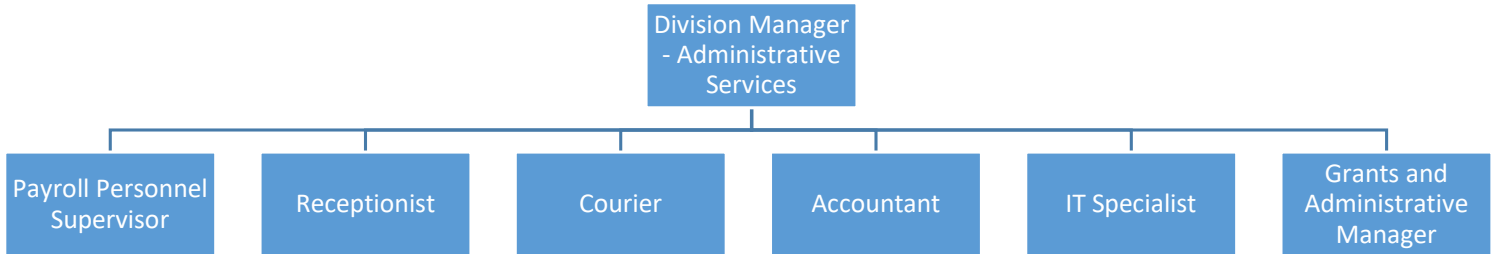
The Art Center Production Specialist oversees a part-time Recreation Assistant in charge of technical support and another Recreation Assistant who oversees logistics. According to the Division Manager, similar operations have at least two full-time staff involved in production work, which requires expertise in sound, lighting, and developing the sets.

In addition to the Art Center productions, this Division also manages special events. This area is also a challenge for the Division, as no position is solely dedicated to organizing and managing events. Special events require many volunteers and other labor resources from other areas of the Department. Typically, a parks and recreation department has a position dedicated to managing special events.

Typically, agencies the size of DeKalb County Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs have approximately three to four staff dedicated toward marketing activities. For DeKalb, two marketing positions exist, though their titles are public relations, and not marketing. One of the positions performs publicity functions and the other focuses on graphics and ActiveNet support. According to the Division Manager, about 85% of the time these two positions support the rest of the Department and 15% of time goes toward supporting the Performing Arts Center and Special Events. Furthermore, it was mentioned by multiple staff that the incumbents in the positions do not have the skillsets to successfully work in these roles. For many departments, marketing reports to the director of the agency, because of marketing activities spanning the entire department and not just one division.

Division of Administrative Services

This position oversees support for the Department. Six positions report to the Division Manager. Support services include areas such as accounting, IT, payroll and HR, receptionist, grants, and courier. The structure of this Division includes:



The structure of the Administrative Services Division has an effective span of control. Additionally, the responsibilities are clearly delineated. The Courier reports to the Division Manager because role of the courier is to ensure that daily revenue is deposited to the County Finance Department, transports documents to park locations and other county departments. If this position did not have such an important financial control role, this would be an example of a less effective management return on investment listed in the organization guiding principles.

The Receptionist (Office Assistant), Accountant, Grants Administrative Manager and Division Manager share responsibility for accounts receivable and accounts payable. Typically, there is clear delineation between accounts payable and receivables. The Payroll Personnel Supervisor oversees human resource functions as well as payroll and directly supervises the Payroll Personnel Assistant. The Grants Manager currently oversees the CAPRA accreditation process for the Department.

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CHANGING & EMERGING ROLES

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11 CHANGING & EMERGING ROLES

Introduction/Overview

As part of the Master Plan process, the Department desires to identify its changing and emerging role as the key provider of leisure services in the County. Information for this element of the Plan includes a review of all the community engagement efforts, Commissioner comments, partner and stakeholder feedback results, survey results, staff meeting discussions, a review of the website, and organizational policies and procedures that impact the Department's stature in the community.

Any determination of identifying an agency's emerging role within the County begins with keeping the Mission Statement in mind:

The Parks and Recreation Department is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life of the citizens of DeKalb County by connecting communities to exceptional parks, recreational facilities, and cross-generational programs that promote healthy and active lifestyles.

**The Department's Vision is:
To create and connect communities
through people, parks, and programs.**

Key words of the mission and vision include enhancing the quality of life, connecting communities, and promoting healthy and active lifestyles. It is important to help ensure that the changing and emerging roles of the Department are aligned with the mission and vision.

Attributes that contribute to the changing and emerging role include the following areas:

- Alignment with the mission and working toward achievement of the vision
- Reputation of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Affairs among other County departments and Board of Commissioners
- Customer and partner satisfaction results from engagement meetings as part of the Master Plan process
- Residents' level of trust toward the Department
- The Department's leadership system
- Employees' perspectives toward the Department's stature as a provider of leisure services

The following information provides a summary of engagement sessions, survey responses related to the Department's changing and emerging role, observations of the overall park system, infrastructure concerns, and overall brand and image.



Little Creek Horse Farm and Park, photo by Eric Bowles

Engagement Meeting Results

The following section provides a summary of comments from various groups and individuals related to the Department's changing and emerging role. The comments are grouped according to: Commissioners, Steering Committee, partners, and employees.

Commissioners: Several comments were made by Commissioners about the leadership team being competent and experienced. There is appreciation for the leadership of the Director and Deputy Director. They feel the Department is moving in the right direction. The Commissioners recognize the importance of the park and recreation system as a driver of economic development. There is some confusion regarding ownership of some parks because of new cities being created, such as Stonecrest and Tucker. This has resulted in a shrinking tax base, because cities have absorbed care creating their own park systems.

Steering Committee Comments: Steering Committee comments included the observation made by several members that the Departments has greatly improved over the last few years, and a belief the senior leadership of the Department continues to improve the agency. Members mentioned Departmental leadership as a key factor in the agency's improvement. There was a suggestion to leverage more non-profit partners. Other significant discussion related to the importance of trails and connectivity, more use of volunteers, and interest in how the County will respond to the COVID-19 crisis.



Mason Mill Park Naturalist Program - post-pandemic 2021 program

11 - Changing and Emerging Roles

Partnership Meetings: These included two meetings, one for a variety of organizations in which the Boys and Girls Club, Park Pride, Arabia Alliance, Stride Ahead, Little Creek Farm Conservancy, and Community Achievement Center members attended. The second group included attendees from municipalities within DeKalb County as well as additional members of the Arabia Alliance.

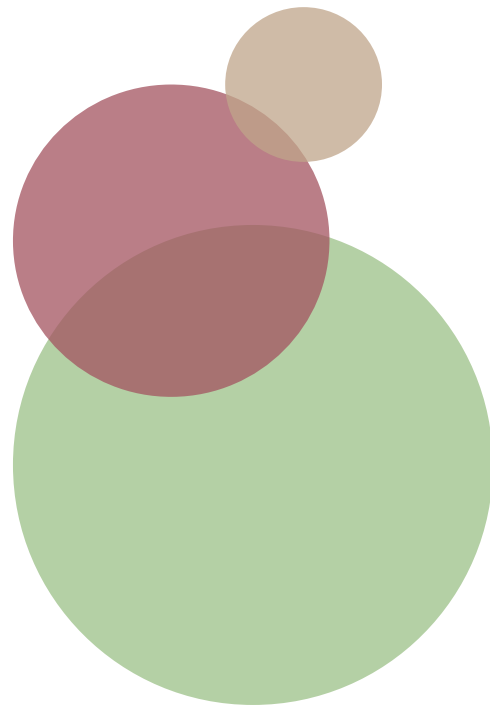
The first group focused on the brand and image of the County. All of the group members felt there are great opportunities to improve the brand and image of the County. The participants mentioned that the County seal is not a brand nor is it a logo. The seal makes one think about government, but not about recreation, parks, and cultural affairs. All agreed that a new brand and identity would be helpful to develop and then roll out to the community. This includes updating and adding signage and wayfinding to and within parks and facilities. Many were not sure what belongs to the County and what does not. Improved signage would help delineate and showcase County assets. The website is in need of work as it is difficult to navigate and hard to find what one is seeking. The layout is not intuitive, important information is missing, and some links do not work according to the group members.

Furthermore, the reputation of the County is perceived as evolving in a positive way. However, they feel that DeKalb is very good at building big, new, beautiful facilities, but they fall very short in maintaining what they have. Tasks like mowing, pressure washing facilities, and bathroom cleaning are not completed in a timely manner, which reflects poorly on the Department.

The response time for maintenance request is slow at times, and residents often assume that items will not be addressed. The sentiment is that if one needs something, plan to wait. When one knows whom to contact for specific needs and has taken the time to build a relationship, one is more likely to be successful. When issues arise that partners cannot get addressed, they will often ask the public to call the County, as the perception is the County will respond to a resident more quickly than to a partner.

In the second group, attendees agreed that DeKalb does not have a positive reputation in its respective communities for the provision of parks, facilities, recreation programming, and special events. The park sites and facilities that municipalities purchased from the County were often poorly maintained, and once purchased, municipalities had a very difficult time obtaining the necessary information regarding building schematics, systems, and preventative maintenance. The sentiment of the focus group attendees was that their residents expect more than what DeKalb is able to provide.

The focus group attendees with children and who live in DeKalb indicated that they do not look to the County for the provision of recreation programming, as they take their children elsewhere. There is a sense that DeKalb focuses its resources on senior programming, programming in low-income areas, and competitive basketball.



Employee Meeting Comments: Staff members believe there is strong support from individuals within the community. Staff also believe the community has a good sense of the direction and growth of the Department and services.

Staff reported that their current use of marketing was ineffective. The physical location of marketing staff impedes the ability for interaction between marketing and parks and recreation staff, which results in a limited information flow, such as upcoming events and programs. Department staff would like more resources for expanding marketing support.

In addition, the Department's website, which is currently maintained by County IT, is outdated, and does not actively engage viewers, according to staff. Staff reported that the website could use a significant upgrade in appearance and engagement. Staff felt that placing IT in charge of the website was inefficient, and the Department should have control over the content. Due to this, staff felt like the website needed major updates and changes, especially in comparison to the websites of surrounding communities.

The Department has many excellent parks, with Arabia Mountain mentioned as one of the best due to its uniqueness, and Mason Mill Park for its trails. Porter Sanford Park was mentioned as a facility that has done much for the community. The Intergenerational Center, Redan Disc Golf, Hairston, Exchange, and Oak Creek Parks are highly regarded. Wade Walker and the YMCA partnership was another top park mentioned by staff.

Staff also noted how the condition of some facilities hurts the Department's standing as a leader of park and recreation services in the County as well as the lack of preventative maintenance.



Burruss Institute Survey Findings

The survey included a question, asking respondents to describe the Department’s reputation. The following chart shows the results. Thirty-six percent responded that the reputation is either great or good. A significant percentage, 36.8% of respondents feel the reputation is average. A small percentage of 9.4% rated the Department as poor or very poor. This result shows room for improvement.

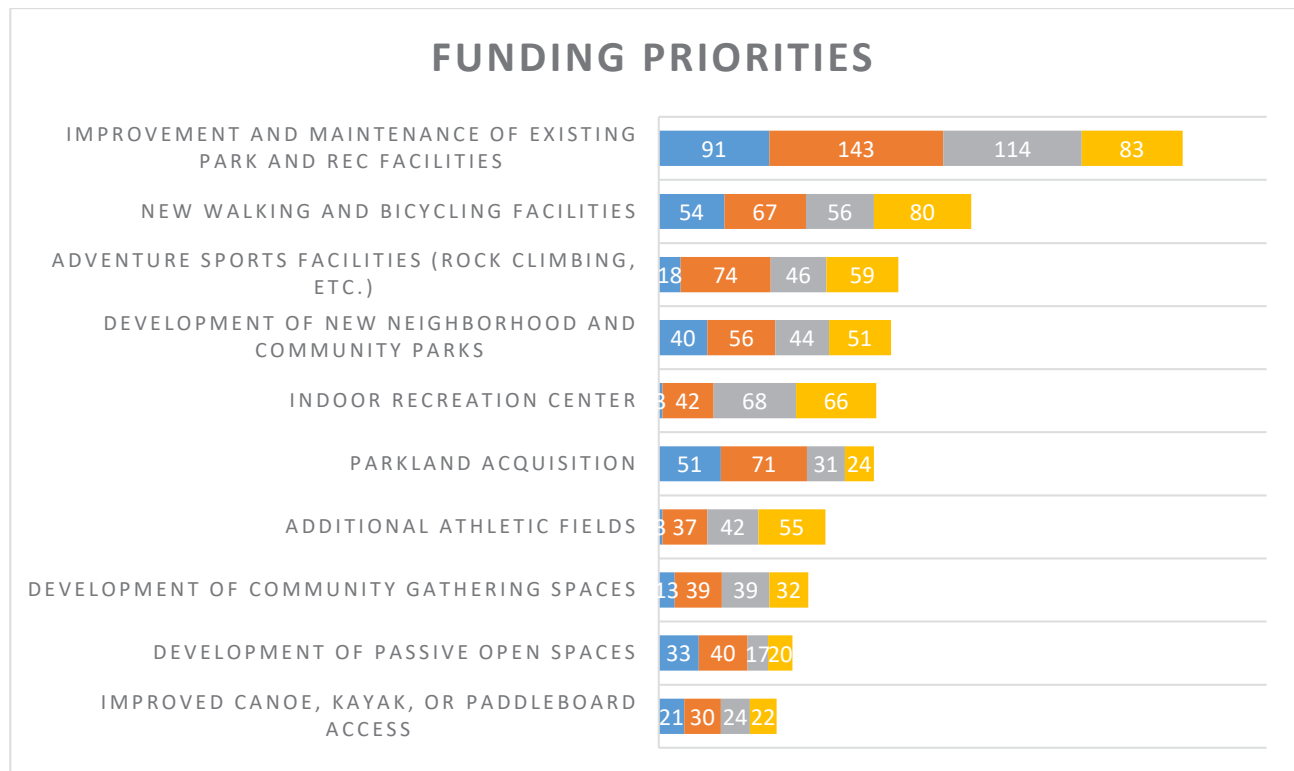
Table 11.1: Describe DeKalb County's Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs' Reputation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Great	58	8.5	8.6	8.6
	Good	186	27.5	27.5	36.1
	Average	249	36.8	36.8	72.9
	Poor	55	8.1	8.1	81.0
	Very Poor	9	1.3	1.3	82.3
	DK	120	17.7	17.7	100.0
	Total	677	99.9	100.0	
	Missing System		0	0.1	
Total		676	100.0		

Spending Priorities

During four open houses, attendees were asked to rank spending priorities for the Department. Allocation of resources in areas of greatest need for residents plays a role in the Department's emerging and changing role. The most important priority was the improvement and maintenance of existing park and recreation facilities. Of all the items listed, such as development of new neighborhood and community parks, development of passive open spaces, and parkland acquisition, improvement and maintenance of existing park and recreation facilities was the most important funding priority. Specifically, improvement and maintenance received 431 votes. The second highest attribute was new walking and biking facilities with 257 votes, as follows:

Figure 11.1: Open House Funding Priorities



As a result, the Department should focus resource allocation toward maintaining the existing infrastructure, while also continuously adding new amenities, based on continued population growth and meeting the unmet needs of the community.

Wayfinding

The County's wayfinding needs improvement. Finding parks can be difficult. There are large park signs at the entries, but if the entry is located off a smaller street, there is little to no signage on the major streets to direct residents to the facility. Once in the parks, wayfinding to specific amenities is hit or miss. Some parks have very clear direction signs, while others have none. Some signs are a simple old street sign style, with smaller text, and others are more significant and easier to read. The style is not consistent among facilities. When signs are present, the verbiage on the signs is generally correct and accurate.

A consistent style of sign would be a big benefit to users and would allow users to key in on something when looking for or navigating through a facility. Additionally, something scalable could be used to direct people to parks from major roadways.

Changing and Emerging Role

The Department, in aspiring to developing its changing and emerging role as the key provider of parks, recreation and cultural affairs services in the County, is currently embarking on a pursuit of certification through CAPRA. The Department's ability to successfully acquire the certification will provide yet one more positive step in ensuring its standing in the County.

Nationally, the park and recreation industry continues to evolve, which will influence a changing role for DeKalb Parks, Recreation & Cultural Affairs. The three pillars of the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) include: Health and Wellness, Conservation, and Social Equity. The Department's mission includes "promotes healthy and active lifestyles," which reinforces the Health and Wellness pillar of NRPA. Many agencies now have close relationships with health departments, with some agencies having satellite health offices in a recreation center and providing support for mental health initiatives, such as mental health first aid training.

As a result of the COVID-19 situation, the operating environment for park and recreation agencies is changing and will continue to change. The importance of parks has increased because of peoples' need to get outside and enjoy nature. Therefore, the Department can play a leading role in the County for offering relief and respite for County residents. Efforts to reinforce the healthy and active lifestyle in providing programs and services will continue to be important. The website should highlight the Department's efforts in this area.

In addition, the methods used to deliver programs will significantly change, given the need for social distancing guidelines. For example, youth sport programs will change as many travel teams will not be able to survive this crisis. Furthermore, many private childcare facilities may go out of business, which will undoubtedly increase participation at parks and recreation agencies' camps and preschool programs.

Trail usage and interest in natural resource protection will increase. As an example, the Schuylkill River Greenway, outside of Philadelphia, has reported a 250% increase in trail use since the beginning of the COVID-19 situation. Greater emphasis on trail development and maintenance will grow in importance. A dedicated trails person is recommended as part of the organization structure report. During the partnership focus group meetings, a frequent comment included the desire for the Department to take the lead on the development of greenways, trails, and connectivity throughout the County.

Protection of natural resources and conservation efforts will need to continue and expand. An example includes Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) investments to reduce and treat stormwater flooding. Nature-based methods, such as permeable pavement, bioswales, stream restorations, or tree canopies are being used by parks and recreation agencies around the country. GSI offers communities many additional health and wellness benefits, opportunities for social cohesion, and improved economic prosperity.

Attention to social equity in geographical placement of parks, amenities, and programs will also continue as a priority for parks and recreation agencies. For example, some agencies such as the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and Milwaukee Public Schools Department of Recreation have initiated equity plans. Milwaukee's plan includes equitable access to Milwaukee's playfields. Other agencies such as Manchester, CT, and Tacoma, WA, have provided cultural competency training and have committed resources to diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

As mentioned by Commissioners during their interviews for the Master Plan, the Department has a major role in the overall economy of the County. As part of the Department's changing and emerging role, an economic impact study may be beneficial in quantifying its impact and educating the public about the results.

Along with external communication efforts, another critical facet of the Department's brand and image includes Departmental marketing methods. This includes the website, social media presence, marketing collateral, and the allocation of labor resources toward marketing support. All of these elements lead toward residents' impressions of the brand and image of the Department. Currently, only two positions perform marketing functions (the positions are titled public relations), which is a fewer number of staff than other comparable organizations.

The Department's changing and emerging role encompasses a commitment to transparency, including the development of an external communication plan as part of the CAPRA standard for public information policy and procedure.

Agencies such as Raleigh Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources have a defined approach to community input and guidelines for connecting with the community. More and more agencies are investing in online engagement platforms such as Social Pinpoint and Bang the Table to engage their community members.

Along with this effort, agencies realize the importance of excellence in customer service and have developed system wide customer service training and efforts through the initiation of a cross functional customer service team. There are thousands of interactions every year that take place between the Department's staff and the customers/residents that are users of the system. Therefore, the Department should place great emphasis on managing the customer service system. This goes beyond simply having customer service training for staff. It's embracing a customer focused mentality in doing business. This includes having a system wide approach to measuring customer satisfaction and developing ongoing relationships with County residents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Department's emerging role recommendations are described by four titles: Provider, Leader, Storyteller, and Advocate.

Provider

Using NRPA's 3 Pillars as a guide, enhance services in health and wellness, conservation, and equity.

- Health and Wellness: Create opportunities for healthy and active lifestyles
- Conservation: Establish a trail development and maintenance plan. Many agency examples from around the country have these and can be customized to DeKalb's needs
- Equity: Develop an equity plan for geographic placement of parks, facilities, and amenities, and for the delivery of recreation programs.

Leader

Activate the Department's mission statement by executing the "exceptional" status to which it aspires.

- Develop standards that define what it means to provide exceptional parks, recreational facilities, and cross-generational programs. Create an action plan to execute said standards.
- Establish customer service standards, then conduct a customer service campaign that includes employee training and support mechanisms
- Demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement by investing in and maintaining existing parks and recreation facilities, as outlined in the Master Plan
- Use wayfinding as a means to lead participants to Department locations as well as promote brand awareness. Conduct sign rebrand campaign, including an assessment of sign quantity, placement, content, and design
- Initiate changes to service delivery as a result of COVID-19 and work in concert with other government agencies to continuously adapt the delivery of services
- Achieve and continuously work to maintain CAPRA accreditation (obtained in 2020) and implement standards as required.

11 - Changing and Emerging Roles

Storyteller

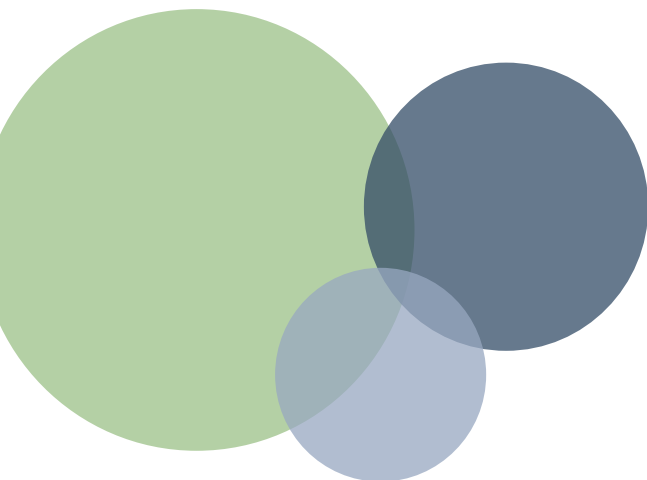
Continuously tell the Department's story – touting accomplishments, building awareness, fostering a sense of transparency, and encouraging public approval.

- Increase the quantity of marketing resources, including staff and funding
- Engage a marketing firm to facilitate a rebranding effort
- Redevelop an engaging, informative website. Use the website to highlight the department's efforts in service development based on NRPA's 3 pillars
- Develop an annual marketing plan that defines the Department's approach to connecting with the community

Advocate

Be the regional champion of why parks and recreation is important to the community.

- Demonstrate the fiscal importance by conducting an economic impact study and reporting the results publically
- Serve as the regional conduit and resource for local nonprofit, private, and public agencies. Invite agency representatives to participate in quarterly meetings, with the goal of increased communication, partnership, and cooperation in providing the community's park and recreation services. Develop and execute action plans based on each meeting's discussion.



