



TOWN OF SWANSBORO

PARKS AND RECREATION COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN

ADOPTED JUNE 12, 2023



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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THE PLAN + THE COMMUNITY



OVERVIEW

The Town of Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department is pursuing a comprehensive parks and recreation master plan in response to the community's growing population, to adapt the Town's recreation offerings to be in line with current recreation trends and community needs and position the Town as a strong contender for grant awards. Through this plan, the Town is proactively ensuring the department's services expand to meet demand generated by new residents, as well as setting up future efforts to make the community competitive to receive grant funding sources to expand the system.

In the context of Town of Swansboro, this comprehensive plan will guide improvements surrounding parkland and facilities, recreation programming, and operations and maintenance. Focusing on a 10-year planning horizon, the document is a resource for officials and the public alike to understand current park and facility offerings and learn the future direction of the department.

COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Historic Context

Swansboro's history began around 1730, when the first permanent settlement was established on the former site of an Algonquin Indian village at the mouth of the White Oak River. In 1783, the colonial port town of Swannsborough was incorporated in honor of Samuel Swann, former speaker of the North Carolina House of Commons. The Town was situated near pine forests providing the raw materials needed for shipbuilding, which became Swansboro and the greater region's primary industry. Captain Otway Burns was the town's most famous ship builder. He was famous for building the first steamboat constructed in North Carolina, the *Prometheus*.



Mullet Festival Parade Circa 1950s/Swansboro Historical Association

The decline of the shipping industry initiated considerable growth of lumber and naval stores, which succumbed to the Great Depression in the 1920s. The town's people then turned to another natural resource, the sea, and the development of the commercial fishing industry. Marine Corps bases at Cherry Point and Camp Lejeune brought economic growth during the second World War. Growth has continued to the present day, but Swansboro has managed to retain the quaint charm and quiet character of a picturesque colonial port while developing its successful fishing and tourist industries.

Regional Context

Swansboro is approximately one and a half square miles, located in the northeastern part of Onslow County. The Town is bordered by the confluent waters of the White Oak River and the Intracoastal Waterway. Swansboro is minutes from North Carolina's Crystal Coast beaches, including Emerald Isle and Hammocks Beach State Park. Swansboro is included in the Jacksonville metropolitan area. The City of Jacksonville with a population of approximately 70,000 is the largest municipality in the region and is home to the 153,000-acre Camp Lejeune marine base, which serves as the mainstay of the local economy and lifestyle in Swansboro. The military presence gives a stable economy but little growth opportunity. The area is also known for boating and water sports. Cost of living is quite low and the winter climate is attractive.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Swansboro is located at the confluence of three sub watersheds. Its unique geographic location positions it at the confluence of Queens Creek and White Oak River. Therefore, southwest Swansboro drains into Queens Creek, north Swansboro drains into White Oak River, and south Swansboro drains into Bogue Sound. Generally, the highest level of biodiversity in Swansboro occurs along the coast, followed by areas around streams and wetlands. Halls creek, Stevens Creek, and Ward Creek are smaller streams that flow through Swansboro.

Wetland Areas are a notable natural resource that brings significant value to the ecology of Swansboro. Halls Creek and Stevens creek are two areas are rated as having exceptional coastal wetland. There are additional patches of wetland scattered relatively evenly throughout Swansboro with "substantial" and "beneficial" costal wetland ratings. In general, there are two dominant wetland types in Swansboro: Estuarine/Marine wetland (tidal habitat semi-enclosed with varying levels of salinity) and Freshwater forested/shrub wetland (freshwater habitat periodically flooded and dominated by woody shrubs and trees).

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS.

The Town of Swansboro has six parks, a recreation center, and roughly one mile of trails. Due to Swansboro's coastal location, access to the water is abundant and The Parks and Recreation Department has done an impressive job of providing public access to recreation opportunities like boating and fishing. The department also offers various outdoor recreation amenities such as play structures, sport courts, and walking paths.

The Town of Swansboro coins itself as the "friendly city by the sea." Swansboro Parks and Recreation staff strive for and provides quality recreation programming for its residents. This plan will define the role that these parks and recreation system elements will play in Swansboro's future.



Pickleball at Municipal Park

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PURPOSE + PROCESS

Comprehensive planning provides the information a town requires to make informed, equitable, and responsible decisions for meeting diverse community needs. Some of the reasons for pursuing a comprehensive planning process include the following:



Comprehensive planning provides a structure for evaluating needs and setting priorities. The planning process captures the status of the department at a moment in time, creates a vision for the future, and identifies steps to achieve that vision. The plan will guide the department's decisions and priorities for the next 10 years.



PLAN OUTLINE

This plan is based on community and staff engagement and data-driven recommendations determined through an analytical approach. From the initial inventory and analysis through the recommendations and action and implementation plan, the project team engaged stakeholders and acknowledged local, regional, and national recreation needs and trends, demographic shifts, and agency performance. The project team is defined as the consultants representing McAdams, the firm the Town of Swansboro commissioned to develop a plan to guide the evolution of the Parks and Recreation Department over the course of a ten-year planning horizon.

The project team studied current facilities and programs to evaluate the overall operational successes and challenges. Finally, the project team alongside Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department staff developed a plan that prioritizes recommendations to improve recreational offerings and meet growing expectations from an increasing population.

This 2022 Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan includes the following components:

THE PLAN AND THE COMMUNITY

The project team reviewed the Town of Swansboro's existing Town-wide plans to gain a comprehensive understanding of the plans that guide the growth and development of the Town. It is the goal of this plan that the recommendations presented herein will be seamlessly integrated with Town plans. Alongside this review, the project team completed a demographic and trends analysis to draw conclusions about current and future recreation trends and participation levels.

INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

The inventory and analysis takes a full account of the existing parks and recreation system. The inventory and analysis chapter covers parkland and facilities, programming, arts and culture, operations and maintenance, finance and budget, and greenways and trails.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The project team gathered input through conversations with community members, Town staff, and the Swansboro Parks and Recreation Advisory Board.

BENCHMARKING AND LEVEL OF SERVICE

Benchmarking and level of service evaluate current and future needs for park acreage, trail mileage, and operational standards compared to national standards, best practices, and peer agencies. These metrics are population based to allow the department to expand to meet future demand for parks and recreation services. The level of service standard includes current and future standards for parkland, facilities, and trails.

Benchmarking peer communities provides a comparison for the existing state of the department's amenities and informs level of service standards for the ten-year planning horizon. Metrics for parks, trails, acreage, staffing, and budget, are evaluated for each peer community which informs the development of an appropriate level of service standard specific to the Town. Such standards are normalized by population so target metrics can evolve to meet demands of the rapid population growth Swansboro is experiencing.

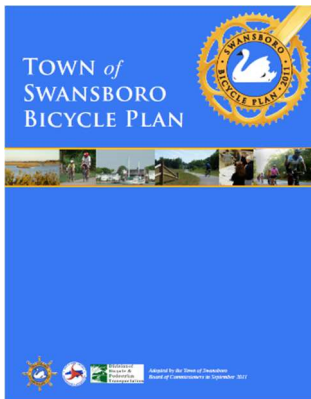
RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The recommendations and prioritized implementation plan provide a framework to guide park, facility, open space, programming, and operational improvements for the future. It is structured to guide decision making for department policy. Each recommendation is further prioritized as short term (1-3 years), mid-term (3-7 years) or long-term (7-10+). Criteria for recommendation prioritization vary based on the context and criteria may range from land availability to financial implications but are firmly rooted in community preferences

PLANNING CONTEXT

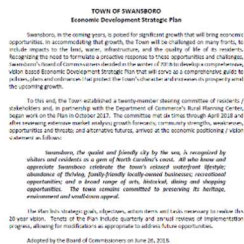
Relevant Plans

Integral to this master plan is the coordination and integration of all planning efforts and goals related to recreation. The following sections summarize overarching goals and objectives of these plans and recognize common parks and recreation related planning themes



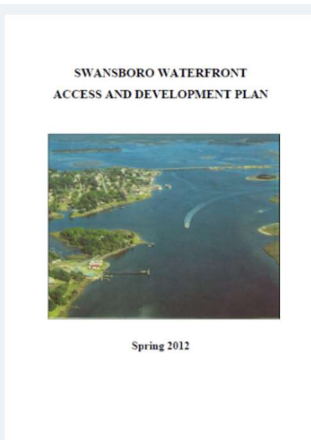
TOWN OF SWANSBORO BICYCLE PLAN, 2011

Bicycle Plan is intended to “guide the Town of Swansboro, NCDOT, and other key stakeholders in creating a community network of bicycle trails connecting the Historic District with parks, schools, and residents. The plan, funded by the Town and a NCDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Initiative, is a product of community input and strategic planning. Swansboro Parks and Recreation is seen as a key partner in implementing the plan. Parks department designated a member of its staff and its citizen advisory board to sit on a bike/ped coordinating committee, allowing parks to have a seat at the table related to program and project activities. The overall bicycle plan envisions a multi-use trail connecting town parks and recommends that the parks department have significant input on determining priority projects for trail corridors. Other multi-use trail recommendations include a greenway along Queens Creek connecting the elementary schools and Swansboro High School and shared use paths along Old Hammock Rd and Hammock Beach Rd.



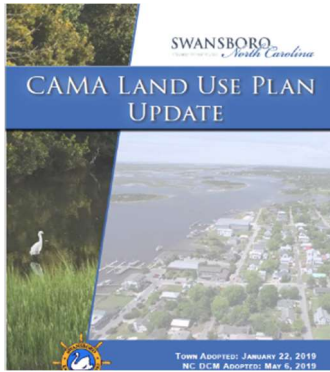
TOWN OF SWANSBORO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN, 2018

The plan assumes that the Town of Swansboro is poised for steady, yet significant growth in coming years. To this end, the Town’s Board of Commissioners decided in the winter of 2016 to develop an economic development playbook grounded in robust community involvement – to guide decision making designed to protect the Town’s character, natural and cultural resources, and increase prosperity amid upcoming growth. The Town’s vision statement, echoed throughout the plan, captures the positive impact parks, recreation and trails have on residents’ quality of life, and visitor experience.



WATERFRONT ACCESS AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN, 2012

During FY 2011-2012, Swansboro elected leaders pushed forward their vision for the waterfront area of town by developing the Waterfront Access Plan. The plan was composed to identify and place-make the popular Swansboro waterfront and downtown district for where residents and visitors had greater public access to the water. Central to improving access was the concept of a linear “walk” winding through the waterfront district from Riverview Park to Ward Shore Park. The plan describes enhancements to existing Swansboro parks as a component of developing the waterfront walk. Slated in the plan are improvements to Riverview Park and Ward Shore Park including landscaping/aesthetics, wayfinding, shade shelters, benches, and decks. The plan also recommended a kayak launch at Bicentennial Park. The primary goal of the plan was to create an identity for Swansboro’s waterfront by formally linking waterfront parks, restaurants, retail shops, overnight accommodations, public access areas and public docking facilities.



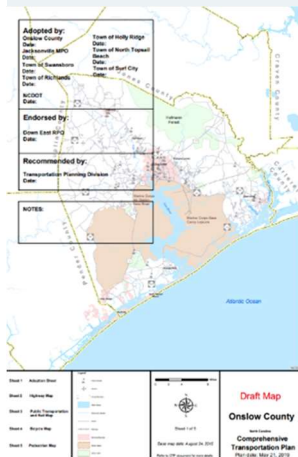
SWANSBORO CAMA LAND USE PLAN UPDATE, 2019

This plan serves as an update to the Town's 2009 Land Use Plan to prepare Swansboro to guide new development, invest public resources, and protect its coastal natural and cultural resources. Parks were strongly considered as playing a central role by building recreational facilities and offering programs vital to protecting CAMA waterfront access points. The plan goes on to recommend Swansboro's growth as a "connected community" by linking destinations like parks, schools, and attractions. One way of achieving this is by requiring low-density suburban neighborhoods to have sidewalks and off-road paths connecting to parks.



NCDOT GREAT TRAILS STATE PLAN, 2021

The NCDOT statewide trail plan proposes to connect communities to the great outdoors, while creating opportunities for active transportation, conservation, recreation, health, tourism, and economic prosperity. This plan identifies a network of shared-use paths that will connect every county in North Carolina. A proposed shared-use path along NC-24 from the Jacksonville-Camp LeJeune Rail-to-Trail to Swansboro is included in the Great Trails State network. The shared use path continues to Emerald Isle via NC-58 and is also a part of the envisioned East Coast Greenway coastal route.



ONSLOW COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (CTP), 2019

The Onslow County CTP is an NCDOT led and community-driven planning effort that identifies transportation needs and recommendations for roadway and multimodal facilities throughout the county. Sidewalk and shared use path recommendations for Swansboro include sidewalk improvements along NC-24; shared use paths along Hammocks Beach Rd to Hammocks Beach State Park, Old Hammocks Rd from Main St Extension to Hammocks Beach Rd, Mt Pleasant Rd from Main St Extension to town limits, and Swansboro Loop Rd from Main St Extension to town limits; and greenways along Queen Creek and adjacent neighborhoods connecting Swansboro Elementary, Queens Creek Elementary, and Swansboro High School.

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Overview

An accurate understanding of a jurisdiction's demographics is an essential foundation for creating an effective long-range plan. Changing demographic proportions of age, race and income often result in demand for different types of recreational facilities and programs. With demographic shifts come an increased or decreased demand for recreational facilities and services.

Demographic dynamics drive many of this plan's goals and objectives, providing a roadmap to keep Swansboro's parks and recreation offerings current, relevant, equitable and sustainable. Included here are the Town of Swansboro's current population estimates, an overview of current demographics, and demographic projections for the 10-year planning horizon

Methodology

Demographic analysis uses a variety of data, methods, and assumptions to illustrate the current demographic composition of an area and project potential changes into the future. It is this plan's understanding that the Town of Swansboro uses the North Carolina State Demographers demographic and population data for planning purposes, and as such, the Town may wish to consider the following analysis alongside those generated by way of the State's data.

This analysis draws data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS is a nationwide survey designed to provide communities with reliable and timely social, economic, housing, and demographic data every year. The U.S. Census Bureau uses data collected in the ACS to provide estimates on a broad range of population, housing unit, and household characteristics for states, counties, cities, school districts, congressional districts, census tracts, block groups, and many other geographic areas. The ACS has an annual sample size of about 3.5 million addresses, with survey information collected nearly every day of the year. It extracts the data across a calendar year to produce estimates for that year. As a result, ACS estimates reflect data that have been collected over a period of time rather than for a single point in time as in the decennial census, which is conducted every 10 years and provides population counts as of April 1 of the census year.

Additional elements of this chapter including population projections are sourced from Esri, an international supplier of geographic information system software, web GIS and geodatabase management. Esri uses data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Internal Revenue Service, and other reliable local sources.

Estimates + Projections

Estimates provide a summary of an area's current population or demographic characteristics, while projections are a proposed scenario for a future population based on certain assumptions such as a consistent growth rate or expected increase in migration.

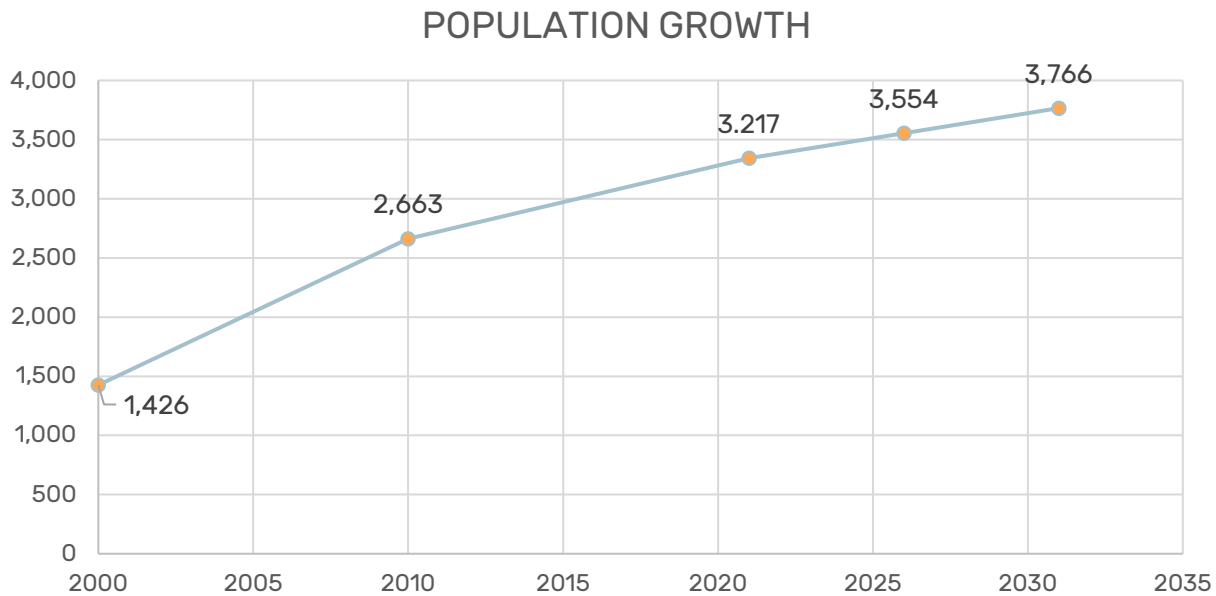
Average annual growth is a measure for determining the rate of growth per year over a given period. The average annual growth rate is useful for showing the rate at which population growth is occurring per year even when population estimate data available spans a multiple year period. An indication of past growth can be used to form the basis for projecting population for a future year.

Projections are based on an estimate of the population at a given point in time and project a potential future scenario based on certain assumptions. Esri's analysis estimates 2021 data and makes a projection for 2026, calculating the average annual growth rate for each demographic segment over a period of five years. The project team used that rate to project population growth to 2031.

The population projections outlined below will become the basis for many of this plan's recommendations, most prominently the level of service analysis, which establishes standards for facility space, park acreage, sports fields and amenities needed within the next 10 years. The population estimates and projections used for this plan are listed below.

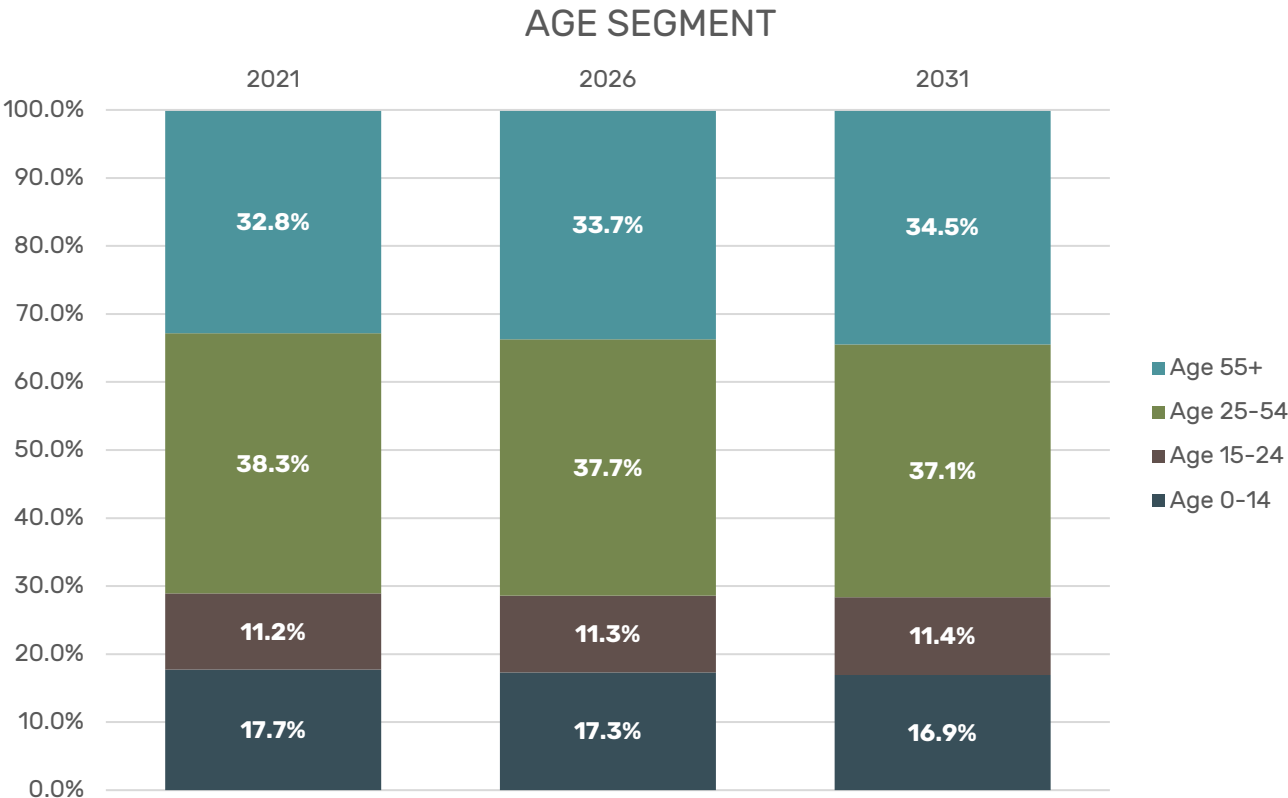
Population Growth

Swansboro is currently growing at a rate of 1.88% annually and its population has increased by 30.38% since the most recent census, which recorded a population of 2,663 in 2010. Swansboro reached its highest population of 3,217 in 2021. Spanning just over 2 miles, Swansboro has a population density of 1.541 people per square mile. The expected growth rate will expand the Town's population from an estimated 3,554 residents in 2026 to a projected 3,766 residents in 2031.



Age Segment

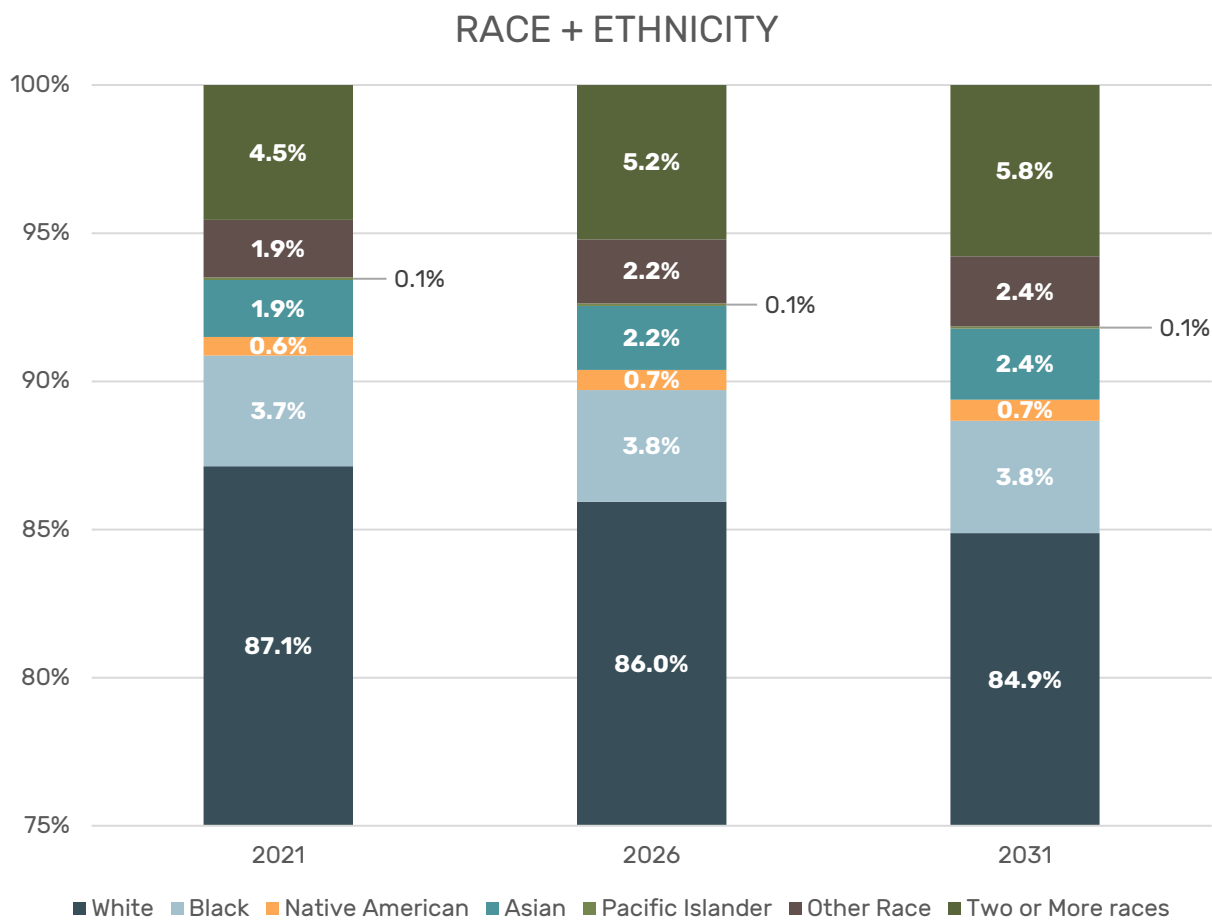
Currently, the most populous age cohort in the Town of Swansboro is age 25-54 (38%), followed by age 55+ (33%). These proportions, as well as the proportion of the population age 15-24, and age 0-14 will effectively remain the same through the year 2031. This indicates while the population expands at a moderate rate, the proportional spread of age segments will remain stable. Under these assumptions, the 25-54 age cohort will remain the largest proportion of the population, and the 55+ cohort will remain the second largest. Yet, it is important to keep in mind while the 55+ population **percentage** in Swansboro is projected to remain stable, the **number** of individuals in this age segment is projected to grow by over 200 individuals by 2031, representing a 1.5% increase. This is indicative of the national trend of a graying nation. The U.S. Census projects that by 2034, older adults are expected to outnumber children for the first time in U.S. history



Race + Ethnicity

Estimates show that in 2021 Swansboro residents identifying as White comprise 87% of the population. This proportion is projected to decrease (2%) over the next 10 years. The proportion of those identifying as African American/Black, Native American, Pacific Islander, and Other Race will remain unchanged. The percent of the population identifying as Two or More Races is projected to increase by two percent. This is in-line with the demographic changes being observed nationwide, as the percent of the United States population identifying as Two or More Races is projected to increase by 1.3% over the next 10 years and is expected to double by the year 2060.

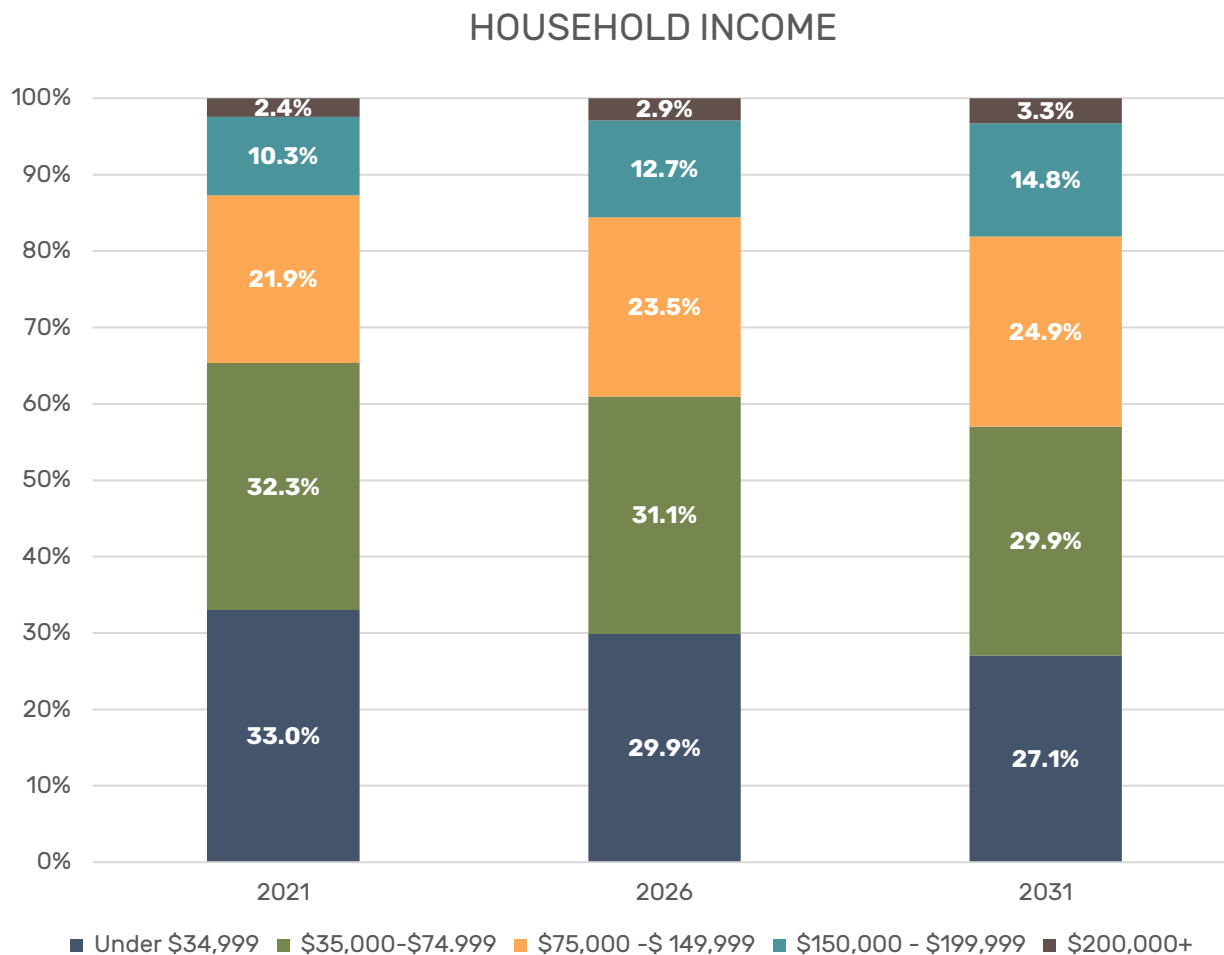
The category is estimated to have the largest flux in proportion is the Hispanic population, with a projected increase of 2.4% percent between 2021 and 2031. Though the Hispanic population is smaller in more rural counties, many of these counties have seen faster growth in this population over the past 28 years. As a result, Hispanic or Latino residents comprise a greater share of the population in many less populated, rural counties¹



¹ Rebecca Tippet, North Carolina's Hispanic Community: 2019 Snapshot; NC in Focus Carolina Demography UNC-CH, 9-26-2019

Household Income

According to the American Community Survey, the estimated median household income in 2021 is \$47,580. Further, in 2021, 33% of households are estimated to have an annual income less than \$34,999, while approximately 2.5 percent of the population has an annual income of more than \$200,000. The Town of Swansboro's poverty rate is 13.1% as estimated by the ACS, down from 15.4% in 2010. Further, it is projected the least wealthy Swansboro households will experience some upward financial mobility as those earning less than \$34,999 will drop by six percent by the year 2031.



TRENDS IN PARKS + RECREATION

The field of parks and recreation continually updates best practices and integrates new policies and technologies as they become available. A forward-looking parks and recreation department will be aware of new and emerging recreation trends and can understand and anticipate the impacts broader trends will have. This plan looks at recreation and activity trends, high-level emerging trends in the field of parks and recreation, sustainability trends, and economic development trends – all of which are expected to have significant impact on Swansboro’s parks and recreation department during the next 10 years.

Local recreation trends are sourced from ESRI, an international supplier of geographic information system software, web GIS and geodatabase management. ESRI uses data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Internal Revenue Service, and other high-quality local sources.

This analysis is drawn from ESRI’s market potential index (MPI). The MPI is a measure that compares demand for a product or service within a pre-determined geographic area to the national demand for that product or service. This data is derived from spending associated with sports and sports equipment and captures participation in public leagues, private leagues, and individual participation.

Demand for a recreational activity is measured based on whether an individual has participated in a certain activity within the past 12 months. An MPI of more than 100 indicates that the local demand for a product is higher than the national average, while an MPI of less than 100 indicates that the local demand is lower than the national average. The products or services included within this comparison are specific to parks and recreation activities, though the products or services are not necessarily indicative of the Town’s facility or program offerings. Demand for a recreational activity is measured based on whether an individual has participated in a certain activity within the past 12 months.

Some activities can be done individually and with little specialized equipment. Walking and biking are activities that residents can participate in anywhere, though they may choose to pursue these activities in public parks. Fishing, hiking, bowling, swimming, and weightlifting are activities that can be pursued at a specific location and may require additional equipment and resources. The popularity of these activities suggests that continuing to offer opportunities to partake in these activities while investing in new resources to enhance those offerings would be responsive to the community.

SOURCES:

- > Local Recreation Trends
 - ESRI Market Potential Index
- > National Recreation Trends
 - Sport & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA)
 - NRPA Trends
- > Equity Trends
 - National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA)
- > COVID-19 Pandemic and Parks
 - Outdoor Fitness
 - NC State University
 - Trust for Public Land
- > Sustainability Trends
 - NRPA
- > Urban Agriculture Trends

Most Popular Passive Leisure Activities

Passive recreation refers to recreational activities that do not require prepared facilities like sports fields or courts. Passive recreational activities place minimal stress on a site's resources. They can be undertaken individually and have low barriers to entry. Each can be adapted to a range of ability levels and are common activities people pursue at any age throughout a lifetime.



Playing a Musical Instrument



Cooking for Fun



Photography



Yoga



Painting or Drawing

Most Popular Active Leisure Activities

Active recreation is leisure activity undertaken outside of organized sports. It is a set of activities within the range of options that also include active living, active transport, and sport. The five activities below are the most popular active recreational pursuits among Swansboro residents. Active recreation activities often require the use of special facilities, courses, fields, or equipment.



Swimming



Yoga



Bicycling (Road)



Walking for Exercise



Golf

Most Popular Outdoor Recreation Activities

Outdoor recreation' refers to activities undertaken for pleasure that occur outdoors. It is often comprised of activities undertaken for pleasure that involve some level of intentional physical exertion and occur in nature-based environments.



Fishing



Camping



Hiking



Paddling



Birdwatching

Most Popular Organized Sport Activities

Sports typically take the form of competitive physical activities, either casual or organized, aim to use, maintain, or improve physical ability and skills while providing enjoyment to participants, and in some cases, spectators. Organized youth sports are defined as physical activity directed by adult leaders and involves rules and formal practice and competition



Basketball



Baseball



Soccer



Football



Softball

National recreation trends and high-level emerging trends are sourced from a variety of industry standard publications including The Sports & Fitness Industry Association's (SFIA) Sports, Fitness & Recreational Activities Topline Participation Report. The report was utilized in evaluating the following trends:

- > National Sport and Fitness Participatory Trends
- > Core versus Casual Participation Trends
- > Participation by Generation
- > Non-Participant Interest by Age Segment

The study is based on findings from surveys carried out in 2020 by the Physical Activity Council (PAC), resulting in a total of N= 18,000 online interviews. A statistically representative sample size of N= 18,000 completed interviews is considered to result in a high degree of statistical accuracy. A sport with a participation rate of five percent has a confidence interval of plus or minus 0.32 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence interval. Using a weighting technique, survey results are applied to the total U.S. population figure of 303,971,652 people (ages six and older). The purpose of the report is to establish levels of activity and identify key participatory trends in recreation across the U.S.

Core vs. Casual Participation

In addition to overall participation rates, SFIA categorizes active participants as either core or casual participants based on frequency. Core participants have higher participatory frequency than casual participants. The thresholds that define casual versus core participation may vary based on the nature of each individual activity. For instance, core participants engage in most fitness and recreational activities more than 50 times per year, while for sports, the threshold for core participation is typically 13 times per year.

In each activity, core participants are more committed and tend to be less likely to switch to other activities or become inactive (engage in no physical activity) than casual participants. This may also explain why activities with more core participants tend to experience less pattern shifts in participation rates than those with larger groups of casual participants

Trends in Recreation for Active Older Adults

As mentioned previously, older adults will outnumber children in just the next 10 years. Based on public health evidence, the Census projects these older adults will be healthier and more affluent than any elderly generation. These factors point toward the coming need to understand the recreational desires of this age segment. The International Council on Active Aging (ICCAA) asserts “today, recreational offerings should be much more active, such as fitness programs, 50-plus clubs that include adventure travel and sports.” ICCAA stresses “the biggest shift has been in the attitude of what people are capable of doing and the diversity of programs and services being offered to meet this shift.” Parks and recreation departments should be ready to take up this call to action and plan to cater toward what are sometimes called ‘active agers.’



Active Adult Women Exercising/Stock Image

In terms of active recreation, older adults are more physically fit and willing to engage in non-traditional exercise than generations past. As a result, parks departments are offering more adventure sports like whitewater kayaking, obstacle courses and mountain biking to their active adult clientele. Zumba Gold is designed to be a low-intensity workout, specifically for older adults. Similarly, the Granny Basketball League targeted for women over 50, which consists of more than 450 players on 40 teams across nine states – primarily in the Midwest – who take part in a program for women ages 50 and older who are interested in playing “a gentle game for women of a certain age.” Played true to traditional 1920s-era basketball rules, philosophy and culture, the Granny Basketball League was created by older players to ensure their own safety while still fostering a competitive, team-based setting.

Another trend to note is older adults’ interest in volunteer or caused-based recreation. Although most opportunities to learn about ways to care for the environment are geared mainly toward youth, older adults are living more active lives and, in turn, are participating in community service projects and educational events.

Trends in Recreation for Adults

Pickleball is another activity popular among active older adults and adults. Most of pickleball's core players – those who play more than eight times per year – are over age 65, but the game is getting younger, with the strongest growth among players under 55.

The game is said to have originated in Washington State in the 1960s, and as of 2022, was named the fastest growing sport in America with more than 4 million people playing it annually². Pickleball is played with a whiffle ball on an asphalt court one-fourth the size of a tennis court. The net is lower, and the court is narrower, placing teammates and opponents closer together. These aspects make pickleball inherently a lower-impact sport.

Municipalities nationwide are trying to meet the demand for pickleball venue – so many that USA Pickleball is putting together a toolkit for community planners with guidelines and cost estimates for

² Richard Dolesh, Richard National Recreation and Parks Association. “Top Trends in Parks and Recreation for 2022.” December 16, 2021. <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2022/january/top-trends-in-parks-and-recreation-for-2022>

building courts, which can range from \$300 for a temporary net, equipment, and tape to mark lines, to \$30,000 for a permanent court.³

Although adult sport leagues have remained popular for decades, the ultra-traditional ones like softball, basketball, and bowling are beginning to give way to what are being called 'retro-rec' activities like kickball, spikeball, cornhole, futsal, etc. Further, 'adult recess' is soaring in popularity. Outside Magazine chronicled an organization in San Francisco who saw its "Play Recess" participant numbers jump from about 150, to over 1,000 per season in just the past three years. The Wall Street Journal published an article in 2019 titled Adult Recess' Is Booming, Because Being a Grown-Up Is Hard – pointing out public recreation agencies' concerted efforts and marked successes in providing adult fun. Play can be less obvious to define outside of when it is applied to children but, Gary Chick, a play theory scholar from Penn State says "play is pretty much in your head. So, if I think, I'm playing, then I am...If it feels like play to us, then why not? It is play."⁴

Cause-related programming is another trend among adult leisure seekers. Ann Beck, marketing and communications manager for Mansfield Texas Parks and Recreation was quoted in NRPA's 2020 Top Trends report where she described an "insanely popular program, where a local animal shelter sponsors a 5K run and walk that pairs shelter dogs with program participants. The programs have raised revenue, expanded audiences for both the shelter and the recreation programs, and have been a huge hit, making people feel like they are making a difference⁵."

