

SANDY SPRINGS RECREATION & PARKS SYSTEM COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

FEBRUARY 2019





Big Trees Forest Preserve. Photo credit: City of Sandy Springs



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The City of Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks System Comprehensive Plan was completed by the City of Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks Department with planning and technical support provided by the consulting team led by Barge Design Solutions in partnership with PROS Consulting and ETC Institute.

Special thanks to City staff, elected officials, community organizations, stakeholders and residents for providing valuable insight and support during this planning process. Without the dedication and commitment of the community, this master plan would not have been possible.

City Mayor and Council

Mayor Rusty Paul
John Paulson, Mayor Pro Tempore
Steve Soteris
Chris Burnett
Jody Reichel
Tibby DeJulio
Andy Bauman

Advisory Committee

Ken Dishman, Committee Chair
Cheryl Barlow
Scott Busch
Mark Durbin
Danny Martin
George Northrop
Molly Welch

City Staff

John McDonough, City Manager
Jim Tolbert, FAICP, Assistant City Manager
Michael Perry, CPRE
Steve Ciaccio, CPRP
Alexandra Horst
Catherine Mercier-Baggett, AICP
Marla Shavin
Ginger Sottile
Kristen Wescott, AICP
Andrea Worthy

Focus Groups

Art Sandy Springs
Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area
Council of Neighborhoods
Friends of Lost Corner
Fulton County School Board (Sandy Springs)
Fulton County Soil and Water Conservation District
Heritage Sandy Springs
Leadership Sandy Springs
Neighbors near Old Riverside Park
Sandy Springs Conservancy
Sandy Springs Education Force

Sandy Springs Environmental Project
Sandy Springs Historical Society
Sandy Springs Perimeter Chamber
Sandy Springs Society
Sandy Springs Tennis Center
Sandy Springs Youth Sports
Steel Canyon Golf Course
Trust for Public Land
Visit Sandy Springs
Watershed Alliance of Sandy Springs

Consulting Team

Barge Design Solutions, PROS Consulting, and E.T.C. Institute, who are referred in this report as we, researchers, the planning team, or consulting team in this document.



Big Trees Forest Preserve. Photo credit: City of Sandy Springs



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Abernathy Greenway North. Photo credit: Barge Design Solutions



1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Introduction

Sandy Springs is a 38.53 square mile city just north of Atlanta, Georgia. Incorporated in 2005, the City of Sandy Springs is the sixth largest city in Georgia and the second largest city in the metropolitan Atlanta area. Sandy Springs, which formerly relied on a large, traditionally-modeled county government, now relies on a Public-Private Partnership, with nearly half of City staff employed by a private company. This approach is designed to save money and provide higher levels of service to city residents. In fact, Sandy Springs City government’s approach has been emulated by newly formed neighboring cities.¹

Sandy Springs is a geographically unique city that lies between in-town Atlanta and the suburbs north of Atlanta. It is a corporate hub, as well as a residential community, drawing highly-educated families and young adults to its mix of residential options, good paying jobs, and proximity to in-town and natural attractions. These demographics influence the way a park system serves the community, as well as how the community can be engaged during the park system master plan process. While the City feels primarily urban, Sandy Springs also has significant single-family residential areas and boasts a vigorous outdoor scene as well. Twenty-two miles of the City’s western and northern boundaries are cradled by the Chattahoochee River and five of the 15 park units of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area. The City’s location along Georgia 400 Freeway allows for direct access to Path400, which is a multiuse greenway along the freeway corridor that will eventually join with the Atlanta Beltline in Atlanta and trails in Sandy Springs and north Fulton County, providing a key link in a regional trail network. Additionally, Sandy Springs has 28 developed parks of various sizes and seven undeveloped park properties. These parklands, in addition to park facilities recommended in this master plan, are capable of becoming one of the premiere park systems in metro Atlanta.

The purpose of the Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks System Comprehensive Plan is to guide the City to create the best possible park system for the next ten years. This document aligns with the recently completed Next Ten Comprehensive Plan, Sandy Springs’ primary City planning document, and builds on its recommendations related to parks, greenspace, and trails. As Sandy Springs continues to grow, it is increasingly important to protect and enhance the City’s parklands, connect them to areas within and outside of the city boundaries, and expand the park system.

Legend


 City of Sandy Springs



Figure 1.1: Sandy Springs Location Map (ESRI)

¹ <http://www.sandyspringsga.gov/government/city-history-and-culture>



1.1.1 Opportunities and Challenges

There are a number of opportunities and challenges in Sandy Springs relative to parks that the Recreation and Parks System Comprehensive Plan considers. The City boasts new and popular parks including Abernathy Greenway Park and Morgan Falls Overlook Park. At the same time, some of its older parks that were acquired from Fulton County when Sandy Springs was incorporated are in need of upgrades and repairs, including Hammond Park, one of the city’s most popular community parks. Additionally, this park system plan addresses programming relative to the existing facilities and future facilities that are recommended based on input from the community.

In the Spring of 2018 Sandy Springs opened its greenspace at City Springs, the City’s new town center. The development of this vibrant and attractive downtown area utilizes greenspace and public realm as an economic catalyst and community development generator. Like City Springs, other aspects of the city’s parks and greenspace system can also have a quality of life and an economic development impact. This park system plan incorporates parks, greenspace and trails to enhance the traditional aspects of the park system throughout the city, connects to and expands on the natural resource parks in the City, and creates a formula to apply the success of City Springs to the city’s urban nodes. There are areas within the City that could potentially transition to park or greenspace that would, in turn, increase the city’s park ratio and spur economic development in areas of concentrated development. Additionally, parkland acquisition with access to transit, sidewalks, bike lanes, greenways, and trails enables the City to create future parks and greenspaces that act as hubs for a bike and pedestrian transportation network in Sandy Springs.

1.2 Project Overview: the Planning Process

The Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks System Comprehensive Plan utilizes several information-gathering strategies to create recommendations. The project process incorporates a thorough research and data-driven process to create the recommendations and implementation plan. This process includes five phases: Research and Analysis, Community Outreach, Needs Assessment, Development Plan and Recommendations, and Implementation Plan. The purpose of these three phases is to assess Where We are Today, Where are We Going Tomorrow, and How Do We Get There:

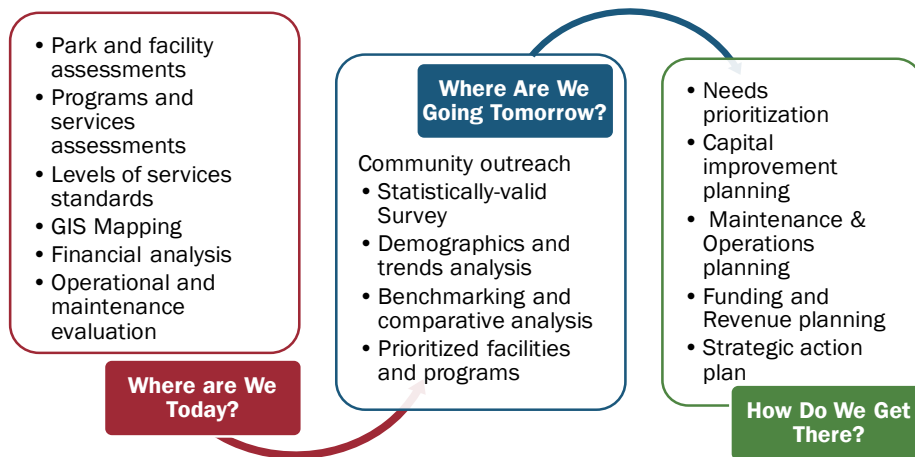


Figure 1.2: the Planning Process

Additionally, a Parks Advisory Committee was formed to work with the planning team, review information and help understand park needs within the community. With the help of the Parks Advisory Committee, a list of interested stakeholders was created for Focus Group input meetings. The planning team conducted stakeholder meetings during which members of local groups with vested interest in the City’s parks were given the opportunity to voice their concerns, as well as identify the needs within the park system as it relates to their organization. Informal surveys were also conducted at these meetings.



Further, the planning team led public meetings during which the general public was given the opportunity to voice their concerns and opinions. During the meetings the public was shown a presentation about the project and asked to participate in several engagement and input activities.



Figure 1.3: Sandy Springs public meeting, April 2018.

A statistically valid community interests and opinion survey was conducted for the City of Sandy Springs during the summer of 2018. The survey and its results were used to establish priorities for improvements to parks, open space system, and recreation programming. The survey also helps the City take a verifiable resident-driven approach to making decisions about the future of the City's park system.

1.3 Demographics Summary

The population in Sandy Springs is expected to grow by over 9% within the next 15 years. While most of the younger age segments are expected to remain the same or experience slight decreases in population percentage; those who are 55 and older are projected to continue increasing over the next 15 years, making up 30.5% of the population by 2032 – an increase of 5.2% over 2017. This is significant as providing access to services and programs will need to be focused on a multitude of age segments simultaneously and equally challenging as age segments have different preferences about activities. Relatively equal distribution across age segments will require the City to continue to provide programs, services, parks, and facilities that appeal to a broad range of residents. Other key findings include that the City is considered affluent, with per capita and median household income levels are well above the state and national averages. While the averages are high, there are also residents of the City without the income, access, and means to participate in some recreation activities.

Significant Recent Growth



Population Projections



Figure 1.4: Recent population growth and future projections.



1.4 Trends Summary

Overall, Sandy Springs demonstrates above-average Market Potential Index (MPI) numbers. The three categories (general sports, fitness, and outdoor activity), even though they each have a few activities with MPI scores below the national averages, a majority of the activities' MPI scores fall above 100+. These overall MPI scores show that Sandy Springs has relatively strong participation rates when it comes to recreational activities. This becomes significant for when the City considers building new facilities or starting up new programs, giving them a strong tool to estimate resident attendance.

1.5 Public Input

Responses from the Community Survey show that fifty-four percent (54%) of residents indicated they are either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the overall value their household receives from the City of Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks Department, as shown in Figure 1.5.

To ensure that the City of Sandy Springs continues to meet the needs and expectations of the community, this plan recommends that the Recreation and Parks Department sustain and/or improve the performance in areas that were identified as "high priorities" in survey responses. The facilities and programs with the highest priorities are listed below.

Overall Level of Satisfaction with City of Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks Department
by percentage of respondents

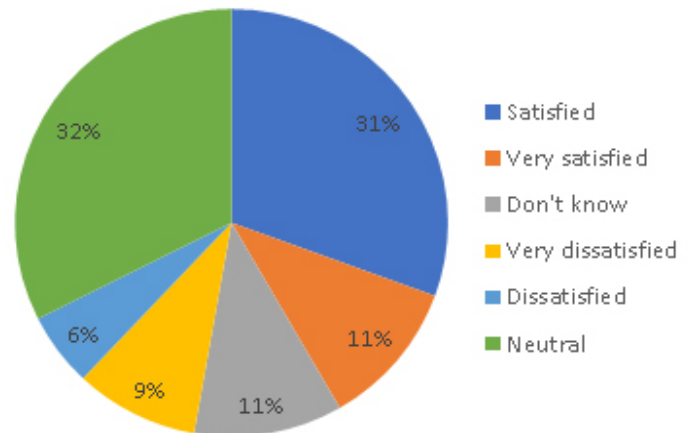


Figure 1.5: Overall Level of Satisfaction with the Park System

TOP FIVE FACILITY PRIORITIES

1. Hiking Trails
2. Multi-Use Trails
3. Dog Parks
4. Community Gardens
5. Indoor Pool

TOP FIVE PROGRAMMING PRIORITIES

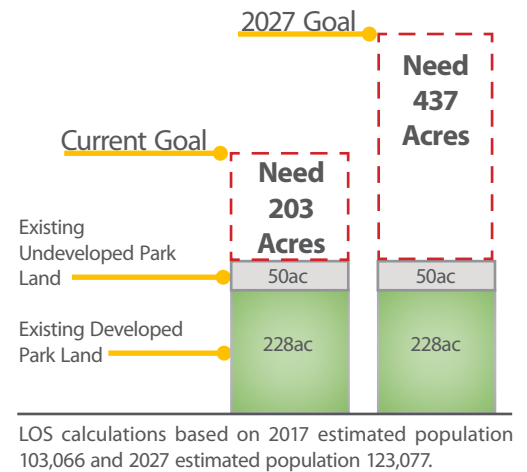
1. Fitness & Wellness Programs
2. Community Special Events
3. Art Classes
4. Performing Arts Programs
5. Outdoor Programs



1.6 Level of Service

There are currently 996 acres of existing developed parkland and 50 acres of undeveloped parkland in Sandy Springs. Upon evaluating the current acreage of parkland compared to the input from city residents, the data in this plan shows that Sandy Springs is in need of an additional 202.71 acres for parkland.

The City of Sandy Springs currently provides a total of Level of Service (LOS) of 9.66 acres of developed parkland per 1,000 residents based on the City's population, with a majority of the parkland being Natural Resource Parks and owned by the National Park Service. While Sandy Springs is largely developed and available land is scarce, the planning team recommends the LOS standard of 12.0 acres/1,000 population as a goal.



1.7 Park and Trail Recommendations

The City of Sandy Springs is developing an exceptional park system that provides a combination of urban greenspaces, recreation opportunities and access to wilderness experiences. To expand upon that park system, this plan takes into consideration park location service areas, and park acreage by park category. To create this park system the park acreage in the City will be increased from a total of 253 acres in 2017 to a total of 487 acres, a 52% increase. In general, the new park land will be made up of the parks and facilities described below. The location of these new park facilities are mapped showing their service area radii along with the existing parks and the service area for each. A thumbnail of the map is shown in Figure 1.7: Existing and Proposed Park Service Area. and a larger version can be found in Section 2 of this report.

Sandy Springs Parks

- Traditional Parks:**
- Ed Morley Memorial Park
 - Grace Park
 - Abernathy Park/Art Center
 - Allan Road Park
 - Marsh Creek Rain Garden
 - Hammond Park
 - Lost Corner Preserve
 - Morgan Falls Overlook Park
 - Ridgeview Park
 - Abernathy Greenway North
 - Abernathy Greenway South
 - Morgan Falls Athletic Complex
 - Sandy Springs Tennis Center
 - Kitty Hawk Greenspace
 - Old Riverside Property
 - Windsor Meadows Park
- Natural Resource Parks:**
- Big Trees Forest Preserve
 - Riverbluff Greenspace
 - Riverside Drive Conservation Easement
 - Morgan Falls River Park/Dog Park
 - Abernathy Veterinary Greenspace
 - Crooked Creek Park
 - Ashton Woods (Glenridge Park)
 - Powers Ferry Conservation Area
 - East Palisades Unit
 - Holcomb Bridge Unit
 - Island Ferry Unit
 - Island Ford Unit
 - Powers Island Unit
- Urban Node Parks:**
- Eagle Park
 - City Springs Park I
 - Sandy Springs Historical Area
 - City Springs Park II

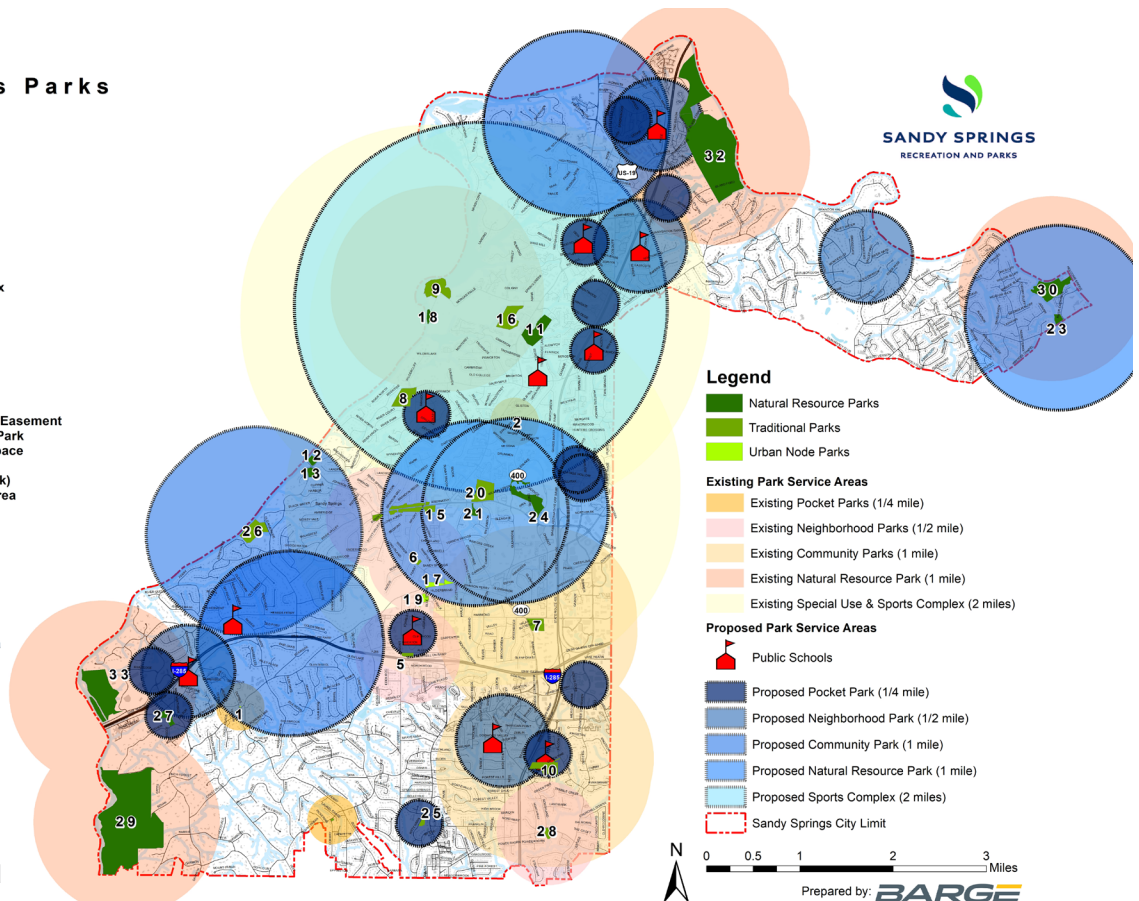


Figure 1.7: Existing and Proposed Park Service Area



New Park Land Acreages by Park Category:

- 24 acres of **Pocket Parks**
- 48 areas **Neighborhood Parks**
- 122 acres for **Community Parks**
- 96 acres **Regional Park** with a sports complex
- 23 acres for **Special Use Parks**
- 21 acres for **Greenway / Trailhead Parks**
- 153 acres of **Natural Resource Parks**

An **Indoor Recreation Center** deficit of 222,154 square feet by 2027 needs to be addressed, which would equate to two recreation centers in the city. One or both of these facilities could include aquatics.

The **Trail and Greenway Network** described in the Next Ten comprehensive plan addresses most of the needs of the city park system, which are to: Connect to all of the City Parks, Provide access to trail networks outside of the City and Provide connections from the urban node areas to the National Park Service units and city Natural Resource Parks.

In the Next Ten Comprehensive Plan, both on and off-street trail connections were recommended. On-street connections include sidewalk and bike lanes. The consulting team recommends that the Recreation and Parks Department focuses on the off-street trails (greenways/greenbelts) that connect to parks. In the Next Ten Comprehensive Plan, approximately 6 miles of off-street trails were recommended. One of the highest priorities should be the **Great Trail**, which provides an east to west connection from the City limits to Morgan Falls Overlook Park along the existing powerline easement.

As part of this master plan, the consulting team recommends adding an additional 13.5 miles to serve the park system. Those trail recommendations include the following, which are listed by priority:

- **Bridge Across the Chattahoochee River** - Connect Morgan Falls Park area to Cobb County
- **North End Greenline** - Connect Morgan Falls along the Chattahoochee River to Roswell Road/North End Village. The trail should continue on to connect to Island Ferry NPS
- **Connect Island Ford NPS** - along Northridge Road across 400 to the PATH 400 conceptual alignment.
- **Connect Lost Corner Preserve to Morgan Falls** - This connection may need to include using bike lanes and sidewalks along Dalrymple Road.
- **Connect Johnson Ferry Road to Old Riverside Property** - Continue to the planned sidewalk/bicycle facilities on Riverside Drive.
- **Trail beginning at One River Place** (south of 285) following the Chattahoochee River south to connect into East Palisades NPS.

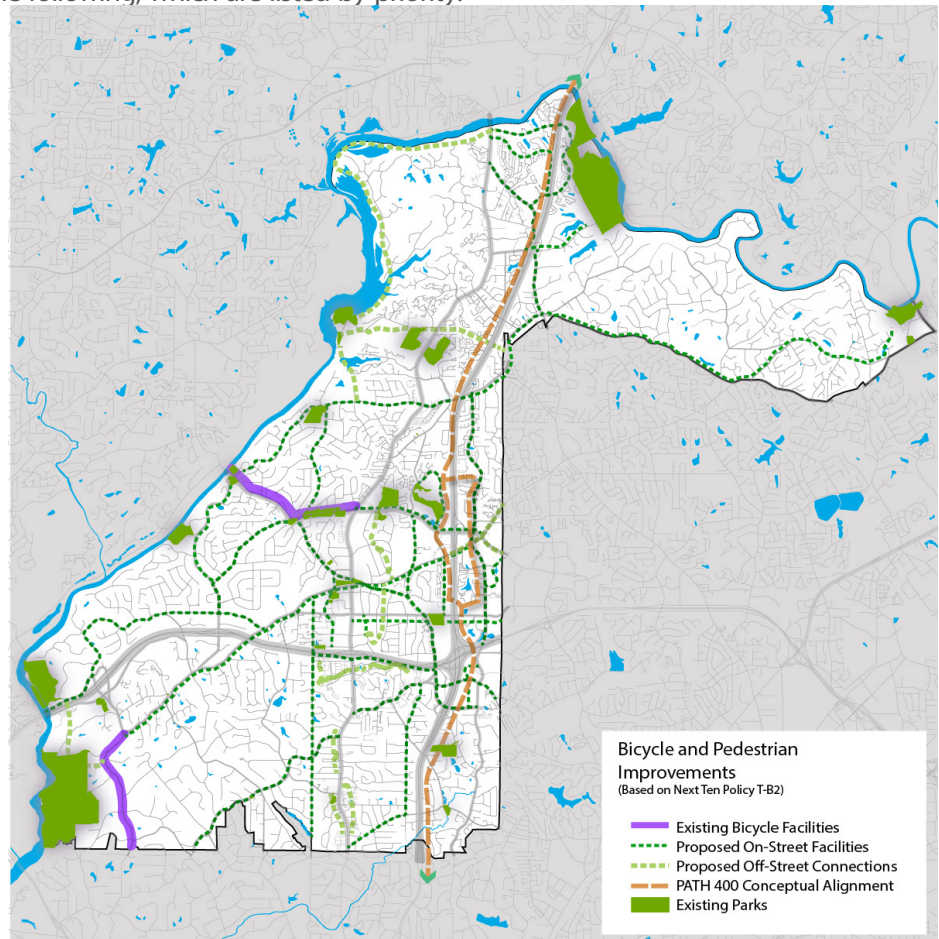


Figure 1.8: Overall Trail Map:



- **Connect Abernathy Veterinary Greenspace to the Hammond Springs Shopping Center** - This connection is primarily off-road, but does cross Mt. Vernon Hwy and Johnson Ferry Road at the planned City Springs Park II (Triangle Park).
- **Connect to Lake Forest Drive On-road Trail** - Begin west of the Windsor at Glenridge development (near Northam Lane NE) and continue west, parallel to I-285 meeting up with Long Island Creek; continue west along Long Island Creek, and end at the proposed bicycle facility along Lake Forest Drive, near Stewart Drive NE; or turn north and end at Northwood Drive.
- **Connect to Southern End of Sandy Springs** - through a series of 3 off-road trail segments on the east and west sides of Roswell Road, beginning just north of Mt. Paran Road and ending at the Gateway commercial development near Windsor Parkway. These segments connect the Kitty Hawk Greenspace and have the potential to connect to Windsor Meadows Park and Ridgeview Park via proposed on-road trails.

1.8 Action Plan

In summary, the Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks Department has a unique and impressive inventory of parks in the current system; however, several parks need a complete overhaul to maximize their use and a significant number of park acres need to be added to the system. Working with staff, the consulting team created a list of action items to be completed over the next ten-years to improve the system.

- Action Plan -

Short-term (1-10 years)

1. Aggressively purchase new park property, especially on the Chattahoochee and floodplains
2. Expand the Allen Park property and re-develop to create a high-quality park
3. Begin design and construction on the first natatoriums/community recreation centers in the northern part of the community
4. Develop connectivity between City parks/green space and those of neighboring jurisdictions to enhance quality of life for all communities involved
5. Conduct process to plan for pedestrian bridge across the Chattahoochee River
6. Build new dog parks designed specific to suburban and urban node areas
7. Pursue a diversified funding portfolio for parks and recreation as recommended
8. Develop a target market communications plan
9. Address deferred maintenance and ADA compliance issues at parks as required per park ratings
10. Design and implement improvements to Heritage Sandy Springs, Morgan Falls Ball Fields and Morgan Falls River Park/Dog Park
11. Conduct a community-wide art plan and begin to integrate art in all parks
12. Increase staffing levels as recommended to support improvements
13. Expand "high priority" programming and services as recommended
14. Construct of a cultural center near City Springs

Long-term (10-20 years)

1. Continue to aggressively purchase new park property
2. Continue to expand greenways and trails to connect all parks
3. Design and implement improvements for new park property
4. Develop Recreation and Parks branding that integrates art in all parks
5. Implement improvements at Ridgeview Park/Update Play Equipment
6. Continue to address maintenance and ADA compliance issues at parks



1.9 Park Programming and Services

The vision of the Department is to be one of the premier park and recreation systems in the United States providing all residents access to high-quality programs and experiences. Part of realizing this vision involves developing and/or expanding Program Areas to create a sense of focus around activities and outcomes of greatest importance to the community as informed by current and future needs.

The Core Program Areas provided by Sandy Springs currently appears to meet some of the major needs of the Sandy Springs community, but the program mix must be evaluated on a regular and reoccurring basis to ensure that the offerings within each Core Program Area – and the Core Program Areas themselves – align with changing leisure trends, demographics, and needs of residents.

Based on assessment of the existing park programs in the City of Sandy Springs, the Department is delivering quality programs, services and events to the community. However, it does have opportunity for improvement. The chart below provides a summary of the recommended actions that the Department should implement in developing a program plan to meet the needs of residents.

PROGRAM	ACTION	TIMELINE
HIGH PRIORITY		
Fitness and Wellness	EXPAND	LONG-TERM (facility development)
Community Special Events	EXPAND	SHORT-TERM
Art and Culture	EXPAND	SHORT-TERM (partnerships)
Outdoor Recreation Programs	EXPAND	SHORT-TERM (partnerships)
Socialization with Dogs	EXPAND	SHORT-TERM (dog park development)
Interpretive and Naturalist Programs	EXPAND	SHORT-TERM (partnerships)
Senior Programs and Services	EXPAND	SHORT-TERM
Visiting Parks (General Visitation)	FACILITATE	SHORT-TERM (enhance parks)
MEDIUM PRIORITY		
Walking/Jogging/Running Events and Clubs	DEVELOP	SHORT-TERM
Golf	FACILITATE	SHORT-TERM (marketing of partnerships)
Picnicking	CONTINUE	SHORT-TERM
Water Fitness	DEVELOP	LONG-TERM (facility development)
Tennis	CONTINUE	SHORT-TERM
LOW PRIORITY		
Youth Sports	CONTINUE	SHORT-TERM (partnerships)
Adult Sports	CONTINUE	SHORT-TERM (partnerships)
Swim Lessons	CONSIDER	LONG-TERM (facility development)
Programs for People with Special Needs	CONSIDER	SHORT-TERM (partnerships)
Competitive Swim Team	CONSIDER	LONG-TERM (facility development)
Youth Out-of-School Programs/Camps	CONSIDER	LONG-TERM (facility development)



1.10 Staffing and Maintenance Recommendations

Staffing: To overcome the challenges related to the asset management of the parks system, the City of Sandy Springs should fund five new positions for the Recreation and Parks Department. The positions should be full-time and include a Park Service Manager, two Park Supervisors, a Lead Park Supervisor and an Outdoor Fitness Program Manager. These positions will provide the Department with a second asset management crew. It is recommended that the crews be geographically assigned (i.e. North Park Crew; South Park Crew) to minimize travel time. Through the development of management processes, the Department must continually evaluate the private sector to determine if the financial resources dedicated to parks maintenance are sufficient as well as effective and efficient.

Maintenance: The annual maintenance budget will need to increase when the existing 50 acres of undeveloped property is developed. As the City begins to purchase land to address the shortage of 203 acres currently, as recommended in the level of services analysis, the Department will need to almost double the current maintenance budget. By 2027 and with the new 437 total acreages added, the Department will require a maintenance budget of somewhere in the range of \$7,150,000 to \$10,725,000 million dollars in maintenance.

1.11 Current and Proposed Spending Level

Annual Park Operation and Maintenance Funding: The Annual Park Maintenance Budget in Sandy Springs is approximately \$2,557,000 for 228.75 acres of developed park land. Best Practice Cost per Acre is \$10,000-\$15,000 per acre. Based on analysis, Sandy Springs’ unit costs are in alignment with best practice cost per acre.

Create Work Plans Based on Maintenance Standards: Maintenance standards are based on a Level (1), (2) and (3) modes (tasks and frequencies of each task) and follow best practices as established by the National Recreation and Park Association. The Department should update and customize the standards found in the third-party contract based on the park and recreation values of the Sandy Springs community and need to be adopted and implemented regardless of whether work is performed by City staff or third-party contractors.

Budget Summary

An opinion of costs was developed to determine a preliminary budget for the Recreation and Parks Department over the next twenty years. The following is a summary of the recommended funding levels.

- Existing Park Improvements = \$14,535,000
- General Improvements = \$350,000 (several costs to be determined)
- New Park and Trail Improvements = \$90,600,000

Grand Total: \$105,485,000

In conclusion, the City of Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks Department has a lot to be proud of within their current system. In addition, the City benefits from great leadership, which will be critical as they move forward to meet the growing demand for recreation and parks. For more detailed information on items in this Executive Summary, please review this full report.

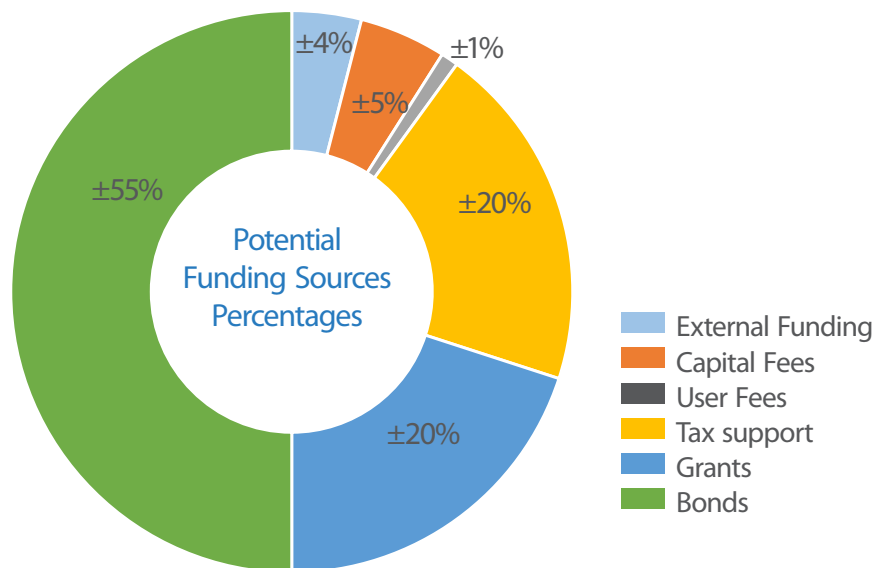


Figure 1.9: Potential Funding Sources Percentages



Lost Corner Preserve. Photo credit: Barge Design Solutions



2.0 PARKS, FACILITIES, AND TRAILS RECOMMENDATIONS

Section 2 Overview

This section of the Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks System Comprehensive Plan brings the research and analysis and community outreach phases (Sections 3 and 4 of this document) together to present the recommendations for the future of Sandy Springs system of parks, trails and green spaces over the next 10 years. The focus of the recommendations is to enhance the physical system of parks and the program offerings, as is the traditional focus of park system master plans. In addition to that focus, the goals of the recommendations of this plan are also to utilize the City park system to improve community health, spur economic development, and create an exceptional quality of life by integrating park facilities, trails and greenspaces throughout the City.

Using the results of the needs assessment, a level of service standard is set as are priorities for improvements to the parks and trails over the planning period. It includes summaries of the recommendations for parks, facilities and trails over the planning period, programming and services and operational and financial findings and recommendations, provides a capital improvement plan, a potential funding profile and a basis for increases in operations and maintenance costs as new and upgraded parks and facilities are added to the system.

2.1 Action Plan

The Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks Department has a unique and impressive inventory of parks in the current system; however, several parks need a complete overall to maximize their use and a significant number of park acres need to be added to the system. Working with staff, the consulting team created a list of action items to be completed over the next ten-years to improve the system (see following page).

- Short-Term Action Plan -

Short-term (1-10 years)

1. Aggressively purchase new park property, especially on the Chattahoochee and floodplains
2. Expand the Allen Park property and re-develop to create a high-quality park
3. Begin design and construction on the first natatoriums/community recreation centers in the northern part of the community
4. Develop connectivity between City parks/green space and those of neighboring jurisdictions to enhance quality of life for all communities involved
5. Conduct process to plan for pedestrian bridge across the Chattahoochee River
6. Build new dog parks designed specific to suburban and urban node areas
7. Pursue a diversified funding portfolio for parks and recreation as recommended
8. Develop a target market communications plan
9. Address deferred maintenance and ADA compliance issues at parks as required per park ratings
10. Design and implement improvements to Heritage Sandy Springs, Morgan Falls Ball Fields and Riverpark
11. Conduct a community-wide art plan and begin to integrate art in all parks
12. Increase staffing levels as recommended to support improvements
13. Expand "high priority" programming and services as recommended
14. Construction of a cultural center near City Springs



- Long-Term Action Plan -

Long-term (10-20 years)

1. Continue to aggressively purchase new park property
2. Continue to expand greenways and trails to connect all parks
3. Design and implement improvements for new park property
4. Develop Recreation and Parks branding that integrates art in all parks
5. Implement improvements at Ridgeview Park/Update Play Equipment
6. Continue to address maintenance and ADA compliance issues at parks

2.2 Service Standards

Level of Service (LOS) standards are guidelines that define service areas based on population that support investment decisions related to parks, facilities and amenities. LOS standards can and will change over time; as the population changes, the need to acquire additional land and develop parks also increases as will the costs to do so.

The Consultant Team evaluated LOS standards using a combination of resources. These resources included: National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) guidelines; recreation activity participation rates reported by the Sports & Fitness Industry Association’s (SFIA) *2016 Study on Sports, Fitness, and Leisure Participation* as it applies to activities that occur in the United States and Sandy Springs; community and stakeholder input; and general observations. This information allowed standards to be customized to the Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks Department. Based on input during public input meetings as well as the results of community survey, a synthesis of Community Values relative to parks was determined. Those values, outlined below, are the foundation for the Level of Service that is recommended in this plan:

- **Traditional park and recreation system elements**
 - » Athletic Fields/Courts
 - » Playgrounds
 - » Picnic Shelters
 - » Special Events
- **Health, Fitness & Wellness**
 - » Swimming Pools
 - » Indoor and Outdoor Spaces designed for Health, Fitness and Wellness programs
- **Outdoor Recreation**
 - » Access to Nature Trails in Natural Resource Parks
 - » Canoe/Kayak Launches
 - » Mountain Bike Trails
- **Art & Culture**
- **Community Gardens**
- **Social Areas for People and Dogs**
- **Special Events**

The standards include a recommended service level based on acreage for each type of park (except for Greenways/Trailhead Parks), for total park acreage and for important outdoor amenities (pavilions, baseball fields, multipurpose fields, etc.) based on quantity. The standards include a current level of service based on 2017 population and a recommended service level in 2027 based on population growth projections.

These LOS standards should be viewed as a guide. The standards are to be coupled with conventional wisdom and judgment related to the particular situation and needs of the community. By applying these standards to the population of Sandy Springs, gaps and surpluses in park and facility/amenity types are revealed. These standards should be used to inform decisions when planning to develop new parks, facilities, and amenities.

Currently, there are multiple needs to be met in Sandy Springs to properly serve the community now and in the future. The City of Sandy Springs currently provides a **total LOS of 9.66 acres of DEVELOPED parkland per 1,000 residents based on the City’s population with 8.06 acres per 1,000 being Natural Resource parks.** While Sandy Springs is largely developed and available land is scarce, **the planning team is recommending the LOS standard of 12.0 acres/1,000 population as a goal.** This means that as of today, the City is deficient by 253 acres of developed



parkland. To keep up with the projected population growth, the City will need to add a total of 487 acres of developed parkland to the recreation and parks system by the year 2027 to achieve the recommended standard. Currently, the City has 50 acres of undeveloped parkland in its inventory, which will help reduce the number of acres recommended; however, some of those park sites such as Old Riverside Property, which accounts for approximately 23 acres are recommended to be Natural Resource Area Parks.

The term “developed parkland” describes any park that is open to users of all abilities and that has infrastructure in place to support safe park use such as parking area(s), restrooms and basic park amenities such as trails, open play space, etc. The park must provide for adequate emergency access and be maintained according to the department’s maintenance standards.

