

Department of Community Services

**2020 GWINNETT
COMPREHENSIVE
PARKS & RECREATION
MASTER PLAN**
Executive Summary

GWINNETT COUNTY

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

LAWRENCEVILLE, GEORGIA

RESOLUTION ENTITLED: A Resolution Adopting the 2020 Gwinnett Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan

ADOPTION DATE: JULY 20, 2021

At the regular meeting of the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners held in the Gwinnett Justice and Administration Center, Auditorium, 75 Langley Drive, Lawrenceville, Georgia.

Name	Present	Vote
Nicole L. Hendrickson, Chairwoman	Yes	Aye
Kirkland D. Carden, District 1	Yes	Aye
Ben Ku, District 2	Yes	Aye
Jasper Watkins, III, District 3	Yes	Aye
Marlene M. Fosque, District 4	Yes	Aye

On motion of **Commissioner Ku**, which carried by a **5-0** vote, the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners hereby adopts the following Resolution:

**A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE
GWINNETT COMPREHENSIVE PARKS AND RECREATION
MASTER PLAN**

WHEREAS, Gwinnett County has a long history of strategically planning for the future needs of the County, its residents, and its businesses, including strategically planning for future parks and recreation needs; and

WHEREAS, in 2004, the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners adopted a Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan which acted as a guide for Gwinnett County's future parks and recreation efforts; and

WHEREAS, since the adoption of the 2004 Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan, Gwinnett County has experienced significant growth in population and demands for services to diverse urban and suburban communities; and

WHEREAS, over the next twenty (20) years, Gwinnett County is projected to continue to grow to potentially become the most populous and diverse County in the State of Georgia; and

WHEREAS, parks, trails, and community services are vital physical, social, and environmental infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, strategically planning for current and future parks and recreation needs of the County helps support and achieve the County's Vision of the County being the preferred community where everyone thrives and helps fulfill the County's Mission of proudly supporting the County's vibrantly connected community by delivering superior services; and

WHEREAS, the 2020 Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan builds directly on Gwinnett County's 30-year planning history taking into account the County's existing and projected demographics; current parks inventory, including city, regional, and national parks; local and national recreation trends; resident and stakeholder needs and priorities; and the County's future financial outlook; and

WHEREAS, the planning process used in the development of the 2020 Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan utilized a robust, multi-lingual approach to public engagement to inform and collect input from residents; and

WHEREAS, the 2020 Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan is also fundamental for the County achieving accreditation through the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies demonstrating that Gwinnett County's parks and recreation system meets the highest possible national standards; and

WHEREAS, on June 10, 2021, the Recreation Authority of Gwinnett County reviewed, considered, and recommended approval of the 2020 Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners finds the 2020 Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan promotes the health, safety, and welfare of the present and future residents of Gwinnett County; and

WHEREAS, the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners further finds that it is in the best interest of Gwinnett County and its residents to adopt the 2020 Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

GCID: 2021-0955

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners that the 2020 Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan is hereby adopted.

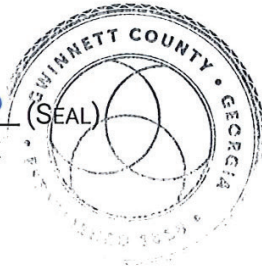
This Resolution is hereby adopted this 20th day of July 2021.

GWINNETT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

BY: Nicole Love Hendrickson
NICOLE LOVE HENDRICKSON, CHAIRWOMAN

ATTEST:

BY: Diane Kemp
DIANE KEMP, COUNTY CLERK



APPROVED AS TO FORM:

BY: Thomas A. Cox
DEPUTY COUNTY ATTORNEY

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Nicole L. Hendrickson	Chairwoman
Kirkland Dion Carden	District 1
Ben Ku	District 2
Jasper Watkins III	District 3
Marlene M. Fosque	District 4

Glenn Stephens	County Administrator
Maria Woods	Deputy County Administrator

RECREATION AUTHORITY BOARD

Eric Thigpen	Chairwoman's Appointment (Vice Chairperson)
Brad Alexander	District 1 Appointment
Pam Cox	District 1 Appointment
Kimberly Ulrich	District 2 Appointment
Robert Daniels Jr.	District 2 Appointment (Chairperson)
Rick Keenan	District 3 Appointment
Derrick Wilson	District 3 Appointment
Loretta Miranda	District 4 Appointment
Robin D. Kamara	District 4 Appointment

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

Tina Fleming	Department Director
Mark Patterson, PhD	Department Deputy Director
Chris Minor	Parks & Recreation, Director
Sarah Barlow	Parks & Recreation, Deputy Division Director – Natural & Cultural Resources
Glenn Boorman	Parks & Recreation, Deputy Division Director – Project Administration
Eric Horne	Parks & Recreation, Deputy Division Director – Parks Operations

CONSULTANT TEAM

Perez Planning + Design, LLC
PROS Consulting, Inc.
Exum Associates
ETC Leisure Vision
LOSE Design

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. THE PROCESS BEHIND THE PLAN	9
What?	10
How?	11
Who?	12
What we learned	14
2. THE LONG-RANGE PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM VISION	25
A new decision-making framework	27
Long-range parks and recreation system vision	34
Recreation facilities and resource areas	35
3. IMPLEMENTING THE VISION	46
Project type and expenditures prioritization	47
Finance Recommendations	48
Asset Management Recommendations	55
Program and Services Recommendations	56
Resource Area Recommendations	59
Marketing Recommendations	61





PLANNING AHEAD FOR A RESILIENT, EQUITABLE, AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

1 | THE PROCESS BEHIND THE PLAN

This section provides an overview of the What, How, Who, and What We Have Learned from the 2020 Gwinnett Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

The year 2020 will forever be remembered as a year when the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) disrupted “normal life” as we knew it in Gwinnett.

Yet this challenging year highlighted the important role that Gwinnett Department of Community Services – Parks and Recreation Division serves in Gwinnett.

Although playgrounds, courts, buildings, and other facilities and amenities were closed, many people turned to greenspaces and trails during this challenging time to relieve stress and enjoy the mental, emotional, and physical health benefits of parks.

In fact, more people are visiting parks than ever before, and more people are recognizing that parks, trails, and community services are not “nice-to-have” community amenities; they are vital physical, social, and environmental infrastructure.

Additionally, the county continues to change. Over the next 10-years, the Gwinnett's diverse population is projected to grow by at least 280,000 residents. This growth will further define the diverse urban, suburban, and rural communities identified in Gwinnett's 2040 Plan, all of which require varying levels of service.

These circumstances highlight the importance of the completion of the 2020 Gwinnett Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2020 P&R Plan).

WHAT?

The 2020 Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan establishes a long-range vision for advancing parks and recreation resources over the next 10-years and beyond.

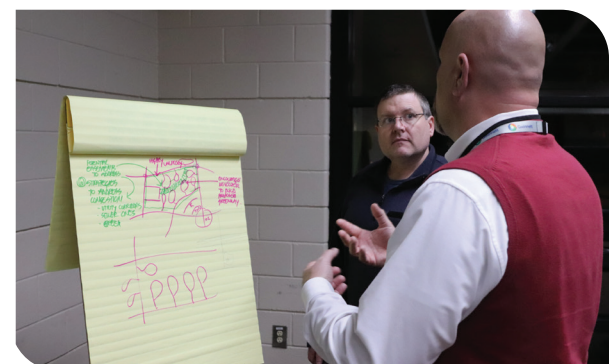
The 2020 Gwinnett Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2020 P&R Plan) builds directly on Gwinnett's 30-year planning history, establishing a road map that considers:

- Existing and projected demographics
- Current parks inventory, including city, regional, and national parks
- Local and national recreation trends
- Residents' and stakeholders' needs and priorities for parks and recreation
- Future financial outlook

This plan analyzes Gwinnett's ability to provide services based on existing facilities and identifies service gaps and needs. It also suggests project categories and the potential allocation of dollars for a future Special Purpose Local Optional Sales Tax (SPLOST), should the Board of Commissioners decide to call for another SPLOST. If a SPLOST is called, a process informed by the findings and recommendations of the 2020 P&R Plan – but specific to capital projects – would be completed to develop a list and costs of SPLOST projects.

This plan is also fundamental for Gwinnett Parks and Recreation achieving accreditation through the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA).

This accreditation guarantees that Gwinnett's parks system demonstrates the highest possible national standards. Over the last 20-years, Gwinnett's parks have received numerous accolades, and this plan intends to provide the template for their continued success and recognition, both by agencies and organizations, and most importantly, by their users.



HOW?

Gwinnett's success is not by chance. Gwinnett has a long history of strategically planning for its future, especially for its award-winning parks and recreation system.

The 2020 P&R Plan process follows five sequential strategic planning steps:



Step 1: Existing conditions analysis

This step identifies and compares the existing, currently planned, and projected future conditions of the county with the conditions found within the parks and recreation system.

Step 2: Needs & priorities assessment

This step identifies the parks and recreation programs, facilities, and actions that are most important to county residents. Because there is no one way to determine these needs, the process uses a triangulated, mixed-methods approach that employs three different analysis methods, each comprised of different techniques, as shown in the diagram below. Additionally, the County was organized into five Recreation Planning Districts (RPD) in order to facilitate a more in-depth analysis of needs.

Step 3: Long-range vision

Step three establishes a long-range vision for the County's parks and recreation system based on the findings from Step 1 and Step 2.

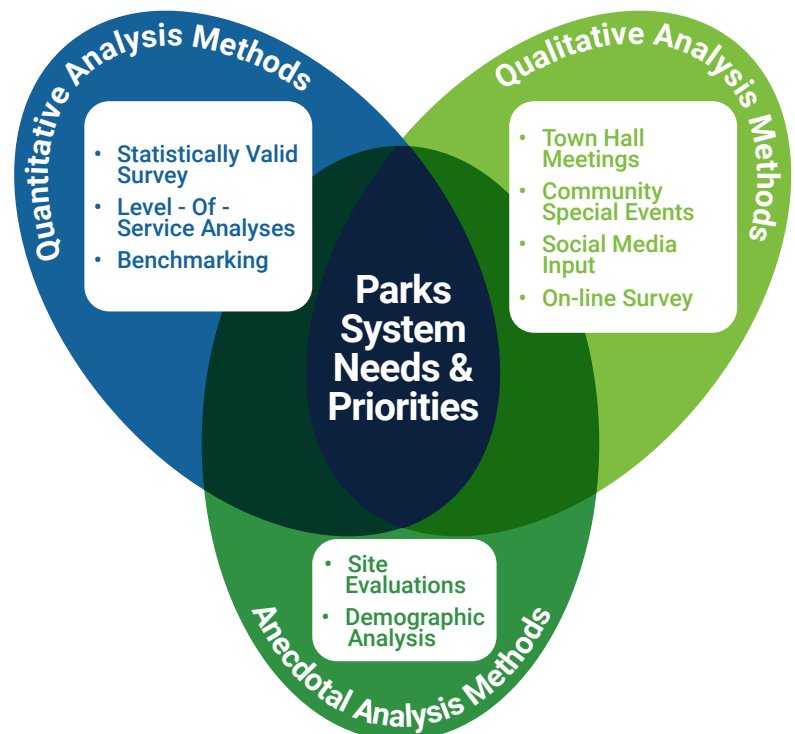
Step 4: Implementation strategy

Step four organizes the long-range vision into realistic strategies, actions, and project categories that will be implemented over the next 10 years based on existing and potential funding sources and partnerships.

Step 5: Final plan + adoption

This step compiles all the completed work into a plan that will be presented to the Board of Commissioners for adoption. This plan will serve as a road map for the Gwinnett Parks and Recreation Division over the next 10-years.

Triangulated Mixed-Methods Approach to Identifying Needs & Priorities



WHO?

A robust, multi-lingual approach to public engagement was undertaken to establish the creation of the 2020 P&R Plan. In the end, thousands of people across the county contributed their opinions during the parks planning process.

The planning process utilized a variety of techniques to inform and collect input from residents, including a statistically valid survey. This type of survey is the most reliable public engagement technique used for parks and recreation system master plans. These surveys provide unbiased views from a large sample of randomly selected residents matched to the demographics of the county. When a specific need is identified in other public engagement techniques, the better confirmation there is that it is a high priority need.

Additional outreach techniques used for the 2020 P&R Plan included multi-lingual social media input (not previously used in Gwinnett comprehensive parks and recreation master planning efforts), on line surveys, and interactive exercises at special events (before COVID-19). Considering these and the other techniques used during the process, the public participation for the plan exceeded expectations!


4 
Languages
English
Español
한국어
Tiếng Việt

10 
Town Hall Meetings

9 
Special Events

4,000+


Project Website Views

6,000+
Opinion Dots Placed 

4 
Steering Committee Meetings

1,700+

Statistically Valid & On-Line Survey Participants

29,000+
Social Media Responses 

5 
Recreation Authority Board Meetings



WHAT WE LEARNED

Following the completion of Step 1: Existing Conditions Analysis and Step 2: Needs & Priorities Assessment, various key findings emerged. These findings, summarized over the following pages, serve as the foundation for Step 3: Long-Range Vision.

The baseline analysis revealed that, overall:

- Gwinnett’s population is increasing in size and diversity. Over the next 20 years, Gwinnett is poised to continue its population growth and maturation to become the most populous and diverse county in Georgia. Varying levels of service, programs, and facilities will be required across the county to cater to its residents.
- There is a need to join and leverage existing and planned projects across sectors (Transportation, Community Development, etc.) to help fulfill the overall vision for the county.
- Demographics analysis indicates a need to focus programs and facilities towards adults/seniors, and programs and services will also need to cater to a broad range of incomes.
- Gwinnett parks and recreation system meets or exceeds facility service levels offered by its peers, but there’s room for improvement. Primarily, opportunities exist for increased multi-model connectivity, improved resource management, accessibility, and programming that relates to the diverse communities throughout the county.

Additionally, input from the public and other key stakeholders helped create a full picture of the system’s strengths, and highlighted areas in need of attention. The following list identifies the six key findings that resulted from the complete existing conditions analysis and needs assessment.

Six key summary findings:

1. There is a strong appreciation for the “Gwinnett Standard.”
2. We need to continue to position parks as essential services.
3. We need to enhance marketing and communications.
4. We need to enhance convenience and accessibility.
5. We need to protect, provide access to, and sensitively program natural areas.
6. We need to prioritize facility/amenity and program/activity investments.



1. THERE IS A STRONG APPRECIATION FOR THE "GWINNETT STANDARD"

Throughout the 2020 comprehensive parks and recreation planning process, participants continuously praised the great work that Gwinnett Parks and Recreation Division staff do to provide high-quality parks and recreation facilities and expressed their desire for that quality to continue.

The excellence of Gwinnett's parks and recreation system was also evident through the Planning Team's system evaluation findings. These findings suggests that Gwinnett's parks and recreation system meets or exceeds facility quality service levels offered by its peers. Elements that currently help to contribute to and define the high quality of the Gwinnett parks system include:

- Overall diversity and wide distribution of recreation facilities
- A well-maintained, accessible, and varied trail system
- Programs that educate students and the public about the environment
- A strong asset management tracking capability where staff monitor amenities and their life cycle, replacement cost and forecast budget needs for replacement
- Swift response to maintenance issues that arise and excellent facilitation of a preventative management program
- High park user satisfaction with programming, and keen staff awareness of program life cycles
- Providing underserved populations access to programs
- Effective cost recovery

Efforts should be made going forward to continue building on these strengths and identify areas of continued growth.



2. WE NEED TO CONTINUE TO POSITION PARKS AS ESSENTIAL SERVICES

Providing high-quality parks and recreation services and amenities is essential to maintaining Gwinnett residents' quality of life and helping to address Gwinnett's complex challenges.

Covid-19 has assisted in illuminating a greater message about the role parks, recreation, and community services play in our society, a role that can often address our residents' most essential needs.

When looking at the history of parks and recreation in the United States, this role of addressing essential needs forms the foundation for parks' existence.

Parks originally emerged to address important needs and combat challenges plaguing the growth of urban areas. As a result, the Urban Parks movement in the US grew as a response to the epidemics and pandemics of the late 1800's and early 1900's.

In the early 1900's...

Considered the most important civic innovation of its time by President Theodore Roosevelt in the early 1900's, Neighborhood Parks and Centers served as places where residents could go to receive essential services. These services included:

- a warm meal
- nursing care
- hygiene
- workforce training
- education to assimilate into the American culture



Source: US Public Service Broadcaster

Today...