Speaking of animals, dog parks are the fastest growing type of park in the U.S., according to NRPA. The Association's 2018 survey discovered that 91 percent of Americans believe dog parks provide benefits to their communities, and this is especially true among millennials. Even further, yoga with a variety of animals is a trending topic, and nationwide some parks and recreation agencies are now sponsoring highly popular goat yoga classes. According to AZ Big Media, "Meows, barks and bleats have been common at yoga sessions in recent years" largely fueled by Millennials and Gen Z.

³ Shannon Mullen, NPR. "America's fastest-growing sport is a cross of tennis, ping-pong and badminton." February 19, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/02/19/1081257674/americas-fastest-growing-sport-pickleball>

⁴ Gary Chick, The Pennsylvania State University. "Strategic games in society: the geography of adult play." September 2017 *International Journal of Play* 6(3):319-321

⁵ Richard Dolesh, Richard National Recreation and Parks Association. "Top Trends in Parks and Recreation for 2020." January <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2022/january/top-trends-in-parks-and-recreation-for-2022>

Trends in Ensuring Affordable Access

<div>10-MINUTE WALK</div> 	<p>Parks are free and open to the public and serve as important locations for people to play, socialize and gather as a community. Community members are only able to access free or low-cost parks and programs if they can afford the trip to get there. Ensuring an equitable distribution of parks and amenities throughout a geographic area means residents truly have affordable access to parks and programs.</p> <p>The 10 Minute Walk campaign⁶ is working to “ensure there’s a great park within a 10-minute walk of every person, in every neighborhood, in every city across America.” Seven North Carolina Mayors have signed the pledge according to Trust for Public Land website</p>			
<div>93%⁷</div>  <div>Percentage of Americans desiring an increase affordable out-of-school time programming at their park and recreation agency</div>	<p>Parks and recreation departments frequently provide day programs and camps for children at below-market or discounted rates. This service provides an affordable alternative for families who must find childcare when school is out of session.</p> <p>A recent study from the National Recreation and Parks Association found “93 percent of Americans believe providing affordable out-of-school time programs at local parks, recreation centers and libraries to families of all income levels should be a goal of their local government. Currently, 93 percent of park and recreation agencies nationwide administer or manage out-of-school time programs.”</p> <p>Day programs and camps can benefit all children but are especially important for low-income families with few other options for daytime childcare options.</p>			
<p><i>Parks and Recreation in Underserved Areas: A Public Health Perspective</i>⁸ states “Several studies have documented that while parks and recreational facilities are available throughout the United States, there are several additional factors that affect park use and physical activity levels.” Factors include:</p>				
	<p>Park access - Easy park access is associated with increased park use. Park visits are more frequent and physical activity levels are higher.</p>	<p>Park distribution - Disparities in park distribution are particularly evident in areas with low income and racial/ethnic populations.</p>	<p>Park facilities - Within parks, there are certain types of facilities that encourage higher levels of physical activity than others, such as trails and playgrounds.</p>	<p>Park conditions - Park facilities that are consistently well maintained, aesthetically appealing and safe have increased public use and physical activity.</p>

⁶ <https://www.10minutewalk.org/#Home>

⁷ <https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/park-pulse/park-pulse-survey-affordable-out-of-school-time-programming/>

⁸ https://www.nrpa.org/uploadedFiles/nrpa.org/Publications_and_Research/Research/Papers/Parks-Rec-Underserved-Areas.pdf

Committing to Achieving Racial Equity

Providing welcoming experiences for all residents regardless of race or ethnicity is increasingly important as the proportion of non-whites is increasing nationwide. In response, many communities are recognizing intentions to equitably provide parks and recreation services to all community members. Special attention is required to rectify historic disparities between resources available in white communities and communities of color.

The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) recognizes that equal access to parks for all is a right, not a privilege. According to their position statement on social equity, “Our nation’s public parks and recreation services should be equally accessible and available to all people regardless of income level, ethnicity, gender, ability, or age. Social equity is a critical responsibility borne by every public park and recreation agency and the professionals that operate them.”



Young Women Cultural Dance/Stock Image

According to NRPA, “designing programming to meet the needs of multicultural, racial, or ethnic communities supports the well-being of historically marginalized and vulnerable groups.” Other programs around the nation have offered community gardens, health and wellness programs and budget and personal finance training for multicultural, racial, and ethnic communities, in addition to a high-quality park system equitably distributed across a community.

The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) acknowledges that parks and recreation providers can be at the forefront of addressing racial equity due to their unique role as a public service provider of many quality-of-life programs and amenities. The NRPA recommends the following considerations for addressing racial equity in parks and recreation:

- Normalizing conversations about race is the only way to develop effective strategies for racial equity. One of the biggest challenges is the general discomfort many people experience in talking about race. This is a critical hurdle to overcome. Avoiding conversations about race means there is a greater likelihood that organizations will not develop appropriate strategies to address institutional and structural racism.
- Behavior drives attitude. It is a common misconception that attitude drives behavior and expecting people to “understand” racism can lead to desired behavioral changes. However, changing behavior changes understanding. Providing common understanding of racial equity terminology and tools to use helps employees develop an increased understanding of institutional and structural racism.
- Equity is a process. Embedding racial equity in the core operations of an organization takes continual learning and practice. It should be considered as an ongoing process of delivering business and not relegated to a checkbox or an additional step to an existing process.

NRPA first published its Inclusion Report in 2018, addressing the challenges for people with different backgrounds, races, ethnicity, income levels, physical ability, sexual orientation, gender, and cultural backgrounds to access high quality parks and recreation programming. NRPA defines Inclusion as removing barriers, both physical and theoretical, so that all people have an equal opportunity to enjoy the benefits of parks and recreation. Many parks and recreation agencies in the United States (40%) have adopted formal inclusion policies to maintain consistent guidelines and implementation standards.

Examples of programming for individuals with physical and cognitive disabilities include physical activity programming, volunteer and employment activities, and health and wellness programs.

Acknowledgement of demographic diversity through celebratory programs such as heritage and holiday celebrations, culturally sensitive program hours, and health and wellness programs that reflect cultural and ethnic practices help bring the community together. Programs and activities geared towards diversity and inclusion include community gardens, women-only programs such as swimming and dedicated gym hours, language training, technology training, financial training, and health and wellness programs such as culinary skills classes, nutrition classes etc.

Sustainability Trends

Parklands in coastal locations like Swansboro where development is in proximity to large expanses of streams and floodplains are credited to reducing flooding by allowing for intensive green infrastructure and opportunities for restoration and stabilization of riverine ecologies. Increasingly, parklands have also been recognized as a vital component of infrastructural development strategies to help mitigate the impacts of climate change.

According to a survey of parks and recreation agencies conducted by The National Recreation and Parks Association, nearly 50 percent of Parks and Recreation agencies had adopted or would go through the process of developing and adopting a Sustainability Plan in the near future. The trends seen in this report relating to sustainability showed that most agencies contributed to city, county and/or state sustainability goals by providing healthy outdoor activity for residents, protection and management of wildlife and wildlife habitat, responsible management of natural land, reduction of landfill waste, environmentally friendly design practices including green infrastructure and fostering sustainability through public education and engagement.

The National Recreation and Parks Association's top trends of 2022 predicted that most new parks will be designed with resiliency in mind. Parks are and will continue to be seen increasingly as landscapes providing a multitude of benefits including protection against flooding, stormwater management, mitigation of rising temperatures and promotion of environmental and social resiliency. NRPA also predicted that in an effort to address extreme heat and the emptying out of strip malls and big-box stores, park and recreation projects will increasingly be transformation of these vacant parcels into recreation amenities. Assessment of fallow land and highest and best use of existing developed land will be priorities for agencies looking to expand their impact and geographic presence and distribution. An additional trend noted, is an increasing view of parks as critical infrastructure for the environment, the economy and social and physical wellbeing. The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) has been providing annual information on Top Trends in Parks and Recreation. These trends range from parks operations and recreation programming to design interventions, while some trends are predictions based on agencies' response to changes happening at the community, state, and national levels. City Parks Alliance and Trust for Public Land are two other national organizations who provide resources on parks and recreation trends. Described below are some of the trends mentioned in the last three years.

Urban Agriculture Trends

A growing trend nationwide and globally, in line with increased view of parks as infrastructure, is the view of parks as food resources. There is a growing consensus around the viability of parks as a food resource and the important role parks and recreation agencies can have in communities as providers of healthy and nutritious food. Nationwide, according to NRPA, park and recreation professionals work to provide access to healthy food through a variety of venues⁹:

- Summer Camps (82 percent)
- Nutrition Programs (57 percent)
- After-school Programs (56 percent)
- Community Gardens (46 percent)
- Farmers Markets (24 percent)
- Community Supported Agriculture Systems (16 percent)



Farmers Market/Stock Image

⁹ National Recreation and Parks Association. "Parks and Recreation: A Link to Healthy Food," 2020. <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2020/february/parks-and-recreation-a-link-to-healthy-food/>.

Covid-19 Pandemic And Parks

The COVID-19 Pandemic simultaneously put strain on parks and recreation organizations and highlighted their importance to both the physical and mental health of their users. For the better part of the pandemic, the outdoors was the safest place to have social gatherings and for individual recreation as well. At times, it was the only option with the closing of indoor gyms and recreation facilities.

According to the Outdoor Foundation, 53 percent of Americans participated in an outdoor recreation activity at least once which is the highest participation rate on record.¹⁰ The report cautions however that this growth is not guaranteed to be sustained in a post-pandemic world. Engagement with those participating in these activities for the first time, especially those open to sustaining outdoor recreation post-pandemic could reveal programmatic and facility desires from that population that would keep them as users of the system.

North Carolina State University led two studies studying the decrease in formal outdoor activities in parks by teens and young adults led to decline in mental health and wellbeing.¹¹ These studies found that 54 percent of college students reduced their park uses during the pandemic.

SIDEBAR

Derived from the 2020 Trust for Public Land special report-Parks and Pandemic. The report highlights following challenges and changes as they are affecting the parks systems.

Health: Parks and open spaces have become critical resources for all the physical and mental health benefits they provide. The pandemic has resulted in closings of restaurants, bars, malls, etc. where people socialize, and parks and open spaces are helping fill that gap while also helping communities deal with the trauma and stress that comes with a global health crisis. The report also notes that the pandemic has revealed a significant gap in the nation's poor neighborhoods which lack access to the quality green spaces, thus depriving them of the health benefits.

Usage: As the businesses and non-essential services have closed across the nation, people have found respite in close to home neighborhood parks, open spaces, and greenway trails to stay physically active and meet other people while maintaining the 'social distance.' Parks and greenway trails are seeing unprecedented high levels of usage proving their importance in this health crisis. This has also led to the overwhelmed parks and recreation systems and many communities had to produce innovative ways to encourage people to maintain distance and use open spaces in accordance with CDC guidelines.

Policy: Across the country, the pandemic has led parks departments to consider a range of policy changes by closing off amenities, athletic programs, and facilities that result in large gatherings. While the communities have kept access to open spaces, portable toilets, restrooms, drinking fountains are shut down. In major cities, the problem of equitable access became apparent when parking lots were closed to manage heavy traffic in parks which in turn created a barrier for people not within the walking distance of the parks.

Investment: Exacerbated usage of parks and open spaces has underscored the need for increase in parks and recreation as essential infrastructure investment and leverage the momentum of communities' interest to be outdoors and focused on health benefits. Cities and Towns across the nation are facing the financial challenges with decreased revenue, employment loss, and budget cuts. Elected officials and decision makers need to realize the importance of parks and recreation as an essential service in this pandemic and ensure a steady investment to continue offering the quality service to their communities.

Future: The Trust for Public Land report also highlights that the pandemic has called attention to the fact that access to the outdoors is considered a privilege when it should be a right. With the data to pinpoint where parks are most needed, we can address the equality challenge across the communities. Experts in the field are suggesting that this is the crucial time to continue supporting the operational needs of parks to maintain their high quality, especially in the underserved areas.

¹⁰ Outdoor Industry Association. "The New Outdoor Participant (COVID and Beyond)." Outdoor Industry Association, March 2021.

¹¹ Larson, Lincoln, and et al. "Greenspace and Park Use Associated with Less Emotional Distress among College Students in the United States during the COVID-19 Pandemic." *Environmental Research* 204 (Part D), 2022. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article>.



2 INVENTORY + ANALYSIS



OVERVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of the Town of Swansboro's existing parks and recreation system. The Inventory and Analysis Chapter is a snapshot of the Parks and Recreation Department as it currently exists, detailing its parkland, facilities, programs, operations, maintenance, and finance. This chapter compiles data that will serve as the foundation for this plan's recommendations. Each recommendation will be firmly rooted in the realities of Swansboro's parks and recreation system and reality in a prioritized list of objectives and strategies for achieving the goals.



PARKLAND AND FACILITIES INVENTORY

To establish a clear vision for the future of a parks and recreation system, the existing state of that system should be inventoried and analyzed to identify those elements that are working well and those where there may be gaps. What follows is an inventory and assessment of the Town's current parkland, facilities, and open space.

Swansboro Municipal Park Swansboro Recreation Center

Address: 830 Main Street Ext.
18.07 Acres

Key Inventory: Multipurpose Fields, Picnic Shelters, Multiuse Courts, Basketball Court, Playgrounds, Splash Pad, Nature Trail, Concession/Restroom Building, Dog Park

Municipal Park

Overview

Municipal Park is Swansboro's most frequented park as it truly offers something for everyone. Park-goers can take their pick from a variety of recreation opportunities. Children enjoy a splashpad and assortment of playground elements. In 2015 Swansboro received a \$275,000 grant funded by the Trillium Health Resources, and in 2018, a \$196,000 grant funded by the Connect North Carolina Bond program to construct the splashpad, all-inclusive playground and other park enhancements. Municipal Park provides a basketball court and tennis courts convertible into pickleball courts, and two shelters in addition to multiple small shade structures with benches. A quarter mile of paved walking trail with fitness stations connects to an interpretive nature trail through the woods. In 2017 the Town built a dog park which has proven extremely popular and well-used. A concessions/restroom building, and undesignated/un-lined athletic fields support various third-party athletic programs. At any given time, several youth teams can either be practicing or playing games.

Strengths

Municipal Park excels in providing a diverse array of activities and facilities to a broad user base. Town staff have dedicated care and provided resources to support the recreational needs of individuals with physical or cognitive challenges. The park is well maintained, appears free of most safety concerns, and expresses itself as a welcoming and aesthetically pleasing place to enjoy leisure time.



MUNICIPAL PARK + RECREATION CENTER

Opportunities

As with any well used facility, the playground equipment wear and tear is evident. The Town has recently removed the broken climbing structure and plans to replace it with other play equipment in the future. Some of the deferred maintenance needs would include ensuring the playground safety surfacing is in compliance with Consumer Product Safety Commission Standards for playground safety and addressing the drainage issues with athletic fields. There is an opportunity to enhance connectivity to surrounding residential areas and educate users on environmental issues like stream restoration or wetland ecology. There is also opportunity to expand the community center by adding a gymnasium.

Swansboro Recreation Center

Overview

The Swansboro Recreation Center is a 5,800 square-foot facility located on the front portion of Municipal Park, facing Main Street Extension. Constructed in 2012, the recreation center was the centerpiece of major renovations taking place at Municipal Park at that time. Establishing this million-dollar facility in the Town of Swansboro marked a milestone in the Town's role as a recreation provider, ushering in new resources including the first full-time parks and recreation department director. For many, the Swansboro Recreation Center represents a commitment on behalf of the Town to provide residents with access to parks and recreational activities.



Swansboro Recreation Center

The Swansboro Recreation Center represents a commitment on behalf of the Town to provide residents with access to parks and recreational activities.

Strengths

The facility is comprised of a lobby, four activity rooms (fitness, game, classroom, multipurpose room, and a small prep-kitchen. Swansboro Parks and Recreation department staff also have their offices here. The Swansboro Recreation Center park is well maintained, appears free of most safety concerns, and expresses itself as a welcoming and aesthetically pleasing place to enjoy indoor leisure time. Although each activity room in the center is designated as serving a particular purpose, the rooms have not been overprogrammed and still provide flexibility to accommodate a variety of recreational programs and activities. The Department also benefits from fees received for room rentals.

Opportunities

An upgraded Swansboro Recreation Center would provide residents and facility users with access to additional indoor recreation amenities. Results from the recreational needs survey indicated a desire among residents for more indoor fitness classes, educational programs, and rentable event space. Further, the majority of survey residents believe the Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department should offer youth athletics independently of third-party associations. The Town could provide an expanding the recreational level of service for indoor activities by expanding the Recreation Center to include a full gymnasium. Survey results also revealed Swansboro residents' willingness to support Recreation Center improvements with tax dollars.



Recreation Programs at Swansboro Recreation Center

Bicentennial Park

Address: 104 E. Corbett Ave.
1.56 Acres

Key Inventory: Fishing Pier, Canoe/Kayak Launch, Boardwalk, Paved Walking Paths

Overview

Bicentennial Park is located in Downtown Swansboro on the shores of the White Oak River along the waterfront. Areas on both sides of the White Oak River Bridge comprise the park and are connected by a boardwalk and concrete under-bridge trail. This attractive and popular facility includes a fishing dock, kayak launch, picnic facilities, brick walkways, a boardwalk, covered swings, informational kiosks, and restrooms. The centrally

located statue of Otway Burns, Jr. is dedicated to his success as a naval hero through the War of 1812, and his accomplishments in the shipbuilding industry. The park is clean, well-maintained, and visually appealing. With consistent signage and a color palate consistent with other Swansboro parks, the average user should recognize that the park is managed and maintained by the Town. Having a full-service restroom on site provides a comfortable and clean convenience.

Strengths

Alongside self-directed active recreation, Bicentennial Park's views of the river and marshes invite park visitors to participate in nature-based recreation as well as restorative leisure activities. Park amenities like covered bench swings, riverside picnic tables, and fishing pier appear to have been selected and placed in an intentional manner to elevate user experience. The under-bridge trail/pathway connects to downtown attractions and is a unique feature providing a touch of excitement or layer of fun.

Opportunities

While there is limited dedicated parking for the park, there is an opportunity to share parking with adjacent businesses. The canoe/kayak launch can be further developed to include lessons and programs to attract visitors. Portions of the site such as the picnic areas should be evaluated for ADA compliance.



Pineland Park

Address: 732 Pineland Dr.
2 Acres

Key Inventory: Large Picnic Shelter, Play Equipment

Overview

Tucked away in the Swansboro Heights neighborhood, this neighborhood/mini park provides playground equipment, large picnic shelter, covered bench swing and parking. Surrounded by residential development, the park is in a location ideal for the type of passive recreation it currently provides.

Strengths

Pineland Park exists in a location ideal for the types of passive and self-guided recreational amenities it currently offers for the surrounding residential neighborhoods including playground equipment, picnic shelter, and areas to relax. The large picnic shelter accommodates three picnic tables/benches and is structurally sound, making it attractive to park-goers interested in gathering with groups. Existing mature hardwood trees provide shade and respite on hot days. The park overall is clean and upkept.

Opportunities

Although the park is in a quiet neighborhood walkable from neighboring housing subdivisions, its location in a corner lot, absence of sidewalk connectivity and limited wayfinding signage makes it difficult for users to find it. The deferred maintenance needs for this park include replacement of aged playground equipment along with the safety surfacing and fence repairs. The Town has the opportunity to 'phase out' play equipment at Pineland Park, transitioning it into a space for passive recreation. It can then explore options for acquiring additional property to develop a traditional neighborhood park with amenities to be determined based on feedback from the community.

Lastly, constructing an ADA compliant parking space will benefit users with different abilities and providing pedestrian circulation connecting all the amenities within the park will help organize the site for better user experience.



Pirate's Den Park

Address: 640 Shore Dr.

Acreage: 0.62

Key Inventory: Playground, Picnic Shelters, Restrooms, Walking Path

Overview

Pirates Den Park is located at the junction of Broad Street and Shore Drive, just one block off NC 24 in the Edgewater Heights neighborhood. The park includes a large nautically themed playground, picnic shelters, benches, covered swings, and restroom facilities.

Strengths

This park excels in providing a unique playground with a variety of play structures coupled with traditional neighborhood park amenities such as a picnic shelter and sitting areas. This park appears to be well maintained with an overall inviting and welcoming character. Support infrastructure including waste receptacles, dog waste receptacles, and signage align with those that exist at Swansboro's other parks making it easy for park users to discern that they are recreating at a Swansboro maintained and operated facility.

Opportunities

Although Pirates' Den Park provides themed playground with many unique structures exciting for young children, several attributes appear to need deferred maintenance. Aging playground structures and deteriorating wood mulch safety surface needs refurbishing. Although some of the walking paths, unprogrammed grassy areas, and picnic shelter area get plenty of shade, the playground itself, the park's signature facility, lacks shade. Additionally, the park could provide opportunities for teens in the form of a small, single goal basketball court. Fitness and leisure needs of adults could be served by adding exercise equipment and extending the walking paths to form a loop around the park's perimeter. Incorporating seasonal flowering shrubs, ornamental grasses and vines over the fences will help reduce the feeling of fenced enclosure and contribute to the aesthetics of the park. Additionally, redeveloping the parallel parking along Broad Street will help define the park entrance thereby enhancing the sense of arrival into the park.



Ward Shore Park

Address: 321 Water St.

Acreage: .36

Key Inventory: Picnic Tables, Covered Swings

Overview

Ward Shore Park is located on Water Street just south of the Swansboro downtown area. The park is situated directly on the White Oak River at the “turning basin” of the Intracoastal Waterway – an excellent site for viewing the passing boats, the historic waterfront and views of Huggins Island, Bear Island, Deer Island, and Pelican Island. The park is a short walk from the downtown area and is a component of the White Oak River Trail, a long-term plan for development of a walking route along the Swansboro waterfront. Ward Shore has picnic tables and covered swings.

Support infrastructure including waste receptacles, dog waste receptacles, and signage align with those that exist at Swansboro’s other parks making it easy for park users to discern that they are recreating at a Swansboro maintained and operated facility.

Strengths

While situated along a narrow strip of land, the layout of the site excels at providing amenities conducive to passive recreation and a place for quiet reflection. In 2016, the Town of Swansboro received a North Carolina Water Resources Development Project Grant to stabilize and protect the shoreline of the park. A failing bulkhead was removed and replaced with living shoreline to reduce erosion. The Town has also replaced asphalt at Ward Shore Park with permeable surfacing, which is reducing stormwater runoff and pollution of the waterway.

Opportunities

Enhancements are underway to address additional maintenance needs at this park. Additionally, provision of low-level landscaping, seasonal flowering shrubs and ornamental grasses will enhance the user experience and contribute to the aesthetics of this site.



Riverview Park

Address: 320 Corbett Ave.

Acreage: .78

Key Inventory: Boardwalk Trail, Observation Shelters, Picnic Shelters, Covered Gazebo, Interpretive Signage

Overview

Riverview Park is located off NC Highway 24, across the street from the West Main Street, the gateway to Historic Downtown Swansboro. This linear park features several hundred feet of elevated shoreline boardwalks. Along the path are two covered observation shelters with viewing telescopes, and three picnic shelters along the White Oak River with views of Jones Island. As park users travel the boardwalk, they encounter interpretive signage pointing out the aspects of the surrounding coastal environment.

Strengths

With its large entrance area, open horizontal sight lines dotted with palm trees, signage, and manicured landscaping, Riverview Park portrays a welcoming gateway for visitors. The park's amenities provide an opportunity for passive recreation. Park visitors can enjoy reading a book, having lunch under one of the picnic shelters, strolling to the end of the boardwalk to experience nature's sensations, or gazing across the White Oak River imagining what the fishing village might have looked like when it was established nearly 200 years ago. Riverview Park provides the ideal physical environment for the public to learn about and engage with the natural resources found in the coastal environment. Birdwatchers can expect to catch sight of migrating and local waterfowl. As the built environment grows to accommodate new residents and visitors to Swansboro, Riverview Park preserves threatened shoreline ecosystems and provides a natural layer of protection from environmental instability.

Opportunities

The physical attributes of the site limit the ability to diversify the inventory of recreation amenities at Riverview Park and although the park itself could be considered a trail; it does not currently connect to anything outside of its boundaries. The boardwalk trail extends northward and ends just before reaching Swan Harbor, the neighborhood subdivision to which it is adjacent. As part of a larger trail system, Riverview Park could serve as the beginning of a 'spoke,' connecting 'hubs' like neighborhoods and downtown destinations. Another opportunity would be to heed waterfront implementation plan's recommendation to extend Riverview to downtown, which would be connecting.



Downtown + Docks

Docks

Overview

Swansboro Parks and Recreation supports three public docks in its historic downtown; Moore Street Dock, Main Street Dock, and Church Street Dock. The Town considers the docks an asset as they allow boaters convenient and cost-friendly access to water and downtown businesses thereby contributing to Swansboro's local economy. Boaters enter the dock via the Intracoastal Waterway and are able to dock for the day or overnight.

Strengths

Main Street Dock- Swansboro's public day-dock, also known as the Town Dinghy Dock, is located at the end of Main Street. This dual-purpose dock is used both for fishing and docking smaller boats for the day. There is no charge for its use, and with its central location in the downtown area, it provides a convenient place for day-trip visitors to dock and visit for the day.

Moore Street Dock- The Town's Moore Street Dock is yet another day option for smaller boats. Located adjacent to the Boro Restaurant at the foot of Moore Street, the dock features two free boat slips for smaller vessels and a pedestrian walkway.

Church Street Dock- The largest of the three, the Church Street Dock located at the water end of Church Street offers overnight accommodations for transient boaters 26 feet or larger. The dock is a floating dock with 10 transient slips offering power, water, and a pump out station. With a dockside depth of 8 feet, the slips can accommodate vessels up to 100 feet.

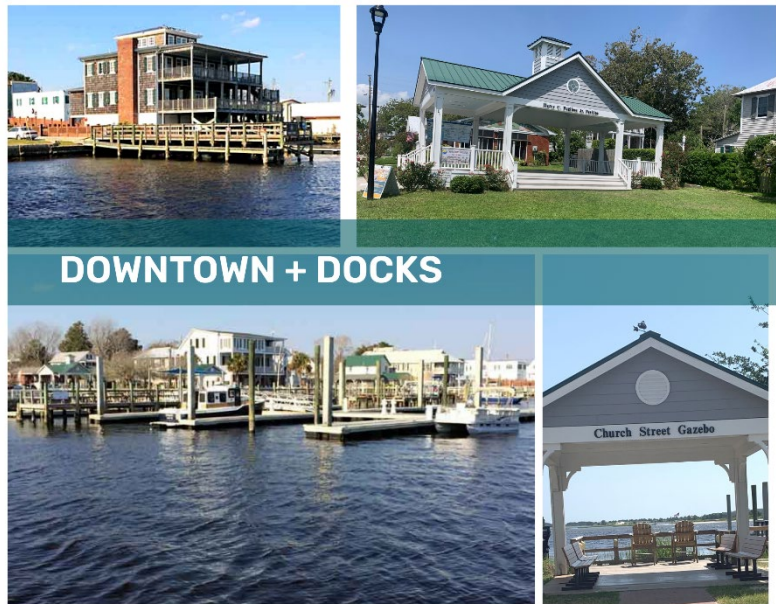
Opportunities

There is opportunity to provide boaters with a better user experience, and recoup lost revenue for the Town by operating Church Street Dock with a fulltime dockmaster. A manned facility would mitigate the risk associated with amateur boaters or boaters needing assistance with when the current is strong and reduce the instances of conflict between day-dockers and those who have reserved slips. It would also provide a chance to educate local boaters on rules and regulations of the Town's dock facilities.

Downtown Facilities

Harry C. Pugliese Pavilion at Olde Town Square: Located at the corner of Front and Church Streets, the 800 square-foot pavilion sits on close to a quarter-acre of grassy turf with scenic views of Bogue Sound. The majority of Swansboro's annual events as well as weekly summertime concerts are held here. The facility shares the downtown public parking.

The Church Street Gazebo at Olde Town Square: Located across from the Pavilion and sitting on the water's edge, this 1,000 square-foot covered shelter features seating and a patio extending out over the river. As with the Pavilion, the Gazebo is well maintained and offers beautiful views of the water. Similarly, parking is shared with other uses in the downtown area. There is a potential for this area to be developed as a pedestrian focused environment for special events. Specialty hardscape elements, site furnishings along the sidewalks, and landscape enhancements will help develop Front Street, the pavilion, and the gazebo area into one cohesive public space.





GREENWAYS

A greenway is a separated linear path that provides a low-stress recreational or transportation experience for bicyclists, pedestrians, equestrians, skaters, wheelchair users, joggers, and others. Greenways are also open space corridors that may protect environmentally sensitive lands or stream corridors. Greenways can also be utilized as buffers, separating, and

protecting the natural environment from the built environment. Typically located in narrow strips of land where other uses are prohibited, greenways are often situated in a flood plain or between developments of differing land uses. Greenways are sometimes referred to as a trail or shared use path. Separated paths that are adjacent to roadway corridors are called sidepaths but can be a part of a community's greenway network.

Greenway Benefits

Greenways and trails provide many types of benefits for a community, which only increase as the network is expanded. Some of the benefits of greenways include:

- > Health and Well-Being
- > Environment
- > Economy
- > Mobility
- > Community
- > Equity

Health + Well-Being

Access to greenways and trails is an important benefit for personal health, especially in places where elements of urban life such as traffic and pollution contribute to stress and poor health. Greenways often serve as linear parks which offer a safe and comfortable environment for active recreation such as walking, biking, jogging, or running. Regular usage can bring both short- and long-term benefits associated with exercise and physical activity. Short-term benefits include improved physical and mental health. Long-term benefits of regular exercise include improved cardiovascular health and reduced risk of coronary heart disease and can even help people manage Type I and Type II diabetes. A modest two hours of walking per week has been shown through research to lower the rate of diabetes, and the American Diabetes Association cites walking as a powerful tool in the battle against diabetes. Walking can be done anywhere but is easier, safer, and more enjoyable when communities invest in public trail networks.

A recent cost-benefit analysis of greenways found that every \$1 in trail investment for physical activity yielded \$2.94 in direct medical benefits. With regards to public health, greenways are a wise investment for any community to make, and the potential medical benefits far outweigh the costs. Greenways are additionally a uniquely accessible form of recreation and exercise as the cost of entry and use is removed, unlike fitness centers which often charge membership fees. 60% of adults in America do not regularly exercise with another 25% not exercising at all according to the U.S. Surgeon General. Trails, therefore, provide a more accessible exercise amenity, and people are more likely to be physically active if they have recreational facilities such as trails nearby.

There is a social benefit to greenways as well, as using public trails can bring one into contact with neighbors and other members of the community. Being able to take a walk with a friend or family member in a safe environment can help reduce stress, improve mental health, and make new connections that deepen the ties of the community.

Environment

Greenways and trails often utilize natural corridors and provide a buffer between urban development and sensitive environmental ecosystems such as streams, wetlands, and riparian buffers. In doing so greenway corridors help filter toxins out of stormwater runoff before they reach the water systems. This can also help reduce erosion and sedimentation. Many greenways are placed in floodplains and are designed to help mitigate the effects of flooding.

In areas with extensive vegetation, air purification can also be a benefit of greenways as trees and other vegetation are often present within the corridor. Trees absorb carbon dioxide and produce oxygen, making greenways among the healthiest places to be. This is especially important in dense urban areas where fossil fuel exhaust from heavy traffic causes air pollution.

Wildlife also benefits from the preservation of natural corridors within developed areas. Habitats for varied species can be protected, and animals can use greenway corridors to safely traverse the region with minimal human interaction. For humans, greenways can function as outdoor environmental classrooms with opportunities to learn about the plant and animal species with which they share their region.

Economy

Significant positive economic impacts can be realized from the construction of greenways and trails. Property values of homes in many communities have been shown to increase by as much as 6.5% when access to trails is included. In the real estate market, close trail access can be an attractive amenity that increases interest in a property. Many developers also include trails as recreational amenities in new developments. Additionally, trail corridors can attract tourism and economic activity centered around trail users. On a larger scale, trails can have impacts across an entire region. A recent study found that the East Coast Greenway, a trail linking cities along the eastern seaboard from Maine to Florida, generates over \$90 million in revenue and taxes each year and creates 800 temporary and permanent jobs within the Triangle region of North Carolina alone.

Mobility

Greenways are not just for recreation; they can also be used for transportation. Trails can link neighborhoods with areas for shopping, education, entertainment, and employment, providing users a safe and enjoyable way to travel. Trails are especially useful for short trips, especially those trips less than one mile. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that three-quarters of these short trips are made by car. There is a great opportunity to increase mode shares of active transportation by investing in greenways and trails, allowing people of all ages and abilities to walk and bike to their destinations.

Community

By connecting people and places, greenways and trails help foster the development of community and a sense of place. Giving people opportunities to meet their neighbors and deepen their ties to the community helps build a stronger local culture where people feel welcomed and engaged. Greenways can help bridge cultural gaps and give people a neutral place to meet as well as recreate and travel. As trails are integrated into the community and become associated with people and places, they can also become a symbol of the community as well as a destination within the region. Trails are valued community assets providing mobility, prosperity, and environmental benefits that contribute a sense of community pride. Greenways can even be used for displaying public art and interpretive signage to celebrate the history and culture of the community and strengthen residents' cultural awareness.

Greenways additionally can be among the safest places in a community. A study on crime rates along the American Tobacco Trail in Durham, North Carolina, found that less than a half percent of area crimes occurred on the trail. With regular use and good design featuring lighting and clear sightlines users can remain safe and secure while on trails.

Equity

Access to greenways and trails is fundamental to helping reduce inequality within our communities. The costs of owning, maintaining, fueling, insuring, and registering a car are great and can be a tremendous burden on many households. A bicycle, on the other hand, is a relatively inexpensive investment, and walking is free. For those who cannot afford a private vehicle, greenways and trails offer a convenient and economical way to get around the city and access shops, schools, and jobs. A 2018 report by the Institute for Transportation Research and Education at North Carolina State University found significant household transportation savings resulting from the trails being studied. Greenways can also help provide additional safe mobility options for those with disabilities, and connect communities underserved by pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

BEST PRACTICES

Design Standards + Typical Sections

The standards and methods in which greenways are designed impact the experience and safety of the diverse set of users that take to greenways and trails for a variety of recreational, utilitarian, health, and transportation purposes. This section illustrates aspects of greenway design to help guide future actions in planning for, designing, constructing, and maintaining greenways that connect to a variety of destinations, promotes a diverse user experience, and is built to a maintainable scale.

Materials Selection

Factors to be considered in the selection of materials for greenways include anticipated facility type (recreational versus commuter), expected use activities (i.e., walking / bicycling / running / rollerblading), age and ability of trail users, environmental conditions, construction cost, maintenance burden and costs, and funding source requirements, among others. A variety of materials are described and illustrated below.

Paved Surface

Paved trail surfaces such as asphalt or concrete offer great accessibility to accommodate users of all ages and abilities. Asphalt pavement tends to be the most popular and cost effective for paved trails. Concrete pavement is more durable, but costs more than asphalt pavement. As such, concrete trails are typically more common in urban settings (where projected user volumes are high or the trail may be subject to vehicular loading more often) or in areas subject to heavy flooding forces that may cause damage to the trail.

Natural Surface

Compacted aggregates and compacted native soil are two types of natural surfaces considered for this study. Both are budget-friendly options that have been implemented in trail systems across North Carolina and beyond to provide a durable alternative to paved trails. Compacted aggregates have proven to be a durable, affordable, and readily available means of providing a natural surface for trail construction. Granite fines are a commonly used material due to their availability from local quarries and their ability to achieve compaction of a level surface that is accessible to most users. Proper compaction and handling adjacent drainage are keys to the success of using this material. Annual maintenance is required to ensure that the trail's crown pitches drain. This typically includes laying and grooming additional aggregate as necessary to ensure that water rills and deep grooves do not form within the trail surface as a result of regular rain events. It is critical to establish drainage adjacent to the trail during construction to ensure concentrated runoff is not allowed to cross the trail perpendicularly. Over time these types of flows will erode the trail and surfacing.

One of the most cost effective and easily constructed natural surface options is compacted native soil. Like compacted aggregate, this surfacing method relies heavily on material compaction and adjacent drainage. The existing soil must be able to achieve compaction levels of 95-98% to ensure trail integrity.

If native soil is unsuitable, material may be imported at additional cost and installed with a roller and small excavating equipment depending on topography. Surface drainage should not be allowed to cross perpendicular to the trail to prevent washout and rills within the walking surface. Annual maintenance is required and includes re-compaction to ensure the trail remains crowned to properly pitch water to adjacent drainage features. Installation of additional soil in rain wash out areas may also be required.



Natural Surface Trails at Swansboro Municipal Park

Boardwalk

Material options for boardwalk decks include timber and concrete (cast-in-place or pre-cast). Timber has traditionally been used for its lower construction cost but requires regular maintenance and deck repairs or replacement to extend its functional life. Concrete deck options typically cost more upfront but have lower life-cycle costs due to reduced maintenance requirements. Safety rails and handrails should be provided in accordance with applicable building codes. Timber, metal, and composite railing options are available depending on site conditions, desired aesthetics, and budget. Boardwalk substructure design and materials may vary depending upon specific site conditions and geotechnical recommendations.



Boardwalk Trail at Riverview Park

TYPICAL CROSS SECTIONS

Greenways (Preferred)

A 10' wide paved trail is recommended for the preferred greenway typical section, as it requires the least amount of long-term maintenance and greater eligibility from the widest variety of funding sources. Asphalt pavement is recommended based on site conditions within Swansboro, anticipated greenway use, and cost considerations. Limited sections of concrete pavement may be required to accommodate site conditions as necessary. Shoulders or shy zones of 2' or greater should be kept clear of any obstacles to ensure full greenway width remains usable.

Greenways (Constrained)

A slightly narrower 8' wide natural surface or asphalt trail may be considered for segments within the greenway network that are constrained due to environmental or right-of-way issues. This typical section may also be considered for neighborhood connections to greenway corridors.

When considering the use of natural surface for constrained or connector segments, it is important to evaluate the overall life-cycle costs of unpaved surfaces, which may be higher due to long-term maintenance requirements. As in the preferred typical section, shoulders, or shy zones of 2' or greater should be kept clear of any obstacles to ensure full greenway width remains usable.

Boardwalk

A 10' clear width elevated boardwalk is recommended in areas where greenways cross streams or wetland areas. For deck surface considerations, concrete provides greater friction to reduce the risks of slips and falls and reduces long-term maintenance burdens compared to those associated with other materials such as timber. Timber safety rails and handrails are shown with a timber pile substructure system in the typical section below. Boardwalk substructure design and materials may vary depending upon specific site conditions and geotechnical recommendations.

