

Vision Holly Springs Comprehensive Plan



Section 3: Parks, Recreation and Greenways Master Plan



TOWN OF HOLLY SPRINGS

**PARKS, RECREATION,
AND GREENWAYS
MASTER PLAN**

March 2021



**CONNECT
INSPIRE
PLAY**



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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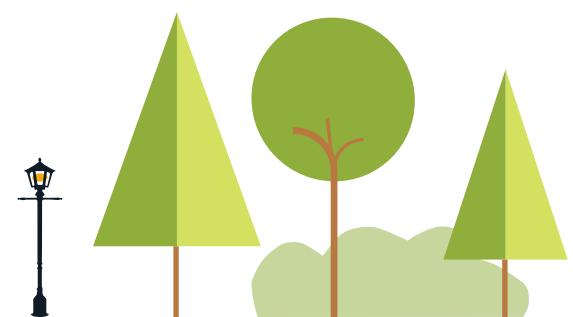
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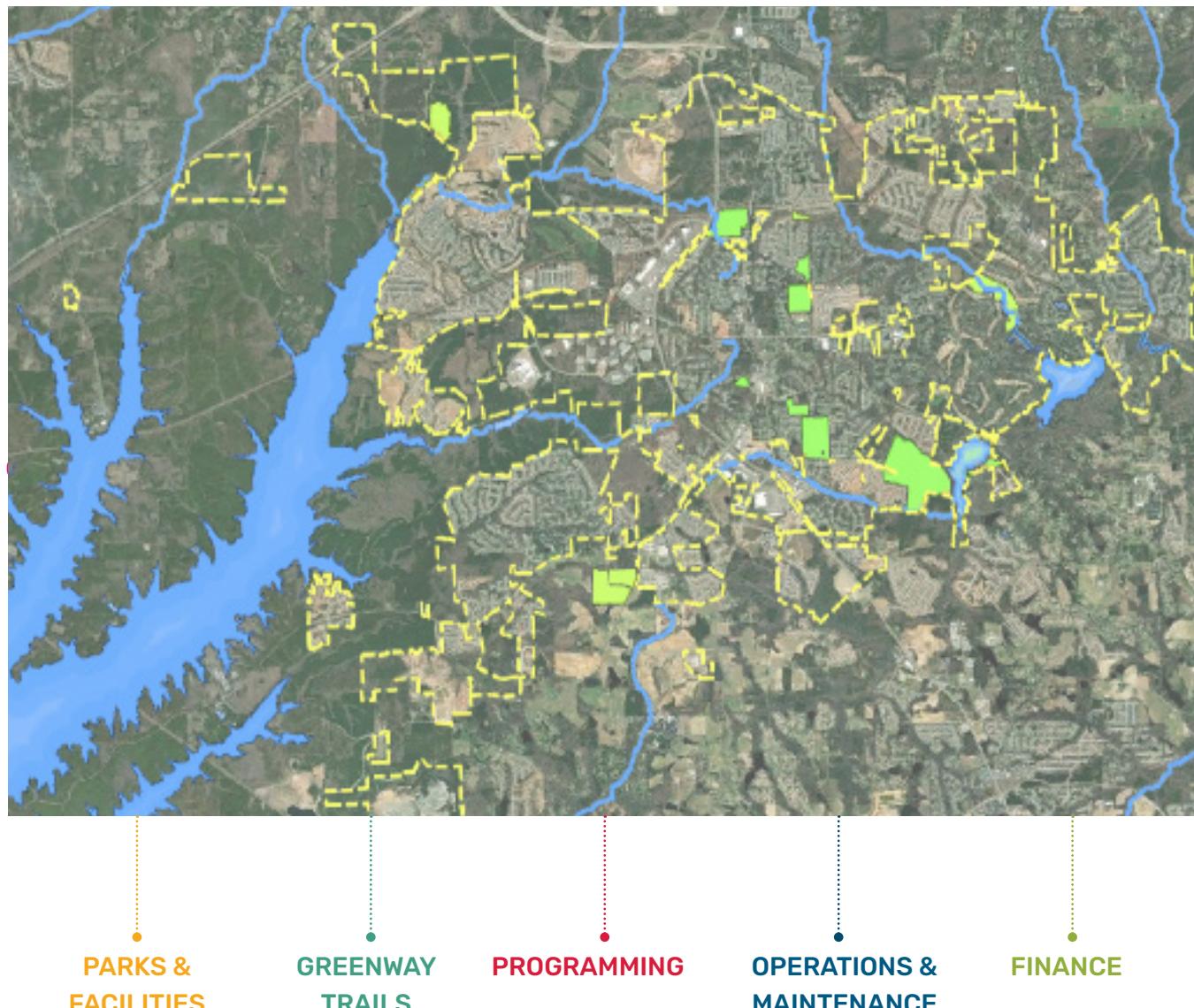
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executive summary



Built on the strong foundation of robust community engagement, the Holly Springs Parks, Recreation, and Greenways Master Plan has established a vision for the Parks and Recreation System and created a work plan to bring that vision to fruition. Over the next ten years, the parks and recreation system comprehensive plan (the Plan) will help guide the development of new parks, facilities, and programs; enhance community connectivity via greenway trails; develop strategies and policies for protection of natural resources; and ensure a stable and financially successful system.

Aerial view of Town of Holly Springs



COMPONENTS OF PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM PLAN

The Town of Holly Springs is a small community in the rapidly growing Wake County area of North Carolina. While the Town boasts its almost 150 years of history and small-town character, the highly educated and diverse population is also seeking modern and innovative recreation opportunities and protection of its unique natural resources.

The Town of Holly Springs Parks, Recreation and Greenways Master Plan is created to guide the Parks and Recreation Department in serving all users of the Town's parks and recreation services. The Town will continue to grow over the period of next ten years, evolving with local, state and worldwide trends. This plan positions the Parks and Recreation Department to meet the needs of a growing community while remaining flexible and able to adapt to changing trends and available resources, while maintaining the excellent level of service they have come to be known for.

The Town had established three overarching principles to guide the development of this plan- Connect, Inspire, and Play. The project goal was to create a plan for **everyone**, regardless of whether they are current users of the system. The Department wanted the updated plan to reflect the community as a whole and set an example for communities around Holly Springs while inspiring residents to try new activities and explore new places.

This plan:

- › Represents a collaborative Town-wide effort including the community, stakeholders, partners, staff, and decision makers;
- › Uses the voice of the community as the foundation for recommendations;
- › Analyzes multiple facets of the current parks, greenway trails and program offerings;
- › Establishes guiding principles on which to base evolving recommendations and action items as the Town continues to grow;
- › Serves as the guiding document and work plan for the next 10 years of the Department's growth, improvement, and expansion;
- › Serves many benefits including: requirement for state and federal grant funding, data driven decisions based on community engagement, benchmarking, industry standards, and framework for department growth planning process



The Planning Process

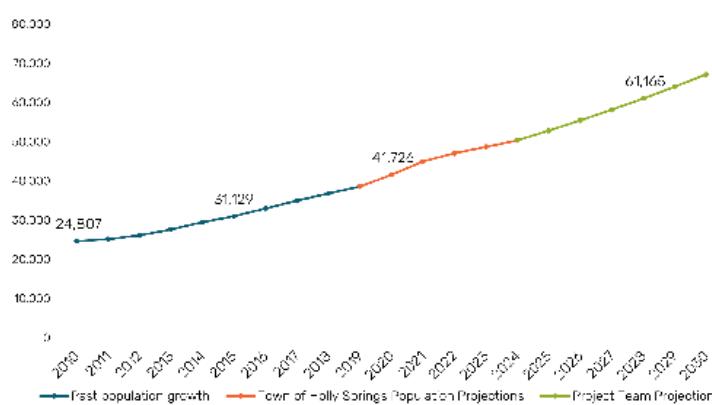
The planning process for Holly Springs Parks, Recreation and Greenways Master Plan established the vision and goals of the Department based on the community's current needs. Rooted in the community engagement process and cross-sector collaboration, guiding principles were developed and informed recommendations, action items, and project implementation priorities.



FINDINGS

Demographics

The Town of Holly Springs population almost doubled from year 2010 to 2020 and is expected to grow at a rate of 4.9 percent annually during the next 10 years increasing the current estimated population of 41,726 residents in 2020 to a projected 64,160 residents in 2030. This rate of annual growth is almost five times North Carolina's projected average annual growth rate of 1 percent for the same period. This population growth will result in additional demands on the existing parks system. With higher educated population and lower unemployment rate than the state average, Holly Springs median household income is also higher than the median household income of North Carolina. The increasing household income levels indicate the ability to pay for parks and recreation services. Regardless of rising income for some community members, residents with lower incomes must still have affordable or no-cost access to parks and recreation services. Holly Springs also has lower median age than the state average which suggests the need for adult and youth athletics as well as family-oriented and intergenerational



programming. Despite the overall younger population than statewide trends, it is important to ensure that older adults are adequately served through facilities and programming. All parks and facilities should feature amenities and design elements that universally include people with all abilities.

Parks, Facilities, and Greenway Trails

The Department provides a variety of amenities, facilities, and greenway trails across 611 acres of parkland and open space and an additional 137 acres of land shared with the local school system through joint use agreements. The Department provides 54,163 square feet of indoor recreation space in the form of a recreation center, cultural center, and nature center facility. The Department's trail mileage currently totals 12.83 miles and is an element of the parks and recreation system that the Town is actively seeking to expand.

Parkland and facilities are concentrated in the more developed, eastern part of the Town and are for the most part, absent west of Highway 55. While the existing parks were found to be well maintained with a variety of amenities to meet residents' needs, this plan recommends system-wide and site-specific improvements. System-wide improvements include consistent wayfinding signage, design standards, ADA compliance and incorporating Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles into overall design and maintenance of facilities. Site specific recommendations include development vacant land at Ting Park, community gardens and permanent farmers market pavilion at Sugg Farm, and facility expansion at Bass Lake Park, Cultural Center, and W. E. Hunt Recreation Center.



WOMBLE PARK

43.43 acres
Enhance entrances
Parking Expansion
Improved site lighting
Amenity Renovations-
Turf fields, restrooms,
bandshell relocation



VETERANS PARK

9.76 acres
Engage youth and add
amenities to activate the
park
Add trailhead
Trim vegetation and
maintain sight lines to
improve "eyes on the
park"



JONES PARK

24.38 acres
Trail head and greenway
connection
Parking expansion
Environmental education
opportunity at 'Turtle
Pond'
Address runoff and
drainage
Additional shelter



TING PARK

35.83 acres
Destination teen space
Public-private
partnerships
SMART park
Full-size basketball courts
Permanent building
with restroom, offices, &
storage

			
<p>SUGG FARM PARK</p> <p>110.47 acres</p> <p>Validate master plan within limits of conservation easement</p> <p>Evaluate barn structures</p> <p>Repave entrance road</p> <p>Permanent farmers market pavilion w/ community garden and farm-to-table programming</p>	<p>BASS LAKE PARK</p> <p>85.23 acres</p> <p>Facility expansion for dedicated event space</p> <p>Upgrade existing building as a dedicated environmental education facility</p> <p>Parking expansion</p>	<p>CULTURAL CENTER</p> <p>19,110 square feet</p> <p>Relocate and expand farmers' market</p> <p>Analyze storage and office space needs</p> <p>Expand various programs and amenities to adjacent Mims Property</p> <p>Collaborate with Wake County for potential building expansion</p>	<p>W. E. HUNT RECREATION CENTER</p> <p>40,132 square feet</p> <p>Playground replacement</p> <p>Improved controlled access to building entrance</p> <p>Renovations to community room, gymnasium, and locker rooms</p> <p>Maximize program capacity through flexible spaces</p> <p>Repurpose the outdoor spaces and 'the pit' with new amenities</p>

Town of Holly Springs residents have expressed a strong support and need for development of greenway trails throughout the public engagement process. This plan has proposed a comprehensive network of greenway trails, sidepaths, and shared-use lanes (sharrows) to connect Holly Springs to neighboring jurisdictions (community connectors), local destinations such as schools, parks, and shops (destination connectors), and other neighborhoods (neighborhood connectors). Participants from the second public input session supported connecting to Town of Apex and American Tobacco Trail via community connector network as a priority project.

Programming

The Department provides a broad range of recreation and leisure programming for all ages at the existing dedicated parks and facilities. Existing eight core programming areas include arts and cultural, athletics, childcare, special events, fitness, nature, seniors, and special interest programs. This plan has identified two unique facilities including Farmers Market and Ting Stadium for expanded program opportunities. The Town also manages several successful partnerships including the school system, athletic program providers, and healthcare providers such as Rex Healthcare. The public engagement process revealed a need for diverse programming that caters to all ages, abilities, and special needs populations. The plan recommends establishing a special events division to focus

on specialized programs that are not only economic drivers but also support programming for health, wellness, and building social capital. The Department needs to encourage volunteerism programs which builds trust and community ownership. In addition, the Department needs to update program pricing strategies to align them with the customer's ability to pay. Finally, the Department needs to adopt the total Cost of Service / Ownership model and Cost Recovery Model for programming to achieve financial sustainability.

Operations and Maintenance

The operations and maintenance overview analyzes the Department's delegation of maintenance tasks based on cost, timeliness, experience, and quality. Currently ten full time maintenance staff members take care of developed parkland, facilities, and greenways. There are no seasonal, part time staff or stable volunteer staff in place. The recommendations for this plan include asset management plan, capital improvement program, deferred maintenance plan, and written maintenance standards. In addition, clear career development path to retain staff and focus on staff training to continue to provide excellent customer services are included in the staffing recommendations. A new business development staff position is recommended to oversee earned income development, partnership equity, to set up and oversee a parks and recreation foundation, seek sponsorships, develop and track data on key performance metrics that are recommended in the master plan.

Finance

The Financial Assessment process by the project team involved a review of their last three years financial statements and financial questions and answers by the staff and the Finance Department from internal financial operations meetings. One of the challenge for Holly Springs Parks and Recreation Department is to manage their operating budget in pace with the community growth and be able to provide programs and facilities for a growing population where the current facilities have reached capacity. The Department should consider other dedicated funding sources outside of property taxes to help support the residents' needs. The Town should also adopt a cost recovery policy, set up a cost recovery goal, establish pricing policy for programs, and focus on the business development aspects of the Department by adding a new staff position for business development.

Community Engagement

COVID-19 Pandemic: Impact on the Master Planning Process

The Town of Holly Springs Parks, Recreation, and Greenways Master Plan process was unexpectedly impacted by the COVID-19 global pandemic when the public engagement process was initiated. The process was adapted to respond to the restrictions and guidelines recommended by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) which replaced all the in-person meetings with a virtual engagement platform. The following summarizes the adaptive strategies used to solicit broad community input throughout the process:

1. Focus group meetings for teens and special needs population were conducted virtually while the senior focus group responded to a printed feedback questionnaire. Teens were also given the opportunity to fill out written responses.
2. The two public open houses made use of virtual presentations, streamed live on Town's website and social media platforms. The public provided additional feedback using web-based public opinion surveys which were available for additional 2-3 weeks.
3. Virtual work sessions were arranged for staff, interdepartmental staff, strategic partners, and interjurisdictional partners to provide comments on proposed greenway corridor maps, park search areas, and recommendations.

GLOBAL IMPACT ON PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEMS

The following excerpt is derived from the 2020 Trust for Public Land special report -Parks and Pandemic. The report highlights following challenges and changes as they are affecting the parks systems.

Health: Parks and open spaces have become critical resources for all the physical and mental health benefits they provide. The pandemic has resulted in closings of restaurants, bars, malls, etc. where people socialize, and parks and open spaces are helping fill that gap while also helping communities deal with the trauma and stress that comes with a global health crisis. The report also notes that the pandemic has revealed a significant gap in the nation's poor neighborhoods which lack access to the quality green spaces, thus depriving them of the health benefits.

Usage: As the businesses and non-essential services have closed across the nation, people have found respite in close to home neighborhood parks, open spaces, and greenway trails to stay physically active and meet other people while maintaining the 'social distance'. Parks and greenway trails are seeing unprecedented high levels of usage proving their importance in this health crisis. This has also led to the overwhelmed parks and recreation systems and many communities had to come up with innovative ways to encourage people to maintain distance and use open spaces in accordance with CDC guidelines. Some of the strategies included markings for people to keep distance, educational signs, one way loops for greenway trails, opening up athletic fields for walking and passive recreation activities, and voluntary sign ins for people to use spaces on certain days of the week.

Policy: Across the country, the pandemic has led parks departments to consider a range of policy changes by closing off amenities, athletic programs, and facilities that result in large gatherings. While the communities have kept access to open spaces, portable toilets, restrooms, drinking fountains are shut down. In major cities, the problem of equitable access became apparent when parking lots were closed to manage heavy traffic in parks which in turn created a barrier for people not within the walking distance of the parks.

Investment: Exacerbated usage of parks and open spaces has underscored the need for increase in parks and recreation as essential infrastructure investment and leverage the momentum of communities' interest to be outdoors and focused on health benefits. Cities and Towns across the nation are facing the financial challenges with decreased revenue, employment loss, and budget cuts. Elected officials and decision makers need to realize the importance of parks and recreation as an essential service in this pandemic and ensure a steady investment to continue offering the quality service to their communities.

Future: The Trust for Public Land report also highlights that the pandemic has called attention to the fact that access to the outdoors is considered a privilege when it should be a right. With the data to pinpoint where parks are most needed, we can address the equality challenge across the communities. Experts in the field are suggesting that this is the crucial time to continue supporting the operational needs of parks to maintain their high quality, especially in the underserved areas where there is a higher chance of them falling victim to antisocial activities.

An additional outreach booth was set up by the Town staff at the Farmers Market to share draft greenway map with public. While the pandemic has not impacted the results and recommendations of this master plan directly, the long-term effects of this crisis will be seen on the parks and recreation systems in the communities across the nation for years to come. Communities have developed a newfound appreciation for the outdoors while the parks and recreation departments are facing budget cuts with economic downfall. From the community engagement perspective, the virtual engagement platforms have been successful in participation from residents which has far exceeded the traditional in-person engagement. The scientific surveys provided an opportunity for non-park users and residents who may not have access to internet to mail in their survey responses.

This plan has considered COVID impacts on the parks and recreation system throughout the document as it relates to facilities, greenway trails, and programming.

STEERING COMMITTEE/ ELECTED OFFICIALS	SCIENTIFIC SURVEYS	VIRTUAL PUBLIC MEETING/ ONLINE SURVEYS	FOCUS GROUPS
<p>+/- 57 participants</p> <p>4 Elected officials meetings</p> <p>3 Steering committee meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Asset mapping sessions › Plan progress updates › Mapping feedbacks › Online Surveys 	<p>351 households</p> <p>Mailed in surveys</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Use & ratings of parks/ facilities › Participation & ratings of programs & events › Barriers that prevent parks & facilities use › Facility Needs & Priorities › Program Needs & Priorities 	<p>271 participants</p> <p>2 virtual meetings 2 online surveys</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Community Values › Greenway trails use › Greenway trails experience › Parks amenity needs › Program needs › Prioritization criteria 	<p>+/- 40 participants</p> <p>3 virtual meetings 1 mail in survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Seniors › Youth › Special needs › Strategic partners › Interjurisdictional meetings › Needs › Challenges › Priorities

Benchmarking

The benchmarking analysis indicates how the Department compares to other similar agencies for metrics including level of service per 1,000 population for parkland, greenway trails, and indoor facility space, programming budget per capita, cost recovery, capital budget, full time equivalent (FTE) staff per acre of developed parkland, and FTE per 1000 population. The results of the benchmarking analysis indicate that the Department is successfully providing a high level of service for developed parkland and staff led recreation programming in comparison to benchmarked communities and can certainly achieve the level of service provided by the NRPA gold medalist communities including Westerville, OH and Coppell, TX. The NRPA Gold Medal is recognized as the "Highest award to honor communities that demonstrate excellence in long-range planning, resource management and innovative approaches to delivering superb park and recreation services with fiscally sound business practices." The Town is working strategically towards the goal to achieve high level of service with greenway trails with the strong support expressed by the community.

This benchmarking analysis summarizes data for the following categories to compare peer communities.

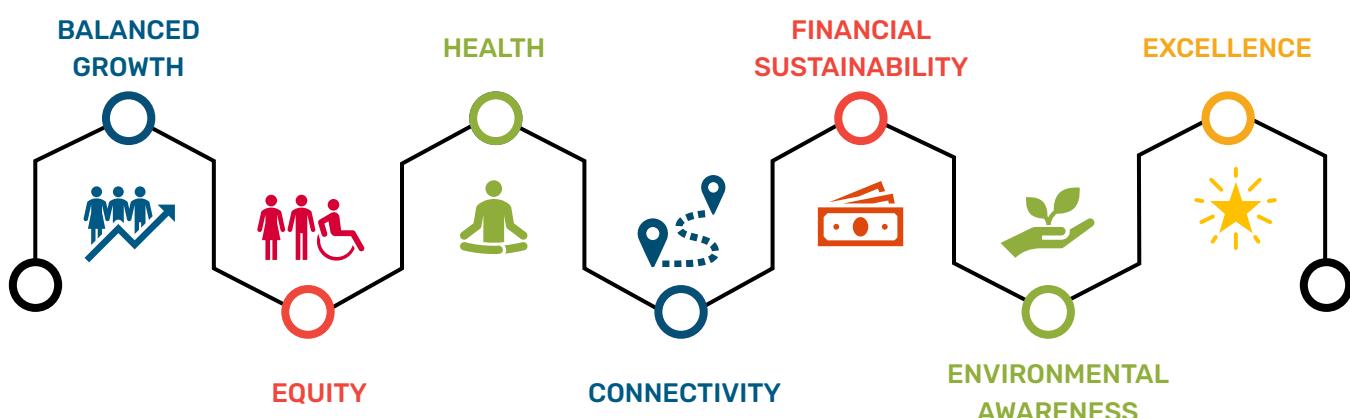
- › Parkland
- › Trails
- › Indoor Facility Space
- › Programming
- › Finances
- › Capital Improvement Budget
- › Staffing

	HOLLY SPRINGS, NC	APEX, NC	COPPELL, TX	WAKE FOREST, NC	WESTERVILLE, OH
Population	41,726	63,500	41,100	48,000	39,737
NRPA Gold Medal Finalist	No	No	Yes	No	Yes



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Grounded in community values and aspirations, this Plan has established seven guiding principles that are pursued in every aspect of the recommendations and action plan. The guiding principles developed for this Plan are derived from the public engagement process and feedback received from the Town Council, steering committee, focus groups, Town officials from neighboring jurisdictions, as well as County and Town staff. This feedback was arranged into similar themes and values that formed the foundation for the guiding principles noted below.



 BALANCED GROWTH	Meet the needs of the growing community
 EQUITY	Provide equitable and inclusive access to ALL residents of Holly Springs
 HEALTH	Prioritize health and wellness of the Holly Springs community
 CONNECTIVITY	Offer a connected recreation system throughout the community
 FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY	Establish a financially sustainable department
 ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS	Commit to the protection of natural resources
 EXCELLENCE	Seek excellence in everything the Town provides to its residents



BALANCED GROWTH

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- › Acquire and develop an additional 186 acres of parkland by 2030
- › Develop the 150 acres of available parkland currently owned by the Department
- › Construct 53,518-80,439 additional square feet of indoor recreation by 2030

SCIENTIFIC SURVEY FINDING

Participants indicated top three priority investment areas should be:

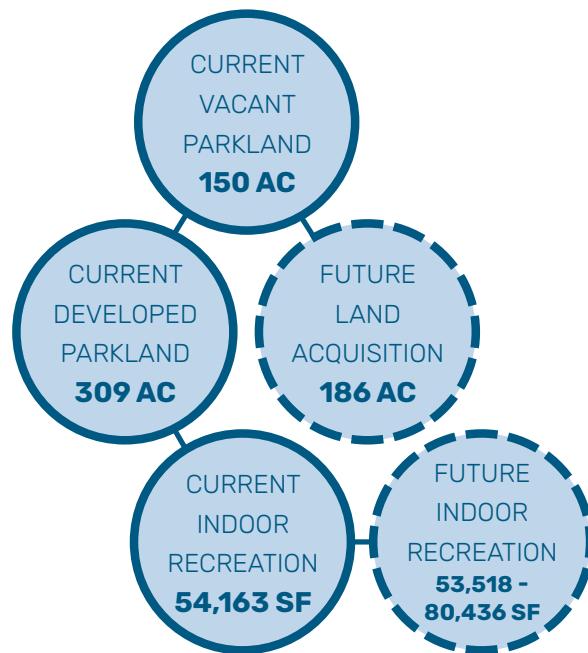
Greenway Trails
Aquatics Center
Farmers Market Pavilion

ONLINE SURVEY FINDING

outdoor
tax
expansion
adventure
fields
market
greenways
west
trails
greenway
capacity
expressed
priority
future gaps
recreation
support
acquire
recreation
technology
center
age
programs
aqua
parks
willingness
deferred
marketing
properties
address
stafing
diversification
parks
park

expand

farmers center aquatic



STRATEGIES FOR ACTION ITEMS

MEET THE NEEDS OF THE GROWING COMMUNITY BY:

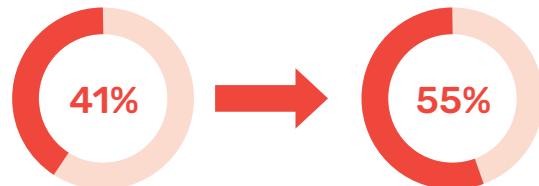
- › Level of service standard for developed parkland, conservation parkland, indoor facilities
- › Land acquisition strategies
- › Expanded programming



EQUITY

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- › Acquire and develop parkland to achieve an equitable distribution of parkland
- › Increase the percentage of residents within a ten-minute walk of a park from 41 percent to 55 percent
- › Offer recreation access to people of all ages and ability levels
- › Ensure equitable distribution of financial investment across the park system
- › Develop program plan for special needs populations



Holly Springs Current
Walkability Rating per
Trust for Public Land

Holly Springs Goal for
Walkability Rating for
Year 2030

SCIENTIFIC SURVEY FINDING

97% participants indicated parks and recreation is an essential service to the Town.

36% participants indicated that it takes them approx. 20 minutes to walk to nearest park, facility or greenway trail.

ONLINE SURVEY FINDING

everyone
parks
been
green
farmers
surveys
efforts
residents
play
biking
needed
support
inclusive
needs
seniors
accessibility
programs
trails gap address
serve west
diversification
marketing
challenging
distribution
serving
special
programming
community
market
highlights
serving
special
programming
affordability
good
affordability
affordability

STRATEGIES FOR ACTION ITEMS

PROVIDE EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE ACCESS TO ALL RESIDENTS OF HOLLY SPRINGS BY:

- › 10-minute walk
- › Design interventions
- › Education
- › Partnerships
- › Financial assistance



HEALTH

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- › Plan, design and program of the parks and recreation system to improve health outcomes related to
 - › Physical fitness
 - › Mental health
 - › Social cohesion
 - › Healthy eating
 - › Identify potential partners and organizations who strive to improve the above-mentioned health outcomes



SCIENTIFIC SURVEY FINDING

Participants indicated fitness and wellness programs as one of the top priority for investment with a priority rating of 133/200.

ONLINE SURVEY FINDING

facilities
arts
sensory support
promote
Aquatic preserves
systemic cultural
wildlife nature
recreation
greenway
health
social/economic/physical
protection/habitat
arts/creativity/creativity
programs/partnerships
programming
pavilion/energy
farmers/health/heath/interaction
wellness
markets
active/natural/trails
athletics
youth
recreational
natural

STRATEGIES FOR ACTION ITEMS

PRIORITIZE HEALTH AND WELLNESS OF THE HOLLY SPRINGS COMMUNITY BY:

- › Amenities that encourage physical activity
 - › Program offerings
 - › Access to healthy food
 - › Partnerships



CONNECTIVITY

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- › Build a well-connected parks and recreation system within the Town
- › Connect to national, regional, and adjacent communities' greenway systems

SCIENTIFIC SURVEY FINDING

Participants indicated **Greenway Trails** as topmost priority investment areas with priority rating at 200/200.

52% of survey respondents indicate greenway trails as most important facilities.

ONLINE SURVEY FINDING

emerging
create
geographic
transportation
accessibility
■ together
gap
destinations
greenway
community connecting social
connectivity
compo connect
connected along
lack via
walking
system
loops
biking
program
west
trails



STRATEGIES FOR ACTION ITEMS

OFFER A CONNECTED RECREATION SYSTEM THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY BY:

- › Cross sector collaborations
- › Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) update
- › Developer built greenway trails
- › Connected destinations
- › Wayfinding and signage



FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- › Complete a true cost of service / ownership assessment for each park and program
 - › Establish cost recovery goals and develop diverse pricing policy for programs and facilities.
 - › Develop a clear funding strategy to fund park improvements and on-going operations and maintenance costs.



SCIENTIFIC SURVEY FINDING

81% of survey respondents are supportive of future bond within existing property tax structure to fund parks and rec improvements and expansion.

ONLINE SURVEY FINDING

STRATEGIES FOR ACTION ITEMS

PROVIDE EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE ACCESS TO ALL RESIDENTS OF HOLLY SPRINGS BY:

- › Total Cost of Service / Ownership model
 - › Staff training
 - › Cost Recovery Model for programming
 - › Diverse funding sources
 - › Economic value of partnerships and volunteer base



ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- › Establish goal to conserve 30% parkland as undisturbed open space
- › Maximize sustainability practices: design, construction, maintenance & operations
- › Additional programs to raise environmental awareness
- › Cross-sector approach to protection of natural resources as Town-wide initiatives



SCIENTIFIC SURVEY FINDING

86% of survey respondents support implementing sustainability measures to minimize environmental impact of parks and recreation facilities.

ONLINE SURVEY FINDING

park supports
natural
environmental
sustainability
areas spaces
measures
impacts
base
reduce
implement
nature
focus park
social adventure
habitat education
open green
protection facilities
outdoor
recreation large
destinations

STRATEGIES FOR ACTION ITEMS

COMMIT TO THE PROTECTION OF NATURAL RESOURCES BY:

- › Natural resource preservation
- › Sustainable sites
- › Green building strategies
- › Tree canopy goals
- › Carbon reduction and energy conservation
- › Waste reduction
- › Educational outreach



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- › Implement best practices in planning and design of parks: CPTED, deferred maintenance, ADA compliance, wayfinding signage.
- › Balance 'uniqueness and consistency' of parks and facilities
- › Develop and support a culture of innovation, technology, and adaptability to respond to on-going local, national, and global challenges
- › Establish best practices to pursue national awards and CAPRA accreditation

SCIENTIFIC SURVEY FINDING

93% of respondents rated the overall quality of programs / special events as excellent.

ONLINE SURVEY FINDING

parks accessibility
region trend
unique offers outdoor facilities excellent
senior ADA
programs cultural events staff diversity
users adventure serve needs
quality sustainability serve needs
high emerging environmental
special



STRATEGIES FOR ACTION ITEMS

SEEK EXCELLENCE IN EVERYTHING THE TOWN PROVIDES TO ITS RESIDENTS BY:

- › Best practices in designing facilities
 - › Placemaking
 - › ADA compliance
 - › CPTED Guidelines
 - › Universal and Inclusive Design principles
- › Key performance indicators
- › Updated technology
- › Staff training
- › Special events division
- › Business development staff position
- › Branding

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the plan & the community



OVERVIEW

The Town of Holly Springs (the Town) is a little more than 17 square miles and extends urban services to an extraterritorial jurisdiction that extends more than 13 miles outward. In 2019, the Town updated section one-Future Land Use and Community Character, as part of the Vision Holly Springs Comprehensive Plan. Vision Holly Springs, the Town's Comprehensive Plan, serves as a policy guide on future land use; transportation; parks, recreation and open space; community character; business development; community facilities; infrastructure and utilities; and natural resources. This Parks, Recreation and Greenway Master Plan (the Plan) will replace the current section 3- "Beyond the Green" within the Vision Holly Springs document that will help guide future growth and asset management while preserving the small-town community feel that Holly Springs' residents love.

The Holly Springs Parks and Recreation Department provides excellent parks, facilities and recreation services to the community with committed staff, diverse amenities, a diverse array of athletic, life skills, and arts and culture programming, and community events. It maintains six parks, a nature center, cultural center, recreation center, athletic fields and more than 12 miles of trails. The Department prides itself on providing exceptional programs and amenities. Holly Springs is also home to the Holly Springs Salamanders, a collegiate summer baseball team which began play in 2015 as part of the Coastal Plain League.

The Town has received many awards and accolades over the past decade. It has been ranked the safest municipality consistently since 2004. The Town's Farmers Market, which is run by the Department, has consistently been voted as a top farmers market in North Carolina and the United States by the American Farmland Trust. The Town received an award for 2007 Pedestrian Transportation Plan as well as 2018 Great Main Street in the Making award from the N.C. Chapter of the American Planning Association. Most recently, it ranked 5th in best places to raise a family and 4th in best places to live.

Some of the noteworthy achievements of the Holly Springs Parks and Recreation Department include:

- › 2012 - Acquired Sugg Farm, 100-acre park
- › 2015 - Opened Ting Park (formerly North Main Athletic Complex), 1700 seat multi-sport stadium
- › 2016 - Launched new registration software (RecTrac)
- › 2019 - Farmers Market in NC, by American Farmland Trust
- › 2020 - Acquired new park land (55.9 acres), west of Highway 55 along Cass Holt Road

The last Parks and Recreation Master Plan, "Beyond the Green", was completed in 2007. Holly Springs has seen significant growth and changes since this plan including change in demographics, land development within and around Holly Springs, as well as community's needs and trends. The plan update comes at a critical point when the Town is investing in other planning efforts to envision its future.

The Parks and Recreation Department established three overarching principles for developing the new parks, recreation and greenways master plan- **"connect, inspire and play"**.

CONNECT

Physically connecting our parks through new greenways ... Bringing people together through new programming opportunities ... Connecting us to nature while preserving and celebrating it.

INSPIRE

Supporting new programs and facilities that encourage people of all ages to try something new.

PLAY

Exploring the many ways we play, including the visual and performance arts ... Increasing options for recreation close to where people live ... Providing thoughtful and innovative programming for people of all abilities.



This comprehensive parks, recreation, and greenways master plan will:

- Replace the previous Parks and Recreation Master Plan as an update to the Town-wide comprehensive planning effort;
- Coordinate with the coinciding Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) update to replace the 2007 Bicycle Transportation Plan and Chapter 4: Bicycle and Pedestrian Element of the 2011 Comprehensive Transportation Plan (Adopted in 2011, and updated in 2013 & 2017) in an effort to unify the planning of pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the Town;
- Define the role that the park and recreation system will play in the future of Holly Springs;
- Provide a framework for the Department to address the Town's rapid growth;
- Accommodate additional demand new residents generate while evolving to meet emerging recreation trends;
- Qualify to access certain state and national funding sources required to improve and expand the system by having a comprehensive plan adopted within the past 10 years;
- Guide improvements to parkland and facilities, programming, operations and maintenance, finance and budget and greenways and trails;
- Develop a resource for officials and the public alike to understand current park and facility offerings and learn about the future direction of the Department;
- Develop the action and implementation plan to aid the decision makers with a framework to guide, validate and prioritize project implementation.



▲ Figure 1- Diagram explaining the master plan components

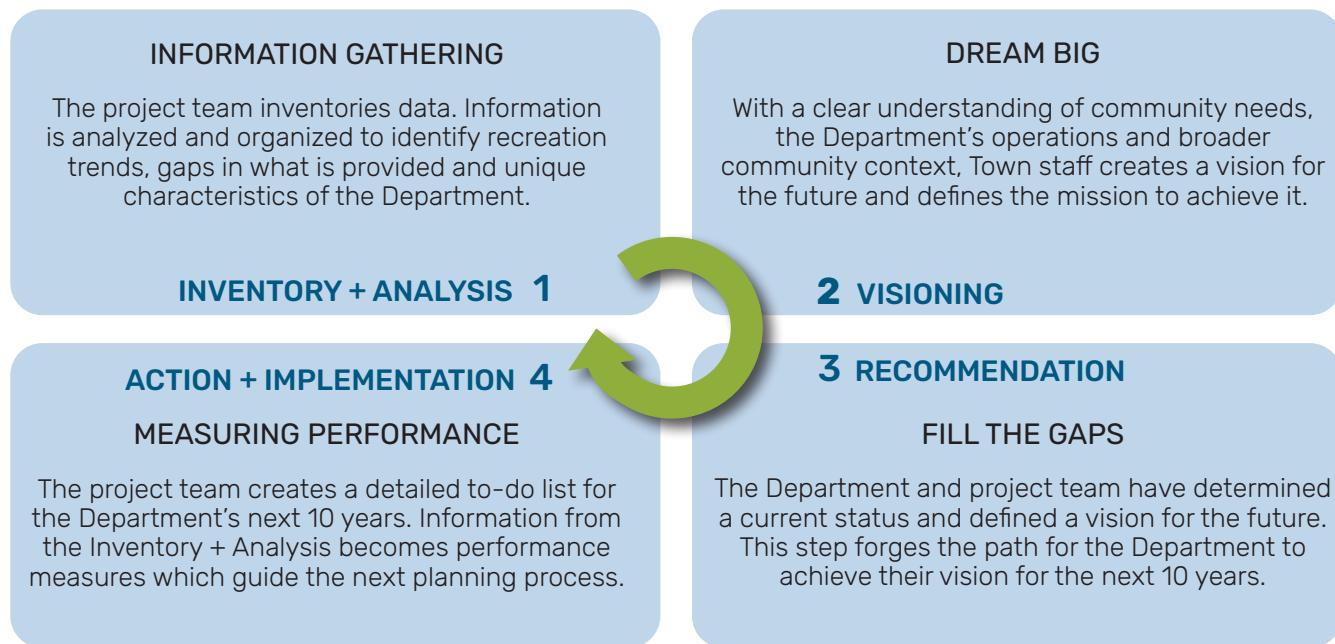
COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PURPOSE + PROCESS

Comprehensive planning provides the information a town requires to make informed, equitable and responsible decisions for meeting diverse community needs. Some of the reasons for pursuing a comprehensive planning process include the following:

		
Qualify for State and Federal grant funding opportunities	Validate decisions related to parks and recreation	Catalog community needs and wants
		
Create a 10-year work plan for department staff	Engage community, staff, stakeholders and decision makers	Generate population-based goals for new parkland, trails and more
		
Benchmark against other agencies to inform department goals	Identify and resolve gaps and deficiencies	Prioritize goals for a 10-year planning horizon

▲ Figure 2 - Reasons for pursuing master planning process

Comprehensive planning provides a structure for evaluating the needs and setting priorities. The planning process captures the status of the Department at a moment in time, creates a vision for the future and identifies steps to achieve that vision. The plan will guide the Department's decisions and priorities for the next 10 years.



▲ Figure 3- Diagram explaining the master planning process

PLAN OUTLINE

This plan is based on robust community and staff engagement and data-driven recommendations determined through an analytical approach. From the initial inventory and analysis through the recommendations and action and implementation plan, the team engaged stakeholders, special interest focus groups, and acknowledged local, regional and national recreation needs and trends, demographic shifts and agency performance. The project team studied current facilities and programs to evaluate the overall operational successes and challenges of the Department and its mission. Finally, the project team alongside Department staff developed a set of guiding principles that prioritize recommendations to improve recreational offerings and meet growing expectations from an increasing population.

This 2020 Parks and Recreation and Greenways Master Plan includes the following components:

The Plan and The Community

The project team reviewed the planning context of the Town's Parks and Recreation Department to understand past planning efforts and the Department's evolution. Comprehensive plans, specific park master plans and long-range recreation planning were reviewed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the plans that guide the growth and development of the Town. It is the goal of this plan that the recommendations presented herein will be seamlessly integrated with other Town plans.

The project team completed a demographic and trends analysis to consider national and local recreation trends and cross-referenced Census data with the Town's demographic data and national publications to draw conclusions about current and future recreation trends and participation levels.

Inventory and Analysis

The inventory and analysis takes a full account of the existing parks and recreation and greenway system. The inventory and analysis chapter covers parkland and facilities, programming, arts and culture, operations and maintenance, finance and budget, and greenways and trails.

Vision and Guiding Principles

Visioning allows Department staff to develop a future direction for the department and each of its component parts. Guiding principles are developed based on community engagement and information gathered through research and inventory and analysis process. The visioning session validates the guiding principles that inform the creation of recommendations. Each of this plan's recommendations and action items are in service to achieving this vision.

Community Engagement

The project team performed a robust public engagement process which gathered input through staff, stakeholder groups, focus groups and community meetings. The process was designed to be transparent, equitable and engage the widest range of residents possible. The engagement plan consisted of virtual public meetings, focus group meetings, steering committee meetings, scientific surveys, online engagement, and several collaborative meetings with Town staff as well as meetings with neighboring agencies.

Benchmarking and Level of Service

Benchmarking and level of service evaluate current and future needs for park acreage, greenway trail mileage, and operational standards compared to national standards, best practices and peer agencies. These metrics are population based to allow the department to expand to meet future demand for parks and recreation services. The level of service standard includes current and future standards for parkland, facilities and trails.

Benchmarking communities provide a comparison for the existing state of the Department's amenities and informs level of service standards for the ten-year planning horizon. Metrics for parks, trails, parkland acreage, staffing and budget are evaluated for each benchmarked community which informs the development of an appropriate level of service standard specific to the Town. Such standards are normalized by population so target metrics can evolve to meet demands of the rapid population growth Holly Springs is experiencing.

Recommendations and Action + Implementation Plan

The recommendations and prioritized implementation plan provide a framework to guide park, facility, open space, greenways, programming, and operational improvements for the future. It is structured to guide decision making for Department policy. Each recommendation is further prioritized as short term (1-3 years), mid-term (3-7 years) or long-term (7-10+). Criteria for recommendation prioritization vary based on the context and criteria may range from land availability to financial implications but are firmly rooted in community preferences.

COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Historic Context

Town of Holly Springs is a community with more than 150 years of history. Tuscarora Indians had occupied the area prior to European settlements. Since acquiring its charter in 1877, the Town will be celebrating its official 150th anniversary in 2027. The town was constructed around the freshwater springs amid mature holly trees from which it received its name. One of the important pieces of Holly Springs history is the contribution and commitment of the African American community and leadership in setting the town on the path of success and moving it forward during the challenges of wars and great depression era. Historically a small commercial hub in an agricultural area of the state, Holly Springs has retained elements of its rural history in the form of its natural resources and low-density suburban development pattern.

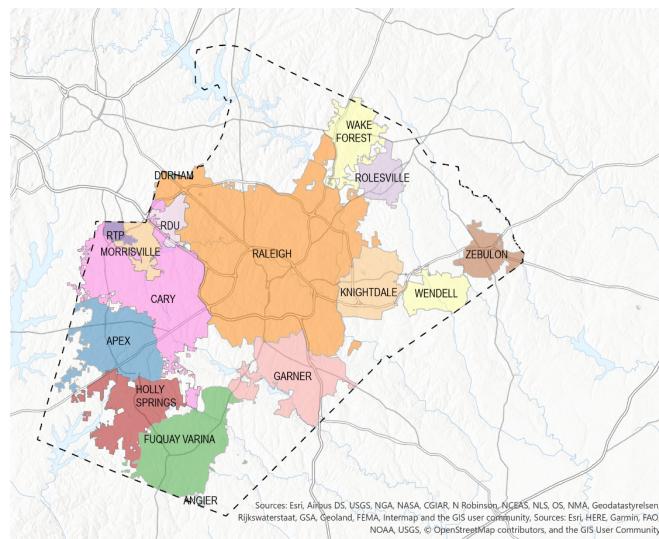


▲ Figure 4- Historic Holly Springs Depot. Source: Holly Springs Area Historical Society

There are three properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) including the Leslie-Alford-Mims House, the Holly Springs Masonic Lodge, and the Samuel Bartley Holleman House, located at Hollemans Crossroads. The Town has developed a master plan for passive recreation opportunities for Mims property.

Regional Context

The Town of Holly Springs' location in the context of its proximity to cities like Durham and Raleigh, and major employment hub of Research Triangle Park, the RDU airport, and connectivity to the greater region via NC 540 Triangle Expressway, Highway 55, and US Highway 1 have contributed significantly to the Town's exponential growth in the last decade. Many new residential developments have been permitted to accommodate the influx of new residents wanting to make Holly Springs home. In addition, Holly Springs business park expansion and investment in downtown business development has sparked a wave of new local as well as international businesses coming to the Town. In 2017, Holly Springs became the first town in North Carolina to become a Certified Entrepreneurial Community that is attracting entrepreneurs from all over the state to launch their unique and creative businesses.



▲ Figure 5- Municipalities in Wake County

NATURAL RESOURCES

Holly Springs is located in the piedmont region of North Carolina and exhibits many natural features typical of this area. The ridge line that separates the Cape Fear and Neuse River Basins runs right through the Town. Approximately 20 percent of the area is within Neuse River basin and 80 percent is within Cape Fear River basin. Presence of an inactive fault line known as the Jonesboro Fault lies just east of Highway 55, close to downtown area, has created a distinct geology for the eastern versus western Holly Springs. Utley Creek, part of the Cape Fear River watershed, runs through the southeastern portion of town and flows into Shearon Harris Reservoir, one of the town's most well-known natural features. Area around Shearon Harris Lake is forested land mainly owned by Duke Energy. Middle Creek, Little Branch and a few other unnamed tributaries through the Town. The majority of the Town's floodplain area is within the stream buffer zones.

The typical piedmont flora in Holly Springs comprises of pines, oaks, maples, sweet gum, sycamore, and red cedar. A signature resource area identified in the western region, close to the Harris Lake, is Long Leaf Pine Forest. While there are many federally listed wildlife species identified in the Wake County region, the two state listed species found within Holly Springs are Eastern Tiger Salamander and the Dwarf Wedgemussel. The Town has established a 40 acre preserve in the floodplain area along Middle Creek, north of Holly Springs Road. Bass Lake is stocked with catfish by the Town and is known as a key fish habitat in Wake County.

Continued growth and new developments coming up in Holly Springs are putting pressure on the preservation of natural resources. The Town has some key ordinances in place to save the riparian buffers, floodplain management, open space preservation requirements and stormwater quality and quantity management.

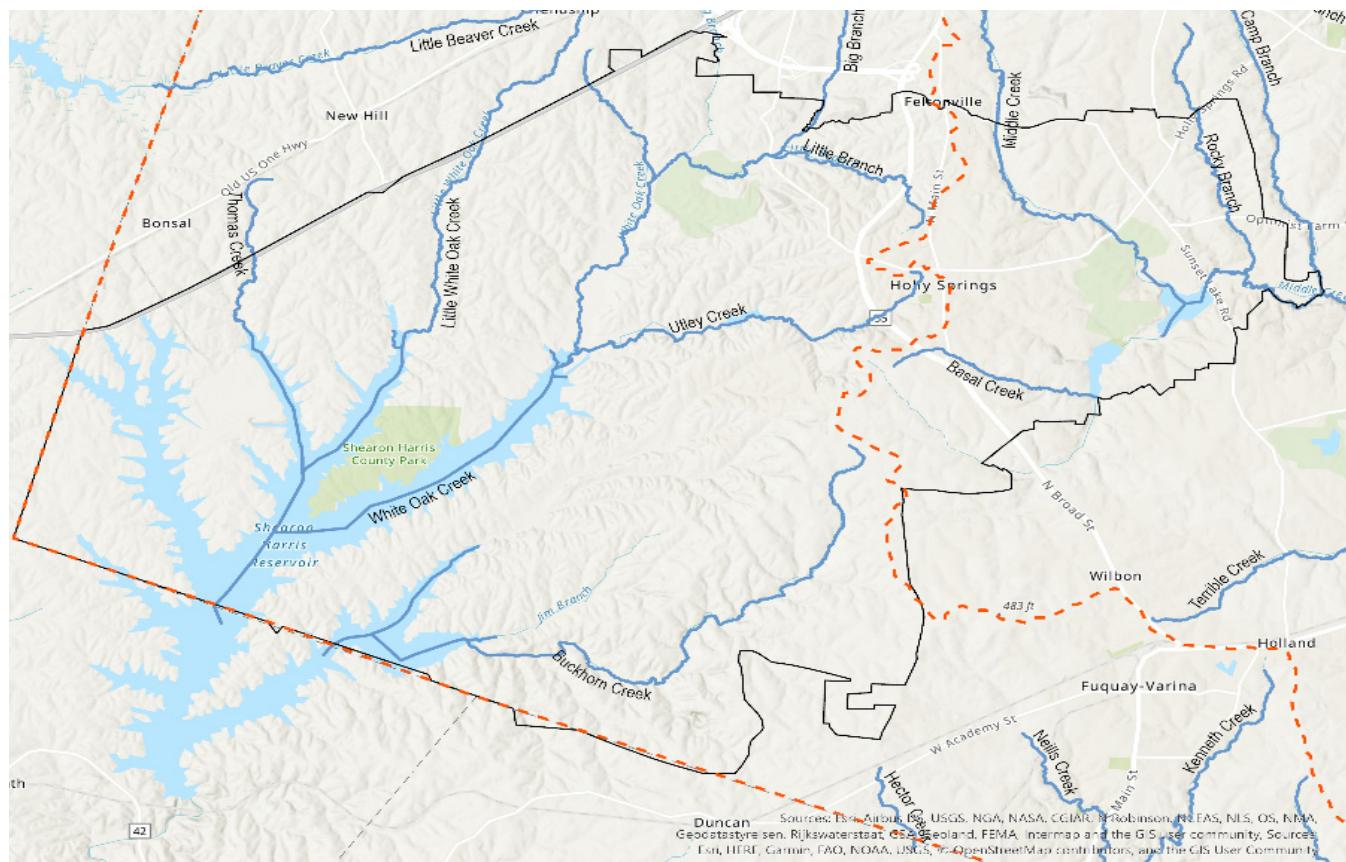


Figure 6- Hydrology within the Holly Springs area

PLANNING CONTEXT

Town-wide areas of growth, current planning documents and development ordinances all form the planning context in which this plan was developed. This master plan is responsive to the existing policies, Town-wide planning efforts and regional growth patterns that influence Town of Holly Springs now and in the future.

Growth Centers

Town of Holly Springs Development Services Department has 21 projects approved for construction drawings, close to 60 projects or project phases under construction and more than 30 development applications under review as of January 2021. Many of the new projects under review or under construction are located west of Highway 55. There are some annexation projects in the pipeline as well which include mixed use commercial development, residential developments, and a new Wake County school site in the western part of the Town.

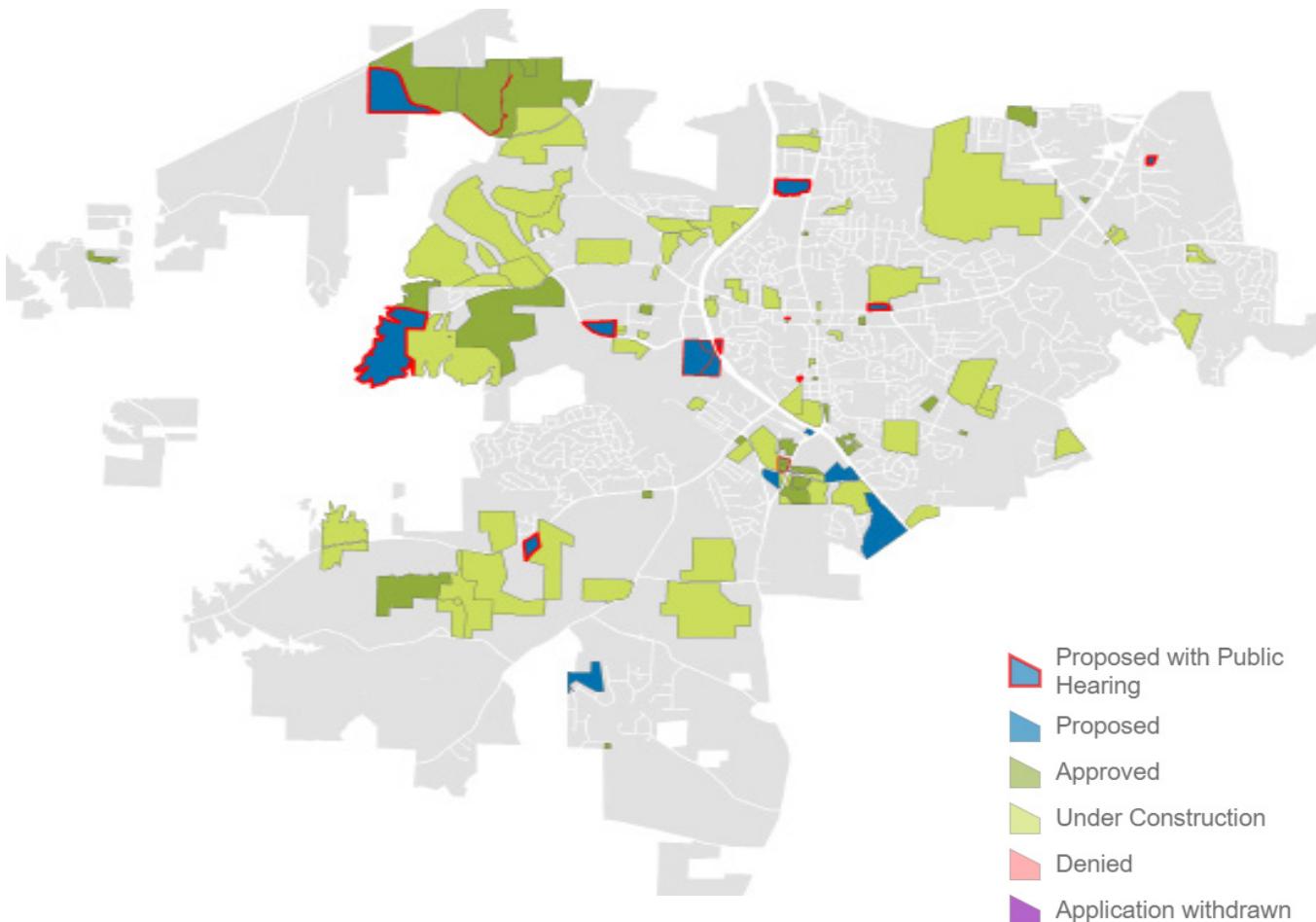
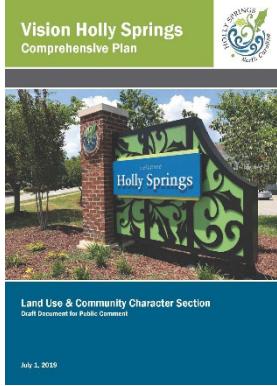


Figure 7- Source: Town of Holly Springs Planning Department
Interactive Development Map (Snapshot taken as of January 2021)

Related Planning Documents

The following represents a summary of planning documents that guide growth and development throughout Town.

