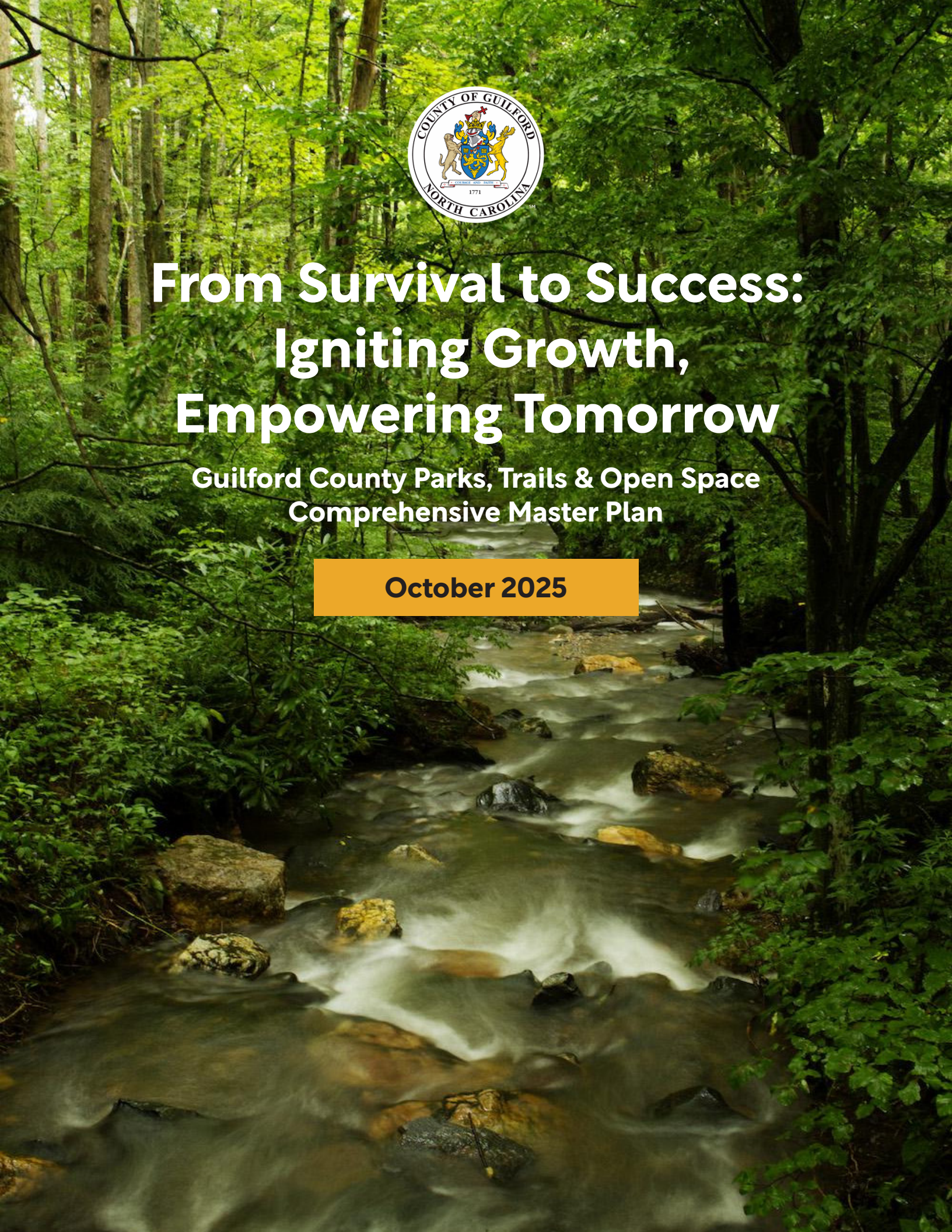


From Survival to Success: Igniting Growth, Empowering Tomorrow

Guilford County Parks, Trails & Open Space Comprehensive Master Plan

October 2025



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Approved by Board of Commissioners on October 16, 2025



Executive Summary

The 2025 Guilford County Parks, Trails, and Open Space Plan (PTOS Plan) is a visionary plan that is intended to guide the growth and operations of the Guilford County Parks Department over the next ten years.

The development of this plan is an opportunity for department staff, appointed and elected officials, and the public to work with a planning team to reflect on the County Parks system, changes happening in the County, and the future of parks in Guilford County. A comprehensive engagement effort combined with multiple technical planning assessments has resulted in a broad array of recommendations and action items for the County to focus on for the coming decade.

This Executive Summary provides a brief overview of the planning process, engagement efforts, results of the assessments conducted, and the resulting recommendations and action items.



Guilford County Farm Greenhouse

2025 Parks, Trails & Open Space Plan Themes

The process to produce this plan spanned two years, engagement with more than 1,000 county residents, and nearly a dozen technical assessments and analyses. Through this effort, the project team worked closely with Parks Department staff to identify themes for the PTOS Plan. These themes are the foundation of the plan and are distilled from all of the information and feedback gathered in the planning process.

The themes are meant to serve as guideposts for the Department as they implement the plan over the next ten years. When new opportunities arise, the department can evaluate those opportunities and their alignment with this plan using the plan's themes. All recommendations and action items in this plan are tied to one or more themes. The themes are ultimately values statements that speak to how the Department will interact internally, across the larger Guilford County organization and with the municipalities located in Guilford County, and with the community. The themes for the Guilford County's 2025 PTOS Plan are:

Transparency & Communication

Guilford County Parks prioritizes clear and open communication with the public, ensuring that park initiatives, developments, and decisions are transparent and accessible. By keeping residents informed about upcoming projects, trail expansions, and park improvements, the department builds trust and fosters community engagement. Transparent communication encourages residents to provide input and participate in the planning and stewardship of the county's parks and open spaces.

Accessibility

The Department is dedicated to creating parks, trails, and open spaces that are welcoming and accessible to all residents. Service delivery ensures that recreational opportunities and green spaces are distributed fairly across the county. Stakeholder inclusion ensures a broad spectrum of voices is reflected in park programming, design, and decision-making.

Accountability

The Department manages public resources responsibly, ensuring that parks, trails, and open spaces are maintained and developed sustainably for future generations. Fiscal accountability is key, as the Department works to allocate funds efficiently while maximizing the value and impact of investments in new facilities and enhancements. Stewardship of the county's natural resources, such as open spaces and greenways, ensures that these assets contribute to the overall health and well-being of residents.

Service Outcomes Excellence

Excellence in service delivery drives the Department to offer high-quality recreational opportunities, innovative programming, and well-maintained facilities. Compassion is reflected in the Department's commitment to meeting community needs, whether through accessible parks or inclusive events. Through professional service and continuous improvement, the Department ensures that the parks and trails system evolves to serve the public effectively and efficiently.

Our People Matter

Supporting staff is essential for maintaining a vibrant and successful park system. The department fosters a positive work environment where employees have opportunities for professional growth, recognition, and work-life balance. By investing in the well-being of its workforce, the department ensures that staff are motivated, knowledgeable, and equipped to deliver exceptional service to the community.

Public Engagement

Engagement efforts for the development of the PTOS Plan can be divided into three distinct areas: community engagement, staff engagement, and engagement with elected and appointed officials.

Community engagement was conducted through multiple methods including a Scientific Survey, a public opinion survey, focus groups, and in person meetings and pop ups. Feedback from engagement efforts revealed high level of use of County Parks. The community generally seemed satisfied with the County's offerings but were unaware of many parks, especially smaller ones.

Conversations with the public revealed that the top values for the community as it relates to parks and recreation are:

- Health & Wellness
- Education & Learning
- Accessibility

The highest ranked amenity needs indicated in the Scientific Survey were Natural Trails and Greenway Trail System. This was indicated as a priority by a wide margin compared to subsequent high-ranking needs.

The largest barrier to use of County Parks indicated by residents was a lack of awareness of offerings. Awareness of parks tends to be more localized to individual residents, meaning they have high awareness of Parks that are close by but many times don't know what might be available beyond their general areas of activity.

Engagement with the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board was conducted to gain a deeper understanding of what Commissioners are hearing from the community, and their perspective of the County's Parks System. Board members praised the variety of amenities available to the community in County Parks. They also expressed concern with the lack of funding available to the Department in the form of a dedicated annual budget to parks and recreation. Currently, the Parks Department receives 2 percent of the County's annual General Fund, which has been the case for the last decade. An increase to 2.5 or 3 percent would allow the Department to improve its operations.



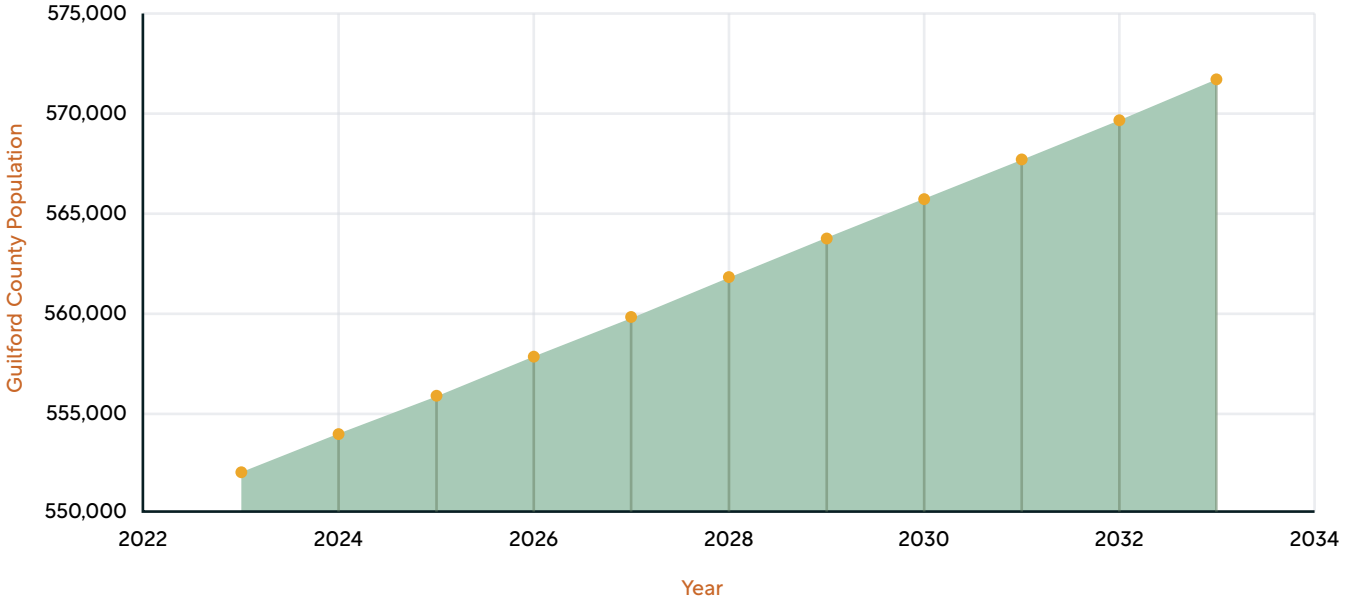
Community Assessments

A key component of the plan is the Community Analysis conducted by the project team. These more technical analyses provided the project team a better understanding of the community and the population level dynamics that the Department should be aware of. These analyses taken into context with community feedback should show what the Department needs to focus on over the course of the next several years.

To kick off the community analysis, previous plans are reviewed to understand what the priority of the County and municipalities within the County have been based on their prior planning efforts. Analysis of the previous plans revealed clear priorities that have been incorporated into this plan.

To gain a better understanding of the community, a Demographics analysis was conducted. This analysis offers an understanding of the community makeup today as well as the community makeup over the next 10 years. The analysis also gives data-centric insights into community recreation trends based on consumer behavior. The demographics analysis revealed a growing county. The analysis also showed that generally, community composition is relatively stable demographically, meaning that there aren't any large shifts in age composition or racial identity.

Population Projections 2023-2033



Park System Assessments

The project team conducted facility assessments which entailed touring County parks with staff to get a better understanding of the state of the facilities and any challenges staff have in operating them. The goal is to document consistent themes in observations that encapsulate the observations made. Themes taken away from the facility assessments include:

- All parks were generally well taken care of and in good physical condition.
- A large variety of amenities are present across the system.
- The County is generally providing relevant amenities to the community and adaptively reusing some out-of-date or unused amenities to provide relevant amenities to the community.

The Level of Service analysis establishes a quantitative understanding of the Parks system, benchmarks it against peer jurisdictions nationwide, and assesses the footprint of the current system to determine where there are gaps that the Department can fill. The Level of Service analysis revealed the following key findings:

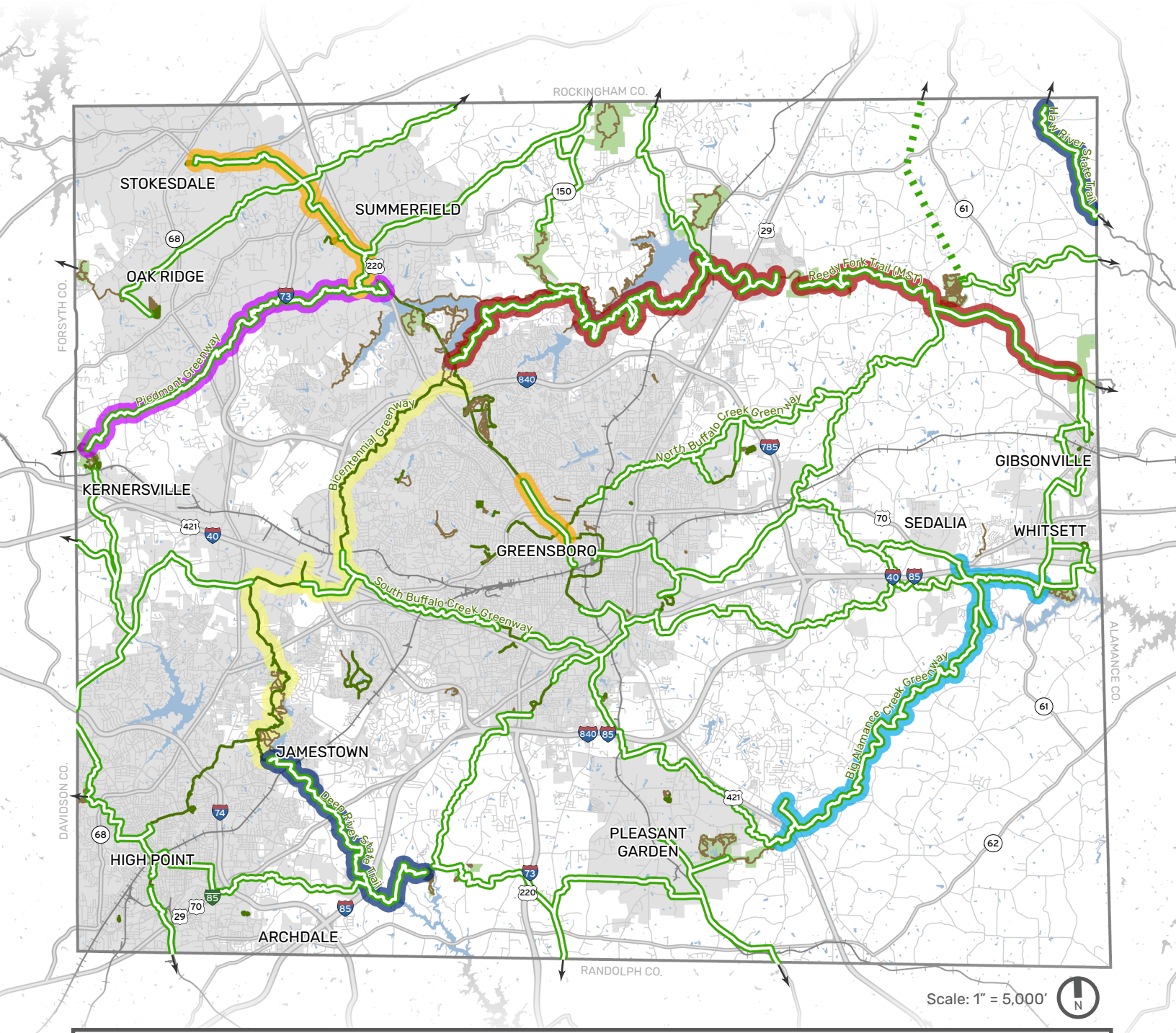
- The County exceeds a median of peers on the acreage provided compared to the population served.
- Geographic distribution analysis indicates that certain areas of the county, particularly the western and northwestern regions, exhibit gaps in service. However, these areas also benefit from proximity to parks and open spaces managed by adjacent jurisdictions, which contribute to meeting local recreational and open space needs.
- The distribution of parks does not entirely align with the areas of greatest vulnerability, highlighting opportunities to prioritize park development or enhancements in regions with higher social vulnerability.

Several staffing analyses were undertaken to get a better understanding of successes and challenges Department staff have in operating the system. The key findings of the assessment are:

- The staff demonstrates a strong commitment to community service.
- Limited funding presents ongoing challenges for infrastructure upgrades and maintenance within Guilford County's Park system.
- Guilford County Parks effectively utilizes part-time and seasonal staff during peak seasons to meet fluctuating park visitation demands.
- Upgrading maintenance equipment across regional parks is imperative to enhance operational efficiency and visitor satisfaction.

A Greenways assessment was conducted to gain a better understanding of the existing trail system withing Guilford County and where opportunities exist to expand the trail network or make critical connections between portions of the trails system. The assessment includes:

- Greenway Design Guidance,
- Greenway Prioritization Guidance, and
- Greenway Implementation Guidance



LEGEND

TRAILS

- Natural Surface
- Paved Surface
- Proposed Greenway or Trail
- Long-Term Desired Trail Connection

- A&Y Greenway
- Bicentennial Greenway
- Big Alamance Creek
- Mountains-to-Sea Trail
- Piedmont Greenway
- State Trails

- Parks
- Water
- Municipality

If you require an accommodation to access this information, please contact Guilford County Parks at 336-641-7275.

Recommendations & Action Items

At the conclusion of the assessment process and after completion of the initial engagement efforts, the project team worked with Department leadership to develop the themes for the plan highlighted at the beginning of this summary.

With those themes in mind, the project team worked to create and refine recommendations and action items for the themes. In sum this plan offers 21 high-level recommendations, and numerous action items meant to help the Department achieve the vision set forth in the themes. Each theme, principle, recommendation, and action item is intended to target potential areas for growth and improvement within the Department and within the system it maintains to continue to provide excellent service to Guilford County's residents.

Transparency & Communication

Recommendation 1: Ensure consistent, clear communication within the Guilford County Parks Department, among peer-Guilford County departments and with the public to create a shared understanding of goals and operations.

Recommendation 2: Create a distinct identity for Guilford County Parks through thoughtful placemaking strategies that enhance sense of place throughout the County.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen intergovernmental coordination to align resources, enhance communication, and support shared goals for parks and recreation across jurisdictions.

Recommendation 4: Encourage participation from all staff members in key positions to support shared ownership and accountability.

Recommendation 5: Implement high-priority projects identified in previously adopted planning documents.

Recommendation 6: Maintain openness in all processes to ensure staff, residents, and stakeholders understand how decisions are made, resources are allocated, and goals are achieved.

Accessibility

Recommendation 1: Provide access to parks, programs, and services for all Guilford County residents.

Recommendation 2: Promote programs and events that celebrate and reflect the differences of Guilford County's communities.

Accountability

Recommendation 1: Strengthen budgeting practices and explore enterprise fund models to support sustainable park system expansion and enhancement.

Recommendation 2: Develop and implement comprehensive maintenance standards and procedures.

Recommendation 3: Establish a long-term asset management plan to track infrastructure conditions, prioritize capital investments, and extend the lifespan of existing facilities.

Recommendation 4: Develop a scalable organizational structure to enhance operational capacity and deliver high-quality services that meet the evolving needs of Guilford County reside.

Service Outcomes Excellence

Recommendation 1: Continuously evolve services to meet the changing recreational needs of the community.

Recommendation 2: Leverage existing resources to expand on current recreational activities and events tailored to community interests and needs.

Recommendation 3: Expand and broaden recreation programs, activities, and events to activate Guilford county's park system and maximize park visitation.

Recommendation 4: Establish park districts based on geographic service areas, accessibility gaps, and community needs, using a phased implementation approach to enhance fair access, streamline operations, and improve resource allocation.

Recommendation 5: Provide consistently high standards of service delivery by ensuring staff are trained and equipped to meet community expectations.

Recommendation 6: Establish internal champions and implementers to lead change and innovation across the Department.

Our People Matter

Recommendation 1: Cultivate meaningful relationships between the Guilford County Parks Department and community members by creating opportunities for participation through volunteer programs, events and collaborative planning initiatives.

Recommendation 2: Promote a positive work environment by supporting staff with opportunities for professional development, leadership roles, and meaningful recognition.

Moving Forward

Guilford County's Parks, Trails, and Open Space Plan demonstrates the County's commitment to providing high-quality outdoor recreation access and establishes a strategic course of action for the next ten years to enhance the recreational experiences of both residents and visitors. Grounded in the values of Transparency and Communication, Accessibility, Accountability, Service Outcomes Excellence, and Our People Matter, the action items, once implemented, will ensure the Department's operational and fiscal success. This approach will create a positive impact and leverage the transformational power of parks to generate multi-layered benefits for the community.



Guilford County Parks and Recreation Staff with Project Team

Expenditure Summary

Over the next ten years, the County will need upwards of 10M dollars in maintenance and management of County-owned parks. This does not include the addition of new amenities, development of new site-specific master plans, or new construction. This budget shows the investment needed only to take care of what the County has and keep up with the life cycle of existing amenities without letting them fall in despair.

For the past decade, the Parks Department has received approximately 0.7% of the net county funds included in the General Fund, meaning revenues generated from property and sales taxes. From Survival to Success, Fueling Growth — With the right investment, our parks can move beyond mere survival to truly thrive, becoming vibrant, flourishing spaces that enrich and unite the entire community. To meet operational funding needs included in this plan, an increase to 1% of the General Fund budget, or an approximate $2 million increase annually, is required to sustain this growth.

Year	Bur-Mil Park	County Farm	Gibson Park	Hagen Stone Park	Northeast Park	Southwest Park	Total Cost
2025	$710,062	$82,425.00	$239,625	$621,862	$205,178	$104,500	$1,991,052
2026	$423,400	$300,000	---	$138,100	$466,500	$8,000	$1,343,500
2027	$464,140	$135,800	---	$49,920	$350,070	$35,500	$1,037,530
2028	---	$276,000	$21,670	$416,000	---	---	$713,670
2029	$342,000	$218,500	$720,950	$113,580	$136,650	$404,900	$1,936,580
2030	---	$54,300	---	$26,924	$202,030	$237,500	$520,754
2031	$54,000	---	---	$26,500	$15,000	---	$127,900
2032	$21,352	$14,000	$4,970	---	$304,085	$412,500	$759,007
2033	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
2034	$197,000	---	---	---	$40,000	$136,500	$373,500

*For expenditure details, please review the summary report provided in the Appendix.

Year	Bur-Mil Park	County Farm	Gibson Park	Hagen Stone Park	Northeast Park	Southwest Park	Total Cost
Deferred Maintenance	$512,962	$71,425.00	$214,125	$432,736	$96,878	$28,900	$1,374,426
Scheduled Maintenance	$438,602	$157,500	$132,590	$188,280	$414,310	$53,300	$1,406,282
Capital Renewal	$1,182,390	$644,600	$375,000	$688,370	$1,087,525	$1,185,800	$5,196,085
Energy & Sustainability	---	---	$240,000	---	$60,000	---	$300,000
Capital Improvement	$78,000	$207,500	$25,500	$83,500	$60,800	$71,400	$526,700
Total (Year 2025)	$2,211,954	$1,081,025	$987,215	$1,392,886	$1,719,513	$1,339,400	$8,803,493
Total (10-Year Investment)	$2,600,088	$1,256,522	$1,125,259	$1,488,594	$2,063,765	$1,625,876	$10,243,598

*For expenditure details, please review the summary report provided in the Appendix.

Name of the Facility	Opinion of Cost (2025)
10’ Paved Greenway Trails (Per Mile)	$1,563,507.75
10’ Compacted Stone Surface Trails (Per Mile)	$1,384,315.45
Trail Head	$1,191,802.50
Outdoor Amphitheater & Band Shell	$2,644,425.00
Challenge Adventure Course	$1,691,707.50
Nature-Based Play Area	$1,691,707.50
Subtotal	**$10,167,465.71**
12 Months Escalation	**$508,373.29**
Subtotal	**$10,675,838.99**
15% Cotingency	**$1,601,375.85**
Total	**$12,277,214.84**

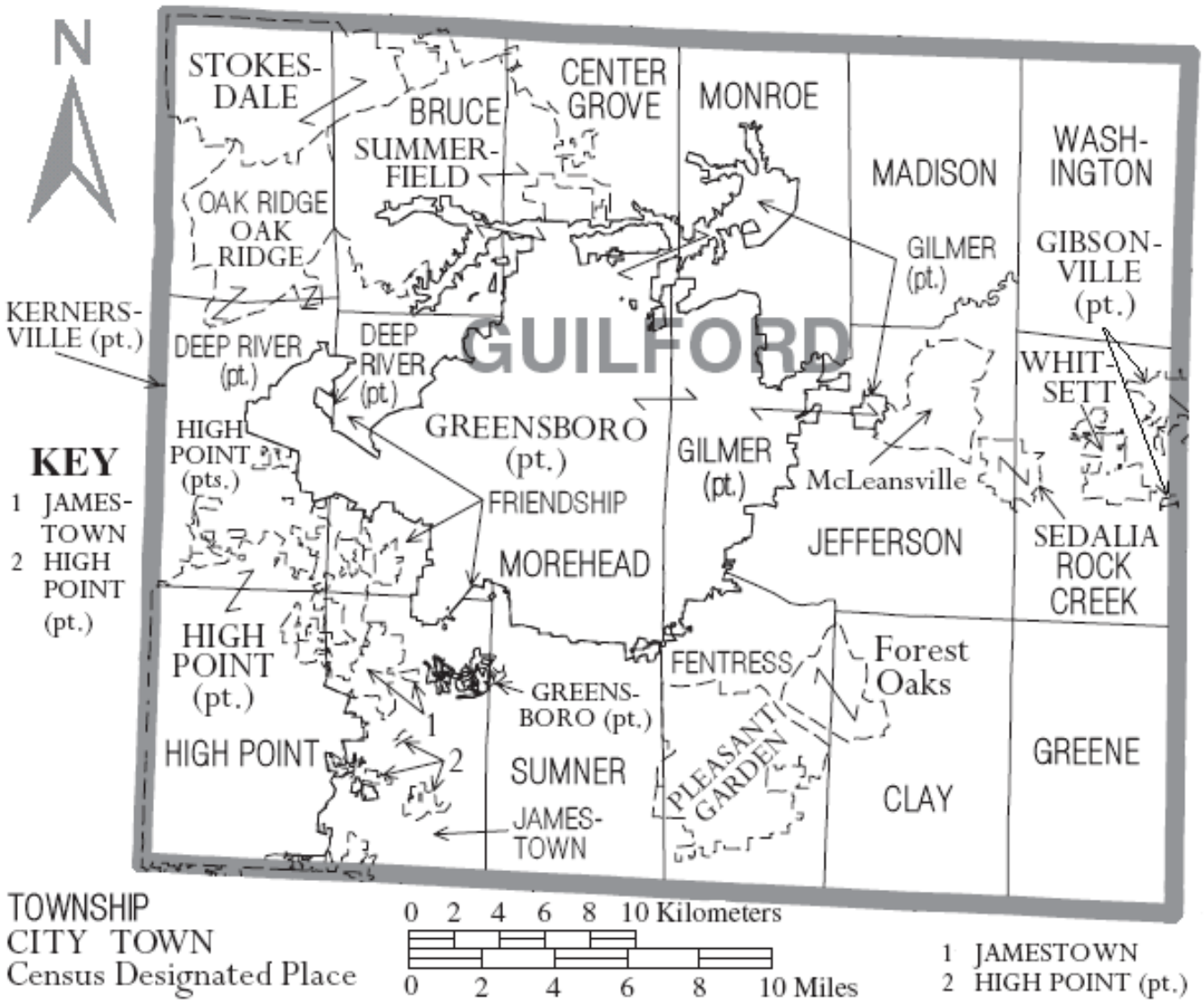


The Plan &
The County

Guilford County Context

Situated in the heart of North Carolina's Piedmont region, Guilford County is a hub of history, culture, and natural beauty. Guilford County is home to municipalities of varying sizes, including expansive cities such as Greensboro and High Point alongside small towns and unincorporated areas; all of which contribute to the County's sense of community, economic differences, heritage, and local identity. Moreover, the County's unique geography provides citizens with urban, suburban, and rural locations to live and work.

There are 12 municipalities in Guilford County, High Point and Greensboro being the two largest with a combined population of over 400,000 residents. As shown in the following table, some of the municipalities are located entirely within Guilford County, and others only partially. As of the 2020 census, there were 541,299 people residing in the County, making it the third largest in North Carolina.



U.S. Census, "Map of Guilford County, North Carolina, United States. Township and Municipal Boundaries"

Guilford County Municipalities (Entire)	Guilford County Municipalities (Partial)	Census-Designated Places & Unincorporated Communities
Jamestown	Archdale	Forest Oaks
Oak Ridge	Burlington	McLeansville
Pleasant Garden	High Point	Browns Summit
Sedalia	Gibsonville	Climax
Stokesdale	Kernersville	Colfax
Summerfield	-	Julian
Whitsett	-	Monticello

Guilford County Communities

It is important to recognize that the towns and unincorporated communities within Guilford County, such as Browns Summit and Town of Oak Ridge, are experiencing significant expansion propelled by the thriving North Carolina and regional economy. Browns Summit, while maintaining its rural charm with wooded areas and farmland, is rapidly populating due to its proximity to major urban centers like Greensboro, Burlington, and Reidsville. Factors such as the planned completion of Interstate 785, ongoing housing developments, particularly along North Carolina Highway 150, and the presence of recreational facilities are attracting residents migrating from other parts of North Carolina and neighboring states. Oak Ridge, once dominated by tobacco farms, has evolved into an active community since its incorporation in 1998. Over the past several decades farmland has been transformed into upscale housing, shopping centers, and recreational amenities along the NC 68 corridor.

Growth also brings challenges for the County to maintain and elevate the quality of life for community members, provide excellent recreational resources and opportunities, and satisfy demands for leisure activities and services. A confluence of change in Guilford County is foreseeable as its rural heritage and traditional roots converge with the realities of population growth and escalating demands for parks and recreation. This moment reflects a broader acknowledgment of the evolving landscape and the necessity to accommodate shifting demographics and preferences. Embracing this convergence signals a proactive approach toward shaping a future that remains resilient and responsive to the needs of its residents while preserving its distinctive character.

The County's recent establishment of Guilford County Parks as a stand-alone department in 2021 marks a significant milestone in its commitment to enhancing recreational opportunities. Prior to this, the management of regional parks fell under the purview of the Facilities Department, following a decision by Commissioners in 2013 to bring these parks under County management. With the Parks Department now operating as its own entity, there is a new-found focus on prioritizing parks, trails, and recreation amenities as vital components of Guilford County's

infrastructure. Investing in a comprehensive Parks, Trails, and Open Space Master Plan (PTOS Plan) is not only a strategic response to evolving needs but also an opportunity to chart a clear and cohesive vision for the future development and management of the County's recreation resources and the provision of leisure services.

This plan, spanning a ten-year horizon, will help guide the vision for a 21st-century park system and will be a resource for enhancing the County's parks, trails, and open spaces. It is also designed to be a living document the Guilford County Parks Department can use to continuously improve the way it operates. Additionally, the PTOS Plan informs the public about current offerings and future plans, as well as provides decision-makers with a framework to guide and prioritize project implementation. Developed with extensive community input, the PTOS Plan is aligned with community needs and priorities and reflects residents' values and aspirations regarding parks, recreation, and trails.

Guilford County Parks provides residents with excellent parks, recreational amenities, and an expansive trail system. Diverse amenities, recreation programming, and special events are not only popular with residents, but also encourages visitation by people living in the Triad region and beyond.

Guilford Parks Department 5-year Accomplishments

Transitioning to an Independent Department: 2021 marked a significant milestone for the Department, providing greater autonomy and resources to effectively manage and enhance the parks system. The shift to an independent department has simplified operations, introduced more targeted strategies, and improved alignment with the County's broader goals.

Professionalizing Staff: Investing in professional development for Guilford County Parks Staff has been instrumental in elevating the quality of services and operations. The provision of training and continuing education has led staff to become more adept at delivering exceptional experiences to park visitors.

Structuring the Department with Clear Roles & Defined Leadership: Establishing clear roles and leadership positions, including Parks Director and Assistant Parks Director, has enhanced accountability, communication, decision-making, and coordination efforts within the Department.

Expanding Programs & Services Across the Parks System: Over the past five years, the Department has diligently worked to broaden the scope of offerings within the parks system, catering to the diverse needs and interests of the community. Examples include introducing popular and on-trend recreational amenities like pickleball courts and dog parks, increasing access to park preserves, and expanding programs and special events.

Management of the County Farm Operations: Taking over management of the County Farm operations represented a strategic expansion of responsibilities, further diversifying the Department's portfolio of offerings and strengthening its connection to the community. This initiative has allowed the Department to explore new avenues for educational programming and community engagement within the Guilford County Parks System.

Planning Context & Process

Comprehensive parks, recreation, and trails planning provides decision-makers with essential information, enabling informed, fair, and responsible management to meet the community's recreational needs. The Guilford County PTOS Plan benefits the Department, elected officials, and the community by providing a structured approach to managing demands, setting priorities, and planning for the future.

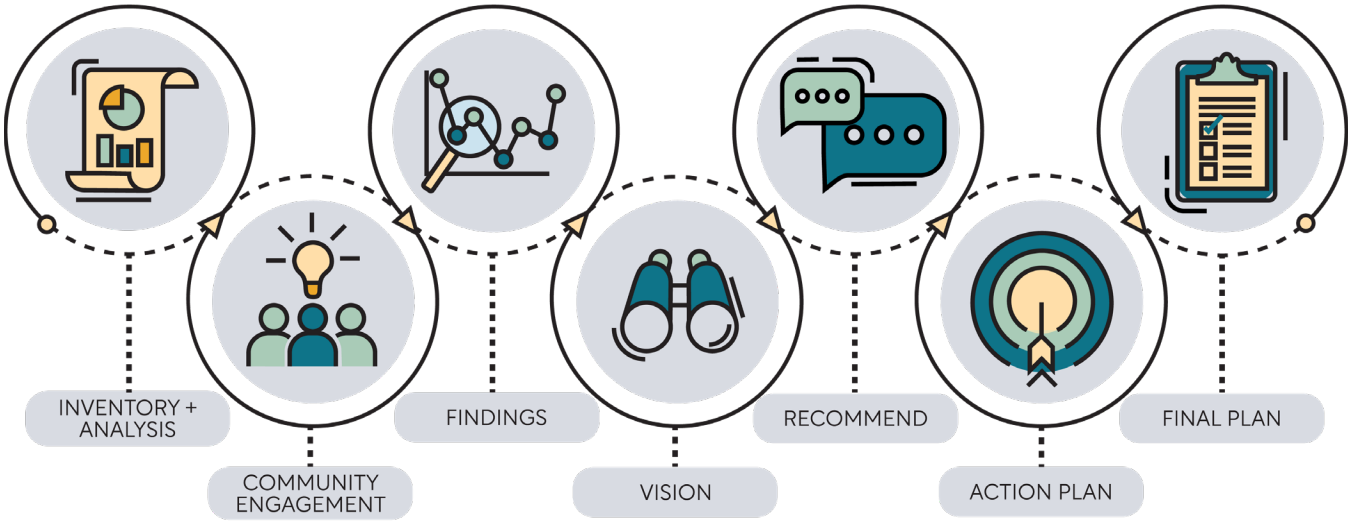
Guilford County Parks is developing a Parks, Trails, and Open Space Master Plan to:

increase awarness of, participation in + attendance at Guilford County Parks	create a work plan for department staff	diversify department leadership + staff for inclusive representation + perspectives
address aging park infrastructure to prioritize projects + allocate resources effectively	create a legacy of parks + open space that reflect the community's aspirations + values	improve visibility among the public, stakeholders + elected officials regarding the park system as a significant asset for Guilford County
establish a unified Guilford County Parks brand	inform the County's trails and greenways program, policies +network recommendations	qualify for state + federal grant funding opportunities

Planning Benefits

The comprehensive parks and recreation planning process involves assessing, analyzing, engaging, visioning, and action planning. It begins with a comprehensive evaluation of the Guilford County Parks Department's current status, consisting of an assessment of the County's existing parks, trails, recreational amenities, and activity offerings. This assessment occurs alongside outreach to the community to understand the recreational preferences of community members. Building on this foundational assessment, the planning then pivots to envisioning the future direction of the Department, considering emerging trends, evolving community expectations, and long-term goals.

Once the vision is established, practical steps and strategies are developed to achieve it, including setting actionable goals and implementation plans to address identified needs and priorities. Once the future direction is established, the planning process proceeds to delineate practical steps and strategies to realize that vision effectively. This includes developing actionable goals, objectives, and implementation strategies.



Planning Stages

Plan Contents

The Guilford County Parks, Trails and Open Space Plan is a comprehensive document designed to guide the growth and development of the Guilford County Parks Department for the next 10 years. It includes multiple components that offer a detailed look at the current state of parks, trails, and recreational services. Concluding with a set of recommendations, the plan lays out an implementation strategy prioritized to meet short-term, mid-term, and long-term needs, all grounded in community preferences and departmental goals.

The Plan & The County

Understanding Guilford County's history, geography, and culture is essential for crafting a comprehensive plan that accurately addresses current needs while anticipating future developments. Historical insights reveal how past events and patterns of development have shaped the County's landscape and community structures, including changes in land use, the evolution of communities, and shifts in recreational needs. The project team also addressed the County's geography, as it has and will influence where and how parks, trails and amenities are developed over the next 10 years. Lastly, the project team conducted a thorough review of both Guilford County's and several of its municipalities' planning documents. This was done to ensure that the current plan's recommendations and outcomes align with broader Countywide goals.

Community Engagement

The community engagement strategy for the PTOS Plan aimed to capture the public's recreational preferences and identify strengths and opportunities. Working closely with department staff, the team developed a marketing and outreach campaign to raise awareness about the project and boost public involvement. Public input meetings utilized a variety of engaging methods, such as printed materials, presentations, and creative tactics like pop-ups and festival participation. The feedback gathered through these meetings and a scientific survey was carefully analyzed to equip the Guilford County Parks staff, the Recreation Advisory Board, and the Guilford County Board of Commissioners with tools for informed decision-making that accurately reflect the community's desires.

Needs Assessment

An inventory and detailed evaluation of Guilford County's trails, greenways, parks, amenities, facilities, and programs was conducted to understand the current state of the system and pinpoint potential for enhancements and future connectivity. Each park's location was cataloged utilizing GIS mapping followed by on-site visits to observe the condition of amenities and facilities and gain insight into how the parks are currently being used. These visits were important for understanding the overall character and quality of the parks system as a foundation for recommending improvements and enhancements over the next 10 years.

The inventory and analysis also includes an operations assessment to identify areas for organizational and staffing adjustments, policy development, process enhancements, technological upgrades, and communications strategies.

Lastly, an assessment was conducted to understand Guilford County Parks' financial strategies concerning budgeting, pricing policies, user fees, existing and potential revenue streams, and grant opportunities. The goal was to enhance the Department's funding and accounting practices and discuss new ways to improve financial sustainability and increase revenue capabilities.

Level of Service & Benchmarking

Benchmarking and Level of Service (LOS) evaluate current and future needs for park acreage, trail mileage, and operational standards compared to national standards, best practices, and peer agencies. These metrics are population-based to allow the Guilford County Parks to meet future demand for parks and recreation services. The Benchmarking component of the PTOS Plan involved comparing Guilford County's park system with predetermined peer counties. Peers were selected based on several criteria including demographics, population size, geography, and other commonalities shared with Guilford County.

The LOS analysis involved placing Guilford County's park system metrics side-by-side with national baseline benchmarks provided by the National Recreation and Park Association. The national baseline LOS was compared to the County's current and projected population to quantify surplus and deficits of parkland and facilities. Both the benchmarking and LOS assessments provided a measure for understanding the existing state of the Department's amenities and informing level of service standards for the ten-year planning horizon.

Visioning & Guiding Principles

This plan presents action items rooted in community values and guiding principles as a decision-making tool for Guilford County Parks' staff, stakeholders, and elected officials. Guiding principles are developed based on community engagement and

Parks, Trails & Recreational Amenities

Parks & Amenities Assessment; Greenway Inventory, Mapping, Segment Prioritization; Infrastructure Capital; Improvements Study

Recreational Needs Assessment

Demographics; Recreation Trends, Benchmarking & Level of Service; Guilford County Parks Service Districts; Recreation Programs Assessment

Park Maintenance & Operations

SWOT Analysis, Staffing Needs; Policy Development; Process Improvements; System & Technology Advances; Marketing & Branding Opportunities

Budget Analysis & Assessment

Evaluate Expenditures; Identify Pricing Policies, Recognize Current & New Revenue Sources

information gathered through the needs assessment and systemwide park and program inventory. Incorporating guiding principles into the current plan's recommendations ensures that potential outcomes align with the community's values.

Visioning enables the Department to define a clear and strategic future direction. During the visioning sessions, the guiding principles are revisited and validated, confirming their relevance and application in the planning process. Ultimately, the recommendations and action items derived from the visioning process are designed to guide the department towards achieving its goals in alignment with community expectations.

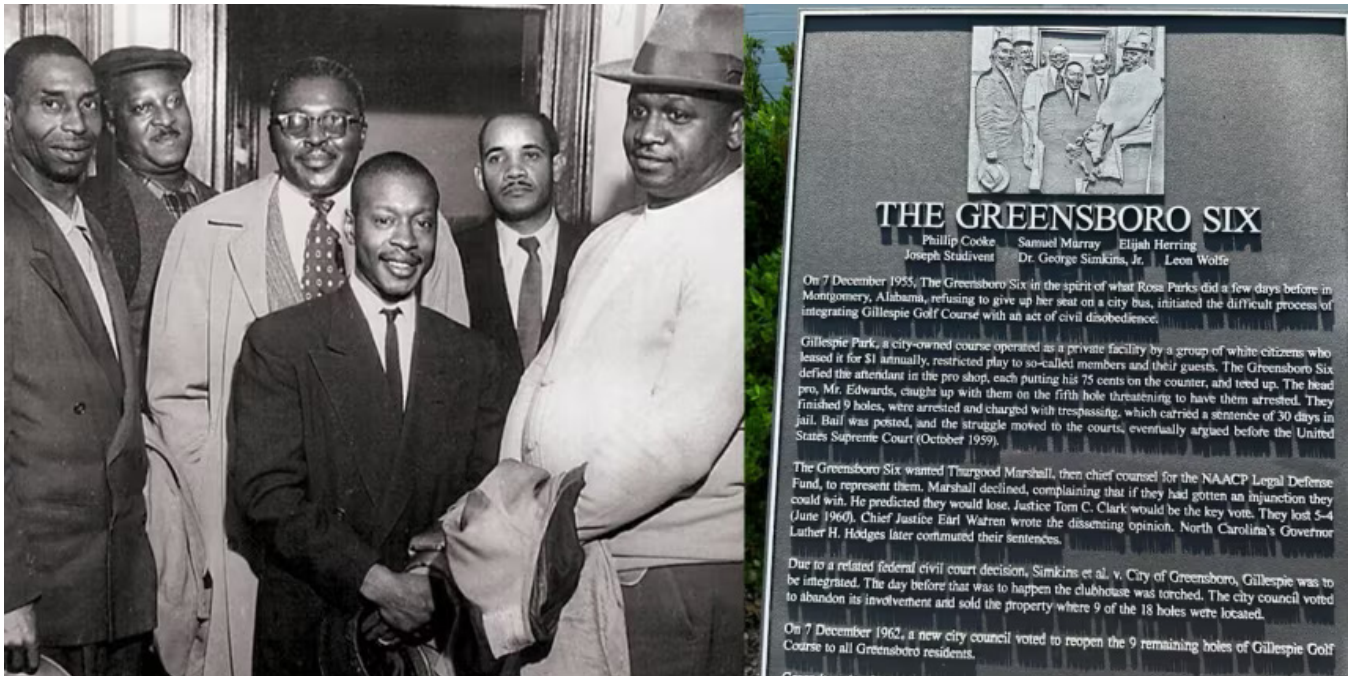
Recommendations & Action Plan

The completion of the parks and recreation master plan involves prioritizing recommendations for phased implementation. This process is collaborative, engaging various government departments and community stakeholders to ensure the plan remains adaptable to evolving needs and opportunities over the next decade. Recommendations are organized into short-term, mid-term, long-term, and ongoing actions, prioritizing those that have robust community support and are strongly aligned with the plan's guiding principles.

Guilford County Historic Context

At the time European settlers arrived in North America, the area that would become Guilford County was inhabited by the Cheraw, a Siouan-speaking people. Guilford County itself was established in 1771 when it was formed from parts of Orange and Rowan Counties. The resulting 645 square-mile County has historically been agrarian, with some of the earliest European settlers being Quakers seeking to acquire affordable land as competition for property rights began to grow in their native New England and Pennsylvania settlements.

Guilford County's narrative is marked by pivotal moments in American history. The Revolutionary War battle at Guilford Courthouse in 1781, now commemorated by a national military park, stands as a testament to the significant role the County played in the United States' founding. The transition from the Revolutionary War to the Civil War stands as a significant turning point in the nation's historical trajectory, characterized by evolving ideologies, shifting alliances, and profound social and economic changes. Amidst the chaos of the Civil War, Guilford County residents experienced profound impacts, witnessing political discord and encountering a diverse array of individuals, from abolitionists to secessionists and



The Greensboro Six (Photographed on the Left); Greensboro Six Placard Commemorating on Their Historic Movement

valiant soldiers. Significant changes occurred during this period, including General Joseph E. Johnston's parole of the Army of Tennessee in Greensboro and the establishment of a free black community following the Confederate defeat.

Following the Civil War, Guilford County placed itself as a central transportation hub, a crossroads of rails and wagon trails. This period was marked by swift industrial growth, drawn by its appealing blend of factors including favorable taxation, affordable labor, and plentiful natural resources like cotton, timber, and tobacco. High Point's emergence as a leading furniture production center in the early to mid- 20th century reflects Guilford County's role in shaping regional economies after the war.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Guilford County bore witness to another transformative period – the battle for civil rights. Progressive-minded individuals championed equal treatment for all, sparking pivotal moments in history. On December 7, 1955, six black men attempted to play at a segregated Greensboro golf course, becoming known as the "Greensboro Six." Following the landmark Brown vs. Board of Education decision, on September 3, 1957, the Greensboro School Board approved six black students to attend its segregated schools. Then, on February 1, 1960, four North Carolina A&T students conducted a sit-in at a downtown Woolworth Store lunch counter, igniting a non-violent protest movement known as the A&T Four and inspiring similar sit-ins across the nation.

Regional Context

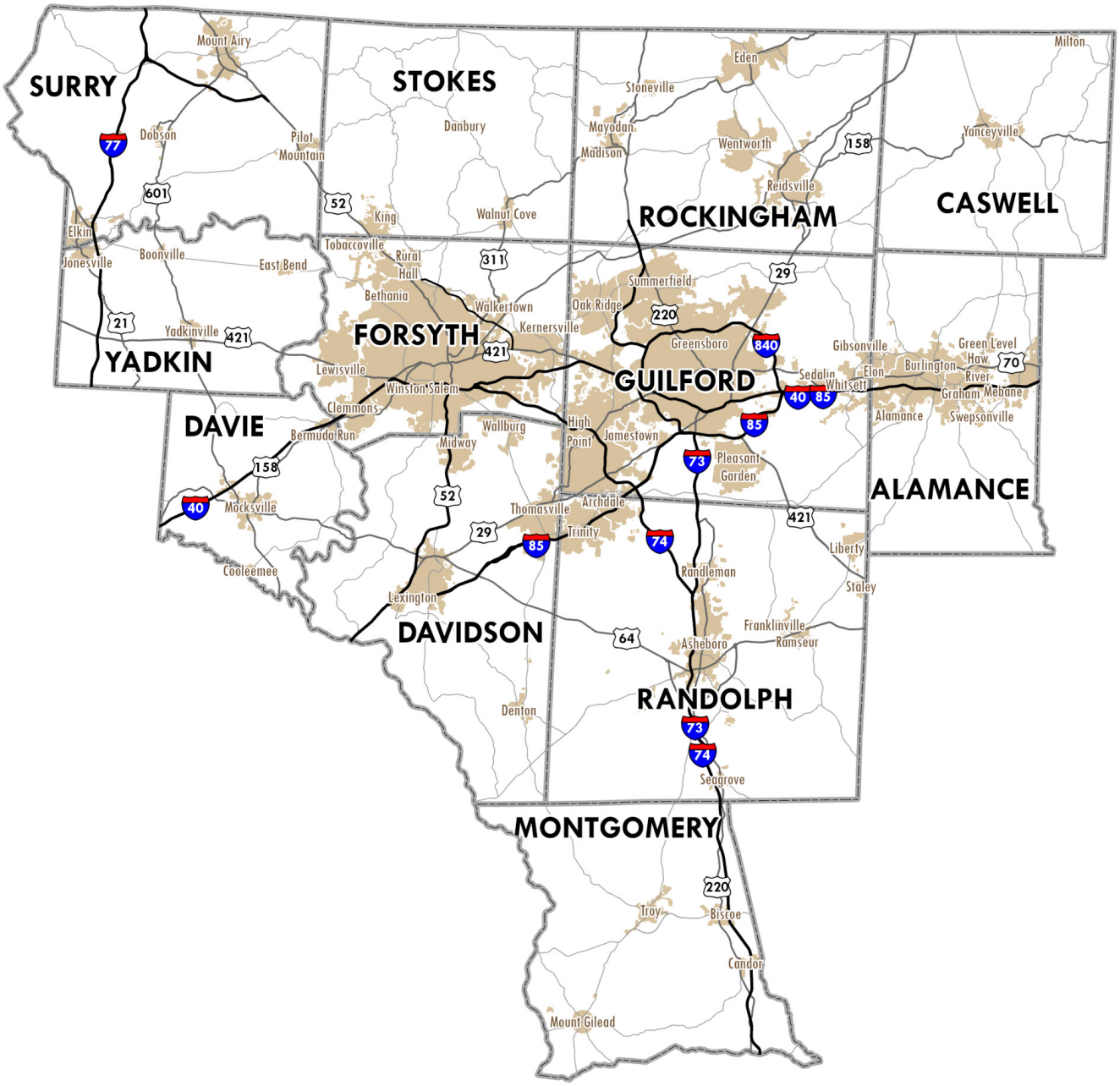
Guilford County enjoys a strategic geographic position with significant implications for its socio-economic landscape. Positioned in the center of the state, Guilford County serves as a pivotal hub connecting various regions within North Carolina. Bordered by Randolph, Alamance, Rockingham, and Forsyth counties, Guilford County's economic significance is enhanced by its proximity to major metropolitan areas like Charlotte, Raleigh, and the Research Triangle Park. This central location facilitates transportation and trade networks, attracting businesses seeking logistical advantages and access to diverse markets. Furthermore, prominent educational and research institutions are located both within and adjacent to Guilford County. This by nature drives innovation and advances the County as a key player in sectors such as advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and technology.

Guilford County benefits from key transportation assets such as Piedmont Triad International Airport (PTI), which plays a vital role in both passenger and



Greensboro Lunch Counter Sit-In

cargo transportation. Additionally, the County's intersecting rail lines further reinforce its connectivity, supporting industries reliant on efficient transportation networks, a crucial economic and transportation hub within the state. Its diverse economy, spanning manufacturing, healthcare, education, and finance, contributes significantly to North Carolina's overall prosperity. The County's strategic location and well-connected transportation infrastructure, including major highways like Interstate 40 and Interstate 85, facilitate the efficient movement of goods and people, enhancing its economic viability.



Natural Resource Context

Guilford County boasts significant natural resources integral to its identity and ecological health. The County manages over 32,000 acres dedicated to conservation, with substantial areas documented by the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program. Nearly 7% of the County lies within floodplains, protected by strict regulations. Key natural features like the Haw River and Deep River offer support ecosystems and provide outdoor recreational opportunities. The Piedmont Aquifer provides groundwater resources, and diverse soil types enable agricultural activities. Extensive forests support common wildlife such as deer, foxes, and numerous bird species. The County also invests in renewable energy to minimize environmental impact, highlighting its commitment to preserving these valuable assets for future generations

Recreational & Cultural Context

Guilford County today serves as a node of historical, cultural, natural, and recreational resources. Its abundance of parks, trails, and leisure opportunities appeal to a broad range of recreation seekers. The County's active park system offers a diverse range of recreational activities that cater to the varied interests and needs of community members and visitors. With amenities like golf courses, campgrounds, boating and fishing, sports fields, hiking trails, and playgrounds, these parks provide opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to engage in physical activity, spend time outdoors, and connect with others.

Further, the County's abundance of conservation land, also referred to as passive parks prioritizes preserving natural habitats and open spaces while providing limited amenities such as trails and picnic areas. Recreational waters within the County include large lakes like Lake Mackintosh, Lake Brandt, High Point City Lake, and Randleman Regional Reservoir offer recreational opportunities such as kayaking, canoeing, fishing, hiking, and picnicking. These bodies of water also afford scenic beauty and surrounding green spaces with accessible outdoor activities and opportunities to enjoy nature.

Guilford County and its cities and towns are hubs of cultural activity. Greensboro's thriving arts scene, High Point's influential furniture industry, and Jamestown's rich historical landmarks offer a range of cultural experiences. Festivals, markets, and community events contribute to the area's lively atmosphere and support a strong sense of community and celebration.



Cyclist on Trail

Planning Context

Previous Plan Review

The Guilford County Parks, Trails, and Open Space Comprehensive Master Plan builds on a long legacy of local, regional, and statewide plans prioritizing parks, greenways and trails. The following tables provide a summary of key recommendations from previous plans that are relevant to the current planning effort. These implications highlight the importance of regional connectivity, strategic use of existing infrastructure, and integration with Guilford County's parks, open space, greenways and trails network.

Over the past decade, Guilford County municipalities have developed various plans emphasizing regional connectivity, strategic use of existing infrastructure, and integration with broader development initiatives. Analyzing these plans ensures that Guilford County's current parks, trails, and open space plan highlights key recommendations and projects from municipalities that may impact the County's Park system. For example, understanding how trails in neighboring cities connect to Guilford County greenways allows for better alignment of new projects, enhancing regional connectivity and providing users with more thorough and enjoyable recreational experiences.

Furthermore, identifying potential collaborations and shared resources will ensure that the County's development leverages existing infrastructure and avoids redundant investments. These insights, when integrated into the PTOS plan, will enable Guilford County to enrich its recreational and environmental assets and create a more effective and interconnected network of parks, trails, and open spaces.



Guilford County Farm

Existing Plan/ Study	Key Recommendations	2024 Guilford. County PTOS Plan Implications
Alamance County		
2015 Trails Plan	The Alamance County Trails Plan identifies and prioritizes opportunities to create recreational trails throughout Alamance County. The highest priority trail is along the Haw River, which connects to the northeastern corner of Guilford. County. Additional potential trail connections are along Big Alamance Creek, Little Alamance Creek, and Reedy Fork.	• The Great Alamance Creek Trail, an approximately 12-mile trail, has potential connections to Guilford. County along Big Alamance Creek or Little Alamance Creek. • Reedy Fork Trail, an approximately 12-mile trail crosses into Guilford. County and connects Ossipee in Alamance County with the historic Summers House in Guilford. County. • The Haw River Trail passes through the northeastern corner of Guilford. County.
City of Archdale		
2011 Safe Routes to School Action Plan	The Safe Routes to School Plan provides recommendations aligning with the City's Pedestrian Trails Master Plan, the Street Network Plan, the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan and the 2020 Strategic and Economic Development Plan.	• Though funded by NCDOT over 10 years ago, compliance with this plan will ensure that the PTOS plan will continue to encourage the use of greenways and park areas to provide safe routes to school.

Existing Plan/ Study	Key Recommendations	2024 Guilford. County PTOS Plan Implications
2016 Comprehensive Parks & Recreation Plan	Archdale residents identified connecting to existing trails, addressing safety concerns, and connecting to existing parks as the most important factors for new trail construction. Four new neighborhood parks are proposed in Archdale, including one within Guilford. County near NC-62 and Interstate 85. Although this plan provides a comprehensive assessment of the parks system, a major goal of the plan is the Creekside Park Plan, created to determine the development of the 100-plus acre park site. The general consideration is to develop a destination park an athletic complex, playgrounds, shelters, and an 18-hole disc golf course. The plan also proposes 13.5 new miles of greenways that connect the future park to others throughout the City.	• Following a land analysis of adjacent vacant land, a potential neighborhood park location was identified within the Guilford. County limits as a part of the City's proposed parks for future expansion. The City would like to add 30 acres of parks over the next 10 to 20 years. • Guilford County may prioritize other recreational needs over the development of large-scale athletic facilities. If community feedback indicates a preference for other activities and natural areas rather than large athletic complexes, the County could focus on developing and maintaining these types of spaces to better meet local needs and desires. It may be more cost-effective to invest in smaller-scale improvements, such as upgrading existing facilities, enhancing trails, and adding amenities to current parks, rather than undertaking the significant financial burden of building new, large-scale complexes.
2018 Pedestrian & Trails Master Plan	The Archdale Pedestrian + Trails Plan recommends sidewalks and trails to connect to destinations in Archdale, with a distinction between proposed and long-term projects.	• A shared-use path loop is proposed to encircle the city, portions of which extend into Guilford County on Longview Dr and Burton Rd. and provide a safe crossing of Interstate 85 along Aldridge Rd. • Long-term shared-use paths are recommended between Aldridge Rd. and Interstate 85 in Guilford. County, and north along a tributary of Muddy Creek toward Jamestown.

Existing Plan/ Study	Key Recommendations	2024 Guilford. County PTOS Plan Implications
2020 Archdale Comprehensive Land Use Plan	Plan Archdale serves as the City's primary policy guide for future land use development, capital investment, and growth management decisions. The plan's recommendations include adopting policies that require the incorporation of Universal Design (UD) in parks and recreation amenities and requiring the development of parks and recreational amenities in new neighborhoods.	• The plan recommends the expansion of the existing greenway system throughout the Town, as well as connecting to and through Guilford. and Randolph Counties. • Building from the recommendation in the Parks and Recreation Plan, one of the policy goals of the plan was to evaluate opportunities for developing a regional sports facility to strengthen the local tourism economy.
City of Burlington		
2017 Greenways & Bikeways Plan	The Burlington Greenways and Bikeways Plan was completed in September 2017. The purpose of the plan is to create a connected and comprehensive system of greenways and bikeways that enhance the quality of life throughout Burlington. The plan provides a framework for city staff, elected officials, and local and regional project partners to create a connected network of greenways and bikeways across the City.	• Connecting Burlington-Springwood Park and Joe C. Davidson Park with a greenway is a top priority project, linking Guilford. County to destinations in Burlington. • A greenway and bikeway connection opportunity between Springwood Park and Davidson Park is a top priority. The proposed project would construct a sidepath on Rural Retreat Rd. and a proposed Rural Retreat Rd. Ext. along an existing transmission line crossing into Guilford. County, with intersection crossing facilities at Springwood Church Rd. • Longer-term bikeway projects proposed in Guilford County include a separated bike lane or sidepath on Springwood Church Rd., Wheeler Bridge Rd., Elmdale Rd., and Ingle Dairy Rd. between US-70 and Bonnar Bridge Pkwy. • Additional long-term recommendations include greenway between Springwood Church Rd. and Nire Valley Dr and along the north shore of Lake Mackintosh, and separated bike lanes or sidepath on US-70, Wheeler Bridge Rd., and Whitsett Park Rd.

Existing Plan/ Study	Key Recommendations	2024 Guilford. County PTOS Plan Implications
2023 Recreation & Parks Master Plan	This plan establishes a framework for reinvesting in Burlington's legacy of providing affordable, diverse, and equitable recreation and parks services. In the short-term, the document recommends revisiting past studies to determine whether to proceed with a new community center in West Burlington which would be adjacent to Guilford County's ETJ. In the mid-term, the plan recommends seeking (CAPRA) accreditation, improving ADA access, and the functionality of maintenance facilities. In the long-term, the plan recommends upgrading parks, designing a new skate park, and developing a policy for allocation of capital improvement funding.	• The plan suggested the City complete a feasibility and conceptual design study for a new skate park, which would be a regional asset. • The consideration of a new community center in West Burlington, near Guilford County's ETJ, suggests potential collaboration opportunities between the two jurisdictions. Such a center could serve as a shared resource, offering recreational and community services to residents of both areas

Existing Plan/ Study	Key Recommendations	2024 Guilford. County PTOS Plan Implications
Burlington-Graham MPO		
2022 Comprehensive Transportation Plan	The Burlington-Graham MPO Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) study is a long-range plan, which identifies major transportation improvement needs and develops long term solutions for the next 25 to 30 years. It is a joint effort between the Burlington-Graham MPO and NCDOT. The CTP study involves examining population, economic conditions, traffic trends and patterns of land development in and around the town. The CTP's bicycle and pedestrian recommendations include proposed multiuse paths that extend into Guilford County.	• Multiuse paths are proposed to create a loop around Gibsonville and around Lake Mackintosh. • A network of multiuse paths are proposed linking Burlington, Whitsett, and Gibsonville in Guilford. County, including along major roadway corridors such as US-70. » ALAM00018-M: Multiuse Path from Guilford. County Farm to Guilford./Alamance Line; 4.85 miles of MST Guilford. County Farm, Travis Creek Greenway » ALAM00045-M: Multiuse Path from Guilford./ Alamance Line to Haw River; 14.45 miles of the Big Alamance Creek Greenway » ALAM00049-M: Multiuse Path from Piedmont Ave/Guilford.-Alamance Line to west end of Moonstone Ct.; 0.46 miles of the Piedmont Ave Greenway Connector » ALAM00070-M: Multiuse Path from Guilford./ Alamance Line to Rural Retreat Rd./University Dr; 0.41 miles of the Springwood-Davidson Greenway » ALAM40006-BP: Bike and Ped from Guilford./ Alamance Line to Huffine St; 0.46 miles of added bicycle lanes and sidewalks » ALAM30001-BP: Bike and Ped from Guilford./ Alamance Line to Chase Street; 0.18 miles of bike lanes/sidewalks along NC-100 » ALAM00001-M: Multiuse Path from Guilford/ Alamance to Haw River; 2.47 miles of multiuse path on the Reedy Fork Greenway

Existing Plan/ Study	Key Recommendations	2024 Guilford. County PTOS Plan Implications
Town of Gibsonville		
2014 Gibsonville Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan	The 2014 Gibsonville Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan outlines strategies to enhance walkability, improve pedestrian safety, and connect key destinations. The plan focuses on infrastructure upgrades, policy changes, and community engagement to promote a more pedestrian-friendly environment throughout Gibsonville and the lack of multi-use trails and greenways as a key challenge to pedestrian travel in Gibsonville. It recommends the adoption of a Complete Streets policy and ordinances that require public easements along priority pedestrian corridors in new development.	• The plan recognizes the importance of Gibsonville's location central to other communities and destinations and envisions regional connectivity with trails linking Gibsonville to Elon, Lake Mackintosh, Burlington, and Greensboro. • Greenways and sidepaths are proposed connecting key roads and areas within Gibsonville, including Springwood Church Rd., Dew Sharpe Rd., W Steele St., Whitsett Ave, Minneola St., Gibsonville Ossipee Rd., Church St., and more. • Over 16 miles of multi-use trails are proposed, forming a loop on the outer edge of the Town boundary, within the extraterritorial jurisdiction, part of the Town that receives Guilford County services.
2020 Gibsonville Bike Plan	The Gibsonville Bike Plan, building on the Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan, recommends greenways and higher priority projects such as a greenway connection and a bikeway on major avenues. It proposes additional bikeways along several other streets and neighborhood connections across a variety of local roads. This network aims to ensure that nearly all Gibsonville streets are within a quarter mile of a bicycle facility.	• Greenways and trails are proposed to create a loop around the western side of Gibsonville, and to connect to Burlington-Springwood Park. • A comprehensive network would promote better integration of County and local initiatives, ensuring nearly all streets within Gibsonville are close to a bicycle facility, which could serve as a model for broader County-wide efforts.

Existing Plan/ Study	Key Recommendations	2024 Guilford. County PTOS Plan Implications
City of Greensboro		
2015 Urban Area MPO Updated (2018) / 2015 Bicycle, Pedestrian, Trials & Greenway Plan (Amended 2023)	The Greensboro Urban Area MPO Bicycle, Pedestrian, Trails & Greenways (BiPed) Plan prioritizes central Greensboro and Summerfield for greenways, trails, sidepaths, and connectors. Key items include: Tier 1 (short-term): Segments in Oak Ridge, Forsyth County, and Greensboro; Tier 2 (short-medium term): Segments in Oak Ridge, Summerfield, and Pleasant Garden; Tier 3 (medium-long term): Greenways in Sedalia, Greensboro, Summerfield, and Stokesdale; Tier 4 (long-term): Greenways and trails in Pleasant Garden, Greensboro, and unincorporated Guilford County.	• The plan emphasizes short-term and medium-term goals to enhance the greenway network within and around Greensboro by incorporating the recommended Tier 1 and Tier 2 greenway projects. • There is a recommendation to improve connectivity between central Greensboro, Summerfield, and other parts of Guilford. County, ensuring that trails and greenways provide continuous access across the region. • Projects farther outside of Greensboro, Summerfield, and urban areas are marked for longer-term implementation.

Existing Plan/ Study	Key Recommendations	2024 Guilford. County PTOS Plan Implications
2019 Plan2Play Parks & Recreation Master Plan	The Greensboro Plan2Play is a comprehensive parks and recreation master plan intended to guide the planning and development of the parks and recreation system within the City over the next twenty years (2018-2038). The plan also builds off momentum established by the 2015 Bicycle, Pedestrian, Trails, & Greenway Plan Update (BiPed Plan), individual park plans such as the Battleground Parks District Master Plan, and the city's parallel process for the Connections 2025 Comprehensive Plan.	• Collaboration between Guilford County and its largest municipalities is noted with the action items. The plan notes that the department has halfway completed the Piedmont Discovery Park locater app in collaboration with High Point and the County. • The plan notes that the Greensboro Parks and Recreation department should conduct a feasibility analysis for the location of an additional Senior Center on the west side of the City where there is a need. Coordinating programs between the senior center and Guilford County Parks could create cooperation, offering a wider range of activities such as fitness classes, social gatherings, and wellness programs. This collaboration could lead to more comprehensive and appealing offerings for seniors. • The plan also focused on conservation, with one of the long-term projects being to "Increase tree canopy to match County average tree canopy coverage of 49.7% from 37.8%". • Lastly, the plan focuses on growing the trail system by increasing the density and the diversity of greenways and blueways.
2020 GSO2040 Comprehensive Plan	GSO2040 is Greensboro's Comprehensive Plan, aligning projects, programs, and policies with the community's vision for the future. It serves as a roadmap for residents, employers, and institutions, guiding growth, reinvestment, and development while respecting the city's history and strengths. The plan coordinates land use, transportation, economic development, and capital improvements, promoting broad community ownership and sustainable, resilient growth. It includes a clear vision, cohesive policies, success measures, and an implementation guide to achieve Greensboro's long-term goals.	• The plan recommends that Greensboro invest in building and maintaining quality, accessible public recreation centers, libraries, neighborhood park facilities, and other services to sustain livable neighborhoods – as well as build on partnerships between the City, residents, and Guilford County. • Given that segments of the A&Y Greenway is exist within Guilford County's greenway system, the recommendations from the GSO2040 Plan suggest significant expansion and connectivity improvements.

Existing Plan/ Study	Key Recommendations	2024 Guilford. County PTOS Plan Implications
2020 Urban Area MPO 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan	The Greensboro Urban Area MPO 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) includes bicycle, pedestrian, and greenway recommendations taken from the 2018 revisions to the 2015 BiPed Plan Update. The MTP is a funding-restricted plan for transportation investments. Projects in the MTP are prioritized for funding and may be selected to be placed in the Transportation Investment Program that NCDOT uses to program projects for construction.	• Planned greenway projects total 2.7 miles by 2025, 9.7 miles with a horizon year of 2035, and 13.3 miles with a horizon year of 2045. • The recommended investments for the bicycle and pedestrian element are based on the current construction programs of the City of Greensboro, Guilford County, and NCDOT. • The plan recommends that the City of Greensboro cooperate with local partners (Greensboro, Guilford County, High Point, Winston-Salem, and surrounding towns) to expand the use of shared- use paths (greenways) throughout the Triad. • It also recommends the City coordinate and mesh with NCDOT's Great Trails State Plan and the plans of neighboring jurisdictions and MPOs.
2023 Greensboro Urban Area Bicycle, Pedestrian, Trails & Greenways Plan Administrative Modification	The Greensboro Urban Area Bicycle, Pedestrian, Trails, and Greenways (BiPed) Plan details strategies and recommendations to meet the MPO's area's walking, bicycling, and trail needs. Recommended in both the 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the City's Comprehensive Plan, the BiPed Plan addresses infrastructure projects and programming to support bicycling and walking in the MPO area. The Plan incorporates recommendations and from the bicycle and pedestrian plans of local MPO municipalities, including the Oak Ridge Pedestrian Plan and the Pleasant Garden Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.	• New and extended roads in Guilford County will facilitate more interconnected greenway and trail networks, improving access across different areas. • Road expansions provide infrastructure that supports the development of new trails, especially in currently underserved areas. • Balancing road development with ecological and recreational needs will be crucial, requiring strategic planning to optimize benefits while addressing potential challenges.

Existing Plan/ Study	Key Recommendations	2024 Guilford. County PTOS Plan Implications
2024 East Greensboro Greenway Feasibility Study	The East Greensboro Greenway Feasibility Study, expected to be completed in mid-2024, will provide a vision for future bicycle and pedestrian connectivity in the study area, and identify opportunities, constraints, and recommendations for future implementation. It will develop and analyze conceptual routes and identify a preliminary preferred route. It will also provide cost estimates and an implementation plan for future trail construction.	• A completed feasibility study allows more advanced design work to continue and prioritizes this project for implementation. • The East Greensboro Greenway is the focus of a grant application for construction funding being submitted to USDOT through the Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program (ATIIP). • It studies alternatives for a greenway between the J. Douglas Galyon Depot and Barber Park in Greensboro, providing greater connectivity to proposed greenway corridors on South Buffalo Creek and elsewhere in Greensboro.
Guilford County		
2014 Southeast Guilford. County & Company Mill Preserve Trail Plan	This Plan identifies and prioritizes recreational trails and bicycle routes throughout Southeast Guilford County and provides a detailed trail plan on Company Mill Preserve, acquired in 2013 and featuring over 225 acres of wetlands, marsh, a historic dam, log cabin, and scenic views of Big Alamance Creek.	• The plan includes significant additions of paved shoulders, side paths, and sidewalks to enhance the pedestrian and cyclist network. • Recommendations focus on adding sidewalks and side paths along key corridors, increasing the connectivity and safety for non-motorized traffic. • Infrastructure improvements are expected to greatly enhance the accessibility and usability of trails and greenways in Guilford County over the next decade, promoting healthier, more sustainable transportation options and increasing recreational opportunities for residents.

Existing Plan/ Study	Key Recommendations	2024 Guilford. County PTOS Plan Implications
2010 Heart of the Triad Small Area Plan	The Heart of the Triad Plan was developed for the purpose of enhancing a strategically important part of Guilford County while maintaining its natural beauty and unique features. The plan was an effort by local governments and regional organizations to work with citizens, businesses, and developers to stimulate the regional economy and provide an excellent quality of life. The plan seeks to have this area complement and support the existing city and town centers in the Triad rather than to compete with them. The Heart of the Triad land area defined in this plan consists of many jurisdictional interests, requiring much cooperation.	• Parks, open space, and greenways accessible to the public would likely involve the efforts of Guilford County, municipal parks and recreation departments, semi-public land trusts such as the Piedmont Land Conservancy, and local property owners. • The plan recommends establishing a system of coordination concerning the implementation of parks, greenways, open space, and agricultural preservation between the municipalities noted within the area plan is required and is an implication that will carry over to the current Guilford County PTOS Comprehensive Plan.
2016 Liberty Road / Woody Mill Road Vicinity Small Area Plan (LWMSAP)	The LWMSAP is a policy document designed to encourage development of a mixed-use area between Liberty Road and US Highway 421 at Woody Mill Road. The plan builds upon and further refines the 2008 Alamance Creek Area Plan Update (ACAP) recommendation that the area develop with a mixture of complementary and compatible land uses.	• This plan recommends that Guilford County implement practical recommendations of the adopted Greensboro Urban Area Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Greenway Master plan (2015) by searching for grant money or other financing to assist in the completion of sidewalks, trails, and bicycle improvements and requesting that NCDOT include plan recommendations, such as paved shoulders, as part of its future projects.

Existing Plan/ Study	Key Recommendations	2024 Guilford. County PTOS Plan Implications
2024 Guiding Guilford: Moving Forward Together Comprehensive Plan	The 2024 Guilford County Comprehensive Plan, "Guiding Guilford," is the County's most recent land use plan. It is a strategic planning document, required by state law (NCGS 160D), used for land use policy related decisions and priorities. The Plan is intended as a guide for Guilford County to help ensure development within the County takes place in a manner that aligns with the community's vision for both the built and natural environments over the next 15-20 years. It aims to guide future growth and development by emphasizing community character, diverse housing, improved transportation, a resilient economy, equitable services, environmental protection, and quality infrastructure. Developed through extensive community engagement, it sets clear goals and policies to ensure development aligns with community values.	• Parks and green spaces will need to reflect and preserve local heritage and culture. • There will be a need for parks and recreational facilities that serve a wide range of housing types and demographics. • Development of interconnected trails and greenways will be essential for safe, multimodal access to parks. • Parks and open spaces will support local business growth and attract tourism. • Efforts will be needed to ensure all residents have access to quality recreational opportunities. • Focus on preserving and enhancing green spaces to protect biodiversity and sustainability. • Investment in high-quality, adaptable recreational facilities will be necessary to meet community needs.
City of High Point		
2018 Parks & Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan	City of High Point Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan was established to guide the enhancement of parks, facilities, and programs over the next ten years. The plan focuses on five key areas: parkland, facilities, programs, operations, maintenance, and finances. It aims to improve the quality of life for residents and visitors by aligning with the city's commitment to excellence and community involvement.	• The plan notes the importance of a collaboration with the City's Transportation Department and Guilford County to coordinate multi-modal transportation planning that promotes greenways and connectivity. • The plan also notes that the High Point Parks and Recreation Department has a joint use agreement with Guilford County Schools for several parks, primarily athletic offerings. • The recommendation to expand parkland in the northern part of High Point, where growth is concentrated, could enhance regional connectivity and resource sharing between High Point and neighboring Guilford County towns.

Existing Plan/ Study	Key Recommendations	2024 Guilford. County PTOS Plan Implications
2019 High Point MPO Regional Bike Plan	The purpose of High Point MPO Regional Bike Plan is to identify opportunities and constraints for bicycling in the High Point region, and to establish recommendations for improvement. The plan covers a small SE portion of Forsyth County, the SW corner of Guilford County, the NW corner of Randolph County, and most of Davidson County.	• The plan recommends a network of bicycle facilities across the MPO region, including southwest Guilford County. • Other proposed projects in the regional network include a greenway or shared-use path along Richland Creek and another greenway linking between key regional routes and the Bicentennial Greenway, expanding the interconnected trail system.
2021 High Point Greenway Plan	The High Point Greenway Plan aims to expand connectivity by creating a city-wide network of greenway facilities that provide bicycle and pedestrian access from neighborhoods, enhancing economic vitality by attracting people and improving quality of life. Additionally, it seeks to improve health and wellness by increasing access to greenways and ensuring equitable distribution of access to natural areas across the city. The plan recommends a comprehensive greenway and trail network to be constructed in three phases.	• Projects along Main St, Skeet Club Rd., and the Southwest Heritage Greenway are proposed as Phase 2 projects to create a loop around High Point and connect to existing and planned greenways, as well as two Guilford County nature preserves. • The plan recommends maintenance and improvements to fix sections and expand wayfinding signage along the High Point Greenway and Bicentennial Greenway. • Partnerships with adjacent jurisdictions, such as Guilford County, are recommended to complete regional greenway connections and pursue state and federal funding. • Major recommendations in phase two include the West Fork Greenway between the Bicentennial Greenway and Johnson Street Sports Complex

Existing Plan/ Study	Key Recommendations	2024 Guilford. County PTOS Plan Implications
2024 Comprehensive Land Use Plan (DRAFT)	The High Point 2045 Comprehensive Plan, currently being updated, sets the general direction for policy-making and investment in High Point. It includes a conceptual roadmap for land use and development while providing a foundation for zoning and other regulations. The plan also notes open space preservation as a high priority within the City's growth framework.	• The plan recommends the development of a Greenbelt Program beyond the City's current municipal boundary and into Guilford County to preserve agricultural and forest land to maintain the natural character of future recreational areas. • Coordination with the Piedmont Land Conservancy (PLC) and the Piedmont Triad Regional Council (PTRC) to use voluntary conservation easements for land preservation and to update the Greenbelt Program as it develops.
2024 Metropolitan Transportation Plan	The 2045 High Point Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) identifies key projects from local planning documents within the fiscal constraints of the MTP.	• The MTP recommends multiuse paths inside areas within or under the jurisdiction of Guilford County. The Deep River, West Fork Deep River, and the Bicentennial Greenway all run through or are connected to Guilford County.
Town of Jamestown		
2010 Jamestown Deep River Trail Plan	The Town of Jamestown collaborated with the Piedmont Triad Council of Governments (PTCOG) and various local and Guilford County entities to develop the Town of Jamestown Deep River Trail Plan. This plan outlines strategies for enhancing trail and waterway access along the Deep River, detailing site-specific proposals for paddling access points, hiking trailheads, and the alignment of both local and regional trails. The focus is on improving recreational infrastructure from City Lake Park to Oakdale Mill dam and extending to the Southwest Guilford County Park.	• The plan studies three components of a trail along the Deep River within Guilford County: a local blueway paddling trail and a local greenway or hiking trail between City Lake Park and the Oakdale Mill dam, and a regional greenway and blueway paddling trail between the Oakdale Mill dam and Southwest Park. • The plan proposes a side path to connect to Southwest Park. • The regional greenway hiking trail is proposed using the existing High Point sewer easement on the west side of the Deep River from Oakdale Mill south to Groometown Rd., where it crosses the river and follows the south side of Groometown Rd. to Southwest Park. • A safe crossing beneath Interstate 85 and potential connections to High Point are identified in the plan.

Existing Plan/ Study	Key Recommendations	2024 Guilford. County PTOS Plan Implications
2021 Envision Jamestown Comprehensive Plan	The Envision Jamestown Comprehensive Plan provides strategic direction for future development, capital investments, and growth management over the next decade. The plan looks at development trends, existing plans, demographic and economic data, and community perceptions, establishing a framework to move forward. It serves as the primary policy guide for elected officials, appointed boards, and staff.	• The development of greenway trails and water access along the Deep River in Jamestown will expand Guilford County's park and trail system, improving regional connectivity and accessibility. • Conservation efforts will protect critical habitats and open spaces within Guilford County, enhancing passive recreation opportunities and environmental quality across the region.
2023 Comprehensive Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan	The Jamestown Comprehensive Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan recommends a network of sidewalks, sidepaths, greenways, and neighborhood slow streets for the Town of Jamestown.	• The plan proposes a greenway along the east side of the Deep River, enhancing connectivity to City Lake Park and the Piedmont Greenway. • New side paths on major roadway corridors and high-priority projects are proposed to improve pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure, linking the Bicentennial Greenway to Charles P. Turner Sports Complex.
Town of Kernersville		
2007 Pedestrian & Bicycle Plan	The Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan establishes priorities for improving and maintaining pedestrian and cycling thoroughfares in Kernersville. It identifies needs such as sidewalk reconstruction, crosswalks, missing wheelchair ramps, and other pedestrian hazards. The plan outlines policies, the importance of sidewalks, greenways, and bicycle links within the transportation network, and provides guidelines for implementation and financing.	• The plan recommends greenways on six corridors, including Reedy Fork between downtown Kernersville and Triad Park in Guilford County using Kernersville-owned property and an existing pedestrian underpass. This aligns with goals to enhance regional connectivity and expand the greenway network within Guilford County.

Existing Plan/ Study	Key Recommendations	2024 Guilford. County PTOS Plan Implications
State of North Carolina		
2015 Mountains-to-Sea North Carolina State Trail Master Plan	The Mountains-to-Sea State Trail (MST) Master Plan will guide the establishment off-road hiking trail from Clingmans Dome State Park on the Tennessee border to Jockey's Ridge State Park in North Carolina's Outer Banks. The plan promotes the completion of the MST by defining trail segments, engaging stakeholders, and providing tools for planning partners. It focuses on refining and shifting trail alignments within the statewide corridor to address regional and local challenges and opportunities.	• Guilford County was identified as an additional planning stakeholder for segments including the Greensboro Watershed Trails and the Piedmont Greenway. The plan noted that the MST should provide assistance and information on establishing the section of trail within Triad Park to the Forsyth-Guilford County line as part of the MST. • Sections of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail (MST) in Guilford. County are identified as a near-term planning priority and include two planned routes. One route would extend the A&Y Greenway northwest from its existing terminus through Summerfield and Stokesdale following the abandoned railway corridor, continuing into Forsyth and Stokes counties across Belews Lake. • A second, southern route, would develop the Piedmont Greenway between the A&Y Greenway in Greensboro and the Salem Lake Greenway in Winston-Salem, primarily following Reedy Fork and connecting to Triad Park. • In Guilford County, the ongoing efforts along Reedy Fork Creek are an opportunity as Northeast Park would accommodate the trail along Reedy Fork Creek.
2022 NCDOT Great Trails State Plan	The Great Trails State Plan proposes a comprehensive network of greenways, trails, and sidepaths to connect all one hundred counties via non-motorized transportation. Routes are proposed between Greensboro and Alamance County, Greensboro, and Forsyth County, and south between High Point and Randolph County. The Deep River State Trail, and sections of the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail would also be part of the proposed network.	• In Guilford County the existing Atlantic & Yadkin Greenway, Latham Park Greenway, Bicentennial Greenway, Greensboro Downtown Trail, High Point Greenway, and Southwest Heritage Greenway are included as part of the plan. • The plan noted a proposed shared path from Greensboro to Graham across the County.

Existing Plan/ Study	Key Recommendations	2024 Guilford. County PTOS Plan Implications
2022 Deep River State Trail Master Plan	The Deep River State Trail Plan is a five-year plan that aims to enhance outdoor recreation and connectivity along the Deep River corridor. The plan outlines the development of various trail segments across Guilford, Randolph, Moore, Chatham, and Lee Counties. It includes planning and construction efforts for greenways and blueways, emphasizing trail connectivity, river access, and recreational opportunities. The plan also highlights collaboration with local partners to deliver projects like trailhead design, easement acquisition, and construction of access sites.	• The Deep River State Trail calls for the construction of a pedestrian bridge across City Lake in High Point to connect the Bicentennial Greenway and designate sections of the Bicentennial Greenway, Deep River Trail, and High Point Greenway as parts of the Deep River State Trail • Further development of the Deep River State Trail within Guilford. County is anticipated to be long-term because of the challenges associated with identifying feasible alignments and major roadway crossings.
2022-2027 Mountains-to-Sea State Trail Plan	The 2022-2027 Mountains-to-Sea State Trail (MST) Plan five-year plan outlining the development, maintenance, and promotional activities for various trail segments. The plan emphasizes strategic planning, land acquisition, trail construction, volunteer engagement, and collaborations with local stakeholders across different regions. Key projects include enhancing trail connectivity, creating new trail sections, protecting access, and improving signage and facilities. The plan also aims to leverage funds for major trail projects and engage communities through events and volunteer opportunities to ensure the MST remains a well-maintained and popular trail for all users.	• The Mountains-to-Sea Trail Piedmont Triad Section notes that there are planned routes of the MST to follow the Piedmont Greenway corridor, north from Greensboro to Rockingham County, and along the Haw River in northeast Guilford County. • The plan recommends identifying collaborators to finish planning and design work for segments in northwest Guilford County. • At the Belews Lake segment of the MST, the plan noted that there are opportunities for collaboration among Duke Energy, Piedmont Land Conservancy, Dan River Basin Association, Rockingham County, Guilford County, Stokes County, Forsyth County, and others. • Current maps for the Mountains-to-Sea Trail include future routes planned between Summerfield and Kernersville and north from Lake Brandt through Haw River State Park and the southern edge of Rockingham County. • Funded projects include an estimated $65,000 for a trail development plan between Oak Ridge and Saxapahaw in Alamance County along the Haw River.

Existing Plan/ Study	Key Recommendations	2024 Guilford. County PTOS Plan Implications
Town of Oak Ridge		
2013 Comprehensive Pedestrian Transportation Plan	This plan is a 20-year vision for projects, policies, and programs that improve safety and walkability in Oak Ridge. Recommended policies include requiring developers to provide public access easements along proposed greenways in subdivision ordinances, and pedestrian access on new non-interstate roadway bridges. It also proposes constructing a new roadway bridge to accommodate future trails where greenways or conservation areas are proposed, or within a half mile of parks or schools.	• Trail segments proposed in the plan will directly impact Guilford County by suggesting routes that should be incorporated into the County's broader network. • The recommended policies for public access easements, pedestrian access on new bridges, and accommodating future trails beneath bridges in Oak Ridge imply that future policies in the Guilford County will support consistent development standards and the development of a safe and effective greenway network.
2022 Comprehensive Parks & Recreation Master Plan	The Town of Oak Ridge Parks and Recreation Master Plan aims to enhance local parks, programs, and facilities over the next decade. It prioritizes upgrades and expansions based on community needs and recreational standards. Developed from an inventory of existing facilities and community input, this practical guide directs future development to meet both immediate and long-term needs for Oak Ridge residents.	• The plan recommends that Oak Ridge coordinate future planning efforts with Guilford County to identify recreation programming and facility expansion. • Collaboration and intergovernmental cooperation are noted as a vital component of the plan, stating that "the Town of Oak Ridge should seek to coordinate planning efforts with the Guilford County parks and recreation services, as well as the municipalities to provide greenway and park facilities. • The proposed greenway and trail network would also help improve the route of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail as it passes through Oak Ridge.
Piedmont Land Conservancy, Guilford. County, City of Greensboro, Forsyth County, City of Winston Salem + Town of Kernersville		
2015 Piedmont Greenway Triad Park/Reedy Fork Section Feasibility Study	The plan provides a blueprint for the Piedmont Greenway Triad Park-Reedy Fork section of the regional trail. Triad Park has portions in Guilford and Forsyth County.	• Phased connections to Kernersville and Forsyth County from Triad Park are established in the plan. Phase 1 proposes a trail west of the park, while Phase 2 would extend the trail to downtown Kernersville.

Existing Plan/ Study	Key Recommendations	2024 Guilford. County PTOS Plan Implications
Piedmont Triad Regional Council		
2003 Piedmont Regional Greenway Master Plan	The Piedmont Regional Greenway Plan aims to create a multi-use greenway spanning from Salem Lake in Forsyth County to Lake Higgins in Guilford County, focusing on recreation, environmental education, and natural resource conservation. Developed with input from the public, civic groups, and government agencies, the plan aligns greenway corridors with natural and man-made features to enhance connectivity and sustainability. It proposes a 19-mile greenway corridor for hikers and bicyclists that will provide connections to city and County greenway systems, breaks the Piedmont Greenway into 14 sections, and marks the first key step toward its implementation.	• This plan identifies a regional greenway that would connect Guilford and Forsyth Counties through Triad Regional Park.
2022 Piedmont Triad Strategic Outdoor Recreation Plan	Initiated in 2018 by the Piedmont Triad Regional Development Corporation, the Piedmont Triad Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan aims to expand the outdoor recreation industry to increase economic impact, create jobs, and boost tourism across a 12-County region. The Piedmont Triad region includes 63 municipalities and 169,000 acres of public land. The plan maps existing resources and provides a strategy to attract investment in the region. The recommendations and action items from the plan focusing on Haw River State Park and Deep River State Trail can significantly impact recreation in Guilford County. The plan recommends additional funding for continued development of the Deep River State Trail and Mountains-to-Sea Trail.	• The Randleman Lake feasibility study could result in new trails and greenways, as well as connections in Guilford County. This expansion would cater to both residents and tourists, potentially increasing the frequency and duration of visits to the area. • Constructing more river access locations would improve the accessibility for water-based recreational activities such as kayaking, canoeing, and fishing along the rivers.

Existing Plan/ Study	Key Recommendations	2024 Guilford. County PTOS Plan Implications
Town of Pleasant Garden		
2015 Comprehensive Bicycle & Pedestrian Transportation Plan	The purpose of the Pleasant Garden Bicycle and Pedestrian Comprehensive Transportation Plan is to enhance the town's walkability and bikeability. The plan identifies strategies, uses public input to develop network recommendations, and includes design guidelines, implementation strategies, and key action steps to build and improve bicycle and pedestrian facilities.	• Sidepath projects and connections between Hagan-Stone Park and downtown Pleasant Garden are prioritized. • Multiple regional trail corridors and bike routes are proposed to converge in Pleasant Garden, highlighting Hagan-Stone Park as a key destination for greenway connectivity.
2018 Parks & Recreation Master Plan	The purpose of the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan for the Town of Pleasant Garden is to address both met and unmet recreational needs through 2025. The plan outlines strategies to enhance parks and recreation programs and facilities and develops a funding strategy to achieve these goals using various financial sources. The acquisition of the Pleasant Garden Community Center is highlighted as a key opportunity to meet these community needs.	• The plan notes that Pleasant Garden should explore opportunities to work with Guilford. County to offer programs and utilize the resources of Hagan Stone Park and the adjacent 250 acres acquired by the County as conservation land. • A short, paved trail section was constructed between Town Hall and Pleasant Garden Volunteer Park. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan reiterates a previous recommendation for additional natural surface trails at this site.
Rockingham County		
2013 Pathways	The Rockingham County Pathways plan aims to collaborate with municipalities, citizens, business owners, and landowners to develop recreational trails throughout the County. The plan identifies several miles of new land trails and potential river access points. Pilot trail projects are those that could be easily implemented and are identified in the plan as prioritized by stakeholders.	• Five regional and state trail connections are proposed between Rockingham and Guilford Counties, along with one local trail that crosses into Guilford County, establishing a shared vision for a regional network that extends beyond individual County lines.

Existing Plan/ Study	Key Recommendations	2024 Guilford. County PTOS Plan Implications
Town of Sedalia		
2015 Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan	The purpose of this Plan was to evaluate the existing bicycle and pedestrian conditions within Sedalia and recommend programmatic and infrastructure projects to improve safety, connectivity, and well-being.	• The proposed shared use path and additional sidewalks and bike lanes on US-70 within and around Sedalia will significantly enhance the Town's connectivity within Guilford County, providing infrastructure to link key areas within Sedalia a to neighboring regions. • The focus on interjurisdictional linkages along US-70 and potential partnerships with Guilford County for the Rock Creek Branch Greenway indicate a move towards a more integrated regional greenway system.
Town of Summerfield		
Summerfield Comprehensive Land Use Plan 2010	The purpose of the Town of Summerfield's Comprehensive Plan is to enhance the town's growth management system by incorporating modern and effective planning principles and methods. This plan builds upon previous planning initiatives and aims to address issues that arise to ensure that Summerfield can successfully navigate and manage its growth in an organized and beneficial manner.	• Summerfield's commitment to providing quality parks and recreation facilities highlights the importance of planning for both neighborhood-level and larger community parks. This emphasis supports Guilford County's efforts to develop an extensive system of open spaces and greenway trails. • Implementing the shared use paths and extending the greenway network might face challenges such as securing easements or purchasing land, especially where private ownership is involved. • The community's support for a fee-in-lieu program to fund parks and recreation improvements could serve as a model for similar funding mechanisms in Guilford County.

Existing Plan/ Study	Key Recommendations	2024 Guilford. County PTOS Plan Implications
2012 A&Y Greenway Feasibility Study	The purpose of the A&Y Greenway Feasibility Plan is to develop a trail plan and alignment for a connected regional alternative transportation system and recreation amenity. This plan aims to enhance the quality of life by connecting people to nature, promoting physical activity, and supporting economic development. The study focuses on a 12-mile segment of the abandoned Atlantic & Yadkin railroad bed through Summerfield and Stokesdale, identified in previous planning efforts for future trail development	• The proposed 13-mile multi-use path through Summerfield and Stokesdale will provide connections between key recreational areas, potentially influencing greenway corridor prioritization in Guilford County. • The corridor's potential adoption into the Mountains-to-Sea Trail will elevate its regional significance. • The completed feasibility study allows design work to proceed, elevating this project as a high priority and setting a foundation for future development and funding.
2021 Bandera Farms Master Plan	The Bandera Farms Master Plan serves as a guide for the development of the new Bandera Farms Park located in Summerfield, NC. This project is the result of a partnership between the Town of Summerfield, Piedmont Land Conservancy, Town of Oak Ridge, City of Greensboro, and Guilford County to develop the Piedmont Greenway, a regional equestrian park, and an open space resource. This chapter provides the project background and outlines plan goals and process.	• The proposed 19-mile Piedmont Greenway will link Forsyth and Guilford Counties, with 1 mile of the greenway running through Bandera Farms, improving regional trail connectivity. • The plan increases equestrian facilities at Bryant Park and Northeast Park and includes 4.5 miles of natural surface trails within Bandera Farms, catering to various recreational activities. • The addition of two parking areas, including one with pull-through parking for horse trailers and another off Bunch Road, will facilitate better access to the greenway and equestrian trailheads. • The inclusion of a trailhead on Bandera Farms will provide convenient access to the Piedmont Greenway from Bunch Road, encouraging more usage and enhancing the recreational appeal of the area.

Existing Plan/ Study	Key Recommendations	2024 Guilford. County PTOS Plan Implications
2021 Parks, Trails, & Open Space Master Plan	The purpose of the Summerfield Parks, Trails, and Open Space Master Plan is to guide the development and enhancement of the town's parks, trails, and open spaces over the next 12 years. This long-range planning document integrates previous planning efforts, department goals, existing conditions, and community needs assessments to create a framework for vision, recommendations, and prioritization strategies for the Parks and Recreation Department.	• Cooperation between Summerfield and Guilford County, as well as other local partners, will facilitate the expansion of shared use paths and greenways throughout the Triad, leveraging resources and creating a more extensive trail system. • Proposed trails along Mears Creek, Scalesville Road, and the Haw River will create crucial east-west connections, linking Summerfield to the Haw River State Park and other County destinations. • The plan identifies opportunities for property acquisition to increase protected open space, expand park acreage, and create new parks, particularly east of the US-220 corridor.
City of Winston Salem & Forsyth County		
2021 Making Connections Plan 2045	Making Connections 2045 updates the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) for the Winston-Salem Urban Area MPO. The study recommends improvements for roadway, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure in the planning area.	• One of the recommended projects is 1.59 miles of the Kerners Mill Creek Greenway Phase II (WS-Bike-036C), which connects Forsyth and Guilford. Counties, for projection year 2045. • A greenway corridor connecting Winston-Salem to Guilford. County through Kernersville is included in the unfunded recommendations of the MTP.
2012 Winston Salem-Forsyth County Greenways Plan Update	The purpose of this plan is to build on the 2002 Greenway Plan by prioritizing the construction of new greenways over the next ten to fifteen years. The update aims to enhance connectivity between existing greenways, sidewalks, bikeways, neighborhoods, major destinations, and community facilities. The update supports the development of a comprehensive active transportation network as recommended by the Legacy plan.	• The prioritization of new greenways focusing on connectivity will link Guilford County's trails with those in Forsyth County. Regional connections are proposed to other neighboring counties, as is the continued development of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail, recognized as a regionally important project. • Emphasizing constructability and public support in the prioritization process can serve as a model for Guilford County. This approach can lead to more efficient project implementation and greater community engagement in Guilford County's trail planning efforts.

