



Parks & Recreation Comprehensive Plan

January 2024

City of Thomasville



Acknowledgments

Mayor – Raleigh York

City Council Members – Payton Williams, Lisa Shell, Doug Hunt, Ronald Bratton, D. Hunter Thrift, Jeannette Shephard, and Wendy Sellars

Administration

Michael Brandt - City Manager

Eddie Bowling - Assistant City Manager

Parks and Recreation

Cory Tobin – Parks and Recreation Director

Molly Hussey – Program Director

Randy Chase – Recreation Maintenance Superintendent

Dominique Pickett – Athletic Director

Recreation Committee

Jarrold Dunbar, Chair

Steve Bare

Elisha Hope

Justin Finch

Scott Styers

Kathleen Sarette

Colon Starret

D. Hunter Thrift, Council Representative

William “Bill” Tagliaferri

John “Tony” Vizzini

A special thank you to everyone who participated during the planning process.



City of Thomasville

10 Salem Street

Thomasville, NC 27360

<https://www.thomasville-nc.gov/>

Prepared by WithersRavenel



Contents

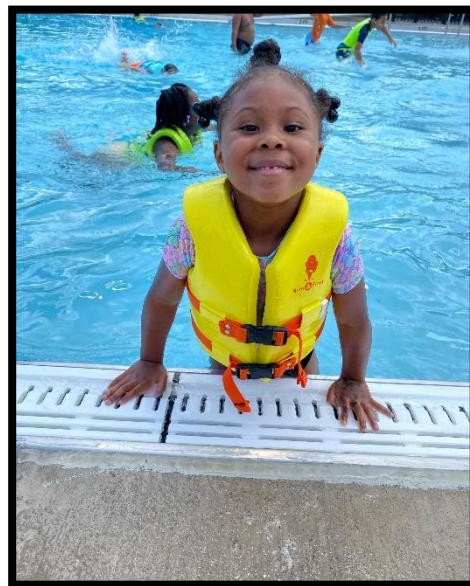
Executive Summary	4
Purpose	5
Process	5
Part 1: Plan Introduction.....	10
Introduction.....	11
Purpose of the Plan.....	11
Data Analysis Methodology	15
Part 2: System Inventory & Analysis	16
Introduction.....	17
Demographics.....	17
Guiding Documents.....	19
Facility Inventory & Analysis	22
Program Inventory & Analysis.....	29
Staffing and Operations Analysis.....	32
Level of Service Analysis	33
Part 3: Community Needs Assessment.....	38
Introduction.....	39
Stakeholder Interviews	40
Community Survey.....	40
Community Event Booth	42
Community Needs Assessment Summary	43
Part 4: Vision	44
Mission, Vision, & Goals.....	45
Goals & Objectives.....	46
Part 5: Recommendations.....	50
Introduction.....	51

Phasing	51
Facility Recommendations	51
Program Recommendations.....	64
Policy Recommendations	66
Funding Sources	67
Appendix	80

Executive Summary



The City of Thomasville owns and maintains an extensive parks and recreation system, comprised of 13 parks totaling approximately 200 acres. Thomasville's system is made up of neighborhood parks, a municipal golf course, aquatic facility, central recreation campus with a gymnasium, multipurpose fields, a skate park, and a variety of other outdoor amenities, all of which provide a strong foundation for recreation opportunities. The purpose of the Thomasville Parks and Recreation Master Plan is to guide City leadership, and staff involved in the decision-making process on how to best meet short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals for enhancing the City's recreational facilities and programs and answer the question, "What do we do next?".



Purpose

The Thomasville Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan will outline the current state of the entire parks system in order to best pave a path forward as the population continues to increase and so does the demand for recreational opportunities. Through a comprehensive lens, this plan sets forth actionable steps towards enhancing Thomasville's recreation network and ultimately, the delivery of its parks and recreation services.

The department's mission statement prepared by City staff and the Vision Statement of the Parks and recreation Comprehensive Plan are as follows:

Department Mission Statement

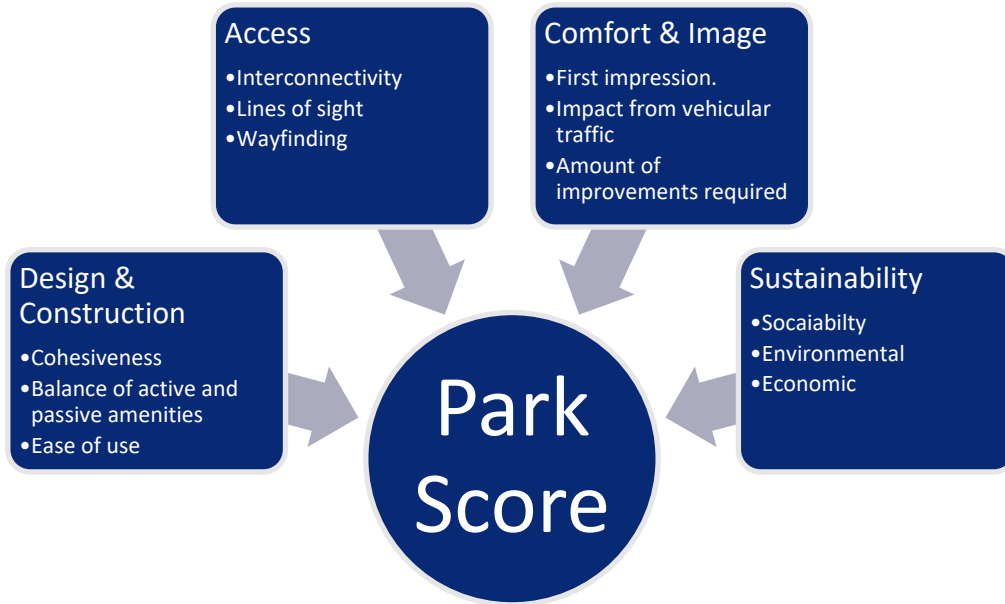
Our mission is to provide quality recreational opportunities to better our community through people, parks, and programs.

Vision Statement

To provide a sustainable park system and services that contribute to a high quality of life through recreational programs, parks, facilities, and service.

Process

The process behind the plan's creation began with an examination of previous planning efforts to understand how they impact the parks and recreation network of Thomasville. Once previous planning efforts were assessed, the project team took inventory of the network, breaking down each park experience by the amenities and programs offered. To best gauge park user experiences, the team conducted field evaluations and stepped into the shoes of a Thomasville park-goer. Evaluative criteria used to determine park scores is illustrated in the graphic on the following page:



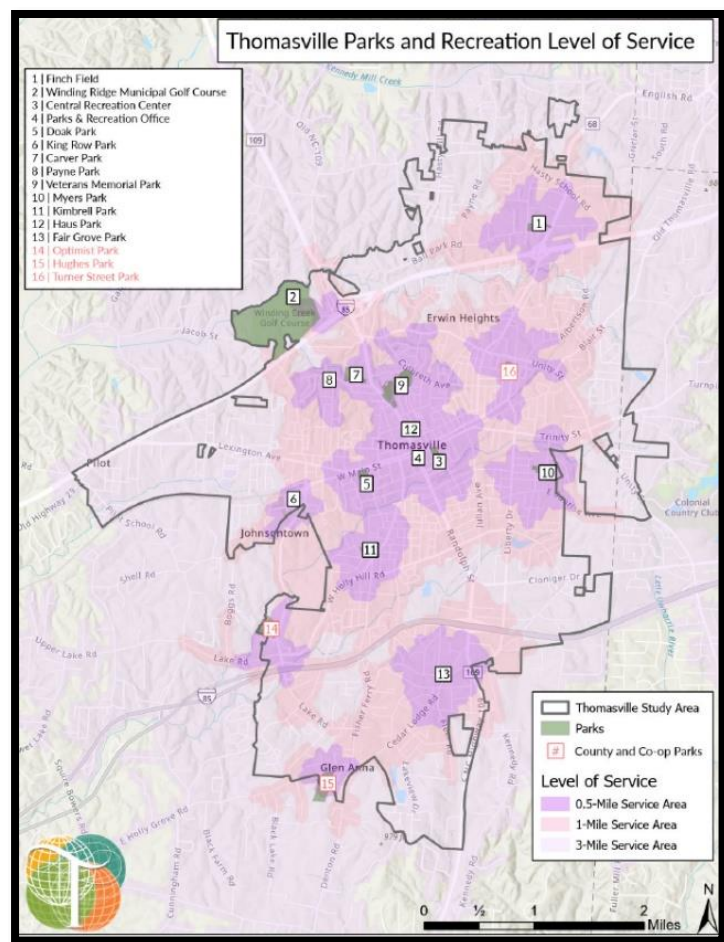
In addition to evaluating individual park experiences, the project team utilized a Level of Service (LOS) analysis to quantify how existing park facilities serve the residents of Thomasville. This was done in three ways:

Acreage: The City's total park acreage was reviewed against communities of similar size across the country.

Access: City parks were evaluated with ½-, 1-, and 3-mile travel distances to identify service gaps in the city recreation network.

Facilities: Individual park facilities such as soccer fields and playgrounds were quantified and reviewed against communities of similar size across the country.

LOS evaluations allowed the project team to develop a suite of preliminary needs and create public engagement materials to help further vet the preliminary understanding of the network's opportunities and challenges.



Once facility evaluations and level of service analyses were complete, the project team was able to hear from the community to determine how field observations and the community's vision aligned. Interactions with the community included participation at the 2023 Everybody's Day event, an online survey, and interviews with stakeholders that included City leadership all helped to form a vision for the Thomasville Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan. Public feedback largely supported enhancement of existing infrastructure while also providing strategic enhancements needed within the community including a dog park, splash pad, and additional pickleball facilities.



The plan concludes with recommendations for existing and future facilities, programs, and policies that were informed through the planning process. Facility recommendations include anticipated phasing while programming and policy recommendations are intended to be implemented and amended on a continuous basis by parks and recreation leadership as community needs and trends shift. Recommendations are outlined in detail in Part 5 of the plan, however, short-term recommendations for facilities in addition to program, policy, and greenway action items can be found below as they are intended to be manageable items for the City to take on within four years of the plan's creation.

Veterans Memorial Park

- Replacement of Cushwa Stadium lighting.

Central Recreation Center

- Improve existing playground with inclusive play features. Provide enhanced access to the playground and throughout park facilities.
- Resurface tennis courts for six (6) pickleball courts, two (2) tennis courts, and a flexible green space.
- Install outdoor fitness equipment.

Myers Park

- Construct a dog park adjacent to the existing parking lot.

Kimbrell Park

- Create a parking lot and develop pathways to existing park facilities.
- Install playground facilities.

Carver Park

- Begin formulation of advisory committee and start design work for Reginald-Strickland Center.

Future Facility Recommendations

- Explore activation of lot adjacent to Fire Station 2 to enhance recreation opportunities in southern Thomasville.

Program Recommendations

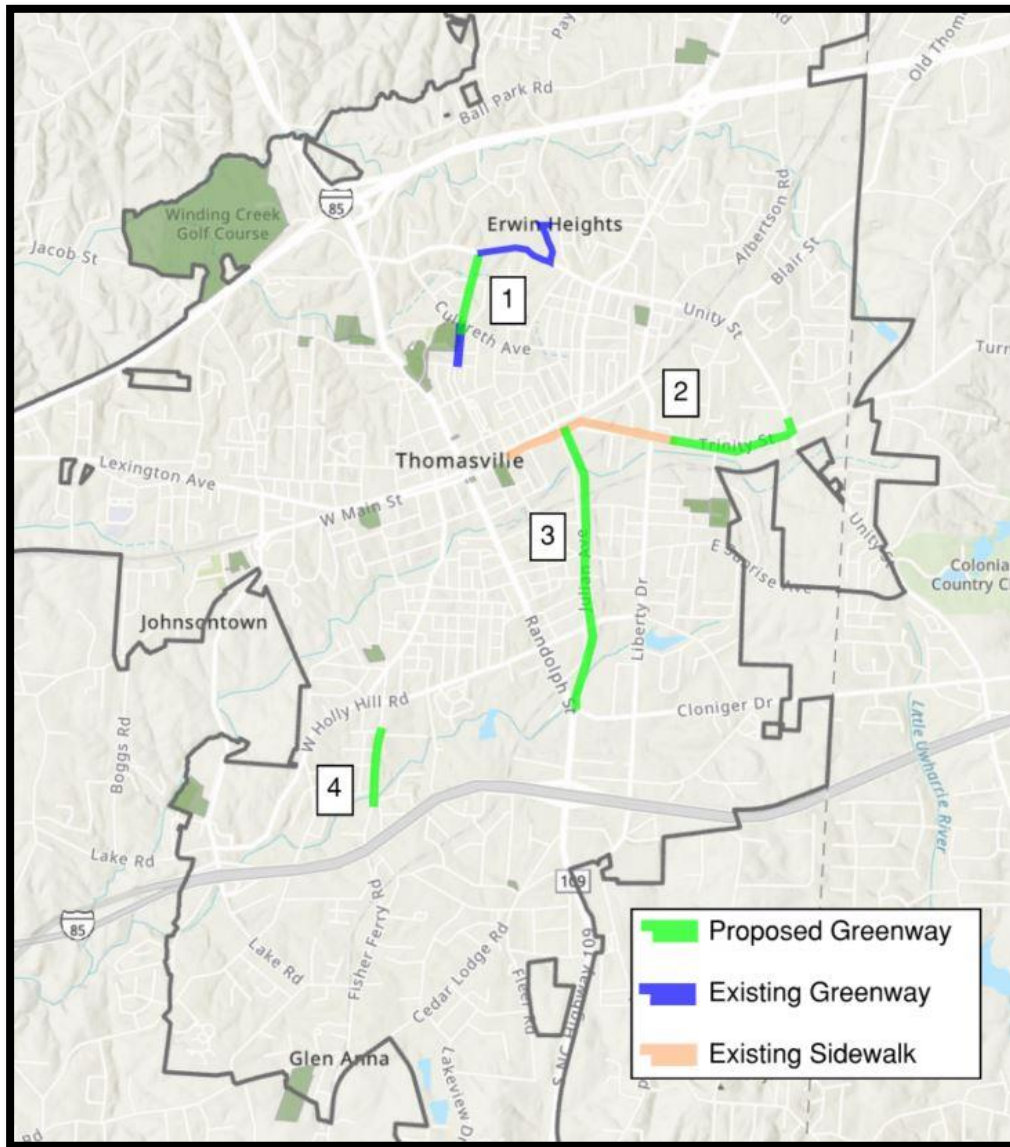
- Establish a program philosophy geared towards offering specialized programming to teens and adults not interested in convention sports and building upon Thomasville reputation as a regional leader in youth sports offerings.

Policy Recommendations

- Recommend hiring an additional 10 FTE staff members by 2030.
- Development of a strategic funding and implementation plan to support implementation of the Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan.

Greenway Recommendations

1. Unity Street to Culbreth Avenue (~1/2 mile)
2. Trinity Street to East Main Street (~1 mile)
3. Julian Avenue to East Main Street (~1.3 miles)
4. Stream Daylighting Project (Old Fisher Ferry Road Re-Use)



Part 1: Plan Introduction



Introduction

The City of Thomasville is located on the eastern most border of Davidson County, North Carolina. The area was established in 1852, when State Senator John Warwick Thomas built a community store in preparation for a new railroad that was to be run through Davidson County. Thomasville was incorporated in 1857 and at the time occupied one square mile.

In the late 1800s, Thomasville's began experiencing notable growth as a result of the rising furniture industry. In 1904, Thomasville Chair became the city's leading furniture manufacturer. Soon after, textiles became a growing industry.

Today, Thomasville is home to approximately 27,337 residents, and is bordered to the east by the City of Trinity in Randolph County.



Purpose of the Plan

The Thomasville Comprehensive Parks & Recreation Master Plan consists of a long-range planning effort aimed at shaping the direction of the City's park and recreation development over the next ten years. This plan will consist of previous planning efforts and documents, goals of the Parks and Recreation department, conditions for the existing parks and facilities, and a thorough assessment of the community needs, to develop a strategic vision for recreational opportunities in Thomasville.

