



H PARKS & GREENSPACE

HENDERSONVILLE
PARKS MASTER PLAN UPDATE



LETTER FROM THE MAYOR

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CITY OF HENDERSONVILLE
The City of Four Seasons



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Dear Hendersonville Community,

It is with great enthusiasm that I present the 2024 Hendersonville Parks and Greenspace Master Plan.

This plan reaffirms our commitment to enhancing and sustaining our parks and greenspaces as our city continues to grow. Through this process, it has become clear that investing in our parks is essential to meeting the diverse needs and aspirations of our community.

I am grateful to everyone who contributed to the creation of this plan. In particular, I am deeply appreciative of the community members who generously shared their stories, ideas, and needs during the community input process. We would also like to thank our Parks and Greenspace Master Plan Advisory Committee members for their time and input into the plan.

This plan offers both a practical roadmap and inspiring vision for the future. While it charts the course for the 20 years and beyond, it also includes actionable short-term priorities that the City can begin addressing immediately, all while keeping the bigger vision in focus. This plan envisions a park and greenspace system that connects people to nature, their neighborhoods, and each other—featuring accessible, high-quality parks, sustainable practices, preserved natural spaces, and vibrant destinations that reflect Hendersonville’s unique character and community spirit.

We recognize the challenges posed by current funding constraints, which limit our ability to act swiftly on all aspects of the plan. However, this plan captures a critical opportunity to define our community’s needs and establish a framework to gather the tools, supporters and resources to make this vision a reality.

The 2024 Hendersonville Parks and Greenspace Master Plan is more than a guide—it is a call to action. Together, we can create parks and greenspaces that reflect the vibrancy of Hendersonville and ensure these cherished spaces remain enjoyable for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Barbara Volk, Mayor
City of Hendersonville

Jeff Miller, Former City Council Member
& Chairman of the Parks and Greenspace
Master Plan Advisory Committee

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In addition to the leaders and project team members below, the City of Hendersonville extends sincere thanks to all the community members that made this possible. Whether you attended a meeting or completed a survey, your effort was greatly appreciated!

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



ABOUT THE PLAN

Hendersonville, located at the southern edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains on Cherokee Indigenous land, is a growing community in a region filled with attractions. People are drawn to the area for its beautiful scenery, natural resources, rich history, and the vibrant cultural arts scene in Downtown Hendersonville and surrounding communities.

While it boasts a beautiful and charming setting, Hendersonville’s current system of public parks falls short of delivering enough greenspace that accommodates the needs and desires of a growing population. The City has lacked adequate funding and a strategic, community-driven vision to guide park and greenspace investments to keep pace.

With momentum from recent investment in parks and regional greenway projects, now exists an opportunity to think both pragmatically and with vision to chart a path towards a great public park system that equitably delivers the benefits of the outdoors to all of Hendersonville’s community.

This plan has an ambitious vision for the future parks and greenspace system of Hendersonville. It seeks to build on and complete visions for existing parks; fix and maintain the existing facilities in need of repair or reinvestment, improve access to high-quality parks, and lay the foundation for a park and greenspace system that continues to serve Hendersonville for generations.

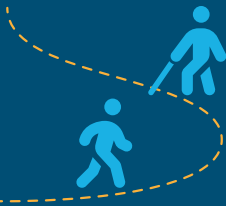
Five guiding principles - **access, inclusivity, nature, place, and quality** - serve as the backbone of this plan. To ensure the legacy of Hendersonville’s parks continues for generations to come, an action plan has been developed for strategic direction to implement these five principles.

HOW TO USE THE PLAN

The Parks and Greenspace Master Plan will be used as a guide book to move Hendersonville’s parks and greenspace system into the future.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

ACCESS



Making sure our parks are welcoming and barrier-free for all Hendersonville residents.

INCLUSIVITY



Committing to fairness and the premise that everyone deserves access to a great public park.

NATURE



Protecting, preserving and enhancing our natural features and resources.

PLACE



Amplifying local character, community vibrancy, safety and sense of place.

QUALITY



Setting a citywide standard for the design, construction and maintenance of high-quality parks and greenways.

The plan has been created with public input and best practices to ensure that it reflects the community’s aspirations, concerns, and desires for the future of Hendersonville’s park system.

The resulting plan offers a framework of steps to take towards the vision including developing and strengthening partnerships, allocation of funding, and investment decisions. This is meant to be flexible to adapt to changing circumstances and will require significant additional implementation effort by community decision makers, leaders, and the public.

A COMMUNITY-DRIVEN VISION

The plan vision statement is intended to represent a community voice and express the desired outcome of this plan, putting aside short-term limitations of funding, operations, and competing public priorities. It asks: what kind of park and greenspace system does Hendersonville want for future generations? The vision statement reflects what the planning team heard and incorporates the ideas, concerns and messages from hundreds of comments from community members and collaborators throughout the planning process.

VISION STATEMENT:

Hendersonville will have a park and greenspace system we love—with high-quality neighborhood parks accessible to all; connectivity between parks, open space and where people live and work; leadership in sustainable practices and preservation of the natural environment; destination parks and placemaking that promote local character, community vibrancy, safety and sense of place.



Playground at Four Seasons Rotary Park - Hendersonville, NC

COMMUNITY INPUT SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

The Parks and Greenspace Plan was informed by public conversations about the role of parks and greenspace in Hendersonville, culminating in a community led, data-driven, and actionable vision for the City's parks and open spaces.

In total, this process yielded input from over 800 people in addition to the feedback incorporated from the concurrent planning effort to update the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Each recommendation and driving principle in the Parks and Greenspace Plan can be traced back to public feedback received through Advisory Committee meetings, public workshops, and online platforms.

LEARN MORE

- » More detailed engagement and survey results can be found within Chapter 3 and the Appendix.



WHAT WE HEARD

The following key takeaways were identified through community input and were essential in developing the plan's guiding principles, goals and strategies:

- » **Patton Park and Berkeley Mills Park are the most valued and visited** City parks.
- » **Lack of comfort, lack of information, and lack of pedestrian/cyclist access** were among the biggest barriers to visiting Hendersonville parks and greenways more often. Safety, condition and availability of desired amenities were close behind.
- » Many feel they **do not have sufficient neighborhood parks** with only 20 percent of respondents saying they have neighborhood parks that meet their needs.
- » **Natural features and scenic views are highly valued.** When asked which destinations they'd most like to access by greenways, nature/scenic views, natural water features and regional trail connectivity were among the top responses.
- » The most important amenities to households included **paved and unpaved walking and biking trails, restrooms, dog parks and canoeing/kayaking.**
- » Many would like to see **shade improvements** in parks to improve comfort.
- » Many would like to see a **high-quality and connected system of greenways** (paved trails) realized.

SURVEY KEY FINDINGS

75%

Of respondents would like to prioritize parks that protect environmental health and natural resources.

65%

Of respondents would like to prioritize neighborhood parks that meet the daily and year-round needs of nearby residents.

60%

Would like to prioritize a high-quality and connected system of greenways.

50%

Would like to prioritize park-based activities and programs; sports and recreation opportunities; and destination parks that promote economic development.

76%

Of respondents feel that it is important for the City of Hendersonville to provide high-quality parks.

FUTURE PARKS SYSTEM PLAN

The overall vision plan for the park system seeks to capture projects over the long term serving as a living framework that can adapt to meet evolving community needs.

A plan of this scale will fix, build, connect and preserve our public spaces in the short, medium and long term.

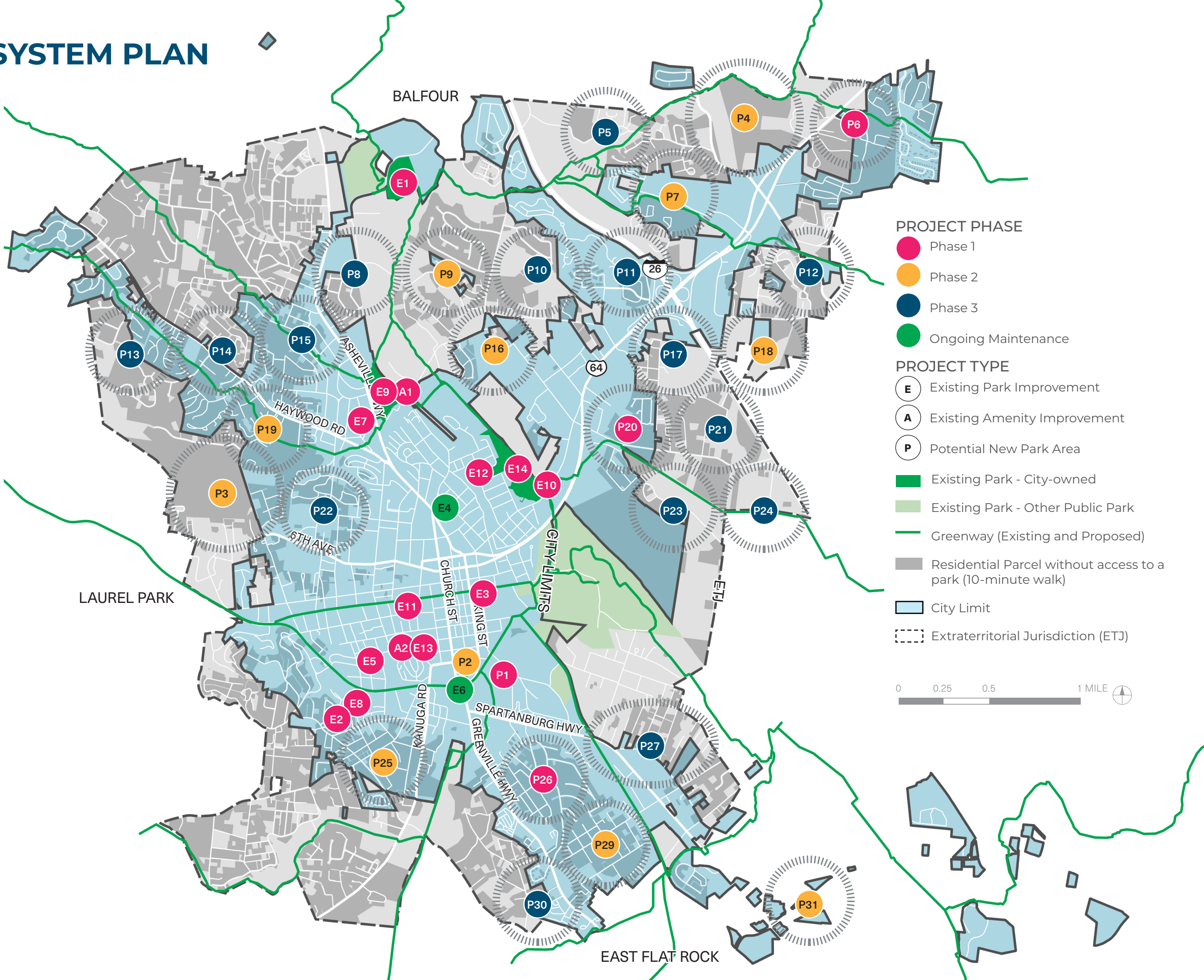
This plan envisions the following investments over the next 20 plus years:

- 1. **Improving 12 existing parks and greenspaces.** Fixing and investing in what we have is our first priority.
- 2. **Developing new parks in priority areas** to reach level of service standards and increase access to parks throughout the City.
- 3. Building and connecting through the implementation of **10 plus miles of new greenways.**

These improvements are informed by the plan principles expanded on in Chapters 4-9.

LEARN MORE

- » Chapter 9 dives into greater detail on the phasing for these projects.
- » Greenways depicted on this map include those existing, planned and proposed as recommended in the Greenway Plan found within the Appendices.



CONCEPT PLANS OVERVIEW

Several parks were conceptually redesigned as part of the Plan update as directed by the City of Hendersonville Public Works department. Initial site improvement concepts provide guidance for applying findings from this plan, however, site visioning processes with the community and detailed site designs are needed to further refine expectations for changes. These concepts are further illustrated in Chapter 10 including a summary of existing features, recommended site improvements and character imagery.

CONCEPTUAL PARK PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

Patton Park the is the second largest city park with the most features. The park’s keystone is Patton Pool, the most visited park feature in the city. It offers something for everyone from a playground to walking trails and sport courts. It also features the only public skate park in Hendersonville and Henderson County. The current conditions reveal a need for improvements to wayfinding signage, and the pool and basketball court facilities are in need of renovation to keep up to code and meet community expectations.

Dedicated pickleball courts are in the process of being built, helping to fulfill Hendersonville’s level of service goals. There are also plans to convert the underutilized baseball diamond into a dog park.

This park concept includes the plans already in motion and helps the city explore ways to improve circulation as well as address flooding with a restored stream to expand floodplain capacity. The concept also makes recommendations to update the playground for all ages and abilities as funding becomes available.

Toms Park features the Whitmire Activity Center and 14 shuffleboard courts. The east side of the park is separated by Wash Creek connected by a pedestrian bridge. Several improvements are needed to renovate the building including repainting, replacing windows, ceiling, and flooring and updating the HVAC system. Renovations present an opportunity to consider updates needed to accommodate more community interests and activities. Integrating social “backyard” lawn games such an area for bocce ball, horseshoe, and corn hole can encourage community members of all ages to come together to play, socialize and participate in physical activity.

This park concept also recommends stream restoration and stabilization, creating a walking loop with seating and fitness equipment. Signage and wayfinding improvements are needed throughout.

Rosa Edwards Park is currently an open space without any amenities near the public library. The City is committed to providing a multipurpose field for small pickup games in the short term, however additional ideas could be explored through further engagement and funding discussions. Some ideas from the community input process include a community garden, shaded picnic and gathering area, dog park, pavilion and playground for library events, and basketball court.

William H. King Memorial Park features a baseball diamond, walking loop, and connection to the Oklawaha Greenway. The site is constrained by floodplain and wetlands, limiting the potential for some new amenities. Opportunity exists to expand nature trails with interpretive elements, celebrate greenway connectivity by formalizing trailheads with wayfinding, bike tuning stations and racks, and improving pedestrian access to the site and to neighboring Sullivan Park and Pet’s Own Place dog park. These three parks should be planned in tandem and thought of as one large campus with distinct experiences.

Sullivan Park, neighborhood park adjacent to William H. King Memorial Park, is in need of improvements to site lighting and safety. The park concept recommends improvements to the pedestrian crossing connecting to the community garden. As funding becomes available, the playground area should be reimaged and upgraded to serve all ages and abilities. The concrete pad is in need of resurfacing and has potential to serve as a vibrant multi-purpose court games area.

Four Seasons Rotary Park is a small neighborhood pocket park with a pavilion with picnic tables, playground and walking loop. Improvement recommendations include signage and presence at the street entrance, and future improvements to the playground. Wash Creek is in need of restoration, including the removal of invasive species and the introduction of native plants. The existing deck location and design should be reconsidered as part of the restoration with interpretive signage incorporated.

Berkeley Mills Park serves as the trailhead to the Oklawaha Greenway with parking and a drop off loop. A disc golf course is currently under construction and is expected to be completed Fall 2024. The Clear Creek Greenway is planned to connect from the parking lot around the north end of the site and to the east. The concept plan suggests installing bike racks and bike tuning stations and formalizing greenway access points to celebrate the site as a trailhead.

LEARN MORE

» The full list of conceptual plans are further illustrated in Chapter 10.

1

PLANNING CONTEXT



BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

WHY THIS PLAN IS NEEDED

Hendersonville's park and greenspace system has been historically underfunded without dedicated resources and staff allocated to implement and plan parks, open space, and greenways for a growing population. The City is at a critical crossroads with a unique opportunity to utilize and expand the existing open space system to provide outdoor experiences to all residents of Hendersonville, while preserving its high-quality landscape and celebrating the authentic community character that makes Hendersonville so special. With the recent success and existing plans for implementing new greenways and trails, this plan also considers what opportunities exist to expand the greenway system and coordinate future regional trail connections.

This document is inspired by Hendersonville's past but is rooted in the city's current conditions and anticipated trajectory. It establishes an achievable vision for the future of the park, greenspace and greenway system and an actionable road map for implementing that vision over time.

Hendersonville is home to 14 city-owned parks and greenspaces; however, many are not recognized as meeting the criteria of a quality neighborhood park, lacking the adequate acreage and amenities that the community desires. The current system is utilized by residents of the city and surrounding communities, though many seek their parks and recreation needs through neighboring municipalities and jurisdictions, such as those offered by Henderson County. Some neighborhoods are better served than others, and nature and recreation experiences could be better integrated into all neighborhoods as well as in the downtown core. The Parks and Greenspace Master Plan is an opportunity to bring Hendersonville's park system into the present day and ensure a high-quality of life for generations.

The plan has five guiding principles that are informed by community needs and priorities and by best practices among Hendersonville's peer cities: **access, inclusivity, nature, place, and quality**. These principles drove the planning process, informed our public conversations, and provided the organizational framework for this document and recommendations.

CONNECTION TO OTHER PLANS

The successful implementation of the Parks and Greenspace Master Plan is contingent upon its synergy with other planning efforts across the City of Hendersonville. The Plan considered relevant planning efforts, reviewing past and recent planning documents to identify areas of collaboration and existing recommendations that have a direct or indirect impact on Hendersonville's park and greenspace system.

Relevant planning efforts reviewed include but are not limited to: The Gen H Comprehensive Plan (2024), Sustainability Strategic Plan (2024), Walk Hendo Pedestrian Plan (2023), Tree Canopy Cover Assessment (2023), Henderson County Greenway Master Plan (2019), Hendersonville Bicycle Plan (2018), and Ecusta Rail Trail Planning Study and Economic Impact Analysis (2012), Above the Mud Greenway Feasibility Study (2024).

This planning effort timeline was concurrent with the citywide comprehensive planning effort presenting an opportunity to ensure a coordinated approach to parks and open space as the City makes decisions on how to manage growth.

GOVERNANCE

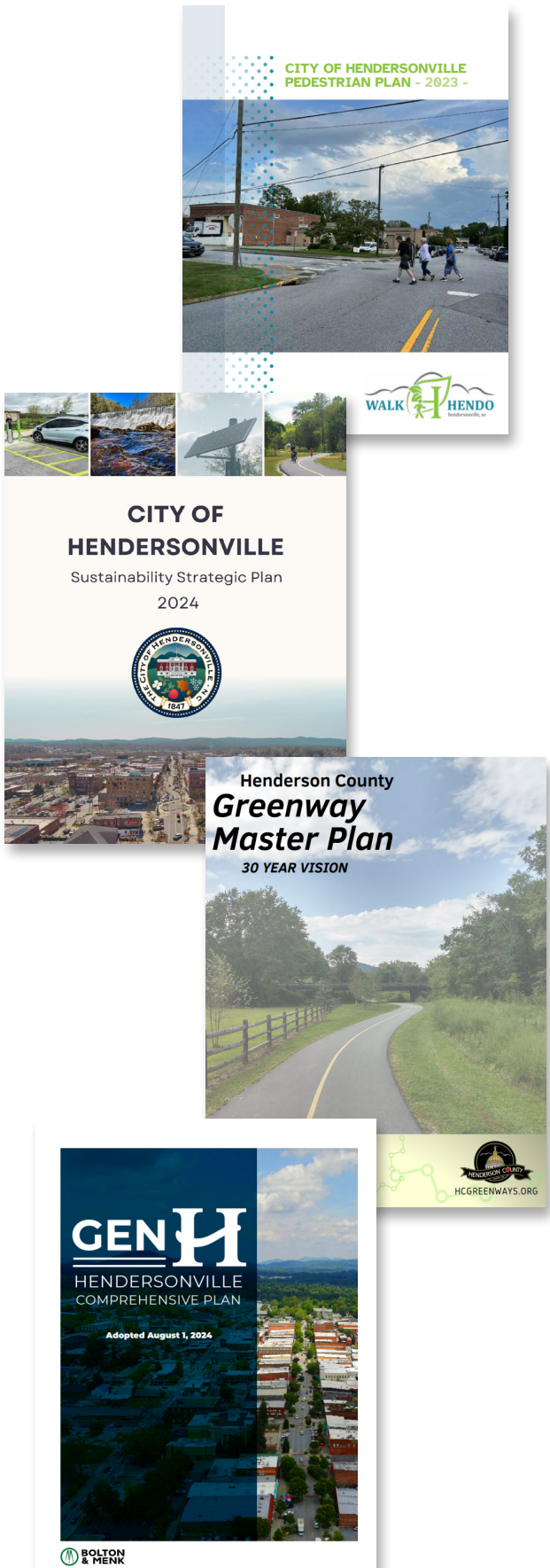
The City of Hendersonville Public Works Department develops, operates and maintains parks and greenspaces among all other public spaces and buildings.

The Public Works Department is supported by 70 staff members. Although crews handle grounds and building maintenance, there is currently no staff dedicated exclusively to parks, nor are there any funds specifically allocated for park expansion. The department is primarily funded through the General Fund and the Stormwater Enterprise Fund.

The Parks and Greenspace Master Plan Advisory Committee was formed to advise and make recommendations throughout the process of this plan development.



Patton Park, Hendersonville, NC



POPULATION TRENDS

The following is a summary of Hendersonville’s demographics. Both current conditions and future projections must be considered in this Plan as they allow the team to identify key changes that have the potential to impact the delivery of city parks and greenspaces for years to come.

As Hendersonville grows in the future and becomes more diverse, the city must ensure that all demographic groups, regardless of age, race, income, or background, have fair access to parks, greenspaces and recreation. See Chapter 6 for more information on vulnerable population variables considered for priority investment zones.

POPULATION GROWTH

According to Hendersonville’s 2024 Comprehensive Plan, Hendersonville will see growth in the next 25 years. However, there are differing projections of population for the future. The North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management (NC OSMB) offers two population projections for Hendersonville. The lower estimate suggests the city’s population could grow by 4,264 people by 2045, assuming it maintains 13% of the county’s population. In contrast, the higher estimate projects a much larger increase of 32,546 people, assuming all of Henderson County’s future growth occurs within Hendersonville’s city limits. Actual growth will depend on various factors, including urban development, infrastructure capacity, and planning initiatives.

The increasing population can significantly impact parks and recreation by elevating demand for these community amenities. As the population grows, there is a greater need for accessible parks, recreational facilities, and green spaces to accommodate the expanding number of residents. This heightened demand can lead to increased pressure on existing parks and necessitate the development of new spaces to ensure equitable access and prevent overcrowding.

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

AGE

Hendersonville’s median age is 48.8 years old (ESRI, 2022). The largest portion of the population, equating to a third of all residents, is made up of residents who are 65+ (30%). The second largest group is made up of youth (ages 5-19) at 15%, followed by those aged 55-64 at 13%, ages 35-44 at 11%, and ages 25-34 at 11%.

With an older population comes the need for for accessible and age-friendly recreational spaces, such as walking paths, fitness centers with low-impact exercise options, and social gathering areas. Given that Hendersonville has a large portion of youth and seniors, parks and recreation should adapt universal design principles such as ramps for wheelchairs and strollers, accessible seating, and flexible use spaces to accommodate a range of interests.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

Hendersonville is predominantly white, with 74% of residents identifying as such (ESRI, 2022). Eight percent (8%) of residents identify as multi-racial/multi-ethnic, followed by six percent (6%) Black or African American, Asian/Other Pacific Islander (2%), and American Indian under 1%. Residents who identify as Other make up ten percent (10%) of the population.

Parks that reflect and cater to diverse cultural needs—such as incorporating multi-lingual signage, culturally relevant activities, and community gathering areas—can foster greater community connection and satisfaction. Hendersonville’s parks can better serve all backgrounds and contribute to a more equitable and cohesive society by acknowledging and addressing the diverse needs and preferences of various racial and ethnic groups.

INCOME

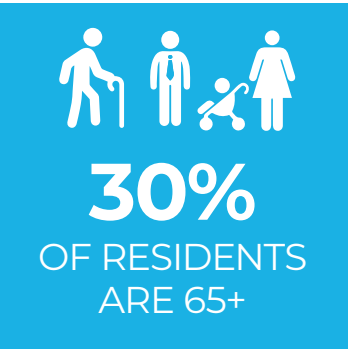
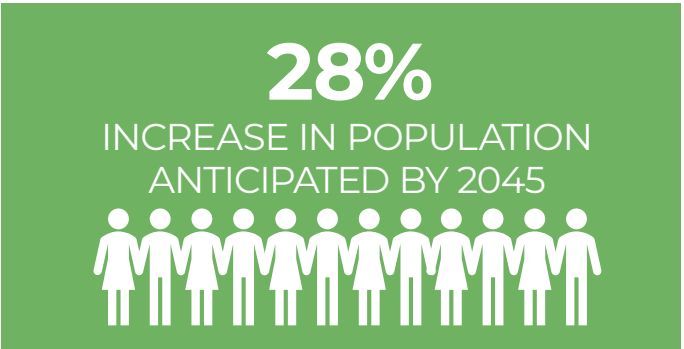
The median household income earnings in Hendersonville is \$51,454 (ESRI, 2022). However, the median disposable income for residents of Hendersonville is \$42,417 annually. This disposable household income plays a key factor in the ability of residents to engage in certain activities. Those with a higher disposable income can spend more on recreational activities such as private fitness classes and sports clubs. In turn, this may reduce their reliance on public parks and facilities. On the other hand, those with lower disposable income likely depend more heavily on publicly-provided parks and recreation, highlighting the need for well-maintained and affordable opportunities.

HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

HOUSING

Alongside the range of projected population from Hendersonville’s 2024 Comprehensive Plan, there are also ranges of projected housing units. On the low end of the NC OSMB projection, an increase of 4,264 people is anticipated to equate to an additional 2,232 housing units to be added by 2045. Taking into account the growth of the entire County overall, NC OSMB anticipates that an increase of 32,546 people will equate to 17,040 housing units to be added by 2045.

In order to maintain the quality of life for all current and future residents, **Hendersonville must balance housing growth with investments in parks and recreation.** For instance, in order to maintain an equitable walkshed—typically described as an area covered by a 5-minute or 10-minute walk—the locations of future housing must be considered as a basis for future parks and greenspaces. Future housing development also provides an opportunity for collaboration amongst the Community Development Department, Public Works Department, and developers to integrate parks and recreation opportunities into new housing developments.



2

THE EXISTING STATE OF THE SYSTEM



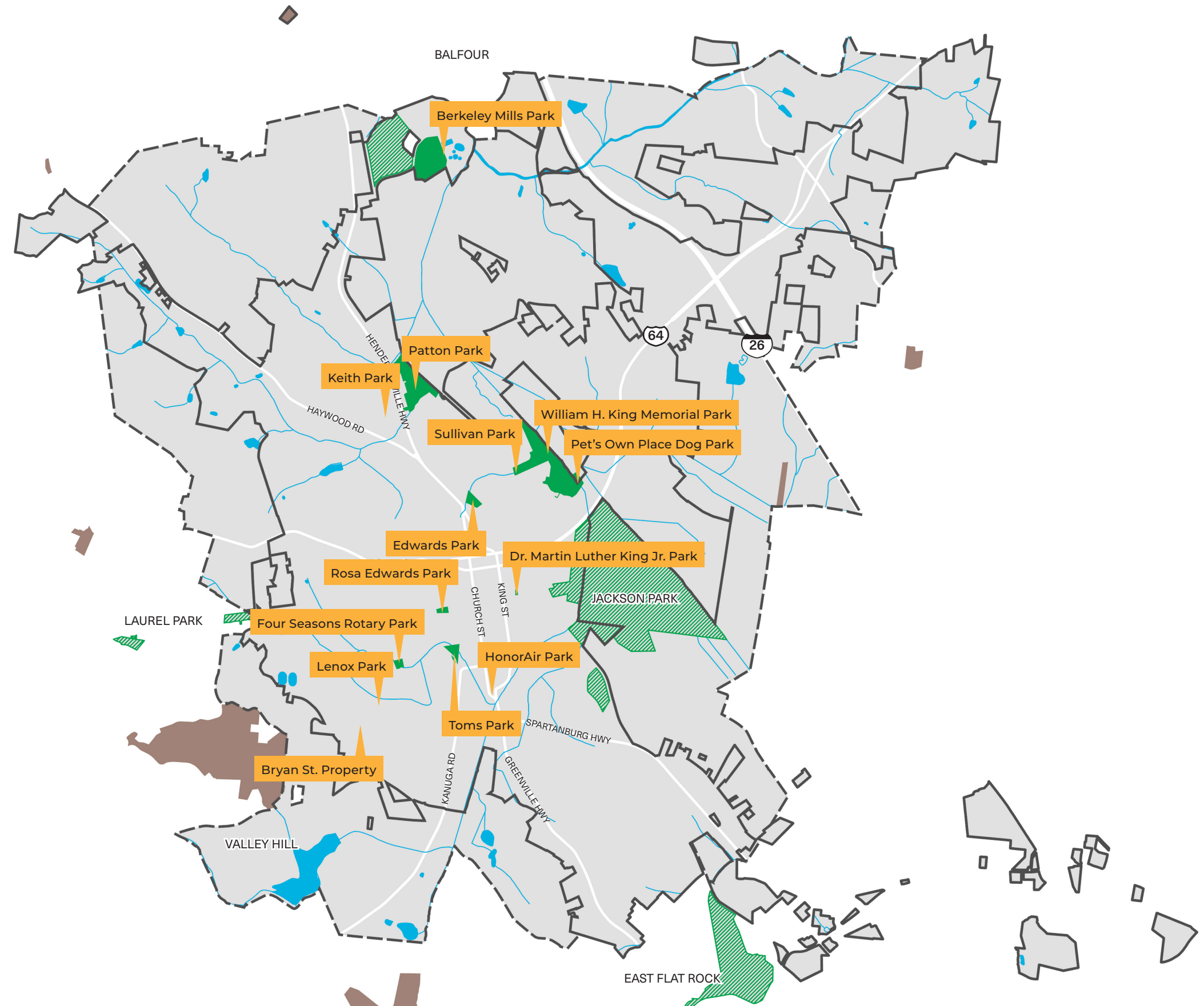
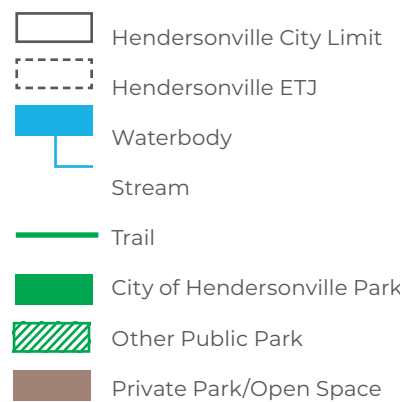
NEEDS ASSESSMENT

OVERVIEW

The evaluation of Hendersonville's park system is based on a needs assessment that ties together data analysis, trends and community input. The assessment deploys data and metrics tailored to the park system in order to identify opportunities, gaps, and priority investment areas. A comprehensive community outreach was conducted in tandem to understand community needs. The assessment is used to guide future planning decisions and investment distribution.

The assessment includes:

- **Community Input** from a community-wide survey, open house workshops and events.
- A **Level of Service (LOS)** and Peer Benchmarking analysis which evaluates the existing number of acres within the park system, establishes a benchmark comparison to peer communities of similar characteristics, and assesses the park amenity distribution and walkability.
- A review of **Visitation Trends** which indicates the annual park visitation totals and user demographics at various park locations.
- A review of **Recreation Trends** at the local, state and national level to understand the most popular amenities needed now and that might be anticipated in the future.
- A analysis which identifies areas of priority to have the most impact for vulnerable populations.