Existing Plan/ Study	Key Recommendations	2024 Guilford. County PTOS Plan Implications
2020 Winston Salem-Forsyth County Parks and Open Space Plan Update	The purpose of the Parks and Open Space Plan Update is to enhance recreational opportunities by guiding the development of new parks and recreational facilities in Forsyth County. Building on the 2006 plan, this update reassesses recommendations to address population growth, shifting recreation trends, and current citizen attitudes. The document aims to adapt to changing demands and new land acquisition opportunities, while aligning with the goals and objectives of the original plan. It also considers the efforts of smaller municipalities in providing recreational amenities and incorporates their adopted recommendations as part of a comprehensive approach to meeting recreational needs.	• The proposed Piedmont Regional Greenway System will enhance connectivity between Winston-Salem, Forsyth County, Kernersville, and Guilford County, linking the existing Salem Lake Trail to Triad Park and the broader Guilford County greenway network. • The development of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail, which plans routes along Muddy Creek, Salem Creek, and the Yadkin River, will connect Forsyth County with Guilford County, expanding the regional trail network. • Potential trails, such as the Mill Creek Greenway and Grassy Fork Creek Greenway, provide opportunities to extend the greenway system into Guilford County, fostering regional collaboration and connectivity.

Demographics

Overview

The comprehensive planning process for County park systems, particularly those spanning multiple municipalities requires a detailed demographic analysis. Understanding current and future population statistics informs how Guilford County will expand and improve its parks, trails, and open space programs over the next 10 years. Population growth will significantly impact parks and recreational services by increasing the demand for facilities and programs. This growth will require the expansion of resources, infrastructure upgrades, and a wider array of offerings to meet the recreational needs of a larger and more diverse community.

Factors such as age, race, income, and level of education will influence the specific recreational needs of different groups. Assessing the distinct needs of residents across both urban and rural areas will allow for more precisely adapted strategic planning to ensure that park and recreation services remain relevant and accessible to all community members.

Data Sources

The current analysis is based on data obtained from the United States Census Bureau (USCB), supplemented by additional data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI). Census data is reflective of the USCB's most recent (2020) Decennial Census of Population and Housing and the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS is conducted by the USCB on an ongoing basis and is reported every five years. Data obtained from the BLS is used to assess current employment and unemployment rates within Guilford County.

Population projections are sourced from ESRI, which uses a proprietary methodology to extract current population and ten-year population projection estimates. ESRI uses data from the USCB, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and high-quality local sources. ESRI has developed methods specially tailored to estimating demographic characteristics of small areas such as Census Blocks.

Estimates & Projections

Estimates summarize the present population and demographic traits of an area, whereas projections present a proposed scenario for the future population based on assumptions like a steady growth rate or an anticipated migration influx. Typically, population estimates, and Annual Growth Rate (AGR) are based on data found in the American Community Survey (ACS).

When discussing projections, it is important to understand that a "negative" growth rate for a specific demographic does not indicate those individuals are waning. Instead, it means that while some individuals in that group might be declining in number due to various factors, the population growth in other demographics is outpacing them, thereby reducing their proportion of the total population. This shift is often due to the larger increase in other demographic groups rather than a significant decrease in the specific group in question. A relevant example is found in California, where the proportion of the non-Hispanic White population is shown to have a "negative" growth rate in demographic projections. This does not mean the number of non-Hispanic White residents is necessarily decreasing; rather, the growth rates of other racial and ethnic groups, such as Hispanics and Asians, are outpacing them, thus reducing their share of the state's total population.

Population Growth

Average Annual Growth

Average annual growth is a measure for determining the rate of growth per year over a given period. Guilford County's population is on a consistent upward trend, with forecasts suggesting ongoing increases. While the County's growth rate does not match North Carolina's 1.3%, it aligns closely with the national average of 0.4%. This continued population growth will increasingly influence the demand for parks, trails, recreational amenities, and programs, shaping strategic operations and service delivery.

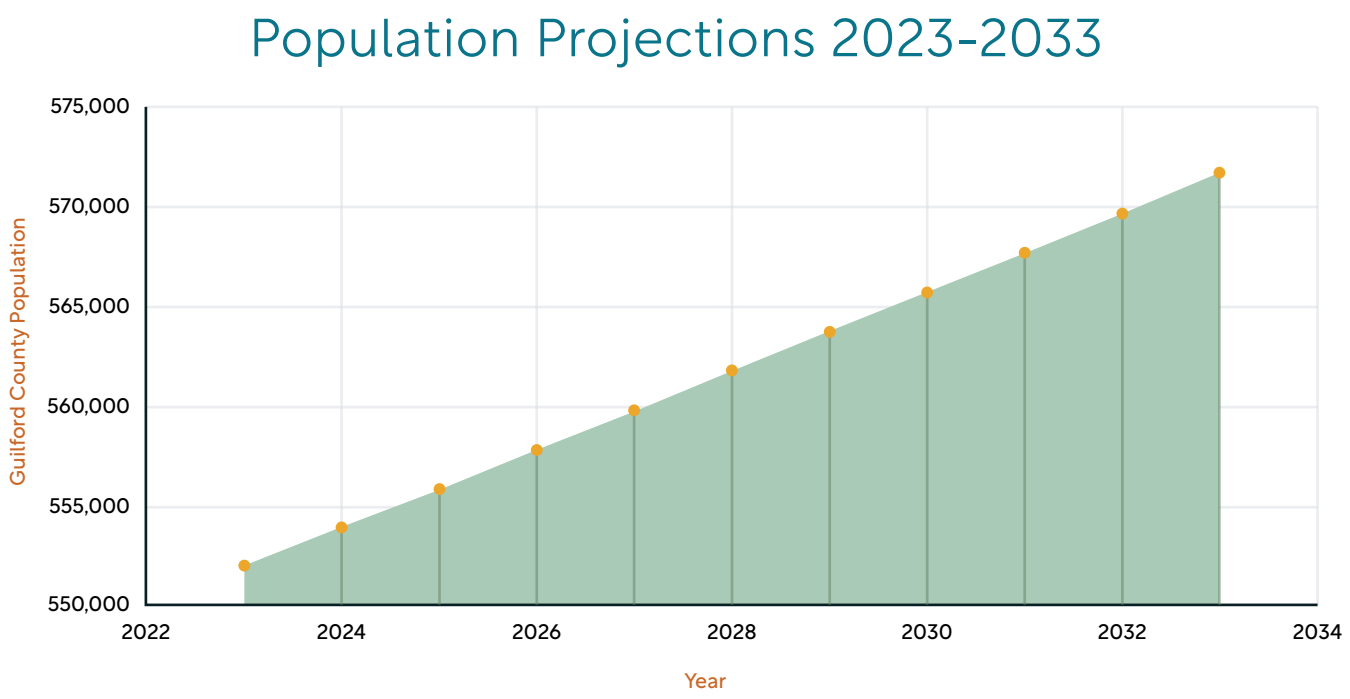
Average Annual Growth	Guilford County	North Carolina	United States
Growth Rate	0.35%	1.3%	0.4%

Over the next 10 years, the Department and County leadership will need to efficiently allocate resources to accommodate the expanding population. This will involve developing and maintaining parks, trails, and recreational facilities, expanding program offerings, upgrading infrastructure to handle increased usage, and ensuring that all residents have equitable access to recreational opportunities

Population Projections

Population - 2023	Population - 2033
552,020	571,648

Population Projections



In 2023, the population was approximately 552,020, and is expected to reach 561,786 by 2033. Guilford County can expect to add almost 10,000 people in the next 10 years. . Efficient allocation of resources will be critical, with a need to prioritize funding to ensure that recreational infrastructure can handle the increased usage. Capital investments will be essential to support the higher number of park visitors. Additionally, the growing population will necessitate the expansion of recreational programs and activities, offering more variety to cater to a larger and more diverse population.



Bur-Mil Swim Meet

Age Distribution

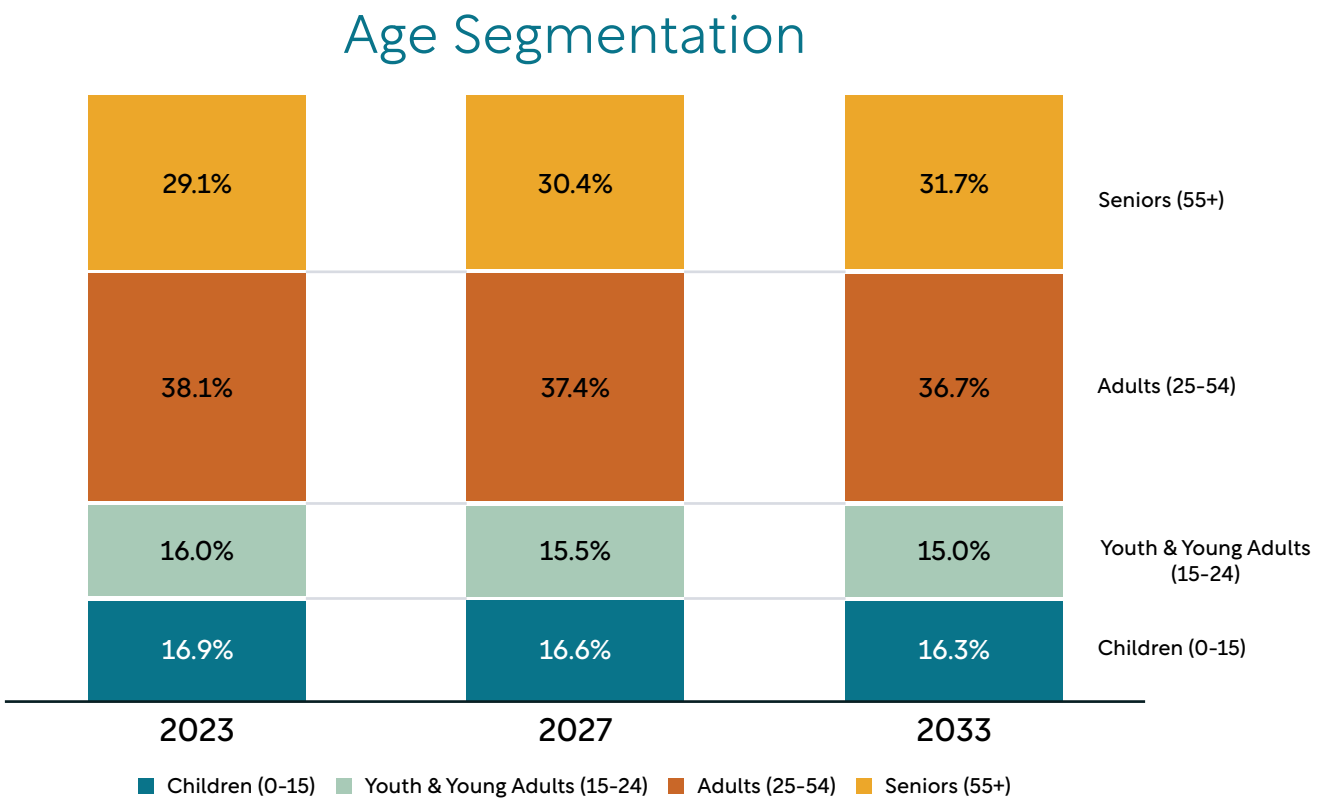
Median Age

The median age in 2023 in Guilford County is 37.7 years, slightly younger compared to 39.2 years for North Carolina and 38.1 years for the United States.

Median Age 2023	Guilford County	North Carolina	United States
Median Age	37.7	39.2	38.1

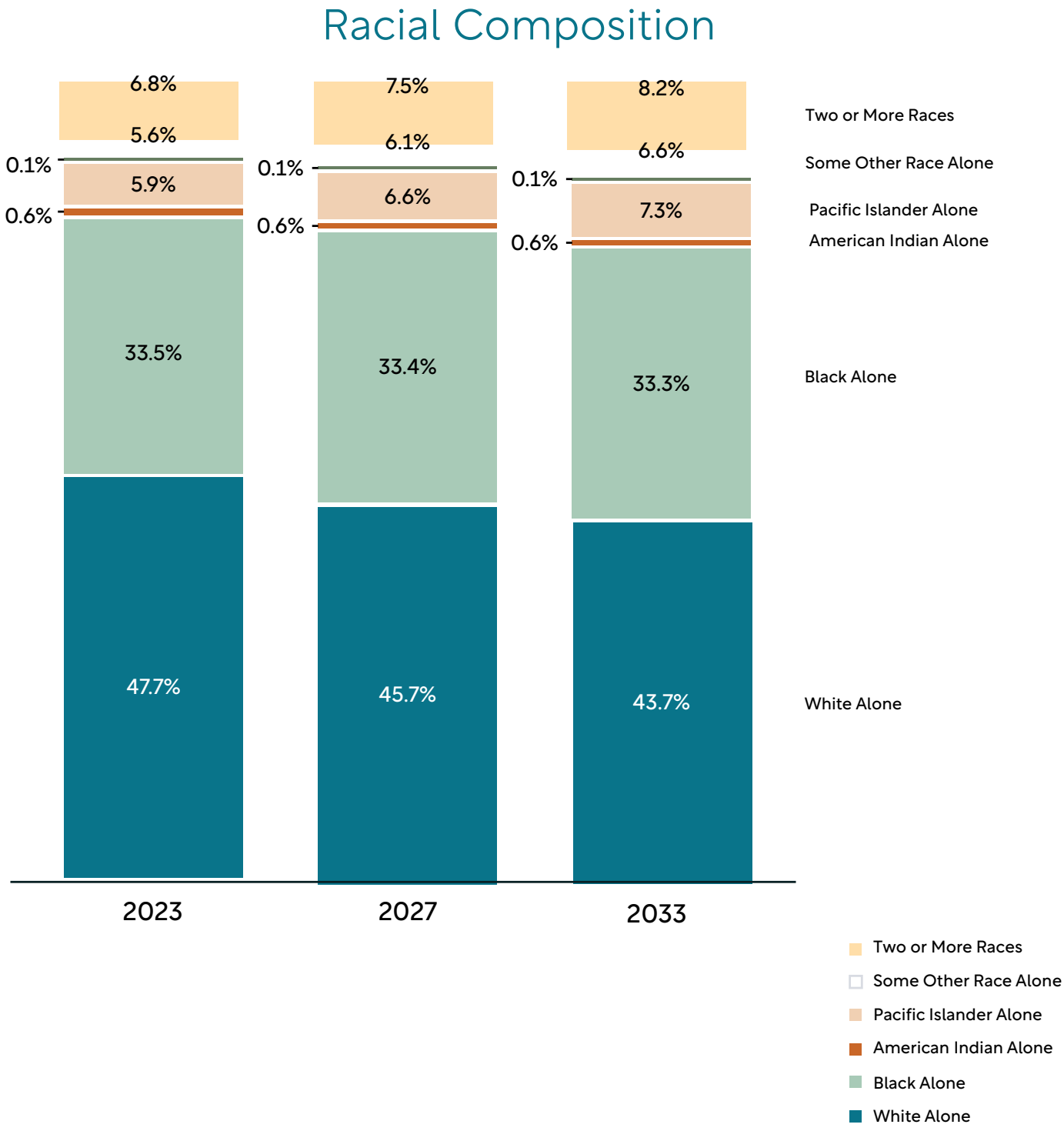
Age Segmentation

Although the median age in Guilford County is currently younger than in North Carolina and the U.S., age distribution figures reveal that the County can expect its median age to mature over the next 10 years. The proportion of seniors (55+) is increasing, and by 2033, seniors are projected to make up 31.7% of the population while the percentage of children (0-15) is slightly declining year over year. As with other factors, this does not mean that the raw number of individuals in this age range is declining. Rather, their proportion of the population is shrinking. The shift indicates that although Guilford County Parks will still maintain recreational amenities and activities for younger age groups, there will need to be a deliberate focus on amenities and programs catering to older adults, such as walking paths, fitness classes, and social spaces.



Race & Ethnicity

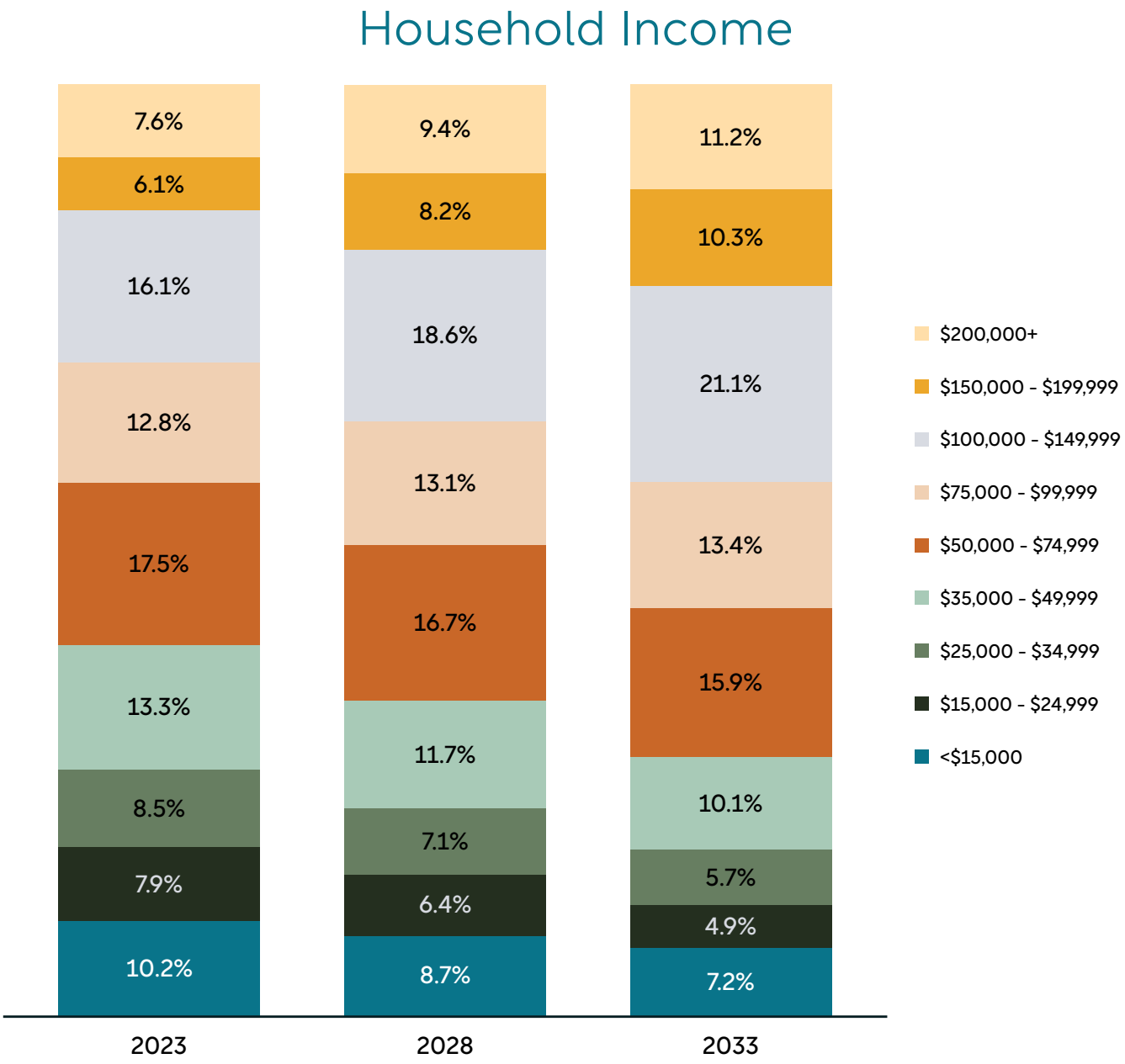
Guilford County's racial composition is changing. Residents identifying as White Alone are projected to decrease by four percent from 47.7% in 2023 to 43.7% in 2033. Guilford County residents who identify as Two or More Races and Asian Alone are projected to be the fastest-growing age segment over the next 10 years. These populations are projected to grow nearly 0.14% annually, and increase by 1.4 percent and one percent, respectively. The population indicating Hispanic origin is also growing rapidly. This group represented 10.2% of Guilford County's population in 2023 and is projected to increase to 12% of the population in 2033.



Household Income

The household income distribution chart for Guilford County over the next decade shows several key trends. First, there is a noticeable increase in higher income brackets, with the proportion of households earning above $100,000 rising from 29.6% in 2023 to 42.6% by 2033. Meanwhile, the percentage of households earning less than $50,000 is decreasing, indicating a shift towards greater overall affluence. The lowest income bracket, under $15,000, is projected to decrease from 10.2% to 7.2% over the same period.

Upward income mobility will influence parks and recreation planning as an increase in higher-income households can lead to strategic investments in parks and recreation, and possibly influence public support and funding available for systemwide enhancement and expansion. However, despite the economic uplift, ensuring equitable access to parks and recreational services remains crucial. This involves balancing the investment and development of high-end amenities with the continued provision of affordable, high-quality recreational options.



Education

The education attainment chart shown below highlights a wide range of educational backgrounds among residents. Only 17.8% in Guilford County have completed high school as their highest level, substantially lower than the national average of 28%. This suggests a smaller proportion of the County population stops at basic education levels. In the same vein, a slightly lower percentage of residents hold bachelor's degrees (20.1%) compared to the national average of 23 percent, yet Guilford County has a slightly higher percentage of residents with graduate or professional degrees (14.9%) compared to the national average of 14%. This may be influenced by the fact that Guilford County contains the highest number of four-year colleges than any other North Carolina County.

The percentage of Guilford County residents who attended some college but not earned a degree (17.8%) is in line with the most recently released 2022 national data which found that about 18% of the total adult population in the United States had some college experience but no degree . Socioeconomic factors are seen to contribute to the likelihood of not completing one's higher education program. For example, 89% of students from the first generation in low-earning families tend to drop out of college . Also, American Indian/Alaska Native, Black, and Pacific Islander first-year students' average dropout rates are more than eight percentage points higher than their Hispanic, white, and Asian peers.

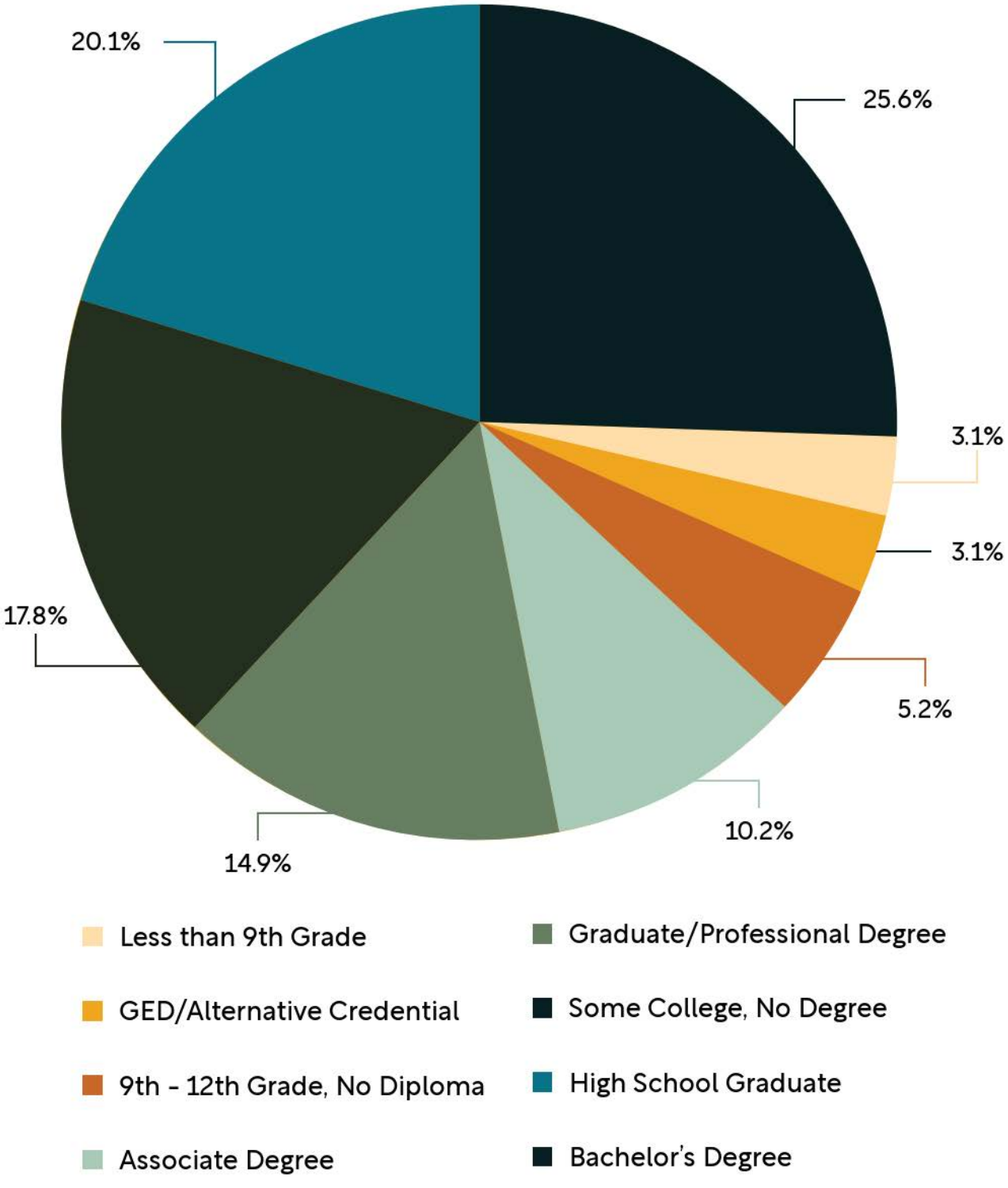
Overall, Guilford County is a community with a unique educational profile that further compliments the differences of its population in general. The lower percentage of high school-only graduates and the higher proportion of residents with advanced degrees suggest a population that values education and likely has a strong interest in lifelong learning and cultural activities. This trend points to the potential for developing more educational and culturally enriching recreation programs within the parks, such as nature-based learning experiences, historical tours, and art installations.

Lastly, the significant percentage of residents who have attended some college but not earned a degree highlights a potential area for targeted community support. Parks and recreation programs could offer educational outreach initiatives, workshops, or partnerships with local colleges to provide accessible learning opportunities that might encourage degree completion. These programs could focus on reducing barriers faced by underserved groups, as identified in the dropout statistics, by creating supportive environments conducive to learning and engagement.



Maker Minds Space

Education Attainment

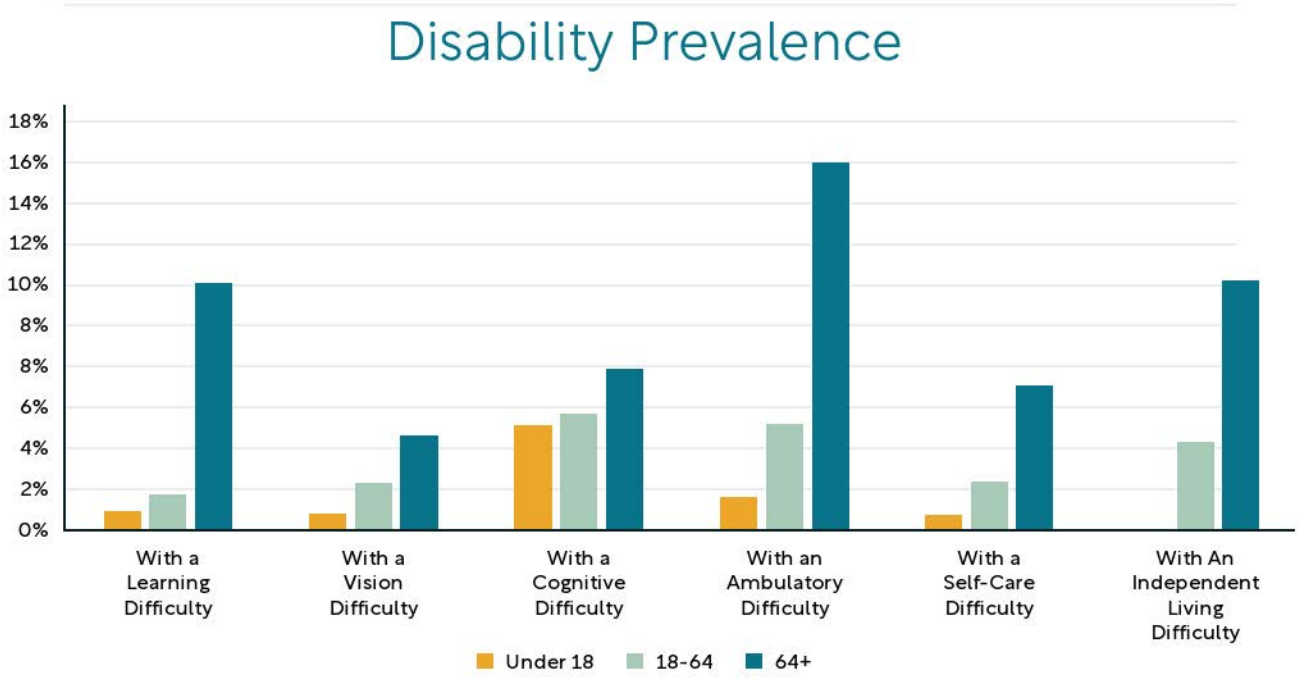


Disability Prevalence

The data indicates that the prevalence of disabilities among Guilford County residents increases significantly with age, particularly for hearing, ambulatory, and independent living difficulties. The highest rates of disabilities are found in the 64+ age group, with notable percentages experiencing ambulatory (18%) and independent living difficulties (16%). Cognitive and ambulatory difficulties are most prevalent among the 18-64 age group, each affecting around six percent of the population. Among children under 18, cognitive difficulties are the most common, affecting approximately seven percent of this age group.

Implications for Guilford County's parks, trails, and open space system derived from disability prevalence data highlight several key areas of focus. Given the higher prevalence of disabilities among older adults, parks and recreational amenities that cater to this age group should be entirely accessible via installing ramps, providing adequate seating, and ensuring trails and pathways are suitable for those with ambulatory difficulties. There is also an opportunity for Guilford County Parks to offer targeted programs for individuals with cognitive difficulties across all age groups, such as sensory-friendly events and educational programs. Additionally, implementing hearing loops in community centers, visual aids, and clear signage will support those with hearing and vision difficulties.

As a final point, it is important to tailor recreational strategies for each age group to better address the needs of individuals with cognitive disabilities. For instance, young children can benefit from accessible play areas designed to enhance learning and social interaction. Meanwhile, older adults might appreciate features that support their physical and sensory needs, such as sensory gardens or walking paths with tactile cues. Considering the specific requirements across all age groups will ensure that everyone with a cognitive disability has access to supportive and engaging recreational environments.



Key Findings

Anticipating future demographic shifts and trends will help in designing flexible and adaptable park systems that remain relevant and effective over time. Over the next 10 years, population growth in Guilford County will drive the need for developing new parks, trails, recreational amenities, and facilities. This will involve identifying and acquiring suitable land, planning for new green spaces, and creating necessary infrastructure. Significant capital investments will be required to expand the County's park and trail system, encompassing not only the development of new parks and facilities but also the addition and upgrading of recreational amenities such as playgrounds, sports courts, picnic areas, and support amenities like restrooms, lighting, and benches.

With this expansion comes the need for increased funding for maintenance and operations, ensuring regular upkeep, landscaping, repairs, and adequate staffing to keep parks safe and welcoming. The growing population will also drive demand for a variety of recreational programs, activities, and services catering to different age groups, interests, abilities, and cultural backgrounds -- including sports leagues, fitness classes, cultural events, educational workshops, and nature-based activities.

As more residents move to Guilford County from other parts of the state, they may bring different recreational preferences and needs, increasing pressure on existing parks and recreational facilities. This necessitates upgrades and expansions to accommodate a growing user base with high expectations of local government services. Additionally, the County should prepare for an aging population, necessitating amenities and programs tailored for older adults to support their well-being and active lifestyles.

The County's increasing racial diversity requires recreational programs and amenities that cater to a broader range of cultural backgrounds and interests, including multilingual signage and culturally relevant activities. The growing Hispanic population will benefit from community activities and services, such as bilingual signage, programs, and materials. Despite an overall increase in higher-income households, equitable access to parks and recreational services for all income levels remains crucial, ensuring universally available and affordable amenities and programs.

Furthermore, with a significant proportion of residents holding advanced degrees, there is potential for more educational and culturally enriching programs within parks, such as nature-based learning experiences and historical tours. By proactively addressing these demographic trends, Guilford County can create a dynamic and responsive park system that effectively serves the community.

The following summary of findings highlights the key demographic trends that will influence the future of parks and recreational services in Guilford County.

- Population growth over the next 10 years will drive the need to develop new parks, trails, recreational amenities, and facilities. This includes identifying and acquiring suitable land, planning for new green spaces, and creating any necessary infrastructure.
- Significant capital investments will be required to expand Guilford County's park and trail system. This includes developing new parks and facilities but also adding and upgrading recreational amenities such as playgrounds, sports courts, picnic areas, as well as support amenities like restrooms, lighting, and benches.
- With expansion will come the need for increased funding for maintenance and operations. This includes regular upkeep, landscaping, repairs, and staffing to ensure that the parks remain safe and welcoming for all users.
- As the population grows, the demand for recreational programs, activities, and services will increase. Providing a variety of programs catering to different age groups, interests, abilities, and cultural backgrounds can help meet community needs. This can include among others, sports leagues, fitness classes, cultural events, educational workshops, and nature-based activities.
- Increasing numbers of residents moving to Guilford County from other parts of the state might bring different recreational preferences and needs. Furthermore, new residents may increase the pressure on existing parks and recreational facilities, necessitating upgrades and expansions to accommodate a growing user base with high expectations of what local governments should provide to them as taxpayers.

- The County should anticipate needing to provide for a population that is aging quicker than it is being replenished by either births or influx of younger residents over the 10-year planning period. This obligation will come in response to increasing demand for amenities and programs tailored for older adults to support their well-being and facilitate active lifestyles.
- As the County becomes more racially diverse, recreational programs and amenities must cater to a broader range of cultural backgrounds and interests, including multilingual signage and culturally relevant activities.
- The growing Hispanic population will require community activities and services, including bilingual signage, programs, and materials.
- Despite an overall increase in higher-income households, it is important to ensure equitable access to parks and recreational services for all income levels. This means providing recreational amenities and programs that are universally available and affordable.
- With a significant proportion of residents holding advanced degrees, there is potential for more educational and culturally enriching programs within parks, such as nature-based learning experiences and historical tours.





Community
Engagement

Community Engagement Phase 1: Identify, Inform & Collaborate

Overview

Community engagement played a key role in shaping the Guilford County Parks, Trails, and Open Space Plan. Input was gathered from a wide range of residents to reflect the county's varied needs and priorities. The process was supported by Guilford County Parks staff, who helped create opportunities for two-way conversations and ongoing dialogue with the community.

The planning team used a variety of tools to gather input from Guilford County residents, selecting methods that aligned with different communication styles and preferences. This ensured that feedback was collected from both current users of parks and programs as well as residents who have not yet participated, resulting in a more complete understanding of community needs and interests.

More than 1,000 community members and individuals representing a range of organizations contributed their time and ideas, providing valuable insights to guide future decisions about parks and recreation. As demand continues to grow, this input will help shape a system that reflects what matters most to residents. The information collected through this process will help the County prioritize investments, shape long-term strategies, and respond more effectively to the evolving needs of its residents.

Outreach activities included in-person conversations, surveys, and interactive tools that encouraged participation from both frequent users and those less familiar with the park system. These efforts also elevated parks and recreation to the forefront of community dialogue, prompting residents to consider their role in shaping Guilford County's parks, trails, and overall access to high quality parks and recreational opportunities.

Scientific Survey – Spring 2024

- 605 Households

- **Public Opinion Survey – Summer 2024**
  - 120 Responses
- **Pop-up Events**
  - Bur-Mil Park Fall Fest, Greensboro, Oct. 14, 2023
  - Peeler Recreation Center, Greensboro Nov. 17, 2023
  - High Point Public Library, High Point, Nov. 20, 2023
  - Greensboro Coliseum Complex, Greensboro - Dec. 21, 2023
  - Guilford County Department of Social Services, Greensboro - Dec. 21, 2023
  - High Point University – Jan. 15, 2024
- **Countywide Drop-In Meetings**
  - Guilford County Department of Social Services, Greensboro - Feb. 6, 2024
  - Northeast Park, - Feb. 6, 2024
- **Focus Groups – Guilford County Government - Jan. 24, 2024**
  - Trails + Greenways
  - Parks + Facilities
  - Adaptive + Specialized Recreation
- **Interjurisdictional Roundtable – Guilford County Government – Tuesday January 23**
- **Staff Listening Sessions**
  - Asset Mapping - Nov. 28, 2023
  - Summary of Findings – Aug. 9, 2024
- **Parks & Recreation Commission Listening Sessions**
  - Asset Mapping – Jan. 9, 2024
  - Summary of Findings - Aug. 13, 2024
- **Guilford County Commissioners Retreat – Congdon Yards, High Point – March 8, 2024**

Scientific Survey

Overview

. A statistically valid survey was conducted to better understand the recreation needs and priorities of Guilford County residents. This effort was designed to provide clear, representative data that can be used to identify service gaps, recognize areas of strength, guide future investment, and build public support for parks and recreation across the County. By reaching residents from a wide range of backgrounds, ages, and geographic areas, the survey offered a comprehensive snapshot of how people experience and value local parks, trails, open spaces, and programs.

The decision to use a scientific survey method was intentional. Open-access surveys—where anyone can choose to participate—often reflect the views of those who are most engaged, rather than the broader community. In contrast, the randomized approach used here helped ensure that every household had an equal chance of being selected. This process improved the reliability of the results and increased public confidence in the findings.

The input collected through this effort will help the County make informed choices about future priorities. It will also serve as a foundation for evaluating long-term needs, measuring progress, and demonstrating public support when pursuing funding and partnerships.

Methodology

The survey firm, ETC Institute (ETC) mailed a survey packet to a random sample of Guilford County households. Each survey packet contained a cover letter, a copy of the survey, and a postage-paid return envelope. Households who received the survey were given the option of returning it by mail or completing it online.

To encourage participation, ETC sent emails and text messages to all households who received the survey containing the link to the online version for ease of participation. All respondents were required to enter their home address prior to submitting the survey. ETC then matched the addresses that were entered online with the addresses that were originally selected for the sample. Responses without matching addresses were omitted.

The goal was to obtain completed surveys from at least 600 residents. That goal was reached with a total of 605 surveys being completed. The overall results for the sample of households have a precision of at least (+/-) 5.5% at the 95 percent level of confidence. The level of confidence indicates that if this survey were run 100 times with the same methodology, the results found here would be replicated 95 percent of those times. Precision and level of confidence are standard metrics for statistic validity.



Pop Up Meeting at High Point Library

Priority Investment Rating

The priority investment rating was developed by ETC Institute to provide decision makers with an objective tool to evaluate the urgency that should be attributed to investments in parks and recreation facilities, amenities, and programs. The priority investment rating combines and equally weigh the following:

1. The importance residents place on certain facilities, amenities, and programs and

2. How many residents have unmet needs for that facility, amenity, or program equally weighs the importance that residents place on facilities and how many residents have unmet needs for facilities.

Recreational Amenities & Facilities

The chart on the following page ranks various recreational amenities based on their stated importance and perception of whether respondents' need for the recreational amenity is being met. Amenities topping the list include natural trails, greenway trail systems, and indoor fitness facilities. High rankings for outdoor aquatic facilities and outdoor fitness amenities reflect a community preference for both active and nature-based recreation.

Community gardens and water access points are also popular, suggesting a notable priority for spaces that facilitate both leisure and engagement with natural resources. Additionally, amenities like climbing walls, canoe-kayak rentals, and pickleball courts are in demand, indicating a broad spectrum of recreational interests.

Amenities such as dog parks, pavilions, and splash pads received mid-level priority, reflecting a range of community interests. Facilities like outdoor amphitheaters, senior centers, and playgrounds were noted as consistent priorities.

Lower priority was given to amenities such as baseball and softball fields, golf courses, and equestrian facilities. Overall, the chart reveals a community inclination toward outdoor and fitness-related activities, with significant interest in trails and water access.



Priority Investment Rating

Recreational Programs & Activities

The chart below ranks various recreational programs based on their stated importance and how well respondents feel their needs are being met (PRI).The most in-demand programs are adult fitness and wellness programs, outdoor music and concerts, and special events and festivals.

Outdoor adventure and aquatics programs received high levels of interest across survey responses. Environmental education and senior programs were also identified as priorities by a wide range of respondents. Outdoor movies, arts and crafts, and life skills classes appeared consistently among the most selected options. Pickleball, music lessons, and dance classes received moderate support and remain part of the program offerings valued by residents.

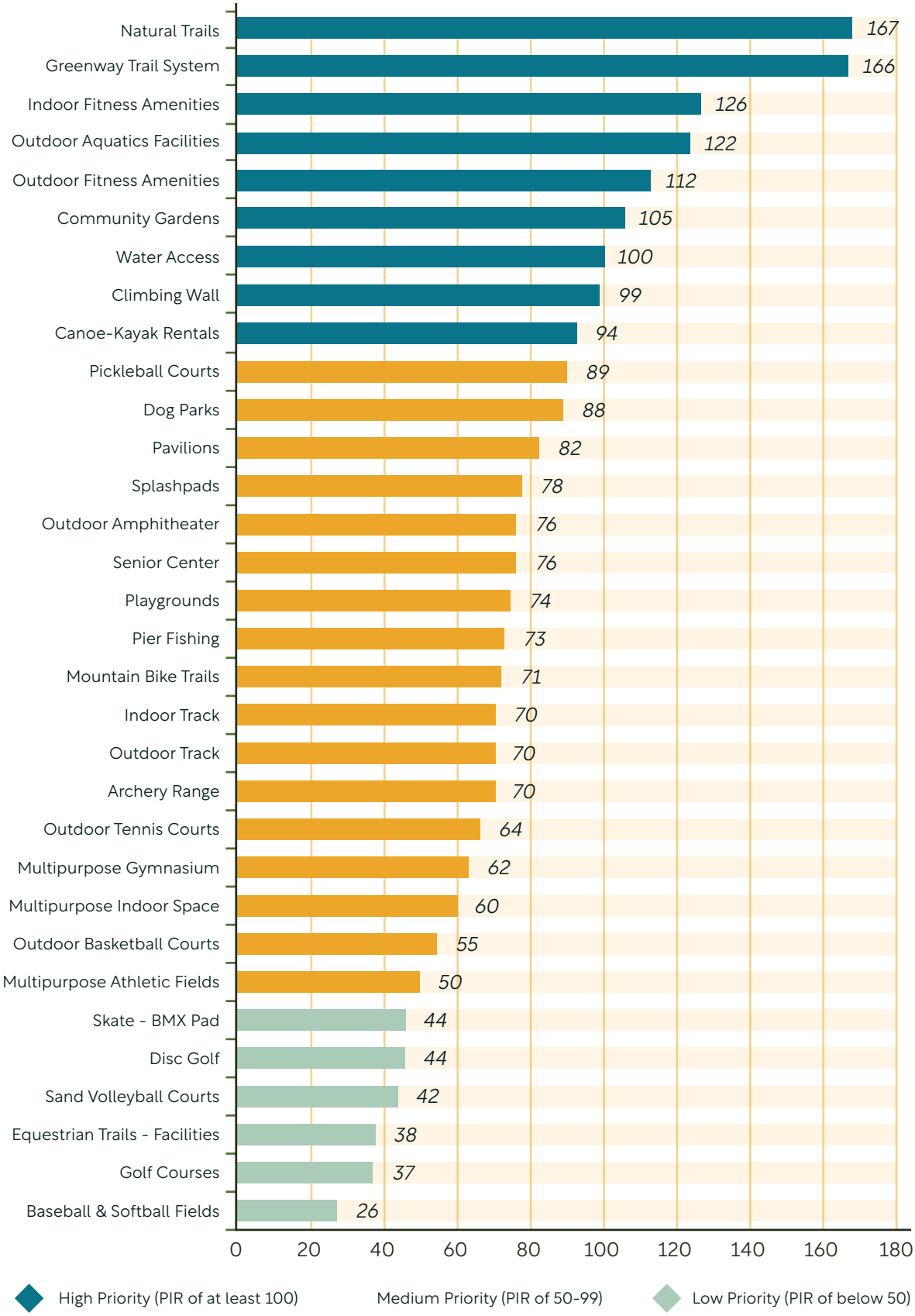
Traditional sports programs such as basketball, soccer, softball, and baseball, performed lower on the list. T-ball, tackle football, and cheerleading rank among the least popular, suggesting a shift in interest away from these traditional youth sports.

Overall, the findings reflect a community with diverse recreational interests, emphasizing fitness, wellness, cultural engagement, and outdoor activities. Programs catering to adults and seniors, along with those offering unique and interactive experiences, resonate most with the population. The lower demand for traditional sports suggests evolving preferences.



Kayaking at Southwest Park

Priorities for Recreational Facility & Amenity Investments



Additional Findings

Overview

The survey explored various aspects of parks, recreation facilities, and programming in Guilford County. Questions were designed to understand residents' visitation patterns, satisfaction levels, opinions on potential improvements, and preferences for funding these improvements. The survey also examined factors affecting park use and program participation and assessed satisfaction with recreation programming and departmental operations. The insights from these findings aim to enhance the overall recreational experience for residents and inform future decision-making processes within the Guilford County Parks Department.

Visitation & Satisfaction with Parks & Recreation Facilities

Residents were asked whether they had visited any of the 19 parks and preserves managed by the County in the past 12 months. These sites represent the full range of Guilford County's active and passive park offerings. Bur-Mil Park was the most frequently visited, with 61% of respondents, followed by Hagan Stone Park (33%) and Triad Park (31%).

Although the County's larger parks are well known, many residents indicated less familiarity with its passive parks and preserves. More than 30 percent of respondents said they did not know whether they were satisfied with several of these sites, which are smaller and less developed. This points to a continued lack of awareness and potential under-use of park preserves and natural areas.

Guilford County Parks has taken steps to address this by offering programs such as guided hikes, fishing trips, and other nature-based activities. While these efforts are worthwhile, the survey findings indicate that additional strategies may be needed to further increase awareness and utilization. Expanding marketing efforts, improving signage, and creating more community-driven events could enhance their visibility. Guilford County can ensure that residents have greater access to a wide range of outdoor experiences by continuing to promote visitation and use of all park types.

Factors Influencing Park Utilization & Participation

The most commonly cited factors that would encourage increased use included improved awareness of programs and events (52%) and better connectivity of greenway trails (41%).

The survey identified several factors that could enhance park usage. Increased awareness of available programs (52%), more trails (40%), and the addition of desired programs (34%) were the top factors that respondents felt would encourage greater use of parks and facilities. Barriers to park use included a lack of information about what is offered (52%), distance from home (34%), and busy schedules (33%). These insights highlight the importance of improving communication and accessibility to maximize community engagement with park resources.

Community Support for Improvements

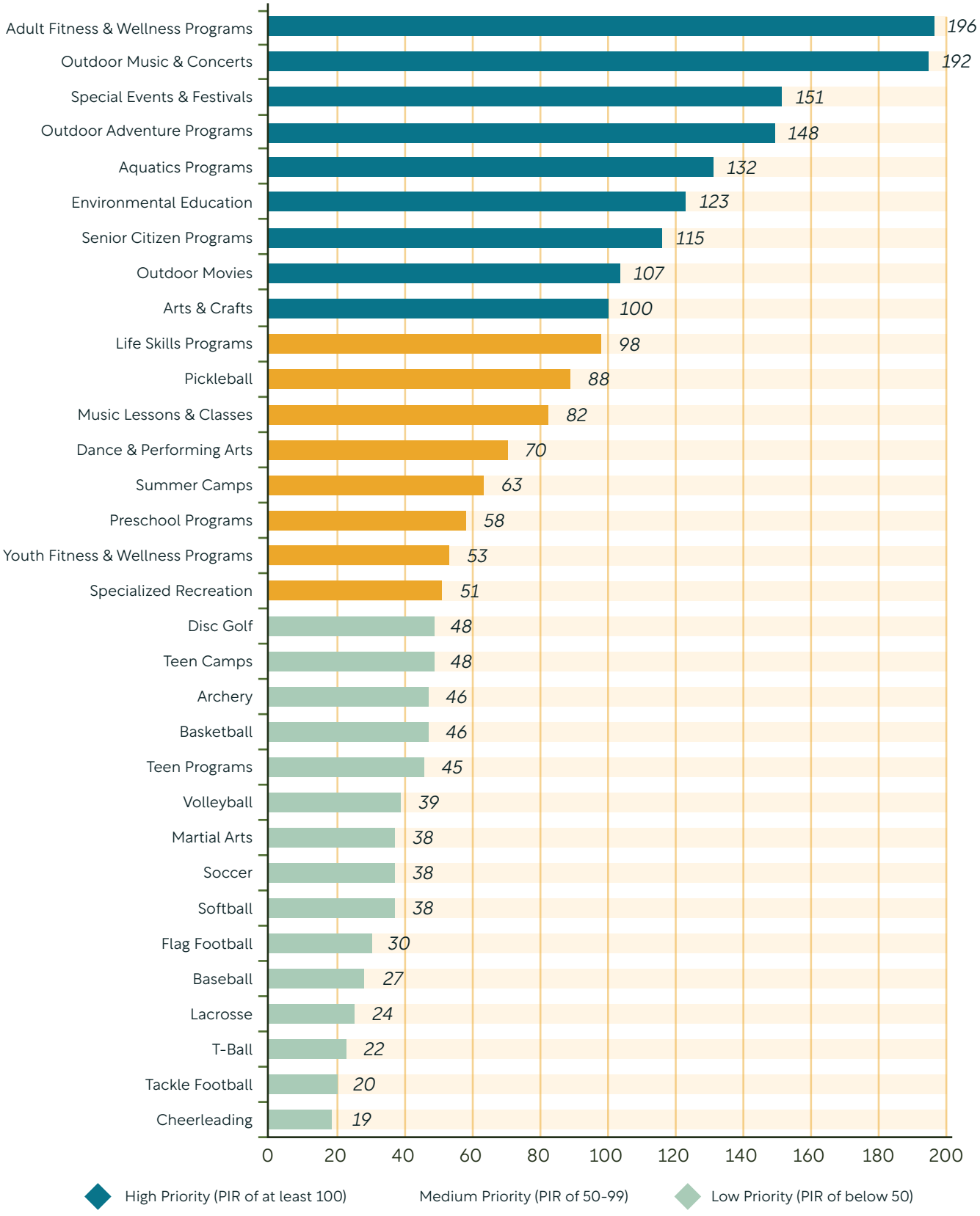
Respondents expressed strong support for specific improvements to the park system. The most popular initiatives included improving and enhancing existing parks and amenities (92%), developing greenway trails to connect parks and facilities (89%), and increasing the variety of programs available for teenagers (85%). These priorities indicate a community desire for a well-maintained, interconnected park system that offers diverse recreational opportunities.

There was broad support for financial measures to improve parks and recreation facilities. The preferred option was funding through a future bond financed within the existing property tax rate (46%). Additionally, many respondents emphasized the importance of creating connections and a sense of community (47%) and promoting health and wellness programming (46%) when considering investment priorities.

Other Parks & Recreation Agencies

The survey asked respondents which park and recreation agencies they use, revealing diverse usage patterns across Guilford County. The results show that residents do not rely solely on Guilford County parks but also utilize facilities provided by various agencies within and outside the County:

Priorities for Recreational Program & Activity Investments

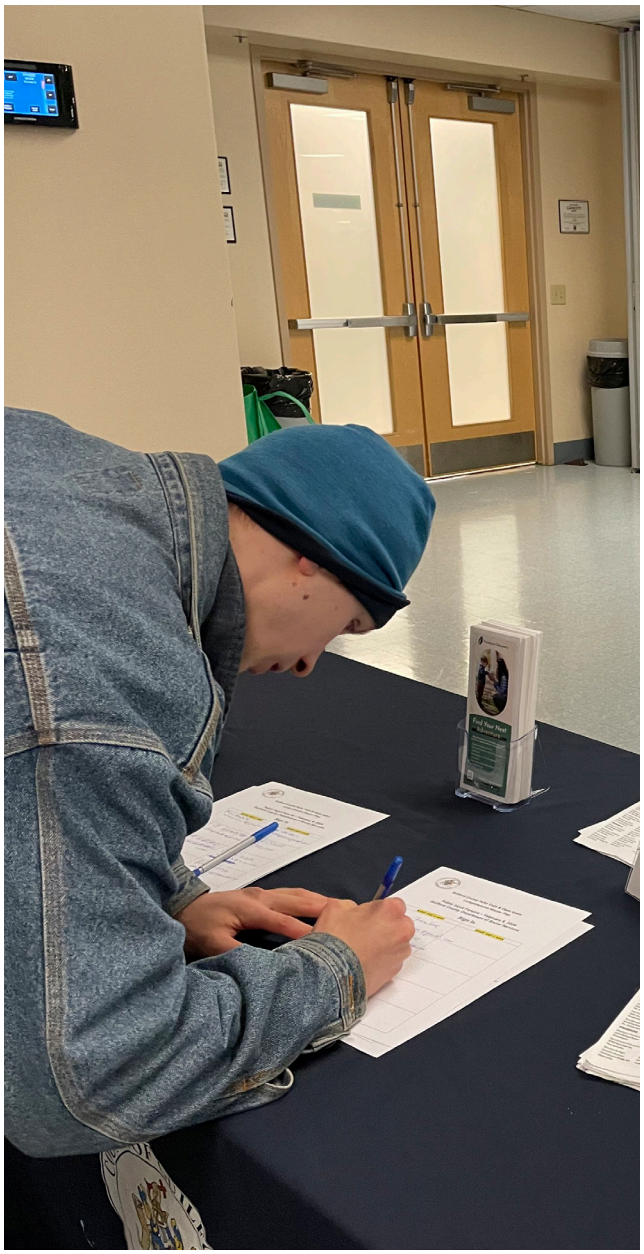




Lake Brandt Marina Trailhead

- **Guilford County Parks** - The parks are widely utilized, with 75% of respondents indicating they visit them regularly for recreation and leisure activities. This suggests a strong reliance on County-provided parks and recreation services.
- **City & Town Parks** - The survey found that Greensboro Parks & Recreation is used by 70% of respondents, followed by High Point Parks & Recreation at 31%. Parks in smaller towns like Jamestown (25%), Oak Ridge (16%), and Summerfield (16%) also see notable usage, reflecting the importance of municipal parks in meeting residents' recreational needs.
- **Other Providers** - In addition to public parks, many residents rely on other sources for recreation. One-quarter of survey respondents reported using private or non-profit facilities such as YMCAs. Another 15 percent said they use amenities provided by their neighborhood, homeowners' association, or subdivision. These responses suggest that a portion of the community meets its recreation needs through non-public providers, which may influence how residents perceive gaps in the County's park system.

Overall, findings indicate that while Guilford County parks are a primary resource for many residents, there is substantial use of recreation services offered by other providers. Such usage patterns point to the importance of collaboration between agencies and organizations to provide a comprehensive range of recreational opportunities. It also suggests that any future planning efforts should consider the interconnected nature of these services and the need for cohesive strategies that enhance access and connectivity across all types of recreational providers.



Open House - County Services

Public Opinion Survey

Overview

An 'opt-in' online survey was conducted s an additional public engagement opportunity. Instead of a random sample, this survey was open to all members of the Guilford County community, including non residents. Like the scientific survey, the goal of the public opinion survey was to collect input on how the County's parks, trails, and open spaces are used, and to gather insights into factors that limit participation.

Findings

Park & Preserve Usage: Bur-Mil Park emerged as the most frequently visited, with 61.1% of respondents indicating having visited in the past year, followed by Northeast Park (30%) and the Guilford County Farm (34.2%). Each of these three parks provide a wide range of recreational amenities and activities. In terms of visitation frequency, 32.4% of residents reported visiting parks 1-3 times per month, and 29.6% visited 2-4 times a week. These results offer a snapshot of how often residents engage with the County's park system and which sites attract the most use.

Agency Usage: Residents showed a strong preference for using Guilford County parks, with 90% of respondents indicating they regularly visit County facilities. Greensboro Parks & Recreation (71.1%) and High Point Parks & Recreation (32.1%) were also frequently used, reflecting the interjurisdictional nature of park and recreation use. The responses illustrate that while County parks are central to recreational life, residents also rely on municipal and regional facilities to meet their needs, suggesting a need for ongoing coordination between County and city-level parks systems.

Satisfaction & Barriers: When asked about their overall satisfaction with Guilford County Parks, 43.7% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the value provided, while 22.6% remained neutral, and a small percentage (4.2%) expressed dissatisfaction. Barriers to participation were primarily related to a lack of information (38.9%), suggesting that many residents are unaware of available programs and amenities. Additionally, the distance to facilities (25.8%) and busy schedules (23.2%) posed challenges.

Greenway & Trail Use: Greenways and natural trails were identified as top community priorities, with 66.8% of respondents naming the greenway system as a key amenity and 74.2% favoring natural trails for recreation. This reflects the growing demand for outdoor, nature-based activities that promote both health and connectivity within the County. However, some barriers to usage remain, with 38.4% citing connectivity issues, and 35.8% noting a lack of



Fox8 Interview with Dwight Godwin, Guilford Parks Department Director

time as reasons for underutilization. These findings suggest that expanding trail networks and improving their integration with neighborhoods and other parks could enhance public access and use.

Recreational Amenities & Facility Needs

Survey participants expressed interest in the development and enhancement of recreational amenities. Among the most requested were natural trails, greenways, indoor fitness facilities, alongside a significant demand for outdoor aquatic facilities. Multipurpose fields and updated playgrounds also emerged as important considerations. Lastly, the public expressed a desire for improved parking and restroom facilities, consistent with broader interest in well-maintained spaces that can support a range of activities.

Recreational Programs

Outdoor music and concerts (32.1%), outdoor adventure programs (31.1%), and environmental education programs (25.3%) ranked among the most valued recreational offerings. There was also significant interest in adult fitness and wellness programs (23.2%), as well as family-oriented events such as festivals and special gatherings (22%).

Willingness to Support Funding

Residents displayed moderate support for funding park improvements through tax increases, with 23.7% of respondents very willing to support maintenance and enhancement of existing parks, and 22.6% willing to fund new recreational facility development. These results suggest a community that recognizes the value of the parks system but may require further communication to increase support for more significant investments. Donations or user fees were less favored, with only 12.6% of respondents expressing a strong willingness to contribute in this manner, indicating that more formal funding structures would be necessary to support long-term improvements.

Pop Up Meetings

Overview

Pop-up meetings—informal outreach sessions held in high-traffic public spaces—were conducted at festivals, park openings, government buildings, and community centers to gather feedback from a broader audience in a casual, accessible setting. Setting up in highly frequented locations like the Greensboro Coliseum Complex or the High Point Public Library ensured a broader representation of community voices, including those less familiar with the parks and recreation system.

The pop-up activities took place from the beginning of the project through the end of community engagement phase one. Feedback was collected using interactive boards and in conversations with Guilford County staff and the project team. The interactive boards asked what people enjoy doing at Guilford County parks, their top community values, top recreational needs, and greenway and trail needs.

Six meetings were held across the following locations and events:

- **Bur-Mil Fall Fest** – Bur-Mil Park – Fall 2023
- **Peeler Recreation Center** – Southeast Greensboro – Fall 2023
- **High Point Public Library** – High Point – Fall 2023
- **Guilford County Department of Social Services** – Greensboro – Winter 2023
- **HAECO Invitational Tournament** – Greensboro Coliseum Complex – Winter 2023
- **Martin Luther King Jr. Worship Service** – High Point University – Winter 2024

Findings

Feedback from the pop-up meetings highlighted recurring themes related to community values, amenity preferences, and use of greenways and trails. Many participants pointed to the role of parks and recreation in supporting health, learning opportunities, and broad access to services. Comments also reflected interest in expanding indoor and outdoor facilities, improving connections between parks and trails, and upgrading amenities to enhance the overall experience. These findings offer useful guidance for future planning across the Guilford County park system.

Community Values

Public input reflected strong support for the following values in shaping the future of parks and recreation. Health and wellness, education, and accessibility emerged as the most frequently cited values.

1. Health & Wellness – Mentioned as the top priority for the role parks play in supporting active lifestyles and mental well-being.
2. Education & Learning – Cited as the second-most important value for its role in providing opportunities to explore, discover, and grow.
3. Accessibility (Equity & Inclusion) – Recognized as the third-ranking value for its importance in making parks, programs, and public spaces welcoming and accessible to all.

Recreational Amenities & Facilities

Public input revealed strong preferences for indoor and nature-based amenities. The following were the three most frequently cited facility types:

1. Indoor Aquatics Centers – Commonly requested across multiple engagement locations as a way to expand year-round water access.
2. Multipurpose Community Centers – Frequently mentioned for their potential to support a wide range of indoor programs and activities.
3. Nature Play Areas & Nature Trails – Cited often by residents seeking more natural, unstructured play and exploration opportunities within parks.

Greenways & Trails

Trails and greenways emerged as a major focus during engagement. The top three uses and priorities included:

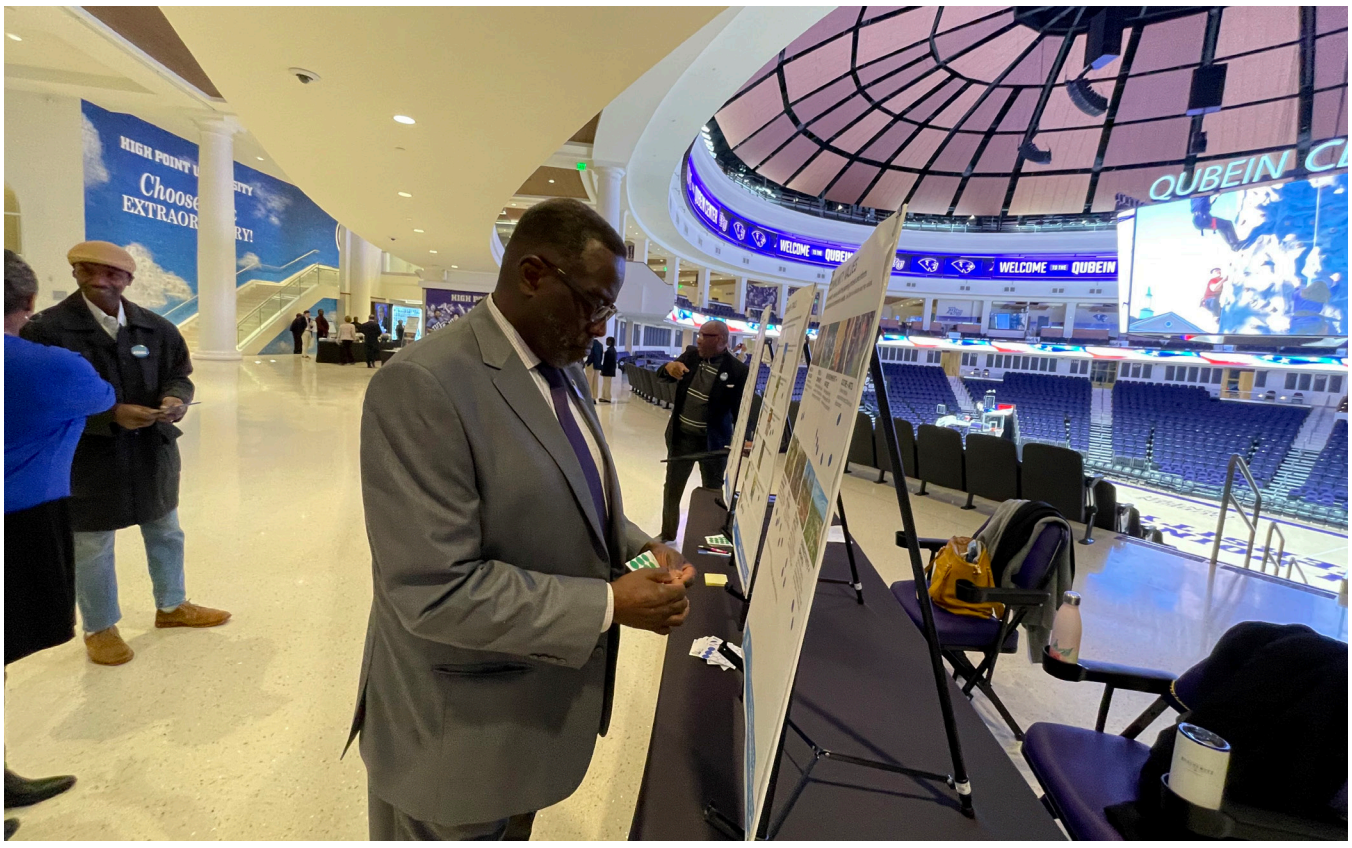
1. Walking on Paved & Unpaved Paths – Identified as the most common use of trails, reflecting widespread demand for both paved and natural surfaces.
2. Connecting with Nature – Many participants valued trails for the opportunity to experience nature, with a preference for routes that offer a more scenic or peaceful setting.
3. Biking on Paved Trails – Frequently mentioned as a priority, with calls for expanding safe, bike-friendly connections throughout the county.

The feedback from the pop-up meetings provided a clear picture of the community's priorities for the future of Guilford County's parks and trails system. Participants emphasized health and wellness, education, and accessibility as key values, along with a strong interest in expanding indoor and outdoor facilities, improving trail connections, and increasing accessibility across the park system.

Open-ended comments reinforced these priorities, with specific suggestions for improving maintenance, safety, and inclusive access, as well as preserving the County's natural spaces.



Pop Up Meeting at Guilford County Services Center



Pop Up Meeting at Greensboro Coliseum

Countywide Public Input Meetings

Overview

The open house engagement meetings provided a more formal setting for community feedback, allowing participants to engage directly with Guilford County parks and recreation staff and the project team. These events, which attracted over 150 attendees, were structured to offer an overview of the process followed by interactive sessions. During the open houses participants were invited to visit various stations focusing on key topics such as community values, recreation amenity and program needs, greenway and trail needs, and existing park enhancement ideas

Findings

Participants echoed many of the priorities identified in the pop-up meetings, including a strong focus on health and wellness, lifelong learning, and ensuring access to parks. Additionally, attendees stressed the importance of enhancing connectivity between parks through greenways, expanding both indoor and outdoor recreational facilities, and providing more inclusive and accessible spaces for diverse user groups.

Community Values

1. Environment & Nature – Participants highlighted the importance of protecting natural spaces and maintaining greenways and trails.

2. Personal & Community Health – There was a strong focus on the role parks play in enhancing both physical and mental health.

3. Connectivity & Growth / Equity & Inclusion – Participants valued creating connected spaces through greenways and providing access to parks for all residents, including underserved communities.

Recreational Amenities & Facilities

1. Greenways & Trails – expanding and maintaining trail networks for walking, biking, and other outdoor activities was the top priority.

2. Mountain Bike Trails – The need for more trails specifically designed for mountain biking was frequently mentioned.

3. Paddling Access – Many participants expressed a desire for more water-based recreation, including expanded access for paddling.

Greenway & Trail Use

1. Biking – A common use for paved and unpaved trails, highlighting the need for dedicated biking infrastructure.

2. Hiking – Many participants indicated they use trails for hiking and connecting with nature.

3. Commute to Work or School – There was an interest in using greenways for commuting.

Greenway & Trail Features

1. Greenway & Trail Connections – Creating a cohesive, connected trail network across the County, particularly connecting parks and regional trails.

2. Commute to Work or School – Ensuring trails can be used as viable transportation routes for commuting.

3. Maps & Directional Signage – Participants valued clear signage and trail maps to enhance the user experience.

Existing Guilford County Park Improvements

Understanding the perceived improvement needs at existing parks is significant as Guilford County looks to maximize the impact of its parks and recreation investments. Findings from the scientific survey revealed that the majority of households prefer the County focus on enhancing and maintaining existing parks rather than building new ones. . By identifying

key opportunities for improvement, the County can prioritize upgrades to ensure parks remain well-utilized, maintained, and responsive to community needs.

Bicentennial Greenway

- **Maintenance:** A need for regular maintenance to address issues to ensure the greenway is physically safe was a top concern. Maintenance plans were suggested to monitor and fix hazards.
- **Safety & Connectivity:** Participants emphasized the importance of improving wayfinding, and enhancing safety for cyclists. The need to create connections between greenways to minimize biking in high-traffic areas was also highlighted.
- **Infrastructure Improvements:** Suggested improvements included better signage at the Bicentennial entrance, spurs to connect neighborhoods, and the completion of the greenway. Participants also advocated for safe street crossings, and the addition of year-round open restrooms and water stations.

Bur-Mil Park

- **Trail Improvements:** There were calls to improve the park's big loop for cross-country running, including addressing issues with tree roots. Additionally, replacing or repairing the greenway bridge was seen as a priority.
- **Lighting & Usage Hours:** Suggestions included extending park hours with better lighting for tennis and pickleball courts to allow longer use in the evenings.
- **Additional Features:** Participants expressed interest in developing a speed track on the greenway bridge, as well as a bike rental shop similar to The Bike Library in Raleigh.

Guilford County Farm

- **Basic Amenities:** The need for basic amenities like restrooms was mentioned, as well as the potential to introduce more community events and activities to increase visibility and visitation.
- **New Features:** Suggestions included developing a native plant/grass prairie and creating a trail connection to Northeast Park.
- **Trails:** Participants noted the lack of bike trails and suggested they be added of to the park.



Bicentennial Greenway



Bur-Mil Park Driving Range

Gibson Park

- **Biking & Walking Trails:** There were suggestions to open the park to mountain biking and to add a pump track. Participants also wanted better signage for connecting trails and for areas designated as walking-only trails.

Hagan-Stone Park

- **Cycling Accessibility:** The need for road trails for safe cycling was emphasized, as well as a call for adaptive cycling trails. Connectivity to the Bicentennial Greenway was also prioritized.

Northeast Park

- **Signage & Connectivity:** Improving trail signage to clearly designate usage was identified as a priority. There was also a request to connect the park to Bold Moon and Hines Chapel Preserves to complete the Mountains-to-Sea Trail (MST).

Southwest Park

- **Trail Connectivity:** Participants requested better connectivity between Southwest Park and the Deep River State Trail, to expand usage.



Hagan-Stone Park



Southwest Park

Interjurisdictional Meeting

Overview

During the winter of 2024, representatives from Guilford County's 12 municipalities as well as the City of Burlington (Alamance County), and Forsyth County met to discuss the Parks, Trails, and Open Space Comprehensive Plan. The focus of the meeting was to share experiences, discuss current conditions and enhance collaboration.

Guilford County's Parks & Recreation Landscape

Participants highlighted the variety of amenities and activities available across Guilford County as significant contributors to residents' quality of life. The extensive network of trails, connecting parts of the County, was particularly noted for providing and flexible recreational opportunities for all user types.

The importance of ensuring access to parks throughout the entire County, including rural areas was notes. The group advocated for expanding partnerships with public and private organizations to enhance the County's recreational offerings and resources. Extending existing greenways and trails was seen as a way to attract more users.

Participation Barriers

During the interjurisdictional meeting, attendees discussed several barriers that may prevent residents from participating in parks and recreation activities. One key issue identified was geographical access; there is a need for more accessible facilities throughout all areas of the County, including rural regions. This disparity means some residents do not have parks or recreational facilities nearby, which makes participation more challenging.

Additionally, a lack of awareness about the available parks, trails, and programs was highlighted as a significant barrier. Many residents might not know what is available.

The group acknowledged that park and recreation fees could be a barrier to participation for many households. They suggested using data to help determine fair fee structures and recommended working with local schools, non-profits, and other organizations that serve families to evaluate residents' ability to pay. Challenges in setting equitable fees, was recognized as a concern, especially when collaborating with private providers.

Safety concerns were also raised, with some participants noting that issues related to safety in parks and along trails could deter people from using these spaces. Ensuring that parks are safe and well-maintained is key to encouraging more participation. , Transportation issues were recognized as a barrier, particularly for those without personal vehicles or easy access to public transportation. Improving transportation links to parks and recreation facilities could help make these areas more accessible to all residents.

Lastly, communication and the effective dissemination of information were also noted as critical factors. The group emphasized the importance of using technology, such as websites and social media, to better inform the public about the offerings. Another barrier mentioned was scheduling conflicts, as many residents, especially those with families or busy work schedules, may find it difficult to participate due to time constraints.

Utilizing Technology & Innovation

There was a strong consensus that technology plays a vital role in enhancing communication and access to parks and recreation information. The group discussed the success of using websites and social media to share information and agreed on the need to further explore technological innovations to coordinate and disseminate information about facilities and programming. Increasing the use of technology to assist residents in accessing information was identified as a growing need.

Focus Group Meetings

Overview

Focus group meetings provide a way to receive input from groups with interests that complement the agency. Guided discussions included opportunities to work toward a well-rounded park system that embraces a shared set of values. Participants responded from their unique positions, expressing their needs, wants and concerns, as well as the needs of the people they represent. Each group added value to the overall community

Individuals representing trails and greenways, specialized/adaptive recreation, and participated in the discussions which took place in late January 2024. The meetings began with an overview of the Guilford County Parks, Trails and Open Space Plan, followed by a series of questions used to guide conversation.

1. What positive attributes of Guilford County's parks, trails and open space system contribute most significantly to your community's quality of life?
2. What actions do you perceive as necessary to strengthen these positive attributes?
3. What are some of the barriers to taking the actions you have identified?
4. What new, expanded, or enhanced parks and recreational amenities would encourage you and members of your community to engage with the Guilford County parks, trails and open space system more frequently?
5. What new, expanded, or enhanced recreation programs or activities would encourage you and members of your community to engage with the Guilford County parks, trails and open space system more frequently?

Trails Focus Group

Overview

The trails advocacy focus group consisted of individuals and organizations supporting development and access of trail types ranging from paved walking/running, biking to natural surface equestrian trails. The group discussed several issues and the importance of planning for future uses.

Strongest Assets

Participants identified several key assets of Guilford County's park, trails, and open space system that significantly enhance the community's quality of life. They praised the variety of trails, which offer different experiences and are well-distributed geographically. The diverse types of trails, including both paved and non-paved options, cater to a range of activities such as walking, running, biking, and even equestrian use. The trails also provide critical access to large open spaces and connect various neighborhoods, which supports commuting and environmental education. The group acknowledged the efforts of dedicated staff who maintain trails and greenways, ensuring they are safe and available for all residents.

Park System Enhancement Opportunities

Opportunities for enhancing the system included focusing on the preservation of green spaces, particularly in the face of ongoing development pressures. The completion of the master plan was seen as essential for documenting future trail and greenway needs and facilitating partnerships and collaboration with supporting organizations.

Barriers

Several barriers to enhancement were noted, such as the lack of dedicated funding, which could limit the implementation of improvements. Development pressures and staff shortages were also identified as challenges that could impact the long-term viability of public access to parks and trails.



Interjurisdictional Meeting

Recreation Program & Amenity Needs

The trails and greenways focus group participants recommended enhancements and new amenities such as coordinated branding for signage, better trail mapping, as well as the use of technology to improve online platforms and communication. The group emphasized the need for more bathrooms along trails, increased parking options—including bike parking—and ongoing marketing efforts to raise awareness about available trail amenities. They additionally suggested expanding recreational activities, partnering with other collaborators, and installing park rangers on site to enhance the visitor experience.

Economic Impact Group: Parks, Recreation, Open Space, Trails, Amenities & Facilities

Overview

Many local governments rely on parks and recreation facilities to generate revenue by attracting overnight visitors. The current focus group was made up of individuals and representatives from a number of organizations that sponsor or support sporting events held at Guilford County's parks and amenities. Insights from this discussion highlighted the importance of strategic planning and collaboration to maximize the benefits of Guilford County's parks, trails, and open spaces, ensuring they continue to serve as valuable assets and economic drivers.

Strongest Assets

Participants emphasized their appreciation for the extensive acreage available for parks in Guilford County. This abundance of space supports a wide range of recreational opportunities and contributes significantly to the quality of life by attracting regional visitors and hosting large-scale events.

Park System Enhancement Opportunities

Participants suggested several key actions including dedicating resources to facility maintenance, improving marketing efforts to increase public awareness of park offerings, and conducting more outreach to gather public input on parks and recreation needs.

Barriers

The group identified several barriers to implementing the recommended enhancements. Bureaucratic challenges and a lack of collaboration with stakeholders were seen as significant obstacles. Additionally, there was a concern about the lack of clarity regarding timetables for improvements. Participants viewed this as a reactive rather than proactive approach, and agreed that the Guilford County Parks, Trails and Open Space plan would be beneficial for guiding future developments and overcoming these challenges.

Recreation Program & Amenity Needs

The group discussed several amenities that could encourage more frequent use of Guilford County's parks and facilities. They suggested the need for better soccer fields, particularly in the northeast part of the County, alongside the installation of synthetic turf to improve playing conditions. Lighting for pickleball courts, covered areas, and extended hours were also recommended. Updating playgrounds and equipment was seen as important for attracting families and improving overall park appeal.

To boost park visitation, participants emphasized expanding and enhancing recreational activities and services. Popular activities such as pickleball, disc golf, and cross-country running were identified as areas with potential for growth. Additionally, there was a call for increased support in organizing sports events, with an emphasis on establishing effective public-private partnerships to support specific sports and recreation interests.

Adaptive & Specialized Recreation Group

Overview

The specialized recreation focus group discussion centered on learning how to design park amenities and recreational opportunities that ensure equal access to environments, information, and activities, regardless of abilities. Participants included individuals from organizations that serve youth and adults who require special accommodations. The discussion focused on how to create more accessible facilities and amenities that cater to a wide range of abilities.



Trailhead Sign at Gibson Park

Strongest Assets

Participants identified several positive attributes of Guilford County's parks, trails, and open spaces that contribute significantly to the community's quality of life. Key strengths included providing opportunities for fitness and wellness, access to natural and beautiful open spaces, and specific facilities like Bur-Mil Park, which are beneficial for children. The group also appreciated the wheelchair accessibility of certain parks and the availability of parking for trail access,

Park System Enhancement Opportunities

The group suggested implementing foam padding in playgrounds for safety, ensuring smooth and accessible surfaces for wheelchairs, and accommodating walkers and canes. They also highlighted the importance of good lighting, especially in the evening, to enhance accessibility and safety.

Barriers

Barriers to implementing suggested improvements were noted. These included issues with trail surfaces that are not always suitable for wheelchairs, particularly for those using motorized wheelchairs, which are heavier and require more maintenance. Participants also noted a lack of accessible bathrooms for larger children and adults requiring care, as well as a need for working water fountains, and shaded areas.

Recreation Program & Amenity Needs

To encourage more frequent use of the County's facilities, participants recommended enhanced amenities, such as light-sensitive screened areas, and interactive activities that allow children of all abilities to play together. They expressed a desire for more parks like the City of Greensboro's Keely Park, which features inclusive playgrounds with different types of swings that cater to various needs.

Suggestions also included installing canopies over playgrounds to provide shade, creating water park or splash pad areas that accommodate wheelchairs, and ensuring the availability of numerous water fountains.

The group emphasized the need for programming catering to adults with different abilities, as well as adaptive sports. They suggested using touch vision boards to help individuals identify activities and recommended providing options for those who cannot voice their preferences.

Stakeholder Group Listening Sessions

Guilford County Parks Staff

Management Staff

Overview: To gain a deeper understanding of the operational challenges and opportunities within the park system, Guilford County Parks conducted a staff listening session with the Parks Management Division. This division oversees the county's five regional parks, the Guilford County Farm, and various park preserves. The staff members manage daily operations, budget planning, and employee supervision, making their firsthand experiences invaluable.

Staff's feedback highlighted the need for stronger community connections, enhanced engagement strategies, and strategic improvements to park assets. Addressing these areas, along with effective resource allocation and leadership, is essential for the continued success of the parks system.

The listening sessions revealed a set of key themes that reflect the values and visions of the department, which are crucial in These themes capture the strengths, opportunities, and challenges that exist within the system and guide the development of the Parks, Trails, and Open Space Plan.

Community Connections: Staff noted the importance of strong community connections in the success of the system. There was a recognition of the central role that parks play in the community, serving as essential public services that enhance the quality of life for residents. The ability to effectively engage and connect with the community was highlighted as a critical asset. However, there was also a noted gap in community engagement efforts, with many participants expressing that they missed opportunities to engage. Outreach and communication, educating the community about available resources, and involving local advocate groups were seen as ways to strengthen connections.

Elevated Park & Recreational Experience: The department's natural resource and outdoor recreation assets, particularly its recreational waters were identified by staff as significant strengths. The lakes and ponds found across Guilford County's park system provide valuable recreational opportunities.

Similarly, the commitment and passion of the staff, who have maintained progress despite limited resources, were seen as a critical factor in the department's success. To further elevate the park experience, staff members emphasized the need to set clear goals. They also highlighted the importance of adhering to national standards for trail systems and integrating these into the broader parks framework. .

Empowerment & Resource Allocation: The sessions highlighted the necessity of empowering staff and ensuring adequate resource allocation to maintain and improve the parks and recreation system. Proactive and supportive leadership was identified as vital to the department's long-term success, with a focus on maintaining continuity and developing staff capabilities. Participants noted the importance of having a clear understanding of what it takes to run and maintain parks, particularly among decision-makers. To that end, staff suggested for more consistent involvement and engagement from County Commissioners, who play a significant role in funding and decision-making.

Maintenance Staff

Overview: Feedback from the Parks Maintenance Division provided insights into the operational challenges experienced by maintenance teams responsible for ensuring that Guilford County's parks are safe, clean, and functional. These teams include park supervisors and ground technicians critical to maintaining the infrastructure, landscaping, facilities, and overall appearance of the parks. Overall, the feedback from maintenance staff highlights the need

for clearer standards, better resource allocation, and stronger leadership to support them.

As with staff from the Guilford County Parks Administrative Division, listening sessions with the Park Maintenance Division revealed several key themes related to daily operations, resource constraints, and opportunities for system-wide improvement. The following themes reflect the main areas of focus and concern raised by maintenance staff during the listening sessions.

Technical & Operational Challenges: One of the main themes highlighted was the uncertainty around maintenance standards and budgeting. Maintenance staff expressed a lack of clarity about replacement standards and lifecycle plans. This uncertainty extends to the systemwide maintenance budget, making it difficult to plan and execute necessary upkeep and repairs. According to staff, the absence of a formal maintenance standards manual adds to the inconsistency in practices, potentially affecting the quality and efficiency of park maintenance.

Resource Limitations & Needs: Maintenance staff identified several resource limitations, including a limited budget for small equipment and the need for a streamlined system that allows staff to purchase necessary materials and equipment independently. A lack of technical training available for equipment repairs was also noted as potentially creating a gap in skills development that could improve maintenance operations. The feedback also noted understaffing issues, with a particular need for more full-time trained staff. Part-time staff play a vital role, but there is recognition that competitive wages and better work culture incentives are needed to retain and attract employees.

Public Perception & Expectations: Staff recognized the possibility that a disconnect exists between public expectations and the realities of park maintenance. The public often does not understand the budget constraints and operational limitations faced by the parks department. Some residents mistakenly believe that County parks are managed by other municipalities, such as Greensboro or High Point, leading to misconceptions about service delivery and responsibility. Addressing these perceptions through better communication and transparency could help align public expectations with what the parks maintenance teams can realistically achieve.

Administration Staff

Overview: The Administration Division of the Guilford County Parks Department oversees the operations and management of the entire parks system. It includes key staff members such as the Parks Director, Assistant Parks Director, Marketing and Events Coordinator, and Property Management Specialist. Several 30-hour part-time positions also provide essential support. This is the Division that plays the central role



Maintenance Staff

in the overall function of the parks system by coordinating efforts across departments and maintaining essential infrastructure and services for both staff and visitors. A dedicated listening session with administrative staff highlighted several key themes: event planning and execution, administrative support, public engagement and communication, and resource allocation, engagement and communication, and resource allocation. Staff emphasized the importance of efficient event planning, adequate administrative capacity, and clear communication with the public. They also noted that limited resources affect the division's ability to support broader departmental goals, enhance the public's experience, and strengthen the delivery of programs and events.

Event Planning & Execution: A major focus of the session was the planning and coordination of special events. The Marketing and Events Coordinator, along with part-time staff, is responsible for organizing community events that increase public interaction with the parks. Staff discussed challenges related to logistics, scheduling, and the day-of execution of events. Feedback emphasized the need for clear communication, adequate staffing, and stronger cross-division support to ensure events run smoothly and meet community expectations.

Administrative Support Challenges: Part-time administrative employees discussed ongoing challenges in supporting departmental leadership, including workload management, scheduling conflicts, and inefficiencies in handling registrations and reservations. They shared the need for improved tools and processes, particularly during peak seasons or when managing high volumes of users and event participants. Additional training and system improvements were identified as potential ways to increase efficiency and reduce strain on limited staff capacity.

Public Engagement & Communication: Staff emphasized the importance of effective public engagement as a key part of their roles. Discussions focused on strategies to increase public awareness of park events and amenities through marketing tools, social media, and other outreach methods. Staff also identified challenges in communicating the value of parks, addressing public misconceptions, and keeping event and program information accurate and accessible across all platforms.

Resource Allocation & Staffing Needs: Staff discussed concerns related to staffing levels and limited resources. The part-time nature of many positions was identified as a constraint, with several employees expressing a need for increased hours or additional support to meet workload demands. Conversations also addressed the difficulty of balancing administrative responsibilities with the expectation to deliver high-quality service to the public and provide support for programs and events.



Guided Hike at Southwest Park

Parks & Recreation Advisory Commission

Overview

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission plays a role in shaping the future of Guilford County's parks, trails, and open spaces. The Commission serves as a bridge between the community and the parks department, providing insights into the interests and needs of local citizens. Parks Commission members actively engage with the community to ensure that the planning process accurately captures the desires and priorities of residents.

The Commission's input provides a grassroots perspective on what makes the parks and recreation system successful and where improvements are needed. Members provide a direct line to community sentiment, highlighting the strengths of the current system, identifying areas that require enhancement, and recognizing barriers to progress.

During the listening session Commission members provided insights into the County's parks, trails, and open space system. They highlighted the variety of park types and amenities, the extensive network of trails and greenways, and the dedication of Guilford County staff as key strengths.

Strongest Assets

Commission members noted the variety of park types and amenities as a major strength of the County's parks, trails, and open space system. They noted that the diversity of park sizes, urban and rural settings, and both formal and informal programming offers a wide range of opportunities for residents. Members viewed the trail and greenway system as a major asset, emphasizing the importance of connections to communities and amenities to improve access and appeal for a wide range of users. Additionally, the dedication and hard work of the parks and recreation staff were recognized as vital to the success of the Department and to the system overall.

Actions to Strengthen Assets

Commission members identified several key actions to enhance Guilford County's parks, trails and open space system. Increasing financial resources was a top priority, as members felt that the department, being relatively new, requires more funding to fully support and sustain its parks and recreation activities. Enhanced marketing efforts were also emphasized, with a focus on increasing awareness of the department's offerings through targeted communication tools. Members suggested that, to avoid confusion marketing should clearly differentiate between the County's parks and those of other municipalities, such as Greensboro. The need for additional staff, both full-time and part-time, was highlighted to handle the growing interest in park facilities and to ensure consistent maintenance.

Barriers to Improvement

The primary barrier to improvement identified by Commission members was a lack of funding, underscoring the need for an annual budget dedicated to parks and recreation. They also suggested exploring partnerships with non-profits and other organizations to maximize resources. Additionally, the challenge of effective marketing was noted, with members pointing out that many residents and stakeholders are unaware of all the department's offerings. They recommended conducting outreach campaigns and using tools like surveys to better understand park user experiences and interests.

Community Engagement Phase 2: Loop Back

Overview

As planning efforts progress, it is important to re-engage key stakeholders—such as Guilford County park staff and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission—to review and validate early findings. Revisiting data from the park inventory, system-wide evaluations, and community engagement efforts ensures that observations are accurate and that no important insights have been missed.

Findings

Guilford County Parks Staff Feedback

Over the course of two meetings held at Bur-Mil Park, Guilford County Parks staff offered meaningful feedback on the preliminary findings across all areas of the plan, including parks, programs, operations, and trails. Staff expressed appreciation for the progress made and showed strong interest in how public and stakeholder feedback would be incorporated into the plan's recommendations and action items.

The following themes captured the sentiment expressed by the staff.

Excitement & Optimism

- Staff responses included words like "excited," "optimistic," "inspiring," and "empowering."
- Overall, the findings and progress made so far were well-received and appreciated by staff.

Citizen Collaboration

- There was a clear interest in how public feedback will continue to shape the next steps of the project.
- Staff asked about the number of scientific surveys and whether there would be more opportunities for public input moving forward.

Eagerness & Energy

- While enthusiasm was prevalent, there was also a sense of anticipation about how the findings would shape future developments.
- Staff expressed excitement about the timeline for implementing the project and what progress would follow the findings.

Parks & Recreation Advisory Commission Feedback

Facts First

- The Commission showed strong interest in the results of the statistically valid survey, particularly the public's willingness to fund parks.
- Members emphasized the importance of using data to present a clear case to the County Board of Commissioners.

Transparency & Translation

- The Board highlighted the need for clear communication with the public throughout the project, stressing the importance of transparency.
- They recommended updating the project website to reflect completed community engagement and keep the public informed.

Sensible Scaling

- The Board raised concerns about the finding that no additional parkland would be necessary, considering the County's rapid growth.
- Members pointed to upcoming manufacturing developments as factors that could impact future parkland needs.

Overall, the feedback gathered from both Guilford County Parks staff and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission demonstrates a shared enthusiasm for the project's progress and a commitment to ensuring that community input is thoughtfully integrated into the planning process. Staff expressed optimism and anticipation for how the findings will shape future developments, with a strong desire for continued public engagement and clarity on next steps. The Advisory Commission emphasized the importance of data-driven decision-making, transparent communication, and addressing concerns around future parkland needs given the County's growth. The project team presented the draft recommendations in an open house format.

Recommendations Open House

The event welcomed a total of twenty-five participants, where most attendees reported learning about the project through social media channels. Among the participants, few had previously engaged in meetings or surveys related to the process. Notably, the Guilford County Manager, one former Advisory Committee member, and two staff members from the City of Greensboro Parks and Recreation were present. Feedback from several attendees reflected appreciation for the content of the boards and the opportunity to gain insight into the foundation of the plan and the decision-making process. The primary area of interest for attendees was trails, making the corresponding board the main focal point of discussion. The former Advisory Committee member in attendance requested the opportunity to submit additional comments and lines for the trail board, and the team agreed to accept those contributions.









Needs Assessment





Parks Assessment

Overview

High-functioning park systems provide a foundation for active living, social connection, and time spent in nature. Recreational amenities such as trails, sports courts, playgrounds, picnic shelters, and water access points support a wide range of activities that bring people into shared spaces and promote healthy lifestyles. Park access also contributes to a healthier, more connected community by making recreation a visible and accessible part of daily life.

These benefits have lasting impacts. Communities with strong park systems tend to be more connected, resilient, and engaged. Well-maintained parks reflect a local government's commitment to quality of life and contribute to a strong sense of identity and civic pride among residents.

To sustain the value parks bring to communities, it is essential that these spaces are consistently maintained and remain welcoming to all users. Too often, the initial development of a park is not supported by a long-term strategy for upkeep. Without adequate maintenance, the quality of park spaces can decline—diminishing their safety, usability, and appeal. Ensuring that parks continue to meet community needs over time depends on reliable funding, sufficient staffing, and a clear commitment to high standards of care.

Building on this understanding, a thorough assessment of the park system is necessary to identify areas for improvement and inform effective maintenance strategies. The process begins with a detailed inventory of all parks, facilities, and recreational amenities.

Following the inventory, each site is evaluated to determine the condition of its assets and whether they are meeting community needs. This includes identifying upgrades, replacements, or enhancements that may be required. The findings are then synthesized to reveal system-wide themes that reflect the overall character and functionality of the park system.

Inventory

The inventory phase documents all parks, facilities, and recreational amenities in the system, creating a baseline for further evaluation.

Parks Assessment

Each park and its amenities and facilities are observed to determine their current condition and functionality.

Themes

Identifying key themes from the synthesized inventory and assessments helps capture the overall character of the park system, informing strategic decisions and future improvements.

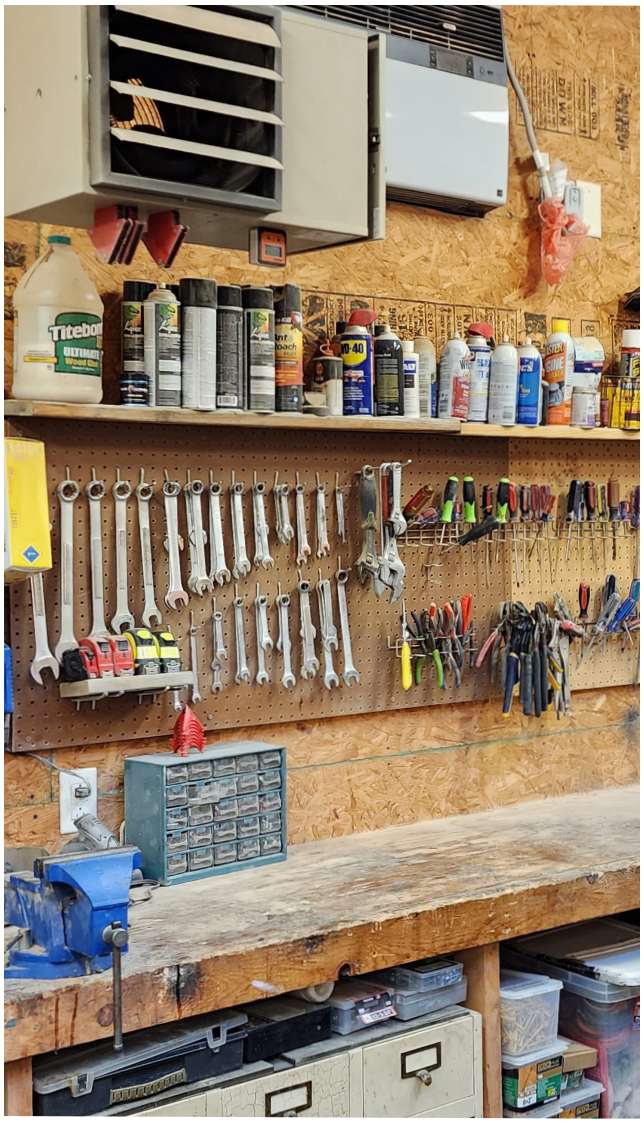
Approach

The current parks assessment combines both quantitative and qualitative observations to evaluate the overall quality of Guilford County's park system. This includes a systemwide inventory of parks and facilities, individual park assessments, and the identification of key themes based on observed conditions. Together, these elements reveal how well the system is functioning and where improvements are most needed.

Traditional park assessments typically focus on access and physical condition. Building on that foundation, the current evaluation goes a step further by examining the overall character of each park and the experience it offers to visitors. It considers factors such as maintenance, cleanliness, aesthetics, and the variety of recreational amenities, as well as how people use park spaces and what shapes their experience.

