

CITY OF SANFORD

COMPREHENSIVE PARKS, RECREATION + GREENWAYS PLAN

ADOPTED MARCH 19, 2024





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COMPREHENSIVE PARK PLANNING PURPOSE

Comprehensive planning provides the information needed 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:

 <p>prioritize goals + objectives for a 10-year planning horizon</p>	 <p>identify + resolve gaps and deficiencies</p>	 <p>catalog community needs + wants</p>
 <p>create a 10-year work plan for department staff</p>	 <p>engage community, staff, stakeholders + decision makers</p>	 <p>validate decisions related to parks + recreation</p>
 <p>benchmark standards to inform department decisions</p>	 <p>identify population-based goals for new recreation resources</p>	 <p>qualify for State + Federal grant funding opportunities</p>

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.

Specifically, this comprehensive parks and recreation master plan will:

- › Define the role that the park and recreation system will play in the future of the City of Sanford
- › Accommodate additional demand new residents generate while evolving to meet emerging recreation trends
- › Qualify to access certain state and national funding sources required to improve and expand the system by having a comprehensive plan adopted within the past 10 years
- › Develop an action and implementation plan to aid decision makers with a framework to guide, validate and prioritize project implementation
- › Serve as a resource for officials and the public alike to understand the current state of the parks and recreation system and goals outlined in the plan to strengthen existing assets and make improvements

PLAN CONTEXT

This plan is based on comprehensive 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 team engaged residents, Parks and Recreation staff and stakeholders within the community. The plan acknowledges local, regional and national recreation needs and trends, demographic shifts and agency performance. The project team observed current facilities and programs to evaluate the overall operational successes and challenges of the Department and its mission. Finally, the project team alongside Department staff developed a set of guiding principles that prioritize recommendations to improve recreational offerings and meet growing expectations.

THE PLAN AND THE COMMUNITY

The project team reviewed the City's existing community-wide plans to gain a comprehensive understanding of the plans that guide growth and development. It is the goal of this plan to seamlessly integrate recommendations with the recommendations and action items presented in Sanford's previously adopted plans. Alongside this review, the plan presents city-wide demographic analysis to draw conclusions about current and future recreation trends and participation levels. Lastly, the plan contains a narrative about a community with a rich history and a promising future.

INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

The inventory and analysis take a full account of the existing parks and recreation system to include parks, greenways, recreational amenities, and department operations.

LEVEL OF SERVICE

The Level of Service (LOS) analysis examines the quality, quantity, and accessibility of Sanford's parks, trails, and recreational amenities. It is a measure of how well the recreational needs and desires of the community are being met compared to national standards and best practices. Benchmarking and level of service evaluate current and future needs for park acreage, greenways mileage, and operational standards compared to national standards and best practices. The LOS provides a comparison for the existing state of the City's amenities and informs level of service standards for the ten-year planning horizon. Metrics for parks, greenways, parkland acreage, staffing and budget are compared with the National Recreation and Parks Association's Parks Metrics Standards annual report which informs the development of an appropriate level of service standard specific to the City. Such standards are normalized by population so target metrics can evolve to meet demands of the growing community.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The project team gathered input through conversations with community members, City of Sanford and Lee County leadership and staff, as well as the Sanford Parks Commission.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The recommendations and prioritized implementation plan provide a framework to guide parks, greenways, recreational amenity, and operational improvements for the future. It is structured to guide decision making and prioritize investments. Each recommendation is designated 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 preference.



COMMUNITY CONTEXT

True to its motto, “Well Centered”, Sanford is a city strategically positioned between the Research Triangle and Piedmont Triad metropolitan regions of central North Carolina. Sanford is a place where history, culture, and community intertwine to create a unique tapestry of identity. Growth within the community has been bolstered by its advantageous setting – and amidst this growth – the City has managed to retain its small-town charm and at the same time providing urban amenities and conveniences. Furthermore, Sanford is surrounded by the picturesque landscapes of the North Carolina Piedmont. The region features rolling hills, rivers, and numerous recreational opportunities. The Cape Fear and Deep River, which form a semicircle to Sanford’s north provide opportunities for paddling and fishing. Jordan Lake and the Jordan Lake State Recreation Area just a few miles east of Sanford offer camping, hiking, motorized boating, fishing, and outdoor activities. The City’s charm, location, recreational opportunities, and affordability make Sanford a community where diverse groups of people chose to live, work, and play.

As Sanford’s population has grown steadily in recent years, demographic composition has changed, new recreation trends have emerged, and there is an increased commitment to the provision of parks, open space, greenways, and recreation opportunities. In 2013, the citizens of Sanford approved a bond referendum that allocated \$2 million for park improvements and an additional \$4 million for the development of greenways. This prompted the City in 2017 to develop a comprehensive parks and recreation master plan to inform how the \$2 million dollars should be spent. The plan provided a blueprint for future development and enhancement of parks and recreational amenities throughout Sanford.

Shortly after the 2017 plan was adopted, the City of Sanford responded to the highest priority

recommendation, renovating Kiwanis Family Park, by accepting 14 acres at the park's front side from Lee County and developing the City and County's first splashpad, along with an inclusive playground, pavilions, and a walking trail. With that, re-establishing a city-wide parks department was a central recommendation of the 2017 plan. The historical evolution of parks and recreation within the City of Sanford has followed a distinctive trajectory. During the 1950s and 1960s, like numerous cities in towns in North Carolina and across the country, Sanford acknowledged the importance of parks and recreational initiatives. To that end, the City introduced an official parks and recreation department and developed a range of parks and recreational amenities. By the mid-1970s, collaborative efforts between the City and the County led to a comprehensive strategy for park provision spanning the entire county. Ultimately, the City made the strategic decision to transfer management of its park system to the County, entrusting the County to serve as the primary provider of park and recreation services for all residents across the county.

The City of Sanford has now come full circle from where it once stood as a recreation provider having heeded the 2017 plan recommendation to create an arm of local government specifically dedicated to the provision of parks and recreational activities. Leadership expanded the public works department to include a parks division, currently referred to as Sanford Parks. Sanford Parks provides several neighborhood parks with plentiful open space for passive and self-guided recreation. The diversity of recreational amenities exists primarily at Kiwanis Family Park. These amenities, such as the splashpad and contemporary playground, as well as concerts and special events at Depot Park are extremely popular with the community. Some of the noteworthy accomplishments of Sanford Parks following the adoption of the 2017 plan include:

- › Kiwanis Family Park Enhancements
- › Depot Park Amphitheater Improvements
- › Establishing the City Summer Concert Series
- › Expanding Special Event Variety in Collaboration with Lee County

As Sanford continues to grow and evolve, its dedication to providing accessible and high-quality parks and recreation opportunities continues to be a core element of community growth and the well-being. City leadership and the Sanford community is now looking forward to updating that plan's recommendations and establishing a new vision to address priorities that respond to current needs and values, along with physical, social, and economic conditions and opportunities. With steady, manageable population growth, recent investments in urban parks and greenways, a burgeoning arts and entertainment scene, and outdoor recreation options, Sanford stands poised on the brink of its potential. Yet, as the next decade approaches, the City understands that it must be prepared to shape the future of its parks and greenways system.