RECOMMENDED PARK CLASSIFICATIONS

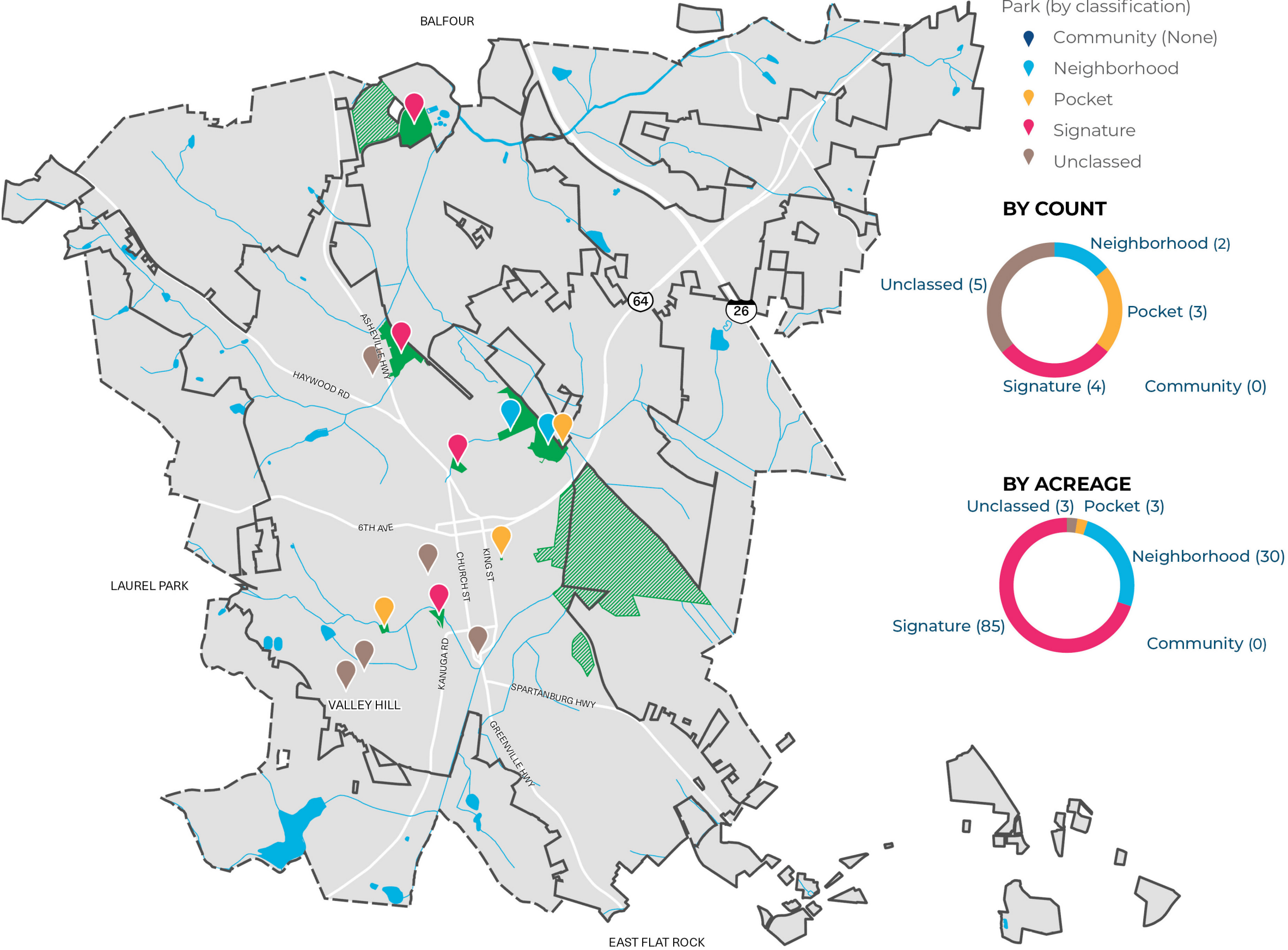
A park classification system allows us to establish a common language around park types, service delivery expectations, experiences and types of amenities. A strong understanding of the types of parks in different areas of the city can inform where access, experience and gaps exist.

Park classifications are useful in:

- Communications (with staff and residents),
- Parkland acquisitions (locations and criteria for future parks),
- Amenity Level of Service and Service Delivery (location and availability of certain facilities and park features and how those should be distributed),
- Programming (the type and scale of activities appropriate to a park), and
- Operations (the degree of maintenance and regular investment needed).

Funding the development and maintenance of parks facilities and services remains a challenge for many cities across the country. Over the last ten years, many cities have decreased their reliance on the general fund as the primary source of park funding. Alternative funding often comes from services charges, grants, and donations.

Hendersonville's current allocation does not allow the City to fully meet its maintenance needs or consider new facilities and parks. Staffing levels are also less than peer cities, with no dedicated department for parks.



LEVEL OF SERVICE ANALYSIS

Level of service (LOS) is a standard measure that recreation providers use to monitor the amount of services provided to their communities. Used in conjunction with community outreach, this tool can help determine quantity and quality gaps in the system and how services are distributed. It is also useful in identifying the amount of parks needed in the future to keep up with future population increases.

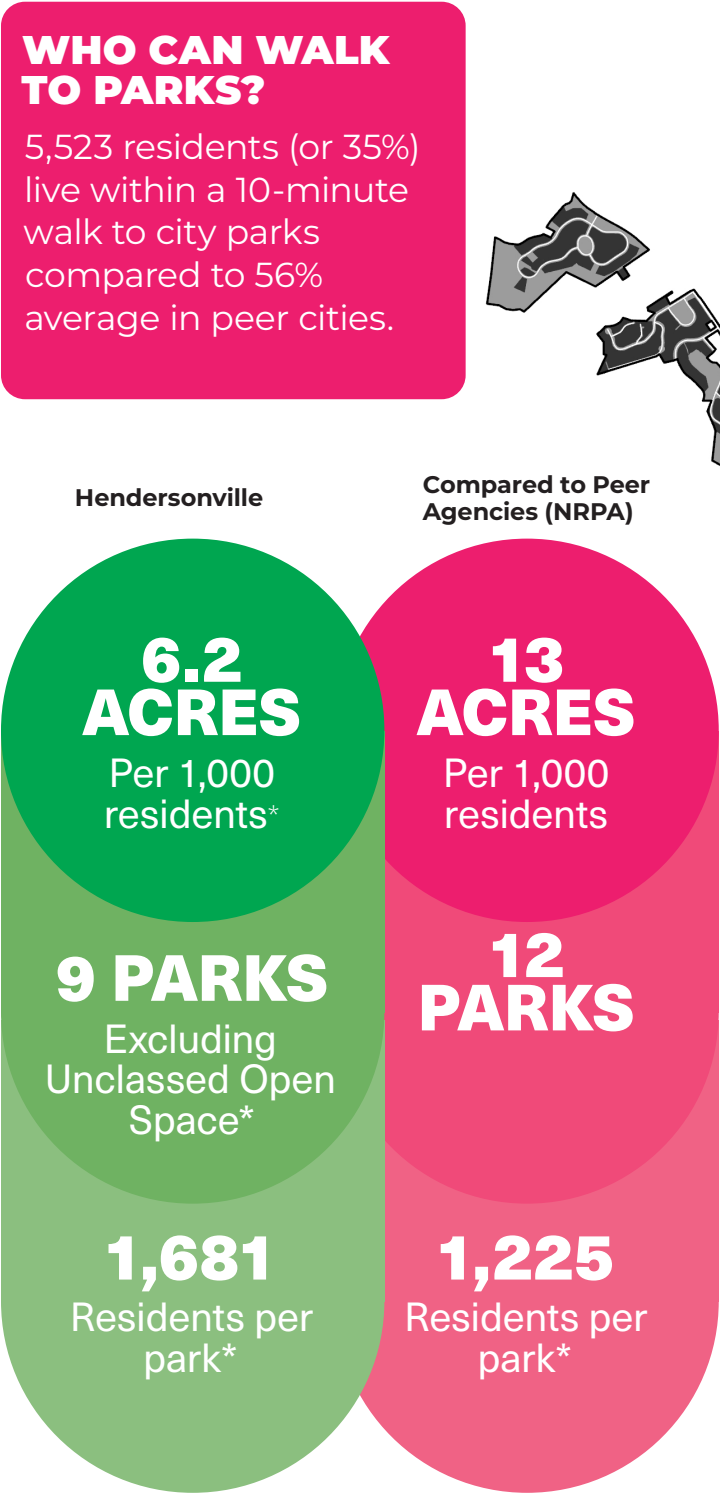
PARK ACREAGE PER POPULATION

One way of measuring park level of service is through acreage per 1,000 residents. This measurement is typically used when overcrowding is a concern or evaluating if additional parkland is needed to accommodate population growth. Hendersonville currently has 6.2 acres of parks per 1,000 residents (excluding unclassified open space properties) and 1,681 residents per park. The median for park agencies of similar size to Hendersonville provide 13 acres per thousand residents and 1,225 residents per park (National Recreation and Park Association - NRPA). If Hendersonville were to match level of service to meet peer cities, roughly another 86 acres of developed parkland will be needed by 2030 and 130 acres by 2050.

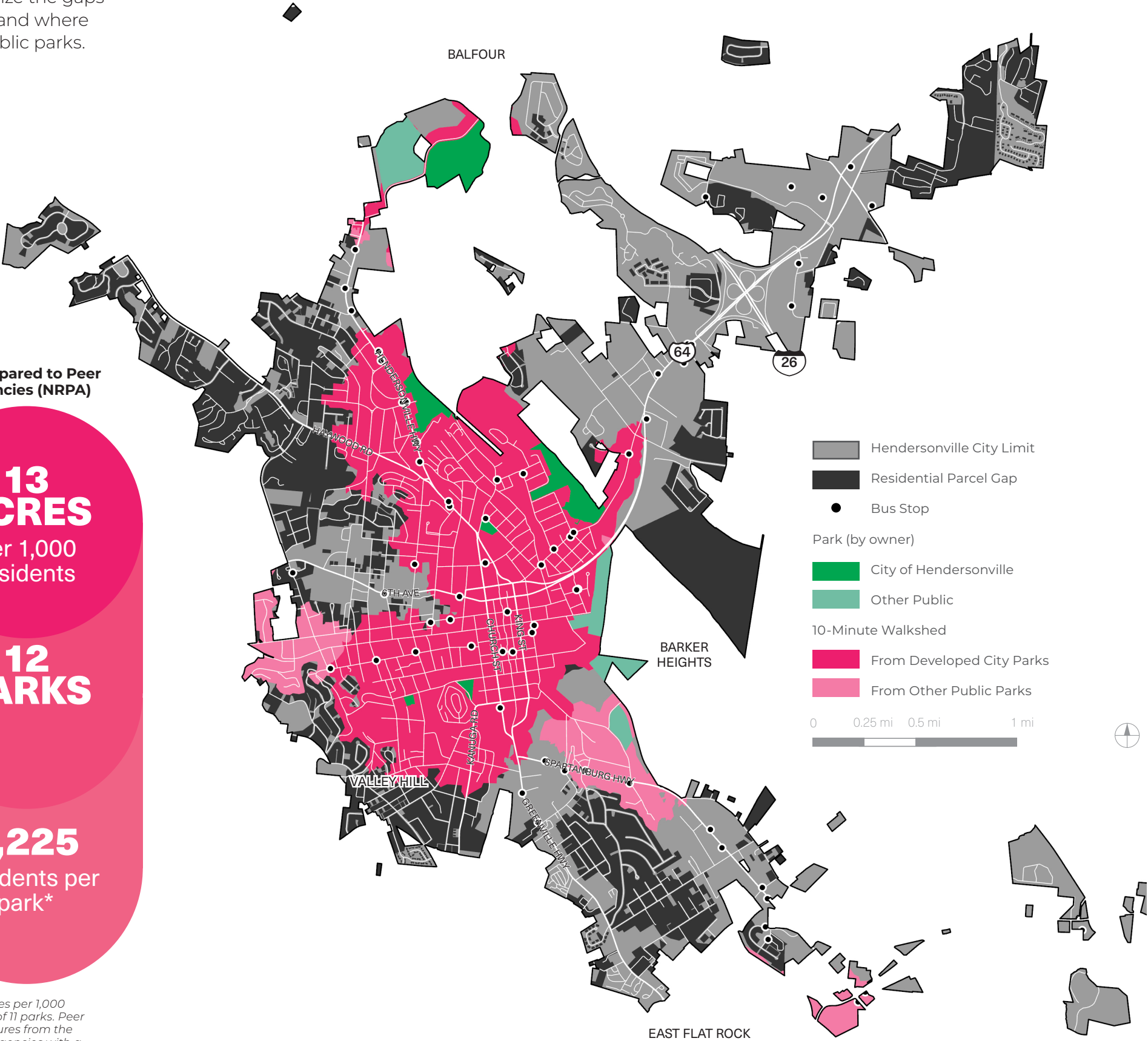
DISTRIBUTION AND ACCESS

The strategic distribution of park acres is important in ensuring all residents can access outdoor public spaces and opportunities to recreate within a reasonable distance from their home. The Trust for Public Land (TPL) advocates for all people to have access to a quality park from their home within a 10-minute walk. Many park and recreation systems across the country, such as nearby Woodfin, NC, have committed to the 10-Minute Walk Program as a long-term vision while establishing achievable short-term action items.

The walkshed map helps to visualize the gaps within city boundaries to understand where residents are lacking access to public parks.



*Note, if including County-owned properties, 25 acres per 1,000 residents, and 1,376 residents per park with a total of 11 parks. Peer agency comparison is based on median metric figures from the 2023 NRPA Agency Performance Review data for agencies with a population less than 20,000.



LEVEL OF SERVICE

FACILITIES PER POPULATION

The level of service for existing parks facilities and amenities were compared against national averages to get a baseline understanding of where Hendersonville stands. Table 1 represents a selection of existing Hendersonville facilities compared against national averages.

The comparison demonstrates the level of service for each facility based on the existing population. Level of service is shown as number of residents per each amenity. These metrics are one useful data point when creating the plan recommendations for level of service. These plus the addition of local input and

trends are crucial to understand gaps in amenities.

FACILITIES SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION

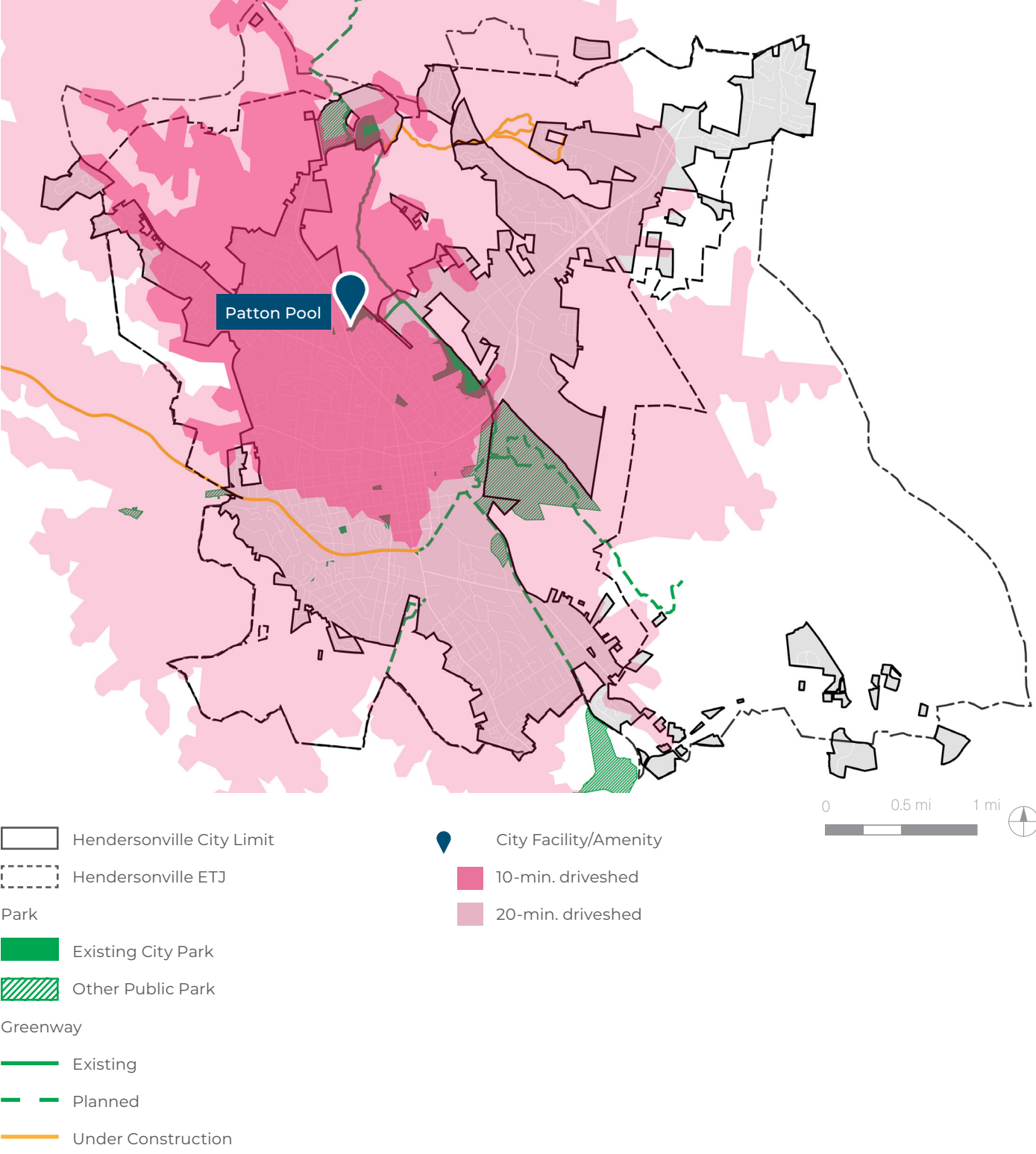
Existing facilities and amenities were mapped and visualized with amenity-specific service areas informed by NRPA metrics and Hendersonville’s current level of service. The maps on the following pages help to identify gaps in amenity-specific access.

Table 1: Population-Based Service Metrics for City-Owned Recreation Facilities Compared to National Park Agency Metrics.

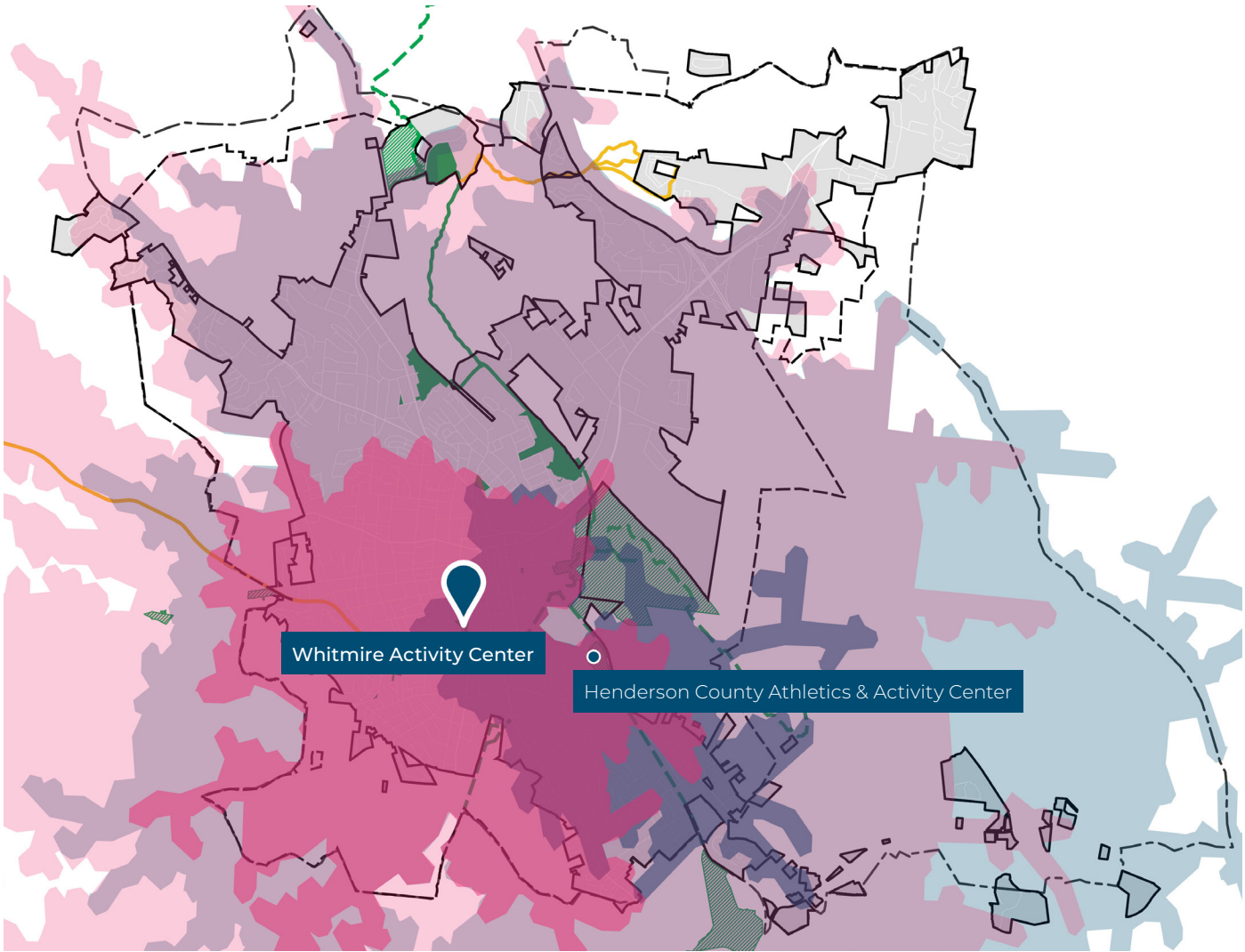
TYPES OF FACILITIES	NO. OF CITY-OWNED FACILITIES	NO. OF NON-CITY OWNED PUBLIC FACILITIES	RESIDENTS PER FACILITY	NATIONAL AVERAGE RESIDENTS PER FACILITY (CITIES WITH POPULATION <20,000)	CURRENT “SHORTAGE” COMPARED TO NATIONAL AVERAGE
Basketball Court	4	2	2,523	4,366	Needs Met
Community Center	0	0	0	8,908	1
Community Garden	1	1	0	8,800	4
Diamond Field	1	10	1,376	1,833	3
Disc Golf**	1	1	7,569	11,079	Needs Met
Dog Park	1	1	7,569	10,327	Needs Met
Multi-use Field	1	1	7,569	2,493	2
Pickleball Court**	6	3	1,682	3,390	Needs Met
Playground	4	2	2,523	1,990	2
Recreation Centers	0	1	15,137	9,685	1
Senior Centers*	0	0	0	14,286	1
Skateboard Park	1	0	15,137	11,284	Needs Met
Splash Pad	0	0	0	12,756	1
Swimming Pool	1	0	15,137	9,745	Needs Met
Tennis Court	2	8	1,514	2,805	Needs Met

Sources: U.S. Census, 2024 National Recreation and Park Association. *Note, while the Whitmire Activity Center is currently used for Senior and Active Adult programming, it does not have a gymnasium or fitness studios that you would typically find in a Senior Center. Some municipalities choose to deliver senior activities at a dedicated facility while others choose to integrate into an all-ages recreation center. **The existing disc golf course and pickleball courts are not yet constructed, but counted as they are underway.

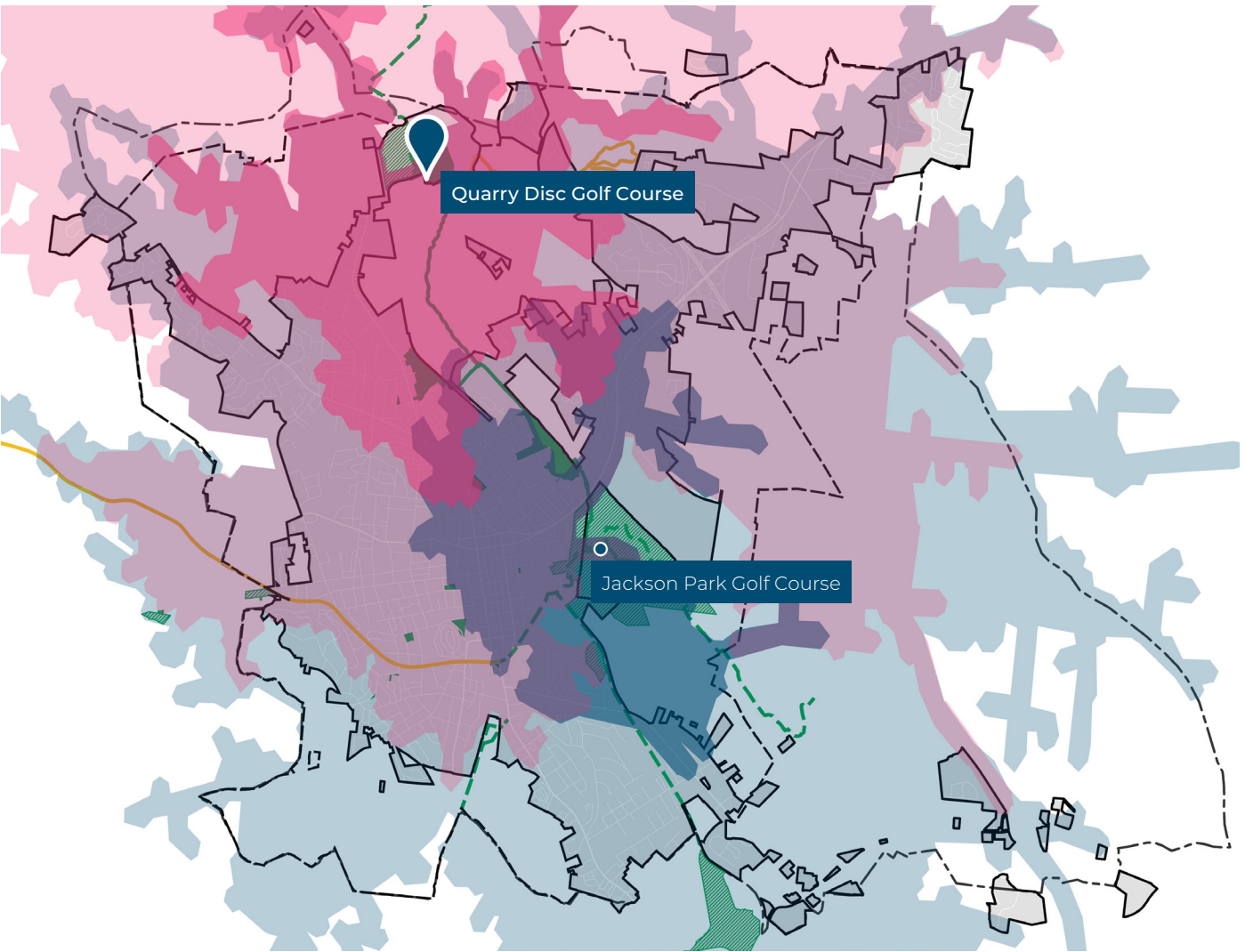
OUTDOOR SWIMMING POOL / SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION



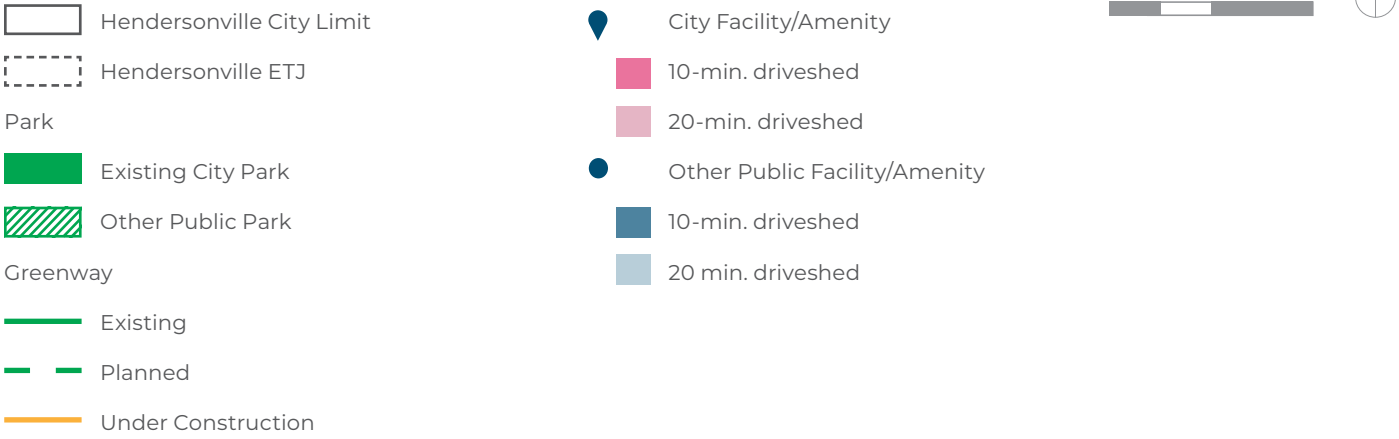
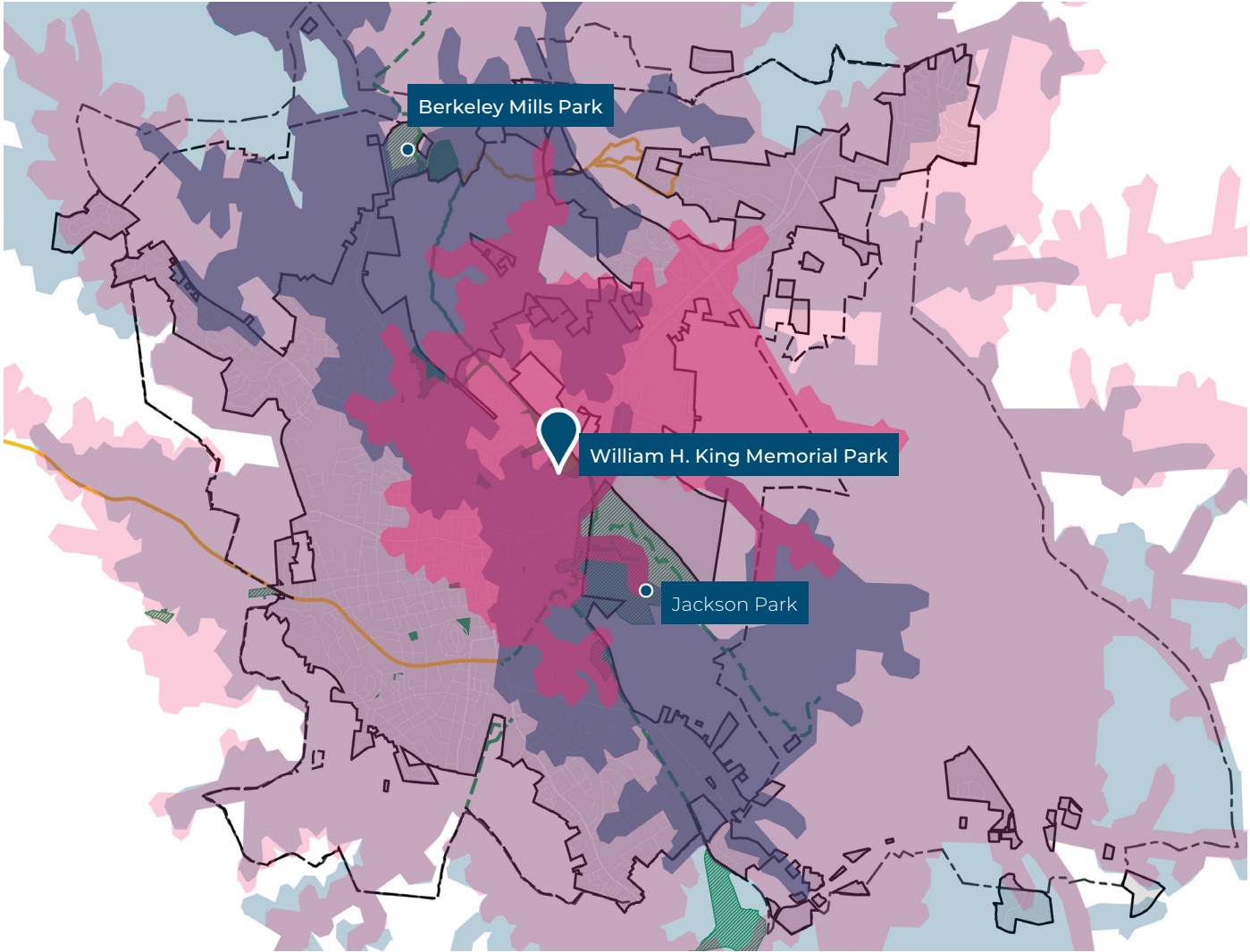
COMMUNITY CENTERS / SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION



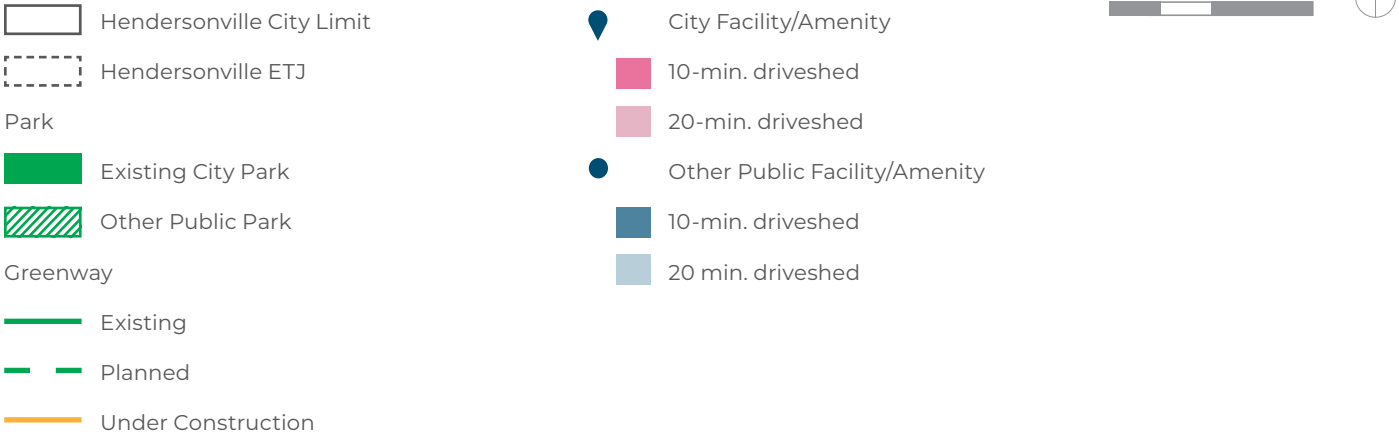
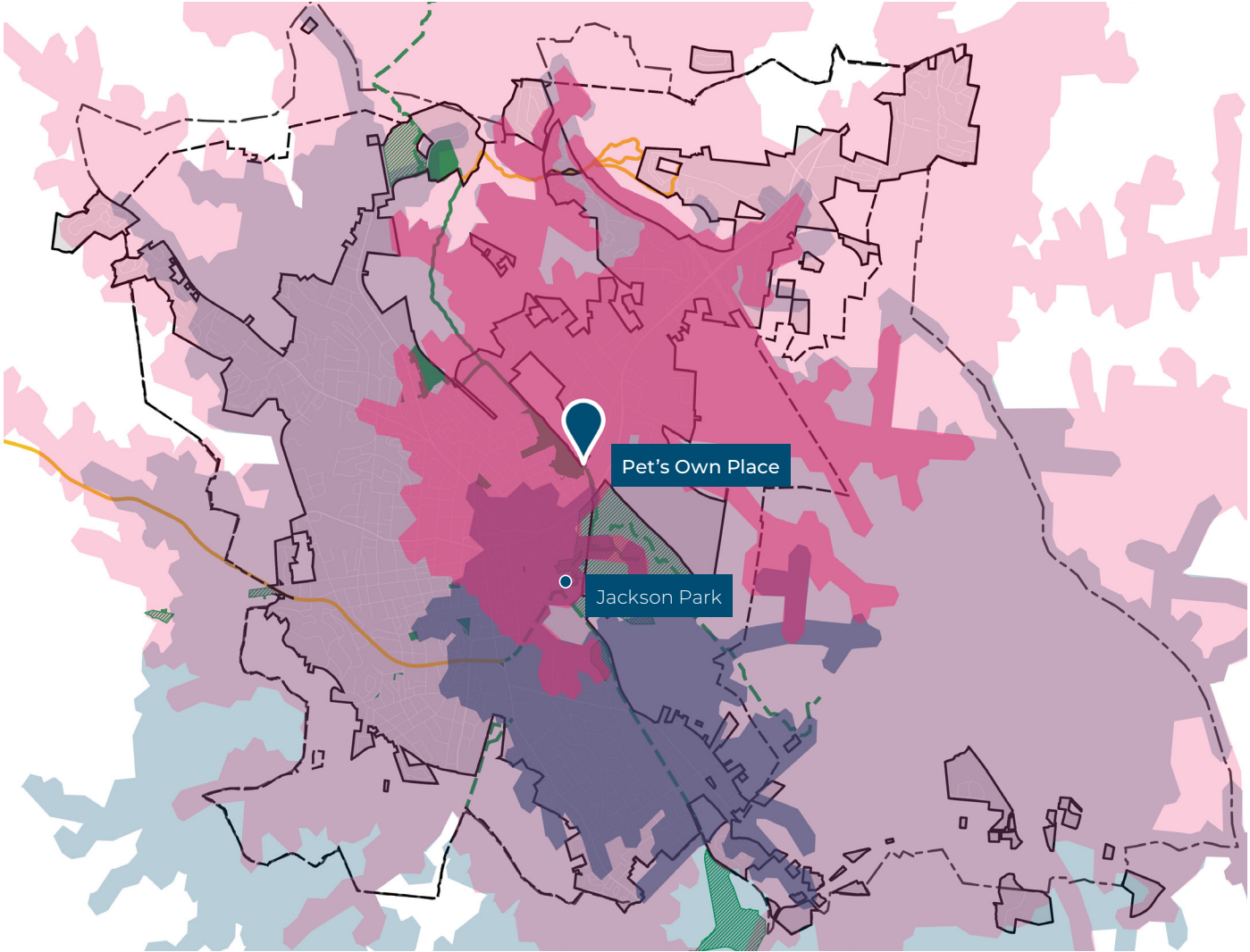
DISC GOLF / SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION



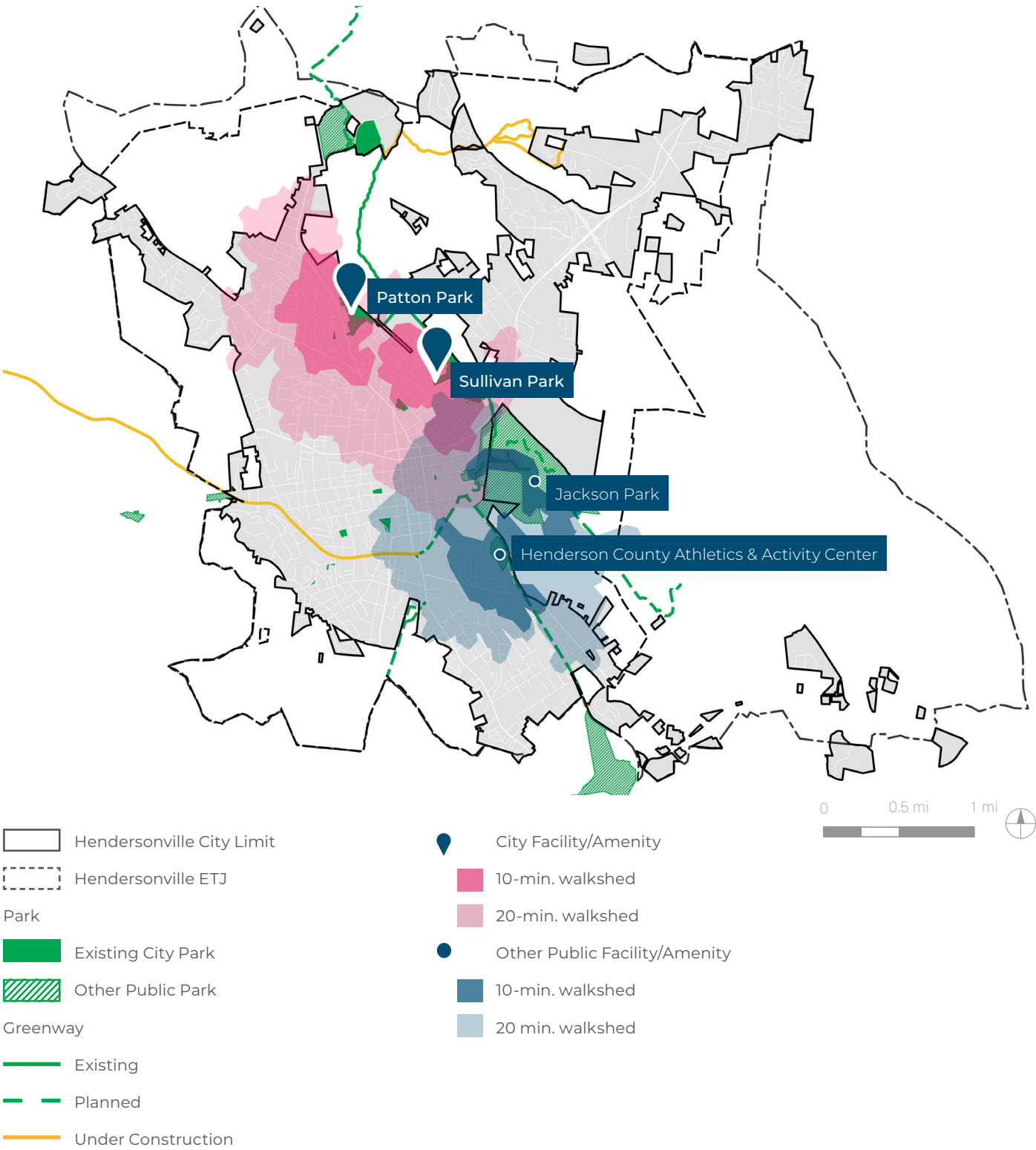
DIAMOND FIELDS / SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION



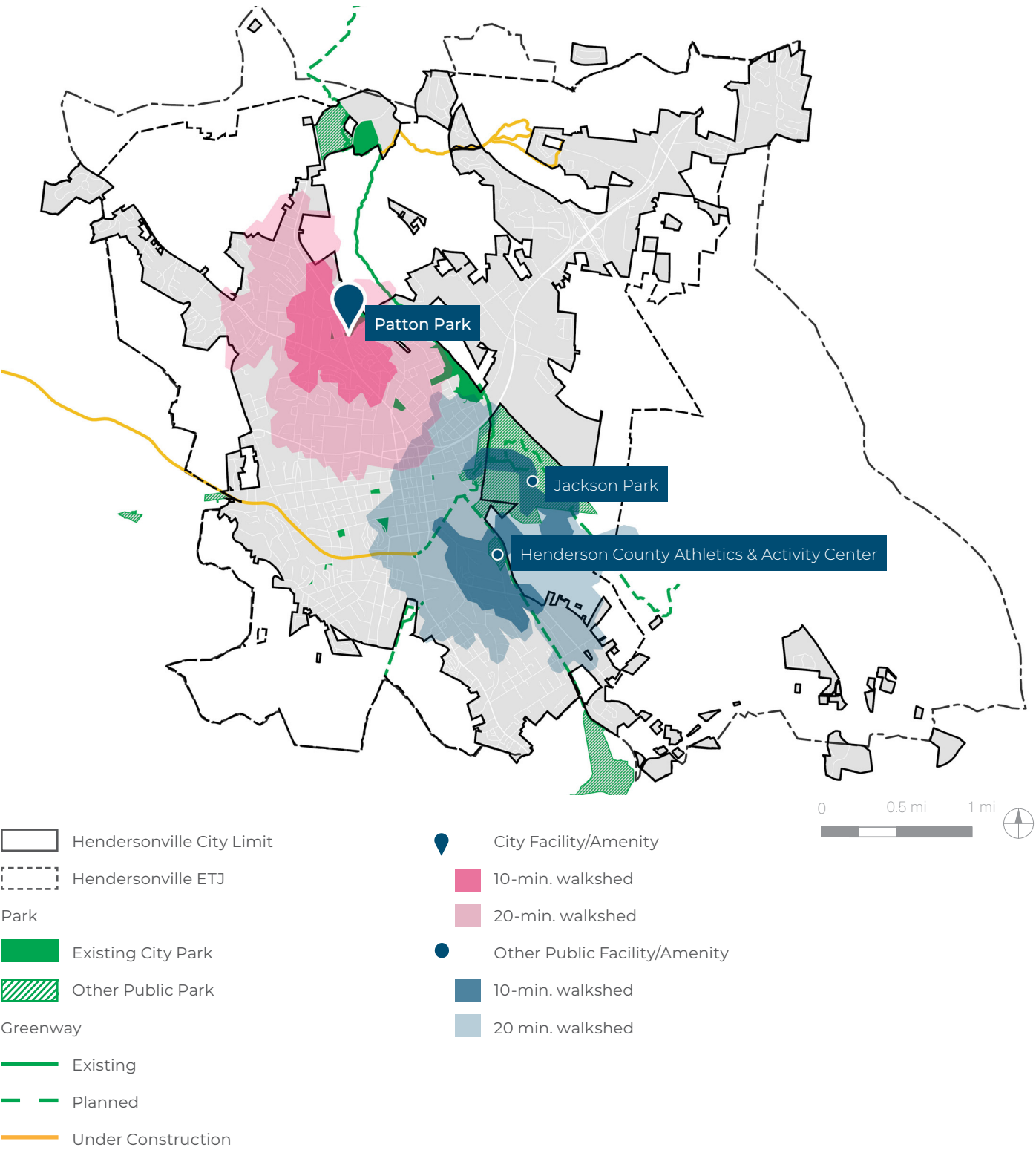
DOG PARKS / SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION



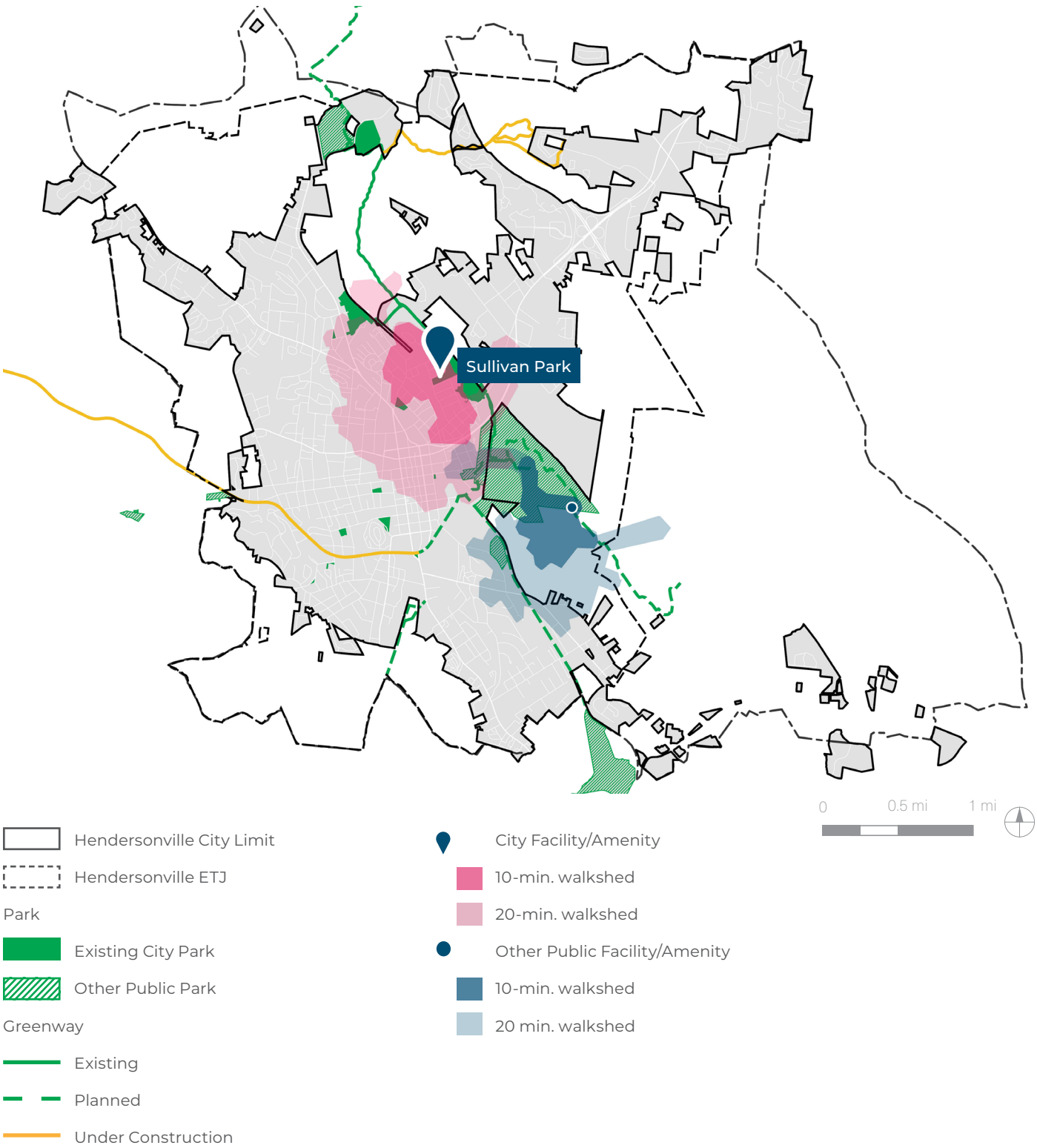
BASKETBALL COURTS / SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION



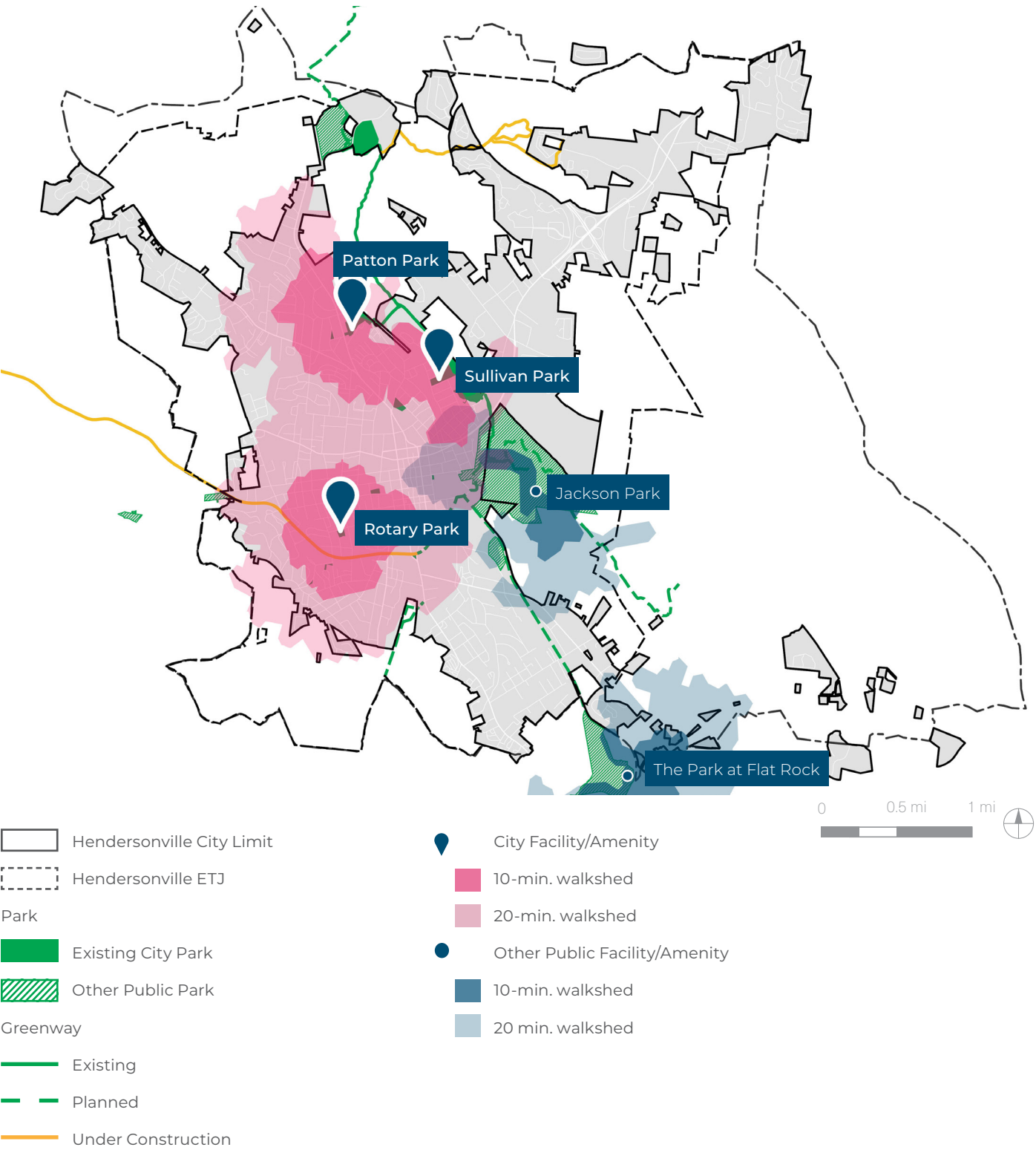
RACKET COURTS / SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION



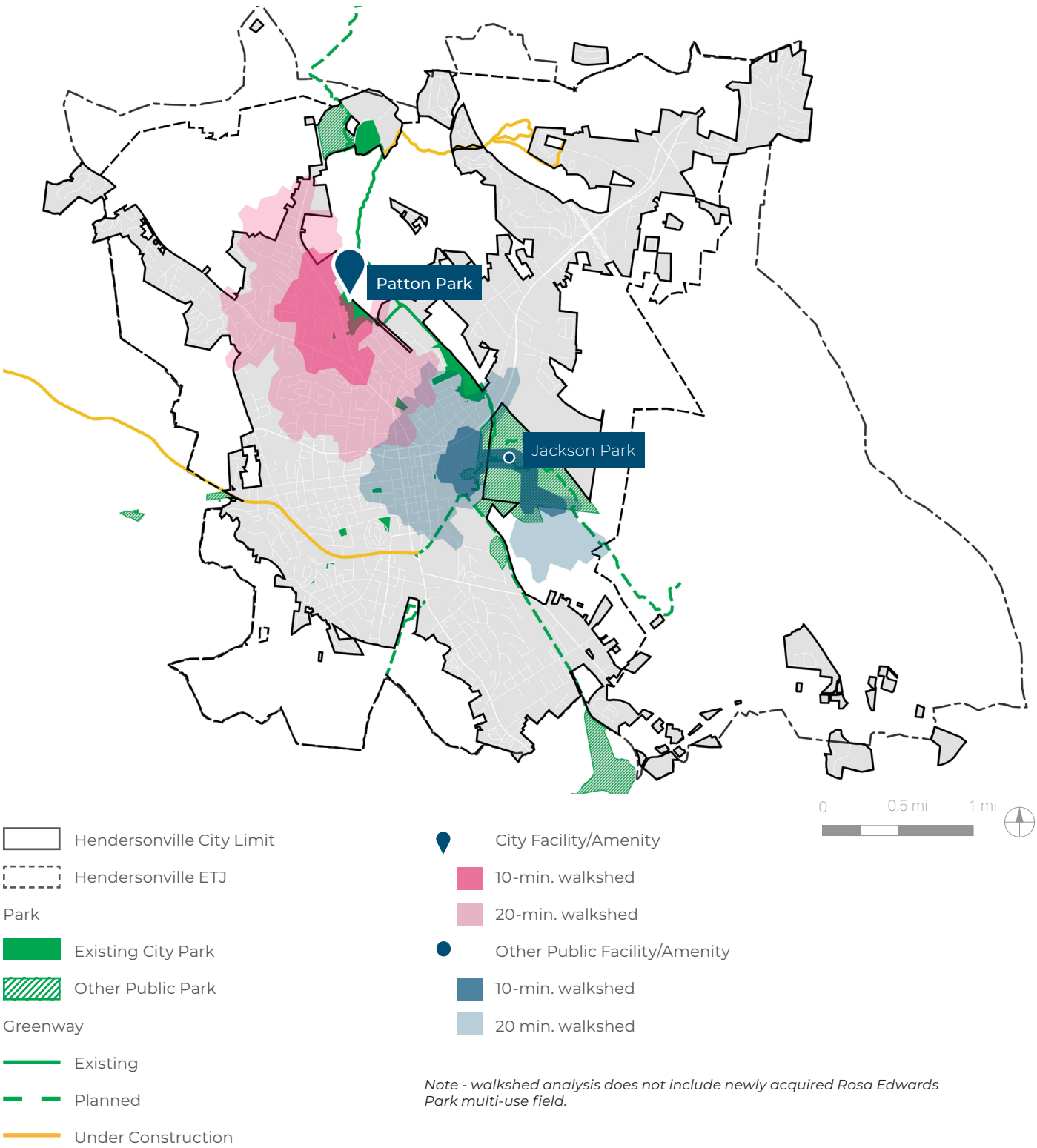
COMMUNITY GARDENS / SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION



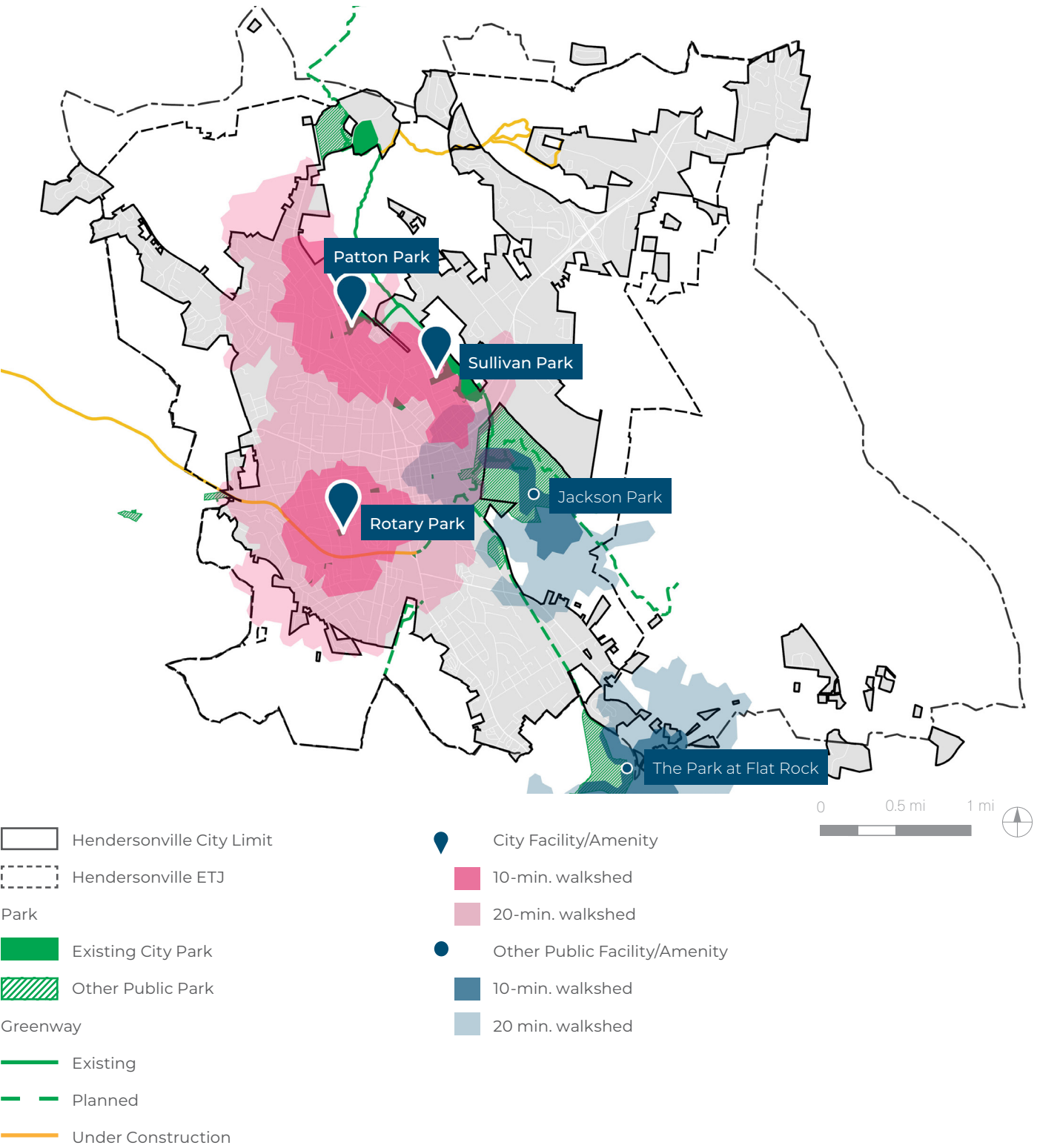
PICNIC SHELTERS / SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION



MULTI-USE FIELDS / SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION



PLAYGROUNDS / SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION



RECREATION TRENDS

The planning team studied national, regional and local trends that could inform parks planning for Hendersonville.

NATIONAL TRENDS

PARKS AS COMMUNITY WELLNESS HUBS

According to the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Top Trends in Parks and Recreation for 2023, positioning parks and recreation systems as anchor institutions that foster strong social, economic, and health-related bonds within communities will help convey their value more effectively. As NRPA Director of Health Allison Colman states, parks and recreation facilities **“are not just nice-to-have in communities. They are essential, vital spaces and programs that are social drivers of health, resilience, and equity.”**

Post COVID-19, agencies across the nation are seeing an increase in attendance and interest in programs that focus on individual and community health supporting mental, emotional and social health. This includes programming such as yoga, tai chi, guided meditation, nature therapy and mindfulness and stress reduction.

ORGANIZATION CULTURE AND COMPENSATION

Park and recreation systems are not isolated from the challenges of worker burnout and dissatisfaction affecting industries across the country. The NRPA stresses the importance of building organizational culture and securing competitive compensation to attract and retain workers.

SHIFT TO ELECTRIC

More park and recreation departments are proactively shifting their equipment, buildings and vehicles to electric power. The NRPA identifies this shift as “possibly the single-largest contribution that parks and recreation

will make to reducing our carbon outputs to the atmosphere, thereby slowing the negative impacts of climate change.”

PICKLEBALL DEMAND AND NOISE CONCERNS

With the growing public demand for more pickleball courts, nearby neighbors are generating complaints about the noise levels nationwide. While the demand for pickleball is expected to continue, still the fastest growing sport in the United States, there has been community pushback to stop tennis court conversions to pickleball courts. Agencies are beginning to implement strategies for soundproofing, revisions to operating hours and policies to mitigate resident concerns.

TRENDS IN GENERAL SPORTS

The 2023 Sports and Fitness Association’s (SFIA) Sports, Fitness and Recreational Activities Topline Report provides a snapshot of all sports, fitness and recreation activities in the United States for the previous year.

- The most popular sport and recreational activities nationally include walking for fitness, hiking, treadmill, free weights, running/jogging, and road biking. Most of these activities appeal to young and old alike, can be done in most environments, are enjoyed regardless of skill level, and have minimal economic barriers to entry.
- Pickleball is still the fastest growing sport in the United States and racquet-based activities overall continue to grow.
- For the first time since 2010, the number of inactive people—not participating in any of the sports or activities that SFIA tracks—dropped below 70 million.
- Though inactivity decreased in all household income levels, there remains a wide gap between the activity levels of the highest and lowest income levels: In 2022, only 14% of households earning more than

\$100,000 were inactive, compared to 39% of households earning less than \$25,000.

- When inactive respondents were asked which activities they are most interested in but do not currently practice, fishing was the top choice for all age groups except 18- to 24-year-olds, who chose working out with weights.
- Team sports participation continued to recover from the large drop it sustained during the COVID-19 pandemic—the team sports participation rate rose in 2022 to 23.2%, just under the pre-pandemic level of 23.4%.
- For the fifth year in a row, the number and percentage of Americans who engaged in some kind of sport or fitness activity grew in 2022—237 million people, or 78% of Americans age 6 and higher, participated in at least one activity in 2022.
- Almost 70% of Americans say they became more aware of the importance of being physically active since living through the pandemic.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL TRENDS

NORTH CAROLINA OUTDOOR RECREATION TRENDS

The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) encompasses all outdoor recreation opportunities in North Carolina, including at the county and municipal levels, examining trends and demands. The following high level issues and objectives were identified:

- Growing population: Meet the needs of North Carolina’s rapidly growing population by providing more recreation opportunities in areas of the state where growth is taking place.
- Diminishing opportunities for protecting natural areas and greenspace: Protect and

conserve North Carolina’s high-quality natural resources and landscapes.

- Aging recreation facilities and infrastructure: Renovate, replace and revitalize existing park amenities across the State.
- Limited recreation opportunities in economically depressed areas: Promote the economic benefits of the state’s recreation opportunities for communities across North Carolina.
- Equity of access: Increase opportunities and public awareness of the state’s natural resources and recreation opportunities for underserved populations.
- Public health: Support improvements in public health and fitness by increasing opportunities for physical activity.

SCORP also identifies trending and niche recreation amenities:

- Disc golf courses have been steadily increasing over the past ten years and demand remains strong. These are often suitable in areas that are not physiographically well suited for other types of recreation.
- Dog parks have seen a massive surge in interest for more than a decade. Demand is not likely to decrease, however local governments will need to prepare for potential long-term management issues.
- Court games, such as shuffleboard, cornhole, bocce, and horseshoes are being offered by local governments. Types of court games are locally driven and can change rapidly based on social trends.
- Golf courses that are publicly managed are experiencing mixed demand across the state. Some are seeing reduced demand and may look at re-purposing into other public needs.

SPORTS AND LEISURE MARKET
POTENTIAL

The Sports and Leisure Market Potential Report, created by ESRI, provides details about the types of activities consumers use and demand and can be used to help measure the likelihood of Hendersonville’s population to participate in recreational activities. The information is based on household level survey data from MRI-Simmons. The expected number consumers refers to the number of adults or households engaging in a particular behavior, representing a count estimate of local consumer demand within a trade area.

The MPI refers to the ratio of local consumption rate relative to the U.S. consumption rate. This helps to understand how low or high demand is in the Hendersonville area as compared to nationwide demand. MPI values that equal 100 represent national demand. Values that are greater than 100 represent higher demand and lower than 100 represent lower demand.

In general, activities in Hendersonville have a lower demand than the national average. There are several factors that may contribute to this including local demographic and cultural preferences, availability and accessibility of recreation, and seasonal variations.

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Table 2: Top 10 Active Recreation Activities for City of Hendersonville by Expected Participation

ACTIVITY	NO. OF ADULTS/HHs PARTICIPATED, 2022	PERCENT	MARKET POTENTIAL INDEX (MPI)
Walking	4,247	32.3%	99
Hiking	2,400	18.3%	95
Swimming	1,960	14.9%	95
Weight Lifting	1,564	11.9%	80
Fishing	1,407	10.7%	108
Bicycling	1,356	10.3%	94
Yoga	1,220	9.3%	92
Jogging/Running	1,035	7.9%	76
Golf	1,019	7.8%	97
Bowling	985	7.5%	91

SOURCE: ESRI BUSINESS ANALYST SPORTS AND LEISURE MARKET POTENTIAL REPORT, 2023

Table 3: Top Active Recreation Activities for City of Hendersonville with MPI 100 and higher

ACTIVITY	NO. OF ADULTS/HHs PARTICIPATED, 2022	PERCENT	MARKET POTENTIAL INDEX (MPI)
Hunting	538	4.1%	123
Fishing	1,407	10.7%	108
Archery	351	2.7%	108
Boating	610	4.6%	103
Walking	4,247	32.3%	100

SOURCE: ESRI BUSINESS ANALYST SPORTS AND LEISURE MARKET POTENTIAL REPORT, 2023

VISITATION DATA

This section includes visitation data collected from Near, an online software that aggregates human movement data gathered through smartphone devices.

Mobility data providers like Near rely on relatively small sample sizes that are statistically representative of the overall population. Their data can be extrapolated across actual populations to estimate the true number of visitors to various locations as well as their travel behaviors and demographics.

