



# PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN



MARCH 2025

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN

The purpose of the Columbia Parks and Recreation Master Plan is to protect and maintain a healthy and diverse parks and open spaces network with amenities that serve the needs and promote the health of the entire community and environment. The citizen-driven plan establishes a clear direction for policy development, delivery of City services, and the prioritization of demands and opportunities. The plan positions Columbia to build on the community's unique assets while identifying new strategic initiatives to improve offerings. This effort has been rooted in an all-inclusive public engagement process and will seek to incorporate energy efficient strategies, accessibility, cost effective improvements and maintenance, and opportunities to reuse municipal and/or non-municipal sites for recreation. This document is meant to facilitate and guide the Strategic Planning Process for the future of the parks and open space facilities in the City of Columbia over the next 2, 5, and 10-year horizons.

The master plan was guided by the Weston & Sampson consultant team and City staff. This collaborative effort creates a plan that fully utilizes the consultants' expertise and incorporates the local knowledge and institutional history that only community members can provide.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

The five principles of the outreach strategy were *to inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower*. A multi-faceted public engagement strategy consisted of the following actions:

- Kick-off Meeting & Facility Tour
- Monthly Project Committee Meetings
- Presentations to City Council & Staff
- Stakeholder/ Focus Group/ Community Input Meetings
- Digital Community & Youth/ Teen Survey

## RECOMMENDATIONS, GOALS & ACTIONS

Recommendations were developed to enhance the level of service and the quality of life through improvement of existing sites, future development of new facilities, organizational enhancements, increased programming, improved safety, and potential partnerships. Recommendations throughout the Parks & Recreation System are needed at two levels: System-wide and Specific Locations or Programs.

Goals and strategies identify priorities to provide an overarching guide for department actions while defining specific actions or recommendations, with a primary focus on maintaining, sustaining, and improving Columbia's Parks and Recreation offerings.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## THE SEVEN GOALS AND STRATEGIES OF THE MASTER PLAN ARE:

### Goal 1: Continue to Support Community Health & Wellness

- Strategy 1.1 - Accommodate residents of all needs
- Strategy 1.2 - Upgrade Safety & Security at Parks & Facilities
- Strategy 1.3 - Support Community Health & Wellness Needs

### Goal 2: Engage with the Community

- Strategy 2.1 - Engage with the Parks & Recreation Foundation for support
- Strategy 2.2 - Establish a Parks & Recreation Advisory Commission to support the department.
- Strategy 2.3 - Collaborate and Partner with Departments & Community Organizations
- Strategy 2.4 - Continue to reach out to the public for input

### Goal 3: Programming & Community Events

- Strategy 3.1 - Continue to Provide Community Programs and Events
- Strategy 3.2 - Review recreational program offerings and adjust annually

### Goal 4: Maintain & Improve Parks & Recreation Facilities

- Strategy 4.1 - Improve Parks & Recreation Facilities based upon High, Moderate & Low rankings identified within Recommendations Section
- Strategy 4.2 - Upgrade Trail/Pathways to Meet Demand

### Goal 5: Expand & Grow Parks & Recreation Facilities

- Strategy 5.1 - Improve Programs/ Amenities to Support Needs
- Strategy 5.2 - Review Parks & Programming Needs on a Regular Basis

### Goal 6: Community Connectivity

- Strategy 6.1 - Continue to Improve and Expand Greenway/Trail System

### Goal 7: Organizational Operations & Efficiencies

- Strategy 7.1 - Continue to Improve Organizational Efficiencies/Operations
- Strategy 7.2 - Improve Maintenance Operations & Efficiencies
- Strategy 7.3 - Continue to Improve Organization Finances
- Strategy 7.4 - Enhance and improve communications regarding Department activities and services
- Strategy 7.5 - Obtain NRPA accreditation
- Strategy 7.6 - Develop Sustainability Plan

# **SECTION 1**

# **INTRODUCTION OF**

# **THE MASTER**

# **PLANNING PROCESS**



## SECTION ONE

### INTRODUCTION OF THE MASTER PLANNING PROCESS

#### PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The purpose of the Columbia Parks and Recreation Master Plan is to protect and maintain a healthy and diverse parks and open spaces network with amenities that serve the needs and promote the health of the entire community and environment. Columbia’s residents highly value the City’s natural assets and ecosystems. They provide wonderful recreational opportunities while offering environmental benefits to the community and protecting nature for the future. The citizen-driven plan establishes a clear direction for policy development, delivery of City services, and the prioritization of demands and opportunities. The plan positions Columbia to build on the community’s unique assets while identifying new strategic initiatives to improve offerings. This effort has been rooted in an all-inclusive public engagement process and will seek to incorporate energy efficient strategies, accessibility, cost effective improvements and maintenance, and opportunities to reuse municipal and/or non-municipal sites for recreation. This document is meant to facilitate and guide the Strategic Planning Process for the future of the parks and open space facilities in the City of Columbia over the next 2, 5, and 10-year horizons.

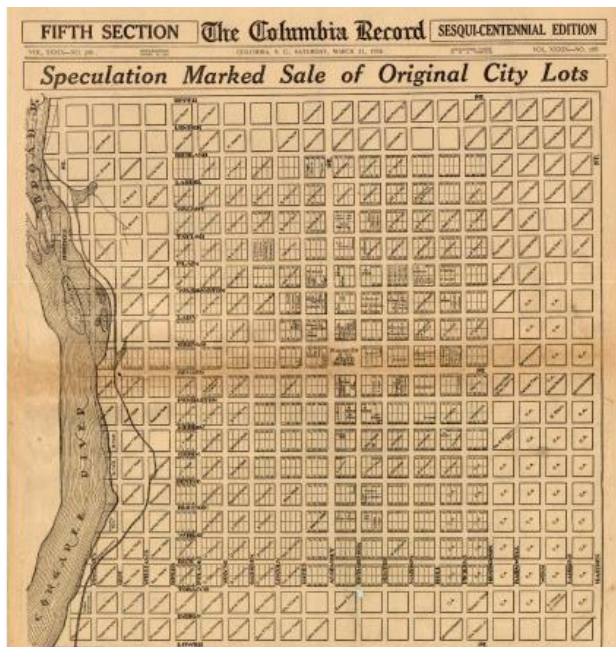
#### OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

1. Develop a Vision: Preparing for the future, while retaining the past.
2. Develop Implementable Goals and Priorities: Focusing efforts on transforming conceptual goals into achievable priorities.
3. Develop an Implementation Strategy for Parks & Recreation Operations.
4. Develop a Financially Sustainable and Innovative Parks & Recreation System

### HISTORY OF COLUMBIA AND ITS RESILIENT SPIRIT

#### Founding and Early Growth

Located within the Midlands region of South Carolina, near the confluence of the Congaree, Broad and Saluda Rivers, the City of Columbia was founded in 1786. To find a central location for the State’s capital, Columbia was created through an act of the State Legislative Assembly and is one of the first planned cities in the United States. The original plan for Columbia consisted of a four block, two-mile grid that would make up the new city. Columbia was chartered as a town in 1805 and chartered as a city in 1854.



Columbia's growth and development can be attributed, partially, to its location along the confluence of the Congaree, Saluda, and Broad rivers. In 1824, using the labor of indentured Irish immigrants and subsidies from the State government, the Columbia Canal was built. The canal allowed the growing city to become an important trade route in the State. Columbia quickly became a major hub of commerce, influence, and culture, by the early 19th century Columbia's population had nearly reached 1,000 residents, becoming one of the largest cities in South Carolina.

In 1842, the Louisville, Cincinnati, and Charleston Railroad Company established the first railroad in Columbia, causing a shift away from the Canal as the primary shipping route. The railway would make Columbia a conduit between Charleston and the Upstate. The natural midpoint between the Lowcountry and Upstate, Columbia, benefited from the goods, services, and people the railway brought to Columbia, helping the city expand its influence in the State.

### Leader in Education

Shortly after Columbia's founding, initiated by Governor John Drayton, South Carolina College was established in downtown Columbia. Now known as the University of South Carolina, the university's flagship campus had an initial enrollment of nine students. Through the decades the university grew in prominence throughout the South and brought new attention to the young city and helped to attract students and educated citizens to Columbia.

In 1868 state legislators, led by Black delegates for the first time, adopted a new state constitution. The new constitution codified rights to all persons and established the first statewide public education system in the nation, one that would be "free and open to all children and youths of the State, without regards to race or color."

In 1870 and 1880 two institutions of higher education, Benedict College, and Allen University, were established in downtown Columbia. To give recently emancipated people of color opportunities for higher education, the colleges were two of the earliest Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) founded in the South. Benedict College and Allen University contributed to Columbia's growth as a center for education in South Carolina.



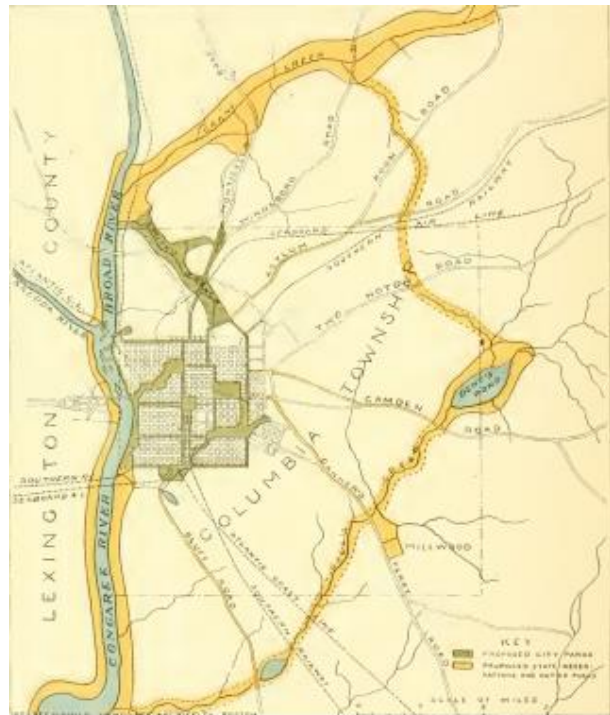
## Industry and Manufacturing Expansion

Post-war, Columbia's rebuilding period lasted decades. The expansion of the Columbia Canal in 1891 was one of the most important construction efforts of this time. The restoration and expansion project consisted of widening and deepening the Canal with the goal of establishing hydroelectric generation. The upgrade also made it possible for textile and cotton mills to begin production in Columbia. In 1893, the first of these mills began construction, one of which would become one of the world's first textile mills powered solely by electricity and another would be the State's first cotton mill powered by a remote source of hydroelectric power. These and other factors solidified Columbia as a manufacturing hub and a center of innovation. Nearing the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the mills would become a main source of employment, housing, and culture. This economic boom continued through the turn of the century as high-rises, hotels, shops, and restaurants were built and developed. During this period, Columbia's population more than doubled, from 15,000 in 1890 to over 37,000 citizens in 1920.

## Racial Equality

A direct result of racial discrimination and a buildup of generational unrest, the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum in the mid 1950's. As the State capital, Columbia was a crucial location for protests and marches during this era. In 1962, sit-in protests saw lunch counters across the city desegregated and in 1963 the first three Black students enrolled in University of South Carolina. While citizens of color fought for equal rights, national policies such as urban renewal and redlining separated populations in other ways.

During the 1960s and 1970s lower-income, predominantly Black, neighborhoods were likely targets for redevelopment under urban renewal. The practice sought to clear out "blighted" areas to create opportunities for house, businesses, and highways permanently displacing residents. While many neighborhoods were lost, some found ways to counter urban renewal and remain. In the early 1970s, Elmwood Park, one of the oldest suburbs of Columbia, residents were able to fight back against demolition of their neighborhood through collective opposition. With this example many other similar projects were canceled and in 1988, Elmwood Park was classified as an Architectural Conservation District and was later listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Other practices such as redlining, had a profound impact on Columbia and its development.

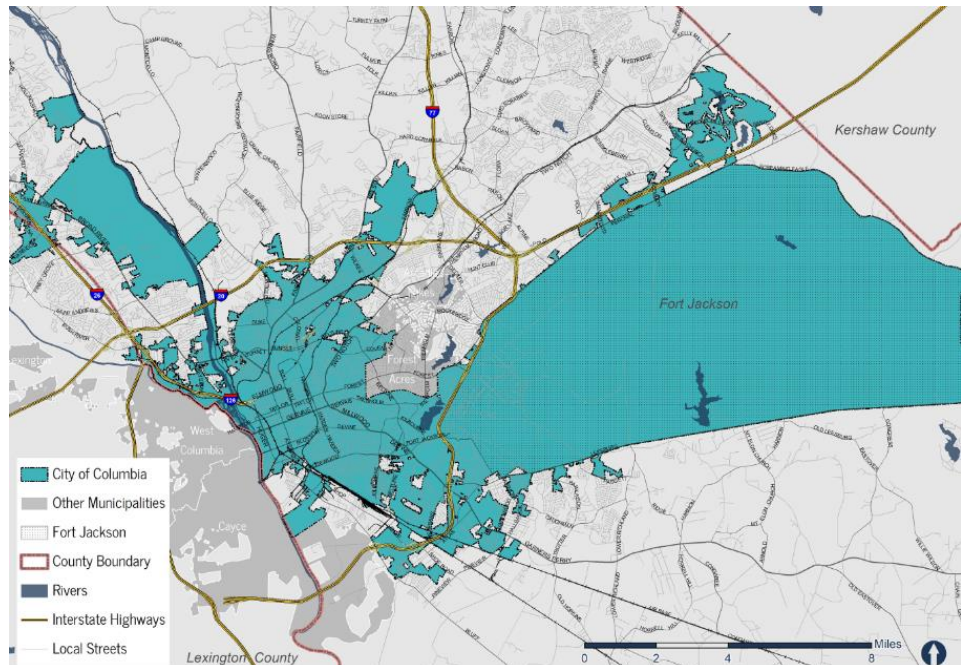


After World War II, homeownership and social mobility was on the rise, thanks to the availability of the 30-year mortgage but access to these loans was not available equitably. Redlining, a policy set up to determine the relative risk of providing loans based on the condition of an area, lenders used this information to determine whether to issue home loans, but the practice soon became more discriminatory and was based on the racial and ethnic makeup of an area. Loans from areas shown to have a majority Black population were, considered to be riskier and were less likely to get approved. Redlining maps of Columbia from 1927 show most Columbia neighborhoods within the yellow and red areas which were, considered to be of lesser quality and riskier to invest in. This policy perpetuated a cycle of disinvestment, crippling development, and social mobility of many Columbia neighborhoods. In 1977, the Community Reinvestment Act put an end to the formal practice of redlining and other forms of discriminatory credit practices. The effects of this policy meant that certain neighborhoods were never fully built-out or renovated, these areas continue to struggle financially even today.

## Late 1990's to Today

In the decades that followed the era of redlining and urban renewal the city sought to correct the ill effects of the past. In 1975 Columbia created the Community Development Department to provide a central location for providing citizens funding opportunities and information. Community Development programs have helped to increase home ownership and build neighborhood capacity. In addition, in 1983 Columbia created the Columbia Development Corporation. The pseudo-government entity helps to restore specific areas such as Eau Claire, the Two Notch corridor, and various entertainment districts throughout the City. Columbia experienced rapid revitalization in the 1990s and 2000s, particularly near the Congaree River. A continued focus for investment is Main Street within the historic Congaree Vista district. Many historic buildings are being redeveloped along with major ongoing economic development projects and streetscape beautification efforts. With a current population of 139,698 residents, Columbia has come a long way since the City's founding and is now a statewide hub for entertainment, innovation, and diversity.

*Columbia history overview was adapted from the Columbia Compass comprehensive plan "Envision 2036" planning document.*



## PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

The City of Columbia Parks and Recreation Department is a source of community pride and is responsible for the operation of parks, recreational facilities and programs which contribute to the community's environment, needs and interests. With the mission of "to change lives through a culture of transformational leadership, innovation and phenomenal customer service" the services and programs provided by the Department are important factors in the quality of life in the community, and is integral to the City's health, welfare and attractiveness.

### VISION

To Be the National Leader in Providing Quality Parks and Recreation Experiences for All.

### CORE VALUES

- Transformational Leadership (Trust, Integrity, Inspiration and Inclusion)
- Innovation (Continuous Improvement, New Way of Doing Things)
- Customer Service (Internal and External)
- Fun/Joy (Memorable Experiences)
- Sustainability (Environmental and Financial)
- Diversity

### Parks, Facilities & Programs

The City of Columbia Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for providing recreational leisure services for the citizens and visitors to the City of Columbia. The Department staffs' programs and maintains over 60 city parks and green spaces, over 600 acres of city-maintained park land, 55 tennis courts, 16 city pools, spray pads and ponds, and 9 city-maintained fountains.

Parks & Recreation provides a wide range of programs to the community, including athletics, summer camps, after-school care, senior and youth programs, community gardening, and cultural arts programming. As a department, their services are evenly split between the built environment (through the provision of parks) and community support and programming (through the provision of recreational and cultural programming).

Riverfront Park, Granby Park, and newly constructed trails along Columbia's rivers provide unique and sometimes wild encounters with the natural environment. Dedicated Park Rangers provide interpretation of and an additional measure of safety in these spaces for park visitors. Eight community recreation centers feature full-size gymnasiums, game rooms, kitchens, playgrounds, splash pads, and more. There are also seven smaller neighborhood recreation centers. Together,



these recreation centers provide space for the programs run by Parks & Recreation in addition to providing meeting space for community groups. The Charles R. Drew Wellness Center, completed in 2005, has a large indoor pool, a gymnasium, an indoor track, fitness equipment (including ADA accessible equipment), and hosts a full schedule of classes and special programs. The Columbia Art Center hosts classes, workshops, and open studio time for the visual arts.

Parks and Recreation has been able to maintain a high standard for their park facilities and programs as well as realize new projects through securing granting funding to supplement their budget. Grant funding has enabled the department to complete capital projects, provide quality programming and develop sustainable partnerships.



### Partnerships

Parks and Recreation has key partnerships with both interdepartmental and external partners. Internal partnerships allow the city departments to quickly resolve issues and provide quality customer service to Columbia residents. External partnerships have been beneficial in meeting the needs and providing different services for City of Columbia residents.

#### *Interdepartmental Relationships*

- Traffic Engineering & Public Works
- Human Resources
- Purchasing and Procurement
- Police & Fire Departments
- Community Development
- Water, Storm Water and Wastewater

#### *External Partnerships*

- Serve and Connect
- USC Athletics Department
- One Columbia Arts and Culture
- Columbia SC 63
- Columbia Green
- Keep the Midlands Beautiful
- Department of Natural Resources
- White Water 101
- SC Wildlife Federation
- Native Plant Society



- Natural Resource Conservation Services
- Clemson Extension
- USC School of Medicine
- Lenoir Ryne
- Pelicans
- Richland School District One
- Senior Resources, Inc.
- Oak Street Health
- Humana

## Recent Sources of Grant Funding

- Community Development Block Grants
- South Carolina Parks, Recreation, and Tourism
- South Carolina Park and Recreation Development Fund
- Department of Health and Environmental Control
- Richland County Conversation Commission
- TD Bank
- Wells Fargo
- AFLAC
- Lipscomb Foundation
- Under Armour

The Parks and Recreation Department strives to create an environment where Columbia's parks continue to serve as a recreation hub for Midland's citizens. Columbia's Parks and Recreation locations are crossroads where technology, diversity, health and wellness, mental well-being, inclusiveness, and environmental sustainability come together. The Department strives for users to enjoy great experiences that enhance them as individuals.

## Related Planning Efforts and Integration

The City of Columbia has undertaken several planning efforts in recent years that have helped direct the planning process for this plan. These documents include:

- Reaching Riverbanks, Community Mobility Plan, 2024
- Columbia Compass: Envision 2036 Comprehensive Plan, 2020
- Walkable 29203, Crane Creek & North Main Areas Pedestrian Master Plan, 2016
- Walk Bike Columbia, Pedestrian & Bicycle Master Plan, 2015
- Walk Bike Columbia, Bike Share Plan, 2015
- Walk Bike Columbia! Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Complete Streets Design Guidelines, 2014

## METHODOLOGY OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

The master planning project team was led by the interim-director of Parks & Recreation, with assistance from the parks and recreation leadership, and Assistant City Manager Henry M. Simons. This team provided input to the consultant team throughout the planning process. This collaborative effort creates a plan that fully utilizes the consultants' expertise and incorporates the local knowledge and institutional history that only community members can provide. The project consisted of the following tasks:

### Community Engagement

- Review of previous planning efforts, city historical information.
- Extensive community involvement effort including focus groups, meetings with key stakeholders, and community-wide public meetings.
- Review of a community survey conducted by consultant team.

### Facility Inventory

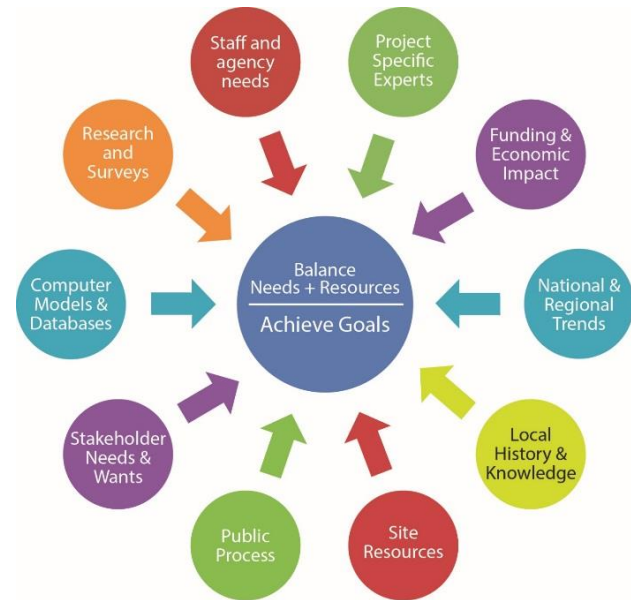
- Inventory of parks and facilities using existing mapping, staff interviews, and on-site visits to verify amenities and assess the condition of the facilities and surrounding areas.

### Level of Service Analysis

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

### Assessment and Analysis

- Review and assessment of relevant plans, policies, documents, and reports related to each of the existing parks, recreation, and open space facilities to be considered, including entities offering parks, programs and/or other facilities not owned by the City of Columbia.
- Measurement of the current delivery of service for park, open space and recreation facilities using a level of service analysis and allowing for a target level of service to be determined that is both feasible and aligned with the desires of citizens as expressed through public input.
- Exploration of finance and funding mechanisms to support development and sustainability within the system.



Needs Assessment

- Consideration of the profile of the community and demographics, including population growth.
- Research of lifestyle trends to help guide programming and facility development.

Operational and Marketing Analysis

- Analysis of departmental programming and service delivery.
- Facilitation of an organizational Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis.
- Broad assessment of overall operations.

Recommendations: Goals, Strategies, and Action Plan

- Identification and categorization of recommendations into themes with goals and strategies.
- Development of an action plan.

MASTER PLAN TIMELINE

- Project Kickoff Meeting.....January 2024
- Stakeholder Interviews/Focus Group Meetings.....April 2024
- Presentation to Council.....February 2024
- Public Meetings #1 (Community Input).....April 2024
- Public Input (Online Survey).....May– August 2024
- Presentation to Council.....October 2024
- Public Meetings # 2 (Findings Presentation + Recommendations)...October/ November 2024
- Final Presentation to City Council.....March 2025



# **SECTION 2**

# **DEMOGRAPHICS &**

# **TRENDS ANALYSIS**



## SECTION TWO

# DEMOGRAPHICS & TRENDS ANALYSIS

### Demographic Analysis

*Adapted from Columbia Compass: Envision 2036 (Comprehensive Plan)*

Columbia’s past is as diverse as its citizens. Columbia is becoming a more active, vibrant, and inclusive city. While the City cannot ignore its past, it can certainly learn from it to become a better city for the future.

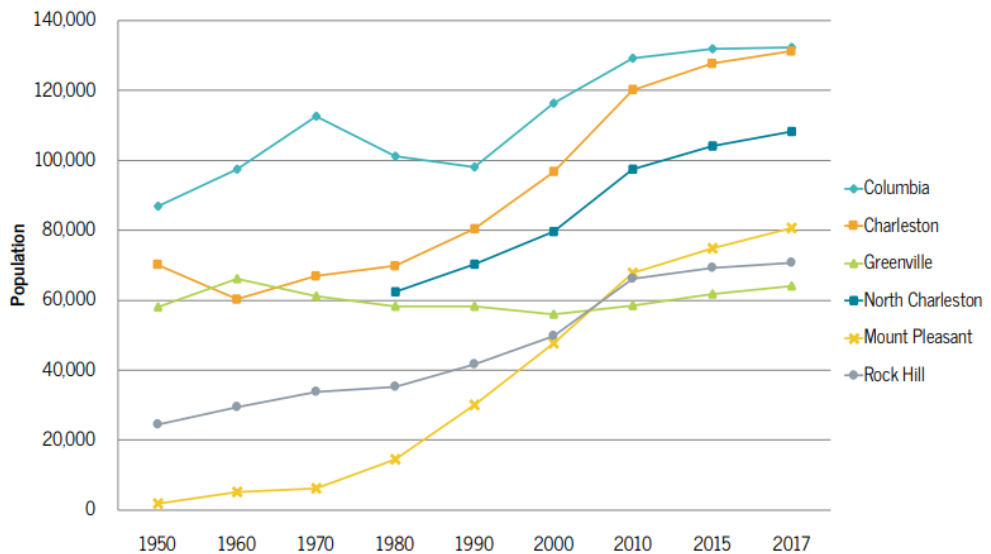
#### Population

The population of Columbia has been steadily increasing over the past few decades. In 2017, the Census Bureau estimated that there were 132,236 people who called Columbia home. This estimate includes homeowners and renters, as well as some of the population who reside in Columbia part-time, including university and college students as well as soldiers at Fort Jackson.

The total population of Columbia has remained relatively stable for the past few decades. However, during the same period, surrounding communities and Columbia’s peer cities have seen substantial increases in population as shown in Figure 5. While there has been a definite increase in the population of those municipalities and unincorporated areas surrounding Columbia, the city continues to be the center of employment, entertainment, and culture in the Midlands. As a result, a growing number

of people are commuting into the City, and are placing a continually increasing burden on the City’s infrastructure.

While Columbia continues to be one of the largest cities in the State, the city’s population is also constantly ebbing and flowing due to the transient nature of its residents and workers.