<p>TOWN OF HOLLY SPRINGS FISCAL YEAR 2019-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN</p> <p>Adopted April 10, 2019</p>	<p>The strategic plan is identified as a 'roadmap' to the Town's vision and strategic priority areas. The priority areas include economic prosperity and diversity; engaged, healthy and active community; organizational excellence; responsible and balanced growth; safe and friendly community. Specifically, under the engaged, healthy, and active community priority area, the plan focuses on expanding the Town's comprehensive system of sustainable facilities, greenways, and park spaces and making it equitable, accessible to a diverse and growing population while integrating the natural resource management as part of the overall strategic plan.</p>
 <p>Adopted October 15, 2019</p>	<p>Vision Holly Springs Comprehensive Plan Section 1: Land Use & Character Plan – Vision Holly Springs, the Town's Comprehensive Plan, serves as a policy guide on future land use; transportation; parks, recreation and open space; community character; business development; community facilities; infrastructure and utilities; and natural resources. The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) was adopted by the Town Council on October 15, 2019. It focuses on character evaluation of the Town based on places to conserve, preserve, and innovate. The elements identified in the plan that have significant impact on the character of place include land use patterns and development intensity, open space and natural resources, street and block patterns, transportation network, parking, lot size and building placement, building scale and massing, private frontages, streetscape, and historic preservation. There is emphasis on 'Public Realm' that supports safe and walkable neighborhoods, excellent schools, and variety of parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities.</p>
 <p>Adopted June 2011, Updated 2013 & 2017</p>	<p>Vision Holly Springs Comprehensive Plan Section 2: Town of Holly Springs Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) – This plan focuses on recommendations for building a comprehensive transportation system for growing Holly Springs and unincorporated areas in Wake County. The plan proposes a multimodal transportation network that supports growth while preserving the environmental, cultural and social character of the area. The document is divided into five chapters including social and environmental resources, roadway element, bicycle and pedestrian element, transit element and funding and implementation. For bicycle and pedestrian element, the plan recommends a coordinated set of sidewalk projects, intersection improvements and greenways. The new CTP process is underway with expected adoption in 2022. The 2019 Future Land Use & Community Character Plan (FLUCCP) also recommends a focus on connecting residents to regional trail network.</p>

<p>Adopted August 2007</p>	<p>Vision Holly Springs Comprehensive Plan Section 3: Beyond the Green Parks and Recreation Master Plan – This 2007 plan is predecessor to the 2020 comprehensive parks, recreation and greenways master plan. It considers the unprecedented growth of Holly Springs for the period of twenty years from 2006-2025. Some of the focus areas mentioned in the plan include land acquisition recommendations, park classifications based on 'community center' themes instead of acreage, greenway system recommendations, programming and recreation trends benchmarking, and capital improvements recommendations. This plan document will serve as a reference guide for the current parks and recreation plan in terms of what goals have been achieved to date, what goals are still valid for the latest demographics and what elements can be dispensed.</p>
<p>Draft December, 2009</p>	<p>Wake County Harris Lake Drainage Basin Land Use Study – This study was the result of action items proposed at the completion of Wake County Southwest Area Land Use Plan. The purpose of the study was to examine the area surrounding Shearon Harris Nuclear Power Plant to determine a preferred development pattern for this area of Wake County. Out of approximately 39,000 acres within Wake County, 43% of study area is occupied by Duke Energy and the surrounding municipalities including Apex, Fuquay-Varina and Holly Springs are interested in the development in this area. Being undeveloped forested land, this area is a vital natural resource that is home to old growth longleaf pine forest, and a habitat for many rare wildlife and plant species, including bald eagles. The area is also home to game lands managed by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission. The plan describes scenarios of development based on infrastructure improvements including transportation, water and wastewater management. The plan also mentions a desire by Triangle Rails to Trails Conservancy to connect Harris Lake County Park to Eno River Park.</p>
<p>Adopted June 2011</p>	<p>Bicycle Transportation Plan – This 2011 plan provides framework on how to incorporate bicycle facilities (on and off-road) into transportation planning and considerations for the Town. Some of the focus areas mentioned in the plan include prioritized corridors to consider based on existing conditions and the most viable opportunities.</p>

Related Codes + Ordinances

Well written policy requiring exactions related to open space dedication or the development of recreation facilities has the potential to influence the level of service and recreational opportunities available to Town residents. Investment by the development community is critical to distributing the capital costs and long-term maintenance burden among multiple stakeholders.

The current Unified Development Ordinances in Article 8, state open space requirements for single family and multi-family residential, mixed use local business districts, commercial and industrial districts. The open spaces are described as spaces for recreation, social gatherings or for the preservation of existing trees and vegetation. The open space ordinance also states that these regulations are intended to guide the development or preservation of open space to assure that such open space is safe, visually attractive, useable, naturally sustainable and maintained.

These regulations are comprehensive in terms of their widespread application across all types of land use, and specific in the type of development while limiting the dedication of "unusable" open space such as wetlands and floodplains.

During the development of this Plan, the Town is also in the process of rewriting the codes and ordinances to align them with the Section 1- Land Use & Character Plan. The recommendations related to land acquisition best practices including fee in lieu, dedicated fees for improvements, greenway trail development and public private partnerships are described in detail in the appendices.



demographics + trends

INTRODUCTION

Understanding the Town of Holly Springs' population and demographics is an essential foundation for creating an effective long-range plan. Population growth drives many of this plan's goals and objectives. This analysis ensures the Town's parks and recreation offerings keep pace with demand generated by the increasing number of residents. Additionally, the analysis determines what types of parks and recreation services the Town may need as demographics related to age, race and income change and influence preferences for leisure time activities.

The demographic analysis tracks projected changes in proportional allocations of age, household income and race and ethnicity of a growing population. While the population is growing overall, changes in the proportions of demographic characteristics suggest changes in recreational needs. For example, as residents over the age of 55 become a larger proportion of the population, the Town can consider expanding recreation facilities, amenities, and programs to target that age segment.

National trends in recreation preferences change continually, influencing local demand for new activities and programs. Even when other demographic factors remain constant, changing preferences influence and alter a population's demand for parks and recreation facilities.

This chapter summarizes the Town of Holly Springs' demographic characteristics, and projects these characteristics through 2030. The analysis includes population growth projections, overview of demographic characteristics and a summary of national and local recreation trends.

METHODOLOGY

This demographic analysis uses data from the U.S. Census Bureau, which gathers data on a continual basis, and Esri, which uses U.S. Census data and other sources to conduct demographic analyses. The Town of Holly Springs Development Services Department projects future population growth through 2024 based on trends in building permits and construction of new residential units.



▲ Figure 8 -Elements influencing local demand for parks, amenities, facilities, and programs

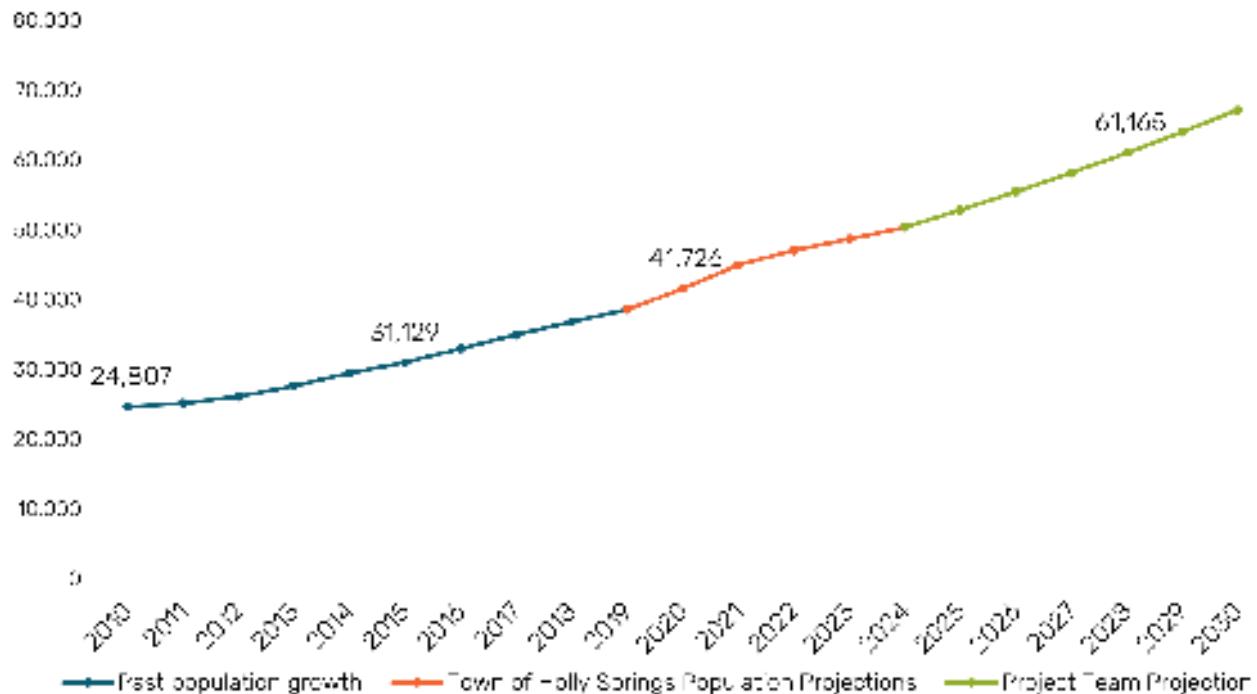
The project team projected population growth to 2030 based on the average annual growth rate of the Town's population projections from 2020 to 2024. The analysis of age segment, household income, and race and ethnicity are based on Esri's analysis of U.S. Census data, then projected to the year 2030. Estimates provide a count of the population at a specific point in time, while projections provide a scenario for a future population, based on certain assumptions such as building permits issued or past growth trends.

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Population Growth

The Town of Holly Springs' 5-year population projections prepared by the Development Services Department are available on the Town's website. The data from the prepared graphs (Figure 9) conveys the Town's continued population growth. The population almost doubled from 24,807 residents in 2010 to 41,726 residents in 2020.

The Town of Holly Springs is projected to continue growing but at a slightly slower rate. The Town saw an average annual growth rate of 5.1 percent between 2010 and 2019, but the population is expected to grow at 4.9 percent annually during the next 10 years. The Town's Long-Range Planners have estimated that the Town can expect to grow an annual average of 2,292 residents through 2024, based on the anticipated rate of new residential development. This expected growth rate will expand the Town's population from an estimated 41,726 residents in 2020 to a projected 64,165 residents in 2030.



▲ Figure 9 – Past and projected population growth for the Town of Holly Springs from 2010 to 2030.

The population growth rate for the state of North Carolina is one percent per year, and the population growth rate for the United States is 0.7 percent per year. Though Holly Springs is not continuing the exponential growth of the most recent decade, Holly Springs' population will continue to increase at a rate nearly five times the growth rate in North Carolina, and seven times as fast as growth in the United States.

TOWN OF HOLLY SPRINGS	NORTH CAROLINA	UNITED STATES
4.9%	1%	0.7%

▲ Table 1 - Average Annual Growth Rates for each jurisdiction

Households and Employment

Holly Springs population is highly educated with more than 66% residents with a secondary degree. Higher education level has also resulted in higher incomes for residents which is described in detail under the income subsection. The percentage of unemployed residents is smaller at 2.5% as compared to Wake County at 3%. The average household size is 3.05 people per household and more than 55% of households have one or more children.

EDUCATION

66.4%

of Holly Springs residents have some form of secondary degree.



UNEMPLOYMENT STATUS

2.5%

of Holly Springs residents in the workforce are unemployed.



HOUSEHOLD SIZE

The average household size in Holly Springs is

3.05

people per household.



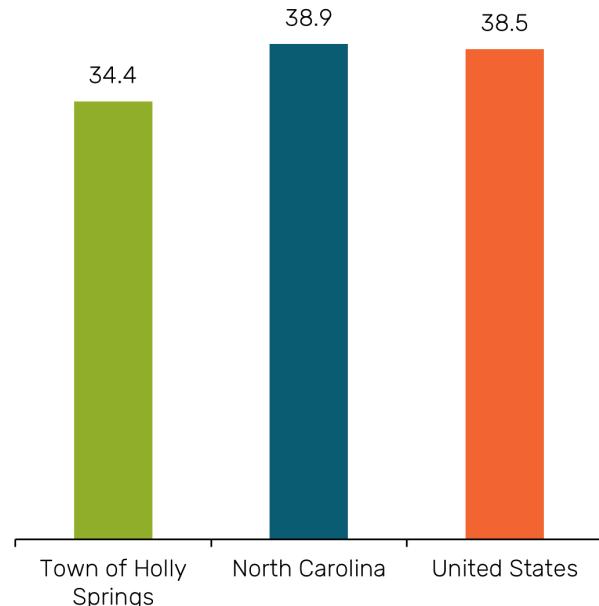
HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN

55.5%

of Holly Springs's households have one or more children.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2019 and 2024.



Age Segment

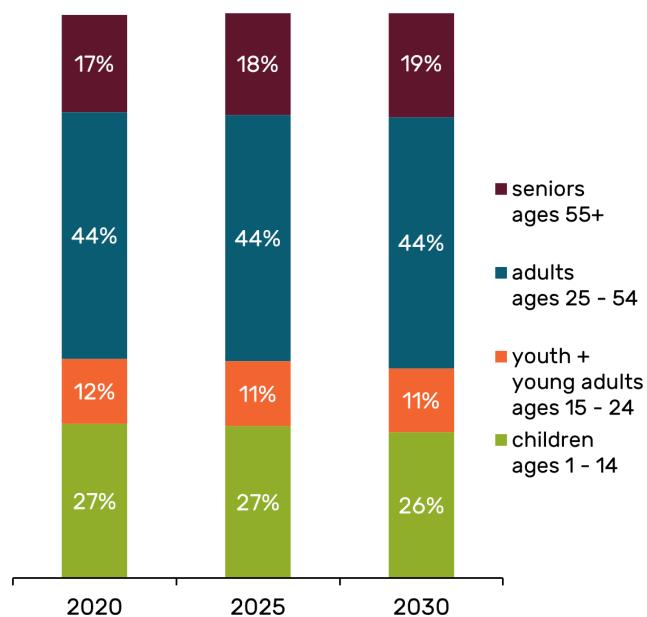
The Town of Holly Springs will experience little change in the proportion of age cohorts during the 10-year planning horizon. Figure 10 shows a slight increase in the proportion of the population over age 55, but little change overall.

National demographic trends show that the portion of the population over age 55 is growing faster than other age segments and becoming a larger portion of the overall population. Adults age 55 and over are the only age segment that will increase proportionally within the next 10 years. This indicates that even while the population grows rapidly, the proportional spread of age segments will remain stable. This is indicative of a population growing through relocation rather than through the natural replacement cycles of birth and death.

The median age of the population of North Carolina and the United States is approximately 39 years of age. The Town of Holly Springs's median age is lower at 34. This further supports the demographic trend of a younger population with more children and young families in Holly Springs than seen in the wider population of North Carolina and the U.S.

▲ Figure 10 - Median age of residents by geographic area.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2019 and 2024. Project team projected data for 2020, 2025 and 2030



▲ Figure 11 - Population proportion by age. Each bar represents 100 percent of the population.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2019 and 2024. Project team projected data for 2020, 2025 and 2030.

TRENDS IN RECREATION FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES

Parks and recreation departments are evolving to meet recreational needs of residents at all ages and life stages through the programs they offer and the park amenities they provide. Youth athletics remains an important cornerstone of parks and recreation programing, but agencies are expanding programs for adults, families and seniors to diversify programmatic offerings for the whole community. The active recreation spaces such as ball fields and tracks remain popular, but parks and recreation agencies are providing more opportunities for passive recreation such as trails, outdoor exercise equipment, public plazas and open spaces.

ALL-AGES PROGRAMMING - Programs catering to intergenerational participation



Caregiver and Child Events

Events and classes where parents or caregivers and children participate together. Examples include caregiver-child dances, exercise classes, music or art lessons and more.

Music and Movies in the Park

Music and movie series integrate into hectic family schedules and become highly anticipated community-wide gatherings.

Increasing Adult and Senior Programming

Many parks and recreation departments have expanded to provide adult and senior fitness, athletic and enrichment programming.

PASSIVE RECREATION - Self-guided activities without formal programming or reservation.



Greenways

Paved trails used for recreation or travel. Greenways provide locations for riding bikes, walking or jogging away from vehicle traffic, often in shaded settings.

Outdoor Exercise Equipment

Equipment includes instructions for workout use. People use equipment individually or meet up to workout in an informal group.

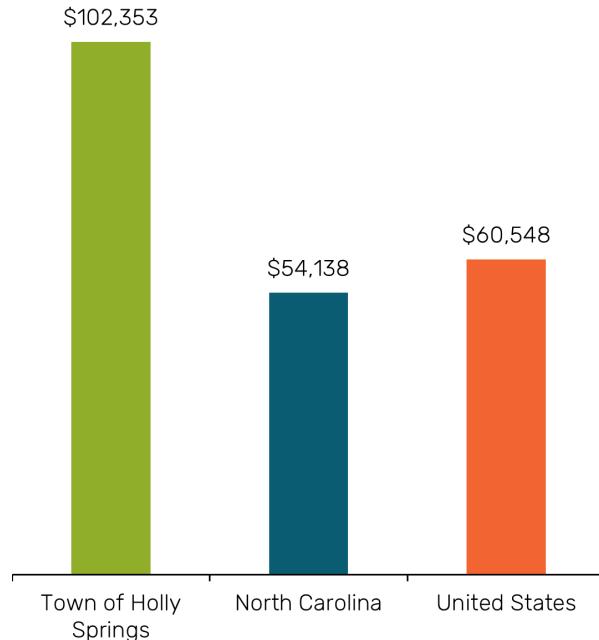
Open spaces

Traditional park lawns and open spaces provide space for picnics, pickup sports games.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

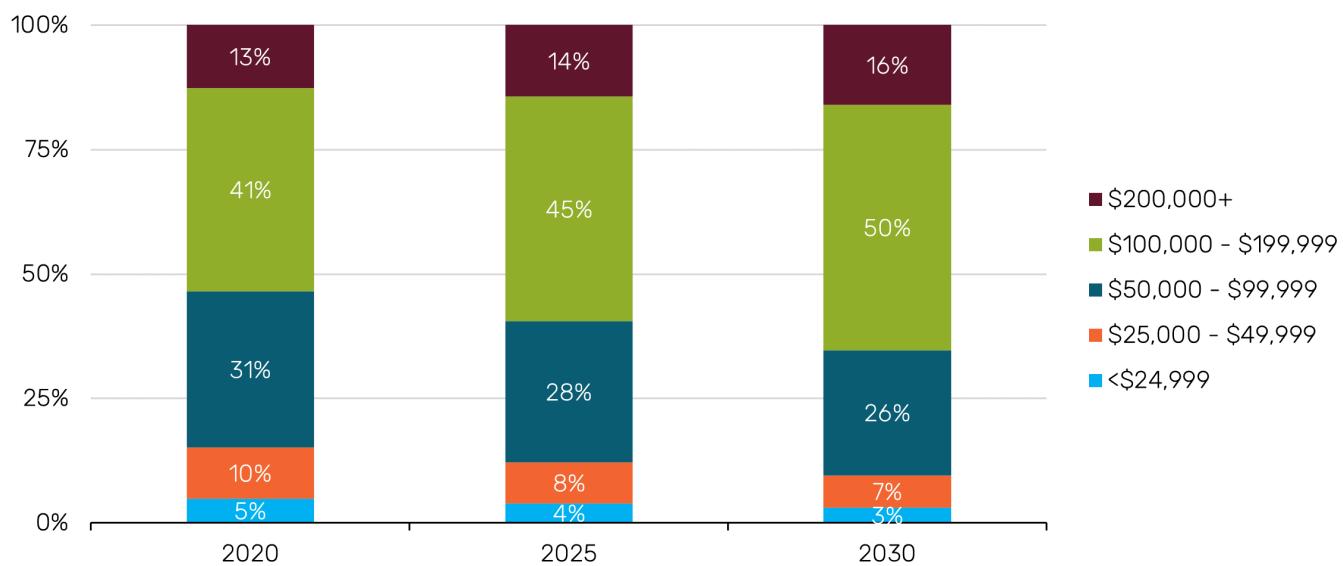
The change in the proportional spread of the Town of Holly Springs household income levels shows an upward trend in household income over time (*Figure 12*). Despite this upward trend, the Town will need to ensure parks, recreation and cultural resources remain accessible to individuals of all income levels.

The median household income of the Town of Holly Springs is 47 percent greater than the median household income of North Carolina and 41 percent greater than the median household income of the United States (*Figure 13*). This indicates that residents may have more ability to pay for parks and recreation programming. However, it is essential for a public parks and recreation provider to meet the needs of all residents and provide access to low-income residents.



▲ *Figure 12 - Median household income of residents by geographic area in 2019.*

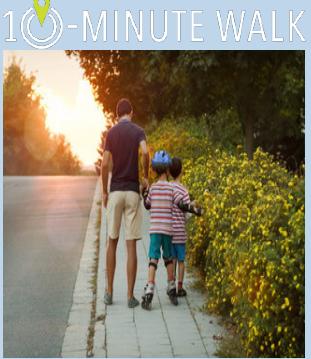
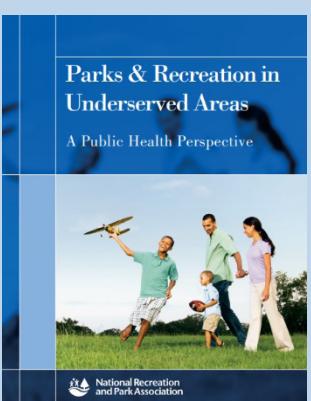
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2019 and 2024.



▲ *Figure 13 - Population proportion by household income. Each bar represents 100 percent of the population.*

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2019 and 2024. Project team projected data for 2020, 2025 and 2030.

TRENDS IN ENSURING AFFORDABLE ACCESS

 <p>10-MINUTE WALK</p> <p>A photograph of a man and a child walking on a paved path next to a field of yellow flowers at sunset.</p>	<p>Parks are free and open to the public and serve as important locations for people to play, socialize and gather as a community. Community members are only able to access free or low-cost parks and programs if they can afford the trip to get there. Ensuring an equitable distribution of parks and amenities throughout a geographic area means residents truly have affordable access to parks and programs.</p> <p>The 10 Minute Walk campaign¹ is working to "ensure there's a great park within a 10-minute walk of every person, in every neighborhood, in every city across America." Seven North Carolina Mayors have signed the pledge according to Trust for Public Land website</p>				
 <p>93%²</p> <p>Percentage of Americans looking to local governments to increase affordable out-of-school time programming at their park and recreation agency</p>	<p>Parks and recreation departments frequently provide day programs and camps for children at below-market or discounted rates. This service provides an affordable alternative for families who must find childcare when school is out of session.</p> <p>A recent study from the National Recreation and Parks Association found "93 percent of Americans believe providing affordable out-of-school time programs at local parks, recreation centers and libraries to families of all income levels should be a goal of their local government. Currently, 93 percent of park and recreation agencies nationwide administer or manage out-of-school time programs."</p> <p>Day programs and camps can benefit all children but are especially important for low-income families with few other options for daytime childcare options.</p>				
 <p>Parks & Recreation in Underserved Areas A Public Health Perspective</p> <p>National Recreation and Park Association</p>	<p>Parks and Recreation in Underserved Areas: A Public Health Perspective³ states "Several studies have documented that while parks and recreational facilities are available throughout the United States, there are several additional factors that affect park use and physical activity levels." Factors include:</p> <table border="0"><tr><td data-bbox="494 1431 731 1695">Park access Easy park access is associated with increased park use. Park visits are more frequent and physical activity levels are higher.</td><td data-bbox="739 1431 975 1695">Park distribution Disparities in park distribution are particularly evident in areas with low income and racial/ethnic populations.</td><td data-bbox="984 1431 1220 1695">Park facilities Within parks, there are certain types of facilities that encourage higher levels of physical activity than others, such as trails and playgrounds.</td><td data-bbox="1228 1431 1465 1695">Park conditions Park facilities that are consistently well maintained, aesthetically appealing and safe have increased public use and physical activity.</td></tr></table>	Park access Easy park access is associated with increased park use. Park visits are more frequent and physical activity levels are higher.	Park distribution Disparities in park distribution are particularly evident in areas with low income and racial/ethnic populations.	Park facilities Within parks, there are certain types of facilities that encourage higher levels of physical activity than others, such as trails and playgrounds.	Park conditions Park facilities that are consistently well maintained, aesthetically appealing and safe have increased public use and physical activity.
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1 <https://www.10minutewalk.org/#Home>

2 <https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/park-pulse/park-pulse-survey-affordable-out-of-school-time-programming/>

3 https://www.nrpa.org/uploadedFiles/nrpa.org/Publications_and_Research/Research/Papers/Parks-Rec-Underserved-Areas.pdf

RACE + ETHNICITY

Demographic trends indicate the proportions of the Holly Springs population identifying as any race other than "white alone" is increasing. The second largest proportion, after "white alone", is "black alone". The white alone category comprises 76 percent of the population, which is greater than the proportion of "white alone" population in North Carolina, at 66 percent. This indicates a lower degree of racial diversity in Holly Springs than in the State as a whole. During the next 10 years, the "white alone" category will decrease in proportion as other racial categories become a greater proportion. "Asian alone" is the racial category that will increase the most between 2020 and 2030 with an increase from 4 percent to 7 percent. All of the census' racial categories are included in the chart, even though residents identifying as "Pacific Islander Alone" do not make up more than 1 percent of the population.

Approximately 7 percent of the population currently identifies as "Hispanic origin", and that population will increase in proportion in the coming years. The Town of Holly Springs has slightly lower proportion of "Hispanic origin" residents than the State of North Carolina, in which 10 percent of the population identifies as "Hispanic origin". The census collects racial identity data and Hispanic ethnicity data separately as respondents with Hispanic ethnicity may also have a racial identity independent from their ethnicity.

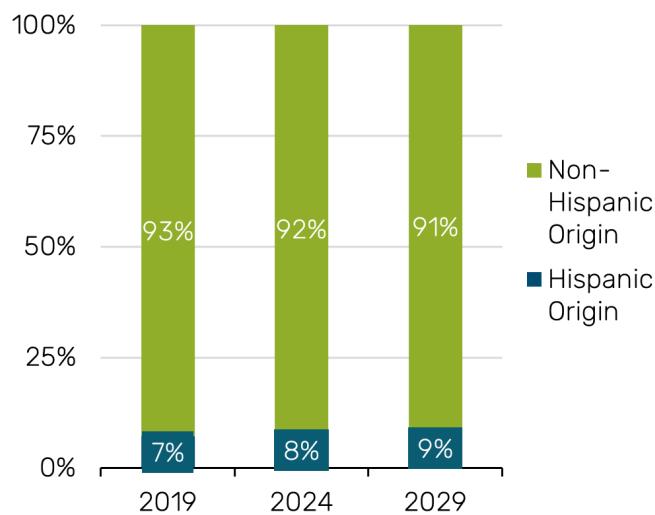


Figure 14 - Population proportion by Hispanic ethnicity. Each bar represents 100 percent of the population.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2019 and 2024. Project team projected data for 2020, 2025 and 2030

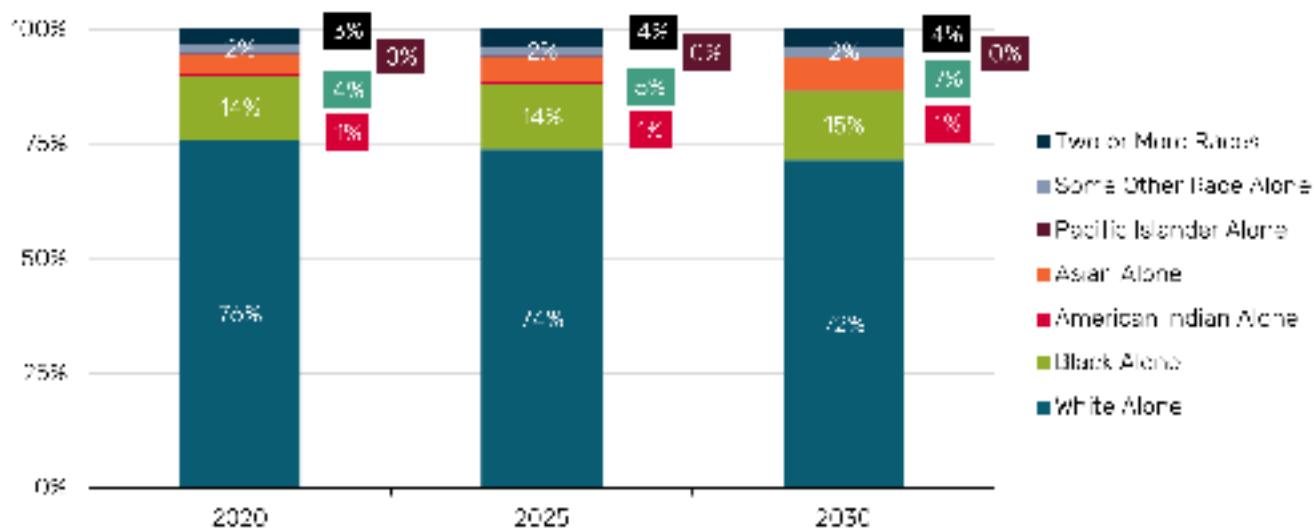


Figure 15 - Population proportion by race. Each bar represents 100 percent of the population.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2019 and 2024. Project team projected data for 2020, 2025 and 2030

Trends in Achieving Racial Equity

Many communities are recognizing that intentions to equitably provide parks and recreation services to all community members has not resulted in equally positive outcomes for all community members, especially communities of color. Special attention is required to rectify historic disparities between resources available in white communities and communities of color. The following recreation trends indicate practices for improving outcomes for all community members by applying a racial equity lens.

The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) acknowledges that parks and recreation providers can be at the forefront of addressing racial equity due to their unique role as a public service provider of many quality-of-life programs and amenities. The NRPA recommends the following considerations for addressing racial equity in parks and recreation⁴:

- › **Normalizing conversations about race is the only way to develop effective strategies for racial equity.** One of the biggest challenges is the general discomfort many people experience in talking about race. This is a critical hurdle to overcome. Avoiding conversations about race means there is a greater likelihood that organizations will not develop appropriate strategies to address institutional and structural racism.
- › **Behavior drives attitude.** It is a common misconception that attitude drives behavior and expecting people to “understand” racism can lead to desired behavioral changes. However, changing behavior changes understanding. Providing common understanding of racial equity terminology and tools to use helps employees develop an increased understanding of institutional and structural racism.
- › **Equity is a process.** Embedding racial equity in the core operations of an organization takes continual learning and practice. It should be considered as an ongoing process of delivering business and not relegated to a checkbox or an additional step to an existing process.

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<https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2015/december/racial-equity-in-parks-and-recreation/>

LOCAL RECREATION TRENDS

This section uses information from a database of sports and leisure spending that estimates overall participation in a variety of sports and leisure activities. The tables below indicate the sports and activities that have the highest rates of participation as estimated based on spending trends for associated equipment. This analysis reviews overall participation in sports and leisure activities, fitness and outdoor activities. While this publication captures participation across all providers and provides a good indication of participation, it is not suggested that Holly Springs provide ALL popular programs or activities.

Most Popular Sports and Leisure Activities

2019. Esri. Methodology Statement: 2019 Esri Market Potential. <https://downloads.esri.com/esri_content_doc/dbl/us/J9672_Market_Potential_DB_Methodology_Statement_2019.pdf

The following analysis is based on information from Esri's 2019 Market Potential Analysis, which measures likely demand for sports and leisure activities in an area. The project team produced this analysis specifically for the Holly Springs area.

The five activities below are overall the most popular sports and leisure activities among Holly Springs residents. The most popular activities can all be undertaken individually and have relatively low barriers to entry. Walking and jogging can be done nearly anywhere with minimal specialized equipment. Swimming and hiking require special facilities or locations, but pools, trails, and natural bodies of water are commonly found, and these activities otherwise require little specialized equipment. Walking, swimming, jogging, and hiking are activities that can be adapted to a wide range of physical ability levels and are common activities that people pursue at any age throughout a lifetime. Weightlifting requires a specialized facility, some specialized equipment, and a degree of specialized knowledge to participate and avoid injury. Participation in weightlifting has likely grown in response to national trends indicating an increase in personal training and cross fit in recent years.

Holly Springs currently offers greenways and trails for walking, jogging, and hiking. The Town also offers the Hunt Recreation Center, which includes a fitness center for weightlifting. The Town does not currently offer facilities for swimming.



Most Popular Sports Activities

Four of the five activities listed below are team sports. People can participate in these sports by enrolling in a formal league or by playing informal pickup games. Golf frequently requires access to private facilities and can be expensive to pursue. Holly Springs does not offer a public golf course, but there are nearby private golf courses for people to participate. Holly Springs offers facilities for basketball, baseball, football, and soccer. Programming is provided by the Town and program partners.



GOLF

11.7%



BASKETBALL

9.5%



BASEBALL

5.7%



SOCCER

5.6%



FOOTBALL

5.3%

Most Popular Fitness Activities

Fitness activities are often pursued individually, but classes, programs and events such as races can increase people's participation in fitness activities. The Town offers hiking trails, greenways, fitness loops, outdoor exercise equipment and yoga classes to support residents pursuing these activities.



FITNESS WALKING



SWIMMING



JOGGING



WEIGHTLIFTING



YOGA

30.2%

20.6%

18.9%

15.8%

10.2%

Most Popular Outdoor Activities

Outdoor activities are those that enable people to interact with the natural environment while pursuing physical activity. Many people pursue hiking and road biking for the combination of physical activity and communion with rural areas and natural landscapes. Freshwater fishing, canoeing and powerboating are all activities that take place on bodies of water. Holly Springs offers trails for hiking and greenways for road biking. Nearby Bass Lake and Harris Lake County Park offer opportunities for fishing and canoeing. Harris Lake County Park also offers power boating access.



HIKING

16.3%



FRESH WATER FISHING

13.2%



ROAD BIKING

12.6%



CANOEING

7.1%



POWER BOATING

6.4%

EMERGING TRENDS IN PARKS AND RECREATION

The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) has been providing annual information on top trends in parks and recreation. These trends range from parks operations and recreation programming to design interventions and some trends are predictions based on agencies' response to changes happening at the community, state and national levels. City Parks Alliance and Trust for Public Land are two other national organizations that provide resources on parks and recreation trends. Some of the trends mentioned in the last three years are described below.

Climate Change Impacts

Parklands in dense urban areas are credited to reducing heat island effect through tree canopy coverage and help mitigate stormwater runoff by allowing infiltration on the large expanse of pervious lands. Parklands have been recognized as a vital component of infrastructure development strategy to help mitigate climate change effects.

Economic Impact of Quality Parks

According to a NRPA study, parkland has been recognized as an "economic development infrastructure" as many businesses are choosing their employment location strategically where their employees will have quality of life with an easy access to quality parks and greenway trails. Many private donors are giving millions of dollars as gifts to develop signature park projects as a way of giving back to the communities.

Diversity of Park Locations

As real estate becomes a more limited resource, many agencies are proposing public open spaces as green roofs, stormwater management amenities, rails to trails projects and most recently underground such as the New York's Low Line project.

Technology

Embracing various technological innovations in the parks system has become a consistent trend nationally. Some of these innovations include drone use for parks surveillance and management, recreational drone use, harnessing solar power to provide charging stations, low level lighting, and technological advances in managing park infrastructure such as stormwater management, irrigation schedules, trash pickup etc. With rapidly improving technology, solar powered video surveillance is gaining popularity and according to NRPA predictions, more than one-third of parks and recreation agencies will have video surveillance in their facilities and parks in 2020.

Children and Nature

Providing children access to natural areas and opportunities for daily interaction with nature has been a growing trend over the last decade. Extensive research in the health and environmental behavior fields has proved many health and wellness benefits to younger generations. Nationwide, this trend is now evolving into policy, programs and partnership development⁵ to ensure equitable benefits across the population spectrum, according to the Municipal Action Guide developed by City Park Alliance.

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<https://cityparksalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/CCCN-Municipal-Action-Guide.pdf>

Response to Global Health Crisis

While this comprehensive planning process is underway, the Trust for Public Land published a report on Parks and Pandemic in response to the global health crisis caused by COVID outbreak. While this report emphasizes the increased use of open spaces and greenway trails for health benefits, it also raises challenges faced by municipal agencies such as a decrease in tax revenue and targeted budget cuts resulting in employment loss. Looking at the future, the report also mentions an emerging trend of newfound appreciation for open spaces and parks bringing the focus to easy access to a high-quality park within a ten-minute walking distance.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- › As Holly Springs' population grows and changes in the coming decade, the community's recreation needs will grow and change.
- › The overall population growth indicates a need for expanding parks and recreation services and suggests a growing tax base to support that work.
- › A younger population suggests the need for adult and youth athletics as well as family-oriented and intergenerational programming. Despite the overall younger population than statewide trends, it is important to ensure that older adults are adequately served through facilities and programming. All parks and facilities should feature amenities and design elements that universally include people with and without mobility challenges.
- › The increasing household income levels indicate the ability to pay for parks and recreation services. Regardless of rising income for some community members, residents with lower incomes must still have affordable or no-cost access to parks and recreation services.
- › The area's racial demographics will remain relatively unchanged during the next ten years, but there is still a need for equity, diversity and inclusion efforts to ensure equitable provision of parks, facilities, amenities and programs.
- › In addition to Holly Springs' specific community context, emerging trends in parks and recreation include understanding the many far-reaching benefits of parks and incorporating parks and greenway planning into larger connected networks of urban infrastructure.



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INTRODUCTION

To establish a clear vision for the future of a parks and recreation system, the existing state of that system should be inventoried and analyzed to identify those elements that are working well, and those where there may be gaps. What follows is an inventory and assessment of the Town's parkland, programs, operations, and finances.





parks and facilities



PARKS AND FACILITIES

The Town of Holly Springs manages six parks, four joint-use facilities with Wake County Public School System, two indoor recreation facilities and more than 12 miles of greenway trails. Holly Springs' park system includes 309.10 acres of developed parkland and 302 acres of undeveloped parkland. Recreation opportunities provided throughout the park system are varied; ranging from athletic fields, playgrounds, greenway trails and natural resource areas to the recreation center and cultural arts center. A clear effort has been placed on providing recreational opportunities for a diverse userbase.

EXISTING PARKLAND

The Town of Holly Springs Parks and Recreation Department (the Department) is responsible for nearly 309 acres of developed parkland. The system provides a critical community resource that residents report adds to their quality of life by providing an access to nature, connection to each other, and beautification of the Town. While the system has traditionally been known for athletics, more diverse amenities and facilities have emerged, and the reputation is evolving.

Holly Springs' parks generally range from 25 acres to 110 acres, apart from Veterans Park which is a little more than 9 acres. Nearly all parks are concentrated within the central area of the Town limits, East of Highway 55. The newly acquired 56 acres of former farmland is the only parkland located West of Highway 55. Additionally, all the parks located East of Highway 55 are within a two-mile radius of each other and typically located in single family residential areas. Coincidentally, the large gap on the western side of Highway 55 is where most of the new development is occurring. Though not classified as parkland, the area west of Highway 55 benefits from a large acreage of preserved open space at Shearon Harris Lake and Harris Lake County Park. This resource provides access to parkland in an area otherwise absent of open space or parks. Harris Lake County Park is managed by Wake County.

PARK NAME	TOTAL PARK ACRES
Womble Park	43.43
Veterans Park	9.76
Jones Park	24.38
Ting Park	35.83
Sugg Farm Park	110.47
Bass Lake Park	85.23
TOTAL	309.10

▲ Table 1- Existing developed and maintained parkland owned by Town of Holly Springs

*Total park acreage is included as developed and open to the public and does not include joint-use or special-use parkland associated with the local school district or other entities.

Parrish Womble Park

Parrish Womble Park, located in the heart of Holly Springs adjacent to the W.E. Hunt Recreation Center, is a community park with a healthy balance of active and passive recreation opportunities including athletic facilities, concession building, tennis courts, a picnic shelter, playground, outdoor amphitheater, greenway trails, horseshoe pits, and sand volleyball courts. While the park is most known for its synthetic turf athletic fields that support the town's strong reputation in youth sports, the additional amenities add diversity to the park system's recreational offerings as alternatives to traditional bat and ball options. This park's expansive views, mature trees, open green space and visually pleasing stormwater pond yield a tranquil setting providing visitors respite from more urban areas and the hustle and bustle of today's fast-paced lifestyle.

While the park is well maintained and equipment appears in good condition, the synthetic turf fields are reaching the end of their lifecycle and will need replacing, parking is inadequate during peak use hours, and site lighting is insufficient. These shortcomings are typical of any well-used and beloved public park and with careful planning can be overcome. As with any park, an on-going schedule of maintenance and replacement items can be developed to anticipate costs. Underutilized areas of the park can be evaluated for parking expansion and pedestrian scale lighting can be added as funds are available.

The synthetic fields at this park support a number of Department sports leagues play, private-use rentals, and provide time for drop-in play each week. While a source of revenue, the rental use agreements should be evaluated to ensure equitable provisions for all parties involved and consideration for adequate open, public-use.



▲ Parrish Womble Park

Veterans Park

Veterans Park is a centrally located neighborhood park surrounded by single family residential homes. As the name suggests, The War on Terror Memorial, Veterans Memorial and an American Liberty Elm tree are the significant features of the park. A play area and parking lot are located close to the Veterans memorial. A 10' wide asphalt greenway connects to a picnic pavilion with restrooms and provides a connection to a newly established fishing pier at the pond. Fitness stations located along this section of the trail provide an added opportunity for exercise. This greenway trail also provides connection to Jones Park on the southern end.

Shrubs in the parking lot create noncompliance with CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) guidelines which can be easily corrected by regular upkeep of landscape to maintain clear sightlines. Overall, this park is well maintained, and no major renovation needs were observed.



▲ Veterans Park

Jones Park

Jones Park is located just south of Veterans Park, behind Holly Springs Elementary School, off Holly Springs Road. Jones Park is the third most visited park in Holly Springs, according to the results of the scientific survey. The Holly Springs Parks and Recreation Department maintains a joint-use agreement with the elementary school for park access and baseball field spectator area. According to the joint use agreement, the Town is maintaining the site for minimal use of school amenities in return.

Other existing amenities include a large play area, small picnic shelter, restroom building, disc golf course and a greenway trail connection to Veterans Park.

Because of the park's location behind the school property and absence of signage along School Days Lane off busy Holly Springs Road, it may be difficult for new visitors to locate Jones Park. Though there is new town wayfinding signage on the school property, a dedicated park entry monument will help guide visitors driving on Holly Springs Road. Similarly, improving sidewalk connection along Holly Springs Road and extending a greenway trail connection along School Days Lane would provide a pedestrian connection to the school from northern neighborhoods. Some of the Jones Park amenities including the playground area and safety surfacing are showing signs of wear and tear. Enhanced landscaping and the addition of diverse, small-scale family friendly amenities (for example, open lawn area, picnic shelter for family events, additional play elements, court games, etc.) would help bring a unique sense of place to this park.



▲ Jones Park

Ting Park

Formerly known as the North Main Athletic Complex, Ting Park is a signature sports complex, located between Main Street and the Highway 55. Ting Internet, a fiber optic internet service provider is the official Naming Sponsor for Ting Park and Ting Stadium and has created a successful public-private partnership.

Ting Park is a regional destination famous for Holly Springs Salamanders summer collegiate baseball league, the Wake Futbol Club's youth soccer tournaments and community sports leagues for athletic programs. The Ting Park facility boasts a state-of-the-art 1700-seat multi-sport stadium with artificial turf, soccer fields and a tennis complex. Other amenities include two small basketball courts in the parking lot and a playground covered by a safety net from all sides to protect from stray balls from athletic fields. In addition, there is approximately 4 acres of vacant land for future expansion and a drone landing site in the southwestern corner of the site. With a separate partner, this location will be used as a landing site for drones to deliver food from restaurants across Highway 55.

Ting Park is well connected to the regional road network system, readily accessible from Highway 55 and minutes away from NC 540. Visitors are greeted by a large entry monument sign with digital display board showcasing upcoming events at the Park. The addition of wayfinding signage internal to the park would help orient and direct visitors to the various fields and park amenities. Consistent use of site furnishings, shade trees and additional landscape would help build the brand as a unique Town park. The park would also benefit from an additional restroom facility to support the large soccer events that are often held at the Park.

A facility management and maintenance plan should be created to take care of the regular maintenance items such as retaining wall leakage, concrete cracking at stairs and upper deck leakage at the stadium. The Town is currently working with contractors to deter birds from roosting at the park.

According to the staff, the existing stadium facility is underutilized, and the Town is focusing on attracting use by local colleges and hosting outdoor entertainment events such as music concerts. The Department recently completed a business plan for Ting Park which outlines goals for economic impact and recommends opportunities to maximize facility use.



▲ Ting Park

Sugg Farm Park

Sugg Farm Park is a large parcel of parkland located along Grigsby Avenue, just minutes from downtown Holly Springs. Formerly farmland, this property features pastures and woodlands. The property is protected from development by a conservation easement overseen by Triangle Land Conservancy. The Town currently hosts special events including the July 5th celebration and fireworks show, and HollyFest. Without defined amenities, structures, or space, and with only periodic events and programs, the Town is struggling to provide consistent maintenance for park upkeep and would benefit from a park-specific maintenance plan to address regular and long-term maintenance needs.

Existing features on the site include several farm structures such as a barn, horse stable, previous owner's residence, remote control (RC) field archery/parking field, main event field with electric capacity for vendors and a police k-9 training facility. A new restroom building, and dog park are under construction. While not currently used, the old barn structures could be repurposed for events if an architectural assessment deems them safely usable with minor renovations.

A major challenge for the park is the single road access point for auto-based visitors attending large events. However, there is an effective greenway connection for visitors on foot or bicycle, as the Carl Dean Greenway connects Parrish Womble Park, Sugg Farm, Bass Lake Park and several adjacent residential neighborhoods.

The Town has previously created a concept plan for this project, however, given the community growth, changing demographics and emerging recreation trends, as well as the site development limitations imposed by the conservation easement, the Town will want to revisit and validate the amenities proposed in the concept plan.



▲ Sugg Farm Park

Bass Lake Park

Bass Lake Park is the topmost visited park in Holly Springs, according to the scientific survey. A favorite spot for fishing, Bass Lake has been loved by the Holly Springs community for several decades. Outdoor amenities at Bass Lake Park include boating and fishing and just under two miles of mulched trails along the lake shoreline that provide users with an opportunity to enjoy the native flora and fauna. The mulched trail is popular, although costly to maintain. With its regular use, the Town should consider alternative surfacing that would limit on-going maintenance costs. The Town's Tree Advisory Committee is currently working on making a "Tree Trail" where different tree species are labeled along the trail route.

The popularity of this park has resulted in facility wear and tear along with inadequate parking and programmed space at capacity. The communities' love for lake views, fishing, nature walks and environmental education should be met with on-going maintenance and expanded facilities, and nature-focused spaces.



▲ Bass Lake Park

UNDEVELOPED PARKLAND

The Town owns a 17-acre historic property known as the Mims Property in the downtown area, close to the Town Hall and adjacent to the Cultural Center. A park concept plan was developed in 2012 for this property (Figure 1). With rapidly changing trends in recreation and an influx of new residents, the Town should consider updating the concept plan based on the priority needs identified in this master plan.

Most recently (2019), the Town acquired a former farmstead across the street from Holly Springs High School on Cass Holt Road for use as future developed park. Just under 56 acres, the parcel remains the only Town-owned park property on the western side of Highway 55 and will provide residents their first recreational park in this growing area. The Southwest part of Town, currently more rural in character, does not have dedicated parkland, although it is situated closer to the preserved natural areas as identified by the Future Land Use Plan. As the Town continues to grow, developing these open spaces will provide a valuable opportunity to serve the Town's growing population and equitably distribute parks and recreation resources throughout the community.



▲ Figure 1- Mims Property Master Plan

OPEN SPACE NAME	ACREAGE
Mims Property	17.48
Holly Glen Property	1.78
Talicud Property	77.68
Wescott Property	8.67
Woodcreek	50.69
Bridgewater	37.42
Cass Holt Land - 2 parcels	55.87
Sunset Lake Open Space	27.53
Carolina Springs Property *	25.0
TOTAL AREA	302.12

▲ Table 2- Town owned undeveloped parkland properties

*Note: Town of Holly Springs does not hold the title to the parkland in the Carolina Springs development as of January 2021. The acreage for the parkland to be updated after the land dedication.

FACILITIES

The Town of Holly Springs manages three indoor facilities that support a range of organized programs and self-directed activity. Each of these facilities provides unique offerings from traditional gymnasium space to performance space and environmental education.

PARK NAME	TOTAL BUILDING SQUARE FOOTAGE
W. E. Hunt Recreation Center	40,132
Cultural Center	10,771
Bass Lake Retreat & Nature Center	3,260
TOTAL AREA	54,163

▲ *Table 3- Existing Town owned facilities*

*The total square footage of Cultural Center only includes the area of the building for the center. It does not include the library area which is operated by Wake County Public Libraries.

W.E. Hunt Recreation Center

The W. E. Hunt Recreation Center is located about half mile from downtown Holly Springs along Grigsby Avenue. The center stands on the grounds of the historic Holly Springs Elementary School for black children from the mid-1920s to around 1970. Named after William E. Hunt, who served as principal for the elementary, most of the recreation center is new construction, with the gymnasium a preserved wing of the old building. A historic marker commemorating the historic school that served young black students during the time of segregation was recently added to the site.

The recreation center houses a gymnasium, walking track, fitness center, game room, group exercise rooms, several multi-purpose classrooms, small kitchen and outdoor fenced in play area. As the only recreation center in Town, this facility's popularity has resulted in high-use spaces impacting for building systems that need replacement or repair. This facility would benefit from a detailed maintenance plan including an assessment of building systems (roof, HVAC, structural, windows / doors, etc.)

With growth of the community comes expansion of the Department's staff needs, storage and additional demand for new programs and updated equipment. The capacity of parking and indoor space is limiting the growth of programs and various building elements simply do not function well for their intended use. Without controlled access at the centers main entrance, safety is an on-going concern. Limited office space has forced staff to use storage space as make-shift offices resulting in the need for evaluating building code compliance. As the Town addresses growth, expansion of indoor recreation facilities, office and storage space should be a priority.



▲ *W. E. Hunt Recreation Center*

The Cultural Center

The Holly Springs Cultural Center, located in the downtown area, is a joint use facility with Wake County where the Town occupies one half of the building for cultural arts programming while the other half of the building is home to a branch of the Wake County Public Library. Residents seeking thrills in theater, dance or music may frequent the Holly Springs Cultural Center. Like other recreational facilities this building space is already too small for the creative energy and performing arts interests Holly Springs has cultivated. From storage space to the stage, the functional and performance spaces are bursting at the seams with enthusiasm for recreation opportunities outside of traditional bat and ball play.

A class act rather than a one-act, the circular drive to the cultural center serves as a backdrop for the Town's year-round Farmers Market. With the introduction of a "moonlight market" featuring food trucks and one-of-a-kind vendors, the demand for the Town's newest family fun night is expanding. The Farmers Market also remained open in the summer of 2020 during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic as an essential food source. According to the results of the scientific survey, the farmers market was the fourth top selection for the importance placed on a recreation facility (see the appendix for the full report). Similarly, the scientific survey reports a farmer's market pavilion ranked the third highest priority for investment. The Town should consider identifying a new, larger civic space with improved facilities to meet the growing demand for access to locally sourced foods.

While offering performing arts programming at a cultural center with a theater is a unique recreation opportunity and worth touting, the center has its shortcomings. Like so many of the Town's facilities, this one reached capacity shortly after its construction. The theater capacity is limited for performances large enough to generate notable revenue, the dance room is undersize with poor floors and without adequate storage space and needs to be evaluated for fire code compliance.



▲ Cultural Center

Bass Lake Park and Nature Center

Bass Lake Park indoor facilities feature a small retreat center with conference room and access to a veranda and 2,000 sq foot deck overlooking the 54-acre Bass Lake, and a North Carolina certified environmental education nature center. For those interested in spending their day with slithering salamanders or learning about North Carolina's nocturnal forest animals, this stop is a must. The nature center offers native animal exhibits, an information desk and a reference library. A service window sells bait for fishing and offers small snacks and beverages for visitors. The conference room is available for rent and has hosted small weddings, business meetings and other events and classes.



▲ Bass Lake Park and Nature Center

JOINT USE

Town of Holly Springs Parks and Recreation Department has contracted joint use agreements with the Wake County Public School System for use of the sports fields on school grounds after school hours. Maintenance of the amenities under these joint use agreements such as sports fields and tennis courts are managed by Town of Holly Springs Parks and Recreation Department, along with some parking lots and access roads. All the joint use agreements have expiration between year 2030-2035.

PARK NAME	AMENITIES	TOTAL SITE ACRES
Holly Springs High School	Softball field	57.56
Holly Grove Middle School	Multipurpose field, walking track, softball field	25.32
Holly Springs Elementary School	Multipurpose field, basketball court, playground, walking track	19.22
Holly Ridge Middle School	Multipurpose field, basketball court, softball field	35.55
TOTAL		137.65

▲ *Table 4- Existing joint use facilities with Wake County Board of Education*

*Site acres includes school property areas including the building and the grounds.

While joint use agreements are necessary for a robust parks and recreation system, they often favor one party and rarely have clearly understood or fair terms. When renegotiating the terms of joint use agreements, the Town should consider the benefits of the agreements and reciprocate with an equally appropriate level of maintenance and use flexibility. In the meantime, the Town should consider establishing Town-owned and operated facilities to gain increased independence from the school system.



▲ Holly Springs High School

Source: <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/c0/b6/d8/c0b6a8f4c4a98b7f0a46e597d3669c77.jpg>



▲ Holly Springs Elementary School

Source: <https://12oaksn.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/HollySpringsElementary.jpg>



▲ Holly Springs High School

Source: https://www.codeelec.com/files/3015/0152/2799/1_Holly_Grove.jpg

INVENTORY SUMMARY

The table below is a summary of the Town of Holly Springs' parks and recreation inventory of parkland, trails, indoor facility space, outdoor fields and courts and park amenities. A detailed breakdown of amenities found at each park can be found in the appendices.

 PARKLAND	 TRAILS	 INDOOR FACILITY SPACE	 OUTDOOR FIELDS + COURTS	 PARK AMENITIES
309.10 acres of developed parkland	12.83 miles of Greenway Trails	54,163 sq. ft. of indoor recreation space	39 outdoor fields and courts including Joint Use Facilities	3 picnic shelters
137.65 acres of Joint Use Land ---	9.23 miles of hard surface trails (asphalt & boardwalk)	1 Recreation Center	16 Ball fields	4 playgrounds
6 Parks	3.60 miles of soft surface trails (mulch)	1 Nature center	21 Tennis and Pickleball courts	10 restrooms
4 Joint Use School Facilities		1 Cultural center	2 Sand Volleyball courts	1 disc golf course
2 Sports complexes			2 Basketball courts	3 fishing piers
1 Nature park				1 dog park (in 2021)
2 Future parkland properties				

► *Table 5- Existing amenities summary*

Park Classification System

The Town currently does not have a parkland classification system based on park size or acreage. Given the timeframe the parks were developed and their centralized location within the Town, this could reflect an older park development model focused on consolidating amenities into larger park parcels for ease of maintenance and management. A park classification system provides a way to catalog existing parks and facilities, monitor maintenance needs and evaluate existing conditions for best practices in park design. Similarly, it provides a way to ensure future parks and facilities meet the goals of the recreation system in terms of frequency of use, equitable financial investment, access, location and excellence in design. A proposed parks classification system to improve the organization of existing and future Town of Holly Springs Parkland is discussed detail in the appendices.

PARKS SYSTEM ASSESSMENT

The project team conducted site assessments of the Town's existing parks and facilities. The assessment is organized by five evaluation criteria, including connectivity, general condition, accessibility and safety, sense of place and green infrastructure. The themes are standard best practices and intended to be a summary of the realities, opportunities and challenges of the current conditions observed throughout the entire Town of Holly Springs park system.



Connectivity

Does the park connect to its surroundings through sidewalks, greenways and trails? Does the network support pedestrians and bikers?



Accessibility + Inclusivity

Is the park designed so people of all abilities can access the park and all its amenities? Does the park meet or exceed most or all requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?



General Condition + Safety

Is the park maintained to department standards? Do the park amenities and facilities need to be updated? How old are the amenities and facilities? Are the park amenities and facilities showing signs of wear and tear? Does the park feel safe and encourage user safety?



Sense of Place

Does the park design create an enjoyable place to pursue those activities? Does the park appear to reflect the history or identity of the Town? Are people able to identify this park as a Town of Holly Springs Park? Has public art or other unique features been used to express the unique qualities of the park?



Environmental Sustainability

Does this park promote green building practices, environmental sustainability and education? Are the maintenance methods promoting department cost savings?

Connectivity

Essential to successful parks systems is interconnectivity by way of alternate modes of transportation. Sidewalks and greenway trails provide safe alternatives to vehicular access and recreational activities such as running, walking and biking are preferred by the public when they connect destination places. The concept of park connectivity through greenway trails promotes these activities and helps to improve the overall health of the community. Further connections to regional greenways and trail systems have local and regional economic development potential. In addition, because greenways are often located in utility easements and stream buffers, they not only help users connect to nature, but preserve ecological corridors for wildlife habitat.



Throughout the Town of Holly Springs, trails and greenways appear to be constructed in fragments or localized within the park properties, leaving several parks disconnected from an overall interconnected park system. While trails in Womble Park and Bass Lake Park are examples of well-used trails internal to parks, greenway trail connections between parks appear to be few.

Veterans Park, Jones Park, W.E. Hunt Recreation Center and Parrish Womble Park are connected to a large extent through a network of side paths and greenway trails within residential neighborhoods and further connect to Sugg Farm Park and Bass Lake through a sidewalk. While some sidewalks are of adequate width to accommodate safe pedestrian travel, there are other sidewalks along roads with narrow right-of-way. Improved connections that accommodate appropriate design dimensions for pedestrian and bicycle facilities will need careful consideration. A continuous pedestrian connection via sidewalk exists from Holly Springs Road intersection along Bass Lake Road that connects to Bass Lake Park. Ting Park is the newest developed sports venue park, regionally connected via Highway 55 and NC 540. Opportunities exist to connect this park by greenway trails to other parks and recreation facilities within the Town as well as surrounding residential developments.