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WORKS CITED

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12 WORKS CITED



Central DeKalb Senior Center

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Appendices

APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A

DeKalb Parks 2020 Survey



Q1; HAS RESPONDENT USED DEKALB COUNTY PARK IN PAST YEAR?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	520	76.9	76.9	76.9
	No	156	23.1	23.1	100.0
	Total	676	100.0	100.0	

Q2 was asked only of those who said they have NOT used a county park or recreational facility in the past year (N=156)

Q2A; IF NOT, WHY NOT? - Lack of Awareness of facilities					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Selected	74	47.2	47.2	47.2
	Yes	82	52.8	52.8	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	

Q2B; IF NOT, WHY NOT? - Condition of Parks					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Selected	131	84.2	84.2	84.2
	Yes	25	15.8	15.8	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	

Q2C; IF NOT, WHY NOT? - Age or Health Limitations					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Selected	128	82.2	82.2	82.2
	Yes	28	17.8	17.8	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	

Q2D; IF NOT, WHY NOT? -Concern About Personal Safety					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Selected	108	69.2	69.2	69.2
	No	48	30.8	30.8	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	

Q2E; IF NOT, WHY NOT? - Limited Hours of Operation					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Selected	143	91.5	91.5	91.5
	Yes	13	8.5	8.5	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	

Q2F; IF NOT, WHY NOT? - Cost/fees					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Selected	152	97.6	97.6	97.6
	Yes	4	2.4	2.4	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	

Q2G; IF NOT, WHY NOT? - Facilities Not Convenient					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Selected	143	91.4	91.4	91.4
	Yes	13	8.6	8.6	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	

Q2H; IF NOT, WHY NOT? - Don't Have What Respondent Wants					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	142	90.8	90.8	90.8
	No	14	9.2	9.2	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	

Q2I; IF NOT, WHY NOT? - Accessibility Issues					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Selected	149	95.7	95.7	95.7
	Yes	7	4.3	4.3	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	

Q2J; IF NOT, WHY NOT? - Lack of Transportation					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Selected	155	99.0	99.0	99.0
	Yes	2	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	

Q2K; IF NOT, WHY NOT? - Not Interested					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Selected	144	92.1	92.1	92.1
	Yes	12	7.9	7.9	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	

Q2L; IF NOT, WHY NOT? - No Time					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Selected	139	89.3	89.3	89.3
	Yes	17	10.7	10.7	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	

Q2M; IF NOT, WHY NOT? -Go Other Places

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Selected	140	89.8	89.8	89.8
	No	16	10.2	10.2	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	

Q2 OTHER; IF NOT, WHY NOT? - Other

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Selected	61	39.1	76.5	76.5
	Yes	19	12.1	23.5	100.0
	Total	80	51.2	100.0	
Missing	System	76	48.8		
Total		156	100.0		

Q3 was asked only of those who said they HAVE used a county park in the past year (N=520)

Q3; HOW OFTEN HAS RESPONDENT VISITED DEKALB PARK?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Several times a week	117	17.4	22.6
	Once a week	66	9.7	12.6
	Two or three times a month	151	22.3	29.0
	Less than two or three times a month	185	27.3	35.5
	DK	1	.2	.2
	Total	520	76.9	100.0
Missing	System	156	23.1	
Total		676	100.0	

Q4; RATE CONDITION OF DEKALB PARKS					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High quality	97	14.4	15.0	15.0
	Good quality	419	61.9	64.6	79.6
	Poor Quality	66	9.7	10.1	89.8
	DK	66	9.8	10.2	100.0
	Total	648	95.9	100.0	
Missing	System	28	4.1		
Total		676	100.0		

Q5A; COMPARED TO OTHER PRIORITIES SUCH AS PUBLIC SAFETY, STREETS, UTILITIES, AND SCHOOLS, PARKS AND RECREATION ARE IMPORTANT TO A COMMUNITY					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	412	60.9	61.0	61.0
	Agree	214	35.7	35.7	96.7
	Disagree	19	2.8	2.8	99.5
	Strongly disagree	3	.4	.4	99.9
	DK	1	.1	.1	100.0
	Total	675	99.9	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.1		
Total		676	100.0		

Q5B; I AM ABLE TO CONTACT DEKALB COUNTY RPCA STAFF EASILY FOR INFORMATION					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	94	13.8	14.1	14.1
	Agree	355	52.5	53.6	67.8
	Disagree	134	19.9	20.3	88.1
	Strongly disagree	25	3.7	3.8	91.8
	DK	54	8.0	8.2	100.0
	Total	662	97.9	100.0	
Missing	System	14	2.1		
Total		676	100.0		

Q5C; I AM WILLING TO BE A VOLUNTEER TO IMPROVE OUR PARKS					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	77	11.4	11.5	11.5
	Agree	312	46.2	46.7	58.2
	Disagree	212	31.4	31.7	90.0
	Strongly disagree	60	8.9	9.0	99.0
	DK	7	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	668	98.9	100.0	
Missing	System	8	1.1		
Total		676	100.0		

Q5D; I SUPPORT EFFORTS TO IMPROVE COUNTY PARK FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS OVER TIME AS FUNDING OPTIONS BECOME AVAILABLE					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	301	44.5	44.6	44.6
	Agree	339	50.1	50.2	94.7
	Disagree	32	4.8	4.8	99.5
	Strongly disagree	2	.3	.3	99.8
	DK	1	.2	.2	100.0
	Total	675	99.9	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.1		
Total		676	100.0		

Q6A; HOW FAR WOULD RESPONDENT BE WILLING TO TRAVEL TO A PARK IF SAFE MULTI-USE TRAILS OR SIDEWALKS OR BICYCLE LANES WERE PROVIDED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1/4 mile	88	13.0	13.5	13.5
	1/2 mile	127	18.8	19.6	33.2
	1 mile	199	29.4	30.7	63.8
	More than 1 mile	190	28.2	29.4	93.2
	Would not walk to park	43	6.4	6.7	99.9
	DK	1	.1	.1	100.0
	Total	648	95.9	100.0	
Missing	System	28	4.1		
Total		676	100.0		

Q6B; HOW FAR WOULD RESPONDENT BE WILLING TO RIDE A BICYCLE TO A PARK IF SAFE MULTI-USE TRAILS OR SIDEWALKS OR BICYCLE LANES WERE PROVIDED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Up to 1 mile	136	20.1	21.1	21.1
	1-2 miles	119	17.6	18.4	39.5
	2-5 miles	148	21.9	22.9	62.4
	5-10 miles	49	7.3	7.6	70.0
	10 or more miles	41	6.1	6.3	76.4
	Would not bike to park	150	22.2	23.3	99.7
	DK	2	.3	.3	100.0
	Total	645	95.5	100.0	
Missing	System	31	4.5		
Total		676	100.0		

Q6C; HOW FAR WOULD RESPONDENT DRIVE TO USE A COUNTY PARK AND RECREATION FACILITY

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	15 minutes or less	282	41.8	43.5	43.5
	15 to 30 minutes	287	42.5	44.3	87.8
	30 to 45 minutes	33	5.0	5.2	93.0
	45 minutes or more	31	4.6	4.8	97.8
	Would not drive	13	1.9	2.0	99.7
	DK	2	.2	.3	100.0
		Total	648	95.9	100.0
Missing	System	28	4.1		
Total		676	100.0		

Q7; DO YOU TRAVEL OUTSIDE DEKALB COUNTY TO USE PARKS OR RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	431	63.8	66.6	66.6
	No	216	32.0	33.4	100.0
	Total	647	95.8	100.0	
Missing	System	28	4.2		
Total		676	100.0		

Q8A; DOES RESPONDENT USE COMMERCIAL RECREATIONAL FACILITIES? (GYMS, HEALTH CLUBS, ETC.)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not selected	402	59.6	61.5	61.5
	Yes	252	37.3	38.5	100.0
	Total	655	96.9	100.0	
Missing	System	21	3.1		
Total		676	100.0		

Q8B; DOES RESPONDENT USE YMCA/YWCA FACILITIES?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not selected	540	79.9	82.4	82.4
	Yes	115	17.0	17.6	100.0
	Total	655	96.9	100.0	
Missing	System	21	3.1		
Total		676	100.0		

Q8C; DOES RESPONDENT USE FACILITIES OFFERED BY PLACES OF WORSHIP?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not selected	535	79.2	81.7	81.7
	Yes	120	17.7	18.3	100.0
	Total	655	96.9	100.0	
Missing	System	21	3.1		
Total		676	100.0		

Q8D; DOES RESPONDENT USE FACILITIES OFFERED BY PUBLIC OR PRIVATE SCHOOLS?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not selected	514	76.0	78.4	78.4
	Yes	141	20.9	21.6	100.0
	Total	655	96.9	100.0	
Missing	System	21	3.1		
Total		676	100.0		

Q8E; DOES RESPONDENT USE FACILITIES MAINTAINED BY NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not selected	500	73.9	76.3	76.3
	Yes	155	23.0	23.7	100.0
	Total	655	96.9	100.0	
Missing	System	21	3.1		
Total		676	100.0		

Q8F; DOES RESPONDENT USE BOYS OR GIRLS CLUB FACILITIES?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not selected	614	90.9	93.8	93.8
	Yes	41	6.0	6.2	100.0
	Total	655	96.9	100.0	
Missing	System	21	3.1		
Total		676	100.0		

Q8G; DOES RESPONDENT USE FACILITIES OFFERED BY OTHER GOVERNMENTS?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not selected	495	73.3	75.6	75.6
	Yes	160	23.6	24.4	100.0
	Total	655	96.9	100.0	
Missing	System	21	3.1		
Total		676	100.0		

Q9 was asked only of those individuals who indicated they use at least one of the alternative recreational alternatives included in Q8 (N=447) (Use "Valid Percent")

Q9A; WHY DOES RESPONDENT USE OTHER FACILITIES? - Closer to home/work					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not selected	189	27.9	42.3	42.3
	Yes	258	38.2	57.7	100.0
	Total	447	66.1	100.0	
Missing	System	229	33.9		
Total		676	100.0		

Q9B; WHY DOES RESPONDENT USE OTHER FACILITIES? - Other Facilities DeKalb Does Not Have

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not selected	263	39.0	58.9	58.9
	Yes	184	27.2	41.1	100.0
	Total	447	66.1	100.0	
Missing	System	229	33.9		
Total		676	100.0		

Q9C; WHY DOES RESPONDENT USE OTHER FACILITIES? - Offer Better Quality Facilities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not selected	264	39.1	59.1	59.1
	Yes	183	27.0	40.9	100.0
	Total	447	66.1	100.0	
Missing	System	229	33.9		
Total		676	100.0		

Q9D; WHY DOES RESPONDENT USE OTHER FACILITIES? - Programs Are Run Better Than Those Offered By DeKalb

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not selected	352	52.1	78.7	78.7
	Yes	95	14.1	21.3	100.0
	Total	447	66.1	100.0	
Missing	System	229	33.9		
Total		676	100.0		

Q9E; WHY DOES RESPONDENT USE OTHER FACILITIES? - Fees Are More Reasonable					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not selected	380	56.3	85.1	85.1
	Yes	67	9.9	14.9	100.0
	Total	447	66.1	100.0	
Missing	System	229	33.9		
Total		676	100.0		

Q9 OTHER; WHY DOES RESPONDENT USE OTHER FACILITIES? - Other Reasons					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not selected	382	56.6	85.6	85.6
	Yes	64	9.5	14.4	100.0
	Total	447	66.1	100.0	
Missing	System	229	33.9		
Total		676	100.0		

Q10; "I WOULD BE WILLING TO PAY MORE TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS PROVIDED BY THE DEKALB COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT"					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	79	11.7	11.8	11.8
	Agree	334	49.4	49.7	61.5
	Disagree	207	30.7	30.9	92.3
	Strongly disagree	46	6.8	6.8	99.2
	DK	6	.8	.8	100.0
	Total	671	99.3	100.0	
Missing	System	5	.7		
Total		676	100.0		

Q11 was asked only of those individuals who either “strongly agreed” or “agreed” in Q10 (N = 415)

Q11; HOW MUCH WOULD RESPONDENT BE WILLING TO PAY ON A MONTHLY BASIS TO SUPPORT IMPROVEMENTS TO PARKS FACILITIES/SERVICES?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	\$0	65	9.6	15.5	15.5
	up to \$15 per month	248	36.7	59.8	75.3
	\$15 to \$25 per month	69	10.3	16.7	92.0
	\$25 to \$50 per month	22	3.3	5.4	97.4
	\$50 to \$75 per month	2	.3	.5	97.9
	More than \$75 per month	1	.2	.3	98.2
	DK	8	1.1	1.8	100.0
Missing	Total	415	61.5	100.0	
	System	260	38.5		
Total		676	100.0		

Q12; WHY DOES RESPONDENT USE OTHER FACILITIES? - Offer Better Quality Facilities					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Great	58	8.5	8.6	8.6
	Good	186	27.5	27.5	36.0
	Average	249	36.8	36.8	72.9
	Poor	55	8.1	8.1	81.0
	Very Poor	9	1.3	1.3	82.3
	DK	120	17.7	17.7	100.0
	Total	675	99.9	100.0	
Missing	System	0	.1		
	Total	676	100.0		

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Q13; TENURE - Years in DeKalb County					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0-5 years	176	26.1	26.3	26.3
	6-10 years	86	12.8	12.9	39.3
	11-20 years	121	17.9	18.0	57.3
	Over 20 years	286	42.3	42.7	100.0
	Total	669	99.1	100.0	
Missing	DK	6	.9		
Total		676	100.0		

Q14; AGE					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-24	72	10.6	10.7	10.7
	25-34	143	21.1	21.3	32.0
Missing	35-44	122	18.1	18.2	50.2
	45-54	115	17.1	17.2	67.5
	55-64	106	15.8	15.9	83.3
	65-74	77	11.3	11.4	94.8
	75 or older	35	5.2	5.2	100.0
	Total	670	99.2	100.0	
	DK	4	.6		
System	1	.2			
Total	5	.8			
Total		676	100.0		

Q15; NUMBER OF ADULTS IN HOUSEHOLD					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	180	26.6	27.4	27.4
	2	305	45.2	46.4	73.8
	3	113	16.8	17.3	91.1
	4	46	6.9	7.1	98.1
	5	9	1.3	1.4	99.5
	6	3	.5	.5	100.0
	Total	657	97.2	100.0	
Missing	9	0	.0		
	99	3	.4		
System	16	2.3			
Total	19	2.8			
Total		676	100.0		

Q16A; NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER 18 IN HOUSEHOLD					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	448	66.2	68.3	68.3
	1	85	12.5	12.9	81.3
	2	81	11.9	12.3	93.6
	3	27	4.0	4.1	97.7
	4	8	1.1	1.1	98.8
	5	6	.8	.9	99.7
	6	2	.3	.3	100.0
Missing	Total	655	96.9	100.0	
	System	11	1.6		
	Total	10	1.4		
Total	Total	21	3.1		
	Total	676	100.0		

Q16B; NUMBER OF CHILDREN 0-4					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	136	20.1	67.7	67.7
	1	53	7.9	26.7	94.4
	2	8	1.2	4.1	98.5
	3	2	.2	.8	99.2
	4	2	.2	.8	100.0
Missing	Total	200	29.6	100.0	
	System	476	70.4		
Total	Total	676	100.0		

Q16C; NUMBER OF CHILDREN 5-11					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	102	15.1	51.0	51.0
	1	47	7.0	23.7	74.7
	2	42	6.2	21.0	95.7
	3	8	1.2	4.0	99.7
	4	1	.1	.3	100.0
Missing	Total	200	29.6	100.0	
	System	476	70.4		
Total	Total	676	100.0		

Q16D; NUMBER OF CHILDREN 12-17					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	92	13.7	46.1	46.1
	1	65	9.7	32.6	78.7
	2	34	5.5	16.9	95.6
	3	9	1.3	4.4	100.0
	Total	200	29.6	100.0	
Missing	System	476	70.4		
Total		676	100.0		

OWNRENT; HOMEOWNER OR RENTER?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Home Owner	470	69.6	71.9	71.9
	Renter	183	27.1	28.1	100.0
	Total	653	96.7	100.0	
Missing	DK	20	2.9		
	System	3	.4		
Total	Total	23	3.3		
Total		676	100.0		

INCOME; 2019 TOTAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Under 20k	27	4.1	4.8	4.8
	20k-35k	73	10.9	12.9	17.7
	35k-50k	63	9.4	11.1	28.8
	50k-75k	130	19.2	22.8	51.6
	75k-100k	79	11.8	14.0	65.6
	100k-150k	97	14.3	17.0	82.5
	150k-200k	49	7.3	8.7	91.2
	Over 200k	50	7.4	8.8	100.0
Missing	Total	570	84.3	100.0	
	DK/NA/Refuse	104	15.3		
	System	3	.4		
Total	Total	106	15.7		
Total		676	100.0		

GENDER					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	305	45.1	46.3	46.3
	Female	354	52.4	53.7	100.0
	Total	659	97.6	100.0	
Missing	Other	12	1.8		
	System	4	.6		
	Total	17	2.4		
Total		676	100.0		

HISPANIC/LATINO					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	56	8.3	8.5	8.5
	No	603	89.2	91.5	100.0
	Total	659	97.5	100.0	
Missing	DK	11	1.6		
	System	6	.9		
	Total	17	2.5		
Total		676	100.0		

RACE					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	
Valid	African-American, Black	349	51.6	53.9	
	Caucasian, White	229	33.9	35.4	
	Asian/Asian-American	19	2.8	2.9	
	American Indian/Pacific Islander	3	.5	.5	
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	6	.9	1.0	
	Other	41	6.0	6.3	
	Total	647	95.8	100.0	
	DK	20	2.9		
Missing	System	9	1.3		
	Total	29	4.2		
Total		676	100.0		

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APPENDIX B

DeKalb Parks 2020 Survey
Open Ended Responses

13 - Appendices

Reasons for rating DCRPCA reputation the way they did (Q12 followup)

A lot of the parks are not equipped. They don't have children's equipment. A lot of their parks don't have that. A lot of parks aren't suitable to grill or eat at.

Abundance of cultural events at parks - Food Trucks, Festivals, community gatherings

All of my friends who have children that participate in the T-ball, they say that they have good coaches and facilities for working out. The fees for the kids to play are not that high.

Although there have been many improvements to my local park, I believe fields need to be more accessible to residents that don't play in a specific league.

As a new member of the area there are some great parks nearby! I see tennis courts and fields. Very welcoming!

As a resident of DeKalb county, we all pay taxes theirs' always room for improvement!!

As you can talk with someone from the office, you will receive different answers. Also it appears that DC parks and recs are on the low end of the commissioners priority.

At Gresham, Decatur there is a pool. Limited tables and seating for adults. No playground. Park across street hidden, appears unsafe.

Recreation center/park on Tilson RD, Decatur I did not feel safe in the park. Limited features.

Barely anyone knows what the department offers. As a current resident and a product and native of Dekalb County, I see varied distribution of resources allocated to parks and rec across the county. And no true real connectivity for residents to local parks like there is in Gwinnett.

Based on my experience at some of the parks

Based on the rating scale you gave me, good would be a fair assessment. It is not exceptional, but it is definitely good.

Based on what I hear from those who have been or are employed by DKC

Because I don't consider them to have a "poor" reputation.

Because no one expounds on the subject too much. Oh, folks mention that they enjoy the Panola Rd walking trails and Panola Mountain Park and the Park on Leigh Blvd. is always packed however and it looks maintained from the street, I have never driven through the parking lot. Other walking trails are centrally located and i have friends from Henry and Rockdale counties come and walk them on a regular bases.

Because of new innovations at Browns Mill and Exchange Parks.

Because when I visit these parks they are not taken care of like others. Paper and trash We want the same all over. Thanks

Before this survey, I was not even aware of the existence of the department.

Buildings and grounds maintenance of what are now Tucker parks was poor. Staff were indifferent. Programming was mediocre for different age groups. A question on this survey asked if I'd be willing to pay more. Seeing the rapid progress and new activities in the Tucker Parks in the last three years makes me think that DeKalb P&R hasn't used its resources well. Gwinnett, another point of reference for me, has superb facilities. Why doesn't DeKalb have several year round pools, indoor sports, and fitness facilities the communities can enjoy? Other cities and small towns where I've lived have had them.

Cannot say if I have never been.

Cleaning needs to be done more often, also more control on renting the parks for private events. New signs are needed at the trails and parks

Compared to other amenities in other counties nearby, that may have better funding. I don't know.

Compared to other counties, it could be cleaner.

Compared, to say Decatur, we need more programming in our parks (Henderson Park). Screen on the green, live music, etc.

Conversations with others outside of DeKalb.

DeKalb has two golf courses, and one is on a flood plane. It floods constantly. Mystery Valley is in need of a new club house.

Dekalb is doing a great job with the park's & Rec using green place fantastic neighborhood parts.

DeKalb really does put effort into making the parks well maintained and advertising them. The parks have lots of relaxing natural forest trails that feel welcoming. There's something for everyone and people who visit are aware of this.

Did you help with kittredge Park? Or is that private? I don't know if your organization cares

Don't have enough interaction to judge this

Don't care

Don't hear anything good or bad about the parks, so I assume its average

Don't think I have ever been to a Dekalb Co. park.

Easily accessible

Every time I go to the library or such, they help me out if I have any questions. It is nice and quiet. The parks around them are nice. I can go and hang out with friends. I have fun.

Every time I go, they have different things down there. If you wanted to have a party, you could.
Everything in DeKalb is very poor, including the parks.
Everything tends to get leftover to the North.
Facilities for all age groups, generally well maintained, and appropriately staffed.
Feel like there are many things in DeKalb government that could be improved.
First time I have heard about this department, and certainly I have been contacted by it for feedback.
From my experience, what they offer is well-maintained and nice. They need more offerings, at least where I live. They could have more in other counties, but I'm not sure.
From what I've heard.
From where I live, it's excellent. They recently updated parks in Brookhaven. They look great.

GENERAL FEELING

Generally, I find that Dekalb lags behind Fulton and other communities in the area
Generally, most of the facilities look good. It is like they are being maintained properly.
good facilities and good managing
Have never heard anyone discuss the reputation.
Have not heard of the Cultural affairs division and have no idea what it does
Haven't heard anything bad
Haven't lived here very long
Haven't heard anything overly positive or negative.
Here in Dunwoody, we have a lot of facilities. They are well-maintained, new, easy to access, and pleasant.
Honestly don't know much about the county recreation, parks and cultural affairs organization.
Honestly I am unsure; as I became a regular user of the parks only in late 2019. The parks I have visited have been well maintained and clean and well marked trails. I wish there were more forested type parks versus sunny open ones. I usually drive 20 mins max and prefer a smaller less crowded site.
I admit I do not educate myself well on where the DeKalb County parks and recreation facilities are located by looking up the information on the Internet. I frequently do use the services offered by the DeKalb County Public Library (one of the best) and I frequently pick up there information on county services offered. I can not remember picking up literature from the library about DeKalb County Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Affairs. Maybe it was not attractive enough to attract my attention. I did one time attempt to look up the location of the DeKalb County Public Pools. The website had the addresses of the pools, but no map. I did not have the time to look up every address and plot them on a map. Without this knowledge, I was left with the impression that public pools were not built where the rich people live and which have expensive private pools. I have enjoyed watching kids play sports such as baseball and especially enjoyed watching them during the MLB strike years ago. I especially watch them play at my church's recreation ministry. I am glad the parks and fields are available for the kids. I am aware that there are senior citizen centers particularly because some of them are near the library branches. As I get older I need to checkout what they offer. Are they located where the rich in the county live? Like I implied, this survey may cause me to proactively research the information if it is offered on the internet in an understandable and usable form including maps. Also, if it is available as a handout to pickup at the DeKalb County Public Library Branches. I am more aware of the cultural events held at the libraries than any cultural events held by the DeKalb Park services. I recently moved and now live in a less affluent part of DeKalb County. Ironically there may be more DeKalb County Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs where I now live than where I used to live.
I am a senior citizen. They offer a great deal for senior citizens. They have a great walking park. I use it because of the hot or summertime weather. They offer senior citizen programs and food programs.
I am concerned about the quality of the management of the program.
I am impressed with the latest facilities, parks, greenspace walking trails, etc., and I've heard nothing bad about the agency.
i am neutral - haven't heard anything about the department
I am not familiar with that at all.
I am not impressed with it. Stone Mountain is neat.
I am not really familiar with them. I have never really used them. I don't have an opinion.
I attend one of the senior citizens' departments. It is the senior housing.
I can't think of a reason right now.
I can't utilize their facilities because the Boys & Girls Clubs are there.