*Figure 2.1: Total Population of the Six Most Populous Municipalities in South Carolina Over Time (Columbia Compass)*

## Age

Columbia, like many other communities in the U.S., is confronted with ever-changing demographics. One of the most discussed topics in the nation is that of shifting priorities and desires as the population ages. This changing age structure of the population has the potential to affect how, when, and where growth and development occurs nationwide. In Columbia, the population is particularly stratified in terms of generations.

- Columbia is a very youthful city, with over 60% of the population made up of Millennials and younger generations. Additionally, these younger generations appear to be predominantly male.
- Members of Generation X make up a relatively small portion of Columbia’s overall population.
- Baby Boomer generation comprises a much larger segment of the population, which is reflective of national trends.
- These older generations also tend to be mainly female. These generational differences could help signal some of the changes that may be in Columbia’s future.

Columbia is a relatively young city. The median age of residents of the city was 28.3 years old in 2017. In comparison, the State median age was 39.0 years old, and the national median age was 37.8 years old. This youthful population, likely due in large part to the presence of the multiple universities and colleges and Fort Jackson, is one of the City’s largest untapped assets.

In order to plan for Columbia’s future, it is necessary to have a better understanding of the needs and desires of the various generations who live in Columbia. Many of the aspirations people hold for Columbia’s future overlap generational differences. However, the delivery and the form these amenities take may vary based on the age of the people accessing them.

Age Groups and Generations (2017)

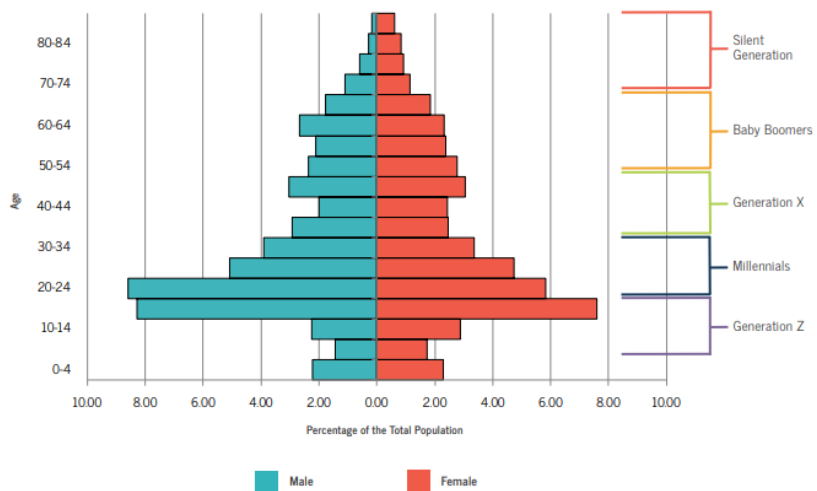


Figure 2.2 – Age Groups and Generations (Columbia Compass)

The preferences of the younger generations - the Millennials and Generation Z - will have a definitive impact on how Columbia engages its residents and what projects it will need to prioritize. Nationally, there has been a trend of greater urbanization; people are moving from rural and suburban areas to urban areas in cities. This trend has especially applied to both young and elderly generations, both of whom wish to live closer to amenities like restaurants, shops, entertainment, and services, as well as reducing their commute to their work. This preference

will continue to place a greater demand for quality infrastructure and services in urban areas as residents increasingly desire walkable and bikeable communities.

Additionally, these younger generations are typically more minimalistic in comparison to older generations, decreasing the amount of possessions they own and the amount of space they need. As such, smaller footprint homes, including apartments, condos, and townhomes are becoming more desirable. This added demand for these spaces, as well as the presence of a large amount of college students demanding off-campus housing, has created a huge desire for affordable housing and apartments in Columbia.

The next older age group is Generation X. Generation X, being a relatively smaller generation in terms of population, is a bit of an enigma in terms of their needs and desires. Generation X's position of being sandwiched between two larger generations - Baby Boomers and Millennials - lead to this generation often being overlooked. While this generation is relatively small, their position in today's culture is a significant one. Generation X's position in society can largely be seen as a result of the time they grew up in. Generation X has also been called the "latchkey generation" due to growing up in a time of less parental supervision than previous generations, due to both parents having full-time jobs or increasing divorce rates. As adults, Generation Xers are noted to have smaller families and tend to have more of a focus on work-life balance than their parent's generation. In Columbia, members of Generation X are generally in positions to succeed positions that are beginning to be vacated by members of the Baby Boomer generation as they begin to retire. For many, these career changes also coincide with other life changes, like their children graduating and leaving the home. While Generation X has largely continued the trend of suburbanization that was popularized by their parent's generation, these recent patterns may signal a change in how Gen X lives. As Generation X begins to become empty-nesters and gain higher-paying employment, they may begin to look toward downsizing or living closer to job centers. The generation which precedes Gen X, the Baby Boomer generation, has received a lot of attention nationally as the generation begins to retire. Governments, businesses, and other groups are having to speculate on the impact this aging generation will have on social services, local economies, and housing availability.

The Baby Boomer generation is one of the largest generations alive, encompassing nearly 20 years of births and nearly 76 million people nationwide. Because of this, the changes this generation are going through will reverberate for years to come. Nationally and locally, as the Baby Boomers age, their need for certain types of services is beginning to shift. This generation will increasingly require public and private entities to provide various products and services that will not only affect the elderly but the entire community as well. As more Boomers retire, many are facing choices how to live out their twilight years. There has been a trend toward "aging in place", that is, retaining their homes or downsizing to smaller houses or apartments to live out the remainder of their lives. Others, particularly those with physical or cognitive issues, have chosen to leave their homes in favor of assisted living facilities or nursing homes. These changing preferences underscore the need for public and private amenities like parks, shops, and health services to be located closer, and more easily accessible, to the people who will be relying on them the most.

## Public Schools

City residents attend schools in three different school districts depending on where they reside. These districts, Richland One, Richland Two, and Lexington-Richland Five, have defined boundaries and taxation authority.

**Richland School District One** - Most of Columbia's students attend schools within this district. District-wide, over 24,000 students attend 52 schools and learning centers, 28 of which (16 elementary schools, 6 middle schools, 3 high schools, and 3 learning centers) are within the boundaries of the City of Columbia.

**Richland School District Two** - Located in the northeastern part of the City and County, this district has over 28,000 students total in attendance at its 41 schools and learning centers. Currently, none of the district's schools are located within the boundaries of the City of Columbia, though a number of City residents live and attend schools within this district.

**Lexington-Richland School District Five** - Over 17,000 students attend one of the 23 schools and learning centers in this district, located between Lake Murray and the Saluda and Broad Rivers. A handful of City's northwestern-most neighborhoods are within the district, and none of the district facilities are within the city limits.

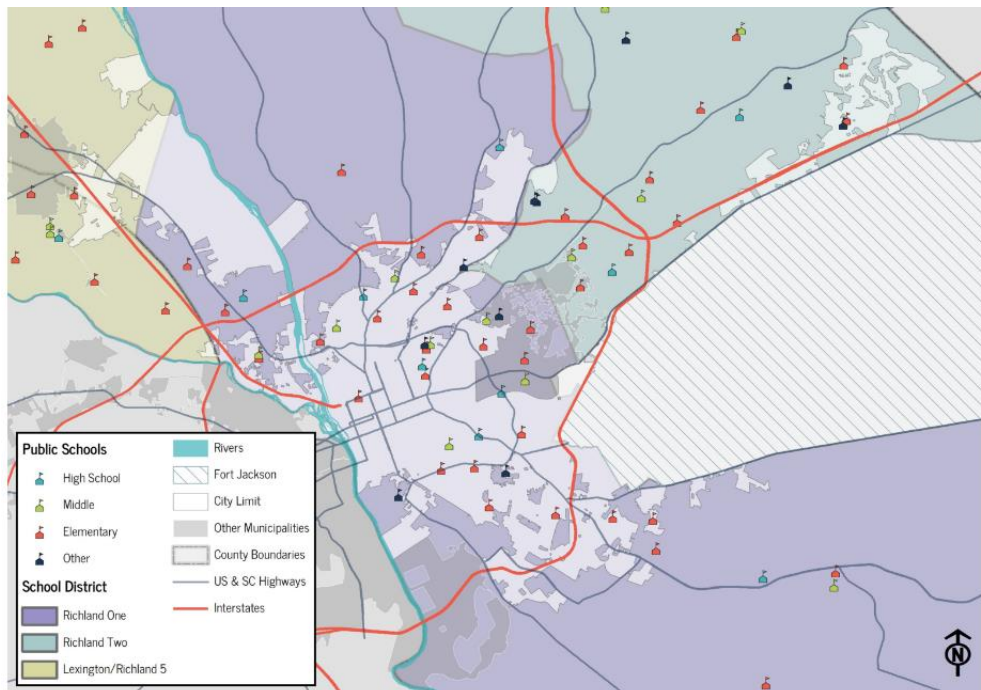


Figure 2.3 - School Districts and Public Schools (Columbia Compass)

## Race

While different communities have different social structures and needs, Columbia strives to be a place where all people are accepted and included. While White and Black populations make up nearly 90% of Columbia’s population, the city is also home to a number of people of other races, ethnicities, and backgrounds. These communities also contribute greatly to the cultural fabric of Columbia. The various cultural festivals and programs that occur throughout the city have made a large impact on furthering cultural understanding and appreciation across racial and ethnic lines in the city. Outside of these fleeting interactions, many Columbians indicated they find it difficult to find opportunities to interact with people they don’t routinely see. Columbia continues to be one of the most racially diverse cities in South Carolina. In 2017, no one race made up a majority of Columbia’s population. This varies drastically with some of our peer cities, and the State as a whole, whose population is overwhelmingly White. This diversity has helped to make Columbia the melting pot of backgrounds and cultural traditions it is today.

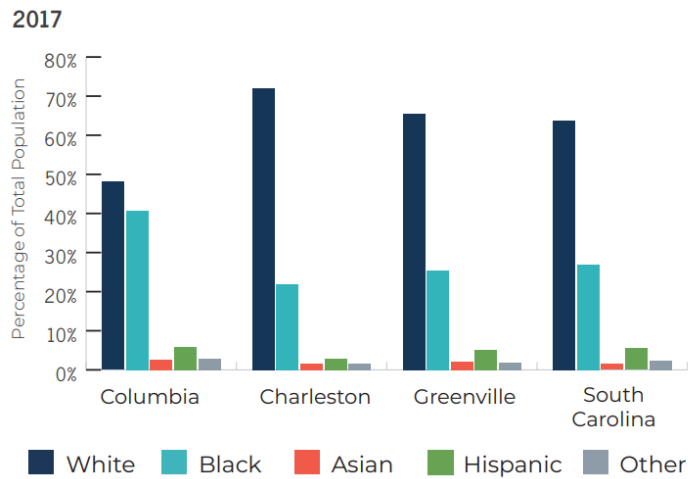


Figure 2.4 - 2017 Race Makeup of Columbia and Peers (Columbia Compass)

### Melting Pot versus Stew Pot

Columbia’s culture is largely defined by the City’s diverse population. Exploring and understanding Columbia’s unique and diverse population will be necessary to defining who we are as Columbians and may help bring us closer together as a community.

The United States of America is regularly referred to as a melting pot of cultures, a notion that this country is able to bring people from varied pasts, beliefs, and cultures and blend them into a unique cultural identity that is American. This implies that there exists a uniform ideal or culture that makes Americans Americans. While in a broad sense this identity helps to define the American consciousness, at local levels this melting pot looks more like a stew, a conglomeration of unique and varied cultures that happen to be in the same location whose combination of flavors contribute to the quality of the overall dish.

### Changing Ages, Changing Demands

While we do not have a crystal ball to know exactly how the future will unfold, looking at the trends established in each generation can help to give us a more accurate picture of what will occur. As older generations continue to age and new generations emerge, demands for goods and services will continue to shift. The City of Columbia will need to consider whether these new and changing needs and desires are being met, and if not, make plans to address them. One of the most important items the city will need to consider is how these new users’ interface with City services and the ease

of which they are able to do so. Additionally, the City should consider if current City policies should be altered to assist in emerging needs. Gen Z and Future Generations The newest generation that cities and communities are only now beginning to understand is Generation Z, which is generally defined as those born between 1995 and 2010. While this generation's needs and preferences are still being studied, some trends seem to be emerging. Generation Z is the first generation to grow up with the Internet and social media, and this generation appears to prioritize uniqueness and the ability to socialize with their peers. Generation Z also seems to be defined by their desire for justice - racial, economic, and environmental. As such, as Columbia adjusts its services for younger generations, it will become necessary to change municipal services and public spaces to become more equitable and geared toward individual interaction.

Millennials and The Future Younger generations will also have an impact on how Columbia continues to grow and develop. As previously stated, the shared desires of the Millennial generation have shifted how cities prioritize the services they provide. Millennials are likely to continue to move toward urban activity centers, effectively making these centers denser and more compact. This means cities will likely continue to see a migration away from rural and suburban areas as Millennials search for places to live with lower commute times that are closer to work and entertainment. These trends underscore the need for active, accessible spaces where people can meet, work, and interact. Millennials also tend to prioritize experiences over physical goods, which may have ramifications for how Columbia portrays and markets itself. For example, highlighting the various shopping districts in Columbia may become less effective as newer generations search for things to do rather than things to buy. Generation X and The Future Generation X is classified as the generation born between the early-to-mid 1960s and the early 1980s. This generation is currently in or entering their middle age and many have families or children. Generation X is also noteworthy for having fewer individuals than the generations which immediately preceded it and followed it - Baby Boomers and Millennials. As a result, the particular needs and goals of this generation have largely been overshadowed by other generations. As older generations begin to retire, members of Generation X will likely begin to take upper management positions that are being vacated, though these positions may conflict with Generation Xers' desires to maintain a healthy work-life balance. While this shift in



the workplace is underway, many of this generation are also beginning to focus on retirement, though many are anxious if entitlement programs like Social Security will allow them to retire in a timely manner or if it will be necessary to continue to work later into their lives. These personal uncertainties also lead to societal uncertainties. Questions surrounding housing, transportation, and economic development will need to be considered. Will Generation X continue to live in suburban areas? When they retire, will they occupy housing that is currently being created for the Boomer generation? How will increasing technology affect how this generation will communicate and interact with their neighbors?

### Baby Boomers and The Future

As the Baby Boomer generation continues to age and leave the workforce in increasing numbers, the life changes this large generation undergoes will have impacts locally and nationwide. Compounding this shift is that the Columbia area is becoming a destination for retirees who come seeking the region's favorable weather and lower cost of living. One of the most impactful preferences of the Baby Boomer generation is the idea of "aging in place." Aging in place is ideal for many recent and soon-to-be retirees. Instead of moving out of their homes to retirement communities or assisted living facilities, many retirees prefer to remain independent for as long as possible, typically by staying in the house they have owned for years or by downsizing to smaller homes with access to better amenities for aging adults. This trend will likely have a number of impacts on the composition of Columbia's neighborhoods and communities in the coming years.

This trend of aging of place may have an impact on the types, amounts, and cost of Columbia's housing stock. This shift in preferences may also have an indirect impact on the relative stability of communities. When a large portion of residents in an area have lived there long-term, their actions can be catalysts for change or stability in that area. However, having a community largely made up of aging people could also have an adverse effect.



If the majority of an area's population is made up of the Baby Boomer generation, there could be a period of time when a large swath of the aging residents are no longer able to maintain or remain in their homes. If this occurs, many properties that have had stable residents for years could flood the market at the same time. It is difficult to predict what might happen to such a community as a result. Will a neighborhood retain its stable character through such a period of disturbance, or will a neighborhood change through new ownership or rentals? In light of these unknowns, the City will need to continue to examine how its actions contribute to neighborhood stability and adjust its policies accordingly.

## Trends Analysis

### Introduction

The following chapter summarizes regional and national trends within the Parks & Recreation industry, as well as societal trends that are relevant to the City of Columbia. This section analyzes the trends and community interests identified within the information gathering and public engagement process.

The information contained within this chapter helps determine which programs, facilities or park amenities may be most useful or of interest to the residents and visitors of Columbia. This information may be used by staff when planning recreation programs, additions to parks and new park amenities, and developing budgets or funding allocation. Overall, understanding relevant trends can help staff reach new interest groups and parts of the community underserved. A variety of sources were used in gathering information for this section, which are identified at the conclusion of this chapter.

The overall trends are separated into the following topic areas:

1. Parks & Recreation Operations/Administration Trends
2. Societal Trends
3. Technology
4. Age Related Generational Trends
5. Facilities & Amenity Trends
6. Recreational Programming Trends
7. Aquatic Trends

Overall, in 2024, it is anticipated that there will be a continued emphasis on sustainability, with parks implementing eco-friendly practices like renewable energy sources, native landscaping, and water conservation measures. There may also be a greater focus on technology integration, such as augmented reality experiences, digital maps, and smart park amenities to enhance visitor engagement. Additionally, parks might offer more diverse programming to cater to various interests and demographics, including wellness activities, cultural events, and outdoor education programs. Accessible design and inclusive amenities may also become even more prominent, ensuring that parks are welcoming spaces for people of all abilities, particularly as parks are reinvested and funded.

Each year, the NRPA publishes an article about industry trends and predictions in the Parks and Recreation Magazine. In the January 2024 edition of the Parks and Recreation Magazine, an article titled *Top Trends in Parks and Recreation for 2024*. A summary of the trends is included below:<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Top Trends in Parks and Recreation for 2024, Parks and Recreation Magazine.

## Parks & Recreation Operations/ Administrative Trends

Predicting park operation trends for 2024 involves considering various factors such as technological advancements, visitor preferences, and operational efficiency. Some of the potential trends that may shape park operations in 2024 are as follows:

1. Contactless and mobile-based services: Parks may increasingly adopt contactless registration and payment systems, mobile ticketing, and reservation platforms to enhance visitor experiences and streamline operations. This could include self-service kiosks, mobile apps for park navigation and information, and virtual queue management systems to reduce wait times.<sup>2</sup>
2. Flexible Pricing: Residents have become more conscious about spending. Flexible pricing provides a means to attract and retain budget conscious patrons. Customer centric packages, like annual memberships, all-access to fitness centers, and bundling programming experiences are ways patrons feel like they're getting a better value for their budget.<sup>3</sup>
3. Data-driven decision-making: Parks may leverage data analytics and visitor tracking technologies to gain insights into visitor behavior, preferences, and usage patterns. This data could inform strategic decisions related to park layout and design, resource allocation, and programming offerings to better meet visitor needs.<sup>4</sup>
4. Green initiatives and sustainability practices: Parks may prioritize sustainability initiatives to minimize environmental impact and reduce operating costs. This could involve implementing energy-efficient lighting and infrastructure, adopting renewable energy sources, implementing water conservation measures, and promoting eco-friendly transportation options.
5. Enhanced safety and security measures: With an increased focus on safety and security, parks may invest in advanced surveillance systems, emergency response protocols, and crowd management strategies. This could include the deployment of drones for aerial monitoring, facial recognition technology for security screening, and enhanced communication systems for emergency alerts.
6. Community engagement and partnerships: Parks may seek to foster stronger ties with local communities through partnerships with schools, businesses, and nonprofit organizations. This could involve collaborative programming initiatives, volunteer opportunities, and community-led events to promote social cohesion and civic pride.

These trends reflect the evolving nature of park operations as they adapt to changing visitor expectations, technological advancements, and sustainability imperatives. By embracing innovation and collaboration, parks can continue to provide enriching experiences for visitors while ensuring the long-term viability and resilience of park operations.

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<sup>2</sup> Three Parks & Recreation Trends to Keep on Your Radar, Maintenance & Asset Management

<sup>3</sup> Three Parks & Recreation Trends to Keep on Your Radar, Maintenance & Asset Management

<sup>4</sup> The Digital Transformation of Parks and Rec" in the Parks and Recreation Magazine from February 2019

### *Agency Accreditation*

Parks and recreation agencies are affirming their competencies and value through accreditation. The National Recreation and Parks Association administratively sponsors the Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA). This accreditation assures policymakers, department staff, and the general public that an accredited park and recreation organization has the operational capacity to deliver programs, facilities, and services at a high level of quality. Additional information may be found at [www.nrpa.org/certification](http://www.nrpa.org/certification).

### *Communications & Social Media*

In today's fast paced environment, there are endless opportunities to market parks and recreation services. Simply, social media is here to stay, and sharing social media is something just about every demographic does. Social media is an opportunity to get people talking, get connected, see new places, and engage with our parks, activities, and facilities. Ultimately, beautifully maintained parks attract people to take photo-worthy memories, which is free advertising. Setting up selfie stations at programs, and events helps creatively reach people in ways typical marketing simply can't do. Technology has made it easier to reach a wide-reaching, location-dependent audience which can be segmented by demographics. However, it has also caused a gap in the way parks and recreation agencies have communicated.

Not everyone relies on technology and social media to get the latest programming options or offerings at facilities. An assessment on how a community prefers to receive information is an important step in developing a communications strategy. Simply, having a strong presence on social networks, through email, and through traditional "paper" communication methods is critical to engaging and communicating with all generations. Reviewing the communications strategy annually is recommended, due to the changing way people are communicating, which seem to change daily.

### *Partnerships*

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, park agencies have increased partnerships with "non-traditional" departments and agencies including the health, social services, justice, education, and the private sector. These partnerships reflect both a broader need for parks and recreation agencies to partner with public, private and interdepartmental entities to work together to address community issues.

Additionally, offering cooperative, consortium-based programs with existing non-profit and private entities allows several organizations to join partnerships to collectively offer programs in specific niche areas. The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the need for partnerships.

## Societal Trends

The societal trends of 2024 are likely to consist of a continued emphasis on sustainability, equality, technology, and an overall post-pandemic emphasis on parks and open spaces. These trends reflect the broader societal interests in healthy, community and personalized experiences, which may continue to shape the parks and recreation landscape in 2024 and beyond.

### *COVID-19 Response*

Since the early days and weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic, parks and outdoor spaces have played a significant role in providing places for families around the world to enjoy the outdoors, while being socially distant, and being safe. The focus on parks has remained high, nearly four years later, which has led to a focus on areas, some of which may have been ignored or not emphasized, needing to be improved to support community wellness.<sup>5</sup>



### *Wearable Technology*

The recreation industry from the occasional recreational runner/ enthusiast to the training athlete, has truly been influenced by wearable technologies, creating personalized experiences for people of all interests with real time results. Wearable technology devices like smart watches, heart rate monitors, fitness trackers; and data analytics has advanced personalized feedback, improved healthy living lifestyles and advanced overall health tracking<sup>67</sup>. As this market continues to grow, and everyone is wearing or holding a digital device, more means to support active living will continue to expand. For example, providing mapped runs for runners to follow a route for a known distance or visit a park space to capture “Pokemon” will only increase usership and expanding the number of interested parkgoers in years to come.

### *Technology in Parks and Recreation*

Technology innovations and introduction of new technologies will continue to infiltrate the parks and recreation industry. From robotic cleaning units and self-cleaning toilets to line-painting vehicles, autonomous-mowing equipment, and semi-autonomous drones, tools for improved efficiency and automation are here for a variety of tasks.

In addition, Artificial Intelligence is certain to affect nearly everything, from telecommunications, and public communications, to automated visitor count data analysis, and systems monitoring. The technology is improving daily, and it will continue to be tried and tested, and introduced into the field. Parks are embracing smart technology to improve visitor experiences, such as

<sup>5</sup> Top Trends for Parks and Recreation 2023, Assetworks

<sup>6</sup> Gitnux Critical Recreation Trends, 12/19/23

<sup>7</sup> ACSM Trends 2024

expanding Wi-Fi connectivity, charging stations for vehicles and handheld devices, developing interactive mapping, and smartphone apps.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, creating parks that are “Insta-worthy” will become increasingly more important as people look for great places to take photos to share on social media with family and friends, as well as emphasize the great spaces throughout a community.

### *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) has been an emphasis for a few years in many aspects. Social and racial equity will continue to be important as park and recreation agencies do more to address disparities in services and to transform the workforce and ensuring services are equitable throughout communities.

There is a growing recognition that access to parks and recreational spaces is not equitable. Some studies suggest that parks in lower-income neighborhoods may have greater population density, be less maintained, have poorer facilities, and offer fewer services than those in higher-income neighborhoods.<sup>9</sup> As a result, many large cities have started to establish data-driven criteria to guide investment in public recreation to improve equity.

In addition, DEI has extended beyond equity of facilities and the general framework of ensuring facilities are “accessible” and influencing municipalities to work towards adopting and implementing hiring policies, staff education, community engagement, recreational programming and community engagement to welcome and incorporate all races, ethnicities, backgrounds, and preferences. In 2023, the NRPA conducted a



research report that found that nearly 2 in 3 park and recreation agencies have established formal diversity, equity and inclusion activities or plans to establish them in the immediate future. Ninety-two percent of park and recreation agencies offer diversity, equity, and inclusion education and resources to their staff, and 6 in 7 park and recreation leaders agree that park and recreation inequality is a problem nationally.<sup>10,11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Park Amenities: Trends and Innovations, 12/11/23) (ACSM Trends 2024)

<sup>9</sup> Neighborhood Income Matters: Disparities in Community Recreation Facilities, Amenities, and Programs (7/6/14)

<sup>10</sup> Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Parks and Recreation, NRPA, 2023.

<sup>11</sup> Parks and Recreation Trends 2023, Sports Facilities Companies

## *Homelessness*

Throughout the United States, parks and recreation agencies are facing the growing concern of homelessness populations in public spaces. Homeless populations often use park benches, shady trees, shade shelters, amphitheaters, restrooms, and recreation facilities to live. Restroom facilities are the number one facility offered by agencies for the homeless, but electricity/charging stations, showers, fitness/health and wellness, and food assistance were in the top five.

According to an NRPA research study, “as front-line staff who enrich the health and wellness of all members of their community, park and recreation professionals are uniquely positioned to affect real change. Homelessness is an ongoing social crisis requiring everyone’s assistance”<sup>12</sup>. Ultimately, building relationships and collaboration with existing homeless services in the community will contribute to providing the proper care needed for this population.

## *Climate Change and Sustainability*

As we approach a post-climate change world, parks and recreation agencies must collectively adapt to the challenge. According to Pew Research Center, most Americans believe that climate change is harming people and that conditions will likely get worse during their lifetimes. Additionally, nearly 75% of Americans believe climate change will cause significant environmental harm, including the extinction of some wildlife species, 6 in 10 people think heat waves will cause people to die, and nearly 6 in 10 believe that rising seas will cause migration away from coastal areas. However, only about 40 percent of Americans think that it will make a much difference in their communities — a major disconnect with the topline beliefs about how much climate change will impact our nation.