Overall, a lack of wayfinding signage along public pedestrian corridors was observed. The absence of wayfinding signage makes it difficult to identify and navigate the public pedestrian connections that do exist. This is especially true in residential neighborhoods where sidewalks are connecting parks but are not marked as publicly accessible.

As a part of this master plan, an in-depth exploration of the existing trail system and the opportunities that exist to connect parks via a complete greenway network is provided in the Greenways chapter.

Accessibility & Inclusivity

As a public agency, the Holly Springs Parks and Recreation Department has a responsibility to provide facilities and amenities that are accessible by all ages and ability levels. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) outlines minimum standards for compliance with regulations that govern public accommodations to provide goods and services to people with disabilities on an equal basis¹. The NRPA has also undertaken an inclusivity initiative to ensure all people have access to the benefits of local parks and recreation. The NRPA defines inclusion as removing barriers, both physical and theoretical, so that all people have an equal opportunity to enjoy the benefits of parks and recreation².

In a system with many well-established parks and facilities such as Holly Springs, older facilities may not meet the standards outlined by the ADA. As standards and regulations evolve it is very common for existing facilities to fall behind. Many of the older parks and their amenities do not provide sidewalks and walkways at the recommended frequency creating disjointed park offerings that are not reachable by users of all ability levels. For example, the playground at the Hunt Recreation Center exhibits a play structure that is disconnected from the sidewalk infrastructure and as a result inaccessible though it has a wheelchair ramp within its use zone boundary. At the Cultural Center, it was observed that there is no accessible evacuation route from the theatre area. Overall, the amenities in Holly Springs' parks are well connected via ADA compliant sidewalks to parking lots and other amenities and support facilities such as restrooms and drinking fountains were found to be ADA compliant. The Town is in the initial stages of developing a Town-wide ADA Transition Plan to evaluate Town facilities for ADA compliance.

Few inclusive amenities were observed throughout the system. Inclusivity tends to exceed the requirements of the ADA and encourage built environment enhancements that increase access to parks for people with cognitive disabilities, the LGBTQ community, and racial and ethnic minorities. Popular inclusive park amenities are sensory gardens, inclusive playgrounds, Miracle League courts, bilingual signage and non-gender specific restrooms. The Town should consider expanding opportunities for inclusive access to recreation amenities.

General Condition

The general condition of parks, amenities and facilities affects residents' perceptions and level of satisfaction which influences their use and perceived safety. Well managed and maintained parks and facilities are typically considered safe and inviting by residents whereas parks showing neglected overgrown landscape, poor lighting levels, graffiti and vandalism deters park visitation by residents and attracts antisocial activities. Similarly, indoor facilities like the community center, recreation center and other facilities that provide safe and pleasant experiences are appreciated, used appropriately and have more visitors.

When analyzing the Holly Springs parks system, it appears that the Town has invested in managing and maintaining their existing facilities. However, many of the parks are now showing signs of aging, such as outdated play equipment, worn court surfacing, deteriorating restroom buildings and overgrown landscaping. While some park systems across North Carolina have a clear hierarchy of park sizes and service areas such as parklets, neighborhood parks, community parks and regional parks, the parks system in Holly Springs lacks this hierarchy both in size and clear distinction of basic and special use amenities. Lack of landscape buffers or transition spaces obscure park boundaries with the adjacent uses. For example, at Jones Park, the bleachers for baseball field are located on the Wake County Public School property and both properties lack the separation by some physical feature like fencing or a landscape buffer.

In general, all the park properties have a natural character. The natural landscape of piedmont woodlands has been preserved where appropriate and supplemented with additional landscape elements along main entrances, parking lots and key destination amenities within parks. Some areas were observed to be planted with nonnative and invasive vegetation such as Privet and Bradford pears. While this was a more common practice among park designers in the 1990's and early 2000's, there is a renewed focus on sustainable landscapes that promote native and adaptive plant species.

The parks and recreation facilities including Hunt Recreation Center (the Recreation Center) and the Cultural Center have concerns of being over capacity, show signs of aging mechanical and HVAC systems, offer limited office space for growing staff, and provide limited space for programming and storage. Being part of an old school building, the recreation center needs renovations, including the gym, community room and storage space. Specifically, the recreation center staff has concerns over ingress/egress from staff offices during emergencies. Limited office space within the center has resulted in a large closet used as an office. The Recreation Center also lacks controlled access making monitoring users coming and going nearly impossible.

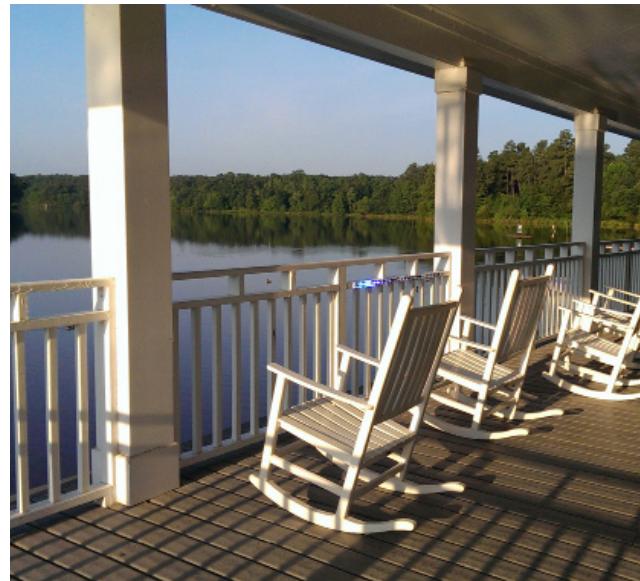
Park safety, whether perceived or real, can affect park utilization and the public's overall perception of the park system. Evidenced by open site lines, cleanliness, separation between vehicular and pedestrian circulation, and well-staffed facilities, the project team found the overall system offers both real and perceived safe park surroundings. All these factors contribute to higher rates of park utilization and continual activity resulting in "eyes on park," a natural surveillance system that contributes to improved safety by discouraging undesirable behavior.

Perceived feelings of safety may be compromised at few park sites by overgrown vegetation that obstructs sightlines. This overgrown vegetation or planting large shrubs instead of dwarf shrub species, combined with low site lighting levels can impair site lines and create places for wrong doers to hide. These overgrown areas were observed at Veterans Park and Womble Park parking lots. Additionally, while the overall park system presents few safety concerns, some of the older park amenities are showing signs of wear and tear. Equipment that falls into disrepair can present safety or non-compliance concerns. For example, the safety surface at the Jones Park playground is uneven and loose in some places. The playground at Ting Park seems to be an afterthought and it is adjacent to ball fields. To avoid the danger of flying balls, the play structure is covered on all sides by a safety net, giving it an appearance of a batting cage and not an inviting play area.



Sense of Place

Parks present an opportunity to communicate a community's unique image and brand, distinct community characteristics and ensure vibrant shared public spaces. Most often, this is accomplished by balancing consistency of signage, furnishings and materiality with the flexibility to express each park's individual appeal. Elements that typically contribute to sense of place are vegetation, wayfinding signage, brand recognition, public art, historic elements and building materials characteristic of a certain geographic location or time period. Insistence on integration of community involvement and public art into all park design projects contributes to a unique sense of place at each park and allows expression of historic, cultural and social narratives.



One of the best ways to promote park identity unique to the Town of Holly Springs and project high quality recreation spaces is through a consistent hierarchy of site elements at each park. This in turn creates a unique and recognizable image for the Town's park system and streamlines replacement. While the picnic shelters exhibit similar architectural style, the overall park system appears to lack consistency among park furnishings such as trash receptacles, benches, water fountains, etc. The models and colors for the furnishings vary at each park site which otherwise would have helped create a unified appearance throughout the parks system.

Both branding and wayfinding can help create a sense of place within parks. Parks which have a strong sense of place exhibit a specific visual and contextual identity that is felt by visitors. Wayfinding refers to the use of signage or other visual cues to guide visitors to their destinations in a safe and enjoyable way. Like other site elements, wayfinding uses a hierarchy of scales, fonts and colors to communicate locations of parks and site amenities within the parks.

Much of the park system can be identified through its primary entrance signage. The typical entry monument signs observed at park properties were low signs on wood, in a blue, white and red color scheme. Ting Park has a unique entry monument sign with digital display and red brick façade. Similarly, the Veterans Park sign is built with stone façade and metal lettering and the Sugg Farm sign is a large metal gateway. Overall, though each park has an entry monument sign for identification, the color schemes and materiality differ considerably.

Like the main entry signage, supplemental wayfinding signage within the large parks is minimal, making it difficult for new users to find amenities. For example, at Womble Park, the ball fields are located on the southern end of the property and without any signage it is difficult to locate them if users are entering the park from the northern end where soccer fields are located. It was also noted that Womble Park and Ting Park have multiple vehicular entry points and minimal signage to inform visitors' directional priorities, leading to increased opportunities for confusion. Jones Park is behind the Holly Springs Elementary School and not visible from Holly Springs Road. Though there is a large wayfinding sign, an entry monument at School Days Lane would be helpful. The distribution of amenities through parks covering many acres, coupled with multiple entry points, a hierarchy of entrance signage and internal way finding signage would contribute to improved visitor orientation, safety and overall experience.

The Town of Holly Springs recently updated their community brand and installed town-wide wayfinding signage with the new logo and fresh color scheme. These wayfinding signs on major roads identify park locations. However, the individual parks signage has not been updated to reflect this new branding and marketing effort.

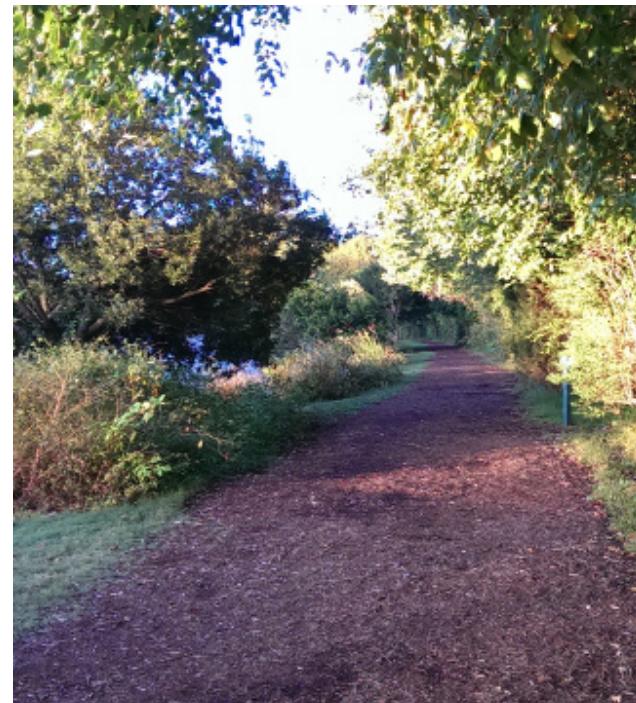
When touring Holly Springs parks and facilities the project team noticed that the two greatest contributors of sense of place are the system's natural park-like character and the type of programming offered. For Sugg Farm Park and to some extent for Womble Park, the mature tree canopy has been preserved in pockets of areas throughout the sites. This canopy is native to the Piedmont region comprised of Oak, Hickory and Pines. The trails within these parks offer the opportunity to walk beside the mature tree buffer lines creating a sense of being close to nature. Bass Lake Park immerses park visitors into the native habitats of piedmont flora and fauna and offers opportunities for environmental education.

Environmental Sustainability

For the purposes of this assessment, the project team assessed the existing parks and recreation systems' provision of green practices by analyzing each park's offering of green infrastructure, environmental education and sustainable maintenance practices. As reported by the scientific survey, 78 percent of respondents are very supportive and somewhat supportive of implementing sustainability measures to minimize environmental impact of parks and recreation facilities. With the degree of importance residents place on this approach, the Department should consider environmental sustainability as a pillar of their park development and maintenance operations.

Few Holly Springs parks explicitly exhibit the promotion of green infrastructure which is usually characterized by the presence of environmental education, native plant materials, reduction of pollutants, stormwater management, reduced maintenance and increased environmental equity³. Many of the parks protect the natural character of the site, but few appear to promote environmental green infrastructure outwardly.

Most of the parks offer limited environmental education. Sugg Farm Park and Bass Lake Park can incorporate educational materials and signage because of the existing vegetation, natural character and existing natural surface trails. These parks also have the potential to support environmental education programs. Additionally, the recently acquired undeveloped former farmstead site appears to have great potential for the inclusion of ecologically sustainable design practices illustrated to residents through educational programming, signage and exhibits.



³ Green Infrastructure in Parks: A Guide to Collaboration, Funding, and Community Engagement; "https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2017-05/documents/gi_parksplaybook_2017-05-01_508.pdf"

KEY FINDINGS:

- › Most parks are concentrated in the center of Town with gaps on the west side of the Highway 55 where most of the growth and new development is taking place.
- › There is potential to close the gaps in providing recreation amenities on the west side of the Town with recently acquired property. In addition, the undeveloped properties on the eastern side, once developed, can help further provide opportunities within walking distance of established neighborhoods.
- › Recreation facilities are at capacity which is limiting the growth of programs. There is inadequate space for storage or staff offices.
- › Many building systems are at the end of their lifecycle or are in need of repair.
- › While most parks and facilities generally meet ADA guidelines, some have areas of non-compliance and few exhibit true universal design or inclusive features.
- › The Department relies on a partnership with Wake County Public Schools for access to athletic fields. While these agreements provide access to valuable resources with a reduced initial capital investment, they limit the flexibility of the Department's athletics programming and increase their maintenance burden.
- › The parks and facilities are well-maintained, welcoming, and clean. Residents report feeling safe in Town parks, although this sentiment could change if aging facilities are not improved.
- › The sense of place at each park could be improved to highlight the Town's unique history and culture. The use of consistent site furnishings, wayfinding, architecture, and materiality would give visitors a visual cue they are in a Town of Holly Springs park while public art and unique amenities can be used to individualize each park.
- › Environmental sustainability is valued by residents but not outwardly expressed or considered across the park system. Elements such as integrated stormwater management, water reuse and locally sourced materials should be considered while education opportunities for the public should be promoted.



programs



PROGRAMS

This program assessment offers an in-depth perspective of program and service offerings and helps identify strengths, challenges and opportunities regarding recreational 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 program findings and comments are based on a review of information provided by the Department including program descriptions, financial data, website content, and discussions with staff. This report addresses the program offerings from a systems perspective for the entire portfolio of programs.

FRAMEWORK

The mission of the Department is to "foster engaged, healthy and active lifestyles for the enrichment of Holly Springs residents and visitors by offering exceptional experiences, affordable recreation & cultural activities, well-maintained parks & facilities, and stewardship of our natural resources."

The Department provides a broad range of recreation and leisure programming for all ages. These program offerings are supported with dedicated spaces which include six major parks, Ting Park's Multi-Sport Stadium, Hunt Recreation Center, Bass Lake Retreat Center and the Holly Springs Cultural Center.



CORE PROGRAM AREAS

To help achieve the Department's mission, 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 Area is to assist staff, policy makers, and the public to focus on what is most important. Program areas are considered as "core" if they meet a majority of the following categories:

- › The program area has been provided for a long period of time (over 4-5 years) and/or is expected by the community.
- › The program area consumes a relatively large portion (5% or more) of the agency's overall budget.
- › The program area is offered 3-4 seasons per year.
- › The program area has a 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.

This plan identifies eight existing core program areas currently being offered.



▲ Figure 2- Core program areas

CORE PROGRAM AREA DESCRIPTIONS, GOALS & EXAMPLE PROGRAMS



- › **Description:** Programming offered for all ages in all areas of the arts. This includes (but is not limited to) dance, visual arts, theater arts (drama), culinary arts, crafts, and music.
- › **Goals:** Provide quality arts programs for members of the community to explore creative outlets.

- › Crafts 4 Kids
- › Preschool Tap
- › Coed Hip Hop
- › Musical Theater
- › Holly Singers Youth Choir



- › **Description:** Sports leagues and programs offered for youth and adults.
- › **Goals:** Provide the opportunity for sports skill development, sportsmanship and fun in a participation-based atmosphere.

- › Youth Soccer
- › Intro to T-Ball
- › Youth Tackle Football
- › Adult Tennis
- › Softball Camp



- › **Description:** Programs offered for children while parents are working and children are not in school.
- › **Goals:** Provide a fun and safe environment for children while parents are working at an affordable rate.

- › Before School
- › After School
- › Track Out
- › Traditional Summer Camp
- › Kid's Day off



- › **Description:** Special events occurring at Town Parks Facilities.
- › **Goals:** Provide a diverse range of entertainment and education opportunities in a larger setting than traditional recreational activities, while also helping to build a sense of community.

- › Clean Comedy Series
- › Turtlefest
- › HollyFest
- › Dog Day in the Park
- › July 5th Celebration



- › **Description:** Programs that provide exercise, health education and wellness activities to all ages.
- › **Goals:** Provide fitness facilities, opportunities for all levels of fitness and group classes/programs across a broad spectrum of exercise-based disciplines.

- › Mommy and Me Yoga
- › Tae Kwon Do 7+
- › Personal Training
- › Recreational Sport Fencing
- › Cross Country Club



- › **Description:** Programs that teach and help people learn more about nature.
- › **Goals:** Provide quality nature programs for all ages that support outdoor learning and adventure experiences.

- › Discovery Nature
- › Toddler Exploration
- › Catch N Cook
- › Fun Forts
- › Archery 101



- › **Description:** Programming offered to those ages 55+.
- › **Goals:** Provide quality opportunities for education, physical exercise, social interaction and mental stimulation to the population of 55+ members.

- › Fit Advantage
- › Senior Yoga
- › Senior Outings
- › Technology Workshops
- › Bridge Club



- › **Description:** Variety of programming offered to spark the interest of every age.
- › **Goals:** Provide new programming areas for people to explore other interests. Most of these programs are offered at a low cost or very reasonable.

- › Nerf Night
- › Family Bingo
- › Photo Club
- › Robotics with LEGO
- › Garden Club

While not considered traditional core program areas, Holly Springs has two unique programming opportunities that should be accounted for as part of the recreation program assessment.

Holly Springs Farmers Market

The Farmers Market is a North Carolina producer/grower market committed to providing local food for the community. Originally established in 2007 by the Town's Planning & Zoning Department, the market moved under the Parks and Recreation Department in 2018. The market operates on Saturdays year-round with a traditional weekly summer schedule from May through October and a bimonthly winter schedule from November through April. Part-time staff manage the program, under the direction of the Cultural Center Manager. Its current location is on Ballantine Street, adjacent to the Cultural Center. Vendors offer fresh seasonal produce year-round as well as free range eggs, pasture-raised meats, local honey, NC seafood, breads and other baked goods, sauces, condiments, coffee and tea, pickles, preserves, confections, prepared foods and much more. The market has been voted North Carolina's most celebrated farmers market—eight years in a row according to the 2019 American Farmland Trust "Farmers Market Celebration" contest.

Although the market has grown significantly in the last two years, more expansion of services is warranted. Staff recommend adding SNAP/EBT benefit access to the market, allowing community members with these benefits to purchase food from vendors using their EBT cards. Demand for a weekly winter market schedule and weeknight market services have grown among vendors and customers. These additions to the traditional Farmers' Market Saturday service would require additional staffing resources. In the long term, it is recommended that the Farmers Market Coordinator (now a permanent part-time position capped at 25 hours per week) upgrade to a full-time position. In the short-term, adding additional part-time Assistant Coordinator positions would help increase services, as suggested above, without significant staff cost increases. In the next decade, the Farmers Market needs a permanent site plan. The market now operates by closing a busy downtown road during market hours. Already this location has maxed out its capacity to increase the number of vendors. Visitors frequently fill most of the downtown car parking during the height of the summer season. Given the regional popularity of the market, a larger and permanent location fosters future increase of services and products, as well as increases accessibility for parking and pedestrian access. Staff offices and equipment storage would also be essential. This site could also exist as a secure location for other Town functions, like small festivals and weekday programming or rentals.



▲ Farmers Markets offer locals direct access to fresh produce. Source: <https://fee.org/articles/why-we-love-farmers-markets/>

Ting Park Stadium

Formerly known as the North Main Athletic Complex, Ting Park is a signature sports complex which is home to the summer college baseball team, the Holly Springs Salamanders. The facility boasts a state of the art 1,800-seat multi-sports stadium with artificial turf, soccer center and a tennis complex. Additional amenities include basketball courts and a playground.

The name Ting Park was realized through a naming rights agreement with Canadian based Internet provider, Ting, Inc. The original agreement was for a three-year term and the Town recently renewed this naming rights arrangement for another three-years.

Prior to the park opening in 2015, the Town entered into two, 10-year licensing agreements for use of the facilities at the park with local sport organizations. These private-public partnerships have served the Town and its constituents well by providing funds to off-set the athletic complex operations.

The location, size and site amenities create an opportunity to provide additional programming for the community beyond baseball and other sporting events. The Town's investment in such a venue was made with local economic impact in mind. Since 2015, Ting Stadium has slowly developed and followed a set pattern of scheduled programs, rentals and partner-run events. The annual structure includes the Holly Springs Salamanders using the venue for their Coastal Plain League games and a variety of rentals which included a baseball academy, several travel baseball tournaments, a yearly scouting event for talented high school prospects and hosting a handful of college games. The Town hosts the 15U parks and recreation baseball league in the spring, tackle and flag football leagues in the fall, local college practices and games, travel soccer and lacrosse tournaments, and the Holly Springs Half Marathon. The scheduled rentals and events have routinely satisfied the yearly fiscal benchmarks set by the Council, but the stadium's potential has not been realized. Higher-end collegiate games and mid-major concerts are untapped opportunities that should be considered for the future.



▲ Ting Stadium



PROGRAM STRATEGY ANALYSIS

Age Segment Analysis

The table below depicts each 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.

AGE SEGMENT ANALYSIS						
Core Program Area	Preschool (5 & Under)	Elementary (6-12)	Teens (13-17)	Adult (18+)	Senior (55+)	All Ages Programs
Arts/Cultural	P	P	P	S	S	S
Athletics	S	P	S	S	S	P
Childcare		P	S			
Festivals, Events, Performances	S	S	S	S	S	P
Fitness	S	S	S	P	S	P
Nature	P	P	S	S	S	S
Seniors					P	
Special Interest	S	P	S	P	S	

▲ Table 6 - Holly Springs Program Priority by Age Segment

For this report, an age segment analysis was completed by core program area, 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, in order to gain a more nuanced view of the data. Based on the age demographics of the Town, current programs seem to be fairly well-aligned with the community's age profile. With roughly 30% of Holly Springs' population falling between 0-17, it is fitting that the youth segments are highly catered to.

The lack of primary programs dedicated to the adult segment is noticeable.

Program Lifecycle

A program lifecycle analysis involves reviewing each program offered by the Department to determine the stage of growth or decline for each. This provides a way of informing strategic decisions about the overall mix of programs managed by the agency to ensure that an appropriate number of programs are "fresh" and that relatively 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 program areas. The following table shows the percentage distribution of the various lifecycle categories of the Town's programs. These percentages were obtained by comparing the number of programs in each individual stage with the total number of programs listed by staff members.

LIFECYCLE	DESCRIPTION	ACTUAL PROGRAMS DISTRIBUTION		RECOMMENDED DISTRIBUTION
Introduction	New Programs; modest participation	7%		
Take-Off	Rapid participation growth	14%	69%	50%-60% Total
Growth	Moderate, but consistent participation growth	48%		
Mature	Slow participation growth	23%	23%	40%
Saturation	Minimal to no participation growth; extreme competition	5%	8%	0-10% Total
Decline	Declining participation	3%		

▲ Table 7 - Program lifecycle table

The lifecycle analysis depicts a slightly skewed program distribution. Approximately 70% of all programs fall within the beginning stages (introduction, take-off & growth). It is recommended to have 50-60% of all programs within these beginning stages because it provides the Department an avenue to energize its programmatic offerings. Eventually, these programs will begin to move into the mature stage, so these stages ensure the pipeline for new programs is there. It is key to continue adding new programs in the introduction stage as those programs are meant to progress through the lifecycle stages.

According to staff, 23% of all program offerings fell into the mature stage. This stage anchors a program portfolio and it is recommended to have roughly 40% of programs within the mature category in order to achieve a stable foundation.

Additionally, 8% of programs are saturated or declining. It is a natural progression for programs to eventually evolve into saturation and decline. 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 into the decline stage, they must be closely reviewed and evaluated for repositioning or elimination. When this occurs, the Department should modify these programs to begin a new lifecycle with the introductory stage or to add new programs based upon community needs and trends.

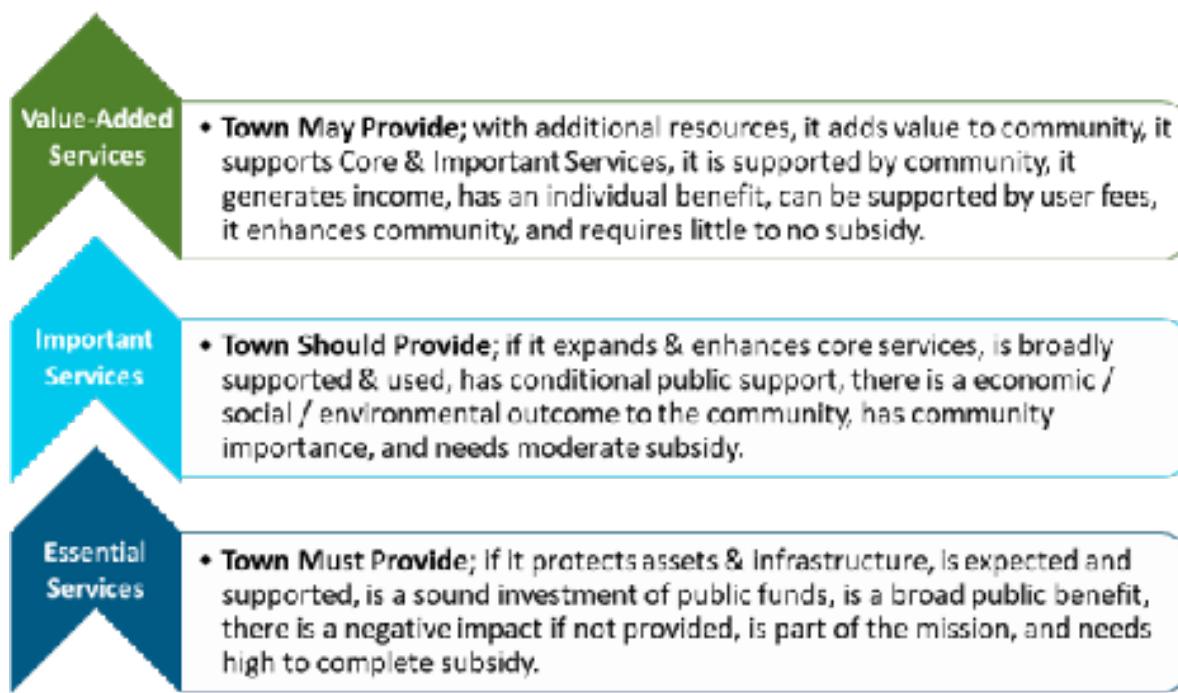
Staff should complete a program lifecycle analysis on an annual basis and ensure that the percentage distribution closely aligns with desired performance. Furthermore, the Department could include key performance measures for each core program area to track participation growth, customer retention and percentage of new programs as an incentive for innovation and alignment with community trends.

Program 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 regard to tax dollars and/or user fees and charges. How a program is classified can help to determine the most appropriate management, funding and marketing strategies.

Program classifications are based on the degree to which the program provides a public benefit versus a private benefit. Public benefit can be described as everyone receiving the same level of benefit with equal access, whereas private benefit can be described as the user receiving exclusive benefit above what a general taxpayer receives for their personal benefit.

For this exercise, the Department used a classification method based on three indicators: essential services, important services and value-added services. 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. The following graphic describes each of the three program classifications.



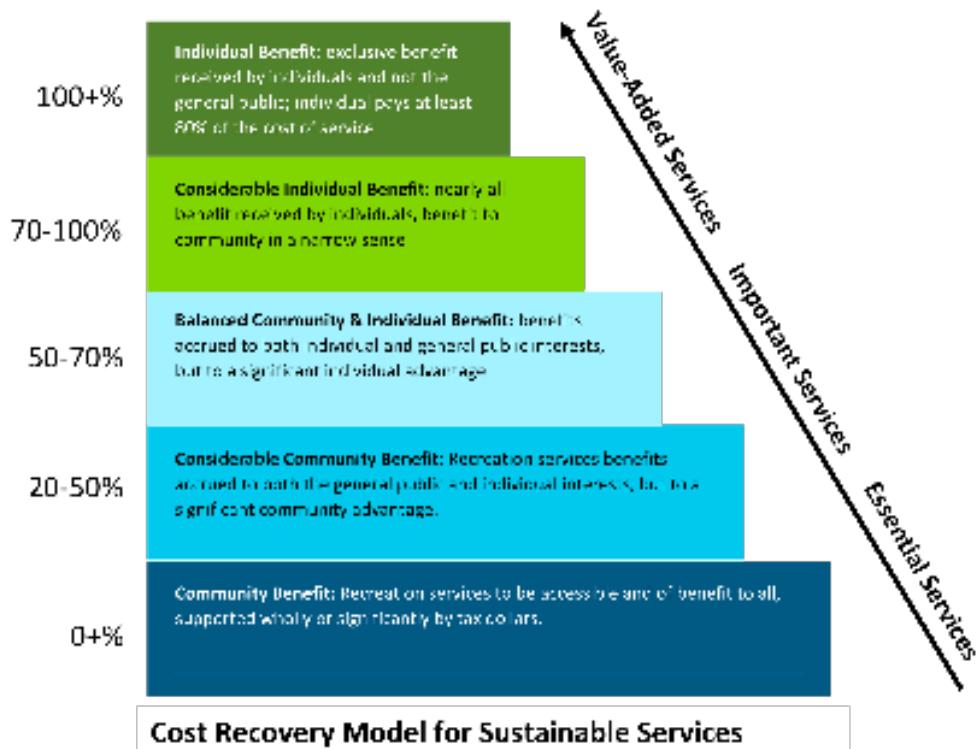
 *Figure 2 - Program classifications*

With assistance from staff, a classification of programs and services was conducted for all of the recreation programs offered by the Department. The results presented in the following table represent the current classification of recreation program services. Programs should be assigned cost recovery goal ranges within those overall categories. A full program list organized by core area can be found in the appendices.

HOLLY SPRINGS PROGRAM CLASSIFICATION DISTRIBUTION		
Essential	Important	Value-Added
11%	71%	18%

▲ Table 8- Holly Springs program classification distribution

As the Department continues to evolve to better meet the community's needs, there could be an added benefit to managing the services if they all were classified according to the cost recovery model for sustainable services depicted below in Figure 3. **The percentages indicate level of cost recovery goal desired.**



▲ Figure 3 – Cost recovery model

Given the broad range of cost recovery goals (i.e., 0% to 40% for Essential Services or 40% to 80% for Important Services), it would be helpful to further distribute programs internally within sub-ranges of cost recovery as depicted in the previous Figure. This will allow for programs to fall within an overall service classification tier while still demonstrating a difference in expected / desired cost recovery goals based on a greater understanding of the program's goals (e.g., pure community services versus mostly community services or community and individual mix versus mostly individual mix).

Cost of Service and Cost Recovery

Cost recovery targets should at least be identified for each core program area, and specific programs or events are 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 Department policy, for each program or program type based on the outcomes of the previous two steps and adjust program prices accordingly.

The following provide more detail on steps 2 & 3.

Understanding the Full Cost Recovery

To develop specific cost recovery targets, full cost 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 the Department'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 4 - 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.

Current Cost Recovery

The Department's program staff also utilize an internal budget work sheet for each program, this tool is useful to review quarterly, seasonally or annually depending on set goals for each core area. Table 9 provides the existing cost recovery percentages by core program area. It should be noted, however, that all Department cost recovery percentages utilize *direct costs* and are not reflective of indirect costs. Since personnel costs and pricing structures vary by the park agency, there is no example the best practice cost recovery range presented for *direct costs*.

The Department's current core program area with the greatest average cost recovery is childcare (145%). The core program area with the next highest average cost recovery is Special Interest (69%)

COST RECOVERY GOAL BY CORE PROGRAM AREA			
Core Program Area	Current Cost Recovery (Direct Costs)	Core Program Area	Current Cost Recovery (Direct Costs)
Arts/Cultural	Min: 30%	Fitness	Min: 20%
	Max: 83%		Max: 186%
	Avg: 39%		Avg: 49%
Athletics	Min: 30%	Nature	Min: 14%
	Max: 153%		Max: 135%
	Avg: 47%		Avg: 67%
Childcare	Min: 108%	Seniors	Min: 63%
	Max: 226%		Max: 63%
	Avg: 145%		Avg: 63%
Festivals, Events, Performances	Min: 27%	Special Interest	Min: 40%
	Max: 42%		Max: 121%
	Avg: 35%		Avg: 69%

▲ Table 9 - Cost recovery by core program area

Pricing

Pricing strategies are one mechanism agencies can use to influence cost recovery. Overall, the degree to which the Department uses various pricing strategies is fairly limited. Pricing tactics are concentrated on residency rates and customers' ability to pay. However, some core areas also use age segment pricing, and market competition rates.

The core area with the largest variety of pricing strategies would be Fitness programs which utilize five of the ten options. Considering weekday/weekend rates, prime/non-prime time rates, group discounts and by location pricing are also valuable strategies when setting prices. These untapped pricing strategies are useful to help stabilize usage patterns and help with cost recovery for higher quality amenities and services. The consulting team recommends that all core program areas utilize cost recovery as a major factor in determining pricing and look at underutilized pricing strategies to bolster participation and revenue.

Staff should continue to monitor the effectiveness of the various pricing strategies they employ and make adjustments as necessary. It is also important to continue monitoring for yearly competitors and other service providers (i.e., similar providers) as found in the appendices. The table below details pricing methods currently in place by each core program area and additional areas for strategies to implement over time.

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
Arts/Cultural			X					X		X
Athletics			X					X		X
Childcare			X							X
Festivals, Events, Performances	X					X	X	X		
Fitness	X	X	X					X		X
Nature	X		X							
Seniors			X							X
Special Interest			X							X

▲ Table 10 - Existing Pricing Strategies

MARKETING, VOLUNTEERS, AND PARTNERSHIPS

Current Recreation Marketing and Communications

The Department follows a marketing plan which currently communicates with residents through printed and online program guides, the Town's website, flyers/brochures, email blast, online newsletters, in-facility signage and various social media channels.

Effective communication strategies require striking an appropriate balance between the content with the volume of messaging while utilizing the "right" methods of delivery. The Department has a broad distribution of delivery methods for promoting programs. It is imperative to develop and continue updating the marketing plan annually to provide information for community needs, demographics and recreation trends.

An effective marketing plan must build upon and integrate with supporting plans and directly coordinate with organization priorities. The plan should also provide specific guidance as to how the Department's identity and brand is to be consistently portrayed across the multiple methods and deliverables used for communication.



Website

The Department's newly updated website has several features making it easy to navigate and user friendly. There is a navigation bar located at the top of the homepage as well as six action buttons located on the top-right, both assist users in finding specific information on secondary pages.

Further down the homepage users will find "News & Announcements", "Find it Fast" and "Upcoming Events" sections which are all great tools to assist residents in quickly finding desired information such as upcoming programs/events, locations of parks/facilities, and cancelations.

PROGRAMS & REGISTRATION

YOUTH SPORTS

HEALTH & WELLNESS

TICKETING

FARMERS MARKET

EVENTS

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS
 Check out the latest news in Holly Springs Parks & Rec

CONNECT INSPIRE PLAY

COVID-19 Update
 www.hollyspringsnc.us/covid

FIND IT FAST
 Quickly Find the Resources You Need

UPCOMING EVENTS
 Stay informed with events in the area

Social Media

The Town of Holly Springs uses of Web 2.0 technology with Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Next-door, and LinkedIn. The key to the successful implementation of a social network is to move the participants from awareness to action and create greater user engagement. This could be done by:

- › Allowing controlled 'user generated content' by encouraging users to send in their pictures from the Town's special events or programs
- › Introducing Facebook-only promotions to drive greater visitation to Facebook
- › Leverage the website to obtain customer feedback for programs, parks and facilities and customer service
- › Maximize the website's revenue generating capabilities
- › Conduct the annual website strategy workshop with the staff to identify ways and means that the website can support the Town's Social Media Trends

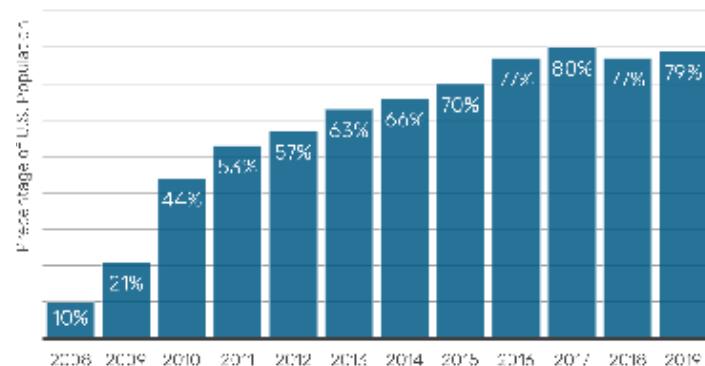


Source: www.dreamgrow.com/top-15-most-popular-social-networking-sites/

Social Media Users

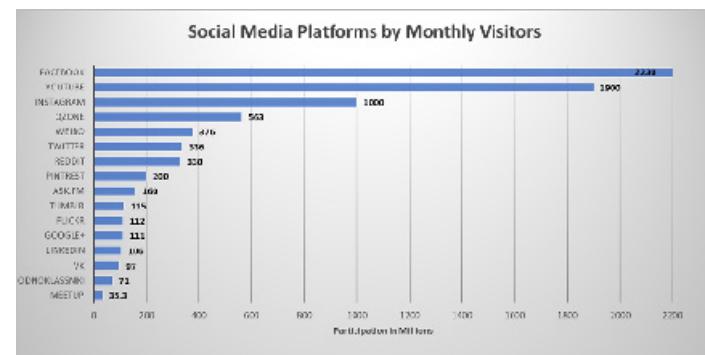
Over the last decade, social media has become one of the country's fastest growing trends. With only ten percent of the country using social media in 2008, an estimated seventy-nine percent of the U.S. population is using some form of social media. With such a large percentage of the population using these online media platforms in their daily lives, it has become essential for the Town to take advantage of these marketing opportunities. Social media can be a useful and affordable tool to reach current and potentially new system users. Platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter or LinkedIn are extremely popular with not only today's youth but also young and middle-aged adults.

Percentage of U.S. Population Who Currently Use Any Social Media



Social Media Platforms

Below is a chart that depicts the most frequently used social media sites throughout the world. As of August 2019, Facebook stands out as the most heavily trafficked social media platform, with an estimated 2.2 billion visitors per month. YouTube is second with 1.9 billion visitors per month.



Mediums Used to Access the Internet

The neighboring image is taken directly from Statista.com and depicts the number of internet users in the United States, number of available Wi-Fi locations and internet penetration in the US. Only 10% of surveyed adults state they do not use the internet in 2019. As of 2018 Statista, the United States has the largest online market in the world with 312 million users. Source: www.statista.com/topics/2237/internet-usage-in-the-united-states/

Volunteer and Partnership Management

Today's realities require most public recreation and parks departments 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 the Town to meet the needs of the community in the years to come.

Current Volunteer Management

When managed with respect and used strategically, volunteers can serve as the primary advocates for the Town and its offerings. Currently, the Department has volunteer opportunities posted on the Department website, underneath the "Connect with Us" dropdown tab. At this time, some current park and recreation volunteer opportunities include:

- Athletics -- youth sports coach
- Bass Lake Park -- park support/beautification
- Cultural Center -- ticket taker/usher
- Hunt Recreation Center -- various positions depending on interest
- Special Events - set-up/break-down support, information booth workers, etc.

The management of volunteers currently differs across various core program areas. Some programs utilize formal volunteer policies which include tracking individual volunteers and hours volunteered. Tracking volunteer hours can be used in budget discussions showing how well the Department is able to leverage limited resources. The image below represents the volunteer information available online.



Volunteer

Holly Springs Parks & Recreation has volunteer opportunities for all interests! Volunteers help make it possible to provide affordable programs and services for the community. Interested individuals must be at least 18 years of age and pass a background check. Depending on the role, some volunteer positions may have certain requirements including but not limited to passing a background check.

Athletics

Interested in coaching? Holly Springs Parks and Recreation is continuously accepting new coaching applications for youth sports. [Click here for more information.](#)

Bass Lake Park

Volunteers are needed to help with tasks and manage the park! Great areas include: Volunteer Ambassador, Bass Lake Park Events, The Affordable Parks Program, Little Swimmers, Nightlife, and more! Contact the Cultural Center at (919)383-2424, by [email](#), or in person for details.

Bass Lake Park Events

A variety of volunteer opportunities are open depending on your skills and interests. Contact the Events manager at (919)383-2424 for more about current volunteer needs.

Cultural Center

Volunteers at the Cultural Center involved in: Volunteer Ambassador, Bass Lake Park Events, The Affordable Parks Program, Little Swimmers, Nightlife, and more! Contact the Cultural Center at (919)383-2424, by [email](#), or in person for details.

Special Events

Individuals or organizations can contact the Special Events Coordinator to volunteer at town events in a variety of capacities (set up, clean up, information booth, etc). Please email specialevents@hollyspringsnc.gov for more details.

Sponsorship

Interested in Holly Springs Parks and Recreation while advertising your business? Click here to complete an online interest form. Opportunities are available for festivals, special events, athletics, and field signage. To learn about all of our sponsorship opportunities, [click here to explore the Parks & Recreation Sponsoring Structure.](#)

See the best practices in volunteer management.

Recreation Program Partnerships

The Department currently works with several different types of partners throughout the community. These partnerships support the facilitation of programs and sponsorships of community events. As with tracking of volunteer hours, tracking partnerships helps show leadership how well staff are able to leverage resources. In many instances, partnerships are inequitable to the public agency and do not produce reasonable shared benefits between parties. It is not suggested that the Department's existing partnerships are inequitable; rather, in general many park and recreation agencies' partnerships tend to be inequitable.

The following recommended policies will promote fairness and equity within the existing and future partnerships while helping staff to manage against potential internal and external conflicts. Certain partnership principles must be adopted by the Department for existing and future partnerships to work effectively. 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 the agency on the performance and outcomes of the partnership including an annual review to determine renewal potential.
- › All partnerships should track costs associated with 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, nonprofit 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.

See the Appendices for best practices for partnerships.

KEY FINDINGS

- › The Town's existing core program areas provide a generally well-rounded and diverse array of programs that could serve the community at present.
- › Overall, the **program descriptions** effectively communicate the key benefits and goals of each core program area.
- › **The age segment distribution** is good but needs to be monitored annually to ensure program distribution aligns with community demographics.
- › **Program lifecycles:** Approximately 6% of the system's current programs are categorized in the introduction stage; while 3% of programs fall into the decline stage. A complete description of Lifecycle Stages can be found in **Section 1.3.2**.
- › The Town's **volunteer program** allows residents and organizations to easily get involved and give back to the community through various volunteer opportunities, special events, programs, etc.
- › From a **marketing and promotions** standpoint, the staff utilizes a variety of marketing methods when promoting their programs including: printed and online program guides, the Town's website, flyers/brochures, email blast, online newsletters, in-facility signage, and various social media channels. As a part of the marketing mix:
 - › The Department would benefit from identifying a marketing return on investment (ROI) for all marketing initiatives.
 - › The Department should explore the opportunity to increase the number of cross-promotions.
- › Currently, **customer feedback methods** are rather limited. Moving forward, it is highly recommended that the Department begins incorporating user feedback, on a more consistent basis, as a key performance measure that can be tracked over time. Specifically, pre-program evaluation and post customer surveys are highly recommended feedback tools that should be considered to move forward.
- › **Pricing strategies** vary across the board. Currently, the most frequently used approaches include: residency rates and customers' ability to pay. These are good practices and must be continued. In addition, it is essential to understand the current cost of service in order to determine ideal cost recovery goals.
- › **Financial performance measures** such as cost recovery goals are currently being utilized for the majority of programs. Moving forward, it is recommended for staff to continue tracking cost recovery for all program areas. When doing so, the staff should factor in all direct and indirect costs pertaining to programming. A focus on developing consistent earned income opportunities would be beneficial to the Department's overall quest for greater fiscal sustainability.



operations and maintenance



Operations + Maintenance

The objective of the maintenance management assessment is to provide an overall evaluation of how the Holly Springs Parks and Recreation Department provides maintenance services for its facilities, greenways, parks, athletic fields and open spaces. The project team understands that the parks system is relatively new and has grown considerably over the last 10 years. As the Town population continues to increase, the Parks And Recreation Department will need to have a robust maintenance plan to ensure sustained service for existing amenities while developing new parks and facilities to meet the growing demand.

METHODOLOGY

The maintenance management assessment methodology process involved a review of questions posed to the Parks Maintenance staff regarding operational processes and practices. The information provided by staff regarding maintenance of facilities, athletic fields, neighborhood and community and greenways was then benchmarked against nationwide best practices in the parks and recreation industry. Field observations were also conducted to provide additional perspectives and insight. The outcomes set the stage for recommendations for a systemwide master plan for the Department.

OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE ANALYSIS

Staff interviews and field observations are summarized below:

Parks and Open Space

- Holly Springs Parks and Recreation is a young system at just 25 years old. The Department was formed in 1996. A voter-approved parks bond was passed in 2011 that stimulated the acquisition and development of the parkland and amenities that are present today. The Town population has continued to grow since that time and the public has high expectations of having more parks and recreation facilities to meet their needs. Following the recommendations in this Master Plan will require additional capital and operational maintenance dollars to achieve community support. Many facilities operate at capacity and are in high-demand for use. As a result, the physical condition of amenities are starting to show their age and use. Continued wear and tear are only expected to increase as demand is not expected to lessen as the community grows.
- The operating budget for park maintenance is \$1.24 million for 2020, of which 49% is made up of staff salaries and benefits. This is a good standard for staff cost versus other maintenance expenses in the department. As the system ages and amenities begin to move towards the end of their useful life, the Town will require more staff to keep the system at its current operational level.
- The ten full-time Parks Maintenance staff take care of all the parks in the system which includes 611 acres of parklands of which 302 acres is undeveloped. This requires the full-time staff to maintain 40 acres per person which is a very high and difficult acreage level to meet on a yearly basis. The best practices are typically 1 FTE to 24-27 acres. Lack of existing part-time and or seasonal staff needs to be evaluated to meet the level of care expected as the system grows.
- The Department does not currently have any formal maintenance management plan prepared for park operations. A detailed maintenance plan including all direct and indirect costs associated with the maintenance of each facility and amenity is needed to inform the key leaders of what it costs to maintain a mile of trail, an acre of park land, or a sports field to achieve the level of care expected by the community. A maintenance plan will also enable the Town to better predict the operational expenses for future parks and facilities as they are planned.

- › As indicated in the 2020 budget, \$52,800 is available for capital equipment, which is a low investment for the size of the system. The standard most cities and towns across the United States use as a capital standard for ongoing asset management is 3-5% of asset value less land value that is budgeted each year. This capital budget is very low for capital investment already made in the system today. The current asset value of the park system less land value is over 23 million dollars. They use this number for insurance purposes. If the department would invest 3% of their asset value now in ongoing capital improvements, it would equate to \$690,000 yearly to take care of what the system already owns.
- › Adding new parks to keep pace with the growth of the Town will be a challenge. The Town recently purchased 55 acres for a future park near Cass Holt and Avent Ferry Roads. This is an important investment, as it is planned to be the first public park west of Highway 55, a growing, but underserved area in Town. The Town is also anticipating the donation of 25 acres on Woods Creek Road, along west of Highway 55. As site plans are developed for these parks, an operational and maintenance management plan should be included so the elected officials can appropriate the level of staffing and equipment needed to take of what is expected to build at the quality of care that is present today in the park system.
- › The Town assists in managing approximately 14,000 street trees. The park staff often assumes the responsibility to plant and replace the trees in the Town as needed. A tree inventory and maintenance management plan with pruning guidelines established at 7-8 years is considered best practices. As the park system continues to grow the Department will have to ensure staffing needs for additional forestry staff.
- › The Town does not have an asset management plan in place to anticipate when amenities, like playgrounds or courts, will need to be replaced. The asset management plan allows staff to keep up with managing existing assets to the end of their useful life with an appropriate level of maintenance and replacement schedules. This must be viewed as a priority.
- › Furthermore, in order to avoid or reduce a backlog of maintenance needs, the asset management will help anticipate and plan for these larger expenses.
- › Currently, there is not a strong Capital Improvement program to take care of assets owned by the Town nor how these projects will be funded. Some five-year CIP planning is in place, but the Master Plan should demonstrate how this should be improved in the future.
- › A new vehicle replacement program is currently being evaluated by the Fleet Division of Public Works, which includes Parks Maintenance vehicles and some types of equipment. Vehicle and equipment replacement can be an ongoing problem if not scheduled to be replaced based on miles used, hours used or high repair costs. The staff are using an eight-year replacement schedule for mowers and it is planned to add dump trucks and trailers (up to 18 feet long) to a future replacement schedule.
- › The Town has invested in a work order system called CityWorks, which is also being utilized by the Public Works Department. The Parks Maintenance crew are motivated to implement it. It will be used to capture the parks' daily maintenance data and costs as they apply to maintaining sports fields, taking care of an acre of park land or a mile of trails. The data collected from this new system will be helpful for current and future maintenance planning.
- › Key Performance Measures for the Parks Maintenance division have not been identified or developed. It is important to have these metrics identified and reported to demonstrate efficiency or effectiveness. Ideally, with the new CityWorks software program staff will be able to demonstrate their key performance measures in a more consistent manner.
- › Many maintenance tasks in the parks that require skilled trades (electric, plumbing, masonry, etc.) are not currently performed by staff, but are usually hired out with skilled contractors. The Town's Public Works Department will sometimes provide some assistance to the Parks division if the schedule allows.
- › Holly Springs does not have a formal volunteer program established in the parks. Typically, volunteer hours make up 5 to 8% of total agency work force hours if managed correctly and in some agencies, it is as high as 15%. Volunteers are great advocates for parks and recreation and can help with passing bond issues and getting the message out when used properly and made to feel appreciated.

- › While many of the Parks Maintenance staff members hold college degrees, none have attended any formal industry maintenance management programs, like the NRPA Parks Maintenance Supervisor School typically held in Oglebay, WV. Many staff hold playground safety certifications and pesticide licenses. Professional development for the Parks Maintenance division is important for increased efficiency and safety reasons.
- › Staff focus more “on the job training” instead of a process improvement training. Both are important and should be made a priority for the future.
- › The Town has a central Fleet Maintenance division as part of the Public Works Department, however, in order to maintain efficiency, the Parks division should have a mechanic on staff to perform preventative maintenance and repairs for mowers, gators, or small equipment.
- › Formal maintenance standards would provide a clear and realistic plan for parks and recreation services as well as cost to help the Department demonstrate their needs through the budget process. Updated maintenance standards will be made as part of the master plan process.
- › Using data regarding the seasonal nature of necessary park maintenance tasks, the Department should analyze the benefits of full-time, part-time and seasonal workers based on the current and future needs of the Department. National standards trend toward 26 FTE's per acre maintained and is a reasonable target to achieve over time.
- › While playground safety inspections are a regular part of the maintenance process, additional staff with playground certifications will increase efficiency and help formalize and document this important requirement.
- › Several parks have water irrigation systems, however, maintenance and operational standards for these systems are lacking. Consideration should be given to develop standards and the establishment of best-practices for water usage in parks.
- › Care, cleaning, and picking up trash at Town Hall, as well as snow removal from decks, parking lots, and walkways is performed by the Facility Maintenance staff.
- › The Parks Maintenance division has a contract with a local landscape company to maintain the street medians and a few smaller parks in the Town. Creating a set maintenance standard that can be adopted by the yearly budget will keep leaders informed of the cost to manage each area in the Town.
- › The Facilities Maintenance staff transitioned to the Public Works Department in October of 2020.

Sports Fields

- › The Parks Maintenance crew takes care of nine sports fields: six of which are natural grass fields, two are large synthetic turf fields and one turf- stadium field that seats 1,700 people. Parks Maintenance also cares for many of the school sports fields in the Town as part of a Joint Use Agreement with the Wake County Public Schools System (WCPSS). The condition of the fields is excellent based on observations, but additional staff will be required if the Town continues to add more sports fields to its inventory.
- › Staff reported that due to high demand for sports field use, it is difficult to keep teams off the fields when they are closed for maintenance or due to the weather. There are few quality practice fields available. Ideally the Town and school district should work together to improve school fields for both practices and competitive play. game level fields. Additional fields are needed in the inventory to allow for proper rest and maintenance.
- › The Department has a joint use agreement for several school fields and courts with the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS). The 25-year agreement was extremely beneficial for both public and private use before the Town was able to build its own fields and courts. The use agreements provide provisions to have the Department maintain certain outdoor areas and in return the Department is able to use or rent the fields and collect revenue. Some school fields and areas are no longer utilized and the agreement should be evaluated to determine if the provisions remain fair and equitable.
- › The Department does not have written maintenance standards in place but based on observations the team does a good job in maintaining parks and sports fields. Park and sports field maintenance standards will be made a part of the master plan document for staff to follow.

Greenways and Trails

- › The Parks Maintenance staff spends a good amount of time maintaining the wooden boardwalk sections of the Town's greenway system. More details on greenway design and maintenance are discussed in the greenway chapter.
- › All greenways in Town are the responsibility of the Park Maintenance division. This task will require many enhancements and standards to follow. As new greenways are built by, or accepted by the Town, additional staffing needs must be considered to maintain or improve the current level of service.

Natural Resources

- › The Department does not have a solid natural resource management plan as part of its maintenance operations. Considerations of native plant material, limited pesticide use, recycled water for irrigation, etc. are just a few ideas that could be considered for the best management approach.

KEY FINDINGS

- › Holly Springs Park Maintenance Operations does an excellent job for maintaining the parks, sports fields and trails with the existing manpower they have in place.
- › The current standard of 40 acres per full-time maintenance person is high for any park system. As the park systems grows in acquiring and developing more parks and trails it will be imperative that increase staffing levels follow.
- › Now that the parks maintenance operations is in Public Works Department, it will still require that the Parks and Recreation Director stay focused on the level of maintenance expected. Only 10% of the parks maintenance work required for a parks and recreation system are managed through a Public Works Department.
- › Incorporating park maintenance standards for parks, sports fields and greenways will need to be incorporated as the system grows.
- › Incorporating a natural resource management plan into the maintenance operations should be made a priority.
- › Establishing a asset replacement program that incorporates money into a set aside budget for that purpose should also be made a priority.



finance



The objective of the Financial Assessment is to provide an overall evaluation of how the Town of Holly Springs Parks and Recreation Department manages its finances regarding the use of tax dollars for operational and capital costs as well as earned income in the development and operations of parks and facilities. This would include how well the Town manages on-going capital components of the assets already owned and daily operations of facilities and programs. The project team understands that the parks and recreation system is relatively new and has grown considerably over the last 10 years. As the Town and the Park and Recreation system grows, there will be a great deal of catch up by the system to deliver parks, recreation facilities, programs, and services, in a fast-growing community like Holly Springs.

METHODOLOGY

The Financial Assessment process by the project team involved a review of the last three years' financial statements. The project team met with both the Finance Department and Parks & Recreation staff to get additional information about internal financial processes and operational challenges. The responses provided information about how financial management is currently performed in the Town for parks and recreation. Based on the information collected, the project team will share the best practices for the development of a systemwide master plan for the Parks and Recreation Department of Holly Springs.

