



# PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

STONECREST, GEORGIA  
FINAL PLAN - OCTOBER 2020





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** ..... 1
  - A. Introduction ..... 1
  - B. Planning Purpose..... 1
  - C. Planning Process Overview ..... 2
  - D. Inventory Assessment and Level of Service Summary ..... 2
  - E. Key Issues and Opportunities Synopsis ..... 3
  - F. Recommendations and Action Plan Summary Table..... 4
  
- I. INTRODUCTION AND PLANNING CONTEXT** ..... 23
  - A. Purpose of this Plan ..... 23
  - B. History and Framework of Stonecrest..... 23
  - C. Parks and Recreation Department Overview ..... 24
  - D. Related Planning Efforts and Integration..... 25
  - E. Methodology of this Planning Process ..... 25
  
- II. COMMUNITY AND IDENTIFIED NEEDS** ..... 29
  - A. Demographic Profile ..... 29
  - B. Park and Recreation Influencing Trends..... 37
  - C. Community and Stakeholder Input ..... 41
  - D. Invitation and Open Link Community Survey Summary..... 44
  - E. Operations Analysis ..... 50
  - F. Financial Analysis ..... 53
  
- III. PARKS AND FACILITIES INVENTORY AND ASSESSMENT: WHAT WE HAVE NOW** ..... 55
  - A. Inventory ..... 57
  - B. Level of Service Analysis (LOS) ..... 67
  - C. Key Conclusions..... 86
  - D. Park Concepts and Strategies..... 86
  
- IV. KEY ISSUES**..... 101
  
- V. RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PLAN**..... 103
  - A. Moving Forward - Recommendations..... 103
  - B. Action Plan, Cost Estimates and Prioritization..... 111
  
- APPENDIX A: LEVEL OF SERVICE ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY** ..... 129
- APPENDIX B: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT OUTREACH REPORT** ..... 155
- APPENDIX C: MAPS** ..... 163
- APPENDIX D: SURVEY REPORT** ..... 173
- APPENDIX E: OPEN-ENDED SURVEY COMMENTS**..... 201
- APPENDIX F: WALKABILITY STANDARDS**..... 213

# TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Planning Process Key Tasks.....	2
Figure 2: City of Stonecrest Demographic Overview.....	29
Figure 3: Population Projected Annual Growth Rates (2010 – 2019).....	30
Figure 4: Projected Population Trends from 2000 to 2032.....	30
Figure 5: Median Age of City of Stonecrest between 2010 and 2024.....	31
Figure 6: 2019 Age Distribution in City of Stonecrest.....	31
Figure 7: 2019 Racial/Ethnic Diversity of City of Stonecrest.....	32
Figure 8: Median Household Income Distribution in City of Stonecrest.....	33
Figure 9: Employment Overview in City of Stonecrest, Georgia.....	34
Figure 10: County Health Ranking Model.....	35
Figure 11: Strengths and Challenges of Georgia Health.....	36
Figure 12: 2018 Georgia Health Ranking Overview.....	36
Figure 13: Outdoor Recreation Behavior of Stonecrest compared to the State of Georgia.....	38
Figure 14: Most Population Team Sport Participation in Stonecrest.....	38
Figure 15: Survey Key Points.....	45
Figure 16: Overall Respondent Demographics.....	46
Figure 17: Survey Key Findings.....	47
Figure 18: Importance of Future Events/Festivals in Stonecrest.....	47
Figure 19: Current Facilities, Parks, and Programs Usage.....	48
Figure 20: Facilities/Amenities Needs.....	48
Figure 21: Facilities/Amenities Needs Continued.....	49
Figure 22: Top Three Future Needs.....	49
Figure 23: Top Five Preferred Methods of Communication.....	50
Figure 24: Top Five Preferred Methods of Communication.....	52
Figure 25: 2019 NRPA Agency Performance Key Metrics.....	53
Figure 26: System Map.....	57
Figure 27: Example of GIS inventory map and datasheet from Farrington Park.....	58
Figure 28: Arabia Mountain Path.....	61
Figure 29: 2019 Population density based on population per square mile by census block group.....	65
Figure 30: GRASP® Level of Service Perspectives Catchment Areas.....	68
Figure 31: Stonecrest Neighborhood Access to Outdoor Recreation Group.....	69
Figure 32: Walkability Barriers “cut-off” Service Areas Where Applicable.....	76
Figure 33: Walkable Access to Outdoor Recreation.....	77
Figure 34: Walkable Access Gap Identification.....	80
Figure 35: Walkable Access to Assets Based on Percentage of Land Within the City.....	80
Figure 36: Walkable Access to Assets Based on Population.....	81
Figure 37: Browns Mill Park Map.....	89
Figure 38: Southeast Athletic Complex Map.....	92
Figure 39: Salem Park Map.....	94
Figure 40: New Fairington Park Map.....	97
Figure 41: GRASP® Asset Scoring Comparision.....	138
Figure 42: GRASP® Score calculation.....	145
Figure 43: GRASP® Process.....	146
Figure 44: Example of GRASP® Level of Service (LOS).....	147
Figure 45: Map and App Resources Example.....	153

# TABLE OF TABLES

Table 1: Action Plan Table.....	4
Table 2: Methodology of Planning Process .....	25
Table 3: City of Stonecrest Gender Distribution Compared to State and National Averages .....	31
Table 4: 2019 City of Stonecrest Educational Attainment Averages .....	33
Table 5: Recreational Expenditures in City of Stonecrest, Georgia.....	37
Table 6: Summary of Stonecrest Outdoor Locations .....	59
Table 7: Summary of Stonecrest Indoor Facilities .....	62
Table 8: Park Ranking Table .....	62
Table 9: Map Statistics for Figure 31.....	71
Table 10: GRASP® Comparative Data.....	73
Table 11: Statistics for Figure 33.....	79
Table 12: Stonecrest Capacities.....	83
Table 13: Outdoor Park and Recreation Facilities – Median Population Served per Facility .....	85
Table 14: Acres of Park Land per 1,000 Residents.....	86
Table 15: Action Plan Table.....	111
Table 16: GRASP® Outdoor Component List.....	130
Table 17: GRASP® Indoor Component List.....	136
Table 18: Outdoor Low Scoring Components .....	140
Table 19: Low Scoring Outdoor Modifiers .....	141
Table 21: Focus Groups Summary Table .....	155
Table 20: Low Scoring Indoor Modifiers .....	143
Table 22: Public Meeting Summary Table.....	157
Table 23: Alternative Methods of Engagement .....	158

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## A. Introduction

With its beginnings planted as a small rural area within DeKalb County, lying just south of the Metro Atlanta Area, Stonecrest, Georgia, now has an amazing story to tell. That story is encompassed by the fact that a vision quickly became reality as a new parks and recreation system was established that will focus on enhancing the quality of life while also complimenting community health and safety in the forefront for its citizens.

As the City became official through a vote by the residents in 2016, and the Parks and Recreation Department became established in 2018, the City acquired eight parks from DeKalb County including the Browns Mill Recreation Center. These acquisitions have opened the door for the City and Department to begin offering a broad palette of recreational opportunities moving forward. As in accompaniment to the palette of opportunities, the City now has a document that can serve as an operations guide with a set of resources the staff can depend on to begin making projects implementable as noted in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The stage is now set for the Master Plan to provide a roadmap for the City to ensure that there is an appropriate balance of facilities, services, and amenities within the community now and into the future.

## B. Planning Purpose

The Stonecrest Parks and Recreation Master Plan is a result of valuable information that has been gathered to provide a roadmap for the City to ensure that there is an appropriate balance of facilities, services, and amenities within the community now and into the future.

The process began with an assessment of the City of Stonecrest's parks and recreation system with an evaluation of parks, programs, open spaces, trails, facilities, and amenities to providing recreational services that meet the needs of residents and the growth of the City. Maintaining existing facilities, planning for new facilities, visioning for new and existing programs, and service delivery are the focus for Stonecrest as this new city continues to develop its footprint.

## C. Planning Process Overview

An integrated project team guided a review of the Stonecrest story, analysis of existing conditions, and engagement with members of the Stonecrest community. Key tasks included:

Figure 1: Planning Process Key Tasks



## D. Inventory Assessment and Level of Service Summary

Parks and facilities were inventoried and assessed for function and quality in November 2019 using the GRASP®-IT audit tool. This tool classifies park features into one of two categories: components and modifiers. A component is a feature that people go to a park or facility to use, such as a tennis court, playground, or picnic shelter. Modifiers are amenities such as shade, drinking fountains, and restrooms that enhance the comfort and convenience of a site. Find further definitions and discussions in **Appendix A**.

GRASP® (Geo-referenced Amenities Standards Process) is the proprietary name for an approach that has been applied in more than one hundred communities across the country to evaluate LOS for park and recreation systems. With GRASP®, information from the inventory of parks and facilities described in **Section III** was used in combination with Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software to produce analytic maps and data that show the quality and distribution of park and recreation services across Stonecrest.

Observations and conclusions based on visits to each park or facility include the following:

- Proximity, availability of transportation, pedestrian barriers, and overall size of the City are relevant factors affecting Stonecrest levels of service and accessibility to parks and facilities
- There is a need to establish standards for individual components within the existing parks
- The City should move forward with the development of the new Fairington Park property as well as begin planning efforts for new park areas in the northern section of the city

## E. Key Issues and Opportunities Synopsis

Key challenges and opportunities were identified using several tools including review of existing plans and documents, focus groups, stakeholder meetings, a community survey, asset inventory, and level of service analysis. The information gathered from these sources was evaluated, and the recommendations were developed that address the following key opportunities:

- Add unique outdoor learning opportunities
- Address accessibility: ADA, within existing and future neighborhoods
- Address safety concerns in all parks and facilities, including the safety of playground and athletic equipment
- Continue to develop partnerships and engage schools along with other surrounding communities
- Create a comprehensive signage and wayfinding plan for the park system
- Create an event and performing arts space
- Create a strong sense of community
- Diversify and increase the amenities offered at all the parks
- Improve connectivity, develop trails and walking paths
- Increase availability for indoor space for programs, fitness, gyms and meeting space
- Increase programming for events, youth, fitness, wellness, outdoor recreation and both youth and adult sports
- Maintain, improve and repair existing facilities
- Need new facilities: multigenerational community center, gym space, splash pads, dog parks, outdoor fitness, botanical gardens and community gardens
- Need standard park facilities at all parks: pavilions, seating opportunities and restrooms
- Preserve open space/land acquisition
- Provide access to the South River
- Promote Arabia Mountain as a City destination
- There is a need to seek additional funding sources: foundation, user fees, resource allocation and cost recovery models, and capital funding opportunities



## F. Recommendations and Action Plan Summary Table

Goals, Objectives and Action Steps are outlined in the main document to help create a process to move forward. Over the next five to ten years, many influences will impact the success of the development of future programs, services, amenities and facilities. Funding availability, staff support, and community support will play significant roles in future planning efforts.

The action plan identifies specific objectives for the following goals:

**Table 1: Action Plan Table**

### Goal 1: Continue to improve events, programs and service delivery

#### Objective 1.1:

#### Develop additional recreation programs and services

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
1.1.a Identify and explore increased programming opportunities for teens, special needs, active adults, and families at Browns Mill	N/A	Staff Time, program supplies, and equipment	Ongoing Priority
1.1.b Partner with other providers in the areas of aquatics, camps and fitness opportunities to increase programming such as swim lessons, wellness, and unique camp opportunities	N/A	Staff Time, supplies and equipment	Ongoing
1.1.c Develop and implement a plan to increase outdoor recreation programs and opportunities promoting outdoor adventure, nature, environmental, and passive recreational experiences	N/A	Staff Time	Ongoing

**Objective 1.2:****Explore and expand opportunities for additional community events**

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
1.2.a Expand special event programming by considering trends and demand to expand and build a sense of community.	N/A	Staff time to plan and conduct events - budgeting	Short-term
1.2.b Partner with suitable community and volunteer organizations to host events.	N/A	Staff time and contracted services for sound and set-up options	Ongoing

**Objective 1.3:****Expand cultural arts**

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
1.3.a Create a plan to add public art classes, lessons, and programs throughout the community.	Varies based on project	Staff time, supplies, and contractual services	Short-term
1.3.b Expand performing arts, sculpture in the parks and facilities, and concerts/music	TBD - Costs for facility improvements and installations	Staff time, supplies, contractual services	Short-term

**Goal 2: Improve Facilities and Amenities**

**Objective 2.1:**

**Maintain and improve existing facilities with aging infrastructure**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
2.1.a The Department should continue to monitor the condition of existing parks, trails and pathways, facilities, and open spaces, as these facilities have been identified by residents as being of high importance. The Department can address lower scoring components and amenities from the Master Plan inventory by upgrading, replacing, or repurposing components or amenities where appropriate.	Will vary based on projects	TBD	Short-term

<p>2.1.b Capital improvement plans, costs, and phasing recommendations and implementation plans should continue to be developed to prioritize items/ projects following the recommendations of the concept plans and Master Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate funding should be provided to address the capital improvement plans.</li> </ul>	<p>Total all costs following approval of Master Plan</p>	<p>Ongoing maintenance costs</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
<p>2.1.c Capital equipment replacement needs</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Staff time or possible contract with consultant</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>2.1.d Develop safety improvement plans for the entire park system including upgrades to lighting, installation of call boxes and a comprehensive review of sight lines and safety standards.</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Staff time or possible contract with consultant</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
<p>2.1.e Develop a site furnishings standard for the Stonecrest park system including, seating, bollards, benches, waster receptacles, etc.</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Staff time or possible contract with consultant</p>	<p>Short-term</p>

2.1.f Develop a signage, graphics and wayfinding standard for the Stonecrest park system to better align all of the parks for consistency.	TBD	Consultant	Short-term
2.1.g Review all Concept Plans (both graphic and written) and use them to create more detailed plans for each park (New Fairington Park is covered in a separate action item).	TBD	Staff Time	Short-term
2.1.h Add restrooms to prioritized locations	\$75,000 average per restroom	Staff time to manage	Short-term Mid-term
2.1.i Add park pavilions to prioritized locations	\$35,000 average per pavilion	Staff time to manage	Short-term/Mid-term

**Objective 2.2:**

**Expand greenways, bike paths, and connectivity of trails**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
2.2.a Participate and contribute to the Stonecrest Transportation Plan development process, which is currently underway	NA	Staff Time	Short-term

<p>2.2.b Continue working with other City Departments to develop and expand trails and pathways to connect communities, neighborhoods, and parks.</p>	<p>Will vary based on material and construction</p>	<p>Staff Time</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>2.2.c Review Stonecrest Park Concept Plans (graphic and written) to identify and confirm trail plans outlined and described for each park.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Staff Time</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
<p>2.2.d Develop and maintain a priority list for improving and adding trails and pathways.</p>	<p>Will vary for each project</p>	<p>Staff Time</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

**Objective 2.3:****Add aquatic amenities to existing and future parks**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
<p>2.3.a Conduct a Feasibility/ Conceptual Study to determine the feasibility and best method to gain community support for an indoor aquatic center.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop priorities for an aquatic center along with conceptual plans, financial projections for construction, and budget projections, and pro-forma for operations.</li><li>• Funding plans and obtaining community support should be a focus of this study.</li></ul>	Dependent on how the Feasibility /Conceptual Study is conducted	Staff Time or possible contract with a consultant	Short-term
<p>2.3.b Identify parks in the system as potential candidates for splash pads.</p>	N/A	Staff Time	Short-term
<p>2.3.c Work with a splash pad manufacturer/installer to confirm budget and specifications for splash pads at designated locations.</p>	N/A	Staff Time and/or possible contract with a consultant	Short-term

2.3.d Execute the installation of splash pads at the designated locations.	TBD	Staff Time	Short-term
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**Objective 2.4:  
Improve ADA accessibility at all facilities**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
2.4.a The Department should continue to work to make its programs and services accessible to people with disabilities. Ongoing self-evaluation must be a high priority for the Department especially in terms of access.	Will vary based on projects	TBD	Ongoing
2.4.b Development of an ADA Transition Plan must be a high priority for the Department especially in terms of access.	N/A	Staff time or possible contract with a consultant	Short-term

**Objective 2.5:  
Upgrade existing playgrounds**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
2.5.a Reconstruct and re-install playgrounds (including equipment and surfacing) at park locations where they were previously removed. Ensure all playground components meet code and safety standards.	Will vary based on projects	Staff time or possible contract with a consultant	Short-term
2.5.b Explore opportunities to enhance the playground structures and the surfacing surrounding playgrounds at additional park locations.	Will vary based on projects	Staff Time	Short-term
2.5.c Review Concept Plans (both graphic and written) to identify future playground needs and create a document with products and manufacturers to use again.	N/A	Staff Time	Short-term

**Objective 2.6:**

**Explore opportunities to fill the identified gaps in the Level of Service Analysis**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
<p>2.6.a Review the Level of Service Analysis in conjunction with the Concept Plans (both graphic and written) and develop a priority list that can be compared and coordinated with other department tasks lists.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>In particular, review all action items for any overlap, i.e. plan to add restrooms, pavilions, update playgrounds, etc.</li></ul>	<p>Will vary based on projects</p>	<p>Staff Time</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

**Objective 2.7:****Seek additional outdoor open space and parks**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
2.7.a The Department should follow the recommendations detailed in the Level of Service Analysis which identified potential gaps in service within the community. The Department should continue to assess available land for future park development. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Opportunities to increase open space and passive recreation through the development of new parks should be considered.</li></ul>	Will vary based on location and future amenities added	Will vary based on location and future amenities added	Short-term/Mid-term
2.7.b Develop an Open Space Preservation Policy that identifies appropriate types of use and limits development of existing open spaces. Use the new property at the intersection of Salem Road and Evans Mill Road as a case study.	Dependent on the engagement of a consultant	Staff time or possible contract with a consultant	Short-term/Mid-
2.7.c Collaborate with land trusts, and other organizations to identify, acquire and or preserve open spaces.	Will vary based on complexity of each project	TBD	Short-term

2.7.d Create a detailed program and Master Plan for the New Fairington Park.	\$60,000-\$85,000	TBD	Short-term
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**Objective 2.8:**

**Upgrade convenience and customer service amenities to existing facilities**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
2.8.a The concession stand at Browns Mill Park should be replaced with a more accessible and food service suitable facility	\$15,000	Staff Time	Short-term
2.8.b The concession stand at Browns Mill Park should be replaced with a more accessible and food service suitable facility.	\$70,000	Staff Time	Short-term
2.8.c Review the Concept Plans (both graphic and written) and create a priority list for upgrading additional convenience and customer service amenities at existing facilities.	N/A	Staff Time	Short-term

**Objective 2.9:  
Improve maintenance standards and plans**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
2.9.a Conduct an internal review of maintenance contractors and contracts and confirm they are meeting the current and future needs of the parks and the parks system.	N/A	Staff Time	Short-term
2.9.b Develop a maintenance plan using a national park-standard guideline and implement standardized evaluation methods and instruments to measure and track the level of quality of maintenance of facilities and amenities on a regular basis.	Dependent on the engagement of a consultant	Staff time or possible contract with a consultant	Short-term
2.9.c Maintenance staffing should be monitored and adjusted as needed to meet current demand for services.	N/A	Staff time, potential costs for FTEs, PTEs and/or seasonal staff	Ongoing
2.9.d Maintenance projects and annual maintenance needs should be funded on a regular schedule. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Priorities for future maintenance projects for should be developed and reviewed regularly.</li> </ul>	Will vary based on projects	TBD	Short-term

**Objective 2.10:**  
**Increase community access to the South River**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
2.10.a Design and construct stair and ramp access from the parking lot to the shore area at the Panola Shoals Trailhead.	\$35,000	Staff time or possible contract with a consultant	Short-term
2.10.b Design and construct a kayak /canoe launch and landing at Panola Shoals Trailhead.	\$15,000	Staff time or possible contract with a consultant	Short-term
2.10.c Design and construct trails in the Miner’s Creek Park to provide visitors additional River access points.	\$15,000	Staff time or possible contract with a consultant	Mid-term
2.10.d Design and construct a kayak / canoe launch and landing at the Everett property.	\$25,000	Staff time or possible contract with a consultant	Short-term

**Goal 3: Improve and Enhance Organizational Efficiencies**

**Objective 3.1: Improve and enhance internal and external communication to promote Stonecrest’s parks, facilities, and programs.**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
3.1 a Develop a marketing plan to improve and enhance internal and external communications and promote Stonecrest Parks and Recreation parks, facilities and programs	N/A	Addition of a marketing and public relations line item	Ongoing
3.1.b Utilize social media, the Department’s website, and collaborative community efforts consistently. Stay in front of your citizens.	N/A	Staff Time	Ongoing

**Objective 3.2:****Dedicate staff to explore a cost recovery and resource allocation philosophy**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
3.2.a Designate a staff member to lead this effort in cooperation with City leadership including the City Manager and Finance Department.	N/A	Staff Time Cost of training and implementation	Short-Term
3.2.b Evaluate and develop a pricing method that reflects the community's values and economic viability	N/A	Staff Time	Ongoing

**Objective 3.3:****Engage and broaden the involvement of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
3.3.a Engage the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board as advocates for department wide efforts. They should be involved in policy recommendations and operations.	N/A	Staff Time	Ongoing

## Goal 4: Increase Financial Opportunities

### Objective 4.1:

#### Seek additional funding opportunities

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
4.1.a Seek increased General Fund allocation to address recommendations from the Master Plan and increased capital funding.	Will vary based on projects recommended	Staff Time	Short-Term
4.1.b Designate 5% of SPLOST funding for capital and trail projects for Parks and Recreation Department initiatives	N/A	Staff Time Increased Revenues	Short-Term Priority
4.1.c Implement developer impact fees for new construction	Will vary based on projects recommended	Staff Time Increased Revenues	Mid-Term
4.1.d Seek donation, grant, and sponsorship opportunities through the development of an “funding opportunity packet” for the entire department and should include a naming rights policy.	N/A	Staff Time	Ongoing
4.1.e Explore the feasibility of a transient tax for long term funding for park maintenance.	N/A	Staff time	Long-Term

**Objective 4.2:**  
**Implement the model for Cost Recovery/Resource Allocation**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
4.2.a Develop a resource allocation and cost recovery philosophy, model and policy that is grounded in the values, vision, and mission of the City of Stonecrest	\$45-\$65k if contracted	Staff Time	Mid-Term
4.2.b Establish a pricing methodology that continuously reflects community values, while generating adequate revenues to sustain Stonecrest’s facilities, parks, open space, programs, and services. Review the user fee structure annually.	N/A	Staff Time	Short-Term

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# I. INTRODUCTION AND PLANNING CONTEXT



## A. Purpose of this Plan

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan will guide the City of Stonecrest in its planning efforts for Parks and Recreation over the next five to ten years. Through a detailed assessment and evaluation of park, recreation programs, open spaces, facilities, and other amenities the City can respond to the needs of a diverse community. This plan will serve as a roadmap for parks and recreational activities ensuring an appropriate balance of facilities, amenities, and services throughout the community.

Contained within the document is a complete listing of goals, objectives, and actionable strategies that have been developed with recommendations to guide the City in its system-wide approach in quality of life services. The Department will use the plan as a resource for future development, renovation, and redevelopment of the City's parks and recreational facilities as well as a guide for streamlined and improved programming. The Master Plan should be incorporated into all citywide plans moving forward including all comprehensive planning initiatives such as pedestrian and transportation plans, general comprehensive planning documents and other quality of life initiatives as well as updated and future Five-Year Capital Improvement Plans.

## B. History and Framework of Stonecrest

*The mission of the Parks and Recreation is to provide the quality park, programs, services, and experiences that energize visitors and create life-long users and advocates. The city will provide and promote safe, healthy, and enriching recreational and educational opportunities that promote stewardship of Stonecrest's natural and cultural heritage.*

The City of Stonecrest, Georgia was established in the fall of 2017 through an act back in 2016 within the General Assembly of Georgia. After approval, the City was formed, giving it the authority to establish and execute legislative matters. The boundaries of Stonecrest lie in the southeastern corner of the county, with a small area located just north of Interstate 20. Bordering the existing municipality of Lithonia, as well as Rockdale and Henry counties, Stonecrest has a population of 55,000 and lies within 32 square miles. The City encompasses businesses and residential tract areas of Panola Road and is adjacent to the industrial park. The Evans Mill Road area and the entire Mall of Stonecrest are all within the official City limits of Stonecrest. Being located approximately 11 miles east of Atlanta, the City plays host to many residents who often commute to Atlanta for work, yet spend their quality of life opportunities within the Stonecrest community.

As a community that is on the verge of shaping its future, Stonecrest's Parks and Recreation Department will play a vital role through improvements to the quality of life elements within the community that are available to all residents.

Stonecrest is known for its shopping and restaurants in “The Mall at Stonecrest” area; however, visitors and residents can explore nature trails and enjoy family activities, hiking, and cycling in the Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area.

### **C. Parks and Recreation Department Overview**

As a community on the verge of new growth and development, the opportunity is strong for the parks and recreation department to begin shaping the future of Stonecrest through improvements to existing facilities as well as the development of new facilities.

The new foundation of the Stonecrest Parks and Recreation Department are deeply rooted in the history of DeKalb County which previously owned and operated the Stonecrest park and facility properties. During the July 22, 2019 Stonecrest City Council Meeting, the Council unanimously approved an intergovernmental agreement with DeKalb to transfer operations of eight park properties that were located within Stonecrest from the county to the city at the cost of \$100 per acre. The parks and facilities gained by the city encompassed approximately 349.5 acres and included the following:

- Browns Mill Park and Aquatic Center
- Chestnut Lakes
- Everett Property
- Fairington Park
- Gregory Mosely
- Miners Creek
- Salem Park
- Southeast Athletic Complex

The City has a few trailheads that are noted in much more detail within the GRASP and Level of Service sections of this plan. The noted trailheads are:

- Panola Shoals
- Murphy Candler Elementary School
- A.W.A.R.E Trailhead
- Lyon’s Farm
- Evans Mill Ruins
- Browns Mill Road
- Vaughters Farm
- Stonecrest Library
- Stonecrest Mall

Within these parks and facilities one can find amenities such as a gym, soccer fields, recreation center, open green space, baseball/softball, football fields, playgrounds, trails, picnic areas, water access, and other common components found in most parks and recreation facilities.

The Department has a strong programming philosophy focused on activities and programs that are multi-generational in nature.

The Department contracts with Jacobs for the employment of full-time employees, with a few part-time staff serving in various capacities who are often seen as the front-line faces of the Department. The Department also collaborates with various individuals and organizations on a contractual basis for classes and instruction within the community. The City contracts with outside organizations to fulfill staffing needs for both programming and facility maintenance needs for the Department.

As the Department continues to grow and evolve within the community, the opportunity exists for continued improvements, additional facilities, and programming for all residents.

## D. Related Planning Efforts and Integration

- City of Stonecrest Comprehensive Development Plan 2038
- DeKalb County Comprehensive Plan 2035
- Stonecrest Livable Communities Initiative Plan
- Stonecrest Transportation Master Plan

## E. Methodology of this Planning Process

The process of developing the Parks and Recreation Master Plan included the formation of an integrated project team. The team was composed of select staff from the City, the GreenPlay consultant team, Cooper Carry, Contente Consulting, RRC Associates, and key City leadership and stakeholders who provided detailed input throughout the project. The process was inclusive to members of the community, with a strong focus on youth. The public was given opportunities to participate through focus groups, stakeholder meetings, a public meeting, a mailed-invitation survey and an open link survey. Opportunities to participate and learn about the Master Plan process also included numerous pop-up events, targeted stakeholder as well as organizational meetings and events. The overarching goal was to create a valid approach with input from many sectors of the entire city which would create a plan that blended consultant expertise with the local knowledge of the community and its residents. **Table 2** outlines the overall process and dates.

**Table 2: Methodology of Planning Process**

<b>Strategic Kick-Off &amp; Determination of Critical Success Factors</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Coordination</li> <li>• Document Collection/Integration of Existing Plans</li> <li>• Determination of Critical Success Factors/Performance Measures</li> </ul>	<b>November-December 2019</b>
<b>Community Profile &amp; Engagement Integration with Survey</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial Information Gathering</li> <li>• Focus Groups/Staff/Stakeholder Interviews</li> <li>• Community Wide Public Meeting</li> <li>• Pop-Up Events</li> <li>• Needs Assessment/Statistically Valid Survey</li> </ul>	<b>December-January 2019</b>
<b>Resource Inventory, Site Assessment &amp; Mapping</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inventory and Level of Service Analysis</li> <li>• Assessment of Existing Standards</li> <li>• Demographics, Trends and Community Profile</li> <li>• Organizational/Program Analysis</li> </ul>	<b>December 2019-March 2020</b>
<b>Identification &amp; Analysis</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Park &amp; Recreation Facilities</li> </ul>	<b>April-May 2020</b>
<b>Financial Analysis</b>	<b>April-May 2020</b>
<b>Findings &amp; Visioning</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Issues Analysis Matrix</li> <li>• Visioning Strategies Workshop</li> <li>• Action Plan/Recommendations</li> </ul>	<b>April 2020</b>
<b>Draft Plan, Action Plan, &amp; Presentation</b>	<b>June-July 2020</b>
<b>Final Plan, Presentation, and Deliverables</b>	<b>May 2020</b>

The process included the following tasks that were carefully analyzed and evaluated to assist with the recommendations and action plan.

### **DEMOGRAPHICS AND TRENDS ANALYSIS**

Consideration of the community's profile, included the following components:

- Demographics with a focus on the projected population growth and changes that will be influenced by that growth were all considered
- A thorough analysis of the statistically-valid invitation survey as well as an open link survey
- An evaluation of identified trends related to Stonecrest and surrounding communities along with national, and local lifestyle trends served as a background document to help guide the efforts in the delivery of parks and recreation services as well as facility recommendations

### **COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

Community engagement has been an important part of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. It was through a citizen-focused community process in December of 2019, that valuable information was collected. The process began with utilizing extensive public input methods which have helped determine community values and needs that will ultimately serve as a guide to the short-, mid-, and long-range planning efforts for parks and recreation in the city.

Information gathered was very important in determining public feedback on city parks and recreation facilities, services, and programs. The sessions and subsequent analyses were designed to assist the City and the GreenPlay project team to develop the community Statistically Valid Needs Assessment Survey and Open Link Survey in order to reflect the needs and desires of the City of Stonecrest. Selected comments from the community participants are found throughout the plan.

Public and stakeholder engagement resulted in extensive data collection for analysis. These engagement efforts were intended to understand the citizens needs and interests in parks and recreation and involved over 500 citizens. The following methods were used:

- Staff SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis
- Focus Group Meetings
- Stakeholder Interviews
- Leadership Interviews
- A Public Forum
- Pop-up events
- Targeted stakeholder and organizational meetings and events
- Statistically-Valid Community Needs Assessment Survey
- Online Open Link Survey

### **STATISTICALLY VALID SURVEY**

Information captured from the public feedback sessions as well as the staff SWOT and other analyses were used to design the community needs assessment survey that was used to create the master plan. The results of the survey can be found in the appendix. It is important to note that there were 475 invited and combined open link surveys completed and 1200 youth surveys submitted. The survey method consisted of the following:

- A random sample invited mailed survey
- An online option of the invitation survey
- An open-link, on-line survey available to all residents

## **INVENTORY AND LEVEL OF SERVICE ANALYSIS**

The framework for the Inventory and Level of Service (LOS) Analysis is based on a formulated technique that evaluates various components of a parks and recreation system. A detailed inventory and analysis of existing public park and recreation amenities available to all City residents was summarized and presented to the City. The needs expressed during public input and identified staff are also included in the LOS. The Level of Service is then summarized and serves as a section for identifying areas of opportunity within the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Steps in the Inventory and LOS included:

- The compilation of a digitally based inventory for all existing parks and recreational facilities, trails, and program areas
- Each inventory item is analyzed on the condition of the overall environment as it relates to usability, comfort, connectivity, and safety for use
- An evaluation of the existing level of service standards
- Accessibility to recreation components
- Facilities, land, and asset gap analysis

## **PROGRAMS, SERVICES, AND MAINTENANCE STANDARDS ANALYSIS**

Understanding core services in the delivery of parks and recreation services will allow the City of Stonecrest's Parks and Recreation Department to improve upon those areas while developing strategies to assist in the delivery of other services. The basis of determining core services should come from the vision and mission developed by the City and what brings the greatest community benefit in balance with the competencies of the Department, current trends and the market. The program analysis included the following:

- Evaluation of current program offerings
- Data from the statistically-valid community needs assessment survey
- Identification of opportunities that exist for expansion and improvement within the Department

The recommendations for maintenance standards are presented as an opportunity to create effective and efficient processes. They follow standard maintenance practices within parks and recreation including procedures for sustainable care of facilities. The following areas are noted within the report:

- Parks
- Open space areas
- Athletic facilities and competitive fields
- Playgrounds
- Picnic areas and shelters
- Tennis courts
- Outdoor basketball courts
- Sand volleyball courts
- Ponds and lakes

## **RECOMMENDATIONS: GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTION PLAN**

Results from the process coincide to help lay the foundations of the path moving forward. The Key Issues Matrix, summaries of all research, qualitative and quantitative data, inventory, LOS analysis, public input sessions, and input collected for the study lead to the recommendations.

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# II. COMMUNITY AND IDENTIFIED NEEDS



## A. Demographic Profile

### POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

By analyzing population data, trends emerge that can inform decision making and resource allocation strategies for the provision of parks, recreation, and open space management. This demographic profile was compiled in October 2019 from a combination of sources including the ESRI Business Analyst, American Community Survey, and U.S. Census. The following topics will be covered in detail in this report:

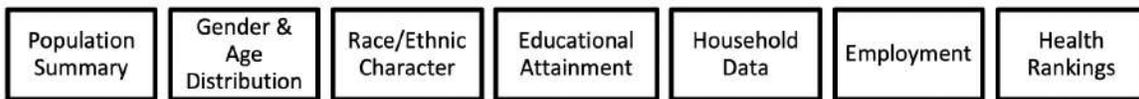
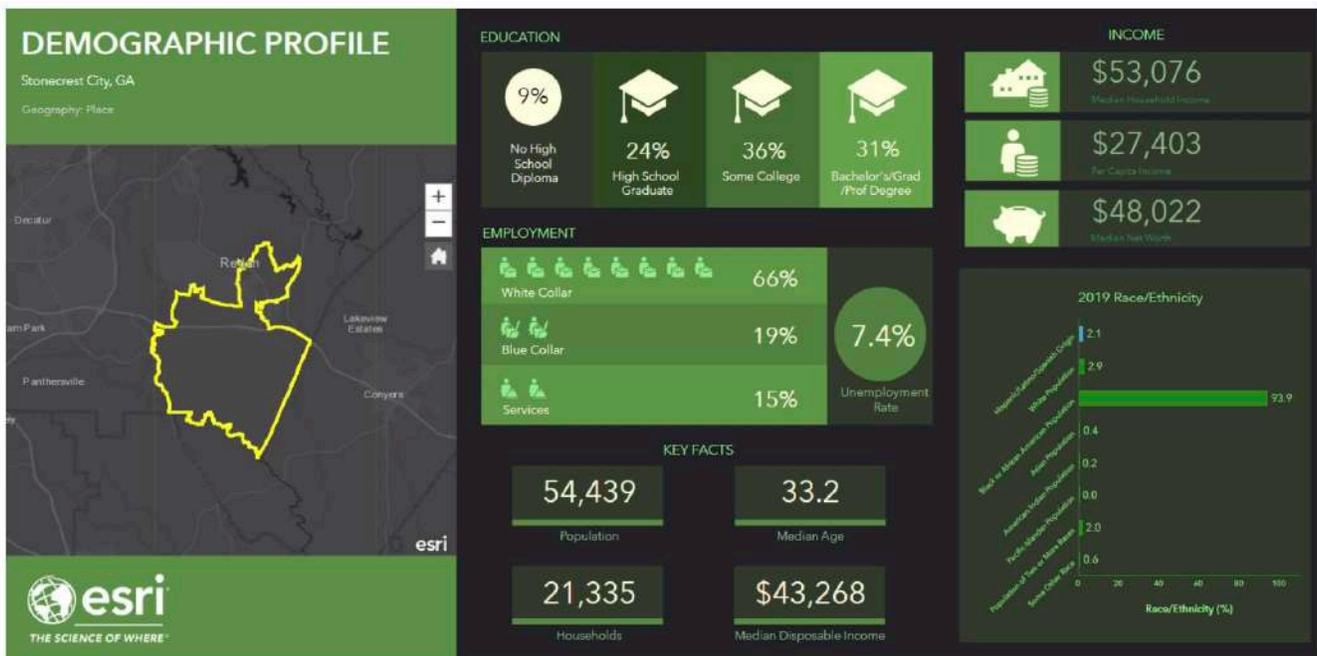


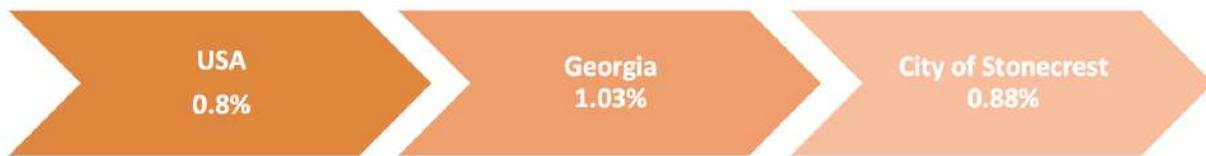
Figure 2: City of Stonecrest Demographic Overview



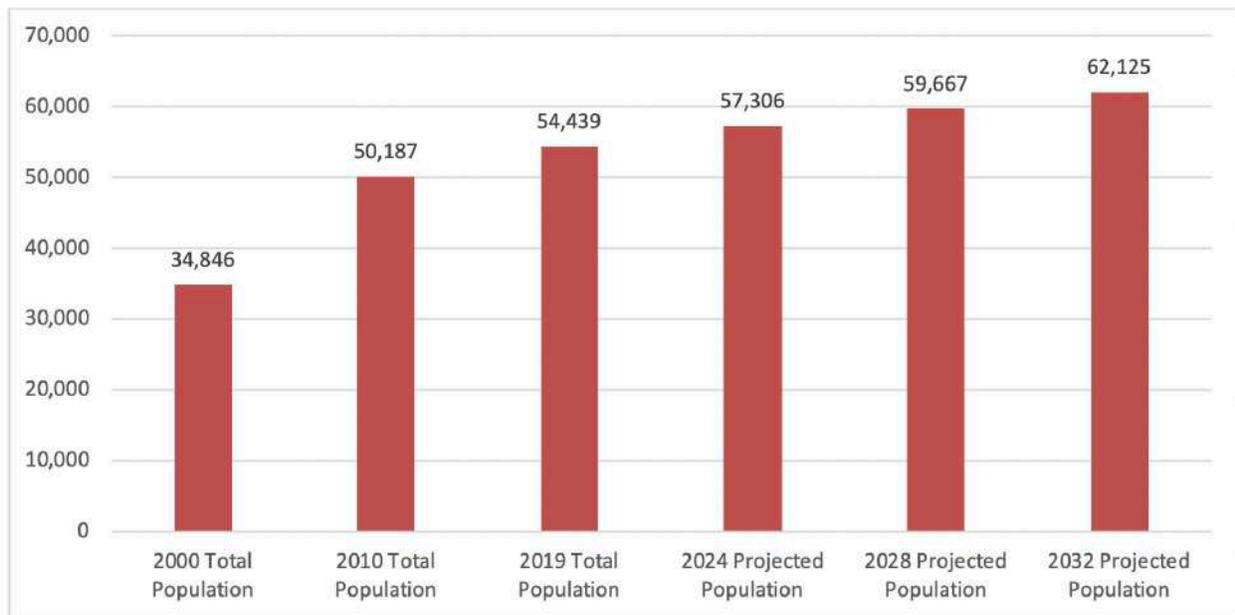
Growth rates can be a strong comparative indicator of an area’s potential for economic development. From 2000 to 2010, the population of City of Stonecrest grew aggressively at 3.72 percent annually each year. However, that rate slowed in 2019 to 0.88 percent, and is expected to change to increase to 1.03 percent between 2019 to 2024.

In 2019, the City of Stonecrest grew at a slower rate than the State of Georgia (0.82%) but faster than the County (0.78%). Figure X below shows a visual representation of the population growth rate between 2010 and 2019. The population in the City of Stonecrest is projected to reach over 60,000 by 2030 if growth rates continue as expected.

**Figure 3: Population Projected Annual Growth Rates (2010 – 2019)**



**Figure 4: Projected Population Trends from 2000 to 2032**



Source: ESRI Business Analyst; Population Projections based on U.S. Census projected 2019 – 2024 growth rate of -1.03%.

## AGE AND GENDER DISTRIBUTION

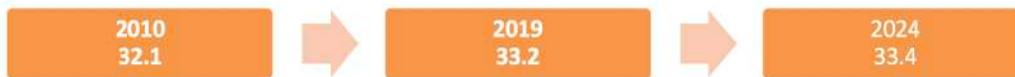
City of Stonecrest has more females (55.40%) than males (44.61%). Gender distribution in Georgia and the United States is more equally balanced.

**Table 3: City of Stonecrest Gender Distribution Compared to State and National Averages**

	City of Stonecrest	Georgia	USA
2019 Female Population (%)	55.40%	51.04%	50.75%
2019 Male Population (%)	44.61%	48.96%	49.25%

The median age in the City of Stonecrest in 2019 was 32.1 years old, younger the median age in the State of Georgia (36.8) and the United States (38.5). The median age in Stonecrest is expected to increase slightly to 33.4 years old in 2024.

**Figure 5: Median Age of City of Stonecrest between 2010 and 2024**



Looking at the population age breakdown by five-year increments in the Figure below, there are a few key conclusions.

- In 2019, there was a high population of 20 to 24 year olds (8.5%) and 25 to 29 year olds (9.2%). These age groups are projected to rise in 2024 to make up even more of the population.
- In 2024, there will be an increase of those 60 and older. In 2010, this group only made up 9.2 percent of the population, but in 2024, the group is expected to make up 16.2 percent of the population.
- Age groups of those under 20 years old are expected to continue to decline.

**Figure 6: 2019 Age Distribution in City of Stonecrest**

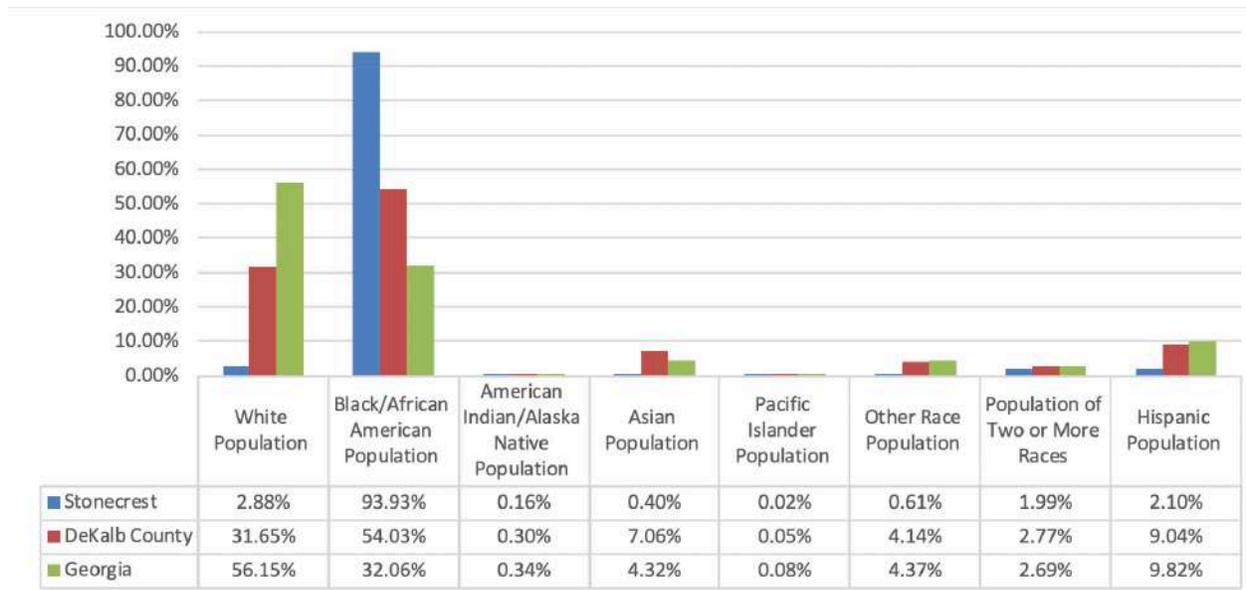


## RACE/ETHNIC CHARACTER

In the United States, communities are generally becoming more diverse. Before comparing this data, it is important to note how the U.S. Census classifies and counts individuals who identify as Hispanic. The Census notes that Hispanic origin can be viewed as the heritage, nationality, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person’s parents or ancestors before arrival in the United States. In the U.S. Census, people who identify as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish are included in all of the race categories. **Figure 7** reflects the approximate racial/ethnic population distribution.

- The City of Stonecrest is more diverse than the State of Georgia, with 97.35 percent minority population, compared to 48.16 percent.
- Approximately 94 percent of the population is made up residents who identify as African Americans or Black.
- Those that identify as Hispanic only makeup 2.10 percent of the total population. This is lower than all other neighboring geographies, including Georgia (9.82%) the United States (18.6%).

**Figure 7: 2019 Racial/Ethnic Diversity of City of Stonecrest**



## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The chart below shows the percentage of residents (18+) that obtained various levels of education. The most common educational attainment was completing some college, but not obtaining a degree. Greater than 20 percent of the population in Stonecrest had obtained a Bachelor’s degree. Only 8.56 percent of residents had not obtained a high school diploma or equivalent.

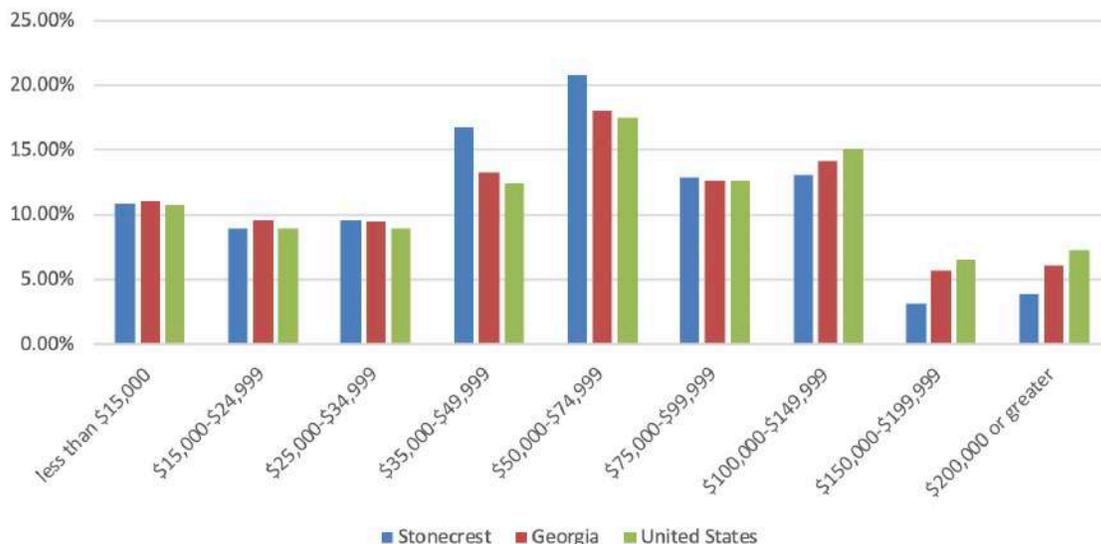
**Table 4: 2019 City of Stonecrest Educational Attainment Averages**

Level of Education	City of Stonecrest	Georgia	USA
Less than 9th Grade	1.63%	4.31%	4.90%
9-12th Grade/No Diploma	6.93%	8.23%	6.74%
High School Diploma	20.21%	23.38%	23.13%
GED/Alternative Credential	3.82%	4.72%	3.90%
Some College/No Degree	26.42%	19.99%	20.23%
Associate's Degree	9.78%	8.01%	8.58%
Bachelor's Degree	21.70%	19.20%	19.98%
Graduate/Professional Degree	9.51%	12.13%	12.54%

## HOUSEHOLD DATA

- The median household income in Stonecrest in 2019 is \$53,076. This was slightly lower than the State of Georgia (\$56,963) and the United States (\$60,548). Approximately 11 percent of residents make less than \$15,000 year.
- The median home value in the City of Stonecrest is \$161,268, compared to Georgia (\$191,818) and the United States (\$234,154).
- The average household size is 2.54 in the City of Stonecrest, compared to 2.64 in Georgia, and 2.59 in the United States.
- Approximately 21.12 percent of households in the City of Stonecrest receive food stamps, compared to the State of Georgia at approximately 14.49 percent.
- Approximately 22.0 percent of residents live with some sort of hearing difficulty, vision difficulty, cognitive difficulty, ambulatory difficulty, self-care difficulty, and/or independent living difficulty. This is lower than the national average (25.5%).