One critical strategy for communities to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change is to enhance the means of self-protection, and one of the best ways to accomplish that is to become more resilient to both catastrophic spike events and long-term climate trends. Parks and recreation plays a vital role in helping communities achieve that goal through flood protection, retention of stormwater, green infrastructure parks, and protection against both long-term climate trends and single events.



This connection of parks to climate resiliency will increasingly become one of the most lasting proofs of just how essential parks are to all communities. Parks, from the smallest to the largest, will play an increasingly important role in 2024 and beyond in mitigating urban heat-island effects, preventing destructive effects of stormwater and flooding, measurably improving air

<sup>12</sup> NRPA Blog – Solutions to Homelessness – The Role of Parks and Recreations, January 10, 2022

quality in cities and densely populated urban areas, and improving community health, livability and sustainability.

Sustainable practices within parks and recreation agencies have received greater emphasis. Beyond the financial benefits and good-stewardship efforts, parks are great opportunities for stormwater management, native landscaping, green infrastructure, flood mitigation, and addressing heat island concerns.

### *Active Transportation*

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, active transportation was on the rise, and has since continued, as evident in many surveys and studies of participation in walking, running, jogging and cycling. Annually, these activities are rated as the most popular activities among youths and adults, and are open to nearly all segments of the population. Increasing bicycling and walking in a community, specifically throughout park areas, can have a major impact on improving public health and life expectancy.<sup>13</sup> Spaces which are designed and built with walking and biking in mind, prompt more people to walk and bike. For these reasons, participation in these activities are often promoted as a means of spurring physical activity, and increasing public health.

According to Dolesh of the NRPA, the pandemic caused many people to spend more time in parks and walking on trails, but paradoxically, since the pandemic began, walking trips have declined precipitously nationwide. Surprisingly, a new report published by Streetlight Data, a transportation analytics firm, finds that walking activity nationwide declined an average of 36 percent since 2019. According to Streetlight data, “If walking is declining less in warm weather metros, or coming back faster, it suggests that walking is becoming primarily a form of recreation.”

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<sup>13</sup> “Parks & Recreation | Active Living Research.” Activelivingresearch.org, 2015.

## Health & Wellness

Parks and recreation’s role in maintaining a healthy lifestyle will continue to grow. People are actively seeking opportunities to disconnect and engage in programs to improve physical and mental health, including those that help to combat anxiety, substance abuse, and stress.<sup>14</sup> Recreation centers may serve as community hubs for community gatherings, fostering social connections through events, group activities, and collaborative projects, beyond typical sport and recreational activities. With this, parks might offer more diverse programming to cater to various interests and demographics, including wellness activities, cultural events, and outdoor education programs. Accessible design and inclusive amenities could become even more prominent, ensuring that parks are welcoming spaces for people of all abilities.

Consequently, parks and recreation staff, should be agile to provide and promote much-needed health programs and benefits to communities. Programs may include guided or self-guided walks, senior walks, family engagement activities, and outdoor youth programs.



<sup>14</sup> ACSM Trends 2024

### Age Related Generational Trends

Participation in activities varies based upon age, as well as typical generational preferences. Annually the Sports and Fitness Industry Association publishes trends in activity participation. In the 2020 SFIA report, millennials had the highest percentage of those who were “active to a healthy level,” while nearly one-third of all Generation X and Baby Boomers remained sedentary.

Generation Alpha	Born 2010 - Present
Generation Z	Born 1997 - 2010
Millennials	Born 1981 - 1996
Generation X	Born 1965 - 1980
Baby Boomers	Born 1946 - 1964
Silent Generation	Born 1928 - 1945

### Trends for Youth Ages 5 – 12 (Alpha & Generation Z)

With an emphasis on improved health, and a rise in the prevalence of obesity, parents are getting youth involved in activities at young ages. There is a growing awareness about the benefits of physical activities and social interactions for children is boosting the demand for more play opportunities and programs. Increased availability of recreational programs, access to a broader community or special interest groups enables parents to get their children involved.

#### *Generational Programming*

Throughout the parks & recreation industry, there has been an increase in the number of offerings for families with children of all ages. This trend responds to the ongoing interest of the Generation X and Generation Y parents of today is an important step, as these age groups place a high value on family, which is a change from past family programming that focused nearly entirely on younger children and preschoolers. Outdoor obstacle courses are opportunities for the entire family to participate in a healthy, and social play experience.

#### *Youth Recreation*

Recreation for youth is on an increasing trend due to several factors which promote participation of a variety of interests, including hobbies, cultural arts and interest groups, and a greater emphasis on child obesity and healthy living. These recreational services empower children to renovate the culture through their own imaginative and creative activities such as painting, puppetry, play, dance, animation, songs, games, street theatre, festivals, stories and many more.

Indoor play areas provide a safe and controlled environment for children to engage in activities such as climbing, sliding, and imaginative play, as well as fine motor skills, such as pencil-and-paper games, card games, puzzles, board and family games.

Outdoor play areas offer children the opportunity to explore nature, engage in physical activities, and develop their motor skills.

Youth organized sports programs, such as basketball, soccer, swimming, and T-ball, encourage movement, motor and sport skills such as kicking, catching and throwing, as well as stretching, balance, and coordination.

## Trends for Teens/Young Adults Ages 13 – 24 (Generation Z)

Local parks and recreation agencies are often tasked with finding opportunities for teen programming beyond youth sports. Activities such as meditation, yoga, non-competitive sports, art and civic engagement can help teens develop life skills and engage cognitive functions. In addition, mental health continues to be a priority for the teen age group, as suicide is the second highest causes of deaths among United States teens.<sup>15</sup>

### *Multi-generational Programs*

Beyond interacting with those of their own age, many agencies are developing creative multi-generational activities which may involve teens, and seniors assisting one another to learn life skills, develop relationships, explore educational opportunities, and develop career development skills. These activities are most successful in promoting positive teen outcomes and curbing at-risk behavior.



### *Esports*

Video games surged in popularity during the pandemic, and even before the pandemic, gaming and Esports had popularity. Esports are more than just playing video games together, rather they are a form of competition using video games. Esport categories include, racing, sports, fighting, multiple player online battles, and real-time strategy.<sup>16</sup> Esports have grown exponentially in recent years, with both casual gamers and professional players participating in organized competitions and tournaments.<sup>17</sup> According to the International Olympic Committee, Esports is being considered as a new Olympic sport. In addition, colleges are adding Esport academic program offerings, and offering it as a collegiate sport option. Local recreation offerings can include training classes, open play, tournaments, and major competition viewings to entice gaming enthusiasts to play Esports in an inclusive atmosphere, where to connect and socialize.

### *Outdoor Active Recreation*

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, outdoor activities and life sports have seen an increase in popularity. From kayaking, canoeing, and stand-up paddleboarding to biking, hiking, trail running, and climbing, there is a focus on activities that recreationalists can enjoy for a lifetime outdoors.

<sup>15</sup> Kardys, Jack "Park After-school Programs: A Vital Community Resource" National Recreation and Park Association. June 2019, <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2019/june/park-afterschool-programs-a-vital-community-resource/>

<sup>16</sup> 3 Parks & Recreation Trends to Keep on Your Radar

<sup>17</sup> Gitnux Critical Recreation Trends, 12/19/23

Additional outdoor programs and classes being offered include:<sup>18</sup>

- HIIT classes that involve bursts of high-intensity exercise followed by a short period of rest with classes ranging 30 minutes or less.
- Ninja warrior training, parkour, and kids' obstacle races in conjunction with adult obstacle races, such as Tough Mudder, and Spartan Races, as a result of shows American Ninja Warrior and Spartan Race. These races are gaining popularity among Gen X and Gen Y families who place a high value on family time.

### Trends for Adults ages 25 – 54 (Generation Z, Millennials and Generation X)

When the middle aged generations aren't transporting the younger or older generations to activities, these generations continue to emphasize social fitness or individualized training. Increasingly, middle-aged Americans find themselves as part of the "Sandwich Generation", people paying (time, money or emotion) to take care of aging parents and not-yet financially stable kids. A few specific trends for this portion of the population are:

#### *Aerobic Activities*

For most age groups, swimming for fitness and weight training are the two most frequently mentioned activities in which people indicate interest. Running, walking, and biking for fitness continue to show strong and consistent growth. A good balance of equipment and classes is necessary to keep consistent with trends. The priority investment rating is a combination of the number of households who have a need for a specific activity combined with the number of households whose needs for this type of activity are not being met.



Running, walking, and biking for fitness continue to show strong and consistent growth. A good balance of equipment and classes is necessary to keep consistent with trends. The priority investment rating is a combination of the number of households who have a need for a specific activity combined with the number of households whose needs for this type of activity are not being met.

#### *Social Fitness and Workout Communities*

Social fitness is a current trend. Exercises such as "P90x," "Insanity," Yoga, "CrossFit" and running clubs, provide social support and motivation for people to stay active and engage in their fitness journey.<sup>19</sup> These programs have proven that a lot of equipment is not necessarily required to get fit, and these types of classes have been growing and will continue to grow in popularity at recreation departments and fitness centers.

Additional social fitness activities include: cornhole leagues, pickleball leagues, kickball leagues, and group cycling.

<sup>18</sup> ACSM Trends 2024

<sup>19</sup> Gitnux Critical Recreation Trends, 12/19/23

### *Personal Training*

Individualized training activities and programs has gained popularity with the support of wearable technology, data analytics, and personalized trainers. This trend is vital for anyone in sports and fitness looking to maintain a competitive edge, as well as promoting healthier lifestyles.<sup>20</sup>

### *Alternative Fitness*

Alternative Fitness/ Exercise Methods may consist of a combination of social fitness/workout communities, personal training, and body weight training. Programs such as High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT), virtual training, and strength training with free weights are increasing in interest.

### Trends for Adults Ages 55 and Over (Generation X, Baby Boomers & Silent Generation)

One out of every three adults in America is a Baby Boomer. However, 50 years of age no longer means what it once did, as life expectancies have increased, leading many to feel younger and more capable than their chronological age might have once implied.

Boomers are re-defining the meaning and purpose of the decades between middle and late life. An entirely new life stage is emerging in which traditional models of retirement and services to seniors are being replaced by new models of engagement – including encore careers, community service, and lifelong learning. Interestingly, Generation X and Y are also showing signs that they've adopted the Boomers' outlook on old age. A few specific trends for this portion of the population are:

### *Fitness and Wellness*

With an increasing emphasis on health and wellness, there is an increased interest in age-appropriate and safe exercise program offerings including fitness classes (tai chi, relaxation, personal training, and yoga), mindfulness activities, and holistic wellness offerings. Programs such as Encore Programming, a program for soon to be retired adults, focuses on a broad range of programs to prepare people for transitions into retirement activities and stimulating the life learning mindset. Even the elderly who are frail can improve their balance and ability to perform activities of daily living.<sup>21</sup>

The highly active older adult can be targeted to participate in more rigorous exercise programs, including strength training, team sports, and HIIT when appropriate.

### *Lifelong Learning*

According to the Pew Research Center, nearly three quarter of adults consider themselves lifelong learners. As a result, do-it-yourself project classes and programs that focus on becoming a more “well-rounded” person are popular. Popular programs for 55+ market include visual arts (drawing, painting and photography), languages, writing, computers and technology, social

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<sup>20</sup> Key trends in sports, 2024

<sup>21</sup> ACSM Trends 2024

media, cooking, card games, and volunteering. In addition, specialized tours and trips encourage socialization and visiting new places, with the benefits of a group travel accommodations.

### Facilities & Amenity Trends

Taking an abandoned or underutilized lot and turning it into a park is something that cities and towns have been doing for a long time. Recently, cities have needed to get more creative with their parks since there is less and less space where they can go. An innovative solution to this problem that also takes advantage of the many unused railroad corridors across the country are rails to trails.<sup>22</sup>

Parks play an integral role in our communities, providing safe spaces where families can spend time together, and residents can build relationships. The concept of parks has evolved over the years, with a greater shift towards providing more than just places to play. Modern park amenities now encompass a variety of innovations directed towards enhancing the visitor experience, promoting community and creating a deeper connection with nature, particularly in urban areas.

According to Parks & Recreation Trends, today's parks embrace sustainable design practices and integrate eco-friendly features, from renewable materials to energy efficient lighting, natural stormwater management and sustainable maintenance practices.

Both team and individual activities are beneficial in a variety of ways. Team-based sports are a great means of developing social skills, a sense of camaraderie and healthy levels of competition, for children and adults alike. Providing fields, courts, aquatic facilities, and gymnasiums are absolutely a means to support these activities.<sup>23</sup>

However, there is also a shift toward more passive and individual sports, which foster life-long exercise and individually motivated activity, which is equally important to promote. Activities such as walking, biking, hiking, paddling, fishing, skating and skiing are more adaptable to people as their bodies age and can no longer handle higher-impact, or competitive sports. These activities saw the greatest uptick in numbers during the Covid-19 pandemic, and continue to grow. As such, providing facilities that accommodate individual, and team activities is important throughout a park system.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Parks & Recreation Trends 2023, Sports Facilities.com

<sup>23</sup> Park Planning to Accommodate

<sup>24</sup> Park Planning to Accommodate

The following are topics of interest and trending in parks and recreation agencies:

## Community Gardens/ Urban Agriculture

Communities around the country are building community gardens for a number of environmental and social impacts. These spaces allow community members to grow their own produce, foster a sense of community, and provide education opportunities on gardening and sustainable food practices, particularly in urban land constrained areas/neighborhoods.<sup>25</sup>

Many studies show that community gardens and urban agriculture can improve the well-being of the entire community by bringing residents together and creating social ties. This activity can reduce crime, particularly if gardens are utilized in vacant lots. The National Recreation and Park Association published an in-depth guide to building a community garden in parks through the Grow Your Park Initiative, which can be found on their website.



## Cricket

Having been played for centuries around the world in over 120 countries, cricket is experiencing a surge in popularity and unites people from all walks of life. The growing demand for infrastructure and facilities to support cricket has prompted park agencies to incorporate dedicated spaces to meet the needs of this growing sport.

## Dog Parks

Dog parks continue to be in high demand, as dog ownership surged during the pandemic. According to the NRPA, dog parks are the fastest-growing type of park, particularly in urban areas. These spaces are simply a great way to bring people together to create community, while creating places for people to enjoy time outdoors socializing with their pups. Dog parks are a relatively low-cost amenity for communities, and can range from simply an area designated for off-leash activity or a fenced in area to a sophisticated space with play amenities specifically catered to dogs and their owners.

Ageless Innovation, a Hasbro-affiliated company, has developed animatronic robot dogs and cats, primarily marketed to older-adults. In the near future there may be older adults with micromobility motorized four-wheelers taking their robot dogs out for an excursion in a neighborhood or dog park.

<sup>25</sup> Park Amenities: Trends and Innovations, 12/11/23

### Outdoor Fitness Trails

A popular trend in urban parks for health, wellness, and fitness activities is to install outdoor fitness equipment along trails. The intent of the outdoor equipment is to provide an accessible form of exercise for all community members, focusing on strength, balance, flexibility, and cardio exercise. These fitness stations – also known as “outdoor gyms” are generally meant for adults, but can be grouped together near a playground or kid friendly amenity, so that adults can exercise and socialize while supervising their children. The fitness equipment can also be dispersed along a nature trail or walking path to provide a unique experience to exercise in nature.



### Pickleball

Pickleball is not new to Parks and Recreation departments, according to USA Pickleball in 1965, Joel Pritchard and Bill Bell played the first pickleball match in Bainbridge Island, WA, in Pritchard’s backyard, and since has gained tremendous interest with over 70,000 members in USA Pickleball, a nearly 30 percent increase in membership in 2022. Pickleball has gained popularity in communities across most of the United States with clubs, leagues and tournaments for all ages and abilities<sup>26</sup>, including juniors, adaptive/wheelchair, round robin, and team formats for youth and adults. As with many growing activities, there are downsides which present issues for communities to deal with and face. For pickleball, the noise factor, court lighting, and balancing space needs between tennis and pickleball are hot topics. Best practices regarding



pickleball setup and programming can be found on usapa.com, the official website for the United States Pickleball Association. There are nearly 11,000 locations on the USA Pickleball Places2Play map. According to Topline Participation Report by the Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA), pickleball is the fastest growing sport in America for the third year in a row.

<sup>26</sup> Assetworks Top Trends for Parks and Recreation, 2023

Regionally several pickleball facilities have been constructed and tournaments have been organized within the Midlands Region. Specifically, the Midlands Pickleball Day is hosted in West Columbia for players of all ages and skill levels, as well as the American Pickleball Tour hosted a regional tournament at the Columbia Convention Center with tournament and open play for Men and Women, Singles and Doubles for all ages and skill levels.

### Playgrounds

Well-designed inclusive parks and playgrounds welcome children of all abilities to play, learn, and grow together. More than ever, parks are being designed inclusively with integrated accessible pathways, play spaces and amenities suitable for individuals of all ages and abilities, throughout the play area, not just a particular area/section of a play space. Creating welcoming environments for everyone fosters a sense of belonging and ensures that parks are enjoyed by diverse communities.<sup>27</sup> Beyond traditional play areas, fitness playgrounds are gaining popularity. These spaces provide varying levels of challenge and options for experiences, from beginner to intermediate and advanced levels for visitors to improve fitness and have fun.

### Restrooms

Restrooms continue to be a frequent topic of discussion in nearly every community. Providing clean, safe and sanitary restrooms for the public has been a challenge for public parks, especially in dense urban areas with high usage or in isolated parks without staff supervision. Self-cleaning restroom disinfectants and toilets in parks, as well as new technology to alert patrons when the allotted time to use the facility has expired, as well as automatic/remote controlled door locks.

### Signage and Park Identity

Parks impact the greatest number of users, non-users, visitors, and visitors of all ages and interests, and signage and park identity impact first impressions. Parks and recreational facilities need to be visible, impactful, and informative thru consistent signage, wayfinding, and park identification. All of which increase awareness, perception and community engagement in parks.



<sup>27</sup> Park Amenities: Trends and Innovations, 12/11/23

## Trails and Community Connections

According to the Trails for Health Initiative by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a connected system of trails increases the level of physical activity in a community. Trails can provide a wide variety of opportunities for being physically active thru walking, running, hiking, rollerblading, wheelchair recreation, bicycling, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, fishing, hunting, and horseback riding.

The health benefits are equally as high for trails in urban neighborhoods as for those in state or national parks. A trail in the neighborhood, creating a 'linear park', makes it easier for people to incorporate exercise into their daily routines, whether for recreation or non-motorized transportation.

With a greater emphasis on connectivity between parks and green spaces. Alternative modes of transportation and a cohesive system of trails connecting parks, enables residents to connect neighborhoods, connect to other parks, and create a cohesive network. Residents want urban trails that feed into and out of each other, connect to schools, and connecting beyond municipal boundaries.<sup>28</sup>



<sup>28</sup> Park Planning to Accommodate

## Recreation Programming Trends

### Recreation Programs That Are Hot in 2024

Family engagement nights, seasonal festivals, fitness programming, holiday karaoke, “eldertainment,” games and activities for “kidults,” and partnerships with libraries are all hot program trends for 2024, according to observations from park and recreation staff around the country. The growth of new seasonal programming and festivals leading to the hiring of more part-time program staff is a strong trendline as well, said a group of park and recreation staff at a recent Virginia Park and Recreation Society trends discussion.

#### Niche Programming

For decades, parks and recreation agencies focused on offering programs for a general audience. As interest in the recreation program offerings and opportunities has increased and generational shifts have occurred, various market segments have matured and developed, such as Senior 55+ demographic. Park agencies responded and have offered specialized programming, during particular times for this demographic groups. Since that time, additional market segments and niche interests have grown for specialty audiences, such as the veterans, people needing physical or mental health support, and the LGBTQ+ communities. As a result, agencies are responding with a much more holistic and inclusive approach to community program and service offerings, beyond what is typically thought of as a recreation program.

#### Fitness Trends

Annually, the ACSM conducts a survey of fitness trends worldwide. The survey is distributed to thousands of fitness professionals to determine health and fitness trends. The Covid-19 outbreak certainly impacted the results of the survey with the top trend now online training, which in 2020 was only number 26.

Due to the Covid-19 outbreak and the temporary closure of fitness centers around the world, big changes occurred within the fitness industry, forcing users and instructors to develop innovative means and methods for delivering fitness classes and experiences. Online training was reconfigured for the at-home exercise experience using digital streaming technology to provide group or individual online fitness training programs.

Two means of online fitness training is virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR). These technologies provide users with realistic simulations and interactive environments.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, VR may become increasingly utilized in sports training and skill development, as athletes could use VR simulations to enhance their performance, analyze opponents' strategies, and experience immersive training environments.

As a result, online training is here to stay for the foreseeable future, offering training classes and courses on demand, live or pre-recorded 24/7.

<sup>29</sup> Gitnux Critical Recreation Trends, 12/19/23

## Nature-Related Programming

Many parks are incorporating dedicated spaces for environmental education and conservation. Nature trails, interpretative centers, and wildlife habitats provide opportunities for learning about local ecosystems. These areas serve as living laboratories, promoting environmental stewardship, and fostering deeper appreciation for nature.<sup>30</sup>

There is an international movement to connect children, their families, and their communities to the natural world called the New Nature Movement. According to the report, “Nature Play & Learning Places: Creating and Managing Places where Children Engage with Nature” there is a genuine need in today’s society for learning spaces that spark creative play with natural materials, such as plants, vines, shrubs, rocks, water, logs, and other elements.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to nature programming, nature-themed play spaces are becoming popular. Some park and recreation agencies are now offering outdoor preschool where the entire program takes place outside.

## Outdoor Activities

Likely because of the Covid-19 pandemic, outdoor activities such as group walks, group rides, and organized hiking groups are gaining in popularity. These activities can be short, daylong or weeklong excursions. Typically, people meet at a local park, hiking area, or bike trail with a designated leader/guide. Beginning in 2010, this activity has been in the top 20 since 2012, and



<sup>30</sup> Park Amenities: Trends and Innovations, 12/11/23

<sup>31</sup> Nature Play & Learning Places: Creating and Managing Places where Children Engage with Nature, 2020

has become more popular during Covid-19, as agencies worked to offer fitness programs outdoors that help to ensure social distancing.

Adventure activities like rock climbing, skydiving, and whitewater rafting continue to attract thrill-seekers looking for a physical challenge and an adrenaline rush.<sup>32</sup> Adventure activities and excursions are typically hosted by specialized companies or organizations; however, more municipalities have started collaborating and forming partnerships with alternative service providers to offer exciting programs and facilities within parks, such as zip lining, challenge/obstacle courses, and other risk-taking elements on a local level.

### Child Care Programs

Participation in parks and recreation before/after school, youth summer camp and childcare programs continues to be very strong. These programs may include fitness/play opportunities, healthy snack, and tutoring/homework services. According to several resources, parks and recreation professionals consider the top five benefits of after-school programs provided to youth are:

- Increased social network
- Improved academics
- Help kids see that learning is fun
- Provide a safe environment

### Therapeutic Recreation

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 enacted that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else to enjoy employment opportunities, purchase goods and services, and participate in state and local government programs.

Therapeutic Recreational Services uses leisure activities to help people with specific health conditions to improve their skills, abilities, overall healthy, and emotional well-being.<sup>33</sup> Recreational therapy provides a wide range of positive impacts to persons with disabilities beyond health benefits by strengthening social connections, improving functional independence after an injury, increasing self-esteem, and increasing strength and physical fitness in a collaborative setting. In addition, therapeutic recreation includes serving community members with the social/emotional challenges associated with “invisible disabilities” such as spectrum disorders, sensory integration disorders, ADHD, and bipolar disorders. According to a 2020 study, at the conclusion of a 12-week mini-basketball training program for thirty-three preschoolers with autism spectrum disorder, the youth had improved social communication skills, speed, agility and muscle strength.<sup>34</sup>

Park and recreation agencies have increasingly focused on providing services and programs for those with “invisible disabilities” and noting that when well done and being inclusive of the entire community population, these services improve the recreational experience for everyone.

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<sup>32</sup> Gitnux Critical Recreation Trends, 12/19/23

<sup>33</sup> healthline

<sup>34</sup> Effects of Mini-Basketball Training Program on Executive Functions and Core Symptoms among Preschool Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders, 2020.

## Community & Special Events

Community-wide and special events continue to be key community gathering activities for residents of a variety of interests. Consequently, flexibility in park and facility design is becoming increasingly popular and necessary, to provide adaptable spaces enabling parks and recreation agencies to be versatile to meet the growing needs of communities. Parks and recreation agencies often organize and oversee various community events that have the role of connecting communities to local, fresh foods and cultural activities, such as Farmers Markets, meal programs, outdoor concerts, movie nights, and cultural activities.

Additionally, parks and recreational facilities are places for cultural performances and experiences. From storytelling sessions and concerts to heritage trails and memorial spaces, celebrating local history and diversity, enriches the park experience for visitors. In addition, art installations and cultural elements to create immersive experience, while adding aesthetic value, stimulate creativity and embrace diversity.<sup>35</sup>



<sup>35</sup> Park Amenities: Trends and Innovations, 12/11/23

## Traditional Sport Programming

According to the Sports & Fitness Industry Association Topline Participation Report, all of the seven major sport and fitness physical activity categories showed increased year-over-year rates of participation.<sup>36</sup> Winter Sports, Team Sports, Racquet Sports, and Water Sports all grew by over 9% last year. Team sports measured 10.8% growth, and most notably 20 of the 24 sports tracked by SFIA showed increases in 2023, whereas only five showed increases over the previous year. This reflects an overall trend in the United States of strong demand for team sports opportunities, following the forced isolation, and breakup of teams during the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of team sports participants has not yet exceeded pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels and prior to the.<sup>37</sup>

Interestingly, just prior to the Covid-19 outbreak, the number of youth involved in team sports was beginning to decline.<sup>38</sup> Accordingly to Deloitte, “Looking back one day, the five years after the coronavirus pandemic will be seen as a transformative period in the global sports industry. The period will be marked by significant changes in technological capabilities, as well as shifts in business and commercial models for sports leagues and teams”.<sup>39</sup>

For each sport, there are two categories which define the level of activity. “Casual” refers to users that participated in the activity up to 12 times in the past 12 months. CORE refers to users that participated in the activity more than 13 times in the last year. The level of change for the following sports includes:



*Baseball/Softball* - Casual participation in baseball saw an increase in participation in the last five years but was particularly high in the past two years. Overall, both fast and slow pitch softball has seen a decline in participants over the last several years.