The current parks, recreation and greenways master plan update stands on the foundation laid by the 2017 City of Sanford Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan yet takes a more in-depth look at park development in Sanford. Assessing the changing needs among the Sanford community and examining recent recreation trends will help guide the vision for a 21st century parks system while preserving the small-town community feel that the community loves.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

In order to chart a visionary path for the growth and enhancement of Sanford's parks system over the next decade, it is important to take a comprehensive look at the City's history. With five distinct national heritage districts that speak to the City's cultural depth, Sanford's community brand is intertwined with an appreciation for its history, coupled with an imperative to share and celebrate this legacy with its residents, visitors, and the broader community. Collaborative efforts with entities such as Visit Sanford and DownCity Sanford Inc. further underscore the City's commitment to preserving and showcasing its history.

Depot Park provides a living connection between Sanford's history and its community. The Railroad House at the heart of the park emphasizes the City's origins and serves as a significant representation of Sanford's roots. Additionally, the integration of heritage with modern life extends through the City's greenway system, which is closely linked to, and named for the historic Endor Iron Furnace site. The connection to heritage, history, and culture is further reinforced by a dynamic public art initiative that interlaces stories from the past into the urban landscape. As we consider the trajectory of Sanford's parks system across a ten-year planning horizon, it's vital to recognize that Sanford's history isn't merely a backdrop; it forms an essential foundation. This foundation, merged with parks and recreational offerings, provides a framework upon which a thriving future can be built.

The area that is Sanford was originally inhabited by various Native American tribes, including the Saponi and the Occaneechi. Native American hunters and farmers thrived in what was a vast wilderness filled with roaming buffalo and thriving wildlife. Settlers began pushing into the region prior to the American Revolution, with migrating colonists from Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia and coastal regions of North Carolina, as well as Scottish immigrants arriving in America through the port of Wilmington as early as the 1730's. The early economy of the area was based primarily on agriculture, naval stores production, and lumbering – although the establishment of an ironworks in the 1760s presaged the larger-scale extractive industries to come.

Long before the City of Sanford was incorporated in 1874, the area played a role in Revolutionary and Civil War history. During the Revolutionary War, a battle between the patriots and loyalists was fought at the Alston House site, which at the time was part of Moore County. The home, built in 1772 by Phillip Alston, is now a historic site managed by the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources' Historic Sites. The Endor Iron Furnace near the community of Cumnock, NC (near Sanford in Lee County) was established to take advantage of the iron deposits along the Deep River. The iron furnace was in use from the early 1860's through the mid 1870's producing pig iron for the Confederate army during the Civil War.

Sanford began to develop at the same time as the next-door community of Jonesboro, built along the former Western Railroad (later Cape Fear & Yadkin Valley Railway) that ran from Fayetteville. In 1871, the tracks of the Chatham Railroad, now reorganized as the Raleigh & Augusta Air Line Railroad (R&A), intersected those of the Western Railroad northwest of Jonesboro. Both Sanford and Jonesboro developed as a result of the rail crossroads and were the center of trade and commerce in the region. Sanford was incorporated as a City in 1874 and is named after Charles W. Sanford, who was

instrumental in the development of the railroad. Jonesboro became a town several years prior and is named after L.C. Jones, who established the Jonesboro depot along the Western Railroad.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Sanford experienced significant industrial growth. The discovery of clay and kaolin deposits in the area led to the establishment of several brick and pottery manufacturing facilities. For example, the W.B. Wicker Company, which later became Sanford's largest employer, started as a brick-making operation. Throughout the 20th century, Sanford continued to grow and diversify its economy by attracting various industries, including textiles, agriculture, and manufacturing.

In 1907, the North Carolina General Assembly passed a bill leading to the establishment of Lee County, with a clear and common objective. The arduous and time-consuming wagon and buggy journeys across the sandy terrain from Sanford to Carthage, the then-county seat of Moore, proved impractical for the industrious residents of the burgeoning railway junction. This spurred the necessity to create a new county, complete with a strategically situated administrative center, to better serve the needs of the community.

REGIONAL CONTEXT

Sanford is in Lee County and is the county seat. It is bordered by Harnett County to the east, Chatham County to the west, and Moore County to the south. The City's proximity to the RTP has influenced its economic landscape, attracting businesses in various sectors, including biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, and advanced manufacturing.

Sanford's location at the intersection of major transportation routes is an essential aspect of its regional context. The city is served by several major highways, including U.S. Route 1 and U.S. Route 421, providing easy access to nearby cities and markets. Additionally, Amtrak operates a passenger rail station in Sanford, enhancing connectivity to other parts of the state and beyond. The regional context of Sanford places it in a strategic location within central North Carolina. Its proximity to the Research Triangle, along with its transportation connections and natural beauty, contributes to its economic development, cultural exchange, and overall quality of life for its residents.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Sanford and its surrounding region in Lee County include a variety of natural resources. These resources have historically played a significant role in the area's economic development and continue to contribute to its local industries and recreational opportunities. Some natural resources in the Sanford area are farmland, bodies of water, timber, minerals and wildlife. The area has several rivers and streams. The Deep River, the Cape Fear River, and their tributaries provide a reliable water supply for agriculture and industrial production. Forests and woodlands are prevalent in and around Sanford. The region's timber resources have supported a timber and wood products industry, including lumber, pulpwood, and paper production. Sanford has deposits of clay and kaolin, which are essential for the ceramics and pottery industry. Kaolin is used in the production of various products, including paper, rubber, and cosmetics. The diverse natural habitats in the area support a wide range of wildlife. This has led to opportunities for hunting, fishing, and wildlife-related tourism.

Sanford's natural resources contribute to various recreational activities, such as boating, fishing, hiking, and camping. The nearby Jordan Lake State Recreation Area and the various parks and nature reserves offer opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts and nature lovers. The region is also known for its groundwater resources, stored in aquifers beneath the surface. These aquifers provide a source of clean water for the community's water supply and various industries.

PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships in parks can foster collaboration, sharing of resources, and community engagement, to lead to well-maintained, and well-utilized public spaces that enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors alike. Sanford has several partners contributing to the success of parks available to residents and visitors.

Downtown Sanford, Inc. (DSI) is a 501c(3) non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing the economic health and quality of life in downtown Sanford, North Carolina. DSI is a partner in Depot Park's success. Depot Park, once the bustling hub of Sanford's economic activity, had been neglected for many years. Recognizing its potential to breathe new life into the downtown area, the DSI Board envisioned a park that could serve as a vibrant gathering place for the community. In collaboration with the City of Sanford, the concept of Depot Park was created in 1997.

