



**Wake Forest, North Carolina
Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources
Department
Master Plan Update**

February 2015

Acknowledgements

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I. Executive Summary

Purpose of this Plan

The Wake Forest Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Master Plan is intended to help meet the needs of current and future residents by positioning Wake Forest to build on the community's unique Park and Recreation assets and identify new opportunities. The citizen-driven plan establishes a clear direction to guide town staff, advisory boards, and elected officials in their efforts to enhance the community's Park and Recreation services and facilities.

Planning Process Summary

This project has been guided by a Parks and Recreation project team made up of Town staff, with input from the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, and the Town Board of Commissioners. This team provided input to the GreenPlay consulting team throughout the planning process. A collaborative approach creates a plan that fully utilizes the consultant's expertise and incorporates the local knowledge and institutional history that only community members can provide. The project consisted of the following tasks:

Community Engagement

- Review of previous planning efforts, town historical information.
- Extensive community involvement effort including focus groups, meetings with key stakeholders, and a community-wide public meeting.
- Statistically-valid community interest and opinion survey.
- Online community engagement website – MindMixer.

Facility Inventory

- Inventory of parks and facilities using existing mapping, staff interviews, and on-site visits to verify amenities and assess the condition of the facilities and surrounding areas.

GRASP® Level of Service Analysis

- Interviews with staff to provide information about Park and Recreation facilities and services, along with insight regarding the current practices and experiences of the Town in serving its residents and visitors.
- Identification of alternative providers of recreation services to provide insight regarding the market opportunities in the area for potential new facilities and services.
- Analysis addressing recreation, parks, cultural resources, and related services.

Assessment and Analysis

- Review and assessment of relevant plans.
- Measurement of the current delivery of service for park and recreation facilities using the GRASP® Level of Service Analysis and allowing for a target level of service to be determined that is both feasible and aligned with the desires of citizens as expressed through the citizen survey. This analysis is also represented graphically in GRASP® Perspectives.
- Exploration of finance and funding mechanisms to support development and sustainability within the system.

Needs Assessment

- Consideration of the profile of the community and demographics, including population growth.
- Research of trends related to the Wake Forest region and American lifestyles to help guide the efforts of Parks and Recreation over the next several years.

Operational and Marketing Analysis

- Analyze parks and recreation programming and service delivery.
- Conduct an organizational Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) .
- Develop a broad assessment of the overall parks and recreation operations.

Recommendations: Goals, Objectives, and Action Plan

- Identification and categorization of recommendations into themes with goals, objectives, and an action plan for implementation.
- Development of an action plan for capital improvements including cost, funding source potentials, and timeframe to support the implementation of the plan.

Key Issues Summary

During the initial stages of the project, the following Key Issues were identified for focus:

Organizational:

- Need better marketing and communication of activities and facilities.
- Increased staffing for operations and maintenance staffing to keep up with demand.
- Attract tourism and outdoor recreational opportunities.

Finance:

- Utilize equitable user fees.
- Increase economic impact and revitalize downtown.
- Utilize proceeds from 2014 Bond Referendum.
- Pursue grant opportunities.

Programs and Service Delivery:

- Increase programming for families, seniors, and teens.
- Increase programs in wellness/fitness, cultural, and special needs.
- Increase the number of special events.
- Increase aquatic opportunities.

Facilities and Amenities:

- Maintain and improve existing facilities.
- Develop connections with greenways and trails.
- Meet future population demands through additional recreation facilities.
- Explore an indoor aquatic facility.
- Explore an outdoor amphitheater/special events venue.
- Improve water access to river, lake, and ponds.

Key Level of Service (LOS) Analysis Findings:

- Coverage for access to parks, trails, and facilities in Wake Forest is fairly good. Eighty-six percent (86%) of the land area within the study area boundary has access to at least some town-provided amenity within a one-mile proximity. If amenities provided by Wake County and other providers were included, the percentage would probably be even greater.
- The LOS value, (i.e. the measure of “how much” service there is from parks, trails, and facilities), varies across the study area and is highest in the area north of Dr. Calvin Jones Highway and east of Capital Boulevard. It is lowest in the farthest south part of town.
- When LOS is examined compared to an assumed threshold value equal to a typical local park, it appears that the central parts of Wake Forest are at or above the threshold, with gaps occurring near Wake Forest Middle School (which is served by a Wake County school/park) and on the west side of Capital Boulevard. The eastern edge and southernmost parts of the study area also fall below the threshold.
- Access to recreation opportunities by walking is less available to residents than may be desired; however, this does not take into account amenities offered by other providers, such as Wake County. It does, however, stress the need to work with other providers to ensure that the needs of all Wake Forest residents are met by at least one provider.
- Some areas with walkable level of service below the threshold may be acceptable if they are commercial or industrial areas or more rural settings.
- Wake Forest’s indoor facilities provide a good range of spaces and activities; however, these facilities are concentrated in a limited part of the Town. Consideration should be given to expanding the options by locating new facilities in other parts of town or partnering with other providers to make sure they are available to residents.

Inventory Assessment Summary

- Parks are pleasant and well-maintained throughout the system.
- No components were found to be functioning below expectations due to condition.
- The parks are used and enjoyed by residents.
- Joyner Park is a particular gem, a signature park for Wake Forest and a model for future parks
- Wake County School Parks offer additional facilities and features that serve residents of Wake Forest.

THEN AGAIN . . .

- Some parks could use better circulation system within them, particularly paved walkways and loop walks.
- Natural areas could be better integrated into the parks with transitional edges and pathways
- Parks could be better connected with the trail system.
- Parks tend to be concentrated in the sector of Wake Forest that lies east of Capital Boulevard and north of Dr. Calvin Jones Highway. Facilities of other providers, such as Wake County, may play a more important role in these outlying areas.

Recommendations with Capital Cost Estimates and Prioritization

The following Goals, Objectives, and Action Items for the recommendations are drawn from the public input, inventory, level of service analysis, findings feedback, and all of the information gathered during the master planning process, with a primary focus on maintaining, sustaining, and improving Town of Wake Forest parks, open space, cultural resources, and trails. All cost estimates are in 2015 figures.

Timeframe to complete is designated as Short-term (up to 3 years), Mid-term (3-6 years), and Long-term (7-10 years).

Goal 1: Improve Organizational Credibility and Operational Efficiencies

Objective 1.1: <i>Enhance and improve internal and external communication of activities and services</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
1.1.a Make use of the Town’s Marketing Plan to improve awareness.	\$0	Staff Time	Short-Term
1.1.b Partner with the Communications Department and the Public Information Office to make the best use of the Town’s website and social media outlets.	\$0	Staff, Partners	Short-Term
1.1.c Adopt open lines of communications and meetings with partners and potential partners.	\$0	Staff Time	Short-Term
Objective 1.2: <i>Create new staffing assignments and/or hire new employees for added responsibilities</i>			
1.2.a Add staff to the Maintenance Division to meet current and anticipated future demands.	\$0	TBD	Short to Mid-Term
1.2.b Add staff for facility operations to meet demand for extended hours of operations for facilities.	\$0	TBD	Short-Term
1.2.c Ensure that staffing resource levels can maintain existing and new facilities at or above acceptable standards as master plan is implemented.	\$0	TBD	Short to Long- Term
1.2.d Add staff to the Urban Forestry Division to meet anticipated future demands with development and expansion of the parks and greenways system.	\$0	TBD	Short to Mid-Term

Goal 2: Improve Financial Situations

Objective 2.1: <i>Implement equitable user fees</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
2.1.a Develop a standardized philosophy for pricing programs and services that reflects our community. An example developing a pricing philosophy is provided (Pyramid Pricing Methodology and Cost Recovery Policy, Appendix A).	\$40,000 – \$60,000	Staff time/consultant	Short-Term/Mid-Term
Objective 2.2: <i>Pursue grant opportunities</i>			
2.2.a Continue to research, submit, and track federal, regional, state, and local grants.	Matching Funds TBD	Staff Time	Short-Term
Objective 2.3: <i>Implement Parks, Recreation and Greenways Improvements from the 2014 Bond Referendum</i>			
2.3.a Develop a plan for the implementation of the Parks, Recreation, and Greenways Improvements from the 2014 Bond Referendum.	\$18,800,000	Staff Time	Mid-Term
Objective 2.4: <i>Consider Increase of Tax Increment Levels</i>			
2.4.a Campaign for community investment in long term Master Plan implementation.	\$0	\$0	Short-Term

Goal 3: Improve Programs and Service Delivery

Objective 3.1: <i>Increase programming for families, seniors, and teens</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
3.1.a Expand program opportunities for teens, families, and seniors in all locations.	\$0	TBD	Short-Term
Objective 3.2: <i>Increase programs in wellness/fitness, cultural, and special needs</i>			
3.2.a Expand wellness/fitness, cultural, and special needs programming opportunities.	\$0	TBD	Short to Mid-Term
3.2.b As new facilities are developed and constructed, include appropriate spaces for wellness/fitness, cultural, special needs, and aquatic opportunities.	TBD	TBD	Short to Mid-Term

Objective 3.3: <i>Increase number of special events and festivals</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
3.3.a Expand neighborhood and community special event and festival opportunities at a variety of locations community wide with an emphasis in the downtown area.	\$0	TBD	Short-Term
Objective 3.4: <i>Create greater awareness for and increase participation at the Renaissance Centre</i>			
3.4.a Create a 3-5 year Strategic Plan that focuses on creating awareness and increasing programming, and develop a marketing strategy.	\$0	TBD	Short-Term
Objective 3.5: <i>Create greater awareness for the Urban Forestry Division</i>			
3.5.a Develop a marketing strategy for the Urban Forestry Division that creates a greater awareness and public interest in the goals and outcomes of the division.	\$0	TBD	Short-Term
3.5.b Develop implementation strategies and educational opportunities for the Urban Forestry Management Plan.	\$0	TBD	Short-Term

Goal 4: Improve Facilities and Amenities

Objective 4.1: <i>Maintain and improve existing facilities</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
4.1.a Continue to implement maintenance strategies that maintain and make improvements to existing facilities.	TBD	TBD	Ongoing
4.1.b Develop a plan to address the recommendations from the inventory as they relate to individual park improvements.	TBD	TBD	Long-Term
Objective 4.2:			

<i>Expand trails & connectivity</i>			
4.2.a Complete Greenways System as identified in the 2014 Bond.	\$4,600,000	TBD	Mid-Term
4.2.b Explore the development of Trail Heads at entrance points to the Greenway.	332,827	TBD	Long-Term
Objective 4.3: <i>Provide new facilities to meet growing demand</i>			
4.3.a Explore the opportunity to design and construct a 65,000 square foot Recreation Center in the downtown area that includes a competitive pool, water features, gymnasiums, fitness/wellness space, indoor track and community space.	\$25,653,857	TBD	TBD
4.3.b Explore the opportunity to construct a dedicated Pickle Ball facility that could serve the region as a tournament and league play hub.	\$232,186	TBD	TBD

The total capital cost estimates for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is in the range of approximately \$__ million to \$__ million with many variables depending on the types, size, and degree of improvements. There is a staff document noted that has the details on the improvements and new construction at parks and facilities.

II. Past, Present, and Future – The Planning Context

A. Purpose of this Plan

The Wake Forest Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Master Plan is intended to help meet the needs of current and future residents by positioning Wake Forest to build on the community's unique Park and Recreation assets and identify new opportunities. The citizen-driven plan establishes a clear direction to guide town staff, advisory boards, and elected officials in their efforts to enhance the community's Park and Recreation services and facilities.

B. History of Wake Forest Park and Recreation Department

Coming from Ruben.....

Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources was defined to include (but not be limited to) playgrounds; playfields; indoor recreation; museums; civic and Cultural Resources centers; and other parks, recreation, and cultural areas and facilities when owned or controlled by the Town. A PARK AND RECREATION Fund and Advisory Board, composed of eleven members, was established in the mid-1980s. The Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Department has seen five Directors to date.

C. Wake Forest Park and Recreation Department Mission Statement

The Wake Forest Parks and Recreation Department seeks to enhance the lives

D. Park and Recreation Department Overview

Wake Forest is located in an area of scenic beauty and historical significance in North Carolina. The Town's Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Department is a source of community pride and is responsible for the many parks, recreation facilities, and programs that are important factors in the quality of life in the community.

The 12 parks have a total acreage of 691, of which 293 are developed and 398 are undeveloped land; 2 community facilities; a 50 meter outdoor pool; a senior center; and a new performing arts center that make up an outstanding park system. The Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Department co-hosts and/or participates in a number of special events including concerts in the park First Friday Flicks, Halloween Spooktacular, Six Sundays in Spring, and a full schedule at the Wake Forest Renaissance Centre.

E. Related Planning Efforts and Integration

The Town of Wake Forest has undertaken several planning efforts in recent years that have helped inform the planning process for this plan. These documents include:

- Town of Wake Forest Community Plan, 2009
- Open Space and Greenways Plan, 2002
- Parks and Recreation Master, 2005
- Transportation Plan Update, 2010
- Bicycle Plan, 2008
- Pedestrian Plan, 2006
- Renaissance Plan, 2004

These documents were reviewed by the consultant team and have been endorsed and integrated into the recommendations of the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Master Plan, where applicable, with no conflicts within any of these existing planning efforts.

F. Methodology of this Planning Process

This project has been guided by a project team made up of Parks and Recreation Department and Town staff, with the input from the Recreation Advisory Board, and the Town Board of Commissioners. This team provided input to the GreenPlay consulting team throughout the planning process. A collaborative approach creates a plan that fully utilizes the consultant's expertise and incorporates the local knowledge and institutional history that only community members can provide. The project consisted of the following tasks:

**Community
Engagement
Facility Inventory**

Community Engagement

- Review of previous planning efforts, Town historical information.
- Extensive community involvement effort including focus groups, meetings with key stakeholders, and community-wide public meetings.
- Statistically-valid community interest and opinion survey.

Facility Inventory

- Inventory of parks and facilities using existing mapping, staff interviews, and on-site visits to verify amenities and assess the condition of the facilities and surrounding areas.

GRASP® Level of Service Analysis

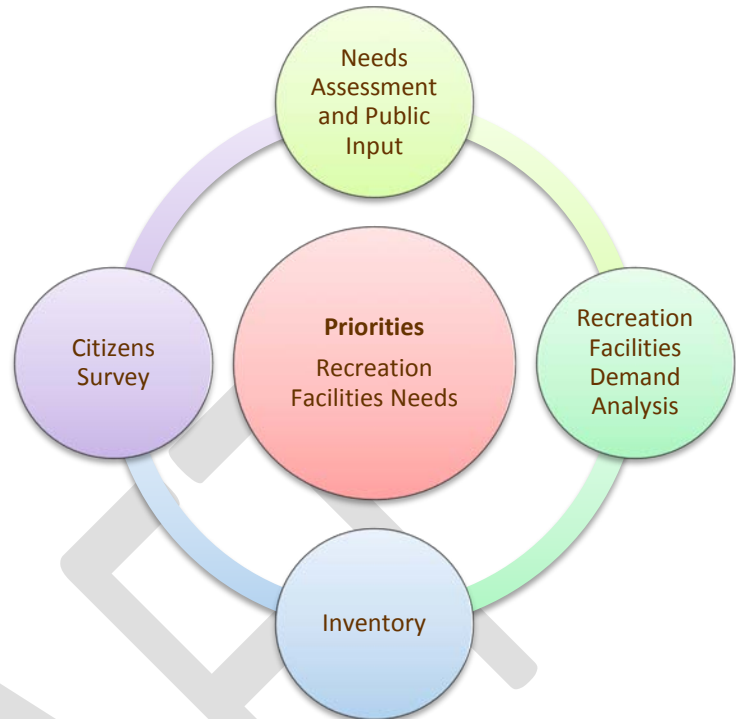
- Interviews with staff to provide information about Park and Recreation facilities and services, along with insight regarding the current practices and experiences of the Town in serving its residents and visitors.
- Identification of alternative providers of recreation services to provide insight regarding the market opportunities in the area for potential new facilities and services.
- Analysis addressing recreation, parks, cultural resources, and related services.

Assessment and Analysis

- Review and assessment of relevant plans.
- Measurement of the current delivery of service for park and recreation facilities using the GRASP® Level of Service Analysis and allowing for a target level of service to be determined that is both feasible and aligned with the desires of citizens as expressed through the citizen survey. This analysis is also represented graphically in GRASP® Perspectives.
- Exploration of finance and funding mechanisms to support development and sustainability within the system.

Needs Assessment

- Consideration of the profile of the community and demographics, including population growth.
- Research of trends related to American lifestyles to help guide the efforts of Parks and Recreation over the next several years.



Operational and Marketing Analysis

- Analyze Park and Recreation programming and service delivery.
- Conduct an organizational SWOT analysis.
- Broad assessment of overall Park and Recreation operations.

Recommendations: Goals, Objectives, and Action Plan

- Identification and categorization of recommendations into themes with goals, objectives, and an action plan for implementation.
- Development of an action plan for capital improvements including cost, funding source potentials, and timeframe to support the implementation of the plan.
- Conceptual designs for the four major parks.

G. Timeline for Completing the Master Plan

Strategic Kick-Off	August 2014
Community Engagement	September – November 2014
Inventory and Assessment of Existing Facilities	September – November 2014
GRASP® Level of Service Analysis	October – December 2014
Needs Assessment	December 2014
Operational and Marketing Analysis	November – December 2014
Findings Compilation Report	November 2014
Recommendations and Action Plans	November 2014 – January 2015
Draft Plan, Presentation	February 2015
Final Plan, Presentation, and Deliverables	March 2015

III. What We Want – Our Community and Identified Needs

Identification of current park and recreation resources, as well as recreation trends, community demographics, and needs, help to better understand future recreational opportunities and identify the unique niche of the Town of Wake Forest. The historic values and standards that the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Department brings to the community, along with park and recreation trends, work together to create a unique opportunity for Wake Forest to plan for and implement recommendations for future park and recreation facilities.

Following is an overview of the Wake Forest community and a needs assessment of park and recreation facilities and services. This section first describes the key demographic information as well as national trends in Park and Recreation services. Community input from stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and a community meeting is described and identifies satisfaction levels along with public needs for Wake Forest’s park and recreation facilities and services.

Results from a statistically-valid community survey are summarized and highlighted. A compilation of the detailed survey data and cross tabulations has been provided separately as a staff resource document. All of this information provides a framework to understand Wake Forest’s context, park and recreational needs, and direction for the future.

A. Wake Forest Population and Demographic Trends

Understanding community demographics is an important component of preparing a Parks and Recreation Master Plan. This chapter provides a demographic overview of the Town of Wake Forest, North Carolina. The population data used in this demographic profile comes from ESRI Business Information Solutions, based on the 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census data.

Table 1: Summary Demographics for Wake Forest, North Carolina – 2014

Summary Demographics - 2014	
Population	34,629
Number of Households	12,081
Avg. Household Size	2.84
Median Age	35.2
Median Household Income	\$64,485

B. Demographic Analysis

Population Projections

Although the future of population growth cannot be predicted with certainty, it is helpful to make assumptions about it for planning purposes. **Table 1** contains population estimates and projections for Wake Forest in the years 2014, 2019, and 2024, based on the 2010 U.S. Census. The annual growth rate for the Town from 2000 through 2010 was 6.62 percent. ESRI’s projected annual growth rate for the Town for 2014 through 2019 is 3.18 percent, compared to a projected 2014 – 2019 annual growth rate of 1.06 percent for the State of North Carolina, and an annual growth rate of 0.73 percent for the United States as a whole. Wake Forest’s population growth trend is graphically represented in **Figure 1**.

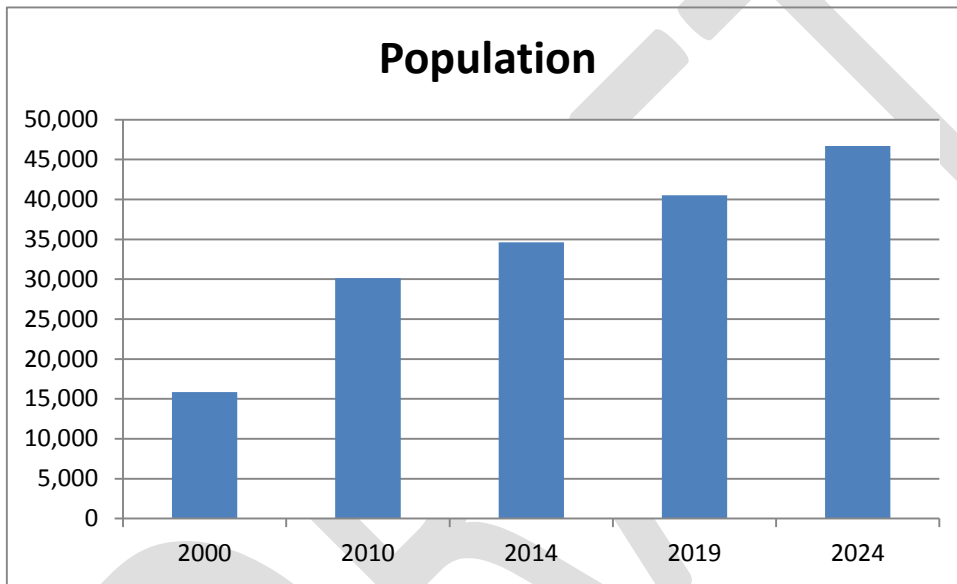
Table 2: Wake Forest Population Projections*

US Census (2000 and 2010) and ESRI Projections	
2000 Population	15,864
2010 Population	30,117
2014 Estimated	34,629
2019 Projected	40,498
2024 Projected	46,682

Source: 2000 and 2010 Census and ESRI Business Information Solutions 2014 Demographic and Income Profile.

*GreenPlay, LLC, calculated projected populations for 2024 based on ESRI growth multiplier of 3.18% for Wake Forest. The U.S. Census does not create projections for 2014, 2019, or 2024.

Figure 1: Wake Forest Population Growth Trend

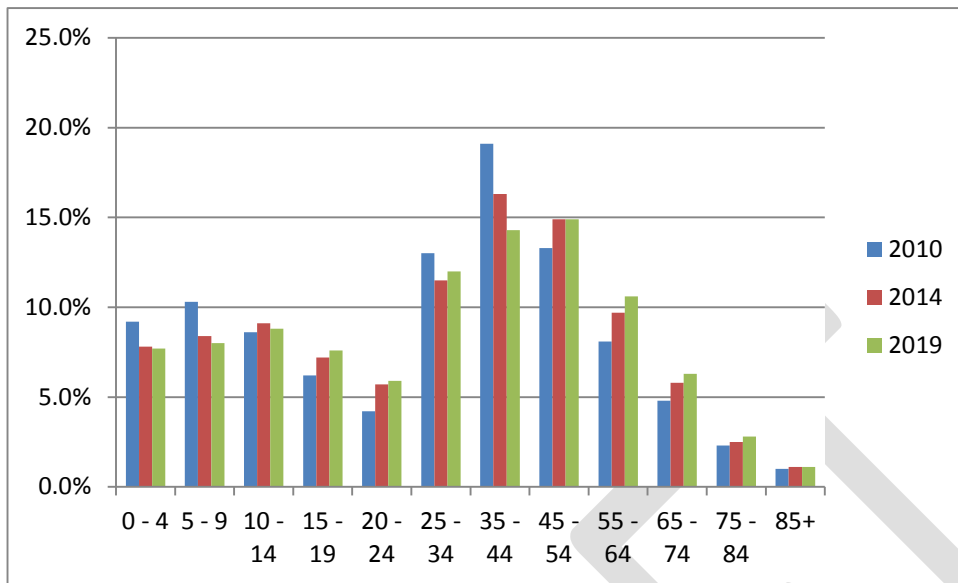


Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions.

Population Age Distribution

A comparison of the estimated population break down by age for the Town of Wake Forest from 2010 to 2019 is shown in **Figure 2**. The gender distribution in 2014 is 48.2 percent male to 51.8 percent female. The median age is 35.2.

Figure 2: Population Age Distribution for the Years 2010, 2014, and 2019



Source: 2010 U.S. Census; 2014 estimates and 2019 forecast provided by ESRI Business Information Solutions.

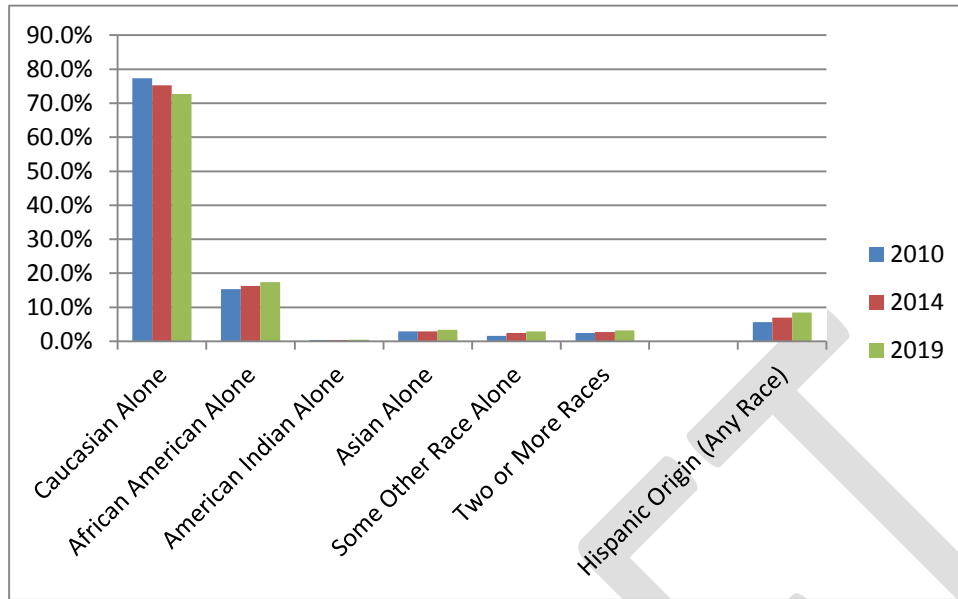
The age demographics have undergone a number of changes in Wake Forest from 2010 to 2014 with these trends predicted to continue through 2019. The 0 – 9 age range is predicted to drop by about four percent by 2019 to represent 15.7 percent of the population, while the 15 – 24 age range is predicted to jump about three percent to 13.5 percent. Similarly, the 25 – 34 age range is predicted to drop by six percent by 2019 to represent 26.3 percent of the population, while the 45 – 74 age range is predicted to jump by six percent to 31.8 percent.

Race/Ethnicity

Figure 3 reflects the racial/ethnic population distribution for Wake Forest:

- The Caucasian population remains quite substantial, while on a slightly downward trend from 77.3 percent in 2010 to a predicted 72.7 percent in 2019.
- Fifteen percent (15%) of the population was African American population in 2010, and this population is trending upward to a predicted 17.4 percent in 2019.
- The population of Hispanic origin (irrespective of race) has grown from 2010 (5.6 percent), and is expected to continue to grow to 8.5 percent of the population by 2019.
- Wake Forest has small Asian and American Indian populations at about 3 percent and .5 percent in 2014, respectively.