*Football (Flag & Tackle)* - Casual participation in flag and tackle football activities has increased in the past two years. CORE participation in all types of football (flag, tackle, touch) decreased – particularly for Touch Football. Overall, casual participation is increasing while CORE participation is decreasing.

*Lacrosse* - Casual participation in lacrosse increased significantly in the past year, while CORE Participation decreased.

<sup>36</sup> SFIA 2024

<sup>37</sup> SFIA 2024

<sup>38</sup> 2024 Sports Industry Outlook, Deloitte

<sup>39</sup> 2024 Sports Industry Outlook, Deloitte

*Pickleball* - With nearly 4.8 million people in the country playing pickleball, pickleball is still trending nationwide as the fastest growing sport in America with the active aging demographic. Three quarters of CORE players are age 55 or older but has a multi-generational appeal.

*Tennis* - Participation for tennis has increased over the past five years approximately 4.5% but has not seen the same level of increase as Pickleball. Tennis has also seen a push to expand the sport to new audiences, including youth, seniors, and people with disabilities, which has led to the creation of new programs and initiatives aimed at introducing the sport to new and diverse communities. The US Tennis Association has an ambitious growth strategy aiming to make the United States the number one tennis-playing nation (by population) in the world—increasing the number of Americans playing the World's Healthiest Sport to 10% of the population (35 million players).

*Soccer* – Although still a very popular sport, particularly among youth entering organized sports, according to the SFIA, CORE participation has declined, but indoor soccer and casual participation has increased over the last five years.

*Volleyball* – Volleyball has seen a decline in participation over the last several years, with both casual and CORE participation decreasing.

## Aquatic Trends

Municipal aquatic facilities have progressed from traditional rectangular pools to zero-entry, multi-faceted play areas with spray features and slides. Outdoor municipal pools vary in size and shape, but ultimately provide a place for patrons to cool off during the warm season and enjoy a place to play and learn how to swim. Indoor aquatic facilities continue to grow in popularity in providing a year-round facility for users of all ages and abilities, particularly with warm water therapy facilities for the aging population.

### Water Fitness Programs

Water fitness programs continue to be popular and a growing trend in the fitness industry. Aqua yoga, aqua Zumba, aqua spin, aqua step, and aqua boot camp are all growing programs for varying ages and abilities.

### Youth Programming

Youth programming, specifically swimming lessons and summer day camp programs, include some of the greatest number of participants for public pool operations. Youth programming can be offered to all ages and levels in individuals or group settings. Equitable access to pool facilities in municipalities is a topic of concern in many communities, with some neighborhoods providing transportation for youth during the summer months.

### Splash Pads

Splash Pads (or spray parks) are aquatic features with many community benefits. As traditional swimming pools age, staff and guard shortages continue to grow, and the demand for places to cool off increase during the warm season, splash pads are a solution. Splash pads are “water

playgrounds” with minimal water depths, therefore they require minimal staffing, less maintenance than a pool, and are a low-cost alternative to a swimming pool. Splash pads may be stand along play areas or integrated into a larger aquatic facility, and typically appeal to youth between the ages of 2 and 12.



## Regional Athletic Organizations & Comparable Facilities

Throughout the Columbia region there are multiple sport teams and recreation facilities which provide regional recreation and sporting events. Included below is a brief list:

### Pre- and Professional Sports Teams/Clubs:

- Columbia Fireflies - Minor league baseball team (Low A), affiliated with Kansas City Royals and play at Segra Park in Columbia.
- Lexington County Blowfish – Summer collegiate baseball team. Part of Coastal Plain League at the Lexington County Baseball Stadium.
- South Carolina United Bantams – Under 23 Men’s (USL League Two and the Women’s USL W pre-professional leagues play at multiple facilities throughout the region including the Southeastern Freight Lines Soccer Center, Polo Road Park, and the SV Presbyterian Church in the City of Columbia.

### Colleges & Universities:

- University of South Carolina – Gamecocks – Division I Athletics Program, member of Southeastern Conference for most men’s and women’s athletics. Multiple athletic facilities are located throughout the campus and city, as well as have hosted several regional and conference championships for various sports.
- Allen University – Division II Athletics Program, member of Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference with 12 intercollegiate men’s and women’s varsity sports including, basketball, cross country, football, soccer, softball, track & field, volleyball, and wrestling.

- Benedict College – Division II Athletics Program, member of Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association with 14 intercollegiate men’s and women’s varsity sports including, baseball, basketball, cheerleading, cross country, football, softball, tennis, track & field, and volleyball.
- Columbia College – Member of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) Appalachian Athletic Conference with 15 intercollegiate men’s and women’s sports including basketball, cross country, golf, soccer, softball, swimming, tennis, track & field, and volleyball.
- Columbia International University – Member of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) Appalachian Athletic Conference with 13 men’s and women’s sports including baseball, basketball, cross country, golf, soccer, softball, track & field, and volleyball.

### Various Comparable Facilities in Nearby Communities

#### BALL PARK ROAD SPORTS COMPLEX, LEXINGTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

The Ball Park Road Sports Complex includes 10 baseball/softball fields, 4 baseball fields with grass infields, 4 tennis courts (hard surface), parking area, and all fields and courts are lit.

#### CAYCE TENNIS AND FITNESS CENTER, CAYCEE, SOUTH CAROLINA

Located in Cayce, the facility includes 30 lighted courts with a championship-sized stadium court that has a viewing capacity of approximately 500 persons. A 11,000 sf clubhouse and 2,400 sf fitness center includes a patio viewing of the Stadium Court, men’s and women’s locker rooms, conference room, catering kitchen and a pro-shop.

#### KELLEY MILLS SPORTS COMPLEX, RICHLAND COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

The Kelly Mills Sports Complex is a 35-acre sports facility with 4 baseball fields, a multipurpose field, a two-story concession building with press boxes and restrooms, a ½-mile walking trail, playground, a maintenance building, parking area, and a batting warm-up area with cages.

#### LEXINGTON COUNTY TENNIS COMPLEX, LEXINGTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

Located in Lexington, the facility includes 21 lighted tennis courts, a championship sized stadium (500 person capacity), a 4,600 sf two-story clubhouse with a patio viewing area, men’s and women’s locker rooms, showers, trainer area, conference rooms, and a pro-shop. Additional facilities include a small central gazebo, iced water coolers, and electricity for ball machines on 5 courts.

#### THE PAR TEE GOLF CENTER, LEXINGTON COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

The Par Tee Driving Range and Miniature Golf Center, includes a driving range, 6,000 sf practice green, 3 hole par 3 loop, miniature golf course, and a pro-shop. The Par Tee Golf Center has played host to the 2013-2019 East Coast Classic, a World Long Drive Event run by The Golf Channel, several Drive, Chip and Putt Local Qualifiers, and is the official practice Facility of the Columbia College Koalas.

PICKLEBALL FACILITIES IN/AROUND COLUMBIA INCLUDE:

- 901 St. Andrews – 1 indoor court, Columbia, SC
- Camden Pickleball Plaza– 12 outdoor courts (lighted), Camden, SC
- Cayce Tennis and Fitness Center – 7 outdoor courts (lighted), Cayce, SC
- Harbison Recreation Center – 3 outdoor courts, Columbia SC
- Katie & Irwin Kahn Jewish Community Center – 4 indoor courts, Columbia, SC
- Lexington County Tennis Complex – 8 outdoor courts, Lexington, SC
- North Springs Park – 4 outdoor courts and 3 indoor courts, Columbia, SC
- Tri-City Leisure Center – 3 indoor courts, Columbia, SC
- Seven Oaks Park – 3 indoor courts, Columbia, SC

*(PER PLACES2PLAY + PICKLEHEADS)*



# **SECTION 3**

# **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

# **SUMMARY**



## SECTION THREE

### PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

#### PURPOSE OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public engagement is fundamental to the master planning process. This input, whether received during a public forum, in a survey, or face-to-face, helps the team form a well-rounded, multi-faceted comprehension of the unique challenges and needs of the community.

The following is a brief overview of the public outreach strategy for the Parks & Recreation Plan for the City of Columbia. The five principles of the outreach strategy are *to inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower*. The principles are further defined as follows:

**Inform** - Communicate to Community Members and Stakeholders about the project and raise awareness about the master planning process, schedule, how people can get involved, and stay informed.

- City Website – regularly post updates, presentations, upcoming meetings.
- Social Media, press releases, and signs & flyers to share with neighborhood associations and citizen groups.
- Stakeholder Signup / Interest on website

**Consult** – Present to the project steering committee and general population throughout public engagement process in various forms (in-person or virtual).

- Presentation / Open House
- Surveys / Questionnaires and Comment Forms

**Involve** – Embed stakeholders in the data collection process by working residents, community advocates, and staff to help advise the project team, spread the word, and help collect input.

**Collaborate** – Review, analyze, evaluate, and discuss stakeholder comments and input. Respond and categorize feedback with stakeholders to develop recommendations, goals, and objectives.

**Empower** – Communicate with residents and community stakeholders the public engagement process, and the goals and objectives developed from the feedback for future advocacy, support and growth in Columbia’s Parks and Recreation facilities and programs.



## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The Weston & Sampson team facilitated a wide variety of public events between February and December of 2024 to obtain feedback about parks, recreation facilities, and programming throughout the City of Columbia. The project team and staff guided the public engagement process through a series of meetings and presentations throughout each of the four districts. The public engagement process was as follows:

### Kick-off Meeting + Facility Tour (January)

- Kick-off meeting and project overview with Parks & Recreation Staff Leadership Group.
- Site visit/facility tour of facilities with parks & recreation staff.

### Project Committee Meetings (Monthly)

- Monthly check-in meetings with Parks & Recreation Staff Leadership to review progress and schedule for project tasks.

### Council Presentation (February)

- Overview presentation to City Council of project, goals, objectives and timeline.

### Stakeholder/ Focus Group Meetings (April)

- Four virtual stakeholder/focus group workshop sessions were facilitated by invitation extended through the Parks and Recreation Department staff with the goal of bringing together stakeholders with differing points of view to solicit broad based perspectives on their experiences, challenges, and ideas for enhancing the City's parks and recreation facilities and programs. Representatives from committees, other City Departments, council members, special interest individuals/ groups, neighborhood associations, and other service providers (e.g., staff, schools, health clubs, seniors, etc.) met to obtain initial stakeholder feedback. Each focus group meeting lasted approximately 45 minutes. All meetings were facilitated by the Weston & Sampson team and a series of questions was used to ensure adequate input was received by all attendees. A total of 29 individuals participated. Some of the participating groups included:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| • Parks & Recreation Department Staff  | • Pickleball Association  |
| • Other City Department Staff (Police)   | • National Alliance of Mental Illness                               |
| • Hampton Park Neighborhood Association (Booker Washington, Hampton Park, Hyatt Park, Lorick Park-Colonial Heights, Melrose, Rosewood) | • Diane's Call (Connecting Families to Fresh Fruits and Vegetables) |
| • Big Homie Lil Homie (Young Male Mentoring Non-Profit)  | • Kids in Parks Organization  |
|  | • Wholespire Healthcare Partner                                     |
|  | • Columbia Tennis Association                                       |
|  | • Disc Golf Association   |

A copy of the findings is included in the Public Input Presentation Appendix A

## Digital Community Input Survey (April thru August)

- A digital community input survey was developed to gather community feedback on the City of Columbia's parks, recreation facilities amenities, future planning, communication methods and more.
- A statistically valid (invitation survey) was mailed to a systematic random sample of residential addresses in the City of Columbia, with the option to complete online through a password protected website (1 per household) or to return a paper survey.
- Over 5,000 Surveys were mailed, and 414 invitation surveys were completed (+/- 4.8% Margin of Error).
- An online open line survey was made available to all City of Columbia stakeholders, including non-residents (e.g., commuters, residents of nearby communities, or frequent visitors of Columbias Parks & Recreational facilities). A link to the survey was posted on the City website and shared through social media at various times throughout the survey period.
- Overall, 685 Open Link surveys were completed.
- A summary of the findings is included below, and a copy of the findings are included in the Findings Presentation Appendix A

## Youth and Teen Survey (June thru July)

- Youth and teen survey workshops were facilitated with youth in grades 2<sup>nd</sup> thru 7<sup>th</sup>, and teens in grades 6<sup>th</sup> thru 12<sup>th</sup> during the summer camps hosted by Columbia Parks & Recreation, and at multiple schools in the fall of 2024.
- The youth and teen survey's specifically targeted younger generations of Columbians to gather key feedback from this important generation. Over 100 youth and teens participated in the workshops to provide feedback on programs, activities, park features, and recommendations for park improvements in Columbia.
- A copy of the findings is included in the Findings Presentation Appendix A

## Stakeholder Meetings

### Public Meetings #1 - Community Input (April – May) at each of the 4 City Districts

- Public meetings for residents and stakeholders to provide information, validate, and round out the qualitative information received from the focus groups. This meeting focused on gathering community thoughts, ideas, and needs for park spaces, recreation facilities, and programs, as well as sharing pertinent existing conditions information.
- Feedback from these meetings aligned with the results of Stakeholder/Focus Group feedback sessions.
  - Leroy Moss Multipurpose Center (4/23) District 1
  - Woodland Park Community Recreation Center (4/25) District 4
  - Charles R. Drew Wellness Center (5/14) District 2
  - Ben Arnold Community Recreation Center (5/16) District 3

A copy of the presentation is included in Appendix A

## Council Presentation (October)

- Project update and summary of community survey findings presentation to City Council.

## Staff Presentation of Findings (October)

- Project update and summary of community survey findings presentation to Parks and Recreation staff.

## Public Meetings #2 – Findings/Preliminary Recommendations Presentation (October – November)

- Woodland Park Community Center (10/16) District 4
- Leroy Moss Multipurpose Center at Hyatt Park (10/17) District 1
- South Edisto Neighborhood Center (11/6) District 3
- Charles R. Drew Wellness Center (11/7) District 2
- Public meetings were facilitated to present a summary of findings from the inventory, needs assessment and analysis for validation by stakeholders and residents.
- Meetings attendees relayed the importance of providing programming for all age ranges, and the need for better connectivity among the trail network. Similar to the survey (discussed later in this chapter), users expressed a desire to maintain existing parks and facilities, while meeting current and future needs of residents (programs, activities), and to increase shade, splash pads, and play areas throughout the City. Recommendations included improvements to specific parks and facilities.

A copy of the Findings Presentation is included in Appendix A

## Staff Findings & Recommendations Workshop (October – November)

- Parks and Recreation Staff Leadership Group workshop to review findings and recommendations for each park and recreation facility in each district. Reviewed, analyzed and developed additional recommendations based upon staff knowledge, expertise and experience at each park and facility. Staff input included maintenance, budgeting and expansion recommendations to supplement and enhance existing programs and facilities.
- Breakout small group sessions enabled each staff member to discuss overarching ideas/goals/connections and finalize recommendations for priorities.



## Draft Recommendations Presentation (February)

A copy of the Recommendations Presentation is included in Appendix A

## Final Presentation for Adoption (March)

- Present final preferred plan. Discuss next steps, schedule moving forward.

## Stakeholder/ Focus Group Meetings Summary:

Stakeholder/ Focus Group meetings were held with staff, stakeholders, officials, and the general public. A series of questions were asked of the participants, ranging from strengths and weaknesses; needed improvements to programs and amenities; and what the participants saw the priorities being for the future of the plan. A summary of the input is as follows:

### *Strengths of Parks and Recreation*

- Flexibility of Department
- Visibility and dedication of staff
- Wide variety of parks
- Large number of parks throughout community
- Elmwood Roy Lynch Park – Great Space
- Three disc golf courses
- Strong arts program
- Overall feeling of safety in parks

### *Areas needing Improvement of Parks and Recreation*

- Not enough staff at mid-size parks
- Maintenance issues within system, smaller parks don't get necessary attention
- Hampton Park needs attention
- Accessible bathrooms
- Communication of Budgets Improvements & Resources available
- Earlewood Park needs maintenance
- Park Amenities are lacking
- Lack of adequate tree canopy
- Not enough lighting in parks

### *Additional Programs or Activities Needed*

- Tennis Lessons & Tennis Pro
- Pickleball in Parks
- Community outreach in parks
- Dog Park Registrations
- Programming at Hyatt Park
- More programming for Community Centers
- More activities beyond sports
- Concerts in the Park (Finlay Park)
- Afterschool Program with partner organizations

### *Improvements to Existing Facilities*

- Tennis Courts need resurfacing
- Improved Parking
- Replace outdated playground equipment
- Provide additional playground equipment
- Wifi in Parks
- Ensure parks are accessible
- Outdoor seating for Seniors and Families
- Trails suitable for strollers
- More cameras and better lighting
- Hyatt Park Playground Improvements and Fencing
- Hollywood Park needs a shelter

### *New Facilities or Amenities Desired*

- Youth pump track at Owens Field
- Walking path at Marshall Park
- More Splash Pads and Misting Stations
- More Natural Park Areas
- Connections to Parks
- Add new benches and trees
- Provide measured walking paths and exercise equipment

### *Suggestions*

- Equity to serve all neighborhoods throughout City
- Provide QR code at each park to report issues/feedback
- Enable an annual survey and get user statistics
- Create a park app
- Rebuild parks as community hubs
- Maintenance Plans
- More collaboration/partnerships between City and County
- Create masterplan for each park (ie. Rosewood Park)
- Increase bilingual staff
- Collaborate with City Bike-Ped Plan

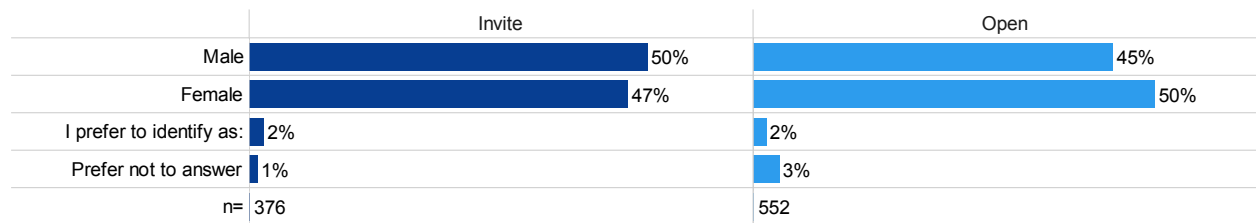


### Summary of Digital Community Input Survey

Online surveys are a great way to obtain input in an organized format where participants are asked to answer a range of questions developed by a collaborative process between the project team and the City. The public was able to complete the survey through two different methods. The first method was through an open link made available to all City of Columbia stakeholders, including non-residents. The open link survey was advertised through channels managed by the City of Columbia including, through the City website, social media outlets, and through the use of QR codes at events. The second method of survey collection included sending paper surveys to a random sample of residential addresses in the City of Columbia. Total surveys completed equaled 1,099, 414 of those completed through the mailer method and 685 surveys were completed through the open link, survey results are broken out in “invite” results and “open” invites. A copy of the survey is included in Appendix A.

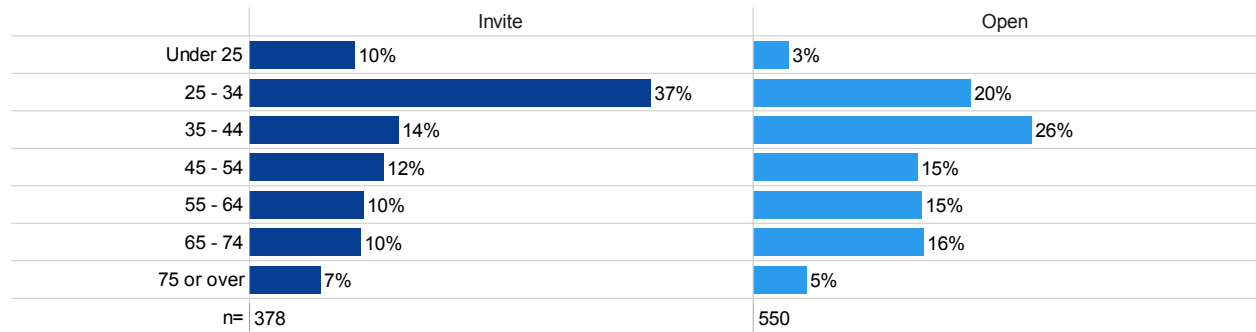
### Respondents Demographics (invite / open)

Please indicate the gender with which you identify



Source: RRC

What is your age?



Source: RRC

How long have you lived in Columbia? Enter 0 if less than a year.

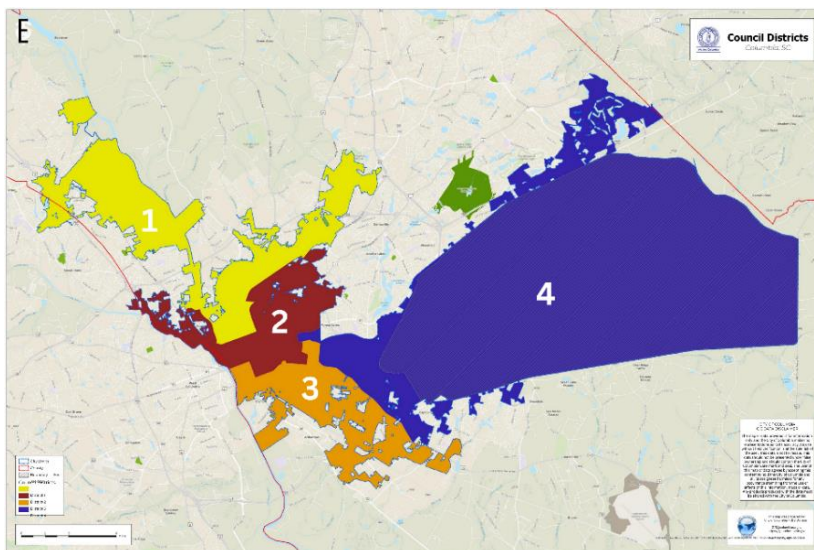
	Invite	Open
Less than 1 year	4%	4%
1-5 years	23%	14%
6-10 years	17%	12%
11-20 years	15%	21%
More than 20 years	42%	49%
Avg.	21.0	23.6
n=	397	685

## Household Demographics (*invite / open*)

In which area of Columbia do you live? Refer to the map below for further clarification.

	Invite	Open
Area 1	12%	13%
Area 2	27%	22%
Area 3	33%	23%
Area 4	28%	15%
Don't know		27%
n=	414	678

Source: RRC



Which of these categories best applies to your household?

	Invite	Open
Couple, children no longer at home (empty nester)	26%	18%
Single, no children	23%	13%
Couple, no children	18%	21%
Couple with children at home	14%	31%
Single, children no longer at home (empty nester)	13%	4%
Single with children at home	4%	9%
Multi-generational home (grandparents, parents, children)	3%	4%
n=	376	549

Source: RRC

- 26% / 18% of participants were couples with children no longer living at home
- 14% / 31% of participants were couples with children living at home
- 14% / 7% of participants have someone in their household who have need for ADA facility and services.
- 73% / 78% of participants were White or Caucasian
- 25% / 15% of participants were Black or African American
- 6% / 2% of participants were Hispanic or Latino
- 2% / 3% of participants were Asian or Pacific Islander
- 51% / 53% of participants have a household income of \$100,000 or more
- 24% / 13% of participants have a household income of \$49,000 or more

### Visitation

Respondents are frequent users of Columbia parks and facilities, 56% of the invite sample and 82% of the open link participants visited a park or recreation facility at least once a month in the past 12 months.

The most visited parks / facilities visited based on survey respondents were,

- Riverfront Park / Riverwalk / Canal
- Southeast Park
- Owens Field Park
- The Drew Wellness Center
- Earlewood Park

### Activities

The most common activities based on survey respondents were,

- Walking / Hiking
- Sports and Recreation
- Biking
- Swimming and Pool Activities
- Playground and Children Activities

Less common activities were,

- Kayaking and Water Activities
- Pottery and Arts Classes
- Volunteering and Community Meetings

### Participant Satisfaction (*invite / open*)

Survey respondents reported general satisfaction with the quality of amenities, services, and facilities provided by the City of Columbia, all categories scoring an average of 3.5 out of 5 or higher, where 5 represents “very satisfied”.

- Parks and Greenway Avg. 3.8 / 3.8 satisfaction score
- Community / Neighborhood Recreation Facilities Avg. 3.5 / 3.6 satisfaction score
- Programs or Services Avg. 3.5 / 3.6 satisfaction score

### Facilities and Services – Meeting the Needs (*invite / open*)

Participants were asked to rate, on a scale of 1 to 5, how facilities and services are currently meeting the needs of the community, 1 being not at all and 5 being completely.

- Playgrounds Avg. 3.7 / 3.6 needs met score
- Greenways and Trails Avg. 3.7 / 3.4 needs met score
- Recreation Programs / Classes Avg. 3.7 / 3.3 needs met score
- Community Gardens Avg. 3.3 / 3.1 needs met score
- Picnic Shelters Avg. 3.4 / 3.4 needs met score

### Facilities and Services – Importance (*invite / open*)

Participants were asked to rate, on a scale of 1 to 5, how important facilities and services are to their household with 1 being not important and 5 being very important.

- Community and Neighborhood Parks Avg. 4.5 / 4.6 importance score
- Greenways and Trails Avg. 4.5 / 4.6 importance score
- Open Space / Natural Areas Avg. 4.5 / 4.5 importance score
- Playgrounds Avg. 3.5 / 3.6 importance score
- Special Event Spaces Avg. 2.9 / 3.0 importance score
- Rental / Even Facilities Avg. 3.0 / 2.9 importance score

### Increasing Use

If addressed the following would increase utilization of City parks and facilities.

- Nearly 75% of respondents state that improving the condition/maintenance of parks or facilities would increase their utilization of parks and facilities.
- Over 50% of respondents state improving safety and security and lighting are also supported.
- Restrooms were the most prominent need for improvement, followed by parking and shade structures.

### Fee Considerations

The largest share of respondents expressed that moderate fee increases would not limit participation at all Invite (47%) and Open link respondents (57%).