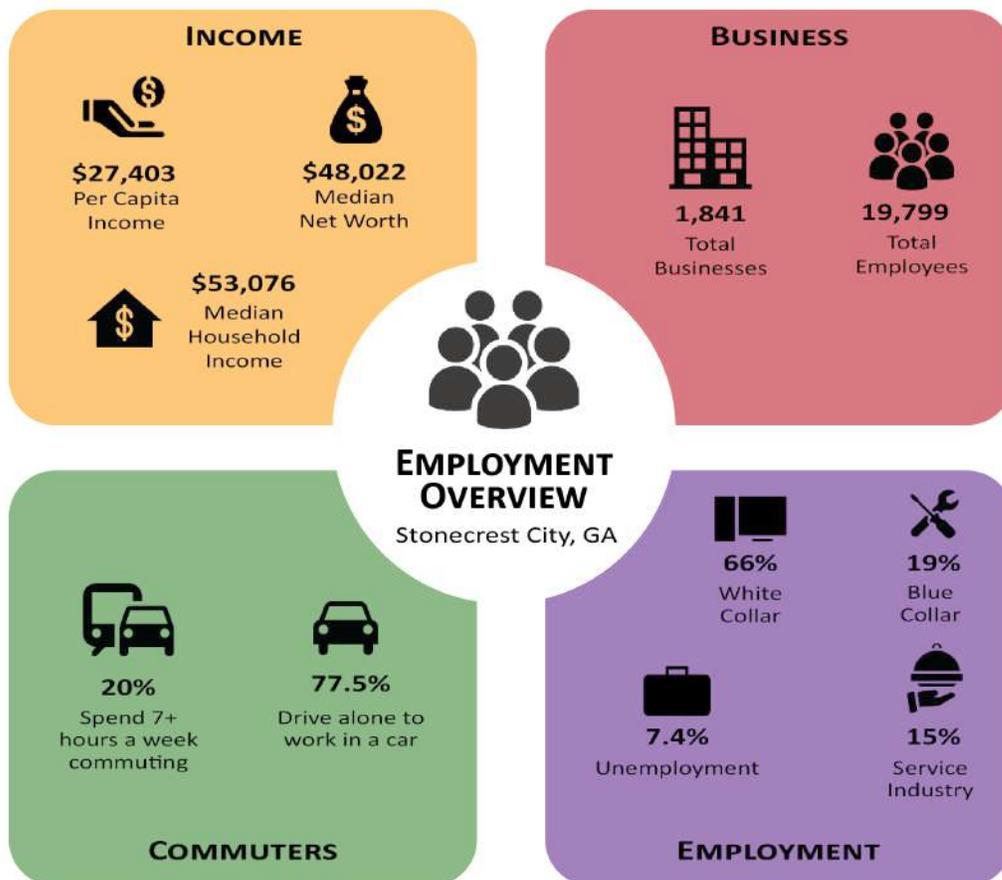
**Figure 8: Median Household Income Distribution in City of Stonecrest**



## EMPLOYMENT

- Roughly 66 percent of the population is employed in white collar positions, which typically performs managerial, technical, administrative, and/or professional capacities. Approximately 19 percent were employed by blue collar positions, such as construction, maintenance, etc. About 15 percent of residents were employed by the service industry.
- Approximately 7.4 percent of the population was unemployed in 2019, compared to the rate of Georgia (5.4%) and the United States (4.6%).
- In terms of commuting, about 20 percent of workers spend seven or more hours commuting back and forth to work each week, and 77.5 percent of commuters drive alone in a car to work.

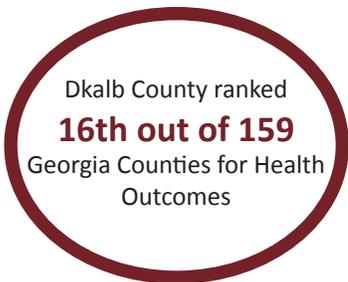
Figure 9: Employment Overview in City of Stonecrest, Georgia



Source: Esri Business Analyst

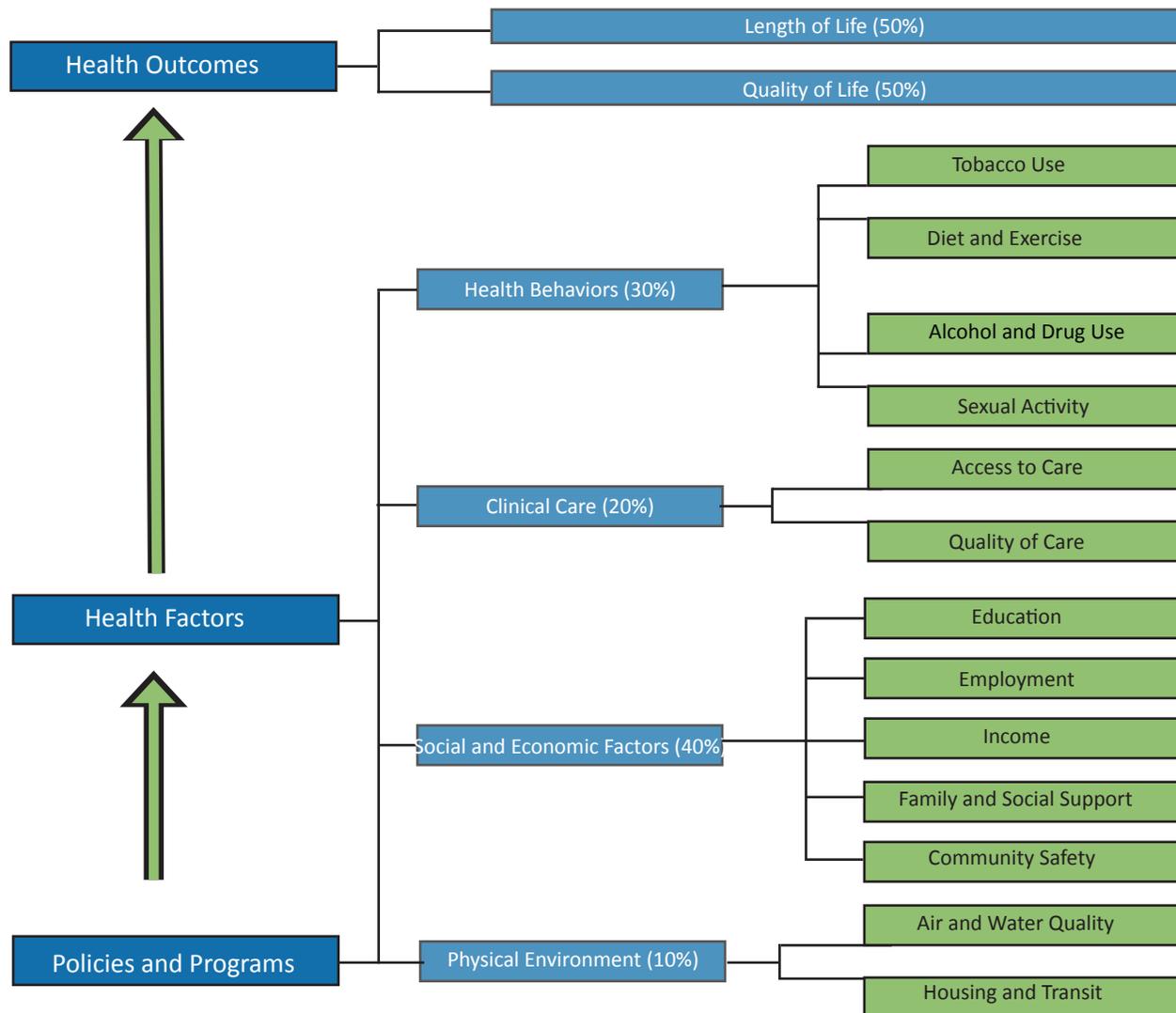
## HEALTH RANKINGS

Understanding the status of the community’s health can help inform policies related to recreation and fitness. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s County Health Rankings and Roadmaps provide annual insight on the general health of national, state, and county populations. The 2019 Rankings model shown in **Figure 10** highlights the topic areas reviewed by the Foundation.



The health ranking gauged the public health of the population based on “how long people live and how healthy people feel while alive,” coupled with ranking factors including healthy behaviors, clinical care, social and economic, and physical environment factors.<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 10: County Health Ranking Model**



<sup>1</sup> University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, County Health Rankings 2019, <http://www.Countyhealthrankings.org>

Figure 11: Strengths and Challenges of Georgia Health

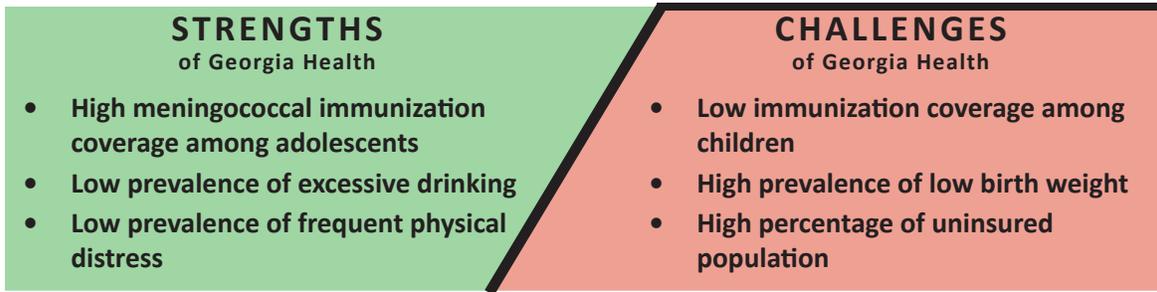


Figure 12: 2018 Georgia Health Ranking Overview



Source: United Health Foundation's America's Health Rankings Annual Report 2018

## B. Park and Recreation Influencing Trends

The changing pace of today’s world requires analyzing recreation trends from both a local and national level. Understanding the participation levels of county residents using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, combined with research of relevant national recreation trends, provides critical insights that help plan for the future of parks and recreation in Stonecrest. The new shifts of participation in outdoor recreation, sports, and cultural programs are an important component of understanding and serving the community.

The following trends were identified as potential opportunities through the Trends Report, which can be found in **Appendix A**, and represent similarities found during the focus group meetings held in Stonecrest. Nationally, these recreational trends are also being adopted by many other agencies. The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), as well as other health, recreation, and nature-based organizations, provide research that supports these recreational trends.

### PART I: RECREATION BEHAVIOR AND EXPENDITURES OF STONECREST HOUSEHOLDS

- Local Recreational Expenditures
- Outdoor Recreation Behavior
- Fitness and Health Behavior
- Team Sport Participation
- Leisure Activity Participation

Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics provides insights about consumer expenditures per household in 2019. The following information was sourced from ESRI Business Analyst, which provides a database of programs and services where Stonecrest residents spend their money. The table below shows the average dollars spent on various recreational products/services. Money spent on fees and admissions related to entertainment and recreation generated the highest revenues of \$11.9 million in Stonecrest.

**Table 5: Recreational Expenditures in City of Stonecrest, Georgia**

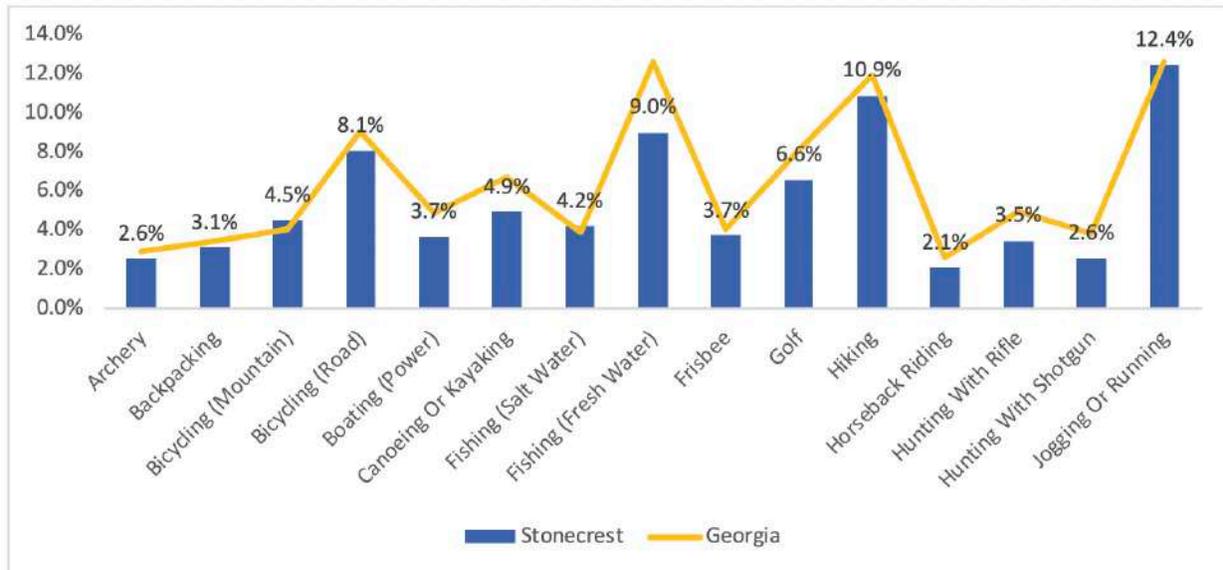
Variable	Individual	Total
Entertainment/Recreation - Fees & Admissions	\$558.51	\$11,915,858
Membership Fees for Social/Recreation/Civic Clubs	\$179.60	\$3,831,858
Entertainment/Recreation -Sports/Rec/Exercise Equipment	\$174.46	\$3,722,080
Fees for Recreational Lessons	\$110.89	\$2,365,749
Entertainment/Recreation - Toys/Games/Crafts/Hobbies	\$102.79	\$2,193,060
Hunting & Fishing Equipment	\$61.76	\$1,317,725
Pet Services	\$51.08	\$1,089,886
Camp Fees	\$34.68	\$739,827
Bicycles	\$25.46	\$543,084
Camping Equipment	\$17.77	\$379,091
Rental of Boats/Trailers/Campers/RVs	\$17.10	\$364,732

### OUTDOOR RECREATION BEHAVIOR

In **Figure 13**, data from ESRI Business Analyst shows popular outdoor recreation activity participation by households in Stonecrest. Participation was also pulled from the State of Georgia for comparison. The most popular activities in the City of Stonecrest included:

- Jogging or Running (12.4%)
- Hiking (10.9%)
- Freshwater Fishing (9.0%)

**Figure 13: Outdoor Recreation Behavior of Stonecrest compared to the State of Georgia**



### FITNESS AND HEALTH BEHAVIOR

In Stonecrest, the most popular fitness and health activities included:

- Walking for Exercise (21.7%)
- Swimming (13.9%)
- Weight Lifting (9.6%)

### TEAM SPORT PARTICIPATION

According to census data, households in Stonecrest had higher participation in team sports in comparison to the State of Georgia. The most popular sports in the City included:

**Figure 14: Most Population Team Sport Participation in Stonecrest**



## LEISURE ACTIVITY BEHAVIOR

Participation in various leisure activities is noted below for Stonecrest:

- Reading a Book (27.9%)
- Visiting the Beach (25.3%)
- Baking (19.8%)

## PART II: PARKS AND RECREATION TRENDS RELEVANT TO STONECREST



In many surveys and studies on participation in recreational activities, walking, running, jogging and cycling are nearly universally rated as the most popular activities among youths and adults. Walking, jogging and running are often the most highly participated in recreational activity and cycling often ranks as the second or third most popular activity.

- Active Transportation
- Administrative Trends
- ADA Compliance
- Community Events and Festivals
- Community Gardens
- Cultural Tourism
- Economic and Health Benefits of Parks
- Food Trucks
- Generational Fitness Trends
- Marketing and Social Media
- National Healthy Lifestyle Trends
- Nature Play
- Older Adults and Senior Programming
- Outdoor Fitness Trails
- Recreational Preferences by Ethnicity
- Shade Structures
- Splashpads
- Sports Trends
- Therapeutic Recreation
- Urban Park Revenue

Municipal parks and recreation structures and delivery systems have changed and more alternative methods of delivering services are emerging. Certain services are being contracted out and cooperative agreements with non-profit groups and other public institutions are being developed. Newer partners include the health system, social services, justice system, education, the corporate sector, and community service agencies. These partnerships reflect both a broader interpretation of the mandate of parks and recreation agencies and the increased willingness of other sectors to work together to address community issues. The relationship with health agencies is vital in promoting wellness. The traditional relationship with education and the sharing of facilities through joint-use agreements is evolving into cooperative planning and programming aimed at addressing youth inactivity levels and community needs.<sup>2</sup>

The City of Stonecrest is strategically positioned to address many of the trends as the department is new with great opportunity to make changes and shifting beyond traditional facility oversight and activity programming. The ability to evaluate and interpret data is a critical component of strategic decision making. In an article in the Parks and Recreation Magazine from February 2019, there are several components that allow agencies to keep up with administrative trends and become an agent of change.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Brian Stapleton, "The Digital Transformation of Parks and Rec" Parks and Recreation, February 2019; <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2019/february/the-digital-transformation-of-parks-and-rec/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2019/february/the-digital-transformation-of-parks-and-rec/>

1. Develop a digital transformation strategy – how will your agency innovate and adapt to technology?
2. Anticipate needs of the community through data – what information from your facilities, programs, and services can be collected and utilized for decision making?
3. Continuous education - How can you educate yourself and your team to have more knowledge and skills as technology evolves?
4. Focus on efficiency – in what ways can your operations be streamlined?
5. Embrace change as a leader – how can you help your staff to see the value in new systems and processes?
6. Reach out digitally – be sure that the public knows how to find you and ways that they can be involved.

### **NATIONAL PARKS AND RECREATION 2020 TRENDS**

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) annually releases a number of predictions that could likely impact parks and recreation agencies. The yearly article identifies the changes agencies are likely to see in the coming year. A summary of key predictions for 2020 are listed below:

- One-third of agencies will have video surveillance in their parks and facilities, and the public will want more surveillance to enhance security
- Private businesses will capitalize on delivery services of food and goods via drones in local parks and beaches. Agencies should be prepared on how to regulate the usage of drones in their public areas.
- E-sports will continue to increase in popularity; agencies who are able to provide tournaments or league play can engage teens and young adults that would otherwise not participate in traditional recreation programs.
- Landscape management practices may remove glyphosate, a common pesticide, due to concerns from the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) that the weed killer is “probably carcinogenic to humans.”
- Large parks have the ability to “cool a city” through the presence of trees and green infrastructure. Agencies may look to linear green spaces and trail corridors to reduce climate change and the impacts of extreme heat.
- Recreation centers will continue to become known as community “wellness hubs.” These innovative models of health and wellness will provide safe gathering spaces, access to healthcare providers, food and nutrition assistance, and additional education opportunities. Partnerships will be formed with health-related organizations.

Source: National Recreation Association<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Richard Dolesh, “Top Trends in Parks and Recreation 2020” National Recreation and Parks Association: <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2020/january/top-trends-in-parks-and-recreation-2020/> Accessed 2020.

## C. Community and Stakeholder Input

Community engagement and stakeholder input are valuable tools that were identified as a key component for the planning process. The engagement allows the residents, users, and all persons that have a stake in the community to offer input in the creation of the plan and future development of the Stonecrest Parks and Recreation Department.

The community and stakeholder input process provided numerous opportunities for input during the planning process that assisted in the development of the survey and needs assessment. In addition, citizens were provided the opportunity to review the findings and the draft documents as the plans came together.

Focus group meetings gave residents the opportunity to provide input on the strengths of the Department and opportunities that they believe exist for improving the direction of the Department along with facilities and programs offered to the community. The engagement and outreach timeline ran from November 12th 2019 to January 20th 2020. Over the ten weeks, Contente Consulting was able to engage fifteen (15) events, connecting with over 560 residents in various forms of engagement.



The main objective in determining outreach events was to identify already-existing events that offered the opportunity for a “pop-up” spot and engage with those already in attendance. As part of the commitment to “meet people where they are,” a majority of the engagement opportunities were preexisting events within the dates noted above. The outreach efforts were focused on four (4) demographic groups: Youth, Senior Citizens, the Business Community, and the General Population.

The process hosted nine focus group meetings that took place at the beginning of the process and included sports partners, civic organizations, government partners, other service providers (public, private and non-profit, etc.), and primary stakeholders such as youth, seniors, other recreation providers, special topics, citizens with disabilities, school officials, and other stakeholders, as mutually determined.

An opportunity to engage the youth arose after meeting with the Student Government Associations (SGA) at Arabia Mountain High School and Lithonia High School, respectively. The SGAs facilitated their own administration of the youth survey in each school through innovative techniques (QR codes) and incentives (cookies at the table) to urge their peers to complete the survey. At the close of the survey, the students were given an opportunity to view the data from the collection period and develop a presentation for the City of Stonecrest. The students had representatives from each school present their findings in front of City Council members, and the general public. Following the presentation, students received certificates of commendations from the Council.

During the first phase of the community engagement process, the first public meeting took place. The team presented the first round of findings from the week of community engagement as well as a charette process directed by Cooper Carry. Participants were given the opportunity to express their thoughts and sentiments of the parks and recreation department. The charettes focused on responders identifying the parks they currently visit and their frequency of use over the last year, a section with boards outlining active and passive parks usages, and a third section with two future development sites.

All boards were detailed with a footprint of the existing park, its classification (active or passive), and a variety of potential uses for those parks separated by use (relaxation, education, active use, community use, etc.). Participants of all ages and backgrounds engaged with the boards by placing a colored sticker indicating a particular interest in the activity.

## KEY STRENGTHS

The residents of Stonecrest identified the current strengths of the Department, the celebrations of what the City is doing well and the overall values of the Department. The list below captures the public's view of Stonecrest's identified strengths:

- Staff is responsive
- Arabia Mountain overlay district
- Economic opportunities
- Collaboration with community organizations
- New awareness of parks
- Upgraded standards for parks and recreation programs
- Browns Mill Recreation Center upgrades
- Geographic position of Stonecrest (off of the I-20) corridor
- Walking trails
- Obtaining Fairington Park green space
- Substantial financial and facility resources
- Committed leadership

## DEPARTMENT CHALLENGES

- Lack of Connectivity
- Lack of Marketing and Promotion
- Lack of quality facilities – pools, athletic fields, recreation centers, event space, tennis courts, etc.
- Lack of Wayfinding Signage
- Lack of updated policies/procedures
- Lack of Public Transportation
- Equitable distribution of facilities
- No historic expenses/revenues for current parks
- Need dedicated funding source for Parks and Recreation particularly for operations and maintenance
- City of Stonecrest stance is to not increase taxes
- City parks are quality of life issue and not cost sustainable
- Only small portion of current SPLOST Funds is for parks (expires in 2024)
- Need a Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
- Continuity of existing DeKalb County programming
- Transition of DeKalb County historical data
- Entitlement attitude from community – no fees as I pay taxes, lack of accountability from DeKalb in consistency of payment for facility use.
- Adjustment from County Fees to Stonecrest Fees /Cost Recovery Policy
- Public not knowing about parks
- Lack of amenities across all parks
- Parks are not ADA accessible
- Lack of diverse program offerings (tennis, swimming, arts, educational, etc.)
- No pool within the City of Stonecrest
- Upkeep and maintenance of parks and amenities offered
- Lack of equitable distribution
- Technology connectivity within parks

## KEY OPPORTUNITIES

Another aspect of the community and stakeholder input process was to identify potential opportunities that exist for the City to improve the operation and administration of the Department. In order to move forward and provide a plan over the next 5-10 years, it is important to take advantage of these opportunities to continue offering quality services to the residents of Stonecrest. Opportunities can consist in various forms, including creating new programs, improving current amenities, entering strategic partnerships, and many other avenues that can guide the Department as the community grows.

The following recreation programming opportunities were noted as new interests:

- Health/Wellness/Nutrition Programs
- Fitness
- Swim Lessons
- Athletic Tourism
- Outdoor Fitness
- Special Events/Jazz Concerts/Cultural Festivals
- Droning
- Senior Programs
- Tennis Instruction
- Lacrosse
- Pickleball
- Film/Entertainment
- Gymnastics
- Biking Programs
- Non-Sports Programs – visual and performing activities
- Lifetime Skills/Trade Skills/Entrepreneur activities
- Multigenerational Programming
- Special Populations Programs/Mainstream Programs
- Volleyball
- Soccer
- Quidditch
- Music
- Extreme sports (adult playground)
- Special Olympics and other programs for special needs kids

In addition to the recreation programming opportunities, the community also identified specific opportunities to improve the current recreation facilities. The following is a summary of the comments regarding opportunities to improve the existing recreation facilities:

- Improve Marketing/Branding
- Trails/Paths – Trailheads, Connectivity to north Stonecrest
- Infrastructure – Permanent Rest Rooms, Pavilions, Lighting, Parking Lots, etc.
- Tourism of Arabia Mountain attractions
- Outdoor Adventure Park – Ziplines, Ropes Course, Tree Top Canopy Trails, Ninja Warrior Obstacle Course, etc.
- Playgrounds and Outdoor Learning Environments
- All parks need to be Clean, Safe, Accessible
- Improve Partnerships/Collaborative Relationships
- Improve Safety
- Canoe/Kayak launches/rentals
- Equestrian Trails
- Impact/Development Fees needed (policy)
- ADA Transition Plan
- Connect High School to Southeast Park
- Connect School to Salem Park
- 501(c)3 Parks Foundation created
- Scholarship Program
- Acquire parks adjacent to potential Stonecrest MARTA stops (3)
- Strategy to get citizens out of their houses and into local parks
- Improve look and feel
- Event space needed
- Overall upkeep and maintenance of parks

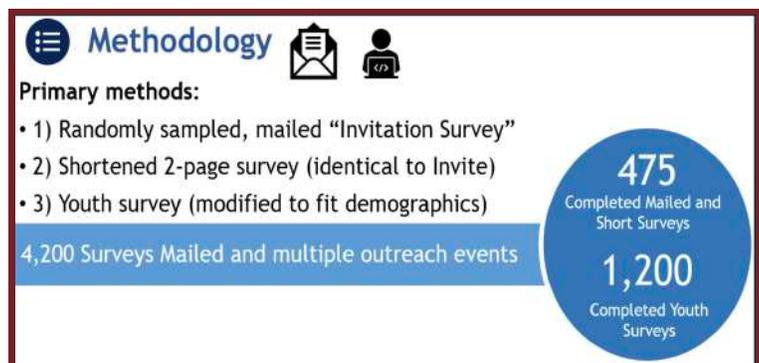
The discussion of additional facilities, programs, trails and open space areas were all discussed with the following suggestions from the community:

- Special Events/Jazz Concerts
- Athletic Sports Tourism – Athletic Sports Complexes
- More all-inclusive recreational activity parks with athletic fields, recreation center, aquatics, etc. (one stop shop)
- Gymnasiums
- Indoor Event/Rental Space with Kitchen (Teaching Kitchen)
- Recreational use of closed landfills (4) in North industrial portion of Stonecrest
- Old YMCA (25) SOQ horse stables, 25-yard x 25-meter outdoor pool, swim lessons, etc.
- Amphitheater Old Target Store (indoor recreational facilities)
- Community Gardens
- Create a Park and Recreation Funding District including neighborhoods just north of Stonecrest
- Artwork in the parks
- Trails/Paths/Nature Trails
- Parks (acquisition) developed in North industrial portion of Stonecrest
- Pavilions
- Permanent Restrooms
- Playgrounds
- Splash pads
- Playscapes
- Dog Parks
- Outdoor Exercise Equipment
- Recreation Center
- Tennis Courts
- Swimming Pool
- Quarry in North industrial portion of Stonecrest developed into a recreational use

## D. Invitation and Open Link Community Survey Summary

Information that was gathered during the community input process was important in determining public feedback on the City of Stonecrest’s parks and recreation facilities, services, and programs. The session and subsequent analyses were designed to assist the City and the GreenPlay project team in gathering information to develop a community statistically-valid assessment survey and open link survey that reflects the needs and desires of Stonecrest. Selected comments from the community participants are found throughout this section of the plan.

This section contains a summary of the random invitation and open link survey results, which have been used in conjunction with information from the planning process to help develop recommendations. The complete survey report is included in **Appendix D**.



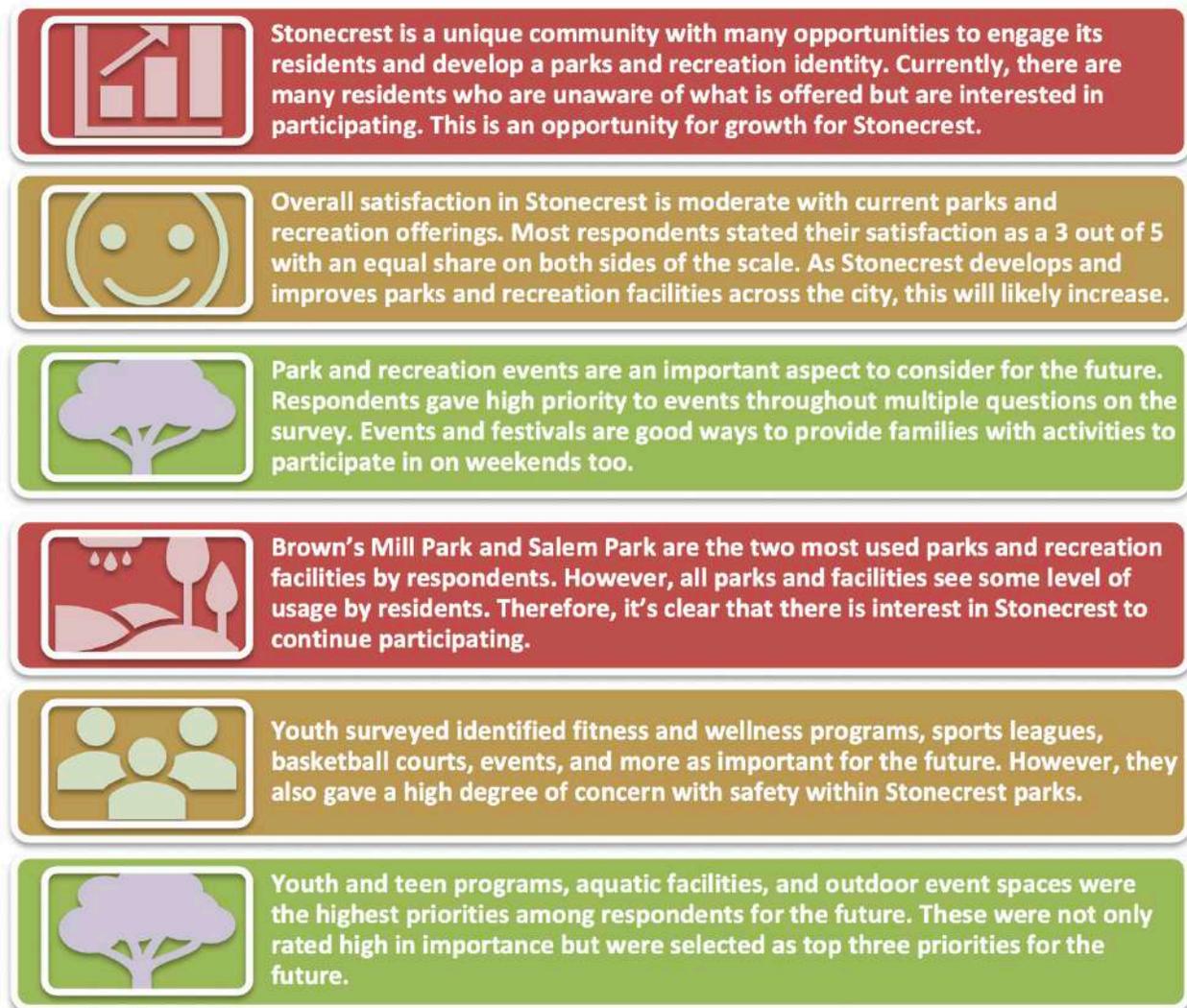
The survey was conducted using three primary methods:

- A randomly mailed survey to households in Stonecrest
- An online, password protected invitation website
- An open link survey for all remaining residents who were not included in the invitation sample

The results of the survey efforts include a combined sample of mailed and shortened version of the survey. Throughout survey summary the combined sample is referred to as “overall respondents.” Combining both samples allowed for a more robust look into the unique settings of the community. When analyzed separately, only minor differences were observed with similarities across almost all variables.

Key points to consider from the survey and the new community may call for new approaches. The survey summarized the following results:

**Figure 15: Survey Key Points**

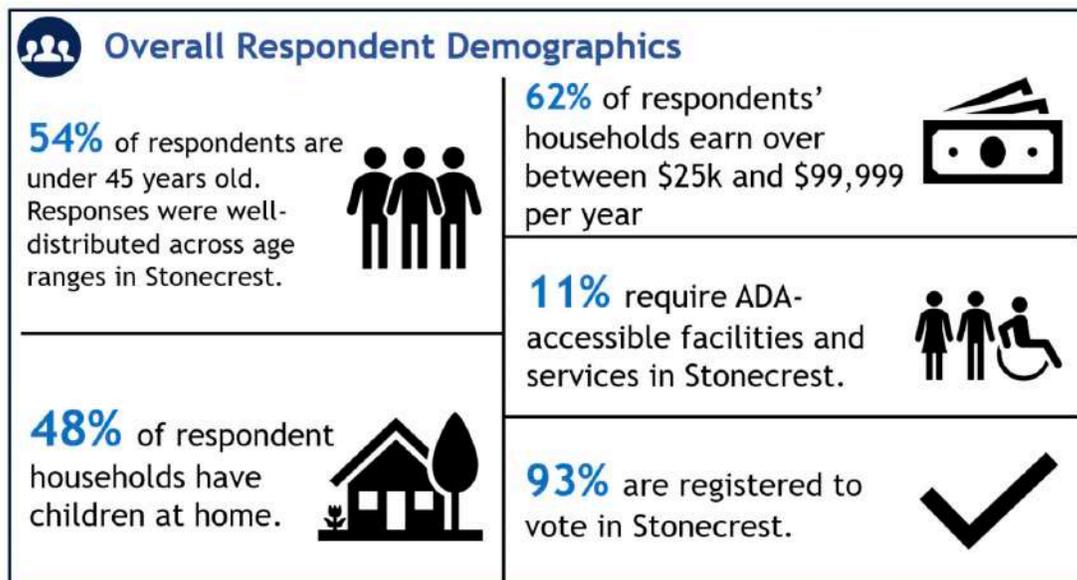


Stonecrest is a very new city in terms of creating a formal community. It wasn't until recently that Stonecrest residents updated their mailing addresses to Stonecrest from their previous community boundary. Early community engagement efforts identified varying awareness about Stonecrest boundaries, parks within the community, and more. The survey results show clear directional patterns in terms of overall opinions and priorities that can be used to support policy discussions where meaningful differences were observed.

As noted in the overall demographics of the survey participants, Stonecrest has a large population of residents under the age of 45 and 48 percent of them have children at home.

Most respondents identified as Black or African American (92%) with three percent identifying as White, two percent American Indian and Alaskan Native, and five percent identified as another race. Approximately 48 percent of respondents have children at home with 27% single without children at home. Finally, 30 percent of respondents earn between \$50k-\$74,999 with 65 percent of respondents earning under \$100k per year.

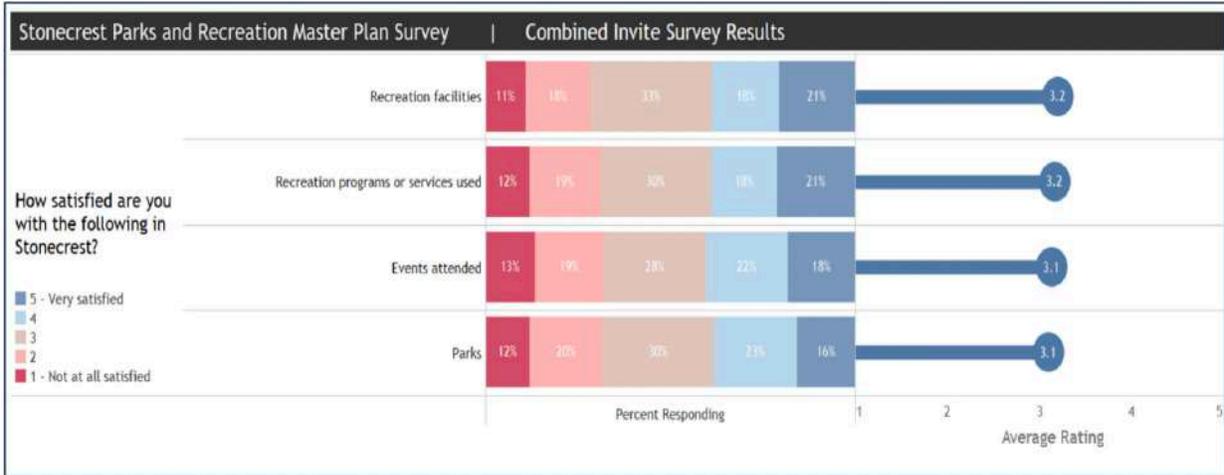
**Figure 16: Overall Respondent Demographics**



## KEY FINDINGS

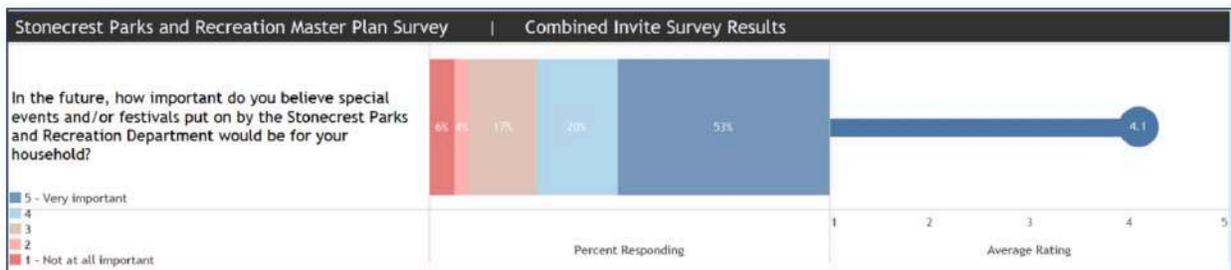
Overall satisfaction with the quality of Stonecrest parks and recreation is moderate. Recreation facilities and recreation programs both rated at an average of 3.2 out of 5, with events and parks rating a 3.1 out of 5. In general, there’s nearly an equal number of respondents who are satisfied than are not satisfied in the community. Most respondents rated their satisfaction a 3 out of 5. In general, Stonecrest is now able to utilize the new acquisitions made to improve and develop the parks to residents liking.

Figure 17: Survey Key Findings



Park and recreation events are seen as an important offering to Stonecrest residents moving into the future. About 73 percent of respondents indicated that events and/or festivals are considered either important or very important for the future of Stonecrest (rating 4 of 5). Only a small number see events as not very important ( about 10%). Events are becoming more popular as time goes on in many communities across the country as it provides residents with a variety of new activities and fun things for families to participate in.

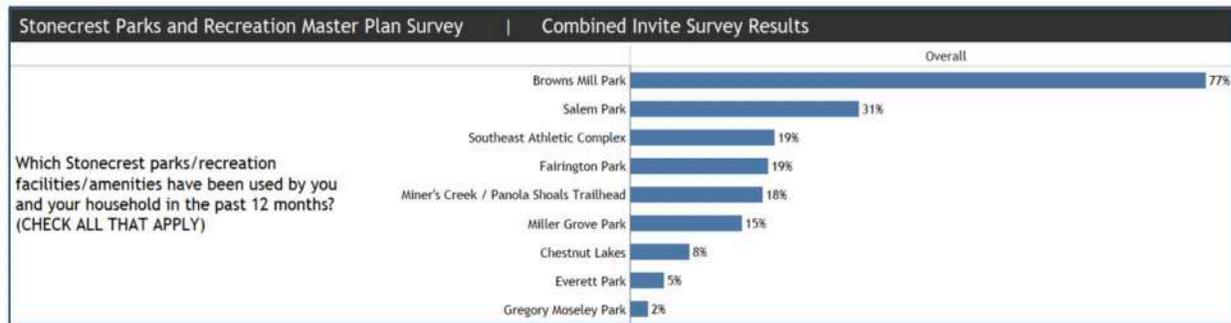
Figure 18: Importance of Future Events/Festivals in Stonecrest



## CURRENT FACILITIES, PARKS, AND PROGRAMS

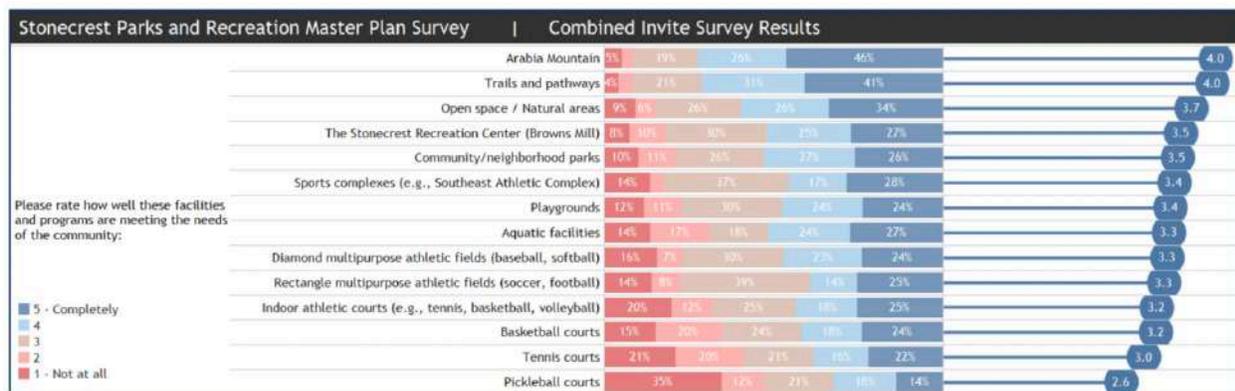
When asked which parks and recreation facilities/amenities respondents have used in the past 12 months, the most used facility is Browns Mill Park (77%) followed by Salem Park (31%), Southeast Athletic Complex (19%), and Fairrington Park (19%). Browns Mill Park sees the highest usage by respondents, but almost all parks/facilities receive some level of use. This is encouraging as it shows interest by the community to participate and visit parks and recreation facilities.

Figure 19: Current Facilities, Parks, and Programs Usage



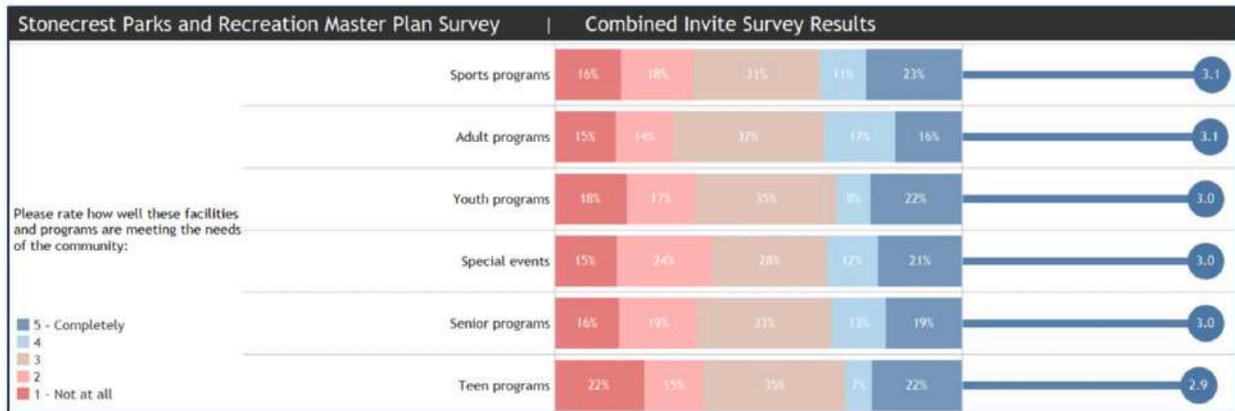
When asked how well these facilities/amenities were meeting the needs of Stonecrest, Arabia Mountain (4.0) and trails and pathways (4.0) see the highest rating among respondents. Open space /natural areas (3.7), The Stonecrest Recreation Center (3.5), and community/neighborhood parks (3.5) follow in how well it meets the needs of the community. Pickleball courts (2.6), tennis courts (3.0), basketball courts (3.2), and indoor athletic courts (3.2) saw the lowest rating for meeting the needs of Stonecrest.

Figure 20: Facilities/Amenities Needs



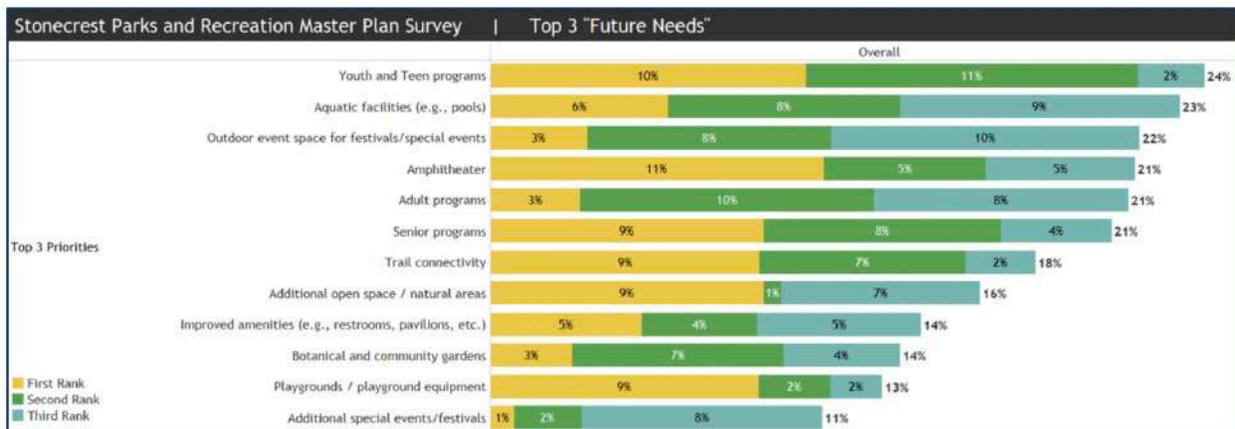
Similarly, respondents saw almost all of these programs as nearly equally meeting the needs of Stonecrest. Sports programs and adult programs are highest at 3.1 out of 5.0, but teen programs are only 0.2 points behind at 2.9. In general, there appears to be a large volume of “neutral” ratings (3 out of 5). This may suggest that respondents are not sure how well some of these programs meet the needs of the community. However, a significant portion of respondents rate how well these are meeting the needs of Stonecrest either a 1 or 2 out of 5, showing potential for improvement.

**Figure 21: Facilities/Amenities Needs Continued**



From the list of future needs, respondents were asked to select their top three priorities. Once prioritized to three options, youth and teen programs (24%), aquatic facilities (23%), and outdoor event space for festivals/special events (22%) rises to the top. An amphitheater (21%) and adult programs (21%), and senior programs (21%) see similarly high prioritization.

**Figure 22: Top Three Future Needs**



## COMMUNICATION

Within this section of the survey, respondents ranked the effectiveness of communication efforts for the parks and recreation department. They ranked their preference on how they would prefer to receive department information about programs, events, facilities, parks, and open space amenities in Stonecrest. Overall, communication is perceived as not being too effective overall in Stonecrest at this point. In total 37 percent of respondents rated the effectiveness as a 1 out of 5. Furthermore, 78 percent of respondents rated the communication effectiveness a 3 or lower. A lower rating on communication is likely tied to a lack of familiarity in general. This is a great opportunity for Stonecrest to capitalize on new acquisitions in park and recreation to promote and make the community aware of what is offered.

With the newness of the department, the survey noted that approximately 39 percent of respondents were aware of the recent acquisitions of parks in Stonecrest from DeKalb County. An additional 58 percent are not aware and three percent are not sure if they recall. Social media (58%), e-mails from the city (44%) and local media (43%) saw the highest percentage of respondents preferring this communication method. Stonecrest can diversify their communication methods by using online and traditional media to reach different segments of the community.

Figure 23: Top Five Preferred Methods of Communication



## E. Operations Analysis

### Organizational Analysis

GreenPlay broadly assessed the organizational structure of the Parks and Recreation Department to determine effectiveness and efficiency in meeting current and future departmental responsibilities as related to the overall needs of the community. The assessment included input from staff interviews, community and key stakeholder engagement, a focus on existing inventory, site assessments, future growth, and mapping along with the consultant’s expertise in areas for operational enhancement.

The key issues were identified as organizational areas for improvement consideration:

- New awareness, branding, and customer service training is needed across the board for the entire staff in order to create the vision of the department and relay that vision to the citizens of Stonecrest.
- Any new residential and commercial development will create a demand on facilities and services
- Capacity of staff; onboarding, cross training full-time and part-time staff; evaluation of the contracted staffing operations is needed including the maintenance divisions.
- Communication and opportunities for revisiting joint use agreements
- Organizational efficiencies can be improved through technology
- Maximize the distribution of equitable services throughout the city
- Funding challenges

A complete list of details actions to address these opportunities for improvement are found in **Section V, Recommendations and Action Plans.**

## STAFFING CONSIDERATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Through input with existing staff, it was noted that the Department has had challenges in working with contractual services including the recruitment of qualified staff with a background in parks and recreation programming. This is critical in many facets as there are certifications needed for many aspects of parks and recreation management.

Onboarding of new staff within reasonable timeframes due to Federal, State and local guidelines. Consideration should be streamlined to improve hiring practices including an evaluation of procedures and steps and hiring timelines.