Figure 3: Ethnicity Statistics (2014)



Source: 2010 U.S. Census; 2014 estimates and 2019 forecast provided by ESRI Business Information Solutions.

Educational Attainment

As shown in **Table 3**, the highest ranking educational cohorts in Wake Forest are those with a bachelor’s degree (31.2%), those with some college education and no degree (21.2%), and those residents that are high school graduates (including equivalency) (16.7%). Those with a graduate or professional degree follow, comprising 13.1 percent of the population. According to a census study, education levels had more effect on earnings over a 40-year span in the workforce than any other demographic factor, such as gender, race, and ethnic origin.¹

¹ Tiffany Julian and Robert Kominski, “Education and Synthetic Work-Life Earnings Estimates” American Community Survey Reports, US Census Bureau, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/acs-14.pdf>, September 2011.

Table 3: Town of Wake Forest, North Carolina – 2014 Educational Attainment

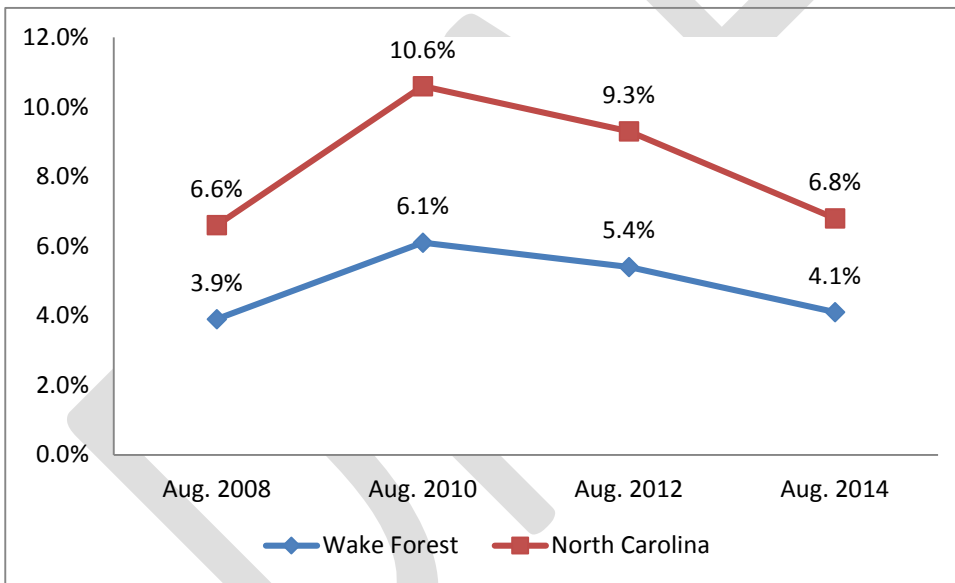
Education Attainment	Service Area Percentage
Less than 9 th grade	2.1%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	4.7%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	16.7%
GED/Alternative Credential	1.7%
Some college, no degree	21.2%
Associate’s degree	9.3%
Bachelor’s degree	31.2%
Graduate or professional degree	13.1%

Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions 2014 estimate based on the 2010 U.S. Census.

Employment

Figure 4 provides a snapshot of the unemployment rate from August 2008 through August 2014 for the Town of Wake Forest and for the State of North Carolina as a whole. Wake Forest has a strong, resilient economy and weathered the recent recession quite well.

Figure 4: Snapshot of Wake Forest and North Carolina unemployment rates from 2008 - 2014



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Household Information

As reflected in **Table 4**, in 2014, Wake Forest has 12,942 housing units with a 63.9 percent owner-occupied housing rate, compared to a 29.4 percent renter occupied rate. The average household size in 2014 is 2.84.

Table 4: Wake Forest Housing Statistics

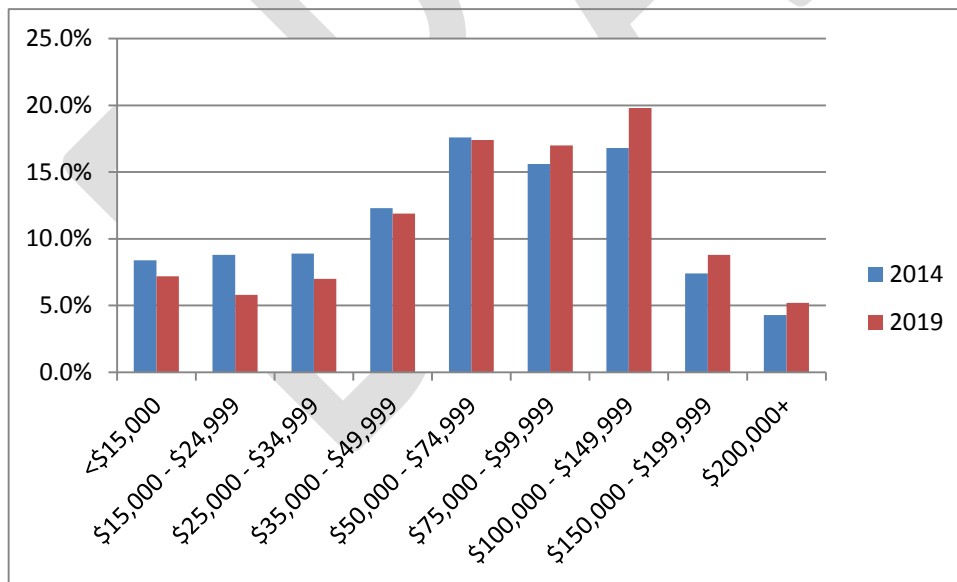
	2010	2014	2019
Total housing units	11,370	12,942	15,085
Percent owner occupied	67.3%	63.9%	63.6%
Percent renter occupied	25.2%	29.4%	29.8%
Percent vacant	7.5%	6.7%	6.4%

Source: 2010 U.S. Census; 2014 estimates and 2019 forecasts provided by ESRI Business Information Solutions.

Household Income

- The estimated 2014 median household income for residents of Wake Forest is \$64,485 and is expected to grow to \$75,844 by 2019. **Figure 5** illustrates the full income distribution estimated for Wake Forest in 2014 and projected for 2019.
- Most residents have an income in the \$50,000 – \$74,999 range (about 17.6%) followed by the \$100,000 – \$149,000 income range (16.8%).
- Income distribution in the \$75,000 – \$99,999, \$100,000 – \$149,000, \$150,000 – \$199,999, and \$200,000+ ranges is expected to rise by 1.4 percent, 3 percent, 1.4 percent, and .9 percent, respectively, from 2014 to 2019.

Figure 5: Annual Household Income Distribution Comparison (2014 – 2019)



Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions, 2014.

C. Park and Recreation Influencing Trends

The following information highlights relevant regional, and national outdoor recreation trends from various sources that may influence the Town of Wake Forest recreation planning for the next several years.

Administration Trends for Recreation and Parks

Municipal parks and recreation structures and delivery have changed, and more alternative methods of services are emerging. Certain services are being out, and cooperative agreements with non-profit other public institutions are being developed. Newer include the health system, social services, justice education, the corporate sector, and community agencies. These partnerships reflect both a broader interpretation of the mandate of parks and recreation and the increased willingness of other sectors to work to address community issues. The relationship with agencies is vital in promoting wellness.

The traditional relationship with education and the facilities through joint-use agreements is evolving into cooperative planning and programming aimed at youth inactivity levels and community needs.

Accreditation is a distinguished mark of excellence that affords external recognition of an organization's commitment to quality and improvement.

Accreditation has two fundamental

systems delivering contracted groups and partners system, service

agencies together health

sharing of addressing

Listed below are additional administrative national trends:

- Level of subsidy for programs is lessening, and more “enterprise” activities are being developed, thereby allowing subsidy to be used where deemed appropriate.
- Information technology allows for better tracking and reporting.
- Pricing is often determined by peak, off-peak, and off-season rates.
- More agencies are partnering with private, public, and non-profit groups.

Agency Accreditation

Parks and Recreation agencies are affirming their competencies and value through accreditation. This is achieved by an agency's commitment to 150 standards. There are currently 116 agencies around the nation that have received the **Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) accreditation.**

Additional benefits of CAPRA accreditation include:

- Boosts staff morale
- Encourages collaboration
- Improves program outcomes
- Identifies agency and cost efficiencies
- Builds high level of trust with the public
- Demonstrates promise of quality
- Identifies best management practices

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) - Compliance

On September 14, 2010 the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) issued an amended regulation implementing the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA 2010 Standards).² On March 15, 2011 the amended Act became effective, and for the first time in history, it includes recreation environment design requirements. Covered entities were to be compliant with design and construction requirements and the development of a three-year transition plan by March 15, 2012. Implementation of the three-year transition plan must be complete by March 15, 2015.

Aquatics/Water Recreation Trends

According to the National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA), swimming ranked third nation-wide in terms of participation in 2012.³ Outdoor swimming pools are not typically heated and open year round. Swimming for fitness is the top aspirational activity for “inactives” in six of eight age categories in the SFIA “2013 Sports, Fitness and Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report,” representing a significant opportunity to engage inactive populations. Nationally, there is an increasing trend toward indoor leisure and therapeutic pools. Additional indoor and outdoor amenities like “spray pads” are becoming increasingly popular as well. In some cities and counties, spray pools are popular in the summer months and are converted into ice rinks in the winter months.

Dog Parks

Dog parks continue to see high popularity and have remained among the top planned addition to parks and recreational facilities over the past three years. The National Dog Park Association, a new association dedicated to providing informational resources for starting and maintaining dog parks, was established in 2014. *Recreation Management* magazine⁴ suggests that dog parks can represent a relatively low-cost way to provide an oft-visited, popular community amenity. Dog parks can be as simple as a gated area, or more elaborate with “designed-for-dogs” amenities like water fountains, agility equipment, and pet wash stations.

Economic & Health Benefits of Parks

There are numerous economic and health benefits of parks, including the following:

- Trails, parks, and playgrounds are among the five most important community amenities considered when selecting a home.
- Research from the University of Illinois shows that trees, parks, and green spaces have a profound impact on people’s health and mental outlook.⁵
- U.S. Forest Service research indicates that when the economic benefits produced by trees are assessed, the total value can be two to six times the cost for tree planting and care.⁶

² U.S. Department of Justice, Americans with Disabilities Act, ADA Home Page, <http://www.ada.gov/>, accessed on November 15, 2012.

³ National Sporting Goods Association, “2012 Participation – Ranked by Total Participation”, 2013.

⁴ Emily Tipping, “2014 State of the Industry Report, Trends in Parks and Recreation”, *Recreation Management*, June 2014.

⁵ F.E. Kuo, “Environment and Crime in the Inner City: Does Vegetation Reduce Crime?” *Environment and Behavior*, Volume 33, pp 343-367.

⁶ Nowak, David J., “Benefits of Community Trees”, (Brooklyn Trees, USDA Forest Service General Technical Report, in review).

- Fifty percent of Americans regard outdoor activities as their main source of exercise.⁷

The Trust for Public Land has published a report titled: “The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space.” The report makes the following observations about the health, economic, environmental, and social benefits of parks and open space⁸:

- Physical activity makes people healthier.
- Physical activity increases with access to parks.
- Contact with the natural world improves physical and physiological health.
- Residential and commercial property values increase.
- Value is added to community and economic development sustainability.
- Benefits of tourism are enhanced.
- Trees are effective in improving air quality and act as natural air conditioners.
- Trees assist with storm water control and erosion.
- Crime and juvenile delinquency are reduced.
- Recreational opportunities for all ages are provided.
- Stable neighborhoods and strong communities are created.

Researchers have long touted the benefits of outdoor exercise. The United States is now catching up on this trend, as park and recreation departments have begun installing “outdoor gyms.” Equipment that can be found in these outdoor gyms is comparable to what would be found in an indoor workout facility, such as leg and chest presses, elliptical trainers, pull down trainers, etc. With no additional equipment such as weights and resistance bands, the equipment is fairly easy to install. Outdoor fitness equipment provides a new opportunity for parks and recreation departments to increase the health of their communities, while offering them the opportunity to exercise outdoors. Such equipment can increase the usage of parks, trails, and other outdoor amenities while helping to fight the obesity epidemic and increase the community’s interaction with nature.

Facilities

According to *Recreation Management* magazine’s “2014 State of the Industry Report,”⁹ national trends show an increased user-base of recreation facilities (private and public). Additionally, parks and recreation providers responding to the survey indicated an average age of 23.8 years for their community recreation facilities. To meet that growing need, a majority of the parks and recreation survey respondents (69%) reported that they have plans to build new facilities or make additions or renovations to their existing facilities over the next three years. Nearly one-third (33%) of parks respondents said that they have plans to build new facilities, and 29 percent said that they plan to add to their existing facilities. More than half (52%) are planning renovations to existing facilities.

⁷ “Outdoor Recreation Participation Report 2010”, Outdoor Foundation, 2010.

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

⁹ Emily Tipping, “2014 State of the Industry Report, State of the Managed Recreation Industry”, *Recreation Management*, June 2014.

The current national trend is toward “one-stop” indoor recreation facilities to serve all ages. Large, multi-purpose regional centers help increase cost recovery, promote retention, and encourage cross-use. Agencies across the U.S. are increasing revenue production and cost recovery. Multi-use facilities versus specialized space is a trend, offering programming opportunities as well as free-play opportunities. “One stop” facilities attract young families, teens, and adults of all ages.

Festivals and Events

In the context of urban development, from the early 1980s, there has been a process that can be characterized as “festivalization,” which has been linked to the economic restructuring of towns and cities, and the drive to develop communities as large-scale platforms for the creation and consumption of “cultural experience.”

There are also a growing number of smaller more local community-based festivals and events, most often supported by local councils that have been spawned partly as a reaction to larger festivals that have become prime economic-drivers. These community-based festivals will often re-claim cultural ground based on their social, educational, and participative value.

Fitness Programming

There have been many changes in fitness programs in the last fifteen years. What clients wanted in 2000 is not necessarily what they want today. Body weight training appeared as a developing trend in 2014 and is projected to stay strong in 2015, as is high-intensity interval training. Yoga is regaining popularity after falling out of the top 20 in 2009 and staying out of the top 10 until 2014. Fitness programs for older adults will remain strong in 2014 and 2015.

Funding

According to *Recreation Management* magazine’s “2014 State of the Industry Report,” survey respondents from parks and recreation departments/districts reporting about their revenues from 2011 through 2013 reveals the beginning of a recovery from the impact of the recession of 2008. From 2011 to 2012, 83 percent of respondents reported that their revenues had either stabilized or had increased. This number grew to 85 percent of respondents when reporting on the 2012 to 2013 time frame, and by 2015, 95 percent of parks and recreation department respondents are expecting revenues to either increase (49%) or remain stable (45%).

General Programming

One of the most common concerns in the recreation industry is creating innovative programming to draw participants into facilities and services. Once in, participants recognize that the benefits are endless. According to *Recreation Management*’s “2014 State of the Industry Report,”¹⁰ the most common programs, offered by survey respondents, include holiday events and other special events (78%), youth sports teams (69%), day camps and summer camps (65%), adult sports teams (61%), arts and crafts (61%), educational programs (61%), sports tournaments and races (57%), programs for active older adults (55%), fitness programs (61%), and festivals and concerts (53%).

¹⁰ Emily Tipping, “2014 State of the Industry Report, Trends in Parks and Recreation”, *Recreation Management*, June 2013.

General Sports and Recreation Trends

The National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA) survey on sports participation in 2012¹¹ found that the top five athletic activities ranked by total participation included: exercise walking, exercising with equipment, swimming, camping, and aerobic exercising. Additionally, the following active, organized, or skill development activities remain popular: hiking, running/jogging, bicycle riding, basketball, golf, and soccer.

Marketing by Parks and Recreation Providers

Niche marketing trends have experienced change more frequently than ever before, as technology affects the way the public receives information. Web 2.0 tools and now Web 3.0 tools are a trend for agencies to use as a means of marketing programs and services. Popular social media marketing tools include:

- Facebook
- Pinterest
- Twitter
- You Tube
- Instagram
- LinkedIn

Mobile marketing is a trend of the future. Young adults engage in mobile data applications at much higher rates than adults in age brackets 30 and older. Usage rates of mobile applications demonstrate that chronologically across four major age cohorts, millennials tend to get information more frequently using mobile devices such as smart phones. For example, 95 percent of 18-to-29-year-old cell phone owners send and receive text messages, compared to 82 percent of 30-to-49-year-olds, 57 percent of 50-to-64-year-olds, and 19 percent of 65 and older.

It is also a fact that minority Americans lead the way when it comes to mobile internet access. Nearly two-thirds of African-Americans (64%) and Latinos (63%) are wireless internet users, and minority Americans are significantly more likely to own a cell phone than are their white counterparts (87 percent of Blacks and Hispanics own a cell phone, compared with 80 percent of whites).¹² By 2015, mobile internet penetration is forecast to grow to 71 percent for Hispanics compared to 59 percent for whites.¹³

¹¹ 2012 Sport/Recreation Activity Participation”, National Sporting Goods Association, 2013, <http://www.nsga.org>.

¹² Aaron Smith, “Mobile Access 2010”, Pew Internet and American Life Project, Pew Research Center, July 7, 2010, <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Mobile-Access-2010/Summary-of-Findings.aspx>, Accessed on November 15, 2012.

¹³ Erik Sass, “Minority Groups Heaviest Users of Mobile Net”, *Media Daily News*, Nov. 18, 2011, <http://www.mediapost.com/publications/article/162699/minority-groups-heaviest-users-of-mobile-net.html#axzz2CK9zYGFw>, Accessed on November 15, 2012.

Multiculturalism

Our country is becoming increasingly racially and ethnically diverse. In May 2012, the U.S. Census Bureau announced that non-white babies now account for the majority of births in the United States. “This is an important tipping point,” said William H. Frey,¹⁴ the senior demographer at the Brookings Institution, describing the shift as, “a transformation from a mostly white Baby Boomer culture to the more globalized multi-ethnic country that we are becoming.” Cultural and ethnic diversity adds a unique flavor to communities expressed through distinct neighborhoods, multicultural learning environments, restaurants, places of worship, museums, and nightlife.¹⁵

In the United States, the Hispanic population increased by 43 percent over the last decade, compared to five percent for the non-Hispanic portion, and accounted for more than half of all the population growth. According to Emilyn Sheffield, Professor of Recreation and Parks Management at the California State University at Chico, the growing racial and ethnic diversity is particularly important to recreation and leisure service providers, as family and individual recreation patterns and preferences are strongly shaped by cultural influences.¹⁶

While Wake Forest has a significant Caucasian population (75 percent in 2011), the Wake Forest

Multiculturalism and Marketing

Today the marketplace for consumers has dramatically evolved in the United States from a largely Anglo demographic to a large minority consumer base known as “new majority.” The San Jose Group, a consortium of marketing communications companies specializing in reaching Hispanic and non-Hispanic markets of the United States, suggests that today’s multicultural population of the United States, or the “new majority,” is 107.6 million, which translates to about 35.1 percent of the country’s total population. The United States’ multicultural population alone could essentially be the 12th largest country in the world.¹⁷

Parks and recreation trends in marketing leisure services continue to emerge and should be taken into consideration in all planning efforts, as different cultures respond differently to marketing techniques.

Natural Environments and Open Space

Outdoor Recreation

The Outdoor Foundation releases an annual “Participation in Outdoor Recreation” report. According to the 2013 report,¹⁸ while there continues to be fallout from the recent economic downturn, the number of outdoor recreation outings reached the highest participation an all-time high in 2012. The foundation reports that the top outdoor activities in 2012 were running, fishing, bicycling, camping, and hiking. Bird watching is also among the favorite outdoor activities by frequency of participation.

¹⁴ Adam Serwer, “The End of White America,” Mother Jones, <http://www.motherjones.com/kevin-drum/2012/05/end-white-america>, May 17, 2012.

¹⁵ Baldwin Ellis, “The Effects of Culture & Diversity on America”, http://www.ehow.com/facts_5512569_effects-culture-diversity-america.html, accessed on Sept. 20, 2012.

¹⁶ Emilyn Sheffield, “Five Trends Shaping Tomorrow Today,” Parks and Recreation, July 2012 p. 16-17.

¹⁷ “SJG Multicultural Facts & Trends”, San Jose Group, <http://blog.thesanjosegroup.com/?p=275>, posted October 25, 2010.

¹⁸ “Outdoor Recreation Participation Report 2013”, Outdoor Foundation, 2013.

The Outdoor Foundation's research brought the following key findings.

Participation in Outdoor Recreation

- Return to Nature: Nearly 50 percent of Americans ages six and older participated in outdoor recreation in 2012. That equates to a total of 141.9 million Americans and a net gain of one million outdoor participants.
- Top Five Biggest Participation Percentage Increase in Outdoor Activities in the Past three years (2014 Topline Report): Adventure racing, triathlon (off road), stand up paddling, kayak fishing, recreational kayaking.

Park and Recreation's Fit in Public Health

Increasingly, governmental agencies and professionals in the public health realm are realizing that Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources agencies can be key public health providers, as most communities, these agencies own and manage the majority of the public built and natural environment, and provide most of the recreation programs and facilities.

There are several types of assessment tools that are available for a future detailed assessment of public health in the community.

Obesity and Public Health

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), obesity continues to be a serious issue in America, growing at an epidemic rate—almost tripling since 1990. Overall, more than one-third (35.7%) of adults and 17 percent of children in the United States are obese.¹⁹ These statistics illustrate the importance of intercepting the epidemic in youth.

In an effort to educate Americans and encourage them to take steps toward a healthier future, the United Health Foundation annually presents *America's Health Rankings®: A Call to Action for Individuals & Their Communities*.

America's Health Rankings has tracked the health of the nation for the past 22 years, providing a unique, comprehensive perspective on how the nation (and each state) measures up. The 2011 edition of the Rankings suggests that our nation is extremely adept at treating illness and disease. However, Americans are struggling to change unhealthy behaviors such as smoking and obesity, which cause many of these diseases.

Obesity continues to be one of the fastest growing health issues in our nation, and America is spending billions in direct health care costs associated with poor diet and physical inactivity. As obesity in the United States continues to be a topic of interest for legislators and our government, research suggests that activity levels remain stagnant among all age groups. The following are statistics that support this concern.

¹⁹ "Obesity and Overweight - Facts", Center for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/facts.html>, accessed on October 3, 2012.

- Only 25 percent of adults and 27 percent of youth (grades 9-12) engage in recommended levels of physical activity.
- Fifty-nine percent (59%) of American adults are sedentary.
- Children born now have a lower life expectancy than their parents.
- Children nationally spend 4.5 – 8 hours daily (30-56 hours per week) in front of a screen (television and/or computer).

Community-Wide Health Assessment Tools for Park and Recreation

There are several types of health assessment tools available for community health assessment, specifically as it relates to management of parks and recreation. One is the use of the *Healthy Communities Surveillance and Management Toolkit™* (www.gpred.org/hcrg).



Safe Routes To Play
A Child-Centered Transportation Initiative

What if all children had the opportunity to safely bicycle, ski, skate, scoot, or walk to their play destinations?



GPARED
Research, Education, and Development
for Health, Recreation, and Land Agencies

www.saferoutestoplay.org

Another assessment process which is similar and can be incorporated into Multi-Modal Transportation Planning is a Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources aligned analysis called **Safe Routes to Play** (www.saferoutestoplay.org).

Additional methodologies that can be applied to specific sites or geographic areas are often called a “Health Impact Assessment” or a “Healthy Site Assessment.” These processes are not yet nationally standardized, but there are many communities and groups working toward that end.

Role and Response of Local Government

Collectively, these trends have created profound implications for the way local governments conduct business. Some local governments are now accepting the role of providing preventative health care through parks and recreation services. The following concepts are from the International County/County Management Association.²⁰

- Parks and Recreation departments should take the lead in developing communities conducive to active living.
- There is growing support for recreation programs that encourage active living within their community.
- One of the highest priorities is a cohesive system of parks and trails and accessible neighborhood parks.

Trail Recreation and Cycling Trends

For trail-related recreation activities such as hiking, bicycling, and running, the 2013 “Outdoor Recreation Topline Report” indicates a positive three-year trend for trail running, running/jogging, hiking, and mountain biking, but a slightly negative trend for road/surface bicycling.

Bicycle friendly cities have been emerging over the last ten years. Cycling has become a popular mode of transportation as people consider the rising cost of fuel, desire for better health, and concern for the environment. Some people also use cycling as a mode of transportation just for the fun of it.

Therapeutic Recreation

Nationally, therapeutic recreation as a service is experiencing many struggles and challenges. The changing face of health care is having a dramatic effect on therapeutic recreation (TR) services in many rehabilitation settings and specifically in physical rehabilitation settings, thus affecting community recreation programs.

²⁰ www.ICMA.org, Accessed in 2012.

The fundamental goal of TR services is to enable participants to return successfully to their communities. This not only means they need to have the functional skill but also that they have physical and social environments in the community that are receptive to the individual.

Youth Sports

The 2013 SFIA sports participation report indicates that in 2012 youth (ages 6-12) participation was highest for outdoor (63%), team (53%), and individual sports (50%). Children in this age group have increased interest in camping, while young adults ages 18 – 24 are becoming more interested in running/jogging.

Youth Participation in Outdoor Recreation

- Participation Fairly Steady from 2011: However, participation rates dropped among teens ages 13 to 17 (particularly teenage girls) and rose among adults ages 25 to 44.
- The Influence of Family: Most youth are introduced to outdoor activities by parents, friends, family, and relatives.
- Physical education in schools: The importance cannot be understated. Among adults ages 18 and older who are current outdoor participants, 75 percent say that they had PE in school between the ages of 6 and 12.

D. Community and Stakeholder Input Summary

Public Process for the Wake Forest Park, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Master Plan was held September 2-3, 2014 and consisted of 105 participants in six focus groups and a public forum. This section summarizes the key issues and input that was mentioned in several of the meetings. A full summary of all of the input can be found in **Appendix B**.

The community input summary is categorized below with brief details of the input from the many focus group meetings. As the Key Issues Matrix demonstrates, these are the key issues that were common throughout the community input process, regardless of the method of communication.

Identified Key Issues from Stakeholder Input

Key issues were identified using a number of tools; review of existing plans and documents, focus groups, stakeholder meetings, a community survey, inventory and level of service analysis, and MindMixer online community engagement. The information gathered from these sources was evaluated, and the following key issues were developed.

Organizational Issues

The marketing and communication of park recreation and cultural resources activities and facilities was consistently brought up as a weakness that needs to be addressed, with many citing that they do not know what programs are being offered, when, and at what location. In addition, several cited that they did not know some parks existed or their locations.

Many of the residents thought it was very difficult to find local Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources amenities based on the need for better signage (both wayfinding and within parks). There was also a consensus for a need for directional and locational signage on the Greenways.

Staffing, specifically the need for additional staffing to both maintain current standards and to operate facilities to optimal capacities, were brought up as ways to address identified weaknesses of inadequate hours of operations for facilities and maintenance of trails.