Most Important Needs:

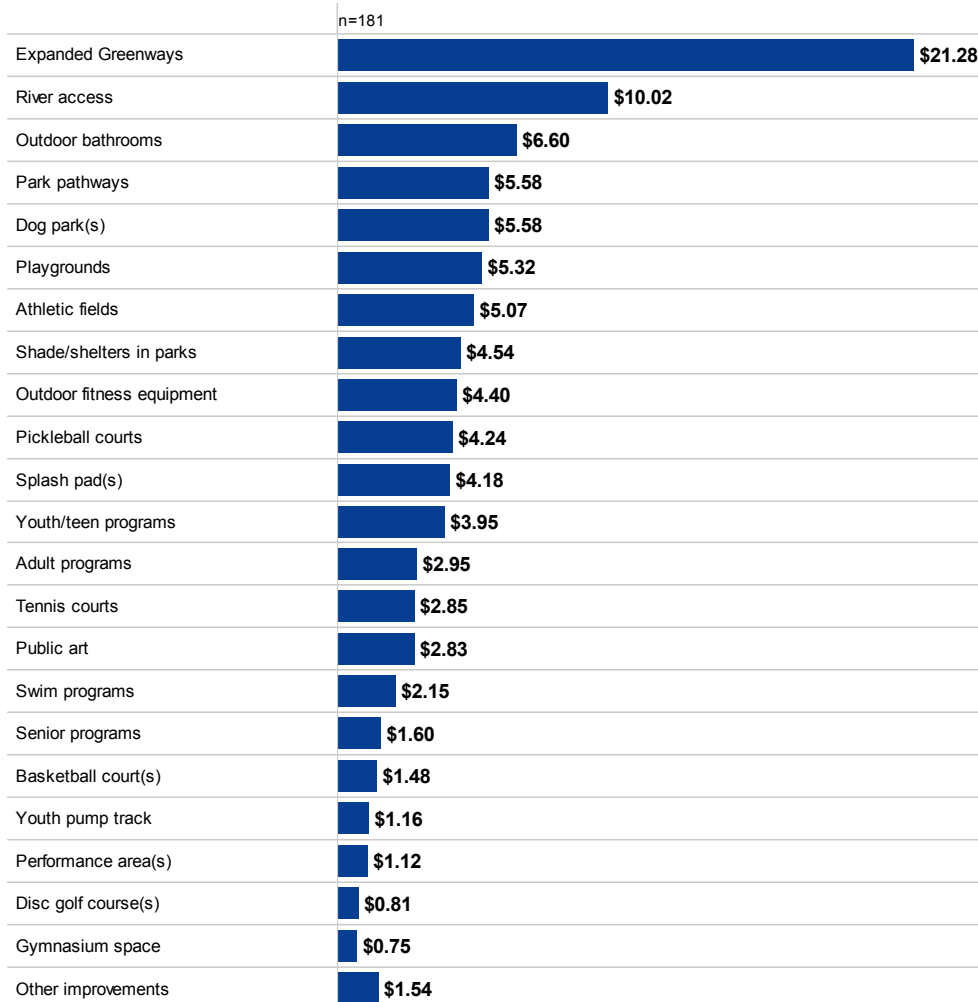
1. Increasing the number of trails and connectivity to greenways
2. Increase river access
3. Renovation of existing facilities
4. Making improvements and/or renovating existing amenities at parks
5. Preserving open space/land acquisition

Least Important Needs:

1. Specialized sports facilities and amenities (inc. tennis, and basketball courts)

Columbia respondents prefer to spend money on:

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| 1. Expanding greenways | 5. Dog park(s)                                   |
| 2. River Access        | 6. Playgrounds                                   |
| 3. Outdoor Bathrooms   | 7. Athletic Fields                               |
| 4. Park Pathways       | 8. Pickleball and Disc golf ( <i>open link</i> ) |



## Improvements

The following issues were identified as the most important to improve:

- Maintenance / Clean Restrooms
- Lighting / Safety
- Connectivity between parks through greenways.
- Increased access to the riverfront.
- Shaded Areas and Splash Pads
- Wider range of recreational facilities.
- More effective community engagement.

## *Improvement Themes*

### Connectivity & Accessibility

- Better Connectivity between Neighborhoods to Parks and the Riverfront
- More Accessible Parks (all ages, elderly and disabilities)

### Safety & Security

- Better Security Measures (more police presence & security cameras)
- More Lighting in Parks

### Maintenance & Upkeep

- General Cleanliness & Better Maintenance of Existing Facilities
- Repair Restrooms
- Resurfacing Sports Courts
- Maintain Playgrounds
- Improved/ Maintained Landscaping & Natives

### Park Amenities

- More Restrooms & Water Fountains
- More Splash Pads, Public Pools & Water Play Areas
- More Shaded Areas

### Recreational Activities & Facilities

- Expand Recreational options (more pickleball courts, disc golf courses, soccer and rugby fields)
- More community programs, classes & events in parks
- People want a wider range of recreational facilities and activities (include more pickleball courts, disc golf courses, and sports fields for various sports)

### Community Engagement & Communication

- Better community engagement is important, with suggestions for more effective communication about park programs, events, and opportunities for public input

## KEY FINDINGS SUMMARY

- Respondents are frequent users of City of Columbia parks and recreation facilities.
- Community and neighborhood parks, greenways, and open space/natural areas are the most important facilities, but there is still room for improvement to meet needs of community.
- Most important to improve condition/maintenance of facilities (restrooms, parking, and shade).
- Increasing safety, security and lighting would increase park use.
- Respondents top priorities are greenways/trail connectivity, river access, the Farmers Market and better maintenance of existing facilities.
- The preferred communication methods include social media and the City's website/the internet.

The survey summary listed above are not an exhaustive representation of each question asked or more nuanced responses; rather, these responses are a sampling of the types of questions asked and an overview of responses. A complete summary of the survey can be found in Appendix A.





WHI...

A vertical poster on a tripod stand. It features the word 'WHI...' at the top, followed by a vertical column of six small photographs showing various scenes. At the bottom, there is a logo for 'Colfax'.



# **SECTION 4 RECREATION PROGRAM INVENTORY & ANALYSIS**



## SECTION FOUR RECREATION PROGRAM INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

Community feedback and historic participation levels can be used to determine if current programs should be continued. Analyzing trends of parks and recreation programming will help the Department determine future program needs. Sources of trends information used in the development of the report include:

- State Parks and Recreation Associations Publications
- National Recreation and Parks Association Studies
- International Health, Racquet & Sports Association Reports
- Parks and Recreation Trade Publications

It is important to look at recreation programming in a demographic context, to understand if current offerings are adequately meeting the needs of the City. This analysis must be performed regularly, since socio-economic patterns and age range composition can change over time. Columbia's Parks, and Recreation Department is fortunate to have a rich assemblage of programs that can be found on the City's website. A complete inventory of existing programs offered by the Parks & Recreation Department are included in Appendix B.

### INVENTORY OF CURRENT PROGRAMS

The Department offers programs in the following categories:

- General Programs
- Afterschool Programs
- Adaptive Recreation Programs/Events
- Art Programs at Columbia Arts Center
- Senior Programs
- Sports Programs/ Leagues
- Swim & Fitness Programs
- Special Events
- Regional Programs/ Events

#### General Programs

Sports programming for adults with leagues is provided in basketball, volleyball, and kickball. Softball is provided for adults 50 and over. Other youth sports opportunities are available through youth sports organizations that utilize the parks and schools for their activities.

- Back to School Bash
- Dancing
- Community Gardens
- Disc Golf
- Easter Events
- Gardening Classes – Youth and Seniors
- Halloween Events
- Incubator/Business Center
- Miscellaneous Programs/ Events
- National Night Out
- Park Ranger Programs
- Pickleball
- Pollinator Workshop
- Prime Time Teen Events in the Parks
- Summer Camp - Youth
- Veteran's Day Parade
- Yoga in the Park

### Adaptive Recreation Programs/Events

The Department hosts adaptive recreation programs and events. Programs and locations include:

- Adaptive Sports Day Festival (All ages) at Greenview Park, Pool & Community Recreation Center
- Miracle League Baseball Program at Owens Field Park

### Afterschool Programs

The Department hosts numerous afterschool programs for youth from elementary thru middle school/teens. Programs and locations include:

#### *Afterschool Camp (5-12 year olds)*

- Emily Douglas Park Neighborhood Center
- Heathwood Park & Neighborhood Center
- Sims Park Neighborhood Center



- Woodland Park Community Recreation Center

#### *Enrichment Camp (5-12 year olds)*

- Greenview Park, Pool & Community Recreation Center
- Leroy Moss Multipurpose Center
- Katheryn M. Bellfield Booker Washington Heights Cultural Arts Center & Community Resource Center
- Lorick Park Community Recreation Center
- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Park & Community Center
- Pinehurst Park Community Recreation Center

- South Edisto Discovery Park Neighborhood Recreation Center



### Art Programs at Columbia Arts Center

- |                            |                              |  |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| • Advanced Slab Building   | • Creative Time              | • Next Step Throwing: Building on the Basics |
| • After School Art         | • Day Sculpture              | • Operation Bed Roll                         |
| • Beginning Wheel Throwing | • Evening Sculpture          | • Summer Art Camp                            |
| • Creating Channeling      | • Hand Building Basics       | • Throwing: 102                              |
| • Creating Throwing        | • Intermediate Hand Building | • Throwing the Mud                           |
| • Creative Journey         |                              | • Worlds of Creativity                       |

### Senior Programs

The senior program offers a variety of programs to enhance the quality of life for Columbia's senior population. Programs and activities in healthy lifestyles, wellness, and self-improvement are presented to meet that objective, as well as to provide a socialization avenue for the senior community to engage with their peers.

- Arthritis Aerobics Classes
- Bingo
- Black History Month
- Chair Activities
- Double Dutch Club
- Soul Line Dancing
- Cooking Classes
- Checkers and Spades Club
- Tai Chi Class



### Sports Programs/ Leagues

A variety of programs for all ages are provided in classes that include fitness, socialization, sports and enrichment. The classes are offered in a variety of city buildings, schools and parks throughout the city.

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseball - Youth League</li> <li>• Baseball - Youth City Sluggers T-ball League</li> <li>• Basketball - League</li> <li>• Drills and Skills Summer Clinics</li> <li>• Golf Camp</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kickball - Adult League</li> <li>• Lacrosse - Youth League</li> <li>• Rugby - Adult</li> <li>• Soccer - Youth League</li> <li>• Softball- Adult</li> <li>• Sports Clinics</li> <li>• Swim - Summer</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tennis - Adult USTA Men's/Women's League</li> <li>• Tennis - Day Camp</li> <li>• Tennis - Junior Team</li> <li>• Volleyball - Youth League</li> <li>• Youth Summer Sports Camp</li> </ul> |
|---|--|--|



### Swim & Fitness Programs

Swimming programs are offered at the Charles R. Drew Wellness Center, Greenview Waterpark & Pool and the Maxy Gregg Pool. Fitness programs are primarily offered at the Charles R. Drew Wellness Center.

The following programs are offered at Greenview and Maxy Gregg Pools:

- Swimming Clinics
- Senior Water Aerobics
- Summer Swim
- Swim Meets
- Teen night events

The following programs are offered at the Charles R. Drew Wellness Center:

- African Drum
- Aqua (Aqua Fit, Cardio Waves, Deep Water Weights, Water Warriors, Water Worx)
- Chair Strength
- Dodgeball Tournament
- Exhale
- F.I.T. (30, Core, Total)
- Functional Mobility
- Hi-Lo Cardio
- Personal Training Program
- PigSkin Poets
- Pilates Fusion
- Miscellaneous Fitness (Barre, Breathe, Butt's & Gutts, Circuit, Core-Strong, Exhale, HIIT, Kickboxing, Pump, Restore & Stretch, Spin, Step)
- Yoga (Aqua, Chair, Hatha, Power, Restorative, Sunrise)
- Senior Chair Volleyball
- Slow Flow Vinyasa
- Soca-Lates
- Swim Lesson
- Zumba (Aqua, Chair & Zumba, Gold, Standard, Toning)

### Special Events

*Off-site Programs & Events:* The Parks & Recreation Department offers a variety of events and trips, primarily for Seniors. These events are coordinated, organized, and managed by staff. The variety of events include:

- Lunch and Motown Ballet
- Senior Fashion Show
- Senior Jamboree
- Ms. Senior Recreation Pageant
- Senior Trips

*Event Support:* In addition to events organized and sponsored by the Parks and Recreation Department, staff also supports, facilitates, and organizes events throughout the City of Columbia for various departments, including Ribbon Cuttings, Press Events, Parades, Conferences, and large gatherings. Dedicated special events technician provides support on a daily basis for the needs of all staff and departments.

### Regional Programs/Events

The City of Columbia hosts a variety of regional programs and events, primarily through Experience Columbia SC. Events and programs generally consist of regional tournaments and competitions for specific sports or activities. Attendees/competitors vary from youth to seniors and amateurs to professionals. The variety of events hosted over the last year include the following:

- Dance & Cheer Competitions (Dance Makers, Encore Dance Competition, Revive Dance Competition, Diamon Cheer & Dance, Rise Up Regionals)
- Disc Golf Tournaments
- Pickleball (American Pickleball Tour)
- Interscholastic Cycling League
- Golf Events (SC Women’s Golf Open, Ultimate Long drive, Palmetto Cup)
- Coastal Plain League All-Star Show
- Basketball (Colleges, SC AAU Tour, Chick-fi-A Classic, International Friendlies)
- Soccer (Palmetto Cup, International Friendlies)
- Volleyball (Colleges, Rising Tide VB, Low Country VB, The Clash)
- Senior Sports Classic
- Endless Talent Show
- Palmetto Classic Body Building
- Governor’s Cup Road Race Festival
- Stars and Stripes Sport
- Kayak Bass Fishing – Lake Murray
- Track & Field (AAU Meet, NCCAA National Championships, Blythewood Rodeo)

### Program Offering Locations

The Columbia Parks and Recreation Department offers a variety of programs for nearly all ages and interests. Art programs are specifically offered at the Columbia Arts Center primarily for ceramic arts, and the Charles R. Drew Wellness Center for swimming and fitness programs with a membership.

General programs, senior programs, and sports programs/leagues are offered at a variety of locations, but primarily at the following locations:

- Emily Douglas Neighborhood Center
- Greenview Park Community Recreation Center
- Hampton Park Neighborhood Center
- Heathwood Park Neighborhood Center
- Leroy Moss Multipurpose Center
- Katheryn M. Bellfield Booker Washington Heights Cultural Arts Center
- Lorick Park Community Recreation Center
- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Community Recreation Center
- Pinehurst Park Community Recreation Center
- Sims Park Neighborhood Center
- South Edisto Discovery Park Neighborhood Center
- Woodland Park Community Recreation Center

Nature/Outdoor Recreation Programming is primarily offered at:

- Riverfront Park
- Saluda Riverwalk
- Southeast Park

Senior Programs are offered at:

- Busby Street Community Center
- Charles R. Drew Wellness Center (Fitness Focus with Membership)
- Virginia Bedford Community Center
- Eau Claire Print Building
- Greenview Park Community Recreation Center
- Leroy Moss Multipurpose Center
- Katheryn M. Bellfield Booker Washington Heights Cultural Arts Center
- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Park Community Recreation Center
- Pinehurst Park Community Recreation Center

Sports Programs/ Leagues primarily for youth. Locations with adult programs are noted.

- Charles R. Drew Wellness Center (Fitness Focus with Membership for Youth & Adults)
- Columbia Tennis Center (Youth & Adults)
- Earlewood Park (Youth & Adults)
- Greenview Park Community Recreation Center (Youth & Adults)
- Hampton Park Neighborhood Center
- Heathwood Park Neighborhood Center
- Hyatt Park & Leroy Moss Multipurpose Center
- James E. Clyburn Golf Center
- Katheryn M. Bellfield Booker Washington Heights Cultural Arts Center
- Lorick Park Community Recreation Center
- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Park Community Recreation Center
- Melrose Park



- Owens Field Park (Soccer Focus thru YMCA)
- Pacific Park (Youth & Adults)
- Pinehurst Park Community Recreation Center
- TS Martin Park (Youth & Adults)
- Woodland Park Community Recreation Center

## Program Partners

The Columbia Parks and Recreation Department collaborates with a variety of programming partners. Partnerships vary from financial support (inc. Under Armour, Verizon, Walmart), to hosting events, clinics and meetings. Program partners consist of the following:

- Mentoring Programs (Mentoring, Reading, Literacy, Empowerment)
- Afterschool Program (Richland School District One)
- Walmart
- Columbia P&R Foundation – Youth Clinics by Under Armour, STEAM Program funding by Verizon
- Harvest Hope
- Urban League Meetings

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SURVEY RESULTS

A review of public survey results indicated the nearly half of the households have children at home, while the other half do not. Respondents were nearly balanced/equal among each of the age groups. In general, Columbia is a very youthful city, with over 60% of the population made up of Millennials and younger generations. Members of Generation X make up a relatively small portion of the overall population, while the Baby Boomer generation comprises a much larger segment of the population, which is reflective of national trends. Additional demographic information is included in Section 2.

The most common activities reported in the Digital Community Input Survey were:

1. Sports and Recreation, such as basketball, tennis, pickleball, and disc golf. Field sports such as baseball, soccer, and softball were also frequently mentioned.
2. Swimming and Pool Activities
3. Fitness / Exercise Classes, Picnicking, and Social Events

The least common but notable activities mentioned were:

1. Kayaking and Water Activities
2. Volunteering and Community Meetings.
3. Pottery and Arts classes or other art-related activities

Respondents noted the desire for more community programs, classes, and events in parks to engage residents. Nearly two-thirds of Invite respondents, and half of Open sample respondents would like to see additional or expanded farmers markets in Columbia.

This was followed by strong interest in music and art in the park and cultural arts programs, programs for adults, environmental education and nature programs, and community events.

Additionally, many respondents during the public input sessions noted the desire for sport/activity specific programming support (disc golf, pickleball), which primarily consist of providing sufficient facilities for these activities, but could be expanded to provide learn to play or other programs to expand interest to additional stakeholder and demographic groups. Adaptive recreation programs and events was not a high priority for addition or expansion of services, but should be continuously reviewed to ensure all Columbia residents are supported.



# MASTER PLAN

Please indicate whether you and your household would like to see the addition or expansion of any of the following additional amenities and services. (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)  
Programs and Activities

	Invite	Open
Farmers Market	65%	50%
Music and art in the park	51%	49%
Cultural/Arts programs	44%	34%
Adult programs	40%	34%
Environmental education/nature programs	33%	32%
Community events	33%	32%
Youth programs	29%	26%
Summer programs	29%	24%
Afterschool programs	28%	25%
Teen programs	27%	20%
Senior programs	23%	22%
Community/Food support services	21%	18%
Community/Medical support services	18%	13%
Intergenerational programs	17%	16%
Preschool-age programs	17%	14%
Adaptive programming	13%	10%
Other Programs and Activities (please specify)	1%	3%
n=	380	573

Source: RRC



## ANALYSIS OF PROGRAMS

Overall, current program offerings are well received and well attended by the community.

### Consistency with National Trends

- Niche Programming
- Fitness Programs
- Nature-Related Programming
- Outdoor Activities
- Childcare Programs
- Adaptive/Therapeutic Recreation Programs
- Community & Special Events
- Traditional Sport Programs
- Aquatic Programs (Fitness, Youth, Splash Pads)

Input gathered from the public input process and a review of the program inventory resulted in the following observations:

#### Strengths:

- Responsive staff
- Good variety of programs
- Balance of programs for all ages and interests
- Significant offerings for memberships at Drew Wellness Center
- Great partnerships and opportunities for seniors offsite

#### Areas for improvement:

- Marketing and communications of variety of programs
- Collaboration with Experience Columbia to promote and interact with regional programs and events
- Ongoing evaluation of programs/event offerings
- Variety of program offering locations and expansion/rotation of new programs to support community interests
- Staffing levels and expertise for programs
- Collaboration with alternative service providers to guide residents to additional programming opportunities.
- Expand offerings/time periods at Columbia Arts Center (long wait list for membership)
- Specialty programming support (adaptive recreation, incubator/business center, tennis professional, pickleball)

#### Areas for additional programs include:

- Aquatic programs (Greenview & Maxy Gregg Pools)
- Cultural programs
- Nature based programs
- Senior programs
- Pickleball
- Disc Golf Tournaments
- After-school programs
- Outdoor adventure and recreation programs
- Historical tours and interpretative programs

## FUTURE PROGRAM EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Understanding core services in the delivery of parks and recreation services will allow the City to improve upon those areas while developing strategies to assist in the delivery of other services. It is important to consider the Vision and Goals of the Department to guide decision-making.

*To Be the National Leader in Providing Quality Parks and Recreation Experiences for All.*

### Program Evaluation

All current programs should be evaluated annually to determine if they should be continued, changed or discontinued. The program evaluation should include both formal and informal methods of evaluation. Formal evaluation methods would include simple end of program surveys or feedback forms and instructor assessments. Informal evaluation methods would include drop in evaluations by the program supervisor, simple exit interviewing of participants and periodic participation by the supervisor in the program.

The following questions should be asked about each program:

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



## Modifying and Development of New Programs

The basis of developing and modifying programs should come from the vision and goals developed by the City and what brings the greatest community benefit in balance with the competencies of the department and the competitive market position (other providers) and look to the future to meet emerging needs).

Staff program area experts should be assigned to develop and oversee specific program areas in order to ensure consistent program characteristics, instructor qualifications, training and evaluation, and fees. Programs areas, at a minimum, should include: aquatics, fitness and wellness, cultural arts, sports, outdoor recreation and adaptive/therapeutic recreation.

The Department should pursue program development around the priorities identified by customer feedback, program evaluation process and research. This plan, as well as an ongoing effort to assess the changing needs of the community, provides the basis for examining programming offerings.

It is very easy to focus on programs that have worked for a number of years, especially if they are still drawing enough interested participants to justify the program's continuation. Starting new programs, based on community demand and/ or trends, can be risky due to the inability to predict their success. The Department should pursue program development around the priorities identified by customer



feedback, program evaluation process and research. This philosophy, as well as an ongoing effort to assess the changing needs of the community, provides the basis for developing and maintaining appropriate program offerings.

The following criteria should be considered when developing new programs:

- Need or enough demonstrated demand to successfully support a minimal start (one class to begin with).
- Budget: accounting for all costs and anticipated revenues should meet cost recovery target established by Department.
- Location: appropriate, available and within budget.
- Instructor: qualified, available and within budget.
- Materials and supplies: available and within budget.
- Marketing effort: adequate and timely opportunity to reach intended market, within budget or new funding available.

If the program interest seems great, as with those identified in public input, then the programs should be expanded. Moreover, new leisure and recreation trends may drive different needs. Appropriate available space may hinder new or expanded opportunities in some cases.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Programs focus on youth and seniors, while limited programs and leagues are available to adults, specifically young adults for children under age of 5, with parents/guardians.
- Consider offering programs in locations throughout City or offering a rotation of programs at neighborhood recreation centers.
- Limited multi-generational programs (ie. youth and seniors, youth and teens)
- Adaptive recreation programs and events are currently not a high priority for addition or expansion of services, but should be continuously reviewed and evaluated to ensure all are supported.
- Special events such as concerts and cultural events/programs are a priority for the community.
- Developing historical and nature-based programming were a priority of survey respondents.
- Expand outdoor water-based activities and programming such as canoeing, and kayaking.
- Expand aquatic based activities and programming at Greenview & Maxy Gregg Pools.
- Columbia Arts Center: Columbia Arts Center has limited programming offerings for seniors, and parking is a challenge. Consider bringing arts to alternative facilities with easier access.
- Consider expanding programming at James E. Clyburn Golf Center for specific age or ability levels for learning/training.
- Program offerings at Charles E. Drew Wellness center are limited to memberships. Consider marketing to daily memberships and leagues during off-peak periods of facility.
- Continue partnering with local service providers and other organizations for program delivery and events.
- Annually evaluate program offerings and demands to determine if they should be continued, changed or discontinued.



# **SECTION 5 PARKS & FACILITIES INVENTORY & ANALYSIS**



ROSEWOOD SCHOOL

## SECTION FIVE PARKS & FACILITIES INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

### CREATING THE INVENTORY

The inventory analysis process involved assembly of a detailed inventory of public physical assets available for use by the Columbia community. This asset inventory was created to serve the City in a number of ways; it can be used for a wide variety of planning and operations tasks including asset management and future strategic master plans. The assets inventory currently includes public parks, recreation, and selected trail and open facilities managed by the Parks and Recreation Department.

The City of Columbia has a parks and recreation system that covers 687 acres of the total land in the City and serves a population of nearly 140,000 residents. The Parks and Recreation Department maintains 19 athletic fields, 74 sports courts, 13 splash pads and 2 pools, and a variety of other open spaces from playgrounds to community gardens. Columbia's parks and recreational offerings are highly regarded within the community and regionally by offering a wide variety of recreational opportunities with quality maintenance and operations of these facilities.

The parks and facilities described below consist of sixty-five parks, neighborhood recreation centers and community centers with sports field/active recreation facilities and several neighborhood open spaces and smaller community parks.

Parks are separated into the following categories:

- Regional Parks
- Community Parks
- Neighborhood Parks
- Specialty Parks
- Greenways

Recreational Facilities are separated into the following categories:

- Community Recreational Centers
- Neighborhood Recreational Centers
- Specialty Facilities



## Regional Parks

From the heart of downtown Columbia to the banks of the Broad, Saluda and Congaree Rivers, to the outermost ends of the city, you can enjoy the beauty and serenity of Columbia’s wonderful Regional Parks. The provided open space and playgrounds are great for children, while parents can enjoy the walking/jogging trails, swinging in the parks or just relaxing on a blanket while taking in an outdoor concert.

Regional parks serve broader purpose than community parks. Focus is on meeting community-based recreation and gathering needs. These parks are generally greater than 20 acres, and the average regional park size in Columbia is 40 acres.

List of Regional Parks:

- Finlay Park
- Gist Street Park
- Granby Park
- Memorial Park
- Owen’s Field Park
- Page Ellington Park
- Riverfront Park
- Saluda Riverwalk
- Southeast Park



## Community Parks

Community Parks are large outdoor space that are conveniently located throughout the City of Columbia. These parks typically include a Community Recreation Center which include a full-size gymnasium for multiple uses including athletics, exercise programs, and special events. Outdoor areas boast a playground, spray pool, community gardens, athletic ball fields, basketball courts, tennis courts and plenty of outdoor aesthetic green space for the community to enjoy.