DEFINITIONS:

Bike Lane: A lane on a roadway designated by striping, signing and pavement markings for the preferential use of bicyclists.

Boardwalk: Walkways that cross over water or marshy ground – typically made of wood or other smooth materials, and are accessible to wheelchairs

Crosswalk: A designated place for pedestrians and greenway users to cross a road at an intersection or mid-block crossing

Greenway: A traffic-separated transportation and recreation facility for bicyclists, pedestrians, and other non-motorized users

Sidepath: Shared-use path located next to a roadway.

Sidewalk: The portion of the right-of-way adjacent to the roadway but intended for use by pedestrians, usually made of concrete or asphalt.

Traffic-separated: Physically separated from motor vehicle traffic by a vertical element (e.g., bollards, jersey barriers, flexible delineator posts, or a grade separation) or a horizontal element (e.g., a grassy verge, drainage swale, etc.) providing at least five feet of separation from the edge of traveled way, or if present, road shoulder. If the vertical element is firm and fixed, such a facility may be designated as East Coast Greenway.

Sidepath

A 10' paved sidepath is recommended along roadway corridors where the greenway network connects with the transportation network, allowing residents and visitors to reach destinations in residential neighborhoods and commercial areas. Asphalt pavement is recommended based on site conditions within Swansboro, anticipated greenway use, and cost considerations. Limited sections of concrete pavement may be required to accommodate site conditions as necessary. A five-foot planting strip is provided to separate users from motorized traffic on the adjacent roadway. Planting strip width may be reduced in highly constrained areas where curb and gutter are present.



Sidepath at the University of Washington

Intersection Treatments + Crossings

Most conflicts between greenway users and motor vehicles occur at intersections. Current roadway design decisions increase exposure and risk for bicyclists and pedestrians, reduce user safety and comfort of the greenway network, and discourage biking and walking between destinations. As communities work to make facilities safer for users of all ages and abilities, intersection design is key.

Crosswalk

A crosswalk is a designated place for pedestrians and greenway users to cross a road at an intersection or mid-block crossing. High-visibility crosswalk markings, such as bar pairs, continental, and ladder are recommended to alert motorists of greenway crossing points across roadways. Inlay or thermoplastic tape is also recommended for highly reflective crosswalk markings. Crosswalks should be accompanied by MUTCD pedestrian warning and advance yield signs W11-2, W16-7P, and R1-6 to alert motorists of a crosswalk.



High-visibility Crosswalk NC 24

Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacon (RRFB)

An RRFB is a pedestrian-actuated signal used in combination with pedestrian or trail crossing warning signage to improve safety at uncontrolled, marked crosswalks. The device includes two rectangular-shaped yellow indications, each with an LED-array-based light source, that flash with high frequency when activated. RRFBs should be accompanied by MUTCD pedestrian warning and advance yield signs W11-2 and W16-7P to alert motorists of a crosswalk.

RRFBs are placed on both ends of a crosswalk. If the crosswalk contains a pedestrian refuge island or other type of median, an RRFB should be placed to the right of the crosswalk and on the median (instead of the left side of the crosswalk). RRFBs typically draw power from standalone solar panel units but may also be wired to a traditional power source.



Example of a HAWK in Arizona/ADOT

High Intensity Activated Crosswalk (HAWK)

A HAWK signal, also known as a Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon, is a traffic control signal designed to help pedestrians and greenway users safely cross streets. HAWK signals like other push-button activated traffic signals stop traffic with a red signal, allowing pedestrians to cross with a WALK signal. In addition to the signal head displays, stop lines, and marked crosswalks are required at HAWK crossings. Advance stop lines should be used on multi-lane crossings to reduce the potential for second threat crashes. HAWKs should be accompanied by MUTCD pedestrian warning and advance yield signs W11-2, W16-7P, R10-23, and R9-8 to alert motorists of the signalized pedestrian crossing.

Shared-Use Bridge

A 10' clear width bridge is recommended for grade-separated crossings over streams and roadways to connect greenway sections at either end of the bridge. A variety of design types are available including truss bridges, girder (beam) bridges, arch bridges, suspension bridges, and cable-stayed bridges, among others. Bridge design type selection will vary depending on specific site conditions, cost constraints, and potential impacts to traffic during construction. Safety rails and handrails should be provided in accordance with applicable building codes and NCDOT Bridge Policy. Minimum vertical clearance over roadways shall be provided based on NCDOT Bridge Policy requirements. For deck surface considerations, concrete provides greater friction to reduce the risks of slips and falls and reduces long-term maintenance burdens compared to those associated with other materials such as timber.

Shared-Use Tunnel

A 10' clear width, concrete paved tunnel is recommended for grade-separated crossings under roadways to connect greenway sections at either end of the tunnel. The desired minimum vertical clearance inside the tunnel is 12 feet. Designs should maximize the vertical clearance within the tunnel to the extent practicable based on specific site constraints to maintain a sense of openness and security for users. Lighting inside the tunnel is recommended to ensure continual visibility and user safety. Consideration should also be given to the potential incorporation of dynamic lighting, vibrant murals or other public art elements that create a comfortable and inviting environment for users.



Lighted Greenway Tunnel Raleigh, NC

GREENWAY AMENITIES

Lighting

Well-placed and properly maintained lighting can improve visibility, increase overall greenway access, and give users a greater sense of security. Consider the following lighting guidance for Swansboro's greenway network:

- > Meet the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials' (AASHTO) Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities requirements for shared-use paths.
- > Light only what is needed and comply with dark-sky requirements to help minimize light pollution, which impacts people, animals, and the environment.
- > Be of appropriate scale and spacing to ensure adequate coverage.
- > Be placed where recommended for safety at tunnels and overpasses; trailheads; bridges; gathering places; along streets; crosswalks; where a greenway crosses another path or sidewalk; and on signage.

A variety of lighting types are available including wired, battery-powered, and solar-powered, each of which offers unique advantages or disadvantages regarding cost, maintenance burden, and environmental impacts.

Use of colored and/or dynamic lighting schemes in select areas (such as tunnels and bridges) can enhance the user experience, contribute to the overall brand/identity of the greenway network, and raise awareness of the facility to the traveling public.

WAYFINDING

Wayfinding consists of comprehensive signage, mapping, and marking systems that help inform and educate users as they make their way to, from, and within a greenway network.

While Swansboro has an established wayfinding system for the town's greenway network, expansion and enhancement of existing wayfinding may improve access, provide a greater sense of security and comfort, promote desired user behaviors, improve awareness of regional trail systems, and reinforce the brand/identity of the greenway network. The following principles should guide the expansion of Municipality's wayfinding system as the greenway network continues to develop:

- > Consistency - User experience should feel consistent and continuous across the greenway network.
- > Connectivity - A primary function of wayfinding is to connect users to destinations and other routes. It should clearly communicate current locations, access points, adjacent streets, distances, directions, destinations, estimated travel times, and historical/cultural/environmental information where applicable.
- > Identity - A strong wayfinding identity will make the greenway network more recognizable and memorable to visitors and residents alike. Custom designs and graphics should be used to create a unique identity which reflects the goals of the greenway network and the character of the community it will serve.
- > Predictability - Apply wayfinding in a predictable manner (including sign placement, design, and content) to allow users to quickly understand the information being presented. For users, this builds trust, increases comfort, reduces stress, and provides a welcoming and low-stress experience as they navigate local greenways.
- > Simplicity - Present information in a clear, logical, universal way to reach the widest possible demographic. The longer it takes to understand the information presented, the less likely the system will be used or relied upon.



Example Greenway Signage/Stock Image

Branding

Popular trail and greenway systems establish strong brands and identities to drive recognition at the local and regional levels and beyond to attract users. A consistent, high-quality user experience may be achieved through repeating brand elements such as typical sections (including materials selection), wayfinding (including logos, graphics, and color palette), lighting, furnishings, and other amenities. At a minimum, good signage will increase the awareness of trails within a community, even outside of the system itself. Effective network signage should strike a balance between establishing a consistent look and feel, promoting the system, and respecting individual greenway corridors.

There are a variety of methods available to improve the branding and wayfinding of a trail network beyond the installation of traditional signage. Logos can be painted on greenway surfaces, and smaller signs or stickers can be added to existing streetscape elements like benches, bike racks, trash receptacles and street signs to catch the attention of passers-by and entice new users into the system. These efforts can complement the installation of dedicated network signage, or in some cases, make more expensive signage unnecessary. A branding study is recommended with community input to establish these elements to be used across Swansboro's greenway network.

Trailheads

Trailheads provide public access points to trails and greenways. They are typically in places where users begin or end their journeys and where they get oriented to the greenway or greenway network. While there are minor access points along greenways such as road crossings, within neighborhoods, or where two greenways intersect, a trailhead tends to be a developed site, purposefully designed to provide amenities to greenway users such as parking, signage, information kiosks, restrooms, drinking fountains, bike racks, bike repair stations, seating, public art, landscaping, and trash receptacles.

Guidance for trailhead placement includes:

- > Endpoints are natural places to locate trailheads, but any place where a large volume of users is expected should be considered as a possible trailhead location.
- > Utilize areas where amenities already exist, such as parks.
- > Consider placing a trailhead where greenways intersect.

- Consider placing a trailhead within residential neighborhoods. Trailheads that are located within neighborhoods should be designed to be compatible with their surrounding uses.
- Consult with the community and seek public input on locations. Residents may have insights or preferences for areas that best meet trail user needs.

At all greenway access points, including trailheads, enhance user safety by implementing access management tools. Bollards, gates, fences, landscaping, and signage can prevent motorized vehicles from accessing the greenway. These barriers should be accessible for persons with disabilities to ensure that users of all ages and abilities can access the greenway. Barriers should also allow emergency or maintenance vehicles to access the greenway.

Data Collection

Bicycle and pedestrian count data are an essential tool to justify investments in greenway and active transportation infrastructure and communicate needs with the public, elected officials, and other stakeholders. Collecting this data provides insights into temporal user volume trends (time of day and seasonal), user type trends (biking vs. walking), and user volume trends by geographic location (which sections are most frequently used). This information can also help identify potential areas of need as municipalities plan their future pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure projects.

A variety of counting technologies and products are available depending on the specific application and budget. These range from inductive loop detectors, pneumatic tube detectors, and passive infrared detectors, among others.

Mobile counters provide the flexibility to collect data in one location before moving to another collection location and are typically battery powered. Fixed counters are used at locations where long-term data collection is desired and may be wired or battery powered. Some blend in with their surroundings and others utilize real-time display totems to present daily and yearly counts and engage directly with those users being counted.

Depending on the specific product, count data may be retrieved manually from the counter or may streamline the process via wireless transmission, reducing trips to the field. Online, easy-to-use data platforms are also offered to analyze and visualize the data. Features include dashboards and interfaces to provide access to count data for the development of custom websites and mobile applications. The emerging use of “Big Data” crowdsourced from mobile phone users, via services such as Streetlight and Strava, may also be an option for collecting user count data.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Currently the Town of Swansboro has two state-designated bicycling routes connecting Hammocks Beach State Park to the downtown area and surrounding areas, but these are only signed routes on existing roads. There are bicycle racks at Municipal Park, Bicentennial Park, and Pirates Den Park, but no dedicated trails connecting parks, civic destinations, employment centers and residential communities. Several greenway and sidepath corridors are recommended in the 2011 Swansboro Bicycle Plan, but they have not yet been implemented. This plan will refine previous recommendations and provide additional recommendations and implementation strategies to establish a well-connected greenway network in Swansboro.



Hammocks Beach Road Sidewalk



Bike Route Sign NC 24



Sidewalk NC 24

GREENWAY RECOMMENDATIONS

Greenway recommendations primarily address the recreational needs of Swansboro residents and visitors by developing a comprehensive network. The proposed greenway system builds off recommendations developed in previous planning efforts and greenway network needs expressed by community members during the planning process. This section translates the vision for an accessible greenway system that connects people, parks, and destinations in the community into a strategic set of recommendations with proposed strategies for the developing the network, amenities, and policies.

Swansboro's greenway facility recommendations establish a comprehensive greenway and trail system that compliments recent active transportation and parks planning efforts. Recommendations were developed based on community and stakeholder input, a review of existing conditions, key destinations and connections identified through the planning process, and a prioritization process. The proposed greenway system provides a network of greenways and sidepaths that is accessible and feels safe for people of all ages and abilities.

This plan does not directly recommend improvements to the sidewalk network, but rather describes the greenway network as a stand-alone system that should connect to and be well-coordinated with the sidewalk networks of local jurisdictions.

Proposed Greenway Network

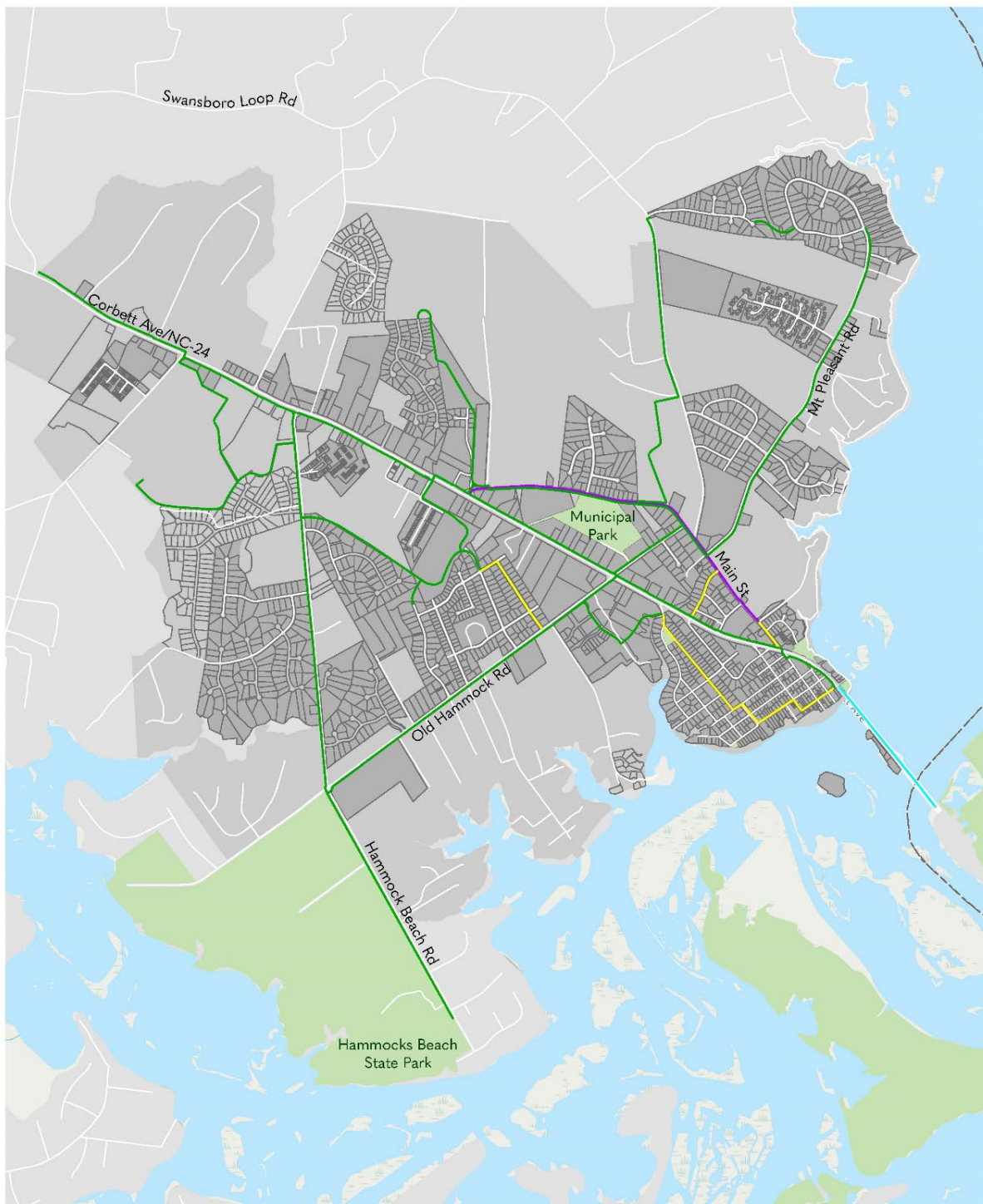
A comprehensive greenway and trail corridor is proposed for Swansboro based on refinements of recommendations from previous planning efforts and feedback from the community. Adjustments to recommendations in previous plans have been made to accommodate recent development, some of which has been constructed on corridors previously recommended for trails. The community survey and resident interviews for the current comprehensive plan solicited feedback on the greenway network regarding opportunities and constraints and fulfill requests for information on the planning process. The following feedback was provided to the planning team:

- > A majority of people indicated they would walk and bike more if a safe and useful greenway network existed.
- > Lack of safe facilities due to poor connections and traffic conditions discourages people from walking and biking more often.
- > Top destinations residents would like to reach by greenway include parks as well as shops and restaurants. Greenway amenities most desired are restrooms, lighting, and trash cans.
- > Interviewees emphasized a need for greenways to be located close to their homes and workplaces, connections to parks, and the addition of amenities such as benches and shade trees.

The backbone of the recommended network is a sidepath along Corbett Ave/NC 24. This recommendation stems from it being identified as the proposed East Coast Greenway Coastal NC route and the Great Trails State Network (statewide trails network for North Carolina - planning effort was led by NCDOT). Sidepaths are 10ft multi-use paths along a roadway to accommodate both bicycle and pedestrian activity. Sidepaths are recommended where sidewalks are proposed along NC 24.

Other recommendations include sidepaths along Mt. Pleasant Rd and Swansboro Loop Rd, which would provide connectivity to residential neighborhoods and parks and be additionally linked by a greenway. Sidepaths along Hammocks Beach Rd and Old Hammock Rd connect residences as well as Hammocks Beach State Park. Swansboro's four public schools would also be connected to neighborhoods by greenways and sidepaths

STREET/CORRIDOR	EXTENT	RECOMMENDATION	LENGTH
Corbett Ave/NC-24	Carteret County to Belgrade-Swansboro Rd	Sidepath	18,300 ft
Hammocks Beach Rd	Corbett Ave to Hammocks Beach State Park	Sidepath	10,800 ft
Old Hammock Rd	Hammocks Beach Rd to Main St Ext	Sidepath	7,500 ft
Mt Pleasant Rd	Main St Ext to Seagate Ln	Sidepath	5,600 ft
Stevens Creek	Swansboro Loop Rd to Mt Pleasant Rd	Greenway	3,800 ft
Main St Ext	Mt Pleasant Rd to Corbett Ave	Sidepath	4,500 ft
New Corridor	Main St Ext to Nautical Ln/Fort Sumter Way	Greenway	4,400 ft
Norris Rd	Corbett Ave to Borough Nest Dr	Sidepath	2,900 ft
Queens Creek Rd	Corbett Ave to Old Carney Rd	Sidepath	1,900 ft
Swansboro High School	Whistling Heron Way to Swansboro High School	Greenway	2,000 ft
Queen's Creek Elementary School	Whistling Heron Way to Queen's Creek Elementary School	Greenway	2,000 ft
Swansboro Elementary School	Corbett Ave to Swansboro Elementary School	Sidepath	1,700 ft
New Corridor	Hammocks Beach Rd to Phillips Dr	Greenway	3,500 ft
New Corridor	Foster Creek Rd to Swansboro Elementary School	Greenway	500 ft
Ward Rd	Old Hammock Rd to New Towne Rd	Sidepath	1,000 ft
New corridor	Ward Rd to Corbett Ave	Greenway	1,000 ft



**SWANSBORO COMPREHENSIVE PARKS AND
RECREATION MASTER PLAN
TRAIL RECOMMENDATIONS**

LEGEND

- Roads
- Parks
- Town Limits
- ETJ
- Recommendations**
- Bike Lanes
- Shared Lane Markings
- Paved Shoulders
- Multi-use Trails

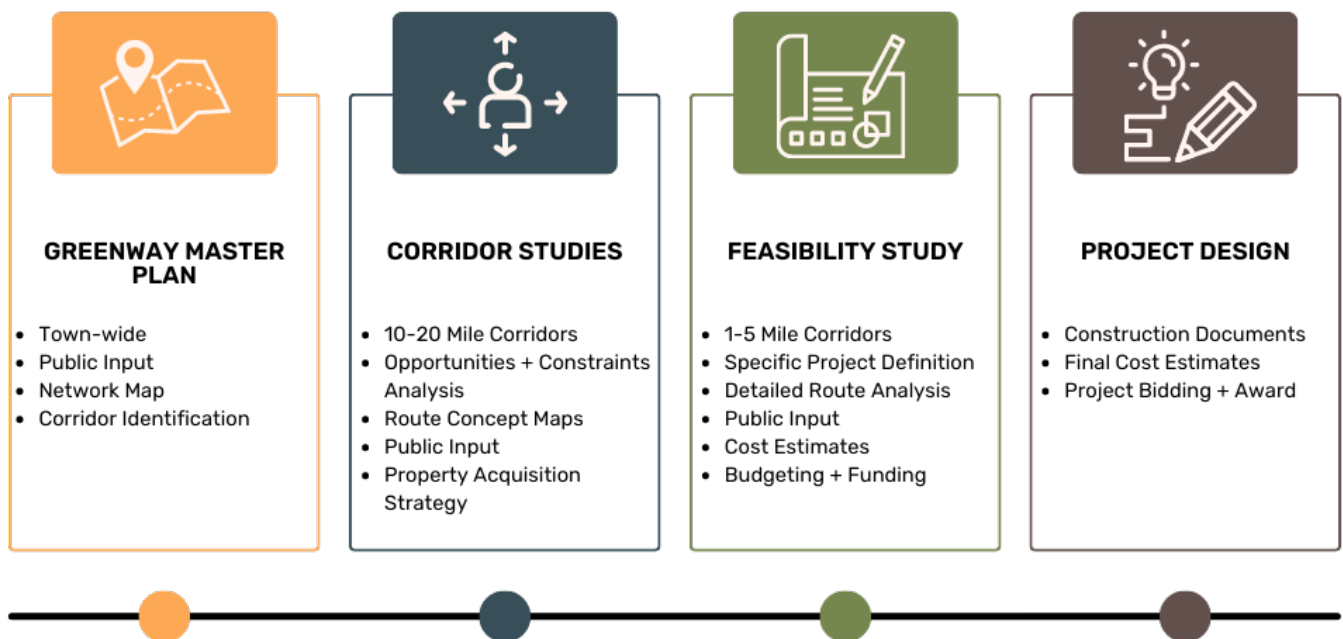
IMPLEMENTATION

While the network plan provides an overall framework for development of various types of trails and the approximate routes, it is by no means decided. As a living document, the network plan and priorities may evolve with changing development pressures, funding opportunities, and demographic trends. Further, the Town will need to undertake more detailed corridor and feasibility studies to “ground-proof” each trail corridor. This typically includes a detailed evaluation of land / easement acquisition, topography, stream or road crossings, grading and drainage patterns, safety, user experience, long-term maintenance, and regulatory requirements. With this more detailed layer of information, design decisions such as trail surface and profile, width, markings, signage, furnishings, and crossings can be finalized.

Only after this detailed assessment can a final trail alignment be determined. The diagram below illustrates a typical greenway planning, design and construction process with key phases and individual tasks. Next steps will be for Swansboro to undertake individual corridor studies followed by feasibility studies and finally, project design.

BLUEPRINT

Greenway Planning, Design + Construction



Greenway recommendations outlined in this plan for Swansboro present major investments in greenway infrastructure that will significantly expand recreational opportunities for Swansboro residents, employees, and visitors. Successful implementation of this plan will require a coordinated and consistent effort with a wide range of community partners. Key agencies and partners include the Swansboro Board of Commissioners, Town of Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department, Town of Swansboro Public Works Department, Town of Swansboro Permitting Department, Onslow County, Jacksonville Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (JUMPO), NCDOT Division 3, NCDOT Integrated Mobility Division (IMD), as well as advocacy organizations, private partners, and members of the community.



RECREATION PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

Overview

Recreation programs and services reflect a community's character in terms of demographics, resources, and culture. They serve as the foundation upon which the notion of parks and recreation being an "essential public service" is built. The goal of this assessment is to identify approaches to develop,

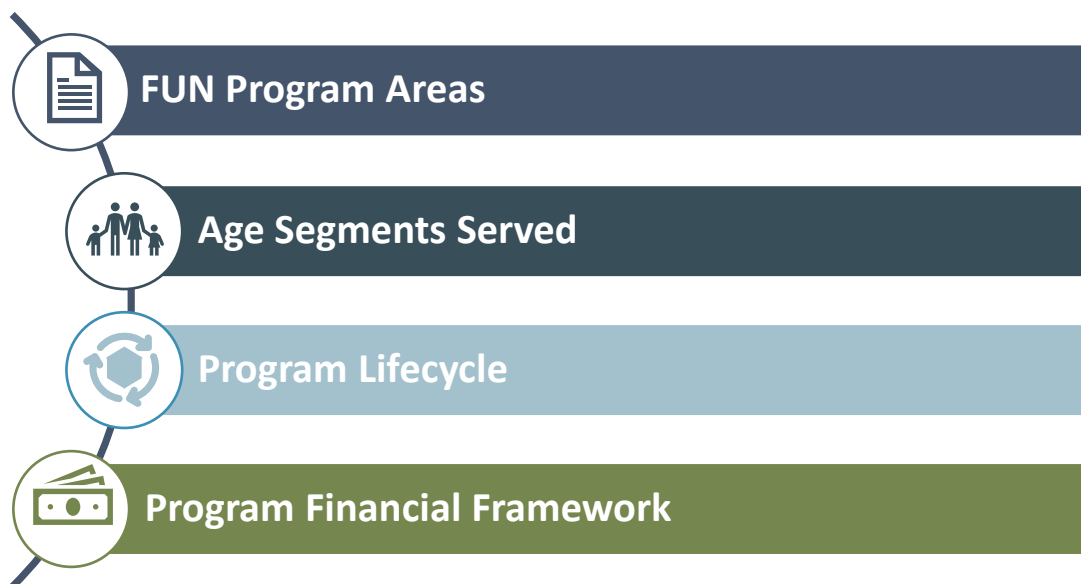
enhance and deliver successful and sustainable recreation programs to be enjoyed by all Swansboro citizens.

Similar to the level of service analysis for park facilities, the recreation programs assessment quantifies existing offerings and qualifies program characteristics and value. Recreation trends, demographics, town-wide initiatives, and industry standards are used to make recreation program recommendations.

Swansboro Parks and Recreation currently offers the majority of its programs at the Swansboro Recreation Center and Municipal Park. Some recreation programs and special events are held at other town-owned facilities like the Harry C. Pugliese, Jr. Pavilion at Olde Town Square, as well as the waterfront, and throughout Downtown Swansboro. Since its inception in 2012, the Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department has grown and expanded over those 10 years, and with that has established fundamental (FUN) program areas. FUN programs are those that are Foundational, Unexpendable, and Necessary – and will be discussed in more detail further into this chapter. FUN programs provided by Swansboro Parks and Recreation include: Festivals and Special Events, Arts and Culture, Fitness and Wellness, Youth and Teens, and Family Recreation.

Methodology

The recreation programs assessment identifies FUN programs, looks at the range of ages served by Swansboro's inventory of recreational programs, analyzes participation over time and reveals program gaps within the community. The assessment further lays out the groundwork for a recreation programs' financial framework. In addition to conversations with department leadership and staff, findings are based on information self-reported by the department including program descriptions, participation levels, ages served, program pricing and cost recovery.



Program Assessment Methodology

FUN PROGRAM AREAS

Designating a recreation program or group of programs as fundamental to a parks and recreation department's service provision allows staff to identify activities that capture the myriad recreational needs within a community. Often times the well-intentioned determination of parks departments to "provide something for everyone" will be unsuccessful if the agency is not actively engaged in determining the true recreational needs among community members.

Quality recreation programs and services provide participants with a wide range of benefits that are linked to physical, mental, social and/or spiritual development and well-being. They give individuals the opportunity to play, learn, grow, and socialize. Among the positive benefits attached to these types of programs are better overall health both physically and mentally, improved fitness, improved self-esteem and self-reliance, increased energy, reduced stress, a sense of social belonging and balance between work and play.

F OUNDATIONAL	recreation programs are considered the bedrock of a parks and recreation department's cache of leisure service offerings. They are representative of the department's strengths and are tied to the mission and vision.
U NEXPENDABLE	recreation programs provide essential benefits to the public, are vital to community-wide health and wellbeing, and have few to any barriers to participation.
N ECCESSARY	recreation programs establish and maintain the quality of life in a community. These programs have a stabilizing effect on the lives of community residents and provide opportunities for families, youth and individuals of all ages and abilities to take part in activities designed to engage and enrich.

Recreation programs are considered FUN if they:

- > garner high participation rates
- > have been provided for a prolonged period of time or is considered an expectation in the community
- > offered more than once per-year
- > have wide demographic appeal
- > consume a significant portion of the department's budget
- > include a tiered level of skill development
- > have the ability to help solve a community issue
- > are supported by facilities or dedicated space
- > are highly visible; and
- > very few if any barriers to participation exist.

- > **Fitness and Wellness:** This FUN program area provides Swansboro residents with access to basic wellness resources. The Town's Fitness and Wellness programs focus on exercise, social interaction, and enrichment. They provide opportunities for individuals of all ages to improve their quality of life by participating in activities that enhance physical and mental health. For example, the Tai Chi program caters mainly to seniors. Other health and wellness programs like Zumba and yoga exclusively cater to adults 18-55, while Pound Fitness, pickleball, and learning about essential oils welcome teens.
- > **Arts and Culture:** Swansboro offers many programs centered around arts and culture. The Town offers programs highlighting several areas of the arts. This includes visual arts (painting, drawing, decorative arts, and crafts) as well as theater arts (drama), and culinary arts. Swansboro residents have the opportunity to expand their artistic abilities with programs such as Paint and Sip, wreath making classes, and sea glass resin art classes. Also in the vein of the arts are books, significant bearers of cultural value. The department hosts Seaside Book Club, held monthly at one of Swansboro's local cafes. Additionally, to satisfy the needs of theater goers, the department provides occasional trip to theaters located in the surrounding area.
- > **Special Events and Festivals:** Swansboro Parks and Recreation staff work tirelessly throughout the year planning and executing the Town's many special events. Swansboro casts a wide net, and the Town's special events and festivals embrace the many characteristics that make Swansboro exceptional. Events like Mullet Festival celebrate the Town's history as a fishing village; Flotilla kicks off the Christmas season with boats adorned with colorful lights and decorations cruising down the White Oak River across Swansboro's waterfront. Special events and festivals play an important role in creating and building community, by which residents enjoy the opportunity to connect with the Town and all the interesting attributes of being a coastal community.
- > **Youth and Teen:** The Parks and Recreation Department provides a range of programs to serve the recreational needs of children and teens ages 6-18. They include activities designed for the social, physical, and recreational enrichment of elementary through middle school-aged youth. The department has had some success with satisfying the recreational needs of Swansboro's teen population. Both Girls and Boys Rec Night, and Kids Night Out have remained popular throughout the years the department has provided them, although attendance does at times fluctuate. Teens are also welcome in several programs designed primarily for adults such as some of the arts and crafts. For youth, Swansboro Parks and Recreation provides several camps, which at times fill the need for childcare – particularly in the summer and on teacher workdays. Further, the Town offers specialty camps to serve specific interests like sports and adventure camps. Other youth programs like Kids Fishing Days and Pogie's Adventure Camp take advantage of the Town's proximity to the White Oak River to offer exclusive water-based activities. Christmas and the holidays provide a thematic backdrop for further youth programs like Gingerbread House Decorating and Elf in the Woods.
- > **Family:** Whole family centered recreation has two main purposes. First, it has the potential to bring families closer together. Also, recreation can be structured to support families by providing a safe and enriching environment for children—one that reinforces the values of the family. Family time is limited amongst the heavily scheduled and fast paced space we are living in. Swansboro Parks and Recreation recognizes the importance of family togetherness and provides activities to entertain families and create lasting memories. Family recreation programs offered by the Town include child-parent cooking and painting classes, and family camping trips. Additionally, seasonal events such as Easter Egg Hunt, Elf in the Woods, Halloweenie Roast, SantaFest, and Touch-a-Truck are included as Family Recreation as young children are the primary age group served, along with their parents.

AGE SEGMENT ANALYSIS

An individual's age is one of the most influential demographic characteristics for determining what type of recreational activities that person will pursue. Many parks and recreation departments aim to provide programming for individuals in all age segments to maximize the benefit their department can create for the population while other departments choose to focus programming on a specific age segment with high needs, such as youth or seniors.

The current assessment includes an age segment analysis cross-referenced by FUN program areas. The goal to provide an over-arching view of the age segments served by different program areas and displaying any gaps in segments served.

Based on the age demographics noted previously in this report, current programs appear fairly well-aligned with the community's age profile. That being said, the lack of primary programs dedicated to the 'Seniors' and 'preschool' segment is noticeable. Seniors make up the second largest potential user group for the department. It is important to engage seniors in recreation offerings as this age segment also tends to be some of the greatest advocates for recreation agencies. It is important to note that Onslow County Senior Services provides a satellite site in the Recreation Center Monday-Friday, 9 am-1 pm. Onslow County Senior Services provides daily activities and meals to the senior citizens in the Swansboro community. The potential value of leisure and recreation activities for children birth to 6 years of age has been noted by both researchers and practitioners.

Program Area	Preschool >5	Elementary (6-12)	Teens (13-17)	Adult (18+)	Senior (55+)
Fitness+ Wellness					
Open Play Pickleball Season			X	X	X
Pound Fitness			X	X	X
Yoga/Zumba Class				X	X
Tai Chi Fitness Class					X
Essential Oils 101			X	X	X
Arts + Culture					
Seaside Book Club				X	X
Bob Ross Paint Class			X	X	X
Seasonal Paint & Sip				X	X
Sea Glass Resin Art Classes			X	X	X
Wreath Making			X	X	X
Theater Trips				X	X
Festivals + Events					
Pirate Fest	X	X	X	X	X
Mullet Festival	X	X	X	X	X
Mullet Adventure Race	X	X	X	X	X
Arts by the Sea Festival	X	X	X	X	X
July 4th Celebration	X	X	X	X	X
Flotilla	X	X	X	X	X
Youth + Teens					
Girls & Boys Rec Night			X		
Kids Night Out		X			
Teacher Workday Camps		X			
Adventure Camps w/ Pogies		X			
Kids Fishing Days		X			
Summer Day Camp		X			
Spring Break Youth Sports		X			
Elf in the Woods	X				
Family Recreation					
Cook w/ Your Kid		X	X	X	X
Family Campouts/ Trips	X	X	X	X	X
Easter Egg Hunt	X	X		X	X
Halloweenie Roast	X	X	X	X	X
Santa Fest	X	X	X	X	X
Touch-a-Truck	X	X	X	X	X
Gingerbread House Decorating	X	X	X	X	X

ALIGNMENT WITH DEMOGRAPHICS, TRENDS, AND COMMUNITY NEEDS

Demographics + Trends

Ensuring that recreation programs offered by parks and recreation agencies appeal to a wide range of a community's demographics is essential. Swansboro Parks and Recreation has been cognizant of the importance of creating a menu of programs appealing across demographic segments. The Town's special events and festivals are at the forefront of this effort. The department also ensure the provision of programs catering to target demographics like youth and teens. However, some gaps exist, and will be discussed below.

Swansboro's recreation programs primarily serve the Town's youth with a focus on providing childcare via the department's various camps and teacher workday activities. These opportunities provide children with a safe and engaging environment in which they can learn new things, socialize with their peers, and take part in unstructured outdoor activities like being on the playground, shooting baskets, and so forth. The Town further provides youth activities by way of special events and holiday themed events. Although the Town provides a robust level of service for youth, it is important to keep in mind that this age segment represents a minority of Swansboro's total population. The demographic analysis demonstrates that most populous age cohort in Town is adults aged 25-54, followed by senior adults aged 55 and over.






Within the Town of Swansboro, in 2021, 33% of households are estimated to have an annual income less than \$34,999. This gives an indication of resident's ability to pay for recreation overall and may indicate that residents are dependent upon low-cost recreational opportunities. This is indicative to the Town that there is a need to provide programs in line with Swansboro resident's ability to pay.



Sea Glass Resin Art Class at Swansboro Recreation Center

"PARKS+" – RECREATION PROGRAM TRENDS

Parks and recreation programming in the 21st century have the potential to serve more than one purpose. A PARKS+ approach seeks to ensure parks and programs play various roles resulting in a plethora of benefits that reach beyond just recreation and leisure. The following age-related program trends can be identified nationwide and throughout the world as ways to overlay positive human outcomes onto recreational activities designed to excite and engage.

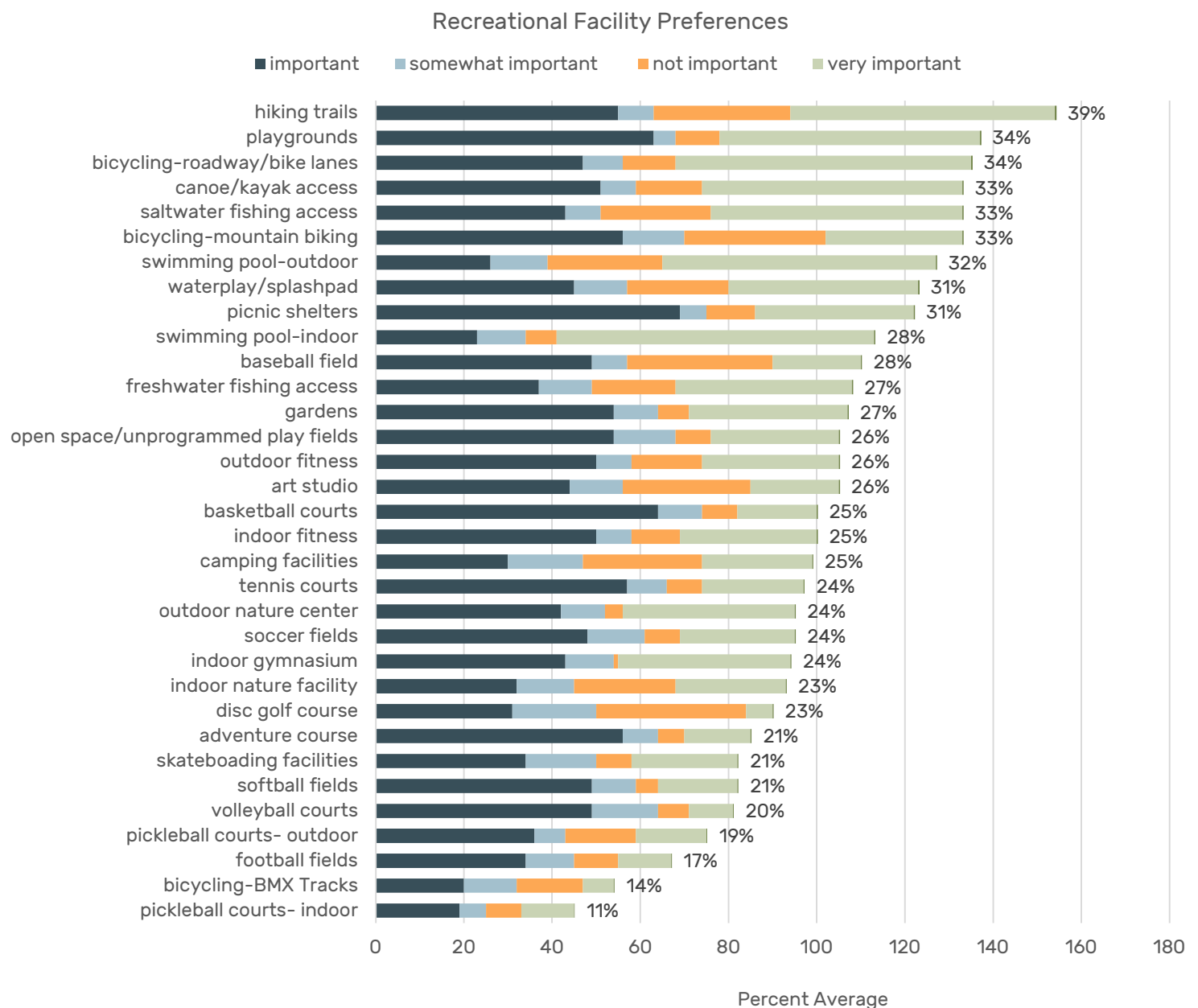
	Pre-K	"Trailblazing Toddlers"		Programming for children 3 - 4 years old that helps children develop into confident and competent individuals through a child-oriented and fun-filled environment, exploring various themes, nature, and interactive play.
	Youth	Out-of-School Time Programs "Life Sports"		Day programs and camps can benefit all children but are especially important for low-income families with few other options for daytime childcare options. Aimed at kids in particular in response to the childhood obesity epidemic, this refers to sport that is fun and an individual can participate well into their later years, e.g., biking, kayaking, tennis, swimming, jogging/walking, etc.
	Teens	"Incentivized Participation"		Tie successful participation to school credit and/or pay teens to participate in programs designed to introduce responsibilities related to employment, such as a counselor-in-training or park ranger cadet programs, can be fun for teens while helping them develop job skills.
	Adults	"Retro-Rec"		Activities like kickball, spikeball, cornhole, futsal, and 'adult recess' are soaring in popularity and do not require parks and recreation departments should not have to go to great financial or staffing lengths to offer activities to its adult clientele.
	Older Adults	"Active Activities"	"Ager"	Recreational offerings should be much more active, such as fitness programs, 50-plus clubs that include adventure travel and sports

COMMUNITY NEEDS

Understanding community demand for programming is essential to inform decision making for expanding or reducing core program areas. Community engagement is discussed at length in a different chapter but is summarized here to inform this discussion.