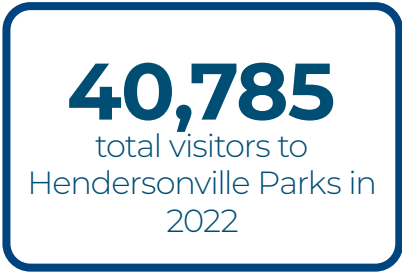
ANNUAL PARK VISITATION

As illustrated in Figure 1, Hendersonville parks welcomed over 40,000 visitors in 2022. Larger community parks, such as Patton Park and Berkeley Mills Park experience the highest visitation rates, likely due to the variety of amenities offered in each space and connection to the trail system. It should be noted that the Henderson County Jackson Park sees the most visitors, but was not included in this analysis since it is not managed by the City. It should be noted that Berkeley Mills Park visitation counts include the entire property, prior to change in ownership to Henderson County.

William H. King Memorial Park, Edwards Park, and Toms Park see a moderate number of visitors at around 4,000-5,000 per year. Smaller, pocket parks see less than 2,000 visitors annually where as unclassified properties without amenities, such as the Lenox Park and Bryan Park properties, experience the lowest visitation rate across the park system.

Figure 2 illustrates average daily visitation by park location, which yields similar findings. City of Hendersonville parks overall see around 100 daily users.

The number of visitors at every park can change due to a variety of factors. The location of the park or facility, surrounding population density, size of spaces, available



amenities, and the events hosted directly influences the annual visitation counts. While the analysis conducted here was using the most updated park boundaries, some of these numbers could be over or underestimating the number of visitors due to data limitations. Despite possible discrepancies, the average annual number of park visitors per location is an important indicator of the level of service provided at every park. The City of Hendersonville will be able to track changes in visitation over time by conducting a similar analysis in the next plan update which presents a unique opportunity to understand the impact of developments performed within the park system.

VISITOR DEMOGRAPHICS

The demographic characteristics of park visitors are useful in determining which populations have access to the park system. Near data allows demographic comparisons by age, median household income, median home value, education level, and race/ethnicity. This comparison suggested that generally the demographics of park visitors match the demographics of the city overall.

LEARN MORE

- » [Explore Park Visitation by Month \[External Link\]](#)
- » [Explore Overall Park Visitor Demographics \[External Link\]](#)
- » [Explore Park Visitor Demographics by Location \[External Link\]](#)

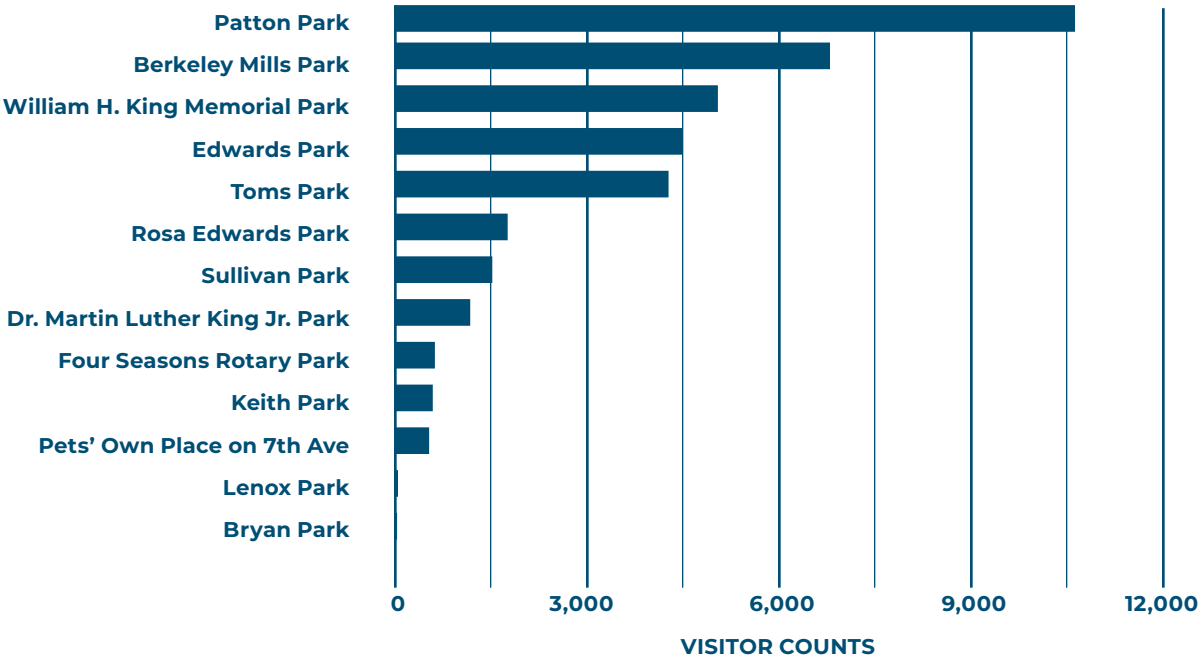


Figure 1: Average Annual Visitation by Park, 2022

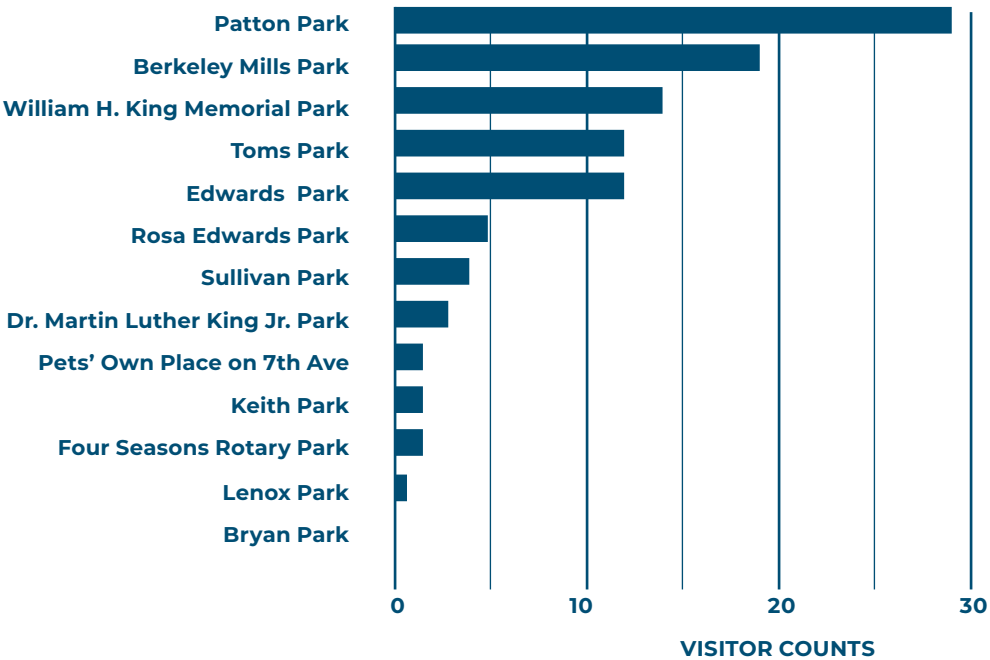


Figure 2: Average Daily Visitation by Park, 2022

3

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

OVERVIEW

Engagement was organized into three phases between Fall 2023 and Summer 2024. Each recommendation and guiding principle in the plan is grounded in feedback gathered through Advisory Committee meetings, public workshops, and online platforms.

SURVEYS

A citywide survey was administered online via the City's Public Input platform from September 10th 2023 to December 31st 2023, asking the community to share their vision and priorities for parks and greenspace. The survey was also translated in Spanish and available in a printed format. A second online survey was conducted in August 2024 to collect feedback on the draft plan. Over 800 people participated in the surveys and provided over 1,000 individual comments.

OPEN HOUSE WORKSHOPS & EVENTS

Two open house workshops were held on October 10, 2023 to gather public input to inform the Parks and Greenspace Master Plan. These workshops were drop-in style, allowing participants to attend the event anytime within the time range and share their input. An



additional open house event was coupled with the Council Comp-versation meeting on Parks and Open Space hosted by City Council.

PUBLIC INPUT MEETING

One public input meeting was held to present the draft plan document and gather feedback before finalizing the plan document.

OUTREACH MATERIALS

The planning process was promoted through flyers, yard signs, social media, coasters, and pocket cards directing people to the project webpage and survey. The webpage hosted all project information, updates, documents, and input options. The plan was also promoted alongside the City's Gen H Comprehensive Planning effort.

PHASE 1: COMMUNITY NEEDS & ASSESSMENT



PHASE 2: DEVELOPING THE PLAN



PHASE 3: PLAN DOCUMENT AND ACTION PLAYBOOK

- Website and Outreach Campaign Launch
- Citywide Survey
- Public Input Workshops
- Council Comp-versation (Parks Focus)
- Advisory Committee Meetings #1 and #2

- Council Work Sessions
- Advisory Committee Meeting #3 and #4

- Public Input Meeting
- Draft Plan & Survey
- Advisory Committee Meeting #5
- Council Work Session
- City Council Public Hearing
- City Council Adoption Vote



OPEN HOUSE WORKSHOPS



2 Languages

AVAILABLE FOR OUTREACH
MATERIALS
(ENGLISH AND SPANISH)

813

SURVEY
RESPONDENTS

1075

SURVEY
COMMENTS

79,787

SOCIAL MEDIA
IMPRESSIONS



17,484

SOCIAL MEDIA
ENGAGEMENTS

1,495

LINK CLICKS

24

DAYS OF TARGETED
ADVERTISEMENTS

750

COASTERS
DISTRIBUTED

105

FLYERS AND
YARD SIGNS
DISTRIBUTED

5

ADVISORY
COMMITTEE
MEETINGS

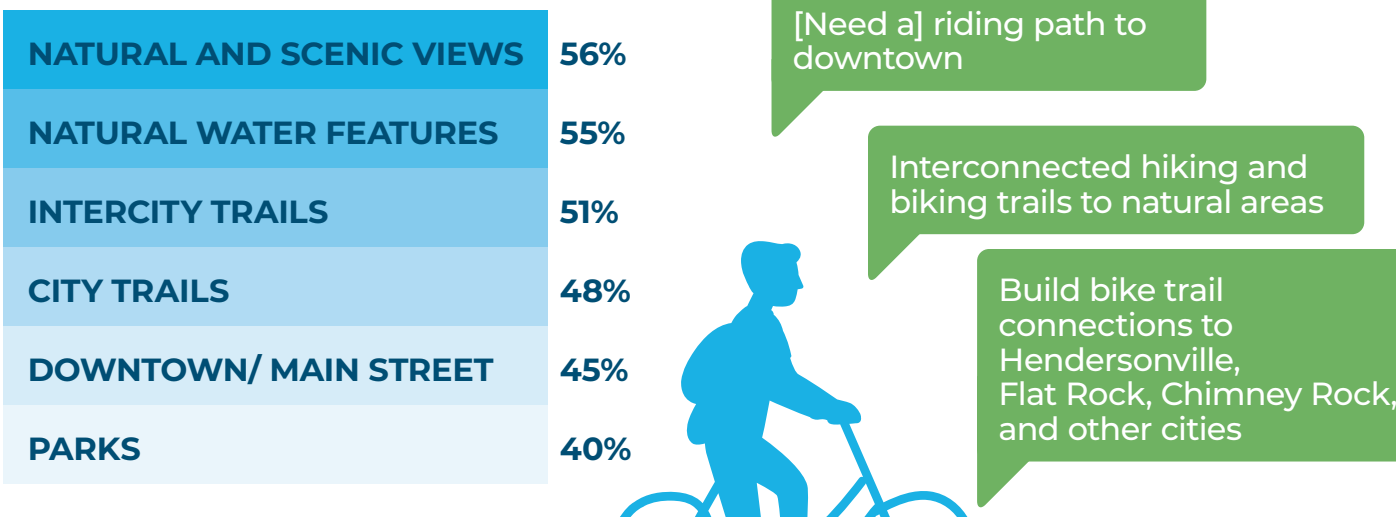


WHAT WE HEARD: SURVEY

MOST IMPORTANT FACILITIES



RESIDENTS MOST POPULAR DESTINATIONS FOR FUTURE GREENWAYS

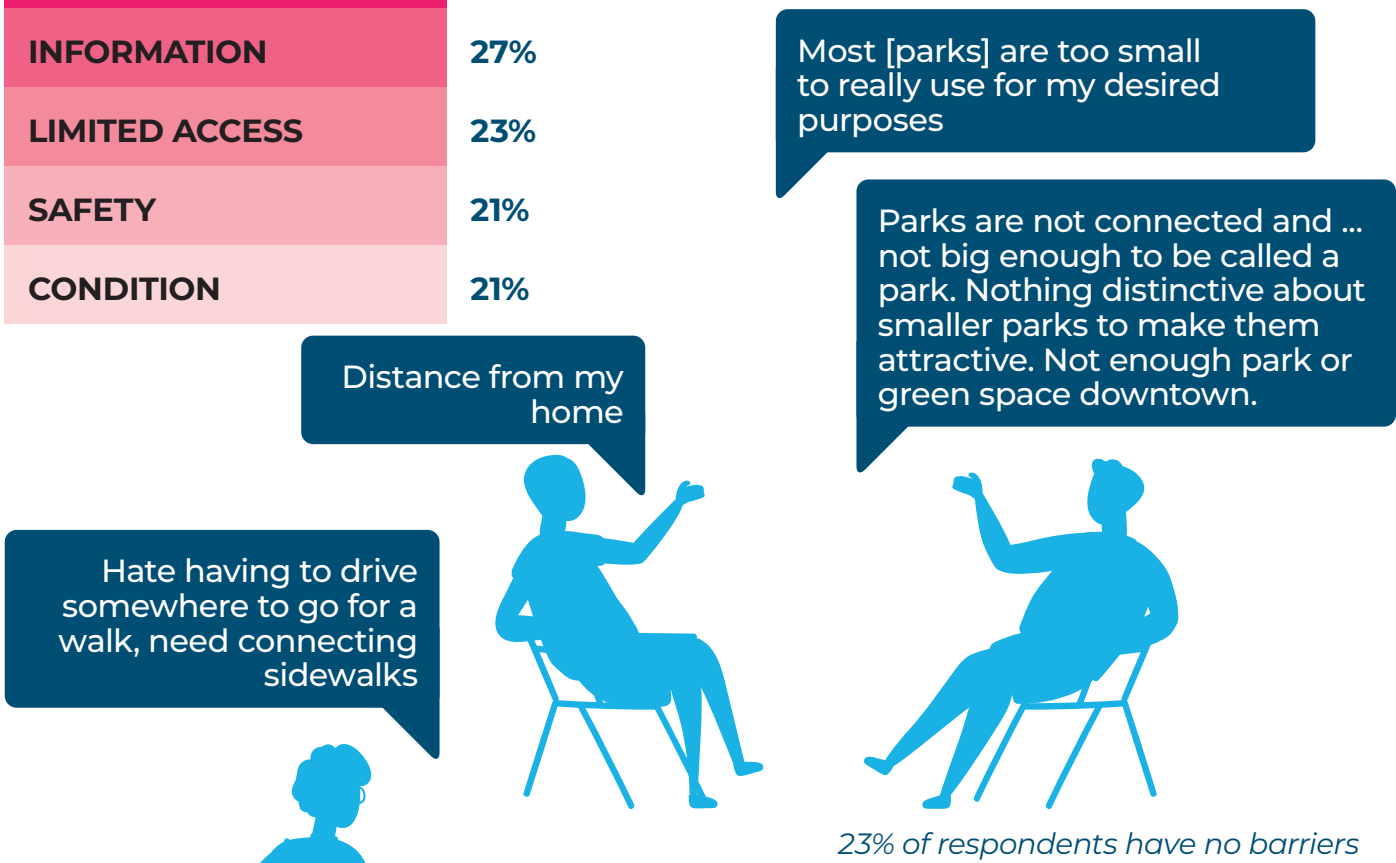


WHAT ARE THE PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS?



BARRIERS FROM USING PARKS

COMFORT	30%
INFORMATION	27%
LIMITED ACCESS	23%
SAFETY	21%
CONDITION	21%



AMENITIES WITH THE MOST UNMET NEEDS



WHAT WE HEARD: SURVEY

MOST VISITED PARKS



Remaining parks have been visited
by fewer than half of respondents

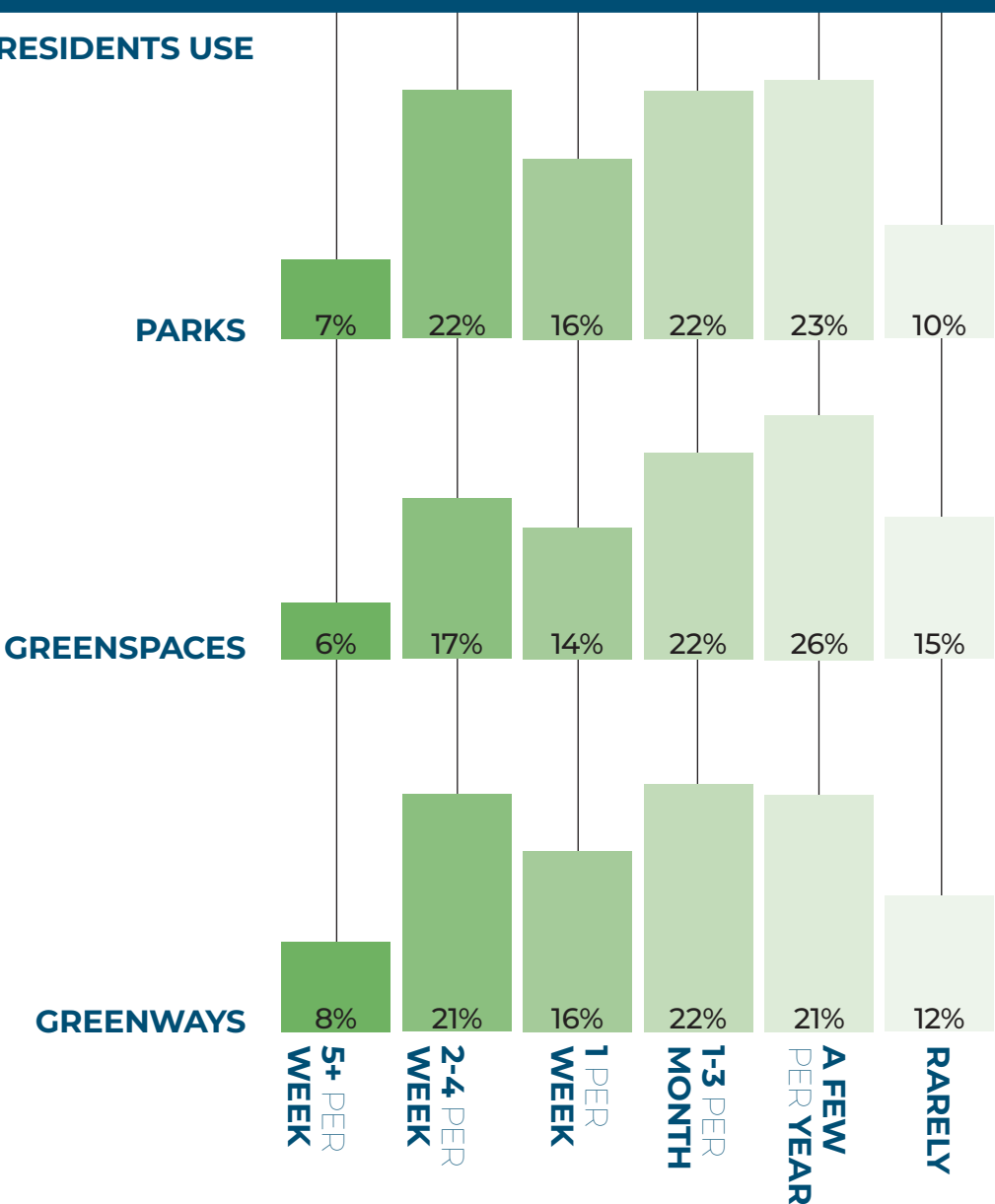
BERKELEY MILLS PARK



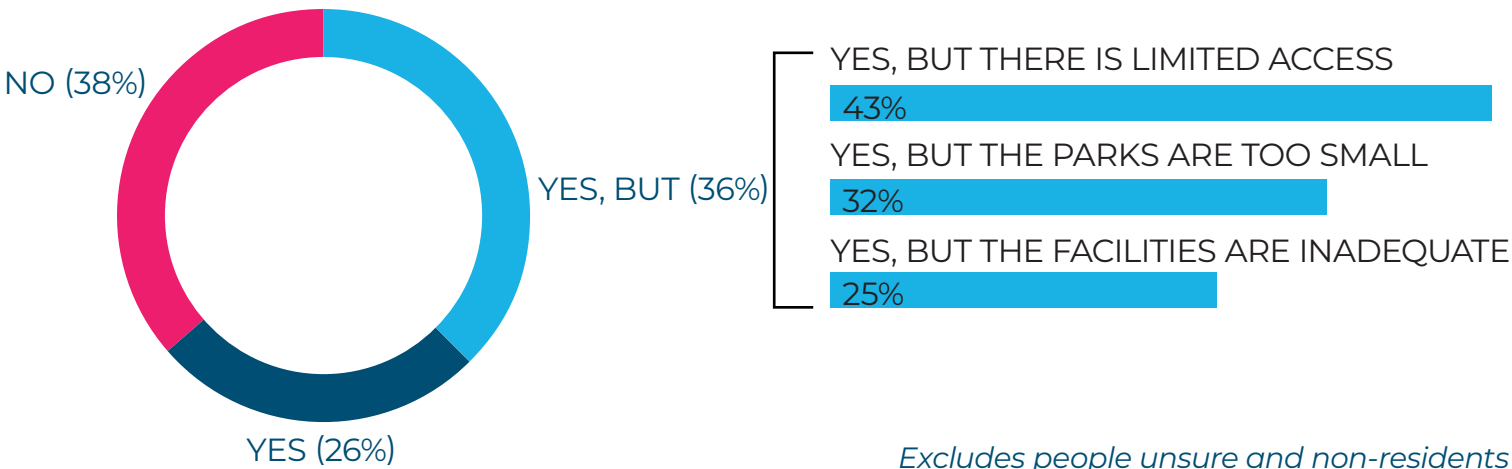
PATTON PARK



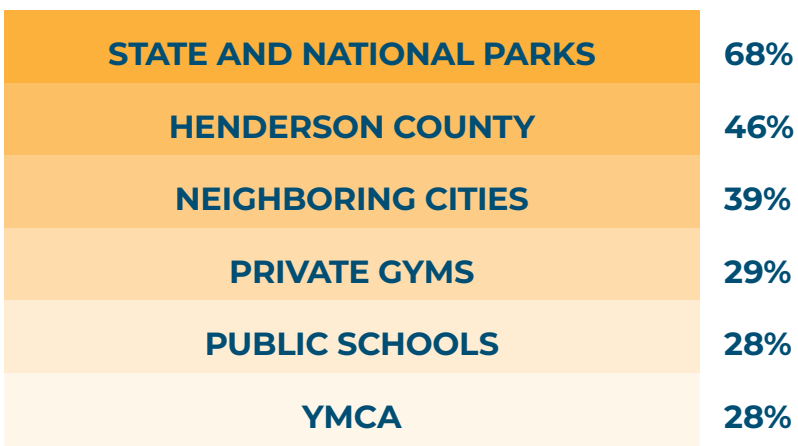
HOW OFTEN DO RESIDENTS USE THE FOLLOWING



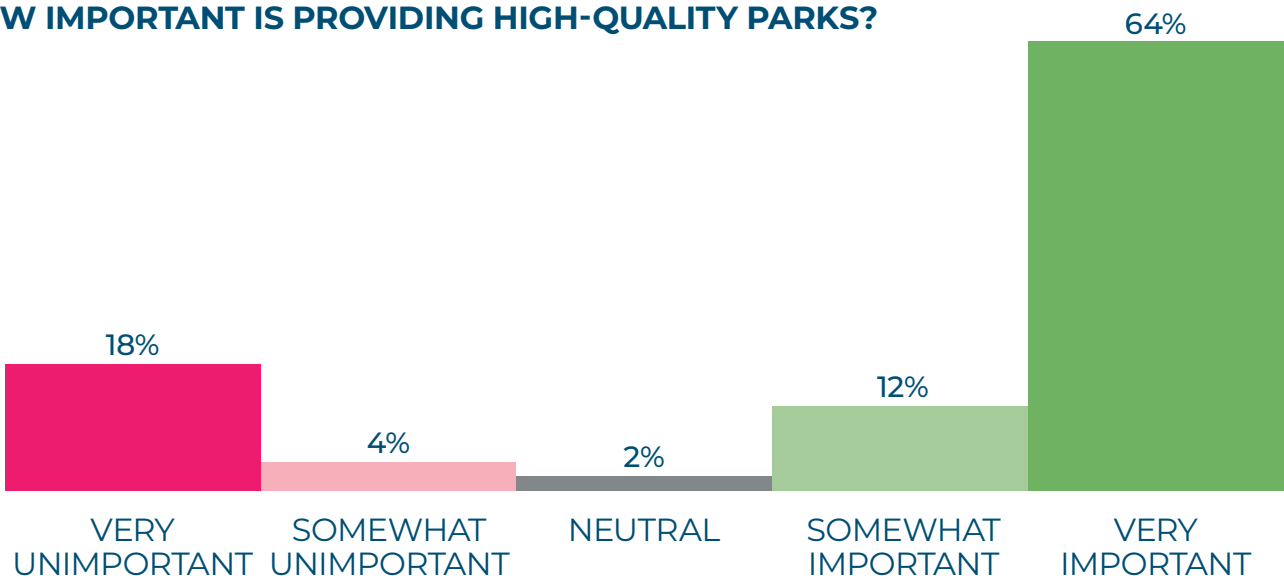
DO RESIDENTS HAVE SUFFICIENT PARKLAND IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD?



TOP PARK PROVIDERS BESIDES THE CITY FOR RECREATION AND PROGRAMMING



HOW IMPORTANT IS PROVIDING HIGH-QUALITY PARKS?



WHAT WE HEARD: WORKSHOPS

WHAT AMENITIES HAVE THE MOST UNMET NEEDS



PAVED WALKING/ BIKING TRAIL

OUTDOOR EVENT SPACE

UNPAVED WALKING TRAIL

WHAT ARE THE PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE PROJECTS

PROTECT AND PRESERVE PARKS AND NATURAL LAND

#1

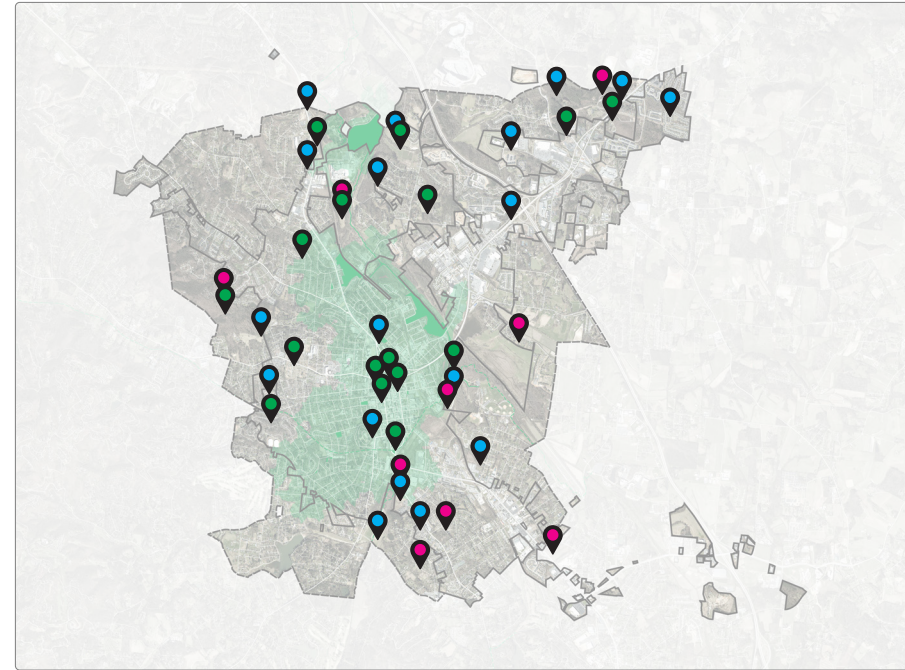
CREATE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PARKS, WATERBODIES AND NEIGHBORHOODS

#2

DOWNTOWN DESTINATION PARK

#3

WHERE RESIDENTS WOULD LIKE TO SEE A NEW PARK



- ADVISORY COMMITTEE
- CONVERSATION WORKSHOP
- COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

RESIDENT'S BIG IDEA

Community gardens and green space along the Ecusta Trail

Grant funding for greenways/ wildlife crossings and educational corridors

Walking access to parks

Accessibility and opportunity for ALL

WHAT RESIDENTS LOVE ABOUT CITY PARKS

Walking and biking access from downtown and other amenities for residents to parks. [I] can't wait for more of that

They are well-maintained and provide quiet greenspaces for people and wildlife

Public places to connect with nature

HOW RESIDENTS WOULD IMPROVE CITY PARKS

Encourage more volunteer opportunities to help keep all areas clean and safe

Work with Botanists and Arborists

Connectivity to each other and neighborhoods

More local businesses sponsoring areas are getting involved in volunteering to maintain gardens

PRIORITY GREENWAY PROJECTS



WHAT WE HEARD: GEN H SURVEY

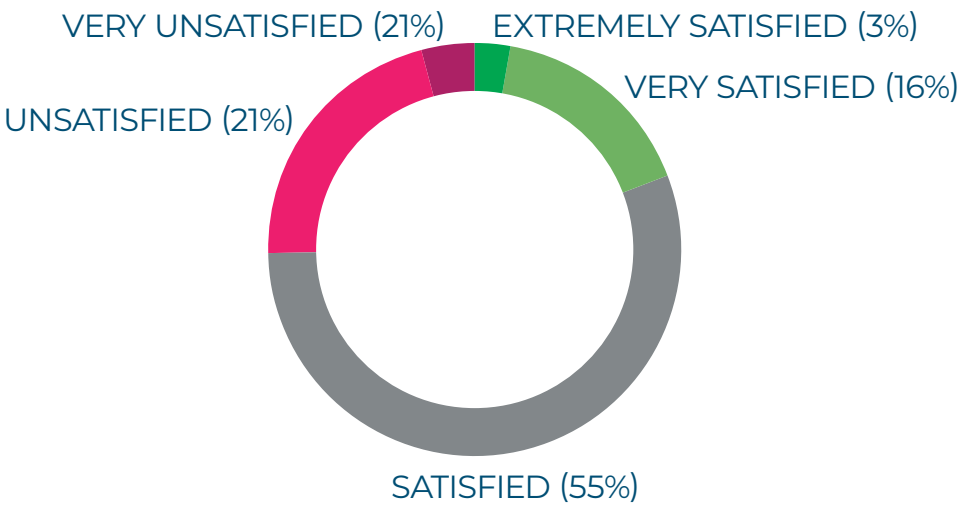
TOP THREE DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENTS



WHAT DOES THE DOWNTOWN NEED?



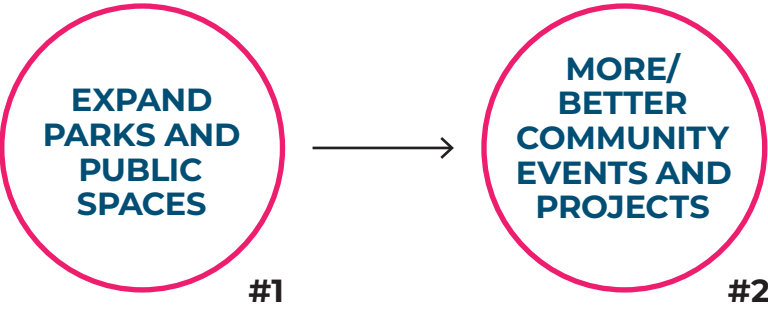
RESIDENTS SATISFACTION WITH CITY PARKS



WHAT ARE THE PRIORITIES FOR PARKS, GREENSPACES AND GREENWAYS



GREEN MEADOW'S RESIDENTS FUTURE WISHES (FROM CANVASSING)



RESIDENTS TOP CONCERNS FOR THE CITY

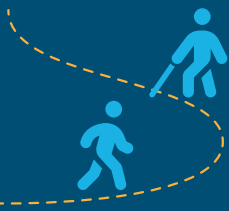


4

ACCESS



ACCESS



Making sure our parks are welcoming and barrier-free for all Hendersonville residents.

ACCESS KEY GOALS

- 1 Launch a Safe Routes to Parks program, improving access to the parks and greenspace system.
- 2 Reduce park access gaps through acquisition or partnerships.
- 3 Ensure parks are accessible to users of all abilities.
- 4 Create safe park environments year-round and improve perceptions of security.
- 5 Connect people to information about their park and greenspace system to increase visitation and stewardship.

CONNECTIVITY

Connectivity is a key aspect of Hendersonville’s park and open space system, with respondents of the community survey indicating that in the past year they have used greenways (bike and walking paths and trails (88%)). A majority of open comments and workshop interactions also emphasized the valued nature of the city’s walking and biking trails. However, Hendersonville’s park walk gap is exacerbated by barriers to access. Residents indicated a need for improved connectivity between existing local and regional trails, park lands, and residences.