In order to operate effectively in the future and to implement the Master Plan, Parks and Recreation will need to hire additional positions to supplement existing staff. This will ensure that staffing resource levels can maintain existing operations, programs, and new facilities at or above acceptable standards as the Master Plan is implemented.

It is the advice of the consultant team that the City staff follow and implement the Personnel Manual written in 2019 with revisions as noted through internal teams and annual review. This document provides a sound foundation for all employees being considered for hire as well as onboarding steps.

## PROGRAM ANALYSIS

Understanding core services in the delivery of parks and recreation services will grant the Stonecrest Parks and Recreation Department an opportunity to improve upon those areas while developing strategies to assist in the delivery of other services. The basis of determining core services should come from the vision and mission developed by the City and what brings the greatest community benefit in balance with the competencies of the department, current trends, and the market.

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

- **Need** - The capacity of a current popular program, or demand that has been demonstrated to successfully support a minimal start (one class for instance)
- **Budget** - Accounting for all costs and anticipated (conservative) revenues should meet cost recovery target established by the Department
- **Location** - Appropriate, available, and within budget
- **Instructor** - Qualified, available, and within budget
- **Materials and supplies** - Available and within budget
- **Marketing effort** - Adequate and timely opportunity to reach intended market, within budget (either existing marketing budget or as part of new program budget)

Further research into what types of programming would be successful should be done. Successful programs utilize continuous creative assessments, research, and planning. New leisure and recreation trends may drive different needs.

It is very easy to focus on programs that have worked in the past, especially if they are still drawing enough interested participants to justify the programs continuation. Starting new programs, based on community demand and/or trends, can be risky due to the inability to predict their success. If the program interest seems great, as with those identified in the citizen survey, then the programs should be expanded.

Lack of available space may hinder new or expanded opportunities in some cases. Not all successful programs have to be solely organized or managed by the City. Partnerships with nonprofits and businesses can prove to be a wise use of resources. Many other organizations have expertise, time, and staff to conduct introductory and advanced programs. By working with those organizations, the City can ensure that residents are offered a wide variety of high-quality programs without having to have those resources in-house.

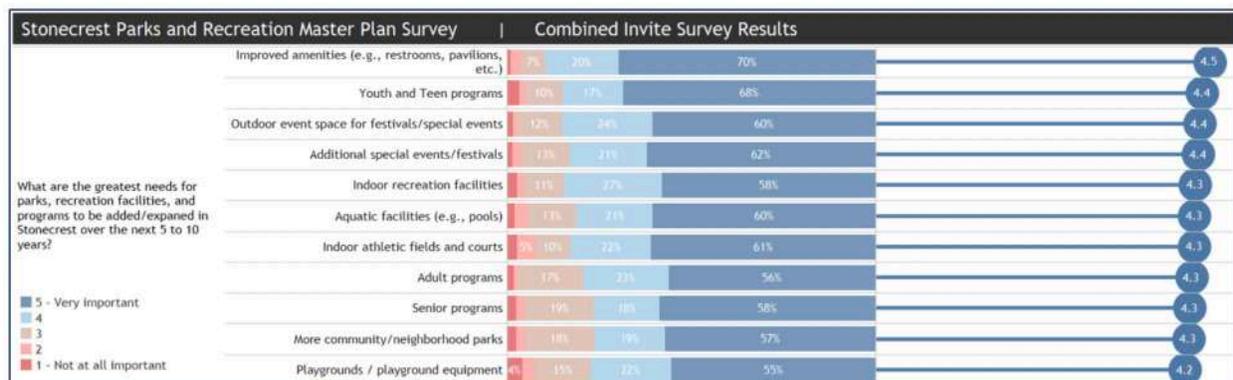
Using historical participation levels to determine program popularity and participant feedback can be helpful in deciding if programs should be continued. In addition, utilizing citizen surveys and participant feedback, and researching trends in park and recreational programming are useful tools in determining future programming needs and desires. Sources for trends information include:

- State Parks and Recreation Associations and Conferences
- National Recreation and Parks Association
- International Health, Racquet, and Sports Associations
- Parks and Recreation Trade Publications
- Outdoor Recreation Publications

## ACTIVITIES

Stonecrest offers minimal programming as a department and those department sponsored programs are primarily based at Browns Mill Recreation Center. When asked what the greatest needs for parks, recreation facilities, and programs to be added/expanded in Stonecrest over the next five to ten years, respondents rated improved amenities as the most important factor for the future (4.5); however, all of the top of the list is seen as an important aspect to focus on. Youth and teen programs (4.4), outdoor event space (4.4), and additional special events/festivals all are very important too. Indoor facilities (including athletic courts) and aquatics are also important to Stonecrest respondents. In general, Stonecrest respondents have an appetite for more parks and recreation offerings across a wide spectrum.

**Figure 24: Top Five Preferred Methods of Communication**



## F. Financial Analysis

### CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES

Parks and recreation facilities, programs, and services are essential to maintaining Stonecrest’s diverse and desirable community. However, not all facilities, programs, and services are equal. In general, the more a facility, program, or service provides a community benefit to its citizens as a whole, the more that element should be paid for by all citizens as part of the City’s general fund. The more a facility, program, or service provides individual benefits, the more that element should be paid for by user fees. This funding and cost recovery philosophy acknowledges the tremendous public benefits of parks and recreation to the community. Parks and recreation services also promote and support a community’s economic development, crime prevention, and community health. The City should seek to leverage partnerships wherever possible to help fund the facilities, programs, and services that it provides to the community.

### FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY FOR PROGRAM DELIVERY

It is important for the City to develop a Resource Allocation and Pricing Philosophy that reflects the values of the community and the responsibility it has to the community. This philosophy will be especially important if the City moves forward in the development of new programs and additional and/or expanded facilities, and as it strives for sustainability and determines how much it is willing to subsidize operations with tax dollars. One means of accomplishing this goal is applying a process using an industry tool called the “Pyramid Methodology.” This methodology develops and implements a refined cost recovery philosophy and pricing policy based on current “best practices” as determined by the mission of the agency and the program’s benefit to the community and/or individual.

Figure 25: 2019 NRPA Agency Performance Key Metrics



Critical to this philosophical undertaking is the support and understanding of elected officials, and ultimately, citizens.

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

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

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

- Understanding of current revenue streams and their sustainability
- Tracking all expenses and revenues for programs, facilities, and services to understand their contributions to overall department cost recovery
- Analyzing who is benefiting from programs, facilities, and services and to what degree they should be subsidized
- Acknowledging the full cost of each program (those direct and indirect costs associated with program delivery) and where the program fits on the continuum
- Program fees should not be based on ability to pay, but an objective program should be in place that allows for easy access for lower income participants, through availability of scholarships and/or discounts. In many instances' qualification for scholarships and/or discounts can mirror requirements for free or reduce cost lunch in schools.

### **POTENTIAL FUNDING SUPPORT**

Revenue enhancement was a key priority for focus group and stakeholder participants as well as those who participated in the survey. The Department should pursue funding strategies that provide alternative funding opportunities away from the City's General Fund. The strategies that were identified are:

- Develop a cost recovery philosophy and policy for parks, programs and facilities; equitable user fees to address increased programming and services; Develop a "pay to play" model for parks and recreation
- Evaluate SPOLST funding extension and adding a % for Parks and Recreation
- Development fees
- Create a Park Foundation (501-C3 status)
- Expand alternative funding for strategic initiatives through grants
- Explore additional Community Partnerships
- Explore the opportunities for (and use of) sponsorships
- Consider a bond referendum for expanded and new facilities
- Consider a local option sales tax (hospitality tax)
- Establish a state of the industry Cost Recovery and Financial Sustainability Program
- Evaluate hotel/motel tax opportunity

# III. PARKS AND FACILITIES INVENTORY AND ASSESSMENT: WHAT WE HAVE NOW



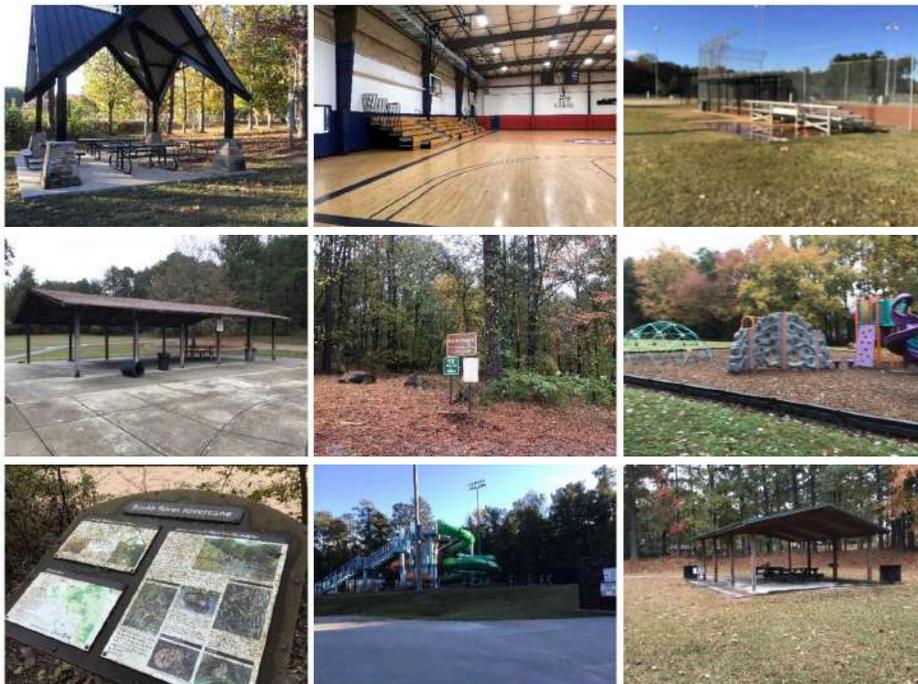
Parks and facilities were inventoried and assessed for function and quality in August 2019 using the GRASP®-IT audit tool. This tool classifies park features into one of two categories: components and modifiers. A component is a feature that people go to a park or facility to use, such as a tennis court, playground, or picnic shelter. Modifiers are amenities such as shade, drinking fountains, and restrooms that enhance the comfort and convenience of a site. Find further definitions and discussions in **Appendix A**.

A formula was applied that combines the assessments of a site's components and modifiers to generate a score or value for each component and the entire site. The study uses the resulting values to compare sites to each other and to analyze the overall performance of the park system.

## ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Observations and conclusions based on visits to each park or facility include the following:

- Opportunity to create a new system
- A lot of land and parcels
- Good distribution of properties
- Arabia Mountain and other existing providers offer additional services



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## A. Inventory SYSTEM MAP

The following map shows park and recreation facilities across Stonecrest.

Figure 26: System Map. Larger scale maps are located in *Appendix C*.

Figure 26: System Map

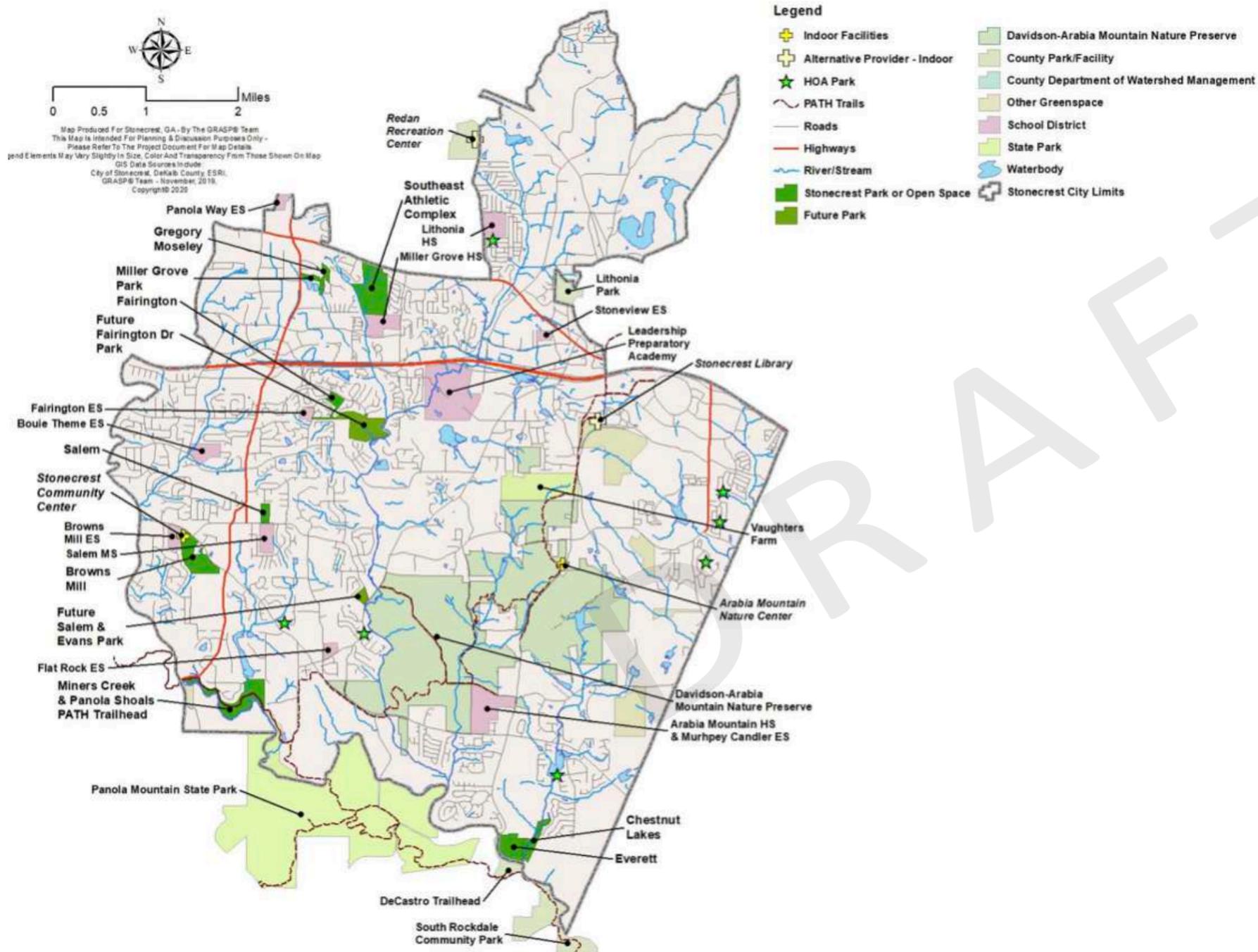


Figure 27: Example of GIS inventory map and datasheet from Farrington Park  
 See Inventory Atlas, which is a supplemental document to the Master Plan.

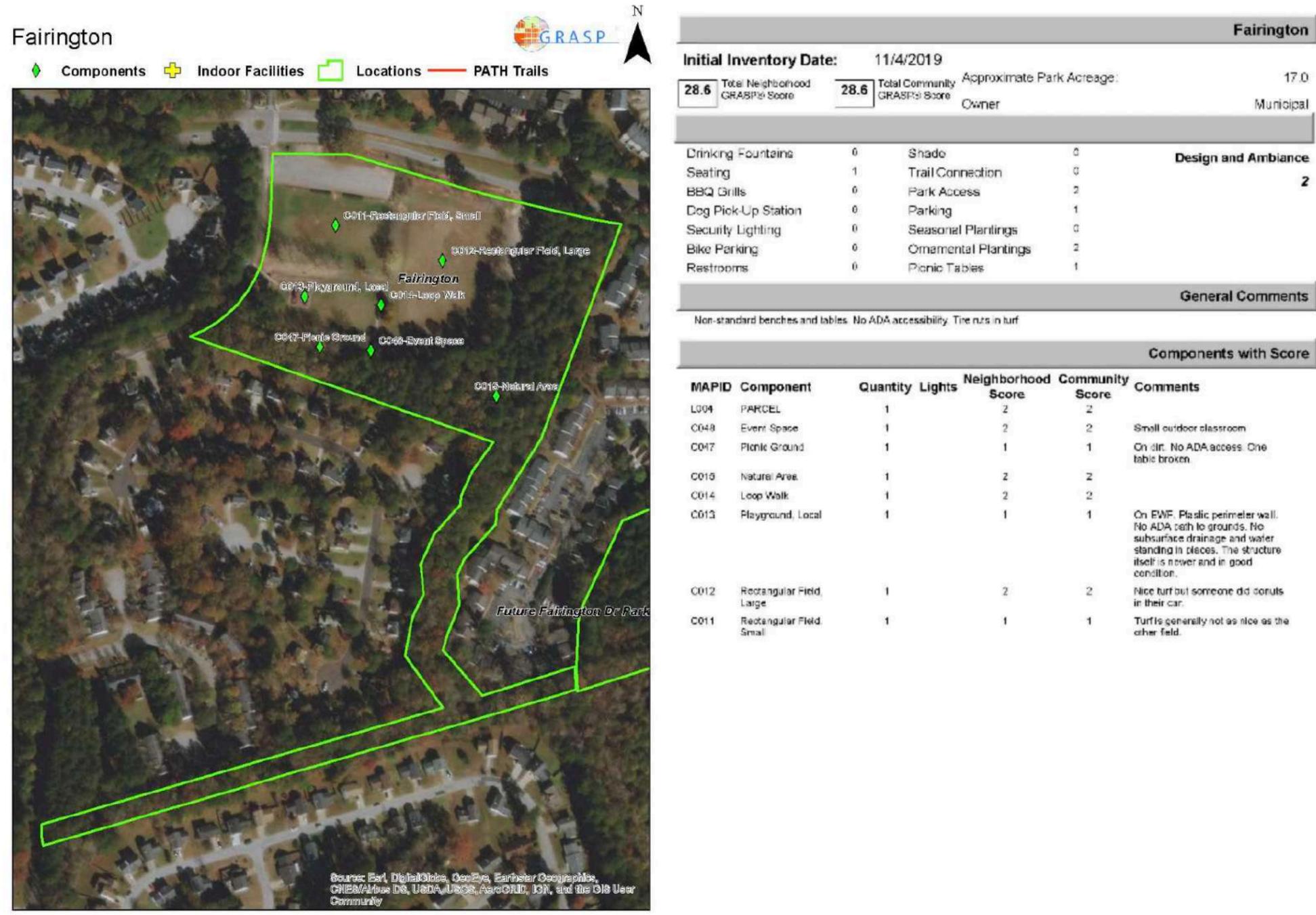


Table 6: Summary of Stonecrest Outdoor Locations

Park or Location	Aquatics, Lap Pool	Aquatics, Leisure Pool	Aquatics, Spray Pad	Basketball Court4	Concessions	Diamond Field	Diamond Field, Complex	Educational Experience	Event Space	Loop Walk	Natural Area	Open Turf	Passive Node	Picnic Ground	Playground, Local	Rectangular Field, Large	Rectangular Field, Small	Shelter, Large	Shelter, Small	Tennis Court	Trail, Multi-use	Trailhead	Water Access, General	Water, Open	Total Components	Unique Components
Browns Mill	1	1	1		2	6	1				1	1			1	2			2	2					18	9
Chestnut Lakes											1											1			2	2
Everett											1											1	1	1	4	4
Fairington									1	1	1			1	1	1	1								7	7
Future Fairington Dr Park											1														1	1
Future Salem and Evans Park											1														1	1
Gregory Moseley				1								1	1		1			1							5	5
Miller Grove Park											1														1	1
Miners Creek and Panola Shoals PATH Trailhead								1			1										1	1	1	1	6	6
Salem				1						1	1	1			1			1							6	6
Southeast Athletic Complex						5	1					1				3	5								15	5
Total:	1	1	1	2	2	11	2	1	1	2	9	4	1	1	4	6	6	2	2	2	1	3	2	2		
Percentage of Parks w/ Component	9%	9%	9%	18%	9%	18%	18%	9%	9%	18%	82%	36%	9%	9%	36%	27%	18%	18%	9%	9%	9%	27%	18%	18%		

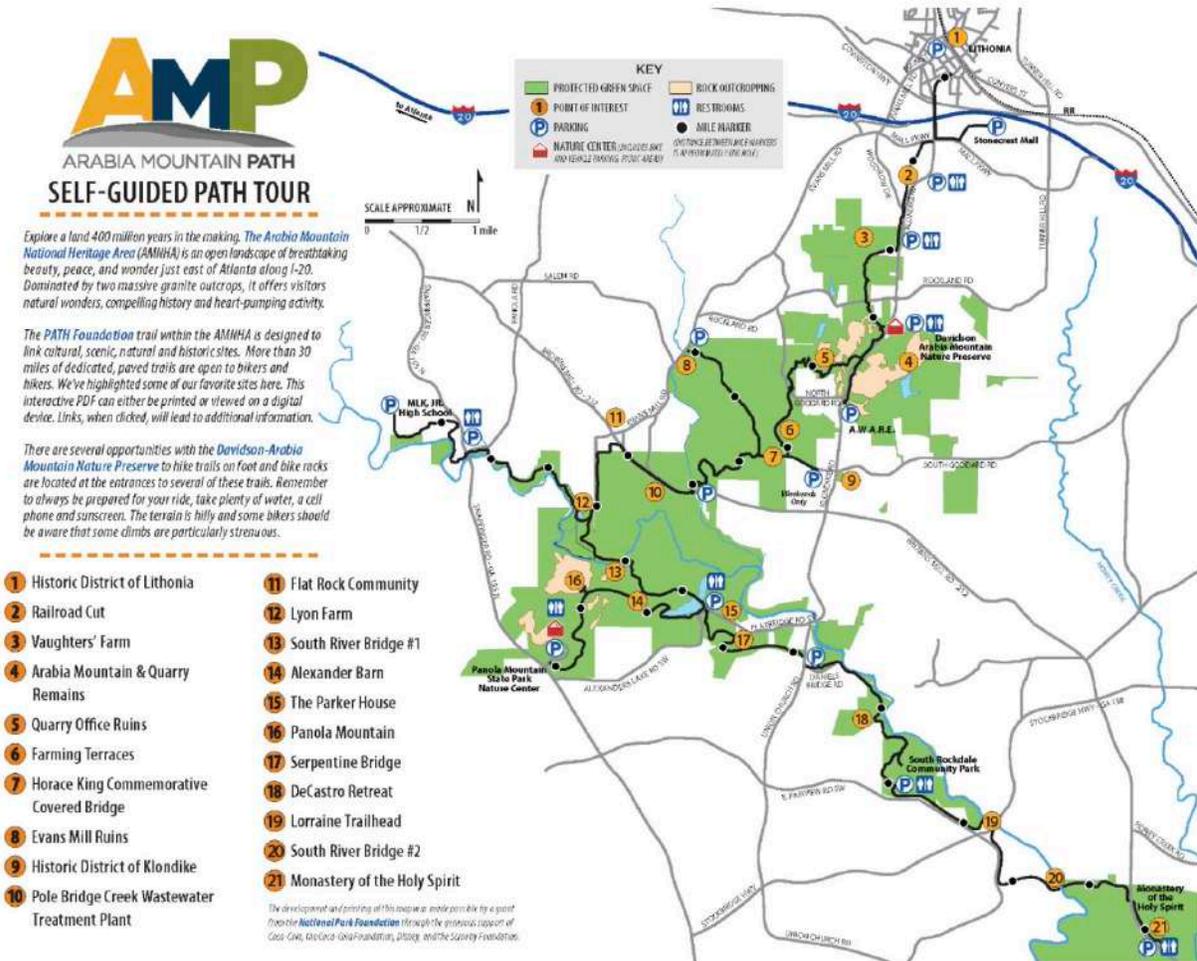
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## TRAILS

While many of Stonecrest’s parks feature walking paths and trails, the majority of multi-use trails in the City are part of the Arabia Mountain Path (AMP). This network is managed by the PATH Foundation and crosses many jurisdictions and land ownership classifications. There are approximately 32 miles of trails within and immediately adjacent to Stonecrest that are utilized and enjoyed by residents. **Figure 28** is a map published on the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance website (<https://arabiaalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/AMP-Map.pdf>) and shows the extent of this network, including points of interest, parking, nature center, and restrooms.

**Figure 28: Arabia Mountain Path**



Within Stonecrest, there are several parking areas, trailheads, and less formal points where residents can access this trail. Miners Creek and Panola Shoals PATH Trailhead highlights these entry points. Also, the Stonecrest Mall and Stonecrest Library are primary access points but do not offer formalized trailheads.

Building off of this existing network could offer tremendous opportunities for Stonecrest to expand access to trails throughout the rest of the City.

## INDOOR FACILITIES

Indoor facilities we also inventoried and cataloged based on the following table. Currently, Stonecrest has one indoor facility.

**Table 7: Summary of Stonecrest Indoor Facilities**

Location	Kitchen - Kitchenette	Multi-purpose room	Sport Court
Stonecrest Community Center	1	3	1

## PARK RANKING

In addition to locating components, assessments included the functional quality of each element. The following table displays the ranking of each park based on an overall score for its components and modifiers. In general, parks at the top of the list offer more and better recreation opportunities than those ranked lower. The bar length for each park reflects its overall score in proportion to the highest-ranking (Regional Park). There is no ultimate or perfect score. Scores are cumulative and based on the number and quality of the components at a park. In addition to the availability of such amenities as restrooms, drinking fountains, seating, parking, and shade.

**Table 8: Park Ranking Table**

Location	GRASP <sup>©</sup> Scoring/Ranking
Browns Mill	98.4
Southeast Athletic Complex	63.8
Miners Creek and Panola Shoals PATH Trailhead	36
Fairington	28.6
Everett	22
Salem	12
Gregory Moseley	9.6
Future Fairington Dr Park	8.8
Chestnut Lakes	5.5
Future Salem and Evans Park	4.4
Miller Grove Park	4.4

Stonecrest parks are comparable to other agencies across the county by using these scores. The GRASP® National Dataset currently consists of 65 agencies, 4,465 parks, and over 23,380 components.

When comparing Stonecrest parks for all other agencies and parks in the dataset, Stonecrest has one park in the top 350 parks in terms of overall GRASP® score.

It also has one park in the top ten percent.

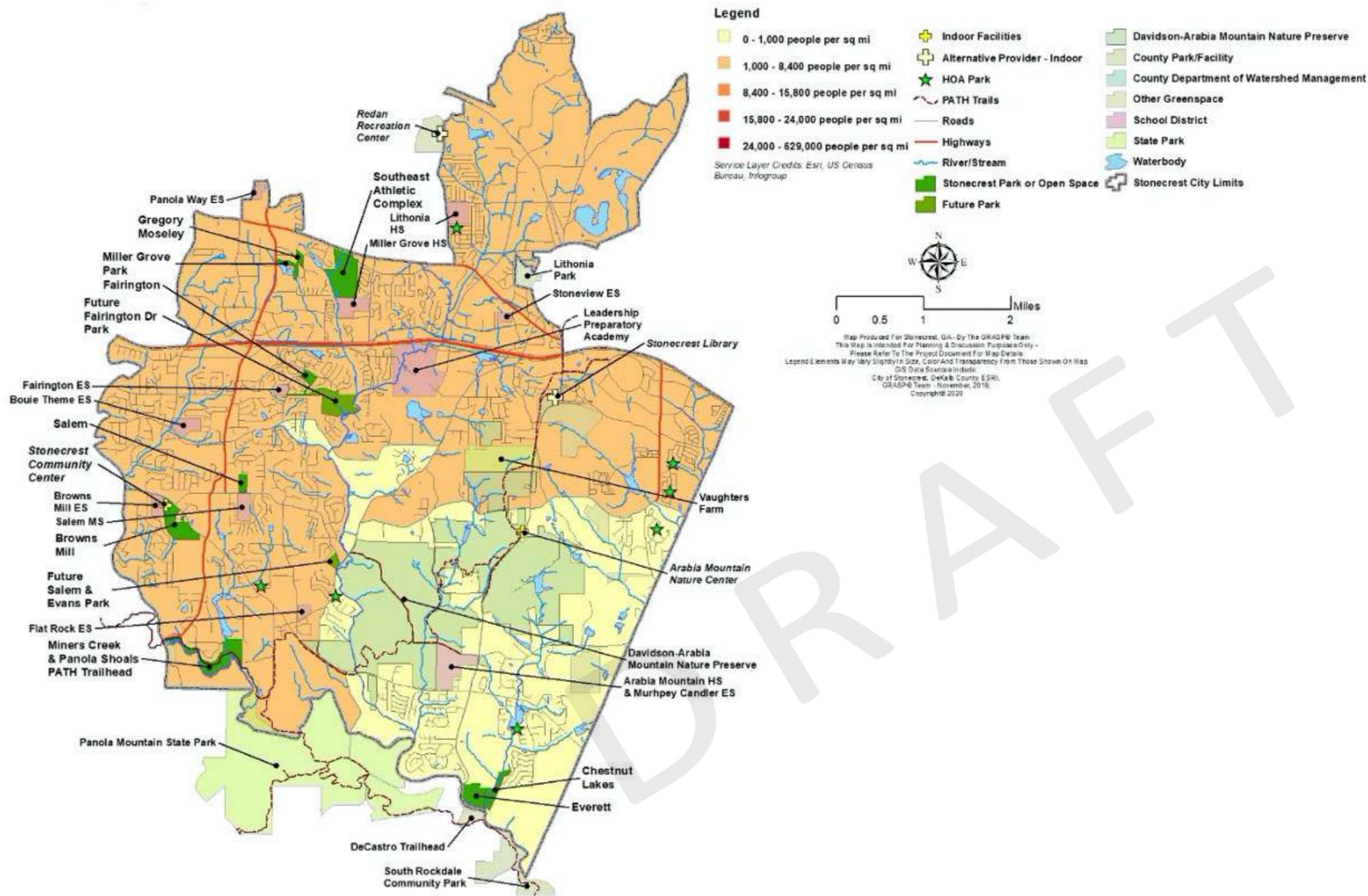


### POPULATION DISTRIBUTION AND DENSITY

When discussing access to recreation, it is helpful to understand the population distribution and density in Stonecrest. In **Figure 29**, areas of higher population density are shown in darker orange, while areas that are less densely populated are lighter in color. Much of Stonecrest has a similar very low density, as indicated by the light orange and yellow tones. A light orange indicates areas of slightly higher density; also, a couple of small areas of moderate population density (medium orange).

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Figure 29: 2019 Population density based on population per square mile by census



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## B. Level of Service Analysis (LOS)

Level of Service (LOS) measurements evaluate how parks, open spaces, and facilities in Stonecrest serve the community. They may be used to benchmark current conditions and to direct future planning efforts.

### WHY LEVEL OF SERVICE?

Level of Service describes how a recreation system provides residents access to recreational assets and amenities. It indicates the ability of people to connect with nature and pursue active lifestyles. It can have implications for health and wellness, the local economy, and the quality of life. Further, LOS for a park and recreation system tends to reflect community values. It is often representative of people's connection to their communities and lifestyles focused on outdoor recreation and healthy living.

### GRASP® ANALYSIS

GRASP® (Geo-referenced Amenities Standards Process) has been applied in many communities across the country to evaluate LOS for park and recreation systems. With GRASP®, information from the inventory combined with Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software, produces analytic maps and data that show the quality and distribution of park and recreation services across the City.

### PERSPECTIVES

Perspectives are maps and data produced using the GRASP® methodology. Each perspective shows service across the study area. Data analysis also incorporates statistics. Maps, tables, and charts provide benchmarks or insights useful in determining community success in providing services. Find further discussion on Perspectives and other GRASP® terminology in the **Appendix A**.

### TYPES OF PERSPECTIVES

The LOS offered by a park or other feature is a function of two main variables: what is available at a specific location and how easy it is for a user to get to it. The inventory performed with the GRASP®-IT tool provides a detailed accounting of what is available at any given location, and GIS analysis uses the data to measure its accessibility to residents. People use a variety of ways to reach a recreation destination: on foot, on a bike, in a car, via public transportation, or some combination. In GRASP® Perspectives, this variability is accounted for by analyzing multiple travel distances (referred to as catchment areas). These service areas produce two distinct types of Perspectives for examining the park system:

1. Neighborhood Access
2. Walkable Access

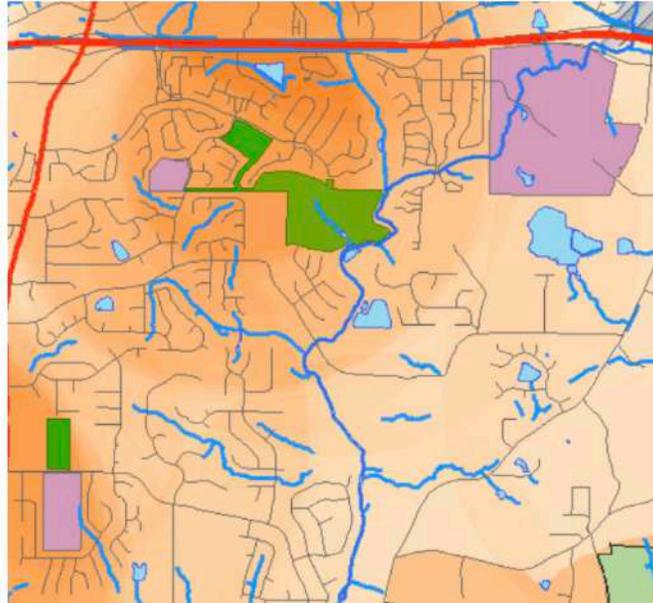
A **Neighborhood Access** perspective uses a travel distance of one mile to the inventory and is assumed to be a suitable distance for a bike ride or short drive in a car, or perhaps a longer walk. This catchment captures users traveling from home or elsewhere to a park or facility by way of a bike, bus, or automobile.

An analytical technique known as **GRASP® (Geo-Referenced Amenities Standard Process)** was used to analyze the Level of Service provided by assets. This proprietary process, used exclusively by GreenPlay, yields analytical maps and data that may be used to examine access to recreation across a study area.

A **Walkable Access** perspective uses a shorter catchment distance intended to capture users within a ten to fifteen-minute walk. See **Appendix F** for further discussion on walkability standards.

For each perspective, combining the service area for each component, including the assigned GRASP® value into one overlay, creates a shaded map representing the cumulative value of all features.

**Figure 30: GRASP® Level of Service Perspectives Catchment Areas**



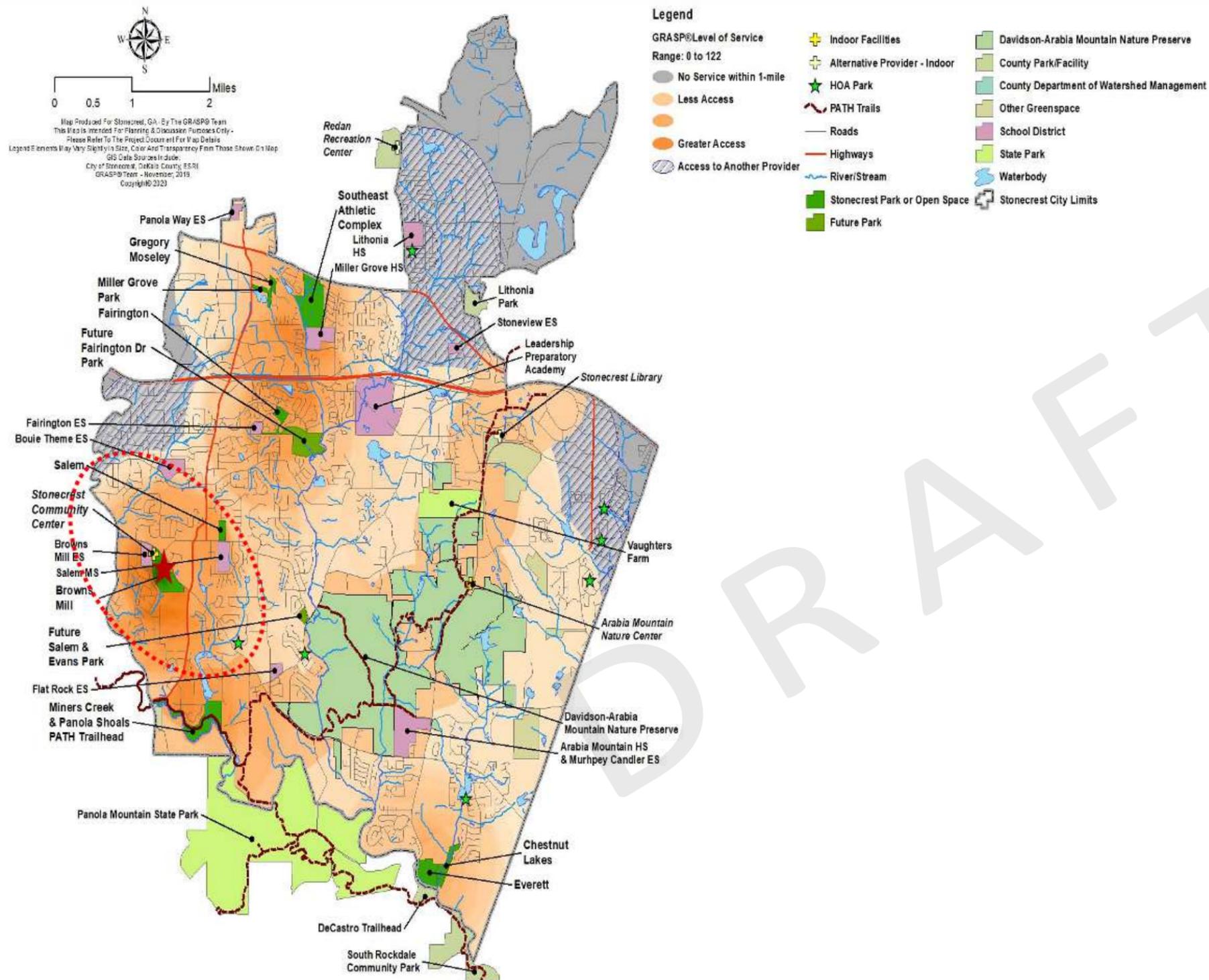
**ASSUMPTIONS**

1. Proximity relates to access. A feature within a specified distance of a given location is considered “accessible” from that location.” “Access” in this analysis does not refer to access as defined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
2. Neighborhood access relates to one-mile proximity, a reasonable distance for a drive in a car, or by bicycle.
3. Walkable access relates to ½-mile proximity, a reasonable ten-minute walk.
4. Walkable access is affected by barriers, obstacles to free, and comfortable foot travel.
5. The LOS value of a map point is the cumulative value of all features accessible at that location.

**NEIGHBORHOOD ACCESS TO OUTDOOR RECREATION**

A series of “heat maps” were created to examine neighborhood access to recreation opportunities. All outdoor recreation providers account for the level of service values. Darker gradient areas on the images indicate where there are more and higher quality recreation assets available based on a one-mile service area. In general, these images also show that Stonecrest has a variable distribution of parks and facilities. Gray areas indicate that recreation opportunities are beyond a one-mile service area. Hatched areas represent areas that may be served by an alternative provider, but the extent of recreation services is not currently known.

Figure 31: Stonecrest Neighborhood Access to Outdoor Recreation Group



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Areas of higher concentration are notable around the City with the highest values in the area around Browns Mill Park. As an example, a red star indicates the highest GRASP® value area (122) in the image above. From the red star, a resident has access to 24 outdoor recreation components in 2 different locations and one indoor facility. There are also three schools with 12 components in this area. Further analysis of this perspective indicates that most of the Stonecrest residents are not within one mile of an outdoor recreation opportunity. Find additional statistics in the **Table 9**:

**Table 9: Map Statistics for Figure 31**

	A	B	C	D	E
	Percent of Total City with LOS	GRASP® Value Range	Average LOS per Acre Served	Avg. LOS Per Acre / Population per acre	GRASP® Index
Stonecrest	78%	0 – 122	37	16	5

**Column A:** Shows the percentage of the City that has at least some service (LOS >0). Stonecrest has a little different circumstance by providing services to such a large geographic area but with several different population centers. Seventy-eight percent is just below the average of comparable cities.

**Column B:** For any location on the map, there is a numerical value that corresponds to the orange shading called the GRASP® value and results from the overlay or cumulative value of the scores of components accessible from that location. Values for different locations on the map can be compared to one another, so a person in a location with a high value (darker orange) has greater access to quality recreation opportunities than a person in a lower value (lighter orange) area. Stonecrest GRASP® values range from a low of 0 to a high of 122.

**Column C:** Stonecrest’s value of 37 is well below the average and median GRASP® value for other comparable GRASP® agencies.

**Column D:** Shows the results of dividing the number from Column C by the population density of the area. Compared to agencies of a similar total population for which GRASP® data is available, Stonecrest’s population density is far lower than the other agencies. Stonecrest’s score of 16 is significantly lower than the other agencies.

**Column E:** The GRASP® Index, effectively the GRASP® value per capita, involves dividing the total value of all the components in the system by the population of Stonecrest. These last two numbers (column C and D) differ in two ways. First, the GRASP® Index does not factor in population density. Second, the GRASP® Index is derived using all components and does account for vital regional resources residents may access outside those limits. Stonecrest’s score of 5 is the lowest on the comparable list.

### GRASP® COMPARATIVE DATA

The table below provides comparative data from other communities of similar population to Stonecrest across the country. Because every community is unique, there are no standards or “correct” numbers. However, there are several interesting similarities and differences when making these comparisons. First, comparing the total number of locations, Stonecrest has the least number of parks when compared to similar agencies.



In the parks per capita and components per capita, Stonecrest is also lowest in the list at .2 parks and 1 component per 1,000 residents.



In contrast, though, the parks that the City does own are reasonably similar in average score and the average number of components per location.



In the end, these comparisons would indicate that Stonecrest residents have access to fewer parks and components than other similar size agencies. Still, the parks that they do have access to are relatively similar to other agency parks. Find these comparisons and others in the following table. Please note that the inventory and analysis only include Stonecrest owned properties. Residents may have additional access to recreation opportunities provided by alternative providers.

Table 10: GRASP® Comparative Data

STATE	CITY	YEAR	POPULATION	STUDY AREA SIZE (Acres)	# OF SITES (Parks, Facilities, etc.)	TOTAL # OF COMPONENTS	AVG. # COMPONENTS per SITE	TOTAL GRASP® VALUE (Entire System)	GRASP® INDEX	AVG. SCORE/SITE	% of TOTAL AREA w/LOS >0	AVG. LOS PER ACRE SERVED	NUMBER OF COMPONENTS PER POPULATION	AVERAGE LOS/POP DEN PER ACRE	Population Density (per acre)	% of Population with Walkable Target Access	People per Park	Park per 1k People
CO	Commerce City	2016	50,239	22,622	105	348	3	2382	47	23	94%	208	7	93	2.2	86%	478	2.1
MO	Blue Springs	2016	53,309	16,911	21	216	10	1074	20	51	99%	173.5	4	55	3.2	35%	2539	0.4
GA	Stonecrest	2020	54,439	24,497	11	66	6	248	5	23	78%	37	1	16	2.2	13%	4949	0.2
OR	Corvallis	2011	54,462	18,006	54	309	6	2217	41	41	93%	289	6	96	3.0	NA	1009	1.0
MO	Liberty	2013	56,041	53,161	39	298	8	607	11	16	57%	107	5	102	1.1	NA	1437	0.7

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## **WALKABLE ACCESS TO RECREATION**

Walkability analysis measures access to recreation components by walking. One-half mile catchment radii have been placed around each component and shaded according to the component's GRASP® score. Scores are doubled within this catchment to reflect the added value of walkable proximity, allowing direct comparisons between neighborhood access and walkable access.

*Walkability is a measure of how user-friendly an area is to people traveling on foot and benefits a community in many ways related to public health, social equity, and the local economy. Many factors influence walkability including the quality of footpaths, sidewalks or other pedestrian rights-of-way, traffic and road conditions, land use patterns, and public safety considerations among others.*

### **Pedestrian Barriers**

Environmental barriers can limit walkability. The LOS in this analysis has been “cut-off” by identified barriers where applicable.

Pedestrian barriers in Stonecrest, such as major streets, highways, streams, and rivers, significantly impact the analysis. Zones created by identified barriers, displayed as dark red lines, serve as discrete areas that are accessible without crossing a major street or another barrier. Green parcels represent existing parks and open space; pink parcels indicate schools.

The analysis shows the LOS available across Stonecrest, based on a ten-minute walk. Darker gradient areas on the images indicate where there are more and higher quality recreation assets available based on a half-mile service area. Gray areas on these maps indicate that recreation opportunities are beyond a ten-minute walk. In general, these images show that Stonecrest has limited distribution of parks and facilities. Hatched areas indicate that alternative providers exist in the area but did not factor into the inventory and assessments.

Figure 32: Walkability Barriers “cut-off” Service Areas Where Applicable

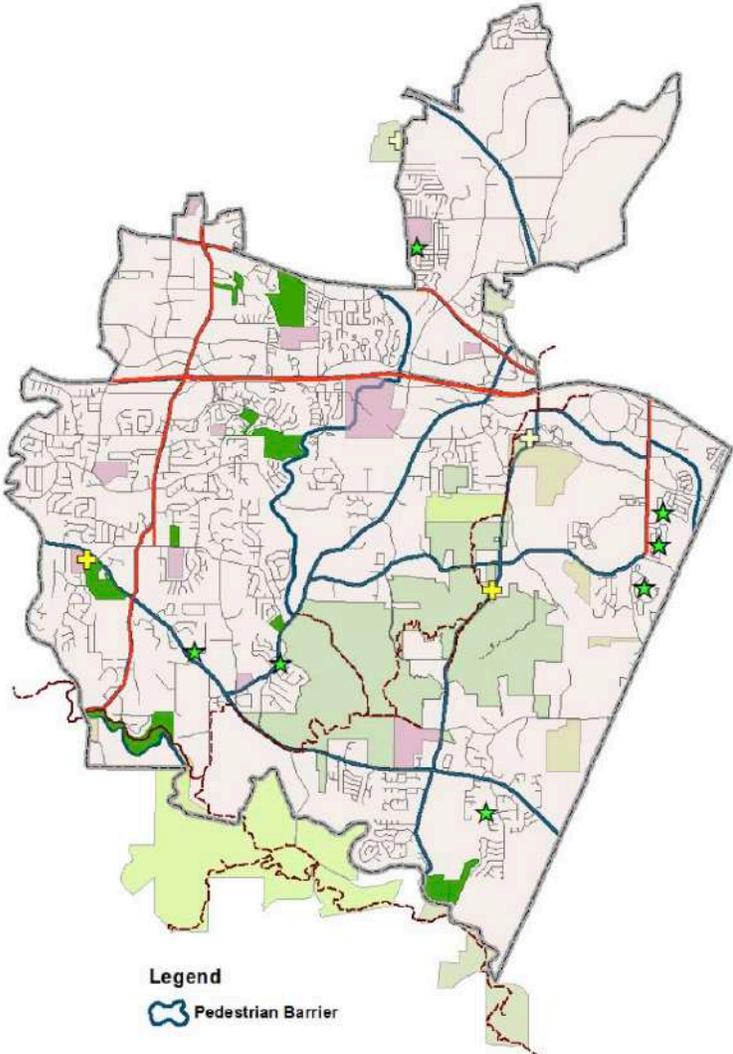
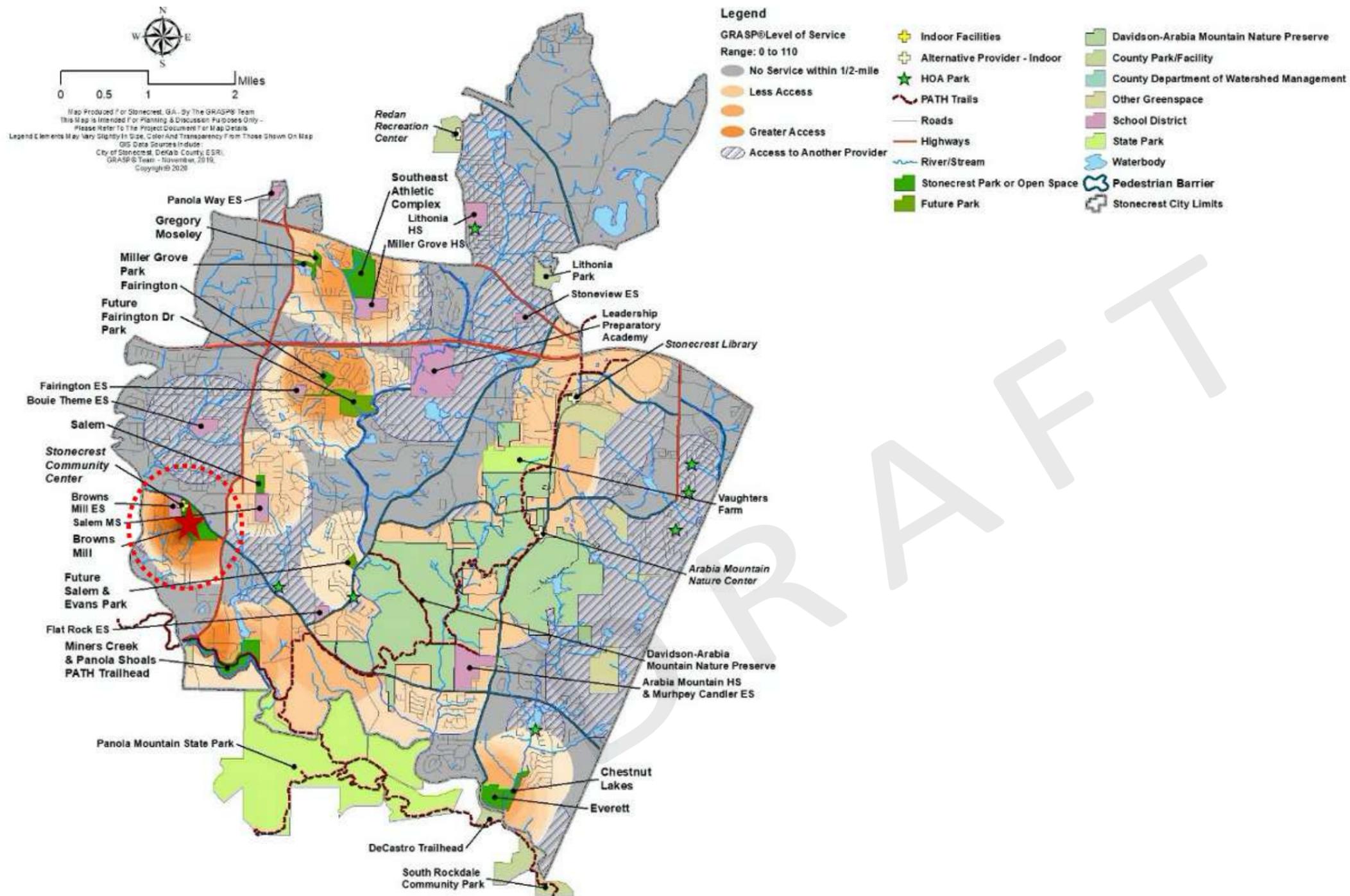


Figure 33: Walkable Access to Outdoor Recreation



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Areas of higher concentration are notable around the City with the highest value around Browns Mill Park. The red star indicates the highest GRASP® value area (110) in the image above. From the red star, a resident has access to 18 outdoor recreation components in 1 park, one indoor facility, and one school with three components.