The recreational needs survey indicates that the top five amenity desires in Swansboro as:

1. **Hiking Trails**
2. **Bike Lanes, Playgrounds,**
3. **Canoe-Kayak Access, Saltwater Fishing Access, Bicycling-Mountain Biking**
4. **Outdoor Swimming Pool**
5. **Waterplay/Splashpad, Picnic Shelters**



The recreational needs survey indicates that the top five program/activity desires in Swansboro as:

1. Special Events + Festivals

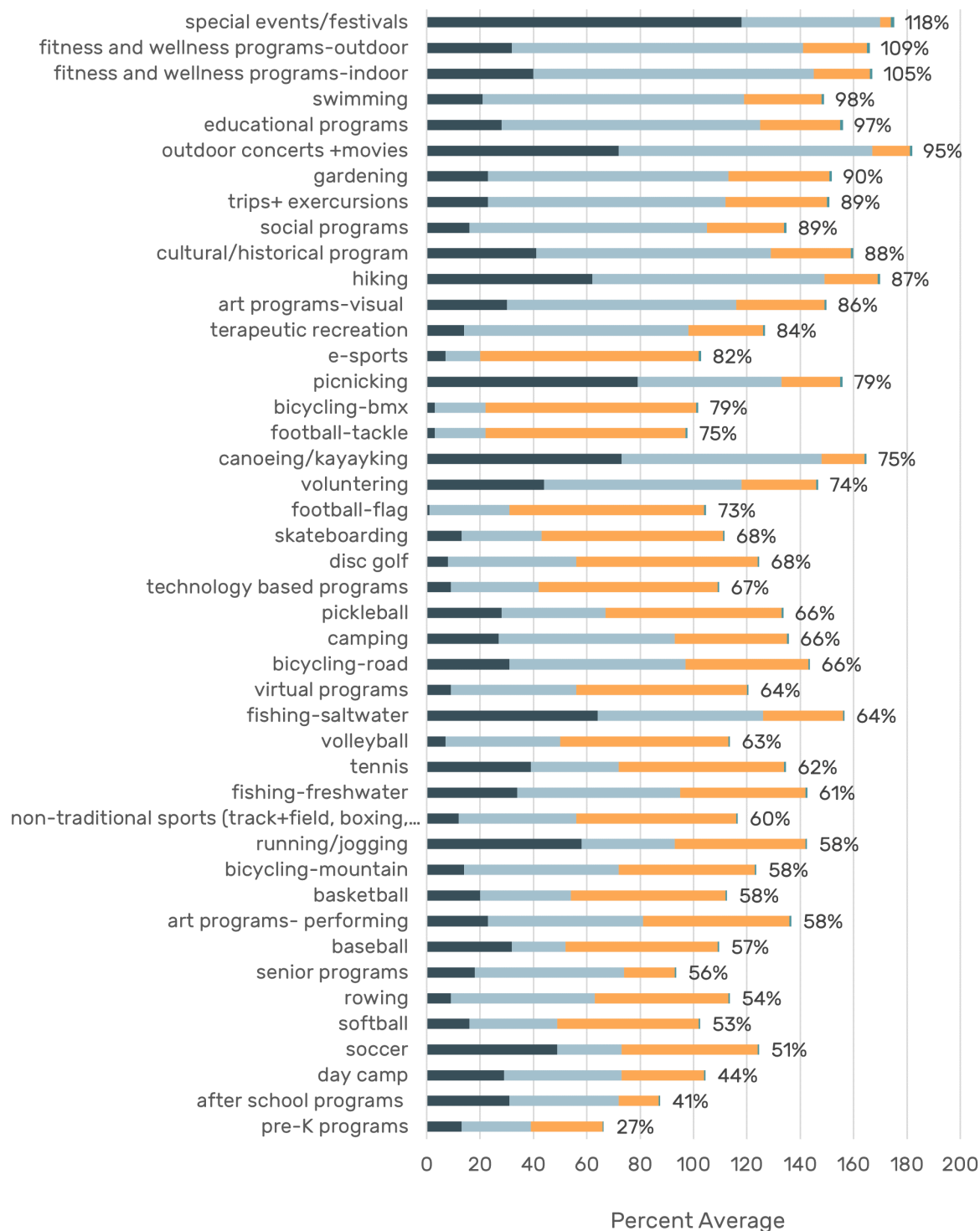
2. Outdoor Fitness and Wellness Programs

3. Indoor Fitness and Wellness Programs

4. Swimming

5. Educational Programs

Recreation Program Preferences

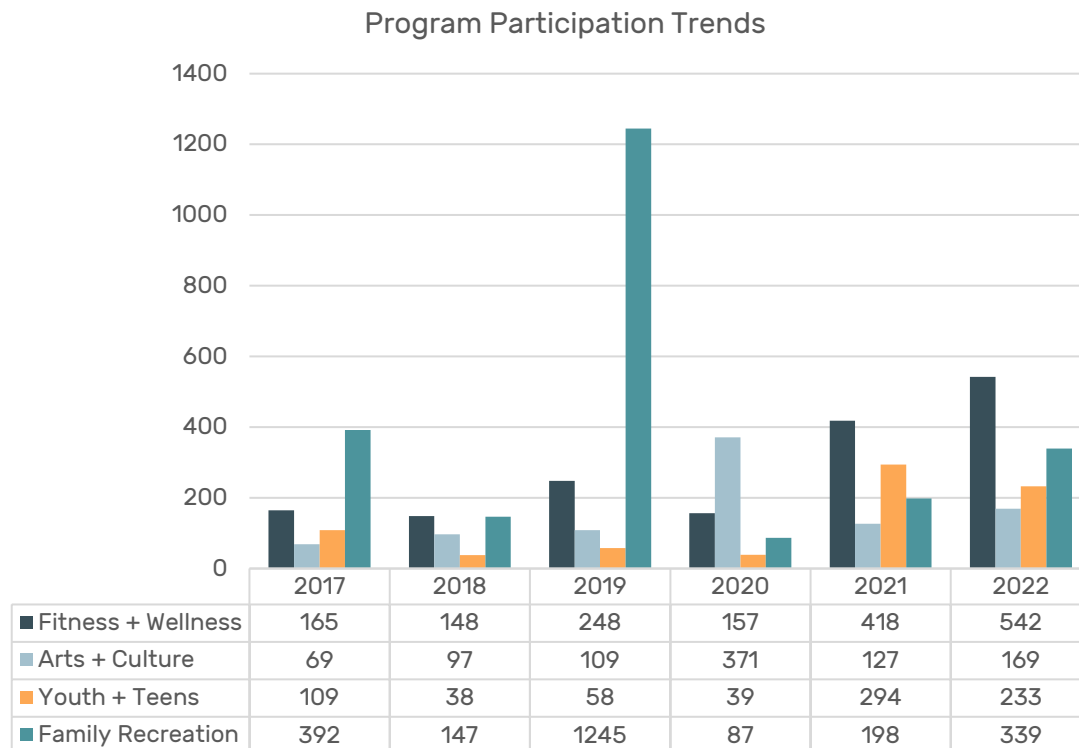


PROGRAM PARTICIPATION AND LIFECYCLE

Program Participation

Swansboro Parks and Recreation offers a diverse program mix suited to appeal to a variety of interests. The data presented in the chart below captures program participation levels over a span of ten years. Before considering themes captured from the current analysis, it is important to point out several assumptions. First, as discussed earlier in this assessment and throughout the current comprehensive master plan, successful parks and recreation departments are responsive to trends and unique recreational needs of the communities they serve. Therefore, it is **not** assumed that the same number of programs in each category are offered every year.

For example, there were fewer family recreation programs offered in 2019 than were in 2018. The large participation jump is due to the addition of waterfront cruises in 2019, which for the purpose of this report, are considered family programs. National trends, conversations, and conditions likewise impact recreation program participation. The 68 percent increase in fitness and wellness program participation from 2017-2019 could be indicative of an increased national focus on improving wellness outcomes. Increased participation in arts and culture programs in 2020 may be attributed to the ability for Swansboro Parks and Recreation to offer them virtually, during the pandemic.



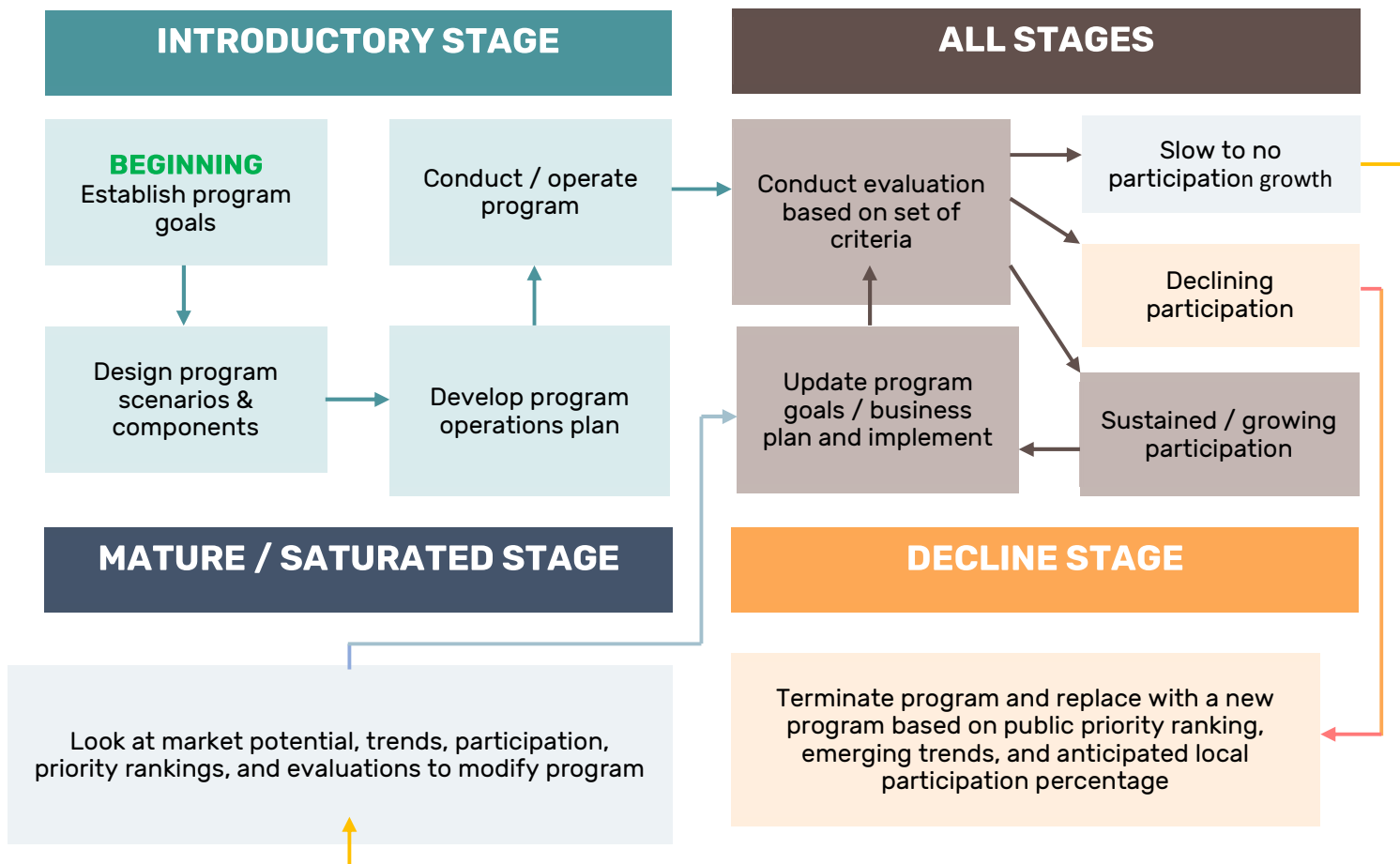
The chart shows participation stabilizing across the four FUN program categories across the years 2021 and 2022. This is indicative of Swansboro Parks and Recreation efforts to actively seek feedback and adjust offerings to accommodate participant preferences. The visual representation of the data can serve as a guide to measure recreational interests and departmental investments over time.

RECREATION PROGRAM LIFECYCLE

The program evaluation cycle identifies a step-by-step process, driven primarily by enrollment and participation rates, for designing, conducting, and evaluating programs. If participation levels are still growing, department staff may continue to provide the program. When participation growth is slow or neutral, or competition increases, staff may consider modifying the program to re-energize, or retiring the program altogether.

Determining which programs to introduce, expand, or retire is a challenging exercise for recreation programmers. The program evaluation cycle provides a means of informing decisions about programmatic offerings. This tool enables department staff to make data-driven decisions regarding which programs to introduce, expand, or retire.

Approximately 53 percent of all programs fall within the beginning phases (Introduction, Take-Off, and Growth), meaning, recreation programs currently offered are consistently expanding, yet at a slower pace than they likely had been previously, when they were first introduced to participants. Through conversations with department staff, and understanding quantitative rationale demonstrated in the figure above, it can be concluded that these programs remain well-received by Swansboro residents. The department may want to explore ways to increase participation in such programs that are noticeably valuable. The department might want to decide internally what those factors are that determine whether a program is valuable despite low participation. Examples may include participant feedback, and/or established personal improvement (health, skills development) outcomes. This could be accomplished in a number of ways including increasing visibility through promotions and media and adjusting or expanding program delivery.



LIFECYCLE STAGE	DESCRIPTION	SWANSBORO PROGRAM DISTRIBUTION		BEST PRACTICE PROGRAM DISTRIBUTION
Introduction	New program; modest participation	9	53%	50%-60% TOTAL
Take-off	Rapid participation growth	2		
Growth	Moderate, but consistent participation growth	13		
Mature	Slow participation growth	9	26%	40% TOTAL
Saturated	Minimal to no participation growth; extreme competition	4	21%	0% - 10% TOTAL
Decline	Declining participation	3		

Approximately 53 percent of all programs fall within the beginning phases (Introduction, Take-Off, and Growth). The majority of Swansboro Parks, and Recreation programs are in a growth position, meaning, recreation programs currently offered are consistently expanding, yet at a slower pace than they likely had been when they were first introduced to participants. It is recommended to have 50 to 60 percent of all programs within these beginning phases because it ensures that programs are consistently being released into the program lifecycle, allowing them to course through the more advanced stages, all the while being regularly evaluated.

Through conversations with department staff, and understanding quantitative rationale demonstrated in the figure above, it can be concluded that these programs remain well-received by Swansboro residents. The department may want to explore ways to increase participation in such programs that are noticeably valuable. This could be accomplished in a number of ways including increasing visibility through promotions and media and adjusting or expanding program delivery.

Eventually, programs in the beginning stage will begin to age. Just over one quarter (26%) of Swansboro's recreation programs are in the mature phase. Recreation programs in this stage can be compared to a fulcrum. It is recommended that 40 percent of programs fall into this stage because they serve as the center for balancing services; thereby identifying where to fill gaps, improve existing offerings, or introduce new programs into the lifecycle.

Additionally, 21 percent of the department's programs appear to be saturated or declining. This figure is only slightly above the best practice range of zero to ten percent. According to previous research, many, if not all recreation programs eventually saturate and decline. Both internal and external factors play into this assumption. Internal considerations include lack of available physical space, human resources, and shifts in departmental operations. Industry trends, and socio-economic considerations can be categorized as external factors to be aware of.

However, rapidly declining programs may point to inadequate planning and execution, as well as not meeting participants' expectations. If programs do not begin to take off after introduction, this could be due to the department overstating what they perceive as a demand for a recreation program or service, or not understanding the level of competition among other recreation providers. Programs should be reevaluated, replaced, or eliminated when the data starts to show that they are entering a stage of decline.

RECREATION PROGRAM FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

As stated in the beginning of the current assessment, recreation programs and activities serve as the foundation upon which the notion of parks and recreation being an “essential public service” is built. Therefore, applying a rational, thoughtful approach to allocating resources and setting fees for programs and services is paramount. The recreation programs financial framework examines budgeting, pricing, and resource allocation for the Town of Swansboro’s parks, recreation, and community services.

Developing and implementing a recreation programs financial framework plan cannot be simply a one-dimensional accounting exercise for parks and recreation organizations. Further, the cost-of-service analysis is only one piece of a more comprehensive picture when examining cost recovery. Understanding the delicate balance of mission and enterprise is equally important to establishing realistic goals and expectations for recovering costs and articulating subsidy allocation for programs. Identifying how positive outcomes accrue to individual participants (or individual groups) and to the taxpaying community as a whole, will assist in determining a cost recovery philosophy.

Unlike the traditional incremental approach to government budgeting, where the current year’s budget becomes the basis for the next year’s spending plan, the recreation programs financial framework allows communities to understand their core values and make fiscal decisions according to these values, prioritizing resources to achieve long-term strategic goals to achieve success.

A parks and recreation department’s pricing strategies should balance established cost recovery goals, market value of the services provided and a community’s ability to pay for recreational services. It is a common challenge for departments to set prices that are fair and ensure access to programming for residents at all income levels. Establishing program classifications and cost recovery goals will help defend increases in pricing if or when they are needed. Additionally, employing a variety of the pricing strategies listed above will ensure that programs priced appropriately while remaining accessible.

Pricing strategies that departments can use include:

- > Ability to pay – some participants are charged a “market rate” price while those with demonstrated need are charged a discounted price or receive a scholarship
- > Age segment – some age groups, such as youth and seniors, are charged a discounted rate
- > Cost recovery goals – price is determined based on the department’s identified cost recovery goals for the program.
- > Family pricing – families are charged as a group rather than by individual. Families with two or more children enrolled in programming may pay the market rate for the first child enrolled and a discounted price for all others.
- > Market rate – the department determines the price based on the prices private and public competitors charge.
- > Prime-time use – a market rate is charged during peak use hours or times of year, and a discounted rate is charged during less popular hours or times of year.
- > Residency – residents receive a discount from the market rate price.

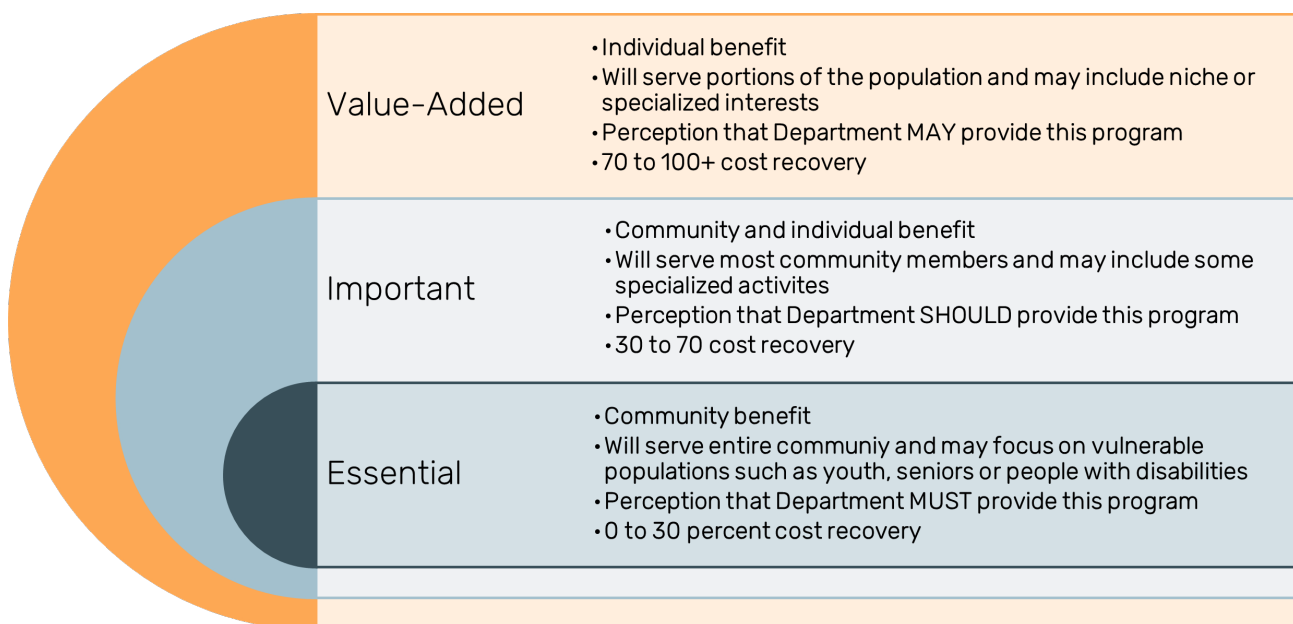
PROGRAM CLASSIFICATION FRAMEWORK

Conducting a classification of services analysis informs how each program serves the overall organization mission, the goals and objectives of each FUN program set, and how the program should be funded with regards to tax dollars and/or user fees and charges. How a program is classified can help determine the most effective management practices.

Program classifications are based on the degree to which the program provides a public benefit versus an individual benefit. Public benefit can be described as everyone receiving the same level of benefit with equal access, whereas individual benefit can be described as the user receiving exclusive benefit above what a general taxpayer receives for their personal benefit.

For this exercise, the department used a classification method based on three indicators: essential services, important services, and value-added services. Where a program or service is classified depends upon alignment with the organizational mission, how the public perceives a program, legal mandates, financial sustainability, personal benefit, competition in the marketplace and access by participants.

- > **Essential programs** critical to achieving the organizational mission and providing community-wide benefits and therefore, generally receive priority for tax-dollar subsidization.
- > **Important programs** contribute to the organizational mission but are not essential to it and cost recovery for these programs should be high (i.e., at least 80 percent overall).
- > **Value-added programs** are not critical to the mission and should be prevented from drawing upon limited public funding and cost recovery for these programs should be near or in excess of 100 percent.



FUN PROGRAM AREA	ESSENTIAL PROGRAMS		IMPORTANT PROGRAMS		VALUE-ADDED PROGRAMS	
	Number of Programs	%	Number of Programs	%	Number of Programs	%
Fitness + Wellness	-	0%	1	13%	4	29%
Arts + Culture	-	0%	1	13%	5	29%
Festivals + Special Events	4	40%	-	-	-	-
Youth + Teens	2	20%	5	62%	2	13%
Family Recreation	4	40%	1	13%	5	29%
FUN Program Area Total	10	100%	8	100%	17	100%
FUN PROGRAM AREA OVERALL DISTRIBUTION	28%		22%		50%	

Most of the department's programs are value added offerings that provide valuable leisure services to the community across programmatic categories, or what this plan refers to as FUN Programs. Understanding the recreation program classification system and applying it to how the department makes decisions about offerings is critical to achieving cost recovery best practices.

Cost recovery is a tool for addressing the department's financial subsidy of programs based on whether they serve a community-wide benefit, or primarily benefit the individual participant. Essential programs with a greater public benefit can be offered with a lower cost recovery threshold, whereas Value Added programs with a primarily individual benefit can be offered with a higher cost recovery expectation.

As the department evolves to meet community needs, it should consider the balance necessary to continue to serve the community at high level of quality, while at the same time understanding the financial considerations that are critical to its solvency. The Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department should continue to meet or exceed its cost recovery goals for programming. This can be a challenging undertaking, but creative pricing strategies and implementing changes gradually over time can create a fair and equitable pricing and cost recovery strategy for the department.

Cost recovery targets should reflect the degree to which a program provides a public versus individual recreational service. Essential and some important programs providing mostly a public should be more firmly subsidized. Some important, and value-added programs providing mostly an individual service should seek to recover costs and generate revenue for other services.

PROGRAMMING ASSESSMENT SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- > The Town of Swansboro offers a diverse range of recreational programs. Staff continue to be attuned to residents' needs and wants. Staff has also been diligent with regard to understanding current trends unique to the region like sea glass classes, seaside book club, and fishing lessons.
- > Swansboro Parks and Recreation has a reputation for being leading provider of high-quality special events and festivals, not only to Town residents, but also residents of the region and visitors from many different places. With limited staff and resources, the department continues to manage a multitude of moving parts every year, advancing the Town's large-scale events offers a diverse range of recreational programs.
- > Roughly half of the department's programs are in the beginning phase of the program lifecycle, thus achieving the best practice goal of supporting between 50-60 percent young programs. However, the percent of programs in decline is greater than 10 percent higher than the best practice, suggesting the department should consider retiring some of these programs or surveying prior attendees for feedback on how to improve.
- > Community engagement outcomes point to the potential to expand the department's FUN programs categories. The department is excelling at providing special events and holiday events, as is evident based on results of the scientific survey. Scientific survey data also points to the potential for expanding the department's FUN program categories to include recreational services related to health and wellness, life skills, and adult recreation.



MAINTENANCE ASSESSMENT

Overview

Park maintenance is a foundational element of providing a safe and

high-quality park system for a community. Parks and recreation staff work every day to achieve that goal. According to the National Recreation and Park Association, operations and maintenance are the primary work responsibility for park and recreation professionals.

Methods used to conduct this assessment included observing existing conditions of the Town's parks, facilities, and amenities, reviewing current maintenance and operations policy, and engaging with Swansboro staff.

Park systems require a wide range of facility, amenity, and grounds maintenance responsibilities. There are many different kinds of parks; some have playgrounds and benches, while others have natural scenery and protected wildlife areas. Regardless of the type, park maintenance is crucial for user experience. Daily tasks frequently include landscaping which encompasses pruning flowers and shrubs, applying pesticides and fertilizers, cleaning amenities, minor repairs and ensuring park equipment remains in good working condition.

Maintenance staff may have a schedule overseeing the upkeep of equipment like lawnmowers, pruning shears, irrigation systems, and blades. Park maintenance also includes many hidden costs both financial and opportunistic. Many park maintenance activities require transportation of equipment to and from sites, which includes costs of fuel and any vehicle wear and tear.

NRPA PARK METRICS

PARK MAINTENANCE

Operations and maintenance are the primary work responsibilities for park and recreation professionals



44%

The typical park and recreation agency dedicates this much of its operating budget to park management and maintenance

\$17.4 MILLION

On average, park and recreation agencies have this dollar amount million of deferred maintenance projects on their books



32 acres

is the recommended maximum amount of space to be maintained by one worker.

Additional Considerations

The Town of Swansboro's parks, amenities and facilities are maintained by the Public Works Department. At this time this plan was created, Swansboro's parks were maintained by a Public Works staff member under the supervision of the Public Works Director. That (former) staff member served as the primary responder to parks and recreation maintenance needs. It should be noted that early into developing the current parks and recreation master plan the consultant had the opportunity to receive feedback from this employee. Information gathered during the conversation pointed to a maintenance approach of being reactive versus proactive. The staff member conveyed that in addition to being assigned primarily to parks maintenance needs, they were also responsible for various other non-park related tasks throughout the town. This led to occasions where there were needs that had to be addressed at a higher priority than parks service requests. This approach to park maintenance often resulted in complaints from park users related to the cleanliness of restrooms, safety of some park facilities, and the overall functionality of various infrastructure components.

Recently, the previous Public Works director retired and was replaced with a director understanding of the importance of being proactive in Swansboro's efforts to address maintenance in a systematic manner. The consultant participated in an interview-like discussion with the Public Works Director. The information gathered provides a snapshot of the Town's current approach to park maintenance, a glimpse into future goals, and a discussion of methods the Town may adopt to achieve operational goals.

Under the new system being crafted by Town staff, park and recreation facilities are considered "public buildings" and include Swansboro Recreation Center, the Swansboro Visitors Center, and park restrooms. Public Works is in the process of creating a priority maintenance punch list based on prior fire marshal inspections to improve safety in the facilities, followed by an assessment of building infrastructure to determine high priority repairs.

Public Works is further working toward a culture of preventative maintenance. Examples include enhancing the department's level of service by establishing replacement schedules to ensure equipment will function for the entirety of its useful life and contracting with a playground maintenance company to perform routine inspections.

In consideration of the current parks and recreation master plan effort, both Swansboro Parks and Recreation and Public Works leadership hope the maintenance assessment will encourage proactivity, reducing events prompting reactive responses. It would also be desirable for this basic assessment to trigger a more comprehensive maintenance management plan with tools to encourage effective exchanges. Communication between the Parks and Recreation and Public Works Department was strained under former Public Works leadership; however, the current relationship appears to be improving especially surrounding the elimination of the protocol of having to submit formal work orders for minor requests. The new director plans to expand his and his staff's level of accessibility to improve communication across departments town wide.



OPERATIONS + FINANCES

OPERATIONS

Operations refers to the standard procedures that guide daily, seasonal, annual, and

ongoing functions of a parks and recreation department. Included are administration and strategies for addressing required staff to adequately maintain, expand and enhance the park system and recreational services.

The Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department has a small and effective staff comprised of two full-time equivalent employees. Yet, the staff are stretched to meet all the demands of parks and recreation services. A lack of staff and resources create a situation where staff are striving to provide the expected facilities and services with little additional capacity available for growing and improving the department to meet the Town's growing recreation needs.

The department has a part-time recreation coordinator position that has been open for over a year. Staff turnover within the department is relatively high in comparison to agency standards. Swansboro Parks and Recreation lost seven part-time employees over a period of two years in addition to three who were hired, attended some training, then discontinued. Many staff are pulled away by the school system, which offers higher pay.

The National Recreation and Park Association has traditionally researched and provided advice to agencies with regard to recruiting and retaining staff, and that research and analysis was highly augmented during the pandemic. The Association found that the majority of parks and recreation agencies across the United States had to reduce their staffing levels – and when the time came to rehire, part-time employees were slow to return. Among the many, the Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department experienced similar impacts in that two employees did not return after the pandemic, and some employees adjusted their roles within the department or joined other departments in Swansboro.

Managing the boat docks is an operational and management responsibility quite unique to the obligations typical of most agencies. In addition to the responsibility of administering programs, including registration, scheduling, and volunteer coordination. The parks and recreation director is having to assume the majority of the responsibility for physically managing the docks as well as budgeting, scheduling, supervising, and training. These responsibilities have the potential to pull the parks and recreation director away from recreation service provisions like strategic planning, developing policies and procedures, goal setting, and project management. These tasks must be held in high regard as the department evolves. Positioning the Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department strategically will ensure its long-term success.

Swansboro Parks + Recreation Maintains:

20.84 park acres

1 indoor recreation center

10 boat slips

2 boat launches

In 2021 the Department served an estimated:

1,126 program participants

1,148 boat slip rentals (2021-2022)

The Department operates with:

2 full-time equivalent staff

5 non-full-time staff

FINANCES

Approaches to financial resource management vary depending on the type of agency (public, private, not-for-profit), agency philosophy, guiding principles, policies, and the political environment in which they operate. Leisure service agencies operating within the public sector are typically mandated to provide services that benefit an entire community of tax-paying citizens.

Public parks and recreation agencies receive the majority of their financial revenue from tax-dollars. It is the primary source for park maintenance, operations, and recreation programming. The City Parks Alliance notes how such responsibilities are “consistently identified by park leaders as the most challenging to fund, but are often not covered by state, federal, or philanthropic sources.” With this in mind, is essential that consistent and adequate funding be made available to these agencies to continue to provide an essential public service.

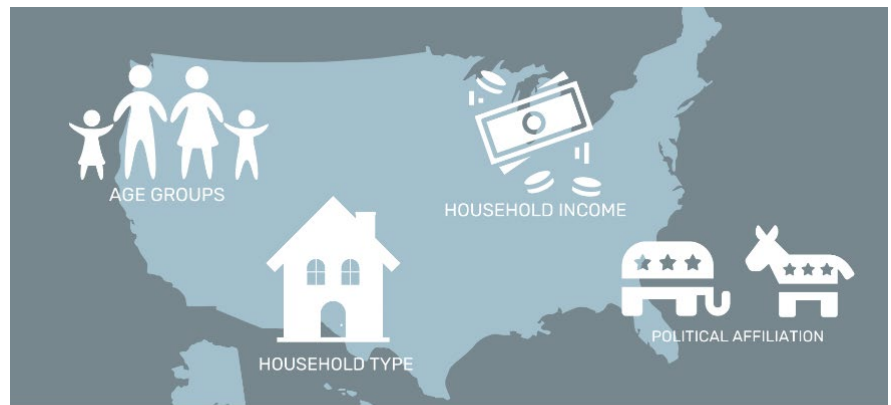
Effective communication of the organization’s financial performance is critical to achieving fair and stable public funding. This funding comes primarily from property taxes, which

are allocated to municipal functions through the annual budget process. Parks and recreation funding can therefore vary, influenced by local politics, economics, and engagement of citizens in the budget process. Parks and recreation departments are often the first to have their budgets reduced and the last to see them increased, all the while responding to high expectations from the public for quality facilities and services within significant budget constraints.

Therefore, it is critical for parks and recreation departments to consistently tell their financial story with easy-to-understand data. The analysis of historical data can inform the department’s decision-making in the future and better define the department’s roles and responsibilities within the Town.

This section analyses components of the Town of Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department’s financial management system to include:

- > Revenues
- > Expenditures
- > Consideration of other funding sources outside of the Town’s general fund



7 IN 10 AMERICANS
GO TO THEIR LOCAL PARK



Revenues

The Town of Swansboro generates revenue through recreation program participation fees, indoor and outdoor recreational and amenity and facility rentals, and boat slip reservations. Funds generated by the Parks and Recreation Department are then deposited into the Town's General Fund.

Recreation Program Fees

The information presented below demonstrate an overall recreation program revenue increase of two percent over a five fiscal year period. Two program categories, family events and arts + cultural programs have decreased relatively substantially. The decrease in revenue for family events can be partially attributed to discontinuing programs that took place prior to the pandemic, and the inability to replace programs during the pandemic. The discontinuation of the boat tours after 2019 accounted for the sharp reduction in revenue after 2019.

	FY 2017-18	FY 2018-19	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21	FY 2021-22	PERCENT CHANGE (+/-)
Youth Programs	\$8,592.00	\$6,930.00	\$19,307.00	\$8,295.00	\$15,302.14	34%
Fitness + Wellness Programs	\$7,945.00	\$7,945.00	\$2,954.00	\$3,603.00	\$11,983.80	48%
Family Events	\$18,309.00	\$20,894.00	\$2,297.00	\$1,495.00	\$345.00	-47%
Summer Camps + After School Programs	\$15,011.00	\$15,168.00	\$7,695.00	\$3,465.00	\$9,495.00	+18%
Arts + Cultural Programs	\$4,544.99	\$6,544.17	\$9,387.00	\$5,330.00	\$3,765.00	+4%
TOTAL PROGRAM REVENUE	\$60,946.16	\$57,481.00	\$41,640.00	\$22,188.00	\$40,890.94	+1%

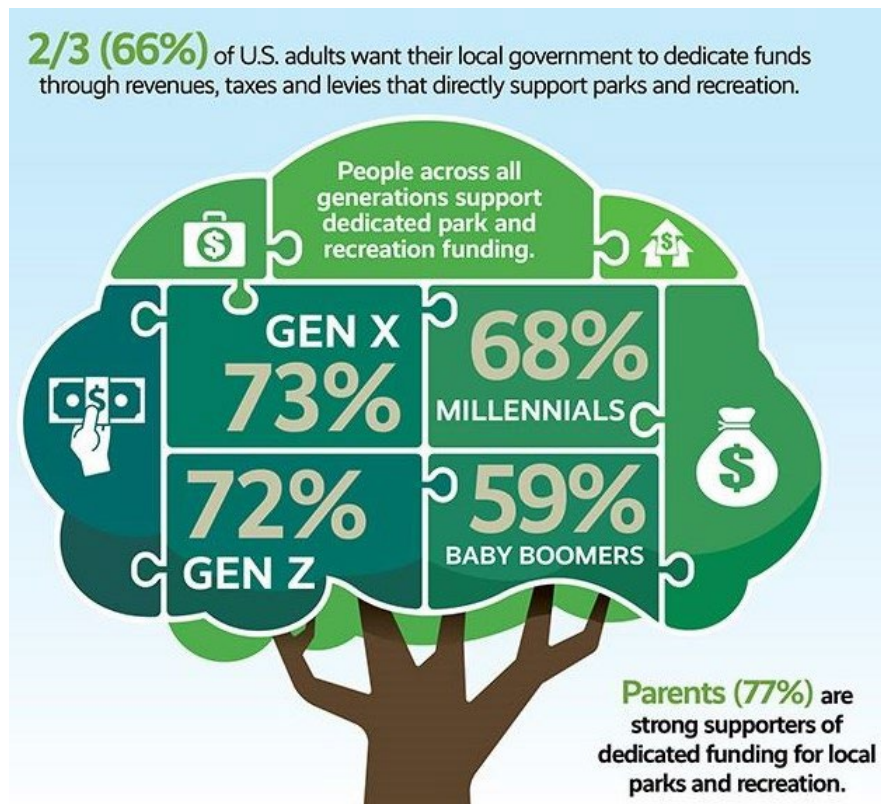
Facility Usage Fees

Revenue earned from facility rentals has increased over the five fiscal year period. Boat slip reservations and outdoor amenity rentals have grown substantially, as indicated by a 37 percent and 27 percent increase, respectively.