To support this broader evaluation, the STARS Scale was developed to rate each park across 30 categories using a 1–5 scale. These scores help identify parks that are in excellent condition, those that may need upgrades, and those that require more extensive improvements.

This comprehensive assessment provides a deeper understanding of how parks function and how they are experienced by the public. The findings will help guide future improvements and investments across Guilford County's park system overall.



Southwest Park Maintenance Workshop

★★★★★ Superior

★★★★ Tops Most Peers

★★★ Acceptable

★★ Consider Renovation

★ Subject to Improvement

Physical Assessment

The physical assessment section contains five criteria that view the site objectively on the general condition of amenities, and include: recreation, architecture, furnishings and signage, and connectivity.

Each park or facility is shaped by a combination of environmental features and site-specific conditions. Elements such as topography, vegetation, and existing water bodies influence how the land is used and where amenities can be placed. In addition, factors like utility access, infrastructure constraints, and regulatory requirements affect site capacity and design possibilities. These physical and contextual layers, along with ongoing operations and maintenance practices, play a key role in how a site functions over time and inform how its conditions are evaluated.

Human Experience

The human experience section contains five criteria that evaluate a visitor's initial impression, and include: arrival, safety, sense of belonging, and community connections.

Parks systems not only fulfill the needs and desires of the community for recreation, but also provide physical, mental, and social health benefits through diversity of amenities and programs. Human experience within a public space is a complex layering of physiological comfort, sense of place, perception, and personal and emotional connection with the place through park visitor's lived experience.

Inventory

Guilford County boasts a diverse and expansive park system designed to cater to a wide array of recreational activities. The County's five active parks as presented in the table below span over 1,700 acres combined. Each park offers unique amenities ranging from sand volleyball courts, equestrian trails, and sports facilities to aquatic centers and expansive greenways. There are also multifunctional indoor activity facilities located at several county parks. Together, these parks enrich the community, serving as welcoming spaces for a variety of recreational opportunities.

Active parks feature a wide array of recreational amenities like swimming pools, sport courts, greenways, and athletic fields. Although they often require higher levels of maintenance and more complex operations, they provide greater benefits by offering recreational resources to support many varied leisure pursuits. Moreover, active parks with a variety of amenities allow the parks department to have greater visibility and a broader reach. This increased engagement can lead to more robust and consistent investment from elected officials, which in turn results in a well-maintained, dynamic park system that meets the needs of the community.

The Guilford Country Parks Department also owns and manages 1,800 acres across 11 passive parks and land preserves. In a state experiencing significant population growth, as well as urban and economic expansion, land preservation is increasingly recognized as a concern requiring the need for both thoughtful management and strategic land acquisition efforts. To that end, land preserves protect and maintain natural environments for future generations. Guilford County's perspective is that passive parks enhance water quality, preserve wildlife habitats, and protect natural areas for the enjoyment of current and future residents.[1]

1 https://www.guilfordcountync.gov/our-county/county-parks/passive-parks

Park Name	Park Acres	Primary Offerings
Bur-Mil Park	250	Swimming Pool + Water Park Amenities, Fishing Piers, Sand Volleyball Courts (6), 9-Hole Golf Course, Driving Range, Pickleball Courts (10), Tennis Courts (6), Volleyball Courts (6), Playgrounds (2), Picnic Shelters (7), Hiking Trails, Trailheads, Bicentennial Greenway Connection, Wildlife Center, Multifunctional Event Center
Northeast Park	374	Swimming Pool + Water Park Amenities, Campground, Softball Field, Soccer Fields (3), Multipurpose Fields (3), Basketball Courts (2), Volleyball Courts (2), Carousel, Mini Golf, Equestrian Trails + Trailhead With Trailer Parking, Playgrounds (3), Picnic Shelters (6), Dog Park, Disc Golf, Multifunctional Event Center
Hagan-Stone Park	409	Swimming Pool + Water Park Amenities, Campground, Fishing Piers, Marina, Boat Slips, Multipurpose Field, Playgrounds (4), Picnic Shelters (8), Horseshoes, Small Amphitheater
Southwest Park	513	Softball Fields (2), Boat House, Boat Launch, Dog Park, Floating Dock, Playgrounds (2), Gazebo, Picnic Shelter, Greenway Connection, Trailheads
Gibson Park	200	Fishing Pier, Softball Fields (2), Soccer Fields (2), Playgrounds (2)

Passive parks and preserves are characterized by minimal management and programming, allowing users to enjoy park spaces at their own pace. Unlike active park systems, passive parks prioritize preserving natural habitats and open spaces while providing limited amenities such as trails and picnic areas. With fewer staff and less involvement, passive parks offer a more hands-off approach to recreation, allowing visitors to connect with the space as they desire. These sites prioritize land preservation and habitat protection, allowing visitors to enjoy a more self-directed experience. While the passive parks play a critical role in preserving Guilford County's natural resources and enhancing quality of life, their management approach does not require the same operational focus as the active parks. It is important to note that individual reviews and detailed assessments of passive parks were not included in this scope of work.

Guilford County Passive Parks & Preserves

- Benbow Preserve - Greensboro
- Bold Moon Preserve - McLeansville
- Brooks Bridge Paddle Access - Gibsonville
- Cascades Preserve - Kernersville
- Company Mill Preserve - Pleasant Garden
- Guilford County Farm - Gibsonville
- Hines Chapel - McLeansville
- McCandless Woods Preserve - Greensboro
- Rich Fork Preserve - High Point
- Richardson-Taylor Preserve - Greensboro
- Saferight Preserve - Greensboro
- Thomas Built Bus Preserve & Urban Orchard - High Point



Northeast Park Pool

Bur-Mil Park

- 250 acres
- 5834 Bur-Mil Club Road, Greensboro

Overview

Bur-Mil Park features a mix of both newer and aging recreational amenities. Notable offerings include a driving range, a three-hole golf course, and competition-grade sand volleyball courts. The addition of an aquatics center at the park's entrance on Owl Roost Road has strengthened its visual presence, especially as nearby development continues to grow. A greenway connection to the Bicentennial and the Atlantic and Yadkin Greenways at Lake Brandt further enhances the park's regional connectivity.

Park Amenities

- Meeting & Events Center
- Swimming Pool & Water Park Amenities
- Picnic Shelters
- Sand Volleyball Courts
- Playgrounds
- Tennis Courts, Lighted
- Pickleball Courts, Lighted
- 9-Hole Golf Course, Lighted
- Frank Sharpe Jr. Wildlife Education Center
- Fishing Pond
- Greenway Access
- Natural Surface Walking & Mountain Biking Trails
- Lake Brandt Access

Physical Assessment

- Some areas of the park show signs of heavy use, particularly near high-traffic amenities like the playground and aquatics facilities.
- The Meeting and Events Center is in excellent condition, with renovations completed within the last decade. The center provides multiuse rooms, banquet space, and a connected prep kitchen,
- The original building for the driving range and golf course operations has been replaced with a temporary modular building following its demolition.

STARS Score

★ ★ ★ Acceptable	
Attribute	Points
Physical Assessment	
Structures & Architecture	3
Recreation	3
Furnishings & Signage	2
Landscape	2
Infrastructure	4
Cleanliness	5
Human Experience	
Arrival	4
Perception of Safety	4
Sense of Welcome	3
Community Connections	2

- The shelters are well-kept, though not all appear to be ADA compliant.
- The pickleball courts are in excellent condition but may require resurfacing in the coming years.
- The aquatic center is in good condition, but the deck surface shows signs of wear such as spalling and cracks.
- The golf course and driving range are well-maintained and well-lit, provide optimal conditions for play and practice.
- Most of the playground equipment is aging and may be nearing the end of its useful life.
- The vegetation across the park is well-maintained, providing clear sight lines.

Human Experience

- The diversity of amenities provides recreational opportunities for a variety of age groups and abilities.
- The playground, shelter and volleyball courts do not appear to be ADA-compliant.

- .The tennis courts and pickleball courts are not accessible, having steep slopes, stairs, and distant parking.
- Nature trails are well marked.
- Wayfinding assists visitors to and through the park.
- There is a trail connection to the new homes on Owl Roost Road.
- Parking is a site-wide issue, resulting in the need to do rolling events.
- There is a need for additional restrooms located in the eastern portion of the park.



Frank Sharpe Jr. Wildlife Education Center at Bur-Mil Park

Northeast Park

- ± 374 acres
- 3441 Northeast Park Drive, Gibsonville

Overview

Northeast Park is a large park in the northeastern region of the County hosting a mixture of historic and modern amenities. A preserved historic farmstead greets park visitors before arriving at the recreational core of the park, which features baseball and soccer fields, an event center, aquatics center, carousel, putt-putt golf course, and various shelters and playgrounds. Hiking, biking, and equestrian trails weave throughout the park, especially in the natural areas. With a diverse array of amenities and large amounts of open space, Northeast Park is home to the County's firework shows and other large events.

Park Amenities

- Historic Farmstead
- Shelters
- Meeting & Events Center
- Gazebo
- Swimming Pool & Water Park Amenities
- Playgrounds
- Dog Park
- Baseball/Softball Fields
- Soccer Fields
- Carousel & Structure
- Miniature Golf Course
- Tennis Courts
- Basketball Courts
- Fishing Pond
- Equestrian Trails with Parking Area & Corral
- Natural Surface Walking & Mountain Biking Trails
- 3/4 Mile Asphalt Walking Loop
- Serenity Garden

Physical Assessment

- Northeast Park offers a welcoming atmosphere, highlighted by a well-preserved restored historic farmstead.
- The park is tidy and well-maintained.
- The aquatics center, located centrally, is in excellent condition and features a wide range of aquatic activities.
- The horse trailer parking lot requires resurfacing, as it shows potholes and areas of standing water.
- The park supervisor's house is currently unoccupied and in need of demolition or renovation.
- The removal of a miniature train has left a visible impact on the surrounding area, including a semi-looping gravel path and inconsistent material use and grading.

Human Experience

- The park's diverse amenities cater to a wide range of ages and abilities.
- The layout of the park follows a master plan, ensuring intentional connectivity between most facilities.

STARS Score

★★★★ Tops Most Peers	
Attribute	Points
Physical Assessment	
Structures & Architecture	5
Recreation	5
Furnishings & Signage	5
Landscape	4
Infrastructure	4
Cleanliness	5
Human Experience	
Arrival	5
Perception of Safety	5
Sense of Welcome	5
Community Connections	2

- Accessibility is well-supported throughout the park, with ample and convenient parking.
- The vast open spaces offer versatility for events like firework displays and provide expansive views.
- There is no paved pedestrian path connecting the front area (shelter/restroom and historic farmstead) with the park's core.
- The numerous large and scattered shelters maximize rental potential.
- A low water bridge over the creek enhances access to the park's northern areas.



Serenity Garden at Northeast Park

Hagan-Stone Park

- ± 404 acres
- 5920 Hagan-Stone Park Road, Pleasant Garden

Overview

Hagan-Stone Park, located just east of Pleasant Garden in the southern region of the County, offers a diverse array of passive and active recreational amenities. Amenities present at Hagan-Stone include a campground, aquatics center, playgrounds, shelters, various historic structures, and miles of trails. The park was named in honor of Anne Hagan and Joseph Stone, two Guilford County residents who advocated for the conservation of the County's natural areas.

Park Amenities

- Chapel (Relocated Church)
- Horseshoes
- Event Center
- Amphitheater
- Sand Volleyball Court
- Fishing Pier
- Marina/Boat Launch
- Campground: Tent Sites, RV Sites, Screened-in Cabins, Group Camping Sites
- Shelters
- Playgrounds: Traditional and Universally Accessible Bradley's Fun For All Playground
- Swimming Pool & Water Park Amenities
- Baseball Field
- Reconstructed Oak Grove Schoolhouse
- Natural Surface Walking & Mountain Biking Trails
- Historic Tobacco Barn

Physical Assessment

- The park entrance on Hagan-Stone Park Road is inviting to visitors, with a tree-lined median and sidewalk accessible to the adjacent neighborhood.
- Level of care is evident in preserving historic features, such as the log cabin, tobacco barn, and reconstructed Oak Grove Schoolhouse.

STARS Score

★★★ Acceptable	
Attribute	Points
Physical Assessment	
Structures & Architecture	3
Recreation	4
Furnishings & Signage	3
Landscape	4
Infrastructure	3
Cleanliness	4
Human Experience	
Arrival	3
Perception of Safety	2
Sense of Welcome	3
Community Connections	3

- Vegetation is well-maintained and presents open sight lines.
- Due to the size of the park, constructed features like Camp Joy and the campground are significantly spaced apart, giving each a distinct feel, and influencing the range of activities and programs offered at these locations.
- The maintenance area has been changed and added to over time, as evidenced by the various building materials used.
- Most shelters and combined shelter-restroom facilities are in good condition despite dating back to the early years of the park's operation.
- The primitive camping area of the campground is experiencing washout from heavy rainfall.
- The two-story shelter is only open on the bottom, with the top being used for storage. The roof of the shelter is in poor condition.
- The overall character of the park is that of a conservation area, with most of the site being covered in mature hardwood forests.

Human Experience

- The park caters to a diverse range of activities, from individual pursuits like walking, wildlife viewing, and relaxation, to larger family gatherings and community-wide events, offering versatile use of its features.
- Rustic bridges along the walking trails enhance the natural experience, inviting visitors to immerse themselves in wildlife observation.
- Recreational and support amenities, developed in the last two decades, are accessible and include nearby parking.
- Bradley's Fun For All Playground, the park's inclusive playground, is well-kept and welcoming.
- The aquatics center, a recent addition, is in excellent condition.
- The chapel, an attractively restored and relocated church, offers picturesque views but lacks accessibility.
- Security remains a significant concern at the campground within the park, necessitating the closure of other park areas from dusk to dawn for safety.



Historic Cabin at Hagan-Stone Park

Southwest Park

- 513 acres
- 6309 Southwest Park Drive, Greensboro

Overview

Southwest Park offers a mix of active and passive recreation, including picnic shelters, playgrounds, natural trails, a dog park, and water-based features such as a boat ramp and kayak launch. While the park is well maintained, challenges include limited pedestrian connectivity between program areas, steep access to water amenities, and multiple vehicular entrances that complicate circulation. The park's clean facilities, spacious layout, and thoughtful landscaping contribute to its popularity and continued use as a key recreational space in Guilford County.

Park Amenities

- Dog Park
- Gazebo
- Shelters
- Playgrounds
- Baseball Fields
- 1/3 Mile Walking Loop
- Natural Surface Hiking Trails
- Overlook With Benches
- Boat Launch
- Boat House
- Boat Rentals
- Artificial Beach
- Fishing Pier

Physical Assessment

- Southwest Park is well-maintained and clean.
- The landscaping throughout is orderly and aesthetically pleasing.
- The exteriors of all structures are in good to fair condition.
- The project team observed two broken slides during the site visit.
- The restroom facility near the baseball fields was non-operational due to a water supply issue in that section of the park during the site visit.

STARS Score

★★★★ Tops Most Peers

Attribute	Points
Physical Assessment	
Structures & Architecture	3
Recreation	5
Furnishings & Signage	3
Landscape	4
Infrastructure	4
Cleanliness	5
Human Experience	
Arrival	4
Perception of Safety	3
Sense of Welcome	4
Community Connections	3

- Walking and driving surfaces throughout the park are smooth and well-kept.
- The park features a variety of environments including mature forests, secondary forests, wetlands, streams, and groomed areas, offering varied outdoor recreation opportunities.

Human Experience

- The park is segmented into four distinct program areas, which lack paved pedestrian pathways, necessitating vehicle use or walking along roads and nature trails for cross-park access.
- Access to the dog park is limited; visitors must park along the roadside or in the main parking area and walk along natural surface trails to reach it.
- An ADA-compliant pathway leads from the main parking area to the baseball fields.
- One of the baseball fields has been repurposed as a dog park.

- The boat launch ramp is steep, posing difficulties for some visitors trying to access the boathouse, beach, and fishing pier.
- The creation of Southwest Park Drive has made the vehicular entrance on Jonquil Drive redundant, complicating park access.



Southwest Park Boathouse

Gibson Park

- 200 Acres
- 5207 W. Wendover Avenue, Jamestown

Overview

Gibson Park pays tribute to the rifle makers who lived and worked in the Jamestown area during the mid-19th century. Rifle making was a chief industry and it is believed as many as 75 individuals manufactured the handcrafted muzzle-loaded rifles that came to be commonly known as the Jamestown longrifle. The park offers a range of amenities on the banks of the Deep River, such as baseball fields, soccer fields, fishing ponds, and a playground near a historic log cabin. A connection to the Bicentennial Greenway connects Gibson Park to the larger region and parks in Jamestown and High Point.

Park Amenities

- Playgrounds
- Shelters
- Baseball Fields
- Soccer Fields
- Bicentennial Greenway Access
- Fishing Ponds
- Natural Surface Hiking Trails
- Historic Cabin

Physical Assessment

- Gibson Park is strategically located among residential communities to the west, commercial entities along Wendover Avenue, and a mature forest along Deep River.
- The park is consistently well-maintained and clean.
- Constructed amenities range from good to excellent condition.
- The abandoned supervisor's house has been boarded up and exposed to the elements, detracting from the park's overall aesthetic.
- The outdoor maintenance area includes aging additions that lack uniformity.
- The historic log cabin, despite its age and minimal use, remains in good condition.

STARS Score

★★★ Acceptable	
Attribute	Points
Physical Assessment	
Structures & Architecture	3
Recreation	3
Furnishings & Signage	2
Landscape	3
Infrastructure	4
Cleanliness	5
Human Experience	
Arrival	2
Perception of Safety	3
Sense of Welcome	3
Community Connections	4

Human Experience

- The park offers a transition from open, flat fields to a sloped, wooded area, leading down to a wetland near Deep River and the Bicentennial Greenway on the eastern boundary. This diverse ecology is a valuable community asset.
- Pedestrian access is available at the park's entrance and extends to the adjacent residential community to the west.
- The park lacks paved pedestrian pathways linking different areas internally, requiring visitors to walk on roads to traverse the site.



Playground at Gibson Park

Current Conditions & Themes

Themes in park systems are synthesized observations that highlight common opportunities and challenges throughout the parks. They are derived from the park assessment as previously presented, capturing significant observations and recurrent patterns. While they serve as a summarized reflection of the park system's dynamics, themes are not rigid categories nor an exhaustive list of all considerations. Instead, they provide a structured way to identify and address key issues and prospects that recur across the park landscape, facilitating strategic

Physical/Spatial Characteristics			**Human Experience**	
Park Infrastructure	Condition & Maintenance	Diversity of Amenities	Sense of Place	
Do the built and natural assets within the park adequately support the intended activity or program? Are the existing support facilities adequately functioning? What infrastructure components are missing?	What is the overall park condition, cleanliness, and the neighborhood environment? Are Park amenities and facilities in need of renewal? Is the park maintained to high standards?	Has the parks and recreation department intentionally sought to ensure that recreation facilities across the system are varied? Is the broadest possible user-base and greatest number of residents being served?	Is the park a place, or simply space? Do its tangible and intangible qualities make it identifiable, personable, and meaningful to people? Are people able to identify the facility as a Guilford County Park? Do the parks convey the history and culture of the community they serve?	What meaningful and valuable aspects of user-park interactions exist? Does the park design and amenities facilitate engaging encounters? Is there opportunity for park users to co-create their experience?

Diversity of Amenities

A park system with a variety of amenities reflects a deliberate effort to offer recreation opportunities that meet the needs and interests of a broad range of users. The assortment and types of recreation amenities and facilities should support the function and purpose of each park type. Guilford County leadership has been consistently proactive in their commitment to investing in recreation and parks and preserving passive-natural park lands for the community. The parks in Guilford County offer a rich tapestry of recreational opportunities, each contributing unique amenities to cater to diverse interests.

Originally developed as a retreat for Burlington Industries employees, Bur-Mil Park now offers a wide range of amenities that serve both everyday users and organized groups. The site includes a driving range, 3-hole golf course, competition volleyball courts, an event center, and an aquatics center. Two ponds—one acre and 3.5 acres in size—provide ample fishing opportunities and are stocked with species such as bass, catfish, bream, and sunfish. The centrally located Wildlife Education Center adds an educational component to the park and is situated between the two ponds..

Similarly, Northeast Park located within Guilford County's eastern portion near Gibsonville, offers both historic and modern amenities, including a preserved farmstead, event center, aquatics center, carousel, inclusive playground and putt-putt golf course. The park is further complemented by ample hiking, biking, and equestrian trails.

Meanwhile, Hagan-Stone Park in the southern region features a campground, aquatics center, playgrounds, historic structures, and miles of trails, providing opportunities for both passive and active recreation. Southwest Park, with its sandy beach, boat launch, fishing pier, and dog park, caters to outdoor enthusiasts and families.

Lastly, Gibson Park is linked to the Bicentennial Greenway for broader access and connectivity and provides active recreational amenities like baseball and soccer fields, fishing ponds, and a playground. Gibson Park also includes a historic structure where Jamestown long rifles were crafted by mid-19th century artisans, offering a unique glimpse into the area's rifle-making heritage amidst its modern recreational amenities.

The diversity of amenities across Guilford County Parks reflects a thoughtful effort to meet the wide-ranging interests of residents. Feedback from the community engagement process showed strong support for both active and passive recreation, including trails, aquatics, and gathering spaces. Residents also emphasized the importance of protecting natural areas as part of the overall park experience. A varied system helps ensure that residents of different ages, abilities, and interests can find meaningful ways to engage with parks, whether through quiet exploration, organized activities, or casual use close to home.

Focusing on the types of amenities residents already value can guide future improvements and ensure the system continues to serve a broad range of interests. Reinforcing these priorities helps maintain the parks' relevance and strengthens their role in everyday community life.

Natural & Built Park Infrastructure Integration

As an essential public service, parks and recreation offerings are often cited in surveys as one of the most important contributing factors to livability and quality of life. In this context, park infrastructure—both natural and built— enhances the overall aesthetic of communities and value of public recreational spaces. Built infrastructure encompasses the constructed amenities and facilities that define the physical landscape of a park. By shaping the physical environment of the park, built recreational infrastructure plays a central and primary role in defining the functionality and appeal of the park. It includes a range of structural features intentionally placed to accommodate a variety of activities.

Natural infrastructure refers to elements that occur naturally or are nature-based recreational amenities.

This type of infrastructure is essential to community-wide beautification and environmental sustainability. Guilford County's parks system exemplifies successful integration of these elements, where natural landscapes and built infrastructure blend to offer myriad recreational opportunities.

For example, Gibson Park and Northeast Park maintain historical features such as farmsteads but also incorporate modern recreational facilities like aquatic centers, sports courts, and event spaces. Furthermore, the two parks connect structured amenities with greenways and natural trails, ensuring that visitors can enjoy organized activities as well as self-guided recreational experiences among natural settings. Similarly, parks like Hagan-Stone and Southwest Park blend rustic and picturesque elements with functional recreational facilities. They feature amenities such as shelters, playgrounds, and boat launches set against the backdrop of mature forests and water bodies.

Natural & Historic Preservation

Parks play a vital role in protecting natural landscapes and honoring places of historical significance. Within Guilford County, areas such as mature forests, wetlands, and streams are more than scenic backdrops—they are preserved environments that anchor the identity of the park system. These natural features offer a quiet counterbalance to developed spaces, providing both ecological benefits and opportunities for reflection, exploration, and retreat.

Preserving these landscapes also expands the educational value of the parks. Whether through informal discovery or organized programs, these areas offer hands-on experiences that build environmental awareness and deepen the public's understanding of the local ecosystem. In this way, conservation and recreation are interwoven, creating spaces that support both learning and enjoyment across generations.

Safeguarding of historic features such as farmsteads and log cabins adds a cultural dimension to the natural beauty of the parks. Cultural and historic elements provide a tangible connection to the past and attract visitors interested in the heritage of the area. Continuous efforts to integrate these historical sites into the park experience enriches the park-goer experience by paying tribute to local history and culture.

Several Guilford County parks maintain historic sites. For example, Gibson Park features the Deep River Cabin and various historical exhibits that educate visitors about the rifle makers of Jamestown and the local industry they supported during the 19th-century. Hagan-Stone Park honors the legacy of conservationists Anne Hagan and Joseph Stone, celebrating their efforts to preserve natural beauty and cultural heritage. Both parks not only provide recreational amenities but also reflect the Guilford County Parks Department's commitment to observing area's heritage.

At Northeast Park, the ongoing restoration of the 1930s historic farm site offers insights into agricultural history and the daily lives of the Gerringer-King family. Overall, these efforts on the part of Guilford County establish the parks as resources for outdoor activities and important cultural landmarks.

Park Maintenance & Management

Ensuring the longevity and functionality of park amenities requires consistent maintenance and planned improvements that address specific needs within the parks. While Guilford County parks are generally well-maintained, they do face challenges such as aging playground equipment, deteriorating sport court surfaces, and cracked aquatic center decks. Implementing targeted improvements, such as replacing outdated playground setups and resurfacing courts and pool decks can ensure these facilities remain safe, functional, and capable of serving the community's recreational needs.

The Guilford County Parks Department has demonstrated a proactive approach in updating and repurposing recreational amenities to meet current recreational demands and improve overall park usage and enjoyment. There have been numerous instances of adapting existing spaces to meet contemporary needs—such as the baseball field at Southwest Park converted into a dog park. Other examples include adding pickleball courts to Bur-Mil Park as well as a major renovation of the event center. Scenic trails

have been added to the Company Mill Preserve and other park areas. Restoration of the farmstead at Northeast Park is being put in place to enrich park visitors' recreational experience by blending leisure activities with learning opportunities.

However, making changes within the park system comes with challenges, including balancing the demands of contemporary recreational use with existing infrastructure. Repurposing and adapting amenities, as well as adding new ones, involves securing adequate funding, ensuring accessibility for all visitors, and minimizing disruptions to existing park activities during construction or renovation. Careful planning is required to ensure changes provide maximum benefit to the community.

User-Park Dynamic

Guilford County arks offer residents and visitors a chance to connect with nature, explore recreational opportunities, and build meaningful experiences. However, while the parks system provides a variety of amenities and environments, there are opportunities to enhance the overall sense of place and the user-park dynamic.

Currently, the parks lacks a unified branding or logo to help visitors immediately recognize them as part of Guilford County's park system. This, combined with inconsistent furnishings and unclear park entrances, can make it challenging for users to form a cohesive impression of the system. Educational programming opportunities are occasionally visible within the parks, but they could benefit from more prominent and uniform signage to draw attention to learning opportunities.

Site circulation and access to amenities like restrooms, water fountains, and parking are inviting in some areas but less intuitive in others. Without clear wayfinding, information kiosks, or physical notices about park amenities, activities, and events, users may miss out on opportunities to engage more deeply with park offerings. Addressing these elements—consistent branding, enhanced wayfinding, and improved visibility of amenities and programs—can transform the parks into a more welcoming and seamless experience for all visitors.



Man Fishing at Southwest Park

Key Findings

- All parks are rated acceptable and tops most peers in the evaluation sheet - making it an overall system that is well cared for.
- Guilford County parks provide a wide range of amenities, including aquatics centers, sports fields, campgrounds, golf, greenways, and equestrian trails. The parks cater to various recreational activities, attracting different user groups and ensuring that visitors of all interests and ages can find something enjoyable to do.
- Northeast Park and Bur-Mil Park are successful in hosting large-scale community events, such as firework displays and festivals, which bring together residents for socializing and shared experiences. These events help build a sense of community, encourage people to connect, and enhance the Department's visibility.
- The conversion of a baseball field into a dog park at Southwest Park illustrates successful adaptive reuse to meet current recreational needs.
- Guilford County parks offer diverse water-based recreational opportunities, ranging from small fishing ponds to lake and river access. Parks such as Bur-Mil Park, Gibson Park, Hagan-Stone Park, and Southwest Park provide access to recreational waters for fishing, boating, and other activities. These amenities attract outdoor enthusiasts and enhance the recreational offerings for visitors seeking water-related activities.
- Parks such as Bur-Mil, Gibson Park, and Hagan-Stone Park face accessibility challenges, including uneven and unpaved pathways and insufficient accessible restrooms. These issues create concerns regarding ADA compliance and limit access for visitors with disabilities, preventing them from fully experiencing the park's amenities. Many of these facilities were built before the 2010 US Access Board Guidelines, which highlights the need for future renovations to meet ADA standards.
- There are opportunities to enhance park amenities such as playground equipment and sports courts with upgrades or replacements to help ensure continued safety, functionality, and recreational value.
- Some parks within the system intentionally incorporate historical features alongside modern amenities. This thoughtful integration enhances educational value while providing contemporary recreational opportunities, allowing visitors to learn about local history in an engaging and enjoyable environment.
- Ensuring the safety and security of visitors is a priority, especially in areas like the Hagan-Stone Park campground. Addressing concerns such as insufficient lighting, as observed in some parks like Bur-Mil, can enhance usability during evening hours and contribute to a safer environment for all visitors.
- Parks like Southwest Park have segmented amenities that lack cohesion, making it difficult for visitors to experience the park as a unified space. Enhancing the integration of these amenities and improving connections within parks, between parks, and with surrounding residential areas can significantly enhance community access and overall visitor experience.
- Trail connections, such as those in Bur-Mil Park, for example, provide safe and convenient routes for residents to reach the parks and enjoy a more cohesive recreational environment.
- Guilford County parks offer abundant wildlife observation opportunities thanks to their well-preserved natural habitats. Parks with preserved natural areas, such as Southwest Park, Bur-Mil Park and Hagan-Stone Park provide visitors with the chance to observe a diverse array of wildlife in their natural settings. These parks also serve as valuable resources for environmental education, offering programs and interpretive displays that raise awareness about local ecosystems and conservation efforts.
- Inadequate parking is a concern across the park system, leading to challenges in accommodating the increasing number of visitors, particularly during events. For instance, Bur-Mil Park often experiences site-wide parking issues, necessitating rolling events to manage the influx of vehicles. Similarly, Southwest Park faces parking limitations that complicate access to popular amenities like the dog park and boat launch.

- Northeast Park and Bur-Mil Park feature multifunctional event centers that support community activities and gatherings. These versatile spaces enhance park utility by providing indoor venues for meetings, social functions, and other events, thereby increasing value to the community.
- Each park in the system features numerous picnic shelters and gathering spaces that support family gatherings and social events. These areas foster community interaction by providing inviting places for people to come together and enjoy the outdoors.



Hines Chapel Preserve Ribbon Cutting



Operations, Maintenance & Budget Assessment

Overview

Guilford County boasts an extensive park system, encompassing five regional parks ranging from 200 to over 500 acres, along with 1,800 acres of passive parks and preserves. The system offers diverse recreational amenities, including aquatics centers, sports fields, campgrounds, event spaces, and nearly 30 miles of greenway connecting parks to community areas.

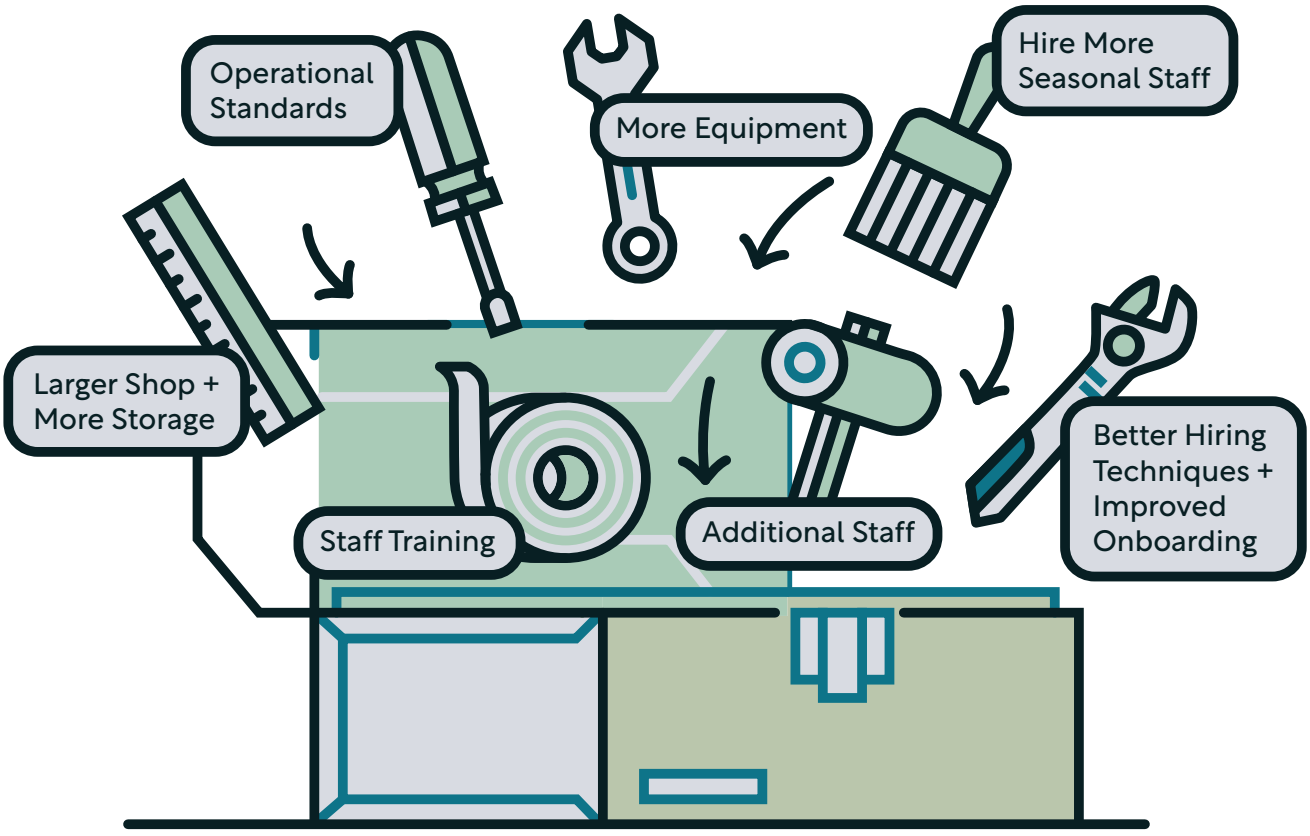
A well-maintained park system is vital to ensuring safe, enjoyable, and accessible spaces for recreation, promoting community well-being, and preserving natural resources. Therefore, to support its evolving needs, the county is conducting an operational assessment as part of the 10-year Comprehensive Parks, Trails, and Open Space (PTOS) Plan. What follows is an evaluation of the Department's organizational structure, operational efficiencies, staffing, and maintenance practices. By identifying areas for improvement, the assessment aims to enhance park management and ensure Guilford County Parks continues to meet the needs of residents and visitors as the system matures.

Operations Assessment

Overview

Throughout this planning effort, staff interviews and policy reviews revealed a deep commitment within the Guilford County Parks Department to serving the public. Employees consistently voiced a strong sense of responsibility and a desire to support the community through their work. At the same time, the assessment identified opportunities to strengthen internal operations, highlighting areas where additional clarity, structure, or resources could improve effectiveness and service delivery.

One significant finding was the opportunity to improve internal communication channels. Effective communication within the department is necessary for efficient decision-making and coordination of tasks. Streamlining communication processes can help ensure that staff at all levels are informed and aligned with the Department's goals and initiatives.



Park Maintenance Needs

Additionally, the assessment highlighted the need for updating the department's technological systems. Currently, scheduling and maintenance tracking are managed through outdated methods, which can lead to inefficiencies and delays. Implementing modern technology solutions, such as advanced scheduling software and digital maintenance tracking systems, would enable the department to better manage resources, streamline operations, and respond more effectively to community needs.

Organizational Structure & Staffing

The Guilford County Parks Department is comprised of three divisions – Management, Administration, and Maintenance. Each Division plays a role in overseeing park operations, coordinating departmental functions, and ensuring the upkeep and safety of park facilities.

Administration

Staff members under this Division include the Parks Director, Assistant Parks Director, Marketing and Events Coordinator, Property Management Specialist, and Administrative Officer.

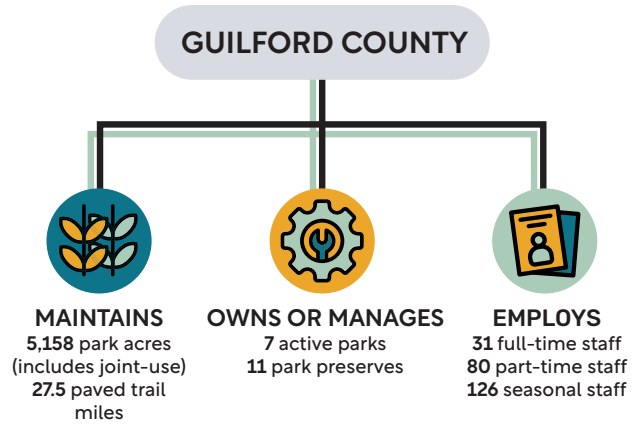
Management

Staff within the Management Division include the supervisors and assistant supervisors of each of the County's five (5) regional parks, as well as a full-time supervisor of Guilford County's passive parks and County Farm.

Maintenance

The Maintenance Division is made up of Senior and Junior Grounds Technicians, as well as Facility Assistants which include part-time and seasonal park attendants such as marina staff, lifeguards, and cashiers.

Guilford County Parks employs a significant number of part-time and seasonal staff. The Department employs 80 part-time and 126 seasonal workers. These roles are critical for addressing the increased operational demands during peak visitation seasons.



Guilford County Parks System Inventory

Part-time and seasonal staff help with a variety of tasks including park and facility maintenance, visitor services, event coordination, and program facilitation. For example, seasonal lifeguards are hired for aquatic centers during the summer, while part-time event coordinators assist with the planning and execution of community events and festivals. Having a flexible workforce allows the Department to maintain high levels of service and ensure that park facilities are well-managed and ready to meet the needs of the community throughout the year.

The distribution of part-time and seasonal staff within the Guilford County Parks Department reflects the varied recreational offerings and operational demands across its park system. Bur-Mil Park and Northeast Park stand out with the largest number of seasonal staff, primarily due to their extensive recreational amenities. Both parks feature large outdoor pools and aquatics facilities. Additionally, Bur-Mil Park provides access to boating and fishing access, further increasing the demand for seasonal staff during peak seasons.

Similarly, Hagan-Stone Park sees a significant influx of seasonal staff, largely attributed to its campground and associated services. With recreational amenities like a pool and access to lakes, Hagan-Stone Park attracts numerous visitors seeking outdoor recreational experiences, particularly during warmer months. As a result, the park requires a substantial seasonal workforce to ensure the smooth operation of its campground and to cater to the needs of its visitors.

The Guilford County Parks Department effectively addresses operational requirements by strategically allocating part-time and seasonal staff based on the specific needs of each park. These part-time and seasonal positions supplement the efforts of full-time Guilford County Parks staff members by providing essential support, helping to ensure park visitor safety, manage increased traffic, maintain park facilities, and deliver quality recreational experiences to the community.

While the flexibility and support provided by part-time and seasonal staff is a valuable asset, this organizational model also presents several challenges that require careful management. The project team noted that some positions across the Department's three divisions are strained in establishing defined job functions due to changing community needs and seasonal priorities. Establishing a formalized organizational structure would clarify roles and define job functions to ensure effective and efficient operations. Staff are currently developing a detailed inventory of all services provided by the park system, organized by functional area. This effort is intended to clarify the responsibilities of each division, assess staffing needs across full-time, part-time, and seasonal roles, and offer a more transparent framework for informing county leadership and meeting community expectations.

In addition, ensuring consistent and thorough training can be challenging when a significant portion of the workforce is temporary. Seasonal and part-time staff may not receive the same depth of training as full-time employees, potentially leading to variability in service quality or safety standards across the parks. Similarly, high turnover rates are common in part-time and seasonal positions, which can lead to gaps in staffing and a loss of accumulated knowledge and skills. Frequent turnover requires continuous recruitment and training efforts, straining resources, and impacting operational efficiency.

Part-time and seasonal workers may feel less connected to the organizational goals and culture compared to full-time staff. Lastly, reliance on seasonal staff makes the department vulnerable to fluctuations in the labor market. The parks might be understaffed during years when it is harder to fill these roles, leading to strained services and overburdened full-time staff. To address these challenges,

Administration (6)
Parks Director
Assistant Parks Director
Marketing & Special Events Coordinator
Property Management Specialist
Administrative Officer
Events Coordinator
Management (10)
Bur-Mil Park Supervisor
Bur-Mil Park Assistant Supervisor
Northeast Park Supervisor
Northeast Park Assistant Supervisor
Hagan Stone Park Supervisor
Hagan Stone Park Assistant Supervisor
Gibson Park Supervisor
Southwest Park Supervisor
Passive Parks & Trails Supervisor
Passive Parks & Trails Assistant Supervisor
Maintenance (16)
Senior Ground Technicians (6)
Ground Technicians (7)
Facility Assistants (3)
Part - Time (80)
Seasonal (126)


KUBOTA L4480
Maintenance Work

the Guilford County Parks Department must engage in strategic planning and management, including effective training programs, efforts to build a loyal temporary workforce, and careful scheduling to ensure adequate staffing throughout the year

Operational Efficiency

The operational efficiency component of this plan examines how the department can improve internal systems and external impact in areas where they are most needed, including policy making, parks planning, marketing and communications, and partnerships. These areas are critical to streamlining day-to-day operations and support strategic decision-making.

In order to establish a baseline for understanding the Department's operational performance, the project team facilitated a discussion with the Guilford County Parks Administrative Division and reviewed current and historical materials relating to policies, plans, and departmental goals.

Policies

While the importance of goal setting and policy development has been acknowledged, this area has historically lacked consistent attention. The current assessment revealed a lack of a clearly defined guiding departmental philosophy, which makes it difficult to align daily decisions, goals, and internal policies with a broader strategic vision. Addressing this gap will require a more structured approach to decision-making, grounded in a shared understanding of the department's purpose and position.

Developing and adhering to clear policies will ensure that Guilford County Parks evolves into a well-rounded and responsive department. With the recent establishment of Guilford County Parks as a formal department under new leadership, there is an opportunity to address the absence of established goals and policies over the past decade.

The development of the Comprehensive Parks, Trails, and Open Space Plan offers a timely opportunity to establish a stronger organizational foundation. By identifying community priorities and aligning them with clear goals and policies, the plan can serve as a catalyst for more intentional decision-making and long-term direction.

Park Planning

Effective park planning relies on accurate, up-to-date information about facility conditions, program participation, and community needs. As Guilford County continues to grow, it is critical that policies and investments align with real-world conditions across the park system. The current operations assessment highlights the need to address aging infrastructure while also expanding amenities to reflect changing recreation preferences and rising user demand.

Establishing a more integrated approach to park planning—grounded in consistent data collection, long-range capital improvement planning, and strategic goal setting—will strengthen the department's ability to make informed decisions. Tools such as asset management systems, digital attendance tracking, and program participation databases can provide the foundation for evaluating existing services, identifying gaps, and prioritizing investments. This data-driven framework allows the department to better align resources with the needs of the community and the condition of park assets.

Investments in both maintaining and expanding facilities will be essential to keep pace with growth and to support the recreational goals of Guilford County's Comprehensive Parks, Trails, and Open Space Plan. There is a consensus within the Guilford County Parks Department regarding the necessity for augmented funding to bolster capital improvements. \.

Enhancements such as revitalized boat ramps, paddleball courts, upgraded campsites, improved disc golf courses, and renovated mini-golf amenities are examples of projects that can be identified and prioritized through a structured capital planning process. When guided by clear strategic goals and accurate asset data, these improvements can help elevate park quality, expand recreation opportunities, and reinforce the department's role in enhancing quality of life countywide.

Marketing & Communications

Marketing plays a pivotal role in Guilford County's parks by ensuring current users are well-informed about available programs, events, and essential updates. Efforts are underway to expand outreach to more residents across the county, leveraging

platforms like social media and other promotional materials to amplify park-related information and engage with the community effectively.

Consistent and well-designed promotional materials can reinforce the Department's identity as a reliable source of recreational opportunities. For example, clear branding across all communication channels—from social media posts to printed materials—can create a cohesive and recognizable image that resonates with residents. This consistency not only enhances visibility but also builds trust and loyalty among park users and the broader community. Periodic audits are recommended to provide a sound understanding of how well social media efforts are raising awareness of parks department services and engaging audiences. It is also an opportunity to assess how social media platforms are impacting park visitation, event attendance, and participation in recreation programming. The specific components of social media audits can be found in this plan's appendix.

Moreover, a strong brand presence can attract more visitors to park events and facilities, fostering a sense of belonging and community pride. Effective marketing and communication are essential tools for connecting with the public and supporting the Department's broader goals. Highlighting core values—such as environmental stewardship and providing welcoming spaces—can help build trust and reinforce the department's relevance in residents' daily lives.

To do this well, the Department needs adequate administrative support and staffing capacity to manage communications consistently. When staff have the tools and time to promote programs, amenities, and events, they can help increase awareness and participation across the system. A more coordinated approach to marketing will also support a stronger brand identity, ensuring that the Department's role and offerings are clearly understood by the public.

Lastly, many parks and recreation departments across the country are embracing emerging technologies and marketing strategies to strengthen public engagement. Tools such as data analytics and artificial intelligence are being used to better understand target audiences and tailor communications for greater impact. Social media platforms, mobile apps, and even virtual reality are expanding how agencies share information and connect with the community. Video marketing—especially through platforms like YouTube and TikTok—has become increasingly popular for showcasing amenities and promoting events. Additionally, partnerships with local influencers and community organizations are helping departments broaden their reach and encourage park use and program participation.

Case Study: Great Rivers Greenway

Great Rivers Greenway, a regional parks and trails district in the St. Louis area, has effectively utilized local social media influencers to promote its programs and open spaces. By partnering with influencers who resonate with their community, the District has diversified its audience and increased participation in park events. Influencers create engaging content that showcases the greenways as versatile spaces for recreation and leisure, attracting a broad range of visitors. This strategy, demonstrates the impact of strategic influencer partnerships in modern park marketing designed to create visibility.

Partnerships, Collaboration & Volunteer Management

Partnerships

Guilford County Parks has established relationships with a range of community organizations, agencies, and volunteers that provide support for programs and events. These collaborations have contributed to valuable offerings across the system. Moving forward, there is an opportunity to formalize these partnerships through clearer roles, agreements, and shared goals. Doing so will allow the department to more effectively track outcomes, demonstrate mutual value, and ensure that partnerships result in tangible benefits for both the community and the department.

Further partnerships can be explored with other public entities such as neighboring towns and cities, colleges, state or federal agencies, non-profit organi-



Great Rivers Greenway

zations, as well as private or for-profit organizations. Standard policies and practices should apply to all partnerships, with additional considerations in place for relationships involving private, for-profit entities.

In today's environment, public parks and recreation departments must seek productive and meaningful partnerships with community organizations and individuals to deliver quality and seamless services to the community. These relationships should be mutually beneficial, enhancing the ability to provide a high level of recreational services. Effective partnerships and meaningful volunteerism will be a key strategy area for Guilford County Parks to address community needs in the coming years.

Effective partnerships are characterized by the following principles:

- All partnerships benefit from a culture of collaborative planning, regular communication, and annual performance agreement with measurable outcomes,
- Tracking the costs associated with partnership investments can demonstrate shared equity.

Volunteer Management

To optimize volunteer management, Guilford County Parks should regularly review and refine its volunteer policies and agreements to reflect the roles volunteers may fill. These documents should be tailored to different types of volunteer types and clearly define expectations. Tracking volunteer metrics—such as the number of individuals involved, hours contributed, and areas of service—will allow the department to evaluate their impact and improve over time.

Attracting and retaining volunteers will require a proactive and multifaceted approach. Social media, and a user-friendly website with clear sign-up processes can help generate interest. Outreach through local schools, businesses, and civic organizations can further expand visibility. Offering a range of opportunities that match different interests and availability—paired with recognition efforts and skill-building experiences—can make volunteering more rewarding. Consistent communication, opportunities for feedback, and ongoing training will help volunteers feel prepared, appreciated, and connected to the department's mission.

Innovative Insights

Participant Journey Mapping

Journey mapping provides a comprehensive understanding of the user experience, identifying all touchpoints and interactions with parks and recreation departments. It offers a visual approach from the customer's perspective, allowing staff to uncover insights that traditional methods might miss, leading to more targeted and effective improvements.

The process highlights areas for improvement and opportunities to enhance efficiency, enable targeted improvements such as simplifying registration forms, provide clearer instructions, and enhance the park visitation experience.

Case Study: Idaho Falls Parks & Recreation Adopt-A-Field

The Adopt-a-Field Program is a volunteer opportunity that builds a sense of community pride and ownership around every park ballfield in the City of Idaho Falls. The City of Idaho Falls Department of Parks and Recreation believe that the success of the Idaho Falls park's system depends on the support, assistance, advocacy and enthusiasm of community volunteers. Through the Adopt-a-Field Program, the Department seeks to find the best practices and strategies to work together to enhance the park system improving ballfields across the park system for all to enjoy.

Maintenance Assessment

Overview

The current assessment provides a snapshot of park maintenance across the Guilford County Parks system. Drawing on site observations and staff feedback, it highlights key operational challenges and identifies opportunities for improvement to ensure parks remain safe, functional, and valued community assets.

Equipment

Park assessments and staff interviews revealed an urgent need to upgrade maintenance equipment across regional parks. Outdated and inadequate tools are limiting operational efficiency and affecting both park conditions and the visitor experience. Investing in modern equipment is essential to support effective maintenance and enhance park quality.

Staffing & Training

In terms of staffing, there is a significant gap in the levels required to maintain the parks adequately. There is a need for Guilford County Parks to expand its workforce to include specialized roles such as maintenance technicians, equipment mechanics, irrigation technicians, foresters, building technicians, landscape technicians, and natural resource technicians. These positions are essential for specialized maintenance tasks that ensure the health and longevity of the park system's various natural and built environments.

Additionally, there is an opportunity to enhance training programs for Guilford County Parks staff across various areas of park maintenance. These programs should cover a range of skills and knowledge areas critical for park maintenance, such as landscaping, facility repair, safety protocols, and customer service. Improved training will better equip staff to meet public expectations and maintain the parks effectively, ultimately leading to better-preserved parks and satisfied visitors.

Support Infrastructure & Resources

The Guilford County Parks system faces significant challenges related to aging infrastructure and limited operational resources. Key facility systems—such as irrigation, sewer, and utility connections—are outdated and prone to failure, leading to recurring service disruptions. For example, malfunctioning irrigation systems in parks and sports fields hinder consistent maintenance and diminish the quality of the user experience.

Across the system, maintenance operations are further constrained by the lack of modern shop facilities and tools. Staff rely on outdated equipment and inefficient systems for scheduling, inventory tracking, and resource allocation. This contributes to lost time, inconsistent workflows, and difficulty maintaining standards across all sites.

This assessment underscores the need for a comprehensive approach to modernizing support infrastructure and operations. Targeted investment in equipment, staff training, facility upgrades, and technology will allow Guilford County Parks to operate more efficiently, meet rising expectations, and continue providing high-quality recreational experiences for residents.

Upgrading operations technology is a priority. Implementing centralized inventory systems and modern scheduling tools would enable staff to track supplies, manage equipment more effectively, and reduce unnecessary travel between parks. These improvements would streamline day-to-day operations, improve productivity, and allow maintenance staff to spend more time focused on park care.

Addressing these infrastructure and operational needs will require increased funding. Current budget limitations restrict the department's ability to upgrade essential systems, replace aging amenities, and keep pace with growing community demands. Without additional investment, basic maintenance—such as repairing walking trails or replacing outdated playground equipment—will continue to fall behind.

Budget Assessment

The budget analysis and assessment highlights possibilities for strengthening financial management and operational oversight. One significant area for improvement is the implementation of a systematic approach to track and analyze financial contributions from park activities. Currently, there is an opportunity to develop a comprehensive framework to better understand how various park facilities and programs contribute to the operational budget.

For instance, because some of Guilford County's recreational amenities and facilities generate revenue, there is potential to enhance monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure these earnings adequately cover operational costs. Developing a clear cost recovery policy would provide guidelines on reinvesting revenues into park maintenance and development in line with strategic objectives.

Furthermore, enhancing the depth and comprehensiveness of financial reporting is essential. The Department can demonstrate the economic impact and value of park services more effectively to county commissioners and the public by implementing robust reporting mechanisms. Transparency such as this not only strengthens the Department's credibility but also leads to greater community investment in and support for park initiatives.

Clear financial reporting frameworks that comprehensively capture revenue streams from all park activities will enable Guilford County Parks Department to capitalize on these opportunities. Moreover, consistent financial tracking and analysis protocols provide accurate insights into revenue generation and expenditure patterns across different park sites, supporting data-driven decision-making and strategic investments.

By implementing these measures, the Guilford County Parks Department can enhance its financial management practices, promote transparency, and effectively advocate for necessary budget allocations to support the ongoing enhancement of park facilities and programs. Employing a proactive approach ensures that the Department continues to meet community needs while maximizing the value and impact of its services for the public.



Northeast Park Miniature Golf Course

Key Findings

- Strategic planning and investment in park infrastructure, technology, and staff development are essential for sustaining and enhancing Guilford County's park system. These initiatives prepare the department to meet future community needs, support population growth, and maintain Guilford County's position as a leader in recreational amenities and services.
- The staff demonstrates a strong commitment to community service. Improving internal communication channels is critical to streamline decision-making processes and enhancing operational efficiencies within Guilford County Parks. Clearer communication pathways will ensure better coordination across departments, promoting more effective service delivery and responsiveness to community needs.
- Limited funding presents ongoing challenges for infrastructure upgrades and maintenance within Guilford County's park system. To address these constraints, strategic financial planning is essential, including exploring alternative funding sources and prioritizing investments that maximize community impact and sustainability over the long term.
- Outdated technological systems for scheduling and maintenance tracking hinder operational efficiency in Guilford County Parks. To overcome these challenges, there is a pressing need to implement upgraded technology solutions. Modernizing these systems will optimize resource allocation, improve maintenance workflows, and enhance overall service delivery to park visitors.
- Guilford County Parks effectively utilizes part-time and seasonal staff during peak seasons to meet fluctuating park visitation demands. However, managing turnover and ensuring consistent training for seasonal staff remain critical challenges. Addressing these issues is essential to maintain service quality and operational continuity, ensuring positive visitor experiences throughout the year.
- Effective marketing strategies play a pivotal role in Guilford County Parks by fostering community engagement and promoting park events. These efforts reinforce the department's identity as a provider of high-quality recreational experiences, enhancing public awareness and participation in park activities.
- Upgrading maintenance equipment across regional parks is imperative to enhance operational efficiency and visitor satisfaction. Addressing current inefficiencies caused by outdated tools will enable more effective park maintenance, ensuring well-maintained facilities that meet community expectations.
- Introducing additional specialized roles, such as maintenance technicians, and enhancing training programs are crucial actions for Guilford County Parks to ensure comprehensive park maintenance and service delivery.
- Updating infrastructure, including irrigation systems and facility operations, is essential to effectively manage Guilford County's park facilities and accommodate increasing visitor traffic. Modernized infrastructure supports sustainable park management practices, improving service reliability and enhancing the overall visitor experience.
- Implementing digital systems for tracking attendance and program participation enables Guilford County Parks to make informed, data-driven decisions. These systems optimize resource allocation, identify trends in park usage, and enhance the efficiency of program planning, ultimately improving service delivery and visitor satisfaction.
- Developing a robust framework to monitor and evaluate revenue from park activities is crucial for Guilford County Parks' financial sustainability. This initiative supports informed budget allocations, ensuring that park revenues are reinvested effectively into maintenance, development, and enhancement projects.
- Improving financial reporting transparency strengthens Guilford County Parks' credibility and fosters community support for park initiatives. Clear and comprehensive financial reporting demonstrates the economic value of park services, promoting public trust and engagement in park-related decision-making processes.



Program Assessment

Purpose & Objective

Recreation programs and services support health, learning, social connection, and overall quality of life. They reinforce the value of parks and recreation as an essential public service by responding to local interests and creating opportunities for people to engage in meaningful, enjoyable activities. When thoughtfully designed and well-delivered, programs can bring people together, strengthen community ties, and encourage ongoing use of park spaces.

As part of the Comprehensive Parks, Trails, and Open Space Plan (PTOS), the current assessment examines the current recreation program offerings in Guilford County, including those provided directly and through partnerships. It highlights program strengths, identifies service gaps, and reveals areas for improvement. The findings inform strategies for refining existing offerings and developing new ones that align with resident needs, leverage existing resources, and broaden access to recreation across the county.

The assessment is based on a review of materials provided by Guilford County Parks, including program descriptions, financial data, website content, and input gathered through staff discussions. It also incorporates findings from the scientific survey conducted as part of the PTOS Plan. These sources provide context for understanding current programming and help establish a baseline for analysis

To provide a comprehensive picture of Guilford County's recreation programming, the assessment is organized into six components. Each section addresses a different facet of program delivery—from current strengths and service gaps to program types, target audiences, and cost recovery considerations.

1. Existing Program Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis
2. Core Program Areas
3. Age Segment Analysis
4. Program Lifecycle Analysis
5. Classification of Services Analysis
6. Cost of Service & Cost Recovery Analysis



Guilford County Parks Fireworks at Northeast Park

SWOT Analysis

Overview

Guilford County Parks focuses on outdoor recreation and promotes available amenities to support active lifestyles and reinforce the value of its parks as community assets. The Department's program offerings are limited in number but intentionally designed to align with community needs and highlight the unique features of Guilford County's parks.

To evaluate how well these offerings support the County's goals, a SWOT analysis was conducted. This approach examines internal strengths and weaknesses, along with external opportunities and threats, providing a structured framework for assessing current conditions and identifying future considerations. The following section provides an overview of the Department's internal capabilities, external challenges, and the broader conditions influencing its ability to deliver and expand recreation programs.

Strengths

Guilford County Parks provides a variety of recreation opportunities that highlight both the County's natural landscapes and built amenities. The Department's programming centers on outdoor experiences that encourage exploration and can be enjoyed with little or no staff facilitation. Parks and facilities—such as trails, campgrounds, nature preserves, pools, splash pads, and access to natural water bodies—support a broad mix of activities including hiking, camping, swimming, and nature observation. These experiences reflect the County's focus on offering accessible, nature-based recreation that appeals to individuals and families alike.

A large portion of the Department's offerings are self-guided and take full advantage of the County's extensive system of passive parks and preserved open spaces. These settings provide meaningful opportunities for residents of all ages to connect with nature and engage in informal recreation at their own pace.

In addition to programs delivered directly, the Department collaborates with local nonprofits, businesses, and community organizations to expand its reach. These partnerships support specialized activities that enhance the overall program mix—such as overnight camping at Hagan-Stone Park, environmental education exhibits at Rich Fork Preserve, and recreational golf at Bur-Mil Park's 9-hole par-3 course. Together, these efforts help extend the Department's impact and bring more diverse opportunities

Challenges/Weaknesses

Several internal limitations affect the Department's ability to deliver and expand recreation programs effectively. One of the most pressing issues is the inconsistent collection of data from program partners and participants. Without a standardized system for gathering feedback, the Department has limited insight into program performance, participant satisfaction, or changing community needs.

Infrastructure challenges also impact service delivery. Deferred maintenance and aging facilities reduce the quality and reliability of park spaces, making it harder to introduce new programs or maintain existing ones. These physical limitations are compounded by staffing constraints. With a small team managing a wide range of responsibilities, there is little capacity to support growth or take on new initiatives.

Access remains another area of concern. Limited transportation options reduce opportunities for residents without personal vehicles to participate in programs. Additionally, not all facilities are fully compliant with ADA standards, creating barriers for individuals with disabilities. Together, these issues restrict who can engage with County offerings and limit the system's overall reach.

Communication with the public is another ongoing challenge. The Department has yet to establish a strong brand identity or consistently promote its programs. As a result, many residents may be unaware of available offerings or unclear about the County's role in providing recreation services.

Opportunities

Despite these constraints, the Department has several opportunities to improve and expand its services. Guilford County's natural assets—including nature preserves, trails, and passive parks—provide a strong platform for outdoor recreation and self-guided activities. These settings are well-suited for programming that encourages exploration, learning, and family engagement.

Partnerships represent another major opportunity. By collaborating with nonprofits, schools, and local businesses, the Department can expand its program menu without needing to build capacity entirely in-house. These partnerships also offer chances to engage new audiences and bring in complementary expertise.

There is also room to improve operational systems. Enhancing tools for registration, scheduling, and data collection can help staff work more efficiently and make better-informed decisions. Just as importantly, the Department could benefit from more consistent and intentional marketing. Increasing awareness through digital tools, events, and cross-promotion with partners can boost participation, clarify the Department's identity, and strengthen public support.

Threats

The most pressing threat to Guilford County Parks' recreation program delivery is the ongoing strain on infrastructure and staffing. Deferred maintenance across park facilities compromises the safety, functionality, and appeal of spaces used for both structured and self-guided recreation. As infrastructure ages without consistent reinvestment, it becomes harder to sustain current offerings, let alone introduce new programs that require functional, well-maintained environments. Staffing limitations also pose a significant risk. The current team is stretched thin, often juggling both operational and programmatic responsibilities. Without additional personnel, the Department may be forced to limit offerings, reduce the quality of its services, or delay innovation. This capacity gap undermines the Department's ability to respond to growing interest in outdoor recreation and seasonal events, especially those that rely on staff planning and facilitation.

Accessibility continues to be a concern, particularly for residents without access to personal transportation or those who rely on ADA-compliant facilities. Parks located in less-connected areas remain underutilized by individuals who cannot easily reach them. Similarly, outdated amenities that do not meet accessibility standards can prevent full participation from residents with disabilities.

While competition from private providers exists, it is not the primary concern for the County. Guilford County Parks offers affordable, outdoor-based experiences that are often unmatched in terms of value and uniqueness. However, if the Department cannot maintain facilities, support staff, or raise awareness of its offerings, it risks falling short of public expectations—even if demand remains high.



Bur Mil Park Driving Range

Core Program Areas

Overview

Core Program Areas represent the primary types of programs a department consistently offers to meet community needs. These categories help define the focus of service delivery, allocate resources, and guide future program development. Categorizing programs by core program area allows for creating standards and goals among a group of similar programs.

Identifying core program areas helps the Department prioritize the types of programs that are most essential to its mission and most expected by the community. These categories reflect current offerings and create a structure that supports future growth and diversification. Organizing programs in this way allows staff to evaluate how well existing services align with community needs. It also helps reveal service gaps and informs decisions about where to expand, improve, or shift programming to better serve Guilford County residents.

Program areas are considered core if they meet most of the following criteria:

- Program area has been provided for a long period of time (over 4-5 years) and/or is expected by the community.
- Program area consumes a large portion (5% or more) of the agency's overall budget.
- Program area is offered 3-4 seasons per year.
- Program area has wide demographic appeal.
- There is a tiered level of skill development available within the program area's offerings.
- There is full-time staff responsible for the program area.
- There are facilities designed specifically to support the program area.
- The agency controls a significant percentage (20% or more) of the local market.











The table below summarizes the core program areas offered by Guilford County Parks. For each category, it includes a brief description, key focus areas, and a list of representative programs. This information helps illustrate the types of activities the Department currently provides and how they are grouped for planning and evaluation purposes.

<table>
<tr>
<td>Sports & Recreation</td>
<td>The sports and recreation program area is comprised of a wide range of athletic and recreational activities designed to attract participants of all ages and skill levels. Programs include team sports, individual sports, fitness activities, and various recreational events.

Goals & Desired Outcomes:

• Promote Physical Health & Fitness: Encourage an active lifestyle through participation in sports, recreational and competitive athletics activities, and other forms of active recreation to improve wellbeing.
• Encourage Social Interaction & Teamwork: Provide opportunities for community members to connect, collaborate, and build relationships through team sports and recreational activities.
• Enhance Community Participation: Organize tournaments, road races, and similar events to promote a sense of belonging and bring people together through active recreation.</td>
<td>• Bur-Mil Marlins Swim Team
• Swim for Cancer
• Pickleball Programs
• Golf Programs (LandM Golf)
• 5Ks (Various Groups)
• Corporate Events
• Fusion Labor Day Soccer Tournament (Fusion Sports)
• Bike Rentals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Recreation & Conservation</td>
<td>Outdoor recreation and conservation programs focus on engaging the community with nature through various activities that promote environmental stewardship, outdoor skills, and natural resource appreciation.

Goals & Desired Outcomes:

• Encourage Environmental Stewardship: Educate participants about conservation practices and the importance of protecting natural resources to instill a sense of responsibility towards the environment.
• Promote Outdoor Skills & Activities: Offer opportunities to enjoy outdoor activities such as hiking, fishing, camping, etc. in a safe and welcoming environment. These programs encourage participation in nature-based recreation and support personal enjoyment of the County's natural spaces.
• Foster Connection with Nature: Create experiences that help participants build a connection to the natural world, while also supporting mental well-being and promoting environmental awareness.</td>
<td>• Volkswagen Bus Camping
• "The Big Pick"
• Family Fishing Day
• Year of the Trail
• Yuletide Trout Derby (NC Wildlife Commission)
• Orienteering
• Canoe & Kayak Rentals
• Educational Walks
• Birding</td>
</tr>
</table>

Community Activities & Events

Community activities and events seek to promote a sense of community through activities and events that bring people together. These programs often include community gatherings, festivals, and special events. They provide an opportunity for Guilford Parks staff to interact with residents and encourages the public to visit the County's parks.

Goals + Desired Outcomes:

- **Encourage Visitation to the County's Parks & Preserves:** Host events that make effective use of parkland, amenities, and staff to attract residents and introduce them to County-owned and managed recreation spaces.
- **Strengthen Community Bonds:** Organize events and activities that bring people together and strengthen social connections, helping to build a sense of belonging among community members.
- **Address Specific Community Needs:**Work with partners to host events and festivals that reflect a variety of interests, engage different demographic groups, and enhance the County's ability to offer inclusive, community-focused experiences.

- Summer Camp (LandM Golf)
- Special Needs Camp (City of Greensboro PandR)
- Firework Extravaganza
- Corporate Events
- Pickin' in the Park (High Lonesome Strings Bluegrass Association)
- Easter Egg Hunt (Restoration Church)
- Camp-o-ween
- Shine a Light on Special Needs (Coble Center for Special Needs)
- Bur-Mil Fall Festival
- Must Love Dogs (Guilford Co. Animal Shelter)



Benbow Preserve Volunteers

SWOT Analysis & Core Program Area Assessment Summary of Findings

The SWOT analysis and Core Program Area Assessment highlight the unique strengths of Guilford County Parks' current program delivery, along with the key limitations that impact its ability to grow. The Department makes effective use of its natural assets and partnerships to support core offerings that reflect community interests.

However, challenges such as limited staffing, deferred maintenance, and inconsistent data collection create barriers to expanding services and reaching more residents. Addressing these limitations will require careful consideration of how resources are allocated. Clear program goals and categories, supported by a shared framework for decision-making, will promote more consistent delivery and provide a foundation for long-term program growth.

With a clearer understanding of current strengths and limitations, the next step is to address identified gaps and expand program offerings in response to community priorities. Input gathered through the comprehensive PTOS planning process—including results from the scientific survey—highlighted specific areas of unmet demand. These findings point to opportunities to introduce new program types, reach underserved populations, and ensure that future offerings reflect the evolving interests and needs of Guilford County residents.

Potential New Program Areas

The identification of future program needs was guided by extensive public engagement conducted as part of the Comprehensive Parks, Trails, and Open Space (PTOS) Plan. In addition to the statistically valid scientific survey, the planning process included public meetings, focus groups, and a review of program participation data to understand where current offerings align—or fall short—of community expectations.

These engagement efforts revealed clear patterns of interest across the County. Participation data helped identify programs with high usage, while direct community input highlighted areas where needs remain unmet. Together, these findings offer a broad understanding of recreational preferences and help clarify where targeted investments could have the greatest impact.

To help prioritize new or expanded offerings, the Department used the Priority Investment Rating (PIR), a tool developed as part of the survey analysis. The PIR combines two key factors: how important residents consider a program or facility, and the extent to which their needs for that offering are currently unmet. Programs with a high PIR score are those with both strong demand and limited availability—making them ideal candidates for future development.

Survey results identified several program types with particularly high interest and unmet demand.

- Adult Fitness and Wellness Programs.
- Outdoor Music/Concerts
- Special Events/Family Festivals
- Outdoor Adventure Programs
- Environmental Education
- Aquatic Programs



Swim Meet at Bur Mil Park Pool



Age Segment Analysis

Overview

Age is one of the most important factors influencing the types of recreation and leisure activities individuals are likely to participate in. Different age groups often seek different experiences, and their preferences can shift over time. To better understand how well current offerings serve residents of all ages, this assessment examines participation across key age segments within each of Guilford County Parks' three core program areas,

Program Area	Preschool (5 & Under)	Elementary (6-12)	Teens (13-17)	Adult (18+)	Senior (55+)	All Ages Programs
Sports & Recreation						
Bur-Mil Marlins Swim Team	X	X	X	-	-	-
Swim for Cancer	-	X	X	X	X	-
Pickleball Programs	-	-	-	-	-	-
Golf Programs (LandM Golf)	-	X	X	X	X	-
5Ks (Various Groups)	-	X	X	X	X	-
Fusion Labor Day Soccer Tournament (Fusion Sports)	-	X	X	-	-	-
Bike Rentals	-	-	-	-	-	X
Community Activities & Events						
Summer Camp (LandM Golf)	X	X	X	-	-	-
Camp Joy (City of Greensboro PandR)	-	X	-	-	-	-
Firework Extravaganza	-	-	-	-	-	X
Corporate Events	-	-	-	-	-	X
Pickin in the Park (High Lonesome Strings Bluegrass Association)	-	-	-	-	-	X
Easter Egg Hunt (Restoration Church)	X	X	-	-	-	-
Camp-o-ween	-	-	-	X	-	-
Shine a Light on Special Needs (Coble Center)	-	-	-	-	-	X
Bur-Mil Fall Festival	-	-	-	-	-	X
Must Love Dogs (Guilford Co. Animal Shelter)	-	-	-	-	-	X
Outdoor Recreation & Conservation						
Volkswagen Bus Camping	-	-	-	X	-	-
The Big Pick	-	-	-	-	-	X
Family Fishing Day	-	-	-	-	-	X
Year of the Trail	-	-	-	-	-	X
Yuletide Trout Derby (NC Wildlife Commission)	-	X	X	X	X	-
Orienteering	-	-	X	X	X	-
Canoe & Kayak Rentals	-	X	X	X	X	-
Educational Walks	-	-	X	X	X	-
Birding	-	-	X	X	X	-

Age Segment Analysis Key Findings

Guilford County Parks offers a range of programs and events designed to engage residents across all age groups, promoting recreation, community involvement, and outdoor exploration. Activities such as swim teams, golf programs, 5K races, and pickleball appeal to multiple generations. Department-led events, including the Fire-work Extravaganza, Easter Egg Hunt, Bur-Mil Fall Fest, and the Big Pick, draw broad audiences and showcase the department's ability to create community-focused experiences. These events, while tailored to specific themes or seasons, successfully engage youth, families, and older adults, reinforcing a sense of community through shared participation.

Additional activities such as summer camps and holiday events focus primarily on youth while creating opportunities for family involvement. Outdoor programs, including Family Fishing Day, canoe and kayak rentals, educational walks, and birding, appeal to a wide audience and encourage appreciation of Guilford County's natural resources.



Fireworks Extravaganza at Northeast Park

Recreation Program Lifecycle

Overview

The recreation program lifecycle evaluation cycle outlines a structured, step-by-step process for designing, managing, and assessing recreation programs – with enrollment and participation rates serving as key indicators of success. When participation levels grow, department staff may choose to maintain or expand the program. If growth slows, remains stagnant, or competition for similar offerings increases, staff may explore ways to modify and improve the program. In some cases, they may decide to discontinue it entirely.

Stages	Description	Actual Programs Distribution		Recommended Distribution
Introduction	New programs; modest participation	8%	58%	80% - 60% Total
Take-Off	Rapid participation growth	7%		
Growth	Moderate, but consistent participation growth	43%		
Mature	Slow participation growth	27%	27%	40%
Saturated	Minimal to no participation growth; Extreme competition	8%	16%	0% - 10% Total
Decline	Declining participation	8%		

The lifecycle analysis of Guilford County Parks' recreation programs shows a well-distributed portfolio across the different stages of program development. Approximately 58% of programs fall into the early stages of the lifecycle—introduction, take-off, and growth. This aligns with the recommended distribution of 50–60% in these stages, which ensures a steady influx of new and expanding programs to meet a range of recreation preferences. Programs in these stages show strong potential, with rapid or consistent participation growth.

Just over a quarter (27%) of programs fall within the mature stage. This stage is categorized as experiencing slower participation and serves as a balance point in the lifecycle. It is within the mature stage that recreation program offerings are stabilized and opportunities to refine existing programs or introduce new ones are identified. The current percentage aligns with the recommended distribution for this stage, demonstrating that Guilford County Parks maintains a core of established programs.

Programs in the later stages of the lifecycle—saturated and decline—make up 16% and 8% of the portfolio, respectively, indicating areas where participation has plateaued or is decreasing. While some programs in these stages are expected, ensuring they do not overpopulate the portfolio is critical to maintaining a dynamic and engaging mix of offerings. Guilford County Parks' current alignment with the recommended 16% for saturated programs suggests a healthy balance, while programs in decline may require evaluation for potential retirement or revitalization. It is at this stage that programs should be reevaluated, replaced, or eliminated when the data starts to show that they are entering a stage of decline.

Program Classification Framework

Classifying recreation programs helps the Department evaluate how each offering supports its mission and the goals of its core program areas. This type of analysis is used to determine whether a program delivers broad public benefit, individual benefit, or a combination of both. These distinctions inform decisions about how programs should be funded—whether primarily through County support, user fees, or a mix of both—and how they should be managed over time.

Programs are classified based on the extent to which they serve the general public versus specific individuals. Public benefit refers to programs that offer equal access and value to all residents, while individual benefit applies to services that primarily serve personal interests or smaller groups. Understanding this distinction allows the Department to align its funding strategies and resource allocation with community expectations.

Three service classifications were used to organize programs within this framework: essential, important, and value-added. A program's placement within these categories depends on several factors, including alignment with parks and recreation departments' mission, perceived community value, cost recovery potential, market competition, and participant access.

The program classification framework is based on the following considerations:

- Program Benefits
- Target Audience
- Community Expectations
- Cost Recovery & Subsidy Guidelines

Nearly half (47%) of Guilford County Parks programs are classified as essential, meaning they closely align with the department's mission and meet high public expectations. These programs typically have lower cost recovery requirements and are primarily funded through community tax revenues.

Essential Programs

Essential programs are central to achieving the organizational mission and providing community-wide benefits and therefore, generally receive priority for tax-dollar subsidization.

Important Programs

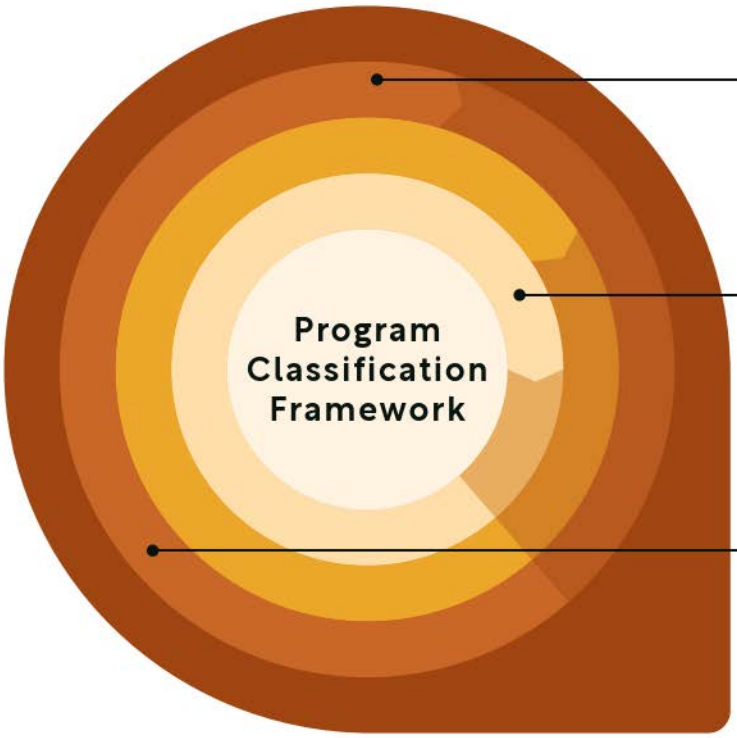
Important programs contribute to the organizational mission but are not essential to it and cost recovery for these programs should be high (i.e., at least 80 percent overall).

Value-Added Programs

Value-added programs are not vital to the mission and should be prevented from drawing upon limited public funding and cost recovery for these programs should be near or in excess of 100 percent.



The Big Pick at the Guilford County Farm



Important

- Community & Individual Benefit
- Will serve most community members & may include some specialized activities
- Perception that Department SHOULD provide this progam
- 30 to 70 cost recovery

Essential

- Community benefit
- Will serve entire community & may focus on vulnerable populations such as youth, seniors or people with disabilities
- Perception that Department MUST provide this program
- 0 to 30 percent cost recovery

Value-Added

- Individual Benefit
- Will serve portions of the population & may include niche or specialized interests
- Perception that Department MAY provide this program
- 70 to 100+ cost recovery



Triad Pickleball Tournament at Bur-Mil Park

Factors	Program Classification		
	Essential	Important	Value-Added
Public interest; Legal mandate; Mission alignment	High public expectation	High public expectation	High individual & interest group expectation
Financial sustainability	Free, nominal or fee tailored to public needs, Requires public funding	Fees cover some direct cots, Requires a balance of public funding & a cost recovery target	Fees cover most direct & indirect costs, Some public funding as appropriate
Benefits (health, safety, protection of assets, etc.)	Substantial public benefit (negative consequence if not provided)	Public & individual benefit	Primarily individual benefit
Competition in the Market	Limited or no alternative providers	Alternative providers unable to meet demand or need	Alternative providers readily available
Access	Open access by all	Open access, Limited access to specific users	Limited access to specific users
Best Practice Cost Recovery Goal*	0% - 50%	50% - 75%	75% - 100%
Program Distribution	47%	31%	22%

When comparing program classifications to the most recent community survey, the core program areas and many essential programs align closely with community priorities for activities and services. Programs such as community events, outdoor adventure, and environmental education likely face minimal competition in the local market, which can influence their pricing strategy.

Given the limitations of tax revenue, Guilford County Parks should evaluate whether programs that primarily serve individuals can be shifted to the important or value-added categories. Recategorizing these programs could create opportunities for earned income through higher program fees and improved cost recovery.

Cost of Service & Cost Recovery

Overview

Parks and recreation departments must balance cost recovery goals with fair pricing that reflects both the value of services and the community's ability to pay. Cost recovery targets should be established for each core program area and, when feasible, for individual programs or events. The previously identified core program areas serve as a useful framework for tracking cost recovery metrics, including administrative costs. Staff should periodically review how programs are grouped by similar cost recovery and subsidy expectations to ensure alignment with management goals and financial outcomes.

Determining cost recovery performance—and using it to inform pricing decisions—follows a three-step process:

- Classify Programs and Services: Categorize programs based on the balance of public versus individual benefit they provide.
- Conduct a Cost-of-Service Analysis: Calculate the full cost of delivering each program, including both direct and indirect expenses.
- Establish Cost Recovery Goals: Use classification and cost data to set appropriate recovery targets. Adjust pricing accordingly, as guided by departmental policy.

A full cost-of-service analysis allows agencies to identify the financial resources needed to deliver programs at consistent service levels. These assessments support the development of pricing strategies, help track cost recovery performance, and enable comparisons across programs.

What is Cost Recovery?

Cost recovery structure defines what should be paid for by tax revenues (basic services) and what should be provided and recovered fully or partially through fees, charges, and other non-tax revenue sources.

Cost recovery is about identifying acceptable levels of basic services, merit services, and private services.

Benefits of cost recovery:

1. Government can divert tax dollars to areas of greater need.

2. Cost recovery allows agencies to improve opportunities that they would otherwise be unable to maintain at current levels.

3. Cost recovery is an information tool allowing agencies to determine user perceptions of value of a product or service and user preferences.

4. Cost recovery expands recreation and park opportunities.

Strategies for altering a program's cost recovery include adjustments in prices, services, and offerings.

Adapted from: Recreation and Leisure in Modern Society by McLean, Dayer-Berenson, Seaward, Hurd.

Pricing

Balancing affordability with financial sustainability is a common challenge for parks and recreation departments. Pricing decisions must consider the community's ability to pay while also supporting operational needs. Program classifications and cost recovery targets provide a framework for setting fees that reflect the balance between public benefit and individual benefit.

To maintain access while meeting financial goals, parks and recreation agencies use a combination of pricing strategies. This allows for flexibility in how fees are applied across different programs and user groups. Pricing strategies include:

- **Ability to Pay:** Participants may be charged a market-rate price, while those with demonstrated financial need are offered discounted rates or scholarships.
- **Age Segment:** Certain age groups, such as youth and seniors often qualify for discounted rates.
- **Cost Recovery Goals:** Program pricing is based on established cost recovery objectives to align with financial targets.
- **Family Pricing:** Families are sometimes charged as a unit rather than individually. For example, the first child may be charged the market rate, while additional children receive a discounted rate.
- **Market Rate:** Pricing is determined by analyzing rates charged by similar and public and non-public recreation providers.
- **Prime-Time Use:** Market rates are applied during peak usage times, with discounted rates available during off-peak hours or seasons.
- **Residency:** Residents pay a discounted rate compared to non-residents, who are charged the full market price.

Cost of Service

Cost recovery targets should be established at a minimum for each core program area and, when feasible, for specific programs or events. The core program areas previously identified provide a useful framework for tracking cost recovery metrics, including administrative expenses. Staff should periodically evaluate how programs are grouped based on similar cost recovery and subsidy goals to ensure these practices align with management objectives and outcomes.

Determining cost recovery performance and using it to make informed pricing decisions involves a three-step process:

1. Classify Programs and Services: Categorize all programs and services based on the balance of public versus private benefits they provide.

2. Conduct a Cost-of-Service Analysis: Calculate the full cost of delivering each program, including direct and indirect expenses.

3. Establish Cost Recovery Goals: Set a target cost recovery percentage for each program or program type, guided by the results of the classification and cost analysis. Adjust pricing accordingly to achieve these goals, as outlined in Guilford County Parks and Recreation policy.

Key Findings

The analysis of Guilford County Parks' recreation programs reveals both strengths in the current system and clear opportunities for improvement. Expanding program offerings will require strategic planning, including additional staffing, infrastructure upgrades, and thoughtful resource allocation. Furthermore, budgeting, supported by clearly defined cost recovery goals and routine program evaluations, will be essential to supporting program expansion, maintaining service quality, and making the most of available funding and staff capacity.

The current recreation programs assessment also highlights two broader system-level challenges: the need to strengthen the Department's public identity and the ongoing effort to balance deferred maintenance with new capital development. Both challenges can affect public perception, participation rates, and the quality of experiences offered.

To address these issues, the Department will benefit from a coordinated marketing and communications strategy that elevates awareness of its role and offerings, alongside a capital improvement planning process grounded in identified community needs.

The following key findings summarize the most important themes that emerged from the analysis.

- Expanding and diversifying programs based on survey results and community input will help activate the park system and demonstrate its value. New programs and events can increase engagement and visibility.
- The County's regional park structure provides a strong foundation for program delivery but would benefit from a more balanced distribution of offerings across locations.
- There is an opportunity to pilot new program types on a small scale to test interest and feasibility before committing long-term resources.
- Strong community interest in outdoor activities—such as hiking, canoeing, and camping—presents an opportunity to promote nature-based recreation program offerings.
- Environmental education is often embedded in passive experiences, but there is an opportunity to develop more intentional programming that interprets the County's natural resources and supports stewardship
- Demand is growing for health and wellness programs, including mental health workshops, nutrition classes, and holistic activities that address multiple aspects of well-being.
- Multigenerational programs, such as family events and grandparent-grandchild activities, can strengthen community ties and broaden engagement.
- Opportunities exist for developing targeted programming for older adults, despite this group expressing strong interest in wellness, outdoor recreation, and social activities.
- Programs lack consistent branding across platforms, which makes it difficult for residents to recognize offerings as part of Guilford County's recreation system and may contribute to confusion with municipal offerings.
- Increased awareness and participation depend on effective outreach.
- Many programs are delivered by third-party providers using County-owned spaces. More formalized agreements and regular evaluation will help strengthen these partnerships..

- Staff capacity is a limiting factor in expanding programs and improving service delivery. Addressing staffing gaps will be critical to meeting growing community demand.
- Inconsistent data collection from partners limits effective evaluation. A standardized framework is needed to track program performance and satisfaction.
- Approximately 60% of programs are in the early stages of their lifecycle, indicating potential for growth. Regular evaluation and adaptation can ensure these programs mature successfully. .
- Flexible pricing strategies—such as income-based fees and peak-time rates—can support both access and cost recovery goals
- Expanding program offerings will require additional staffing and infrastructure. Proactive planning for resource allocation, based on detailed community needs assessments, will support sustainable program growth and effectiveness.
- Utilizing technology for registration, scheduling, and feedback collection can streamline operations and improve experiences.
- There is a need to make programs accessible to all community members, including those with disabilities. Regular updates to program offerings and facilities to meet ADA standards will enhance inclusivity and participation rates.
- Transportation barriers remain a concern, particularly for residents in rural areas or without access to a vehicle, limiting participation in programs held at more remote park sites.
- Ancillary services—such as those detailed by park in the appendix—enhance the recreation experience. Regular evaluation can help optimize their impact and align them with community needs.
- Special events draw high attendance but are not always designed to connect participants to ongoing programs or repeat use of park facilities, missing a chance to build long-term engagement.
- Cost recovery practices vary across program areas, making it difficult to evaluate financial performance or adjust pricing in a consistent, strategic way.
- Program classification offers a valuable framework for decision-making, but the Department would benefit from applying it more consistently to guide resource allocation and fee structures



Bur Mil Park Fall Fest – Ivybrook Academy Kids Zone



Greenways Assessment

Overview

The project team surveyed existing conditions, reviewed relevant past planning efforts and policies, and conducted an analysis of opportunities and constraints to gain a better understanding of greenway and trail needs for Guilford County. Findings gathered were used to inform policy, program, and network recommendations made in the Trails chapter of the Guilford County Parks, Trails, and Open Space Comprehensive Master Plan.

The Greenways Inventory, Analysis, and GIS Mapping section includes the following:

- Mapping Analysis
- Previous Planning Efforts
- Policy Review
- Opportunities + Constraints

Mapping Analysis

The project team used geographic information systems (GIS) and spatial data obtained from multiple sources, including Guilford County, North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), and the United States Geological Survey (USGS) to prepare detailed maps of the study area. Environmental features and conditions such as floodplains, wetlands, and topography were documented in addition to data for zoning, land use, and existing and previously planned bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Finally, roadway characteristics such as traffic volumes, speed limits, right-of-way (ROW), and planned NCDOT projects were analyzed to create an understanding of the existing conditions and possible constraints to greenway and trail development in Guilford County.



Bur-Mil Park Greenway

Floodplains & Wetlands

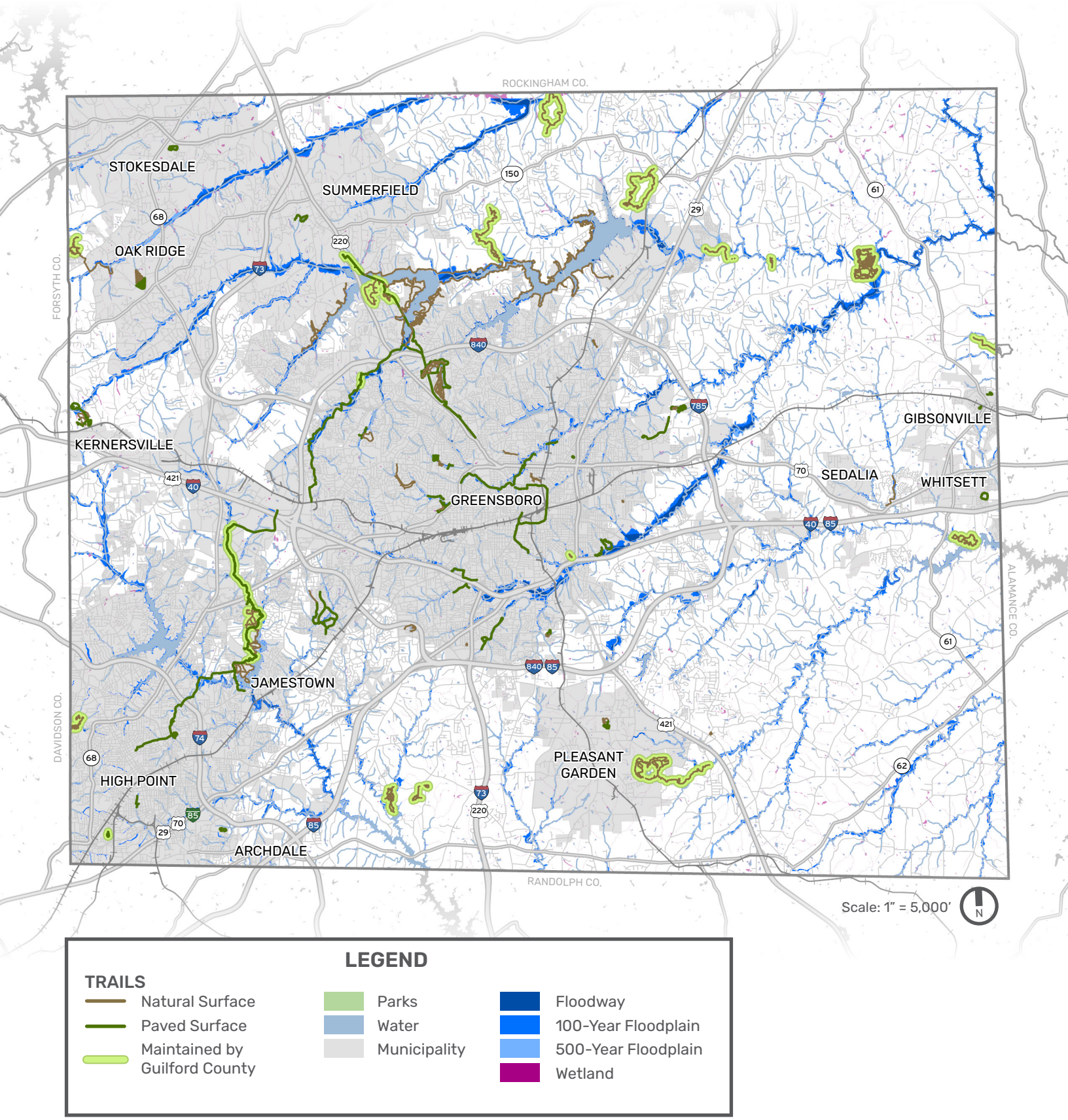
Floodplains and wetlands are sensitive environmental areas and have greater development restrictions placed on them by local, state, and federal agencies. Greenways are typically among the few allowable uses in either of these areas which provide a more natural and scenic alternative that is popular among trail users; however, greenways in floodplains and wetlands must be designed to minimize their impacts on environmental features and flooding. Development in these areas requires additional engineering, permitting, and boardwalk structure that can increase the cost of the project. In Guilford County, floodplains largely follow waterways including the Deep River, Richland Creek, Reedy Fork, Haw River, Troublesome Creek, Mears Fork, Benaja Creek, Buffalo Creek, Alamance Creek, and Polecat Creek. Wetlands are located along waterways and in the margins of lakes and ponds but also include low-lying areas northeast of Archdale, north of High Point, and to the southeast and northeast of Greensboro. Wetlands are especially prominent in the north of Guilford County along Reedy Fork, Mears Fork, Haw River, and Troublesome Creek in Summerfield, Stokesdale, and Oak Ridge.

Topography

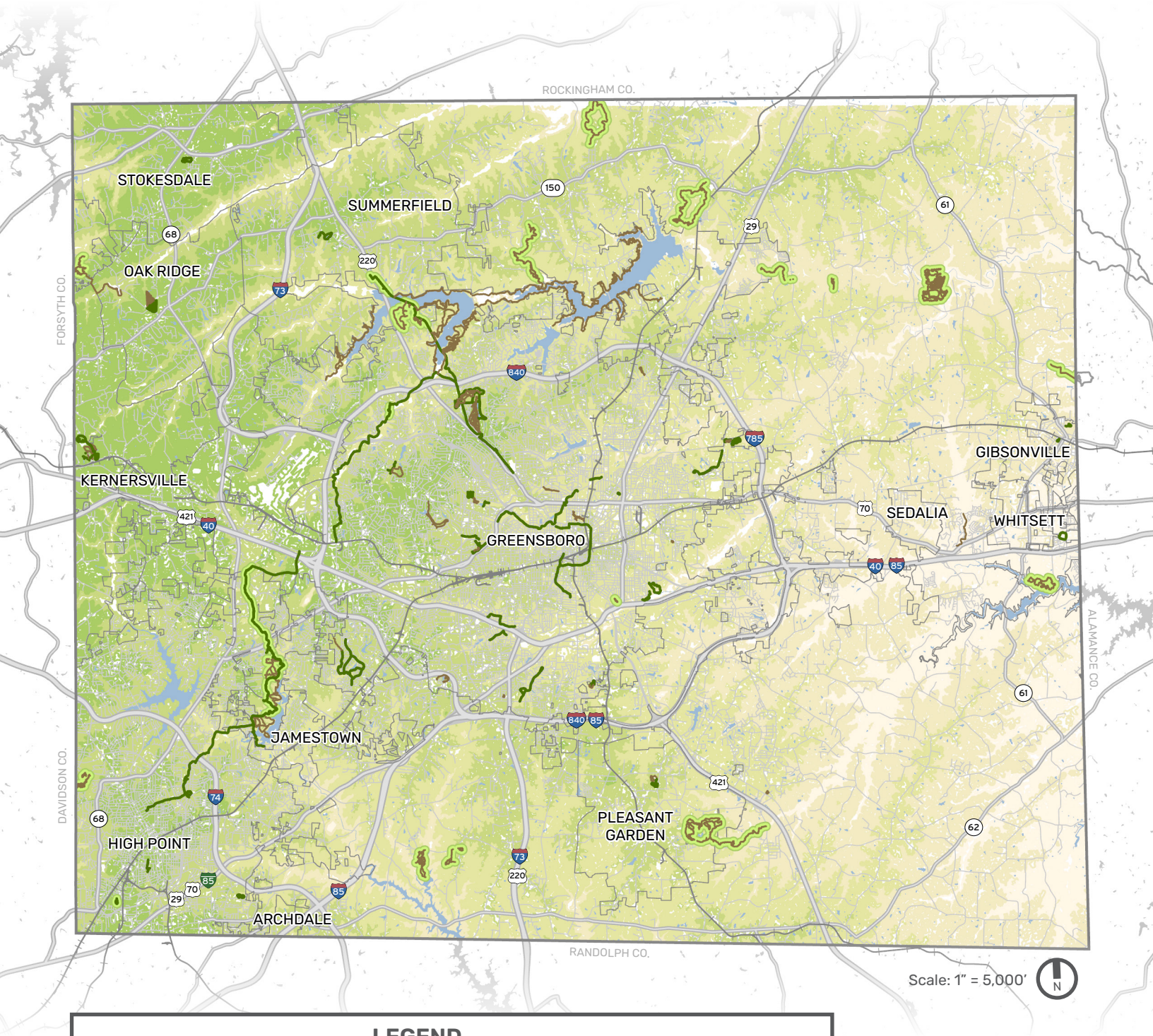
Steep topography creates a challenge for greenway construction, requiring steeper slopes or switchbacks to climb hills. This can add to the amount of land or easement needed, increasing cost and making construction more challenging in order to maintain accessible grades of five percent or less. Topography in Guilford County is characteristic of the Piedmont region of North Carolina with some mild elevation change, but generally flat terrain or gentle rolling hills that are suitable for greenway development. Apart from quarries which descend to as deep as 435 feet above sea level in places, elevation is lowest in the eastern edge of the county where Reedy Fork Creek and Lake Mackintosh carve valleys as they drain eastern Guilford County into Alamance County, at an elevation of approximately 555 feet. Elevation is also lower to the south where the Deep River flows into Randleman Lake. The highest elevation in the county is in the northwest at a peak of 985 feet near Oak Ridge. Reedy Fork, Mears Fork, and the Haw River create a series of valleys between Greensboro and Stokesdale.