**Table 11** shows the statistical information derived from perspective Walkable Access to Recreation analysis.

**Table 11: Statistics for Figure 33**

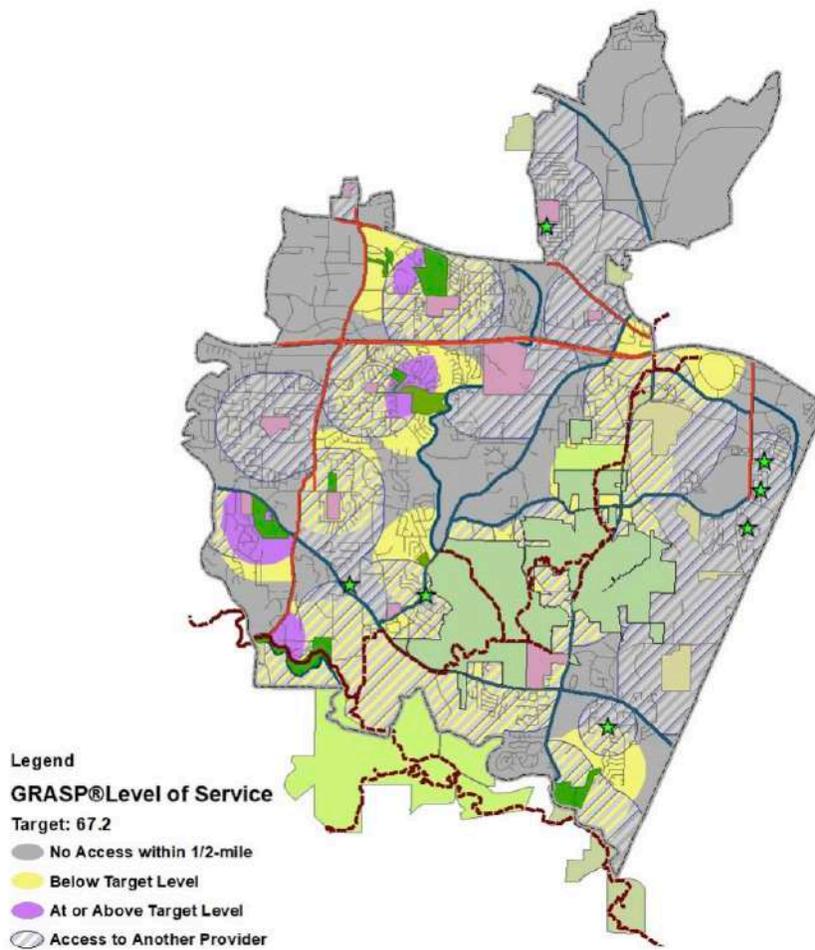
	A	B	C	D
	<b>Percent of Total with LOS</b>	<b>GRASP® Value Range</b>	<b>Average LOS per Acre Served</b>	<b>Avg. LOS Per Acre / Population per acre</b>
<b>Stonecrest</b>	42%	0 to 110	32	14

The numbers in each column are derived as described in neighborhood access. The GRASP® Index does not apply to the walkability analysis. The LOS value for a person who must walk to assets is about 90 percent (32 vs. 37) of that for someone who can drive for areas that have some access to recreation opportunities.

The orange shading in the maps allows for a quick understanding of LOS distribution across the City. Showing where LOS is adequate or inadequate is an advantage of using GIS analysis. First, we must determine what constitutes an appropriate level of service for Stonecrest residents. In most GRASP® analysis, a park with three to four components and access to a trail is considered a usual desired level of service.

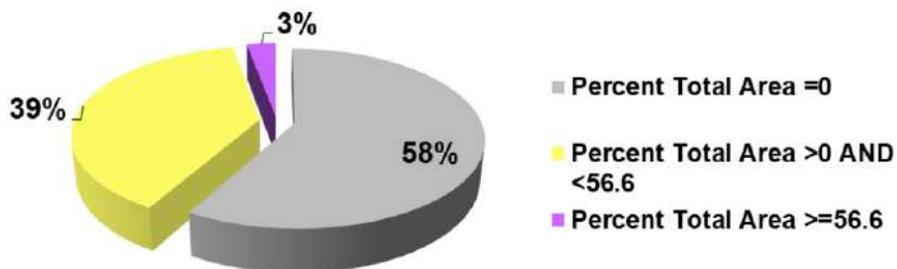
These parks have between three and four unique components. The components are likely to attract users from a walkable distance. The following maps bracket the level of service values to areas that are below or above the value provided by parks in this range and is known as the **target score** for Stonecrest. GIS analysis shows where LOS is above or below the threshold value. Purple areas indicate where walkable LOS values meet or exceed the target. Areas shown in yellow on the map can be considered areas of opportunity. These are areas where land and assets are currently available but do not provide the target value. It may be possible to improve the LOS value in such areas by enhancing the quantity and quality of features in existing parks without the need to acquire new lands or develop new parks. Another option might be to address pedestrian barriers in the immediate area. Hatched areas indicate an alternative provider such as a school, HOA park, or another agency facility may provide access to residents.

**Figure 34: Walkable Access Gap Identification**



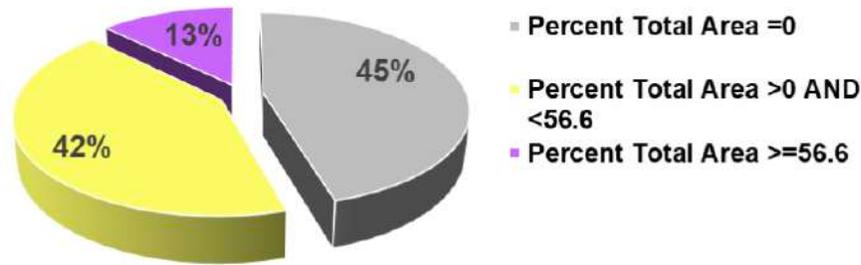
In **Figure 34**, areas shown in purple have LOS that exceeds the target value. Only about three percent of the City is above the target and over 58 percent of is outside of walkable access.

**Figure 35: Walkable Access to Assets Based on Percentage of Land Within the City**



Walkable access to assets based on the percentage of land within the City boundary that scores above threshold (purple) or below threshold (yellow), respectively.

**Figure 36: Walkable Access to Assets Based on Population**



**Figure 36** displays the level of service based on where people live. Using the walkable level of service data shown in Walkable Access to Recreation Gap Identification, as compared to census data provided by Esri GIS data enrichment techniques, the analysis indicates that parks are generally well placed in or close to residential areas and capture a higher percentage of the population than land area. With 55 percent of residents within walking distance of some outdoor recreation opportunities, Stonecrest is better positioned than the previous analysis indicated.

#### **Additional Discussion on Access to Outdoor Recreation**

While the above analyses are typical, they may not reflect the model that an agency such as Stonecrest may follow in the level of service provision. The expansiveness of the City likely makes it unfeasible for complete coverage at a walkable distance. On the other hand, the City may find its market is more in providing recreational opportunities to its residents at the broader drive-to distance, especially as the department is in its infancy.

#### **MORE ON UTILIZING GRASP® PERSPECTIVES**

GRASP® perspectives evaluate the level of service throughout an area from various points of view. Their purpose is to reveal possible gaps in service and provide a metric to use in understanding a recreation system. However, it is not necessarily beneficial for all parts of the community to score equally in the analyses. The desired level of service for a location should depend on the type of service, the characteristics of the site, and other factors such as community need, population growth forecasts, and land use issues. For example, commercial, institutional, and industrial areas might reasonably have lower Levels of Service for parks and recreation opportunities than residential areas. GRASP® perspectives focus attention on gap areas for further scrutiny.

Perspectives can determine if current levels of service are appropriate if used in conjunction with other assessment tools such as needs assessment surveys and a public input process. Future planning efforts can model similar levels of service to new, developing neighborhoods, or it may be that different levels of service are suitable, and the City should utilize a new set of criteria to reflect these distinctions.

**OTHER TYPES OF ANALYSIS**

Traditional analyses may also evaluate the recreational level of service.

**CAPACITIES ANALYSIS**

A capacity analysis is a traditional tool for evaluating service for parks and recreation. This table compares the number of assets to population and projects future needs based on providing the same ratio of components per population (i.e., as the population grows over time components may need to be added to maintain the same proportion). The issue or limiting factor, in this case, is that the current inventory for these components was limited to Stonecrest properties only and did not include other providers in the area. **Table 12** shows the current capacities for selected components in Stonecrest. While there are no correct ratios for these components, this table must be used in conjunction with other information, such as input from focus groups, staff, and the general public, to determine if the current capacities are adequate or not for specific components.

The usefulness of the capacity table to project future facility needs based on population growth, if the future population’s interests and behaviors are the same as today’s, and that today’s capacities are in line with today’s needs. The capacities table bases its analysis on the number of assets without regard to distribution, quality, or functionality. Higher LOS is achieved only by adding assets, regardless of the location, condition, or quality of those assets. In theory, the LOS provided by assets is more accurately a combination of location and quality as well as their quantity, which is why this table should be used with discretion, and only in combination with the other analyses presented here.

Table 12: Stonecrest Capacities

	Population	Aquatics, Lap Pool	Aquatics, Leisure Pool	Aquatics, Spray Pad	Basketball Court	Concessions	Diamond Field	Diamond Field, Complex	Educational Experience	Event Space	Loop Walk	Natural Area	Open Turf	Passive Node	Picnic Ground	Playground, Local	Rectangular Field, All Sizes	Shelter, Large	Shelter, Small	Tennis Court	Trail, Multi-use	Trailhead	Water Access, General	Water, Open
<b>INVENTORY</b>																								
Stonecrest		1	1	1	2	2	11	2	1	1	2	9	4	1	1	4	12	2	2	2	1	3	2	2
<b>CURRENT RATIO PER POPULATION</b>																								
<b>CURRENT POPULATION 2019</b>	54,439																							
Current Ratio per 1000 Population		0.02	0.02	0.02	0.04	0.04	0.20	0.04	0.02	0.02	0.04	0.17	0.07	0.02	0.02	0.07	0.22	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.02	0.06	0.04	0.04
Population per component		54,439	54,439	54,439	27,220	27,220	4,949	27,220	54,439	54,439	27,220	6,049	13,610	54,439	54,439	13,610	4,537	27,220	27,220	27,220	54,439	18,146	27,220	27,220
<b>PROJECTED POPULATION - 2024</b>	57,306																							
Total # needed to maintain current ratio of all existing facilities at projected population		1	1	1	2	2	12	2	1	1	2	9	4	1	1	4	13	2	2	2	1	3	2	2
Number that should be added by all providers to achieve current ratio at projected population		0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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**Table 13: Outdoor Park and Recreation Facilities – Median Population Served per Facility**

Outdoor Facility	Agencies Offering this Facility	Median Number of Residents per Facility	Stonecrest Residents per Facility	Stonecrest Current Quantity	Need to add to meet current median	Need to add with projected population
Residents Per Park*	NA	2,451	4,949			
Acres of Park Land per 1,000 Residents*	NA	8.4	6.5			
Basketball Courts	86.1%	7,260	27,220	2	5	6
Community Gardens	46.3%	27,167	NA	0	2	2
Dog Park	59.3%	37,500	NA	0	1	2
Playgrounds	94.4%	3,397	13,610	4	12	13
Swimming pools (outdoor only)	52.3%	26,474	NA	1	1	1
Skate Park	26.2%	41,148	NA	0	1	1
Tennis Courts	79.7%	5,217	27,220	2	8	9
Diamond Fields: baseball - youth	77.9%	16,360	4,949	11	-8	-7
Diamond Fields: softball fields - youth	60.9%	5,574			-1	-1
Diamond Fields: softball fields - adult	66.5%	9,494			-5	-5
Diamond Fields: baseball - adult	54.7%	8,216			-4	-4
Rectangular Fields: multi-purpose	66.1%	7,398	4,537	12	-5	-4
Rectangular Fields: soccer field - youth	48.1%	5,262			-2	-1
Rectangular Fields: soccer field - adult	40.9%	9,930			-7	-6
Rectangular Fields: football field	38.0%	20,398			-9	-9

\*Comparison based on median for 50,000 to 99,999 population comparison

The remaining comparisons are based on similar residents (38) per square mile (less than 500)

Orange shade represents current surplus based on comparisons

Comparing Stonecrest to recent national statistics published by the National Recreation and Park Association in their “2019 NRPA Agency Performance Review: Park and Recreation Agency Performance Benchmarks,” the agency fails to meet the median in all components except diamond and rectangle fields.

Similar calculations can also be made based on acres of land and parks per 1,000 residents. The following table includes all the properties included in the GIS mapping. Calculation of the acreage includes only Stonecrest parks. Residents per park and acres of parks per 1,000 people fall well short of the NRPA published benchmarks for similar size agencies for density.

Table 14: Acres of Park Land per 1,000 Residents

		2019 GIS Acres*
<b>INVENTORY</b>		
Stonecrest Parks		352
<b>Current Ratio of Park Acres per 1000 Population</b>		
<b>CURRENT POPULATION 2019</b>	54,439	
<b>Current Ratio of Park Acres per 1000 Population</b>		6.5
<b>Population per acre</b>		155
<b>PROJECTED POPULATION - 2024</b>	57,306	
<b>Total acres needed to maintain current ratio of City of Stonecrest existing facilities at projected population</b>		371
<b>Acres that should be added to maintain current ratio at projected population</b>		19
*Does not include 75 acres of future park lands		

### C. Key Conclusions

Proximity, availability of transportation, pedestrian barriers, and overall size of the City are relevant factors affecting Stonecrest levels of service. The current provision of assets is somewhat equitable across Stonecrest, assuming resident’s access to motorized transportation. The City provides neighborhood and walkable levels of service in some areas, while other regions may be more limited or only have access to alternative providers. All parks and their components in the system need improvements. Establishing recognizable standards for individual components will significantly increase the quality of the existing parks.

The most obvious way to increase overall LOS is to add assets in any lower service zones or acquire land or develop partnerships where current service is lacking. Significant gaps in neighborhood and walkable service exist throughout Stonecrest, and many of these regions may be residential. Inventory efforts for this study did not include alternative providers that are known to exist and may supplement the service at the neighborhood and walkable levels. Some neighborhoods have less access to quality recreation opportunities, while others have no walkable access. Pedestrian barriers and lack of trails and sidewalks also may limit access to recreation throughout Stonecrest. Additional analysis and a review of the information received from surveys, focus groups, and other sources, including staff knowledge, contribute to identify the best locations for future improvements.

### D. Park Concepts and Strategies

#### CONTEXT

There are eleven park sites in the City of Stonecrest park system – nine were inherited from DeKalb County during the incorporation process and two new sites were acquired within the City boundaries for park creation. Park concept plans have been developed for four of the sites: Browns Mill Park, Southeast Athletic Complex, Salem Park and a new property located at Fairington Club Drive (referred to as New Fairington Park in this document).

These parks were chosen for concept plan development because of their significance or archetypal qualities within the larger context of all the sites. Browns Mill Park and Southeast Athletic Complex are both sizeable sites offering many programs, facilities and uses and will be major components of the park system indefinitely. Salem Park is a neighborhood park that can serve as an example for other small parks. Ideas and strategies used in the plan development for Salem Park can be considered for all the other neighborhood parks in Stonecrest. New Fairington Park represents the future of the Stonecrest Park system. It is envisioned to be a significant community gathering space in the City and will have programming and features unique to its locale.

Concepts and strategies for the remaining parks in the system are addressed in bulleted format at the end of this section and include both general and specific action items and program elements. Concept plans for these four parks (Browns Mill Park, Southeast Athletic Complex, Salem Park and New Fairington Park) appear first and, in more detail, because action and activities used to improve and create at these parks will be prioritized as funding becomes available for improvements and future programming.

### **1. BROWNS MILL PARK**

Browns Mill Park is the shining star in the City of Stonecrest park system. It scored 98.4 in the GRASP analysis, placing it within the top ten percent of parks in cities of similar sizes within a national dataset (see GRASP analysis data). With a high ranking and use, it was consistently mentioned by citizens in all public forums as the park that they know and use most frequently in Stonecrest. Therefore, the concept plan for the 62-acre Browns Mill Park focuses largely on making improvements to the park to increase its viability and longevity. The principles that guided the concept plan are:

- Improve the existing facilities and amenities so they can better support existing and future park programming
- Add facilities and amenities to the underutilized areas of the park
- Improve the circulation within the park to reinforce Browns Mill Park as a destination location

One of the key factors in the conceptual plan for Browns Mill Park is to maintain the amenities that the park has and make refinements and improvements to them, so they function better for the park constituents. All major facilities and uses in the park have been retained – community center, athletic fields and courts, and the central water park which is operated by an entity separate from the City of Stonecrest and is not part of this Master Plan effort.

The community center is well used and has been upgraded in some areas in recent years. The plan calls for continuing improvements to the community center, so it can house more programming opportunities in the after-school, community gathering and athletic events departments. Immediately outside the center, the children’s playground should be brought up to safe and accessible standards and the area surrounding the playground should be expanded and re-envisioned as an outdoor learning environment to better support the school after care programming.

Browns Mill Park is one of several parks in the City of Stonecrest park system that offers athletic fields for use. These fields are maintained in their current location in the conceptual plan, but each field and the facilities that support them need restoration and renovation. Field restoration includes the stadium field and the six baseball fields located in the southern portion of the site. The concession building west of the stadium is the structure which needs the most renovation work of all the athletic structures. The baseball support facilities (dug outs, score balconies, etc.) will require only minor improvements. All these efforts underscore the first concept design principle: improve the existing facilities and amenities so they can better support existing and future park programming.

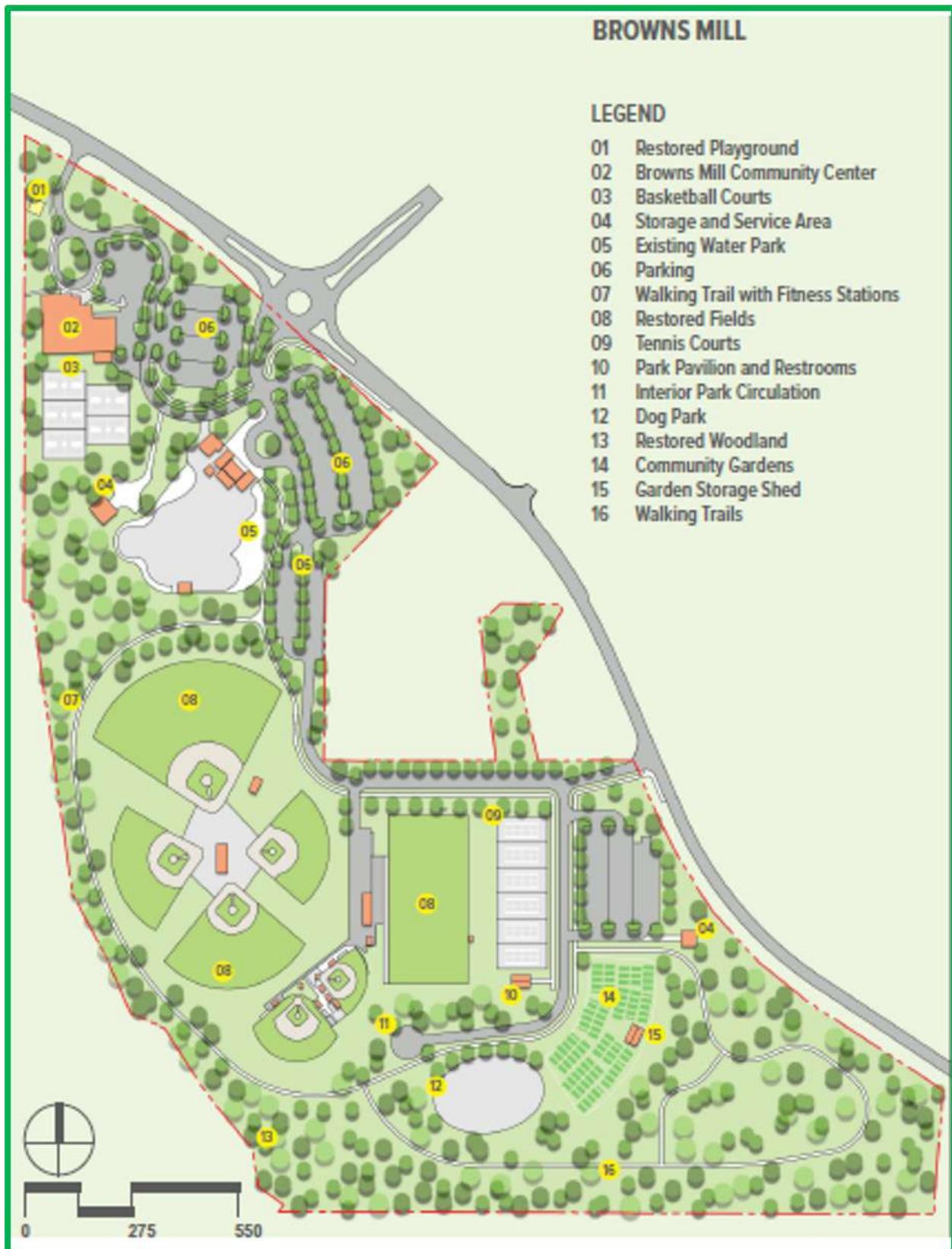
In addition to the existing athletic facilities, the concept plan expands court offerings by adding five basketball courts and six tennis courts. The basketball courts are located south of the community center with the expectation that they will be used by the after-school program for basketball and other court related games as well as group gatherings and outdoor meetings. The tennis courts are in the southern portion of the site, east of the stadium field.

General health and fitness were recurring themes that many citizens wanted to see expanded to all available parks in the City and the concept plan for Browns Mill creates a fitness trail with fitness stations that moves through the entire site. The fitness trail diversifies the athletic offerings at the park to serve a greater audience and reinforces another design principle: improve the circulation within the park to reinforce Browns Mill Park as a destination location – meaning that you can spend an entire day at Browns Mill Park and have plenty to keep you active and engaged.

A large portion of the 62-acre site of Browns Mill Park is wooded and currently inaccessible. The concept plan executes on the design principle: add facilities and amenities to the underutilized areas of the park by designating space for more park features. These included a park pavilion with restrooms, a dog park, community gardens, service and support structure, a gathering place for groups and restored and revitalized woodlands. Parking to support all the programming expansion and restored existing features gives more opportunity for more citizens to visit and enjoy the park.

One of the key issues raised by multiple constituents during the data gathering phase of the Master Plan was the repeated comment that “Browns Mill Park should have more programs.” This concept plan addresses the planning, spatial and facility requirements to allow for adding more activities and events to Browns Mill Park.

Figure 37: Browns Mill Park Map



## 2. SOUTHEAST ATHLETIC COMPLEX

Southeast Athletic Complex is a 97-acre site south of Covington Highway and north of Miller Grove High School and is the largest park site in the City of Stonecrest park system. It scored 63.8 in the GRASP analysis, placing it second in the rankings of the city's parks. As its name suggests, it is a field-sports-oriented park with soccer, multi-purpose and baseball fields. It hosts athletic events and – given these established field configurations and uses – the concept plan for Southeast Athletic Complex focuses largely on making improvements to the park to increase its functionality for athletic events and new programming and organizes the features to provide longevity for the park. The principles that guided the concept plan are:

- Celebrate the identity of Southeast Athletic Complex as a premier destination athletic facility
- Improve the existing facilities and amenities so they can better support existing and future park programming
- Add facilities and amenities to the underutilized areas of the park – in particular, amenities to balance the sports activities

Fields at Southeast Athletic Complex are maintained in their current location in the conceptual plan, but each field and the facilities that support them need restoration and renovation and the needed improvements apply to all the fields and field facilities. During the inventory and analysis phase, we noted that many commented on the fields at the park as being, “either too large or too small.” The concept plan maintains field locations but notes that with the creation of a specific program for the types and sizes of fields for tournament or regulation play (most specifically baseball and soccer) the fields can be easily adjusted in the plan and a new configuration can be approved by the city for adjusting plans to better suit the demands of the overall park.

At the center of the five central baseball fields, the concept plan calls for the renovation and re-envisioning of the concession and restroom facility and the plaza that connects all the fields. This is an important central gathering space and needs to be designed in a way that supports the spectator activity and provides a social gathering place for both athletes and spectators. Without appropriate restroom facilities or adequate space and support for food vending, any future event in the park will suffer. All improvements made to the central plaza and all fields will be a strong response to following the principle: improve the existing facilities and amenities so they can better support existing and future park programming.

The concept plan also addresses a programming issue for families who attend the park to watch an event but also have children or other people who are looking for a different activity. North of the central baseball fields, the concept plan outlines a location for a new children's playground, a park pavilion, complete with restrooms and a multi-purpose field that can also be used for smaller gatherings and events. The woodland in this northern portion of the site should be selectively cleared to accommodate these features and actively restored as a park space with native plantings that can also support outdoor exploration and educational programming.

The concept plan creates a park-wide walking and fitness trail complete with fitness stations. The trail links the entire park from north to south and provides interior park pedestrian circulation. This trail introduces a new version of exercise into the park program and is expanded further with the addition of a skate park and multi-purpose fields in the south portion of the site to host archery and other, more passive, field activities.

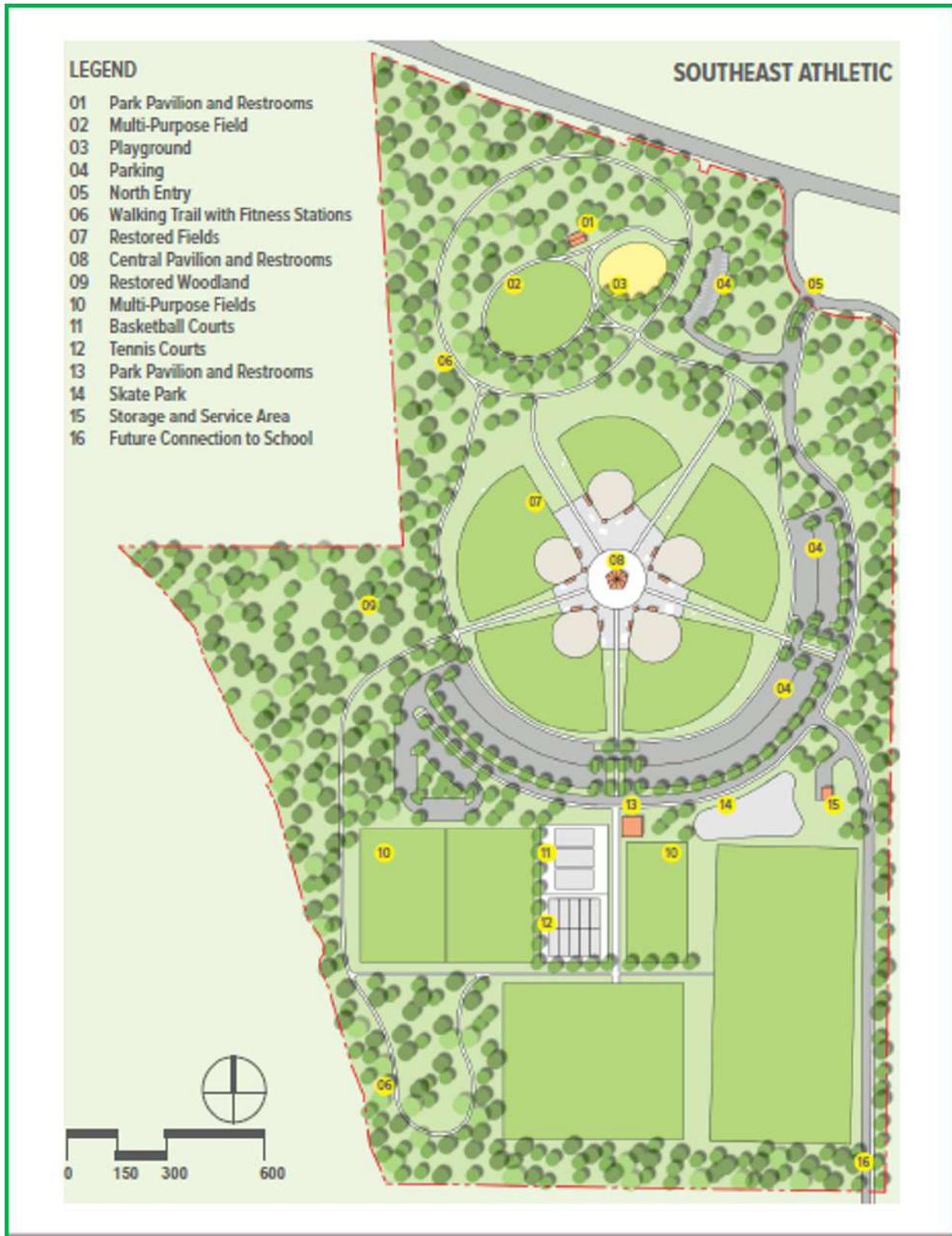
Courts are also included in the concept plan expansion of programmed athletic spaces. Ten new tennis courts and three new basketball courts are illustrated in the plan.

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The fields on the south side of the site are noted to be restored and expanded, providing a near-term solution for event space for large community and City gatherings. The southeast corner of the site shows a connection to Miller Grove High School to better facilitate events at the park and, when established, can allow for more parking on the school site to accommodate bigger events and less wear on the Southeast Athletic Park fields.

All these improved existing features and proposed new features combine to support the first principle: Celebrate the identity of Southeast Athletic Complex as a premier destination athletic facility.

Figure 38: Southeast Athletic Complex Map



### 3. SALEM PARK

Salem Park is an 11-acre site north of Salem Road and Salem Middle school. It is primarily used as a neighborhood park but could experience a greater draw of people from the community if the facilities were improved and expanded. The concept plan addresses existing and future conditions with the following design principles:

- Maintain Salem Park as a family and neighborhood gathering space
- Improve the existing facilities and amenities so they can better support existing and future park programming
- Add facilities and amenities to the underutilized areas of the park.
- Plan for future transportation needs by making a Salem Park a node in a greater circulation plan for the City

All the parks in the City system will require some level of restoration and refurbishment, and Salem Park is not an exception. One of the key factors in the conceptual plan for Salem Park is to maintain the amenities that the park has and make refinements and improvements to them, so they function better for the park constituents. All major facilities and uses in the park have been retained – multi-purpose field and surrounding path, pavilion, playgrounds, and court spaces.

The existing pavilion is well used but must be a priority for improvements. The improvements should also include adding space for storage and service on the east side of the structure to support park activities and maintenance. This addition to the facility will be served by a future service drive which is illustrated in the concept plan.

South and west of the park pavilion the two children’s playground space should be brought up to safe and accessible standards and the area south of the east playground should be expanded and re-envisioned as multi-purpose play field for more active running and movement away from the play equipment.

The large multi-purpose field and oval walking path should be restored, and a new walking and fitness trail should connect to the oval path in multiple locations. The walking and fitness trail will have stations along the transect and will begin and end a fitness area south of the field. These trails provided a way to activate and engage the woodland to the north with only selective clearing so that it maintains its native character.

New pavilions are proposed to provide more opportunities for small groups to gather and congregate and should be equipped with standard park resources like restrooms, picnic tables and cooking grills.

In addition to the existing park and playground facilities, the concept plan expands court offerings by adding three defined and striped basketball courts. The basketball courts are located on the west side of the entry sidewalk (north-south sidewalk) with the expectation that they can be used by a Salem Middle School after-school program for basketball and other court related games as well as group gatherings and outdoor meetings.

The concept plan uses a strategy to expand the demographic of the park and offer additional passive park programming opportunities, community garden beds are shown on the southwest portion of the site, complete with a storage shed to support the gardening activities.

As the City continues to develop alternative methods of transportation for its citizens, Salem Park can play an important role. With its neighborhood location, adjacency to Salem Middle School and plans for

a future sidewalk along Salem Road – the park is primed to become a node in the greater transit strategy for the City. The concept plan anticipates this shift and allows space for a future transit canopy or small pavilion.

**Figure 39: Salem Park Map**



#### 4. NEW FAIRINGTON PARK

New Fairington Park is a place-holder name for the park that will be built on the 62-acre site at the southern terminus of Fairington Parkway. Planned for the site of a former defunct golf course, the park will be the first new park built in the City of Stonecrest and – as the concept plan illustrates – will represent a diverse and interesting park program for the citizens of Stonecrest. The design principles for New Fairington Park that guide the concept plan are:

- Design the park as the primary future community gathering space for the City of Stonecrest
- Create park facilities, amenities and programming that does not exist in other park sites or is incompatible with other features in existing parks in the City Park System
- Explore improvements that encourage activities that contribute to the economic vitality of the City
- Create a park plan that can be phased over time to allow for expansion of spaces and programming as the City develops
- Reinforce connectivity within the park and to other recreational trails and facilities in the City of Stonecrest

One of the key notes derived from the survey conducted in the City was: Aquatic facilities are potentially not meeting the community needs as well as they could – so the New Fairington Park concept plan provides for a potential aquatic facility for the City in:

- Conjunction with the Community Center as shown in the concept plan; or
- As an independent facility located west of the Community Center as shown in the alternate concept plan

As expected, many comments from public forums and the city-wide survey addressed programming requests for the new park site. A few examples include (each identified issue is followed by an action item defined by the master plan team that can be addressed in the New Fairington Park):

- Not enough program opportunities
  - Evaluate and plan for increased programs within the community. Programs for teens, the developmentally disabled, physically challenged, etc.
- No programs for teens other than athletics
  - Teens are interested in outdoor adventure park opportunities; social opportunities; community partners
- Lack of cultural art and programs including public art, performing arts etc.
  - Create a plan to add the arts into the overall department programming and facility development
- There is a need for another recreation center in the city
  - Complete a feasibility study for a new facility that will serve the needs of citizens who are not able to access Browns Mill Recreation Center
- Add unique outdoor learning opportunities
  - Create an outdoor learning environment opportunity
- No outdoor performing/arts space
  - Examine the opportunity for a small outdoor amphitheater/plaza for small community gatherings and events; New Fairington Park should be considered for this facility
- Create botanical and community gardens
  - Consider for existing and future park lands

The concept plan for New Fairington Park provides program space for each of the issues and solutions. The plan translates to a design that is completely specific to this site. The new community center is the focal point of the entry drive and will house new park programs and – in conjunction with the new garden spaces – can be rented for events. Park elements that can sometimes be at odds with active parks – like community vegetable gardens and dog parks – are well placed and provided for here. And

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the slope to the creek will be utilized as a terrace gardens and amphitheater for events. On the east side a new fitness challenge course engages the slope for and exercise route.

Specific features of the new park include:

- Trail connections to existing Fairington Park and to the adjacent residential neighborhoods
- Restored woodlands and woodland gardens
- Botanical Garden with gardens highlighting the flora of the Piedmont region
- Dog Park and Dog Park Pavilion
- Walking and Fitness Trails
- Amphitheater and Event Space
- New Stonecrest Community Center and Aquatic Center
- Outdoor Classrooms
- Children’s Playground
- Park Pavilions and Restrooms
- Fitness Challenge Course and Meeting Pavilion
- Community Gardens with plots available for rent
- Multi-Purpose Fields for athletics or events

Figure 40: New Fairington Park Map



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## **5. FAIRINGTON PARK**

Fairington Park is a 14-acre neighborhood park located south of Fairington Parkway and east of Phillip Bradley Drive. Fairington Park will continue to operate as a local neighborhood park but will be an important node in the park system as it links to the New Fairington Park by way of trail access through the forest connecting both sites. Consideration for improvements and additions to the park should include:

- Thinning vegetation on the east side of the site to accommodate future programming
- A new internal trail that connects to the existing trail (around the small lawn) and gives visitors an opportunity to access the east side of the park
- Trail connection to the New Fairington Park (to the south and east)
- Trail connection to Ottawa Trail and the residential neighborhood (to the south and west)
- Repair the current parking surfacing and add parking to the eastern edge of the site to increase capacity
- Restore the existing multi-purpose fields
- Add a park pavilion with covered area for seating and dining and appropriately scaled restrooms
- Restore the playground area and install play equipment that meets safety regulations
- Add fitness equipment to compliment the equipment planned for New Fairington Park so that visitors can traverse between the two parks and use fitness equipment at both locations

## **6. GREGORY MOSELEY PARK**

Gregory Moseley Park is an 18-acre neighborhood park located north of Miller Grove Road. Gregory Moseley Park will continue to operate as a local neighborhood park but can expand its capacity and program offerings by making a connection to the undeveloped Miller Grove Property to the southwest of the site. The park property includes a small non-contiguous triangle of space that can be used as a location for signage or a small public art piece. Consideration for improvements and additions to the park should include:

- Thinning vegetation on the east side of the site (beyond the field) to accommodate future programming
- A new internal trail that connects to the existing trail (around the small lawn) and gives visitors an opportunity to access the east side of the park
- Trail connection to the Miller Grove property (crossing Miller Grove Road)
- Repair the current parking surfacing
- Restore the existing multi-purpose field on the east side of the site
- Repair and restore the court on site for basketball and other court-related activities
- Add a seating plaza to the existing park pavilion to increase the capacity for gatherings
- Use the slope in the central portion of the park to build a small amphitheater for gatherings
- Install a playground area and specify play equipment that meets safety regulations

## **7. MILLER GROVE PROPERTY**

The Miller Grove property is an 18-acre parcel located East of Panola Road and west of Miller Grove Road and is directly across the street from Gregory Moseley Park. By linking the two sites with a trail and street crossing connection, the neighborhood park offering doubles in size and becomes 36 acres. Consideration for improvements and additions to the park should include:

- Thinning vegetation on the entire site (selectively and with guidance from an arborist) to accommodate future programming
- Create a trail system that gives visitors access to the entire site.
- Trail connection and street crossing to Gregory Moseley Park
- Trail connection to the existing trail around Smith's Lake
- Build a park pavilion with covered area for seating and dining and appropriately scaled restrooms
- Build a parking area with access from Panola Road

## **8. SALEM ROAD AND EVANS MILL ROAD PROPERTY**

The property located at the intersection of Salem Road and Evans Mill Road and is one of the recently acquired properties planned for future park development. It is an 8-acre parcel and, though small, can become a central node in a larger trail and park plan if properties are acquired and developed to the north, south and east. Consideration for improvements and additions to the park should include:

- Thinning vegetation on the site to accommodate future programming
- A new trail system that gives visitors an opportunity to access the entire site
- Future trail connections to the north, south and east
- Build a parking area with access from Salem Road
- Build a park pavilion with covered area for seating and dining and appropriately scaled restrooms
- Build a boardwalk and platform area to host birdwatching and outdoor education sessions
- Construct an outdoor classroom and amphitheater for gatherings

## **9. MINER'S CREEK AND PANOLA SHOALS TRAILHEAD**

The Miner's Creek and Panola Shoals Trailhead property is an 80-acre site located south and east of Panola road and is below the South River bridge crossing on Snapfinger Road. The site has direct access to the South River and is one of two parks in the City of Stonecrest park system that provides direct access to the river (the other being Everett and the two parks provide water access on both east and west sides of the city). Consideration for improvements and additions to the park should include:

- Improving access to the water by building a stair or ramp from the parking area down to the shoreline
- Adding parking spaces to the existing lot to accommodate more vehicles
- Creating a boardwalk lookout point that has access from the parking area and overlooks the river below
- Add a restroom facility near the parking area for visitor's planning a hike into the site
- Improve and increase trails in the eastern portion of the site
- Make trail connections at multiple locations on the property to provide visitors multiple access points to the river

## **10. EVERETT PROPERTY AND CHESTNUT LAKES**

Combined, the Everett property and the Chestnut Lakes property total 111 acres (84 and 27 respectively). They are contiguous properties and are located east of Klondike Road and north of the South River. Portions of the Everett property and most of the Chestnut Lakes property are in the Crooked Creek floodplain. These properties are planned to give visitors access to the South River on the southeast side of the city. Consideration for improvements and additions to the park should include:

- Improving access to the water by building a kayak /canoe dock (or multiple docks) near the entry to the site(s) of Klondike Road
- Build a parking area near the entrance to the site(s) off Klondike Road
- Add a restroom facility near the parking area for visitor's planning a hike into the site
- Build a trail system in the eastern portion of the site
- Make trail connections at multiple locations on the property to provide visitors multiple access points to the river



## IV. KEY ISSUES

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

- Add unique outdoor learning opportunities
- Address accessibility: ADA, within existing and future neighborhoods
- Address safety concerns in all parks and facilities, including the safety of playground and athletic equipment
- Continue to develop partnerships and engage schools along with other surrounding communities
- Create a comprehensive signage and wayfinding plan for the park system
- Create an event and performing arts space
- Create a strong sense of community
- Diversify and increase the amenities offered at all the parks
- Improve connectivity, develop trails and walking paths
- Increase availability for indoor space for programs, fitness, gyms and meeting space
- Increase programming for events, youth, fitness, wellness, outdoor recreation and both youth and adult sports
- Maintain, improve and repair existing facilities
- Need new facilities: multigenerational community center, gym space, splash pads, dog parks, outdoor fitness, botanical gardens and community gardens
- Need standard park facilities at all parks: pavilions, seating opportunities and restrooms
- Preserve open space/land acquisition
- Provide access to the South River
- Promote Arabia Mountain as a City destination
- There is a need to seek additional funding sources: foundation, user fees, resource allocation and cost recovery models, and capital funding opportunities

Stonecrest Parks and Recreation staff were presented the Key Issues Matrix which is can be found **Appendix G**.

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# V. RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PLAN



## CONTEXT

Residents and community leaders are increasingly recognizing that parks and recreation facilities, programs, and services are becoming more and more essential in planning efforts for long term investments in economic sustainability and planning the vitality of desirable communities. The City of Stonecrest Parks and Recreation Department is committed to providing comprehensive, high quality parks, programs, facilities, and services to the community and the following recommendations will assist the department in moving forward.

## A. Moving Forward - Recommendations

After analyzing the findings from the master plan process, including the Key Issues Matrix, a summary of all research, the qualitative and quantitative data captured, inventory, LOS analysis, and input assembled for this study, a variety of recommendations have emerged to provide guidance in consideration of how to raise the bar for programs, facilities, and development for the City of Stonecrest. This section describes ways to enhance the level of service and the quality of life with improvements through organizational efficiencies, enhanced program and service delivery, facilities and amenities, and increased financial opportunities.

The following areas narrowed down the challenges that were identified as the focus areas for the master plan along with opportunities for growth.

## ORGANIZATIONAL

- Improve partnerships with alternative providers
- Establish a resource allocation/cost recovery process for programs
- Reevaluate and update the department Mission and Vision statements

The projected population of Stonecrest is expected to grow by 1.03 percent between now and 2032. The expectation and demand for services and programming will continue to increase. It will be important to improve relationships with non-profit partnerships and other alternative providers, such as the school system and faith-based community. The Department will benefit by developing a written resource allocation/cost recovery policy that will develop and create established goals. Developing a policy in resource allocation and cost recovery is a key component to maintaining an agency's financial control, its equitable pricing offerings, and helps it to identify core services including programs and facilities. Critical to this philosophical undertaking is the support and buy-in of elected officials and advisory boards, staff, and ultimately, citizens. Whether or not significant changes are called for, the Department should be certain that it philosophically aligns with its constituents. The development of a financial resource allocation philosophy and policy is built upon a very logical foundation, based upon the theory that those who benefit from parks and recreation services ultimately pay for its services.

As organizational changes develop, evaluating and updating the Mission and Vision Statement for the department will be a critical step moving forward as it defines the overall direction for the Parks and Recreation Department for the next five to ten years.

With limited indoor space, the City would benefit by evaluating current partnerships with the County, school system, local non-profits such as the YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, and surrounding municipalities. There is an opportunity to seek alternative partners that can assist the City by increasing and improving services.

### **PROGRAM AND SERVICE DELIVERY**

- Improve health and wellness opportunities
- Enhance and add special events across the City
- Address marketing and outreach efforts including the web site and social media platforms
- Enhance programming for teens
- Address gaps in the level of service and programming in the Northern section of the City
- Monitor participation in existing programs

The City of Stonecrest would benefit by exploring additional opportunities to provide programming that meets the demands of the community and creates equity throughout the City. The Department has many opportunities to increase its level of service and expand programming and recreational opportunities to the residents but has limited resources to fulfill the demand. Through the information gathering process, enhancing fitness and wellness opportunities, outdoor programs, events, concerts, sports, and swim/aquatic programs were identified as being important to households.

In addition to teens, there is a desire for additional programming opportunities for seniors, adult sports, and fitness. Senior programming is strong within the Department, and it is beneficial to continue to expand and offer programs that increase the variety and options available to this demographic. Adults expressed a desire for additional sports programming as well as providing events/activities that offer various social activities and meet the trends that have been identified for the community. Outdoor fitness options were identified as an opportunity to be placed in existing and future parks, trails and greenways, along with reevaluating the current use of space in the Recreation Center and identifying areas to make improvements and enhance the user's experience.

The City of Stonecrest has many natural areas within current parks. The Department would benefit by taking advantage of these nature areas and providing nature programming, education opportunities, hosting special events, and providing access to areas that are currently not available. In addition to nature opportunities, the Northern section of the county is an area that was identified as a gap in receiving services. Access to recreation opportunities should be addressed in this area, as well as marketing and outreach efforts.

Marketing and outreach to the community remains a challenge for many entities throughout the country. Stonecrest would benefit by creating a community engagement/marketing position and aligning it with a citywide branding effort and policy. Creating a marketing plan and identifying strategic forms of communication for all service levels within the City will improve outreach efforts of the Department and City overall on a consistent basis.

Special events are becoming a very robust and preferred trend in parks and recreation nationwide as noted in the results of the survey. The City has a few notable celebrations and is often a partner in other events within surrounding municipalities. Evaluating events and partnerships with those organizations

should be completed on a regular basis, identifying opportunities to make improvements. In order to continue growing the level of service provided. An emphasis should be placed on family-oriented activities that bring families to the parks and facilities. Identifying new trends in special events and varying locations would address equitable access for some areas of the City.

### **FACILITIES, AMENITIES, AND LEVEL OF SERVICE**

Proximity, availability of transportation, pedestrian barriers, and the overall size of the City are relevant factors affecting Stonecrest's levels of service within facilities and amenities. The current provision of assets is somewhat equitable across the City provided residents have access to transportation.

The Key Issues Matrix, summarized the community engagement focus group input as well as the survey and overall on-site assessments by the GreenPlay team. It can be noted that the City provides neighborhood and walkable levels of service in some areas, while other regions may be more limited or only have access to alternative providers. With the City's purchase of these older and somewhat under serviced parks and facilities, from DeKalb County, it should be noted that all of the parks and the components within them need improvements. Establishing recognizable standards for individual components will significantly increase the quality of the parks.

It will be important for the City to address lower service zones and consider acquiring land in those zones. The most obvious way to increase the overall level of service is to add assets in any lower service zones, acquire land, or develop partnerships where current service is lacking. Significant gaps in neighborhood and walkable service exist throughout Stonecrest, and many of these regions may be residential. Some neighborhoods have less access to quality recreation opportunities, while others have no walkable access. Pedestrian barriers and lack of trails and sidewalks also limit access to recreational opportunities throughout Stonecrest. The City should move forward on the development of the new Fairington Park land and consider adding pickleball courts, tennis courts, and basketball courts as the survey noted that the needs of those three areas were not being met.

### **FINANCE**

When considering options for funding parks and recreation within Stonecrest, the survey respondents noted that the City should consider grants, sponsorships, naming rights, and public and private partnerships as the primary financial source. Other options noted during community engagement meetings included the need for the City to develop a cost recovery philosophy and policy for parks, programs, and facilities. Developing equitable user fees with a "pay to play" philosophy would be within current national trends for sustainable parks and recreation programs and facilities.