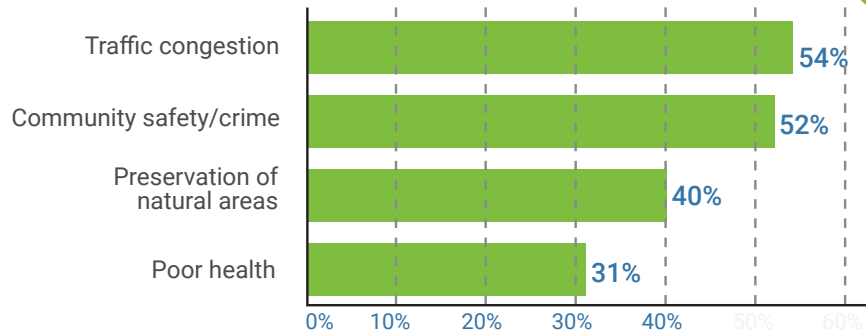
Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Parks and Recreation Division, in collaboration with other Community Services divisions and other Gwinnett departments, continued this legacy by providing these essential services to Gwinnett residents:

- 388,105 Summer Meals
- 710 Emergency Senior Meals
- 1,515,195 lbs. of Meals Transported/Distributed
- 909 Summer Campers

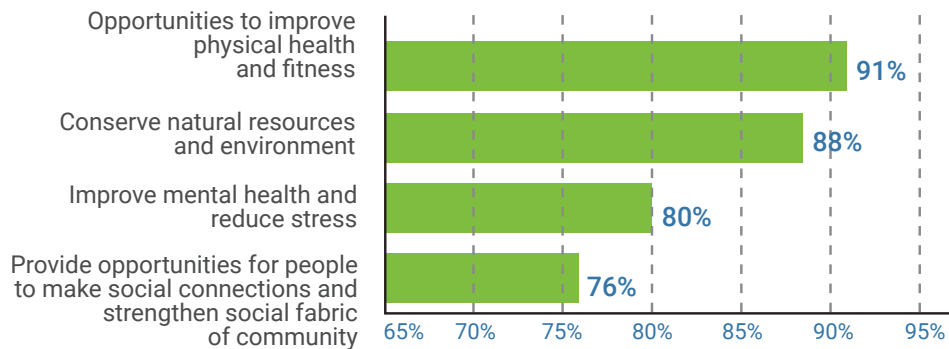


Moving forward, there are opportunities to broaden the Parks and Recreation Division's role in sustaining and improving the county's quality of life by addressing the challenges that residents are most concerned about and the initiatives that residents believe Gwinnett Parks and Recreation should achieve.

Top four Gwinnett challenges that are most important to residents



Important initiatives that Gwinnett residents believe the Parks and Recreation Division should achieve

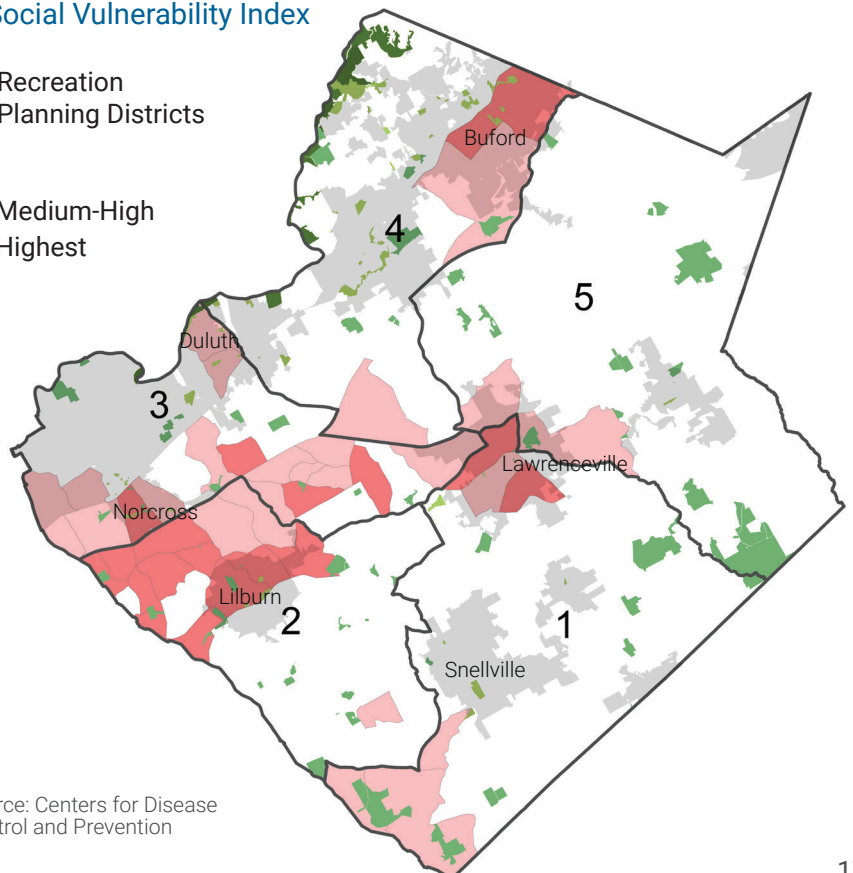
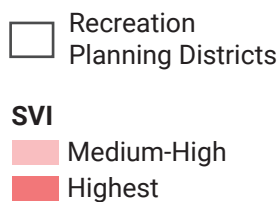


Though these broader challenges are recognized county-wide, based on existing conditions research performed, it appears concentrated areas in need of social support are clustered in the urban areas of the cities of Buford, Duluth, Lawrenceville, Lilburn, and Norcross, as well as in the county's southern corner south of Snellville.

The CDC's Social Vulnerability Index (SVI), displayed right, ranks Census tracts based on 15 social factors, to provide an overall assessment of a community's need for support.

With further exploration and consideration, some of these concerns may possibly be addressed through the Parks and Recreation Division in the future – whether through direct outreach and social services offered, or via the provision of quality parks themselves.

CDC Social Vulnerability Index



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

3. WE NEED TO ENHANCE MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Gwinnett residents love their parks, and want to know more about them and the programs offered.

"I don't know what is being offered" was selected by 31% of statistically valid survey respondents as the second reason they don't participate in parks and recreation programs. This is higher than the national average of 22% and consistent with staff's desire to find ways to improve marketing and communication with Gwinnett's diverse population.

While the overwhelming majority (84%) of statistically valid survey respondents gave a rating of "Excellent/ Good" customer service experience during the last 12 months, they expressed a desire for more interactive communication with staff.

Efforts to identify methods to increase effective marketing was initiated at the start of this plan. The introduction of a Gwinnett Parks and Recreation Facebook page and Instagram presence enabled the division to reach a wider more mobile minded audience. Additionally, the Gwinnett Twitter page is utilized for promotions and notices relevant to Gwinnett residents, which is already increasing interaction with customers.

Efforts are underway to further establish effective communication to meet these needs as conveyed in our data analysis. For example, the recent creation of the Community Service Department's Community Engagement and Collaboration Division will broaden interactive communication for the Department.

To better acquaint each community with their nearby recreation sites, small scale facilitated events and open house showcases should be explored to expand the community awareness of services and programs each site offers. The development of more specific needs within certain communities can be discovered through facilitated events and direct solicitation of comments via Q&A sessions. Utilization of interns and volunteers in these instances would reduce the possible load on staff while enabling effective information gathering.

Gwinnett does an excellent service to its residents by training and equipping its workforce far better than many municipalities. The changes to the county's population method of obtaining information should be a targeted training area for recreation staff to participate. This will strengthen their understanding and awareness of community engagement and produce positive results as they reach to further their impact on the communities they serve.



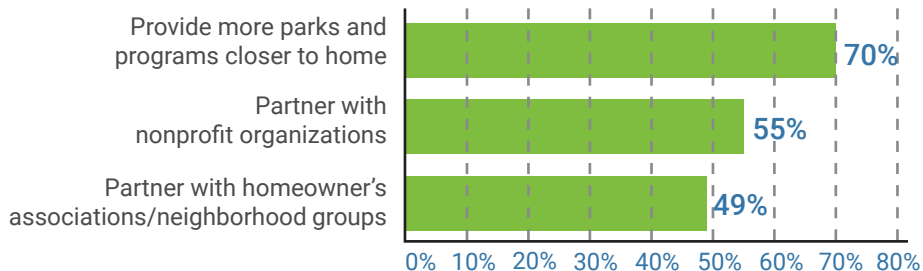
Source: facebook.com/GwinnettParksandRec

4. WE NEED TO ENHANCE CONVENIENCE AND ACCESSIBILITY

Surveys found that people have limited time for recreation, and that there is a clear desire for more parks to be provided closer to home.

The number one barrier to respondents using facilities and programs was “I have no time” (35%). Residents also expressed how best to provide more parks and recreation services to their households.

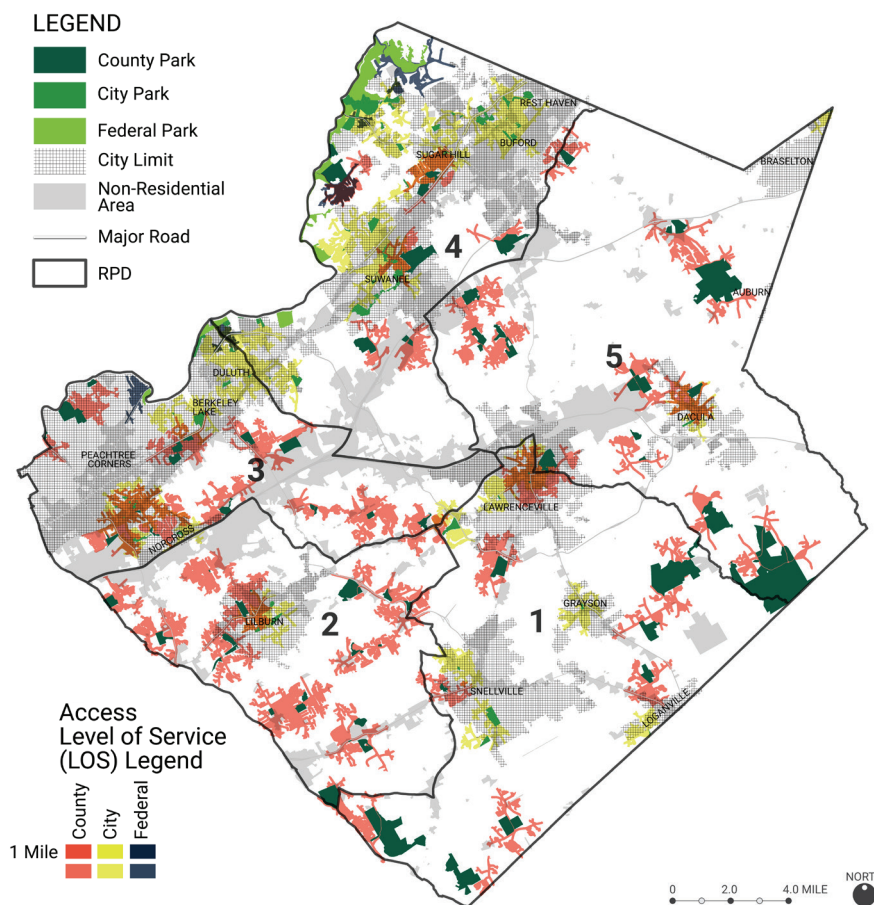
Best way to provide more Parks and Recreation services to households



Additionally, 78% of statistically valid survey respondents expressed their desire to travel a maximum of 2 miles to enjoy facilities and programs. Much of the county, however, does not have access to a park within their desired travel range, as illustrated in the map to the right. Of the parks that are accessible, nearly half lack sidewalk connections, and many also lack transit connections.

Partnering with homeowner associations/neighborhood groups, providing more parks and programs closer to home, and partnering with non-profit organizations were identified by participants as ways to increase accessibility to parks and recreation services.

Internal discussions with staff have led to the view that parks need to be more mobile and the success of the mobile programs have shown this to be true. Additionally, the expansion of programs into park sites previously underutilized enables programs to be brought closer to the participant.



5. WE NEED TO PROTECT, PROVIDE ACCESS TO, AND SENSITIVELY PROGRAM NATURAL RESOURCE AREAS

An overwhelming majority (84%) of the statistically valid survey participants believe it's important for the County to acquire park land to protect natural and cultural areas and resources.

Historic and ongoing development of land across the county has impacted natural communities and their contiguity locally and across the region. Participants in the public engagement process recognized this change, and felt a need to protect and to be able to enjoy what's not already lost:

- A high number of people (88% of statistically valid survey respondents and 81% of social media participants) felt the most important initiative the Parks and Recreation Division should achieve is "conserve natural resources and environment".
- In terms of overall priorities, "conservation areas/nature preserves" was identified as the second most important through the statistically valid survey, online survey, and Town Hall Meetings.
- Other high-ranking priorities were providing nature/resource-based amenities and activities, such as paved multi-purpose trails/sidewalks; conservation areas/nature preserves; unpaved walking and hiking trails; community gardens/food forests; and nature and history-based programs.

While natural and cultural resources are currently protected in Gwinnett's greenways and parks, establishing 1) conservation areas that limit internal development and 2) wildlife corridors were identified as the top two ways to better conserve and sustain Gwinnett's natural resource areas within each park site.

Further development of park specific resource management plans and dedicated dollars should be a strategy to accomplish more effective resource management of these parks.



6. WE NEED TO PRIORITIZE FACILITY/ AMENITY AND PROGRAM/ACTIVITY INVESTMENTS

While Gwinnett's residents have access to a variety of facilities/amenities and programs/activities, there are certain elements that residents would like to see more of in the county.

The chart below identifies the facilities/amenities that residents identified as high priority, medium priority, and low priority through the statistically-valid survey. These are then compared to the other needs assessment techniques. The more a specific need appears at and above the 50th percentile in the other assessment techniques, the better confirmation there is that it is a high priority need.

FACILITIES/AMENITIES	Needs assessment techniques					
	STATISTICALLY VALID SURVEY	ON-LINE SURVEY	TOWN HALL MEETINGS	SPECIAL EVENTS	SOCIAL MEDIA	LOS ANALYSIS
Paved multi-purpose trails/sidewalks		●	●	●		
Conservation areas/nature preserves		●	●	●	●	
Unpaved walking & hiking trails		●	●	●	●	
Community gardens/food forests		●	●	●		
Indoor pools	Highest priority investment	●	●	●		●
Senior centers			●	●		●
Dog parks			●	●	●	
Greenway/trails system		●	●	●		
Outdoor exercise stations along trails		●	●			
Amphitheater		●	●			
Interactive fountains/water features		●			●	●
Historic sites				●		
Fishing				●		
Recreation centers		●	●	●	●	●
Indoor gym with volleyball/ badminton/ pickleball		●	●	●	●	●
Outdoor picnic areas	Medium priority investment	●	●	●		●
Passive recreation parks		●	●			●
Pump course (bicycle park)		●				●
Active recreation parks		●	●	●		●
Indoor nature center			●	●		
Outdoor pools					●	
Bus stops at parks		●	●			
Playgrounds				●	●	●
Park pavilions			●	●		
Tennis courts					●	
Basketball courts			●	●		●
Soccer fields			●	●		
Sand volleyball court	Low priority investment					
Table tennis			●			
Pickleball courts						
Multipurpose/football/lacrosse fields						
Disc golf						
Baseball/softball fields						●
Cricket field						

● 98th Percentile ● 85th Percentile ● 75th Percentile ● 50th Percentile

The chart below identifies the programs and activities that residents identified as high priority, medium priority, and low priority through the statistically valid survey. Similar to the facilities chart, these are then compared to the other needs assessment techniques. The more a specific need appears above the 50th percentile in the other assessment techniques, the better confirmation there is that it is a high priority need.

PROGRAMS/ACTIVITIES	Needs assessment techniques				
	STATISTICALLY VALID SURVEY	ON-LINE SURVEY	TOWN HALL MEETINGS	SPECIAL EVENTS	SOCIAL MEDIA
Adult fitness/wellness	Highest priority investment	●	●	●	
Senior leisure programs	Medium priority investment	●	●	●	
Nature programs		●	●	●	●
Community special events		●	●	●	
Water fitness					●
Art programs					
Senior clubs			●	●	
Adult education			●		
Digital media/photography programs					●
Lap swimming					
Adult performing arts/dance					
Adult learn to swim			●	●	
Educational lecture series				●	
Teen programs		●	●	●	
Science/Technology/Education/Math (STEM classes)		●	●		
Volunteering					
Language classes					
Youth fitness & wellness	Low priority investment	●	●	●	
Youth arts/painting/crafts/classes				●	
Historic preservation/interpretation					
Bird watching			●		
Programs with people with disabilities		●	●	●	
Adult athletic leagues			●		
Camps (summer school/break)		●		●	
Before & after school programs		●	●	●	
Youth learn to swim				●	
Youth athletic leagues					
Athletic special events					
Programs with meals for children			●	●	
Video gaming/virtual gaming			●	●	
Child day care				●	
Youth performing arts dance					
Preschool programs				●	●

● 98th Percentile ● 85th Percentile ● 75th Percentile ● 50th Percentile



SO, WHAT'S NEXT?

Based on these important findings, as well as parks planning best practices, the following section proposes a customized Long-Range Parks and Recreation System Vision for Gwinnett.