Programs and Service Delivery

When asked about what Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources programming needed to be expanded, the overwhelming response was to provide additional programs for families, seniors, and teenagers. Additional programs mentioned to expand included wellness/fitness, cultural, special needs, and aquatics. The public would like to see an increase in the number of special events and festivals.

Facilities and Amenities

When the focus group attendees were asked what facilities and amenities need to be improved or potential new facilities that could be built, the overwhelming response was to make sure that Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources maintains and improves existing facilities if at all possible prior to building new facilities. Existing facilities mentioned most often included signage on the Greenways, expanding the Senior Center, expanding hours at the facilities, and developing trailheads for the greenways.

The number one amenity the public would like to see improved (and new additions built) is the completion of the Greenways to provide as much connectivity as possible to other amenities within the Town.

The vast majority of input supported the construction of a multi-purpose facility that incorporated an aquatic center, additional gymnasiums, fitness/wellness spaces, indoor walking track, and flexible spaces for teen and senior programming.

There was consensus to increase ADA accessibility at all Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources facilities, especially since there is a federal mandate to do so.

Other additional facilities that the public would like to see in Wake Forest included a dedicated pickleball facility, exercise trails on the 80 acres, and an outdoor amphitheater/special event venue. The public would like to see the Department stock pile land for future parks.

Level of Service

In general, Wake Forest has a distribution of facilities that offers good general access to parks and recreation facilities. Areas of higher concentration are notable, particularly in the area that lies north of Dr. Calvin Jones Highway and east of Capital Boulevard. However, even most of the areas outside that sector are still within the catchment area of at least some components provided by the Town. In fact, 86 percent of the land area within the study area boundary falls within the catchment area of at least one component from the inventory.

Finance

There seems to be a consensus to implement and utilize equitable user fees for Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources activities based on a value received by the participant for the services with a personal benefit.

There was a local focus on revitalizing the downtown area of Wake Forest with the opening of the Wake Forest Renaissance Centre and by more community-wide special events and festivals to downtown Wake Forest.

Most focus group attendees agreed that it would be wise to pursue any and all grant opportunities at the federal, state, regional, and local levels.

In November of 2014, the citizens of Wake Forest passed a Bond Referendum to enhance current facilities, provide greenways improvements, and improve pedestrian travel throughout Wake Forest.

Community Survey Summary

Survey Methodology

The purpose of this study was to gather public feedback on Town of Wake Forest parks, recreation, and cultural resources facilities. This survey research effort and subsequent analysis was designed to assist the Town of Wake Forest in the creation of an updated Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Master Plan for existing and possible future enhancements, facilities, and services.

The survey was conducted using three primary methods: 1) a survey, 2) an online, invitation-only web survey to further response from those residents already within the defined sample, and 3) an open-link online survey for members of the were not part of the random sample. The analysis herein the combined results of these methods. A close analysis demographics and response patterns among random sample respondents were similar enough to permit the merging of these sources. Aggregating these data sources also contributes to a larger sample size, allowing for more meaningful segmentation of the data by variables of interest.

This community survey section is a summary of the survey results. Many survey

mail-back encourage random public who focuses on revealed that and open link

The primary list source used for the mailing was a third party list purchased from Melissa Data Corp., a leading provider of data with emphasis on U.S., Canadian, and international address and phone verification and postal software. Use of the Melissa Data list also includes renters in the sample who are frequently missed in other list sources such as utility billing lists.

A total of 3,500 surveys were mailed to a random sample of Wake Forest residents in October 2014. The final sample size for this statistically valid survey was 270, resulting in a margin of error of approximately +/- 6.0 percentage points calculated for questions at 50 percent response.²¹ The open link survey received an additional 71 responses.

The underlying data were weighted by age to ensure appropriate representation of Wake Forest residents across different demographic cohorts in the sample. Due to variable response rates by some

²¹ For the total invitation sample size of 270, margin of error is +/- 6.0 percent calculated for questions at 50% response (if the response for a particular question is "50%"—the standard way to generalize margin of error is to state the larger margin, which occurs for responses at 50%). Note that the margin of error is different for every single question response on the survey depending on the resultant sample sizes, proportion of responses, and number of answer categories for each question. Comparison of differences in the data between various segments, therefore, should take into consideration these factors. As a general comment, it is sometimes more appropriate to focus attention on the general trends and patterns in the data rather than on the individual percentages.

segments of the population, the underlying results, while weighted to best match the overall demographics of residents, may not be completely representative of some sub-groups of the population, including those in the Latino community.

Survey Respondent Profile

This section of the report summarizes the respondent and household demographics of both the invitation and open link samples. By understanding how the characteristics of these two groups differ, it is easier to understand contrasting response patterns for various questions on the survey.

- **Gender.** Most invitation sample respondents are female (65%), while just over a third of respondents are male (35%). Open link respondents also skewed female (62%).
- **Age.** Just over a quarter of invitation respondents are under the age of 35 (26%), compared to just four percent of open link respondents. There was also notable representation among those in the 35 to 44 (24%) and 45 to 54 (22%) age cohorts within the invitation sample. These were also the most represented age cohorts within the open link sample, at 33 percent each, respectively.
- **Household Profile.** The invitation and open link samples had similar proportions of the various household profile segments. Households with children at home comprised the largest share of invitation sample (61%) and open link (58%) respondents. Empty-nesters were the next most represented, comprising 22 percent of the invitation sample and 24 percent of the open link sample. Couples without children (11% of invitation respondents and 13% of open link respondents) followed. Meanwhile, singles without children comprised a small share of the overall sample, both among invitation (5%) and open link (4%) respondents.
- **Ethnicity/Race.** Two percent of invitation respondents and four percent of open link respondents consider themselves to be of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin. A majority of respondents consider themselves to be white (89% of invitation respondents and 91% of open link respondents). The next most common race identified was Black or African American (7% of invitation respondents and 4% of open link respondents).
- **Household Income.** Half of all invitation sample households earn an annual income of less than \$100,000, compared to 57 percent of open link households. An additional 26 percent of respondents from each sample earn between \$100,000 and \$150,000, while 24 percent of invitation households and 17 percent of open link households earn \$150,000 or more per year. Overall, the income profile is highly similar between the two samples, with invitation households skewing just slightly more affluent.
- **Years in the Wake Forest Area.** Invitation sample respondents have lived in the area for 9.2 years, on average. Open link respondents have lived in the area for slightly more time, on average (11.4). Overall, resident results show that roughly 1 in 10 people from each sample are newer residents of Wake Forest, having lived in the area for less than a year.
- **Own or Rent.** A majority of respondents own their residence, both in the invitation sample (90%) and open link sample (87%).

- **Voter Registration.** The percentage of respondents who are registered to vote in Wake Forest is highly similar to the share of those who own their residence. Ninety percent (90%) of invitation respondents and 89 percent of open link respondents are registered to vote in Wake Forest.

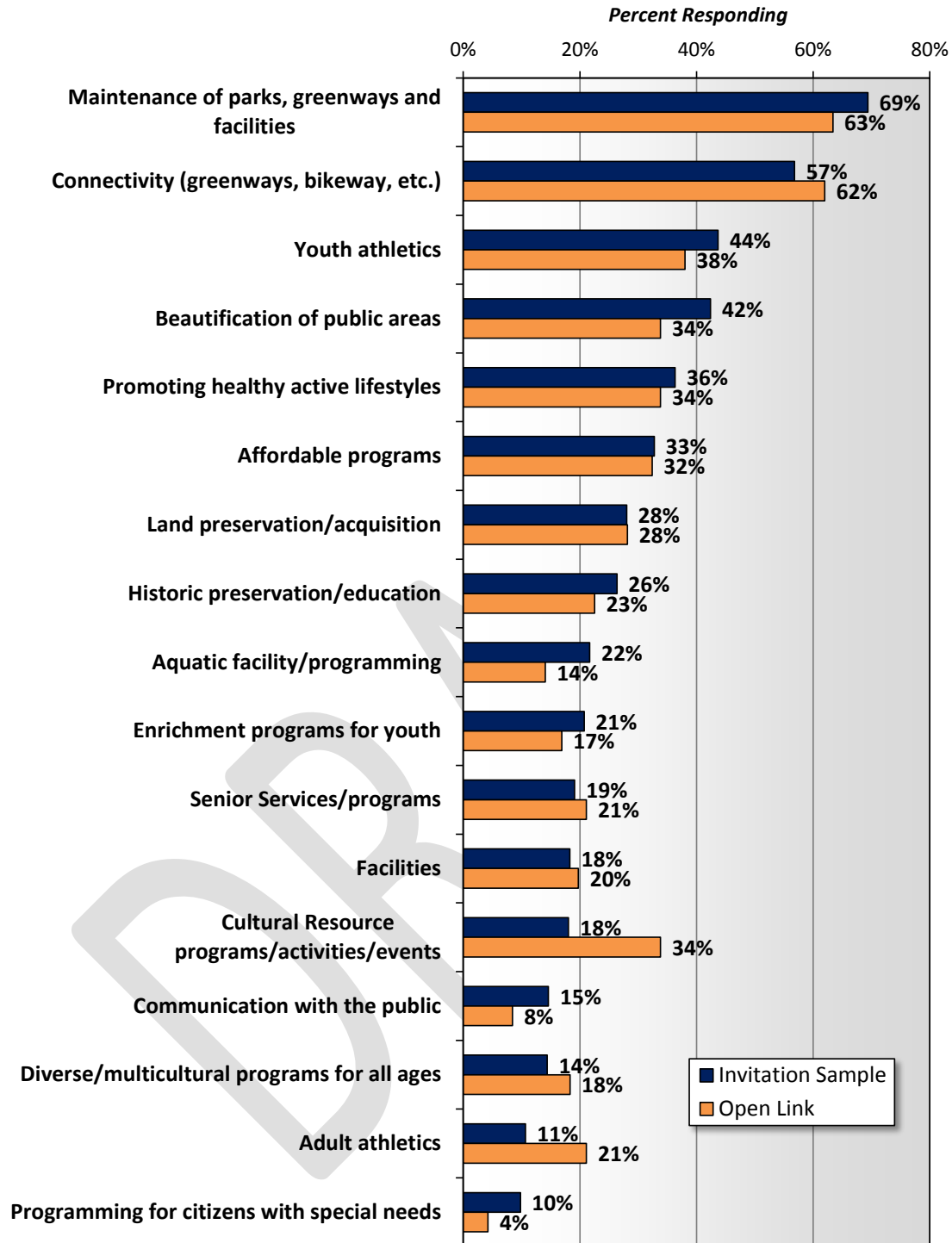
Current Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Programs and Facilities

Importance of Recreational Amenities/Activities and Degree to Which Needs are Being Met

Respondents were asked to indicate the top five community issues that Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources should focus on improving. Maintenance of parks, greenways, and facilities is the top priority among invitation respondents, with 69 percent of respondents including this category as one of their top five priorities. However, several other categories were also reported as top priorities, including connectivity of greenways and bikeways (57 percent of respondents including this category as one of their top five), youth athletics (44%), beautification of public areas (42%), promoting healthy active lifestyles (36%), and affordable programs (33%). With regard to the number one priority, connectivity had the highest share of respondents noting this was a top priority (25%); followed by youth athletics (18%); and maintenance of parks, greenways, and facilities (13%).

Figure 6 explores the top five overall priorities between the invitation and open link samples. Among respondents of both samples, maintenance of parks, greenways, and facilities was identified as most important, with 69 percent of invitation respondents, and 63 percent of open link respondents noting this as one of their top five priorities. Connectivity was a close second among open link respondents (62%). Invitation respondents were more likely to prioritize youth athletics, beautification of public areas, aquatic facility/programming, enrichment programs for youth, communication with the public, and programming for citizens with special needs. Meanwhile, open link respondents were more likely to prioritize cultural resource programs, activities, and events by a large margin, as well as adult athletics. For all other areas, responses were highly similar between the two groups.

Figure 6: Community Issues to Focus on Improving –Top Five Priorities Combined Invitation Sample vs. Open Link



Satisfaction with Amenities and Services

Respondents reported their satisfaction with 29 different Wake Forest parks and facilities on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 meaning “not at all satisfied” and 5 meaning “extremely satisfied.” Respondents also had the opportunity to note if they were unaware of or do not use the park or facility.

Respondents who are aware of or use the park or facility were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction. The following had the most frequently reported “4” or “5” ratings:

- E. Carroll Joyner Park (72% of invitation respondents providing a rating of “4” or “5”)
- J.B. Flaherty Park (38%)
- Holding Park (34%)
- Athletic fields (31%)
- Flaherty Park Community Center (28%)

Overall, satisfaction ratings were strong, with higher shares of satisfied respondents than dissatisfied respondents for each park or facility. Heritage High Park had the highest share of dissatisfied respondents (9%) relative to the shares recorded for other parks and facilities, but dissatisfaction was still quite low overall.

A follow-up question asked respondents to provide comments or suggestions for how the parks and facilities could be improved to better meet the needs of their household and/or the community. Both invitation and open link respondents provided a wide range of insightful comments, the full set of which are included in the final survey report. However, a few common themes did appear in the comments.

Comments/Suggestions Regarding Parks and Facilities

A follow-up question asked respondents to provide comments or suggestions for how the parks and facilities could be improved to better meet the needs of their household and/or the community. Both invitation and open link respondents provided a full range of insightful comments, the full set of which should be viewed to fully understand community member desires and needs. However, a few common themes did appear in the comments:

Importance of Facilities and Services

Respondents rated the importance of 14 different facilities and services operated by the Wake Forest Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Department to their household. These categories are general areas of Department operations, intended to provide high-level insight into areas of greatest importance. Respondents used a 5-point scale, with 1 meaning “not at all important” and 5 meaning “very important.”

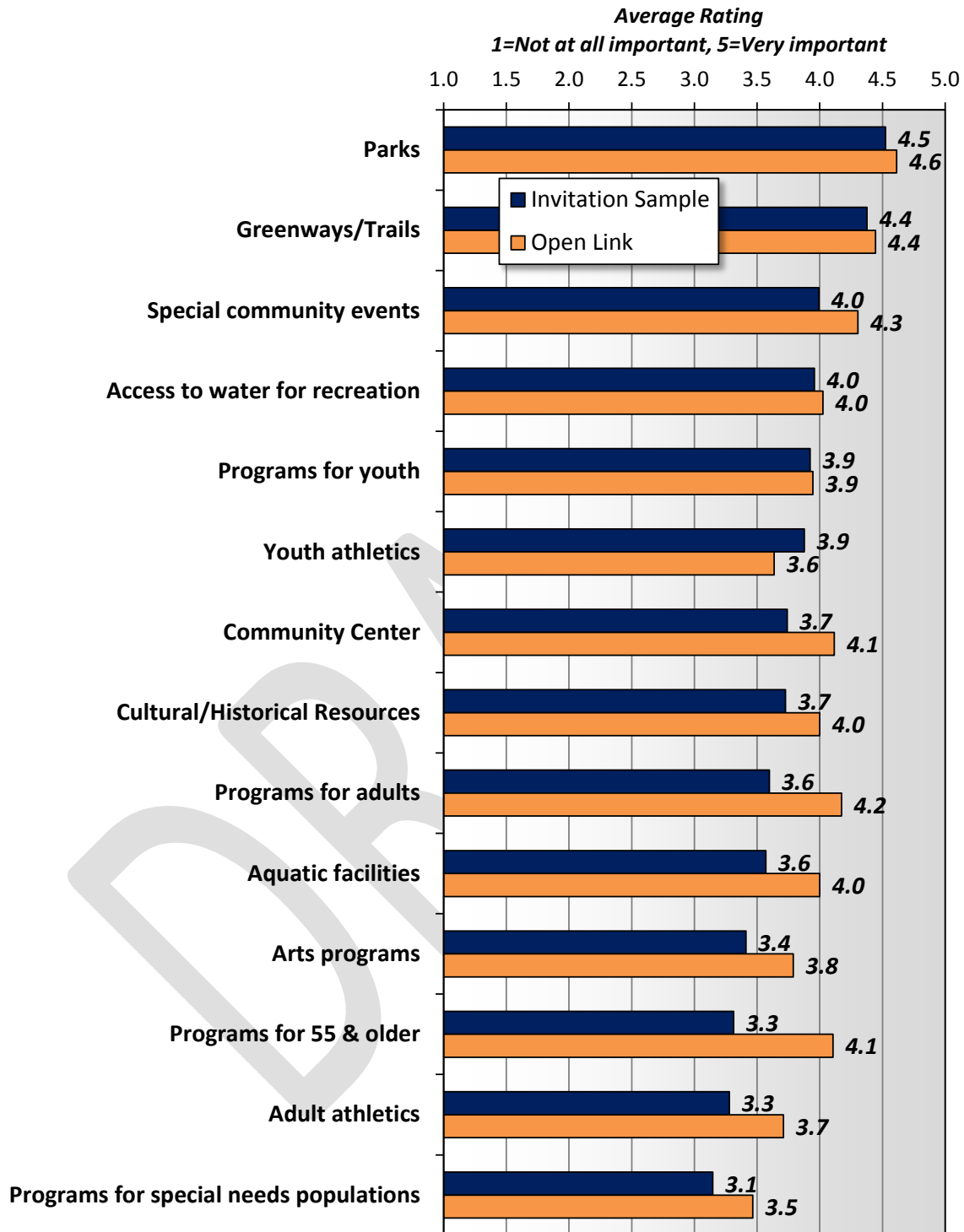
Figure 7 to follow shows the percentage of “4” and “5” ratings (indicating the respondent feels the facility or service is important) versus the share of “1” and “2” ratings (suggesting the respondent does not feel it is important) among invitation respondents. The following had the most frequently reported “4” or “5” ratings and highest averages:

- Parks (with an average rating of 4.5, 93% of respondents provided a rating of “4” or “5”)
- Greenways/Trails (4.4 average; 83% rated 4 or 5)
- Special community events (4.0 average; 73% rated 4 or 5)
- Access to water for recreation (4.0 average; 74% rated 4 or 5)
- Programs for youth (3.9 average; 74% rated 4 or 5)

Second tier of facilities and services include:

- Community Center (3.7 average; 61% rated 4 or 5)
- Cultural/historical resources (3.7 average; 63% rated 4 or 5)
- Programs for adults (3.6 average; 74% rated 4 or 5)
- Aquatic facilities (3.6 average; 60% rated 4 or 5)
- Arts programs (3.4 average; 47% rated 4 or 5)
- Programs for 55 and older (3.3 average; 51% rated 4 or 5)
- Adult athletics (3.3 average; 45% rated 4 or 5)
- Programs for special needs populations (3.1 average; 40% rated 4 or 5)

Figure 7: Importance of Facilities and Services – Average Rating Invitation Sample vs. Open Link



Top 3 Priorities for Amenities/Activities to be Added, Expanded, or Improved

Respondents were asked to indicate their top three priorities for additions or improvements of indoor and outdoor facilities within Wake Forest using the list of 19 facilities. Connecting the greenways is by far the top priority, with 56 percent of invitation respondents including this category as one of their top three priorities. This also earned the highest share of respondents noting that it was their number one top priority (37%). Roughly 1 in 4 respondents prioritized an outdoor amphitheater/special events venue (25%), playgrounds (24%), and an indoor aquatics facility (24%).

On the other end of the spectrum, several facilities fell low on the list of priorities, with fewer than 1 in 10 respondents indicating these as one of their first, second, or third priorities. These included: parking at recreational facilities (3%), skateboard parks (3%), special needs population (5%), spray grounds (8%), disc golf (8%), and non-school indoor gymnasium space (8%).

Among both samples, connecting the greenways was the most prioritized area for future improvement. Additionally, outdoor amphitheater/special events venue, playgrounds, and indoor aquatics facilities topped the list among both samples as well. However, open link respondents were more likely to prioritize non-school indoor gymnasium space (22%), expanded parking at existing parks and greenways (20%), spray grounds (18%), and disc golf (16%).

Programs, Activities, and Special Events

Degree to Which Programs, Activities, and Special Events are Meeting Household Needs

Using a 5-point scale with 1 meaning “not at all” and 5 meaning “completely,” respondents indicated to what degree their needs were being met by the 14 categories of facilities and services offered in Wake Forest. The following had at least half of all respondents providing a rating of “4” or “5” (“needs met”):

- Parks (82% of respondents providing a rating of “4” or “5”)
- Special community events (71%)
- Greenways/trails (70%)
- Youth athletics (69%)
- Programs for youth (68%)
- Cultural/historical resources (62%)
- Community Center (60%)
- Adult athletics (53%)
- Programs for adults (53%)

Five facilities and services had fewer than half of all invitation respondents providing a rating of “4” or “5:” arts programs (49%), aquatic facilities (49%), access to water for recreation (47%), programs for 55 and older (46%), and programs for special needs populations (35%). Overall, results suggest that respondents have a high level of needs being met by current facilities and services in Wake Forest.

In-Need vs. Needs-Met Matrix –Programs, Activities, and Special Events

It is informative to plot and compare the facilities and services scores for level of importance and degree to which needs are being met by these facilities and services using an “Importance vs. Needs-Met” matrix. In **Figure 8**, scores are displayed in this matrix using the mid-points for both questions to divide into four quadrants. The Importance scale midpoint was 3.7 (the median rating for importance across all programs); the Needs-Met midpoint was 3.5.

The upper left quadrant shows the programs that had a high average rating of importance as well as higher level of needs being met. These programs are less of a priority for improvement because needs are being met, but are important to maintain moving forward as they are perceived as important to resident households:

- Greenways/trails
- Parks
- Programs for youth
- Special community events
- Youth athletics

Programs located in the upper right quadrant are programs with relatively high importance but lower level of needs being met, which suggests that these programs could be improved. Improving these programs would have a strong impact on the degree to which needs are being met overall. There was only one item that fell into this category:

- Access to water for recreation

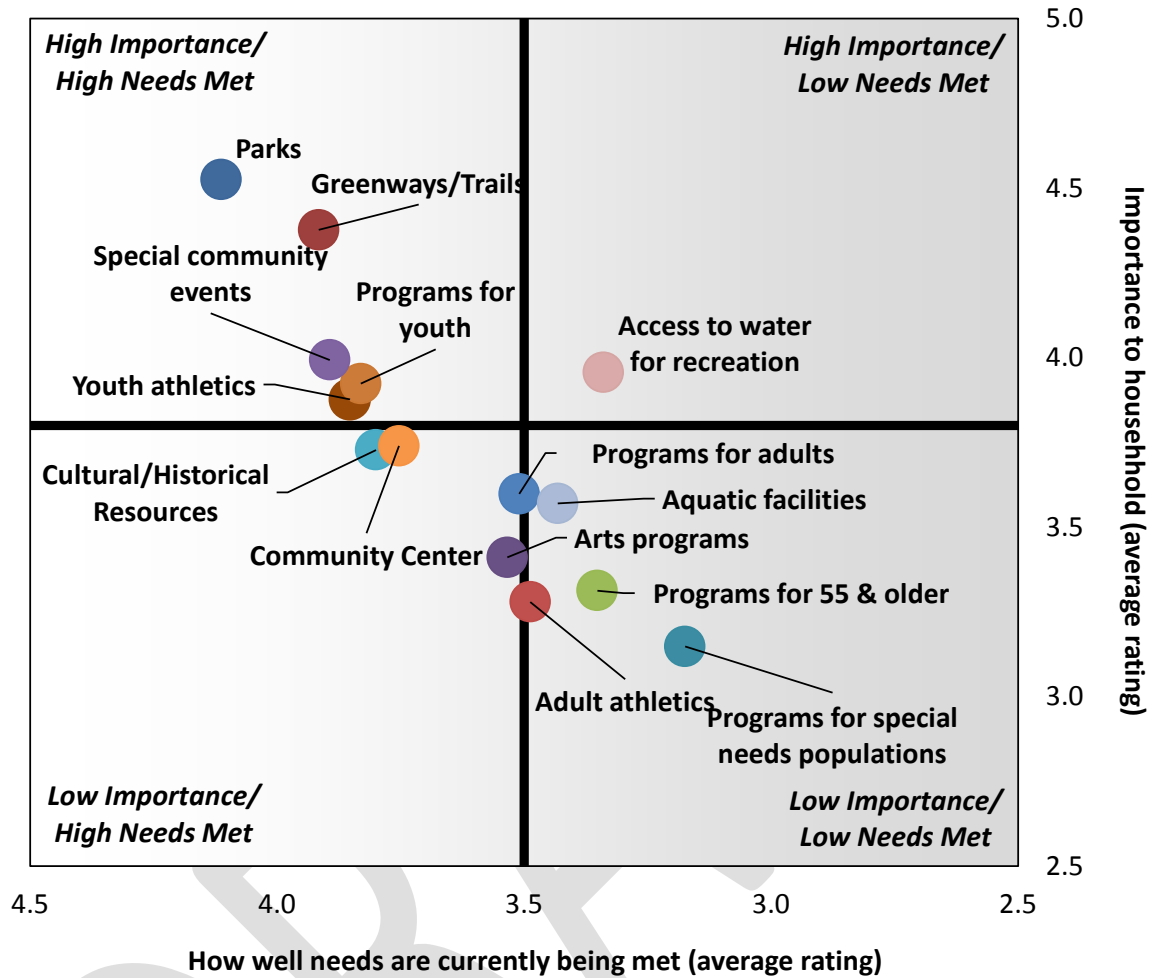
The lower left quadrant shows programs that are not important to many households, yet are meeting their needs very well. It would be beneficial to evaluate whether the resources supporting these programs outweigh the benefits. Reallocating these resources to the programs in the upper right quadrant could be a more efficient use of resources.

- Arts programs
- Community Center
- Cultural/historical resources
- Programs for adults

Programs found in the lower right quadrant, further below the in-need midpoint, are programs not meeting needs well; however, they are important to fewer members of the community. These “niche” programs may have a small but passionate following; therefore, there is merit to measuring participation and planning for potential future enhancements accordingly.

- Adult athletics (this was on the cusp between meeting needs and not meeting needs, and therefore should be considered accordingly)
- Aquatic facilities
- Programs for 55 and older
- Programs for special needs populations

Figure 8: Current Facilities and Services – Importance vs. Needs Met Matrix Invitation Sample Only



Importance of Aspects of Open Space

Respondents noted how important six different aspects of open space were to them and their household using a 5-point scale, with 1 meaning “not at all important” and 5 meaning “very important.”

The ratings among invitation respondents, all aspects explored earned high importance ratings, with very few respondents providing a rating of “1” or “2” (not important). Protect historic character of Wake Forest (85 percent of respondents providing a rating of “4” or “5”), preserve wildlife habitat (80%), improve or provide access to natural areas (79%), and preserve existing open space (77%) were reported as most important among invitation respondents.