Construction of Depot Park was completed in 2005. The park showcases the historical significance of the Railroad House and the Railroad Depot while providing a beautiful space for people to come together, connect, and enjoy a day of leisure in the heart of downtown. The transformation of this area into a dynamic park has been a testament to the shared vision and commitment of both downtown Sanford, Inc. and the City of Sanford.

DSI also provides grants, hosts events and contributes to public art in downtown. To assist business and property owners, the organization provides support by funding for property enhancements such as awnings and exterior improvements. This includes promoting historic preservation, and endorsing projects that contribute to the well-planned development of historic downtown Sanford.

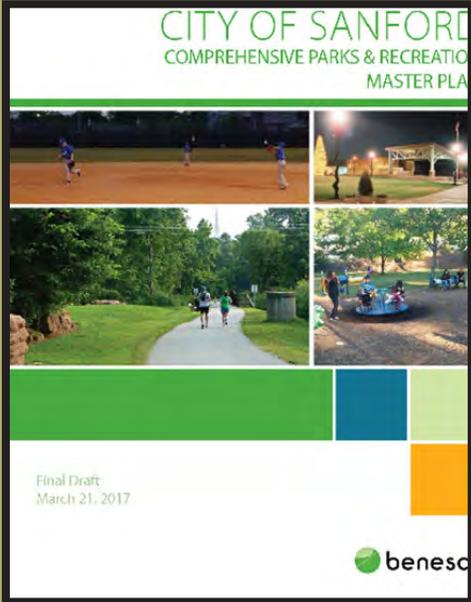
DSI hosts a many events that draw both residents and visitors such as concert series to creatively themed street festivals. Additionally, DSI has partnered with the City Appearance Commission in the growth of the public art scene in downtown Sanford. Murals, sculptures, ceramic panels, and intricate brickwork are throughout downtown. This also includes the Mural Trail, which showcases several historical murals in both downtown Sanford and Jonesboro. This initiative provides a key to Sanford's history and fosters a sense of pride and community.

The S-Line Raleigh to Richmond, or R2R, project includes the development, implementation, and operation of passenger rail service in the Southeast Corridor. This rail service will provide future high-performance passenger rail services connecting communities from Raleigh to Richmond. The S Line is slated to have a stop in Sanford and the City has been evaluating the site of an abandoned furniture mill to be the location. There is over 100,000 feet of space for a potential mixed-use development and an open space that used to be a ballfield and is intended to be the anchor of the revitalization project. This location is a block away from Depot Park.

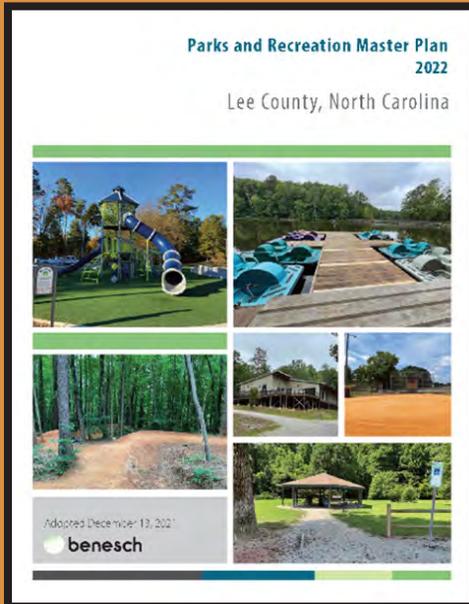
PREVIOUS PLAN ASSESSMENT

OVERVIEW

The current parks and recreation master plan update will align its goals and recommendations with the overall vision of the city, ensuring that it contributes effectively to Sanford’s long-term development and growth. Existing planning documents are typically the result of extensive research, public input, and expert analysis. Drawing on this existing knowledge base can provide a framework for future plans and policies. Cities often make commitments in their planning documents to address specific issues or needs. By referencing these commitments, the new master plan can ensure that it fulfills ongoing obligations and demonstrates Sanford’s dedication to its stated goals. The plans included in this assessment were identified as relevant to the current parks and recreation master plan update. A brief summary and highlights of key findings from each plans follows.

PLAN	SUMMARY
<p style="text-align: center;">ADOPTED MARCH, 2017</p> 	<p>The 2017 comprehensive parks and recreation master plan begins with providing context to explain the existing state of publicly provided recreational services in the City of Sanford. In particular, acknowledging that in the seventies, the City turned over its park system to Lee County, and thus the majority of the parks in Sanford are managed by the County. This fact and its implications are central to the plan’s recommendations.</p> <p>Relevant actions items from the plan include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Develop a site-specific park plan for Kiwanis Family Park. – Completed > Develop at least four neighborhood parks within the city limits where geographic gaps exist. > Develop civic parks as part of downtown improvements. > Improve the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park. > Construct 4-5 miles of new greenways including expanding the Endor Iron Furnace Greenway. > Develop two multipurpose athletic fields. > Install outdoor basketball courts. > Construct seven (7) picnic shelters across the parks system. > Develop an off-leash dog park. > Invest in a feasibility study for a multi-generational indoor recreation facility.

ADOPTED DECEMBER, 2021

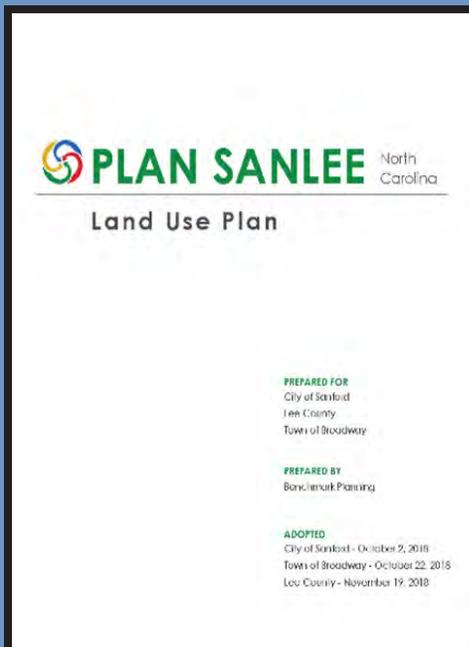


Lee County completed an update to its 2010 comprehensive parks and recreation master plan in late 2021. The plan established a renewed vision for Lee County's parks and recreation department based on an assessment of goals accomplished since 2010, community engagement, and recommendations for new projects and achievements to take place over the next 10-year planning timeframe. The City of Sanford and its leisure service offerings are mentioned frequently, and the plan recommends from the beginning that Lee County and Sanford work collaboratively wherever possible to expand access to quality parks and recreation amenities and programs.