Once these items have been collected and analyzed, they are used as the basis for recommendations in implementing strategies that will address current necessities and provide a thriving framework for future growth.

The plan will take into consideration previous planning efforts such as the City's Bicycle and Greenway Plan (2009), the High Point MPO Bike Plan (2019), the Parks and Recreation Master Plan for the City of Thomasville (1999), and the Stream Daylighting Project (2022).



This Comprehensive Plan will provide an outline for the Parks and Recreation Department, while functioning as a guideline for future decision making that align with the needs and desires of the community. This document will serve as a comprehensive guide for planning improvements, acquisition of land, and the operations of parks, trails, park facilities and recreation programs throughout the city. By utilizing community engagement methods, real input from the surrounding neighborhoods will be taken into consideration to create a comprehensive plan that encompasses the realistic needs of the community.



The recommendations set forth in the Comprehensive Plan will assist department staff in the creation of community-defined priorities, allowing Thomasville to be an environment where residents can work, live, and play.

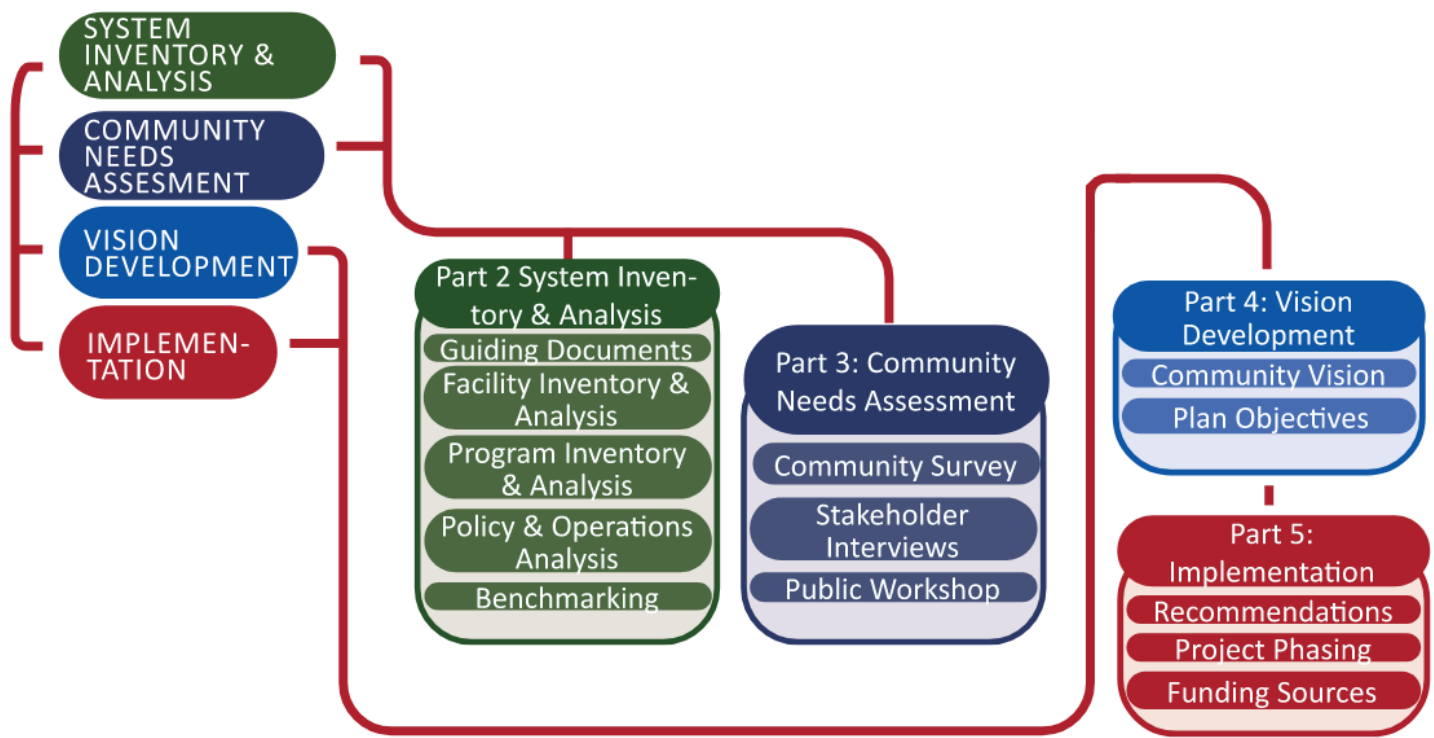


Process

The process involved in preparing for the Comprehensive Plan document requires a thorough analysis of the current system inventory, community engagement and participation in a comprehensive community needs assessment, a development of the vision for the future, recommendations to meet those future visions, and potential means of implementation for the recommendations.

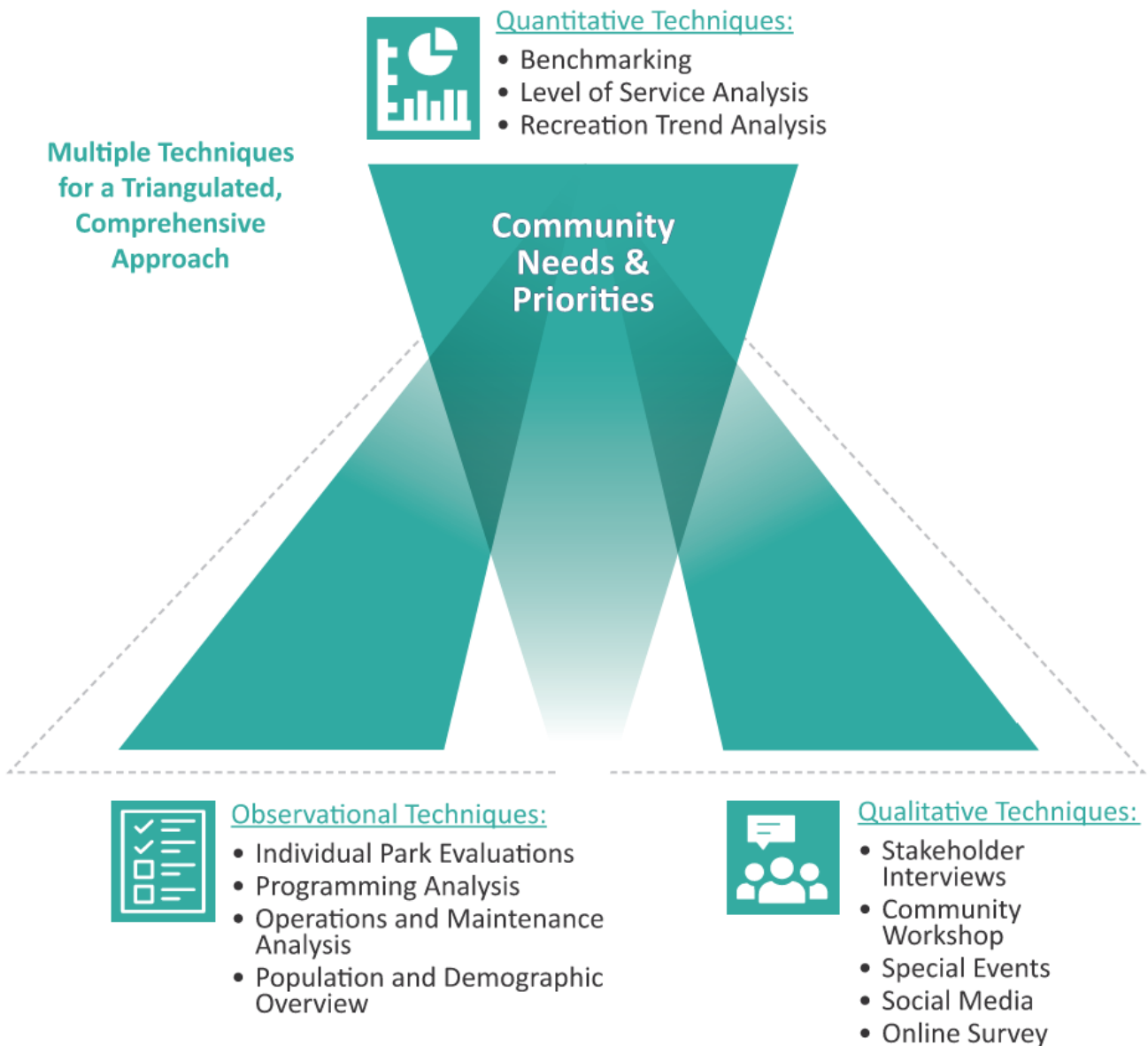


The planning process began with an evaluation of existing park data and previous planning documents. Simultaneously, the planning team also launched a community survey to reach Thomasville parks and recreation stakeholders and gather their input on current and future network needs. This base information allowed the planning team to begin drafting a vision for the city's future parks and recreation network. Establishment of the plan vision then allowed for the drafting of recommended projects, policies, and programs. These concepts were developed iteratively with city staff and the greater public during community engagement events.



Data Analysis Methodology

A mixture of methods was employed to gain a precise understanding of the Thomasville Parks and Recreation system and the community's needs. This methodology focused on merging quantitative data points with qualitative and observational data to develop a complete picture of the system and community conditions. The following figure identifies the techniques used during the development of this plan:



A large, ornate red wooden chair sculpture is the central focus, mounted on a light-colored stone pedestal. The chair has a lyre-shaped backrest and a striped seat. In the foreground, a vibrant flower bed filled with red, yellow, and purple tulips and irises is visible. The background features large green trees and a street with buildings under a cloudy sky.


Part 2: System Inventory & Analysis

Introduction

This section provides an overview of the City of Thomasville’s existing conditions, including current demographics and previously adopted plans while itemizing its parks, facilities, and current programs. Furthermore, this section assesses the design, function, and appearance of the existing parks within the Thomasville parks network.

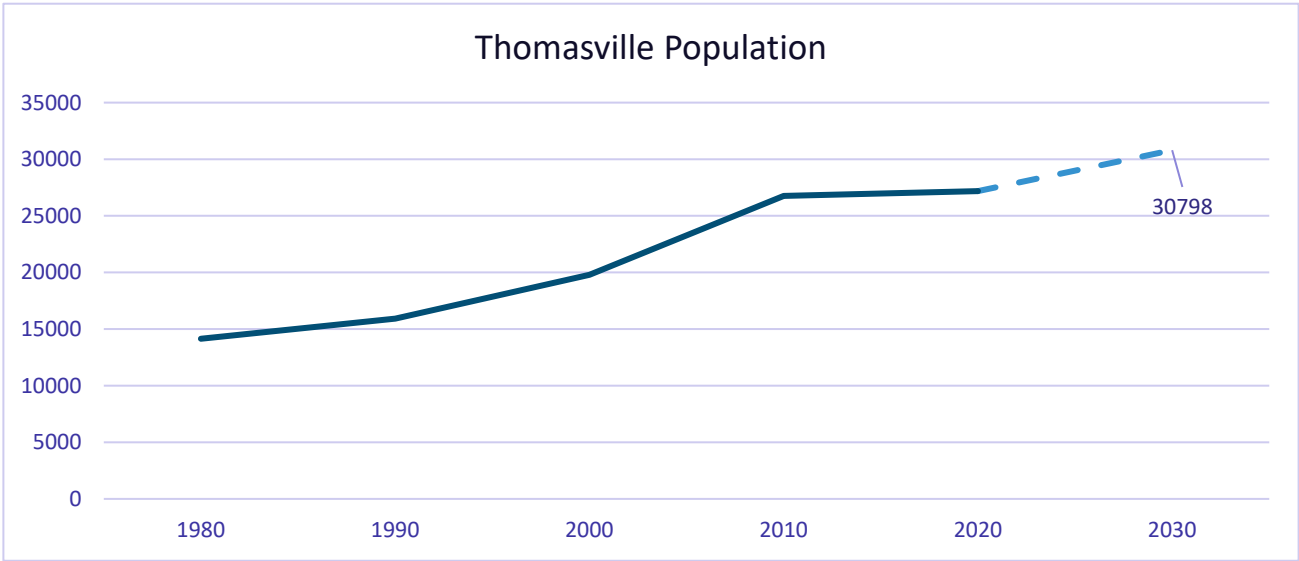
Demographics

Understanding current demographic trends helps identify community needs and special considerations required during vision development. Through review of the current Census data it is possible to project community needs. This in turn establishes basic assumptions regarding Thomasville Parks and Recreation stakeholders which informs future recommendations. All demographic findings and subsequent recommendations are then reviewed during public engagement to ensure accuracy.

 **2022 Population and Population Projection**

The current population of the City of Thomasville is 27,399. Through evaluation of the City’s previous five decades of growth and discussion with City staff regarding future development, the 2030 population for this city is projected to be 30,798. This represents a 13% growth in the population from 2020 and indicates ongoing steady growth in the City. In addition to informing benchmarking analysis within this section, the population projection for the City of Thomasville indicates an ongoing need for continued parkland evaluation, acquisition, and activation.

Year	Thomasville Population	% Change
1980	14,144	
1990	15,915	13%
2000	19,788	24%
2010	26,757	35%
2020	27,183	2%
2030	30,798	13%





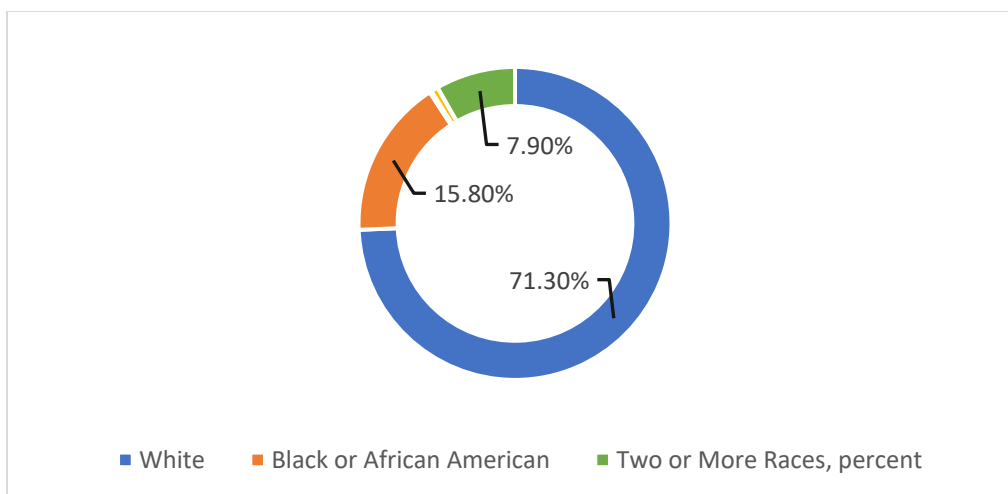
Age

Age cohorts within the City are relatively balanced. The median age in Thomasville is 35.5 years old. This age range typically represents young professionals that have started families. Over a quarter of the City's population (25.8%) are under 18-years old, signifying a large importance on teen and youth programming opportunities. Conversely, persons aged 65 and over represent 16.4% of the population. While not as largely represented in this community, future recreation considerations must maintain and enhance access to opportunities for active adults and elderly individuals to ensure that these individuals can continue to recreate and enjoy Thomasville.



Race & Ethnicity

The majority of residents in Thomasville are White with almost 16% of the population being Black or African-American. Individuals of two or more races represent the third largest cohort at almost 8% of the population.



Furthermore, 17.5% of residents are considered to be of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. Ongoing public engagement will be paramount to ensure the inclusion of these small racial and ethnic groups and to identify specific facility and programming needs are addressed.



Housing

Owner-occupied housing in Thomasville was 59.3% between 2017-2021 data sets. In turn, 40.7% of housing in the City is renter-occupied. A balance of owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing can be considered healthy. Housing occupancy can also provide insight regarding facility needs and support infrastructure.



Education

Of those above the age of 25 in Thomasville between 2017-2021, 80% are high school graduates and 13.4% hold a bachelor's degree or higher form of education. Attainment of higher education is often correlated with more disposable income and diversified recreation needs.