KEY FINDINGS

- › The Department has limited funding sources from dedicated taxes and from earned income to support the development and operations of the system as it continues to grow. This limits the Department in acquiring future park land for neighborhood and community parks as well as implementing capital improvements for parks, trails and for recreation amenities such as aquatic facilities based on need and with a goal of equity across the system.
- › From both general tax dollars and user fees, the Town of Holly Springs spends \$154 dollars per capita, that creates a \$5.79 million-dollar operating budget for the Department. This compares financially well with other communities of similar size regarding the funding of their parks and recreation system. The challenge is that the Town is growing at a fast pace and most of the amenities developed to date have similar asset life which means that as these facilities and amenities age out or come to the end of their lifecycle all at the same time. Funding will need to be available to replace these amenities. Due to the rapid growth of Holly Springs, many of the facilities that have been created are undersized to serve the increased population in the Town. One such example is the Hunt Recreation Center.
- › Just considering the general tax funding amount of \$100.54 per capita, Holly Springs is about \$19.00 above the national average of \$81.19. The Town has made a strong commitment to parks and recreation with tax support, but consideration of other dedicated funding sources outside of property taxes is needed to provide long-term investment to maintain a high-service level department.
- › Currently, the Department does not have a cost recovery policy in place for staff to work towards in terms of how program fees are determined. Developing a cost recovery policy would help manage finances more effectively. The Department is currently operating at a 35% cost recovery level with earned revenues totally \$2.03 million and expenses totaling \$5.8 million. The national cost recovery standard currently being used by many departments across the United States is approximately 37% for suburban systems but this target varies

by the size of the town, the number of parks and facilities and the wealth of the municipal agency. In fiscal year 2020, the Parks and Recreation Department's operating budget was calculated to be 20% of the entire Town's operating budget. This high percentage demonstrates a strong commitment by the Holly Springs Town Council and from residents of the Town for investing in parks and recreation facilities and programs.

- › The asset value of the department is \$23.62 million, less land value. Typically, municipal agencies invest approximately 5% of their total asset value into an asset replacement fund to keep up with what has already been built to keep facilities and amenities in great condition. Using this best practice, it is recommended that the Department should budget \$1,181,000 a year to maintain the service level of parks, trails and facilities.
- › As part of the current budgeting process, every Department division establishes a revenue goal annually. The Athletics division has historically produced the greatest cost recovery outcome. This is good practice for the Department to continue to follow.
- › In fiscal year 2020, the Bass Lake division projected cost recovery at 21.7%. This is low for the value of the experience visitors have at this unique park. If the Department would create a true 'cost of service' model for the park to capture direct and indirect costs associated with operation and implement with an updated pricing policy effort, it is projected that the cost recovery percentage would be much greater and more in-line with the rest of the Department.
- › The Town has a land dedication / fee in lieu policy in place for acquiring park land or collecting developer fees. These "impact fees" are important to help with meeting the demand of services as the Town grows. The revenues from this policy are put into the park system's reserve fund and should be earmarked for land purchases as when park land opportunities become available so the Town has the money to acquire the land as a future park.
- › The Department does not currently have a uniform or equity-based pricing policy. A pricing policy or philosophy is needed to help better understand the cost of services and how to price services based on public and private good associated with the delivery of these program services.
- › While the Department does project revenue by division, there is not a set cost recovery goal for core programs or core facilities. Setting cost recovery goals for core programs and core facilities needs to be a high priority for the Department to avoid creating entitlement with existing or future special interest groups. Special interest groups become entitled when they do not know what the true cost of their special interest is to the Town on the front end of their involvement and they feel they are entitled to the existing investment the Town is making them now and, in the future, and don't want the Town to reduce it or eliminate if it becomes necessary. If the Town provides them the true cost of the services both direct costs and indirect costs the Town is making in them and what they are paying for the access and the level of exclusive use of a government facility it helps to curb entitlement which has been the downfall of many park and recreation systems across the United States because of their inability to change anything about the use or fees involved with the special interest group. Informing users of what it truly costs to provide services based on their individual or group benefit above a local taxpayer receives on the front end resolves this problem.
- › The Department has a scholarship policy in place which enables access to programs for all residents regardless of ability to pay. This is a great practice, so the community knows parks and recreation is for all residents. Most agencies set certain amount each year in their budget for scholarships which is in the range of 3-5% of their operational budget.
- › Once a pricing policy is established, staff will need to be trained in how to effectively communicate this new model to users and community groups.

- A pricing policy should be established with program service classifications – including core essential, important, or value added. Each classification should then have an associated cost recovery goal. To determine the user fee, both direct and indirect costs need to be included in the calculation targeting the cost recovery percentage.
- The Department does not have a dedicated person to assist with business development. It is recommended that a position be created in the future to work on creating equitable partnership agreements with public / public partners, not-for-profit partners, and private partners to maximize the Town's resources. This position should also focus on earned income opportunities such as grants and sponsorships and manage the parks foundation for the future. A good business development person will earn eight times their salary if they are doing their job effectively.
- The software the Department utilizes, RecTrac, monitors revenue and helps track costs for programs and services. The Department should use this data to track Key Performance Measures to demonstrate the efficiency and effectiveness of the work in all divisions within the Department.
- The Town does not have a non-profit partner like a park foundation or "friends of" group as part of its operations. It is highly recommended that a non-profit fundraising entity be established. Non-profit affiliates like a park's foundation can help raise money in a variety of key areas, including help to acquire park land, developing new or replacement amenities like playgrounds or sports courts and they can help to support programs for people in need primarily for youth programs. Non-profit foundations can also raise money for matching grant programs.
- Based on recent data from revenue reports, the Town is underserved with recreation facilities. As the Town continues to grow, the demand shows the justification for larger and diversified facilities. Two areas that indicate a growing need include an aquatics center and a larger multigenerational recreation center.
- Several years ago, the Town conducted a space analysis, as well as an RFP for a new indoor recreation center, but it lacked leadership support at the time. To prepare for the future, a feasibility study should be established for any type of recreation facility to demonstrate its need, cost, cost recovery capability and how it will be used and operated. This is a best-practice that the Department has not historically employed. A study of this type helps the key leadership and the community to understand how it would be developed and operated and who will benefit from the facility or amenity.

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community engagement



INTRODUCTION

Community input is an essential part of any planning process and the most effective plans are firmly rooted in the realities and visions of the community that created them. This plan uses a combination of input from the community, the steering committee, focus groups and Department staff to inform the community engagement portion of the information-gathering process.

METHODOLOGY

The Department and project team designed the public engagement process to maximize the amount of input and feedback from community members and Department staff. The process was intended to be equitable and inclusive, offering a variety of input opportunities and methods for all community members to have a comfortable platform for expressing their input.

Though each input meeting had its own purpose and outcomes, the meetings towards the beginning of the planning process had a broader approach with the Department and project team intending to inform participants about the planning process and solicit input regarding community values, customer satisfaction and the recreational needs and wants of the community. Meetings later in the process took a more focused approach, seeking feedback on proposed recommendations. Input from all meetings drove the creation of the Department's vision statements, which are the foundation for this plan's recommendations and action and implementation plan. The scientific survey was conducted to ensure community engagement reaches all geographic areas of the Town. It provided an opportunity to reach individuals who would not typically attend a meeting or otherwise participate in a public engagement process. This survey focused on community's recreation needs, priorities and support for funding.

The public engagement process included the following elements:

- › Two public input meetings
- › A scientific survey
- › Three Public Opinion Surveys (1 General, 2 following Public Meetings)
- › Three meetings with the Steering Committee
- › Six staff input meetings
- › Interdepartmental and multi-jurisdictional meeting for greenways
- › Farmers Market pop up booth
- › Focus Groups meetings
- › Strategic partners meeting

In addition to targeted community outreach, additional four information sessions were conducted with the Town of Holly Springs Council. A special workshop sesion was conducted for asset mapping, the results of which are documented in the appendices.

The summary of the meetings, input strategy and the outcomes are described in the following pages.

STEERING COMMITTEE/ ELECTED OFFICIALS	SCIENTIFIC SURVEYS	VIRTUAL PUBLIC MEETING/ ONLINE SURVEYS	FOCUS GROUPS
+/- 57 participants 4 Elected officials meetings 3 Steering committee meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Asset mapping sessions › Plan progress updates › Mapping feedbacks › Online Surveys 	351 households Mailed in surveys	271 participants 2 virtual meetings 2 online surveys	+/- 40 participants 3 virtual meetings 1 mail in survey
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Use & ratings of parks/ facilities › Participation & ratings of programs & events › Barriers that prevent parks & facilities use › Facility Needs & Priorities › Program Needs & Priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Community Values › Greenway trails use › Greenway trails experience › Parks amenity needs › Program needs › Prioritization criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Seniors › Youth › Special needs › Strategic partners › Interjurisdictional meetings › Needs › Challenges › Priorities



Scientific Survey

Purpose

To solicit feedback on the recreational needs and wants of the community. Responses are reflective of the Town's demographics.

Number of Responses

351 households, exceeding the goal of 300 residents.

Methodology

ETC Institute administered the scientific survey in the Spring of 2020 as part of the Town's efforts to develop parks, facilities and recreation programs. ETC mailed a survey packet to a random sample of households in Holly Springs who were given the option to return the survey response by mail or complete it online on www.HollySpringsSurvey.org. A total of 1,800 surveys were mailed out and 351 responses were returned with a precision of at least +/- 5.2% and the 95 % level of confidence.

A more detailed description of ETC Institute's methodology for ensuring statistically valid results is contained in Appendices.

KEY FINDINGS

Priority investment rating - The priority investment rating is an objective tool to evaluate the priority that should be placed on investments in parks and recreation facilities, amenities and programs, especially as resources become available. The priority investment rating combines measures of:

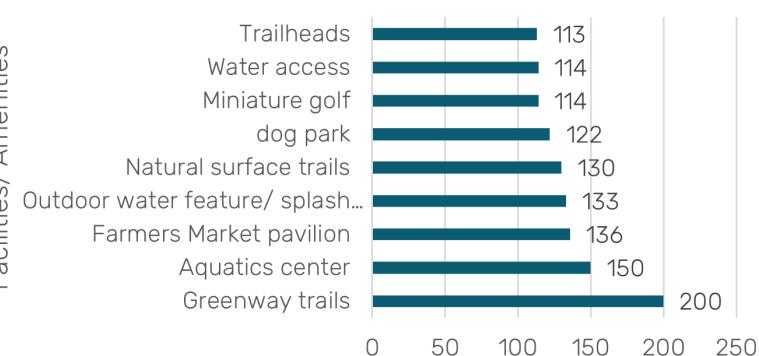
1. The importance residents place on certain facilities, amenities and programs and
2. How many residents have unmet needs for that facility, amenity or program.

Appendices to this report include a more detailed description of the methodology for determining the priority investment rating.

High Priority Facilities

- Greenway trails
- Aquatic center
- Farmers market pavilion
- Outdoor water feature or splash pad
- Natural surface trails
- Dog Park
- Miniature golf
- Water access
- Trailheads

Priority Investment Rating - Facilities/ Amenities

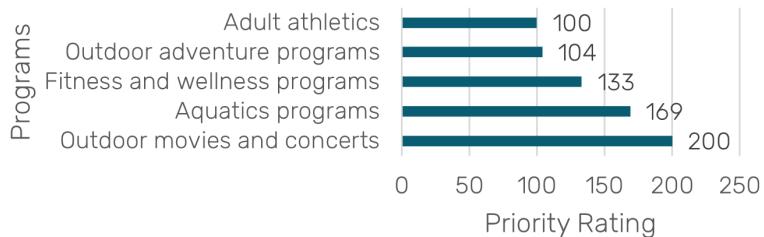


▲ Figure 1- Priority Investment Rating - Facilities and Amenities

High Priority Programs

- › Outdoor movies and concerts
- › Aquatic programs
- › Fitness and wellness programs
- › Outdoor adventure programs
- › Adult athletics

Priority Investment Rating - Programs



▲ Figure 2- Priority Investment Rating - Programs

Priority Improvements

The highest levels of support for potential improvements to parks and the recreation system, based on the sum of "very supportive" and "somewhat supportive" were:

- › Developing greenway trails to connect Town's existing greenway trail segments (88%).
- › Investing in improvement and upkeep of existing facilities (86%).
- › Constructing a permanent farmers market pavilion (78%), and
- › Implementing sustainability measures to minimize environmental impact of parks and recreation facilities (78%)

Summary

Program participation ratings – Twenty percent of households surveyed indicated they had participated in a recreation, athletic or youth/teen program the Department offered during the past 12 months. Eighty-five percent of those who have participated in a program gave an "excellent" or "good" rating when asked to rate the overall quality of the programs they participated in. Only fifteen percent gave a "fair" rating and no respondents gave a "poor" rating.

Organizations used for parks and recreation facilities – The organizations that responding households use most for recreation parks and facilities were; Town of Holly Springs (86%), County parks (71%), and State parks (71%). Forty-two percent (42%) of respondents use the Town of Holly Springs most for their household's recreation needs.

Barriers to park, facility and program usage – Respondents were given a list of fourteen (14) various reasons that prevent them or members of their household from using Town parks/facilities. The top four reasons were: lack of information/don't know what is offered (42%), not enough time/too busy (33%), cost of participation (19%), and overcrowding (19%).

Community perceptions of the Department – The highest levels of agreement with various statements regarding the Town Parks and Recreation, based on the sum of "strongly agree" and "agree" responses among residents who had an opinion, were: public parks add to quality of life in the community (98%), recreation and parks are an essential service to the Town (97%), and I feel safe when visiting parks in Holly Springs (95%).

Methods of learning - Responding households were asked to indicate all the ways they learn

about Town parks, facilities and special events.

- › 65% learn from the Town newsletter •
- › 58% learn from the Town website
- › 56% learn from social media
- › 53% learn from word of mouth

The sources of information that respondents most prefer to use to learn about Town parks, facilities, and special events, based on the sum of respondents' top two choices, were: Town newsletter (41%), social media (39%), and the Town website (31%).

Funding support - The potential improvements that respondents indicated they would be most willing to support with tax dollars, based on the sum of respondents' top three choices, were: developing greenway trails to connect Town's existing greenway trail segments (57%), constructing an indoor aquatics facility (33%), and constructing a permanent farmers market pavilion (31%). Eighty-one percent (81%) of respondents are "very supportive" (42%) or "supportive" (39%) of the funding of parks and recreation improvements/expansions to be funded with a future bond financed **within the existing property tax rate structure**.

Public Opinion Survey 1

Purpose

To provide a feedback tool in the form of a web-based public opinion survey in conjunction with the virtual public engagement meeting.

Number of responses

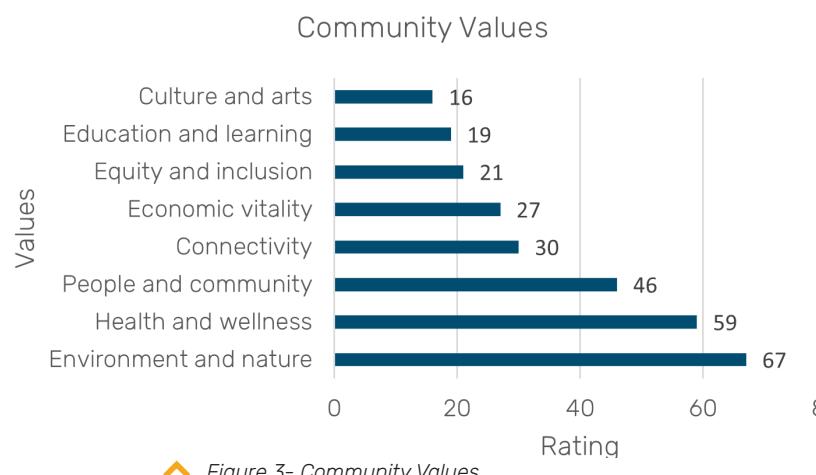
120 (June 2020)

Methodology

The project team used the Town's virtual public engagement platform publicinput.com to get feedback on the information presented at the first virtual public meeting. The questions were directed towards understanding the community's values, experience with existing parks and facilities, and the community's needs for future recreation opportunities. Detail results of the public opinion survey are provided in the appendices.

"As a 22 year resident of Holly Springs I have been very pleased with the growth of Parks and Rec and the dedication of its staff."

"Include teen oriented programs- life skills, volunteering opportunities, tutoring/coaching, and career development"



KEY FINDINGS

Many of the public opinion survey results are consistent with the scientific survey results, showing that the community's needs across various interest groups and demographics are similar in nature. The overall public opinion survey findings show a strong support for greenway trails and bike-ped facilities, for their health and wellness benefits. Outdoor programs and events are the topmost community need with some interest for innovative opportunities for youth programming. The survey participants want the Department to prioritize meeting community needs for future investment in parks and recreation. Several of the open-ended comments included support and concern for future greenway trail development and support for preserving the natural resources within the Town.

Focus Group Meetings

Purpose

To understand the recreation needs of otherwise underrepresented groups in the community engagement process.

Number of responses

+/- 40 across all focus groups

Methodology

The project team identified the following focus groups at the Steering Committee meeting:

- Special needs population
- Active adults
- Youth



▲ Virtual meeting with Special Needs Population Focus Group

One of the biggest challenges in getting more participants coincided with the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The engagement process was adapted to fit the state-wide regulations regarding group gatherings. Virtual work sessions were conducted with two of the groups while the active adults group received a mailed questionnaire. Each focus group was asked a consistent set of questions to get their feedback on parks and facility usage and overall needs for the target population. In addition, the discussion was focused on specific concerns and barriers of usage for parks, facilities and program participation.

KEY FINDINGS

Special needs population - Ten people participated in this focus group meeting. Overall, the group is satisfied with the level of inclusivity the Parks and Recreation Department offers in their programs, facilities and particularly the recent special events targeted towards special population such as Sensory Santa, and a Halloween event at Sugg Farm. etc. Participants were interested in dedicated inclusive play area with signage, buddy programs (teaming up special needs person with neurotypical person for programming) and providing more social opportunities for this group.

Active adults - Six people participated in this focus group. All of the participants had participated in the Town programs targeted for this age group while none of them visited greenway trails in the past twelve months. Reasons for not using the parks, programs and greenway trails included cost of participation, location of facilities, lack of maintenance and lack of parking. Participants mentioned a need for senior center, additional athletic programs, surfacing repairs to greenway trails and the need for parks within walking distance of homes. All participants stated that they use the Department HURRAHS program guide to access program information. Overall, the group commended Department staff for their services.

Youth - Five participants ages 10-17 attended the virtual focus group session. A variety of teen friendly programs were mentioned as future needs, including volleyball, indoor and outdoor basketball, water-related activities, greenways and esports. Transportation is a challenge for this group to access parks and facilities without direct greenway trails or sidewalk connections and without being transported by an adult. Participants were conflicted to some degree about perceived safety using parks and greenway trails. The group would like program information to be provided at schools and other public spaces as well as neighborhood apps.

Strategic Partners Meeting

Purpose

To hear from the Department's partners about the nature of their partnerships, levels of satisfaction, visions for the future and identify potential challenges. The results of this meeting will be used to guide programming recommendations to ensure partnerships are equitable, productive, and in service to the Department's vision.

Number of responses

±11 responses

Methodology

The project team conducted a virtual work session with the representatives from the following organizations. A short presentation was made in the beginning to introduce the project followed by a series of questions. The responses to the questions were recorded using *polleverywhere.com* software.

- › Wake Futball Club (WFC)
- › Western Wake Tennis Association (WWTA)
- › Martin Luther King, Jr. Committee (MLK)
- › Holly Springs Food Cupboard (HSFC)
- › Holly Springs Salamanders
- › Rex Healthcare
- › Wake Health
- › Holly Springs Half Marathon (HSHM)
- › Holly Springs High School Athletics
- › Holly Springs Community Band
- › Holly Springs Chamber of Commerce

Key Findings

Most of the existing partnerships with the Department have been in operations between 5-10 years and a few partnerships have been for over a decade. The partners seemed happy and excited for this long-term successful relationship with the Town. Five out of eleven organizations have formal partnership agreement with the Town, one is considered a vendor, and one was unsure about the nature of agreement. Some participants were not aware of the time and financial investment Town is making in the partnership agreement because of the lack of written conditions, however they all strongly appreciated the support received. All participants contributed instances where their organization promotes economic development, health and wellness, or arts and culture within Holly Springs which ties in with the overall parks and recreation goals. While many acknowledged the biggest challenge as COVID-19 pandemic, they also shared many positive comments regarding recreation opportunities offered in Holly Springs. The most commonly stated needs were better communication, increased marketing support, and automated processes for event applications and sponsorships.

Many program partners have a future vision of growth and expansion. This is consistent with the Town's current demographics. Partners overall shared a well-rounded vision for the Town's future that includes many quality-of-life recreation amenities.

Multi-Jurisdictional Meetings

Purpose

To hear from the neighboring jurisdictions and the county officials about the current and future greenway trails development in their respective jurisdictions to recommend regional greenway trail network on the edges of Holly Springs.

Number of participants

The following jurisdictions participated in the meeting:

Town of Apex
Town of Cary
Town of Fuquay-Varina
Wake County
Harnett County

Methodology

The project team conducted a virtual work session with the staff from the above jurisdictions. A draft proposed greenway trail map was shared with the participants to solicit their feedback on the best locations for future regional or community connectors.

Key Findings

Participants shared the information about their jurisdiction's current and future greenway trail development projects that could potentially provide connections to Holly Springs. Wake County staff shared information about current jurisdictional projects that are receiving funding assistance from the County.

Steering Committee and Staff Meetings

Purpose

To hear from the Department staff about the current state of operations, finances, and their vision for the parks and recreation growth for the next ten years. The steering committee represented appointed community members from Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee, Tree Advisory Committee, Town Planning Board and two members of the Mayor's Teen Advisory Board and provided feedback during the course of the project on parks and facilities, focus groups, and vision and recommendations.

Number of meetings

Six staff meetings

Three steering committee meetings

Methodology

The project team conducted a combination of in person and virtual work sessions with the staff and steering committee. The initial engagement process involved asset mapping sessions with each group where the participants brainstormed on series of questions related to the current state of the system and establishing the vision for the future parks and recreation system. Throughout the course of the project, the participants were engaged at key milestones to provide input on needs assessment and recommendations.

Key Findings

Several key themes emerged from the asset mapping sessions and update meetings including greenway trails connectivity, focus on community health and wellness, diverse program offerings, challenges of a growing community and the need for continued financial investment in the parks and recreation system. The detailed results of asset mapping sessions are provided in the appendices.



▲ Steering Committee meeting

Public Opinion Survey 2

Purpose

To provide a feedback tool in the form of a web-based public opinion survey in conjunction with the virtual public engagement meeting.

"Work with neighborhoods and their HOA's on connections to greenways."

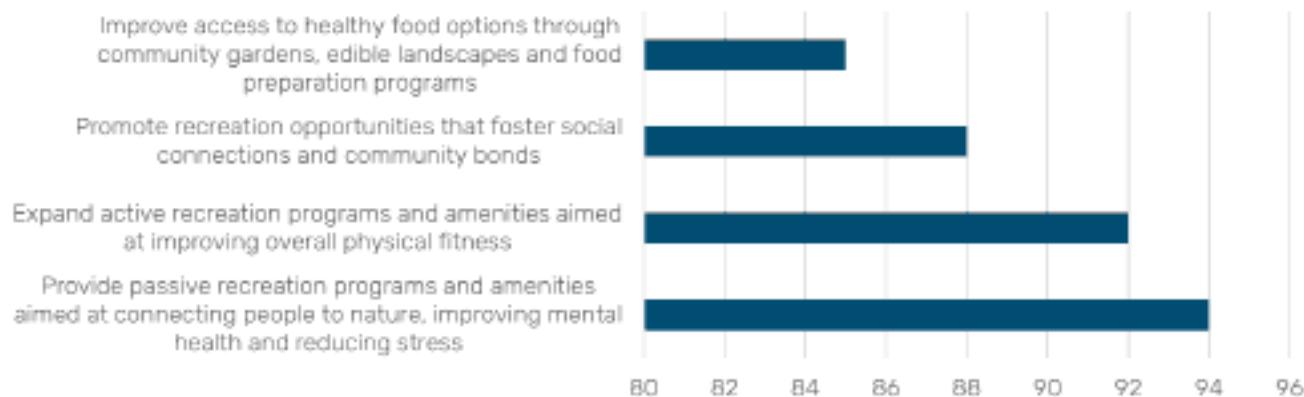
Number of responses

151 (December 2020)

Methodology

The project team used the Town's virtual public engagement platform *publicinput.com* to get feedback on the information presented at the second virtual public meeting. The questions were directed towards understanding the community's need to establish priorities for action items derived from the recommendations shared with them during the virtual open house. Detail results of the public opinion survey are provided in the appendices.

Priority Action Items for Positive Health Outcomes



▲ Figure 4- Priority Investment Rating - Programs

Key Findings

The public opinion survey results show an overall focus on parks and recreation development on the West side of highway 55. This includes acquisition of new parkland, development of existing park properties, and prioritizing greenway connections to American Tobacco Trail. 90% of the participants ranked greenway trail development as the top priority. Diversity of amenities and programs for all ages and ability levels, connecting people to nature to improve health and wellness, and establishing conservation goal for undisturbed parkland were ranked as the highest priorities. Participants also prioritized establishing a business office to seek alternative funding sources.

Development of Guiding Principles and recommendations

Ideas and outcomes that emerged from the community engagement process along with the inventory and assessment findings were used to create themes or guiding principles upon which the recommendations for that future parks and recreation system are based. Follow up public meetings, staff and steering committee meetings were conducted to receive feedback on recommendations and priorities for implementation. These guiding principles, and recommendations are explained in detail in the Recommendations chapter.

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level of service



INTRODUCTION

Level of service, benchmarking and national standards provide important metrics for guiding future growth in parks and recreation. Considered together, these metrics provide a broad understanding of current parks and recreation conditions in the Town, similar jurisdictions and nationally. This analysis provides detailed metrics and statistics that should be considered within the full context of parks and recreation services Holly Springs is offering residents.

Level of service, benchmarking and national standards provide concrete numbers that allow for comparison. 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 Town grows its parks and recreation services to meet an increasing population.

LEVEL OF SERVICE	BENCHMARKING	NATIONAL STANDARDS + BEST PRACTICE
<p>Measures the Department's current offerings. Analysis is local.</p> <p>This analysis asks: What do we offer?</p> <p>The Level of Service analysis identifies what the Town is currently offering, based on current population. This metric is population based and forms a baseline standard moving into the future.</p> <p>The analysis answers the question, if Holly Springs currently offers this much parkland for this many people, how much parkland will we need to serve the population in 10 years?</p>	<p>Compares measures among similar jurisdictions. Analysis is similar communities regionally.</p> <p>This analysis asks: What do others offer?</p> <p>The benchmarking analysis identifies communities that share similar characteristics with the Town of Holly Springs and then compares data points across all communities. This generates an understanding of the department's strengths and chosen areas of expertise.</p> <p>Shortcomings in the benchmarking may represent deficiencies or areas that have been deprioritized in favor of other priorities.</p>	<p>Measures national statistics or case studies. Analysis is national or based on a case study.</p> <p>This analysis asks: What do parks and recreation professionals say is best to offer?</p> <p>National standards and best practices serve as an "ideal state" for parks and recreation in a community. These standards may account for emerging trends communities are beginning to implement, such as trails and greenways or inform how the Town may meet their individual priorities such as providing parks and recreation services to help residents meet personal health and wellness goals.</p>

LEVEL OF SERVICE

The level of service measures how much access to parks, trails and indoor facility space residents have based on the park system's current inventory and the jurisdiction's total population. The analysis identifies deficits or surpluses within what the Department provides. The level of service, combined with benchmarking and best practices, will provide the foundation for this plan's recommendations of how much parkland, trails and indoor facility space the department should acquire or construct to meet the recreation needs for the future, based on population growth.

Methodology

The level of service is a ratio that includes the current offering of parkland, trails and facility space, divided by a portion of the current population. Parkland and trails are calculated based on a rate per 1,000 residents, and indoor facility space is based on a per capita rate, or rate per 1 resident. This difference reflects reporting standards created by the National Recreation and Parks Association.

The population figure used for this analysis is **41,726 residents**. This number is used throughout the plan as the estimate for Holly Springs's 2020 population. The estimate was provided by the Town of Holly Springs Development Services Department and is consistent with the population projections created as part of the Holly Springs Future Land Use Plan. Numbers have been rounded to two decimal places.

$$\text{LEVEL OF SERVICE} = \left(\frac{\text{parks and recreation offering population*}}{\text{portion of population}} \right)$$

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

This formula is used to determine current level of service for any given population number. Current level of service is determined using the current population, and future level of service is determined based on future population projections. This plan determines 2030 level of service using population projects determined in the Demographics and Trends chapter.

Current Level of Service

The Department's current level of service is summarized in the table below. The table shows the Department's offering for parkland, trails, indoor facility space, outdoor fields and courts and selected park amenities. The left-hand column shows the level of service and the portion of the population used to determine that level of service.

The purpose of the level of service analysis is to establish a baseline level of service standard for the Department's current offerings. Creating the level of service as a ratio means that the Department can use this level of service standard to project future needs for parkland, trails, indoor facility space, outdoor fields and courts, and park amenities based on future population.

	THE DEPARTMENT OFFERS -	THE CURRENT LEVEL OF SERVICE IS -
 PARKLAND	309.10 acres of developed parkland	7.41 acres of developed parkland per 1,000 residents
 TRAILS	12.83 miles of trail	0.31 miles of trail per 1,000 residents
 INDOOR FACILITY SPACE	54,653 square feet of indoor recreation space	1.31 square feet of indoor recreation space per 1 resident (per capita)
 OUTDOOR FIELDS + COURTS	49 outdoor fields and courts 7 baseball / softball fields 21 tennis Courts 4 outdoor basketball court 9 multipurpose fields	1.71 outdoor fields and courts per 1,000 residents
 PARK AMENITIES	3 picnic shelters 6 playgrounds	0.07 picnic shelters per 1,000 residents 0.14 playgrounds per 1,000 residents

► Table 1 - Town of Holly Springs Parks and Recreation inventory and current level of service

BENCHMARKING

Benchmarking provides a direct comparison among peer communities with parks and recreation departments that have similar characteristics to the Town of Holly Springs. Looking to peer communities is a valuable tool for decision-making, evaluation and goal setting.

It is a common tendency to believe that numbers above the median are good and numbers below the median are bad. Another common tendency is to believe that numbers below the median must be brought up to the standard, while numbers above the median indicate a jurisdiction is over-providing a service. A better interpretation is to consider metrics as a representation of services the jurisdiction has chosen to invest in. A high metric may indicate a service particularly important to the Town. A low metric may indicate an area in need of additional investment, or an area that is not considered a priority. A benchmarking analysis may identify areas where the department is excelling or falling behind, but it is essential to understand the connections between all metrics rather than focus on one isolated fact.

Methodology

Peer communities should be jurisdictions that share similar enough characteristics to allow for a meaningful comparison, but still represent an array of circumstances and situations among parks and recreation departments. The project team identified peer communities based on the following characteristics.

- › Communities with a similar population
- › Communities that serve on forward-looking comparisons
- › Departments that have similar facility and program offerings including athletic leagues, diverse parks and cultural and performing arts.
- › Communities are suburban and growing

The project team distributed a questionnaire to each peer community. This report includes information from all reporting agencies.

Peer Communities

The project team and Town staff selected peer communities to compare common parks and recreation metrics across different departments. No department can offer a one-to-one comparison and each department serves a different community and pursues different priorities.

	HOLLY SPRINGS, NC	APEX, NC	COPPELL, TX	WAKE FOREST, NC	WESTERVILLE OH
Population	41,726	63,500	41,100	48,000	39,737
Tax rate per \$100 valuation	\$0.48	\$0.38	\$0.58	\$0.52	2%
NRPA Gold Medal Finalist	No	No	Yes	No	Yes

▲ Table 2 - Summary of peer communities



Analysis

This benchmarking analysis summarizes data for the following categories to compare peer communities.

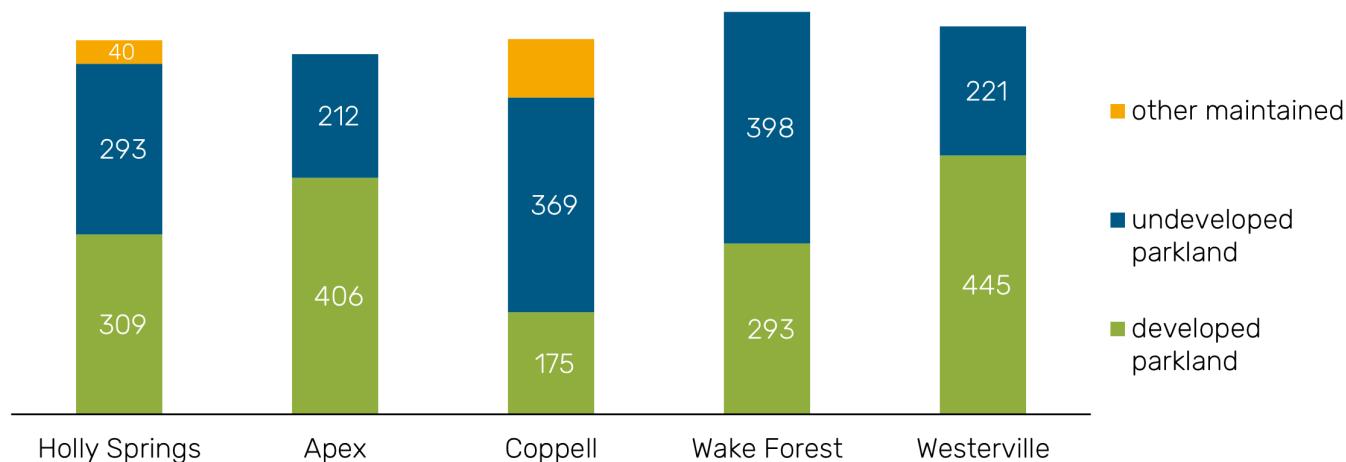
- › Parkland
- › Trails
- › Indoor Facility Space
- › Programming
- › Finances
- › Capital Improvement Budget
- › Staffing

Parkland

Holly Springs provides 7.41 acres of developed parkland per 1,000 population. This falls above the benchmarking median of 6.40 acres of developed parkland per 1,000 population. Holly Springs is second among peer communities, ranking behind Westerville, OH, offering 11.19 acres of developed parkland per 1,000 residents.

All peer communities also hold undeveloped parkland to accommodate future growth or to be held for environmental conservation. Holly Springs holds nearly 300 acres that can become future park development. Undeveloped parkland does not contribute to the acres per population calculation, but it does indicate the capacity a department has to accommodate future parkland growth. Holly Springs ranks third among peer communities in holdings of undeveloped parkland.

Some departments maintain land that does not contribute a recreational use to their community, such as road rights of way, or lawns at Town buildings. The Holly Springs Parks and Recreation department maintains 40 acres of land that do not contribute to recreational use.



▲ Figure 1 - Acreage of parkland types by peer community

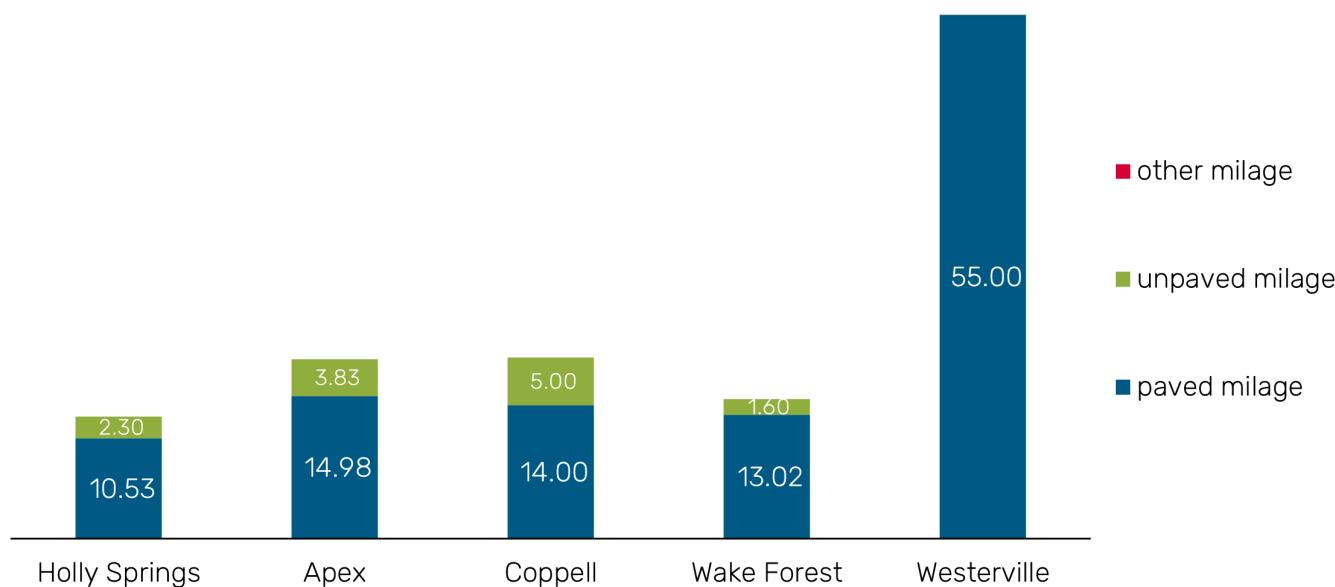
	ACRES OF DEVELOPED PARKLAND	POPULATION	ACRES OF DEVELOPED PARKLAND PER 1,000 POPULATION
Westerville	445	39,737	11.19
Holly Springs	309	41,726	7.41
Apex	406	63,500	6.40
Wake Forest	293	48,000	6.10
Coppell	175	41,100	4.26
MEDIAN			6.40

▲ Table 3 - Acres of developed parkland per 1,000 in peer communities

Greenway Trails

Holly Springs ranks third in greenway trail mileage per 1,000 population, with 12.83 miles of greenway trails. Each peer community, except Westerville, OH, provides natural surface trails and paved trails. Westerville, OH provides only paved mileage.

Holly Springs' 0.31 miles of greenway trail per 1,000 residents is at the median of peer communities. Westerville is providing the highest level of service at 1.38 miles of trail per 1,000 population. Greenway trails have grown in popularity as communities recognize the recreational, transportation and quality-of-life benefits they provide. This analysis indicates that as many communities are undertaking the challenging task of constructing greenway trails, some are emerging as leaders while others are just beginning the process.



▲ Figure 2 - Miles of greenway trail by peer community

	MILES OF TRAIL	POPULATION	MILES OF TRAIL PER 1,000 POPULATION
Westerville	55.00	39,737	1.38
Coppell	19.00	41,100	0.46
Holly Springs	12.83	41,726	0.31
Apex	18.81	63,500	0.30
Wake Forest	14.62	48,000	0.30
MEDIAN			0.31

▲ Table 4 - Miles of greenway trail per 1,000 in peer communities

Indoor Facility Space

Holly Springs ranks second among peer communities for providing indoor recreation space. The Department offers a variety of indoor recreation spaces including recreation / community center space, a performing arts center, and a nature center. Holly Springs provides 1.3 square feet of indoor recreation space per capita, which is below the benchmarking median of 1.7 square feet of indoor recreation space per capita.

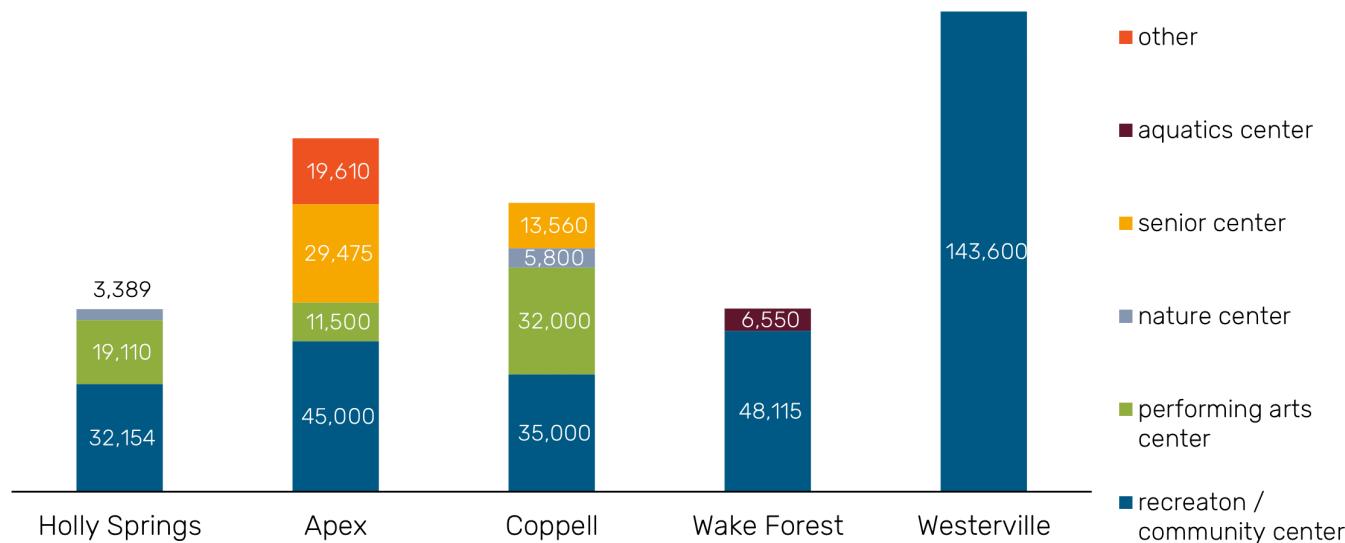


Figure 3 - Square footage of indoor facility space by peer community

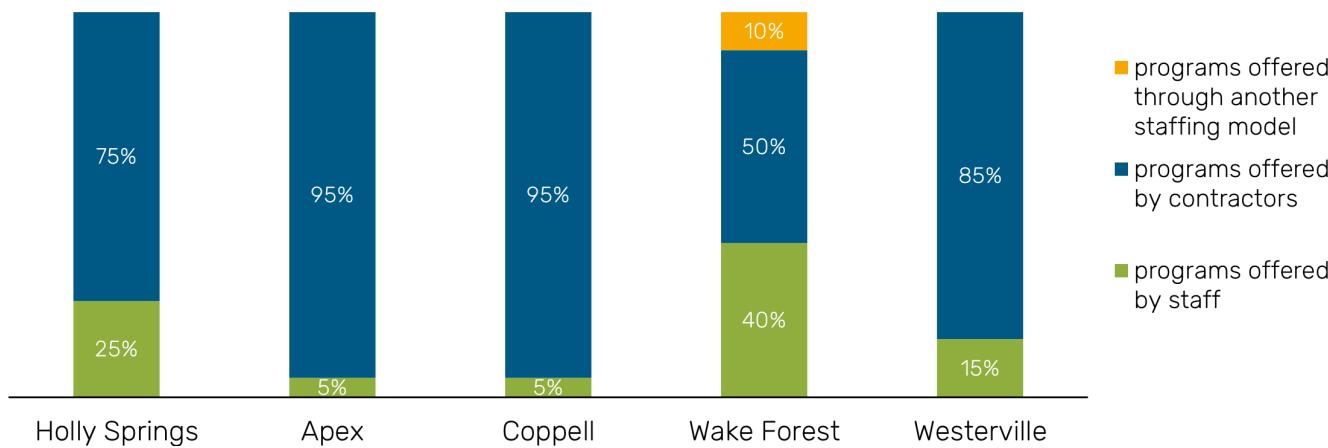
	SQUARE FEET OF INDOOR RECREATION SPACE	POPULATION	SQUARE FEET OF INDOOR RECREATION SPACE PER RESIDENT
Westerville	143,600	39,737	3.6
Coppell	86,360	41,100	2.1
Apex	105,585	63,500	1.7
Holly Springs	54,653	41,726	1.3
Wake Forest	54,665	48,000	1.1
MEDIAN			1.7

Table 5 - Square footage of indoor facility space per capita in peer communities

Programming

Benchmarking communities provide programming through a combination of staff-led programming and contractor-led programming. Peer communities offer programming primarily through contractor-led programs, Wake Forest having the highest percentage of staff-led programming.

Holly Springs is second highest for programming budget per participant. 10% is partnership agreements for Wake Forest. While the project team collected data related to programming budget and number of participants, the benchmarking communities reported the data differently resulting in wide ranges that were not comparable.

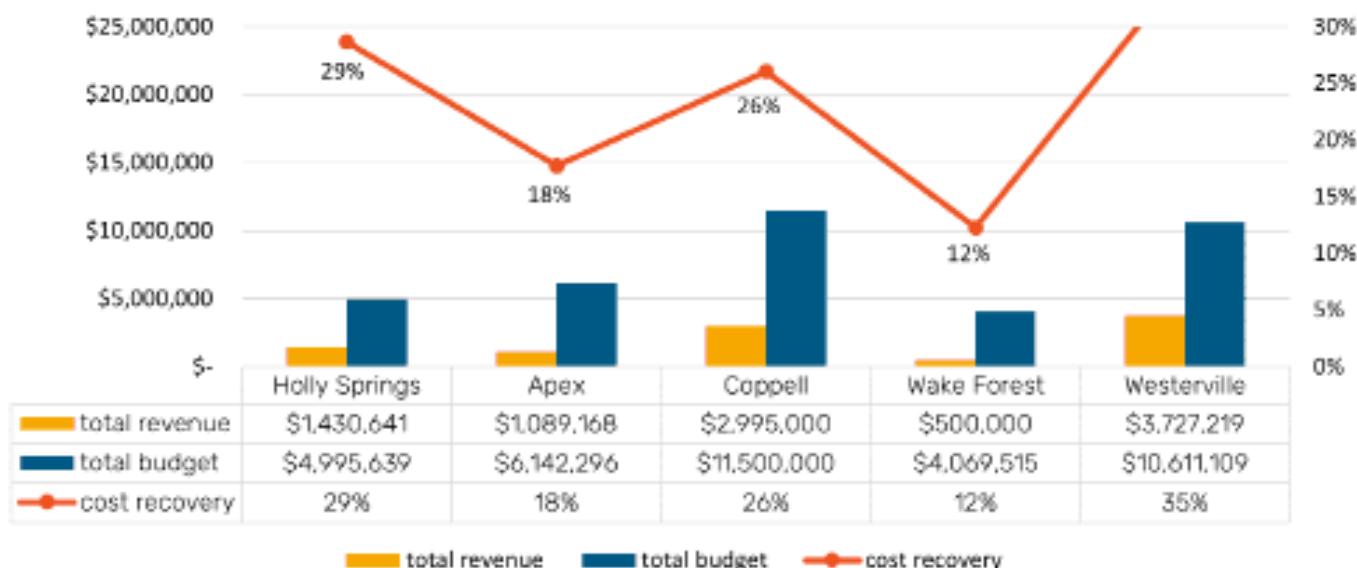


▲ Figure 4 - Programming cost recovery (Programming revenue minus programming cost)

Finances

Holly Springs ranks second in the cost recovery at 29 percent, preceded by Westerville, OH. This means that the Department recoups a higher proportion of their total budget than any other peer community except Westerville. Holly Springs has the second lowest budget and the third highest revenue of peer communities.

Holly Springs has the second highest operating expense per capita at \$119.72. Coppell, TX has significantly higher operating expense than any other peer community, and this is reflected in the operating budget per capita.



▲ Figure 5 - Total operating budget for the most recent fiscal year by peer community

	OPERATING EXPENSE	POPULATION	OPERATING EXPENSE PER CAPITA
Westerville	\$10,611,109	39,737	\$267.03
Coppell	\$11,500,000	41,100	\$279.81
Holly Springs	\$4,995,639	41,726	\$119.72
Apex	\$6,142,296	63,500	\$96.73
Wake Forest	\$4,069,515	48,000	\$84.78
MEDIAN			\$119.72

▲ Table 7 - Operating expenses per capita by peer community

Capital Budget

Capital budgets include funding for non-operational costs such as construction of new facilities, land acquisition, and large-scale renovations and improvements. At more than \$14 million over 5 years, Holly Springs is budgeting the second highest amount for capital improvement among peer communities. Apex, NC has the highest amount budgeted for capital improvements in the next 5 years at more than \$28 million.

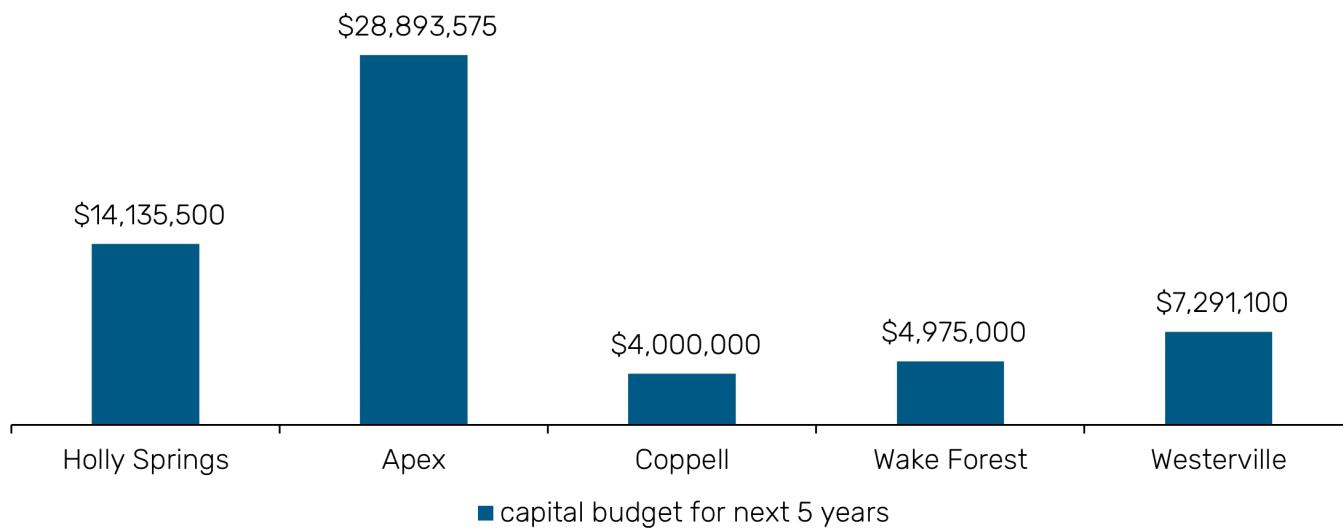


Figure 6 - Peer community capital budgets for the next five years

Staffing

Holly Springs provides 0.86 Full Time Employees (FTE) per 1,000 residents, which is close to the median of FTEs per 1,000 residents among peer communities. The staffing level of service may vary throughout the year with seasonality, but this analysis uses annual staff numbers to generate one annual level of service. There is a significant gap in the number of staff between Westerville, OH, Coppell, TX, and the Wake County communities. The FTEs per 1,000 population are an indication of how the staff is able to meet residents' programming needs.

The same trends hold true when comparing FTEs to acres of developed parkland. Holly Springs currently has 0.12 FTEs per acre of developed parkland, which is below the benchmarking median of 0.16 FTEs per acre of parkland. The (National Recreation and Parks Association) NRPA Gold Medal Community Coppell, TX have significantly higher levels of service for FTEs per acre of parkland. Holly Springs has same FTE/ acre of parkland ratio as Westerville, OH and higher than the two Wake County peer communities. The FTEs per developed parkland acre is an indication of staff's capacity to maintain park acreage to a high standard.

	FTES	POPULATION	FTES PER 1,000 POPULATION
Coppell	68	41,100	1.65
Westerville	55	39,737	1.38
Holly Springs	36	41,726	0.86
Apex	36	63,500	0.56
Wake Forest	23	48,000	0.48
MEDIAN			0.99

► Table 8 - Full time equivalent staff per 1,000 by peer community

	FTES	ACRES OF DEVELOPED PARKLAND	FTES PER ACRE OF DEVELOPED PARKLAND
Coppell	68	175	0.39
Westerville	55	445	0.12
Apex	36	406	0.09
Holly Springs	36	308	0.12
Wake Forest	23	293	0.08
MEDIAN			0.16

► Table 9 - Full time equivalent staff per acre if developed parkland

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Benchmarking results indicate that Holly Springs is a leader among fellow Wake County peer communities, and can compare to Westerville, OH and Coppell, TX, communities that have received NRPA Gold Medal Awards.

Holly Springs is highly ranked among peer communities for developed parkland level of service. The Department is also well positioned to develop new parkland on the undeveloped parkland acreage. Holly Springs ranks at the top of this analysis among Wake county Communities and NRPA Gold Medal Finalists.

Holly Springs is on par with Wake County peer communities for trail mileage level of service. NRPA Gold Medal Finalist communities appear to be leading the trend to introduce more trail mileage in their communities. Westerville, OH is notable with its 55 miles of paved trail which far surpasses the trail mileage of any other peer community.

Holly Springs ranks low for indoor facility space. All communities use joint use agreements to increase the facility space available, though joint use space is not included in the inventory. Holly Springs currently does not offer indoor recreation space for aquatics or a dedicated senior center.

Holly Springs provides the highest ranking of staff provided programming with 25 percent of all programming led by staff. Having staff lead programming ensures that the Department maintains control of the quality and standards of programming, but results in more resource-intensive programming. This is reflected in Holly Springs' high program cost per participant rating. It is possible that the Department could expand programming by offering more contractor-led programming, but leadership will need to ensure that program quality and standards are maintained to the Department's expectations.

Holly Springs currently has the second highest departmental cost recovery among peer communities at 29 percent. When paired with the higher operating budget per capita, this indicates that Holly Springs residents should expect high quality parks and facilities and may expect pay at or near market rate for programming. This is in line with program pricing best practices and indicates the Department is on the right track for establishing an approach to pricing strategies.

The capital improvement budget shows that the Department is planning to expand and grow in the future at a level on-par with other peer communities. Town of Apex, NC will be funding capital improvements at a significantly higher rate than other peer communities.

Staffing levels vary greatly between Wake County peer communities and NRPA Gold Medal Finalists. Gold Medal peer communities have much larger staffs, which is likely related to the larger amount of greenway trail mileage and indoor facility square footage. This may indicate the Holly Springs may need to grow staff in order to provide services on par with Gold Medal Finalists.



walkability

INTRODUCTION

Walkability is a measure of the effectiveness of community design in promoting walking and bicycling as alternatives to driving cars to reach shopping, schools, and other common destinations. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO), and other health organizations advocate increasing the walkability of communities to promote fitness, combat obesity, and enhance sustainability.¹ There is wide evidence to show that when the urban population takes up walking as a daily activity there is a positive impact on health, transportation, economy, and air quality.² Because a community's built form has a strong influence over its walkability, many planners and public officials hope to improve walkability through zoning and infrastructure changes.

Trust for Public Land, Urban Land Institute, and NRPA joined hands in creating a 10-minute walk to park campaign with a goal that everyone should be able to reach the nearest park or open space within ten minutes or half a mile distance. This initiative is being embraced by parks and recreation agencies across the US to achieve equitable access to parks, recreation facilities, and programs to help residents with positive health outcomes related to walkability and access to spaces that encourage physical activity.



1 <https://www.esri.com/news/arcuser/0112/modeling-walkability.html>

2 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6719924/>

METHODOLOGY

The walkability assessment determines the extent to which Holly Springs residents have access to parks and greenways within a 10-minute walk. The assessment uses geographic information systems to identify all areas within a 10-minute walk of a park or greenway trailhead. The analysis provides additional detail by mapping 10-minute walk areas with areas of social vulnerability and the Town's planned future land uses.

This analysis includes three elements described below. First, the analysis maps all areas within a 10-minute walk of a park access or greenway trailhead. Next, the analysis compares areas within a 10-minute walk and the social vulnerability index that identifies areas by their level of social vulnerability. Finally, the analysis maps areas within a 10-minute walk and the Town's future land use map.

This report includes a qualitative discussion of parks and their suitability for the areas they serve based on social vulnerability and future land use.

TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND: WALKABILITY SUMMARY

The Trust for Public Land maintains a parks database that tracks park-related data for communities around the country. The analysis is based on census data and it provides metrics for community-wide walkability including demographic characteristics of those living within a 10-minute walk of a park.

According to the Trust for Public Land's 2020 report, 41 percent of Holly Springs residents are within a 10-minute walk of a park. This is slightly below the national average of 55 percent.

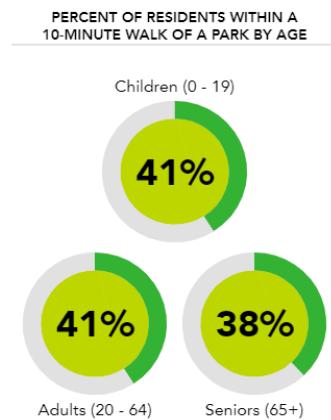
41% of residents live within a 10 minute walk of a park.