Relevant action items from the plan include:

- > Partner with Sanford to expand recreation program and activity offerings.
- > Develop a greenway master plan for the region in partnership with the City of Sanford.
- > Partner with Sanford and/or other agencies to develop an indoor facility that would serve all county residents.
- > Construct a skate park in or near downtown Sanford.
- > Seek partnerships with City of Sanford Parks to expand health and wellness programs
- > Partner with City of Sanford to acquire the Depot building for programs and special events.
- > Partner with the City of Sanford to acquire parkland.

ADOPTED OCTOBER, 2018



The Plan SanLee Future Land Use Plan was established to guide future development of the City of Sanford, Lee County, and the Town of Broadway. It is the vision of what the community wants to become, and the steps needed to realize that vision. The plan is comprised of strategies and actions that form a broad policy-based document and guide for decision-making on the long-term physical land development and economic development of the entire community.

Relevant action items from the plan include:

- > Preserve and protect the character of existing residential neighborhoods, historic districts, and similar community assets from encroachment by incompatible development while promoting ongoing investment around such areas.
- > Align land use patterns with the existing and planned capacity of the region's streets and highways, promoting connectivity, and developing in a manner that encourages alternative modes of transportation
- > Protect and preserve the environmental quality of the county through reasonable environmental regulations and context sensitive development standards to prevent negative effects of development on flood plains, surface water, ground water, air quality, forests, wetlands, and wildlife habitat.
- > Recognize "Place types" appropriate for public parks and/or community gathering places -- Village Center, Suburban Neighborhood, Urban Neighborhood, Neighborhood Transition Area, Neighborhood Center, Downtown, Mixed Use Activity Center, Professional and Institutional Camps.

DEMOGRAPHICS

INTRODUCTION

A detailed and accurate understanding of a community's demographics is a critical component of a successful long-range plan. Growth and change within the population will ultimately impact the City's parks and recreation goals. Therefore, the intent of the analysis that follows is to provide the City of Sanford with a roadmap to keep parks and recreation offerings at pace with evolving demand. In addition to population growth. Alongside growth, changing demographics – including race and income – have a significant impact on recreational needs within a community. These factors influence the types of activities desired, the availability of resources, and the overall accessibility of recreational opportunities.

In addition to demographics, understanding recreational trends is important as they can help predict what recreation activities may be expected or desired by park users and program participants. Trends in recreational preferences change continuously, sparking change in demand for new activities and programming. Even when demographic factors are unchanging, preferences and trends influence the type of demand for parks and recreation services within a community.

What follows is an assessment of the City of Sanford's current demographic characteristics, a population growth forecast, a summary of Sanford's current demographics, and projections for the 10-year planning horizon. This summary is complemented by an assessment of national and local trends. Combining these two sets of data provides a framework for recommendations that target the current and future population and align with trends in recreation.

DATA SOURCES

The current analysis is centered in data obtained from the United States Census Bureau (USCB), supplemented by additional data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI). Census data is reflective of the USCB's most recent (2020) Decennial Census of Population and Housing and the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS is conducted by the USCB on an ongoing basis and reported every five years. Demographic data is collected and synthesized using a variety of methods to inform current and future population characteristics. Data obtained from the BLS is used to assess current employment and unemployment rates within the City of Sanford.

Population projections gathered as a component of the current assessment are sourced from ESRI. ESRI uses proprietary methodology to extract current population estimates and a five-year population projection estimates. ESRI uses data from the USCB, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and high-quality local sources. ESRI has developed methods specially tailored to estimating demographic characteristics of small areas such as Census Blocks.

ESTIMATES AND PROJECTIONS

Estimates summarize present population and demographic traits of an area, whereas projections present a proposed scenario for the future population based on assumptions like a steady growth

rate or an anticipated migration influx. Population estimates and Annual Growth Rate (AGR) are based on data found in the American Community Survey (ACS). These numbers are meant to be a snapshot in time and often do not match perfectly with conditions on the ground due to continuous fluctuations related to community growth. While these numbers are helpful for the project team and the municipality in gaining an understanding of the community, no recommendation of this plan will be solely based on the population estimate or calculated AGR. Growth and development will be addressed in the Level of Service chapter and that information should be equally weighted with the contents of this chapter for decision-making purposes.

AVERAGE ANNUAL GROWTH

Average annual growth is a measure for determining the rate of growth per year over a given period. Such a measure is useful for showing the rate at which population growth is occurring year over year across a multiple-year period. With that, prior growth patterns can serve as an indicator to project the future population for a specific year. At the time of the previous parks and recreation master plan, Sanford’s AGR was estimated to be 0.72%. Data obtained from the ACS shows the City’s current annual growth rate has increased to approximately 0.96%. This is in line with that of North Carolina and is over 0.25% higher than the United States.

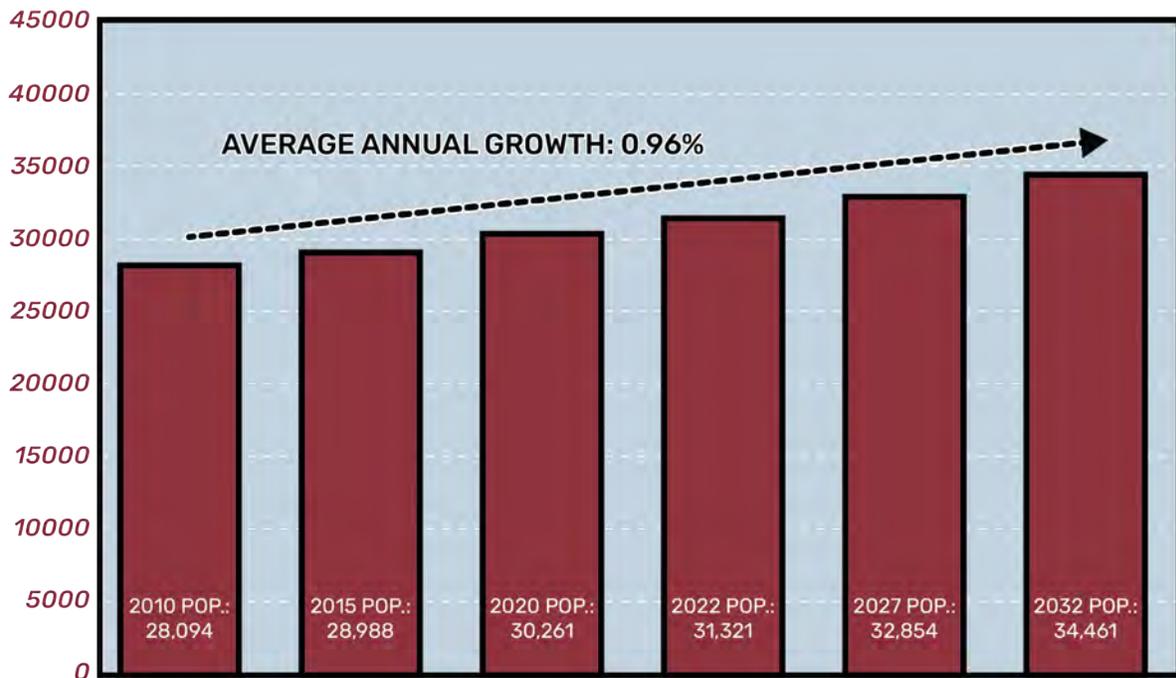
	CITY OF SANFORD 2017	CITY OF SANFORD 2022	NORTH CAROLINA	UNITED STATES
GROWTH RATE	0.72%	0.96%	0.95%	0.7%

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

The City of Sanford is experiencing above-average population growth, which is anticipated to result in slight shifts in the overall demographic composition of the City in the next 10 years.