Utilities & Easements

Duke Energy provides gas and electric service across Guilford County, often within an easement held on private property. Utility easements place restrictions on the development that may occur within the easement property, but often electric transmission easements can be used for greenway development provided utility access is maintained, which may necessitate occasional greenway closures. In Greensboro, portions of the Lake Daniel Greenway are located within an electric transmission easement. Gas easements often have greater structural restrictions and may allow any proposed greenways or trails to enter the easement only for an elevated crossing where no practicable alternative exists. Gas easements cross Guilford County from Oak Ridge through Greensboro to Gibsonville, from Stokesdale to Rockingham County, from Kernersville through Jamestown to Pleasant Garden, from Grandover Resort to Archdale and Randolph County, and within High Point. Electric easements are located across Guilford County and include corridors between High Point and Whitsett, from Jamestown through Pleasant Garden to Alamance County, from Kernersville to Greensboro, from Randolph County to Rockingham County, and from Greensboro to Rockingham County. In coordination with utility providers, provisions for public access and greenway development should be incorporated into easements where possible.



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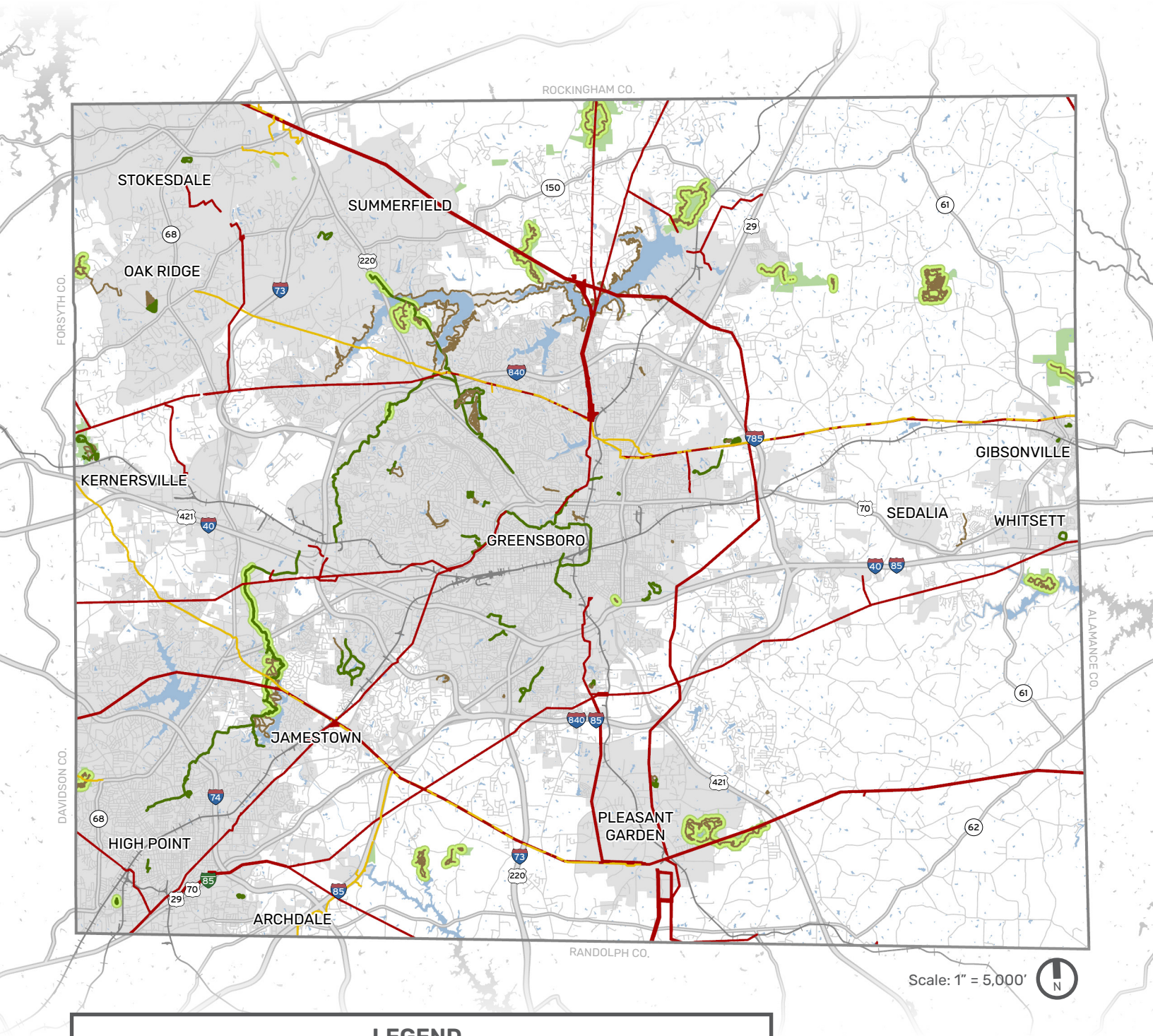
TRAILS
- Natural Surface
- Paved Surface
- Maintained by Guilford County

- Parks
- Water
- Municipality

TOPOGRAPHY
- 445 - 655 ft
- 656 - 725 ft
- 726 - 795 ft
- 796 - 865 ft
- 866 - 985 ft

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Topography Map



LEGEND

TRAILS

- Natural Surface
- Paved Surface
- Maintained by Guilford County
- Parks
- Water
- Municipality
- Electric Easement
- Gas Easement

If you require an accommodation to access this information, please contact Guilford County Parks at 336-641-7275.

Zoning

Zoning regulates the use of land and shapes the physical form of development and can be a tool to implement planned greenways and other active transportation facilities. Many communities across North Carolina require the construction of or dedication of easements for greenways shown in an adopted plan when new development is proposed, and have accelerated the expansion of greenway networks by partnering with private developers to construct significant mileage. Unincorporated Guilford County is zoned primarily for agricultural use, with residential single-family zoning surrounding Greensboro, Pleasant Garden, Sedalia, Archdale, Summerfield, and Oak Ridge. Pockets of industrial zoning are focused adjacent to Interstate and railroad corridors, especially between Greensboro and High Point and between Sedalia and Whitsett. Land is zoned for public and institutional use around portions of Lake Townsend and Lake Mackintosh, as well as for parks including Hagan-Stone Park and Triad Park. Some residential multi-family zoning is found near Whitsett and around the border of Greensboro.

Future Land Use

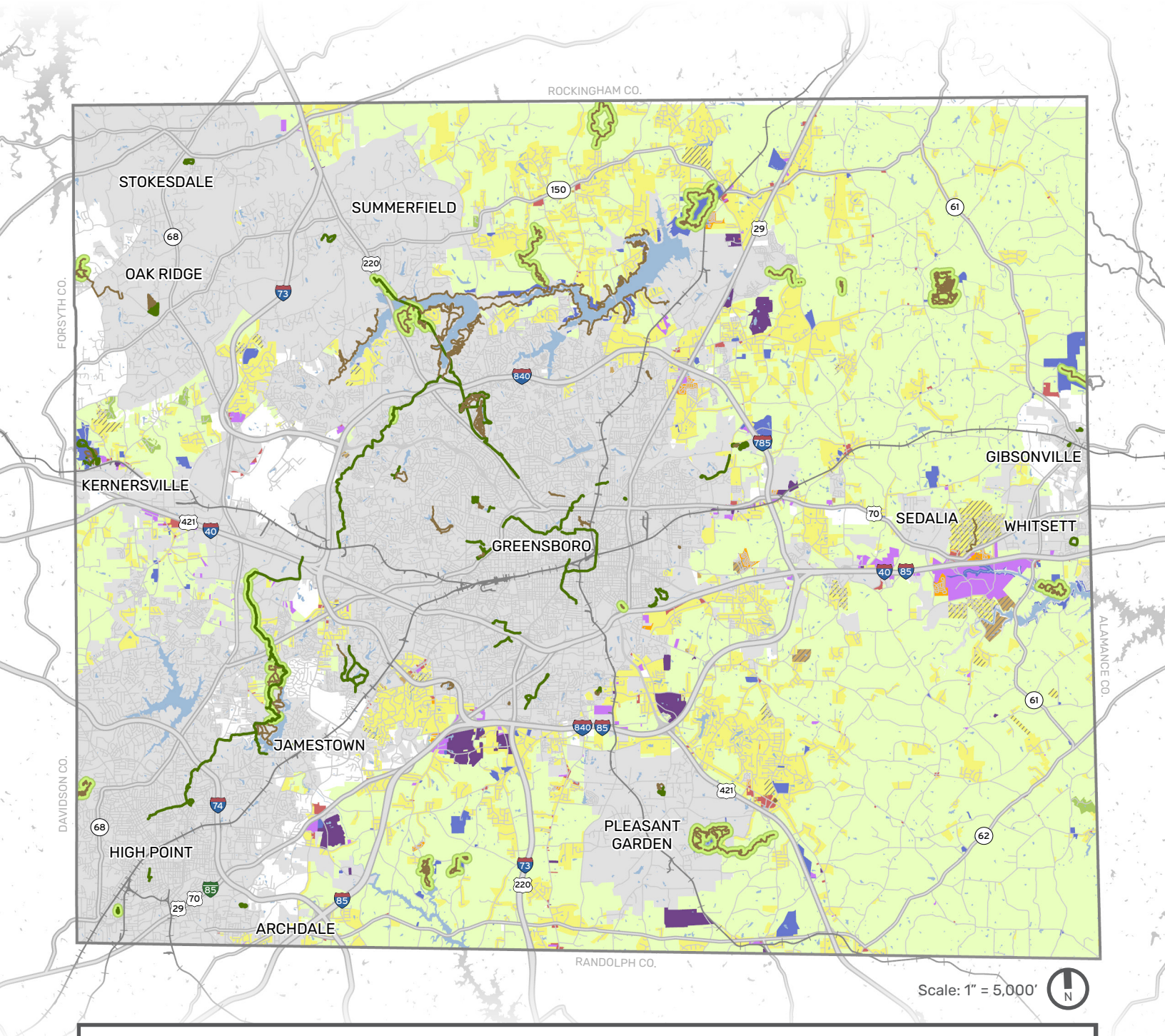
Future land use is identified in the Guilford County Comprehensive Plan and represents the community's vision for what type of growth and development should be accommodated in locations across the county outside of its municipalities. Unincorporated Guilford County is largely planned for Rural Residential land use, with significant Agricultural land in the southern third of the county between Pleasant Garden and Archdale. Northeast of Pleasant Garden, a large area including the Forest Oaks Country Club is planned for Conditional Single Family Residential land use and small amounts of Mixed Use and Office. Inside the Greensboro Urban Loop land is proposed primarily for Residential Single Family and Mixed Use development. Light and Heavy Industrial areas are identified along Interstate 85, and a large Business Center, Business Support, and Mixed Use area is planned for the Colfax community between High Point and Oak Ridge. Limited amounts of Moderate and Heavy Commercial land use is identified along major corridors close to urban areas, including Interstate 40, Interstate 85-BUS, and US-29 around Greensboro.

NCDOT Right-of-Way (ROW)

Roadway right-of-way (ROW) plays a key role in the planning and development of greenways, as the availability of existing public ROW reduces the amount of land and easement acquisition needed and utilizes existing transportation corridors. Interstates and major highways typically offer a wider ROW, often in excess of 150 feet, but are not ideal corridors for greenway development due to high vehicle traffic and speeds. Portions of state highways in rural Guilford County, including NC-61, NC-62, and NC-150, have ROW widths between 76 and 100 feet, while remaining segments of state highways and county roads have a ROW between 51 and 75 feet. Minor streets, such as those in residential subdivisions, often have a ROW of 50 feet or less. Additionally, counties do not maintain roadways in North Carolina, so many roads in unincorporated Guilford County are owned and maintained by NCDOT, with some larger municipalities such as Greensboro and High Point taking on greater roadway maintenance responsibilities within their jurisdictions.

NCDOT Traffic Volumes (AADT)

When a greenway must parallel or cross a roadway, vehicle traffic volumes play a key role in determining appropriate design treatments to maximize greenway user safety and minimize impacts to the user experience. High traffic volumes can negatively impact the greenway user experience and make providing safe roadway crossings challenging, often requiring costly grade separation such as tunnels or bridges. Major highways in Guilford County, including I-40, I-73, I-74, I-85, I-840, US-29, US-220, US-421, and NC-68, have high traffic volumes and create a barrier to bicycle and pedestrian mobility due to access restrictions and grade-separated crossings. Other highways, such as US-70 east of Greensboro, NC-62, and NC-150, have moderate traffic volumes between 12,000 vehicles per day (AADT) and 18,000 AADT. Many other roadways in unincorporated Guilford County have traffic volumes less than 12,000 AADT, creating better opportunities for greenway segments along or across roadways.



LEGEND

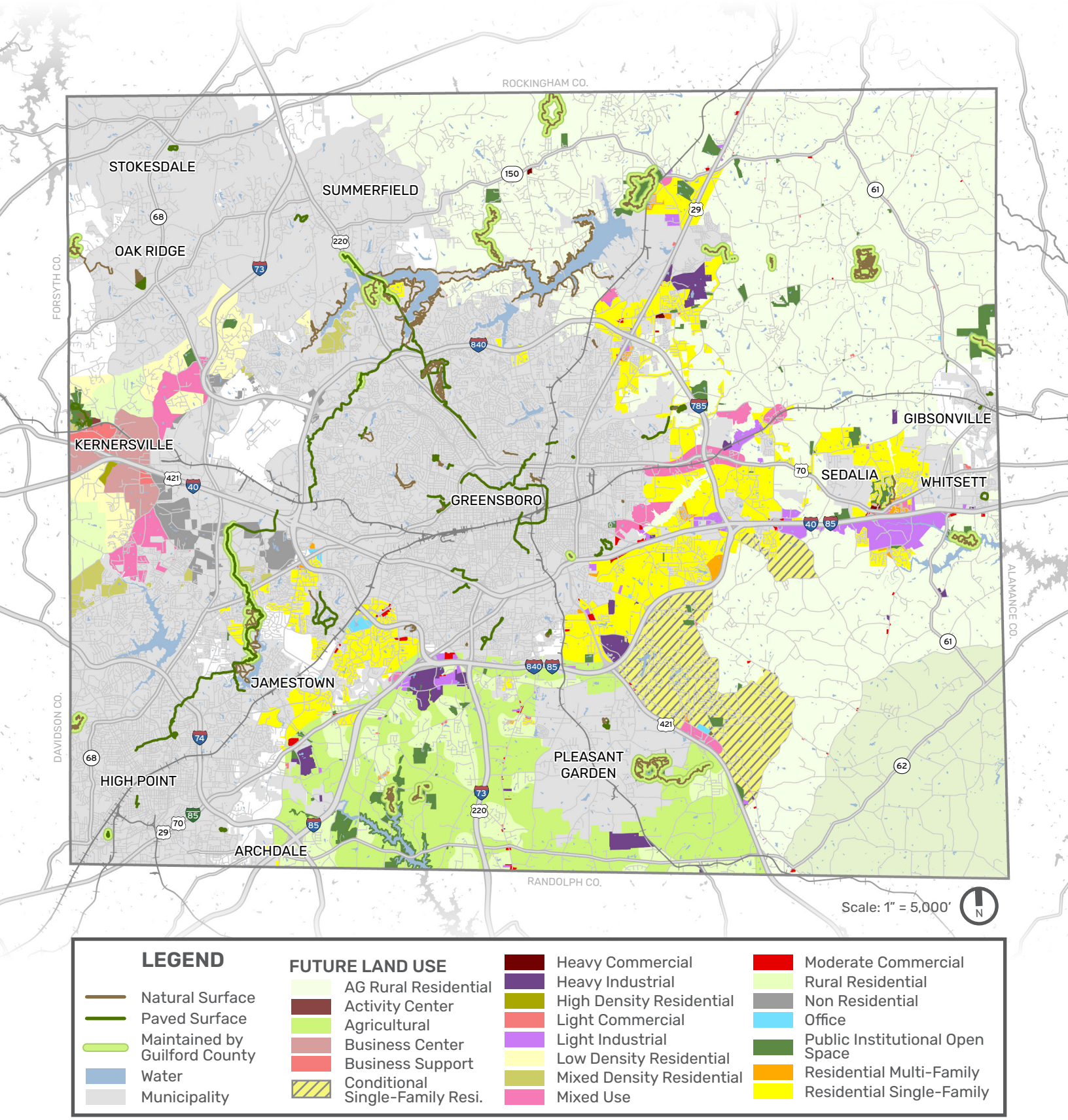
TRAILS
- Natural Surface
- Paved Surface
- Maintained by Guilford County

- Water
- Municipality

ZONING CLASSIFICATION
- Agricultural
- Commercial + Office
- Heavy Industrial
- Light Industrial
- Mixed-Use
- Planned Unit Development
- Public + Institutional
- Residential Multi-Family
- Residential Single-Family
- Rural Preservation

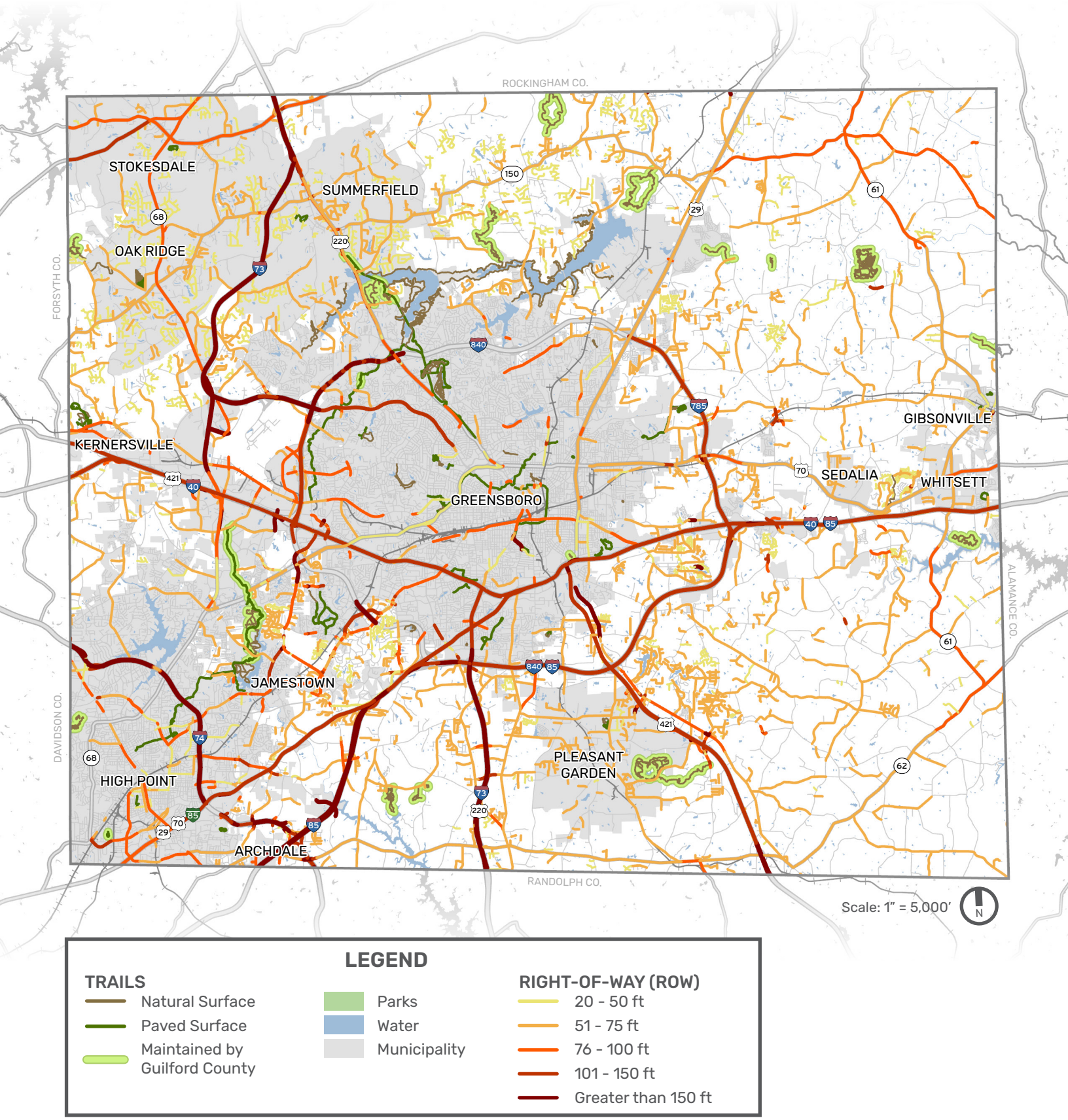
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Guilford County Zoning Map

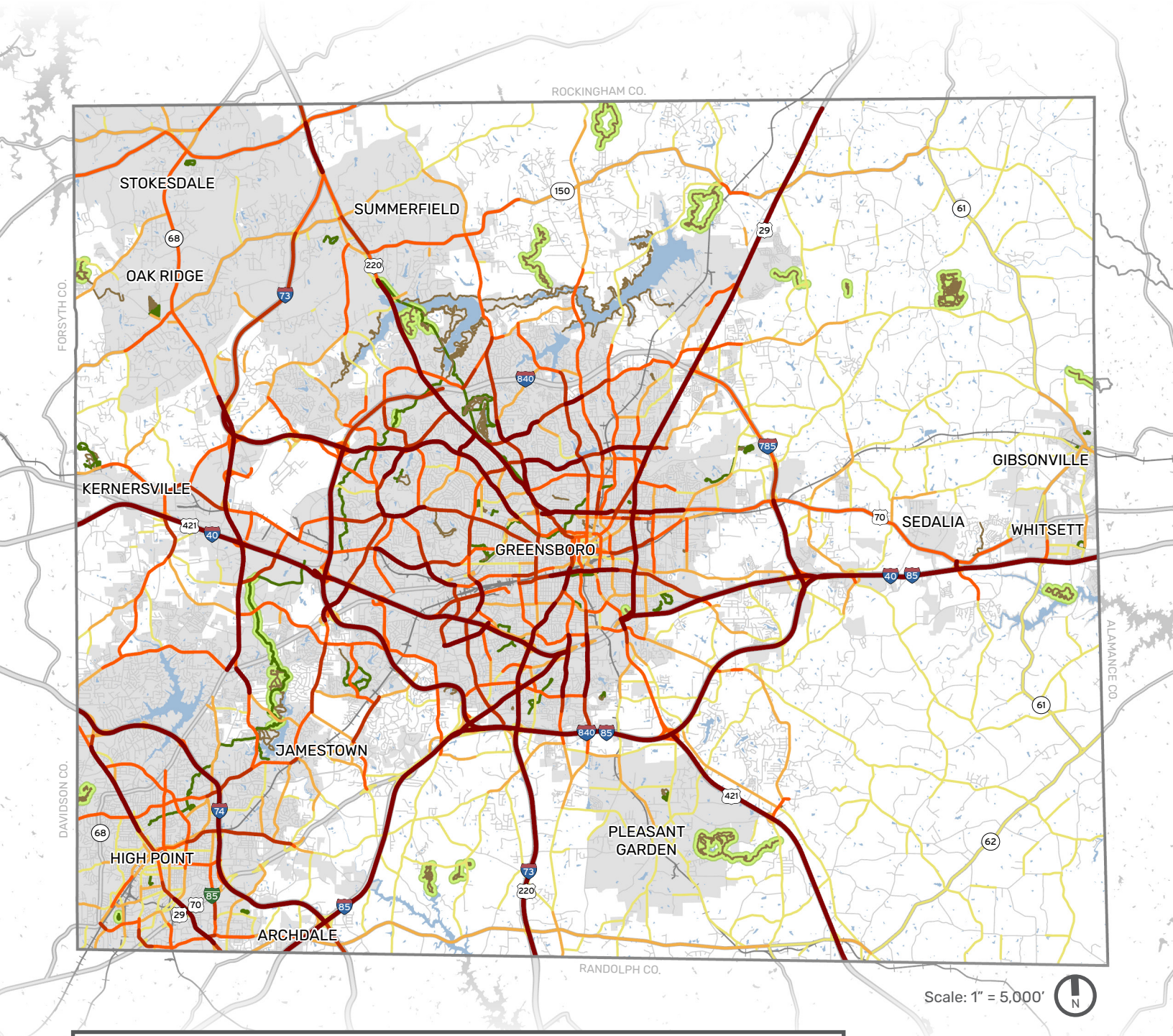


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Future Land Use Map



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LEGEND

TRAILS
- Natural Surface
- Paved Surface
- Maintained by Guilford County

- Parks
- Water
- Municipality

AADT
- 0 - 3,000 AADT
- 3,001 - 6,000 AADT
- 6,001 - 12,000 AADT
- 12,001 - 18,000 AADT
- 18,001 - 113,000 AADT

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Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) Map

NCDOT Speed Limits

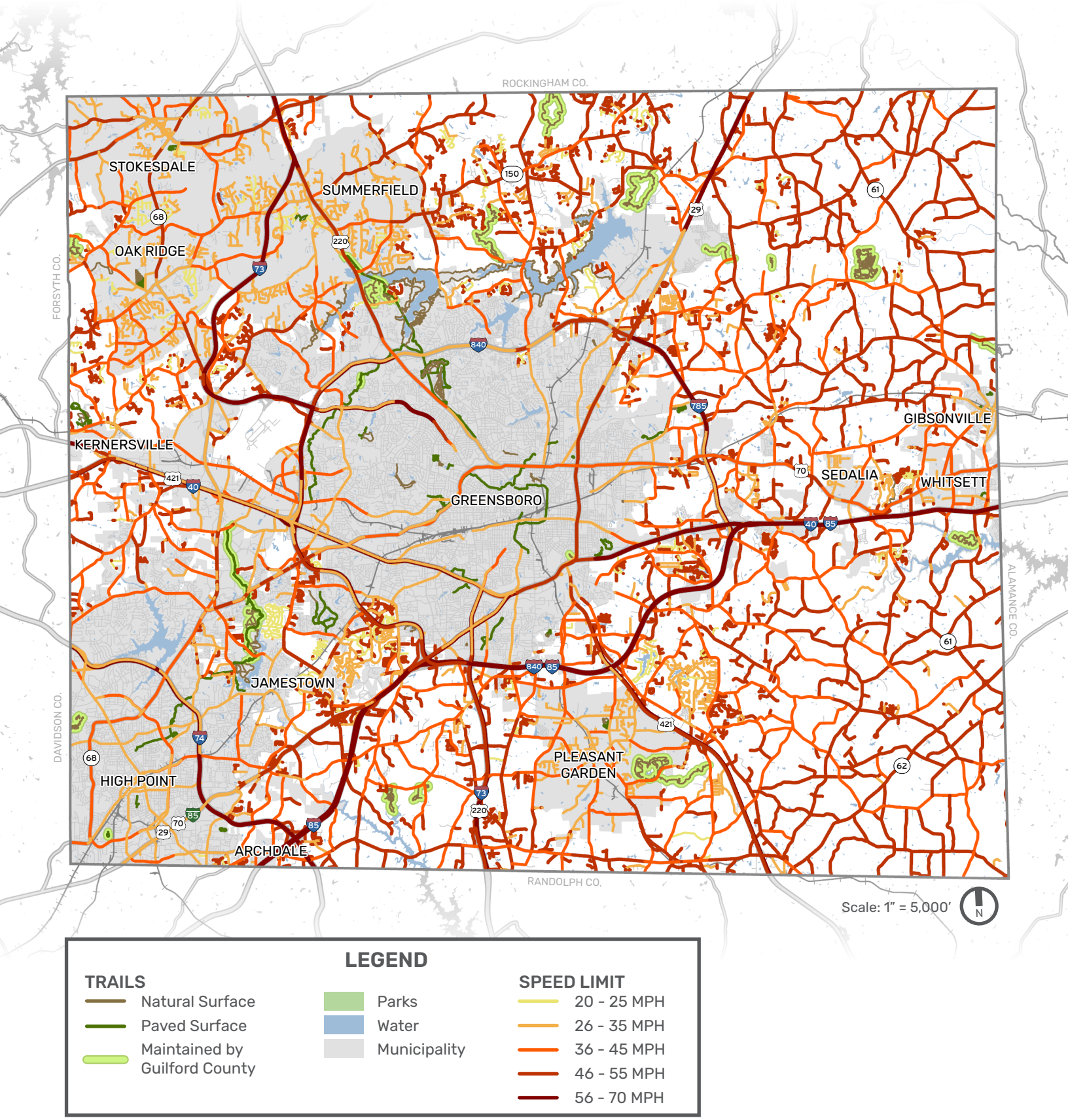
Roadway speed at roadside greenway segments and at-grade crossings is among the greatest factors in greenway safety and user comfort, with greater vehicle speeds being strongly linked to a higher risk of serious injury or fatality in crashes. Interstates and major highways have posted speed limits of between 55 and 70 miles per hour (MPH). While many non-interstate roadways in unincorporated Guilford County have relatively low traffic volumes, speed limits are high, often posted at 45 to 55 MPH. In some locations with sharp corners, limited visibility, or near schools and populated areas, speed limits may drop to 35 MPH. Neighborhood streets are typically posted at 25 MPH.

NCDOT STIP Projects (2024-2033)

A major source of funding and implementation for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure is through the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), a 10-year multimodal plan for projects funded by NCDOT. Programmed roadway projects may include bicycle and pedestrian accommodations as required by the Complete Streets Policy but may also create new barriers to movement. In Guilford County, several STIP projects are planned which may impact greenway and trail projects, including R-5889, which will convert US-29 north of Greensboro to Interstate standards as I-785; U-6068, which will widen US-421 west of I-40 in Guilford County to six lanes; and multiple bridge replacement projects which will construct new bridges over waterways and highways. Additionally, bicycle and pedestrian projects are programmed across the county, including an extension of the A&Y Greenway north to Summerfield, connecting the A&Y Greenway south to the Downtown Greenway, and constructing a multiuse path in downtown High Point.

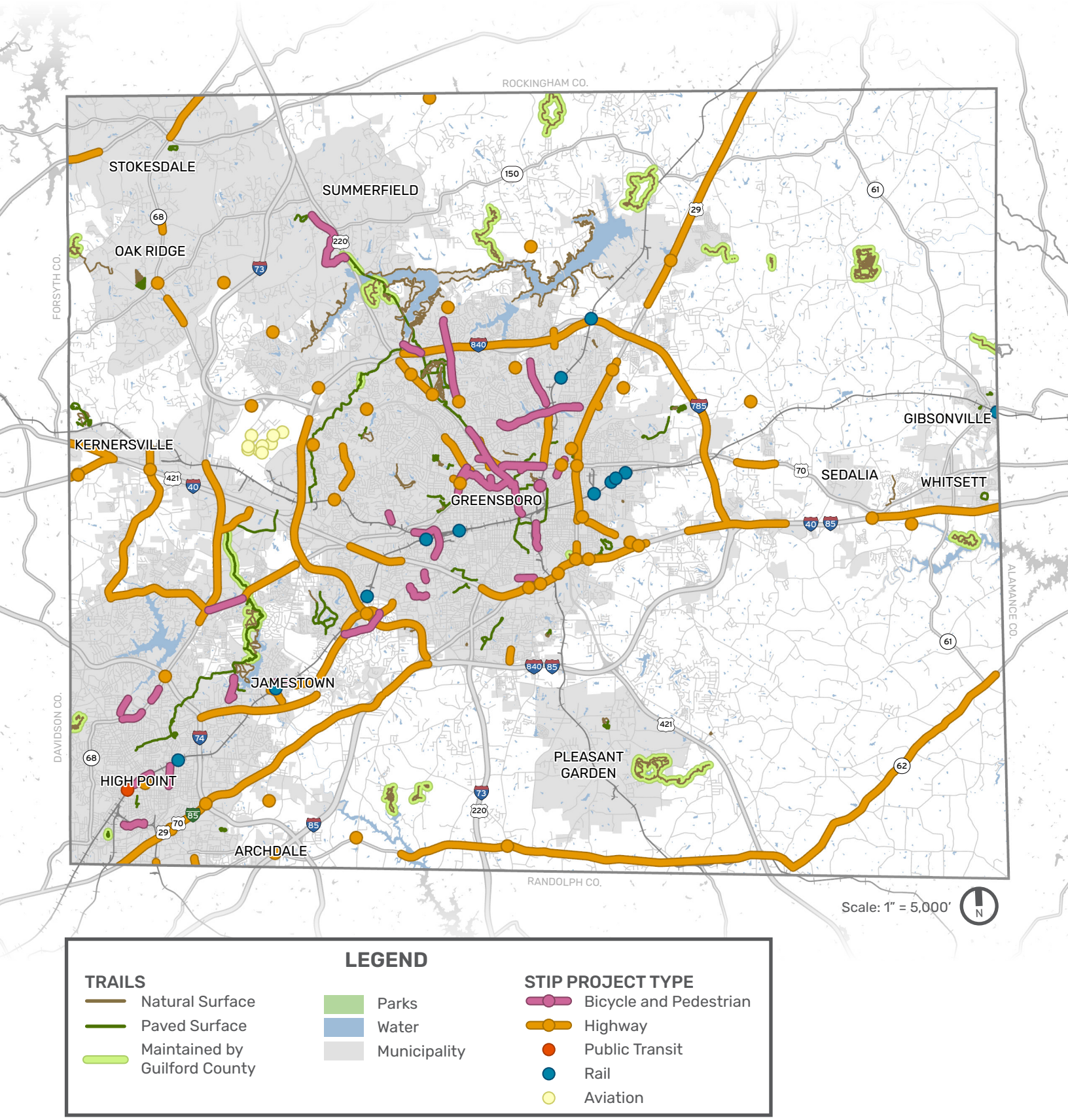
Existing & Planned Bicycle & Pedestrian Facilities

Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in Guilford County is located primarily within its municipalities, but some recently-constructed residential neighborhoods in the County have sidewalks or bicycle lanes. Planned sidewalks are largely found within municipalities and aimed at improving linkages between Greensboro, Jamestown, and High Point. A long-range sidepath project is proposed in the Greensboro Urban Area MPO BiPed Plan Update between Kernersville and Oak Ridge on a new alignment and on US-70 between Buchanan Church Rd and South Buffalo Creek, while a short-term project would add sidepath on a segment of US-70 in Sedalia. Sidepath is also proposed throughout Pleasant Garden including segments of Hagan-Stone Park Rd and Minden Rd.Bicycle lanes are proposed on McConnell Rd west of I-40, on Huffine Mill Rd between Rankin Mill Rd and I-840, on Summit Ave, on Yanceyville Rd, on Lake Brandt Rd, on Grandover Pkwy, on S. Holden Rd and Harris Dr, on Alamance Church Rd west of I-85, on Liberty Rd north of Wiley Lewis Rd, and on a new alignment connecting Vandalia Rd and Edgemont Rd. Separated bicycle lanes are proposed near High Point and Jamestown on parts of Kivett Dr and Harvey Rd, near Burlington on NC-61 from Lake Mackintosh to US-70 and on segments of Wheeler Bridge Rd, Springwood Church Rd, and Whitsett Park Rd. Additional sidewalks, bicycle lanes, buffered bicycle lanes, separated bicycle lanes, shared lane markings, sidepaths, and greenways are proposed within Guilford County municipalities.



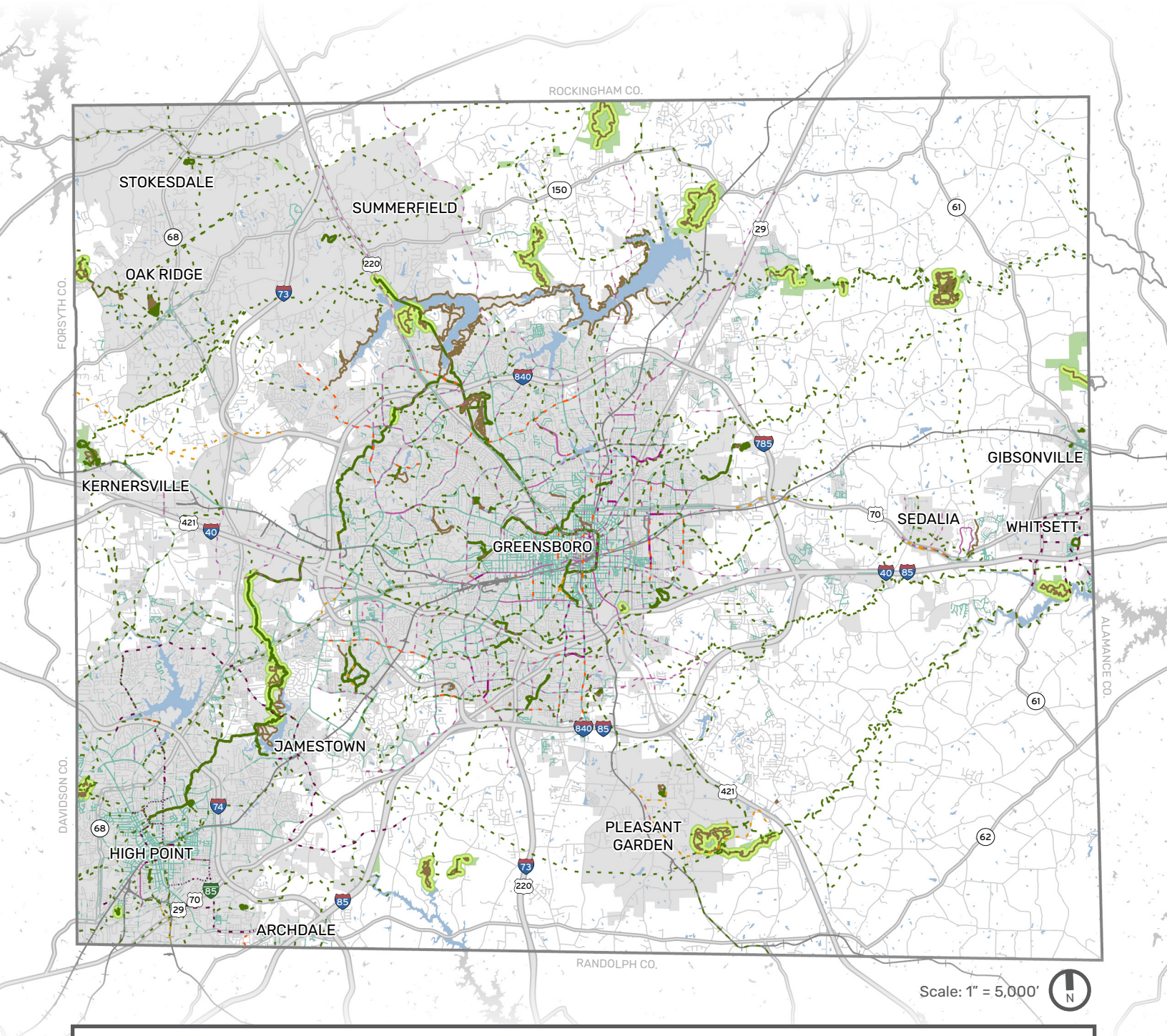
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NCDOT Speed Limits Map



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NCDOT 2024-2033 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Projects Map



LEGEND

TRAILS

- Natural Surface
- Paved Surface
- Maintained by Guilford County

BICYCLE + PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

- Sidewalk
- Sidepath
- Bicycle Lane
- Buffered Bicycle Lane
- Separated Bicycle Lane
- Shared Lane Marking
- Existing Facility
- Planned Facility

- Parks
- Water
- Municipality

If you require an accommodation to access this information, please contact Guilford County Parks at 336-641-7275.

Existing & Planned Bicycle & Pedestrian Facilities Map

Existing & Planned Greenways

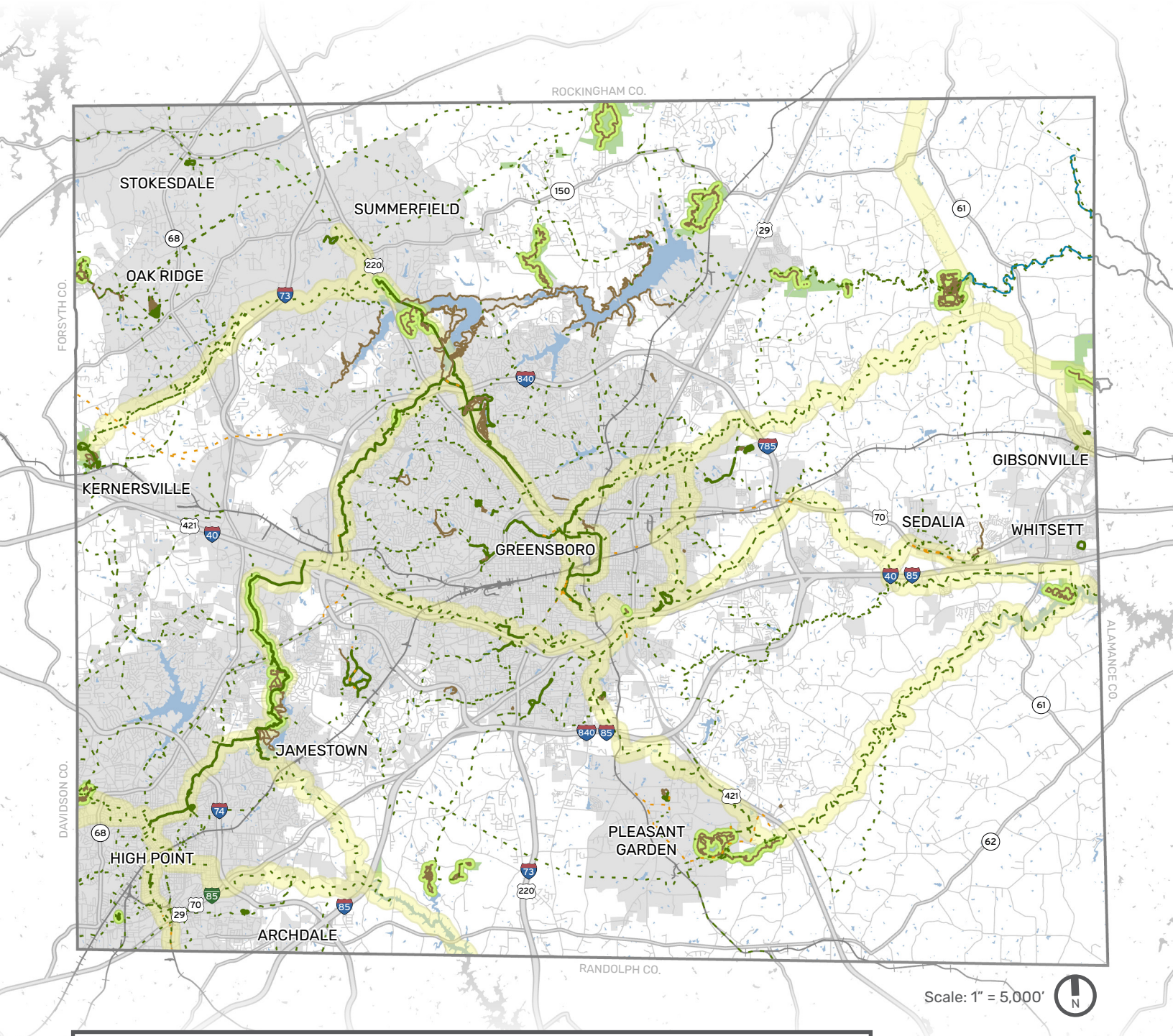
Guilford County is home to 60 miles of greenways and trails, of which the County maintains approximately 27.5 miles. The longest piece of the network is the Bicentennial Greenway between Jamestown and Greensboro, connecting to the High Point Greenway, City Lake Park Trail, A&Y Greenway, and trails at Guilford Courthouse National Military Park and Lake Brandt. Other trails maintained by Guilford County include the Bill Craft Trail at Richardson Taylor Preserve, Big Loop Trail and Little Loop Trail at Bur-Mil Park, trails at Rich Fork Preserve in High Point, and trails at Benbow Preserve in Greensboro. Previous planning efforts have proposed many additional miles of greenways and trails across Guilford County and its municipalities, including the Piedmont Greenway between Triad Park and the A&Y Greenway, trails along Reedy Fork, Haw River, Deep River, Buffalo Creek, Hickory Creek, Rock Creek, Little Alamance Creek, and Big Alamance Creek. An additional major greenway corridor is proposed in an electric transmission easement between I-85 and Hagan-Stone Park. Many existing and planned greenway and trail corridors are proposed as segments of the Great Trails State Plan, which was created by NCDOT to envision a statewide trail network.

Bicyclist Crashes

Crashes involving bicyclists in Guilford County are primarily concentrated within Greensboro and High Point. Outside of municipal boundaries, multiple crashes have occurred on Huffine Mill Rd, NC-150, Oak Ridge Rd, Sandy Ridge Rd, Guilford College Rd north of Jamestown, and NC-62 east of Archdale. Fatalities have taken place on N. Church St near NC-150, Scalesville Rd at Sewarn Rd, and NC-61 north of Gibsonville. Locations where crashes have occurred may indicate a need for safer bicycle facilities to serve an unmet transportation need.

Pedestrian Crashes

Crashes involving pedestrians in Guilford County are primarily concentrated within Greensboro and High Point. Outside of municipal boundaries, crashes have occurred on Randleman Rd near NC-62, Old Randleman Rd, Alamance Church Rd, NC-62, NC-150, Haw River Rd, Hiccone Rd, Huffine Mill Rd, US-29, Sharpe Rd, Southeast School Rd, Summit Ave, and McKnight Mill Rd. Fatalities have occurred on Randleman Rd near NC-62, Old Randleman Rd near I-73, Haw River Rd, McKnight Mill Rd, Sharpe Rd, and Alamance Church Rd. While walking and bicycling are not allowed on Interstate highways, crashes and fatalities involving pedestrians have nevertheless taken place on highways in Guilford County including I-40/I-85 east of Greensboro and I-85 south of Greensboro.



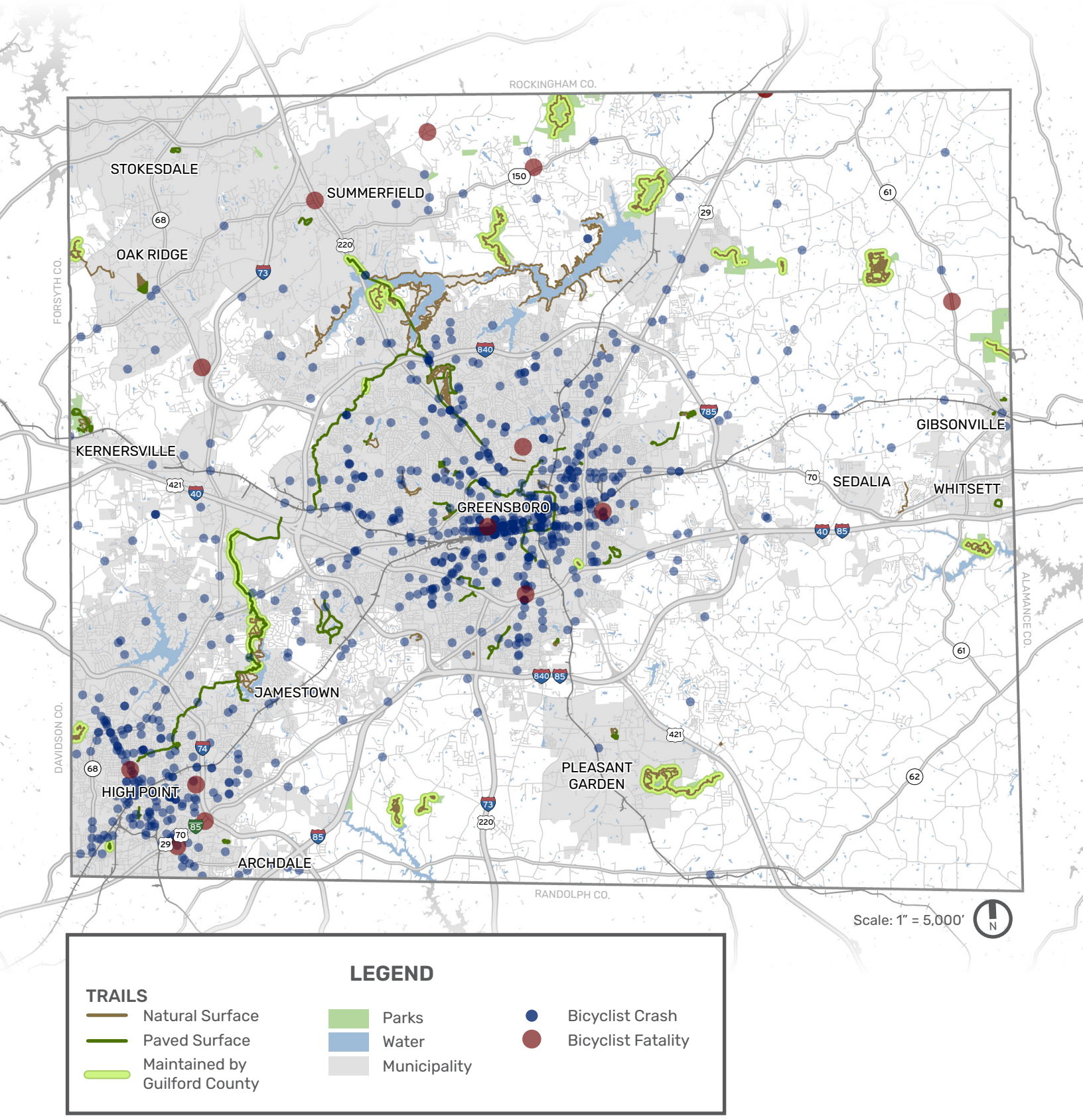
LEGEND

TRAILS

- Natural Surface
- Paved Surface
- Maintained by Guilford County
- Planned Greenway
- Planned Sidepath
- NCDOT Great Trails State Route
- Parks
- Water
- Municipality

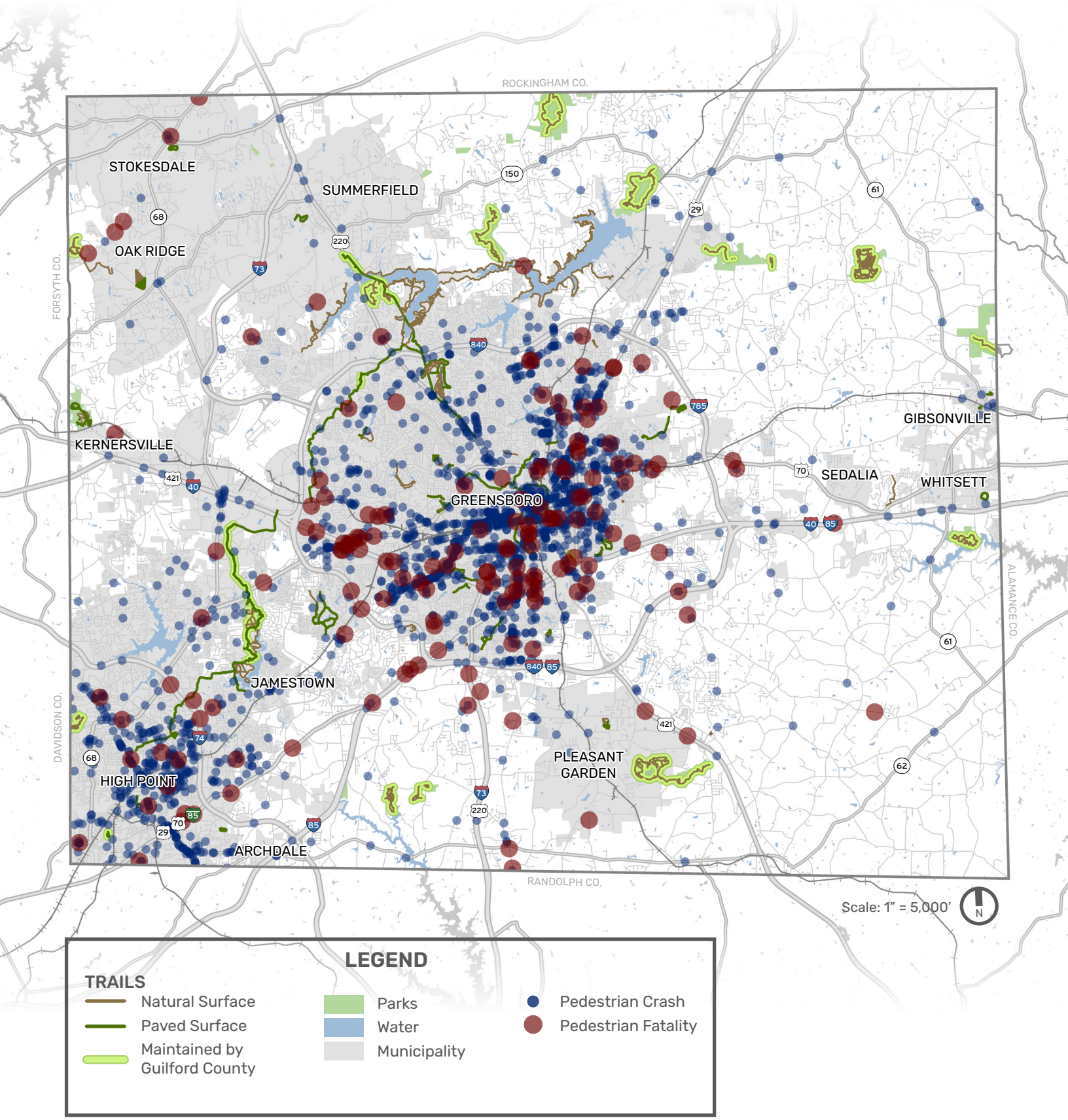
If you require an accommodation to access this information, please contact Guilford County Parks at 336-641-7275.

Existing & Planned Greenways Map



If you require an accommodation to access this information, please contact Guilford County Parks at 336-641-7275.

Bicyclist Crashes (2007-2022) Map



If you require an accommodation to access this information, please contact Guilford County Parks at 336-641-7275.

Pedestrian Crashes (2007-2022) Map

Plan Review

Recommendations for greenways and trails in Guilford County are based on an understanding of previous plans. An inventory of local, regional, and state plans and their recommendations related to greenways and trails that may impact the development of the Guilford County trail network is included in Chapter 01.

Policy Review

This section provides an overview of key federal, state, and local policies that may guide or impact the development of Guilford County's trail and greenway network.

Existing Policy	Key Policies to Impact Guilford County
FHWA Guidance on Bicycle & Pedestrian Accommodation (2011)	Under the US Department of Transportation Policy Statement on Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation, "The DOT policy is to incorporate safe and convenient walking and bicycling facilities into transportation projects. Every transportation agency, including DOT, has the responsibility to improve conditions and opportunities for walking and bicycling and to integrate walking and bicycling into their transportation systems... transportation agencies are encouraged to go beyond minimum standards to provide safe and convenient facilities for these modes." There are no Federal laws or regulations that prohibit shared use paths or bicycle use along or near Interstate highways or other freeways. Bicycle and pedestrian accommodations may be allowed on Interstate and other major highways and freeways. Bridges are essential in any transportation network, and many Interstate or other freeway bridges often are the only possible bridges across rivers, canyons, railroads, other highways, or other major barriers. Major highway bridges often are necessary links for nonmotorized transportation networks. Under 23 U.S.C. 217(g), transportation plans must consider bicycle and pedestrian accommodations. 23 U.S.C. 217(g) Planning and Design. – 1. **In General**. --Bicyclists and pedestrians shall be given due consideration in the comprehensive transportation plans developed by each metropolitan planning organization and State in accordance with sections 134 and 135, respectively. Bicycle transportation facilities and pedestrian walkways shall be considered, where appropriate, in conjunction with all new construction and reconstruction of transportation facilities, except where bicycle and pedestrian use are not permitted. 2. **Safety Considerations** --Transportation plans and projects shall provide due consideration for safety and contiguous routes for bicyclists and pedestrians. Safety considerations shall include the installation, where appropriate, and maintenance of audible traffic signals and audible signs at street crossings.

Existing Policy	Key Policies to Impact Guilford County
NCDOT Complete Streets Policy (2019)	The NCDOT Complete Streets Policy Update was adopted by the Board of Transportation in August 2019. This policy requires NCDOT to consider and incorporate multimodal facilities in the design and improvement of all transportation projects in North Carolina. The adopted Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) is considered the controlling plan for the identification of nonmotorized facilities to be evaluated as part of a roadway project. The CTP may include and/or reference locally adopted plans for public transportation, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and greenways. Bicycle, pedestrian, and public transportation facilities that appear in the CTP directly or by reference will be included as part of the proposed roadway project, and NCDOT is responsible for the full cost of the project. Bicycle, pedestrian, and transit facilities incidental to a roadway project where a need has been identified through the project scoping process but not identified in an adopted plan may be included in the project. Inclusion of these incidental facilities requires the local jurisdiction to share the incremental cost of constructing the improvements based on population thresholds. The policy also establishes maintenance responsibility for active transportation facilities. Bicycle, pedestrian, and transit improvements inside a municipal boundary are subject to local maintenance. For non-separated facilities outside of a municipal boundary where a county maintenance agreement has not been executed to maintain the facility, NCDOT will maintain the facility after construction if the bicycle or pedestrian facility lies within NCDOT right-of-way. Projects that have not completed environmental review prior to August 2019 are subject to the Complete Streets Policy.
NCDOT Roadway Design Manual (2018)	The Roadway Design manual provides general design information, design criteria, and plan preparation guidance for NCDOT roadways. Guidance on clear zones can be referenced in Part 1, Chapter 1-4N. Guidance states that the recommended clear zone range for flat, level terrain adjacent to a straight section of a 60 mph highway with an average daily traffic of 6,000 vehicles is a width of 30 to 32 feet. For steeper slopes on a 70-mph roadway, the clear zone range increases to 38 to 46 feet. Additional clear zone guidance is provided for roadway facilities based on design speed, design ADT, and roadside slope. Guidance on multimodal design elements can be referenced in Part 1, Chapter 4 Sections 4.14, 4.15, and 4.16. Guidance states that shared-use paths, often referred to as greenways, are paths physically separated from motor vehicle traffic and used by pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized users. The width of a shared-use path may vary, based on expected user volumes and context. • Desirable width – 12 to 14 feet • Minimum width – 10 feet; 8 feet in exceptionally constrained areas • Vertical clearance, minimum – 8 feet

Existing Policy	Key Policies to Impact Guilford County
NCDOT Bridge Policy (2000)	This policy establishes design elements of new and reconstructed bridges on the North Carolina Highway System. Vertical clearances for new structures shall be designed above all sections of pavement including the useable shoulder. Future widening and pavement cross slope will be considered in design clearance. Vertical clearances for facilities are as follows: over interstates, freeways, and arterials: 16'-6" to 17'-0"; over local and collector roads and streets: 15'-0" to 15'-6"; over all railroads: 23'-0" to 23'-6" or less if approved by Railroads; pedestrian overpasses and sign structures vertical clearance: 17'-0" to 17'-6". Sidewalks shall be included on new bridges with curb and gutter approach roadways that are without control of access. A minimum handrail height of 42 inches is required.
Guilford County Unified Development Ordinance (2022)	The Guilford County Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) was adopted in 2022. The document contains several relevant provisions for multimodal planning and parks and recreation development: • Public Parks are permitted with individual development standards for all residential, industrial, commercial, and institutional districts within Guilford County. • 5.7.K: All parks greater than ten (10) acres shall have primary access to a collector or higher capacity street • 8.5.A.6.a: Except along controlled access roadways, sidewalks shall be required on all thoroughfares, collector, subcollector, and local residential streets (except cul-de-sacs) within one (1) mile of a park/recreation facility, school, shopping center, employment center, or other major pedestrian generated. Where sidewalks are installed, they shall have a minimum width of five (5) feet and be constructed on one (1) side of the street right-of-way as determined by the Technical Review Committee. • 8.5.A.6.b: Alternative provisions for pedestrian sidewalk movement meeting the intent of this section may be used where unreasonable or impractical situations would result from application of these requirements.

Existing Policy	Key Policies to Impact Guilford County
City of Greensboro Land Development Ordinance (2011)	• The Greensboro Land Development Ordinance sets standards for new development, expansions, or redevelopment and replaced the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) upon its adoption. The document contains several relevant provisions to multimodal planning and parks and recreation development: • 30-7-5.2E: Bicycle parking racks and similar facilities must be provided in conformance with 30-11-8, Bicycle Parking Facilities. • 30-9-10: Sidewalks must be installed along private and public streets that are within or abut a subdivision or a property, are required along both sides of new and existing major and minor thorough fare streets, along both sides of all new/existing streets in Traditional Neighborhood Developments, along both sides of collector streets with AADT of over 8,000 vehicles, speed limit of over 35 mph, where there are pedestrian needs or a specified pedestrian destination within ¼ mile. • 30-11-8: Short-term bicycle parking is required in commercial parking garages and in MU-M, MU-H, CN, RM-26, and RM-40 districts at a minimum rate of 1 bicycle space per 10 parking spaces (up to 25 spaces) and each bike space must have a minimum of 2 feet in width by 6 feet in length and a minimum vertical clearance of 7 feet. • 30-10-3.2: Pedestrian landscaping is required along all street frontages, which can be met by either providing a street planting yard from the edge of the ROW that includes 2 canopy trees per 100 linear feet or 6 understory trees per linear feet, providing a minimum 10-foot wide sidewalk with canopy trees planted in tree wells at 30-foot intervals; providing minimum 10-foot wide sidewalk at least 50% covered with weather-protection materials; or providing a plaza between building and ROW a minimum of 10 feet in width along 50% of the building with pavers and permanently fixed planters with vegetation. • 30-12-8.2: Sets minimum open space requirements that apply to PUDs, Mixed-use developments, Residential subdivisions in the R-7 district in excess of 5 acres in area, Cluster developments, Townhouses and residential condominium developments, and Other multi-family residential developments. Paths/trails at least 10-feet in width and public sidewalks at least 6-feet in width may count toward satisfying the minimum open space requirements. • 30-13-2.1: Subdivisions must provide pedestrian routes to nearby pedestrian activity areas as well as nearby shopping, public/civic, employment, and recreation uses to the extent possible and must create an integrated system of lots, streets, trails, and infrastructure to provide for efficient movement of pedestrians and bicyclists within the subdivision and to/from adjacent development.

Existing Policy	Key Policies to Impact Guilford County
Pleasant Garden Development Ordinances (2023)	The Pleasant Garden Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) was adopted in 2023. The document contains several relevant provisions for multimodal and recreation development: • 5-12.5: Except along controlled access facilities sidewalks shall be required on all thoroughfare streets and at other locations where a pedestrian traffic generator requires separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic on collector, subcollector, and local residential streets. Where sidewalks are installed, they shall have a minimum of five feet and be construed on one side of the right-of-way as determined by the Zoning Board. • 6-4.56 (C): All parks greater than ten acres shall have primary access to a collector or higher capacity street.

Existing Policy	Key Policies to Impact Guilford County
Jamestown Land Development Ordinance (2023)	The Jamestown Land Development Ordinance was adopted in 2023. The document contains several relevant provisions for multimodal infrastructure and recreation planning: • Multiple building types must be pedestrian oriented and of pedestrian scale with building design promoting pedestrian activity and pedestrian-driven commerce. Sidewalks shall be an extension of the street level business' operations, and businesses shall not encroach more than 5 feet into the sidewalk in Urban Workplace Lots and Shopfront Commercial Lots. Streets in Jamestown must interconnect to the extent possible (13.2-1), be pedestrian scaled (13.2-2), and be bordered by sidewalks (13.2-3). • 2.20-2: Sidewalks shall be required along one side of new streets, except along major thoroughfares, where sidewalks shall be required on both sides of new streets. In the case of private streets, sidewalks shall be required on one side of new streets. Regardless of streets being public or private, the developer of new street networks may petition the technical review committee (TRC) to waive the requirement for sidewalks along new streets for developments located in the watershed critical area where additional built-upon area may be detrimental to water quality. The TRC shall apply an "equal or better" performance standard to the request and the developer shall be required to comply with conditions placed upon them by the TRC. • 12.7: All non-residential uses and all multi-family residential uses, including condos and townhomes with shared parking, shall include bicycle parking spaces in the amount, at a minimum, equal to five percent of the parking provided for automobiles. This area may be a designated parking space within the parking lot near the building or an area outside the parking lot adjacent to the building. The bike parking area must include a bike rack with provisions for locking bikes. • 12.12-9: The planning director may approve the joint use of up to 100 percent of the required parking spaces for properties zoned Parks & Recreation (PNR), provided that public parking is available within 750 feet walking distance of the property on which the principal use is located, and provided that if a major thoroughfare crossing is required, that there is a painted pedestrian crossing which permits safe access across said thoroughfare. • 13.6-1: Street trees and sidewalks are required on both sides of public streets except rural roads, lanes, alleys, and the undeveloped edge of neighborhood parkways except that sidewalks may be permitted on only one side of the street to accommodate low impact design in the Agricultural District. On commercial streets, sidewalks must be a minimum of 7 feet in width and a 10-foot minimum width with tree grates or cutouts is required, while 12 feet is encouraged on commercial streets, on properties/streets adjacent to schools, especially in the Main Street District.

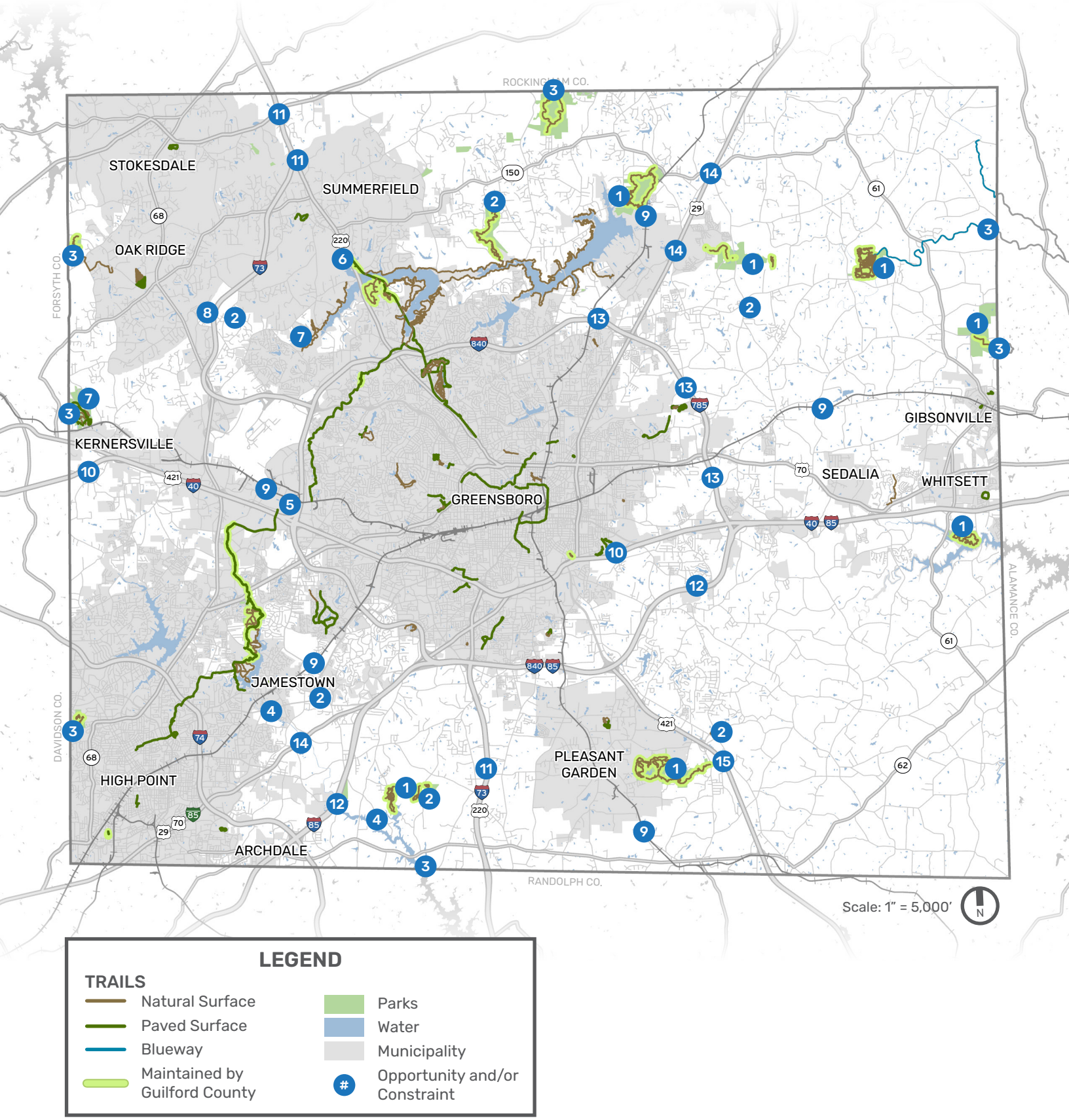
Opportunities & Constraints

The table below and associated map provide a summary of opportunities and constraints that may impact the development of Guilford County's greenway and trail network. Numbers marked on the map correspond to specific opportunities and constraints listed in the table and include potential connections as well as key transportation corridors within the county. The opportunities and constraints analysis will help inform network recommendations for the greenway and trail plan to create a system that is realistic and attainable.

Opportunities & Constraints	Description
1. Connections to Parks	Parks are a key connection for greenways and trails in Guilford County, and many local and County parks include internal trail networks. Creating additional connections between parks may help increase trail usage and park visitation, providing residents with greater access to recreation facilities.
2. Connections to Schools	Connecting to schools enables greater mobility for students and school staff. Existing trails at McCandless Woods Preserve and Saferight Preserve are adjacent to three public schools, and other schools near existing and planned trails include Northwest Guilford Middle and High schools, Northeast Guilford Middle and High schools, Jamestown Middle School, Ragsdale High School, and Millis Road Elementary School. However, safety considerations for greenways on or adjacent to school property may require access control measures such as fencing.
3. Interjurisdictional & Regional Connections	Guilford County includes several municipalities with their own trail networks, including Greensboro and High Point, and can facilitate the creation of additional connections between communities within the County such as those created by the Bicentennial and A&Y greenways. Additionally, regional connections to Alamance, Forsyth, Rockingham, Davidson, and Randolph counties can help strengthen Guilford County's position at the heart of the Piedmont Legacy Trails network.
4. Deep River	The Deep River drains southwestern Guilford County into Randleman Lake and connects several county and municipal parks. The Deep River State Trail is an adopted state trail and has been proposed to include both trail and blueway corridors connecting parks and communities along its route. Challenges to the implementation of trails along the Deep River are routing through private property and safely crossing roadways and highways, especially Interstate 85 and US-29.

Opportunities & Constraints	Description
5. Bicentennial Greenway	The Bicentennial Greenway is among the main trails of Guilford County and connects High Point City Lake Park to the A&Y Greenway in Greensboro. Portions of the trail are maintained by the County. A large gap exists between segments of the trail in west Greensboro from Chimney Rock Rd to Swing Rd, where multiple highway and railroad crossings in an industrial area create barriers to travel and user comfort.
6. A&Y Greenway	The Atlantic & Yadkin (A&Y) Greenway connects Greensboro and Summerfield across Lake Brandt, with additional segments to the north in progress. An abandoned railroad corridor that gives its namesake to the greenway provides an opportunity to continue the trail and connect communities and parks along its route, including the Atlantic & Yadkin Greenway Preserve. A section of the A&Y extending it to Medearis St in Summerfield is funded by NCDOT and expected to begin in 2024, while a feasibility study has been completed for the remaining portion within Guilford County.
7. Piedmont Greenway	The Piedmont Greenway is a developing corridor along Reedy Fork connecting Guilford and Forsyth counties that is proposed as a spur route of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail (MST). It will provide connections to Triad Park, Kernersville, Oak Ridge, Summerfield, and Greensboro within Guilford County and has a completed master plan and feasibility studies for three segments of the corridor.
8. Mountains-to-Sea Trail (MST)	The MST is a statewide trail that passes through northern Guilford County, including the communities of Oak Ridge, Summerfield, and Greensboro. Significant portions of the MST within Guilford County have been completed with trails around Lake Brandt and Lake Townsend, and other segments in Oak Ridge, the Guilford County Farm, and Reedy Fork. The MST shares segments of other greenways such as the A&Y Greenway and will include a spur route along the Piedmont Greenway. Opportunities abound to continue developing the MST in Guilford County by moving trail segments off roadways and linking trails together to create a cohesive network.
9. Railroads	Guilford County's central location within North Carolina makes it a vital hub for transportation and industry, and railroads play a major role in carrying both freight and passengers. However, limited crossing opportunities make railroads a major travel barrier and pose a constraint to developing new greenways. Active railroad corridors radiate in five directions from Greensboro and policies prohibiting new at-grade crossings mean any greenway or trail must cross at an existing roadway crossing or via a grade-separated crossing. Where space permits, existing railroad bridges over streams, rivers, and roadways may provide an opportunity for a greenway to pass beneath, or a new grade separated crossing may be required at additional expense.

Opportunities & Constraints	Description
10. Interstate 40	Interstate 40 bisects Guilford County as it passes from east to west, creating a major barrier for mobility with few opportunities to cross away from busy roads and interchanges. Several existing crossings of Interstate 40 include sidewalks, and a bridge crossing of South Buffalo Creek provides an opportunity to pass beneath the highway.
11. Interstate 73	Interstate 73 crosses central and western Guilford County from north to south and is a key barrier to east-west mobility in the area. However, opportunities to provide a trail crossing may exist at the Haw River and US-158 crossings near the Rockingham County border, and at Old Randleman Rd and Sutton Rd in southern Guilford County. Interstate 73 is also a key barrier to the Bicentennial Greenway where a gap exists on the west side of Greensboro.
12. Interstate 85	Interstate 85 splits from Interstate 40 in Greensboro and continues south toward Charlotte through Archdale. While there are no existing crossings with sidewalks or bicycle lanes, multiple bridges exist to carry the highway over Little Alamance Creek and the Deep River which may provide enough space for a greenway beneath. A wide forested median is present northeast of Archdale, creating a small refuge between northbound and southbound traffic. Additionally, existing highway bridges at Nelson Farm Rd and Kivett Dr may be wide enough to retrofit a greenway beneath adjacent to the existing roadway.
13. Interstate 840	Interstate 840 forms the Greensboro Urban Loop and is shared with other interstates and major highways. Potential greenway crossing opportunities may include existing bridges at South Buffalo Creek, Old Burlington Rd, Camp Burton Rd, North Buffalo Creek, Hines Chapel Rd, McKnight Mill Rd, Lees Chapel Rd, Yanceyville St, and N Elm St.
14. US-29	US-29 north of Greensboro is a limited-access highway with few crossing opportunities, but existing bridges at Reedy Fork and NC-150 may provide enough space to incorporate a greenway crossing. South of Greensboro US-29 is signed as Interstate 85-BUS and includes a bridge crossing of the Deep River and an at-grade intersection with Riverdale Dr.
15. US-421	US-421 in Guilford County is a limited-access highway severely constraining multimodal access, but opportunities may exist to incorporate a greenway crossing at an existing bridge of Big Alamance Creek.



Opportunities & Constraints Map

Greenway Network Development

The project team reviewed existing conditions within Guilford County as well as previous plans and recommendations for greenways within the County and its municipalities to create a countywide network that is realistic and attainable, connects to destinations and communities, and serves all residents of the County. The network includes greenways as well as sidepath where facilities are proposed to be constructed parallel to existing roadways. The proposed greenways and trails included in this plan are intended to serve as a core countywide greenway network connecting all communities and key destinations and forming the backbone of a regional system that extends across county lines. Additional local connections from the spine countywide trail network may be desired which are not shown here but should be pursued in conjunction with trails recommended in this plan.

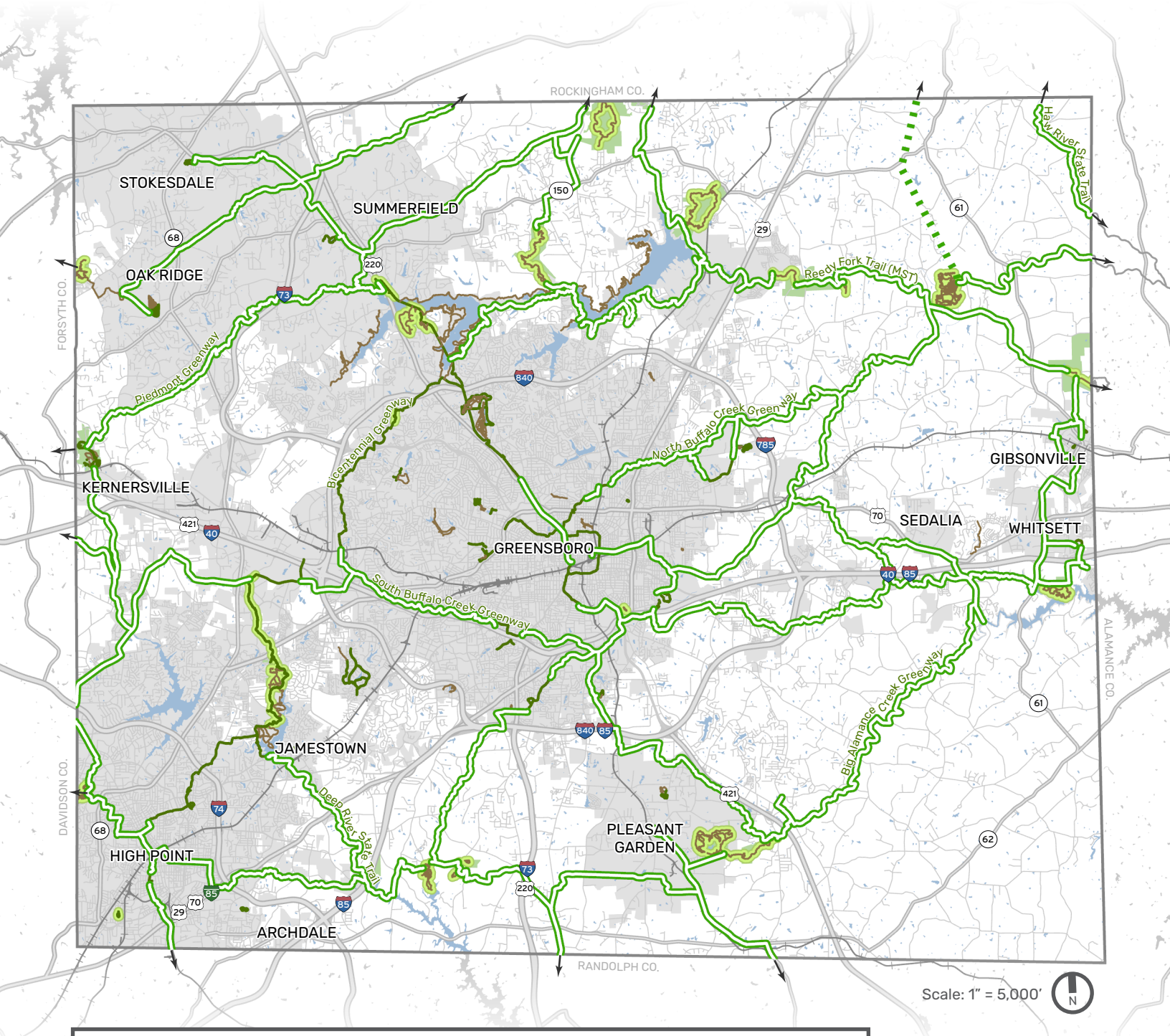
Some proposed trails in this network connect to or pass within municipal jurisdictions as the Bicentennial Greenway and A&Y Greenway currently do; while implementation and maintenance for some of these trails may be the responsibility of the local jurisdictions or a partnership effort, these trails serve as vital connections through and between communities and support the overall countywide system to create a cohesive network for all Guilford County residents and visitors. Alignments through municipalities primarily defer to previous local planning efforts with only minor changes and reflect ongoing projects in those communities.

ID	Proposed Corridor	From	To	Facility Recommendation	Length (MI)
1	Big Alamance Creek	Company Mill Preserve	Liberty Rd	Greenway	0.82
2	Liberty Rd/Woody Mill Rd	Big Alamance Creek	Southeast Guilford High School	Sidepath	1.01
3	Wall Rd	Southwest Park	Southern Middle School	Sidepath/Greenway	1.68
4	Big Alamance Creek	Liberty Rd	Alamance Church Rd	Greenway	3.29
5	Piedmont Greenway	Triad Park	NC-68	Greenway	4.61
6	Piedmont Greenway	NC-68	I-73	Greenway	4.30
7	Piedmont Greenway	I-73	US-220	Greenway	3.68
8	Reedy Fork	Reedy Fork Pkwy	Reedy Fork Pkwy	Greenway	1.39
9	Reedy Fork	Reedy Fork	Townsend Rd	Greenway	2.27
10	Mountains to Sea Trail (MST)	Townsend Rd	Southshore Rd	Greenway/Sidepath	1.69
11	Lake Townsend	Reedy Fork	Bryant Park North	Greenway	1.42
12	MST	Southshore Rd	Yanceyville Rd	Greenway	3.63
13	MST	Yanceyville Rd	N Church St	Greenway	2.17
14	MST	N Church St	N Church St	Greenway	1.05
15	MST	N Church St	Lake Brandt St	Greenway	3.07
16	MST	Lake Brandt St	A&Y Greenway	Greenway	2.29
17	MST	Hines Chapel Preserve	Bold Moon Preserve	Greenway	1.50

ID	Proposed Corridor	From	To	Facility Recommendation	Length (MI)
18	MST	Bold Moon Preserve	Northeast Park	Greenway	3.90
19	MST	Northeast Park	County Farm	Greenway	4.80
20	Bicentennial Greenway	Boulder Rd	W Market St	Sidepath	2.75
21	Big Alamance Creek	Alamance Church Rd	Thacker Dairy Rd	Greenway	1.63
22	Big Alamance Creek	Thacker Dairy Rd	Mt Hope Church Rd	Greenway	2.53
23	Big Alamance Creek	Mt Hope Church Rd	Rock Creek Dairy Rd	Greenway/Sidepath	3.62
24	Little Alamance Creek	Lake Mackintosh	Rock Creek Dairy Rd	Greenway	2.71
25	Rock Creek Dairy Rd	Burlington Rd	Lake Mackintosh	Sidepath	2.01
26	Whitsett Park Rd	NC-61	Burlington Springwood Rd	Sidepath	0.84
27	NC-61	Lake Mackintosh	US-70	Sidepath	1.71
28	North Buffalo Creek	Northeast Community Trail	Huffine Mill Rd	Greenway	5.15
29	Buffalo Creek	Huffine Mill Rd	Northeast Park	Greenway/Sidepath	4.91
30	North Buffalo Creek	Rankin Mill Rd	Ralph C Johnson Rd	Greenway	1.92
31	Nealtown Rd	Northeast Community Trail	North Buffalo Creek	Sidepath/Greenway	0.92
32	North Buffalo Creek	Revolution Mill	Ralph C Johnson Rd	Greenway	2.77
33	NC-61/Dew Sharpe Rd	Burlington Rd	W Steele St	Sidepath/Greenway	2.70
34	Gibsonville Loop	Whitsett Ave	Minneola St	Greenway/Sidepath	1.00
35	Gibsonville Loop	Minneola St	Gibsonville Public Library	Greenway	1.51
36	Travis Creek	Gibsonville Loop	Guilford County Farm	Greenway	1.31
37	South Buffalo Creek	East Greensboro Greenway	Richardson Village Way	Greenway	4.44
38	South Buffalo Creek	Richardson Village Way	Huffine Mill Rd	Greenway	4.12
39	Birch Creek	Richardson Village Way	Birch Creek Rd	Greenway	2.46
40	Birch Creek	Birch Creek Rd	Rock Creek Dairy Rd	Greenway/Sidepath	3.32
41	Reedy Fork	Northeast Park	Alamance County	Greenway	5.43
42	Haw River	Rockingham County	Alamance County	Greenway	4.02
43	Spearman Rd	Bryant Park North	Rockingham County	Greenway/Sidepath	4.41

ID	Proposed Corridor	From	To	Facility Recommendation	Length (MI)
44	Mears Fork	Rockingham County	Lake Brandt Park	Greenway	4.39
45	Mears Fork	Lake Brandt Rd	Auburn Rd	Greenway/Sidepath	3.45
46	Deep River	City Lake Park	Harvey Rd	Greenway	2.36
47	Deep River	Harvey Rd	Kivett Dr	Greenway	2.17
48	Deep River	Kivett Dr	Groometown Rd	Greenway	2.52
49	Groometown Rd	Deep River	Southwest Park	Sidepath/Greenway	1.84
50	Big Alamance Creek	Company Mill Preserve	Neelley Rd	Greenway	3.61
51	Big Alamance Creek/ Little Alamance Creek/ Ritters Lake Rd	Neelley Rd	Pleasant Garden Rd	Greenway/Sidepath	3.34
52	Pleasant Garden Rd/ Vandalia	Gardengate Rd	South Buffalo Creek	Sidepath/Greenway	3.07
53	South Buffalo Creek	Vandalia	Barber Park	Greenway	2.30
54	Sharpe Rd	South Buffalo Creek	Youngs Mill Rd	Greenway/Sidepath	4.69
55	Little Alamance Creek	Youngs Mill Rd	McConnell Rd	Greenway	2.19
56	Little Alamance Creek	McConnell Rd	Rock Creek Dairy Rd	Greenway	5.39
57	Birch Creek	Birch Creek	Little Alamance Creek	Greenway	1.14
58	Appomattox Rd/NC-22/ NC-61	Pleasant Garden	Randolph County	Sidepath/Greenway	5.44
59	Old Randleman Rd	Southern Middle School	Randolph County	Sidepath/Greenway	4.53
60	Transmission Easement	Appomattox Rd	Old Randleman Rd	Greenway/Sidepath	5.24
61	Transmission Easement	Hagan-Stone Rd	Appomattox Rd	Greenway	1.11
62	Richland Creek	Deep River	Baker Rd	Greenway	3.45
63	Richland Creek	Baker Rd	Brentwood St	Greenway	1.70
64	Brentwood St/E. Green Dr	Richland Creek	Elm St	Sidepath	2.62
65	Hickory Creek	Wall Rd	Kivett Rd	Greenway	1.50
66	Hickory Creek	Kivett Dr	Bishop Rd	Greenway	2.08
67	Hickory Creek/Glendale Dr	Bishop Rd	Shannon Hills Greenway	Greenway/Sidepath	2.72
68	High Point	High Point Greenway	Southwest Heritage Greenway	Sidepath	1.82
69	Southwest Heritage Greenway	Southwest Heritage Greenway	S Elm St	Sidepath	0.59
70	High Point	High Point Greenway	Rich Fork Preserve	Sidepath/Greenway	2.75
71	N Main St	Rich Fork Preserve	Forsyth County	Sidepath/Greenway	2.37

ID	Proposed Corridor	From	To	Facility Recommendation	Length (MI)
72	Skeet Club Rd	Forsyth County	Johnson St	Sidepath	2.01
73	West Fork Deep River	Forsyth County	Johnson St	Greenway	3.49
74	West Fork Deep River	Triad Park	West Fork Deep River	Greenway	3.44
75	Johnson Rd/Sandy Ridge Rd	Skeet Club Rd	Gallimore Dairy Rd	Sidepath	3.42
76	Gallimore Dairy Rd	Sandy Ridge Rd	Bicentennial Greenway	Sidepath	2.65
77	MST/Linville Rd	MST	Oak Ridge Town Park	Sidepath	0.93
78	Plainfield Rd	MST	Bill Craft Trail	Greenway/Sidepath	1.03
79	NC-150/N Church St	Southern Guilford High School	Haw River State Park/Mears Fork	Sidepath/Greenway	4.82
80	Haw River	Linville Rd	Eversfield Rd	Greenway	4.00
81	Haw River	Eversfield Rd	Lake Brandt Rd	Greenway	5.68
82	Haw River	Lake Brandt Rd	Rockingham County	Greenway	1.58
83	A&Y Greenway	Piedmont Greenway	Auburn Rd	Greenway	1.33
84	A&Y Greenway	Auburn Rd	Haw River	Greenway	2.21
85	A&Y Greenway	Haw River	Stokesdale Town Park	Greenway/Sidepath	3.46
86	East Greensboro Greenway	J. Douglas Galyon Depot	Barber Park	Sidepath/Greenway	4.06
87	North Buffalo Creek	Latham Park Greenway	North Buffalo Creek	Sidepath	0.55
88	South Buffalo Creek	Hillsdale Park	E J J Dr	Greenway	2.50
89	South Buffalo Creek	Meadowview Rd	Guilford College Rd	Greenway	5.03
90	Ryan Creek	Shannon Hills Greenway	South Buffalo Creek	Greenway	1.63
91	Lake Mackintosh/ Wheeler Bridge Rd/ Springwood Church Rd	NC-61	Whitsett Park Rd	Greenway/Sidepath	2.91
92	Surrett Dr	S. Elm St	Randolph County	Greenway/Sidepath	1.49
93	Northeast Guilford County	Northeast Park	Rockingham County	Long-Term Connection	5.52
94	Downtown Greenway	Spring Garden St	W. Smith St	Greenway	0.84
95	A&Y Greenway	Markland Dr	Downtown Greenway	Greenway	1.94
96	Mile Run Creek	O Connor St	South Buffalo Creek	Greenway/Sidepath	1.63
97	A&Y Greenway	Auburn Rd	Summerfield Community Park	Greenway/Sidepath	0.85



LEGEND

TRAILS

- Natural Surface
- Paved Surface
- Maintained by Guilford County
- Proposed Greenway or Trail
- Long-Term Desired Trail Connection

- Parks
- Water
- Municipality

Proposed Guilford County Greenways & Trails Map

Greenway Design Guidance

Greenways are used for a variety of recreational, utilitarian, health, and transportation purposes, and the standards to which greenways are designed impact the experience and safety of users. This section illustrates aspects of facility design to help guide future actions by Guilford County and its partners in planning for, designing, constructing, and maintaining greenways that connect to a variety of destinations, promotes a diverse user experience, and is built to a maintainable scale.

Materials Selection

Factors to be considered in the selection of materials for greenways include anticipated facility type (recreational versus commuter), expected use activities (i.e., walking / bicycling / running / rollerblading), age and ability of greenway users, environmental conditions, construction cost, maintenance burden and costs, and funding source requirements among others. A variety of materials are described and illustrated below.

Paved Surface

Paved greenway surfaces such as asphalt or concrete offer great accessibility to accommodate users of all ages and abilities. Asphalt pavement tends to be the most popular and cost effective for paved greenways. Concrete pavement is more durable, but costs more than asphalt pavement. As such, concrete greenways are typically more common in urban settings (where projected user volumes are high or the greenway may be subject to vehicular loading more often) or in areas subject to heavy flooding forces that may cause damage to the greenway.



Concrete Surface Trail



Asphalt Surface Trail

Natural Surface

Compacted aggregates and compacted native soil are two types of natural surfaces considered for this study. Both are budget-friendly options that have been implemented in greenway systems across North Carolina and beyond to provide a durable alternative to paved greenways.

Compacted aggregates have proven to be a durable, affordable, and readily available means of providing a natural surface for greenway construction. Granite fines are a commonly used material due to their availability from local quarries and their ability to achieve compaction of a level surface that is accessible to most users. Proper compaction and handling adjacent drainage are keys to the success of using this material. Annual maintenance is required to ensure that the greenway's crown pitches drain. This typically includes laying and grooming additional aggregate as necessary to ensure that water rills and deep grooves do not form within the greenway surface as a result of regular rain events. It is critical to establish drainage adjacent to the greenway during construction to ensure concentrated runoff is not allowed to cross the greenway perpendicularly. Over time these types of flows will erode the greenway and surfacing.

One of the most cost effective and easily constructed natural surface options is compacted native soil. Like compacted aggregate, this surfacing method relies heavily on material compaction and adjacent drainage. The existing soil must be able to achieve compaction levels of 95-98% to ensure greenway integrity. If native soil is unsuitable, material may be imported at additional cost and installed with a roller and small excavating equipment depending on topography. Surface drainage should not be allowed to cross perpendicular to the greenway to prevent washout and rills within the walking surface. Annual maintenance is required and includes re-compaction to ensure the greenway remains crowned to properly pitch water to adjacent drainage features. Installation of additional soil in rain wash out areas may also be required.



Compacted Aggregate Natural Surface Trail



Compacted Soil Natural Surface Trail

Boardwalk

Material options for boardwalk decks include timber and concrete (cast-in-place or pre-cast). Timber has traditionally been used for its lower construction cost but requires regular maintenance and deck repairs / replacement to extend its functional life. Concrete deck options typically cost more upfront but have lower life-cycle costs due to reduced maintenance requirements. Safety rails and handrails should be provided in accordance with applicable building codes. Timber, metal, and composite railing options are available depending on site conditions, desired aesthetics, and budget. Boardwalk substructure design and materials may vary depending upon specific site conditions and geotechnical recommendations.



Precast Concrete Surface Boardwalk



Timber Surface Boardwalk

Typical Cross Sections

The physical and environmental context of greenways and trails informs design considerations, including width, shoulder, and landscaping elements, that will necessarily vary. The following section describes typical greenway and trail design aspects for greenway and sidepath sections, as well as places where bridge or boardwalk structure must be used.

Greenway

A minimum 10 ft wide paved greenway is recommended for the greenway typical section, as it requires the least amount of long-term maintenance, has greater eligibility from the widest variety of funding sources, and is consistent with other local trail design standards. Asphalt pavement is recommended in most locations based on site conditions within Guilford County, anticipated greenway use, and cost considerations; however, limited sections of concrete pavement may be required to accommodate site conditions as necessary, including areas expecting heavier usage or vulnerability to flooding events. Shoulders or shy zones of 2 ft or greater should be kept clear of any obstacles to ensure full greenway width remains usable. While a minimum trail width of 10 ft is recommended, a trail width of 12 ft is preferred where conditions permit to accommodate heavier usage and allow more space for passing, and in very constrained locations a narrower trail of 8 ft may be acceptable.

Greenways are primarily located away from roadways and may traverse a range of land use contexts. In natural or more rural areas, a wider buffer around the greenway is often desired to preserve nature and screen properties such as homes from the trail. Greenways often route adjacent to streams or water bodies, providing scenic vistas and vital flood protection. In suburban areas greenways may feature greater landscaping along their edges and include connections to surrounding neighborhoods and developments. Urban areas, where trail width may be wider to accommodate larger trail user volumes, often further constrain trail design, leading to a greater reliance on artificial landscaping to provide screening and visual interest. Lighting may also be necessary in these locations to support usage at night as these facilities serve a greater transportation purpose, and pavement markings may be employed to reduce conflicts between users.