National average **55%**

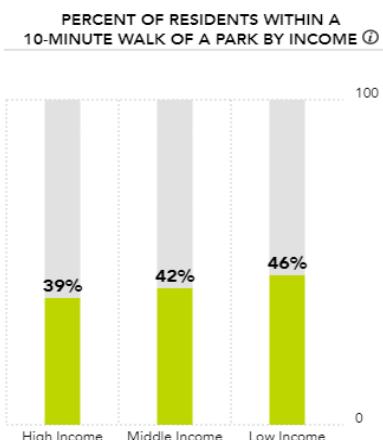
AGE

The Trust for Public Land's age analysis indicates that 41 percent of children and adults are within a 10-minute walk of a park, while only 38 percent of seniors are within a 10-minute walk of a park. This indicates that seniors are less able to access parks than other age demographics within the community. Seniors face additional challenges to walking to parks related to mobility. In addition to being located at a further walking distance than other age demographics, seniors are likely to have mobility challenges to access parks by walking at a higher rate than other age groups.



INCOME

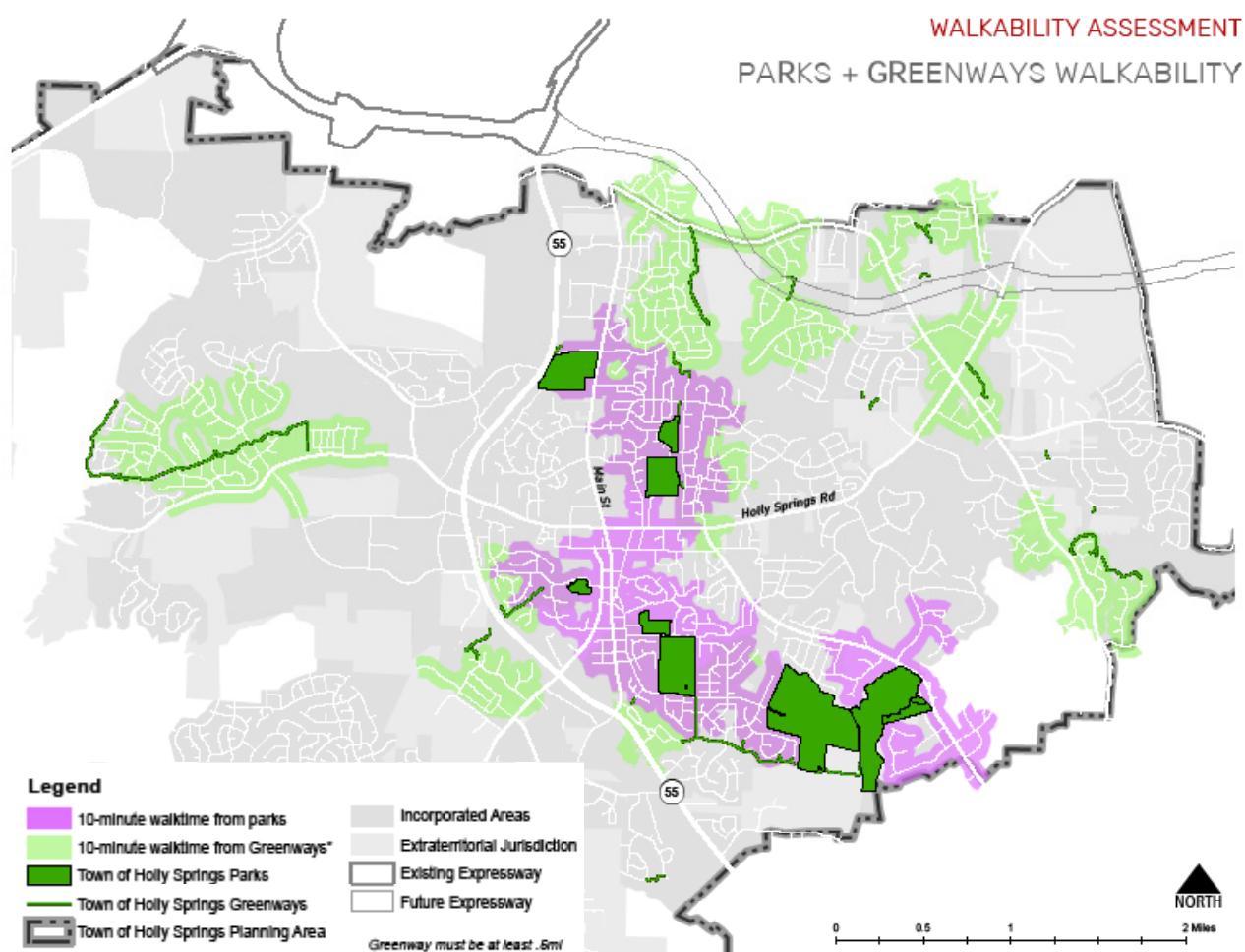
The Trust for Public Land's analysis indicates that 46 percent of low-income residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park, while 39 percent of high-income residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park. The analysis only accounts for public parkland. Parks offered within developments or through homeowners' associations would not be included in this analysis, which are more likely to be located in high-income areas. In a community with a suburban development pattern, low-income areas are also more likely to be more densely developed, such as apartment buildings or neighborhoods with smaller lots, this means that parks serving areas with more low-income residents may be more densely populated.



10-MINUTE WALK AREAS

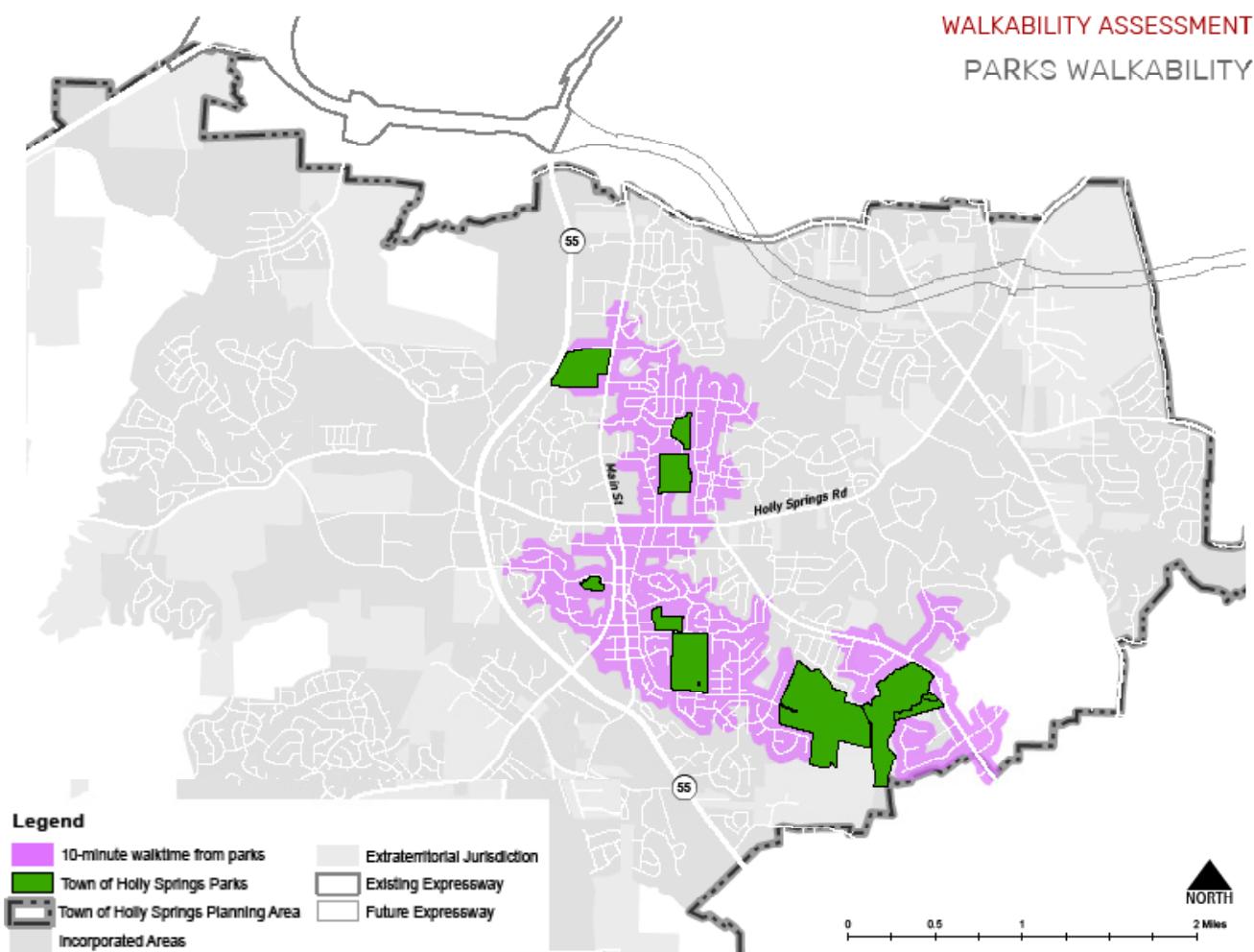
This analysis identified areas within a 10-minute walk of parks and greenways. The analysis identified all park access points, all greenway trail heads, and all intersections of greenways with other streets. The project team used geographic information system software to identify all areas within a 10-minute walk of these points, based on the existing street and sidewalk grid.

The combined parks and greenways 10-minute walk areas provide coverage throughout Holly Springs with a core area of connectivity created with park access and extended throughout the community with the growing greenway network.



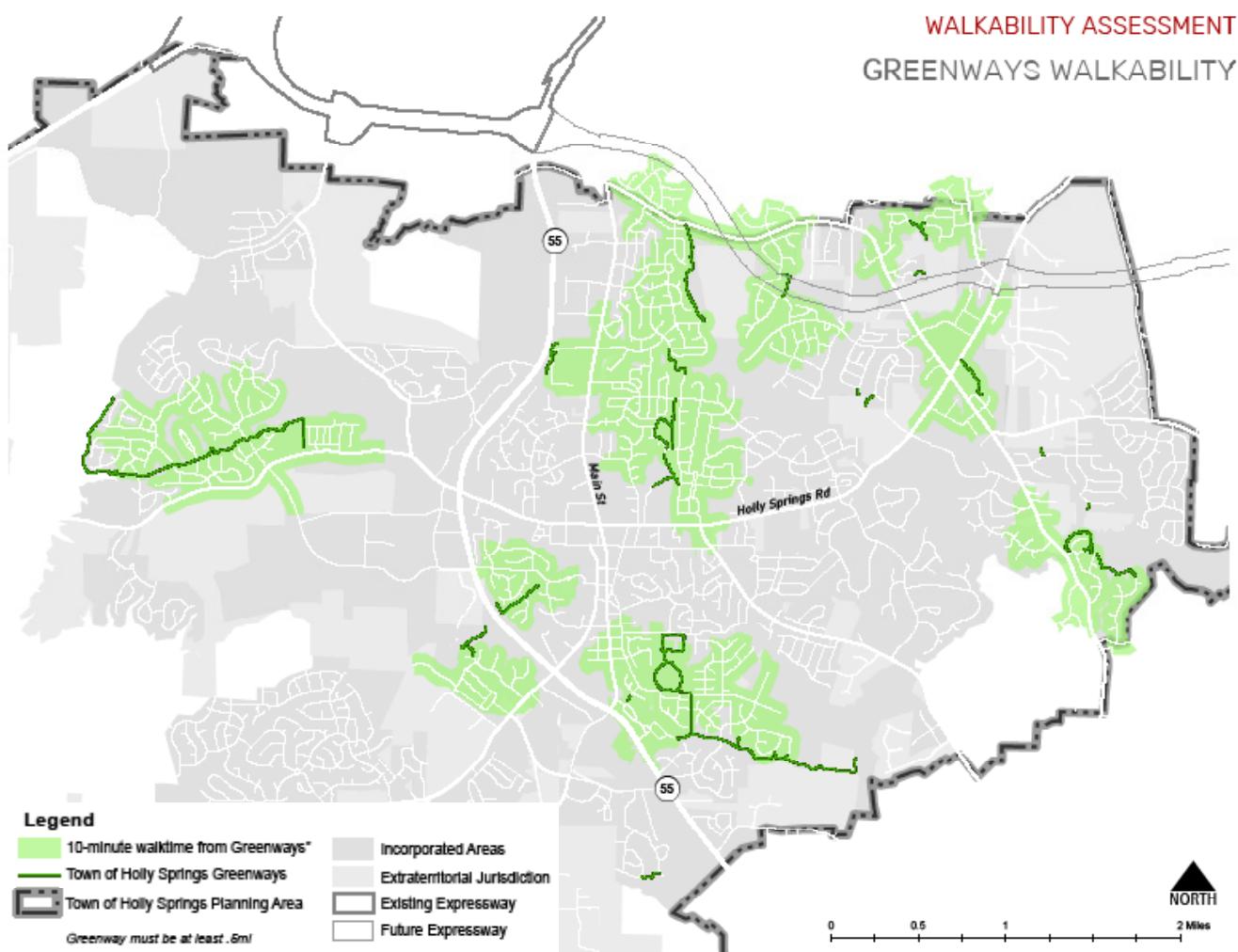
PARK WALKABILITY

The existing park system creates a core of walkability coverage in the central area of Holly Springs. This map illustrates that parkland is an essential part of the central area of Holly Springs. However, it also illustrates a lack of parkland outside of the central core and surrounding areas, particularly on the western and northeastern portions of Town.



GREENWAY WALKABILITY

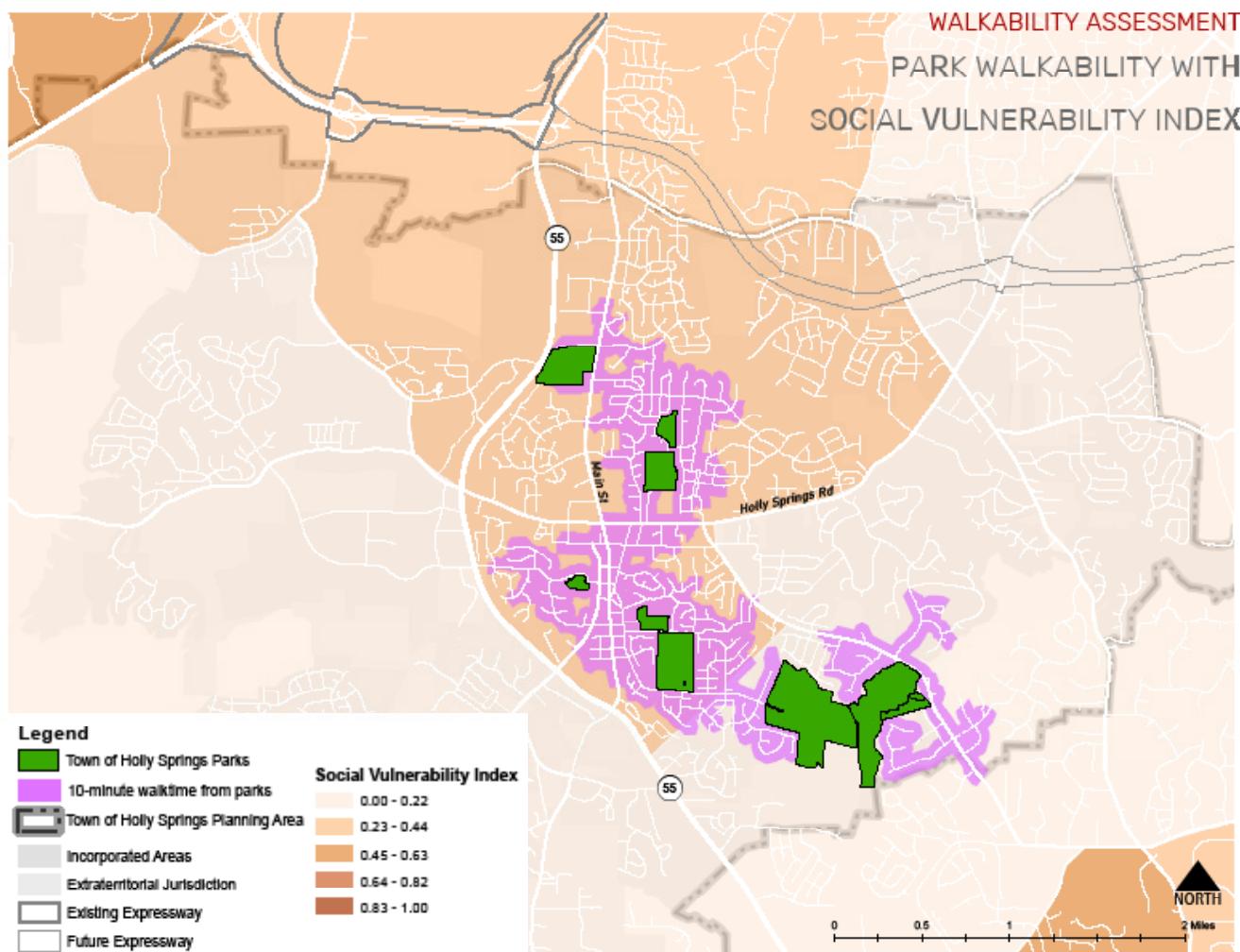
The existing greenway network is considerably fragmented and through recommendations in this plan, the Town will adopt a long-term vision for a system-wide connected network. Existing greenway trails connect parks and residential areas to their surroundings. However, many greenway trails currently dead end and provide only out-and-back walking opportunities. This situation will be rectified as the network expands and offers additional connections. The map illustrates how the greenway system effectively expands the residents within a 10-minute walk of a park or greenway facility. Though the smaller segments show larger 10-minute walkshed coverage, there are many gaps created by typical suburban development pattern. Various challenges regarding connectivity and gaps are addressed in the greenway chapter of this document.



EQUITABLE ACCESS TO PARKS AND GREENWAYS

The purpose of identifying walkable park access and social vulnerability is to illustrate the equitability of park location throughout Holly Springs. Government investment in parks is intended to create benefits for the community as a whole and in some cases individuals may also benefit. For example, providing places to exercise in parks creates an individual benefit for those who use the space, but provides expanded benefit to the community by avoiding the health care costs that individuals with sedentary lifestyle habits tend to incur. In areas with higher social vulnerability, a park may provide a valuable resource an individual may not otherwise have access to these resources.

The Social Vulnerability Index (all GIS data collected as of June 2020) combines demographic characteristics commonly used as indicators for areas considered at risk of experiencing negative social or health outcomes. Social vulnerability includes an analysis of socioeconomic status, household composition and disability, minority status and language, and housing and transportation to determine the area's vulnerability. The dataset for this analysis is created by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention with the intention of assisting communities after a natural disaster. This data set also has applications for community planning in the areas of public health, parks and recreation, and greenways.



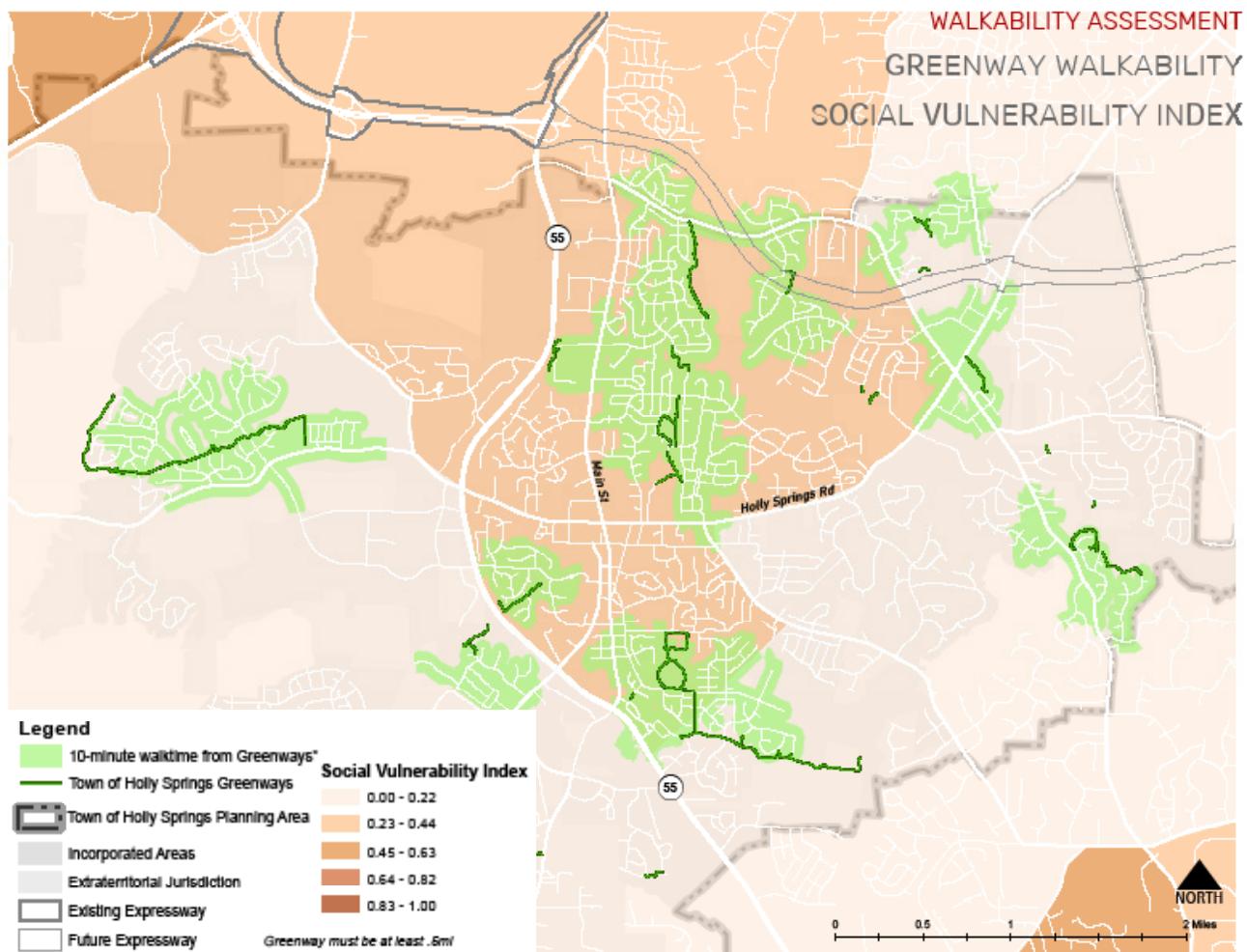
The 10-minute walk areas are overlaid with the social vulnerability index information to identify connections between social vulnerability and park location. The map indicates that Holly Springs has overall low social vulnerability with nearly all areas falling in the two lowest ranked categories for social vulnerability.

SOCIAL VULNERABILITY INDEX AND PARK WALKABILITY

This map indicates that the core connected area of walkable access to parks is located in areas of low social vulnerability. Bass Lake and Sugg Farm create coverage in areas of the lowest vulnerability.

SOCIAL VULNERABILITY INDEX AND GREENWAY WALKABILITY

Fragmented segments of greenway trails are spread throughout the planning boundary area of Holly Springs. Connection is provided through the community in areas of low social vulnerability and lowest social vulnerability. Gaps exist in both areas of low social vulnerability and lowest social vulnerability, indicating that greenway trails are allocated throughout the community regardless of social vulnerability.



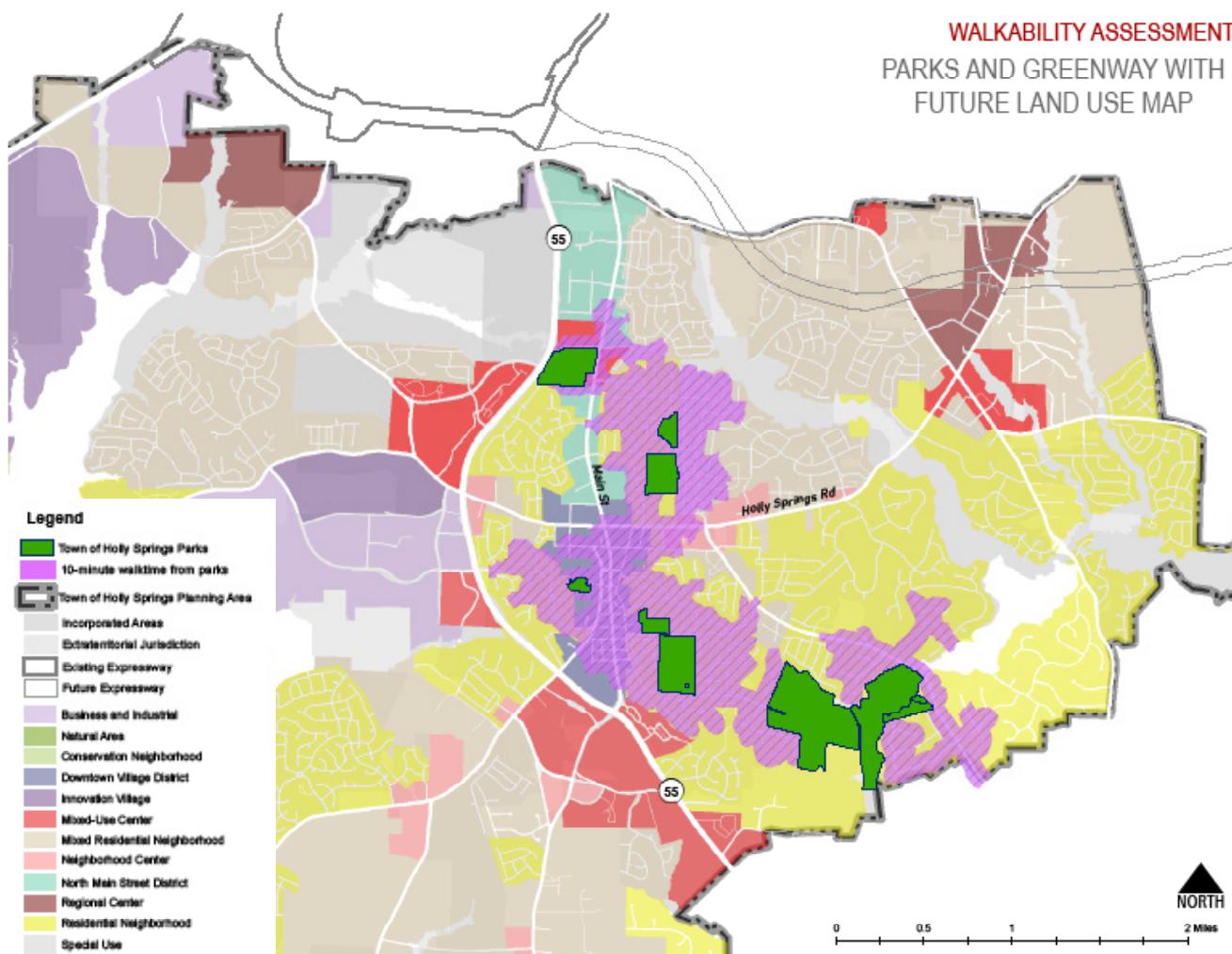
PLANNED FUTURE LAND USE

The Town's future land use is an important consideration for understanding how the parks and recreation department will influence the Town's development pattern in the long term. Future land use guides the type, style, and density of development throughout the Town, based on an overarching comprehensive plan. Land use influences walkability by determining allowances for development features that influence walkability such as mixes of use, location of parking and sidewalks, building setbacks and more. Understanding the surrounding land uses can determine whether a park is suited to serve its surrounding uses and how greenways can be incorporated to increase walkability.

The 10-minute walk areas are overlaid with the future land use map to identify connections and future compatibility between parks and their future surrounding land uses.

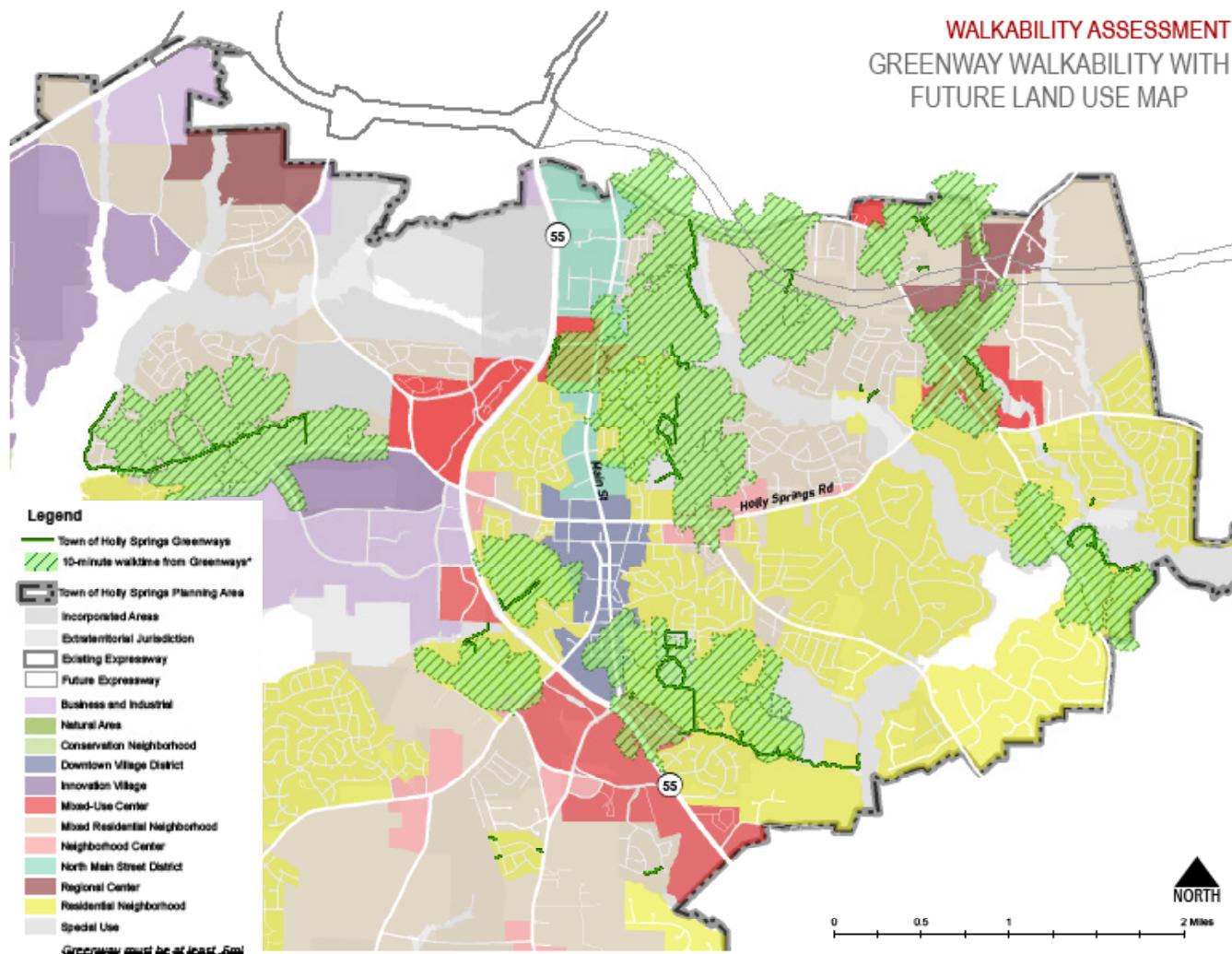
PLANNED FUTURE LAND USE AND PARK WALKABILITY

Future land use designations within a 10-minute walk of a park include Natural Areas, Residential Neighborhood, Mixed Residential Neighborhood, Neighborhood Center, N. Main Street District, Downtown Village District, and Mixed-Use Center. Most of the areas within a 10-minute walk of a park include Residential Neighborhood, Downtown Village District, and Mixed Residential Neighborhood.



PLANNED FUTURE LAND USE AND GREENWAY WALKABILITY

Future land use designations within a 10-minute walk of a greenway intersection include Natural Area, Residential Neighborhood, Mixed Residential Neighborhood, Neighborhood Center, N. Main Street District, Downtown Village District, Mixed-Use Center, Regional Center, Innovation Village, and Business & Industrial. Areas within a 10-minute walk of a greenway intersection or trailhead consist primarily of Mixed Residential Neighborhood and Residential neighborhood.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The combination of areas within a 10-minute walk of parks and a 10-minute walk of greenway trails creates a coverage of many areas within Holly Springs, though notable gaps persist. The map of park walkability and greenway walkability illustrates the spatial pattern that parks create a dense core of connectivity within the downtown area, while greenways create extensions to the east and west. The greenway trail network still displays the fragmented pattern, but these fragments and gaps will be addressed as part of this plan's greenway trail plan.

Holly Springs displays low social vulnerability overall. It is important to consider that the data used for this analysis is collected at the Census Block level. Smaller areas of vulnerability such as small neighborhoods or portions of neighborhoods, may not be fully captured in this analysis. The analysis provides an important starting point for understanding areas of social vulnerability, but it is necessary to incorporate local knowledge about areas that display characteristics of social vulnerability that may not be captured at the Census Block scale.

Finally, the future land use analysis shows significant coverage of commercial, mixed-use, and residential areas in and near the downtown core. This analysis shows that the greenway network needs to expand the areas within a 10-minute walk of a recreational amenity. It still lacks overall connectivity to position greenway trails as a viable alternative to trips otherwise taken by car.

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6

recommendations



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The cornerstone of any great plan is the principles it stands on. When making recommendations for the Town's parks and recreation future, guiding principles serve as the foundation. While the action items of this plan may evolve over time with changing demographics, industry trends, policy or availability of resources, the guiding principles remain constant. Grounded in community values and aspirations, this plan has established seven guiding principles that are pursued in every aspect of the recommendations and action plan.

This plan aligns its recommendations with other Town-wide initiatives and policy to ensure a cross-sector approach to achieving community goals. While developed through a separate and independent process, the guiding principles developed for this Parks, Recreation and Greenway Master Plan parallel with those recently developed from the Town's Strategic Plan. The similarities between this plan's Guiding Principles and the priority areas of the Town's Strategic Plan are encouraging, suggesting Town residents, staff and elected officials share similar values and a vision for the Town's future.

Methodology

The guiding principles developed for this plan are derived from the public engagement process and feedback received from the Town Council, steering committee, focus groups, Town officials from neighboring jurisdictions, as well as County and Town staff. This feedback was arranged into similar themes and values that formed the foundation for guiding principles development. These themes are noted below:

1. Meet the needs of the growing community;
2. Provide equitable and inclusive access to ALL residents of Holly Springs;
3. Prioritize health and wellness of the Holly Springs community;
4. Offer a connected recreation system throughout the community;
5. Establish a financially sustainable department;
6. Commit to the protection of natural resources;
7. Seek excellence in everything the Town provides for its residents.



▲ Figure 1 - Guiding Principles



BALANCED GROWTH

Meet the Needs of a Growing Community

One cannot dispute that the Town of Holly Springs is growing and feeling growth pressures in many ways. Evidenced by continued population growth, diminishing vacant property, recreation facilities at capacity, and wait lists for various programs, the Town is not currently poised to accommodate the growth it has experienced in the last ten years. At the same time, this plan acknowledges the Town's desire to retain its small-town charm, character and history. Thus, a balanced approach is most appropriate; one that promotes an enhanced level of service while ensuring the small-town character of the Town is preserved across the built environment and within service delivery.

Recommendations related to the Balanced Growth guiding principle are divided into following three subcategories and described in detail on the following pages:

1. Land Acquisition and Development

- Level of service
- Park search areas

2. Indoor Community and Recreation Space

3. Diverse Programs, Parks, and Facilities

- Facilities and amenities
- Programming

Land Acquisition & Development

Level of Service

One way to expand an agency's level of service is to acquire additional open space for future parkland development. Currently, the Town is providing a level of service of 7.4 acres of developed parkland per 1,000 residents. While this is above the benchmarking median of 6.4 acres of developed parkland per 1,000 residents, industry best practice is 9.6 acre per 1,000 residents¹. To retain the current level of services, the Town must develop 186 acres of land by 2030. To elevate the Town's level of services to industry best practice, the Town must develop 337 acres by 2030.

G-1

Acquire and develop an additional 186 acres of parkland by 2030, especially in areas devoid of parkland and not currently served by the 10-minute walk analysis.

¹ National Recreation and Park Association's 2020 NRPA Agency Performance Review And NRPA Park Metrics. Metrics include only statistics from communities in the same population range as Holly Springs, 20,000 to 49,999.

PARKLAND DEVELOPMENT (IN ACRES) REQUIRED TO MEET LEVEL OF SERVICE (LOS) STANDARDS BY 2030			
Existing 7.4 Ac / 1,000 pop	Benchmarking Median 6.4 Ac / 1,000 pop	Industry Best Practice 9.6 Ac / 1,000 pop	Recommendation
186 AC	121.6 AC	337 AC	9.6 Ac / 1,000 pop

► *Table 1 - Parkland needed to meet level of service standards*

The community engagement process revealed the public has a strong sentiment for preserving the natural environment and enhancing sustainable development through implementation of this plan. One strategy for accomplishing this is to establish a level of service goal for conservation land to be administered by the Town. The recommended proportion of developed parkland to conservation parkland is 70 percent to 30 percent. Thus, this plan recommends evaluating total parkland for development and land acquisition to account for the Town conservation goals. While the Town can seek land of exceptional conservation value, one strategy for attaining conservation lands would be to engage the development community through land dedication.

G-2

Engage the development community to acquire parkland that contributes to the conservation land goals.

This strategy is particularly timely given the recently adopted Section one of comprehensive plan- Land Use and Character Plan which specifies conservation neighborhoods and natural areas as part of land use patterns which allows for increased development density in exchange for greater dedication of open space. The Town should consider the upcoming changes to the Unified Development Ordinance to reflect this conservation goal. While parkland dedicated by developers is typically covered with stream buffers, wetlands, floodplain, steep slopes or other features unsuitable for development, these lands also have great ecological functionality and environmental value rendering them ideal for preserved open space. Land dedicated to the Town could be used to meet conservation goals. A developer-driven approach to achieving conservation goals should aim for 2 AC of dedicated conservation land per 1,000 population. The table below represents the recommended ratio of developed parkland to conservation parkland acreage, resulting in a total recommended level of service for parkland.

TOTAL ACRES REQUIRED TO MEET LEVEL OF SERVICE (LOS) STANDARDS BY 2030		
70% Developed Parkland (9.6 AC / 1,000 pop)	30% Conservation Parkland (+/- 2 AC / 1,000 pop)	Total Parkland
337 AC	141.5 AC	478.5 AC

► *Table 2 - Developed and conservation parkland required to meet level of service standards*

Currently the Department has total of 302.12 acres of undeveloped open space. Of this, 150 acres appear suitable for development, thus an additional 186.18 acres of land would need to be acquired and developed as parkland by the year 2030. It should be noted that detail site suitability analysis will be needed to calculate accurate acreage of developable land on these sites. Any undisturbed land or land unsuitable for development should be considered for preservation and as part of conservation land. The sites currently owned by the Town, which are considered suitable for development include:

PROPERTY	ACREAGE	RECOMMENDATION
Mims Property	17.48	Review and update the existing concept plan for a special use park that responds to the site's downtown location and historic context.
Holly Glen Property	1.78	Natural Pocket Park, Public Art, Walkable Destination
Woodcreek	50.69	Trailhead/Parking Area (Lockley), Neighborhood Park with Play Area
Cass Holt	55.87	Develop site specific master plan for a community park.
Carolina Springs	25 *	Develop site specific master plan for a neighborhood park.
TOTAL	150.82 acres	

▲ Table 3- Recommendations for Town owned properties

*Note: Town of Holly Springs does not hold the title to the parkland in the Carolina Springs development as of January 2021. The acreage for the parkland to be updated after the land dedication.

The remainder of the existing open space can be preserved and counted as conservation land (151.3 acres), which already meets the of the conservation land needed by 2030. If any of the open space is developed as trailheads, greenway connections, additional conservation land will need to be acquired to maintain the level of service.

Acquiring and developing additional parkland will expand the Town's level of service while the location and type of land are equally important considerations. Too often departments accept vacant land at a reduced price or even as a donation, to discover environmental features prevent development or that development is cost-prohibitive due to subsurface

G-3
Develop the 150.82 acres of vacant parkland currently owned by the Department.

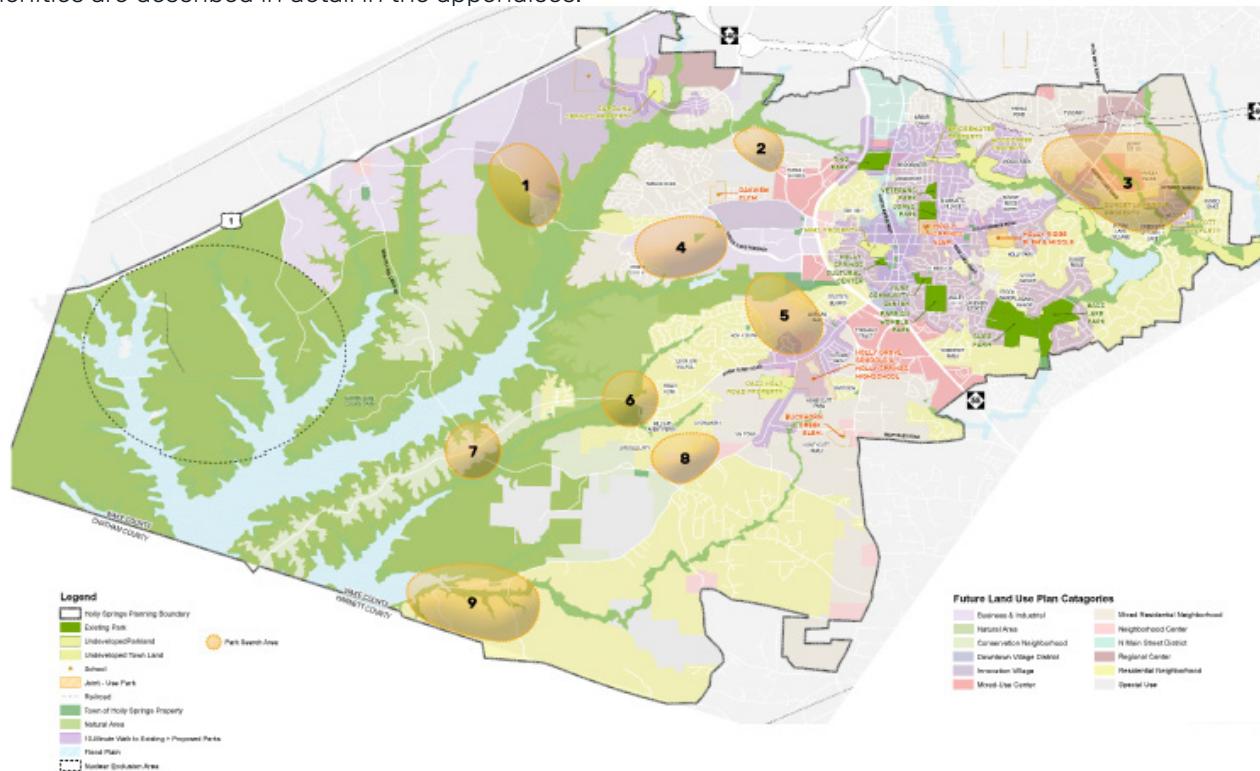
conditions, lengthy utility extensions, or off-site road improvements to name a few. This plan recommends completing a site suitability study to confirm the parcel(s) in question are suitable for parkland development. The process for completing a site suitability study is provided in the Appendix.

Lastly, the location of land for acquisition should be given considerable attention. Equitable geographic distribution of parkland ensures all residents have access to parkland regardless of where they live. The Inventory and Analysis chapter identified geographic gaps in parkland primarily on the western side of Highway 55. When proposing new parks, these areas should receive priority attention.

This plan identifies nine proposed park search areas. The park search areas are based on closing gaps in service and alignment with surrounding and future land uses. For each park search area, this plan identifies options for park classifications and possible park amenities. When searching for potential parcels to acquire, the suitability study will ensure a given subject parcel can support the type of park and amenities proposed. It is important to note these are general guidelines and should be considered flexible to evolve with land availability, market conditions and changes in industry trends.

Park search areas

Proposed park search areas developed for this plan are overlaid with the future land use map to ensure compatibility of land uses with proposed park typologies and recreation opportunities provided for future users. The details of each character area are described in detail in the Land Use & Character Plan section of the comprehensive plan document. The illustration below shows land use pattern as one of the elements that contributes to the overall community character and place making. The plan proposes mixed land uses to create more activated and economically viable developments and each mix thereby generates need for diversity of recreation opportunities. The detail descriptions of park search areas and recommended park typologies and amenities are described in detail in the appendices.



Indoor Community & Recreation Space

While there is not a published industry standard for square feet of indoor recreation space per resident, the NRPA Agency Performance Review Report (2020 Edition) indicates that the Town, at its current population, is serving nearly twice as many residents per facility as peer communities for recreation centers, community centers and stadiums. Furthermore, according to the NRPA Agency Performance Review Report a community the size of Holly Springs should have at least one senior center. It should be noted that the square footage for an individual facility will depend upon the types of amenities provided at that facility, such as number of offices, gym space, number of rooms to accommodate variety of programs, storage space, and any special programs like aquatics, indoor walking track or commercial kitchen to hold cooking classes. Depending on community's need for certain type of programming the square footage of the building should be considered.

The inventory and analysis and staff interviews revealed a significant shortage of indoor recreation space. Lack of office space, storage space and space to expand recreation programming is limiting the Department's ability to meet current needs and expand to meet future demands from a programmatic and operational perspective. This is further reinforced in the benchmarking and level of service analysis, showing the Town having the second lowest square feet of indoor recreation space per resident when compared to peer communities. This plan recommends the Town increase the indoor recreation space to range of a level of service standard from 1.6 square feet per resident to 2 square feet per resident, resulting in the construction of a range of 53,518 square feet to 80,439 square feet of additional space by 2030. A range of level of service standard is provided as a recommendation to include additional square footage needed should the Town decide to pursue developing an aquatics facility.

G-4

Construct 53,518 square feet to 80,439 square feet of additional space by 2030

G-5

Develop indoor recreation space to prioritize aquatics, athletic courts, dedicated space for senior and special population programming and office and storage space

MEDIAN NUMBER OF RESIDENTS PER FACILITY		
Facility Type	Existing Town of Holly Springs Population	Median of Peer Agencies (2020 Population)
Recreation Center	41,726	25,716
Community Center	41,726	26,280
Senior Center	NA	32,639
Performance Amphitheaters	41,726	30,577
Nature Centers	41,726	35,854
Stadiums	41,726	24,910
Aquatics Center	NA	NA

► Table 4- Median number of residents per facility

Based on these metrics, the significant resident and staff support for aquatics and indoor courts, and the aspiration to provide diverse, equitable programs, this plan recommends the additional indoor recreation space accommodate:

- › Indoor pool / aquatics
- › Indoor courts (gymnasiums) and active recreation space Dedicated space for seniors and special population programming
- › Offices and storage for program supplies and site equipment

Diverse Programs, Parks, and Facilities

Parks and recreation agencies across the nation have moved toward offering diverse programs and amenities rather than a narrow repertoire to residents with key interests. This allows agencies to serve a broad participant base, offering the many benefits of parks, recreation and cultural programs to more people. As the Town of Holly Springs continues its quest to promote fulfilling and rewarding lifestyles with abundant, healthy living options², providing recreation and cultural arts opportunities with wide appeal should be top of mind.

G-6

Offer diverse recreation and cultural arts programs and amenities.

Furthermore, the growth the Triangle region is experiencing is primarily from individuals, families and businesses relocating from other parts of the country, sometimes from communities with very high standards for parks and recreation programming. These expectations place high demand on the Town for diverse programs and amenities.

Finally, this “diversity where everyone is served” approach can leverage the Parks and Recreation Department’s community influence to launch larger cross-sector goals such as health and wellness, equity, resilience, economic prosperity and a safe and welcoming small-town feel.

Impact of COVID on Programming³

The 2020 COVID crisis highlighted the critical need and importance of parks and recreation services and programs. While the open spaces and greenway trails provided people an opportunity to be outdoors and active, other important amenities like playgrounds, courts, and fields were closed impacting the Departments’ revenue stream significantly. Agencies across the country adapted to delivering programming virtually which included:

- › Family engagement activities
- › Fitness classes
- › Self-care and well-being topics
- › Education classes; including literacy, STEM, environment

.....
2 Priority area from the Town of Holly Springs Strategic Plan.

3 <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2020/june/nrpa-surveys-track-covid-19s-impact-on-pr/>

In addition, agencies also adapted their traditional programs to cater to the needs of most critically impacted populations within their community by:

- › Serving or distributing food to older adults and/or families
- › Opening recreation centers and other agency facilities to serve as emergency shelters
- › Providing childcare to the children of essential agency staff, healthcare providers and first responders

Amenities and Facilities

Once known for athletics, the Town has experienced a growing demand for more diverse amenities and programs. Seen throughout the community engagement process, participants voiced desires for more greenway trails, aquatics and splash pads, a farmers market pavilion, natural play, outdoor adventure programs, and indoor and outdoor athletic courts. Based on the Priority Investment Rating for facilities and amenities, as the Town renovates existing parks or constructs new parks, facilities and amenities should include:

- › Greenway trails (see Greenway Trails chapter) and trailheads.
- › Aquatics / outdoor water feature / splash pad
- › Farmers market pavilion
- › Dog park
- › Miniature golf
- › Community garden

Furthermore, throughout the public input process, staff and focus group interviews, program demands and feedback from elected officials, great support was voiced for:

- › Athletics courts (basketball, pickleball, volleyball – both indoor and outdoor)
- › Inclusive playground and social gathering spaces for special needs populations
- › Dedicated space for adult programs

Programming

To address current gaps and address the future programming needs of the community, the Department should consider expanding their core program areas, diversifying program age segments served, monitoring program lifecycles on an annual basis and classifying programs based on a cost recovery model.

Expand Core Program Areas - The existing core program areas generally provide a well-rounded and diverse array of programs that could serve the community at present. However, for a community the size of Holly Springs, and with substantial anticipated growth, this plan recommends a minimum of 10 core program areas to assist in fulfilling existing unmet need. Based on community input, residents have a need for additional athletic programs, specifically adult athletics, as well as more fitness program offerings. Similarly, based on the results from the scientific survey, Holly Spring residents have a strong “need” for aquatic programs and outdoor adventure programs. Both of these program areas received a very high Priority Investment Rating (PIR) base on resident responses as well as a strong household need rating. (See the scientific survey results in the Appendix)

In addition to the eight existing core program areas, staff identified two supplementary program areas that are unique and should be given special consideration: the farmers market and Ting stadium.

- › Farmers Market: It is recommended that the Department develop a specific business plan for the Farmers Market. This plan can help address some of the operation needs such as full-time/part-time staffing, storage facilities, formal policies and procedures as well as identifying a new permanent location. Ideally, this new location would be within a centralized park with ample parking and restroom facilities. Additionally, it is recommended this location to have covered/indoor space in case of inclement weather.
- › Ting Park and Stadium: To help Ting Park reach its full potential, it is recommended that the Department continue to utilize the recently developed business plan for the park. In doing so, the Department will be able to better implement possible untapped opportunities. Similar sport venues around the country have begun offering non-sport programs during their off seasons to assist with increasing the facility's usage. Such programs/events include: yoga, movie nights, concerts, watch parties, festivals, etc.

Department staff should evaluate core program areas and individual programs, on an annual basis, to ensure offerings are relevant to evolving demographics and trends in the local community.

Diversify Program Age Segments – the program assessment revealed current programs are well aligned with the community's age profile yet there is a lack of primary programs dedicated to the adult age segment. Moving forward, it is recommended that the Department considers introducing new programs to address any unmet needs. With approximately 50% of the Town's overall population falling between 18-54 years-old, offering an adequate number of adult programs is essential for the Departments success.

Staff should continue to monitor demographic shifts and program offerings to ensure that the needs of each age group are being met. It would be best practice to establish a plan including what age segment to target, establish the message, which marketing method(s) to use, create the social media campaign, and determine what to measure for success before allocating resources towards a particular effort.



EQUITY

Provide equitable and inclusive access

A public park system must ensure the equitable provision of parkland and amenities to all members of the community regardless of age, race, income, ability, education or access to an automobile as a means of transportation. The benefits of parks are many. From improved health to deeper social bonds within a community, parks have been shown to improve quality of life and contribute to more livable communities. For these reasons, equitable access to parks should be a guiding principle of every public park and recreation agency.

Improving equity across a park system can be achieved through attention to three key indicators:

- › Equitable geographic distribution of parkland,
- › Distribution of investment in parks across the system, and
- › Accessibility and inclusivity.

Equitable Geographic Distribution of Parkland

One way to achieve equitable access to parks across a system is to provide equitable geographic distribution of parks across a community. The Inventory and Assessment identified many geographic gaps where no parks currently exist, especially west of Highway 55. The park search areas described above have specifically been located to close such gaps and provide an equitable distribution of parkland to increase the percentage of residents who live within ten-minute walk of the park which corresponds to half a mile distance. National Park Service and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention use half a mile measure to when linking park and public health⁴.

NRPA'S WORKING DEFINITION OF EQUITABLE PARK & RECREATION ACCESS:

Just and fair quantity, proximity and connections to quality parks and green space, recreation facilities, as well as programs that are safe, inclusive, culturally relevant and welcoming to everyone. When people have just and fair access, our health and social wellbeing improve, and our communities can protect and better recover from environmental, social, and economic challenges.

E-1

Acquire and develop parkland to achieve an equitable distribution of parkland and increase the percentage of residents who live within 10-minute walk of a park

E-2

Ensure equitable distribution of financial investment across the park system

E-3

Increase the percentage of residents within a ten-minute walk of a park from 41 percent to 55 percent.

4 Merriam, D.; Bality, A.; Stein, J.; Boehmer, T. (2017). "Improving Public Health through Public Parks and Trails: Eight Common Measures. Summary report. US Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and US Department of the Interior, National Park Service"

Distribution of Investment

The second indicator of an equitable parks system relates to providing comparable investment in parks regardless of their location or community context. Based on the qualitative results from the plans' parks audit, little evidence exists that suggests any one park is ignored or overlooked. This is further supported by the results of the scientific survey indicating that an overwhelming majority (95 percent) of respondents gave the overall quality of parks / facilities a good or excellent rating.

Similarly, when evaluating social vulnerability indices with park locations and walkability, there is no correlation between highly vulnerable populations and gaps in park access or quality of parkland. Based on the scientific survey and staff interviews, the greatest barriers to use are lack of information on offerings, not enough time to participate, the cost of participation and overcrowding. The only barrier relating to equitable access is the cost of participation. With 19 percent of respondents indicating the cost of participation is a barrier to engaging in recreation, the Town should consider evaluating their fee structure to broaden strategies that include a greater degree of subsidy for residents with lower incomes.

One way to guarantee equitable financial investment across the park system is to quantify the distribution of park assets by tracking operating expenditures per park and capital investment in park development / renovations. Both metrics can be normalized on a per-acre basis.

Accessibility & Inclusivity

Physical access to parks is the third indicator of equity. Parks must be accessible to users of all ages and ability levels, by way of all forms of transportation including walking, biking, public transit, and driving. Thus, physical access can refer to the way a user gets to a park or experiences the park once they have arrived. The Department should ensure that parks are accessible along public transportation routes and should continue to promote connectivity of parks with a connected greenway system, ensuring bicycle and pedestrian access. The Department should coordinate with the public transportation system to ensure access to all recreational centers as well as regional and community parks. Providing specialized transportation to and from recreation centers and parks for demographics that may lack mobility, such as seniors, is a value-added service to consider.

E-4

Offer recreation access to people of all ages and ability levels

One strategy for ensuring equitable access to parks is to implement a 10-minute walk standard. As indicated in the Walkability Assessment, 41 percent of residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park, which is slightly below the national average of 55 percent. The assessment is consistent with the Town's development patterns, reflecting walkability to most parks in the developed areas in the center of Town. Given the large tracts of undeveloped and rural land in the western and southern areas of the Town limits, a goal of a ten-minute walk time for all residents may be unrealistic. This plan recommends the Town strive to increase the percentage of residents within a ten-minute walk of a park to 55 percent, matching the national average.

This plan recommends the integrated principles of universal design and inclusivity into the park design, development and programming process.

According to the Gehl Institute, inclusion is both an outcome and a deliberate process that actively engages people and cultivates trust among them, and a critical tool for achieving social and health equity. To be inclusive is to seek to understand the community context, to support inclusion in the process, to design and program public space to enhance access and safety and to invite diversity and foster social resilience.⁵

Embracing these principles of inclusion in the planning, implementation, and evaluation process is essential for achieving the goals of a healthier community. An agency can achieve inclusivity by improving individual park elements, or by considering an inclusive experience as part of park redesigns and redevelopments.