POPULATION - 2022	POPULATION - 2032
31,321	34,461

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

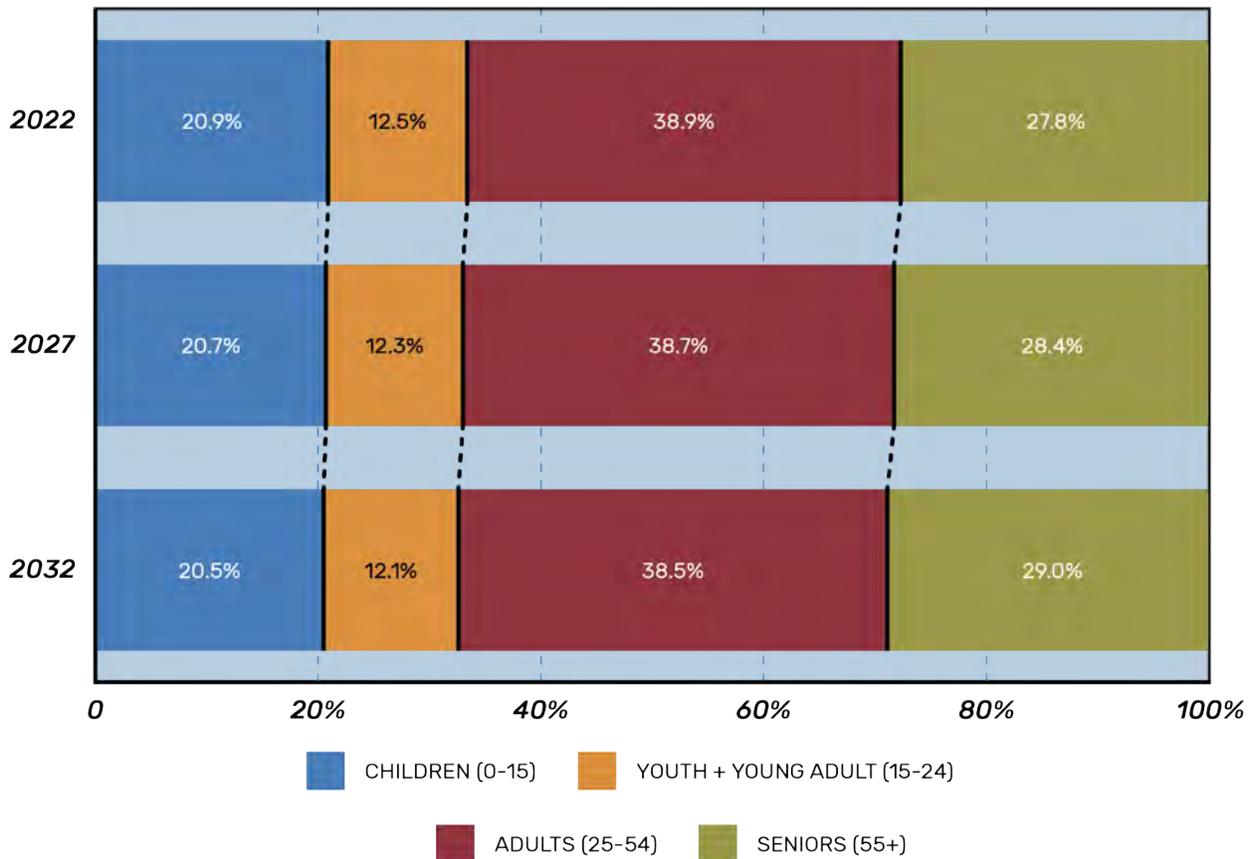


AGE SEGMENT

The following chart presents the changing proportions of the age cohorts based on population estimates and projections from 2022 through 2032. The proportional charts show a downward trend in all groups except those between the age of 25 to 34, and individuals over the age of 75. The median age in 2021 in the City of Sanford was 37.1 years, compared to 38.3 years for North Carolina and 38.1 years for the United States. Since the completion of the last plan, the demographics of the city have skewed older. The previously reported population over 65 was 11.7 percent and now sits at 16 percent with a projected increase to 17.3 percent of the population by 2032.