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I chose Very Poor because I've asked a similar question to many in our communities. The consensus is that Dekalb County as a whole has been a disappointment. Around the communities I hear, "Our taxes have tripled, but we don't see any improvements." Now, we receive a "survey" filled with misleading questions, typos and grammatical errors asking us to volunteer, instead of Dekalb County using the taxes we pay to improve the areas we use for leisure.

I did not vote for the creation of the city of Brookhaven because I thought taxes would go up. My property taxes went up almost immediately & continue to go up every year. While I like that the city's police department pays more attention to their citizens, more than the county ever did, I'm not convinced that the mayor & town council members are spending tax money wisely (ex: why do we need a fence around Blackburn Park?) I didn't hear any of my friends who are parents say anything negative about it.

I do not feel that we should have to pay for a YMCA membership when Dekalb Co may parks and recreation can supply all of the possible avenues for our citizens to be able to have a great outdoor life at our facilities/parks.

I do not have a good answer.

I do not know about the Dekalb Co. recs, parks and cultural affairs department.

I do not know enough about the culture.

I do what is necessary. They do not think outside the box.

I don't even know what parks are in DeKalb. Why not give some examples at the beginning of this survey? I'm supposed to know what county each park is in?

I don't know anything about the program.

I don't know them

I don't agree with all that happen around the park.

I don't any indication of their visibility. I unfortunately have to drive into Gwinnett to get the quality of customer service to shop and I pass several Gwinnett County Parks and often ask why Dekalb does not have the same caliber of parks.

I don't get out that much.

I don't go out that much. In fact, I worked in Fulton. I never worked out here.

I don't go to the parks. I just ride by the parks.

I don't have any experience with the organization

I don't have any strong opinion. I have not heard anything of that.

I don't have enough experience.

I don't have issues.

I don't hear a lot about it.

I don't know much of anything regarding DeKalb County Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs. You would think living here after 2 years I would know more but most of the parks and hiking/biking trails that I visit are not located in Dekalb County because there aren't really any good ones to go to.

I don't know who they are or where they are. I have never spoken to a single person. They don't communicate with the neighborhood. I am 64 years old and I've never met a single person. There is no type of communication at all.

I don't see a lot of marketing to know who they are.

I don't see them doing anything to make any improvements.

I don't spend that much time at parks, but when I do those I see in the area and get to go to are well kept in my opinion

I don't think I've heard anything good or bad about it

I don't think that it has enough cultural things, like concerts. It is also because of the families' schedules.

I don't use any of them.

I don't use it because of my age and immobility. I'm not that familiar with it.

I don't use the parks that much. It is also because of the lack of firsthand knowledge.

I enjoy going to parks.

I enjoy the park facilities. They are in high-quality. They are well-kept and well-managed.

I enjoy using the parks I have visited and think they are well run.

I enjoyed using the hiking trails, but with my current mobility issues,, I can no longer use the trails.

I feel I am more connected to the nature whenever I walk in there, I meet some wonderful and positive people; the county is making every effort to keep them tidy and people friendly

I feel like they could do better. They could have better equipment, better care, and have more working employees.

I feel really good that they are maintained. I have used them for kids' birthday parties. They have been good and very affordable.

I feel that it's good for the kids and seniors to go to.

I feel that the trails that I go to on a regular basis are beautiful and well maintained, but there are some parks that are abused by residents, are too loud and crowded, and get trashed making them look less than well maintained

I feel that they do not do enough of a good job communicating services, because I am not aware of them.

I frequently go to Brook Run Park, and it is always well kept! Great place to walk, and take kid to the playground.

I go to the park that is close to where I live, but I have tried to go to other facilities for the events we have hosted. The facilities were kind of old and battered.

I go to theirs parks. I live in DeKalb County, and I use some of their facilities.

I grew up in DeKalb. I have spent a lot of time in parks. I believe in what they are doing.

I guess it is average. There is not a lot of marketing information about the facilities, so I'm just unaware.

I have been associated with so many of the programs. I love that the kids and parents are participating.

I have been living here for 3 years and not gotten a lot of updates. I do not know where to get that information about parks and cultural affairs.

I have been living here in the county, I have been a resident for many years, and I think it's a good quality.

I have been living on this street for years. There is a park just up the street, and just last year, a woman was murdered. Then, the man who killed her, left her body there, and we, as a community, were not even told that her body had been left there like that. Just like I said previously, I go to this park several times a week, this park is right down the road. I like to go outside regularly to get some sun, take walks, exercise, and etcetera, but to find out her body was left like that, for who knows how long, was just so shocking. That is why, I also said that the park is average. If they started putting money to make the parks better, people wouldn't do that.

I have compared the service provided by other counties and they are much better run, it seems that they there is more accountability to keeping the parks at there best.

I have family in Fulton County. We have used some of their parks and recreation. It becomes even in some cases. Maybe it is less, but basically, it is at the level of Metropolitan Atlanta.

I have had no interaction and have been a resident of Dekalb County ~10 months

I have known better parks and recreation facilities.

I have lived there for 4 years. As far as the parks are concerned, they are nice, but they could be better.

I have never been to cultural centers. I haven't gone to any play or production. I don't use the parks or cultural recreation system.

I have never been to the park.

I have never heard of this organization before now

I have never really heard anything good that they do.

I have never seen anything outstanding offered.

I have never seen or heard any thing very bad.

I have never used it.

I have not heard anything bad about the Dekalb Parks and Recreation.

I have not observed strong evidence of related events involving cultural affairs. This does not mean that they are not happening but it has not attracted my attention.

I have only visited Stone Mountain Park. They have a lot of activities to do.

I have seen others that have better maintenance.

I have seen some improvements

I haven't been in a while.

I haven't been to any parks recently, but when I was there, they were kept in good order.

I haven't gone to a DeKalb facility. I go to LA Fitness. It is covered by my insurance, so it is free.

I haven't had any interactions with it.

I haven't had any problem. They are okay at the present time. Everything needs some improvement.

I haven't heard anything about them, so they must be average because if they were really good or really bad, I would have heard something about them.

I haven't heard anything negative.

I haven't heard anything to the contrary.

I haven't heard great things about the park.

I haven't interacted directly with the department nor have heard anything particularly positive or negative. My experience with the parks themselves has always been positive.

I haven't really come across any serious problems. They are not extremely nice, but there is no trash anywhere. They also have pretty good parks.

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I haven't seen anything to make it outstanding. I think that the ones I have been to are just average parks.
I haven't used enough of them to have an opinion.
I haven't used them a lot, but when I did it was unorganized.
I haven't used them.
I just don't know much about Dekalb County parks and rec and because I live in a city (Dunwoody) within DeKalb I use the services of the city
I haven't used them a lot, but when I did it was unorganized.
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I just don't know much about Dekalb County parks and rec and because I live in a city (Dunwoody) within DeKalb I use the services of the city
I just don't have any ideas.
I just don't know. We use other venues. We don't typically attend programming at the park.
I just don't see a lot of people talking about Dekalb County Parks.
I just go to one, and it is the Dog Park.
I just haven't been there.
I just moved from Henry County to Dekalb County. Therefore I am not familiar with the local areas.
I just moved here
I just moved to Dekalb county in December 2019 so I don't know much about their reputation
I just use the dog park. It is just a strip a land that I mainly use. Those are good.
I know a lot of people that come over to the park in my area.
I know nothing about DeKalb County's Cultural Affairs.
I know that they are doing the best they can for DeKalb County.
I like the facilities because of the way they look. My granddaughter and her children enjoy them.
I like to go to plays. My husband does, too, but we don't want to go down town. We feel safer going to our own community.
I live in Brookhaven, I am limited in where I can go and how long I have been here. I walk the Greenway which is a great idea and execution by your department but would love to see a community effort to organize a trash cleanup day in that creek. It is full of tires, shopping carts and all sorts of plastic and debris. It would be a great way to get the community back together once all this shit settles down with the virus
I live in Dunwoody and am involved with the parks in my city. Hence I don't interact with the DeKalb officials.
I live in the City of Decatur. They make an effort to reach out via newsletters, emails, and websites to inform residents of events and new greens space projects. Dekalb Co doesn't do the same. I don't really know what they do or offer. Had to look up their GIS maps to know which parks belonged to them vs. my city parks.
I live in the country 2/3 miles away from parks. They are very convenient. I've walked to these facilities. They are very responsive to comments. There was a big hole in the bridge that was rapidly fixed.
I live next to DeKalb Memorial Park and the safety and maintenance of this park has always fallen to the neighborhood. It takes forever to get a bench fixed/replaced or trash cans emptied. It's frequently overrun (because there are no barricades or processes in place for prevention) with illegal "car shows" or parties whose participants block the streets and participate in illegal activities. The safety of the park and the safety of our neighbors is constantly passed back and forth between county and city with no one willing to take responsibility. DeKalb County is a corrupt, ignorant, antiquated mess.
I love DeKalb county and all of the wonderful parks and green spaces. This is one of the reasons that drew me to Medlock park to reside. We need more sidewalks! And bike paths. And most importantly better traffic control/calming measures. At times, I have felt unsafe walking to the parks, because of speeding cars and sharing the road. I avoid 7-9AM and 3-6PM for this reason.
I never do any of these.
I never had a problem. It is always clean and safe.
I never had any negative experiences.
I never hear about the park system. But I'm a hermit for the most part...
I never heard anyone expresses an opinion of it.
I occasionally see the parks. They look pretty nice.
I personally don't hear too much about Parks and Recreation.
I prefer natural parks. I prefer programming done by non-profit organizations.
I question the safety of Dekalb parks. In the Clarkston/Memorial Drive part of the county the crime rate seems high. There's a lot of gunfire at night. So I don't think the parks are safe.
I really don't know what to say about that. I am not out and about. I don't want to say anything that would make DeKalb County look bad. There are some things that I don't know how to answer correctly.

I really pulled myself away from that stuff since I'm retired.
I say that it's average. I think I feel like they do their job. Their facilities are maintained enough, but there is nothing special about them.
I see a lot of activities. They have a lot of things going on and staff there.
I see that a lot of the parks bring a good amount of families. They are getting a good exercise, feeling good and enjoying themselves.
I take advantage of the senior center, however some of the classes that should be available isn't, so there should be more variety of classes for seniors. It is average.
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I think it's a lot better now. We have a new school that costs millions. I haven't had the privilege to walk through it yet, but my kids went there.

They already went to college. They did really well for themselves. To see them build a new school is beautiful. I think it's a great addition to the neighborhood to bring in more people. When people move, they look for a great school. That's what I did. Race movements have affected the community before. I had a chance to see that. Now, we have more people. We have more White neighborhoods and a little Mexican.

The school had a lot to do with that, and same with the parks. People are moving back. I've been living here for 35 years. I've seen a lot of improvement. It hasn't gone down, to tell you the truth. People always want to help each other and build, not destroy.

I think that it could be a little better. There could be more effort put into it.

I think that with the budget concerns, they do the best they can. They are trying to improve things because they know it is important to the people who live in the district. It's important to be healthy.

I think the parks should be more accessible on the weekends by staff. Including bathrooms, in which I do understand that things negative can happen but there should be something put in place for the citizens to enjoy the parks

I think they are things that are recommended by people in my community.

I use Biffle Park close to my home

I use Stone Mountain Park, Mason Mill Park and Nancy Creek Park. I also use the Central DeKalb County Senior Center. I love them all.

I use two parks that are 1 1/2 miles from my house. I've never had a problem with either. They are always well-maintained and cleaned.

I usually go to Arabia Mountain and it seems to be the stepchild of the county. The park could use a little more resources to improve the trails, get the crews nice uniforms.

I walk four miles. I worry about my safety.

I was born and raised in DeKalb County.

I would say in the surrounding areas, in comparison, it's average, nothing in particular stands out.

I'm new to DeKalb. So I'm still learning my way around.

I've never had a problem with the parks and Rec

I'm concerned about my safety when visiting parks in my area. I really don't know what's is going on in DeKalb County. I would love to attend a concert in DeKalb County and feel safe with family and friends. I would like to feel the same way when I attend Chaistain Park.

I'm not aware of any negative issues. We use the Medlock park walking trails near the tennis courts. Very nice. I would like to see one or two of the tennis courts converted into Pickleball courts. You could easily put two PB courts in the Same space as one tennis court.

I'm not sure what they do.

I'm not sure which parks are dekalb parks

I'm not walking.

I'm only speaking from past experience with DeKalb County Parks & Recreation. I know that the county has a long history of providing good recreational facilities including recreation centers in areas around the county. However, over the past 20 to 30 years, I haven't had occasion to use those facilities because my children are adults and I currently don't have that first hand knowledge of their present condition and resources that I once had.

In an organization that has supported Parks & Recreation Facilities for many years

In DeKalb, the parks are really clean and organized.

In general, they have fairly nice parks. I visit some of their facilities. They are clean and well-run. They aren't greatly special, but they are well-maintained.

It depends on the part of the park you are on. One part of the parks appears unwelcoming while the other side isn't as displeasing to the eye.

It is a place for the kids to go.

It is affordable and accessible.

It is based on the people I have come in contact with who have attended events. I have never heard of anything negative.

It is because everything is fine.

It is because of feeling comfortable with the way things are set up there.

It is because of recreation.

It is because of the accessible things that we have like the performing arts center.

It is because of the area and safety.

It is because of the commissioners in the district controlling the parks and recreation areas.

It is because of the customer service. The staff could be better.

It is because of the equipment, the people who are there, and their attitudes, and the distance.

It is because of the issues with the safety, sanitary and accessibility.

It is because of the lack of information. I don't really know. I don't pay much attention to the parks.

It is because of the lack of knowledge of other county programs.

It is because of the location to where I live and ability to have a dog park.

It is because of the maintenance. People do whatever they want.

It is because of the people and students I interact with at the parks.

It is because of the upkeep of most of them.

It is because of the way the parks are maintained well. It has a good reputation.

It is because of what I have been exposed to and utilizing.

It is because you can get to the park, but sometimes you can't.

It is clean and I don't have to pay. It is easy to get to.

It is clean.

It is comparable to other parks and recreation.

It is convenient and clean.

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It is comparable to other parks and recreation.

It is convenient and clean.

It is convenient. I enjoy the park.

It is diverse and has lots of options.

It is due to the crime.

It is easily accessible, open to the public and affordable.

It is gotten really dangerous.

It is in an urban setting. It is probably good for the kids. The playground equipment is nice. As an adult, I don't find much there.

It is just average. I haven't visited any other parks to rate it better or worse than them.

It is just because of the programs. They don't give me many programs to choose from.

It is just not popular.

It is maintained well, so that's good enough for me.

It is mostly just based on the pools. I think that they are good. It would also be because of the playgrounds.

It is nice and clean. They do try to keep it safe for you.

It is not advertised.

It is not exceedingly cultural.

It is not too good, but it is not too bad. There are other programs that are better than DeKalb.

It is not very good compared to other counties.

It is okay. Sometimes it isn't up-to-date.

It is safe and well-maintained.

It is very hard to reach for anyone, and when you get there, they are not clean.

It is well-maintained and clean.

It isn't above or below the surrounding counties.

It just seems like a regular park and nothing special.

It needs some improvements, especially for seniors. You have to wait on the list to go to the senior classes. We need more senior citizen centers.

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It really needs to be monitored as well as it should be. It is overcrowded and uncontrollable. People are hot rodding. Altogether, it isn't kid-friendly. There is too much partying in some parks.
It seems to be well-maintained.
It's so difficult to do things that I or my family enjoy like basketball, swimming or exercising.
It's comfortable for the kid. It's just average.
It's pretty good. I only went to a couple. I'd say it's average.
I've been to some parks, and they are kept up.
I've never heard anything bad happening at any of the Parks. I am older and have no children or grandchildren so although, I considered going to one of the swimming pools, I never made it but they look nice.
I've seen parts that are bad or worse. We can always use more, so I call them average.
I've used Medlock Park and the community garden.
I've visited a few facilities that were nice in DeKalb but they are further from my home. The ones close to my home near Candler and Flat Shoals are not the nicest nor do they feel the safest. Also, I've never received any emails or letters marketing parks or facilities close to my home that would convince me to utilize them.
Just average
Just by what I see.
Just the same...could be better. Certain neighborhood parks are better..
Living in Brookhaven, we are pleased some facilities were improved, but are extremely upset that many of our park spaces/fields have been leased out to private sports clubs and are now unavailable to local residents. We are also waiting anxiously for more safely connected walking and biking paths between parks.
Looking at what is available Southside versus Northside and for seniors, there is a great disparity. Southside where I live is the worst. I pay taxes that support DeKalb on the whole, Seniors pay little to nothing, yet they get better facilities.
Maintenance is done reasonably well, nothing outstanding. There are a few "extras" such as outdoor exercise equipment, water fountains, or similar that could be added
More hiking and biking trails needed
More important is building infrastructure than conservation of biodiversity and establishing school and community gardens. Corridors for pollinators is also very important
Most of my usage of parks and recreation are within the Dunwoody, Brookhaven, Sandy Springs area and I really like the walking trails available at places like Brookrun Park and Murphy Candler Park. I do not know of, or use, and dedicated DeKalb County parks or recreation facilities.
Most of the parks don't have any securities. Some of the grounds are not well kept.
Most parks aren't convenient. When I attend to parks, there are safety concerns.
Most parks need to be updated. There should be more stuff and more renovations.
Most parks visited appear to be average. Nothing out of the ordinary.
Multiple options highlighting many cultures. Diverse crowds - this is important to me.
My assessment of their reputation is based solely on my experience using the facilities. They are often underwhelming when compared to neighboring counties.
My daughter used to attend Camp Superstars and Camp Mason Meal. They do offer good activities for the children.
My experience with the Friends of Mason Mill Park and the county parks and recreation has been very favorable in helping us provide free family friendly events for the community.
My grandkids went there for summer camp, and they seemed to like it when they were growing up. It is close to home.
My husband and I are over 75 years of age and that impacts what we do at this time. We do use the park and playground (for grandchildren) that is close to here.
My interactions have been good or excellent. I have had no complaints.
No communication with them
No one ever talks positively or negatively about DeKalb parks.
No opinion
No reason to state otherwise. Have only heard good things about Parks and Recreation in DeKalb County. I am quite impressed.
Nobody hardly uses them, so it has no reputation.
"Nobody raves about *anything* in DeKalb county
The parks are fine- nothing to get excited about (unlike Brookhaven's or Chastain Park etc)"

Not all are welcome and subtle bullying unseen but felt and experienced acts that rob one of the opportunity to wash one's spirit as American Naturalists recommend...for reasons for which national parks, state parks and smaller places like the littlest backyard creeks etc exist for communing with nature. Loss of feelings of being safe in park environments makes one choose safety rather than unsafe feelings about an environment or hostile environment feelings....etc.

Not enough knowledge on subject

Not really sure, but the limited experience I have had with such facilities has always been very good. I am now 73 years old and have a 15 year old Lab mix that I used to take to nearby parks for walks frequently, but her physical condition is not up to it any more even though mine is.

Not very much of use to me near my residence.

Not visible, not sure what is available within 10 minute drive of me. Playgrounds have old equipment and are for really young kids, unimaginative, not much for kids 6-9 years old.

Nothing in Dekalb County is really great. A decent library system. Everything else is in disrepair/falling apart from decades of neglect due to incompetence and corruption.

Nothing really special with Dekalb county parks that I am aware of

On TV, there is always something happening at the parks.

One pool is a disgrace. The nicer pool is too far away, but, I don't visit there much, so, I said average.

Other states do more and are better funded

Overall experiences have been good with rec centers and local Tucker pool.

Overcrowded in the summer. Some staff are nice. Some are not.

Parks within the City of Decatur and City of Tucker are better maintained and funded, and have more amenities (trails, bridges, docks, volunteers, etc.).

Past experience trying to deal with the Parks department about an issue that related to a commercial developer. The developer's agenda was inconsistent with expressed neighborhood desires. Parks Department supported the developer over the residents.

People feel the parks are not very well-maintained and that parks in cities in DeKalb get more time and attention.

pools only open when schools out, I have no children and would like to use after September 1. have attempted to get some adult pool time

Poor playground equipment pools are old

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Safety and security is not the best.

Safety reasons, age category

Senior citizens' facilities are efficient.

Serves the community well.

So far so good. And I do not know much about the other Parks.

Some areas don't appear safe. The area of some doesn't have enough shade or ample tables or seats for adults that bring children.

Some neighborhoods are less desirable and safe

Some of your staff is not as inviting or courteous to those they see often. If I am a resident new to using parks, recreation and cultural affairs facilities I should feel and be treated like; I'm glad you are here using the facilities. Depending on the center, I may be made to feel like an intruder than a welcomed resident.

Some parks have more facilities than others. There are less stuff for the kids to play. There is no supervision. The upkeep is not great.

Some things can be improved.

Sometimes they're there and sometimes they're not. I can reach them sometimes and sometimes and I cannot.

Sometimes you couldn't go because they are overcrowded.

Sometimes, the fountain does not work. They have dirty bathrooms. There is not enough light for safety.

Sometimes, the parks are not always that clean. They are clean but not for the most part.

Sporting is good. There is a high parents' participation. It is widely enjoyed and utilized.

Swimming facility is year round. Outdated equipment for kids. Not enough pavilions. Landscape and sports fields poorly maintained. No county sponsored events. Not enough gymnasiums.

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That is based on my experience.

That is because of ignorance about issues about child sex abuse.

That would be the safety issues and the outdated facilities.

That's what I read or heard.

The Park located on 5845 Hillvale Rd the outer area are not kept clean and the street leading to the park is use as a dipping area. I wish this park was better monitor .

The best parks are that way because of private organizations.

The cleanliness and maintenance of the parks speak for themselves.

The closest park was bought by the city, and they now pay for the upkeep.

The County in general has a bad reputation for being inept. The parks department has been largely quiet even under new leadership. the parks aren't a catastrophe, but they are not Gwinnett Co. parks either.

The facilities are kept up with and cleaned.

The facilities are smaller and inadequate for the number of members that use the gyms.

The facilities that they have to offer aren't adequate as compared to the other counties.

The information is very limited to what I receive.

The one I use is good.

The one park I use for my dog overall is good- but could have better fences/blocking certain areas/ water tunnels that dogs can get into

The one that I have been into were not adequate. Walking was fine, but other than that was not.

The ones I attend to are good to me. The people are respectful.

The only time I hear of an activity in a DeKalb Park is when a criminal act has taken place there

The park and recreation location, and where they are, and their upkeep have very limited access.

The park I go to is well-maintained and clean. I really don't have anything negative to say.

The parks and facilities where I've gone to were very good.

The parks and pools are in good shape. I see them all the time.

The parks are a beautiful and safe.

The parks are clean, grass meticulous cut. There is area to walk, run your bicycle. Special area to walk with your dogs. Children area and playgrounds. Trash containers every were

The parks are in good condition. People seem to be having a good time using them.

The parks are not at the top of my priority list. The security, county's supplies and money that is being used for the citizens are more important.

The parks are terrible. I don't know where all of our tax dollars are being sent.

The parks are usually in good shape. I've never interacted with anyone in Parks, so I would assume they're ok, but I have no experience to say they're "Great."

The parks are very one-dimensional. Maybe if we are lucky, there are trails. They want to make money with the soccer fields. Their sole purpose for building parks is to make money. My purpose for making parks is that I want to enjoy them.

The parks are well maintained.

The parks aren't the best quality but lot of funds go to so much waste when they could be used for helping nature facilities.

The parks have few facilities compared to Gwinnett and are much more poorly maintained.

The parks should be better maintained from pollution and trash. Signage should be posted throughout the parks encouraging participants not to litter.

The parks should be proving adequate support for the kids, coaches, staff, and parks and recreation members. I coached at a park and there was no help around that area.