2 | A LONG-RANGE PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM VISION

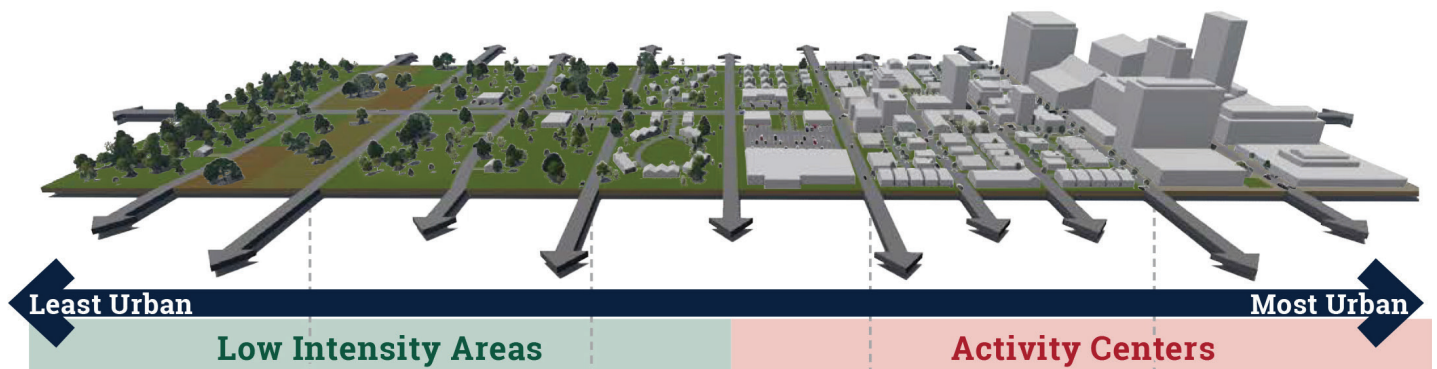
This section details the County's Long-Range Parks and Recreation System Vision, which anticipates the needs of future residents and aligns with the County's priorities. Factors that underpin the development of the vision are Guiding Plans and the Commission's Priorities.

Guiding Plans

Looking beyond this project's 10-year horizon, the county's diverse population is projected to grow to at least 1.28 million residents by the year 2030. The **Gwinnett County 2040 Unified Plan** proposes a new growth strategy that refines the county's historical rural and suburban development patterns and organizes this growth in defined urban, suburban, and rural development character areas.

This reality suggests the need for the parks and recreation system to evolve and consider new service delivery models to address the varying levels of service requirements of these diverse areas.

Through the continued implementation of the **Gwinnett Trails Master Plan**, this network of trails will address the high priority needs of residents, and deliver access to amenities closer to residents' homes.



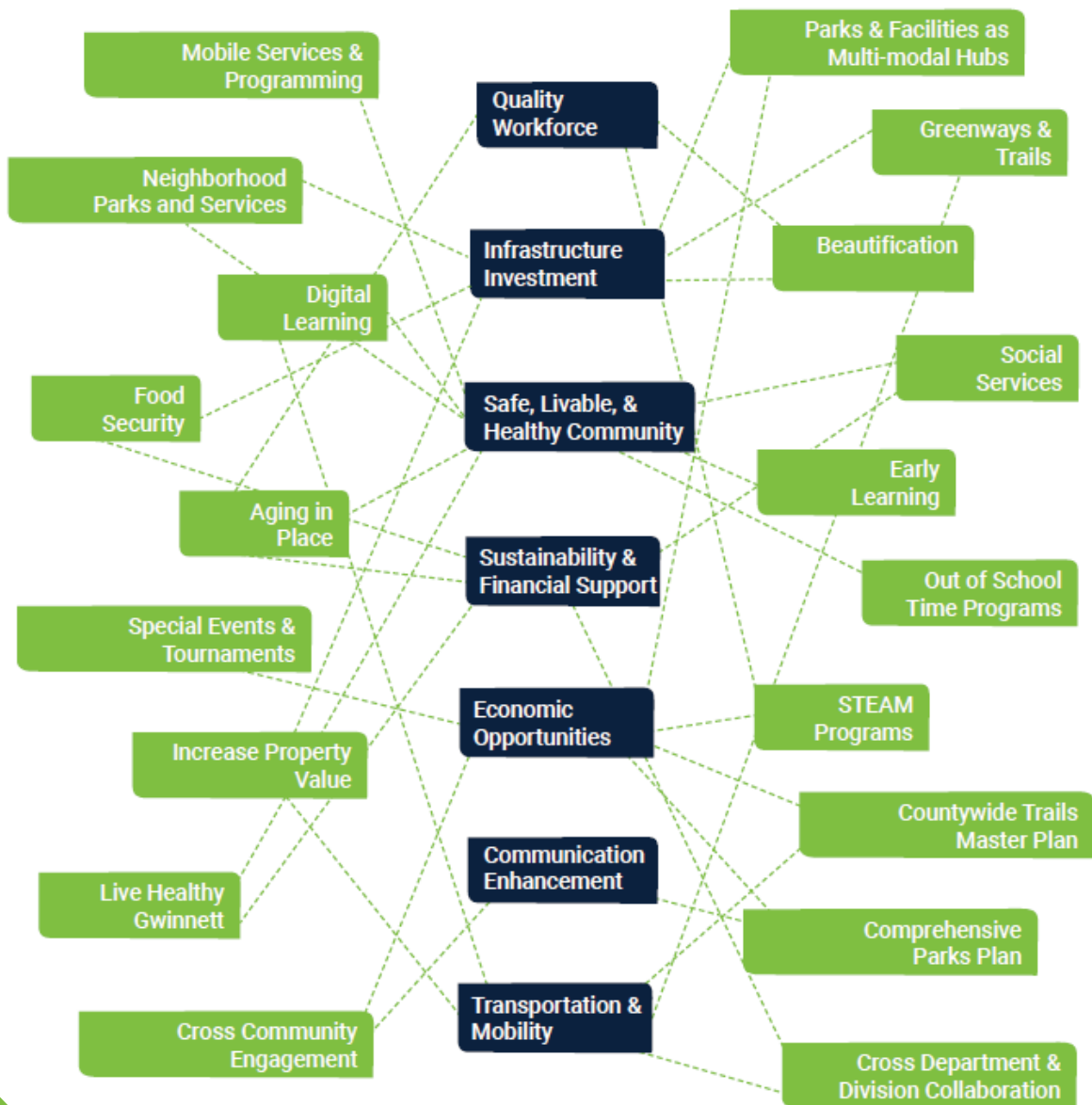
Source: Gwinnett County 2040 Plan

Gwinnett Board of Commissioner Priorities

The Board of Commissioners developed seven priority areas of interest for future investment to help advance Gwinnett's mission.

- Quality Workforce
- Infrastructure Investment
- Safe, Livable, & Healthy Community
- Sustainability & Financial Support
- Economic Opportunities
- Communication Enhancement
- Transportation & Mobility

The Community Services Department and Parks and Recreation Division can help implement the Gwinnett Board of Commissioners 7 Priorities through a multitude of initiatives, including those suggested below.



A NEW DECISION MAKING FRAMEWORK

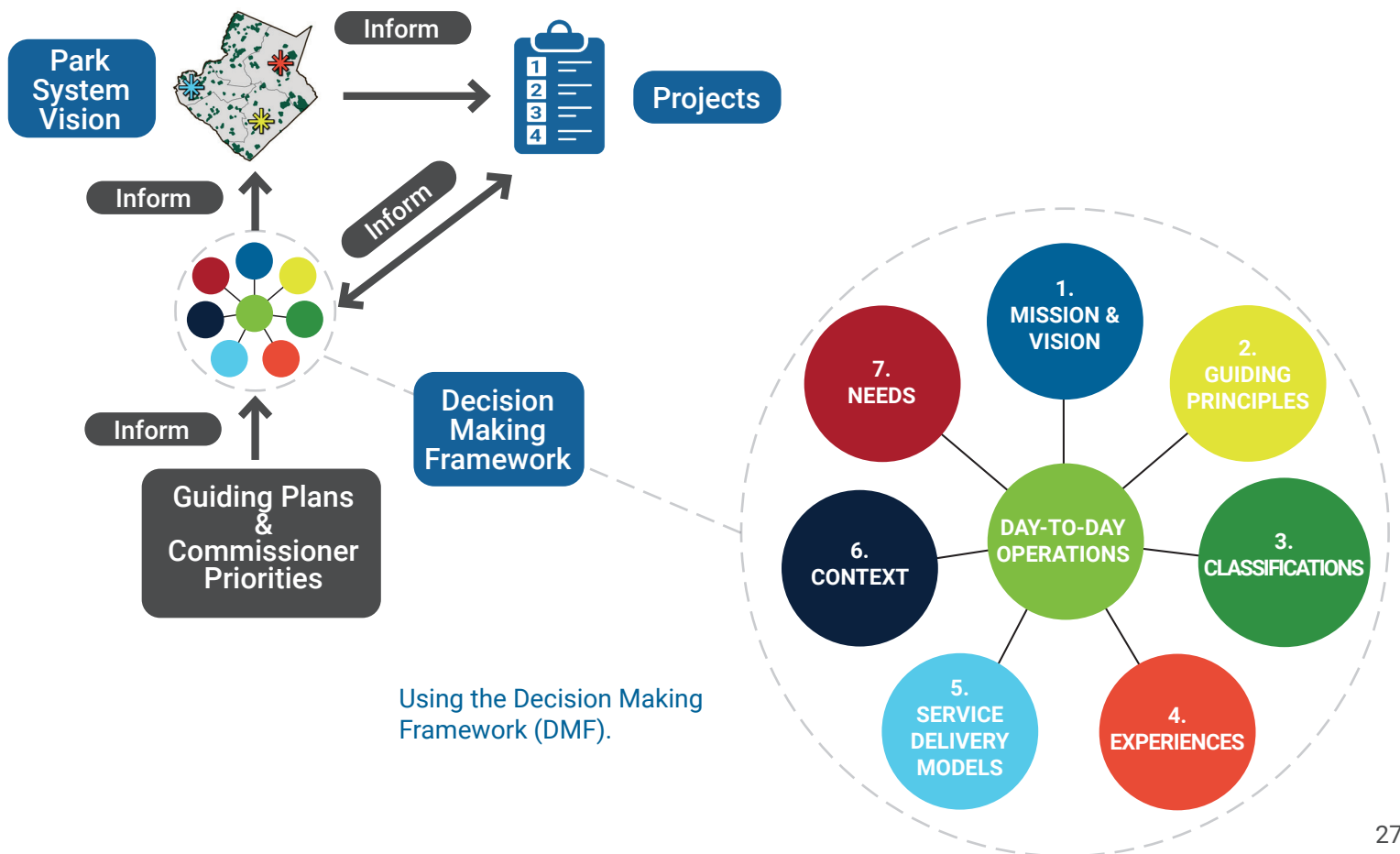
In light of the Guiding Plans and the Commissioner's Priorities, the use of a new Decision Making Framework is proposed for staff to make short-term and long-term decisions and to serve as a foundation for the development of a Long-Range Parks and Recreation System Vision.

This Decision Making Framework (DMF) serves as a tool for staff to be more thoughtful, inclusive, equitable, and adaptable in responding to the county's diverse future parks and recreation needs. This framework is comprised of seven elements illustrated below and explained in subsequent pages.

It is envisioned that prior to the undertaking and during the course of a project, Division staff considers and often revisits this DMF to ensure:

1. The mission and vision of the County is being upheld
2. Principles created internally by the Division are being considered
3. New park classifications are being employed
4. The intended experiences will be the outcome of the effort
5. Which service delivery model best fits the project
6. Knowledge of Character Area context informs the process
7. Existing needs are being addressed

Additionally, the DMF itself has informed the Long-Range Parks and Recreation System Vision.



1. VISION & MISSION

The Community Services Department and Parks and Recreation Division will help achieve Gwinnett's vision and mission:

Vision: Gwinnett is the preferred community where everyone thrives!

Mission: Gwinnett proudly supports our vibrantly connected community by delivering superior services.

The Department and Division's role in helping achieve Gwinnett's vision and mission is inspired by the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. They will strive to deliver the highest standard of excellence of parks, facilities, programs and services by:

- Being responsive to the changing recreational needs of a diverse and growing community
- Continue a citizen-driven and professional approach to provide safe, well designed and maintained facilities and programs
- Providing responsible stewardship of human, fiscal, natural and historic resources
- Maximizing community resources



Source: un.org

2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Consistent with Gwinnett's mission, the following guiding principles were established for parks and recreation facilities and programs to guide decision-making. These principles would be reviewed and updated annually to reflect the Division's initiatives and activities:

- Equitable Access
- Elimination of Barriers
- Bicycle/Pedestrian Access
- Context-Based Decision-Making
- Residents' Needs and Priorities
- Negative Impacts to Neighborhoods
- Natural Resource Protection
- Cultural Resource Protection
- Multi-use Facilities
- Economic Development
- Social Development
- Public Engagement
- Appropriate Response
- Mobile Opportunities
- Safe Spaces
- Use of Technology
- Gender Equality and Inclusivity
- Memorable Experiences
- Staff Diversity
- Have Fun!

3. CLASSIFICATIONS

Gwinnett's proposed Decision-Making Framework simplifies the park and recreation system's classification to:

- Avoid internal confusion regarding particular park or recreation center types.
- Provide greater flexibility to plan, design, maintain, and program parks and recreation facilities in alignment with Gwinnett's vision and mission and the Division's guiding principles.

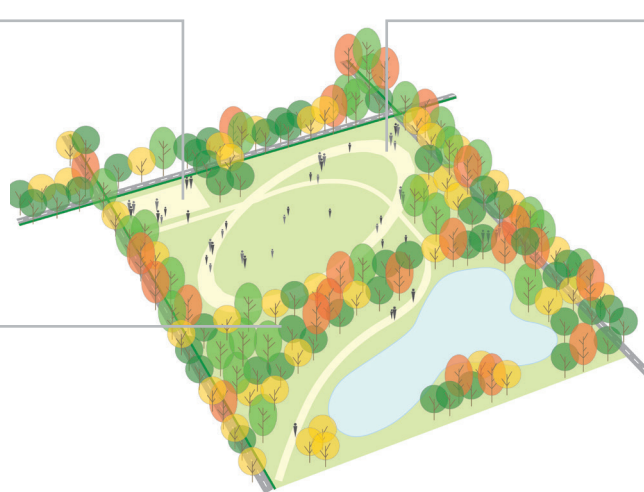
Moving forward, all parks and recreation spaces will be classified as, very simply, Parks. Parks, will be comprised of:

Recreation amenities

such as playgrounds, courts, athletic fields, indoor centers, etc.

Resource areas

such as natural and cultural resources areas.



Trails

such as paved or natural trails, which may extend outside of parks and also contain recreation amenities such as play areas, exercise stations, and community gardens.

4. EXPERIENCES

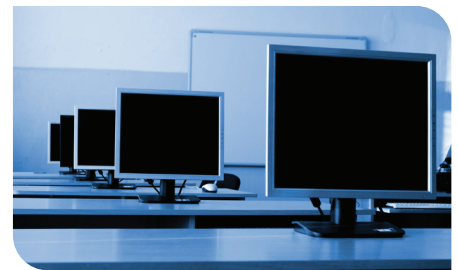
Recreation amenities within parks and trails are informed by the type of outdoor and indoor experiences that residents may wish to enjoy. Many of these experiences will be determined in close collaboration with residents during the typical thoughtful, collaborative, and comprehensive Park Site Master Planning Process. Examples of experiences may include:



Relax in the park



Enjoy a walk in a forested natural area



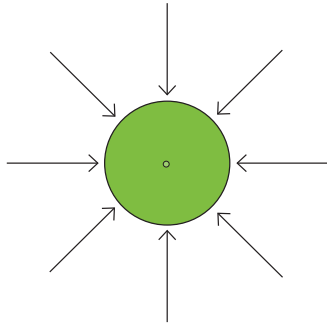
Learn in a computer lab

Experiences related to the "Big Rocks" of the parks system, or the facilities that require large infrastructure investment such as aquatics facilities, gyms, indoor centers, and athletic fields are provided based on desired experiences, updated Facilities Level of Service Metrics, and Service Delivery Models.

5. SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS

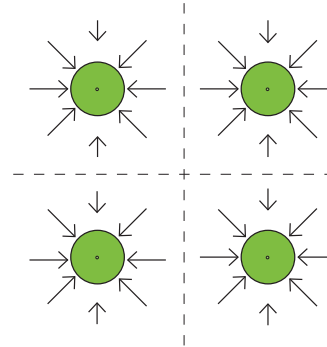
Six common, alternative Service Delivery Models have been developed to help define the provision of major recreation amenities such as aquatic facilities, gyms, centers, and athletic fields. The images below illustrate and describe the various Service Delivery Models that are considered.

Centralized Model



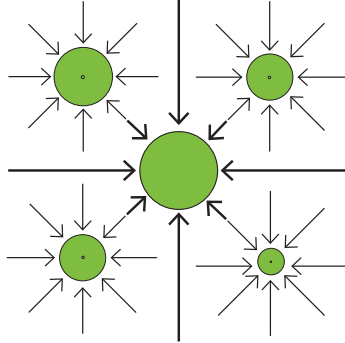
This model assumes that residents and visitors from throughout the community will drive to the central facility.

Equity Model



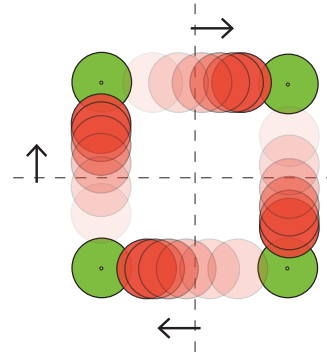
This model focuses on the equitable distribution of services, measured in terms of distance (Access LOS) or population served (Facility or Acreage LOS).