Specifically, the Town should consider providing dedicated inclusive amenities such as an inclusive playground and supporting infrastructure. Strategies to promote inclusion are:

- › Clear messaging in promotional materials about inclusivity
- › Intentional facility improvements such as restrooms, changing rooms, and locker rooms to create safe and comfortable spaces for all community members
- › Trained staff to promote gender neutral interactions and inclusive language related to physical appearance
- › Intentional community engagement to bring trust and transparency in the process

Parks and Recreation agencies should meet the needs of these groups by providing increased opportunities through program offerings such as⁶:

- › Health and wellness programs that explicitly state inclusivity to all community members
- › Create welcoming facilities that are safe and comfortable
- › Childcare programs that are cognizant of all family units
- › Outreach programs and mentoring services for youth particularly in LGBTQ and racial and ethnic minorities
- › Connections to local social service providers

Quick Resource:

A Checklist for Existing Facilities. This checklist will help identify accessibility problems and solutions in existing facilities in order to meet an agencies' obligation under the ADA.

<https://www.washington.edu/doit/equal-access-universal-design-physical-spaces>

Source: Checklist for Existing Facilities version 2.1. Revised August 1995, Adaptive Environments Center, Inc. for the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research.

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⁵ Gehl Institute (2018). Inclusive Healthy Places. Accessed at https://gehlinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Inclusive-Healthy-Places_Gehl-Institute.pdf. November 20, 2018.

⁶ <https://www.nrpa.org/contentassets/b1f3a10f8b58405d907b053edb803282/parksforinclusion-lgbtq.pdf>



HEALTH

Prioritize health and wellness

"Investment in parks is an investment in health.⁷" Parks are a critical part of the community's public health infrastructure and there is a growing body of scientific research to support this claim as recognized by the NRPA as one of the three pillars of parks and recreation. COVID-19 crisis of 2019-2020 has highlighted the critical need for open spaces and natural areas where people can safely engage in physical activity and socially connect with others, emphasizing the fact that parks are essential service for the community.

Historically, the first parks in the United States were developed in the 19th century as public health resources. Conceived as 'green refuges' in urban areas, parks were designed with the aim of improving the health and the quality of life for all residents by offering places for recreation, spiritual transformation through nature, exposure to fresh, clean air, and social interaction that transcended class⁸. Since that time, public investment in parks has been a priority for every level of government and the evidence suggesting that parks are 'green health spaces' has grown. Among an endless list of benefits, some of the documented health-related benefits of parks are increased physical activity, reduced stress, improved mental health, and increased social connectivity⁹. It is thus not difficult to make the case for the integral relationship between parks and health. Stated simply, access to parks and recreation can lead to improved health outcomes within a community.

The Vision Holly Springs Comprehensive Plan's Land Use and Character Plan section and the strategic plan priority areas have already laid the foundation for creating healthful living opportunities through parks and recreation. This cross-sector alignment of goals builds the integral relationship between parks and health and strengthens the case for creating recreation spaces including parks, greenways, and open spaces that promote active living, improved mental health, and increased social interaction.

As part of the 2019 Wake County Community Health Needs Assessment¹⁰, the southern service area (which includes Holly Springs and Fuquay-Varina) focus group meeting was conducted. The summary of findings as it relates to Town of Holly Springs is described on the next page.

7 *The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space*. Paul Sherer. Trust for Public Land, San Francisco, CA, 2006.

Accessed at: <https://www.tpl.org/sites/default/files/cloud.tpl.org/pubs/benefits-park-benfits-white-paper12005.pdf>

8 *The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space*. Paul Sherer. Trust for Public Land, San Francisco, CA, 2006.

Accessed at: <https://www.tpl.org/sites/default/files/cloud.tpl.org/pubs/benefits-park-benfits-white-paper12005.pdf>

9 Barret, Meredith, Miller, Daphne, and Frumkin, Howard. *Parks and Health: Aligning Incentives to Create Innovation in Chronic Disease Prevention*. Preventing Chronic Disease, 11:130407. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.58888/pcd11.130407>

10 <http://www.wakegov.com/wellbeing/Documents/FINAL%202019%20CHNA.pdf>

Elements of a healthy community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Walkability – sidewalks downtown ➢ Transportation ➢ Access to health providers ➢ Recreation centers ➢ Low density housing ➢ Plenty of foliage and access to nature ➢ Food share programs
Pressing health concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Transportation within town ➢ Transportation/access issues for low income ➢ Senior citizen/aging ➢ Affordable resources ➢ Identifying and treating the root causes of health issues to truly make healthier community ➢ Need more health information distribution channels ➢ Need more school nurses and social workers to help promote healthy behaviors earlier in age
Overlooked/ Vulnerable populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Seniors ➢ Low income ➢ Mental health specifically ➢ Children/teen ➢ Access to and availability of after school and summer programs ➢ Bullying ➢ Special needs adults
Most important issues to address	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Transportation ➢ Mental health

Many of these key findings directly correlate to the recommendations of this plan, specifically, those centered around public, multimodal transportation, access to parks and recreation opportunities, and improving mental health. As described above in the guiding principle addressing equitable park access, public transportation and increasing the number of residents within a 10-minute walk time to parks clearly enhance an individual's opportunity to access parks thus the opportunity for improve health outcomes.

While improved access to parks inherently improves the health and wellness of an individual, there are ways the Town can actively plan, design and program the parks and recreation system to improve health outcomes. Health outcomes should consider physical fitness, mental health, healthy eating and social connections.

H-1

Plan, design and program parks to improve outcomes related to physical fitness.

H-2

Plan, design and program parks to improve outcomes related to mental health.

H-3

Plan, design and program parks to improve health outcomes related to social cohesion.

H-4

Plan, design and program parks to improve health outcomes related to healthy eating.

Physical Fitness

Physical inactivity has been identified as a primary cause of most chronic health conditions¹¹ including, cardiovascular disease, Type II Diabetes, obesity, certain cancers, depression and anxiety. One study estimated that 11% of all deaths in the United States are attributable to physical inactivity and projected that life expectancy in the United States would be increased by .78 years with the elimination of physical inactivity.¹² The direct and indirect cost burden of chronic illnesses associated with physical inactivity exceeds \$500 billion a year in the U.S.¹³

Physical fitness can be improved by providing amenities and programs that specifically engage users in leisure, moderate and vigorous physical activity. All three levels of activity should be provided to engage users of different age groups. Similarly, the Town should explore innovative programming that encourages active lifestyles and keep health and wellness as a core service component in the Town's program offerings.

Mental Health

The consequences of the high prevalence of mental illness in the United States are significant. Depression, anxiety and chronic stress are also major public health concerns. In 2016, approximately 1 in 5 adults in the U.S.—43.8 million—had a mental illness.¹⁴ More than a third of these adults (16 million) were living with major depression. Anxiety disorder is even more prevalent. It is estimated that 18% of American adults (42 million) are living with anxiety disorder.¹⁵ Among youth the prevalence is high as well. 20% of youth ages 13-18 live with a mental health condition, 11% have depression, and 8% have an anxiety disorder.¹⁶ Sadly, these numbers have been on the rise the past few years. Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States and the 3rd leading cause of death for youth ages 10-24. For every suicide death, it is estimated that there are 11.4 hospital visits for suicide attempts. Notably, 90% of those who die by suicide had an underlying mental illness with depression being the most common underlying disorder (30% to 70% of suicide victims).¹⁷

While these statistics are daunting, the opportunity for parks planning to yield improved outcomes is encouraging. A growing number of studies find that exposure to nature is linked to benefits such as recovery from mental fatigue, stress reduction, reductions in crime, violence and aggression, reduced morbidity in multiple disease categories and better self-reported health. Specifically for children and youth, the positive effects of nature exposure include improved cognitive functioning (including increased concentration, greater attention capacities and higher academic performance), better motor coordination, reduced stress levels, increased social interaction with adults and other children and improved social skills.¹⁸

11 Booth FW, Roberts CK, Laye MJ. Lack of exercise is a major cause of chronic diseases. *Compr Physiol.* 2012;2(2):1143-211.

12 Lee IM, Shiroma EJ, Lobelo F, et al. Effect of physical inactivity on major non-communicable diseases worldwide: an analysis of burden of disease and life expectancy. *Lancet.* 2012;380(9838):219-29.

13 A Smart Investment for America's Health. Codevilia, B., The Land and Water Conservation Fund. City Park Alliance, 2015. Accessed at: https://www.cityparksalliance.org/storage/documents/Mayors_for_Parks/CPA_SMART_INVEST_FINAL_RPT_L_1.pdf

14 Any Mental Illness (AMI) Among Adults. (n.d.). Retrieved November 16, 2018, from <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/prevalence/any-mental-illness-ami-among-adults.shtml>

15 <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/major-depression.shtml>

16 <https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-By-the-Numbers>

17 *ibid*

18 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3162362/>

It should be the goal of the Department to increase resident access, exposure and involvement in parks and programming to reduce the percentage of residents who report poor mental health or persistent feelings of sadness / hopelessness. The Town should develop partnerships with local organizations, extension services and private businesses to provide educational resources for residents suffering from mental health illness. The Town should also consider programs and amenities targeted at reducing stress and anxiety such as yoga, meditation, labyrinths, and easy access to nature.

Social Cohesion

While social cohesion is a broader and less measurable concept, there is evidence of its importance for fostering a healthy community. Healthy People 2020 identified social cohesion as a key issue in shaping social determinants of health. According to Health People 2020, social relationships, which are conceptualized with concepts like social cohesion, social capital, and social support, are important for health and well-being. Eighteen studies have found that social capital, for example, is associated with mortality and social support serves as a protective factor against risk factors that cause poor health. Another study of social cohesion and health found that countries with higher levels of social inclusion, social capital, and social diversity had populations who were more likely to report good health.¹⁹ Global economists, political scientists, and social scholars have gone as far as arguing that social cohesion is an important factor in promoting economic growth and population health worldwide.²⁰

Case Study

City of Coppell, TX has some of the robust initiatives around community outreach that include farmers market and community garden. The community garden has been established as a 501 (c) nonprofit and the funds generated are used to support the farmers' market.

Parks have been shown to serve as places where people of different cultures interact, acting as a catalyst for interactions between people of different backgrounds. Similarly, casual interactions among park-goers have been shown to foster a sense of community and feelings of inclusion. To improve social cohesion and feelings of social connectedness, the Town should develop amenities and programs that promote social interaction and connection to the larger community. This can be achieved by increasing the number of gather spaces in existing and future parks, such as amphitheaters, picnic shelters, and community gardens to name a few. From a programming perspective, the Town can increase the number of community events hosted each year, along with pro-social activities for youth, active adults and seniors including after school programs and weekend / summer programs.

19 *Social Cohesion Matters in Health*. Ying-Chih Chuang, Kun-Yang Chuang. *International Journal for Equity in Health*: 2013 1287 <https://doi.org/10.1186/1475-9276-12-87>

20 Foa, R. (2011). *The economic rationale for social cohesion—the cross country evidence*. In *The international conference for social cohesion*. OECD. Paris, OECD.

Healthy Eating and Access to Healthy Food

Parks and recreation agencies nationwide work to provide access to healthy food through a variety of options. Many agencies fill the role of the nutrition provider to adults and children of low-income and vulnerable families. Other agencies simply want to provide education and a leading example for families to establish healthy eating habits of their own.

One/A September 2018 NRPA article²¹ states that farmers markets and other community-supported agriculture initiatives (CSA) have seen a steady growth nationwide. One of the greatest benefits of farmers markets and CSAs is the ability to connect community members to locally sourced, healthy, seasonal, and fresh produce. They provide an opportunity for local governments to partner with nonprofit organizations and agricultural community and bring the culture of collaboration within the community that provides economic as well as health and wellness benefits.

Opportunities for the Town to provide access to healthy food include summer camps, nutrition programs, after-school programs, and community gardens. This plan recommends the Town enhance access to healthy food options by incorporating additional community gardens, edible landscapes and agritourism facilities into parks. The popularity of the existing farmers market provides an excellent platform for educating and marketing healthy food options, locally sourced produce, and the agrarian lifestyle of our ancestors. When expanding or relocating the farmers market, the Town should consider a location that is accessible to a broad resident base with the possibility of satellite markets to enable equitable access. When designing the space, consider amenities for farm-to-table exhibits and events.

- › Incorporate nutrition programs as age-appropriate recreation program activity
- › Expand programming opportunities to around outdoor adventure activities
- › Develop nature-based outdoor recreation programs for all ages, particularly youth.

Finally, the Town should identify potential partner organizations who strive to improve health outcomes related to physical fitness, mental health, social cohesion and healthy eating. Such organizations may include Wake County Human Services, healthcare providers, the Holly Springs Food Cupboard, or subject matter experts from local universities or technical colleges to name a few.

H-5

Develop strong community partnerships with organizations striving to improve outcomes related to physical fitness, mental health, healthy eating and social connections.

²¹ <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2018/September/farmers-markets/>



CONNECTIVITY

Offer an interconnected recreation system

Connectivity is an important consideration in building an integrated system of parks, recreation facilities, open spaces, natural resource areas, and other important community resources that are linked by a bike and pedestrian friendly multimodal transportation system. Safe and accessible connections to parks and recreation facilities provide many benefits including active and healthy living, connection to nature, social interactions, natural resources protection and stronger economy.

The Greenway Trails chapter in this master plan report is dedicated to this guiding principle. It provides details regarding current challenges in Holly Springs, benefits of greenway trails, design standards, and principles that guide the proposed greenway trails system framework.



FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Offer a financially sustainable department

A recreation department's ability to maintain financial sustainability as local, state, federal and global determinants such as economics, politics, health, environmental and social circumstances fluctuate will ensure recreation services remain without interruption or alarm. Several factors contribute to establishing a financially sustainable department, most of which fall under two categories: understanding and tracking the Department's costs and identifying diverse funding sources to finance those costs.

One of most valuable approaches to understanding the Department's costs of providing recreational services to the community is the completion of a true cost of service / ownership assessment. This assessment will identify direct and indirect costs associated with parks and programs, yielding the total cost of the service or ownership. Based on the total cost of service / ownership, the Town can better establish cost recovery goals for programs and facilities. Cost recovery goals should directly inform pricing strategies and identify the remaining operational and maintenance costs needing subsidy. It is important to note a Department's pricing policy should reflect the community's approach to funding parks and recreation programs. Communities that believe their agency should subsidize most recreation costs have lower price-points and thus lower cost recovery goals.

F-1

Complete a true cost of service / ownership assessment for each park and program in the system to understand and project on-going operations and maintenance costs.

F-2

Establish cost recovery goals for programs and facilities

F-3

Classify programs according to a cost recovery model

F-4

Establish a diverse pricing policy that reflects cost recovery goals and community values.

F-5

Develop a clear funding strategy to fund park improvements and on-going operations and maintenance costs.

Alternatively, communities with a pay-to-play attitude tend to have higher fees for programs and access to value added amenities, and thus higher cost recovery goals.

Classifying Programs According to a Cost Recovery Model

Moving toward a model of classifying programs according to a cost recovery model for sustainable services will benefit the Department. Agencies use the above total cost of service approach 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 the Department between one another. Cost recovery goals are established once cost of service totals have been calculated.

The process for implementing this classification model is described in detail in the program assessment. Because this classification model is rooted in cost recovery goals and the total cost of service, it is important the Town establish a philosophy for balancing user fees and Town subsidized services.

Cost recovery targets should reflect the degree to which a program provides a public versus individual good. Programs providing public benefits (i.e., essential programs) should be subsidized more by the Department; programs providing individual benefits (i.e., value-added programs) should seek to recover costs and/or generate revenue for other services. To help plan and implement cost recovery policies, the project team has developed the following definitions to help classify specific programs within program areas.

- Essential programs-category are critical to achieving the organizational mission and providing community-wide benefits and, therefore, generally receive priority for tax-dollar subsidization.
- Important or value-added program classifications generally represent programs that receive lower priority for subsidization.
- Important programs contribute to the organizational mission but are not essential to it; therefore, cost recovery for these programs should be high (i.e., at least 80% overall).
- Value-added programs are not critical to the mission and should be prevented from drawing upon limited public funding, so overall cost recovery for these programs should be near or in excess of 100%.

Once total cost of service / ownership is understood, the Town can develop a funding strategy plan to finance initial capital projects and ongoing operational and maintenance costs. Park and Recreation Departments often rely on the same narrow portfolio of funding sources for their projects, programs, and capital improvements as well as their ongoing operations. This limited approach can prove troublesome as the availability of funds in each source fluctuates. For example, the availability of grant funding varies based on local, state, and federal revenues, some of which are sourced with tax dollars. When resident investment is reduced, grant funding is in turn more limited. Similarly, bond approvals can oscillate depending on the current political landscape. In the 2020 November election, 96% of all park and recreation ballot issues passed compared to 87% just four years earlier. While we can only surmise, it is logical to conclude that the demand for parks during the COVID-19 pandemic may have influenced the increased approval rate.

Understanding the various funding opportunities available can be valuable to the financial sustainability of a parks and recreation system. This plan recommends the Town expand the types and sources of Department funding through a clear funding strategy plan that identifies the category, source, requirements, and feasibility of various options. As with personal financial planning, a diverse portfolio of revenue will ensure the Town has available funds when normal funding channels change unexpectedly.

These three categories are examples of funding sources considered to be viable methods used in the parks and recreation industry.

1. Dedicated Funding

These funds (often in the form of various tax options) are appropriated or set aside for a limited purpose. The options that should be most considered would include the following dedicated funding options.

Examples include:

- › Nationally, Impact Fees are used for sewer and water facilities, parks, roads, and schools, however, North Carolina local governments have more limited authority than those in many other states. Town of Holly Springs currently uses park fee in lieu for land dedication and capacity fees for utilities which are allowed by North Carolina General Statutes (See G.S. 160A-372).
- › Land dedication ordinance that requires developers to give the Town a portion of the land they are developing to the park system to develop the site for a neighborhood park or cash in lieu of land. The key element is that the land that is given to the Town must be developable for a neighborhood park.
- › A percentage of hotel taxes that can be used to support facilities developed that bring in visitors to the Town in the form of overnight guest that participate in regional sports tournaments, special events, endurance races put on by the parks and recreation department of the Town.
- › Tax Increment Finance funds on new or redevelopment. TIF is a public financing method that is used for community improvement projects. The intent of TIF is to stimulate private investment. Municipalities typically divert future property tax revenues increases from a defined area or district toward an economic development project or a public improvement in the community such as a community center, library or school.
- › Food and beverage taxes on restaurant food or drinks which can include fast food places that a half cent is dedicated for parks and recreation. This does not apply to buying grocery items.

2. Earned Income

Revenue generated by membership fees, facility rentals, program fees and other sources where the agency is paid for services or what they are providing that residents are willing to pay for access.

3. Financial Support

These monies are acquired by applying for grants from foundations, corporations, organizations, as well as state and federal sources.

Parks and Recreation Foundation

Holly Springs Parks and Recreation should consider the development a parks and recreation foundation for the park system. The three primary goals of a park foundation are to:

- › Help acquire park land through individual or family gifts,
- › Raise money for developing park and recreation amenities in existing parks and
- › Support scholarships for youth and families to attend programs offered by the Department.

A park and recreation foundation operates independently of the Town's Parks and Recreation Department and Town Council but the Director of the Parks and Recreation system typically sits on the park foundations board as a non-voting member to inform and guide the park foundation of the park and recreation needs of the department in the three areas outlined. Park foundations also raise matching money for grants when appropriate. A detailed list of possible funding sources from each category can be found in the Appendix.



Environmental awareness is an important guiding principle for the growing community because it supports protection of natural resources, wildlife habitats, and water and air quality. Protection of the environment, open space, and natural resources are gaining priority in communities across the US. According to the March 2020 Park Pulse Survey²² by NRPA, ninety-one percent of U.S. adults want children to learn or participate in conservation efforts, including:

- › Waste reduction (74%)
- › Nature-based recreation (62%)
- › Nature health benefits (58%)
- › Gardening (57%)
- › Wildlife preservation (56%)
- › Planting trees (56%)
- › Climate education (50%)

This trend is echoed in the Town of Holly Springs, evidenced throughout the community engagement process. Reported in the scientific survey, 78 percent of respondents are "very supportive" or "supportive" of implementing sustainability measures to minimize environmental impact of parks and recreation facilities. Additionally, during the first public input meeting, one of attendee's greatest concerns was the impact developing greenways and parks can have on the environment. Finally, this guiding principle also aligns with the initiatives highlighted in the Holly Springs Strategic Plan that focus on natural resource protection, transportation, watershed management and waste management.

Benchmarking communities used in this master plan report have incorporated various environmental sustainability practices into their department programs, facilities, and operations. Examples include air quality programs, environmental education and outreach programs, solar installations, recycling options at all parks and facilities, multimodal transportation alternatives, and native and non-invasive landscapes. The City of Coppell, TX has established a "Green Team" comprising of interdepartmental city-wide collaborative sustainability efforts that focus on all the three pillars of sustainability – people, planet, and profit.

Sustainable Land Development Practices

Through community support and alignment with Town-wide strategic goals, Holly Springs' Parks and Recreation Department can foster positive environmental impacts on a larger scale. The Department should adopt environmentally sustainable practices such as protecting natural resources, minimizing development impacts to natural resources and using green building practices. Protecting natural resources can be achieved before development takes place through conserving riparian buffers, wetlands, and ecologically sensitive habitats for local flora and fauna. Similarly, when selecting new park sites or greenway corridors, protection of contiguous open space corridors for the protection of wildlife habitat should receive priority. When the Department is planning to construct parks or facilities, development should minimize negative impacts to natural resources. Strategies include grading with the natural contours of the land to minimize extensive grading and excavation; orientation of facilities to maximize sun exposure and maintaining natural drainage patterns to the extent possible.

22 <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2020/april/conservation-education-starts-with-parks-and-recreation/>

Lastly, the Department should emphasize green building practices when developing new parks and facilities. Examples include proposing sustainability harvested and locally sourced materials for facility development and department operations; incorporating low impact development approaches to stormwater management to enhance water quality; introducing aspects of stream restoration or flood mitigation; and utilizing native and adapted vegetation as landscape.

Parks and recreation systems across the nation are implementing such practices through programs such as SITES certification for sustainable site development or pursuing LEED certifications for buildings. While securing such certifications can be expensive, the Department should consider adopting the development policies and practices they promote and referencing their programs for best practices.

N-1

Develop parks, facilities and greenways in an environmentally sustainable way

N-2

Maximize sustainability initiatives to minimize resource consumption, reduce waste and promote use of renewable resources

N-3

Expand core program offerings to include environmental education

N-4

Adopt a cross-sector approach to supporting and implementing Town-wide initiatives related to natural resource protection and environmental awareness

Sustainability Initiatives

Net-Zero Resource Consumption - The Department should consider developing goals around minimizing water and energy consumption and carbon emissions. Achieving Net Zero energy or water status or generating the same amount of energy / water that a park would consume, is one strategy gaining momentum across the nation. Achieving net-zero status is best achieved through a combination of resource demand reduction and provisions for renewable resources such as solar, wind or thermal power. Similarly, water reuse and rain harvesting practices can provide alternative water sources, reducing demand on municipal potable systems.

Waste Reduction - The 2018 declaration by Chinese government to not accept certain recyclables and more stringent "acceptable recyclables" has caused a new challenge to communities across the nation who were once considered 'successful' in managing their trash. Parks and recreation agencies must educate the public about recycling and waste reduction and the negative impact of comingled trash which ultimately ends up in the landfill. Focusing on reducing food waste during special events, camps, and social gatherings and using compostable products can help significantly reduce landfill waste. While the science and practice of trash management is still evolving, it is a necessity for communities to be adaptable and 'future ready.'

Town of Holly Springs Parks and Recreation department can demonstrate leadership in waste management programs targeted towards maintaining facilities and Department operations. Establishing policies to include recycling bins along with trash receptacles at facilities, smart technology trash compactors (E.g. Big Belly Trash Compactor) at key locations, bottle filler stations instead of drinking water fountains, composting at recreation centers are some of the strategies to reduce waste that the Department can take on.

Education and Outreach

Resident education and awareness can cultivate support and initiate action for natural resource protection initiatives. By establishing environmental education as a core program, the Department can provide tools and techniques to residents who are interested in the effort but lack the direction. Programs and events can also generate new interest, fostering new ideas and momentum. Many communities are hosting special events on Earth Day or Arbor Day that bring likeminded community groups, nonprofit organizations, and even environmental artists together.

Education and outreach efforts for Holly Springs should be targeted by following priority topic areas determined by the Department and further expanded to align with Town-wide initiatives. Examples to consider include programs focused on:

- › Stormwater: water quality, low impact development, and Town-wide green infrastructure projects
- › Native and non-invasive landscapes, local flora and fauna; reduction in the use of pesticides
- › Green learning “laboratories” for students enforcing STEM curricula
- › Watershed management

Cross-Sector Approach

A cross sector approach can be used to protect natural resources and the Town’s environmental heritage in a more impactful way. The Department should intentionally collaborate with other Town departments such as Development Services and Utilities & Infrastructure to develop policies that reinforce goals around resource protection and environmental awareness. One such opportunity exists while the Town is developing updates to comprehensive plan sections including Land Use & Character Plan and Comprehensive Transportation Plan. as well as updates to the Unified Development Ordinance. New regulations for conservation subdivisions provide an opportunity for the Department to secure conservation land through exactions. The Town recently completed their Strategic Plan, which outlines specific initiatives related to sustainability, natural resource protection and environmental preservation. The Department should support these initiatives through their day-to-day operations and future projects. Similarly, the Department can collaborate with local and state transportation agencies to implement projects that meet connectivity, park access and carbon emissions reduction goals. Finally, the Department should work with the Tree Advisory Committee to establish tree canopy goals for parks and recreation facilities.



Excellence, or the quality of being outstanding, is so admirable because it is hard to find. Achieving excellence should be the common direction all staff within the Department are aligned toward, and this sentiment cultivated by Department leadership. This guiding principle serves as framework for how the Department can operationalize this aspiration. These recommendations should be used to engage and motivate employees to deliver products, services, and experiences that users perceive to be outstanding. Particularly for the Parks and Recreation Department, excellence can be achieved through attention to:

- › High quality parks and facilities
- › On-going maintenance
- › Recreation programs
- › Technology
- › Staff and operations
- › Marketing and communications
- › Partnerships

High Quality Parks & Facilities

High quality parks and facilities create a positive impact on the local economy while providing much needed health benefits. Well-maintained parks and facilities are welcoming and safe for all users and they mirror the unique community character they are located in. High quality parks and recreation services is one of the factors cited often when measuring quality-of-life in a community. Similarly, many studies have cited that businesses choose to locate their offices in places where employees can experience a high quality-of-life, making parks and recreation an essential service in the economic development of a community.²³

X-1

Adhere to best practices in planning and design of parks and facilities.

X-2

Emphasize 'placemaking' to focus on the imageability of the parks system

The Department can provide excellent quality parks and facilities by ensuring best practice design guidelines, regulatory code compliance, and systematic tracking of maintenance and management schedules. Responding to current recreation trends, engaging in 'creative placemaking,'²⁴ and adhering to principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) to ensure residents have modern, imaginative and safe places to recreate are key components of high-quality parks. The Department should continue to review industry trends and utilize surveys to understand evolving recreation interests, needs and wants. Considering a one-percent public art dedication and engaging residents and artists in the design process will enhance placemaking aspects of parks. A one-percent art dedication commits the Department to dedicating a small portion of a park's construction budget to public art installations. While the Department does not have a history of violence or vandalism at local parks, adherence to (CPTED) principles will minimize the chance of future problems.

23 <https://www.nrpa.org/siteassets/nrpa-economic-development-report.pdf>

24 <https://www.tpl.org/field-guide-creative-placemaking-and-parks>

On-going Maintenance

The way in which a Department maintains their facilities is an outward expression of pride within a parks system. Establishing maintenance management standards will not only operationalize the Town's maintenance program but allow the Department to better track maintenance costs and needed staffing levels. This degree of oversight results in improved aesthetic, playability and land management.

X-3

Develop and implement maintenance management plans for existing and future parks and facilities.

This plan recommends the Town develop a maintenance management plan for the entire Department to maximize cost, enhance use and productivity of space. As new parks, trails, sports fields, playgrounds and indoor / outdoor facilities come online, written maintenance standards should be developed and implemented.

As maintenance management plans are developed, the Departments should incorporate Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) which enable the Department to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the maintenance management plan by park maintenance staff. The Department can celebrate successful implementation and adjust where improvements are needed. Standard KPI's include:

- › Acres of recreational value maintenance per employee versus non recreational value lands per employee.
- › Track travel time costs for staff to determine level of productivity.
- › Work orders timelines completed.
- › Customer service complaints resolved by a set time.
- › Establish unit cost for game fields for (competitive, recreational and practice fields).
- › Track landscaping acres maintained in house versus a contractor's costs.
- › Customer complaints resolved by set timeline.
- › Workplace accident percentage for employees in maintenance.
- › Ratio of employees; by acre, by buildings square footage, by linear ft. of trails maintenance.
- › Track current assets value versus percentage saved for asset replacement.
- › Track fleet vehicles and equipment cost based on employee requirements to be as productive and efficient as possible.
- › Track part-time employees versus overtime cost for full-time employees versus the cost of contract work.
- › Part-time retention average turnover pay-out versus salary savings.

Recreation Programs

Monitor Program Lifecycles - Viewing recreation programs through a life cycle model provides the opportunity to increase program production efficiency. Identifying a program at the end of its maturity phase before it reaches the decline phase helps achieve efficiency in program delivery. Based on the program assessment, the Department is only providing 22 percent of all program offerings within a mature stage whereas the recommended distribution is 40 percent. A typical program life cycle goes through four phases of development: beginning or developmental phase, maturity, decline, and termination.

At the maturity phase, programs are at their highest efficiency with least cost investment and highest returns generated because of high level of participation. Program delivery does not need initial time investment although minor updates or customization for a specific audience may be needed. Overall, the mature program has fixed any negative feedback from participants, and the program delivery is near flawless with evaluations and attendance

high. It is important for the program staff to keep tracking the program performance to make any necessary changes and updates before the program starts to see the decline phase.

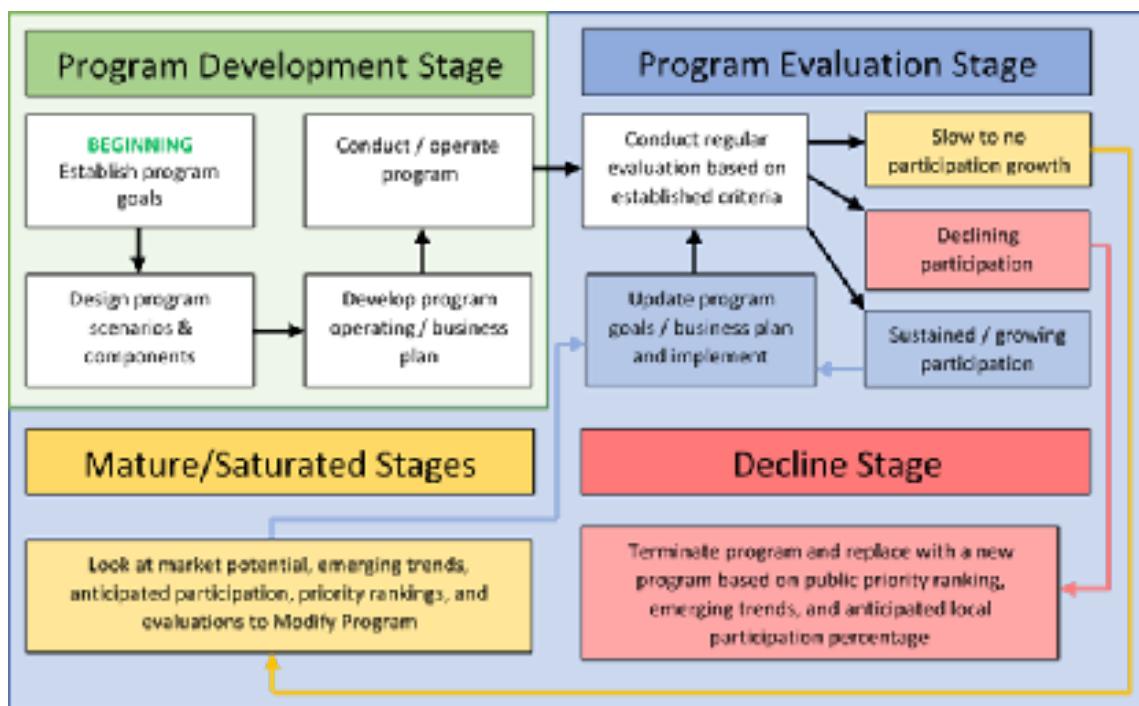
Using the Lifecycle analysis, and other established criteria, program staff should evaluate programs on an annual basis to determine program mix. This can be incorporated into the program operating/business plan process. During the introductory stage, program staff should establish program goals, design program scenarios and components, and develop the program operating/business plan. Regular program evaluations will help determine the future of a program.

Staff should complete a program lifecycle analysis on an annual basis and ensure that the percentage distribution closely aligns with desired performance. Furthermore, the Department 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.

If participation levels are still growing, continue to provide the program. When participation growth is slowing (or non-existent) or competition increases, staff should look at modifying the program to re-energize the customers to participate. When program participation is consistently declining, staff should terminate the program and replace it with a new program based on the public's priority ranking and/or in activity areas that are trending nationally/regionally/locally, while taking into consideration the anticipated local participation percentage.

X-4

Increase the percentage of program offerings in the mature phase to the recommended distribution of 40 percent.



▲ Figure 3 - Evaluation Cycle with Program Lifecycle Logic Matrix

In general, the Department program staff should continue the cycle of evaluating programs on both individual merit as well as the program mix. This can be completed at one time on an annual basis, or in batches at key seasonal points of the year, as long as each program is checked once per year.

Program Development & Decision-Making Matrix

When developing program plans and strategies, it is useful to consider all the core program areas and individual program analysis discussed in the Program Assessment. Lifecycle, age segment classification, and cost recovery goals should all be tracked, and this information along with the latest demographic trends and community input should be factors that lead to program decision-making. Community input can help staff focus in on specific program areas to develop new opportunities in what group of citizens to target including the best marketing methods to use.

Marketing & Promotion Methods			
Program Idea (Name or Concept): _____			
Marketing Methods	Content Developed	Contact Information	Start Date
Activity Guide			
Website			
Newspaper Article			
Radio			
Social Media			
Flyers - Public Places			
Newspaper Ad			
Email Notification			
Event Website			
School Flyer/Newsletter			
Television			
Digital Sign			
Friends & Neighbors Groups			
Staff Promotion @ Events			
Internal Factors			
Priority Ranking:			
	High	Medium	Low
Program Area:			
	Core	Non-core	
Classification			
	Essential	Important	Discretionary
Cost Recovery Range			
	0-40%	60-50%	80+
Age Segment			
	Primary	Secondary	
Sponsorship/Partnership			
Potential Partnerships			
	Monetary	Volunteers	Partner Skill
Potential Sponsors			
	Monetary	Volunteers	Sponsor Skill
Market Competition			
Number of Competitors			
	High	Medium	Low
Growth Potential			
	High	Low	

▲ Figure 4 -Marketing Methods (example for graphics purpose)

A simple, easy-to-use tool as shown above (Figure 4) will help compare programs and prioritize resources using multiple data points, rather than relying solely on cost recovery. In addition, this analysis will help staff make an informed, objective case to the public when a program is in decline, but beloved by a few, is retired. If the program/service is determined to have strong priority, appropriate cost recovery, good age segment appeal, good partnership potential, and strong market conditions the next step is to determine the marketing methods

Technology

While the benefits of nature-based recreation and disconnecting from screen time is an important function of parks, attracting younger generations requires balancing the use of technology with outdoor access. Incorporating state of the art technological features into park environments has caught the attention of agencies and designers alike. Integrated wi-fi network, smart playgrounds, solar powered site furnishings, apps to track park usage, activities, special events registrations etc., and incorporating VR technologies to create 'smart parks' are few of the latest trends. "SMART Park" is a new concept defined as a park that uses technology (environmental, digital, and materials) to achieve a series of values: equitable access, community fit, enhanced health, safety, resilience, water and energy efficiency, and effective operations and maintenance.²⁵ The UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation has created a toolkit for developing 'smart parks' which described a compilation of technologies that can be used in parks to make them SMART.

X-5

Develop and support a culture of innovation, technology, and adaptability to respond to on-going local, national, and global challenges.

25 <https://innovation.luskin.ucla.edu/sites/default/files/ParksWeb020218.pdf>

For Holly Springs, Ting Park is a perfect opportunity to implement design and operational technological advancements to make it a state-of-the-art sports destination. The sports industry is being revolutionized by the Cloud, artificial intelligence, 5G and extended reality and though it may seem a futuristic for a community like Holly Springs, it is a predictable reality that the Town can leverage these resources as they become available.

The Department should cultivate a culture of innovation, technology, and adaptability to respond to ongoing location, national and global challenges using new operational technologies and high-tech experiences for park users. For example, COVID-19 pandemic has required people maintain social distancing while outdoors and agencies have incorporated an autonomous line-marking paint robot into their operations to paint sports field lines and 'safe zones' for open areas and ensure safety of park users as well as operations staff who would otherwise be in close proximity to paint these areas.²⁶

There are several other technological advancements that the Town can implement to increase their operational efficiencies. Some features the Department should consider include:

- › Enhance the current online reservation and payment system for transactional services and program registration.
- › Implement work order system software for the Parks Maintenance division.
- › Incorporate a GPS tracking system to track staff's commute time to parks and facilities.
- › Experiment with small scale new technologies or develop pilot projects that significantly reduce staff time and costs such as smart trash compactors, sensors on lights and irrigation, stormwater management, landscape and hardscape performance, and other technological advances that track data and operational performance.
- › The Town should continue to make technology improvements in park maintenance to save operational dollars through efficiencies as they are learned.

Staffing and Operations

At the Department level, competent staff, and operations and maintenance policies play a crucial role in ensuring the tax payers dollars are being spent efficiently. This effort should result in proving first class experiences to residents from responsive customer service to exemplary user experiences at parks, facilities, and in programs. Operations of the parks and recreation system depend on a well-trained and dedicated staff responsible for planning and delivering programs, maintaining the land and facilities, and administering and promoting the system.

Operations - This plan recommends the Department develop an Asset Management Plan within the CityWorks software program the Town has purchased as it applies to accurately estimating unit costing

X-6

Develop an Asset Management Plan within the CityWorks software program

X-7

Create a capital improvement plan for new improvements outlined in this master plan

X-8

Leverage the parks system as a source of economic development.

²⁶ <https://www.nrrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2020/august/using-technology-to-help-keep-people-safe/>

for park maintenance of parks (cost per acre), tree management per tree, trails (cost of a mile of trail), sports fields (cost per field), capital replacement of existing facilities and amenity upgrades when needed. This would include timeline replacement or upgrades of major assets such as playgrounds, artificial turf sports fields, community center upgrades, trails, rental facilities, and sports courts.

Staffing - Employees are considered one of the Departments' greatest assets. If an agency focuses on its employees, ultimately the customers will benefit. Parks and recreation departments are often the most public facing departments in a community, making employees the cornerstone of customer service. Staff are brand ambassadors, reflecting community and Department values through their work, interactions with the public and the experiences they deliver.

This plan recommends the Town cultivate a strong work culture to promote positivity, personal growth, training, and constructive feedback. Ideas should be heard from the lowest level up, acknowledging all input is valued and even the smallest efforts contribute to the common goals of the Department. Maintaining employee moral can often be linked to work-life balance, clearly defined career paths, and gestures of appreciation.

An efficient department with minimal burn-out typically has a combination of full-time, part-time and seasonal staff. The Parks Maintenance division currently only has full-time employees, limiting potential efficiencies and cost containment through part-time and seasonal staff. This plan recommends the Town establish the right balance of full-time equivalent's or FTE's between full-time and part-time staff to achieve 27 acres per FTE which is best practice for park maintenance departments across the United States. Similarly, the Department should continue to balance all areas of the Maintenance division with employees that have skills in trades, data-tracking, natural resource management, and forestry to meet the expectations of the community. Identifying tasks that can be outsourced more efficiently than completed in-house can also provide cost savings for the Department.

X-9

Cultivate a strong work culture to promote positivity, personal growth, training, constructive criticism. Ideas should be heard from the lowest level up.

X-10

Update the organizational structure of the department to improve functionality.

X-11

Establish the right balance of FTE's between fulltime and part-time maintenance staff to achieve the industry standard of 27 acres per FTE.

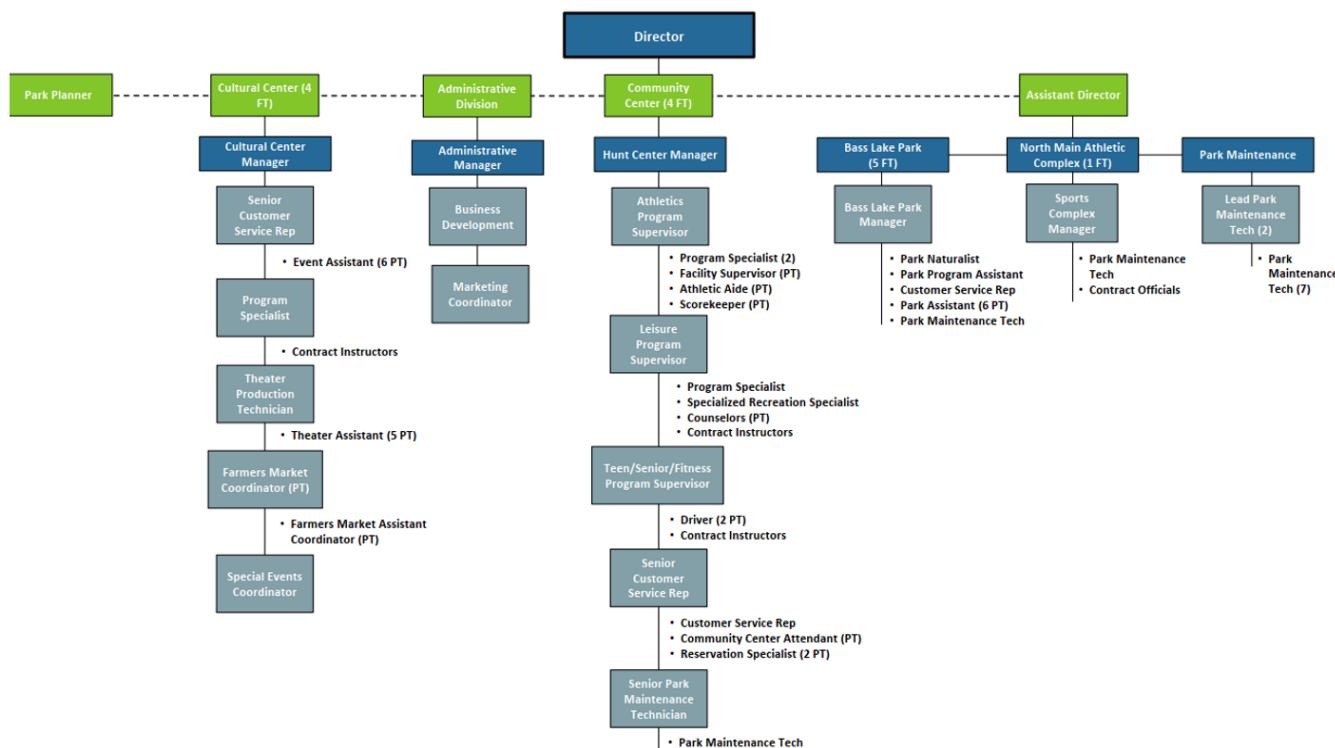
X-12

Support professional development and succession planning for all staff levels.

This plan also recommends updates to the current organizational chart to improve the functionality of the Department by eliminating duplication of effort and competition between divisions for people, money, and priorities. The following changes are proposed and reflected in the below organization chart:

Consider a business development position to oversee earned income development, partnership equity, to set up and oversee a parks and recreation foundation, seek sponsorships, develop and track data on key performance metrics that are recommended in the master plan.

- › Consider establishing a special events division and incorporate town-wide events tied to the Farmers Market.
- › Functionally align the sport facilities and programs together so that both service areas have access to the resources they need.
- › Align reservations, permits and customer service as one division serving the entire department as well as reservations in parks and at the Hunt Community Center.
- › Move the Bass Lake Park Maintenance Tech position to the Parks Maintenance division to eliminate redundancy in services.



▲ Figure 5 - Proposed organization structure

Professional development and succession planning for all staff levels will result in continuity of operations and provide employees with opportunities for career growth and advancement. The Department should encourage and support parks maintenance leadership staff to attend park maintenance and management schools. Additional training should also be provided in the areas of natural resource management, conservation, and sustainability practices across all park's personnel. Finally, the Department should commit to clear career development paths for employees by establishing an organizational hierarchy of job responsibilities.

Marketing and Communications

Marketing and communications are vital for successful program delivery. These two areas of community outreach not only convey information about the programs being offered, but also educate people about the benefits of participation and generate interest among nonparticipants to try something new. A large proportion of Holly Springs residents who participated in the scientific survey are newcomers who have recently relocated to the area and one of the reasons cited in the survey for non-participation in programs is lack of information. The Department needs to adapt their marketing strategies to reach the newer population through an appropriate communications platform.

Additional strategies for increasing participation through improved marketing efforts include:

- › Develop marketing plan based on the strategies discussed in the inventory + analysis chapter.
- › Establish priority segments to target in terms of new program/service development and communication tactics.
- › Establish and review regularly performance measures for marketing; performance measures can be tracked through increased use of customer surveys as well as web-based metrics.
- › Leverage relationships with partners to enhance marketing efforts through cross-promotion that include defined measurable outcomes.

Branding is an essential component of marketing and communications and should be considered an economic investment. Building on the Town's recent efforts on rebranding, the Department has an opportunity to develop a parks and recreation brand for all published material including parks and greenway trails maps, information brochures and flyers. The branding can be clearly articulated by logo and color scheme use, typography, email signatures, tone and language, and social media advertising²⁷. The Department should extend the branding initiative to create a sense of place (described in the inventory + analysis chapter) in the parks and facilities using wayfinding and signage.

X-13

Increase awareness, branding, & marketing of parks, programs, greenways & services.

.....
27 <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2017/september/five-steps-to-unlock-your-agencys-marketing-and-branding-potential/>

Partnerships

Parks and recreation departments across the nation are developing strategies to partner with other agencies and organizations to provide innovative programming opportunities for residents that otherwise may be missed because of limited resources available within the agency. Local businesses, donors, developers, nonprofit organizations, and third-party recreation providers who have a similar vision as the Department can help close gaps and meet the demands of a growing community.

X-14

Nurture existing partnerships that are mutually beneficial and develop new partnerships.

X-15

Establish best practices to pursue national awards and CAPRA accreditation.

The Department currently has a strong network of recreation program partners. Therefore, the following recommendations are both an overview of existing partnership opportunities available to the Department, 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:

- › Operational Partners: Other entities and organizations that can support the efforts of the Department 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.
- › Vendor Partners: Service providers and/or contractors that can gain brand association and notoriety as a preferred vendor or supporter of the Town or Department in exchange for reduced rates, services, or some other agreed upon benefit.
- › 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.
- › Co-Branding Partners: Private, for-profit organizations that can gain brand association and notoriety as a supporter of the Department in exchange for sponsorship or co-branded programs, events, marketing and promotional campaigns, and/or advertising opportunities.
- › 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.

Once probable partners in these areas have been identified, the Town should establish formal volunteer and partnership policies and agreements according to best practices listed in the Appendix. As an on-going practice, the Town should continue to monitor, and update established volunteer and partner policies and agreements which are tailored to the different types of volunteers and partnerships the Department encounters. Finally, to demonstrate and quantify the benefits of partnerships, the Department should begin tracking volunteer metrics which include individual volunteers used annually and volunteer hours donated annually. Lastly, continue background checks for all volunteers working with all programs.

CAPRA Accreditation

No other gesture declares excellence more than seeking the NRPA's CAPRA Accreditation. Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) accreditation is a national level recognition for parks and recreation agencies for their excellent services and operations.

CAPRA provides the following benefits to a park and recreation agency:

- › Proves that the agency is developing and using the best practices in programs, facilities, safety, financial, human resources, and operations to serve the community;
- › Provides standards to assist with relevance with elected officials and decision makers;
- › Allows an agency to stand apart from peers;
- › Sets the agency up with strong data and standards to receive grants and funding;
- › Increases national network of high performing park departments that may give advice or become a mentor;
- › Sets the agency up for continual evaluation and improvement;
- › Improves the opportunities for securing grant funding as it provides confidence to grant selectors that they are selecting experts in the field.



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implementation



OVERVIEW

An implementation plan with prioritized action items is the final step in bringing the parks and recreation master plan vision to reality. Implementation is not a linear process but an ongoing iterative process that will rely on large funding investments. Feasibility studies, master plans, phasing plans, and business plans are some of the intermediate steps the Town will have to assume to understand the full order of magnitude costs. In addition, effective implementation strategies are based on highly collaborative processes that span across the various Town Departments, community leaders, strategic partners, and elected officials resulting in multiple benefits to the community.

Over the ten year planning horizon, the priority projects may change or evolve into new prospects based on community needs or other related opportunities. For this reason, additional prioritization criteria has been established and described in the appendices which the staff can use to evaluate for implementation.

The recommendations presented in this plan have been further refined into strategies or action items and prioritized as short-term, mid-term, long-term or ongoing. Action items receiving higher priority are those supported by significant community input or are items that have been delayed or postponed in the past but have significant bearing on accomplishing the recommendations of this plan. Each action item indicates a responsible party to foster accountability within the Department as well as component of the parks and recreation system as it relates to parks and facilities, greenway trails, programs, operations and maintenance, staffing and finance. The responsible party has been identified based on the Department's proposed organization: Planning Programming, Athletics, Cultural, Environment/ Sustainability, and Administration with a top tier category for Leadership, including the Department Director, Assistant Director, and area managers. Individuals under the Administration Division (AD) include marketing, business development and finance staff. In addition, the order of magnitude costs (OMC) is expressed as shown below. This estimate should be used only for planning purposes and not set as budgets for specific projects. Key to Implementation Plan is described below.

Responsible Groups:

PR - Parks & Recreation Department
 LD - The Department Leadership
 MA - Maintenance
 PG - Programming
 AT - Athletics
 CU - Cultural
 PL - Planning
 AD - Administration
 EN - Environment/ Sustainability

DS - Development Services
 FN - Finance Department
 U&I - Utilities & Infrastructure
 PW - Public Works
 CM - Communications & Marketing
 OC - Outside Consultant

Order of Magnitude Costs:

\$	<\$50,000
\$\$	\$50,000 - \$100,000
\$\$\$	\$100,000 - \$500,000
\$\$\$\$	\$500,000 - \$1,000,000
\$\$\$\$\$	\$1,000,000+

Staff time is noted where OMC is not relevant.

GOAL	PRIORITY TIMEFRAME	PRIORITY CODE
Short-term	1 - 3 years	ST
Mid-term	4 - 8 years	MT
Long-term	8 + years	LT
Ongoing	Continual	OG



BALANCED GROWTH

Expand the parks and recreation system to ensure serving the needs of a growing community.

Park + Fac.	Greenways	Programs	O + M	Finances	Recommendation	Action	Priority	Responsible Group	OMC/ Notes
X					G-1 Acquire and develop an additional 186 acres of parkland by 2030, especially in areas currently void of parkland (west of Highway 55)	➢ Adopt a level of service standard of 9.6 acres per 1,000 population for developed parkland	ST	PR-LD	Staff time
X						➢ Establish a level of service goal of 2 acres per 1,000 population for conservation parkland	ST	PR-LD, DS, U&I	Staff time
X						➢ Maintain a 70% to 30% ratio of developed to conservation parkland	ST	PR-LD, DS, U&I	Staff time
X		X				➢ Implement best practices in land acquisition that identify evaluation criteria for parkland set aside for future development	ST	PR-LD, DS, U&I	Staff time
X		X				➢ Target land acquisitions as identified in the park search areas map.	OG	PR-LD, DS, U&I	Staff time \$\$\$\$\$
X					G-2 Engage the development community to acquire parkland that contributes to the conservation land goals.	➢ Update Unified Development Ordinances to include policy around land dedication for conservation lands	ST, OG	LD, PL, DS	In progress Staff time
						➢ Consider other parkland exactions that clearly define ownership / maintenance, access, quality of land and design guidelines for amenities	LT	PR-LD, DS, U&I	Staff time
X					G-3 Develop the 150 acres of vacant parkland currently owned by the Department.	➢ Develop master plans for each parcel that consider broad community engagement and best practices in park design	LT	PR-LD, PR-PL	\$\$\$\$\$/ Park
		X				➢ Use a cost estimate and total cost of service / ownership model to anticipate initial capital investment and on-going operations and maintenance costs	OG	PR-LD, PR-MA	Staff time
		X				➢ Develop mini business plans for each proposed park	MT	OC	\$/ Park

Balanced Growth, continued

Park + Fac.	Greenways	Programs	O + M	Finances	Recommendation	Action	Priority	Responsible Group	OMC/ Notes
X		X			G-4 Construct a range of 53,518 square feet to 80,439 square feet additional square feet of indoor recreation by 2030.	› Determine amount of storage needed to support different programs in multi-functional spaces	ST	PR-PL, PR-PG	Staff time
		X	X			› Conduct a feasibility study to determine needs to meet new program space requirements	ST	PR-PL, PR-PG, OC	\$\$
X						› Conduct a feasibility study to build a new recreation center facility	ST	OC	\$\$
X		X				› Assess the feasibility of providing aquatics programming. Consider partnership with local healthcare providers	ST	PR-PL, PR-PG, PR-LD	\$\$
X		X			G-5 Develop indoor recreation space to prioritize aquatics, athletic courts, dedicated space for senior and special population programming and office and storage space	› Establish minimum space requirements for new spaces to support programs and operations	ST	PR-PL, PR-PG	\$\$
					G-6 Offer diverse recreation and cultural arts programs and amenities	› Complete a feasibility study for possible aquatics facilities	MT	OC	\$\$\$
		X				› Appeal to diverse populations whether age, culture, or interest	ST, OG	PR-PG, PR-CU PR-AT	Staff time
X	X					› Use the PIR and results of community engagement to prioritize development of new amenities	ST, OG	PR-LD, PR-PL	Staff time
		X				› Expand core program areas and diversify program age segments served	MT	PR-PG, PR-CU, PR-AT	Staff time
		X	X			› Include the Farmers Market and Ting Stadium as Core Program Areas and develop mini business plans for each.	ST	PR-PG, OC	\$/ Facility
						› Evaluate Core Program Areas and individual programs on an annual basis to ensure offerings are relevant to evolving demographics and trends.	ST	PR-PG, PR-CU, PR-AT	Staff time

 **EQUITY**
 Achieve equitable access to parks and recreation amenities for all
 Town of Holly Springs residents.

Park + Fac.	Greenways	Programs	O + M	Finances	Recommendation	Action	Priority	Responsible Group	OMC/ Notes
X					E-1 Acquire and develop parkland to achieve an equitable distribution of parkland and increase the percentage of residents who live within one mile of a park.	› Improve access to parks, especially west of Highway 55.	OG	PR-LD, PR-PL, DS, U&I	\$\$\$\$
X						› Using tools like GIS mapping and community feedback, develop priorities for resource allocation associated with closing the gaps for park access	ST	PR-LD, PR-PL, DS, U&I	Staff time
X X X X X					E-2 Ensure equitable distribution of financial investment across the park system	› Evaluate the existing fee structure to provide greater subsidy for low-income residents.	ST	PR-PG	Staff time
		X X				› Quantify and track operating expenditures and capital investment per park across the system	ST	PR-MA, PR-PG	Staff time
		X X				› Establish criteria/ policy for equitable expenditures for equipment, programming, capital needs and facilities	ST	PR-LD, PR-MA, PR-PG	Staff time
X						› Construct new parks where gaps exist	OG	PR-PL	\$\$\$\$/Park Grant funding or alternate resources
X X						› Consider multi-modal connections when locating new parks and planned developments	OG	PR-PL, U&I	\$\$
		X				› Collaborate with local, state, and federal transportation planning efforts to improve public transportation access to parks	OG	PR-LD, PR-PL, DS, U&I	Staff time, Collaboration w/ other local/state/federal agencies

Equity, continued

Park + Fac.	Greenways	Programs	O + M	Finances	Recommendation	Action	Priority	Responsible Group	OMC/ Notes
X X					E-4 Offer recreation access to people of all ages and ability levels	➤ Develop an ADA Transition Plan to address all instances of non-compliance	ST,OG	PR-PL, U&I, PW, OC	\$\$\$ Ongoing town-wide effort
X						➤ Implement the principles of universal design to lower the physical barriers to access for people with different ability levels	LT,OG	PR-PL	\$\$\$ Leverage state level grant funding, private groups
	X X					➤ Increase community awareness by finding ways to educate public about social issues related to inclusivity.	ST,OG	PR-PL, PR-PG, CM	Staff time
	X X					➤ Establish partnerships with local nonprofits and organizations to offer recreation programs targeted for all ability levels	MT	PR-PG	Staff time
X X						➤ Integrate principles of universal design and inclusivity into the park design, development and programming process.	ST, OG	PR-PL, PR-PG	\$\$\$\$/ Park
X						➤ Provide additional inclusive amenities such as all-inclusive playgrounds	ST	PR-PL	\$\$\$/ Park Leverage grant funding
	X				E-5 Develop program plan for special needs populations	➤ Consider expanding core program offerings to include special needs programs	ST	PR-PG	Staff time, Special Training



HEALTH

Prioritize health and wellness

Park + Fac.	Greenways	Programs	O + M	Finances	Recommendation	Action	Timeline	Responsible Group	OMC/ Notes
X	X	X			H-1 Plan, design and program of the parks and recreation system to improve health outcomes related to physical fitness.	› Provide amenities that provide opportunities for leisure, moderate and vigorous physical activity	ST	PR-PL, PR-PG	\$\$-\$\$\$\$
			X			› Establish health and wellness as a core service component of the program offerings.	ST	PR-PG	Staff time, Partnerships, Grant funding
		X				› Explore innovative programming that encourages active lifestyles	ST	PR-PG	\$-\$ Staff time
X	X	X			H-2 Plan, design and program of the parks and recreation system to improve health outcomes related to mental health.	› Consider programs and amenities targeted at reducing stress and anxiety such as labyrinths for meditative walks and general access to untouched nature.	ST	PR-PL, PR-PG	\$\$
X	X	X			H-3 Plan, design and program of the parks and recreation system to improve health outcomes related to social cohesion.	› Explore programming that encourages large group participation	ST	PR-PG	Staff time
						› Develop amenities to host community gathering events	MT	PR-PL, PR-PG	\$\$-\$\$\$\$
		X				› Expand programming opportunities for outdoor adventure	MT	PR-PG	Staff time, Partnerships
		X				› Develop nature-based outdoor recreation programs for all ages, particularly youth.	MT	PR-PG	Staff time, Partnerships

Health, continued

Park + Fac.	Greenways	Programs	O + M	Finances	Recommendation	Action	Timeline	Responsible Group	OMC/ Notes
X	X	X			H-4 Plan, design and program of the parks and recreation system to improve health outcomes related to healthy eating.	› Leverage presence of existing farmers market to advertise and educate attendees about health food options and locally sourced produce.	OG	PR-PG, PR-CU, CM	Staff time
		X		X		› Assess the feasibility of developing 'farm to table' program using partnerships	ST	PR-PG	\$-\$\$ Staff time Partnerships
			X			› Incorporate nutrition programs as age-appropriate recreation program activity	LT	PR-PG	Staff time, Partnerships, Grant Funding
X						› Provide additional community gardens, kitchens, edible landscapes and agritourism facilities within parks and facilities.	LT	PR-PL	\$\$-\$\$\$\$
	X	X	X		H-5 Identify potential partners and organizations who strive to improve health outcomes related to physical fitness, mental health, social cohesion and healthy eating.	› Develop short list of potential partners	ST	PR-LD	Staff time
			X			› Contact partners and determine program goals	ST	PR-LD	Staff time
						› Using best practices for partnerships, create agreements that are mutually beneficial	MT	PR-LD	Staff time



CONNECTIVITY

Offer a connected trail network within the Town of Holly Springs

Park + Fac.	Greenways	Programs	O + M	Finances	Recommendation	Action	Priority	Responsible Group	OMC/ Notes
	X	X			C-1 Build a well-connected parks and recreation system within the town	› Link parks, schools, residential areas, commercial and employment centers as well as regional connections	LT	PR-PL, DS, U&I	Staff time Grant funding
X						› Ensure interdepartmental collaboration on long range planning projects	LT, OG	PR-PL, DS, U&I	Staff time
	X	X			C-2 Connect to national, regional, and adjacent communities' greenway systems	› Ensure collaboration with NC Department of Transportation, Wake County, and adjacent jurisdictions to build the community connector corridors	LT	PR-LD, PR-PL, DS, U&I	Staff time
	X			X	C-3 Update policies and design standards for greenway trail construction	› Offer a variety of transportation and recreational use trail types (natural surface, off-road greenways, sidewalks, bike lanes, etc.) that are appropriate for location and use	LT	PR-PL, DS, U&I	\$\$\$\$\$
	X				C-4 Engage private development community to expand the greenway trail network	› Adopt the greenway master plan to guide developer-built greenway networks	ST	PR-PL, DS, U&I	Staff time
	X					› Update the UDO to include clearly defined exactions that expand the greenway trail network	ST, OG	PR-PL	Staff time
X	X				C-5 Improve community awareness about greenway trails through wayfinding, mapping, trailheads, and other communication tools	› Develop wayfinding and signage plan for parks, recreation, and greenway trail system.	ST	PR-PL, OC, CM	\$\$\$
				X	C-6 Establish a well-funded capital, operations and maintenance budget for trails and greenways	› Continue to track ongoing operations and maintenance costs for greenways and consider additional budget as new greenways are being added to the system.	ST, OG	PR-PL, PR-MA, PW	Staff time



FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Establish a financially sustainable Department.