The parks that are in Dekalb County are nowhere near me, so I use Gwinnett County Parks.

The people who run them are very professional and courteous.

The places I have visited are unremarkable.

The staff in certain parts are rarely available, and their equipment does not work properly.

The things they have don't appeal. I would like to see movies in the park.

The trash was cleaned, and it was well-maintained in the park.

The upkeep is very poor. The facilities are hardly open. When there is a game, you cannot purchase any food from the venues. They are not open. The bathrooms are seldom open and there are no water fountains. The grass, baseball field, and the football field are in poor shape.

The view, space and atmosphere

Their press materials are accurate.

There are a few parks around my neighborhood. There is a lot of trash or construction right next to it. Also, there are moms smoking marijuana with the kids around.

There are events that I've seen. The communication and the parks where my kids go are good.

There are facilities up in the northern part of Atlanta. They put more money into the parks.

There are no police around.

There are not a lot of interactions.

There are not as many activities for toddlers and smaller kids to do at the parks.

There are not enough dog parks in the area

There are not enough parks. The park they have don't appeal to me. It is only for the people who want to play basketball or has a dog to walk.

There are only a few of them.

There are quite a few parks that are short distances from where we live. I have two granddaughters who loved to go to those parks.

There are some bad people who don't live nearby. They go into the park and disrespect it.

There are some that are totally inconsistent. Some are really good, but like the tennis park, they are private and don't keep up the grounds. We only used certain areas because of the upkeep.

there have not been many programs that I am aware of

There is a lot of corruption.

There is a lot of different parks around.

There is a park. I do not remember the name, but they recently built a pavilion there. They recently improved the trails. I enjoy the upgrades to the park.

There is no equipment for kids to play on. Basketball court looks like crap. No greenery or floors. Benches are old, etc.

There is no specific example. It is just a general feeling.

There is not enough information out there. No one I know regularly uses Dekalb Parks and Recreation sites.

There is nothing great, but it looks like they have done a lot of upgrades to it.

There is nothing special for most of the parks.

There is nothing special. They are average and well-maintained.

There is nothing spectacular, not like the one's by my house.

There is nothing that stands out about it.

There is too much crime in the evening. You can't go out at night.

There's always room for improvement. I live by brownwood park. It can get over grown and becomes difficult to see

They all look average.

They are all in need of improvement.

They are all the same. I don't see that it is high-quality. I have seen better things in other counties.

They are clean, well-maintained and attractive.

There is nothing that stands out about it.

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They are all the same. I don't see that it is high-quality. I have seen better things in other counties.

They are clean, well-maintained and attractive.

They are green and sufficiently maintained.

They are moderately funded. They don't have a lot of things in the area.

They are not as good as the others.

They are not in the news. I haven't heard anything negative about it.

They are up to par and in good condition programs are good.

They are very well-kept. The landscapes are beautiful.

They are well-lit and well-managed.

They aren't anything special. They have what any other recreation has, so they are average.

They aren't the best parks I have gone to. Other parks in the state are better. There isn't much to do about it because of the terrain.

They aren't the best parks, but some of them need to be cleaned.

They can do improvements on the trails and stuff using our tax money.

They could be better.

They do a good job maintaining everything and thinking of ways to improve.

They don't have a lot of resources for recreation. They are limited.

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They don't have a variety of things for the family. They don't have a lot for the family, but only have children stuff. The parks are good for picnic activities, but they need more.

They don't have enough of them. They don't have enough room in their facilities.

They don't have enough security. They aren't being controlled that well.

They have done a good job of implementing the PATH Foundation Trails.

They have done a lot of improvements and have been taking steps in the right direction.

They have improved over the years. They are still not up to par where I live, but they are conveniently located.

They have regular customer service people who aren't willing to go above and beyond.

They have turned the parks around. They are fixing things up.

They just don't do enough outreach. There is a lack of communication.

They keep it well and don't charge a lot. Everything is reasonable. It is within walking distance.

They keep up on the equipment. They are fairly clean, but they need more equipment for different age groups.

They maintain and manage parks and recreations on the north end, but not the south end of the county. Since everyone pays taxes, every part of the county should be up-kept.

They need more festivals in DeKalb because most of them are in Atlanta.

They need to do a little bit more for their parks.

They offer a variety of opportunities.

They really don't do anything outstanding to the parks system.

They represent our cultures and the people who live outside the county.

They seem to have varied programs. They also advertise well.

They seem to offer a wide range of activities that suit me and my grandchildren.

They seemed as good as the others. No one ever says anything about them. It is above average.

This is my first time hearing about DeKalb County Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs

"This is the first outreach I've received from dekalb county.

My area has a gas station on every corner but no small walkable park."

This is what I have been told by other people. I don't use it myself.

To me, they are average.

Too expensive and not worth the pay

Unfamiliar with group managing parks.

Unless these two parks have had a makeover, (Shoals Creek park I,11&111 (1,2&3), they are in need of a complete overhauled from the grounds, playground equipment and building including bathrooms if any. Homeless people live in these parks...so why should I take my grands there?

Please understand me, I have lived in DeKalb for over 30 years and there is a need for upgrades, overhauls, including our streets, sidewalks and parks. I am specifically speaking of South DeKalb County. I feel like homeowners, renters or citizens have been omitted/disregard from County fundings and some of it is tax payers monies. Unkept sidewalks, trash in the parks, loitering in the parks and our streets are trashed. It is very disheartening. My grands have to be taken outside of this county for recreational activities and their parents have to spend monies outside of their county. That speaks volumes to the County as a whole.

Usually, they aren't close enough to my residence.

Very little visibility within the community. Little to no programs offered. Conditions of facilities are poorly maintained.

Wade Walker Park is maintained very well.

We are in a low-income neighborhood.

We have a good variety for our community.

What I see on the news is what I gather.

When I have been to the park, it has been maintained well, and used by a lot of people.

When making reservations for park use, sometimes a CSR is unsure of information asked. When calling about the disarray of parks or rec areas, It will usually take quite some time before a janitor/custodian arrives. Most of the lots are quite small for large communities that have play areas, gazebos, and barbecue areas. For now, this is the short list.

Why are the only decent parks in Atlanta (centennial and piedmont). The Dekalb county parks do not come close to comparison. The Dekalb county parks are not spacious and do not have year round activities

With most surveys of this nature more money is usually brought up to imply the thought that more available funds would mean better facilities. However, the other counties that I visit as alternatives often have cheaper taxes than Dekalb county. So it appears that the other counties are more efficient with revenue or there is an uneven distribution(i.e. north vs south part of county) of the funds that I'm not seeing reflected at the parks in my area.

You cannot find them. They are not visible.

You don't know where they are. They just don't advertise any functions that are happening.

You have to come and look at them for yourself.

You have to search for it, and it is lackluster.

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APPENDIX C

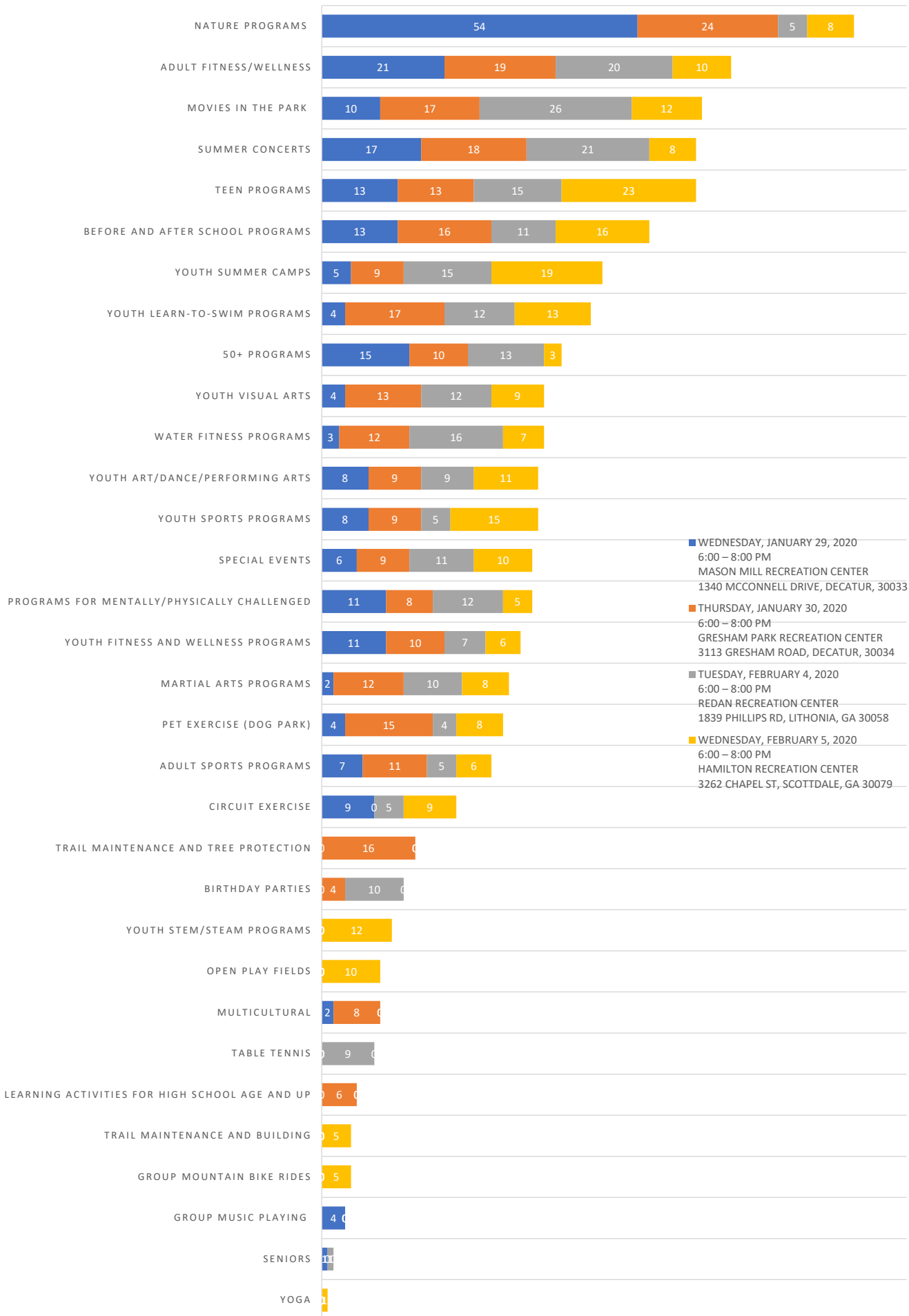
Open House Tabulations



13 - Appendices

	WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, 2020 6:00 – 8:00 PM MASON MILL RECREATION CENTER 1340 MCCONNELL DRIVE, DECATUR, 30033	THURSDAY, JANUARY 30, 2020 6:00 – 8:00 PM GRESHAM PARK RECREATION CENTER 3113 GRESHAM ROAD, DECATUR, 30034	TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2020 6:00 – 8:00 PM REDAN RECREATION CENTER 1839 PHILLIPS RD, LITHONIA, GA 30058	WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2020 6:00 – 8:00 PM HAMILTON RECREATION CENTER 3262 CHAPEL ST, SCOTTDALE, GA 30079	TOTAL
YOGA	0	0	0	1	1
SENIORS	1	0	1	0	2
GROUP MUSIC PLAYING	4	0	0	0	4
GROUP MOUNTAIN BIKE RIDES	0	0	0	5	5
TRAIL MAINTENANCE AND BUILDING	0	0	0	5	5
LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR HIGH SCHOOL AGE AND UP	0	6	0	0	6
TABLE TENNIS	0	0	9	0	9
MULTICULTURAL	2	8	0	0	10
OPEN PLAY FIELDS	0	0	0	10	10
YOUTH STEM/STEAM PROGRAMS	0	0	0	12	12
BIRTHDAY PARTIES	0	4	10	0	14
TRAIL MAINTENANCE AND TREE PROTECTION	0	16	0	0	16
CIRCUIT EXERCISE	9	0	5	9	23
ADULT SPORTS PROGRAMS	7	11	5	6	29
PET EXERCISE (DOG PARK)	4	15	4	8	31
MARTIAL ARTS PROGRAMS	2	12	10	8	32
YOUTH FITNESS AND WELLNESS PROGRAMS	11	10	7	6	34
PROGRAMS FOR MENTALLY/PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED	11	8	12	5	36
SPECIAL EVENTS	6	9	11	10	36
YOUTH SPORTS PROGRAMS	8	9	5	15	37
YOUTH ART/DANCE/PERFORMING ARTS	8	9	9	11	37
WATER FITNESS PROGRAMS	3	12	16	7	38
YOUTH VISUAL ARTS	4	13	12	9	38
50+ PROGRAMS	15	10	13	3	41
YOUTH LEARN-TO-SWIM PROGRAMS	4	17	12	13	46
YOUTH SUMMER CAMPS	5	9	15	19	48
BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS	13	16	11	16	56
TEEN PROGRAMS	13	13	15	23	64
SUMMER CONCERTS	17	18	21	8	64
MOVIES IN THE PARK	10	17	26	12	65
ADULT FITNESS/WELLNESS	21	19	20	10	70
NATURE PROGRAMS	54	24	5	8	91

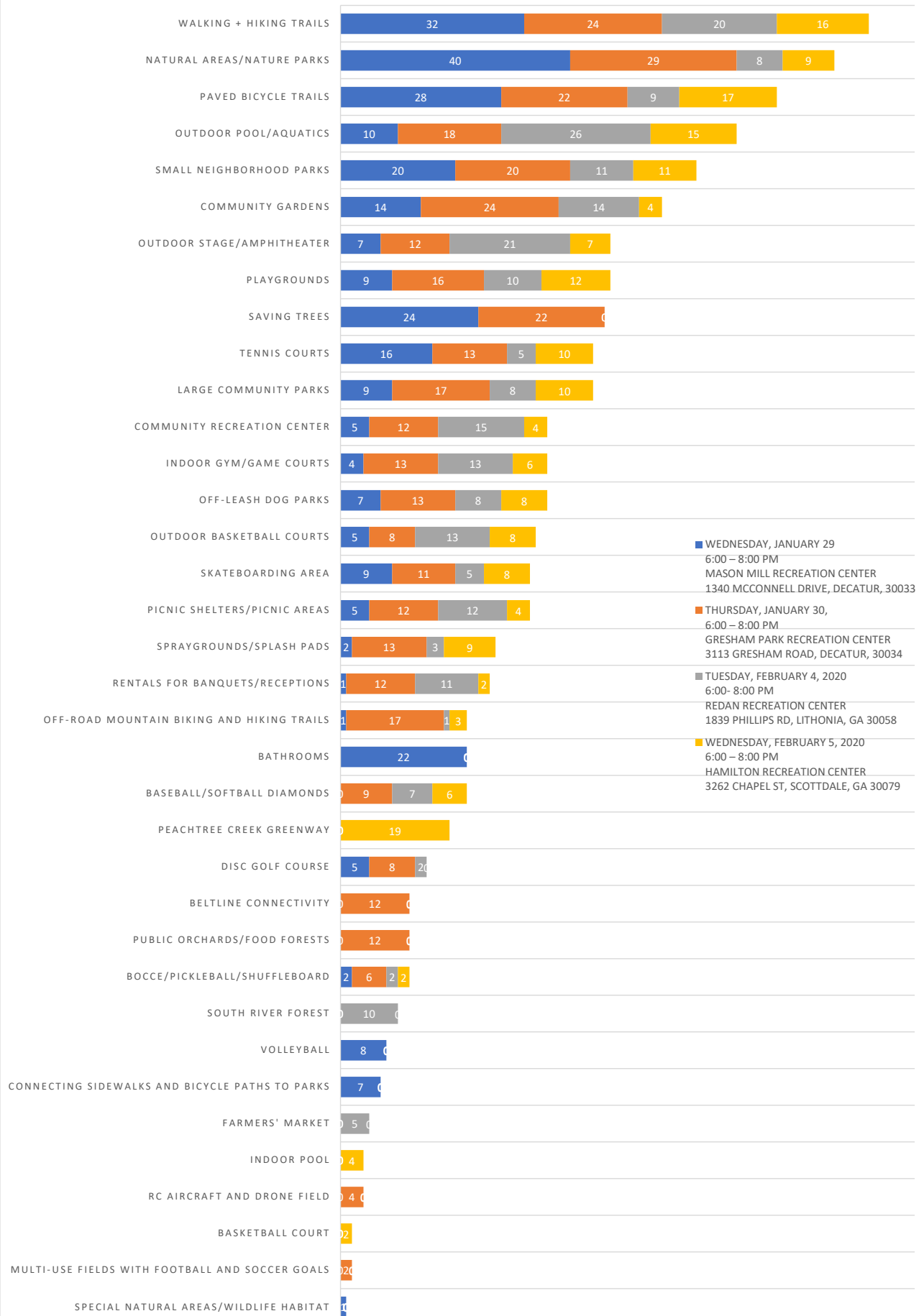
PROGRAM NEEDS



13 - Appendices

	WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29 6:00 – 8:00 PM MASON MILL RECREATION CENTER 1340 MCCONNELL DRIVE,	THURSDAY, JANUARY 30, 6:00 – 8:00 PM GRESHAM PARK RECREATION CENTER 3113 GRESHAM ROAD, DECATUR,	TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2020 6:00- 8:00 PM REDAN RECREATION CENTER 1839 PHILLIPS RD, LITHONIA, GA 30058	WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2020 6:00 – 8:00 PM HAMILTON RECREATION CENTER 3262 CHAPEL ST, SCOTTSDALE, GA 30079	TOTAL
SPECIAL NATURAL AREAS/WILDLIFE HABITAT	1	0	0	0	1
MULTI-USE FIELDS WITH FOOTBALL AND SOCCER GOALS	0	2	0	0	2
BASKETBALL COURT	0	0	0	2	2
RC AIRCRAFT AND DRONE FIELD	0	4	0	0	4
INDOOR POOL	0	0	0	4	4
FARMERS' MARKET	0	0	5	0	5
CONNECTING SIDEWALKS AND BICYCLE PATHS TO PARKS	7	0	0	0	7
VOLLEYBALL	8	0	0	0	8
SOUTH RIVER FOREST	0	0	10	0	10
BOCCE/PICKLEBALL/SHUFFLEBOARD	2	6	2	2	12
PUBLIC ORCHARDS/FOOD FORESTS	0	12	0	0	12
BELTLINE CONNECTIVITY	0	12	0	0	12
DISC GOLF COURSE	5	8	2	0	15
PEACHTREE CREEK GREENWAY	0	0	0	19	19
BASEBALL/SOFTBALL DIAMONDS	0	9	7	6	22
BATHROOMS	22	0	0	0	22
OFF-ROAD MOUNTAIN BIKING AND HIKING TRAILS	1	17	1	3	22
RENTALS FOR BANQUETS/RECEPTIONS	1	12	11	2	26
SPRAYGROUNDS/SPLASH PADS	2	13	3	9	27
PICNIC SHELTERS/PICNIC AREAS	5	12	12	4	33
SKATEBOARDING AREA	9	11	5	8	33
OUTDOOR BASKETBALL COURTS	5	8	13	8	34
OFF-LEASH DOG PARKS	7	13	8	8	36
INDOOR GYM/GAME COURTS	4	13	13	6	36
COMMUNITY RECREATION CENTER	5	12	15	4	36
LARGE COMMUNITY PARKS	9	17	8	10	44
TENNIS COURTS	16	13	5	10	44
SAVING TREES	24	22	0	0	46
PLAYGROUNDS	9	16	10	12	47
OUTDOOR STAGE/AMPHITHEATER	7	12	21	7	47
COMMUNITY GARDENS	14	24	14	4	56
SMALL NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS	20	20	11	11	62
OUTDOOR POOL/AQUATICS	10	18	26	15	69
PAVED BICYCLE TRAILS	28	22	9	17	76
NATURAL AREAS/NATURE PARKS	40	29	8	9	86
WALKING + HIKING TRAILS	32	24	20	16	92