As can be seen in the table, the “Facility Standards” column identifies whether a park type or outdoor amenity “Meets Standard” (in black) or “Need Exists” (in red) based on the recommended service level. “Need Exists” is shown for all park classifications except Natural Resource Parks. This provides a guide for the type of parks that should be developed in the future.

In terms of Outdoor Amenities, needs exist currently in every category, except for tennis and potentially skateparks. One of the most important needs is the addition of playgrounds and pavilions to gather large groups. In terms of Indoor Amenities, the need exists for and multi-generational indoor recreation center/gym. The current small inventory of indoor space cannot be used for a wide range of indoor recreation programming and activities.

Table 2.1 details the current and recommended LOS for the City of Sandy Springs’ Recreation and Parks system. Please note that greenway/trailhead parks and trails were not calculated in this population-based service level analysis because they are based on connected networks rather than population.

Park Type	2017 Park Inventory			Park Service Levels					2017 Standards		2027 Standards	
	City of Sandy Springs Inventory	Other Inventory	Total Inventory	Current Service Level	Recommended Developed Park Service Levels; Revised for Local Service Area			Meet Standard/ Need Exists	Additional Developed Parks/Facilities/ Amenities Needed	Meet Standard/ Need Exists	Additional Developed Parks/Facilities/ Amenities Needed	
Pocket Park	0.69	-	0.69	0.01 acres per	1,000	0.20 acres per	1,000	Need Exists	20 Acre(s)	Need Exists	24 Acre(s)	
Neighborhood Parks	13.92	-	13.92	0.14 acres per	1,000	0.50 acres per	1,000	Need Exists	38 Acre(s)	Need Exists	48 Acre(s)	
Community Parks	62.24	-	62.24	0.60 acres per	1,000	1.50 acres per	1,000	Need Exists	92 Acre(s)	Need Exists	122 Acre(s)	
Regional Parks	27.26	-	27.26	0.26 acres per	1,000	1.00 acres per	1,000	Need Exists	76 Acre(s)	Need Exists	96 Acre(s)	
Special Use Parks	38.64	-	38.64	0.37 acres per	1,000	0.50 acres per	1,000	Need Exists	13 Acre(s)	Need Exists	23 Acre(s)	
Greenway/Trailhead Park	21.74	-	21.74	0.21 acres per	1,000	0.35 acres per	1,000	Need Exists	14	Need Exists	21	
Natural Resource Parks (includes NPS land)	64.26	767.00	831.26	8.07 acres per	1,000	8.00 acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	- Acre(s)	Need Exists	153 Acre(s)	
Total Developed Park Acreage	228.75	767.00	995.75	9.66 acres per	1,000	12.05 acres per	1,000	Need Exists	252.94 Acre(s)	Need Exists	487.33 Acre(s)	
Undeveloped Park Acreage	50.29	-	50.29	0.49 acres per	1,000	0.00 acres per	1,000					
Recommended Land Acquisition (Needs Exist less the Current Undeveloped Park Land)								Needs Exists	203 Acre(s)	Needs Exists	437 Acre(s)	
OUTDOOR AMENITIES												
Basketball Courts	4.00	-	4.00	1.00 court per	25,767	1.00 court per	25,000	Meets Standard	- Court(s)	Need Exists	1 Court(s)	
Multi-Purpose Fields	3.00	-	3.00	1.00 field per	34,356	1.00 field per	20,000	Need Exists	2 Field(s)	Need Exists	3 Field(s)	
Football	1.00	-	1.00	1.00 field per	103,068	1.00 field per	125,000	Meets Standard	- Field(s)	Need Exists	1 Field(s)	
Baseball Fields	7.00	-	7.00	1.00 field per	14,724	1.00 field per	15,000	Meets Standard	- Field(s)	Need Exists	1 Field(s)	
Softball Fields	3.00	-	3.00	1.00 field per	34,356	1.00 field per	50,000	Meets Standard	- Field(s)	Meets Standard	- Field(s)	
Sand Volley Ball Courts	-	-	-	1.00 court per	-	1.00 court per	50,000	Need Exists	2 Court(s)	Need Exists	2 Court(s)	
Tennis Courts	30.00	-	30.00	1.00 court per	3,436	1.00 court per	3,500	Meets Standard	- Court(s)	Need Exists	5 Court(s)	
Picnic Pavilion (NPS not included)	9.00	-	9.00	1.00 site per	11,452	1.00 site per	7,500	Need Exists	5 Site(s)	Need Exists	7 Site(s)	
Picnic Sites (NPS not included)	10.00	-	10.00	1.00 site per	10,307	1.00 site per	7,500	Need Exists	4 Site(s)	Need Exists	6 Site(s)	
Playgrounds	7.00	-	7.00	1.00 site per	14,724	1.00 site per	7,500	Need Exists	7 Site(s)	Need Exists	9 Site(s)	
Off Leash Dog Park	1.00	-	1.00	1.00 site per	103,068	1.00 site per	30,000	Need Exists	2 Site(s)	Need Exists	3 Site(s)	
Skateboard Areas	-	-	-	1.00 site per	-	1.00 site per	250,000	Meets Standard	0 Site(s)	Meets Standard	0 Site(s)	
Indoor/Outdoor Pool	-	-	-	1.00 site per	-	1.00 site per	50,000	Need Exists	2 Site(s)	Need Exists	2 Site(s)	
INDOOR RECREATION CENTER												
Indoor Rec/Community Center (square feet)	24,000	0	24,000	0.23 SF per person	2	2 SF per Person	2	Need Exists	182,136 SF	Need Exists	222,154 SF	

Table 2.1: Sandy Springs Level of Service – Entire City



The Level of Service Standard also does not consider for the need for relocation or expansion of existing outdoor amenities at existing parks that are not operating or functioning properly due to poor design, intensive use pressure, lack of lighting and other factors. There are also sub-sets of the Outdoor Amenities categories that could be underserved even though the primary category meets the standard. An example of this is the various field sizes required for sports played on a rectangular multipurpose field. High school lacrosse cannot be played on a field sized for U10 soccer while a properly sized high school lacrosse sized field could accommodate several youth soccer fields. Also, if sports fields are not lit, their use is limited in the evening hours which reduces their capability to meet demand. Likewise, sub-categories could be met even though the primary category shows that a need exists. An example of this is that girls' softball can be played on a 200'-250' baseball field if portable mounds are brought in for baseball and the infields skinned. Lighted synthetic turf fields can accommodate a variety of sports and can withstand almost constant use pressure. Such dual use of facilities and the availability of synthetic turf fields can reduce the need for the number of facilities specifically reserved for a certain sport. These are examples why the Level of Service Standards should serve as a guide for future development of parks and outdoor amenities and not as a prescriptive road map.

Urban Core Level of Service

As part of this research, the consulting team analyzed the LOS for the urban core area. This results below only include the parks that serve the population in the urban core. Currently, the largest deficiency in this area is pocket parks. By 2027, deficiencies are found in almost every category. Given this part of the City is the most developed, acquiring new land for parks will be challenging.

The City of Sandy Springs feels like a densely developed area that is more urban than suburban. This is because most visitors to the City are there for the commercial and office areas of the city or are passing through them along the primary corridors in the City. However, most of the City is single-family residential on shady lots and most of the open space is National Recreation Area lands along the Chattahoochee River. Because of this the City of Sandy Springs has two personalities; urban and suburban. An important goal of this Recreation and Parks System Comprehensive Plan is to utilize parks and greenspace to spur economic development that enhances the quality of life in the Urban Nodes of the City, and to link those Urban Nodes to the traditional parks and natural resource area parks of the City.

Park Type	2017 Park Inventory			Park Service Levels						2017 Standards		2027 Standards	
	City of Sandy Springs Inventory	Other Inventory	Total Inventory	Current Service Level			Recommended Developed Park Service Levels; Revised for Local Service Area			Meet Standard/ Need Exists	Additional Developed Parks/Facilities/ Amenities Needed	Meet Standard/ Need Exists	Additional Developed Parks/Facilities/ Amenities Needed
Pocket Park	-	-	-	-	acres per	1,000	0.20	acres per	1,000	Need Exists	3 Acre(s)	Need Exists	6 Acre(s)
Neighborhood Parks	8.92	-	8.92	0.53	acres per	1,000	0.50	acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	- Acre(s)	Need Exists	5 Acre(s)
Community Parks	13.10	-	13.10	0.78	acres per	1,000	0.50	acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	- Acre(s)	Need Exists	1 Acre(s)
Sports Complex	-	-	-	-	acres per	1,000	0.00	acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	- Acre(s)	Meets Standard	- Acre(s)
Special Use Parks	35.22	-	35.22	2.10	acres per	1,000	2.00	acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	- Acre(s)	Need Exists	21 Acre(s)
Greenway/Trailhead Park	21.74	-	21.74	1.30	acres per	1,000	1.25	acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	-	Need Exists	14
Natural Resource Parks (includes NPS land)	-	-	-	-	acres per	1,000	0.00	acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	- Acre(s)	Meets Standard	- Acre(s)
Total Developed Park Acreage	78.98	-	78.98	4.71	acres per	1,000	4.45	acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	3 Acre(s)	Need Exists	47 Acre(s)
Undeveloped Park Acreage	5.22	-	5.22	0.31	acres per	1,000	0.00	acres per	1,000				
Recommended Land Acquisition (Needs Exist less the Current Undeveloped Park Land)										Needs Exists	(2) Acre(s)	Needs Exists	42 Acre(s)

Table 2.2: Sandy Springs Level of Service – Urban Core

To accomplish this goal, two separate community surveys were conducted to determine the needs of residents across the city as a whole, as well as separately determine the needs of the residents within the primary urban core at the center of the City. The results of these two separate surveys were used to create two separate Level of Service recommendations; one to apply community-wide, and one to apply to the urban nodes and villages identified in the Next Ten Comprehensive Plan. This approach allows for both personalities of the City of Sandy Springs to improve and grow park facilities that complement and enhance quality of life in the urban and the suburban areas of the City relative to the character of those areas.



The result of the two separate levels of service is an identification of two somewhat different lists of Community Values relative to parks and greenspace. The values for the Urban Nodes are not starkly different from those for the City as a Whole, but rather compliment each other and implementing them in the form of parks can enhance the character of each. Those Community Values are outlined as follows:

Community Values for City-Wide Parks

- **Traditional park and recreation system elements**
 - » Athletic Fields/Courts
 - » Playgrounds
 - » Picnic Shelters
 - » Special Events
- **Health, Fitness & Wellness**
 - » Indoor and Outdoor Spaces designed for Health, Fitness and Wellness programs
 - » Swimming Pools
- **Outdoor Recreation**
 - » Access to Nature Trails in Open Space/Conservation Parks
 - » Canoe/Kayak Launches
- **Art & Culture**
- **Off-Leash Dog Areas/Parks**

Community Values for Urban Node Parks

- **Village Centers**
 - » Urban Plazas
 - » Commons for Markets
 - » Amphitheaters
 - » Social Events Areas
- **Access to Outdoor Recreation**
 - » Connections to Nature Trails in Open Space/Conservation Parks
 - » Canoe/Kayak Launches
 - » Mountain Bike Trails
- **Dog Friendly Gathering Spaces**
- **Art and Culture**
- **Community Gardens**

These sets of Community Values, derived from public input meetings and the two separate community surveys, are utilized to develop the two separate Levels of Service, which are shown in the Table 2.1 and 2.2.

2.3 Benchmark Analysis

The Consultant Team identified metrics to be benchmarked against comparable parks and recreation systems in the Atlanta, Georgia metropolitan area. The complexity in this analysis was ensuring direct comparison through a methodology of statistics and ratios in order to provide objective information that is relevant and accurate, as best as possible.

It must be noted that the benchmark analysis is only an indicator based on the information provided. The information sought was a combination of metrics based on jurisdiction size and park inventories. The attributes considered for selection in this benchmark study included:

- Jurisdiction population size
- Jurisdiction land area size
- System focused on suburban parks and recreation service delivery

Benchmark analysis incorporates a mix of systems that are close in geographical proximity to Sandy Springs. The benchmark includes the following agencies:



Agency	State	Jurisdiction Type	Population	Jurisdiction Size (Sq. Mi.)	Population per Sq. Mi.
Alpharetta Parks and Recreation	GA	City	65,799	27.30	2,410
Dunwoody Parks and Recreation	GA	City	48,884	13.17	3,712
Johns Creek Parks and Recreation	GA	City	84,350	31.30	2,695
Marietta Parks and Recreation	GA	City	61,048	23.17	2,635
Roswell Parks and Recreation	GA	City	94,786	42.01	2,256
Sandy Springs Parks and Recreation	GA	City	103,068	38.53	2,675

Table 2.3: Sandy Springs Benchmark Analysis

Due to difference in how each system collects, maintains, and reports data, variances exist. These variations have an impact on the per capita and percentage allocations; hence the overall comparison must be viewed with this in mind.

The benchmark data collection for all systems was obtained in August, 2018. Population figures used for analysis reflect data from the Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget, as of July 1, 2016. While it is possible that there may have been changes or updates in the data provided, to ensure consistency only the original figures obtained at that time have been used in the benchmark. The goal is to evaluate how Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks Department is positioned among peer agencies as it applies to the delivery of its parks system through data that offers a view of each system’s park acreage inventory.

2.3.1 Comparison of Service Area, Inventories, and Operations System Acreages

This section provides a general overview of each system within the benchmark analysis. The table below describes the total parks, total acreage, total developed acres, percentage of developed acres, and level of service (total park acres per 1,000 residents for each agency).

Agency	Population	Total Number of Developed Parks	Residents per Park	Total Acres	Total Developed Acres	Percentage of Developed Acres	Total Developed Acres per 1,000 Residents
Alpharetta Parks and Recreation	65,799	16	4,112	862	832	97%	12.64
Dunwoody Parks and Recreation	48,884	7	6,983	172	162	94%	3.31
John's Creek Parks and Recreation	84,350	4	21,088	356	197	55%	2.34
Marietta Parks and Recreation	61,048	29	2,105	221	194	88%	3.18
Roswell Parks and Recreation	94,786	20	4,739	920	902	98%	9.52
Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks	103,068	21	4,908	1,046	996	95%	9.66

Table 2.4: Sandy Springs Comparison of Service Area, Inventories, and Operations

Note: The LOS for Roswell apparently does NOT include NPS lands, while our existing LOS for Sandy Springs does include NPS lands. The LOS for Sandy Springs excluding NPS lands would be 2.2 per 1,000. The City includes NPS lands in it’s total acreage because that land is an asset to the public that will remain park land in perpetuity.

Total number of parks for the benchmark agencies ranges from four to 20, with a benchmark median of 13. Sandy Springs is above the median and has the second most developed parks in its system providing one park for every 5,736 residents.



Total Park Acres

Total acreage reported for benchmark systems ranges from 172 acres to 1,045 acres, with a benchmark median of 596 acres. Sandy Springs is well above the median and has the most acres of the benchmark cities at 1,045 acres. It must be noted that 767 acres are provided by other service providers, most notably the National Parks Service and the Fulton County School District.

Developed Park Acres

In terms of percentage of developed acres, the benchmark agencies range from 55%-98%. With developed acreage accounting for 95% of its total, Sandy Springs is well above the benchmark median of 88% developed.

Level of Service

When comparing total acreage to each benchmarked community, there is a wide range of coverage, anywhere from 2.34 to 12.64 acres per 1,000 residents. Sandy Springs' 9.66 acres per 1,000 residents ranks above the benchmark median (6.78 acres per 1,000). It must be noted that of the 9.66 acres per 1,000 residents, 7.44 acres is provided by other service providers, most notably the National Parks Service and the Fulton County School District.

2.3.2 Benchmarking Key Takeaways

Percentage of Developed Acres

- Least developed acres: Johns Creek – 55% developed
- Most developed acres: Roswell – 98% developed
- Benchmark median – 88% developed
- Sandy Springs – 95% developed

Total Park Acres Per 1,000 Population

- Benchmark leader: Alpharetta – 12.64 acres/1,000 residents
- Benchmark bottom: Johns Creek – 2.34 acres/1,000 residents
- Benchmark median – 6.78 acres/1,000 residents
- Sandy Springs – 9.66 acres/1,000 residents

2.4 Park Equity and Service Areas

Park space within walking distance to home is an important element in providing quality recreation experiences and in increasing the health and fitness of the community residents. People will walk down the street to a park after dinner to exercise or let their children play but are much less likely to do so if they must drive a car. Generally accepted standards for how far people are comfortable walking to a park indicate ¼ mile is acceptable and ½ mile is the maximum people are typically willing to walk. This assumes there is a safe sidewalk or trail that can be used; otherwise, the distance does not matter as people will not walk when it is not safe.

Figure 2.2: Existing Area of Service, illustrates a ¼ mile and ½ mile radii around all the existing Sandy Springs parks. While this figure does not present a clear picture of walking distance because sidewalks or greenway trails do not serve all neighborhoods in the community, it does give a perspective on how well the park locations are potentially serving the residents of the City who may wish to walk to a park.

Figure 2.2 also shows the lack of equitable distribution of parks across the City. There are no parks in the southwestern portion, northern most and the panhandle of the City boundary. Future land acquisition for parks should focus on the unserved and underserved areas of the City for larger community parks and more neighborhood and pocket parks should be provided in the urban nodes as central greens.



2.5 New Parks Recommendations

2.5.1 Land Acquisition

As mentioned earlier, there is a need to acquire and develop an additional 437 acres to meet the 12.05 acres per 1,000 population level of service goal. This goal is important based on the need identified in the LOS standards and on stakeholder input, analysis of existing facilities and programs. Given the limited availability of land in the City in key locations for parks, this goal will be challenging and will require creative partnerships, adaptive reuse, and other site adaptations. See **Figure 2.3: Existing and Proposed Area of Service** for potential locations for these parks.

2.5.2 New Parks and Facilities

Roughly 24 acres of **pocket parks** are recommended as part of the goal to increase green space within walking distance of every resident. A pocket or mini park is generally .5 to 1 acre in size, which means 24 or more additional pocket parks are recommended. As noted early in this section, pocket parks should be developed in dense areas and may have small event space, play areas for children, spaces for relaxing and socializing, taking lunch breaks, etc. To fill the large void of pocket parks in the community, the City should look for partnerships with businesses, housing complexes and others to provide these much-needed park spaces. See **Figure 2.4: Existing and Proposed Areas of Service for Urban Node Park System Facilities** for potential locations for these parks.

The recommendation for **Neighborhood Parks** is approximately 48 acres. These parks are generally 5 to 10 acres in size. Some of the existing undeveloped parcels that the Recreation and Parks Department already owns will help fill this need. Additional needs could be met by partnering with schools. Currently, the City has intergovernmental agreements with the six schools. See Section 4.8 Schools for more information. See **Figure 2.5: Existing and Proposed Areas of Service for Traditional Park System Facilities** for potential locations for these parks.

Based on the LOS results, the City needs to acquire approximately 122 acres for **Community Parks**. For Sandy Springs, two community parks of around 50 to 60 acres for each would be desirable. We recommend one location on the north end and one serving the south to southwest area of the community. These community parks should provide areas for both passive and active recreation activities. Community Parks could also be on acreage associated with recreation centers. Two recreation centers are recommended in this plan; one in the north area of the community, one in the south.

In addition to active recreation at the community parks, we recommend a **Regional Park with sport fields**. Participating in organized sports can play an important part of physical, mental, social, and emotional health of children and adults. These benefits are not gender specific, yet we often see lower participation rates in girls than boys. Providing adequate field space for boys and girls is critical to foster space where they can benefit from physically activity that could positively influence them throughout their lives. The LOS shows 96 acres are needed for a sports complex. One option to meet this need is to purchase and convert some or all of the existing Steel Canyon golf course. Another option would be to find a location in the southwest part of the City where larger tracks of land may be available.

Throughout the input process, the community, especially in the urban core area, expressed a strong desire for more passive park opportunities and connections to wilderness parks. Based on the LOS standards, 153 **Natural Resource Park** acres are recommended. These acres are important for wildlife conservation and for residents to enjoy nature. These parks should be interconnected through the community to provide a network of trails and open space that link neighborhoods, parks, recreation facilities, attractions, and natural areas. See **Figure 2.6: Existing and Proposed Areas of Service for Natural Resource Park System Facilities** for potential locations for these parks.

Indoor Recreation Center/Natatorium

The Hammond Park gymnasium is currently the only indoor space that can be used for indoor recreation programming. Adult Fitness and Wellness and Swimming programs are listed as the top priority overall in Section 4.3.5 Programming Needs and Priorities - City Overall. The Proposed LOS indicates a 2017 deficit of indoor space of 182,136 square feet and projects a 2027 deficit of 222,154 square feet, which would equate to two recreation centers in

Sandy Springs Parks



Pocket Parks:

- 1 Eagle Park
- 2 Ed Morley Memorial Park
- 3 Grace Park

Neighborhood Parks:

- 4 Abernathy Park/Art Center
- 5 Allen Road Park
- 6 Marsh Creek Rain Garden
- 28 Windsor Meadows Park

Community Parks:

- 7 Hammond Park
- 8 Lost Corner Preserve
- 9 Morgan Falls Overlook Park
- 10 Ridgeview Park

Natural Resource Areas:

- 11 Big Trees Forest Preserve
- 12 Riverbluff Greenspace
- 13 Riverside Drive Conservation Easement

Linear Parks:

- 14 Abernathy Greenway North
- 15 Abernathy Greenway South

Sports Complex:

- 16 Morgan Falls Athletic Complex

Special Use Parks:

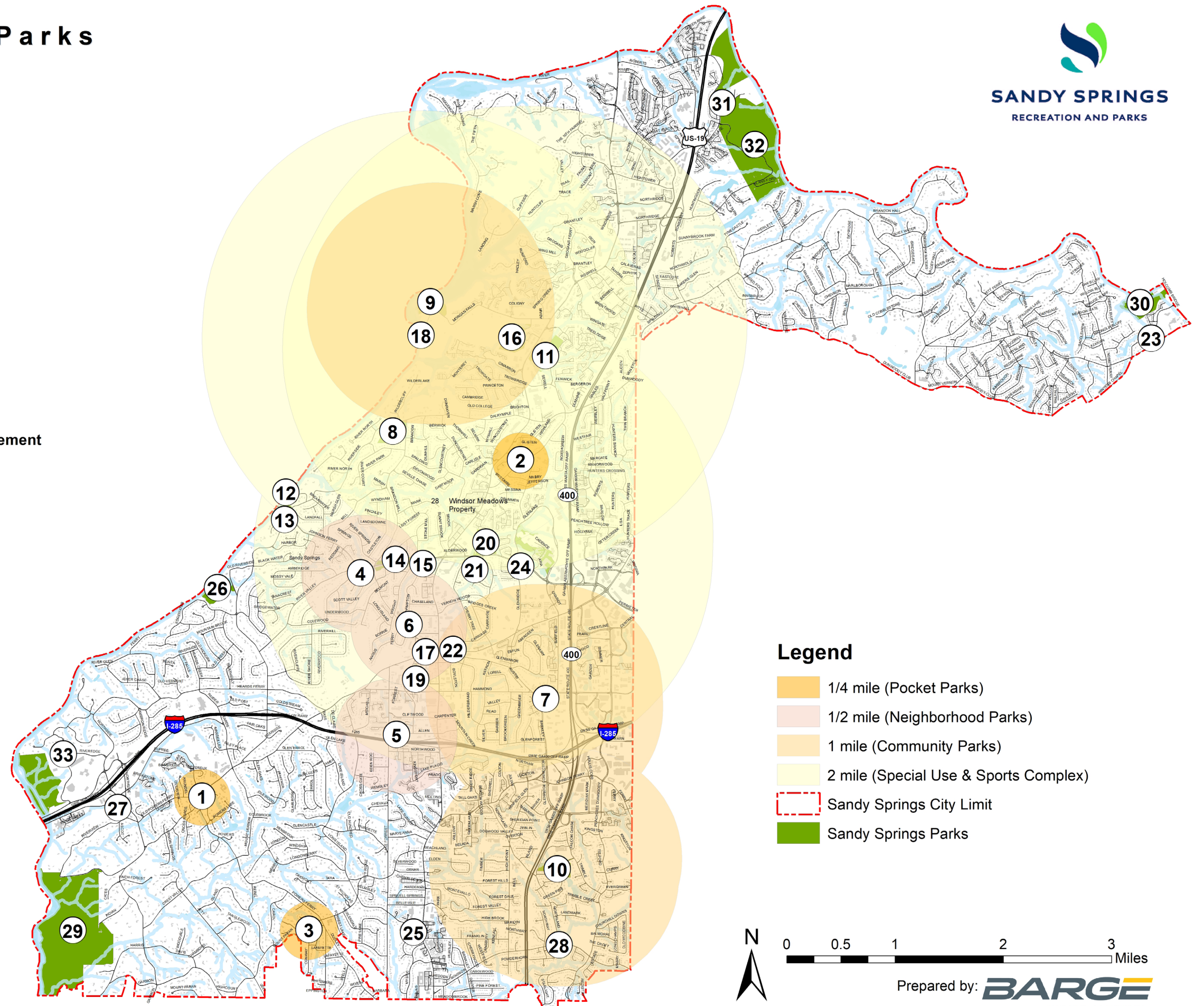
- 17 City Springs Park I
- 18 Morgan Falls River Park/Dog Park
- 19 Heritage Sandy Springs
- 20 Sandy Springs Tennis Center

Undeveloped Parks:

- 21 Abernathy Veterinary Greenspace
- 22 City Springs Park II
- 23 Crooked Creek Park
- 24 Ashton Woods (Glenridge Park)
- 25 Kitty Hawk Greenspace
- 26 Old Riverside Property
- 27 Powers Ferry Conservation Area

National Park Service:

- 29 East Palisades Unit
- 30 Holcomb Bridge Unit
- 31 Island Ferry Unit
- 32 Island Ford Unit
- 33 Powers Island Unit



Legend

- 1/4 mile (Pocket Parks)
- 1/2 mile (Neighborhood Parks)
- 1 mile (Community Parks)
- 2 mile (Special Use & Sports Complex)
- Sandy Springs City Limit
- Sandy Springs Parks



Prepared by: **BARGE**
DESIGN SOLUTIONS

Fig. 2.2: Existing Areas of Service

Sandy Springs Parks

Traditional Parks:

- 2 Ed Morley Memorial Park
- 3 Grace Park
- 4 Abernathy Park/Art Center
- 5 Allen Road Park
- 6 Marsh Creek Rain Garden
- 7 Hammond Park
- 8 Lost Corner Preserve
- 9 Morgan Falls Overlook Park
- 10 Ridgeview Park
- 14 Abernathy Greenway North
- 15 Abernathy Greenway South
- 16 Morgan Falls Athletic Complex
- 20 Sandy Springs Tennis Center
- 25 Kitty Hawk Greenspace
- 26 Old Riverside Property
- 28 Windsor Meadows Park

Natural Resource Parks:

- 11 Big Trees Forest Preserve
- 12 Riverbluff Greenspace
- 13 Riverside Drive Conservation Easement
- 18 Morgan Falls River Park/Dog Park
- 21 Abernathy Veterinary Greenspace
- 23 Crooked Creek Park
- 24 Ashton Woods (Glenridge Park)
- 27 Powers Ferry Conservation Area
- 29 East Palisades Unit
- 30 Holcomb Bridge Unit
- 31 Island Ferry Unit
- 32 Island Ford Unit
- 33 Powers Island Unit

Urban Node Parks:

- 1 Eagle Park
- 17 City Springs Park I
- 19 Sandy Springs Historical Area
- 22 City Springs Park II

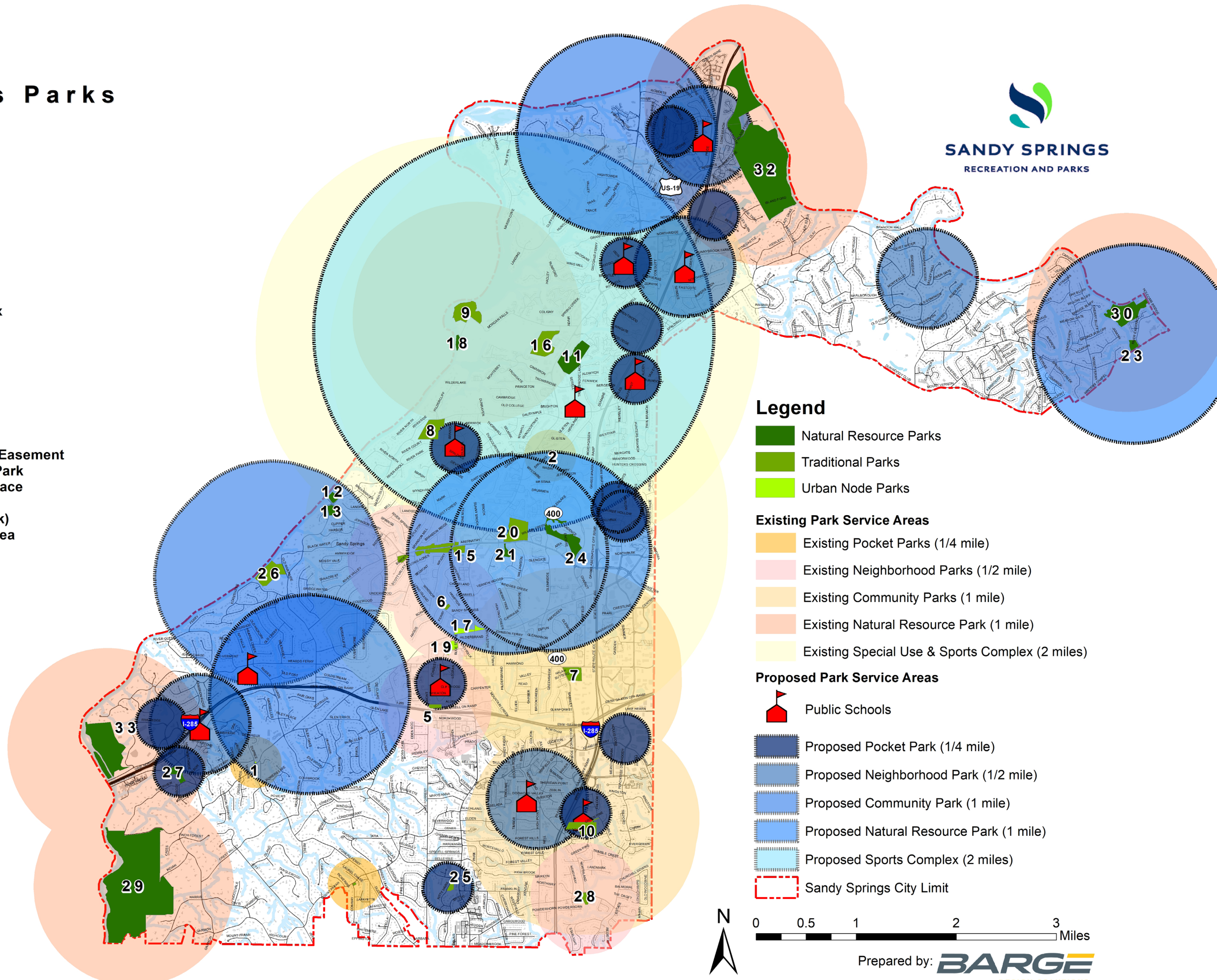


Fig. 2.3: Existing and Proposed Areas of Service

Sandy Springs Parks

- Traditional Parks:**
- 2 Ed Morley Memorial Park
 - 3 Grace Park
 - 4 Abernathy Park/Art Center
 - 5 Allen Road Park
 - 6 Marsh Creek Rain Garden
 - 7 Hammond Park
 - 8 Lost Corner Preserve
 - 9 Morgan Falls Overlook Park
 - 10 Ridgeview Park
 - 14 Abernathy Greenway North
 - 15 Abernathy Greenway South
 - 16 Morgan Falls Athletic Complex
 - 20 Sandy Springs Tennis Center
 - 25 Kitty Hawk Greenspace
 - 26 Old Riverside Property
 - 28 Windsor Meadows Park

- Natural Resource Parks:**
- 11 Big Trees Forest Preserve
 - 12 Riverbluff Greenspace
 - 13 Riverside Drive Conservation Easement
 - 18 Morgan Falls River Park/Dog Park
 - 21 Abernathy Veterinary Greenspace
 - 23 Crooked Creek Park
 - 24 Ashton Woods (Glenridge Park)
 - 27 Powers Ferry Conservation Area
 - 29 East Palisades Unit
 - 30 Holcomb Bridge Unit
 - 31 Island Ferry Unit
 - 32 Island Ford Unit
 - 33 Powers Island Unit

- Urban Node Parks:**
- 1 Eagle Park
 - 17 City Springs Park I
 - 19 Sandy Springs Historical Area
 - 22 City Springs Park II

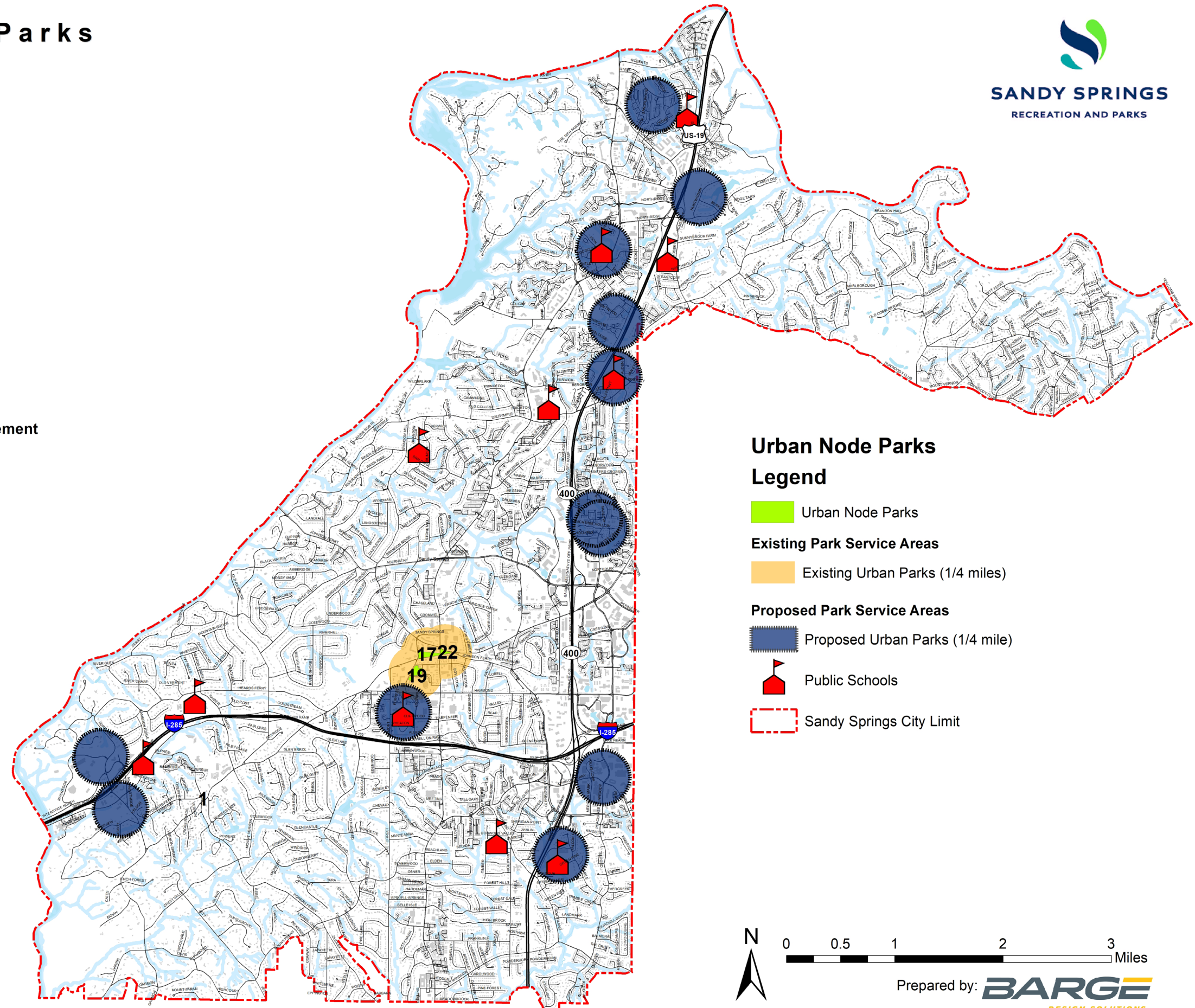


Fig. 2.4: Existing and Proposed Areas of Service for Urban Node Park System Facilities

Sandy Springs Parks

Traditional Parks:

- 2 Ed Morley Memorial Park
- 3 Grace Park
- 4 Abernathy Park/Art Center
- 5 Allen Road Park
- 6 Marsh Creek Rain Garden
- 7 Hammond Park
- 8 Lost Corner Preserve
- 9 Morgan Falls Overlook Park
- 10 Ridgeview Park
- 14 Abernathy Greenway North
- 15 Abernathy Greenway South
- 16 Morgan Falls Athletic Complex
- 20 Sandy Springs Tennis Center
- 25 Kitty Hawk Greenspace
- 26 Old Riverside Property
- 28 Windsor Meadows Park

Natural Resource Parks:

- 11 Big Trees Forest Preserve
- 12 Riverbluff Greenspace
- 13 Riverside Drive Conservation Easement
- 18 Morgan Falls River Park/Dog Park
- 21 Abernathy Veterinary Greenspace
- 23 Crooked Creek Park
- 24 Ashton Woods (Glenridge Park)
- 27 Powers Ferry Conservation Area
- 29 East Palisades Unit
- 30 Holcomb Bridge Unit
- 31 Island Ferry Unit
- 32 Island Ford Unit
- 33 Powers Island Unit

Urban Node Parks:

- 1 Eagle Park
- 17 City Springs Park I
- 19 Sandy Springs Historical Area
- 22 City Springs Park II

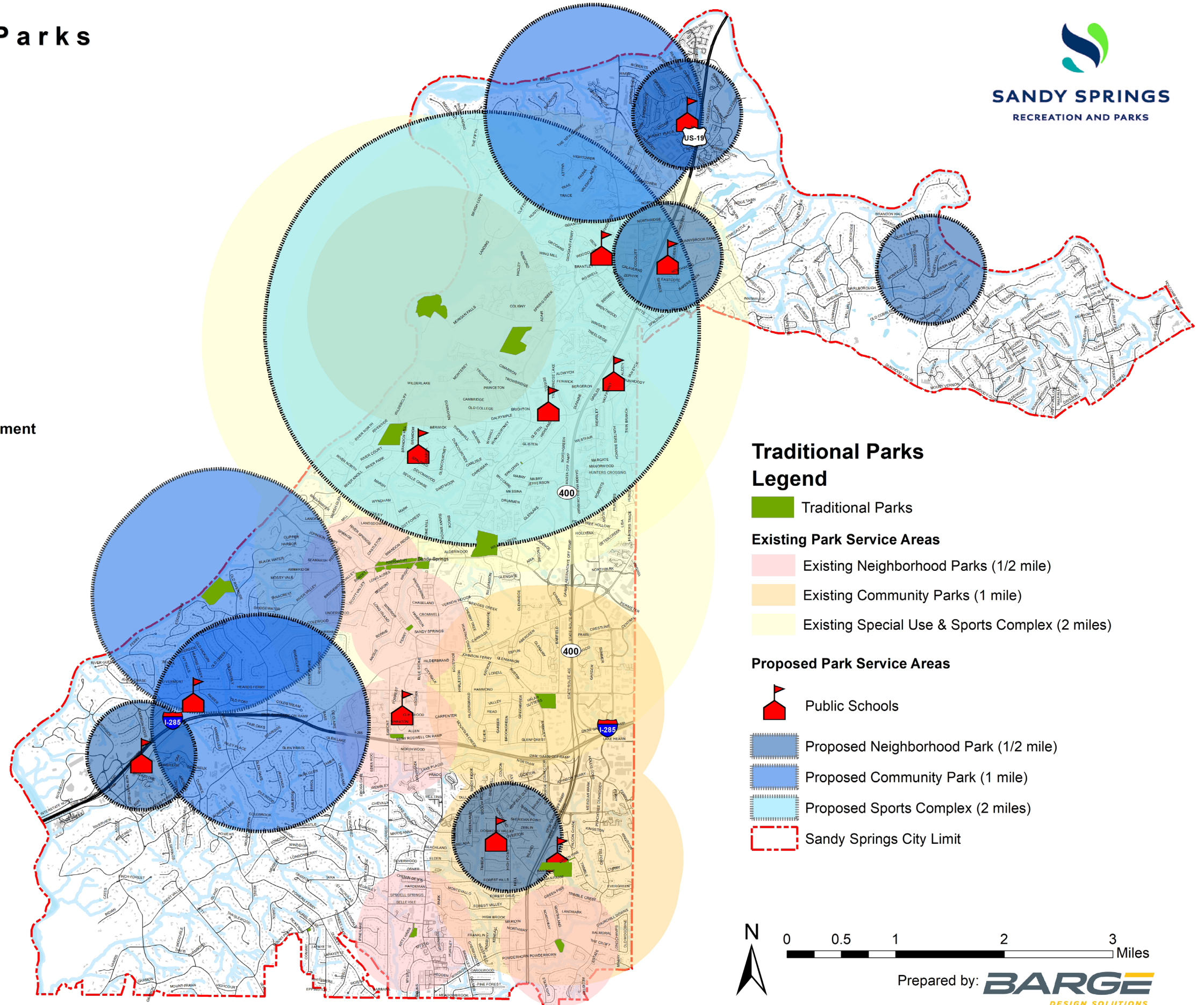


Fig. 2.5: Existing and Proposed Areas of Service for Traditional Park System Facilities

Sandy Springs Parks

Traditional Parks:

- 2 Ed Morley Memorial Park
- 3 Grace Park
- 4 Abernathy Park/Art Center
- 5 Allen Road Park
- 6 Marsh Creek Rain Garden
- 7 Hammond Park
- 8 Lost Corner Preserve
- 9 Morgan Falls Overlook Park
- 10 Ridgeview Park
- 14 Abernathy Greenway North
- 15 Abernathy Greenway South
- 16 Morgan Falls Athletic Complex
- 20 Sandy Springs Tennis Center
- 25 Kitty Hawk Greenspace
- 26 Old Riverside Property
- 28 Windsor Meadows Park

Natural Resource Parks:

- 11 Big Trees Forest Preserve
- 12 Riverbluff Greenspace
- 13 Riverside Drive Conservation Easement
- 18 Morgan Falls River Park/Dog Park
- 21 Abernathy Veterinary Greenspace
- 23 Crooked Creek Park
- 24 Ashton Woods (Glenridge Park)
- 27 Powers Ferry Conservation Area
- 29 East Palisades Unit
- 30 Holcomb Bridge Unit
- 31 Island Ferry Unit
- 32 Island Ford Unit
- 33 Powers Island Unit

Urban Node Parks:

- 1 Eagle Park
- 17 City Springs Park I
- 19 Sandy Springs Historical Area
- 22 City Springs Park II

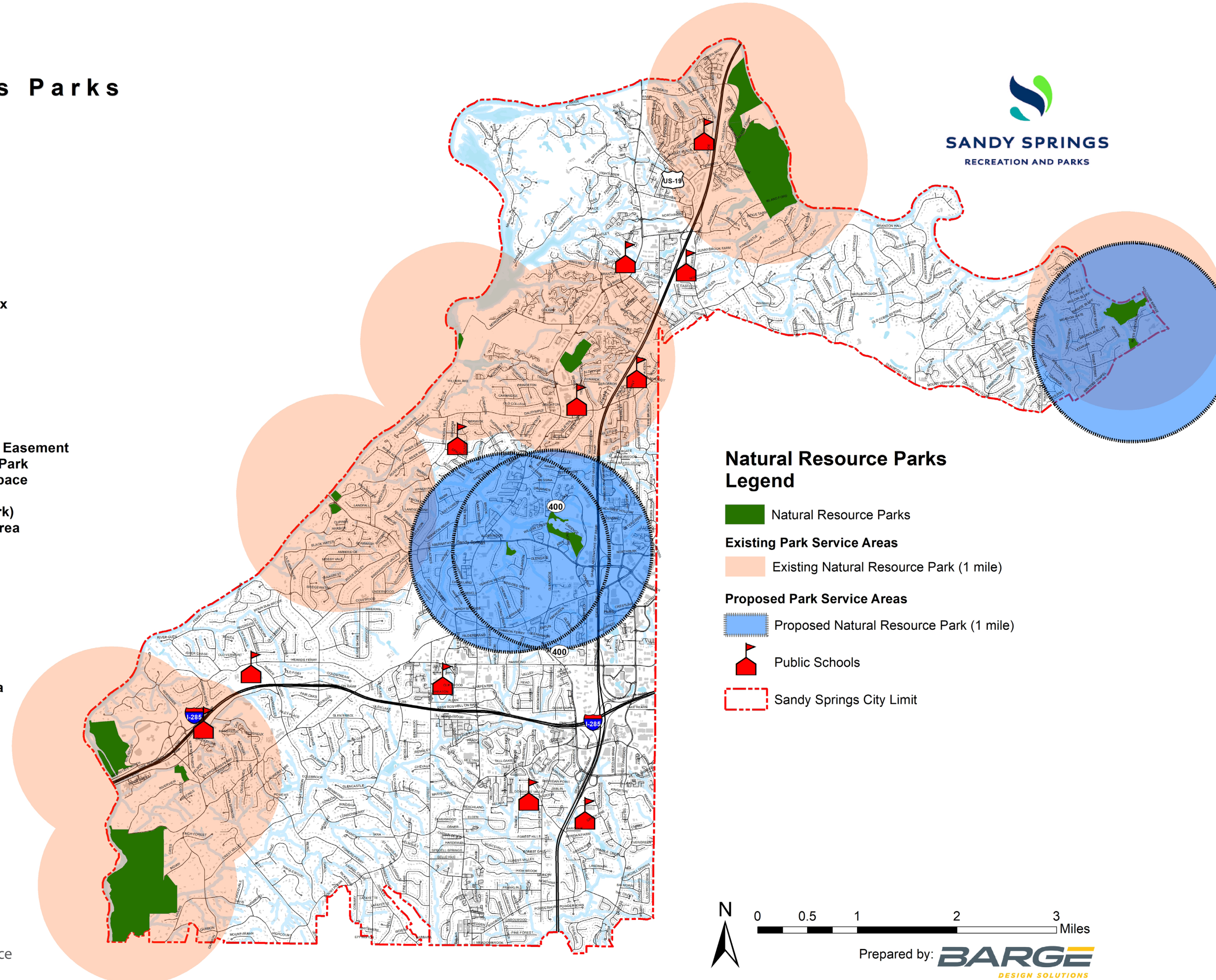
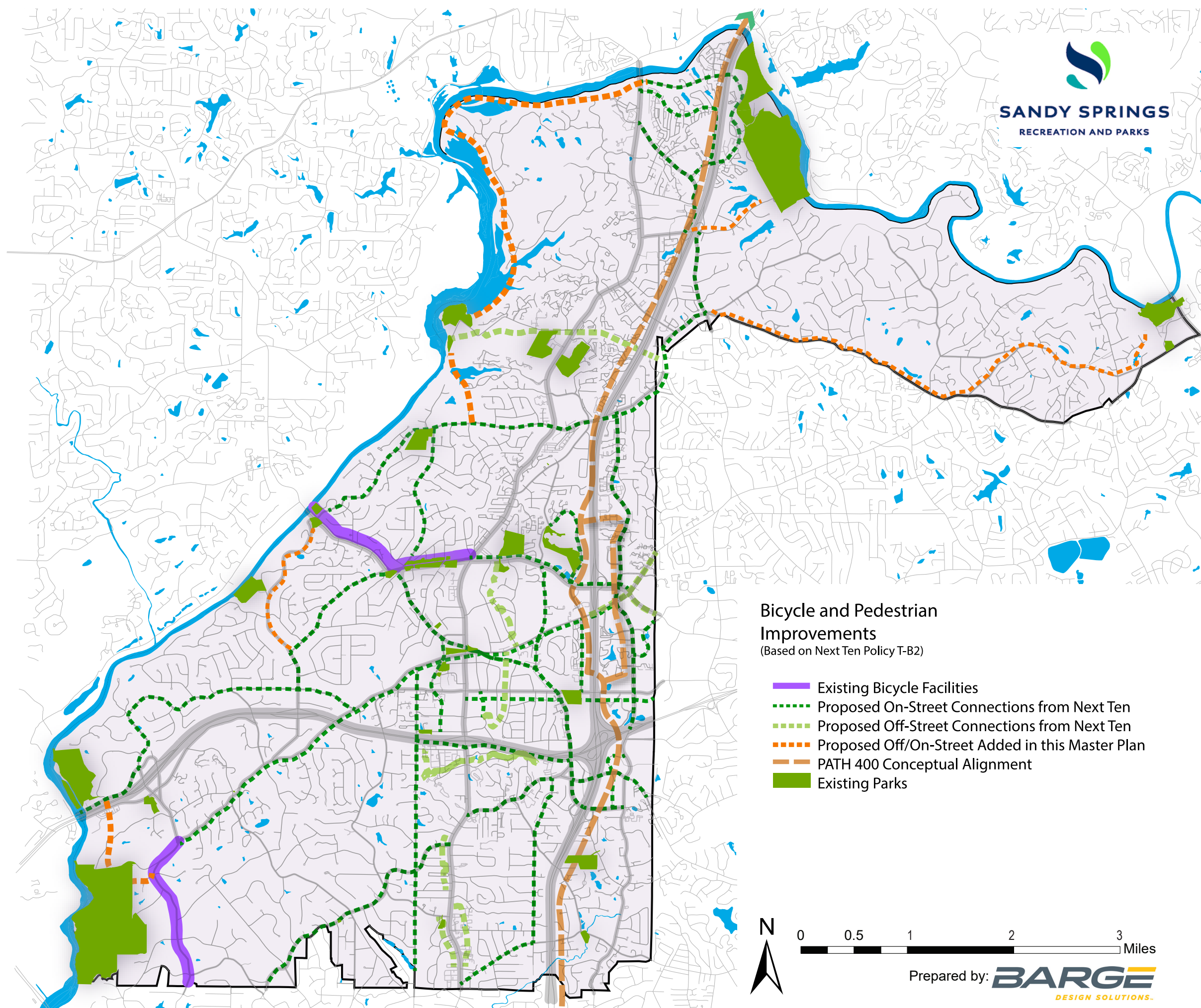


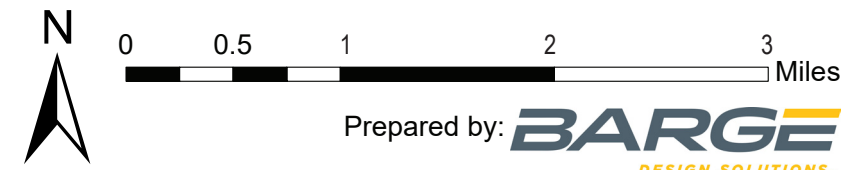
Fig. 2.6: Existing and Proposed Areas of Service for Natural Resource Park System Facilities



Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements
(Based on Next Ten Policy T-B2)

- Existing Bicycle Facilities
- - - Proposed On-Street Connections from Next Ten
- - - Proposed Off-Street Connections from Next Ten
- - - Proposed Off/On-Street Added in this Master Plan
- - - PATH 400 Conceptual Alignment
- Existing Parks

N



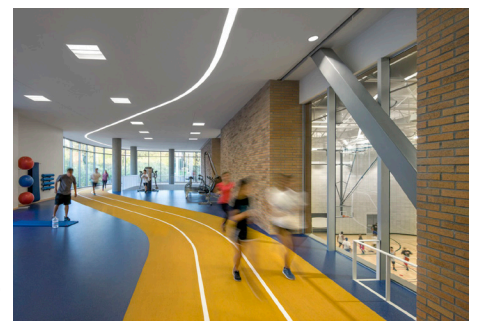
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Prepared by: **BARGE**
DESIGN SOLUTIONS.

Fig. 2.7: Overall Trail Map



the City. It is recommended that the City undertake a facility-specific needs assessment regarding the development of such a facility/facilities to address this significant need. The facility-specific needs assessment would determine the recommended uses/programming for the facility, the required square footage, site location in the City, estimated construction cost, and operations and maintenance costs. The City should consider partnering with a third-party operator, such as Boys and Girls Club or YMCA, and/or acquiring an existing facility and possibly expanding it. When searching for locations to provide additional indoor recreation, the City should consider empty big box/strip mall space. With the growing trend of shopping online, retailers are closing stores. These vacant commercial properties could be converted to indoor recreation space, which can help revitalize an area and create a win-win for the community. The first of the two recreation centers/natatoriums should be constructed in the northern part of the City. A recreation center/natatorium could include the following elements:



- Multipurpose gymnasium
- Indoor walking track
- Weight/fitness rooms
- Meeting rooms and class rooms
- Childcare room
- Outdoor Playground
- Indoor pool, including competition space and therapeutic space
- Outdoor pool with slides, lazy river, and splash pad area

2.6 Multiuse Trails and Connections

Throughout the public input process, the residents expressed a strong desire for more trails throughout Sandy Springs. The development of new greenways and trails should be a high priority for the City. The community needs assessment qualitative and quantitative data show that greenways and trails are the most important and most desired recreational facility in the City.

2.6.1 Recommended Trails Connections

The Next Ten Comprehensive Plan proposed numerous bicycle and pedestrian improvements. Building on the recommendations of the Next Ten Plan, additional connections were identified during this more detailed review. **Figure 2.7: Overall Trail Map** illustrates the on-street and off-street proposed trails from the Next Ten Plan. One of the highest priorities should be the **Great Trail**, which provides an east to west connection from the City limits to Morgan Falls Overlook Park along the existing powerline easement. The trails in orange are the additional trails identified during this planning process for this master plan. Below is a description of the additional connections proposed to added to the Next Ten Plan in order of suggested priority for the additional trail routes.

- **North End Greenline** - Connect Morgan Falls along the Chattahoochee River to Roswell Road/North End Village. The trail should continue on to connect to the Island Ferry Unit (NPS).
- **Connect Island Ford NPS** - along Northridge Road across 400 to the PATH 400 conceptual alignment.
- **Connect Lost Corner Preserve to Morgan Falls** - This connection may need to include using bike lanes and sidewalks along Dalrymple Road.
- **Connect Johnson Ferry Road to Old Riverside Property** - Continue to the planned sidewalk/bicycle facilities on Riverside Drive.
- **Trail beginning at One River Place** (south of 285) following the Chattahoochee River south to connect into the East Palisades Unit (NPS).



Given the large number of proposed trail connections and that they are mostly associated with transportation projects, the Department should focus on trails connections through the parks and work with staff to coordinate those connections as they relate to parks.

In addition to the Great Trail, there are three additional off-road trails that the Recreation and Park Department should focus on:

- **Connect Abernathy Veterinary Greenspace to the Hammond Springs Shopping Center** - This connection is primarily off-road, but does cross Mt. Vernon Hwy and Johnson Ferry Road at the planned City Springs Park II (Triangle Park).
- **Connect to Lake Forest Drive On-road Trail** - Begin west of the Windsor at Glenridge development (near Northam Lane NE) and continue west, parallel to I-285 meeting up with Long Island Creek; continue west along Long Island Creek, and end at the proposed bicycle facility along Lake Forest Drive, near Stewart Drive NE; or turn north and end at Northwood Drive.
- **Connect to Southern End of Sandy Springs** - through a series of 3 off-road trail segments on the east and west sides of Roswell Road, beginning just north of Mt. Paran Road and ending at the Gateway commercial development near Windsor Parkway. These segments connect the Kitty Hawk Greenspace and have the potential to connect to Windsor Meadows Park and Ridgeview Park via proposed on-road trails.

2.7 Existing Park General Recommendations

The consulting team conducted a park evaluation at each park in Sandy Springs. Overall, the condition of the parks can be characterized as fair to good, with several new facilities in the system that were ranked excellent. However, the team found several older facilities that need attention in the short-term due to potential safety concerns or items that, if addressed now, could be less expensive to fix than in the future. Common items found at most of the parks are summarized below. See **Figure 2.1: Existing Park Locations** for a map of the locations for all the existing parks

ADA Compliance

The Americans with Disabilities Act was signed into law in 1990. It requires that all facilities open to the general public provide reasonable accommodations for those with disabilities and make their programs, services, and activities accessible to individuals with disabilities. Within most community park systems, there are facilities that may not comply; however, communities should be working toward compliance each year. The Department should conduct a detailed inspection the parks and provide a recommendation report. While some items were noted in this study during site observations, the Department should rely on the detailed assessment for parks for compliance.

Safety and Security

Designing for parks should incorporate techniques to promote Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). These techniques include layers of security, such as the use of physical design, lighting, cameras, and other methods. In addition, having citizen participation in decisions about parks and providing a range of activities through the day in parks is key. Citizen involvement with parks and recreation can lead to passionate support and use of parks. Maintenance is also crucial. Litter, broken equipment, etc., can contribute to a perception that a park is possibly unsafe. These issues should be addressed quickly. For example, painting over graffiti immediately, even if it happens numerous times, will help deter future vandalism because they eventually move to areas where it stays. Keeping parks safe and feeling safe requires a combination of techniques. Successful approaches will have a direct relationship on park usage.

Playground Safety

Playgrounds provide a great way for kids to exercise, breathe fresh air, and socialize with others, but injuries on the playground can ruin the fun. A Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI) should monitor playgrounds on a regular schedule. Each playground should be inspected and maintained regularly to prevent hazardous conditions. High-use areas during peak times could require daily maintenance. Equipment and safety surfaces should be frequently inspected for damage.

Sandy Springs Parks

Pocket Parks:

- 1 Eagle Park
- 2 Ed Morley Memorial Park
- 3 Grace Park

Neighborhood Parks:

- 4 Abernathy Park/Art Center
- 5 Allen Road Park
- 6 Marsh Creek Rain Garden
- 28 Windsor Meadows Park

Community Parks:

- 7 Hammond Park
- 8 Lost Corner Preserve
- 9 Morgan Falls Overlook Park
- 10 Ridgeview Park

Natural Resource Areas:

- 11 Big Trees Forest Preserve
- 12 Riverbluff Greenspace
- 13 Riverside Drive Conservation Easement

Linear Parks:

- 14 Abernathy Greenway North
- 15 Abernathy Greenway South

Sports Complex:

- 16 Morgan Falls Athletic Complex

Special Use Parks:

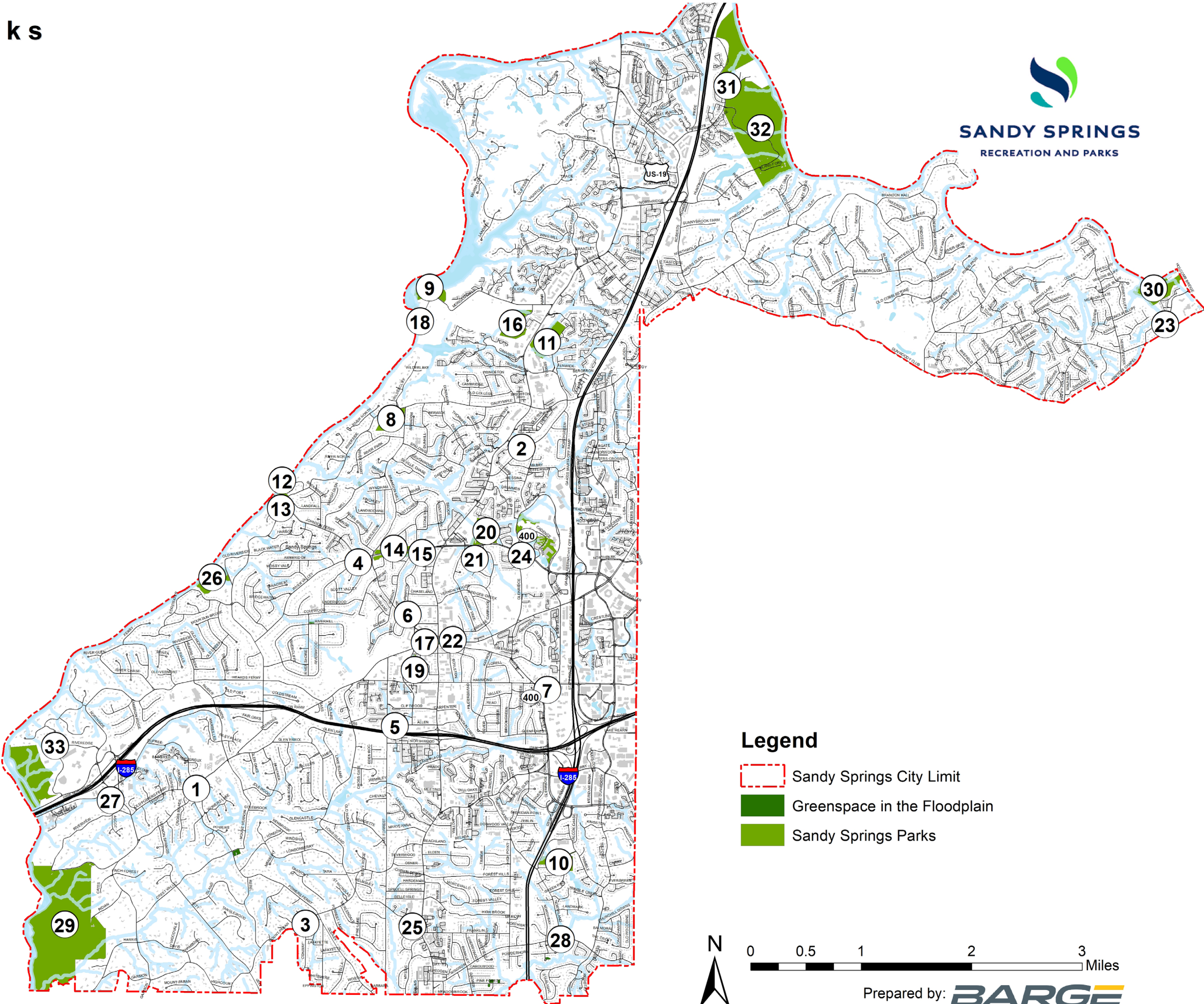
- 17 City Springs Park I
- 18 Morgan Falls River Park/Dog Park
- 19 Heritage Sandy Springs
- 20 Sandy Springs Tennis Center

Undeveloped Parks:

- 21 Abernathy Veterinary Greenspace
- 22 City Springs Park II
- 23 Crooked Creek Park
- 24 Ashton Woods (Glenridge Park)
- 25 Kitty Hawk Greenspace
- 26 Old Riverside Property
- 27 Powers Ferry Conservation Area

National Park Service:

- 29 East Palisades Unit
- 30 Holcomb Bridge Unit
- 31 Island Ferry Unit
- 32 Island Ford Unit
- 33 Powers Island Unit



Legend

- Sandy Springs City Limit
- Greenspace in the Floodplain
- Sandy Springs Parks

N
0 0.5 1 2 3 Miles
Prepared by: **BARGE**
DESIGN SOLUTIONS

Figure 2.1: Existing Park Locations



Branding and Signage

Park signage plays an important part in helping visitors find the park and understanding who owns the park. The Department should develop complete sign standards for a variety of signs including wayfinding, monument, rules and mile markers. This effort should be part of a branding effort, and the Department has an opportunity to integrate parks with Community Arts Plan to create a unique and memorable park system. The City should also standardize the Open Data site for the parks, available at <http://data-coss.opendata.arcgis.com>, to help increase the ability of web app developers and app users to locate parks and find out about facilities and programs available in the park.

Maintenance for Paved Surfaces

While many deferred maintenance items were noticed, Sandy Springs has a lot to be proud of when assessing their park system. Regular inspections and maintenance are needed in the park beyond mowing and cleaning. For example, concrete sidewalks and asphalt parking lots will last longer if properly maintained. By resealing concrete expansion joints and sealing any cracks in the asphalt, these improvements will last longer. If the maintenance continues to be deferred, water and vegetation can get into the cracks and worsen the issue.

2.8 Existing Park Individual Recommendations

This section describes recommended improvements to existing developed parks and the development of currently undeveloped parks.

To assess park condition, the consulting team conducted site visits to all of the City of Sandy Springs Parks. During the site visits, the team collected data on existing conditions, as well as potential recommendations based on existing issues within the parks. The team took photographs and notes. The following condition assessments were made by the consulting team and not City staff.

Scale of Conditions	
Assessment Finding	General Description
Excellent	Park/amenities are in excellent condition with little or no maintenance problems noted. Park/amenities do not feature any major design issues that contribute to diminished use or maintenance.
Good	Park/amenities are in good condition and feature only minor maintenance problems. Generally, most maintenance issues with these park/amenities appear to be the result of age and/or heavy use. Park/amenities may only feature minor design issues that contribute to diminished use or maintenance (i.e., drainage, structural, utilities, etc.).
Fair	Park/amenities are in fair condition and indicate ongoing maintenance problems. Generally, most maintenance issues with these park/amenities appear to be the result of age and heavy use. Some maintenance issues may be compounded over time due to being deferred because of budget and/or resource limitations.
Poor	Park/amenities are in poor condition and clearly show ongoing maintenance problems that may result in suspended use for repair/replacement. Maintenance issues with these park/amenities are the result of age and heavy use and generally are compounded over time due to deferred maintenance as a result of budget and/or resource limitations.



Abernathy Greenway - North

Address: 70 Abernathy Road, Sandy Springs, GA 30328
Acreage: 7.74 acres
Classification: Linear Park
Overall Rating: **GOOD**

Opened in 2014, the Abernathy Greenway North runs parallel to Abernathy Road. The park's main entrances are at the intersection of Brandon Mill Road Northwest and Wright Road Northeast. The park is completely developed and features a pavilion, picnic tables, a restroom building, and six playable art pieces. Starting at the eastern end of the park, the visitor enters the Abernathy Greenway at the northwest corner of Abernathy Road and Wright Road Northeast. The entrance is denoted by a semicircle of brick pavers, landscape plantings, and a columnar, arched overhead entrance sign. The restroom building lies just west of the parking lot. Beyond the restroom building, the path splits off into another oval path with an expansive grassy lawn in the middle. The oval also marks the return to concrete paving material. There are two small paths that shoot off the oval and take the visitor to the sidewalk along Abernathy Road. Visitors with limited mobility will have to take this path, as there are three flights of stairs west of the oval. West of the stairs is a circular landing, and then the path continues to the northeast corner of Brandon Mill Road Northwest and Abernathy Road.



Recommendations:

- New park with minor items to be improved. Address area where pavement is settling
- Construct entry structure long-term

ABERNATHY GREENWAY - NORTH

Abernathy Greenway - South

Address: Abernathy Road (parallel with Abernathy Greenway Park - North)
Acreage: 14 acres
Classification: Linear Park
Overall Rating: **FAIR**

The Abernathy Greenway South runs parallel to Abernathy Road. The park includes a slate chip-walking trail, landscaping, park benches, bike racks, pet waste stations, and trash cans along the trail. It is much less developed than the Abernathy Greenway North, which has art and amenities integrated throughout.

Recommendations

- All eroding slope needs to be re-worked including the chipped slate material pathway to stream, which is not ADA accessible
- Change chipped slate to a durable material, such as concrete, that will not erode and meets ADA standards
- Long-term, improve park users experience with signage, art, and other amenities



ABERNATHY GREENWAY - SOUTH



Abernathy Park/Art Center

Address: 254 Johnson Ferry Rd, Sandy Springs, GA 30328
Acreage: 3.68 acres
Classification: Neighborhood Park
Overall Rating: **GOOD**

Abernathy Park is a 3.68-acre neighborhood park located at the intersection of Johnson Ferry Road, River Valley Road NW, and Bridgewood Valley Road NW. Abernathy Park is a former Fulton County park. There is a small parking lot, which is accessed via Bridgewood Valley Road. The parking lot has approximately thirty (30) parking spaces. There are two tennis courts north of the parking lot and a small playground south of the parking lot. The Abernathy Arts Center is east of the parking lot and is comprised of three buildings. Two of the buildings are constructed of similar materials and have similar residential architectural styles, while the third building has a more modern, institutional architectural style. The area around the buildings is a paved plaza space. The landscape throughout the park is natural with large trees and native shrubs.



ABERNATHY PARK

Recommendations

- Improve signage at park using Sandy Springs standard signage
- Improve wayfinding signage between Abernathy Park and Abernathy Arts Center
- Address ADA accessibility throughout the park (per report by others)
- Update and/or replace antiquated and damaged playground equipment
- Address playground safety surface issues
- Enhance landscaping around the park



Allen Road Park

Address: 5900 Lake Forest Drive, Sandy Springs, GA 30328
Acreage: 3.042 acres
Classification: Neighborhood Park
Overall Rating: **POOR**

Allen Road Park is a smaller neighborhood park situated off Lake Forest Drive between Allen Road and I-285. The park has two small parking lots: one along Lake Forest Drive and the other along Allen Road. From the Lake Forest Drive parking lot, the visitor can walk down either a steep concrete path or wooden stairs, neither of which are ADA accessible. The path leads to a basketball court, where runoff is a major problem on the southern end of the court. Next to it is an artificial turf soccer field. The path continues and meanders through a slightly wooded area and over a stream. There is a small picnic pavilion with a picnic table near the stream crossing, but there is not a formal path leading from the main trail to the pavilion. It is not ADA accessible. Beyond the stream crossing, the trail continues, passing a concrete pad, several picnic tables, and another small pavilion, finally ending at a small, well-used playground with equipment at the end of its life-cycle. The Allen Road parking lot is directly north of the playground.



ALLEN ROAD PARK



Recommendations

- Through a master plan process, provide a high quality park experience for all ages and abilities. Given the size and park type, parking by the playground could be reduced and re-purposed. In addition, two properties to the east of the park are privately owned and may redevelop. The next two lots eastward are County property that the City should consider inquiring about a land swap in an effort to increase the contiguous size of the park.
- Improve ADA access and address non-compliant slopes throughout park
- Improve stormwater runoff/site drainage to address dirt/debris on courts
- Replace wooden stairs at northwest corner of the park with more durability and long-lasting material
- Basketball courts are cracking and need re-surfacing
- Add trails around court to increase activity and eyes on the park
- Enhance wayfinding signage and park signage
- Enhance/resurface walking trail and landscaping
- Increase maintenance to address litter problem and/or work with nearby neighborhood groups and organizations using the park to help
- Repaint/refinish picnic tables and picnic shelters with graffiti-resistant finish and consider adding security cameras to monitor the park
- Replace playground equipment and provide and maintain appropriate playground surface
- Parking lot asphalt is cracking and needs repair
- Remove invasive vines from trees and have an arborist determine which unhealthy trees should be removed



Big Trees Forest Preserve

Address: 7645 Roswell Road, Sandy Springs, GA 30350

Acreage: 31.338 acres

Classification: Natural Resource Area

Overall Rating: **GOOD**

Big Trees Forest Preserve is a 31.34-acre wooded nature preserve in the northern portion of Sandy Springs. The park is located directly adjacent to the North Fulton County government complex, and park users are permitted to use the parking lots associated with the government buildings. The entrance park is denoted by a sign, a concrete sidewalk, and small restroom building/information kiosk. There is a split-rail fence along the edge of the park, separating it from the parking lot. Big Trees Forest Preserve’s primary feature is the soft-surface walking and hiking trails through a heavily-wooded preserve, a rare amenity considering the development density around the park. The trails wind throughout the property and climb an elevation of 120’. Big Trees Forest Preserve is a natural park with minimal man-made development.



BIG TREES FOREST PRESERVE

Recommendations

- New monument entrance signage
- Improve wayfinding and general park signage
- Repair Colonial-style split rail fence as needed



CITY SPRINGS PARK

City Springs Park

Address: 1 Galambos Way, Sandy Springs, GA 30328

Acreage: 1.05 acres

Classification: Special Use Park

Overall Rating: **EXCELLENT**

City Green is a component of the new Sandy Springs City Center, City Springs. City Springs opened in May 2018 and is a multipurpose site. It is home to the new City Hall, a performing arts center, shops, gyms, cafes, and more. These buildings are centrally located around City Green, a public plaza and park area. City Green is comprised of a large lawn, a plaza area, a shade bosque with ample seating, an interactive fountain, and a restroom/changing room facility. As it is brand new, it is in excellent condition.

Recommendations

- New park in excellent condition



EAGLE PARK

Eagle Park

Address: Mt. Vernon Road and Dupree Drive, Sandy Springs, GA 30328

Acreage: 0.10 acres

Classification: Pocket Park

Overall Rating: **GOOD**

Eagle Park is a small pocket park at the corner of Mt. Vernon Road and Dupree Drive. Directly adjacent to Crossroads Atlanta Primitive Baptist Church, the pocket park has a sidewalk, a bench, a water fountain, and an open field area with ornamental landscaping.

Recommendations

- Improve this small pocket park with landscaping and consider adding art and pedestrian scaled signage



ED MORLEY MEMORIAL PARK

Ed Morley Pocket Park

Address: 640 Spalding Drive, Sandy Springs, GA 30328

Acreage: 0.133 acres

Classification: Pocket Park

Overall Rating: **GOOD**

Ed Morley Memorial Park is a small pocket park located within a large median on Spalding Court, directly adjacent to Spalding Drive. The park consists of two benches and a memorial plaque set in a circular base. There is also a small stepping stone path from Spalding Court NE to the benches in the middle of the median.

Recommendations

- Improve signage
- Enhance park landscape
- Maintain benches



GRACE PARK

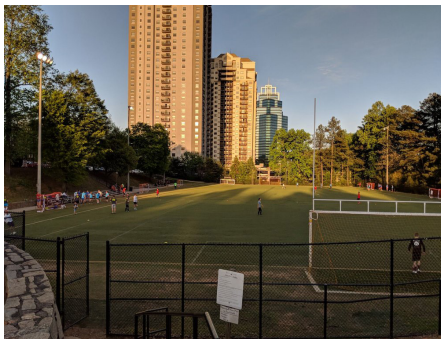
Grace Park

Address: 4811 E. Conway Drive, Sandy Springs, GA 30327
Acreage: 0.5 acres
Classification: Mini Park
Overall Rating: **GOOD**

Grace Park is a small park in a residential area. The park has basic amenities, including a bike rack, trash can, a water fountain with a dog bowl, a short walking trail, and a gazebo with benches. There is an open lawn area and designed ornamental planting, including a row of mature crape myrtles. The park is directly adjacent to a small cemetery. This park is hard to access by car, as there is no parking lot. There are sidewalks connecting the park to the surrounding residential areas. Recently, a bike rack was added and other repairs were made at the park.