	FY 2017-18	FY 2018-19	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21	FY 2021-22	PERCENT CHANGE (+/-)
Dock Facilities Reservations	\$11,359.00	\$19,575.00	\$17,090.00	\$26,749.50	\$34,917.00	+37%
Room Rentals	\$31,694.00	\$20,965.00	\$14,610.00	\$10,485.00	\$25,805.00	+37%
Parks + Grounds Rentals	\$5,291.00	\$3,630.00	\$2,298.00	\$2,210.00	\$6,180.00	+27%
TOTAL FACILITY USE REVENUES	\$48,344.00	\$44,170.00	\$33,998.00	\$39,444.50	\$66,902.00	+37%

Expenditures

	FY 2017-18	FY 2018-19	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21	FY 2021-22	PERCENT CHANGE (+/-)
Personnel Services	\$182,033.93	\$186,128.41	\$180,442.00	\$190,489.00	\$208,032.32	+3%
Operating Expenses	\$57,161.50	\$39,298.24	\$32,712.00	\$101,842.00	\$52,287.07	+29%
Facilities	\$43,386.09	\$35,658.10	\$72,430.00	\$43,160.23	\$21,135.24	-2%
Programs	\$32,889.00	\$21,889.00	\$17,016.00	\$9,200.00	\$15,252.24	-9%
Marketing + Communications	\$941.13	\$458.38	\$150.00	\$1,196.00	\$545.00	+131%
Other	\$2,846.26	\$2,943.00	\$7,317.00	\$5,070.00	\$16,669.25	+88%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$319,257.91	\$286,375.13	\$310,067.00	\$350,957.23	\$313,921.12	+40%



Cost Recovery

It is not unusual for publicly funded recreation agencies to find themselves contemplating their approach to establishing fees and charges for programs and services. Agencies ask –if parks and recreation is an essential public service like police and fire, and is supported by residents' tax dollars, should we even consider charging people for recreational services? Definitive answers can be elusive. The National Recreation and Park Association's 2022 Agency Performance Report determined that the typical park and recreation agency recovers 22.5 percent of its operating expenditures from non-tax revenue.

Cost recovery represents revenue as a percentage of operating expenditures. In other words, *the bottom line*. Just as publicly traded companies are expected to be accountable to investors by growing their earnings and reducing costs, public parks and recreation agencies are best served by applying the same philosophy in being accountable to taxpayers. However, in contrast to private business whose interest is to generate a profit, public agencies are not seeking to make a profit, but rather seek to be responsible with financial resources. In addition, agencies that adopt cost recovery philosophies are in fact optimizing tax-payer dollars and augmenting benefits parks and recreation provides to the community.

SIDEBAR: What is cost recovery?

Adapted from: Recreation and Leisure in Modern Society by McLean, Dayer-Berenson, Seaward, Hurd.

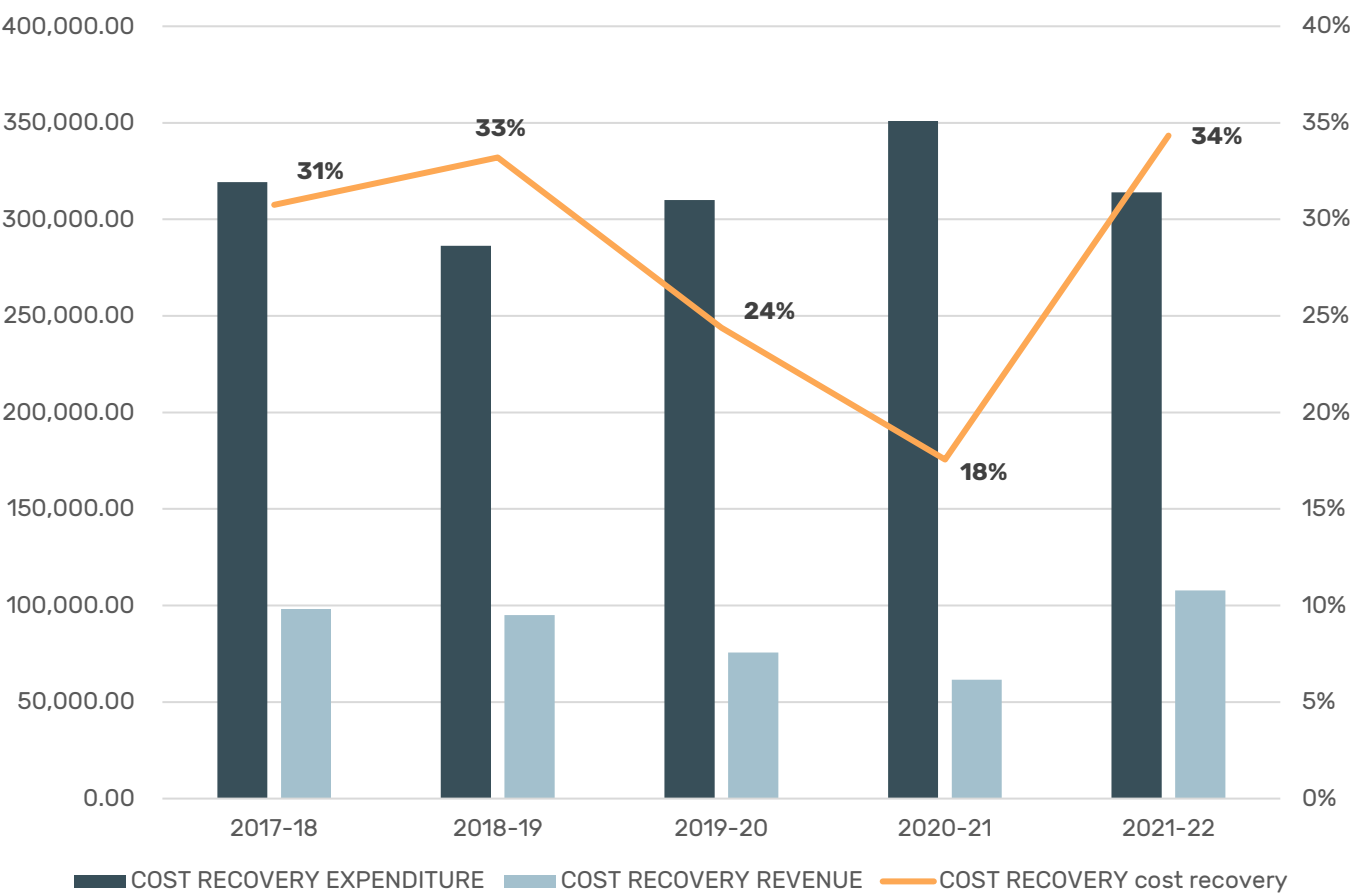
Cost recovery approaches attempt to define what should be paid for by tax revenues (basic services) and what should be provided and recovered fully or partially through fees, charges, and other nontax revenue sources. Cost recovery is about identifying acceptable levels of basic services, merit services, and private services.

Benefits of cost recovery:

1. Government can divert tax dollars to areas of greater need
2. Cost recovery allows agencies to improve opportunities that they would otherwise be unable to maintain at current levels
3. Cost recovery is an information tool allowing agencies to determine user perceptions of value of a product or service and user preferences.
4. Cost recovery expands recreation and park opportunities

Strategies for altering a program's cost recovery include adjustments in prices, services, and offerings.

Cost recovery for parks and recreational services in the Town of Swansboro had been increasing year over year until the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, dropping to a low of 18 percent during fiscal year 2020-2021. Swansboro Parks and Recreation has succeeded in recovering costs to a high mark of 34 percent through the third quarter of FY 2021-2022. The department’s cost recovery over a five-year period is **28 percent**.



NATIONAL MEDIAN COST RECOVERY: 22.5%

SWANSBORO COST RECOVERY: 28%



3

BENCHMARKING + LEVEL OF SERVICE



OVERVIEW

Level of service, benchmarking, and national standards provide important metrics for guiding future growth in parks and recreation. Considered together, these metrics provide a nuanced comparison of current parks and recreation characteristics in Swansboro with similar North Carolina communities. This analysis provides detailed metrics that should be considered within the full context of parks and recreation services Swansboro is offering residents. Looking to departments of other cities is a valuable tool for decision-making, department evaluation, and goal setting.

Using benchmarking to inform the level of service standards presented later in this chapter adds detail to national standards and provides appropriate context to determining level of service standards specifically tailored to the Town of Swansboro.

This plan does not adopt any standard comprehensively, but considers the full analysis, staff input, and community input to help identify standards and metrics. These implements will provide meaningful support as the Town grows its parks and recreation services to meet an increasing population and keep pace with ever-changing recreation trends.

LEVEL OF SERVICE	BENCHMARKING	NATIONAL LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARDS
Measures the Department's current offerings. Analysis is local.	Compares measures among similar jurisdictions. Analysis is similar communities regionally.	Measures national statistics or case studies. Analysis is national or based on a case study.
This analysis asks: <i>What do we offer?</i>	This analysis asks: <i>What do others offer?</i>	This analysis asks: <i>What are best practice recommendations?</i>
The Level of Service analysis identifies what the Town is currently offering, based on current population. This metric is population based and forms a baseline standard moving into the future. The analysis answers the question, if Swansboro currently offers this much parkland for this many people, how much parkland will we need to serve the population in 10 years?	The benchmarking analysis identifies communities that share similar characteristics with the Town of Swansboro and then compares data points across all communities. This generates an understanding of the department's strengths and chosen areas of expertise. Shortcomings in the benchmarking may represent deficiencies or areas that have been deprioritized in favor of other priorities.	National standards and best practices serve as an "ideal state" for parks and recreation in a community. These standards may account for emerging trends communities are beginning to implement, such as trails and greenways or inform how the Department may meet their individual priorities such as providing parks and recreation services to help residents meet personal health and wellness goals.

BENCHMARKING

Understanding what peer communities offer provides a comparison for the existing state of the department's amenities and informs level of service standards for the ten-year planning horizon. The analysis serves as an illustration of how the town of Swansboro's parks, recreation and department is operating in comparison to their peers. Looking at departments within peer municipalities is a valuable tool for decision-making, department evaluation, and goal setting.

The information gleaned is used to inform the level of service standards recommended later in this chapter. These standards determine Swansboro's needs for park acreage, staffing, and park and recreation budget. Using benchmarking to inform the level of service standards provides appropriate context to determining level of service standards specifically tailored to the Town of Swansboro.

A benchmarking analysis is a quantitative assessment of key data points from parks and recreation agencies with similar characteristics to the Town of Swansboro. **This assessment uses data from the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) which aggregates self-reported data from agencies across the country.** Peer communities should be jurisdictions that share similar enough characteristics to allow for a meaningful comparison, but still represent an array of circumstances and situations among the departments. This analysis uses a general range of logical parameters to extrapolate data from peer communities resembling the Town of Swansboro.

Parameters have been selected to increase the likelihood of identifying an adequate sample of peer communities that meet all constraints, while at the same time being mindful that peer community characteristics align accurately with those of Swansboro. The communities were selected among other North Carolina municipalities with similar square mileage, population size, number of parks, operating budget, and number of full-time parks and recreation department staff.

SELECTION PARAMETER	TOWN OF SWANSBORO	SUMMARY OF PARAMETER
Towns with similar budgets	\$295,040	\$350,000 to \$550,000
Towns with similar number of parks	6	1 to 5 parks
Towns with similar FTEs	4	1 to 5 FTEs
Towns with similar populations	3,217	7,000 or less
Towns with similar square mileage	2.4	5-10
Towns with similar par acreage	20.84	Under 100 acres

Town of Swansboro, NC
Town of Swansboro Parks and Recreation
Population: 3,217
Square mileage: 2.4
Parks: 6
Park Acres: 20.84
2021 Operating Budget: \$295,040
FTE Staff: 2

Peer Communities

Town of Nashville **Parks, Recreation + Cultural** **Resources**

Population: 5,516
Square mileage: 5
Parks: 2
Park Acres: 38
Operating Budget: \$404,533
FTE Staff: 4
Programs: Yes
Athletics: No
Special Events: Yes
Maintained by P+R Dept.
Park Amenities: Playgrounds (2), athletic fields, picnic shelters (2), amphitheater, multiuse sport court, outdoor basketball nature play, disc golf, dog park, fishing pier

Town of Selma **Parks + Recreation**

Population: 6,913
Square mileage: 5
Parks: 7
Park Acres: 30
Operating Budget: \$507,153
FTE Staff: 5
Programs: Yes
Athletics: Yes
Special Events: Yes
Maintained by P+R Dept, Public Works
Park Amenities: Gym, outdoor basketball courts, community building, playground, athletic fields

Town of Ayden **Arts + Recreation**

Population: 4,932
Square mileage: 2
Parks: 4
Programs: Yes
Park Acres: 62
Operating Budget: \$500,458
FTE Staff: 3
Athletics: Yes/Partnership with Winterville
Special Events: Yes
Maintained by P+R Dept.
Park Amenities: Gym, outdoor basketball courts, community building, playground, fields

Town of Mills River **Parks + Recreation**

Population: 7,406
Square mileage: 22
Parks: 1
Park Acres: 50
Operating Budget: \$424,306
FTE Staff: 3
Programs: No
Athletics: No
Special Events: No
Maintained by P+R Dept.
Park Amenities: Trails, athletic fields, canoe/kayak launch, fishing pier, playground, picnic shelter, tennis courts, multipurpose fields

City of King, NC **Parks + Recreation**

Population: 7,666
Square mileage: 6
Parks: 2
Park Acres: 42.55
Operating Budget: \$359,507
FTE Staff: 3
Programs: Yes
Athletics: No
Special Events: Yes
Maintained by P+R Dept.
Park Amenities: Playground, athletic fields amphitheater, historic site, trails, fishing pier, shelters, veteran's memorial

Park Acreage

The rate of acres of parkland per 1,000 residents indicates how much access to parkland residents have. A higher number indicates more acres per resident, and therefore, more access to parks. This number indicates whether a department's provision of parkland is keeping pace with population growth and helps forecast land acquisition needs over time based on population.

The Town of Swansboro's park system is comprised of 20.84 acres, which equates to a per capita offering of 6.48 acres of parkland. When compared to peer communities, Swansboro owns and operates fewer acres of parkland per capita. Additionally, since Swansboro's community cohort is alike in terms of overall square mileage, these figures indicate that the Town lags behind its peer communities with regard to parkland provision across a comparable geographic size.

AGENCY	ACRES	POPULATION	PARK ACREAGE PER-1,000 RESIDENTS
King	42	6,877	6.10
Nashville	38	5,516	6.96
Ayden	62	4,932	12.57
Mills River	50	7,406	6.75
Swansboro	20.84	3,217	6.48
Selma	30	6,913	4.34
MEDIAN			6.62

Staffing

The following table compares the staffing for peer agencies included in the benchmarking analysis by converting the hours worked by staff to a measure called FTE, or full-time equivalent, to provide a uniform metric for the analysis. FTE is calculated by adding the number of total hours worked by all department employees and then dividing that total by the number of hours typically worked by one full-time employee in a calendar year (2,080 is the number generally used for this calculation).

The number of FTEs per 1,000 residents is a performance metric that can be used as an indicator to determine how well an agency is staffed, and thus how well it is equipped to meet the jurisdiction's needs. The following table illustrates how Swansboro's staffing levels compare to their peer agencies.

Swansboro Parks and Recreation provides two FTEs per 1,000 residents, which is third among the Town's peer communities. Despite this finding, the information presented in the maintenance and operations assessment of this plan explains where additional staff may be needed. Other potential staffing matters are further addressed in this plan's recommendations.

AGENCY	FTEs	POPULATION	FTEs PER 1,000 RESIDENTS
Swansboro	2	3,217	.62
Selma	5	6,913	.72
Ayden	3	4,932	.61
King	3	6,877	.44
Mills River	3	7,406	.41
Nashville	4	5,516	.73
MEDIAN			.62

Operating Expense Per Capita

Operating expense per capita indicates how much a department spends to provide and maintain parkland, facilities, and programs each year. A higher number indicates that the department spends more per capita to provide the expected or needed level of service.

With a budget of \$295,040 to serve 3,217 residents across 20.84 park acres, the Town of Swansboro spends \$91.71 per resident on parks and recreation services. As observed, the Town's per capita and per-park-acre spending is potentially higher than the level of investment on the part of its peer communities. This indicates that the Town is likely providing the community with adequate recreation programs and services in addition to ensuring the parks are safe, functional, and well-maintained. Conversely, although the data implies that the Town of Swansboro is providing a higher-than-average level of service it is important to contextualize the information in terms of existing physical condition of park facilities and amenities, diversity of amenities, and diversity of recreational program offerings.

Agency	Population	Operating Budget	Operating Budget Per-Capita
Selma	6,913	\$507,153	\$73.36
Ayden	4,932	\$500,458	\$101.47
Swansboro	3,217	\$295,040	\$91.71
Mills River	7,406	\$424,306	\$57.29
King	6,877	\$359,507	\$52.28
Nashville	5,515	\$405,065	\$73.36
MEDIAN			\$72.86

LEVEL OF SERVICE

Level of service (LOS) is a quantitative measure used to determine how much access to parks, trails, and indoor facility space residents have based on the park system's current inventory and the jurisdiction's total population. The purpose of the level of service analysis is to establish a baseline benchmark for the Department's current offerings. The final output of the analysis is a determination of surpluses and deficits in parkland and facilities based on 10-year population projections.

The analysis is a four-step process that begins with an inventory of existing facilities. The second step is to compare Swansboro's parks and facility inventory to national baseline benchmarks. Third, the findings are locally contextualized by understanding current offerings, recreation trends and demand, annual budgets, land use, land availability, and other factors to propose a recommended level of service. The recommended LOS is compared to current and future projected populations to quantify surplus and deficits of parkland and facilities. These metrics are used to inform many of this plan's recommendations for how much parkland, trails, and indoor facility space the Town of Swansboro should invest in to meet future recreation needs.

Baseline level of service is gleaned from the National Recreation and Parks Association's (NRPA) Park Metrics database for departments serving similar sized populations (Under 20,000) and associated 2021 NRPA Agency Performance Review. The 2021 NRPA Agency Performance Review contains self-reported data from 1,000 unique park and recreation agencies across the United States, as reported between 2018 and 2020.

The level of service is a ratio which includes the current offering of parkland, trails, and facility space – divided by a portion of the current population. Parkland and trails are calculated based on a rate per 1,000 residents. The population figure used for this analysis is **3,217**. This number is used throughout the plan as the Town of Swansboro's 2021 population estimate.

$$\text{Level of Service} = \left(\frac{\text{parks and recreation offering}}{\text{portion of population}^*} \right) \times 1000$$

Existing level of service is determined using the current population of **3,217**, future level of service is determined based on future population projections. This plan determines 2031 level of service recommendations using population projections determined in the Demographics and Trends chapter as **3,766** residents. The current inventory serves as a baseline and the NRPA Park Metrics serve as a benchmark from which the Town can goal-set.

Current Level of Service

The Town of Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department's current level of service is summarized in the table below. The table shows the Department's offerings for parkland, trails, indoor facility space, outdoor fields and courts, and selected park amenities.

	THE DEPARTMENT OFFERS:	THE CURRENT LEVEL OF SERVICE IS:
 PARKLAND	20.84 acres of developed parkland	6.48 acres of developed parkland per 1,000 residents
 TRAILS	1.25 miles of trail	0.39 miles of trail per 1,000 residents
 INDOOR FACILITY SPACE	5,892 square feet of indoor recreation space	1.83 square feet of indoor recreation space per 1 resident (per capita)
 OUTDOOR FIELDS + COURTS	6 outdoor fields and courts 2 tennis Courts 1 outdoor basketball court 4 multipurpose fields	1.87 outdoor fields and courts per 1,000 residents
 RECREATION AMENITIES	6 picnic shelters 4 playgrounds 1 splashpad 1 dog park 1 outdoor fitness zone	1.87 picnic shelters per 1,000 residents 1.24 playgrounds per 1,000 residents
 WATER-BASED AMENITIES	10 boat slips 2 fishing piers 1 kayak launch	

Acres of Parkland per 1,000 Residents

Parkland refers to both maintained parks and open space areas, such as green spaces and courtyards. The Town of Swansboro currently owns/maintains 20.84 park acres. Based on the current level of service analysis, the Department is providing 6.48 acres parkland per 1,000 residents.

PARK ACRES		CURRENT OFFERING	CURRENT LOS	RECOMMENDED LOS	NEEDED TO MEET RECOMMENDED LOS (CURRENT)	NEEDED TO MEET RECOMMENDED LOS (FUTURE)
		TOTAL ACRES	ACRES PER 1,000 POPULATION		ACRES	
	OPTION 1 MAINTAIN CURRENT LOS	20.84	6.48	6.48	6.48	1.72
	OPTION 2 NATIONAL MEDIAN LOS	20.84	6.48	10.4	33.46 (+12.62)	39.17 (+18.33)

Compared to the national median for similar size communities, the Town owns 3.57 fewer acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. To immediately achieve the national median, Swansboro would need to acquire 12.62 acres of parkland. Similarly, to meet the LOS for 2031 population projections (3,776), the Town will need to acquire an additional 5.7 acres of parkland within the next 10 years, for a total of 18.33 acres. To maintain the current level of service of 6.48 acres of parkland per 1,000 population, Swansboro would need to acquire just under two (2) acres to meet the level of service for the 2031 projected population.

It is necessary to emphasize contextualization of existing conditions and resources that are readily available in the local environment to make an informed decision regarding the level of service standards. Every agency has its own unique set of realities that may present barriers to achieving a baseline level of service. This is particularly true of parkland acquisition. Many local governments have a limited ability to acquire land for various reasons. A goal of the current parks and recreation comprehensive master plan is to provide data and context to allow local leaders to make informed decisions like whether to prioritize land acquisition as a means of enhancing park offerings for the community.

Miles of Trail

Park and recreation agencies that serve a population of under 20,000 residents typically manage or maintain 3 miles trails for walking, hiking, running and/or biking. The Town of Swansboro manages/maintains less than one mile of trail. A table displaying the national median for miles of trails is included as an indicator that the Town may refer to as it plans for future trails and greenways.

CURRENT OFFERING	NATIONAL MEDIAN OFFERING	CURRENT LOS	NATIONAL MEDIAN LOS	RECOMMENDED LOS	TOTAL NEEDED TO MEET RECOMMENDED LOS (CURRENT)	TOTAL NEEDED TO MEET RECOMMENDED LOS (FUTURE)
1.25	3	.39	.23	3	0.74 (-0.51)	0.87 (-0.38)



Indoor Park and Recreation Facility Prevalence and Population per Facility

Park and recreation agencies offer a number of indoor facilities to their residents. More than three in five agencies offer community centers and recreation centers. Also common are senior centers, performance amphitheaters and nature centers. The typical park and recreation agency operates seven buildings. Those agencies serving populations of less than 20,000 community members typically operate three buildings.

The Town of Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department provides one 5,892 square foot recreation center supplying the following amenities:

- > Large Multipurpose Room
- > Classroom
- > Game Room
- > Office Space
- > Kitchen
- > Restrooms

EXISTING INDOOR RECREATION SPACE	1 indoor recreation facility	5,892 Sq. Ft. of indoor facility space	1.83 Sq. Ft. of indoor facility space per 1 residents
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While NRPA does not provide benchmarking data for indoor facility space per population, the project team has developed an industry standard based on the experience gained through working with nationally recognized consultants. The Town of Swansboro currently offers one recreation center, providing 1.83 square feet of indoor recreation space per capita, which is below the industry standard of 2.0 square feet of indoor recreation space per capita.

Based on the calculations shown in the table below, Swansboro needs an additional 542 square feet of indoor space for the current population and will need 1,660 square feet of additional space by 2031 to serve the growing population.

RECOMMENDED INDOOR RECREATION SPACE	2.0 Sq. Ft. of indoor facility space per 1 resident is the industry standard	542 Sq. Ft. of indoor facility space needed to currently meet recommended LOS	1,660 Sq. Ft. of indoor facility space needed to meet recommended future LOS
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The Town of Swansboro provides a parks, recreation, and department to serve a population of 3,217 residents. Fifty percent or more parks and recreation agencies serving a population of less than 20,000 residents provide at least one of the following indoor facilities:

- > Recreation Center & Gym (52.7%)
- > Community Center (50%)

Distance or Travel Time to Access

The Trust for Public Land, Urban Land Institute, and NRPA joined hands in creating a 10-minute walk to park campaign with a goal that everyone should be able to reach the nearest park or open space within ten minutes or half a mile distance. This initiative is being embraced by parks and recreation agencies across the US to achieve equitable access to parks, recreation facilities, and programs to help residents with positive health outcomes related to walkability and access to spaces that encourage physical activity.

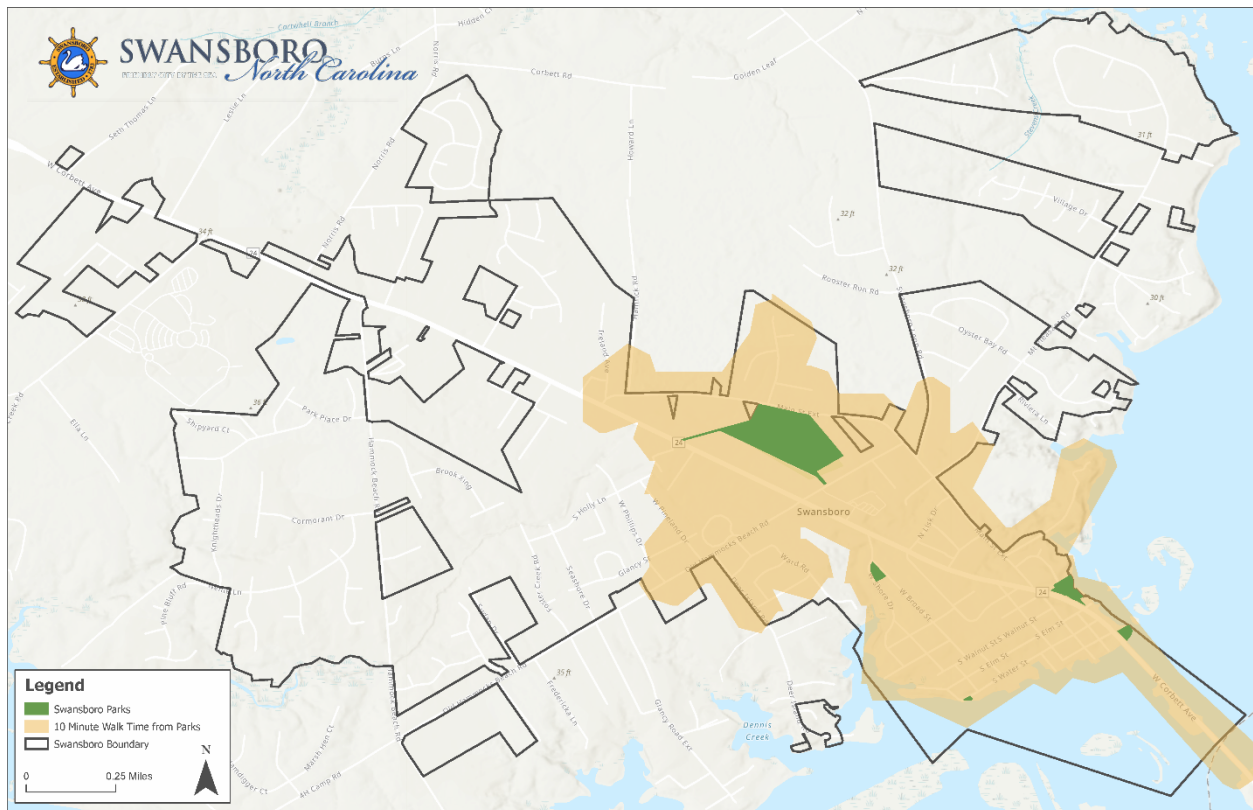
The Trust for Public Land maintains a parks database that tracks park-related data for communities around the country. The analysis is based on census data and provides metrics for community-wide walkability including demographic characteristics of those living within a 10-minute walk of a park.

According to the Trust for Public Land's 2020 report, 66 percent of Swansboro residents are within a 10-minute walk of a park, which is above the national average of 55 percent.

66% of residents live within a 10 minute walk of a park.



Median for the 100 ParkScore[®] cities: **75%**
Median for the 14,000 cities and towns in our ParkServe[®] database: **55%**





4 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



OVERVIEW

Community engagement is an essential part of any planning process. The most effective plans are firmly rooted in the realities and vision of the community that created them. Such visionary documents influence recommendations for development of future parks and enhancement of recreation programs and services. The community engagement approach for the current plan included a combination of input from community members, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and Swansboro Parks Recreation staff.

The department and project team designed the public engagement process to maximize the amount of input and feedback from community members and department staff. The process was intended to be equitable and inclusive, offering a variety of input opportunities and methods for all community members to have a comfortable platform for expressing their input. The graphic below describes each technique. A recreational needs survey was conducted alongside the outreach process. The instrument was distributed representative portion of the Town’s population, and focused on community recreation needs, priorities, and support for funding. This method provides an opportunity to reach individuals who would not typically attend a meeting or otherwise participate in a public engagement process.



PUBLIC INPUT

RESIDENT INTERCEPT SURVEYS

45
Participants

Purpose

To solicit input regarding community values, satisfaction and recreational needs and wants.

Date

November 21, 2021 + Ongoing at Swansboro Recreation Center

Big Ideas

Community Values

- › People + Community
- › The Environment + Nature
- › Health + Wellness

Recreation Programs

- › Outdoor Movies + Concerts
- › Fitness + Wellness Programs
- › Outdoor Adventure Programs

Recreation Facilities + Amenities

- › Farmers Market Pavilion
- › Greenways + Trails
- › Amphitheater/Outdoor Event Pavilion

Public input provides a foundation for understanding and responding to the parks and recreation needs of a community. An effective master plan is the result of a collaborative effort that solicits and incorporates input from citizens. This exercise was conducted as a means of understanding public sentiment towards parks and recreation and resource needs.

An intercept survey is a research method used to gather on-site feedback from an audience. Intercept surveys are often used at events, restaurants, conferences, and in shopping malls to collect patron perception information. Results from the intercept surveys allow the client organization to obtain feedback from their target audience while the information is still fresh in their minds.

The project team conducted intercept surveys giving residents the opportunity to provide input into the 10-year comprehensive plan. Participants provided input with regard to community values, park facility and amenity needs, greenways usage, and prioritizing investments in recreation in the Town of Swansboro.

The team spoke with **34** Swansboro residents on **November 21st** at the **Ace Hardware** and in **Downtown Swansboro**.

Swansboro Parks and Recreation staff spoke with an additional **11** residents during some of the department's programs and activities.

The surveys took the shape of small booklets containing images and focusing input on community values, park facilities, recreational programming, trails and greenways, and criteria for prioritization.

Responses indicate that the Town of Swansboro should create places where people connect with their community and are social with friends and family, and where people learn about and pursue activities to maintain their physical and mental well-being through events, amenities, and programs. These priorities overlap and intersect in many ways, and none should be excluded or overlooked

RECREATIONAL NEEDS SURVEY

Date

Distributed for +/- six weeks during the early spring of 2022.

Purpose

To solicit feedback on the recreational needs and wants of the community.

Big Ideas

Recreation Programs

1. Special Events + Festivals (118%)
2. Outdoor Fitness Classes (109%)
3. Indoor Fitness Classes (105%)
4. Swimming (98%)
5. Educational Programs (97%)
6. Outdoor Concerts + Movies (95%)
7. Gardening (90%)
8. Trips, Excursions + Social Programs (89%)
9. Cultural-Historical Programs (88%)
10. Hiking (87%)

Recreation Facilities + Amenities

1. Hiking Trails (39%)
2. Playgrounds (34%)
3. Bicycling-Roadway Infrastructure/Bike Lanes (34%)
4. Canoe/Kayak Access, (33%)
5. Saltwater Fishing Access (33%)
6. Bicycling-Mountain Biking (33%)
7. Outdoor Swimming Pool (32%)
8. Water-play/Splashpad (31%)
9. Picnic Shelters (31%)
10. Swimming Pool Indoor (28%)

245
Responses

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The recreational needs survey was administered as part of the community outreach effort. Data captured as a result of the survey will be used to prioritize recreation facilities, amenities, activities, and programs.

The project team made every effort to ensure the broadest level of outreach participation, taking into consideration that the survey was not a random sample, which is the gold-standard approach to comprehensive planning. The survey was distributed electronically to 2,276 email addresses across the platforms below, resulting in 245 completed surveys at a response rate of 10.8 percent.

- > HOAs – 250
- > Swansboro Public Schools – 1,382
- > Town's Listserv - 644
- > Swansboro P+R RecDesk – 884

When asked about their general opinions regarding Town of Swansboro parks and facilities, respondents overwhelmingly reported (79%) that they believe the Parks and Recreation Department is providing an essential service, and that the Town's parks and programs enhance their quality of life (80%). Swansboro residents visit each park relatively equitably as was evident by the survey results. Park visitation distribution was concentrated most frequently at Municipal Park (14%), followed by Downtown Pavilion, Gazebo and Town Docks (11%). Survey findings indicate that the majority of respondents (59%) agree that Swansboro's parks and facilities are well maintained; 24 percent strongly agree.

In terms of heavy-investment facilities and departmental operations, Respondents indicated either agreeing or strongly agreeing that the Town needs and indoor gymnasium (57%), the Town needs aquatic facilities (65%), and that the Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department should offer athletic programming (70%).

Survey-takers were asked about their opinion of the maintenance and upkeep of Swansboro Parks. The item that had the largest percent of dissatisfied respondents was restroom cleanliness, the item that had the smallest percent of dissatisfied respondents was feelings of safety and security. A report of survey results is located in the Appendix.

ASSET MAPPING

PURPOSE

The objective of this exercise was to provide the Town of Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department staff with an open and safe forum to discuss their perspectives among their peers without concerns of repercussion or expectations of partiality. Specifically, this exercise was applied for the purpose of gleaning information and resources from staff by asking how the Town's parks and recreation programs make the community better, how the department stands out among peer communities, how programs and facilities can be strengthened, and how barriers could stand in the way of efforts to improve the system. The questions posed were intentionally designed for responses to be extracted from a place of positivity, whereby staff is granted a copacetic starting point upon which to build productive dialogue.

METHOD

Staff input meetings provide qualitative data capturing meaningful patterns and themes. Qualitative data is the descriptive and conceptual findings collected through questionnaires, interviews, or observation. The asset mapping meetings with staff were formatted as focus groups in that they were interviews capitalizing on communication between participants in order to generate data. This form of research in particular, is an effective technique for exploring the attitudes and needs of staff. Swansboro Parks and Recreation staff were segmented based on their position within the department, whereby front-line members and administrative level members participated in independent meetings. After a brief presentation about components/content of the comprehensive parks and recreation master plan and the benefits it touts, the project team activated the asset mapping exercise intended to generate feedback other department's strengths and successes and identify potential challenges and areas for growth.



Date
September 1, 2021

6
Staff
Members

Big Ideas

- › Swansboro is home to a number of festivals and events that express the Town’s identity.
- › Staff recognizes the need to provide and maintain an equitable park system, in-particularly the need to examine the level of accessibility of current facilities and emphasize universal design when developing new facilities.
- › Staff suggested improving the department’s visibility by starting its own department-specific social media accounts (Swansboro currently has town-wide accounts). Visibility could also be enhanced by investing in print marketing like parks and program booklets to mail to Town residents.
- › Staff understand the value in partnerships, the importance of maintaining them, and the occasional need to improve them.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Cooperation from the department’s staff is central to the authenticity and usefulness of a comprehensive systemwide plan for parks and recreation. Educating staff on the purpose and benefits of the plan, together with conveying that their input is directly incorporated into its content creates an atmosphere of camaraderie and rallies staff around a common interest. It is the goal of this comprehensive parks and recreation master plan to provide a carefully constructed roadmap spelling out milestones and painting of picture of what success looks like for their department.

What about parks and recreation makes your community better?

The Town of Swansboro’s parks are inviting and well maintained, providing quality public space upon which to build a sense of community.

What is your parks and recreation system known for?

The parks and recreation system in Swansboro is known for its special events and festivals. Events like Flotilla and Mullet Festival are supported by the Town’s high-quality park infrastructure such as the Downtown Pavilion, Gazebo, and Town Docks. Parks such as Riverview and Bicentennial are attractive places for tourists to visit when they are in Town.

What would strengthen the department’s positive impact on the community?

The Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department would benefit greatly from additional financial and human resources - allowing them to raise the bar even higher when it comes to planning and delivering its special events, festivals, and hosting visitors. Also, adding a gymnasium to the existing recreation center would allow the department to support indoor athletics and allow for more programming opportunities.

What are the most significant threats to the department’s assets and reputation?

Staff are concerned that the department will become diminished due a lack of human and financial capital necessary to provide high-quality services and recognizes that this can be prevented by expanding the department’s budget and staff. Overdevelopment is an additional concern. Staff worry that the rate of housing construction way outpaces the Town’s ability to preserve greenspace and maintain sense of place.

Date

Held virtually on
November 17, 2021

7

Board
Members

Big Ideas

- › The Swansboro Parks and Recreation Advisory Board were in agreement over the need to replace some of the Town's existing park amenities and create a maintenance plan to reduce the need to replace amenities prior to the end of their useful life.
- › The Department would benefit from improved communication with the public. Some residents are unaware of what the Department does thereby missing out on understanding how Swansboro Parks and Recreation, and parks and recreation departments overall, provide an essential public service that only improve quality of life in a community.
- › Member shared the sentiment that not only do Town's parks provide high-quality traditional leisure facilities like playgrounds, picnic shelters, and sport courts – but also offer very unique facilities like riverside boardwalks, fishing platforms, and access to the river for kayakers.
- › Parks and Recreation is the one department in Swansboro that consistently generates revenue and should be recognized for its good work.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The Swansboro Parks and Recreation Advisory Board is a volunteer committee made up of 7 Swansboro residents. Citizens apply to be on advisory boards and then the Board of Commissioners appoint them. They are advocates for parks and recreation in the community and it is critical that this group be knowledgeable, supportive, and intimately involved with the comprehensive planning process.

What about parks and recreation makes your community better?

The Board believes that parks and recreation create connections to the community and among residents. Members expressed how parks and recreation makes their community better by connecting people with similar interests thereby providing opportunities to meet people that community members would not have had otherwise.

What is Swansboro Parks + Recreation known for?

Swansboro Parks and Recreation excels at delivering festivals and special events. The Advisory Board believes these assets build community and economic capacity by creating a space for residents to gather and celebrate, and attracting visitors who spend money at local businesses. Partnerships with the business community, according to board members, have also coalesced around the visibility of the Town's events, which again are primarily supported by Swansboro Parks and Recreation.

What would strengthen the department's positive impact on the community?

Board members feel that the department's efforts could be strengthened by employing a dedicated dockmaster. Swansboro Parks and Recreation staff currently are responsible for this service which is a heavy lift for a small staff wearing many hats. Board members feel that the capabilities of an expert dock master would free current staff to build the department's capacity.

What are the most significant threats to the department's assets and reputation?