Hub and Spoke Model



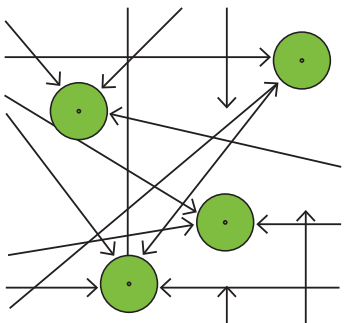
This model combines the Centralized and Equity models to provide one central facility supported by smaller satellite facilities.

Mobility Model



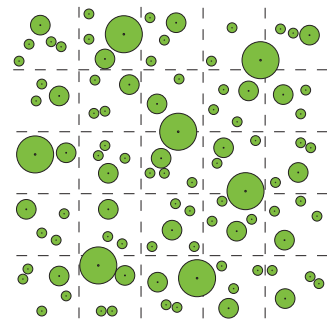
This model focuses on bringing services and amenities to where residents live through virtual applications, programming, or vehicles.

Venues Model



This is a variation on the Centralized model and it assumes that there are specialized facilities that will serve the entire community, regardless of access distance or population densities.

Activity Model



This model focuses on providing desired recreation opportunities throughout the community wherever space is available.

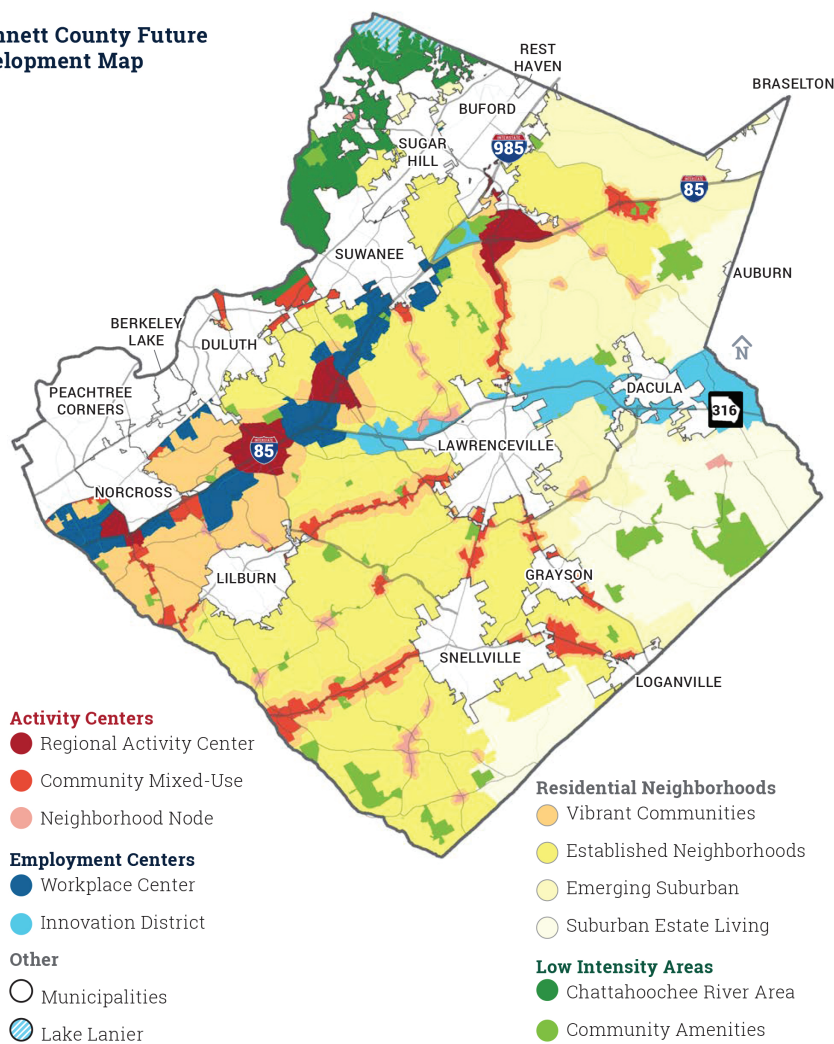
6. CONTEXT

The Gwinnett 2040 Unified Plan organizes Gwinnett's future growth into four Character Areas as illustrated in the map below.

Each of these Character Areas has a different development pattern and density ranging from high-density urban areas to low-density rural areas. These varied densities will inform how parks and recreation services are delivered. For example, having a park within a 10-minute walk may be more appropriate for a person living in a high-density urban area--where there is less access to private greenspace and more traffic congestion--than a person living in a low-density rural area where there is more access to private greenspace and less traffic congestion.

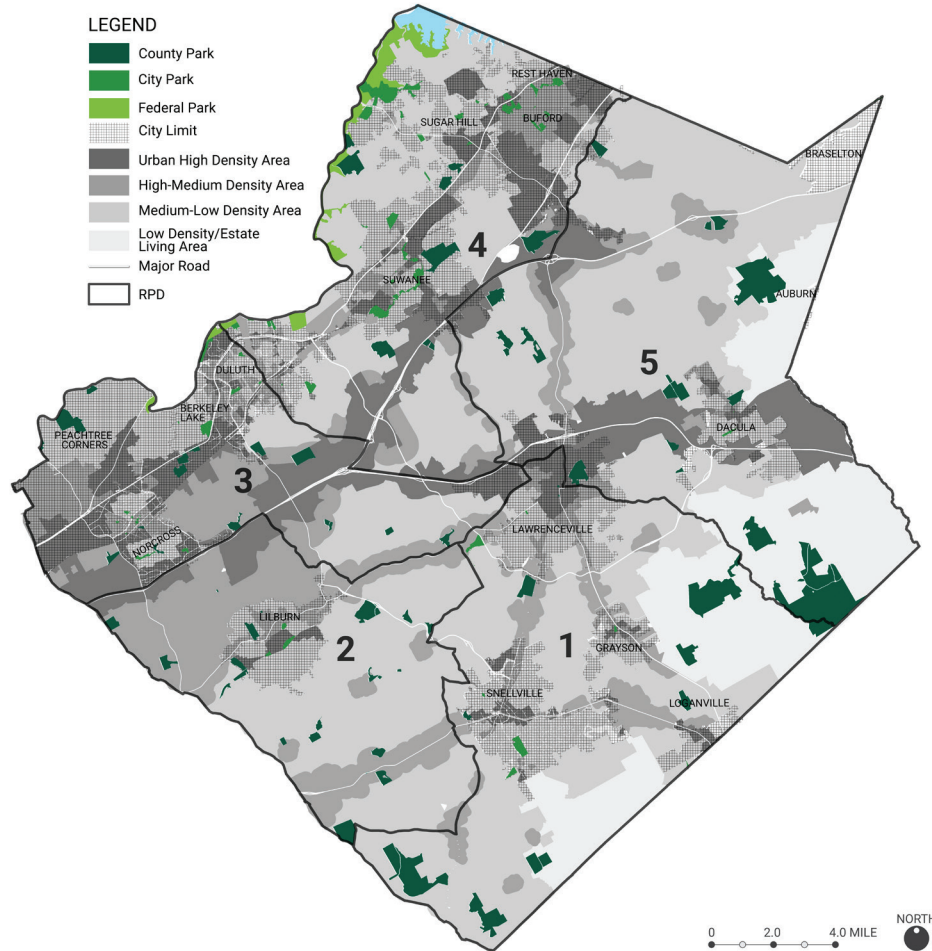
The Context element of the Decision-Making Framework considers these differences and suggests different parks and recreation Levels of Service (LOS) for each of these areas. The chart and map on the adjacent page identify the different density areas and their associated LOS Metrics.

Gwinnett County Future Development Map



Source: Gwinnett County 2040 Plan

Context	Urban High Density Area	High-Medium Density Area	Medium-Low Density Area	Estate Living/Rural Area
PARKS				
Access LOS	¼ mile	½ mile	1 mile	2 miles
Acreage LOS	20 acres per 1,000 population			
INDOOR CENTER				
Access LOS	1 miles	2 miles	3 miles	5 miles
Indoor Square Footage	1.5 square feet per resident			



7. NEEDS

Lastly, surveys and trends are combined with Contextual LOS metrics such as Access, Acreage, Indoor Square Footage, Facilities LOS, and Service Delivery Models to help identify needs.

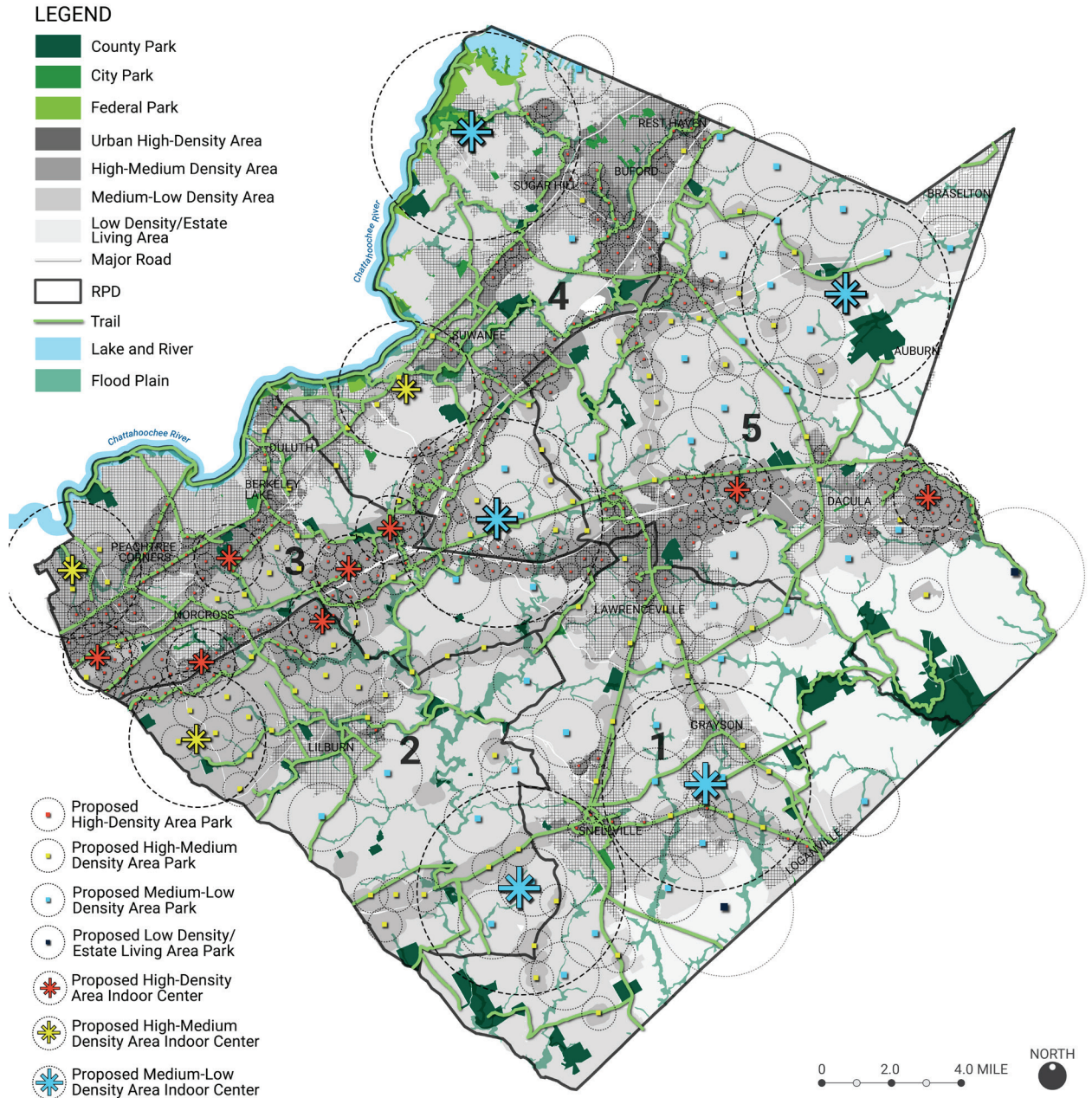
Facilities and Contextual Access LOS metrics are established for the major facilities/amenities of the parks system. These are listed below and are used to inform a Facilities Gap Analysis. The Division would review and update the Facilities and Access LOS metrics with every Capital Improvements Plan Update.

FACILITY	SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL	FACILITIES LEVEL OF SERVICE	CONTEXTUAL ACCESS LOS
Trails in Parks	Venues	-	Based on park size and site suitability
Resource Areas - Natural	Venues	-	Based on site availability and suitability
Resource Areas - Cultural	Venues	-	Based on site availability and suitability
School Cluster Park Experiences	Equitable	1 per School Cluster	Per School Cluster
Pools/Aquatics - Competition	Equitable	1 per 150,000 residents	8 Miles
Pools/Aquatics - Leisure	Hub & Spoke	Hub - 1 per 500,000 residents Spoke - 1 per 80,000	Hub - 4, 6, 8 Miles Spoke - 2, 4 Miles
Senior Centers	Equitable	1 per 160,900 residents	6 Miles
Community Gardens	Equitable	1 per 50,500 residents	2, 4 Miles
Indoor Gymnasiums	Equitable	1 per 80,000 residents	6 Miles
Soccer Fields	Hub & Spoke	1 per 15,550 residents	4, 6 Miles
Interactive Water Features	Hub & Spoke	1 per 90,000 residents	2, 4 Miles
Racket Courts	Hub & Spoke	1 per 12,900 residents	2, 4 Miles
Pickleball Courts	Equitable	1 per 29,000 residents	4, 6 Miles
Playgrounds	Hub & Spoke	1 per 12,600 residents	Hub - 3 Miles Spoke - 0.5, 1, 1.5, and 2 Miles
Dog Parks	Hub & Spoke	1 per 60,000 residents	Hub - 2, 4, 6 Miles Spoke - 2, 4 Miles
Skate Park	Equitable	1 per 68,000 residents	4 Miles
Basketball Courts	Hub & Spoke	1 per 20,400 residents	Hub - 3 Miles Spoke - 1, 2 Miles
Mountain Bike Trails/ Pump Tracks	Equitable	1 per 256,000 residents	10 Miles
Disc Golf Course	Equitable	1 per 130,000 residents	6 Miles
Amphitheaters	Hub & Spoke	1 per 140,000 residents	Hub - 8 Miles Spoke - 6 Miles

LONG-RANGE PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM VISION

Informed by the Decision Making Framework, below is the proposed Long-Range Parks System Vision for Gwinnett. It identifies where new parks, Gwinnett Trails, and indoor centers may be developed as the county continues to grow over the next 10 years and beyond.

These spaces would be collaboratively implemented over time using a variety of strategies, including Gwinnett's Capital Improvements Plan; partnerships with City, State, and Federal agencies, CIDs and non-for-profit and neighborhood organizations; and private development and redevelopment. As the Gwinnett Trails Master Plan is implemented, there may be opportunities to include some of these spaces along the trail system.



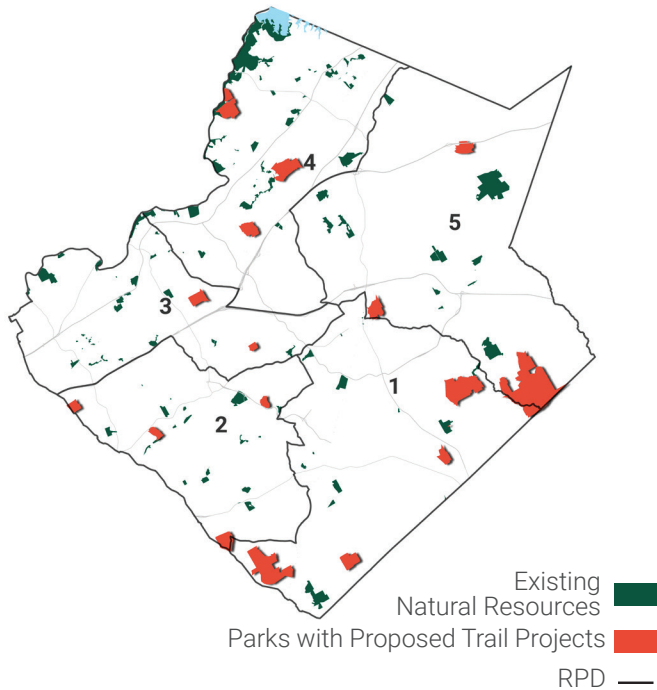
RECREATION FACILITIES GAP ANALYSES

Utilizing the Decision Making Framework as a guide, Facilities Gap Analyses were completed to inform where the major facilities/amenities - such as aquatics facilities, gyms, indoor centers, and athletic fields - may be needed in the future. The following maps identify the general locations of where additional facilities may be needed; specific details would be determined in the Park Site Master Plans. The Division would review and update the Gap Analyses with every Capital Improvements Plan Update.

TRAILS IN PARKS



In addition to the implementation of trails from the Gwinnett Trails Master Plan, trails in parks are proposed to be expanded through the construction of remaining unbuilt trail segments and development of new trails in future parks. Trail projects are proposed in all Recreation Planning District (RPDs).