Greenway Section



Asphalt

Sidepath

A 10-12 ft paved sidepath is recommended along roadway corridors where the greenway network connects with the transportation network, allowing residents and visitors to reach destinations in residential neighborhoods and commercial areas. Asphalt pavement is recommended in most locations within Guilford County based on anticipated greenway use, and cost considerations. Limited sections of concrete pavement may be required to accommodate site conditions as necessary, including areas expecting heavier usage or vulnerability to flooding events. Separation from the roadway is a critical element in user safety and comfort, and a 2 ft minimum planting strip is recommended to separate users from motorized traffic on the adjacent roadway where curb and gutter is provided. This space may include landscaping elements such as trees and should be increased to a minimum width of 5 feet when curb and gutter is not in place.

Sidepath often traverses areas in urban and suburban locations where curb and gutter is present, and amenities such as lighting are provided in conjunction with the adjacent roadway. Landscaping is often provided in the buffer space between the path and the roadway, or between the path and adjacent development. Due to its location adjacent to the roadway, sidepaths often must cross intersecting streets and driveways which introduce points of potential conflict to trail users. Crossing safety improvements, such as high-visibility crosswalk markings and signage, are key elements of sidepath design.



Sidepath Section



Asphalt Sidepath



Concrete Sidepath

Boardwalk

A 10-12 ft clear width elevated boardwalk is recommended in areas where greenways cross streams or wetland areas. For deck surface considerations, concrete provides greater friction to reduce the risks of slips and falls and reduces long-term maintenance burdens compared to those associated with other materials such as timber. Timber safety rails and handrails are shown with a timber pile substructure system in the typical section below. Boardwalk substructure design and materials may vary depending upon specific site conditions and geotechnical recommendations.



Boardwalk Section



Concrete Surface Boardwalk

Bridge

A 10 ft clear width bridge is recommended in where the trail crosses the river or streams. Prefabricated steel truss bridges are a common, cost-effective bridge type in this application and are the recommended bridge type for this typical section. Corten / weathering steel is a finish which should be considered for its ability to blend well with natural surroundings and its minimal maintenance requirements as compared to those for painted finishes. The deck surface should be concrete which provides greater friction to reduce the risks of slips and falls and reduces long-term maintenance burdens compared to those associated with other materials such as timber. Bridge substructure design and materials may vary depending upon bridge design type, specific site conditions, and geotechnical recommendations.



Bridge Section



Prefabricated Steel Truss Bridge

Amenities

A greenway is more than just a multi-use trail; a variety of user aids, safety features, and beautification treatments are commonly applied in addition to enhance the user experience and elevate the role of the trail in the community. Typical amenities associated with a greenway or trail may include lighting, signage and wayfinding, data collection, and trailheads.

Lighting

Well-placed and properly maintained lighting can improve visibility, increase overall greenway network access, and give users a greater sense of security. The following guidance is recommended if lighting is implemented along the Guilford County greenway network:

- Meet the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials' (AASHTO) Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities requirements for shared-use paths.
- Light only what is needed along paved trails and comply with dark-sky requirements to help minimize light pollution, which impacts people, animals, and the environment.
- Be of appropriate scale and spacing to ensure adequate coverage.
- Be placed where recommended for safety at tunnels and overpasses; trailheads; bridges; gathering places; along streets; crosswalks; where a trail crosses another path or sidewalk; and on signage.

A variety of lighting types are available including wired, battery-powered, and solar-powered each of which offers unique advantages or disadvantages regarding cost, maintenance burden, and environmental impacts.

Use of colored and/or dynamic lighting schemes in select areas (such as tunnels and bridges) can enhance the user experience, contribute to the overall brand/identity of the trail network, and raise awareness of the facility to the traveling public.



Greenway Tunnel Lighting

Signage & Wayfinding

Wayfinding consists of comprehensive signage, mapping, and marking systems that inform and educate users as they make their way to, from, and along a greenway or trail. A cohesive system across the network will enhance access, provide a greater sense of security and comfort, promote desired user behaviors, improve awareness of nearby trail networks and key destinations, and reinforce the brand and/or identity of the facility. The following principles should guide the implementation of the wayfinding system:

- **Consistency** - User experience should feel consistent and continuous across the entire network.
- **Connectivity** - A primary function of wayfinding is to connect users to destinations and other routes. It should clearly communicate current locations, access points, adjacent streets, distances, directions, destinations, estimated travel times, and historical/cultural/ environmental information where applicable.
- **Identity** - A strong wayfinding identity will make the network more recognizable and memorable to visitors and residents alike. Custom designs and graphics should be used to create a unique identity which reflects the goals of Guilford County and the communities within it.
- **Predictability** - Apply wayfinding in a predictable manner (including sign placement, design, and content) to allow users to quickly understand the information being presented. For users, this builds trust, increases comfort, reduces stress, and provides a welcoming and low-stress experience as they navigate the trail network.
- **Simplicity** - Present information in a clear, logical, universal way to reach the widest possible demographic in a timely manner.



Wayfinding Signage

Data Collection

Bicycle and pedestrian count data are an essential tool to justify investments in active transportation infrastructure such as greenways and trails and communicate needs with the public, elected officials, and other stakeholders. Collecting this data provides insights into temporal user volume trends (time of day and seasonal), user type trends (biking vs. walking), and user volume trends by geographic location (which sections are most frequently used). This information can also help identify potential areas of need as municipalities plan their future pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure projects.

A variety of counting technologies and products are available depending on the specific application and budget. These range from inductive loop detectors, pneumatic tube detectors, and passive infrared detectors among others.

Mobile counters provide the flexibility to collect data in one location before moving to another collection location and are typically battery-powered. Fixed counters are used at locations where long-term data collection is desired and may be wired or battery-powered. Some blend in with their surroundings and others utilize real-time display totems to present daily and yearly counts and engage directly with those users being counted.

Depending on the specific product, count data may be retrieved manually from the counter or may streamline the process via wireless transmission, reducing trips to the field. Online, easy-to-use data platforms are also offered to analyze and visualize the data. Features include dashboards and interfaces to provide access to count data for the development of custom websites and mobile applications. The emerging use of "Big Data" crowd-sourced from mobile phone users, via services such as Streetlight and Strava, may also be an option for collecting user count data.



Greenway User Counter

Trailheads

Trailheads provide public access points to trails and greenways. They are typically placed in locations where users begin or end their journeys and where they get oriented to the greenway or trail network. While there are minor access points along paved trails such as road crossings, within neighborhoods, or where two facilities intersect, a trailhead tends to be a developed site, intentionally designed to provide amenities to trail users such as parking, signage, information kiosks, restrooms, drinking fountains, bike racks, bike repair stations, seating, public art, landscaping, and trash receptacles.

Guidance for trailhead placement includes:

- Endpoints are natural places to locate trailheads, but any place where a large volume of users is expected should be considered as a possible trailhead location.
- Utilize areas where amenities already exist, such as parks.
- Consider placing a trailhead where paved trail facilities intersect.
- Consider placing a trailhead within residential neighborhoods. Trailheads that are located within neighborhoods should be designed to be compatible with their surrounding uses.
- Consult with the community and seek public input on locations. Residents may have insights or preferences for areas that best meet trail user needs.

At all paved trail access points, including trailheads, enhance user safety by implementing access management tools. Bollards, gates, fences, landscaping, and signage can prevent motorized vehicles from accessing the facility. These barriers should be accessible for persons with disabilities to ensure that users of all ages and abilities can access the facility. Barriers should also allow emergency or maintenance vehicles to access the greenway or trail.



Greenway Trailhead

Greenway Prioritization Guidance

With over 260 miles of greenways and trails proposed, identifying clear priorities for the Guilford County system is critical to ensuring it can be implemented equitably and efficiently, in an orderly manner. A set of prioritization criteria is identified below that will allow the County to evaluate proposed corridors and identify projects that will have a high impact.

Prioritization Considerations

The prioritization criteria take into account a range of quantitative considerations for developing an effective greenway network, including land use, safety and crash history, and connectivity. While this system attempts to be comprehensive, it is based only on a planning-level understanding of proposed corridors and may not reflect the technical feasibility of a project at the design level. Additionally, community support and leadership priorities are factors that evolve over time, and a static set of criteria cannot anticipate all opportunities which may arise for earlier implementation of projects.

Prioritization criteria recommended for Guilford County's greenway and trail system are based on conditions identified in the Opportunities and Constraints analysis, staff input, as well as industry standards and best practices. Within each criterion, the scoring system should evaluate the extent to which the project addresses the prioritization criterion, and may include a tiered ranking of high, medium, and low scores such as 10, 5, and 0. Additionally, it is recommended that a weight be applied to each criterion as appropriate to properly reflect the importance of each criterion to the community, and to ensure variation in the scoring results.

Recommended Prioritization Criteria & Scoring Guidance

Connects to Schools or Colleges

Greenways and trails can be used as transportation corridors to help students, faculty, and staff connect to educational institutions, and Guilford County is home to many public and private schools as well as institutions of higher education. A criterion should evaluate connectivity to schools and colleges and provide a scaled score based on how the following thresholds are met:

- **High:** A direct connection is provided,
- **Medium:** An indirect connection is provided through connections to existing facilities, or
- **Low:** A connection is not provided

Connects to Parks or Recreation Centers

Greenways and trails often act as linear parks and serve a key recreational purpose in addition to helping connect existing parks and recreation centers. The proposed network includes connections to County-maintained parks as well as local and state recreation areas. A criterion should evaluate connectivity to parks and recreation centers and provide a scaled score based on how the following thresholds are met:

- The corridor connects to a county park or nature preserve (high),
- The corridor connects to a municipal park (medium), or
- The corridor does not connect to a park (low)

Connects to Existing Bicycle or Pedestrian Facilities

A lack of connectivity is often the greatest barrier to walking and biking in a community, and closing gaps in the active transportation and recreation network can enable greater trip lengths and decrease crash rates by providing safer facilities for walking and biking. Additionally, greenways and trails are often accessed not from trailheads with parking areas but from the existing active transportation network, including sidewalks, bike lanes, and other greenways. A criterion should evaluate connectivity to existing bicycle or pedestrian facilities and provide a scaled score based on how the following thresholds are met:

- The corridor connects to an existing greenway or shared-use path on both ends (highest),
- The corridor connects to an existing greenway or shared-use path on one end (high),
- The corridor connects to a sidewalk or bicycle facility on both sides (medium), or
- The corridor connects to a sidewalk or bicycle facility on one side or does not connect to a sidewalk or bicycle facility (low)

Provides Connections Across a Major Barrier

Major barriers to safe transportation and recreational travel include built infrastructure such as highways and railroads and environmental features such as lakes, rivers, and streams. In Guilford County, there are many major highways that serve as an effective barrier to travel, with limited opportunities to cross using existing infrastructure. A criterion should evaluate connections across a major barrier and provide a scaled score based on how the following thresholds are met:

- A grade-separated crossing is provided (high),
- An at-grade crossing is provided (medium), or
- A crossing of a major barrier is not present (low)

Connects to Disadvantaged or Underserved Communities

In addition to recreation, greenways and trails serve a transportation purpose, providing a safe and effective facility for residents who cannot drive or do not have access to a car. However, in many communities greenway connectivity is limited in areas with greater socioeconomic disadvantage, and is missing entirely from rural locations.

Multiple metrics exist to measure disadvantage, including tools developed by the Centers for Disease Control and US Department of Transportation. Another tool, the Transportation Disadvantage Index (TDI), developed by NCDOT, establishes an indexed score of 0 to 21 for transportation disadvantage based on seven factors including carless households; low-income population; disabled population; youth population; senior population; Black, Indigenous, Persons of Color (BIPOC) population; and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) population. TDI uses data at the Census block group level to provide a relatively granular analysis of a community and its disadvantage factors. TDI is recommended for use in prioritizing greenway and trail corridors in Guilford County.

A criterion should evaluate disadvantage indicators using TDI and provide a scaled score based on how the following thresholds are met:

- The corridor serves Census block groups with a TDI score greater than 13 (high),
- The corridor serves Census block groups with a TDI score between 6 and 13 (medium), or
- The corridor serves Census block groups with a TDI score below 6 (low)

Provides Regional or Statewide Connectivity

Greenway and trail networks are most often used to provide connections within communities, but can also serve as links between communities, regions, and even states. Guilford County is fortunate to be located centrally within North Carolina with a high degree of regional connectivity to other communities in the Piedmont Triad region and is also served by adopted state trails including the Mountains-to-Sea Trail, Deep River State Trail, and Haw River State Trail. Building on these existing trail corridors and economic connections within the region should be a key consideration for the greenway and trail network, and many projects proposed in this plan provide connections to adjacent counties or are part of an adopted state trail corridor. A criterion should evaluate whether the project serves a regional need based on how the following thresholds are met:

- The corridor is part of an adopted state trail (high),
- The corridor connects to an adopted state trail or an adjacent county (medium), or
- The corridor does not connect to an adopted state trail or provide a regionally significant connection (low)

Greenway Implementation Guidance

In order to successfully implement the recommendations contained within this plan, a set of action items is recommended for consideration. These are categorized into three types of actions, related to Policy and Planning actions, Program and Project Development actions, and Community Engagement and Maintenance actions. Associated with each action step is a designated lead and support partner, and an expected timeline on when the action should occur.

Policy & Planning					
ID	**Action**	**Description**	**Lead**	**Support**	**Timeline**
1	Update GUAMPO Bicycle Pedestrian, Trails and Greenways Plan	Make any additions or modifications to GUAMPO's adopted Bicycle, Pedestrian, Trails, and Greenways plan to ensure the Guilford County network is well positioned for implementation through MPO funding sources.	Guilford County	GUAMPO	Short Term
2	Update Guilford UDO to require land dedication and/ or construction so future development contributes to construction of greenway network segments	Update Guilford UDO so future development contributes to constructing and dedicating segments of the greenway network. Greenway construction should count toward open space requirements. Consider incentivizing greenway construction by new development through UDO provisions.	Guilford County Planning Department	Guilford County Parks Department	Short Term
3	Ensure that greenway infrastructure recommendations are incorporated into development plans	Planning Department staff should coordinate closely with developers and Guilford Parks and Recreation staff during the development review process on inclusion of planned greenways in new developments.	Guilford County Planning Department	Guilford County Parks Department	Short Term

Policy & Planning					
ID	**Action**	**Description**	**Lead**	**Support**	**Timeline**
4	Develop shared greenway design standards	Collaborate with partner jurisdictions in Guilford County to establish consistent greenway design standards, particularly on regional greenway corridors with multiple implementing agencies.	Guilford County Parks Department	All local governments in Guilford County	Medium Term
5	Develop region wide mapping and wayfinding	Coordinate with partner jurisdictions to establish wayfinding for regional greenways so users are able to better navigate and recognize the growing Guilford County connected network. This includes mapping at a county scale.	GUAMPO	All local governments in Guilford County, Piedmont Legacy Trails	Medium Term

Program & Project Development					
ID	**Action**	**Description**	**Lead**	**Support**	**Timeline**
6	Staff structure and assignments for greenway advancement	Designate a staff lead for greenway planning and implementation. Ensure departments understand their roles in developing and delivering greenway projects (Parks and Recreation, Planning, Engineering, etc.)	Guilford County	--	Short Term
7	Establish a Capital Improvement Program category for greenway projects	Appropriate funding in the County's 5-year CIP to begin the pipeline of greenway project development	Guilford County Parks Department	--	Short Term
8	Prioritize greenway network segments	Prioritize segments of the greenway network to determine which sections should advance toward funding and implementation.	Guilford County Parks Department	--	Short Term

Program & Project Development					
ID	**Action**	**Description**	**Lead**	**Support**	**Timeline**
9	Establish formal partnerships for trail implementation and maintenance	Where greenways are delivered in collaboration with municipal agencies, nonprofits, or private organizations, or are within municipal boundaries, establish clear roles for ownership, construction and maintenance, and emergency management. Often these take the form of a memorandum of understanding (MOU).	Guilford County Parks Department	All local governments in Guilford County	Short Term, Ongoing
10	Coordinate with NCDOT Division 7 on future STIP projects	Ensure sidepaths and intersection treatments as a part of STIP projects that facilitate the development of the Guilford County greenway network.	Guilford County Parks Department	GUAMPO, NCDOT	Short Term
11	Perform greenway feasibility studies	As a first step in the greenway project development pipeline, feasibility studies should be performed on high priority corridors to better understand design parameters and future construction cost to position projects for funding. Feasibility studies ensure CIP projects meet budget targets.	Guilford County Parks Department	GUAMPO, NCDOT	Medium Term
12	Program greenway projects for design/ construction funding	Once feasibility studies have been performed projects can then be programmed into a 5- and 10-year CIP for design, permitting, and construction.	Guilford County Parks Department	Other Guilford County Departments	Medium Term
13	Grant procurement	Evaluate priority greenway projects for matches with grant funding sources. Local match funding is almost always required for grant funding (typically a minimum of 20%).	Guilford County Parks Department	GUAMPO, NCDOT	Medium Term

Community Engagement & Maintenance					
ID	**Action**	**Description**	**Lead**	**Support**	**Timeline**
9	Designate a citizen advisory board to champion and guide implementation of the greenway network	A new or existing Citizen Advisory Board can serve as a champion for developing the greenway network and securing funding in the County budget for implementation.	Guilford County	Citizens	Short Term
10	Create a dedicated webpage for Guilford County greenways	Host the master plan on the Guilford County greenways webpage along with information on existing greenways and links to partner resources.	Guilford County Parks Department	--	Short Term
11	Develop a "level of service" standard for greenway maintenance	Coordinate with partners communities to establish a level of service on greenway trails as a baseline for the condition of greenway trails in Guilford County.	Guilford County Parks Department	All local governments in Guilford County	Medium Term
12	Establish County trail maintenance practices	Establish regular recurring maintenance tasks along with protocols for as-needed maintenance to respond to damage from weather events.	Guilford County Parks Department	All local governments in Guilford County	Medium Term

Strategic Corridors

From the larger network, six strategic corridors were selected which form critical parts of the network or have regional or statewide importance. The County is well positioned to leverage resources (both financial and staff capacity) available from the State of North Carolina and partner jurisdictions to advance the construction of these key trails. Completing these corridors is fundamental to achieving greenway connectivity within the county and between neighboring counties.

A&Y Greenway

The A&Y Greenway serves as a key connection between Greensboro, Summerfield, and Stokesdale. Portions of the trail are existing with additional segments in development.

Bicentennial Greenway

The Bicentennial Greenway is among the first trails constructed in Guilford County, beginning in 1988 and connecting its two largest communities. As many segments of the trail are now over 30 years old, there are opportunities to improve the user experience by establishing a consistent standard for design and maintenance. Additionally, there remains a gap in the trail between S. Chimney Rock Rd and W. Market St, requiring a crossing of I-40 through a primarily industrial area. Projects on Burnt Poplar Rd and Swing Rd are currently planned to help bridge this gap.

Big Alamance Creek

A greenway along the Big Alamance Creek corridor would link Hagan-Stone Park to Guilford Mackintosh Park, with connectivity to the Southeast Guilford High School area.

Mountains-to-Sea Trail

Many segments of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail are existing in Guilford County, and the County continues to pursue its development. A section of the MST is also included as part of the Piedmont Greenway. Some gaps remain to complete the MST in Guilford County.

Piedmont Greenway

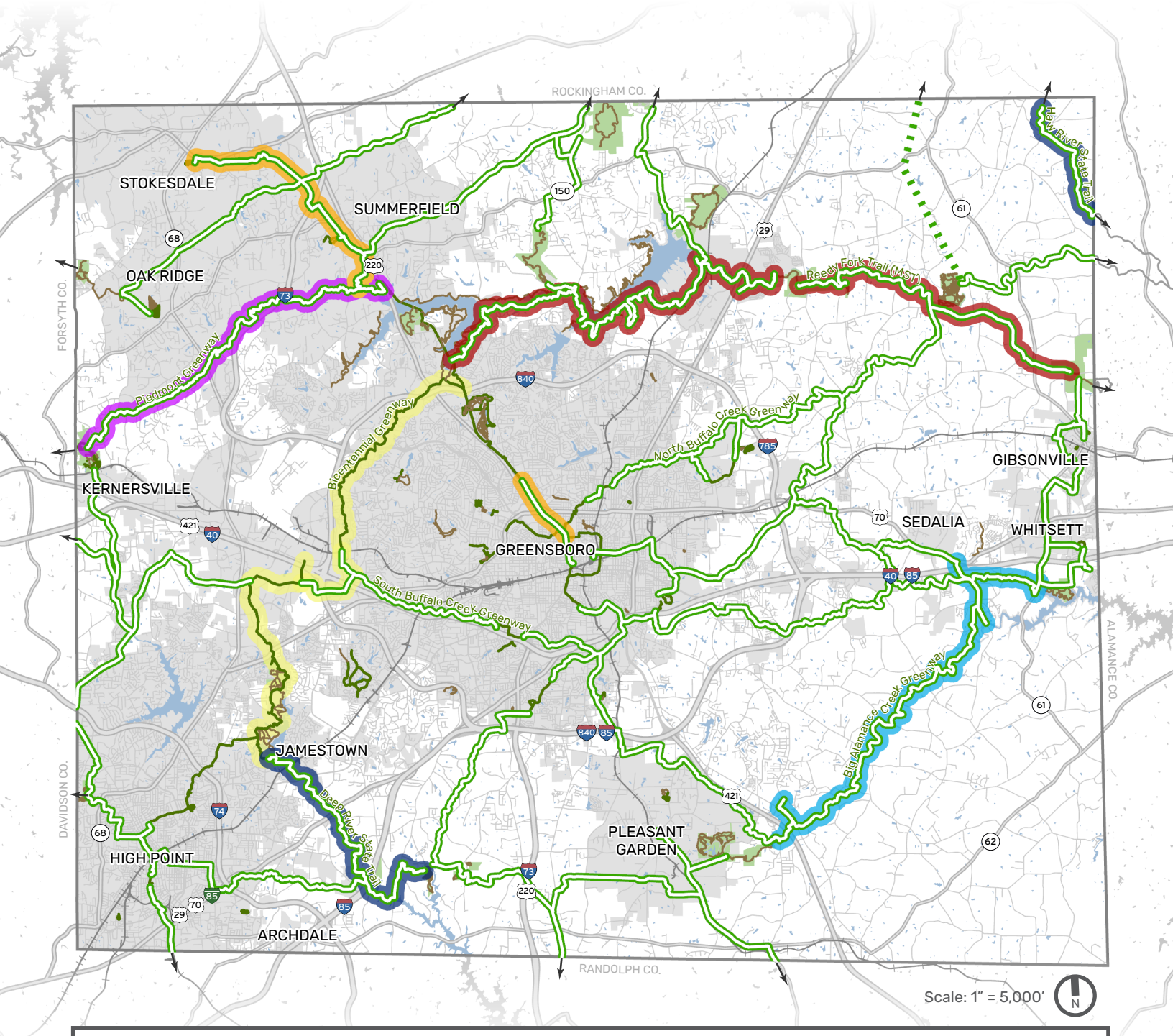
The Piedmont Greenway is a partnership between Guilford County and Forsyth County and will share alignments with part of the MST. This is a key connection between Greensboro, Summerfield, Oak Ridge, Kernersville, and points west toward Winston-Salem.

State Trails

In addition to the MST, Guilford County includes sections of two other adopted state trails along the Haw River and Deep River State Trail. These corridors will link existing park and recreational assets, and the Deep River Trail offers connectivity to Jamestown and High Point. Designated State Trails are eligible for the legislatively directed complete the trails fund.



Company Mill Preserve Heritage Trail



LEGEND

TRAILS

- Natural Surface
- Paved Surface
- Proposed Greenway or Trail
- Long-Term Desired Trail Connection

- A&Y Greenway
- Bicentennial Greenway
- Big Alamance Creek
- Mountains-to-Sea Trail
- Piedmont Greenway
- State Trails

- Parks
- Water
- Municipality



Level of Service & Benchmarking



Trends

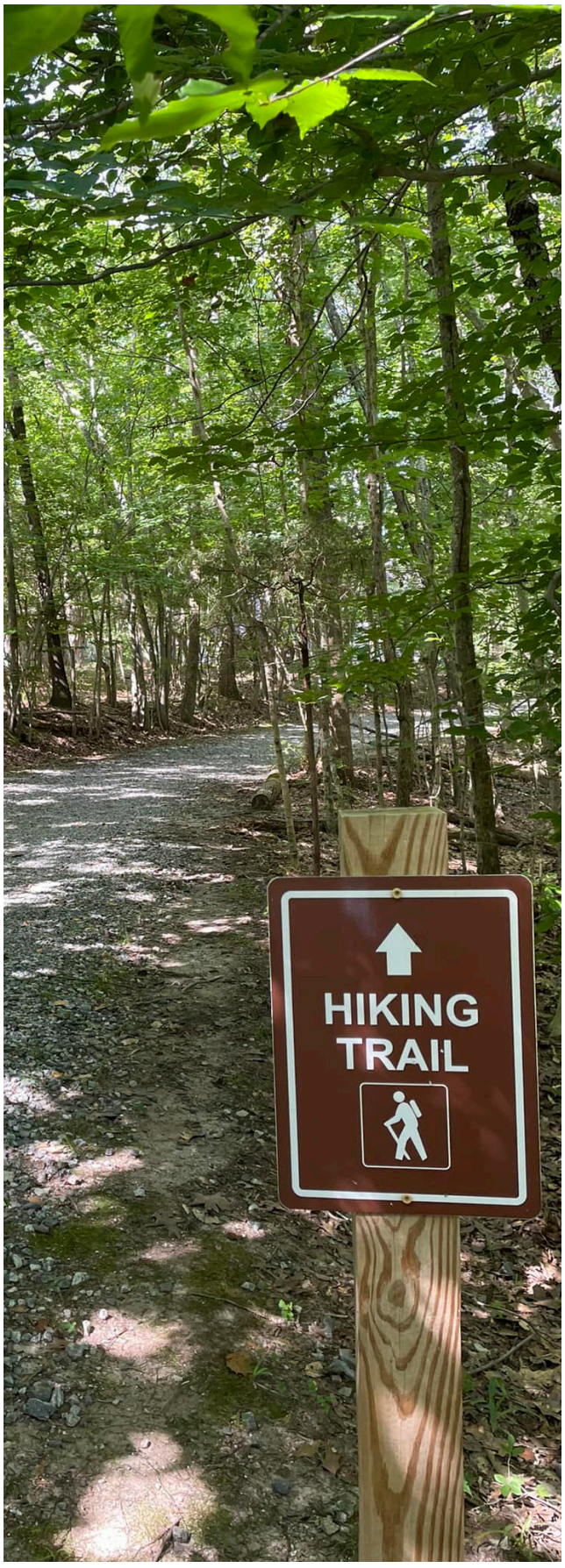
Overview

Recognizing the importance of trends helps in planning and improving park and recreation systems to better serve the community. Across the United States, there is a noticeable evolution in how communities interact with parks, recreation, and greenways – often driven by shifting societal behaviors, technological advancements, and a greater emphasis on health and environmental sustainability.

National trends offer insights into broad patterns that can influence local preferences and needs. For instance, the increasing popularity of outdoor fitness activities, such as trail running and outdoor yoga, highlights a growing demand for versatile and well-maintained outdoor spaces. Additionally, the growing interest in attending special events and festivals underscores the importance of designing and adapting parks and open spaces that can host a variety of activities like food truck rodeos, farmers markets, music festivals, and cultural celebrations. Prevailing industry-wide trends for the current trends assessment are sourced from the Sports & Fitness Industry Association's (SFIA) Sports, Fitness & Recreational Activities Topline Participation Report, and the National Recreation and Park Association's (NRPA) annual Top Trends in Parks and Recreation Report.

Local trends provide an understanding of community-specific preferences and behaviors for the purpose of understanding how and if Guilford County's parks and recreation services are tailored to meet the unique needs of its residents. These trends are gleaned from ESRI's Market Potential Index (MPI), which compares the demand for a product or service within a pre-determined geographic area to the national demand for that product or service. Demand for recreational activities is measured by an individual's participation in a certain activity within the past 12 months.

By elaborating on these trends, Guilford County can better forecast shifting demand and pinpoint recreational service gaps, thereby ensuring that parks, recreational amenities, and trails continue to be considered essential components of county infrastructure. The assessment that follows evaluates both national and local trends that may guide the development of parks and recreation offerings the County provides over the 10-year planning horizon.



Rich Fork Multi-Use Trail at Rich Fork Preserve

National Recreation Trends

Sports, Fitness & Recreational Activities Topline Participation Report

Generally, national recreational activity trends experience varying degrees of momentum, which provides insight into whether changes within a given year are local trends or part of a larger shift in recreational preferences. On a regular basis, the Sport and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) conducts a survey of individuals and households throughout the United States to determine participation in a variety of sports and fitness activities. The study is based on findings from surveys carried out in 2022 by the Physical Activity Council (PAC). Using a weighting technique, survey results are applied to the total U.S. population figure of 305,439,858 people (ages six and older).

The five fitness activities experiencing the largest growth by participants in the last year according to the Sports, Fitness, and Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report are Pilates, yoga, kettlebells, dance exercise, and barre.

Pilates	Yoga	Kettlebells	Dance Exercise	Barre
11.6%	10.4%	6.5%	5.0%	3.8%

Topline Participation Report - Top 5 Fitness Activities

The top 5 fastest growing sports/activities according to the same report were skateboarding, surfing, camping, tennis, and pickleball.

Skateboarding	Surfing	Camping	Tennis	Pickleball
7.9%	7.8%	7.7%	6.0%	4.2%

Topline Participation Report - Top 5 Sporting Activities



Sunflowers at Guilford County Farm

Top Trends in Parks & Recreation

Every year, NRPA publishes the top trends in parks and recreation across the country. Being aware of the latest developments helps parks and recreation agencies stay proactive and competitive in implementing innovative parks, recreational amenities, and programs to the communities they serve. Trends often signify new avenues for forward-thinking approaches to attract new park users, program participants, and partnerships. Staying informed about industry patterns can inspire parks and recreation agencies to foster growth and expand their reach. Following is a summary of the latest relevant trends from NRPA's 2023[1] and 2024[2] reports.

Aging Communities

Across the United States, demographic trends indicate a significant increase in the median age of the population, with a particularly rapid growth in the number of persons aged 65 and over. In Guilford County, the percent of the population over the age of 55 currently stands at 29%, and is projected to grow to 32% by the year 2033. This trend is reflective of national patterns, where similar demographic shifts are occurring in many communities.

As the health and activity levels of older adults improve, there is a corresponding shift in their recreational needs and desires. Today's seniors are seeking more active and engaging recreational options than previous generations. Traditional activities at senior centers are being supplemented or replaced by more dynamic programming such as pickleball, team sports, outdoor recreational activities like hiking and biking, and nature-oriented programs. The growing number of older adults presents an opportunity for parks and recreation agencies to not only enhance the quality of life for older residents, but also create more inclusive and accessible environments.

Technology

AI (Artificial Intelligence) is the latest buzzword across all industries, with parks and recreation being no exception. While the larger implications of AI integration are still unknown, some ways parks and recreation agencies are seeing efficiency in operations through the use of AI chatbots, meeting summarization, visitor count data, building monitoring systems, security and surveillance, client inquiries and more. NRPA forecasts that this operational efficiency will enable quicker decision-making and improved public services.

Electrification is another fundamental change. The term refers to the process of replacing traditional mechanical or fuel-based systems with electric-powered alternatives.[3] The shift from fossil fuels represents a societal shift with far-reaching impacts on infrastructure, consumer demand, and how parks and recreation agencies operate and deliver services. According to the 2023 NRPA report, agencies are moving from fossil fuel-powered fleet vehicles to fully electric vehicles and landscape equipment. This initiative stands as one of the most impactful ways the parks and recreation community can combat climate change due to its cost-effectiveness, efficiency, health benefits for communities and workers, environmental advantages, and potential to significantly reduce carbon emissions.

Drones are increasingly being used in parks for both recreation and operational purposes. For enthusiasts, drones offer a unique way to explore and interact with large park areas, providing new perspectives on natural landscapes. However, their use also raises concerns about privacy, wildlife disturbance, and safety. Responsive park management is now incorporating designated flying areas, strict operational guidelines, and educational programs on responsible drone usage to balance these concerns.

Resilience

The 2024 NRPA trend report emphasizes the escalating impacts of climate change, particularly its consequences for public spaces. As these impacts persist, parks are increasingly vital in fostering community resilience and ensuring public safety and well-being in the face of evolving environmental challenges. Planning for new or renovated park and recreational assets now includes considerations for climate resiliency, affecting their materials, design, and engineering. This shift highlights the urgent need for adaptive measures in response to environ-

1 https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2023/january/top-trends-in-parks-and-recreation-for-2023/
2 https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2024/january/top-trends-in-parks-and-recreation-for-2024/
3 Jones, Hessie. 2023. " The Slow Road To The Electrification Of Everything." Forbes, Sep 26, 2023. www.forbes.com/sites/hessiejones/2023/09/26/the-slow-road-to-the-electrification-of-everything/

mental challenges. Despite global efforts to mitigate temperature increases, the threat of climate change continues, presenting significant challenges to public safety and health. Nevertheless, there is a noticeable shift in public perception, with a growing recognition within the public sector of the severity of climate change and the urgent need for adaptive strategies.

Parks alone cannot reverse climate change, but they can mitigate its effects and protect communities from some of the most harmful impacts such as improving water quality, and minimizing flooding. They also offer solutions to the effects of rapid, unsustainable urbanization on public health and well-being. Parks, from the smallest to the largest, will play an increasingly important role in 2024 and beyond in mitigating the destructive effects of climate change, measurably improving community health, livability and sustainability.

Health & Wellness

Parks and recreation agencies are playing a fundamental role in combating public health epidemics and promoting overall well-being in their communities. As health and wellness trends evolve to prioritize mental, emotional, and social well-being, parks and recreation agencies are stepping up as providers of essential public health services. Recognizing the importance of holistic health, these agencies have expanded their offerings to include a diverse array of activities such as yoga, tai chi, meditation, and nature therapy like forest bathing. Recreational programs like these not only promote physical fitness, they also provide avenues to stress reduction, mental clarity, and social connections.

An increasing number of epidemiological studies have demonstrated various positive health effects of maintaining urban green spaces, including improved mental health and reduced depression; improved pregnancy outcomes; and lower rates of cardiovascular morbidity and mortality, obesity and diabetes.[4]

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent shift towards virtual platforms, parks and recreation agencies have adapted by launching virtual health programs and nutrition workshops. This approach has proven to be effective in reaching a broader audience, attracting participants not only from the local community but also from neighboring areas and even out-of-state.

4 Gascon, Mireia. 2016. Review of Residential Green Spaces and Mortality: A Systematic Review.Environment International. January, 2016.



Cross County Meet at Bryan Park North

Another post-pandemic occurrence is recognizing the importance of prioritizing the mental health and well-being of recreation agencies' own workforce. More and more often employees are expressing their desire to work for organizations that prioritize their well-being and provide support for mental health. Allison Colman, NRPA's senior director of programs, emphasizes this shift, citing the desire of employees to work for organizations that value their psychological well-being and provide support for mental health.[5]

Trails & Connectivity

The increasing throughout the United States demand for trails, linkages, and pathways that connect parks, recreation facilities, open spaces, and local points of interest signifies a trend in recreation and active transportation planning. Communities are recognizing the importance of such connectivity, as it not only facilitates easier and more appealing access to natural spaces but also integrates recreational areas with daily life activities. Connected trails enable residents to commute between home, work, schools, shopping areas, and leisure destinations without the need for vehicles, promoting a more active and sustainable lifestyle. The presence of extensive trail systems is often a source of pride and an ongoing community project, as seen in locales with high livability scores where residents report superior quality of life due to the availability of robust, reliable connectivity.

Off-road bicycling, including mountain biking, has grown in popularity, contributing to the demand for specialized trail designs. Mountain bike trails, known for their challenging terrains and scenic routes, not only cater to dedicated cyclists but also add to the recreational value to the areas they traverse. The introduction of "flow trails" and pump tracks, which offer smoother rides with fewer obstacles, makes mountain biking more accessible to beginners and families, broadening the appeal of outdoor cycling activities.

The strategic development of trail systems reflects a broader trend towards creating more livable, engaged, and healthy communities. By linking various community points of interest with well-maintained and thoughtfully designed pathways, cities can significantly enhance recreational landscapes to meet growing public demand. As urban areas continue to develop, the integration of comprehensive trail systems will be critical in shaping the future of sustainable, community-focused living environments.

Outdoor Aquatics

The evolution of aquatic facilities within parks and recreation is markedly shifting towards family-oriented centers that cater to all ages with a range of activities and features. Traditional rectangular and L-shaped swimming pools, often designed with deeper waters for competitive swimming, are becoming less appealing to the modern recreational user. These designs typically segregate younger children into shallow wading pools, which are not engaging for older children, reducing the facility's attractiveness to families with kids of varying ages. In contrast, contemporary family aquatic centers are designed to be inclusive for the entire family, featuring zero-depth entry areas, shallow waters suitable for young children, and interactive water elements like spray activities that enhance the experience for all ages.

Modern aquatic centers also include traditional swimming lanes and diving boards but are enhanced with attractions such as lazy rivers, large waterslides, and expansive shaded grass areas. Such facilities are not only more appealing but also operationally efficient. While older pools can be costly and less efficient, leading to financial drains, newer aquatic centers often generate significant revenue. This financial viability comes from the ability to charge higher fees due to the added attractions and improved amenities.

Another growing trend in aquatics is the development of splash pads, which replace traditional wading pools with more accessible and engaging options for young children. Splash pads are advantageous because they do not require standing water, thereby reducing the need for lifeguards, thereby lowering operational costs. They pads often use recirculating water systems, which also reduces costs and enhances sustainability. Furthermore, it is universally common for splash pads to provide accessible features, ensuring that children of all abilities can enjoy the benefits of aquatic play in a safe and engaging environment.

Another way parks and recreation agencies are capitalizing on their recreational aquatics infrastructure is by hosting themed evening events at aquatic centers,

5 Colman, Allison. "Mental Health and Parks and Recreation." PARKS & RECREATION MAGAZINE, May, 2024, 32–37.

such as “dive-in movies” where families can watch films from the pool or “glow swims” featuring LED lights and glow sticks. These events can add a novel aspect to the experience, drawing larger crowds and extending usage into the evening hours. As communities continue to grow and demographics shift, the need for such versatile and inclusive aquatic amenities will only become more pronounced as components of modern parks and recreation planning.

Universal Design

Universal design and access are becoming central to the development of parks and recreation facilities, driven by the growing recognition of the need for inclusivity in public spaces. This approach emphasizes going well beyond the minimum requirement for the Americans with Disabilities Act, creating environments that are accessible and usable by all people, regardless of age, disability, or other factors. Universal design includes retrofitting existing areas and designing new spaces to remove barriers that limit accessibility for anyone, enhancing features such as smooth pathways, accessible facilities and restrooms, and sensory-friendly areas suited for individuals with sensory processing disorders.

Parks are also evolving to feature inclusive playgrounds and facilities where children of all abilities can play together. Playgrounds are a particular focus of universal design, evolving to feature amenities like wheelchair-accessible swings, tactile play elements, and quiet zones, ensuring they are welcoming and usable for children with various needs. Recreation programs are expanding to incorporate activities that cater to all community members, including adaptive sports and specialized fitness programs. Park and recreation agencies have a unique opportunity to demonstrate leadership in inclusivity by designing facilities that cater to people of all ages and abilities. In doing so, these agencies are transforming landscapes and promoting cultural shifts by facilitating interaction and education among diverse community members.



Accessible Canoe-Kayak Launch

Creative Placemaking

Creative placemaking is an innovative approach that engages local government leaders, artists, cultural organizations, and community members in transforming public spaces to better meet the needs of the community. This collaborative process utilizes public areas such as streets, parks, libraries, and public buildings to enhance vibrancy, improve economic conditions, and empower residents to take ownership of their surroundings.

By focusing on unique local characteristics, creative placemaking connects the past with the present, highlights cultural influences, and fosters new traditions. This form of placemaking strengthens the ties between people and places through cooperative efforts and visual arts. The duration of these projects can vary, with some initiatives designed to temporarily activate a space or provide short-term cultural and artistic experiences that bring communities together.

According to the Trust for Public Land's Field Guide for Creative Placemaking and Parks, creative placemaking is defined as "a cooperative, community-based process using arts and cultural expression to create or rejuvenate parks and open spaces, thus deepening a sense of place and inspiring community pride." This method is a powerful tool for parks and recreation agencies to connect communities physically and socially. By partnering with various local stakeholders like government departments, nonprofits, educational institutions, and religious organizations, these agencies can implement projects that allow for community-driven artistic and cultural expressions.

Creative placemaking projects are diverse in nature. For instance, it may take the form of an interactive light displays in parks that react to movement or sound. This can transform a simple evening stroll into a dynamic, sensory experience, encouraging more night-time park visits and enhancing safety with well-lit areas. It might be a series of music events that feature traditional music from various cultures within the community. These can be held in different neighborhood parks, turning each event into a discovery of new sounds and heritage. A straightforward and achievable creative placemaking option could be to set up outdoor reading rooms that can take the shape of comfortable seating and bookshelves with donated books in a park or public square to create an outdoor contemplative space to encourage leisure and literacy in a communal setting.

Recreation Program Trends

Pickleball has surged to become the fastest-growing sport in the United States over the past five years. The sport appeals to individuals of all ages and has recently absorbed youth participants who prefer to participate in a non-traditional sport like baseball or soccer. Furthermore, major celebrities such as LeBron James, Tom Brady, Billie Eilish, and Taylor Swift have taken to pickleball – expanding its reach even further.[6] What seemed to be a niche activity for older adults with bad knees has exploded into a full-fledged recreation trend, complete with pickleball performance apparel and even professional leagues.

However, regardless of pickleball's popularity, participation in the activity and public investment in the infrastructure needed to support it has had some unintended consequences. Both the 2023 and 2024 NRPA trends report highlighted the negative effect pickleball noise has on both humans and birds. Regrettably, disputes regarding noise are on the rise, leading to neighborly conflicts, conflicts among the public and parks and recreation agencies, and conflicts between park and recreation agencies and conservation groups. Consequently, municipalities have faced legal disputes, including lawsuits aimed at halting the conversion of tennis courts into pickleball courts. Despite these challenges, pickleball continues its upward trajectory in 2024. Yet municipalities are approaching the sport's demand cautiously, implementing measures such as moratoriums on new court construction and buffering requirements to mitigate noise disturbances for nearby residential areas, ensuring courts are situated at least 250 feet away from homes.

Cricket is emerging as another notable recreation program trend, particularly in regions like the Dallas-Fort Worth Metro and North Carolina. Recreation providers in these areas cite a growing Southeast Asian population as a contributor to the increasing need for cricket facilities and leagues. Major League Cricket's presence in Morrisville, North Carolina has drawn significant attention, with several games selling out within days, indicating a growing interest in the sport across the state and beyond.

6 Austin, Daryl. "Pickleball Is Everywhere. Here's Why the Fast-Growing Sport Is Good for You." National Geographic, May, 2024.

Other programs and niche activities are gaining popularity alongside recreational sports. As noted in the 2024 NRPA trends study, recreation providers named family engagement nights, seasonal festivals, holiday karaoke, and partnerships with libraries as emerging trends for this year. Parks and recreation agencies have also been investing more resources in the program needs of sometimes overlooked age groups such as adults and older adults. This is evidenced by the quirky names like eldertainment and kidults associated with these user groups. Similarly, parks agencies are recognizing the benefits associated with recreation between and among age groups. With that, the parks and recreation community is beginning to see sizable investments in multigenerational recreation spaces that are designed with everyone in mind.

Environmental Education is becoming a pivotal aspect of parks and recreation programming nationwide. Recreation providers play an important role in providing access to the natural environment through comprehensive educational programs. Topics such as ecosystem dynamics, conservation management, and wildlife habitats are central to these efforts, enhancing public understanding and appreciation of natural spaces.

Collaborations between parks departments, educational institutions, and environmental groups have proven effective in weaving environmental education into broader community curriculums. These partnerships not only promote greater interaction with and appreciation for local parks but also build a foundation for ongoing commitment to environmental stewardship. Programs designed to include all demographics—offering activities like nature walks, environmental workshops, and conservation projects—ensure broad accessibility and bridge intergenerational connections, enriching community ties to the natural environment.



The Annual Big Pick at Guilford County Farm

Local Recreation Trends

Local recreation trends are sourced from ESRI's Market Potential Index (MPI). The MPI is a measure that compares demand for a product or service within a pre-determined geographic area to the national demand for that product or service. Demand for recreational activities is measured by an individual's participation in a certain activity within the past 12 months. An MPI of more than 100 indicates that the local demand for a product is higher than the national average, while an MPI of less than 100 indicates that the local demand is lower than the national average. For example, an activity that 30% of the population participates in that has an MPI over 100 is likely to be an activity that is worth investing in while an activity that 1% of the population participates in but has an MPI over 100 is not likely to be an activity that is worth investing in. For niche activities, one strategy could be to work with private sector providers and connect residents to those options

The products or services included within this comparison are specific to parks and recreation activities, though the products or services are not necessarily indicative of the County's facility or program offerings. Demand for recreational activity is measured based on whether an individual has participated in a certain activity within the past 12 months. The contents the table below include activities participated in by 10 percent or more of Guilford residents and their associated MPI scores.

The majority of recreational activities highlighted in the local trends analysis are self-directed, meaning they do not require formal programs or structured participation to engage. This indicates that residents primarily seek opportunities for independent recreation, making it important for the department to focus on providing accessible spaces and amenities that support these activities.

Activity	Percentage of Population Participating	Market Potential Index (MPI)
Walking for Exercise	34%	100
Cooking for Fun	28%	100
Hiking	18%	100
Gardening	16%	100
Camping	13%	100
Road Bicycling	12%	102
Fresh Water Fishing	11%	104
Yoga	11%	101
Attending Educational Courses	11%	101

ESRI's Market Potential Index Local Recreation Trends

Key Findings

Guilford County can ensure its park system remains responsive to the evolving needs of its residents by continually evaluating parks and recreation trends alongside public input. This approach, which involves tailoring park facilities and programs to current trends and community feedback, is structured to fulfill both the immediate and future needs of the community. It aims to leverage the broad benefits that parks offer, such as social connections, environmental resiliency, health, and cultural enrichment. The following are several implications the trends described in this report may have on Guilford County's park and trail system over the 10-year planning timeframe.

- Given the general trend of aging adults becoming more active, Guilford County has the opportunity to align its park facilities with the interests of this dynamic demographic. By enhancing parks with additional pickleball courts, improved road cycling paths, community gardens, spaces for low-impact group exercises like yoga and Tai Chi, as well as better access for water activities such as kayaking and fishing, the Guilford County Parks can meet the needs of its senior residents and encourage continuous engagement with the county's recreational resources.
- Creative placemaking strengthens communities through collaborative projects that enhance public spaces, reflect differences, and promote shared identity and pride. Activating underutilized areas by highlighting local history, achievements, or unique attributes of the community contribute to a shared sense of identity and pride. For instance, parks like Northeast Park, with its historical farmstead, and Gibson Park, which features the early 1800's era Deep River Cabin, offer a natural setting for cultural and historical programs that can be augmented through creative placemaking initiatives.
- The trend towards family-oriented aquatic centers could be applied to enhance Bur-Mil Park and Northeast Park, which already have aquatic amenities. Adding in-demand would boost the parks' appeal, increase attendance, and enhance revenue potential.
- The demand for trails and connectivity aligns with current efforts in Guilford County to improve linkages between parks and the community. Enhancing trail systems to connect parks like Southwest and Gibson Park to residential areas and other points of interest can encourage active transportation and recreation.
- With high participation rates and a strong market potential index (MPI) for activities such as walking for exercise, hiking, and attending educational courses, there is a clear indication that Guilford County should prioritize the expansion of greenways and trails.
- The focus on health and wellness trends provides an opportunity for Guilford County parks to expand programs that promote mental, emotional, and physical health. Parks can offer programs like outdoor yoga, meditation retreats, and fitness trails that cater to the holistic well-being of residents.
- Guilford County's parks, with their diverse natural landscapes, and existing indoor environmental center are ideal for expanding environmental education programs. Initiatives could include guided nature walks, wildlife spotting tours, or conservation workshops, particularly in parks with rich natural features and the various passive preserves.
- As parks move toward electrification, replacing maintenance equipment and vehicles with electric alternatives can reduce operating costs and carbon footprints. This trend is particularly applicable to parks with extensive maintenance needs, such as the County's expansive greenways and active parks.
- Enhancing park infrastructure to be more resilient to climate change is essential to ensure the parks remain safe, enjoyable, and capable of mitigating flooding impacts. This includes using climate resilient park programming, design and construction or adaptation.
- High participation rates and interest in cooking for fun and gardening provide a unique opportunity for Guilford County's park system to develop integrated spaces that cater to both activities. Examples include community gardens with outdoor kitchens, and educational programs focusing on farm-to-table concepts.



Level of Service

Overview

The purpose of a Level of service (LOS) assessments is to provide an indicator of how effectively parks and recreation services are meeting the needs of the community, factoring in the extent of park acreage, trail miles, and the availability of recreation facilities. This measure also considers the number of staff members in the department and the budget allocated to these services. Collectively, this information is useful for decision-makers as they plan funding and resource allocations to enhance service delivery in the future.

Yet, providing space and funding alone does not guarantee that Guilford County Parks is meeting the community's needs. LOS assessments typically focus on the quantity of facilities rather than the quality or the activities they support. For instance, a well-maintained two-acre park with diverse amenities may better serve the community than a poorly maintained, under-programmed 10-acre park. Furthermore, these assessments tend to overlook geographical factors, offering insights into the amount of service provided but not addressing where it is occurring, or importantly, where it is lacking. While LOS measures provide valuable assessments, enhancing these evaluations with more detailed information and context can significantly improve their utility in guiding future planning and addressing service gaps effectively.

The table below outlines the key components of the LOS analysis used for the current assessment. This analysis is structured into three distinct parts: the 'Current Level of Service,' which evaluates what services the county currently offers based on existing population; 'NRPA Benchmarking,' which compares these services against national standards to understand relative performance; and 'Proposed Level of Service,' which forecasts future service needs considering anticipated population growth and emerging trends. This assessment helps to gauge the effectiveness of Guilford County in serving its citizens today and guides strategic planning for the future.

This plan does not adopt any standard wholesale, but considers the full analysis, staff input, and community input to help identify standards and metrics that will be meaningful points of guidance as the County grows and looks to expand or modify its Parks and Recreation offerings.



Fishing at Guilford County Farm

Current Level of Service (LOS)	NRPA Benchmarking	Proposed Level of Service
Measures the Department's current offerings. The analysis is local.	Compares measures against the national median as reported by NRPA. The analysis is nationwide.	Measures the Department's future offerings based on projected population and growth. The analysis is local.
This analysis asks: **What do we offer?**	This analysis asks: **How does our level of service compare to national benchmarks?**	This analysis asks: **What should we offer or anticipate offering in the next ten years?**
The initial step in the process involves assessing what the County currently provides, considering the population size at the time of the review. This assessment establishes a population-based foundation by determining the range and extent of services offered to meet the needs of the current population.	The NRPA benchmarking analysis relies on the annual NRPA Parks Metrics Report to compare with communities across the U.S. This generates an understanding of the department's strengths. Shortcomings in benchmarking may represent deficiencies or areas that have been relegated.	National standards and emerging trends provide one of several measures to guide Guilford County Parks planning. These standards are important but not the sole determinants of service quality. This analysis helps assess the types and scales of services and facilities needed to effectively meet the evolving needs of the county's growing population over the next decade, complementing these benchmarks with local insights and priorities.

Level of Service Matrix



Diving Board at Northeast Park Pool

Service Level Assessment

While LOS metrics are not absolute standards, they are a means of identifying potential deficits or surpluses in the County's offerings as it prepares for growth or changes over the next decade. The current assessment uses LOS as one framework for understanding the potential parkland, trails, indoor spaces, and operational resources—such as staffing and budgeting—that the department should acquire or develop to meet current recreational needs and future needs based on projected population growth.

Data for the assessment that follows was sourced from Guilford County's records and the 2024 NRPA National Agency Performance Review. NRPA National Agency Performance Review is a comprehensive annual study that gathers information from thousands of park and recreation agencies across the country, providing valuable insights that help participating agencies enhance their systems and better serve their communities.

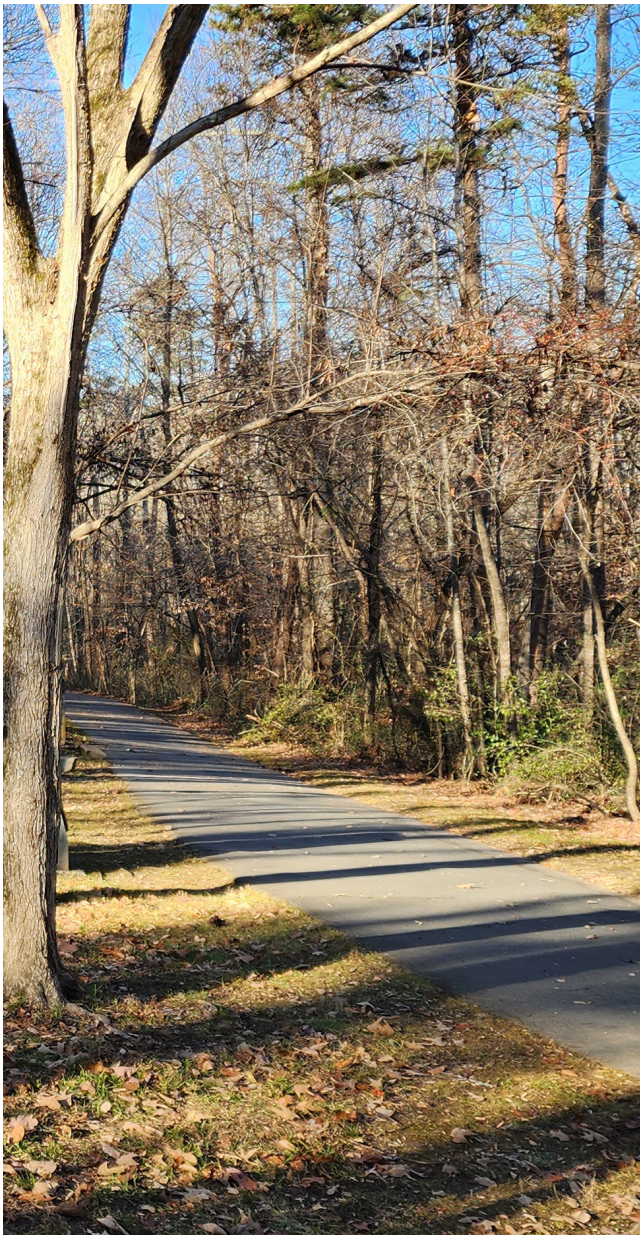
Guilford County's benchmark data is as follows:

- 2023 Population – 552,020
- 2032 Population Projection – 571,648
- Active Park Acreage – 3,672 Acres
- Passive Park Acreage – 2,606 Acres
- Undeveloped Park Acreage – 534 Acres
- Total Systemwide Park Acreage – 6,812 acres
- Trail & Greenway Miles – 60 miles
- Indoor Recreation Space – 12,400 sq. ft.
- FY2025 Operating Budget - $5,827,560
- Full Time Employees (FTE's)

Data from Guilford County and the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) are organized across nine metrics for this study. Metrics such as parkland and trails are standardized to rates per 1,000 residents, while indoor facility space, agency staffing, and budget are measured per capita. This standardization is applied to a population category exceeding 500,000 residents as defined by NRPA, which facilitates the level of service (LOS) analysis. The LOS analysis aims to establish a baseline and project future needs for parkland, trails, indoor and outdoor facilities, and other amenities based on current and expected population growth. These calculations, precise to two decimal places, determine both current and projected service levels through 2032.

$$\frac{\textbf{parks and recreation offering}}{\textbf{portion of population*}} = \textbf{Level of Service}$$

(*EITHER per 1,000 population OR per capita)



Bicentennial Greenway at Gibson Park

Current Level of Service

The table below compares Guilford County's parks and recreation metrics with NRPA median values for agencies serving 500,000 to 999,999 residents. Key metrics include developed parkland per 1,000 residents, trail miles, budget expenditures, and staffing levels. Notably, Guilford County's parkland (1.53 acres per 1,000 residents) is significantly less than the NRPA median of 9.2 acres, highlighting a need for improved park accessibility. Additionally, the county's operating expenditures and staffing levels are substantially below the NRPA median, which could affect the quality and maintenance of park services and facilities.

Side-by-Side Comparative Analysis of Guilford County Parks Metrics and NRPA Medians		
Metric	Guilford County	NRPA Median
Park Acres per 1,000 Residents	12.34 Acres	10.06
Trail Miles	60	110.05
Indoor Recreation Space (Square Feet)	0.022 SF/Resident	2 SF/Resident*
Operating Expenditures Per Capita	$10.56	$46.60
Operating Expenditure per Full-Time-Equivalent (FTE) Staff	$187,986	$102,346
Operating Expenditure per Park Acre	$855.48	$3,722
Agency Staffing (FTEs)	31	289
Staffing (FTEs) per 10,000 Residents	0.56	4.7

*** National Best Practice – PROS Consulting, INC.**

Park Acres

NRPA Parks Metrics calculates acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. Guilford County's level of service for parkland is calculated using the same ratio of total park acreage within the system to the number of residents.

Options Based on Ratio of Total Park Acreage	Current Offering	Current LOS	NRPA LOS	Needed to Meet Recommended LOS (Current Pop.)	Needed to Meet Recommended LOS (Future Pop.)
	Total Acres	(Acres / Per 1,000 Population)		Acres	
Option 1 (Current LOS Maintained)	6,821	12.34	10.20	6,821 (+0)	6,821 (+0)
Option 2 (LOS NRPA Median)	6,821	12.34	10.20	6,821 (+0)	6,821 (+0)
Option 3 (LOS NRPA Upper Quartile)	6,821	12.34	16.7	9,164 (+2,343)	9,489 (+2,668)

As shown in the Table above, Guilford County currently has 12.34 acres per 1,000 residents based on a total of 6,821 park acres (active, passive, and undeveloped). The County would need approximately 2,343 additional park acres to meet or exceed the national upper quartile benchmark of 16.7 acres per 1,000 residents.

By 2033, to maintain the upper quartile benchmark of 16.7 acres per 1,000 residents for the projected population of 571,648, Guilford County would need a total of approximately 9,489 park acres. This means the county would need to acquire an additional 2,668 acres to meet this benchmark.

It is necessary to emphasize the contextualization of existing conditions and resources that are readily available in the local environment to make an informed decision regarding the level of service standards. Every agency has its own unique set of realities that may present barriers to achieving a baseline level of service. This is particularly true of parkland acquisition. Many local governments have a limited ability to acquire land for various reasons. As a County, focus has to be on the entire county as opposed to a more geographically limited municipality. This means that the population it is serving can be rather large and geographically dispersed making it harder for strategic land acquisition. To accomplish the goal of increasing Level of Service, the County will have to evaluate the current land dedication and fee-in-lieu policy to ensure they acquire land suitable for park development.

Passive Park Acres

Passive parkland is characterized by minimal management and programming, allowing users to enjoy open spaces at their own pace. Unlike active park systems, passive parks typically lack structured activities and scheduled events. These parks prioritize preserving important cultural, natural, historic, ecological, scenic, and other natural habitats while providing limited amenities such as trails and picnic areas. With fewer staff and less involvement, passive parks offer a more hands-off approach to recreation, allowing visitors to connect with the space as they desire.

This type of open space may include areas of significant vegetation, important and sensitive habitats, scenic areas, wetlands, or areas that are otherwise considered undevelopable, too expensive to develop, or important to protect. They provide opportunities for wildlife habitat connections, and when access is provided via natural surface trail connections can offer opportunities such as hiking, photography, bouldering, and access to local flora and fauna with minimal impact to the natural features. These properties also provide significant environmental educational opportunities. They also provide environmental benefits of mitigating stormwater impacts, reducing heat island effects, and carbon sequestration.

Guilford County Parks is committed to enhancing and preserving the natural beauty and ecological health of the region through its dedicated management of approximately 1,800 acres across 11 passive parks and preserves. These areas play a crucial role in maintaining the county's water quality, protecting wildlife habitats, and conserving scenic and vital natural spaces for the enjoyment and well-being of both current and future residents.

Current Total Park Acres	Current Passive Park/Preserves Acres	Current LOS (Passive Park Acreage/ Total Park Acreage)	Recommended LOS	Needed to Meet Recommended LOS
6,812	1,800	26.4%	30%	246 Acres

Guilford County Parks Passive Park Acreage vs. National Median

While NRPA does not have a standard established for conservation vs. developable parkland, the industry-accepted standard is 30% of parkland to be conservation land. Applying this standard, Guilford County would need a total of approximately 2,046 acres of passive parkland. This means the county needs to designate an additional 246 acres as passive parkland or preserves to reach this benchmark.

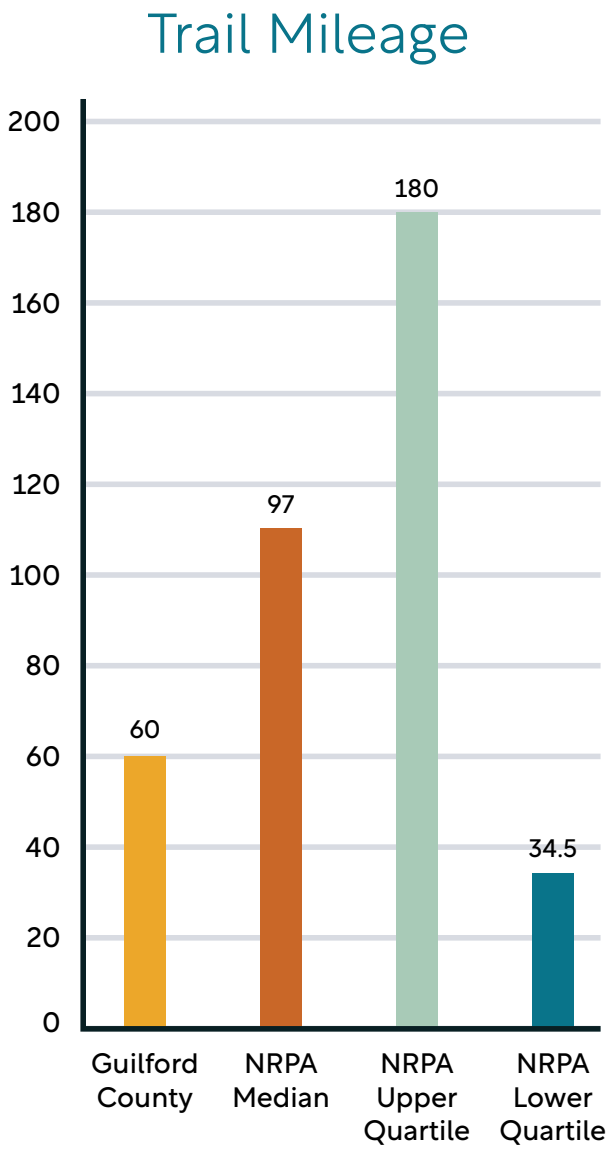
Greenway Trail Miles

Greenways are almost universally appreciated for their aesthetic appeal, recreational opportunities, social interaction, environmental benefits, and the improved quality of life they bring. Trails and greenways are linear green spaces that play a vital role in creating vibrant, livable communities that prioritize the well-being of their residents. They also add value to neighborhoods, attracting potential homebuyers and fostering a sense of pride in the community

The residents of Guilford County currently have access to 60 miles of trails across the park system compared to NRPA median of 110.5 miles, upper quartile of 180 miles, and lower quartile of 34.5 miles.

Parks and recreation researchers and industry leaders have generally agreed that anywhere between one-half to one mile of trail per 1,000 population is an acceptable level of service for recreational trails and greenway provisions in a community. Guilford County has approximately 0.109 miles of trail per 1,000 residents, which falls below the accepted level of service standard for greenway trail provisions, which ranges from 0.5 to 1 mile of trail per 1,000 population.

To meet the accepted level of service standard for greenway trail provisions, Guilford County would need between 276 and 552 miles of trails to serve its population. This means the county needs to add between 216 miles (to meet the minimum standard of 0.5 miles per 1,000 residents) and 492 miles (to meet the maximum standard of 1 mile per 1,000 residents) of trails.



Current Offering	NRPA Lower Quartile LOS	NRPA Upper Quartile LOS	NRPA Median LOS (Recommended)	Needed to Meet Recommended LOS
60	34.5	180	110.5	110.5 (+50.5)

Guilford County Parks Trail Mileage vs. National Median

Staffing

Overview

Staffing plays a foundational role in the success of park and recreation agencies, particularly when it comes to supporting programs, maintaining facilities, and delivering services that meet community needs. Full-time and full-time equivalent (FTE) employees are the driving force behind day-to-day operations, long-term planning, and consistent service delivery. These employees provide continuity, allowing agencies to effectively manage facilities, run programs, and engage with the community on an ongoing basis. Without adequate full-time staffing, agencies risk reduced program offerings, diminished facility maintenance, and lower levels of community participation, all of which can impact the overall quality and accessibility of services.

According to the NRPA 2024 Agency Performance Report, the median number of full-time equivalent staff for park and recreation agencies across all population breaks is 58 employees. Parks and recreation agencies serving jurisdictions of more than 250,000 people have a median staffing level of 263 FTEs. The lower quartile figure among this population break is 120 FTEs, while the upper quartile employees 472 FTEs. Guilford County currently operates with only 31 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees, a number significantly below the NRPA benchmark of 263 FTEs for agencies serving similar populations. While the Department does not currently offer athletics or manage indoor recreation centers—both of which typically require more staffing—this could change in the future.

The Department's current staffing levels still present challenges, particularly in maintaining facilities and expanding program offerings. Although much of the county's park acreage consists of natural preserve land with minimal maintenance needs, the operations and maintenance staff report being stretched thin, with high turnover among part-time employees adding to the strain. Even without the demands of athletics or indoor programming, addressing these staffing gaps is critical to improving facility maintenance and expanding the Department's ability to offer more diverse recreational opportunities as the community continues to grow.

Quick Facts

Parks & Recreation Agency Staffing

- The number of FTEs at an agency increases as jurisdiction population increases. The typical number of FTEs at an agency is 57.6.
- The median FTEs per 10,000 residents is 8.9. The number of FTEs per 10,000 residents decreases as jurisdiction population increases.
- The primary responsibility of FTEs is related to operations and maintenance (46 percent), followed by programming (31 percent).

Sourced from NRPA 2024 Agency Performance Report

Guilford County Parks Total FTEs	31
NRPA Lower Quartile	123
NRPA Median	263
NRPA Upper Quartile	472

Guilford County Parks Staffing Level vs. National Median

Staff Per 10,000 Residents

While the number of staff increases as population increases, the same is not true for the ratio of FTEs to residents. For agencies serving a population of fewer than 20,000 people, there are 13.7 FTEs for every 10,000 residents. This ratio decreases as population increases. At agencies serving 50,000 to 99,999 people, there are 10.5 FTEs for every 10,000 residents. At agencies in jurisdictions of more than 250,000 residents, the ratio declines to an average of 4.7 FTEs per 10,000 residents. Overall, the ratio of FTEs across jurisdiction populations is 8.9 FTEs per 10,000 residents.

Guilford County employs only 0.27 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff members per 10,000 residents, which is significantly below the NRPA average of 4.7 FTEs per 10,000 residents for agencies serving populations over 250,000. While it is expected that the ratio of staff to residents decreases as population size increases, Guilford County's staffing falls far below national norms. This discrepancy suggests that the County may face challenges in maintaining its parks and delivering services at the same level as other agencies.

However, several factors must be considered when assessing these numbers. Guilford County currently offers minimal programming and does not operate any indoor recreation centers, which are typical service areas that require more substantial staffing. Additionally, a large portion of the County's parkland is natural preserve land, which requires less maintenance. Despite these factors, the County's operations and maintenance staff still report being under-resourced, and there is a high turnover rate among part-time employees. While the reduced program offerings and low-maintenance parkland might reduce the immediate need for higher staffing levels, the current shortage still impacts the quality of services and maintenance of developed park areas. Expanding staff will be crucial as Guilford County grows and potentially expands its services, allowing the department to better meet the needs of its residents.

Budget

Overview

Annual operating expenditures, which include personnel costs, contracts, supplies, and capital outlays, are designed to strike a balance between meeting community needs and the financial capacity of local governments (such as cities or counties). For park and recreation agencies, maintaining a clear understanding of these expenses is essential to ensuring they can continue delivering the programs and services that are vital to the community.

In the case of Guilford County Parks, this challenge is compounded by the fact that the department is relatively new, having been established less than five years ago. As a young department, Guilford County Parks is still in the process of defining its role, managing its limited resources, and expanding its services to meet the growing needs of the community. Being mindful of its operating expenditures is especially important for the department, as it seeks to establish itself as a key provider of recreational opportunities while managing fiscal constraints. This careful balance will be critical as the department grows and works to provide the programs, services, and well-maintained facilities expected by Guilford County residents.

Operating Expenditures

The median annual operating expenditures for park and recreation agencies across all population breaks is nearly $6.5 million. Total operating expenditure amounts increase as population increases. Smaller agencies serving fewer than 20,000 people have median operating expenditures of about $1.5 million, while agencies in jurisdictions of more than 250,000 people have annual operating expenditures of $32.7 million. With a budget of $4.2 million, Guilford County is much more financially constrained than parks and recreation agencies serving similar sized population. The County, while serving a larger population is operating with a budget much smaller than similarly sized agencies, and somewhat smaller than agencies across population breaks.

Operating Expenditures Per Capita

Guilford County Parks operates with an annual budget of $4.2 million, which translates to $8 per capita. This figure is significantly lower than the national median for park and recreation agencies serving populations over 250,000, where the average per capita expenditure is $57.61. While it is common for per capita expenditures to decrease as population size increases, Guilford County's budget remains far below the national averages. For comparison, agencies serving smaller populations of fewer than 20,000 residents have a median operating budget of $135.53 per capita, while those serving populations between 50,000 and 99,999 people average $120.72 per capita.

As a relatively new department, Guilford County Parks faces the challenge of managing its limited resources while still trying to meet the recreational needs of a growing population. The department's current budget is stretched thin across personnel costs, contracts, supplies, and capital outlays, making it difficult to expand services and maintain facilities at the same level as more established departments with higher per capita expenditures. Balancing community needs with financial capacity will be key as the department seeks to grow and provide a wider range of programs and services.

With a budget well below the national median, it's clear that Guilford County must either secure additional funding or find innovative ways to stretch its resources in order to meet both current and future community demands.

Operating Expenditures Per Park Acre

With a total budget of $4,243,161 and 6,812 acres of parkland, Guilford County Parks spends approximately $623 per acre. This is significantly lower than the national median of $8,260 per acre for park and non-park sites. Even for agencies serving larger populations, the median expenditure is $4,421 per acre. Guilford County's current expenditure highlights the financial strain the department faces in maintaining its vast parkland and delivering quality services. Despite having a large amount of natural preserve land that requires minimal maintenance, the low per-acre expenditure suggests that operations and maintenance are still underfunded, making it challenging to expand programming or improve park facilities.



Northeast Park Staff

Key Findings

Parkland & Acreage

- Guilford County provides 12.34 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, surpassing the NRPA median of 10.06 acres. This indicates that the county is above average in providing parkland relative to its population, though further expansion could still enhance accessibility and recreational opportunities.
- To meet the national upper quartile benchmark of 16.6 acres per 1,000 residents, the county would need to acquire an additional 2,343 acres of parkland. This expansion would position the county among the leading communities in terms of parkland provision.
- With the population projected to grow to 571,648 by 2033, Guilford County will need an additional 2,668 acres of parkland to maintain the upper quartile benchmark, emphasizing the need for proactive land acquisition and park development planning.
- The county manages approximately 1,800 acres of passive parkland across 11 sites, focusing on minimal intervention to preserve natural environments. Guilford County's passive park acreage accounts for approximately 26 percent of the County's total park acreage, which is slightly below the industry standard of 30 percent. This is a small gap that can realistically be filled if the County continues its efforts to acquire additional park preserves as it has done successfully for the past decade. These passive parks emphasize preserving natural environments and offering unstructured recreational opportunities.

Trails & Greenways

- The county currently offers only 0.109 miles of trail per 1,000 residents, which is significantly below the accepted standard of 0.5 to 1 mile. This highlights a substantial gap in the trail network, limiting residents' access to recreational and commuting options.
- To meet the accepted level of service for greenways, Guilford County would need to add between 216 and 552 miles of trails. Expanding the trail network would enhance connectivity, promote active transportation, and improve overall quality of life.
- Enhancing the county's greenway system could significantly contribute to community well-being by providing safe, accessible routes for walking, cycling, and other forms of outdoor recreation. This could also attract new residents and businesses, boosting local economic development.

Budget & Staffing

- Guilford County Parks operates with only 31 FTE staff, which is far below the NRPA benchmark of 263 FTEs for agencies serving populations over 250,000. This staffing shortfall limits the department's ability to deliver programs, maintain facilities, and serve the community at the same level as other parks and recreation agencies.
- While Guilford County currently offers minimal programming and does not operate athletic programs or indoor recreation centers, the low staffing levels may be less of an issue. However, the limited staffing still hinders the Department's ability to expand its offerings and improve services, particularly as community demands grow.
- Despite much of the county's parkland being natural preserve areas that require minimal maintenance, the remaining developed park areas place considerable pressure on operations and maintenance staff. High turnover among part-time employees and being under-resourced further exacerbates these challenges, impacting the quality of park maintenance.
- Guilford County Parks operates with an annual budget of $4.2 million, which is significantly smaller than the national median of $6.5 million across all population breaks. Agencies serving jurisdictions of over 250,000 people typically have annual expenditures of $32.7 million, leaving Guilford County financially constrained in comparison to its peers.
- Guilford County's operating budget translates to $8 per capita, far below the national median of $57.61 for agencies serving similar-sized populations. This low per capita spending underscores the department's financial limitations, which restrict its ability to expand programs, maintain facilities, and meet community expectations.
- With an operating budget of $4,243,161 and 6,812 acres of parkland, Guilford County spends approximately $623 per acre—substantially lower than the national median of $8,260 per acre. This underfunding places considerable strain on the department's ability to adequately maintain its parkland and provide high-quality services, especially as the community continues to grow.

Geographic Distribution

Overview

Understanding the geographic distribution of parkland and facilities in Guilford County helps identify service gaps and opportunities for expanding recreation access to underserved areas. This aspect of the Level of Service analysis examines the locations of parks and recreational amenities, identifies existing service gaps, and explores reasons behind these gaps to guide recommendations for more accessible recreation opportunities. Achieving fair access to high-quality parks, recreational amenities, and leisure experiences for all community members necessitates a balanced geographic distribution of these resources.

To that end, understanding the extent to which parks and recreational facilities are distributed helps prevent certain areas from being disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged. Well-balanced distribution enables a greater number of people to engage in regular physical activities, promoting healthier lifestyles, and reducing health disparities across the various geographic segments of cities and towns. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that parks and recreational amenities contribute not only to physical health but also to social well-being. Ensuring fair distribution allows communities to insure that individuals from all neighborhoods have access to spaces that facilitate social engagement, community events, and shared experiences.

Parkland Distribution

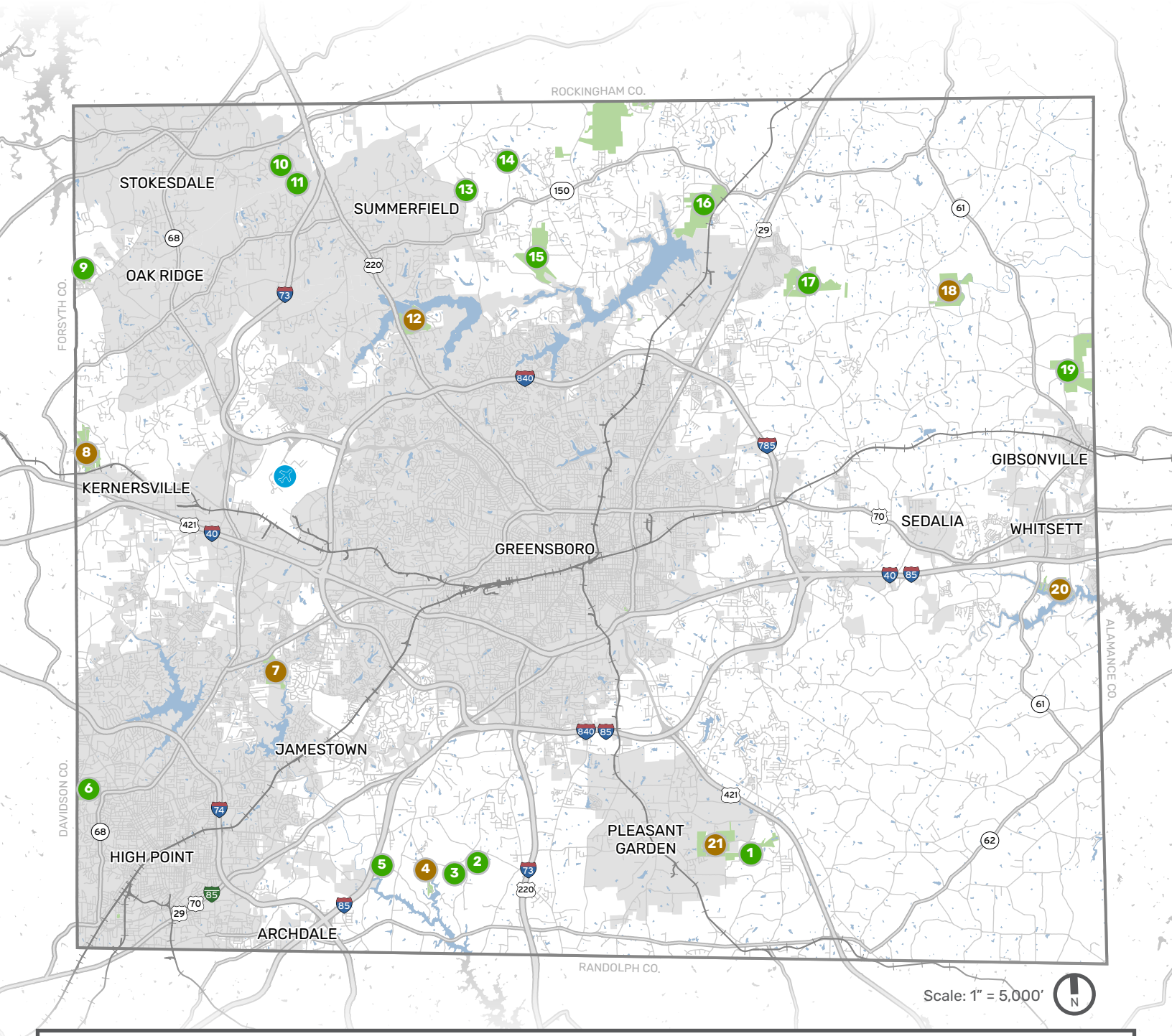
Park Access

The map of Guilford County on the following page provides a detailed overview of the distribution of parks, trails, and open spaces as part of the county's comprehensive master plan. A visual analysis reveals that the parks are strategically scattered across the county, ensuring accessible green spaces for most residents. The central and eastern regions of the county, particularly around Greensboro and High Point, feature a denser concentration of parks, which include notable sites like Triad Park, Southwest Park, and Gibson Park. This clustering in urban areas reflects a focus on providing recreational spaces in more densely populated areas.

However, the northern and western parts of the county, particularly around Stokesdale and Oak Ridge, show a sparser distribution of parks, though these areas are served by several preserves like Belews Lake and Haw River State Park, which are crucial for conservation efforts and offer more natural, undeveloped spaces.

The southern border, near Pleasant Garden and Jamestown, also benefits from several parks and preserves, which are crucial for serving the suburban populations in these areas. Overall, the distribution indicates an attempt to balance between recreational parks in urban locales and larger, conservation-oriented spaces in less densely populated areas. The map also underscores ongoing efforts to enhance connectivity through trails, aiming to link these spaces effectively, which is vital for creating a cohesive network of parks and recreational areas throughout Guilford County.

Unlike municipalities, county boundaries are fixed, necessitating a comprehensive gap analysis that evaluates not only the accessibility of park services but also the adequacy of these services for vulnerable populations, including considerations of income, race, and ethnicity. This analysis of the geographic distribution of all parks, including those within municipalities, shows that the western and northwestern regions of the county are most underserved. These areas lack county-operated facilities and are not covered by any municipal services, underscoring a need for increased recreational access and infrastructure to support fairness.



PARKS KEY

1 - Company Mill Preserve
2 - Saferight Preserve
3 - McCandless Woods Preserve
4 - Southwest Park
5 - Deep River Preserve
6 - Rich Fork Preserve
7 - Gibson Park
8 - Triad Park**
9 - Cascades Preserve
10 - Atlantic + Yadkin Preserve
11 - Atlantic + Yadkin Preserve*
12 - Bur - Mil Park
13 - Mears Fork Corridor Preserve
14 - Mears Fork Corridor Preserve*
15 - Richardson - Taylor Preserve
16 - Bryan Park Annex
17 - Hines Chapel Preserve
18 - Northeast Park
19 - County Farm Preserve
20 - Guilford Mackintosh Park**
21 - Hagan-Stone Park

Park
Nature Preserve

*Indicates park spans non-contiguous parcels

**Indicates park is a partnership with another local government

Existing Parkland Distribution Map

Social Vulnerability

The map on the following page illustrates the social vulnerability of different areas within Guilford County and the proximity of these areas to existing park facilities. Social vulnerability is a measure of the degree to which individuals or groups are at risk due to their social, economic, or demographic characteristics – coupled with their ability to prepare for, cope with, and recover from disruptive events or crises. The Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) used for this assessment was created by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention with the intention of assisting communities after a natural disaster. Social vulnerability research frequently focuses on risk management analysis, particularly related to the impacts of natural hazards.

SVI indicates the relative vulnerability of every U.S. Census tract. Census tracts are subdivisions of counties for which the Census collects statistical data. They are a particularly useful variable as they are smaller than city or county-wide boundaries and provide the ability to drill down on specific areas within a community. This level of specificity is helpful in further understanding the different levels of vulnerability within larger geographic areas (such as city, county, state). For example, a census tract analysis will allow you to compare the vulnerability of one part of a jurisdiction to another. Such granular comparison may illuminate differences in vulnerability (or inequities) that may exist within communities – thus, helping to guide future capital and operational investments.

This assessment recognizes that many of the factors that determine a community's resilience to natural hazards are the same factors that leave communities vulnerable to ongoing public health risks, such as a lack of access to parks and open space. The data also has implications for community planning in the area of parks and recreation. In areas with higher social vulnerability, a park may provide a valuable resource an individual may not otherwise have access to.[1]

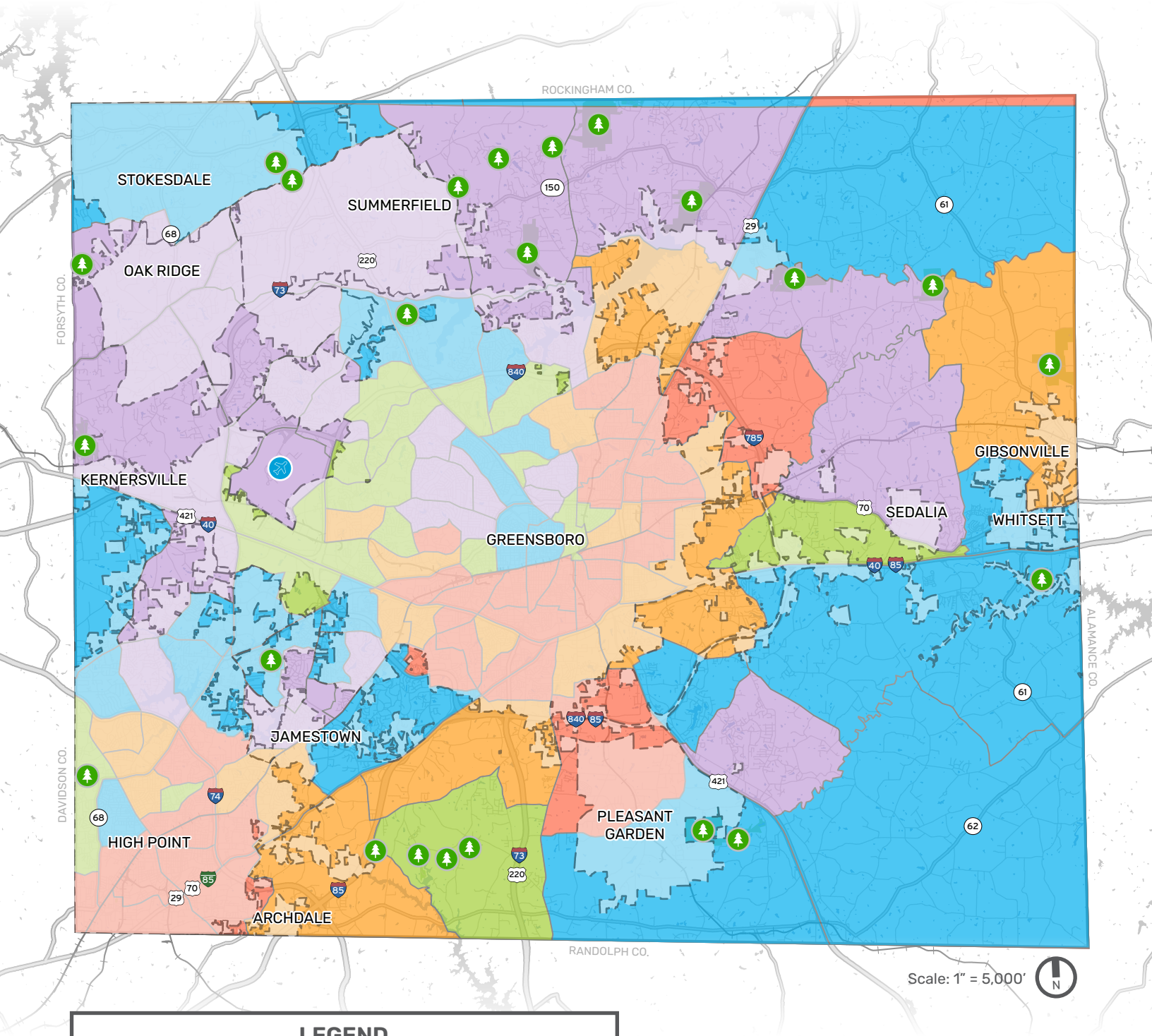
Social vulnerability across Guilford County is color-coded on the map below, with shades ranging from blue (less vulnerable) to red (most vulnerable), based on a percentage scale. The map reveals that the most socially vulnerable areas, shown in darker red hues, are predominantly located in central parts of the county, including parts of Greensboro and High Point. These areas, despite their vulnerability, appear to have access to several park facilities, as indicated by the green park icons.

Conversely, less vulnerable areas, shown in blue, particularly in the outskirts like Stokesdale, Oak Ridge, and the eastern parts of the county, also have access to parks, though the distribution is less dense compared to more vulnerable areas. This suggests that while park accessibility spans across various levels of social vulnerability, the concentration and possibly the quality of park amenities might differ, highlighting potential areas for focused improvement and development in the county's parks and recreation offerings to ensure access.



Guilford County Farm Entrance Signage

1 https://www.earthdata.nasa.gov/learn/articles/sedac-social-vulnerability-dataset



Social Vulnerability Map

Drive Time

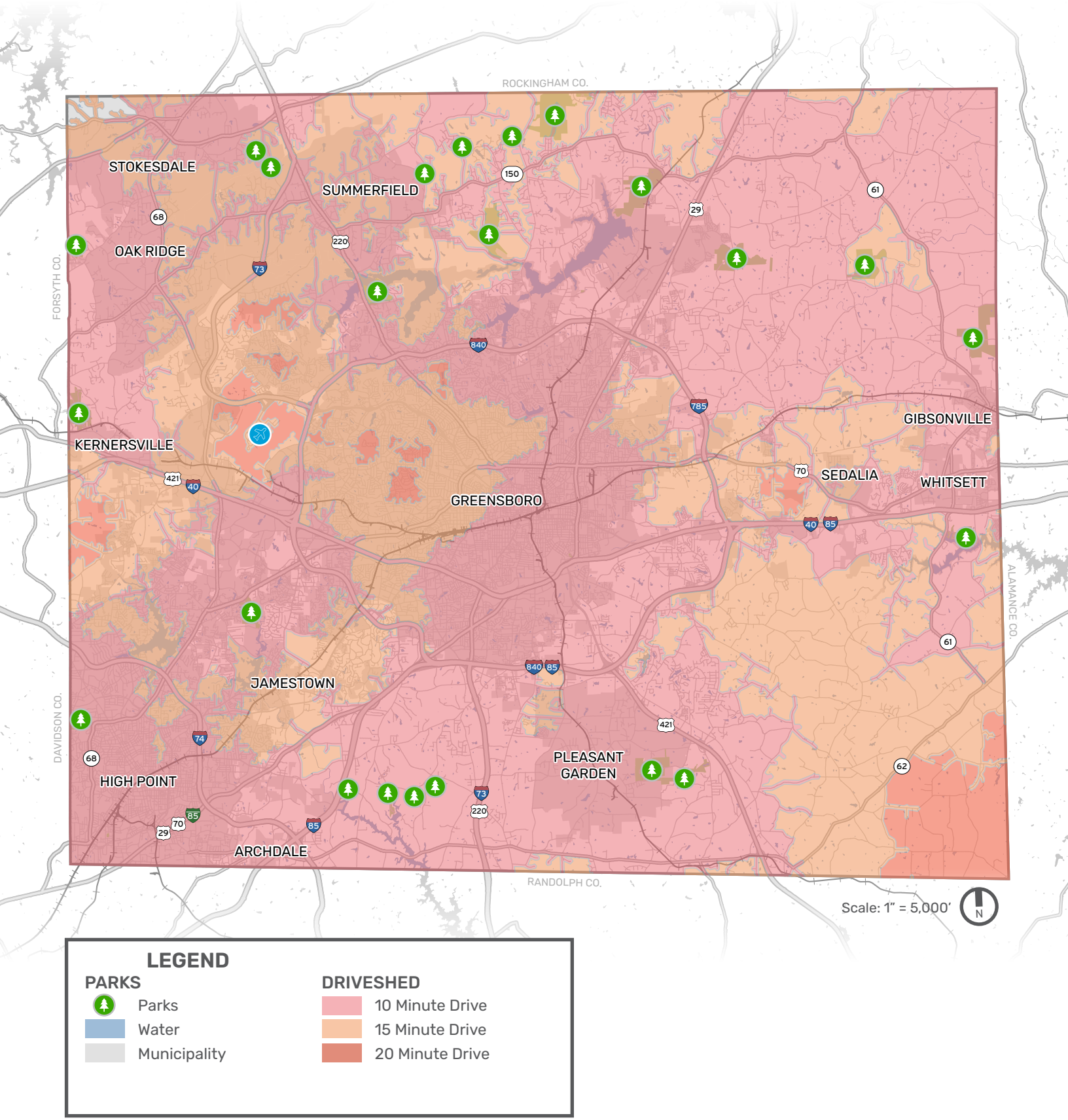
The “Drive Times to a County Park” map of Guilford County forms an essential part of the comprehensive master plan, showcasing the accessibility of parks via automobile across different regions of the county. The map color-codes areas based on estimated driving times—10, 15, and 20 minutes—to the nearest county park, providing a clear visual representation of park accessibility for residents.

From this map, it is evident that the majority of the central and eastern regions of the county, especially around Greensboro and High Point, are well-served, with most residents being able to reach a park within a 10 to 15-minute drive. This indicates effective coverage in urban areas, where the density of both population and parks is highest.

However, the northwestern and certain southern areas of the county exhibit larger spans of 15 to 20-minute drive zones, suggesting these areas are less optimally served in terms of quick park access. Particularly, the regions around Stokesdale and the far eastern part of the county near Gibsonville show potential gaps in park access, where residents may experience longer travel times to reach a county park.

This distribution highlights a significant opportunity for strategic park development and enhancements to existing trail and road networks to improve access in underserved areas. Enhancing connectivity not only within but also between communities can substantially reduce travel times and make parks more accessible, thereby increasing usage and supporting the county’s goals of promoting health, well-being, and community cohesion through its park facilities.





Drive Times to a County Park

Health & Wellbeing

"The link between access to parks and long-term physical health is well-established. Using data from the CDC, the map below identifies areas in Guilford County with high rates of chronic health conditions. While parks cannot cure illnesses, they are recognized as effective tools for managing health conditions, aiding recovery, and preventing future illnesses.

As part of its Environmental Justice Index (EJI), the CDC uses the Health Vulnerability Index (HVI) to evaluate and score each Census Tract on a scale from 0 to 5, based on the prevalence of specific health conditions. A tract meeting four out of the five conditions, such as high blood pressure, asthma, cancer, diabetes, and poor mental health, would score a 4. The conditions included in the HVI are:

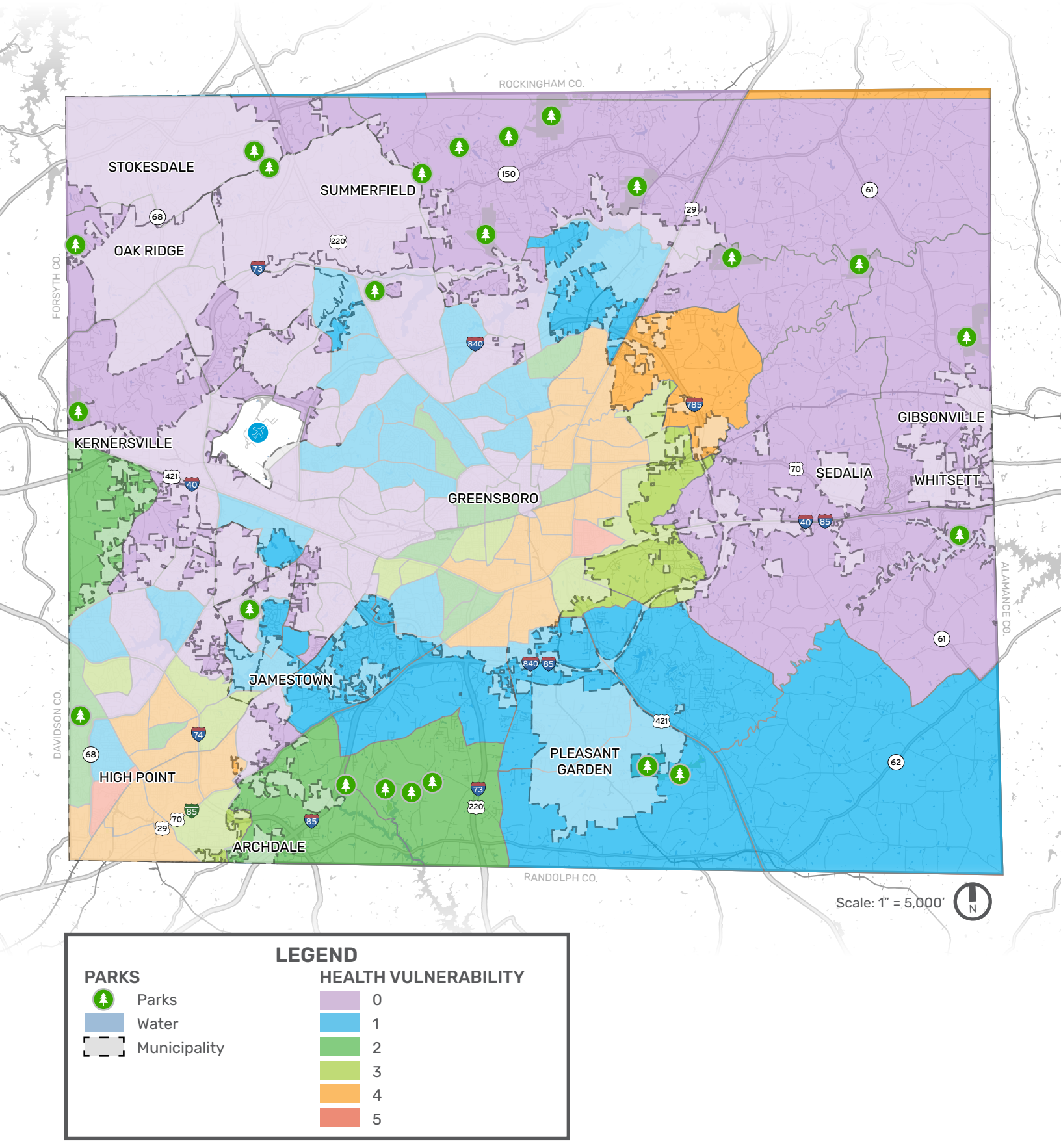
- High Prevalence of High Blood Pressure
- High Prevalence of Asthma
- High Prevalence of Cancer
- High Prevalence of Diabetes
- High Prevalence of Poor Mental Health

Evaluating the prevalence of chronic health conditions in the County geographically, adds another layer in considering current offerings and future expansions. Areas with high prevalence of chronic health conditions are areas where expansion should be considered after looking at some of the additional factors discussed throughout this chapter. Areas with low chronic health conditions should be viewed as areas for maintenance of current offerings, assuming there are no other factors indicating the need for more service.