Members feel that with population growth and demand, the department will struggle with expanding facilities and services especially related to youth athletics and the need for a gymnasium to grow the Town's recreation programs.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

WHAT WE HEARD

The following summary of presents the feedback received across each engagement activity conducted during the inventory and analysis phase of the comprehensive planning process. Opinions and comments collected were diverse across stakeholder groups, but a number of themes emerged. Themes represent the community's expressed needs, aspirations, and visions. They convey a powerful message for leveraging the Town of Swansboro's parks and recreation assets, while acknowledging and addressing its current challenges. Swansboro residents recognize the profound positive effect Swansboro Parks and Recreation has on quality of life in the community, its ability to create positive relationships among community members, and introduce residents to nature and the outdoors. They share a belief in the power of parks and recreation to address some of the most pressing concerns facing the Town of Swansboro, such improving health and wellness outcomes, balancing growth, mitigating crime, and supporting at-risk youth, and the effects of climate change. The graphic below provides a glance at general opinions gleaned per outreach method.

NEEDS SURVEY	PUBLIC INPUT	STAFF ASSET MAPPING	ADVISORY BOARD ASSET MAPPING
245 Households	45 Participants	9 Participants	7 Participants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Hiking Trails are the most desired park amenity > 70% - believe Swansboro Parks and Recreation should provide youth athletics > Special events + festivals are most desired programs > A lack of pedestrian facilities is a barrier to greenway use > Nearly one quarter (24%) of respondents do not feel the Department's advertisement methods are adequate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Community Values: Nature + The Environment; People + Community; > Outdoor movies and concerts are the most desired programs. > Paved walking loops and a farmers market pavilion are most desired amenities > Creating community connections is top criteria for prioritization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Parks and Recreation connects the community and creates relationships > It provides space for residents to interact with nature + the outdoors > Swansboro Parks and Recreation is under resourced > The Town needs a gymnasium to grow its recreation programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > The Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department needs a dedicated expert Dockmaster > There is a need to replace some of the Town's park amenities and create a plan to reduce the need to replace amenities prior to the end of their useful life > The Department generates revenue



5 RECOMMENDATIONS + IMPLEMENTATION



OVERVIEW

The comprehensive planning process is an opportunity to create a coordinated vision for a Department to guide the next 10 years. Comprehensive plans are a system-wide approach to evaluating progress, identifying opportunities and problem solving. The results, as well as the planning process itself generates new ideas and collaborative conversations that would not occur as part of the day-to-day operations of a department. This plan's recommendations and implementation strategy result directly from an extensive information gathering process involving community input, staff and stakeholder input, analysis of existing parkland and programs, research, and data.

The following data sources informed recommendations:

- > Staff Meetings + Interviews
- > Parks + Recreation Trends
- > Park + Facility Inventory
- > Benchmarking
- > Recreational Needs Survey
- > Demographics + Trends
- > Level of Service

Lastly, an implementation plan with prioritized action items is the final step in bringing the parks and recreation master plan vision to reality. Implementation is not a linear process but an ongoing iterative process that will rely on large funding investments. Feasibility studies, master plans, phasing plans, and business plans are some of the short to medium-term action items steps the Town may pursue to understand various levels of investment and resources necessary to enhance the parks system overall. Effective implementation strategies are based on highly collaborative processes that span across the various Town Departments, community leaders, strategic partners, and elected officials resulting in multiple benefits to the community.

The recommendations presented in this plan have been further refined into strategies or action items and prioritized as short-term, mid-term, long-term or ongoing. Action items receiving higher priority are those supported by significant community input or are items that have been delayed or postponed in the past but have significant bearing on accomplishing the recommendations of this plan. Each action item indicates a responsible party to foster accountability within the Department as well as component of the parks and recreation system as it relates to parks and facilities, programs, operations, and maintenance.

Implementation Plan Key

GOAL	TIMELINE	TIMELINE CODE
Short-term	1 – 5 years	ST
Mid-term	5 – 10 years	MT
Long-term	10 + years	LT
Ongoing	Continual	OG



PARKLAND + FACILITIES

RECOMMENDATION	STRATEGY / ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY
Continue to provide high quality park experiences by continuing to make investments and upgrades to parks as it relates to functionality and design standards.	Maintain and update existing parks and facilities. <ul style="list-style-type: none">> Develop a schematic drawing to capture potential layout and redevelopment of Pineland Park> Complete a detailed list of upgrades for individual parks along with cost estimates to present in requesting funding as part of operational budget or CIP.	ST-MT
	Upgrade parks to include amenities reflecting the latest trends and community needs. <ul style="list-style-type: none">> Additional basketball courts> Additional pickleball courts> Access to greenways and trails	ST-MT
	Leverage technology. <ul style="list-style-type: none">> Identify apps that create virtual environments and recreational experience “co-creation” via mobile devices activated at playgrounds and park amenities.	ST, OG

To provide relevant and diverse parks, the Town of Swansboro should continue to review industry trends and utilize resident surveys to understand evolving recreation interests, needs and wants. A diversity of amenities leads park users to extend their length of stay and appeals to a wider audience of park visitors. A combination of amenities with low barriers to entry and on trend amenities provide all visitors with recreation opportunities. This is something Swansboro Parks and Recreation is already achieving and has the potential to heighten the user experience even further.

One of the best ways to promote consistency of recreational quality and department character is through department branding. Wayfinding adheres to Town branding, provides directional clarity, and often expands park identity. This plan recommends continuing to apply and creatively augment existing brand standards to apply to selecting site furnishings, signage, and entryways in the parks. This will result in a defined character of the entire Swansboro park system, reinforcing the overall brand of the Town.

RECOMMENDATION	STRATEGY / ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY
Position Parks and Recreation as an essential public service.	Develop a public information campaign to raise awareness and stimulate individuals or groups to seek information about the positive impacts the Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department's efforts, successes, and the positive impact it has on the Town.	ST
	Schedule and conduct bi-annual or quarterly informal conversations with Town Council members to convey the Department's latest achievements.	ST-OG
	Perform data analyses to map tax values of properties located within walking distance or 5-minute driving distance from parks.	ST-MT

Expand tax base - Evidence shows residential development adjacent to parks and trails have higher property values and sell for more than properties further away from park services. Proximity to parks increases property value and increases revenue from property taxes. Research has shown that a 5% increase in property values for houses within 500 feet of a park is a conservative estimate of the change in property value due to proximity to a park.

Maintain a healthy community - Access to parks and trails have significant impacts on health and wellness. As medical research continues to reveal the benefits of an active lifestyle, communities are beginning to see providing parks and trails as a form of preventative care for their residents. Programs such as ParkRx are building relationships among health care providers, residents, and local governments to understand and enhance the important role parks and trails play in keeping communities healthy and vibrant.

Just as water, sewer, and public safety are considered essential public services, parks are vitally important to establishing and maintaining the quality of life in a community, ensuring the health of families and youth, and contributing to the economic and environmental well-being of a community and a region. Parks and recreation, however, does not always receive the same priority as other services like police and fire. Ensuring the Town provides an appropriate level of service for parks and facilities within their expanding community will be essential to preserving the small-town character residents desire.

The amplification of parks and recreation as an essential public service must be accomplished with the understanding the existence of competing demands for infrastructure improvements. As the Town grows, there will be more competition for funding, necessitating validation of investment decisions and tracking of outcomes. The recreational needs survey results indicated that 80 percent of respondents agree that public parks add to the quality of life in a community, and 79 percent of respondents believe recreation and

parks are an essential service to the Town. Both data points suggest there is community support to justify prioritizing investment in the park system. Achieving this objective will require a multifaceted approach to elevating the profile of parks and recreation within the Town.

The Department should understand and communicate the many widespread community benefits that access to parks and recreation services provides. Research indicates that parks strengthen local economies, provide quantifiable health and wellness benefits, and expand the community's tax base by increasing property values. Identifying and tracking performance measures, such as economic impact and health outcomes will be essential to communicating the positive outcome of parks and recreation services.

RECOMMENDATION	STRATEGY / ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY
Enhance and expand the Park System to meet community needs and wants.	Strategically acquire land for park development. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Consider acquiring 18 acres suitable for development by 2031. > Construct 2.75 miles of trails by 2031. 	MT-LT
	Activate underused park spaces. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Employ “tactical urbanism” by making low-cost, temporary changes to underutilized areas of the parks. > Engage the community to determine long-term dedication of space. 	ST-OG
	Construct a gymnasium as an addition to the Swansboro Recreation Center. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Determine cost estimates. > Identify funding sources. > Develop site and building design. > Construct, maintain and program the facility. 	MT
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Identify opportunities to invest in and/or develop partnerships to provide facilities and amenities recognized by the community as priority recreational needs: (1) Hiking Trails; (2) Roadway Biking Infrastructure + Playgrounds; (3) Canoe-Kayak Access, Saltwater Fishing Access, Bicycling-Mountain Biking; (4) Outdoor Swimming Pool; (5) Water-play/Splashpad + Picnic Shelters 	ST-MT

The recreational needs study conducted as part of this plan identified recreational amenities among the highest demand for residents of Swansboro. As a note to assist the Town with prioritization decisions, the amenity highest in demand (hiking trails) ranked over ten percentage points (11%) less than fifth highest ranked amenity (indoor pool). Swansboro Parks and Recreation currently provides a robust level of service in terms of motorized and non-motorized boat access, saltwater fishing access, playgrounds, splashpad and picnic shelters. The department also offers programs that take participants to Hammocks Beach State Park where there are opportunities to hike and bike.

In-demand recreational amenities listed above also include both indoor and outdoor swimming pools. The Town of Swansboro, a government entity and provider of public services has not entered this realm of recreation service provision. Costs associated with constructing, managing, staffing, and programming pools and aquatic facilities are often far more than a local government can fund and sustain. For example, a pre-pandemic (2018) feasibility study for an indoor 50-meter, 8 lane community pool in Las Cruces estimated the cost of construction to be over \$18 million with an annual operational cost of nearly \$650,000.¹²

¹²City of Las Cruces, NM. Cost Benefit Analysis on the Construction of a 50- Meter Community Pool. Economic Development Department. September 2018. <https://www.lascruces.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1120/Cost-Benefit-Analysis-on-the-Construction-of-a-50-Meter-Community-Pool-PDF>

There is no question that municipal pools have many benefits. Municipal pools are inexpensive to access and provide aquatics programs and the unique benefits of providing a competitive sport, a recreational activity, and life-saving skills. In addition, pool usage is not bound by age, gender, or an individual's socioeconomic conditions. An article in Municipal Association of South Carolina quoted Charleston Councilwoman Kathleen Wilson as saying "a quality municipal pool is a sign of a functioning, healthy community. As our communities grow, these are the sorts of features residents are demanding."¹³ Demand within communities for public swim facilities has not been seen to wane despite the mostly broad knowledge of associated fiscal constraints. Cities and towns recognize that even in places with many planned residential developments that offer pools, most community residents do not have access to swim facilities. Taking that into consideration, even small local governments like Amery Wisconsin have invested in feasibility studies to determine whether proposed aquatics facilities are sound investments.

Taking into consideration the constraints facing the Town of Swansboro, this plan recommends the Town first focus its investments on recreational amenities more within its financial and operational reach, then in the medium term (5-10 years), invest in a professionally prepared feasibility analysis into a new pool facility. Many Swansboro residents have easy access to the White Oak River, yet the majority of residents and visitors have to drive to a public entryway to access the water. Therefore, this plan recommends prioritizing expanding public access to the river for residents and visitors to canoe, kayak, paddle board, etc.

CASE STUDY – Town of Amery, Wisconsin

The City of Amery is located in rural Wisconsin and has a population of 2,974. Although there are three lakes (including two public beaches), and a river within city limits, community members felt the City needed a pool. In 2017, the City conducted an internal study to assess the feasibility of an outdoor pool in Amery.

The study provided results of a community poll and a survey of municipalities in Wisconsin who operate pools. It was determined that all the municipalities funded construction, at least in part, through their tax levy as a regular capital expenditure or borrowed the funds and placed it on their debt levy. Some municipalities reduced the financial burden on their tax levy by applying for grants, running fundraising campaigns, and collaborating with other entities.

This particular study failed to accurately capture estimated average costs for construction but did list the average maintenance costs at \$102,828. Pools must also be operated by maintenance personnel and lifeguards. On average, personnel costs were higher than maintenance costs at \$131, 194.

The Amery Wisconsin study ultimately recommended to City Council that the City should not pursue the construction and development of a pool or aquatics facility. It went on further to recommend more attainable efforts to better connect the community with water-based recreation. The first recommendation was to launch an awareness campaign to inform users of Amery's lakes and rivers and the recreation amenities available there. The second recommendation was to invest in upgrading, enhancing, and adding to existing water-based recreation infrastructure. The study concluded with a recommendation to commission a professional consultant to develop a feasibility study examining site selection, design, construction cost estimates, and expected operational costs.

¹³ Uptown Magazine Municipal Association of South Carolina, *Public pools benefit residents but take work*, Municipal Association of South Carolina, 2017.

RECOMMENDATION	STRATEGY / ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY
Leverage parks and greenways as a platform to meet larger community goals.	Economic Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Continue to work with the Swansboro Tourism Development Authority and the Onslow County Tourism Office to advertise Swansboro special events and park amenities. > Partner with Onslow County and East Carolina University to determine interest in conducting an economic impact study 	ST-OG
	Multimodal Transportation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Examine past milestones <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > E.G., "Connect intersections of Hammocks Beach Road or Queen's Creek Road with NC 24. > Invest in a greenways plan. 	ST-MT-OG
	Costal Resource Protection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Continue to maintain existing waterfront recreational infrastructure to a high standard/preserve CAMA waterfront access points. > Revisit the Waterfront Access and Development Plan, 2012 to determine what natural resource protection objectives and actions have been achieved. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > E.G., "Create a single source map that [identifies] wetland areas within town limits." 	ST

Multimodal Transportation: As expressed throughout this plan, the Town of Swansboro's population is poised to grow over the course of the next 15-30 years. Town leadership partnered with NCDOT to create the Town of Swansboro Bicycle Plan with the goal of creating a community network of bicycle trails connecting the Historic District with municipal and school facilities, parks, and neighborhoods. The plan recommended the Town place priority on roadway and bicycle-pedestrian planning to include improving the pedestrian and bicycle network with additional sidewalks, multiuse paths, and greenways. The current parks and recreation comprehensive master plan recommends the Town of Swansboro revisit the 2011 plan to determine what of its recommendations have been achieved and move toward investing in a greenways plan – either as a single entity or in partnership with other government bodies like Onslow County and North Carolina State Parks.

Coastal Resource Protection: An obvious theme echoed throughout this plan is Swansboro's identity as a coastal community and the water-based recreation opportunities it currently provides and plans to provide in the future. The Town developed a plan for waterfront development in 2012 and updated its CAMA land use plan in 2019 – whereby the importance of parks was noted for being vital for protecting waterfront access. The Town has already accomplished several items from these plans including improvements to Ward Shore and

Riverview Parks. The current parks and recreation comprehensive plan recommends the Town identify goals from the two aforementioned plans that have not yet been accomplished and work with other Town of Swansboro departments to prioritize coastal and environmental resource protection projects impactful of the Town's parks.

Economic Development: Recreation and parks are frequently viewed as cost centers that generate revenue for only a fraction of the costs they incur. Parks departments themselves have frequently reinforced this idea by only reporting annual financial data, rather than reporting economic impact data which captures a wider variety of considerations. Parks provide intrinsic environmental, aesthetic, and recreation benefits to our cities. They are also a source of positive economic benefits. They enhance property values, increase municipal revenue, bring in homebuyers and workers, and attract retirees.

These resources can include technology like spending tracking software. This software can be expensive, but savvy communities typically share the cost of economic development tools with partner agencies. Town staff can also use reliable spending formulas to establish a baseline estimate of the economic development impact of recreation services. By understanding their economic impacts, decision makers can better evaluate the creation and maintenance of parks.

5 KEY POINTS

How cities use parks for ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

01

REAL PROPERTY VALUES ARE POSITIVELY AFFECTED.

As early as the 19th century the positive connection between parks and property values was being made.



02

MUNICIPAL REVENUES ARE INCREASED.

Increased property values and increased municipal revenues go hand in hand. Property tax is one of the most important revenue streams for cities.



03

AFFLUENT RETIREES ARE ATTRACTED AND RETAINED.

They increase the tax base and are "positive" taxpayers, using fewer services than payed for through taxes.



04

KNOWLEDGE WORKERS AND TALENT ARE ATTRACTED TO LIVE AND WORK.

Knowledge workers prefer places with a diverse range of outdoor recreational activities, from trails to rock climbing.



05

HOMEBUYERS ARE ATTRACTED TO PURCHASE HOMES.

The National Association of Home Builders found that 65 percent of home shoppers surveyed felt that parks would seriously influence them to move to a community.





PARK MAINTENANCE

RECOMMENDATION	STRATEGY / ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY
Identify and track maintenance needs of the existing park system.	Develop a maintenance management plan linked to maintenance standards.	ST
	Develop a maintenance management training program for any Public Works staff assigned to maintaining parks.	ST-MT

Maintenance Management Components:

Maintenance Zones: Define the level of maintenance required for each area within the parks and the frequency of tasks. Identifying maintenance zones can increase efficiencies and promote asset preservation for parkland, facilities, and amenities.

Work Order System: Manages existing workloads and use the data collected regarding time spent and cost to improve the understanding of maintenance needs and ultimately forecast maintenance needs annually.

External Contractors Protocol: Identifies jobs that can achieve a cost-benefit advantage from being outsourced to a private contractor.

Design Standards: Account for maintenance and operational cost over an asset's lifetime.

Lifecycle Analysis: Tracks needed replacements and renovations of amenities. This tracking method will also account for full cost of ownership.

Evidenced through the community engagement process, residents, stakeholders, and elected officials truly recognize the value of parks and recreation. However, there is less recognition and understanding regarding the amount of maintenance and staff hours that go into maintaining the parks in a way that meets or exceeds the public's expectations.

Park maintenance is a foundational element of providing a safe and high-quality park system and parks and recreation staff work every day to achieve that status. Park maintenance also includes many hidden costs and unseen time expenditures. For example, mowing requires transportation of equipment to and from sites, any time needed to repair or replace equipment and refueling, in addition to time spent on the mower itself.

Daily maintenance tasks typically include landscaping and trash removal. Long-term maintenance includes items such as structural repairs and unplanned maintenance needs. It is important to have records of the time and funding expenditures needed to achieve all maintenance needs so the department can be properly staffed and funded. A well-planned maintenance strategy will include full accounting of the time and budget required to meet short term, long term, and unplanned maintenance needs.

This plan recommends the Town of Swansboro create a comprehensive maintenance management plan that establish standards to forecast management needs as the system evolves.



RECREATION PROGRAMMING

RECOMMENDATION	STRATEGY / ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY
Develop programs that activate spaces and encourage the community to experience parks, recreation facilities, and activities.	Expand current program inventory to include outdoor activities that take advantage of Swansboro's unique outdoor spaces and facilities. Partner with local specialists. Examples could include: yoga on the Downtown Pavilion or Bicentennial Park lawn, wildlife watching at Riverview Park, moonlight paddles, etc.	ST
	Invest in a gymnasium as an addition to Swansboro Recreation Center to grow the Department's menu of recreation programs, services, and activities.	MT-LT
	Create capacity within the Department to offer town-provided youth sports.	ST-MT

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the importance of not only one's personal physical health, but also demonstrated our capacity to adapt our habits and activities to take place outdoors when accessing indoor space was prevented. When gyms and recreation centers shut their doors, parks, trails, and open space gladly took their place. An article in Fortune Magazine described recent data gleaned from workout and travel apps revealing users' shifting preferences. The data revealed that hiking is now more popular than interval training, participation tennis and pickleball have doubled and some cases even tripled in 2021. The turn to "green exercise" and greater engagement with the outdoors is likely the future recreation administrators are looking into. Lines between indoor and outdoor exercise are consistently being blurred, with the public showing a great level of interest in bringing activities traditionally held inside to outdoor, shared civic spaces.

This plan recommends the Town of Swansboro determine the capability and feasibility of utilizing existing park and open spaces beyond their traditionally intended usage – and begin to adopt the viewpoint that most public spaces can become multifunctional and easily adjustable to accommodate community needs and emerging trends. Tied to this recommendation is a proposal for youth sports programs developed and administered by the Town of Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department. Over 20 percent of survey respondent reported being dissatisfied with youth programming offerings in Swansboro. Furthermore, 70 percent of respondents believed athletic programming should be offered by the Town.

The notion of outdoor activities being in high demand does not diminish the need to couple park space with indoor recreation facilities. This plan recommends the Town expand the Swansboro Recreation Center to include a gymnasium. Results from the current parks and recreation master plan recreational needs survey pointed to a need for the Town of Swansboro to invest in expanding its indoor recreation offerings. Indoor pickleball was one of the most desired activities, as were indoor fitness and wellness programs. Additionally, the majority of survey takers (57%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the Town needs an indoor gymnasium.

RECOMMENDATION	STRATEGY / ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY
Expand education and learning through connections to history and the natural environment via park amenities and recreational programs.	Explore opportunities to educate community members and visitors about Swansboro's history and natural heritage with recreation programs and park enhancements – like educational kiosks, QR code tour, etc.	ST
	Partner with state, regional, and local environmental educators, history interpreters, and nature programmers to offer activities and programs.	ST

Both the needs assessment and public input revealed Swansboro residents highly regard and value nature, the environment, and the outdoors. Participants in the resident intercept survey exercise identified this value more often than any of the other available options as it tied with the strongly held value of people and community.

The Town should consider a vision for historical and cultural programming and how to foster culture, heritage, and place. This may include compiling the history and heritage of a place, identifying community partners and organizations, and determining diverse venues for arts and cultural expression. Culture and Arts was the third most commonly cited value among residents that participated in the resident intercept interviews. Therefore, this plan recommends Swansboro Parks and Recreation continue to invest in the physical and human infrastructure necessary to connect the community to parks and programs that are conducive to experiential learning.

RECOMMENDATION	STRATEGY / ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY
Use program management principles to maximize department efficiency.	Use the program lifecycle model to assist decision making to introducing, continuing, and retiring programs.	ST + OG
	Reference the age segment analysis to understand imbalances in service distribution among age groups.	ST
	Employ the program classification framework to justify program pricing strategies and cost recovery policy.	ST + OG

This plan's program assessment uses program management principles as a framework for evaluating the Swansboro Parks and Recreation's operational approach to recreation programming. With the baseline understanding this plan provides, the Department can develop metrics and goals for expanding and diversifying program offerings. Using program management principles will provide information needed to justify additional resources to expand programming based on community need, validate decisions and track results such as participation, customer satisfaction, and cost recovery.

The program management principle of annually tracking the lifecycle of all programs will help ensure the best program distribution and identify early when a program is transitioning into decline. This also demonstrates a logical approach to terminating declining programs. Based on the Program Lifecycle Analysis completed as part of this plan's program assessment, the Department should terminate programs that fall into the decline and or saturation phase. Currently, the majority (53%) of Swansboro Parks and Recreation's are in the beginning phases (Introduction, Take-Off, and Growth) with over half in the growth stage, nearly one quarter (21%) are considered to be saturated or declining.

Programs in decline are representative of two out of the Department's five FUN Recreation Program Areas (Fitness + Wellness, Family) and include Yoga/Zumba, Kid's Night Out, and Cook with Your Kid. This plan recommends the Department seek feedback from those who are participating in those activities to understand what draws them to the programs and enhance those factors as necessary. The Department might also consider the way these programs are advertised, as a lack of information may be contributing to their decline.

RECOMMENDATION	STRATEGY / ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY
Base decisions for introducing new programs based on community needs and recreation trends.	Understand recreation trends to evaluate correlation with current department offerings.	ST + OG
	Use the results of the recreational needs survey and public input to justify introducing new programming.	ST
	Use program assessment data to determine the success and value of current offerings.	ST
	Continually seek information related to current recreation program trends.	ST + OG
	Continue to monitor the demographics of the town to ensure the needs of the community are being met.	ST + OG
	Continue to provide best in class festivals and special events and expand activities where resources are available.	ST + OG

Results from the recreational needs survey and public input should inform selection of new programs. Top program desires expressed by the community included

Recreational Needs Survey

1. Special Events + Festivals
2. Outdoor Fitness Classes
3. Indoor Fitness Classes
4. Educational Programs
5. Swimming

Public Input

1. Special Events + Festivals
2. Outdoor Movies + Concerts
3. Fitness + Wellness Programs
4. Outdoor Adventure Programs
5. Environmental Education/Nature-based Programs

Understanding new and emerging trends in parks, recreation, and cultural resources will help the Department craft programming that meets needs in exciting fresh ways. For example, “fitness and wellness programming” is a community priority, but residents’ expectations of engaging programming have changed over time, with current trends leaning toward outdoor and mind/body exercises. Focus groups and surveying are effective tools for determining user expectations of fresh programming. Department staff can select programming with the highest potential for success by aligning stated community needs with emerging trends.

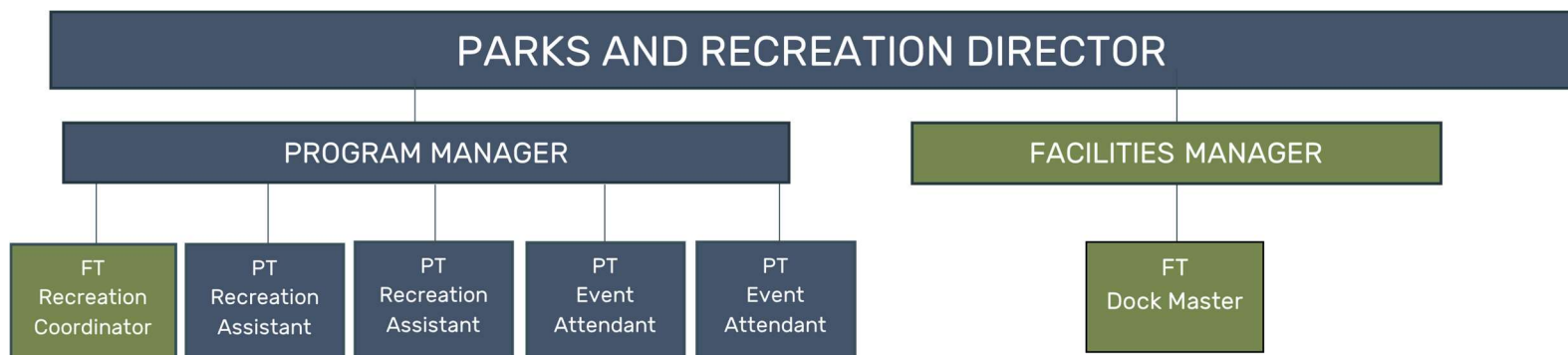


OPERATIONS

RECOMMENDATION	STRATEGY / ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY
Build staff capacity to meet growing community needs.	Expand the organizational structure to meet current and future demands.	ST-MT
	Track staff workloads seasonally to identify opportunity to build capacity.	ST + OG

Providing a sound foundation of knowledge among Department staff elevates skillsets, increases efficiency, and builds capacity employees and the Department as a whole. These elements are necessary to increase capabilities in employees to manage the responsibilities that arise from implementing a Comprehensive Master Plan or adding services and amenities as the system evolves.

To develop an adequately staffed Department using best management practices, customer-focused outcomes, and performance measure tracking to demonstrate excellence in service delivery. Based on the Operations Assessment, conversations with staff, and community need, this plan recommends the Town consider expanding their organizational structure to include new staff. Items shaded in green represent future new positions.



↑ *Proposed Organizational Chart*

RECOMMENDATION	STRATEGY / ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY
Continue to grow the marketing, communication, and brand identity of the Department.	Identify creative ways to market the Department.	ST + OG
	Continue to promote the Department's unique identity.	ST +OG
	Create and implement social media outreach standards and policies for the Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department.	ST

Brand positioning has value beyond attracting participants to recreation programs, activities, events, and parks. Parks and recreation departments are often the only department within a local government where the public chooses to spend their disposable income.

The Department should have a communication strategy to guide outreach campaigns. A communication strategy sets the tone and direction so that all communication activities, products, materials, and design work together to achieve stated outcomes. Efforts should be made to portray the positive role the Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department plays in town. Even minor achievements can be spun into fun and educational social media posts highlighting the Department's strengths. The Department should use data, key performance indicator graphics, and other creative methods to engage followers in improvements initiatives

As part of the overall communication strategy, the Department should develop a marketing and social media policy to direct staff on standards, brand identity, and tone of social media posts. This policy should outline the overall philosophy to social media, the marketing process, marketing methods, contributor roles, and desired outcomes. Parks and recreation requires a higher level of customer engagement in social media platforms to attract customers in a competitive market. The Department's engagement on social media should reflect the fun an engaging experiences that residents have at the Town's parks and programs.



6 APPENDIX



APPENDIX CONTENTS

1 > RECREATIONAL NEEDS SURVEY

2 > ASSET MAPPING SUMMARY

3 > PRIORITIZATION MODEL

4 > GREENWAY RESOURCES

Town of Swansboro Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan -
Recreational Needs Survey

Let's Plan!

The Town of Swansboro is conducting a needs survey to assess the community's usage, satisfaction and desires for facilities and programs provided by the Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department. Input will be used to identify opportunities for improvement and help establish priorities for the future development of parks, facilities, programs, and services within the community. Community feedback leads to higher quality parks, recreational amenities and programming attuned to your community's needs.

This survey will be available to the public until FRIDAY, APRIL 8TH

All responses are confidential and results will be reported only in the aggregate. Your participation in this effort is very important and very much appreciated.

Town of Swansboro Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan -
Recreational Needs Survey

Swansboro Residency

1. This question determines Swansboro residency. Do you receive a stormwater bill from the Town of Swansboro?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Town of Swansboro Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan - Recreational Needs Survey

Park Visitation Behavior + General Attitudes

2. How often do you visit Swansboro Parks/Facilities?

- 4 ☐ Very Often
3 ☐ Somewhat Often
2 ☐ Rarely
1 ☐ Have Not Visited
9 ☐ I am not sure if the park(s) I visit or have visited are Town of Swansboro Parks.

3. Have you or other members of your household visited any of the following parks or facilities operated by the Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department during the past year?

[Check all that apply.]

- 13 ☐ Swansboro Municipal Park - 830 Main Street Ext.
12 ☐ Swansboro Recreation Center - 830 Main Street Ext.
11 ☐ Pirate's Den Park - located at the junction of Broad Street and Shore Drive in the Edgewater Heights neighborhood.
10 ☐ Pineland Park - located in the Swansboro Heights neighborhood.
9 ☐ Bicentennial Park - located on the downtown waterfront adjacent to White Oak River Bridge.
8 ☐ Riverview Park - located directly off NC 24 (Corbett Avenue) between Main and Elm Streets
7 ☐ Ward Shore Park - located on Water Street just south of downtown at the edge of the Inter Coastal Waterway.
6 ☐ Town Docks - located at the intersection of Front and Church Streets, centrally located in the historic downtown district,
5 ☐ Church Street Gazebo - Located right next to the water on the corner of Church St. and Water St. in downtown Swansboro.
4 ☐ Downtown Bandstand Pavilion - located in downtown Swansboro at the corner of Front and Church Street
3 ☐ Municipal Park Dog Park - located in Municipal Park 830 Main Street Ext.
2 ☐ Old Town Hall/Assembly Room - 502 West Church Street
1 ☐ Municipal Park Splash Pad - located in Municipal Park 830 Main Street Ext.
0 ☐ None of the above

FREQU

PARKS

4. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements regarding parks and recreation in the Town of Swansboro:

	5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neutral	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
Recreation and parks are an essential service to the Town.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public parks add to the quality of life in the Town.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am aware of the parks, facilities, programs, and events that are offered.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am satisfied with the variety of parks, facilities, programs, and events the Town offers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am satisfied with the recreation opportunities for youth in Swansboro.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am satisfied with the recreation opportunities for teens in Swansboro.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am satisfied with the recreation opportunities for adults in Swansboro.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am satisfied with the recreation opportunities for older adults/seniors in Swansboro.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. How would you describe your satisfaction with the operation and maintenance of Swansboro parks and facilities?

SATIS

	4	3	2	1	
	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Condition of Buildings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Natural Areas Stewardship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tree Care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mowing/Field Maintenance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trails Maintenance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Playground Maintenance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restroom Cleanliness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Signage and Information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trash Removal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Safety/Security	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neutral	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
Recreation facilities are well-maintained.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parks are well-distributed across the Town	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Town should prioritize renovating/improving existing recreational facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Town should prioritize developing new recreational facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Athletic programming should be offered by the Town	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Town needs an indoor gymnasium	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Town needs aquatic facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Acquiring undeveloped land for future parkland locations is important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel safe when visiting a park or recreational facility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel that I have good access to a park	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advertisements about programs and events are adequate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Town of Swansboro Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan - Recreational Needs Survey

Recreation Facility + Program Needs

7. What indoor and outdoor recreational facilities do you believe are important to be added, expanded, or improved in Swansboro over the next ten years?

	5	4	3	2	1
	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Adventure Courses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Art Studios	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Baseball Fields	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Basketball Courts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bicycling-Mountain Bike Trails	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bicycling-Roadway Infrastructure/Bike Lanes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bicycling-BMX Tracks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Camping Facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Canoeing/Kayaking Access	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Disc Golf Course	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Environmental/Nature Facility-Indoor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Environmental/Nature Facility-Outdoor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fishing Access-Freshwater	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fishing Access-Saltwater	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fitness Stations-Indoor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fitness Stations-Outdoor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Football Fields	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gardens	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hiking Trails	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Indoor Gymnasium	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Open Space/Unprogrammed Play Fields	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pickleball Courts-Outdoor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Pickleball Courts-Indoor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Picnic Shelters	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Playgrounds	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Skateboarding Facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Soccer Fields	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Softball Fields	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Swimming Pool-Indoor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Swimming Pool-Outdoor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tennis Courts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Volleyball Courts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Waterplay/Splashpad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. I or my family members have participated in or would like to participate in the following park activities:

	3	2	1	0
		Would Like to Participate if Facility/Activity Were Available	Would Not Like to Participate	Not Applicable
Afterschool Programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Art Programs-Visual (painting, drawing, ceramics, photography, video, filmmaking, crafts)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Art Programs-Performing (music, dance, drama)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Baseball	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Basketball	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bicycling-Mountain	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bicycling-Road	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bicycling-BMX	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Camping	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Canoeing/Kayaking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cultural/Historical Programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Day Camp	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Disc Golf	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Educational Programs				

(Environment/Nature, History, Cultural Enrichment, Life Skills)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
E-sports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fishing-Freshwater	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fishing-Saltwater	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fitness and Wellness Programs-Indoor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fitness and Wellness Programs-Outdoor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Football-Tackle	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Football-Flag	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gardening	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hiking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Non-Traditional Sports (Track + Field, Boxing, Martial Arts)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Outdoor Concerts + Movies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pickleball	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Picnicking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pre-K Programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rowing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Running/Jogging	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Senior Programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Skateboarding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social Programs (Parent-Child activities, Teen Clubs, Senior Groups)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Soccer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Softball	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Special Events/Festivals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Swimming	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technology Based Programs (Pokemon Go, Smart Playgrounds, Park Designed Apps)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tennis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Therapeutic Recreation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Trips + Excursions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Virtual Programs (5ks, Book Club, Streaming Events)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Volleyball	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Volunteering	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Town of Swansboro Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan - Recreational Needs Survey

Greenways

9. How frequently do you bike and/or walk in Swansboro?

- 4 ☐ Daily
3 ☐ A few times a week
2 ☐ A few times a month
1 ☐ A few times a year
0 ☐ I do not bike or walk

10. Have your biking and walking habits changed during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- 3 ☐ I bike and walk more than I did before the pandemic
2 ☐ I bike and walk the same as I did before the pandemic
1 ☐ I bike and walk less than I did before the pandemic

11. Would you bike and/or walk more frequently if Swansboro had a greenway network?

- 2 ☐ Yes
1 ☐ No
9 ☐ Not sure

12. List three destinations that you currently bike and walk to in Swansboro?

Destination 1

Destination 2

Destination 3

13. What factors discourage you from biking and walking in Swansboro?

- ☐ Lack of existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities
- ☐ Lack of safe biking and walking connections to and from destinations.
- ☐ Poor maintenance conditions of existing facilities, such as sidewalks
- ☐ Unsafe street crossings
- ☐ Motor vehicle traffic
- ☐ Lack of signage and wayfinding
- ☐ Lack of nearby destinations
- ☐ Personal Safety Concerns
- ☐ Lack of interest
- ☐ Other (please specify)

14. What destinations would you like to get to by greenway? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Work
- ☐ School
- ☐ Parks/Playgrounds/Recreation Centers
- ☐ Shops/Restaurants
- ☐ Essential Services (medical centers, government buildings, etc.)
- ☐ Existing greenways in the region
- ☐ Other (please specify)

15. What greenway amenities are most important to you?

- ☐ Wayfinding signs
- ☐ Greenway maps/kiosks
- ☐ Lighting
- ☐ Benches
- ☐ Drinking Fountains
- ☐ Murals/Public Art
- ☐ Restroom
- ☐ 911 Call Boxes
- ☐ Bike Parking
- ☐ Trash Cans
- ☐ Pet Waste Stations

Town of Swansboro Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan - Recreational Needs Survey

Communication Preferences and Overall Support for Parks + Recreation

16. From the following list, please CHECK ALL of the ways you learn about Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department programs and activities.

- 1 ☐ Bulletin boards at other public facilities or local businesses
- 2 ☐ Bulletin boards at Swansboro Recreation Center
- 3 ☐ Direct email
- 4 ☐ Town of Swansboro Parks and Recreation Website
- 5 ☐ Social Media
- 5 ☐ Friends, Family Members, Colleagues, etc.
- 6 ☐ Other (please specify)

17. Which of the following prevent you or other members of your household from using recreation programs/facilities offered by the Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department (or, if you currently use them, what prevents you from using them more often)? **[Check all that apply.]**

- 1 ☐ Cost to participate
- 2 ☐ Lack of transportation
- 3 ☐ Lack of cleanliness and/or maintenance
- 4 ☐ Lack of access for people with disabilities
- 5 ☐ I am too busy
- 6 ☐ I am not interested in what is provided
- 7 ☐ I don't feel welcome
- 0 ☐ Nothing; I am actively using the Town's parks and facilities
- ☐ Other (please specify)

18. Do you support improving and expanding recreation programs in the Town of Swansboro?

- 2 ☐ Yes
- 1 ☐ No

19. If you do support expanding recreation opportunities, what methods do you support to fund recreational improvements and expansion in the Town of Swansboro? Check all that apply.

- 1 ☐ Grants
- 2 ☐ Bonds
- 3 ☐ Fundraising
- 4 ☐ Increased non-resident user fees
- 5 ☐ Increased resident and non-resident user fees
- 6 ☐ The Town's General Fund
- 7 ☐ Property tax increase

Town of Swansboro Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan - Recreational Needs Survey

Demographics

20. How long have you lived in Swansboro?

- ☐ 0-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ 11-20 years
- ☐ Over 20 years

21. What is your age?

- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 65+
- ☐ No Response.