	CITY OF SANFORD	NORTH CAROLINA	UNITED STATES
MEDIAN AGE	37.1	38.3	38.1

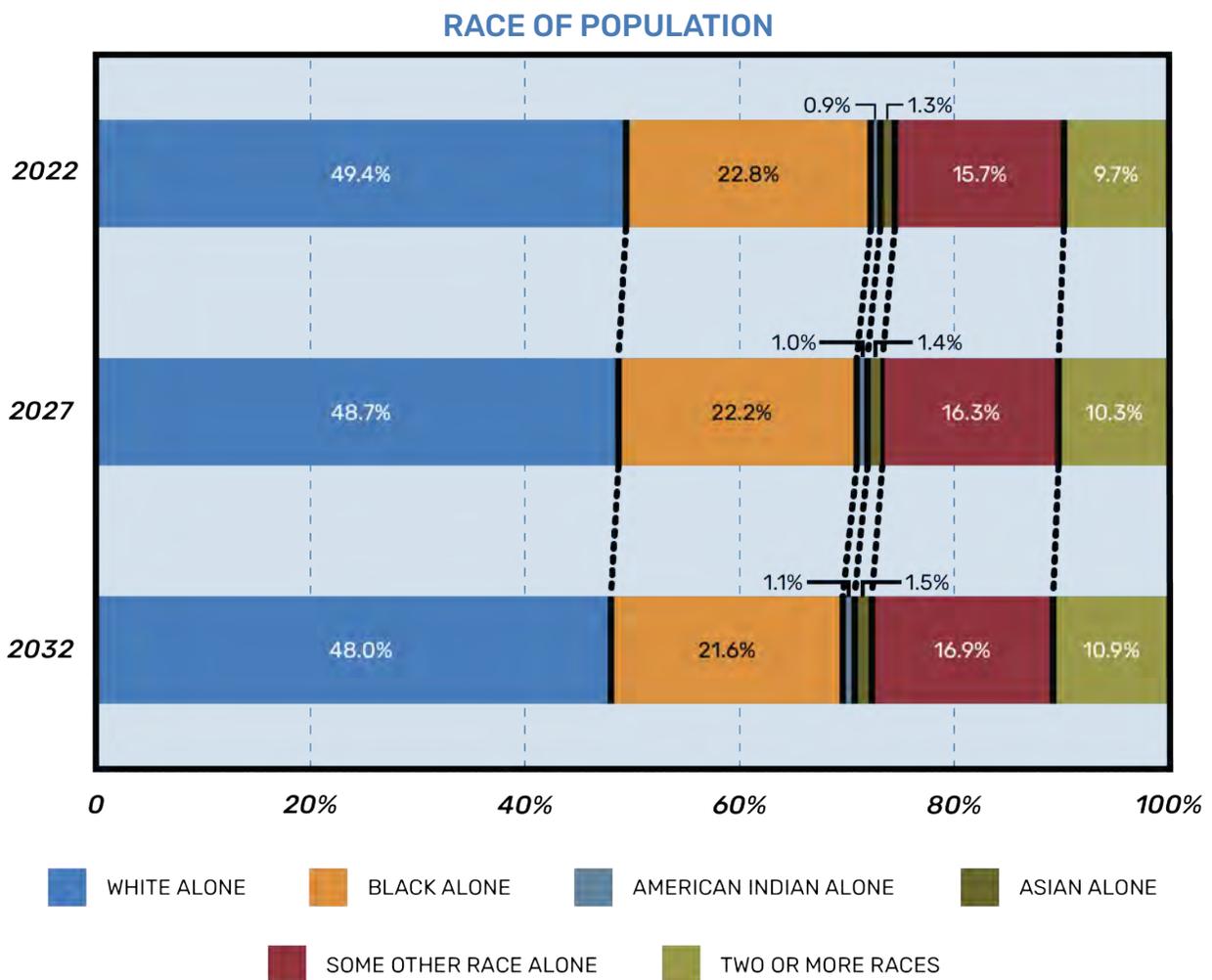
AGE OF POPULATION



*Age segmentation projections through 2032. (Sources: ESRI Community Profile)

RACE AND ETHNICITY

Estimates show that although currently Sanford residents identifying as White Alone make up less than half of the population, that percentage has increased by 5% since the 2017 parks and recreation master plan was developed. In the coming years this will shift slightly as the population of non-white individuals decreases. As seen in the chart below, the largest growth will be experienced in the portion of the population that identifies Some Other Race Alone or Two or More Races with a projected increase of 2.2 percent of the total population and 1.2 percent of the total population respectively. The percent of the population of Hispanic Origin is experiencing a slight positive annual growth rate of 0.02 percent per year and will make up 27.1 percent of the population by 2032.



NOTE: PACIFIC ISLANDER ALONE ACCOUNTED FOR 0.1% IN ALL YEARS AND CANNOT BE SEEN ON CHART

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Pew Research defines low-income households as those earning less than two-thirds of the United States median income; middle-income households as those earning between two-thirds of the country’s median income, and upper-income households as those making more than double the U.S. median income. The current U.S. median income, as documented by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, is \$79,900. Current income ranges for City of Sanford households are listed below.

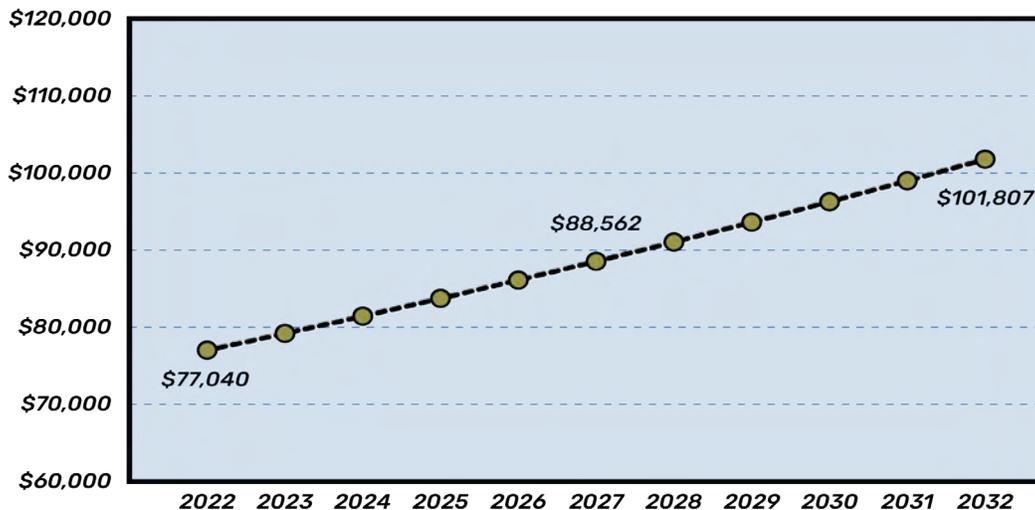
	LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLD	MIDDLE INCOME HOUSEHOLD	UPPER INCOME HOUSEHOLD
HOUSEHOLD INCOME	< \$53,269	\$53,269 - \$159,800	> \$159,800

Currently, 42.2 percent of households in Sanford would be classified as low-income based on the Pew Research metric; 43.9 percent would be considered middle-income, and 13.9 percent would be considered upper-income. Low-income households are experiencing a strong negative growth trend in Sanford. This indicates that as a portion of all households, those earning less than \$75,000 will be fewer than they are currently yet will remain a sizable portion of the population. Low-income households currently, make up 57.9 percent of all households, by 2032 that number is expected to fall to 51.3 percent. Households earning between \$100,000 and \$200,000 are experiencing strong positive growth (increase of 6.2 percent of households by 2032) with households earning between \$100,000 and \$150,000 growing the fastest with an average annual growth rate of 0.58 percent.

The average household income in 2022 according to the ESRI Community Profile was \$77,040 – a figure that is projected to increase to \$103,446 by 2032. The current median household income is \$51,311, which is an increase from the previous plan, which had the median income in 2015 as \$44,391.