Community parks serve broader purpose than neighborhood parks. Focus is on meeting community-based recreation and gathering needs. These parks are generally greater than 10 acres, and the average size in Columbia is 12 acres.

### List of Community Parks:

- Busby Street Park
- Greenview Park
- Hyatt Park
- Lorick Park
- Martin Luther King Jr. Park
- Pinehurst Park
- Woodland Park



### Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks feature some of Columbia’s hidden treasures, including a variety of outdoor leisure excursion opportunities. We also offer seasonal programs and activities catered to individuals, families and large groups that wish to engage in wholesome recreational experiences. These parks offer residents and visitors the opportunity to enjoy open space, playgrounds, picnic shelters, walking trails and entertainment venues. These parks typically include a Neighborhood Recreation Center, which provides spaces for community events, and programming.

Neighborhood Parks are the basic unit of the park system and serve as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. Focus is on providing informal, active, and reflective recreational options for all ages. Unique character helps create a sense of place for the neighborhood.

Typical size of neighborhood parks are ideally between 5 and 15 acres is ideal, particularly in medium to high density neighborhoods. Smaller “pocket parks” may be between 3 and 5 acres.

The average size of neighborhood parks in Columbia is 13 acres. The largest neighborhood park is Earlewood Park at 44 acres, and the smallest neighborhood park is Katy Park (Golden Acres) with 0.12 acres.

## List of Neighborhood Parks:

- All-Stars Baseball Field
- Drew Splash Pad
- E.B. Sessions Park
- Earlewood Park
- Elmwood / Roy Lynch Park
- Emily Douglas Park
- Fairwold Park
- Hampton Park
- Heathwood Park
- Hollywood Rose Hill Park
- Isaac McClinton Park
- Katy Park (Golden Acres) Park
- Lester Bates Park
- Lincoln Park
- Mashall Park
- Mays Path
- Melrose Park
- Pacific Park
- RA-Rock
- Realtors Park
- Rosewood Park
- Sims Park
- South Edisto Discovery Park
- St. Anna's Park
- T.S. Martin Park
- Tyler Park
- Valencia Park

## Specialty Parks

Columbia's specialty parks work to serve the specific recreation needs of the City. These specialty parks are scattered throughout the City and are attractions for very specific populations with very specific interests. Specialty parks include amphitheaters / outdoor stages, community gardens, and dog parks. Trails and greenways are present in many specialty parks with 60% of specialty parks including these features.

The specialty parks in Columbia range in size from less than one acre to 44 acres with an average of 13 acres.

## List of Specialty Parks:

- Boyd Plaza
- Coble Plaza
- Columbia Doggie Park
- Maxcy Gregg Park
- NOMA Bark Park
- NoMA Community Gardens & Easement



## Greenways

Greenways are shared-use paths along a strip of open space, typically through or along a linear park, urban corridor or natural area (canal, river or wooded area). Greenways effectively tie park system components together to form a continuous park environment. The facilities emphasize harmony with the natural environment, and allow for uninterrupted and safe bicycle and pedestrian movement through the community.



- Esplanade at Canal Side
- Saluda Riverwalk and Sanctuary at Boyd Island
- Lincoln Street Tunnel
- Vista Greenway
- Williams Street Extension

## Community Recreation Centers

Community Recreation Centers are large recreational facilities that are conveniently located throughout the City of Columbia. These centers each have a full-size gymnasium for multiple uses including athletics, exercise programs, and special events, as well as multi-purpose areas that can be utilized for meetings, educational and enhancement programs, and workshops. Additionally, Community Recreation Centers offer game rooms with pool tables, air hockey, table tennis, foosball, and full-size kitchens. These centers are typically located within a community park, which include a playground, spray pad, community garden, ballfields, basketball courts, tennis courts and outdoor aesthetic green space for the community to enjoy. The Community Recreation Centers strive to meet the needs and interests of all age groups and demographics in the City of Columbia. The average square footage of Community Recreation Centers is approximately 7,250 square feet.



## List of Community Recreation Centers:

- Greenview Community Recreation Center
- Leroy Moss Multipurpose Center
- Lorick Park Community Recreation Center
- Martin Luther King Jr Park Community Recreation Center
- Pinehurst Park Community Recreation Center
- Ben Arnold Community Recreation Center
- Woodland Park Community Recreation Center

## Neighborhood Recreation Centers

Neighborhood Recreation Centers are nestled in various neighborhoods throughout the City of Columbia to cater to the families that reside within each community. The centers are typically located within a Neighborhood Park and consist of approximately 1,000 to 3,600 square feet of space, each including a multi-purpose room, kitchenette, and restroom facilities. The centers also have an outdoor area, which includes a playground, spray pad, basketball court, tennis court, ballfields and more. Afterschool care is available in most facilities from 2 to 6:00 p.m. with snacks, homework assistance and a variety of supervised activities provided. These facilities may be rented upon request. The average square footage of Neighborhood Recreation Centers is 2,500 square feet.

## List of Neighborhood Recreation Center:

- Anna Mae Dickson Neighborhood Recreation Center
- Arsenal Hill Center
- Katheryn M. Bellfield Booker Washington Heights Cultural Arts Center
- Pacific Park Neighborhood Recreation Center
- South Edisto Discovery Park Neighborhood Recreation Center
- Emily Douglas Park Neighborhood Recreation Center
- Melrose Park Neighborhood Recreation Center
- Sims Park Neighborhood Recreation Center
- Hampton Park Neighborhood Recreation Center
- Mays Neighborhood Recreation Center



## Specialty Facilities

These specialty facilities are scattered throughout our city and are attractions for very specific populations with very specific interests. Specialty facilities in Columbia included features such as gymnasiums, computer labs / cubicles, polling centers, rental facility, kitchens, and fitness equipment.

- Busby Street Community Center
- Virginia Bedford Community Center
- Eau Claire Print Building
- Ensor Keenan House
- Greenview Waterpark & Pool
- Columbia Arts Center
- Charles R. Drew Wellness Center
- James E. Clyburn Golf Center
- Sarah Nance Community Resource Center
- Columbia Tennis Center
- Maxcy Gregg Pool

A complete Facility Inventory Summary Matrix is included in Appendix C. This matrix represents the inventory of each park component, completed by visiting each park and recreation facility in the spring and summer of 2024.



## Major Components & Locations

Below is a brief summary of the major components and locations of existing throughout the parks and recreation system:

### *Community Gardens*

- Granby Park
- Greenview Park
- Hyatt Park
- Martin Luther King Jr. Park
- Marvin Heller Community Garden
- Melrose Park
- NOMA Community Gardens and Easement
- Owen's Field Park
- Pacific Park
- Pinehurst Park
- Sims Park
- South Edisto Discovery Park
- Southeast Park
- St. Anna's Park
- Woodland Park

### *Dog Parks*

- Columbia Doggie Park
- Emily Douglas Park
- Granby Park
- NOMA Bark Park
- Page Ellington Park

### *Outdoor Fitness/Trails*

- Emily Douglas Park (*Prisma Health Fitness Court*)
- Fairwold Park
- Finlay Park (*Prisma Health Fitness Court*)
- Lorick Park
- Greenview Park (*Prisma Health Fitness Court*)
- Heathwood Park (*Prisma Health Fitness Court*)
- Riverfront Park

### *Traditional Sport Courts/Fields*

- Basketball Courts – 15 park locations
- Baseball/Softball Fields – 13 park locations
- Multipurpose Fields – 19 park locations



*Specialty Courts/Courses/Facilities*

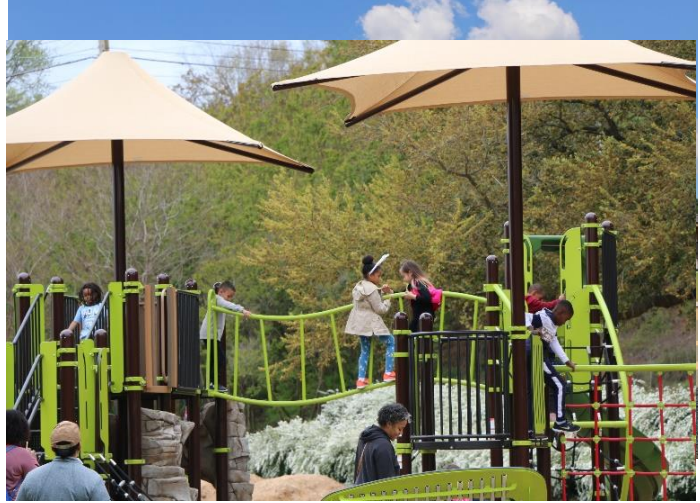
- Disc Golf – Earlewood Park, Owen’s Field Park, Southeast Park
- Pickleball Courts – Southeast Park (4), Woodland Park (2), Charles R. Drew Wellness Center (3-indoor), Greenview Park Community Recreation Center (2)
- All-Stars Baseball Field
- Sarah Nance Community Resource Center
- Eau Claire Print Building (Rental Facility)
- Ensor Keenan House (Rental Facility)
- Charles R. Drew Wellness Center
- Columbia Arts Center
- Columbia Tennis Center
- James E. Clyburn Golf Center
- Miracle Field (Synthetic Surface Accessible Baseball Field & Playground)
- Owen’s Field Skate Park & Pump Track



*Playgrounds* – Nearly half of all parks include a playground for varying ages.

- 2-5 years age
  - Drew Splash Pad
  - E.B. Sessions Park
  - Earlewood Park
  - Emily Douglas Park
  - Fairwold Park
  - Hampton Park
  - Heathwood Park
  - Hollywood Rose Hill Park
  - Hyatt Park
  - Isaac McClinton Park
  - Lorick Park
  - Marshall Park
  - Mays Park
  - Melrose Park
  - Pinehurst Park
  - Rosewood Park
  - Sims Park
  - Valencia Park
  - Woodland Park

- 5-12 years age
  - Busby Street Park
  - Drew Splash Pad
  - E. B. Sessions Park
  - Earlewood Park
  - Elmwood/Roy Lynch Park
  - Emily Douglas Park
  - Fairwold Park
  - Finlay Park
  - Greenview Park
  - Hampton Park
  - Heathwood Park
  - Hollywood Rose Hill Park
  - Hyatt Park
  - Isaac McClinton Park
  - Lorick Park
  - Marshall Park
  - Martin Luther King, Jr Park
  - Mays Park
  - Melrose Park
  - Owen's Field Park
  - Pacific Park



- Swing Set/ Other
  - All-Stars Baseball Field (Zip Line)
  - Drew Splash Pad
  - E. B. Sessions Park
  - Earlewood Park
  - Elmwood/Roy Lynch Park (Zip Line)
  - Emily Douglas Park
  - Fairwold Park
  - Hampton Park
  - Heathwood Park
  - Hollywood Rose Hill Park
  - Hyatt Park
  - Isaac McClinton Park

- Pinehurst Park
- Rosewood Park
- Sims Park
- South Edisto Park
- St. Anna's Park
- T.S. Martin Park
- Valencia Park
- Woodland Park
  
- Marshall Park
- Martin Luther King, Jr Park
- Mays Park
- Melrose Park
- Owen's Field Park
- Realtors Park
- Rosewood Park
- Sims Park
- South Edisto Park
- St. Anna's Park
- T.S. Martin Park
- Valencia Park
- Woodland Park

*Restrooms* - Nearly half of all parks include restrooms (indoor or outdoor. Outdoor listed below).

- All-Stars Baseball Field
- Drew Splash Pad
- Earlewood Park
- Finlay Park
- Granby Park
- Greenview Park
- Heathwood Park
- Hyatt Park
- Owen's Field Park
- Southeast Park



*Tennis Courts/Facilities*

- Columbia Tennis Center (9 hard, 5 clay, lighting)
- Earlewood Park (2 hard, lighting)
- Greenview Park (9 hard, lighting)
- Hampton Park (2 hard, lighting)
- Heathwood Park (2 hard, lighting)
- Mays Park (2 hard, lighting)
- Southeast Park (12 hard, 4 clay, lighting, includes 4 courts with pickleball)
- Woodland Park (6 hard, lighting, includes 2 courts with pickleball)



*Trails/Connectivity* – Trails and Pathway connect to and throughout nearly all parks in Columbia. The greenways within Columbia have larger trail networks, primarily along the existing rivers.

*Outdoor/Natural Areas* – Nearly all parks have an outdoor/nature area component. While some have larger areas or specialized functions, the following have unique characteristics worth noting:

- Granby Park – Fishing & Tubing
- Hyatt Park – Daylighted Stream
- Marshall Park – Forested Area
- Saluda Riverwalk – Fishing, Kayaking & Tubing
- Sanctuary at Boyd Island – Fishing
- Southeast Park – Fishing

## Aquatic Facilities

Splash Pads: predominately located in Neighborhood Parks

- Drew Splash Pad
- Elmwood/Roy Lynch Park
- Emily Douglas Park
- Hampton Park
- Heathwood Park
- Hyatt Park
- Lorick Park
- Mays Park
- Melrose Park
- Pacific Park
- Pinehurst Park
- Sims Park
- South Edisto Discovery Park
- St. Anna's Park

## Pools

- Greenview Waterpark & Pool
- Charles R. Drew Wellness Center (Indoor Salt Water)
- Maxy Gregg Pool



## LEVEL OF SERVICE METHODOLOGY

### Overall System

The overall parks and recreation facility system level of service was developed through the analysis of existing park and recreational facility resources, and variety of amenities and offerings, relative to neighborhoods and community resources. For purposes of this study, the city limit boundary was used as the extent of the study area, however it should be noted that park and recreational facilities just over the City border provide services for City residents or connect to nearby municipalities, i.e., Forest Acres, Arcadia Lakes, West Columbia, Cayce and other municipalities in Lexington County. An overall map and maps of each district illustrating the locations of parks and recreation facilities within the City of Columbia is included within Appendix D.

The City was separated into the Four Council Districts for ease of analysis. In general, the map indicates that the City of Columbia has a wide variety of park facilities throughout the City. In particular, Districts 1 and 2 are densely concentrated with parks and recreation facilities, while Districts 3 and 4 have sections with less concentrated areas of parks and recreation facilities. The City is bordered by Fort Jackson (adjacent to District 4) and the Broad, Congaree, and Saluda Rivers (adjacent to Districts 1, 2 and 3), which creates a greenway corridor along the western city boundary.

Finally, there are multiple Richland County School District One and Two properties throughout the City which include athletic and open spaces, however there is limited public use of these facilities for non-school events/use. As a result, these resources have not been included in the assessment of the overall open spaces or recreational facilities.

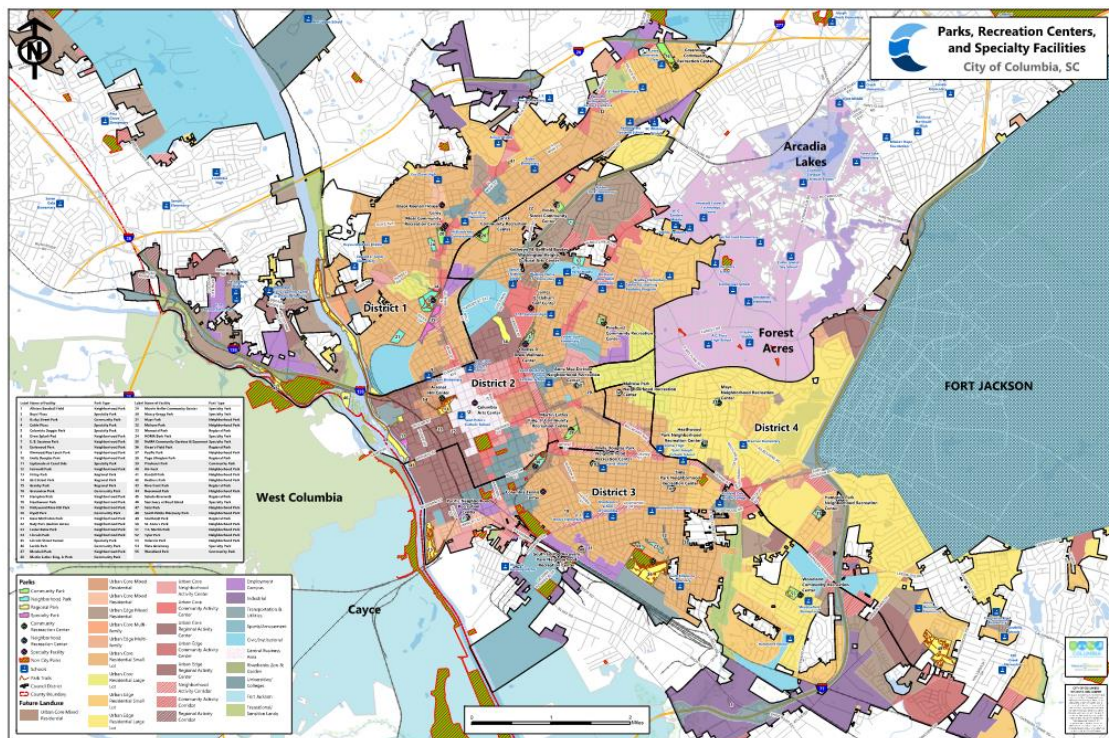


Figure 5.1: Citywide map of Parks, Recreation Centers & Specialty Facilities (Map included in Appendix D)

Park Catchment Areas

Park Catchment Areas, also called buffers, are used to display Level of Service areas in the community for each park and recreation facility. The overall level of service scoring from a driving standpoint is relatively high and thus identified minimal need for improvement. However, the walkable coverage provided near park facilities varies considerably throughout the City. Although this plan does not address improvements to access to parks beyond the limits of the park parcel, it is important to acknowledge that increased walking, bicycling and transit access to parks and recreation facilities improves use of parks, provides health and safety benefits for the community, and reduces parking demands within park spaces.

In addition, although people use a variety of transportation modes to access parks, walking and biking to park facilities are two modes of travel which can support park visitors of all ages and abilities. Studies show that in general, park visitors will comfortably ride their bicycles between one-half and three-quarters of a mile, and comfortably walk between a quarter and half-mile to a park facility. This distance represents a travel time of 7 minutes based on an average walking speed of three miles per hour, accounting for longer actual walking distances due to indirect routes, as are commonly found in a disconnected street network. As a result, half mile and one-mile buffers, as well as a 10 minute walk time were developed around each park and recreation facility to illustrate the access potential of each park and recreation facility. It should be noted that residents will walk and bike to park facilities as long as there are safe and adequate facilities for access (ie. sidewalks, multi-use pathways and/or on-road bicycle facilities). Mapping in Appendix D illustrates the one-half mile, one mile and ten-minute walk catchment radii around each park and recreation facility.

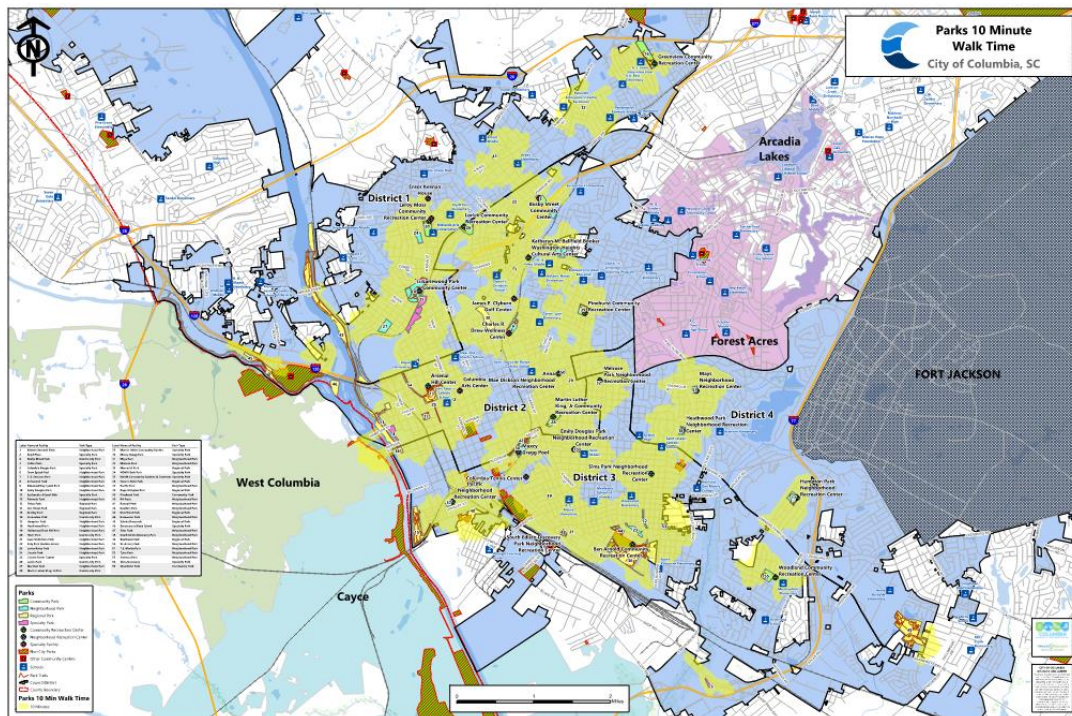


Figure 5.2: Citywide map of 10 Minute Walking Time to Parks, (Map included in Appendix D)

## LEVEL OF SERVICE ANALYSIS FINDINGS

Through the level of service analysis, the park system was reviewed through several perspectives, including geographical distribution of park resources, proximity to neighborhoods, and variety of park resources. Mapping of community and neighborhood parks and recreation centers shows an even distribution of facilities throughout the City of Columbia core, with general overlap of access between one-half, one mile and the ten-minute walk.

The City of Columbia has two major boundaries, the Broad, Congaree, and Saluda rivers to the west and Fort Jackson to the east. Columbia lies in a low river valley with many tributaries from the highlands of the north following down to meet the Broad, Congaree, and Saluda Rivers. This position creates both opportunities and constraints regarding the accessibility and availability of parks and open spaces.

The Broad, Congaree, and Saluda rivers pose a unique and rich recreation opportunity but the access to these areas is limited due to the presence of industrial (manufacturing and distribution) facilities along the river creating a barrier to access. The Saluda Riverwalk and Riverfront Park are two great examples of linear greenways extending along the river's edge, which have the potential to connection regionally with surrounding communities. The linear trail network along the rivers exhibits numerous opportunities to expand and connect to nearby neighborhoods via sidewalks, on-road bicycle facilities, and multi-use pathways. These walking and bicycle connections enable non-motorized access to parks, recreation facilities and trail systems, and should be connected (refer to Columbia Compass: Envision 2036, Walk Bike Columbia – Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan & Bike Share Plan, and the Reaching Riverbanks Plan).

While tributaries and wetlands adjacent to these rivers pose unique opportunities for environmental stewardship and suitable recreation within the City, they can also be a barrier to service for certain neighborhoods. For example, this type of barrier is demonstrated with the wetland created by Gills Creek that runs through the southern portion of the City cutting off neighborhoods to the south from parks and recreation centers to the northwest.

In addition, several major roadways and rail corridors extending through the City inherently create barriers to access parks and recreation centers. In particular, Interstate 77 proves to be a significant barrier for residents in Districts 3 and 4, while the various rail corridors extending along the river and through the City divide Districts 1 and 2.

Core Coverage

Within the core of the City, gaps of coverage exist particularly where zones of green space simply do not exist, predominately in Districts 2 and 3. (see purple zone in between light green areas in image below).