The Health Vulnerability map of Guilford County visually represents the prevalence of common chronic health conditions across different areas, based on the CDC's Health Vulnerability Index (HVI). This map is color-coded to show the number of health conditions affecting at least 65% of the population in each area, with values ranging from 0 (least vulnerable) to 5 (most vulnerable). Notably, central regions of Greensboro and parts of High Point are marked in shades of orange to red, indicating a high vulnerability with HVI scores between 3 and 5.

In contrast, the outskirts, such as Stokesdale and Oak Ridge, display lower vulnerability levels, shown in blue. The distribution of parks, depicted by green icons, does not consistently align with areas of high health vulnerability. This discrepancy points to potential gaps in the availability of recreational facilities that could support health management and recovery, particularly in areas with higher health vulnerabilities. Such insights underscore the need for strategic park placement and enhancements to address public health challenges and improve community well-being in Guilford County.





Health Vulnerability Map

Park Service Districts

Overview

Park Service Districts are created to analyze park distribution and accessibility on a regional scale. Regional differences and local needs shape how the park system strengthens services, expands recreational opportunities, and protects natural resources, reinforcing its value to residents.

By dividing the county into smaller geographic areas, the districts allow for a more precise understanding of differences in population density, development patterns, and environmental factors that influence park access and recreational needs. For example, urban areas like Greensboro and High Point may require more structured recreational spaces, such as sports fields and community event spaces, while rural districts may benefit from expanded natural areas, greenways, and passive recreation opportunities. Additionally, some regions of the county face greater social and health vulnerabilities, requiring targeted investments in park accessibility, programming, and transportation connections.

While these districts are defined by geography, their purpose is to ensure that parks and recreation services meet the diverse needs of all residents while maintaining a cohesive, well-managed countywide system. This structure also has the potential to reinforce Guilford County Parks' role in protecting and conserving environmentally sensitive land, ensuring that growth and development do not come at the expense of the County's natural resources.

Organizing Guilford County's park system into service districts allows for a more in-depth analysis of community needs at a local level, ensuring that public investment is strategically guided by geographic context. Understanding the current distribution of parks and amenities helps identify gaps and priorities, forming the foundation for a long-term plan to expand access and create a best-in-class park system over the next ten years.

Benefits & Challenges

Establishing park districts in Guilford County provides a structured way to manage and distribute park resources equitably. Benefits include more targeted investments, improved access to recreation, and a clearer framework for long-term planning, while challenges remain in defining boundaries, balancing resources across districts, and coordinating efforts between local and county agencies.

Park Districting Framework

Park districts offer a data-driven framework for improving park access, addressing community needs, and enhancing operational efficiency. However, careful planning is necessary to characterize districts in a way that maximizes benefits while mitigating administrative challenges. Defining park districts requires careful consideration of the factors that shape how residents interact with parks and recreational spaces.

Beyond geographic boundaries, districts should be structured around key elements that influence park access, service distribution, and long-term planning. These factors ensure that each district reflects the unique characteristics of its communities while optimizing the placement and management of resources.

Park districts can be centered on any of the following components:

- **Prominent Recreational Resources:** Park districts can be centered around major recreational facilities and amenities like community centers, large sports complexes, recreational waters, aquatics, and other unique recreational amenities.
- **Land Use & Small Area Plans:** Districts can align with broader urban development plans, integrating parks into new residential and commercial areas to improve access to green space. They may also incorporate Guilford County's small area plans, which address specific local needs.
- **Access:** District boundaries can be based on reasonable driving distances from central recreational resources, considering natural and man-made barriers that impact travel.

Case Study

Prince William County Park Planning Districts

Prince William County, Virginia, implemented a park planning district model to guide the management, distribution, and development of parks and recreational facilities. The county established multiple planning districts, each with an inventory of parks, facilities, and recreational assets. These districts were designed to align with population distribution, land use patterns, and service area needs, ensuring access to parks and recreation opportunities across urban, suburban, and rural areas.

The study included service area maps for neighborhood, community, and regional parks, identifying gaps in access and areas for future investment. Each district assessment incorporated park assessment grades, land ownership status, and facility inventories, helping the county evaluate the quality and capacity of its park system. The planning districts also accounted for conservation easements, school partnerships, and private recreational facilities.

Implementing a district-based system allowed Prince William County to prioritize park improvements, target land acquisition, and enhance recreational opportunities in a way that aligned with broader urban planning and community development goals. This methodology can serve as a model for counties to effectively manage large and complex park systems.

- **Population Growth, Distribution & Demographic Trends:** High-growth areas may require tailored districts to ensure adequate recreational space. Demographic trends, such as age distribution, income levels, and cultural preferences, can also inform district boundaries.
- **Environmental Features:** Natural landscapes, such as forests, bodies of water, and ecologically sensitive areas, can guide district placement and design.
- **SVI:** Incorporating SVI into district planning helps direct investments to areas where enhanced recreational resources can improve community resilience and well-being.
- **Communities of Interest:** Districting can reflect overlapping neighborhoods, cultural networks, and shared recreational interests, ensuring parks are designed to be relevant and well-used by their communities.

Guilford County is exploring the creation of park districts to manage resources more effectively and ensure services align with community needs. Organizing parks into districts would improve operational coordination, help prioritize investments, and support long-term planning. The district boundaries were drawn by analyzing three key factors: accessibility, health vulnerability, and social vulnerability.

Accessibility

Accessibility was evaluated using drive-time analysis, which identifies areas beyond a 10-, 15-, or 20-minute drive from a county park. This helped determine where gaps in access exist and where future investments may be needed. The map highlights how park accessibility varies across the county, with urban areas like Greensboro and High Point having more coverage within a short drive, while rural areas—particularly in the northeast and southeast—experience longer travel times to reach a park. Major highways, such as I-40 and I-85, provide quicker access to parks in some regions, but natural and municipal boundaries may still create barriers for certain communities. The districts were drawn to account for these variations, ensuring that future park planning considers both well-served and underserved areas.

Health Vulnerability

Health vulnerability was assessed by mapping communities with higher rates of chronic conditions, reinforcing the need for parks that promote physical activity and wellness.

The map below highlights how health vulnerability varies across Guilford County, with higher concentrations of chronic health conditions in the southeastern and northeastern districts, while lower vulnerability scores appear in the northwestern district and parts of Greensboro and High Point. Many of the lower health vulnerability areas are in densely populated urban centers, where municipal-managed parks provide additional recreation opportunities not reflected in this county-level analysis.

Unlike municipal parks, Guilford County's regional parks and preserves offer unique recreational experiences. Regional parks provide active amenities such as sports fields, playgrounds, and event spaces, while preserves focus on passive recreation like hiking, nature exploration, and conservation. The district boundaries account for these differences, ensuring that areas with greater health concerns, particularly in the Southeast and parts of the Northeast, are prioritized for future park investments that promote physical activity and wellness.

Social Vulnerability

Social vulnerability factors, including income levels, transportation access, and housing stability, further shaped district boundaries by identifying areas where expanded recreation opportunities would be most beneficial. This map illustrates social vulnerability throughout Guilford County, with the highest vulnerability levels concentrated primarily in central and eastern Greensboro, as well as parts of High Point.

In contrast, lower vulnerability levels appear predominantly in the northern and western sections of the county. Urban areas like Greensboro and High Point have more extensive municipal park services, which are not reflected in this county-focused analysis. Park district boundaries were drawn to include areas with higher social vulnerability, ensuring these communities are considered in future investments and park improvements

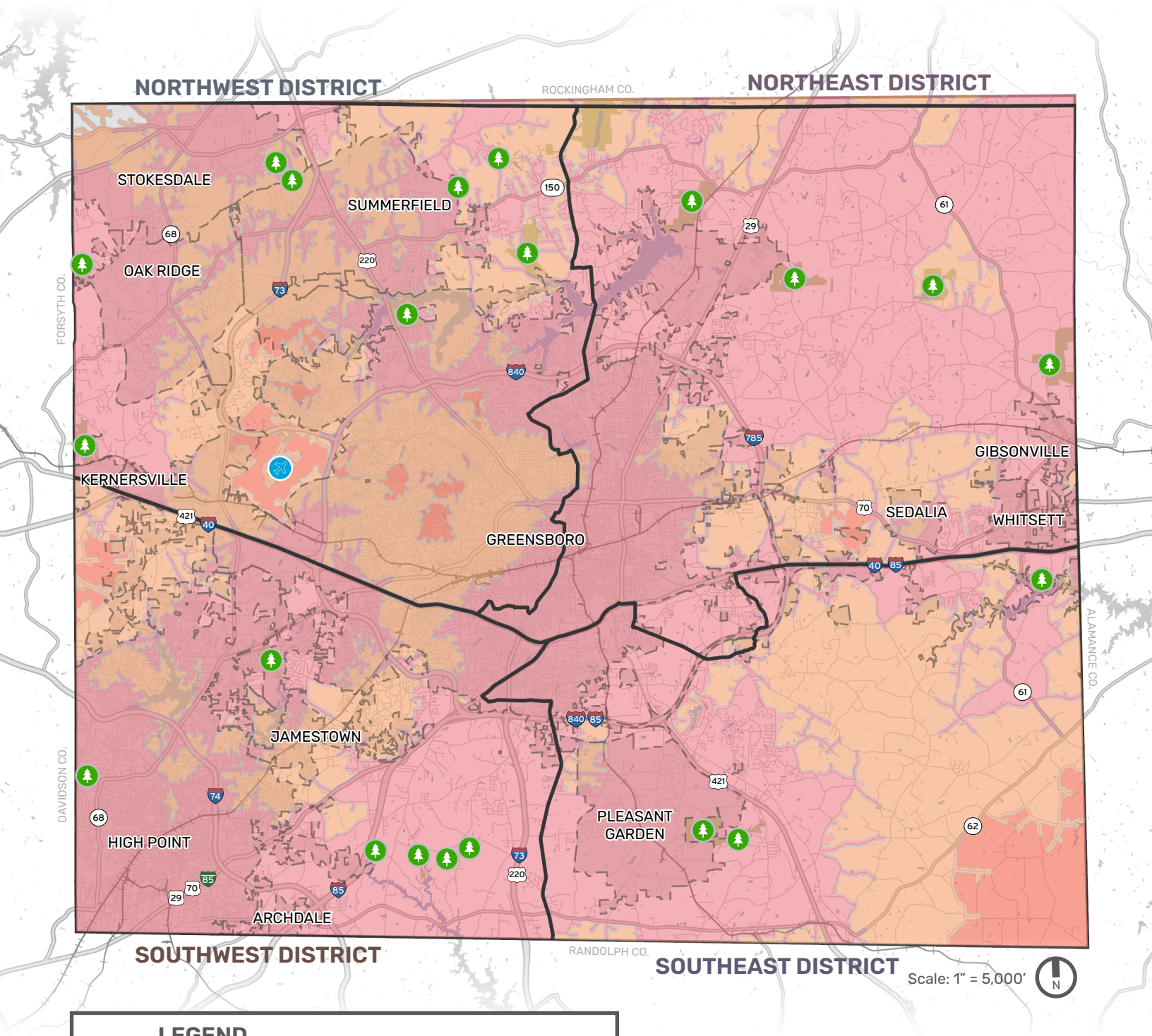
Park Districts

The proposed park districts provide a structured way to manage and expand Guilford County's park system. Each district was shaped using accessibility, health vulnerability, and social vulnerability data to balance service distribution, address gaps, and guide future investments. The final district boundary map brings these factors together, ensuring that each district includes a mix of well-served and underserved areas while maintaining logical geographic divisions.

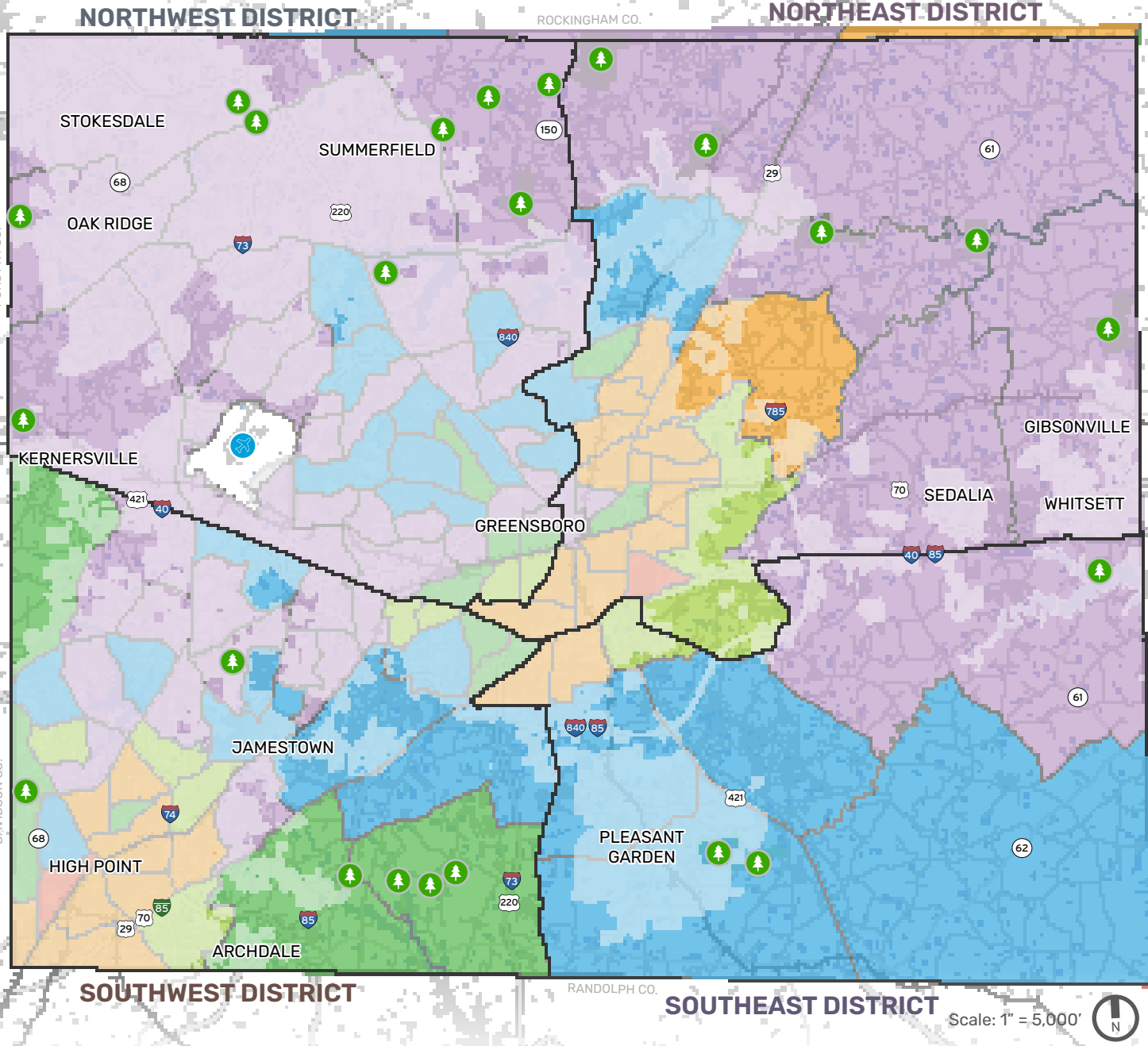
Each district contains a combination of regional parks, preserves, and natural areas that reflect Guilford County's recreational landscape. The Northwest and Southwest districts feature multiple regional parks that provide active recreation opportunities, while the Northeast and Southeast districts have larger areas of open space with fewer county-managed park sites. Opportunities for system expansion are most evident in the Northeast District, where gaps in county park access remain, and in the Southeast District, where higher social and health vulnerabilities point to a need for increased recreational investment. Prioritizing strategic land acquisition and park development in these areas can enhance access while strengthening the overall network of parks, trails, and open spaces. The framework establishes a path toward long-term planning, ensuring resources are allocated to an accessible and effective park system.



Food Truck Event



Proposed Park Districts Drive Times to a County Park Map



LEGEND

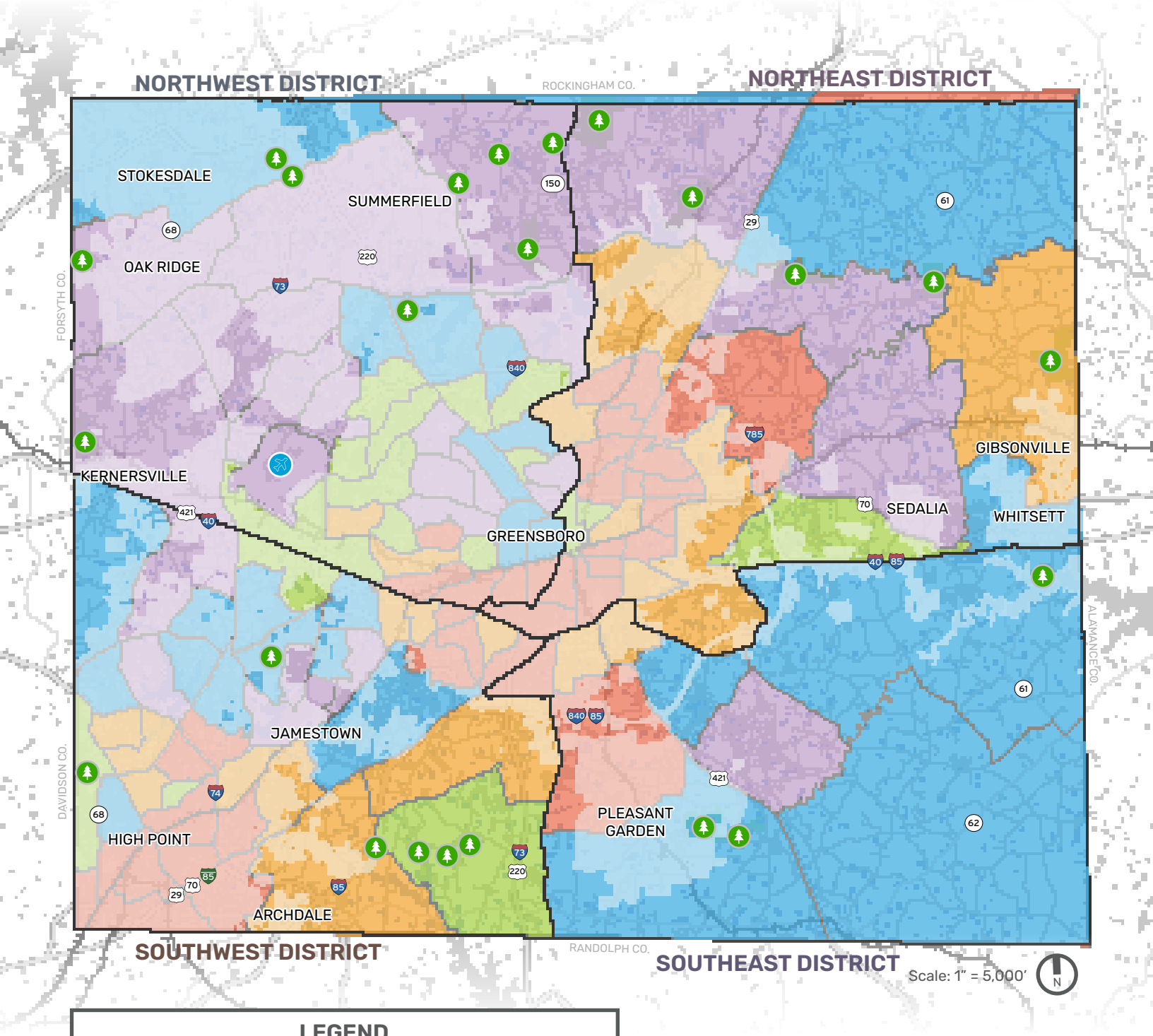
PARKS

- Parks
- Water
- Municipality
- Park Districts

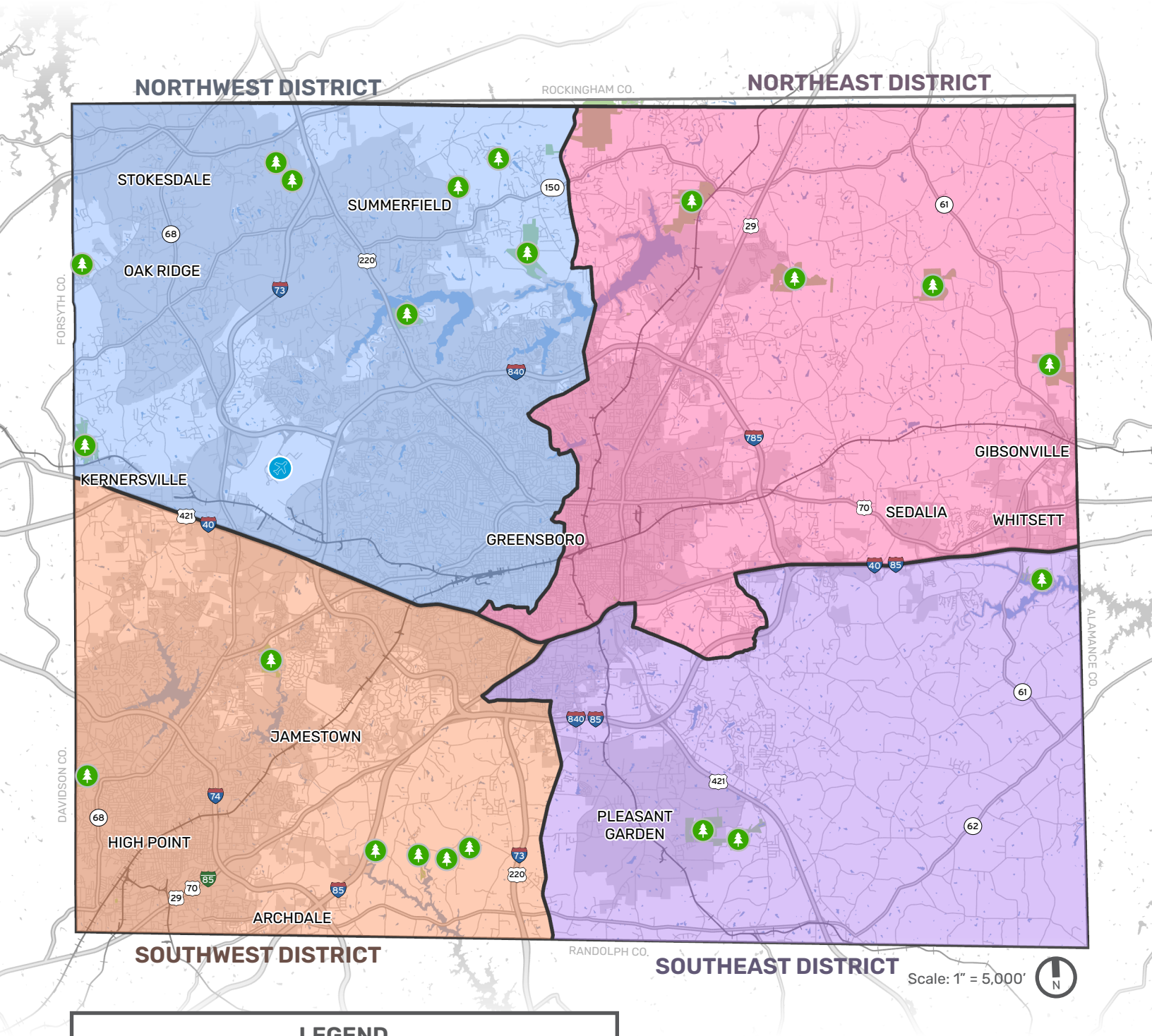
HEALTH VULNERABILITY

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Proposed Park Districts Health Vulnerability Map



Proposed Park Districts Social Vulnerability Map



Proposed Park Districts Map

Key Findings

Geographic Distribution & Accessibility

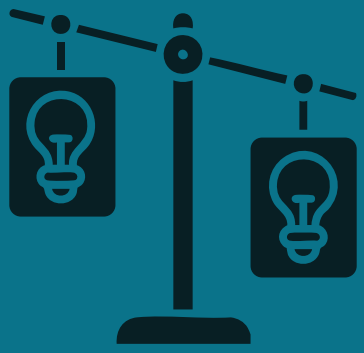
- Geographic distribution analysis reveals that certain areas of the county, particularly the western and northwestern regions, are underserved. Addressing these gaps through strategic park placement, greenway connectivity, and leveraging proximity to parks and open spaces managed by adjacent local jurisdictions will be essential for ensuring access.
- The assessment highlights the importance of ensuring that parks and recreational facilities are equitably distributed across the county. This is crucial for preventing certain communities from being disproportionately underserved and ensuring that all residents have access to quality recreational opportunities.
- Urban areas like Greensboro and High Point have effective park coverage, with most residents able to access a park within a 10 to 15-minute drive. This reflects strong service in densely populated regions.
- Northwestern areas, such as Stokesdale, and parts of the southern and eastern regions, including Gibsonville, have longer drive times of 15 to 20 minutes or more. These areas are less optimally served and show gaps in accessibility.

Social Vulnerability

- The central and southern portions of Greensboro and High Point display the highest levels of social vulnerability, marked in red and orange. These areas also have multiple county parks nearby, such as Hines Chapel Preserve and Southwest Park, providing valuable resources for at-risk populations. However, the quality and amenities of these parks should be evaluated to ensure they adequately serve these vulnerable communities.
- The distribution of parks does not entirely align with the areas of greatest vulnerability, highlighting opportunities to prioritize park development or enhancements in regions with higher social vulnerability.
- Eastern areas near Gibsonville and the northwestern regions around Stokesdale, marked in blue and green, show lower levels of social vulnerability but also have fewer parks. This indicates that while these areas may not face significant social challenges, their residents could benefit from enhanced recreational opportunities and improved access.
- Enhancing connectivity between parks and surrounding neighborhoods, especially in vulnerable areas, through pedestrian pathways, public transportation, and greenway networks, could further reduce barriers to access and encourage greater utilization of park resources. Such efforts could support accessibility goals while addressing gaps in the current park system.

Health & Well-being

- Areas with high rates of chronic health conditions, as identified through the Health Vulnerability Index, are highlighted as priorities for potential park expansions. Improving access to parks in these areas could play a critical role in supporting public health outcomes and the potential to reduce healthcare costs.
- The analysis suggests that parks, especially in areas with higher health vulnerability, could be leveraged as interventions to prevent and manage chronic illnesses. This underscores the role of parks in promoting community health and well-being.
- Enhancing park access in vulnerable communities is identified as a key strategy for reducing health disparities across the county. By providing access to recreational facilities, the county can help promote healthier lifestyles and improve overall quality of life.



Benchmarking

Overview

The current benchmarking analysis compares the Guilford County Parks Department with peer county parks and recreation agencies—organizations selected based on similar population sizes, geographic characteristics, and service models. While these shared traits support a meaningful comparison, it is important to recognize that each community operates under its own set of circumstances.

Differences in funding, governance, geography, and community priorities shape the way agencies deliver services. As such, benchmarking findings offer useful reference points but should be viewed as one of several data points alongside the needs assessment and community engagement.

To support meaningful comparisons across agencies of different sizes, the analysis uses per-capita metrics to adjust for variations in population and service scale. This method highlights proportional differences, giving a clearer view of relative performance. Still, because the data is self-reported, variation in how agencies report information may affect consistency.

Key metrics examined in the benchmarking analysis include:

- Per Capita Parkland
- Total Trail Mileage
- Staffing Levels
- Department Funding
- Unique Recreational Amenities

Together, these benchmarks illustrate how Guilford County's current capacity measures up and where gaps may exist in meeting community demand.

Department Snapshot

Guilford County Parks

- Population: 552,020
- 7 Active Parks
- 11 Passive Parks/Preserves
- 6,812 Acres
- 60 Trail & Greenway Miles
- 12,400 Indoor Facility Sq. Ft.
- 31 Full Time Staff
- 80 Part-time Staff
- 126 Seasonal Staff
- 31 FTEs
- $5,827,560 FY 2025 Budget



Guilford County Parks Staff

Peer Communities

The project team identified peer communities based on the following characteristics:

- Neighboring Piedmont Counties: The benchmarking study includes neighboring counties within the North Carolina Piedmont region that serve similar-sized populations. This regional focus allows for a more relevant comparison, considering geographic and demographic similarities.
- Aspirational Parks & Recreation Systems: The study also looks at communities with parks and recreation systems that could be considered "aspirational," providing a benchmark for excellence and innovation that Guilford County might aim to achieve.
- Park Acreage & Trail Miles: The analysis includes communities with large park systems and well-developed trail networks. These peers were selected for their emphasis on outdoor recreation and regional connectivity.
- Outdoor Recreation Amenities: Peer communities were chosen based on the availability and diversity of outdoor recreation amenities, including extensive park acreage, miles of trails, equestrian facilities, golf courses, campgrounds, and water-based activities such as marinas and boat ramps. These elements were prioritized to compare how different jurisdictions support and enhance outdoor recreational opportunities.
- Historic Amenities & Educational Farms: Others among the selected peers feature historic buildings, educational farms, and preserved cultural sites. Like Guilford County, these agencies demonstrate a commitment to heritage preservation and hands-on learning.



Lake at Hagan Stone Park

Comparison of Key Characteristics Among County Parks and Recreation Departments

Department Name	Population	Dept. Type	CAPRA Accredited	Tax Rate per $100 Valuation	Recent (10 Years) Parks Bond	Parks Foundation	Golf Course(s)	Equestrian Trails or Facilities	Outdoor Aquatic facilities	Historic Amenities
Guilford County, NC Parks	552,020	County	No	$0.73	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mecklenburg County, NC Park & Recreation	1,145,000	County	Yes	$0.48	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Broward County, FL Parks & Recreation	1,950,000	County	Yes	$0.57	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Charleston County, SC Parks & Recreation Commission	419,279	Special Purpose District	Yes	$0.51	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Prince William County, VA Parks & Recreation	489,640	County	Yes	$0.92	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Gaston County, NC Parks & Recreation	227,943	County	No	2.25%	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Cabarrus County, NC Active Living & Parks	240,000	County	No	$0.58	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Orange County, NC Environment, Agriculture, Parks & Recreation	155,000	County	No	$0.86	Nov. 2024 Ballot Initiative	No	No	No	No	Yes
Forsyth County, NC Parks & Recreation	396,181	County	No	$0.68	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Wake County, NC Parks Recreation & Open Space	1,100,000	County	No	$0.51	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes

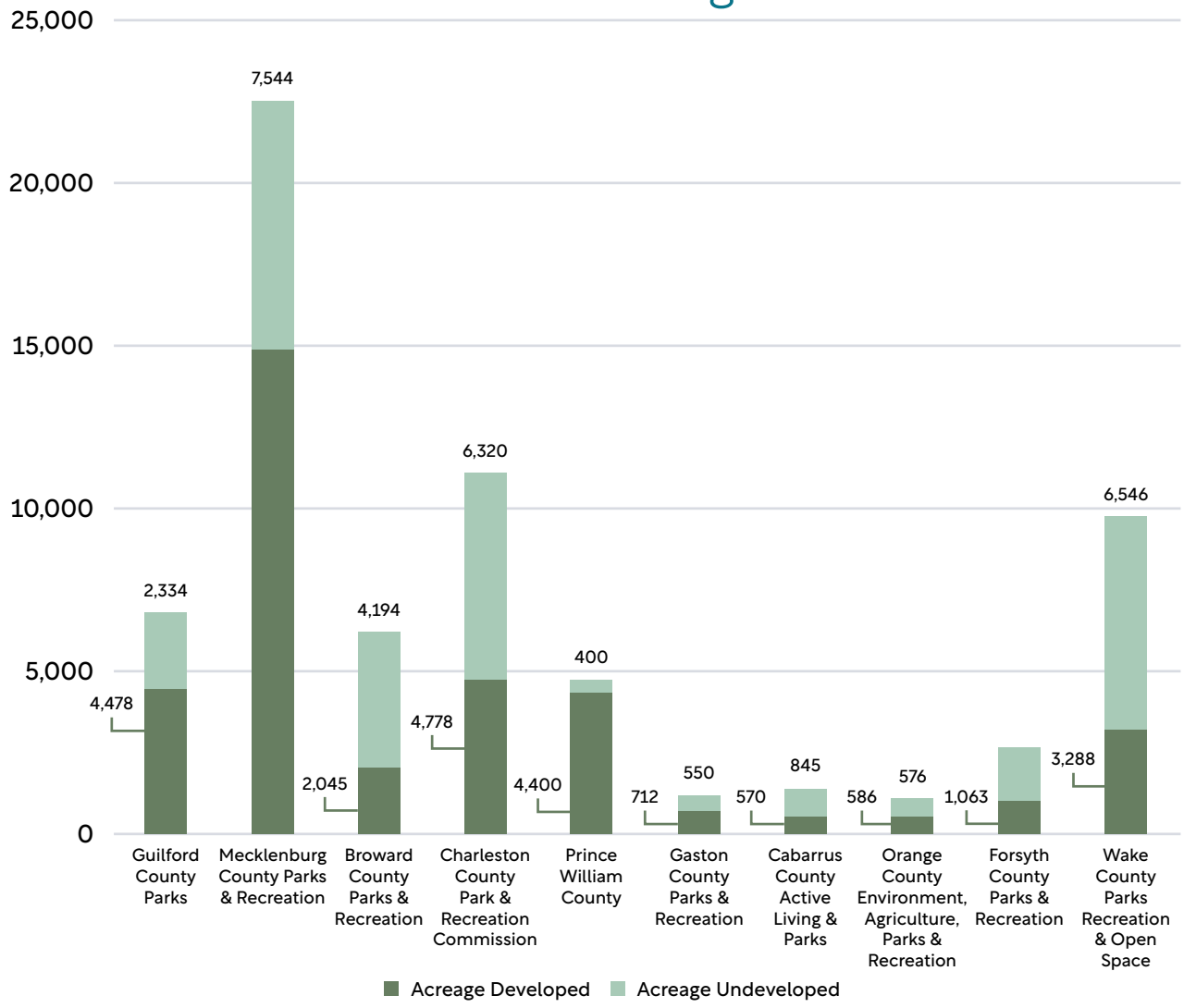
Parkland

Guilford County manages 6,812 acres of parkland, with 4,478 acres developed and 2,334 acres undeveloped. This total is less than that of larger counties like Mecklenburg (22,523 acres) but exceeds that of smaller peers such as Gaston (1,262 acres) and Cabarrus (1,415 acres), placing Guilford in the mid-range. While the county's park system is sizable, expanding undeveloped acreage could help meet future demand and preserve land for long-term use.

Parkland per capita in Guilford County is adequate but falls short of top-performing peers. Larger counties often achieve higher per-capita figures through broader land holdings and greater investment in open space. As the population grows, expanding total acreage and improving distribution will be important to maintain access to parks and recreational amenities and to support growing needs.

Furthermore, as was described in the previous Level of Service (LOS) chapter, much of Guilford County's parkland is concentrated in large, regional sites and natural areas. This current pattern may limit access in rapidly developing areas, where additional smaller parks or greenway connections could address gaps. Increasing both the quantity and strategic placement of parkland—particularly in underserved or high-growth areas—will support expanded access as the county grows.

Park Acreage



Jurisdiction	Park Acreage	Population	Acreage per 1,000 Population
Charleston County Park & Recreation Commission	11,000	419,279	26.24
Mecklenburg County Park & Recreation	22,523	1,145,000	19.67
Guilford County Parks	**6,812**	**552,020**	**12.34**
Prince William County	4,800	489,640	9.80
Wake County Parks Recreation & Open Space	9,834	1,100,000	8.94
Orange County Environment, Agriculture, Parks & Recreation	1,162	155,000	7.50
Forsyth County Parks & Recreation	2,698	396,181	6.81
Cabarrus County Active Living & Parks	1,415	240,000	5.90
Gaston County Parks & Recreation	1,262	227,943	5.54
Broward County Parks & Recreation	6,239	1,950,000	3.20

Spotlight on Strategic & Innovative Land Conservation

Beaufort County South Carolina Rural & Critical Land Preservation Program

The Beaufort County Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program has levied taxpayer dollars since 1999. The program is publicly supported by Beaufort County citizens via bond referendum, most recently in 2018.

The Rural and Critical Program protects many special properties including working farms and forests, important cultural and historic sites, passive parkland, rural land adjacent to streams and important waterbodies, and critical lands in cities, and along scenic vista.

The Program protects large tracts of land to alleviate inconsistent development patterns, like a gated community in the middle of a rural area, Suburban sprawl can oftentimes force small rural landowner to pay higher taxes. Often rural residents are forced to sell their land to avoid high tax bills, in turn leading to more development – a perpetual cycle that erodes the character of our rural communities. Maintaining rural character and way of life is vital to Beaufort County.

Lastly, the Program provides access to a variety of nature preserves, sweeping scenic vistas, and unique, irreplaceable Lowcountry landscapes. There is no doubt the Program improves the quality of life for Beaufort County residents by providing visual and physical access to extraordinary natural areas.

Trails

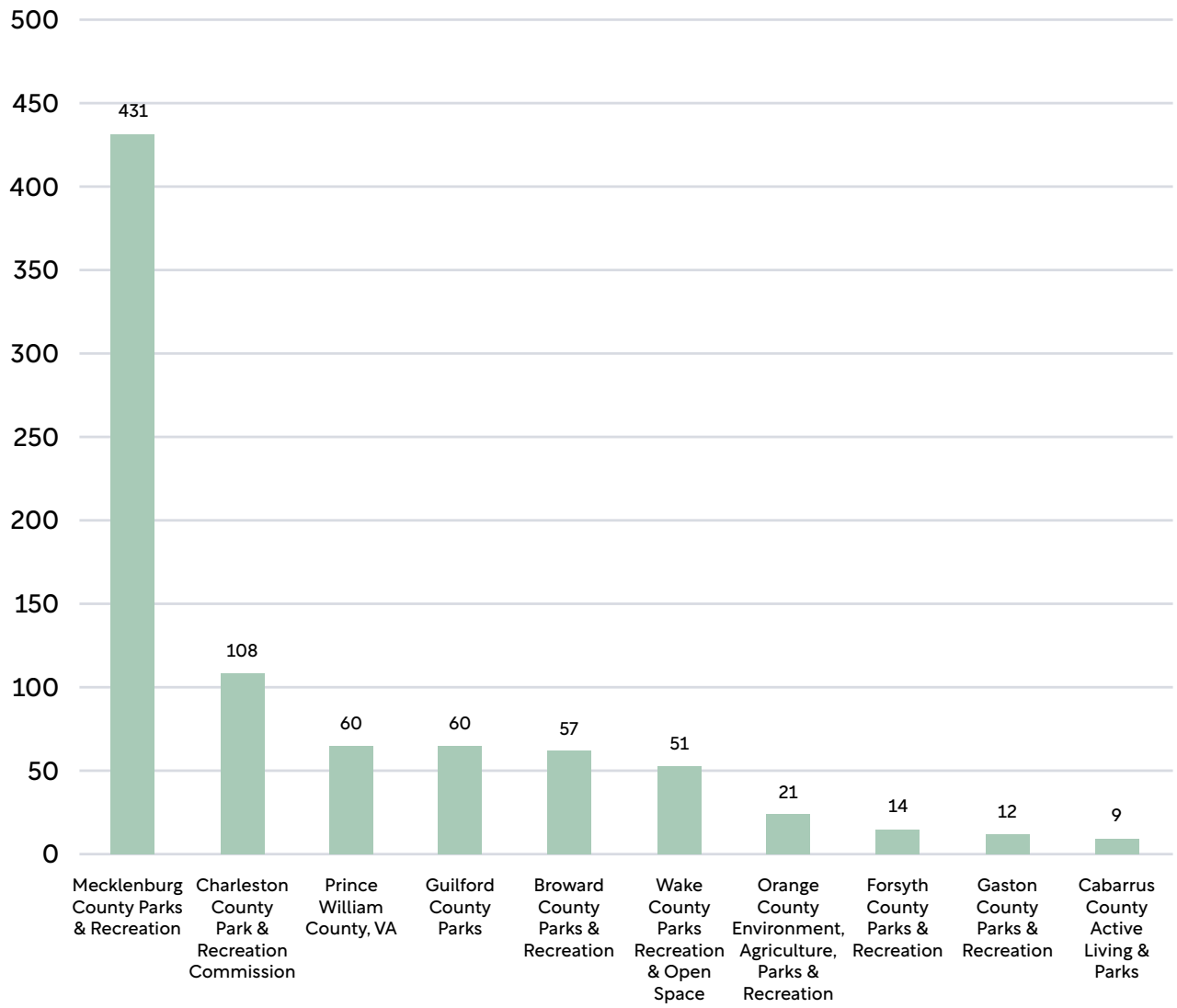
Guilford County's trail inventory is a strong asset within its parks and recreation system. With 60 miles (paved and natural-surface) of trails, Guilford ranks 4th among its peer counties. While larger counties like Mecklenburg boast more extensive trail networks, Guilford's trail mileage still places it ahead of several other counties, demonstrating its proactive efforts in developing and maintaining these valuable resources.

In terms of trail miles per 1,000 population, Guilford County offers approximately 0.109 miles, which, while slightly lower than some peers, still represents a significant resource for its residents.

This ranking demonstrates the County's progress in building a substantial trail system that serves a broad population base.

As Guilford County continues to grow, expanding the trail network will be essential to keeping pace with community needs. A more connected and extensive trail system can enhance recreation opportunities, and make it easier for residents to experience the county's natural landscapes. It also adds value to nearby neighborhoods and contributes to a stronger, more integrated park system overall.

Trail Mileage



	Trail Miles	Population	Mileage per 1,000 Population
Mecklenburg County Park & Recreation	431	1,145,000	0.38
Charleston County Park & Recreation Commission	108	419,279	0.26
Prince William County Parks & Recreation	60	489,640	0.12
Guilford County Parks	**60**	**552,020**	**0.11**
Broward County Parks & Recreation	57	1,950,000	0.03
Wake County Parks Recreation & Open Space	51	1,100,000	0.05
Orange County Environment, Agriculture, Parks & Recreation	27	155,000	0.17
Forsyth County Parks & Recreation	14	396,181	0.04
Gaston County Parks & Recreation	12	227,943	0.05
Cabarrus County Active Living & Parks	9	240,000	0.04
Median	**0.08**		



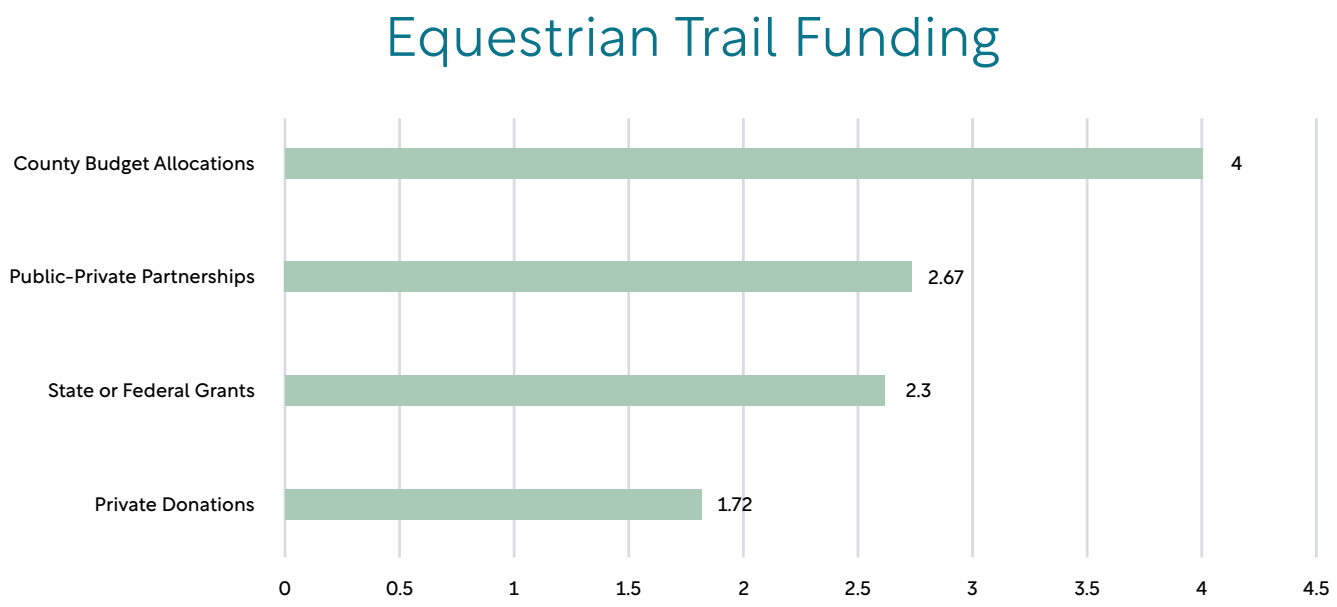
Stable Management

Equestrian Trail Management

Funding

The funding sources for maintaining equestrian trails in Guilford County show a reliance on a few key areas. The highest contributor to funding is county budget allocations, which scored a perfect 4.0, indicating that half of the respondents ranked it as the most significant source of funding. State or federal grants follow with a score of 2.33, highlighting that while these grants are important, they are not as heavily relied upon as county budgets.

Private donations and public-private partnerships scored 1.75 and 2.67, respectively, showing that these sources play a smaller role in funding equestrian trail maintenance. The data suggests that while there is some diversification in funding sources, the county budget remains the most critical component.



Challenges

When it comes to maintaining equestrian trails, several challenges emerged from the survey responses. The most prominent issue is trail usage conflict, which received an average score of 5.33, indicating that half of the respondents rated it as the most pressing concern. This suggests ongoing tension between equestrians and other trail users, such as hikers or cyclists, particularly on shared-use paths.

Trail length and width requirements also ranked high, with a score of 5.50. This reflects concerns about whether existing trails are physically suited to accommodate horses safely—especially in terms of turning radius, clearance, and surface conditions. Additionally, there are concerns regarding wear caused by hooves and the need for frequent surface repairs.

Interjurisdictional Greenway Management

Overview

The peer counties participating in the current benchmarking study indicated that their parks agencies are responsible for maintenance and development of greenways that often span the boundaries of individual municipalities. For example, there are 12 municipalities in Wake County, North Carolina's most populous county. One of the County Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Department responsibilities is to facilitate the planning and collaboration among municipal and regional trail and greenway plans.

Similarly, municipalities within Guilford County—including Greensboro and High Point, two of North Carolina's largest cities—must navigate a variety of local priorities and policies. As greenways play a growing role in transportation, recreation, and environmental connectivity, coordinated management across jurisdictions becomes increasingly important. By evaluating how partners share responsibilities, address maintenance, and fund new segments, Guilford County can strengthen its role in shaping a greenway system that functions across boundaries and responds to the needs of each community.

One aim of the current Parks, Trails, and Open Space Plan is to help Guilford County clarify its role in providing greenways and trails. Examining how peer counties manage these systems within and across jurisdictions can inform that process and guide future decision-making. For instance, learning how other counties successfully navigate jurisdictional cooperation, standardize maintenance practices, and coordinate emergency responses.

The charts and summaries that follow describe how Guilford County compares with peer agencies in key areas of greenway planning and management across multiple jurisdictions.

Greenway Improvement Priorities

Understanding how peer agencies prioritize planned greenway improvements helps clarify how they sequence projects, allocate funding, and coordinate with partner with neighboring local governments to address system needs.

The analysis of the data reveals that trail system connectivity is the highest priority, emphasizing the importance of creating a well-integrated greenway network, which is essential for enhancing user experience and encouraging broader use. Existing trail upgrades and new trail development also rank high, indicating a focus on maintaining and expanding the current trail infrastructure.

While accessibility enhancement and resilience and/or sustainability initiatives are important, they are considered secondary priorities, highlighting that foundational improvements like connectivity and infrastructure take precedence. Augmented Safety Features ranks lowest, suggesting that while safety is essential, it is seen as less urgent compared to other improvements.

Management Challenges

The data shows that, among the key challenges of interjurisdictional greenway management, the most significant appears to be emergency response coordination. This suggests that considerable challenge s exist, likely due to varying protocols, resources, and response times across different jurisdictions.

Other notable challenges include cooperation, which highlights the difficulties in aligning the goals, policies, and operations, and standardizing maintenance practices. Uniform trail standards and funding/resource allocation were also identified as challenges but to a lesser extent.

Coordination & Communication

Findings show that regular intergovernmental meetings are the most frequently used method for coordinating with neighboring municipalities, selected by three-quarters of responding peer agencies. Co-funded projects and unified signage or wayfinding, each selected by 62.5% of respondents, were also identified as effective tools for integrating trails across jurisdictions.

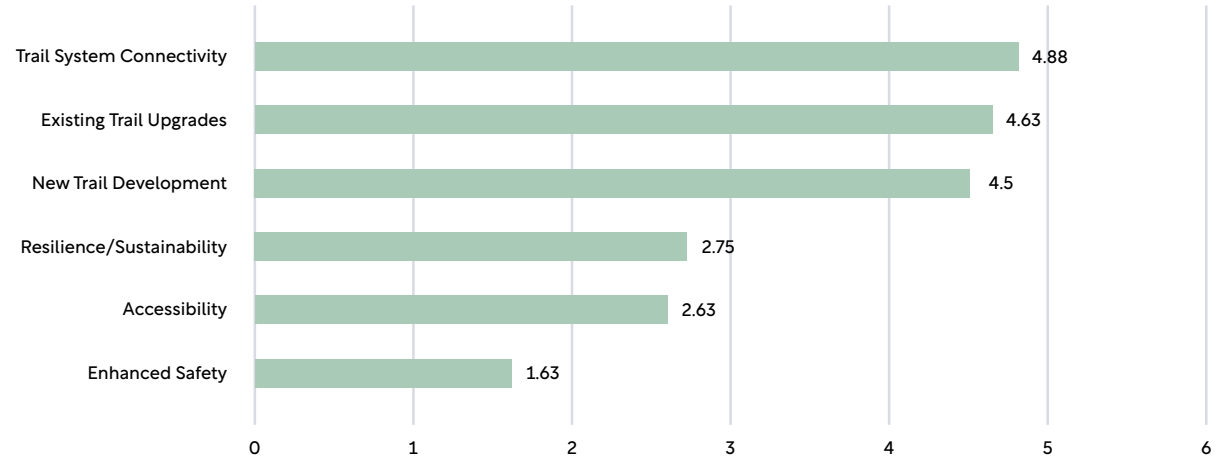
Half of the agencies reported shared maintenance responsibilities and aligned management practices, reinforcing the importance of collaboration in sustaining trail quality. A quarter of respondents mentioned additional strategies, such as partnering on regional trail plans and developing interactive maps to support coordination.

Funding Sources

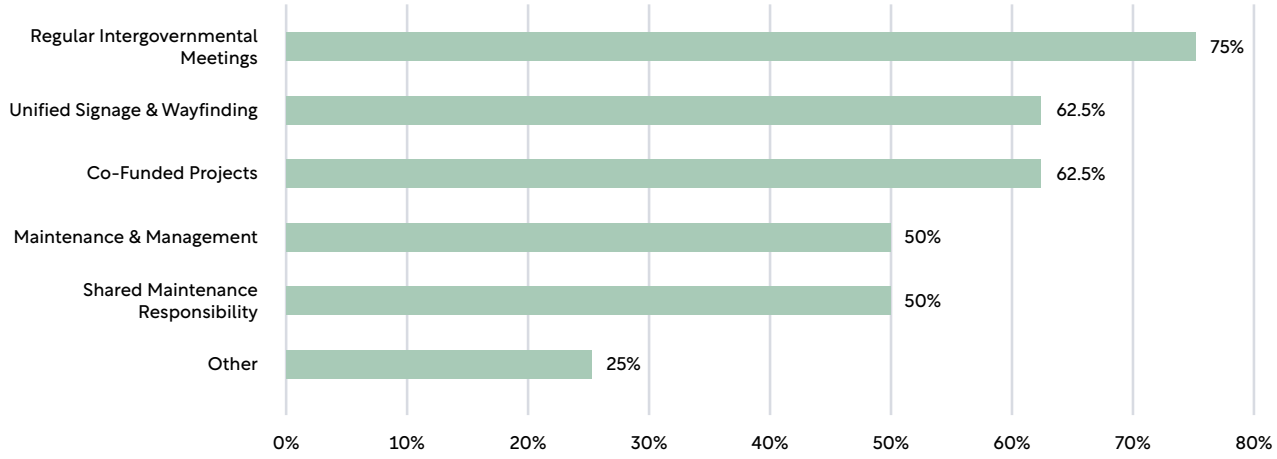
The data indicates that when managing trails across multiple jurisdictions, funding is primarily sourced from county budget allocations and state or federal grants, both being used 100% of the time by the respondents. Municipal contributions also play a significant role, with 75% of respondents utilizing this source.

Private donations and public-private partnerships contribute as well but are less commonly relied upon, with each being cited by 25% of respondents. This shows a strong reliance on governmental funding sources, with supplementary support from private and community partnerships.

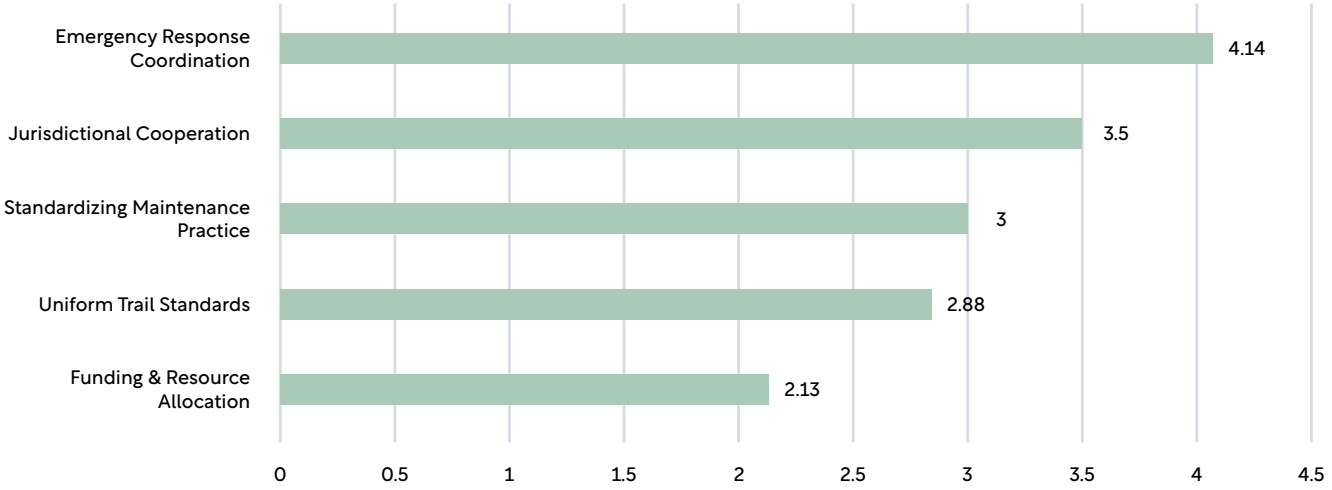
Interjurisdictional Greenway Management: Improvements



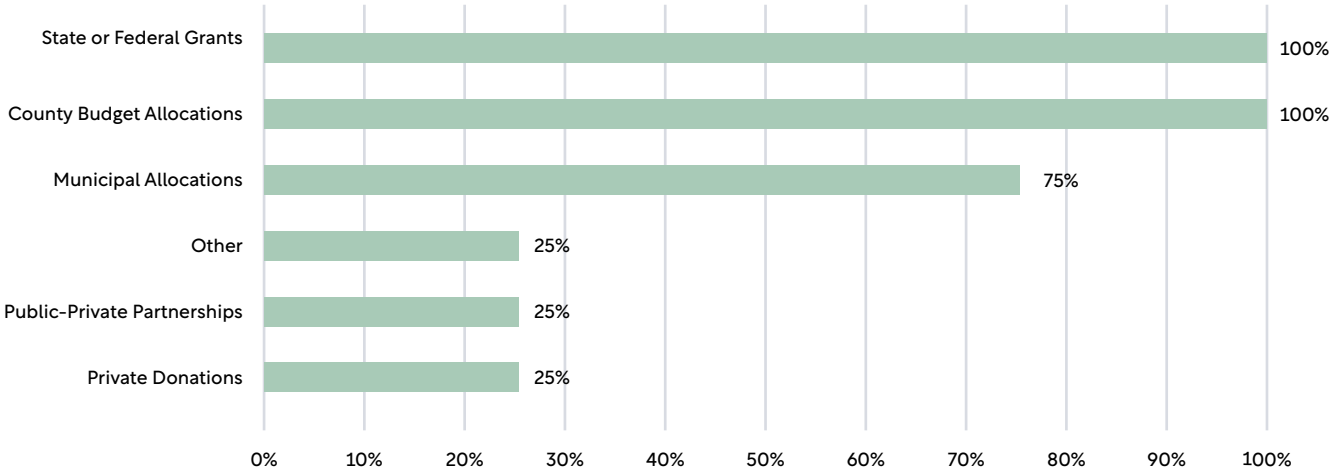
Interjurisdictional Greenway Management: Coordination



Interjurisdictional Greenway Management: Challenges



Interjurisdictional Greenway Management: Funding

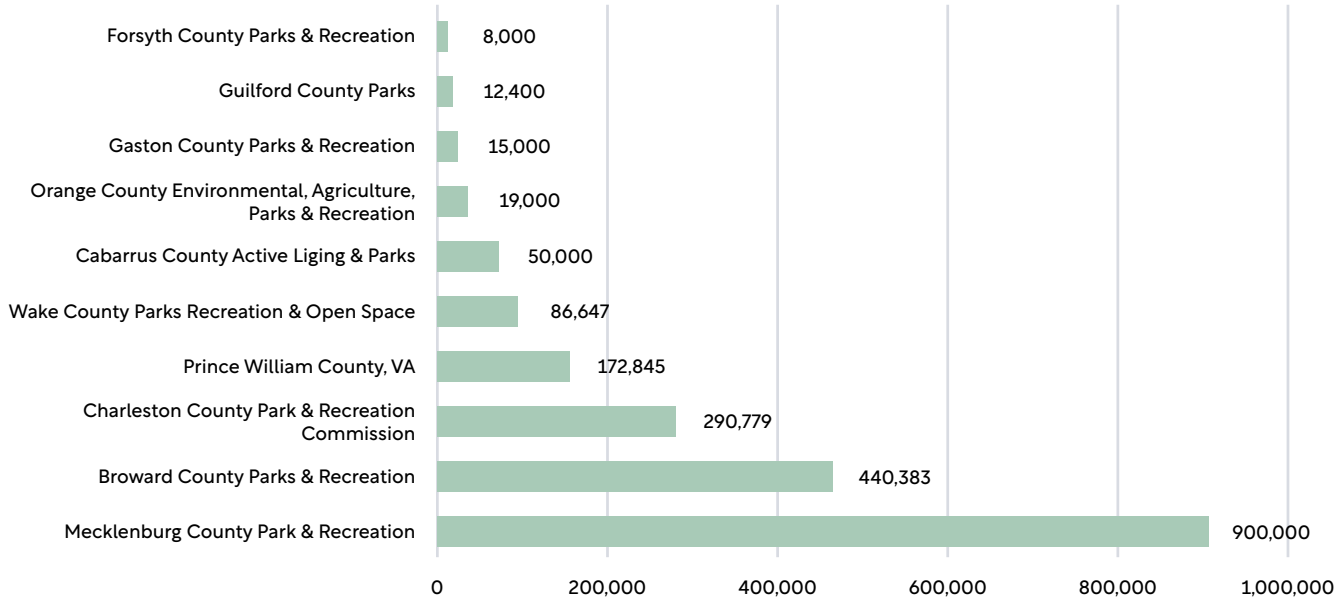


Indoor Recreation Space

The table compares indoor recreation space across ten peer agencies. Guilford County Parks has the second-lowest amount of indoor square footage, offering only 12,400 square feet for a population of over 550,000. This results in just 22 square feet per 1,000 residents—well below the peer median. By contrast, counties like Mecklenburg and Charleston provide significantly more indoor space, with 786 and 694 square feet per 1,000 residents, respectively. Only Forsyth County ranks lower than Guilford in both total square footage and square footage per capita. These figures highlight a substantial gap in indoor facility provision, especially when compared to similarly sized or even smaller counties.

#	Agency	Indoor SQ. FT.	Population	Square Feet per 1,000 Population
1	Mecklenburg County Park & Recreation	900,000	1,145,000	786
2	Charleston County Park & Recreation Commission	290,779	419,279	694
3	Prince William County VA	172,845	489,640	353
4	Broward County Parks & Recreation	440,383	1,950,000	226
5	Cabarrus County Active Living & Parks	50,000	240,000	208
6	Orange County Environment, Agriculture, Parks & Recreation	19,000	155,000	123
7	Wake County Parks Recreation & Open Space	86,647	1,100,000	79
8	Gaston County Parks & Recreation	15,000	227,943	66
9	**Guilford County Parks**	**12,400**	**552,020**	**22**
10	Forsyth County Parks & Recreation	8,000	396,181	20

Indoor Square Feet



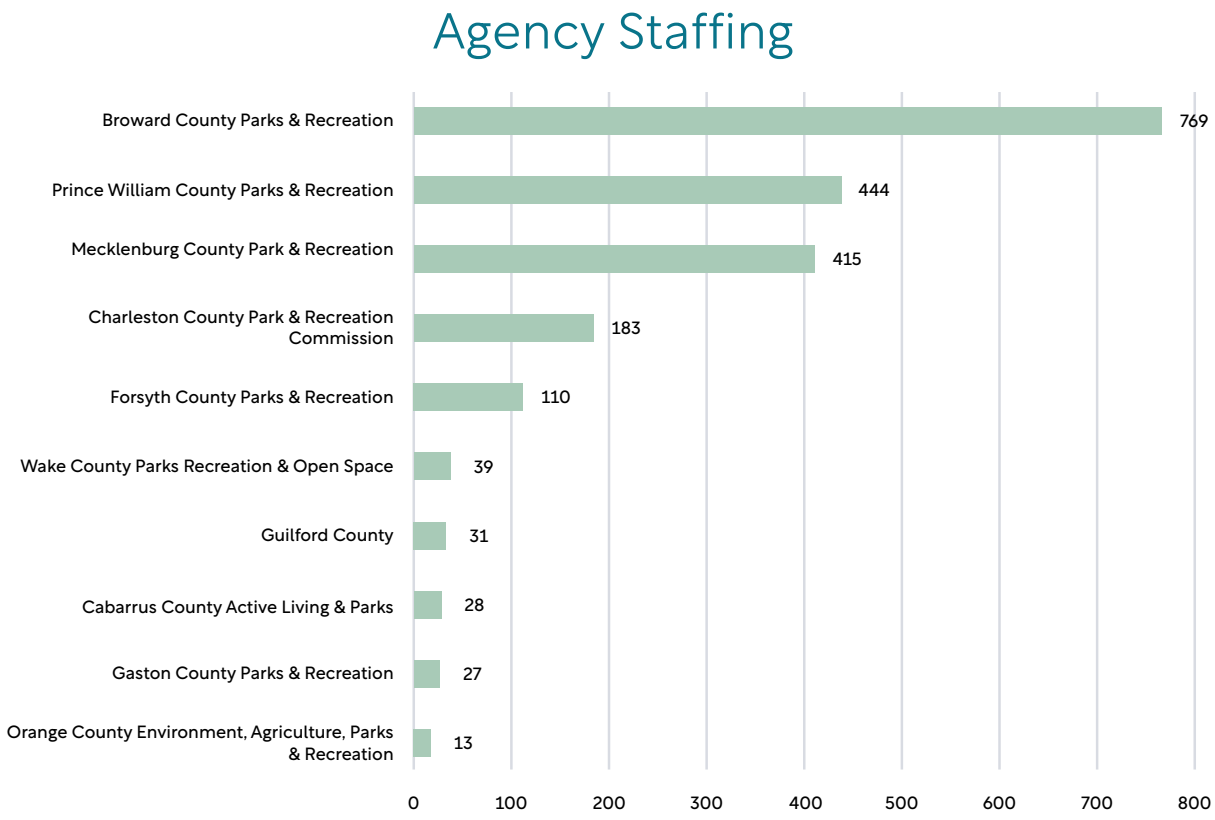


Bur-Mil Clubhouse Meeting & Events Center

Staffing

Total Full Time Equivalent Staff

Guilford County has significantly lower staffing levels compared to departments like Broward (769 staff), Prince William (444 staff), and Mecklenburg (415 staff), which corresponds with its more limited recreation program offerings. These larger departments have the capacity to deliver a broader range of programs and services that meet diverse community needs. In contrast, Guilford County's limited staff likely constrains its ability to provide varied recreational opportunities, reducing its reach as the population grows. Closing this staffing gap will be essential to expanding the County's offerings and strengthening its capacity to operate at the level of its peers.



Parks & Recreation Staffing, Population & Acreage

The table on the following page presents staffing and parkland metrics across the ten peer departments. It shows the relationship between full-time equivalent (FTE) staff, population served, and park acreage. Broward County stands out with the highest FTE per 10,000 population (33.74) and FTE per park acreage (0.123), indicating a strong staffing capacity relative to both population and parkland. Prince William County and Charleston County also demonstrate relatively high staffing levels, both in terms of population and park acreage, while Guilford County's FTE per 10,000 population (0.27) and FTE per park acreage (0.041) are significantly below the median. This lower staffing ratio suggests that Guilford County has fewer resources to manage its parks and services compared to its peers, likely impacting its ability to maintain parkland and offer recreational programming at the same scale as its peers.

#	Department	FTE	Park Acreage	FTE Per Park Acreage
1	Orange County Environment, Agriculture, Parks & Recreation	13	1,162	0.011
2	Cabarrus County Active Living & Parks	28	1,415	0.020
3	Guilford County	31	6,812	0.005
4	Forsyth County Parks & Recreation	110	2,698	0.041
5	Charleston County Park & Recreation Commission	183	11,098	0.016
6	Mecklenburg County Park & Recreation	415	22,523	0.018
7	Prince William County Parks & Recreation	444	4,800	0.093
8	Broward County Parks & Recreation	769	6,239	0.123
9	Gaston County Parks & Recreation	FTE Data Not Provided		
10	Wake County Parks Recreation & Open Space	FTE Data Not Provided		
Median		**0.019**		

Five Tips for Recruiting Parks & Recreation Staff Members

1. **Update Job Descriptions:** Before reposting a job, review and refresh the description to reflect any changes in duties or needs over time. This helps attract the right candidates, including for seasonal roles.

2. **Utilize NRPA Career Center:** Post your job on the NRPA Career Center for broad exposure within the parks and recreation field. The platform also offers tools for managing applications and additional hiring resources.

3. **Streamline the Interview Process:** Consider using panel interviews to gather multiple perspectives efficiently, reducing the need for multiple interview rounds.

4. **Prioritize Cultural Fit:** Hire candidates who align with your organization's values and culture, even if they need some skill development. A diverse staff with varied perspectives drives innovation.

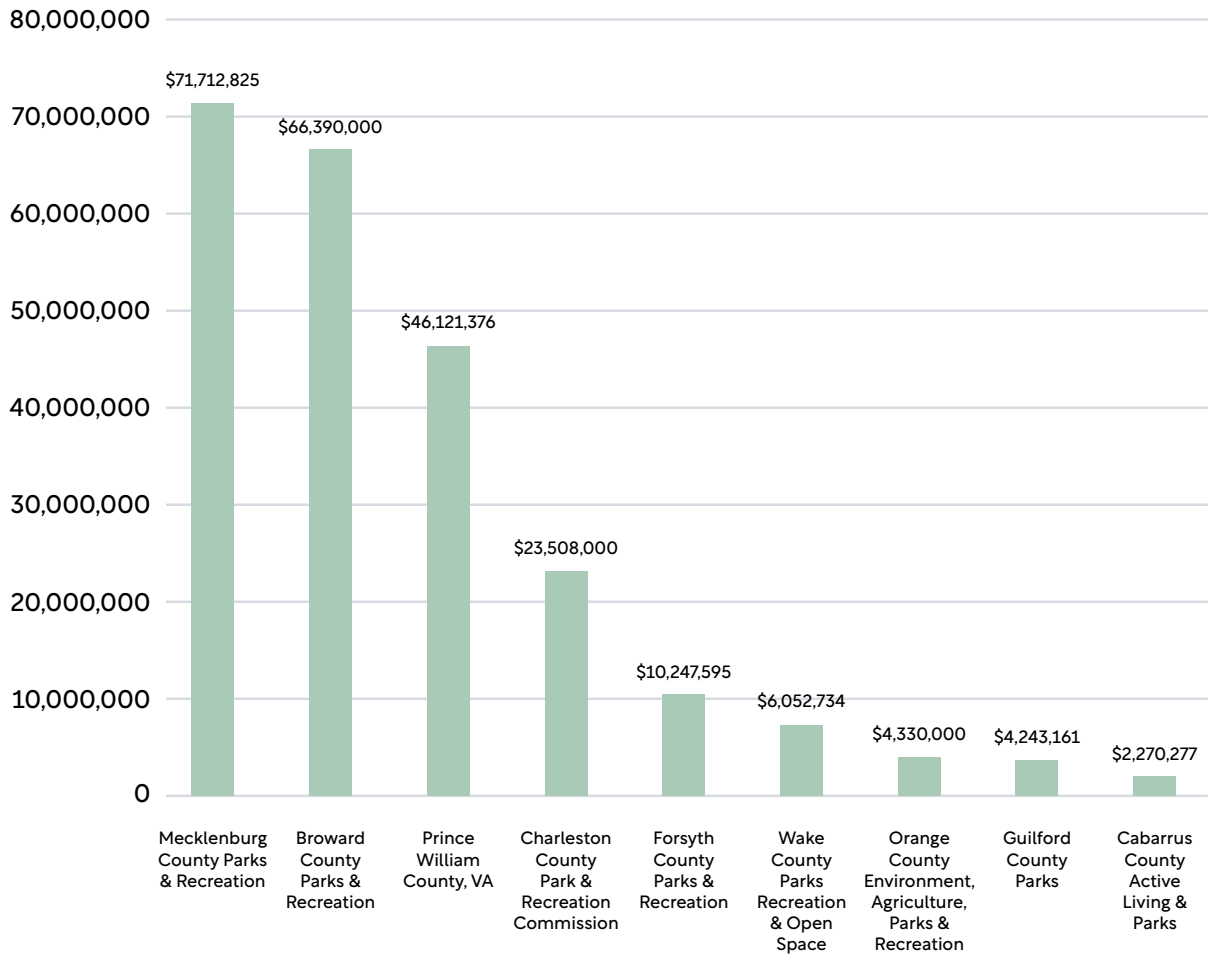
5. **Maintain Candidate Communication:** Keep in touch with candidates, even those not selected, to build relationships and keep future opportunities open.

Adapted from NRPA Blog: 5 Tips for Recruiting Your Next Park and Recreation Employee By Martin Dease | Posted on April 16, 2015.

Budget

The budget data for 2024 reveals significant disparities among Guilford County's peer park and recreation departments. Mecklenburg County leads with a substantial operating budget of $71.7 million, followed closely by Broward County with $66.4 million. Prince William County, VA ranked third with $46.1 million. These counties have the largest budgets, which reflects their ability to manage extensive park systems, provide diverse amenities, and support comprehensive recreational programs. Guilford County, with an operating budget of $4.2 million, is among the lower-budgeted departments, ranking near the bottom alongside Orange County ($4.3 million) and Cabarrus County ($2.3 million).

Operating Budget 2024



Guilford County's per capita operating budget is just $8 per resident, placing it near the bottom among peer agencies. In comparison, Prince William County allocates $94 per capita and Mecklenburg County $63. This limited funding suggests Guilford operates under tight financial constraints, which may hinder its ability to expand services, upgrade facilities, or keep pace with growing demand. The gap is even more pronounced when viewed through the lens of spending per acre. Guilford allocates only $623 per acre of parkland—the lowest among peers—while Prince William County invests $9,609 per acre.

In summary, the budget data illustrates that Guilford County operates with significantly fewer financial resources than many of its peer agencies. This limited funding restricts the county's ability to maintain existing parks, upgrade facilities, and invest in new development—factors that directly affect the quality and reach of its recreational services. As the county looks ahead, increasing its operating budget through avenues such as bonds, grants, or public-private partnerships will be essential. Strengthening financial capacity will position Guilford County to better meet community needs and keep pace with the service levels offered by peer departments.

Department Name	Population	Park Acres	Operating Budget 2024	Operating Budget 2024 Per Capita	Operating Budget 2024 Per Park Acreage
Prince William County Parks & Recreation	489,640	4,800	$46,121,376	$94	$9,609
Mecklenburg County Park & Recreation	1,145,000	22,523	$71,712,825	$63	$3,184
Charleston County Park & Recreation Commission	419,279	11,908	$23,508,000	$56	$1,974
Broward County Parks & Recreation	1,950,000	6,239	$66,390,000	$34	$10,641
Orange County Environment, Agriculture, Parks & Recreation	155,000	1,162	$4,330,000	$28	$3,726
Forsyth County Parks & Recreation	396,181	2,698	$10,247,595	$26	$3,798
Cabarrus County Active Living & Parks	240,000	1,415	$2,270,277	$9	$1,604
Guilford County Parks	522,020	6,812	$4,243,161	$8	$623
Wake County Parks Recreation & Open Space	1,100,000	9,834	$6,052,734	$6	$615
Gaston County Parks & Recreation	Budget Data Not Provided				

Aquatics Facilities

Overview

The current benchmarking assessment gathered insights from peer agencies on how they manage outdoor aquatic facilities. These insights will help Guilford County identify best practices that can be applied to improve the management of its own aquatic centers and ensure they are meeting the current and future needs of the community. Findings reveal significant variations in how aquatic facilities are managed and operated across different counties.

Department Name	How many full time equivalent staff are employed at your aquatic facilities?	What is the total annual attendance at your aquatic facilities?	What is your average annual budget for operating aquatic facilities?
Guilford County	**126**	**82,078**	**$549,710**
Mecklenburg County Park & Recreation	179	1, 191, 115	$1,300,000
Broward County Parks & Recreation	14	600,000	$250,000,000
Prince William County, VA	Data Not Provided	Data Not Provided	$3,532,400
Gaston County Parks & Recreation	Data Not Provided	Data Not Provided	$10,000
Cabarrus County Active Living & Parks	Contracted	8,750	$95,000
Forsyth County Parks & Recreation	2	50,000	490,000
Charleston County Park & Recreation Commission	Data Not Provided		
Orange County Environment, Agriculture, Parks & Recreation	Not Applicable		
Wake County Parks Recreation & Open Space	Not Applicable		

Aquatic Facility Staffing, Attendance, and Budget

Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation employs a substantial 179 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff at its aquatic facilities, supporting an impressive annual attendance of over 1.19 million visitors with a corresponding budget of $13.3 million. In contrast, Broward County, with only 14 FTE staff, manages to attract 600,000 visitors annually, but its operating budget is notably higher at $25 million, suggesting a more resource-intensive approach to maintaining and operating their facilities.

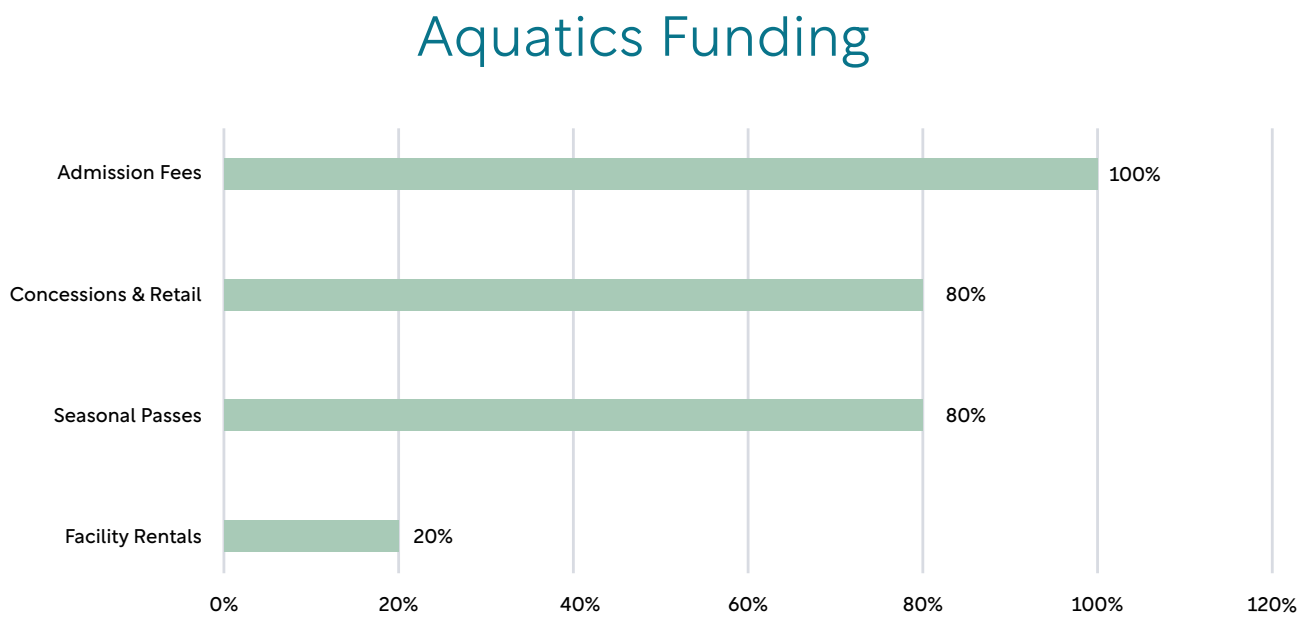
Prince William County, VA, reports a budget of $3.5 million but does not provide specific figures for staffing or attendance, which could indicate either less comprehensive data collection or a different operational focus. Gaston County, with a minimal budget of $10,000, likely supports much smaller or fewer facilities compared to the other counties listed.

Cabarrus County, serving 8,750 annual visitors, operates on a modest budget of $95,000, which reflects a smaller scale operation. Similarly, Forsyth County operates with just 2 FTE staff and a budget of $490,000, accommodating 50,000 visitors annually. These variations suggest that Guilford County needs to carefully assess its resources and operational strategies to ensure its aquatic facilities are effectively managed and meet the community's needs, especially in comparison to these peer counties.

Revenue Sources

Revenue sources play a vital role in the financial sustainability and quality of aquatic facilities. Agencies that generate revenue are much better positioned to ensure its facilities are well-funded, properly maintained, and adequately staffed. The findings indicate that admission fees are the most universally relied-upon funding source for aquatic facilities, with 100% of respondents using this method. Seasonal passes and concessions / retail are also significant sources of revenue, with 80% of respondents incorporating these into their funding strategies. This suggests that while admission fees provide a consistent base income, supplementary revenue streams like seasonal passes and concessions play an important role in the overall financial sustainability of aquatic facilities.

Facility rentals are less commonly utilized, with only 20% of respondents indicating this as a funding source, and notably, none of the respondents reported using swim lessons as a revenue stream. This could suggest potential areas for growth or adjustment in how aquatic facilities are funded, particularly for counties like Guilford looking to diversify their revenue streams.




DuckAWoo
The Chocolate Shop

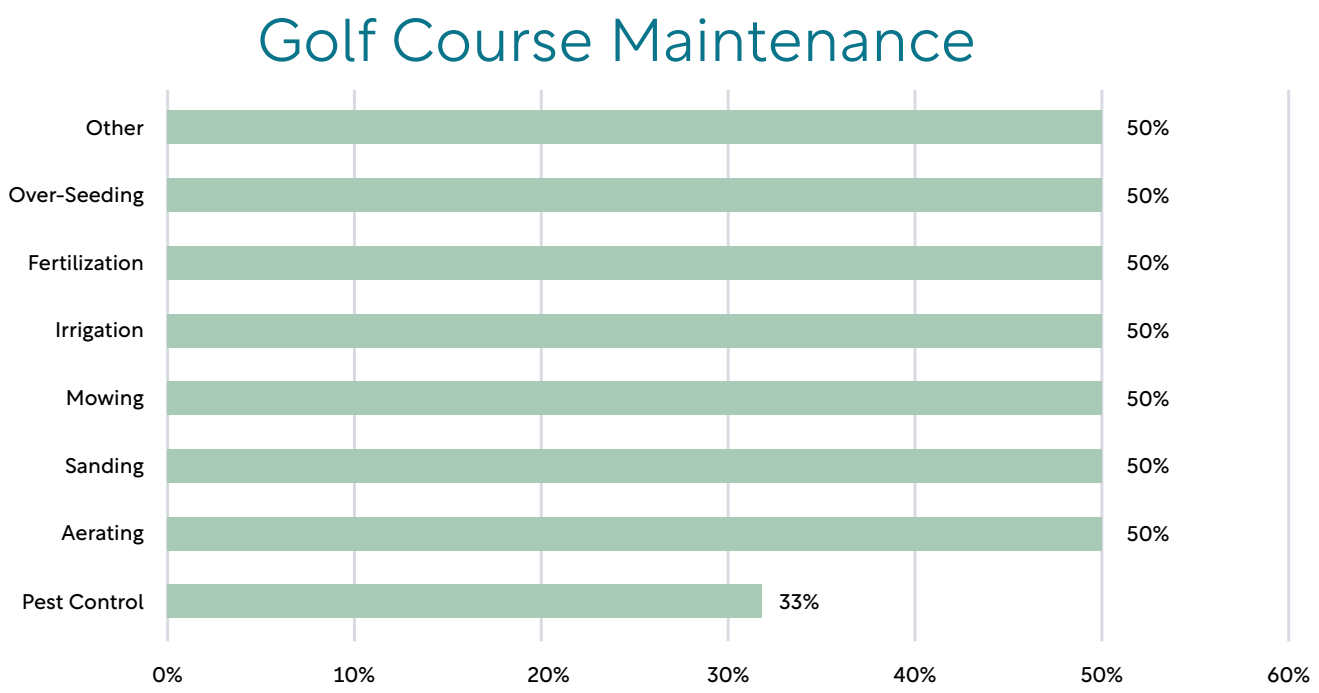
Golf Courses & Amenities

Overview

Looking at how peer agencies manage their golf courses can help Guilford County identify practical ways to improve operations, maintenance, and the overall experience at Bur-Mil Park. Learning from what works elsewhere can guide adjustments that keep the course competitive, well-maintained, and responsive to the needs of local golfers and visitors.

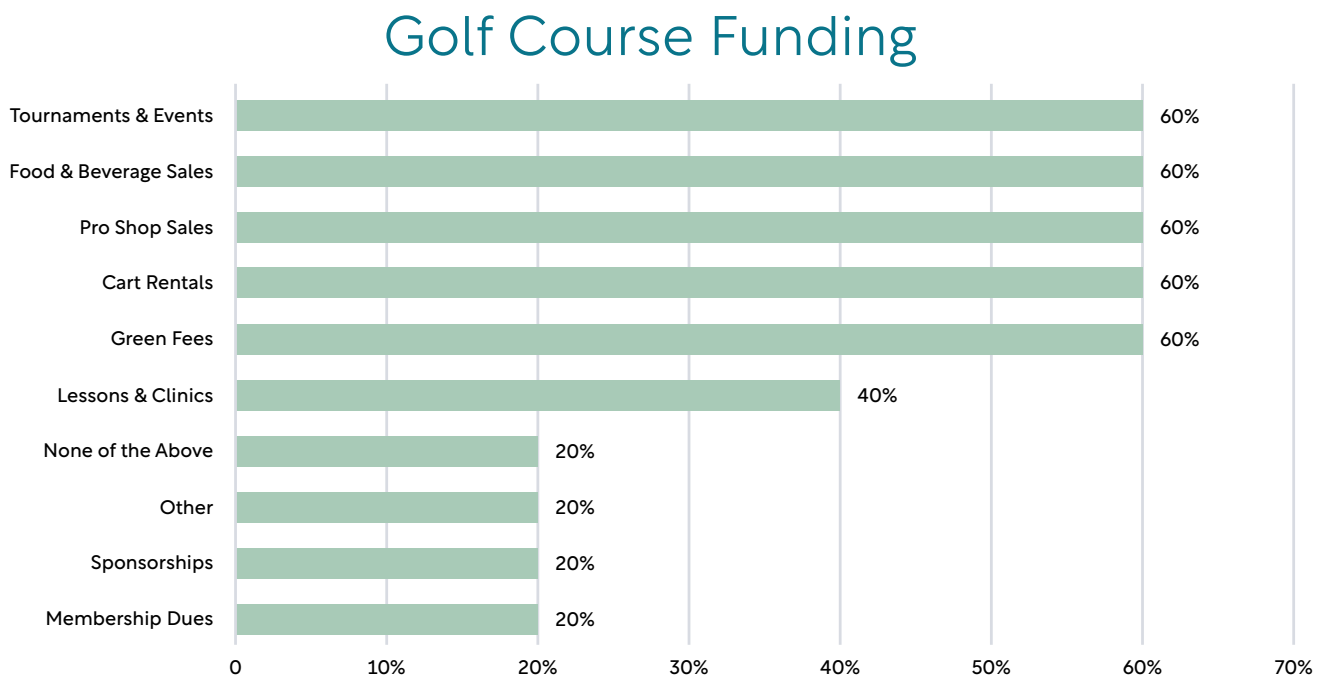
Maintenance Practices

The data shows that half of the responding agencies identified key maintenance tasks—such as aeration, sanding, mowing, irrigation, fertilization, and over-seeding—as essential to keeping golf courses in top condition. These practices help maintain healthy turf and ensure a smooth, durable, and attractive playing surface. Pest control, selected by one-third of respondents, was also noted as important, though its use may vary based on local environmental factors.



Revenue Sources

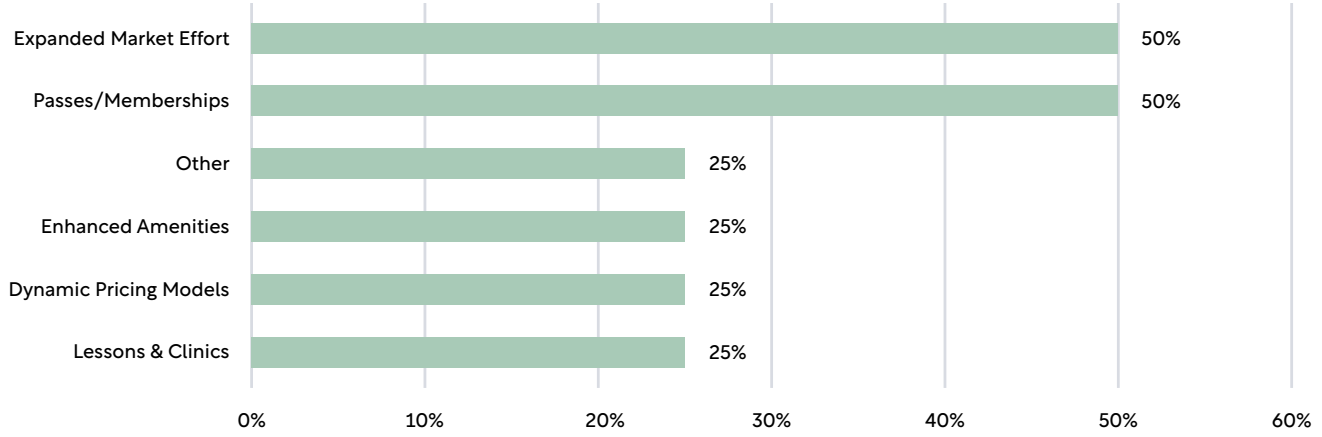
The data shows that green fees, cart rentals, pro shop sales, food and beverage sales, and tournaments or events are the most frequently identified revenue sources, each selected by 60% of respondents. Lessons and clinics were also noted as a revenue stream by 40% of respondents, indicating moderate interest. Membership dues, sponsorships/advertising, and "other" revenue sources were selected by only 20% of respondents, reflecting less common revenue opportunities. The responses suggest that a diverse mix of revenue-generating activities, particularly those directly tied to facility usage and events, plays a key role in financial sustainability.



Cost Recovery Strategies

Effective strategies for maximizing revenue from golf courses, as indicated by the data, include season passes and memberships, as well as expanded marketing efforts, each selected by half of all respondents. These strategies typically provide consistent revenue and increase customer engagement. dynamic pricing models, local business partnerships, and enhanced on-site amenities were each chosen by one-quarter of respondents, suggesting they also play a role in revenue maximization, though they may be used less frequently or in specific contexts. Notably, no respondents selected tournaments + corporate events or golf lessons + clinics, which might indicate these strategies are either underutilized or less effective in the context of the agencies' golf courses.

Golf Course Cost Recovery





Bur-Mil Park 9-Hole Par 3 Golf Course & Driving Range

Campgrounds

Overview

Comparing Guilford County's camping facilities with those of peer agencies helps highlight practical ways to improve management and operations. By examining how other counties run their campgrounds, Guilford can strengthen services at Hagan-Stone Park to improve the overall camping experience and better accommodate both individual visitors and group users.

Cost Recovery

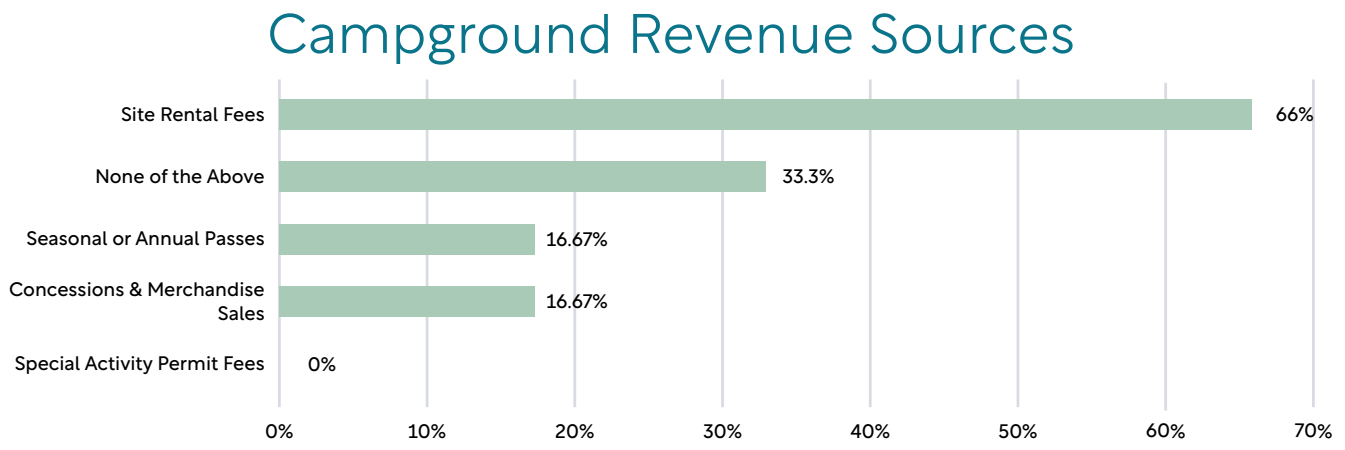
The table outlines peak-season occupancy rates and cost recovery levels for county-operated campgrounds, offering a snapshot of how different agencies balance use and financial performance. Mecklenburg County reports a 90% occupancy rate but recovers only 20% of its operating costs through user fees, suggesting either low pricing or reliance on other funding sources. Broward County maintains a strong 80% occupancy rate but does not report cost recovery data. Forsyth County stands out with an 82% occupancy rate and a cost recovery rate of 150%, indicating a highly efficient revenue model that likely includes effective pricing or supplemental income sources. Orange County reports a 90% cost recovery rate but does not provide occupancy data, limiting a full comparison. Similarly, Cabarrus County's 75% occupancy rate is notable, but the absence of cost recovery data makes it difficult to assess financial sustainability.

Department Name	What is the average occupancy rate of your campgrounds during peak season?	What percentage of your campground operating costs is recovered through user fees?
Mecklenburg County Park & Recreation	90%	20%
Broward County Parks & Recreation	80%	Data Not Provided
Cabarrus County Active Living & Parks	75%	Data Not Provided
Orange County Environment, Agriculture, Parks & Recreation	Data Not Provided	90%
Forsyth County Parks & Recreation	82%	150%
Guilford County Parks	**33%**	**159%**
Prince William County Parks & Recreation	Not Applicable	
Gaston County Parks & Recreation	Not Applicable	
Wake County Parks Recreation & Open Space	Not Applicable	
Charleston County Park & Recreation Commission	Not Applicable	

Campground Occupancy Rates & Cost Recovery Percentages

Revenue Sources

The chart below shows that site rental fees are the primary source of revenue for most campground operations, Other revenue streams, such as concessions, merchandise sales, and passes, are used by about 20% of respondents. Interestingly, none of the agencies reported using special activity permit fees—like those for fishing or hunting—as a source of revenue, suggesting these are either offered at no charge or generate minimal income. Additionally, one-third of respondents selected "None of the above," which may reflect the use of alternative funding sources or unique financial structures not captured in the survey options.



Operation & Management Challenges

Identifying the challenges that peer agencies face in managing campgrounds helps Guilford County anticipate potential issues and improve the quality and efficiency of its own campground operations. The biggest challenges in operating and managing campgrounds, as highlighted by the data, are primarily focused on ensuring the safety and security of guests and upkeeping and renovating facilities to meet modern standards. These challenges indicate the significant emphasis placed on maintaining a safe environment and ensuring that facilities are up-to-date and appealing to campers.

Other challenges include staffing adequately during peak and off-peak seasons, which peer agencies indicated as the second highest operational concerns. This is demonstrative of the difficulties associated with maintaining sufficient seasonal personnel throughout the camping season. Managing environmental impact and sustainability practices also presents a notable challenge, emphasizing the growing importance of green campground management.

Providing high-quality amenities and services ranked toward the middle, showing that meeting guest expectations for amenities is a key concern. Less pressing but still relevant challenges include handling reservations and customer service efficiently, developing and offering engaging recreational programs, and adapting to seasonal weather conditions and natural disasters. These scores indicate that while these issues are important, they may not be as immediately critical as safety, facility upkeep, and staffing.