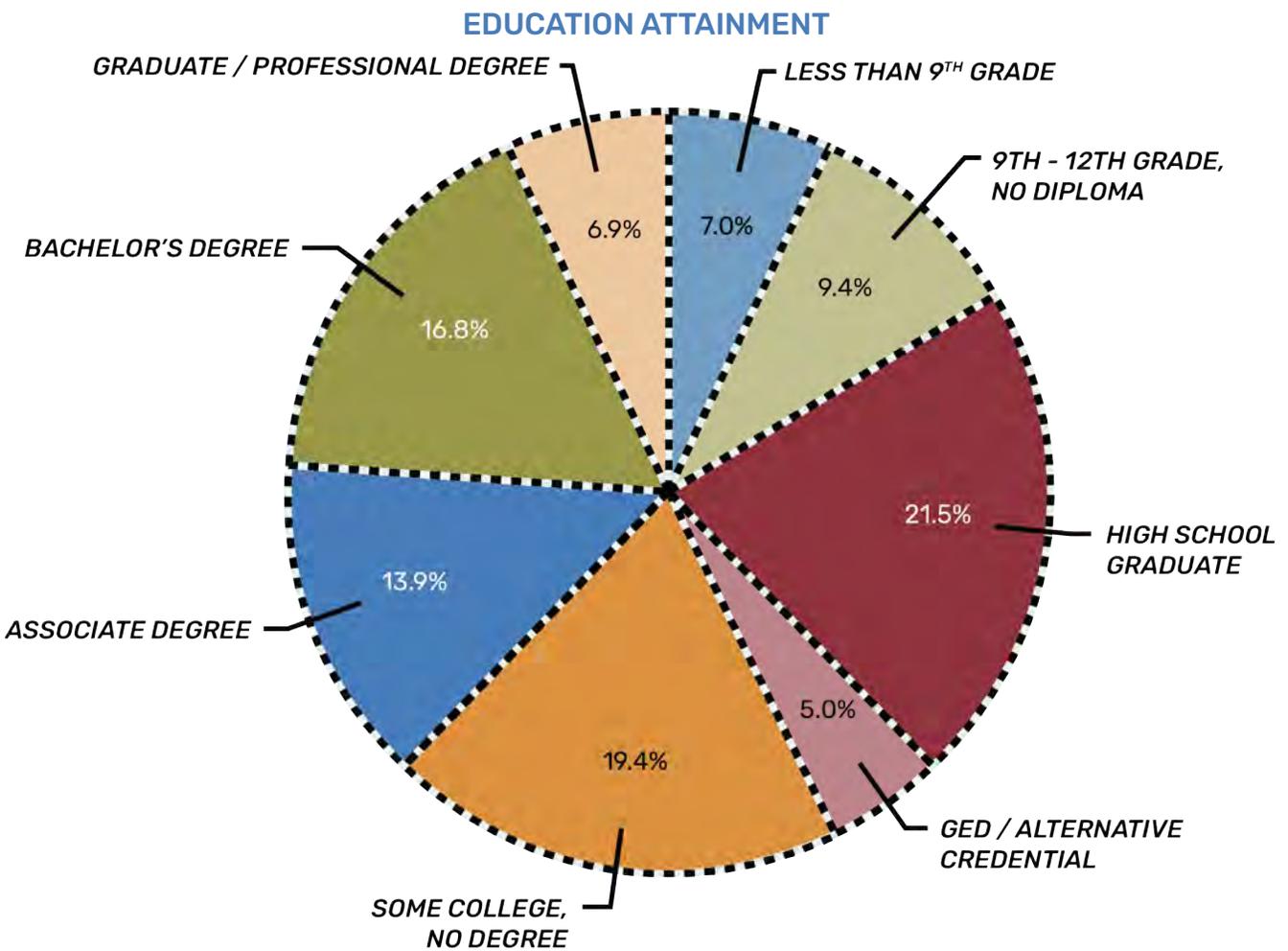
CITY OF SANFORD	NORTH CAROLINA	UNITED STATES
\$77,040	\$54,602	\$67,521

AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME



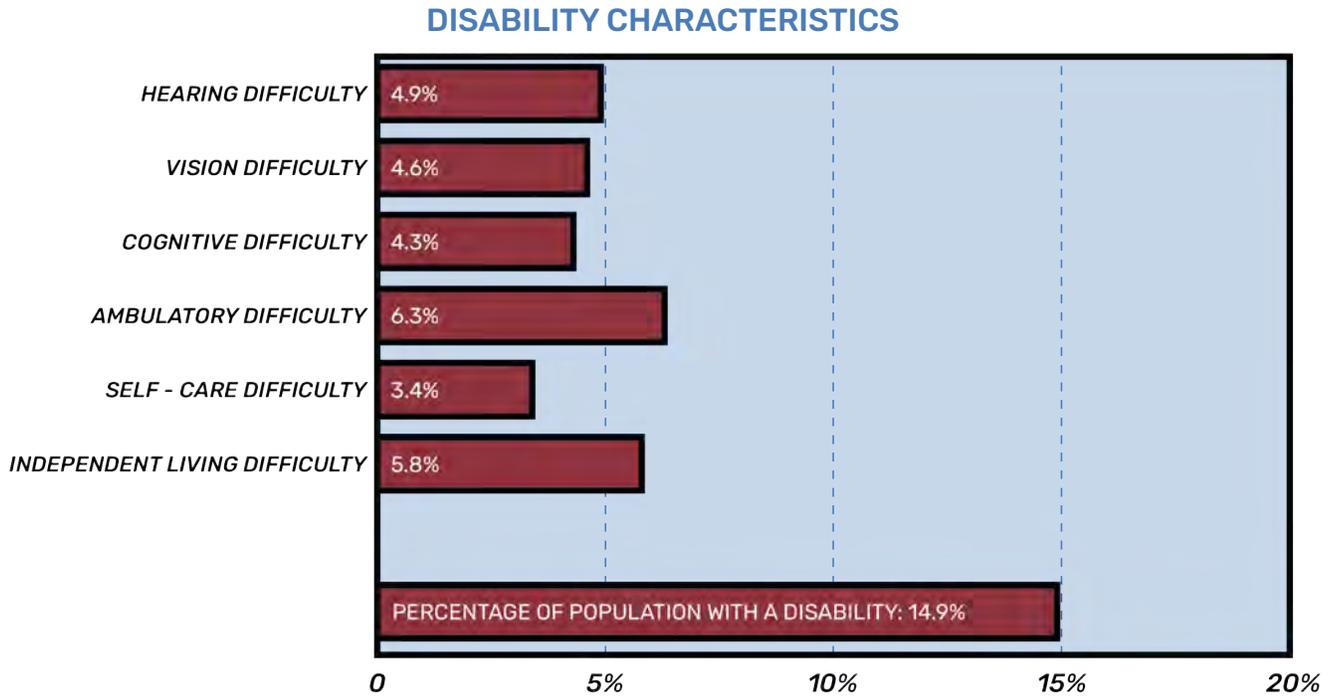
EDUCATION

The City of Sanford's population, according to estimates for 2022, has higher attainment of degrees and diplomas than the United States. More than 57 percent of the population has an education beyond high school compared to 45.2 percent for the United States as a whole. However, 16.4 percent of the population of Sanford does not have a high school diploma or equivalent, compared to 10.2 percent for the United States. The proportion of population with at least a high school diploma has increased nearly 10 percent from the time the last plan was completed and the percentage of the population with at least a bachelor's degree has increased by 2.5 percent.



DISABILITY STATUS

The portion of the population within Sanford that has at least one recognized disability is 14.9 percent which is an increase of approximately 4.9 percent from the figure presented during the previous planning effort. Some of this growth can likely be attributed to a population that is older than it was during the previous plan. The most common disability is difficulty walking.