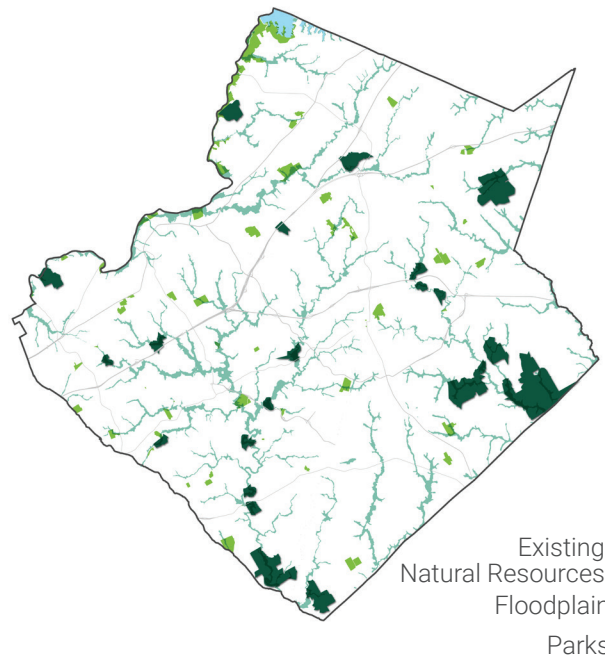


RESOURCE AREAS - NATURAL



Natural resources are proposed to be expanded County-wide to increase access to nature-based experiences, where they are available and suitable for public access.

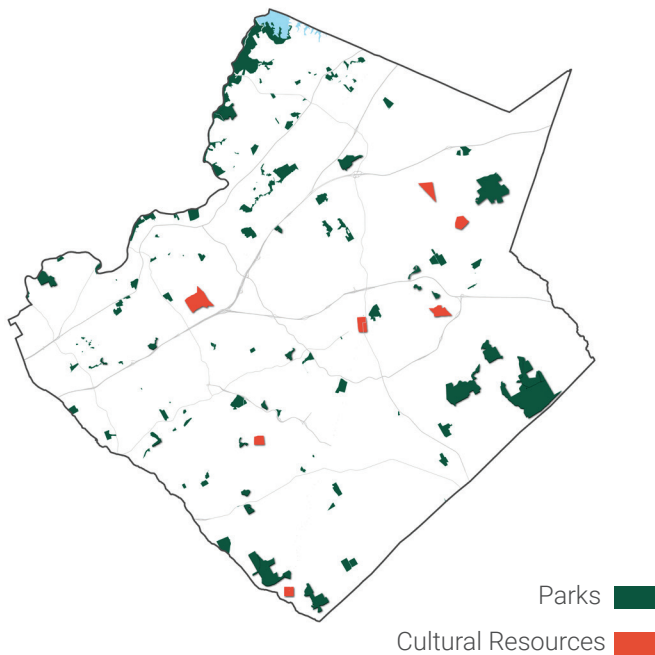
These experiences would be expanded by providing access to natural and agricultural areas with high ecological value. These areas would be connected through the Gwinnett Trail system, adjacent parks, and linkages with high ecological value.



RESOURCE AREAS - CULTURAL



Cultural resources are proposed to be expanded County-wide in collaboration with federal, state, and local organizations to preserve, protect, and enhance sites to achieve a desired future condition. Where available and suitable, cultural areas would be made available for public understanding and enjoyment and would be physically connected to the park system.

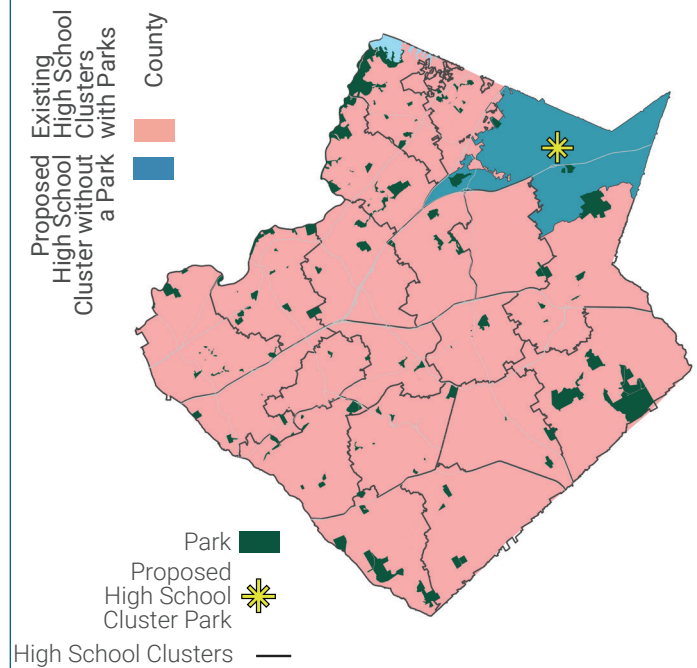


SCHOOL CLUSTER PARK EXPERIENCES



The Mill Creek High School Cluster will split to facilitate the creation of the new Seckinger High School Cluster by the year 2022.

The development of new park experiences, which could be related to the school's technology focused curriculum, could be explored for the Seckinger High School Cluster.

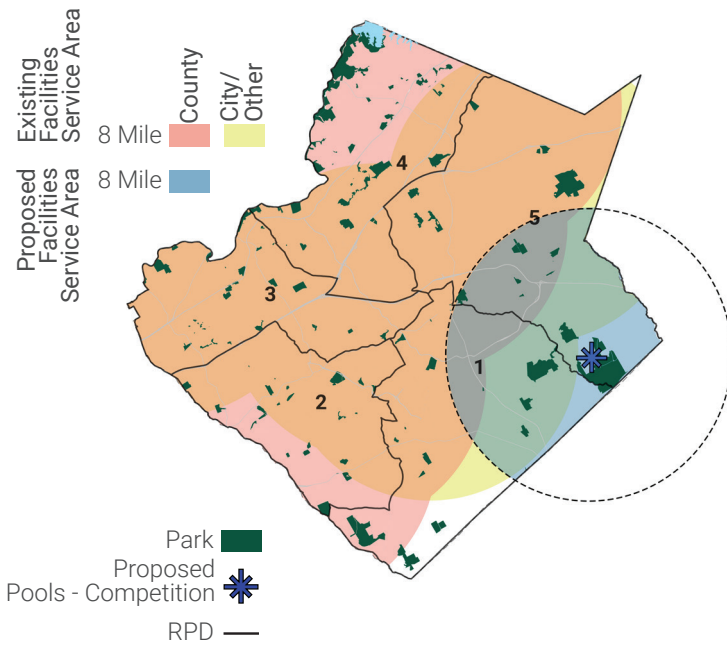


POOLS | AQUATICS - COMPETITION



Are provided using an Equitable Model and Facilities Service Area of 8 miles.

An additional Competition Pool is proposed in RPD 5 to service the eastern portion of the County.

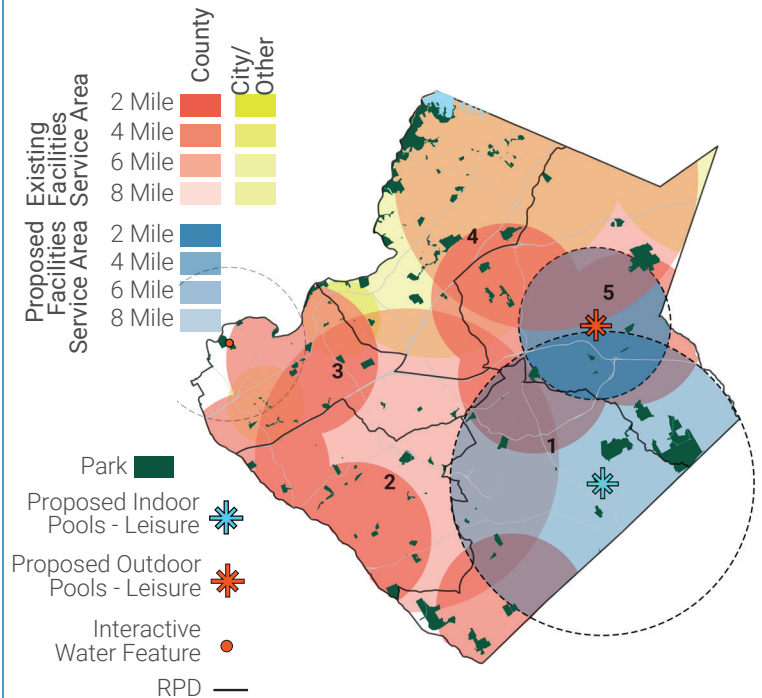


POOLS | AQUATICS - LEISURE



Are provided using a Hub and Spoke Model with varying Service Areas based on facility types and context. Hubs are Indoor and Outdoor Leisure Pools and Spokes are Interactive Water Features.

A Hub Indoor Leisure Pool and Outdoor Leisure pool are proposed in RPD 5 to service the eastern portion of the County. A proposed Interactive Water Feature is proposed in RPD 3 to service the eastern portion of the County.

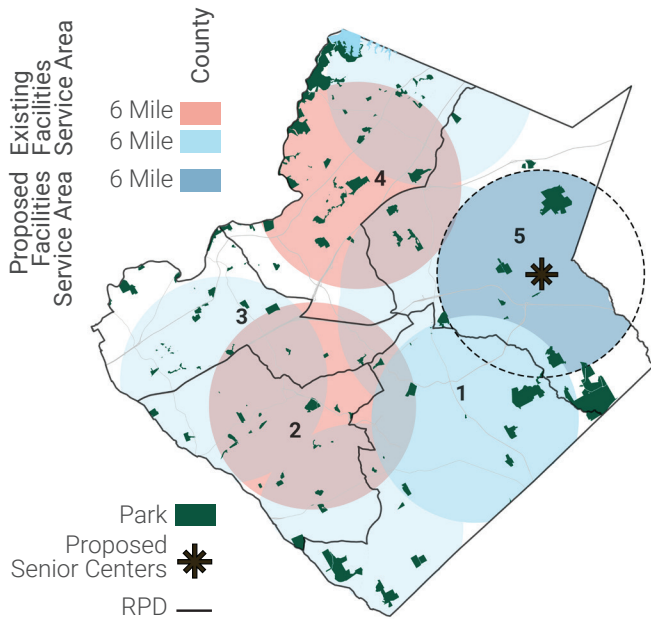


SENIOR CENTERS



Are provided using an Equitable Model and Facilities Service Area of 6 miles.

An additional Senior Center is proposed in RPD 5.

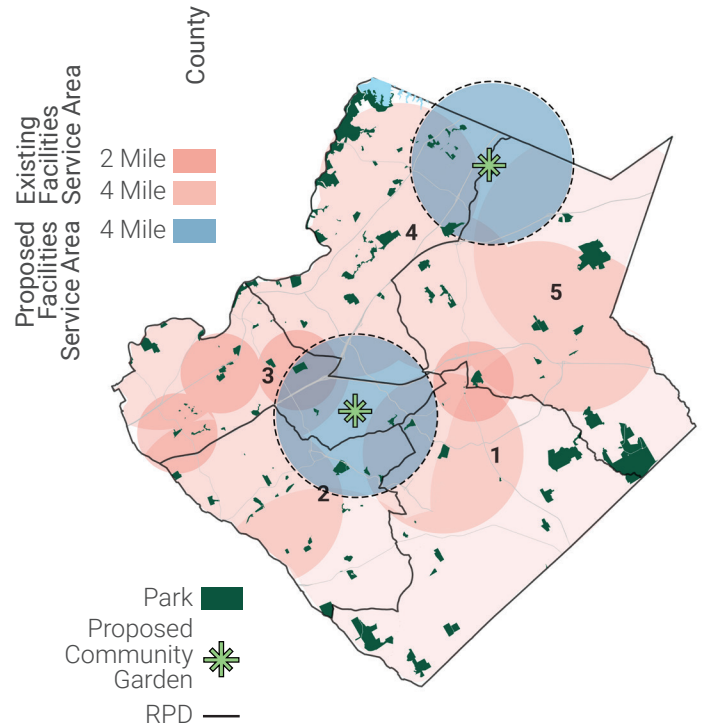


COMMUNITY GARDENS



Are provided using an Equitable Model with varying Service Areas based on context.

Additional Community Gardens are proposed in RPDs 3 and 4/5.

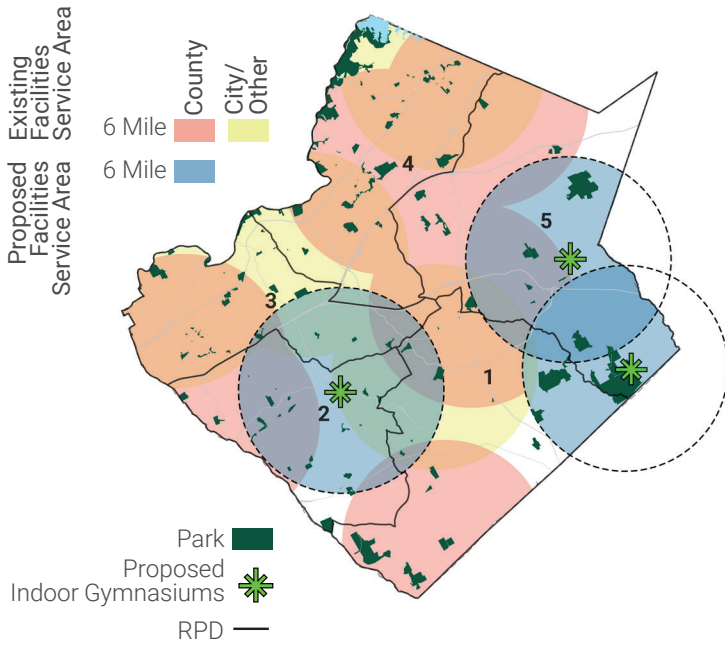


INDOOR GYMNASIUMS



Are provided using an Equitable Model and Facilities Service Area of 6 miles.

Additional Indoor Gymnasiums are proposed in RPDs 2 and 5.

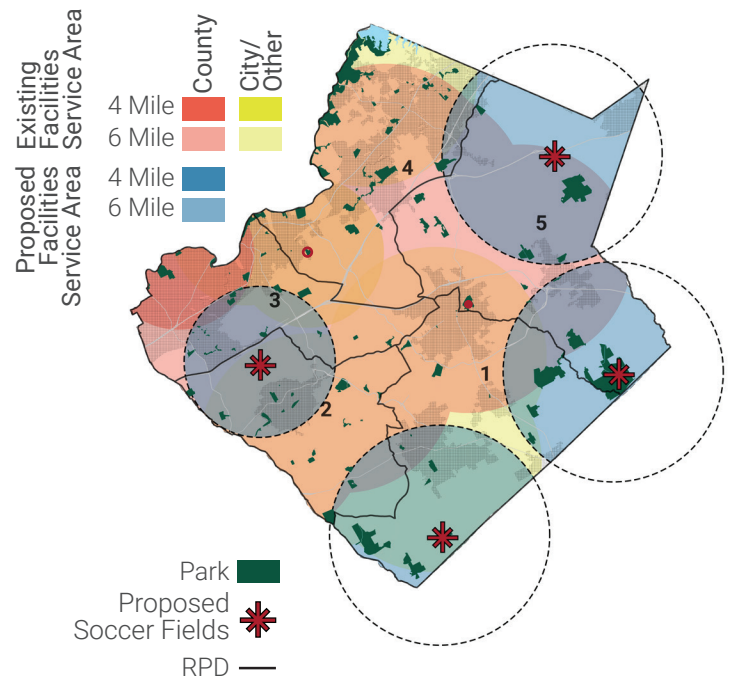


SOCCER FIELDS



Are provided using a Hub and Spoke Model with varying Service Areas based on facility types. Hubs are lighted fields. Spoke facilities are unlighted fields.

Additional Hub and Spoke fields are proposed in RPDs 1, 2, and 5.

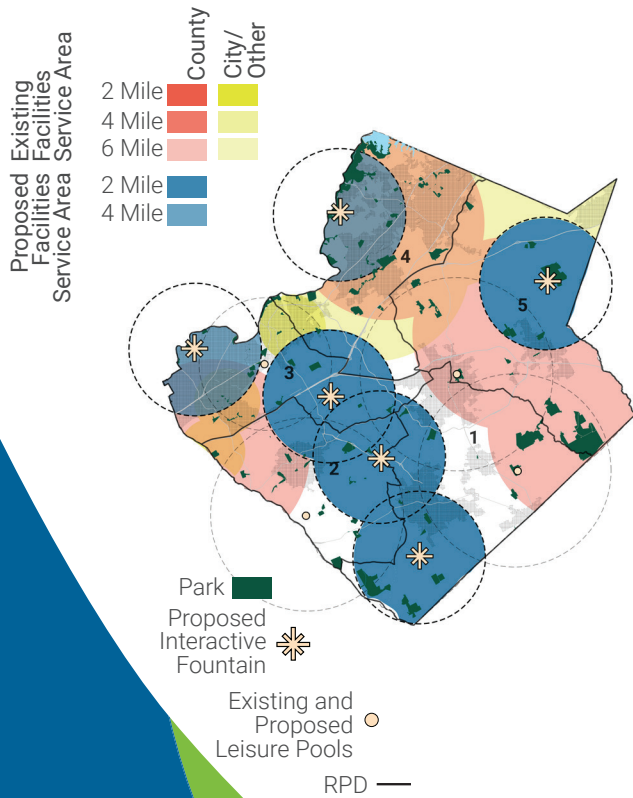


INTERACTIVE WATER FEATURES



Are provided using a Hub and Spoke Model with varying Service Areas based on facility type and context. Hubs are Indoor and Outdoor Leisure Pools. Spokes are Interactive Water Features and depending on their location, would be implemented in collaboration with cities.