Income & Poverty

Median income in Thomasville was found to be \$45,610. Additionally, 19.9% of the population is considered to be in poverty. While parks and recreation facilities and programs are not intended to replace social programs and facilities, understanding local economic characteristics informs the planning process regarding recreation needs.

Guiding Documents

The purpose of the Guiding Documents section is to review previous studies, documents and planning efforts which can ensure that the documents created over the previous years helps to guide and encourage the goals of the current Master Plan. These documents include the following:

- Master Plan (1999)
- Comprehensive Bicycle Transportation Plan (2009)
- MPO Bike Plan (2019)
- Stream Daylighting Project (2022)



1999 Parks and Recreation Master Plan

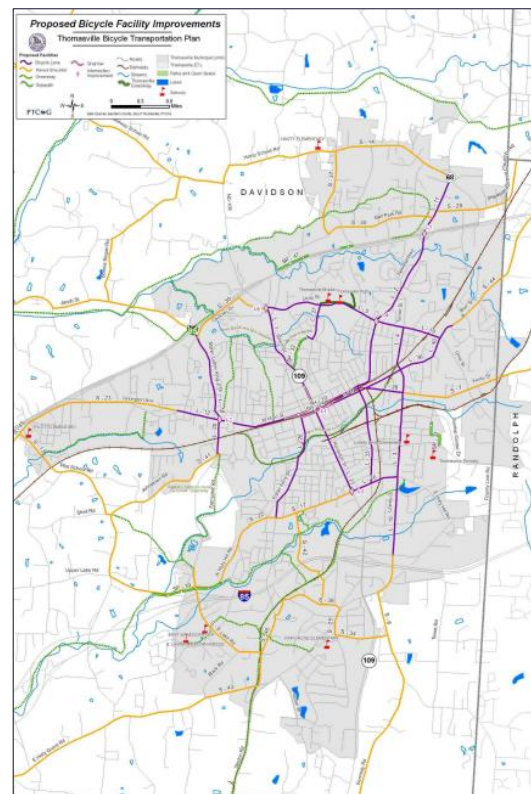
A Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan was created in 1999 for Thomasville, with the goal of addressing the needs of the residents for the next 15 years, with goals at intervals of every 5 years. By gathering input and research from the City Council, the Recreation Committee, focus groups, citizens and consultants, a thorough Master Plan was crafted. Policies and standards were created and included the cost implications and appropriate timeline for implementation. Various program initiatives were proposed, the existing facilities and resources of Thomasville were examined, with schedules of improvement created from the information, and new facilities and resources were proposed.

This information provides valuable insight into the community as it was in 1999 and showcases what the priorities of the community were at that time. Goals and timelines can be taken from the Plan and compared to what exists today in Thomasville, and what is still yet to be accomplished. Items from the Master Plan, such as developing new neighborhood and community parks, and assembling a strategic greenway planning team, can be compared to what exists today to judge the effectiveness of the Master Plan. This provides a valuable jumping-off point for those who are researching and evaluating for the modern Parks and Recreation Plan.

2009 Comprehensive Bicycle Transportation Plan

The Comprehensive Bicycle Transportation Plan for Thomasville was created to establish goals and strategies which would improve Thomasville's bicycle transportation system. Extensive research was gathered from city staff, residents, and visitors through various efforts including public meetings and a user survey. The goals of the document were to suggest recommendations which would improve the safety, access and comfort of bicycle transportation within the area.

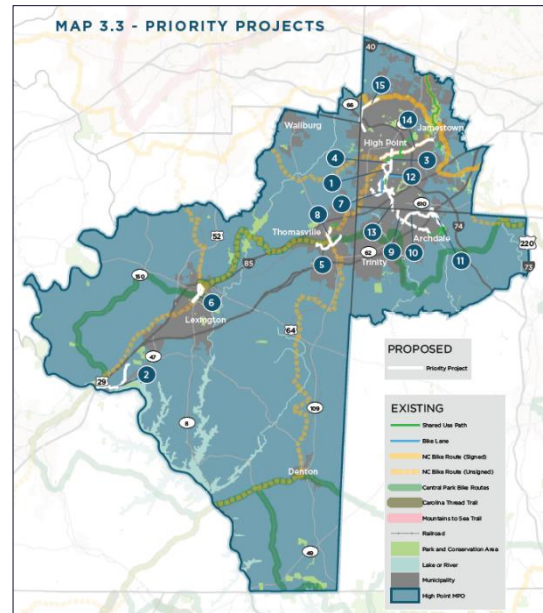
This document's importance to future planning efforts lies within its recommendations for enhancements based upon prior community engagement efforts and thorough research of the area's needs. A section of the document details on-road (bicycle lane, paved shoulders) and off-road (multi-use pathways, etc.) improvements that are tailored to Thomasville. These include specific intersection improvements, off-road facility improvements, on-road facility improvements, and current project opportunities. Using the research and recommendations found within the document, ideas and proposals can efficiently be suggested for future projects.



2019 MPO Bike Plan

The MPO Bike Plan provides a glimpse into the current needs and recommendations for the areas in and around Davidson County and Randolph County, including Thomasville. Priority projects are indicated, which highlight some areas within Thomasville's jurisdiction. Estimated construction costs, support from other plans, and potential partnerships are also provided.

This document is beneficial in showcasing some areas that are proven to require additional services, and could benefit from being prioritized and evaluated in the current Master Parks and Rec Plan. Proposed projects such as the Thomasville Rail Trail and areas such as the Thomasville downtown, memorial park, and high school are highlighted within the document and can be reviewed and utilized in the current Master Plan.



2022 Stream Daylighting Project

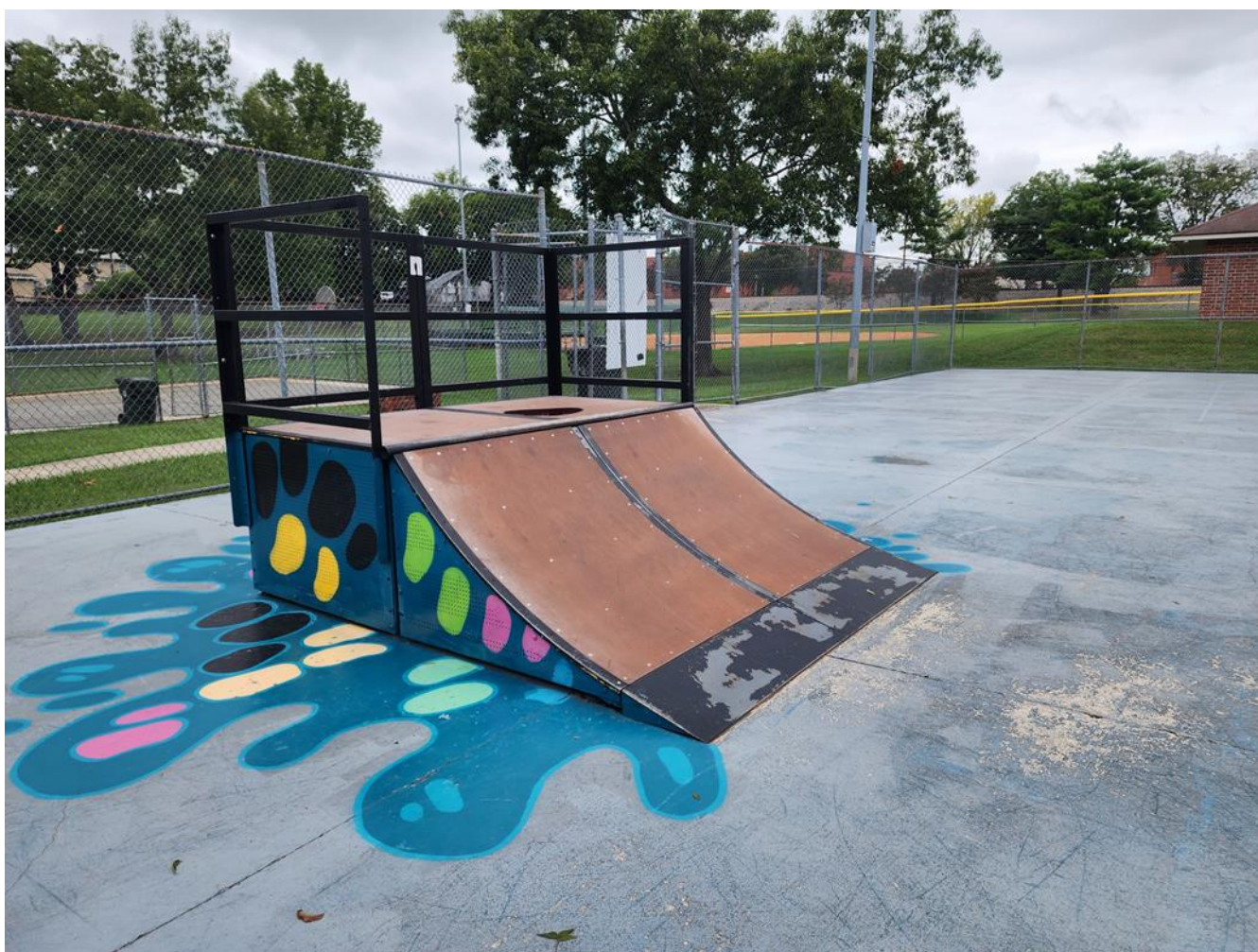
The Stream Daylighting document was created to propose a re-use project, known as the North Hamby Creek Restoration & Park Plan. The project provided images of the under-utilized area, and various concepts of how the area could be revitalized and showcased as a premier park for the community.



This document provides valuable insight into the specific area at North Hamby Creek, including potential recreational items such as outdoor fitness, sports courts, and trails for the community to enjoy. If this plan is utilized as a guide for the area in the current Master Plan, the Stream Daylighting project can be updated, and appropriate funding sources can be identified. The project is currently in the review phase at the time of this research, and plan concepts have been introduced to the community. It is vital that Thomasville continues to research and work towards the development of quality parklands.

Facility Inventory & Analysis

The City of Thomasville manages a robust and diverse network of recreation amenities. The Thomasville facilities map highlights 16 parks within the City's corporate limits. Hughes and Optimist Park are under Davidson County's ownership and Turner Street Park is operated as a cooperative between the City of Thomasville and Thomasville City Schools. The locations of these facilities are shown on the Thomasville Parks and Recreation Map and associated facilities table.



The table below includes the 16 facilities featured on the Thomasville Parks and Recreation Map, 3 of which are partnership parks that are owned and operated by Davidson County and Thomasville City Schools.

1. Finch Field Acreage: ~8.1 Amenities: Baseball	2. Winding Creek Municipal Golf Course Acreage: ~120.0 Amenities: Golf	3. Central Recreation Center Acreage: ~6.0 Amenities: Horseshoes, Playground, Tennis Courts, Basketball, Multi-purpose Field, Community Center
4. Parks & Recreation Office Acreage: ~0.4 Amenities: Offices	5. Doak Park Acreage: ~5.4 Amenities: Baseball, Basketball, Playground, Shelter, Skate Park, Internal Walking Trail	6. King Row Park Acreage: ~4.1 Amenities: Multi-purpose field, Basketball, Playground, Shelter, Internal Walking Trail
7. Carver Park Acreage: ~10.6 Amenities: Playground, Shelter, Basketball, Community Center	8. Payne Park Acreage: ~1.3 Amenities: Passive Open Space, Multipurpose Field	9. Veterans Memorial Park Acreage: ~28.8 Amenities: Shelters, Playgrounds, Basketball, Swimming Pool, Stadium, Tennis Courts
10. Myers Park Acreage: ~12.1 Amenities: Baseball, Basketball, Playground, Shelter, Internal Walking Trail	11. Kimbrell Park Acreage: ~3.4 Amenities: Passive Open Space, Multi-purpose Field	12. Haus Park Acreage: ~0.3 Amenities: Passive Open Space
13. Fair Grove Park Acreage: ~0.8 Amenities: Shelter, Passive Open Space	14. Optimist Park (Davidson County) Acreage: ~11.0 Amenities: Concession, Football Field, Restrooms, Soccer Field, Walking Trail	15. Hughes Park (Davidson County) Acreage: ~55.9 Amenities: Baseball/Softball Fields, Batting Cages, Bike Trail, Concession, Disc Golf, Hiking, Picnic Shelters, Playground, Restrooms
16. Turner Street Park (Co-Op with Thomasville City Schools) Acreage: ~ 1.0 Amenities: Playgrounds, Two Basketball Courts	Additional City of Thomasville Facilities: -PACE Park Acreage: ~0.3 Amenities: The Big Chair -Farmers Market Acreage: ~0.3 Amenities: Farmer's Market Stalls -Communities in Schools Park Acreage: ~0.5 Amenities: Shelter, Passive Open Space Greenway Infrastructure Mileage: ~1.4	



Members of the project team visited each of the City's park facilities to evaluate the existing conditions and their overall quality. The project team used criteria developed in part by the Project for Public Spaces (PPS), a non-profit organization dedicated to creating impactful public spaces and bringing communities together. The following questions were answered for each facility in Thomasville:

Design, Construction, & Effectiveness

- Is the design and construction of this site appropriate for the needs of users served?
- Is the site readily accessible by pedestrians/cyclists from the surrounding neighborhood (i.e. - non-automobile)?
- Is the site accessible to users of all ability levels including but not limited to mobility impaired or handicapped?
- Does the site utilize cohesive design standards (for branding, materials, wayfinding, etc.)?
- Does the site have features/amenities that can be used by people of different ages?
- Do site facilities function and are they easy to use?
- Does the site display a balance of active recreation intensities and passive or at-will opportunities?



Comfort, Appearance, & Safety

- Does the site make a good first impression?
- Are there enough places to sit and conveniently located?
- Is the site being regularly and sufficiently maintained and is clean and free of litter?
- Does vehicular traffic around or within the site impact user enjoyment?
- Does the site need upkeep or improvements?

Access and Linkages

- Are there clear and open view lines into open spaces?
- Is there clear, useful, and adequate wayfinding/signage within the site?
- Can people walk easily to the site from surrounding areas?
- Do paths and/or roads connect people to primary amenities?



Sociability and Sustainability

- Does the site provide places for people to gather?
- Does the site provide opportunities and or resources to promote active, healthy lifestyles?
- Does the site promote educational awareness of the history of the property (if there is any)?

Environmental Sustainability

- Does the site use energy, water and material resources efficiently?
- Does the site treat stormwater from a larger area than itself or otherwise improve water quality?
- Does the site use varied vegetation and/or contain biological diversity?
- Is the site a node within a larger ecological corridor or habitat?
- Does the site enhance environmental awareness or knowledge through signage or educational material?



Economic Sustainability

- Does the site generate public and/or private revenue or is there a user fee?
- Does the site contain or require full-time employees?

The results of the facility evaluations may be found on page 21. Using a combination of field observations, staff input, and background research, each park was then scored based on each of the above questions. The project team then combined the scores of each question used during evaluation to develop an overall park score. These combined scores provide insight into overall park performance while allowing the project team to also consider individual park needs.

Facilities Exceeding Expectations

These facilities exhibit features that go above and beyond the needs of the community and provide an enjoyable experience for their users. The facilities provide accessible, properly maintained opportunities. Other characteristics may include:

- Compatibility with surrounding land and a safe atmosphere.
- Sidewalk and bicycle connectivity into the park.
- Diverse accommodations for different types of park users.
- Intentional park design and consistent maintenance is apparent.
- Integrated programming with park features.

Veterans Memorial Park was identified as exceeding expectations.

Facilities Meeting Expectations

These parks function as intended and are generally maintained. Users can enjoy these parks and use them for their intended function, but they are not otherwise notable. Other characteristics may include:

- Parks are aesthetically pleasing and maintained.
- Parks offer a moderate level of activities and can contain diverse activities.
- Connectivity into the park may be served by sidewalk in addition to vehicular parking.
- Programs and organized events can function as intended within these parks.
- Parks have a general feeling of safety.

Parks meeting expectations include Finch Field and Carver Park.