SIDEWALKS

A common concern throughout the engagement process revolved around the lack of maintenance and development of sidewalks. Connectivity can be increased in a variety of ways including traffic calming, sidewalk repairs, curb ramp access, and crosswalk development to promote safe, universal access.

BIKE LANES

Many of the system’s users utilize the bike trails in and around Hendersonville. Engagement highlighted the need for better access to all parks with safe bike lanes, as well as the need to close the gaps between existing bike trails and those of adjacent communities. The city is constantly working towards improving bicycle connections through updates to traffic regulation ordinances and bike specific plans. Recommendations incorporate previous efforts in addition to modern best practices and community input.

TRANSIT

In addition to sidewalks and biking, transit is another component of connectivity for Hendersonville residents. Public transit is a key part of a well-balanced transportation system as it provides an easier, passive mobility option to access parks and open spaces. A consideration for existing transit is identifying

gaps in connectivity between the bus stop and parks or open spaces. These areas are opportunities for prioritized additional trails or dedicated routes to service parks and trailheads.

GREENWAYS

Leveraging the existing network of already publicly-owned ditches and easements, provides an opportunity to create interconnected pathways that seamlessly link parks and open space, offering residents and visitors an accessible, connected greenway system. Hendersonville can transform underutilized spaces into vibrant pedestrian corridors. These pathways not only offer a functional means of connectivity but also serve as green corridors, promoting biodiversity and creating a more environmentally sustainable urban environment. Hendersonville has an opportunity to expand on existing and underway plans, exhibiting a commitment to forward thinking approaches through transforming mundane spaces into vibrant greenways. The Greenway Plan in the Appendix further describes a vision for a connected system.

SAFE ROUTES TO PARKS

The planning and engagement process highlighted the public interest in improving walkable, rollable and bikeable connections to Hendersonville’s parks. A Safe Routes to Parks program would focus City efforts on making it easier for the Hendersonville community to safely and comfortably reach parks without having to drive.

Overcoming these challenges will require extensive and coordinated work from public and private partners to retrofit existing rights-of-way, expand the greenway system, and implement Complete Streets design principles in future road projects. These efforts for safe routes to parks should begin within the half-

mile radius of existing and future park sites and trailheads.

Because that last half-mile to parks and trailheads can be so important for access—the Plan proposes that Hendersonville launches a Parks Walk Audit program. Community leaders, residents, City staff and elected officials would get together to walk the half-mile radius of existing and future park sites; make note of needed improvements; and develop a strategy of short- and long-term investments to improve safe routes to specific parks. The Walk Audit program could be piloted at parks located in Priority Investment Zones, with a focus on parks serving nearby populations of children or seniors.

There is an opportunity to align this effort with the actions recommended in Hendersonville’s Walk Hendo Plan to pool resources and expertise and coordinate future planning and capital improvement projects to realize a more connected and accessible parks system.

ELIMINATING BARRIERS TO USE

ACCESSIBILITY

Many of Hendersonville’s existing parks lack basic accessibility features, such as clear wayfinding signage or ADA-accessible entries and paths. Park improvements and reinvestment projects should focus on bringing parks up to ADA requirements as a minimum standard for accessibility. The action matrix calls for a Universal and Inclusive Design Audit and Feasibility Study of existing parks

to capture the scope of the challenge and prioritize improvements.

The table below calls out basic principles for universal park design—park design that accommodates and welcomes visitors of diverse ages, abilities, backgrounds and experiences. ADA standards are technical in nature and often result in spaces that are still very challenging for people with disabilities to

access. Applying universal design principles across all projects creates more inclusive spaces and allow for people of all abilities to experience and participate in public life.

ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS IN PARKS WITH COMPASSION AND DIGNITY

Park systems are grappling with how best to serve the unhoused people who seek refuge in public parks and outdoor spaces, as a national homelessness crisis is exacerbated by issues such as poverty and low wages, mental health disorders, COVID-19 and a shortage of affordable housing. The Plan recommends that Hendersonville Public Works collaborate with the City’s Community Development Department to study the issue and to identify the role of the parks and recreation system within a broader coordinated effort to combat homelessness in Hendersonville. There are no simple solutions for a complex problem that extends well beyond the borders of our parks, but there are best practices for how park spaces and park staff can promote a feeling of safety for all and serve unhoused parks users with care, compassion and dignity.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- 1 Welcome all park visitors with open park edges, clearly marked and ADA-accessible entries, and safe connections to nearby transit stops, intersections and other community destinations.
- 2 Plant and maintain trees and plants to provide shade, wildlife habitat and beauty while preserving visibility.
- 3 Provide park amenities that are desired by the community and designed for visitors of all physical and cognitive abilities.
- 4 Follow design principles—such as open sight lines, active edges and high-quality lighting—that promote real and perceived safety.
- 5 Offer a variety of spaces—open and enclosed, vibrant and peaceful, programmed and passive—for activity and rest, to serve visitors of diverse ages, interests, abilities and sensory experiences.
- 6 Maintain park spaces and facilities to keep them safe from hazards and address trash and overgrown and invasive plants.

CONNECTING PEOPLE TO INFORMATION

In the citywide survey, when asked about the barriers that prevent them from visiting Hendersonville parks more often, ‘lack of information’ was the second most common among participants.

Park agencies across the country utilize a variety of tactics and strategies to market, promote and communicate with constituents, residents, participants and visitors. Industry best practices encompass a variety of marketing and communication channels, with agencies tailoring communication to best meet local needs and cultural practices. Not all channels will be effective or desired at specific locations and are selected and utilized to best meet the needs of local cities and target audiences.

Examples of marketing channels and tactics include, but are not limited to:

- Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, You Tube, etc.)
- Online Digital Advertising (i.e., Google ads, Groupon, Travel Zoo, etc.)
- Blogs and Podcasts
- Analytics & Reporting
- Traditional Advertising (print, newspaper, radio, television, specialty, etc.)
- E-blast/E-Mail Communications
- Digital Signage (i.e. television screens within facilities, scoreboards, etc.)
- Events and Activation

ACCESS ACTION ITEMS

Each of the Key Goals are supported by a series of specific actions with associated entities and timelines, intended to offer a roadmap for how and when the City and its partners can achieve the vision of the Parks and Greenspace Plan.

Chapter 9: Implementation offers more details about partnership and funding recommendations.

Table 4: Action Items Matrix / Access

			TIMEFRAME				
#	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	Year 1	Short Term (2-5 Years)	Mid Term (Years 5-10)	Long Term (11-20 Years)	Ongoing
GOAL #1: Launch a Safe Routes to Parks program, improving access to the parks and greenspace system.							
A1.1	Coordinate with Hendersonville's Engineering Department and other City departments to identify funding sources and begin collaborative planning and design for projects that are needed to overcome significant barriers to non-motorized transportation, such as over/ undercrossings of major roads and railroads, streams and ridges.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Community Development, Engineering, Henderson County Health, NCDOT		●			●
A1.2	Coordinate with other City departments and other entities to align with the Walk Hendo Plan and other transportation plans to prioritize connections between parks and open space, residences, schools, and grocery stores to advance connectivity.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Community Development, Engineering, Henderson County Health, NCDOT		●			●
A1.3	Coordinate with other City departments to build off the ADA Transition Plan to implement safe routes to parks and greenway access points. As part of future updates, consider ADA 'Walk Audits' where community leaders, residents, City staff and elected officials convene to walk existing routes to parks, make note of needed improvements, and create short- and long-term strategies for improving connectivity and access. Consider launching the program in Priority Investment Zone communities, particularly at neighborhood parks in areas with high rates of children or seniors.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Community Development, Engineering, Henderson County Health, NCDOT		●			●
A1.4	Implement appropriate pedestrian signalization strategies to ensure safe pedestrian movement around park properties. Add signs and navigation cues as needed for pedestrians to easily navigate the park area.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Community Development, Engineering, NCDOT		●			

			TIMEFRAME				
#	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	Year 1	Short Term (2-5 Years)	Mid Term (Years 5-10)	Long Term (11-20 Years)	Ongoing
GOAL #2: Reduce park access gaps through acquisition or partnerships.							
A2.1	Prioritize pursuing land acquisition of vacant, redevelopable lots, or access easements, within identified walkshed gaps to introduce additional parks and pedestrian access in proximity to residential areas or existing public service facilities.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Community Development, Admin, Legal					●
A2.2	Partner with Henderson County and other local organizations to share or acquire underutilized spaces and introduce recreational opportunities.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Community Development, Henderson County					●
A2.3	Prioritize acquisition of park land greater than 2 acres that will increase access to and support future goals in the development of neighborhood and community parks with desired amenities in identified areas of service gaps.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Community Development, Admin, Legal					●
A2.4	Collaborate to realize a connected greenway and regional trail system to connect Hendersonville to Asheville, Brevard, Spartanburg, and beyond.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Community Development, Henderson County, Conserving Carolina					●
GOAL #3: Ensure parks are accessible to users of all abilities.							
A3.1	Develop a Universal and Inclusive Design Audit and Feasibility Study of existing park and sites— including curb ramps, sidewalk and path conditions, park feature accessibility, amenities and signage—to identify and prioritize improvements.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Community Development, Engineering		●			
A3.2	Work with City and external partners to ensure all online and physical communication materials are accessible and multilingual. Use language-neutral communication (i.e. widely recognizable icons) wherever possible.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Community Development, Communications		●			

#	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME				
			Year 1	Short Term (2-5 Years)	Mid Term (Years 5-10)	Long Term (11-20 Years)	Ongoing
A3.3	Identify locations for additional playgrounds that meet universal design criteria. Ensure that universal design principles are integrated within new park enhancements whenever possible. Increase awareness of universal design efforts through a community awareness campaign.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Community Development, Communications			●		
A3.4	Design spaces in all improved and new parks to form different visual and auditory site experiences and to serve the needs of visitors with sensory sensitivity.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Community Development, Engineering					●
GOAL #4: Create safe park environments year-round and improve perceptions of security.							
A4.1	Engage community members and park users to better understand safety concerns. Utilize this information to design strategies to address concerns.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Community Development	●				
A4.2	Perform a park safety audit to evaluate the relative safety of parks and greenspace areas. Involve community members in the assessment of the physical environment in terms of fear of crime and safety concerns. The findings from the audits will inform the action plan to enhance park safety.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Community Development, Police		●			
A4.3	Consider, thorough conversations with community members, measures such as a security camera program for parks and greenspaces with crime related issues.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Community Development, IT		●			
GOAL #5: Connect people to information about their park and greenspace system to increase visitation.							
A5.1	Consider updates to the City's webpage on parks with a focus on user-friendly access to up-to-date information about park sites, events and volunteer opportunities.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Administration, Communications	●				●
A5.2	Complete an analysis of marketing and communication resources to identify the desired target market and the best suited tactics. Evaluate strategy on a regular interval to increase reach and engagement among targeted audiences.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Administration, Communications,	●				●

#	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME				
			Year 1	Short Term (2-5 Years)	Mid Term (Years 5-10)	Long Term (11-20 Years)	Ongoing
A5.3	Develop a professionally driven signage and universal design wayfinding strategy for the entire parks and greenspace system that reflects the City's brand and helps people find their way to and around the City's parks.	Lead: Administration, Communications, Public Works Partner(s): Henderson County, Non-profits	●				
A5.4	Establish an online dashboard to track performance metrics, provide transparency and build trust as projects and action items are implemented.	Lead: Administration Partner(s): Public Works		●			●

5

INCLUSIVITY



INCLUSIVITY



Committing to fairness and the premise that everyone deserves access to a great public park.

INCLUSIVITY KEY GOALS

- 1

Promote inclusion in park spaces, facilities and events.
- 2

Honor the culture, storytelling, art and history of traditionally marginalized communities.
- 3

Require that all new park development and existing park improvement projects are driven by a robust and community-based engagement and design process.
- 4

Incorporate anti-displacement strategies as part of park design and engagement processes.

INCLUSIVE PARKS FOR ALL

Inclusivity within the parks and open space system is a commitment to fairness and the premise that everyone deserves access to a great public park.

For Hendersonville’s parks and greenspaces, inclusivity means that the system is tailored to meet the unique needs of all Hendersonville residents and park users, ensuring that:

- The park system **serves all ages, incomes, abilities, genders and cultural identities.**
- Each City park is **equipped and maintained** to be well-loved and well-used by its neighbors.
- Sidewalks, bike paths and greenways are provided and designated so **all residents can easily reach parks.**
- There are **no longer disparities in the quantity or conditions of parks** depending on where you live.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach for each place. Proposed recommendations and actions seek to create a parks and greenspace system with amenities and activation that are accessible, inclusive, and welcoming for all.

VULNERABILITY INDICATORS

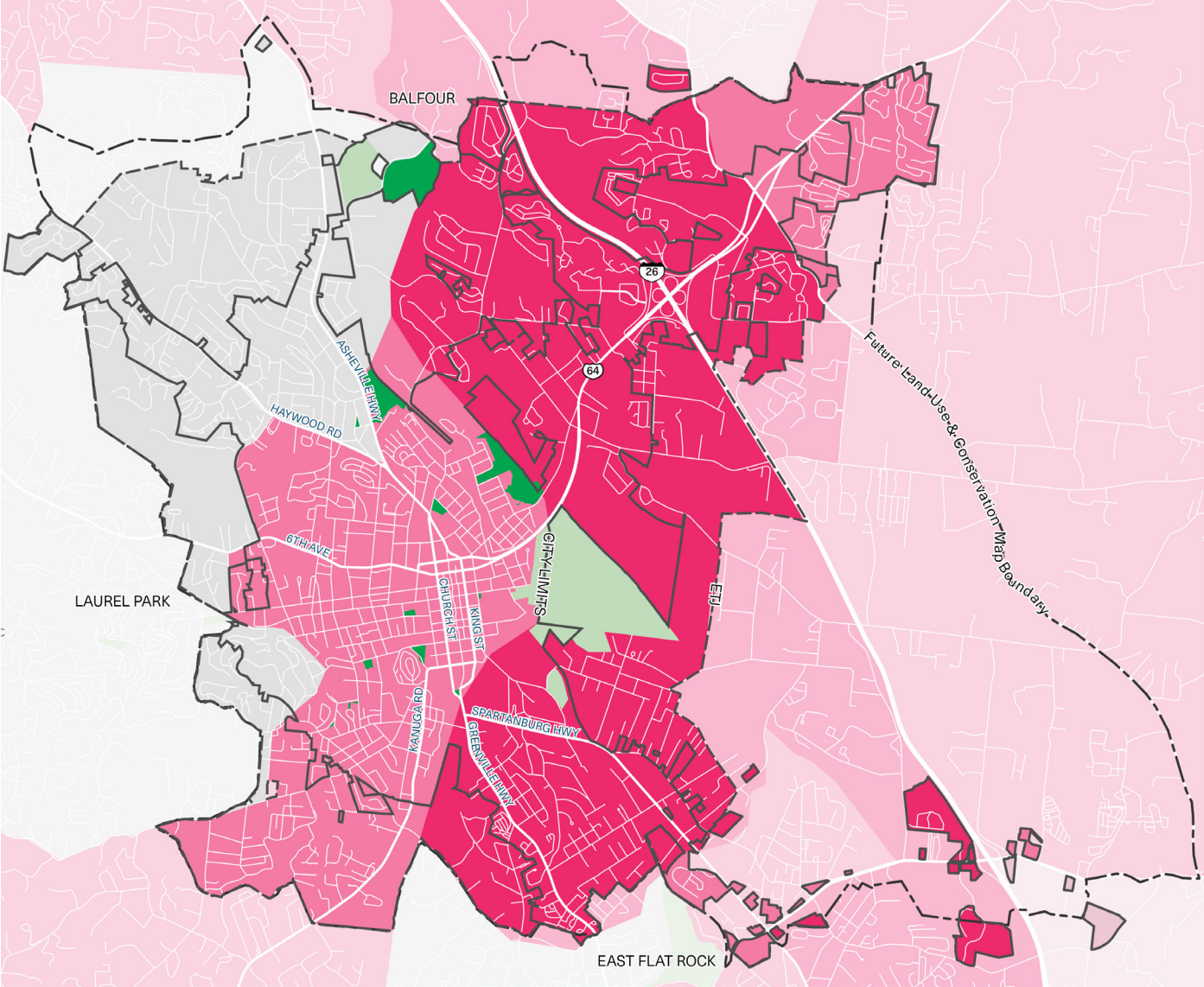
The identification of Priority Investment Zones establishes one of the prioritization criteria for determining where projects and investments are recommended in the Parks and Greenspace Plan.

The Center for Disease Control’s (CDC) Social Vulnerability Index assembles composite data to document levels of vulnerability for populations at the census-tract level. The index uses 16 variables, outlined below, to identify areas with a concentration of individuals who may be more vulnerable to both episodic and ongoing social or economic disruptions. Disaggregating the criteria in the index can assist with tailoring improvements to meet the needs of individuals in these areas.

Table 5: Social Vulnerability Variables, CDC

Socioeconomic Status	Below 150% poverty	Racial and Ethnic Minority Status	Hispanic/Latino (any race)
	Unemployed		Black/African American
	Housing cost burden		Asian
	No high school diploma		American Indian/Alaska Native
	No health insurance		Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
Household Characteristics	Aged 65 and older	Housing Type and Transportation	Two or more
	Aged 17 and younger		Multi-unit structures
	Persons with a disability		Mobile homes
	Single-parent households		Crowding
	English language proficiency		No vehicle
			Group quarters

PRIORITY INVESTMENT ZONES



LEGEND

- Existing Park: City/Other Public
- CDC Social Vulnerability Index (SVI)
 - 1 (Most Vulnerable)
 - 0.5 - 0.75
 - 0.25 - 0.75
 - <0.25 (Least Vulnerable)

SOURCES: State of North Carolina DOT, Esri, HERE, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, US Census Bureau, USDA



HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Park access and utilization are determinants of public health. More time spent in parks and green spaces can help individuals fight against mental health issues like depression, anxiety and stress. Park access and utilization also encourages physical activity, whether it be a moderate stroll or an intense hike.

The body of evidence demonstrating the health and wellness benefits of community parks and greenspace are well-documented by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA).

PEDESTRIAN LOOPS AND TRAILS

Public input revealed that residents want more multi-use paved and unpaved trails. Adding amenities in existing parks and any future park developments that encourage recreational and fitness walking or rolling will increase the level of service across the parks and recreation system. Hendersonville should look for opportunities to enhance and/or formalize trails that provide recreational opportunities and are used frequently by community members when not in conflict with environmental or wildlife management goals. Look for opportunities to add loop walks or nature trails to new and existing parks, both paved and unpaved.

THE ROLE OF PARKS IN FOOD SECURITY AND ACCESS

Nationally, park and recreation agencies serve as one of the leading providers of healthy meals and nutrition education to children and families. Through U.S. Department of Agriculture federally funded child nutrition and older adult programs, 47 percent of agencies provide nutrition education and 37 percent of agencies provide meals. In alignment with NRPA's Community Wellness Hub vision and building off the existing food security efforts across the park and recreation field, park

and recreation professionals are advancing and integrating new approaches to increase community-wide access to healthy food.

Community gardens provide residents the opportunity to grow their own fruits and vegetables, increasing access and affordability. Cities can help establish community gardens by identifying and purchasing viable sites for gardens, providing water for irrigation, and necessary infrastructure as a one-time capital expense. Some cities also provide organizational structure for community gardens as a strategy for long-term survival by creating a municipal community garden program and partnering with non-profits to build and maintain the gardens. Other cities have supported community gardens through resources such as a tool lending library and compost center.

During public engagement, community members expressed a desire to see more community gardens and edible landscaping in Hendersonville. Currently, located adjacent to Sullivan Park in the historic 7th Avenue District of Hendersonville, community members and the City have partnered to secure funds through grants for the Brooklyn Community Garden.

ANTI-DISPLACEMENT

During the engagement process, the planning team heard from community members that they are concerned about the threats posed to existing communities by growth and development and the resulting gentrification and investment-driven displacement that can occur. There is a growing body of research devoted to 'green gentrification'—the effect of new park and greenway development in driving up rents and home values, forcing out longtime residents who can no longer afford to live in the neighborhood they have called home.

Neighborhood change and new investment can affect communities in diverse and complicated ways, and persistent disinvestment can just as easily lead to displacement.

The Plan recommends developing a multidisciplinary strategy that is unique to Hendersonville. By working with existing communities and being proactive with housing and economic development programs, the City can help ensure that park and greenway system improvements benefit rather than displace longtime residents.

ENGAGEMENT AND DESIGN TOOLKIT

Great neighborhood park design is not design-driven—it results from a robust community visioning process that captures exactly the kinds of activities, facilities, amenities, and ‘look and feel’ the community wants from its park. Designers translate this vision into site plans and material proposals that get vetted again with neighborhood residents, to work collaboratively toward a final design that captures broad community support.

The plan recommends that the City and its partners develop a neighborhood park engagement and design toolkit that can streamline this process while ensuring a baseline quality standard for both community engagement and neighborhood park design and amenities.

The development of reusable survey and activity templates could help to jumpstart these processes, provide basic quality control, and free up resources that otherwise would be spent on process and material planning to be focused elsewhere—community-specific outreach, stipends for artists and community leaders, and community event expenses such as meals, entertainment, childcare and translation services.



The Budget Game (top) invites community members to distribute limited resources to the park features they value most. Visual preference boards (center) allow people to vote on park elements and aesthetics. The Chip Game (bottom) allows the community to place the park elements they want on the actual park site—when overlaid, the resulting heat map shows the kinds of features that residents want, and where they want them.

SAMPLE - NEW PARK ENGAGEMENT BUDGET GAME

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK ‘BUDGET GAME’ OPTIONS

- ☐ Picnic pavilion
- ☐ Nature play
- ☐ Splash pad
- ☐ Skatespot features
- ☐ Dog run features
- ☐ Community garden
- ☐ Soccer goals
- ☐ Basketball court
- ☐ Pickleball court
- ☐ Tennis court
- ☐ Pump track
- ☐ Stage/Amphitheater

BASE AMENITIES AT ALL NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

- ☒ Restrooms
- ☒ Water fountains
- ☒ Seating
- ☒ Picnic tables
- ☒ Public art
- ☒ Dark Sky Friendly lighting
- ☒ Playground
- ☒ Fitness equipment
- ☒ Walking loop
- ☒ Flexible lawn
- ☒ Wayfinding and interpretive signage
- ☒ Trash and recycling

INCLUSIVITY ACTION ITEMS

Each of the Key Goals are supported by a series of specific actions with associated entities and timelines, intended to offer a roadmap for how and when the City and its partners can achieve the vision of the Parks and Greenspace Plan.

Chapter 9: Implementation offers more details about partnership and funding recommendations.

Table 6: Action Items Matrix / Inclusivity

#ACTIONRESPONSIBILITY			TIMEFRAME				
			Year 1	Short Term (2-5 Years)	Mid Term (Years 5-10)	Long Term (11-20 Years)	Ongoing
GOAL #1: Promote inclusion in park spaces, facilities and events.							
E1.1	Establish mechanisms for ongoing feedback and communication between city officials and community members, ensuring that input from individuals experiencing barriers is integrated into decision-making processes at all stages.	Lead: Public Works, Communications	●				●
E1.2	When replacing elements in poor condition or at the end of their life cycle, explore options that follow Universal Design Guidelines.	Lead: Public Works, Engineering	●				●
GOAL #2: Honor the culture, storytelling, art and history of traditionally marginalized communities.							
E2.1	Co-create definitions of welcoming, safety, belonging and inclusion with community members, particularly those from historically underserved communities. Work with community members to identify important cultural landscapes to be celebrated within the parks and greenspace system.	Lead: Public Works, Administration, Communications, DEI Board	●				●
E2.2	Honor Indigenous stories and language through partnerships, ceremonies, land management, signage and interpretation and proactive community engagement.	Lead: Public Works, Administration, Communications Partner(s): Community organizations	●				●
E2.3	Explore financially sustainable options for the creation and enjoyment of public art in park spaces that honors the diverse heritages and histories of the community.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Arts Council, Community Development		●			
E2.4	Revise current parks naming policy to provide a comprehensive process for naming (and renaming) parks and park features.	Lead: City Council, Community Development, Public Works		●			

#	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME				
			Year 1	Short Term (2-5 Years)	Mid Term (Years 5-10)	Long Term (11-20 Years)	Ongoing
GOAL #3: Require that all new park development and existing park improvement projects are driven by a robust and community-based engagement and design process.							
E3.1	Organize community listening sessions in diverse neighborhoods to hear directly from residents about their experiences, challenges, and needs. Conduct focus groups or pulse surveys of residents in public housing and Priority Investment Zone communities to understand their recreation needs. Utilize virtual engagement platforms, such as online forums, social media groups, and virtual town halls, to facilitate discussions and gather input from individuals who may face physical, social, or economic barriers to participation in face-to-face meetings.	Lead: Public Works, Council, Admin, Communications, Community Development		●			●
E3.2	In continuing the Parks and Greenspace Advisory Committee, look to include representation for youth and older adult needs. Consider developing a Youth Advisory Council to provide guidance for parks planning and leadership opportunities for youth. Similarly, consider coordinating with the Council on Aging of Henderson County to develop an Older Adult Advisory Council.	Lead: Council, Community Development, Public Works Partner(s): Communications, Henderson County	●				●
E3.3	For major reinvestment projects and new development projects, expand transparent budgeting processes that empower residents, including those experiencing barriers, to directly influence how public funds are allocated.	Lead: Budget , Public Works Partner(s): Communications, Community Development		●			●
GOAL #4: Incorporate anti-displacement strategies as part of park design and engagement processes.							
E4.1	Coordinate with other City Departments to create a working group of City, institutional and community-based partners to study park-related displacement, research best practices from other cities, identify Hendersonville communities at risk of displacement, and develop multidisciplinary anti-displacement and equitable development strategies.	Lead: Community Development Partner(s): Communications, Public Works, DEI Board		●			
E4.2	Work with City and community-based partners to proactively implement parks-related anti-displacement strategies in advance of park planning and development before investors recognize the potential of major new park projects. This may include strategies such as Community Benefits Agreements, targeted affordable housing programs, homeowner and homebuyer financial assistance programs, job development and small business support, and value capture strategies.	Lead: Community Development Partner(s): Communications, Public Works, DEI Board					●

6

NATURE



NATURE



Protecting, preserving and enhancing our natural features and resources.

NATURE KEY GOALS

1

Integrate with other citywide sustainability and stormwater initiatives to promote the parks system as green infrastructure.

2

Increase nature interaction opportunities in parks and public greenspaces.

3

Preserve and enhance the city's tree canopy.

4

Dedicate and prioritize preservation of natural open space.

RESILIENCY

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

The environmental health and scenic qualities of Hendersonville are threatened with global and local stressors. The rapid loss of biodiversity (or richness of different types of plants and animals) is a global phenomenon. To combat this loss and achieve sustainability goals, a majority of parks and recreation agencies are planting trees, transtioning to native and climate-adaptable plants, and updating and retrofitting buildings and other infrastructure.

These actions recognize the environmental benefits of thriving natural areas, such as supporting diverse wildlife, providing resilience to natural disasters, and improved air and water quality. This chapter provides direction on how Hendersonville can implement tactics aimed at preservation and conservation throughout the parks and greenspace system.

The Trust for Public Land's Climate Smart Cities program recommends four objectives for parks to provide multi-benefit climate solutions:

- **Cool:** Shady green spaces reduce the heat island effect to protect people from high temperatures.
- **Absorb:** Green infrastructure practices can be utilized for parks and streetscapes to absorb rain, reduce flooding, and recharge drinking water.
- **Protect:** Strategically placed and managed parks and natural lands.
- **Connect:** Trail links between park spaces provide more sustainable transportation opportunities and connect destinations.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESILIENCE

The City should carefully plan for environmental impacts and implement green infrastructure projects to mitigate existing issues and as intensive recreation amenities

are renovated and added to the system. Green infrastructure can include rain gardens, constructed wetlands, vegetated swales, stream restoration, rainwater harvesting, green roofs and more. When properly designed, these systems provide ecological benefits as well as recreational and aesthetic benefits, reduce flooding while saving the City money on stormwater management costs over time.

FLOOD HAZARDS

The majority of Hendersonville's parkland is within the floodplain and is considered susceptible to flooding according to FEMA.

Due to their susceptibility, these parks should be considered for increased flooding maintenance and green infrastructure, transformation into natural areas, or site designs specific to flood adaptation.

Site selection for development must consider these floodways and the benefits that strategically designed greenspaces can have for the city. By locating proposed greenways along these corridors, this plan supports a citywide framework for protecting critical habitat and keeping future development out of floodplains.

HEALING AND RESTORATION

In addition to assessing the lands that should be protected, this plan must consider lands that have opportunities for restoration. Sites that have been contaminated by previous industrial use can be reclaimed, cleaned, and restored as iconic public parks. Streams that were once were buried in underground pipes—aging infrastructure that will require significant investment to replace or repair—can be daylighted and restored to add to the city's system of greenways.

Successful examples abound, and these approaches to park conversion are becoming more common as available urban land grows

more sparse and as momentum grows to correct past environmental injustices.

ADVOCACY AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Parks are perfect places to learn about land conservation, green infrastructure and cultivate a culture of environmental stewardship. Stewards and volunteers are key to the success of nature conservation-focused efforts—helping to establish, maintain and amplify educational outreach.

There is a particularly strong imperative for this kind of programming to engage children and youth, low income communities, communities of color, linguistically isolated communities, and older adults. Stewardship entails a comprehensive, sustainable and adaptable approach to land management that secures a property or projects environmental or conservation values over time.

TREE CANOPY PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT

Trees provide many benefits to the community and to the environment, improving air quality, carbon reduction, stormwater runoff, shade and reducing the effect of heat islands. Hendersonville's Tree Board advises City Council on tree preservation and protection on new developments and public properties in addition to other mandates.

A Tree Canopy Study was conducted in 2023 to serve as a baseline understanding and avoid tree canopy loss. Hendersonville should explore setting a minimum tree canopy goal across the park system and leverage programs and partnerships to plan and care for trees. Some sites may not be able to meet minimums due to site conditions or amenities. Begin evaluating existing park projects within Priority Investment Zones and areas that are indicated as high priority in Hendersonville's overall plans for urban forestry.

PRESERVATION

PRESERVATION OF NATURAL OPEN SPACE

Natural areas are properties that are maintained in their natural state and help preserve significant views and provide wildlife sanctuaries. These spaces were noted time and again as cherished assets to preserve by the residents of Hendersonville. The city currently has limited land dedicated to natural areas and open spaces, creating opportunities for the city to expand passive recreation through trails, interpretive facilities, historic and cultural exhibits, nature observation, photography, and off-trail pedestrian and bicycle use. The city has the opportunity to acquire more vacant and underutilized land to expand natural areas.

Public support for conservation, preservation, and protection of natural lands is clear throughout community input. The opportunity to transform some developed parks back to their natural state also exists. Tactics may include turf grass being replaced with more native and drought tolerant vegetation and pollinator gardens.

Also highlighted through engagement was the community’s desire to continue to conserve lands to link and create a contiguous green network. **Hendersonville, like most cities, must be strategic in land acquisition for these purposes. It is crucial to consider the balance between the need for development in the community and conservation.** Efforts should be made to direct conservation to the locations most beneficial towards environmental and management goals.