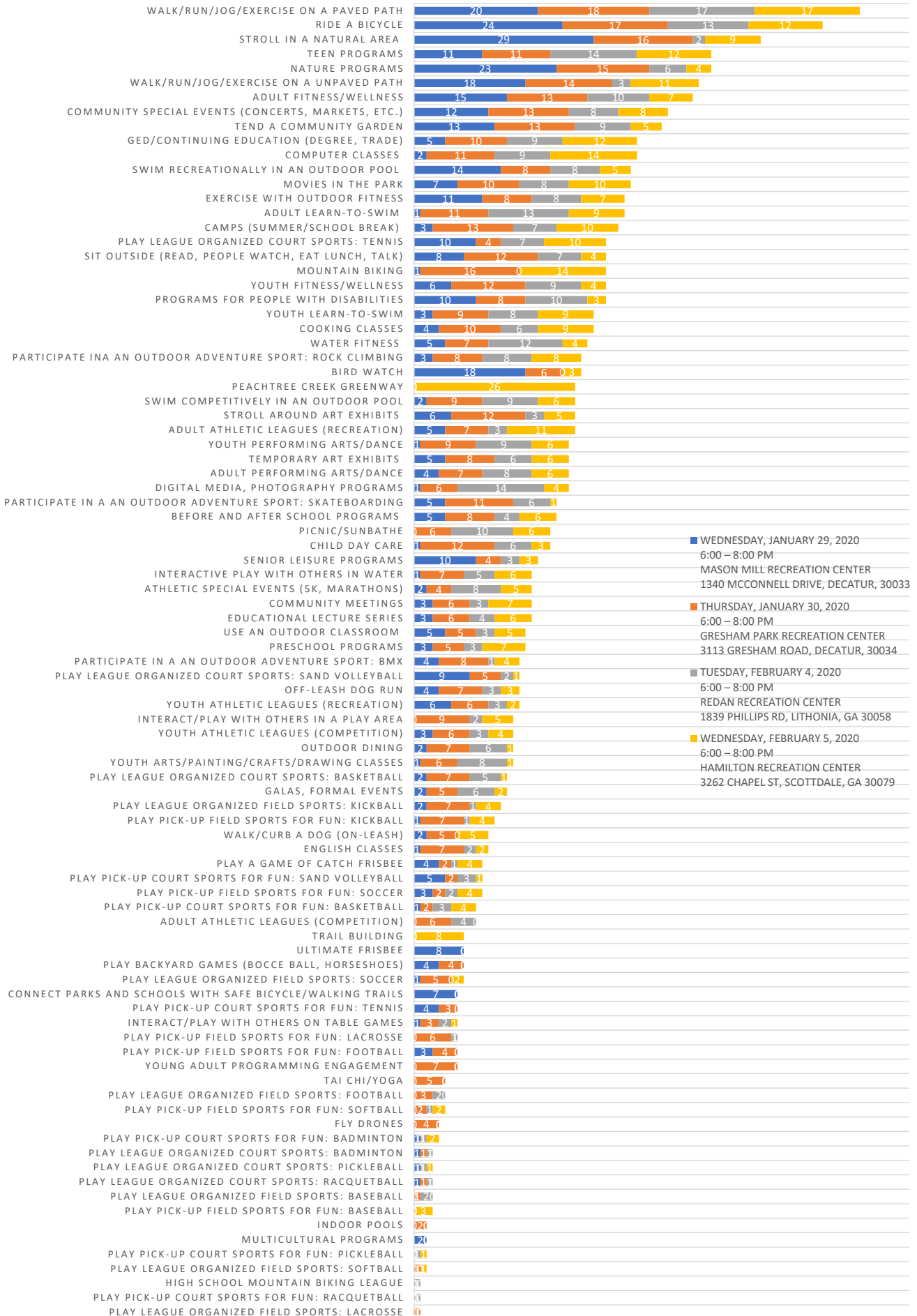
FACILITY NEEDS



13 - Appendices

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PLAY LEAGUE ORGANIZED FIELD SPORTS: LACROSSE	0	1	0	0	1
PLAY PICK-UP COURT SPORTS FOR FUN: RACQUETBALL	0	0	1	0	1
HIGH SCHOOL MOUNTAIN BIKING LEAGUE	0	0	1	0	1
PLAY LEAGUE ORGANIZED FIELD SPORTS: SOFTBALL	0	1	0	1	2
PLAY PICK-UP COURT SPORTS FOR FUN: PICKLEBALL	0	0	1	1	2
MULTICULTURAL PROGRAMS	2	0	0	0	2
INDOOR POOLS	0	2	0	0	2
PLAY PICK-UP FIELD SPORTS FOR FUN: BASEBALL	0	0	0	3	3
PLAY LEAGUE ORGANIZED FIELD SPORTS: BASEBALL	0	1	2	0	3
PLAY LEAGUE ORGANIZED COURT SPORTS: RACQUETBALL	1	1	1	0	3
PLAY LEAGUE ORGANIZED COURT SPORTS: PICKLEBALL	1	0	1	1	3
PLAY LEAGUE ORGANIZED COURT SPORTS: BADMINTON	1	1	1	0	3
PLAY PICK-UP COURT SPORTS FOR FUN: BADMINTON	1	0	1	2	4
FLY DRONES	0	4	0	0	4
PLAY PICK-UP FIELD SPORTS FOR FUN: SOFTBALL	0	2	1	2	5
PLAY LEAGUE ORGANIZED FIELD SPORTS: FOOTBALL	0	3	2	0	5
TAI CHI/YOGA	0	5	0	0	5
YOUNG ADULT PROGRAMMING ENGAGEMENT	0	7	0	0	7
PLAY PICK-UP FIELD SPORTS FOR FUN: FOOTBALL	3	4	0	0	7
PLAY PICK-UP FIELD SPORTS FOR FUN: LACROSSE	0	6	1	0	7
INTERACT/PLAY WITH OTHERS ON TABLE GAMES	1	3	2	1	7
PLAY PICK-UP COURT SPORTS FOR FUN: TENNIS	4	3	0	0	7
CONNECT PARKS AND SCHOOLS WITH SAFE BICYCLE/WALKING TRAILS	7	0	0	0	7
PLAY LEAGUE ORGANIZED FIELD SPORTS: SOCCER	1	5	0	2	8
PLAY BACKYARD GAMES (BOCCE BALL, HORSESHOES)	4	4	0	0	8
ULTIMATE FRISBEE	8	0	0	0	8
TRAIL BUILDING	0	0	0	8	8
ADULT ATHLETIC LEAGUES (COMPETITION)	0	6	4	0	10
PLAY PICK-UP COURT SPORTS FOR FUN: BASKETBALL	1	2	3	4	10
PLAY PICK-UP FIELD SPORTS FOR FUN: SOCCER	3	2	2	4	11
PLAY PICK-UP COURT SPORTS FOR FUN: SAND VOLLEYBALL	5	2	3	1	11
PLAY A GAME OF CATCH FRISBEE	4	2	1	4	11
ENGLISH CLASSES	1	7	2	2	12
WALK/CURB A DOG (ON-LEASH)	2	5	0	5	12
PLAY PICK-UP FIELD SPORTS FOR FUN: KICKBALL	1	7	1	4	13
PLAY LEAGUE ORGANIZED FIELD SPORTS: KICKBALL	2	7	1	4	14
GALAS, FORMAL EVENTS	2	5	6	2	15
PLAY LEAGUE ORGANIZED COURT SPORTS: BASKETBALL	2	7	5	1	15
YOUTH ARTS/PAINTING/CRAFTS/DRAWING CLASSES	1	6	8	1	16
OUTDOOR DINING	2	7	6	1	16
YOUTH ATHLETIC LEAGUES (COMPETITION)	3	6	3	4	16
INTERACT/PLAY WITH OTHERS IN A PLAY AREA	0	9	2	5	16
YOUTH ATHLETIC LEAGUES (RECREATION)	6	6	3	2	17
OFF-LEASH DOG RUN	4	7	3	3	17
PLAY LEAGUE ORGANIZED COURT SPORTS: SAND VOLLEYBALL	9	5	2	1	17
PARTICIPATE IN A AN OUTDOOR ADVENTURE SPORT: BMX	4	8	1	4	17
PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS	3	5	3	7	18
USE AN OUTDOOR CLASSROOM	5	5	3	5	18
EDUCATIONAL LECTURE SERIES	3	6	4	6	19
COMMUNITY MEETINGS	3	6	3	7	19
ATHLETIC SPECIAL EVENTS (5K, MARATHONS)	2	4	8	5	19
INTERACTIVE PLAY WITH OTHERS IN WATER	1	7	5	6	19
SENIOR LEISURE PROGRAMS	10	4	3	3	20
CHILD DAY CARE	1	12	6	3	22
PICNIC/SUNBATHE	0	6	10	6	22
BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS	5	8	4	6	23
PARTICIPATE IN A AN OUTDOOR ADVENTURE SPORT: SKATEBOARDING	5	11	6	1	23
DIGITAL MEDIA, PHOTOGRAPHY PROGRAMS	1	6	14	4	25
ADULT PERFORMING ARTS/DANCE	4	7	8	6	25
TEMPORARY ART EXHIBITS	5	8	6	6	25
YOUTH PERFORMING ARTS/DANCE	1	9	9	6	25
ADULT ATHLETIC LEAGUES (RECREATION)	5	7	3	11	26
STROLL AROUND ART EXHIBITS	6	12	3	5	26
SWIM COMPETITIVELY IN AN OUTDOOR POOL	2	9	9	6	26
PEACHTREE CREEK GREENWAY	0	0	0	26	26
BIRD WATCH	18	6	0	3	27
PARTICIPATE IN A AN OUTDOOR ADVENTURE SPORT: ROCK CLIMBING	3	8	8	8	27
WATER FITNESS	5	7	12	4	28
COOKING CLASSES	4	10	6	9	29
YOUTH LEARN-TO-SWIM	3	9	8	9	29
PROGRAMS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES	10	8	10	3	31
YOUTH FITNESS/WELLNESS	6	12	9	4	31
MOUNTAIN BIKING	1	16	0	14	31
SIT OUTSIDE (READ, PEOPLE WATCH, EAT LUNCH, TALK)	8	12	7	4	31
PLAY LEAGUE ORGANIZED COURT SPORTS: TENNIS	10	4	7	10	31
CAMPS (SUMMER/SCHOOL BREAK)	3	13	7	10	33
ADULT LEARN-TO-SWIM	1	11	13	9	34
EXERCISE WITH OUTDOOR FITNESS	11	8	8	7	34
MOVIES IN THE PARK	7	10	8	10	35
SWIM RECREATIONALLY IN AN OUTDOOR POOL	14	8	8	5	35
COMPUTER CLASSES	2	11	9	14	36
GED/CONTINUING EDUCATION (DEGREE, TRADE)	5	10	9	12	36
TEND A COMMUNITY GARDEN	13	13	9	5	40
COMMUNITY SPECIAL EVENTS (CONCERTS, MARKETS, ETC.)	12	13	8	8	41
ADULT FITNESS/WELLNESS	15	13	10	7	45
WALK/RUN/JOG/EXERCISE ON A UNPAVED PATH	18	14	3	11	46
NATURE PROGRAMS	23	15	6	4	48
TEEN PROGRAMS	11	11	14	12	48
STROLL IN A NATURAL AREA	29	16	2	9	56
RIDE A BICYCLE	24	17	13	12	66
WALK/RUN/JOG/EXERCISE ON A PAVED PATH	20	18	17	17	72

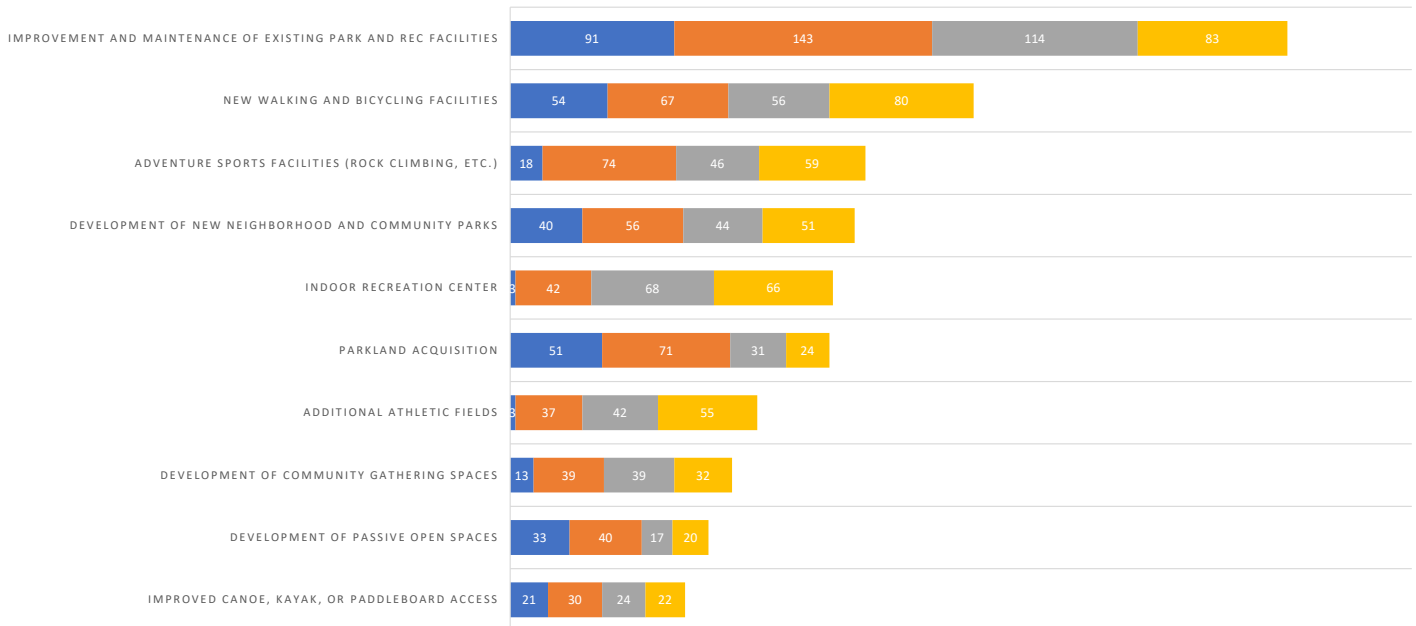
ACTIVITY NEEDS



13 - Appendices

	WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, 2020 6:00 – 8:00 PM MASON MILL RECREATION CENTER 1340 MCCONNELL DRIVE, DECATUR, 30033	THURSDAY, JANUARY 30, 2020 6:00 – 8:00 PM GRESHAM PARK RECREATION CENTER 3113 GRESHAM ROAD, DECATUR, 30034	TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2020 6:00- 8:00 PM REDAN RECREATION CENTER 1839 PHILLIPS RD, LITHONIA, GA 30058	WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2020 6:00 – 8:00 PM HAMILTON RECREATION CENTER 3262 CHAPEL ST, SCOTTTDALE, GA 30079	TOTAL
IMPROVED CANOE, KAYAK, OR PADDLEBOARD ACCESS	21	30	24	22	97
DEVELOPMENT OF PASSIVE OPEN SPACES	33	40	17	20	110
DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY GATHERING SPACES	13	39	39	32	123
ADDITIONAL ATHLETIC FIELDS	3	37	42	55	137
PARKLAND ACQUISITION	51	71	31	24	177
INDOOR RECREATION CENTER	3	42	68	66	179
DEVELOPMENT OF NEW NEIGHBORHOOD AND COMMUNITY PARKS	40	56	44	51	191
ADVENTURE SPORTS FACILITIES (ROCK CLIMBING, ETC.)	18	74	46	59	197
NEW WALKING AND BICYCLING FACILITIES	54	67	56	80	257
IMPROVEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF EXISTING PARK AND REC FACILITIES	91	143	114	83	431

FUNDING PRIORITIES



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 6:00 – 8:00 PM
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 3262 CHAPEL ST, SCOTSDALE, GA 30079

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APPENDIX D

Focus Group Notes



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Arabia Mountain Focus Group

May 14, 2020

Agenda

- I. Introductions
- II. Strengths
- III. Weaknesses
- IV. Opportunities
- V. Threats
- VI. Conclusions & Next Steps

MISSION STATEMENT

- Preservation
- Education
- Passive Recreation

STRENGTHS

- Natural viewshed 15-20 minutes from Atlanta
 - Unique natural experience near an urban center
 - A short drive for several million people
 - Significant "freedom"
- Community Enrichment
 - Attractive passive rec. facility (Path trail and foot trails)
 - Ability to get lost
 - Part of an approx. 7,000 acre "system"
 - Behavior change efforts
 - Heritage area
 - South River
 - Flat Rock Archives
 - Historical Sites
 - Industrial heritage
 - Biological heritage
- Cultural Strengths
 - Klondike settlement
 - Flat Rock (Stonecrest-Lithonia)
 - African American Community History
 - Monastery of the Holy Spirit
 - Vaughters Farm
 - Lyon Farm
- Recreational Value
 - Trail system (Path trail + soft trails)
 - Camping opportunities around the lake
 - Scout troops and similar organizations
 - Fishing demand is high
 - Programs created around this demand
 - Geocaching – multigenerational with regional draw
 - Birding
 - Paddling access
- Educational Value
 - Jr. Ranger Program

- Pre-school to higher ed.
 - "Behavior Change" efforts
- Staff leadership, education, and continuity
 - Works as a team
 - High return rate of seasonal staff
- Shared Vision by 3 Counties and the State
 - Captured federal attention
 - Collaboration across jurisdictional lines
- Perceived as a safe place to go for all ages.
- Volunteer support is tremendous.
 - High level of local community support
 - Increasing regional support
 - Majority of license plates are outside of DeKalb County
- Coordination by the Arabia Alliance
- City of Stonecrest has supported the park through zoning efforts to eliminate inappropriate development near the park

WEAKNESSES

- Wayfinding
 - Looks and feels like a rustic national park –
 - People can and do get lost at times
 - Better mapping needed
 - Some trailheads are underutilized
- Increasing demand is overwhelming facilities in every way.
- Parking is overflowing – leading to safety issues
- Speeding is a concern also
- Shooting range
 - Activity occurs 7 days a week
 - Rented out to other jurisdictions
 - Arbitrarily closes sections of trails for safety concerns
 - Huge question to be studied further
 - Is an indoor facility an option?
- Wifi needed at the Nature Center
 - Remote cameras
- Limited cellular access
 - Hot spots may be needed
 - 5G applications may be more suitable for this setting
 - Safety issue
 - Emergency response delays
- Approach to the park needs attention (trash, maintenance, etc.)
- Budget needs (chronic underfunding)
- Deferred maintenance
- **Bike path injuries – slippery boardwalks**
- Crosswalks on Klondike with pedestrian signalizations
- Emergency access improvements
 - Progress has been made
 - Improvements are needed
- **Unintegrated green space properties**
- Lack of access by locals
 - Few sidewalks or bike trails from neighborhoods
- No method of limiting visitors to sensitive areas
 - Need to distribute visitors across the park(s)

Top 3 Needs

- More staff
- Toilets
- Comprehensive Mgmt. Plan for Green Spaces

- Flora/Fauna
 - Manmade structure removal plan
- New interpretive center
 - Gwinnett center would be a good template

OPPORTUNITIES

- Lyon Farm
 - Opportunity for ag demonstrations
 - Could become hub for sustainability education and awareness programming
 - Highlight mistakes of the past
 - Demonstrate solutions going forward
 - Interpretation of ag. landscapes
 - Urban farming education
 - Trailhead location opportunity
 - Restoration efforts
 - Issues with contaminated flooding
 - Slavery legacy – tied to Flat Rock archives
- Highlight the total history of the area
- School Partnerships
 - Arabia Mountain High School
 - _____ Elementary School
 - Other school field trips and youth programming
- Improvements for visitor experiences
 - High visitation is a mixed blessing
 - 50% increase during current crisis
- Increased Ranger Presence
 - Law enforcement officers
 - Spread across the park
 - Focused on improving visitor experiences and enforcement of park rules
- Former Ranger Residence
 - Possible retreat facility
 - Should be utilized
 - Conference or family retreat opportunities
- Rental programs???
- Bicycles
- Canoe/kayaks
- Parking Fees???
- Central Parking off-site with shuttles to park property
- Convention Center Development
 - Trail connection
 - Opportunity & Threat
- Panola Shoals Trailhead (Stonecrest City Park)
 - Former resort
 - Unsafe at present
 - Still utilized for swimming

- Leverage the whole of the 7,000 acres available to complement each other
 - Reinforced by individual mgmt. plans
 - Coordinated by various jurisdictions

THREATS

- What paradigm are we choosing?
 - Nature preserve vs. Park
 - Ecology vs. Recreation
 - Best practices
 - What should be allowed?
 - Fall back to mission statement
 - County could reaffirm mission and values
 - Implications for staffing needs and partnership opportunities
- Surrounding development
 - Greater development leads to increased visitation
 - How is demand managed?
 - Hours of operation
 - Limitation of visitors
 - Reservation system?
 - Other control methods?
- Inter-departmental Coordination/Communication (Lack thereof)
 - Watershed Department project example
 - Firing range
 - Policy change needed
- Loved to death
- Invasive plants
 - Privet
 - Muscadine
 - Virginia Creeper
 - Others
- Safety Issues
 - Lighting?
- Degradation of the Arabia Lake Dam
 - Lake level lowering
 - Wildlife depends on the lake
 - Beaver
 - Deer
 - Migratory birds
 - Needs restoration
- Wildlife Mgmt.
 - Deer study 2012-13
 - Carrying capacity sufficient for herd
 - Urban-wildlife interface (crashes) are the larger issue.
- Cultural Resources

- Historical Structures
 - Neglected but important to the history of the land
 - Need restoration
 - Underutilized
 - Possible amenities
- Vandalism
 - Graffiti
 - Boardwalk damage (fire)
 - Scratches in granite
- Increasing air traffic
 - Pilot waypoint
 - Hartfield approach alignment
 - Opportunities to work with FAA?

CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS

- Consider the Klondike Area Civic Association going forward

Agenda

I.Intros

II.Strengths

III.Weaknesses

IV.Opportunities

V.Threats

VI.Summary

13 - Appendices

Bill –

- Director – 2006
- Arts Station
- 150 artists in DeKalb Co.
- Member artist
- Any medium; all ages
- \$35/year – membership
- Members – 3 or 4 pieces per show
- Renovation
- County – maintenance
- Grants – endowments for the arts
- Porter Sanford – 24hr job running facility
- August-October 2019 – Phase I
- March – Phase II
- August-October 2020 – Phase III
- Trying for more diverse audience
- Motown

Bob Kinzey, Alan

- 16 years – retiring
- Alan coming on board
- 45 years old org.
- Now city of Dunwoody facility (was county's until Dunwoody became City) 2010
- Bursting @ seams – looking @ expansion
- 99 year – rent revenue stream
- Fundraising to close gap
- Dinner/dance
- Dunwoody – new mayor
- New council people
- City of Dunwoody – does not donate to non-profits for utilities, maintenance
- Support the center
- Suwanee
- Sandy Springs – progressive
- Create Dunwoody

Bill –

- Artists are 60+
- Not progressive
- No classes
- Theatre, exhibits
- Do offer summer camp
- Well attended
- County gives 70-80k, some support

- City of Dunwoody – does not donate to non-profits for utilities, maintenance
 - o Support the center
- Suwanee
 - o Sandy Springs – progressive
 - o Create Dunwoody

Call. –

- Private school
- Big mansion - where classes are
- Needs renovated
- Pool house, gardens
- Wanted to build separate classrooms
- Make mansion – museum-like
- Christmas
- Rent out a lot

Bob –

- 100,000x2/year to close gap
- Would be nice to get some more from county

4

- Arts station
- Porter Sanford
- Education

13 - Appendices

STRENGTHS

Juliet

- Good coaching – GA Soccer Assoc.
- Good relationship w/ Co. Commissioneers – good support

Davis

- Corporate + community support
 - o \$10,000 last couple of years
 - o Grant from falcons
- Parent support – volunteering, working
 - o USA Football – grant for equipment
- Good coaches - follow nat'l standards
- Online registration!

Mark

- Partnerships w/ golf courses, tennis courts
- Good coaches
- Giving kids opportunity to play the sport

Erica

- Close-knit family
- Loyalty from parents to community/parks

Wade Walker

- Good coaches
- Nat'l exposure – marketing
- Been around a long time
 - o Kids that played coming back as parents
- Biggest tournament in SE
 - o (100 teams) – beyond state TX, FL, AL
 - o 2nd week in Aug., pre-scattton

WEAKNESSES

Communication!

Z DeKalb – email system

- Used to be used to broadcast events
- Not anymore

4 centers – not competition

- Completely different programs
- Should communicate/support each other

Funding for arts

- Good to see more funding for artists
- Systemwide – hard to attract younger artists
 - o When child goes to college, start participating

Marketing

- Free, quality events
- Need more programs + more marketing
- Limited participation w/ schools
 - o 1 play/year
- How to attract younger people
- 10 week classes – limit younger folks – time \$
- 1 – ½ day workshop – more might be attended

Opportunity –

- Market more to younger people
- Stone Mountain – green space for concerts
- No - church owned

13 - Appendices

Not designed to compete against large orgs.

- Fundraising

Approved assoc. On DeKalb Co. website

Not much support

Only see the YMCA

- Quantity not quality

Chasing championships, rec football has changed

WW Equipment

- stealing, break-ins, concession stand break-ins

Weaknesses/Facilities

- WW
- Responsible for cleaning, providing paper goods
- Lack of security
- Need another field – would lose a multi-use field
- Challenge - can have weapon in park w/permit

Erica

- Short-tempered/confrontational parents
- Conflicts increasing
- Facility maintenance – comes out of budget
- Facility conditions - poor in some cases
- Would like scoreboards
- Level of support from county – minimal
- Insufficient parking

Juliet

- Lack of communication

OPPORTUNITIES

- Replicating Chastain Park
 - o Next to police/city hall
- More culture-based programming
 - o County parks would be a great place to house
- DeKalb Council for the Arts – fizzled out
- Programs
 - o Jazz Festival, Paint in the Park day @ county park – food trucks, etc.
 - o Brookhaven Arts Festival
- Another field
- County-schools partnerships
- Turf fields would provide more opportunities
- WW- partnership
- Gwinnett model is good
 - o Leaving DeKalb going to Gwinnett
- Rec + school partnership/connection
- Parks could support each other more
- Organizations could communicate more
- Track
- Paying competition to use their space
 - o Partnership
- Golf and tennis lessons/clinics
 - o Low-cost clinics
- Better facilities = keeping kids home/in community
 - o Won't go to Gwinnett, AL, etc.
- Short-term vision – band-aid/patch/retrofit instead of renovating
- Leadership doesn't listen to people
 - o So decline in county, schools, parks over the years

13 - Appendices

THREATS

- Money
 - o Operating funds
- Continuing pipeline of people who will support the arts
- Financial, geographic barriers
- Competition – if Brookhaven does a visual arts center
 - o Sandy Springs – thinking about a visual arts center too
- 35% DeKalb
- 30% Fulton
 - o Everywhere else
- Arts center – 3 miles away – Abernathy
- Y is a threat to WW
 - o Big building that doesn't support over kids or benefit
- Stone erest
- If neighboring cities put \$ not their parks = a threat to county parks
- Gwinnett Co.
 - o Programs & facilities are better
 - o Leave DeKalb go to Gwinnett
- County reputation
 - o Declined over the years
- Cities around us are growing/changing/improving and
 - o We are stuck – no change
- 6 month agreements

3/11/2020

DeKalb CRMP

Conservation & Green Space Focus Group

SWOT

How is DeKalb County doing w/ natural areas?