Recommendations

- Landscape improvements (long-term)



HAMMOND PARK

Hammond Park

Address: 705 Hammond Drive, Sandy Springs, GA 30328
Acreage: 13.708 acres
Classification: Community Park
Overall Rating: **FAIR**

Hammond Park is a large community park in the heart of Sandy Springs at the intersection of Hammond Drive NE and Glenridge Drive. Hammond Park is a completely developed park with ample recreational opportunities. The park is accessed via Hammond Drive NE, and the entrance road leads to two parking lots. The upper parking lot has 58 parking spaces and is made of permeable pavement. The upper parking lot also has two electric vehicle charging stations. The lower parking lot has approximately 90 spaces, including six ADA parking spaces, and provides ADA access to the park. There are an additional ten spaces east of the lower parking lot that are also constructed of permeable pavement.

The Hammond Park Gymnasium is directly west of the lower parking lot, and a large multipurpose turf field is directly south of the lower parking lot. There are four tennis courts directly east of the multipurpose turf field, as well as a restroom building and two basketball courts. One of the basketball courts is also used for pickle ball. There is a small parking lot to the west of the basketball courts with 28 parking spaces, including two ADA spaces. This parking lot is located directly off Glenridge Drive. A maze of concrete trails extends northwest of the basketball courts to a more vegetated portion of the park, where there are several pavilions, small playgrounds, and the Hammond Park Community Building. Erosion and stormwater runoff is a major issue throughout the park.

Recommendations

- Create a new park master plan, which could include a state-of-the-art recreation center given the central location and heavy use of this park



- Address serious erosion issues throughout the site
- Improve trail connection between upper and lower parking lots
- Improve structures cosmetically (paint, etc.)
- Complete deferred maintenance issues
- Improve ADA access throughout park, including restrooms
- Repair damaged fencing throughout park
- Provide wayfinding and new entrance monument signage
- Repair retaining walls around multipurpose fields
- Improve and repair restrooms at sports courts
- Improve playgrounds (replace equipment, resurface, etc.) and make all playgrounds ADA compliant
- Enhance park landscaping, including removing invasive species
- Continue fencing along ridge behind pavilion and events facility to prevent children from going downhill into traffic
- Improve sidewalk/trail surfaces throughout park



JOHNSON FERRY RD - NORTH

Riverbluff Greenspace/Riverside Dr. Conservation Easemt.

Address: 6880 Riverside Drive, Sandy Springs, GA 30328

Acreage: 4.79 acres

Classification: Natural Resource Area

Overall Rating: N/A (undeveloped)

Located at the northeastern corner of Johnson Ferry Road and Riverside Drive, this property is currently not open to the public. While the property is directly adjacent to the Chattahoochee River, the river is not visible due to the rising topography and thick vegetation. The former cul-de-sac driveway has been removed, and the site has recently been planted for reforestation. There is also a retention area with a chain-link fence around it. There is no parking area for this site.

Recommendations

- Continue reforestation efforts
- Potentially use this site as an educational tool



Lost Corner Preserve

Address: 7300 Brandon Mill Road, Sandy Springs, GA 30328

Acreage: 24 acres

Classification: Natural Resource Area

Overall Rating: **EXCELLENT**



LOST CORNER PRESERVE

Lost Corner Preserve is a unique community park located at the corner of Dalrymple Road/Riverside Drive and Brandon Mill Road NW. This 24-acre park is home to a renovated historic home, community garden, greenhouse, apiary, and approximately one mile of walking trails. The park's parking lot is accessed via Brandon Mill Road. There are approximately 35 parking spaces, including two ADA spaces, and the parking lot is made of porous pavers. The pavers extend into the paved path that leads to the renovated bungalow-style cottage. The community garden is located between the parking lot and the cottage to the east of the path. The greenhouse, which was moved from Glenridge Hall, is located just south of the cottage. The land west of the



parking lot and cottage is heavily wooded and can be accessed via mulched trails.

Recommendations

- Facility in excellent condition but park signage and wayfinding signage is needed (Note: since this park observation was conducted, the Department has installed new monument signage)



Marsh Creek Rain Garden

Address: 100 Johnson Ferry Road, Sandy Springs, GA 30328

Acreage: 2.2 acres

Classification: Neighborhood Park

Overall Rating: **EXCELLENT**



Marsh Creek Rain Garden is a new park that celebrates stormwater and stormwater design. This 2.2-acre neighborhood park is accessed via Johnson Ferry Road, where there is a small, permeable pavement parking lot with five parking spaces, including one ADA space. The park is clearly denoted by stone-veneer piers and decorative aluminum fence. There are four uncovered picnic tables to the west of the parking lot. The concrete trail leads from the parking lot down, via stairs and a ramp, to the retention basin, which is the focal point of the park. Plants throughout the park are used to filter pollutants from stormwater. There are three covered picnic tables at the base of the stairs. The concrete trail follows the circumference of the pond, and there are stopping points along the path, which are either denoted by benches or interpretative signage. There is also a deck that overlooks a smaller detention area. There is a large crab orchard stone retaining wall topped with an aluminum decorative fence around the west and north sides of the park.

MARSH CREEK RAIN GARDEN

Recommendations

- Marsh Creek Rain Garden is a new park in excellent condition



Morgan Falls Athletic Complex

Address: 450 Morgan Falls Road, Sandy Springs, GA 30350

Acreage: 27.26 acres

Classification: Sports Complex

Overall Rating: **GOOD**



The Morgan Falls Athletic Fields park is a large sports complex located off Morgan Falls Road in the northern area of Sandy Springs. The park features 10 ball fields, most of which are used for baseball and softball, while some of the fields are converted into soccer and football fields. There are two large asphalt parking lots off the entry road into the park, Morgan Falls Place NE. The upper parking lot has approximately 80 spaces including three ADA spaces. The lower parking lot has approximately 125 spaces including six ADA spaces. There are five baseball/softball fields between the upper and lower parking lots, as well as a restroom building and concession building. There is a central path between four fields with the fifth field is at the terminus of the path. Each field has a scorekeeper's box and bleachers, as well as lights.

MORGAN FALLS ATHLETIC FIELDS

The remaining five fields are located to the southeast of the entrance road



and lower parking lot. The lower parking lot has about 130 spaces, including 6 ADA accessible spaces. There is a roundabout entry drop-off area between the parking lot and Morgan Fall Place NE. The concessions/restrooms/office building is located directly off the drop-off area. There is also an arbor along one edge of the drop-off area. Next to the concessions building is an elevated plaza area with picnic tables and umbrellas, which overlooks the fields. The picnic area is ADA accessible. Four of the fields are strictly for baseball/softball, and the fifth field is used for baseball/softball, soccer, and football. All five fields have metal bleachers, dugouts, and scorekeepers' boxes.

Recommendations

- Improve drainage issues throughout park and parking lots
- Address ADA access throughout park including paving the primary walkway through fields 1-4 to make it ADA accessible
- Permanent recycling receptacles needed
- Repair/replace bleachers; improve restrooms
- Complete deferred maintenance
- Repair/replace fencing throughout park as needed
- Ensure steps throughout park have a railing/meet code
- Add shade structure(s) to picnic areas and all fields
- Repair pavilion lighting on upper fields
- Lights around restrooms and snack bar needed
- Fix fall zone issues in small playground at fields 6 and 7
- Improve wayfinding signage throughout park



MORGAN FALLS OVERLOOK PARK

Morgan Falls Overlook Park

Address: 200 Morgan Falls Road, Sandy Springs, GA 30350

Acreage: 27.811 acres

Classification: Community Park

Overall Rating: **EXCELLENT**

Morgan Falls Overlook Park, opened in 2010, was the first new park opened by the City of Sandy Springs since its incorporation. Amenities include picnic pavilions, a playground, restrooms, boat dock, hiking trail, fire pit, porch swings and scenic views. This park is in excellent condition with a need for only minor repairs and improvements. Recently, the Department completed repairs to the fencing and improved canoe access to the river.

Recommendations

- Fairly new park in excellent condition



MORGAN FALLS RIVER PARK

Morgan Falls River Park/Dog Park

Address: 100 Morgan Falls Road, Sandy Springs, GA 30350

Acreage: 3.421 acres

Classification: Special Use

Overall Rating: **POOR**

Morgan Falls River Park/Dog Park is located along the Chattahoochee River and includes a boat ramp, fishing pier, and informational signage about the dam. A gravel parking lot serves the activities along the river and a dog park. The dog park is small and heavily used. Wayfinding signage was not found



MORGAN FALLS DOG PARK

but along the water, but there is signage about Morgan Falls and the dam. Repairs to the gravel parking area are needed. This park lacks hiking trails or other passive recreation activities. This dog park is not large enough and more dog park locations are needed throughout the City.

Recommendations

- Improve parking and provide a canoe put-in/take-out area
- Given the possibility of point-source pollution, relocate dog park to another location away from the water. Replace with a pavilion for picnics and gathering and other compatible uses with the river access point
- Master plan this park to include the proposed Chattahoochee River pedestrian bridge with supporting uses



Ridgeview Park

Address: 5200 South Trimble Road, Sandy Springs, GA 30342
Acreage: 20.72 acres
Classification: Community Park
Overall Rating: **FAIR**

Ridgeview Park is a passive 20.7-acre community park, adjacent to Ridgeview Charter Middle School. Located off S. Trimble Road, the park is well-identified with signage at the entry. The park also has standard Sandy Springs regulatory signage. There is a small parking lot with approximately 15 parking spaces; there are no ADA-accessible parking spaces. Directly adjacent to the parking lot is a small playground. The playground equipment is in fair condition. The rest of the developed area of the park features a large picnic area with a pavilion and outdoor fitness/exercise equipment (vita course). The southwestern portion of the park is undeveloped, with the exception of a natural-surface trail, and is heavily wooded. Erosion from stormwater runoff is an issue in the park. The park is accessible to residents in the surrounding neighborhoods via sidewalks.



Recommendations

- Address drainage and erosion issues in the park
- Landscape around entry signs
- Remove existing antiquated playground and construct a new all-inclusive playground with a bathroom building
- Remove/rework existing picnic area to provide ADA compliant area with a pavilion space, which can be rented.
- Develop a MOU with Ridgeview Middle School tennis courts for public use when school is not in session (nights, weekends and summer months). Tennis courts and pickle ball courts could be reserved.
- Maintain walking trails through the woods and along the creek with leash laws enforced, doggie bags and disposal bins available, benches, and water stations. Garden clubs and scout troops should be engaged for trail beautification projects.
- Consider adding a fenced dog run in the meadow area
- Consider providing access with sidewalks and parking from the Ridgeview Middle School access road. This connection could be part of



RIDGEVIEW PARK



HERITAGE SANDY SPRINGS

the Pathway 400 project providing a parking area and resting point with access to bathrooms and water fountains.

Heritage Sandy Springs (Sandy Springs Historical Area)

Address: 6075 Sandy Springs Circle, Sandy Springs, GA 30328

Acreage: 5.206 acres

Classification: Preserve

Overall Rating: **GOOD**

The Sandy Springs Historical Area is comprised of three distinct zones: an outdoor amphitheatre/bandstand, a park-like garden area called Heritage Green, and the Williams-Payne House. The amphitheater area is a large, tiered open area with six levels and a raised stage. The stage has a semi-circular arbor around the back. There are concrete sidewalks around the amphitheater, as well as concrete retaining walls between each level. The “seating area” of the amphitheater is open grass. At the back (eastside) of the amphitheater is another arbor with benches underneath. There is a small parking lot and the Heritage Sandy Springs office building directly north of the amphitheater.

Heritage Green is located directly west of the amphitheatre and office building. It features a large open lawn area with an ADA-accessible paved trail. A small stream begins at a natural spring, marked by a spring structure, and bisects the lawn. There is a large octagonal gazebo and wooded trails and boardwalks. This area has a large amount of ornamental landscape planting, as well as benches and trash cans.

The Williams-Payne House (1878) is an old farmhouse that is now home to a museum. There is a simple front yard with minimal ornamental landscape plantings, a sidewalk in the middle of the yard, and a white picket fence.

Recommendations

- New park master plan
- Improve grand stand with covered structure
- Add restrooms
- Repair landscape fencing near amphitheater
- Address ADA accessibility issues
- Improve stream by making it more of a focal point
- Improve spring structure
- Address site stormwater drainage issues
- Improve entry/gateway signage
- Provide wayfinding signage
- Improve connection to City Springs
- Control access to amphitheater by installing gates

Sandy Springs Tennis Center

Address: 500 Abernathy Road, Sandy Springs, GA 30328

Acreage: 27.662 acres

Classification: Special Use Park

Overall Rating: **GOOD**



SANDY SPRINGS TENNIS CENTER

The Sandy Springs Tennis Center is a large tennis complex located on the north side of Abernathy Road. There is a large parking lot with about



SANDY SPRINGS TENNIS CENTER

20 spaces, including 5 ADA-accessible spaces, which are shared with a neighboring building/business. Visitors access the tennis courts through the clubhouse, which also houses the pro shop and locker rooms. There are 20 hard courts and 4 clay courts, all of which are lighted. There are concrete sidewalks connecting all of the tennis courts. There are concrete bleachers overlooking two of the tennis courts closest to the clubhouse. The other tennis courts do not have bleachers, but do have benches on the courts. There is an asphalt walking/jogging trail surrounding the perimeter of the tennis courts. When the tennis center hosts large tournaments, the parking deck across Abernathy Road on the veterinary hospital property is utilized.

Recommendations

- Facility in good condition
- Remove invasive species
- Seek funding partnerships to build a cover over tennis courts for year-around use
- Resurface tennis courts as needed
- Improve walking trail
- Walking trail to connect to Glenridge/Ashton Woods Park



WINDSOR MEADOWS PARK

Windsor Meadows Park

Address: 825, 835, & 845 Windsor Parkway, Sandy Springs, GA 30342
Acreage: 5 acres
Status: **EXCELLENT**

This new four-acre passive park was recently opened and is a FEMA flood plain property. Amenities include a soft-surface trail, benches, swings, and four parking spaces.

Recommendations

- New park, excellent condition

2.9 Undeveloped Property

The City currently has roughly 50 acres in undeveloped park land ranging from 0.5 acres to 23.23 in size. Those parks are listed below with suggestions on classifications

City Springs Park II (Triangle Park)

- Undeveloped. Design and develop as a pocket park and match character of City Springs

Abernathy Veterinary Greenspace

- Consider developing natural trails into the wooded area of this site with wayfinding signage and supportive amenities
- Not a park but used for parking as it is across the street from Sandy Springs Tennis Center.
- Improve pedestrian access across Abernathy Road from veterinary property to tennis center



OLD RIVERSIDE PROPERTY

Crooked Creek Park

- Develop park master plan; provide wooded trails and connect to Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area.

Kitty Hawk Greenspace

- Create master plan and develop into a pocket park

Old Riverside Property

- This property was the former location of the Fulton County pumping station. During the site observation, nearby residents were using the space. Given the size of this park with access to the river, this property should be developed as a community park with trails and other amenities for all residents to enjoy.

Powers Ferry Conservation Easement

- Maintain area as conservation area

Glenridge Park/Ashton Woods Park

- Developed per existing master plan completed in 2015

2.10 Schools

The City of Sandy Springs is served by seven public elementary schools, two public middle schools and two public high schools. The eleven schools are all part of the Fulton County School system. Currently, the City has intergovernmental agreements with the six schools: Spalding Elementary, Sandy Springs Middle School, Woodland Elementary, Ison Springs Elementary, Lake Forest Elementary, and North Springs High School. These joint-use agreements for recreation are an excellent way to maximize limited community resources. The Recreation and Parks Department should continue to formalize, update and expand these agreements. Successful joint use agreements require a lot of cooperation to reach and maintain. The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) provides examples and guidelines for agreements.

2.11 Community Health and Economic Benefits of Parks

Recreation and parks offer essential health and wellness benefits for the residents of Sandy Springs. As the obesity epidemic continues to grow across America, especially in the southeastern states, recreation and parks can provide an affordable solution. Access to parks has an enormous impact on a community's health. Studies show that regular physical activity can help improve cardiorespiratory fitness, lower high blood pressure, control weight, reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, and reduce the risk of developing health conditions such as heart disease, some cancers and type 2 diabetes. Understanding the risks of inactivity is critical for the City officials and residents of Sandy Springs because deliberate and decisive action is needed to combat the obesity epidemic. Local parks and trails also can play a large role in the quality of life and attracting new residents to Sandy Springs.

Dr. John Crompton, a Distinguished Professor in the Recreation Park and Tourism Sciences department at Texas A&M University and the leading researcher in recreation and parks in the world, has conducted significant research on how local parks contribute to the quality of life and economic development in a community. Through his research, he has



found that when people are asked to write down the place they would like to live, given their “druthers” (i.e., their preferred place, ignoring practical concerns such as a job, family, language, and heritage) and are asked to write in one sentence, why they picked that place, more than 80% of participants will cite some park, recreational, cultural, or environmental ambiance dimension in their responses.

Dr. Crompton’s research notes that there are more than 10,000 economic development groups are competing to attract businesses. He also notes that today’s most sought-after new businesses are “Information Factories” whose main asset is highly educated professional employees. An increased quality of “place” is extremely important to retain and attract knowledgeable workers and new companies. Other key factors are:

- Beyond a threshold salary level, people are persuaded to relocate by quality of life factors rather than money.
- No matter how “quality of life” is defined, parks, recreation, and open space are part of it.
- “Disamenity compensation” – companies located where there is only mediocre quality of life have to pay higher wages to attract the same quality worker (and vice-versa).

Sandy Springs’ vision for the future and Dr. Crompton’s research align; parks, trails and open space are a key factor in keeping residents happy and healthy and convincing today’s new businesses to locate in Sandy Springs. The recommendations in this section will also align with these findings by focusing on the new parks, facilities and trails that are most in demand by the residents.

2.12 Park Design Principles and Park Classifications

In developing design principles for parks, it is important that each park be programmed, planned, and designed to meet the needs of its service area and classification within the overall recreation and parks system. The term programming, when used in the context of planning and developing parkland, refers to a list of uses and facilities and does not always include staff-managed recreation programs. The program for a site can include such elements as ball fields, spray parks, shelters, restrooms, game courts, trails, natural resource stewardship, open meadows, nature preserves, or interpretive areas. These types of amenities are categorized as lead or support amenities. The needs of the population of the park it is intended to serve should be considered and accommodated at each type of park. Park Design Principles in this document should apply to existing and future parks needing Master Plans. Every park, regardless of type, needs to have an established set of outcomes. Park designers plan to those outcomes, including consideration of operational and maintenance costs associated with the design outcomes.

Each park classification category serves a specific purpose, and the features and facilities in the park must be designed for the number of age segments the park is intended to serve, the desired length of stay deemed appropriate, and the uses it has been assigned. Recreation needs and services require different design standards based on the age segments that make up the community that will be using the park. A varying number of age segments will be accommodated with the park program depending on the classification of the park.

2.13 Terminology used in Park Design Principles

Land Usage: The percentage of space identified for either passive use or active use in a park. A Recreation and Parks Master Plan should follow land usage recommendations.

Programming: Can include active or passive programming. Active means it is organized and planned with pre-registration by the user. Examples of active programming include sports leagues, day camps, and aquatics. Passive programming is self-directed by the user at their own pace. Examples of passive programming include playground usage, picnicking, disc golf, reading, or walking the dog.

Park/Facility Classifications: Includes Pocket Park, Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Regional Park, Sports Complex Facility, Recreation/Special Use Park and Natural Resource Parks.

Revenue Facilities: These include facilities that charge to play on them in the form of an access fee, player fee, team



fee, or permit fee. These could include pools, golf courses, tennis courts, recreation centers, sport field complexes, concession facilities, hospitality centers, reservable shelters, outdoor or indoor theatre space, and special event spaces.

Signature Facility/Amenity: This is an enhanced facility or amenity which is viewed by community as deserving of special recognition due to its design, location, function, natural resources, etc.

Pocket Park

According to the NRPA, a pocket park or a mini park is a small outdoor space, usually less than 0.25 acres up to 1 acre, most often located in an urban area surrounded by commercial buildings or houses. Pocket parks are small, urban open spaces that serve a variety of functions, such as: small event space, play areas for children, spaces for relaxing and socializing, taking lunch breaks, etc. Successful mini parks have four key qualities: they are accessible; allow people to engage in activities; are comfortable spaces that are inviting; and are sociable places. In general, pocket parks offer minimal amenities on site and are not designed to support programmed activities. The service area for pocket parks is usually less than a quarter-mile and they are intended for users within close walking distance of the park.

Sandy Springs Current Developed Pocket Park Inventory: Grace Park, Ed Morley Pocket Park, and Eagle Park.

Future Pocket Parks in Sandy Springs are to be focused in the urban nodes and village areas identified in the City comprehensive plan and in the North End Redevelopment Plan areas. These new pocket parks can serve as the “town green” in these areas, providing spaces for community events and gatherings.

Neighborhood Park

A neighborhood park should be three to 10 acres; however, some neighborhood parks are determined by use and facilities offered and not by size alone. The service radius for a neighborhood park is one mile. Neighborhood Parks should have safe pedestrian access for surrounding residents; parking may or may not be included but if included accounts for less than ten cars and provides for ADA access. Neighborhood Parks serve the recreational and social focus of the adjoining neighborhoods and contribute to a distinct neighborhood identity.

- Service radius: 1.0-mile radius
- Site Selection: On a local or collector street. If near an arterial street, provide natural or artificial barrier. Where possible, next to a school. Encourage location to link subdivisions and linked by trails to other parks
- Length of stay: One-hour experience or less
- Amenities: One signature amenity (e.g. playground, spray ground park, sport court, gazebo); no restrooms unless necessary for signature amenity; may include one non-programmed sports field; playgrounds for ages 2-5 and 5-12; no reservable shelters; loop trails; one type of sport court; benches, small picnic shelters next to play areas.
- Landscape Design: Appropriate design to enhance the park theme/use/experience
- Revenue facilities: None
- Land usage: Generally, 85 percent active/15 percent passive
- Programming: Typically, none, but a signature amenity may be included which is programmed
- Maintenance Standards: Provide the highest-level maintenance with available funding. Seek a goal of Level 2 maintenance standards. Some amenities may require Level 1 maintenance.
- Signage: Wayfinding/directional signage and facility/amenity regulations to enhance user experience.
- Parking: Design should include widened on-street parking area adjacent to park. Goal is to maximize usable park space. As necessary, provide 5-10 spaces within park including handicap spaces. Traffic calming devices encouraged next to park.
- Lighting: Security only.
- Size of park: Typically, Three to 10 acres

Sandy Springs Currently Developed Neighborhood Park Inventory: Abernathy (Art Center) Park, Allen Road Park, Marsh Creek Park and Windsor Meadows Park.



Future Neighborhood Parks in Sandy Springs are to be developed in the residential areas of the City that are shown as underserved by the current distribution of Neighborhood Parks in **Figure 2.3: Existing and Proposed Areas of Service**.

Community Park

Community Parks are intended to be accessible to multiple neighborhoods and should focus on meeting community-based recreational needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. Community Parks are generally larger in scale than neighborhood parks, but smaller than regional parks and are designed typically for residents who live within a two-mile radius. Community Parks provide recreational opportunities for the entire family and often contain facilities for specific recreational purposes: athletic fields, tennis courts, extreme sports amenity, loop trails, picnic areas, reservable picnic shelters, sports courts, restrooms with drinking fountains, large turfed and landscaped areas and a playground or spray ground. Passive outdoor recreation activities such as meditation, reading, and wildlife watching also take place at Community Parks.

Community Parks generally range from 10 to 75 acres depending on the community. Community Parks serve a larger area – radius of one to three miles and contain more recreation amenities than a Neighborhood Park.

- Service radius: One to three-mile radius
- Site Selection: On two collector streets minimum and preferably one arterial street. If near an arterial street, provide natural or artificial barrier. Minimal number of residences abutting site. Preference is streets on four sides, or three sides with school or municipal use on fourth side. Encourage trail linkage to other parks.
- Length of stay: Two to three hours experience.
- Amenities: Four signature amenities at a minimum: (e.g., trails, sports fields, large shelters/ pavilions, community playground for ages 2-5 and 5-12 with some shaded elements, recreation center, pool or family aquatic center, sports courts, water feature); public restrooms with drinking fountains, ample parking, and security lighting. Amenities are ADA compliant. Sport Fields and Sport Complexes are typical at this park.
- Revenue facilities: One or more (e.g. pool, sports complex, pavilion)
- Land usage: 65 percent active and 35 percent passive
- Maintenance Standards: Provide the highest-level maintenance with available funding. Seek a goal of Level 2 maintenance standards. Some amenities may require Level 1 maintenance.
- Parking: Sufficient to support the amenities; occupies no more than 10 percent of the park. Design should include widened on-street parking area adjacent to park. Goal is to maximize usable park space. Traffic calming devices encouraged within and next to the park.
- Lighting: Amenity lighting includes sport field light standards.
- Signage: Wayfinding/directional signage and facility/amenity regulations to enhance user experience. May include kiosks in easily identified areas of the facility
- Landscape Design: Appropriate design to enhance the park theme/use/experience. Enhanced landscaping at park entrances and throughout park
- Other: Strong appeal to surrounding neighborhoods; loop trail connectivity; linked to Regional Park, trail or recreation facility.
- Size of park: Typically, 10 to 75 acres

Sandy Springs Currently Developed Community Park Inventory: Hammond Park, Morgan Falls Overlook Park, and Ridgeview Park.

Future Community Parks in Sandy Springs, such as the Old Riverside Property, are to be developed in the areas of the City that are shown as underserved by the current distribution of Community Parks in **Figure 2.3: Existing and Proposed Areas of Service**.



Regional Park

A regional park serves a large area of several communities, residents within a City, city or county, or across multiple counties. Depending on activities within a regional park, users may travel as many as 60 miles for a visit. Regional parks include recreational opportunities such as soccer, softball, golf, boating, camping, conservation-wildlife viewing and fishing. Although regional parks usually have a combination of passive areas and active facilities, they are likely to be predominantly natural resource-based parks.

A common size for a regional park is 75 to 1,000 acres but some parks can be 2,000 to 5,000 acres in size. A regional park focuses on activities and natural features not included in most types of parks and often based on a specific scenic or recreational opportunity. Facilities could include those found in a Community Park and have specialized amenities such as an art center, amphitheater, boating facility, golf course, or natural area with interpretive trails. Regional parks can and should promote tourism and economic development. Regional parks can enhance the economic vitality and identity of the entire region.

- Service radius: Usually, three mile or greater radius
- Site Selection: Prefer location which can preserve natural resources on-site such as wetlands, streams, and other geographic features or sites with significant cultural or historic features. Significantly large parcel of land. Access from public roads capable of handling anticipated traffic.
- Length of stay: All or multiple day experience
- Amenities: 10 to 12 amenities to create a signature facility (e.g. golf course, tennis complex, sports complex, lake, regional playground, 3+ reservable picnic shelters, camping, outdoor recreation/extreme sports, recreation center, pool, gardens, trails, zoo, specialty facilities); restrooms with drinking fountains, concessions, restaurant, ample parking, special event site. Sport Fields and Sport Complexes are typical at this park.
- Revenue facilities: Typically, park designed to produce revenue to offset operational costs
- Land usage: Up to 50 percent active/50 percent passive
- Maintenance Standards: Provide the highest-level maintenance with available funding. Seek a goal of Level 2 maintenance standards. Some amenities may require Level 1 maintenance
- Parking: Sufficient for all amenities. Traffic calming devices encouraged within and next to park
- Lighting: Amenity lighting includes sport field light standards.
- Signage: Wayfinding/directional signage and facility/amenity regulations to enhance user experience, may include kiosks in easily identified areas of the facility
- Landscape Design: Appropriate design to enhance the park theme/use/experience. Enhanced landscaping at park entrances and throughout park
- Other: Linked to major trails systems, public transportation available, concessions, and food and retail sales available, dedicated site managers on duty.
- Size of park: Typically, 75 to 1,000 acres

Sandy Springs Currently Developed Regional Park Inventory: While the City of Sandy Springs owns no regional parks, the series of National Recreation Area Units along the Chattahoochee River within the City of Sandy Springs are a form of regional park. Improved access to these lands and partnership with the Park Service to create special use areas within the Units will enhance the benefit that these parks provide to the City. Also, many residents of the area of Sandy Springs south of Interstate 285 have easy access to Chastain Park located in the City of Atlanta just over the city limits. The close proximity of this regional park provides park opportunities to an area of Sandy Springs that is currently underserved by local parks.

Sports Complex

Sports complexes at Community Parks, Regional Parks, and stand-alone Sports Complexes are developed to provide 4 to 16+ fields or courts in one setting. A sports complex may also support extreme sports facilities, such as BMX and skateboarding. Sports Complexes can be single focused or multi-focused and can include indoor or outdoor facilities to serve the needs of both youth and adults. Outdoor fields should be lighted to maximize value and productivity of the complex. Agencies developing sports complexes focus on meeting the needs of residents while also attracting sport



tournaments for economic purposes to the community. Morgan Falls Ball Fields Park is classified as a Sports Complex.

Sport field design includes appropriate field distances for each sport's governing body and support amenities designed to produce revenue to offset operational costs.

Signature sports complexes include enhanced amenities such as artificial turf, multipurpose field benches and bleachers, scoreboards, amplified sound, scorer's booths, etc. Enhanced amenities would be identified through discussion between City and Schools and or sports associations and dependent upon adequate funding.

- Service radius: Determined by community demand, but typically 5 miles.
- Site Selection: Stand-alone sports complexes are strategically located on or near arterial streets. Refer to community or regional Park sections if sport complex located within a park. Preference is streets on four sides, or three sides with school or municipal use on fourth side.
- Length of stay: Two to three hours experience for single activities. Can be all day for tournaments or special events
- Amenities: Four to sixteen or more fields or sports courts in one setting; restrooms, ample parking, turf types appropriate for the facility and anticipated usage, and field lighting.
- Revenue facilities: Four or more (e.g. fields, concession stand, picnic pavilion)
- Land usage: 95 percent active and 5 percent passive
- Programming: Focus on active programming of all amenities
- Maintenance Standards: Provide the highest-level maintenance with available funding. Plan for Level 1 and sometimes 2 level of maintenance standards at signature facility
- Parking: Sufficient to support the amenities. Traffic calming devices encouraged within and next to park
- Lighting: Amenity lighting includes sport field light standards.
- Signage: Wayfinding/directional signage and facility/amenity regulations to enhance user experience. May include kiosks in easily identified areas of the facility
- Landscape Design: Appropriate design to enhance the park theme/use/experience. Enhanced landscaping at entrances and throughout complex
- Size of park: Preferably 20 or more acres for stand-alone complexes

Sandy Springs Currently Developed Sports Complex Inventory: Morgan Falls Athletic Complex.

Future Sports Complex in Sandy Springs should be determined by a feasibility study.

Special Use Areas

Recreation/Special Use areas are those spaces that don't fall within a typical park classification. A major difference between a Special Use facility and other parks is that they usually serve a single purpose whereas other park classifications are designed to offer multiple recreation opportunities. It is possible for a Special Use facility to be located inside another park. Special Use facilities generally fall into four categories:

- **Cemeteries** - burial-ground that is generally viewed as a large public park or ground laid out expressly for the interment of the dead, and not being the 'yard' of any church. Cemeteries are normally distinct from churchyards, which are typically consecrated according to one denomination and are attached directly to a single place of worship. Cemeteries can be viewed as historic sites.
- **Historic/Cultural/Social Sites** – unique local resources offering historical, educational, and cultural opportunities. Examples include historic downtown areas, commercial zones, plaza parks, performing arts parks, arboretums, display gardens, performing arts facilities, indoor theaters, churches, and amphitheaters. Frequently these are located in Community or Regional Parks
- **Golf Courses** – Nine and 18-hole complexes with ancillary facilities such as club houses, driving ranges, program space and learning centers. These facilities are highly maintained and support a wide age level of males and females. Programs are targeted for daily use play, tournaments, leagues, clinics and special events. Operational costs come from daily play, season pass holders, concession stands, driving range fees, earned income opportunities and sale of pro shop items



- **Indoor Recreation Facilities** – specialized or single purpose facilities. Examples include community centers, senior centers and community theaters. Frequently these are located in Community or Regional Parks
- **Outdoor Recreation facilities** – Examples include aquatic parks, disc golf, skateboard, BMX, and dog parks, which may be located in a park
 - » Size of park: Depends upon facilities and activities included. Their diverse character makes it impossible to apply acreage standards
 - » Service radius: Depends upon facilities and activities included. Typically serves special user groups while a few serve the entire population
 - » Site Selection: Given the variety of potential uses, no specific standards are defined for site selection. As with all park types, the site itself should be located where it is appropriate for its use.
 - » Length of stay: varies by facility
 - » Amenities: varies by facility
 - » Revenue facilities: Due to nature of certain facilities, revenue may be required for construction and/or annual maintenance. This should be determined at a policy level before the facility is planned and constructed
 - » Land usage: varies by facility
 - » Programming: varies by facility
 - » Maintenance Standards: Provide the highest-level maintenance with available funding. Seek a goal of Level 2 maintenance standards. Some amenities (i.e., rose gardens) will require Level 1 maintenance
 - » Parking: On-street or off-street parking is provided as appropriate. Goal is to maximize usable park space. As necessary, provide a minimum of five to 10 spaces within park including handicap spaces. Traffic calming devices encouraged next to park
 - » Lighting: Security or amenity only.
 - » Signage: Wayfinding/directional signage and facility/amenity regulations to enhance user experience
 - » Landscape Design: Appropriate design to enhance the park theme/use/experience

Sandy Springs Currently Developed Recreation/Special Use Inventory: Morgan Falls RiverPark/Dog Park, Sandy Springs Tennis Center, Heritage Sandy Springs, and City Springs Park II.

Future Special Use Parks in Sandy Springs will include the central greens for the urban node areas, additional dog parks, and recreation centers.

Natural Resource Parks

Natural Resource Parks are properties designated as parks that have few or no built amenities but provide natural areas or open space that can be utilized for passive recreation. These parks may have parking areas, restrooms, small playgrounds, natural and hard surface trails/greenways, picnic tables, benches and other passive use amenities but are dominated by open areas for the enjoyment of nature, fishing or other similar activities. Ideally these parks are interconnected through the community with either paved or natural trails providing a network of trails and open space. Linking neighborhoods, parks, recreation facilities, attractions, and natural areas with open space and multiuse trails fulfills two guiding principles simultaneously: protecting natural and open space areas and providing people with a way to access and enjoy them. Multiuse trails also offer a safe, alternative form of transportation; provide substantial health benefits, habitat enhancements for plants and wildlife, and unique opportunities for outdoor education and cultural interpretation.

- Site Selection: Located consistent with open space and trail/greenway plans
- Amenities: Parking areas, restrooms, small playgrounds, natural and hard surface trails/greenways, picnic tables, benches and other passive use amenities
- Maintenance standards: Demand based maintenance with available funding. Biological management practices observed.
- Lighting: Security lighting at parking areas is preferred.
- Signage: Wayfinding signage, trail mileage markers at ¼ mile intervals. Interpretive kiosks at all trailheads and where deemed necessary.
- Landscape Design: Coordinated planting scheme in urban areas. Limited or no planting in open space areas
- Other: Connectivity to parks or other City attractions and facilities is desirable



- Size: May be as narrow as 50 ft. width of linear unencumbered land for a greenbelt/open space up to several hundred acres. May include a trail to support walk, bike, run, equestrian type activities. Typically, an urban trail is 10-12 feet wide to support pedestrian and bicycle uses. Trails incorporate signage to designate where a user is located and where the trails connect in the City.

Sandy Springs Currently Developed Natural Resource Parks Inventory: Big Trees Forest Preserve, Johnson Ferry/Riverbluff and Riverside Drive Conservation Easement, and Lost Corner Preserve.

Future Natural Resource Parks in Sandy Springs will include the some currently undeveloped parks such as Abernathy Veterinary Greenspace, Crooked Creek Park, Powers Ferry Conservation Easement as well as City owned flood plain sites.

Linear Parks

Linear Parks are developed for one or more modes of recreational travel, such as walking, jogging, biking, in-line skating hiking, horseback riding, and paddling. Linear parks may include restroom buildings, play areas, art, and other amenities. The NRPA does not stipulate specific standards for linear parks other than they should be sufficient to protect the natural resource. Linear parks are sometimes referred to as greenways, greenbelts, blueways or trail parks.

- Site Selection: Located consistent with open space and trail/greenway plans
- Amenities: Parking areas, restrooms, small playgrounds, natural and hard surface trails/greenways, picnic tables, benches and other passive use amenities
- Maintenance Standards: Provide the highest-level maintenance with available funding. Plan for Level 1 and sometimes 2 level of maintenance standards at signature facility
- Parking: Sufficient to support the amenities.
- Lighting: Security lighting at parking areas is preferred.
- Signage: Wayfinding signage, trail mileage markers at ¼ mile intervals. Interpretive kiosks at all trailheads and where deemed necessary.
- Landscape Design: Appropriate design to enhance the park theme/use/experience. Enhanced landscaping at park entrances and throughout park
- Other: Connectivity to parks or other City attractions and facilities is desirable
- Size of park: Varies. An urban trail is 10-12 feet wide to support pedestrian and bicycle uses. Trails incorporate signage to designate where a user is located and where the trails connect in the City.

Sandy Springs Currently Developed Linear Parks Inventory: Abernathy Greenway North and Abernathy Greenway South.