Future Facilities, Amenities, and Services

Facilities/Amenities to be Added, Expanded, or Improved over Next 5 to 10 Years

Using a 5-point scale, with 1 meaning “not at all important” and 5 meaning “very important,” respondents rated the importance of adding or improving a list of 19 different indoor and outdoor facilities within Wake Forest over the next 5 to 10 years. The following had at least half of all invitation respondents providing a rating of “4” or “5” (“important”):

- Connect the greenways (77% of respondents providing a rating of “4” or “5”)
- Playgrounds (62%)
- Picnic areas/pavilions (61%)
- Expanded parking at existing parks and greenways (54%)
- Outdoor amphitheater/special events venue (54%)
- Weight/cardio/fitness space (53%)
- Indoor aquatics facility (52%)

Two facilities had higher shares of respondents noting the facility was more unimportant (providing a rating of “1” or “2”) than important (“4” or “5”). These include a skateboard park (45 percent not important vs. 18 percent important) and disc golf (40 percent not important vs. 25 percent important). Meanwhile, sprayground and dog park had shares of “not important” ratings that came close to the shares of “important” ratings.

Overall, open link respondents provided higher average importance ratings across-the-board, with the exception of connecting Greenways which earned the highest average rating (4.2 each) among both samples. Open link respondents were particularly likely to note that parking at recreational facilities (3.9) and expanding the Senior Center (3.8) were very important as compared to invitation sample respondents.

Financial Choices

Opinions Regarding Program and Facility Fees and Potential Impact of Fees Increases

Program Fees. Most invitation respondents feel that current programs fees currently charged directly to them by Wake Forest are acceptable (40%). Three percent of invitation respondents reported they were underpriced, and eight percent indicated they were too high. If respondents who did not know/were unsure (49%) are removed, results show that six percent feel that program fees are underpriced, 77 percent feel they are acceptable, and 17 percent report they are too high.

Facility Fees. Respondents were also prompted to assess the fees charged for facilities. Overall, invitation respondents noted that facility fees were acceptable (37 percent including don't know/not applicable and 78 percent excluding those respondents). Two percent of respondents noted the fees were underpriced (four percent when don't know responses are removed), and eight percent noted they were too high (18 percent when don't know responses are removed). Fifty-three percent (53%) of respondents noted they did not know or were unsure.

Potential Impact of Fee Increases. Respondents were asked what impact, if any, fee increases would have on their current level of participation in programs, services, or use of facilities. Among invitation respondents, results are split across-the-board: 27 percent of respondents said it would not limit their participation, 23 percent said it would limit their participation somewhat, and 17 percent noted it would limit their participation significantly. Meanwhile 33 percent of respondents were uncertain.

Overall, a high share of don't know/uncertain responses suggests that there are opportunities for further educating community members about current program and facility fees.

Communication

A section of the survey had respondents indicate the methods by which they usually receive information on Wake Forest Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources facilities, services, and programs. Invitation respondents indicated that local newspapers such as the *Wake Forest Weekly*, *Wake Forest Today*, *Wake Forest News*, and *North Raleigh News* (65%) were their primary sources of receiving information on related facilities, services, and programs. Internet/website (44%) and word of mouth (34%) were also relatively common among invitation respondents. Meanwhile, open link respondents were much more likely to receive information through an email from the Town (64%) and RecConnect (45%). Considering open link respondents skew much more currently active in Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources classes and programs, it makes sense that they would be heavier users of these particular information sources. Not surprisingly, younger age cohorts are more likely to rely on Internet/websites and social networking sites than do older age cohorts. Older age cohorts, meanwhile, are more reliant on local newspapers and direct communication from the Town.

E. Operational and Marketing Analysis

Athletics

The Department offers adult softball, basketball, flag football and Pickle Ball; youth, youth baseball, softball, basketball, track and field, as well as sports camps for soccer, baseball, softball. The department's goal is to recover 100 percent of the cost of providing the programs through fees and charges for adult athletics and 60 percent for youth. Outside partnerships with youth sports associations provide programming to the community. The partners operate the programs and Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources provides the fields.

Economic Impact of Festivals and Cultural Events

In the context of urban development, from the early 1980s, there has been a process that can be characterized as "festivalization," which has been linked to the economic restructuring of towns and cities, and the drive to develop communities as large-scale platforms for the creation and consumption of "cultural experience."

The success rate for festivals should not be evaluated simplistically solely on the basis of profit (sales), prestige (media profile), or size (numbers of events). Research by the European Festival Research Project (EFRP)²² indicates there is evidence of local and city government supporting and even instigating and managing particular festivals themselves to achieve local or regional economic objectives, often defined very narrowly (sales, jobs, tourists, etc.). There are also a growing number of smaller more local community-based festivals and events, most often supported by local councils that have been spawned partly as a reaction to larger festivals that have become prime economic-drivers. These community-based festivals often will re-claim cultural ground based on their social, educational, and participative value. For more information on the values of festivals and events, see the CRC Sustainable Tourism research guide²³ on this topic.

It is important to recognize the financial impact that drives economy. When the cost of travel is more expensive, it will be more difficult to draw people from further distances, as people travel less due to a tightened economy.

It is important to have a coordinated strategy, not only among the festivals/events, but also for other needs of the Department and the Town as a whole so as to avoid multiple requests to potential sponsors, and/or requests that do not maximize the potential opportunity.

Opportunities exist to coordinate festivals on a regional basis, maximizing the potential to attract additional promotional efforts and grant funding by working through the Wake Forest Renaissance Centre to benefit from their promotion and funding opportunities. Other opportunities may come to light by working with other regional cities that offer similar festivals to coordinate schedules, and to discuss mutually beneficial promotional strategies and state level financial support.

Evaluations

In order to ensure the long-term sustainability of festival and cultural arts offerings in Wake Forest, and to ensure that all festivals are working together to support overall Town goals, an ongoing evaluation of offerings should address the following areas:

- **Content** – review the inventory of festivals and events offered by the Town and outside agencies to determine if there is a duplication of events, or a gap in types of events. If duplications are present, the Town should look at cooperative efforts to combine offerings. The Town could also explore combining several independent events into one longer event as a means to maximize resources within the Town or sponsorships.
- **Demographic** – analyze what population is benefiting from the events and to what degree they should be supported financially or by other Town resources.
- **Geographic** – evaluate where events are held in consideration of appropriateness, location, and sustainability of the physical resource. Map location of festival inventory to ensure that services go beyond the downtown area and Joyner Park, and do not exceed the physical resource of the downtown area and park.

²² EFRP is an international consortium seeking to understand the current explosion of festivals and its implications and perspective, <http://www.efa-aef.eu/en/activities/efrp/>, accessed October 2012.

²³ Ben Janeczko, Trevor Mules and Brent Ritchie, "Estimating the Economic Impacts of Festivals and Events: A Research Guide", Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism, 2002, <http://www.sustainabletourisonline.com/1005/events/estimating-the-economic-impacts-of-festivals-and-events-a-research-guide>, accessed October 2012.

Festivals

The majority of households indicated they had a need for the following programs, activities, and special events:

- Special events (e.g., concerts, festivals) (74 percent of households indicated that they have a need; these households indicate this need as being 50 percent met on average).

Overview

Festivals are defined as an event, usually staged by a local community, which centers on some unique aspect of that community.²⁴

Role of Festivals in the Community

Both Town-produced and co-sponsored festivals and events offer diverse cultural and recreational experiences to citizens and visitors while providing a strong economic impact on the region. Hotels, restaurants, retail shops, and convenience stores all benefit from the thousands of people that attend these events. Town-produced festivals also provide opportunities for sponsorship and booth space, which helps to promote local businesses, merchants, and non-profit organizations.²⁵ Through co-sponsored events, the Town has the opportunity to have a presence at each of them.

Town produced festivals should work to support the local community through involvement of the community in several other ways including: input to the operations of the events themselves; direct involvement along the lines of providing opportunity for local artists/exhibitors and non-profit organizations; consideration of local businesses; and minimizing negative impact to the local community.

Financial Sustainability for Program Delivery

It is important for the Town to develop a Resource Allocation and Pricing Philosophy that reflects the values of the community and the responsibility it has to the community. This Philosophy will be especially important if the Town moves forward in the development of new programs and additional and/or expanded facilities, and as it strives for sustainability and determines how much it is willing to subsidize operations with tax dollars.

One means of accomplishing this goal is applying a process using an industry tool called the “Pyramid Methodology.” This methodology develops and implements a refined cost recovery philosophy and pricing policy based on current “best practices” as determined by the mission of the agency and the program’s benefit to the community and/or individual.

Critical to this philosophical undertaking is the support and understanding of elected officials, and ultimately, citizens. Whether or not significant changes are called for, the agency wants to be certain that it is philosophically aligned with its residents. The development of the core services and cost recovery philosophy and policy is built on a very logical foundation, using the understanding of who is benefitting from recreation services to determine how the costs for that service should be offset.

²⁴ Wikipedia on Festivals 5.12.08, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Festivals>

²⁵ AEA Consulting, Thundering Hooves Maintaining the Global Competitive Edge of Edinburgh’s Festivals, Full Report May 2006

Recreation programs and services are sorted along a continuum of what delivers the greatest individual benefit to what delivers the greatest community benefit. The amount of subsidy for each level (not necessarily each individual program) is then determined to create an overall cost recovery philosophy.

Developing effective ongoing systems that help measure success in reaching cost recovery goals and anticipate potential pitfalls are dependent on the following:

- Understanding of current revenue streams and their sustainability.
- Tracking all expenses and revenues for programs, facilities, and services to understand their contributions to overall department cost recovery.
- Analyzing who is benefiting from programs, facilities, and services and to what degree they should be subsidized.
- Acknowledging the full cost of each program (those direct and indirect costs associated with program delivery) and where the program fits on the continuum of who benefits from the program or service to determine appropriate cost recovery targets.
- Defining direct costs as those that typically exist purely because of the program and the change with the program.
- Defining indirect costs as those that are typically costs that would exist anyway (like full-time staff, utilities, administration, debt service, etc.)
- Program fees should not be based on ability to pay, but an objective program should be in place that allows for easy access for lower income participants, through availability of scholarships and/or discounts. In many instances qualification for scholarships and/or discounts can mirror requirements for free or reduce cost lunch in schools.

Marketing

The main reason for not using Wake Forest program or amenities include:

- Not aware of programs or facilities as indicated by Focus Groups participants.

Therefore, it is important that the Department improve communications with residents about program/event offerings and Department information.

- Work closely with Communications Department and Marketing Plan to increase awareness.
- Direct mail the RecConnect to all households in Wake Forest.

Organizational Analysis

GreenPlay broadly assessed the organizational and management structure of the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Department and staffing to determine effectiveness and efficiency in meeting current and future departmental responsibilities as related to the community's needs. The needs assessment – including input from staff interviews, community and key stakeholder engagement, and level of service analysis, along with the consultant's expertise – has identified a few areas for operational enhancement.

These key organizational issues identified and observed as areas for improvement include:

- Better marketing and communication of activities
- Increase staffing for maintenance to meet current and future demands for services.
- Increase staffing for facilities operations to meet demand for use of facilities.
- Improve and update park and wayfinding signage and maps
- Develop connections with greenways and trails

Program and Service Delivery Analysis

The Town of Wake Forest Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Department has an array of recreation programs that seek to meet the needs of its diverse community. Programming consists of Administration, Athletics, Aquatics, Cultural Arts and Events, Park Maintenance, Recreation Programs, and Urban Forestry.

Administration

The Parks and Recreation Director oversees the operation of the department. Recreation Program Staff are responsible for program development, urban forestry, the Renaissance Centre, athletics, and aquatics. The Department is also responsible for the maintenance of parks, greenways, and trails. Other program responsibilities include budget preparation and monitoring, preparation of the Department's Capital Improvements Plan, preparation of grant applications, purchasing, work planning, and supervision of all employees. The Director and staff serve as support for the Recreation Advisory Board, Greenway Advisory Board, Urban Forestry Advisory Board, Public Arts Commission, Cultural Resources Advisory Board, Wake Forest Arts, and Youth in Government Advisory Board.

Aquatics

The department operates one (1) swimming pool for public use during the summer months. Activities offered include recreational swimming, parent-toddler swim time, swim lessons, and group parties. The pool is located at Holding Park.

Renaissance Centre

The Wake Forest Renaissance Centre is a multi-purpose facility providing visual and performing arts programming for people of all ages, while also serving as a popular venue for a variety of community events. Located in the heart of Wake Forest's Renaissance District, the Renaissance Centre endeavors to *"contribute to the revitalization of downtown, connect and engage our community through inspiring arts experiences, and contribute to the economic growth and quality of life in our region."* Through exhibitions, workshops, community theatre, classes, concerts, and related events, the Renaissance Centre will offer a variety of programming to achieve these goals. It will also provide an inclusive environment that enriches the lives of members of the community, while also encouraging and facilitating a flourishing arts community across cultures, generations, and disciplines.

Recreation Programming

The Department offers a variety of programs for youth and adults. Activities are held at the Flaherty Park Community Center, the Cottage at Olde Mill Stream, Alston-Massenburg Center, and Wake Forest Community House.

Urban Forestry

Administered by the Urban Forestry Coordinator and the Wake Forest Urban Forestry Board, the program oversees the planting, removal and maintenance of trees and other vegetation located on public property and rights-of-way. The urban forestry program provides opportunities for public education and participation through classes, tours, events, and volunteering opportunities.

Town's tree canopy goal is 40% tree coverage; parks, greenways and natural areas play a large role in this number. New park development should look to maintain tree-covered areas and utilize greenway connections between parks to maintain contiguous forested habitat.

Urban Forest Management Plan recommendation: “Identify areas of below-average coverage and encourage measures to preserve and expand tree canopy coverage. Continue to purchase and preserve forested open space to offset canopy loss due to new development.”

- 80-acres tract – incorporate recommendations from management plan.
- Explore possibility of creating a Nature Explore Outdoor Classroom.
<http://www.natureexplore.org/>
- Development of new park facilities should take into account trees as green infrastructure. Look for opportunities to implement stormwater bioretention areas.
- Use trees, shrubs and other plants to delineate various uses within the park. Can serve as visual and sound barriers between conflicting uses.

Special Events

The Department provides a variety of special events for all ages and interest levels. Some popular events include the Community Easter Egg Hunt, Halloween Spooktacular, Calls from Santa, Six Sundays in Spring, and Concerts in the Park. Some activities are co-sponsored with various businesses, agencies, and organizations.

Park Maintenance

The Park Maintenance division provides maintenance for twelve (12) parks, greenways/trails, grounds of the swimming pool, and various school facilities. Duties include ball field maintenance, landscaping, litter control, playground inspections, equipment repairs, mowing, and building maintenance.

Program Development

Understanding core services in the delivery of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources services will allow the Town of Wake Forest Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Department to improve upon those areas while developing strategies to assist in the delivery of other services. The basis of determining core services should come from the vision and mission developed by the Town and what brings the greatest community benefit in balance with the competencies of the department and the competitive market.

Staff program area experts should be assigned to develop and oversee specific areas in order to ensure consistent program characterizes instructor qualifications, training and evaluation, and fees. Experts will also be charged with program research and development. Program areas, at a minimum, should include fitness and wellness, aquatics, cultural arts and events, athletics, recreation programs, and therapeutic recreation.

The Department should pursue program development around the priorities identified by customer feedback, program evaluation process, and research. Those following criteria should be examined when developing new programs.

- **Need:** outgrowth of a current popular program, or enough demonstrated demand to successfully support a minimal start (one class for instance)
- **Budget:** accounting for all costs and anticipated (conservative) revenues should meet cost recovery target established by the Department
- **Location:** appropriate, available, and within budget

- **Instructor:** qualified, available, and within budget
- **Materials and supplies:** available and within budget
- **Marketing effort:** adequate and timely opportunity to reach intended market, within budget (either existing marketing budget or as part of new program budget)

Further research needs to be done with regard to what types of programming would be successful. Successful programs utilize continuous creative assessments, research, and planning. The Department should create a process that evaluates the success of current program offerings and criteria to determine if new program ideas should be instituted or if changes should be made to current programs. Moreover, new leisure and recreation trends may drive different needs. It is very easy to focus on programs that have worked for a number of years, especially if they are still drawing enough interested participants to justify the program's continuation. Starting new programs, based on community demand and/or trends, can be risky due to the inability to predict their success. If the program interest seems great, as with those identified in the citizen survey, then the programs should be expanded. Available space may hinder new or expanded opportunities in some cases.

Program Evaluation

All current programs should be evaluated annually to determine if they should be continued, changed (market segment focus, time/day offered, etc.), or discontinued. A few simple questions should be asked about each program that includes:

- Is participation increasing or decreasing? If participation is increasing, then it could clearly mean that the program should be continued. If participation is decreasing, are there any steps to take to increase interest through marketing efforts, change the time/day of the program is offered and change the format or instructor? If not, it may be time to discontinue the program.
- Is there information contained in the participation feedback that can be used to improve the program?
- Are cost recovery goals being met? If not, can fees be realistically increased?
- Is there another provider of the program that is more suitable to offer it? If yes, the Department could provide referrals for its customers for the program it does not offer or is not willing or able to offer.
- Is this program taking up facility space that could be used for expansion of more popular programs or new programs in demand by the community?

Senior Programming

The Northern Wake Senior Center offers adults age 55 and older a full schedule of recreational activities, such as aerobics, line dancing, ballroom dancing, wood carving, painting, and craft making. The center also provides several social events each month, as well as educational classes on subjects including computers and ceramics and clay. Programming at the Northern Wake Senior Center is provided by Resources for Seniors, Inc. The organization serves senior and disabled adults in Wake County by

providing home- and community-based services and information, thereby allowing them to maximize their choices for independence, comfort, safety, security, and well-being. Through its commitment to excellence in service and care for individuals and their families, Resources for Seniors provides information and support for decision-making, and also direct services such as home care, adult day care, senior centers, home repair, and more.

Staffing Analysis

GreenPlay broadly assessed the management structure and staffing levels of the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department to determine effectiveness and efficiency in meeting current and future departmental responsibilities as related to the community's needs. Many observations were taken into account to determine if the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Department had the right mix of staffing in the right places within the department.

The staffing analysis process included the observations and assessments of:

- Community input
- Community satisfaction rates
- Staff focus group
- Facility tours
- Observations of quality of maintenance
- Full hours of operation
- Professional knowledge in Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources organizations
- SWOT Analysis
- Organizational chart

Staffing Considerations

After considering all of the organizational observations and staffing assessment, the consultant team has determined that the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department does not have an adequate number of staff to operate its current system with the right mix of staff in the right places within the department. To operate more effectively in the future and to implement the Master Plan and the additions from the 2014 Bond, Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources should consider hiring the following positions to supplement existing staff.

- Add park maintenance staff
- Add facility operations staff
- Add urban forestry staff
- Add athletics staff
- Ensure staffing resource levels can maintain existing and new facilities at or above acceptable standards as the Master Plan is implemented

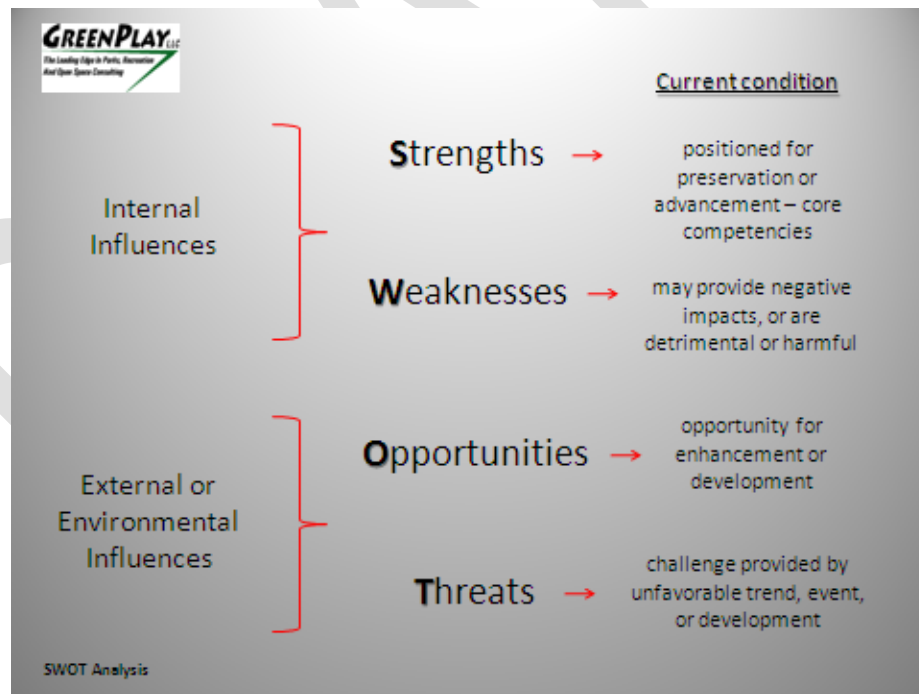
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

To develop a short and long-term strategy for the future planning of Wake Forest's Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Department, a **SWOT Analysis** was conducted. A SWOT Analysis is an effective and realistic way of identifying the market **Strengths** and internal and external **Weaknesses**, and for examining the **Opportunities** and **Threats** faced by the organization. The result of this process helps identify any deficiencies in the organization and is described below along with definitions of terms. The process is described below and includes definitions as well as Park and Recreation's organizational results.

Definitions

SWOT Analysis: Appreciative inquiry and analysis of internal strengths and weaknesses, and external opportunities and threats. Discussion includes the why and examples.

- **Internal Strengths:** Major strengths of the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources that should be capitalized upon. Strengths may include competencies in various areas.
- **Internal Weaknesses:** Major weaknesses of the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources that the agency has control over positively impacting, addressing, or changing. Weaknesses include any items that can be harmful, detrimental, and/or cause a negative impact.
- **External Opportunities:** An opportunity is an attractive arena to take action in which the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Department would enjoy a competitive advantage, would further the agency in meeting its vision or fulfilling its mission, or enhance the development of its services. The agency should watch and plan for these if there is a high probability of occurrence.
- **External Threats:** A challenge posed by an unfavorable trend, event, or development in the environment. In the absence of purposeful action, this threat might lead to the erosion of the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources quality service provision, financial and service sustainability, or the agency's position or credibility. In some instances, this could also be detrimental to the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources industry. Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources should identify and prepare to mitigate all foreseeable threats.

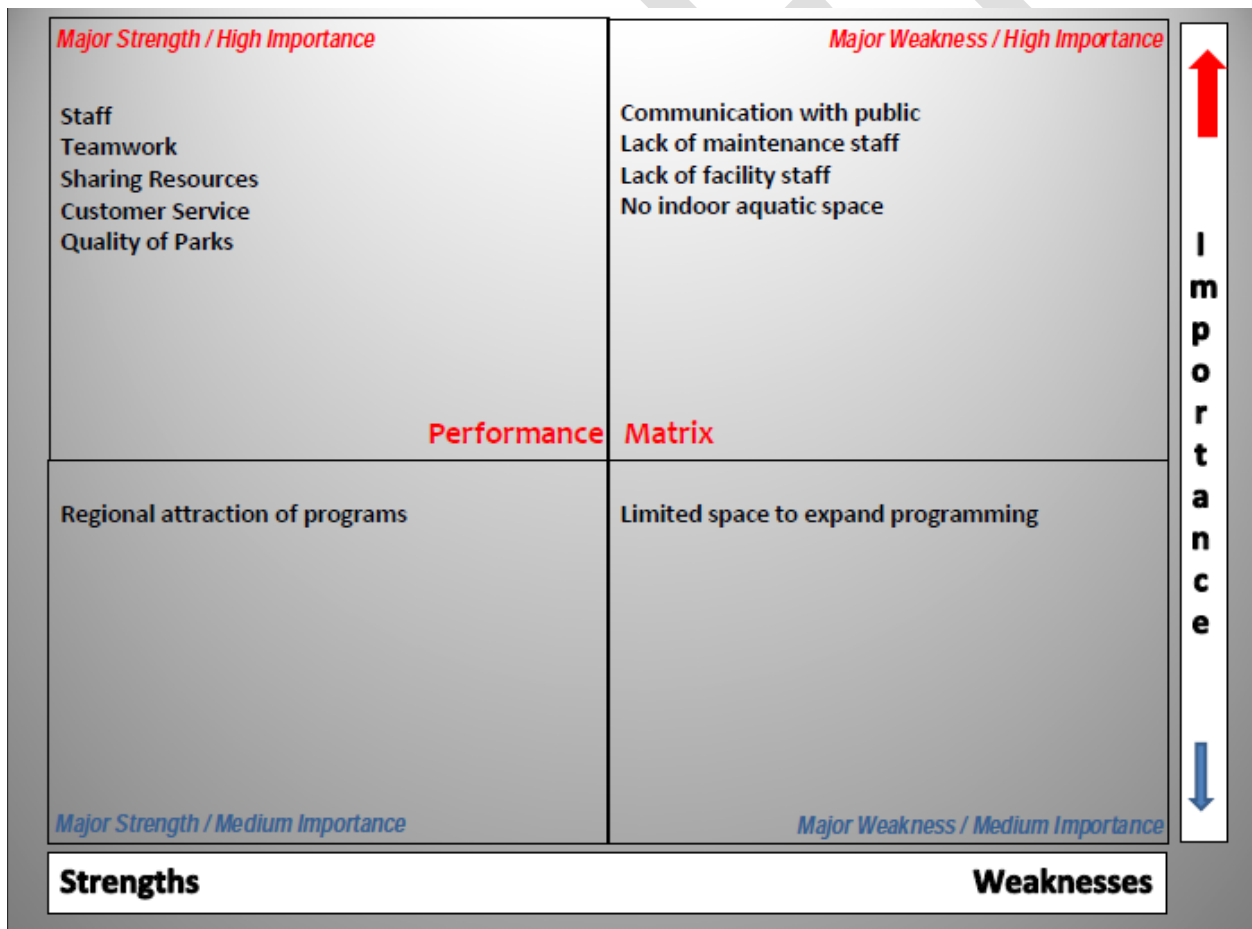


During a meeting with staff, the team began brainstorming to identify potential strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. As a group, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were listed, and then ranked them according to the following.

After the brainstorming session regarding the **strengths and weaknesses**, a consensus was reached on ranking the **performance** and **importance** rating scale for each item.

- **Performance:** rated as major strength, minor strength, neutral (neither major nor minor), minor weakness, or major weakness.
- **Importance:** rated the importance of each item to the success of the Department. Rating is high, medium, or low.
- After consensus was reached on each strength or weakness, a rating for **performance** and **importance**, a **Performance-Importance Matrix** was developed.