22. What is your gender?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ No Response
- ☐ Other (please specify)

23. What is your current household status?

- ☐ I live alone
- ☐ I live with someone(s)
- ☐ I am married
- ☐ No Response
- ☐ Other (please specify)

24. Do you have children?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ No Response

25. Please CHECK ALL of the following that best describe your race/ethnicity.

- ☐ White or Caucasian
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ Asian or Asian American
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- ☐ Another Race
- ☐ No Response

26. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- ☐ Less than high school degree
- ☐ High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)
- ☐ Some college but no degree
- ☐ Associate degree
- ☐ Bachelor degree
- ☐ Masters degree or higher
- ☐ No Response

27. What is your approximate average household income?

- ☐ \$0-\$24,999
- ☐ \$25,000-\$49,999
- ☐ \$50,000-\$74,999
- ☐ \$75,000-\$99,999
- ☐ \$100,000-\$124,999
- ☐ \$125,000-\$149,999
- ☐ \$150,000-\$174,999
- ☐ \$175,000-\$199,999
- ☐ \$200,000 and up
- ☐ No Response

Q1 This question determines Swansboro residency. Do you receive a stormwater bill from the Town of Swansboro?

Answered: 340 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
None of the above	0.00%	0
Yes	80.88%	275
No	19.12%	65
TOTAL		340

Q2 How often do you visit Swansboro Parks/Facilities?

Answered: 245 Skipped: 95

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very Often	32.65%	80
Somewhat Often	44.49%	109
Rarely	20.00%	49
Have Not Visited	2.04%	5
I am not sure if the park(s) I visit or have visited are Town of Swansboro Parks.	0.82%	2
TOTAL		245

Q3 Have you or other members of your household visited any of the following parks or facilities operated by the Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department during the past year? [Check all that apply.]

Answered: 242 Skipped: 98

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
None of the above	0.83%	2
Swansboro Municipal Park - 830 Main Street Ext.	80.17%	194
Swansboro Recreation Center - 830 Main Street Ext.	58.68%	142
Pirate's Den Park - located at the junction of Broad Street and Shore Drive in the Edgewater Heights neighborhood.	37.60%	91
Pineland Park - located in the Swansboro Heights neighborhood.	8.68%	21
Bicentennial Park - located on the downtown waterfront adjacent to White Oak River Bridge.	61.16%	148
Riverview Park - located directly off NC 24 (Corbett Avenue) between Main and Elm Streets	39.26%	95
Ward Shore Park - located on Water Street just south of downtown at the edge of the Inter Coastal Waterway.	43.39%	105
Town Docks - located at the intersection of Front and Church Streets, centrally located in the historic downtown district,	61.98%	150
Church Street Gazebo - Located right next to the water on the corner of Church St. and Water St. in downtown Swansboro.	66.12%	160
Downtown Bandstand Pavilion - located in downtown Swansboro at the corner of Front and Church Street	64.46%	156
Municipal Park Dog Park - located in Municipal Park 830 Main Street Ext.	18.60%	45
Old Town Hall/Assembly Room - 502 West Church Street	16.94%	41
Municipal Park Splash Pad - located in Municipal Park 830 Main Street Ext.	31.82%	77
Total Respondents: 242		

Q4 Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements regarding parks and recreation in the Town of Swansboro:

Answered: 244 Skipped: 96

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Recreation and parks are an essential service to the Town.	79.10% 193	18.44% 45	2.05% 5	0.41% 1	0.00% 0	244	4.76
Public parks add to the quality of life in the Town.	80.25% 195	17.70% 43	2.06% 5	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	243	4.78
I am aware of the parks, facilities, programs, and events that are offered.	34.02% 83	35.66% 87	23.36% 57	6.15% 15	0.82% 2	244	3.96
I am satisfied with the variety of parks, facilities, programs, and events the Town offers.	10.70% 26	46.50% 113	30.45% 74	8.64% 21	3.70% 9	243	3.52
I am satisfied with the recreation opportunities for youth in Swansboro.	7.88% 19	33.61% 81	39.00% 94	14.94% 36	4.56% 11	241	3.25
I am satisfied with the recreation opportunities for teens in Swansboro.	5.42% 13	19.17% 46	46.67% 112	23.75% 57	5.00% 12	240	2.96
I am satisfied with the recreation opportunities for adults in Swansboro.	7.88% 19	36.93% 89	38.59% 93	14.11% 34	2.49% 6	241	3.34
I am satisfied with the recreation opportunities for older adults/seniors in Swansboro.	9.21% 22	26.78% 64	45.19% 108	15.48% 37	3.35% 8	239	3.23

Q5 How would you describe your satisfaction with the operation and maintenance of Swansboro parks and facilities?

Answered: 244 Skipped: 96

	VERY SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED	TOTAL
Condition of Buildings	42.79% 92	48.84% 105	7.44% 16	0.93% 2	215
Natural Areas Stewardship	36.46% 70	56.25% 108	6.77% 13	0.52% 1	192
Tree Care	34.36% 67	54.36% 106	10.77% 21	0.51% 1	195
Mowing/Field Maintenance	51.69% 107	42.51% 88	5.31% 11	0.48% 1	207
Trails Maintenance	39.25% 73	52.69% 98	7.53% 14	0.54% 1	186
Playground Maintenance	39.78% 74	49.46% 92	7.53% 14	3.23% 6	186
Restroom Cleanliness	32.74% 55	49.40% 83	13.69% 23	4.17% 7	168
Parking	40.30% 81	43.28% 87	12.44% 25	3.98% 8	201
Signage and Information	40.21% 78	52.06% 101	6.70% 13	1.03% 2	194
Trash Removal	44.79% 86	45.83% 88	8.33% 16	1.04% 2	192
Safety/Security	47.21% 93	46.19% 91	6.09% 12	0.51% 1	197

Q6 Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Answered: 244 Skipped: 96

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL
Advertisements about programs and events are adequate	14.12% 24	51.76% 88	31.18% 53	2.94% 5	170
Recreation facilities are well-maintained.	28.10% 59	67.14% 141	3.33% 7	1.43% 3	210
Parks are well-distributed across the Town	28.64% 59	62.62% 129	8.25% 17	0.49% 1	206
The Town should prioritize renovating/improving existing recreational facilities	37.71% 66	56.57% 99	4.57% 8	1.14% 2	175
The Town should prioritize developing new recreational facilities	38.80% 71	42.62% 78	15.85% 29	2.73% 5	183
Athletic programming should be offered by the Town	42.22% 76	50.00% 90	5.00% 9	2.78% 5	180
The Town needs an indoor gymnasium	45.98% 80	32.76% 57	15.52% 27	5.75% 10	174
Acquiring undeveloped land for future parkland locations is important	49.73% 93	41.18% 77	5.88% 11	3.21% 6	187
I feel safe when visiting a park or recreational facility	43.50% 97	54.71% 122	1.79% 4	0.00% 0	223
The Town needs aquatic facilities	53.03% 105	24.75% 49	13.64% 27	8.59% 17	198
I feel that I have good access to a park	48.87% 108	47.06% 104	4.07% 9	0.00% 0	221

Q7 What indoor and outdoor recreational facilities do you believe are important to be added, expanded, or improved in Swansboro over the next ten years?

Answered: 214 Skipped: 126

Town of Swansboro Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan - Recreational Needs Survey

	VERY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Adventure Courses	16.49% 16	62.89% 61	10.31% 10	10.31% 10	97	2.35
Art Studios	19.80% 20	50.50% 51	13.86% 14	15.84% 16	101	2.55
Baseball Fields	20.79% 21	52.48% 53	8.91% 9	17.82% 18	101	2.50
Basketball Courts	18.18% 20	60.00% 66	11.82% 13	10.00% 11	110	2.35
Bicycling-Mountain Bike Trails	27.50% 33	51.67% 62	13.33% 16	7.50% 9	120	2.22
Bicycling-Roadway Infrastructure/Bike Lanes	53.52% 76	35.21% 50	7.04% 10	4.23% 6	142	1.73
Bicycling-BMX Tracks	10.98% 9	30.49% 25	15.85% 13	42.68% 35	82	3.49
Camping Facilities	22.52% 25	31.53% 35	15.32% 17	30.63% 34	111	3.00
Canoeing/Kayaking Access	47.37% 63	40.60% 54	7.52% 10	4.51% 6	133	1.81
Disc Golf Course	7.07% 7	34.34% 34	20.20% 20	38.38% 38	99	3.48
Environmental/Nature Facility- Indoor	25.74% 26	33.66% 34	14.85% 15	25.74% 26	101	2.81
Environmental/Nature Facility- Outdoor	35.71% 40	42.86% 48	9.82% 11	11.61% 13	112	2.19
Fishing Access-Freshwater	36.84% 42	37.72% 43	10.53% 12	14.91% 17	114	2.29
Fishing Access-Saltwater	47.58% 59	39.52% 49	6.45% 8	6.45% 8	124	1.85
Fitness Stations-Indoor	30.77% 32	50.96% 53	9.62% 10	8.65% 9	104	2.14
Fitness Stations-Outdoor	30.10% 31	42.72% 44	14.56% 15	12.62% 13	103	2.37
Football Fields	13.19% 12	39.56% 36	13.19% 12	34.07% 31	91	3.15
Gardens	32.76% 38	50.00% 58	9.48% 11	7.76% 9	116	2.09
Hiking Trails	47.83% 66	42.75% 59	5.80% 8	3.62% 5	138	1.75
Indoor Gymnasium	33.06% 40	38.02% 46	10.74% 13	18.18% 22	121	2.43
Open Space/ Unprogrammed Play Fields	26.13% 29	52.25% 58	12.61% 14	9.01% 10	111	2.26
Pickleball Courts-Outdoor	18.89% 17	45.56% 41	7.78% 7	27.78% 25	90	2.80
Pickleball Courts-Indoor	15.79% 12	27.63% 21	9.21% 7	47.37% 36	76	3.45

Town of Swansboro Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan - Recreational Needs Survey

Picnic Shelters	30.47% 39	57.81% 74	6.25% 8	5.47% 7	128	1.98
Playgrounds	44.60% 62	49.64% 69	4.32% 6	1.44% 2	139	1.68
Skateboarding Facilities	23.58% 25	34.91% 37	16.04% 17	25.47% 27	106	2.85
Soccer Fields	24.07% 26	50.00% 54	12.96% 14	12.96% 14	108	2.41
Softball Fields	18.00% 18	53.00% 53	11.00% 11	18.00% 18	100	2.58
Swimming Pool-Indoor	50.34% 74	18.37% 27	8.16% 12	23.13% 34	147	2.35
Swimming Pool-Outdoor	47.06% 64	20.59% 28	10.29% 14	22.06% 30	136	2.40
Tennis Courts	22.86% 24	57.14% 60	9.52% 10	10.48% 11	105	2.28
Volleyball Courts	10.53% 10	60.00% 57	16.84% 16	12.63% 12	95	2.61
Waterplay/Splashpad	39.13% 45	41.74% 48	12.17% 14	6.96% 8	115	2.06

Q8 I or my family members have participated in or would like to participate in the following park activities:

Answered: 215 Skipped: 125

Town of Swansboro Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan - Recreational Needs Survey

	HAVE PARTICIPATED	WOULD LIKE TO PARTICIPATE IF FACILITY/ACTIVITY WERE AVAILABLE	WOULD NOT LIKE TO PARTICIPATE	NOT APPLICABLE	TOTAL
Afterschool Programs	15.61% 32	20.98% 43	8.29% 17	55.12% 113	205
Art Programs-Visual (painting, drawing, ceramics, photography, video, filmmaking, crafts)	16.26% 33	45.81% 93	17.73% 36	20.20% 41	203
Art Programs-Performing (music, dance, drama)	13.13% 26	30.81% 61	30.81% 61	25.25% 50	198
Baseball	16.58% 33	10.55% 21	32.66% 65	40.20% 80	199
Basketball	10.00% 20	18.00% 36	32.50% 65	39.50% 79	200
Bicycling-Mountain	7.43% 15	31.19% 63	27.23% 55	34.16% 69	202
Bicycling-Road	17.41% 35	34.33% 69	24.38% 49	23.88% 48	201
Bicycling-BMX	1.54% 3	11.28% 22	42.56% 83	44.62% 87	195
Camping	14.07% 28	35.18% 70	23.62% 47	27.14% 54	199
Canoeing/Kayaking	39.30% 79	38.81% 78	9.95% 20	11.94% 24	201
Cultural/Historical Programs	21.57% 44	48.04% 98	15.20% 31	15.20% 31	204
Day Camp	15.00% 30	23.50% 47	17.50% 35	44.00% 88	200
Disc Golf	4.02% 8	26.13% 52	37.69% 75	32.16% 64	199
Educational Programs (Environment/Nature, History, Cultural Enrichment, Life Skills)	15.74% 31	53.81% 106	16.24% 32	14.21% 28	197
E-sports	3.54% 7	6.57% 13	45.96% 91	43.94% 87	198
Fishing-Freshwater	18.18% 36	32.83% 65	26.26% 52	22.73% 45	198
Fishing-Saltwater	33.67% 67	33.67% 67	16.58% 33	16.08% 32	199
Fitness and Wellness Programs-Indoor	21.29% 43	56.93% 115	10.89% 22	10.89% 22	202
Fitness and Wellness Programs-Outdoor	15.84% 32	58.91% 119	13.86% 28	11.39% 23	202
Football-Tackle	1.55% 3	9.84% 19	43.52% 84	45.08% 87	193
Football-Flag	0.52% 1	15.98% 31	41.24% 80	42.27% 82	194
Gardening	11.94%	49.25%	21.39%	17.41%	

Town of Swansboro Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan - Recreational Needs Survey

	24	99	43	35	201
Hiking	33.83% 68	45.77% 92	11.94% 24	8.46% 17	201
Non-Traditional Sports (Track + Field, Boxing, Martial Arts)	6.25% 12	23.96% 46	34.38% 66	35.42% 68	192
Outdoor Concerts + Movies	37.25% 76	51.96% 106	6.86% 14	3.92% 8	204
Pickleball	14.07% 28	21.11% 42	36.18% 72	28.64% 57	199
Picnicking	42.64% 84	29.95% 59	12.69% 25	14.72% 29	197
Pre-K Programs	6.57% 13	13.64% 27	14.65% 29	65.15% 129	198
Rowing	5.08% 10	28.43% 56	27.41% 54	39.09% 77	197
Running/Jogging	30.46% 60	18.27% 36	26.40% 52	24.87% 49	197
Senior Programs	9.90% 20	32.67% 66	9.41% 19	48.02% 97	202
Skateboarding	6.60% 13	15.74% 31	37.06% 73	40.61% 80	197
Social Programs (Parent-Child activities, Teen Clubs, Senior Groups)	9.55% 19	47.74% 95	14.57% 29	28.14% 56	199
Soccer	25.76% 51	12.63% 25	28.28% 56	33.33% 66	198
Softball	8.72% 17	18.46% 36	29.74% 58	43.08% 84	195
Special Events/Festivals	63.00% 126	28.50% 57	3.00% 6	5.50% 11	200
Swimming	10.50% 21	52.50% 105	16.00% 32	21.00% 42	200
Technology Based Programs (Pokemon Go, Smart Playgrounds, Park Designed Apps)	5.08% 10	17.77% 35	36.55% 72	40.61% 80	197
Tennis	19.80% 39	17.77% 35	34.52% 68	27.92% 55	197
Therapeutic Recreation	7.58% 15	46.97% 93	14.65% 29	30.81% 61	198
Trips + Excursions	12.63% 25	49.49% 98	19.70% 39	18.18% 36	198
Virtual Programs (5ks, Book Club, Streaming Events)	4.62% 9	24.62% 48	36.41% 71	34.36% 67	195
Volleyball	3.57% 7	23.98% 47	34.69% 68	37.76% 74	196
Volunteering	24.49% 48	41.84% 82	14.80% 29	18.88% 37	196

Q9 How frequently do you bike and/or walk in Swansboro?

Answered: 211 Skipped: 129

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Daily	33.65%	71
A few times a week	28.91%	61
A few times a month	22.75%	48
A few times a year	9.48%	20
I do not bike or walk	5.21%	11
TOTAL		211

Q10 Have your biking and walking habits changed during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Answered: 208 Skipped: 132

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I bike and walk more than I did before the pandemic	30.29%	63
I bike and walk the same as I did before the pandemic	54.81%	114
I bike and walk less than I did before the pandemic	14.90%	31
TOTAL		208

Q11 Would you bike and/or walk more frequently if Swansboro had a greenway network?

Answered: 210 Skipped: 130

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	79.52%	167
No	6.67%	14
Not sure	13.81%	29
TOTAL		210

Q12 List three destinations that you currently bike and walk to in Swansboro?

Answered: 170 Skipped: 170

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Destination 1	100.00%	170
Destination 2	78.24%	133
Destination 3	57.06%	97

Q13 What factors discourage you from biking and walking in Swansboro?

Answered: 204 Skipped: 136

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Lack of existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities	49.51%	101
Lack of safe biking and walking connections to and from destinations.	65.20%	133
Poor maintenance conditions of existing facilities, such as sidewalks	23.04%	47
Unsafe street crossings	46.08%	94
Motor vehicle traffic	63.24%	129
Lack of signage and wayfinding	10.78%	22
Lack of nearby destinations	9.80%	20
Personal Safety Concerns	24.02%	49
Lack of interest	2.45%	5
Other (please specify)	19.61%	40
Total Respondents: 204		

Q14 What destinations would you like to get to by greenway? Select all that apply.

Answered: 193 Skipped: 147

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Work	10.88%	21
School	15.54%	30
Parks/Playgrounds/Recreation Centers	86.53%	167
Shops/Restaurants	82.38%	159
Essential Services (medical centers, government buildings, etc.)	17.62%	34
Existing greenways in the region	38.86%	75
Other (please specify)	6.74%	13
Total Respondents: 193		

Q15 What greenway amenities are most important to you?

Answered: 192 Skipped: 148

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Wayfinding signs	34.90%	67
Greenway maps/kiosks	33.85%	65
Lighting	66.67%	128
Benches	43.75%	84
Drinking Fountains	27.60%	53
Murals/Public Art	11.46%	22
Restroom	68.75%	132
911 Call Boxes	28.13%	54
Bike Parking	28.13%	54
Trash Cans	51.56%	99
Pet Waste Stations	44.79%	86
Total Respondents: 192		

Q16 From the following list, please CHECK ALL of the ways you learn about Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department programs and activities.

Answered: 201 Skipped: 139

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Bulletin boards at other public facilities or local businesses	24.38%	49
Bulletin boards at Swansboro Recreation Center	25.87%	52
Direct email	32.34%	65
Town of Swansboro Parks and Recreation Website	52.74%	106
Social Media	54.23%	109
Friends, Family Members, Colleagues, etc.	53.73%	108
Other (please specify)	8.46%	17
Total Respondents: 201		

Q17 Which of the following prevent you or other members of your household from using recreation programs/facilities offered by the Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department (or, if you currently use them, what prevents you from using them more often)? [Check all that apply.]

Answered: 192 Skipped: 148

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Cost to participate	9.38%	18
Lack of transportation	5.21%	10
Lack of cleanliness and/or maintenance	4.69%	9
Lack of access for people with disabilities	4.69%	9
I am too busy	22.92%	44
I am not interested in what is provided	18.23%	35
I don't feel welcome	4.69%	9
Nothing; I am actively using the Town's parks and facilities	38.54%	74
Other (please specify)	21.88%	42
Total Respondents: 192		

Q18 Do you support improving and expanding recreation programs in the
Town of Swansboro?

Answered: 205 Skipped: 135

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	95.61%	196
No	4.39%	9
Total Respondents: 205		

Q19 If you do support expanding recreation opportunities, what methods do you support to fund recreational improvements and expansion in the Town of Swansboro? Check all that apply.

Answered: 193 Skipped: 147

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Grants	84.97%	164
Bonds	46.11%	89
Fundraising	75.65%	146
Increased non-resident user fees	44.56%	86
Increased resident and non-resident user fees	17.62%	34
The Town's General Fund	44.04%	85
Property tax increase	14.51%	28
Total Respondents: 193		

Q20 How long have you lived in Swansboro?

Answered: 202 Skipped: 138

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
0-5 years	34.65%	70
6-10 years	20.79%	42
11-20 years	21.78%	44
Over 20 years	22.77%	46
TOTAL		202

Q21 What is your age?

Answered: 203 Skipped: 137

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under 18	0.49%	1
18-24	0.99%	2
25-34	7.39%	15
35-44	28.57%	58
45-54	11.33%	23
55-64	22.17%	45
65+	26.60%	54
No Response.	2.46%	5
TOTAL		203

Q22 What is your gender?

Answered: 201 Skipped: 139

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Female	58.21%	117
Male	36.82%	74
No Response	4.98%	10
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
TOTAL		201

Q23 What is your current household status?

Answered: 202 Skipped: 138

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I live alone	13.86%	28
I live with someone(s)	9.41%	19
I am married	72.28%	146
No Response	3.96%	8
Other (please specify)	0.50%	1
TOTAL		202

Q24 Do you have children?

Answered: 203 Skipped: 137

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	72.91%	148
No	18.23%	37
No Response	8.87%	18
TOTAL		203

Q25 Please CHECK ALL of the following that best describe your race/ethnicity.

Answered: 202 Skipped: 138

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
White or Caucasian	84.65%	171
Black or African American	1.98%	4
Hispanic or Latino	2.48%	5
Asian or Asian American	2.48%	5
American Indian or Alaska Native	2.48%	5
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.00%	0
Another Race	0.50%	1
No Response	11.88%	24
Total Respondents: 202		

Q26 What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

Answered: 200 Skipped: 140

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than high school degree	0.00%	0
High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)	5.50%	11
Some college but no degree	10.50%	21
Associate degree	12.50%	25
Bachelor degree	37.50%	75
Masters degree or higher	29.50%	59
No Response	4.50%	9
TOTAL		200

Q27 What is your approximate average household income?

Answered: 201 Skipped: 139

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
\$0-\$24,999	3.98%	8
\$25,000-\$49,999	4.98%	10
\$50,000-\$74,999	14.43%	29
\$75,000-\$99,999	19.90%	40
\$100,000-\$124,999	14.43%	29
\$125,000-\$149,999	6.47%	13
\$150,000-\$174,999	6.47%	13
\$175,000-\$199,999	1.49%	3
\$200,000 and up	6.47%	13
No Response	21.39%	43
TOTAL		201

ASSET MAPPING

INTRODUCTION

Asset mapping is an information gathering technique concentrating on community strengths, opportunities, and challenges from an asset-based perspective. Such an approach cultivates promise by shifting the focus from the identification of needs/deficits, to recognizing a community's resources and capacities/assets¹. Assets are defined as anything that provides tangible or intangible value to the community. Examples include traditional concepts such as vehicles and buildings, and non-traditional concepts such as relationships, community support, quality staff members, and more.

Asset mapping questions include the following:

1. What about parks and recreation makes your community better?
2. What is your parks and recreation Department known for?
3. What would strengthen the Department's positive impact on the community?
4. What are the most significant threats to the Departments assets and reputation?

STAFF ASSET MAPPING

Date

September 1, 2021

Summary

Through the asset mapping exercise Department staff shared many thoughtful and insightful components to the operations and future of the Department. Staff engaged discussion and shared ideas, in which there were common themes generated. Five themes emerged based on staff input:

Sense of Community: Recreation assets serve as a community's backbone. Parks and Recreation staff believe Swansboro's inviting and well-maintained parks, along with its successful and innovative recreation program offerings are uniquely positioned to create a sense of community structured around quality public space. Swansboro is home to a number of festivals and events that express the Town's identity. Having a positive sense of identity contributes to the overall cache of community capital within a place and enhances sense of pride, thus forming a space where residents encouragingly interact with one another and are empowered to welcome out-of-town visitors.

Tourism and Events: Recreation and park amenities, programs, events and festivals serve both Swansboro residents and visitors to town. Swansboro's location on the White Oak River and its proximity to the coast position the town as a desirable destination for day-trippers and overnight visitors. Parks and Recreation staff are the primary deliverers of Swansboro's special events, and singularly operate the Town's park facilities. Unique among parks and recreation agencies, Swansboro Parks and Recreation is responsible for managing the Town Docks, and overseeing the Visitors' Center. Staff is proud of the role they play in hosting visitors, although they do admit that additional financial and human resources would allow them to raise the bar even higher.

¹ U of M's Urban Serving Research Mission, "Module 4 – Asset Based Community Engagement," University of Memphis, Last Modified: August 5, 2019. <https://www.memphis.edu/ess/module4/page3.php>

Equity: Public parks and recreation services should be equally accessible and available to all people regardless of income level, ethnicity, gender, ability, or age. All related services and programs including the maintenance, safety, and accessibility of parks and facilities, should be provided on an equitable basis to all citizens of communities served by public agencies. Staff recognizes the need to provide and maintain an equitable park system, in-particularly the need to examine the level of accessibility of current facilities, and emphasize universal design when developing new facilities.

Growth: Swansboro's population is growing steadily, as evidenced by the many new subdivisions being developed in town. With picturesque scenery and ready access to the water, Swansboro is being discovered as a great place to live across myriad demographics. Consequently, the parks and recreation department, which already provides a wide-range of offerings, will need to develop a plan to further grow its services. It was conveyed to the planning team that Parks and Recreation is the one department in town that consistently generates revenue and should be recognized for its good work. Staff are concerned that the department will become diminished due a lack of human and financial capital necessary to provide high-quality services, and recognizes that this can be prevented by expanding the department's budget and staff. Overdevelopment is an additional concern. Staff worry that the rate of housing construction way outpaces the Town's ability to preserve greenspace and maintain sense of place.

Partnerships and Communication: Swansboro Parks and Recreation boasts a number of gainful partnerships, both formal and informal. During discussions, it was apparent that staff understood the value in partnerships, the importance of maintaining them, and the occasional need to improve them. For example, staff view the partnership with Senior Services as benefitting both agencies from the perspective that the seniors can gather at Swansboro's community center, and by way of their gathering the department can engage them in its senior programs. There are also times when partnerships require fine-tuning. Staff suggested taking a deeper look at the agreement between the Department and the Swansboro Youth Soccer Association to ensure the Department has the financial resources can maintain the fields, which have always experienced drainage issues and are showing signs of wear and tear. Opportunities for new interagency partnerships, and relationships with community members grow when an organization is visible within their community. Staff suggested improving the Department's visibility by starting its own department-specific social media accounts (Swansboro currently has town-wide accounts). Visibility could also be enhanced by investing in print marketing like parks and program booklets to mail to Town residents.

PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD ASSET MAPPING

Date: November 17, 2021

Summary:

The project team engaged with Parks and Recreation Advisory Board in a virtual forum and conducted asset mapping by posing questions to members and allowing them to respond. Through the asset mapping exercise Swansboro's Parks and Recreation Advisory board staff shared many thoughtful and insightful components to the operations and future of the Department. Board members engaged discussion and shared ideas, in which there were common themes generated. Four themes emerged based on their input – Sense of Community, Tourism and Events, Park Facilities and Amenities, and Growth.

Sense of Community: Swansboro Parks and Recreation Advisory Board believes strongly that Parks and Recreation resources create connections to the community and among residents. Advisory board members expressed how parks and recreation makes their community better by connecting people with similar interests thereby providing opportunities to meet people that perhaps community members would not have had otherwise. These meetup opportunities, according to board members, occur by way of the programs, events and festivals provided by the Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department. Moving forward, the board believes these community connections can be strengthened by improved communication with the public. Some residents are unaware of what the Department does thereby missing out on understanding how Swansboro Parks and Recreation, and parks and recreation departments overall, provide an essential public service that only improve quality of life in a community. Board members offered suggestions of methods through which the Town could better promote Swansboro Parks and Recreation such as having dedicated social media accounts, and sending print mailers to residents.

Tourism and Events: Recreation and park amenities, programs, events and festivals serve both Swansboro residents and visitors to town. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board service as supporters and advocates in the community for the department. They and understand the central role Swansboro Parks and Recreation has in delivering festivals and special events. These assets, they believe, build community and economic capacity by creating a space for residents to gather and celebrate, and attracting visitors who spend money at local businesses. Partnerships with the business community, according to board members, have also coalesced around the visibility of the Town's events, which again are primarily supported by Swansboro Parks and Recreation.

Park Facilities and Amenities: Unique among parks and recreation agencies, Swansboro Parks and Recreation is responsible for managing the Town Docks. Board members feel that this asset could be strengthened by employing a dedicated dockmaster. Swansboro Parks and Recreation staff currently are responsible for ASK ANNA WHAT DOCK MASTERS DO. This responsibility is a heavy lift for a small staff wearing many hats. Board members feel that the capabilities of an expert dock master would free current staff to build the Department's recreational program, facilities, and special event capacity. Swansboro is home to top-notch and highly visible park facilities lending the community opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board was clear in conveying that opinion. Members shared the sentiment that not only do Town's parks provide high-quality traditional leisure facilities like playgrounds, picnic shelters, and sport courts – but also offer very unique facilities like riverside boardwalks, fishing platforms,

and access to the river for kayakers. However, board members also feel that with population growth and increased demand, the Department will struggle with expanding facilities and services especially related to youth athletics and the need for a gymnasium to grow the Town’s recreation programs. Further, the Swansboro Parks and Recreation Advisory Board were in agreement over the need to replace some of the Town’s existing park amenities and create a maintenance plan to reduce the need to replace amenities prior to the end of their useful life.

Growth: Swansboro’s Parks and Recreation Advisory board echoed the sentiment of the Department’s staff related to growth. Like staff, board members understand Swansboro’s population is growing steadily. Consequently, the parks and recreation department, which already provides a wide-range of offerings, will need to develop a plan to further grow its services. It was conveyed to the planning team that Parks and Recreation is the one department in town that consistently generates revenue and should be recognized for its good work. Staff are concerned that the department will become diminished due a lack of human and financial capital necessary to provide high-quality services, and recognizes that expanding the department’s budget and staff will allow Swansboro to “grow in the right direction.”

ASSET MAPPING SUMMARY

The asset mapping exercise with Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department staff and Parks and Recreation Advisory Board members revealed thinking and sentiment among the two groups generally tended to align. Both staff and Board believe that parks have the ability to create a shared sense of place and create connections throughout the community. Both groups also recognize the need to examine the Department’s budget and revenue in order to make informed decisions relating to funding and staffing needs. Similar to the feedback from Swansboro residents, both the department staff and advisory board members resonate with the idea that the Town’s parks and recreation facilities provide access to healthy outdoor spaces and experiences.

STAFF ASSET MAPPING	P+R ADVISORY BOARD ASSET MAPPING
<div>> Community Connection</div> <div>> Growth</div> <div>> Outdoor Experiences</div> <div>> Quality</div> <div>> Equity + Inclusion</div> <div>> Partnerships</div> <div>> Human + Financial Resources</div>	<div>> Community Connection</div> <div>> Quality</div> <div>> Human + Financial Resources</div> <div>> Communication</div> <div>> Outdoor Experiences</div> <div>> Partnerships</div> <div>> Park Facilities + Amenities</div>

PRIORITIZATION MODEL

The Town of Swansboro Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan recommendations and action items address enhancements to existing core services areas and implementing new amenities and programs over the course of next decade. As the Town begins executing recommendations and implementing policy, priorities may evolve based on changing recreation trends, availability of funding and the larger community context. When there are many opportunities and competing interests both within the Department and across Town sectors, it can be difficult for decision makers to prioritize projects.

A prioritization model considers the overarching master plan guiding principles, community needs, and parks system advancement as criteria for prioritization. It is proposed as a decision-making tool for staff and elected officials to validate decisions through data and community values, leading to defensible projects and consensus among stakeholders.

1. Criteria 1: Compatibility with Common Themes

To ensure that projects considered top priority are consistent with common themes identified during the planning process.

The following questions can help evaluate this criterion:

1. Does the project meet the needs of the community by providing recreation programs, special events, and unique amenities that are not currently available?
2. Does this project support health and wellness of the community members by providing amenities that encourage physical activity or reduce mental stress?
3. Does this project identify gaps to create a recreation system that connects key destinations within town via greenway trails and side paths?
4. Does this project create financial benefits to the Town by revenue generation and overall positive economic impact?
5. Does this project protect natural resources for its ecological and environmental benefits?

2. Criteria 2: Community Needs

This criterion leverages the findings from the community engagement process undertaken during this project. Two major components of this criterion are findings from the recreational needs survey and the feedback received from the public.

- a. Recreational Needs Survey
 - i. Facility and Amenity Needs
 - ii. Recreational Program Needs
- b. Public Input
 - i. Resident Intercept Surveys

The following questions can help evaluate this criterion:

1. Is this project listed within the top ten most desired items as mentioned in the recreational needs survey?
2. Is this project identified as a need by community members in the public engagement process?
3. Does this project reduce barriers to usage as identified in the community feedback?
4. Does this project promote strategic partnerships within the community?
5. Does this project support building stronger community bonds by offering social interaction?

3. Criteria 3: Parks System Advancement

Parks system advancement criterion is related to providing excellent parks and recreation services and high-quality amenities to the community by addressing technical project implementation questions. These questions are categorized into three subcategories as follows:

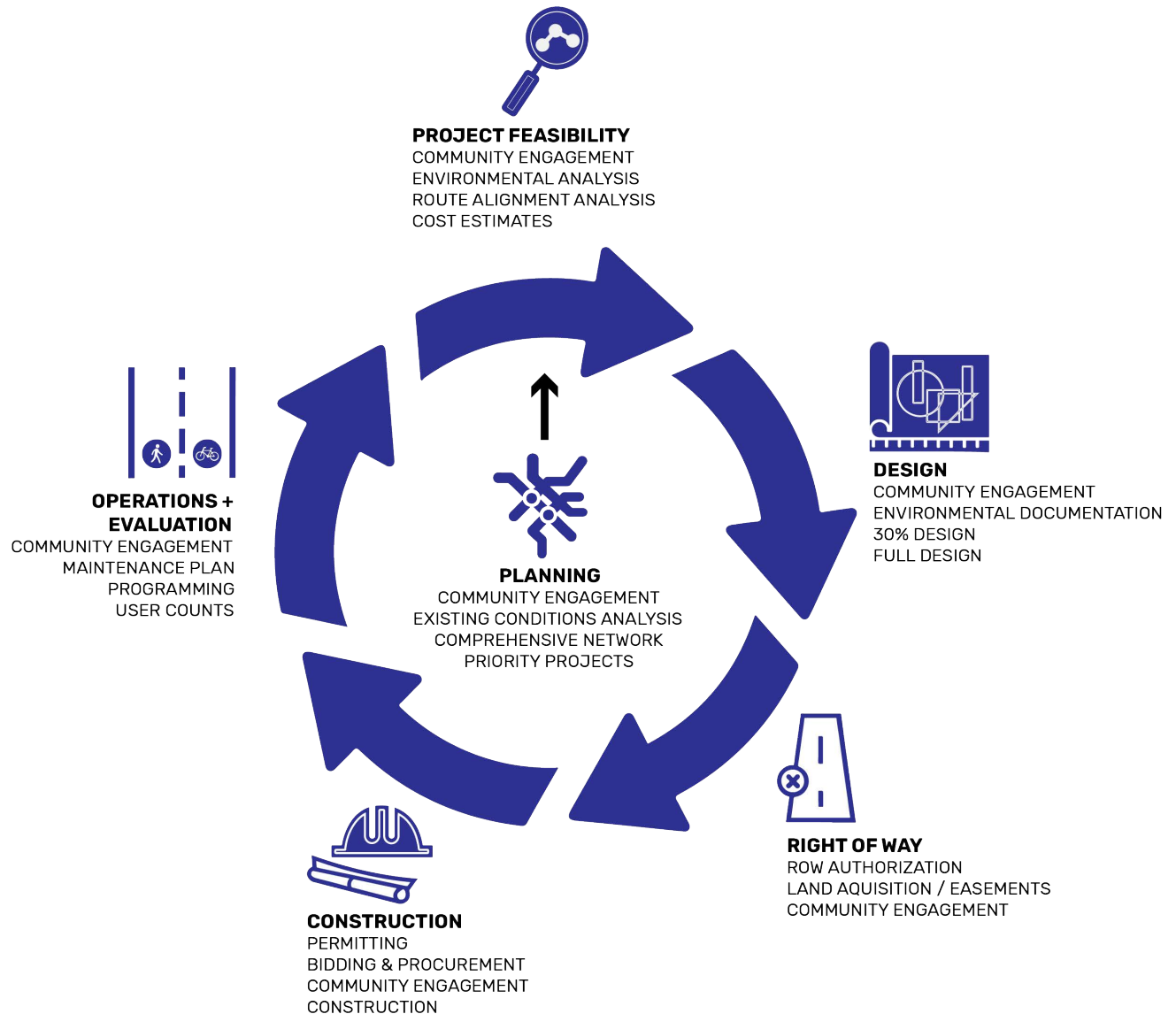
1. Degree of Urgency
 - a. Does this project need attention to ensure public health, safety, and welfare?
 - b. Does this project need attention to comply with current building codes and regulations?
 - c. Will this project protect natural resources which otherwise may be lost if not addressed immediately?
 - d. Is this project a unique opportunity resulting from other projects that may be lost if not taken as priority?
2. Economic Impact
 - a. Will this project create long term operational efficiency and financial loss if not addressed promptly?
 - b. Does this project generate revenue for the parks and recreation department?
 - c. Does this project generate revenue through strategic partnerships or time sensitive grant funding opportunities?
3. Compatibility with Town policies and planning efforts
 - a. Is this project compatible with recent town-wide plans?
 - b. Does this project build upon other regional planning efforts to connect to Onslow County, regional, and state level recreation opportunities (Great Trails State Plan, Onslow County Comprehensive Transportation Plan, etc.)?
 - c. Does this project address existing gaps in the system to achieve cohesive parks and recreation system?

GREENWAY PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT TOOLS

- > Greenway System Development Process + Implementation Strategies**
- > Greenway Maintenance**
- > Greenway Funding**

KEY STEPS IN THE PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

While this plan's greenways assessment presents an overall framework for development of greenways and trail amenities, it is only the first step in a larger process. As a living document, recommendations and priorities outlined in the greenway plan may evolve with changing development pressures, funding opportunities, and community growth trends. Further, Swansboro may need to conduct feasibility studies to understand the environmental conditions, routing challenges, and costs of priority corridors. This detailed analysis allows design and right-of-way acquisition to be finalized, which is followed by construction. Operational and programming plans are developed once greenways are constructed to determine maintenance and evaluation needs. The diagram below illustrates the typical planning, design and construction process for greenways and trail amenities with key phases and individual tasks.