Facilities Not Meeting Expectations

Unfortunately, some facilities will exhibit conditions that indicate they have exceeded their functional life span and utility. These parks require repairs, replaced facilities, and additional considerations to provide functioning recreational opportunities. These parks are generally not comfortable or enjoyable to use. Other characteristics include:

Parks not meeting expectations include Kimbrell Park and Payne Park.

- Facilities are broken or poorly maintained.
- Perceptions that the park is unsafe or unwelcoming.
- Park activity is consistently limited.
- Park is not compatible with surrounding features.

The parks and facilities were evaluated by the project team over a period in August 2023. The following section of this document reviews the parks and facilities, identifying scores for each category, weighted overall scores and category scores. Each facilities' observation provides a summary of all five criteria subjects along with site-specific observational notes. It should be noted that these are based on the team's observations during a limited period and do not necessarily reflect the recommendations produced during the Needs and Priorities Assessment portion of this report, which included public engagement.

	Design & Construction & Effectiveness (Max 30)	Access and Linkages (Max 25)	Comfort and Image (Max 30)	Sustainability (Max 60)	Park Total
Finch Field	26	8	25	21	70
Central Recreation	22	15	18	17	63
Myers Park	24	11	20	12	59
Veterans Memorial Park	35	20	30	25	91
Carver Park	28	13	26	21	70
Fair Grove Park	23	13	25	6	62
Haus Park	25	12	23	12	66
Kimbrell Park	13	13	18	5	49
Payne Park	13	13	18	4	46
Doak Park	26	13	23	16	69
King Row Park	20	9	20	14	55
Category Total	66	67	75	42	

(The full assessment summary may be found in the Appendix)

Facility Rating Summary

This section of the document contains examples of successful aspects of the parks and facilities in Thomasville. These successes provide examples of areas that provide opportunities for enhancement or expansion to current areas of specific parks. This information is pulled from the Facilities Analysis.

Successes

The successful areas listed below are documented from site visits to the parks and facilities in Thomasville. The information is calculated by combining the high-scoring individual park ratings, which include the categories that indicate the specific park system that meets or exceeds expectations.

Design, Construction, and Effectiveness

The amenities provided for users are facilitated and plentiful. Park items are designed to exhibit quality, effectively attracting a variety of visitors. A variety of activities are available for users to choose from, and diverse activities accommodate a wide range of age groups.

Comfort and Image

The parks and facilities in Thomasville are easily accessible by means of pedestrian traffic, vehicular traffic, and bicycle traffic. Adjacent neighborhoods have access to these areas and can utilize them at their leisure. A variety of active and leisure activities are provided throughout most of the parks, making them efficient to utilize by a wide range of demographics. Most parks and facilities are free and clear from litter, creating an attractive and welcoming space. A sense of satisfaction and pride is reflected from the Parks and Recreation staff, in their care of these facilities. The lawns and common gathering areas provide a clean and comforting appearance.

Opportunities

Opportunities identified in this section are defined by an analysis of individual park metrics and performance of overall facilities and parks that are provided in the specific categories above.

Access and Linkages

The opportunity exists for the addition of appropriate wayfinding signage, and attractive new signage that can welcome visitors to the park. Some parks can be linked to surrounding neighborhoods with new paths, including greenways and other means of access for pedestrians and cyclists. Furthermore, current pathways and trails can be modified to include ADA capabilities and upgrades.

Sustainability

While a majority of parks provided an appropriate amount of spaces for people to gather, and resources and opportunities to promote active, healthy lifestyles, there was an missing element of environmental and economic sustainability. Environmental sustainability metrics measures the facilities, features and other measures that can potentially affect and utilize water, energy, biological diversity, and other resources in a sustainable fashion. Potential opportunities include environmental education located within the parks and facilities. Educational signage that provides an understanding of the ecological area are significant opportunities.

Program Inventory & Analysis

This section will provide an overview and assessment of the current programs the City of Thomasville offers to residents. Program data and information was gathered from Staff and facility tours. In summary, Thomasville offers a wide array of programs, inclusive of all age groups but has room to become more inclusive.

Program Area Definitions

Definitions of the program areas are not specific to Thomasville Parks and Recreation, but they do represent the types of programs that could be included by the City.

- Sports – Team and individual sports, including camps, clinics, and tournaments, as well as adventure/non-traditional sports.
- Fitness – Group fitness classes, personal training, health education, and nutrition.
- Cultural Arts – Performing arts classes, visual arts classes, music/video production, and arts events.
- Aquatics – Learn to swim classes, aqua exercise classes, competitive swimming, SCUBA, and other programs (synchro, water polo, etc.).
- Youth Programs – Youth-based programming for before- and after-school programs, summer/school break camps, and preschool.
- Education – Language programs, tutoring, STEM classes, computer literacy, and financial planning.
- General Interest – Personal development classes.
- Special Needs – Programs for those with physical, intellectual, and developmental disabilities.
- Special Events – Special events that focus on the local market.
- Outdoor Recreation – Environmental education, hiking, camping, paddle sports, and other activities.
- Seniors – Programs and services that are dedicated to serving the needs of seniors, which can include all the activity areas noted above plus social service functions.
- Teens – Programs and services that are focused on serving the needs of teens, which can include most of the activities noted above.
- Self-Directed – Opportunities for individuals to recreate on their own, which can include activities such as open gym, use of weight/cardio space, lap/recreational swimming, golf, and tennis; although not an organized program, time and space must be allocated for this purpose in City facilities.
- Social Services – Nutrition and feeding programs, job training, and life skills training.

Area	Age	Programs -
Sports	Youth	Baseball Basketball Open Gym Basketball Soccer Cheerleading Football
	Adult	Pickleball
Fitness	Youth	
	Adult	
Cultural Arts	All	C.O.O.K. Class Line Dance
Aquatics	Youth	Camp Swim Lap Swim/Family Swim Open Swim Swim Meet WaterDawgs
	Adult	Senior Swim Water Safety Day
Youth Programs	Youth	Winter Camp Afterschool Program Summer Camp Spring Break Camp Kids Night Out
Education	Youth	Black History Month Drive Thru Event
	Adult	
General Interest	Youth	
	Adult	
Special Needs	All	
Special Events	All	Drive-In Movies Easter Egg Hunt Craft Fair Pumpkin Carving Glow Golf Holiday Drive Thru Party in the Park Pancakes with Santa
Outdoor Recreation	Youth	
	Adult	Hiking Adventure
Senior Programs	Adult	Senior Citizens Club
Teen Programs	All	
Self-Directed Activities	Youth	
	Adult	
Social Services	All	

Program Evaluation

The programs provided on the following page are the major areas focus for the Thomasville Parks and Recreation Department. The programs listed represent the 22-23 offerings by the department. The following strengths and opportunities have been identified based on review of the programs list and public engagement feedback.

Overview of Strengths

- Thomasville offers a strong diversity of program opportunities and balances traditional youth sports with various enrichment classes and alternative offerings.
- The City's new aquatic facility and community center offers a variety of flexible programming spaces in addition to its multitude of aquatic offerings.
- Programs are generally well attended and regarded as being high quality.

Overview of Opportunities

- Thomasville can work with community partners to provide self-directed programs. This could include a local geocaching network or walking tours that are supported by the City but championed by community members.
- The City can explore emerging and exciting mediums to advertise program opportunities.
- Teen programming and similar afterschool events have been identified as a community need.
- Social services and special needs programming options can support community members that are often underrepresented during community engagement.



Staffing and Operations Analysis

In addition to the review of Thomasville’s program offerings, the planning effort also reviewed the staffing and operations of the department itself. This helps ensure that the department can grow strategically to meet the needs of the City.

Full Time Equivalents (FTEs)



One method of reviewing department service is to assess the number of residents being served by each Fulltime Equivalent (FTE) staff position. FTE positions that are above national benchmarks can represent redundancy of department responsibilities and/or exceptionally high levels of service. Lower FTE’s may depict a department with limited manpower or departments that are extraordinarily efficient in serving their communities.

Thomasville currently has 11 FTE staff members in Parks and Recreational and 6 FTE staff for the Winding Creek municipal golf course. Annually, Thomasville has between 20-40 part time staff members to assist with Parks and Recreation facilities and programs. These part-time employees represent 2.78 more FTE staff members for a total of 19.78 in Thomasville Parks and Recreation. National benchmarking figures tell us that communities with a similar population have a median of 29.3 FTE staff members, resulting in a 9.52 FTE deficit. As Thomasville’s population continues to increase, staffing will become more important, as the 2030 population projections show a deficit of 16 FTE.

Operating Budget

Operational funds are allocated for various needs of the department over the year including employee salaries, professional services, vehicles, and maintenance. National benchmarking indicates that agencies of similar size to Thomasville have a median operating expenditure of \$103.95 per resident. With a population of approximately 27,399 residents according to the census, the City of Thomasville would have a benchmark median expenditure of \$2,848,126.

Thomasville’s recreational programming is supported by about 72 volunteers with approximately 16,587 collective hours annually. This translates to \$495,287.82 value in North Carolina! Ongoing encouragement of volunteer support will continue to support the City’s parks and recreation opportunities.

The 2022-2023 City budget allocated \$2,117,130 for the operations of the Parks and recreation Department. This reflects an operating expenditure of approximately \$77.27 per resident. While this operating expenditure is lower than the national average for similarly sized communities, it is important to note that the expense deficit can occur due to lower maintenance costs for facilities, volunteer time, local partnerships, and department efficiencies. Community needs and preferences can also impact the municipal operating budget. For example, if Thomasville residents show a preference in one facility or program and have distaste for another, the City’s operating budget should reflect this.

Level of Service Analysis

Methodology

The purpose of a Level of Service Analysis (LOS) is to quantify how adequately existing park facilities are serving the needs of residents. LOS in Thomasville was based on three factors, including park land acreage, number of facilities, and access to public recreational facilities. The analysis ultimately helps identify areas of Thomasville that are underserved in terms of recreational opportunities.



Acreage LOS

When measuring LOS for existing park land acreage, the total number of public park acres are divided by 1,000 residents currently residing within a community. For communities similar in size to Thomasville, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) suggests 11.3 acres of park are necessary per 1,000 residents. Based on the current park land totals, the City had a deficit of 105.1 acres in 2022, and is projected to experience a 143.5 acre deficit in 2030.

Acres of Park Land (acres / 1,000 residents)				
Year	NRPA Benchmark	NRPA (ac.)	Thomasville (ac.)	+/-
2022	11.3 ac / 1,000 residents	309.6	204.5	-105.1 acres total
2030	11.3 ac / 1,000 residents	348.0	204.5	-143.5 acres total

Facility LOS

The second variable used in the LOS analysis was the total number of facilities per population. Similar to the national averages provided above, the NRPA recommends a certain number of specific facility types for communities comparable in size to Thomasville. Facilities exceeding what the NRPA suggests are needed are shown in green, and facilities experiencing a deficit are shown in red. It is important for the community's facility types to best serve the needs of its residents, therefore, facility types shown in the NRPA benchmarking figures below may not be necessary or desired by Thomasville residents. Furthermore, some facilities may be flexible in terms of the activities they can accommodate. For example, while benchmarking may indicate that the City of Thomasville has a deficit of two adult softball fields, this does not necessarily mean that Thomasville lacks the facilities to host adult softball.

Facility	2022 Population (Est. 27,399)			2030 Population (Est. 30,798)		
	NRPA	Thomasville	+/-	NRPA	Thomasville	+/-
Playgrounds	9	7	-2	10	7	-3
Basketball Courts	4	5	1	4	5	1
Diamond fields: baseball	5	4	-1	6	4	-2
Tennis courts	5	9	4	5	9	4
Rectangular fields: multipurpose	4	2	-2	4	2	-2
Dog parks	1	0	-1	1	0	-1
Diamond fields: softball fields – adult	2	0	-2	3	0	-3
Diamond fields: softball fields – youth	3	1	-2	3	1	-2
Diamond fields: baseball – adult	1	3	2	2	3	1
Swimming pools	1	1	0	1	1	0
Community gardens	1	1	0	1	1	0
Rectangular fields: soccer field – youth	6	0	-6	6	0	-6
Multiuse courts: basketball, volleyball	2	0	-2	2	0	-2
Rectangular fields: soccer field – adult	3	0	-3	3	0	-3
Skate parks	1	1	0	1	1	0
Rectangular fields: football field	1	1	0	2	1	-1
Pickleball (outdoor)	3	0	-3	3	0	-3
Regulation 18-hole courses	1	1	0	1	1	0
Multiuse courts - tennis, pickleball (outdoor)	3	0	-3	3	0	-3
Multipurpose synthetic fields	1	0	-1	1	0	-1
Miles of Trail	8	1.4	-7	8	1.4	-7

Community Facility	2022 Population (Est. 27,399)			2030 Population (Est. 30,798)		
	NRPA	Thomasville	+/-	NRPA	Thomasville	+/-
Recreation centers (including gyms)	1	1	0	1	1	0
Community centers	1	2	1	1	2	1
Senior centers	1	0	-1	1	0	-1
Performance amphitheatres	1	1	0	1	1	0
Nature centers	1	0	-1	1	0	-1
Aquatic centers	1	1	0	1	1	0
Stadiums	1	1	0	1	1	0
Teen centers	1	0	-1	1	0	-1
Indoor ice rinks	1	0	-1	1	0	-1
Arenas	1	0	-1	1	0	-1

An evaluation of Thomasville facilities shows the City is carrying a large deficit in the number of playgrounds, youth and adult soccer fields, tennis and pickle ball courts, and the miles of trails offered.



While there may be a deficit in the number of certain facility types offered, the community's preferences should dictate which are prioritized.

Though the population continues to grow as we look towards 2030, facility deficits will remain consistent to those that currently exist.

While Facility LOS analysis provides an overview of the recreation facility capacity, accessibility to the facilities offered is not captured. For this analysis, the planning team conducted an Access LOS to identify areas where access is a challenge.

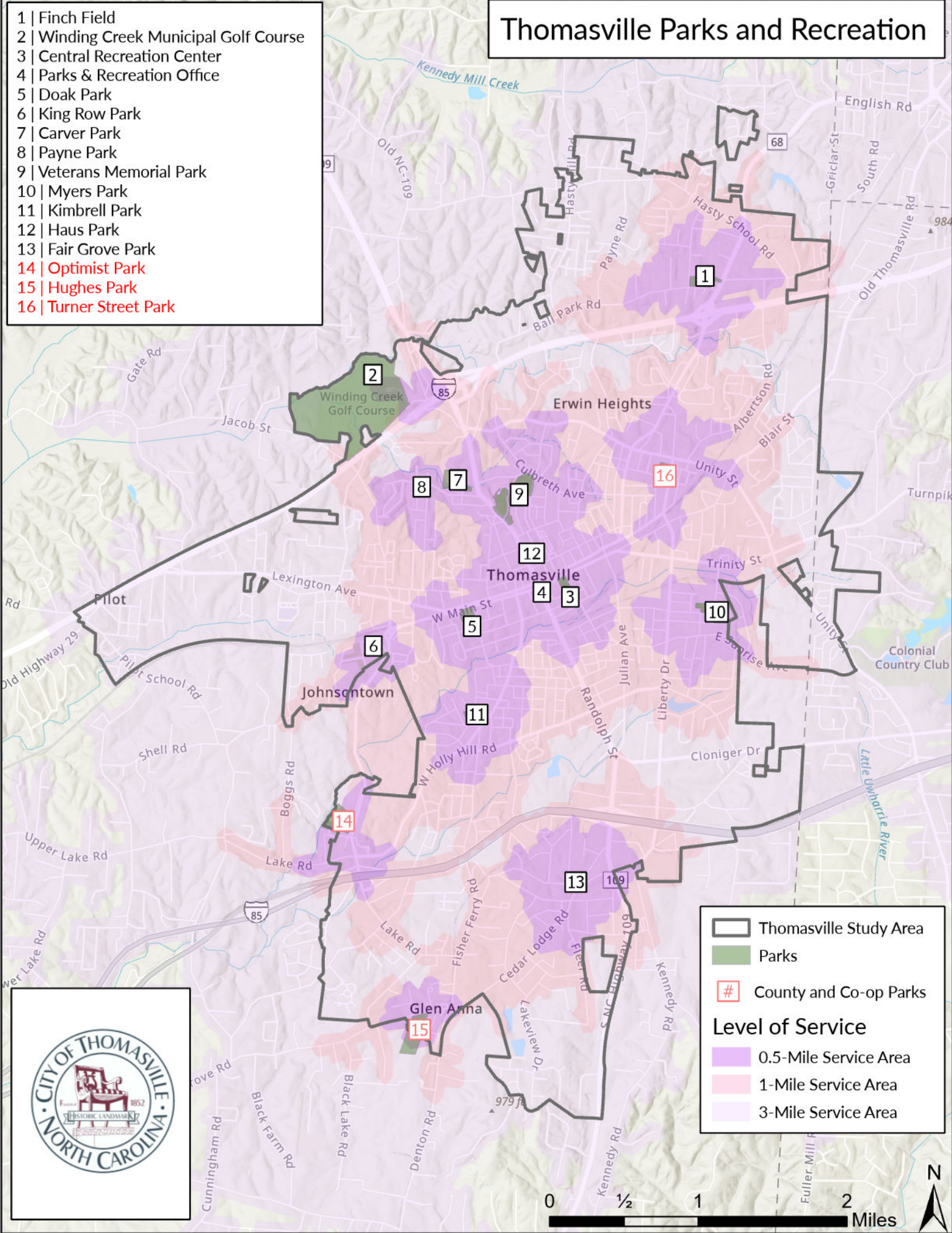
Access LOS

Access level of service is another approach to determining how accessible a park is within the overall network. This in turn allows the planning team to identify gaps in the parks system and plan for future connections and/or parks. Access LOS is typically measured by distance, either in miles or travel time, suggesting the level of effort that a person must spend to get to a park facility.