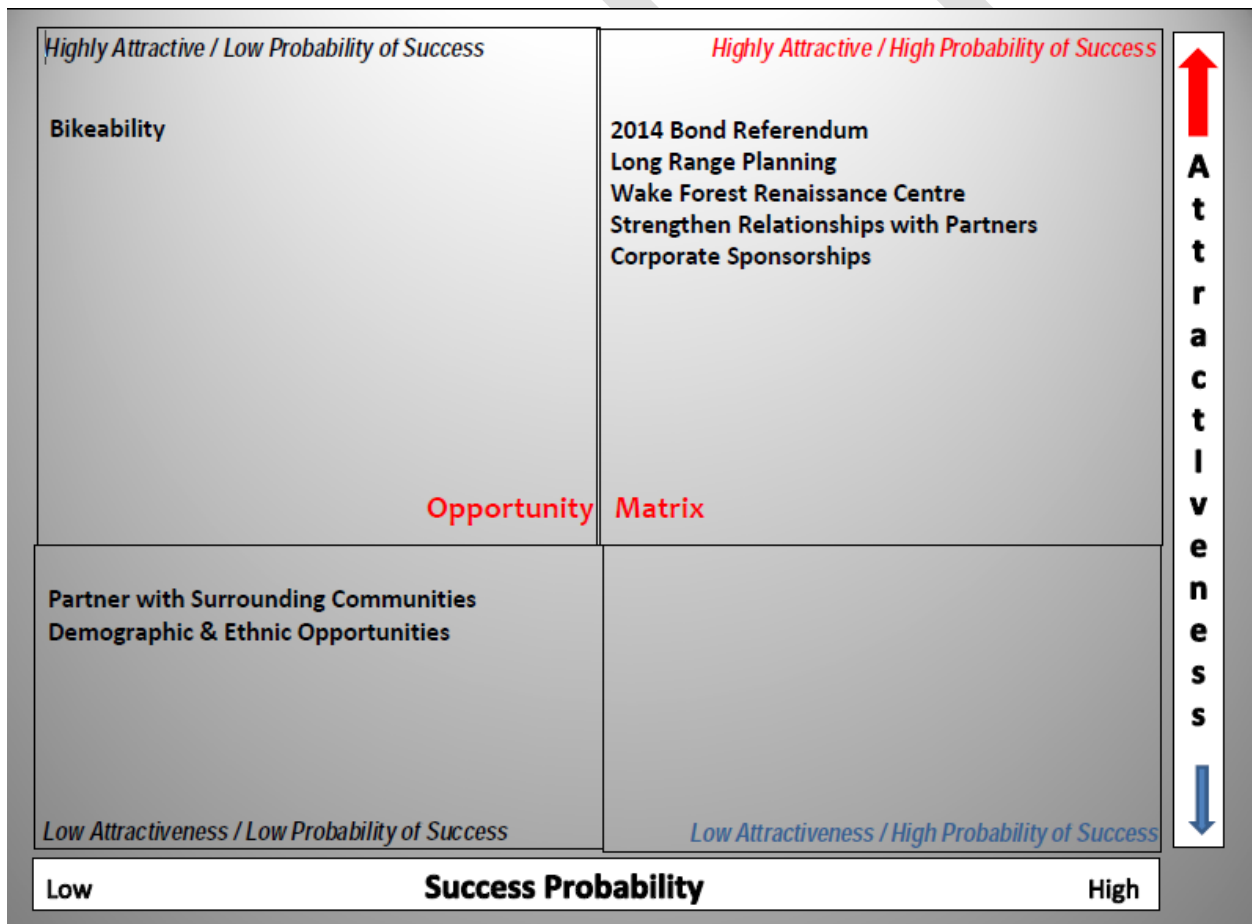
The Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources **Major/High** and **Minor/High** strengths and weaknesses were plotted on a chart (below).



For each **opportunity**, a consensus rating for **attractiveness** (high or low) and **success probability** (high or low) was established.

- **Attractiveness** refers to how attractive the opportunity is to the Department in furthering its mission, fulfilling its vision, improving its revenue generation, cost recovery, or decreasing expenses. Rating is either **high** or **low**.
- **Success probability** relates to whether the department’s strengths will enable it to be successful in this area. Rating is either **high** or **low**.

The Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources consensus ratings were then charted for each opportunity for attractiveness and success probability into an **Opportunity Matrix** (below).

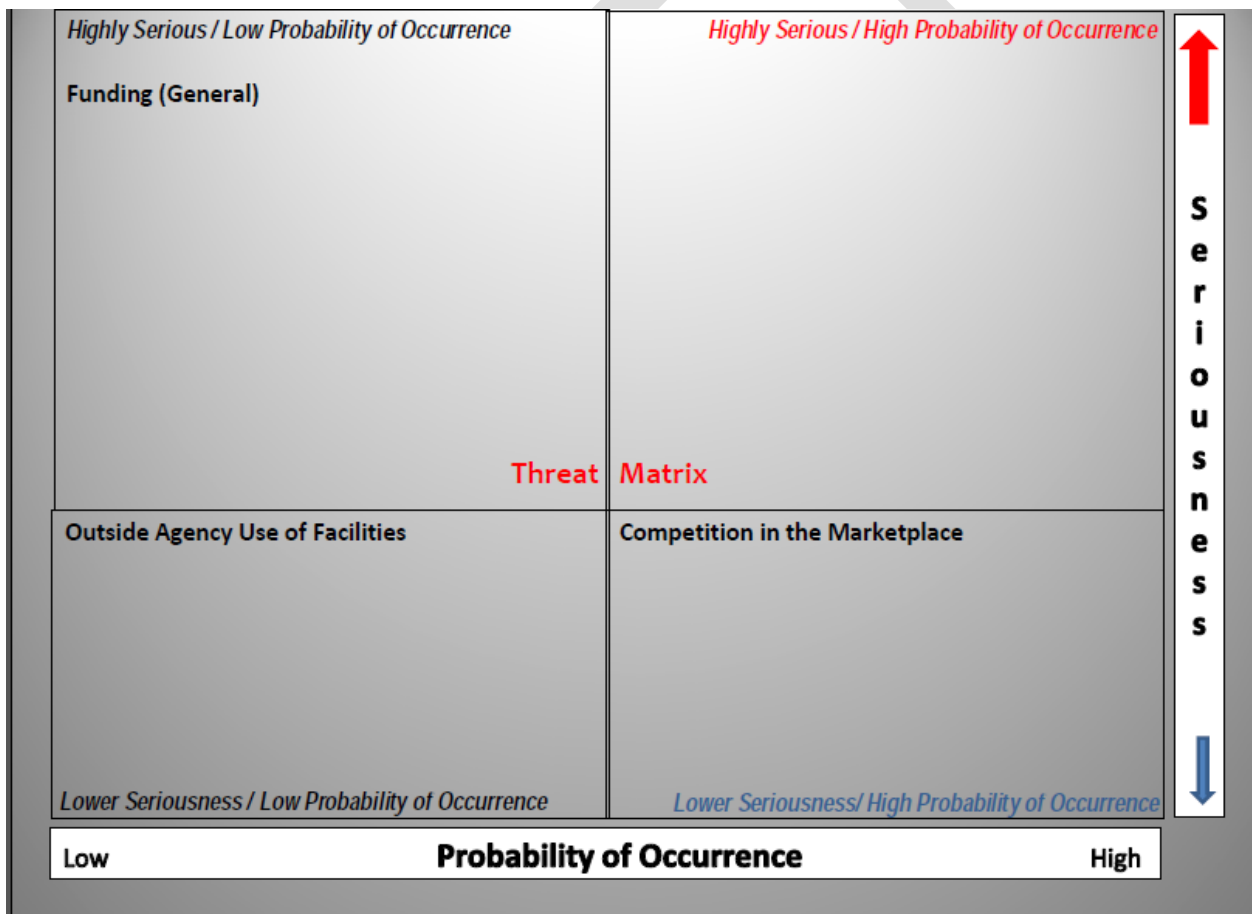


For each **threat**, a consensus rating to specify the likelihood that it will happen (**probability of occurrence**) and the **seriousness** of the threat) was established.

- **Probability of occurrence** relates to the likelihood that the threat will happen. Rating is either **high** or **low**.

- **Seriousness** of the threat is rated either **high** or **low**.

The Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources consensus ratings were then charted for each **threat** for **probability of occurrence** and **seriousness** into a **Threat Matrix** (below).



User Profile and Public Perception

GreenPlay’s analysis of the public’s perception of facilities, programs, services, and maintenance is a critical component of this master planning effort. The documented results of the community input mechanisms feed directly into the formulas for level of service analysis. Demographic profiles of the

current and projected population, along with trends analysis, allow for the characterization of existing and prospective park users, so the Town can determine appropriate marketing channels to reach them.

The survey indicated that a high percentage of respondents rated them between very good and excellent on a scale of 1 to 5 (1=poor, 2=fair, 3=good, 4=very good, and 5=excellent). Overall, results point to a high degree of satisfaction – they are most satisfied with ease of registration (average rating of 4.3), followed by customer service (4.2), maintenance of facilities and parks (4.2), and value received for feed paid (4.0).

Some key household characteristics that may influence Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources planning and marketing efforts in the Town of Wake Forest are summarized below.

- Couples with children living at home comprised the largest percent, followed by couples with children no longer at home (empty nesters).
- A much lower percent of respondents were single, either with or without children.
- The majority of households earn an annual income between \$50,000 and \$150,000.
- Most residents own their home as a primary residence, while a few rent at their current residence.
- Resident results show that roughly 1 in 10 people from each sample are newer residents of Wake Forest, having lived in the area for less than a year.

Some key demographic trends that may influence planning and marketing efforts in the Town of Wake Forest are summarized below.

- Estimated median household income for Wake Forest residents was \$64,485 in 2014.
- The median age for the Town in 2010 was 35.2, lower than the median age (37.1) for the United States.
- The population is estimated to be 46,682 an increase 12,053 by the year 2024 that represents an increase of nearly 26 percent.
- The 25 – 34 age range is predicted to drop by 5.8 percent by 2019 to represent 26.3 percent of the population, while the 45 – 74 age range is predicted to jump by 5.6 percent to 31.8 percent.
- The population of Hispanic origin (irrespective of race) has grown from 2010 (5.6%) and is expected to continue to grow to 8.5 percent of the population by 2019.

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IV. What We Have Now – An Analysis of Spaces and Services

A. Inventory Assessment and Level of Service Analysis

The purpose of this Inventory Assessment and Level of Service (LOS) analysis is to evaluate how facilities and parks in Wake Forest serve the community. The analysis may be used as a tool to benchmark current level of service and to direct future planning efforts. Combined with other findings, including survey results and focus group and stakeholder feedback, it is also intended to indicate the level of service anticipated by the community.

B. GRASP® Methodology

An analytical technique known as *Composite-Values* (CVM) was used to analyze level of service (LOS) in Wake Forest. The proprietary version of CVM used Design Concepts is known as GRASP® (Geo-Amenities Standard Process). This process yields data that may be used to study LOS across the study

Composite-Values Level of Service (LOS) Analysis – This is the process used to inventory and analyze the assets, including quantity, location, and various qualities of each. The process utilizes MS Excel, MS

Methodology provided by assets by GreenPlay and Referenced analytical maps and area.

Why Level of Service?

Level of Service for a community recreation system is indicative of the ability of people to pursue active have implications on health and wellness, the local quality of life and tends to reflect community values. It is often emblematic of the manner and extent to which people are connected to their communities.

important, as it is lifestyles. LOS can economy, and

Perspectives

Maps and data quantifications produced using the GRASP® methodology are known as *perspectives*. Level of Service perspectives show how well the community is served by any given set of assets. Maps are utilized along with quantified measurement charts to provide a benchmark of what a community may use, and determine its success providing services both at present and over time. Each perspective is a model of the service being provided across the study area. The model can be further analyzed to derive statistical information about service in a variety of ways.

Perspectives are produced based on processes that combine information from a detailed inventory of Wake Forest facilities that was conducted in October of 2014 with computerized Geographic Information System (GIS) technology. During the inventory process, a set of scores was assigned for each location (i.e. park) and the features within (components). The complete inventory of assets was provided as a separate staff-level document to supplement this report. A general description of the facilities that were inventoried was provided in the previous section of this report.

A GRASP® score ascribed to a catchment area yields a *service area* for a particular asset which reflects that score. When service areas for multiple components are plotted on a map, a picture emerges that represents the cumulative level of service provided by that set of components in a geographic area.

Image A: Example of Town of Wake Forest GRASP® (LOS)

On a map, darker shade results from the overlap of areas. Darker shades indicate areas served by more quality components. All shades have GRASP® scoring with them such that for any given spot on a perspective GRASP® Level of Service score for that reflects scoring for nearby assets. Image A, above, provides an illustrate.

Creating the Inventory

The Level of Service analysis process involved assembly inventory of public and semi-public physical assets by the Wake Forest community. This asset inventory was the Town in a number of ways. It can be used for a wide planning and operations tasks such as asset well as future strategic and master plans. The assets currently includes public parks, recreation, and trails by the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources those school facilities that are open to usage for outside of school hours. Several other alternative also identified, located, and scored during the inventory

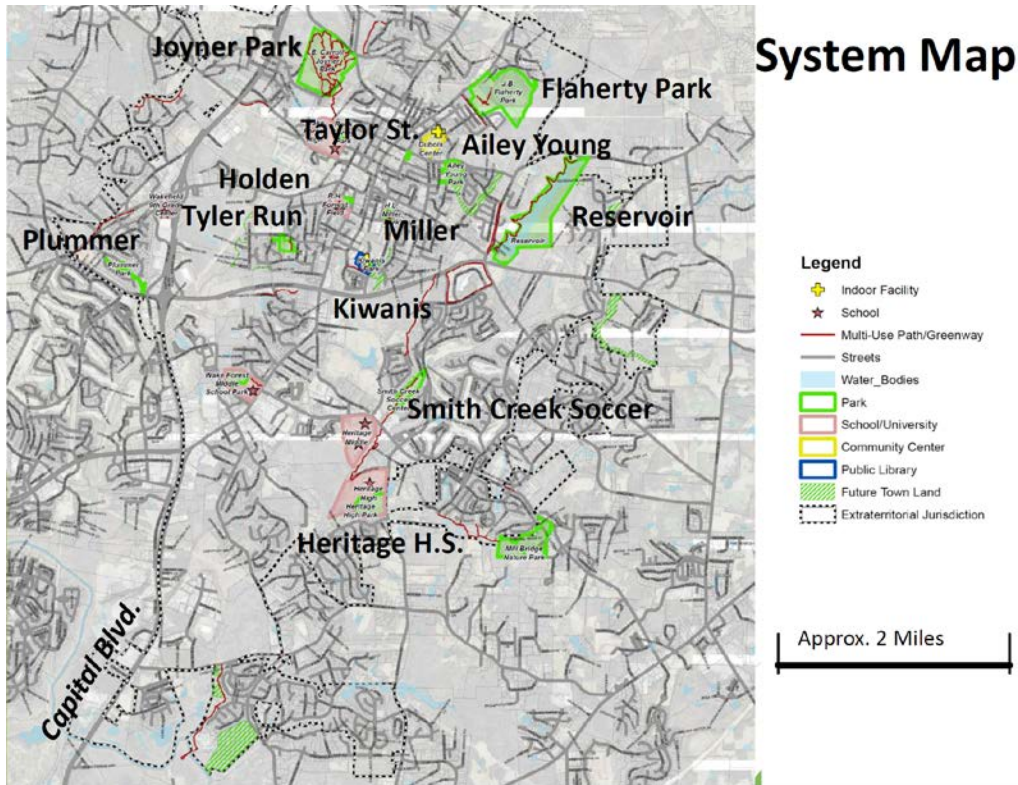
Map A shows the study area and key locations of Larger scale maps may be found in **Appendix C**.

In planning for the delivery of Park and Recreation services, it is useful to think of parks, trails, indoor facilities, and other public spaces as parts of an infrastructure. This infrastructure allows people to exercise, socialize, and maintain a healthy physical, mental, and social wellbeing. The infrastructure is made up of **components** that support this goal. Components include such amenities as playgrounds, picnic shelters, courts, fields, indoor facilities, and other elements that allow the system to meet its intended purpose. In the inventory of assets, the

Level of Service

more service and/or higher values associated map there is a cumulative example to

of a detailed available for use created to serve variety of management as inventory assets managed Department and recreation providers were process. properties.



Map A: Town of Wake Forest system map showing all Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources inventory included for GRASP® analysis. Correct name for Holding Park

Asset Scoring

A complete Inventory Atlas is provided as a staff level document. In addition, inventory summaries for both indoor and outdoor facilities and parks are included in **Appendix D**. Also included in the appendix are numerous tables of low scoring components and facility/park modifiers.

Inventory Assessment

- Parks are pleasant and well-maintained throughout the system.
- No components were found to be functioning below expectations due to condition.
- The parks are used and enjoyed by residents.
- Joyner Park is a particular gem, a signature park for Wake Forest and a model for future parks.
- Wake County School Parks offer additional facilities

Inventory Summary

Catchment Areas

Catchment areas are used to determine how service looks from a given viewpoint or perspective. In this process, a radius is drawn around each feature found in a park – referred to here as a component. This radius represents the catchment area for that component, or essentially the area from within which the component can be conveniently reached by various means

of travel. The score that was assigned to the component in the inventory process is then applied to its catchment area and overlapped with all other component catchment areas. This process yields the data used to create perspective maps and analytical charts.

People use a variety of transit modes to reach a recreation destination: on foot, on a bike, in a car, via public transportation, or utilizing any combination of these or other alternatives. The mode is often determined, at least in part, by the distance to be travelled. The GRASP® system accounts for this by applying multiple catchment area distances to examine access to assets.

Two different catchment area distances were used to calculate scoring totals, yielding two distinct perspectives used to examine the park system:

1. Overall Level of Service
2. Walkable Level of Service

A catchment distance of one mile was used for the Overall LOS. The one-mile catchment is intended to capture recreational users travelling from home or elsewhere to a park or facility by way of bike, bus, or automobile.

Academic and professional research on catchment distances for walkability is

Walkable LOS analysis uses a more focused catchment distance intended to capture users within a ten minute walk. **For Wake Forest, a 1/3 mile radial catchment buffer was used for analyzing walkability.** Within the area scribed by this radius, the origins of virtually all potential trips with a maximum walking time of 10 minutes to reach the component are captured. Further discussion of walkable distances and catchment buffer types may be found in **Appendix D.**

C. Key Level of Service Findings

Summary of Findings from the LOS Analysis

Perspective analyses were generated to evaluate the assets available to residents. For purposes of this study, Wake Forest's Extra-territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) line was used as the extent of the study area. The population within this area was estimated to be 35,839 in 2014, and projected to be 41,921 in 2019.

These figures were also used to calculate the population/acre as a measure of population density to be used in additional LOS calculations.

Key Level of Service Findings

- Coverage for access to parks, trails, and facilities in Wake Forest is fairly good. Eighty-six percent (86%) of the land area within the study area boundary has access to at least some town-provided amenity within a one-mile proximity. If amenities provided by Wake County and other providers were included, the percentage would probably be even greater.
- The LOS value, i.e. the measure of "how much" service there is from parks, trails, and facilities varies across the study area and is highest in the area north of Dr. Calvin Jones Highway and east of Capital Boulevard. It is lowest in the farthest south

Study Area Population*/Density Data					
	Total Acres	2014 Population*	2019 Population*	2014 Population/ Acre	2019 Population/ Acre
Town of Wake Forest GRASP Study Area	13,740	35,839	41,921	2.61	3.05

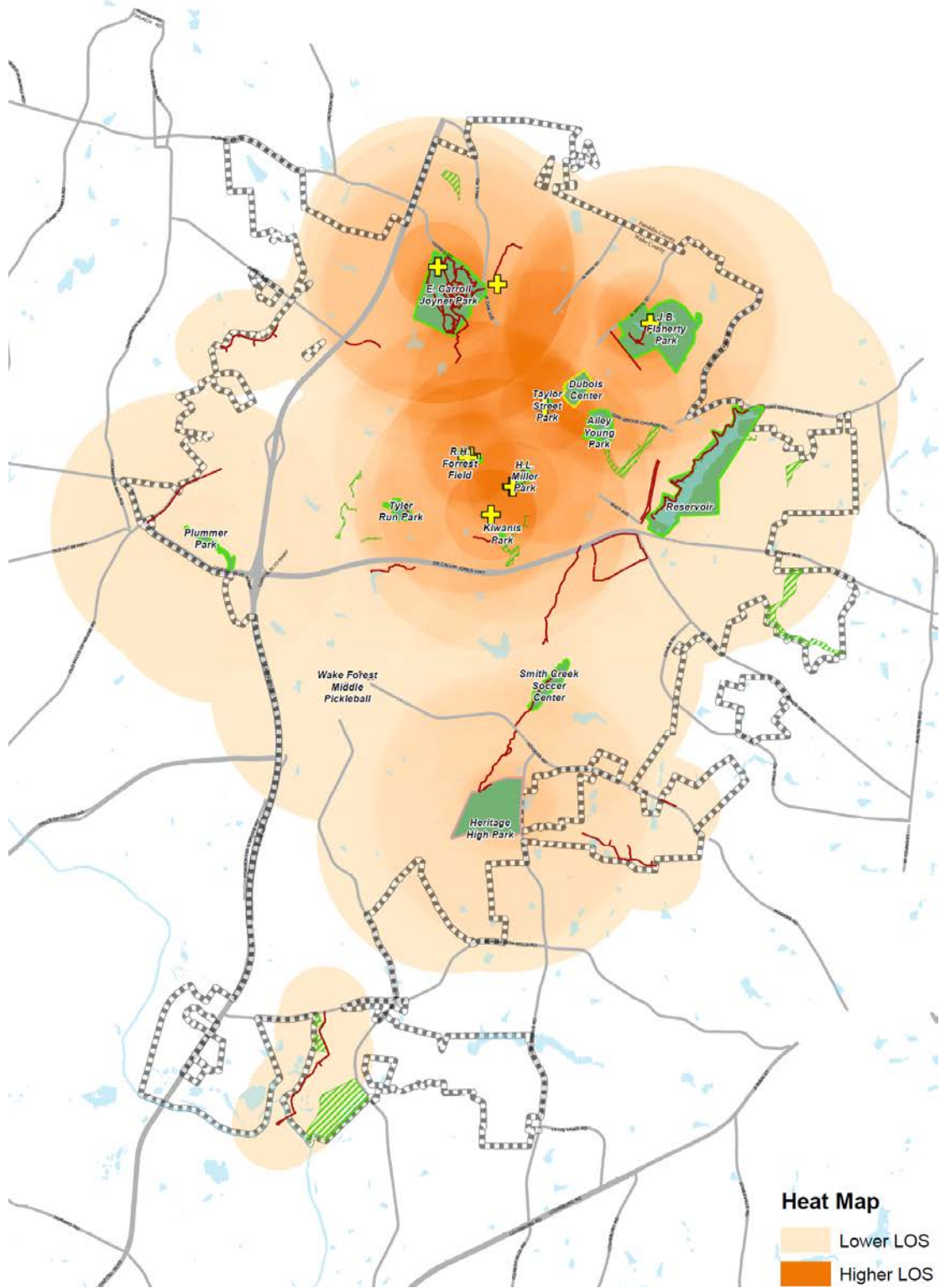
* Population data source: ESRI ArcGIS Online

Overall Level of Service

For this perspective of service everything provided by the Town in its parks, trails, and indoor facilities is combined together and viewed from the standpoint of someone who can get to it by a choice of automobile, bike or walking. All things in the inventory are valued according to the scores given to them in the assessment, but when something is within walking distance its score is doubled. This is what is displayed in **Map B** and **Map B-1**.

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Map B: General Access to All Recreation Components



Map B: General Access to All Recreation Components in the Town of Wake Forest

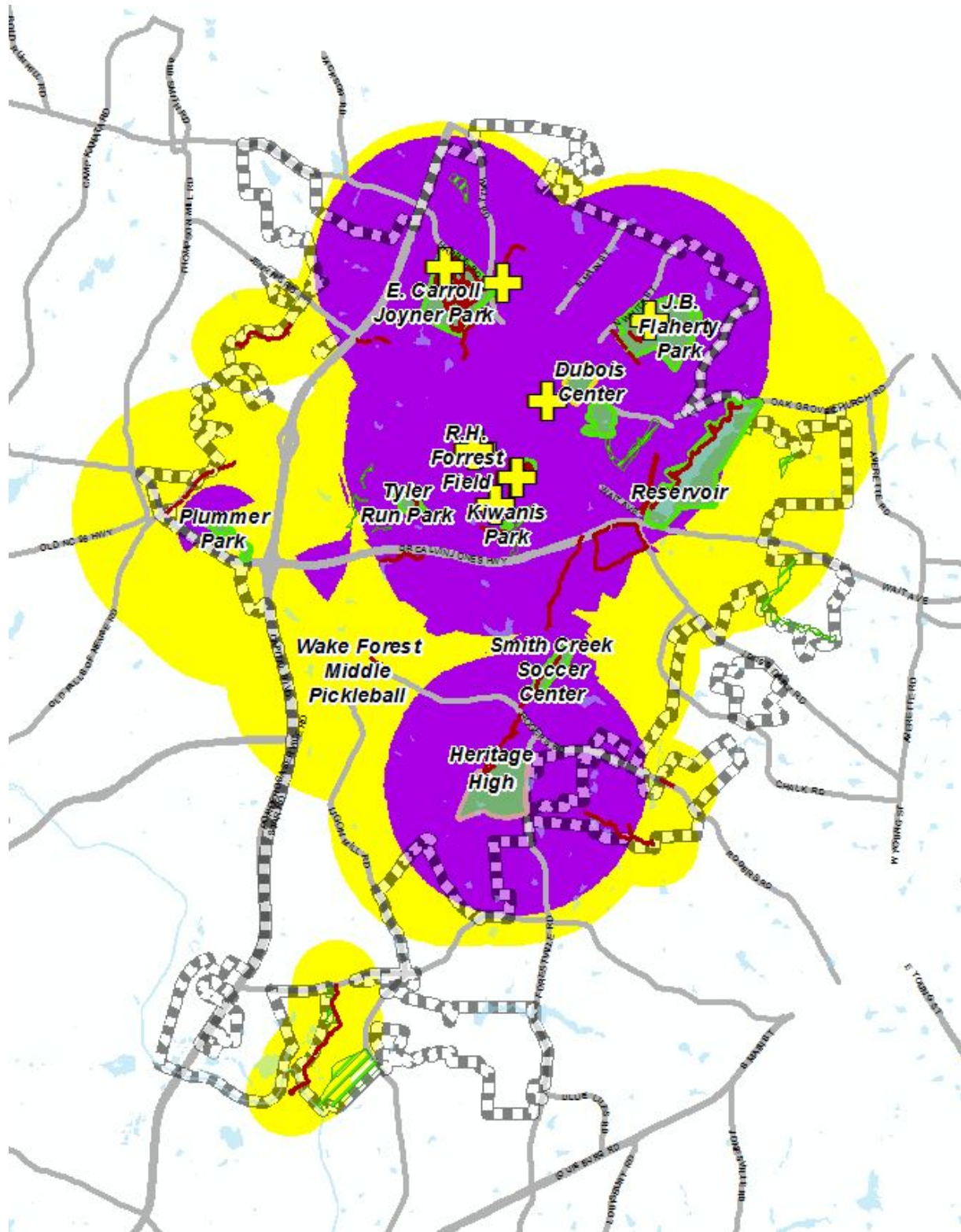
In general, **Map B** indicates that Wake Forest has a distribution of facilities that offers good general access to parks and recreation facilities. Areas of higher concentration are notable, particularly in the area that lies north of Dr. Calvin Jones Highway and east of Capital Boulevard. However, even most of the areas outside that sector are still within the catchment area of at least some components provided by the Town. In fact, 86 percent of the land area within the study area boundary falls within the catchment area of at least one component from the inventory.