- Fair - would like to see improvements
- Poor; fair

STRENGTHS

- Enviro/conservation efforts have been done by outside groups - Partnerships
- Other groups
 - Zoo atlanta, Amphibian Foundation, NWACP, GA Forestry Commission, Conservation Fund, Chattahoochee River Keepers, DNR, PATH, S. Fork Conservancy, UGA AG Extension, Emory
- Natural Area Conservation is (fair-poor)
- Examples of progress/improvement:
 - Habitat restoration at mason mill
 - o Would like this to be more widespread
 - Existing canopy/forested areas w/in parks system are a strength
 - Presence of waterways/is a potential assoc. could be leveraged as a strength
- River corridors/waterway in poor condition
- Non-native/invasive species are not well managed
- Storm water & erosion control area weakness along natural waterways
- County support for access to waterways is lacking
- Note: Land acquisition has been a strength
 - Could be/should be considered for future of parks system

13 - Appendices

GREATEST WEAKNESS

- Funding; maintenance; erosion control; staffing for maintenance needs
 - Less nimble w/ limited staff that are not properly trained or offered training
 - Pay scale may be issue
 - Reduction of work force due to 2008 not only reduced total of staff but also reduced trades/skills/knowledge base that has not been replaced
 - Policies are not strong
 - o Lack of environmental literacy w/in department
 - o Greatest weakness for environmental policy is lack of impact fees
 - Internal silos w/in county government
 - o Interdivisional (w/in parks) & interdepartmental (w/in county)
 - Independent/quick response contractor for immediate needs
- Lack of equity w/in system
 - Watershed (weakness)
 - Access??
 - Friends groups help improve specific parks
 - Park locations
- Zoning policies requiring greenspaces/parks w/ development to ensure equitable dist. Of facilities

OPPORTUNITIES

- Developers should be required dedicated greenspace & retain storm water
 - Trees should be thought of as infrastructure
- Hire more park naturalists
- Acquire existing open spaces/provide methods of accessing spaces
- Connectivity through county
- Demonstrations of natural environment & benefits
- More green infrastructure
- Year-round environmental programming
- Workforce could be trained on how this infrastructure works; how to be maintained
 - Use for demonstration
- 2 unique ecosystems/enviro features
 1. Granite outcrops
 2. Soapstone ridge (equity issue)
 3. Starving
 4. Emory campus
 - *Require native plants when doing restorations
- More informational signage
- Technology & public library
- Incentives for staff to get training for green infrastructure, management of unique areas, forest management
- Ecological areas that provide habitats for endangered species
 - Farrell cats
- Linking greenspaces at SW DeKalb

THREATS

1. Density & development around existing parks
2. Swapping public/private land as a policy
3. Budget cuts
4. Over-burdened sewer system
5. Staff turnover
6. Age of existing infrastructure/size of existing infrastructure; size of existing parks
7. Work/infrastructure improvements w/in forested areas
- *Regular maintenance of sewer easements
8. Development of land that could be used for future connectivity
9. Forestation management
10. Fact that parks system improvements & infrastructure are not included w/ other county improvements (roadway/utilities/etc.)
11. Lack of urgent response policy

- Lack of overarching plan for climate change (resiliency plan)
- Lighting – Dark skies/light deflection
- Smart building designs
- Habitat destruction - need for more rehab facilities
- Decrease in federal support for environmental/green spaces

OTHER

- Urban agricultural/food forest
- Historical/cultural sites w/in county
- Increased transparency & communication
 - Better messaging from county communication department
 - Public outreach w/in department
- Fishing/recreational fishing
- Arabia Mountain Park - Look at full master plan
 - South river forest - look at master plan for this area

13 - Appendices

Juliet

- Pleasantville

Jazzmin

- Biffle
- Security issues

Valerie

- Melton
- Mason Mill expansion
- Wetland – all floodplain
- Trails

Charlie

- Lithonia
- ½ city owned, ½ county owned
- 2 pocket parks
- 1 park
- 1 – Lithonia

Ann

- Scottdale & Avondale
- Brookside
- Tobie Grant
- Hamilton

Tracey

- Hamilton Rec Ctr
- After school program
- Multi-use fields
- History

Kevin

- Dearborn
- Decatur/Dekalb Co.

Sherry

- Rehobeth, county purchased 2-3 years ago
- ½ woodland, ½ playground
- Traffic control
- Accessible, safe playground

Pete

- Zonolite
- 14 acre floodplain
- Keep natural
- Grant – boardwalk
- Community garden

Tamra

- Little Creek Horse Park
- 40 acres
- 14+ acre wooded area – invasive plants
- Equestrian safety

Erica

- Sugar Creek Golf + Tennis
- 310 acres
- Where does Friend group fit in?
- Media presence
- Family reunion events – DeKalb Co.
- Work w/ film community
- Fundraising

STRENGTHS

Chuck

Kayla – Park Pride

Paige, David F.

Jonah – Park Naturalist

Ranger Robbie

- Park Pride as catalyst
- Community involvement
- Financial – Commissioner Jeff Roder support
- Responsive w / maintenance (within ability)
- South Fork – support conservation
- SPLOS investment
- Hidden Hills Civic Association – support
- Civic/neighborhood associations.
- Schools, churches support Sugar Creek
- Boy Scouts
- Facility maintenance
 - o Needs were taken care of

13 - Appendices

WEAKNESSES

Digital – website

Signage, speed bumps

- GDOT – working with

- County doesn't act in a timely manner

- Coordination between departments

- Procurement doesn't serve Parks well

- Weakness – Terrance Ramsey

- Increase fees

- WW, Redan Recreation Ctr.

- Privatization of rec centers

Susan

- Mary Scott Nature Park
- Inconsistent maintenance
 - o Why are some parks taken care of?
- Park Pride Kayla – not a county employee
 - o Lost employees (recession) – did not replace them
- Buying parks, but not maintaining them
- County waits for break/fix mode
 - o Develop a better maintenance plan
- Not enough programming \$
- Marketing
- County calendar program
 - o Difficult to use

OPPORTUNITIES

- Google, Facebook
- Specific vendors for specific uses
 - Define
- Lack of defined process
- Media plan
- Dedicated media staff @ Parks & Rec
- Automatically link site calendars to an overall county calendar
- Pays for 10 people to be in charge of 10 parks each
 - Demonstration grant/coordination grant
 - Check o park, point of contact
- Ticket system
- Enable Friends teams to take care of some things
- How can county support/partner with Park Pride?
- Parks & Rec training for Friends group
- Does county have funding resources that they can share?
- Partnership/relationship w/ Park Pride would trickle down to Friends
- Stronger support from commissioners
- Potential naturalist program
- More aggressive grant writer
- Assign young people/interns to each park
 - Work w/ Friends

13 - Appendices

THREATS

- Crime, undesirable activities
- Safety, security
- Non-working systems
- Inability to support future population growth
- Severe water pollution
 - Erosion, stormwater
- Creekbed loss – erosion control
- Traffic
 - How is county working w/ DOT
- Can county provide rangers for security
- Lack of signage
- Invasive species
- Management of natural spaces
- Infrastructure – roads
- NIMBY
- Dumping!
- Homeless
- Lack of lights
- Lack of maintenance funds
- City hoods
- Overcrowding/over use of parks
- Parking issues
- Connectivity
- Lack of restrooms
 - Lack of restrooms
 - Lack of programs
- Facilities, not enough space/land
- Need better relationship w/schools

Brent

- City of Dunwoody Parks & Rec
 - 10 years
 - 190 acres
 - 110 acres in Oak Run
 - 5 employees – January
 - Programming – outdoors, events
 - Middle school baseball
 - 2016 – youth soccer
 - Maintenance – contracted out skilled trades
 - 4 staff consultants

Sean

- City of Stonecrest
 - City – 3 years
 - Dept. – 1 year
 - Acquired 9 from DeKalb Co.
 - Purchased 2 additional properties
 - Arabia Mountain - ? 2700 acres
 - Large sports complex
 - Water facility – Browns Mill Aquatic Ctr.
 - o Rockdale, Henry, south DeKalb
 - Everyone contracted out
 - Separate maintenance and aquatics
 - Youth after school
 - Summer camp
 - Contractors of City not Jacobs
 - Master plan – April

Jody

- City of Chamblee
 - 1908
 - P&R 1995
 - 4 FT employees
 - 6 FT employees contract out maintenance
 - Had 10 – took 6 public works
 - Landscaping – contracted maintenance – staff or public works
 - o 9 parks
 - o 2 pieces of land
 - o Adult softball
 - o Youth baseball, t-ball
 - o Summer camp
 - o Special events
 - Contracted out
 - o Youth soccer
 - o Lacrosse
 - o Flag football
 - o Yoga, etc.

13 - Appendices

Jason

- OM – City of Tucker
 - 5 years old
 - Dept. 2 ½ years old
 - Jacobs – ran city
 - Parks Dept. – now city employees
 - Summer camp
 - o 13 parks, 345 acres
 - o 1 pool, purchasing another pool/4 tennis courts
 - 2019 master plan
 - Rec center – basketball, pickleball
 - Contract out outdoor programs
 - o Tysa – soccer, football, baseball, mens basketball

Betsy

- 50k
- Peachtree Creek Greenway
- 4 municipalities
- 2 cities
- Along I-85
- Transportation, greenspace, etc. connection
- Model Mile 1-3 – by REI
 - o Make all specs same throughout municipalities
 - o Width, lighted
- Brookhaven - Briarwood Rd.; under Corporate Dr to N. Druid Hills
 - o 6am-11pm – Brookhaven

Shelton

- Stonecrest

Kathy

- Sports Director
- Decatur Family YMCA
 - 3rd largest branch
 - o Buckhead
 - o Cobb
 - On Claremont by Emory
 - o 4-5 branches
 - Youth soccer – 1800 kids
 - Decatur, DeKalb P&R, School properties
 - Avondale – Dunaire master plan
 - Friends of Park group
 - Use WW fields – soccer
 - Belvedere – 2 soccer fields?

John

- Boys/Girls Club
- Flag football
- Soccer
- STEM program
- Leadership
- Community service
- Keystone
 - Community engagement
 - Choice Club – middle

- o 1 can – element.
Pick up from 14 school
 - o Bus in
Indoor swimming pool
 - o Funding, staffing of pool
 - o Decatur
Support Y, City of Decatur programs
\$60/kid – 1 school year
 - o \$15 transportation fee
DeKalb – 500 kids
 - o Avondale
- Sulamya – Boys/Girls Club
6-18 years old
- Camblee – Chamblee Tucker area
Diverse groups
20 clubs – metro Atlanta
Parents – lack of resources
- o Tutoring
 - o Rec sports
 - o Special needs
Serve low-income families
\$175 – fee summer camp – 8 week
Transportation issues – pick up from 12 schools
 - o 160-180 kids
 - Community engagement
 - Choice Club – middle
 - o 1 can – element.
 - Pick up from 14 school
 - o Bus in
 - Indoor swimming pool
 - o Funding, staffing of pool
 - o Decatur
 - Support Y, City of Decatur programs
 - \$60/kid – 1 school year
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 - Parents – lack of resources
 - o Tutoring
 - o Rec sports
 - o Special needs
 - Serve low-income families
 - \$175 – fee summer camp – 8 week
 - Transportation issues – pick up from 12 schools
 - o 160-180 kids

13 - Appendices

STRENGTHS

- Chuck + Marvin + Paige + Terrance!

J. McDonald Ranger, Ranger Robbie

- Rangers in park

- Desire to continue maintaining parks

- More quality staff

- Things are getting better

- Making changes

- Successful partnerships

- More open to partnerships

- DeKalb Co. police

- DeKalb Co. branch in Tucker

- Transitions getting better

WEAKNESSES

- Communication!

- No response unless copy a Commissioner
- Silo – no internal communication

- Infrastructure

- No investment, old

- Buy, buy, buy - new parks but now can't maintain

- Silo – funding sources

- Transportation/parks partnership

- Staff unwilling to do programming – building sits empty

- Chamblee maintaining a park that the Co. owns Holly Huntley Hills

- Need to give up control and start partnering

- Multiple landscaping companies – switch to 1

- FEMA

- City maintaining the land

- Poor parks - motivates city hood

- DeKalb Co. school properties – very poor condition
- DeKalb Co. - DeKalb Co. schools – need a strong partnership

Tucker – strong Friends group

- DeKalb – Decatur – politics

- Inability to move forward

- Signatures
- Stuck w/ lawyers
- Pass the buck

- Spending \$ in wrong places

13 - Appendices

OPPORTUNITIES

- Communication
- Partnerships – Friends of Parks
- Build trails w/ transportation dollars
- Infrastructure
- Public-private partnerships
- Pocket parks
- Easements dedicated to cities for trails
- Shift programming to cities/non-profit
- Master plan
 - Staffing needs
- Update trails plan
- More greenspace
- Retrofit old fields/bldgs. – into greenspace, passive space (lower cost)
- Gwinnett + Cobb are good models
- Grant money
- Trust for public land
- 5 year plan?
 - 10 year plan – too much time
 - 2 ½ year review
- Safety of parks
 - Avoid litigation
- Bonus/\$ based on what staff accomplishes
 - Grading system – holds staff to complete tasks
- Change peoples mindset/mentality
- Repair relationships

- Work together/coordinate
- Show up/networking
- Updated software system
 - Inventory
 - No guess work
 - Uniformity
- Look @ ARC

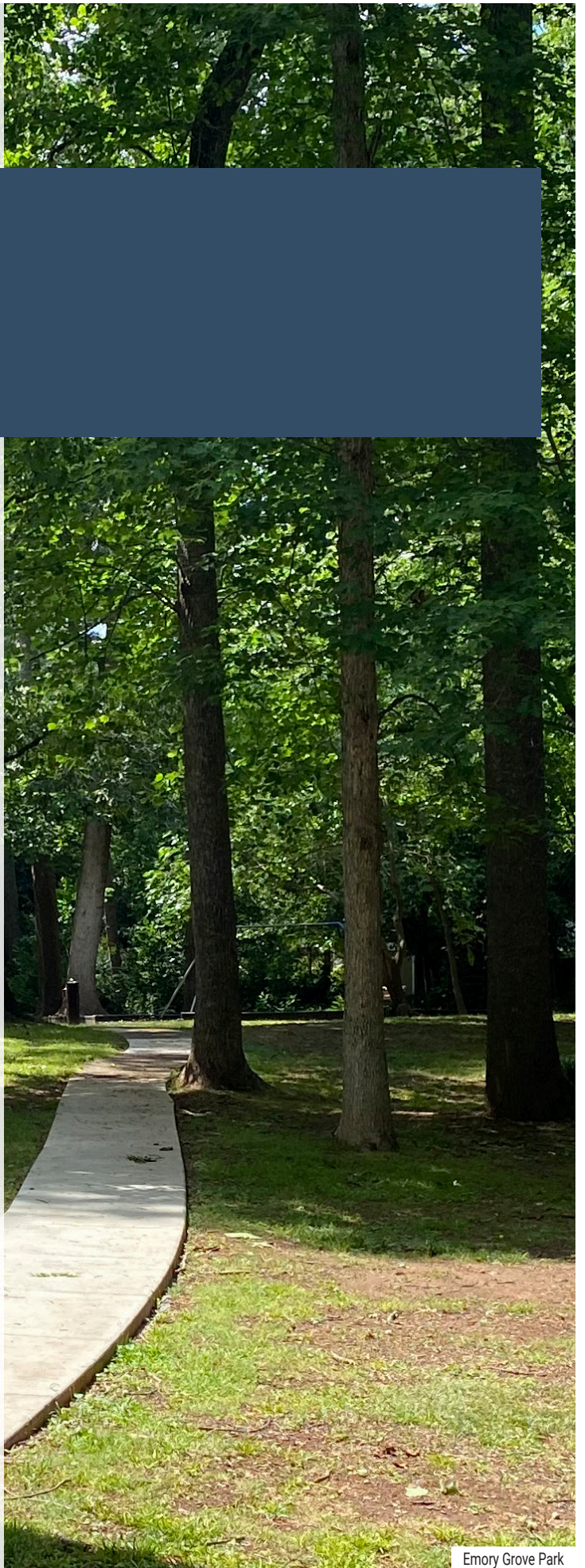
THREATS

- City hoods
- Growth/increased population
 - Not enough developed parkland per capita
- Stadium – owned by county
 - School has to pay county to use stadium 4 schools, different sports competing for use of stadium
- Not progressive – stuck in the past
 - Now need multi-use fields
 - New sports are coming
 - Need for current/future population
- Parks not accessible
- Need to stay up-to-date w/new, better designs
- Next steps – will continue?
 - Have master plan but what gets done from it?
- Responsibility – create ownership
- Reputation

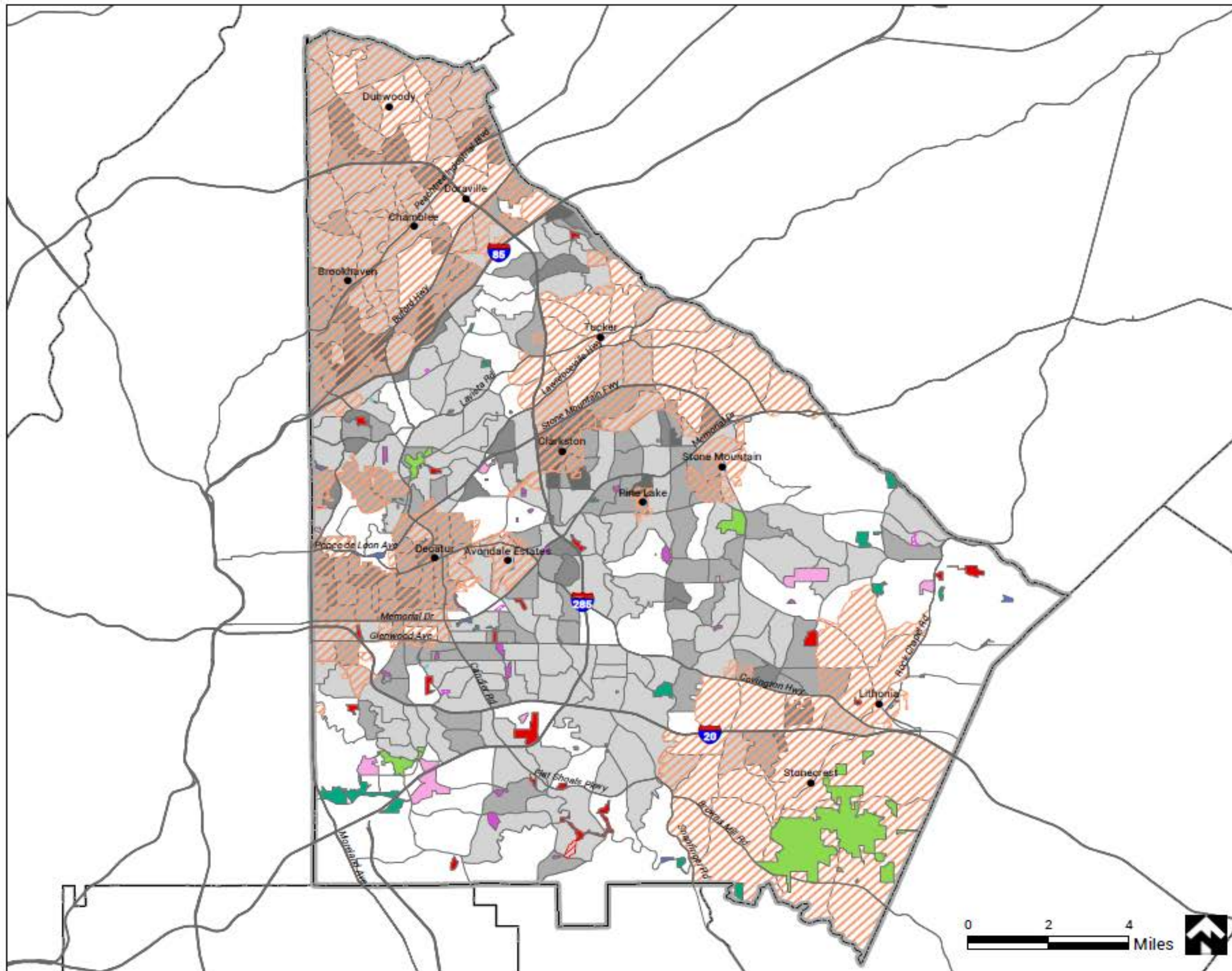
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APPENDIX E

Park Classification and Service Areas



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DeKalb County

GEORGIA

CURRENT PARKS WITH POPULATION DENSITY

LEGEND

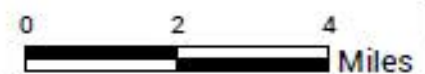

- CITIES
- ROADS
- ▭ DEKALB COUNTY
- ▨ INCORPORATED AREAS


PARK CLASSIFICATIONS

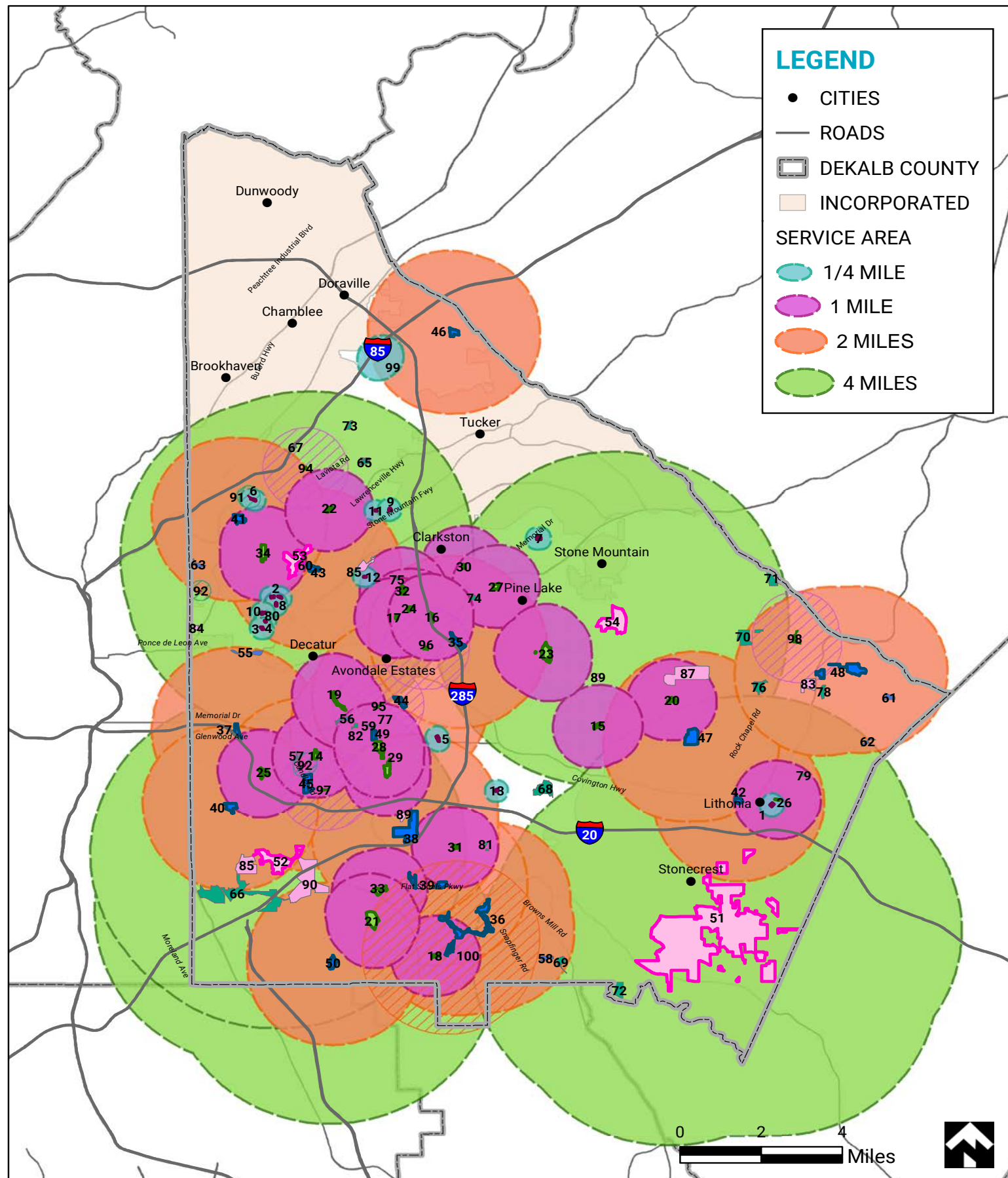
- ▭ MINI PARK
- ▨ FUTRE MINI PARK
- ▭ NEIGHBORHOOD PARK
- ▨ FUTURE NEIGHBORHOOD PARK
- ▭ COMMUNITY PARK
- ▨ FUTURE COMMUNITY PARK
- ▭ REGIONAL PARK
- ▭ LINEAR PARK
- ▭ NATURE PARK
- ▭ SPECIAL-USE PARK