Additional Hub and Spoke Interactive Water Features are proposed in all five RPDs.

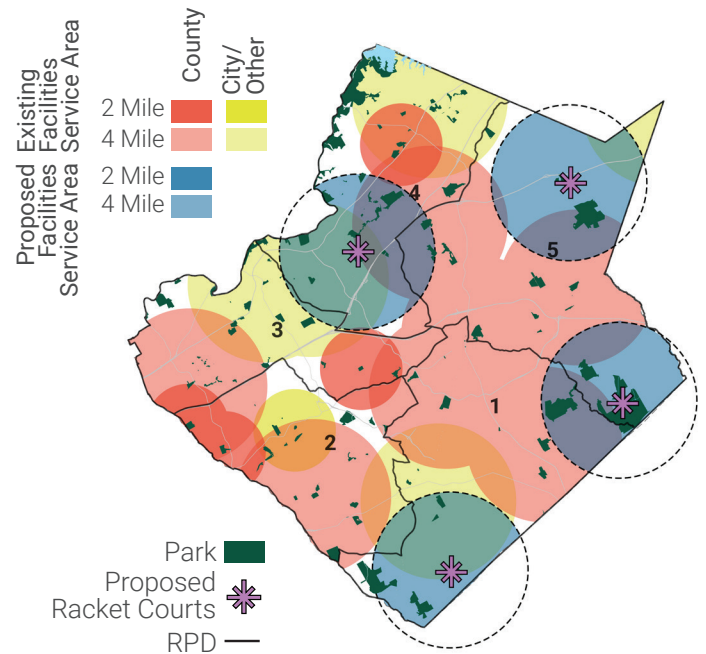


RACKET COURTS



Are provided using a Hub and Spoke Model with varying Service Areas based on facility types. Hubs are outdoor courts with lighting and Spokes are outdoor courts without lighting.

Additional Hub Racket Courts are proposed in RPDs 1, 4, and 5. All courts should be striped to allow tennis and pickleball court play allowing multiple uses of the courts.

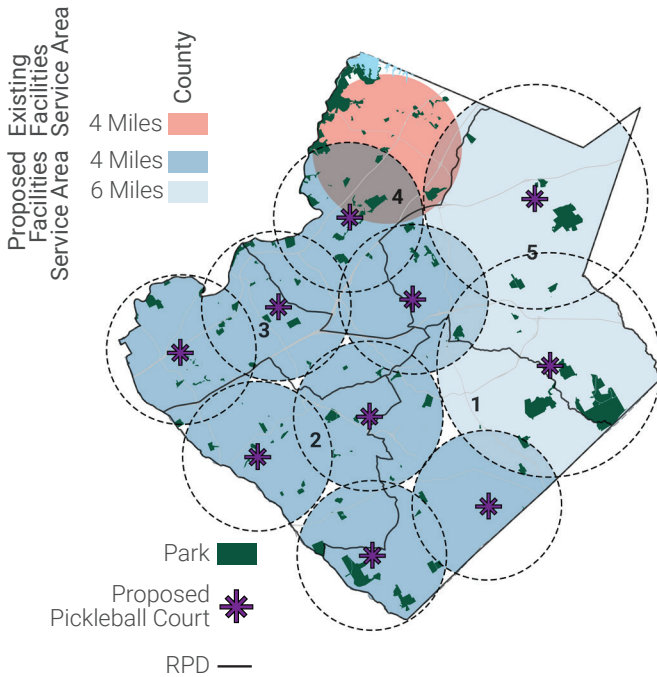


PICKLEBALL COURTS



Are provided using an Equitable Model, with a Facilities Service Area of 4 miles in Urban-High and High-Medium Density Areas and 6 miles in Medium-Low and Low Density/Estate Living Areas.

Additional Pickleball Courts are proposed in all RPDs.

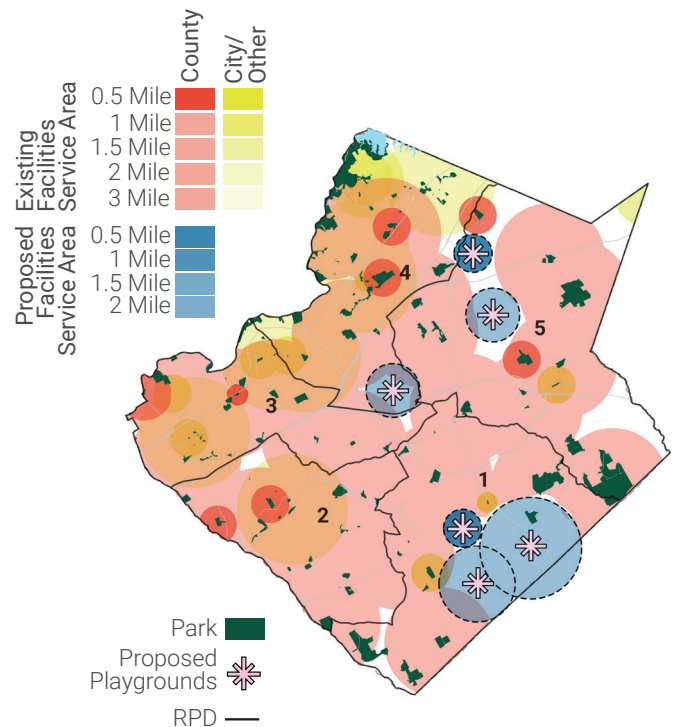


PLAYGROUNDS



Are provided using a Hub and Spoke Model with varying Service Areas based on facility type and context. Hubs are large County facilities while Spokes are smaller facilities.

Additional Spoke Playgrounds are proposed in RPDs 1,4, and 5 and may vary in amenities based on residents' desired experiences.



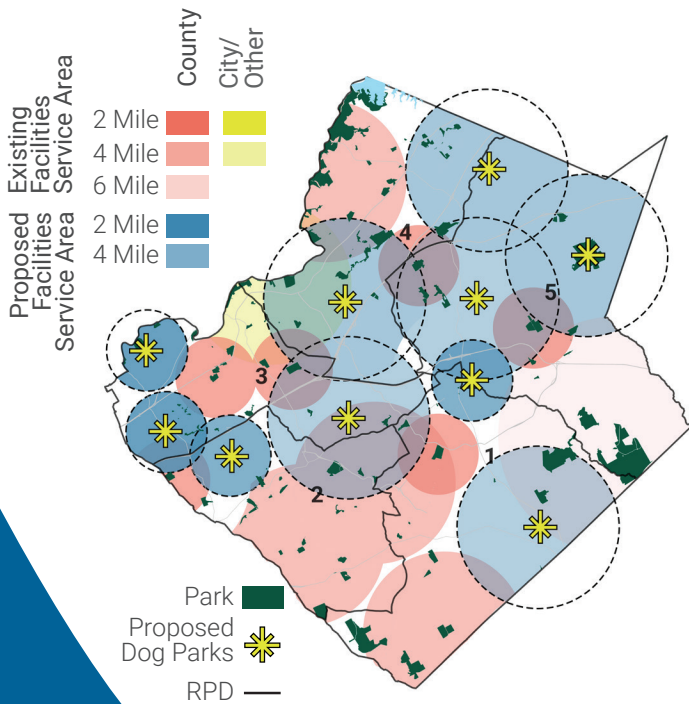
DOG PARKS



Are provided using a Hub and Spoke Model with varying Service Areas based on facility type and context.

Hubs are large facilities similar to those provided by the County, while Spokes are smaller facilities that would be located in more dense areas, along trails and greenways, and depending on their location, in collaboration with cities.

Additional Hub and Spoke Dog Parks are proposed in all five RPDs.

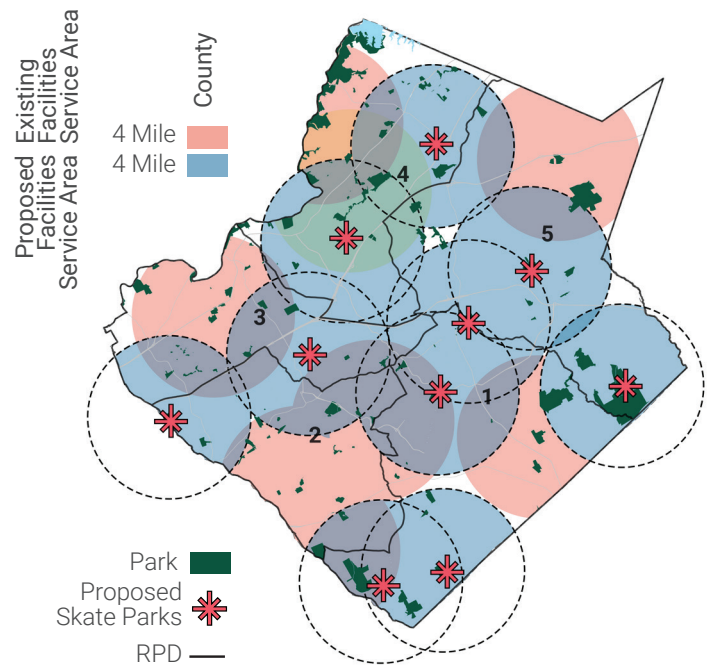


SKATE PARKS



Are provided using an Equitable Model and Facilities Service Area of 4 miles.

Additional Skate Parks are proposed in all the RPDs.

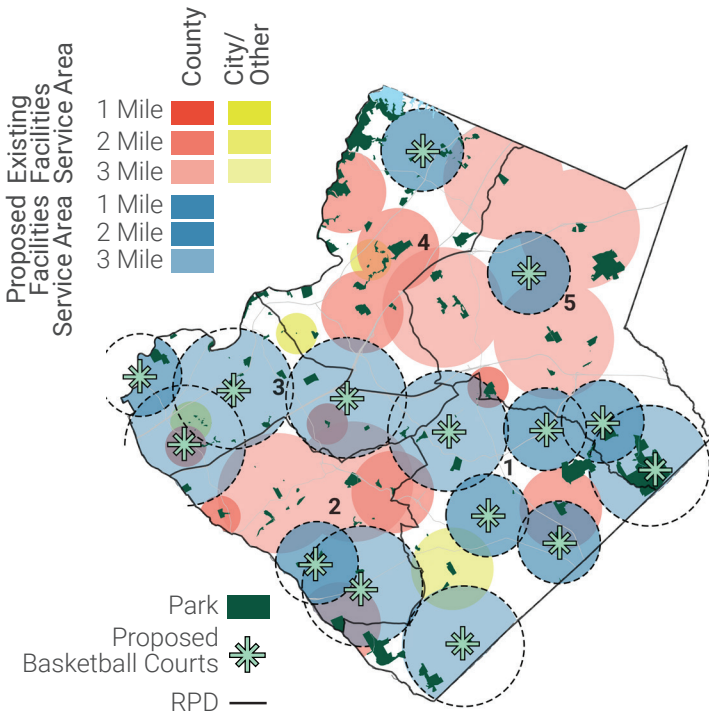


BASKETBALL COURTS – OUTDOORS



Are provided using a Hub and Spoke Model with varying Service Areas based on facility types and context. Hubs are outdoor basketball courts with lighting and Spokes are outdoor basketball courts without lighting.

Additional Hub and Spoke Basketball Courts are proposed in all five RPDs.

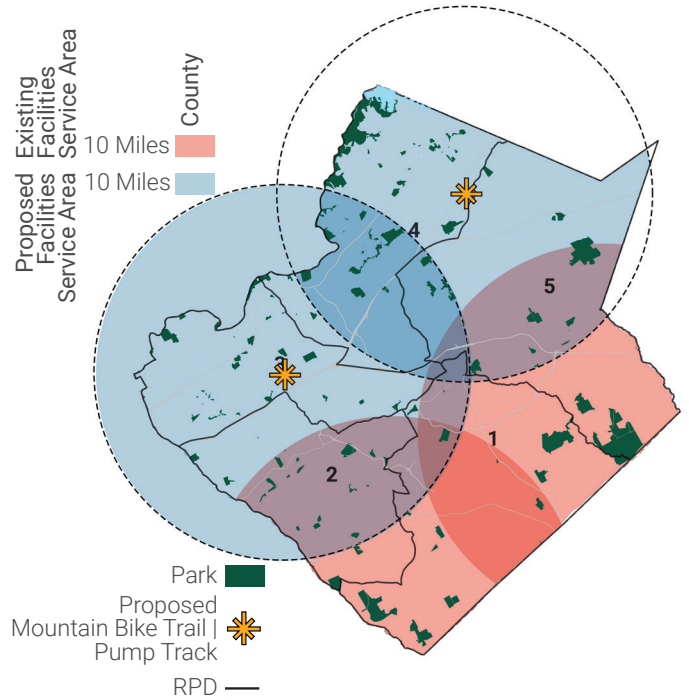


MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAILS | PUMP TRACKS



Are provided using an Equitable Model and Facilities Service Area of 10 miles.

Additional Mountain Bike Trails or Pump Tracks are proposed in RPD 3 and 4.

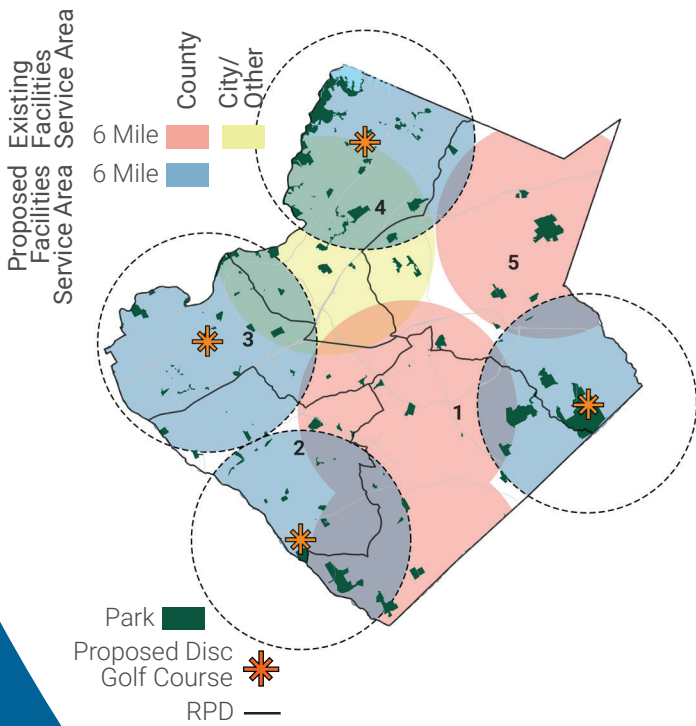


DISC GOLF COURSES



Are provided using an Equitable Model and Facilities Service Area of 6 miles.

Additional Disc Golf Courses are proposed in RPDs 2,3,4, and 5.

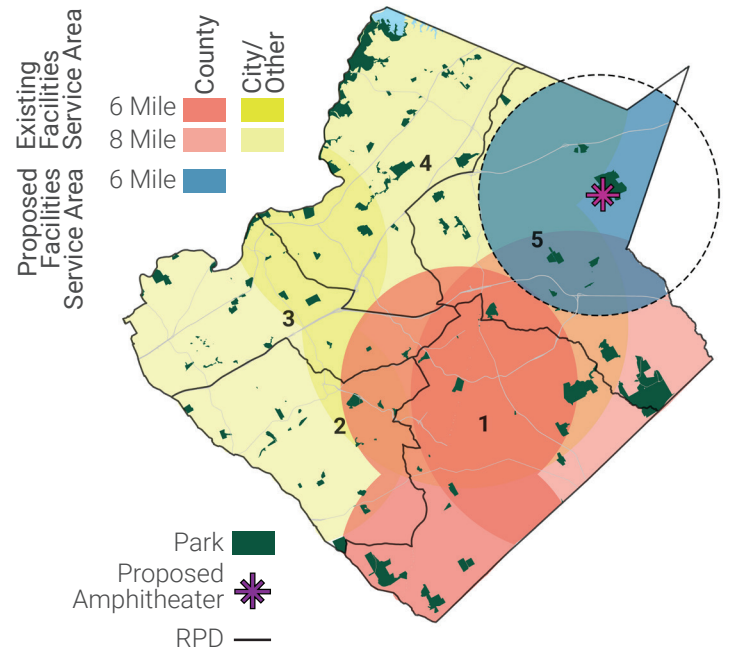


AMPHITHEATERS



Are provided using a Hub and Spoke Model with varying Service Areas based on facility type and context. Hubs are larger, dedicated amphitheaters while Spokes are smaller event spaces that rely on mobile stages and support facilities.