Abernathy Greenway - North. Photo Credit: City of Sandy Springs



Image Credit: City of Sandy Springs



3.0 RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

Section 3 Overview

This section of the document provides information regarding the current recreation facilities and programs owned by the City of Sandy Springs that assist in meeting the recreation needs of the citizens. This section also contains an analysis of current and projected demographics for the City; a review of projected recreation trends that could influence the recommendations; and a description of the current administration, organization, and financial information for the Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks Department.

3.1 Demographic Research and Analysis

The Demographic Analysis provides an understanding of the population of Sandy Springs, Georgia. This analysis is reflective of the total population, and its key characteristics such as age segments, income levels, race, and ethnicity.

It is important to note that future projections are all based on historical patterns and unforeseen circumstances during or after the time of the projections could have a significant bearing on the validity of the final projections.

3.1.1 Methodology

Demographic data used for the analysis was obtained from U.S. Census Bureau and from ESRI, the world's largest research and development organization dedicated to Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and specializing in population projections and market trends. All data was acquired in September 2017 and reflects actual numbers as reported in the 2010 Censuses, and estimates for 2017 and 2022 as obtained by ESRI. A statistics model called straight line linear regression was utilized for projected 2027 and 2032 demographics.

3.1.2 Race and Ethnicity Definitions

The minimum categories for data on race and ethnicity for Federal statistics, program administrative reporting, and civil rights compliance reporting are defined as below. The Census 2010 data on race are not directly comparable with data from the 2000 Census and earlier censuses; caution must be used when interpreting changes in the racial composition of the US population over time. The latest (Census 2010) definitions and nomenclature are used within this analysis.

- American Indian – This includes a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment
- Asian – This includes a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam
- Black – This includes a person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander – This includes a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands
- White – This includes a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa
- Hispanic or Latino – This is an ethnic distinction, a subset of a race as defined by the Federal Government; this includes a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race

3.2 Sandy Springs Populace

3.2.1 Population

The City's population has experienced a growing trend in recent years and is currently estimated at 103,068 individuals. Projecting ahead, the total population is expected to continue to grow over the next 15 years.

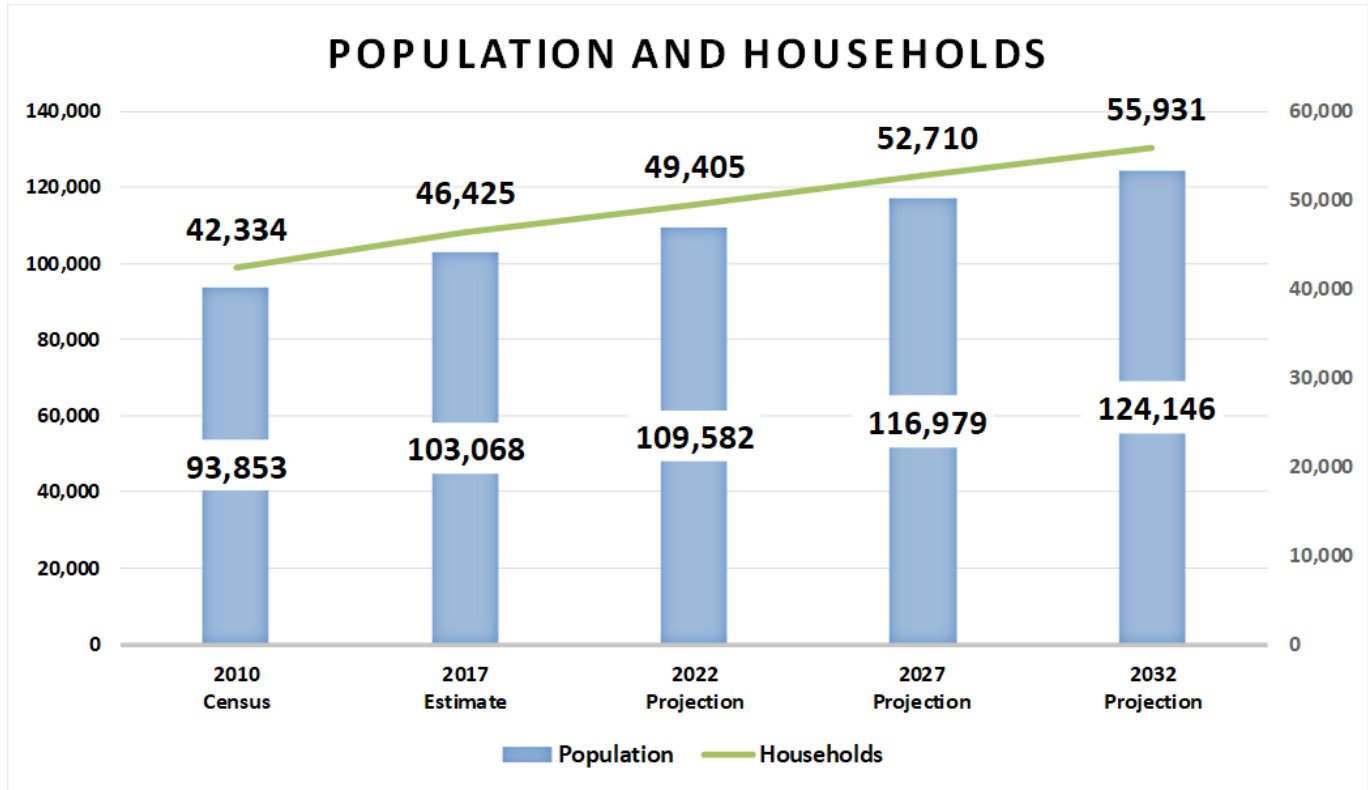


Fig. 3.1: Population and households in Sandy Springs (ESRI, 2018).

Based on predictions through 2032, the service area is expected to have 124,146 residents living within 55,931 households.

The population is increasing and is projected to experience a 20% population growth over the next 15 years. With a growing population, park and recreation services must continue to grow to keep up with the population. Additionally, development will continue over the next 15 years, and the parks and recreation system will need to strategically invest, develop, and maintain parks and facilities in relation to current and future housing development areas.

3.2.2 Age Segmentation

Evaluating the population by age segments, the service area exhibits a fairly balanced

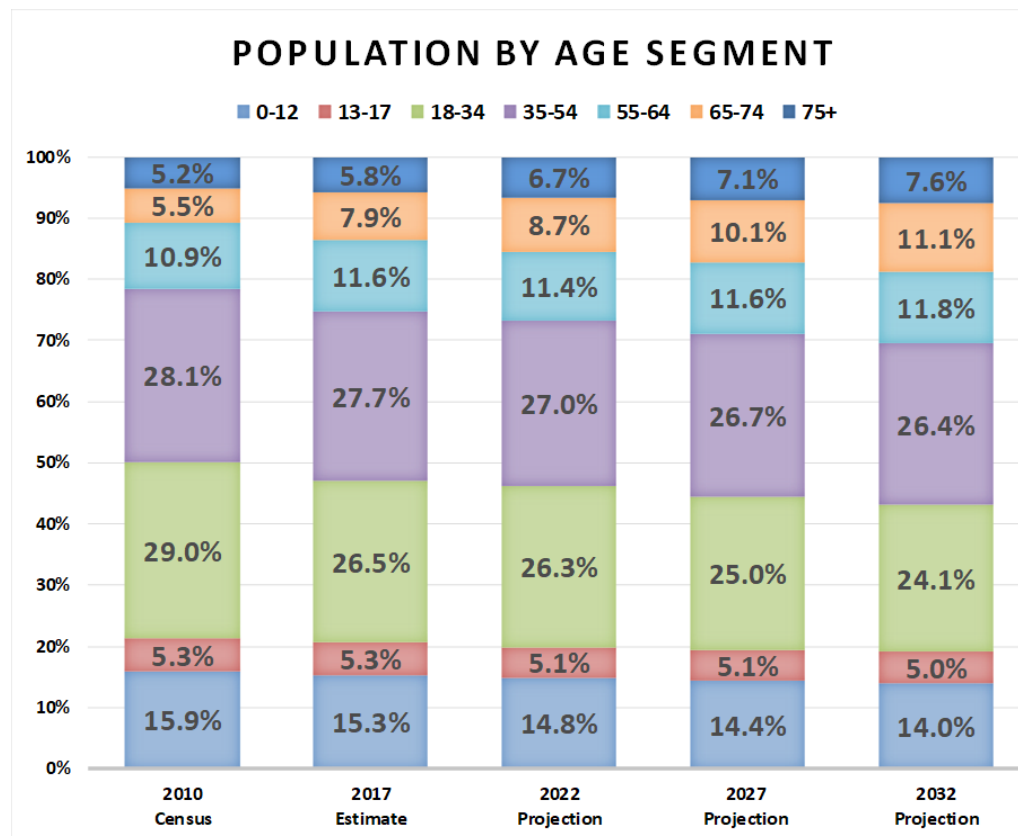


Fig. 3.2: Sandy Springs population by age segment (ESRI, 2018).



distribution among the major age segments. Currently, the largest age segment is the 35-54 segment, making up 27.7% of the population.

The overall age composition of the population within the City is projected to undergo a slight aging trend. While most of the younger age segments are expected to remain the same or experience slight decreases in population percentage; those who are 55 and older are projected to continue increasing over the next 15 years, making up 30.5% of the population by 2032 – an increase of 5.2% over 2017. This is assumed to be a consequence of a vast amount of the Baby Boomer generation shifting into the senior age segment.

Given the differences in how the active adults (55 and older) participate in recreation programs, the trend is moving toward having at least two to three different program age segments for older adults. When developing the park and recreation system, the City should evaluate recreation experiences that would cater to active adults who are 55-64, 65-74, and 75+ age segments.

Sandy Springs has a broad age segmentation with the largest group being 35-54+ and the second largest group being 18-34. Over the next 15 years, while most of the younger age segments are expected to remain the same or experience slight decreases in population percentage; those who are 55 and older are projected to continue increasing over the next 15 years, making up 30.5% of the population by 2032 – an increase of 5.2% over 2017. This is significant as providing access to services and programs will need to be focused on a multitude of age segments simultaneously and equally challenging as age segments have different preferences towards activities. Equal distribution across all age segments will require the City to continue to provide programs, services, parks and facilities that appeal to all residents of the community.

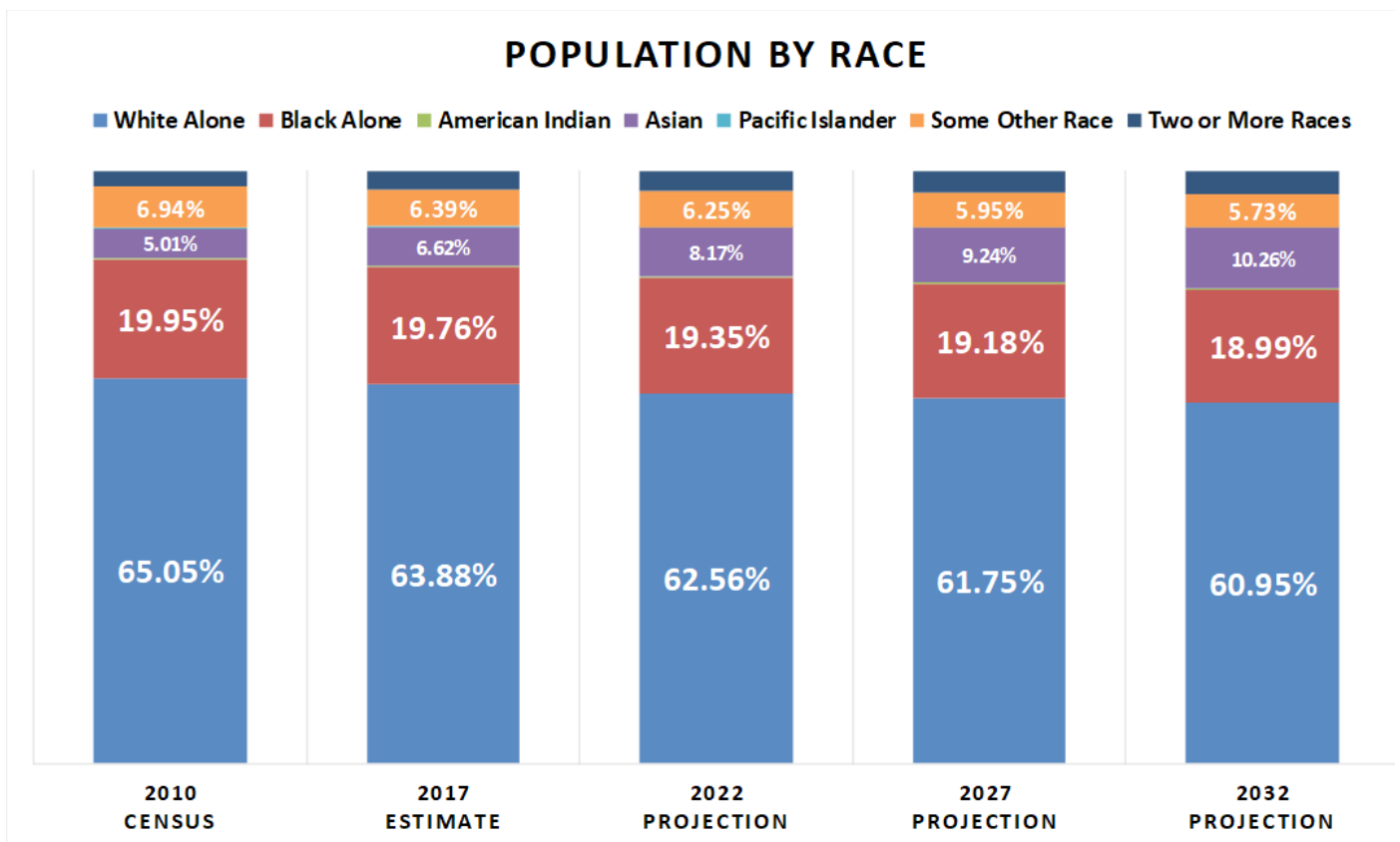


Fig. 3.3: Sandy Springs population by race (ESRI, 2018).



3.2.3 Race and Ethnicity

In analyzing race, the service area’s current populations are predominately White Alone. The 2017 estimates show that 63.08% of the service area’s population falls into the White Alone category, while the Black Alone category (19.76%) represents the largest minority. The predictions for 2032 expect that the service area’s population by race will diversify even further with decreases in the White Alone population (3%) and the Black Alone population (1%) by approximately 3% and a 4% increase in the Asian population.

Based on the 2017 estimate, those of Hispanic/Latino origin represent 13% of the City’s total population. The Hispanic/Latino population is expected to experience a slight decrease to 12% by 2032.

A diversifying population will likely focus the City on providing traditional and non-traditional programming and service offerings while always seeking to identify emerging activities and sports.

3.2.4 Households and Income

As seen in Figure 3.5, the City’s per capita and median household income levels are much above the state and national averages. With median and per capita household income averages above the state averages and in-line with national averages, it would be important for the City to prioritize offerings that are first class with exceptional customer service while modestly seeking opportunities to create revenue generation.

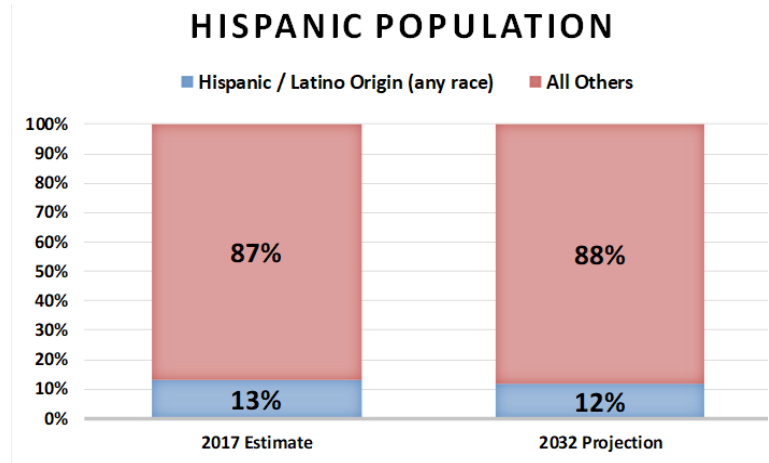


Fig. 3.4: Sandy Springs Hispanic population (ESRI, 2018).

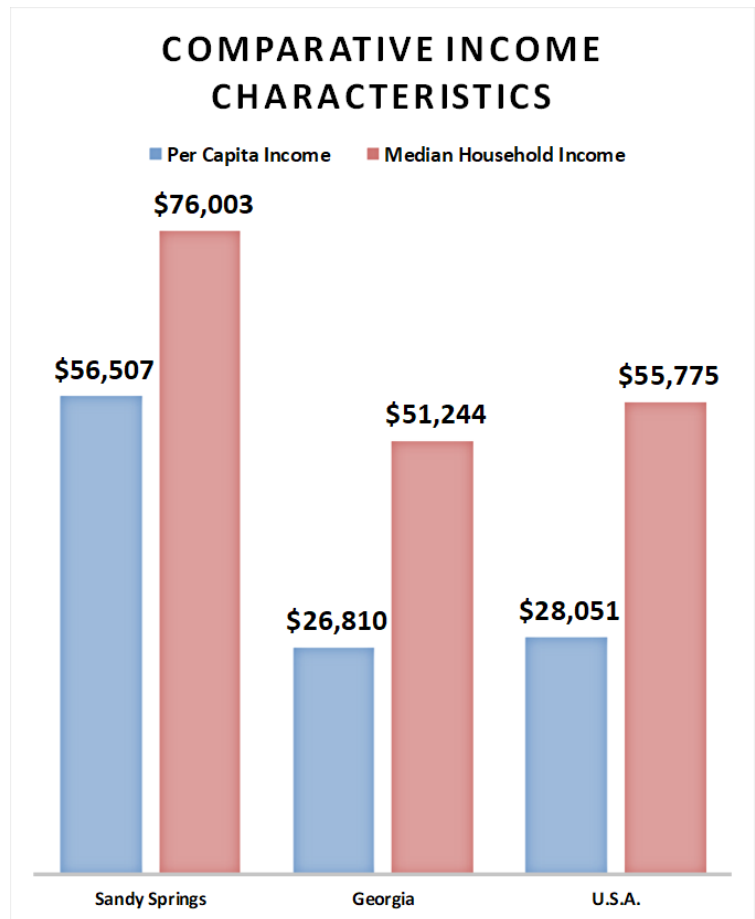


Fig. 3.5: Sandy Springs’ comparative income statistics (ESRI, 2018).



3.3 National Recreation Trends Analysis

Table 3.1 summarizes the findings from the Sports & Fitness Industry Association’s (SFIA) *2016 Sports, Fitness and Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report*, as well as the local market potential index data. The local market potential index data compares the demand for recreational activities and spending of residents for the targeted area to the national averages.

Summary of National Participatory Trends Analysis	
1. Number of “inactives” decreased slightly, those ‘active to a healthy level’ on the rise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Inactives” down 0.6% in 2015, from 82.7 million to 81.6 million • Approximately one-third of Americans (ages 6+) are active to a healthy level
2. Most popular sport and recreational activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fitness Walking (109.8 million) • Treadmill (50.4 million) • Running/Jogging (48.5 million)
3. Most participated in team sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Golf (24.1 million) • Basketball (23.4 million) • Tennis (18 million)
4. Activities most rapidly growing over last five years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adventure Racing – up 136% • Non-traditional/Off-road Triathlon – up 119% • Squash – up 66% • Trail Running – up 63%
5. Activities most rapidly declining over last five years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-line Roller Skating – down 30% • Touch Football – down 25% • Wrestling – down 22% • Slow-pitch Softball – down 16%

Table 3.1: Summary of national participatory trends analysis (SFIA, 2016).

Note: Adventure racing is a relatively new sport that involves multi-disciplinary teams navigating an unmarked wilderness course.

3.3.1 Overview of National Participatory Trends

Information released by Sports & Fitness Industry Association’s (SFIA) 2016 Study of Sports, Fitness, and Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report reveals that the most popular sport and recreational activities include: fitness walking, treadmill, running/jogging, free weights, and road bicycling. Most of these activities appeal to both young and old alike, can be done in most environments, are enjoyed regardless of level of skill, and have minimal economic barriers to entry. These popular activities also have appeal because of their social application. For example, although fitness activities are mainly self-directed, people enjoy walking and biking with other individuals because it can offer a degree of camaraderie.

Fitness walking has remained the most popular activity of the past decade by a large margin, in terms of total participants. Fitness walking participation last year was reported to be roughly 109.8 million Americans. Although fitness walking has the highest level of participation, it did report a 2.4% decrease in 2015 from the previous year.



This recent decline in fitness walking participation paired with upward trends in a wide variety of other activities, especially in fitness and sports, suggests that active individuals are finding new ways to exercise and diversifying their recreational interests. In addition, the popularity of many outdoor adventure and water-based activities has experienced positive growth based on the most recent findings; however, many of these activities' rapid increase in participation is likely a product of their relatively low user base, which may indicate that these sharp upward trends may not be sustained long into the future.

From a traditional team sport standpoint, basketball ranks highest among all sports, with approximately 23.4 million people reportedly participating in 2015. In general, nearly every sport with available data experienced an increase in participation, which is a reversal from the five-year trend of declining participation in sports. Sports that have experienced significant growth in participation are squash, boxing, lacrosse, rugby, roller hockey, and field hockey – all of which have experienced growth in excess of 30% over the last five years. More recently, roller hockey, racquetball, indoor soccer, boxing, and flag football were the activities with the most rapid growth during the last year.

According to the Physical Activity Council, an “inactive” is defined as an individual that doesn’t take part in any physical activity. Over the last five years, the number of inactive individuals has increased 7.4% from 76 million in 2010 to 81.6 million in 2015. However, looking at just the past year, from 2014 to 2015, the US saw a slight decrease of 0.6% from 82.7 to 81.6 million individuals. Although this recent shift is very promising, inactivity remains a dominant force in society, evidenced by the fact that 27.7% of the population falls into this category.

The Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) 2016 *Sports, Fitness & Recreational Activities Topline Participation Report* was utilized to evaluate national sport and fitness on participatory trends. The study is based survey findings by the Physical Activity Council from a total of 32,658 online interviews carried out in 2015. The purpose of the report is to establish levels of activity and identify key participatory trends in recreation across the US.

National Participatory Trends - General Sports					
Activity	Participation Levels			% Change	
	2011	2015	2016	11-16	15-16
Golf (2015 data)	26,122	24,700	24,120	-7.7%	-2.3%
Basketball	24,790	23,410	22,343	-9.9%	-4.6%
Tennis	17,772	17,963	18,079	1.7%	0.6%
Baseball	13,561	13,711	14,760	8.8%	7.7%
Soccer (Outdoor)	13,667	12,646	11,932	-12.7%	-5.6%
Softball (Slow Pitch)	7,809	7,114	7,690	-1.5%	8.1%
Badminton	7,135	7,198	7,354	3.1%	2.2%
Volleyball (Court)	6,662	6,423	6,216	-6.7%	-3.2%
Football, Flag	6,325	5,829	6,173	-2.4%	5.9%
Football, Touch	7,684	6,487	5,686	-26.0%	-12.3%
Volleyball (Sand/Beach)	4,451	4,785	5,489	23.3%	14.7%
Football, Tackle	6,448	6,222	5,481	-15.0%	-11.9%
Gymnastics	4,824	4,679	5,381	11.5%	15.0%
Soccer (Indoor)	4,631	4,813	5,117	10.5%	6.3%
Track and Field	4,341	4,222	4,116	-5.2%	-2.5%
Cheerleading	3,049	3,608	4,029	32.1%	11.7%
Ultimate Frisbee	4,868	4,409	3,673	-24.5%	-16.7%
Racquetball	4,357	3,883	3,579	-17.9%	-7.8%
Pickleball	N/A	2,506	2,815	N/A	12.3%
Ice Hockey	2,131	2,546	2,697	26.6%	5.9%
Softball (Fast Pitch)	2,400	2,460	2,467	2.8%	0.3%
Lacrosse	1,501	2,094	2,090	39.2%	-0.2%
Roller Hockey	1,237	1,907	1,929	55.9%	1.2%
Wrestling	1,971	1,978	1,922	-2.5%	-2.8%
Rugby	850	1,349	1,550	82.4%	14.9%
Squash	1,112	1,710	1,549	39.3%	-9.4%
Field Hockey	1,147	1,565	1,512	31.8%	-3.4%
Boxing for Competition	747	1,355	1,210	62.0%	-10.7%
NOTE: Participation figures are in the millions for the US population ages 6 and over					
Legend:	Large Increase (greater than 25%)	Moderate Increase (0% to 25%)	Moderate Decrease (0% to -25%)	Large Decrease (less than -25%)	

Fig. 3.6: National participatory trends for general sports (SFIA, 2016).



3.3.2 National Trends in General Sports

The most heavily participated sports for 2015 were golf (24.1 million) and basketball (23.4 million), which have participation figures well in excess of the other activities in the general sports category. The popularity of golf and basketball can be attributed to the ability to compete with relatively small number of participants. Golf also benefits from its wide age segment appeal, and is considered a life-long sport. Basketball's success can be attributed to the limited amount of equipment needed to participate and the limited space requirements necessary, which make basketball the only traditional sport that can be played at the majority of American dwellings as a drive-way pickup game.

As seen in the chart below, since 2010, squash and other niche sports, like boxing, lacrosse and rugby, have seen strong growth. Squash has emerged as the overall fastest growing sport, as it has seen participation levels rise by 66% over the last five years. Based on the five-year trend, boxing (59%), rugby (44%), lacrosse (47%), roller hockey (39%), and field hockey (32%) have also experienced significant growth. In the most recent year, the fastest growing sports were roller hockey (10%), racquetball (8%), squash (7%), indoor soccer (6%), and boxing (6%). During the last five years, the sports that are most rapidly declining in participation numbers include touch football (-25%), wrestling (-22%), slow pitch softball (-16%), and racquetball (-16%).

Overall, activities in the general sports categories show very promising growth in the most recent year. Only three activities experienced a dip in participation, none of which declined by more than 3%. In general, the strong recent growth in sports is a reversal of the five-year trends, as nearly every activity declining in the long run has tipped the scale to show positive growth in the past year.

3.3.3 National Trends in Aquatic Activity

Swimming is unquestionably a lifetime sport, and all aquatic activities have experienced participation growth among the American population. In 2015, fitness swimming is the absolute leader in overall participation (26.3 million) for aquatic activities, due in large part to its broad, multigenerational appeal.

National Participatory Trends - Aquatics					
Activity	Participation Levels			% Change	
	2010	2014	2015	10-15	14-15
Swimming (Fitness)	N/A	25,304	26,319	N/A	4.0%
Aquatic Exercise	8,947	9,122	9,226	3.1%	1.1%
Swimming (Competition)	N/A	2,710	2,892	N/A	6.7%
NOTE: Participation figures are in 000's for the US population ages 6 and over					
Legend:	Large Increase (greater than 25%)	Moderate Increase (0% to 25%)	Moderate Decrease (0% to -25%)	Large Decrease (less than -25%)	

Fig. 3.7: National participatory trends for aquatics (SFIA, 2016).

In the most recent year, competition swimming reported the strongest growth (7%) among aquatic activities, followed by fitness swimming (4%) and aquatic exercise (1%). It should be noted, in 2011, recreational swimming was broken into competition and fitness categories in order to better identify key trends.



Aquatic exercise also has a strong participation base and has experienced steady growth since 2010. Aquatic exercise has paved the way as a less stressful form of physical activity, while allowing similar benefits as land based exercises, including aerobic fitness, resistance training, flexibility, and better balance. Doctors are now recommending aquatic exercise for injury rehabilitation, mature patients, and patients with bone or joint problems, due to the significant reduction of stress placed on weight-bearing joints, bones, muscles, and also the effect of the water in reducing swelling from injuries.

3.3.4 National trends in General Fitness

Overall, national participatory trends in fitness have experienced strong growth in recent years. Many of these activities have become popular due to an increased interest among people to improve their health by engaging in an active lifestyle. These activities also have very few barriers to entry, which provides a variety of options that are relatively inexpensive to participate in and can be performed by nearly anyone with no time restrictions.

The most popular fitness activity by far is fitness walking, which had just over 109.8 million participants in 2015, which represents a 2.4% decrease from the previous year. Other leading fitness activities based on total number of participants include treadmill (50.4 million), running/jogging (48.5 million), hand weights (42.8 million), stretching (35.8 million), and stationary cycling (35.6 million).

Over the last five years, the activities growing most rapidly are non-traditional / off-road triathlons (119%), trail

National Participatory Trends - General Fitness					
Activity	Participation Levels			% Change	
	2011	2015	2016	11-16	15-16
Fitness Walking	112,715	109,829	107,895	-4.3%	-1.8%
Treadmill	53,260	50,398	51,972	-2.4%	3.1%
Free Weights (Dumbbells/Hand Weights)	N/A	54,716	51,513	N/A	-5.9%
Running/Jogging	50,061	48,496	47,384	-5.3%	-2.3%
Stationary Cycling (Recumbent/Upright)	36,341	35,553	36,118	-0.6%	1.6%
Weight/Resistant Machines	39,548	35,310	35,768	-9.6%	1.3%
Stretching	34,687	35,776	33,771	-2.6%	-5.6%
Elliptical Motion Trainer	29,734	32,321	32,218	8.4%	-0.3%
Free Weights (Barbells)	27,056	25,381	26,473	-2.2%	4.3%
Yoga	22,107	25,289	26,268	18.8%	3.9%
Calisthenics/Bodyweight Exercise	N/A	22,146	25,110	N/A	13.4%
Choreographed Exercise	N/A	21,487	21,839	N/A	1.6%
Aerobics (High Impact)	15,755	20,464	21,390	35.8%	4.5%
Stair Climbing Machine	13,409	13,234	15,079	12.5%	13.9%
Cross-Training Style Workout	N/A	11,710	12,914	N/A	10.3%
Stationary Cycling (Group)	8,738	8,677	8,937	2.3%	3.0%
Pilates Training	8,507	8,594	8,893	4.5%	3.5%
Trail Running	5,373	8,139	8,582	59.7%	5.4%
Cardio Kickboxing	6,488	6,708	6,899	6.3%	2.8%
Boot Camp Style Cross-Training	7,706	6,722	6,583	-14.6%	-2.1%
Martial Arts	5,037	5,507	5,745	14.1%	4.3%
Boxing for Fitness	4,631	5,419	5,175	11.7%	-4.5%
Tai Chi	2,975	3,651	3,706	24.6%	1.5%
Barre	N/A	3,583	3,329	N/A	-7.1%
Triathlon (Traditional/Road)	1,686	2,498	2,374	40.8%	-5.0%
Triathlon (Non-Traditional/Off Road)	819	1,744	1,705	108.2%	-2.2%

NOTE: Participation figures are in millions for the US population ages 6 and over

Legend:	Large Increase (greater than 25%)	Moderate Increase (0% to 25%)	Moderate Decrease (0% to -25%)	Large Decrease (less than -25%)
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Fig. 3.8: National participatory trends in general fitness (SFIA, 2016).



running (63%), traditional road triathlons (57%), high impact aerobics (41%), and yoga (20%). In the last year, activities with the largest gains in participation included non-traditional / off-road triathlons (24%), traditional / road triathlons (13%), barre (12%), and trail running (8%). It should be noted that many of the activities growing most rapidly have a relatively low user base, which allows for more drastic shifts in terms of percentage. The recent decline in the extremely popular activities of fitness walking and running / jogging paired with widespread growth in activities with lower participation levels, may suggest that those engaging in fitness activities are actively looking for new forms of exercise.

3.3.5 National Trends in Outdoor Recreation

Results from the Participation Report demonstrate a dichotomy of growth and attrition among outdoor / adventure recreation activities. Much like the general fitness activities, these activities encourage an active lifestyle, can be performed individually or with a group, and are not limited by time restraints. In 2015, the most popular activities, in terms of total participants, from the outdoor / adventure recreation category include road bicycling (38.3 million), freshwater fishing (37.7 million), day hiking (37.2 million), and camping within ¼ mile of vehicle/home (27.7 million).

National Participatory Trends - Outdoor / Adventure Recreation					
Activity	Participation Levels			% Change	
	2011	2015	2016	11-16	15-16
Hiking (Day)	33,494	37,232	42,128	25.8%	13.1%
Bicycling (Road)	39,834	38,280	38,365	-3.7%	0.2%
Fishing (Freshwater)	38,864	37,682	38,121	-1.9%	1.2%
Camping (< 1/4 Mile of Vehicle/Home)	31,961	27,742	26,467	-17.2%	-4.6%
Wildlife Viewing (>1/4 Mile of Home/Vehicle)	21,495	20,718	20,746	-3.5%	0.1%
Camping (Recreational Vehicle)	16,282	14,699	15,855	-2.6%	7.9%
Fishing (Saltwater)	11,896	11,975	12,266	3.1%	2.4%
Birdwatching (>1/4 mile of Vehicle/Home)	13,067	13,093	11,589	-11.3%	-11.5%
Backpacking Overnight	7,722	10,100	10,151	31.5%	0.5%
Bicycling (Mountain)	6,989	8,316	8,615	23.3%	3.6%
Archery	6,471	8,378	7,903	22.1%	-5.7%
Fishing (Fly)	5,581	6,089	6,456	15.7%	6.0%
Skateboarding	6,318	6,436	6,442	2.0%	0.1%
Roller Skating, In-Line	7,451	6,024	5,381	-27.8%	-10.7%
Climbing (Sport/Indoor/Boulder)	4,445	4,684	4,905	10.3%	4.7%
Bicycling (BMX)	1,958	2,690	3,104	58.5%	15.4%
Adventure Racing	1,202	2,864	2,999	149.5%	4.7%
Climbing (Traditional/Ice/Mountaineering)	1,904	2,571	2,790	46.5%	8.5%
NOTE: Participation figures are in millions for the US population ages 6 and over					
Legend:	Large Increase (greater than 25%)	Moderate Increase (0% to 25%)	Moderate Decrease (0% to -25%)	Large Decrease (less than -25%)	

Fig. 3.9: National participatory trends in outdoor / adventure recreation (SFIA, 2016).



From 2010-2015, outdoor / adventure recreation activities that have undergone the largest increases were adventure racing (136%), archery (33%), BMX bicycling (29%), traditional climbing (28%), and backpacking overnight (26%). Over the same time frame, activities declining most rapidly were in-line roller skating (-26%), camping within ¼ mile of home/vehicle (-15%), and recreational vehicle camping (-12%). More recently, activities growing most rapidly in the last year were adventure racing (21%), BMX bicycling (15%), traditional climbing (5%), and fly fishing (4%).

3.3.6 Local Sport and Market Potential

The following charts show sport and leisure market potential data from ESRI. Market Potential Index data (MPI) measures the probable demand for a product or service within the City of Sandy Springs and its surrounding service area. The MPI shows the likelihood that an adult resident of the target area will participate in certain activities when compared to the US National average. The national average is 100, therefore numbers below 100 would represent a lower than average participation rate, and numbers above 100 would represent higher than average participation rate. The service area is compared to the national average in three (3) categories – general sports, fitness and outdoor activity.

Overall, Sandy Springs demonstrates above average market potential index (MPI) numbers. Looking at the three categories (general sports, fitness and outdoor activity), even though they each have a few activities with MPI scores below the national averages, a majority of the activities’ MPI scores fall above 100+. These overall MPI scores show that Sandy Springs has relatively strong participation rates when it comes to recreational activities. This becomes significant for when the City considers building new facilities or starting up new programs; giving them a strong tool to estimate resident attendance.

High index numbers (100+) are significant because they demonstrate that there is a greater potential that residents of the service area will actively participate in offerings provided by the City.

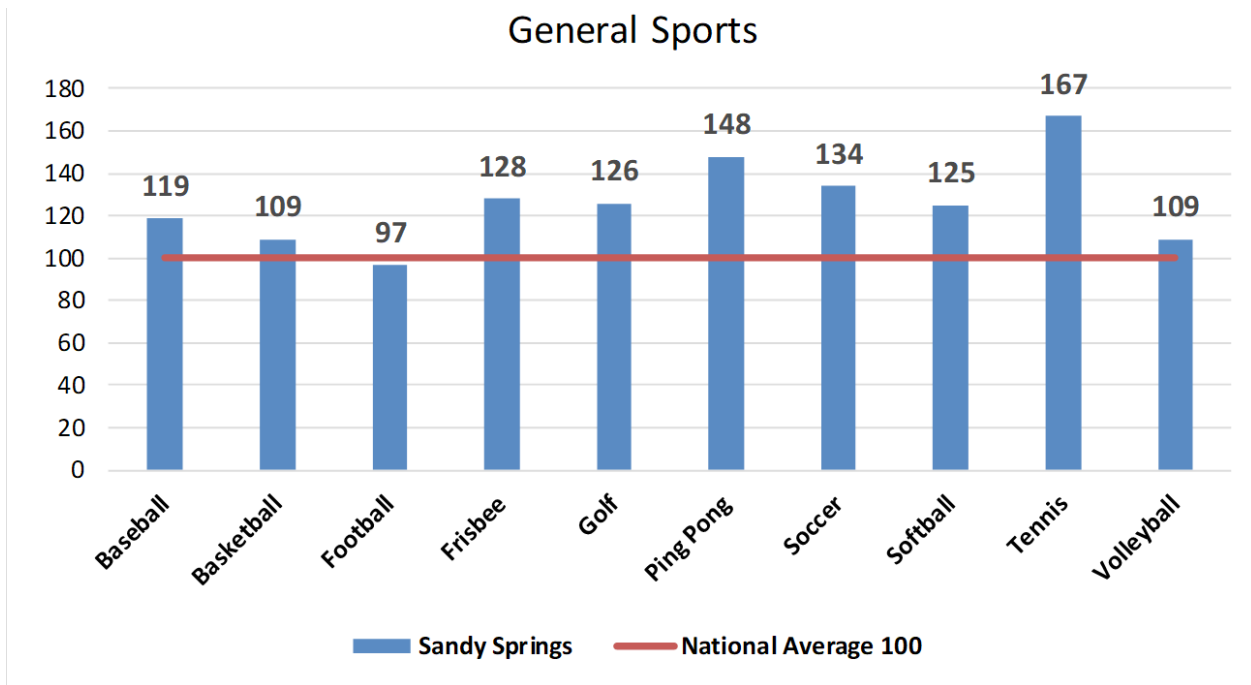


Fig. 3.10: MPI for general sports (ESRI, 2018).