TOTAL POPULATION PER SQUARE MILE

- ▭ 0 - 2,301
- ▭ 2,302 - 3,886
- ▭ 3,887 - 6,415
- ▭ 6,416 - 11,498
- ▭ 11,499 - 25,878





GAP ANALYSIS

1/4 M MINI PARK

1. BRUCE STREET PARK
2. EMORY GROVE PARK
3. HEATON PARK
4. HUMMINGBIRD PARK
5. LOU WALKER PARK
6. MARGARET HARRIS PARK
7. PEACELAND PARK
8. PRINCETON PARK
9. REHOBOTH PARK
10. RIDGEWOOD/RUTLEDGE PARK
11. SPRINGBROOK (RIDERWOOD) PARK
12. WASHINGTON PARK
13. WESLEY CHAPEL PARK

1 M NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

14. BARKER BRYANT MEMORIAL PARK
15. BIFFLE PARK
16. BROOKSIDE PARK
17. CEDAR PARK
18. COUNTY LINE PARK
19. DEARBORN PARK
20. EMMIE SMITH PARK
21. FORK CREEK MOUNTAIN PARK
22. FRAZIER ROWE PARK
23. HAIRSTON PARK
24. HAMILTON PARK
25. LONGDALE PARK
26. LUCIOUS SANDERS PARK
27. OAKCREEK PARK
28. SHOAL CREEK II PARK
29. SHOAL CREEK III PARK
30. STONEVIEW PARK
31. SUMMERGATE PARK
32. TOBIE GRANT PARK
33. TRUELOVE PARK
34. W.D. THOMSON PARK

2M COMMUNITY PARK

35. AVONDALE DUNAIRE PARK
36. CHAPEL HILL PARK
37. DEKALB MEMORIAL PARK
38. EXCHANGE PARK
39. FLAT SHOALS PARK
40. GLEN EMERALD PARK
41. KITTREDGE PARK
42. LITHONIA PARK
43. MEDLOCK PARK
44. MIDWAY PARK
45. N.H. SCOTT PARK
46. PLEASANTDALE PARK
47. REDAN PARK
48. ROCK CHAPEL PARK
49. SHOAL CREEK I PARK
50. BOULDERCREST PARK

4M REGIONAL PARK

51. DAVIDSON-ARABIA MOUNTAIN NATURE PRESERVE
52. GRESHAM PARK
53. MASON MILL PARK/TENNIS CENTER
54. WADE WALKER PARK

(VARIES) LINEAR PARK

55. DEEPDENE-DELLWOOD PARK
56. DELANO LINE STREET PARK
57. MCAFEE-STARMOUNT PARK
58. MLK - SOUTH RIVER PARK
59. SHOAL CREEK TRAIL
60. SOUTH FORK PEACHTREE CREEK TRAIL
61. YELLOW RIVER NORTH PARK
62. YELLOW RIVER SOUTH PARK
63. ZONOLITE PARK

(VARIES) NATURE PARK

64. BOULDERCREST DONATION
65. BRIARLAKE FOREST PARK
66. CONSTITUTION LAKES PARK
67. FISHER TRAIL
68. FOWLER PARK
69. GENIER PARK
70. HIDDEN ACRES PARK
71. KINNETT PARK
72. LYONS PARK
73. MARY SCOTT PARK
74. MEMORIAL DRIVE HAGAN PARK
75. NEEDHAM PARK
76. ROGERS LAKE PARK
77. SHOAL CREEK - SANTA MONICA PARK
78. STEPHENSON ROAD DONATION
79. UNION GROVE PARK
80. VICKERS DRIVE PARK
81. WESLEY CHAPEL - KELLY CHAPEL PARK
82. WHITE OAK PARK

(VARIES) SPECIAL-USE PARK

83. BRANSBY OUTDOOR YMCA AT ROCK CHAPEL
84. CALLANWOLDE FINE ARTS CENTER
85. INTRENCHMENT CREEK PARK
86. LITTLE CREEK HORSE FARM
87. MYSTERY VALLEY GOLF COURSE
88. RAINBOW DRIVE PARK/PORTER SANFORD
89. REDAN ROAD GARCIA PARK
90. SUGAR CREEK GOLF COURSE

1/4 M FUTURE MINI PARK

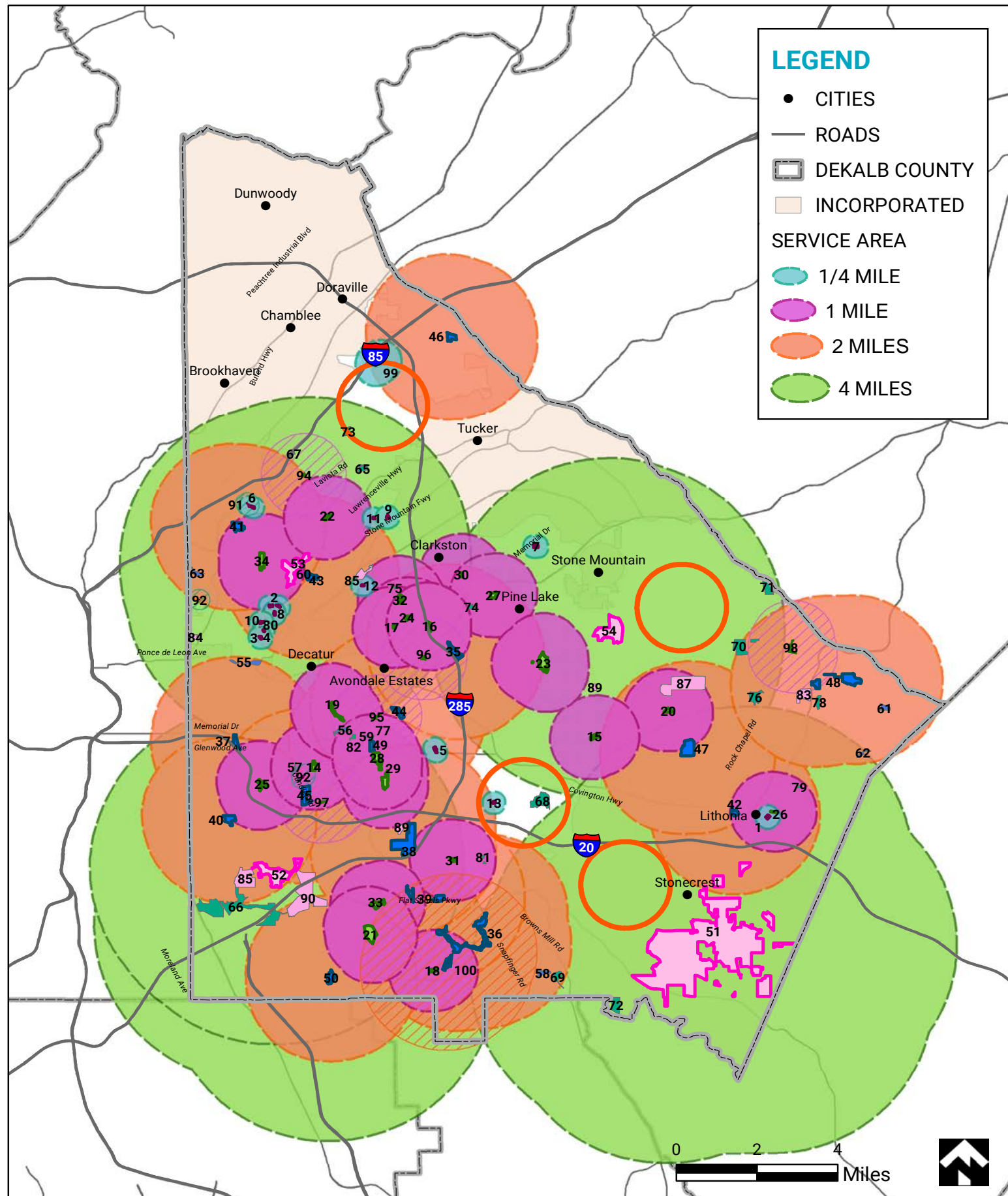
91. BRIARCLIFF PARK
92. LANGSDALE PARK
93. MARKAN PARK

1 M FUTURE NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

94. CHRYSLER/PENDERGRAST PARK
95. COLUMBIA DRIVE SOCCER FIELDS/BELVEDERE PARK
96. DAWN DRIVE PARK
97. KENSINGTON EXECUTIVE SQUARE PARK
98. ROCKBRIDGE ROAD PARK
99. BARKSIDE/WINDSOR COURT PROPERTIES

2M FUTURE COMMUNITY PARK

100. ELLENWOOD/RIVER ROAD PARK



PROPOSED SERVICE AREAS

1/4 M MINI PARK

1. BRUCE STREET PARK
2. EMORY GROVE PARK
3. HEATON PARK
4. HUMMINGBIRD PARK
5. LOU WALKER PARK
6. MARGARET HARRIS PARK
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30. STONEVIEW PARK
31. SUMMERGATE PARK
32. TOBIE GRANT PARK
33. TRUELOVE PARK
34. W.D. THOMSON PARK

PROPOSED NEIGHBORHOOD PARK SERVICE AREA

1M

2M COMMUNITY PARK

35. AVONDALE DUNAIRE PARK
36. CHAPEL HILL PARK
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4M REGIONAL PARK

51. DAVIDSON-ARABIA MOUNTAIN NATURE PRESERVE
52. GRESHAM PARK
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1/4 M FUTURE MINI PARK

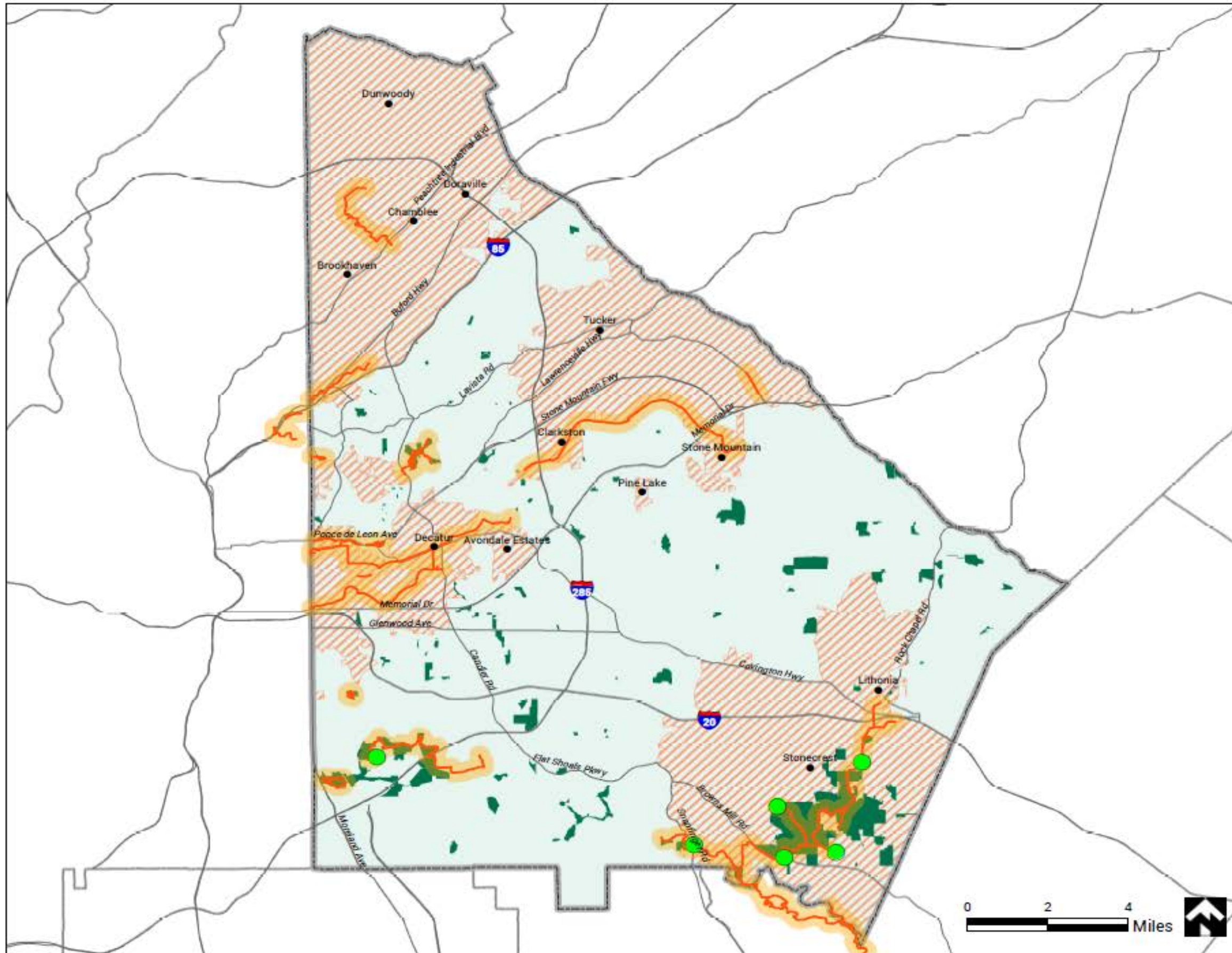
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100. ELLENWOOD/RIVER ROAD PARK

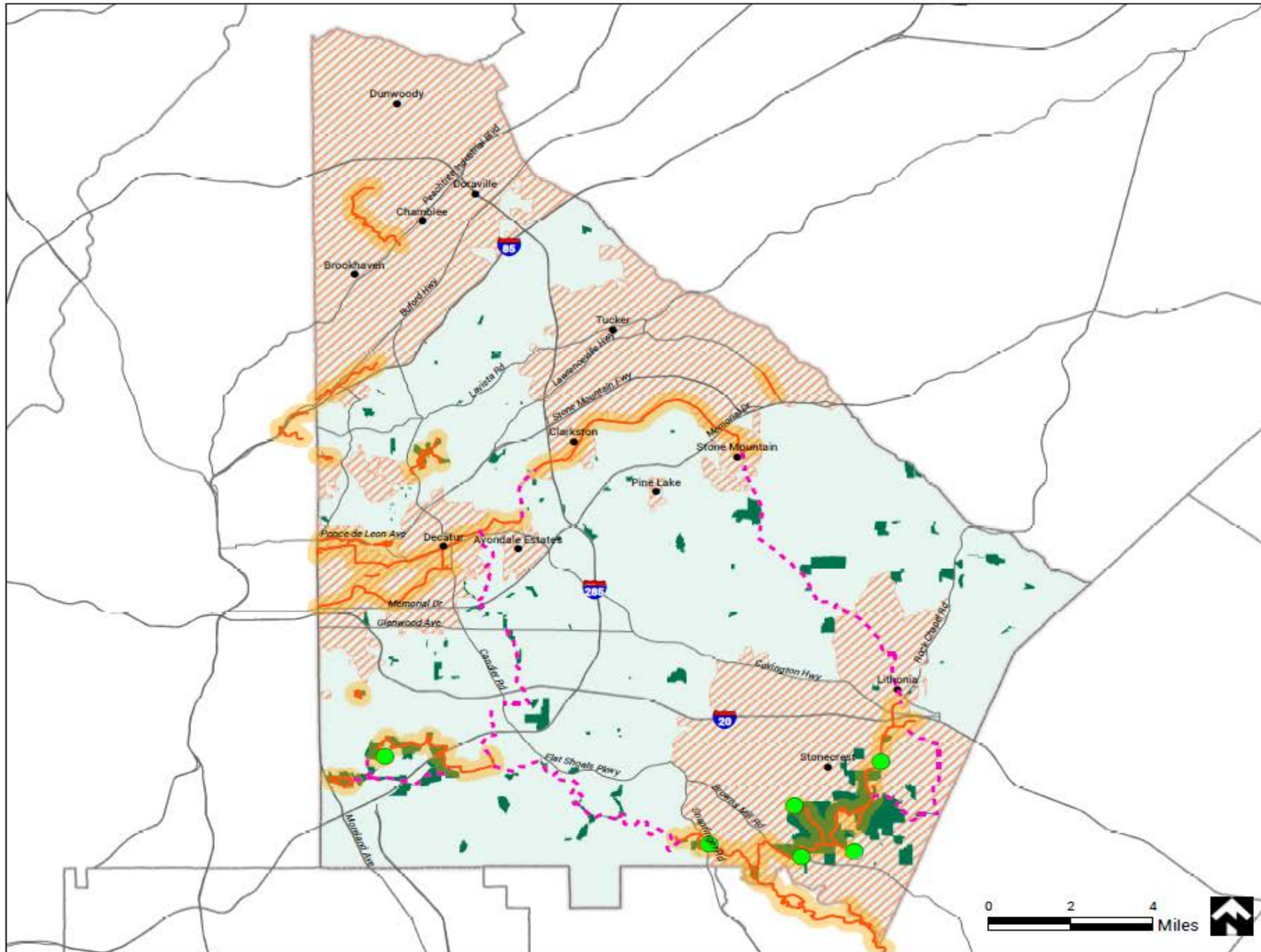



EXISTING GREENWAYS

LEGEND

- CITIES
- TRAILHEAD LOCATION
- ROADS
- EXISTING GREENWAY
- ▭ DEKALB COUNTY
- ▨ INCORPORATED AREAS
- PARKS
- EXISTING GREENWAY SERVICE AREA
- 0.25 MILE







DeKalb County
GEORGIA


PRIORITY GREENWAY EXPANSIONS

LEGEND

- CITIES
- TRAILHEAD LOCATION
- ROADS
- PRIORITY PATH SEGMENTS
- EXISTING GREENWAYS
- PARKS

EXISTING GREENWAY SERVICE AREA

■ 0.25 MILE



**LOSE
DESIGN**
SPACES FOR LIFE.

APPENDIX F

Ten-Year Spending Plan



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Table 5.1: DeKalb County DRPCA Ten-Year Spending Plan

EXISTING PARK RENOVATIONS (GENERAL)	TIER 1		TIER 2			TIER 3					Future	TOTAL
	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	YEAR 6	YEAR 7	YEAR 8	YEAR 9	YEAR 10		
Buildings, Pavilions, Other Structures	\$7,620,500	\$1,736,800	\$3,445,700	\$1,836,000	\$1,618,000	\$5,974,700	\$500,000	\$286,600	\$500,000	\$8,264,300		\$31,782,600
Rec. Center Replacements/Major Renovation	\$18,481,500	\$917,800	\$2,306,500	\$6,359,100	\$3,194,900	\$6,200,000	\$7,000,000	\$7,000,000	\$7,000,000	\$7,000,000		\$65,459,800
Site Furnishings/ Amenities	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000		\$3,000,000
Outdoor Athletic Facilities	\$3,587,300	\$196,800	\$4,435,200	\$1,071,000	\$2,970,300	\$2,500,000	\$2,500,000	\$2,500,000	\$2,500,000	\$2,500,000		\$24,760,600
Playground Improvements	\$9,500,000	\$800,000	\$800,000		\$800,000		\$400,000	\$2,200,000	\$1,200,000	\$4,000,000		\$19,700,000
Stormwater Renovations	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000		\$22,000,000
ADA Renovations (Budget)	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000		\$10,000,000
Other, Misc. Improvements	\$500,000		\$500,000			\$500,000						\$1,500,000
Aquatic Facility Improvements	\$1,023,300	\$1,200,000	\$1,314,500	\$1,212,600	\$792,800	\$7,951,900	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000		\$15,495,100
PATH/Greenway Improvements	\$250,000		\$1,000,000		\$250,000		\$250,000		\$250,000			\$2,000,000
EX. PARK RENOVATIONS (GENERAL) TOTAL	\$47,262,600	\$11,151,400	\$20,101,900	\$12,778,700	\$11,926,000	\$25,426,600	\$13,450,000	\$14,786,600	\$14,250,000	\$24,564,300	\$0	\$195,698,100
EXISTING PARK (CURRENTLY IN PLANNING)												
Zonolite Expansion		\$500,000	\$500,000									\$1,000,000
Pendergrast Park	\$500,000											\$500,000
Belvedere Park/ CHARM		\$2,500,000										\$2,500,000
Ellenwood Road Park	\$800,000	\$3,000,000	\$5,000,000									\$8,800,000
Split Creek Park		\$950,000										\$950,000
Michelle Obama Park		\$1,300,000										\$1,300,000
Chapman Farm and Redan Nature Preserve	\$1,000,000	\$350,000	\$1,250,000									\$2,600,000
Rehoboth Park	\$550,000											\$550,000
Bransby Property		\$2,500,000										\$2,500,000
Margaret Harris Property			\$500,000									\$500,000
Barkside/Windsor Court				\$500,000								\$500,000
Cedar Park			\$2,050,000									\$2,050,000
Needham Park		\$750,000										\$750,000
County Line Park		\$850,000	\$100,000	\$1,200,000	\$600,000							\$2,750,000
Avondale Dunaire Park	\$1,000,000		\$5,000,000									\$6,000,000
Little Creek Horse Farm	\$100,000	\$250,000										\$350,000
Mason Mill Park	\$265,000	\$1,200,000			\$10,000,000							\$11,465,000
Briarlake Park	\$480,000											\$480,000
Pleasantdale Park			\$850,000	\$850,000								\$1,700,000
EX. PARK (CURRENTLY IN PLANNING) TOTAL	\$4,695,000	\$14,150,000	\$15,250,000	\$2,550,000	\$10,600,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$47,245,000
NEW PARK DEVELOPMENT												
Embry Hills Area			\$650,000				\$7,500,000					\$8,150,000
Central DeKalb Area				\$650,000				\$7,500,000				\$8,150,000
Stone Mountain Area				\$650,000					\$7,500,000			\$8,150,000
Arabia Mountain Area					\$650,000					\$5,000,000		\$5,650,000
Additional Land Acquisition (Budget)	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000		\$2,500,000
NEW PARK TOTAL	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$900,000	\$1,550,000	\$900,000	\$250,000	\$7,750,000	\$7,750,000	\$7,750,000	\$5,250,000	\$0	\$32,600,000
TRAIL AND GREENWAY CAPITAL COSTS												
Stone Mtn- Arabia Mtn Trail			PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH		\$0
South River- Constitution Lake Trail			PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH		\$0
GSP Campus- East Decatur Greenway			PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH		\$0
Stn Mtn- East Decatur Greenway			PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH	PATH		\$0
TRAILS AND GREENWAYS TOTAL	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
OTHER CAPITAL COSTS												
Facility Design Standards Manual	\$250,000											\$250,000
New Park Master Planning (Budget)	\$200,000											\$200,000
ADA Renovation Cost Evaluation (Budget)	\$200,000											\$200,000
Risk Management Assessment (Budget)	\$200,000											\$200,000
OTHER TOTAL	\$250,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$250,000
YEARLY TOTAL	\$52,457,600	\$25,551,400	\$36,251,900	\$16,878,700	\$23,426,000	\$25,676,600	\$21,200,000	\$22,536,600	\$22,000,000	\$29,814,300	\$0	\$275,793,100

Tier 1 and Tier 2 TOTAL	\$154,565,600											GRAND TOTAL	\$275,793,100
Tier 3 TOTAL	\$121,227,500												
TOTAL	\$275,793,100												
FUTURE	\$0												
												2021-2030 TOTAL	\$275,793,100
												Ten Year Average Spending	\$27,579,310

Land acquisition costs not included.
Opinion of cost estimates as of August 2021.
*Based on current market trends, anticipate construction cost escalation of approximately 5-7% annually for budgeting

APPENDIX G

Natural Resource Management



DeKalb County Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs Natural Resource Management

Natural resource management practices are commonly aligned with the National Recreation and Parks Association's (NRPA) Conservation Pillars. NRPA has established three pillars of focus and guidance to include Conservation, Health and Wellness, and Equity at the Center.