In addition to the cost recovery recommendation, the City should evaluate a SPLOST funding extension and add a percentage for Parks and Recreation facilities in collaboration with a share of hotel/motel tax or the addition of a sales tax dedicated toward economic development for parks and recreation.

## **Goal 1: Continue to improve events, programs and service delivery**

### **Objective 1.1: Develop additional programs and services**

The City is home to an abundance of outdoor recreational amenities. The Department should continue to look for opportunities to expand recreational programs and activities based on community demand and current trends. The community would like to see an outdoor events plaza/facility, more fitness and wellness programs, followed by community events, the expansion of swim lessons/aquatic programs, cultural arts programs for teens. The City has great access to outdoor recreational opportunities beyond athletics. These are resources that are focused on outdoor active recreation programming such as hiking and environmental education. Programming should be fostered and expanded at Arabia Mountain, Miners Creek, Pinola Shores, and other areas where opportunities exist for program and improved service.

In addition to active outdoor recreation opportunities, the City should promote passive opportunities throughout the area. Passive activities and facilities require fewer resources from the Department and can enhance the programming efforts. The Department should continue to monitor recreational trends and community needs to stay current with programming and demand. As new programs and services are developed and implemented, continue to create a balance between passive and active recreation.

### **Objective 1.2: Explore and expand opportunities for additional community events**

As identified by focus groups and survey respondents, events are an important aspect to consider for the future. Expanding opportunities and enhancing special event programming was identified as a priority and the Department should work with service providers to explore new special events. The Department should continue to look for opportunities and possibly help to facilitate the growth of community events. Events that reflect the diversity of the community should be noted and open to all. The Department should engage volunteers from the community and relevant organizations in to expand community events and activities based on the community's demand and trends.

### **Objective 1.3: Expanding Cultural Arts**

The Department should explore, expand, and provide a plan for public art opportunities throughout the community. During the focus group meetings and survey process, participants identified the importance of cultural arts. Adding public art in parks and recreational facilities can add visual value to spaces as well as create new opportunities for engagement. Other suggestions for the expansion of cultural arts which the City should consider could be public art displays such as artistic sculpture in parks, art, music, and concerts in the parks, theater performances, visual and performing art lessons and other ideas that the community may recommend.

## Goal 2: Improve Facilities and Amenities

### Objective 2.1: Maintain and improve existing facilities with aging infrastructure

Maintenance of facilities and amenities should become a priority. The Department should continue to monitor the condition of existing parks, trails and pathways, and facilities, as these facilities have been identified by residents as being of high importance. Providing additional staff and resources to ensure continuous upkeep and long-term maintenance of these areas should be considered. Maintenance staffing should be monitored and seasonal staff added as needed to meet current demand for services. Regular inspections of all facilities, parks, trails, and open spaces should continue. Maintenance projects and annual maintenance needs should be funded on a regular schedule to address the aging infrastructure. Priorities for future maintenance projects for these areas should be developed and reviewed regularly. Capital improvement plans, costs, and phasing recommendations and implementation plans should be developed addressing low scoring parks and amenities from the master plan. Use the master plan inventory and evaluation of amenities to develop CIP priorities to repair, replace and upgrade existing amenities in parks. Appropriate funding should be provided to address the capital improvement plans.

### Objective 2.2: Expand greenways, bike paths, and connectivity of trails

Linking every possible Stonecrest park and recreation facility with a network of safe paths, trails and/or sidewalks is an important step in creating a great park system. Trail and path connectivity were identified as a high priority during the engagement process. Based on trends and demand, the Department should look for opportunities to improve/add trail and pathway connectivity and develop a priority list.

Trails, fitness, wellness and connectivity were identified through the needs assessment process as being important to the community. With current trends and demand, the Parks and Recreation Department should look for opportunities to partner with other non-profit organizations, City Transportation, Planning and Economic Development Departments, and developers to improve and add trails with destination connectivity in the forefront. Other City plans such as a Bicycling Pedestrian Plan or Transportation Plan could serve the community needs at various levels. The City should consider developing a Trails Master plan in the future to identify potential trails and multiuse pathways to park destination points as well as capitalizing on other amenities along the routes such as retail, health and wellness, and to create safe opportunities for the community to connect beyond vehicular means.

Additional key concepts identified through the level of service analysis to expand trails and improve the connectivity of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure that should be considered are:

- An exemplary trail system provides multiple opportunities for users to utilize trail segments to access different parts of the City directly or enjoy recreational circuits of various sizes. By employing park trails, city trails, and regional trails, users should ideally be able to select from several options to reach a destination or spend time recreating. Simple, early steps such as creating preferred routes and loops on city sidewalks or low traffic streets are a great place to start.
- Within Stonecrest, there are several parking areas, trailheads, and less formal points where residents can access this trail. Miners Creek and Panola Shoals PATH Trailhead highlights these entry points. Also, the Stonecrest Mall and Stonecrest Library are primary access points but do not offer formalized trailheads. Building off of this existing network could offer tremendous opportunities for Stonecrest to expand access to trails throughout the rest of the City.
- Development and implementation of a wayfinding signage program for pedestrians and cyclists. The program should cover signage standards, directional and distance signage, maps, branding guidelines, and the integration of apps. The wayfinding system, when successfully implemented, will help connect residents and visitors to greenways, bike paths, and trails, as well as create an

awareness of these amenities. These should all be accomplished in coordination with the county-wide greenways development planning.

**Objective 2.3: Add aquatic amenities to existing and future parks**

The Department should explore splash pad opportunities and identify locations for installation throughout the parks system. Splash pads provide aquatic programming needs and can serve as a park destination by offering alternative means to swimming pools. If a feasibility study confirms the need for a new aquatic center, a location within the New Fairington Park has been identified (see concept plan).

**Objective 2.4: Continue to improve ADA accessibility at all facilities**

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

The Department should continue to inspect existing facilities, conduct self-evaluations, and update its transition plan as needed to continue to improve accessibility for all citizens. As facilities are upgraded, the installation of inclusive playground and park equipment should be considered as 11 percent of Stonecrest households require ADA accessible facilities and services. Ongoing self-evaluation and development of an ADA Transition Plan must be a high priority for the Department and will be an important first step in creating a park system for every Stonecrest resident.

**Objective 2.5: Upgrade existing playgrounds**

As identified by focus groups and survey respondents, making upgrades to and improving existing playgrounds should be a considered. The Department should explore opportunities to enhance the playground structures and the surfacing surrounding playgrounds.

**Objective 2.6: Explore opportunities to fill the identified gaps in the Level of Service Analysis**

The importance of addressing low scoring components and amenities along with the significant gaps in service for future residential growth areas is critical to all citywide planning efforts. As the City grows and development takes place, the master plan inventory and Level of Service Analysis serve as the tool which the City should utilize when prioritizing capital improvement plans, costs, and phasing recommendations. The concept plans address this objective and places many of the new amenities in underutilized spaces within the existing parks.

**Objective 2.7: Seek additional outdoor open space and parks**

The Department should look for opportunities to acquire new park lands near newer, or underserved neighborhoods and refer to the recommendations outlined in the Level of Service Analysis which identified potential gaps in service within the community. The Department should continue to assess available land for future park development. Opportunities to increase open space and passive recreation through the development of new parks should be considered.

Natural areas should be preserved for opportunities focused on outdoor programming and facility needs suggested from the survey where 70 percent of respondents rated the importance of open space/natural areas as very important and community parks at 74 percent, trails and pathways at 71 percent and aquatic facilities at 71 percent.

### **Objective 2.8: Upgrade convenience and customer service amenities to existing facilities**

As noted in the Level of Service and GRASP analysis, many facilities ranked low on components and the City should consider upgrades and improvements such as adding shade, restrooms, water bottle filling stations, drinking fountains, security lighting, public art and other amenities. The concession stand at Browns Mill Park should be replaced with a more accessible and food service suitable facility.

### **Objective 2.9: Improve maintenance standards and plans**

The implementation of a standardized maintenance plan with task lists should be a priority for the department in order to provide quality facilities, well-maintained parks and grounds, and sustainable maintenance practices. A key step in this process will be to keep an open line of communication with the contracted organization on the recommend task lists as a means of accountability and level of service. It will be important to re-visit the maintenance agreement annually to confirm that this is the most efficient process including a thorough knowledge base of athletic field management, playground safety inspections, aquatic facilities and other areas where expert knowledge is required.

## **Goal 3: Continue to Improve and Enhance Organizational Efficiencies**

### **Objective 3.1: Improve and enhance internal and external communication to promote Stonecrest Parks and Recreation parks, facilities, and programs**

As a department that is just over a year old, the importance of developing and adding communication methods to the Department's portfolio will only enhance the success of programs and build a strong and supportive foundations among staff and within the community. To be successful, the Department should develop a marketing plan that will guide communication and promotion of its activities and facilities. Such a marketing effort will create greater awareness of the City's recreation offerings and should include branding of the City of Stonecrest as an outdoor destination. The Department's role in creating experiences in the outdoors through use of social media, the Department website and partnership opportunities should be utilized consistently. This could involve additional staff on a contractual basis.

### **Objective 3.2: Coordinate efforts with contracted non-profits, DeKalb County, and schools to promote and partner on shared use of facilities and partner with events**

The Department's outreach and engagement efforts should continue to use a variety of methods to engage the community in current and future parks, recreation, and trails planning efforts. Stonecrest is a diverse recreation-based community, and the Department should strengthen its efforts to promote and create awareness of the amenities available as well as promote the public health benefits. As such, it is important to provide accessible, well maintained open spaces to help improve the health and vitality of the community. In addition to health benefits, the Department should promote the impact of natural resources for economic sustainability. A focus moving forward should be to bring awareness to natural and outdoor recreation as a key role in tourism and economic development for the City.

### **Objective 3.3: Explore and Implement a Cost Recovery and Resource Allocation program philosophy and practice for a strong return in revenues**

The Department should track expenses and revenues (cost recovery) for programs and events by implementing a formal resource allocation and cost recovery philosophy, model, and policy that is grounded in the values, vision and mission of the City. The GreenPlay team conducted a workshop for staff on the Pyramid Methodology and provided resource materials for the staff. Developing a pricing methodology that reflects the community's values, while generating revenues to help sustain Stonecrest's facilities, parks, programs, and services would be a valuable tool moving forward.

### **Objective 3.4: Engage and broaden the involvement of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board**

Review existing policies and bylaws for the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and make needed revisions that will support the structure of ongoing improvements to the Department's operations and service to the community.

## **Goal 4: Increase Financial Opportunities**

### **Objective 4.1: Implement the model for Cost Recovery/Resource Allocation**

The Department will benefit by developing a written resource allocation/cost recovery policy that will develop and create established goals. Developing a policy in CR/RA is a key component to maintaining an agency's financial control, equitable pricing offerings, and helps to identify core services including programs and facilities. Critical to this philosophical undertaking is the support and buy-in of elected officials and advisory boards, staff, and ultimately, citizens.

### **Objective 4.2: Seek additional funding opportunities**

In an effort to see additional funding for parks and recreation, strong consideration should be given to SPLOST, the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax. SPLOST may be used for capital purchases and areas focused on transportation. Other areas that the City should consider for funding include:

- Seek increased General Fund allocation to address recommendations from the Master Plan and increased capital funding.
- The assessment of developer impact fees for new construction that has the ability to add additional users of parks and facilities. The implementation of impact fees for development in unincorporated portions of the City could supplement current funding for large capital projects.
- Donations, grants, and sponsorships are other funding mechanisms that could be used provided a strict contract and agreement policy is set in place. This type of funding opportunity is generally short term, specific to a project or amenity, and normally require matching funds. These strategies are a great source of supplemental funds but are not a long-term solution.
- For long term funding of park maintenance, the City could consider a transient tax that would tax visitors who stay in hotels, bed and breakfasts, and short-term rentals (i.e. Airbnb).
- Another consideration would be the addition of a sales tax that would be designated toward specific items.

## B. Action Plan, Cost Estimates and Prioritization

The following Goals, Objectives, and Action Items for the recommendations are drawn from the public input, inventory, level of service analysis, findings feedback, and all the information gathered during the master planning process with a primary focus on maintaining, sustaining, and improving Stonecrest's parks, recreation, open space, and trails. All cost estimates are in 2020 figures where applicable. Most costs are dependent on the extent of the enhancements and improvements determined or known at this time.

Timeframe to complete is designated as:

- Short-term (up to 3 years)
- Mid-term (4-6 years)
- Long-term (7-10 years)

**Table 15: Action Plan Table**

### Goal 1: Continue to improve events, programs and service delivery

#### Objective 1.1:

#### Develop additional recreation programs and services

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
1.1.a Identify and explore increased programming opportunities for teens, special needs, active adults, and families at Browns Mill	N/A	Staff Time, program supplies, and equipment	Ongoing Priority
1.1.b Partner with other providers in the areas of aquatics, camps and fitness opportunities to increase programming such as swim lessons, wellness, and unique camp opportunities	N/A	Staff Time, supplies and equipment	Ongoing

1.1.c Develop and implement a plan to increase outdoor recreation programs and opportunities promoting outdoor adventure, nature, environmental, and passive recreational experiences	N/A	Staff Time	Ongoing
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**Objective 1.2:**

**Explore and expand opportunities for additional community events**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
1.2.a Expand special event programming by considering trends and demand to expand and build a sense of community.	N/A	Staff time to plan and conduct events - budgeting	Short-term
1.2.b Partner with suitable community and volunteer organizations to host events.	N/A	Staff time and contracted services for sound and set-up options	Ongoing

**Objective 1.3:**  
**Expand cultural arts**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
1.3.a Create a plan to add public art classes, lessons, and programs throughout the community.	Varies based on project	Staff time, supplies, and contractual services	Short-term
1.3.b Expand performing arts, sculpture in the parks and facilities, and concerts/music	TBD - Costs for facility improvements and installations	Staff time, supplies, contractual services	Short-term

**Goal 2: Improve Facilities and Amenities**

**Objective 2.1:**  
**Maintain and improve existing facilities with aging infrastructure**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
2.1.a The Department should continue to monitor the condition of existing parks, trails and pathways, facilities, and open spaces, as these facilities have been identified by residents as being of high importance. The Department can address lower scoring components and amenities from the Master Plan inventory by upgrading, replacing, or repurposing components or amenities where appropriate.	Will vary based on projects	TBD	Short-term

<p>2.1.b Capital improvement plans, costs, and phasing recommendations and implementation plans should continue to be developed to prioritize items/ projects following the recommendations of the concept plans and Master Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate funding should be provided to address the capital improvement plans.</li> </ul>	<p>Total all costs following approval of Master Plan</p>	<p>Ongoing maintenance costs</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
<p>2.1.c Capital equipment replacement needs</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Staff time or possible contract with consultant</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>2.1.d Develop safety improvement plans for the entire park system including upgrades to lighting, installation of call boxes and a comprehensive review of sight lines and safety standards.</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Staff time or possible contract with consultant</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
<p>2.1.e Develop a site furnishings standard for the Stonecrest park system including, seating, bollards, benches, waster receptacles, etc.</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Staff time or possible contract with consultant</p>	<p>Short-term</p>

2.1.f Develop a signage, graphics and wayfinding standard for the Stonecrest park system to better align all of the parks for consistency.	TBD	Consultant	Short-term
2.1.g Review all Concept Plans (both graphic and written) and use them to create more detailed plans for each park (New Fairington Park is covered in a separate action item).	TBD	Staff Time	Short-term
2.1.h Add restrooms to prioritized locations	\$75,000 average per restroom	Staff time to manage	Short-term Mid-term
2.1.i Add park pavilions to prioritized locations	\$35,000 average per pavilion	Staff time to manage	Short-term/Mid-term

**Objective 2.2:**

**Expand greenways, bike paths, and connectivity of trails**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
2.2.a Participate and contribute to the Stonecrest Transportation Plan development process, which is currently underway	NA	Staff Time	Short-term

<p>2.2.b Continue working with other City Departments to develop and expand trails and pathways to connect communities, neighborhoods, and parks.</p>	<p>Will vary based on material and construction</p>	<p>Staff Time</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>2.2.c Review Stonecrest Park Concept Plans (graphic and written) to identify and confirm trail plans outlined and described for each park.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Staff Time</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
<p>2.2.d Develop and maintain a priority list for improving and adding trails and pathways.</p>	<p>Will vary for each project</p>	<p>Staff Time</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

**Objective 2.3:****Add aquatic amenities to existing and future parks**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
<p>2.3.a Conduct a Feasibility/ Conceptual Study to determine the feasibility and best method to gain community support for an indoor aquatic center.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop priorities for an aquatic center along with conceptual plans, financial projections for construction, and budget projections, and pro-forma for operations.</li><li>• Funding plans and obtaining community support should be a focus of this study.</li></ul>	Dependent on how the Feasibility /Conceptual Study is conducted	Staff Time or possible contract with a consultant	Short-term
<p>2.3.b Identify parks in the system as potential candidates for splash pads.</p>	N/A	Staff Time	Short-term
<p>2.3.c Work with a splash pad manufacturer/installer to confirm budget and specifications for splash pads at designated locations.</p>	N/A	Staff Time and/or possible contract with a consultant	Short-term

2.3.d Execute the installation of splash pads at the designated locations.	TBD	Staff Time	Short-term
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**Objective 2.4:  
Improve ADA accessibility at all facilities**

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
2.4.a The Department should continue to work to make its programs and services accessible to people with disabilities. Ongoing self-evaluation must be a high priority for the Department especially in terms of access.	Will vary based on projects	TBD	Ongoing
2.4.b Development of an ADA Transition Plan must be a high priority for the Department especially in terms of access.	N/A	Staff time or possible contract with a consultant	Short-term

**Objective 2.5:  
Upgrade existing playgrounds**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
2.5.a Reconstruct and re-install playgrounds (including equipment and surfacing) at park locations where they were previously removed. Ensure all playground components meet code and safety standards.	Will vary based on projects	Staff time or possible contract with a consultant	Short-term
2.5.b Explore opportunities to enhance the playground structures and the surfacing surrounding playgrounds at additional park locations.	Will vary based on projects	Staff Time	Short-term
2.5.c Review Concept Plans (both graphic and written) to identify future playground needs and create a document with products and manufacturers to use again.	N/A	Staff Time	Short-term

**Objective 2.6:**

**Explore opportunities to fill the identified gaps in the Level of Service Analysis**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
<p>2.6.a Review the Level of Service Analysis in conjunction with the Concept Plans (both graphic and written) and develop a priority list that can be compared and coordinated with other department tasks lists.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>In particular, review all action items for any overlap, i.e. plan to add restrooms, pavilions, update playgrounds, etc.</li></ul>	<p>Will vary based on projects</p>	<p>Staff Time</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

**Objective 2.7:****Seek additional outdoor open space and parks**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
<p>2.7.a The Department should follow the recommendations detailed in the Level of Service Analysis which identified potential gaps in service within the community. The Department should continue to assess available land for future park development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities to increase open space and passive recreation through the development of new parks should be considered.</li> </ul>	<p>Will vary based on location and future amenities added</p>	<p>Will vary based on location and future amenities added</p>	<p>Short-term/Mid-term</p>
<p>2.7.b Develop an Open Space Preservation Policy that identifies appropriate types of use and limits development of existing open spaces. Use the new property at the intersection of Salem Road and Evans Mill Road as a case study.</p>	<p>Dependent on the engagement of a consultant</p>	<p>Staff time or possible contract with a consultant</p>	<p>Short-term/Mid-</p>
<p>2.7.c Collaborate with land trusts, and other organizations to identify, acquire and or preserve open spaces.</p>	<p>Will vary based on complexity of each project</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Short-term</p>

2.7.d Create a detailed program and Master Plan for the New Fairington Park.	\$60,000-\$85,000	TBD	Short-term
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**Objective 2.8:**

**Upgrade convenience and customer service amenities to existing facilities**

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
2.8.a The concession stand at Browns Mill Park should be replaced with a more accessible and food service suitable facility	\$15,000	Staff Time	Short-term
2.8.b The concession stand at Browns Mill Park should be replaced with a more accessible and food service suitable facility.	\$70,000	Staff Time	Short-term
2.8.c Review the Concept Plans (both graphic and written) and create a priority list for upgrading additional convenience and customer service amenities at existing facilities.	N/A	Staff Time	Short-term

**Objective 2.9:**  
**Improve maintenance standards and plans**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
2.9.a Conduct an internal review of maintenance contractors and contracts and confirm they are meeting the current and future needs of the parks and the parks system.	N/A	Staff Time	Short-term
2.9.b Develop a maintenance plan using a national park-standard guideline and implement standardized evaluation methods and instruments to measure and track the level of quality of maintenance of facilities and amenities on a regular basis.	Dependent on the engagement of a consultant	Staff time or possible contract with a consultant	Short-term
2.9.c Maintenance staffing should be monitored and adjusted as needed to meet current demand for services.	N/A	Staff time, potential costs for FTEs, PTEs and/or seasonal staff	Ongoing
2.9.d Maintenance projects and annual maintenance needs should be funded on a regular schedule. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Priorities for future maintenance projects for should be developed and reviewed regularly.</li> </ul>	Will vary based on projects	TBD	Short-term

**Objective 2.10:**  
**Increase community access to the South River**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
2.10.a Design and construct stair and ramp access from the parking lot to the shore area at the Panola Shoals Trailhead.	\$35,000	Staff time or possible contract with a consultant	Short-term
2.10.b Design and construct a kayak /canoe launch and landing at Panola Shoals Trailhead.	\$15,000	Staff time or possible contract with a consultant	Short-term
2.10.c Design and construct trails in the Miner’s Creek Park to provide visitors additional River access points.	\$15,000	Staff time or possible contract with a consultant	Mid-term
2.10.d Design and construct a kayak / canoe launch and landing at the Everett property.	\$25,000	Staff time or possible contract with a consultant	Short-term

**Goal 3: Improve and Enhance Organizational Efficiencies**

**Objective 3.1: Improve and enhance internal and external communication to promote Stonecrest’s parks, facilities, and programs.**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
3.1 a Develop a marketing plan to improve and enhance internal and external communications and promote Stonecrest Parks and Recreation parks, facilities and programs	N/A	Addition of a marketing and public relations line item	Ongoing
3.1.b Utilize social media, the Department’s website, and collaborative community efforts consistently. Stay in front of your citizens.	N/A	Staff Time	Ongoing

**Objective 3.2:****Dedicate staff to explore a cost recovery and resource allocation philosophy**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
3.2.a Designate a staff member to lead this effort in cooperation with City leadership including the City Manager and Finance Department.	N/A	Staff Time Cost of training and implementation	Short-Term
3.2.b Evaluate and develop a pricing method that reflects the community's values and economic viability	N/A	Staff Time	Ongoing

**Objective 3.3:****Engage and broaden the involvement of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
3.3.a Engage the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board as advocates for department wide efforts. They should be involved in policy recommendations and operations.	N/A	Staff Time	Ongoing

**Goal 4: Increase Financial Opportunities**

**Objective 4.1:**

**Seek additional funding opportunities**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
4.1.a Seek increased General Fund allocation to address recommendations from the Master Plan and increased capital funding.	Will vary based on projects recommended	Staff Time	Short-Term
4.1.b Designate 5% of SPLOST funding for capital and trail projects for Parks and Recreation Department initiatives	N/A	Staff Time Increased Revenues	Short-Term Priority
4.1.c Implement developer impact fees for new construction	Will vary based on projects recommended	Staff Time Increased Revenues	Mid-Term
4.1.d Seek donation, grant, and sponsorship opportunities through the development of an “funding opportunity packet” for the entire department and should include a naming rights policy.	N/A	Staff Time	Ongoing
4.1.e Explore the feasibility of a transient tax for long term funding for park maintenance.	N/A	Staff time	Long-Term

**Objective 4.2:**  
**Implement the model for Cost Recovery/Resource Allocation**

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
4.2.a Develop a resource allocation and cost recovery philosophy, model and policy that is grounded in the values, vision, and mission of the City of Stonecrest	\$45-\$65k if contracted	Staff Time	Mid-Term
4.2.b Establish a pricing methodology that continuously reflects community values, while generating adequate revenues to sustain Stonecrest’s facilities, parks, open space, programs, and services. Review the user fee structure annually.	N/A	Staff Time	Short-Term

## APPENDIX A:

### LEVEL OF SERVICE ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

#### A. GRASP® Glossary

**Buffer:** see catchment area

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

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

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

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

**GRASP®-IT audit tool:** an instrument developed for assessing the quality and other characteristics of parks, trails, and other public lands and facilities. The tested, reliable, and valid tool, is used to conduct inventories of more than 100 park systems nationwide.

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

**Lower-service area:** an area of a city that has some GRASP® Level of Service but falls below the minimum standard threshold for the overall Level of Service

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

**No-service area:** an area of a city with no GRASP® Level of Service

**Perspective:** a perspective is a map or data quantification, such as a table or chart, produced using the GRASP® methodology that helps illustrate how recreational assets serve a community

**Radius:** see catchment area

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

**Recreational trail:** A recreation trail can be a soft or hard-surfaced off-street path that promotes active or passive movement through parklands or natural areas. Recreational trails are typically planned and managed by parks and recreation professionals or departments.

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

**Threshold:** a minimum Level of Service standard typically determined based on community expectations

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

**Trail network:** A trail network is a functional and connected part of a trail system within which major barrier crossings, including such things as crosswalks, pedestrian underpasses, or bridges. Different networks are separate from other trail networks by missing trail connections or by such barriers as roadways, rivers, or railroad tracks.

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

**Transportation trail:** A transportation trail is a hard surface trail, such as a city sidewalk, intended for traveling from one place to another in a community or region. These trails typically run outside of parklands and are managed by Public Works or another city utility department.

## B. GRASP® Components and Definitions

**Table 16: GRASP® Outdoor Component List**

GRASP® Outdoor Component Type	Definition
Adventure Course	An area designated for activities such as ropes courses, zip-lines, challenge courses. The type specified in the comments.
Amusement Ride	Carousel, train, go-carts, bumper cars, or other ride-upon features. The ride has an operator and controlled access.
Aquatics, Complex	An aquatic complex has at least one immersion pool and other features intended for aquatic recreation.
Aquatics, Lap Pool	A human-made basin designed for people to immerse themselves in water and intended for swimming laps.
Aquatics, Leisure Pool	A human-made basin designed for people to immerse themselves in water and intended for leisure water activities. May include zero-depth entry, slides, and spray features.
Aquatics, Spray Pad	A water play feature without immersion intended for interaction with moving water.
Aquatics, Therapy Pool	A therapy pool is a temperature-controlled pool intended for rehabilitation and therapy.
Basketball Court	A dedicated full-sized outdoor court with two goals.

Basketball, Practice	A basketball goal for half-court play or practice that includes goals in spaces associated with other uses.
Batting Cage	A batting cage is a stand-alone facility that has pitching machines and restricted entry.
Bike Complex	A bike complex accommodates various bike skills activities with multiple features or skill areas.
Bike Course	A designated area for non-motorized bicycle use, constructed of concrete, wood, or compacted earth. May include a pump track, velodrome, skills course.
Camping, Defined	Defined campsites may include a variety of facilities such as restrooms, picnic tables, water supply. Use the official agency count for quantity if available.
Camping, Undefined	Indicates allowance for users to stay overnight in the outdoors in undefined sites. Undefined camping receives a quantity of one for each park or location. Use this component when the quantity of sites is not available or for dispersed camping.
Climbing, Designated	A designated natural or human-made facility provided or managed by an agency for recreation climbing not limited to play.
Climbing, General	Indicates allowance for users to participate in a climbing activity. Use a quantity of one for each park or other location.
Concession	A facility used for the selling, rental, or other provision of goods and services to the public.
Diamond Field	Softball and baseball fields, suitable for organized diamond sports games. Not specific to size or age-appropriateness.
Diamond Field, Complex	Many ballfields at a single location suitable for tournaments.
Diamond Field, Practice	An open or grassy area used for the practice of diamond sports. Distinguished from ballfield in that it doesn't lend itself to organized diamond sports games and from open turf by the presence of a backstop.
Disc Golf	A designated area for disc golf. Quantities: 18 hole course = 1; 9 hole course = .5
Dog Park	An area explicitly designated as an off-leash area for dogs and their guardians.

Educational Experience	Signs, structures, or features that provide an educational, cultural, or historical experience. Assign a quantity of one for each contiguous site. Distinguished from public art by the presence of interpretive signs or other information.
Equestrian Facility	Signs, structures, or features that provide an educational, cultural, or historical experience. Assign a quantity of one for each contiguous site. Distinguished from public art by the presence of interpretive signs or other information.
Event Space	A designated area or facility for an outdoor class, performance, or special event, including an amphitheater, bandshell, stage.
Fitness Course	Features intended for personal fitness activities. A course receives a quantity of one for each complete grouping.
Game Court	Outdoor court designed for a game other than tennis, basketball, volleyball, as distinguished from a multi-use pad, including bocce, shuffleboard, lawn bowling. The type specified in the comments. Quantity counted per court.
Garden, Community	A garden area that provides community members a place to have a personal vegetable or flower garden.
Garden, Display	A garden area that is designed and maintained to provide a focal point or destination, including a rose garden, fern garden, native plant garden, wildlife/habitat garden, an arboretum.
Golf	A course designed and intended for the sport of golf. Counted per 18 holes. Quantities: 18 hole course = 1; 9 hole course = .5
Golf, Miniature	A course designed and intended as a multi-hole golf putting game.
Golf, Practice	An area designated for golf practice or lessons, including driving ranges and putting greens.
Horseshoe Court	A designated area for the game of horseshoes, including permanent pits of regulation length. Quantity counted per court.
Horseshoes Complex	Several regulation horseshoe courts in a single location suitable for tournaments.
Ice Hockey	Regulation size outdoor rink explicitly built for ice hockey games and practice. General ice skating included in "Winter Sport."
Inline Hockey	Regulation size outdoor rink built specifically for in-line hockey games and practice.

Loop Walk	Opportunity to complete a circuit on foot or by non-motorized travel mode. Suitable for use as an exercise circuit or leisure walking. Quantity of one for each park or other location unless more than one distinct circuit is present.
Multi-Use Pad	A painted area with games such as hopscotch, 4 square, tetherball found in schoolyards. As distinguished from “Games Court,” which is typically single-use.
Natural Area	Describes an area in a park that contains plants and landforms that are remnants of or replicate undisturbed native regions of the local ecology. It can include grasslands, woodlands, and wetlands.
Open Turf	A grassy area that is not suitable for programmed field sports due to size, slope, location, or physical obstructions. May be used for games of catch, tag, or other informal play and uses that require an open grassy area.
Other	An active or passive component that does not fall under any other component definition. Specified in comments
Passive Node	A place that is designed to create a pause or particular focus within a park and includes seating areas, plazas, overlooks. Not intended for programmed use.
Pickleball Court	A designated court designed primarily for pickleball play.
Picnic Ground	A designated area with a grouping of picnic tables suitable for organized picnic activities. Account for individual picnic tables as Comfort and Convenience modifiers.
Playground, Destination	A destination playground attracts families from the entire community. Typically has restrooms and parking on-site. May include special features like a climbing wall, spray feature, or adventure play.
Playground, Local	A local playground serves the needs of the surrounding neighborhood. Includes developed playgrounds and designated nature play areas. Park generally does not have restrooms or on-site parking.
Public Art	Any art installation on public property. Art receives a quantity of one for each contiguous site.
Rectangular Field Complex	Several rectangular fields in a single location suitable for tournament use.

Rectangular Field, Large	Describes a specific field large enough to host one adult rectangular field sports game such as soccer, football, lacrosse, rugby, and field hockey. The approximate field size is 180' x 300' (60 x 100 yards). The field may have goals and lines specific to an individual sport that may change with the permitted use.
Rectangular Field, Multiple	Describes an area large enough to host one adult rectangular field sports game and a minimum of one other event/game, but with an undetermined number of actual fields. This category describes a large open grassy area arranged in any manner of configurations for any number of rectangular field sports. Sports may include but are not limited to: soccer, football, lacrosse, rugby, and field hockey. The field may have goals and lines specific to an individual sport that may change with the permitted use.
Rectangular Field, Small	Describes a specific field too small to host a regulation adult rectangular field sports game but accommodates at least one youth field sports game. Sports may include but are not limited to: soccer, football, lacrosse, rugby, and field hockey. A field may have goals and lines specific to a particular sport that may change with a permitted use.
Shelter, Large	A shade shelter or pavilion large enough to accommodate a group picnic or other event for a minimum of 13 seated. Address lack of seating in scoring.
Shelter, Small	A shade shelter, large enough to accommodate a family picnic or other event for approximately 4-12 persons with seating for a minimum of 4. Covered benches for seating up to 4 people included as a modifier in comfort and convenience scoring and should not be included here.
Skate Feature	A stand-alone feature primarily for wheel sports such as skateboarding, in-line skating. The component may or may not allow freestyle biking. May be associated with a playground but is not part of it. Categorize dedicated bike facilities as Bike Course.
Skate Park	An area set aside primarily for wheel sports such as skateboarding, in-line skating. The park may or may not allow freestyle biking. May be specific to one user group or allow for several user types. It can accommodate multiple abilities. Typically has a variety of concrete or modular features.

Target Range	A designated area for practice or competitive target activities. The type specified, such as archery or firearms, in comments.
Tennis Complex	Multiple regulation courts in a single location with amenities suitable for tournament use.
Tennis, Practice Wall	A wall intended for practicing tennis.
Track, Athletic	A multi-lane, regulation-sized running track appropriate for track and field events.
Trail, Multi-Use	A trail, paved or unpaved, is separated from the road and provides recreational opportunities or connection to walkers, bikers, rollerbladers, and equestrian users. Paths that make a circuit within a single site are Loop Walks.
Trail, Primitive	A path, unpaved, located within a park or natural area that provides recreational opportunities or connections to users. Minimal surface improvements that may or may not meet accessibility standards
Trail, Water	A river, stream, canal, or other waterway used as a trail for floating, paddling, or other watercraft.
Trailhead	A designated staging area at a trail access point may include restrooms, an information kiosk, parking, drinking water, trash receptacles, and seating.
Volleyball Court	One full-sized court. May be hard or soft surface, including grass and sand. May have permanent or portable posts and nets.
Wall Ball Court	Walled courts associated with sports such as handball and racquetball. The type specified in the comments.
Water Access, Developed	A developed water access point includes docks, piers, kayak courses, boat ramps, fishing facilities. Specified in comments, including quantity for each unique type.
Water Access, General	Measures a user's general ability to access the edge of open water. May include undeveloped shoreline. Typically receives a quantity of one for each contiguous site.
Water Feature	This passive water-based amenity provides a visual focal point that includes fountains and waterfalls.
Water, Open	A body of water such as a pond, stream, river, wetland with open water, lake, or reservoir.
Winter Sport	An area designated for a winter sport or activity such as a downhill ski area, nordic ski area, sledding hill, toboggan run, recreational ice. The type specified in the comments.

**Table 17: GRASP® Indoor Component List**

GRASP® Indoor Component Type	Definition
Arts and Crafts	A room with a non-carpeted floor, built-in storage for materials, and a sink. Often adjacent to a kiln room.
Auditorium/Theater	A large room explicitly designed as a performance/lecture space that includes a built-in stage, seating and can accommodate stage lighting and sound amplification.
Childcare/Preschool	A room or space with built-in secure entry and cabinets, a small toilet, designated outdoor play area. Intended for short-term child watch or half or full-day preschool use.
Fitness/Dance	A room with resilient flooring and mirrors.
Food - Counter Service	Staffed food service with a commercial kitchen and no waiter services.
Food - Full Service	Staffed food service with a commercial kitchen and dining room with waiter services.
Food - Vending	A non-staffed area with vending machines or self-service food options.
Gallery/Exhibits	A space intended for the display of art, interpretive information, or another type of exhibit. Typically has adequate lighting, open wall space, and room for circulation.
Sport Court	An active recreation space such as a gymnasium that can accommodate basketball, volleyball, or other indoor court sports with one or more courts designated in quantity.
Track, Indoor	Course with painted lanes, banked corners, resilient surface, and marked distances suitable for exercise walking, jogging, or running.
Kitchen - Kitchenette	Area for preparing, warming, or serving food.
Kitchen - Commercial	A kitchen meeting local codes for commercial food preparation.
Lobby/Entryway	An area at the entry of a building intended for sitting and waiting or relaxing
Multi-Purpose Room	A multi-purpose room can host a variety of activities, including events, classes, meetings, banquets, medical, or therapeutic uses. It also includes rooms or areas designated or intended as games rooms, libraries, or lounges. Rooms may be dividable.
Patio/Outdoor Seating	Outdoor space or seating area designed to be used exclusively in conjunction with indoor space and primarily accessed through an indoor space.

Retail/Pro-shop	An area for retail sales of sporting equipment, gifts. Typically has direct access from outdoors and can be secured separately from the rest of a building or facility.
Sauna/Steam Room	A facility with built-in seating and a heat source intended for heat therapy. May be steam or dry heat.
Specialty Services	Any specialty services available at an indoor location.
Specialty Training	Any specialty training available at an indoor location that includes gymnastics and circuit training.
Weight/Cardio Equipment	A room or area with weight and cardio equipment, resilient or anti-bacterial flooring, adequate ventilation, and ceiling heights appropriate for high-intensity workouts
Woodshop	A room with wood-working equipment that contains an adequate power supply and ventilation.

*Note: Include any component from the outdoor component list as an indoor component*

## C. Inventory Methods and Process

To complete a detailed GIS (Geographic Information System) inventory, the planning team first prepared a preliminary list of existing components using aerial photography and GIS data. Components identified in aerial photos were located and labeled.

Next, field teams visited sites to confirm or revise preliminary component data, make notes regarding sites or assets, and develop an understanding of the system. The inventory for this study focused primarily on components at public parks. Evaluations include assessments to ensure a component was serving its intended function, noting any parts in need of refurbishment, replacement, or removal. The inventory also included the recording of site comfort and convenience amenities such as shade, drinking fountains, restrooms, called modifiers.

Collection of the following information during site visits:

- Component type and geolocation
- Component functionality
  - Based assessment scoring on the condition, size, site capacity, and overall quality. The inventory team used the following three-tier rating system to evaluate these:
    - 1 = Below Expectations
    - 2 = Meets Expectations
    - 3 = Exceeds Expectations
- Site modifiers
- Site design and ambiance
- Site photos
- General comments

## ASSET SCORING

All components were scored based on condition, size, site capacity, and overall quality as they reflect the expected quality of recreational features. Beyond quality and functionality of components, however, GRASP® Level of Service analysis also considers important aspects of a park or recreation site. Not all parks are created equal, and their surroundings may determine the quality of a user's experience. For example, the GRASP® system acknowledges the essential differences between identical playground structures as displayed in the following images:

**Figure 41: GRASP® Asset Scoring Comparison**



In addition to scoring components, GRASP®-IT assesses each park site or indoor facility for its comfort, convenience, and ambient qualities. These qualities include the availability of amenities such as restrooms, drinking water, shade, scenery. These modifier values then serve to enhance or amplify component scores at any given location.

Compiled GIS information collected during the site visit includes all GIS data and staff input. This review packet consists of the most recent GIS data displayed by location on an aerial photograph. An accompanying data sheet for each site lists modifier and component scores as well as observations and comments.

Analysis of the existing parks, open space, trails, and recreation systems often determine how they are serving the public. Level of Service (LOS) in parks and recreation master plans defines the capacity of the various components and facilities to meet the needs of the public in terms of the size or quantity given a population or user group.

## D. Addressing Low-Scoring Components

Components whose functionality ranks below expectations are identified and scored with a “one.” Find a list of these as extracted from the inventory dataset below. When raising the score of a component through improvement or replacement, the Level of Service is raised as well. The following is an outline strategy for addressing the repair/refurbishment/replacement or re-purposing of low-functioning components.

- I. Determine why the component is functioning below expectations.
  - Was it poorly conceived in the first place?
  - Is it something that was not needed?
  - Is it the wrong size, type, or configuration?
  - Is it poorly placed, or located in a way that conflicts with other activities or detracts from its use?
  - Have the needs changed in a way that the component is now outdated, obsolete, or no longer needed?
  - Has it been damaged?
  - Or, has the maintenance of the component been deferred or neglected to the point where it no longer functions as intended?
  - Does component scores low because it is not available to the public in a way that meets expectations?
  - Is the component old, outdated, or otherwise dysfunctional, but has historical or sentimental value? An example would be an old structure in a park such as a stone barbecue grill, or other artifacts that are not restorable to its original purpose, but which has historical value.
- II. Depending on the answers from the first step, a select a strategy for addressing the low-functioning component:
  - If the need for that type of component in its current location still exists, then the component should be repaired or replaced to match its original condition as much as possible.
    - Examples of this would be many of the existing shelters that need shingles or roof repairs. Other examples could be playgrounds with old, damaged, or outdated equipment, or courts with poor surfacing or missing nets.
  - If the need for that type of component has changed to the point where the original one is no longer suitable, then it should be replaced with a new one that fits the current needs.
  - If a component is poorly located or poorly designed to start with, consider relocating, redesigning, or otherwise modifying it.
  - Remove a component because of changing demands, unless it can be maintained in good condition without excessive expense or has historical or sentimental value. Inline hockey rinks may fall into this category. If a rink has been allowed to deteriorate because the community has no desire for inline hockey, then maybe it should be repurposed into some other use.

- III. It is possible that through ongoing public input and as needs and trends evolve, there is the identification of new demands for existing parks. If there is no room in an existing park for the requests, the decision may include removal or re-purpose a current component, even if it is quite functional.
- As the popularity of tennis declined and demand for courts dropped off in some communities over recent decades, perfectly good courts became skate parks or inline rinks. In most cases, this was an interim use, intended to satisfy a short-term need until a decision to either construct a permanent facility or let the fad fade. The need for inline rinks now seems to have diminished. In contrast, temporary skate parks on tennis courts are now permanent locations of their own. They become more elaborate facilities as skateboarding, and other wheel sports have grown in popularity and permanence.
  - One community repurposed a ball diamond into a dog park. The ball diamond is well-suited for use as a dog park because it is already fenced, and the combination of the skinned infield where the dogs enter and natural grass in the outfield where traffic disperses is ideal. In time this facility either becomes a permanent facility or is constructed elsewhere. Or, it could turn out that dog parks fade in popularity like inline hockey rinks are replaced with some other facility that dog owners prefer even more than the current dog park model. Meanwhile, the use of the ball diamond for this purpose is an excellent interim solution.

## E. List of Low-Scoring Components and Modifiers

Table 18: Outdoor Low Scoring Components

Location	Component	GIS ID	Quantity	GRASP® Score
Browns Mill	Diamond Field	C003	4	1
Browns Mill	Diamond Field	C005	2	1
Browns Mill	Playground, Local	C052	1	1
Browns Mill	Concessions	C058	1	1
Browns Mill	Concessions	C059	1	1
Chestnut Lakes	Trailhead	C044	1	1
Fairington	Rectangular Field, Small	C011	1	1
Fairington	Playground, Local	C013	1	1
Fairington	Picnic Ground	C047	1	1
Salem	Shelter, Large	C027	1	1
Salem	Basketball Court	C028	1	1
Southeast Athletic Complex	Rectangular Field, Small	C023	3	1
Southeast Athletic Complex	Rectangular Field, Large	C054	1	1

Table 19: Low Scoring Outdoor Modifiers

Location	Design and Ambiance	Drinking Fountains	Seating	BBQ Grills	Dog Station	Security Lighting	Bike Rack	Restrooms	Shade	Trail Connections	Park Access	On-site Parking	Seasonal Plantings	Ornamental Plantings	Picnic Tables
Browns Mill	2	2	2	0	0	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	0	2	1
Chestnut Lakes	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Everett	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	1	0	2	0
Fairington	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	2	1
Future Fairington Dr Park	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Future Salem and Evans Park	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gregory Moseley	1	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	2	2
Miller Grove Park	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	2	0
Miners Creek and Panola Shoals PATH Trailhead	2	0	2	0	2	0	0	1	2	2	2	2	0	2	0
Salem	1	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	1	0	2	1
Southeast Athletic Complex	2	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	2	0	2	1	0	0	0

Red highlighted modifiers scored low. Modifiers, in yellow that was not present at the time of site visits, scored a zero. These scores do not imply that all parks and facilities should have all modifiers but instead that the presence of modifiers positively impacts the user experience.

**INDOOR LOW SCORING COMPONENTS**

\*no indoor components scored low during site visits

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## LOW SCORING INDOOR MODIFIERS

Red highlighted modifiers scored low. Modifiers, in yellow that was not present at the time of site visits, scored a zero. These scores do not imply that all indoor facilities should have all modifiers but instead that the presence of modifiers positively impacts the user experience.

**Table 20: Low Scoring Indoor Modifiers**

LOCATION	Design & Ambiance	Site Access	Aesthetics	Entry	Entry Aesthetics	Building Condition	Entry Desk	Office Space	Overall Storage	Restrooms	Locker Rooms
Stonecrest Community Center	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0

### FURTHER SYSTEM-WIDE CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Consider the “Acres of Park Land per 1,000 Residents” table when adding land to an existing park or new park locations.

- 19 acres of developed parkland (Note there are currently 75 acres of undeveloped parkland in the inventory.)

Consider the “Capacities Analysis” and NRPA Park Metrics comparison table when adding new components at an existing park or new park locations. This table showed the possible need for the following in the next five years based on population projections:

- Basketball court (6)
  - Community Gardens (2)
  - Diamond fields (1\*)
  - Dog Parks (2)
  - Playgrounds (13)
  - Rectangle fields (1\*)
  - Swimming Pools (1)
  - Tennis courts (9)
- Notes: Number needed to match the NRPA median for similar size agencies. \*number needed to maintain current LOS based on population projection

#### Agency or system-wide considerations

- Improve ADA access to recreation components throughout the park system
- Parks generally need updates or refreshing
- Consider upgrading standards for sports field turf quality

#### Park or location-specific considerations

- Browns Mill
  - Improve pathways throughout the park
  - Repair drainage issues at diamond and practice diamond fields
  - Improve access to the playground
- Chestnut Lakes
  - Create access to roads or trails

- Everett
  - Improve the parking lot and turn around
  - Enhance trailhead with signage and wayfinding
  - Create access to the South River
  - Incorporate trails leading to Chestnut Lakes park to the East
  
- Fairington
  - Replace broken benches and tables.
  - Solve drainage issues at the playground and refill EWF
  - Manage turf and repair tire ruts and bald patches
  - Create ADA walkways and access throughout the park
  - Develop site standards for benches, picnic tables, and other amenities
  
- Gregory Moseley
  - Add components
  - Replace or build a new playground
  - Make basketball usable
  - Repave walkways and add security lighting
  - Install new signage
  - Create a parking area
  
- Miller Grove Park
  - Build a park with amenities and components
  
- Miner’s Creek /Panola Shoals PATH Trailhead
  - Develop a water access point and boat launch
  
- Salem
  - Replace missing playground
  - Repair the shelter
  - Repaint and refresh other components
  
- Southeast Athletic Complex
  - Build ADA accessible walkways to all components and areas

## F. Composite-Values Level of Service Analysis Methodology

**Level of Service (LOS)** measures how parks, open spaces, trails, and facilities serve the community. They may be used to benchmark current conditions and to direct future planning efforts.

### WHY LEVEL OF SERVICE ?

LOS indicates the ability of people to connect with nature and pursue active lifestyles. It can have implications for health and wellness, the local economy, and the quality of life. Further, LOS for a park and recreation system tends to reflect community values. It is often representative of people’s connection to their communities and lifestyles focused on outdoor recreation and healthy living.

Analysis of the existing parks, open space, trails, and recreation systems determine how the systems are serving the public and the capacity of the various components and facilities to meet the needs of the users or residents.

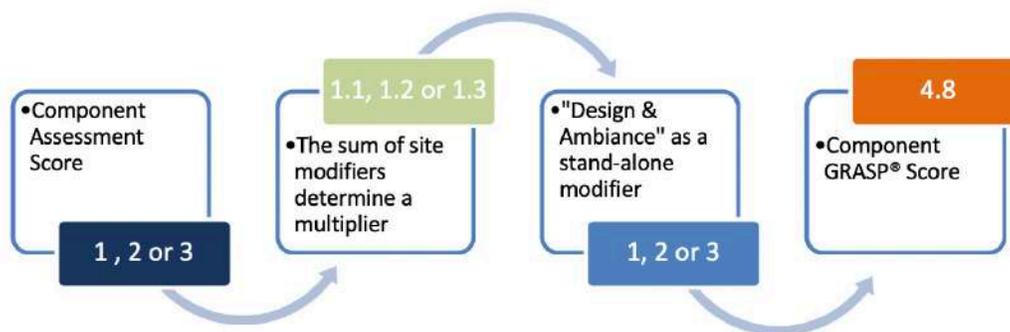
### GRASP® SCORE

Each park or recreation location, along with all on-site components, has been assigned a GRASP® Score. The GRASP® Score accounts for the assessment score as well as available modifiers and the design and ambiance of a park.

The following illustration shows this relationship. A basic algorithm calculates scoring totals, accounting for both component and modifier scores, every park, and facility in the inventory. The resulting ratings reflect the overall value of that site. Scores for each inventory site and its components may be found in the GRASP® Inventory Atlas, a supplemental document.

An analytical technique known as GRASP® (Geo-Referenced Amenities Standard Process) was used to analyze the Level of Service provided by assets. This proprietary process, used exclusively by GreenPlay, yields analytical maps and data that may be used to examine access to recreation across a study area.