An additional amphitheater similar to the facility located in Alexander Park is proposed on the eastern portion of the County within RPD 5.





3 | IMPLEMENTING THE VISION

This section provides a summary of recommendations for implementing the proposed Gwinnett County Long-Range Parks and Recreation System Vision.

Prioritization Workshops were completed with the Project Steering Committee, the Recreation Authority Board (RAB), and departmental staff to organize the Parks and Recreation System Long-Range Vision into prioritized project categories and expenditures.

Additionally, goals and actions were established to facilitate the implementation of these and many other improvements identified in the needs assessment process. These recommendations are organized into the following categories:

- Parks, Recreation Amenities, Trails, and Resource Project Type and Expenditure Prioritization
- Finance Recommendations
- Asset Management
- Program and Services Recommendations
- Resource Area Recommendations
- Marketing Recommendations

PROJECT TYPE AND EXPENDITURE PRIORITIZATION

The Project Steering Committee and Division staff engaged in workshops to review the Long-Range Parks and Recreation System Vision and prioritize project categories. The Team also determined budget allocation percentages based on the needs and priorities identified in the Needs Assessment Process.

These prioritizations were then reviewed with the Recreation Authority Board for comment and approval. Following are the recommendations from these meetings:

- Continued development of trails through Gwinnett Trails Master Plan and where possible, integrate park experiences
- Seckinger School Cluster park experience
- Indoor Aquatics Facility
- Recreation Center with space for senior activities
- Community Gardens (nine completed through C.A.R.E.S Funding)
- Gymnasiums
- Soccer Fields
- Interactive Water Features
- Outdoor Leisure Pools
- Racquet Courts/
Pickleball Courts
- Playgrounds
- Dog Parks
- Skate Parks
- Basketball Courts
- Disc Golf
- Amphitheater

POTENTIAL SPLOST AMOUNTS

Funding Category	Proposed Budget Allocation Percentages	\$50 M	\$125 M	\$175 M
Renovations/Asset Management	-	\$30 M	\$30 M	\$30M
Remaining SPLOST		\$20 M	\$95 M	\$145M
Trail Implementation	37%		\$35.15 M	\$53.65 M
Park Expansion/New Park Construction	25%	2017 CIP Bridge Projects	\$23.75 M	\$36.25 M
Land Acquisition	22%		\$20.9 M	\$31.9 M
Resource Area Protection	16%		\$15.2 M	\$23.2 M
Total	100%	\$50 M	\$125 M	\$175 M

The implementation of the prioritized project types are estimated to cost over \$300 million. Of these \$300

million, Renovations/Asset Management costs for the next 6 years are projected to be \$30 million. Given these needed investments to ensure that parks and recreation facilities continue to reflect the "Gwinnett Standard" of quality, the chart above demonstrates how remaining SPLOST dollars would be allocated to proposed project types based on proposed budget allocation percentages and three potential SPLOST amounts.

Should the Gwinnett Board of Commissioners decides to call for a SPLOST, a prioritization and budgeting process specific to capital projects would be completed, informed by the findings and recommendations of this plan. This process would be focused on collaboratively working with the public and stakeholders on developing a SPLOST specific project list with refined capital costs and operations and maintenance implications, based on the final amount of the SPLOST that would be dedicated for Parks and Greenspaces.

FINANCE RECOMMENDATIONS

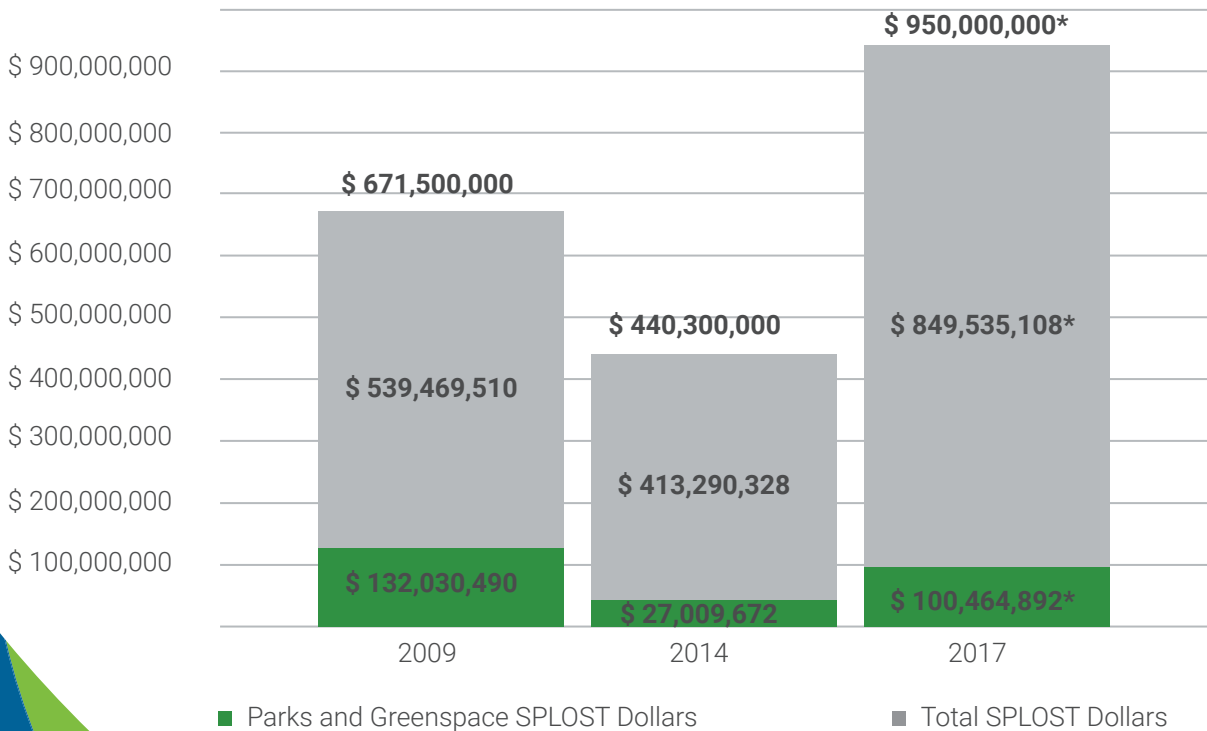
The following finance recommendations are intended to enhance the Parks and Recreation Division's financial sustainability.

Gwinnett's award-winning parks system has been implemented, managed, and maintained using a variety of funding sources. Operations, management, and programming of the system have been primarily funded through a Recreation Tax while capital projects have primarily been funded through Special Purpose Local Options Sales Taxes (SPLOST) and grant dollars.

In 1986, voters approved a recreation tax known as the Recreation Fund to help cover the operations, management, and programming of the parks and recreation system. Voters chose to allow the Board of Commissioners (BOC) to allocate up to one mill from property tax revenues to provide county-wide parks and recreation services. Historically, Commissioners had established the funding level at 0.95 of the one mill and increased it to the full one mill during the Fiscal Year 2020. In 2020, this fund generated \$38.7 million and is typically supplemented by additional funds collected from earned income, grants, and other contributions. Approximately 10 percent of the funds generated through the Recreation Fund are also used for capital projects.

Capital projects have primarily been funded through SPLOST, the Recreation Fund, and grant dollars. Since the completion of the last Comprehensive Parks Master Plan in 2004, the County is expected to collect approximately \$259.5 million from SPLOST campaigns in 2009, 2014, and 2017. This equates to approximately 12.5 percent of total SPLOST funds collected during these campaigns. The chart below illustrates the overall total and total parks and greenspace SPLOST revenues collected or expected for the last three SPLOST campaigns. Furthermore, these SPLOST dollars have been used to leverage additional dollars from grants and other contributions.

2009-2017 Total, Other, and Parks and Greenspace SPLOST Campaign Revenues



*Note: Expected revenue

Moving forward, it is envisioned that these funding sources will continue to serve as the primary funding sources for many of the elements proposed in 2020 P&R Plan Vision. However, consistent with parks and recreation industry trends and best practices, implementing the 2020 P&R Vision will necessitate that these funding sources be leveraged to facilitate the implementation, operations, management, and programming of the County's future parks and recreation system.

CAPITAL FUNDING

Capital funding for projects such as trails, parks, park renovations, and park improvements would be funded through future SPLOST, grant dollars, and partnerships. This may include increasing the percentage of total SPLOST dollars that go towards parks and greenspace projects. To the greatest degree possible, these dollars should be leveraged with investments from additional funding sources, partner agencies, organizations, philanthropies, grants, and even through public-private partnerships (P3).

For example, Gwinnett has previously utilized Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) to fund parks and recreation centers. Trail dollars could be leveraged through a variety of grants including Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) and Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) funds or through joint projects with Gwinnett Department of Transportation (DOT) as well as Gwinnett Department of Water Resources (DWR).

Partnerships will continue to be a driving force in support for the capital, as well as operations, management, and programming of Gwinnett's parks system. The success of initiatives like Live Healthy Gwinnett and Harvest Gwinnett have shown the imaginative ways that Gwinnett Parks and Recreation can use to engage with its diverse community to address their needs. By further strengthening existing partnerships and building upon those success, Gwinnett Parks and Recreation should look towards similar methods to invigorate growth in both its program and amenity needs.



Community-based groups such as Park Conservancies and non-profit agencies and organizations would also be empowered and in certain instances, partnerships re-imagined to collaborate on the implementation of the Vision through capital campaigns and contributions. For example, in the future, Gwinnett could benefit from the strengthening its Parks Foundation with the intent of increasing collaboration with partners to leverage public dollars collected by Gwinnett.

One opportunity that the Division could consider for leveraging capital funds is the process of creating and updating Park Site Master Plans. Some of the master plans developed for Gwinnett's parks were completed many years ago. Considering the changing demographics and needs of the county, it may be appropriate to update some of these plans. However, it will be important to begin this process once public funds have been allocated for implementation. This will allow Gwinnett to seize the momentum created by the park site master planning process to leverage public dollars with private or non-profit funding from partner organizations.

Additionally, Gwinnett could explore re-imagining its relationship with the School Districts to maximize use of publicly funded existing and future School District parks and recreation facilities. This is consistent with strategies park agencies across the country are using to enhance park access. The Trust for Public Land (TPL), a national non-profit organization that works with communities to create parks and protect land for people, completed an analysis in 2019 showing that only 10 percent of the approximately 100,000 public schools in the United States provide the general public with formal access to schoolyard sites. The study also suggests that America's public-school grounds have the potential to solve the problem of park access for at least 19.6 million people, including 5.2 million children.



Source: Trust for Public Land

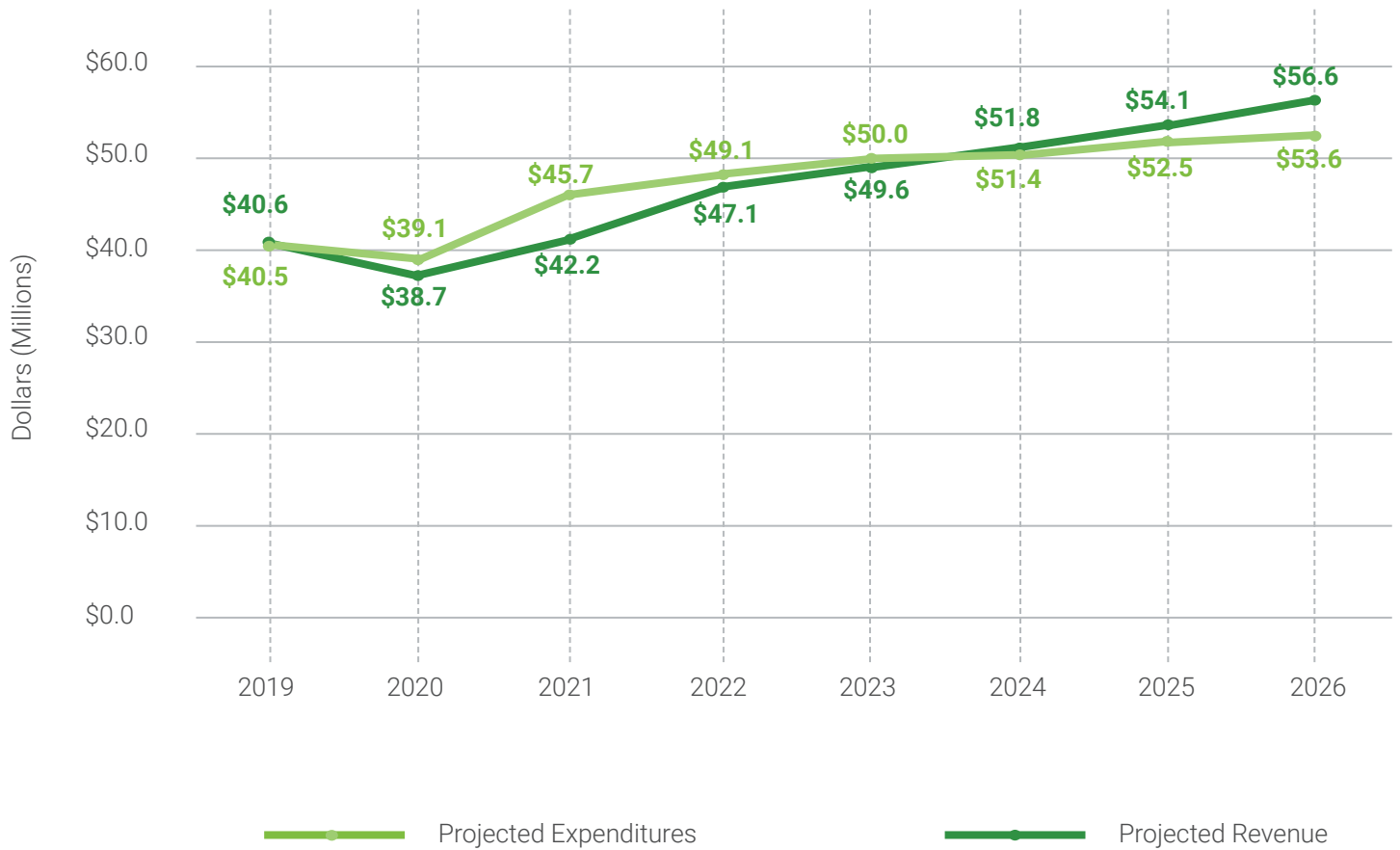
Lastly, like many municipalities in the Metro Atlanta region, Gwinnett should continue to collaborate closely with CIDs and local municipalities to co-fund, not only the development but the operations, maintenance, and management of park and trail projects. Previous successes of these projects show a willingness within the community to leverage their resources with Gwinnett to provide equitable opportunities that meet the demands of Gwinnett's diverse audiences.

OPERATIONS, MANAGEMENT, AND PROGRAMMING FUNDS

Operations, management, and programming would be funded through Recreation Fund, earned income, grants, and partnerships. As Gwinnett's population increases over the next 10-years, the amount of revenue collected through the Recreation Fund is expected to increase allowing the County to partially cover the operations, management, and programming costs of an expanded parks and recreation system.

For example, the chart below projects the Recreation Fund's revenue in relation to projected expenses. This pro-forma suggests that by the year 2024, there will be sufficient surplus in the fund to help pay for the operations, management, and programming of all facilities.

2019 - 2026 Recreation Fund Projected Revenue vs. Expenditures



However, moving forward, Gwinnett cannot continue to rely solely on the Recreation Fund to cover all the operations, management, and programming costs. New, creative, and collaborative funding and service delivery models will be required to leverage Recreation Fund dollars and ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the parks and recreation system.

New projects such as community centers, gymnasiums, and athletic facilities will require feasibility studies to identify realistic capital, operations, management, and programming dollars that could be used to leverage public dollars. This will ensure that the Division identifies ways to maximize the Return on Investment (ROI) of existing and future facilities through new and creative service delivery models.

The Division will also revise existing business plans for each of Gwinnett's community centers, aquatics facilities, and athletic fields that establish realistic and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) based earned revenue goals informed by the County study, that address unique community needs while providing for the general use of parks, programs, and services. For example, amenity rentals could be targeted towards non-traditional hours that provide great access and facility availability to community groups and organizations for special events and meetings.

Park Conservancy and community-based groups could also help leverage public operations, management, and programming dollars through the establishment of mutually beneficial agreements. For example, over the past five years, park conservancies and community-based groups in the Metro Atlanta area have raised over \$25 million through grants, private, and philanthropic organizations. Similar to Gwinnett, they have also provided millions of volunteer hours to leverage public operations, management, and programming dollars.

Collectively, these strategies have the potential to conservatively reduce the Division's yearly operations, management, maintenance, and programming expenditures by 15 - 20 percent. This reduction in costs would allow Gwinnett to address operations, maintenance, and programming of the 2020 P&R Vision.