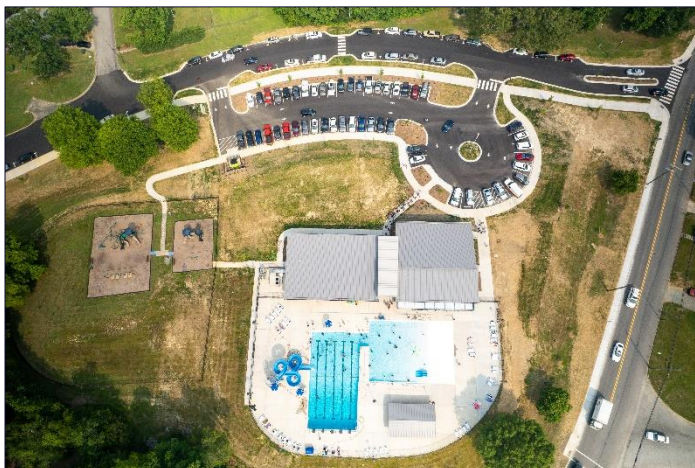
For the included assessment, a distance of 1/2 mile is considered a comfortable walking distance; 1 mile a long walk or short bike ride; and 3 miles representing a bike ride or short drive.

Thomasville Parks and Recreation

- 1 | Finch Field
- 2 | Winding Creek Municipal Golf Course
- 3 | Central Recreation Center
- 4 | Parks & Recreation Office
- 5 | Doak Park
- 6 | King Row Park
- 7 | Carver Park
- 8 | Payne Park
- 9 | Veterans Memorial Park
- 10 | Myers Park
- 11 | Kimbrell Park
- 12 | Haus Park
- 13 | Fair Grove Park
- 14 | Optimist Park
- 15 | Hughes Park
- 16 | Turner Street Park



The access assessment was performed through distance analysis mapping to see how long it takes people to reach 16 different parks within the City. Facilities that were analyzed are consistent with those included within the Facility Inventory table. Overall, the Access LOS analysis showed that Thomasville facilities are relatively centralized within the City's core, resulting in gaps of park accessibility along the western and southeastern portions of Thomasville. A majority of the residential subdivisions along Lexington Avenue in the western city limits are located within the 3-mile service area. Increasing facility access to these residential areas that do not have as great of access as those more centrally located can directly result in a more equitable distribution of facilities. Like Lexington Avenue, many residences along Randolph Street and Cloniger Drive are not within walking distance to Thomasville facilities. In the northern limits of Thomasville, Hasty Hill Road lies completely within the 3-mile service area. Access to many Thomasville parks for residents along Hasty Hill Road is further limited to the use of a car due to US Highway 70, and the lack of an interconnected pedestrian network in place.

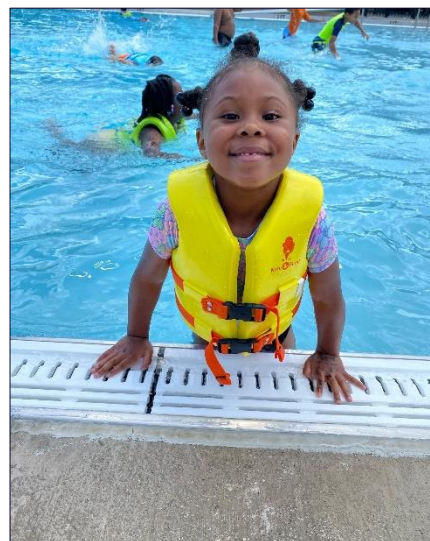


System Inventory & Analysis Summary

Analysis of community demographics, previous planning efforts, and national metrics has developed a basis of understanding for the City of Thomasville's parks system. A review of demographics has identified unique trends that are occurring within the City, such as projected linear population growth, a considerable young age cohort, and the need for City-funded programs & facilities. Assessment of NRPA metrics concludes that the City's parkland acreage is low, but a number of facilities are meeting metric needs.

With Thomasville's population anticipated to continue growing, the strategic placement and upgrading of popular facilities will be critical in terms of the level of service they provide to current and future residents. A review of park level of service indicates that gaps in facility access are located in the northern, western, and southeastern City limits. A combined effort of filling these gaps by factoring adjacent land uses, proximity to residential uses, and building upon existing facilities where desired programs and amenities will prove beneficial when expanding Thomasville's Parks and Recreation system.

These findings indicate the existing conditions of the Thomasville Parks and Recreation network and the planning work performed thus far. Part 3 of the plan will introduce the other half of the vision's foundation, public engagement. To be successful and effective, the Master Plan must be a document that incorporates the perspective of the community which is captured through engagement with residents and visitors.



A large, ornate red wooden chair sculpture is the central focus, mounted on a light-colored stone pedestal. The chair has a lyre-shaped backrest and a striped seat. In the foreground, a vibrant flower bed with red, yellow, and purple tulips and irises is visible. The background features large green trees and a street with buildings under a cloudy sky.

Part 3: Community Needs Assessment

Introduction

The importance of collecting data by researching the needs of the local community is paramount to the efforts to develop an affective Parks and Recreation Plan. In order to effectively evaluate the needs of an area, public involvement is key. This includes a multifaceted approach by gathering information through community workshops, stakeholder interviews, and community surveys. Included in this effort were one-on-one stakeholder interviews, community meetings, virtual engagement online surveys, and a community-wide mail survey.

Much of this information was gathered from the public in the time allotted for the development of the Thomasville Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan. This was done with the following primary goals in mind:

- Understand the community's perspective,
- Obtain input from residents regarding current and prospective programs, facilities, and concepts,
- Raise awareness of the project,
- Build support and a sense of ownership within the community.

City staff and representatives were kept up to date with the information gathered in real time over the duration of the research process and asked for their feedback regarding the results.



Stakeholder Interviews

A series of stakeholder interviews were conducted with City management, recreation maintenance, and recreation program staff. Hearing feedback from those heavily involved in all aspects of Thomasville's parks and recreation system helped to understand the current state and desired direction for existing and future facilities and programs.

In summary, the following perspectives were heard through these interviews:

- A focus on enhancing and renovating existing facilities should be at the top of Thomasville's priority list. There has been an identified need for a dog park and an additional gymnasium, but a strategic maintenance plan should be in place, along with more staffing prior to bringing in additional facilities.
- Grant funding is always an ideal way to assist with facility renovations and land acquisitions, but often comes with a matching component which can be burdensome. Historically, Thomasville has paid as they go when it comes to funding its parks and recreation, which often comes in the form of inclusion in the City's general fund.
- Thomasville City Schools and Davidson County are long standing partners, but the relationship could be stronger, and more coordination with facility sharing would be beneficial. There is a strong partnership with the Thomasville Rotary and Lions clubs that could continue to be built upon.
- When asked what communities or towns should be used for a reference to try and emulate, Blowing Rock, Greensboro's greenway system, Creekside, Hickory, Elkin, and Boone were all mentioned.
- Overall, the vision for the future of Thomasville Parks and Recreation should be centered around inclusion and accessibility, while building upon the strong reputation for providing quality youth sports at a low cost for participants.

Community Survey

An online community survey was conducted to obtain specific information regarding the City's parks and facility systems. Residents were able to participate in the survey and provide feedback throughout the process online. A total of 124 respondents completed the survey. The survey consisted of 17 questions, with feedback options.

Of the parks visited, the majority of respondents remarked that they felt at least 'Somewhat Satisfied' regarding the parks in Thomasville. Parks that received a score of 'Very Satisfied' include:

- Veterans Memorial Park
- PACE Park / Farmer's Market
- The Big Chair

The following parks had more ‘Not Satisfied’ responses than ‘Satisfied’ when the respondents were familiar with the park:

- Carver Park
- Kimbrell Park
- Payne Park
- Turner St. Park
- King Row Park

One of the largest barriers to park use is the lack of park awareness. Throughout the comments, a lack of amenities available and various safety concerns is noted as the second and third barriers to park use and appear to be responsible for the parks with low satisfaction ratings.

Survey questions also asked what physical amenities residents and visitors would like to see in Thomasville parks. The top three desired park facilities were a variety of active activities:

- Playground Equipment
- Greenways and Trails
- Tennis and Pickleball Courts

In the write-in comment section of the desired park facilities, splash pad facilities and greenway trails were a recurring response. Splash pads were identified as needed to have aquatic play throughout the City, versus solely located at the central facility. Greenways were desired to connect facilities and provide additional passive recreation.

Most of the respondents who participated in City programs indicated that they were very satisfied or at least somewhat satisfied with them.

Like the barriers for respondents using the facilities, most survey participants indicated that a lack of awareness has prevented them from accessing City programs. A lack of programming offered for their age groups was cited as the second largest barrier.

Of the City’s special events, the following are the most attended:

- Drive-In Movies
- Annual Craft Fair
- Easter Egg Hunt

The top three desired programs to be added in the City were:

- Outdoor/Adventure Programming
- City-wide Special Events
- Youth Athletics

The respondents of the survey ranked social media posts and direct email as their top preferred means of communication from the Parks and Recreation Department. Many respondents also wrote-in to the survey to say that they would prefer direct text messages with important updates from the recreation department.

Respondents indicated that they would support additional funding for parks and recreation, however there was a general disinclination to fund using property tax rates dedicated for parks.

Community Event Booth

In addition to hosting an online community survey to gather input on the plan's needs, the project team also went into the community to meet people where they are and collect direct feedback on the existing/future parks network. On September 30th, 2023, the project team attended a booth at the City's Everybody's Day event. This event is hosted annually by the City and attracts thousands of residents and visitors from the surrounding region.

During this event, the project team explained the goals of the project, provided preliminary plan recommendations for review, and asked event attendees what they would like to see in their future parks/programs. In large, participants were very complimentary of the existing parks and recreation network. Of particular note, a large number of participants expressed the desire for a dog park facility in Thomasville. Dog park facilities received 27 write-in responses or votes, 20 more than the second highest facility write-in provided for splash pads. Other facility recommendations included additional playgrounds, water features, outdoor pickleball, a community garden, and a koi pond.



Programming recommendations received much less attention than the facility recommendations, with the largest write-in/voted program being girl's youth volleyball with five responses. Home-school opportunities/activities received the second most responses with three participants noting the need for such activities. Other program recommendations ranged from organized adult water aerobics to bocce ball leagues.

Following the booth engagement, the project team reassessed the preliminary recommendations of the plan to incorporate public interests and comment.

Community Needs Assessment Summary

Throughout the planning process, the project team worked directly with community leaders and stakeholders to understand what the Thomasville community needs and would like to see from its parks. Participants largely expressed satisfaction with the department and its efforts, with several noting their excitement to see what comes next.

Overall, community engagement revealed a need to support existing park facilities while strategically growing the overall network with site-specific enhancements. Some existing facilities, such as Carver Park, require enhancements to existing structures and buildings to become more accessible, usable, and enjoyable. Conversely, community feedback indicates a desire for brand new features and facilities, such as the widely recommended dog park identified primarily at Everybody's Day. To address these two needs, existing parks must be evaluated for their capacity to grow with enhanced features in addition to the ongoing maintenance recommendations based on feedback and the project team's site visits.

While some programming opportunities received more responses than others, such as outdoor programming and youth volleyball, public input regarding programming opportunities largely varied without any clear gaps in existing programming. It is recommended that the Thomasville Parks and Recreation Department continue to provide flexible and diverse opportunities for the public.



Part 4: Vision



Mission, Vision, & Goals

The vision for the Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan establishes a guidepost upon which all department decisions must follow. The City's system of parks, greenways, open spaces, facilities, are components of the parks and recreation vision. This recreation vision is in turn a small component of what allows Thomasville to be a great place to live, work and play.

The Vision is intended to guide the parks and recreation system over the next 10 years. Goals and objectives have been developed to support the overarching vision, and to provide contextual direction for the various components of the department and recreation network. City staff must work to update the Vision and Goals as needed to account for changes in the community's needs and desires. The following chapter identifies recommended facility improvements, programming considerations, and changes to department policies to meet this vision statement.

Mission & Vision Statements

The department's Mission Statement and a Vision Statement identify the guiding principles upon which the Thomasville community is served. City staff prepared a mission statement that embodied the values and intent of the department.

Department Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide quality recreational opportunities to better our community through people, parks, and programs.

Vision Statement

To provide a sustainable park system and services that contribute to a high quality of life through recreational programs, parks, facilities, and service.



Goals & Objectives

The following overarching goals and subsequent objectives have been identified by the department to further the department's Mission Statement and Vision. These goals serve as the guiding principles for the department, their associated priorities, and the projects and action items developed in this plan.

Department Goals

Goal 1: Enhance Community Relations

Objectives

- Enhance customer services by making a conscience effort to greet everyone graciously and with professional courtesy.
- Reach out to citizens with disabilities by implementing programs and activities that will enhance their abilities.
- Continue to partner with agencies to provide marketing and outreach materials to enhance the lives of the citizens of Thomasville.

Goal 2: Prioritize Public Safety

Objectives

- Continue to apply safe principles to make neighborhood parks safer.
- Continue to partner with agencies that will strengthen and provide a safe environment for our citizens.
- Continue to attend our City Safety Training Workshop which will provide safe facilities for our participants and staff.

Goal 3: Ongoing Organization Improvements

Objectives

- Continue to work on strategic and long-term plans for our recreation facilities and parks.
- Provide maintenance staff with a system that will help our department to maintain our parks and facilities.
- Continue to expand staff development skills by attending workshops.

Goal 4: Continued Staff Professional Growth

Objectives

- Continue to send staff to North Carolina Recreation and Parks Association Conferences and workshops.
- Continue to provide training for part-time staff with center responsibilities.
- Continue to provide training and opportunities for all staff in their career for future promotion.

Goal 5: Address park space usage and the opportunities to repurpose areas for new additions or spaces.

Objectives

- Identify areas of current park space that may be underutilized and determine feasible opportunities for repurposing.
- To create opportunities for these underutilized areas to again be vital components of the Recreation Department.
- To follow recreational trends and community needs to determine what purpose these areas could be used to provide.

Program Goals

Goal 1: Provide quality programming focused on benefiting our constituent's health and well-being.

Objectives

- Focus on providing specific programming that emphasizes fitness and wellness for all ages of participants and abilities.
- Provide fitness and wellness opportunities in conjunction with community partners.
- Implement policies within our childcare programming for mandatory free play in efforts to reach the "60 Minutes" of activity a day for our youth.