 Existing Park: City/Other Public

Environmental Protection Suitability

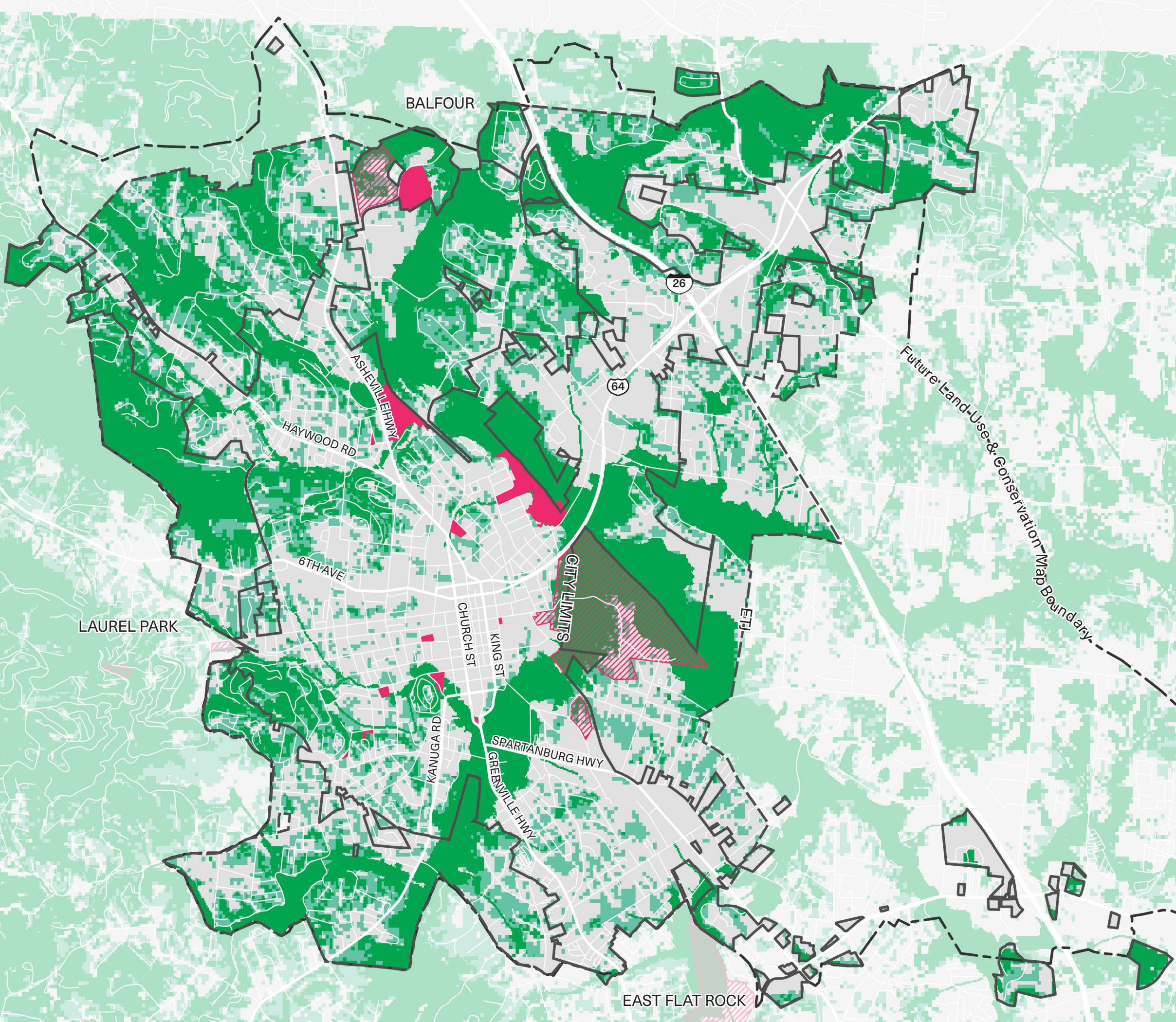
 High

 Medium

 Low

0 0.25 0.5

1 MILE



PARKLAND DEDICATION

STRENGTHENING PARKLAND DEDICATION REQUIREMENTS

Given public demand, projected growth and a changing climate, there is an urgent need for park and open space conservation and expansion in Hendersonville. The City must develop a diverse toolkit to help public and private park and conservation partners protect land for current and future generations.

The Plan recommends the Public Works department works with Community Development and other City departments and community stakeholders to develop this toolkit.

Proactive steps to acquire lands for future parks is a strategic move in anticipation of population growth, increasing land costs, and limited availability. To fill the service gap for existing residents and provide service as the City population grows, additional parks, open spaces and related facilities are planned to be acquired and built by the City as well as through ongoing partnerships with other jurisdictions and entities.

Lacking an increase in the City’s budget that is allocated toward capital improvements for parks, it will be challenging for Hendersonville to dedicate funds to system expansion while maintaining existing parklands. Partnerships with the development community to succeed in strategic acquisitions are therefore critical.

A mitigation/exaction program for the city should reflect the types of facilities the City will acquire and develop. Therefore, the level of service outlined and discussed reflects parks and open space facilities owned and maintained by the City of Hendersonville—and which the City will continue to acquire and develop (as opposed to Henderson County or other entities).

General suggested categories based on suggested park classifications include:

- Neighborhood Parks
- Pocket Parks
- Community Parks
- Open Space
- Signature Parks
- Greenways (Trails and Trailheads)

Fees or fees in lieu should reflect actual costs to acquire and develop parks and open space facilities.

TYPES OF EXACTIONS

Impact fees, land dedications, and fees in lieu are all types of exactions. Exactions can be imposed as a condition for approval of land development and relate to a public need generated by the development itself. They are imposed on a one-time basis.

Land dedication can be imposed by a local government on a development applicant to ensure land is available for public facilities—including parks and open space—and that they will be provided in a timely manner to serve the new development. The amount of land required must meet the needs generated by the new residents. The local government may also require infrastructure improvements needed for the new facilities.

Payment of a fee-in-lieu of land dedication may happen when there are site constraints within the development, or the location is not ideal for the jurisdiction. When collecting a fee-in-lieu, the amount should be equivalent to the value of land that would have been dedicated and any required infrastructure improvements.

CURRENT APPROACH IN HENDERSONVILLE

The City of Hendersonville has established requirements for parkland dedication within their Subdivision Ordinance. The Zoning Ordinance does not currently require parkland or greenway dedication. This means that

multi-family and commercial development do not currently contribute to the system. Hendersonville does, however, have Open Space requirements that vary by Zoning District.

When a subdivision of land is developed for 30 or more single-family residential lots (including detached and attached units), they are required to dedicate a portion of the land, or pay a fee-in-lieu, for public parkland.

Current Hendersonville Parkland Dedication Amount:

- Single-family residential subdivisions of 30 or more lots shall dedicate 500 square feet of land per residential lot to the city for its use in developing public parkland.
- No credit towards required parkland dedication is given for lands mandated for preservation by state or federal requirements.
- No more than 25 percent of the total dedication requirement may be met through dedication of water areas.

This section of the Ordinance also requires specific standards for the public parkland including unity, usability, shape, location, and access.

Within the subdivision standards, the code also has requirements for greenway dedication and construction. This includes an easement of at least 50 feet wide as well as a trail of at least 10 feet in width.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

As Hendersonville continues to grow and expectations for the City park system evolves, the exaction system should evolve as well.

The following recommendations are offered:

- Revise City mitigation/exaction approach to align with future City park and open space needs.

- » Increase the land dedication amount to align with level of service standards. (For example, to meet the NRPA 12.6 acres/1,000 residents, the land dedication could be 500 square feet per dwelling unit)
- » Align the approach to match the impact to the type of facility as well as City policy capital planning and geography.
- » Consider both land dedication and contributions for improvements in the mitigation program and base costs on actual costs to acquire and develop. Eliminate the choice for cost methodology by the applicant.
- » Separate parks, schools, and other public purposes.

- Establish a structured program, but allow for flexibility.
- Establish incentives for commercial development to include parkland. This could include, but is not limited to:

- » Fast-track approvals
- » Reduced setbacks
- » Reduced parking requirements
- » Application fee reductions

- Hendersonville should also explore developing an alternative in the form of impact fees. The fee is imposed on new development on a new unit basis to pay for a portion of the costs for providing new park spaces within the project area or system-wide (based on need). The fee should account for long-term maintenance costs of public spaces and explicitly state that this would be the responsibility of the park department. Impact fees are helpful in passing costs onto new development rather than existing taxpayers.

NATURE ACTION ITEMS

Each of the Key Goals are supported by a series of specific actions with associated entities and timelines, intended to offer a roadmap for how and when the City and its partners can achieve the vision of the Parks and Greenspace Plan.

Chapter 9: Implementation offers more details about partnership and funding recommendations.

Table 7: Action Items Matrix / Nature

#	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME				
			Year 1	Short Term (2-5 Years)	Mid Term (Years 5-10)	Long Term (11-20 Years)	Ongoing
GOAL #1: Integrate with other citywide sustainability and stormwater initiatives to promote the parks system as green infrastructure.							
N1.1	Adopt park design standards that enumerate stormwater storage goals per acre by park classification for new park developments and reinvestment projects.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Stormwater		●			
N1.2	Identify new maintenance programs and technologies to address climate issues and resiliency needs (i.e. water quality, flooding, heat mitigation, air quality, etc.)	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Sustainability		●			
N1.3	Identify opportunities for low maintenance design, such as low-mow plants and native and adaptive plantings, to decrease the necessary upkeep.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Sustainability		●			
N1.4	Develop climate adaptation strategies and natural lands management practices that support high environmental quality and resilience in alignment with the City's 2024 Sustainability Strategic Plan.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Sustainability			●		
N1.5	Explore opportunities for regional partnerships and funding for urban forestry, green infrastructure and use of cool materials.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Sustainability, Stormwater, Tree Board			●		
N1.6	Continue to collaborate with Hendersonville Stormwater Department on green infrastructure projects (ex: rain gardens, green roofs, biofiltration swales) throughout parks in collaboration with those required or encouraged in street design and private development.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Stormwater, Sustainability					●

#	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME				
			Year 1	Short Term (2-5 Years)	Mid Term (Years 5-10)	Long Term (11-20 Years)	Ongoing
GOAL #2: Increase nature interaction opportunities in parks and public greenspaces.							
N2.1	Look for new opportunities to support pollinators and native landscaping/plants in parks and greenspaces.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Tree Board		●			
N2.2	Partner with Sustainability and local organizations to host workshops and seminars on topics such as environmental conservation, climate resilience, wildlife identification, or outdoor safety. Collaborate with local experts or environmental organizations to provide valuable insights.	Lead: Tree Board and ESB			●		
N2.3	Incorporate signage and exhibits to connect park users to the landscape and highlight the sustainability and conservation value of the site.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Friends of the Oklawaha					●
GOAL #3: Preserve and enhance the city’s tree canopy.							
N3.1	Establish a 50% minimum tree canopy coverage goal across the park system and leverage programs and partnerships to plan and care for trees. Evaluate existing parks and new park opportunities to increase tree coverage, contributing to the systemwide goal. Begin in Priority Investment Zones and areas that are indicated as high priority for increasing tree canopy coverage and shade.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Tree Board, Sustainability		●			
N3.2	Identify opportunities to incentivize tree planting, protection and preservation by private developers.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Tree Board, Sustainability		●			
N3.3	Evaluate current budget and workforce to determine necessary resources to accomplish tree canopy goals.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Tree Board, Sustainability		●			

#	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME				
			Year 1	Short Term (2-5 Years)	Mid Term (Years 5-10)	Long Term (11-20 Years)	Ongoing
GOAL #4: Dedicate and prioritize preservation of natural open space.							
N4.1	Coordinate across departments to review vacant or surplus landholdings to determine highest and best use, including identification of suitable lands for parks, housing and development. Repeat this exercise every three to five years.	Lead: Community Development Partner(s): Public Works	●				●
N4.2	Establish a process to collect and analyze data that will be used to determine and protect the most ecologically valuable open spaces.	Lead: Community Development Partner(s): Public Works		●			●
N4.3	Create an acquisition plan to prioritize parcels that link and create contiguous green network with goals around wildlife habitat provision, conserving and enhancing vegetation quality, groundwater recharge, and water quality management.	Lead: Community Development Partner(s): Public Works, Administration, Stormwater		●			●
N4.4	Identify ways that the Zoning Ordinance can be strengthened to protect natural areas, generate funding for parks, and encourage compatible development at park perimeters.	Lead: Community Development Partner(s): Public Works		●			
N4.5	Based on size and context, identify existing city owned properties and parks that should be dedicated as passive greenspace with stormwater, habitat, and beautification benefits rather than active recreation. Make this the first step toward a comprehensive habitat system that delivers systemwide benefits - shade, biodiversity, beauty, and clean air and water - while supporting flood mitigation and resilience.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Stormwater		●			●
N4.6	Develop an approach that applies to all new residential developments. New developments are required a) a park dedication within the development or b) if not possible due to land constraints or otherwise, the option to pay into the broader parks and recreation system via a park impact fee.	Lead: Community Development Partner(s): Legal		●			

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7

PLACE



PLACE



Amplifying local character, community vibrancy, safety and sense of place.

PLACE KEY GOALS

1

Activate parks, emphasize community and sense of place.

2

Identify new opportunities for partnerships to expand events and activations at parks and facilities.

DEFINING PLACE

SENSE OF PLACE

A park with a ‘sense of place’ has a strong identity that is deeply felt by its community and visitors. There are things about the park’s setting, context, design and day-to-day use that render the park special or unique and make it feel grounded in its community.

On the other hand, a park that is ‘placeless’ lacks these special features or a basic relationship to its surroundings—like many strip malls or cookie-cutter developments, a placeless park could be located anywhere.

PLACEMAKING AND PLACEKEEPING

Placemaking is a term used by designers, planners and advocates to describe efforts to harness the power of place. Placemaking refers to the collective imagining and design of public spaces as the heart of every community. This is a collaborative, community-driven design and programming process that identifies and builds upon the existing assets and identities of a place.

The term placemaking has also been used disingenuously as part of development projects that result in the displacement of long-time residents. In response to this, placekeeping is another term used to describe community-based projects that explicitly seek to reinforce the qualities of an existing place and its social fabric, cultural memories and lifeways.

ELEMENTS OF COMMUNITY GATHERING

MULTI-GENERATIONAL PLAY

There is opportunity to envision a system of park and outdoor spaces and programming that encourages multi-generational play. National recreation data shows a preference amongst older adults for recreational and outdoor opportunities that promote socializing and service. However, research also shows that older adults account for a small percentage of park users (4%), despite making up nearly 20% of the general population. Through offering these kinds of opportunities to Hendersonville’s population, the city’s park and greenspace system can help older adults stay healthy and active while creating a cohort of dedicated participants who act as stewards and teach environmental and recreational values to younger generations.

SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING

Directional elements are important aspects of welcoming users into a space. Wayfinding combines signage and map design, trail markers, symbols, color, and typography to help users or visitors easily navigate through a space. Users can become disoriented without proper directional signage. When asked about barriers preventing respondents from using Hendersonville’s parks and greenways more often, 27% of survey respondents selected “Information”, meaning that they are “not sure where to find good information about parks and greenway locations.” Signage can also be utilized to provide residents with information regarding the park itself and events that go on inside of the spaces.

STORYTELLING

As Hendersonville goes forward into the future and continues to grow, important historic stories, parks and public lands are at risk of being lost in the passage of time and dynamic changing of place. For youth, these stories can add an additional path to understand and appreciate green space and

civic commons. There are several means and methods to design and tell stories of the land and cultures both past and present. Tactics used may include art, recreating or restoring natural ecologies, guided walks, landscape architecture, and architecture.

PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships can play a key role in encouraging community-wide park use. Partnerships can be leveraged for fostering collaboration, pooling resources, and enhancing the overall park experience. Data shows that several large U.S. cities have a substantial backlog of deferred park maintenance. Despite efforts to fund parks locally through ballot initiatives, there is still a shortfall in many department’s financial resources available to maintain and operate existing park spaces or create new ones. Hendersonville’s Public Works Department is no different. It is important to look towards park supportive partnerships to sustain the city’s commitment to enhancing the quality of life in Hendersonville through the parks and open space system.

ACTIVATING PARKS

In a study completed by City Parks Alliance, researchers found that well-designed, well-programmed, and well-marketed parks are places where all Americans — regardless of age, gender, or ability — can be more physically active. The key to increasing park usage is well-planned activation in order to create a welcoming atmosphere and enhance the overall experience of being in a park. There is a diverse array of activation opportunities from regional events to guided tours. Even an activation tactic that is a minimal modification, such as a walking path, can have large impacts. In fact, City Parks Alliance found that in a study of nationwide parks, those with walking loops had 80% more users compared to those without loops.



Edwards Park, Hendersonville, NC

CREATING DESTINATIONS

SIGNATURE PARKS

The city has a few special, transformative features in parks that make Hendersonville’s park system distinct from other city’s systems. Because of their uniqueness, people are willing to travel to experience one-of-a-kind spaces. A destination or signature park should be designed with the intention of inviting in all community members and visitors.

Concepts to consider when planning a destination park are:

Types of play: Children have different preferences when it comes to play type. Some like to use their imagination, while others enjoy more active spaces like a playground. A space should consider these preferences and their differing equipment.

Multigenerational play: Typical parks encourage children to play and for guardians, have benches and tables to watch. Parks can break down this traditional mindset and encourages inclusive and multigenerational for the entire family to play together and enjoy the park. Play equipment should cater to all ages through appealing to a variety of ages and a range of interests.

Zones: A strategic way to incorporate multiple recreational preferences is to separate an area into different zones based on type of play or the age of anticipated users. Zones can be enforced by equipment as well as signage and visual cues. A priority of utilizing zones should be easy movement throughout and encouraging exploration of the various zones.

Themes: A theme to be used throughout the park should consider the park’s users and the local context of the area to create or enhance a unique sense of place. For instance a destination park can include names and educational landmarks based on Hendersonville’s unique history and natural environment.

DEVELOPMENT OF DESTINATIONS

The development of destination parks can take up huge resources in regards to staff, time, and money. This plan recommends a more timely, creative, profitable way to capitalize on destination spaces and expand upon parks as treasured community places. This approach is based on taking incremental steps through using low-cost experiments. Rather than spending time, money, and energy on developing permanent structures and spaces, it is recommended that experimental, temporary tactics are implemented after community desires are understood.

This allows for ideas to be efficiently implemented, assessed, then tweaked and customized based upon the community’s response. Although this approach is not for every situation, it can be a creative, locally-powered alternative to capital-heavy, top-down planning.

Another consideration for these parks is their location. Parks should be located where they will serve the most people. They should be prioritized for areas with higher density housing to reach a large portion of the community, particularly those without private open space, and particularly near Housing Authority projects. Newly developed parks will also be highly impactful when clustered with community centers, libraries and schools where joint programming is possible.



Examples of creating park placemaking from cities and leftover spaces across North America—clockwise from top: Bailey Drive Temporary Art Exhibit - Raleigh, NC; Pop-up Event - Vancouver, BC; Bridge Street Pop-up Park - Delta, BC.

PLACE ACTION ITEMS

Each of the Key Goals are supported by a series of specific actions with associated entities and timelines, intended to offer a roadmap for how and when the City and its partners can achieve the vision of the Parks and Greenspace Plan.

Chapter 9: Implementation offers more details about partnership and funding recommendations.

Table 8: Action Items Matrix / Place

# ACTION			RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME				
				Year 1	Short Term (2-5 Years)	Mid Term (Years 5-10)	Long Term (11-20 Years)	Ongoing
GOAL #1: Identify new opportunities for partnerships to expand events and activations at parks and facilities.								
P1.1	Investigate sponsorships with local businesses, medical and health organizations to implement park improvement projects that promote health and well-being.	Lead: Parks/Public Works	●					●
P1.2	Develop a program to offer rotating small-scale, seasonal pop-up park amenities such as interactive art installations, picnic tables, lounge chairs, swings, games and other colorful, joyful additions to parks.	Lead: Parks Partner(s): Public Works		●				
P1.3	Partner with the Sustainability Division to establish a community ambassador program with a focus on recruiting community leaders to develop activation and events that connect communities to parks and recreation opportunities.	Lead: Sustainability Partner(s): Community Development, Parks		●				
GOAL #2: Activate parks, emphasize community and sense of place								
P2.1	Collaborate with local organizations to expand and strengthen opportunities for third-party entities to provide small-scale, pop-up park amenities that invite social interactions.	Lead: Community Development Partner(s): Communications		●				●
P2.2	Support community art and performance in public spaces, establishing programs that provide temporary access to park and outdoor facility space, the use of open hours for informal use of performance spaces, and rotating park-based exhibits of work by up-and- coming or school-aged artists.	Lead: Parks Partner(s): Arts Council			●			●
P2.3	Incorporate artful design elements into parks that reflect the culture of the surrounding neighborhood and/or community.	Lead: Parks/Public Works Partner(s): Arts Council						●

#			RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME				
				Year 1	Short Term (2-5 Years)	Mid Term (Years 5-10)	Long Term (11-20 Years)	Ongoing
P2.4	Identify opportunities for storytelling and signage to create or enhance a sense of identity and history in parks and open spaces.	Lead: Historic Preservation Committee Partner(s): Public Works						●
P2.5	Host popular, modest scale activities in under-utilized park spaces that are well maintained to better activate and increase awareness of those park gathering spaces.	Lead: Parks Partner(s): Boards, Sustainability, HPC, Communications						●
P2.6	Collaborate with the public to better use and improve park spaces for building a sense of community and togetherness, including consideration of resources, policies, volunteer availability, maintenance, and activating different park types.	Lead: Parks Partner(s): Communications, Community Development						●

8

QUALITY

QUALITY



Setting a citywide standard for the design, construction and maintenance of high-quality parks and greenways.

QUALITY KEY GOALS

1

Rethink Parks and Greenspace Delivery in Hendersonville.

2

Invest in High-Quality Neighborhood Parks.

3

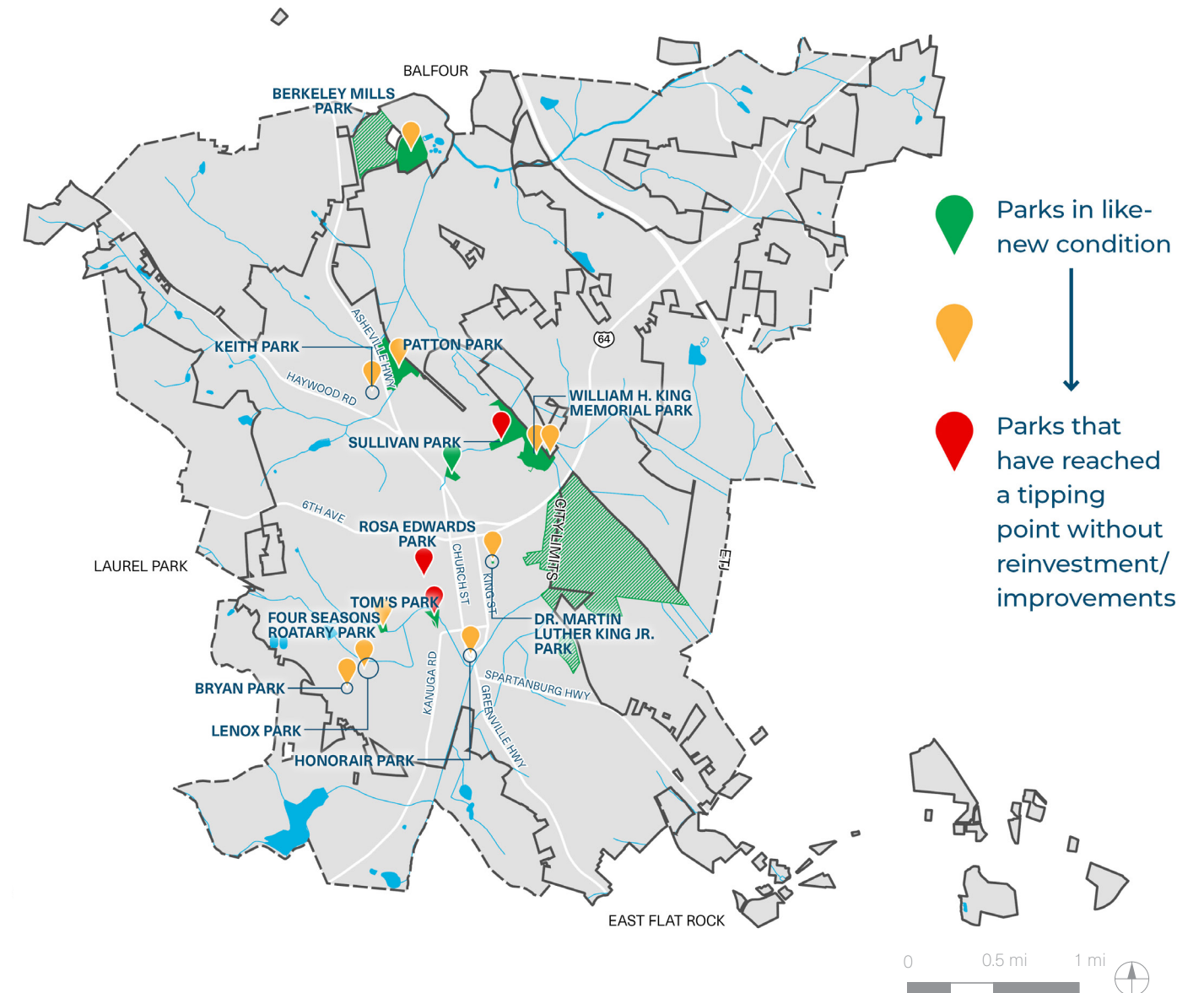
Increase and diversify park system funding in line with industry standards.

A STANDARD OF QUALITY

While most of Hendersonville's parks are generally in good condition, there are amenities that are in need of renovation and others that not up to modern standards. A few of Hendersonville's parks have destination amenities, valued regionally, and meet national standards for their quality of design and materials. On the other hand, many parks, specifically neighborhood parks, have aged infrastructure and lack basic elements, such as seating or signage. Additionally, parks with high quality amenities are not distributed evenly throughout the city. This chapter considers what makes a high quality park, such as:

- **Developing written standards** for the quality and management of all parks and greenways.
- **Reinvesting in our existing parks** to correct for the disparities in current park quality and to bring all existing parks to the set minimum standards.
- **Developing future parks with care**—ensuring that site selection, park design, and programming are driven by the standards set above in addition to a community process.
- **Securing sustainable funding and staff support** and training to ensure all existing and future parks are maintained, well-loved and well-used over time.

CONDITION ASSESSMENT



As a starting point, a quality assessment was completed. This helped establish a high-level understanding of:

- What park assets does the City have?
- What condition are they in?
- How much investment is required right now to get all the existing park assets to a good and functional condition?
- How might the City plan its investments moving forward to maintain the condition and quality of existing and future park assets?

To complete the quality assessment, the planning team set up a ArcGIS Field Maps application for Public Works staff to conduct an on-site condition rating of City-owned parks. This assessment did not take into account the number of amenities at each park, only the condition of those amenities. For instance, an open field in new condition might receive a rating of “1”, while a playground that is showing signs of wear of tear might receive a “3”. The number and distribution of amenities was considered separately.

PARKS AND GREENSPACE DELIVERY

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR FUTURE PARK PROJECTS

Clear design guidelines for new park and park reinvestment projects will guide City and partner efforts and ensure a consistent quality standard as the parks and greenspace sytem grows over time.

- 1 Spell out site selection standards, design best practices, and minimum amenity and service standards for each type of park and center classification.
- 2 Provide community engagement strategies tailored to each type of park—for example, a citywide or regional process for new Regional Parks and more focused, community-specific outreach for new or retrofitted Neighborhood Parks.
- 3 Include drawings and specifications for certain common park elements to ensure consistency and quality across the system.

MAINTENANCE

Proper maintenance is critical to the aesthetics, safety and vitality of parks. It is imperative that the City consider the quality ratings assigned during the planning process to determine where improvements should be prioritized. Maintenance will become increasingly important as the system continues to grow and existing parks continue to age.

NEW DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT STANDARDS

The Plan recommends the development of written design and management standards to ensure:

- The quality of parks, greenways and open spaces,
- The use of park amenities that are tried and true for durability and performance, and
- Clear maintenance standards and performance metrics to guide the care and long-term health of city’s parks and greenspaces.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Plan recommends developing a series of written design guidelines to ensure that future parks are developed and existing parks retrofitted according to a consistent quality standard.

These guidelines can set clear expectations for park designers, City staff, partners and contractors and will help prevent the continued growth of disparities in quality and service across the parks and greenspace system.

These guidelines should be developed with insight from Public Works staff, the Parks and Greenspace Advisory Committee, key City partners, and other local public and private park providers. The effort should be led by a local landscape architect familiar with the diversity of the city’s park types and landscapes.

MANAGEMENT PLANS AND PERFORMANCE METRICS

The Plan recommends an updated and expanded series of written management plans and best management practices to guide staff and volunteers in the ongoing care and stewardship of Hendersonville’s park sites and critical landscapes.

The management plans and practices should be developed with leadership from Sustainability Division, with insight from other Public Works staff, the Parks and Greenspace Advisory Committee, key City partners, other local public and private park providers and regional environmental advocates and researchers.

PARKS AND GREENSPACE MANAGEMENT PLANS

Management plans can help to ensure the long-term care and quality of parks and to make a well-defined case for investing in maintenance staff, training and support.

- 1 Incorporate recommendations, benchmarks and performance metrics within all updated management plans, particularly landscape and natural area management plans.
- 2 Develop overarching management plans and practices—including timetables for seasonal tasks and anticipated repair and replacement of park assets—for each type of park or facility classification.
- 3 Develop park-specific management plans and timetables for all existing parks, and as part of all future park projects.
- 4 Support maintenance staff through regular training, professional development and upward mobility.
- 5 Explore organization of maintenance staff by zone and specialty to develop expertise and instill a sense of ownership.
- 6 Strengthen our system for staff to coordinate park stewardship with volunteers.
- 7 Develop a system to monitor the condition and status of parks and recreation sites, including with public crowdsourcing data.

QUALITY ACTION ITEMS

Each of the Key Goals are supported by a series of specific actions with associated entities and timelines, intended to offer a roadmap for how and when the City and its partners can achieve the vision of the Parks and Greenspace Plan.

Chapter 9: Implementation offers more details about partnership and funding recommendations.

Table 9: Action Items Matrix / Quality

#ACTIONRESPONSIBILITY			TIMEFRAME				
			Year 1	Short Term (2-5 Years)	Mid Term (Years 5-10)	Long Term (11-20 Years)	Ongoing
GOAL #1: Rethink Parks and Greenspace Delivery in Hendersonville.							
Q1.1	Develop written design guidelines & park amenity standards for all park classification types to establish a service standard for new park and park improvement projects.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Engineering	●				
Q1.2	Develop written management plans for all park classification types to establish a baseline standard for maintenance.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s):	●				
Q1.3	Create a Parks and Greenspace Advisory Committee to provide guidance and oversight of Hendersonville parks and greenspaces and ongoing plan implementation.	Lead: Council Partner(s): Administration, Public Works/Parks, Communications	●				
Q1.4	Utilize existing Cityworks asset management software and implement a Total Asset Management approach to track and adequately budget for existing and future park maintenance needs.	Lead: Public Works	●				
Q1.5	Create a dedicated Hendersonville Parks and Greenspace Department. Consider a Parks and Greenspace Division within Public Works Department as a transition step.	Lead: Admin Partner(s): Budget, Council, Finance, Public Works		●			
Q1.6	Define and expand viable volunteer opportunities that support the stewardship, and/or care of park spaces for both one-time volunteer groups and on-going volunteers (e.g., adopt programs and “Friends of-” Groups).	Lead: Sustainability Partner(s): Public Works		●			●
Q1.7	Publish an annual “State of the Parks” report that compiles Key Performance Indicators and reporting to paint a picture of citywide parks and build public trust and transparency.	Lead: Public Works		●			
Q1.8	Conduct an organization chart and job description review to ensure they reflect current position requirements and staffing as the park system grows.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Human Resources			●		●

#			RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME				
				Year 1	Short Term (2-5 Years)	Mid Term (Years 5-10)	Long Term (11-20 Years)	Ongoing
Q1.9	Update the Priority Invest Zone mapping tool every five years to ensure data inputs reflect community needs and priorities.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Engineering, Community Development				●		●
Q1.10	Use the Project Prioritization Model tool as part of annual budgeting and the development of Capital Improvement Plan requests. Update community-supporting scoring criteria as part of the regular plan update process.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Engineering, Community Development				●		●
GOAL #2: Invest in High-Quality Neighborhood Parks.								
Q2.1	Dedicate identified City-owned park opportunity sites as future parkland.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s):	●					●
Q2.2	Begin securing funding to complete short-term deferred maintenance projects.	Lead: Admin, Council Partner(s): Public Works, Finance, Budget	●					●
Q2.3	Establish a partnership framework and best practices for empowering and supporting Friends of Parks groups and other community-based organizations that can act as stewards and ambassadors for their parks.	Lead: Admin Partner(s): Public Works, Council	●					
Q2.4	Launch a Neighborhood Park Program to formalize the emphasis on neighborhood park improvements.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Communications		●				
Q2.5	Invest in adequate facilities and equipment for staff.	Lead: Council Partner(s): Admin			●			●

#	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME				
			Year 1	Short Term (2-5 Years)	Mid Term (Years 5-10)	Long Term (11-20 Years)	Ongoing
Q2.6	Increase the percentage of residents within a ten-minute walk of a park through new park acquisition and development.	Lead: Admin Partner(s): Council, Public Works			●	●	●
Q2.7	Ensure the equitable distribution of financial investment across the park system	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Admin, Council				●	●
Q2.8	Continue to support the suggested Neighborhood Park Program to spotlight beloved neighborhood parks; steward, share progress and rally support for reinvestment projects; and find new ways to connect people to their parks.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Communications					●
GOAL #3: Increase and diversify park system funding in line with industry standards.							
Q3.1	Create Deferred Capital Maintenance funding program utilizing Total Asset Management approach to establish budget cycle based on depreciation rates of existing assets.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Budget, Finance	●				●
Q3.2	Create a position for a City grant officer or contract position for a grant writer to identify and coordinate critical next steps for specific state and federal grants.	Lead: Admin Partner(s): Council	●				
Q3.3	Prioritize and complete short-term deferred maintenance projects at parks rated moderate to poor.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Engineering, Stormwater	●				
Q3.4	Create a Hendersonville Parks Foundation (non-profit group to support and seek funding opportunities)	Lead: Council, Parks Partner(s): Admin, Public Works		●			
Q3.5	Identify new funding sources for citywide parks and greenspaces.	Lead: Admin Partner(s): Budget, Council, Finance, Public Works					●

#	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME				
			Year 1	Short Term (2-5 Years)	Mid Term (Years 5-10)	Long Term (11-20 Years)	Ongoing
Q3.6	Identify new and creative opportunities for public-private partnerships for parks and recreation in Hendersonville, including through leveraging catalytic site and greenway projects.	Lead: Parks, Public Works Partner(s): Community Development					●
Q3.7	Coordinate efforts and identify where master plans, land acquisitions and other steps are needed to position the City to take advantage of current and future federal and state dollars for parks, recreation and infrastructure.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Community Development					●

9

IMPLEMENTATION

ONE YEAR ACTION PLAN

A one-year action plan is integral to this plan as it provides a roadmap for immediate implementation of key initiatives. Within the next year, specific goals and actions outlined here should be realized, serving as a catalyst for quick wins and demonstrating tangible progress. The One-Year Plan identifies action items that can be considered “early wins” and are easier to implement, but still have big impacts. It also helps to gain trust from the community through addressing their immediate needs and concerns. By breaking down implementation into manageable steps for the short term, stakeholders can witness the positive impacts of the overall vision and the flexibility of the plan, garnering ongoing support and momentum for the broader, long-term goals outlined.

MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS

Another ongoing initiative that can support implementation of this plan is the City’s pursuit of a total asset management system, utilizing the City Works asset software. This tool can help the City track its park and recreation assets and maintenance hours; anticipate and budget for maintenance needs and equipment; and identify where new positions or operational efficiencies might be needed to address challenges or backlogs. The inventory and condition assessment completed as part of this planning process can be integrated with this system to plan for deferred maintenance and depreciation schedules.

PARTNERSHIPS AND FUNDING

The One-Year Plan seeks to lay the groundwork for increased funding and partnerships in support of citywide parks and greenspace. The following table lists the critical first steps and target deadlines for the City and partners to set the plan actions into motion. The Public Works Department or identified entity should lead coordination and implementation of these tasks.

TASK	RESPONSIBILITY
Create a Parks and Greenspace Advisory Committee to provide guidance and oversight of Hendersonville parks and greenspaces and ongoing plan implementation.	Lead: Council Partner(s): Admin, Public Works/Parks, Communications
Develop written design guidelines & park amenity standards for all park classification types to establish a service standard for new park and park improvement projects.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Engineering
Develop written management plans for all park classification types to establish a baseline standard for maintenance.	Lead: Public Works
Utilize existing Cityworks asset management software and implement a Total Asset Management approach to track and adequately budget for existing and future park maintenance needs.	Lead: Public Works
Dedicate identified City-owned park opportunity sites as future parkland.	Lead: Public Works
Begin securing funding to complete short-term deferred maintenance projects.	Lead: Admin, Council Partner(s): Public Works, Finance, Budget
Establish a partnership framework and best practices for empowering and supporting Friends of Parks groups and other community-based organizations that can act as stewards and ambassadors for their parks.	Lead: Admin Partner(s): Public Works, Council
Create a position for a City grant officer or contract position for a grant writer to identify and coordinate critical next steps for specific state and federal grants.	Lead: Admin
Gain approval from City Council and Planning Board to revise park development and dedication ordinances.	Lead: Community Development
Create Deferred Capital Maintenance funding program utilizing Total Asset Management approach to establish budget cycle based on depreciation rates of existing assets.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Budget, Finance
Prioritize and complete short-term deferred maintenance projects at parks rated moderate to poor.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Engineering, Stormwater
Engage community members and park users to better understand safety concerns. Utilize this information to design strategies to address concerns.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Community Development
Consider updates to the City’s web page on parks with a focus on user-friendly access to up-to-date information about park sites, events and volunteer opportunities.	Lead: Public Works Partner(s): Administration - Communications
Complete an analysis of marketing and communication resources to identify the desired target market and the best suited tactics. Evaluate strategy on a regular interval to increase reach and engagement among targeted audiences.	Lead: Administration - Communications Partner(s): Public Works
Coordinate across departments to view vacant or surplus landholdings to determine highest and best use, including identification of suitable lands for parks, housing and development. Repeat this exercise every three to five years.	Lead: Community Development Partner(s): Public Works
Investigate sponsorships with local businesses, medical and health organizations to implement park improvement projects that promote health and well-being.	Lead: Community Development, Parks Partner(s): Public Works

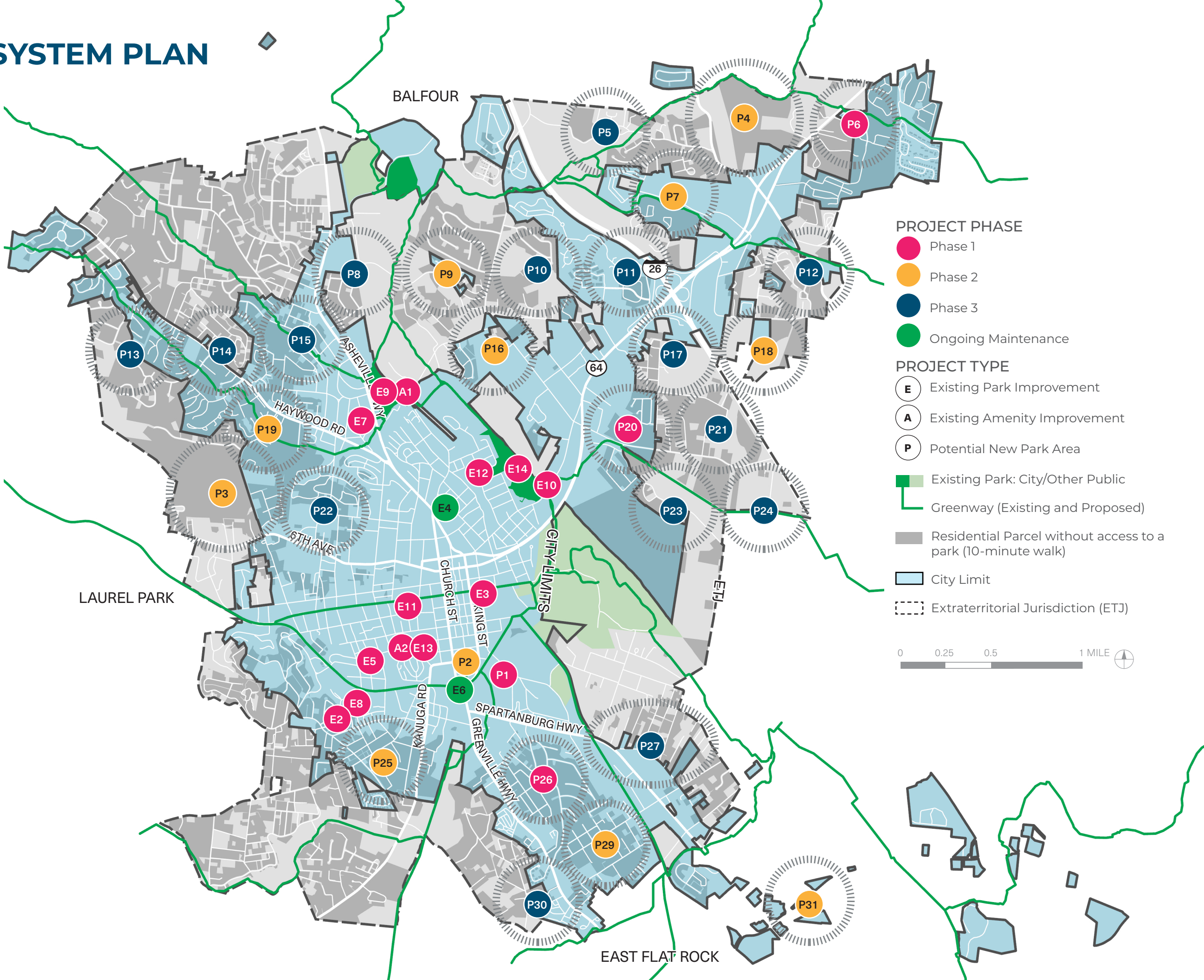
FUTURE PARKS SYSTEM PLAN

This map identifies priority existing park improvement projects as well as potential areas for future park development. It considers the analysis and recommendations from each chapter including increasing access, addressing system-wide quality and deferred maintenance, and helping to achieve level of service goals. Given the future outlook of this plan, the map also considers future growth within and outside of city limits.

This map highlights residential parcels outside of a 10-minute walk to parks and identifies several opportunity areas for new park development near parcels with gaps in access. Half-mile radius circles are included to roughly identify the residential areas that do not have current access to public open space and are prioritized in phasing based on a set of prioritization criteria described on page 110.

The overall vision seeks to:

- 1. **Improve 12 existing parks and greenspaces.** Fixing and investing in what we have is our first priority.
- 2. **Develop 30 new parks in opportunity areas** to reach level of service standards and increase access to parks throughout the City.
- 3. Building and connecting through the implementation of **10 plus miles of new greenways.** The Greenway plan and phasing is further described in the Appendix.



PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA

The following list outlines priorities to focus on as the City implements this plan.

- Quality**
The project improves the condition and utility of an existing park.
- Nature**
The project supports the protection, preservation or restoration of natural features.
- Greenways / Connectivity**
The project adds to or completes the greenway system.
- Access**
The project fills an existing gap in the city’s 10-minute walkshed.
- Investment Zones**
The project serves the areas of the City identified as Priority Investment Zones.
- Site Size**
The project is large enough that it does not exacerbate the citywide challenges of small/scattered greenspaces.
- Population Density**
The project would serve more people in areas with relatively higher population density.
- Future Development**
The project anticipates future growth areas and the need for protected parkland and open space.
- Level of Service**
The project accomplishes a LOS goal for number of facilities needed.
- Feasibility**
The project is feasible given current ownership and land use.
- Support / Opportunity**
The project aligns with other community priorities and funding sources.

FUTURE OPERATIONS

This section of the plan takes a deeper dive into how Hendersonville parks and greenspaces should be managed and maintained now and into the future. Recommendations are based on planning team analysis, community input, best-practices research and discussions with staff. This plan serves to build on and complete previous City park visions; close gaps in the park system; anticipate future growth; ensure residents have a high-quality park or trail close to home; and lay the foundation for a valued and impactful park and greenspace system.

PROJECT PRIORITIZATION MODEL

The physical projects and investments captured in the Plan are filtered through a prioritization model to rank the projects and divide them into phases based on priorities expressed during the community engagement process and needs assessment. This helps the City and partners make fiscally and socially responsible decisions, focus resources and first steps on projects that are best positioned to advance the public interest and the goals of the Plan.

A LIVING FRAMEWORK

The prioritization model and phasing plan should be seen as a living framework that can adapt to meet evolving community needs. The relative importance of projects listed will likely evolve in future plan updates to reflect new conditions and public values. Some projects listed in those phases might also become higher priorities within the initial implementation timeline as new opportunities emerge; the prioritization of projects into phases should not prevent the City or its partners from taking advantage of such opportunities as they arise.

ADDING IT ALL UP

The plan has an ambitious vision for the future parks system of Hendersonville. Table 10 recommends the level of service and number of new park facilities to fill the gap by 2050. Anticipated costs are in 2024 dollars and do not account for the costs of staffing; potential land acquisition, permitting or environmental regulation; design or ongoing maintenance.

The intent is to capture high-level system-wide capital costs to aid in future budgets and planning. More detailed and accurate budgets for each project will be determined and refined through each project’s master planning, design

and construction documentation process. When budgeting, the City should account for escalation.

These new facilities will require retrofitting of existing parkland or new parkland acquisition. All special facilities should include easily accessible parkland that allows each site to also serve a neighborhood park function, collocating proposed facilities with existing park improvement projects or new park opportunities. Some new facilities and parkland may require partnerships to implement.

Table 10: Future Park Facility Recommendations

TYPES OF FACILITIES	NO. OF NEW FACILITIES NEEDED TO FILL THE GAP BY 2050	ANTICIPATED TOTAL PRICE	RECOMMENDED LEVEL OF SERVICE 2050 (RESIDENTS PER FACILITY)	RELATIVE TO CURRENT LOS	RELATIVE TO PEER-CITY METRICS
AMPHITHEATER	1	\$5,000,000	20,000	+	+
BASKETBALL COURT	1	\$150,000	3,500	=	+
COMMUNITY CENTER	1	\$5,000,000	20,000	+	-
DIAMOND FIELD	NEEDS MET		3,000	-	=
DISC GOLF COURSE*	NEEDS MET		15,000	+	=
DOG PARK	1	\$50,000	7,500	=	+
MULTI-USE FIELD	3	\$300,000	4,000	+	=
PICKLEBALL COURT*	NEEDS MET		3,000	=	=
PLAYGROUND	4	\$1,000,000	2,000	+	=
RECREATION CENTERS	1	\$5,000,000	10,000	+	=
SENIOR CENTERS	1	\$5,000,000	14,000	+	=
SKATE PARK	NEEDS MET		20,000	=	=
SPLASH PAD	1	\$800,000	20,000	+	=
SWIMMING POOL	1	\$2,000,000	10,000	+	=
TENNIS COURT	NEEDS MET		3,000	-	=

*A new disc golf course and pickleball courts are currently under construction. Once completed, these facilities meet the recommended level of service goals.

= Indicates where the recommended level of service is similar or equal
+ Indicates where the recommended level of service is greater than
- Indicates where the recommended level of service is less than

LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

Table 11: Future Parkland Analysis, Budget and Staffing (City-limits)

YEAR	POPULATION	TOTAL PARK ACREAGE @12.6 AC/1000 RESIDENTS	COST OF NEW PARK DEVELOPMENT AT \$500K/ACRE	TOTAL OPERATING BUDGET AT \$120/ PERSON	TOTAL FTE @11.5/10,000 RESIDENTS
2024	15,137	191	\$16,783,673	\$1,816,440	17
2030	16,197	204	\$21,108,531	\$1,943,591	18
2040	17,816	224	\$27,719,384	\$2,137,950	20
2050	19,598	247	\$34,991,322	\$2,351,745	22

Table 12: Future Parkland Analysis, Budget and Staffing (Including ETJ)

YEAR	POPULATION	TOTAL PARK ACREAGE @12.6 AC/1000 RESIDENTS	COST OF NEW PARK DEVELOPMENT AT \$500K/ACRE	TOTAL OPERATING BUDGET AT \$120/ PERSON	TOTAL FTE @11.5/10,000 RESIDENTS
2024	22,847	288	\$43,253,061	\$2,741,640	26
2030	24,446	308	\$49,780,776	\$2,933,555	28
2040	26,891	339	\$59,758853	\$3,226,910	30
2050	29,580	373	\$70,734,738	\$3,549,601	34

STAFFING

In addition to the financial requirements of a growing system, Table 11 identifies the necessary park staff to maintain it. The figures in the table identifies the number of full time employees (FTE's) to meet NRPA metrics of 11.5 FTE per 10,000 residents based on cities of a similar size to Hendersonville. Table 12 looks at the same analysis, but includes the consideration of expanding into the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) area. As the parks and greenspace system expands, the importance of increasing and dedicating park staff becomes increasingly evident. A growing system means an influx of visitors and the need for heightened maintenance and supervision. Adequate staffing is essential to ensure the smooth operation, safety, and overall positive experience of park users. Hendersonville does not have a dedicated parks department as maintenance is managed through the Public Works Department. It will be important to evaluate the organization structure and identify specific park staff needs as the system grows.

For a park system and population the size of Hendersonville, NRPA metrics find that 44% of staff responsibilities are dedicated to operations and maintenance, 31% are dedicated to programming and events, 16% are dedicated to administration, 3% capital development and 6% other.

As Hendersonville evaluates the development of a dedicated parks and greenspace department, these metrics are helpful in developing an organizational chart and job descriptions, though should be further customized for the City's unique needs and service delivery model. For example, Hendersonville has and anticipates continuing to rely on Henderson County to provide for residents recreational programming and sports league offerings. If this approach continues, dedicated programming staff may not be necessary. However, even park systems that do not offer scheduled recreation programming do engage in organizing community events, whether those are by the City or coordinated through partnerships.

Similar to staff levels, the needs of park maintenance varies based on park size and type. Maintenance service and frequency should be determined and allocated consistently throughout the system as informed by the park classification guidelines. Striking a balance between routine maintenance and park type is important in avoiding costly deferred maintenance and ensuring a high-quality system.

The seasonality of maintenance activities in parks and on trails is significant, and routine maintenance levels and seasonal employment should be adjusted accordingly. Maintenance activities during the winter, for instance, are typically limited with higher maintenance required in the summer due to higher usage.

DESIGN GUIDELINES AND SITE SELECTION

The Plan recommends creating a set of design guidelines to ensure future parks are developed and existing parks are upgraded to a consistent quality standard. These guidelines will establish clear expectations for park designers, City staff, partners, and contractors, helping to prevent disparities in quality and service across the parks and recreation system.

The guidelines should be developed with input from Public Works staff, the Parks and Greenspace Advisory Committee, key City partners, and local public and private park providers.

Clear design guidelines for new parks and park reinvestment projects will guide City and partner efforts, ensuring consistent quality as the parks and greenspace system expands.

For future neighborhood park projects, the Plan emphasizes the importance of careful site selection and thorough site analysis to ensure that site conditions and context can support the envisioned facilities. The City should be selective when adding new park sites, as even the best design and maintenance cannot make up for a site that is too small, too steep, flood-prone, or difficult to access.

The following checklists—compiled from sources including National Recreation and Park Association, AARP, and City Parks Alliance—are a starting point for a standardized quality control system that should become the norm for every future neighborhood park project.

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK | EXAMPLE SITE SELECTION STANDARDS

Does the site meet these basic standards?

☐

Is there a sizeable residential population within a 10-minute walk of the site? Would a park here help to fill a park walkshed or service gap?

☐

Does the site have opportunities for safe walkable, bikeable and rollable access on multiple edges?

☐

Is the site big enough (ideally at least two acres) to function as a neighborhood park? Will the site soils, topography and drainage allow for a mix of spaces, from open and flexible to intimate and enclosed?

☐

Does the site have opportunities for active site edges—such as restaurants and shops—and strong connections to nearby schools, libraries and other community destinations?

☐

Is the site already owned by the City or a public or private partner?

☐

Are there opportunities to protect or restore natural resources? To protect or restore a cultural landscape?

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK | EXAMPLE DESIGN GUIDELINES

Does the park design create a welcoming entry experience?

☐

Are there multiple park entries to collect visitors from multiple directions?

☐

Are the park edges open, welcoming and beautiful, with clear views into the park and site entries?

☐

Do the park entrances have bike racks and good access by sidewalk and crosswalks?

☐

Is there an appropriate amount of parking for cars given the context?

Does the park design celebrate and protect nature?

☐

What percent of the park acreage has tree canopy? Gardens? Naturalized areas?

☐

Are there big trees (or trees that will grow to be big) where they're needed to provide shade?

☐

Is stormwater captured and cleaned on-site through green infrastructure?

☐

Is the park beautiful?

Does the park design encourage people to use the space?

☐

Are there basic amenities—like playgrounds, flexible seating, shade, picnic tables and restrooms—that encourage people to linger, rest and socialize?

☐

Are there basic amenities—like walking paths and flexible fields—that encourage people to be active?

Does the park design promote access and inclusion?

☐

Are entries, paths and equipment accessible to ADA standards?

☐

Are park features like signage and fitness equipment intuitive to understand and use?

☐

Is there adequate space or facilities for the specific activities the neighborhood wants?

☐

Are the park edges and access routes safe and attractive for multiple types of users?

Does the park design promote safety?

☐

Is there adequate (and Dark Sky Friendly) lighting?

☐

Are there open sight lines within the park and beyond its edges?

☐

Are there facilities and programming to ensure that plenty of people are using the park at different times of the day, week and year?

☐

Are there active uses around the park edges?

Does the park design provide for ongoing care and sustainability?

☐

Are there adequate receptacles and signage for trash and recycling?

☐

Is there a coordinated management plan for City staff and volunteers?

☐

Is there adequate activation, visibility and stewardship to ensure eyes on the park?

☐

Are the park materials and equipment durable and sustainable?

FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT

This section offers a number of funding strategies for the City to translate the Hendersonville Parks and Greenspace vision into built projects and improvements that ensure park access for generations.

NATIONWIDE FUNDING TRENDS

Nationally there is a concerted effort to diversify funding sources. According to the 2024 National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) Agency Performance Review study, the current national level of funding is 62% of operating expenditures being derived from the general fund. Currently, Hendersonville relies primarily on the general fund and with no dedicated allocation to parks and greenspace.

Nationally, there has been an increased reliance on earned income to offset the cost of operation of parks and recreation. According to NRPA, in 2023, an average of 21% of operational costs were offset through fees and charges.

Rather than relying on allocations from a city's general fund, agencies have been turning to dedicated tax funding sources for not only on-going parks operations but also for capital projects.

Capital funding has also become more diversified with an effort to not only utilize local tax dollars but also broader funding through state and federal government as well

as fundraising and grant funding for larger projects.

ALTERNATIVE FUNDING SOURCES

How do we pay for all of this? The City and its partners should pursue a diverse toolkit of funding strategies and sources.

LOCAL SOURCES

Capital Improvement Fund: A dedicated funding source for capital projects from either a percentage of existing tax revenues or through tax increase established for the specific purpose.

Borrowing (bonds): The City of Hendersonville can issue bonds to raise significant one-time funds for large-scale projects and initiatives or capital improvements. These funds are available in the short term, with costs that are repaid over time and therefore shared by future beneficiaries of the investments. A bond issuance must be approved by Hendersonville voters.

Park Dedication fee: For new housing, developers must either pay a per unit fee and/or dedicate property for future park development.

Real Estate Transfer Fees: Funding through the sale and transfer of real estate, where

a small percentage goes to a tax that can support parks, greenways and open space conservation.

Transient Lodging Tax: A tax on hotel and motel rooms where a percentage tax is collected on each room night sold. This often funds parks and recreation amenities that attract visitors (sports complexes, ice rinks, amphitheaters, etc.).

Business Improvement District (BID): A BID is a defined area in a city that collects a fee from businesses for improvements. These are usually in downtown areas.

Earned Income or User Fees: Fees charged for parks and recreation services. This requires a strong fee for service philosophy and solid fee policies. This can also include sponsorships, permit fees for vendors, cell tower leases, concessions agreements, and other fees. Increasingly cities are asking users to pay a higher percentage of maintenance and programs through the fees that are charged for these services.

Amenity Development: Partnership with a private or non-profit agency to build and operate amenities such as a wedding/event center, that also includes recreation amenity development. These are amenities that have the ability to generate a strong positive cash flow and are used to help fund other aspects of the operation.

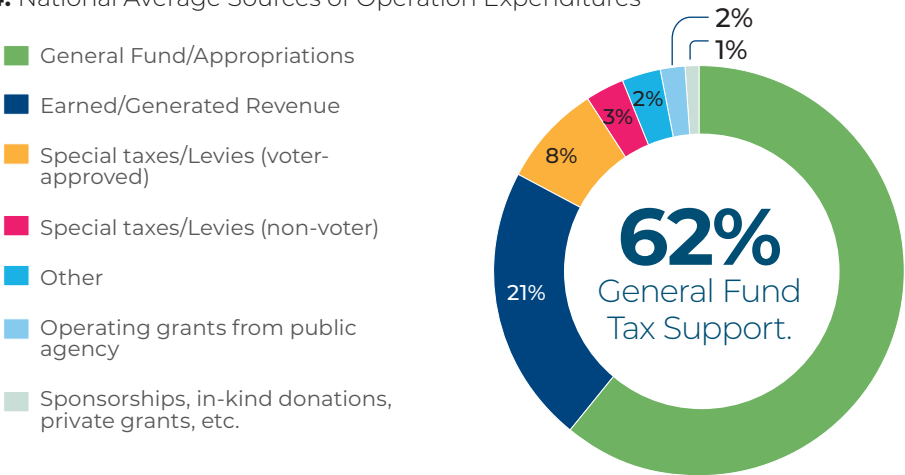
what projects might be competitive for which grants.

Hendersonville should consider hiring or dedicating staff as a grants coordinator to annually review all relevant private and public grant opportunities and to coordinate efforts to ensure project proposals are submitted that are the best fit for each grant program. These annual reviews can also help to ensure that the City is well-positioned for future funding opportunities.

Table 13: Public Grant Opportunities on page 119 lists several public grant programs that are considered a strong fit for local park and recreation projects. Generally, the grants administered by state agencies are those with the longest track record of promoting local parks and open space. The federal opportunities are largely new grant programs created by recent federal climate and infrastructure legislation. These require a heavier lift for technical capacity and coordination but offer exciting opportunities for transformative projects in the public realm.

Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS): Encourages safe bicycling and walking among schoolchildren. Administered by state departments of transportation, this is a federal grant; there is no local matching needed for these funds. These proposals can be located anywhere in the state, regardless of population size. The SRTS projects must be planned to be within public right of way within 2 miles of a public, charter, or private school serving K-8th grade students. The types of projects typically funded include bicycle infrastructure improvements, shared use paths, sidewalk improvements and infrastructure related projects to improve safety for non-motorized transportation.

Figure 4: National Average Sources of Operation Expenditures



SOURCE: 2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review.

STATE AND FEDERAL SOURCES

One-time grants for parks, open space and greenways can fund specific capital projects. Grants generally have a formal application process with specific submission requirements, along with reporting requirements that seek to quantify the program's impact. They often require a local funding match. They also can require expertise to navigate the application requirements and forms and to understand

OTHER NON-TAX SOURCES

Parks Foundation: A parks and greenspace foundation, 501(C)3, provides a way for individuals and corporations to provide donations to fund parks and recreation facilities and programs. This also increases eligibility for certain grants. Often the city council will serve as the actual board, or they appoint others to the board.

Fundraising: A possible source of capital funding can come from a comprehensive fundraising campaign. Contributions from local businesses, private individuals and social service organizations can be targeted. To maximize this form of funding a private fundraising consultant may be necessary.

Naming Rights and Sponsorships: The sale of naming rights and long-term sponsorships could be a source of some capital funding as well. It is often necessary to hire a specialist in selling naming rights and sponsorships if this revenue source is to be maximized to its fullest potential. No lifetime naming rights should be sold, only 20-year maximum rights should be possible. Determining the level of financial contribution necessary to gain a naming right is crucial. In addition to a portion of the cost to develop, including an endowment or mechanism for operations and maintenance is critical.

Endowment Fund: This form of operational funding is relatively rare as it requires a large fund balance to establish an annual operational endowment level of any magnitude.

Ground Lease of Property: In communities where it has been difficult to fund new parks and recreation facilities, cities have issued low fee ground leases to private and non-profit organizations to build and operate facilities that will benefit the recreation needs of residents. This has included a number of specialty facilities.

PARTNERSHIP FUNDING

Partnerships can be made with a variety of organizations to manage facilities and provide programs and other services. This requires a strong partnership agreement to be in place.

Potential strategies include:

Adopt-a-Trail Programs: These are typically small grant programs that fund new construction, repair or renovation, maps, trail brochures, and facilities (bike racks, picnic areas, birding equipment, etc.), as well as providing maintenance support. These programs are similar to the popular “adopt-a-mile” highway programs most states utilize. Adopt-a-trail programs can also take the form of cash contributions in the range of \$12,000 to \$16,000 per mile to cover operational costs.

Adopt-a-Park Programs: These are small-grant programs that fund new construction and provide maintenance support. Adopt-A-Park programs can also take the form of cash contributions in the range of \$1,000 to \$5,000 per acre to cover operational costs.

Operational Partnerships: Partnerships are operational funding sources formed from two separate agencies, such as two government entities, a non-profit and a public agency, or a private business and a public agency. Two partners jointly share risk, operational costs, responsibilities, and asset management based on the strengths of each partner. Many cities have found success in sponsorships and funding from the health care industry, such as at Unity Park in Greenville, SC.

Table 13: Public Grant Opportunities

GRANT OPPORTUNITY	ENTITY	LOCAL MATCH REQUIRED	WHAT THE GRANT CAN SUPPORT				
			LAND ACQUISITION	PARK PROJECTS	GREENWAY PROJECTS	PUBLIC REALM	PLANNING
Climate and Environmental Justice Block Grants	EPA		X	X	X	X	
EPA Environmental Justice Community Change Grants	EPA					X	X
FEMA Mitigation Assistance Grants and Floodplain Buyouts	FEMA	X	X	X	X	X	X
NC Water Resources Development Grant: State and Local Projects	NC DEQ	X		X	X	X	X
NC Department of Public Safety - Building Resilient Infrastructure in Communities	NC DPS					X	
NC Association of Regional Council of Governments - Land of Sky Region: Grant Writing and Management Assistance	NCARCOG						X
NC Land and Water Conservation Fund	NCLWF	X	X	X		X	X
NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund	NCSP	X		X		X	X
NC Trails Recreational Trails Program	NCSP				X	X	X
Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program	NPS		X	X	X	X	
US Department of the Interior Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA)	NPS						X
USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program	USDA	X		X		X	X
Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity Discretionary Grant Program	USDOT	X			X	X	X
US Department of Transportation Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A)	USDOT	X				X	X

10

CONCEPT PLANS AND NEW PARK TOOLKIT



PARK CONCEPTUAL PLANS

PATTON PARK / COMMUNITY

ACRES: 17.9

EXISTING CONDITION RATING:

3 - Improvements have reached a tipping point where irreversible decline will occur without reinvestment

EXISTING FEATURES:

- Pool
- Playground
- Skate Park
- Baseball Diamond/Field
- Tennis Courts
- Multi-Purpose Field
- Walking Loop
- Picnic Shelter and Grill
- Restroom
- Pickleball Courts (*under construction*)

DESCRIPTION:

The second largest city park with the most features. The park's keystone is Patton Pool, the most visited park feature in the city. It offers something for everyone from a playground to walking trails to sport courts. It also features the only public skate park in the city.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Improve signage and wayfinding
- Create a vegetated screen from the commercial building on the northwest corner
- Consider consolidating greenway and walking trail into single multi-use trail where they are adjacent
- Consider consolidating bridge crossing into one larger multi-purpose bridge
- Convert baseball field to dog park and greenspace
- Reconfigure the parking lot to reduce flooding and sediment deposits adjacent to Brittain Creek
- Improve bathrooms
- Improve the multipurpose fields and add soccer goals
- Increase shade
- Improve and expand the playground to encompass more types of play and ages
- Install bike racks and bike tuning stations at greenway access points

Pool

- Consider a complete redesign of pool and complex. Hire consultant to analyze best use of facility
- Replace fence and ensure compliance with safety regulations
- Ensure ADA compliance; modernize and re-use buildings to increase efficiency
- Refinish pool surface
- Add splash pad
- Add shade structures

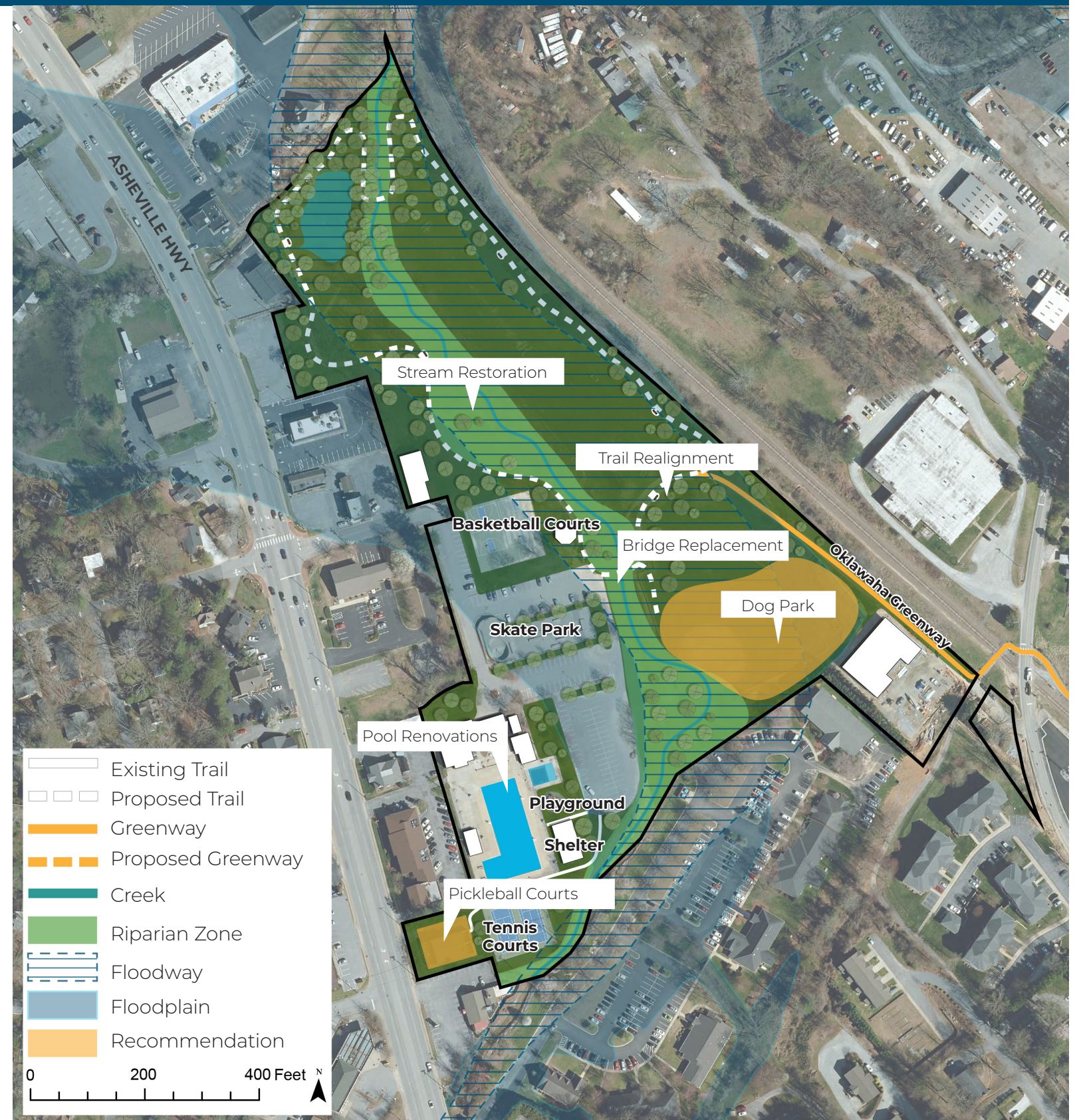
Brittain Creek

- Restore and re-meander creek to expand floodplain capacity, improve bank erosion and stability and improve native habitat

Basketball Court

- Resurface and repaint surface
- Consider raising court to mitigate flooding

Note: Existing site conditions such as topography and existing soils should be evaluated before finalizing and implementing new facilities.