Threshold Analyses – Maps B-1 and B-2

The information in Map B can be looked at another way by assuming that it is desirable to be within proximity (i.e. within the catchments) to a set of components that are at or above an assumed value. In this case, a value of 1 is used that is equal to a “typical” park with four components in it and a trail or greenway. Map B-1 shows where service falls above (in purple) or below (in yellow) this threshold, and where there is no service at all (no color).

The results show that most of the core area of Wake Forest falls above the assumed threshold, meaning that most of Wake Forest has proximity to a “typical” set of park amenities or some combination of amenities that equate to a typical park in value. The primary gaps in service appear around Wake Forest Middle School (which has a Wake County school/park) and the area west of Capital Boulevard, which has limited facilities located in Plummer Park.

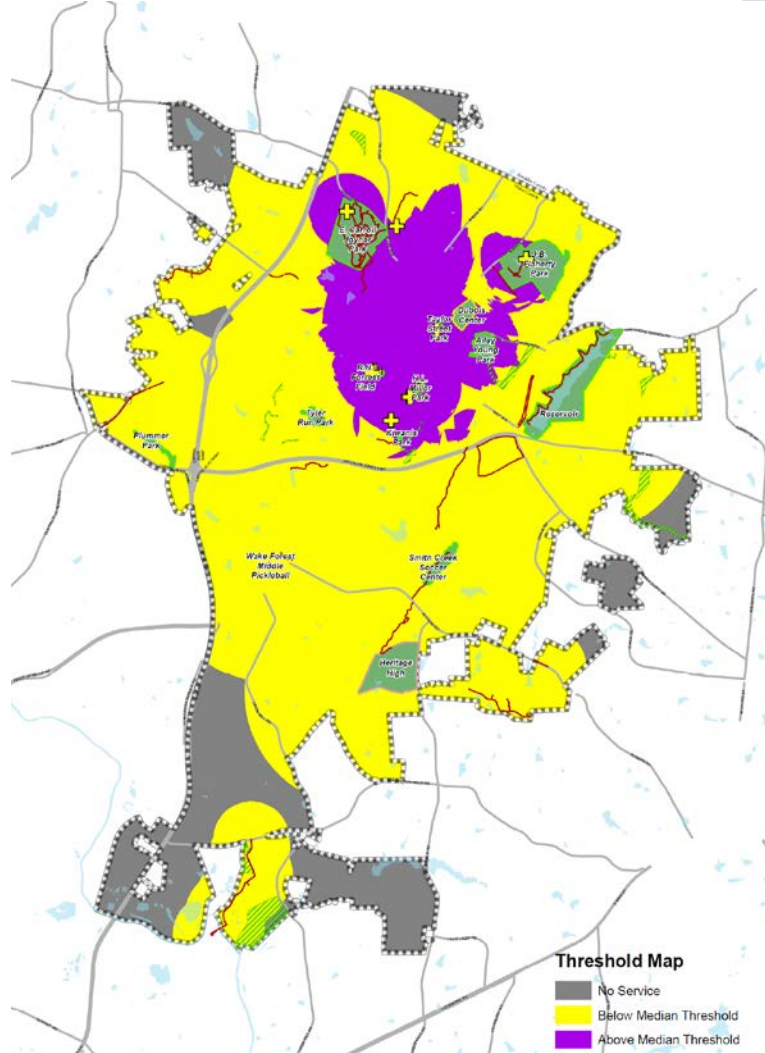
Map B-1 – Assumed LOS Value Threshold



Map B-1 – Assumed LOS Value Threshold

Another threshold that can be looked at is the median value of service. When the range of LOS value is measured across the study area and locations are sorted into whether they are in the top half or bottom half of the measured service value, the results are as shown in Map B-2. It looks similar to the previous threshold map (Map B-1) in that areas with higher service (i.e. in the upper half of all service values) are concentrated in the core of the area north of Dr. Calvin Jones Highway and east of Capital Boulevard. However, in this analysis, the areas around Smith Creek Soccer Center and Heritage High drop below the threshold, meaning that the LOS there is in the bottom half of all values. This is not necessarily a problem, it simply indicates where the concentrations of service are presently located and where areas with less service occur.

Map B-2 – Median LOS Threshold



Walkable Level of Service

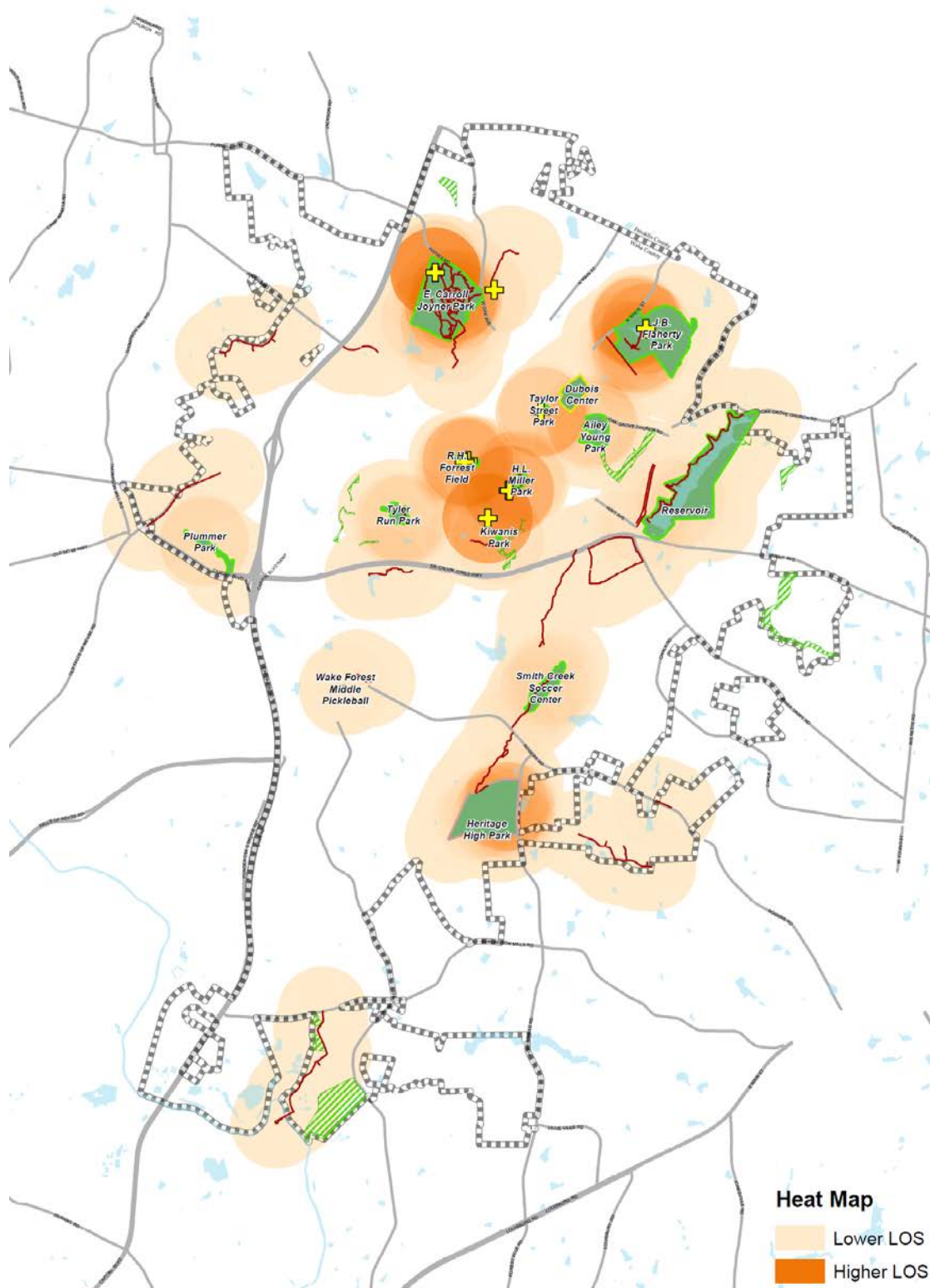
Another point of view from which to look at service is that of someone who, by choice or necessity, only gets to parks and other facilities by walking. In the resulting walkable level of service perspective analysis, Capital Boulevard was considered to be a *pedestrian barrier* at which the service coverage for all features was clipped. Dr. Calvin Jones Highway was not considered a barrier because of crossings that have been installed or will be installed in the near future.

Map C: Walkable Access to All Recreation Components

Map C shows access to all recreation components by walking. One-third mile catchment radii have been placed around each component and shaded relative to the component's GRASP® score. This represents a distance from which convenient access to the component can be achieved by an average person within a ten minute walk. Scores are doubled within this catchment to reflect the added value of walkable proximity, allowing direct comparisons to be made between **Map B** and **Map C**.

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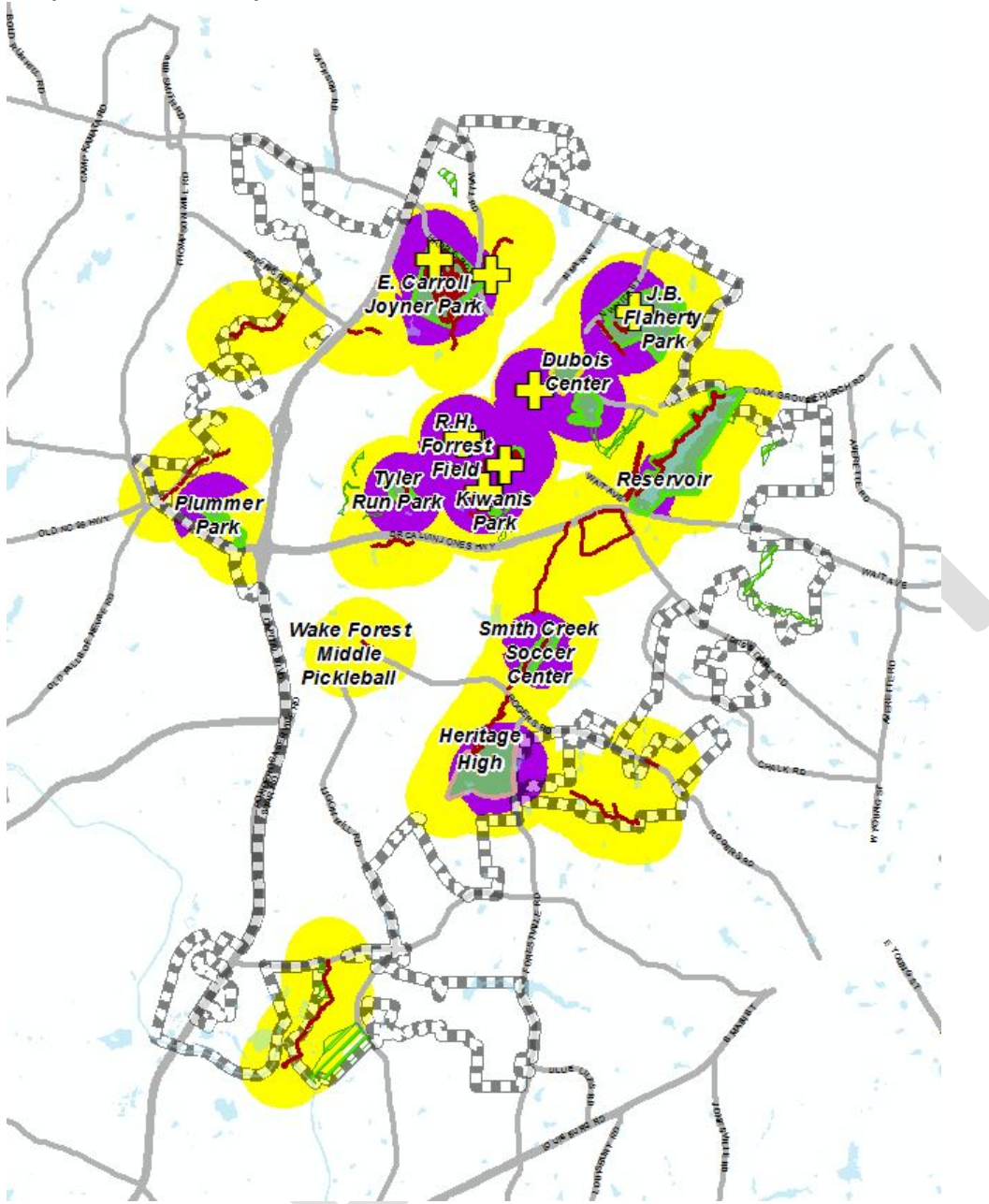
Map C: Walkable Access to All Recreation Components



Map C analysis is intended to show the LOS available if walking is the only way used to reach assets. Compared to **Map B**, there is a lot less area with service coverage. The area north of Dr. Calvin Jones Highway and east of Capital Boulevard continues to have higher levels of service and greater coverage than other parts of town, and the presence of trails becomes a more important factor in service. Overall, 54 percent of the land within the study area boundary has walkable service coverage.

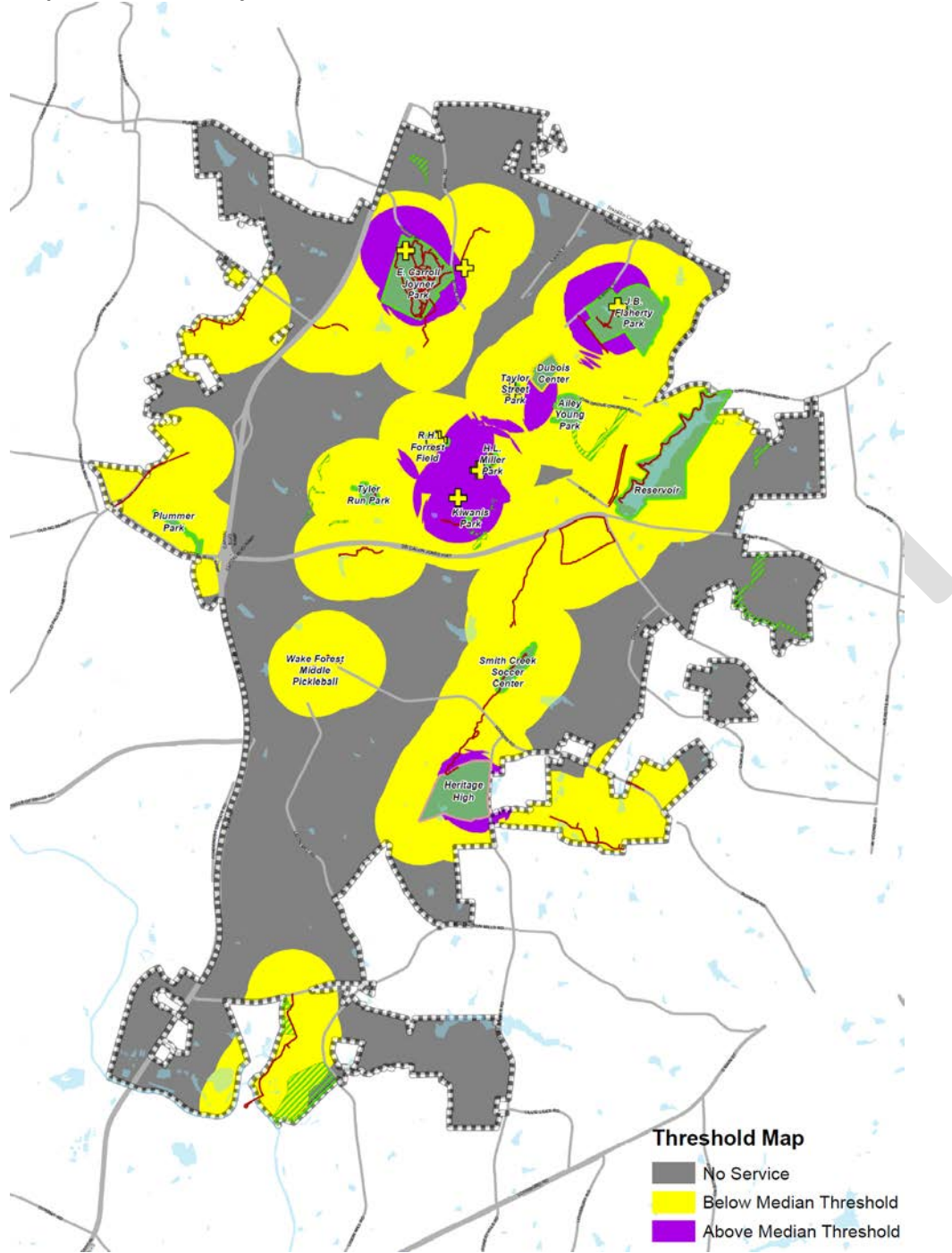
As in the previous perspective, the walkability perspective can be analyzed further to determine areas where proximity to a set of components that are above or below an assumed threshold exists. Using the same assumptions of proximity to a set of components equal in value to a typical local park as in the previous perspective B-1, **Map C-1** shows where this occurs, along with areas where it falls below the threshold or there is no service at all. It shows that areas within walking distance to one of Wake Forest's developed parks meet the threshold. While this seems like an obvious outcome, it would not necessarily be true if any of Wake Forest's existing parks were performing below-par, or if barriers were creating access problems. This information demonstrates that the parks that Wake Forest are performing well in terms of meeting the needs of people who live within walking distance. However, there are large parts of the community that do not have walkable access to threshold service value offered by a typical local park. Though if the amenities offered by other providers, particularly Wake County, are taken into consideration, the picture would likely improve. This suggests that partnering with Wake County to ensure that schools, school/parks, and other facilities meet a basic threshold or standard to serve Wake Forest residents could be an effective way to assure that Wake Forest is a more walkable community.

Map C-1 – Walkability Assumed LOS Value Threshold



Also, consider that areas shown in yellow on **Map C-1** are areas of opportunity. These are areas where land and assets that provide service are currently available but that do not meet the minimum standard threshold value. It may be possible to improve the quantity and quality of those assets to raise the LOS without the need for acquiring new lands. For example, enhancing the value of trails through the addition of trailheads, waysides, interpretive signage, art, play features, or other amenities could move the areas around these trails from yellow to purple, putting them above the threshold. Map C-2 shows the effects of plotting areas that are above the median service value, as described for Map B-2. It reinforces the information in Map C-1 and this suggests the same actions that were just described in order to improve walkable service throughout Wake Forest.

Map C-2 – Walkability Median LOS Value Threshold



Indoor Facilities

The following facilities were included in the inventory of assets:

Alston Massenburg Center

This recently-renovated facility features a large meeting room with stage and a kitchen, which is available for rent. The facility sits adjacent to Taylor Street Park, which offers a playground and outdoor gathering space.

Cottage at Olde Mill Stream

This one-room building is used for Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources programs.

Flaherty Park Community Center

This center includes a gymnasium, meeting room, and open area that are all reservable. The meeting room includes an adjoining kitchen.

Holding Park Lockers and Concessions

This recently-renovated facility supports the aquatics center and other amenities associated with Holding park.

Joyner Park Center

This facility is planned and funded but not yet constructed.

Northern Wake Senior Center

This facility offers adults 55 and over a full schedule of recreational activities, social events, and educational classes.

Renaissance Center and Arts Annex

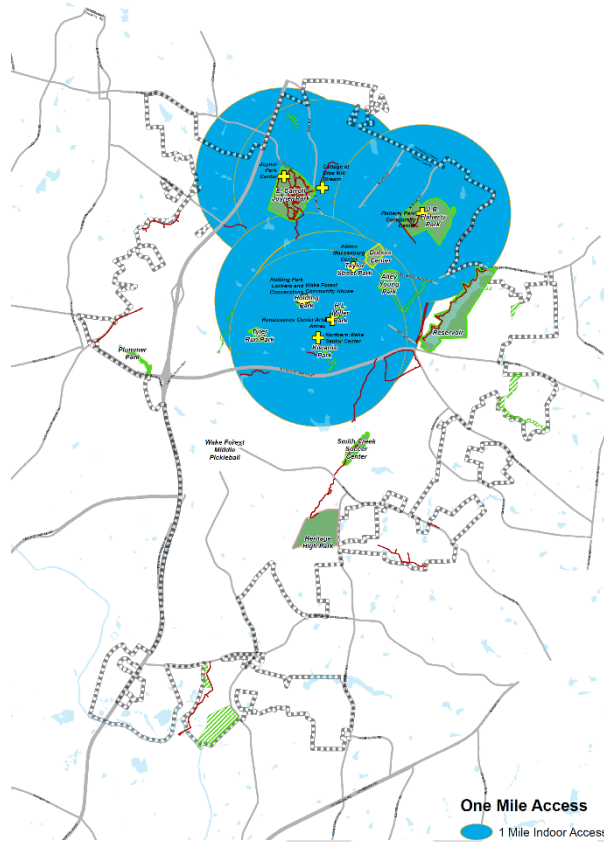
This is a multi-purpose facility that provides visual and performing arts activities as well as community events. It is also available for rental for special events.

Wake Forest Community House

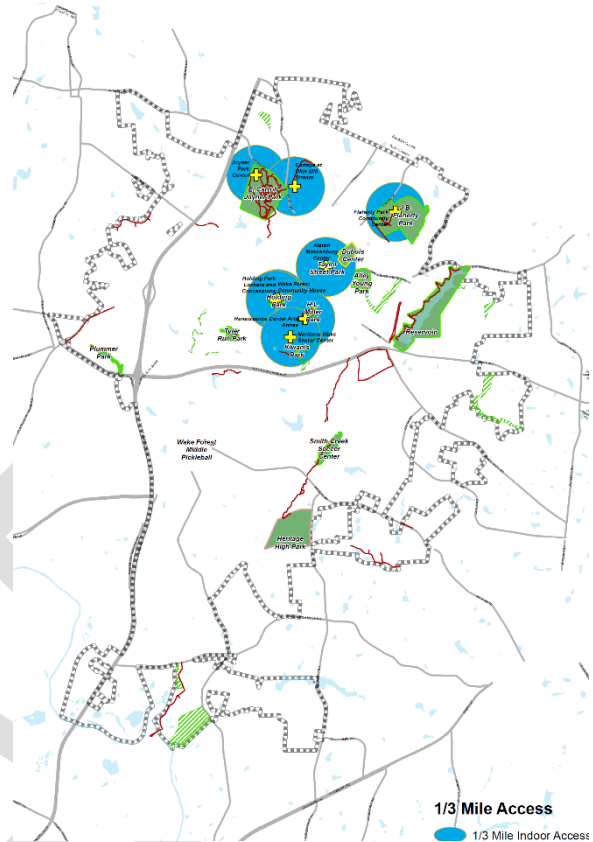
This historic structure provides a large gathering space with an adjacent kitchen and large porch that overlooks the Holding Park Pool and playground. It is available to rent for special events.

The two following maps (Maps D and D-1) show two different catchment areas for all of Wake Forest's indoor facilities. The first shows a one-mile catchment and the second a 1/3 mile catchment.

Map D-1: One Mile Access to Indoor Facilities



Map D-2: 1/3 Mile Access to Indoor Facilities



From these maps, it is evident that indoor space in Wake Forest is currently not well-distributed outside of the core area north of Dr. Calvin Jones Highway and east of Capital Boulevard. Consideration should be given to whether or not additional indoor facilities are needed to serve the outlying areas. To provide further insight, the table below shows the population currently living within each of the catchment areas of each current (and proposed in the case of Joyner Center) indoor facility. It shows that, compared to other indoor locations, the proposed Joyner Park site provides relatively low access for residents, especially from a walking perspective. In addition, it falls within a part of the Town that already has access to indoor facilities. While this is just one of many factors affecting the location of a

new community center, consideration may be given to exploring other options for its location.

LOCATION	2014 POPULATION - One Mile	2019 POPULATION - One Mile	2014 POPULATION - 1/3 Mile	2019 POPULATION - 1/3 Mile
Alston Massenburg Center	7511	8752	1354	1581
Cottage at Olde Mill Stream	5456	6236	531	594
Flaherty Park Community Center	3925	4794	1076	1439
Holding Park Lockers and Concessions	7260	8142	725	797
Joyner Park Center	4429	4966	290	330
Northern Wake Senior Center	6296	7044	655	709
Renaissance Center	5999	6767	900	967
Renaissance Center Arts Annex	5999	6767	900	967
Wake Forest Community House	7388	8295	725	797

Centre not Center

GRASP® Index

Another way to look at service is to ignore the distribution of features within the Town and simply measure their net value in comparison to the number of people served. This very simplified measure assumes that everyone has equal access to everything that the Town offers, regardless of where they are located, and shares equally in the ability to make use of them. By itself, this number may not mean a lot, but when monitored over time, as the population increases and as components are added, removed, replaced, or allowed to age or degrade, it can be used to track the agency's progress toward its overall service goals. For example, at the time of this report, the GRASP® Index for Wake Forest is a numerical value of **42**. Assuming that the physical inventory of assets does not change between now and 2019, when 6,082 people are expected to be added to the community and begin using the park and trail system, the GRASP® Index would fall to a value of 36, or a net drop in LOS to only 85 percent of what it is today. To offset this population increase, Wake Forest would need to add more amenities or upgrade those existing to increase the overall value of its physical assets. The table below shows how this value is currently distributed across existing facilities and how much increase in value would be needed within each category to maintain existing levels of service according to the GRASP® Index.

However, an alternative would be to focus on maintaining existing features to retain their value and adding new features that are in high demand rather than simply keeping the proportions among features the same as they currently are. This is the approach taken in the Recommendations section of this plan, which suggests the upgrading of specific parks rather than across-the-board improvements to all parks. Upgrading existing parks, even if new components are not added, can have the same effect on GRASP® Index as creating new parks or adding new features. Also, the addition of trails and greenways is likely to cover a large portion of the additional service needed to address population growth. In general, following the suggestions in the Recommendations section should assure that the GRASP® Index is

maintained at a desirable level in Wake Forest, and this can be easily monitored as implementation of the plan proceeds.