Goal 2: Integrate and implement cultural and educational opportunities within existing and new recreational programs.

Objectives

- Purposefully plan Childcare and Senior programming field trips to include educational and/or cultural experiences.
- Provide an annual community art initiative to inspire creativity and add vibrancy to wherever it may be placed.
- Expand arts programming through special class opportunities or events.

Goal 3: Expand programming with new and innovative community events.

Objectives

- Provide innovative and impactful special events in line with new recreational trends and ideas.
- Pursue funding and partnership opportunities through grants, donations, sponsorships or in-kind partnerships to bring community events to the community.
- Provide staff with continuing education opportunities to stay up to date with recreational trends and opportunities.

Goal 4: Provide multi-generational programming opportunities to the community.

Objectives

- Provide specific programming that brings multiple generations together.
- Partner with community agencies with varied generational demographics.
- Provide specific programming targeted at active-adults and senior citizens.

Goal 5: Provide quality and accessible programming to the citizens of Thomasville.

Objectives

- Provide staff and instructors with all possible outlets to continue to build and enhance current programming including training, safety training and technology.
- Continue to develop and build community partnerships to expand our capabilities and reach.
- Plan and program with consideration of the accessibility of location, cost, duration while market programs through all outlets.

Maintenance Goals

Goal 1: Provide safe, clean and appealing parks to enhance community enjoyment and pride.

Objectives

- Continue to complete routine safety and cleaning checklists at each recreational site.
- Use the work order system to continue to address issues while conducting regularly scheduled maintenance.

Goal 2: Objectively identify and address issues of deferred maintenance throughout park space and recreational facilities.

Objectives

- Perform extensive and objective park and facility audits to identify the department's biggest needs and issues.
- Enact a post audit plan to address and tackle capital issues as well as address any safety concerns immediately.
- Create a work order checklist system to ensure that any issues are addressed.

Goal 3: Purposefully update recreational facilities to meet current and future standards in energy, technology and accessibility.

Objectives

- Use facility audits to determine areas of need, but also opportunities in up-fitting facilities to new standards.
- Include up fitting of facilities in budget planning as well as ensure modern standards are included in capital projects.
- Encourage maintenance staff to participate in training or educational opportunities in energy, technology and accessibility trends and standards.

Based upon the established department Mission, Vision, Goals, and subsequent Objectives, the following chapter details out network, program, and policy recommendations for the Recreation Department and the City of Thomasville. These recommendations seek to further the vision of the City, and are supported by the mission of the department. Overarching goals and objectives will be supported by recommended actions, tying efforts by the City to plan progress and achievement.



Part 5: Recommendations



Introduction

Recommendations outlined within this chapter are intended to provide clear and achievable steps for the realization of the vision established through community engagement and city staff correspondence. The chapter will describe facility, programming, and policy recommendations that were informed through the planning process. Facility recommendations will include anticipated phasing while programming and policy recommendations are intended to be continuously implemented by parks and recreation leadership on a continuous basis and reevaluated as community needs shift.

Phasing

In addition to the plan recommendations detailed within this Chapter, the project phasing takes the next step forward by organizing when each item should be undertaken. For the purposes of this plan the following phasing categories will be used:

- Short-term, representing the immediate priority that should be completed within 1- to 3-years of plan adoption.
- Medium-term, representing notable facility and program-enhancing actions that should be undertaken and completed within 4- to 7-years of plan adoption.
- Long-term, network-defining actions that should be undertaken and completed within 8- to 10-years of plan adoption.

Please note that while the plan puts forward recommended phases for each action item, City staff and project champions must exercise flexibility and adaptability when carrying out these action items. Action item phases may change due to early project completion, changes in community needs, or other unforeseen circumstances. It will be the responsibility of the Parks and Recreation Department to maintain this phasing plan and update it regularly to accurately reflect past, present, and future efforts within the project pipeline.

Facility Recommendations

These recommendations for existing facilities provide clear steps that act as action items towards the Thomasville Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan system vision. Phasing recommendations have also been developed through the public engagement process to identify and prioritize less complex projects in the short term while preparing and planning for system-defining actions over the long term.

Existing Facilities

The City of Thomasville's park facilities were evaluated as part of plan development. As indicated in Chapter 2, most of the City's parks scored on the lower end of "meeting expectations" with Veterans Memorial Park "exceeding expectations". Many parks are reaching capacity for additional or improved facilities, funneling many of the recommendations made by this plan across the 16 park locations. The following park recommendations offer strategic implementation items to enhance usership.

Veterans Memorial Park

Veterans Memorial Park is the highest-ranking park within the Thomasville park system and represents a gateway feature entering the City from Salem Street. The almost 30-acre facility contains shelters, playgrounds, basketball courts, a swimming pool, the football stadium, and tennis courts. Planned amenities for the site include a gymnasium adjacent to the aquatic center. The park scored the maximum score in both Design, Construction, & Effectiveness and Comfort, Appearance, & Safety through the criteria developed in part by the Project for Public Spaces national non-profit organization.

The recently constructed swimming pool has quickly become a community favorite as the aquatic facilities allow for recreation, competition, and rehabilitation. The other facilities on site have been identified for improvements or enhancements to match the quality of the swimming pool. During the school sports season, the Cushwa stadium becomes the highly utilized and thus needs improvements to accommodate the crowd of enthused football fans.

Park Improvements Map



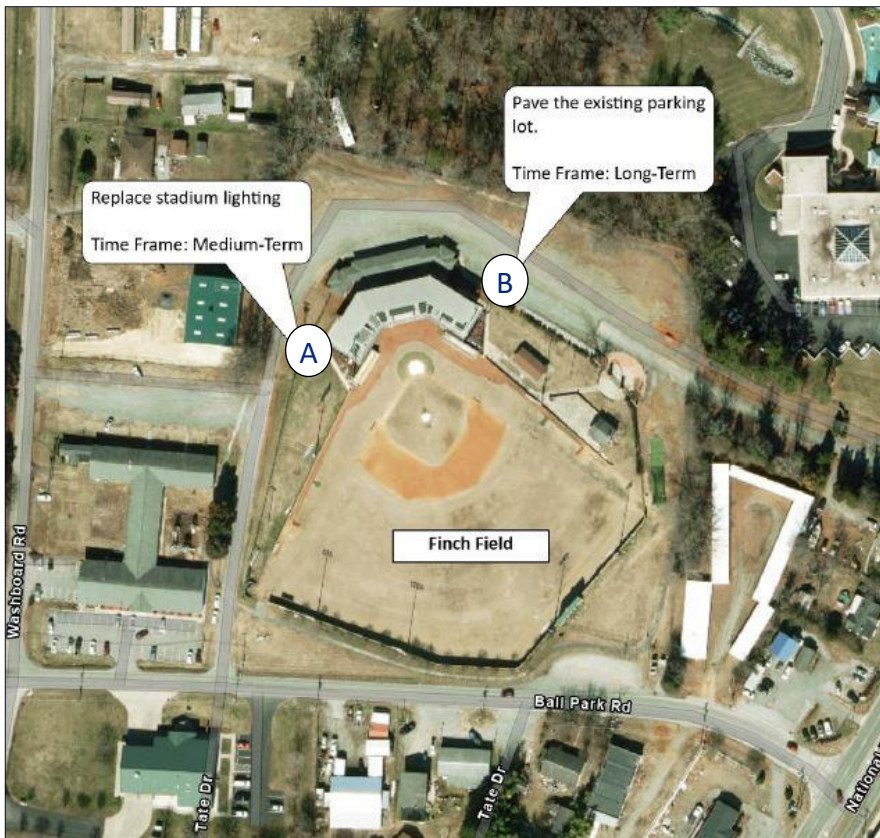
Precedent Imagery



Finch Field

Finch Field, originally constructed in the 1930's, currently houses a playground, a picnic shelter, a baseball field, and a community center. Of the City's ball fields, this one has the most amenities and parking available, meaning that minor improvements will stand to only increase the park experience here. There are several unpaved lots around the stadium as well as a small lot along ball Park Road. Paving the existing parking lots and providing striping can ease the flow of traffic leaving the site. It was also recommended to replace the stadium lighting.

Park Improvements Map



Precedent Imagery



Central Recreation Center

Thomasville's Central Recreation Center contains several park facilities including horseshoe pits, a playground, tennis courts, basketball court, a multi-purpose field, and of course, the community center. The park has been maintained mostly in good shape, with the exception of a few aging facilities and accessibility barriers. Beginning with Central Recreation's existing playground, resurfacing is recommended to not only improve user safety, but overall accessibility. Increasing facility inclusiveness is another recommended playground enhancement. All equipment should accommodate different user abilities. Accessibility enhancements may also include increased interconnectivity in the form of a pedestrian connection to all park amenities, including the recommended splashpad. In addition to resurfacing the existing playground, rehabilitation efforts in the form of resurfacing the existing tennis courts are recommended.

When considering resurfacing and repainting the tennis court area, it is recommended that a combined court with six (6) pickleball courts, two (2) tennis courts, and a flexible green space replace the current configuration of the space, so multiple sports and activities are accommodated. The benefits to resurfacing include increased safety, confidence, and increased attendance at this portion of the site. Repainting the court increases the visual appeal of the surface. A well-painted surface leaves a great first impression and can help spread awareness of the facilities offered at the park. In addition to painting standard court striping, the courts could also include art by a local artist that is representative of the community. For the existing multi-purpose fields, it was recommended to replace those with artificial turf to ensure a uniform aesthetic and access to year-round play.

Additionally, it is recommended that the City installs outdoor fitness equipment with instructional signage so that users can confidently and safely use the fitness equipment. Increased guidance on how to properly use the offered equipment will allow users to comfortably use the facility and increase park attendance.

Lastly, there were several maintenance recommendations including replacing fencing and lighting and renovating all restrooms. Like the facilities improvements, these maintenance recommendations increase accessibility while maintaining visual interest across the park as whole.



Park Improvements Map



Myers Park

Nestled between residential and industrial spaces, Myers Park currently has two baseball/softball fields, a basketball court, a playground, one community shelter, and a paved walking trail that goes through around the basketball court and playground areas. Parking for the park is located across Mason Way in a gravel lot near the picnic shelter, playground, and basketball court.

Proposed improvements include a second playground near the ball fields as well as a dog park. The ball fields themselves are also in need of renovation and updates, including the future need for lighting enhancements. The addition of additional playground equipment by the fields and the dog park adjoining the parking area could allow for all ages and members of the family, two or four-legged, to enjoy the baseball/softball game without having to cross the street. Enhanced crosswalk and traffic calming measures may be necessary for pedestrian safety as this park develops further and draws additional users.

Park Improvements Map



Precedent Imagery



Carver Park

Located within a residential community and adjacent to a place of worship, Carver Park provides the community with a playground, a picnic shelter, two (2) full basketball courts, and a community center. Carver Park holds a rich history that should continue to be displayed through all future facility enhancements.

To make the site ADA accessible, sidewalks are proposed between and around the facilities. Many people within the survey noted that they were “Not Satisfied” with the existing facilities. This further supports the recommendation to update the community center building with community support, buy-in, and guidance through the oversight of a specialized advisory committee. On-going work with the advisory committee will help illuminate facility needs and the design of the community center.

Park Improvements Map



Kimbrell Park

Kimbrell Park is currently an unimproved grass field within a residential community. It is a large site and has been identified for the location of two (2) new multi-purpose fields and playground equipment. To bring access into the site, a parking lot is proposed. Another enhancement noted by the project team is the inclusion of ADA accessible pathways between the parking lot and all the proposed facilities.

Park Improvements Map



Precedent Imagery



Payne Park

Payne Park is another unimproved grass field within the Thomasville community. When asked about the park during the community survey many stated they were not satisfied with the park's facilities. Creating a parking lot to encourage visitation and placing a picnic shelter would make this an ideal spot for events like birthday parties, education gardening classes, and the occasional game of soccer.

National benchmarking indicated the need for a community garden in Thomasville. The northern limits of the park are an optimal location for raised beds. This would provide the nearby residential neighborhoods with walkable, fresh foods and provide an interesting set piece for the gateway entrance into Thomasville. Sidewalk or internal pathways will be required to access the garden.

Park Improvements Map



Precedent Imagery

A.



B.



C.

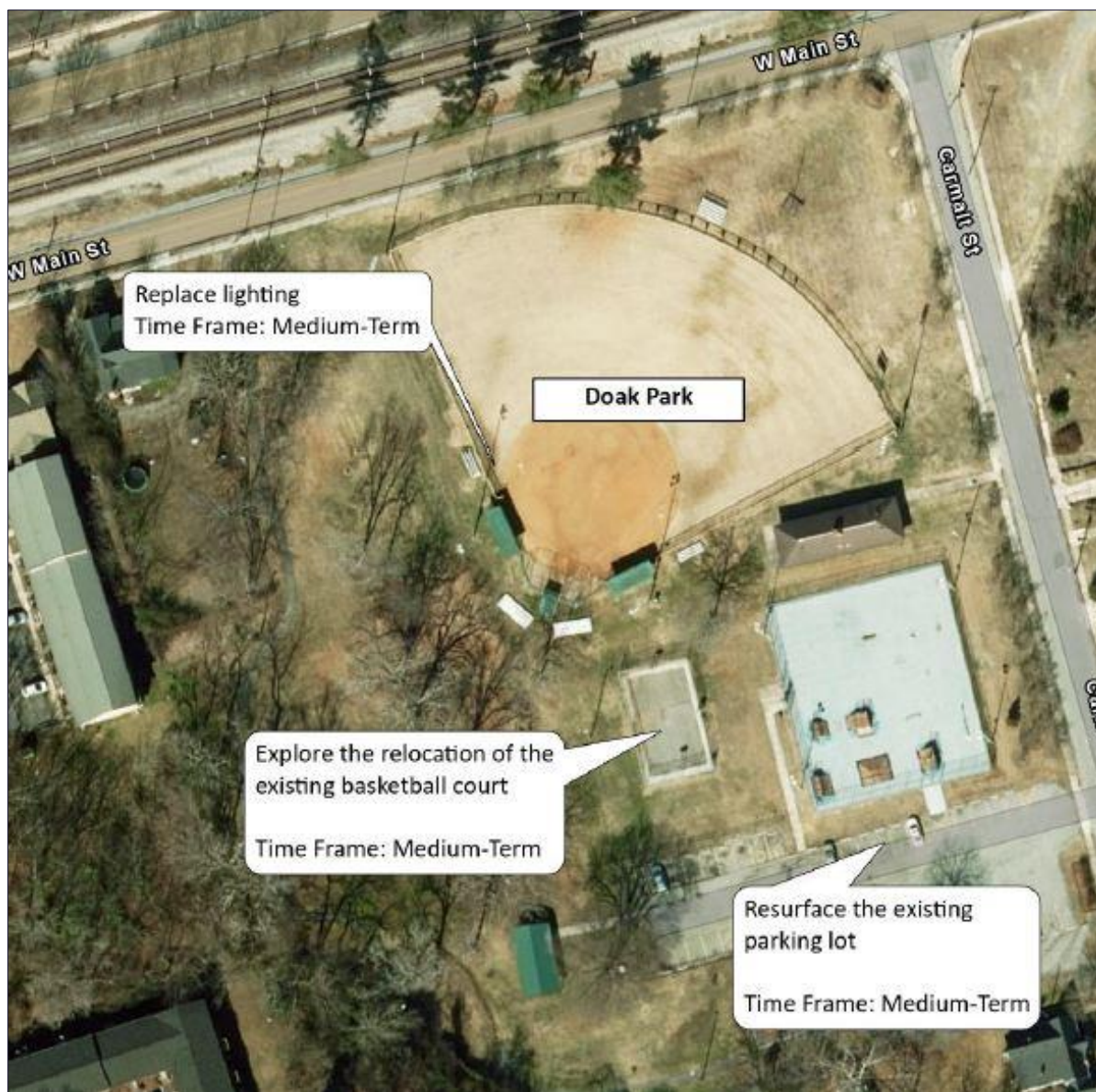


Doak Park

Located off West Main Street, Doak Park was one of the highest scorers in the Comfort, Appearance, and Safety category, confirming that the park makes a good first impression and has regular vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The existing facilities include a baseball field, basketball court, playground, shelter, skate park and walking trail.