Maintaining high occupancy rates throughout the season	2.25
Handling reservations and customer service efficiently	3
Developing and offering engaging recreational programs	3.5
Adapting to seasonal weather conditions and natural disasters	4.5
Managing environmental impact and sustainability practices	4.75
Providing high-quality amenities and services	5
Staffing adequately during peak and off-peak seasons	6.5
Upkeeping and renovating facilities to meet modern standards	7.25
Ensuring the safety and security of guests	8.25



Operations & Management Challenges

Historic Buildings

Overview

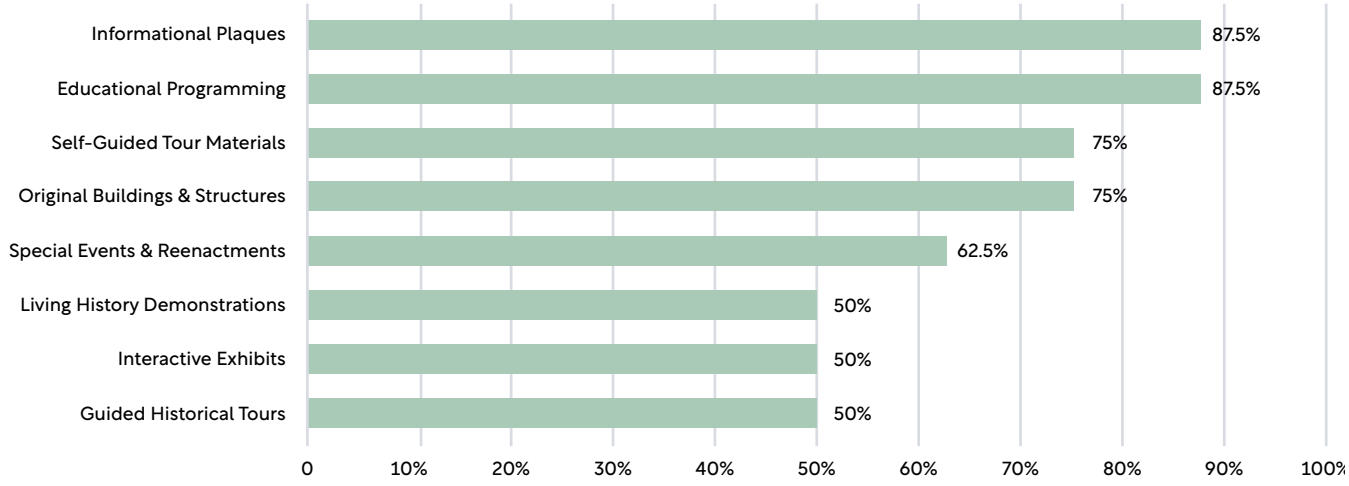
Guilford County's historic County Farm, with its rich history dating back to the 1930s, offers a unique opportunity to engage the community through programming and preservation efforts. As the County looks to increase visitation and strengthen the role of its historic sites, learning from how peer agencies manage similar properties can inform strategies that keep these spaces well-used and relevant. The following summary highlights key findings from the benchmarking questionnaire to support efforts to preserve and activate the County Farm.

Interpretation Practices

The data reveals that various methods are used by peer agencies to integrate historical interpretation into site management, with informational plaques + signage and educational program offerings being the most common. These methods provide accessible and engaging ways for visitors to learn about the history of a site. Many agencies prioritize the restoration of original buildings and structures as a way to protect historic integrity and strengthen the educational value of their sites.

Special events and reenactments are a popular tool among peer agencies, often used to bring history to life and attract broader audiences who might not engage with traditional exhibits. These events can serve as entry points for deeper learning and help foster a stronger connection between visitors and the site's cultural significance. Guided tours, living history demonstrations, and interactive exhibits are also common, offering more tailored experiences that may require additional staffing or specialized expertise.

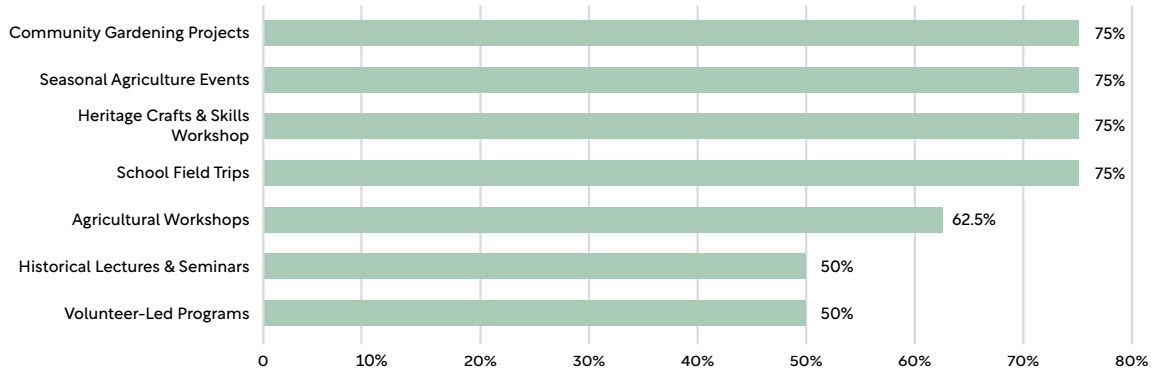
Historical Interpretation Methods



Educational Programming

As the findings demonstrate, most peer agencies actively offer educational programs at their sites to connect visitors with historical and agricultural heritage, which could serve as a valuable model for Guilford County in developing its own programming for the County Farm. Peer agencies offer a variety of educational programs to highlight the historical and agricultural significance of their sites. The most common offerings include school group field trips, heritage crafts + skills workshops, and seasonal agricultural events (e.g., harvest festivals, planting days). Community gardening projects and agricultural workshops (e.g., farming techniques, sustainable practices) are also popular. Additionally, volunteer-led programs and historical lectures + seminars are provided by 50% of respondents, offering further opportunities for community interaction and deeper exploration of historical topics.

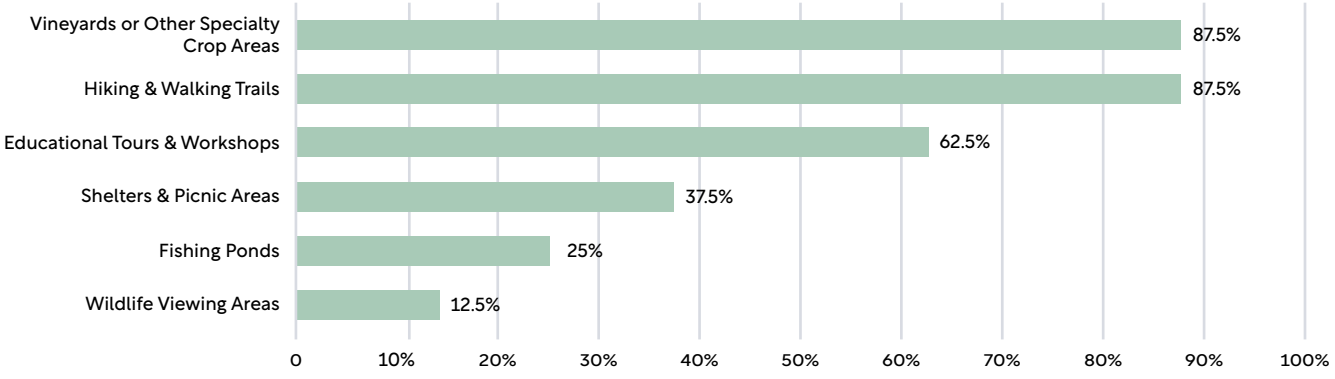
Educational Program & Activity Offerings



Recreational Activities & Amenities

The data shows that the most commonly offered amenities at peer historic sites are hiking and walking trails, along with picnic areas and shelters—likely due to their broad appeal and ease of access. Many sites also combine outdoor recreation with educational experiences, offering features such as guided tours, workshops, wildlife viewing areas, and fishing ponds. Though less common, vineyards and other specialty crop areas are emerging as popular additions that align with current consumer interests. For the Guilford County Farm, which already emphasizes these types of activities, this trend presents a valuable opportunity to distinguish the site as a regional destination where visitors can engage with local agriculture in hands-on and meaningful ways.

Recreational Programs & Activities



Key Findings

- Guilford County Parks serves a population of 552,020, placing it in the middle range compared to its peers. For example, Mecklenburg County, with more than double the population (1,145,000), represents a larger urban center, while Gaston County provides recreational services to a smaller population of about 227,000. Guilford County's population includes both urban and rural communities, presenting a unique challenge in balancing recreational services and resources across diverse areas.
- Guilford County's parks system is heavily oriented toward passive recreation, with a large share of its total acreage comprised of natural preserves. While this supports conservation and nature-based experiences, it also limits the availability of active amenities such as playgrounds, athletic fields, and courts. Addressing this imbalance could help meet the recreation needs of a broader range of residents.
- As a county-level department, Guilford operates similarly to other large park systems that cover broad geographic areas, such as Mecklenburg and Broward Counties. This structure allows for a regional focus essential for managing extensive park systems and ensuring access across different communities. However, Guilford County is not CAPRA accredited, unlike some of its peers.
- While most peer agencies have completed a system-wide parks and recreation master plan within the last five years, Guilford County has not had a comprehensive plan in place for several decades. This gap in long-term planning may impact the department's ability to prioritize investments, align with funding opportunities, or respond to shifting community needs.
- The tax rate in Guilford County is $0.73 per $100 valuation, which is moderate compared to other departments. For instance, Mecklenburg County likely benefits from a higher tax base and rate, supporting a more substantial parks and recreation budget. Guilford's moderate rate reflects a balance between generating necessary revenue and maintaining affordability for taxpayers, but it also might limit the department's ability to fund large-scale projects or expansions compared to areas with higher dedicated tax rates.
- In the past decade, Guilford County has not passed a parks bond, unlike some of its counterparts. Counties like Mecklenburg or Wake may have leveraged such bonds to expand and improve their parks and facilities, which has allowed them to undertake ambitious projects. The absence of a recent bond in Guilford County could indicate a reliance on other funding mechanisms or a potential gap in resources needed for major upgrades or expansions.
- Guilford County does not have a parks foundation, a resource that other counties use to secure private donations and grants. Parks foundations can be a critical tool in attracting philanthropic support and engaging in public-private partnerships, providing funds beyond what is available through public budgets.
- Guilford County offers a well-rounded set of amenities. These offerings are comparable to those provided by other counties, such as Mecklenburg and Charleston, which also cater to a diverse range of recreational interests. However, given the larger budgets and staff sizes of these other counties, their amenities might be more extensive, with multiple facilities or larger-scale operations.
- Only a subset of peer agencies operates public swimming pools, and those that do often manage them in partnership with municipalities or school systems. Guilford County does not currently operate a pool, and benchmarking suggests that counties without them tend to focus on splash pads or partnerships to meet aquatic needs without incurring the high costs.
- Campground operations among peer agencies vary widely in terms of scale, amenities, and financial models. Guilford County's Hagan-Stone Park offers a modest campground but does not currently recover its full operating costs. In contrast, some peer counties achieve cost recovery rates exceeding 100% through site rental fees, expanded amenities, and dynamic pricing strategies—highlighting a potential opportunity for revenue growth and reinvestment.
- Guilford County ranks fourth among its peers with 60 miles of trails, reflecting proactive efforts in developing and maintaining a robust trail system despite being smaller in population than counties with more extensive networks like Mecklenburg.

- With approximately 0.109 miles of trails per 1,000 residents, Guilford County provides a valuable recreational resource, though its trail mileage per capita is slightly below the median of peer counties, indicating an opportunity for continued trail network expansion.
- Several peer agencies have developed formal intergovernmental agreements to manage greenways that cross municipal boundaries, including shared funding models, maintenance responsibilities, and signage standards. Guilford County's greenways connect through multiple jurisdictions, but lack of formal coordination may limit consistency and long-term connectivity across the system.
- Peer agencies that manage equestrian trails commonly face challenges related to user conflict, trail dimensions, and limited support amenities such as trailer parking and signage. Guilford County already maintains a notable equestrian trail network, and demand for these facilities remains high. Benchmarking suggests that continued investment in dedicated infrastructure, wayfinding, and trail management strategies could help Guilford County enhance the experience for equestrian users and better accommodate shared-use pressures.
- Unlike many peer agencies, Guilford County does not operate indoor recreation centers, which often serve as hubs for year-round programming, fitness, and community events. This absence may contribute to lower per capita program offerings and restrict access to structured activities, particularly during colder months.
- Guilford County offers fewer recreation programs than most peer agencies, many of which provide extensive, year-round programming supported by dedicated indoor facilities. This limited program menu may reflect staffing and space constraints but also suggests an opportunity to expand offerings that align with peer practices and community demand.
- Staffing levels in Guilford County are among the lowest when compared to similar agencies, both in total number of staff and staff-to-resident ratio. Limited staffing capacity affects the department's ability to expand programs, maintain facilities, and engage with the public. Investing in additional full-time and seasonal personnel could support more responsive service delivery.
- Several peer agencies report using dedicated planning or capital improvement staff to manage long-term growth, land acquisition, and system upgrades. Guilford County does not currently have specialized planning staff within the parks department, which may limit its capacity to proactively guide system development or pursue external funding tied to planning readiness.
- The County's total operating budget is significantly below average among peer departments, limiting the ability to invest in capital maintenance, programming, and system expansion. Without new funding mechanisms or dedicated sources such as a bond or sales tax, the County may struggle to meet increasing demand and maintain service quality.
- Several peer agencies benefit from strong cost recovery models in areas like campgrounds, golf courses, and special events. Forsyth County, for example, recovers 150% of its campground operating costs through user fees. Guilford County's lower cost recovery rates suggest opportunities to reassess pricing structures or expand revenue-generating services.
- A number of peer agencies track and report performance metrics such as cost per program participant, volunteer hours, maintenance cycles, and facility usage rates. Guilford County does not currently track this level of data, which could hinder its ability to measure outcomes, demonstrate value, and make data-informed decisions.
- Many peer agencies manage historic or agricultural properties with a combination of educational programming, guided tours, and seasonal events. These agencies often leverage partnerships and unique features—such as vineyards or living history exhibits—to activate the space. Guilford County can look to these examples to further develop the County Farm as a destination.





Recommendations & Action Items

Overview

Guilford County, one of North Carolina's most populous and diverse counties, is well-positioned to enhance its parks, trails, and recreational facilities to serve a growing and evolving population. As the third-largest county in a rapidly expanding state, planning efforts must address North Carolina's projected growth to 11.7 million residents by 2030. The state's strong economy and high quality of life continue to appeal to new residents and businesses, highlighting the need for innovative and forward-looking recreation strategies.

The proposed recommendations focus on closing current gaps in Guilford County's park system while anticipating future needs. With its mix of urban, suburban, and rural landscapes, as well as its rich cultural and natural diversity, the county requires a responsive and adaptive approach to recreation planning. By doing so, Guilford County pledges to transform insights from community consultations and detailed analyses into tangible enhancements for its parks and recreation services. This plan's recommendations reflect a commitment to developing a park system that prioritizes the well-being of the community, adapting to evolving needs while preserving the unique character that defines Guilford County.

Framework

This chapter is organized around five key themes that represent Guilford County Park's core values and serve as the foundation for this plan. These themes—Transparency + Communication, Equity & Inclusion, Accountability, Service Outcomes Excellence, and Our People Matter—reflect the principles that guide the county's parks operations and interactions with the community. Each theme is further defined by guiding principles, developed through extensive community engagement, staff input, and stakeholder involvement, to address current and future priorities.

The plan's guiding principles provide a consistent framework for decision-making, ensuring that all recommendations and actions align with the county's core values. They serve as a foundation for creating a forward-thinking park system that meets the needs of the community. This structure makes the guiding principles universally applicable, tying them to all themes while allowing the themes to articulate specific aspects of Guilford County Park's vision.

Themes

Overview

Themes in long-range planning for parks and trails systems set a vision and direction for the future of the parks system. These core values inform a wide range of decisions on everything from resource allocation to public engagement, ensuring that parks and trails remain accessible, inclusive, and responsive to community needs. By focusing on themes like transparency, equity, and accountability, Guilford County stays grounded in its commitment to public service and environmental stewardship.

Over the long term, these themes provide stability and consistency, even as leadership or community dynamics evolve. They guide the development and maintenance of parks and trails in a way that reflects the community's priorities. Anchoring the plan in these values helps the county remain aligned with its mission while adapting to the changing needs of residents over the next decade.

Theme 1 – Transparency & Communication

"We are committed to open and accessible government driven by information sharing."

Guilford County Parks prioritizes clear and open communication with the public, ensuring that park initiatives, developments, and decisions are transparent and accessible. By keeping residents informed about upcoming projects, trail expansions, and park improvements, the department builds trust and fosters community engagement. Transparent communication encourages residents to provide input and participate in the planning and stewardship of the county's parks and open spaces.

Theme 2 – Accessibility

"We celebrate differences and support service delivery and stakeholder inclusion."

The Department is dedicated to creating parks, trails, and open spaces that are welcoming and accessible to all residents. Equitable service delivery ensures that recreational opportunities and green spaces are distributed fairly across the county. Stakeholder inclusion ensures a broad spectrum of voices is reflected in park programming, design, and decision-making.

Theme 3 - Accountability

"We are stewards of the public's resources and accept responsibility for the fiscal and physical health of the county."

The department manages public resources responsibly, ensuring that parks, trails, and open spaces are maintained and developed sustainably for future generations. Fiscal accountability is key, as the department works to allocate funds efficiently while maximizing the value and impact of investments in new facilities and enhancements. Stewardship of the county's natural resources, such as open spaces and greenways, ensures that these assets contribute to the overall health and well-being of residents.

Theme 4 – Service Outcomes Excellence

"We strive for compassionate, effective, and professional service delivery."

Excellence in service delivery drives the department to offer high-quality recreational opportunities, innovative programming, and well-maintained facilities. Compassion is reflected in the department's commitment to meeting community needs, whether through accessible parks or inclusive events. Through professional service and continuous improvement, the department ensures that the parks and trails system evolves to serve the public effectively and efficiently.

Theme 5 – Our People Matter

"We provide a positive work environment that supports the financial, physical, mental, and social wellbeing of our team members."

Supporting staff is essential for maintaining a vibrant and successful park system. The department fosters a positive work environment where employees have opportunities for professional growth, recognition, and work-life balance. By investing in the well-being of its workforce, the department ensures that staff are motivated, knowledgeable, and equipped to deliver exceptional service to the community.

Guiding Principles

Overview

Guiding principles differ from themes by operating at a more detailed level, translating broader values into actionable priorities. While themes establish the overarching vision for long-range planning, guiding principles provide a practical framework that informs decisions and strategies. They act as reference points to ensure each initiative, program, or policy aligns with the county's core value

Unlike the high-level nature of themes, guiding principles focus on specific areas such as communication, community engagement, and resource management, ensuring the parks and trails system remains adaptable and responsive. In essence, guiding principles break down themes into actionable practices, enabling the Department to effectively implement its long-term goals.

1. **Strategic Investment** – Allocate resources efficiently through data-driven decision-making, prioritizing long-term sustainability and responsible fiscal management.

2. **Equitable Access** – Ensure parks, trails, and programs are geographically and financially accessible to all residents, addressing service gaps and diverse community needs.

3. **Community-Centered Planning** – Engage residents, staff, and stakeholders in shaping park development, programming, and policy decisions to foster shared ownership.

4. **Identity and Sense of Place** – Strengthen the distinct character of Guilford County's parks through placemaking, branding, and design that reflect local history, culture, and nature.

5. **Operational Excellence** – Maintain high standards in facility management, customer service, and program delivery by equipping staff with training, tools, and recognition.

6. **Sustainable Stewardship** – Manage natural and built assets with proactive maintenance, asset tracking, and strategic capital investment to ensure long-term viability.

7. **Innovative Programming** – Expand recreational opportunities through partnerships, underutilized resources, and emerging trends to meet evolving community interests.

8. **Transparent Communication** – Foster trust and accountability by keeping residents informed about decisions, initiatives, and opportunities for involvement in park planning.

9. **Empowered Workforce** – Cultivate a workplace where staff are valued, supported, and equipped with the training, leadership opportunities, and recognition needed to excel and drive community impact.

Recommendations

Transparency & Communication

Clear communication and community engagement are essential for building trust and ensuring Guilford County residents stay informed about parks and recreation initiatives. By adopting a cohesive brand and strengthening transparency in messaging, Guilford County Parks can create consistent, recognizable communication that aligns with its mission and values. These efforts can facilitate collaboration, strengthen community ties, and support effective management of parks and programs.

Recommendation 1: Ensure consistent, clear communication within the Guilford County Parks Department, among peer-Guilford County departments and with the public to create a shared understanding of goals and operations.

Guilford County should prioritize internal communication by developing clear processes for staff updates, including routine departmental briefings and a centralized platform for sharing important information. Establishing liaisons between parks and other county departments would help streamline collaboration and resource sharing, ensuring cohesive planning for projects and initiatives. The department would also benefit from improving external communication by providing regular updates through public meetings, newsletters, and digital platforms, such as a user-friendly website. These efforts would enable the public to stay informed and engaged, fostering trust and understanding of the department's goals.

Recommendation 2: Create a distinct identity for Guilford County Parks through thoughtful placemaking strategies that enhance sense of place throughout the County.

The county should focus on creating a cohesive and recognizable identity for its park system to demonstrate thoughtful and strategic use of public resources. Incorporating local history, natural elements, and distinctive design features into park layouts would provide residents with spaces that reflect the unique character and values of Guilford County. Establishing unified branding across signage, entryways, and facilities would make parks more inviting and foster a sense of pride among residents.

It would be beneficial for the department to align placemaking efforts with long-term goals by prioritizing enhancements that strengthen park identity and improve visitor experiences. By emphasizing the distinctiveness of each park, the department can highlight its commitment to maintaining high-quality amenities while ensuring the system remains sustainable and responsive to future needs. These efforts would reinforce the department's accountability as a steward of public assets and its role in enhancing the community's quality of life.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen intergovernmental coordination to align resources, enhance communication, and support shared goals for parks and recreation across jurisdictions.

Effective collaboration between Guilford County and its cities and towns is essential to maximizing resources, improving service delivery, and ensuring a connected greenway network. By establishing formal coordination mechanisms, joint planning efforts, and shared funding strategies, the County can work with neighboring jurisdictions to reduce duplication, address gaps in recreation access, and support large-scale projects that benefit multiple communities.

Recommendation 4: Encourage participation from all staff members in key positions to support shared ownership and accountability.

The department would benefit from creating formal opportunities for staff to contribute to decision-making, such as employee advisory groups or brainstorming sessions tied to major projects. Guilford County should provide leadership development opportunities, allowing staff to take ownership of smaller projects or operational tasks, preparing them for future leadership roles. Incorporating feedback mechanisms, such as anonymous surveys or suggestion platforms, would enable employees to share ideas and identify challenges without hesitation. These actions would build a collaborative environment where employees feel valued and engaged in achieving the department's mission.

Recommendation 5: Implement high-priority projects identified in previously adopted planning documents.

Guilford County and its municipal partners have developed numerous parks, trails, transportation, and land use plans that identify high-priority recreation and connectivity projects. Implementing these projects will ensure that past planning efforts lead to real improvements while enhancing regional collaboration. By focusing on key recommendations from these documents, the County can advance trail expansion, park upgrades, and regional greenway connections that align with municipal, regional, and state priorities.

Recommendation 6: Maintain openness in all processes to ensure staff, residents, and stakeholders understand how decisions are made, resources are allocated, and goals are achieved.

The county would benefit from establishing a regular schedule for publishing updates on resource allocation, project milestones, and park improvements, using accessible formats such as annual reports and public dashboards. Hosting community forums and town hall meetings would give residents and stakeholders opportunities to ask questions, provide input, and stay connected to decision-making processes. Guilford County Parks should also implement tools, such as project timelines and budget trackers, to improve visibility into operations and demonstrate how goals are being met. These measures would promote accountability and strengthen community confidence in the department's ability to manage public resources effectively.

Accessibility

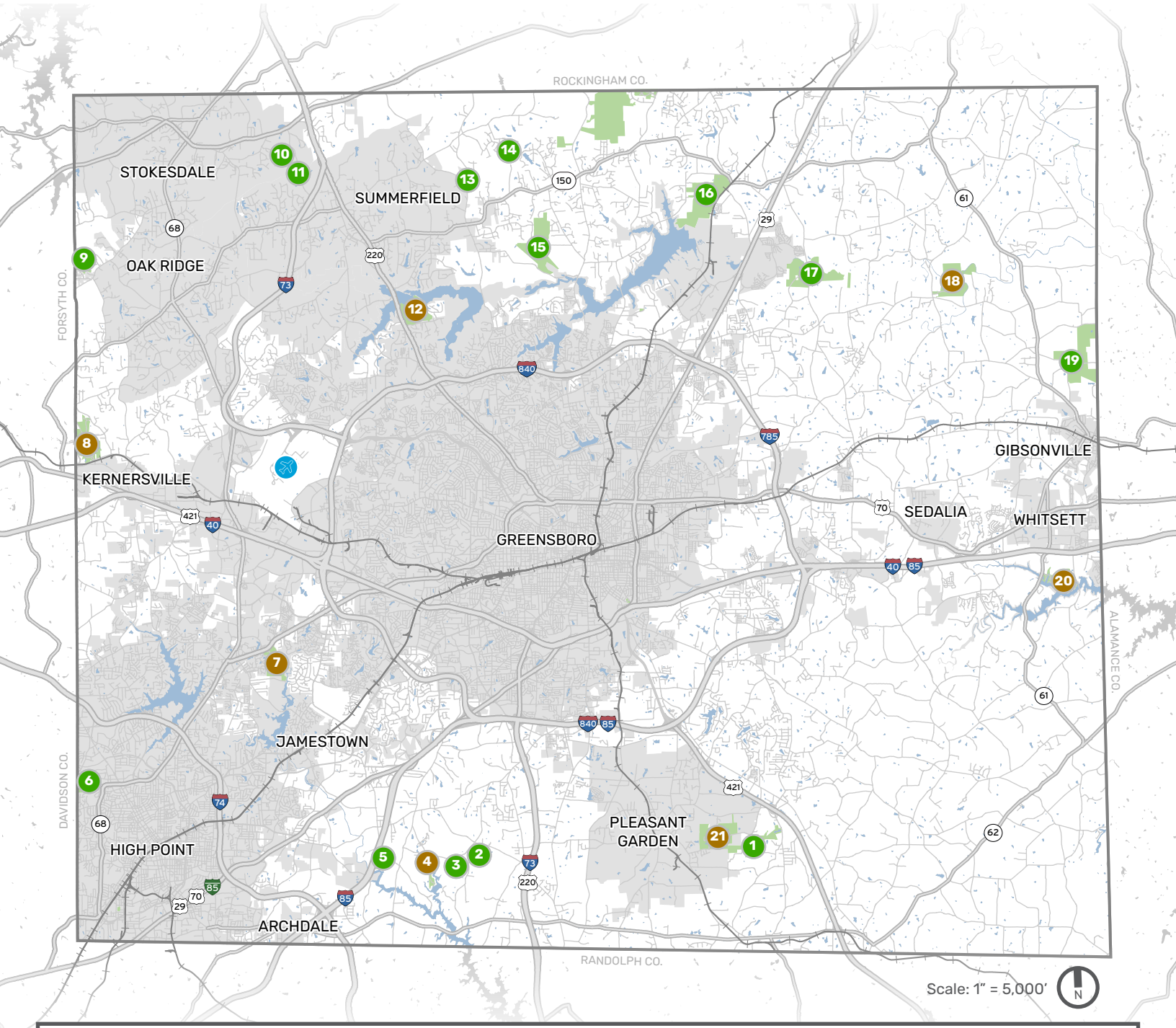
Guilford County's diverse population spans urban centers, suburban neighborhoods, and rural landscapes, requiring a park and recreation system that addresses the distinct needs of each community. Achieving equity means providing all residents, regardless of their age, ability, or background, with accessible and inclusive opportunities for recreation. Parks, trails, and facilities should reflect the uniqueness of the county, ensuring that all residents feel welcome and valued. Fair geographic distribution of resources is key to closing service gaps in underserved areas while fostering a balanced system that meets the needs of a growing and changing population.

The County must also focus on culturally relevant programs, ensuring that events, activities, and amenities celebrate the differences of the community. By involving varying voices in the planning and development process, Guilford County can ensure its parks and programs reflect the values and priorities of all residents. This emphasis on fairness prepares the system to respond to evolving demographic trends and helps create a sense of belonging and pride among community members.

The following recommendations outline how Guilford County can advance accessibility within its parks and recreation system

Recommendation 1: Provide access to parks, programs, and services for all Guilford County residents.

Access to parks, trails, and recreational facilities should not be determined by geography or demographic factors. Guilford County should assess and address barriers that limit access to recreational resources, particularly in underserved areas. This includes expanding transportation options, improving park infrastructure, and ensuring that facilities meet accessibility standards. Strategic investments in underserved communities can help ensure that recreational opportunities are distributed fairly, allowing all residents to benefit from the health, wellness, and community-building benefits of parks.



PARKS KEY

1 - Company Mill Preserve
2 - Saferight Preserve
3 - McCandless Woods Preserve
4 - Southwest Park
5 - Deep River Preserve
6 - Rich Fork Preserve
7 - Gibson Park
8 - Triad Park**
9 - Cascades Preserve
10 - Atlantic + Yadkin Preserve
11 - Atlantic + Yadkin Preserve*
12 - Bur - Mil Park
13 - Mears Fork Corridor Preserve
14 - Mears Fork Corridor Preserve*
15 - Richardson - Taylor Preserve
16 - Bryan Park Annex
17 - Hines Chapel Preserve
18 - Northeast Park
19 - County Farm Preserve
20 - Guilford Mackintosh Park**
21 - Hagan-Stone Park

Park
Nature Preserve

*Indicates park spans non-contiguous parcels

**Indicates park is a partnership with another local government

Guilford County's seven regional parks are relatively well-distributed across the county and provide a strong foundation for broad access. Five of these are managed by the County—Bur-Mil Park (Greensboro), Gibson Park (Jamestown), Southwest Park (Greensboro), Hagan Stone Park (Pleasant Garden), and Northeast Park (Gibsonville). Two regional parks Guilford Mackintosh, and Triad Park are managed by the City of Burlington and Forsyth County respectively.

Some areas of the county, particularly the rural northwest and far southeast, have more limited access to county-operated active recreation sites. In the northwest, Guilford County manages three passive parks—Cascades Preserve and the Atlantic & Yadkin Preserves—which offer natural experiences but fewer active-use amenities. Municipalities or other local providers may help fill recreation needs in these areas. In the southeast, City of Greensboro facilities such as Keeley Park and Barber Park provide high-quality amenities that supplement county offerings. Ongoing coordination and strategic investment can help ensure the overall system remains geographically balanced and responsive to current and future community needs.

Lastly, several smaller public properties also contribute to areas within the system that could be perceived to be underserved. These include the Benbow Preserve and Urban Orchard, located at 2279 Britton Street in Greensboro, adjacent to Southern Guilford High School and Southern Guilford Elementary School. In High Point, the six-acre Thomas Preserve—located across from Oak Hill Elementary School—offers a walking path, multipurpose field, and a community orchard featuring fruit and nut trees. Designed for both education and recreation, this site represents a unique model for neighborhood-scale public space. Although these properties are not currently reflected on the map, they remain meaningful community assets and should be considered in ongoing planning and investment efforts.

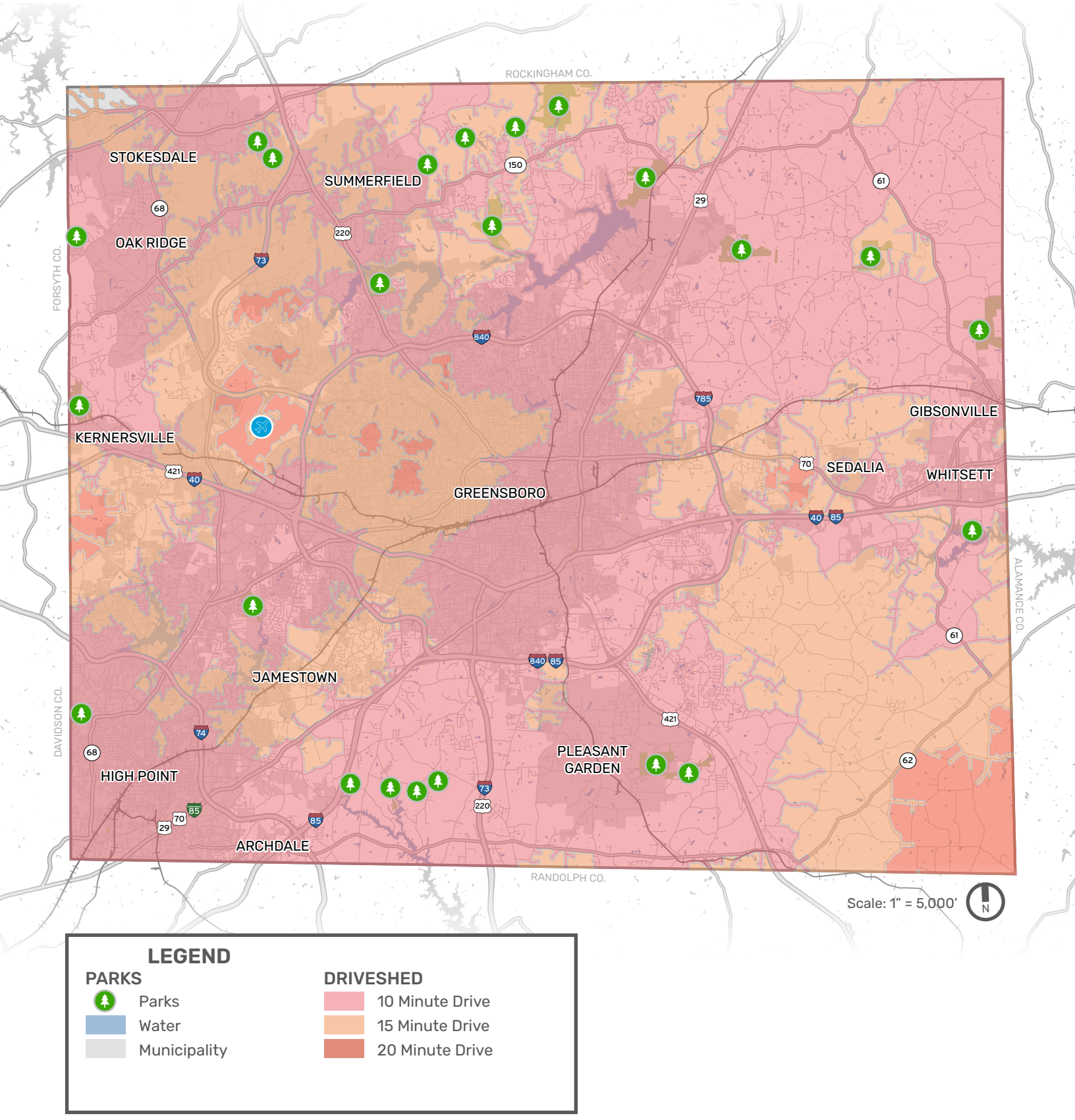
Analyzing the drive time map for Guilford County reveals significant insights into the accessibility of park facilities across the region. The map clearly delineates areas within 10, 15, and 20-minute drives to the nearest county park, showing a variable distribution of access. While urban centers such as Greensboro and High Point enjoy multiple parks within a short driving distance, rural areas, particularly in the northeast and southern parts of the county, have much fewer options. This uneven distribution underscores a disparity in access that predominantly affects rural residents, potentially impacting their frequency of park use and, by extension, health and well-being.

The implications of these findings are critical in the context of fair access to parks, a fundamental component of community development. Residents who live further than 20 minutes from a park are less likely to benefit from the recreational and health benefits these spaces provide. To address these disparities, Guilford County could consider strengthening park access by prioritizing new park development or improved trail and transportation connections in areas that fall outside a 10–15-minute drive of existing regional parks, particularly in the northeast and southern parts of the county. By focusing on strategic park development and transportation improvements, the County can ensure a more fair distribution of parks across all its regions.

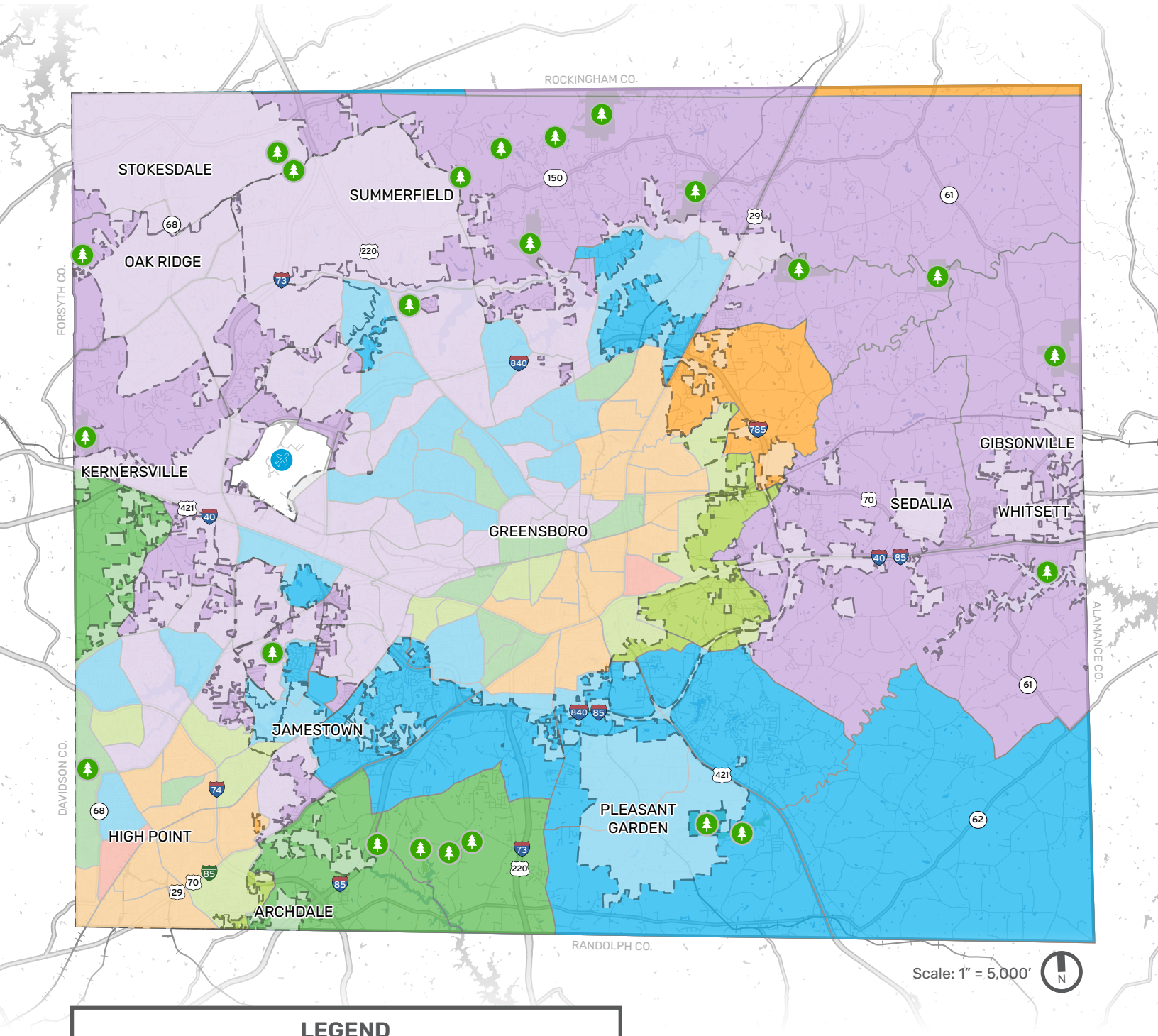
The health vulnerability map of Guilford County reveals insights into disparities in health outcomes, especially noted around densely populated urban centers, where higher vulnerability scores indicate a greater prevalence of chronic health conditions. The map's indication of these vulnerabilities highlights regions where improving access to parks in these areas could contribute to more positive public health outcomes, given that parks offer natural venues for physical activity, relaxation, and social interaction, all of which are known to improve health.

Therefore, it would be strategic for Guilford County to focus on enhancing park access within high vulnerability areas. This could involve the development of new parks or the enhancement of existing ones with specific health-oriented amenities such as walking trails, outdoor fitness equipment, and spaces designated for community health programs. Integrating health-focused activities like nutrition classes, exercise programs, and wellness activities provides inviting ways for individuals in high vulnerability areas to improve their health.

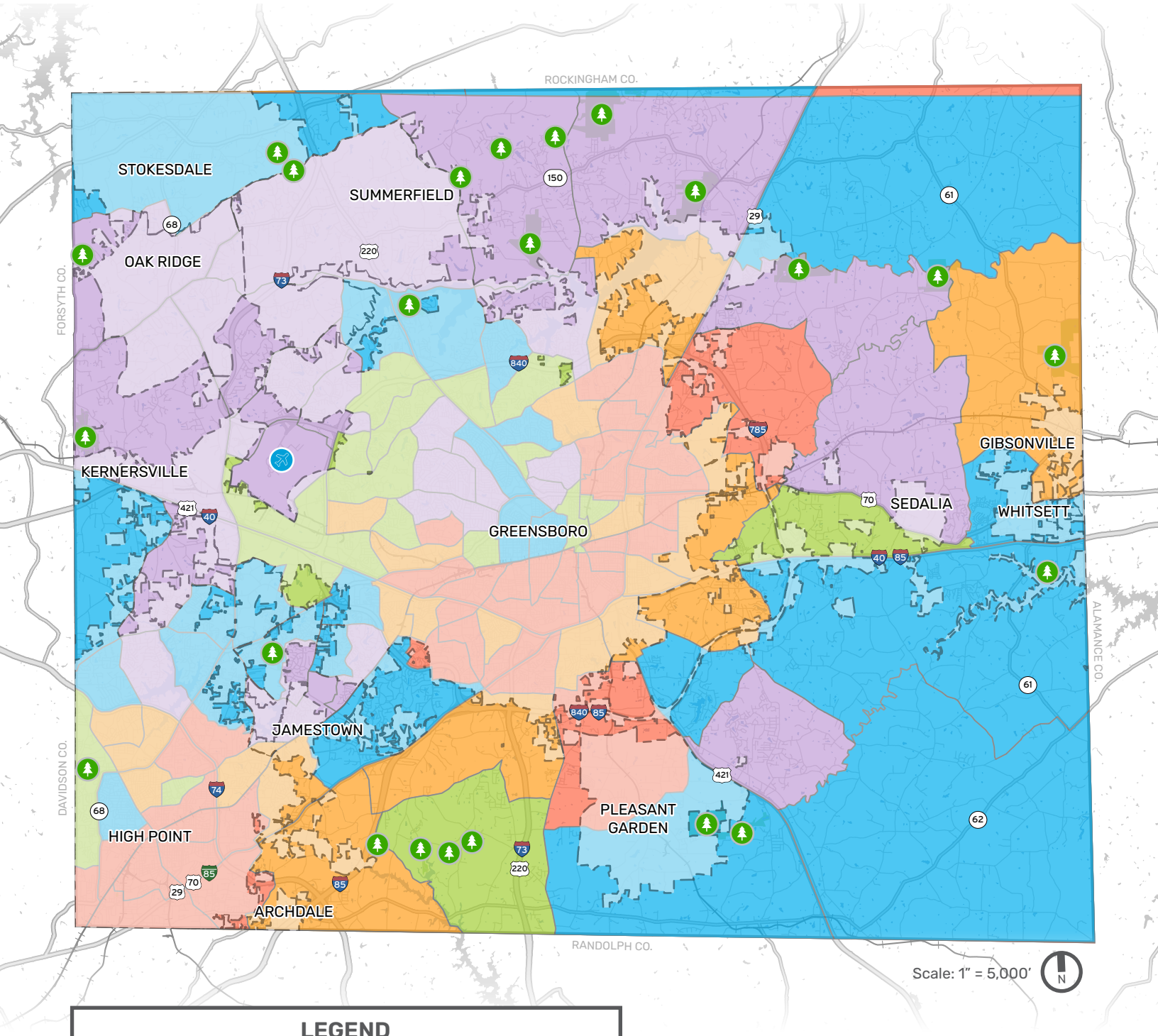
Improving transportation links to parks, such as dedicated bus services on weekends or new bike lanes, could increase park usage and its associated health benefits. Collaboration with local health agencies and community organizations could also



Drive Times to a County Park Map



Health Vulnerability Map



LEGEND

PARKS

- Parks
- Water
- Municipality

SOCIAL VULNERABILITY

- < 20% (less vulnerable)
- < 40%
- < 60%
- < 80%
- < 100% (most vulnerable)

Social Vulnerability Map

amplify the effectiveness of these initiatives, creating a comprehensive approach that leverages community resources for health improvement. By strategically using parks to address public health needs, Guilford County can enhance the overall well-being of its communities where it is most needed.

The social vulnerability map highlights the need for targeted interventions to make parks a tool for social improvement, especially in areas with greater vulnerabilities. By strategically focusing resources and design on the needs of these populations, Guilford County can significantly enhance the role of parks in improving community well-being and resilience.

Areas colored in dark orange and red indicate regions with higher social vulnerability. These areas, notably around Greensboro and stretching towards the southeast, including parts of High Point and Pleasant Garden, may face challenges such as higher poverty rates, larger elderly populations, or higher numbers of residents with disabilities. These communities typically benefit the most from accessible public spaces that offer not just recreation but also opportunities for social interaction and community-building. Lighter areas, such as those in Oak Ridge and northwest of Greensboro, exhibit lower social vulnerability. While these areas might not face as acute social challenges, access to parks is still important to ensure all residents can enjoy a high quality of life.

Given the higher social needs in the southeastern parts of the county, park development and programming in these areas should be prioritized. Parks can be equipped with facilities that accommodate people with disabilities, safe and engaging play areas for children, and comfortable spaces for the elderly. To enhance the accessibility of parks in Guilford County, it is essential to design parks with amenities that cater to the population, featuring language-accessible signage, culturally relevant programming, and physical accessibility for individuals with varying mobility levels. Strengthening partnerships with local nonprofits, healthcare providers, and social services can tailor park programming to meet specific community needs, ensuring parks serve as vital community resources. Additionally, improving public transportation links and pedestrian pathways to parks is crucial, particularly for residents in high vulnerability areas, ensuring that all community members have safe access to these public spaces.

Recommendation 2: Promote programs and events that celebrate and reflect the differences of Guilford County's communities.

Recreational programming should reflect the rich cultural heritage of Guilford County, creating opportunities for residents to connect with their neighbors and celebrate their unique identities. Events such as multicultural festivals, arts workshops, and cultural heritage days can engage a wide range of participants while fostering understanding and community pride. By collaborating with local cultural organizations and community leaders, Guilford County can ensure its programming is inclusive and resonates with the interests of its residents.

Accountability

Accountability ensures Guilford County Parks operates with transparency, responsible resource management, and a commitment to community-driven placemaking and sustainable investments in high-quality recreational opportunities. By openly sharing decisions, financial information, and operational goals, the department builds trust with staff and the public, enabling informed decisions and effective use of resources. Furthermore, establishing a distinct identity for the department reinforces accountability by providing a clear and consistent representation of its mission and values. A recognizable identity helps residents understand the department's role in improving quality of life, increasing access to recreational amenities, and managing resources responsibly.

In the same vein, continued investments through capital improvement planning ensure recreational amenities remain high-quality and sustainable over time. These efforts not only improve the local experience but also position the parks as attractions capable of drawing visitors from outside the county, generating economic impact. Aligning operations with these objectives through transparent reporting, data-driven decision-making, and community engagement ensures the parks system evolves responsibly while meeting the needs of residents and supporting regional growth.

Recommendation 1: Strengthen budgeting practices and explore enterprise fund models to support sustainable park system expansion and enhancement.

To operate more efficiently and reduce reliance on general tax funding, Guilford County Parks should implement proactive budgeting strategies and develop site-specific financial plans. Where appropriate, the County should explore the use of enterprise funds, similar to that described in the Prince George's County case study[1] for revenue-generating services and facilities, allowing those operations to reinvest in their upkeep and long-term sustainability.

Recommendation 2: Develop and implement comprehensive maintenance standards and procedures.

Guilford County Parks should prioritize the development of clear and consistent maintenance standards to ensure all parks, facilities, and amenities are safe, functional, and appealing. Establishing lifecycle schedules for infrastructure upgrades, equipment replacements, and routine repairs allows the department to address issues proactively rather than reactively. Comprehensive training for maintenance staff on best practices, including safety protocols, playground inspections, and trail upkeep, would further enhance operational efficiency. By implementing consistent procedures, the department demonstrates accountability in managing public assets while delivering a high-quality experience for residents and visitors.

Recommendation 3: Establish a long-term asset management plan to track infrastructure conditions, prioritize capital investments, and extend the lifespan of existing facilities.

A long-term asset management plan ensures park infrastructure is maintained, upgraded, and replaced strategically to maximize lifespan and minimize unexpected costs. Tracking asset conditions and lifecycle needs allows for data-driven capital investment decisions that enhance user experience and long-term sustainability. Exploring dedicated funding sources, such as a sales tax referendum, can provide stable revenue for ongoing improvements.

Recommendation 4: Develop a scalable organizational structure to enhance operational capacity and deliver high-quality services that meet the evolving needs of Guilford County reside.

Case Study: Prince George's County Enterprise Fund

Prince George's County in Maryland operates a dedicated Enterprise Fund to manage several specialized parks and recreation facilities, including an equestrian center, golf courses, trap and skeet center, and airport. These facilities are funded primarily through user fees, rentals, and concessions, reducing the burden on general taxpayers who do not use them regularly.

While most facilities do not fully cover their operating costs, the Enterprise Fund structure improves financial transparency and helps isolate the expenses and revenues tied to specific services. The model also provides a framework for targeted subsidies, which the county can adjust based on strategic priorities.

In FY2023, Prince George's County projected $7.2 million in subsidies for its Enterprise Fund. Despite the need for some tax support, the Enterprise Fund enables clearer tracking of performance and resource needs for high-cost or high-use amenities with unique operating needs.

Guilford County's growing population and diverse recreational needs require the Parks Department to establish a scalable organizational structure that enhances its ability to deliver exceptional services. An expanded staffing structure would allow the department to adapt to evolving trends, address community priorities, and efficiently oversee both existing amenities and new initiatives. Strengthening operational capacity ensures the department can manage the increasing demand for parks, programs, facilities, and trails effectively while maintaining high-quality standards. This includes clearly defining roles, streamlining workflows, and ensuring sufficient staffing to support expanding responsibilities such as trail and greenway development alongside traditional park operations.

1 "M-NCPPC – FY 2023 Proposed Budget - Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR)." https://pgccouncil.us/DocumentCenter/View/7195/MNCPPC-Parks-and-Recreation-Budget-Report-Final.

Service Outcomes Excellence

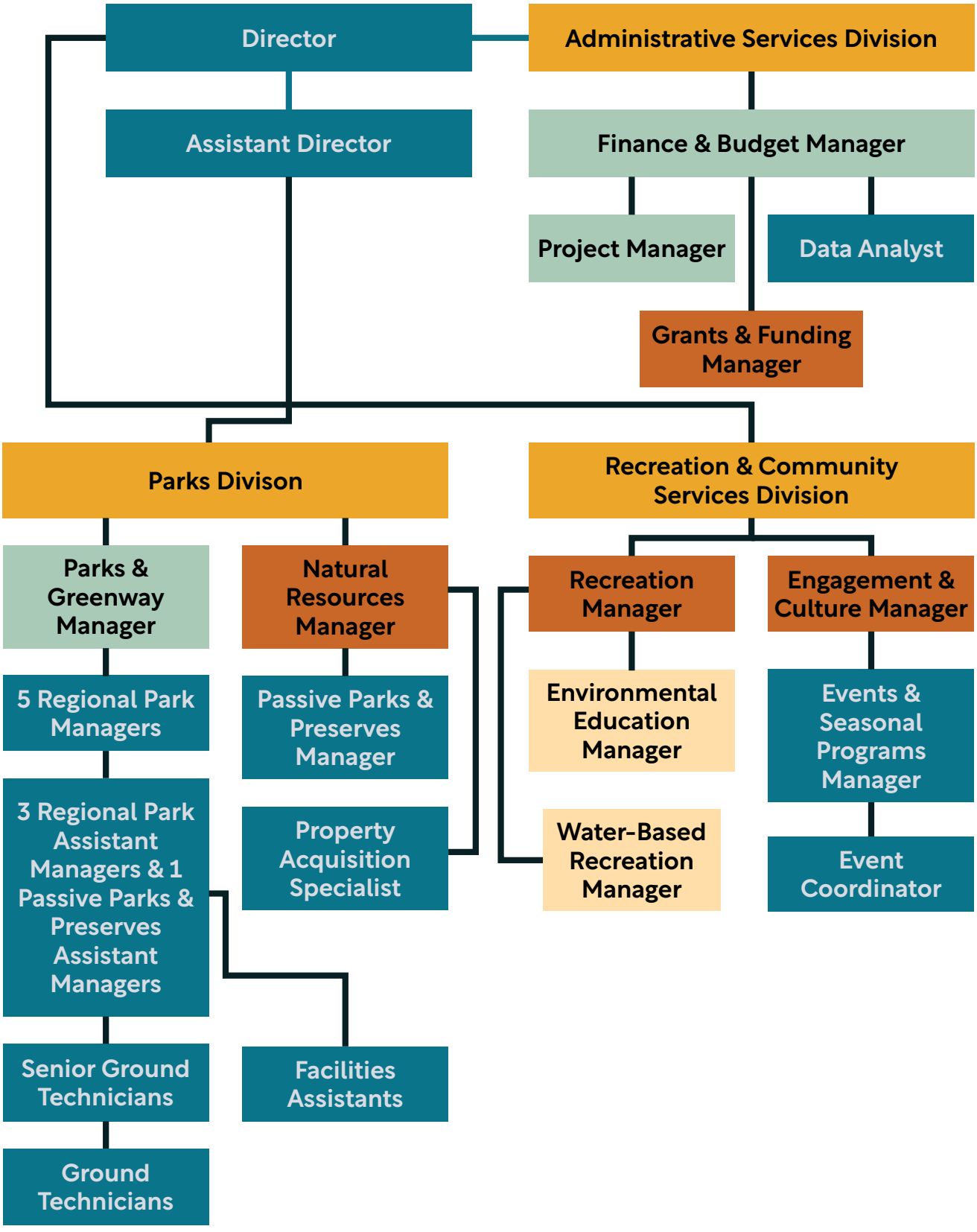
Exceeding community expectations requires Guilford County to prioritize enhancements to its park system and recreational offerings. By addressing the unique needs of urban, suburban, and rural communities, the county can create parks that support recreation, wellness, and cultural enrichment for all residents. A strategic focus on delivering high-quality, responsive services ensures that parks are not only places for leisure but also vital contributors to community well-being. This includes leveraging partnerships, optimizing resources, and aligning services with the diverse preferences of the county's population.

Communities within the county, from urban centers like Greensboro and High Point to smaller towns and rural areas such as Stokesdale and Pleasant Garden, have distinct preferences when it comes to parks and recreation. Designing parks to appeal to wide subsets of the population with distinctive amenities strengthens the county's overall recreational landscape. Thoughtful planning for health and wellness facilities, amphitheaters, and environmental education centers ensures parks remain versatile and responsive to evolving community needs.

Professional development is equally important for achieving service outcomes excellence. Comprehensive training programs tailored to elevate service standards, combined with a quality assurance framework, can maintain high levels of performance across the system. Staff recognition initiatives and a mystery visitor program offer opportunities to innovate, motivate employees, and improve visitor experiences. These efforts maintain the parks' high quality while ensuring they continue to meet the expectations and improve quality of life.



Bur-Mil Park's Fall Festival



Organizational Chart

By integrating this feedback into actionable plans, the department can ensure its parks and programs remain relevant and valuable to residents. This ongoing evolution strengthens the connection between the community and its parks, demonstrating the department's commitment to meeting current and future recreational demands.

Recommendation 2: Leverage existing resources to expand on current recreational activities and events tailored to community interests and needs.

The County can expand recreational activities and events by maximizing the use of existing resources, ensuring programs are cost-effective and widely accessible. This includes evaluating underutilized facilities to identify spaces that could support additional activities, strengthening partnerships with local organizations to enhance offerings without increasing operational costs, and expanding successful programs to reach a broader audience.

Recommendation 3: Expand and diversify recreation programs, activities, and events to activate Guilford county's park system and maximize park visitation.

Diversifying recreation programs will broaden the appeal of Guilford County's park system by introducing new activities that engage both current visitors and those who do not typically use parks. By offering fresh, innovative experiences that go beyond traditional recreation programming, the County can create more inclusive, accessible, and exciting opportunities that attract a wider audience. This includes developing unique, first-time programs in outdoor adventure, cultural engagement, and community-driven recreation that showcase the parks as dynamic spaces for gathering, learning, and exploration.

Recommendation 4: Establish park districts based on geographic service areas, accessibility gaps, and community needs, using a phased implementation approach to enhance equitable access, streamline operations, and improve resource allocation.

Establishing park districts in Guilford County offers an opportunity to create a more responsive and equitable parks system that reflects the diverse needs of its communities. A district-based approach allows for a deeper understanding of how accessibility, health, and social factors shape recreational opportunities, ensuring that investments are guided by data and a commitment to serving all residents.

Each district presents unique challenges and opportunities, from expanding access in underserved areas to strengthening recreational offerings where demand is highest. Prioritizing investment in communities with higher health and social vulnerability ensures that parks function not only as spaces for leisure but also as essential infrastructure that supports well-being. A deliberate and thoughtful approach to district management can help balance resource allocation, enhance maintenance strategies, and create stronger connections between residents and their local parks.

Sustainability and adaptability should be central to this approach. A well-organized district framework allows for greater coordination in staffing, programming, and long-term planning, ensuring that parks

Case Study: Greenwood County Capital Project Sales Tax for Parks and Recreation

In 2016, Greenwood County, South Carolina, voters approved a Capital Project Sales Tax (CPST) to fund improvements to local parks and recreation facilities. This initiative supported upgrades to West Cambridge Park and Grace Street Park, enhancements to Youngs Park, J.C. Fox Boozer Park, and the Larry Traynham Center, and the development of a new indoor recreation facility at Wilbanks Complex. Investments also improved the Ware Shoals Amphitheater, expanding opportunities for community events and performances. These projects have provided residents with modernized recreational spaces, increased access to indoor and outdoor amenities, and strengthened Greenwood County's commitment to quality-of-life enhancements through dedicated local funding.

evolve alongside the county's changing needs. Collaboration across municipalities and within the community will be key in shaping park districts that are both functional and reflective of local priorities.

Recommendation 5: Provide consistently high standards of service delivery by ensuring staff are trained and equipped to meet community expectations.

High-quality service delivery begins with a commitment to equipping staff with the right tools, knowledge, and support systems to succeed. Guilford County Parks should implement comprehensive training programs that address specific needs such as customer service, first-aid, and technical park operations. Staff must be supported with reliable scheduling systems, maintenance tools, and communication devices to perform effectively and consistently.

To help staff adapt to evolving systems and expectations, the department should continue using existing platforms and avoid rolling out too many new systems at once. Establishing internal "power users," "trainers," and "coaches" can provide peer-to-peer guidance and help ensure smoother adoption of software, workflows, and best practices. These internal champions can offer just-in-time support and reduce dependence on external consultants or vendors.

Recommendation 6: Establish internal champions and implementers to lead change and innovation across the Department.

To increase the success of new initiatives and drive innovation, Guilford County Parks should identify and empower staff members to serve as internal champions and implementers. These individuals can take on leadership roles in piloting new programs, testing technology, coordinating interdepartmental projects, and ensuring staff stay engaged with new directions and priorities. Appointing champions helps create ownership across all levels of the organization, speeds up decision-making, and improves internal communication.

Our People Matter

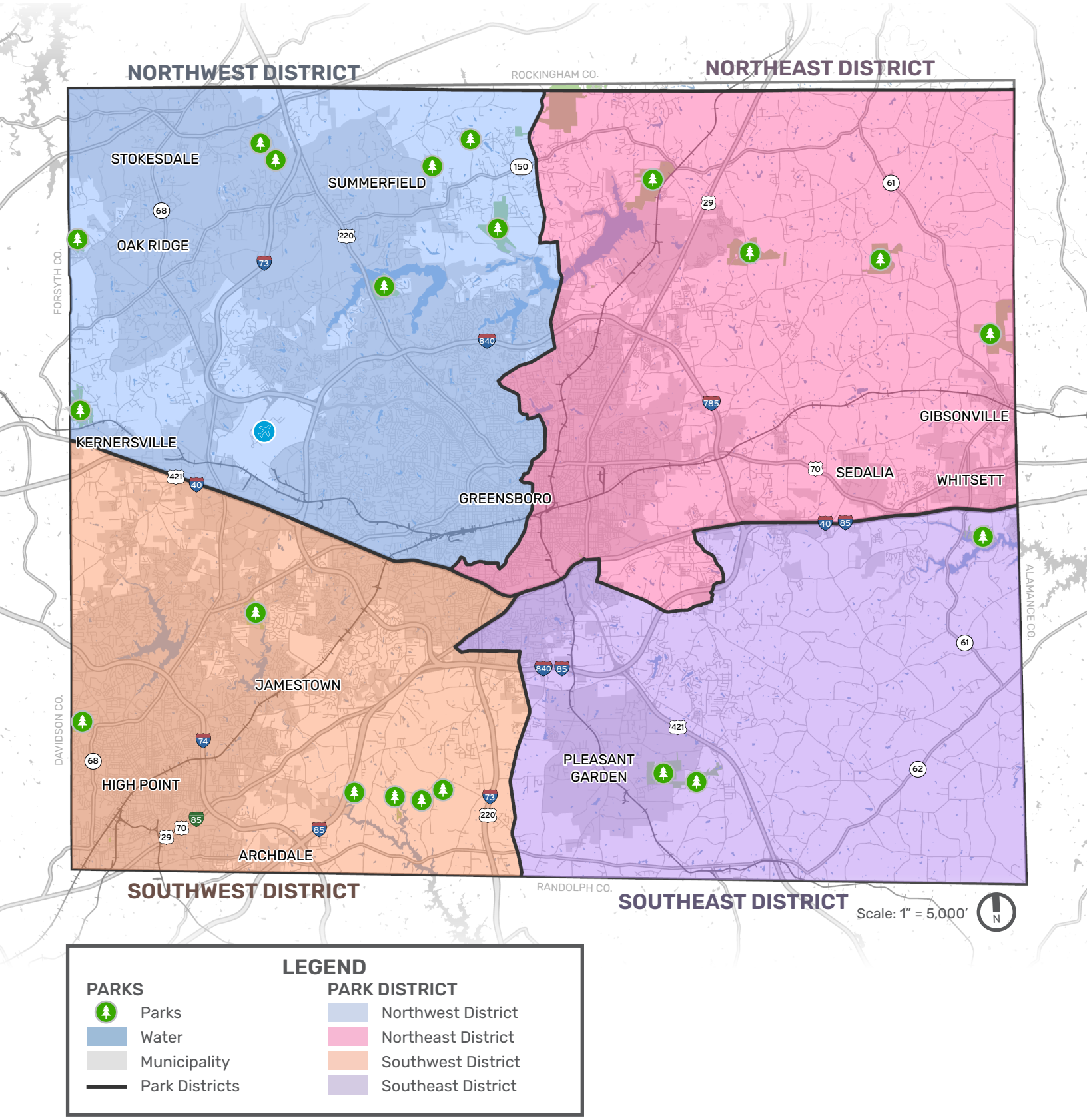
The success of Guilford County's park system relies on the well-being, growth, and collaboration of its staff and the community it serves. Recognizing the contributions of employees and residents builds shared ownership and strengthens connections between the parks department and those who use and care for its spaces. Prioritizing the physical, mental, and social well-being of staff ensures they are equipped to deliver high-quality service, while valuing community input creates a stronger and more responsive park system.

Investing in professional development, leadership opportunities, and staff recognition programs empowers employees to grow and contribute meaningfully to the department's mission. Simultaneously, engaging residents through volunteer programs, participatory planning, and events promotes collaboration and trust. By cultivating a culture of support, respect, and shared responsibility, Guilford County can ensure its parks remain vibrant and inclusive spaces that meet the needs of both its workforce and the community.

Recommendation 1: Cultivate meaningful relationships between the Guilford County Parks Department and community members by creating opportunities for participation through volunteer programs, events and collaborative planning initiatives.

Building stronger connections with the community requires creating accessible and engaging opportunities for residents to participate in the park system. Guilford County Parks should establish structured volunteer programs that allow residents to contribute to park maintenance, event support, and programming efforts. Hosting community events and participatory planning workshops provides platforms for residents to share their ideas, connect with staff, and become active stakeholders in the development of parks and recreational services.

These initiatives not only strengthen community engagement but also help the department tap into local resources and insights. To further expand community involvement and secure long-term investment in the park system, Guilford County should establish a Parks Foundation nonprofit organization to generate private funding, sponsorships, and grants for park projects, facilities, and conservation efforts. Engaging local businesses, philanthropic organizations, and community leaders in this effort will provide the necessary support to fund high-impact initiatives such as greenway expansions, signature



Proposed Park Districts Map

destination facilities, and major capital improvements that enhance park infrastructure and amenities. By involving residents in meaningful ways and creating new funding pathways, Guilford County Parks can build trust, increase park utilization, and foster a shared sense of responsibility for the success and sustainability of the park system.

Recommendation 2: Promote a positive work environment by supporting staff with opportunities for professional development, leadership roles, and meaningful recognition.

Creating a supportive and growth-oriented workplace begins with investing in opportunities that empower staff to succeed. Guilford County Parks should develop structured professional development programs tailored to enhance key skills, such as leadership, customer service, and technical expertise in park operations. Providing pathways for staff to take on leadership roles, including mentorship programs and cross-functional projects, allows employees to grow their careers while contributing to departmental success.

Meaningful recognition programs, such as awards for innovation or excellence in service, demonstrate appreciation for employee contributions and reinforce a culture of respect and motivation. By equipping staff with the tools and opportunities they need to excel, the department can maintain high morale, retain talented team members, and deliver exceptional service to the community.

Next Steps

The recommendations outlined in this plan reflect Guilford County's commitment to its core values—Transparency & Communication, Equity & Inclusion, Accountability, Service Outcomes Excellence, and Our People Matter. These themes provide the framework for ensuring parks, trails, and programs align with community priorities and are managed responsibly. Each recommendation addresses specific needs, from creating a distinct identity for the parks system and expanding access to underserved areas, to improving service delivery through professional development and innovative programming.

Transparency guides initiatives such as enhancing public communication channels and providing consistent updates on project progress, while equity prioritizes developing parks and programs that are accessible and inclusive for all residents. Accountability focuses on sustainable investments through capital improvement planning and responsible resource management. Service excellence drives improvements like evolving programming to reflect changing recreational interests and maintaining high service standards. Valuing people emphasizes meaningful staff development, leadership opportunities, and creating stronger connections with residents through volunteer initiatives and collaborative planning.[2]

The next chapter will translate these recommendations into a clear action plan, outlining specific steps, timelines, and resources needed to accomplish the county's goals. This actionable roadmap ensures Guilford County Parks continues to grow as a system that supports community well-being, enhances quality of life, and responsibly serves future generations.

2 Emmerling, Torben. 2020. "7 Strategies for Better Group Decision-Making." Harvard Business Review. November 22, 2020.





Implementation Matrix


Guilford County Parks Staff

1. Transparency & Communication

"We are committed to open and accessible government driven by information sharing."

Recommendation 1: Ensure consistent, clear communication within the Guilford County Parks Department, among peer-Guilford County departments and with the public to create a shared understanding of goals and operations.

#	Action Item	Guiding Principle	Timeframe
1.1.1	Create and implement a cohesive branding strategy that enhances public recognition, communicates the department's core values and initiatives, and reinforces trust through consistent visuals and messaging. Focus on developing a professional logo and clear brand standards, including guidelines for color schemes, typography, and tone to ensure consistent use across all materials and platforms.	Transparent Communication, Identity & Sense of Place	MT
1.1.2	Work with the Guilford County Communications Department to improve the current parks webpage by adding current news-worthy items, project updates, stylized park maps, event calendars, and user-friendly navigation for residents to access information	Transparent Communication, Identity & Sense of Place, Operational Excellence	ST
1.1.3	Distribute printed quarterly park guides to libraries, schools, and community centers to ensure residents without consistent digital access remain informed about the park system overall, special events, activities, recommended parks to visit each season and other creative communication campaigns.	Transparent Communication, Operational Excellence	MT
1.1.4	Ensure residents stay informed through a variety of platforms by partnering with local newspapers, radio stations, local TV, and universities to share updates, stories and recreation opportunities	Transparent Communication	ST
1.1.5	Conduct an annual resident satisfaction survey, available in multiple languages, to provide feedback on County's communication methods, visitor experience, special events, recreation programs and participation barriers, etc.	Community-Centered Planning, Transparent Communication, Equitable Access	ST
1.1.6	Organize informal "Parks Open Houses" or virtual forums where staff share updates, answer questions, and gather community input on ongoing and upcoming projects.	Community-Centered Planning, Transparent Communication	MT
1.1.7	Engage trusted community leaders or volunteers as "Park Ambassadors" to disseminate park updates, encourage program participation, and serve as feedback channels for park-related issues.	Community-Centered Planning, Transparent Communication, Sustainable Stewardship	LT

1.1.8	Assign liaisons from different park sites or operational divisions to act as communication bridges within the department to ensure consistent messaging and stronger collaboration on shared goals.	Transparent Communication, Operational Excellence	MT
1.1.9	Develop a task force with representatives from key county departments, such as Public Works, Planning, Health and Human Services, Senior Services, etc. to improve cross-departmental collaboration and share information on overlapping initiatives, timelines, and projects.	Transparent Communication, Operational Excellence,	MT
1.1.10	Continue existing positive relationships and partnerships with Guilford County Government departments.	Strategic Investment, Operational Excellence	ST

Recommendation 2: Create a distinct identity for Guilford County Parks through thoughtful placemaking strategies that enhance sense of place throughout the County.			
#	**Action Item**	**Guiding Principle**	**Timeframe**
1.2.1	Create a unified placemaking strategy that includes consistent visuals, signage, and messaging for parks, greenways, trailheads, and preserves. This strategy should incorporate a wayfinding system with thematic designs, directional signage, and interpretive elements to guide visitors and highlight natural and historical features.	Identity & Sense of Place, Transparent Communication, Community-Centered Planning, Operational Excellence	ST-MT
1.2.2	Host community workshops to gather public input on park design elements, entryways, and interpretive signage, piloting enhancements at one, strategically identified Guilford County park before broader implementation.	Community-Centered Planning, Identity & Sense of Place, Strategic Investment	MT
1.2.3	Evaluate the success of the pilot project and, based on community feedback and available resources, extend the entryway enhancements to the other four regional parks. Ensure the designs remain cohesive across the park system while incorporating unique features that highlight each park's distinct character and role within the County.	Community-Centered Planning, Identity & Sense of Place, Strategic Investment, Operational Excellence	LT
1.2.4	Expand greenway connections by developing new segments that link urban areas, parks, and preserves, prioritizing accessibility for residents while protecting sensitive habitats and addressing underserved areas	Strategic Investment, Equitable Access, Sustainable Stewardship	MT-LT
1.2.5	Develop new trails in preserves like Hines Chapel and Rich Fork that provide access to unique natural features and conserve Guilford County's natural and cultural resources.	Sustainable Stewardship , Strategic Investment,	ST-MT
1.2.6	Partner with local artists to create temporary or seasonal art installations in regional parks and along greenways. Highlight themes like Guilford County's natural beauty, diverse communities, and history to engage visitors and encourage repeat visits.	Community-Centered Planning, Identity & Sense of Place, Innovative Programming	LT

Recommendation 3: Strengthen intergovernmental coordination to align resources, enhance communication, and support shared goals for parks and recreation across jurisdictions.			
#	**Action Item**	**Guiding Principle**	**Timeframe**
1.3.1	Continue to work toward an interlocal agreement with Guilford County municipalities regarding greenway management responsibilities	Community-Centered Planning, Transparent Communication, Operational Excellence, Strategic Investment	ST
1.3.2	Form a parks coordination task force representatives from Guilford County Parks, municipal parks departments (Greensboro, High Point, Jamestown, etc.), and neighboring counties to discuss shared challenges, funding opportunities, and joint initiatives.	Community-Centered Planning, Transparent Communication, Operational Excellence, Strategic Investment	ST-MT
1.3.3	Develop a regional trails plan to enhance connectivity and coordinate multi-jurisdictional trail development.	Strategic Investment, Community-Centered Planning, Equitable Access, Operational Excellence	MT-LT
1.3.4	Work with Guilford County municipalities and neighboring counties regional to develop a cost-sharing model for large-scale greenway projects, including potential bond measures or joint capital improvement plans.	Strategic Investment, Operational Excellence, Transparent Communication, Sustainable Stewardship	LT
1.3.5	Seek joint funding applications for state and federal grants that support multi-jurisdictional trail and greenway connections.	Strategic Investment, Operational Excellence, Sustainable Stewardship, equitable access	ST-MT
1.3.6	Establish usage agreements with local leagues and community organizations to clarify scheduling, maintenance responsibilities, and cost-sharing expectations for facilities such as, but not limited to, athletic fields, sport courts, pools and aquatic amenities.	Strategic Investment, Innovative Programming Operational Excellence, Transparent Communication	MT
1.3.7	Identify high-priority regional projects and implement a joint capital investments program to ensure multi-jurisdictional funding for development.	Strategic Investment, Transparent Communication	MT-LT

Recommendation 4: Encourage participation from all staff members in key decisions to support shared ownership and accountability.			
#	**Action Item**	**Guiding Principle**	**Timeframe**
1.4.1	Establish a quarterly 'Staff Roundtable' where employees from various roles and park locations meet with leadership to discuss challenges, brainstorm improvements, and recommend operational enhancements through smaller workgroups	Empowered Workforce, Operational Excellence	MT
1.4.2	Implement a peer mentorship program where newer staff members with seasoned employees to build skills in decision-making and operational awareness, while improving workplace collaboration.	Empowered Workforce, Operational Excellence	MT
1.4.3	Incorporate staff surveys and focus groups into the annual strategic planning process to gather structured input on long-term goals, operational improvements, and service priorities	Empowered Workforce, Operational Excellence	ST
1.4.4	Develop a program that highlights and rewards staff whose ideas or leadership directly influence positive outcomes in park operations or programming.	Empowered Workforce, Operational Excellence, Innovative Programming, Strategic Investment	ST

Recommendation 5: Implement high-priority projects identified in previously adopted planning documents, particularly those aligned with the One Guilford vision for countywide coordination and collaboration.			
#	**Action Item**	**Guiding Principle**	**Timeframe**
1.5.1	Upgrade Hagan-Stone Park facilities as recommended in the 2018 Pleasant Garden Parks & Recreation Master Plan, partnering with Pleasant Garden to address aging infrastructure and enhance park amenities that meet evolving community needs.	Strategic Investment, Transparent Communication, Operational Excellence, Community-Centered Planning	ST-MT
1.5.2	Expand parkland and open space based on growth projections outlined in the 2024 Guilford County Comprehensive Plan and the 2018 High Point Parks & Recreation Master Plan, collaborating with Guilford County, High Point, Greensboro, Summerfield, and Oak Ridge to acquire and preserve land in areas with increasing demand for parks and natural spaces.	Strategic Investment, Transparent Communication, Operational Excellence, Innovative Programming, Community-Centered Planning, Sustainable Stewardship	MT-LT

1.5.3	Implement large-scale regional greenway and trail projects guided by previously established priority corridors – partnering with MPOs, state agencies, and municipalities to construct key missing trail segments, improve connectivity, and enhance accessibility for all users.	Strategic Investment, Transparent Communication, Operational Excellence, Innovative Programming, Community-Centered Planning, Sustainable Stewardship, Equitable Access	LT
1.5.4	Develop a coordinated regional conservation and recreation strategy informed by the 2024 Guilford County Comprehensive Plan and the 2021 Bandera Farms Master Plan, collaborating with Piedmont Land Conservancy, municipal partners, and state agencies to balance land preservation with expanded public access to outdoor recreation.	Strategic Investment, Transparent Communication, Operational Excellence, Community-Centered Planning, Sustainable Stewardship, Equitable Access	MT-LT

Recommendation 6: Maintain openness in all processes to ensure staff, residents, and stakeholders understand how decisions are made, resources are allocated, and goals are achieved.			
#	**Action Item**	**Guiding Principle**	**Timeframe**
1.6.1	Implement a centralized system to log, monitor, and respond to public inquiries, ensuring consistent follow-up and accountability.	Operational Excellence, Empowered Workforce, Transparent Communication	ST
1.6.2	Create engaging reports for the public that highlight achievements, key project updates, and basic financial details. This can be distributed as a short PDF or printed handout to build transparency without overwhelming resources.	Transparent Communication, Community-Centered Planning	MT-LT
1.6.3	Share a few easily tracked metrics, such as park attendance through the existing Guilford County newsletter or at community events. This introduces performance tracking gradually without requiring significant technical resources.	Transparent Communication, Operational Excellence	ST
1.4.4	Develop a program that highlights and rewards staff whose ideas or leadership directly influence positive outcomes in park operations or programming.	Empowered Workforce, Operational Excellence, Innovative Programming, Strategic Investment	ST

2. Accessibility

"We celebrate differences and support service delivery and stakeholder inclusion."

Recommendation 1: Provide access to parks, programs, and services for all Guilford County residents.

#	Action Item	Guiding Principle	Timeframe
2.1.1	Organize focus groups and seek input from different populations, including historically underserved communities, to identify specific needs and barriers. Use these findings to guide resource allocation, program development, and geographic distribution of services.	Equitable Access, Community-Centered Planning, Operational Excellence	ST-MT
2.1.2	Develop and share marketing materials in multiple languages, highlighting park programs, events, and resources	Equitable Access, Operational Excellence	ST
2.1.3	Advocate for long-range transit planning that considers improved access to county parks by encouraging Greensboro Transit Agency (GTA), High Point Transit System (HPTS), and the Guilford County Transportation Advisory Board to evaluate opportunities for future route extensions or additional stops near key park sites.	Equitable Access, Operational Excellence	MT-LT
2.1.4	Encourage Guilford County Transportation and Mobility Services (TAMS) and PART to pilot shuttle services connecting underserved communities to parks.	Equitable Access, Operational Excellence	MT-LT
2.1.5	Conduct a county-wide accessibility audit of park facilities, trails, and programming to identify barriers to access.	Equitable Access, Operational Excellence	ST-MT
2.1.6	Implement infrastructure improvements, such as accessible parking and pathways, in high-priority locations identified during the accessibility audit.	Strategic Investment, Equitable Access, Operational Excellence	MT-LT
2.1.7	Incorporate universal design principles in all new park and facility projects to ensure inclusivity.	Strategic Investment, Equitable Access, Operational Excellence	Ongoing
2.1.8	Develop additional parks and amenities in underserved regions to ensure balanced geographic distribution.	Strategic Investment, Equitable Access	LT

Recommendation 2: Promote programs and events that celebrate and reflect the differences of Guilford County's communities.			
#	**Action Item**	**Guiding Principle**	**Timeframe**
2.2.1	Use data and feedback gathered during community engagement efforts to develop programs and events that celebrate the traditions, celebrations, and contributions of the county's different populations.	Community-Centered Planning, Innovative Programming, Transparent Communication, Identity & Sense of Place	MT
2.2.2	Collaborate with local groups and service providers such to promote recreational opportunities and address barriers to park access in underserved areas through targeted outreach and shared initiatives.	Community-Centered Planning, Equitable Access, Transparent Communication,	MT
2.2.3	Organize annual or seasonal multicultural festivals for music, dance, art, and food from various ethnic groups to strengthen community connections.	Innovative Programming, Identity & Sense of Place	LT
2.2.4	Continue to work with the special events committee to gather real-time feedback on cultural programs, ensuring offerings remain relevant and reflect the county's evolving population	Community-Centered Planning, Innovative Programming, Identity & Sense of Place	ST-MT
2.2.5	Seek sponsorships and grants from organizations that prioritize community development and cultural preservation.	Community-Centered Planning, Innovative Programming, Identity & Sense of Place, Transparent Communication,	MT
2.2.6	Dedicate spaces for hosting cultural events, performances, and community gatherings.	Strategic Investment, Community-Centered Planning, Identity & Sense of Place	Ongoing

3. Accountability

We are stewards of the public's resources and accept responsibility for the fiscal and physical health of the county."

Recommendation 1: Strengthen budgeting and cost recovery to support sustainable growth.

#	Action Item	Guiding Principle	Timeframe
3.1.1	Create a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for infrastructure upgrades and improvements based on deferred maintenance needs, lifecycle costs, and community priorities.	Operational Excellence, Strategic Investment, Sustainable Stewardship	ST
3.1.2	Develop park-specific budgets to track spending and revenue by site rather than relying on a single department-wide budget.	Operational Excellence, Strategic Investment	ST
3.1.3	Identify revenue generators, such as rental spaces, golf courses, and aquatic centers, to ensure they are financially sustainable.	Operational Excellence, Strategic Investment	ST
3.1.4	Establish a consistent system for tracking park visitation, facility rentals, and maintenance needs to provide data-driven justifications for funding requests.	Operational Excellence, Strategic Investment	ST
3.1.5	Implement active budgeting strategies that allocate funding based on facility performance, user demand, and operational costs rather than flat-line budgeting.	Operational Excellence, Strategic Investment	ST

Recommendation 2: Develop and implement comprehensive maintenance standards and procedures.

#	Action Item	Guiding Principle	Timeframe
3.2.1	Develop maintenance standards for each park type and amenity. (SEE APPENDIX XX)	Operational Excellence, Sustainable Stewardship, Empowered Workforce	ST
3.2.2	Define routine maintenance schedules, cleaning procedures, inspection checklists, and repair timelines to ensure consistent service levels across all parks.	Operational Excellence, Sustainable Stewardship, Empowered Workforce	ST

3.2.3	Improve existing maintenance buildings and storage areas to accommodate staff and equipment needs more effectively.	Operational Excellence, Strategic Investment Sustainable Stewardship, Empowered Workforce	ST-MT
3.2.4	Consider the operational role of existing park properties when evaluating future use decisions, particularly those that currently support systemwide maintenance functions.	Operational Excellence, Strategic Investment Sustainable Stewardship, Empowered Workforce	Ongoing
3.2.5	Maintain geographically distributed maintenance access points to reduce staff travel time, fuel costs, and response delays across the park system.	Operational Excellence, Strategic Investment Sustainable Stewardship, Empowered Workforce	Ongoing
3.2.6	Explore software for tracking work orders, routine maintenance, lifecycle replacements, and equipment use in a centralized digital platform.	Operational Excellence, Empowered Workforce, Transparent Communication	ST-MT
3.2.7	Standardize trail and natural area maintenance protocols. Establish differentiated maintenance plans for hard-surface trails, soft-surface trails, and equestrian paths based on surface type and usage.	Strategic Investment Sustainable Stewardship, Operational Excellence	ST-MT
3.2.8	Implement erosion control measures and strengthen stormwater management practices to reduce trail damage and mitigate runoff issues, with a focus on monitoring older infrastructure in existing parks.	Sustainable Stewardship, Operational Excellence	ST-MT
3.2.9	Implement regular maintenance staff training programs on equipment operation, irrigation management, sustainable landscaping, and stormwater control.	Operational Excellence, Strategic Investment Sustainable Stewardship, Empowered Workforce	ST

Recommendation 3: Establish a long-term asset management plan to track infrastructure conditions, prioritize capital investments, and extend the lifespan of existing facilities.			
#	**Action Item**	**Guiding Principle**	**Timeframe**
3.3.1	Implement a tiered maintenance approach based on asset criticality and lifecycle stage to allocate resources efficiently and ensure timely upkeep of high-use and high-priority facilities.	Operational Excellence, Strategic Investment Sustainable Stewardship,	ST-MT
3.3.2	Establish criteria for decommissioning or repurposing underutilized or obsolete assets to optimize resource allocation and reduce long-term maintenance costs.	Operational Excellence, Strategic Investment Sustainable Stewardship,	ST-MT
3.3.3	Incorporate climate resilience and sustainability considerations into asset management planning to mitigate risks related to extreme weather events, aging infrastructure, and environmental impact.	Operational Excellence, Strategic Investment Sustainable Stewardship,	MT-LT
3.3.4	Explore the feasibility of a dedicated sales tax referendum, to generate long-term funding for park infrastructure, facility upgrades, and recreational enhancements.	Strategic Investment Sustainable Stewardship, Operational Excellence, Community-Centered Planning	MT-LT

Recommendation 4: Develop a scalable organizational structure to enhance operational capacity and deliver high-quality services that meet the evolving needs of Guilford County residents.			
#	**Action Item**	**Guiding Principle**	**Timeframe**
3.4.1	Evaluate the responsibilities and workload of maintenance staff to determine staffing needs, improve efficiency, and ensure the department has the resources required to maintain parks at a high standard.	Operational Excellence, Empowered Workforce, Sustainable Stewardship	ST
3.4.2	Conduct a workload and capacity assessment for existing staff to identify resource needs and determine optimal staffing levels for maintenance, programming, and administrative functions.	Operational Excellence, Empowered Workforce, Innovative Programming, Sustainable Stewardship	ST

3.4.3	Phase in the addition of 6–8 full-time maintenance staff over the next five years to better align with systemwide needs and reduce strain on existing personnel.	Operational Excellence, Empowered Workforce, Sustainable Stewardship	ST-MT
3.4.4	Implement staffing increases in coordination with facility expansions, new park development, and deferred maintenance reduction goals to ensure operational capacity keeps pace with system growth.	Operational Excellence, Empowered Workforce, Innovative Programming, Sustainable Stewardship	Ongoing
3.4.5	Reassess staffing needs every two years in conjunction with capital improvement progress and park usage trends to guide future hiring decisions.	Operational Excellence, Empowered Workforce, Sustainable Stewardship	-
3.4.6	Add 4–6 part-time or seasonal maintenance positions during peak months to support routine upkeep, event preparation, and landscape maintenance in high-use parks.	Operational Excellence, Empowered Workforce, Innovative Programming, Sustainable Stewardship	ST
3.4.7	Develop a phased staffing plan to address key operational gaps, including hiring specialized roles such as a natural resources manager, special events and activities manager, and engagement and culture manager.	Operational Excellence, Empowered Workforce, Innovative Programming, Sustainable Stewardship	LT
3.4.8	Establish new leadership roles to support department growth, such as a recreation manager and operations manager, to oversee programming, partnerships, and maintenance activities across the park system.	Operational Excellence, Empowered Workforce, Innovative Programming	MT-LT

4. Service Outcomes Excellence

"We strive for compassionate, effective, and professional service delivery."

Recommendation 1: Continuously evolve services to meet the changing recreational interests and needs of the community.

#	Action Item	Guiding Principle	Timeframe
4.1.1	Guilford County should invest in park-specific master plans for all five county parks to guide future improvements, enhance amenities, and align development with community needs. These plans will incorporate public engagement, assess existing conditions, identify opportunities for growth, and establish a phased approach for upgrades, programming, and long-term sustainability.	Strategic Investment, Community-Centered Planning, Operational Excellence, Sustainable Stewardship	ST-MT
4.1.2	Conduct feasibility studies for aquatic centers and pool improvements.	Strategic Investment, Operational Excellence, Sustainable Stewardship	ST-MT
4.1.3	Use findings from the scientific survey and facility assessments to develop a bond proposal focused on enhancing existing resources that prioritizes investments in lifecycle replacements, facility upgrades, and enhancements to existing parks and greenways. The bond should address critical needs such as aquatics repairs, trail expansions, and amenity improvements.	Community-Centered Planning , Strategic Investment, Operational Excellence, Sustainable Stewardship, Transparent Communication,	MT
4.1.4	Introduce unique, temporary amenities such as mobile pump tracks, modular climbing walls, or pop-up nature play zones, rotating them across parks to engage residents and assess interest. Use participation data and visitor feedback to guide decisions on permanent investments while collaborating with local organizations for demonstrations or events.	Community-Centered Planning , Strategic Investment, Operational Excellence, Innovative Programming	ST-MT
4.1.5	Create destination playgrounds that integrate natural features like boulders, logs, and water streams into their design. Utilize Guilford County's existing landscapes to provide unique play areas that encourage exploration and connect visitors to the natural environment.	Community-Centered Planning , Strategic Investment, Innovative Programming, Sustainable Stewardship	LT
4.1.6	Invest in destination-level specialty amenities and facilities such as nature based playground, an outdoor adventure park with zip lines, a pump track for bikers, or an amphitheater for community events and concerts, to draw visitors from across the region.	Strategic Investment, Innovative Programming, Sustainable Stewardship	MT-LT

4.1.7	Pursue grants, public-private partnerships, and sponsorships to finance signature amenities that draw visitors from across the region.	Strategic Investment, Operational Excellence, Transparent Communication	MT-LT
4.1.8	Install outdoor fitness amenities in high-use parks to meet the growing demand for wellness-focused activities. Position these amenities along popular trails or near high-traffic areas to ensure consistent use.	Strategic Investment, Innovative Programming,	ST-MT
4.1.9	Install a universally accessible boat launch at Southwest Park to ensure safe and inclusive water access for all users	Equitable Access, Sustainable Stewardship, Innovative Programming	MT
4.1.10	Enhance existing water amenities across all parks with water access by upgrading fishing piers and expanding shoreline access to meet growing needs	Equitable Access, Sustainable Stewardship, Innovative Programming	ST + Ongoing

Recommendation 2: Leverage existing resources and partnerships to expand on current recreational activities and events tailored to community interests and needs.			
#	**Action Item**	**Guiding Principle**	**Timeframe**
4.2.1	Continue to provide self-guided, park-activating activities like weekend scavenger hunts, family fun runs, and parent-child fishing clinics based on survey findings. Schedule these events on weekends and school breaks to maximize accessibility for families	Innovative Programming, Strategic Investment, Operational Excellence	Ongoing
4.2.2	Following the positive response to guided hikes, offer a regular schedule of guided nature walks, birdwatching tours, and educational hikes across various parks to encourage exploration and appreciation of natural spaces.	Innovative Programming, Sustainable Stewardship, Community-Centered Planning	ST
4.2.3	Host a “Parks After Dark” Series featuring evening recreation opportunities like moonlight paddling excursions, marshmallow roasts, stargazing programs, etc.	Innovative Programming, Strategic Investment	ST
4.2.4	Based on the scientific survey results, to satisfy demand and attract a wider range of participants, enhance aquatic center offerings by introducing themed swim programs and low-impact water fitness sessions during evening hours in the summer to maximize the use of aquatic facilities while providing a unique recreation opportunity.	Innovative Programming, Strategic Investment	ST-MT

4.2.5	Leverage tournaments, such as softball, pickleball, fishing, disc golf, at parks with appropriate facilities. Provide incentives to encourage participation, create opportunities to build excitement around the park system, increase usership and earn revenue.	Innovative Programming, Strategic Investment	ST-MT
4.2.6	Building on successful events like the Bur-Mil Fall Festival and the July 4th Fireworks Extravaganza, organize additional seasonal festivals and community gatherings that feature local vendors, live music, and family-friendly activities like music in the park.	Innovative Programming, Community-Centered Planning, Strategic Investment	MT-LT
4.2.7	Capitalize on the recent stocking of Gibson Park's pond by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission by organizing youth fishing clinics and fishing days to promote angling skills and outdoor recreation.	Innovative Programming, Strategic Investment, Sustainable Stewardship, Operational Excellence	ST-MT
4.2.8	Introduce a “Sunday in the Park” drop-in activity series, which would expand on Guilford County Park’s family-friendly weekend events for themed activities like pop-up lawn games, art-in-the-park, etc.	Innovative Programming, Community-Centered Planning, Strategic Investment	ST-MT
4.2.9	Expand the Annual “Year of the Trail” initiative into a monthly challenge series by building on the success of hiking and guided nature walks, introducing monthly themed trail challenges featuring photo scavenger hunts, step-count competitions, and guided hikes.	Innovative Programming, Community-Centered Planning, Strategic Investment, Sustainable Stewardship	ST-MT
4.2.10	Increase visibility and recreational access at the Guilford County Farm with improved trail signage and maps for the hiking trails and fishing ponds to encourage increased use	Innovative Programming, Community-Centered Planning, Strategic Investment, Sustainable Stewardship	ST
4.2.11	Enhance trails, fishing access, and passive recreation at the Guilford County Farm to strengthen its role as a community asset.	Innovative Programming, Community-Centered Planning, Strategic Investment, Sustainable Stewardship	ST

4.2.12	Establish partnerships with local schools and universities to offer environmental education, sustainable agriculture workshops, and field-based learning experiences at the Guilford County Farm	Innovative Programming, Community-Centered Planning, Strategic Investment	ST-MT
4.2.13	Conduct a feasibility study to assess long-term recreation, conservation, and educational uses for the County Farm.	Innovative Programming, Community-Centered Planning, Strategic Investment, Sustainable Stewardship	MT-LT
4.2.14	Host public workshops and visioning sessions to gather community input on future opportunities for the County Farm.	Innovative Programming, Community-Centered Planning, Sustainable Stewardship	MT-LT
4.2.15	Initiate a conceptual site design process to explore expanded public use and infrastructure improvements at the County Farm.	Innovative Programming, Community-Centered Planning, Strategic Investment, Sustainable Stewardship	MT-LT

Recommendation 3: Expand and broaden recreation programs, activities, and events to activate Guilford county's park system and maximize park visitation.			
#	**Action Item**	**Guiding Principle**	**Timeframe**
4.3.1	Utilize natural settings, such as lakesides, shaded groves, and open meadows, etc. to provide fitness and wellness activities like outdoor yoga, tai chi, and guided mindfulness walks.	Innovative Programming, Operational Excellence, Sustainable Stewardship, Identity and Sense of Place	ST
4.3.2	Engage universities or community colleges to bring in health and exercise science students for volunteer-led wellness programming.	Transparent Communication, Innovative Programming,	ST-MT

4.3.3	Continue to make outdoor recreation and environmental education the focal point of Guilford county's park system. Highlight the park system's diverse natural assets, including trails, waterways, forests, and open spaces, and unique natural heritage found throughout preserves and passive parks to create a stronger connection between residents and the outdoors.	Identity and Sense of Place, Innovative Programming, Operational Excellence, Sustainable Stewardship	Ongoing
4.3.4	Develop an outdoor adventure series for teens, featuring orienteering, survival skills, backcountry navigation, and outdoor leadership training. Partner with local outdoor retailers and outfitters to provide gear demonstrations, workshops, and guided experiences.	Innovative Programming, Operational Excellence, Sustainable Stewardship, Strategic Investment	MT
4.3.5	Introduce seasonal challenges like hiking and paddling excursions, and adventure-based activities to encourage year-round use of trails, waterways, and open spaces.	Innovative Programming, Operational Excellence, Sustainable Stewardship	ST-MT
4.3.6	Activate Hagan-Stone Park campground with year-round outdoor recreation opportunities like beginner-friendly outdoor skills workshops, treasure hunts, geocaching, guided night hikes, movie nights and other activities for campers.	Innovative Programming, Operational Excellence, Strategic Investment, Sustainable Stewardship, Identity and Sense of Place	ST-MT
4.3.7	Enhance the role of the Frank Sharpe Jr. Wildlife Education Center as a hub for nature learning and outdoor engagement.	Innovative Programming, Operational Excellence, Sustainable Stewardship, Identity and Sense of Place	MT
4.3.8	Develop an environmental education initiative incorporating partnerships with schools, conservation groups, and outdoor educators to provide hands-on workshops, guided nature walks, and seasonal programs that highlight local ecosystems, wildlife, and sustainability practices	Innovative Programming, Operational Excellence, Sustainable Stewardship, Identity and Sense of Place	ST-MT
4.3.9	Explore partnerships with hospitals and insurance providers to fund or cost-share community fitness initiatives.	Innovative Programming, Transparent Communication,	ST-MT

4.3.10	Offer specialized wellness programs for targeted audiences such as senior-friendly movement classes, parent-child fitness sessions, and prenatal yoga.	Innovative Programming, Strategic Investment	ST
4.3.11	Develop activation plans for existing indoor meeting and event centers that would focus on potential activity and program offerings.	Strategic Investment, Operational Excellence, Innovative Programming	MT
4.3.12	Partner with volunteers and local experts to offer low-cost sessions such as arts and crafts, DIY projects, indoor herb gardening, and beginner-friendly skill-building classes.	Strategic Investment, Operational Excellence, Innovative Programming, Community-Centered Planning	ST-MT
4.3.13	Designate open hours for activities like chair yoga, stretching, light aerobics, meditation, and social meetups such as book clubs or coffee chats.	Innovative Programming, Strategic Investment, Operational Excellence	ST-MT

Recommendation 4: Establish park districts based on geographic service areas, accessibility gaps, and community needs, using a phased implementation approach to enhance fair access, streamline operations, and improve resource allocation.			
#	**Action Item**	**Guiding Principle**	**Timeframe**
4.4.1	Conduct a needs assessment for each district to identify district-specific park improvement investments, such as adding trails, upgrading facilities, or expanding recreation programming, particularly in high-vulnerability areas in parts of Greensboro.	Strategic Investment, Equitable Access, Operational Excellence, Sustainable Stewardship, Innovative Programming, Community-Centered Planning	MT-LT
4.4.2	Implement a phased investment strategy for capital improvements and new park developments in the most underserved districts first, using data-driven metrics to guide future investments.	Strategic Investment, Equitable Access, Community-Centered Planning	MT-LT

4.4.3	Enhance maintenance and staffing resources by district – allocating dedicated maintenance crews and programming staff to each district, ensuring that parks in socially and health-vulnerable areas receive equitable levels of service and park upkeep.	Strategic Investment, Equitable Access, Operational Excellence, Community-Centered Planning, Empowered Workforce	MT-LT
4.4.4	Acquire new parkland and easements in key underserved areas such as the northeastern portion of the county along US-29 near Browns Summit, the southeastern portion along US-421 near Pleasant Garden, and the western portion along NC-68 near Oak Ridge, where accessibility gaps remain.	Strategic Investment, Equitable Access, Community-Centered Planning, Sustainable Stewardship	LT
4.4.5	Initiate a fresh master planning process for Bryan Park North, in collaboration with the City of Greensboro, to reassess community needs, evaluate existing amenities, and determine future park development priorities. This plan should establish a clear vision, phased implementation strategy, and updated cost estimates to guide investment in the 534-acre site.	Strategic Investment, Equitable Access, Community-Centered Planning, Sustainable Stewardship	ST

Recommendation 5: Provide consistently high standards of service by ensuring staff are trained and equipped to meet community expectations.			
#	**Action Item**	**Guiding Principle**	**Timeframe**
4.5.1	Establish a structured training curriculum that includes customer service, safety protocols, and park-specific skills.	Empowered Workforce, Strategic Investment, Operational Excellence	ST-MT
4.5.2	Provide staff with updated equipment, software, and mobile tools to streamline operations and improve efficiency. Examples include work order management apps, GPS-enabled maintenance tools, and scheduling software.	Empowered Workforce, Strategic Investment, Operational Excellence	ST-MT
4.5.3	Designate “power users,” trainers, and internal coaches within each division to assist with onboarding, answer peer questions, and reinforce staff confidence with new systems and tools.	Empowered Workforce, Strategic Investment, Operational Excellence	ST
4.5.4	Streamline software and technology adoption by limiting concurrent rollouts and focusing on high-priority tools to maximize efficiency.	Empowered Workforce, Strategic Investment, Operational Excellence	Ongoing

4.5.5	Create opportunities for staff to shadow colleagues in other roles, such as maintenance, programming, or customer service, to gain a broader understanding of park operations.	Empowered Workforce, Strategic Investment, Operational Excellence	ST
4.5.6	Encourage staff to pursue CPRP certification through the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) to strengthen knowledge of park planning, program management, operations, and leadership.	Empowered Workforce, Strategic Investment, Operational Excellence	Ongoing
4.5.7	Enroll staff in the two-year NRPA Maintenance Management and Revenue Schools at Oglebay, the to gain insight into developing and managing a wide variety of maintenance programs.	Empowered Workforce, Strategic Investment, Operational Excellence	MT

Recommendation 6: Establish internal champions and implementers to lead change and innovation across the department.			
#	**Action Item**	**Guiding Principle**	**Timeframe**
4.6.1	Identify staff leaders to serve as champions for piloting new ideas, lead innovation, and report back on outcomes and lessons learned.	Empowered Workforce, Strategic Investment, Operational Excellence	ST
4.6.2	Provide leadership training to equip champions and implementers with communication, facilitation, and problem-solving skills.	Empowered Workforce, Strategic Investment, Operational Excellence	ST
4.6.3	Form cross-divisional working groups of implementers to help guide major projects, from capital planning to community outreach.	Empowered Workforce, Strategic Investment, Operational Excellence	ST-MT

5. Our People Matter

"We provide a positive work environment that supports the financial, physical, mental, and social wellbeing of our team members"

Recommendation 1: Cultivate meaningful relationships between Guilford County Parks staff and community members by creating opportunities for participation through volunteer programs, events and collaborative planning initiatives.