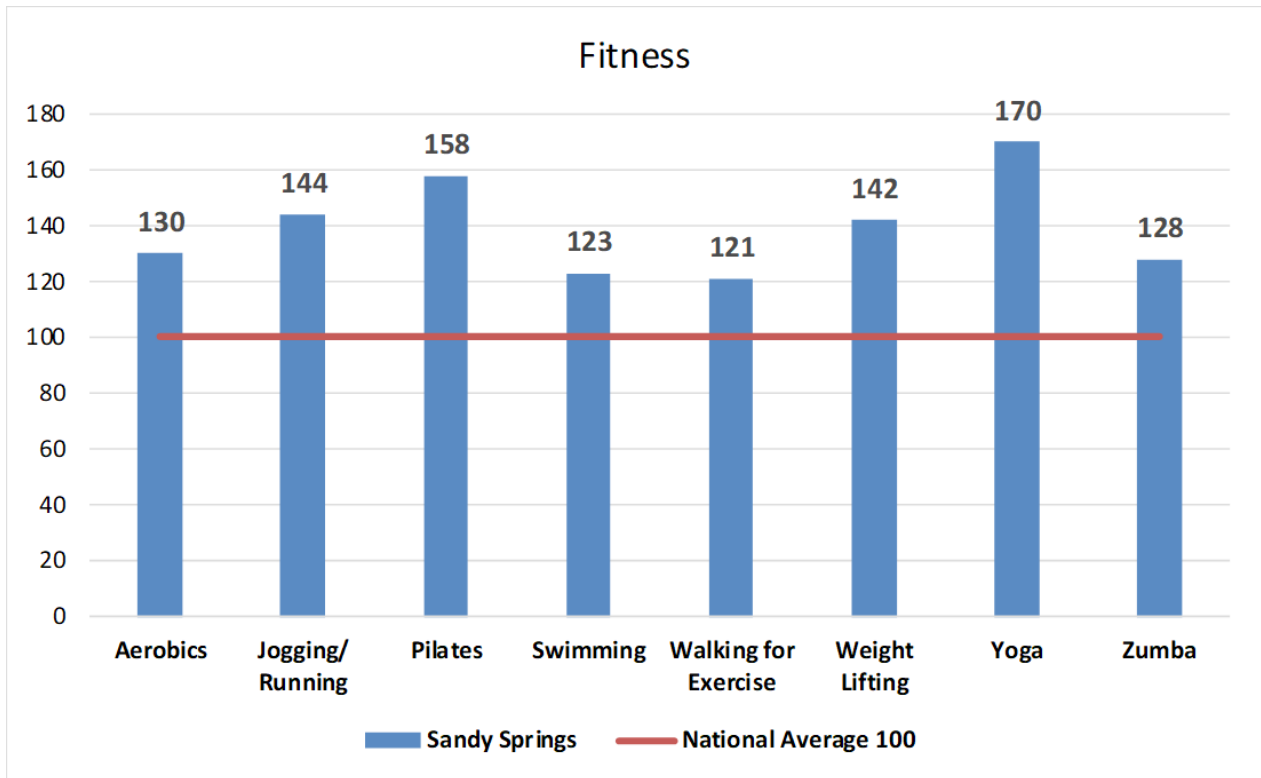


Fig. 3.11: MPI for fitness (ESRI, 2018).

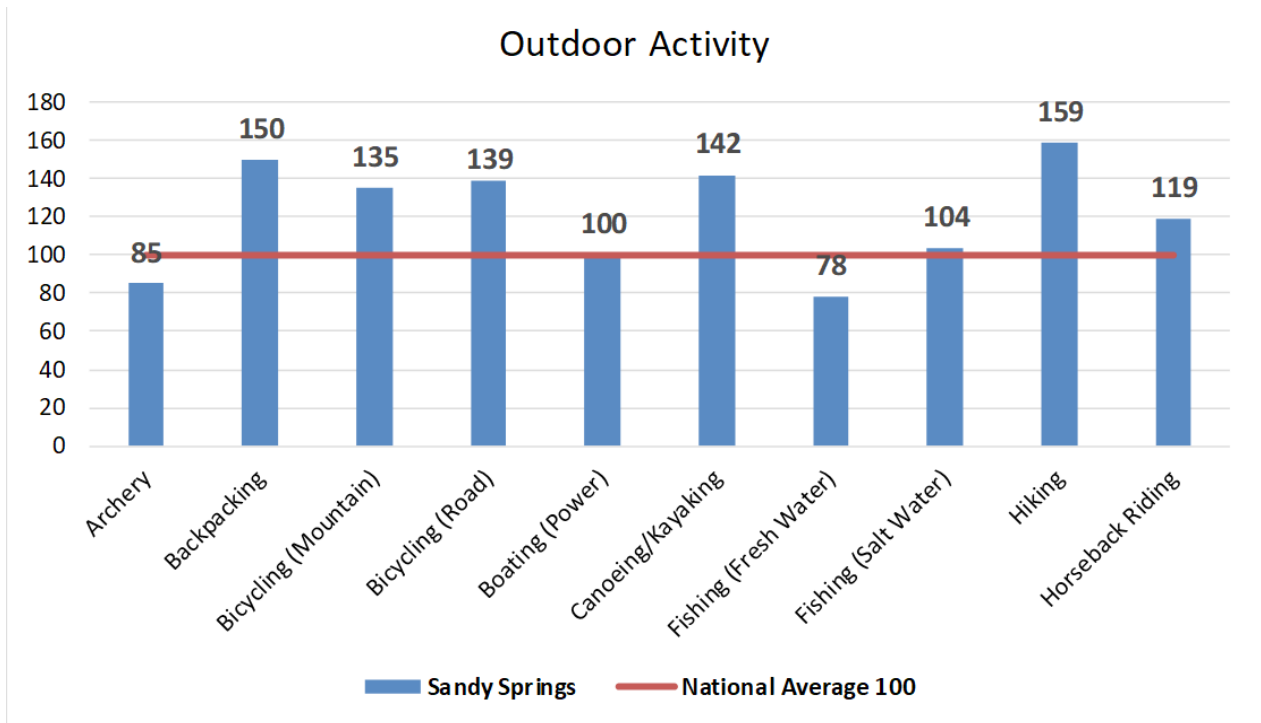


Fig. 3.12: MPI for outdoor activity (ESRI, 2018).



3.4 Existing Parks and Recreation Facilities

This section provides a brief description of City of Sandy Springs facilities managed by the Recreation and Parks Department, along with documentation of the Fulton County Schools facilities that are counted in the City's existing parks and recreation level of service. Table 3.2 shows the current park inventory by classification, along with the respective acreage. Figure 2.1 shows the locations of the parks in the City.

A detailed evaluation of the condition, ADA compliance, and identification of deferred maintenance items at existing parks was not a part of the scope of this study. Each park was visited by the planning team, and general observations regarding the condition and accessibility of the facilities in each park are included in the descriptions. Following are the proposed classifications and a description of each. A complete description with more detail is provided in Section 4 of this report.

Pocket Parks

The smallest park classification, Pocket Park, is used to address limited, isolated, or unique recreational needs. Examples of mini parks include isolated development areas, unique recreational opportunities, landscaped public-use areas, scenic overlooks, canoe access points, and play areas adjacent to downtown shopping districts. There is no minimum acreage requirement for a pocket park; however, they must be large enough to provide facilities that can meet the recreation needs of the immediate neighborhood (not just open space) and be located within walking distance of dense residential and commercial developments. **Examples of Pocket Parks in Sandy Springs include Grace Park, Ed Morley Pocket Park, and Eagle Park.**

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood Parks are the basic unit of the park system, serving as a recreational and social focus of a neighborhood with both passive and active activities. They are not intended to be used for programmed activities that result in overuse, noise, parking problems, and congestion. They should be geared for those living within the service area. A Neighborhood Park accommodates a variety of ages, including children, adults, and seniors. These parks are usually not smaller than 2-5 acres and are developed centrally within the neighborhood to encompass a service radius of ½ mile. Neighborhood Parks primarily facilitate recreational activities including play structures, sitting areas, and open space. Ideally, these parks are linked to the neighborhood and to each other by a pathway or walk system and respond to the need for basic recreational amenities close to home. **Examples of Neighborhood Parks include Abernathy Park/Art Center, Allen Road Park, and Marsh Creek Park.**

Community Parks

These are larger in size and serve a broader purpose than neighborhood parks. Their focus is on meeting the recreational needs of several neighborhoods or large sections of the community, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. They allow for group activities and offer other recreational opportunities not feasible, nor desirable, at the neighborhood level. As with Neighborhood Parks, they should be developed for both active and passive recreation activities. Optimal size for a Community Park should exceed 25 acres. Design features might include large play structures, informal fields for youth play, tennis courts, volleyball courts, horseshoe areas, swimming pools, disc golf, trails, group picnic areas, open space and unique landscapes/features, nature study areas, ornamental gardens, and facilities for cultural activities such as plays and concerts in the park. **Parks in Sandy Springs that are categorized as Community Parks include Hammond Park, Morgan Falls Overlook, and Ridgeview Park.**

Sports Complex

Sports Complexes at Community Parks, Regional Parks, and stand-alone Sports Complexes are developed to provide 4 to 16 or more fields or courts in one setting. **Sandy Springs currently has one Sports Complex: Morgan Falls Athletic Complex.**



Natural Resource Parks

Natural Resource Parks are properties designated as parks that have few or no built amenities, but provide natural areas or open space that can be utilized for passive recreation. These parks may have parking areas, restrooms, small playgrounds, natural and hard surface trails/greenways, picnic tables, benches and other passive use amenities but are dominated by open areas for the enjoyment of nature, fishing, or other similar activities.

Natural Resource Parks in Sandy Springs include Big Trees Forest Preserve and Riverbluff Greenspace, as well as all of the National Recreation Area Park Units.

Special Use Parks

These parks are designed to serve the entire community with specialized facilities, such as a sports complex, golf course, or aquatic facility. Size is determined by the demand for the facilities located there and their space requirements. A golf course may require 150 acres, an athletic complex may require 100 acres, and so on. Location of special use parks has to be carefully planned to ensure that access, traffic control, lighting issues, and noise issues do not negatively impact neighborhoods.

Special Use Parks in Sandy Springs include Morgan Falls River Park/Dog Park, Sandy Springs Tennis Center, and Heritage Sandy Springs.

Additional Park Classifications

There are a number of other industry-accepted standard classifications, such as Linear Parks, Regional Parks, and Signature Parks, that are not currently present in Sandy Springs' system that could be applied if parks of these types are added to the system in the future. Descriptions of these are as follows:

Linear Parks

These parks are areas that are developed for one or more varying modes of recreational use, such as hiking, biking, horseback riding, paddling, etc. A blueway would be a type of Linear Park.

Regional Parks

These parks serve a larger purpose than Community Parks. Regional Parks are larger and have more amenities than community-level parks, and they attract users for longer time due to their size and features. Regional Parks typically include features such as playgrounds, shelters, walking trails, and athletic facilities.

Signature Parks

These are parks which the entire community recognizes as its most important facility. The Signature Park is one which really creates an image of who the community is and what it represents. The Signature Park has the full complement of passive and active recreational activities and creates a high level of earned income. Examples would be the Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, Fairmont Park in Philadelphia, Central Park in New York, Millennium Park in Chicago, Piedmont Park in Atlanta, and White River State Park in Indianapolis.



3.5 Sandy Springs Parks and Recreation Facilities

The City of Sandy Springs’ current inventory of park and recreation facilities includes 21 developed parks and 7 undeveloped park properties totaling, 279.04 acres. Of this total, 228.75 acres are developed and 50.29 acres are undeveloped. Below is a summary list of parks and schools.

CITY OF SANDY SPRINGS PARKS			
NAME	PARK TYPE	ACREAGE	CONDITION
Grace Park	Pocket Park	0.46	GOOD
Ed Morley Pocket Park	Pocket Park	0.13	GOOD
Eagle Park	Pocket Park	0.10	GOOD
Abernathy Park/Art Center	Neighborhood	3.68	GOOD
Allen Rd Park	Neighborhood	3.04	POOR
Marsh Creek Rain Garden	Neighborhood	2.20	EXCELLENT
Windsor Meadows Park	Neighborhood	5.00	EXCELLENT
Hammond Park	Community	13.71	FAIR
Morgan Falls Overlook Park	Community	27.81	EXCELLENT
Ridgeview Park	Community	20.72	FAIR
Morgan Falls Athletic Complex	Sports Complex	27.26	GOOD
Big Trees Forest Preserve	Natural Resource Park	31.34	GOOD
Riverbluff Greenspace/Riverside Conservation Easemt.	Natural Resource Park	4.13	N/A
Lost Corners Preserve	Community	24.00	EXCELLENT
Abernathy Greenway - North	Greenway	7.74	GOOD
Aberthathy Greenway - South	Greenway	14.00	FAIR
Morgan Falls River Park/Dog Park	Special Use	3.42	POOR
Sandy Springs Tennis Center	Special Use	27.66	GOOD
Heritage Sandy Springs (Sandy Springs Historical Area)	Special Use	5.21	GOOD
City Springs Park I (City Green)	Special Use	2.35	EXCELLENT
Abernathy Veterinary Greenspace	Undeveloped (Future Neighborhood Park)	4.17	N/A
Crooked Creek Park	Undeveloped (Future Natural Resource Area)	4.45	N/A
Kitty Hawk Greenspace	Undeveloped (Future Mini Park)	0.50	N/A
Old Riverside Property	Undeveloped (Future Community Park)	23.23	N/A
Powers Ferry Conservation Easement	Undeveloped (Natural Resource Area)	3.00	N/A
City Springs Park II (Triangle Park)	Undeveloped (Future Mini Park)	1.05	N/A
Ashton Woods (Glenridge Park)	Undeveloped (Future Natural Resource Area)	13.9	N/A



Fulton County Schools (IGA)			
NAME	PARK TYPE	ACREAGE	CONDITION
North Springs Charter High School	High School	38.01	N/A
Riverwood International Charter School	High School	32.98	N/A
Ridgeview Charter School	Middle School	23.04	N/A
Sandy Springs Charter Middle School	Middle School	30.53	N/A
Dunwoody Springs Elementary School	Elementary School	22.94	N/A
Heards Ferry Elementary School	Elementary School	8.27	N/A
High Point Elementary School	Elementary School	9.65	N/A
Ison Springs Elementary School	Elementary School	24.90	N/A
Lake Forest Elementary School	Elementary School	15.13	N/A
Spalding Drive Charter Elementary School	Elementary School	11.30	N/A
Woodland Elementary School	Elementary School	22.14	N/A
Total School Park Inventory		238.89	
Total Park Inventory		517.93	

Table 3.2: Sandy Springs Park Inventory

3.6 Other Providers of Recreation and Park Facilities

3.6.1 Surrounding Facilities

Other providers of parks and recreation facilities in and around Sandy Springs can serve to augment the City's system. Sandy Springs residents often use nearby parks such as City of Dunwoody parks and City of Atlanta parks like Chastain Park. Unfortunately, access to many of these parks is limited either by geographic elements or use restrictions. For example, the entire western and northern boundary of the City is bordered by the Chattahoochee River, which limits access to parks in East Cobb and Roswell on the other side of the river. Interstate 285 and State Route 400 also act as barriers to nearby parks for Sandy Springs residents.

3.6.2 Facilities Within Sandy Springs

Within the boundary of Sandy Springs, other providers of recreation include the Huntcliff Club and Stable, Cherokee Town and Country Club, Dunwoody Country Club, and Steel Canyon Golf Club. All of these facilities have membership requirements for use. The community also has two facilities owned and managed by Fulton County, which are the Dorothy C. Benson Senior Multipurpose Complex and the Abernathy Arts Center. Both of these facilities are open to the community through events, exhibitions, and various classes.

3.6.3 Schools in Sandy Springs

The City of Sandy Springs is served by seven public elementary schools, two public middle schools, and two public high schools. The eleven schools are all part of the Fulton County school system. Currently, the City has intergovernmental agreements with the six schools: Spalding Elementary, Sandy Springs Middle School, Woodland Elementary, Ison Springs Elementary, Lake Forest Elementary, and North Springs High School. These joint-use agreements for recreation are an excellent way to maximize limited community resources.

Sandy Springs also has several private schools with recreation facilities, such as the Holy Innocents Episcopal School that has a baseball field, soccer multipurpose field, swimming pool, gym, and a track facility. Other schools with useable facilities include the Epstein School, Mt. Vernon Presbyterian School, and the Weber School.



3.6.4 Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area Park Units

Five of the fifteen land units of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area (CRNRA) reside within the Sandy Springs city limits. These units provide public access to the Chattahoochee River, as well as beautiful natural scenery, trails, and passive recreation. The five units are East Palisades Unit, Holcomb Bridge Unit, Island Ferry Unit, Island Ford Unit, and Powers Island Unit. The Island Ford Unit is also the Park Headquarters.



Abernathy Greenway - North. Photo Credit: City of Sandy Springs



4.0 OUTREACH AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Section 4 Overview

This section of the document provides information regarding the community outreach phase of the project. The community outreach phase is divided into three parts: focus group meetings, public forums, and the statistically valid survey. The consulting team conducted 11 focus group discussions, where 22 interested groups provided their opinions about the park system. The consulting team also conducted a public workshop forum, where Sandy Springs residents were invited to participate in data-collection activities. Two statistically valid surveys were administered: one to the entire city, and one to the City's Urban Core.

4.1 Qualitative Input Summary

In the Spring of 2018, consultants conducted a series of meetings with individuals representing diverse organizations and perspectives. The stakeholder outreach for the project consisted of three basic components: a series of focus group discussions, two public forums, and a community interest and opinion survey. Each group was asked a series of similar questions, and the results are condensed to a series of key themes that emerged from the qualitative data collection method. Note that the words "the Department" relate specifically to the City of Sandy Springs Department of Recreation and Parks.

4.1.1 Focus Groups

The planning team and City staff conducted 11 focus group discussions in Sandy Springs on August 17 and 18, 2018. A total of 22 different groups participated in the focus groups. The focus groups were identified and participants invited by City staff. The following is a listing of the focus groups that were involved in the process:

- Art Sandy Springs
- Chattahoochee National Recreation Area
- Council of Neighborhoods
- Friends of Lost Corner
- Fulton County School Board (Sandy Springs)
- Fulton County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Heritage Sandy Springs
- Leadership Sandy Springs
- Local Property Owners/Developers
- Neighbors Near Old Riverside Park
- Sandy Springs Conservancy
- Sandy Springs Education Force
- Sandy Springs Environmental Project
- Sandy Springs Historical Society
- Sandy Springs Perimeter Chamber
- Sandy Springs Society
- Sandy Springs Tennis Center
- Sandy Springs Youth Sports
- Steel Canyon Golf Course
- Trust for Public Land
- Visit Sandy Springs
- Watershed Alliance of Sandy Springs

A presentation was made to each group that summarized the demographics and trends analysis and the current level of service of recreation facilities and programs in Sandy Springs. Each group was asked some general questions and then questions specifically related to the group's potential particular interest. The following is a summary of the responses.

*List the top five **strengths** of the Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks Department programs and facilities:*

- Good variety of parks
- Natural resources (tree canopy, river)
- Strong tax base
- Community involvement
- Diversity of the community



List the top five biggest **challenges** that Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks Department is facing:

- Lack of connectivity
- The City is “spread-out”
- Few access points to the river
- High cost of land
- Few funding sources for parks

What top five **facilities** would you like add to Sandy Springs?

The most often mentioned improvements included purchasing more land to increase the number of parks. The participants voiced a strong desire for more multiuse paths (paved for walk/run/bike) and the desire for access to the river. Additionally, several participants mentioned there is a shortage of athletic fields and there is a need to maximize existing park land.

What top **programs** would you like to add to Sandy Springs?

Many of the suggestions included the need for educational programs and classes. They also suggested adding educational signage in parks and at access points to the river. Events, concerts, and activities the whole family can enjoy were also mentioned several times. It is difficult to sum up the top desired programs because there was a wide range of ideas, which included the desire for river activities (fishing, boating, etc), the need for swim classes, performing arts, and providing bike programs.

If there was just one thing that you would like to **make sure that the master plan covers**, what would that be?

- Indoor/outdoor swimming pool and splash pad
- Connectivity to parks
- Historic trail city-wide
- Natural playground
- Formalized programs for river usage
- Dog parks
- Claim as much open greenspace as we can
- Golf course could be a 9-hole course with 50 acres for new activities open.
- New wayfinding to the river. If you are on Roswell Road, you don't realize the great assets [of the river because it is hidden from view.
- Morgan Park Dam public-private partnership. Incorporate the history. Focus on the water and find opportunities.

4.1.2 Public Forums

Following the Focus Group meetings, the planning team facilitated a public input workshop forum, which was held at the Sandy Springs City Council Chambers on the evening of April 18, 2018. After a presentation of information regarding the current Sandy Springs parks, programs, and level of service, participants were asked to vote on the facilities and programs they would like to see in the community. The planning team also had them provide comments and markup maps of the community where improvements should occur. Participants were asked to choose each of their four most important park programs and facilities. Results can be found on the following pages.





What PROGRAMS would you like to add or expand in Sandy Springs?

Programs	Priority
Community special events (festivals, etc.)	1
Outdoor programs (nature hikes, etc.)	1
Art classes (pottery, painting, etc.)	2
Youth learn-to-swim programs	2
Performing arts programs	3
After school programs/out-of-school camps	4
Fitness and wellness programs	4
Senior programs and services	4
Walking/jogging/running clubs	4
Water fitness programs/lap swimming	5
Youth enrichment programs	5
Adult basketball/volleyball programs	6
Programs for people with special needs	6
Youth baseball/softball programs	6
Bicycle lessons and clubs	7
Gardening classes and events	7
Recreation/competitive swim team	7
Sand volleyball programs	7
Youth lacrosse programs	7
Youth soccer programs	7
Golf lessons/clinics	8
Tennis lessons and leagues	8
Youth basketball/volleyball programs	8
Youth football programs	8

Note: multiple same numbers indicate a tie.

What FACILITIES would you like to add or expand in Sandy Springs?

Facilities	Priority
Multiuse Paths (Paved for walk/run/bike)	1
Playgrounds	2
Indoor Pool	3
Community Gardens	4
Ropes Course/Zipline	4
Soccer/Lacrosse Multipurpose Fields	4
Walking Trails (Natural Surface)	4
Dog Parks	5
Mountain Bike Trails	5
Splash Pad	5
Pavilions/Picnic Sites	6
Amphitheater	7
Banquet/Meeting Rooms	7
Restroom Buildings	7
Multipurpose Meeting Rooms	8
Baseball Fields	9
Basketball Courts	9
Disc Golf Course	9
Fishing Pier/Docks	9
Recreation Center/Gym	9
Sand Volleyball Courts	9
Skateboard Area	9
Softball Fields	9
Aerobics/Dance Rooms	10
Concession Stands	10
Football Fields	10
Racquetball Courts	10
Tennis Courts	10

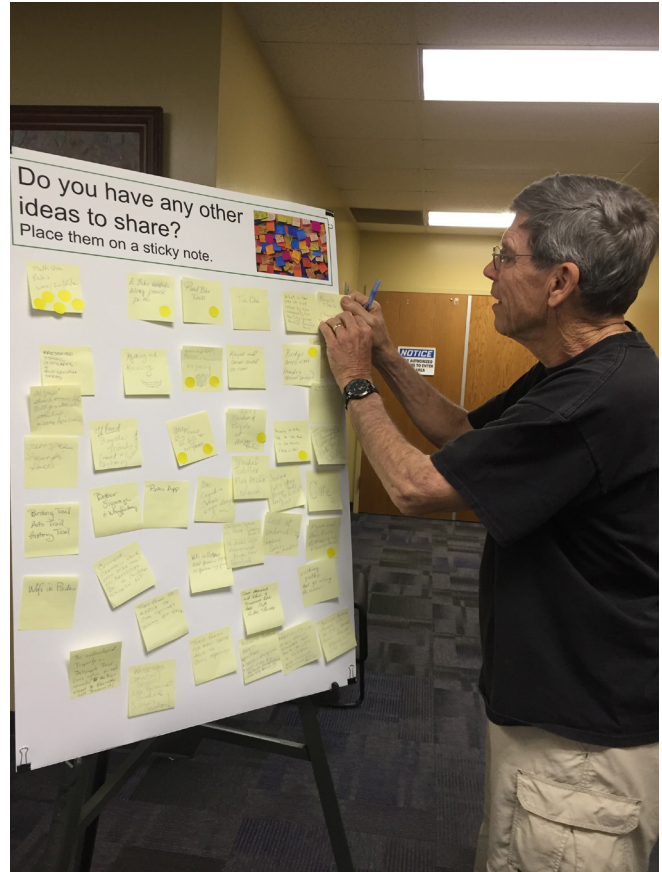
Note: multiple same numbers indicate a tie.

The charts above show the results from the voting exercise. Community special events (festivals, etc.) tied with Outdoor programs (nature hikes, etc.) for the top program priorities. For facilities, multiuse paths (paved for walk/run/bike) is the clear winner. While some programs and facilities did not receive any votes, it does not mean that they are not valued in the community, rather that the current level of programs and facilities may be being met.



In addition to the Programs and Facilities Boards, we provided a third board and asked participants if they had any other ideas to share. We received 37 notes with ideas:

- Multiuse paths (walk/run/bike)
- Bike rentals along paved paths
- Tai Chi
- Bicycle trails
- Kayaking and canoeing
- Preserved historic landmarks and old growth areas
- Kayak and canoe rentals on the river
- Bridge across the Chattahoochee River
- All parks should accommodate multi-generational activities in the same location
- Greenspace scavenger hunts
- Off-road bicycle trails - connect with neighboring jurisdictions
- Utilize Big Trees for zip and ropes course
- Bridge at Morgan Falls
- Running and biking - 5K and 10K races on City streets (bike on Path 400)
- Shaded toddler play areas
- Shaded community park for toddlers
- Cafes in parks
- Develop parks along Morgan Falls Road to riverfront
- Look at under-utilized shopping areas to convert to greenspace
- Acquire land along river at Roswell Road
- Preserve space that we have at Library Park
- Do more with Hammond Park for families
- Wi-Fi in parks and public center or gathering places
- Walking paths that go along the Chattahoochee River
- Create agreements with schools to incorporate public parks. Both public and private partnerships
- Trail from Sandy Springs Marta to City Springs along Mt Vernon
- The undeveloped property on Dalrymple Road (see notes on map) connects from the Chattahoochee River almost to Abernathy. Let's preserve it!
- Waterwall (paint with brush) like [Atlanta] Botanical Garden's Children's Garden
- Marsh Creek trail from playable art to UPS to MARTA and connect Big Trees to City Springs
- Connect Cochran Shoals [NPS] to City Springs down Heards Ferry with wide trail



Comment Cards:

- *When it comes to parks and rec, how crucial is the Sandy Springs city master plan approved in 2012? (See exhibit 23, page 68; property at Sandy Springs UMC is identified as city park space)*
- *Save the Sandy Springs public library reading garden with walking paths, labyrinth, and peace pole; also children's play and presentation area. Landscaped and benches (6). City has proposed a cut-thru four-lane to save 3 minutes of travel time at T Ferry and Mt. Vernon Hwy connection.*
- *Bike and walking connectivity – please. Trails, paths, etc.*



4.2 Statistically Valid Surveys

4.2.1 City Overall and Urban Core

Two surveys were conducted for this project. One survey was sent to a sampling of residents throughout the entire city (see figure 4.1) and the second survey was sent to a sampling of residents in the “Urban Core” of Sandy Springs (see figure 4.2). The following sections will discuss first the Urban Core results and second, the City Overall results. The benefit of receiving input from the overall city as well as from an urban core area of the city is that the responses may indicate recreation and park needs in the residential areas of city that are different from the recreation and park needs within the numerous urban nodes throughout the city. The differences in responses have enabled the consulting team to create recommendation sets that are applicable to the overall city, and a separate unique set of recommendations that are applicable to the environments of the urban nodes in the city. It allows for this plan to respond to a characteristic that is unique to Sandy Springs in that it is a city that includes traditional single-family residential areas, as well as densely urban commercial areas with higher density residential.

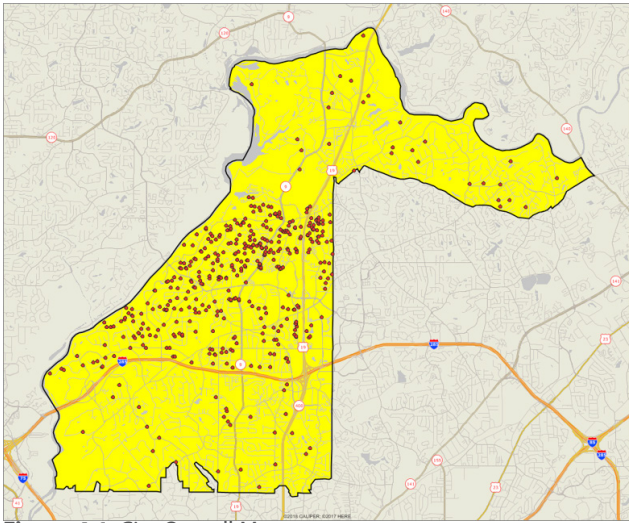


Figure 4.1: City Overall Map

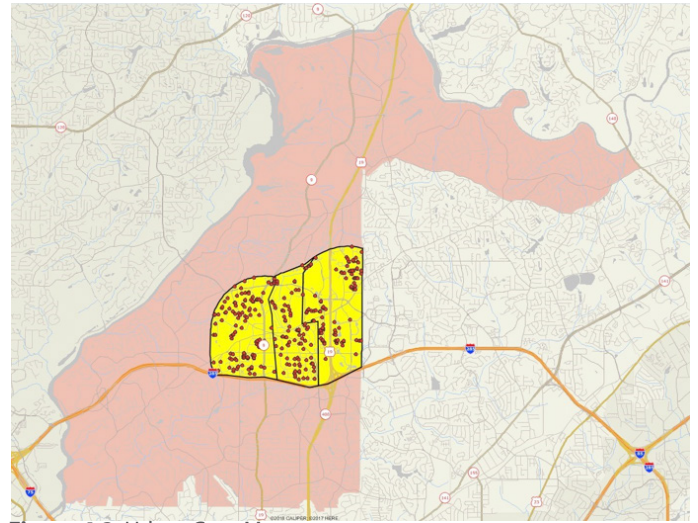


Figure 4.2: Urban Core Map

4.3 Statistically Valid Survey

4.3.1 Overview

The consulting team administered a community interest and opinion survey for the City of Sandy Springs during the summer of 2018. The survey was administered as part of the City’s update to their Comprehensive Recreation and Parks Master Plan. The survey and its results will be used to establish priorities for improvements to parks, open space system, and recreation programming throughout the city. The survey will also help the City take a resident-driven approach to making decisions about the future of the City’s park system. The overview and detailed results below are from the survey sent to the entire city. The detailed results from the survey sent to the urban core area only can be found in the appendix of this report. The conclusions of both surveys are compared at the end of this section of the report.

4.3.2 Methodology

The consulting team mailed a survey packet to a random sample of households in the City of Sandy Springs. Each survey packet contained a cover letter, a copy of the survey, and a postage-paid return envelope. Residents who received the survey were given the option of returning the survey by mail or completing it one time only on-line at www.SandySpringsCommunitySurvey.org.

Ten days after the surveys were mailed, the consulting team sent emails and placed phone calls to the households that



received the survey to encourage participation. The emails contained a link to the on-line version of the survey to make it easy for residents to complete the survey. To prevent people who were not residents of the City of Sandy Springs from participating, everyone who completed the survey on-line was required to enter their home address prior to submitting the survey. The consulting team then matched the addresses that were entered on-line with the addresses that were originally selected for the random sample. If the address from a survey completed on-line did not match one of the addresses selected for the sample, the on-line survey was not counted. A total of 512 residents completed the survey. The overall results for the sample of 400 households have a precision of at least +/-4.3% at the 95% level of confidence.

4.3.3 Facility Use and Ratings - City Overall

Respondents were asked to indicate if they have used four different types of facilities and rate the condition of the facilities they have used during the past 12 months.

- 73% of respondents have used park areas
- 57% have used trails
- 52% have used the Riverfront area
- 19% have used the Recreation Center
-

Park areas and riverfront area received the highest percentage of “excellent” and “good” ratings among the four types of facilities respondents were asked to rate. Respondents were least satisfied with the condition of the recreation center. If respondents indicated they had not visited one of the four facilities they were asked to indicate the reasons why. Results include:

- 24% were not aware of parks or trails locations
- 15% use parks and trails in other cities
- 13% indicated parks and trails offered by the City of Sandy Springs lack features they want to use

4.3.4 Program Participation and Ratings - City Overall

Twenty-three percent (23%) of respondents indicated their household has participated in a recreation program offered by the City of Sandy Springs during the past 12 months. Ninety-two percent (92%) of respondents indicated the quality of the programs they have participated in are either “excellent” (42%) or “good” (50%). The main reason households have not participated or do not participate in programs more often is that they do not know what is offered (65%).

Facility Needs and Priorities

Facility Needs: Respondents were asked to identify if their household had a need for 25 recreation facilities and amenities and rate how well their needs for each were currently being met. Based on this analysis, the number of households in the community that had the greatest “unmet” need for various facilities was estimated. The four recreation facilities with the highest percentage of households that have an unmet need were:

1. Multi-use trails – 17,460 households (or 36%),
2. Dog parks – 15,608 households (or 32%),
3. Hiking trails – 14,641 households (or 30%), and
4. Indoor pool – 13,532 households (or 28%).



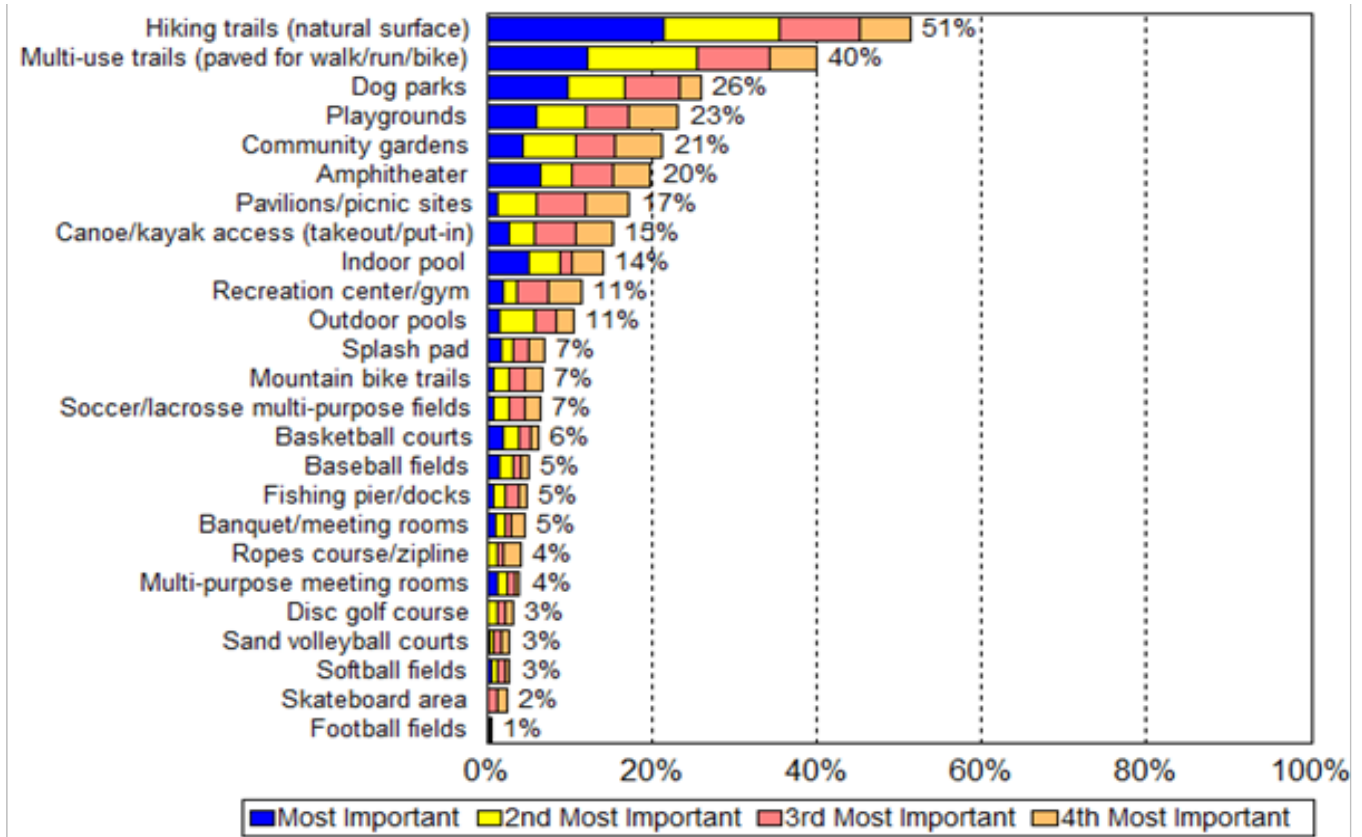
Facility Importance. In addition to assessing the needs for each facility, also assessed was the importance that residents placed on each facility. Based on the sum of respondents’ top four choices, the three most important facilities to residents were:

1. Hiking trails (51%)
2. Multi-use trails (40%)
3. Dog parks (26%)

The percentage of residents who selected each facility as one of their top four choices is shown in Figure 4.3.