The project team noted that the existing basketball court could be relocated closer to the walking trail. Given the park's internal location near residential properties, and the large trees provided on the site, it will need to be explored whether relocating the basketball court would result in decreased buffering or an increase in lighting on the site near residential properties.

Park Improvements Map



King Row Park

King Row Park is nestled within a residential community in the City. The existing facilities include a basketball court, playground facility, and walking trail. Currently, the facility is accessible via a gravel parking lot. Due to the existing facilities on the site, the park is at capacity regarding the addition of new facilities.

Resurfacing the gravel access and establishing a parking lot are recommended for this park. The current gravel parking is not aesthetically pleasing, appears temporary, and contains ADA accessibility barriers. Paving the parking lot and connecting it to existing facilities solidifies the park experience and solidifies King Row as a park within the City's existing system.

Park Improvements Map



Precedent Imagery



Future Facility Recommendations

While the primary recommendations of this plan revolve around the existing suite of parks, additions to the Thomasville network have been recommended to meet national benchmarks and ‘future-proof’ the City. These recommendations are considered long-term in nature and should be evaluated periodically to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the City.

Thomasville Fire Station 2

The City currently owns a sizeable portion of land next to Fire Station 2 at the intersection of Randolph Street and Lambeth Road. It is recommended that this open space is activated with vehicle parking and playground equipment. Activation of this property would allow for the residents of south Thomasville a quick and accessible park facility.

Randolph Street / Cloniger Drive Sports Fields

Benchmarking assessments indicated that several sports fields would be necessary as the City grows. Purchase of a single, large lot near to Randolph Street or Cloniger Drive would allow for a centrally-located park that could host community and regional sports. Facilities identified for the future park include two (2) flexible baseball fields, two (2) flexible softball fields, and four (4) multi-purpose soccer/football/rugby fields. Additionally support infrastructure would be required and assessed during park plan development.



Greenway Recommendations

In addition to the future facility recommendations discussed above, the project team also assessed internal and regional trail connectivity. Through the planning process, three greenway recommendations have been put forward to strategically interconnect Thomasville infrastructure and broaden multi-modal accessibility of the City's parks.

1. Unity Street to Culbreth Avenue (~1/2 mile)

A pedestrian network exists along Unity Street, which provides interconnectivity between the Tom A. Finch Community YMCA, Thomasville Senior High School, and Thomasville Middle School. By extending the existing multi-use path along Memorial Park Drive, the network will expand to include a connection to Veterans Memorial Park.

2. Trinity Street to East Main Street (~1 mile)

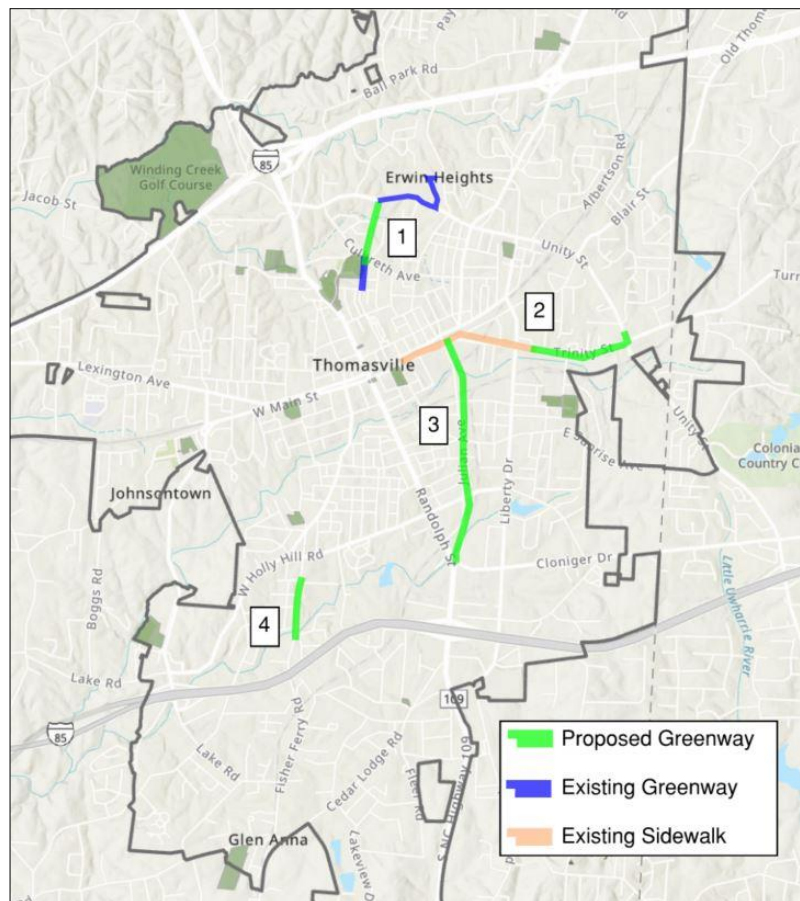
A pedestrian connection from Trinity Street to East Main Street would connect the surrounding residences between Trinity and Blair Streets to downtown and Central Recreation.

3. Julian Avenue to East Main Street (~1.3 miles)

A notable takeaway from the access level of service (LOS) map is a gap in access exists along Julian Avenue at its intersection with Cloniger Drive. A greenway connection along Julian Avenue would provide a recreational connection from the residences and businesses off Julian Avenue to downtown and Central Recreation. Furthermore, a connection would close the gap in access that exists for many of the residences on Julian Avenue and Liberty Drive.

4. Stream Daylighting Project (Old Fisher Ferry Road Re-Use)

Adherence to the North Hamby Creek restoration and park plan will be critical in terms of providing another walkable segment in the southern portion of Thomasville, where gaps in access exist. The project includes proposed sidewalks along Fisher Ferry Street, which will further Thomasville's pedestrian network. Additional Park facilities including an environmental education component, bicycle track, basketball courts, and more outdoor amenities will also result from this planning effort.



Program Recommendations

The City of Thomasville has a long-standing history of leading by example in the realm of youth program offerings, specifically youth athletics. How the City can build upon their reputation as a leader in youth programming will be important moving into the future with a projected 13% increase in population for 2030.

While youth programming is strong with respect to athletics, survey results and stakeholder interviews revealed a need for increased advertisement of program offerings to increase awareness as well as teen and adult program opportunities. An overwhelming majority of survey respondents indicated that their household has not participated in most of the programs offered by the City. This may be a direct result of marketing and advertising program offerings with the goal to increase awareness and participation.

It is recommended that Thomasville prioritize outreach efforts to help decrease the amount of unfamiliarity with the City's programs. One way outreach can be enhanced is through promotion on social media. Elevated awareness through social media will allow residents and visitors to stay connected with important program information, including but not limited to, registration dates and program descriptions. Up to date and accurate information on the City's website will also aid with public communication.

Survey results have indicated a lack of programs offered to the teen and young adult age groups. Youth sports leagues in Thomasville are offered to ages 6-12. A reason why youth sports leagues are offered until age 12 is due to children being able to participate in middle school sports at that age. Those above the age of 12 that do not choose to pursue middle school sports can be left without an organized program to participate in. Because of this, it is recommended that specialty programs be offered to teens who no longer have an interest in athletics. Specialty programs offered to teens may include cooking classes, art courses, fitness classes, and environmental education. These specialty programs can be offered within

Programming should be inclusive of all age groups; therefore, it is also recommended that offered programs be enhanced to reach adults and seniors. Although survey respondents were primarily unaware of the programs offered, those with familiarity indicated an interest in adult line dancing, Zumba, and other specialty fitness classes. While the senior club received high praise from survey results, there was a desire to see more activities offered. These activities could include game nights, adult sports leagues, and cooking classes.

Thomasville's youth program popularity is no secret, although survey results offered feedback on how some youth programs offered could be enhanced. Survey results showed a desire for increased structure and stability, specifically with youth sports leagues. It is recommended that the City consider incorporating additional practice times for youth sports will result in more education of the sport being offered. Additionally, establishing a manual or "playbook" for all youth sport coaches that fits the vision of the City will result in the leagues operating at consistent and high levels. While coaches may bring their expertise to the table and sport, a manual outlining commitment of time and suggested material will allow all participants to receive the same level of education and experience.

Program Recommendations Summary

Diversifying the City's programs should be performed in a manner that reaches all ages and ethnicities. Although current youth program offerings are present, there is room for strategic expansion that includes more specialized sports opportunities. Program recommendations broken down by age group and program type have been consolidated into the of action items below:

Youth – Offer more frequent practices and establish a coaching manual to create more consistency and maintain a desired level of quality for youth sports.

Teen- Offer specialized programming for teens no longer interested in traditional organized sports. These specialized programs may include exercise and cooking classes, outdoor events, and environmental education. Cooking and art classes should be representative of the community's cultural values and ethnic groups.

Seniors- Routinely offer senior age group targeted programs such as game nights, adult sports leagues, cooking classes and yoga or similar exercise courses. Games, art, and cooking classes should also reflect the community's culture.

Programming Approach

To maintain the desired quality of program delivery, Thomasville will first need to determine the level of financial commitment to program offerings that the City is willing to endure. Adding additional programs will result in the need for additional staff and increased funding through budget allocation, partnerships, and grant opportunities. Early recognition of challenges associated with delivery can be accomplished through a philosophy behind Thomasville's approach to growing and enhancing programming.

Program Philosophy

The Parks and Recreation Department should develop a program philosophy inclusive of the following:

- Provide programs and services to all ages, incomes, gender, and ethnic groups equitably.
- Provide programs that are reflective of the community's interests.
- Form and maintain partnerships that will benefit program delivery.
- Respond to community programming needs as they evolve in a cost-effective manner.

Program Plan

The City will need to establish a program plan that incorporates community priorities that were revealed throughout this planning process. These areas of program focus include:

- Promote and enhance marketing of program offerings.
- Build upon the strong youth program delivery reputation.
- Specialized teen, young adult, and senior programming.

Role of Partnerships

In order to deliver programs at a high level, leveraging partnerships will be necessary. In addition to financial commitments, partnerships will allow Thomasville to focus in-house resources in a more efficient manner and rely on local and regional partners to assist where gaps in delivery exist. The City

should coordinate with regional partners to collect an understanding of who currently offers programs at a high-level with additional capacity. Knowledge of the regional program network, duplicated efforts with respect to programming can be avoided.

Policy Recommendations

A majority of this document is geared towards facilitating current physical recreational needs of the community, additional recommendations evolving around current and existing policies must be made. Purposeful policy is a key component of successful delivery of recreational opportunities in communities. The City should only enact policies based on the needs of its residents and continuously update them as necessary.

As mentioned throughout this chapter, community awareness of program offerings is low despite the efforts of staff to promote opportunities on the Parks and Recreation website. Social media is a powerful outreach tool and can be used as another method for connecting the community with ongoing programs. The Parks and Recreation department should consider uploading relevant information not only through its Facebook and Instagram, but also TikTok, and Twitter to reach and broader audience. To routinely promote opportunities, the department will need to continue to use a designated media relations staff member or employ a community member who may be interested. Policy relating to media relations should be clear and concise to avoid inconsistent delivery methods. Mailers within utility bills.

The staff operation analysis section of this plan revealed the importance of the City hiring additional Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff members to appropriately serve a growing population. It is recommended that Thomasville proactively approach staffing deficits within the Parks and recreation department by hiring additional full-time positions. Communities of similar size have on average 10 more FTE staff members than Thomasville. Taking a proactive approach as opposed to a reactive one will not only allow the City to better serve the recreational needs of the current community, but prepare for more park users in the near future.

Successful partnerships have resulted in additional facilities for the city's parks system. An emphasis on maintaining these beneficial partnerships cannot be overstated, specifically when it comes to prioritized projects. Policy should be developed that continues to provide a mutual benefit for long standing successful partnerships to continue to thrive. It is recommended that a partnership policy guide be created that outlines mutual benefits for both parties in the agreement. The policy document should be designed to provide the parameters for gathering the needs of potential partners and identify how said partnerships will benefit the City of Thomasville.

Thomasville should also recognize all deferred maintenance within its parks system and deploy policy that prioritizes maintenance needs that directly affect the public's general safety and welfare. Chipping away at deferred maintenance can be accomplished through the idea of grant stacking. Grant stacking allows a project to receive funding from multiple sources. Grants awarded at the federal, state, and local levels can all be used towards an individual project if carefully selected. Deferring necessary maintenance through the delay of capital projects may only lead to larger expenses in the future therefore, the City should consider prioritizing projects with deferred maintenance using the following three step approach:

-
1. Identify facilities with aging infrastructure and amenities that serve as an immediate threat to the health, safety, and general welfare of the community.
 2. Determine available funding and the timeframe of improvements.
 3. Should the funding timeframe leave potential for harm to the community, contact elected officials and identified partners to explore more immediate funding outlets.

Alternative funding options can include donations, sponsorships, and pledges. Thomasville should actively maintain its existing partnerships and pursue new ones through sponsorship and advertising opportunities on City facilities and athletic uniforms.

It is recommended that the City develop a strategic funding and implementation plan that prioritizes projects identified within this plan and identifies appropriate funding sources to support project implementation. This strategy should encompass facility, program, and policy efforts with appropriate timeframes that align with the City's project priorities. During the development of project line items within this plan, staff may work with vendors and industry experts to develop the cost estimates for each effort and should include the various internal and external funding sources required for implementation.

In conclusion, with such an extensive network and a growing population, it is recommended that the City of Thomasville increase the volume of community outreach and explore funding mechanisms that will result in addressing projects sooner. As the City continues to grow, more use of the currently offered facilities will occur, resulting in more use of park equipment and more program participants. It is imperative that Thomasville continue to leverage successful partnerships and identify facility maintenance needs as they emerge.

Funding Sources

While increases in the Capital Improvements budget for Parks and Recreation facilities and programs are recommended over the next 10 years, grants also provide sources for facility enhancements, programs and land acquisition. Several grants have been identified for projects proposed in the plan, with many providing options to apply annually. Individual grants may apply to multiple projects, therefore, the projected funding totals for each project may include the use of overlapping grants for a different project. The tables on the following pages include summarized descriptions of project-based potential funding sources. The integration of stormwater, emergency management, public health, and educational functions into projects such as a recreation trail can significantly increase the funding opportunities available to the City. Examples of design features that would facilitate additional funding opportunities would include: the construction of parking areas to act as drainage and/or treatment basins for severe weather events; stormwater retention ponds that alleviate localized flooding as part of park or trail project; and the hardening of an indoor facility such as a recreation center to act as a shelter and/or public outreach center before and after a disaster.

The following section includes a list and information on potential funding opportunities that City staff may utilize to support the development of facilities and programs. Funding strategies may also include grant-stacking or utilization of multiple grants, identification of project partners/sponsors, or other alternative funding mechanisms as required to pursue project development.