Figure 42: GRASP® Score calculation



### CATCHMENT AREAS

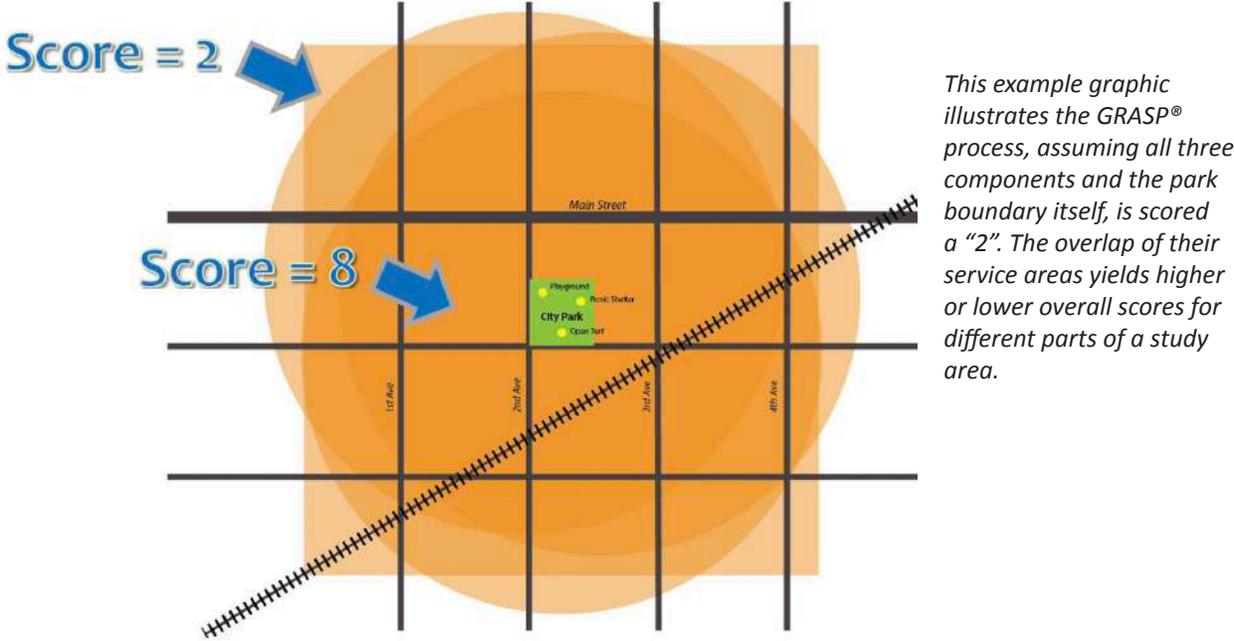
Catchment areas, also called buffers, radii, or service area, are drawn around each component. The GRASP® Score for that component is then applied to that buffer and overlapped with all other component catchment areas. This process yields the data used to create perspective maps and analytical charts.

### PERSPECTIVES

Maps and data produced using the GRASP® methodology are known as *Perspectives*. Each perspective models service across the study area. The system can be further analyzed to derive statistical information about service in a variety of ways. Maps are utilized along with tables and charts to provide benchmarks or insights a community may use to determine its success in delivering services.

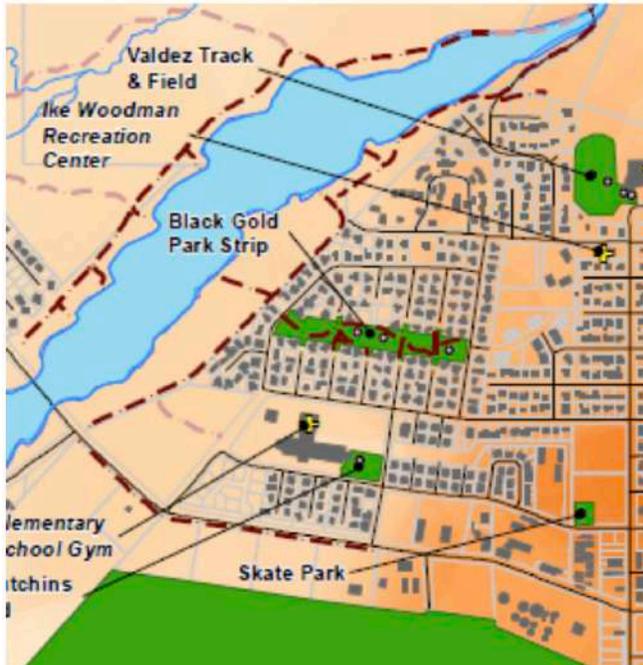
Plotting service areas for multiple components on a map produces a picture that represents the cumulative Level of Service provided by that set of elements in a geographic area.

Figure 43: GRASP® Process



On a map, darker shades result from the overlap of multiple service areas and indicate areas served by more or higher quality components. For any given spot, there is a GRASP® Value for that reflects cumulative scoring for nearby assets. **Figure 48** provides an example.

Figure 44: Example of GRASP® Level of Service (LOS)



### MORE ON UTILIZING GRASP® PERSPECTIVES

GRASP® Perspectives evaluate the Level of Service throughout a community from various points of view. Their purpose is to reveal possible gaps in service and provide a metric to use in understanding a recreation system. However, it is not necessarily beneficial for all parts of the community to score equally in the analyses. The desired Level of Service for a location should depend on the type of service, the characteristics of the place, and other factors such as community need, population growth forecasts, and land use issues. For example, commercial, institutional, and industrial areas might reasonably have a lower Level of Service for parks and recreation opportunities than residential areas. GRASP® Perspectives should focus attention on gap areas for further scrutiny.

## G. Brief History of Level of Service Analysis

To help standardize parks and recreation planning, universities, agencies, and parks and recreation professionals have long been looking for ways to benchmark and provide “national standards” for how much acreage, how many ballfields, pools, playgrounds, a community should have. In 1906 the fledgling “Playground Association of America” called for playground space equal to 30 square feet per child. In the 1970s and early 1980s, the first detailed published works on these topics began emerging (Gold, 1973, Lancaster, 1983). In time, “rule of thumb” ratios emerged with 10 acres of parklands per thousand population becoming the most widely accepted norm. Other normative guides also have been cited as traditional standards but have been less widely accepted.

In 1983, Roger Lancaster compiled a book called, “Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines,” which was published by the National Park and Recreation Association (NRPA). In this publication, Mr. Lancaster centered on a recommendation “that a park system, at minimum, be composed of a core system of parklands, with a total of 6.25 to 10.5 acres of developed open space per 1,000 population (Lancaster, 1983, p. 56). The guidelines went further to make recommendations regarding an appropriate mix of park types, sizes, service areas, and acreages, and standards regarding the number of available recreational facilities per thousand population. While published by NRPA, the table became widely known as “the NRPA standards,” but these were never formally adopted for use by NRPA.

Perspectives used in conjunction with other assessment tools such as community needs surveys and a public input process to determine if current levels of service are appropriate in a given location. Plans provide similar levels of service to new, developing neighborhoods. Or it may be determined that different Levels of Service are adequate or suitable. Therefore a new set of criteria may be utilized that differs from existing community patterns to reflect these distinctions.

Since that time, various publications have updated and expanded upon possible “standards,” several of which have been published by NRPA. Many of these publications benchmarked and other normative research to try and determine what an “average LOS” should be. NRPA and the prestigious American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration, as organizations, have focused in recent years on accreditation standards for agencies, which are less directed towards outputs, outcomes, and performance, and more on planning, organizational structure, and management processes. The popularly referred to “NRPA standards” for LOS, as such, do not exist.

Today, NRPA has shifted to an annual Agency Performance Review publication. The following three tables provide similar but updated information to the table of commonly referenced LOS capacity standards included in the 2006 document. “The 2019 NRPA Agency Performance Review presents the data and key insights from 1,075 park and recreation agencies collected by the Agency Performance Survey. This annual report provides critical park and recreation metrics on budgets, staffing, facilities, and more.”<sup>1</sup>

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

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

## **H. GRASP® (Geo-Referenced Amenities Standards Program)**

A new methodology for determining the Level of Service is appropriate to address these and other relevant questions. It is called composite-values methods is applied in communities across the nation in recent years to provide a better way of measuring and portraying the service provided by parks and recreation systems. Primary research and development on this methodology were funded jointly by GreenPlay, LLC, a management consulting firm for parks, open space, and related agencies, Design Concepts, a landscape architecture, and planning firm, and Geowest, a spatial information management firm. The trademarked name for the composite-values methodology process that these three firms use is called **GRASP® (Geo-Referenced Amenities Standards Program.)** For this methodology, capacity is only part of the LOS equation. Consider other factors, including quality, condition, location, comfort, convenience, and ambiance.

Parks, trails, recreation, and open space are part of an overall infrastructure for a community made up of various components, such as playgrounds, multi-purpose fields, passive areas. Explanations and characteristics listed above affect the amount of service provided by the parts of the system follow.

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

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nrpa.org/siteassets/nrpa-agency-performance-review.pdf>

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

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

**Comfort and Convenience** – The service provided by a component, such as a playground, is increased by having amenities such as shade, seating, and a restroom nearby. Comfort and convenience enhance the experience of using a component and encourages people to use an element. Easy access and the availability of drinking fountains, bike rack, or nearby parking are examples of conveniences that enhance the service provided by a component.

**Design and Ambiance** – Simple observation proves that places that “feel” right, attract people. A sense of safety and security, as well as pleasant surroundings, attractive views, and a sense of place impact ambiance. A well-designed park is preferable to a poorly designed one, and this enhances the service provided by the components within it.

The GRASP® methodology records a geographic location of components as well as the capacity and the quantity of each element. Also, it uses comfort, convenience, and ambiance as characteristics that are part of the context and setting of a component. They are not characteristics of the element itself, but when they exist in proximity to a component, they enhance the value of the component.

By combining and analyzing the composite values of each component, it is possible to measure the service provided by a parks and recreation system from a variety of Perspectives and for any given location. Typically, this begins with a decision on “**relevant components**” for the analysis, collection of an accurate inventory of those components, analysis. Maps and tables represent the results of the GRASP® analysis.

## I. Making Justifiable Decisions

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

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

## LEVEL OF SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

### *Addressing Lower and No Service Areas*

One way of using the GRASP® Perspectives is to consider prioritization of identified gap areas. For example, in the walkable access analysis, several areas with low or no service were identified. Further analyses of these areas can help when prioritizing future improvements or recreation opportunities. Prioritization of improvements may consider multiple factors, including providing maximum impact to the highest number of residents. Social equity factors, such as average household income, could also influence priorities.

### *Component Inventory and Assessment*

Maintaining and improving existing facilities typically ranks very high in public input. Existing features that fall short of expectations should be improved to address this concern. Features have been assessed based on condition and functionality in the inventory phase of this plan. Identify and address those with low scores as explained below. The assessment should be updated regularly to assure the upgrade or improvements of components as they are affected by wear and tear over time.

### *Addressing Low-Scoring Components*

Low scoring components were addressed previously in *Section D*.

### *Booster Components*

Another way to enhance the Level of Service is through the addition of **booster components** at specific park sites or recreation facilities. These are most effective in low-service areas where parks exist that have space for additional components.

### *High Demand Components*

The statistically-valid survey asks respondents to rank facilities by importance based on those they felt the city needed to add or improve. Consider these **high demand components** when adding new components to the system.

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

1. Make improvements or renovate existing amenities at parks focused on fitness and wellness
2. Improve amenities such as restrooms, picnic pavilions, etc.
3. Increase trail and pathway connectivity by connecting the communities with walking/biking trails
4. Develop a town plaza or small amphitheater for outdoor events and safe gathering spaces
5. Evaluate the opportunity for an aquatic facility
6. Update or improve indoor facility such as gyms and community centers
7. Maintain current level of service and quality
8. Sustain the current system
9. Develop new parks
10. Provide a variety and diversity of facilities

Many of these needs may be addressed by upgrading facilities, retrofitting lesser used assets, and by adding components that could serve as future program opportunities:

### **Trends in Parks and Recreation**

Trends to consider when deciding what to do with low-functioning facilities, or improving existing parks to serve the needs of residents, include things like:

- Dog parks continue to grow in popularity and may be related to an aging demographic in America, with more “empty-nesters” transferring the attention they once gave to their children, to their pets. It is also an essential form of socializing for people who may have once socialized with other parents in their child’s soccer league, and now that the kids are grown, they are enjoying the company of other dog owners at the dog park. And for singles, a dog park is an excellent place to meet people.
- Skateboarding and other wheel sports continue to grow in popularity. Making neighborhood parks skateable and distributing skating features throughout the community provides greater access to this activity for younger people who cannot drive to a more extensive centralized skate park.
- A desire for locally-grown food and concerns about health, sustainability, and other issues is leading to the development of community food gardens in parks and other public spaces.
- Events in parks, from a neighborhood “movie in the park” to large festivals in regional parks, are growing in popularity to build a sense of community and generate revenues. Providing spaces for these could become a trend.
- Spraygrounds are growing in popularity, even in colder climates. An extensive and growing selection of products for these is raising the bar on expectations and offering new possibilities for creative facilities.
- New types of playgrounds are emerging, including discovery play, nature play, adventure play, and even inter-generational play. Some of these rely upon movable parts, supervised play areas, and other variations that are different from the standard fixed “post and platform” playgrounds found in the typical park across America. These types of nature-based opportunities help connect children and families to the outdoors.
- Integrating nature into parks by creating natural areas is a trend for many reasons. These include a desire to make parks more sustainable and introduce people of all ages to the natural environment.

## **J. Walkability and Recreational Connectivity**

Walkability is an essential consideration in recreation. Various walkability metrics and methodologies have emerged to assist park and recreation managers and planners in understanding this dynamic. These include:

- Walk score
- Walkability TM
- Walkonomics
- RateMy Street
- Walkability App
- Safe Routes to Parks
- Safe Routes to Play
- Safe Routes to School
- Sidewalk and Walkability Inventory

It is vital to take bicycles and public transportation users into account as well as pedestrians. The concept of “complete streets” refers to a built environment that serves various types of users of varying ages and abilities. Many associations and organizations guide on best practices in developing walkable and bikeable complete streets infrastructure. One such entity, the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP, [www.apbp.org](http://www.apbp.org)) actively promotes complete streets in cities around the country. Another such organization, the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO, [www.nacto.org](http://www.nacto.org)), recently released the NACTO Urban Street Design Guide, which provides a full understanding of complete streets based on successful strategies employed in various North American cities. This most comprehensive reference on the topic is a valuable resource for all stakeholders involved in city planning. It proves to be a critical reference in building the cities of tomorrow.

More information is provided in **Appendix F**.

The infrastructure available to get people to and from destinations is increasingly vital as many people prefer a leisurely walk or bike ride to a trip in the car. Users expect easy access to parks, recreation centers, and other community resources. Employing different modes of travel to include walking and bicycling may be referred to as **recreational connectivity**.

Recreational connectivity is the ability to access a variety of recreational opportunities or amenities by multiple modes of transportation. In addition to recreational trails, this may also include city sidewalks, bicycle paths, bicycle routes, and public transit infrastructure. Of course, the scope of creating and maintaining such a network is a substantial undertaking that involves many players. Along with a community expectation for this type of user-friendly network infrastructure comes the hope that stakeholders work together in the interest of the public good. At the municipal level, this might include public works, law enforcement, private land-owners, public transit operators, and user groups, as well as the local parks and recreation department.

The concept of recreational connectivity is essential within the scope of parks and recreation planning but also has more profound implications for public health, the local economy, and public safety, among other considerations. As more people look for non-automotive alternatives, a complete network of various transportation options is in higher demand. Other elements of this infrastructure might consist of street/railroad crossings, sidewalk landscaping, lighting, drainage, and even bike-share and car-share availability.

### **WHERE TO START?**

Recognizing that trail development occurs at a variety of scales, many trails serve park users only while others are citywide or regional extent. Also, people with a destination in mind tend to take the most direct route, while recreationists tend to enjoy loop or circuit trails more than linear pathways. An exemplary trail system provides multiple opportunities for users to utilize trail segments to access different parts of the city directly or enjoy recreational circuits of various sizes. By employing park trails, city trails, and regional trails, users should ideally be able to select from several options to reach a destination or spend time recreating. Simple, early steps such as creating preferred routes and loops on city sidewalks or low traffic streets are a great place to start.

### **CONNECTING PEOPLE TO TRAILS**

As the trail system develops, additional resources are desirable to support users. It is worthwhile to consider signage and wayfinding strategies, trailheads and access points, public trail maps, and smartphone applications as strategies to connect people to trails and affect positive user experience.

### ***Signage and Wayfinding***

Signage and wayfinding strategies enhance a system by promoting ease of use and improving access to resources. Branding is an essential aspect of adequate signage and wayfinding markers. A hierarchy of signage for different types of users assists residents and visitors as they navigate between recreation destinations. Further, a strong brand can imply investment and commitment to alternative transit, and which can positively impact city identity and open economic opportunities.

### ***Trailheads and Access Points***

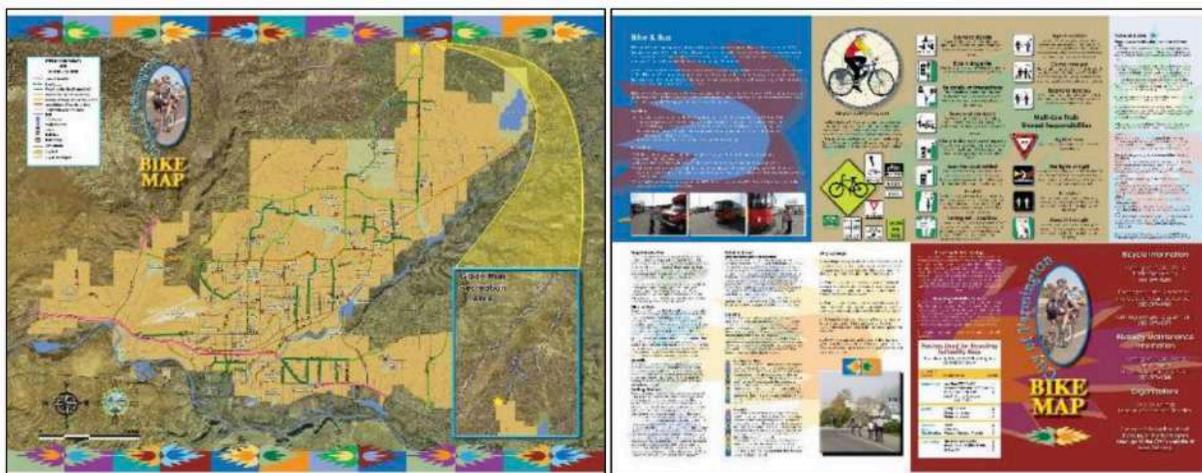
It is also vital to provide users access to trails. There are two ways to approach this. First, the development of formal trailheads to include parking, bike racks, signage, restrooms, drinking water, a trail map, and other amenities. A trailhead provides access to trails that serve a higher volume of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

### ***Map and App Resources***

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

**Figure 45** shows a trail and bicycle map for users with a host of information about trails, bike paths, and bike routes. The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance website offers a similar but more limited style of this map.

**Figure 45: Map and App Resources Example**



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

## APPENDIX B:

### PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT OUTREACH REPORT

#### City of Stonecrest Parks and Recreation Master Plan Public Engagement Outreach Report

##### PROJECT TIMELINE

The Engagement and Outreach timeline ran from November 12th 2019 to January 20th 2020. Throughout those ten weeks, Contente Consulting was able to engage at fifteen (15) events, connecting with over 560 residents in various forms of engagement.

The main objective in determining outreach events was to identify already-existing events that we could “pop up” at and engage with those demographics already in attendance. As part of our commitment to “meeting people where they are”, majority of the engagement opportunities were pre-existing events within the timeline.

Our outreach efforts aimed to target three demographic groups: Youth, Senior Citizens, the Business Community, and the General Population.

##### FOCUS GROUPS

We conducted nine focus groups during Phase I of the Planning Process, including sports partners, civic organizations, government partners, other service providers (public, private and non-profit, etc.), and primary stakeholders such as youth, seniors, other recreation providers, special topics, citizens with disabilities, school officials, and other stakeholders, as mutually determined.

##### Total Engagement: 36 People Touched

Table 21: Focus Groups Summary Table

Date, Time, Location	Organization	Participant	Outcomes
11/12 (2:30 – 4p) Stonecrest City Hall 3120 Stonecrest Boulevard Stonecrest, GA 30038	City Staff	Focus Group	A large gathering of thirteen (13) staff members participated in this focus group.
11/12 (4p - 5:30p) Stonecrest City Hall 3120 Stonecrest Boulevard Stonecrest, GA 30038	Elected Officials	Focus Group	

11/13 (8a – 9:30a) Stonecrest City Hall 3120 Stonecrest Boulevard Stonecrest, GA 30038	Business Community	Focus Group	This focus group saw a good turnout of nine (9) participants showing up for the focus group.
11/13 (10a – 11:30a) Stonecrest City Hall 3120 Stonecrest Boulevard Stonecrest, GA 30038	Nonprofit/Civic Organization Community	Focus Group	This focus group had a low turnout, with only three (3) participants showing up for the focus group.
11/13 (11:30a – 1p) Stonecrest City Hall 3120 Stonecrest Boulevard Stonecrest, GA 30038	Steering Committee	Focus Group	This meeting saw six (6) attendees from the identified stakeholders provided by the City of Stonecrest.
11/13 (1:30p – 3p) Stonecrest City Hall 3120 Stonecrest Boulevard Stonecrest, GA 30038	Youth Athletics Groups	Focus Group	Two (2) representatives from the athletic group showed up for the focus group.
11/13 (5:30p – 7p) Stonecrest City Hall 3120 Stonecrest Boulevard Stonecrest, GA 30038	Residential Community	Focus Group	This focus group did not receive the turnout anticipated. While Stonecrest has a large number of homeowner associations, only two (2) invitees showed up for the meeting.
11/14 (10a – 11:30a) Stonecrest City Hall 3120 Stonecrest Boulevard Stonecrest, GA 30038	Faith-Based Community	Focus Group	This focus group did not receive the turnout anticipated. While Stonecrest has a large number of faith organizations and churches, only one (1) invitee showed up for the meeting.

## PUBLIC MEETING

This widely advertised open public meeting located at Browns Mill Recreation Center took place on November 14th, between 6:30 pm and 8:00 pm. Any and all members of the community were invited to attend. The event was facilitated by staff and partners to ask about what is working well, opportunities for improvement, along with a variety of other questions targeted to gather information on issues and topics. Participants were asked to express their thoughts and sentiments on the parks system through charettes.

Boards were provided by Cooper Cary that touched upon several points of the current park system, including a general board outlining the parks' locations asking responders to identify the parks they currently visit and their frequency of use over the last year, a section with boards outlining active and passive parks usages, and a third section with two future development sites.

All boards were detailed with a footprint of the current park, its classification (active or passive), and a variety of potential uses for those parks separated by use (relaxation, education, active use, community use, etc.). Participants of all ages and backgrounds engaged with the boards by placing a colored sticker indicating a particular interest in the activity.

**Total Engagement: 35 People Touched**

**Table 22: Public Meeting Summary Table**

Date, Time, Location	Organization	Participant	Outcomes
11/14 (6:30p – 8p) Browns Mill Center 5101 Browns Mill Rd, Stonecrest, GA 30038	Stonecrest, GreenPlay, Contente Consulting	“Come One/Come All” Public Meeting	This event was highly successful, with a turnout of at least 30 participants of all ages. Lisa Wolff, Contente Terry, and Sean DePalma led a brief presentation explaining the process and timeline for the project.

## SURVEY POP UP AND INTERCEPT OVERVIEW

*Dates for survey launch and closing: 12/10/19 to 1/24/20*

This tool is the most effective mechanism for reaching current NON-USERS. A carefully designed community survey was created to be distributed to a random sampling of residents. We proposed using multiple methods to disseminate the survey to maximize responses including: 1. a mail survey with a postage paid return envelope provided; 2. A link to an open web-based version.

To help improve response rates, the City of Stonecrest assisted with marketing and creating public awareness of the survey through local channels and we developed a distribution strategy utilizing partner organizations and other touch points.

An opportunity to engage the youth arose after meeting with the Student Government Associations at Arabia Mountain High School and Lithonia High School, respectively. The SGAs decided to facilitate their own administration of the youth survey in their schools. Both SGAs used innovative techniques (QR codes) and incentives (cookies at the table) to urge their peers to complete the survey. At the close of the survey, the students were given an opportunity to view the data from the collection period and develop a presentation for the City of Stonecrest.

The students had representatives from each school present their findings in front of City Council members, and the general public. Afterwards, the students were rewarded with a token of gratitude in the form of a pizza party and certificates of commendations.

The following is a list of alternative methods of engagement executed by the outreach team. In an effort to “meet citizens where they are”, the team in partnership with Parks and Recreation staff conducted alternative methods of engagement, which included intercept surveys, pop up events, events with local community organizations, etc. Through customized outreach collaboration and consensus building techniques, our diverse team of skilled facilitators were able to engage stakeholders and solicit responses to the online survey.

**Table 23: Alternative Methods of Engagement**

Date, Time, Location	Organization	Participant	Outcomes
12/10 (6:30p – 8p) 3123 Klondike Rd, Lithonia, GA 30038	Stonecrest Citizens Coalition	General Membership Meeting - Presentation	Membership meeting limited to 15 Stonecrest residents. Sean DePalma and Contente Terry presented a brief overview of the master plan process, public engagement activities and survey.

<p>12/12 (10a-2p) Lou Walker Senior Center Lobby 2538 Panola Rd, Stonecrest, GA 30058</p>	<p>Lou Walker Senior Center</p>	<p>Seniors' Bazaar – Table Pop Up</p>	<p>Outreach team engage with 25 to 30 seniors at a pop-up table. Despite the high volume of attendees at the event, only able to successfully complete 7 surveys. Most attendees were non-residents of the Stonecrest area and do not use the current park system.</p>
<p>12/12 (9:38a – 10:30a) Arabia High School 6610 Browns Mill Rd, Lithonia, GA 30038</p>	<p>Arabia High School Student Government Association</p>	<p>SGA meeting – Presentation</p>	<p>Tameika Porter and Contente Terry provided an overview of the project and the students provided recommendations to the youth survey and identified January 14th to push the survey to the 1400 student population.</p>
<p>12/14 (3p-6p) Another Chance Center 5301 Snapfinger Park Dr, Decatur, GA 30035</p>	<p>Sassy Special People</p>	<p>Christmas Party – Pop Up</p>	<p>Approximately 50 <b>physically challenged young adults and their parents</b> were in attendance. The park preference boards were available, but not a good tool to capture input for this target market. The team worked with 9 attendees to complete the survey and concluded that that the more effective approach was to forward survey to parents to complete on behalf of their youth.</p>

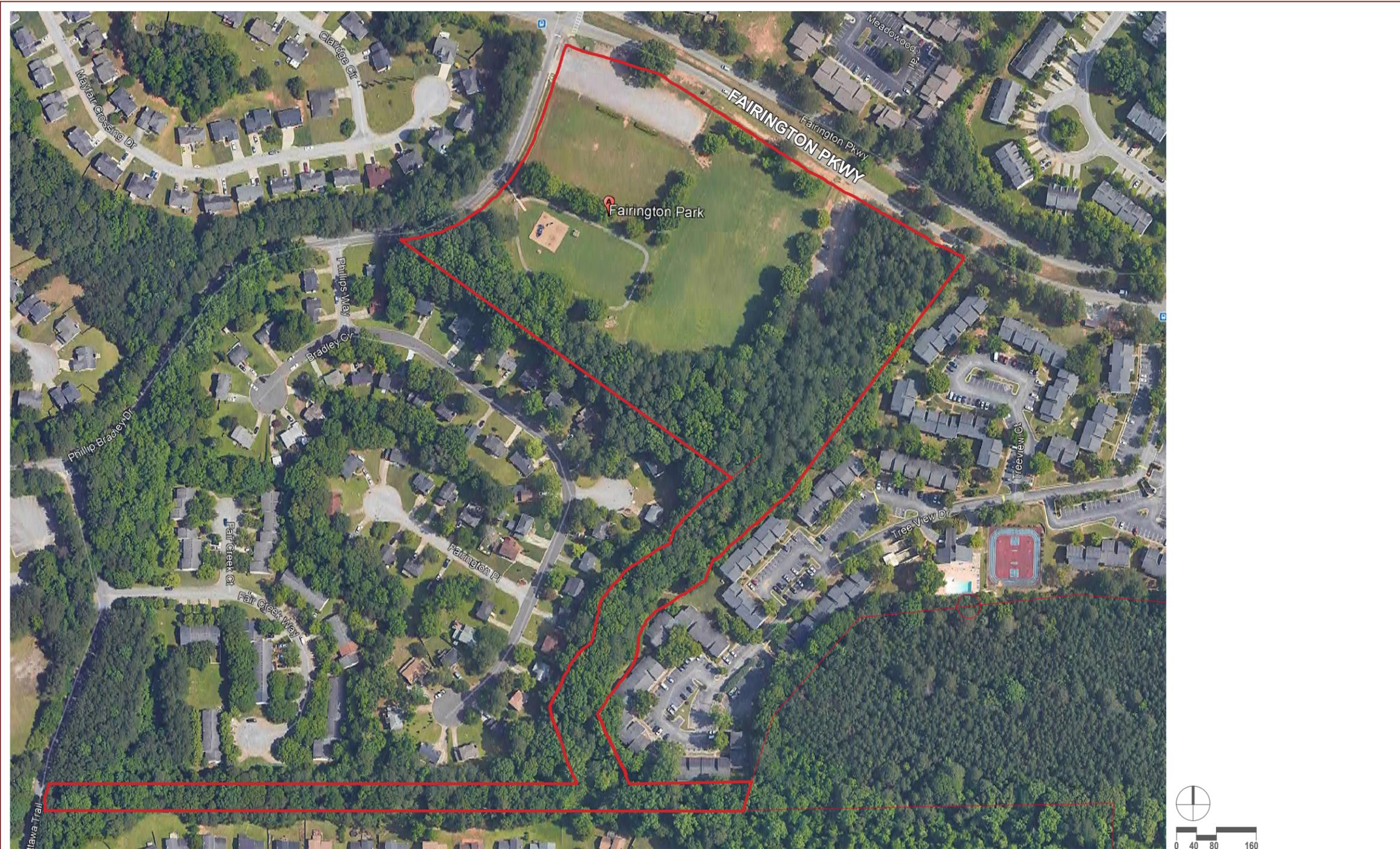
<p>12/17 (9:30a-10:30a)          Browns Mill Center          5101 Browns Mill Rd,          Stonecrest, GA 30038</p>	<p>Browns Mill Recreation          Center</p>	<p>Senior Body Sculpting          Class – Table Pop Up</p>	<p>Tameika Porter and          the outreach team          engaged with about          30 seniors and yielded          about 20 to 25 surveys          from them during this          event. The participants          requested hardcopy          documentation about          the project</p>
<p>12/19 (4:30pm –          6:30pm)          Browns Mill Center          Multipurpose Room</p>	<p>Young Bosses - Youth          Entrepreneurial Group</p>	<p>Focus Group –          Presentation</p>	<p>The focus group was          comprised of 2 young          entrepreneurs and a          basketball group of          5 18+ young adults.          Contente Terry and          Tameika Porter          provided the group with          project overview and          facilitated a Q and A          focusing on how Parks          and Recreation can best          serve the youth. All          attendees completed          the survey using their          smart phones and          provided input on the          park preference boards.</p>
<p>12/27 (5p-8p)          The Mall at Stonecrest          2929 Turner Hill Rd.          Lithonia GA</p>	<p>Stonecrest Mall</p>	<p>Pop Up Table</p>	<p>It was very difficult to          engage mall customers          to participate in the          survey. Most were not          residents of the City or          the area, encountered          a lot of visitors to          Georgia. Many took          pictures of the signage          to take the survey at          their leisure. In total,          the team was able to          engage with about 10          participants.</p>

12/28 (8a-12p) Arabia Mountain Park	Arabia Mountain Park	Pop Up Table	The outreach team was able to engage with between 30 and 40 park-goers. Since the visitors were already active park users, we were successful in the collection of about 20 surveys.
12/30 (2:30p-4:30p) Lou Walker Senior Center Lobby 2538 Panola Rd, Stonecrest, GA 30058	Lou Walker Senior Center	Kwanzaa Celebration – Pop Up Table	The outreach team found it difficult to take surveys due to the limited access to the seniors who were attending the program. In total, the team was able to engage with about 15 participants.
1/7 (8:30 – 10am) AEI Power Breakfast 7310 Stonecrest Concourse, Stonecrest, GA, 30038, US	AEI Startup Factory	Focus Group – Presentation	Contente Terry, Sean DePalma and Tameika Porter provided the group with project overview and facilitated a Q and A focusing on how Parks and Recreation can best serve the small business and entrepreneur community. Half of the 40 meeting attendees completed the survey.
1/9 (10am – 11am) SGA @ Lithonia HS 2440 Phillips Rd, Lithonia, GA, 30058, US	Lithonia High School Student Government Association	SGA meeting – Presentation	Tameika Porter and Contente Terry provided an overview of the project to the 10 member SGA leadership and school principal. The students identified a date to push the survey to student population.

1/15 (4pm – 5pm) Pop-Up @ YMCA Afterschool Program	YMCA South DeKalb	Pop Up – Presentation	Contente Terry and the Outreach Team conducted a pop-up focus group with 30 elementary-aged children in the Afterschool program at the YMCA.
1/19 (2pm – 4pm) Pop-Up @ Basketball Tournament Browns Mill Center 5101 Browns Mill Rd, Stonecrest, GA 30038	Browns Mill Recreation Center	Pop Up Table	This event was highly successful in collecting youth surveys from participants in the tournament. An Outreach team member collected over 20 surveys at the table set up in the recreation center.
1/20 (110am – 1pm) Pop-Up @ MLK Day Parade Green Pastures Church 5455 Flat Shoals Pkwy, Decatur, GA, 30034, United States	City of Stonecrest	Pop Up Table	The Outreach Team and Tameika Porter set up a survey table at the starting point of the parade. While a large number of people were in attendance, only a few were eligible for to survey. In total, about 18 surveys were collected.

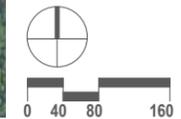
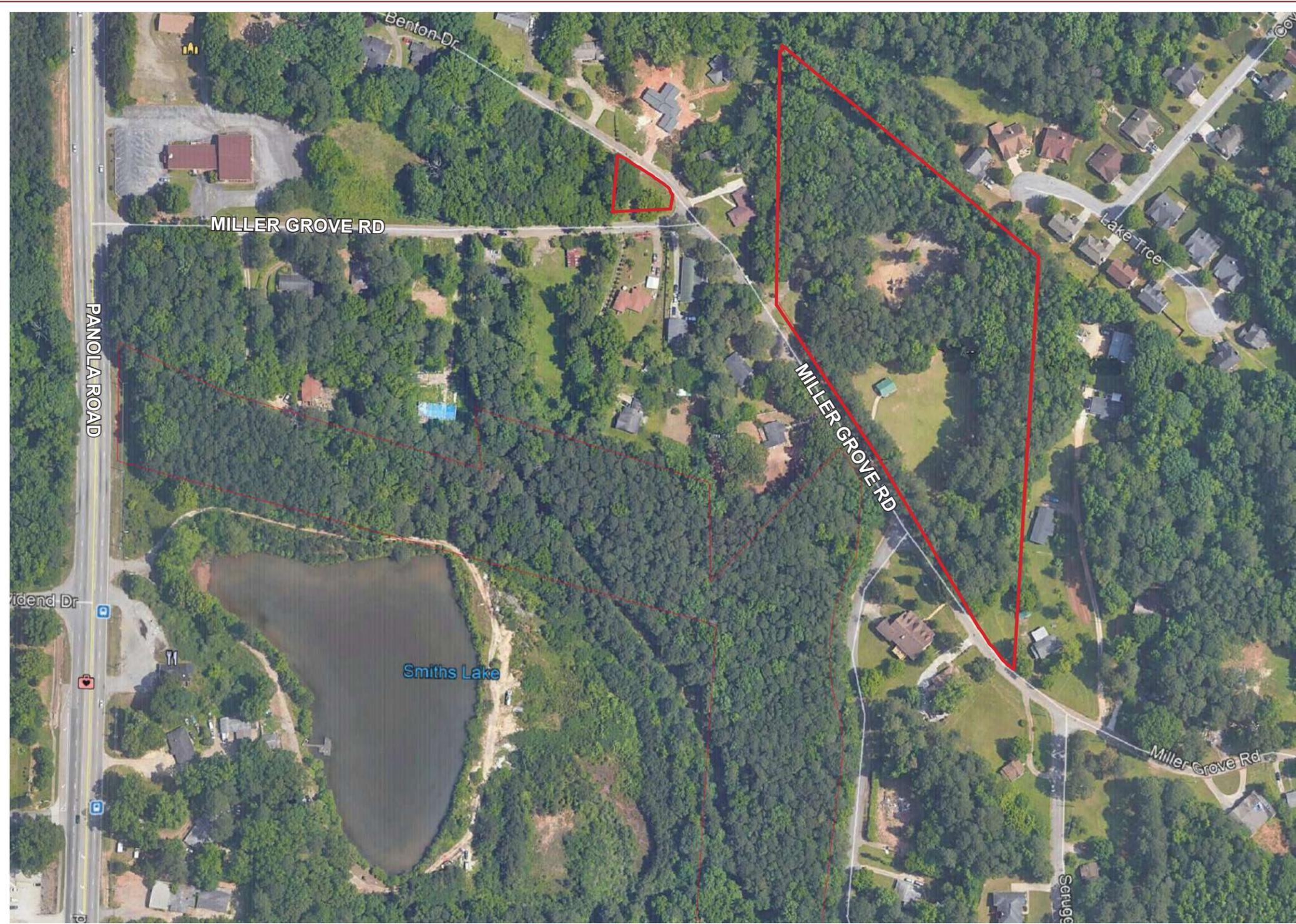
**Total Public Engagement: 491 Touched**

APPENDIX C: MAPS



**park life!** Fairington Park 14 acres





# Gregory Moseley Park 18 acres





# Miller Grove Park 18 acres

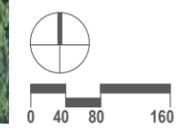
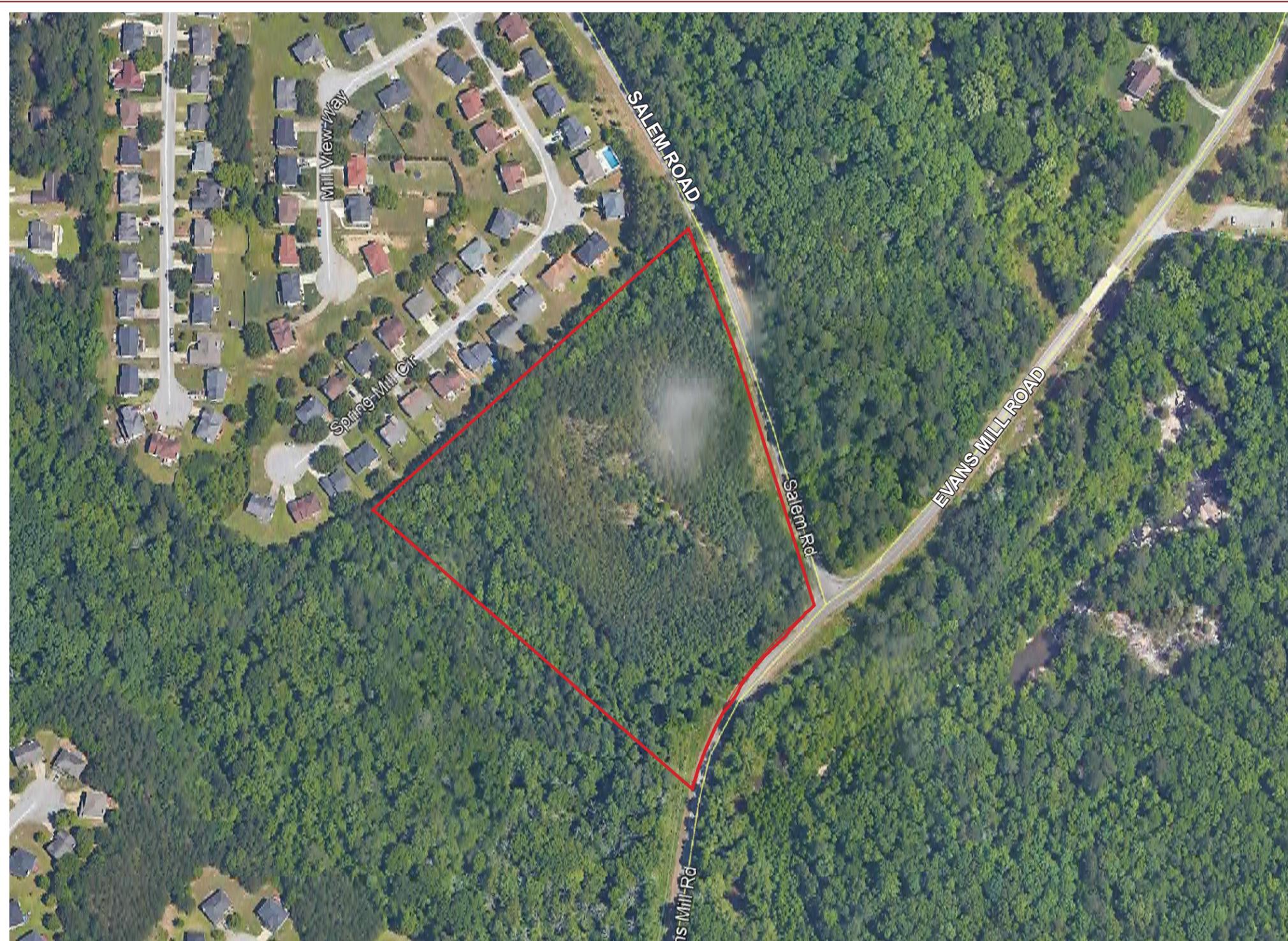




# Miner's Creek / Panola Shoals Trailhead

80 acres





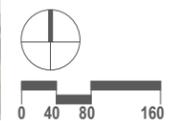
# Salem Road and Evans Mill Road 8 acres





**park life!** Fairington Club Drive 62 acres





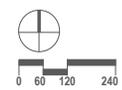
# Salem Park 11 acres



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# Southeast Athletic Complex 97 acres



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**APPENDIX D:  
SURVEY REPORT**

# Stonecrest Recreation and Park Department *Master Plan Survey 2020 Final Report*



1

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

-  INTRO, METHODOLOGY & KEY FINDINGS
-  DEMOGRAPHICS
-  SATISFACTION
-  IMPORTANCE-PERFORMANCE
-  FUTURE FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS
-  COMMUNICATION AND VISION
-  FINANCIAL CHOICES & VALUES
-  COMMUNITY COMMENTS
-  YOUTH SURVEY RESULTS



2

## Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gather community feedback on Stonecrest’s facilities, amenities, programs, future planning, communication, and more.

This survey research effort and subsequent analysis were designed to assist Stonecrest in developing a plan to reflect the community’s needs and desires.



3

## Methodology

### Primary methods:

- 1) Randomly sampled, mailed “Invitation Survey”
- 2) Shortened 2-page survey (identical to Invite)
- 3) Youth survey (modified to fit demographics)

4,200 Surveys Mailed and multiple outreach events



The results of the survey efforts includes a combined sample of mailed and shortened survey. Throughout this is referred to as “overall respondents.” Combining both samples allows for a more robust look into the unique settings of this community. When analyzed separately, only minor differences were observed with similarity across almost all variables.



475  
Completed Mailed and  
Short Surveys

1,200

Completed Youth  
Surveys



4



## Weighting the Data

The underlying data from the invitation and shortened survey were weighted by age to ensure appropriate representation of Stonecrest residents across different demographic cohorts in the sample.

Using a combination of sources including the American Community Survey, and U.S. Census Data, the age distributions in the sample were adjusted to more closely match the population profile of Stonecrest.

Due to variable response rates by some segments of the population, the underlying results, while weighted to best match the overall demographics of residents, may not be completely representative of some sub-groups of the Stonecrest population.



## The Story of Stonecrest

**Mail and Online survey**

Initial survey mailed to 4,000 households in Stonecrest. Online version available for residents to participate in. Received moderate participation. New approaches were considered to capture a broader range of input.

**Shortened 2-Page Survey**

Pop-up events were conducted with a shortened version of the survey available for people to participate. Furthermore, social media ads were used to promote the shortened version.

**Youth Survey**

Through a coordinated effort, a variety of schools including large efforts by Lithonia and Arabia High Schools encouraged students to take a youth survey. This was a shorter survey focused on younger demographics.

- Stonecrest is a unique community which required a unique approach to engagement. Multiple methods were used to reach residents of Stonecrest including youth.
- Traditional survey methodology (only mailed and online) was not enough to fully capture the community. Thus, a shortened survey was provided to be used at intercept events, social media, and at meetings.

## New Community, New Approach

- Stonecrest is a very new city in terms of creating a formal community. Stonecrest residents only recently updated their mailing addresses to Stonecrest from their previous community boundary. Early community engagement efforts identified varying awareness about Stonecrest boundaries, parks within the community, and more.
- The traditional mail survey and online option gathered approximately 140 total responses, a lower response rate than expected. The approach shifted to engage residents at events, through email/social media, and through schools to cast a wider net. Local input from community planning experts such as Contente Consulting and social media outreach from GreenPlay led to a more aggressive outreach than in some communities.
- Therefore, the mail survey and “short” 2-page survey provided broader coverage across Stonecrest. The combined results have varying sample sizes due to some questions only being on the longer survey; however, the questions that were shared between versions were identical and provide strong insights. For Stonecrest, it was more appropriate to adopt a broader outreach strategy as many of these topics have not been discussed at a community level yet.



7

## Key Findings



Stonecrest is a unique community with many opportunities to engage its residents and develop a parks and recreation identity. Currently, there are many residents who are unaware of what is offered but are interested in participating. This is an opportunity for growth for Stonecrest.



Overall satisfaction in Stonecrest is moderate with current parks and recreation offerings. Most respondents stated their satisfaction as a 3 out of 5 with an equal share on both sides of the scale. As Stonecrest develops and improves parks and recreation facilities across the city, this will likely increase.



Park and recreation events are an important aspect to consider for the future. Respondents gave high priority to events throughout multiple questions on the survey. Events and festivals are good ways to provide families with activities to participate in on weekends too.



8

## Key Findings



Brown's Mill Park and Salem Park are the two most used parks and recreation facilities by respondents. However, all parks and facilities see some level of usage by residents. Therefore, it's clear that there is interest in Stonecrest to continue participating.



Youth surveyed identified fitness and wellness programs, sports leagues, basketball courts, events, and more as important for the future. However, they also gave a high degree of concern with safety within Stonecrest parks.



Youth and teen programs, aquatic facilities, and outdoor event spaces were the highest priorities among respondents for the future. These were not only rated high in importance but were selected as top three priorities for the future.



9

# OVERALL SURVEY RESULTS (COMBINED INVITE AND SHORT SURVEY)



10



## DEMOGRAPHICS



11



### Overall Respondent Demographics

**54%** of respondents are under 45 years old. Responses were well-distributed across age ranges in Stonecrest.



**62%** of respondents' households earn over between \$25k and \$99,999 per year



**11%** require ADA-accessible facilities and services in Stonecrest.



**48%** of respondent households have children at home.



**93%** are registered to vote in Stonecrest.



12

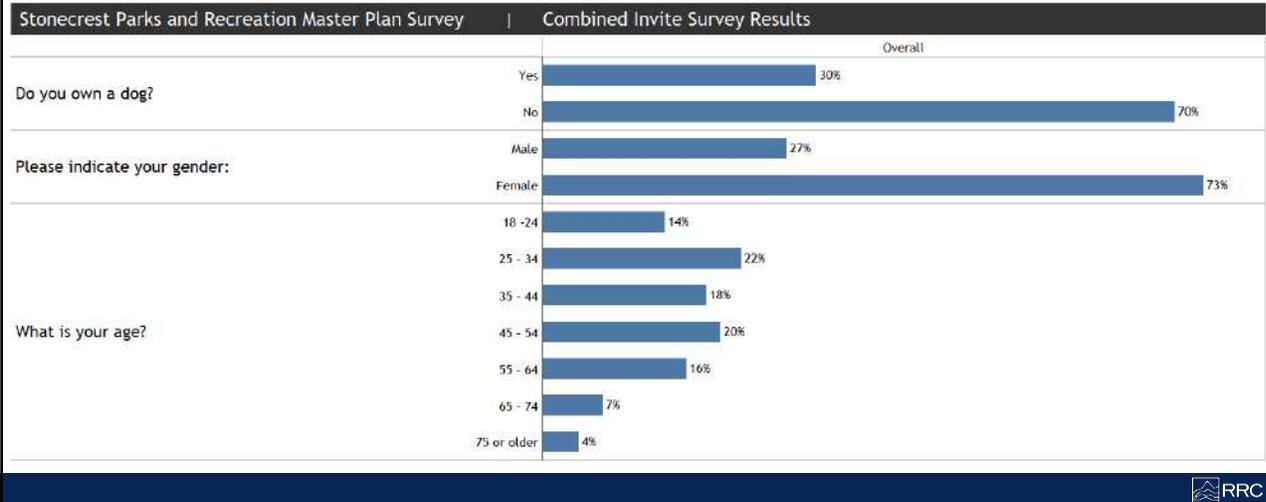


12



## Demographic Profile

Approximately 30% of Stonecrest residents own a dog with 70% without a dog at home. The survey skewed female (73%) which is not uncommon for survey research. Females tend to participate in survey research more frequently. Finally, age, a weighted variable, was well-distributed across all age ranges.