Overall, the Division strives to operate in a financially sustainable manner where revenues and expenses are tied together. To further enhance these practices the following actions are recommended:

- The Division tracks the true cost of service for both direct and indirect costs to know what it costs to provide and maintain a mile of trail, a sports field, a pool, a park of any type, and a playground as well as what it cost to deliver programs and maintain recreation facilities. To strengthen this, the Division will:
 - Initialize a program management system as it relates to assessing direct and indirect programmatic cost of service tracking. This should account for labor/ administrative cost, facility use values and other identified peripheral cost. Potential use of leveraged tools between Lucity and Civic Rec could be identified through a mutual interface environment.
 - Cost of services currently used should be updated and tracked on a yearly basis. Adjustments are made on pricing of partnership agreements to keep partnerships and services equitable between the user and the county. Unit costs will be tracked and reported so there is focus on; cost per experience, cost per unit, cost per hour, cost per acre, cost per person or other programs / services they want to measure. The same would apply to, revenue per hour, revenue per square foot, revenue per person, and revenue per user.
 - Lifecycle maintenance and replacement should continue to be made a priority for existing facilities and parks to keep these assets in the best possible condition for years to come. A case study for assets such as playgrounds, aquatic centers and equipment should be initialized to understand the ROI of said investments and the opportunities available to improve upon the existing methods used and the desired outcomes.
- The Division has formal and effective service guidelines that are tied to direct and indirect costs and to a cost recovery goal for each program and service provided. Guidelines are based on a classification of service approach to what is a defined public good and what is a private good within a service, as well as when and how to seek earned income dollars to support their operational budgets at an agreeable level. To further customize the guidelines to Gwinnett's growing population, the Division will:
 - Review current practices and establish service and cost recovery that better aligns to individual Recreation Planning Districts based upon an equity model driven through periodic updates developed through future Comp Plans.
 - Continue to review the establishment of alternative instructor service delivery models, additional partnerships, and grants to leverage programs, and the increase of community events that align with inclusive experiences in the parks.
 - Staff will need to be trained on the cost-of-service process and how to properly classify services, so they are appropriately pricing services that are provided. All facilities and programs should be tied to measurable outcomes that track, cost per experience, cost per hour, cost per square foot, cost per mile, cost per acre, and cost per game as examples.
 - Staff should eliminate programs that are no longer cost effective to provide and are past their useful life or utilize contract providers to deliver the services in a more cost-effective manner. The Division does a good job of contracting instructors to offset full-time programmers' costs in the Division today and this should continue where applicable.
 - Continue to evaluate Partnerships to show they are realized to be fair and equitable. The Division should not enable a partner by subsidizing them more than what is required by agreement. As costs go up, the partners' contribution follows the County's commitment to support the service or facility.

- The Division tracks staffing costs to include full-time, part-time, and seasonal staff including benefit costs to keep staffing costs below 60 percent of their total operational budget.
 - As Gwinnett strives to develop top-tier talent it will increase staff training to facilitate a comprehensive succession plan guided by the County's plan. Utilizing in-house training and coupled with external opportunities with training that extends beyond parks and recreation management to innovation in programming strategies and technology. Business training would be useful for these areas: cost-of-service establishment, pricing, and classifying services based on the level of benefit received, partnership development and management, earned income development, and unit costing. Marketing and development of services will continue to be made a priority.
 - The Division will establish business plans for each section that address current staffing capabilities with goals toward meeting demands and facilitates a vision towards meeting the future demands of the park system.
 - The Division will continue to strive to maintain staffing and benefit costs below 60 percent of the operational budget to keep the level of operational dollars in place. This provides the best possible experience for users of all programs, facilities, and park operations.
- Parks and recreation agencies typically have business plans in place to manage golf course operations, aquatic facilities, community centers, and revenue producing facilities to meet the cost recovery goals originally established for those facilities when they were built. Earned income options are built into the budget to help offset operational costs from; rentals, permits, user fees, sponsorships, grants, partnerships, and other revenue sources. Gwinnett strategically incorporates these when needed.
 - The Division will consider additional methods to provide more financial options for the staff who manage these facilities and programs for the Division. The use of alternative service delivery models could be utilized along with equity-based fee models to provide for sustainable programming options that avail accessibility to a wider audience.
 - A review of fees tied to in-direct cost associated with the Recreation Fund should be compiled to ascertain areas where reductions in cost could be realized. This would include a further ROI review of energy saving equipment and designs in future site improvements or additions.

Additional overarching recommendations that the Division will consider include:

- The staff will strive to present key performance metrics that demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness to move from an effort-based culture to an outcome-based culture in all areas of the system.
- All facilities will track their level of use and make changes to the programs or services if usage levels fall below 60 of the targeted level.
- Feasibility studies will continue to be developed for new parks and recreation facilities before they are built to ensure the county has the revenue to support these opportunities and the Division does not get overextended. Prior to the facility's operational availability, the Division will develop business plans to support their approach to operations and long term asset needs and leverage additional resources, which is consistent with Gwinnett Board of Commissioner's Sustainability & Financial Support priority.

ASSET MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Asset management recommendations will help ensure that Gwinnett Parks and Recreation Division continues to provide the same quality facilities that residents desire.

- Continue to update the Asset Management Plan to accurately estimate costing for park maintenance, capital replacement of facility and amenity upgrade needs or replace major assets that complement the work that has already been completed.
- Update the Maintenance Management Plan and apply to each park based on the level of use it receives. Identify core KPI's for each park site and migrate the inclusion of resource management goals into these sites.
- Remodel and update aquatic centers and community centers with some level of redesign to support multifunctional use to maximize its program value to the community.
- Continue to establish the true cost of service that includes direct and indirect costs for maintenance costs.
- Continue to balance all areas of maintenance and operations through the use of internal staff and available contracted resources.
- Incorporate updated design standards that allow for parks to create operational revenue where appropriate in the system.
- Continue to make technology improvements in park maintenance to save operational dollars through efficiencies learned.
- Enhance existing partnership agreements to maximize cost sharing.
- Explore new partnerships that include partnerships with the development of edible landscapes adjacent to office parks as connectors to a county wide trail system.
- Continue to update Key Performance Indicators (KPI) to demonstrate efficiency practices and effectiveness of the work completed by the park maintenance staff.
- Develop a strong work culture to promote positivity, personal growth, training, constructive criticism.
- Increase innovative automated systems to include ordering of supplies, lighting, irrigation, emergency shut-offs, utilization of tablets for parks inspections and preventative maintenance procedures.

PROGRAM AND SERVICES RECOMMENDATIONS

Program and service summary recommendations are organized around six categories intended to supplement the great work that Gwinnett is already doing with Programming and Services. These categories are Core Programs, Community Dialogue, Service Delivery Models, Human Capital Investment, Business Development Concentration and Technology.

These categories are underpinned by the idea that Gwinnett will continue to be socially responsible, responsive, and receptive in delivering programs and services. Additionally, amenities, facilities, and experiences will continue to drive programming and should align to one of the three pillars of the National Recreation and Park Association. These are as follows: Conservation, Health and Wellness, and Equity.

CORE PROGRAM AREA PLANNING

- Review cost-ratio with regards to demographics and location. Identify core programming versus specialized programming that facilitates greater usage of each site's available resources.
- Consider expanding Gwinnett's nature and outdoor recreation as a core program area.
- Create more self-directed nature experiences that will in turn lead to leader-directed participation.
- Establish Playground Play Programs that facilitate age specific learning objectives.
- Identify non-traditional methods of programming i.e. virtual driven classes, on-demand learning capabilities, and self-directed learning experiences.
- Develop an Outdoor Recreation Plan that supports outdoor adventure program trends and addresses outdoor adventure users' needs.
- Identify what the "true subsidy" is in delivering programs and services by determining the core services and what finances are associated with them.
- Update the pricing structure to identify true cost of services and what classification the service provided falls into as it applies to core, essential, important, and value added based on the public and private good of the service.
- Expand partnerships within local community to assist in driving greater programming variability.
- Develop detailed business plans by core program that include key performance indicators (KPIs), marketing methods, pricing tactics, classifications of programs and services, evaluation metrics, and annual work plan goals and objectives.

COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

Create a continuous and intentional community dialogue that understands its goals and considers the following as mechanisms for success.

- Available feedback opportunities available 24/7 on the division's digital presence through "question of the week" or monthly surveys.
- Utilization of feedback from open house showcase events.
 - Statistically valid community survey implementation every 3 – 5 years to keep abreast of recreation interests and changes.
 - Quarterly virtual public meetings to allow an open format for residents and users to provide general input and feedback.
 - Utilization of marketing reports from social media impacts and values on ROI for such usage.

- Regularly scheduled internal audits of programs and surveys with partners.
- Utilize Trusted intermediary engagement – partner with other people and organizations to enable the division staff to reach out to assist in continuous dialogue with communities and encourage participation.
- Deploy a user experience design by adapting programs to fit community needs by making it easy for them to participate in terms of non-threatening and accessible venues, suitable times, transport options, food, and beverages.
- Develop influencer engagement models at centers where staff engage community opinion leaders to design the engagement or assist in program design, so it meets the needs of the participants.

SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS

- Foster a customer first model towards our park users and develop internal training programs that empower staff to understand and deploy such vision.
- Continue and expand upon the use of a Hybrid Partnership Service Delivery Model that includes other providers to deliver programming.
- Continue to use a Mobile Recreation Service Delivery Model and consider expanding the model to deliver virtual programming.
- Investigate maintenance needs and strategies to support assets in a growing population towards reduction in “windshield time”.
- Continue to expand digital presence as an alternative to in-person recreation.
- Expand nature and culturally based learning programs throughout park system through leveraging our specialty staff to teach programs in parks throughout the county.
- Establish playground park programs for non-traditional users such as home school groups, pre-schools, and seniors.
- Establish Community based volunteer driven programs such as “Community Scientist” and “Trail Ambassadors”.
- Identify hybrid program models to be deployed in each center to include a review of ROI opportunities.
- Identify alternative opportunities for amenity use in early hours and late evening hours for those users in non-traditional work hour jobs.
- Continue to migrate marketing materials towards digital platforms to reduce paper use and reduce printing cost.
- Establish KPI’s for on-time servicing of assets and service request that validate staffing needs for budgetary needs.
- Continue to investigate “Green” measures towards reducing the carbon footprint in our parks using resource management strategies, reduction in chemical use and recycling.

HUMAN CAPITAL INVESTMENT

- Continue and support investment in staff clothing, branding, and overall community visibility to help bolster public perception.
- Continue to invest in staff through training, memberships, and conference travel to facilitate the exchange of ideas and learning.
- Continue to explore hiring beyond recreation professionals to provide a greater synergetic workforce.
- Continue to match recreation staff demographics with those of the communities served.
- Continue to establish business plans on a 3-5-year rotational basis for each section within parks and recreation to forecast needs and changes towards budgetary request.
- Consider tracking Human Capital Investment as a KPI and intentional business practice to demonstrate Gwinnett's investment in its staff.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CONCENTRATION

- Assist the Parks Foundation to develop its own strategic plan to provide goals and benchmarks to assist the Division in its programs, scholarships, and fundraising efforts.
- Continue to leverage departmental partnerships towards grant applications that facilitate meeting the needs of the Division.
- Develop a 10-year asset management budget that identifies assets to be replaced, expected cost and project ROI.

TECHNOLOGY

- Continue to support the Information Technology Department with insight into parks and recreation technology needs and future expansion.
- Continue to expand upon the use of Lucity and E-Builder systems towards project management accountability and asset management.
- Increase the use and expectation of outside consultants to utilize 3-D modeling for project plans to assist staff in recognizing issues before construction and allow for mitigation before and not after work commences.
- Ensure that meeting and/or public spaces are equipped with technological features such as audio/visual capabilities, internet connectivity, and event/program-specific technologies. These capabilities assist in driving to ensure that meeting and/or public spaces are designed to be open and versatile design concepts, and both are required for optimal program and service delivery.

RESOURCE AREA RECOMMENDATIONS

Resource areas are organized into Cultural Resource Areas and Natural Resources Areas.

NATURAL RESOURCE AREA RECOMMENDATIONS

COUNTY-WIDE SCALE:

- Increase public access to natural resource areas.
- Leverage the objectives of the Gwinnett Trails Master Plan to provide experiences in nature in representative areas across the county.
 - Identify specific locations across the county where access to natural areas can be increased on the Gwinnett Trails network, potentially with a focus on floodplains.
 - Allocate funds targeted to establish transit stops and build parking areas, trails, boardwalks, and bridges to provide access to the natural areas along the Gwinnett Trail network.
 - Install signage, including wayfinding, and interpretive graphics to educate users about the resources they are encountering.
- Assess the Comprehensive Plan to assure that existing policies and regulations are enforced to prevent incompatible land uses adjacent to Resource Areas.
- Provide opportunities for protection of natural areas adjacent to existing Resource Areas through Conservation Easements.

SITE SCALE:

- Define the Desired Future Conditions (DFC) for resource protection and outdoor recreation for natural areas in all parks.
- Determine the Indicators of Success that can be used to measure progress towards the DFC.
- Create Natural Resource Management Plans for Resource Areas, Gwinnett Trails, and natural areas managed by the County.
- Create management plans for each Resource Area that should include:
 - A current natural resource inventory
 - Soils and historical and current vegetative community mapping
 - Desired Future Conditions and their status
 - Indicators of Success
 - Management actions necessary to achieve the DFC over the short- and long-term
 - Staffing and budgeting to accomplish the DFC over the short- and long-term the identification of partners to supplement the efforts of staff
 - Monitoring to assess the effectiveness of the management
 - Implement short-term management actions that will require restoration, monitoring, and maintenance

LOCAL SCALE:

- Expand opportunities for access to existing Resource Areas.
- Identify adjacent natural areas, ecological linkages, and agricultural areas adjacent to Resource Areas.
- Assess opportunities to connect Resource Areas with the Gwinnett Trail system, adjacent parks, and areas of high ecological value.
- Use tools to ensure that these compatible uses adjacent to Resource Areas are sustained over time.
 - Conduct GIS analysis to identify opportunities to expand natural areas available for public access adjacent to existing Resource Areas.
 - Leverage partnerships within and beyond the County to acquire land for multiple benefits that can be used for resource-based recreation.

CULTURAL RESOURCE AREA RECOMMENDATIONS

- Identify cultural resource areas in the County that are significant to Gwinnett.
- Establish guiding principles for what constitutes a “significant site” for Gwinnett.
 - Coordinate with partners such as the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), United Ebony Society, and other local agencies and organizations to locate and inventory potential sites.
 - Coordinate roles and responsibilities between partner organizations related to needed research and evaluation of existing and potential new sites.
 - Determine funding and schedule needs with partner organizations to appropriately research and weigh the significance of cultural resources, their condition, their interpretive value, their research potential, the availability of data about them, and threats to them to determine their potential significance and treatment.
 - Allocate funding to complete relevant and needed research and studies that also consider public engagement.
 - Determine sites that are significant to Gwinnett.
- Integrate significant sites into park planning and management processes.
- Complete or update Cultural Resource Component of Resource Management Plans (RMP) for significant sites based on the following objectives:
 - Summarize the cultural resource values and related mission and purposes of the park.
 - Analyze the significance of resource management needs and problems and rank them in importance.
 - Propose specific actions, including funding and staffing requirements, for dealing with the most important problems.
 - Present a multi-year program to achieve measurable progress in accomplishing the proposed actions.
 - Provide an annual review and recording of accomplishments to measure the effectiveness of actions.
 - Provide a forum for an interdisciplinary approach to the park’s resource management issues.
- Manage cultural resources to ensure they are preserved and protected, receive appropriate treatments (including maintenance) to achieve a desired conditions, and are made available for public understanding and enjoyment.
 - Allocate funding and staffing to implement and monitor the RMP.
 - Coordinate with partner organizations and volunteers to assist in the implementation and management of appropriate components of the RMP.
 - Implement RMP
 - Monitor RMP and assess effectiveness of the management.


MARKETING RECOMMENDATIONS

Marketing recommendations are intended to enhance the great on-going work that the Division is currently doing to increase awareness and communications with the County's diverse residents.

- Incorporate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) strategy from County study into the existing Marketing Plan with a strategy for how to apply it to programs, parks, trails, recreation facilities and community centers.
- Continue to track public engagement of who is using parks, recreation facilities, and programs and adjust accordingly to meet DEI goals from County study.
- Focus marketing strategies on experiences and benefits of visiting Gwinnett parks.
- Incorporate a customer service App to gain feedback on customers experiences at a park, on a trail, in a program, at a event and make adjustments accordingly.
- Continue to incorporate video boards at recreation facilities to inform users of how to use the resource but also to inform users of upcoming events and news on the Division.
- Continue to interface with users through social media outlets.
- Continue building relationships with multicultural groups through special events, programs, and services where they live.
- Develop monthly program themes to program around in parks to bring new people to the system (e.g. continue to do research on the demographics of the county to provide communication strategies to encourage all residents to use parks and programs for their enjoyment).
- Continue to develop monthly human interest stories on staff, coaches, volunteers, parents, and instructors.
- Develop all engagement material in several languages to reach residents to be a part of a program, park or to take advantage of a service provided by Gwinnett.
- Continue to provide various ethnic festivals around the county to reach various residents and to educate all residents of the history and traditions of various ethnic groups as to how they like to experience recreation in their lives.



The complete 2020 Gwinnett
Comprehensive Parks and Recreation
Master Plan can be located at
GwinnettParks.com



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QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

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