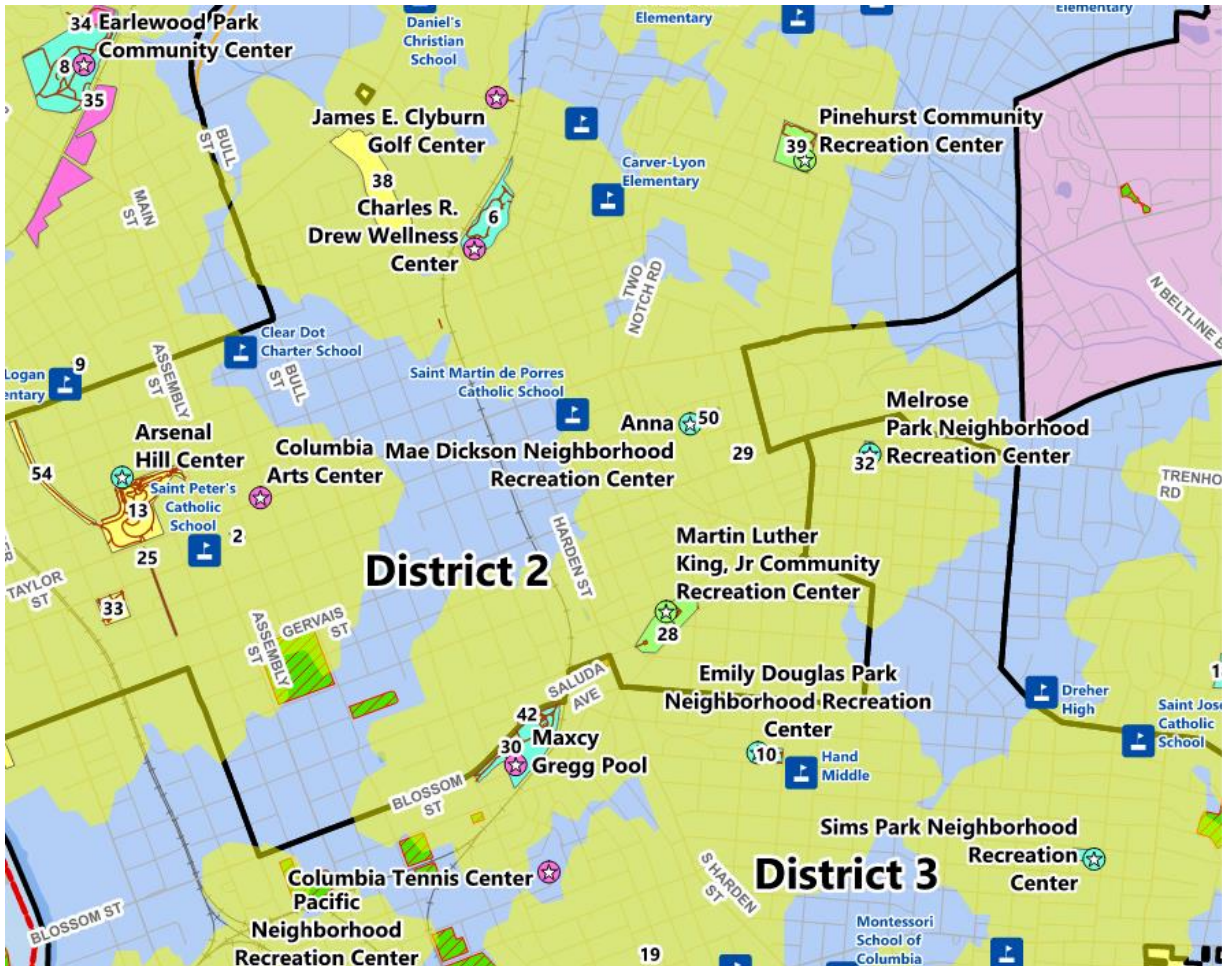


Figure 5.3: Enlargement of Citywide map of 10 Minute Walking Time to Recreation Centers & Specialty Facilities (Map included in Appendix D)

Beyond the Core:

Beyond the central core of the City, the outer limits, particularly along the perimeter of Districts 1, 2 and 4 to the north, east, and southeast, illustrate limited access to parks within a half-mile or within a 10-minute walk. The geographic distribution of parks and recreational centers in these areas is not as widespread. (see purple zone in between light green areas in images below)

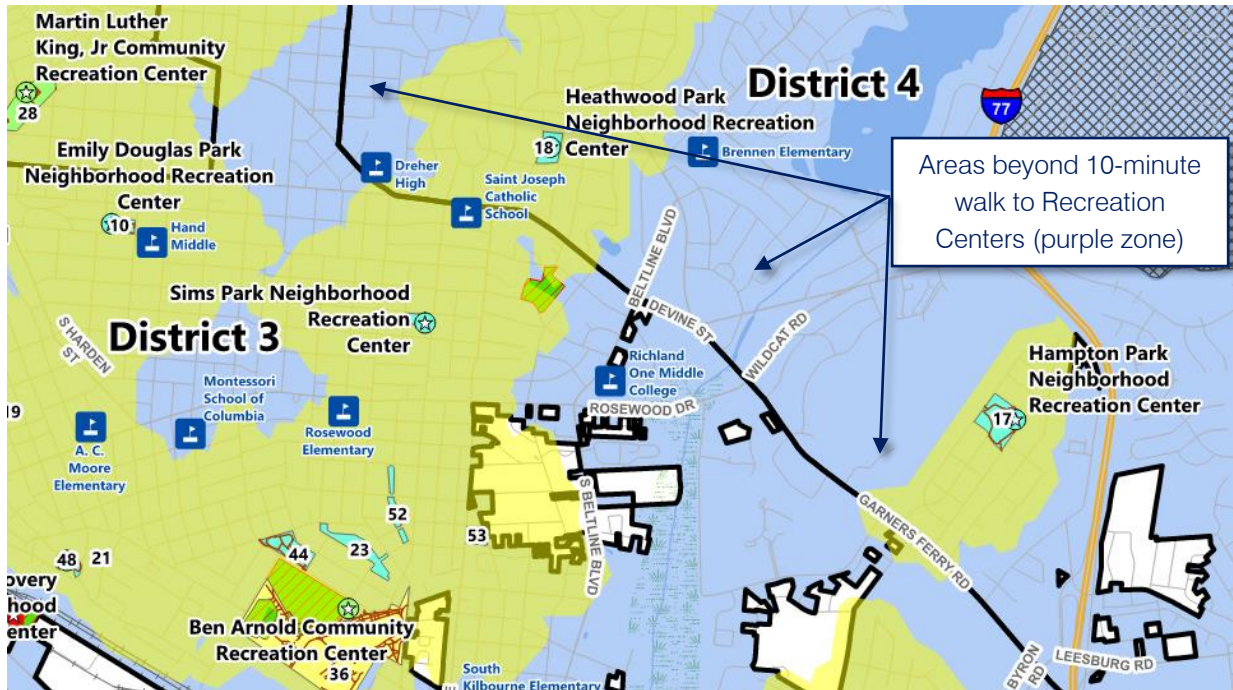


Figure 5.4: Enlargement of Citywide map of 10 Minute Walking Time to Recreation Centers & Specialty Facilities (Map included in Appendix D)

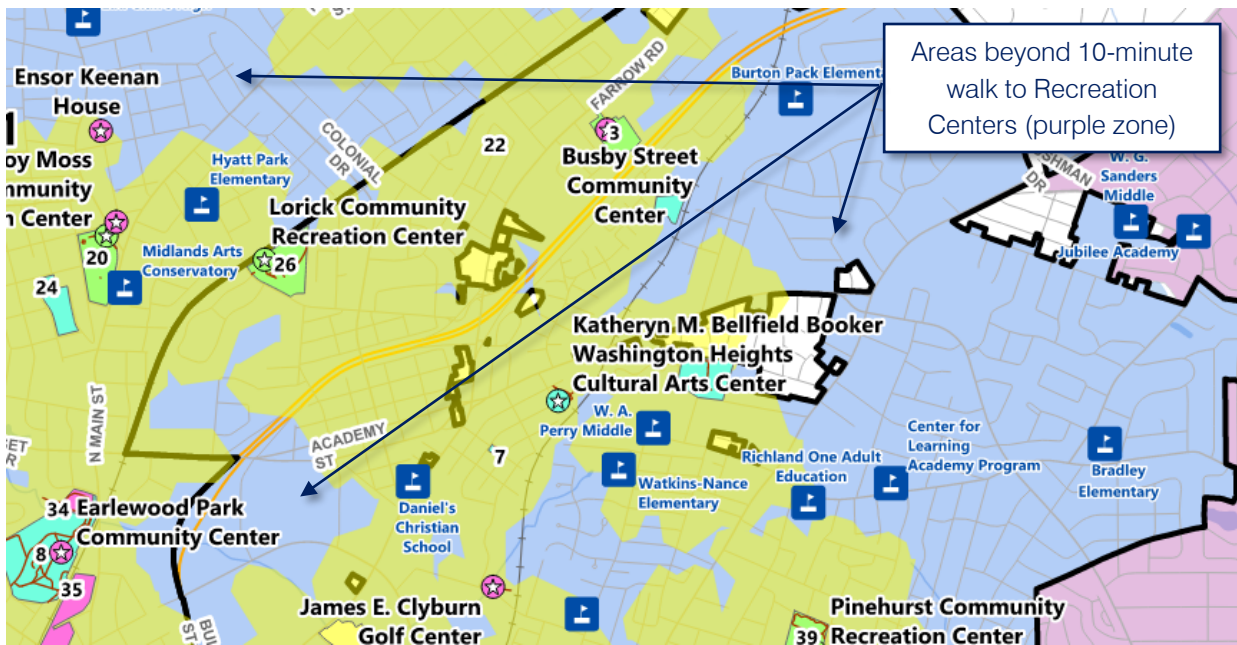


Figure 5.5: Enlargement of Citywide map of 10 Minute Walking Time to Recreation Centers & Specialty Facilities (Map included in Appendix D)

Finally, the maps indicate that Columbia has numerous undeveloped parcels throughout the City which could be considered when expanding recreation facilities throughout each of the Districts, primarily where there are gaps or barriers to access (major roadways, railway corridors, and other land access restrictions). Although there currently aren't any large tracts of undeveloped lands owned by the City for potential park spaces, as lands become available, future parks should be considered in areas that have limited parks and open spaces or are outside of the walkability zone of the current parks and recreation facility locations.

In addition, smaller undeveloped parcels are scattered throughout the City and may be considered for additional pocket parks or neighborhood parks to meet resident needs of each neighborhood and community area. (see red hatched parcels in images below)

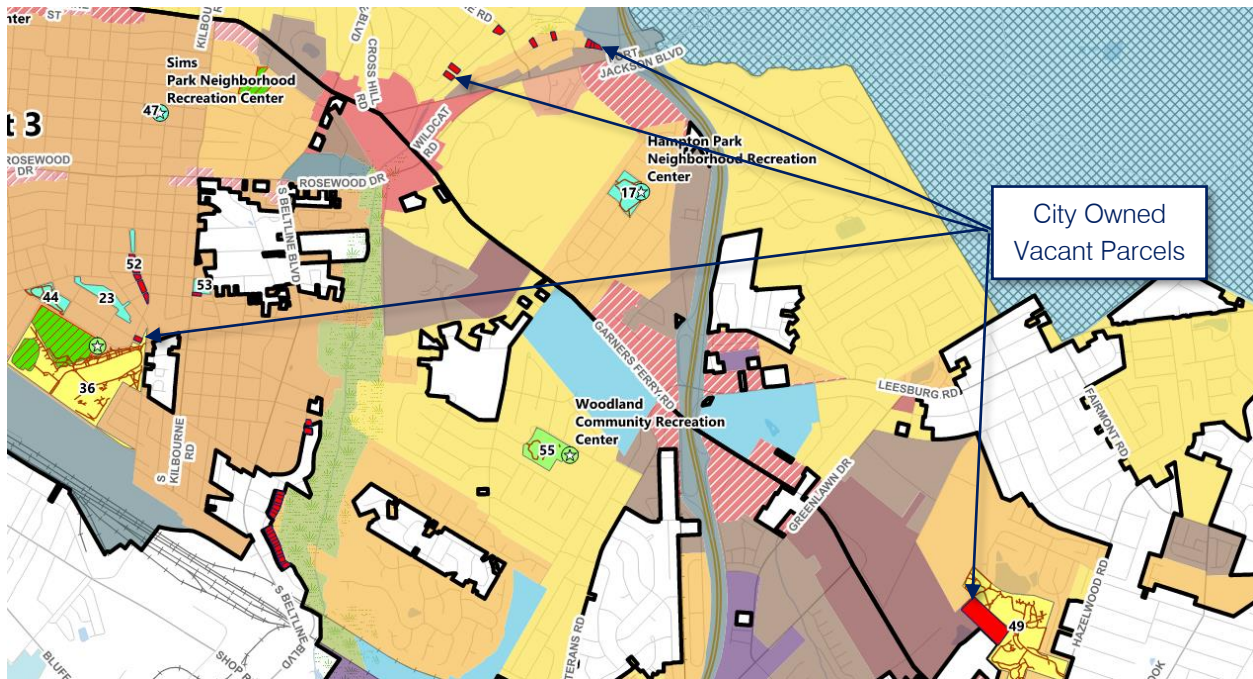


Figure 5.6: Enlargement of Citywide map of City Owned Vacant Parcels (Map included in Appendix D)

Access to Parks:

It should be noted at a neighborhood scale, parks and recreation facilities may be accessible from all surrounding streets, while others may be restricted by a nearby multi-lane road or a busy roadway without a crosswalk, which limits safe access to parks and recreational facilities. In addition, Sidewalk connections, pathways and crosswalks enable non-motorized neighborhood access for residents to safely connect to parks and recreation facilities.



Figure 5.7: Enlargement of Area around Charles R. Drew Wellness Center and Drew Splash Pad & Park illustrating inaccessibility due to Railroad Corridor and Harden Street



Figure 5.8: Enlargement of Area around Hyatt Park & Leroy Moss Multipurpose Center illustrating inaccessibility due to N. Main Street (Multi-lane Roadway) and limited access to neighborhood and Hyatt Park Elementary School

## Consistency with National Trends

The Parks & Recreation system includes many facilities and offers many programs that are consistent with national trends, such as:

- Community Gardens
- Dog Parks
- Outdoor Fitness/Trails
- Specialty Courts/Courses/Facilities (Pickleball, Disc Golf, Columbia Art Center, Columbia Tennis Center)
- Playgrounds
- Restrooms
- Trails/Connectivity
- Outdoor/Natural Areas
- Aquatic Facilities (Pools, Splashpads)
- Traditional Sport Courts/Fields

Input gathered from the public input process and a review of the parks and recreation facilities resulted in the following observations:

### *Strengths:*

- Balance of park sizes and program offerings for all ages and interests
- Significant offerings at Drew Wellness Center and Columbia Arts Center.
- Variety of amenities throughout park system.
- Community and Neighborhood Parks are located throughout the City.
- Variety of specialized parks and facilities to meet special interest groups.
- Very few underutilized spaces.
- Memorials, gardens and community specific interest areas embedded in parks.

### *Areas for improvement:*

- Ongoing upgrades of existing amenities, parks, and recreation facilities.
- Expand existing amenities, parks, and recreation facilities to meet demand.
- Invest in parks and recreation facilities beyond those eligible for federal grants or other funding opportunities.
- Ongoing evaluation of parks and facilities to meet needs of community (specialty facilities, adaptive recreation, incubator/business center, tennis professional, pickleball)
- Introduce variety of programs to expand/rotate throughout City.
- Expansion and audit of aquatic facilities (splash pads, pools, and misting stations)
- Collaborate with alternative service providers to support programming growth opportunities in parks and recreation facilities.
- Removal/replacement of underutilized/outdated facilities (Mays Neighborhood Recreation Center, Anna Mae Dickinson Recreation Center)
- Review cost recovery methods for programs and resources.

### *Areas for additional parks and recreation facilities include:*

- Aquatic facilities (pools, splash pads, misting stations)
- Expanding/growing trail network.
- Open space/park space and outdoor adventure areas along Rivers.
- Rectangular multi-purpose sports fields.
- Pickleball Courts (indoor, outdoor)
- Disc Golf Courses (mini courses, expand existing)
- Evaluate demand and potential need for a facility similar to Charles E. Drew Wellness Center in another area of the City.
- Introduce new parks and recreation facilities in areas not being served in City, as noted in Level of Service Analysis Mapping.

### Future Parks and Facilities Evaluation and Development

Existing parks and recreation facilities should be evaluated and assessed bi-annually. The evaluations should consider needs of the community, as well as current conditions and usage of amenities or facilities. Formal evaluation methods would include simple end of surveys or feedback forms. Informal evaluation methods would include periodic inspections or simple exit interviewing of users/patrons by staff.

The need for future parks and facilities should be evaluated by checking current demand for parks, amenities and facilities, as well as updating the LOS analysis, for facilities in growing neighborhoods, areas, and sectors of City.

The following criteria should be considered when developing new parks and facilities:

- Need or enough demonstrated demand to successfully support park or facility (general or specialized facility/amenities).
- Budget: accounting for all costs and anticipated revenues should meet cost recovery target established by Department.
- Location: appropriate/accessible, available and within budget.
- Staffing: qualified, available and within budget.



KEY FINDINGS:

- Columbia has a wide variety of parks and recreational facilities located throughout the City with very few underutilized spaces in the system.
- Nearly half of all parks include a playground, restroom, baseball/softball field, basketball court or a multi-purpose field.
- A diverse range of specialty courts/ courses/facilities are located within the City.
- Trails and pathways connect to and throughout nearly all parks in Columbia. The greenways within Columbia have larger trail networks, primarily along the existing rivers with an interest in expanding/growing the trail network.
- Balance of park sizes and program offerings for all ages and interests.
- Some existing amenities, parks, and recreation facilities need to be upgraded or expanded.
- There is an interest in expanding of aquatic facilities (splash pads, pools and misting stations).
- Some facilities that are underutilized/outdated should be removed/replaced.
- Open space/park space and outdoor adventure areas along Rivers.
- Rectangular sports fields
- Pickleball Courts (indoor, outdoor)
- Disc Golf Courses (mini courses, expand existing)
- Introduce new parks and recreation facilities in areas not being served in City, as noted in Level of Service Analysis Mapping.
- Consider offering programs in parks and recreational facilities throughout the City or offering a rotation of programs at recreation centers.
- Adaptive recreation facilities are currently not a high priority for addition or expansion of services, but should be continuously reviewed and evaluated to ensure all are supported.
- Special events such as concerts and cultural events/programs are a priority for the community and facilities should support community needs.
- Greenview & Maxy Gregg Pools and systems should be audited.



## MASTER PLAN

- Columbia Arts Center: Explore opportunities to expand offerings at center and parking alternatives in current location. Consider bringing arts to alternative facilities with easier access.
- Review current demand at Charles E. Drew Wellness Center and determine feasibility of expanding facility or developing similar specialized facility in another area of the City.
- Annually evaluate facilities and community needs to determine additional amenities, parks or facilities are needed.





Push It In  
Keep It Out

# SECTION 6

# RECOMMENDATIONS



## SECTION SIX RECOMMENDATIONS

This section describes recommendations to enhance the level of service and the quality of life through improvement of existing sites, future development of new facilities, organizational enhancements, increased programming, improved safety, and potential partnerships.

Although the City of Columbia Parks & Recreation system has great facilities and is well maintained, there are multiple recommendations to further improve the system. The recommendations are separated between general system-wide and site-specific recommendations. Site-specific recommendations are divided into parks and recreation facilities. The recommendations are outlined in the Recommendations Table and Park Specific Recommendations found in Appendix E.

Recommendations throughout Columbia’s Parks & Recreation System are needed at two levels: System-wide and Specific Locations (Parks/Facilities) or Programs. In addition, each of the improvements has an expected degree of importance due to current and expected conditions.

As a result, each of the recommendations have been classified as near-term (0-2 years), mid-term (3-6 years), long-term (7-10 years) or as opportunities arise for implementation. In addition, each of the recommendations has been categorized as follows:

- **Administrative:** Recommendations necessary to improve efficiencies or introduce new programmatic processes.
- **Programs:** Recommendations for recreation, facility or parks programming.
- **Parks:** Recommendations to parks and greenways.
- **Facilities:** Recommendations to facilities.

Parks and Facilities are further categorized into the following sub-categories:

- **Maintenance/Compliance:** Improvements/ repairs necessary to maintain and operate parks, facilities or programs or improvements/ assessments necessary to comply with the latest codes/ standards.
- **Upgrades/Enhancement:** Improvements/ modifications or rehabilitations necessary to improve efficiencies, expand programmatic offerings or introduce new park and recreational facilities without the need for a comprehensive reconstruction.
- **Comprehensive:** Larger scale reconstruction or replacement improvements of current park or recreational facilities to improve efficiencies, reduce financial burdens, or introduce new programs, park or facility amenities.

### ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Obtain NRPA CAPRA (Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies) Certification within 3 years.
2. Setup Parks Committee/Commission – include youth in conversations.
3. Master Planning:
  - a. Develop ADA Transition Plan
  - b. Develop park specific master plans/updates
  - c. Develop maintenance/operations plans for existing parks
  - d. Develop tree master plan/ replacement strategy
4. Communications & Marketing:
  - a. Develop/ implement notification system for park closures, new programs, events, etc.
  - b. Develop/ implement maintenance feedback (QR code in parks, email)
  - c. Develop marketing plan to showcase parks (maps, brochures, online, etc.)
  - d. Improve connections with community/residents and streamline reservation/field sign-up processes.
5. Volunteer Support:
  - a. Work with Parks Foundation and formalize “Friends of Parks Groups”
  - b. Organize volunteer program with volunteer coordinator to help connect people to parks and assist with staff tasks.
6. Community Resources:
  - a. Implement Library Machines (similar to Greenview) throughout park facilities.
  - b. Implement Food Refrigerator (similar to LeRoy Moss Multipurpose Center) throughout park facilities.
7. Safety & Security:
  - a. Improve lighting and security at existing parks and trails (specifically Districts 1 + 4.).
  - b. Develop emergency/shelter plan for community support/refuged during events (ie. power failure, severe storms) for shelter, food/water, internet, generator, etc.)
  - c. Develop emergency call box plan – nighttime security, security plan, lighting.
8. Access to Parks:
  - a. Support/encourage development of walking & bicycling facilities throughout city and improve access to parks, facilities & greenways (Walk/Bike Columbia, Riverbanks Plan, Columbia Compass).
9. Greenways:
  - a. Create “Greenways Division” to oversee existing and future greenways throughout the city.
10. Financial:
  - a. Budgeting – Enable naming rights, donations in combination with Foundation and Friends Groups, public/private partnerships
  - b. Develop funding strategies/mechanism for parks needing additional attention (Donations via Parks Foundation) and adopt a park.
11. Technology
  - a. Improve technology at community and neighborhood recreation centers

- b. Improve Wifi in parks
12. Staff Development
- a. Expand staff capacity/expertise (native plant care, therapeutic recreation, etc.)
  - b. Consider specialty staff to support growing need for volunteers (ie. volunteer program coordinator).
  - c. Encourage staff to evaluate programs, facilities and parks in the field on a regular basis. Be seen and heard by public.

### PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Expand/support specific interest activities/facilities (pickleball, disc golf). Collaborate with regional/national organizations for tournaments.
2. Develop programs/ events (ie. farmers markets)
3. Finlay Park Programming:
  - Concerts: Mid-Tier Concerts, Regional & Local Performers, Jazz,
  - Events: Movies in the park, Races, Remote Control Sail Boats.
  - Festivals: Seasonal, Christmas Market, Spring Fling, Mayfest, Summer Crush, Oktoberfest
  - Private Events/Functions/Rentals: Weddings, Receptions (Overlook Drum, Ranger Station), Employee Appreciation
  - Activities: Roller Skating, Food Truck Rodeo, Sand Volleyball, Flag Football, Cornhole,
  - Classes/Clinics: Yoga/Outdoor Fitness, Plyometrics, Bootcamps, Art in the Park, Senior Walking Program, Gardening Tutorials,

### GENERAL PARKS & FACILITIES RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Maintain existing parks & facilities: Increased maintenance / regular maintenance of parks (particularly restroom facilities), remove debris.
2. Evaluate and add new park & recreation facilities as appropriate to expand Parks & Recreation opportunities throughout the city. Specifically, areas with lack of parks/access, as identified within the Level of Service Analysis, and areas near developing neighborhoods/developments. Implement a baseline 10 minute walk to Parks & Recreation Facilities. Specific needs include:
  - Develop rectangular field for various sports (ie. rugby, flag football, lacrosse, soccer, etc.) (multi-purpose fields for open play/unprogrammed)
  - Develop multi-purpose complex/facilities (indoor and outdoor) to support competitions/tournaments, similar to Drew Wellness Center.
3. Pathways/ Connections:
  - Improved pathways & trails in coordination with City Departments.
  - Maintain pathways with clear width along sides of trail to reduce overall maintenance expenditures, correct drainage issues/grading along trails
4. Shade & Seating Areas:
  - Improved shaded / picnic/ seating areas

- Replant forested areas for shade
5. Splash Pads/Misting Stations: Improve/expand splash pads with automatic systems. Water elements (misting stations) that support heat relief for hot days
  6. Bathroom Facilities:
    - Improve/upgrade bathroom facilities
    - Replace water fountain with model for children and adults with bottle filling station
    - Note: recently completed in 2024: Hyatt Park/LeRoy Moss, Lorick Park, MLK, Greenview, Pinehurst, Woodland? Others?
  7. Kitchen Facilities: Renovate/improve existing kitchen facilities (model: Busby Center Kitchenette)
  8. Playgrounds: Renovate, improve and relocate playground equipment; replace/remove unsafe features.
  9. Park Signage:
    - Directional, wayfinding, and informational signs/ maps. Consider digital directories at larger regional parks and walking distance markers along pathways.
    - Interpretation/Informational Signs: Historical and cultural interpretative signs.
  10. Greenways Recommendations: Expand/ Develop Greenways throughout City and improve access to Rivers
    - Connections to Finlay and Page Ellington
    - Williams Street Extension - Keystone connection to make it possible to travel from Olympia to Diversion Dam.
    - Crane Creek & Gills Creek
    - Rocky Branch to Granby Park Connection
    - Riverfront connections to Elmwood via Cemetery, Palmetto Trail, Smith Branch Greenway, and Finlay Park.
    - SCDOT Route 277 Property – Connection/park space between Earlewood and Vista Greenway (possibly include: community gardens, playground/ challenge course, seating/picnic areas, soccer fields, & walking paths.

### SPORT SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Pickleball – Access to courts (indoor/outdoor) – Look at specific input.
  - Programming? (in city/non-resident rates)
  - Greenview indoor pickleball?
2. Disc Golf – Improve Facilities & opportunities for tournaments. (look at specific needs for Earlewood & Owens Field)

### NEW FACILITY SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS: BELTLINE IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

Park and Recreation Facility along West Beltline Boulevard and adjacent to the Colony Apartments. Future Park and Recreation Facility is in the schematic design process. Recommendations include:

1. Rebrand facility: Identify facility/complete relating to historic/neighborhood (ie. Washington-Carver Recreation Center or Carver Village Recreation Center).
2. Promote access to facility off West Beltline Blvd., if feasible.
3. Incorporate police substation, teen space, gymnasium (with wood flooring)
4. Provide lighting and security system (call boxes, cameras) for safety.
5. Include walking pathway to Allstar Field, parking area to support facility and Allstar Field, splash pad, community garden, water fountains with bottle filling stations, trash/recycling receptacles.
6. Potential partnerships: Eau Claire Cooperative Health – Possible partner for a small clinic



## PARK & RECREATION FACILITIES SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations for specific parks and recreational facilities have been prioritized based on the criteria described below. Each of the recommendations have been prioritized by the consultant team based upon which would be most beneficial to the City (High, Moderate or Low). Most costs are dependent on the extent of the enhancements and improvements determined. Capital improvement costs (including maintenance and enhancement projects) are typically greater than \$10,000 with a minimum life expectancy of 15 years.

Below is summary of recommendations for each park and recreational facility.

<b>LEGEND</b>	
<b>Ability to Meet Needs of City</b>	<b>Rating</b>
Completely Meets Needs of City	5
Moderately Meets Needs of City	3
Needs additional Recommendations to Meet Needs of City	1
<b>Staff Impact</b>	<b>Rating</b>
Minimally impacts existing Department staffing	5
Moderately impacts existing Department staffing	3
Highly impacts existing Department staffing	1
<b>Cost to Implement/ Maintain</b>	<b>Rating</b>
Relatively Low Cost to Implement/ Maintain	5
Moderate Cost to Implement/ Maintain	3
High Cost to Implement/ Maintain	1
<b>Community Benefit</b>	<b>Rating</b>
Broad Community Benefit (most inclusive)	5
Balanced Community/ Specific Group Benefit	3
Primarily Specific Group/ Individuals (least inclusive)	1
<b>Ease of Implementation</b>	<b>Rating</b>
Minimal difficulty to implement	5
Moderate ease of implementation	3
Difficult/ Challenging to implement	1
<b>Recommended Timing of Implementation</b>	<b>Rating</b>
Near-term	1-2 years
Mid-term	3-6 years
Long-Term	7-10 years
As Opportunity Arises	

In summary, parks across the City of Columbia are well maintained. Areas for improvement are typically related to outdated amenities and facilities such as recreation centers, play equipment, and courts. In some cases, complete removal of substandard facilities is recommended, while in others, repair to these features is recommended. In all parks, accessibility, tree planting/ maintenance, and non-motorized access (where feasible) is recommended to increase usership and provide a safe environment.