DEVELOPING + IMPLEMENTATING GREENWAYS IN SWANSBORO

Greenway recommendations outlined in this plan for Swansboro present major investments in greenway infrastructure that will significantly expand recreational opportunities for Swansboro residents, employees, and visitors. Successful implementation of this plan will require a coordinated and consistent effort with a wide range of community partners. Key agencies and partners include the Swansboro Board of Commissioners, Town of Swansboro Parks and Recreation Department, Town of Swansboro Public Works Department, Town of Swansboro Permitting Department, Onslow County, Jacksonville Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (JUMPO), NCDOT Division 3, NCDOT Integrated Mobility Division (IMD), as well as advocacy organizations, private partners, and members of the community.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	LEAD	SUPPORT	TIMELINE
Provide staff resources and training related to greenway infrastructure and trail amenities.	Provide resources and funding for staff involved in plan implementation to attend webinars, trainings, and conferences on greenway planning, design, and programming. Invest in guidance materials available from FHWA, NCDOT, NACTO, AASHTO, Rails to Trails Conservancy, and American Trails.	Town Manager, Town Department Directors	Town Staff	Ongoing (Beginning 2023)
Ensure that greenway infrastructure recommendations are incorporated into new developments.	The Planning Department should coordinate closely with developers during the development review process on inclusion of planned greenways in new developments where required.	Town Planning	Parks + Recreation, Town Board	Ongoing (Beginning in 2023)
Develop funding strategies for greenway planning, design and construction	Review funding resources provided in Appendix A and coordinate with Town Staff, JUMPO, Onslow County, and NCDOT IMD to determine funding strategies for plan recommendations.	Town Manager, Department Directors	Town Staff, Town Board, JUMPO, NCDOT IMD, Onslow County	Beginning in 2024
Conduct feasibility studies for priority greenway projects.	Coordinate with NCDOT, regional partners, and adjacent municipalities to conduct feasibility studies for priority greenway projects to determine corridor alignments with 30% design and detailed cost estimates.	Town Department Directors and Staff	JUMPO, NCDOT Division 3, NCDOT IMD, Onslow County, Cedar Point, Jacksonville	Ongoing (Beginning in late 2024 early 2025)
Coordinate with NCDOT Division 3 on future STIP projects to include sidepaths and intersection treatments in roadway projects.	Coordinate with NCDOT Division 3 and IMD on future State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) projects to incorporate sidepaths and intersection treatments in roadway enhancements, especially along Corbett Ave, Old Hammock Rd, Hammocks Beach Rd, Mt Pleasant Rd, and Swansboro Loop Rd.	Town Department Directors, Staff, NCDOT Division 3	NCDOT IMD, JUMPO	Ongoing (Beginning in late 2023)
Develop a Greenway Maintenance & Operations Plan	Develop a greenway and trail amenities maintenance plan to define maintenance responsibilities, budget, and staff resources required to maintain facilities.	Swansboro Parks + Recreation, Public Works,	Town Manager	As needed
Evaluate performance of the greenway network annually	Develop performance measures and conduct annual reviews of the greenway system to understand facility needs, funding and resource needs, and usage rate	Parks + Recreation	Town Manager, Planning, Public Works	Begin when first greenway segment is complete

MAINTENANCE

Maintenance of Swansboro's greenways is essential to the long-term viability of the network. Greenways that are consistently maintained have lower costs over time and provide a safe and positive trail user experience than greenways that require major rehabilitation work from a lack of consistent maintenance. Good maintenance practices also prolong the useful life of greenways, promote positive relationships with adjacent landowners, and create a sense of stewardship in the community.

This plan recommends a comprehensive approach to maintenance with the development of a maintenance plan to prioritize funding and responsibilities amongst Town departments. The maintenance plan should be reviewed and updated annually, responding to lessons learned and changes in tasks, operational policies, standards, and maintenance goals. Key considerations for Swansboro's greenway system maintenance plan include:

- Understanding the anticipated needs of the greenway system and assessing the capacity of Town staff to meet those maintenance needs.
- Developing a facility inventory to understand the routine and substantial maintenance needs of greenway signs, amenities, bridges, culverts, and pavement conditions.
- Estimation of baseline maintenance costs by determining necessary maintenance activities, such as mowing, edging, landscaping, trash removal, debris clearing, lighting, drainage, seasonal maintenance needs, sealcoating, repaving, patching, and bridge repair.
- Consideration of labor costs based on which maintenance activities can be completed in-house versus contracted out.
- Assessment of available technologies to collect data on facility conditions and facilitate maintenance functions.
- Developing methodology to prioritize annual maintenance needs based on facility conditions and available funding.
- Consideration of emergency services including designated ingress/egress locations, mile-marker signage along the facility for location identification, and emergency notification systems.

MAINTENANCE TASK	TASK TYPE	RECOMMENDED FREQUENCY
Tree/Brush Trimming Mowing Trail Sweeping Signage/Map/Kiosk Updates/Replacement Trash Removal/Litter Clean-Up Planting, Pruning, Landscaping Flooding Repairs Repainting/Restriping Minor Patching Minor Bridge Repairs Lighting Replacement Bollard Locks/Replacement Pest Management	Routine	On-Going / Annually
Greenway and Sidepath Sealcoating	Minor Repairs	Every 5 Years
Greenway and Sidepath Resurfacing: Asphalt Concrete Boardwalk	Major Reconstruction	Every 10-15 Years Every 20 Years Every 10 Years
Complete Greenway and Sidepath Replacement, Regrading, and Resurfacing	Major Reconstruction	Every 20 Years

Best Practices in Trail Maintenance: A Manual by the Ohio River Greenway, Perdue University

GREENWAY FUNDING

Below are several funding sources that can be leveraged to provide the necessary dollars to plan, design, and/or construct bicycle, pedestrian, and greenway facilities. The following sources of funding have been instrumental in the successful development of bicycle and pedestrian networks in North Carolina communities.

FEDERAL FUNDING

North Carolina communities have partnered with Federal agencies to build multi-use paths, greenways, sidewalks, bike lanes and improve crossings. Federal funding is primarily distributed to municipalities through state agencies and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO), as well as through discretionary grant programs.

The Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act authorizes transportation funding for highway, transit, rail, bicycle and pedestrian, and safety programs and infrastructure. FAST Act funding is administered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). FHWA distributes funding to NCDOT and directly to MPOs through the Locally Administered Projects Program (LAPP). Communities wishing to access Federal funding must submit their candidate projects to their MPO or RPO to then be entered into the NCDOT's Strategic Transportation Investment (STI) Mobility Formula. This formula ranks projects and identifies those to be funded in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). These funds require a 20% match from the municipality. Federal transportation funds for bicycle and pedestrian projects are primarily distributed through four programs: Transportation Alternatives (TA), Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality (CMAQ), Recreational Trails Program, (RTP), and Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP).

Additional federal funding sources for bicycle and pedestrian projects are administered through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) with the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, and several discretionary grant programs administered by the US Department of Transportation (USDOT), National Park Service (NPS), and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).

STATE & MPO ADMINISTERED FUNDING

TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES (TA)

Transportation Alternatives provides federal funds for community-based projects that expand travel choices and enhance the transportation experience by integrating modes and improving the cultural, historic, and environmental aspects of our transportation infrastructure. In North Carolina, TA funds are administered by NCDOT. Program-eligible projects must be submitted through STI and require a 20 percent local match.

Project types include:

- On and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities
- Infrastructure projects for improving non-driver access to public transportation and enhanced mobility
- Community improvement activities
- Environmental mitigation
- Safe routes to school projects
- Streetscape improvements
- Refurbishment of historic transportation facilities
- Other investments that enhance communities

NCDOT has created a bicycle and pedestrian scoping guidance document for local governments that have been awarded Transportation Alternatives funding. The Bike/Ped Project Scoping Guidance for Local Governments provides an overview of the four scoping tools used for locally managed, federally funded transportation projects in North Carolina. The document provides guidance on the project delivery process, scoping, identifying project risks, and project cost estimation. The document is available at the link below.

<https://connect.ncdot.gov/projects/BikePed/Documents/BikePed%20Project%20Scoping%20Guidance%20for%20Local%20Governments.pdf>

https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation_alternatives/

CONGESTION MITIGATION & AIR QUALITY (CMAQ)

CMAQ is a federal program that funds transportation projects and programs in air quality nonattainment and maintenance areas to help achieve and maintain national standards for air quality. In North Carolina, NCDOT serves as the administrator for this program. Funding is apportioned to North Carolina based on the population in non-attainment and maintenance areas of the state and the severity of air quality problem. North Carolina's allocation of CMAQ funding is split in three pots available for funding, as follows:

- Statewide CMAQ funds are administered by NCDOT and are awarded to prioritized NCDOT-driven CMAQ eligible projects either on a statewide tier facility or involving a system wide improvement within nonattainment and maintenance areas. Statewide CMAQ funds are not subject to regional or subregional allocations or the allocation formula. This category accounts for 35% of the total North Carolina CMAQ apportionment.
- Regional CMAQ funds are locally administered and awarded to projects spanning more than one air quality region that cannot be considered subregional projects. Air quality regions are Catawba, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Metrolina, Rocky Mount, the Triad, and the Triangle. The local project sponsor is responsible for providing the required match. This category accounts for 5% of the total North Carolina CMAQ apportionment.
- Subregional CMAQ funds are locally administered and awarded at the MPO/RPO level to projects within eligible counties. The local project sponsor is responsible for providing the required match and meeting federal funding requirements. This category accounts for 60% of the total North Carolina CMAQ apportionment.

https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/air_quality/cmaq/

HIGHWAY SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (HSIP)

The purpose of the North Carolina Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) is to provide a continuous and systematic procedure that identifies and reviews specific traffic safety concerns throughout the state. The goal of the HSIP process is to reduce the number of traffic crashes, injuries, and fatalities by reducing the potential for these incidents on public roadways. Areas with bicycle and pedestrian safety concerns are primarily analyzed based on bicycle and pedestrian crash data.

<https://connect.ncdot.gov/resources/safety/Pages/NC-Highway-Safety-Program-and-Projects.aspx>

RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM (RTP)

The Recreational Trails Program provides funds to state agencies to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both non-motorized and motorized recreational trail uses. RTP is an assistance program of the Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). In North Carolina, the Recreational Trails Program is a \$1.5 million grant

program that funds trails and trail-related recreational needs identified by the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. Grant funding is available for trail planning, construction of new trails; maintenance and repair of existing trails; land acquisition; purchase of trail tools; and legal, environmental, and permitting costs. RTP is a reimbursement grant program. Municipalities must provide project funds upfront and are reimbursed upon completion of deliverables. Eligible applicants are state, federal, or local government agencies or qualified nonprofit organizations. Grants range from \$10,000 - \$100,000 and require a 25% match by the municipality.

https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/

<https://trails.nc.gov/trail-grants>

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG)

The Community Development Block Grant Program provides annual grants on a formula basis to states, cities, and counties to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing, suitable living environments, and expanding economic opportunities for low-and moderate-income persons. The program is authorized under Title 1 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. CDBG funds are allocated at the federal level by HUD and at the state level by the NC Department of Commerce. All municipalities are eligible to receive State CDBG funds except for entitlement communities, which receive funds directly from HUD.

North Carolina's 24 entitlement municipalities are: Asheville, Burlington, Cary, Chapel Hill, Charlotte, Concord, Durham, Fayetteville, Gastonia, Goldsboro, Greensboro, Greenville, Hickory, High Point, Jacksonville, Kannapolis, Lenoir, Morganton, New Bern, Raleigh, Rocky Mount, Salisbury, Wilmington, and Winston-Salem. In addition, all counties are eligible to receive State CDBG funds except Mecklenburg County, Wake County, Union, and Cumberland County, which have been designated by HUD as urban entitlement counties.

CDBG funds may be used for activities which include, but are not limited to:

- Acquisition of real property.
- Relocation and demolition.
- Rehabilitation of residential and non-residential structures.
- Construction of public facilities and improvements, such as water and sewer facilities, streets, neighborhood centers, and the conversion of school buildings for eligible purposes.
- Public services, within certain limits.
- Activities relating to energy conservation and renewable energy resources.
- Provision of assistance to profit-motivated businesses to carry out economic development and job creation/retention activities.

https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/communitydevelopment

DISCRETIONARY GRANTS

REBUILDING AMERICAN INFRASTRUCTURE WITH SUSTAINABILITY AND EQUITY (RAISE)

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act appropriated \$1.5 billion to be awarded by the Department of Transportation (DOT) for National Infrastructure Investments, formerly known as TIGER and BUILD Grants and now as Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grants. RAISE Grants are for capital investments in surface transportation that will have a significant local or regional impact. The FY2022 RAISE Notice reflects the current Administration's priorities for creating good-paying jobs, improving safety, applying transformative technology, and explicitly addressing climate change and advancing racial equity. Consistent with the FY 2022 Appropriations Act requirement, the Secretary shall award projects based solely on the selection criteria. The primary selection criteria are safety, environmental sustainability, quality of life, economic competitiveness, and state of good repair, and the secondary selection criteria are

partnership and innovation. The Federal share of project costs may not exceed 80 percent for a project located in an urban area. The Secretary may increase the Federal share of costs above 80 percent for projects located in rural areas and for planning projects located in areas of persistent poverty.

Project Awards:

- Total Funding: \$1.5 billion.
- Minimum Project Awards: Urban Projects: \$5 million, Rural Projects: \$1 million.
- Planning Grants: \$75 million total funding; No project minimum required.
- Maximum Awards: Urban/Rural Projects: \$25 million, Per State: \$225 million.
- Geographic Distribution: 50% of total funds (\$750 million) awarded to both urban and rural projects.

<https://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants>

FEDERAL LANDS ACCESS PROGRAM (FLAP)

The Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) provides funds for projects to improve Federal Lands Access Transportation Facilities that provide access to, are adjacent to, or are located within federal lands. This can include public roads, bridges, paved trails, or transit systems that are owned and/or maintained by the state, county, town, township, tribal, municipal, or local government. Funds may be used for the costs of transportation planning, research, engineering, preventive maintenance, rehabilitation, restoration, construction, and reconstruction of transportation facilities located on or adjacent to, or that provide access to, federal lands. Applicable activities include parking areas; acquisition of scenic easements or historic sites; bicycle and pedestrian provisions; environmental mitigation; public safety; and roadside rest areas. Other eligible activities include the operation and maintenance of transit facilities, and any transportation project that is within, adjacent to, or provides access to federal land. The program requires a minimum 20% local match.

<https://highways.dot.gov/federal-lands/programs-access/nc>

FEDERAL LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND (LWCF)

The Land and Water Conservation Fund was established by Congress in 1964 to fulfill a bipartisan commitment to safeguard natural areas, water resources and cultural heritage, and to provide recreation opportunities to all Americans. The LWCF program is divided into the "State Side" which provides grants to State and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities, and the "Federal Side" which is used to acquire lands, waters, and interests therein necessary to achieve the natural, cultural, wildlife, and recreation management objectives of federal land management agencies. State Side funds are distributed by the State and Local Assistance Programs Division of the National Parks Service. Funding is available as 50/50 matching grants to states and territories to plan, acquire, and develop public lands for outdoor recreation. Projects are selected by states and submitted to NPS for approval. In North Carolina, grants are selected by the Parks and Recreation Division in the NC Department of Cultural and Natural Resources. To be eligible for LWCF assistance, every state must prepare and regularly update a statewide comprehensive outdoor recreation plan (SCORP). Applicants can request a maximum grant of \$500,000. An applicant must match the grant with a minimum of 50 percent. Due to a federal share cap of \$500,000, a greater match is required for projects that exceed total costs of \$1 million.

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/lwcf/stateside.htm>

<https://www.ncparks.gov/more-about-us/grants/lwcf-grants>

RIVERS, TRAILS, AND CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (RTCA)

The National Parks Service (NPS) Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program supports community-led natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation projects across the nation. Although RTCA is not a traditional funding program, NPS staff provide planning, design and technical expertise for trails and outdoor recreation projects. Depending on the project scale, RTCA can invest up to four years of planning and project development assistance. Eligible entities include community groups, nonprofit organizations, tribes, and governments.

Technical Assistance Services:

- Define project vision and goals.
- Set priorities and build consensus.
- Inventory and map community resources.
- Identify funding strategies.
- Identify and analyze key issues and opportunities.
- Design community outreach, participation, and partnerships plans.
- Create project management and strategic action plans.
- Develop concept plans for trails, parks, and natural areas.

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/rtca/index.htm>

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS (NEA) OUR TOWN PROGRAM

Our Town is the National Endowment for the Arts' creative placemaking grants program. Through project-based funding, the NEA supports projects that integrate arts, culture, and design activities into efforts that strengthen communities by advancing local economic, physical, and/or social outcomes. These projects require a partnership between a local government entity and nonprofit organization, one of which must be a cultural organization; and should engage in partnership with other sectors (such as agriculture and food, economic development, education and youth, environment and energy, health, housing, public safety, transportation, and workforce development). Cost share/matching grants range from \$25,000 to \$150,000, with a minimum cost share/match equal to the grant amount. <https://www.arts.gov/grants/our-town>

STATE FUNDING

North Carolina communities have partnered with state agencies to build bicycle and pedestrian facilities. State agency funding sources for bicycle and pedestrian planning, infrastructure, and programs are administered primarily through the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, and North Carolina Department of Commerce. Discretionary grant programs focusing on public health and community development are administered by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ), and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture when funding is available.

NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (NCDOT)

(STI)

The Strategic Transportation Investments law, passed in 2013, establishes the Strategic Mobility Formula, which allocates available funding based on data-driven scoring and local input. The Strategic Mobility Formula is used to develop the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), which identifies projects that will receive funding during a 10-year period. The STIP is state

and federally mandated and updated by NCDOT every 2 years. The Strategic Mobility Formula groups projects in three categories: Division Needs, Regional Impact, and Statewide Mobility.

Independent bicycle and pedestrian projects are programmed in the Division Needs category. Eligible bicycle and pedestrian projects submitted for prioritization must be included in a locally adopted plan and have a minimum project cost of \$100,000. Eligible activities include right-of-way acquisition, design, and construction. Additionally, the STI law prohibits the use of state funding for bicycle and pedestrian projects, requiring municipalities to provide the 20% match for federally funded projects.

FUNDING CATEGORY	FUNDING DISTRIBUTION	OVERVIEW
Division Needs	30%	Funding in this category is shared equally between NCDOT's 14 transportation divisions. Project scores are based 50% on data and 50% on rankings by MPOs and RPOs and the NCDOT Divisions.
Regional Impact	30%	Projects on this level compete within regions made up of two NCDOT Divisions with funding based on population. Project scores are based 70% on data and 30% on rankings by MPOs and RPOs and the NCDOT Divisions.
Statewide Mobility	40%	Projects in this category are of statewide significance and are based 100% on data.

Bicycle and Pedestrian STI Prioritization Qualitative Scoring:

Local input points represent 50% of the scoring for bicycle and pedestrian projects. 25% of local input points are assigned by MPOs and RPOs, which are determined by municipal and county project priorities and public comment. The remaining 50% of the local input points are assigned by NCDOT Division Engineers.

CRITERIA	MEASURE	DIVISION NEEDS (50%)
Safety	(Number of crashes x 40%) + (Crash severity x 20%) + (Safety risk x 20%) + (Safety benefit x 20%)	20%
Accessibility / Connectivity	Points of Interest pts + Connection pts + Route pts	15%

Demand / Density	# of households and employees per square mile near project	10%
Cost Effectiveness	(Safety + Accessibility / Connectivity + Demand / Density) / Cost to NCDOT	5%

Project Bundling:

Multiple bicycle and pedestrian projects can be bundled to better compete with other projects submitted in the Division Needs category. Bundled projects are allowed across various geographies and project types. Projects do not have to be contiguous or related, and projects can be within a single municipality or across multiple jurisdictions. Bundled projects must be under one project manager, which must be a TAP eligible entity.

<https://www.ncdot.gov/initiatives-policies/Transportation/stip/Pages/strategic-transportation-investments.aspx>

INCIDENTAL BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES WITH ROADWAY PROJECTS

The NCDOT Complete Streets Policy Update was adopted by the Board of Transportation in August 2019. This policy requires NCDOT to consider and incorporate multimodal facilities in the design and improvement of all transportation projects in North Carolina. The adopted Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) is considered the controlling plan for the identification of nonmotorized facilities to be evaluated as part of a roadway project. The CTP may include and/ or reference locally adopted plans for public transportation, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and greenways. Bicycle, pedestrian, and public transportation facilities that appear in the CTP directly or by reference will be included as part of the proposed roadway project, and NCDOT is responsible for the full cost of the project. Bicycle, pedestrian, and transit facilities incidental to a roadway project where a need has been identified through the project scoping process but not identified in an adopted plan may be included in the project. Inclusion of these incidental facilities requires the local jurisdiction to share the incremental cost of constructing the improvements based on population thresholds. Projects that have not completed environmental review prior to August 2019 are subject to the Complete Streets Policy.

<https://connect.ncdot.gov/projects/BikePed/Pages/Complete-Streets.aspx>

STATEWIDE PROJECTS FUNDS

Small Construction Funds: These funds were established in 1985 to fund small projects in and around cities and towns that could not be funded in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Funds are allocated equally to each of 14 Transportation Divisions. Funds can be used on a variety of transportation projects for municipalities, counties, businesses, schools, and industries throughout the State. Funds projects up to \$250,000 per fiscal year, unless otherwise approved by the Secretary of Transportation. Right-of-way and utility relocations should be provided and accomplished at no cost to NCDOT. Funding requests should be submitted to the Division Engineer providing technical information such as location, improvements being requested, and project timeline.

Statewide Contingency Funds: These funds were created for statewide rural or small urban highway improvements and related transportation enhancements to public roads/ public facilities, industrial access roads, and spot safety projects. The President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Speaker of the House, and the Secretary of Transportation sponsor project requests from this fund. \$12 million in funds are administered by the Secretary of Transportation. Requests can be submitted from municipalities, counties, businesses, schools, citizens, legislative members, and NCDOT staff. Request should include a clear description and justification of the project.

Economic Development Funds: These funds were created to expedite transportation projects that promote commercial growth as well as either job creation or job retention. \$2500 per job (new & retained) allowed unless waived by the Secretary of Transportation. Funds projects up to \$400,000 per fiscal year, unless otherwise approved by the Secretary of Transportation. New access roads must be approved by NCDOT and serve multiple property owners or government owned property; roads will become part of the State Highway System or serve as public roads maintained by a government agency.

High Impact / Low-Cost Funds: This program provides funds to complete low-cost projects with high impacts to the transportation system including intersection improvement projects, minor widening projects, and operational improvement projects. Funds are allocated equally to each of 14 Transportation Divisions. Each Division is responsible for selecting their own scoring criteria for determining projects funded in this program. At a minimum, Divisions must consider all of the following in developing scoring formulas: (1) The average daily traffic volume of a roadway and whether the proposed project will generate additional traffic. (2) Any restrictions on a roadway. (3) Any safety issues with a roadway. (4) The condition of the lanes, shoulders, and pavement on a roadway. (5) The site distance and radius of any intersection on a roadway. Funds projects up to \$1.5 million per fiscal year, unless otherwise approved by the Secretary of Transportation. Projects are expected to be under contract within 12 months of funding approval by the Board of Transportation.

[https://connect.ncdot.gov/projects/planning/ Economic%20Development/Small%20Project%20 Fund%20Request.docx](https://connect.ncdot.gov/projects/planning/Economic%20Development/Small%20Project%20Fund%20Request.docx)

SPOT SAFETY PROGRAM

The Spot Safety Program is used to develop smaller improvement projects to address safety and potential safety and operational issues. The program is funded with state funds and currently receives approximately \$9 million per fiscal year. Other monetary sources (such as Small Construction or Contingency funds) can assist in funding Spot Safety projects, however, the maximum allowable contribution of Spot Safety funds per project is \$400,000. A Safety Oversight Committee (SOC) reviews and recommends Spot Safety projects to the Board of Transportation (BOT) for approval and funding. Criteria used by the SOC to select projects for recommendation to the BOT include, but are not limited to, the frequency of correctable crashes, severity of crashes, delay, congestion, number of signal warrants met, effect on pedestrians and schools, division and region priorities, and public interest.

[https://connect.ncdot.gov/resources/safety/ Pages/NC-Highway-Safety-Program-and-Projects.aspx](https://connect.ncdot.gov/resources/safety/Pages/NC-Highway-Safety-Program-and-Projects.aspx)

STATE PLANNING & RESEARCH FUNDS (SPR)

The State Planning and Research Program funds States' statewide planning and research activities. This program funds metropolitan and statewide planning for future highway programs and local public transportation systems. The FAST Act expanded the statewide transportation planning process' scope of consideration to include projects, strategies, and services that will improve transportation system resiliency and reliability; reduce (or mitigate) the stormwater impacts of surface transportation; and enhance travel and tourism. In 2017, NCDOT extended the use of SPR funds to Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs) by establishing an annual call for proposals to fund planning and research projects for rural communities. Since the program expansion, RPOs have used SPR funds for a range of transportation planning activities, including to develop greenway and trail feasibility studies. SPR funding requires a 20% local match. However, the local match is 5% for Tier 1 Counties with NCDOT contributing 15% of the local match and 10% for Tier 2 Counties with NCDOT contributing 10% of the local match. RPOs must administer the funds. Since 2017, RPOs have used SPR funds for a range of transportation planning activities, including to develop bicycle and pedestrian facility and trail feasibility studies.

<https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/fastact/factsheets/statewideplanningfs.cfm>

<https://connect.ncdot.gov/projects/planning/Pages/Transportation-Planning-Program-and-Services.aspx>

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL (NON-INFRASTRUCTURE TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM)

NCDOT's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program was established in 2005 through SAFETEA-LU as a federally funded program to provide an opportunity for communities to improve conditions for bicycling and walking to school. The SRTS Program has set aside \$1,500,000 per year of Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) funds for non-infrastructure programs and activities over a three-year period. Funding requests may range from a yearly amount of \$50,000 to \$100,000 per project. Projects can be one to three years in length. Funding may be requested to support activities for community-wide, regional, or statewide programs.

<https://connect.ncdot.gov/projects/BikePed/Pages/Non-Infrastructure-Alternatives-Program.aspx>

POWELL BILL FUNDS

The State Street Aid to Municipalities Program, also known as Powell Bill Funds, assists local governments with transportation system improvements. The Powell Bill requires municipalities to use the money primarily for street resurfacing, but it can also be used for the construction and maintenance of roads, bridges, drainage systems, sidewalks, and greenways.

Funding amounts for each municipality are based on a formula set by the N.C. General Assembly, with 75 percent of the funds based on population, and 25 percent based on the number of locally maintained street miles.

<https://connect.ncdot.gov/municipalities/State-Street-Aid/Pages/default.aspx>

NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

PARKS AND RECREATION TRUST FUND (PARTF)

PARTF provides dollar-for-dollar matching grants to local governments for parks and recreational projects to serve the public. PARTF is the primary source of funding to build and renovate facilities in the state parks as well as to buy land for new and existing parks.

<https://www.ncparks.gov/more-about-us/parks-recreation-trust-fund/parks-and-recreation-trust-fund>

NORTH CAROLINA LAND & WATER FUND (NCLWF)

The NCLWF (formerly known as the Clean Water Management Trust Fund) was created in 1996 by the General Assembly to conserve North Carolina's streams, rivers, and open space. The NCLWF funds land acquisition, stream restoration, stormwater, and planning projects that protect and conserve riparian buffers for the purpose of providing environmental protection for surface waters and urban drinking water supplies and establishing a network of riparian greenways for environmental, educational, and recreational uses. NCLWF also funds mini grants of up to \$25,000 for donated property or the value of the conservation donation to pay transaction costs associated with the donation of property in fee simple, or a permanent conservation agreement. NCLWF has one grant cycle per year. Applications are available in early December and close in February. Final award decisions are made in the fall.

<https://nclwf.nc.gov/apply>

NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

MAIN STREET SOLUTIONS FUND

The Main Street Solutions Fund supports small businesses in designated micropolitans located in Tier 2 and Tier 3 counties or designated North Carolina Main Street communities. The grants assist planning agencies and small businesses with efforts to revitalize downtowns by creating jobs, funding infrastructure improvements and rehabilitating buildings.

<https://www.nccommerce.com/grants-incentives/downtown-development-funds>

RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM

The Rural Economic Development Division provides grants and loans to local government units to support economic development activity that will lead to the creation of new, full-time jobs. The program gives priority to projects located in the 80 most distressed counties in the state; and resident companies as defined in N.C.G.S. 143B-472 (a) 4. The Rural Infrastructure Program funding is available for publicly owned infrastructure including water, sewer, electric, broadband, rail, and road improvements that will lead to the direct creation of new, full-time jobs. Eligible applicants are units of local government with priority given to the Tier 1 and Tier 2 counties. A cash match equivalent to at least 5% of the grant amount is required for all projects.

Eligible project activities include:

- Construct public infrastructure improvements
- Upgrade or repair of public drinking water or wastewater treatment plants
- Upgrade, extensions, or repair of public water or sewer lines

- Publicly owned natural gas lines (requires an executed Pipeline Construction, Operating and Resale Agreement)
- Installation or extension of public broadband infrastructure
- Construction of public rail spur improvements
- Construction of publicly owned access roads not funded or owned by the Department of Transportation

<https://www.nccommerce.com/grants-incentives/public-infrastructure-funds/infrastructure-state-rural-grants>

NORTH CAROLINA NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

The NC Neighborhood Program offers non-entitlement municipalities and counties the opportunity to tailor a project to meet the community development needs specific and most critical to their locality, primarily for their low- and moderate-income residents. NC Neighborhood Program projects must incorporate at least one of the following three livability principles as an area of focus:

- Promote equitable, affordable housing. Expand location and energy-efficient housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, races, and ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.
- Support existing communities. Target federal funding toward existing communities - through strategies like transit-oriented, mixed-use development, and land recycling - to increase community revitalization and the efficiency of public works investments and safeguard rural landscapes.
- Value communities and neighborhoods. Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in health, safe, and walkable neighborhoods - rural, urban, or suburban.

All municipalities are eligible to receive State CDBG funds except for entitlement communities, which receive funds directly from HUD. The maximum grant amount is \$750,000 per grantee with some restrictions for specific activities. There is no minimum grant amount, and the program does not have a matching fund requirement.

<https://www.nccommerce.com/grants-incentives/community-housing-grants#neighborhood-revitalization/-federal-cdbg>

LOCAL FUNDING

BONDS

Wake County, City of Raleigh, City of Wilmington, Town of Chapel Hill, Town of Cornelius, and City of Greenville have all passed bonds to protect open space corridors and build greenway networks. Multi-use paths and greenways are also frequently included in municipal transportation bond packages. Successful bond campaigns require a well-defined plan with specific projects supported by the community. Bond campaigns should be well organized with a community's public affairs department and thoroughly coordinated across all internal departments. Public outreach during the campaign is essential to educate residents about the benefits of infrastructure investment and to understand which projects garner the highest community support.

DEVELOPER BUILT TRAILS/IN-LIEU FEES

The Town of Cary built its first greenway 40 years ago and now has more than 80 miles of greenway trails. A significant portion of their network development has been the result of developer-built trails. The Town of Cary requires developers to set aside important open space providing trail

connectivity, wildlife habitat corridors, and water quality protection. Per the Cary Land Use Ordinance, developers must dedicate land or make payment in-lieu of public park and/or greenway development to serve the recreational needs of residents. Land dedications for greenways are required for both residential and commercial development for those locations indicated in the Town's greenway master plan.

IMPACT FEES

Impact fees represent financial payments made to a local government by a developer to fund certain off-site capital improvements needed to accommodate future growth. Many communities impose impact fees for transportation, parks and recreation, and open space facility needs. The City of Durham imposes transportation impact fees to fund for a portion of the costs for new streets and sidewalks, paving, grading, resurfacing, and widening of existing streets, traffic control signals and markings, lighting, and crosswalks. The City's development fees for open space and parks and recreation are used for the acquisition of park land and the provision of facilities, including athletic fields, parks, playgrounds, courts, recreation centers, shelters, stadiums, arenas, swimming pools, lighting, trail construction, and bike paths.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (CIP)

A Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is one element in a municipality's long-term planning process. It is a bridge between the municipality's Comprehensive Plan and short-term planning for infrastructure and operations. A Capital Improvement Program analyzes major facility and equipment needs, establishes priorities, estimates fiscal resources, and schedules the development of funded projects. The City of Raleigh funds parks, greenways, and active transportation facilities through the city's Capital Improvement Program. The Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department's CIP primary sources of funding come from Parks and Recreation Bonds, Facility Fees, General Fund (Tax Base), grants, and donations.

MUNICIPAL SERVICE DISTRICTS (MSD)

Municipal Service Districts provide an equitable method for funding special improvements to public right-of-way areas because property owners share in the cost. The Town of Morrisville uses Municipal Service Districts in several neighborhoods to perform pavement, curb and gutter, and sidewalk enhancements and repairs on the public streets throughout neighborhoods in the MSD.

PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

The City of Greensboro is leading North Carolina in leveraging public-private partnerships to complete their Downtown Greenway Loop. Through the Action Greensboro Foundation, the project has raised over \$10 M in private funds by working with foundations and private givers. This money leverages over \$21 M in local and federal funds.

PRIVATE FUNDING

NORTH CAROLINA LAND TRUSTS AND CONSERVANCIES

North Carolina land trusts partner with landowners and local communities to permanently protect natural resources with agricultural, cultural, recreational, ecological, and scenic value across the state. In Watauga County the Blue Ridge Conservancy is leading the effort to develop the Middle Fork Greenway along the Middle Fork New River to connect Boone and Blowing Rock via trail. The Blue Ridge Conservancy has purchased property and easements along the Middle Fork New River to preserve the corridor and develop the greenway in partnership with Watauga County and the Town of Boone. The conservancy is also leading planning design, and construction of each phase of the greenway development.

Provided below is a list of Land Trusts & Conservation Organizations in North Carolina:

- Conservation Trust for North Carolina
- Blue Ridge Conservancy
- Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy
- Catawba Lands Conservancy
- Davidson Lands Conservancy
- Eno River Association
- Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina
- Land Trust for Central North Carolina
- Land Trust for the Little Tennessee
- National Committee for the New River
- NC Coastal Land Trust
- Tar River Land Conservancy

<https://www.presnc.org/nc-land-trusts-conservation-organizations/>

NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION (NCCF)

The NCCF is the statewide community foundation serving North Carolina and sustains more than 1,200 endowments established to provide long-term support of a broad range of community needs, nonprofit organizations, institutions, and scholarships. The NCCF partners with a network of affiliate foundations to provide local resource allocation and community assistance across the state. NCCF's community grantmaking programs are advised by its network of affiliate foundations. Each affiliate is advised by a local board who help to assemble resources through their unique knowledge and understanding of local needs and opportunities. Organizations must be qualified as tax-exempt public charities under Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code or be classified as a unit of local government or public school.

<https://www.nccommunityfoundation.org/apply/grants>

GOLDEN LEAF FOUNDATION

The Golden LEAF Foundation is a nonprofit organization established in 1999 to receive a portion of North Carolina's funding received from the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement with cigarette manufacturers. Golden LEAF works to increase economic opportunity in North Carolina's rural and tobacco-dependent communities through leadership in grantmaking, collaboration, innovation, and stewardship as an independent and perpetual foundation. Golden LEAF's grantmaking focuses on the following priorities: Job creation and economic investment; workforce preparedness; agriculture; and community competitiveness, capacity, and vitality. Golden LEAF has two standard programs open to eligible entities seeking grants: Open Grants Program and Economic Catalyst Program. These programs complement other ongoing initiatives of the Foundation, such as the Community-Based Grants Initiative.

Open Grants Program: The Open Grants Program is open to all governmental entities and 501(c)(3) organizations that propose projects in Golden LEAF's priority areas. This program funds economic development projects aligned with the Golden LEAF priority areas. Most awards will be for \$200,000 or less.

Economic Catalyst Program: The Economic Catalyst process is open to governmental entities and 501(c)(3) organizations with projects that will create jobs at risk without Golden LEAF funding. Grants include funds for public infrastructure, job training, upfit for buildings owned by governmental or nonprofit entities, or equipment acquisition where the building or equipment will be leased or sold at fair-market value to a company creating jobs. Grants are available only for projects that include a specific company's commitment to create full-time jobs in NC.

Community-Based Grants Initiative: Each year, the Golden LEAF Foundation invites organizations from counties from a different Prosperity Zone to participate in the Community-Based Grant Initiative (CBGI). The process is competitive, but organizations from all counties within the Prosperity Zone will have an opportunity to apply. The CBGI is designed to identify projects with the potential to have a significant impact. It is a focused process with grants targeted toward investments in the building blocks of economic growth. Funds are limited to projects that address economic development, agriculture, workforce preparedness, infrastructure, and capital costs necessary to create health care jobs. County managers serve a key role in the process. Each county manager will submit a slate of up to four projects for consideration. Applicants must be 501(c)(3) organizations or governmental entities (county and municipal governments, community colleges, universities, etc.) Funds do not have to be administered or implemented by the county government. Awards are limited to no more than three projects per county and will total no more than \$1.5 million per county.

<https://www.goldenleaf.org/>

THE CONSERVATION FUND

The Conservation Fund works with public, private, and nonprofit partners to protect land and water resources through land acquisition, sustainable community and economic development, and leadership training. The City of Durham partnered with the Conservation Fund to assist with negotiations to purchase the Durham Belt Line rail corridor from Norfolk Southern to convert the rail line into an urban trail. In 2017 the Conservation Fund successfully purchased the property as the interim owner while the city secured the necessary funding. The property was transferred to the City of Durham in 2018, which allowed for the rail-trail's development.

<https://www.conservationfund.org/where-we-work/north-carolina>

BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF NORTH CAROLINA FOUNDATION

The Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation funds a range of programs from targeted, mini grants to multi-year partnerships. Their grantmaking supports initiatives that focus on early childhood, healthy communities, healthy food, and oral health. The Foundation does not operate regular grant cycles. Instead, the Foundation invites applications based on specific strategic objectives or announces broader opportunities to apply for funding on a periodic basis.

<https://www.bcbsncfoundation.org/grants-programs/grantmaking-overview/>

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS SMART GROWTH AND PLACEMAKING GRANTS

The National Association of Realtors (NAR) funds placemaking and smart growth grants to make communities better places to live by transforming unused or underutilized sites into welcoming destinations accessible to everyone in a community.

Smart Growth Grants: Smart Growth Grants fund efforts to engage in local land-use, growth, and transportation policy issues with other stakeholders and elected officials. Eligible projects include Better Block events, placemaking visioning processes, charettes, pop-up workshops, project mock-ups, developer open houses, public open houses, utility roundtables, Main Street analysis, walkable community workshops/audits, assistance with updating land use ordinances and codes and community plans, and hosting conferences and webinars. Applications can only be submitted by a state or local REALTOR® association, and grants provide up to \$5,000 per award.

Placemaking Grants: Placemaking Grants fund the creation of new, outdoor public spaces and destinations in a community. Funds can be used for amenities such as street furniture, paint, signage, materials, landscaping, murals, site preparation, and artist fees. Applications can only be submitted by a state or local REALTOR® association, and grants provide up to \$5,000 per award.

<https://realtorparty.realtor/community-outreach/>

AARP COMMUNITY CHALLENGE GRANT

The AARP Community Challenge provides small grants to fund quick-action projects that can help communities become more livable for people of all ages. Applications are accepted for projects to improve public spaces, housing, transportation, civic engagement, coronavirus recovery, diversity, and inclusion, and more. Project types include those that provide permanent physical improvements in the community, temporary demonstrations that lead to long-term change, and innovative programming or services. The program is open to 501(C)(3), 501(C)(4) and 501(c)(6) nonprofits and government entities. Grants can range from several hundred dollars for smaller, short-term activities to several thousand or tens of thousands of dollars for larger projects.

<https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/community-challenge/info-2021/2021-challenge.html>