Projected Community Components GRASP® Index 2019				
	Current Population 2014	35,839	Projected Population 2019	41,921
	Total GRASP® Community Score By Component Type	GRASP® Index (GRASP® Score / 1000 Population)	Total GRASP® Score Needed At Projected Population	Additional GRASP® Score Needed
Ballfield	64.4	1.8	75.3	10.9
Basketball	38.7	1.1	45.3	6.6
Educational Experience	16.1	0.4	18.8	2.7
Event Space	32.2	0.9	37.7	5.5
Garden, Display	32.1	0.9	37.5	5.4
Loop Walk	62.9	1.8	73.6	10.7
MP Field, All Sizes	87.6	2.4	102.5	14.9
Natural Area	39.3	1.1	46.0	6.7
Open Water	19.2	0.5	22.5	3.3
Playground, Destination	16.1	0.4	18.8	2.7
Playground, Local	35.55	1.0	41.6	6.0
Shelter, Group	28	0.8	32.8	4.8
Tennis	100.8	2.8	117.9	17.1

Capacities Analysis

Capacities analysis is a somewhat outdated method of measuring service, but can be useful when combined with the other analytics presented here to look at how growth. The table shows the number of additional components that would be needed for certain component types if the goal is to maintain the current ratio of components to population. This assumes that the current ratio is the “correct” one, and does not take into account changing needs, trends, or other factors. For example, Pickleball is not shown on the chart (in part because it is currently being played on gym courts and other non-dedicated

sites, which would skew the table), but Pickleball is a growing sport with evolving needs. Using a table such as this one alone would not provide all of the information to project the needs for Pickleball. Similarly, the projections shown in the chart for features like tennis courts and open water may need to be adjusted based on other input that was obtained in the needs assessment and public process for this plan.

	All Components	Aqua Feat. Pool	Aqua Feat. Spray	Ballfield	Basketball	Batting Cage	Base Ball	Complex, Ballfield	Complex, Tennis	Dog Park	Event Space	Garden, Display	Loop Walk	MP Field, Large	MP Field, Small	Multuse Court	Natural Area	Open Turf	Open Water	Picnic Grounds	Playground, Destination	Playground, Local	Shelter	Shelter, Group	Tennis	Track, Competition
Town of Wake Forest Study Area Total	134.5	1	1	12	8.5	3	1	1	1	1	5	4	6	15	2	1	10	6	4	3	2	9	1	7	15	3
	Population																									
2014	35,839																									
Ratio / 1000 Population	3.75	0.03	0.03	0.33	0.24	0.08	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.14	0.11	0.17	0.42	0.06	0.03	0.28	0.17	0.11	0.08	0.06	0.25	0.03	0.20	0.42	0.08
Population/ Component	266	35,839	35,839	2,987	4,216	11,946	35,839	35,839	35,839	35,839	7,168	8,960	5,973	2,389	17,920	35,839	3,584	5,973	8,960	11,946	17,920	3,982	35,839	5,120	2,389	11,946
2019	41,921																									
Total # Components to Meet Current Ratio in 2019	157	1	1	14	10	4	1	1	1	1	6	5	7	18	2	1	12	7	5	4	2	11	1	8	18	4
# Additional Components to Meet Current Ratio in 2019	23	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	2	0	1	3	1

Summary and Comparison of Analysis Data with other Communities

The table below provides a comparison between Wake Forest and other communities on a variety of metrics. It should be understood that there is no standard or “correct” value for any of these metrics, and that they are provided simply for the purpose of showing how these values range across a number of different communities and situations.

STATE	CITY	YEAR	POPULATION	STUDY AREA SIZE (ACRES)	TOTAL # SITES	TOTAL # COMPONENTS	AVERAGE # COMPONENTS / SITE	TOTAL GRASP VALUE (ENTIRE SYSTEM)	GRASP® INDEX	AVERAGE GRASP® INDEX	% TOTAL AREA WITH COMPOSITE SERVICE	NUMBER OF COMPONENTS PER POPULATION	POPULATION / ACRE	COMMENTS
VT	Essex	2011	28,858	25,230	47	153	3.3	895	31	19.0	72%	5	1.1	1/2 mile, 1 mile catchment areas
ID	Post Falls	2011	29,062	24,928	35	271	7.7	1005	35	28.7	71%	9	1.2	
OR	Oregon City	2006	29,540	5,944	51	215	4.2	NA	NA	NA	86%	7	5.0	1/2 mile, 1 mile catchment areas
CO	Commerce City	2006	36,049	26,270	90	357	4.0	1047	29.0	11.6	73%	10	1.4	
CA	La Quinta	2006	39,614	22,829	27	143	5.3	611	15	22.6	79%	4	1.7	
UT	South Jordan	2006	44,276	14,081	48	172	3.6	1578	36	32.9	44%	4	3.1	
CA	Palm Springs	2013	44,468	60,442	16	162	10.1	1149	26	71.8	69%	4	0.7	1/2 mile, 1 mile catchment areas
OR	Corvallis	2011	54,462	18,006	54	309	5.7	2217	41	41.1	93%	6	3.0	1/3, 1 and 10 mile catchment areas
MO	Liberty	2013	56,041	53,161	39	298	7.6	607	11	15.6	57%	5	1.1	
MA	Brookline	2009	60,000	NA	74	128	1.7	551	9	7.4	NA	2	NA	
NM	Farmington	2014	46,815	21,179	98	354	3.6	2204	48	22.5	97%	8	2.2	1/2 mile, 1 mile catchment areas
NC	Wake Forest	2014	35,839	13,740	37	159	4	1,491	42	40	86%	4	3	1/3 mile, 1 mile catchment areas

Recommendations

Table 5 shows components in the inventory that were assigned low scores during the inventory process. Most of the items represent an opportunity rather than an existing problem. For example, the lack of access to the creek at Ailey Young Park is not a problem of poor maintenance or disrepair, but rather simply a feature that exists but which has not been utilized to its full potential. Others, such as the small size of the turf areas at Taylor Street Park, are simply making the best of an existing situation and are acceptable as-is. A few, such as the playground at Dubois Center and the picnic grounds at Holding Park, can be addressed as part of a new overall master plan for those sites, as explained further below.

This table shows that, unlike many communities today, Wake Forest is in a good position to move forward with its park system rather than having a lot of deferred-maintenance issues to deal with. This is reflected in the recommendations that follow, which focus on taking Wake Forest’s parks, trails and facilities into the future rather than restoring them to some past condition.

Table 5: Low Scoring Components

LOCATION	COMPONENT	CLASS	QUANTITY	N_SCORE	C_SCORE	COMMENTS
Ailey Young Park	Open Water	Y	1	1	1	Not really accessible.
Dubois Center	Playground, Local	Y	1	1	1	Appeared to be off limits at time of inventory on a Sunday.
H.L. Miller Park	Natural Area	Y	1	1	1	No forest, but the area around the stream is a natural area.
Heritage High Park	Natural Area	Y	1	1	1	Seems to have limited access.
Heritage High Park	Open Water	Y	1	1	1	Unattractive. Could be made more of an asset.
Holding Park	Picnic Grounds	Y	1	1	1	Small but great location near the pool and playground.
R.H. Forrest Field	Batting Cage	Y	1	1	1	Locked. Off limits without coach.
Reservoir	Water Access, Developed	Y	1	1	1	Boat ramp. Poor condition.
Smith Creek Soccer Center	Natural Area	Y	1	1	1	Small, not accessed.
Taylor Street Park	Open Turf	Y	1	1	1	Small.
Taylor Street Park	Open Turf	Y	1	1	1	Small.

Wake Forest Suggestions for Improvements

The challenge for the near future will be to respond to growth and rapid changes in ways that retain the small-town flavor of Wake Forest’s parks while bringing them up to a level of aesthetic and functional sophistication that reflect the character that Wake Forest wants to project for its future. The suggestions below are not prioritized at this point, and are offered as a starting point for the discussion of setting priorities.

General Recommendations

- Where portable restrooms are provided, consider adding screen enclosures to improve the appearance of these and give them a more permanent look.
- Natural play and exposing people (especially children) to nature is a growing trend. Wake Forest is in a good position to respond to this trend by incorporating natural areas that are already found at its parks into the overall design of the parks in a cohesive way. Where forested areas are found in parks, create transition zones that integrate the forest into the overall design of the park. Joyner Park is a good model, with its meadow areas, wetlands, and variety of habitats, instead of just an abrupt line where woods meet mowed lawns. Also, provide opportunities for natural playspaces to augment developed playgrounds throughout the Town.
- Walking is one of the most frequent and healthful activities that occurs in parks. It is engaged in by people of all ages and a wide range of abilities. Connected, looping walkways in parks facilitate and encourage walking. Create a variety of walking loops in parks. Have these wind through a variety of spaces, including open areas, woods, etc.
- Find suitable locations for facilities that meet the needs of active and involved constituencies (both current and future ones) such as Pickleball and tennis enthusiasts.
- Consider the impact of the proposed new community center and weigh options and opportunities to make it a true center of the community. While Joyner Park is an attractive location for this, it will become a drive-to facility and place an even higher burden on the parking problems at Joyner Park. Locating it in the center of Wake Forest would make it more walkable and bike-able, and make downtown a true center of the community.
- Provide trailheads to access trails throughout the Town. This may be done in partnership with other entities that have space for parking and support amenities in appropriate locations
- Continue to fill gaps in the greenway system and to connect across barriers such as Capital Boulevard.

- Create a better wayfinding and identity system for parks. Include facilities of other providers, such as county school/parks within this wayfinding system, to make it an integrated one that facilitates easy navigation to parks, trails, and green spaces throughout town.
- Improve service west of Capital Boulevard. Ways to do this might include expanding/improving Plummer Park and improving access to it from the surrounding neighborhoods. Service to this side of town might also be improved by creating safe and desirable crossings of Capital Boulevard at key locations, and by adding trailheads and connections to the Neuse River Trail system.

The following is a brief description of suggested improvements at each location. Some are modifications to the existing site, such as adding walkways or creating transition area between the developed parts of the site and forested areas. New master plans for the entire site are suggested for the Dubois Center, Miller Park, and Reservoir. New master plans may be in order for Ailey Young Park and Holding Park as well, given the potential for these sites to take on dramatic new roles.

Ailey Young Park

This park could be enhanced by creating transition zones that blend the forest gradually into the developed part of the site and invite exploration of its natural areas in a way that feels safe and inviting. This might be accomplished by opening up views and extending paths through broad swaths of open areas through the natural area. These paths should connect to the new development happening east of the park. This park could be a good place to create a playground focused on nature play.

The development of the area east of this park may change the way people think about this park. Rather than being somewhat isolated or perceived as on the edge of town, it will now be central to multiple neighborhoods. It should be connected to the new neighborhoods by trails that link to the overall greenway system that is shaping up along Traditions Grande Boulevard, and by extension, to Reservoir and the larger greenway system.

Suggested Improvements:

- Add walkways to connect all parts of the site.
- Use selective clearing to create open areas that invite people into the natural parts of the park, provide access to access the stream corridor, and connect to new development east of the park.
- Consider a new master plan for the park that integrates these new parts of the park into the existing.

Dubois Center

A master planning process for this site is recommended to determine the ways in which it can best serve the community for the future.

Suggested Improvements:

- Conduct a public process and prepare a long-range master plan for the site.

E. Carroll Joyner Park

This park should serve as a model and inspiration for improvements throughout Wake Forest.

Suggested Improvements:

- None. Simply ensure that future development in this park maintains the spirit that it exhibits and incorporates the concepts listed above.

H. L. Miller Park

This park should combine the feeling of a traditional park with a sense of civic pride. This could be done by highlighting the connection to the Town hall (perhaps with a commemorative walkway of some kind connecting the park to the Town hall), and adding art, sculpture, and interpretive signage to the park. It has some interpretive signage that explains the hydrology of the site, and this should be expanded and enhanced.

Suggested Improvements:

- Create well-designed interpretive signage to explain the natural and cultural qualities of this site, and position it as a civic space
- Upgrade the furnishings to reflect a sense of civic importance and pride and make this park feel like part of the overall civic campus.
- Connect this park to downtown through the civic campus so that it truly feels like Wake Forest’s “downtown park.”
- Consider preparing an overall master plan for redevelopment of this site.

J. B. Flaherty Park

With proper design to better mesh the various parts of this park, it could be as impressive as Joyner Park. If the existing walkway system was extended and connected to form a loop walk that circumnavigated the pond, tennis courts, and dog park, it would likely become a popular walking route. An additional loop could be created around the ball diamonds, offering an even longer walking route.

The large dog park is a major draw to this site. Enhancing the dog park with gathering and event spaces, skills course, and other amenities would add appeal.

Suggested Improvements:

- Add one or more walking loops.
- Enhance dog park with shelters, skills course, other amenities.
- Integrate the woods into the park with transition zones of natural meadow and open shrubland, not unlike Joyner Park.
- Make the pond an amenity by providing better access to the shore, with picnic tables, benches, and paths.

Kiwanis Park

The addition of a direct connection to the greenway, behind the fire station, would enhance pedestrian access and might encourage more parents to walk their children to the playground. It would take some work to navigate the hillside, but may be worth looking into.

Suggested Improvements:

- Investigate the possibility of a spur connection from the playground to the greenway.

Plummer Park

As the only facility on the west side of Capital, this park plays a crucial role in serving that section of the community. However, the park is small and located in a somewhat obscure place. It is an attractive site, with a nice shelter, playground, and a natural spring. While there is a dirt drive into the park, it does not seem welcoming for vehicles. Perhaps a small parking lot is needed, but if not, at least a paved walkway from the street to the playground and shelter should be installed. Extending connections along the “arms” that follow along the creek on either side of the park would connect it better to the neighborhood, although doing so may impact the privacy of homes along there. If that is not feasible, adding paved paths within the currently developed part of the park is recommended.

Suggested Improvements:

- Add a small parking lot if warranted.
- Install a paved path from the street into the park.
- Highlight the spring with interpretive signage and benches.

R.H. Forrest Field and Holding Park

These two sites are adjacent and may be thought of as one large park. The western side has a league-play baseball diamond and batting cage. The eastern portion has an attractive playground with picnic tables. In between are the Community House, which offers a unique space for events, and the outdoor pool with concession stand. There is also a basketball court.

Because of its central location and the combination of features found here, it is likely that this location is heavily used at times, particularly in the summer when the pool is open. In that sense, it seems to represent a “central park” of sorts for Wake Forest, and should be thought of as a primary identity feature for the community.

Suggested Improvements:

- This location lends itself to being a “destination playground,” with a variety of play spaces and picnic sites that could be used for birthday parties, etc. The topography lends itself to the creation of an exciting playground on multiple levels that would be accessible to all abilities (Centennial Center Park and Westlands Park in Colorado are examples).
- Consider a long-range vision for this site that makes it an identity site and a destination that leverages the pool, event space, and a major play space into a unique facility.

Reservoir

Though largely undeveloped, this site offers lots of potential. The lake and surrounding woods are highly scenic and offer opportunities for boating and hiking. The existing development includes an access drive that is not well marked and a boat ramp that is in need of repairs. Parking is informal and not developed.

With improvements, this could be a true gem for Wake Forest. This site has the potential to support amenities like those found at Lake Johnson in Raleigh and Fred Bond Park in Cary. This could include a walking path around the lake, a boat house with rentals, and event space that could be used as a source

of revenue. Other improvements could include a destination playground, picnic shelters (also as a revenue source), and other amenities.

Suggested Improvements:

- Given the potential of this site, it is recommended that a master planning process be conducted to determine how much development and of what type is desired at this location.

Smith Creek Soccer Center

This facility offers several multi-use fields, a playground, and picnic shelter. It is connected to the greenway system. Given this, and its potential as a destination for people on bicycles, it seems appropriate to add bike racks here. Adding shade trees and benches along the paved path, especially near the playground, would enhance the user experience for visitors. The addition of permanent restrooms may also be justified, given the size and use of the site. Also, the vehicle entrance for this park is not well-marked, particularly for those arriving from the North.

Suggested Improvements:

- Relocate entry signage for better visibility.
- Add trees for shade along paved path.
- Add benches along paved path.
- Add bicycle racks.

Taylor Street Park

This small park packs a lot of value into a small space. It offers play equipment, picnic shelter, and a small area of open turf. Permanent restrooms are available in the adjacent building.

Suggested Improvements:

- (None needed)

Tyler Run Park

This park is approximately eight acres and is situated within a residential neighborhood. It is completely surrounded by the back yards of homes. However, it contains a ball diamond that serves more than just the immediate neighborhood. People may also come here to use the playground and large area of open turf.

This is a nice park, but it could use some upgrading. The addition of comfort and convenience features such as more shade and seating in key locations, along with landscaping to enhance the vehicular entrance and separate vehicles from the rest of the park would enhance its value.

Suggested Improvements:

- Create a loop walk around the perimeter of the park, but not too close to adjacent yards, that would allow for better pedestrian access and circulation, and for walking as a healthy activity. Distance markers along the loop would further enhance the value of a loop here.
- Add benches and waysides at key locations along the loop walk.
- Add planting beds with shrubs and trees to separate the parking from the park.
- Consider adding a permanent restrooms to replace the portable toilets.

- Add drinking fountain.

More on Utilizing the GRASP® Perspectives

Different Perspectives can be used to determine levels of service throughout the community from a variety of views. These Perspectives can show a specific set of components, depict estimated travel time to services, highlight a particular geographic area, or display facilities that accommodate specific programming. It is not necessarily beneficial for all parts of the community to score equally in the analyses. The desired level of service for any particular location will depend on the type of service being analyzed and the characteristics of the particular location. Commercial, institutional, and industrial areas might reasonably be expected to have lower levels of service for Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources opportunities than residential areas. Levels of service for retail services in high density residential areas should probably be different than those for lower density areas.

Used in conjunction with other needs assessment tools (such as needs surveys and a public process), Perspectives can be used to

Each Perspective shows the cumulative levels of service across the study area when the catchment areas for a particular set of components are plotted together. As previously stated, darker shades represent areas in which the level of service is higher for that particular Perspective. It is important to note that the shade overlaying any given point on the Perspective represents the cumulative value offered by the surrounding Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources system to an individual situated in that specific location, rather than the service being provided by components at that location to the areas around it.

V. Great Things to Come – Recommendations & Action Plans

The recommendations for this plan are focused around the following areas:

- Improve Organizational Creditability and Operational Efficiencies
- Improve Financial Situation
- Improve Programming and Service Delivery
- Improve Facilities and Amenities

In the body of the report, there is an in-depth analysis of each area described above. Immediately following each area are the recommendations (goals, objectives, and action items) that pertain to that subject. A summary of subject areas follows.

A. Identification of Key Issues for Focus

Key issues were identified using a number of tools; review of existing plans and documents, focus groups, stakeholder meetings, a community survey, inventory and level of service analysis, and MindMixer. The information gathered from these sources was evaluated and the following recommendations and action plans were developed.

The findings are summarized on the **Key Issues Matrix (Table 6)**, which captures all of the key issues that surfaced during the Master Plan process and prioritizes them on one matrix. The key issues were placed into four categories on the matrix:

- a) Priority
- b) Opportunity to Improve
- c) Minor or Future Issue
- Left blank means the issue did not come up or wasn't addressed in that venue

The qualitative data planning tools used to determine the priority of key issues include:

1. Existing planning documents
2. Consultant team's expertise
3. Parks and Recreation staff input
4. Public forum input

The quantitative data planning tools used to determine the priority of the key issues include:

1. Community survey
2. 2014 Bond Initiatives
3. Facility Assessment and Level of Service Analysis



The key issues were organized into four areas including:

1. Organizational issues
2. Programs and Service Delivery issues
3. Facility and Amenities issues
4. Level of Service issues
5. Finance issues

Preliminary recommendations are listed for each key issue and presented to the Parks and Recreation project team to gather input on the prioritization of the final recommendations and action plans. The Key Issues Matrix summarizes the areas that need immediate attention and determine the direction of the implementation of recommendations in the Master Plan.

DRAFT

Table 6: Summary of Findings - Key Issues Matrix

2014 Data Source	Qualitative Data						Quantitative Data			Consultant's Analysis and Professional Expertise		
 <p>Key Issue - Rating Scale a - priority b - opportunity to improve c - minor or future issue blank means the issue didn't come up or wasn't addressed</p>	Consultant Team	Staff Input	Public Input				Community Survey	2014 Bond	Facility Assessment/LOS	 <p>Preliminary Recommendations</p>		
Organizational												
Need better marketing and communication of activities and facilities	a	a	a				a			Make use of the Town's Marketing Plan to improve awareness		
Increase staffing for maintenance	a	a	a				a			Hire and train staff for current and future parks maintenance demand		
Increase staffing for facilities operations	a	a	a							Hire and train staff for current and future facility usage demand		
Programs and Service Delivery												
Need more programming for families, teens, seniors	a	b	a				b			Expand program opportunities for teens, families, youth in all locations		
Increase programs in wellness/fitness, cultural, special needs	a	a	a				b			Expand programs in wellness/fitness, cultural, special needs		
Increase number of events	a	b	b				a			Expand neighborhood & community special event opportunities		
Increase aquatic opportunities	a	a	a				a			Review current schedule to maximize usage and meet demand		
Facilities and Amenities												
Maintain and improve existing facilities	a	a	a				a	a		Continue to implement existing plans & Master Plan		
Develop connections with greenways and trails	a	a	a				a	a		Continue to develop greenways and expand to connect neighborhoods		
Meet future population demands through additional recreation facilities	a	a	a				b	a		Future facility expansion should include multipurpose use facility		
Explore indoor aquatic facility	a	a	a				a	a		Future facility expansion should include additional aquatic facility		
Explore outdoor amphitheater / special event venue							a			Future facility expansion should consider additional entertainment venues		
Level of Service												
Identify gaps that are need of service based on GRASP									a			
Verify other Service Providers are not filling gaps									a			
Finance												
Utilize equitable user fees	a	a	a	a			a			Develop Cost Recovery Policy		
Pursue grant opportunities	a	a	a	a			a			Explore alternative funding opportunities		
Bond Referendum Passed									a	Parks and recreation Facilities Improvements		
Bond Referendum Passed									a	Greenways Improvements		

B. Recommendations

Findings of input gathered throughout this process, the qualitative and quantitative data, and the GRASP® LOS analyses provide some guidance when considering how to improve Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources opportunities in the Town of Wake Forest. This section describes ways to enhance the level of service and the quality of life through improvement of existing sites, future development of new facilities, organizational enhancements, financial improvements, increased programming, improved safety, and potential partnerships.

Note: Any reference to level of service scoring throughout this recommendation discussion relies on walkable level of service analysis. Overall level of service scoring from a driving standpoint was high and thus offered minimal need for improvement. Despite the fact that walkable coverage provided is generally good, an examination of walkable level of service does reveal areas on which to focus improvement efforts.

Improve Organizational Credibility and Operational Efficiencies

Enhance and Improve Internal and External Communications

The current Town of Wake Forest Marketing Plan needs to be used by the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Department to create great awareness and should include all the recommendations in the Master Plan for programs, services, and facility upgrades.

The Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Department should partner with the Communications Department and the Public Information Officer to make the best use of the Town's website and social media outlets.

The marketing and communication of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources activities should be enhanced with a focused effort on adopting open lines of communication and meetings with partners and potential partners within the community.

Create New Staffing Assignments and/or Hire New Employees for Added Responsibilities

The Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Department needs to add staff to the maintenance division to meet current and anticipated future demands of new parks, miles of Greenway and new facilities.

The Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department needs to add staff for facility operations to meet demand for extended hours of operations for current facilities and as new facilities are added to the Town's inventory.

Ensure that staffing resource levels can maintain existing and new facilities at or above acceptable standards as master plan is implemented.

Recreational Connectivity - Provide Easier and More Convenient Connections for Users to Parks and Facilities

The definition of recreation has evolved in recent years to include aspects of the built environment that are more important today than they were in the past. These days, people are more inclined to integrate recreational opportunities within their daily lives. The infrastructure available to get people to and from destinations is of greater importance than ever before, as more and more people have started to prefer a leisurely walk or bike ride to a trip in the car. People increasingly expect that parks, recreation centers, and other community resources be easy destinations to access for a variety of users employing different modes of travel to include walking and bicycling. This concept of may be referred to as *recreational connectivity*.

Recreational connectivity may be defined as the extent to which community recreational resources are transitionally linked to allow for easy and enjoyable travel between them. In addition to recreational trails, this may also include town sidewalks, bicycle paths, bicycle routes, and public transit infrastructure. Of course the scope of creating and maintaining such a network is a substantial undertaking that involves many players. Along with a community expectation for this type of user-friendly network infrastructure comes the expectation that stakeholders work together in the interest of the public good. At the municipal level, this might include public works, law enforcement, private land-owners, public transit operators, and user groups as well as the local Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Department.

This concept of recreational connectivity is important within the scope of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources planning but also has deeper implications for public health, the local economy, and public safety among other considerations. As more and more people look for non-automotive alternatives to get to and from local destinations, a complete network of various transportation options is in greater demand than ever to include walking trails, bicycle paths, bicycle routes, and public transit. Other elements of this infrastructure might include street/railroad crossings, sidewalk landscaping, lighting, drainage, and even bike-share and car-share availability.

Many of the residents thought it was very difficult to find the local Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources amenities based on current signage (both wayfinding and within parks). Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources should conduct a park identification sign inventory and condition assessment and ensure that all parks are clearly and consistently signed as Wake Forest Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources facilities.

There is also a need to improve directional/wayfinding signage as well as maps to facilities on roadways and within parks. Trail maps with distances and local leisure amenities should also be created and distributed to users.

Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources should improve partner agency relationships within Wake Forest, the state of North Carolina, and the region to create some positive outcomes of establishing partnerships. Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources should work with partners such as the Convention and Visitors Bureau to create a central clearing house (one stop shop) for distribution of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources materials and opportunities. For a Sample Partnership Policy see **Appendix G**.

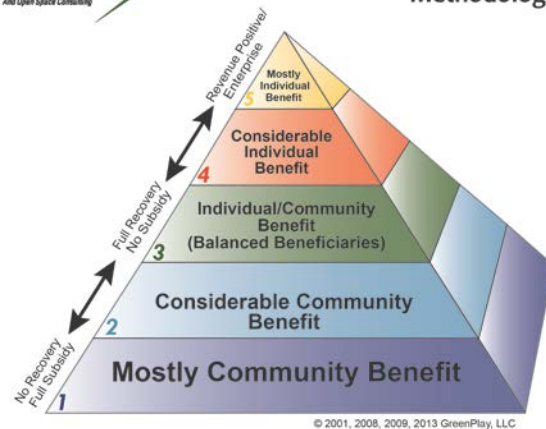
Improve Financial Situations

Implement Equitable User Fees and Assessment Fees

There is a consensus to implement and utilize equitable user fees and assessment fees for Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources activities based on a value received by the participant for the services with a personal benefit. Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources should create a Cost Recovery Policy such as the Pyramid Pricing Methodology (**Appendix H**) to determine a consistent method of pricing Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources activities throughout the department.



The Pyramid Methodology



Consider Increase of Tax Increment Levels

The community appears willing to increase tax increment levels to pay for the improvements that come out of this Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Master Plan over the next several years. A campaign for a community investment may be a successful way of implementing the long term recommendations in the Master Plan.

Pursue Grant Opportunities

It would be wise for Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources to pursue any and all grant opportunities at the federal, state, regional, and local levels. There are still numerous grants available to the Town of Wake Forest at all levels to assist in the funding of recommendations made in this Master Plan and continuous operational expenses.

Improve Programs and Service Delivery

Increase Programming for Families, Youth, and Teens

The public would like to see Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources provide additional programs for families, youth, and teenagers in all sectors of the Town.

As the Town of Wake Forest updates, improves, or repurposes existing parks it should take into consideration the demand for additional family, teen, and youth programming opportunities.