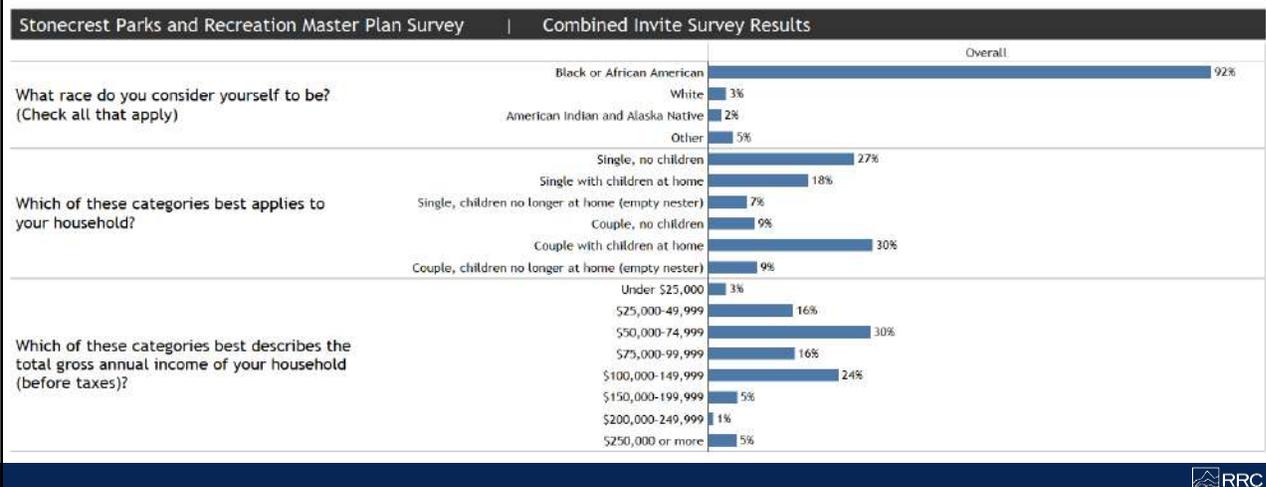


13



## Demographic Profile

Most respondents identified as Black or African American (92%) with 3% identifying as White, 2% American Indian and Alaskan Native, and 5% some other race. Approximately 48% of respondents have children at home with 27% single without children at home. Finally, 30% of respondents earn between \$50k-\$74,999 with 65% of respondents earning under \$100k per year.

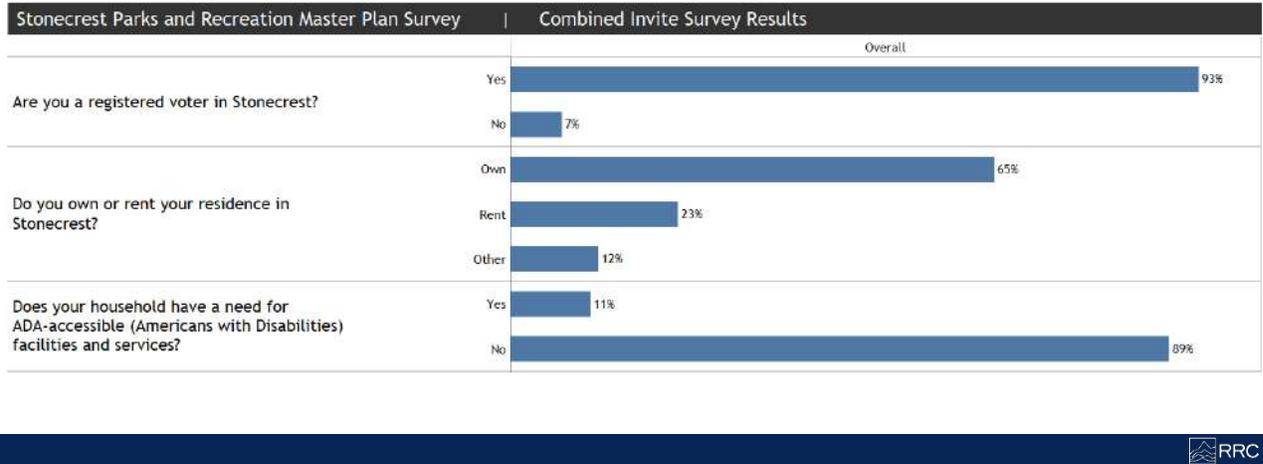


14



## Demographic Profile

Over 90% of respondents are registered to vote in Stonecrest. Approximately 65% of respondents own their home with 23% renting and 12% in some other agreement. Just over 10% of respondents identified a need for ADA-Accessible facilities and services in Stonecrest.



15



## CURRENT USAGE AND SATISFACTION

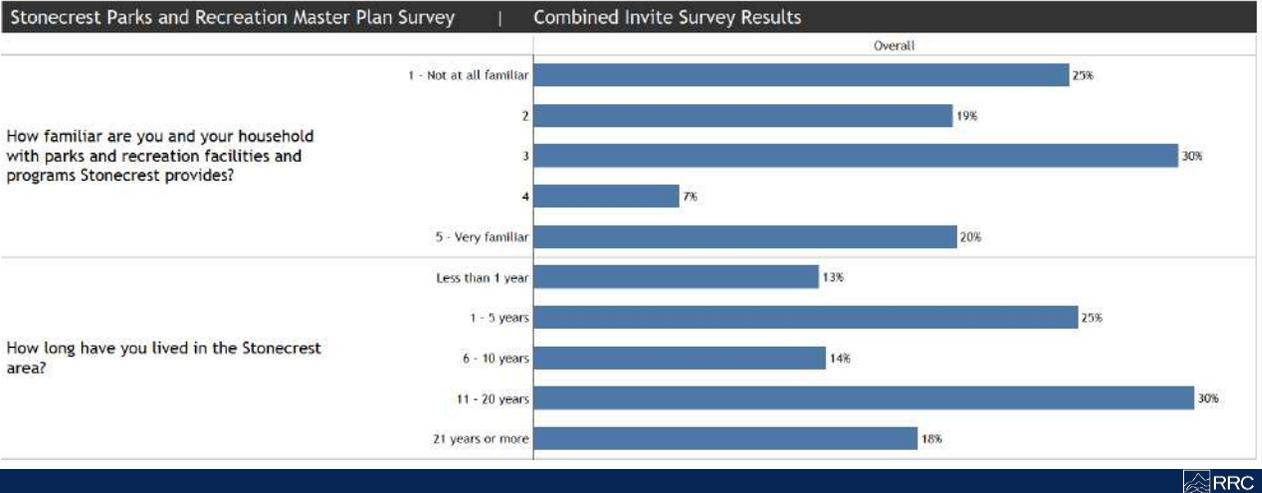


16



## Familiarity and Length of Residence

Familiarity is both positive and negative in Stonecrest among parks and recreation offerings. About 44% of respondents rate their familiarity either a 1 or 2 out of 5 while 27% rate it 4 or 5 out of 5. This difference in familiarity indicates that awareness is likely an area that needs to be focused on in the future. Similarly, respondents have lived in the Stonecrest area for a variety of years. Most respondents have lived in the area for at least 6 years (62%).

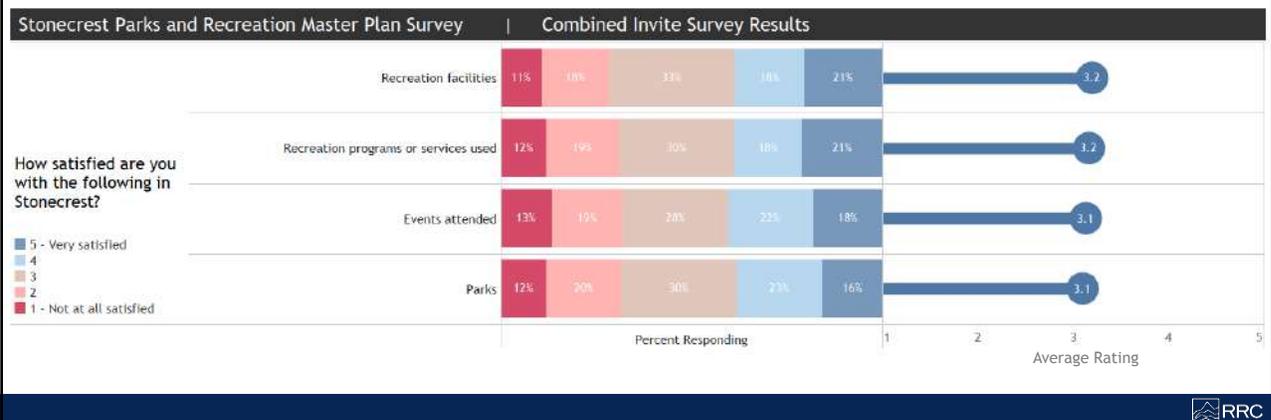


17



## Overall Satisfaction

Overall satisfaction with the quality of Stonecrest parks and recreation is moderate. Recreation facilities and recreation programs both rated at an average of 3.2 out of 5, with events and parks rating a 3.1 out of 5. In general, there's nearly an equal amount of respondents who are satisfied than are not satisfied in the community. Most respondents rated their satisfaction a 3 out of 5. In general, Stonecrest is now able to utilize the new acquisitions made to improve and develop the parks to residents liking.



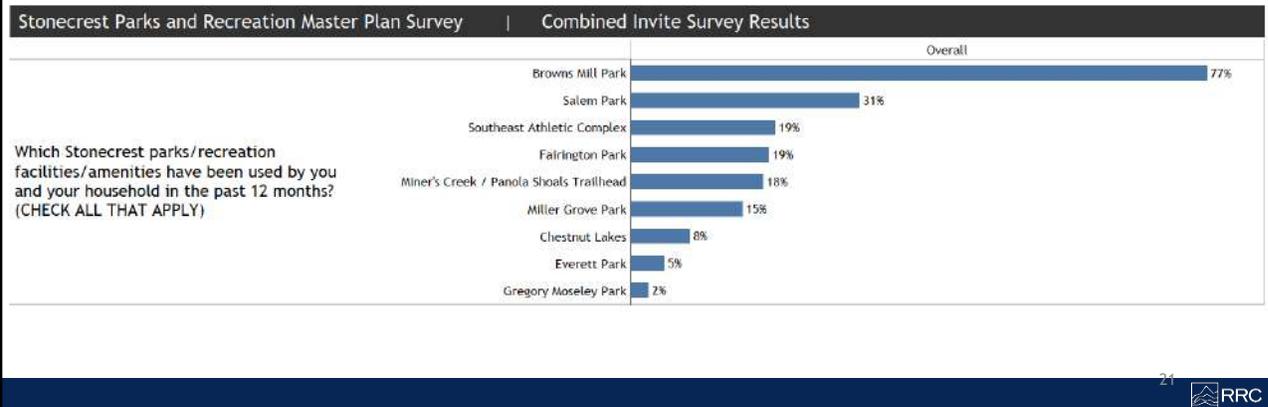
18





## Usage of Parks and Recreation Facilities

When asked which parks and recreation facilities/amenities respondents have used in the past 12 months, the most used facility is Browns Mill Park (77%) followed by Salem Park (31%), Southeast Athletic Complex (19%), and Fairington Park (19%). Browns Mill Park sees the highest usage by respondents, but almost all parks/facilities receive some level of use. This is encouraging as it shows interest by the community to participate and visit parks and recreation facilities.



21

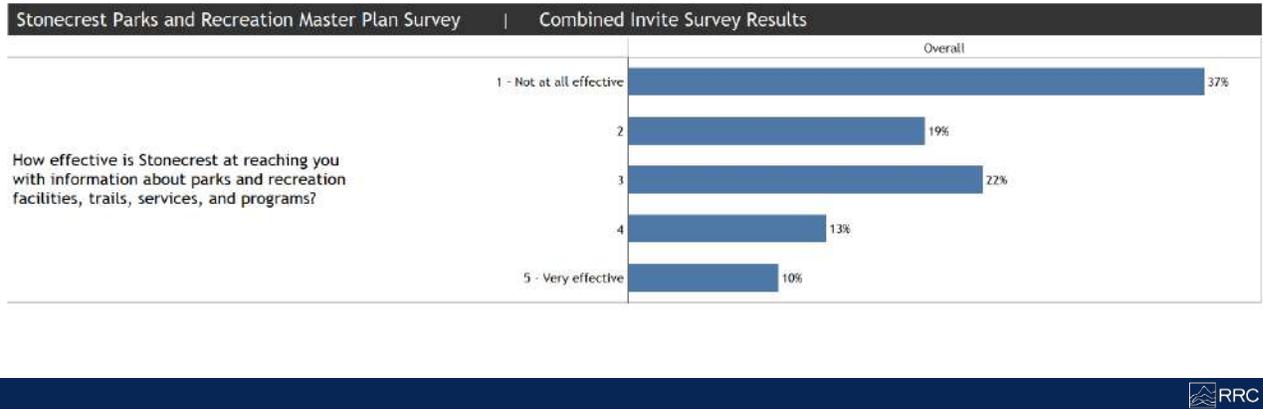
## COMMUNICATION AND VISION

22



## Communication Effectiveness

Communication is perceived as not too effective overall yet in Stonecrest. In total 37% of respondents rated the effectiveness as a 1 out of 5. Furthermore, 78% of respondents rated the communication effectiveness a 3 or lower. A lower rating on communication is likely tied to a lack of familiarity in general. This is a great opportunity for Stonecrest to capitalize on new acquisitions in park and recreation to promote and make the community aware of what is offered.



23



## Top 5 Methods of Receiving Information



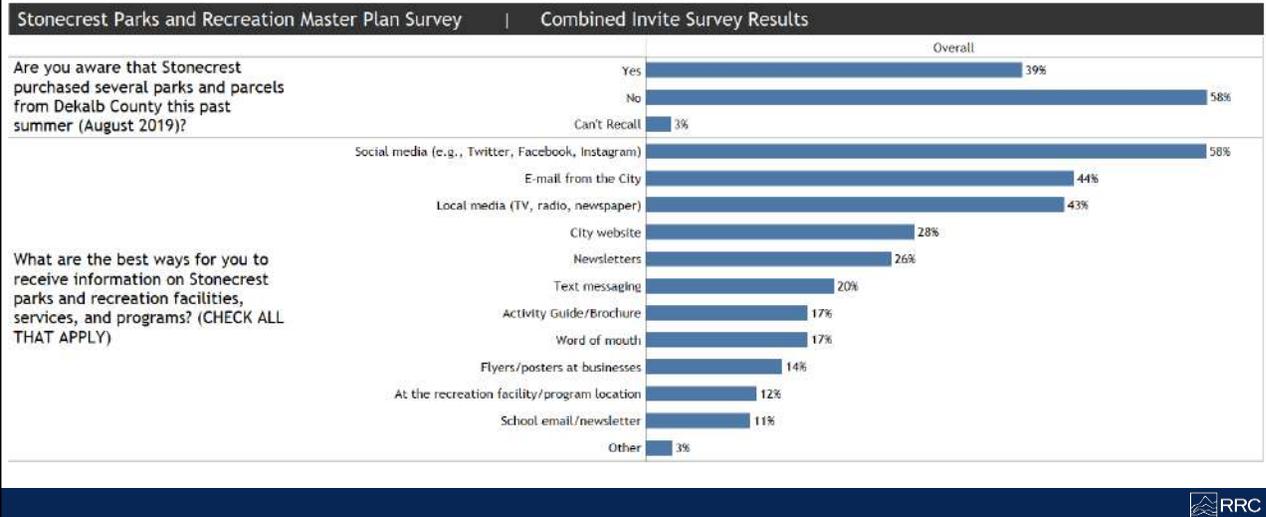
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24



# Communication Methods

Approximately 39% of respondents are aware of the recent acquisitions of parks in Stonecrest from DeKalb County. An additional 58% are not aware and 3% are not sure if they recall. Social media (58%), e-mails from the city (44%) and local media (43%) saw the highest percentage of respondents preferring this communication method. Stonecrest can diversify their communication methods by using online and traditional media to reach different segments of the community.



25

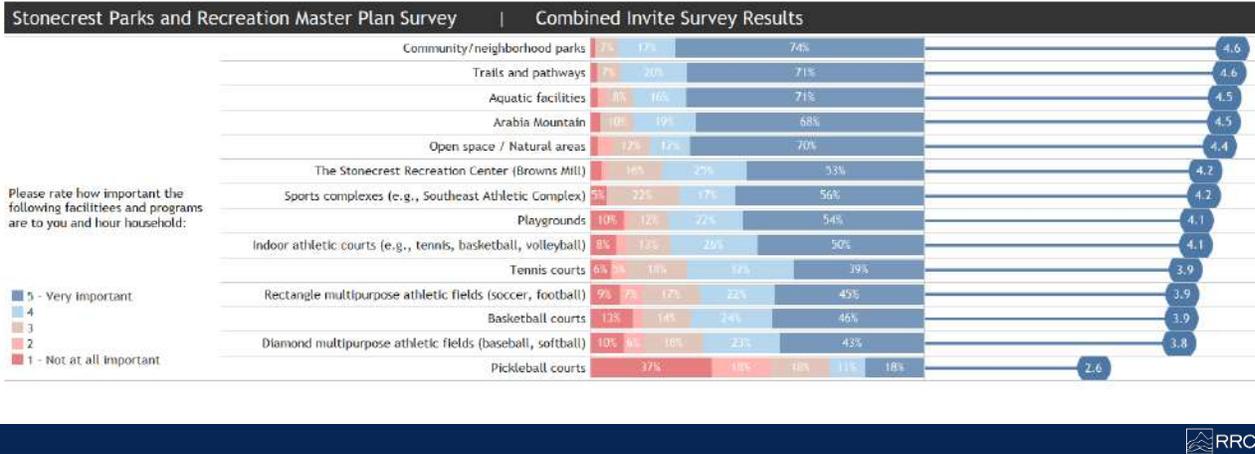
## IMPORTANCE-PERFORMANCE

26



## Importance of Current Facilities

Respondents were asked to rate how important several facilities/amenities were to their household in Stonecrest. As displayed, community/neighborhood parks (4.6), trails and pathways (4.6), aquatic facilities (4.5), and Arabia Mountain (4.5) were all rated as quite important to respondents. Open space / natural areas (4.4) and The Stonecrest Recreation Center (4.2) all were perceived to be quite important too. Pickleball courts (2.6) saw a much lower importance, but these facilities are typically very important to a small, niche user group.

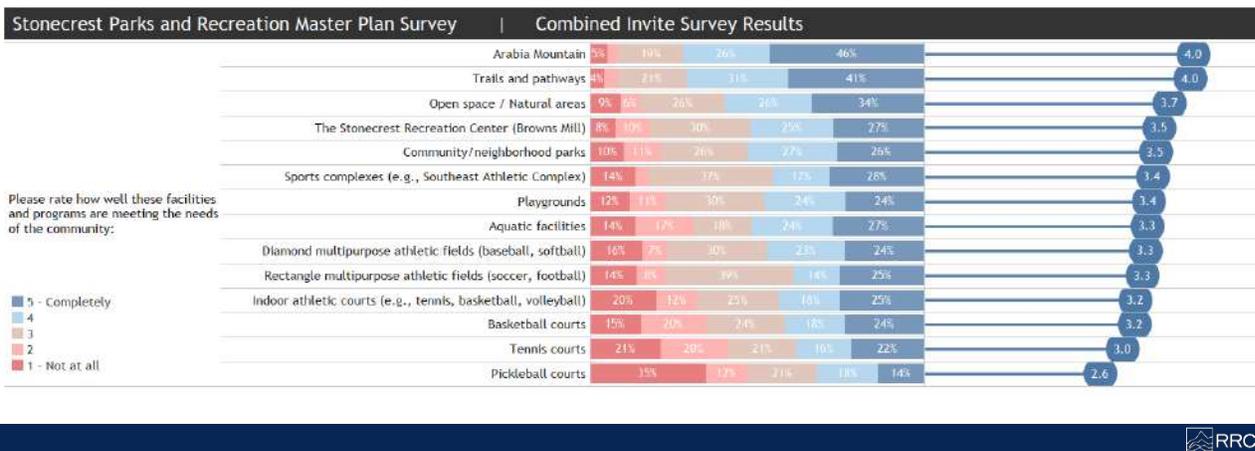


27



## Needs Met of Current Facilities

When asked how well these facilities/amenities were meeting the needs of Stonecrest, Arabia Mountain (4.0) and trails and pathways (4.0) see the highest rating among respondents. Open space / natural areas (3.7), The Stonecrest Recreation Center (3.5), and community/neighborhood parks (3.5) follow in how well it meets the needs of the community. Pickleball courts (2.6), tennis courts (3.0), basketball courts (3.2), and indoor athletic courts (3.2) saw the lowest rating for meeting the needs of Stonecrest.

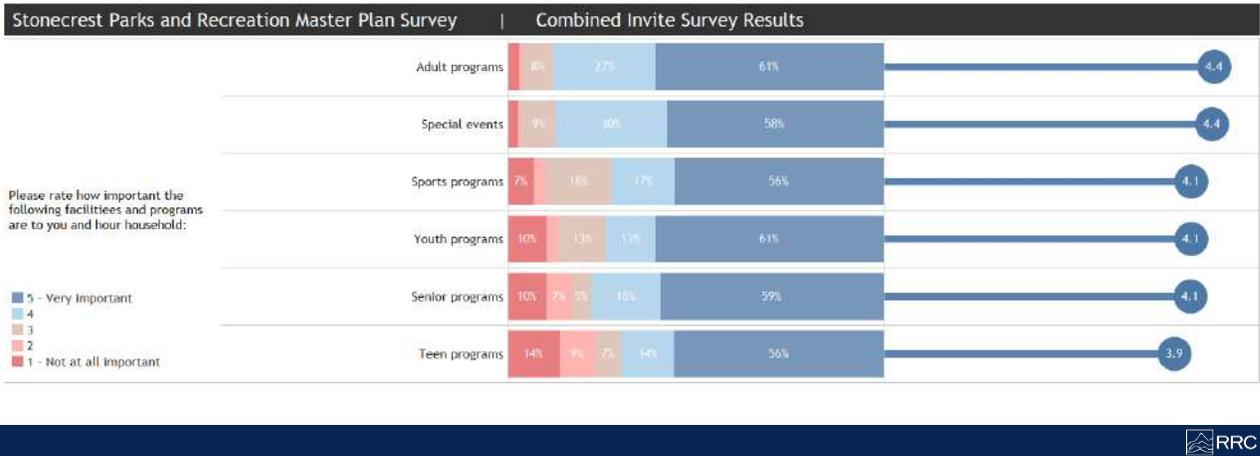


28



## Importance of Current Programs

Respondents were asked similar questions about programs in Stonecrest. Adult programs (4.4) and special events (4.4) were rated as most important to respondents. Sports programs (4.1), youth programs (4.1), and senior programs (4.1) were not too far behind in importance. Overall, programs had a surprisingly high level of importance compared to many communities. Therefore, programs seem to have a higher demand in Stonecrest than some other communities.



29



## Needs Met of Current Programs

Similarly, respondents saw almost all of these programs as nearly equally meeting the needs of Stonecrest. Sports programs and adult programs are highest at 3.1 out of 5.0, but teen programs are only 0.2 points behind at 2.9. In general, there appears to be a large volume of “neutral” ratings (3 out of 5). This may suggest that respondents are not sure how well some of these programs meet the needs of the community. However, a significant portion of respondents rate how well these are meeting the needs of Stonecrest either a 1 or 2 out of 5, showing potential for improvement.



30



# Importance-Performance Matrix

## High importance/ Low needs met

These are key areas for potential improvements. Improving these facilities/programs would likely positively affect the degree to which community needs are met overall.

## High importance/ High needs met

These amenities are important to most respondents and should be maintained in the future but are less of a priority for improvements as needs are currently being adequately met.

These “niche” facilities/programs have a small but passionate following, so measuring participation when planning for future improvements may prove to be valuable.

## Low importance/ Low needs met

Current levels of support appear to be adequate. Future discussions evaluating whether the resources supporting these facilities/programs outweigh the benefits may be constructive.

## Low importance/ High needs met

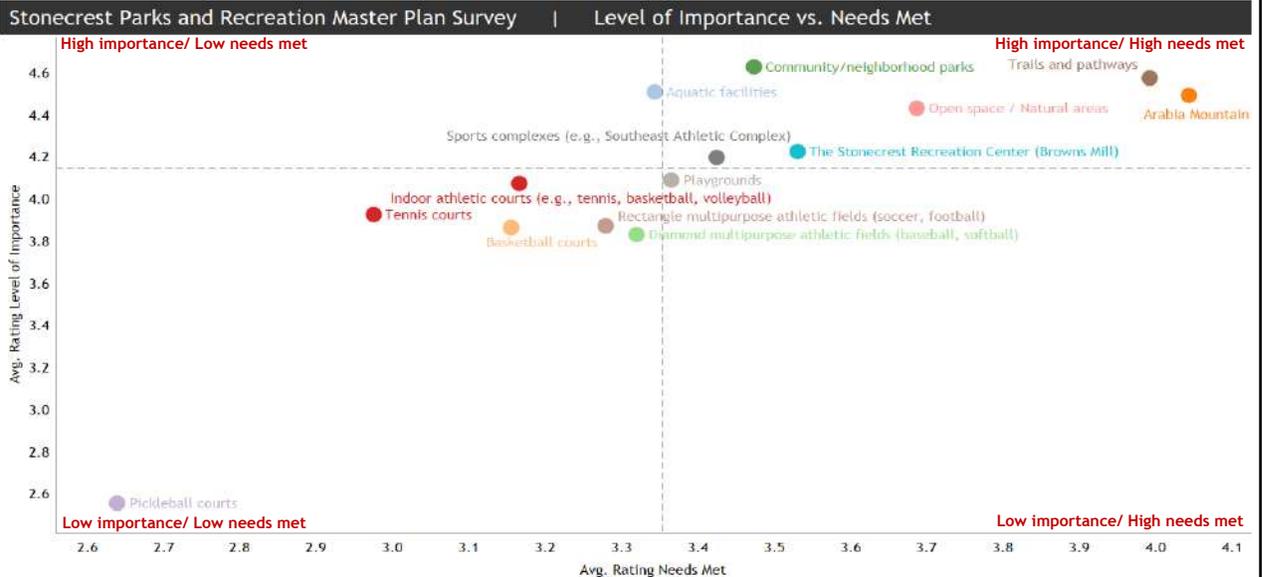
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31



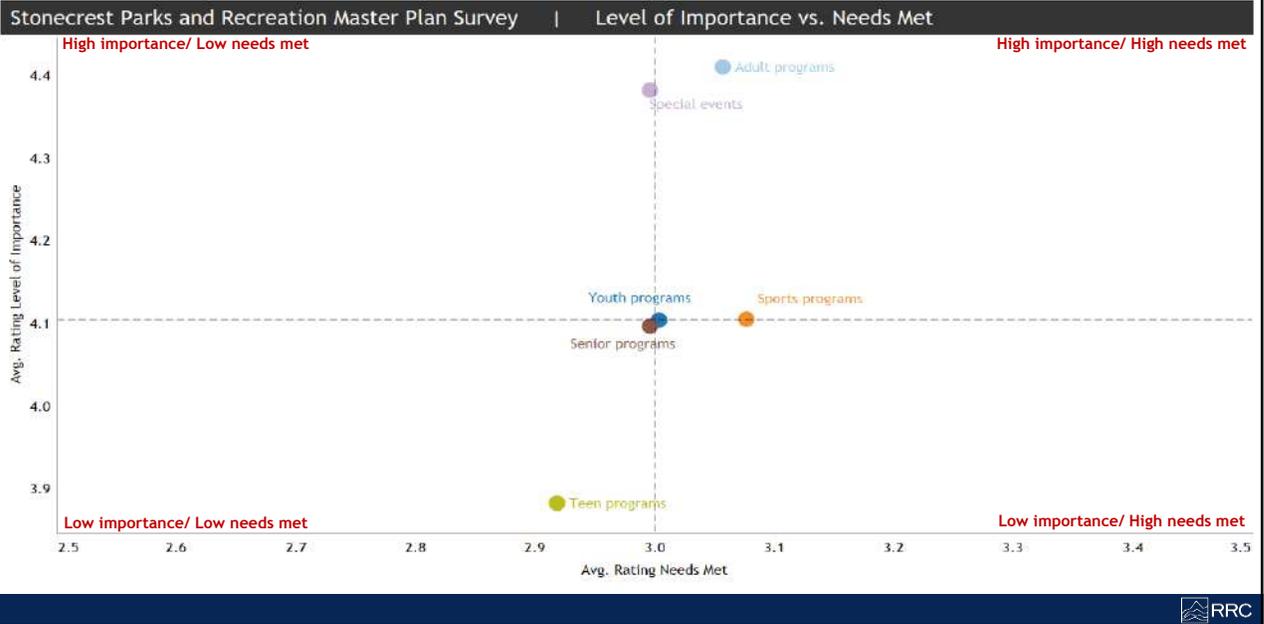
# Importance-Performance Matrix - Facilities



32



# Importance-Performance Matrix - Programs



33

## FUTURE FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS

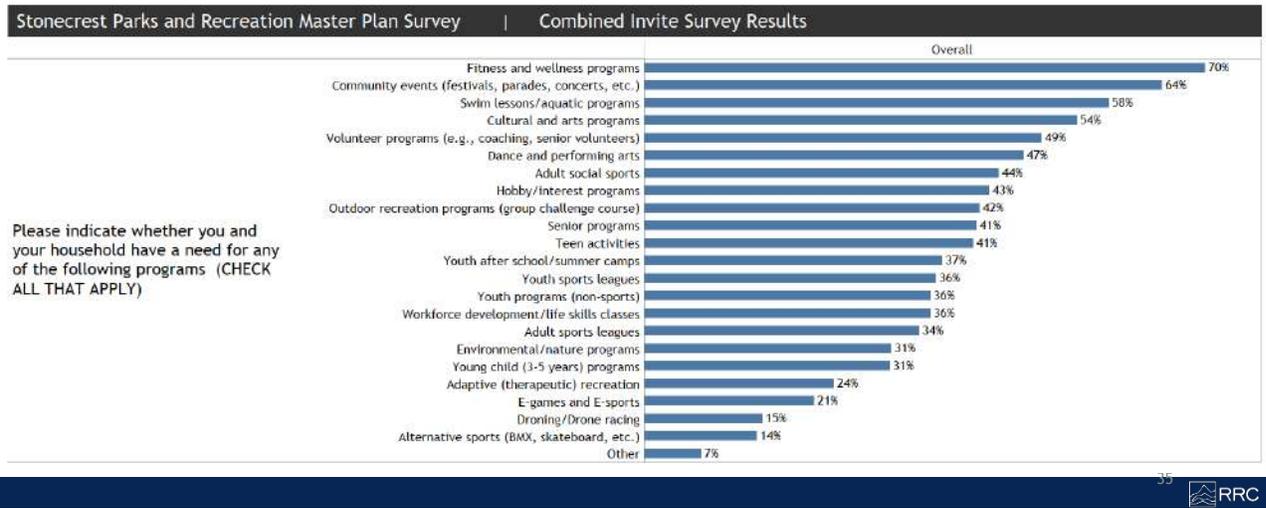
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34



## Future Programs

Respondents were asked to identify which programs their households had a need for in the future. Fitness and wellness programs topped the list (70%) with community events (64%), swim lessons/aquatic lessons (58%), and cultural arts programs following (54%). Volunteer programs (49%), dance and performing arts (47%), and adult social sports (44%) represent another tier of needs.

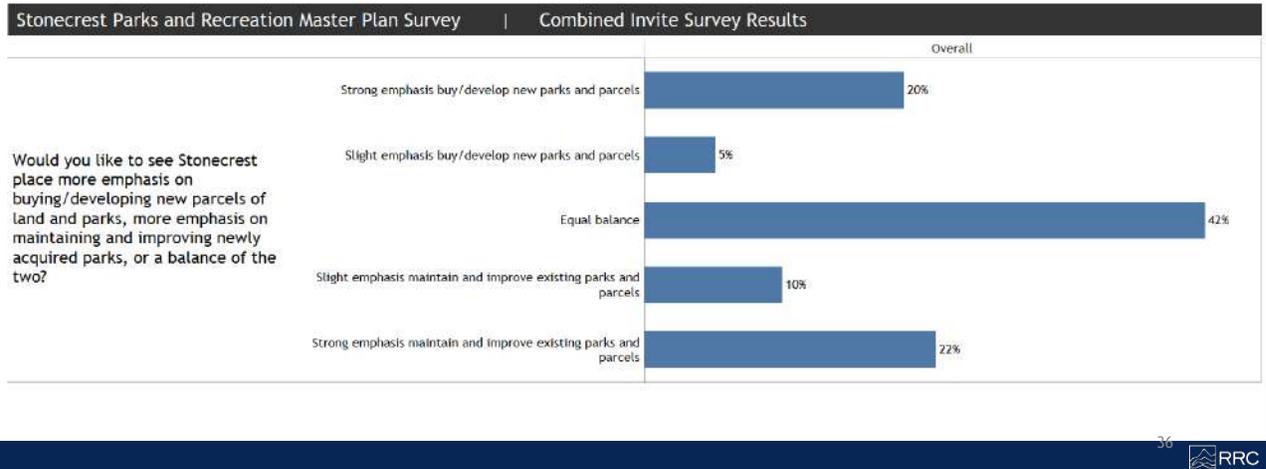


35



## Development Emphasis

Development of parks/amenities and maintaining existing facilities are both important strategies for parks and recreation. Stonecrest respondents mostly prefer an equal balance of developing new parks and maintaining existing parks and parcels. For those who chose one side, more respondents would prefer maintaining (32%) than developing (25%). Stonecrest has recently purchased several parks and there may be room with the public to both improve those while seeking any necessary parcels to continue filling out the inventory.

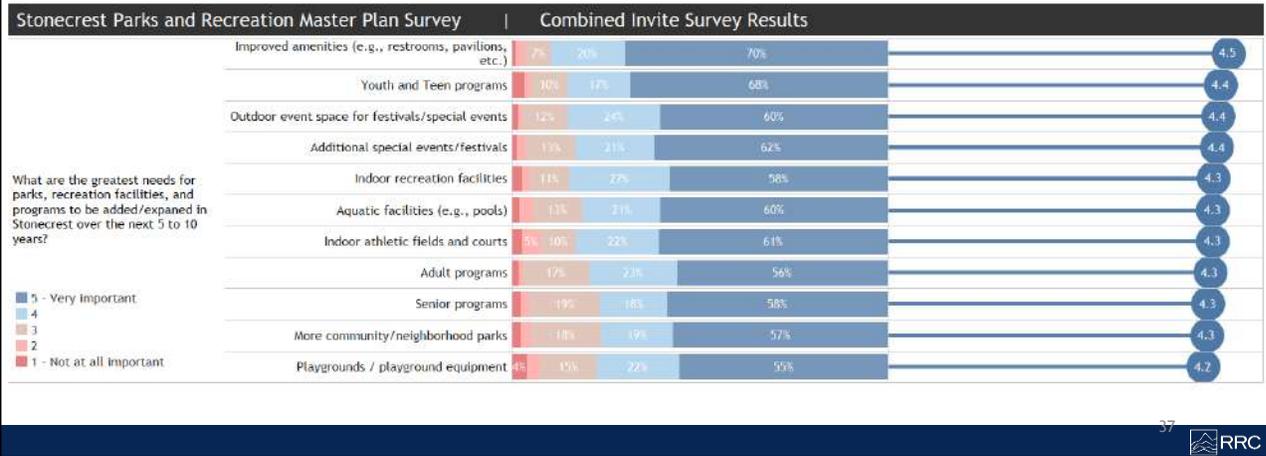


36



## Future Needs for Increased Use - Top of list

Respondents rated improved amenities the most important factor for the future (4.5); however, all of the top of the list is seen as an important aspect to focus on for Stonecrest. Youth and teen programs (4.4), outdoor event space (4.4), and additional special events/festivals all are very important too. Indoor facilities (including athletic courts) and aquatics are also important to Stonecrest respondents. In general, Stonecrest respondents have an appetite for more parks and recreation offerings across a wide spectrum.

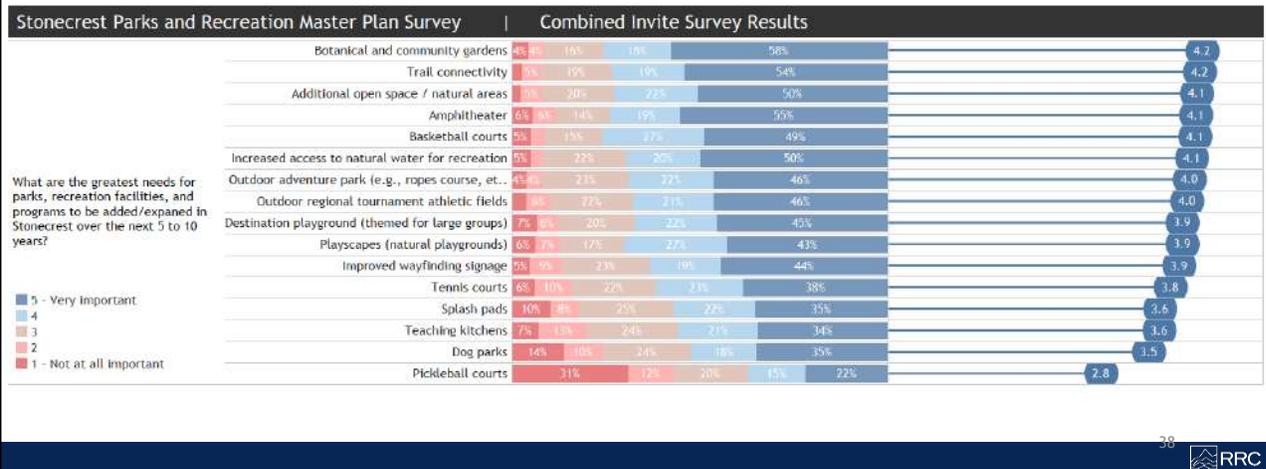


37



## Future Needs for Increased Use - Bottom of List

Towards the middle-to-bottom of the list in importance are trail connectivity, basketball courts, playgrounds, dog parks, and pickleball courts.

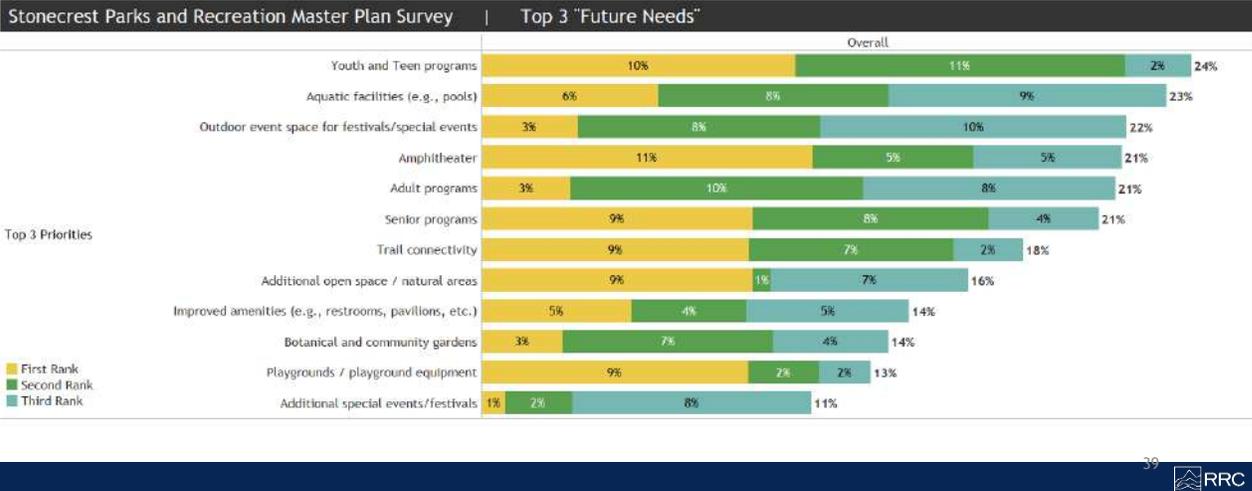


38



## Future Needs for Increased Use - Bottom of List

From the list of future needs, respondents were asked to select their top three priorities. Once prioritized to three options, youth and teen programs (24%), aquatic facilities (23%), and outdoor event space for festivals/special events (22%) rises to the top. An amphitheater (21%) and adult programs (21%), and senior programs (21%) see similarly high prioritization.

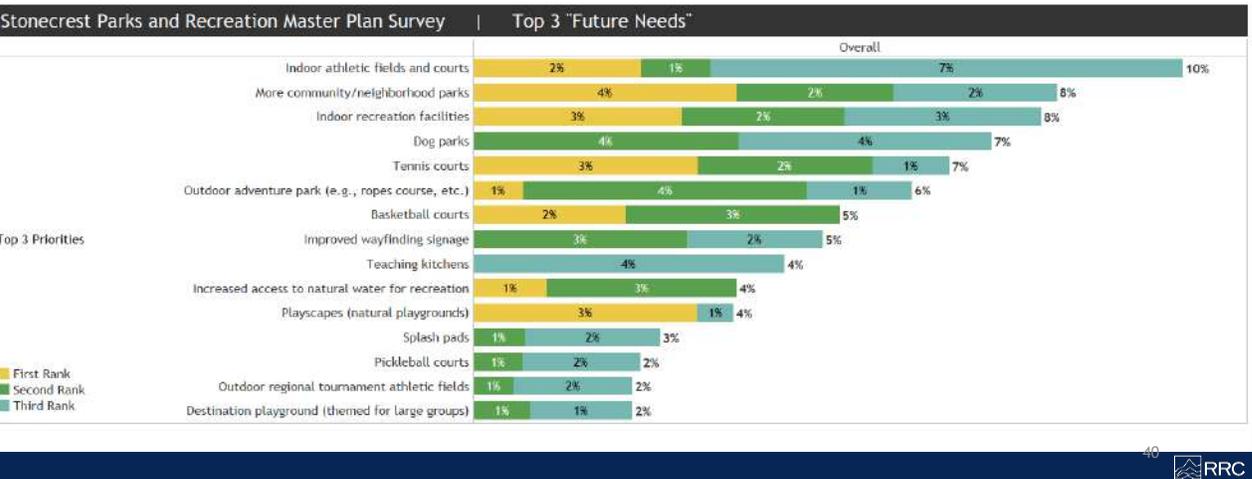


39



## Future Needs for Increased Use - Bottom of List

Towards the bottom of the prioritization list, indoor athletic fields and courts is in the middle (10%). The bottom of the list includes destination playground (2%), outdoor regional tournament athletic fields (2%), pickleball courts (2%), and splash pads (3%).



40

# \$ FINANCIAL CHOICES AND VALUES



41

## \$ Funding Mechanisms

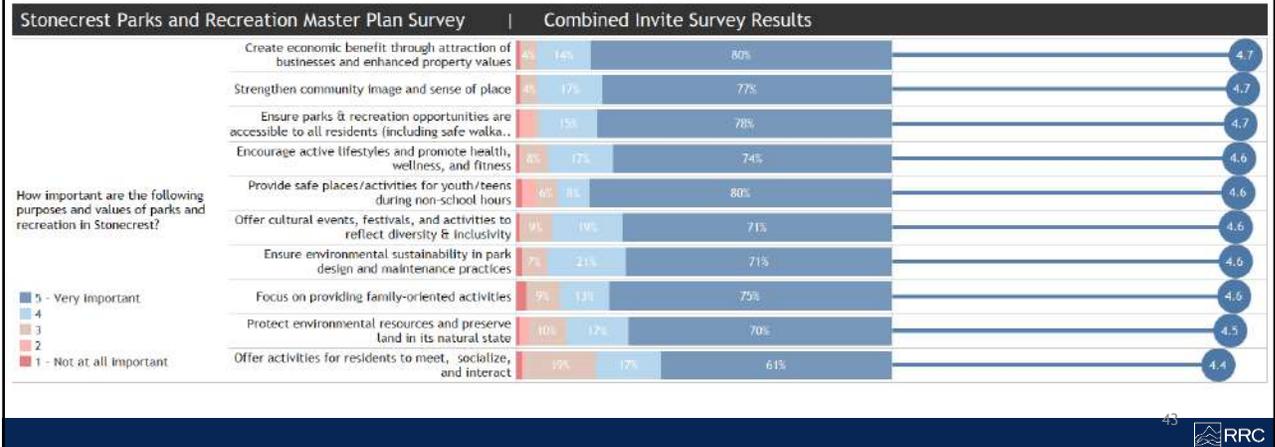
Support for funding mechanisms varied by the type of support. For example, increased resources towards grants/philanthropy received a high degree of support (4.0) while increased property tax received little support (2.0). Park and facility sponsorships (3.9) and public-private partnerships (3.9) also saw a high degree of support.



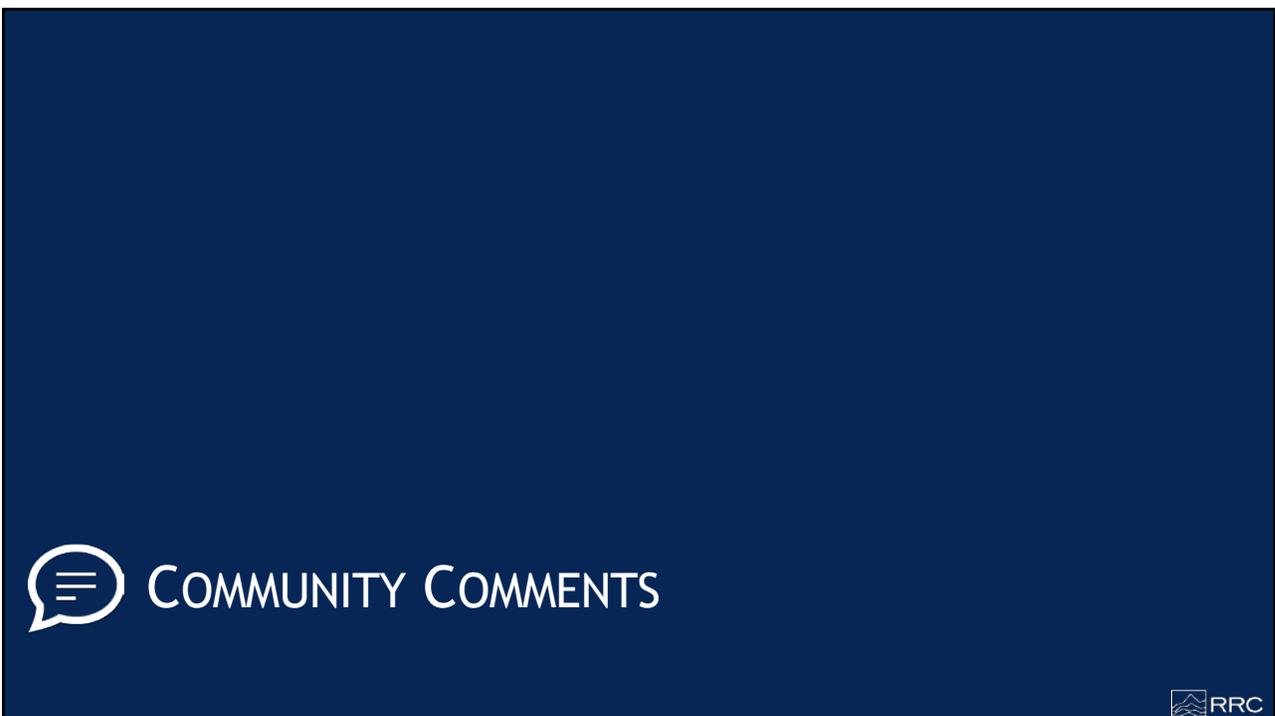
42

## § Values and Vision

Almost all of the proposed values and vision for the future were thought of a very important by respondents. From economic benefits to strengthening community image and ensuring all parks are accessible to all residents, Stonecrest respondents see all these ideas as important to strive for in the future.



43



44



## Additional Comments

At the end of the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to provide any additional comments about parks and recreation facilities, programs and programs in Stonecrest. A random selection of verbatim responses is shown below. The full listing of responses is provided in the appendix.

I am so excited to see we are going in a healthy community direction. I hope to see more healthy food markets and better restaurants in our community.

Safety is more important than anything. Stonecrest is not really safe at the moment, especially in certain areas. Safety is being overlooked by city officials.

I would love to see more outside community festivals. I would also like to love a Snap-fitness in the area (in the Salem Crossing plans). I would love to have more sidewalks along the streets/neighborhoods

It would be nice if Browns Mill Park had a hike and bike trail around the current fields and facilities (with a bit of green space)

I am thankful for a park in my neighborhood. However during the day things are happening that should not be. I was one of the persons who helped paint signs and the mural in Fairington Park.

They need more fitness classes, when only have LA Fitness and Planet Fitness, it's always packed. So if they can add fitness centers that would be great.