Through NRPA's conservation focus, park and recreation professionals are considered champions in addressing our most pressing environmental challenges; the parks and open spaces they manage maximize the benefits of nature to achieve positive and equitable health and economic impacts at the community level.

Park and recreation professionals must ensure that all people benefit from parks and open spaces that are not only resilient and regenerative, but also transformative at the community level. Park and recreation professionals are one of the largest land managers in the nation and are key to climate change solutions.

As leaders in building community resilience, park and recreation professionals connect community members to environmental programming, ensure healthy ecosystems, advocate for the benefits of nature, and implement sustainability practices. These efforts must focus on communities most impacted by poor environmental conditions and the effects of climate change, including people of color and people living in low-income communities, and invest in efforts that support holistic community resiliency.

Natural resource management is important to DeKalb County Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs (RPCA). The organization is a steward of valuable natural areas that are highly regarded by stakeholders. These natural areas provide many benefits that contribute to the overall quality of life in the region. This supports the mission and vision of RPCA:

"The Parks and Recreation Department is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life of the citizens of DeKalb County by connecting communities to exceptional parks, recreational facilities, and cross-generational programs that promote healthy and active lifestyles."

The vision of RPCA is:

"To create and connect communities through people, parks, and programs."

As defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, open space includes natural areas such as forests and grasslands, as well as working farms, ranches, and timberlands. Open space also includes stream and river corridors and other natural areas within urban and suburban areas. Open space lands may be protected or unprotected, public or private.

Some of the key natural areas within the RPCA system are identified as Arabia Mountain, Mason Mill, Little Creek Horse Farm and Park, nature preserves as well as key specific amenities such as trails, waterways, and trees.



South Fork Peachtree Creek, Mason Mill Park, photo by Alan Cressler

Throughout the engagement efforts of the DeKalb County Parks and Recreation Master Plan project, stakeholders consistently identified natural areas and related operations and programs as a high priority. Largely, it seems these areas are currently being provided at some level by RPCA, but may or may not need more attention to meet service demands. Commonly prioritized areas of stakeholder input include:

- Trails to facilitate walking, hiking, and bicycling
- Nature programs
- Exercise activities such as walking/running/jogging/bicycling on a paved path
- A stroll in a natural area
- Community gardens
- Saving trees
- Trail connectivity and wayfinding
- Adventure sports (such as rock climbing)
- Development of natural open spaces
- Improved kayak, paddleboard, and canoe access



canoeing

Specific and focused engagement efforts, such as with the Conservation and Green Space focus group and the Friends of Parks, noted the following **strengths** of RPCA related to natural areas:

- Land Acquisition
- Habitat restoration, such as efforts taking place at Mason Mill Park
- Tree canopy efforts within parks



Friends of Parks



Mason Mill clean-up event

Specific and focused engagement efforts, such as with the Conservation and Green Space focus group and the Friends of Parks, noted the following **opportunities for improvement** of RPCA related to natural areas:

- Stormwater and erosion control
- Waterway access
- Conservation related policies such as impact fees and/or public land dedication to support natural areas
- Increased connectivity, wayfinding, and access to open space
- Year-round environmental programming
- Expansion of green infrastructure practices
- Increased maintenance management practices

13 - Appendices

The priorities that have been generally identified throughout the DeKalb County Parks and Recreation Master Plan efforts are similar to other organizations across the United States. Priorities related to natural areas have been more visible through COVID-19 impacts, as usage and demand for outdoor recreation has increased significantly.

Common themes for natural areas can be identified throughout the plan. These themes include Acquisition, Preservation and Maintenance, and Activation.



Natural Area and Open Space Acquisition

Stakeholder feedback indicates that the land acquisition practices of RPCA are strong, yet, like many other municipalities across the country, stakeholders would like to see more opportunities for land acquisitions for natural areas and open space. It is common for communities to have this demand as land availability within a jurisdiction is limited. Best practices in increasing financial resources for natural area acquisition include options of capital budget direct funding, dedicated taxing (such as an open space sales tax), policies such as public land dedication or cash in-lieu of land for certain types of developments, acquisitions through partnerships with local organizations with mission-aligned goals, funding through donations or donated lands, state or local grant funding, and federal funding, such as Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). RPCA should examine these possibilities when considering land acquisition for natural areas and open space.





Preservation and Maintenance

Stakeholder input indicates that preservation and maintenance practices are strong in areas such as the system's tree canopy, but other areas such as weed and invasive vegetation control, erosion control, and other areas may need greater emphasis. This input is common in systems across the country, regardless of size or scope. To respond to growing stakeholder awareness and demands, many organizations are developing natural area or open space maintenance plans or stewardship plans. One of the most recognized open space systems in the United States is located in Westminster, Colorado, with their three-time gold medal award winning Parks, Recreation and Libraries Department. Their Open Space Stewardship Plan is considered a model for high quality open space stewardship and has been presented on a national level. The plan is available on the city's website of www.cityofwestminster.us. Another outstanding Open Space Master Plan has been created by the City of Boulder, Colorado and can be found here: <https://bouldercolorado.gov/media/2666/download?inline>.

While preservation and maintenance practices will vary for geographic location, the core elements of this plan are applicable to the needs of RPCA. Strong natural area and open space preservation and maintenance plans include:

- Classification of natural areas and their target service level of maintenance standards
- Identification of staffing resources to also include specialized training and equipment as well as certifications (e.g., forestry, Integrated Pest Management staff, weed control staff, etc.)
- Noxious weed management practices
- Wildlife management practices
- Integrated Pest Management (IPM)
- Trail design, maintenance, and wayfinding standards
- Inventory of natural areas and resources (and may include inventory of historic properties)
- Prioritization of lands and resources related to available maintenance and preservation resources
- May include trail and mobility master plan
- Potential funding sources
- Goals to guide staff and operations

While it was not the goal to provide such a preservation and maintenance management plan for the DeKalb County Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the efforts of the master plan project identify several of these practices as already underway and/or should be considered for future focus.



Arabia Mountain Nature Center Kiosk



Activation

Stakeholder input indicates appreciation for existing nature-based programs and activities, in addition to desire for more opportunities. This input is also common across the country from stakeholders and their view of their park and recreation organizations. The demand for nature-based recreation has notably increased across the country over the past two-years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the high priority of nature-based experiences, RPCA is fortunate to have unique and high-quality resources that exist in their system. Stakeholder input specifically identifies resources, such as Arabia Mountain, Mason Mill, and Little Creek Horse Farm and Park, as important resources for the community. While expansion of natural areas is desired, care of existing facilities is particularly desired. This is a common feeling across the park and recreation industry. Best practices that apply to RPCA include:

- Focus on trail connectivity as well as wayfinding on trails
- Maximize limited resources through support of highly dedicated and engaged volunteer groups
- Ensure that a plan is in place for equity and access to natural areas, as it is common for underrepresented populations to have less access to natural areas.
- Facilitate programs and amenities, like community gardens, to provide the community the ability to connect to outdoor recreation while minimizing staff/operating investments
- Remove barriers to existing nature-based opportunities (e.g., ADA transition plans, transit, etc.)
- Provide greater focus on public safety for patrons to feel more comfortable and safe in the outdoors (e.g., solar powered lighting, park rangers, off-duty police officers, appropriately maintained vegetation to increase visibility, etc.)
- Utilize existing resources, such as Cities Connecting Children to Nature (joint initiative of National League of Cities and Children and Nature Network), to facilitate free and easy means to implement services for youth: <https://www.childrenandnature.org/resource-hub/resources/>
- Develop strategic partnerships to advance nature-based recreation goals

Parks and recreation organizations across the country have been very successful in creating new and innovative ways to activate natural areas and open space, while advancing the conservation efforts in their communities in alignment with NRPA's Pillar of Conservation. Some examples of established high-quality programs include:

Five Rivers Metroparks - Dayton, OH

Conservation Kids program in which there are four levels of programs for youth:

GREEN LEVEL: DISCOVER

Focus: Discover what's out there in nature and become comfortable outdoors

Activities: Interact with wildlife, play in creeks, go on owl walks, and hold crawdads

Programs: Fossil Fun, Tree Exploration, Spider Search, Creepy Creatures, Owl Prowl

BLUE LEVEL: ACT

Focus: Learn to protect the parks, develop ownership, become citizen scientists, and give back to nature

Activities: Participate in frog surveys, monitor bluebird boxes, plant seeds

ORANGE LEVEL: SHARE

Focus: Share knowledge with the community and become a conservation leader among peers

Activities: Serve as a naturalist with peers and host an event, such as a spider party or backyard bird count, that rallies other kids around conservation and challenges them to get out in nature

YELLOW LEVEL: PROTECT

Focus: Build conservation into daily activities

Activities: Report results from orange level activity and continue such conservation efforts as creating backyard habitats at home

Other types of programs include: backpacking, horse trail rides, photography classes related to nature, birding, paddle sports, camping and camping gear rentals, school engagement with nature, outdoor vacation passports, mindfulness walks, family fishing, access to nature financial assistance program, service Saturdays, geocaching, and many others.

Chicago Botanic Garden - Chicago, IL

The Chicago Botanic Garden offers a nature-based preschool. This program is different from a traditional preschool in the following ways:

- The natural world is the catalyst for the curriculum.
- Daily time spent outdoors in all-weather allows for discovery in an ever-changing environment.
- Discovery-based learning includes a hands-on approach to education.
- Time is built in for children to observe, explore, discover, and reflect in learning activities.

These types of preschools are becoming popular with parents, especially in light of COVID-19.

City of Westminster Parks, Recreation and Libraries Department - Westminster, CO

Led by their recently adopted Open Space Stewardship Plan, Westminster has implemented nature-based programming on a trend-setting level with programs replicated throughout the United States and Canada:

- The Standley Lake Monster Program (<https://www.cityofwestminster.us/News/calling-all-treasure-hunters-mysterious-egg-laying-creature-returns-to-standley-lake>)
- The Growing Home Community Garden and Program
- Standley Lake Eagle Camera
- Goat invasive weed control
- Hard as Nails outdoor adventure event
- Immersive outdoor theater experiences in open spaces

Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) - www.goco.org

Great Outdoors Colorado partners with park and recreation organizations across Colorado to provide some of the most innovative nature-based programs in the United States. GOCO provides grassroots grant funding through state lottery funds to support the launch of innovative efforts. Financial and operational sustainability beyond grant funding is core to GOCO's beliefs. Hundreds of trend-setting nature-based efforts have resulted from GOCO's leadership. Some highlights include:

- Community-based (free) outdoor equipment "lockers" to help reduce the barrier of equipment access and cost to participants. The lockers exist at school sites as well as park and recreation organizations, including the City and County of Denver and the City of Westminster Parks, Recreation and Libraries Department.
- Nature-based afterschool and summer camp programs targeted to underrepresented individuals. This program contains unique features, such as establishing Spanish speaking parent groups, to help create a greater connection between the community and the services to transport youth to regional nature destinations.
- Innovative virtual programs

13 - Appendices

Direction:

Based on the overall planning efforts and recommendations, it is clear that DeKalb County Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs will experience many challenges and opportunities for the department's future. It is the intent of this natural resource management review to identify key considerations for department leadership in helping to guide decision making.

Based on the results of input from the public and other stakeholders, the department should prioritize taking care of existing infrastructure and maintain programs related to those facilities before taking on large new initiatives (including large expansion of natural resources programming and facilities).

The department should continue to monitor opportunities to acquire unique resources that could enhance the system, should those become available. When those opportunities arise, consideration should be given as to whether they face development pressure (meaning the resource might not be available in the future) or annexation pressure (meaning perhaps those resources would be better left for future municipalities to acquire and program).

The plan addresses capital, programs, staffing, and operational aspects related to the County's existing natural resource facilities (e.g., Arabia Mountain, Mason Mill, etc.) in each of those sections or related reports, but more from a maintenance and efficiency perspective, rather than large-scale enlargement in those areas. Given that resources are limited, it would be expected that any such new initiatives would not be in the near future, and thus, near-term resource planning, operational aspects, etc. for such new initiatives would be premature. That said, the following can serve as a guide for the larger natural resources initiative, when the time arrives for that undertaking.



Mason Mill Park



Intrinchment Creek



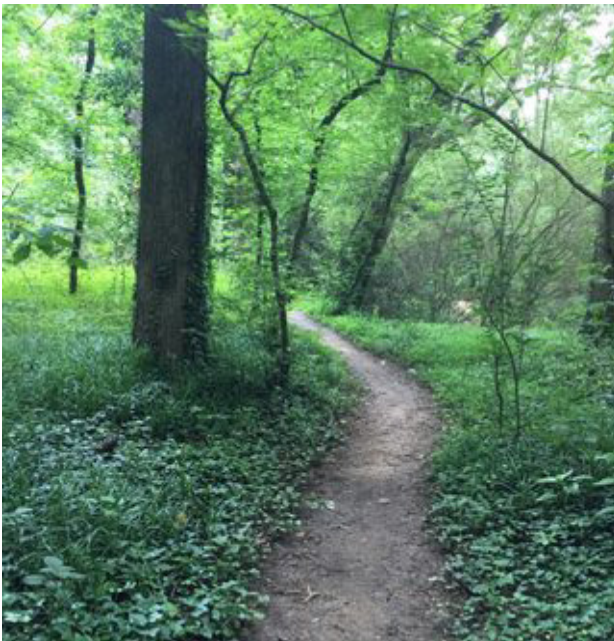
Dearborn Park

Natural Resource Management Future Considerations

As stakeholder demand across the country continues to increase for natural resource prioritization, public organizations are challenged with the need to provide funding and staffing for acquisition, preservation and maintenance, and activation. A comprehensive understanding of an organization's existing and potential natural resources is critical to successful service delivery practices. While best practices and a framework have been identified throughout the DeKalb County Parks and Recreation Master Plan, it is recommended that RPCA pursue specific and focused planning efforts in the area of natural resource management. Based on the input and research on this master plan process, the following goals are recommended for RPCA to successfully move the management of their natural resources forward:

Goal 1: Complete a specific natural resource management plan to develop a vision while serving as a guide for decision making. The plan should include focus of acquisition, maintenance and preservation, and activation.

Goal 2: Maximize the impact of this master plan in the areas of natural resource management by taking timely steps, aligned with stakeholder input, that will begin to meet demand for services and create momentum for future growth.



Dearborn Park

Goal 3: Address funding. While a future natural resource management plan should ultimately provide for a long-term vision and guide, much like any public service, financial resources are necessary for implementation. Best practices for any new or expanded service offerings from an organization provide a phased approach over a period of time that can be sustained by the organization. Top performing organizations with a natural resource management focus area started small and carried forward a phased approach that was led by planning efforts. Due to favorable stakeholder input on natural resources, RPCA should begin to prioritize budget resources accordingly in alignment with the master plan recommendations. Fortunately, due to the significant demand in natural resource prioritization, many new grants and partnerships are available for RPCA.

Goal 3a: Address natural resource management operations of staffing (including job descriptions, certifications, training, etc.) and equipment/supplies. This goal focuses on the areas of maintenance and preservation and activation. Public service delivery does not happen without people. As part of funding considerations and guided by a future natural resource management plan, determine the appropriate level of staffing based upon an established vision and guidance. Staffing will be needed in all areas for balanced and effective natural resource management operations. Specifically, staffing should be identified for acquisitions, preservation and maintenance, and activation. Staffing and organization models are available in the recommended natural resource management plans (or open space stewardship plans) identified earlier in this master plan. Best practices for staffing a natural resource management area include:

- Manager of Natural Resources (or Open Space or similar)
- Superintendent of Acquisitions and Planning
- Special Facility (e.g., Arabia Mountain, etc.) Coordinator
- Forrester overseeing Assistant Forrester and Arborist Technical Staff
- Supervisor (program/activation) overseeing Programming Specialist, Trails Specialist, Programming Technician/GIS
- Maintenance Foreman overseeing Maintenance Specialists and Parkworkers/Groundskeepers (this team is often capable of natural resource management construction related endeavors)
- Senior Park/Natural Resource Ranger overseeing Rangers (focus on public safety and ambassadorship of natural resources)

A phased approach to staffing, similar to any new or expanded area of service delivery, is recommended. Further, as natural resource related activities are of high priority within RPCA, it is recommended that cross-collaboration across the organization and with partners will be most effective to deliver services. For example, blending of programs, such as an afterschool program (perhaps programmed by recreation staff or a partner organization) with a trail or nature activity assisted by natural resource management staff, is a highly effective practice.

Goal 3b: Address the future of capital funding, including acquisitions. Best practices related to policy and funding techniques are identified earlier in this plan. Capital funding and acquisitions are typically a significant one-time or ongoing cost to an organization. Capital resources dedicated to natural resources are especially challenging for planning purposes, as tasks like acquisitions are highly variable as far as land costs and timing. Best practices for capital budgeting includes dedicated funding for identified and planned needs while also creating opportunity funds for potential acquisitions (which are commonly supplemented by other revenue streams).

Goal 4: Partnerships. With so much awareness of the importance of natural resources, including the high priority identified by RPCA stakeholders, additional partnerships to support service delivery should be pursued and achieved. Tool kits for partnerships, such as *The Children and Nature Network*, provide guidance and resources to advance local partnerships. Also, while volunteer programs already exist in RPCA, there is no better time than now to grow this volunteer program especially around natural resource management due to the heightened awareness and demand for services.



youth on trail walk - Mason Mill Naturalist Program

Acquisition, Preservation and Maintenance, and Activation are critical components for an organization implementing successful natural area and open space related services. Much like any public service delivery, resources to implement services are limited. It is recommended that an open space stewardship plan, or similar, is pursued in the future for RPCA to identify staffing, operating and capital budgets, guidelines, priorities, policies, and other related areas to establish goals and guide the organization in alignment with system wide efforts.

APPENDIX H

Updated Census Data



Population

DeKalb County, Georgia - 2010 and 2020 estimates

Population	DeKalb County, Georgia
Population Estimates, July 1 2021, (V2021)	NA
PEOPLE	
Population	
Population Estimates, July 1 2021, (V2021)	NA
Population estimates base, April 1, 2020, (V2021)	NA
Population, percent change - April 1, 2020 (estimates base) to July 1, 2021, (V2021)	NA
Population, Census, April 1, 2020	764,382
Population, Census, April 1, 2010	691,893

Age and Sex

DeKalb County, Georgia - 2021 estimates

Age and Sex	DeKalb County, Georgia
Population Estimates, July 1 2021, (V2021)	NA
PEOPLE	
Age and Sex	
Persons under 5 years, percent	6.9%
Persons under 18 years, percent	23.0%
Persons 65 years and over, percent	12.9%
Female persons, percent	52.8%

Race

DeKalb County, Georgia - 2021 estimates

Race and Hispanic Origin		DeKalb County, Georgia
Population Estimates, July 1 2021, (V2021)		NA
PEOPLE		
Race and Hispanic Origin		
White alone, percent		35.9%
Black or African American alone, percent (a)		54.8%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent (a)		0.5%
Asian alone, percent (a)		6.5%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent (a)		0.1%
Two or More Races, percent		2.2%
Hispanic or Latino, percent (b)		8.5%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent		29.3%

Housing

United States and Georgia - 2021 estimates

Housing	United States	Georgia
Population Estimates, July 1 2021, (V2021)	331,893,745	10,799,566
PEOPLE		
Housing		
Housing units, July 1, 2019, (V2019)	139,684,244	4,378,391
Owner-occupied housing unit rate, 2015-2019	64.0%	63.3%
Median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2015-2019	\$217,500	\$176,000
Median selected monthly owner costs -with a mortgage, 2015-2019	\$1,595	\$1,417
Median selected monthly owner costs -without a mortgage, 2015-2019	\$500	\$427
Median gross rent, 2015-2019	\$1,062	\$1,006
Building permits, 2020	1,471,141	55,827

Housing

Gwinnett County, Cobb County, and DeKalb County - 2021 estimates

Housing	Gwinnett County, Georgia	Cobb County, Georgia	DeKalb County, Georgia
Population Estimates, July 1 2021, (V2021)	NA	NA	NA
PEOPLE			
Housing			
Housing units, July 1, 2019, (V2019)	316,334	304,819	317,646
Owner-occupied housing unit rate, 2015-2019	66.3%	64.5%	54.6%
Median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2015-2019	\$217,900	\$253,900	\$215,600
Median selected monthly owner costs -with a mortgage, 2015-2019	\$1,564	\$1,633	\$1,573
Median selected monthly owner costs -without a mortgage, 2015-2019	\$510	\$471	\$550
Median gross rent, 2015-2019	\$1,272	\$1,202	\$1,169
Building permits, 2020	4,551	2,494	2,225

Income and Poverty

United States and Georgia - 2021 estimates

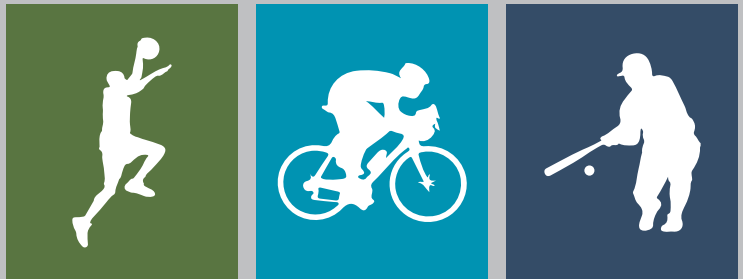
Income & Poverty	United States	Georgia
Population Estimates, July 1 2021, (V2021)	331,893,745	10,799,566
PEOPLE		
Income & Poverty		
Median household income (in 2019 dollars), 2015-2019	\$62,843	\$58,700
Per capita income in past 12 months (in 2019 dollars), 2015-2019	\$34,103	\$31,067
Persons in poverty, percent	11.4%	14.0%

Income and Poverty

Gwinnett County, Cobb County, and DeKalb County - 2021 estimates

Income & Poverty	Gwinnett County, Georgia	Cobb County, Georgia	DeKalb County, Georgia
Population Estimates, July 1 2021, (V2021)	NA	NA	NA
PEOPLE			
Income & Poverty			
Median household income (in 2019 dollars), 2015-2019	\$71,026	\$77,932	\$62,399
Per capita income in past 12 months (in 2019 dollars), 2015-2019	\$30,636	\$40,031	\$36,077
Persons in poverty, percent	10.4%	9.2%	15.8%

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