Land and Water Conservation Fund	
Level of Funding	State
Management Agency	NC Division of Parks and Recreation
Website	https://www.ncparks.gov/about-us/grants/land-and-water-conservation-fund
Description	The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) provides matching grants to local governments to assist with public park and recreation projects.
Project Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acquire land for a public park. - Renovate/replace outdoor recreational or support facilities at existing park sites.
Grant Amount	\$500,000
Match	At least 50% of the total cost of the project.
Application Deadline	Early October

Parks and Recreation Trust Fund	
Level of Funding	State
Management Agency	NC Division of Parks and Recreation
Website	https://www.ncparks.gov/about-us/grants/parks-and-recreation-trust-fund
Description	The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PRTF) provides matching grants to local governments to assist with public park and recreation projects.
Project Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acquire land for a public park. - Renovate/replace outdoor recreational or support facilities at existing park sites.
Grant Amount	\$500,000
Match	At least 50% of the total cost of the project.
Application Deadline	Early May

NC Land and Water Fund	
Level of Funding	State
Management Agency	NC Land and Water Fund
Website	https://nclwf.nc.gov/
Description	The Land and Water Fund improves water quality, sustains ecological diversity, and protects historic sites and military installations by funding projects to acquire land, restore the habitat for fish, wildlife, and other species, and enhance the filtering of stormwater runoff to reduce pollutants from entering water supplies.
Project Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Land acquisition. - Restoration projects to enhance or restore degraded waters and to protect downstream natural resources such as drinking water supplies, fisheries, and recreation opportunities. - Stream restoration. - Innovative stormwater. - Enhance or restore degraded waters. - Protect unpolluted waters. - Contribute towards a network of riparian buffers. - Provide buffers around military bases. - Acquire land that represents ecological diversity. - Acquire land for a balanced program of historic properties. - Facilitate innovative efforts in improve stormwater treatment.
Grant Amount	No set funding range.
Match	No match requirement. However, the percentage of match and the type of match is factored in the application rating system
Application Deadline	Early February

Clean Water State Revolving Fund	
Level of Funding	Federal
Management Agency	EPA – Environmental Protection Agency
Website	https://www.epa.gov/cwsrf
Description	The Clean Water State Revolving Fund provides funds for wastewater treatment facilities and projects associated with estuary and nonpoint source programs.
Project Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wastewater treatment. - Wastewater collection. - Reclaimed water. - Stormwater Best Management Practices. - Stream restoration. - Energy efficiency at treatment works or collection systems.
Grant Amount	\$30,000,000, 0% loan, 20-year term
Match	n/a
Application Deadline	Spring and Fall application funding cycles.

Water Source Development Grant Program	
Level of Funding	State
Management Agency	NCDEQ – Division of Water Infrastructure
Website	https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/water-resources/water-resources-grants/water-resources-development-grant-program
Description	The purpose of this program is to provide cost-share grants and technical assistance to local governments for seven eligible project types.
Project Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General navigation. - Recreational navigation. - Water management. - Stream restoration. - Water-based recreation. - Natural Resource Conservation Service Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). - Feasibility/Engineering studies.
Grant Amount	\$200,000, however larger awards may be granted.
Match	50%
Application Deadline	Spring

Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE)	
Level of Funding	National
Management Agency	US Dept. of Transportation
Website	https://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants/about
Description	These grants fund regional and multi-modal transportation projects of regional and local significance. In 2021, the program funded bike and pedestrian projects at the highest level ever and “includes new or improved walking, biking, and rolling access for the disabled, especially access that reverses the disproportional impacts of crashes on people of color.
Project Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trails and greenways. - Bike lanes. - Installation.
Grant Amount	No set amounts
Match	No match required.
Application Deadline	Mid-April

Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program	
Level of Funding	National
Management Agency	US Department of Agriculture Forest Service
Website	https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/community-forest
Description	The purpose is to protect forest land from conversion to non-forest uses and provide community benefits such as environmental benefits including clean air, water and wildlife habitat; benefits from forest-based educational programs; benefits from serving as models of effective forest stewardship; and recreational benefits secured with public access.
Project Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community outreach. - Land purchases. - Installation.
Grant Amount	\$20,000 to \$50,000
Match	At least 50% of the total cost of the project.
Application Deadline	January

Bike and Pedestrian Planning Grant Initiative	
Level of Funding	State
Management Agency	North Carolina Dept. of Transportation
Website	https://connect.ncdot.gov/municipalities/PlanningGrants/Pages/Planning-Grant-Initiative.aspx
Description	Encourage municipalities to develop comprehensive bicycle plans and pedestrian plans.
Project Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comprehensive Bicycle Plans. - Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan. - Comprehensive Plan Updates.
Grant Amount	No set amount
Match	Sliding scale based on population (high populations must have higher match).
Application Deadline	June

Recreational Trails Grant Program	
Level of Funding	State
Management Agency	North Carolina Trails Committee
Website	https://trails.nc.gov/trail-grants/apply-grant
Description	Grants help fund sustainable, construction ready projects that meet recreational trail needs to provide low infrastructure economic development opportunities through natural resource tourism.
Project Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trail construction and renovation - Land acquisition - Planning, legal and permitting
Grant Amount	\$10,000 - \$100,000
Match	At least 25% of the total cost of the project.
Application Deadline	September

Community Challenge	
Level of Funding	National
Management Agency	American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)
Website	https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/community-challenge/info-2021/2021-challenge/?cmp=EMC-DSM-NLC-LC-HOMFAM-20210217_LivableCom
Description	This program provides funding for projects that create change and opportunity for walking and movement at the community level.
Project Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Construction of public spaces and parks. - Increase community engagement. - Programs or services.
Grant Amount	No set amounts.
Match	At least 25% of the total cost of the project.
Application Deadline	April

Doppelt Family Trail Development Fund Grant	
Level of Funding	National
Management Agency	Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
Website	https://www.railstotrails.org/our-work/grants/doppelt/
Description	Support organizations and local governments that are implementing projects to build and improve multi-use trails.
Project Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trails and greenways. - Bike lanes. - Installation.
Grant Amount	\$5,000 - \$8,000
Match	No match required.
Application Deadline	Early spring

T-Mobile Hometown Grants	
Level of Funding	National
Management Agency	T-Mobile
Website	https://www.t-mobile.com/brand/hometown-grants
Description	This program provides funding for projects to build, rebuild, or refresh community spaces that help foster local connections. Communities must have less than 50,000 in population to be eligible. This program runs for 5 years.
Project Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Park construction. - Site furnishings & beautification efforts. - Public art installation. - Accessibility improvements. - Rebuilding/renovating urban spaces.
Grant Amount	Up to \$50,000
Match	No match required.
Application Deadline	Quarterly

Safe Routes to School (Safe Routes to Parks Partnership)	
Level of Funding	National
Management Agency	Safe Routes Partnership
Website	https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/healthy-communities
Description	This program provides funding for park access, especially in low-income areas and in communities of color; grants given to nonprofits.
Project Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sidewalk route planning construction. - Park access. - Accessibility improvements.
Grant Amount	\$12,500 plus technical assistance
Match	No match required
Application Deadline	December

Bloomberg Asphalt Art	
Level of Funding	National
Management Agency	Bloomberg
Website	https://asphaltart.bloomberg.org/grants/
Description	Fund visual art interventions on roadways, pedestrian spaces, and public infrastructure in U.S. cities with the goal of improving street and pedestrian safety, revitalizing and activating underutilized public space, and promoting collaboration and civic engagement in local communities.
Project Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improving street and pedestrian safety. - Revitalizing and activating underutilized spaces. - Promoting collaboration and civic engagement.
Grant Amount	Up to \$2,500 plus technical assistance.
Match	No match required.
Application Deadline	April

Pool Safety Grant Program	
Level of Funding	National
Management Agency	Consumer Product Safety Commission
Website	https://www.poolsafely.gov/grant-program/
Description	These grants provide funds to assist jurisdictions in reducing deaths and injuries from drowning and drain entrapment incidents in pools and spas.
Project Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pool plumbing system reconstruction.
Grant Amount	\$50,000 - \$400,000
Match	No match required.
Application Deadline	July

Build it with Kaboom!	
Level of Funding	National
Management Agency	KaBOOM!
Website	https://kaboom.org/grants/community-built
Description	KaBOOM! Works with communities to design and build playgrounds and play spaces.
Project Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Playground equipment including shipping. - Safety surfacing. - Installation.
Grant Amount	No set amounts. Grant will provide equipment, safety surfacing, and installation.
Match	\$8,500
Application Deadline	Accepted on a rolling basis throughout the year.

Build It Yourself – Community-Built Playgrounds	
Level of Funding	National
Management Agency	KaBoom!
Website	https://www.kaboom.org/grants/build-it-with-kaboom
Description	KaBOOM! Works with communities to design and build playgrounds and play spaces.
Project Examples	- Playground equipment including shipping.
Grant Amount	\$15,000
Match	\$9,000 - \$15,000 with a maximum project cost of \$50,000
Application Deadline	Accepted on a rolling basis throughout the year.

Bark for your Park	
Level of Funding	National
Management Agency	PetSafe
Website	https://barkforyourpark.petsafe.com/
Description	The PetSafe Bark for your Park program provides funding to create new dog parks to maintain/improve existing dog parks.
Project Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creation of a new dog park. - Dog Park improvements and maintenance.
Grant Amount	\$25,000 for new parks; \$5,000 for improvements and maintenance of existing parks.
Match	None
Application Deadline	June

Baseball of Tomorrow Fund Youth Development Foundation	
Level of Funding	National
Management Agency	MLB/MLBPA Youth Development Foundation
Website	https://www.mlbplayers.com/ydf
Description	MLB-MLBPA Youth Development Foundation is a joint initiative between Major League Baseball and the Major League Baseball Players Association. It was created to increase participation in and expand access to youth baseball and softball. The Foundation makes grants to organizations in the United States and internationally.
Project Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capital projects include building and renovating fields and practice facilities and installing lighting. Field and lighting capital projects that have most of the funding secured will be prioritized. - Baseball/Softball programs include in-school/after-school baseball/softball programming, equipment and uniforms, umpire fees, player registration fees and practice facility rental fees. - Education initiatives include programs, exhibits and other learning opportunities that use baseball and softball as its primary focus to promote interest and engagement in the game.
Grant Amount	No set funding range.
Match	No match required. Field and lighting capital projects that have most of the funding secured will be prioritized.
Application Deadline	Accepted on a rolling basis throughout the year.

Community Improvement Grants	
Level of Funding	National
Management Agency	Keep America Beautiful
Website	https://kab.org/beautification/community-grants/
Description	Grant recipients are selected based on their potential to collect cans and bottles as well as creating new or expanded access to recycling opportunities in a community. Keep America Beautiful selects recipients based on the merits of their proposal, then works with its vendors to arrange delivery of the bins at no cost to the grant recipients.
Project Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide recycling access to greater numbers of people. - Provide access in environmentally sensitive areas. - Potential to increase overall recycling participation in a community.
Grant Amount	Recipients are granted recycling bins as requested.
Match	None
Application Deadline	March

Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program	
Level of Funding	Federal
Management Agency	USDA
Website	https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program
Description	Program provides affordable funding to develop essential community facilities in rural areas. An essential community facility is defined as a facility that provides an essential service to the local community for the orderly development of the community in a primarily rural area, and does not include private, commercial, or business undertakings.
Project Examples	Funds can be used to purchase, construct, and/or improve essential community facilities, purchase equipment, and pay related project expenses including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health care facilities such as hospitals, medical clinics, dental clinics, nursing homes or assisted living facilities. - Public facilities such as city and town halls, courthouses, airport hangars or street improvements. - Community support services such as childcare centers, community centers, fairgrounds, or transitional housing. - Public safety services such as fire departments, police stations, prisons, police vehicles, fire trucks, public works vehicles or equipment. - Educational services such as museums, libraries, or private schools. - Utility services such as telemedicine or distance learning equipment.
Grant Amount	No set funding range.
Match	None
Application Deadline	Accepted on a rolling basis throughout the year.

People for Bikes	
Level of Funding	National
Management Agency	Triangle Community Foundation
Website	https://www.peopleforbikes.org/grants
Description	Program supports bicycle infrastructure projects and targeted advocacy initiatives that make it easier and safer for people of all ages and abilities to ride.
Project Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bike paths, lanes, trails, and bridges. - Mountain bike facilities. - Bike parks and pump tracks. - BMX facilities. - End-of-trip facilities such as bike racks, bike parking, bike repair stations and bike storage.
Grant Amount	\$10,000
Match	No specific match is required but will not consider grant request in which funding would amount to 50% or more of the total project cost.
Application Deadline	2 cycles per year: April and October.

Accessibility for Parks Grant	
Level of Funding	State
Management Agency	NC Division of Parks and Recreation
Website	https://www.ncparks.gov/about-us/grants/accessibility-parks-grant#Eligibility-4704
Description	The Accessibility for Parks program provides \$10 million for parks and recreation grants that aim to benefit children and veterans with disabilities in North Carolina.
Project Examples	The matching grants can be used to build accessible facilities or adapt existing facilities that meet the unique needs of children and veterans with physical and developmental disabilities. A project must be located on a single site.
Grant Amount	\$500,000 (max)
Match	\$5 to \$1 match
Application Deadline	May 1, 2024

Appendix

The following appendix contains the full facility evaluation matrix as conducted by the project team.

Park Evaluation Criteria

	Finch Field	Central Recreation	Myers Park	Veterans Memorial Park	Carver Park	Fair Grove Park	Haus Park	Kimbrell Park	Payne Park	Doak Park	King Row Park	Weighted Criteria Total
Design, Construction, & Effectiveness (Max 35)	26	22	24	35	28	23	25	13	13	26	20	66
Is the design and construction of this site appropriate for the needs of users served?	4	3	4	5	4	4	4	2	2	4	3	71
Is the site readily accessible by pedestrians/cyclists from the surrounding neighborhood?	2	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	75
Is the site accessible to users of all ability levels including but not limited to mobility impaired or handicapped?	3	3	3	5	5	4	4	2	2	3	1	64
Does the site utilize cohesive design standards?	4	2	2	5	3	2	4	1	1	3	2	53
Does the site have features/amenities that can be used by people of different ages?	4	4	3	5	4	3	3	1	1	4	4	65
Do site facilities function and are they easy to use?	4	3	4	5	4	4	4	2	2	4	4	73
Does the site display a balance of active recreation intensities and passive or at-will opportunities?	5	3	4	5	4	2	2	1	1	4	4	64
Access & Linkages (Max 20)	8	15	11	20	13	13	12	13	13	13	9	67
Are there clear and open view lines into open spaces?	n/a	4	3	5	4	4	n/a	4	4	3	4	78
Is there clear, useful, and adequate wayfinding/signage within the site?	3	3	2	5	2	2	4	2	2	2	2	53
Can people walk easily to the site from surrounding areas or neighborhoods?	2	4	4	5	4	3	4	4	4	4	2	73
Do paths and/or roads connect people to primary amenities?	3	4	2	5	3	4	4	3	3	4	1	65
Comfort, Appearance, & Safety (Max 30)	25	18	20	30	26	25	23	18	18	23	20	75
Does the site make a good first impression?	4	2	3	5	4	4	3	2	2	4	2	64
Are there enough conveniently located places to sit and rest?	4	2	3	5	4	4	4	1	1	4	3	64
Is the site being regularly and sufficiently maintained and is clean and free of litter?	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	98
Considering safety, are activities within the site visible within and around the site?	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	76
Does vehicular traffic around or within the site impact user enjoyment?	4	3	3	5	5	4	3	4	4	3	5	78
Does the site need upkeep or improvements?	4	2	3	5	4	4	4	3	3	3	2	67
Sustainability (Max 45)	21	17	16	29	21	17	13	5	7	17	14	42
Sociability & Sustainability	11	7	7	9	10	7	10	4	4	8	8	60
Does the site provide places for people to gather?	5	3	4	5	4	4	3	2	2	4	4	55
Does the site provide opportunities and or resources to promote active, healthy lifestyles?	3	4	n/a	4	4	3	3	2	2	4	4	66
Does the site promote educational awareness of the history of the property?	3	n/a	3	n/a	2	n/a	4	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	60
Environmental Sustainability	3	3	4	10	9	8	2	n/a	1	3	4	30
Does the site use energy, water, and material resources efficiently?	2	n/a	1	3	n/a	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	2	n/a	28
Does the site treat stormwater from a larger area than itself or otherwise improve water quality?	n/a	n/a	n/a	2	3	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	30
Does the site use varied vegetation and/or contain biological diversity?	1	2	2	3	4	4	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	3	43
Does the site enhance environmental awareness or knowledge through signage or educational material?	n/a	1	1	2	2	2	1	n/a	1	1	1	20
Economic Sustainability	7	7	5	10	2	2	1	1	2	6	2	35
Does the site generate public and/or private revenue or is there a user fee?	4	4	2	5	1	1	n/a	n/a	1	3	1	38
Does the site contain or require full-time employees?	3	3	3	5	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	33
Weighted Park Totals	70	63	59	91	70	62	66	49	46	69	55	