Stream Restoration
Expanding the floodplain, re-meandering the creek and improvements to native planting can help with flooding and stream bank erosion.



Trail Realignment and Formal Trailhead
To improve experience and wayfinding, consider improvements to internal walking path where adjacent to the greenway. Incorporate amenities and reduce pedestrian and bicycle conflicts.



Bridge Replacement
The existing bridge is in need of replacement and provides an opportunity to simplify the stream crossings and increase functionality for multiple users.



Bike/Ped Amenities
Improved wayfinding and amenities such as a bike tuning station and bike racks, will help to formalizing the park as a gateway to the Oklawaha greenway.



Dog Park
A new dog park is an important amenity based on the community needs assessment. The City has identified the underutilized baseball diamond fields as an area that can be converted to this use. The new feature should allow for expanding the floodplain as part of the redesign considerations.



Pool Area Renovations
Modernizing the pool area and facilities will increase efficiency, improve accessibility and ADA compliance, while ensuring this amenity can continue to serve the community for generations.



Improved Playground Equipment
Expanding and improving playground equipment can provide more opportunities for kids of all ages to get active and play.

TOMS PARK AND WHITMIRE ACTIVITY CENTER/ SIGNATURE

ACRES: 2.6

EXISTING CONDITION RATING:

3 - Improvements have reached a tipping point where irreversible decline will occur without reinvestment

EXISTING FEATURES:

- Whitmore Activity Building
- Shuffleboard

DESCRIPTION:

This park features The Whitmire Activity Building and 14 shuffleboard courts. The east side of the park is separated by Wash Creek featuring greenspace and a walking path, connected to the west by a bridge.

The park is named after Confederate Captain Marion C. Toms.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Whitmire Activity Building

- Renovate building to include repairs such as repainting, replacing windows, ceiling and flooring, and updating the HVAC system to better regulate indoor temperatures
- Improve internal wayfinding

- Reprogram space to accommodate more community interests and activities

Wash Creek

- Restore the floodplain
- Remove invasive species

Parking

- Stabilize area near stream

Shuffleboard Courts

- Remove and replace Sweet Gums to address root encroachment into the court
- Protect area near the stream from failing
- Consider converting some courts to bocce to accommodate different users

Park Amenities

- Consider whether the highest and best use of the lot across the creek is for additional parking, park amenities or other uses
- Increase native planting, especially near the stream
- Consider creating a short walking loop with seating and/or fitness equipment at nodes

Signage and Wayfinding

- Update park entry and wayfinding signage.

Note: Existing site conditions such as topography and existing soils should be evaluated before finalizing and implementing new facilities.





Creek Restoration
Invasive plant removal and bank stabilization will help to protect existing site amenities and provide native planting habitat. Restoration plans should be combined with reconfiguring parking.



Social “Backyard” Lawn Games
Adding a variety of yard game areas (e.g. bocce ball, horseshoe, corn hole) can encourage community members of all ages to come together to play, socialize and participate in physical activity.

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Fitness Equipment
Outdoor exercise equipment encourages park users to explore healthy and active lifestyles and can be integrated with a new paved loop trail.



Paved Loop Trail
A paved loop trail proves an accessible route for pedestrians to exercise and remain active. Seating along the trail provides a place to rest.

ROSA EDWARDS PARK / UNCLASSIFIED GREENSPACE

ACRES: 1.1

ASPIRING CLASS:
Neighborhood

EXISTING CONDITION RATING:
3 - Improvements have reached a tipping point where irreversible decline will occur without reinvestment

EXISTING FEATURES:

- Open space

DESCRIPTION:
A large open space field right next to the public library in the city center.

RECOMMENDATIONS:
During the public workshops, the community had many ideas for this patch of open space. The City is committed to providing a multipurpose field for small pickup games, however additional ideas could be explored through further engagement and funding discussions:

- Community garden and food forest
- Basketball court
- Shaded picnic tables and gathering spaces
- Dog Park
- Pavilion and small playground for library events (book fairs, story times)
- Increase tree coverage

Note: Existing site conditions such as topography and existing soils should be evaluated before finalizing and implementing new facilities.



WILLIAM H . KING MEMORIAL PARK / NEIGHBORHOOD

ACRES: 25.5 (<5 ACRES IS USABLE PARK)

EXISTING CONDITION RATING:

2 - Moderate loss of aesthetics and function

EXISTING FEATURES:

- Baseball
- Walking Loop
- Nature Trail

DESCRIPTION:

This park features a baseball diamond, walking loop, and connection to the Oklawaha Greenway. The majority of the site is constrained by floodplain and wetlands, limiting the potential for new amenities.

The park's name is dedicated to William H. King, a native of Hendersonville and active member in local civic and church organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Increase seating along the walking loop
- Consider integrating interpretive elements with seating
- Increase tree canopy
- Add nature trail experience through northern property and connect to Sullivan Park
- Consider developing and planning William H. King Memorial Park, Sullivan Park and Pet's Own Place as one large campus to create a community scale park
- Install bike racks and bike tuning stations at greenway access points

Note: Existing site conditions such as topography and existing soils should be evaluated before finalizing and implementing new facilities.





Stream Restoration
Invasive management and increased native vegetation can improve biodiversity and the user experience along the greenway.



Boardwalk and Nature Trails
An expanded trail provides an opportunity for increased recreation, exploration, and greater connectivity to the adjacent parks and neighborhood.



Bike/Ped Amenities
Improved wayfinding and amenities such as a bike tuning station and bike racks, will help to formalizing the park as a gateway to the greenway.



Formalized Trailhead
A trailhead marker and formalized entrance helps users identify park entrances and provides an opportunity for park information, trail maps, and educational signage.



Interpretive Elements
Interpretive signage can enhance user experiences and connections to the park site. Signage can include cultural, historical, and education information such as information on wildlife and vegetation species, previous site uses, and other relevant information.

SULLIVAN PARK / NEIGHBORHOOD

ACRES: 4

EXISTING CONDITION RATING:

3 - Improvements have reached a tipping point where irreversible decline will occur without reinvestment

EXISTING FEATURES:

- Covered Basketball
- Playground
- Picnic table
- Restroom
- Community garden

DESCRIPTION:

This park features neighborhood amenities and connections to William H. Memorial Park and the Oklawaha Greenway. A stream restoration was completed in the spring of 2024.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Increase tree canopy around the perimeter
- Improve the community garden and safe pedestrian connection to the park
- Strengthen connection to William H. King Memorial Park and the Oklawaha Greenway
- Install bike racks and bike tuning stations at greenway access points
- Improve site lighting
- Upgrade/improve playground for all ages and abilities
- Replace concrete pad near playground and explore opportunities to create a vibrant multi-purpose court

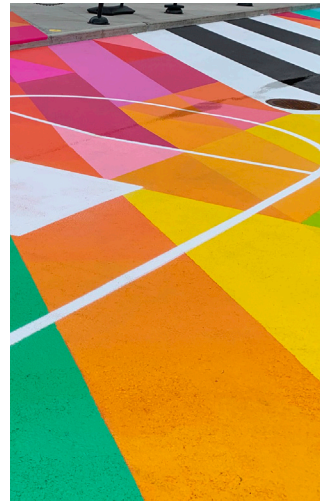
Note: Existing site conditions such as topography and existing soils should be evaluated before finalizing and implementing new facilities.





Playground

Expanding and improving playground equipment can provide more opportunities for kids of all ages to get active and play.



Colorful Multi-use Court / Games Area

The existing concrete pad will be reimagined and updated to provide opportunities for multi-use court or yard games.



Bike/Ped Amenities

Improved wayfinding and amenities such as a bike tuning station and bike racks, will help to formalizing the park as a gateway to the greenway.



Stream Restoration

Invasive management and increased native vegetation improve biodiversity and the user experience along the greenway.



Site Lighting

Pathway and site lighting will provide safety for users to circulate through the park.



Artful Crosswalks

Creating colorful and formalized crosswalks with stop signs will help improve safe pedestrian access to the park across Ashe street and between the adjacent community garden.

PETS' OWN PLACE ON 7TH AVE. / POCKET

ACRES: 1.5

EXISTING CONDITION
RATING:

2 - Moderate loss of aesthetics and function

EXISTING FEATURES:

- Dog park

DESCRIPTION:

Small dog park adjacent to the Oklawaha Greenway and William H. Memorial Park.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Add dog playground equipment
- Increase native vegetation
- Improve entry experience with new signage, wayfinding, and dedicated parking
- Improve greenway connectivity and connection to William H. King Memorial Park
- Consider potential to expand the dog park in the future

Note: Existing site conditions such as topography and existing soils should be evaluated before finalizing and implementing new facilities.



FOUR SEASONS ROTARY PARK/ POCKET

ACRES: 1.3

EXISTING CONDITION
RATING:

2 - Moderate loss of aesthetics and function

EXISTING FEATURES:

- Playground
- Picnic tables
- Pavilion
- Walking Loop

DESCRIPTION:

This small park packs a lot of punch! An exemplary example of a pocket park for the city.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Reconsider deck location and design in concert with the restoration
- Consider adding an interpretive element for the stream and native habitat
- Improved park signage and street presence
- Consider future improvements and updates to the playground that allow for all ages and abilities
- Consider intersection safety improvements within a 5-10 minute walk

Wash Creek

- Restore stream and expand floodplain
- Remove invasive species and increase native planting in the floodplain

Note: Existing site conditions such as topography and existing soils should be evaluated before finalizing and implementing new facilities.



DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. PARK / POCKET PARK

ACRES: 0.2

EXISTING CONDITION
RATING:

2 - Moderate loss of
aesthetics and function

EXISTING FEATURES:

- Memorial
- Walking Path
- Picnic Tables

DESCRIPTION:

Located downtown, this small park memorializes the great civil rights activist Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. It is currently the only park downtown and provides a place to rest to take a lunch or coffee break in a contemplative environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Consider future improvements to add protection from the wind, traffic and noise to improve comfort
- Maintain sightlines throughout space
- Consider adding spaces that attract families and children
- Study usage and potential for future expansion of picnic and seating areas
- Add bike racks
- Consider integrating more interactive public art into the space through community partnerships to activate the space and create a sense of community pride and ownership

Note: Existing site conditions such as topography and existing soils should be evaluated before finalizing and implementing new facilities.



BERKELEY MILLS PARK / COMMUNITY

ACRES: 18.7

EXISTING CONDITION
RATING:

2 - Moderate loss of
aesthetics and function

EXISTING FEATURES:

- Walking Loop
- Disc Golf (coming soon)

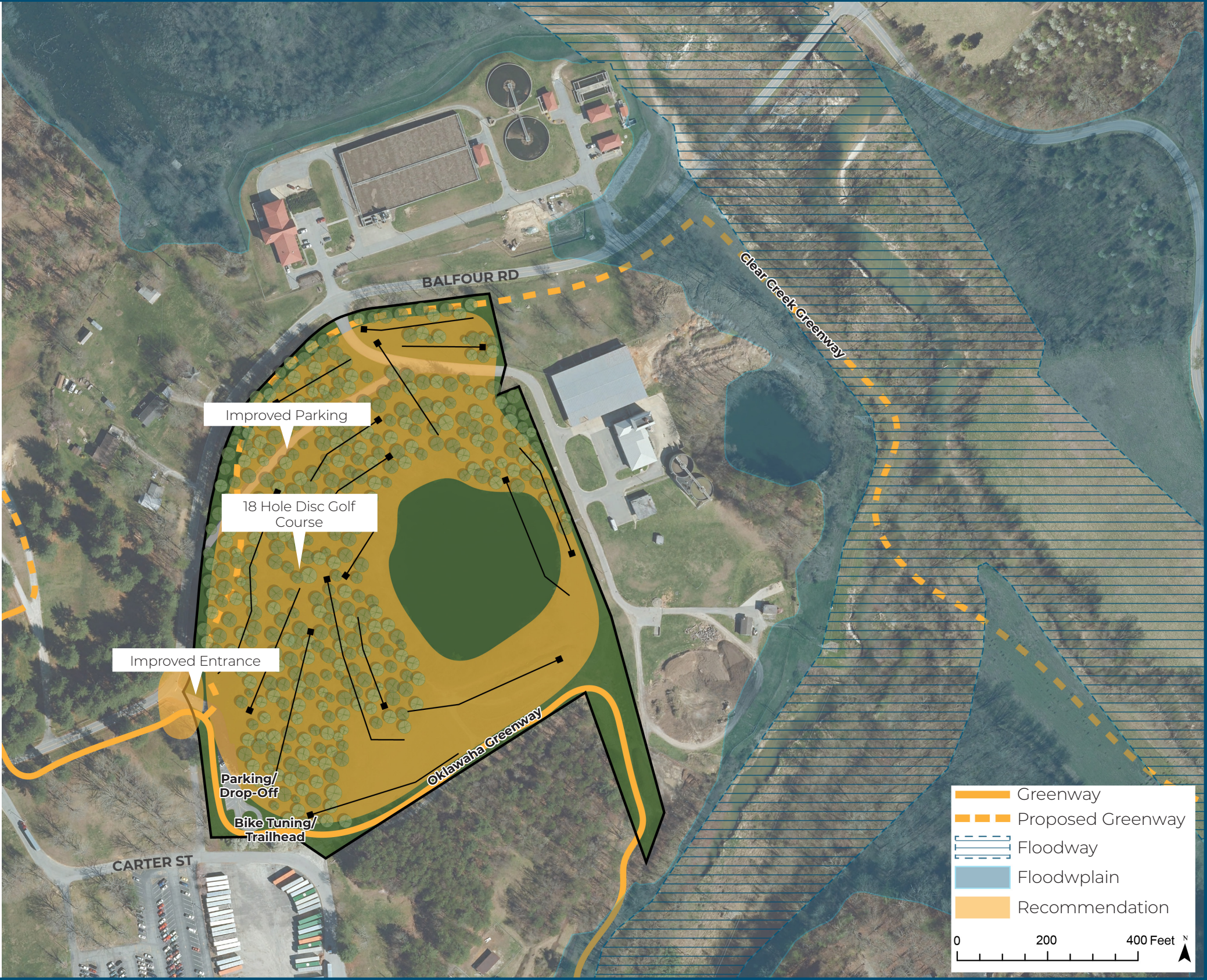
DESCRIPTION:

The Berkeley Mills Park property has been subdivided into two parcels. The larger parcel, located at 69 Balfour Road is now owned by Henderson County Public Schools with plans from the County to make several updates. The smaller parcel was retained by the City and serves as a trailhead to the Oklawaha Greenway with parking, a drop off loop and bike tuning station. A disc golf course is currently being developed as a feature, anticipated to be completed Fall 2024. The Oklawaha Greenway terminates here with plans to connect to the east via the Clear Creek Greenway.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Celebrate connection to the Oklawaha and Clear Creek Greenways
- Create a more inviting entry experience and improve pedestrian access
- Install bike racks at greenway access points

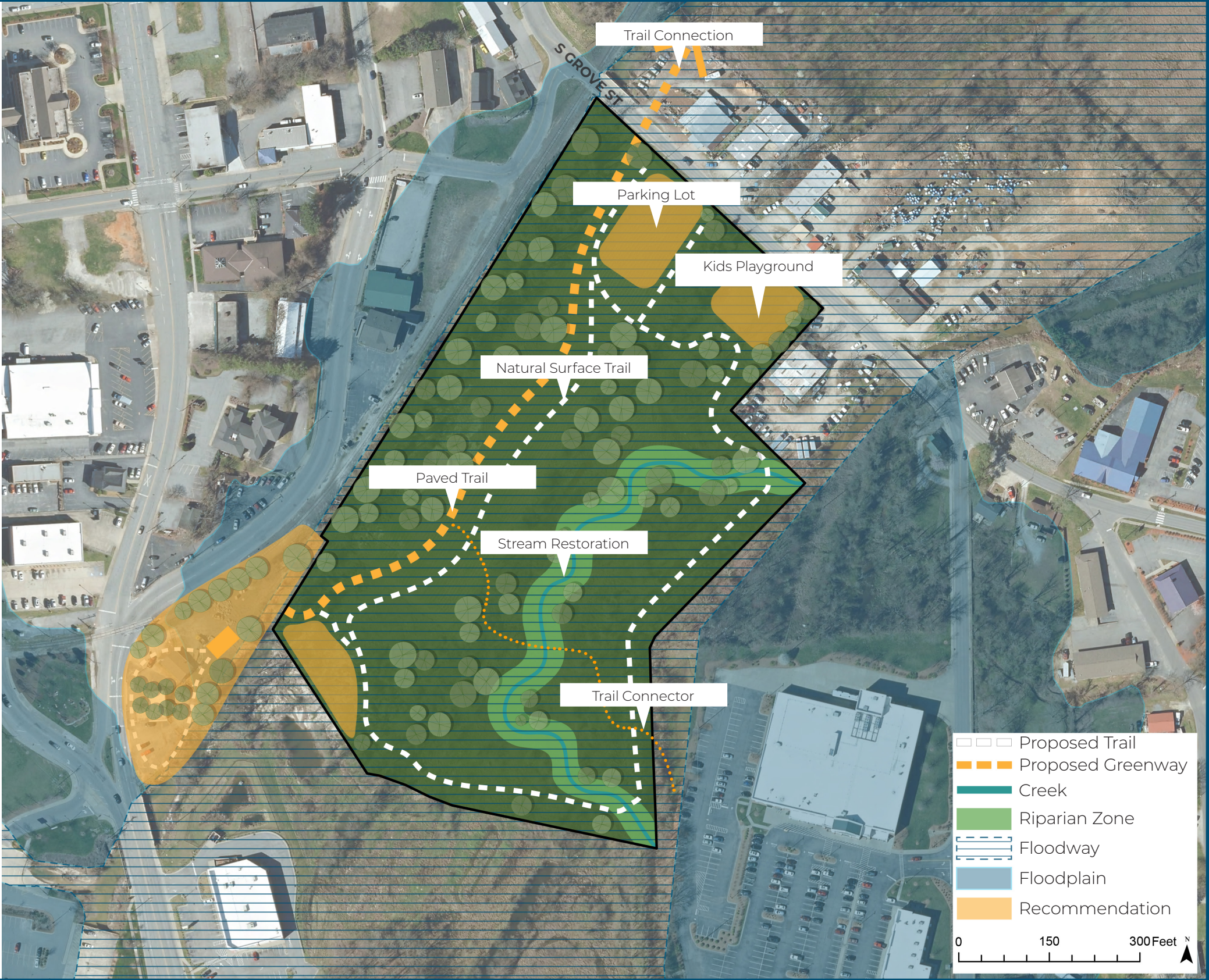
Note: Existing site conditions such as topography and existing soils should be evaluated before finalizing and implementing new facilities



GROVE STREET PARK / NEW COMMUNITY PARK

DESCRIPTION:

The Grove Street park property is located just southeast of Mainstreet. The City is currently planning for the Ecusta trail to connect through this site in addition to providing floodplain restoration. There is an opportunity to incorporate parking as well as a kids playground with interpretive nature-based play equipment as well as natural surface trails for exploring the site.





Play Features
Nature-inspired play features can be influenced by local ecology and habitat.



Mud Puppy Playground
The playground may incorporate features such as hillside play and natural materials such as logs and boulders.



Bike/Ped Amenities
Wayfinding and amenities such as a bike tuning station and bike racks, will help to formalizing the park as a gateway to the greenway.



Stream Restoration
Stream and floodplain restoration can increase capacity for the site to manage stormwater.



Restrooms
Public restrooms at parks was one of the amenities requested through pubic input to make parks more comfortable and accessible to families.



Natural Surface Trails
Natural surface trails are low impact and reduce the impervious surfaces on the site while providing recreation amenities.

WILSON PARK / NEW COMMUNITY PARK

DESCRIPTION:

The Wilson Tract is another property owned by the City that is currently under design for floodplain restoration and increased stormwater storage. This property will help provide greenway trail connections and offers an opportunity to consider nature-based passive recreation features such as a natural surface trail and wildlife viewing platform.



LENOX PARK / UNCLASSIFIED GREENSPACE

ACRES: 0.4

ASPIRING CLASS:

Pocket Park

EXISTING CONDITION

RATING:

2 - Moderate loss of aesthetics and function

EXISTING FEATURES:

- Historic Spring
- Picnic tables

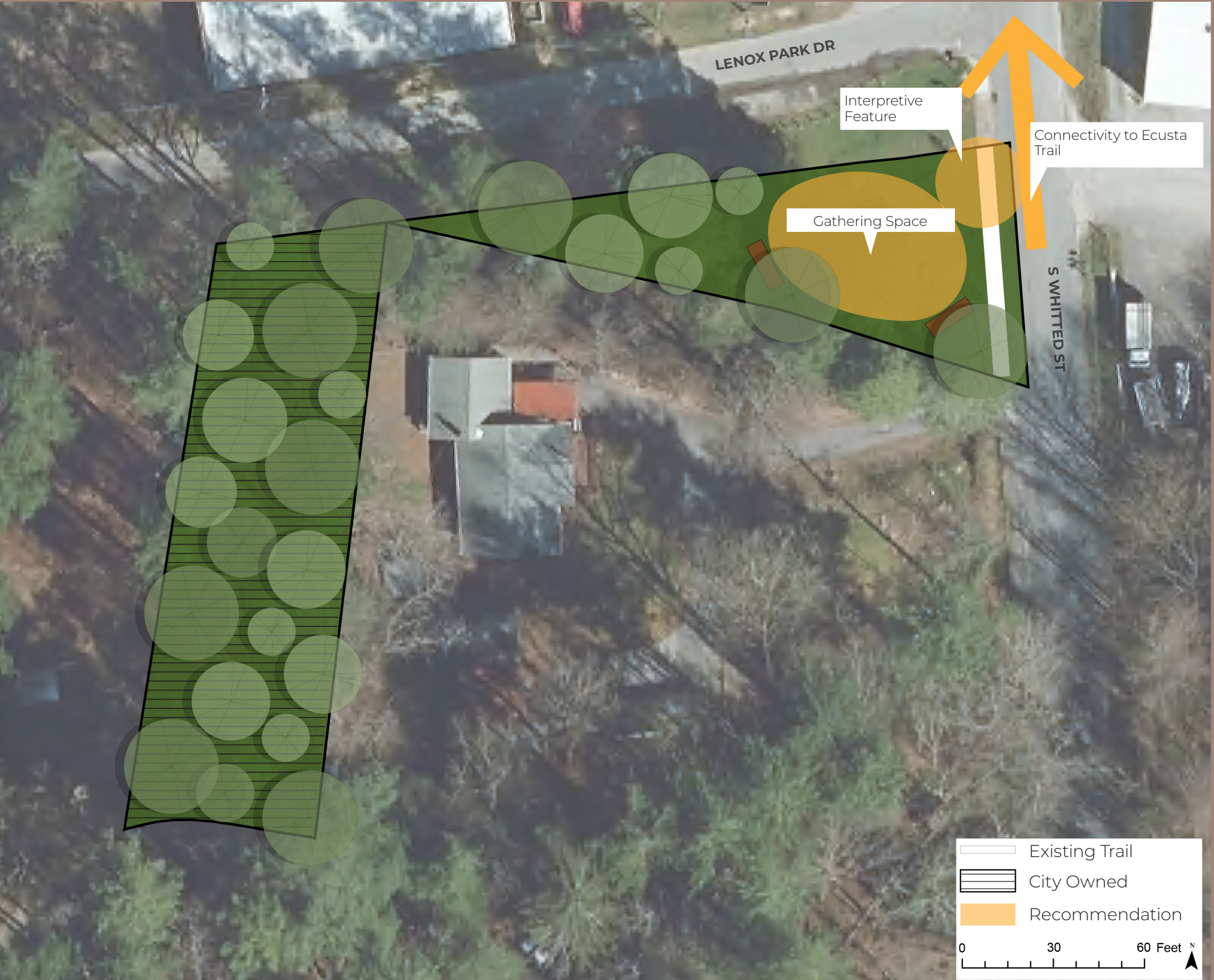
DESCRIPTION:

This small park is nestled in the neighborhood, offering a potential refuge from the streetscape.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Highlight the historic spring on the site with an interpretive feature
- Create a strong connection to the Ecusta trail through wayfinding and placemaking elements
- Create gathering spaces and refuges for the neighborhood and Ecusta trail users
- Incorporate historic aesthetic elements throughout site features, seating, etc.

Note: Existing site conditions such as topography and existing soils should be evaluated before finalizing and implementing new facilities.



KEITH PARK / UNCLASSIFIED GREENSPACE

ACRES: 0.5

ASPIRING CLASS:

Pocket Park

EXISTING CONDITION RATING:

2 - Moderate loss of aesthetics and function

EXISTING FEATURES:

- n/a

DESCRIPTION:

Triangular lot with no current function.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Add accessible sidewalks around the perimeter
- Add seating and gathering area
- Create a connection to Patton Park through wayfinding and consider rethinking park as a neighborhood gateway
- Consider adding a small playground

Note: Existing site conditions such as topography and existing soils should be evaluated before finalizing and implementing new facilities



BRYAN STREET PROPERTY/ UNCLASSIFIED GREENSPACE

ACRES: 0.2

EXISTING CONDITION RATING:

2 - Moderate loss of aesthetics and function

EXISTING FEATURES:

- none

DESCRIPTION:

Triangular lot with no current function other than greenspace.

Recommendations: Explore best and highest use of property. Potential examples to consider:

- Leave as greenspace
- Add seating and signage
- Add public art
- Consider whether property is better utilized for another purpose - size of lot and conditions is not conducive to providing park-like amenities for the neighborhood.

Note: Existing site conditions such as topography and existing soils should be evaluated before finalizing and implementing new facilities.



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GLOSSARY

KEY TERMS

Amenity: A feature or facility within a park or recreational area that adds to its attractiveness, convenience, or comfort. Examples include benches, play structures, picnic tables, shelters, sports facilities, trails, etc.

Accessibility: The extent to which parks and recreational facilities are usable by people of all abilities, including those with disabilities.

Access: The ability of individuals and communities to physically reach and use parks and recreational resources. This can refer to both proximity to parks and the presence of transportation options to access them.

Activation: The use of programming—well-planned, supervised activities and events—to bring life and energy to a physical park space by making people feel welcome and comfortable.

Athletic Field: A general term for ball fields and multi-use fields.

Ball Field: A baseball or softball field of any size. Ball fields include a backstop and can include foul line fencing, spectator/player seating, skinned or grass infields, lights, scoreboards and supporting amenities.

Bioswale: A landscape feature designed to manage stormwater runoff by collecting, filtering, and redirecting it to reduce erosion and pollution.

Blueway: A designated water trail designed with launch points—and occasionally camp sites and other points of interest along the route—for recreational use with canoes, kayaks and paddle boards.

Capital Reinvestment: The allocation of funds to maintain, repair, or upgrade existing park infrastructure and facilities. This may include repairing playground equipment, repaving trails, or renovating buildings.

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP): A strategic document that outlines planned investments in public infrastructure over a specified period, including parks and recreational facilities.

Capital Projects: Projects that involve the construction, renovation, or expansion of park facilities and infrastructure. These typically require significant financial investment and planning.

Complete Streets: Streets designed to accommodate all modes of transportation, including pedestrians, cyclists, public transit, and vehicles, in a safe and accessible manner.

Connectivity: The state of being connected or interconnected and enables movement among otherwise disparate elements, which may refer to transportation, ecology, culture, and community.

Conservation: Planned management of a natural resource to prevent exploitation, destruction, or neglect.

Ecosystem services: Outputs of natural ecological functions or processes that directly or indirectly contribute to human welfare or have the potential to do so in the future (Boyd and Banzhaf, 2007).

Ecological restoration: A process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed.

Facility: A building, structure, or area within a park or recreational space that serves a specific purpose, such as a community center, sports field, or picnic area.

Floodplain: Any land area susceptible to being inundated by floodwaters.

Flood Zone: Areas within the flood mapping boundaries defined by the engineering models for the 100 year, 500 year and floodway as well as the stream centerline.

Floodway: Channel of a stream plus any adjacent floodplain areas that must be kept free from encroachments in order to contain the 1% annual chance flood.

Green Stormwater Infrastructure: Measures that use plant or soil systems; landscaping; stormwater harvest and reuse; or permeable surfaces to store, infiltrate or evapotranspire stormwater and reduce flows to sewer systems and surface waters. Green infrastructure reduces and treats stormwater at its source, reducing the chance of local flooding, while delivering environmental, social and economic benefits.

Greenway: Simply stated, a greenway is a corridor of protected open space managed for conservation, recreation and non-motorized transportation. Greenways are corridors of land recognized for their ability to connect people and places together. These ribbons of open space are **located within linear** corridors that are either natural, such as rivers and streams, or man-made, such as abandoned railroad beds and utility corridors. Greenways as vegetated buffers protect natural habitats, improve water quality and reduce the impacts of flooding in floodplain areas. Most greenways contain trails, which enhance existing recreational opportunities, provide routes for alternative transportation, and improve the overall quality of life in an area.

Land Acquisition: The process of acquiring additional land for parks and recreational purposes, either through purchase, donation, or other means.

Landcover: The physical material covering the surface of the land within a park or recreational area, including vegetation, pavement, water bodies, and natural features.

Land use: How people use the landscape – whether for development, conservation, or mixed uses.

Level of Service (LOS): A number or ratio representing the amount of parkland, recreational facilities or open space per population. These metrics can help to establish baselines, identify needs and gaps, and define park and recreation goals. They can help to measure and track parkland and recreation facility access, distribution, quality, maintenance services, connectivity and levels of investment. Level of Service goals can help the City and its partners stay on track, focusing efforts on meeting the highest community needs and priorities.

Maintenance: The regular tasks that keep parks and recreation facilities clean and safe to use, such as mowing, pruning, trash collection, safety inspections and replacement of broken parts or equipment.

Multi-use fields: Flat rectangular fields that can be used for soccer, football and other formal or informal sports and activities. These fields can include goals, spectator/player seating, scoreboards, lights and supporting amenities.

Native garden: A garden composed primarily of plants native to the local region, which typically require less water and maintenance while providing habitat for native wildlife.

Natural play area: A designated area within a park or playground that incorporates natural elements such as logs, boulders, and plants to encourage unstructured and imaginative play.

National Recreation Parks Association (NRPA): A professional organization dedicated to advancing parks, recreation, and environmental conservation efforts across the United States.

Operations: The ongoing management, maintenance, and programming of parks and recreational facilities, including staffing, budgeting, and daily activities.

Open Space: Undeveloped land or green space set aside for conservation, recreation, or aesthetic purposes.

Park Classifications: The categorization of parks within a system, which helps to establish a common language around park types and quality of amenities. Park classifications can help identify service gaps, establish goals, and inform decision-making around parkland acquisition, park and recreation investments, and required levels of ongoing maintenance.

Partnership: Collaborative relationships between government agencies, non-profit organizations, businesses, and community groups to support initiatives.

Pollinator Garden: A garden specifically designed to attract and support pollinators such as bees, butterflies, and birds by providing a variety of nectar-rich flowers and habitat.

Programming: Planned activities, events, and services offered within parks and recreational facilities to engage and serve the community, such as fitness classes, nature hikes, and cultural festivals.

Resilience: The ability to withstand and recover from environmental, social, and economic challenges, such as climate change, natural disasters, and social unrest.

Sustainability: The practice of creating and maintaining conditions so as to meet the needs of the present without compromising on the ability to meet the same needs elsewhere or in the future.

Trust for Public Land (TPL): A national nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving land for people to enjoy as parks, gardens, and natural areas, often through land acquisition, conservation easements, and advocacy.

Trails: A general term for pathways within parks, off-street greenways and on-street connections (sidewalks, bike lanes, etc.) that provide both transportation routes and opportunities for walking, running, bicycling and other recreational activities.

Tree canopy: The effective radial circumference area of a mature tree’s vegetative cover, including all branches and leaves. The canopy can be conveyed in values of percentage area of total land space being assessed or by numerical.

Universal Design: Design principles and practices that aim to create environments, products, and services that are accessible and usable by people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

Urban Heat Island

An urban area or metropolitan area that is significantly warmer than its surrounding rural areas due to human activities, lack of vegetation, low reflective rates of roofing materials and asphalt, and the production of waste heat by vehicles or buildings.

Walkshed: The area around a destination—such as a park, trailhead, downtown, neighborhood center, transit stop or other location—that is reachable on foot, on a connected street or path network, for the average person. Walksheds are often defined as the area covered by a 5-minute or 10-minute walk (1/4 to ½ mile).

Zoning: Zoning refers to the process of dividing land into different zones or districts for specific purposes, such as residential, commercial, industrial, or recreational use. Zoning regulations typically dictate what types of structures can be built in each zone, as well as other aspects like building height, lot size, setbacks from property lines, and the density of development.

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