Prioritization and consideration for implementation of these recommendations are further discussed in Section 7: Goals and Action Plan.





CHARLES R. DREW  
WATER

# SECTION 7

# GOALS & ACTION PLAN



## SECTION SEVEN

### GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

The following goals, strategies and action items for the Master Plan recommendations are drawn from the public input, inventory, level of service analysis, findings feedback, and the information gathered throughout the master planning process.

Goals, and strategies identify priorities for the Department, and provide an overarching guide for department actions while defining specific actions or recommendations, with a primary focus on maintaining, sustaining, and improving Columbia’s Parks and Recreation offerings.

#### SEVEN GOALS OF THE MASTER PLAN:

1. Continue to Support Community Health & Wellness
2. Engage with the Community
3. Programming & Community Events
4. Maintain & Improve Parks & Recreation Facilities
5. Expand & Grow Parks & Recreation Facilities
6. Community Connectivity
7. Organizational Operations & Efficiencies

Execution and implementation of a Master Plan by the Department is essential, and it is a team effort by all, including the City Administration, Department Leadership, and Community Stakeholders.

The following are implementation suggestions, which represent the commitment required to integrate the goals, strategies, actions and recommendations into daily operations and annual reporting.

**Guide the Department** - The Parks and Recreation Master Plan becomes the guide for the Department. As decisions and requests from the community arise, the plan becomes the foundational tool for decision making and establishing the path forward. The plan becomes the reference point for determining whether issues or responses to stakeholders are of higher importance than what has been established as the path forward.

**Communicate the Plan** – Communicate and promote the Master Plan online, and throughout the Department. Track results of addressing the recommendations, accomplishing goals, strategies, and actions. This will enable and inform the community with information about the overall strategic direction, implementation progress and the City’s commitment to results.

**Staff Support** – Implementation of the Plan will take the entire team, and staff should take responsibility to help ensure success. Staff “champions” for portions of the Plan will encourage all to have a stake in the successful implementation of the plan, assist with tracking and monitoring progress, and report on success and timelines to completion.

**Annual Review** – Review progress and success of the plan annually. Update staff, stakeholders, and City administration quarterly to review progress and implementation. New ideas and strategies arise throughout the year, review these suggestions annually, determine if changes to strategies or action items are necessary, and report out in a “scorecard” in a public format. At the five-year mark of the plan, complete a shortened update and adjust existing goals, strategies, actions and recommendations as necessary.

GOAL 1 – CONTINUE TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY HEALTH & WELLNESS			
Strategy 1.1 – Accommodate residents of all needs			
Community health and wellness are important for all residents of Columbia, and the Parks & Recreation Department should continue to support and promote programming, services and facilities for users of all needed within the community.			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Time frame to Complete
<b>Action 1.1.1 – Expand Health &amp; Wellness Support</b> Address underserved areas of the community, and community desires for more community health and wellness support programs/activities.	\$0	Staff time	Short-term; Ongoing
<b>Action 1.1.2 – Develop ADA Transition Plan</b> Continue to improve ADA accessibility at all parks and facilities and develop an ADA transition plan. Conduct an ADA compliance assessment and improve parks, facilities, and amenities based on recommendations. Update ADA transition plan every five years.	\$0	Staff time; <i>(Consultant: \$25,000 – 35,000)</i>	Short-term; Ongoing

Strategy 1.2 - Enhance Safety & Security Measures at Parks & Facilities			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Time frame to Complete
<p><b>Action 1.2.1 - Improve Lighting within Parks and Recreation Facilities</b></p> <p>While not a concern at all parks and facilities, some park users expressed concern about using facilities at night due to insufficient lighting. Lighting is not appropriate at all facilities but may be a good investment at parks or along pathways where patrons frequently stay late for programs and events. Light fixtures should be compliant with the Illuminating Engineering Society, International Dark Sky Association Guidance, and modern/sustainable to improve site security lighting and minimize operational costs. Improvements should be prioritized based upon stakeholder feedback, user demand/concern, and site/location conditions.</p>	Costs vary based upon Project	Staff time	Short-term; Ongoing
<p><b>Action 1.2.2 – Enhance Safety &amp; Security Measures within Parks &amp; Recreation Facilities</b></p> <p>Safety and security at night within park spaces was a concern for some park users. In addition to lighting, coordinating with Columbia Police Department, upgrade/providing additional call-boxes, and expanding Wi-Fi coverage throughout parks, facilities, and along trails would help to improve user safety and security in parks and greenways.</p>	Costs vary based upon Project	Staff time	Short-term; Ongoing

<p><b>Action 1.2.3 - Update/Standardize Park &amp; Recreation Signage</b></p> <p>The Parks and Recreation Department should evaluate, update and standardize parks and recreational facility signage. Improved wayfinding/directional signage will contribute to a greater connectivity of parks and facilities. As parks and recreational facilities are renovated or updated, the Department should replace, enhance and update existing park signs (informational, guidance, and interpretative). A trail wayfinding signage design and implementation effort should be undertaken to establish a cohesive reassurance and intersection marker strategy across City-maintained trails and pathways.</p>	<p>Costs vary based upon Project</p>	<p>Staff time (Consultant: \$35,000 – 50,000)</p>	<p>Short-term; Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Strategy 1.3 – Support Community Health &amp; Wellness Needs</b></p>			
<p><b>Actions</b></p>	<p><b>Capital Cost Estimate</b></p>	<p><b>Operational Budget Impact</b></p>	<p><b>Time frame to Complete</b></p>
<p><b>Action 1.3.1 – Develop Community Support Plan</b></p> <p>Columbia’s neighborhood and community recreation centers not only provide recreation services and facilities for community gatherings and sports, but they also provide temporary support services (care, shelter, food, electricity, restrooms/showers, and heat) during severe storm events, power outages or community disaster events. Develop an actionable support and communications plan for key neighborhood and community recreation centers, with staffing plans to support the community in times of need/emergency.</p>	<p>\$0</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>Short-term; Ongoing</p>

<p><b>Action 1.3.2 – Expand community offerings and services at neighborhood and community recreation centers, including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Fridge Program by PITCH Inc. - This program utilizes the "Take As You Need, Give As You Can" model and encourages Columbia residents to donate and have a direct impact on hunger.</li> <li>• Expand Community Mini-Libraries and Library Vending Machines – Mini-libraries are newspaper vending machine reproductions that have been vibrantly painted by children and seniors. The library vending machines and mini-libraries are stocked with books generously provided by the Columbia community.</li> </ul>	\$0	Staff time	Short-term; Ongoing
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**GOAL 2 – ENGAGE WITH THE COMMUNITY**

**Strategy 2.1. – Engage with the Parks & Recreation Foundation for support**  
 As a non-profit entity, the Parks & Recreation Foundation was established with the following mission: *The Mission of the Columbia Parks and Recreation Foundation is to promote and cultivate vibrant public parks where communities connect.*

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Time frame to Complete
<p><b>Action 2.1.1 – Organize Friends of Groups/ Volunteers to support the Parks &amp; Recreation Department.</b>                      Volunteering enables a sense of pride and ownership of shared resources and can guarantee long- term support.</p>	\$0	Staff time	Short-term; Ongoing
<p><b>Action 2.1.2 – Support Parks &amp; Recreation Department with fundraising &amp; grant funding.</b>                      In alliance with the P&amp;R Foundation Strategic Plan, engage the P&amp;R Foundation to support the Department with fundraising, grant funding, and promotion of Parks &amp; Recreation.</p>	\$0	Staff time	Short-term; Ongoing

<p><b>Strategy 2.2 – Potentially Establish a Parks &amp; Recreation Advisory Committee to support the department.</b></p> <p>Develop a Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee comprised of City department staff. The purpose of the Committee is to advise the Department Head and City Administration on needed parks and recreation programs; plan, acquire and develop recreation facilities, parks and trails to meet current and future needs of the City.</p>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Time frame to Complete
<p><b>Action 2.2.1 – Potentially Establish a Parks &amp; Recreation Advisory Committee.</b></p> <p>Members of committee should include a diverse sampling of City Department staff as well as parks and recreation staff.</p>	\$0	Staff time	Short-term
<p><b>Strategy 2.3 – Collaborate and Partner with Departments &amp; Community Organizations</b></p>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Time frame to Complete
<p><b>Action 2.3.1 – Continue and expand partnerships and collaborations with community organizations, businesses and City departments to support Parks &amp; Recreation programs, facilities, and services.</b></p> <p>The Parks &amp; Recreation Department actively collaborates and partners with entities throughout Columbia, from the Columbia Police and Fire Departments to Under Armor and Walmart. The University of South Carolina and other non-profit entities support with various events and programs. Experience Columbia hosts and attracts regional and national programs, activities and events, which provide collaborative opportunities for Columbia residents to become engaged and positively impact the community. Continue to build relationships with the Richland One and Two School Districts to collaborate (programs, services, facilities). The Department should continue to collaborate and expand partnerships with new organizations that can provide unique services, funding opportunities, and collaborative interventions for the residents of Columbia.</p>	\$0	Staff time	Ongoing

**Strategy 2.4 – Continue to reach out to the public for input**  
 The needs of residents and users of Columbia’s Parks & Recreation Facilities continue to grow and expand, particularly as demographics shift within the city. It is important for the Department to continue to reach out to the public for input, collaborate with interested entities for partnerships, alternative service offerings, and strive to meet the needs of the various user groups. Communicating offerings and input opportunities is an important step in collaborating to find solutions for the community.

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Time frame to Complete
Action 2.4.1 – Communicate and extend opportunities for public input and engagement with stakeholders.	\$0	Staff time	Ongoing

**GOAL 3 – PROGRAMMING & COMMUNITY EVENTS**

**Strategy 3.1 - Continue to Provide Community Programs and Events**  
 Current program and service offerings are admired and appreciated by the community, who feel fortunate to live in a city that values civic gatherings and recreation. It is important for the Department to stay informed and aware of changing recreation trends to ensure the program and services offerings stay relevant to an evolving demographic. Expand community events to meet changing demands, including Farmers Market, Pop up concerts, Movies in the park, and etc.

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Time frame to Complete
Action 3.1.1 - Expand special event offerings. Columbia already attracts visitors from miles away for its unique and family-friendly special events. It is important to maintain traditions while looking to the future – the city should work with the community to obtain ideas for special events, and programs throughout City facilities.	\$0	Staff time to plan and conduct programs/ events	Short-term; Ongoing

<p><b>Strategy 3.2 – Review recreational program offerings and adjust annually.</b>                  The community would like to see new additional programs for families, teens, and seniors. Specialty fitness/ wellness, and cultural programs are in high demand, and in order to ensure service delivery reflects the diversity of the community, the Department should engage the community in program development. To effectively achieve this objective, the Department should look to partner with other service providers in the community.</p>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Time frame to Complete
<p><b>Action 3.2.1 - Diversify/ Evaluate Programs</b>                  Varied offerings are more likely to attract participants from a wider demographic, fortifying the Department’s relevance and continued support. Educational, senior, multi-generational/ family, teen/tween, and arts programming are in high demand. Based on demand and current trends in the industry, there are opportunities to develop or expand on non-traditional sports programs such as disc golf and pickleball. Community gardens are another way to engage multiple age groups in a common activity. Expand program offerings specifically for seniors &amp; youth.</p>	<p>\$0</p>	<p>Staff time to plan and conduct programs/ events</p>	<p>Short-term; Ongoing</p>

**GOAL 4 – MAINTAIN & IMPROVE PARKS & RECREATION FACILITIES**

There was notable public response to make sure that Parks and Recreation maintains and improves existing parks and facilities. The Department should continue to improve and upgrade existing facilities and amenities as well as address low-scoring components/features.

**Strategy 4.1 – Improve Parks & Recreation Facilities based upon High, Moderate & Low rankings identified within Recommendations Section**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Time frame to Complete
<p><b>Action 4.1.1 – Improve/ Upgrade Aquatic Facilities</b> Renovate and expand pools, splash pads, and misting stations. Aquatic facilities and program offerings were a stakeholder priority, and the Department should continue to look for opportunities to offer aquatic programming. Splash pads, misting stations, or other similar aquatic features provide a place to cool off without requiring lifeguards. These could be installed at existing popular facilities or at sites where the Department would like to see increased visitation.</p>	<p>Costs vary based upon Project</p> <p>Splash Pad Reconstruction [\$150,000 – 200,000]</p> <p>Misting Stations [\$75,000 – 100,000]</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>Short-term; Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Action 4.1.2 - Improve/ Upgrade Restrooms</b> Restrooms are highly sought at City-owned facilities. These include neighborhood recreation centers, community centers, playgrounds, splash pads, and within proximity to trails/pathways. A careful analysis of costs associated with the construction and maintenance of new restroom facilities will be required to determine what type of facility is best for each site. Composting facilities are recommended where septic/sewer connections are not feasible. Improvements shall be implemented as prioritized in Recommendations section.</p>	<p>Costs vary based upon Project</p> <p>Outdoor Restroom Renovation: [\$85,000 – 100,000]</p> <p>Indoor Restroom Renovation: [\$100,000 – 250,000]</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>Short-term; Ongoing</p>

<p><b>Action 4.1.3 - Improve/ Replace Playgrounds</b></p> <p>Many playgrounds are in good condition but show evidence of wear and weathering. In some cases, the Department should assess use to determine if the playground location is most appropriate for current use. Other play structures should be replaced immediately as they are deteriorated enough to pose a safety risk. Suggested playground replacements, relocations and improvements should be implemented in order of priority.</p>	<p>Costs vary based upon Project</p> <p>Playground Renovation: [\$150,000 – 300,000]</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>Short-term; Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Action 4.1.4 - Improve/ Replace Park Amenities</b></p> <p>Demand for usage of Columbia’s parks and recreation facilities continues to grow, and the Department should look for opportunities to add new amenities to enhance the experience for users. As the Department upgrades and improves existing facilities, it should explore opportunities to add shade, storage, restrooms, drinking fountains/water bottle filling stations, wayfinding and signage, and other amenities appropriately. Some enhancements identified through the public process include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shade Plantings &amp; Structures. Shade is important in any public space; protects people from sun exposure and reduces the overall heat island impact of impermeable surfaces (parking lots, sidewalks, etc.).</li> <li>• Seating Areas &amp; Picnic Tables. Though many parks in the city have these amenities, they are often not accessible or have fallen into disrepair.</li> <li>• Sports Appurtenances (ex. bleachers, dugouts, netting). Where possible, repairs should be made to existing appurtenances to reduce cost. If replacement is warranted accessible models should be incorporated wherever possible.</li> </ul>	<p>Costs vary based upon Project</p> <p>Mays Park Renovations: [\$1.5 – 2M]</p> <p>Hampton Park Renovations: [\$1 - 2M]</p> <p>Melrose Park Renovations: [\$850,000 – 1M]</p> <p>Baseball Field Renovation: [\$250,000 – 300,000]</p> <p>Site Amenities: [\$75,000 – 100,000]</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>Short-term; Ongoing</p>

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<p><b>Action 4.1.5 – Renovate/ Improve Kitchens</b> Renovate or improve kitchens and kitchenettes within recreation centers to meet current community demands to heat/serve/host after-school programs, lunches, and community events.</p>	<p>Costs vary based upon Project  Kitchenette Renovation: [\$250,000 – 350,000]</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>Mid-term; Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Action 4.1.6 - Renovate Recreation Facilities</b> Columbia’s neighborhood and community recreation centers are in high demand and should be renovated to support current and future needs of the community. Recreation facilities should serve as community hubs and spaces for community gatherings, meetings, after-school programs, special events, and to host recreation activities. Renovations should be implemented as prioritized in Recommendations Section.</p>	<p>Costs vary based upon Project  Neighborhood Recreation Center Renovation: [\$5M – 8M]  Community Recreation Center Renovation: [\$10M – 15M]</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>Short-term; Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Action 4.1.7 – Dispose or Re-envision Underutilized Recreation Facilities</b> Eliminate or re-envision/renovate underutilized facilities or facilities solely utilized by alternative service providers (Boys &amp; Girls Club) or other organizations. If facilities are eliminated, Department should shift maintenance resources and capital investments to other facilities and parks throughout system.</p>	<p>Costs vary based upon Project</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>Short-term</p>

Strategy 4.2 – Upgrade Trail/Pathways to Meet Demand			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Time frame to Complete
<p><b>Action 4.2.1 - Upgrade pathways within parks</b> Throughout parks and greenways, pathways should be upgraded or widened to meet needs of park users, to eliminate user conflicts and provide safe connections for users of all interests and abilities.</p>	<p>Costs vary based upon Project</p> <p>Trail Widening: [\$300,000 – 750,000]</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>Mid-term; Ongoing</p>
GOAL 5 – EXPAND & GROW PARKS & RECREATION FACILITIES			
Strategy 5.1 - Improve Programs/ Amenities to Support Needs			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Time frame to Complete
<p><b>Action 5.1.1 - Expand Park Facilities</b> Add new parks or components based on details in Level of Service and Recommendations Section. Based on the LOS analysis, the Department should look for opportunities to add new components at existing parks where service levels may be below the desired threshold. Refer to the Facilities Recommendations section of this plan for those areas identified as most in need of improvement on a park-by-park basis.</p>	<p>Costs vary based upon Project</p> <p>Beltline Improvements [\$10M - 15M]</p> <p>Southeast Park Environmental Center: [\$2M - 2.5M]</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>Mid-term; Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Action 5.1.2 – Expand Recreation Facilities</b> Develop sports/recreation facility to host large sports events (indoors – minimum 6 courts, basketball, volleyball, pickleball, etc.) Add new facilities or components based on details in Level of Service and Recommendations Section. Refer to the Facilities Recommendations section of this plan for those areas identified as most in need of improvement on a facility-by-facility basis.</p>	<p>Costs vary based upon Project</p>	<p>Staff time; (Consultant: \$75,000 – 100,000)</p>	<p>Mid-term; Ongoing</p>

**MASTER PLAN**

<p><b>Action 5.1.3 - Develop rectangular space to support growing demand for rectangular sports (rugby, youth football, lacrosse, soccer).</b></p>	<p>Costs vary based upon Project</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>Mid-term; Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Action 5.1.4 – Expand Pickleball Facilities</b> Pickleball is one of the fastest growing sports in the country. This active sport attracts a wide array of players and can easily be installed in existing tennis courts. The Parks and Recreation Department currently provides indoor and outdoor pickleball facilities. As interest/demand grows within the community, the department should provide additional facilities, programs and events (tournaments) to meet the growing demand.</p>	<p>Costs vary based upon Project</p> <p>4 Courts: [\$400,000 – 500,000]</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
<p><b>Action 5.1.5 – Improve/ Expand Disc Golf Facilities</b> Three disc golf courses exist within Columbia. This active sport attracts players regionally. Modifications to existing courses should be prioritized based upon needs to meet current demand and potential for hosting regional tournaments. Mini-courses may be considered to expand offerings throughout park system where space allows, based upon Recommendations Section.</p>	<p>Costs vary based upon Project</p> <p>(Costs depending on volunteer/city or contract services) [\$50,000 – 75,000]</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>Short-term</p>

Strategy 5.2: Review Parks & Programming Needs on a Regular Basis			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Time frame to Complete
<p><b>Action 5.2.1 - Develop/ Update Individual Park Improvement/Master Plans</b></p> <p>Through the master planning process, needs were identified for each park and recreation facility. As a next step, the Department should develop or update individual park master plans based on priorities from the public process, current and future needs of the community, and how the repurposed spaces can create better usage of the parks. Individual park master plans should consider shifting pressure from parks and repurpose spaces as appropriate. Park master plans should consider existing City Master Plans/Documents (inc. Innovation Plan, Area Plans, Columbia Compass Envision 2036, Downtown Plan, Reaching Riverbanks Community Mobility Plan, and Walk-Bike Columbia).</p>	\$0	Staff time; (Consultant: \$35,000 – 50,000)	Short-term; Ongoing

**GOAL 6: COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY**

**Strategy 6.1 - Continue to Improve and Expand Greenway/Trail System**

The City of Columbia has a growing network of trails and greenways throughout the community. Working with other City Departments, Parks and Recreation should look for additional opportunities to develop pathways and/ or sidewalks to connect neighborhoods to parks, facilities, places of work, and commercial centers.

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Time frame to Complete
<p><b>Action 6.1.1 - Expand/ Develop Greenways throughout City and improve access to Rivers</b>                      Create connections from existing parks and greenways to neighborhoods, transit facilities, and walking/bicycling facilities. Greenways provide important non-motorized transportation connections within the networks of roads, sidewalks, and transit facilities.                      Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vista Greenway</li> <li>• Connections to Finlay and Page Ellington Parks</li> <li>• Williams Street Extension</li> <li>• SCDOT Route 277 Property</li> </ul> <p>It is advised that the Department utilize standards/recommendations from the City of Columbia Engineering Regulations Manual, Walk-Bike Columbia Masterplan, and associated planning documents.</p>	<p>Costs vary based upon Project                       Riverfront/ Vista Greenway [\$22M]</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>Mid-term; Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Action 6.1.2 – Enhance Greenways</b>                      Within greenway corridors, consider adding fitness stations, restrooms, playgrounds and family fun stations in appropriate locations.</p>	<p>\$0</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>Mid-term; Ongoing</p>

<b>GOAL 7 - ORGANIZATIONAL OPERATIONS &amp; EFFICIENCIES</b>			
<b>Strategy 7.1 - Continue to Improve Organizational Efficiencies/Operations</b>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Time frame to Complete</b>
<p><b>Action 7.1.1 – Review and modify Department structure to meet growing needs</b>                      Modify Department structure and encourage staff specializations to support the community, ie. volunteer program coordinator, native plant specialist, therapeutic recreation specialist.</p>	\$0	\$0	Ongoing
<p><b>Action 7.1.2 – Establish a Greenways Division within the Department to support the growing need for new facilities, specialized support and operations of greenways in Columbia.</b></p>	\$0	\$0	Short-term
<b>Strategy 7.2 – Improve Maintenance Operations &amp; Efficiencies</b>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Time frame to Complete</b>
<p><b>Action 7.2.1 – Develop Cyclical Maintenance Program</b>                      The Department should develop a Cyclical Maintenance Program to ensure consistent application of maintenance standards and cost efficiencies.</p>	\$0	TBD	Mid-term
<p><b>Action 7.2.2 - Develop maintenance standards</b>                      The Department should develop maintenance standards for parks and facilities, including alterations to mowing strategies, maintenance staff training, and identification of invasive species. Trail maintenance standards and practices should also be developed that reflect the use of each site.</p>	\$0	\$0	Mid-term
<p><b>Action 7.2.3 - Enlist volunteers/friends of groups to support maintenance and improvements at parks and facilities.</b></p>	\$0	Staff time to support volunteers	Ongoing

Strategy 7.3 - Continue to Improve Organization Finances			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Time frame to Complete
<p><b>Action 7.3.1 - Increase funding for parks and recreation facility operations</b></p> <p>The Department should continue to pursue creative funding strategies to diversify capital available for improvements to the system, with the assistance of the P&amp;R Foundation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public-Private Fundraising: Partner with the P&amp;R Foundation and non-public entities or the general public to raise funds through private fundraising or grant sources available only to the non-public entities to match public funds.</li> <li>• Sponsorships/Naming Rights: The Department should continue existing and explore new sponsorship arrangements or naming rights for special events, programs, memorials, or activities.</li> <li>• Donations: Partner with the P&amp;R Foundation and work to acquire donated funds, materials or services from local companies or residents to support the trail development. Acknowledgment of supporting individuals or organizations could be provided within parks and recreational facilities.</li> </ul>	\$0	Staff time	Ongoing
<p><b>Action 7.3.2 - Analyze current fees and develop a cost recovery/pricing policy</b></p> <p>Parks and Recreation should continue to monitor the affordability of programming and services and consider implementing a Cost Recovery Policy to determine a consistent method of pricing parks and recreation programs, services and activities throughout the Department.</p>	\$0	Staff time	Ongoing

Strategy 7.4 - Enhance and improve communications regarding Department activities and services			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Time frame to Complete
<p><b>Action 7.4.1 - Develop Marketing &amp; Communications Plan</b></p> <p>The Parks and Recreation Department should improve internal and external communications by developing a Marketing and Communications Plan that will guide its efforts in communicating, marketing, and promoting its activities and facilities. This should include recommendations for awareness of programs, services, and facilities and be a focused effort on electronic communication. A streamline internal and external communications strategy will make it easier for users to access information in a centralized and interactive location The Plan should be reviewed periodically, updated as needed and include strategies that incorporate the efforts of partner departments, organizations, and projects.</p>	\$0	Staff time; (Consultant: \$25,000 – 40,000)	Short-term; Annual Review
<p><b>Action 7.4.2 – Improve Department Website</b></p> <p>Update and expand department website with parks and recreation facility locations, resources, amenities, and offerings to provide the public with a resource to better understand what is available across the city. Create and online/interactive tool (website/ app/ map) so patrons can report issues/concerns with maintenance, reserve facilities, and sign-up for programs or events. An online interactive map of parks, trails and facilities should be updated periodically to reflect changes in facility offerings, trail routes, on-going projects/closures, and seasonal attractions.</p>	\$0	Staff time	Short-term; Ongoing

Strategy 7.5 - Obtain NRPA accreditation			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Time frame to Complete
<p><b>Action 7.5.1 – Obtain NRPA accreditation by CAPRA</b></p> <p>The Parks &amp; Recreation Department strives to provide quality service and offerings to the residents of Columbia. Achieving a National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) accreditation is the best way to demonstrate that the department and staff provides the highest level of service and quality assurance. This operational management system improves department infrastructures; increases efficiency in all activities; and demonstrates accountability within the community. Implementation of the CAPRA system strengthens teamwork among department staff, imbeds all aspects of CAPRA into the department’s internal culture, and establishes a continuous improvement mindset for all department activities.</p>	\$0	Staff time	Short-term; Ongoing
Strategy 7.6 – Develop Sustainability Plan			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Time frame to Complete
<p><b>Action 7.6.1 – Develop a Sustainability Plan</b></p> <p>A sustainability plan is crucial for the Department to harness change, foster long-term success, addresses critical environmental and social challenges. A plan should be developed to guide resiliency and sustainability measures of energy, environment, community resources and climate change.</p>	\$0	Staff time; (Consultant: \$35,000 – 45,000)	Short-term; Annual Review



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