Park + Fac.	Greenways	Programs	O + M	Finances	Recommendation	Action	Priority	Responsible Group	OMC/ Notes
		X	X	X	F-1 Complete a true cost of service / ownership assessment for each park and program in the system to understand and project on-going operations and maintenance costs.	› Utilize a Total Cost of Service / Ownership model, track all costs associated with programs and amenities / facilities, including maintenance	ST	PR-LD, PR-PG, PR-AT, PR-CU, PR-MA	Staff time
			X	X		› Train program staff on the process of conducting a Cost of Service / Ownership Analysis and the process undertaken on a regular basis.	ST	PR-LD, PR-PG	Staff time
				X		› Utilize a financial management system to efficiently track and manage costs to deliver services	ST	PR-LD	\$\$\$
X	X	X			F-2 Establish cost recovery goals for programs and facilities	› Classify programs according to a Cost Recovery Model.	ST	PR-LD, PR-PG	Staff time
		X		X	F-3 Establish a diverse pricing policy that reflects cost recovery goals and community values	› Establish pricing policy for essential, important, and value-added programs based on Cost Recovery Model.	ST	PR-LD, PR-PG	Staff time
			X	X	F-4 Develop a clear funding strategy plan to fund park improvements and on-going operations and maintenance costs.	› Diversify funding sources to include dedicated funding options such as impact fees, hotel tax, tax increment fund, and food and beverage tax.	ST	PR-LD, PR-MA, PR-PL FN	Staff time
				X		› Include earned income options such as membership fees, rentals, program fees, etc.	ST	PR-LD, PR-PG	Staff time
						› Include financial support options such as grant funding from various non profit, state, & federal sources.	ST	PR-LD, DS, FN, U&I, PW, OC	Staff time Partnerships

Financial Sustainability, continued

Park + Fac.	Greenways	Programs	O + M	Finances	Recommendation	Action	Priority	Responsible Group	OMC/ Notes
					F-4 Develop a clear funding strategy plan to fund park improvements and on-going operations and maintenance costs. (Continued from previous Page)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Establish Parks and Recreation Foundation to expand funding sources options 	MT	PR-LD	Staff time
		X	X	X	F-5 Evaluate existing partnerships to determine on-going mutually beneficial outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Use partnerships to offer programs / services in response to community needs & trends 	ST	PR-LD	Staff time
			X	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Track and evaluate the economic value of partnerships and volunteers 	ST	PR-LD	Staff time



ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Commit to protection of natural resources.

Park + Fac.	Greenways	Programs	O + M	Finances	Recommendation	Action	Timeline	Responsible Group	OMC/ Notes
X X					N-1 Develop parks, facilities and greenways while protecting natural resources	➢ Deploy best practices in natural resource preservation	ST	PR-PL, PR-EN, PR-MA DS, U&I	Staff time
X X						➢ Deploy best practices in environmentally sustainable site design practices	ST	PR-PL, DS, U&I	\$\$\$
X X						➢ Deploy best practices in green building practices	ST	PR-PL, DS, U&I	\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$
X X				X		➢ Leverage conservation subdivisions to secure additional conservation land from developers	ST	PR-PL, DS, U&I	Staff time
			X			➢ Adopt a cross-sector approach to support sustainability goals identified in the Future Land Use and Community Character Plan.	ST	PR-PL, PR-EN, DS, U&I	Staff time
		X X			N-2 Maximize sustainability initiatives to minimize resource consumption, reduce waste and promote use of renewable resources.	➢ Develop goals around minimizing water and energy consumption, and carbon emissions	ST	PR-PL, PR-EN, DS, U&I	Staff time
					N-3 Expand core program offerings to include environmental awareness	➢ Identify and implement practices to provide renewable resources	MT	PR-PL, PR-EN, DS, U&I	Staff time
			X X			➢ Establish policies to introduce waste reduction technologies and programs at parks and facilities.	ST	PR-LD, PR-PL, PR-EN, DS, U&I	Staff time
		X X				➢ Identify key focus areas related to natural resources and environmental awareness	ST	PR-LD, PR-PL, PR-EN, DS, U&I	Staff time
			X X			➢ Develop program plans	MT	PR-PG, PR-EN	Staff time
			X X			➢ Identify potential partners to lead programs	ST	PR-PG, PR-EN	Staff time
			X			➢ Collaborate with local school system to support STEM curricula	ST	PR-LD, PR-PL, PR-PG	Staff time

Environmental Awareness, continued

Park + Fac.	Greenways	Programs	O + M	Finances	Recommendation	Action	Timeline	Responsible Group	OMC/ Notes
			X		N-4 Adopt a cross-sector approach to supporting and implementing Town-wide initiatives related to natural resource protection and environmental awareness	➢ Secure additional conservation land through exactions as part of UDO rewrite process	MT	PR-LD, PR-PL, PR-EN, DS, U&I	Staff time
			X			➢ Collaborate with other Town departments to execute the initiatives of the strategic plan	MT	PR-LD, PR-PL, PR-EN	Staff time
			X			➢ Partner with local and state transportation agencies to meet connectivity, park access and carbon emissions reduction goals.	LT	PR-LD, PR-PL, PR-EN, DS, U&I	Staff time
X		X				➢ Work with Tree Advisory Committee to establish tree canopy goals for parks and recreation facilities	ST	PR-PL	Staff time



Park + Fac.	Greenways	Programs	O + M	Finances	Recommendation	Action	Timeline	Responsible Group	OMC/ Notes
X X					X-1 Adhere to best practices in planning and design of parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> >Create safe parks through CPTED design 	LT	PR-PL	\$-\$\$
X X						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use data-driven design process to identify current recreation needs 	LT	PR-PL, PR-LD	Staff time
X X					X-2 Emphasize 'placemaking' to focus on the imageability of the parks system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider a 1% public art dedication in all construction projects 	MT	PR-PL, DS,U&I	\$\$-\$\$\$\$
X X						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make community engagement process integral part of parks and facilities development to ensure the community identity is reflected in the parks and facilities design 	ST	PR-LD, PR-PL, OC	\$-\$\$\$ Staff time
X X					X-3 Develop and implement maintenance management plans for existing and future parks and facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish focus on local history, culture, and context to inform park design process 	ST	PR-PL	Staff time
X X						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop park design standards for site furnishings, signage to establish consistency across the park system and Town brand 	ST	PR-PL, OC	\$-\$\$\$ Staff time
X X X						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create Key Performance Indicators to evaluate efficiency and effectiveness of the work 	ST	PR-LD, PR-PL, PR-PG	Staff time
	X	X	X		X-4 Increase the percentage of program offerings in the mature phase to the recommended distribution of 40 percent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete a Program Lifecycle Analysis annually to increase program delivery efficiency 	ST	PR-PG	Staff time

Excellence, continued

Park + Fac.	Greenways	Programs	O + M	Finances	Recommendation	Action	Timeline	Responsible Group	OMC/ Notes
X	X	X	X	X	X-6 Develop and support a culture of innovation, technology, and adaptability to respond to on-going local, national, and global challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop training programs for staff to expand knowledge associated with new technologies 	ST	PR-LD	\$\$
			X	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement on-line reservation and payment system for transactional services and program sign-ups 	ST	PR-LD, PR-AD, PR-PG	\$\$\$
			X	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt an asset management/ work order system and software for the Maintenance Division. 	ST	PR-MA	\$\$\$
			X	X	X-7 Update the organizational structure of the department to improve functionality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate a GPS tracking system to track staff's commute time to parks and facilities. 	ST	PR-LD, PR-MA	\$\$\$
			X	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiment with small scale new technologies or develop pilot projects that significantly reduce staff time and costs 	ST	PR-LD	\$-\$\$
				X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider a dedicated business development position 	ST	PR-LD	\$\$
			X	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a tiered hierarchy of positions (primary, secondary, tertiary, etc.) based on accountability, responsibility and pay. 	ST	PR-LD	Staff time
			X	X	X-8 Establish the right balance of FTE's between fulltime and part-time maintenance staff to achieve the industry standard of 27 acres per FTE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect top tier positions as a leadership team 	ST	PR-LD	Staff time
				X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make Special Events a Division 	ST	PR-LD	Staff time
			X			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Functionally align facilities and programming for sports, the farmers market and Arts and recreation, and Bass lake with Park maintenance 	ST	PR-LD, PR-CU, PR-PG	

Excellence, continued

Park + Fac.	Greenways	Programs	O + M	Finances	Recommendation	Action	Timeline	Responsible Group	OMC/ Notes
			X		X-9 Support professional development and succession planning for all staff levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Encourage staff to attend professional training programs and conferences. 	ST	PR-LD	\$
			X		X-10 Increase awareness, branding, & marketing of parks, programs, greenways & services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Develop marketing plan based on the strategies discussed in the inventory + analysis chapter. 	MT	PR-LD, CM, PR-AD	\$\$
		X				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Establish priority segments to target in terms of new program/ service development and communication tactics. 	ST	PR-AD, PR-PG, CM	Staff time
			X			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Establish and review regularly performance measures for marketing; performance measures can be tracked through increased use of customer surveys as well as some web-based metrics. 	ST	PR-PG, CM	Staff time
		X	X		X-11 Nurture existing partnerships that are mutually beneficial and develop new partnerships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Leverage relationships with partners to enhance marketing efforts through cross-promotion that include defined measurable outcomes. 	ST	PR-PG, PR-AD CM	Staff time
		X	X	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Identify potential partners in the areas of operations, vendors, service providers, co-branding and resource development. 	ST	PR-LD, PR-PG, PR-MA	Staff time
			X	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Implement best practices in partnerships to establish mutually beneficial relationships 	MT	PR-LD	Staff time

Excellence, continued

Park + Fac.	Greenways	Programs	O + M	Finances	Recommendation	Action	Timeline	Responsible Group	OMC/ Notes
			X		X-11 Nurture existing partnerships that are mutually beneficial and develop new partnerships. (Continued from previous page)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Continue to monitor and update established volunteer and partner policies and agreements which are tailored to the different types of volunteers and partnerships the Department encounters 	MT	PR-PG, PR-AD	Staff time
			X			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Track volunteer metrics annually 	ST	PR-PG, PR-AD	Staff time
			X			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Continue background checks for all volunteers working with all programs 	ST	PR-PG, PR-AT, PR-CU	Staff time
X	X	X	X	X	X-13 Establish best practices to pursue national awards and CAPRA accreditation.			PR-LD, OC	Staff time

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greenways



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Greenway trails are bicycle and pedestrian facilities that allow people to make muscle powered trips for transportation and recreation. Greenway trails are recognized for their ability to connect people and places, working as a tool for health, transportation, economic development, environmental preservation and leisure activities. They serve an array of user needs and activities including commuting, recreation, daily exercise and connecting with nature. Greenway trails have become an increasingly important and highly sought-after facility that communities across the world are demanding.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide context in guiding principles, design standards, trail types and framework in which facilities are assessed and recommendations are developed. A review of the current conditions, related planning efforts and projects and comparing benchmarking of comparable size towns also provides important background to an inventory assessment. Throughout the planning process, a broad community engagement effort was coordinated to facilitate feedback from the general public, steering committee, Town of Holly Springs staff members, Town Council and neighboring jurisdictions. This all ultimately informed the project team's key findings, recommendations and implementation strategies.

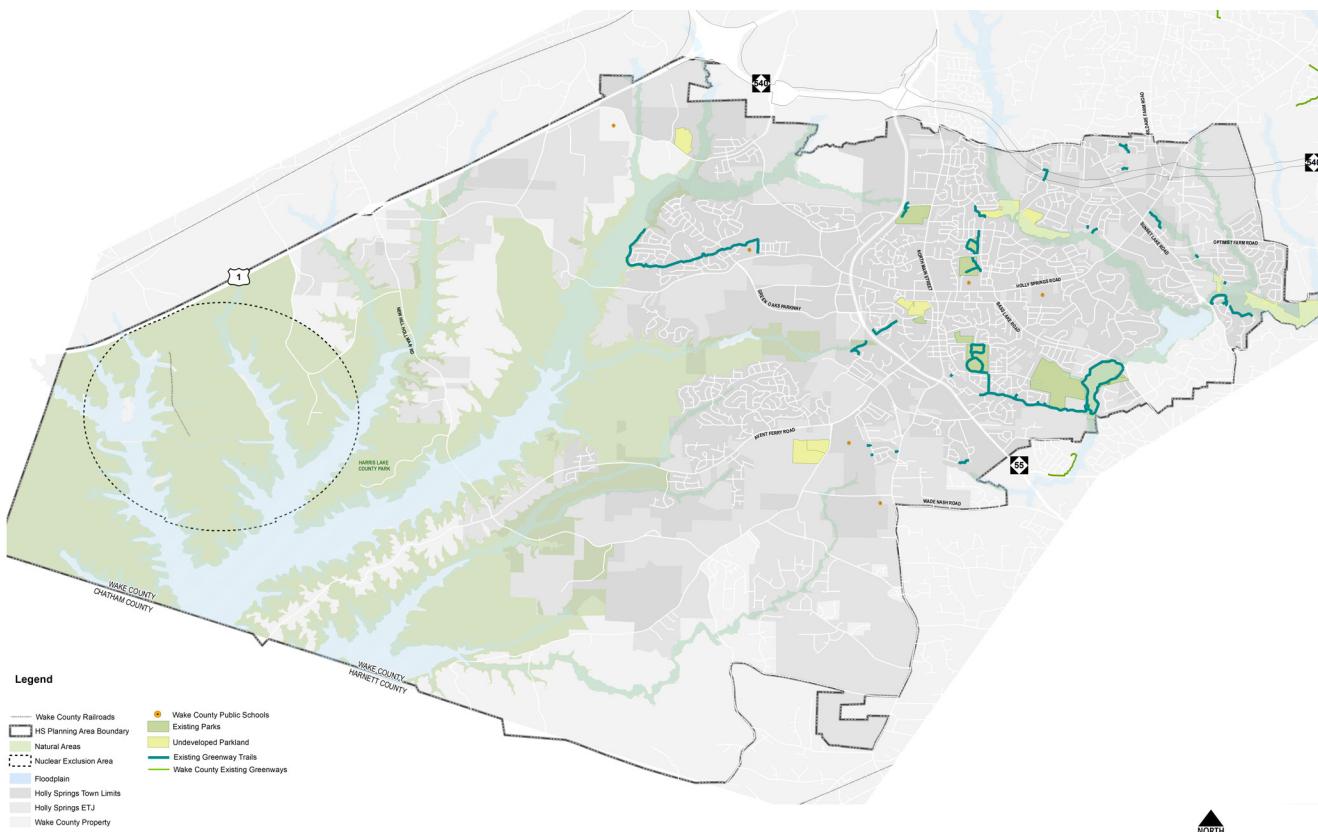


Figure 1 - Existing greenway trails map

BENEFITS OF GREENWAY TRAILS

Greenway trails contribute to a community's well-being by promoting individual and community health, environmental quality and economic impact. Greenway trails are one of the very few public investments that have such a wide impact on a community's quality of life. A dollar invested in a greenway project will yield return on that investment in transportation, health, environmental quality and economic vibrancy.



▲ Figure 2 - Benefits of greenway trails

COMMUNITY HEALTH	ENVIRONMENT QUALITY	ECONOMIC IMPACT
 HEALTH AND WELL-BEING facilitate active living and connecting with nature	 ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP protect air quality, water quality and wildlife habitat	 ECONOMIC IMPACT CATALYST promote tourism and business through public investment
 INCREASED MOBILITY OPTIONS expand residents' options for non-vehicular travel and commuting	 EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES connect residents to information about the natural world	 WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT attract new residents and businesses with high quality of life
 CULTURAL AWARENESS define community identity through public art	 HAZARD MITIGATION buffer hazard-prone areas such as floodplains	 HIGHER TAX REVENUE increase tax revenue by increasing property values

▲ Table 1 - Community, environmental and economic sustainability benefits of investing in greenway trails

Social Benefits

Simply being in nature and away from the stressors of everyday life promotes improved health and well-being. Greenway trails provide residents an opportunity to be away from driving, traffic, noise and dense development. Greenway trails promote a healthy, active lifestyle providing a safe and attractive environment for running, jogging, biking, walking and other forms of physical activity. Providing safe facilities for these activities away from areas of automobile traffic allows users to pursue these activities safely and comfortably.

Health benefits range from short to long-term effects on both physical and mental health. Evidence shows that greenway trails and parks provide an opportunity for residents to create long-term health habits and active lifestyles that improve health and reduce chances of cardiovascular, skeletal, or other health complications.

A 2005 study on the cost benefit analysis of physical activity on bike and pedestrian trails revealed that for every \$ 1.00 in investment in trails for physical activity led to \$ 2.94 in direct medical benefit, indicating that building trails is cost beneficial from a public health perspective.¹

In North Carolina, 32.1 percent of adults and 15 percent of children are obese, with trends projected to increase. In 2019, 12.5 percent, or roughly 1.3 million North Carolinians were diabetic. That number has increased by 15% since 2012.

¹ Wang, Guijing, Caroline A. Macera, Barbara Scudder-Soucie, Tom Schmid, Michael Pratt, and David Buchner. "A Cost-Benefit Analysis of Physical Activity Using Bike/Pedestrian Trails." *Health Promotion Practice* 6, no. 2 (April 2005): 174–79.
 doi:10.1177/1524839903260687

Walking as a form of exercise becomes easier, safer, and more fun when people can use greenway trails for their exercise. Greenway trails have low barriers to entry; there is no entry fee and no special equipment is needed. Greenway trail users are more likely to interact with neighbors and community members, improving their own social health and the social connectedness of the community. This has been proven to reduce stress, diminish depression and promote overall positive health outcomes.

Greenway trails provide a critical opportunity to connect children with nature. Studies show that regular non-structured play in a natural setting reduces symptoms of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Connecting with nature allows children and adults to release stress, engage in physical problem solving, and find space for contemplation and reflection.

Vehicular traffic congestion is often an issue in areas experiencing population growth. Robust greenway networks are a tool to mitigate congestion by providing residents transportation options other than driving a vehicle. When residents can choose cycling or walking to their destination, vehicular traffic is removed from the road, decreasing congestion.

Greenway trails can be constructed to comply with universal design standards that ensure accessibility to people who use mobility devices such as a wheelchair or crutches. Following design standards that comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) will ensure that all residents can have expanded choices in their modes of transportation.

Nationally, about 836,569 Americans commuted by bike in 2017, an increase of 43 percent since year 2000. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the average commute time nationally was 26 minutes, and the Town of Holly Springs' average commute time was 28 minutes.

The protection of sacred places with lasting identities set years ago allows a community to maintain a sense of place for not only residents, but also for tourism and economic purposes.

Redevelopment of formerly neglected community resources with walking and biking infrastructure brings a new sense of identity, as observed at the American Tobacco Trail in Durham, North Carolina and The High Line in the New York City, New York. In both cases, industrial uses prohibited public use until the installation of trails and active public/private destinations. Greenway trails are a catalyst for urban revitalization and restoration of economic vitality in derelict industrial centers. The incorporation of historic monumentation, interpretive signage and public art have the potential to capture and celebrate the past, enhancing cultural awareness and connection to community identity.

Paired with economic benefits and community identity, greenway trails add and/or protect aesthetically pleasing aspects of a community. Not only is the natural environment portrayed in a raw state accessible to the public, but with the addition of artwork such as commissioned sculptures and murals an added aesthetic is achievable. This improves the user experience and potentially attracts new users who would otherwise not utilize a greenway trail system.

Environmental Benefits

Greenway trails are often located along stream corridors, utility easements and forested areas. This urban trail infrastructure protects water quality, air quality and wildlife habitat.

Greenway trails located along stream corridors preserve natural areas where stormwater can filtrate through soils naturally, rather than entering stormwater infrastructure. Once water enters a jurisdiction's stormwater infrastructure, it is either deposited into natural waterbodies without any treatment or filtration, or it is treated as wastewater at a cost to the area's water customers and utilities. Using greenway trails to create vegetated buffers along streams creates opportunities for stormwater to filter through soils before seeping into natural bodies of water. Greenway trails within these natural corridors protect water quality by allowing water to filter out pollution carried in storm water and reducing stormwater velocity to reduce erosion and sedimentation. The positive impact greenway trails have on air quality is two-fold. First, greenway trails are often vegetated with trees or shrubs. These plants provide air filtration, carbon sequestration, and ecosystem services. Wildlife benefits from greenway trail networks. Greenway trails provide corridors between forested areas. These connections are critical to supporting wildlife populations that need safe routes for local migration, as well as bird species following much longer migration routes.

Additionally, greenway trails promote forms of transportation other than driving a car. The avoided car trips add up to reduce the amount of non-point source pollution in the form of fossil fuel exhaust released into the atmosphere.

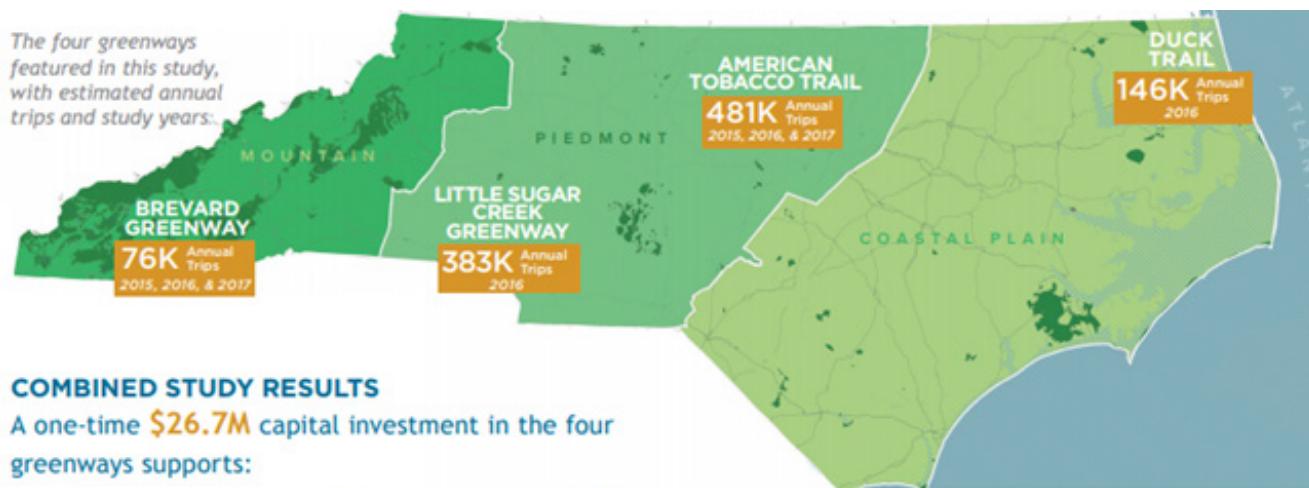
Economic Benefits

Greenway trail networks bring new business and economic life to cities, towns and communities. Communities benefit both by creating a greenway trail network that provides important local connections and by extending local connections to larger regional trail networks.

Greenway trails benefit the surrounding area on a micro-economic scale by increasing adjacent property values and generating trail-user spending near trails. Proximity to a greenway trail is an important consideration for homebuyers and businesses looking to locate in a community. The value of homes and properties adjacent to a trail statistically are higher than comparable properties further away from a greenway trail corridor.

The East Coast Greenway is a regional trail project that runs through North Carolina with the goal of creating a continuous greenway connection between Maine and Florida. The Triangle is the most connected metro on the route with 74 miles of trail on the ground from Durham to Clayton. This greenway trail benefits the Triangle area of North Carolina by bringing in more than \$90 million in related revenue and taxes per year. The greenway trail has also created nearly 800 temporary and permanent jobs².

2 <https://www.greenway.org/uploads/attachments/cj8ahwk7d0flaagqiv9ieamat-triangle-ecg-impact-report-min.pdf>



\$19.4M

Estimated annual sales revenue at local businesses along the four greenways



\$684K

Estimated annual local and state sales tax revenue from businesses along the greenways



\$25.7M

Estimated annual savings due to more physical activity, less pollution and congestion, and fewer traffic injuries from use of the greenways



\$48.7M

Estimated business revenue from greenway construction



790 JOBS

Are supported annually through greenway construction

▲ Figure 3 - Economic impact of shared use paths in North Carolina³



COVID-19

The multiple benefits of greenway trails have never been more apparent than during the coronavirus pandemic. With most fitness centers closed and people confined to their homes, parks and greenway trails have become an even more valuable public amenity for physical and mental health. Across the country and world, greenway trails have seen a huge uptick in users, requiring municipalities to find creative solutions to maintain social distancing and follow safety protocols. The increased demand on greenway trails have led some municipalities to temporarily close streets and designate them for walking, biking, roller blading and other forms of exercise.

Greenway trails that collect user data are seeing double and triple the volume of usage in comparison to the same period last year. In North Carolina, many of the popular greenway trails collect data and are seeing a significant increase in bicycle and pedestrian users. For instance, the following trails have experienced nearly double or triple user count: the American Tobacco Trail (179%), Neuse River Greenway (278%) and Black Creek Greenway (277%).³ Another study looking at Strava data reported that in Houston and Los Angeles, two sprawling metropolises infamous for driving, there was a significant increase in total volume of cycling trips in May 2020 (138% higher in Houston, 93% higher in Los Angeles).⁴

It is more obvious than ever that more greenway trails are needed, with more public funding and increased support for greenway investment. There is hope from bicycle advocates, transportation planners and the public that this will lead to increased government spending and stimulus packages for greenway trails and bicycle facilities. It could, in fact, contribute to economic growth.

Greenway Trail Network Guiding Principles

Proper long-range planning is essential to ensure that greenway trails can be planned, designed and constructed to fully meet the benefits they can provide.

Guiding principles of a greenway trail system represent the broad philosophy that guides greenway trails planning and design. Consistent across the industry, the following guiding principles were considered when authoring the recommendations contained herein.

GREENWAY TRAILS SHOULD BE			
ACCESSIBLE	EQUITABLE	EXPERIENTIAL	SAFE

³ The Institute for Transportation Research and Education and Alta Planning + Design for the North Carolina Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation.

⁴ <https://itre.ncsu.edu/focus/bike-ped/nc-nmvdp/>

⁵ https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-09-23/how-the-coronavirus-affected-biking-in-u-s-cities?cmpid=BBD102220_CITYLAB&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_term=201022&utm_campaign=citylabdaily

Accessible

Accessible greenway trails can be enjoyed by all people of all ages and ability levels. Accessibility is regulated through technical design standards outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), but more communities are recognizing the benefit of Universal Design, which considers accessibility comprehensively, beyond ADA requirements. Universal Design is defined as the "design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability." Aspects of the built environment contribute to universal accessibility of greenway trails, such as trail width, surface material and longitudinal and horizontal slopes.



Equitable

The result of equitable greenway trail planning is that all people have access to greenway trails regardless of race, class, location and other factors. Greenway trails should support all residents, and equity recognizes that equally providing infrastructure may not equitably meet the needs of neighborhoods and individuals. For example, individuals who use greenway trails to achieve fitness goals will have different needs than individuals who use greenway trails to commute to a workplace. Investment in greenway trail infrastructure should happen in a way that provides more vulnerable populations with equitable greenway trail infrastructure, access and experiences.



Experiential

Experience is the sensory feedback an individual receives while engaging in a task or activity. Sensory feedback forms an experience, one that is positive or negative. Creating greenway trails to generate positive experiences includes considering the natural views, a comfortable environment and safety. Greenway trails should contribute to an overall quality-of-life and become a regular part of everyday life for short trips, exercise and connecting with nature and socializing.



Safe

Safety refers to greenway trail elements that minimize the risk of injury, danger and crime. Safe greenway trail networks are comfortable for users of all ages and ability levels as a safe means of alternative transportation making it easier to walk or ride a bike. The application of relevant design standards ensures that grades, curves and intersections with roadways and driveways are as safe as possible. Greenway trails are as safe as the neighborhoods they traverse through. Communities should develop appropriate



policing and volunteer ambassador programs as their network expands.

The McAdams project team has developed a framework to assist decision makers in how to prioritize greenway trail implementation in Holly Springs. This framework, or trail hierarchy, emphasizes the importance of considering the network as a system when making decisions. The trail hierarchy is separated into three categories, as described below:

- **Community Connector** - greenway trails that form the main structure of Holly Springs' greenway trail network. These greenway trails form the main connections with adjacent communities, to and from downtown, across challenging obstacles and to other greenway trails. Community Connectors provide strong North/South and East/West routes on which to build a highly functional greenway trail network.
- **Destination Connector** - greenway trails that link Holly Springs destinations such as schools, parks, employment centers and others to the Community Connector network.
- **Neighborhood Connector** - greenway trails that connect residential neighborhoods to the larger greenway trial network.



Based on this framework, a comprehensive network map is developed that helps municipal agencies to efficiently plan, design and fund projects. These priority greenway trails also take into consideration major obstacles that could hinder the success of certain corridors.

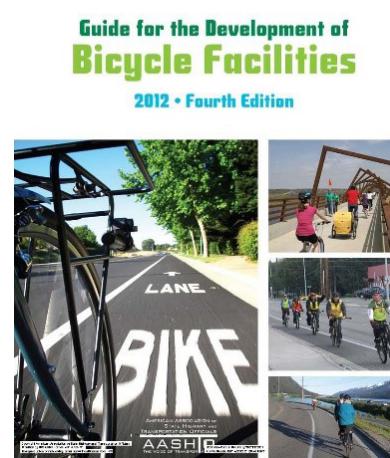
Design Standards

There are several resources available that provide guidance on design standards and specifications for greenway trails. Below is a brief description of those resources and a table that highlights the recommended specifications that the Town of Holly Springs should consider when developing new or modifying existing greenway trails.

AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities, 4th Edition

Published by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), this guide provides the basis for both planning and designing bicycle facilities. Information covered includes planning, bicycle operation and safety, on-road bicycle facility design, side path design, bicycle parking, and maintenance and operations. The purpose of the guide is to present sound planning and design guidelines by referencing a recommended range of design values and describing alternative design approaches. The guide also allows for the incorporation of pedestrians and motorists along with bicyclists for dynamic designs that are sensitive to local context.

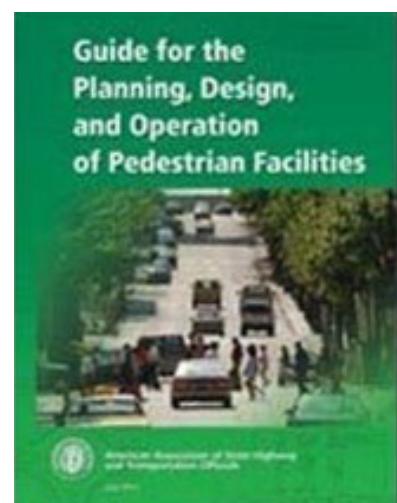
(link: [Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities, 4th Edition](#))



AASHTO Guide for the Planning, Design and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities, 1st Edition

Much like the AASHTO's Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities, this guide provides instruction on planning, design and operation of pedestrian facilities along streets and highways, focusing on effective ways to accommodate pedestrians within public rights-of-way. Methods to accommodate pedestrians vary depending on the roadway and facility type, and those practices are described in this guide. It also addresses land use planning and site design, as these topics have a profound effect on pedestrian mobility.

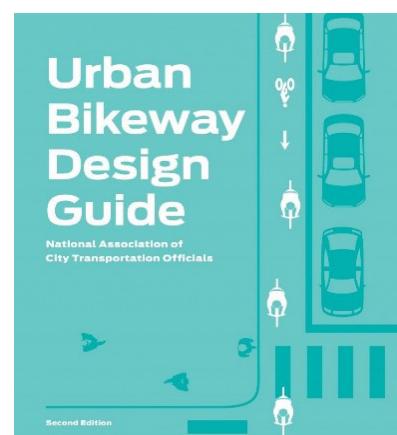
(link: [Guide for the Planning, Design and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities, 1st Edition](#))



NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide

The NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide is based on experience and recommendations from prominent cycling cities from around the world. The target of this guide is cities seeking to improve bicycle transportation where unique challenges like high interaction with traffic, decreased right of way and increased conflict points are present. These challenges demand innovative solutions and the NACTO guide showcases how other cities have conquered these challenges. The AASHTO Guide is not referenced in most of NACTO design solutions. However, virtually all treatments are permitted under the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).

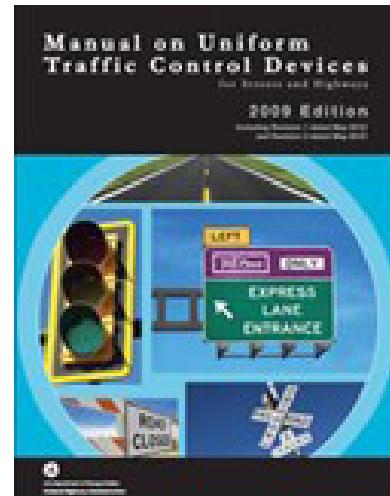
(link: [NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide](#))



Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)

The Federal Highway Administration's MUTCD is the foremost source for guidance on lane striping requirements, signal warrants, recommended signage, and recommended pavement markings for greenway trails and roadway crossings. If desired design treatments are not covered in the MUTCD manual, they may be offered to FHWA for interpretation and official ruling. The FHWA provides an online database where past official rulings can be found (<https://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/orsearch.asp>) which may provide useful when progressing through the design process.

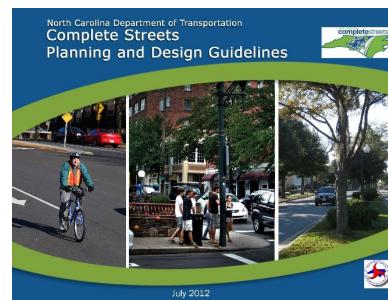
[\(link: Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices\)](#)



The North Carolina Department of Transportation Complete Streets Planning and Design Guidelines

This publication, released in 2012, includes detailed information on the processes, street types, and recommendations for designing complete streets in North Carolina. The guidelines are meant to help both NCDOT and municipalities with thinking through planning and designing new streets or improving existing infrastructure that all modes of transportation can use, be they pedestrians, bicyclists or motor vehicles. While all design standards referenced are valuable to planning and designing Holly Springs' pedestrian and bicycle network, special attention should be paid to AASHTO, MUTCD and ADA guidelines.

[\(link: NCDOT Complete Streets Planning and Design Guidelines\)](#)



American with Disabilities Act (ADA)

While elements such as curb ramps, slopes, and railings that are referenced in AASHTO or MUTCD guides, these guides do not explicitly reference compliance with ADA standards. There are several manuals listed below that provide standards for the construction of accessible facilities to comply with the American with Disabilities Act.

- › [2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design](#)
- › [ABA Accessibility Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas](#)
- › Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG)
 - [Proposed guidelines](#) have been developed but are not yet adopted by the Department of Justice
- › [2017 ICC/ ANSI A117.1 Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities](#)
- › US Forest Service Outdoor Recreation Accessibility Guidelines ([FSORAG](#))

Meeting the requirements outlined in the aforesaid planning documents is important for any bicycle and pedestrian network to do such that the most users can participate. Other Valuable Resources include:

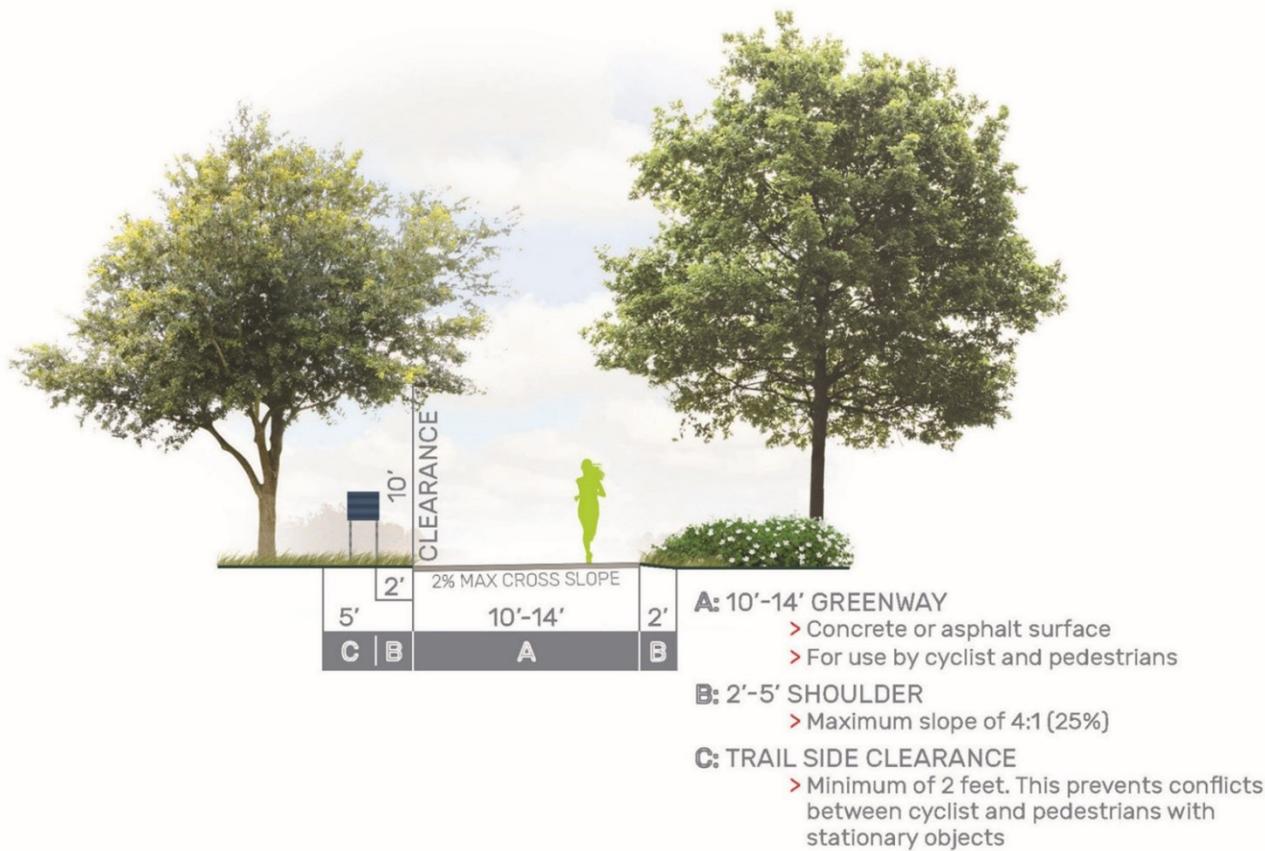
- › [U.S. Department of Transportation FHWA – Separated Bike Lane Planning and Design Guide](#)
- › [10 Techniques for Making Cities More Walkable](#)
- › [Center for Disease Control and Prevention – Parks and Trails Health Impact Assessment Toolkit](#)
- › [National Association of City Transportation Officials \(NACTO\) – Design Guide Archives](#)
- › [Small Town and Rural Design Guide – Facilities for Walking and Biking](#)
- › [American Trails](#)
- › [Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center](#)
- › [Rails-to-Trails Conservancy](#)
- › [America Walks – Learning Center](#)
- › [International Mountain Biking Association](#)
- › [FHWA Course on Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation](#)

TRAIL TYPES

When planning and building pedestrian and bicycle facilities, there are several options that a municipality can choose from. There are also many factors that influence that decision, such as available right-of-way, interaction with vehicular traffic, terrain, intersections, roadway conditions, community preferences and comfort levels, etc. Below is a brief description of the most common options available when building pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

Greenway Trails

As the most common type, greenway trails can be defined as linear open space areas, often associated with wildlife corridors or valuable vegetative buffers. Most often located within a dedicated easement or public utility right-of-way, greenway trails usually include a developed (hard) surface to allow ease of usage for bicycles and other wheeled vehicles. Developed surfaces are most commonly asphalt, concrete or crushed stone. The width of the trail can vary from ten to fourteen feet, with ten feet being the most common. Communities around North Carolina including Raleigh, Charlotte and Wilmington have recently updated their standard width to 12 feet due to the high usage seen on built greenway trails.



▲ Figure 4 - Paved greenway trail illustration

Side Paths

Usually located immediately adjacent and parallel to a roadway, side paths are 10-14 feet in width for two-way traffic flow and are physically separated from vehicular travel through vegetated landscape strips, rumble strips or site furnishings (streetlights, wayfinding signage or benches). Side paths often share the right-of-way (ROW) with collector and highway roads with higher volumes and moderate-to-high speeds (15 – 55 MPH)⁵. As roadway speed increases so should the separation width between the vehicular path of travel and the side path facility. Specific details regarding path width, separation width, landscape material, maintenance, crossing design or intersection width and connection to other multi-modal facilities should be considered during a detailed corridor study.

Side paths should be located with consideration to a safe clear zone. Highway design manuals specify the distance from the edge of roadway to the side path based on the posted speed of the road and average daily trips. This distance can be mitigated by installing curb and gutter or a vertical barrier to protect users from vehicles. The clear zone distance should be considered at the planning stage to determine the adequate right-of-way width required and possible increase in costs for the installation of curb and a closed drainage system. Side paths can offer a more comfortable experience for cyclists as compared to on-road facilities such as bike lanes or wide outside shoulders located in heavy traffic environments and their inclusion within a network allows for reduced roadway crossing distances.

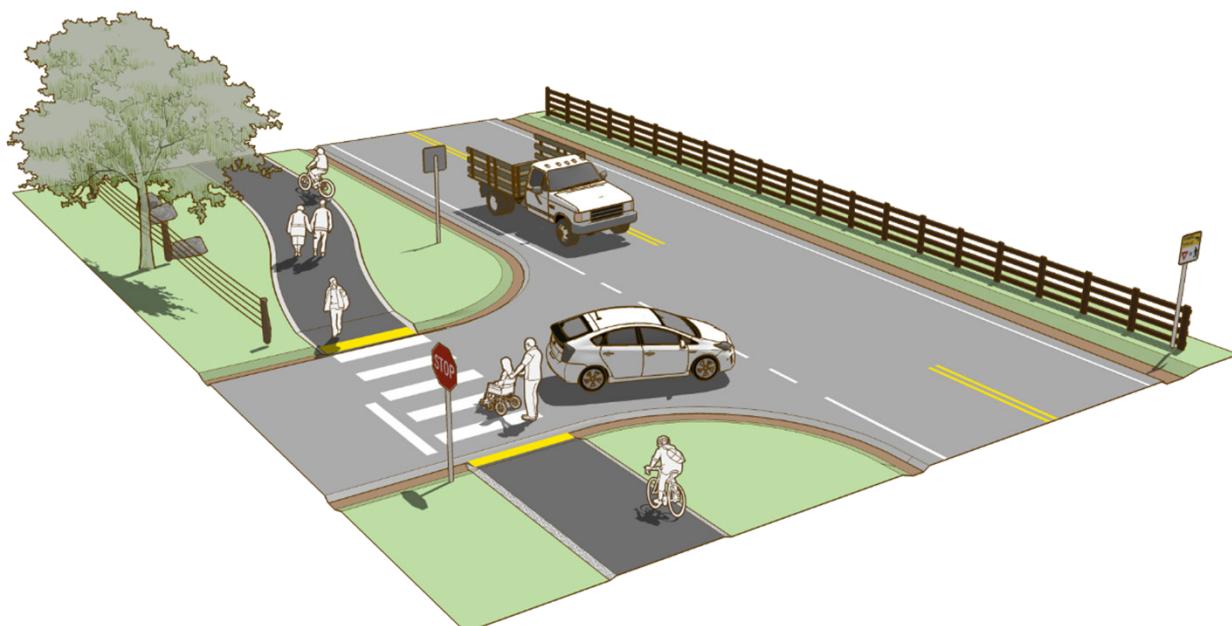


Figure 5 - Side path illustration⁵

5 U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration. Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks, 2016.

Side paths are designed to be part of a transportation system, providing off-road routes for a variety of users. The primary users of side paths are bicyclists and pedestrians, including pedestrians using mobility devices such as manual or motorized wheelchairs. While they may coincidentally provide a recreational experience, side paths differ from other types of trails with their transportation focus and serving as a supplement to on-road bike lanes, shared roadways, bike boulevards and paved shoulders. They may extend or complement a roadway network. Side path design is similar to roadway design but on a smaller scale and for lower speeds. Whether located within a highway right-of-way, provided along a riverbank or established over natural terrain within an independent right-of-way, side paths differ from sidewalks and greenway trails in that they are primarily designed for bicyclists and others for transportation purposes such as commuting to work.⁶

For this plan, side paths are paved facilities, connecting users from residential, civic, social and employment areas to the greenway trail network. They can be either parallel to the road or meander slightly, creating a more comfortable and aesthetically pleasing experience for the trail user.

Sidewalks

Sidewalks are dedicated to and designed for use by pedestrians. They should be safe, comfortable and accessible to all. Sidewalks are paved facilities, physically separated from the roadway by either a curb or unpaved road verge or combination of both. Like side paths, sidewalks are typically parallel to a roadway but are designed for pedestrians only, not for bicycles or other recreational purposes.



▲ Figure 6 - Sidewalk Illustration⁹

6 <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/framework.htm> and <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/research/safety/pedbike/05137/05137.pdf>

8 U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration. Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks, 2016.

9 U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration. Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks, 2016.

Stream Corridor Trails

For purposes of this plan, stream corridor trails are defined as greenway trails adjacent to a stream or river corridors that are typically located within the floodway or floodplain. It should be noted that there are challenges when including stream corridor trails into the transportation network. Coordination with North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) is required in order to provide access under the road bridges where the body of water crosses. United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) approvals are required on projects where environmental impact, wetlands impact or floodplain impacts are inevitable.

In general, trails located along streams are typically asphalt or concrete. Often, an undisturbed vegetated buffer is located between the stream bank and the trail to help stabilize streambanks, moderate stream flow and filter pollutants. Located within the floodway, the materiality of trail cross sections should be carefully considered to provide an adequate foundation, stabilization and non-slip surface depending on the frequency and velocity of flood events. Greenway trails adjacent to streams pose a variety of design challenges that should be considered during planning and project selection, including:

- › **Urban Streams** - Dense urban conditions restrict trails to the floodway and may require installation of railings, and/or retaining walls to stabilize stream banks.
- › **Regular Flooding** - Trail surface within the floodway that are regularly inundated should be carefully selected. Often concrete is the best solution for these areas. While there is a higher construction cost, maintenance savings for repairs quickly balance the initial investment.
- › **Bench Modifications Beneath Vehicular Bridges** - These greenway trails stay at the stream elevation when crossing beneath vehicular bridges. Special design considerations and materials are recommended at these locations. Common materials include concrete trail surfaces, retaining walls (segmental block, cast-in place, pile and panel are often required to protect the trail from erosion) and safety rails. Connections up to the surface street network are desirable at most locations.
- › **FEMA Regulated Streams** - When working within the regulatory floodway, trail design (regardless of surface type) should minimize any change in ground elevation where possible. Any construction or increase in ground elevation within the floodway triggers detailed hydraulic modeling and required approvals through the Local Floodplain Administrator and possibly Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).
- › **Isolated Asphalt** - Many stream corridors include areas of jurisdictional wetlands. Care should be taken to locate boardwalks that cross these wetlands with future maintenance in mind. Asphalt should be avoided if a trail section is located between boardwalks and cannot be accessed by paving equipment for resurfacing. Concrete is the best surface type in this condition as it provides a longer surface life and can be repaired in batches using the adjacent boardwalks.



Shared Lane Markings



▲ Figure 7 - Shared lane marking illustration

Shared Lane Markings, or “sharrows,” are road markings used to indicate a shared traffic lane for bicycles and automobiles. The shared lane marking is a pavement marking that supports a complete bicycle network, however, it is not a facility type and should not be considered a substitute for bike lanes, cycle tracks, or other separation treatments where these facility types are otherwise more appropriate.

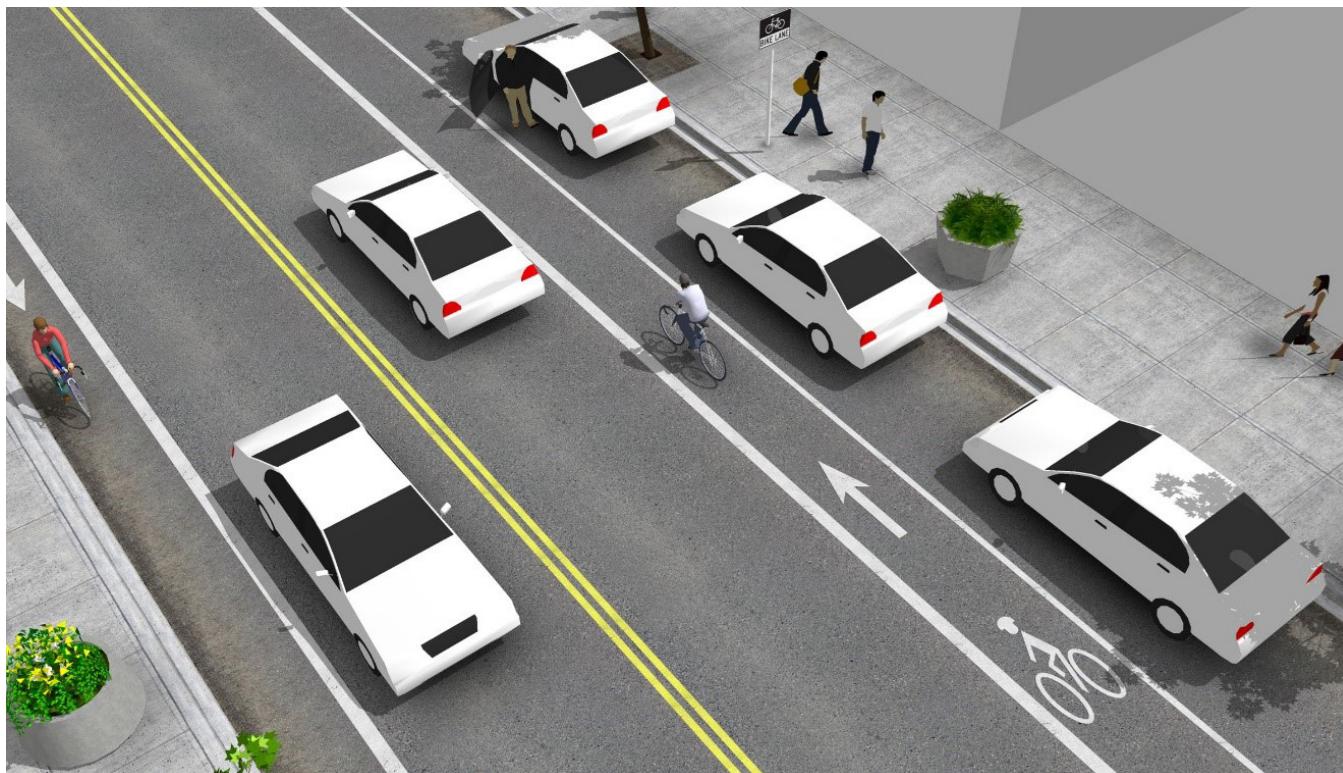
Benefits of “sharrows” include:

- Encourages bicyclists to position themselves safely in lanes too narrow for a motor vehicle and a bicycle to comfortably travel side by side within the same traffic lane.
- Alerts all road users to the presence of bikeway routes.
- Indicates a proper path for bicyclists through difficult or potentially hazardous situations, such as railroad tracks.
- Provides a wayfinding element along bike routes.
- Encourages safe passing by motorists.
- Reduces improper bicyclist behavior (e.g., sidewalk riding, wrong-way bicycling, etc.)