Facilities that are Most Important to Households

by percentage of respondents who selected the items as one of their top four choices



Source: ETC Institute (2018)

Figure 4.3: City Overall Most Important Facilities



Top Priorities for Investment for Recreation Facilities Based on the Priority Investment Rating

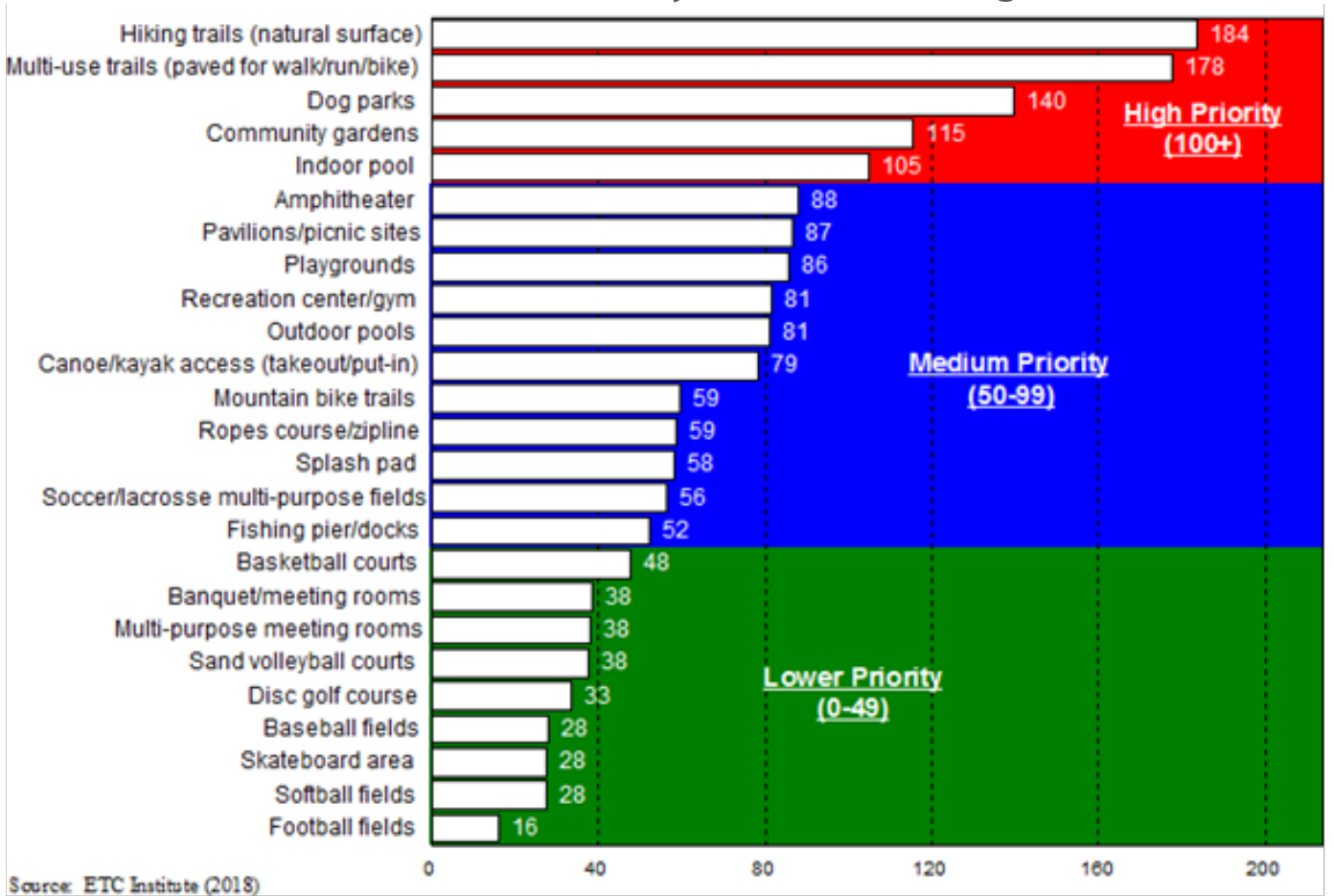


Fig. 4.4: City Overall Top Priorities for Facilities

Priorities for Facility Investments. The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) was developed by the consulting team to provide organizations with an objective tool for evaluating the priority that should be placed on recreation and parks investments. The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) equally weights the importance that residents place on facilities and how many residents have unmet needs for the facility. (Details regarding the methodology for this analysis are provided in Appendix of this report.)

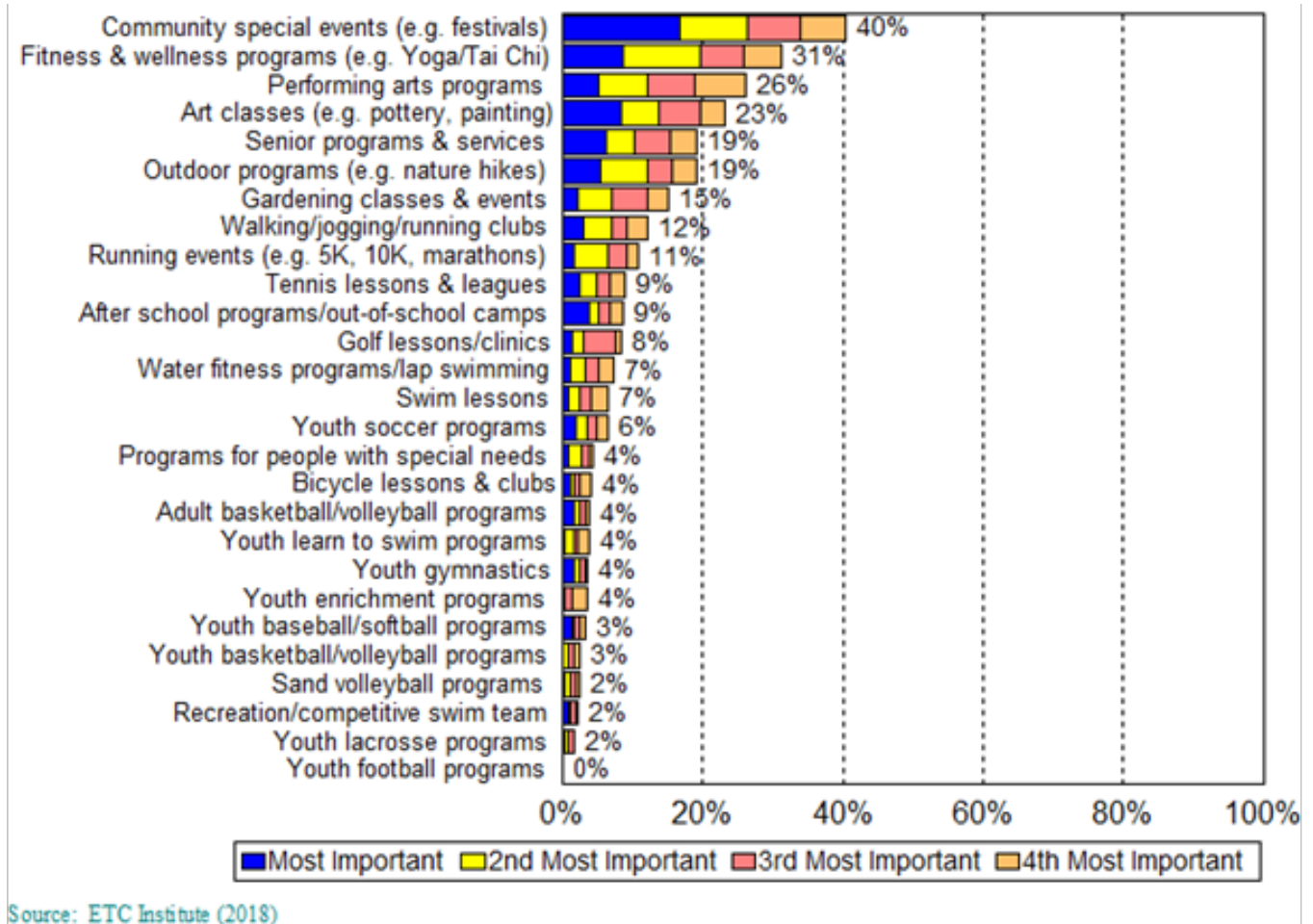
Based on the Priority Investment Rating (PIR), the following five facilities were rated as high priorities for investment (see Figure 4.4):

- Hiking trails (PIR=184)
- Multi-use trails (PIR=178)
- Dog parks (PIR=140)
- Community gardens (PIR=115)
- Indoor pool (PIR=105)



Programs that are Most Important to Households

by percentage of respondents who selected the items as one of their top four choices



Source: ETC Institute (2018)

Figure 4.5: City Overall Most Important Programs.

4.3.5 Programming Needs and Priorities - City Overall

Programming Needs. Respondents were also asked to identify if their household had a need for 27 recreational programs and rate how well their needs for each program were currently being met. Based on this analysis, the number of households in the community that had “unmet” needs for each program was estimated.

The four recreation programs with the highest percentage of households that have an unmet need were:

1. Fitness and wellness programs – 20,670 households (or 42%),
2. Community special events– 15,465 households (or 32%),
3. Art classes – 14,030 households (or 29%), and
4. Outdoor programs – 13,874 households (or 27%).

Program Importance. In addition to assessing the needs for each program, the importance residents place on each program was also addressed. Based on the sum of respondents’ top four choices, the three most important programs to residents were:

1. Community special events (40%),
2. Fitness and wellness programs (31%), and
3. Performing arts programs (26%).

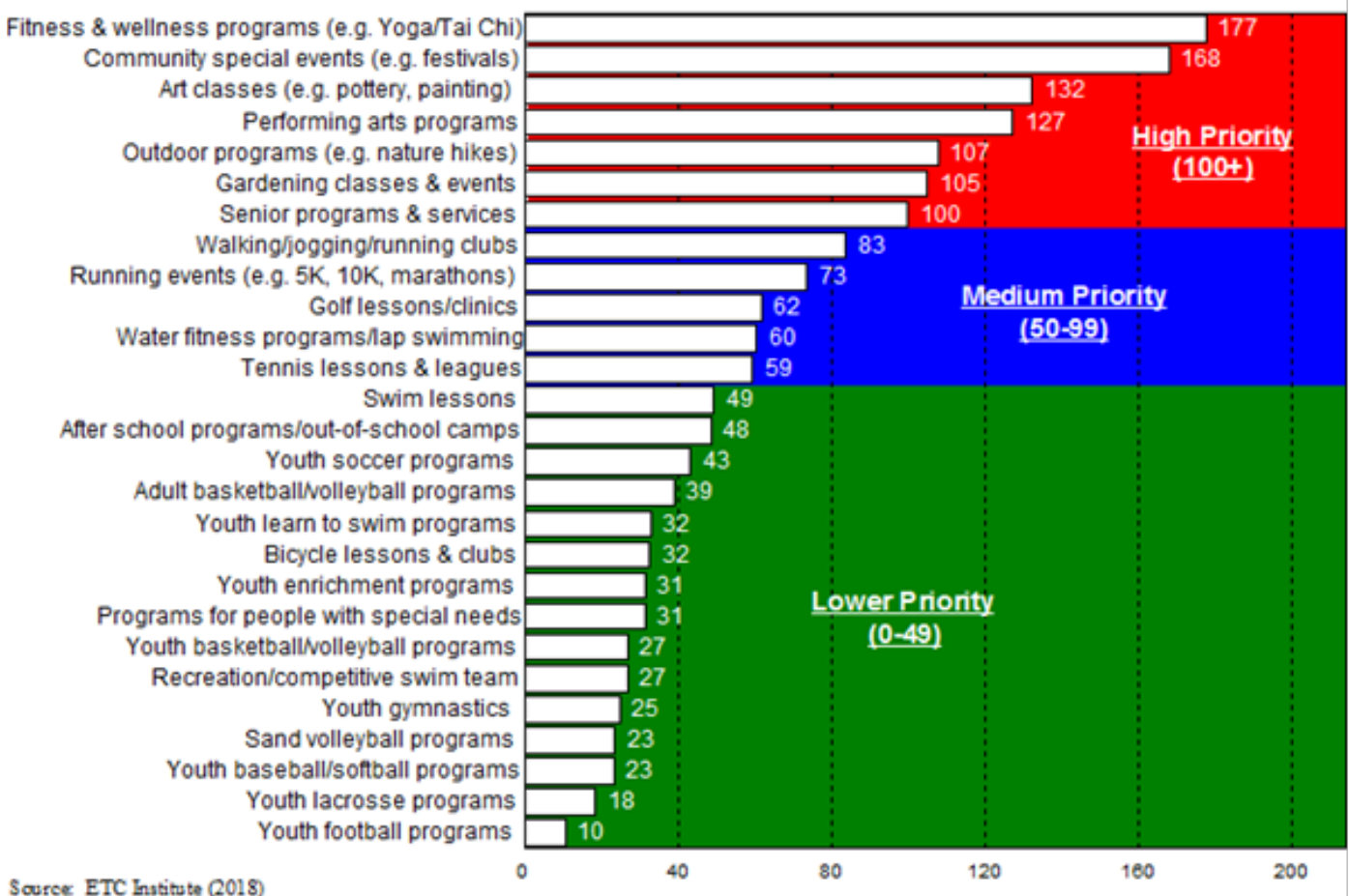


The percentage of residents who selected each program as one of their top four choices is shown in the chart below: **Priorities for Programming Investments.** Based on the priority investment rating (PIR), the following seven programs were rated as “high priorities” for investment:

- Fitness and wellness programs (PIR=177)
- Community special events (PIR=168)
- Art classes (PIR=132)
- Performing arts programs (PIR=127)
- Outdoor programs (PIR=107)
- Gardening classes and events (PIR=105)
- Senior programs and services (PIR=100)

Figure 4.6 shows the Priority Investment Rating (PIR) for each of the 27 programs that were rated.

Top Priorities for Investment for Recreation Programs Based on the Priority Investment Rating



Source: ETC Institute (2018)

Fig. 4.6: Urban Core Top Priorities for Facilities



4.3.6 Support for Actions that Would Improve the Parks, Trails, and Recreation System in the City of Sandy Springs - City Overall

Respondents were asked to indicate which items, from a list of 14, they would most support the City of Sandy Springs taking to improve the parks, trails, and recreation system. Based on the sum of “very supportive” and “somewhat supportive” responses the most supported actions were: repairing parks (87%), improving the existing trail system (87%), developing new walking and biking trails (86%), developing new parks (85%), adding trail and walking loops in existing parks (84%), and purchasing land to preserve open space (84%). Adding trails and walking loops in existing parks (34%), repairing parks (34%), purchasing land to preserve open space (34%), and developing new Walking and biking trails (34%) were the improvements respondents would be most willing to fund based on the sum of their top four responses.

4.3.7 Conclusions - City Overall

Fifty-four percent (54%) of respondents indicated they are either “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the overall value their household receives from the City of Sandy Springs’ Recreation and Parks Department. To ensure that the City of Sandy Springs continues to meet the needs and expectations of the community, The consulting team recommends that the Recreation and Parks Department sustain and/or improve the performance in areas that were identified as “high priorities” by the Priority Investment Rating (PIR). The facilities and programs with the highest PIR ratings are listed below.

Facility Priorities

- Hiking trails (PIR=184)
- Multi-use trails (PIR=178)
- Dog parks (PIR=140)
- Community gardens (PIR=115)
- Indoor pool (PIR=105)
- Gardening classes and events (PIR=105)
- Senior programs and services (PIR=100)

Programming Priorities

- Fitness and wellness programs (PIR=177)
- Community special events (PIR=168)
- Art classes (PIR=132)
- Performing arts programs (PIR=127)
- Outdoor programs (PIR=107)

Full results from both the Urban Core and City Overall survey can be found in the Appendix.

4.4 Urban Core Statistically Valid Survey

4.4.1 Overview

The community interest and opinion survey for the City of Sandy Springs Urban Core area was administered in the same way as the survey for the overall city, but it was done separately. While the differences between the responses within the Urban Core and the Overall City are not stark, they are noteworthy. The interest in programs is extremely similar in the Urban Core and the Overall City. But the interest in facilities makes clear that people who live in the densely commercial area of the city crave access to outdoor wilderness experiences such as hiking, trail bike riding, and boating. These are activities that are not connected to the urban areas. They also want things that areas with swim/tennis amenity facilities take for granted; playground and outdoor pools. Below are the conclusions from the Urban Core Community Survey for direct comparison with the Overall City conclusions above.

4.3.9 Conclusions - Urban Core

Forty-five percent (45%) of respondents indicated they are either “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the overall value their household receives from the City of Sandy Springs’ Recreation and Parks Department. To ensure that the City of Sandy Springs continues to meet the needs and expectations of the community, ETC Institute recommends that the Recreation and Parks Department sustain and/or improve the performance in areas that were identified as “high priorities” by the Priority Investment Rating (PIR). The facilities and programs with the highest PIR ratings are listed below.



Facility Priorities

- Hiking trails (PIR=147)
- Playgrounds (PIR=115)
- Multi-use trails (PIR=114)
- Mountain bike trails (PIR=109)
- Outdoor pools (PIR=109)
- Canoe/kayak access (PIR=103)

Programming Priorities

- Fitness and wellness programs (PIR=175)
- Community special events (PIR=174)
- Art classes (PIR=123)
- Performing arts programs (PIR=119)
- Outdoor programs (PIR=117)

Full results from both the Urban Core and City Overall survey can be found in the Appendix.



Image Credit: City of Sandy Springs



5.0 PROGRAM & SERVICES ASSESSMENT

5.1 Overview of Priorities and Core Program Areas

The Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks Department has a professional staff that annually delivers sports, fitness, recreation and special event programs. Department staff are responsible for the management and implementation of a diverse array recreation programs, special community-wide events, and the operation of multiple facilities. Employees are engaged year-round in planning, implementing, conducting, and evaluating programs and events. All functions within the Department combine to provide hundreds of offerings in the areas of youth camps, outdoor adventure, aquatics, sports, health, fitness, senior services and special events. But in addition to the provision of services provided directly by the Department, partnerships with other organizations are utilized throughout the service area. Through formal and informal cooperative relationships with various school districts and nonprofit agencies, partners assist with delivering select programs and indoor space to provide limited access for programs.

5.2 Core Program Approach

The vision of the Department is to be one of the premier park and recreation systems in the United States providing all residents access to high-quality programs and experiences. Part of realizing this vision involves identifying Core Program Areas to create a sense of focus around activities and outcomes of greatest importance to the community as informed by current and future needs. However, public recreation is challenged by the premise of being all things to all people. The philosophy of the Core Program Area assists staff, policy makers, and the public focus on what is most important. Program areas are considered as Core if they meet a majority of the following categories:

- The program area has been provided for a long period of time (over 4-5 years) and/or is expected by the community.
- The program area consumes a relatively large portion (5% or more) of the agency’s overall budget.
- The program area is offered 3-4 seasons per year.
- The program area has wide demographic appeal.
- There is a tiered level of skill development available within the programs area’s offerings.
- There is full-time staff responsible for the program area.
- There are facilities designed specifically to support the program area.
- The agency controls a significant percentage (20% or more) of the local market.

5.3 Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks Core Programs

The Department currently offers programs and services in seven Core Program Areas, identified in the table below:

CORE PROGRAM AREA DESCRIPTION		
Core Program Area	Brief Description	Internal Goals and/or Desired Outcomes
Adult Sports	League structured programs that provide opportunities for adults to gather friends to form a team to participate	Continue to expand participation levels by providing an exceptional structure and oversight. Need for increased indoor space to program. Competition from other organizations. Revenue producer.
Fitness	Programs to provide adults and active seniors an avenue to participate that benefit their physical, mental, and emotional health	Offer and promote access to healthy lifestyle opportunities. Need for quality, trained, and certified instructors.
Special Events	Park events coordinated by other organizations that bring people of all ages and families together to celebrate the community. Also included are non-profit sports organizations that utilize our facilities for their practices and games	Offer events of a variety of sizes to bring community together. Additionally, assist the facilitation of non-profit events, leagues, and camps offered throughout our parks system. Our goal is to help them be successful.



Core Program Area	Brief Description	Internal Goals and/or Desired Outcomes
Special Interest	Area that focuses on hobby-based programming to fulfill different interest-based instruction or additional learning opportunities	Provide programs to meet the needs of the community with specific interests. Provide educational or basic instruction. Offer life skills programming.
Youth Camps	Provide safe, quality structured program for school-aged children for all-day care. Provide activities within the camps that separate our Dept. from other providers. Staff ratios based on age of participants	Offer a variety of camps for youth from traditional out-of-school camps to sports to outdoor recreation.
Youth Sports	Area that focuses on wide variety of different sports providing quality instructional programming and opportunities for more advanced athletes.	Focuses on both instructional skill development (leagues and camps) and opportunities for club sport athletes. Area for expanded program opportunities for club sports.

Table 5.1: Core Program Area Descriptions

Ensuring the Right Core Program Mix

The Core Program Areas provided by Sandy Springs currently appears to meet some of the major needs of the Sandy Springs community, but the program mix must be evaluated on a regular and reoccurring basis to ensure that the offerings within each Core Program Area – and the Core Program Areas themselves – align with changing leisure trends, demographics, and needs of residents. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) recommends that six determinants be used to inform what programs and services are provided by the Department. According to NRPA, those determinants are:

- **Conceptual foundations of play, recreation, and leisure** – Programs and services should encourage and promote a degree of freedom, choice, and voluntary engagement in their structure and design. Programs should reflect positive themes aimed at improving quality of life for both individuals and the overall community.
- **Organizational philosophy, mission, and vision** – Programs and services should support the Department’s mission and vision statements, values, goals, and objectives. These generally center on promoting personal health, community well-being, social equality, environmental awareness, and economic vitality.
- **Constituent interests and desired needs** – Departments should actively seek to understand the recreational needs and interests of their constituency. This not only ensures an effective (and ethical) use of taxpayer dollars, but also helps to make sure that programs perform well and are valued by residents.
- **Creation of a constituent-centered culture** – Programs and services do reflect a departmental culture where constituents’ needs are the prime factor in creating and providing programs. This should be reflected not only in program design, but in terms of staff behaviors, architecture, furniture, technology, dress, forms of address, decision-making style, planning processes, and forms of communication.
- **Experiences desirable for clientele** – Programs and services should be designed to provide the experiences desirable to meet the needs of the participants/clients in a community and identified target markets. This involves not only identifying and understanding the diversity of needs in a community, but also applying recreation programming expertise and skills to design, implement, and evaluate a variety of desirable experiences for residents to meet those needs.
- **Community opportunities** – When planning programs and services, a Department should consider the network of opportunities afforded by other organizations such as nonprofits, schools, other public agencies, and the private sector. Departments should also recognize where gaps in service provision occur and consider how unmet needs can be addressed.



5.4 Survey Findings

As part of the process for developing a Park and Recreation Master Plan, the consulting team conducted a statistically valid citizen survey to identify satisfaction with park and recreation facilities, identify needed park and recreation facilities and programs, and gain input from citizens that will assist City officials in park and recreation resource allocation, budget and policy decisions. A total of 512 residents participated in the survey. Participants rated the City of Sandy Springs as having a current or anticipated need for the following recreation programs, ranked in order of importance (full results on this topic can be found in the appendix):

Programs that Households Have a Need For
by percentage of respondents (multiple choices could be made)

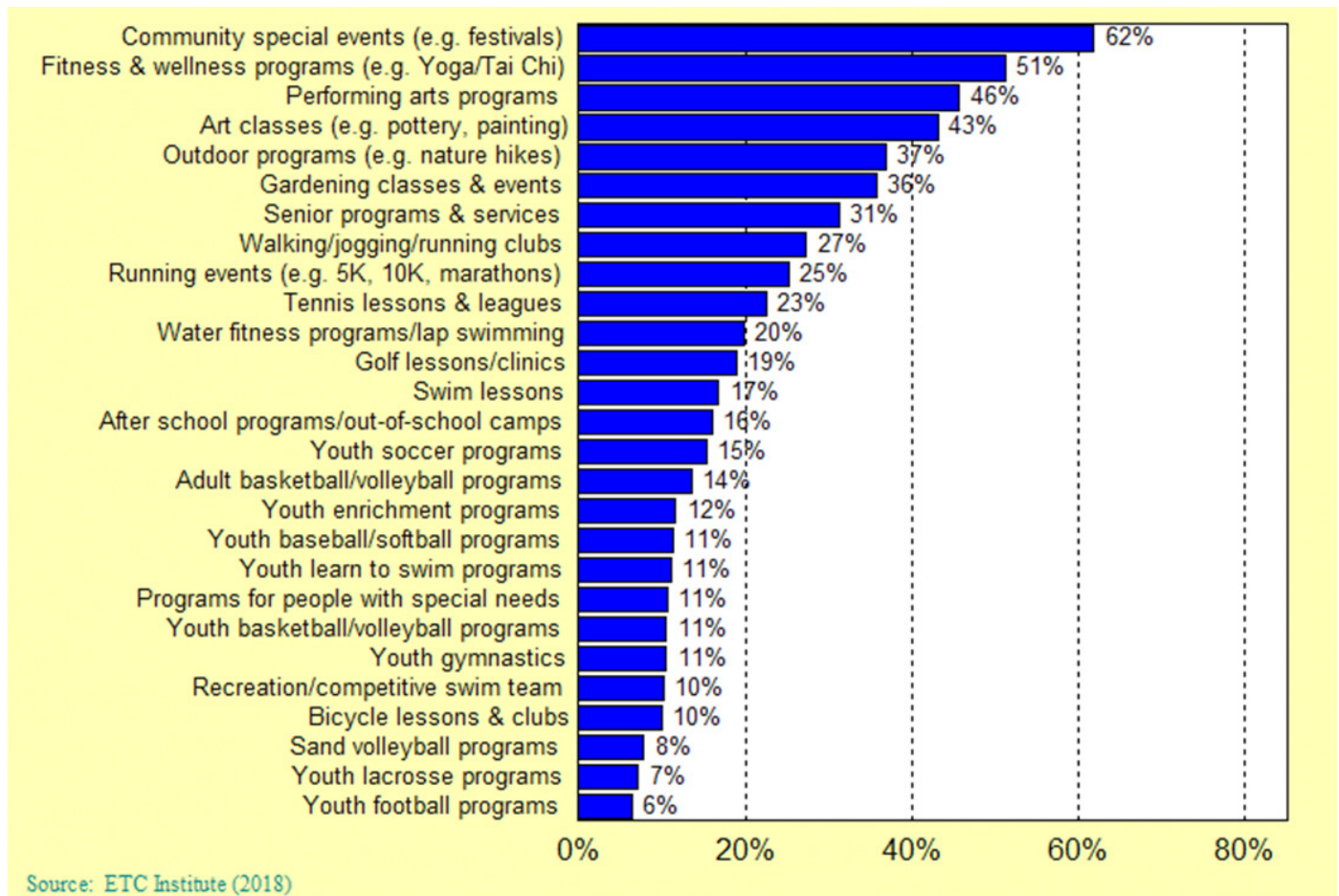


Fig. 5.1: Programs that Households Have a Need For

5.5 Age Segment Analysis

The table on the following page depicts each program along with the age segments they serve. Recognizing that many programs serve multiple age segments, primary and secondary markets were identified.

Age Segment Analysis – Current Segments Served

Findings from the analysis show that the Department provides a good balance of programs across all age segments. All segments are targeted as a primary market for multiple programs.



AGES SERVED					
Primary Market or Secondary Market					
Programs	Preschool (5 and Under)	Elementary (6-12)	Teens (13-17)	Young Adult (18-34)	Adult (35-54)
Adult Flag Football (contract)				Primary	Primary
Adult Pickleball (in-house)				Secondary	Secondary
Adult Soccer (contract)				Primary	Primary
Adult Volleyball (contract)				Primary	Primary
Art a la Carte Before/After Summer Camp Care	Secondary	Primary	Secondary		
Art a la Carte Summer Camp	Secondary	Primary	Secondary		
Back to School Bash	Primary	Primary	Primary	Secondary	Secondary
Backyard Birding Classes		Secondary	Secondary	Primary	Primary
Bird Walks		Secondary	Secondary	Primary	Primary
Canoe Kayak Stand up Paddleboard Intro Day		Secondary	Secondary	Primary	Primary
Discover Nature Summer Camp		Primary			
Exceptional Adventures Inclusion Summer Camp		Primary			
Father Daughter Dance		Primary	Secondary	Primary	Primary
Fencing		Primary	Primary	Primary	Primary
Fulton County Schools Special Olympics Bocce		Primary	Primary		
Fulton County Schools Special Olympics Gymnastics		Primary	Primary	Secondary	Secondary
Fulton Golden Games					
Gardening Classes			Secondary	Primary	Primary
Gymnastics	Primary	Primary	Primary	Secondary	Secondary
History Lectures			Secondary	Primary	Primary
Karate		Primary	Primary	Primary	Primary
Ladies Morning Paddle			Secondary	Primary	Primary
Master Gardener Lectures				Primary	Primary
National Kids To Parks Day	Primary	Primary	Primary	Secondary	Secondary
Paddle Shack Rentals		Secondary	Secondary	Primary	Primary
Paddle Shack Storage					
Photography Club			Secondary	Primary	Primary
Pollination Celebration	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary	Primary	Primary
Rhythmic Gymnastics	Primary	Primary	Primary	Secondary	
School Field Trip Program	Primary	Primary	Primary		
Special Pops Tennis		Primary	Primary	Secondary	Secondary
SSYS Baseball/Softball (contract)	Primary	Primary	Primary	Secondary	
SSYS Football/Cheerleading (contract)	Primary	Primary	Primary	Secondary	
Star Gazing	Secondary	Primary	Primary	Primary	Primary
Summer Day Camp		Primary			
Summer Hangout Camp (in-house)		Secondary	Primary	Secondary	
Summer Soccer Camp (in-house)	Primary	Primary	Secondary	Secondary	
Summer Sports Camp (in-house)	Secondary	Primary	Secondary		
Summer Theater Camp	Secondary	Primary	Secondary		
Stand-Up Paddleboard Demo Classes			Secondary	Primary	Primary
Stand-Up Paddleboard Race		Secondary	Secondary	Primary	Primary
Stand-Up Paddleboard Yoga Classes			Secondary	Primary	Primary
Team Gymnastics	Primary	Primary	Primary		
Youth Basketball (in-house)		Primary	Primary	Secondary	
Youth Golf (in-house)	Secondary	Primary	Primary	Secondary	
Youth Kickball (in-house)	Secondary	Primary	Primary		
Youth Lacrosse (contract)	Primary	Primary	Primary	Primary	
Youth Running Club (in-house)	Secondary	Secondary	Primary		
Youth Soccer (in-house)	Primary	Primary		Secondary	Secondary
Youth Track (in-house)	Primary	Primary	Primary		
Youth Wrestling (in-house)	Primary	Primary	Secondary		

Table 5.2: Ages Served in Primary or Secondary Market.

This balance should be maintained moving forward, and the Department should update this Age Segment Analysis every year to note changes or to refine age segment categories. Given the growing population trend for residents ages 55 and over and the growing demand for services in this age bracket, it is also recommended that the Department further segment this group into 65-74 and 75+. These two sub-segments will have increasingly different needs and expectations for programs and services in coming years, and program planning will be needed to provide differing requirements.



Age Segment Analyses should ideally be conducted for every program offered by the Department. Program coordinators/managers should include this information when creating or updating program plans for individual programs. An Age Segment Analysis can also be incorporated into Mini Business Plans for comprehensive program planning.

5.6 Lifecycle Analysis

A lifecycle analysis involves reviewing every program identified by City of Sandy Springs’ staff to determine the stage of growth or decline for each as a way of informing strategic decisions about the overall recreation program portfolio.

The various stages of program lifecycles are as follows:

- Introduction - New program; modest participation
- Take-Off - Rapid participation growth
- Growth - Moderate, but consistent participation growth
- Mature - Slow participation growth
- Saturated - Minimal to no participation growth; extreme competition
- Decline - Declining participation

This analysis is not based on strict quantitative data, but rather is based on staff’s knowledge of their program areas. The table 5.3 below shows the percentage distribution of the various lifecycle categories of the Department’s recreation programs. These percentages were obtained by comparing the number of programs in each individual stage with the total number of programs listed by staff.

SYSTEM-WIDE LIFECYCLE STAGE				
	Percentage	Number	Actual Distribution	Best Practice Distribution
Introduction	10	7	67.6%	50-60%
Take-Off	10	7		
Growth	47	32		
Mature	24	16	23.5%	40%
Saturated	4	3	8.8%	0-10%
Decline	4	3		
TOTAL	100	68		

Table 5.3: System-wide Lifecycle Stages

Recreation Program Lifecycle Analysis - Current Distribution and Recommendations

Overall, the lifecycle analysis results indicate an unbalanced distribution of all programs across the life cycle. A combined total of 67.6% of programs fall into the Introduction, Take-off and Growth stages, primarily due to the increase in programs offered by the department within the last five years.

While it is important to provide new programs to align with trends and help meet the evolving needs of the community, it is also important to have a stable core segment of programs that are in the Mature stage. Currently, the Department has only 23.5% of their programs in this category. The consulting team recommends this be approximately 40% so as to provide stability to the overall program portfolio, but without dominating the portfolio with programs that are advancing to the later stages of the lifecycle. Programs in the Mature stage should be tracked for signs they are entering the Saturation or Decline stages. There should be an ongoing process to evaluate program participation and trends to ensure that program offerings continue to meet the community’s needs.

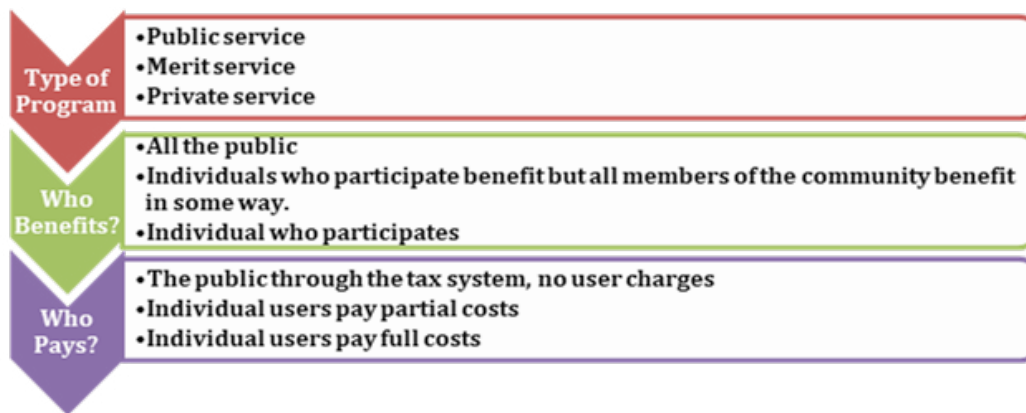


A total of 8.8% of programs are saturated or declining. The consulting team recommends keeping as few programs as possible in these two stages, but it is understood that programs eventually evolve into saturation and decline. If programs never reach these stages, it is an indication that staff may be excessively modifying their offerings and abbreviating the natural evolution of programs. This prevents programs from reaching their maximum participation, efficiency, and effectiveness. For departments challenged with doing the most they can with limited resources, this has the potential to be an area of concern.

As programs enter into the decline stage, they must be closely reviewed and evaluated for repositioning or elimination. When this occurs, the consulting team’s recommendation is to modify these programs to begin a new lifecycle with the introductory stage or to add new programs based upon community needs and trends. Staff should complete a lifecycle review on an annual basis and ensure that the percentage distribution closely aligns with desired performance.

5.7 Program and Service Classification

The Recreation and Parks Department currently does not classify its programs and services. Classifying programs and services is an important process for an agency to follow in order to remain aligned with the community’s interests and needs, the mission of the organization, and to sustainably operate within the bounds of the financial resources that support it. The criteria utilized and recommended in program classification stems from the foundation’s concept detailed by Dr. John Crompton and Dr. Charles Lamb. In Marketing Government and Social Services, they purport that programs need to be evaluated on the criteria of type, who benefits, and who bears the cost of the program. This is illustrated below:



The approach taken in this analysis expands classifying services in the following ways:

- For whom the program is targeted
- For what purpose
- For what benefits
- For what cost
- For what outcome



5.7.1 Parameters for Classifying Program Types

The first milestone is to develop a classification system for the services and functions of the City of Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks Department. These systems need to reflect the statutory obligations of the agency, the support functions performed, and the value-added programs that enrich both the customer's experience and generate earned revenues in mission-aligned ways to help support operating costs.