Other opportunities include adding splash pads in other park locations throughout the Town. Splash pads have a low operational cost and provide a great neighborhood free activity.

Increase Programs in Wellness/Fitness, Cultural and Special Needs

Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources should expand programs in wellness/fitness, cultural, and special needs programs such as pickleball, arts, dance, exercise, etc.

As the Town of Wake Forest updates, improves, or repurposes existing parks, it should take into consideration the demand for wellness/fitness, cultural, special needs programs, and access to water such as kayaking, canoeing, and standup paddle boarding programming opportunities.

Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources should consider adding loop walks, mileage markers, and fitness course equipment to existing park locations across the community to increase the activity on trails.

Increase the Number of Special Events and Festivals

The opening of the Wake Forest Renaissance Centre and distribution and variety of existing parks and facilities provides many opportunities to host special events and festivals throughout the community. In addition, strategic use of special events, festivals, and programming may help increase use of some spaces, and therefore, help to promote activities in some lesser used parks.

Maintain and Improve Existing Facilities

There was an overwhelming public response to make sure that Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources maintains and improves existing facilities. Many of these needs may be addressed within the existing system by upgrading facilities, retrofitting less used assets, and by establishing or strengthening partnerships. Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources should continue the development of system wide self-evaluation to identify low scoring assets and amenities and implement a strategy for repair, repurpose, or replacement (see *Staff Resource Document* for examples of current issues).

Level of Service Improvements

Areas of the Town that either fall below the minimum standard threshold or provide no service at all, called *low-service areas* and *no-service areas*, often provide opportunities for improvement. This might involve fixing up a tired picnic shelter or updating playground structures or safety surfacing. Such efforts to improve level of service are more attainable than alternatives that require land acquisition and large-scale capital investment. Several such opportunities exist to improve walkable level of service in Wake Forest.

Low-Score Components

Maintaining and improving existing facilities was ranked highest in public input with regard to goals for the next 5 to 10 years. Developing a method or process for continued assessment of existing facilities is key to monitoring existing resources. The assessment process used for this plan involves scoring of all included assets. This scoring takes into account condition and functionality. Those components with low-scores may be addressed one by one and will serve to improve level of service. The easiest and most obvious way to raise level of service is to improve *low-score components* – those that were scored down because they do not meet expectations. This entails repair, refurbishment, or replacement of existing components at a site that are in need of some attention.

A step-by-step process for scoring and strategies to address low-score components may be found in *Appendix D*.

Low-Score Modifiers

In scoring inventory locations, additional consideration was also given to basic site amenities, called *modifiers*. These are things that support users during their visit such as design and ambience, drinking fountains, seating, BBQ grills, security lighting, bike racks, restrooms, shade, access, and parking among others. These help inform overall GRASP® scoring. Modifiers that do not meet expectations are scored down. Modifiers at a site that are in need of some attention such as repair, refurbishment, or replacement.

Booster Components

Another way to enhance existing assets is through the addition of **booster components** intended to “boost” the level of service at specific existing park sites or recreation facilities through the addition of new components. These are most effective in low-service areas in which park sites already exist that have space for additional components. Based on the isolation analysis that displayed needed areas based on population, several such locations exist.

High Demand Components

The statistically-valid survey asked respondents to rank facilities by importance based on those they felt the Town needed to add or improve. These **high demand components** should be considered in any efforts to add new components to the Wake Forest recreation system.

The highest priority for added, expanded, or improved outdoor activities listed by survey respondents are:

1. Completing the Greenways
2. Trails and Connectivity
3. Water Access (River and Lake)
4. Family, Senior, and Teen Programming
5. Large Special Events

Expand Trails and Connectivity

Paved and unpaved trails were indicated as one of the most important types of facilities or amenities. Completion of the Greenways Trail is one of the keys to fulfilling this public need.

Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources needs to follow the Greenways Master Plan that includes a recreational trails component with Complete Streets features for further development of the trail system in Wake Forest.

The Greenways

Recreational connectivity in most American cities usually starts with trails. A **trail** may be defined as any off-street or on-street connection dedicated to pedestrian or bicycle users. **Recreational trails**, as distinguished from transportation trails, typically pass through park lands or natural areas and can be soft or hard surface. Recreational trails are the only elements of an alternative transit network that traditionally fall to Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources professionals. They are intended mostly for leisure and enjoyment of resources. **Transportation trails**, the sidewalks or paved trails found in street right-of-ways in most municipalities, are intended more for utility in getting from one place to another. Yet these two types of town infrastructure must work together to create a well-connected community. The resulting **trail system** includes all trails that serve pedestrian and bicycle users in a community for purposes of both recreation and transportation.

As a trail system matures, the need emerges to address barriers such as roadways, rivers, and railroad crossings that separate distinct trail networks in order to create a truly connected trail system. A **trail network** is a part of a trail system within which major barrier crossings have been addressed and all trails are connected. Trail networks within a trail system are typically separated from each other by such barriers or by missing trail connections. Crosswalks, pedestrian underpasses, and bridges can be used to help users navigate barriers. New trails may be added to merge trail networks and improve overall connectivity. Most cities have several trail networks that connect users to common destinations such as schools, shops, restaurants, and civic and religious institutions in addition to Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources facilities. The more integrated these networks, the more connected a town.

Building a trail system involves many considerations beyond the control of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources managers. Vacant lands, utility easements, street right-of-ways, and existing social trails may be worth investigating for trail feasibility and to determine how trail development in these areas might impact overall connectivity. However, other departments and agencies will need to be consulted and partnered to address issues such as land acquisition, street crossings, and utility maintenance. To complicate matters, the distinction between a recreational trail and a transportation trail can be hazy. Further, on-street connections via usable, comfortable bicycle lanes and routes are also critical to establishing good recreational connectivity. Though these connections can be invaluable to a town's infrastructure, as they supplement a trail system, they introduce another set of stakeholders and complications. The types of collaboration necessary to build a trail system are not without their challenges, yet can yield lasting partnerships that benefit the community. The sooner the discussion is started, the better.

Potential partners can include school districts, public works departments, county offices, state entities, federal agencies, and/or private land owners among others. It is important to convince stakeholders that their cooperation is critical to the public good. It can be helpful to remind them of the economic boost that often results from investment in recreational infrastructure like a trail system. Of course, not all players stand to gain from trail development. It is essential that land managers and planners be aware of all possible implications inherent in their efforts.

Wake Forest has potential for an outstanding trail system. Here are a few general strategies to use in planning efforts as this system is established:

- Work with a variety of departments, offices, and agencies to obtain assistance and access in creating trail links.
- Look for ways to relieve cost burdens for property maintenance presently borne by other utilities by adapting these properties to create recreation opportunities.
- Create connections that blend recreation opportunities with restaurants and retail opportunities for greater economic impact.
- Create connections that allow safe, comfortable routes between homes, schools, and civic and religious institutions for user convenience.
- Look at existing utility areas such as power line easements, drainages, and detention ponds for options to improve connectivity.
- Use wide, under-utilized, or non-used street corridors for best pedestrian and bike routes within developed parts of the Town.

Connecting People to Trails

As the Wake Forest Greenways system continues to develop, additional resources will be desirable to support users. It may be worthwhile to consider signage and wayfinding strategies, trailheads and access points, public trail maps, and smart phone applications as strategies to connect people to trails and affect a positive user experience.

Signage and Wayfinding

Signage and wayfinding strategies should be employed to enhance the Wake Forest trail system by promoting ease of use and improved access to recreational resources. An important aspect of effective signage and wayfinding markers is branding. An easily identifiable hierarchy of signage for different types of users assists residents and visitors as they navigate between recreation destinations. Further, a strong brand can imply investment and commitment to alternative transit and which can positively impact town identity and open up economic opportunities.

Trailheads & Access Points

It is also important to provide users access to trails. There are two ways to approach this. First, formal trailheads may be developed to include parking, bike racks, signage, restrooms, drinking water, a trail map, and other amenities. A trailhead is most appropriate to provide access to trails that serve a higher volume of users at destinations reached by automobile. The second approach involves simply providing a trail access point, usually without the extensive amenities found at a trailhead. Trail access points such as this are more appropriate in residential or commercial areas where users are more likely to walk or ride a bicycle to reach the trail.

Map & App Resources

By making trail maps available users may enjoy Wake Forest trails with greater confidence and with a better understanding of distances, access points, amenities, and the system as a whole. Even with a developing trail system, such a trail map can provide valuable information to users. For example, the Town of Wake Forest created a bike map (see the following graphic) for the community, which includes various trail types to include bike paths and bike routes. In addition to showing streets with bicycle paths and safe on-street bike routes, the Wake Forest map also includes information about trail ownership, which is helpful, as it displays some trails within easements or even on private land with use agreements. As the trail system evolves, this map should be updated to produce newer versions for distribution to users. The Town of Wake Forest provides a trail and bicycle map to users with a host of information about trails, bike paths, and bike routes.

Another way to provide a trail map to users is through web based smart phone technologies. Maps made available on this type of platform are more dynamic for users, always on hand, and can be easily updated. Upfront investment needed for this type of resource may be cost prohibitive at the present time. However, it is likely that as technologies advance, these costs will become more manageable in the future. It may be worth considering development of web based maps in long term planning decisions.

Ensure ADA Accessibility at All Facilities

ADA Transition Plan and Compliance

According to the ADA.gov website, *“Access to civic life by people with disabilities is a fundamental goal of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). To ensure that this goal is met, Title II of the ADA requires State and local governments to make their programs and services accessible to persons with disabilities... One important way to ensure that Title II's requirements are being met in cities of all sizes is through self-evaluation, which is required by the ADA regulations. Self-evaluation enables local governments to pinpoint the facilities, programs, and services that must be modified or relocated to ensure that local governments are complying with the ADA.”*

Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources needs to develop an ADA Transition Plan which is also required to implement needed changes identified during the self-evaluation process. Ongoing self-evaluation and development of a comprehensive transition plan must be a high priority of the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Department.

Improve Restroom Availability and Maintenance

Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources should continue to monitor restroom use and vandalism while assessing the need for additional restrooms. The maintenance standards should be elevated where needed to ensure the cleanliness of the restrooms and to keep them vandal free. The restrooms could be open for longer hours to improve customer satisfaction.

C. Summary Action Plan, Cost Estimates and Prioritization

The following Goals, Objectives, and Action Items for recommendations are drawn from the public input, inventory, level of service analysis, findings feedback, and all information gathered during the master planning process with a primary focus on maintaining, sustaining, and improving Town of Wake Forest parks, open space, and trails. All cost estimates are in 2015 figures.

Timeframe to complete is designated as Short-term (up to 3 years), Mid-term (3-6 years), Long-term (7-10 years)

Goal 1: Improve Organizational Credibility and Operational Efficiencies

Objective 1.1: <i>Enhance and improve internal and external communication of activities and services</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
1.1.a Make use of the Town’s Marketing Plan to improve awareness.	\$0	Staff Time	Short-Term
1.1.b Partner with the Communications Department and the Public Information Office to make the best use of the Town’s website and social media outlets.	\$0	Staff, Partners	Short-Term
1.1.c Adopt open lines of communications and meetings with partners and potential partners.	\$0	Staff Time	Short-Term
Objective 1.2: <i>Create new staffing assignments and/or hire new employees for added responsibilities</i>			
1.2.a Add staff to the Maintenance Division to meet current and anticipated future demands.	\$0	TBD	Short to Mid-Term
1.2.b Add staff for facility operations to meet demand for extended hours of operations for facilities.	\$0	TBD	Short-Term
1.2.c Ensure that staffing resource levels can maintain existing and new facilities at or above acceptable standards as master plan is implemented.	\$0	TBD	Short to Long- Term
1.2.d Add staff to the Urban Forestry Division to meet anticipated future demands with development and expansion of the parks and greenways system.	\$0	TBD	Short to Mid-Term

Goal 2: Improve Financial Situations

Objective 2.1: <i>Implement equitable user fees</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
2.1.a Develop a standardized philosophy for pricing programs and services that reflects our community. An example developing a pricing philosophy is provided (Pyramid Pricing Methodology and Cost Recovery Policy, Appendix A).	\$40,000 – \$60,000	Staff time/consultant	Short-Term/Mid-Term
Objective 2.2: <i>Pursue grant opportunities</i>			
2.2.a Continue to research, submit, and track federal, regional, state, and local grants.	Matching Funds TBD	Staff Time	Short-Term
Objective 2.3: <i>Implement Parks, Recreation and Greenways Improvements from the 2014 Bond Referendum</i>			
2.3.a Develop a plan for the implementation of the Parks, Recreation, and Greenways Improvements from the 2014 Bond Referendum.	\$18,800,000	Staff Time	Mid-Term
Objective 2.4: <i>Consider Increase of Tax Increment Levels</i>			
2.4.a Campaign for community investment in long term Master Plan implementation.	\$0	\$0	Short-Term

Goal 3: Improve Programs and Service Delivery

Objective 3.1: <i>Increase programming for families, seniors, and teens</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
3.1.a Expand program opportunities for teens, families, and seniors in all locations.	\$0	TBD	Short-Term
Objective 3.2: <i>Increase programs in wellness/fitness, cultural, and special needs</i>			
3.2.a Expand wellness/fitness, cultural, and special needs programming opportunities.	\$0	TBD	Short to Mid-Term
3.2.b As new facilities are developed and constructed, include appropriate spaces for wellness/fitness, cultural, special needs, and aquatic opportunities.	TBD	TBD	Short to Mid-Term

Objective 3.3: <i>Increase number of special events and festivals</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
3.3.a Expand neighborhood and community special event and festival opportunities at a variety of locations community wide with an emphasis in the downtown area.	\$0	TBD	Short-Term
Objective 3.4: <i>Create greater awareness for and increase participation at the Renaissance Centre</i>			
3.4.a Create a 3-5 year Strategic Plan that focuses on creating awareness and increasing programming, and develop a marketing strategy.	\$0	TBD	Short-Term
Objective 3.5: <i>Create greater awareness for the Urban Forestry Division</i>			
3.5.a Develop a marketing strategy for the Urban Forestry Division that creates a greater awareness and public interest in the goals and outcomes of the division.	\$0	TBD	Short-Term
3.5.b Develop implementation strategies and educational opportunities for the Urban Forestry Management Plan.	\$0	TBD	Short-Term

Goal 4: Improve Facilities and Amenities

Objective 4.1: <i>Maintain and improve existing facilities</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
4.1.a Continue to implement maintenance strategies that maintain and make improvements to existing facilities.	TBD	TBD	Ongoing
4.1.b Develop a plan to address the recommendations from the inventory as they relate to individual park improvements.	TBD	TBD	Long-Term
Objective 4.2: <i>Expand trails & connectivity</i>			

4.2.a Complete Greenways System as identified in the 2014 Bond.	\$4,600,000	TBD	Mid-Term
4.2.b Explore the development of Trail Heads at entrance points to the Greenway.	332,827	TBD	Long-Term
Objective 4.3: <i>Provide new facilities to meet growing demand</i>			
4.3.a Explore the opportunity to design and construct a 65,000 square foot Recreation Center in the downtown area that includes a competitive pool, water features, gymnasiums, fitness/wellness space, indoor track and community space.	\$25,653,857	TBD	TBD
4.3.b Explore the opportunity to construct a dedicated Pickle Ball facility that could serve the region as a tournament and league play hub.	\$232,186	TBD	TBD

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Appendix A – Community Input Summary

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Appendix B – GRASP® Maps

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Appendix C – GRASP® Composite Values Method for Level of Service Analysis

A. GRASP® History and Methodology

GRASP® Glossary

Buffer: see catchment area

Catchment area: a circular map overlay that radiates outward in all directions from an asset and represents a reasonable travel distance from the edge of the circle to the asset. Used to indicate access to an asset in a level of service assessment

Component: an amenity such as a playground, picnic shelter, basketball court, or athletic field that allows people to exercise, socialize, and maintain a healthy physical, mental, and social wellbeing

Isolation analysis: an examination on a map of places within a study area that meet specific criteria, often included as part of a level of service assessment

Geo-Referenced Amenities Standards Process® (GRASP®): a proprietary composite-values methodology that takes quality and functionality of assets and amenities into account in a level of service assessment

Level of service (LOS): the extent to which a recreation system provides a community access to recreational assets and amenities

Low-score component: a component given a GRASP® score of “1” or “0” as it fails to meet expectations

Low-service area: an area of a town that has some GRASP® level of service but falls below the minimum standard threshold for overall level of service

Modifier: a basic site amenity that supports users during a visit to a park or recreation site, to include elements such as restrooms, shade, parking, drinking fountains, seating, BBQ grills, security lighting, and bicycle racks among others

No-service area: an area of a town with no GRASP® level of service

Perspective: a map or data quantification, such as a table or chart, produced using the GRASP® methodology that helps illustrate how well a community is served by a given set of recreational assets

Radius: see catchment area

Recreational connectivity: the extent to which community recreational resources are transitionally linked to allow for easy and enjoyable travel between them

Recreational trail: a soft or hard surface trail intended mostly for leisure and enjoyment of resources. Typically passes through park lands or natural areas and usually falls to Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources professionals for planning and management.

Service area: all or part of a catchment area ascribed a particular GRASP® score that reflects level of service provided by a particular recreational asset, a set of assets, or an entire recreation system

Threshold: a minimum level of service standard typically determined based on community expectations

Trail: any off-street or on-street connection dedicated to pedestrian, bicycle, or other non-motorized users

Trail network: a part of a greater trail system within which major barrier crossings have been addressed and all trails are functionally connected by such things as crosswalks, pedestrian underpasses, and/or bridges. Typically separated from other trail networks by missing trail connections or by such barriers as roadways, rivers, or railroad tracks.

Trail system: all trails in a community that serve pedestrian, bicycle, and alternative transportation users for purposes of both recreation and transportation

Transportation trail: a hard surface trail, such as a town sidewalk, intended mostly for utility in traveling from one place to another in a community or region. Typically runs outside of park lands and is managed by Public Works or other town utility department.

Composite-Values Level of Service Analysis Methodology

Analysis of the existing parks, open space, trails, and recreation systems are often conducted in order to try and determine how the systems are serving the public. A Level of Service (LOS) has been typically defined in Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources master plans as the capatown of the various components and facilities that make up the system to meet the needs of the public. This is often expressed in terms of the size or quantity of a given facility per unit of population.

Brief History of Level of Service Analysis

In order to help standardize Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources planning, universities, agencies and Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources professionals have long been looking for ways to benchmark and provide “national standards” for how much acreage, how many ball fields, pools, playgrounds, etc., a community *should* have. In 1906 the fledgling “Playground Association of America” called for playground space equal to 30 square feet per child. In the 1970s and early 1980s, the first detailed published works on these topics began emerging (Gold, 1973, Lancaster, 1983). In time “rule of thumb” ratios emerged with 10 acres of parklands per thousand population becoming the most widely accepted norm. Other normative guides also have been cited as “traditional standards,” but have been less widely accepted. In 1983, Roger Lancaster compiled a book called Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines that was published by the National Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Association (NRPA). In this publication, Mr. Lancaster centered on a recommendation “that a park system, at minimum, be composed of a core system of parklands, with a total of 6.25 to 10.5 acres of developed open space per 1,000 population (Lancaster, 1983, p. 56). The guidelines went further to make recommendations regarding an appropriate mix of park types, sizes, service areas, and acreages, and standards regarding the number of available recreational facilities per thousand population. While the book was published by NRPA and the table of standards became widely known as “the NRPA standards,” these standards were never formally adopted for use by NRPA.

Since that time, various publications have updated and expanded upon possible “standards,” several of which have been published by NRPA. Many of these publications did benchmarking and other normative research to try and determine what an “average LOS” should be. It is important to note that NRPA and the prestigious American Academy for Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Administration, as organizations, have focused in recent years on accreditation standards for agencies, which are less directed towards outputs, outcomes, and performance, and more on planning, organizational structure, and management processes. In essence, the popularly referred to “NRPA standards” for LOS, as such, do not exist. The following table gives some of the more commonly used capatown “standards” today.

Commonly Referenced LOS Capatown “Standards”

Activity/ Facility	Recommended Space Requirements	Service Radius and Location Notes	Number of Units per Population
Baseball Official	3.0 to 3.85 acre minimum	¼ to ½ mile Unlighted part of neighborhood complex; lighted fields part of community complex	1 per 5,000; lighted 1 per 30,000
Little League	1.2 acre minimum		
Basketball Youth	2,400 – 3,036 vs.	¼ to ½ mile Usually in school, recreation center or church facility; safe walking or bike access; outdoor courts in neighborhood and community parks, plus active recreation areas in other park settings	1 per 5,000
High school	5,040 – 7,280 s.f.		
Football	Minimum 1.5 acres	15 – 30 minute travel time Usually part of sports complex in community park or adjacent to school	1 per 20,000
Soccer	1.7 to 2.1 acres	1 to 2 miles Youth soccer on smaller fields adjacent to larger soccer fields or neighborhood parks	1 per 10,000
Softball	1.5 to 2.0 acres	¼ to ½ mile May also be used for youth baseball	1 per 5,000 (if also used for youth baseball)
Swimming Pools	Varies on size of pool & amenities; usually ½ to 2-acre site	15 – 30 minutes travel time Pools for general community use should be planned for teaching, competitive & recreational purposes with enough depth (3.4m) to accommodate 1m to 3m diving boards; located in community park or school site	1 per 20,000 (pools should accommodate 3% to 5% of total population at a time)
Tennis	Minimum of 7,200 s.f. single court area (2 acres per complex	¼ to ½ mile Best in groups of 2 to 4 courts; located in neighborhood community park or near school site	1 court per 2,000
Volleyball	Minimum 4,000 s.f.	½ to 1 mile Usually in school, recreation center or church facility; safe walking or bike access; outdoor courts in neighborhood and community parks, plus active recreation areas in other park settings	1 court per 5,000
Total land Acreage		Various types of parks - mini, neighborhood, community, regional, conservation, etc.	10 acres per 1,000

Sources:

- David N. Ammons, *Municipal Benchmarks - Assessing Local Performance and Establishing Community Standards*, 2nd Ed., 2002
- Roger A. Lancaster (Ed.), *Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines* (Alexandria, VA: National Recreation and Park Association, 1983), pp. 56-57.
- James D. Mertes and James R. Hall, *Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenways Guidelines*, (Alexandria, VA: National Recreation and Park Association, 1996), pp. 94-103.

In conducting planning work, it is key to realize that the above standards can be valuable when referenced as “norms” for capatown, but not necessarily as the target standards for which a community should strive. Each community is different and there are many varying factors which are not addressed by the standards above. For example:

- Does “developed acreage” include golf courses”? What about indoor and passive facilities?
- What are the standards for skate parks? Ice Arenas? Public Art? Etc.?
- What if it’s an urban land-locked community? What if it’s a small town surrounded by open Federal lands?
- What about quality and condition? What if there’s a bunch of ball fields, but they haven’t been maintained in the last ten years?
- And many other questions....

GRASP® (Geo-Referenced Amenities Standards Program)

In order to address these and other relevant questions, a new methodology for determining Level of Service was developed. It is called a **composite-values methodology** and has been applied in communities across the nation in recent years to provide a better way of measuring and portraying the service provided by Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources systems. Primary research and development on this methodology was funded jointly by GreenPlay, LLC, a management consulting firm for parks, open space and related agencies, Design Concepts, a landscape architecture and planning firm, and Geowest, a spatial information management firm. The trademarked name for the composite-values methodology process that these three firms use is called **GRASP® (Geo-Referenced Amenities Standards Program)**. For this methodology, **capatown** what is this???? is only part of the LOS equation. Other factors are brought into consideration, including *quality, condition, location, comfort, convenience, and ambience*.

To do this, parks, trails, recreation, and open space are looked at as part of an overall infrastructure for a community made up of various components, such as playgrounds, multi-purpose fields, passive areas, etc. The ways in which the characteristics listed above affect the amount of service provided by the components of the system are explained in the following text.

Quality – The service provided by anything, whether it is a playground, soccer field, or swimming pool is determined in part by its quality. A playground with a variety of features, such as climbers, slides, and swings provides a higher degree of service than one with nothing but an old teeter-totter and some “monkey-bars.”

Condition – The condition of a component within the park system also affects the amount of service it provides. A playground in disrepair with unsafe equipment does not offer the same service as one in good condition. Similarly, a soccer field with a smooth surface of well-maintained grass certainly offers a higher degree of service than one that is full of weeds, ruts, and other hazards.

Location – To be served by something, you need to be able to get to it. The typical park playground is of more service to people who live within easy reach of it than it is to someone living all the way across town. Therefore, service is dependent upon proximity and access.

Comfort – The service provided by a component, such as a playground, is increased by having amenities such as shade, seating, and a restroom nearby. Comfort enhances the experience of using a component.

Convenience – Convenience encourages people to use a component, which increased the amount of service that it offers. Easy access and the availability of trash receptacles, bike rack, or nearby parking are examples of conveniences that enhance the service provided by a component.

Ambience – Simple observation will prove that people are drawn to places that “feel” good. This includes a sense of safety and security, as well as pleasant surroundings, attractive views, and a sense of place. A well-designed park is preferable to poorly-designed one, and this enhances the degree of service provided by the components within it.

In this methodology, the geographic location of the component is also recorded. Capatown is still part of the LOS analysis (described below) and the quantity of each component is recorded as well.

The methodology uses comfort, convenience, and ambience as characteristics that are part of the context and setting of a component. They are not characteristics of the component itself, but when they exist in proximity to a component they enhance the value of the component.

By combining and analyzing the composite values of each component, it is possible to measure the service provided by a Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources system from a variety of perspectives and for any given location. Typically this begins with a decision on “**relevant components**” for the analysis, collection of an accurate inventory of those components, analysis and then the results are presented in a series of maps and tables that make up the **GRASP**[®] analysis of the study area.

Making Justifiable Decisions

All of the data generated from the GRASP[®] evaluation is compiled into an electronic database that is then available and owned by the agency for use in a variety of ways. The database can help keep track of facilities and programs, and can be used to schedule services, maintenance, and the replacement of components. In addition to determining LOS, it can be used to project long-term capital and life-cycle costing needs. All portions of the information are in standard available software and can be produced in a variety of ways for future planning or sharing with the public.

It is important to note that the GRASP[®] methodology provides not only accurate LOS and facility inventory information, but also works with and integrates with other tools to help agencies make decisions. It is relatively easy to maintain, updatable, and creates easily understood graphic depictions of issues. Combined with a needs assessment, public and staff involvement, program and financial assessment, GRASP[®] allows an agency to defensibly make recommendations on priorities for ongoing resource allocations along with capital and operational funding.

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Appendix D – Asset Scoring for the Town of Wake Forest

Inventory asset locations for the Town of Wake Forest GRASP® Level of Service analysis may be organized into the following categories:

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Appendix E – LOS Inventory Tables

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Appendix F – Sample Sponsorship Policy

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Appendix G – Sample Partnership Policy

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Appendix H – Pyramid Methodology

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