45



45



## Recap of Primary Survey

- Awareness and familiarity is a topic that Stonecrest can look to improve on in the short term. Stonecrest is a brand-new community and is making strides to understand what residents want. There's a great opportunity to connect and inform residents about the recent purchases of parks and facilities.
  - Residents are interested in participating and are eager to find out more about Stonecrest's offerings. Using a diverse range of communication methods looks to make Stonecrest successful into the future.
- Aquatic facilities are potentially not meeting the community needs as well as they could; however, it's not a major problem as it is right near the threshold. That said, the most important facilities (e.g., Arabia Mountain, parks, trails and pathways) are doing well to meet community needs.
- Events are viewed as important to offer in the future according to most respondents. Events are seen as a positive addition and could be a great way to introduce residents to parks and recreation within the city.

46



46



## YOUTH SURVEY RESULTS



47



## Youth Survey Approach

- Through support from Contente Consulting, schools in the Stonecrest area were contacted to ask their students to complete a modified parks and recreation survey. In total, 1,200 responses were collected from several schools, the bulk of which coming from Lithonia and Arabia High Schools.
- The Youth Survey was a much shorter version of the main survey with questions modified to fit the needs of students. The following topics were covered:
  - Current usage of parks
  - Future preferences for programs
  - Future preferences for amenities/facilities
  - Perceptions of safety

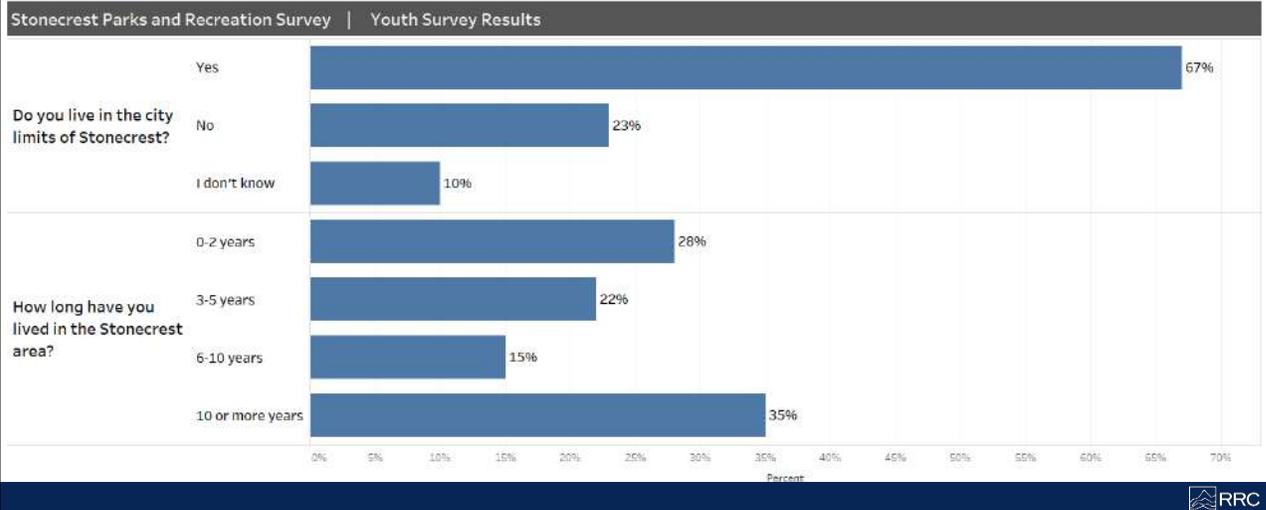


48



## Youth Residence Characteristics

Approximately 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of students live in the city limits of Stonecrest, but 10% aren't sure if they do or not. Most students have lived in the area for 10 years (35%), likely their whole life. However, 28% have only lived under 2 years, citing a large volume of new residents in the area.

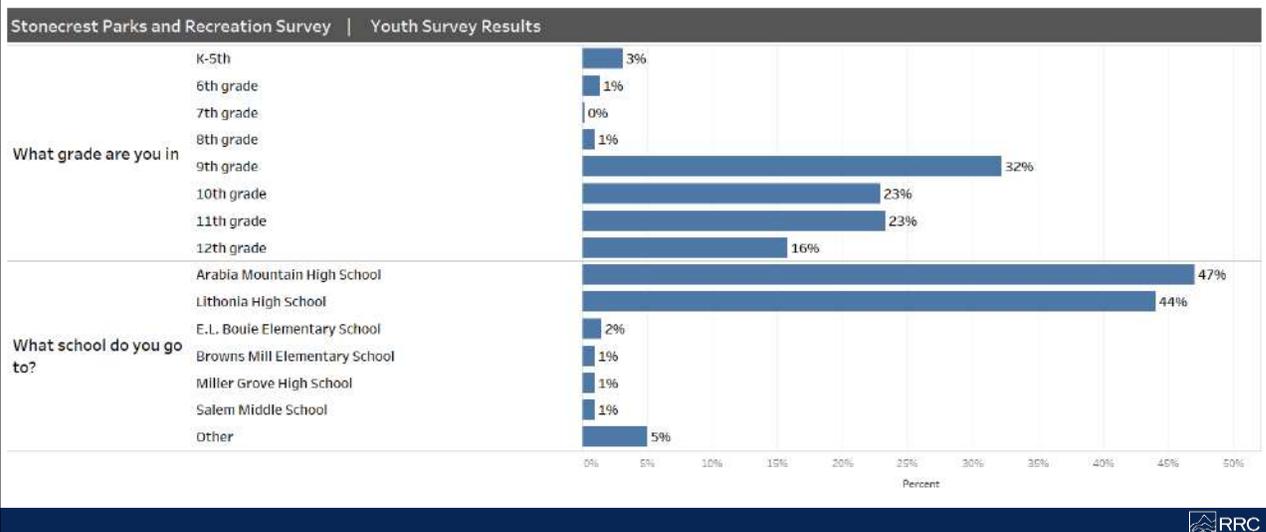


49



## Grade and School

Because Lithonia and Arabia High Schools were the largest participants, it's not surprising that 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade are most represented in the data. However, there's a smaller volume of participation from other schools in the area.

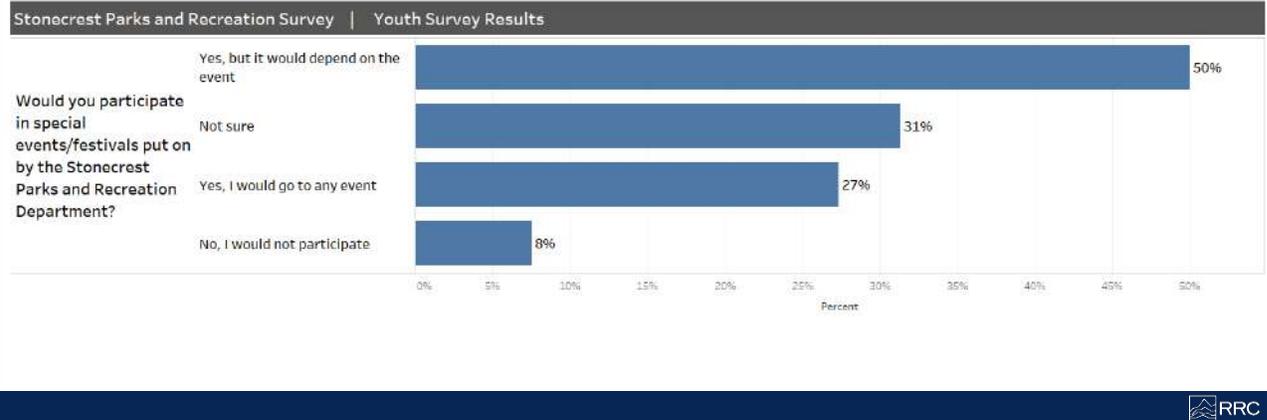


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## Events

Students, generally, are willing to participate in events, but it would depend on the event. In total, 77% of students are likely to participate in some events put on by the Parks and Recreation Department. Approximately 31% are not sure if they would participate and 8% would not.

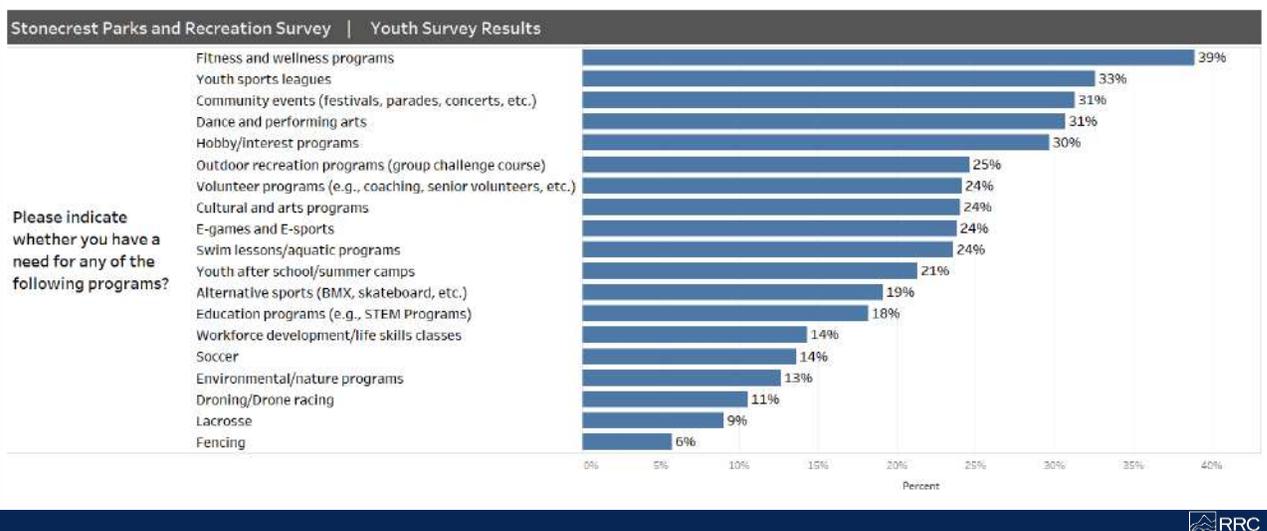


51



## Programs needed

When asked about which programs are important to them, fitness and wellness programs (39%) are the most important, followed by youth sports leagues (33%), community events (31%), and dance/performing arts (31%).

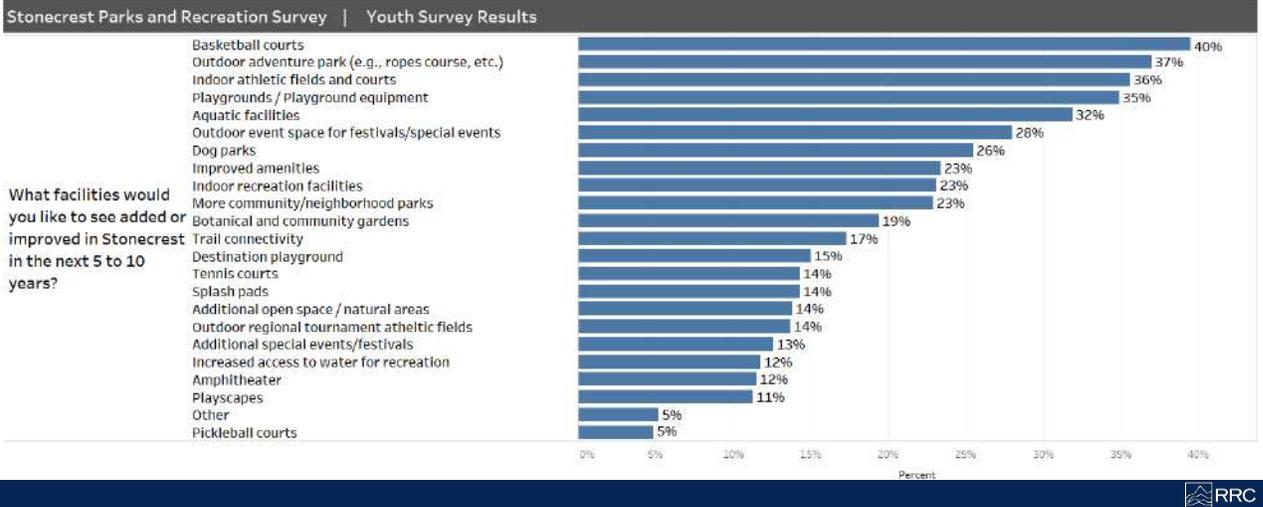


52



## Amenities and Facilities

For facilities, basketball courts (40%), outdoor adventure park (37%), indoor athletic fields and courts (36%) and playgrounds / playground equipment (35%) are most requested. Aquatic facilities and outdoor event spaces are also popular.

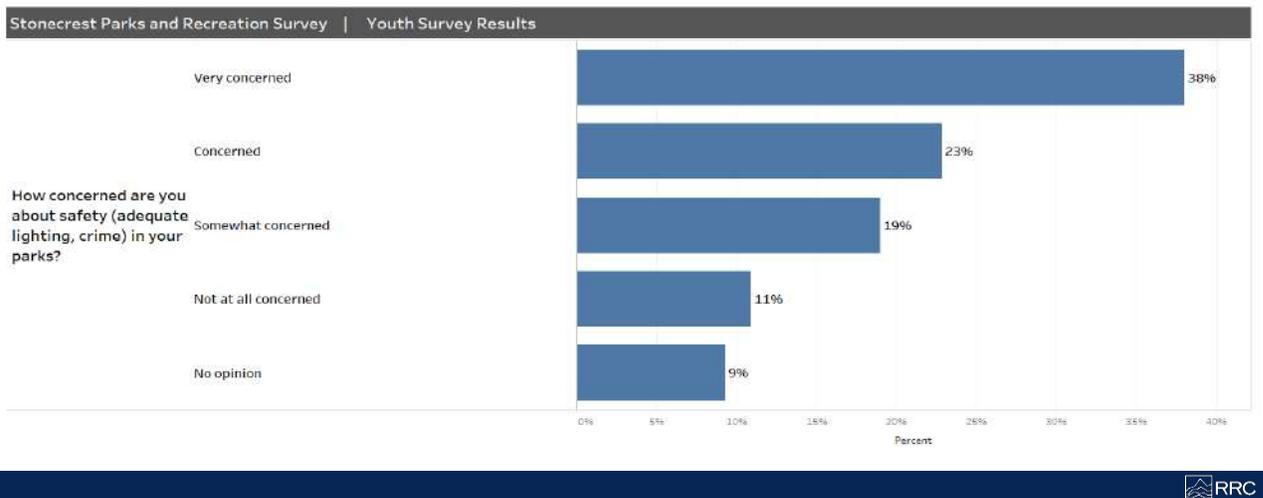


53



## Safety in Parks

Safety in parks is something that quite a few students are concerned about. In fact, 61% of students are “very concerned” or “concerned” about safety in parks. This is an opportunity for Stonecrest to work with younger demographics to identify ways to make them feel safer in their newly acquired parks and facilities.



54



## Key Takeaways from Stonecrest's Youth Survey

- Stonecrest's youth are most interested in fitness/wellness programs, sports leagues (including basketball courts added), events, and arts. There is a wide range of different wants and needs throughout the younger generations in Stonecrest.
- Safety is a concern for students. This is something that should be addressed as soon as possible as students who don't feel comfortable at parks are much less likely to participate. Stonecrest could coordinate with student groups to understand what can be addressed in order to make the parks safer for students.
- The programs and facilities desired by youth matches up well with the adult preferences too. Adults recognize the need for more youth and teen programs while youth request fitness and wellness programs similar to adults. Thus, there's definite crossover in preferences for the future.

55



**APPENDIX E:  
OPEN-ENDED SURVERY COMMENTS**

Appendix: Open-Ended Comments

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**STONECREST PARKS AND RECREATION  
MASTER PLAN SURVEY**

# Table of Contents

**WHAT TYPES OF EVENTS AND/OR FESTIVALS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE OFFERED IN STONECREST BY THE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT? ..... 9**

**WHAT ARE THE BEST WAYS FOR YOU TO RECEIVE INFORMATION ON STONECREST PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES, SERVICES, AND PROGRAMS? (OTHER) ..... 12**

**PLEASE RATE HOW IMPORTANT THE FOLLOWING FACILITIES ARE TO YOUR HOUSEHOLD. (OTHER) ..... 12**

**PLEASE INDICATE WHETHER YOU AND YOUR HOUSEHOLD HAVE A NEED OR A DESIRE FOR THE FOLLOWING. (OTHER) ..... 12**

**WHAT ARE THE GREATEST NEEDS FOR RECREATION FACILITIES, AND RECREATION PROGRAMS TO BE ADDED, EXPANDED, OR IMPROVED UPON IN STONECREST IN THE NEXT 5 TO 10 YEARS? (OTHER) ..... 13**

**PLEASE RATE HOW IMPORTANT THE FOLLOWING PURPOSES OF PARKS, RECREATION, OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS IN STONECREST ARE TO YOU AND YOUR HOUSEHOLD. (OTHER) ..... 15**

**DO YOU HAVE ANY FURTHER COMMENTS ABOUT PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS, NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN AMHERST? ..... 16**

**1. What types of events and/or festivals would you like to see offered in Stonecrest by the Parks and Recreation Department?**

Age	Kids	Events and/or Festival Suggestions
18-24	Yes	More parks the feature playgrounds; More recreation venues for events
18-24	No	Summer events, movie nights, fall pumpkin decorating
25-34	Yes	Food truck festival, classic car show, annual festival
25-34	Yes	Food, music, and art festivals.
25-34	Yes	Juneteenth
25-34	Yes	Taste of Stonecrest, Stonecrest days
25-34	No	Any festivals and activities that will benefit both the citizens and the city of Stonecrest.
25-34	No	Block parties, family day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, back2school, no bullying
25-34	No	entertainment. music. festivals
35-44	Yes	Arts, food, health
35-44	Yes	Children and teen events
35-44	Yes	Christmas parade
35-44	Yes	City Fair for adults and children
35-44	Yes	Events that enrich the culture of the area as well as festivals for children.
35-44	Yes	Events to help our youth
35-44	Yes	Family oriented activities, health related activities that promote outdoor exercise, activities that support an appreciation and preservation of nature
35-44	Yes	Farmer's Market, live music, Easter hunt, parades, Latin festival, kite festival
35-44	Yes	Festival such as the ones in Snellville/Lawrenceville
35-44	Yes	Food truck festivals and family friendly events
35-44	Yes	Music, family festivals, art festivals
35-44	Yes	Recreation facilities for kids, afterschool programs, swimming pools
35-44	Yes	Summer concert series
35-44	Yes	Taste of Stonecrest (outside festival); Truck or Treat for October or Fall Festival
35-44	No	Concerts, seasonal festivals
35-44	No	jazz festival community service festival health fairs
35-44	No	Jazz, art, festivals, community events
35-44	No	Labor Day events, Christmas events
35-44	No	Music, film, food and sport events
35-44	No	Pride events, 4th of July
45-54	Yes	Concerts Family Day w/Food Trucks Art Festival
45-54	Yes	concerts festivals
45-54	Yes	Concerts for kids, gaming for kids, swimming for all ages with the price lower
45-54	Yes	Holiday events (4th of July, Memorial Day, Labor Day, Christmas holidays similar to Snow Mountain @ Stone Mountain); Concerts/outdoor festivals
45-54	Yes	Jazz and or music festival Stuff for kids
45-54	Yes	Jazz Festivals, Stone City Festival
45-54	Yes	Music concerts (summer), plays and live performances
45-54	Yes	Music, art, crafts, food

Age	Kids	Events and/or Festival Suggestions
45-54	Yes	Outside music events, 5ks, children fest, BBQ fest
45-54	Yes	Various festivals that are geared toward children
45-54	No	Adult and senior events
45-54	No	Community awareness projects, health fair, job fair
45-54	No	Concerts, free health screenings, food trucks
45-54	No	Cultural, music, spring that would generate income for the city.
45-54	No	Educational events for children, black history, etc.
45-54	No	festivals for each season especially winter and summer.
45-54	No	Food truck festival, farmers market festival, slutty vegan festival, fair
45-54	No	House in the Park (concert); Arts Festival
45-54	No	Lawn Concerts; Wine Down Wednesday Fall Festivals
45-54	No	Music fest, art fest, carnivals
45-54	No	Music festivals, arts festivals, cultural events
55-64		Outdoor jazz concerts, plays, festivals, cooking demonstrations
55-64	Yes	Family programs and games for adults and children
55-64	Yes	Jazz concerts, food festivals
55-64	Yes	More events for kids
55-64	Yes	Talent shows, cultural events, performances, etc.
55-64	No	Art Festivals, Drama Festivals, Food Truck Festivals, Music Festivals
55-64	No	Arts & Crafts Festival, gospel and jazz concerts, and 1K fun run or walk race
55-64	No	Arts and music
55-64	No	Concerts
55-64	No	Entertainment for older adults
55-64	No	Everything!
55-64	No	Family Day in the park with games, attractions, and food trucks
55-64	No	Family events/activities, concerts
55-64	No	Family friendly events and activities for singles
55-64	No	Family oriented events
55-64	No	Free concerts
55-64	No	Health oriented
55-64	No	international food festivals art shows
55-64	No	Jazz festivals and learning workshops for a variety area that productivity would benefit Stonecrest
55-64	No	Jazz in park at Stonecrest like Newport Jazz Fest
55-64	No	Jazz, 70's-90's and some 20's concerts
55-64	No	Music, arts
55-64	No	Music, plays, Christmas activities
55-64	No	Outdoor concerts, sports events, rallies, etc.
55-64	No	Parades, family day, carnival rides
55-64	No	Park cleanup, fairs, health fairs, volunteer opportunity
55-64	No	Screen on the Green, East Egg Hunt, Community Day

Age	Kids	Events and/or Festival Suggestions
55-64	No	Some type of carnival or small plays
55-64	No	Something for children
55-64	No	State Fair, food festivals, music festivals, farmers markets
55-64	No	Vendor/Food Festivals Concerts Motivational/Educational Speakers, Farmers Market
55-64	No	Youth arts programs and performances
65-74	Yes	concerts
65-74	Yes	Jazz concerts/more baseball games/concerts
65-74	Yes	Music
65-74	Yes	Nature
65-74	No	Adult and teen social events
65-74	No	All events
65-74	No	Arts and crafts, music, food vendors, health awareness
65-74	No	Christmas Festival
65-74	No	concerts
65-74	No	Concerts
65-74	No	Concerts
65-74	No	Concerts, ball games, children sports
65-74	No	Concerts; hot air balloons
65-74	No	Family cookouts, entertainment, fishing classes
65-74	No	Festivals
65-74	No	Free concerts, art shows, meet and greets, fitness
65-74	No	Jazz
65-74	No	Jazz
65-74	No	Jazz concerts; arts and crafts fair; food truck vendors (variety of food)
65-74	No	More family activities, include activities old residents can participate
65-74	No	Taste of Stonecrest Food Fest, art festival, family reunions
75+		Gospel Fest, puppet shows, some early teaching to our community on environment
75+	No	More sports
75+	No	Walking trails with marks for exercise, swimming pools, bike trails, tennis courts
		Books, education centers for kids
		Community rallies
		concerts community picnic
		Concerts, youth football and championship competitions, Caribbean festivals
		Concerts, youth sports and championship competitions, and Caribbean festivals
		Family friendly, ex. Stonecrest days, taste of Stonecrest
		Food truck festivals and Family friendly events.
		Outdoor concerts

**2. What are the best ways for you to receive information on Stonecrest’s parks and recreation facilities, services, and programs? (other)**

<b>Best Information Source: Other</b>
emails
I don't go to the parks.
Mail
Mail
next door app
People talking
Regular mail
Sand

**3. Please rate how important the following facilities are to your household. (other)**

<b>Importance</b>	<b>Importance of Facilities (other) 1=Not at all important, 5=Very important</b>
5	Amphitheater
5	available near fishing spots
5	Bike trails
5	Cleanliness
5	Community garden
5	Disabled events
5	Dog parks
5	Fitness centers
5	Henry County Park, Fairview
5	Indoor programs- yoga, dance, arts, etc.
5	Indoor swing
5	Indoor trash/gym
5	Needs playground by mall or close to mall
5	Swimming pools, hot tubs
4	Bowling facility

**4. Please indicate whether you and your household have a need for any of the following programs. (other)**

<b>Programs Needed by Household (other)</b>
Children's playground near Arabia mtn
Disabled events
Dog Parks
fishing spots
Fitness programs year around
Jazz at Stonecrest
Man
N/a

<b>Programs Needed by Household (other)</b>
NONE
Nothing applies to my family.
Safe houses
Sewing Classes
Shootouts
Side walks
Social Events like Holiday Mixers & Networking with Neighbors
Things for stay at home parents and small children to do or a place to go
Tutoring

**5. What are the greatest needs for parks, recreation facilities, and recreation programs to be added, expanded, or improved upon in Stonecrest in the next 5 to 10 years? (other)**

<b>Rating</b>	<b>Greatest Needs in Next 5 to 10 Years: Other 1=Not at all important, 5=Very important</b>
5	A water park/ skating rink
5	Adaptive (Special Needs) playground and athletic equipment. (Swings for wheelchairs, etc.)
5	bowling team
5	Can be very beautiful, just needs attention!
5	Community gardens and teaching on gardening
5	Concessions stand
5	Covered playground, walking tracks, exercise outdoor stations, outdoor water fountains, sidewalks, more streetlights. Thank you.
5	Customer service quality
5	Disabled events
5	Fishing
5	Fishing Lake
5	fishing, DIY workshops, craft stores
5	Fitness centers
5	Fitness gym
5	Football field/footballs
5	Grocery stores
5	Ha
5	I don't know.
5	Idk
5	Indoor heated lap pool. And an indoor heated therapeutic pool
5	Jazz at Stonecrest
5	Need opportunities for teens in Dist. 1. NO PARKS in Dist. 1
5	Other
5	Plays
5	Please fix the potholes

Rating	Greatest Needs in Next 5 to 10 Years: Other 1=Not at all important, 5=Very important
5	Rec Center at Southeast /running track
5	Safe houses
5	Safety
5	Salem park needs restrooms!
5	security
5	Seniors activities
5	Sidewalks
5	soccer
5	Survival skills and sustainable living classes
5	They don't look like the parks in Gwinnett county
5	Tutoring
5	Very good
5	weight room inside walking track
4	Arts
4	Bike trail
4	Dodgeball and ultimate frisbee
4	Family friendly park
4	Family oriented park with a variety of things for the entire family to participate in.
4	Family/community events
4	Good
4	Growth and development
4	I have always wanted an aquatic center and playground for my children. They are now grown except one, we always had to go elsewhere for swimming and playground.
4	Lit
4	Refuse containers
4	Security at parks and events
4	Senior programs are critical.
4	Sidewalks and/or bike trails that connect communities to parks.
4	Topgolf
4	Trails
4	Yeet
4	Youth sports
3	A light park that is solar powered
3	An outdoor track around the parks for walking/running. Not a walking trail
3	Gangbang
3	None
3	None
3	other
3	Party area
3	Playground within line of sight of park benches for parents to see the kids

Rating	Greatest Needs in Next 5 to 10 Years: Other 1=Not at all important, 5=Very important
3	Sidewalks, the city isn't walking friendly
3	Skills programs for youth
3	Something for children 3-10 yrs of age. Swimming!
3	swimming
3	Tennis
3	Walking trails
3	Walking/ shopping areas, City Center
3	We need area that have it all.
2	Area for concerts and events
2	None
2	Outdoor fitness programs
2	Walking trails
1	Clean up around Stone Crest & repair roads before more parks
1	Entrepreneur programs
1	Indoor fitness center
1	None
1	None
1	None
1	Not needed
1	Nothing
1	Safe biking
1	Soccer
1	Sports
1	The Arabia Mountain Park is in store for a new look. Cut bike path right away. Cut road right away on Klondike Road between ranger house and North Goddard Road. Trees are hanging over the road. Do something about what you have now instead of concentrating on new items. Klondike Road and South Goddard Rd and North Goddard need the road right away cut back. I know you want parks for people, but the roads are Horrible.
1	Unknown

**6. Please rate how important the following purposes of parks, recreation, open space and trails in Stonecrest are to you and your household. (other)**

Importance	Importance of Purpose (other) 1=Not at all important, 5=Very important
	<i>No comments received</i>

**7. Do you have any further comments about Stonecrest parks and recreation facilities and programs, needs and opportunities?**

Age	Kids	Additional Comments
18-24	No	Maybe send out information about facilities so people are aware they exist. It could include upcoming events and where to get more information
25-34	Yes	More festivals (music, art, food); better restroom access at parks (clean and stocked), better playgrounds
25-34	Yes	The area needs a makeover. The curry deserves it. Nice playground for kids. I shouldn't have to drive to Snellville for a decent playground. Bring more activities concerts to City to help bring in more Money to keep building it up.
25-34	No	Let's do it!
35-44	Yes	I am looking forward to the growth and beautifying of our area! New parks and recreation will breathe new life into our community.
35-44	Yes	I t would be great to enhance the greenspace that we have, perhaps through a variety of new foliage, shrubs and flowers that aren't traditionally seen here.
35-44	Yes	I would love to see a nice park with a playground in Stonecrest. I currently take my children to the parks in Snellville and Lawrenceville.
35-44	Yes	I would love to see more outside community festivals. I would also like to love a Snap-fitness in the area (in the Salem Crossing plans). I would love to have more sidewalks along the streets/neighborhoods
35-44	Yes	More police coverage onsite
35-44	Yes	Please replace playground equipment for children at Salem park and add benches/ more seating
35-44	Yes	Public service staff presence; participating local Atlanta area surrounding communities in programming locally, walking access to park or natural playground
35-44	Yes	Stonecrest is a beautiful and spacious area. The purpose of this city is to bring family, friends, and community together in a beautiful and clean environment.
35-44	Yes	We do not wish for public transportation in Stonecrest (city bus). We desire the current P&R to be upgraded, expanded and maintained. More children activities. More cost-effective events.
35-44	No	Park needs to maintain cleanliness
35-44	No	They need more fitness classes, when only have La Fitness and Planet Fitness, it's always packed. So, if they can add fitness centers that would be great
45-54		It would be nice if Browns Mill Park had a hike and bike trail around the current fields and facilities (with a bit of green space)
45-54	Yes	I am impressed by the beautiful parks in Gwinnett County. The signs are attractive, and they are multi-purpose with walking trails, playground, sports park, and skateboard park.
45-54	Yes	I wish there was a Performing Arts facility for plays
45-54	Yes	The disabled need attention too and should be acknowledged. Children need safety and more things to keep them occupied.
45-54	Yes	Whomever you put on the committee, please make sure they have visited parks outside of the Dekalb area, have children, and have a large outlook than just dirt and swings; maybe someone from different states.
45-54	No	I am so excited to see we are going in a healthy community direction. I hope to see more healthy food markets and better restaurants in our community

Age	Kids	Additional Comments
45-54	No	Safety is more important than anything. Stonecrest is not really safe at the moment, especially in certain areas. Safety is being overlooked by city officials.
55-64		Where are the Stonecrest recreation facilities located?
55-64	No	More swimming and water parks for the summer; Boys and Girls Club at parks; after school programs for the kids; free lunch summer programs
55-64	No	No
55-64	No	Open trails- all trails are currently in wooded, not lit, unsafe environment
55-64	No	Stonecrest needs more activities for seniors
55-64	No	Survey is a great start!
55-64	No	Upscale shopping- Saks Fifth Avenue, Bloomingdales
55-64	No	Use the funds available for parks and rec efficiently
55-64	No	Very excited to see the development of the Stonecrest Community (park, etc.) over the next 5.10 years
55-64	No	We certainly look forward to the changes and upgrades. We also look forward to events to come out to meet you all. Thank you!
55-64	No	Youth Programs to keep the youths busy after school and after
65-74	Yes	Keep up the good work
65-74	No	I love to fish but have difficulty finding safe fishing spots near me and available indoor pools that offer senior water sports that are affordable to me.
65-74	No	More advertisement about parks use
65-74	No	Need qualified staff in all areas
65-74	No	Please do something about the numerous dark streets- add more street lights for safety, add more policemen to patrol neighborhoods to cut down on the porch pirates; kids breaking in to cars and shooting guns all throughout the night- it's turning into a war zone in our neighborhood
65-74	No	Please keep our parks clean and equipment and fields maintained
65-74	No	Safer environment for seniors!
75+		I am thankful for a park in my neighborhood. However, during the day things are happening that should not be. I was one of the persons who helped paint signs and the mural in Fairington Park.
75+	No	Do we already have land available for the use to develop? If not, when do you plan to get all the land needed?
		Safety and security

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**APPENDIX F:  
WALKABILITY STANDARDS**



RESEARCH BRIEFS  
2014-#1

# Walkability Standards:

a test of common assumptions  
related to walkable access



**Robby Layton, FASLA, PLA, CPRP**

October 28, 2014

# Abstract

The increasing interest in walking as a healthy and sustainable means of getting around highlights a need to fill the gaps in what is known about walking as a form of transportation. Planners have traditionally relied on normative standards rather than ones based on evidence to determine time and distance relationships associated with walkability. This paper reports the results of an activity designed to test basic assumptions about walking speed and distance in the built environment and provides suggested guidelines for use in planning for walkability.



## Introduction

Determining how far apart to space things like parks, trails and transit stops has a direct bearing on the cost of providing such services to the public. Placing facilities too far away may discourage people from using them, while spacing them too close together is inefficient. It is important to get it right.

Parks are a good example. Providing parks within walking distance of people's homes has long been a basic principle of urban planning. But serious study of the relationship between walking and parks has been lacking, so planners have relied on general practices and rules of thumb, rather than standards based on research. The increasing emphasis of walking as a viable and desirable means of transportation highlights a need to fill the gaps in what is known about walking as it relates to parks and other destinations. Questions such as how far and how fast people walk; what influences their choices of when to walk and where to walk; and other behavioral aspects of walking have relevance to an expanding cadre of people interested in walking.

The purpose of this paper is to offer some insight into the principles behind planning for walkability.

## Normative Standards for Walking

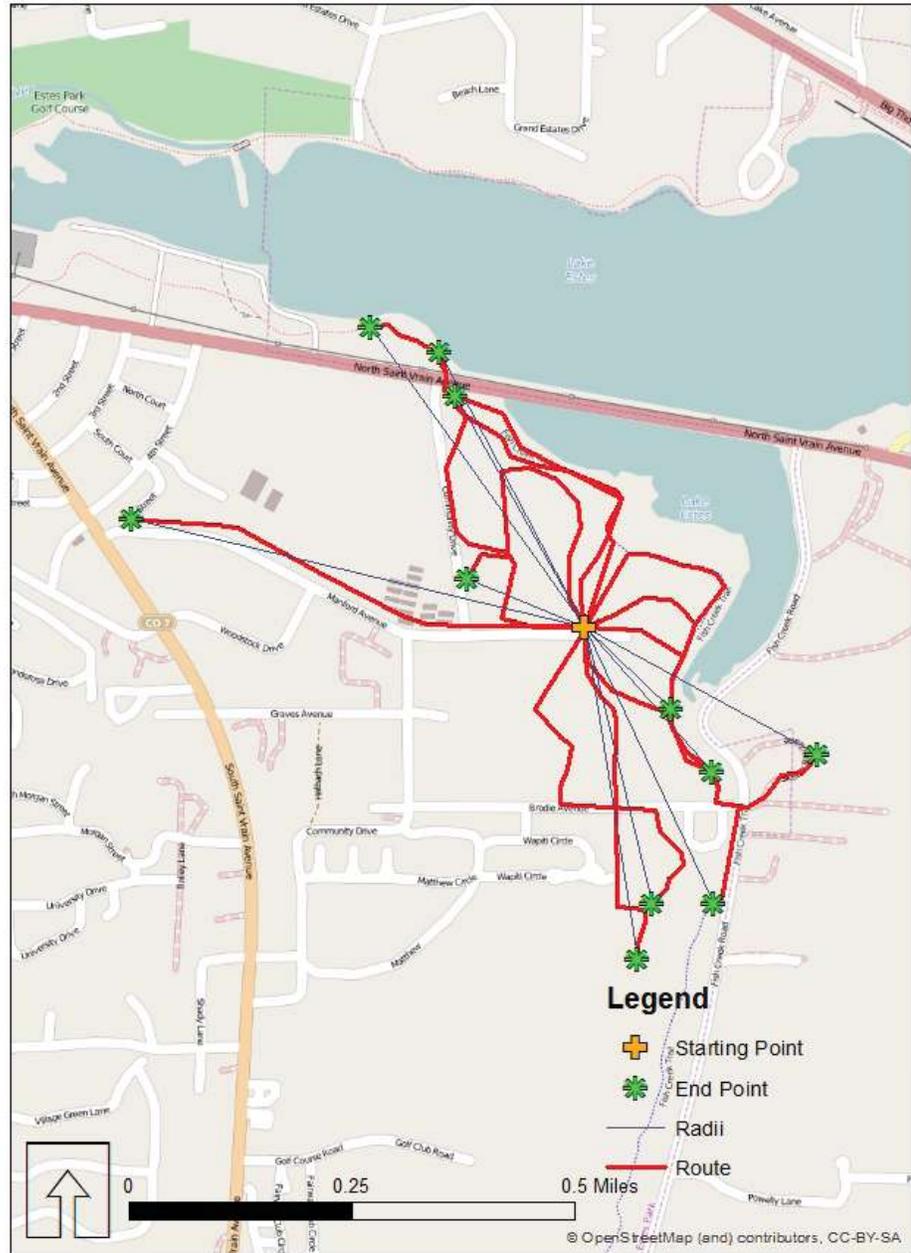
Planners typically use ten minutes as the duration that people are willing to spend to walk to a destination. While there is little empirical evidence to support the validity of this measure, it has nonetheless been accepted as a standard. Translating ten minutes of walking into a measure of distance brings up the question of walking speed. Obviously, speed varies depending on the physical ability of the pedestrian and any encumbrances they may have, such as pushing a baby stroller or carrying packages. Other factors, such as the nature of the route (including such things as pavement type, terrain, and impediments like busy streets or waterways) affect pedestrian speed as well. As a result there is a lack of consistency in the distances used among planners to make decisions related to walking. Distances ranging from 1/8 mile to a mile or more are found in planning studies, with 1/4 mile being the most commonly used standard for determining walkable access.



Upon a signal, the groups were asked to fan out simultaneously from the starting point. Each group was instructed to walk in a direction generally away from the starting point and away from the other groups, and to walk casually as a group for a period of exactly 10 minutes. At the 10-minute point they recorded their group's location

on the map and returned to the starting point, re-tracing their route and marking it on the map. The maps were then collected and the starting point, routes, and end points were entered into a GIS map for analysis. Figure 2 shows the end points, routes, and a radial line from the starting point for all of the groups.

**Figure 2. Map of Results for All Groups**



Using the GIS, three specific aspects of walking were analyzed. First the Euclidian, or straight line (radial) distance between the origin and the destinations was measured.

Second, the length of the actual routes walked were measured. Third, the speed at which the groups walked was calculated. The results are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. - Summary of Results**

Group	Radial Length (Ft.)	Radial Length (Miles)	Path Length (Ft.)	Path Length (Miles)	Speed MPH
1	755	0.14	2155	0.41	2.45
2	1576	0.30	2035	0.39	2.31
3	1846	0.35	2337	0.44	2.66
4	2184	0.41	2838	0.54	3.23
5	703	0.13	1944	0.37	2.21
6	1144	0.22	1265	0.24	1.44
7	1808	0.34	2375	0.45	2.70
8	1688	0.32	2485	0.47	2.82
9	1995	0.38	2181	0.41	2.48
10	2753	0.52	2922	0.55	3.32
11	1571	0.30	2697	0.51	3.06
Average	1638	0.31	2294	0.43	2.61
Median	1688	0.32	2337	0.44	2.66

Rounding off the results, we find that the radial distance from the starting point ranged from as little as 0.13 miles (just over 1/8 mile) to as far as 0.52 miles (just over 1/2 mile). The average of all eleven teams was 0.31 (mean of 0.32), or just under 1/3 mile.

The lengths of the routes taken by the teams ranged from 0.24 (just under 1/4 mile) to 0.55 miles (just over 1/2 mile). The speed of the teams (averaged over the 10 minute walking time) ranged from 1.44 miles per hour to 3.32 miles per hour, with an average speed of 2.62 (mean of 2.66) miles per hour.

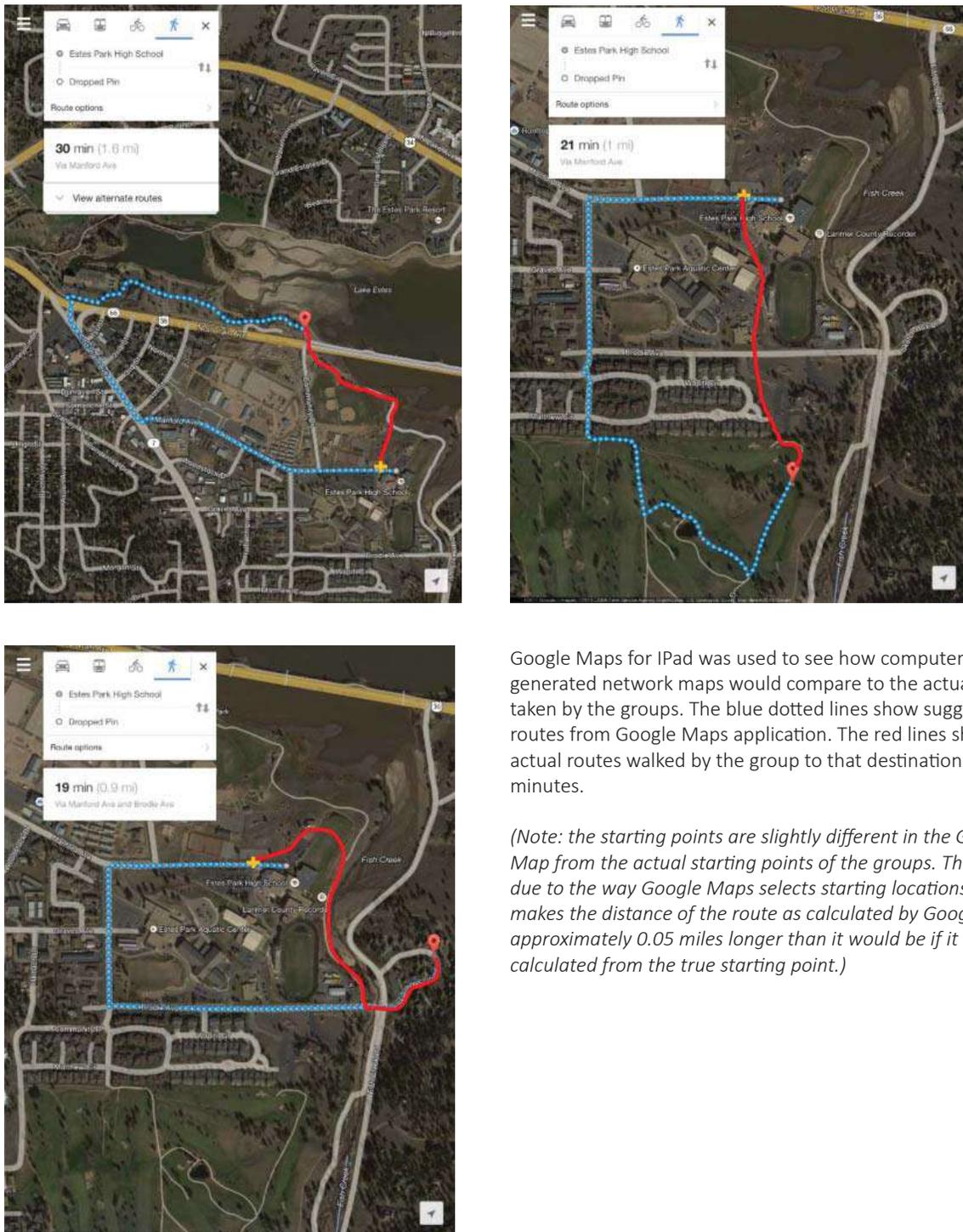
## Radial vs Network Buffers

Buffers are typically used around origins or destinations to determine walkable access. Buffers are typically one of two types, although other types are sometimes used. Radial (also called Euclidian or straight-line) buffers are circular and have the travel origin or destination at their center. Network buffers are plotted along defined routes, such as streets, trails, or sidewalks. While radial buffers are commonly used and easily applied, some feel that network buffers produce more accurate results when measuring access between origins and destinations. However, to be accurate, network buffers require a GIS base map that contains all possible routes. In the case of the study area used here, it was possible for participants to take a number

of shortcuts across the park and school grounds. As a result, some groups walked across the large parking lots and/or sports fields while others stayed on designated paths.

Barriers, such as highways and water bodies, also affect the results of different buffer types. Figure 3. shows the difference between some of the routes recorded by the groups and those prescribed by Google Maps along its known network. Note that while Google Maps accurately included the trail system as part of the walking network, it did not recognize the presence of a tunnel under the adjacent highway that two groups took advantage of. The use of the tunnel made a significant difference in where the groups ended up on their prescribed 10-minute walk.

Figure 3. Network-Based Routes vs. Actual Routes Walked



Google Maps for iPad was used to see how computer-generated network maps would compare to the actual routes taken by the groups. The blue dotted lines show suggested routes from Google Maps application. The red lines show the actual routes walked by the group to that destination in 10 minutes.

*(Note: the starting points are slightly different in the Google Map from the actual starting points of the groups. This is due to the way Google Maps selects starting locations. This makes the distance of the route as calculated by Google Maps approximately 0.05 miles longer than it would be if it was calculated from the true starting point.)*

## Limitations

This study was conducted as an exercise using volunteers. The sample size is small, and the participants were not randomly selected. They are not intended to represent the set of all pedestrians who may want to walk to a park, school, or other destination. The results described here should not be considered statistically valid nor generalizable to other places and situations. The intent was simply to test generally-held assumptions about walking patterns against empirically measured results in a specific case. It is hoped that additional studies will be conducted by others to build the base of knowledge and allow more informed decisions to be made by planners.

The location used for this case study consisted in large part of a developed park and the grounds of a public school campus and local government center. Thus, the results may apply best to situations such as university grounds; government or corporate campuses; regional shopping centers; downtowns with high proportions of public plazas and open parking lots; and large parks and open space areas. They may not apply as effectively to residential areas with gridded streets and/or cul-de-sacs.

## Recommendations

The results suggest some general guidelines that may be useful to planners, keeping in mind the limitations discussed earlier. These guidelines are only suggestions, and are not intended to be final or definitive.

### For Radial Distances from a Destination (such as a Park or School)

**1/8 mile** is the radius of a circle centered on the destination within which typical pedestrians should be able to arrive at the destination within 10 minutes. Any walk originating inside this circle and proceeding towards the destination by the most expedient route should arrive within 10 minutes in most circumstances.

**1/3 mile** is the average radial distance from the destination from which a walker will arrive at the destination in 10 minutes. Stated differently, the average of all possible 10 minute walks to the destination would originate this far away in a straight line.

**1/2 mile** is the farthest radial distance from the destination that can be covered in 10 minutes by a typical pedestrian. This distance will capture essentially all possible walkers traveling at a normal pace within 10 minutes of the destination. I.e., all possible walks of 10 minute duration at normal walking speed and ending at the destination are captured within this distance.

### For Network Distances

**1/2 mile** should be considered the maximum distance along a network from which a destination can be reached in ten minutes. The average ten minute walk would be slightly shorter.

**1/8 mile** should be considered the distance along a network from which most everyone should be able to arrive at the destination within ten minutes, except in unusual situations.

## Summary

The results of this study suggest that the standards in common use, including 1/8 mile, ¼ mile, and ½ mile, are all useful, but should be applied with a clear understanding of how they differ and what they actually represent. It is recommended that **1/3 mile** be used as a standard for radial buffers that represent the average origin of a ten minute walk to a selected destination. A distance of **½ mile** should be used as the typical distance along a network from which a 10 minute walk to a selected destination would originate. Walks originating closer to the destination along the network would be likely to take less than 10 minutes.

When GIS base data is known to be complete and accurate, or if non-network shortcuts are not common within the proximate area of a destination, network buffers are recommended. However, if base data is incomplete or if there are numerous possible shortcuts, radial buffers are recommended.

It is important to note that this study does not address the validity of ten minutes as a planning standard for the duration of walks. Further tests are recommended to determine the true relationship between walk duration and people's motivation to walk.

## Additional Resources

While research on walking behaviors, particularly those associated with walking to parks, seems to be lacking in the literature, there is growing interest and discussion in the subject of walking. The following examples might be useful to those interested in this topic:

Kuzmyak, Richard, & Dill, Jennifer (2012). Walking and Bicycling in the United States: The who, what, where, and why. *TR News*, 280, 4-15. PDF.

Walker, Jarrett (2011). Basics: walking distance to transit. *Human Transit: the professional blog of public transit planning consultant Jarrett Walker*. 24 July 2011. Web. 25 July 2014.

**Robby Layton, FASLA, PLA, CPRP** is a member of GP RED's Operating Board and a Principal at Design Concepts, CLA, Inc., a landscape architecture and planning firm. He is also a PhD student and instructor at North Carolina State University's College of Design, where he is researching the links between physical attributes of public greenspace and people's perceptions of how they are served by the public greenspace that exists in proximity to where they live.

Tags: Walkability; walking buffers; walking behaviors; walking distances; walkable access; walking studies; pedestrian standards; walking standards.



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