#	Action Item	Guiding Principle	Timeframe
5.1.1	Encourage community members to volunteer for projects like trail maintenance, habitat restoration, or park beautification. Include opportunities for participants to interact with Guilford County Parks staff through educational talks or guided tours of park improvements to build stronger connections and shared ownership.	Community-Centered Planning, Innovative Programming, Sustainable Stewardship Operational Excellence	ST-MT
5.1.2	Recruit and train dedicated community volunteers to act as "Parks Ambassadors," providing information at events, assisting with recreational programming, and gathering community feedback. These ambassadors can serve as liaisons between the department and the public, ensuring open communication and active community engagement.	Community-Centered Planning, Innovative Programming, Transparent Communication	MT-LT
5.1.3	Implement creative engagement where community members can offer insight on new amenities, trail designs, or programming ideas for parks. Use interactive tools like maps, surveys, and brainstorming sessions to encourage creative input while strengthening the department's relationship with the community.	Community-Centered Planning, Innovative Programming, Transparent Communication	MT-LT
5.1.4	Establish a Guilford County Parks Foundation nonprofit organization to secure private funding, sponsorships, and grants for park projects, facilities, and conservation initiatives. Engage local businesses, philanthropic organizations, and community leaders to serve on the foundation's board, guiding efforts to fund high-impact initiatives such as greenway expansions, signature destination facilities like an amphitheater or outdoor adventure park, and large-scale capital improvements to enhance park infrastructure and amenities.	Community-Centered Planning, Strategic Investment, Operational Excellence, Transparent Communication	LT

Recommendation 2: Promote a positive work environment by supporting staff with opportunities for professional development, leadership roles, and meaningful recognition.			
#	**Action Item**	**Guiding Principle**	**Timeframe**
5.2.1	Recognize staff who demonstrate exceptional service, innovation, or community engagement.	Empowered Workforce, Operational Excellence, Transparent Communication, Strategic Investment	MT
5.2.2	Create mentorship programs, cross-training sessions, and workshops to prepare staff for leadership roles within the department. Focus on equipping team members with decision- making, conflict resolution, and project management skills to enhance overall service delivery.	Empowered Workforce, Operational Excellence, Transparent Communication, Strategic Investment	ST-MT
5.2.3	Organize an annual team retreat focused on strengthening collaboration, building camaraderie, and fostering professional growth. Incorporate team-building activities, skill development workshops, and brainstorming sessions to align staff around shared goals while promoting a positive and supportive work culture. This retreat would serve as both a reward and an investment in staff well-being and engagement.	Empowered Workforce, Operational Excellence, Transparent Communication, Strategic Investment	MT-LT


3 FT

GUILFORD COUNTY, NC

PARKS

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Recreation programs and services form the essential foundation of park and recreation systems. The goal of the program assessment is to understand current recreation program and activity offerings, as well as recommendations for additional programming to meet community needs and priorities identified in the community needs assessment.

The assessment helps identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities regarding programming. The assessment also assists in identifying core programs, program gaps within the community, key system-wide issues, areas of improvement, and future programs and services for residents and visitors.

The recommendations within this report align with the Guilford County Parks and Recreation's overall mission and vision within the strategic plan. These practices have been proven to lead to improved planning, better service delivery, and enhanced community satisfaction. Streamlining processes can make for smoother daily operations. Additionally, improved data analysis and strategic planning for recreation programming lead to more informed decision making and better program execution.

The program findings and comments are based on a review of information provided by Guilford County Parks & Recreation ("GCPR") staff and partners including program descriptions, financial data, and website content. This report addresses the program offerings from a systems perspective for the entire portfolio of programs and analyzes how these offerings differ for each unique park or facility within the park system.

FRAMEWORK

The Guilford County Parks and Recreation Department aims to ensure that every corner of the community has access to enriching recreational opportunities. GCPR offers a wide range of facilities including athletic fields and courts, aquatic centers, camping sites, dog parks, fishing areas, golf courses, and driving ranges. They also have meeting and event centers at Bur-Mil Park, Hagan-Stone Park, and Northeast Park.

Overall, GCPR operates seven regional parks for the public to enjoy, including:

- Bur-Mil Park
- Gibson Park
- Hagan-Stone Park
- Northeast Park
- Southwest Park

In addition to these properties, the county also manages Triad Park and Guilford-Mackintosh Park as well as approximately 1,800 acres of preserves for conservation and passive recreation opportunities.

GCPR became its own department separate from the county's facilities department in 2021. As the agency looks to position itself to address future community priorities for recreational services, this analysis will provide valuable insights that will inform leadership on potential program strategies for smart growth and expansion.

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

FINDINGS

As a part of the program assessment process, staff identified the strengths, challenges, and key priorities for improvement for their recreational services. The findings as well as high level recommendations outlined below help inform program data analysis, as submitted by GCPR staff.

Program Management

GCPR primarily manages its programs through partnerships and contract management. While this approach fosters collaboration and diversity in offerings, there is a need for better data collection from contractors to inform decision-making processes effectively. GCPR should look to develop a comprehensive data collection system to gather feedback from contractors and its participants, enabling informed decision-making and enhancing program efficacy.

Additional Resources for New Programming

Expanding program offerings requires additional resources, including staffing and services. These resources are vital for ensuring the successful implementation and sustainability of new programs. GCPR will need to proactively plan through its budget development process to allocate additional resources for staffing and services to support the development and execution of new programs, aligning with community needs and interests.

Cost Recovery Goals and Program Outcomes

Establishing cost recovery goals will be crucial for ensuring financial sustainability and accountability. This approach enables GCPR to allocate resources efficiently while maximizing community benefits. The Program Assessment will provide strategies to develop clear cost recovery goals and integrate regular program evaluation mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of programs regularly.

Strengths of Recreation Programming

GCPR identified several strengths with their current offerings to build on for future planning, including:

- GCPR offers affordable or free programming, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility for all community members.
- The department offers unique programs tailored to specific locations, enhancing community engagement and satisfaction.
- Programs are selectively curated based on subject experience, ensuring high-quality offerings that meet community interests and standards.
- The strategic location of parks ensures comprehensive geographical coverage, reaching all corners of the county with the city at the center.

GCPR should continue to explore opportunities for securing grants or sponsorships to supplement earned income revenue while ensuring affordable options to include all residents are planned in the future. Additionally, by conducting regular community needs assessments and collecting feedback from participants

on programming offerings, GCPR will ensure relevant programming and be able to make decisions on continuous improvement of its services.

Current Challenges

- GCPR faces challenges in establishing a distinct identity, which may affect brand recognition and community engagement.
- The department grapples with deferred maintenance issues and the need for new capital development, which could impact the overall quality of facilities and services.
- Some park properties lack alternative transportation opportunities, posing accessibility challenges for certain community members. ADA upgrades are also needed to ensure compliance with accessibility standards, facilitating inclusivity and participation for individuals with disabilities.

GCPR should focus its future communications on a branding initiative to establish a cohesive identity that emphasizes its unique offerings, values, and contributions to the community's quality of life. The department should also prioritize capital improvement projects based on data from community needs assessments and look to implement a variety of funding strategies that help address current enhancements needed as well as new projects that are on the horizon. Lastly, GCPR should develop a comprehensive ADA compliance plan that will inform leadership on priorities for necessary upgrades and renovations that will ensure full accessibility to recreation facilities and programming.

Priorities for Improvement

- Invest in infrastructure to streamline program management processes, enhancing efficiency and effectiveness in program delivery.
- Establish clear guidelines on the expansion of programs, including the determination of the number of programs to be offered and the facilitators responsible for their implementation.
- Address staffing challenges and define staffing needs based on operational requirements, ensuring optimal organizational structure and resource allocation.

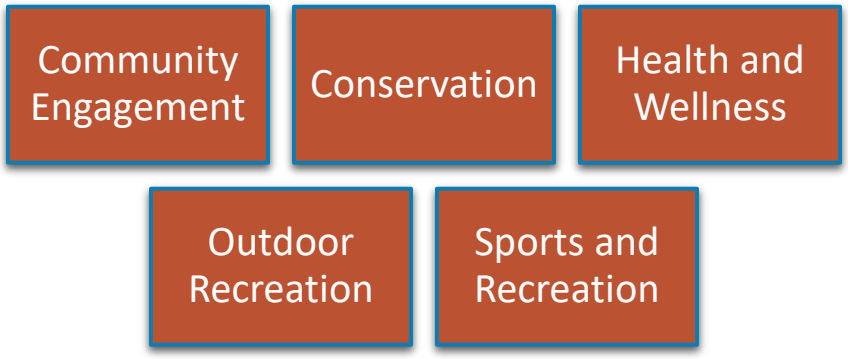
Investments in upgraded technology solutions for program scheduling, registration, and evaluation will help streamline administrative processes and enhance operational efficiency. GCPR should gather a team of stakeholders from various departments and partners to define a strategic plan for program expansion that has clear objectives, timelines, and performance metrics. Lastly, a staffing needs assessment would identify gaps and areas for improvement, recommend professional development opportunities, as well as strategies for recruitment and retention of employees for the future expansion of services.

CORE PROGRAM AREAS

It is important to identify core program areas based on current and future needs to create a sense of focus around specific program areas of greatest importance to the community. Public recreation is challenged by the premise of being all things to all people. The philosophy of the core program areas is to assist staff, policy makers, and the public to focus on what is most important to the community. Program areas are considered as core if they meet most of the following criteria:

- *The program area has been provided for an extended period (over 4-5 years) and/or is expected by the community.*
- *The program area consumes a relatively sizable portion (5% or more) of the Commission's overall budget.*
- *The program area is offered 3-4 seasons per year.*
- *The program area has wide demographic appeal.*
- *There is a tiered level of skill development available within the program area's offerings.*
- *There are full-time staff responsible for the program area.*
- *There are facilities designed specifically to support the program area.*
- *The Commission controls a significant percentage (20% or more) of the local market.*

EXISTING CORE PROGRAM AREAS



- *Community Engagement: Engage the community through access to park facilities for gatherings and events, volunteer opportunities, and unique programming.*
- *Conservation: Promote conservation of natural resources and environmental education through park amenities and programs.*
- *Health and Wellness: Offer wellness activities, fitness classes, and recreational programs promoting healthy lifestyles for all ages.*
- *Outdoor Recreation: Offer outdoor spaces, trails, and recreational opportunities for hiking, biking, fishing, and boating.*
- *Sports and Recreation: Provide sports fields, leagues, and recreational activities promoting fitness, teamwork, and community engagement.*

EXISTING CORE PROGRAM AREA RECOMMENDATIONS

GCPR has unique park properties and facilities throughout the park system. This provides many opportunities for different experiences when its park visitors and residents look to participate in programming depending on their interests. Currently, the core program area descriptions and goals or desired outcomes slightly differ for each park.

As the department looks to focus on the services that are the most important to the community and have the highest unmet need in the region, it will be critical for GCPR to have consistent goals and outcomes to guide staff on the expansion of services that highlight the uniqueness of each park while ensuring alignment with the overarching mission of GCPR.

Steps to ensure that future programs and activities are aligned with the needs and priorities of the community as well as GCPR resources include:

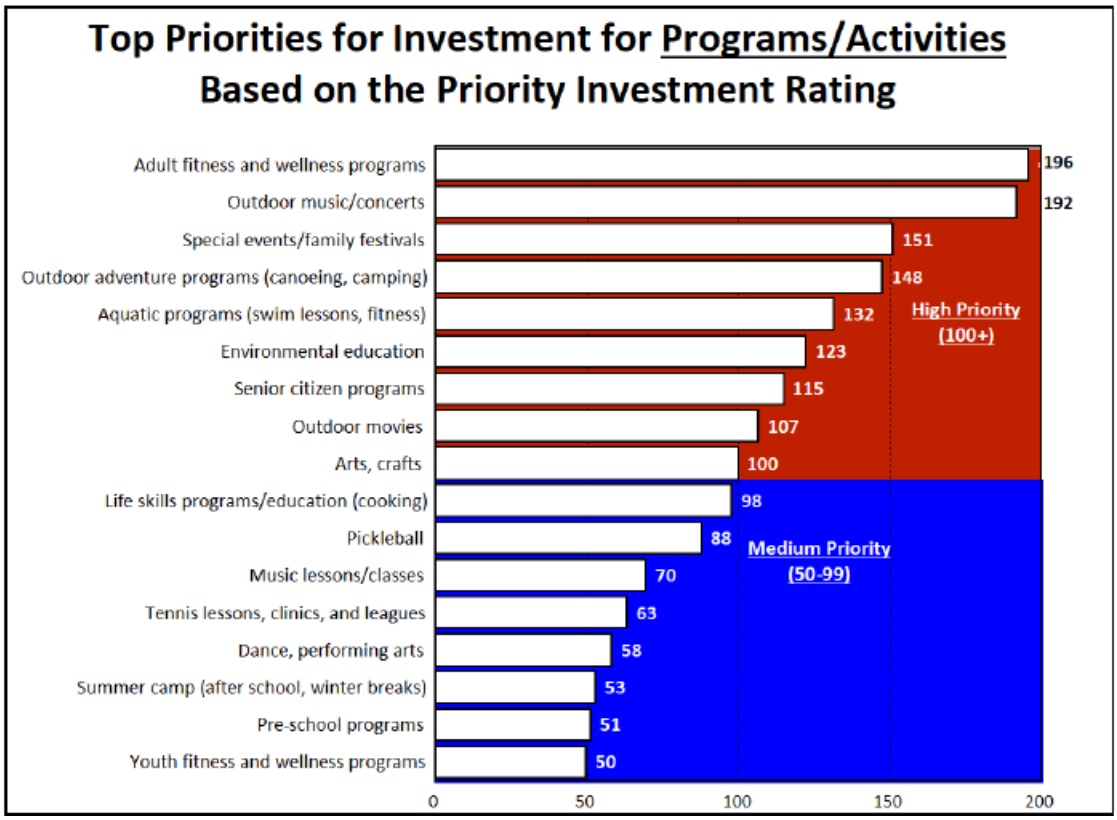
- Utilize needs assessment data to determine community demographics, interests, and preferences for programming and activities.
- Adjust the GCPR mission, vision, and strategic goals according to community priorities. All core program areas should be aligned with the mission and vision of the organization.
- Each core program area should have a consistent description that explains the objectives and target audience. It should also include details such as the types of programs offered, expected participant outcomes, and any specialized equipment or facilities that may be necessary.
- Goals and outcomes for each core program area should align with GCPR's overall objectives, and define realistic, measurable key performance indicators such as an increase in participation rates, health and wellness enhancement, or educational benefits.
- Develop a Program Development and Resource Guide that clearly describes the core program areas and department expectations for program staff planning, implementation, and evaluation.
- Regularly review program performance and update core program areas based on participant feedback, changing community needs, emerging trends, and best practices.

POTENTIAL NEW CORE PROGRAM AREAS

Community Priorities

GCPR distributed a statistically valid survey in the spring of 2024 that has identified several priorities for program planning focus. The top priority for investment, as determined by Priority Index Ratios (PIR) that equally weighs the unmet needs and importance residents place on the programming, includes:

- Adult fitness and wellness programs
- Outdoor music/concerts
- Special events/family festivals
- Outdoor adventure programs
- Aquatic programs (swim lessons, fitness)
- Environmental education
- Senior citizen programs
- Outdoor movies
- Arts, crafts



Priority Investment Rating (PIR) for recreation programming, ETC Institute, 2024 – *The PIR equally weighs the importance that residents place on programming and how many residents have unmet needs for the program.*

PROGRAM STRATEGY ANALYSIS

In general, GCPR program staff should continue the cycle of evaluating programs on both individual merit as well as the overall program mix. This can be completed at one time on an annual basis, or in batches at key seasonal points of the year, if each program is checked once per year. The following tools and strategies can help facilitate this evaluation process:

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND RESOURCE GUIDE

A Program Development and Resource Guide that outlines a program development process can assist programming staff and create consistency in service delivery. This includes a worksheet that staff would fill out when proposing a new program or update to a current program. The worksheet outlines critical program details including projected expenses that are used to establish the program fee. The worksheet also asks for information related to program outcomes, marketing tactics, and whether a similar program is offered elsewhere within the community.

Also, as a part of the program development process, GCPR should consider comparing planned programs and prioritizing resources using additional data points, such as potential partnership or sponsorship opportunities, market competition, and the program's priority investment ranking from the community needs assessment survey. This additional analysis will help staff make an informed, objective case for the public when a program is in decline, but beloved by a few, is retired. A strong case is made for resources to be allocated to the program/service if it has a high priority ranking, appropriate cost recovery, good age segment appeal, good partnership potential, and strong market conditions.

MACMILLAN MATRIX

The GCPR service district has many leisure and recreation opportunities available to residents offered by GCPR and other providers in the local government, non-profit, and private sectors. With limited resources, GCPR cannot realistically provide all recreation opportunities at a high level. Leadership should continuously assess its services to ensure they are not duplicating a program or activity that is already addressing a need in the community. The MacMillan Matrix is a tool that can help staff determine if specific program areas are the right strategic investment for GCPR.

MacMillan Matrix		High Program Attractiveness		Low Program Attractiveness	
		Other organizations cover this.	**Few other organizations cover this.**	**Other organizations cover this.**	**Few other organizations cover this.**
Good Fit With Mission and Abilities	**Strong** Competitive Position	Affirm this program and negotiate functions with other organizations.	Grow in order to provide this service to the community.	Collaborate to share the load or help to find resources.	"Soul of the Organization" - find support for this or limit its scope.
	Weak Competitive Position	Give this away quickly.	Decide with other organizations who should do this.	Give this to other organizations, supportively.	Collaborate to share the load or give it away.
Poor Fit With Mission and Abilities		Give this away quickly.		Give this away systematically.	

MacMillan Matrix – *A method to determine the best services to offer as an agency.*

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Key performance indicators ("KPIs") are essential in the overall recreation programming strategy because they provide metrics that assess the effectiveness and impact of programs. By tracking KPIs such as participant numbers, program satisfaction rates, and cost recovery percentages, GCPR can gauge how well its programs meet community needs and priorities. This data-driven approach will enable GCPR to make informed decisions, optimize resource allocation, and justify funding requests. Furthermore, KPIs help identify trends and areas for improvement, ensuring that the recreation programs remain relevant, inclusive, and engaging for diverse community members.

For recreation staff and agency leadership, KPIs foster accountability and transparency, facilitating a clear understanding of individual and team contributions towards GCPR goals. Regular monitoring and reporting on KPIs create a culture of continuous improvement and performance excellence. Staff can align their efforts with strategic priorities, focusing on initiatives that yield the highest community benefits. Additionally, KPIs enable leadership to recognize and reward outstanding performance, promote professional development, and cultivate a motivated workforce dedicated to enhancing the quality of life of the community through exceptional recreation programming.

ENHANCED TECHNOLOGY FOR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The use of artificial intelligence ("AI") and enhanced technology can enhance efficiency through automated tasks and allow staff to be used in different, potentially more effective ways. Here are some ways that GCPR could leverage technology to enhance its services:

- AI chatbots like ChatGPT are being used to provide detailed responses to instruction prompts and assist with a range of ideation and writing-heavy tasks.
- AI is being used to streamline operations such as recruitment, training, and employee management. It is also used for analyzing financial data, budgeting, and reporting with accuracy.
- AI can automate marketing campaigns, content creation, and audience engagement.
- AI can also be used to design and manage recreational programs and events. For example, AI can help with research and data analysis to determine participation trends to recognize adjustments or enhancements that need to be made to offerings. Fitness centers are also using this technology for wellness analytics for members to help with the development of wellness plans.
- Lastly, AI can help in counting visitors, monitoring building systems, surveilling facilities, providing security, planning building improvements, and saving energy.

AGE SEGMENT ANALYSIS

For this report, an Age Segment Analysis was completed by individual park property and its core program areas, exhibiting an over-arching view of the age segments served by different program areas and displaying any gaps in segments served. It is also useful to perform an Age Segment Analysis by individual programs, to gain a more nuanced view of the data.

Appendix A depicts each park property, the core program area and the most prominent age segments they serve. Recognizing that many core program areas serve multiple age segments, Primary (noted with a 'P') and Secondary (noted with an 'S') markets are identified.

Staff should continue to monitor demographic shifts and program offerings to ensure that the needs of each age group are being met. It is best practice to establish a program plan for each program or activity that identifies what age segment to target, establishes the right type of message and desired program outcome, which marketing method(s) to use, and determines what to measure for success before allocating resources towards a particular effort.

PROGRAM LIFECYCLE

Lifecycle Analysis				
Stages	Description	Actual Programs Distribution		Recommended Distribution
Introduction	New Programs; modest participation	8%	58%	50%-60% Total
Take-Off	Rapid participation growth	7%		
Growth	Moderate, but consistent participation growth	43%		
Mature	Slow participation growth	27%	*27%*	*40%*
Saturated	Minimal to no participation growth; extreme competition	8%	*16%*	*0%-10% Total*
Decline	Declining participation	8%		

Figure 1: Lifecycle Analysis – *GCPR staff should carefully review the programs in the Saturated and Declining stages, as these make up a higher percentage of the overall programming portfolio than is recommended.*

A program lifecycle analysis involves reviewing each program offered by GCPR to determine the stage of growth or decline for each. This informs strategic decisions about the overall mix of programs managed by the agency to ensure that an appropriate number of programs are "fresh" and that few programs, if any, need to be discontinued. This analysis is not based on strict quantitative data, but rather, is based on staff members' knowledge of their programs. The percentages in ***Figure 1*** were obtained by comparing the number of programs in each individual stage with the total number of programs listed by staff members.

Program Lifecycles

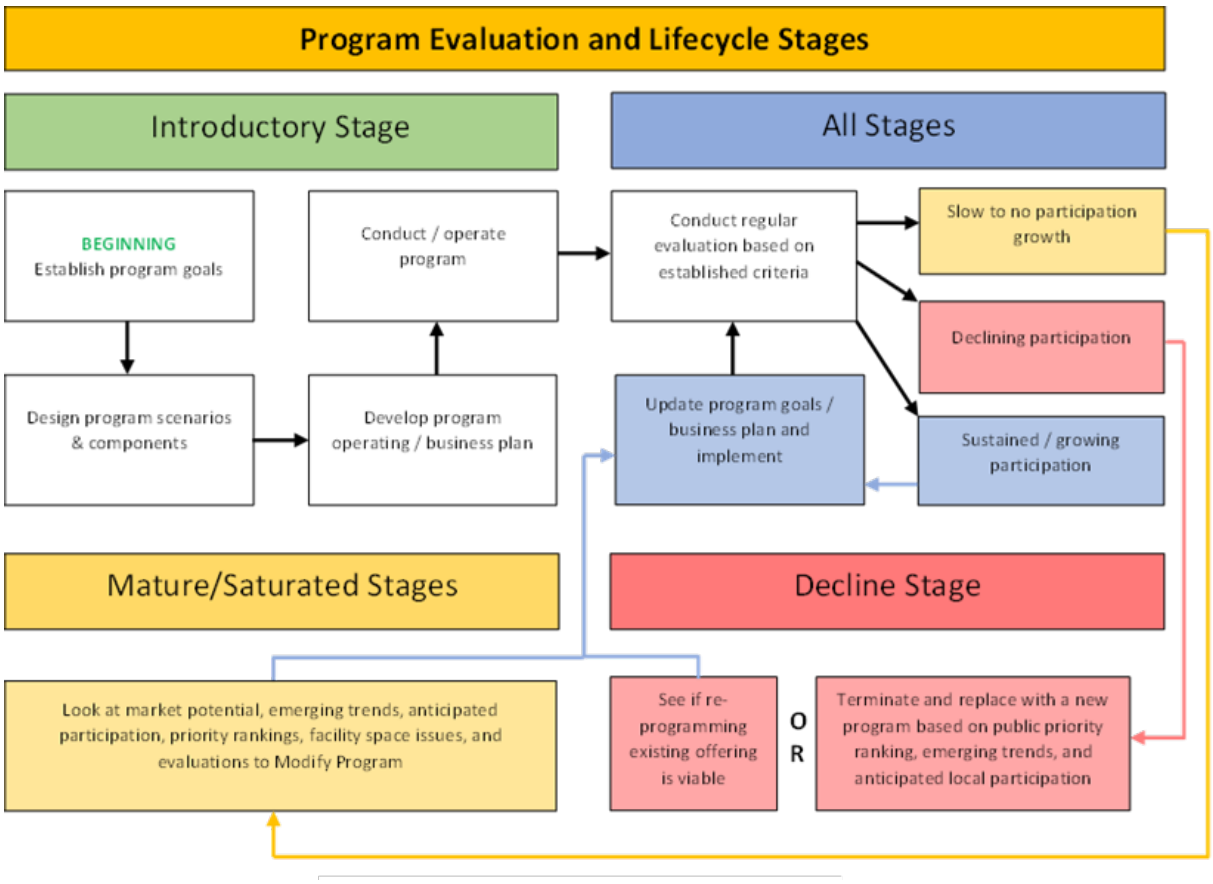
- Conduct an annual review of all programs to determine their stages of growth or decline and adjust the portfolio as needed to maintain balance and innovation.
- Aim for 50-60% of programs in the beginning stages to energize offerings and ensure a pipeline for future mature programs.
- Implement annual performance metrics for each core program area to track participation growth, customer retention, and the introduction of new programs, fostering innovation and alignment with community needs and trends.

It is recommended to have fifty to sixty percent of all programs within the beginning stages because it provides GCPR with an avenue to energize its programmatic offerings. These stages ma the pipeline for new programs is there prior to programs transitioning into the Mature stage. Currently, fifty eight percent of GCPR's programs fall within the beginning stages.

According to staff, twenty seven percent of all program offerings fall into the Mature Stage. This stage anchors a program portfolio, and it is recommended to have forty percent of programs within the Mature category to achieve a stable foundation. It is expected that this percentage will grow soon as the large number of programs in the growth stage transition to mature over time.

Additionally, sixteen percent of programs are identified as Saturated or Declining. It is a natural progression for programs to eventually evolve into saturation and decline stages. However, if programs reach these stages rapidly, it could be an indication that the quality of the programs does not meet expectations, or there is not as much of a demand for the programs. As programs enter the Decline Stage, they must be closely reviewed and evaluated for repositioning or elimination. When this occurs, GCPR should modify these programs to begin a new lifecycle within the Introductory Stage or replace the existing programs with innovative programs based upon community needs and trends.

Staff should complete a Program Lifecycle Analysis on an annual basis and ensure that the percentage distribution closely aligns with desired performance. Furthermore, GCPR could include annual performance measures for each core program area to track participation growth, customer retention, and percentage of new programs as an incentive for innovation and alignment with community trends.



Program Lifecycle Evaluation Process *- Recommended for each program at least on an annual basis*

PROGRAM CLASSIFICATION

Conducting a classification of services analysis informs how each program serves the overall organization mission, the goals and objectives of each core program area, and how the program should be funded with tax dollars and/or user fees and charges. Where a program or service is classified depends upon alignment with the organizational mission, how the public perceives a program, legal mandates, financial sustainability, personal benefit, competition in the marketplace, and access by participants. Program classifications can also help to determine the most appropriate management, funding, and marketing strategies.

With assistance from staff, a classification of programs and services was conducted for all the recreation programs offered by GCPR. The results presented in ***Figure 2*** represent the current classification distribution of recreation program services. Programs should be assigned cost recovery goal ranges, through a GCPR pricing policy, for the different classifications or core program areas.

GCPR staff have classified nearly half of their programs (47 percent) within the essential category which means these programs closely align with the agency mission and likely have a high public expectation. Essential programs traditionally have a lower cost recovery expectation and are covered by other revenue sources such as an appropriate level of tax distribution from the community's fiscal authority.

When comparing the program classification to the most recent community survey, the core program areas and majority of the programs that were classified as essential align with community priorities for programs

and activities. Community events and outdoor adventure and environmental education programs likely have low competition in the surrounding market which can also drive the pricing strategy for these programs.

However, due the nature of limited tax revenue, GCPR should determine whether more of their programs that primarily serve individuals can move to the important or value-added categories and create more earned income opportunities for the agency through higher program fees and cost recovery levels. Sports as well as most fitness and wellness programming are typically classified in the important or value added categories.

Program Classification			
Factors	**Essential**	**Important**	**Value-Added**
Public interest; Legal Mandate; Mission Alignment	High public expectation	High public expectation	High individual and interest group expectation
Financial Sustainability	Free, nominal or fee tailored to public needs, Requires public funding	Fees cover some direct costs, Requires a balance of public funding and a cost recovery target	Fees cover most direct and indirect costs, Some public funding as appropriate
Benefits (health, safety, protection of assets, etc.)	Substantial public benefit (negative consequence if not provided)	Public and individual benefit	Primarily individual benefit
Competition in the Market	Limited or no alternative providers	Alternative providers unable to meet demand or need	Alternative providers readily available
Access	Open access by all	Open access Limited access to specific users	Limited access to specific users
Best Practice Cost Recovery Goal*	*0 - 50%*	*50% - 75%*	*75% - 100%+*
Program Distribution	**47%**	**31%**	**22%**

Figure 2: Program Classification – *Nearly half of GCPR's programming falls in the Essential category which typically has a high public and low cost recovery expectation.*

PROGRAM STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS

Implementing a planned, strategic approach to recreation programming is crucial for enhancing service delivery and meeting community needs effectively. By adopting a structured framework, GCPR can ensure that their programs are consistently aligned with organizational goals, financially sustainable, and responsive to demographic shifts and market demands. A strategic approach enables data-driven decision-making, fosters innovation, and enhances accountability, ultimately leading to more relevant, inclusive, and high-quality recreational offerings. This proactive planning not only improves participant satisfaction but also strengthens the agency's ability to secure funding and resources, thereby sustaining and expanding its impact within the community.

A comprehensive Program Development and Resource Guide is essential for ensuring consistent service delivery in recreation programming. This guide should include a detailed worksheet for proposing new programs or updating existing ones, covering critical aspects such as projected expenses, program outcomes, marketing tactics, and comparisons with similar community offerings. Additionally, GCPR should use data points like market competition and community needs assessments to prioritize resources and justify program decisions. Implementing a structured approach like the MacMillan Matrix can help avoid duplication of efforts and ensure strategic investments in the right programs. Key performance indicators (KPIs) are also crucial, allowing GCPR to measure effectiveness and impact, track trends, and make data-driven decisions to optimize resources and enhance program relevance.

Integrating technology and AI can further enhance efficiency for staff. AI can automate tasks like recruitment, training, financial analysis, marketing campaigns, and even the design and management of programs. Regular analysis should be performed on programming moving forward to ensure GCPR adapts to changing recreation trends and the community demographics. An Age Segment Analysis should be conducted to ensure that program offerings meet the needs of different demographic groups, while a Program Lifecycle Analysis helps maintain a balanced mix of new and mature programs. Regularly updating this analysis ensures that programs remain fresh and responsive to community demands. A program classification analysis is also important for aligning programs with organizational goals, funding strategies, and community priorities, ensuring a sustainable mix of essential, important, and value-added services.

Strategy Recommendations

- Create and implement a comprehensive Program Development and Resource Guide for consistent service delivery in recreation programming.
- Establish Key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure effectiveness and impact, track trends, and make data-driven decisions to optimize resources and enhance program relevance.
- Perform an annual analysis on programming to adapt to changing recreation trends and the community demographics.

COST OF SERVICE & COST RECOVERY

PRICING

Pricing strategies are one mechanism agencies can use to influence cost recovery. Pricing tactics used most consistently by staff include regularly assessing market rate, ensuring rates achieve cost recovery goals, age segments, and determining the customer's ability to pay. ***Appendix A*** details various pricing methods currently in place for each individual park property as well as additional strategies that could be implemented over time.

- Pricing by age segment and customer's ability to pay
- Varying levels of cost recovery expectations for individual parks

Moving forward, GCPR should consider researching any untapped pricing strategies and the impact they could have on cost recovery goals. For instance, GCPR could enhance their marketing budget by adding a marketing fee for those value-added programs that require more extensive promotions or increase earned income through differential pricing strategies such as prime time and non-prime time for programs and facilities that are in high demand.

COST OF SERVICE

Cost recovery targets should at least be identified for each core program area at a minimum, and for specific programs or events when realistic. The previously identified core program areas would serve as an effective breakdown for tracking cost recovery metrics including administrative costs. Theoretically, staff should review how programs are grouped for similar cost recovery and subsidy goals to determine if current practices still meet management outcomes.

Determining cost recovery performance and using it to make informed pricing decisions involves a three-step process:

1. Classify all programs and services based on the public or private benefit they provide (as completed in the previous section).

2. Conduct a Cost-of-Service Analysis to calculate the full cost of each program.

3. Establish a cost recovery percentage, through GCPR policy, for each program or program type based on the outcomes of the previous two steps and adjust program prices accordingly.

The following section provides more details on steps 2 & 3.

UNDERSTANDING THE FULL COST OF SERVICE

To develop specific cost recovery targets, full cost of accounting needs to be created for each class or program that accurately calculates direct and indirect costs. Cost recovery goals are established once these numbers are in place, and GCPR's program staff should be trained on this process. A Cost-of-Service Analysis should be conducted on each program, or program type, that accurately calculates direct (i.e., program-specific) and indirect (i.e., comprehensive, including administrative overhead) costs. Completing a Cost-of-Service Analysis not only helps determine the true and full cost of offering a program, but it also provides information that can be used to price programs based upon accurate delivery costs. Figure 8 illustrates the common types of costs that must be accounted for in a Cost-of-Service Analysis.

The methodology for determining the total Cost-of-Service involves calculating the total cost for the activity, program, or service, then calculating the total revenue earned for that activity. Costs (and revenue) can also be derived on a per unit basis. Program or activity units may include:

- Number of participants
- Number of tasks performed
- Number of consumable units
- Number of service calls
- Number of events
- Required time for offering program/service



Full Cost of Service

Agencies use Cost-of-Service Analysis to determine what financial resources are required to provide specific programs at specific levels of service. Results are used to determine and track cost recovery as well as to benchmark different programs provided by GCPR. Cost recovery goals are established once Cost-of-Service totals have been calculated. Program staff should be trained in the process of conducting a Cost-of-Service Analysis and the process should be undertaken on a regular basis.

MARKETING, VOLUNTEERS, AND PARTNERSHIPS

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS RECOMMENDATIONS

Effective communication strategies require striking an appropriate balance between the content with the volume of messaging, while utilizing the "right" methods of delivery. GCPR utilizes many of the traditional delivery methods for promoting programs. However, it is imperative to continue updating the marketing strategy annually to provide information for community needs, demographics, and recreation trends. Successful strategies will help GCPR effectively share the impact it has on the community, enhance programming and partnerships, and ultimately build a stronger connection with current and future customers.

According to the statistically valid community survey, word of mouth, Facebook, and the Guilford County Parks website (https://www.guilfordcountync.gov/our-county/county-parks) are the top three ways that respondents learn about GCPR programming.

Word of mouth can significantly influence a parks and recreation agency's efforts to increase participation in its programs, either positively or negatively. Positive experiences shared by satisfied participants can build trust, enhance the agency's reputation, and serve as cost-effective marketing, encouraging broader community engagement. Conversely, negative experiences can quickly spread, damaging the agency's reputation and deterring potential participants. To leverage positive word of mouth, agencies should focus on high-quality experiences, encourage positive feedback from returning customers or advocates, address issues or negative feedback promptly, and engage with community influencers to foster a supportive and active community presence.



As GCPR looks to make future enhancements to the website and user experience, staff should consider implementing new technology to assist with inclusionary improvements. The National Recreation and Park Association’s Equity Guide provides guidance on inclusive verbal, visual and written communication for the website and other marketing materials. (https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/Three-Pillars/equity/equity-language-guide/).

Also, a full list of website accessibility basics can be found at https://www.usability.gov/what-and-why/accessibility.html.

Currently, GCPR uses RecTrac and WebTrac for program registration and facility reservations. GCPR should consider additional tools either with its current software provider or an alternative to optimize and automate its online program registration and facility reservation process. Ease of registration is a main contributor to

customer satisfaction and there are several software providers that can offer solutions that fit the needs of GCPR and its customers.

The registration software should automate repetitive tasks such as program setup, pricing adjustments, and program roster and waitlist management. Other automation features to enhance efficiency could include customizable online forms for different programs as well as reminders and confirmation emails to streamline communication with participants. The GCPR website should eliminate as many clicks as possible for the customer to get to the point of registering for the program or activity. Multiple different paths to a customer's destination for completing the purchasing process can make it confusing and be a deterrent from registering for the program or taking advantage of the automated features that help staff with efficient program management on the backend of the software.

Marketing and Communications

- Create a marketing plan aligned with GCPR goals and annually update marketing strategies to reflect community needs. Focus on high-quality word-of-mouth, social media, and website enhancements, using inclusive and accessible communication methods.
- Enhance the online registration and user experience by using customer journey mapping to identify and resolve pain points, streamline navigation, and automate tasks to enhance customer satisfaction and operational efficiency.
- Ensure consistent branding and messaging across all platforms, regularly assess unmet community needs, and educate staff on marketing principles to boost program participation and community engagement.

Customer Journey Mapping

Customer journey mapping can significantly enhance the service delivery of programs and streamline the program registration process for GCPR by providing a detailed visualization of the user experience. This process identifies all the touchpoints and interactions a customer has with GCPR, from initial awareness and interest in a program to registration and participation. By understanding these touchpoints, GCPR can identify pain points, inefficiencies, and moments of frustration that participants might encounter. This insight allows for targeted improvements, such as simplifying online registration forms, providing clearer instructions, or ensuring staff are better trained to assist customers at various stages of their journey. Furthermore, customer journey mapping fosters a customer-centric approach, ensuring that GCPR's services align more closely with the needs and expectations of its users. By highlighting the emotional and practical aspects of the customer experience, GCPR can create more engaging and satisfying interactions, thereby increasing customer satisfaction and retention. For example, by recognizing that many users may find the initial search for program information cumbersome, the agency can redesign its website to be more user-friendly and intuitive. In turn, this can lead to higher participation rates and a more positive overall perception of the agency's offerings.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media strategies play a critical role in telling the story of a recreation agency. The right content can increase program participation and overall community awareness of GCPR services. GCPR currently uses Facebook to promote programs and events, update the community on park projects and planning efforts, and highlight other community initiatives.

GCPR should continue to focus on high-quality photos and videos that highlight their parks, facilities, programs, and their users. The agency should consider online events and challenges, live video, and partnerships with local influencers to drive more traffic to its social media channels. Additionally, maintaining

a consistent posting schedule can ensure that fresh content is always being pushed out to the community. A periodic social media audit is recommended to provide GCPR with a sound understanding on how social media impacts its programming, they are engaging with their audiences, and effective the platforms are at raising awareness of their services.

There are several components and benefits to a social media audit that are highlighted below.

- Take inventory of the platforms that are in use and whether you need them by developing Key Performance Indicators.
- Define goals for each platform to ensure multiple platforms are not pushing out the same type of content.
- Ensure branding and messaging are consistent across all platforms.
- Understand how to use social media analytics to determine where your social media traffic is coming from. Google analytics is another tool to inform BVRC about website and social media users.
- Understand the demographics and preferences on content type of BVRC social media followers and tailor the messaging to the right audience.
- Identify the top performing social media posts and build on this success with future social media campaigns.

MARKETING PLAN

The best practice is to have a specific recreation marketing plan that is in line with GCPR goals and objectives in communications. A marketing plan must be built upon and integrated with supporting plans and directly coordinate with organization vision and priorities. The plan should also provide specific guidance as to how GCPR's identity and brand is to be consistently portrayed across the multiple methods and deliverables used for communication. Below are the essential pieces to an effective marketing plan:

- Know the audience: Understand the community demographics and who GCPR is trying to reach along with their needs and interests and how they will best receive messaging. GCPR should also regularly assess the unmet needs or gaps in recreation services throughout the community.
- Define the goals that will drive specific marketing strategies: Some goals can include increasing program participation, boosting GCPR brand awareness, or improving community engagement for more informed decision making.
- Create the right message: Focus on the benefits and positive outcomes of the program. Emphasize the factors that make the program or service stand out from others in the community.
- Use the right tools and channels: Depending on the demographic and area, some channels may not resonate with community members. For instance, traditional media can reach a wider audience, but it may not be the main source for GCPR's target market. Additionally, partnerships with other community organizations can help GCPR get messaging to the right audience by sharing resources. By ensuring the right method is used, GCPR will maximize resources for marketing and communications and see positive results with engagement.
- Monitor goals and strategies regularly: GCPR should build in methods to measure the impact of the marketing plan and specific strategies to ensure necessary adjustments can be made with communications.

MARKETING TRAINING

Educating program staff on marketing principles can lead to increased awareness of services and overall participation, a stronger connection with the community, and enhanced program partnerships. Simply put, marketing training empowers program staff to take more ownership over their programs.

RECREATION PROGRAM PARTNERSHIPS

GCPR currently works with several partnering agencies, organizations, and corporations throughout the community. These partnerships support facilitation of programs and sponsorships of community events.

Tracking partnerships can demonstrate GCPR's ability to leverage resources within the community. In many instances, partnerships can be inequitable to a public agency and do not produce reasonable shared benefits between parties. It is not suggested that GCPR's existing partnerships are inequitable; rather, in general many parks and recreation agencies' partnerships tend to be one-sided.

The following recommended policies will promote fairness and equity within existing and future partnerships while helping staff to manage potential internal and external conflicts. Partnership principles for existing and future partnerships will maximize their effectiveness. These partnership principles are as follows:

- All partnerships require a working agreement with measurable outcomes and will be evaluated on a regular basis. This should include reports to GCPR on the performance and outcomes of the partnership including an annual review to determine renewal potential.
- All partnerships should track costs associated with the partnership investment to demonstrate the shared level of equity.
- All partnerships should maintain a culture that focuses on collaborative planning on a regular basis, regular communications, and annual reporting on performance and outcomes to determine renewal potential and opportunities to strengthen the partnership.

Additional partnerships can be pursued and developed with other public entities such as neighboring towns/cities, colleges, state or federal agencies, non-for-profit organizations, as well as with private or for-profit organizations. There are recommended standard policies and practices that will apply to any partnership, and those that are unique to relationships with private, for-profit entities.

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

Today's realities require most public parks and recreation BVRCs to seek productive and meaningful partnerships with both community organizations and individuals to deliver quality and seamless services to their residents. These relationships should be mutually beneficial to each party to better meet overall community needs and expand the positive impact of the agency's mission. Effective partnerships and meaningful volunteerism are key strategy areas for GCPR to meet the needs of the community in the years to come.

ESTABLISH FORMAL VOLUNTEER AND PARTNERSHIP POLICIES AND AGREEMENTS

Following the best practice listed in the previous section as well as in ***Appendix B***, continue to monitor and update established volunteer and partner policies and agreements which are tailored to the different types of volunteers and partnerships the GCPR encounters. Additionally, begin tracking volunteer metrics more consistently, including individual volunteers used annually and volunteer hours donated annually. Lastly, begin identifying measurable outcomes for each partnership and track these metrics annually.

CONCLUSION

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT ANALYSIS

The analysis of GCPR's programming highlighted several areas for enhancement and strategic development. Expanding program offerings necessitates careful planning and resource allocation, including additional staffing and support services. This will require proactive budget planning to align with community needs and sustain new programs effectively. Establishing clear cost recovery goals and integrating regular program evaluations will also ensure financial sustainability and accountability, enabling GCPR to maximize community benefits efficiently.

The department has identified future challenges such as establishing a distinct identity and balancing deferred maintenance with the need for new capital development. These challenges can impact brand recognition, program participation, and the overall quality of facilities and services. To mitigate these issues, GCPR should focus on a comprehensive marketing and communications strategy that highlights its unique offerings and contributions to the community. Prioritizing capital improvement projects based on community needs assessments and implementing a variety of funding strategies will address current needs and future projects that will help enhance program offerings.

Lastly, GCPR should leverage new technology to automate tasks and streamline operations, enhancing efficiency and service delivery. Regular program performance reviews, aligned with community needs and feedback, will ensure relevant and high-quality offerings. Overall, a strategic approach to program development, consistent goals, and clear performance metrics will enable GCPR to align its services with the community's evolving needs and maintain a high standard of recreational programming.

ANCILLARY SERVICES

Ancillary services refer to additional or supplementary services that support and enhance the primary recreational offerings. These services are typically aimed at improving the overall experience for participants and may encompass a variety of functions beyond the core recreational activities. Regularly evaluating ancillary services enables parks and recreation agencies to optimize their offerings, enhance visitor experiences, and better serve the needs of the community. GCPR has a wide variety of ancillary services throughout their park system that are highlighted in ***Appendix A*** by each park property.

BUR-MIL PARK

Age Segment Analysis						
Core Program Area	Preschool (5 and Under)	Elementary (6-12)	Teens (13-17)	Adult (18+)	Senior (55+)	All Ages Programs
Bur-Mil Park						
Community Engagement		P				P
Conservation						
Health and Wellness						
Outdoor Recreation		P/S	P/S	P	P/S	
Sports and Recreation	P	P/S	P/S	P/S	P	

Figure 3: Bur-Mil Park Age Segment Analysis – *Bur-Mil Park's programs mostly fall within the Outdoor Recreation and Sports and Recreation core program areas serving all age segments.*

Pricing Strategies										
Core Program Area	Age Segment	Family/ Household Status	Residency	Weekday/ Weekend	Prime / Non-Prime Time	Group Discounts	By Location	By Competition (Market Rate)	By Cost Recovery Goals	By Customer's Ability to Pay
Bur-Mil Park										
Community Engagement				X	X				X	
Conservation										
Health and Wellness	X									
Outdoor Recreation										
Sports and Recreation								X		

Figure 4: Bur-Mil Park Pricing Strategies– *Bur-Mil Park primarily prices programming using a mixture of recommended strategies.*

ANCILLARY SERVICES

Bur-Mil Park features 250 acres with several recreational opportunities including the Bur-Mil Golf Course and Driving Range, a nine hole, par 3 course and the Bur-Mil Clubhouse Meeting & Event Center for social and corporate events.

According to data provided by GCPR staff, the Bur-Mil Golf Couse saw a 12 percent increase in participants and 11 percent increase in revenue from fiscal year 2021 to 2022. The Clubhouse Meeting & Event Center's participation increased by 39 percent and revenue by 34% from 2021 to 2022.

Services	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	Difference (%)
Bur-Mil Golf Course				
Total Participation	NA	14,895	16,952	12%
Revenue	NA	$ 129,552.50	$ 146,024.00	11%
Clubhouse Meeting & Event Center				
Total Participation	NA	8,391	13,680	39%
Revenue	NA	$ 78,377.42	$ 117,911.93	34%
Shelters				
Total Participation	NA	NA	NA	NA
Revenue	NA	$ 35,645.00	$ 35,665.00	0.1%

Figure 5: Ancillary Services Trends – *Bur-Mil Park saw increases for most ancillary services between 2021 and 2022.*

Age Segment Analysis						
Core Program Area	Preschool (5 and Under)	Elementary (6-12)	Teens (13-17)	Adult (18+)	Senior (55+)	All Ages Programs
Gibson Park						
Community Engagement						P
Conservation						
Health and Wellness	S	S	P	P	P	
Outdoor Recreation						P
Sports and Recreation		S	P	S	S	

Figure 6: Gibson Park Age Segment Analysis – *Gibson Park serves mostly ages 13 and older with most GCPR core program areas.*

Pricing Strategies										
Core Program Area	Age Segment	Family/ Household Status	Residency	Weekday/ Weekend	Prime / Non-Prime Time	Group Discounts	By Location	By Competition (Market Rate)	By Cost Recovery Goals	By Customer's Ability to Pay
Gibson Park										
Community Engagement							X	X		
Conservation										
Health and Wellness										
Outdoor Recreation										
Sports and Recreation						X		X	X	

Figure 7: Gibson Park Pricing Strategies– *Gibson Park prices programming mostly by competition, cost recovery goals, location, and with group discounts.*

ANCILLARY SERVICES

Gibson Park is 200 acres and has historic features along with several outdoor recreational opportunities including shelters and athletic fields available for rental.

Gibson Park saw a large increase in shelter rentals and revenue between fiscal years 2021 and 2022, however those services along with athletic field permits have decreased from fiscal years 2022 to 2023. GCPR should closely monitor this trend over the next few years to determine the reason for the decline in usage. GCPR should determine what enhancements would benefit shelter and athletic field users and how those investments can be funded through a capital improvement plan.

Services	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	Difference (%) FY22-FY23
Shelters					
Total Participation	41	52	115	92	-25%
Revenue	$3,455.00	$3,985.00	$9,280.00	$8,305.00	-12%
Athletic Fields					
Total Participation	235	370	340	257	-32%
Revenue	$8,472.52	$16,481.00	$13,579.50	$10,630.00	-28%

Figure 8: Gibson Park Ancillary Services Trends – *Gibson Park saw revenue decrease for all ancillary services between 2022 and 2023.*

Age Segment Analysis						
Core Program Area	Preschool (5 and Under)	Elementary (6-12)	Teens (13-17)	Adult (18+)	Senior (55+)	All Ages Programs
Hagan-Stone Park						
Community Engagement						P
Conservation						P
Health and Wellness						P
Outdoor Recreation						P
Sports and Recreation		S	P	S		

Figure 9: Hagan-Stone Park Age Segment Analysis – *Hagan-Stone Park serves all age segments with all core program areas.*

Pricing Strategies										
Core Program Area	Age Segment	Family/ Household Status	Residency	Weekday/ Weekend	Prime / Non-Prime Time	Group Discounts	By Location	By Competition (Market Rate)	By Cost Recovery Goals	By Customer's Ability to Pay
Hagan-Stone Park										
Community Engagement							X			
Conservation										
Health and Wellness						X				
Outdoor Recreation							X			
Sports and Recreation						X				

Figure 10: Hagan-Stone Park Pricing Strategies – *Hagan-Stone Park prices programming by location and group discounts.*

ANCILLARY SERVICES

Hagan-Stone Park includes 409 acres of wildlife habitat, trails, a campground, an aquatic center, shelters, the Camp Joy Activity Center and a Chapel available for year round wedding event rentals.

Hagan-Stone Park's campgrounds and the Event Center and Chapel saw a 12 percent and 34 percent increase in revenue between fiscal years 2021 and 2022, respectively. Aquatic Center revenue fell by 36 percent from 2021 to 2022. Aquatic center attendance can be significantly impacted by poor weather. However, GCPR should determine what capital investments are needed to the Aquatic Center to enhance the user experience and proactively stay ahead of any significant reduction in revenue that could be caused by mechanical failures.

Services	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	Difference (%)
Campground				
Total Participation	1,232	2,599	2,802	7%
Revenue	$91,915.04	$185,510	$211,124	12%
Aquatic Center				
Total Participation	CLOSED	24,353	18,105	-35%
Revenue	CLOSED	$112,794	$83,059.00	-36%
Shelters				
Total Participation	124	553	498	-11%
Revenue	$9,330.00	$35,835	$37,150.00	4%
Event Center and Chapel				
Total Participation	27	77	128	40%
Revenue	$3,000.00	$10,900.00	$16,400.00	34%

Figure 11: Hagan-Stone Park Ancillary Services Trends – *The Aquatic Center saw a considerable decrease in revenue while the Event Center and Chapel increased significantly between 2021 and 2022.*

Age Segment Analysis						
Core Program Area	Preschool (5 and Under)	Elementary (6-12)	Teens (13-17)	Adult (18+)	Senior (55+)	All Ages Programs
Northeast Park						
Community Engagement	S	P	S	P	P	
Conservation	S	P	S	P	P	
Health and Wellness	S	P	P	P	S	
Outdoor Recreation	S	P	P	P	P	
Sports and Recreation	S	P	P	P	S	

Figure 12: Northeast Park Age Segment Analysis – *Northeast Park serves most age segments from youth to ages 55+.*

Pricing Strategies										
Core Program Area	Age Segment	Family/ Household Status	Residency	Weekday/ Weekend	Prime / Non-Prime Time	Group Discounts	By Location	By Competition (Market Rate)	By Cost Recovery Goals	By Customer's Ability to Pay
Northeast Park										
Community Engagement				X	X				X	
Conservation										
Health and Wellness	X									
Outdoor Recreation								X		
Sports and Recreation										

Figure 13: Northeast Park Pricing Strategies – *Northeast Park utilizes a mixture of pricing strategies for most core program areas.*

ANCILLARY SERVICES

Northeast Park contains 374 acres of parkland and trails including an aquatic center, athletic fields, biking and equestrian trails, picnic shelters, and the Northeast Park Meeting & Event Center.

Northeast Park saw increases in revenue between the fiscal years 2021 and 2022 for their Event Center, shelters, and smaller attractions. However, like Hagan-Stone Park, the Aquatic Center saw a sizeable decrease in revenue, by 17 percent.

Services	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	Difference (%) FY21 - FY22
Event Center				
Total Rental	46	57	119	52%
Revenue	$ 5,490.00	$21,569.00	$50,940.00	58%
Athletic Fields				
Total Rental	84	100	83	-20%
Revenue	$5,467.00	$6,347.00	$5,900.00	-8%
General				
Total Reservation Days	5	6	7	14%
Revenue	$1,517	$1,857.00	$1,163.00	-60%
Shelters				
Total Rentals	63	219	257	15%
Revenue	$3,805.00	$17,520.00	$22,375.00	22%
Attractions				
Total Participation	$ -	0	12	100%
Revenue	$ -	$305.00	$1,043.00	71%
Pool				
Total Participation	0	24,844	22,225	-12%
Revenue	$ -	$123,933.00	$105,682.00	-17%
Concessions				
Revenue	$ 600.00	$35,517.25	$26,186.75	-36%

Figure 14: Northeast Park Ancillary Services Trends – *Northeast Park saw a large revenue increase for its Event Center and general attractions between 2021 and 2022.*

Age Segment Analysis						
Core Program Area	Preschool (5 and Under)	Elementary (6-12)	Teens (13-17)	Adult (18+)	Senior (55+)	All Ages Programs
Preserves and County Farm						
Community Engagement						P
Conservation	S	P	P	P	P/S	
Health and Wellness						
Outdoor Recreation						
Sports and Recreation						

Figure 15: Preserves and County Farm Age Segment Analysis – *The Preserves and County Farm serve all ages through conservation programming.*

Pricing Strategies										
Core Program Area	Age Segment	Family/ Household Status	Residency	Weekday/ Weekend	Prime / Non-Prime Time	Group Discounts	By Location	By Competition (Market Rate)	By Cost Recovery Goals	By Customer's Ability to Pay
Preserves and County Farm										
Community Engagement								X	X	
Conservation										
Health and Wellness										
Outdoor Recreation										
Sports and Recreation										

Figure 16: Preserves and County Farm Pricing Strategies – *The Preserves and County Farm price services mostly by competition and cost recovery goals.*

Age Segment Analysis						
Core Program Area	Preschool (5 and Under)	Elementary (6-12)	Teens (13-17)	Adult (18+)	Senior (55+)	All Ages Programs
Southwest Park						
Community Engagement	S	S	S	P	P/S	P
Conservation						
Health and Wellness	S	S	S	P/S	P	P
Outdoor Recreation	S	S	S	P/S	P	P
Sports and Recreation	S	P/S	P	S	S	

Figure 17: Southwest Park Age Segment Analysis – *Southwest Park serves all age segments through GCPR's core program areas.*

Pricing Strategies										
Core Program Area	Age Segment	Family/ Household Status	Residency	Weekday/ Weekend	Prime / Non-Prime Time	Group Discounts	By Location	By Competition (Market Rate)	By Cost Recovery Goals	By Customer's Ability to Pay
Southwest Park										
Community Engagement							X			
Conservation										
Health and Wellness						X		X	X	
Outdoor Recreation						X		X	X	
Sports and Recreation						X		X	X	

Figure 18: Southwest Park Pricing Strategies – *Southwest Park prices services mostly by group discounts, competition, and cost recovery goals.*

ANCILLARY SERVICES

Southwest Park has 513 acres including the Randleman Regional Reservoir for open water use by boaters and fishers, as well as picnic shelters, a dog park, hiking trails, playgrounds, and vast open space.

Southwest Park saw increases in participation and revenue for most ancillary services between the fiscal years 2022 and 2023, with the most sizeable revenue increases going to tandem kayak rentals and pier fishing. Based on community priorities for outdoor adventure programming and water access facilities, GCPR should anticipate demand for Southwest Park's services to increase over the next few years.

Services	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	Difference (%) FY22 - FY23
Shelters						
Total Number of Rentals	62	8	96	71	84	15%
Revenue	$6,140	$745	$9,830	$7,295	$8,495	14%
Softball Fields						
Total Participation	3	0	1	1	0	100%
Revenue	$225	$0	$75	$75	$0	100%
10' Jon Boat Rentals						
Total Participation	203	98	162	153	190	19%
Revenue	$3,045	$1,470	$2,430	$2,295	$2,850	19%
14' Jon Boat Rentals						
Total Participation	465	301	343	248	270	8%
Revenue	$9,765	$6,321	$7,203	$5,208	$5,670	8%
Single Kayak Rentals						
Total Participation	350	237	279	207	232	11%
Revenue	$4,200	$2,844	$3,348	$2,484	$2,784	11%
Tandem Kayak Rentals						
Total Participation	62	24	27	38	89	57%
Revenue	$930	$360	$405	$570	$1,335	57%
Canoe Rentals						
Total Participation	28	10	34	42	42	0%
Revenue	$364	$130	$442	$546	$546	0%
Boat Launches						
Total Participation	874	789	611	639	806	21%
Revenue	$6,118	$5,523	$4,277	$4,473	$5,642	21%
Kayak Launches						
Total Participation	1679	1506	1917	1391	1602	13%
Revenue	$8,395	$7,530	$9,585	$6,955	$8,010	13%
Pier Fishing						
Total Participation	183	429	440	316	483	35%
	$549	$1,287	$1,320	$948	$1,449	35%

Figure 19: Southwest Park Ancillary Trends – *Southwest Park saw increases for most ancillary services between 2022 and 2023.*

APPENDIX B: VOLUNTEER/PARTNERSHIP BEST PRACTICES & RECOMMENDATIONS

BEST PRACTICES IN VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

In developing a volunteer policy, some best practices that the GCPR should be aware of include:

- Involve volunteers in cross-training to expose them to various organizational functions and increase their skill. This can also increase their utility, allowing for more flexibility in making work assignments, and can increase their appreciation and understanding of the GCPR.
- Ensure a Volunteer Coordinator (a designated program staff member with volunteer management responsibility) and associated staff stay fully informed about the strategic direction of the agency overall, including strategic initiatives for all divisions. Periodically identify, evaluate, or revise specific tactics the volunteer services program should undertake to support the larger organizational mission.
- A key part of maintaining the desirability of volunteerism in the agency is developing a good reward and recognition system. The consultant team recommends using tactics like those found in frequent flier programs, wherein volunteers can use their volunteer hours to obtain early registration at programs, or discounted pricing at certain programs, rentals or events, or any other department function. Identify and summarize volunteer recognition policies in a Volunteer Policy document.
- Regularly update volunteer position descriptions. Include an overview of the volunteer position lifecycle in the Volunteer Manual, including the procedure for creating a new position.
- Add end-of-lifecycle process steps to the Volunteer Manual to ensure that there is formal documentation of resignation or termination of volunteers. Also include ways to monitor and track reasons for resignation/termination and perform exit interviews with outgoing volunteers when able.
- In addition to number of volunteers and volunteer hours, categorization and tracking volunteerism by type and extent of work, is important:
- Regular volunteers: Those volunteers whose work is continuous, provided their work performance is satisfactory and there is a continuing need for their services.
- Special event volunteers: Volunteers who help with a particular event with no expectation that they will return after the event is complete.
- Episodic volunteers: Volunteers who help with a particular project type on a recurring or irregular basis with no expectation that they will return for other duties.
- Volunteer interns: Volunteers who have committed to work for the agency to fulfill a specific higher-level educational learning requirement.
- Community service volunteers: Volunteers who are volunteering over a specified period to fulfill a community service requirement.

The GCPR should encourage employees to volunteer in the community. Exposure of staff to the community in different roles (including those not related to parks and recreation) will raise awareness of the agency and its volunteer program. It also helps staff understand the role and expectations of a volunteer if they can experience it for themselves.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

The recommended policies and practices for public/private partnerships that may include businesses, private groups, private associations, or individuals who desire to make a profit from use of the GCPR's facilities or programs are detailed below. These can also apply to partnerships where a private party wishes to develop a facility on park property, to provide a service on publicly owned property, or who has a contract with the

agency to provide a task or service on the agency's behalf at public facilities. These unique partnership principles are as follows:

- Upon entering into an agreement with a private business, group, association or individual, the GCPR staff and political leadership must recognize that they must allow the private entity to meet their financial objectives within reasonable parameters that protect the mission, goals and integrity of the GCPR.
- As an outcome of the partnership, GCPR must receive a designated fee that may include a percentage of gross revenue dollars less sales tax on a regular basis, as outlined in the contract agreement.
- The working agreement of the partnership must establish a set of measurable outcomes to be achieved, as well as the tracking method of how those outcomes will be monitored by the agency. The outcomes will include standards of quality, financial reports, customer satisfaction, payments to the agency, and overall coordination with GCPR for the services rendered.
- Depending on the level of investment made by the private contractor, the partnership agreement can be limited to months, a year or multiple years.
- If applicable, the private contractor will provide a working management plan annually that they will follow to ensure the outcomes desired by the GCPR. The management plan can and will be negotiated, if necessary. Monitoring the management plan will be the responsibility of both partners. The agency must allow the contractor to operate freely in their best interest, if the outcomes are achieved, and the terms of the partnership agreement are adhered to.
- The private contractor cannot lobby agency advisory or governing boards for renewal of a contract. Any such action will be cause for termination. All negotiations must be with the GCPR Director or their designee.
- The agency has the right to advertise for private contracted partnership services or negotiate on an individual basis with a bid process based on the professional level of the service to be provided.
- If conflicts arise between both partners, the highest-ranking officers from both sides will try to resolve the issue before going to each partner's legal counsels. If none can be achieved, the partnership shall be dissolved.

PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

GCPR currently has a strong network of recreation program partners. Therefore, the following recommendations are both an overview of existing partnership opportunities available to GCPR, as well as a suggested approach to organizing partnership pursuits. This is not an exhaustive list of all potential partnerships that can be developed, but this list can be used as a reference tool for the agency to develop its own priorities in partnership development. The following five areas of focus are recommended:

1. Operational Partners: Other entities and organizations that can support the efforts of the GCPR to maintain facilities and assets, promote amenities and park usage, support site needs, provide programs and events, and/or maintain the integrity of natural/cultural resources through in-kind labor, equipment, or materials.
2. Vendor Partners: Service providers and/or contractors that can gain brand association and notoriety as a preferred vendor or supporter of the GCPR in exchange for reduced rates, services, or some other agreed upon benefit.
3. Service Partners: Nonprofit organizations and/or friends' groups that support the efforts of the agency to provide programs and events, and/or serve specific constituents in the community collaboratively.

4. Co-Branding Partners: Private, for-profit organizations that can gain brand association and notoriety as a supporter of the GCPR in exchange for sponsorship or co-branded programs, events, marketing and promotional campaigns, and/or advertising opportunities.
5. Resource Development Partners: A private, nonprofit organization with the primary purpose to leverage private sector resources, grants, other public funding opportunities, and resources from individuals and groups within the community to support the goals and objectives of the agency on mutually agreed strategic initiatives.

BEST PRACTICE FOR ALL PARTNERSHIPS

All partnerships developed and maintained by the GCPR should adhere to common policy requirements. These include:

- Each partner will meet with or report to the GCPR staff on a regular basis to plan and share activity-based costs and equity invested.
- Partners will establish measurable outcomes and work through key issues to focus on for the coming year to meet the desired outcomes.
- Each partner will focus on meeting a balance of equity agreed to and track investment costs accordingly.
- Measurable outcomes will be reviewed quarterly and shared with each partner, with adjustments made as needed.
- A working partnership agreement will be developed and monitored together on a quarterly or as-needed basis.
- Each partner will assign a liaison to serve each partnership agency for communication and planning purposes.

Maintenance Standards

Best Practices: Maintenance Standards

Based on data collected during site visits, maintenance standards were developed in both qualitative and quantitative formats, organized by three Levels of Service. Maintenance standards can change by season and month depending on the type of park area level of use. Standards will be calculated by time and equipment proposed for all parks in the system.

Maintenance Standards

Three maintenance levels are generally defined. The difference between levels is frequency of maintenance as determined by funding availability. Maintenance Standards have these general characteristics.

- **Level 1 Maintenance** – High profile areas where the entire area is visible to foot traffic such as entrances to community centers, signature facilities, and areas where funding permits a higher level of maintenance. Example of maintenance activities include: Mowing and edging twice per week, 95 percent turf coverage at start of season with 5 percent weeds and 0 percent bare area, edging once per week, tree pruning cycle once annually, litter pickup twice per week.
- **Level 2 Maintenance** – Moderate to heavy use typical of most parks. Example maintenance activities include: Mowing and edging once per week, 88 percent turf coverage at start of season with 8 percent weeds and 4 percent bare area, tree pruning cycle every seven years, litter pickup once per week.
- **Level 3 Maintenance** – Typical for low usage parks or when funding is limited. Example maintenance activities include: Mowing and edging every 10 days, 80 percent turf coverage at start of season with 20 percent weeds, edging once per week or every 2 weeks in off-season, tree pruning cycle every 10 years, litter pickup every other week.

In areas where turf does not impact quality of experience (i.e., dog parks) or non-landscaped open space areas, demand-based maintenance is provided according to funding availability.

This format provides guidance in terms of understanding the required work activities and elements in a descriptive manner that then can be quantified numerically. Following are descriptions of the levels of service and both qualitative and quantitative maintenance standards as proposed for all parks in the system.

Level One Maintenance Standards and Definitions for Parks

- Turf Maintenance – high profile areas (small areas, entire area visible to foot traffic)
  - » Mowing will occur 2 times/week
  - » Mowing heights
  - » 2 ½ “during warm season (daytime highs consistently above 75 degrees)
  - » Edging of all turf perimeters will occur 1 time/week
  - » 95% turf coverage
  - » 3% weed infestation for existing areas (all efforts should be made to keep new areas 100% weed free)
  - » 2% bare area
  - » Remove grass clippings if visible
  - » Aerate 1 time/year (additionally if needed)
  - » Inspect thatch layer regularly and remove as needed
  - » Test soil and water annually

    - Additional testing will occur if deemed necessary
  - Soil moisture will be consistent
    - No wet areas
    - No dry areas
    - Firm enough for foot and mower traffic
    - Apply wetting agents to assist in uniform soil moisture
    - Hand water as needed
  - Inspect daily for insects, disease, and stress and respond to outbreaks within 24 hours
  - Fertilize (3) times per year
  - Top dress/over seed once a year
- Tree and Shrub Maintenance
  - Prune/trim trees and shrubs as dictated by species twice annually during spring and fall
  - Remove sucker growth annually
  - Test soil annually to ensure application of appropriate nutrients as needed
  - Apply fertilizer to plant species according to their optimum requirements as needed or yearly
  - Inspect regularly for insects and diseases. Respond to outbreaks within 48 hours
  - Place 2” of organic mulch around each tree within a minimum 18” ring
  - Place 2” of organic mulch around shrub beds to minimize weed growth
  - Remove hazardous limbs and plants immediately upon discovery
  - Remove dead trees and plant material immediately unless located within an environmental area
  - Remove or treat invasive plants within 5 days of discovery
  - Flower bed maintenance done yearly
  - Fertilize once a year
  - Pond maintenance done yearly and inspect weekly
  - Water features maintained weekly
  - Invasive plant removal annually
- Storm Cleanup
  - Inspect drain covers at least twice monthly, before rain and immediately after flooding
  - Remove debris and organic materials from drain covers immediately
  - Maintain water inlet height at 100% of design standard
- Irrigation Systems
  - Inspect irrigation systems at least once per month or computer monitors as necessary
  - Initiate repairs to non-functioning systems within 24 hours of discovery
  - Back flow testing done annually
- Litter Control
  - Pick up litter and empty containers at least once daily or as needed
  - Remove leaves and organic debris once a week or as necessary
- Playground Maintenance
  - Audit each playground to ensure compliance with the current version of ASTM Performance Standard F1487 and the Consumer Product Safety Commission “Handbook for Public Playground Safety”

- » Complete low-frequency playground inspections at least bi-monthly or as required. All low-frequency inspections are to be completed by a Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI). Complete safety related repairs immediately, and initiate other repairs within 48 hours of discovery
- » Complete high-frequency inspections at least weekly
- » Grooming surface three times weekly, nine months a year

- Hard Surface Maintenance
  - » Remove debris and glass immediately upon discovery
  - » Remove sand, dirt, and organic debris from walks and hard-court surfaces weekly
  - » Remove trip hazards from pedestrian areas immediately upon discovery
  - » Paint fading or indistinct instructional / directional signs annually
  - » Blow grass clippings after mowing around hard surfaces
  - » Remove grass growing in cracks as needed
- Outdoor Court Maintenance
  - » Inspect tennis and basketball courts at least once monthly. Complete all repairs within 48 hours of discovery
  - » Repaint lines at least once each year
  - » Replace basketball nets when frayed, broken, or removed
  - » Maintain basketball goal posts, backboards, rims, tennis net posts, fencing, and hardware to original design specifications
- Trail Maintenance
  - » Inspect hard and soft surface trails at least once monthly
  - » Remove dirt, sand, and organic debris from hard surfaces at least once weekly
  - » Remove organic debris from soft surfaces at least once weekly
  - » Maintain a uniform 3-4” depth of compacted material on soft surface trails at all times
  - » Graffiti removed weekly
  - » Remove overhanging branches within 84” of the trail surface at least twice annually
  - » Mechanically or chemically control growth 24” on either side of the trails
  - » Inspect signs, benches, and other site amenities at least once monthly. Complete repairs within 10 days of discovery
  - » Inspect and make necessary repairs to lighting systems at least once monthly
  - » Always Repair / replace bulbs to maintain lighting levels to design specifications
- Site Amenity Maintenance
  - » Inspect benches, trash containers, picnic tables and grills, bicycle racks, flag poles, drinking fountains, and other site amenities at least monthly. Complete repairs within 24 hours of discovery
  - » Cleaning, scrub, and power wash of amenities twice yearly
  - » Inspect daily for insects, disease, and stress and respond to outbreaks within 24 hours
- Athletic fields grounds maintenance (Baseball, Soccer, Softball and Rugby)
  - » Fields that are dedicated to softball, baseball, soccer, and rugby only
  - » Use mower capable of “striping” the turf
  - » Mowing will occur twice weekly
  - » Mowing heights
  - » 2” during cool season (daytime highs consistently below 75 degrees)

- » Edging of field perimeters will occur twice monthly
- » 95% turf coverage at the start of every season
- » 80% turf coverage after play begins
- » 5% weed infestation
- » 0% bare area at the start of every season
- » 15% bare and weak areas will be acceptable after play begins
- » Apply pre-germinated seed to heavily worn areas after every tournament
- » Remove grass clippings if visible
- » Aerate 3 times annually
- » Spot aerate high use areas as needed
- » Inspect thatch layer regularly and remove as needed
- » Test soil and water annually
- » Additional testing will occur if deemed necessary
- » Soil moisture will be consistent
- » No wet areas
- » No dry areas
- » Firm enough for foot and mower traffic
- » Apply wetting agents to assist in uniform soil moisture
- » Hand water as needed
- » Inspect daily for insects, disease, and stress and respond to outbreaks within 24 hours
- » Fertilize monthly
- » Aerate and over seed yearly

- Fence and Gate Maintenance
  - » Inspect fences, gates, and bollards at least twice annually. Complete safety-related repairs immediately. Complete other repairs within 48 hours of discovery
  - » Annually free fence of debris
- Sign Maintenance
  - » Inspect sign lettering, surfaces, and posts at least once monthly
  - » Repair / replace signs to maintain design and safety standards within 24 hours of discovery
  - » Clean signs twice a year
  - » Cut back plant material annually or more if needed
- Pest Control
  - » In accordance with the Department's Integrated Pest Management Program (IPM), problem areas are inspected monthly and remedied immediately upon discovery
- Vandalism and Graffiti Removal
  - » Initiate repairs immediately upon discovery. Document and photograph damage as necessary
- Picnic Shelters
  - » Reserved units cleaned and litter removed prior to and after each reservation
  - » Minor repairs are made immediately upon discovery
  - » Non-reserved units are cleaned weekly by power washing, or as necessary
- Lighting Security/Area

- » Foot-candle levels will be maintained to preserve original design
- » Inspect once monthly
- » Repairs/bulb replacement will be completed within 24 hours of discovery

- Aquatic Center Standards when a pool is developed
  - » Vacuum pool weekly
  - » Manually check water chemistry every two hours of operation
  - » Check water electronically on a continuous basis
  - » Water checked for temperature, chlorine, and pH
  - » Check flow rates every 2 hours of operation
  - » Water checked for clarity on a continuous basis
  - » Clean concrete areas daily
  - » Repaint pool tank every two years
  - » Pressure wash concrete areas weekly
  - » Clean restrooms two times daily
  - » Inspect facility and associated equipment daily
  - » Maintain all equipment per manufacturers suggestions
  - » Inspect sand filter annually
- Broken Equipment Standard
  - » Broken equipment shall be repaired immediately, as staff is capable, and parts are available when noticed or reported
  - » If staff is not able to repair, the broken equipment will be signed and roped off with emergency tape indicating that the amenity is broken, not to be used, and when it will be repaired
- Lifecycle Replacement
  - » The Town has developed a lifecycle replacement program that must be built into the Capital Improvement Program based on contractor and product specifications
- Concession Standards (outdoor) when developed in the future
  - » Concession facilities cleaned, wiped down, and sanitized before opening
  - » Electrical appliances checked for compliance and repaired if damaged
  - » Lights checked and repaired as needed
  - » Concession operating permits secured before opening
  - » Appliances cleaned thoroughly before opening
  - » Prices for concessions will be posted
  - » Cash registers tested to ensure they work properly
  - » Circuit breakers tested prior to opening
  - » Cleaning and sanitization supplies on hand before opening
  - » Pick up debris daily
- Closing Concession Standards (outdoor)
  - » Equipment cleaned thoroughly
  - » Supplies removed and discarded
  - » Electricity should be turned off
  - » Refrigerators and cables turned off and sealed

- Facility floors, sinks, and counters cleaned thoroughly
- Hoses cleaned and drained
- Kitchen cleaned thoroughly
- Inspections of standards will occur monthly

- Restrooms
  - Restrooms cleaned twice per day unless contracted
  - Restrooms inspected hourly
  - Restrooms locked/unlocked daily
  - Replace waterless urinal cartridges monthly
  - Leaks dealt with immediately and repaired within 24 hours of discovery
- Open Space Standard
  - Maintain natural appearance to open space areas
  - Remove trees and branches that pose a hazard to the users of the area
  - Respond to disease and insect outbreaks within 24 hours of identification
  - Inspect areas monthly
  - Remove and clean dump sites within 48 hours of identification
  - Post and maintain appropriate signage for each individual area
  - Implement strategies to assist in reducing the stand of non-native invasive plants by 5% annually
  - No large branches or debris will be allowed in parks and along perimeters

Level Two Maintenance Standards for Parks

Maintenance standards can change by season and month depending on the park and level of use. Standards will be calculated by time and equipment needed to develop the required operation budgets. The difference between Level 1 and Level 2 standards is the frequency rate.

- Turf Maintenance
  - Mowing will occur once weekly
  - Mowing heights
  - 2½" during cool season (daytime highs consistently below 75 degrees)
  - Edging of all turf perimeters will occur weekly during season and every 2 weeks in off-season
  - 88% turf coverage
  - 8% weed infestation
  - 4% bare area will be acceptable after play begins
  - Remove grass clippings if visible
  - Aerate once annually in low use areas
  - Aerate twice annually in high use areas (additional if needed)
  - Inspect thatch layer regularly and remove as needed
  - Test soil and water annually
  - Additional testing will occur if deemed necessary

- » Soil moisture will be consistent
- » No wet areas
- » No dry areas
- » Firm enough for foot and mower traffic
- » Apply wetting agents to assist in uniform soil moisture
- » Hand water as needed
- » Inspect weekly for insects, disease, and stress, and respond to outbreaks within 24 hours
- » Fertilize twice yearly

- Tree and Shrub Maintenance
  - » Prune/trim trees and shrubs as dictated by species at least once annually
  - » Apply fertilizer to plant species only if plant health dictates
  - » Remove sucker growth as needed
  - » Inspect regularly for insects and diseases. Respond to outbreaks within 48 hours
  - » Place 2" of organic mulch around each tree within a minimum 18" ring
  - » Place 2" of organic mulch around shrub beds to minimize weed growth
  - » Remove hazardous limbs and plants immediately upon discovery
  - » Remove dead trees and plant material within 30 days of discovery
  - » Remove or treat invasive plants yearly
- Storm Cleanup
  - » Inspect drain covers at least once monthly and immediately after flooding occurs
  - » Remove debris and organic materials from drain covers within every other month
  - » Inspect and clean drains before forecasted storms begin
  - » Maintain water inlet height at 100% of design standard
  - » o Invasive plant removal once a year or as needed
  - » o Drain system maintenance done once a year
- Irrigation Systems
  - » Inspect irrigation systems a minimum of once per month and as necessary
  - » Initiate repairs to non-functioning systems within 48 hours of discovery
  - » Annual back flow inspection done yearly
- Litter Control
  - » Pick up litter and empty containers at least every other day or as needed
  - » Remove leaves and organic debris once a week
- Playground Maintenance
  - » Audit each playground to ensure compliance with the current version of ASTM Performance Standard F1487 and the Consumer Product Safety Commission "Handbook for Public Playground Safety"
  - » Complete low-frequency playground inspections at least bi-monthly or as required. All low-frequency inspections are to be completed by a Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI). Complete safety related repairs immediately and initiate other repairs within 48 hours of discovery
  - » Complete high-frequency inspections at least weekly
  - » Grooming surface two times weekly
- Hard Surface Maintenance

- » Remove debris and glass immediately upon discovery
- » Remove sand, dirt, and organic debris from walks, lots, and hard surfaces every 30 days
- » Remove trip hazards from pedestrian areas immediately upon discovery
- » Paint fading or indistinct instructional/directional signs every other year
- » Remove grass in the cracks monthly

- Outdoor Court Maintenance
  - » Inspect basketball courts at least once monthly. Complete repairs within 10 days of discovery
  - » Repaint lines at least once every 2 years
  - » Replace basketball nets within 10 days when frayed, broken, or removed
  - » Maintain basketball goal posts, backboards, rims, fencing, and hardware to original design specifications. Complete repairs within 10 days of discovery
- Trail Maintenance
  - » Inspect hard and soft surface trails at least once monthly
  - » Remove dirt, sand, and organic debris from hard surfaces at least once monthly
  - » Remove organic debris from soft surfaces at least once monthly
  - » Maintain a uniform 2-4" depth of compacted material on soft surface trails
  - » Mechanically or chemically control growth 24" on either side of the trails
  - » Remove overhanging branches within 84" of the trail surface at least once annually
  - » Inspect signs, benches, and other site amenities at least once monthly. Complete repairs within 10 days of discovery
- Site Amenity Maintenance
  - » Inspect benches, trash containers, picnic tables, grills, bicycle racks, drinking fountains, and other site amenities at least monthly. Complete repairs within 5 days of discovery
  - » Cleaning and washing annually
  - » Inspect daily for insects, disease, and stress and respond to outbreaks within 24 hours
- Athletic Field Grounds Maintenance (baseball, soccer, softball, and rugby)
  - » Fields that are dedicated to soccer, baseball, softball, and rugby only
  - » Mowing will occur twice weekly
  - » Mowing heights
  - » 2 ½ "during cool season (daytime highs consistently below 75 degrees)
  - » 3" during warm season (daytime highs consistently above 75 degrees)
  - » Edging of all field perimeters will occur once monthly
  - » 80% turf coverage at the start of every season
  - » 65% turf coverage after play begins
  - » 20% weed infestation
  - » 5% bare area at the start of every season
  - » 15% bare and weak areas will be acceptable after play begins
  - » Remove grass clippings if visible
  - » Aerate once annually
  - » Inspect thatch layer regularly and remove as needed
  - » Test soil and water annually

- » Additional testing will occur if deemed necessary
- » Soil moisture will be consistent
- » No wet areas
- » No dry areas
- » Firm enough for foot and mower traffic
- » Inspect weekly for insects, disease, and stress, and respond to outbreaks within 24 hours

- Fence and Gate Maintenance
  - » Inspect fences, gates, and bollards at least once annually. Complete safety-related repairs immediately, and complete other repairs within 5 days of discovery
  - » Clean debris annually
- Sign Maintenance
  - » Inspect sign lettering, surfaces, and posts at least once every 3 months
  - » Repair/replace signs to maintain design and safety standards within 5 days of discovery
  - » Clean sign once a year
- Pest Control
  - » In accordance with the Department's Integrated Pest Management Program (IPM), inspect problem areas monthly and remedy immediately upon discovery
- Vandalism and Graffiti Removal
  - » Initiate repairs immediately upon discovery. Document and photograph damage as necessary
- Picnic Shelters
  - » Reserved units cleaned and litter removed prior to and after each reservation
  - » Minor repairs are made immediately upon discovery
  - » Non-reserved units are cleaned bi-weekly, or as necessary
- Lighting Security/Area
  - » Inspect quarterly
  - » Repairs/bulb replacement will be completed within 72 hours of discovery
- Restrooms
  - » Restrooms cleaned daily unless contracted
  - » Restrooms inspected every three hours
  - » Restrooms locked/unlocked daily
  - » Replace waterless urinal cartridges monthly
  - » Leaks dealt with immediately and repaired within 24 hours of discovery

Guilford County Trails and Open Space Comprehensive Plan

Guilford County, NC
Estimation of Probable Cost
January 21, 2025

		QUANT.	UNIT	UNIT COST	TOTAL
A. 10' Paved Greenway Trails (Per Mile)					
1.	Mobilization	1	LS	$90,000.00	$90,000.00
2.	Construction Surveying	1	LS	$25,000.00	$25,000.00
3.	Geotextile for Pavement Stabilization	7,040	SY	$5.00	$35,200.00
4.	Aggregate Base Course	2,500	TON	$55.00	$137,500.00
5.	Asphalt Conc Surface Course, Type S9.5B	685	TON	$150.00	$102,750.00
6.	Asphalt Binder for Plant Mix	45	TON	$650.00	$29,250.00
7.	Drainage	1	LS	$75,000.00	$75,000.00
8.	Erosion Control	1	LS	$200,000.00	$200,000.00
9.	Comprehensive Grading	1	LS	$330,000.00	$330,000.00
A. 10' Paved Greenway Trails (Per Mile) Subtotal:					**$1,024,700.00**
				DESIGN FEE	$122,964.00
				CONTRACTOR OVERHEAD & PROFIT	$122,964.00
				12 MONTHS ESCALATION	$88,943.96
				SUBTOTAL	$1,359,571.96
				15% CONTINGENCY	$203,935.79
				TOTAL	**$1,563,507.75**
B. 10' Compacted Stone Surface Trails (Per Mile)					
1.	Mobilization	1	LS	$80,000.00	$80,000.00
2.	Construction Surveying	1	LS	$25,000.00	$25,000.00
3.	Geotextile for Pavement Stabilization	7,040	SY	$5.00	$35,200.00
4.	Aggregate Base Course	2,500	TON	$55.00	$137,500.00
5.	Trail Surface (Decomposed Granite)	645	CY	$60.00	$38,720.00
6.	Timber Retainer	5,280	LF	$3.00	$15,840.00
7.	Drainage	1	LS	$75,000.00	$75,000.00
8.	Erosion Control	1	LS	$200,000.00	$200,000.00
9.	Comprehensive Grading	1	LS	$300,000.00	$300,000.00
B. 10' Compacted Stone Surface Trails (Per Mile) Subtotal:					**$907,260.00**
				DESIGN FEE	$108,871.20
				CONTRACTOR OVERHEAD & PROFIT	$108,871.20
				12 MONTHS ESCALATION	$78,750.17
				SUBTOTAL	$1,203,752.57
				15% CONTINGENCY	$180,562.89
				TOTAL	**$1,384,315.45**
C. Trail Head					
1.	Site Clearing & Grubbing (1/2 AC)	1	LS	$50,000.00	$50,000.00
2.	Site Grading (1/2 AC)	1	LS	$30,000.00	$30,000.00
3.	Site Utilities contingency (10% of project cost)	1	LS	$75,000.00	$75,000.00
4.	Asphalt Parking Lot (Incl. Curb & Gutter and Striping)	1	LS	$100,000.00	$100,000.00
5.	Concrete Sidewalk	1	LS	$15,000.00	$15,000.00
6.	Information Kiosk	1	EA	$7,500.00	$7,500.00
7.	Signage	1	LS	$5,000.00	$5,000.00
8.	Restroom Building	1,700	SF	$300.00	$510,000.00
9.	Furnishings	1	LS	$5,000.00	$5,000.00
10.	Landscaping (Code & Enhanced)	1	LS	$25,000.00	$25,000.00
C. Trail Head Subtotal:					**$822,500.00**
				DESIGN FEE	$82,250.00
				CONTRACTOR OVERHEAD & PROFIT	$82,250.00
				12 MONTHS ESCALATION	$49,350.00
				SUBTOTAL	$1,036,350.00
				15% CONTINGENCY	$155,452.50
				TOTAL	**$1,191,802.50**
D. Outdoor Amphitheater + Band Shell					
1.	Site Grading (2 AC)	1	LS	$150,000.00	$150,000.00
2.	Site Utilities contingency (20% of project cost)	1	LS	$125,000.00	$125,000.00
3.	Tiered Concrete Seating + Sidewalks	1	LS	$250,000.00	$250,000.00
4.	Band Shell	2,000	SF	$650.00	$1,300,000.00
5.	Landscaping (Code & Enhanced)	1	LS	$50,000.00	$50,000.00
D. Outdoor Amphitheater + Band Shell Subtotal:					**$1,825,000.00**
				DESIGN FEE	$182,500.00
				CONTRACTOR OVERHEAD & PROFIT	$182,500.00
				12 MONTHS ESCALATION	$109,500.00
				SUBTOTAL	$2,299,500.00
				15% CONTINGENCY	$344,925.00
				TOTAL	**$2,644,425.00**

Guilford County Trails and Open Space Comprehensive Plan

Guilford County, NC
Estimation of Probable Cost
January 21, 2025

		QUANT.	UNIT	UNIT COST	TOTAL
E. Challenge Adventure Course					
1.	Selective Clearing	1	LS	$100,000.00	$100,000.00
2.	Concrete Paving	2,000	SF	$10.00	$20,000.00
3.	Course Equipment + Installation	1	LS	$1,000,000.00	$1,000,000.00
4.	Signage	1	LF	$15,000.00	$15,000.00
5.	Furnishings	1	LS	$7,500.00	$7,500.00
6.	Landscaping	1	LS	$25,000.00	$25,000.00
E. Challenge Adventure Course Subtotal:					**$1,167,500.00**
				DESIGN FEE	$116,750.00
				CONTRACTOR OVERHEAD & PROFIT	$116,750.00
				12 MONTHS ESCALATION	$70,050.00
				SUBTOTAL	$1,471,050.00
				15% CONTINGENCY	$220,657.50
				TOTAL	**$1,691,707.50**
F. Nature Lab					
1.	Selective Clearing	1	LS	$100,000.00	$100,000.00
2.	Concrete Paving	2,000	SF	$10.00	$20,000.00
3.	Nature Lab Equipment + Installation	1	LS	$750,000.00	$750,000.00
4.	Signage	1	LF	$15,000.00	$15,000.00
5.	Furnishings	1	LS	$7,500.00	$7,500.00
5.	Landscaping	1	LS	$25,000.00	$25,000.00
F. Nature Lab Subtotal:					**$917,500.00**
				DESIGN FEE	$91,750.00
				CONTRACTOR OVERHEAD & PROFIT	$91,750.00
				12 MONTHS ESCALATION	$55,050.00
				SUBTOTAL	$1,156,050.00
				15% CONTINGENCY	$173,407.50
				TOTAL	**$1,329,457.50**

A. 10' Paved Greenway Trails (Per Mile)	**15%**	**$1,563,507.75**
B. 10' Compacted Stone Surface Trails (Per Mile)	**14%**	**$1,384,315.45**
C. Trail Head	**12%**	**$1,191,802.50**
D. Outdoor Amphitheater + Band Shell	**26%**	**$2,644,425.00**
E. Challenge Adventure Course	**17%**	**$1,691,707.50**
F. Nature Lab	**17%**	**$1,691,707.50**
	SUBTOTAL	**$10,167,465.71**
	12 MONTHS ESCALATION	**$508,373.29**
	SUBTOTAL	**$10,675,838.99**
	15% CONTINGENCY	**$1,601,375.85**
	TOTAL	**$12,277,214.84**

NOTES:*

1. The above opinion of probable construction cost was prepared by McAdams as part of the preliminary design phase. Estimate is subject to change.
2. Estimate was prepared for budgeting purposes using historical data, RS Means and generalized contractor estimates. Actual costs may vary.
3. Estimate does not include permit fees.
4. Materials identified in estimate are intended for pricing purposes only. Materials may be substituted as the design develops.
5. This estimate does not include sub-contractor professional fees, construction/contract administration fees, the cost of various bonds that may be required in the construction contract, or reimbursables.
6. Cost estimate does not include pre-bid or pre-construction consultation, inspection/management, design revisionss, ubmittal review, plotting or printing costs due to Client instructed design changes.
7. Cost estimate does not include any property acquisition, easements or other property costs or legal fees.
8. Estimate was created for generic sites, price could change will selection of site not suitable for amenity construction.
9. Cost estimate has been created from similar projects and site specific elements including but not limited to topography, onsite, rock, streams, stormwater BMP's, wetlands, trees save, and any other building restrictions have not been accounted for. Once specific sites have been selected these factors should be incorporated into final estimates of probable cost. The numbers used for this exercise are for budgetery projections only.
10. The estimate assumes that local utility services are available and access and connections are adjacent and do not require extension or upgrades, etc.