Sharrows are most conducive on streets with:

- Low volume of vehicle traffic (\leq 3,000 motor vehicle average daily).
- Low traffic speed (\leq 35 mph).
- Frequent, visible lane markings.

Bike Lanes



▲ Figure 8 - Bike lane illustration

Bike lanes allocate an exclusive space for bicyclists with a designated 5-foot striped lane, pavement markings, and signage and enable bicyclists to ride at their chosen speed without interference from traffic. Conventional bike lanes are located directly adjacent to motor vehicle travel lanes and run curbside when no parking is present or adjacent to parked cars on the right side of the street. They typically follow the same direction as motor vehicle traffic and have no physical barriers (bollards, medians, raised curbs, etc.) that restrict vehicular encroachment into the bike lane.

Benefits of conventional bike lanes include:

- Increases use comfort and confidence on busy streets.
- Creates separation between bicyclists and automobiles.
- Increases predictability of bicyclist and motorist movement and interaction.
- Increases streets' carrying capacity.
- A visual reinforcement of the bicyclists' right to the street.

Bike lanes are most conducive on streets with:

- $\geq 3,000$ motor vehicle average daily traffic.
- A posted speed ≥ 25 mph.
- High transit vehicle volume.

Buffered Bike Lanes



▲ Figure 9 - Buffered Bike Lane Illustration – Travel Side Buffer

A buffered bike lane is a conventional bike lane paired with additional buffer space to separate the motor vehicle traffic lane and/or parking lane from the bicyclists. Multiple pavement markings are typically used to delineate the

Benefits of buffered bike lanes include:

- Provides greater shy distance between vehicles and bicyclists.
- Provides space for bicyclists to pass other bicyclists without encroaching into adjacent vehicle traffic.
- Encourages bicyclists to ride outside of the door zone when buffer is located between parked cars and the bike lane.
- Provides a greater space for bicycling, but not so great that the bike lane is mistaken for a travel or parking lane.
- Appeals to a wider cross-section of bicycle users.
- Encourages bicycling by contributing to the perception of safety among bicycle network users.

Buffered bike lanes can be incorporated:

- Anywhere a standard bike lane is being considered.
- On streets with high travel speeds, high travel volumes, and/or high amounts of truck traffic.
- On streets with extra lanes or extra lane width.

Protected Bike Lanes (Cycle Tracks)

A protected bike lane or cycle track is an exclusive bike facility, physically separated from motor traffic and distinct from the sidewalk, that combines the experience of a separated path with the on-street infrastructure of a conventional bike lane. Cycle tracks have several different forms, but all provide space that is primarily used for bicycles and are separated from motor vehicle travel lanes, parking lanes and sidewalks. In contrast to bike lanes, where on-street parking exists, cycle tracks are located on the curb-side of the parking lane.

Cycle tracks can be one-way or two-way and can be at street level, sidewalk level, or an intermediate level. When located at street level, cycle tracks can be separated from motor traffic by raised medians, on-street parking or bollards. When a cycle track is located at sidewalk level, a curb or median separates it from motor traffic, while pavement markings such as color/texture separates the cycle track from the sidewalk. Separating cyclists from motor traffic offers a higher level of safety than other bike lane facilities and are attractive to a wider array of users.

One-Way Protected Cycle Track

One-way protected cycle tracks are bikeways at street level and use a variety of methods for physical separation from the motor vehicle travel lane such as a raised curb, planters or a parking buffer.

Benefits of one-way protected cycle tracks include:

- Dedicates and protects space for bicyclists in order to improve comfort and safety.
- Eliminates risk and fear of collisions with vehicles.
- Reduces risk of 'dooring' compared to a bike lane
- Eliminates the risk of a doored bicyclist being run over by a motor vehicle.
- Prevents double-parking, unlike a bike lane.
- Low implementation cost by using existing pavement and drainage and by using the parking lane as a barrier.
- More attractive for bicyclists of all levels and ages.

One-way protected cycle tracks can be incorporated:

- On streets with parking lanes.
- On streets where conventional bike lanes would be stressful to bicyclists due to multiple lanes, high traffic volumes, high speed traffic, high demand for double parking and high parking turnover. While there are no US standards for bicyclist and motor vehicle volumes that warrant the implementation of cycle tracks, several international documents provide basic guidance (refer to the [NACTO website](#) for such references).
- On streets where intersection conflicts can be effectively alleviated using parking lane setbacks, bicycle markings through the intersection and other signalized intersection treatments.
- Along streets with high bicycle volumes and/or high motor vehicle volumes/speeds.



▲ Figure 10 - One-Way Protected Cycle Track Illustration –
Parking Buffer

PLANNING CONTEXT

The Town of Holly Springs is a consistently growing suburban community in the middle of one of the state's most growing counties. As an important component to all planning efforts, public engagement has demonstrated strong support for greenway planning in the Town. The plans highlighted below are not a comprehensive list of all the Town's planning efforts but are instead, the ones that speak most directly to greenway trail planning.

Vision Holly Springs Section 3- Beyond the Green Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2007)

This Plan, considered as the section 3 of the Vision Holly Springs Comprehensive Plan, is a predecessor to the new section 3 - Comprehensive Parks, Recreation and Greenways Master Plan. The Plan includes a chapter entitled 'Greenway and Park System' which provides a conceptual plan for the integration of a greenway system into the park land, open space and 'recreational nodes' in Holly Springs. A community survey completed during this planning process indicates that 71% of residents were interested in the Town developing a network of multi-use recreational and connective trails. The recommended greenway system would include a system of "Community Central Parks," a primary parkway system, a primary greenway system, a secondary greenway system and connections with proposed bike lanes and trails of adjacent municipalities.

Greenway Trail Recommendations

- › Central "Loop" connects downtown, neighborhoods, Parrish Womble Park, Bass Lake and Sunset Lake.
- › Western Greenway Trail connects future westside development to Harris Lake and Central "Loop."
- › Southern Greenway Trail connects Harris Lake to neighborhoods in the south and to the greater system.
- › Secondary Greenway Trail system to complete shorter segments on Town connections.

Vision Holly Springs Section 2- Comprehensive Transportation Plan (2011, update-2013, 2017)

This Plan (adopted 2011, updated 2013 & 2017) focuses on recommendations for building a comprehensive transportation system for growing Holly Springs and unincorporated areas in Wake County. It includes a chapter dedicated to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. The 'Bicycle and Pedestrian Element' chapter recognizes the previous planning efforts and seeks ways to enhance safety and mobility for all. The Bicycle Plan recommendations involve numerous on-street and off-street bicycle facilities that aim to connect people and neighborhoods to local destinations. Based on the Bicycle Recommendations Map (Figure 4.3), the key greenway trail recommendations are below.

Greenway Trail Recommendations

- › Middle Creek Greenway from Apex to Sunset Lake and beyond to Camp Branch in Cary.
- › Little Branch Creek Greenway from Twelve Oaks to Ting Park and Middle Creek Greenway.
- › Rocky Branch Creek Greenway to Sunset Lake to Bass Lake to Basal Creek to Fuquay Varina.
- › Utley Creek Greenway from Holly Springs Cultural Center to Harris Lake.

*An update to this Plan was launched late 2020 and will utilize this Parks, Recreation and Greenways Master Plan during the drafting of future vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle elements. Where suggested changes to future roadway alignments impact those shown on the Parks Master Plan Greenway Map, and update to the Greenway Map will be performed by staff or by third party consultant to rectify the changes and align the vision of both sections within the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

Bicycle Transportation Plan (2011)

This Plan pursues the vision of the Town becoming a "bicycle friendly community by developing a combination of infrastructure, education programs, and policies that support bicycling." It provides recommendations on

how to create a bicycle network that will allow transportation and recreation-based bicycle travel throughout Holly Springs. It includes both on-street and off-street bicycle facilities. The recommendations have been divided into two groups: (1) low-cost, near-term solutions, and 2) longer-term solutions to coincide with roadway reconstruction or widening. Key multi-use paved greenway trails that were recommended as part of the overall network are discussed below.

Greenway Trail Recommendations

- › Arbor Creek greenway: extend existing greenway south to Holly Springs Rd.
- › Crossway – Veterans Park – Jones Park greenway: formalize existing and extend south through Holly Springs Elementary to Holly Springs Rd.
- › Ballentine – NC 55 greenway: extend existing greenway north to Earp St. and south to Holly Glen.
- › Stinson connection to Bass Lake Park greenway: would connect Bass Lake to neighborhoods directly to the north and west, allowing for safe travel to Bass Lake.
- › Grigsby connection to Bass Lake Park greenway: connect Bass Lake to neighborhoods to the south and west and to Parrish Womble Park.
- › Optimist Farm connection to Sunset Lake shopping center: connect existing greenway at Sunset Lake shopping center to Optimist Farm road as an alternate to travel along Sunset Lake Rd.

Wake County Greenway System Plan (2017)

The vision for this Plan is to create a connected and comprehensive system of greenway trails that enhances quality-of-life throughout Wake County. This Plan serves as a clear guideline for trail planning and development, providing a framework for local governments and project partners to create a connected system of cross-county greenway trails. While this is a county-level plan and not all proposed greenways would intersect the Town of Holly Springs, it does provide good regional context and highlights potential interjurisdictional connections.

Greenway Trail Recommendations

- › Holly Springs Southwest Greenway (Utley Creek Greenway to Holly Glen Greenway).
- › Holly Springs Central Greenway (along W. Ballentine St. which is one-way).
- › Holly Springs North/South Greenway (on road - Raleigh St).
- › Bass Lake – Basal Creek Greenway (connection to Fuquay-Varina).
- › Fuquay-Varina Greenway (side path from Town Hall to Honeycutt Road Park).
- › Middle Creek Greenway (connection to downtown Apex).
- › Potential connection to Camp Branch Greenway in Cary.
- › Future Land Use and Community Character Plan (2019)

Vision Holly Springs, the Town's Comprehensive Plan, serves as a policy guide on future land use & character; transportation; parks, recreation and open space; community character; business development; community facilities; infrastructure and utilities; and natural resources. The vision of the Plan includes several greenway related elements such as: establishing a community-wide "green infrastructure" that provides all residents with convenient access to trails and open space; provide walkability; physically unite the Town by connecting existing trails, sidewalks and open spaces; and to preserve and protect, where appropriate, agricultural land, green space, woodland and the natural environment.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Long range greenway trail planning is a relatively new undertaking in the Town of Holly Springs. Many communities are investing in greenway trail planning as they recognize the importance of creating a network of greenway trails that create community connections and expand opportunities for recreation and alternative modes of transportation. The Town of Holly Springs currently offers some options for walking and biking on existing greenway trails and side paths. Most existing greenway trail segments are concentrated in the central core of Town or within residential subdivisions.

Inventory + Benchmarking

The Town of Holly Springs has 12.83 of greenway trails. Of those, 9.23 miles are hard surface trails (asphalt and boardwalk) and 3.60 miles are soft surface trails (mulch). Most of that mileage is walking and biking trails, with a smaller mileage of natural surface trails. The Town has two new segments in or near the design phase, which will further expand the network (Utley Creek Greenway Phase 2 and Arbor Creek Greenway Extension).

GREENWAY TRAIL	LENGTH (MILES)	SURFACE TYPE
Womble Loop	1.0	asphalt
Carl Dean	1.3	asphalt
Main Street Square Boardwalks (2)	0.12	boardwalk
12 Oaks (School to Duke Land)	1.85	asphalt
Hensley Subdivision	0.5	asphalt
Morgan Park	0.32	asphalt
Creekside at Sunset Lake	0.3	asphalt
Woodcreek (3)	0.31	asphalt
Ting Park	0.25	asphalt
Wildwood Farms	0.13	asphalt
Arbor Creek Boardwalk	0.28	boardwalk
Bridgewater North	0.04	asphalt
Bridgewater South	0.22	asphalt
Veterans Park	0.66	asphalt
Jones Park	0.28	asphalt
Ballentine	0.31	asphalt
Harris Teeter	0.25	asphalt
Tuscany	0.07	asphalt
Scots Laurel	0.12	asphalt
Sunset Pointe	0.1	asphalt
Brackenridge - Carrington	0.39	asphalt
Wescott - Wescott Ridge	0.05	asphalt
Wescott - Eden Glen	0.03	asphalt
Garrison (3 small)	0.11	asphalt
Market 2018 connection to Jones Park	0.05	asphalt
Oakview Elementary	0.19	asphalt
TOTAL HARD SURFACE	9.23	

▲ Table 2 - Town of Holly Springs current hard surface trail mileage inventory

TRAILS	LENGTH (MILES)	SURFACE TYPE
Bass Lake Loop	2	mulch
Arbor Creek	0.3	dirt/hard pack
Holly Glen	1	dirt/hard pack
Mims Property	0.3	dirt/hard pack
TOTAL SOFT SURFACE	3.6	

▲ Table 3 - Town of Holly Springs current soft surface trail mileage inventory

Current trail mileage in Holly Springs is equivalent of 0.31 miles per 1,000 residents, which is about average among peer communities. Peer towns offer the following miles per 1,000 residents: Westerville (1.38), Coppell (0.46), Apex (0.30) and Wake Forest (0.30). Further detail and analysis are provided in Benchmarking.

Facilities Assessment

On April 8, 2020, McAdams staff conducted a greenway trail site tour on several of the Town's greenway trails. McAdams staff visited Jones Park, Veterans Park, Bridgewater Pond, Arbor Creek Greenway, Morgan Park Greenway, Utley Creek Greenway, Downtown, Parrish Womble Park, Carl Dean Greenway, Bass Lake, Sugg Farm, Grisby Ave., Sunset Lake Rd., Bass Lake Rd., Holly Springs Rd. and Ting Park. The majority of these were reviewed on bicycle, while the more heavily trafficked streets were reviewed from a car. Another site visit was conducted on July 13, 2020 to visit the downtown area and connection to Main Street, barriers along highway 55 for safe crossing, and some of the existing gaps in the system.

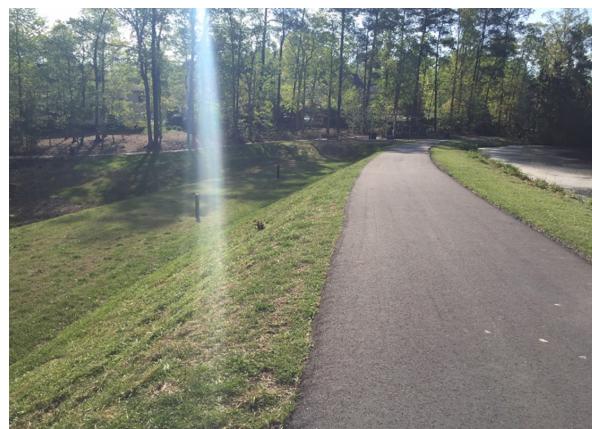
Based on both site visits, some general observations about the existing greenway trail system include: disjointed network with many small disconnected greenway trails;

- no universal greenway trail design standards;
- limited to non-existent wayfinding system; and
- limited connections to desired destinations.

It is important to address these challenges in order to accomplish the aforementioned guiding principles – greenways should be equitably distributed, accessible, provide high quality experiences and be safe overall. A few specific safety concerns that were discovered during field observations of the greenway trail system are discussed below.

Asphalt Edging

In many of the Town's parks, there are newly paved asphalt trails that provide a pleasant walking and biking experience. While the trail width is adequate and the surface is smooth, the trail design did not include stone shoulders. This creates an abrupt edge to the trail that poses a safety risk to both pedestrians and cyclists who unexpectedly leave the trail with no transition area. Stone shoulders also protect the edge of the asphalt trail and greatly extend the life of the facility. There is also a steep slope in some areas along side of the trail without safety railing.



▲ Figure 11 - Asphalt greenway

Grade

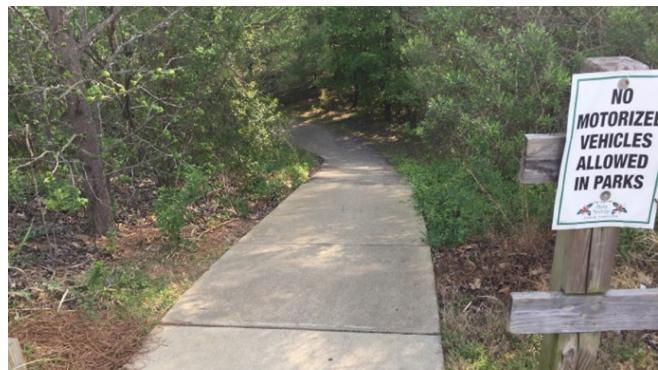
As greenway trails often are built in low-lying areas, there is typically a change in elevation and grade when connecting these low-lying greenways to biking and walking facilities in neighborhoods and parks. There are at least two places in the Town of Holly Springs where this has resulted in an extremely steep grade. (Figure 12).

Bridges

Throughout the Town's greenway trail system, there are several bridges that appear to be repurposed loading dock ramps (Figure 13). While the structural integrity of these bridges may be good (this should be confirmed), the bridges themselves are too narrow (should be the same width or greater than the trail), create an abrupt grade transition that is not ADA compliant, and often do not provide much clearance from the water feature they are intending to cross.

Boardwalks

Boardwalks are commonly built in areas that receive and retain high levels of water, such as in wetlands and floodplains. Given that greenway trails are often built in these environments, boardwalks serve an important purpose for a town's greenway trial system. The Town of Holly Springs has several areas in which boardwalks have been inappropriately designed. These structures may present safety concerns for trail users. There are several areas in which the boardwalk is nearly three feet high and does not include a safety railing. This condition could create a fall hazard. There are also several sections of boardwalk in which the deck boards have been installed in a longitudinal direction. This construction method also creates a safety hazard for cyclists, as wheels can easily get caught between gaps in deck boards (Figure 14). After initial feedback in Spring 2020, the Town of Holly Springs has already addressed this concern by installing safety railings on boardwalks with height concerns.



▲ Figure 12 - Steep greenway slope



▲ Figure 13 - Greenway bridge



▲ Figure 14 - Greenway boardwalk



▲ Figure 15 - Greenway trail marker

Wayfinding

As greenway trail systems often include a variety of different bicycle and pedestrian facilities (sidewalks, side paths, greenway trails, on road facilities, etc.), it is important to provide good directional signage or wayfinding for trail users to easily navigate the system of trails. The Town's greenway trail system currently lacks signage and creates a significant challenge for trail users attempting to navigate the system. There are some limited markings in the pavement (Figure 15), although they are easy to miss and not consistent throughout town.

EXISTING CONDITIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS	GUIDANCE/CODE REFERENCE
Exposed asphalt edge with no shoulder transition	Create gravel/stone shoulders to minimize edge and protect asphalt	Gravel/stone shoulder to be part of minimum 2-feet grass shoulder on either side of trail per AASHTO
Steep slope adjacent to trail	Install 48-inch safety rail within 6 feet of trail in certain areas (see code reference)	<p>Provide a safety rail when:</p> <p>Slope is greater than or equal to 3:1 and drop of 6-feet</p> <p>Slope is greater than or equal to 2:1 and drop of 4-feet</p> <p>Slope is greater than or equal to 1:1 and drop of 1-foot</p>
Boardwalk over 30" above ground	Install a 42-inch guardrail	<p>A 42-inch guardrail will be required if there is a 30-inch or greater grade change between the boardwalk surface and the ground</p> <p>A 6-inch curb rail is recommended for all boardwalks</p>
Boardwalk decking running parallel to path of travel	Install deck boards perpendicular to path of travel	Morgan Creek Greenway serves as a template for good boardwalk construction.
Trail grade above 5%	Create switchbacks or stairs with railing to walk bike up and down	Comply with ADA regulations when possible
Loading ramp bridges that are narrower than trail and have too short of a span	Either replace with boardwalk or new bridge with appropriate width and span	AASHTO and FEMA requirements (if in floodplain)

▲ Table 4 - Town of Holly Springs existing conditions

Opportunities & Constraints

The Town of Holly Springs is striving to improve its network of greenway trails and side paths to anticipate the needs and desires of a growing community. There are many opportunities to leverage existing infrastructure and other planning efforts to achieve these goals. There are also many challenges the Town is facing when creating a network to serve its population. Several of these opportunities and constraints have been highlighted below.

Opportunities

- › Connections to greenway trail networks in neighboring jurisdictions: Town of Cary, Town of Fuquay-Varina, Town of Apex, Harnett County, Wake County and Chatham County for regional connectivity.
- › Connections to regionally significant greenway trails (e.g. American Tobacco Trail).
- › Connections to highly valued local destinations (e.g. Bass Lake, Harris Lake, Womble Park, etc.).
- › Utilize existing corridors (low-lying creeks and utility easements) for greenway trail development.
- › Leverage UDOs to expand upon developer-built greenway trails and improve long-term planning.
- › Leverage small greenway segments within many subdivisions and extend these for greater connectivity.

Constraints

- › Fragmented segments of greenway trails around Holly Springs.
- › Busy arterial roads without pedestrian/ bike facilities (e.g. Holly Springs Rd, Sunset Lake Rd, etc.).
- › Highway 55 is a major barrier between central Holly Springs and many neighborhoods, schools, commercial areas, and important destinations in other parts of town.
- › Many greenway trails in subdivisions are 'private' and may not desire connectivity to the Town network.
- › Lack of wide ROW on existing roadways to accommodate physically separated bike/ pedestrian facility.
- › Once NC 540 loop is complete, connecting the northern and southern neighborhoods for pedestrian and biking facilities will be challenging.

Key Findings

- › Existing network consists of many small, disjointed greenway trails that provide limited connections to other facilities and/or desired destinations across Town.
- › Existing network does not follow universal design standards and many facilities included in this network are not technically greenway trails (e.g. sidewalks) yet are labeled so.
- › Infrastructure (e.g. bridges and boardwalks) also lacks universal design standards and may present safety concerns.
- › Safety concerns include asphalt edging, steep slope adjacent to trails, incorrect directional installation of boards on some boardwalks and lack of railings in areas with high clearance (ToHS has since addressed).
- › Some greenway trails do not currently comply with ADA standards and exceed 5% grade.
- › Existing network provides limited to non-existing wayfinding and designated trailheads, which presents difficulties in navigating the system.
- › Community members rank greenway trails as the most important facility and as the facility with the highest unmet need.
- › Community members are demanding more greenway trails and are willing to support with their tax dollars.

Community Engagement

This greenway trails plan is the result of collaborative efforts of the Holly Springs residents, steering committee members, focus groups, Town Council and the regional representatives from neighboring municipal and county agencies. Over a period of six months, the project team conducted virtual and in person meetings with these groups to gather input on existing conditions of greenway trails, key destinations and future priorities for Town wide and regional connections. In addition, the scientific public input survey as well as virtually conducted open house presentations and online surveys provided feedback from residents on the overall parks, recreation and greenways system.

Scientific Survey Results

A Scientific Survey was developed and distributed to community members in Spring 2020. A total of 351 households responded to the survey. While many of the questions were specific to parks and recreation, there were several questions that also referred to greenway trails. The main takeaways from the survey results that relate to greenway trails include:

- › Greenway trails were selected as **the most important facility** by respondents (52%).
- › Greenway trails were selected as the **highest unmet need facility** by respondents (43%).
- › Greenway trails received the **highest Priority Investment Rating** at 200.
- › *Developing greenway trails to connect to Town's existing greenway trail segments* received the **highest level of support** by respondents (88%).
- › *Developing greenway trails to connect to Town's existing greenway trail segments* received the highest ranking from respondents **willing to support with tax dollars** (57%).
- › Greenway trails are visited by 49% of respondents at least once a month.
- › Greenway trails were selected as a facility responding households would like to visit more frequently (83% of respondents would like to visit greenway trails at least a few times a month).

Input on desired destinations is a key point of public input that helps shape a greenway network. Many of the destinations and routes identified include neighborhoods, natural areas, schools, parks, commercial areas, restaurants, recreation centers and libraries, and existing greenway trails. These results are consistent with feedback that has been received in the other community engagement activities.

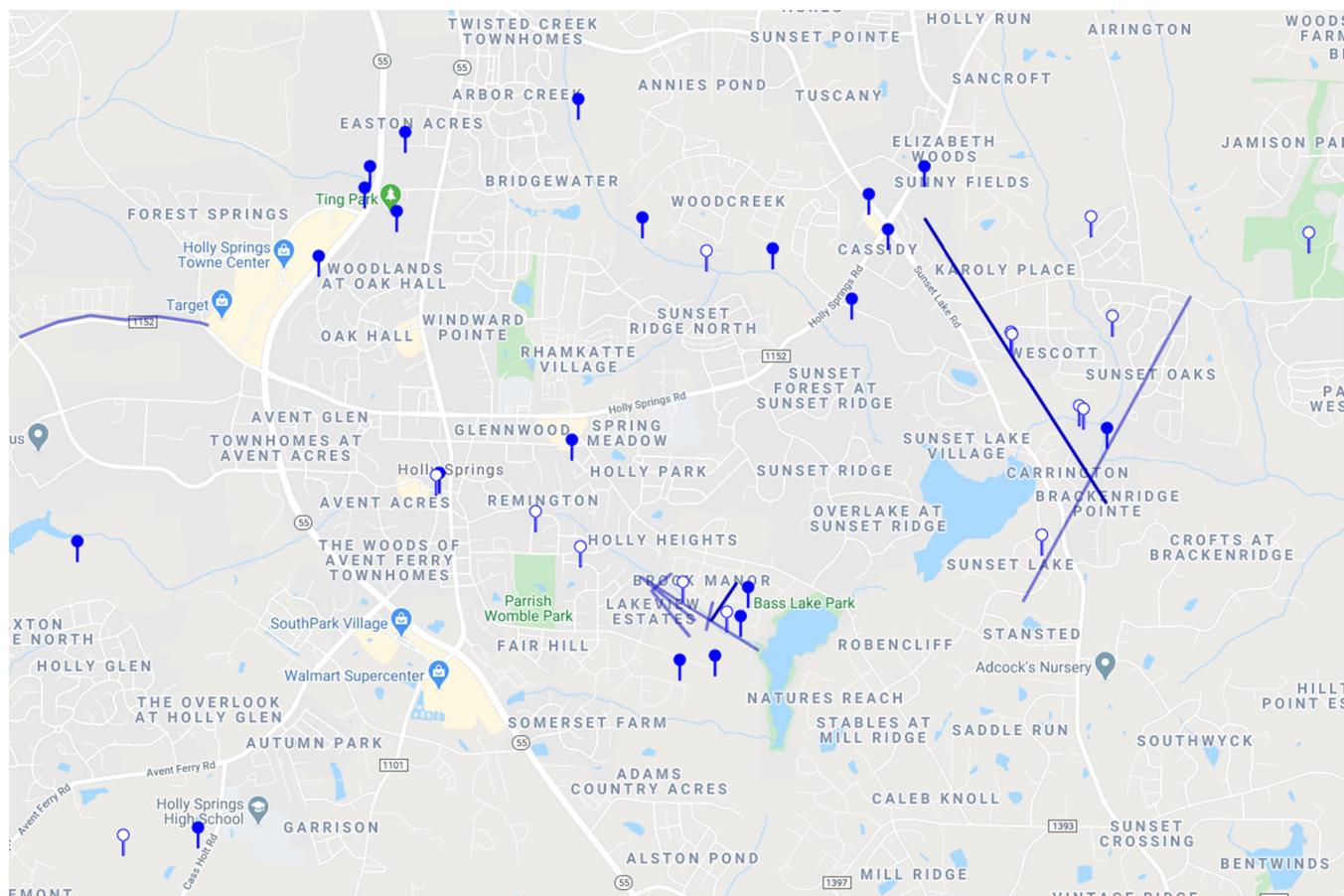
To summarize, the survey results clearly convey a high value and level of importance of greenway trails to the community. Greenway trails are the most desired facility and the majority of households want more of them. Responding households enjoy and feel safe on the current greenways and would be willing to support the development of more greenway trails with their tax dollars because they believe in the value of greenway trails and realize that there is an unmet need for a more robust system of greenway trails.

Virtual Open House Mapping Activity Results

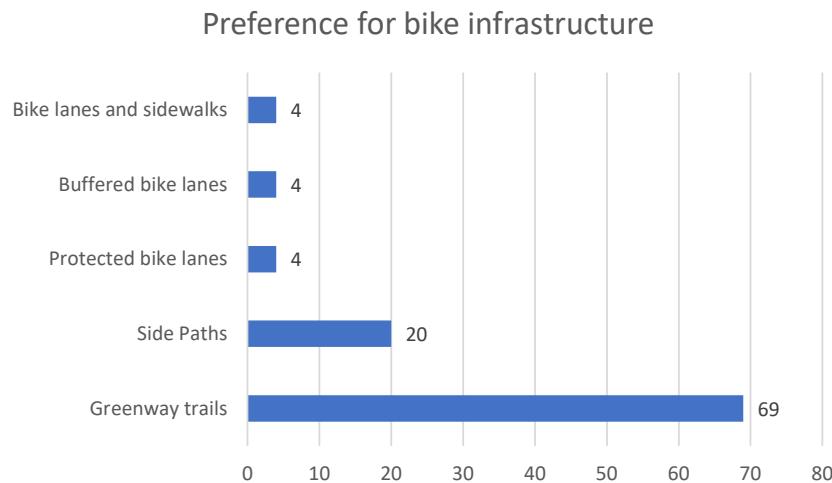
Residents had the opportunity to provide input on the greenways master plan during the virtual open house and online survey in March 2020. The survey participants indicated greenway trails as their stron preference for bike infrastructure and it also relates to the large segment of respondents who are interested but concerned about biking.

Participants indicated routes where they would like to begin and end greenway trips, such as their home, school, park or grocery shop. Participants also indicated what corridors they would like to use to reach these destinations. The map below shows the results of virtual community engagement.

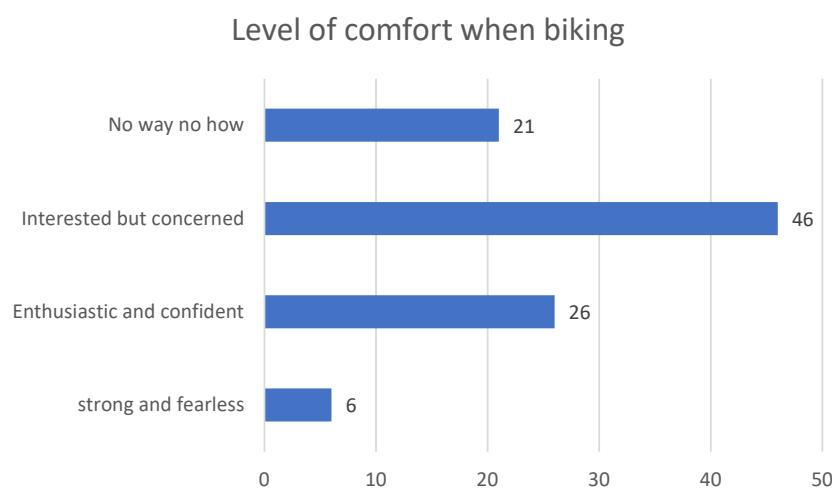
Participants also indicated their preference for using greenway trails as desirable bike infrastructure. 46% of open house survey participants are interested but concerned about biking. This is encouraging as the Town starts to develop safer and physically seperated bike and pedestrian facilities, the number of residents using the same will also increase.



▲ Figure 16- Town of Holly Springs existing conditions



▲ *Figure 17- Preference for bike infrastructure*



▲ *Figure 18- Level of comfort when biking*

Focus Groups

Focus groups are an important step in community engagement as they target outreach to specific demographic groups that typically have more barriers to access the other types of engagement activities offered. The focus groups identified for this project included: Seniors, Special Needs and Youth. A questionnaire was distributed to community members of each focus group asking for their feedback on the parks, recreation and greenway trails facilities and programs in the Town of Holly Springs. The following themes emerged from that engagement:

- Transportation is a barrier for all groups.
- Lack of walkability (distance, limited network of greenway trails, etc.) is also an issue.
- Not all facilities are ADA compliant and therefore can pose risks.

Steering Committee Input

The project team presented the comprehensive planning process to the steering committee in March 2020. The steering committee members strongly supported development of new greenway trails to connect Holly Spring through alternate modes of transportation. The key themes that emerged from the first meeting included Town-wide connectivity and healthful living opportunities by improving access to outdoors. The Steering Committee was also engaged as part of the Visioning Sessions and those themes are discussed on the next page.

Staff Meetings

The Town staff provided feedback on the destination priorities as follows:

- › Connecting to existing parks and schools
- › Connection to commercial connections
- › Connecting to neighborhoods

Interjurisdictional Meeting

The project team and Town staff met with staff members of several neighboring jurisdictions (Harnett County, Wake County, Town of Apex, Town of Cary and Town of Fuquay-Varina) on June 26, 2020. The purpose of the meeting was to learn about proposed and planned greenway trails within neighboring jurisdictions to help determine potential connections to the Town of Holly Springs greenway trails network. Information gathered during this meeting helped influence the recommended connections and corridor alignments in the proposed greenway trail network map.

Interdepartmental Meetings

In August 2020, staff members from Development Services, Utilities & Infrastructure, Economic Development and Maintenance Departments were briefed on the project and offered an opportunity to provide feedback. The staff asked a lot of great questions regarding design standards, trail types, trail dimensions (width), tree preservation techniques, the pros and cons of on-street and off-street bicycle facilities, etc. The project team also got some valuable insight regarding upcoming transportation and road projects, maintenance and safety concerns, and intersection improvements being discussed in the draft Comprehensive Transportation Plan that is being updated now.

Visioning Sessions

In September 2020, several different visioning sessions were conducted that included Town staff, the steering committee and Town Council. In those meetings, the project team discussed research methodology, community engagement results, key findings, guiding principles and recommendations. An overall map of the recommended greenway trails network and design renderings of before and after photos of specific facilities improvements were also presented. Many of the participants of these various visioning sessions were impressed by the survey results that clearly indicated the high level of value and importance greenway trails hold in the community.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The proposed greenway trail network traverses through differing development densities and connects various Town-wide destinations through a series of linked greenway trails and side paths strategically located to connect residential neighborhoods, commercial centers, schools, transit stops, existing parks and future recreation amenities.

The overall greenway trail network is focused on meaningful connections and opportunities to provide more mobility and access to users, to improve their health and wellbeing, and to enhance economic impact and environmental protection.

The overall parks, recreation and greenways plan recommendations are centered around seven overarching guiding principles. One of the guiding principles that relates to greenways is connectivity while also touching on the other guiding principles such as health and wellness, environmental awareness and financial sustainability.

This plan prioritizes connectivity by identifying corridors that consider:

- Minimal land / easement acquisition (utilizing otherwise undevelopable land)
- Strong support from the community
- The ability to improve access to priority destinations, especially public parks and schools
- Potential for land acquisition in danger of more immediate development
- Proximity to population growth centers
- Connection to or traversing across isolated areas
- Facilitation of regional connections

Methodology

Recommendations contained herein are based on data collection through desktop map analysis, on-site field visits, detailed coordination with Town of Holly Springs staff and public input. Existing bicycling and pedestrian facilities and proposed facilities from previous planning efforts were mapped to determine where gaps currently exist and to identify which previously planned corridors have yet to be integrated into the Town's transportation system. This exercise also helped inform which corridors have been the subject of previous planning efforts and may be key elements in advancement of the network.

The Town of Holly Springs desires a high functioning greenway trail network that serves not only the internal trip-making but also connecting to the vibrant and growing Triangle regional greenway trails. The Triangle region is home to many of the most highly visited greenway trails in the state like the American Tobacco Trail and the Neuse River Trail. Through interjurisdictional coordination, key connection nodes at the edges of Holly Springs were identified. Connections to these nodes within Cary, Apex, Fuquay-Varina, unincorporated parts of Wake County, Chatham County and Harnett County are important to a successful greenway trail network.

From these key steps, recommendations were developed in concert with Town of Holly Springs Staff, across Town departments and with the needs and desires of Holly Springs residents at the forefront.

Prioritization Matrix

The Town of Holly Springs has already begun developing its greenway trail network and is motivated to expand and improve the existing conditions. The adjacent municipalities have also made similar efforts with greenway trail networks at a variety of levels of maturity. In the interest of developing a more robust and connected system in town and in the region, it is important to analyze the existing and planned facilities and develop a framework to help guide decision making and investment. This framework, or trail hierarchy, is as follows:

- › Community Connector – greenway trails that form the main structure of Holly Springs’ greenway trail network. These greenway trails form the main connections with adjacent communities, to and from downtown, across challenging obstacles and to other greenway trails. Community Connectors provide strong North/South and East/West routes on which to build a highly functional greenway trail network.
- › Destination Connector – greenway trails that link Holly Springs’ destinations such as schools, parks, employment centers and others to the Community Connector network.
- › Neighborhood Connector – greenway trails that connect residential neighborhoods to the larger greenway trial network.

Based on this framework, a comprehensive recommended network map has been developed that will help the Town of Holly Springs efficiently plan, design and fund projects. The recommended greenway trails take into consideration the major opportunities and challenges that were highlighted earlier in the chapter. For example, one of the greatest opportunities for developing new greenway trails and connecting to the larger network in Holly Springs exist in low-lying creek and major utility easement corridors and one of the greatest challenges is safely navigating the Hwy 55 and the future extension of Interstate 540. As a companion to the recommended network map, the narrative below helps highlight the major opportunities and recommendations in each section of town.

Recommended Corridors

Based on preliminary recommendations above and staff and public input.

Community Connectors

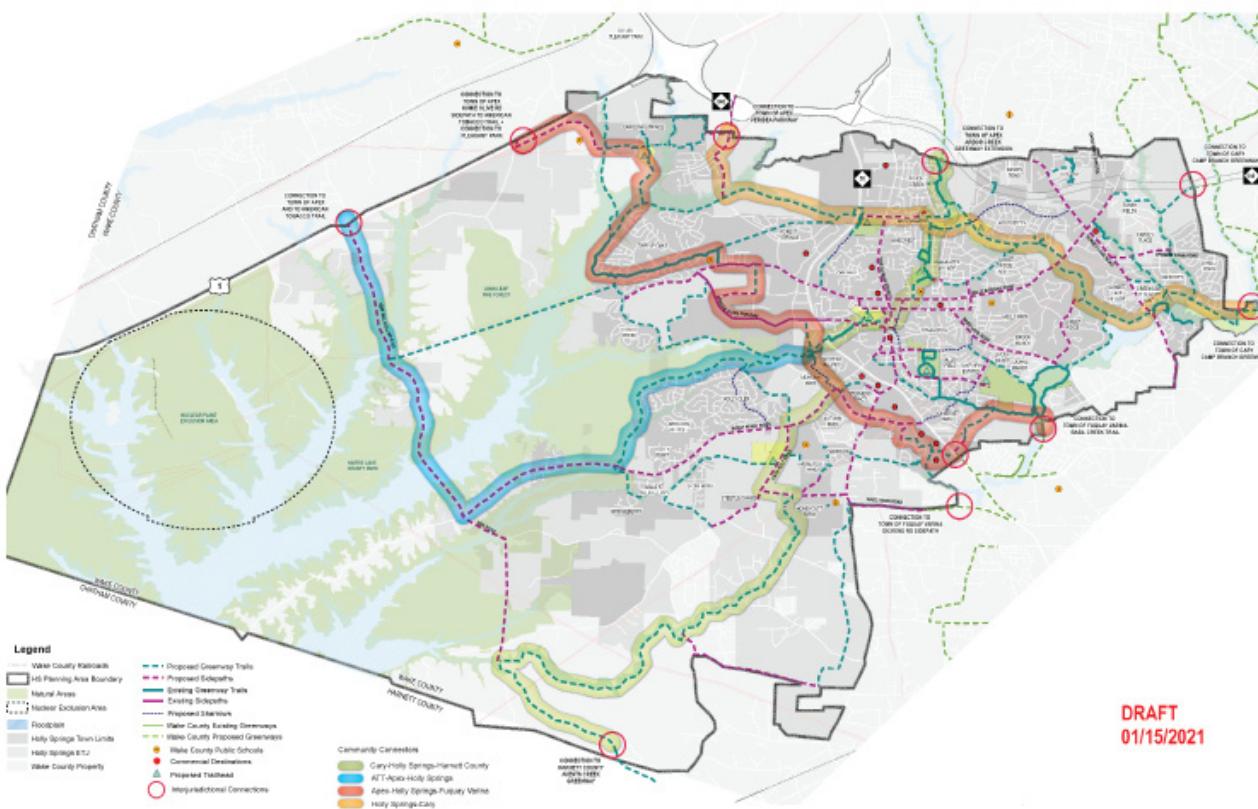
- › Cary’s Camp Branch Greenway to Apex (and ultimately to American Tobacco Trail) via utility and stream corridor to Sunset Lake, Arbor Creek Greenway, and Little Branch Creek.
- › Bass Lake to Apex via Carl Dean Greenway, Pecan Grove Greenway, future Lowes greenway, future Ralph Stephens Rd side path, Morgan Park Greenway, Green Oak Pkwy side path, and Twelve Oaks.
- › Harris Lake to Apex’s Middle Creek Greenway via stream corridor north of Braxton Village and Holly Glen subdivisions, Utley Creek Greenway (future and existing), to existing Arbor Creek Greenway.
- › North South connector through downtown that connects Apex on the North and Harnett County on the south via existing and proposed infrastructure in central Holly Springs to Buckhorn Creek corridor.

Destination Connectors

- › Proposed side paths between Arbor Creek Greenway and Ting Park
- › Proposed side path north-south route down Main St and safe crossing over Highway 55.
- › Proposed side path on Earp St to connect Mims Property to Holly Springs Elementary School.
- › Expand sidewalk to side path along Grisby Ave to connect downtown and Bass Lake.
- › Proposed side path along Bass Lake Rd to connect neighborhoods to schools to Park.
- › Expand sidewalk to side path along Avent Ferry Rd. to Holly Springs High School.

Neighborhood Connectors

- › Potential neighborhood connection via Lockley Rd. to Arbor Creek Greenway.
- › Connect existing greenways in Twelve Oaks and Carolina Springs subdivisions.
- › Connection between Wescott subdivision and Sunset Lake Rd. utilizing utility corridor.
- › Connect Palmetto Ct. boardwalk trail to existing greenway behind Harris Teeter for longer trail.
- › Sugg Farm Park Master Plan indicates a planned greenway along creek that feeds into Bass Lake.
- › Proposed Pecan-Grove Greenway connecting Pecan-Grove Apartments to Carl Dean Greenway.



▲ Figure 19- Proposed greenway network map

Downtown Connectivity

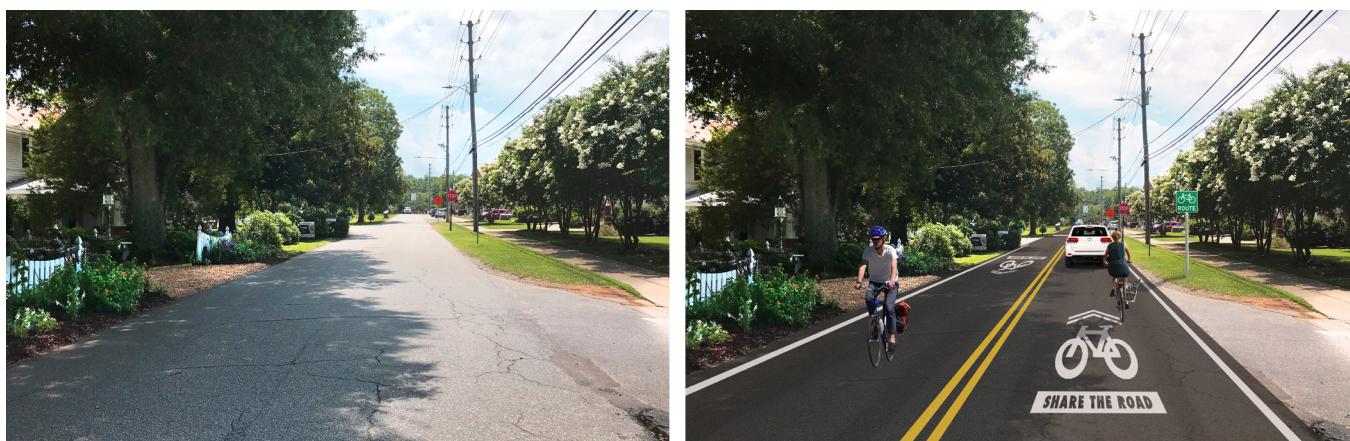
Holly Springs Downtown Village District is an important destination and is central to the overall recommended network. There is a balance of commercial, employment and some residential areas. There are also more installations to encourage pedestrian activity, such as wider sidewalks, street trees, outdoor dining, curbside parking and slower vehicular traffic. Given these existing conditions and in an effort to minimize potential user conflicts, it is recommended that the bicycle network utilize parallel side streets with a variety of different trail types (e.g. Raleigh St., sharrow and Center St. side path) and also have a "dismount zone" for bicyclists on Main Street. Figures 20-22 help illustrate the recommended network in downtown as well as before and after images of each specific recommendation.



▲ Figure 20- Existing conditions (left) and rendering of potential streetscape along Main Street (right).



▲ Figure 21- Existing conditions (left) and rendering of potential streetscape along Center Street (right).



▲ Figure 22- Existing conditions (left) and rendering of potential streetscape along Raleigh Street (right).

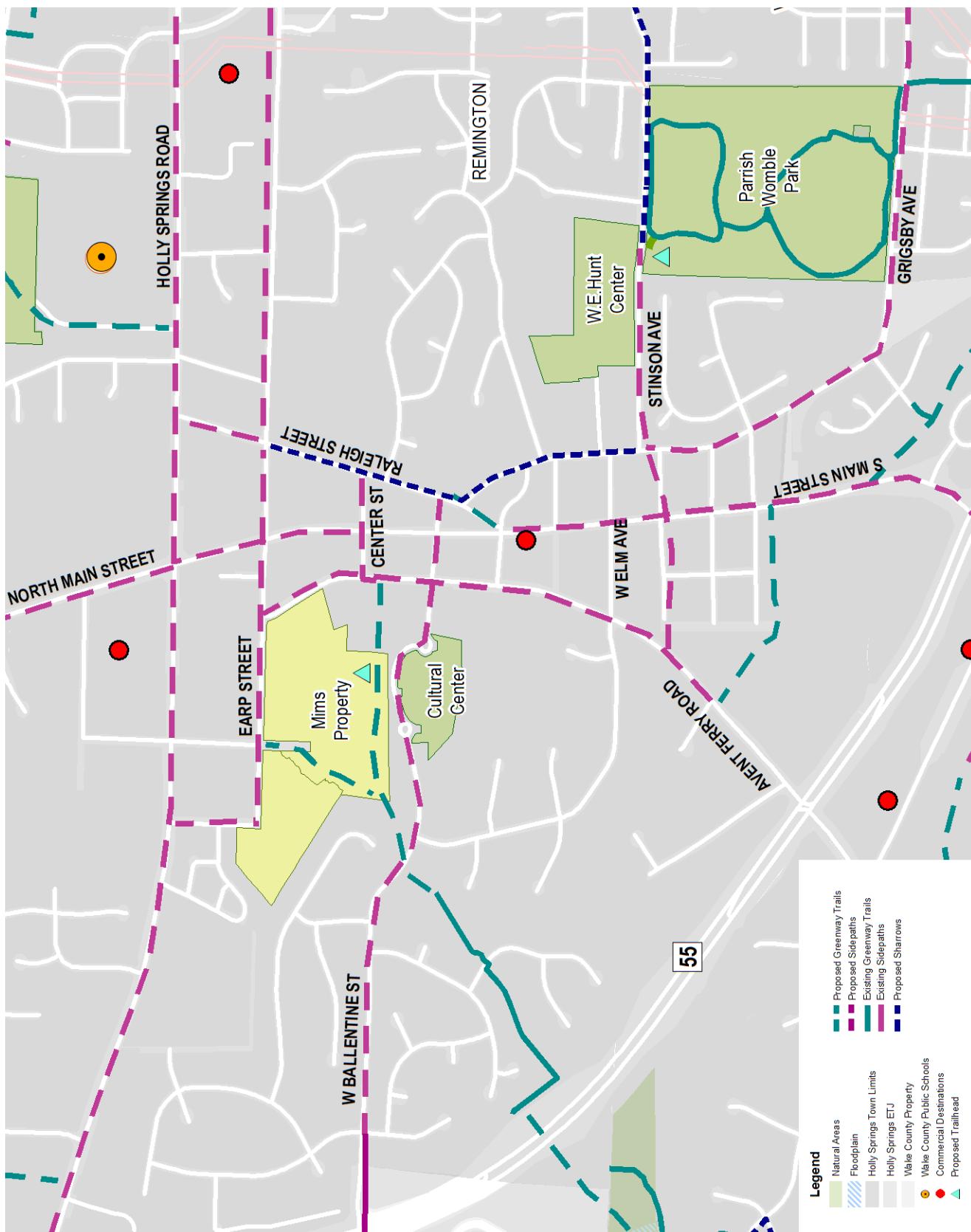


Figure 23- Proposed Downtown Greenway Map

Policy/Program Recommendations

The Town of Holly Springs' Unified Development Ordinance includes several references to pedestrian/bike paths in which requirements are made for new development.

Section 7.07.C2 Street Design and Right-of Way Reservation states that "under appropriate circumstances or when approved for use as part of a development plan approval, an alternative walkway or pedestrian/bike path may be proposed in addition to sidewalks."

Section 7.09 Pedestrian Circulation and Vehicular Area Design states that "the new development of private walkways or pedestrian/bikeway systems is required for all new developments and additional to existing developments."

Section 7.10.7 Open Space Regulations states that "all greenbelts may, in areas within a greenbelt which are located more than twenty (20) feet from a perimeter or the project, include a sidewalk, footpath, walkway or combined pedestrian/bikeway system."

Amended ordinance #07-16 states that "in any case in which a greenway is indicated on an adopted plan of the Town of Holly Springs as being located on lands proposed for development, such greenway shall be dedicated to the Town of Holly Springs and developed. The costs associated with the development of the greenway and value of the land dedicated shall not be credited toward the requirements of Section 7.06 F Recreational Facilities and Open Space."

Dedication of Public Greenway by Final Plat (added ordinance #12-11) states that when a greenway right of way is dedicated in connection with a project, the approval of a final plat shall include a notation that the greenway is a "proposed greenway" which may or may not be co-located on another easement.

While having these regulations in the Town's UDO are supportive of greenway development, there is also a waiver of Pedestrian Circulation and Vehicular Area Design Requirements available under the following:

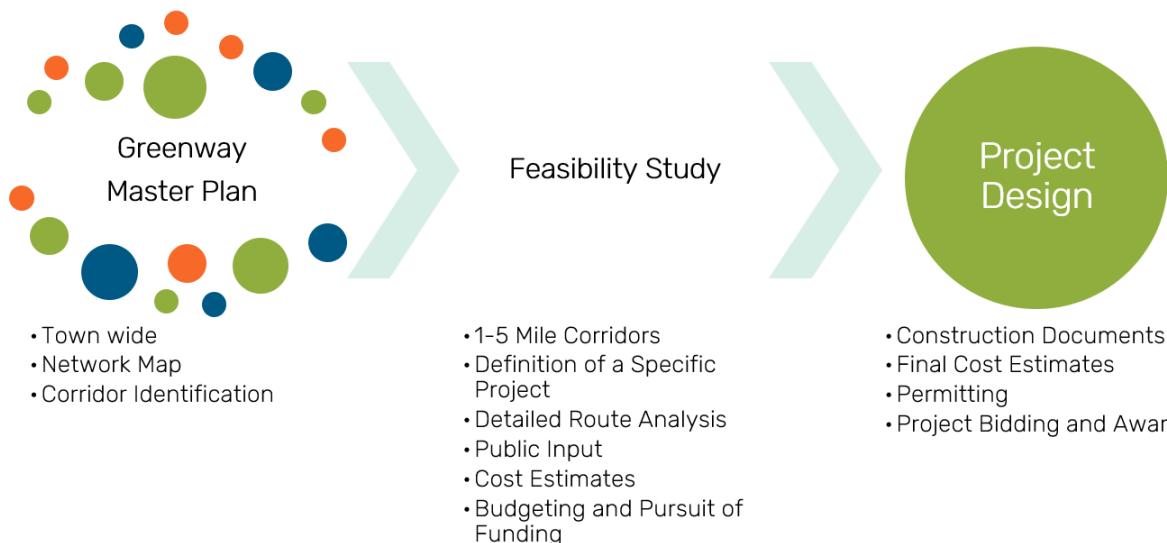
- › The proposed pedestrian circulation and vehicular area design will result in a development pattern which is equivalent to or superior to that achievable under the applicable requirements;
- › The proposed development will be compatible with and will enhance the use of value of area properties;
- › The proposed development is consistent with the intent of the Comprehensive Plan; and
- › The proposed development is consistent with the intent and purpose of this UDO.

In order for the Town of Holly Springs to realize their vision of creating a robust greenway network that connects neighborhoods to community and regional destinations and provides the residents of Holly Springs with increased recreational opportunities and quality of life amenities, a stronger commitment from private developers and companies to this same vision is necessary. The Town of Cary, for instance, has successfully created a growing and robust greenway system of nearly 80 miles and nearly half (47%) of those greenway trails have been built by developers. They have successfully done this by providing developers with a few options that ultimately create opportunities for greenway trails. These options include park land dedication; payments in lieu of park land dedication; greenway easements; or payment in lieu credit for greenway construction.

The Town is undertaking an effort to rewrite the ordinances. It is recommended that the Department refer to the recommendations for greenway design standards and best practice guidelines to develop policies around increasing the greenway trail network within the Town by leveraging the option of developer-built trails. In addition to establishing the necessary ordinances, it is important to develop construction standard specifications and details and create standard operating procedures for greenway development.

IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW

While the network plan provides an overall framework for development of various types of trails and the approximate routes, it is only the first step in a larger process. As a living document, the network plan and priorities may evolve with changing development pressures, funding opportunities and demographic trends. Further, the Town will need to undertake more detailed feasibility studies to understand the challenges, cost and timeline of each trail corridor. This typically includes a detailed evaluation of land / easement acquisition potential, topography, stream or road crossings, grading and drainage patterns, safety, user experience, long-term maintenance and regulatory requirements. With this more detailed layer of information, design decisions such as trail surface and profile, width, markings, signage, furnishings and crossings can be finalized. Only after this detailed assessment can a final trail alignment be determined. The below diagram illustrates a typical greenway planning, design and construction process with key phases and individual tasks. Next steps will be for the Town to complete feasibility studies on priority corridors, which will speed up the design and construction process.



▲ Figure 24- Greenway trail planning, design, and construction process and sequencing.

Successful implementation of the greenway trails systems plan will require a coordinated effort of many parties working together. These agencies include the County, local municipal agencies as well as NCDOT and Federal Affiliations. Private sector organizations may also prove beneficial, as they may have the influence and capacity to garner additional community support for the establishment of the bicycle/pedestrian network.

In the appendix, a detailed spreadsheet is included that describes specific implementation strategies and next steps for the community connectors. Each of the four community connectors is broken into smaller (1-3 miles) segments with specific details on recommended trail type, destinations, context, implementation considerations, property, or easement acquisition, and recommended next steps. This spreadsheet should assist Town staff in determining the most feasible segments and connectors to address key next steps in advancing all of the different recommended segments.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Federal Funding Sources

- › US DOT Federal Highway Administration
- › Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development Transportation Discretionary Grants (BUILD)
- › Infrastructure for Rebuilding American Discretionary Grant Program (INFRA)
- › Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA)
- › Federal Transit Administration Capital Funds (FTA)
- › Associated Transit Improvement (ATI)
- › Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)
- › Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)
- › National Highway Performance program (NHPP)
- › Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG)
- › Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (formerly Transportation Alternatives Program)
- › Recreational Trails Program (RTP)
- › Safe Routes to School (SRTS)
- › State and Community Highway Safety Grant Program (Section 402)
- › US EDA Public Works/EAAP
- › National Park Service: Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA)
- › Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP)
- › AARP Community Challenge Grants
- › America Walks: Community Change Grants

State Funding Sources

- › Clean Water Management Trust Fund
- › Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
- › Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF)
- › NC Department of Commerce
- › Main Street Solutions Fund
- › Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)
- › Economic Infrastructure Program
- › Golden LEAF Foundation
- › Strategic Mobility Formula
- › NCDOT State Transportation Improvement Program
- › MPO Planning Funds

Local Funding Sources

- › Capital Improvement Program (CIP)
- › Developer requirements and exactions
- › General Obligation Bonds
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