In order to identify how the costs of services are supported and by what funding source, the programs are to be classified by their intended purpose and what benefits they provide. Then funding source expectations can then be assigned and this data used in future cost analysis. The results of this process are a summary of classification definitions and criteria, classification of programs within the City of Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks Department and recommended cost recovery targets for each service based on these assumptions.

Program classification is important as financial performance (cost recovery) goals are established for each category of services. This is then linked to the recommendations and strategies for each program or future site business plan. These classifications need to be organized to correspond with cost recovery expectations defined for each category. In this section of the Master Plan, each program area will be assigned specific cost recovery targets that align with these expectations.

5.7.2 Service Classification Process

The service classification process consists of the following steps:

1. Develop a definition for each program classification that fits the legislative intent and expectations of the Department; the ability of the Department to meet public needs within the appropriate areas of service; and the mission and core values of City of Sandy Springs' Recreation and Parks Department.
2. Develop criteria that can be used to evaluate each program and function within the Department and determine the classification that best fits.

5.7.3 Program Classification Descriptions

The program classification matrix was developed as a guide for the Department staff to follow when classifying programs, and how that program needs to be managed with regard to cost recovery. By establishing clarification of what constitutes a "Core Public Service", "Important Public Service", and "Value Added Service" will provide the Department and its stakeholders a better understanding of why and how to manage each program area as it applies to public value and private value.

Additionally, the effectiveness of the criteria linked to performance management expectations relies on the true cost of programs (direct and indirect cost) being identified. Where a program falls within this matrix can help to determine the most appropriate cost recovery rate that should be pursued and measured. This includes being able to determine what level of public benefit and private benefit exists as they apply to each program area. Public benefit is described as, "everyone receives the same level of benefit with equal access". Private benefit is described as "the user receives exclusive benefit above what a general taxpayer receives for their personal benefit".



	ESSENTIAL Programs	IMPORTANT Programs	VALUE-ADDED Programs
Public Interest; Legal Mandate; Mission Alignment	High public expectation	High public expectation	High individual and interest group expectation
Financial Sustainability	Free, nominal or fee tailored to public needs Requires public funding	Fees cover some direct costs Requires a balance of public funding and a cost recovery target	Fees cover most direct and indirect costs Some public funding as appropriate
Benefits (i.e., health, safety, protection of assets)	Substantial public benefit (negative consequence if not provided)	Public and individual benefit	Primarily individual benefit
Competition in the Market	Limited or no alternative providers	Alternative providers unable to meet demand or need	Alternative providers readily available
Access	Open access by all	Open access Limited access to users	Limited access to users

Table 5.4: Program Classifications

5.7.4 Classification of Services-Key Recommendations

In order to improve the fiscal performance and delivery of programs and services, the consulting team makes the following recommendations.

- Implement the Classification of Services and Cost Recovery Goals: Through the program assessment analysis, the major functional program areas were assessed and classified based on the criteria established in the previous section of the plan. This process included determining which programs and services fit into each classification criteria. Then cost recovery goals were established based on the guidelines included in this plan. The percentage of cost recovery is based on the classification of services and will typically fall within these ranges, although anomalies will exist:
 - » Essential 0-35%
 - » Important 35-75%
 - » Value Added 75%+

The table on the following pages represents a summary of programs and services, the classification of those programs, as well as recommended cost recovery goals to be achieved within 5 years.



PROGRAM	BENEFIT LEVEL	CLASSIFICATION	PRICING STRATEGY	RECOMMENDED TOTAL COST RECOVERY
Adult Flag Football (contract)	Individual	Value Added	Rental Fees	100%
Adult Pickleball (in-house)	Merit	Important	General Fund/User Fees	50%
Adult Soccer (contract)	Individual	Value Added	Rental Fees	100%
Adult Volleyball (contract)	Individual	Value Added	Rental Fees	100%
Art a la carte Before/After Summer Camp Care	Merit	Important	General Fund/User Fees	50%
Art a la carte Summer Camp	Merit	Important	General Fund/User Fees	50%
Back to School Bash	Community	Essential	Sponsorships/General Fund	up to 35%
Backyard Birding Classes	Individual	Value Added	User Fees	100%
Bird Walks	Community	Essential	Sponsorships/General Fund	up to 35%
Canoe Kayak Stand Up Paddleboard Intro Day	Merit	Important	General Fund/User Fees	50%
Discover Nature Summer Camp	Merit	Important	General Fund/User Fees	50%
Exceptional Adventures Inclusion Summer Camp	Community	Essential	General Fund	up to 35%
Father Daughter Dance	Community	Essential	General Fund	up to 35%
Fulton County Schools Special Olympics Bocce	Community	Essential	General Fund	up to 35%
Fulton County Schools Special Olympics Gymnastics	Community	Essential	General Fund	up to 35%
Fulton Golden Games	Community	Essential	General Fund	up to 35%
Gardening Classes	Individual	Value Added	User Fees	100%
Gymnastics	Individual	Value Added	User Fees	100%
History Lectures	Community	Essential	General Fund	up to 35%
Karate	Individual	Value Added	User Fees	100%
Ladies Morning Paddle	Individual	Value Added	User Fees	100%
Master Gardener Lectures	Community	Essential	General Fund	up to 35%
National Kids to Parks Day	Community	Essential		up to 35%
Paddle Shack Rentals	Individual	Value Added	Rental Fees	100%
Paddle Shack Storage	Individual	Value Added	Rental Fees	100%
Photography Club	Community	Essential	Sponsorships/General Fund	up to 35%
Pollination Celebration	Community	Essential	General Fund	up to 35%
Rhythmic Gymnastics	Individual	Value Added	User Fees	100%
School Field Trip Program	Community	Essential	Sponsorships/General Fund	up to 35%



PROGRAM	BENEFIT LEVEL	CLASSIFICATION	PRICING STRATEGY	RECOMMENDED TOTAL COST RECOVERY
Special Pops Tennis	Community	Essential	Sponsorships/General Fund	up to 35%
SSYS Baseball/Softball (contract)	Individual	Value Added	Partnership	100%
SSYS Football/Cheerleading (contract)	Individual	Value Added	Partnership	100%
Star Gazing	Community	Essential	Sponsorships/General Fund	up to 35%
Summer Day Camp	Merit	Important	General Fund/User Fees	50%
Summer Hang-Out Camp (in-house)	Merit	Important	General Fund/User Fees	50%
Summer Soccer Camp (in-house)	Merit	Important	General Fund/User Fees	50%
Summer Sports Camp (in-house)	Merit	Important	General Fund/User Fees	50%
Summer Theater Camp	Merit	Important	General Fund/User Fees	50%
Stand-Up Paddleboard Demo Classes	Individual	Value Added	User Fees	100%
Stand-Up Paddleboard Race	Individual	Value Added	User Fees	100%
Stand-Up Paddleboard Yoga Classes	Individual	Value Added	User Fees	100%
Team Gymnastics	Individual	Value Added	User Fees	100%
Youth Basketball (in-house)	Merit	Important	General Fund/User Fees	50%
Youth Golf (in-house)	Merit	Important	General Fund/User Fees	50%
Youth Kickball (in-house)	Merit	Important	General Fund/User Fees	50%
Youth Lacrosse (contract)	Community	Essential	General Fund	up to 35%
Youth Running Club (in-house)	Individual	Value Added	User Fees	100%
Youth Soccer (in-house)	Merit	Important	General Fund/User Fees	50%
Youth Track (in-house)	Merit	Important	General Fund/User Fees	50%
Youth Wrestling (in-house)	Merit	Important	General Fund/User Fees	50%

Table 5.5: Classification of Services and Recovery Goals



5.8 Understanding the Full Cost of Service

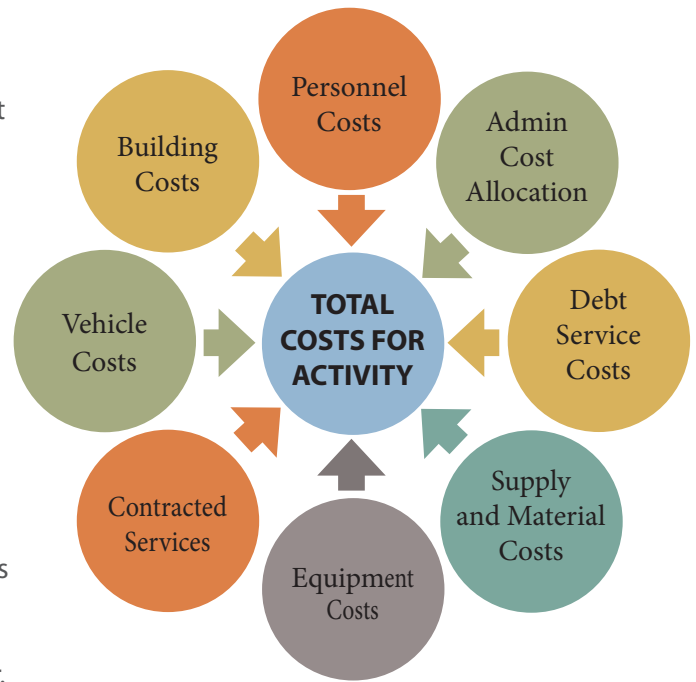
To properly fund all programs, either through tax subsidies or user fees, and to establish the right cost recovery targets, a Cost of Service Analysis should be conducted on each program, or program type, that accurately calculates direct (i.e., program-specific) and indirect (i.e., comprehensive, including administrative overhead) costs. Completing a Cost of Service Analysis not only helps determine the true and full cost of offering a program but provides information that can be used to price programs based upon accurate delivery costs. The image illustrates the common types of costs that must be accounted for in a Cost of Service Analysis.

The methodology for determining the total Cost of Service involves calculating the total cost for the activity, program, or service, then calculating the total revenue earned for that activity. Costs (and revenue) can also be derived on a per unit basis. Program or activity units may include:

- Number of participants
- Number of tasks performed
- Number of consumable units
- Number of service calls
- Number of events
- Required time for offering program/service

Agencies use Cost of Service Analyses to determine what financial resources are required to provide specific programs at specific levels of service. Results are used to determine and track cost recovery as well as to benchmark different programs provided by Sandy Springs between one another.

Cost recovery goals are established once Cost of Service totals have been calculated. Department staff should be trained on the process of conducting a Cost of Service Analysis and the process undertaken on a regular basis.



Currently, the Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks Department does make an effort to track revenue, expenditures and cost recovery goals for each program, but is not consistent in doing so.

To more accurately track cost of service and cost recovery, the consulting team recommends the following:

- **Develop New Pricing Policy Based on Classification of Programs and Services:** Given the recommended shift in philosophical approach, it is important to refocus the Department on cost recovery goals by functional program area or line of service. Pricing based on established operating budget recovery goals will provide flexibility to maximize all pricing strategies to the fullest. Allowing the staff to work within a pricing range tied to cost recovery goals will permit them to set prices based on market factors and differential pricing (prime-time/non-prime-time, season/off-season rates) to maximize user participation and also encourage additional group rate pricing where applicable.

To gain and provide consistency, a revised pricing policy must be adopted in order for the Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks Department to operate effectively and efficiently to meet the program cost recovery goals identified above. In short, it is important that the Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks Department state its policy in all publications, on its website, and in its reservation processes to describe how they establish a price for a service or use of a facility. Example: "The Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks Department's funding that is derived from taxpayers is focused on mission-based facilities and services. The programs and facilities that are furthest from our mission, that provide an individual benefit, or that provide exclusive use will require higher fees from users or other sources to help offset operating costs." It is recommended that the Sandy Springs City Council adopt the recommended cost recovery goals for the Recreation and Parks Department as presented in this Master Plan. In order to achieve the cost recovery goal, it is expected that the Sandy Springs



Recreation and Parks Department will strive to continue to meet the cost recovery goals established for each program area as recommended. In order to continue to meet these goals, efforts must be made to:

- » Consistently deliver high quality programs and services
- » Strategically price programs and services
- » Solicit sponsorships and donations to develop a sustainable earned income stream
- » Increase the utilization of volunteers to offset operational expenditures
- » Expand marketing to increase the volume of participation in programs and services

The cost recovery goals are expected to be achieved over a 5-year period and there should be no expectation that they be realized immediately. It is expected that an evolving implementation process of introducing the classification methodology and a new pricing policy along with the refinement of department’s cost of service analysis will occur over the next 5 years. This process will have an impact on cost recovery as it will result in the refinement of foundational business elements including but not limited to service levels, service delivery, pricing and the guidelines developed to secure external operational funding sources such as grants, donations and partnerships. Additionally, external factors such as economic conditions and changes to the City’s financial policies will have a bearing on achieving a cost recovery goal in which revenue offsets 50% of expenditures.

- **Develop Pricing Strategies:** As the Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks Department embarks on the implementation of a new pricing policy, it will be necessary to expand upon and implement pricing strategies that will not only increase sales but also maximize the utilization of the City of Sandy Springs’ parks, programs and recreation facilities. By creating pricing options, customers are given the opportunity to choose which option best fits their schedule and price point. The consulting team recommends that the Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks Department continue to explore pricing strategies that create options for the customer.

The following table offers examples of pricing options.

Primetime	Incentive Pricing
Non-primetime	Length of Stay Pricing
Season and Off-Season Rates	Cost of Recovery Goal Pricing
Multi-tiered Program Pricing	Level of Exclusivity Pricing
Group Discounting and Packaging	Age Segment Pricing
Volume Pricing	Level of Private Gain Pricing

5.9 Program Priority Rankings

The purpose of the Facility and Program Priority Rankings is to provide a prioritized list of facility/amenity needs and recreation program needs for the community served by Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks. This model evaluates both quantitative and qualitative data.

- Quantitative data includes the statistically-valid community survey, which asked residents to list unmet needs and rank their importance.
- Qualitative data includes resident feedback obtained in community input, stakeholder interviews, staff input, local demographics, recreation trends, and planning team observations.
- A weighted scoring system is used to determine the priorities for recreation programs:



DATA SOURCE	COMPONENT	WEIGHTING
Quantitative Data (measurable)	Unmet Needs Reported by the Community Survey — This is used as a factor from the total number of households stating whether they have a need for a facility/ program and the extent to which their need for facilities and recreation programs has been met. Survey participants were asked to identify this for 25 different facilities and 19 recreation programs.	35%
	Importance Rankings Reported by the Community Survey — This is used as a factor from the importance allocated to a facility or program by the community. Each respondent was asked to identify the top four most important facilities and recreation programs.	35%
Qualitative Data (subjective)	Synthesis of Trends and Anecdotal Information — This factor is derived from the planning team’s evaluation of program and facility priority based on survey results, community input, stakeholder interviews, staff input, local demographics, and recreation trends.	35%

Table 5.6: Program Priorities Scoring System

These weighted scores provide an overall score and priority ranking for the system as a whole. The results of the priority ranking are tabulated into three categories: High Priority (top third), Medium Priority (middle third), and Low Priority (bottom third):

PROGRAM/SERVICE	PRIORITY
Fitness and Wellness	High
Community Special Events	
Art and Culture	
Outdoor Recreation Programs	
Socialization with Dogs	
Interpretive and Naturalist Programs	
Senior Programs and Services	
Visiting Parks (General Visitation)	
Walking/Jogging/Running Events and Clubs	Medium
Golf	
Picnicking	
Water Fitness	
Tennis	Low
Youth Sports	
Adult Sports	
Swim Lessons	
Programs for People with Special Needs	
Competitive Swim Team	
Youth Out-of-School Programs/Camps	

Table 5.7: Overall Program Priorities

5.9.1 Key Findings

- **Program Evaluation:** Assessment and evaluation tools to measure the success of programs and services are in place.
- **Customer Satisfaction and Retention:** The department currently tracks customer satisfaction ratings and customer retention percentages.
- **Staff Training/Evaluation:** The department has a comprehensive staff training program and solid evaluation methods in place.
- **Public Input:** The department utilizes survey tools to continually gather feedback on needs and unmet



needs for programming.

- **Marketing:** The department utilizes a number of marketing strategies to inform City residents of the offerings of the community; however, it lacks a formalized Marketing Plan which can be utilized to create target marketing strategies.

5.9.2 Key Recommendations

- **Participation Data Analysis:** Through ongoing participation data analysis, refine recreation program offerings to reduce low enrollment or cancel programs due to no enrollment.
- **Expand programs and services in the areas of greatest demand:** Ongoing analysis of the participation trends of programming and services in Sandy Springs is significant when delivering high quality programs and services. By doing so, staff will be able to focus their efforts on the programs and services of the greatest need and reduce or eliminate programs and services where interest is declining. Specific efforts should be made to increase programming in the areas of greatest UNMET need as identified in the statistically valid survey.
- **Evaluation:** Implement the program assessment and evaluation tool as recommended. The consulting team has provided an assessment and evaluation tool as an Excel spreadsheet to the Department for their use.

5.10 Summary

The department is delivering quality programs, services and events to the community. However, it does have opportunity for improvement. The chart below provides a summary of the recommended actions that the Department should implement in developing a program plan to meet the needs of residents.

PROGRAM	ACTION	TIMELINE
HIGH PRIORITY		
Fitness and Wellness	EXPAND	LONG-TERM (facility development)
Community Special Events	EXPAND	SHORT-TERM
Art and Culture	EXPAND	SHORT-TERM (partnerships)
Outdoor Recreation Programs	EXPAND	SHORT-TERM (partnerships)
Socialization with Dogs	EXPAND	SHORT-TERM (dog park development)
Interpretive and Naturalist Programs	EXPAND	SHORT-TERM (partnerships)
Senior Programs and Services	EXPAND	SHORT-TERM
Visiting Parks (General Visitation)	FACILITATE	SHORT-TERM (enhance parks)
MEDIUM PRIORITY		
Walking/Jogging/Running Events and Clubs	DEVELOP	SHORT-TERM
Golf	FACILITATE	SHORT-TERM (marketing of partnerships)
Picnicking	CONTINUE	SHORT-TERM
Water Fitness	DEVELOP	LONG-TERM (facility development)
Tennis	CONTINUE	SHORT-TERM
LOW PRIORITY		
Youth Sports	CONTINUE	SHORT-TERM (partnerships)
Adult Sports	CONTINUE	SHORT-TERM (partnerships)
Swim Lessons	CONSIDER	LONG-TERM (facility development)
Programs for People with Special Needs	CONSIDER	SHORT-TERM (partnerships)
Competitive Swim Team	CONSIDER	LONG-TERM (facility development)
Youth Out-of-School Programs/Camps	CONSIDER	LONG-TERM (facility development)



6.0 OPERATIONS AND FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Park Operations and Financial Assessment

Parks and amenities that are clean and functioning efficiently are a critical element to delivering high-quality programs and services. The chart below illustrates the acreage that the City of Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks Department has the responsibility for maintaining (not included right-of-way/median acreage).

Park Type	City of Sandy Springs Inventory
Pocket Park	0.69
Neighborhood Parks	13.92
Community Parks	62.24
Regional Parks	27.26
Special Use Parks	38.64
Greenway/Trailhead Park	21.74
Natural Resource Parks (includes NPS land)	64.26
Total Developed Park Acreage	228.75

Key Findings

- **Staffing:** The City of Sandy Springs contracts with a third-party vendor the maintenance responsibilities of the City park system with the exception of asset management.
- **Lines of Service:** The core lines of service (functions) performed by the third-party contractor in maintaining the City of Sandy Springs' parks system are numerous and are as shown on the table.

Parks Maintenance Lines of Service
Athletic Field - Game Preparation
Athletic Field Maintenance (Diamond and Multi-Purpose Fields)
Citizen Inquiries
Equipment Maintenance
Facility Grounds Maintenance
Furniture, Fixtures, Systems Maintenance and Repair
Integrated Pest Management
Irrigation Systems
Landscape Beautification
Natural Resource/Open Space
Park Building Maintenance
Playground Maintenance
Restroom Custodial Services
Sport Courts (Basketball, Tennis, Sand Volleyball Courts)
Trails
Turf Management



Key Findings - continued

- Maintenance Standards – Through the review of the third-party contract, the consulting team determined that the Recreation and Parks Department does have strong maintenance standards in place.
- Resources: Staff does not lack the necessary equipment or resources to perform tasks at a high level, however, lack of staff creates hardships when managing the assets of the system.
- Third-Party Contracting of Services - Given the “varying” cycles of the economy, it is imperative that the department continually evaluates the capacity and cost of service in the private sector. Without this level of analysis, the department will not be able to determine if it is more effective and efficient to perform work “in-house” or to “contract it out.”
- Annual Park Operation and Maintenance Funding: Based on analysis conducted by PROS Consulting, unit costs are in alignment with best practice cost per acre.
 - Annual Park Maintenance Budget = \$2,556,797
 - Total Developed Park Acres Maintained = 228.75
 - Actual Cost per Acre = \$11,177.25
 - Best Practice Cost per Acre as defined by numerous cost-of-service projects that PROS Consulting has performed = \$10,000-\$15,000 per acre
 - Currently, parks maintenance is sufficiently funded.

Recommendations

- Systematic Approach to Contracting Services: Through the development of management processes, the Department must continually evaluate the private sector to determine if the financial resources dedicated to parks maintenance are sufficient as well as effective and efficient.
- Create Work Plans Based on Maintenance Standards: Maintenance standards are based on a Level (1), (2) and (3) modes (tasks and frequencies of each task) and follow best practices as established by the National Recreation and Park Association. The department should update and customize the standards found in the third-party contract based on the park and recreation values of the Sandy Springs community and need to be adopted and implemented regardless of whether work is performed by City staff or third-party contractors.



Windsor Meadows Park. Image Credit: Barge Design Solutions



6.2 Organizational Structure

Current Organizational Structure Key Findings

- **Alignment:** The current organizational structure is aligned with the primary functions of the Department, which are as follows:
 - Recreation Programs and Services
 - Park and Facility Management
 - Administrative Services
- **Capacity:** Though the organizational structure is functionally aligned, the Department lacks the staffing levels necessary to efficiently and effectively manage forward. Specifically, the Department lacks capacity to effectively manage the “built environment” (assets) of the parks system and ensure that the life-cycles of each asset are reached.

Recommended Staffing Level Enhancements

The following are the preliminary proposed staffing additions for the City of Sandy Springs Recreation and Parks Department. It is the conviction of the Consulting Team that these staffing enhancements will assist the Department in overcoming the challenges related to the asset management of the parks system.

STAFF POSITION	CLASSIFICATION	STATUS	TIMELINE
Park Services Manager (1 FTE)	Full-time	NEW	Within 3 years
Park Supervisors (2 FTE)	Full-time	NEW	Within 3 years
Lead Park Supervisor (1 FTE)	Full-time	NEW	Within 3 years
Outdoor and Fitness Program Manager (1 FTE)	Full-time	NEW	Within 3 years

The addition of the staffing shown above will provide the Department with a second asset management crew. It is recommended that the crews be geographically assigned (i.e., North Park Crew; South Park Crew) to minimize travel time.

With the addition of more park space and facilities in the future, more staffing will be needed. Those staffing enhancements are contingent upon the outcomes of feasibility studies and site specific master plans. This information will determine how much the system expands and how quickly it expands. It is critical that an operational business plans be conducted in conjunction with site specific master plans so the Department can dial in the staffing and operational carrying costs associated with each new addition to the system.



6.3 Opinions of Costs for Preliminary Budgeting

The result of the input from elected officials, City staff, and residents, combined with the recommendations for new park facilities was the development of an opinion of cost. The recommendations and associated costs have been divided into short-term and long-term over a 10 and 20-year time frame. The opinion of costs includes items that are basic improvements needed at existing parks, recommendations for improvements on existing undeveloped parks, and land acquisition recommendations.

In Table 6.2, the cost for the implementation of the recommendations is listed with comments related to the opinion of cost. The total opinion of cost for the budget is over \$105 million. This total includes \$40 million to acquire new land. Opinion of costs listed is a rough order of magnitude and takes into consideration only general top-level estimates. This chart and opinions should be updated often.

The following is a summary of the recommended funding levels.

Existing Park Improvements = \$14,535,000

General Improvements = \$350,000 (several costs to be determined)

New Park and Trail Improvements = \$90,600,000

Grand Total: \$105,485,000

As part of the Comprehensive Plan, the consulting team has included approximate revenues that can realistically be derived from each of the previously identified federal, state, and local sources. If federal or state funding sources are unavailable, the amounts allocated to local sources will have to be adjusted accordingly. Below is a chart indicating potential sources for funding and the following pages provide more detail about each of them.

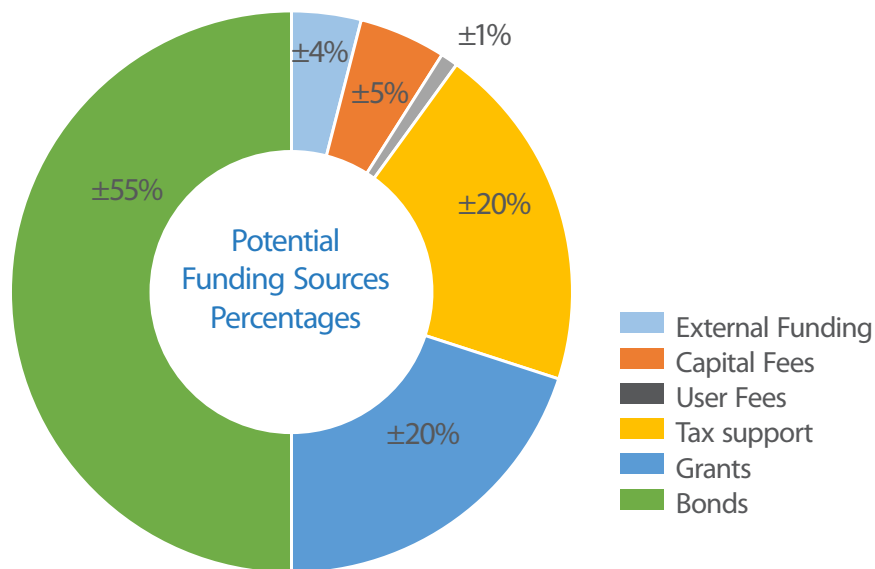


Figure 1.9: Potential Funding Sources Percentages

Table 6.1: Sandy Springs Budget Summary		TOTAL	
NAME	Condition	OPINION	COMMENTS
New Park and Trail Improvements			
Land Acquisition		40,000,000	Land costs and location will vary
Connect parks via trails/greenbelts		4,750,000	Leverage matching funds for grants
Natorium/community recreation center		31,600,000	Begin design and construction of 1st natatorium/community recreation center
Partner with schools for improvements		1,250,000	Provide improvements to create neighborhood school-parks
Cultural Center		13,000,000	
	Subtotal	\$90,600,000	
Existing Park Improvements			
Abernathy (Art Center) Park	Fair	\$150,000	Signage, playground, tennis court, landscaping, etc.
Abernathy Greenway - North	Good	\$180,000	Address area where pavement is settling. Construct proposed entry structure
Abernathy Veterinary Property	Undeveloped	\$0	Public works to improve crossing.
Abernathy Greenway South	Fair	\$650,000	Trail stabilization and stream restoration
Allen Rd Park	Poor	500,000	Master plan and phase 1 implementation
Big Trees Forest Preserve	Good	\$60,000	Signage and general repairs
City Springs Park	Excellent	\$0	
City Springs Park II	Undeveloped	\$0	
Crooked Creek Park	Undeveloped	\$200,000	Develop master plan and CDs; connect to river in phase 1 implementation
Eagle Park	Good	\$60,000	Landscaping, art, signage, etc.
Ed Morley Pocket Park	Good	\$50,000	General enhancements
Glenridge Park (Ashton Woods)	Undeveloped	\$500,000	Implement master plan
Grace Park	Good	\$25,000	Repairs and landscaping
Hammond Park	Fair	\$3,130,000	Master plan trails, pavilion, playground, landscaping, turf replacement and erosion control, etc.
Riverbluff Greenspace	Good	\$0	Natural resources areas
Riverside Dr. Conservation Easemt.	Good	\$0	Natural resources areas
Kitty Hawk Property	Undeveloped	\$25,000	Master plan and implementation
Lost Corner Preserve	Excellent	\$20,000	Provide wayfinding signage
Marsh Creek Rain Garden	Excellent	\$0	
Morgan Falls Athletic Complex	Good	\$1,050,000	Master plan update. Repair (restrooms, turf, etc.) and replace cost (new playground)
Morgan Falls Overlook Park	Excellent	\$275,000	Repairs and improvements
Morgan Falls Riverpark/Dog Park	Poor	\$600,000	Master plan, improve river access, facilities, signage, relocate dog park, etc.
Old Riverside Property	Undeveloped	\$3,400,000	Master plan, CDs and implementation of trails, access to river, etc.
Powers Ferry Property	Undeveloped	\$0	Natural resources areas
Ridgeview Park	Fair	\$1,050,000	Master plan, design and construct a new all-inclusive playground with a bathroom building
Heritage Sandy Springs	Good	\$1,760,000	Repairs to landscape, drainage, signage, and add trails
Sandy Springs Tennis Center	Good	\$850,000	Provide LED lighting. Seek funding partnerships for upgrades and to cover courts for year-around use
Windsor Meadows Park	Excellent	\$0	
	Subtotal	\$14,535,000	
General Improvements			
Develop system-wide signage/branding		250,000	
Conduct Community-wide Art Plan		100,000	
	Subtotal	\$350,000	
TOTAL FUNDS:		\$105,485,000	

Note: Opinion of costs listed are a rough order of magnitude and takes into consideration only general top-level estimates. This chart and opinions should be updated often with more detailed information. Per the City's request this budget reflects a 20-year time frame.

Table 6.1: Opinions of Costs for Preliminary Budgeting



6.4 Funding Sources

In order to continue to build and maintain the parks and recreation system, funding should be pursued for operations and capital improvement projects, such as those presented in this plan.

New sustainable funding sources are essential to implementing a capital improvement plan. There is substantial potential for increasing revenues for the parks and recreation system while still providing affordable recreation opportunities. The following funding options are specifically defined for Sandy Springs, based on both the feasibility and the risk of implementing that should be vetted as Sandy Springs develops a one- to ten-year capital improvement program in 2019.

6.4.1 External Funding

Funding Strategy	Funding Description	Implementation Feasibility
Partnerships	Partnerships are joint development funding sources or operational funding sources between two separate agencies, such as two government entities, a non-profit and a City department, or a private business and a City agency. Two partners jointly develop revenue-producing park and recreation facilities and shared risks, operational costs, responsibilities, and asset management, based on the strengths and weaknesses of each partner.	High
Foundations/Gifts	These dollars are raised from tax-exempt, non-profit organizations established with private donations in promotion of specific causes, activities, or issues. They offer a variety of means to fund capital projects, including capital campaigns, gifts catalogs, fundraisers, endowments, sale of items, etc.	High
Private Donations	Private donations may also be received in the form of funds, land, facilities, recreation equipment, art, or in-kind services. Donations from local and regional businesses as sponsors for events or facilities should be pursued.	High
Friends Groups	These groups are formed to raise money typically for a single-focus purpose that could include a park facility or program that will better the community as a whole and their special interest.	High
Irrevocable Remainder Trusts	These trusts are set up with individuals who typically have more than a million dollars in wealth. They will leave a portion of their wealth to the City in a trust fund that allows the fund to grow over a period of time and then is available for the City to use a portion of the interest to support specific park and recreation facilities or programs that are designated by the trustee.	High
Volunteerism	The revenue source is an indirect revenue source in that persons donate time to assist the department in providing a product or service on an hourly basis. This reduces the City's cost in providing the service, plus it builds advocacy into the system.	High
Special Fundraisers	Many park and recreation agencies have special fundraisers on an annual basis to help cover specific programs and capital projects.	Medium



6.4.2 Capital Fees

Funding Strategy	Funding Description	Implementation Feasibility
Capital Fees	Capital fees are added to the cost of revenue producing facilities such as golf courses, pools, recreation centers, hospitality centers and sports complexes and are lifted off after the improvement is paid off.	Medium
Dedication and Development Fees	These fees are assessed for the development of residential properties with the proceeds to be used for parks and recreation purposes, such as open space acquisitions, community park site development, neighborhood park development, regional park acquisition and development, etc.	High
Impact Fees	These fees are on top of the set user rate for accessing facilities such as recreation centers and pool facilities. Given the recommended LOS in this plan, the City should consider updating its impact fees within two years.	High

6.4.3 User Fees

Funding Strategy	Funding Description	Implementation Feasibility
Recreation Service Fees	This is a dedicated user fee, which can be established by a local ordinance or other government procedures for the purpose of constructing and maintaining recreation facilities. The fee can apply to all organized activities which require a reservation of some type or to other purposes, as defined by the local government. Examples of such activities include adult basketball, volleyball, tennis, and softball leagues; youth baseball, soccer, football, and softball leagues; and special interest classes. The fee allows participants an opportunity to contribute toward the upkeep of the facilities being used.	Low
Fees/Charges	The Department must position its fees and charges to be market-driven and based on both public and private facilities. The potential outcome of revenue generation is consistent with national trends relating to public park and recreation agencies, which generate an average 35% to 50% of operating expenditures.	High
Ticket Sales/ Admissions	This revenue source is for accessing facilities for self-directed activities such as pools, ice skating rinks, ballparks, and entertainment facilities. These user fees help offset operational costs.	High
Permits (Special Use Permits)	These special permits allow individuals to use specific park property for financial gain. The City receives either a set amount of money or a percentage of the gross service that is being provided.	High
Reservations	This revenue source comes from the right to reserve specific public property for a set amount of time. The reservation rates are usually set and apply to group picnic shelters; meeting rooms for weddings, reunions and outings; or other types of facilities for special activities.	High
Equipment Rental	The revenue source is available on the rental of equipment, such as tables, chairs, tents, stages, bicycles, roller blades, stand-up paddle boards, etc., that is used for recreation purposes.	High



6.4.4 Grants

Funding Strategy	Funding Description	Implementation Feasibility
Partnership Enhancement Monetary Grant Program	Partnership Enhancement Monetary Grant Program is administered by the National Tree Trust. Matching grants are available on a 50/50 cost share basis. Funds are available for projects which promote public awareness in support of tree planting, maintenance, management, protection, and cultivation of trees in rural, community, and urban settings. These are small grants ranging from \$500 to \$20,000.	High
CDBG Funding	Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Programs is a funding source given in accordance with the national objectives as established by the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Funding may be applied to such programs as Infrastructure Improvements, Public Facility and Park Improvements, Human Service Enhancements, Lead-Based Paint Education and Reduction, Housing Education Assistance, and Economic Development and Anti-poverty Strategies.	Low
Land Trust	Many systems have developed land trusts to help secure and fund the cost of acquiring land that needs to be preserved and protected for greenway purposes. This could be a good source for acquisition of future lands.	Medium

6.4.5 Tax Support

Funding Strategy	Funding Description	Implementation Feasibility
Property Taxes	Ad valorem taxes on real property	Low
Lighting and Landscape District	Special property owner approved assessment	Low
Hotel, Motel, and Restaurant Tax	Tax based on gross receipts from charges and meal services, which may be used to build and operate sports fields, regional parks, golf courses, tennis courts, and other special park and recreation facilities.	Medium
Catering Permits and Services	This is a license to allow caterers to work in the park system on a permit basis with a set fee or a percentage of food sales returning to the City. Many cities have their own catering service and receive a percentage of dollars off the sale of their food.	Low
Pouring Rights	Private soft drink companies can execute agreements with the City for exclusive pouring rights within park facilities. A portion of the gross sales goes back to the City.	Low
Concession Management	Concession management is from retail sales or rentals of soft goods, hard goods, or consumable items. The City contracts for the service, or they receive either a set amount of the gross percentage or the full revenue dollars that incorporates a profit after expenses.	Low



6.4.5 Tax Support - continued

Funding Strategy	Funding Description	Implementation Feasibility
Private Management	Contract with a private business to provide and operate desirable recreational activities financed, constructed, and operated by the private sector, with additional compensation paid to the City.	High
Greenway Utility	Greenway utilities are used to finance acquisition of greenways and development of the greenways by selling the development rights underground for the fiber optic types of businesses.	Low
Naming Rights	Many cities and counties have turned to selling the naming rights for new buildings or renovation of existing buildings and parks for the development cost associated with the improvement.	Low
Private Developers	These developers lease space from City-owned land through a subordinate lease that pays out a set dollar amount plus a percentage of gross dollars for recreation enhancements. These could include a golf course, marina, restaurants, driving ranges, sports complexes, equestrian facilities, recreation centers, and ice arenas.	High
Easements	This revenue source is available when the City allows utility companies, businesses, or individuals to develop some type of an improvement aboveground or belowground on their property for a set period of time and a set dollar amount to be received by the City on an annual basis.	High
Advertising Sales	This revenue source is for the sale of tasteful and appropriate advertising on park and recreation-related items, such as the City's program guide, scoreboards, dasher boards, and other visible products or services that are consumable or permanent and expose the product or service to many people.	High
Interlocal Agreements	Contractual relationships are entered into between two or more local units of government and/or between a local unit of government and a non-profit organization for the joint usage/development of sports fields, regional parks, or other facilities.	High

6.4.6 Bonds

Funding Strategy	Funding Description	Implementation Feasibility
Park, Open Space, and Trail Bond Issues	Agencies typically seek park bonds to meet park-related needs. The key is to use debt financing through bonds to address needs that are both unmet and clearly a community priority. It is best to propose a capital-bond project that serves a variety of users and needs. Even in the worst economic downturn, bond issues have been passing because communities are the direct recipient of the money, and it benefits families on a personal basis.	High



Windsor Meadows Park. Image Credit: City of Sandy Springs