TRENDS

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 local and national recreation and activity trends as well as prevailing trends across the parks and recreation industry. All of these components will likely impact the provision of leisure services in the City of Sanford over the 10-year planning period.

OVERVIEW

Local recreation trends are sourced 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. Demand for recreational activities is measured upon 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 City'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.

Prevailing industry-wide 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 2022 by the Physical Activity Council (PAC), resulting in a total of N= 18,000 online interviews. A 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

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)

305,439,858 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 versus 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.

LOCAL RECREATION TRENDS

Local recreation trends were gleaned from ESRI’s market potential index profile for the City of Sanford. The table below lists the parks and recreation activities most popular among Sanford residents as indicated by having the highest Market Potential Index (MPI). Market Potential data provides details about what type of goods, services, activities consumers use and demand. The data includes consumer attitudes on topics such as spending, health, and the environment.

The percentages included in the tables below indicate the estimated proportion of Sanford residents that participate in the activities listed. Although some of the percentages may seem either high or low, when they are paired with their MPIs we can determine the level of demand for a particular activity among Sanford residents. MPI values that equal 100 represent national demand. Values greater than 100 represent higher demand, while values less than 100 represent lower demand. For example, an index of 130 implies that demand in the area is likely to be 30 percent higher than the U.S. average; an index of 85 implies that demand that is 15 percent lower.

The contents of the first table include activities participated in by 10 percent or more of Sanford residents yet are associated with a MPI score indicating there is less demand for that activity in Sanford than at the national level. The second table contains activities participated in by small percentages of Sanford residents yet are associated with a MPI score greater than 105 – indicating there is more demand for that activity in Sanford than at the national level.

WALKING FOR EXERCISE	SWIMMING	HIKING	WEIGHTLIFTING	JOGGING/ RUNNING	ROAD BICYCLING
29% MPI: 91	14% MPI: 90	13% MPI: 83	11% MPI: 89	10% MPI: 88	10% MPI: 90

VOLLEYBALL	HORSEBACK RIDING	FRESHWATER FISHING	HUNTING WITH A RIFLE	HUNTING WITH SHOTGUN	ROLLER SKATING
3% MPI: 121	2% MPI: 118	12.3% MPI: 115	4% MPI: 107	3% MPI: 106	2% MPI: 106

The MPI analysis shows that only one of the seven most participated in recreation activities in the City (freshwater fishing) is more popular in Sanford than they are nationwide. Of the 38 recreation activities analyzed have ESRI MPI values over 100, and only 11 have a score under 90 (see appendix). This indicates that generally, recreational activities are very popular in the City but there is higher than average interest in certain specialized recreation activities such as horseback riding, hunting, and shooting.

Walking, jogging, hiking, biking, and roller skating are activities community members can participate in anywhere, though they may choose to pursue them in public parks. Others, like fishing, hunting, horseback riding, swimming and weightlifting are activities that must be pursued at specific locations and may require additional equipment and resources. The popularity of these activities among Sanford residents suggests that continuing to offer opportunities to partake in these them while investing in new resources to enhance any existing offerings would be responsive to community members’ desires.

NATIONAL RECREATION TRENDS

The current assessment gains context by understanding the popularity of fitness and recreational activities nationwide. In general, recreational activities will always experience varying degrees of momentum thereby affecting the type of leisure services provided at the local level. National trends also provide insight as to whether changes within a given year are local trends or part of a larger shift in recreational preferences.

The five fitness activities experiencing the largest growth by participants in the last year according to the Sports, Fitness and Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report are Pilates, yoga, kettlebells, dance exercise and barre.

PILATES	YOGA	KETTLEBELLS	DANCE EXERCISE	BARRE
11.6%	10.4%	6.5%	5.0%	3.8%

The top 5 fastest growing sports/activities according to the same report were skateboarding, camping, trail running, hiking, and bicycling.

SKATEBOARDING	CAMPING	TRAIL RUNNING	HIKING	BICYCLING
7.9%	7.8%	7.7%	6.0%	4.2%

While playgrounds, park shelters, and restrooms remain the most common facilities located across parks and recreation systems nationwide, trending facilities, according to Recreation Management, include: outdoor fitness areas and fitness trails, splash play areas, and walking and hiking trails.

The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) also issues an annual trends report. That report recognizes the increased integration of technology as well as a decline in youth sports participation. On technology, NRPA notes the increased use of drones for horticultural maintenance, a transition to electric maintenance vehicles and mowers, and a long-term future use of pedestrian robots using public paths in parks for deliveries and other services.

NRPA also provides commentary on a steady decline in youth sports participation, which purportedly has been happening since the late 2000s and has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Citing multiple academic studies, NRPA reports that youth participation in sports decreased 7 percent between 2008 and 2018 and that most kids between the age of 6 and 12 playing a team sport had quit by age 11. Since the onset of the pandemic, 30 percent of kids have reported that they are no longer interested in picking their pre-pandemic team sports back up. NRPA promotes parks and recreation organizations using sports sampling programs that allow kids to try a variety of sports in an effort to find something that aligns with their interest and skills with low commitment and investment required on the kid and family’s part. In addition, NRPA sees a return to community-based sports in the future and that parks and recreation agencies are the most ideally positioned to be multi-sports providers.

INTERGENERATIONAL RECREATION TRENDS

Children and Nature Programming

The Cities Connecting Children to Nature (CCCN) initiative offers local officials' guidance for establishing new connections between children and nature. Children and Nature Network and other organizations have been pushing the efforts to provide the benefits of nature for all children. Parks and open spaces provide opportunity to highlight natural resources and enhance access to these areas. Nature based programming, after school, and summer camp programming in natural areas, as well as educational programming to raise environmental awareness are some of the strategies that are on the rise across the country.



Adult and Senior Programming

Many parks and recreation departments have expanded to provide adult and senior fitness, athletic, and enrichment programming. Healthy aging in parks is NRPA'S campaign to improve and maintain the health and wellbeing of older adults through parks and recreation. It is about preserving the health, independence, and social connections of older adults. NRPA'S healthy aging in parks initiative aims to improve the health and wellbeing of older adults through parks and recreation by the following strategies:

- › Chronic Disease Prevention and Management: Dissemination and increased sustainable supports for evidence-based chronic disease prevention and management programs.
- › Food Security: Improved access to healthy foods.
- › Social Isolation: Increased opportunities to establish strong and healthy social connections.

Committing to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

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."

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

INCLUSIVE PROGRAMS:

- › Health and wellness programs such as cooking and nutrition programs
- › Field trips
- › Special Olympics or Paralympics
- › Therapy and mentoring services such as therapy swimming, art/music therapy
- › Technology training
- › Volunteer or employment activities including work opportunities at local parks and special events

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.

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 . 40 percent of US agencies have adopted formal inclusion

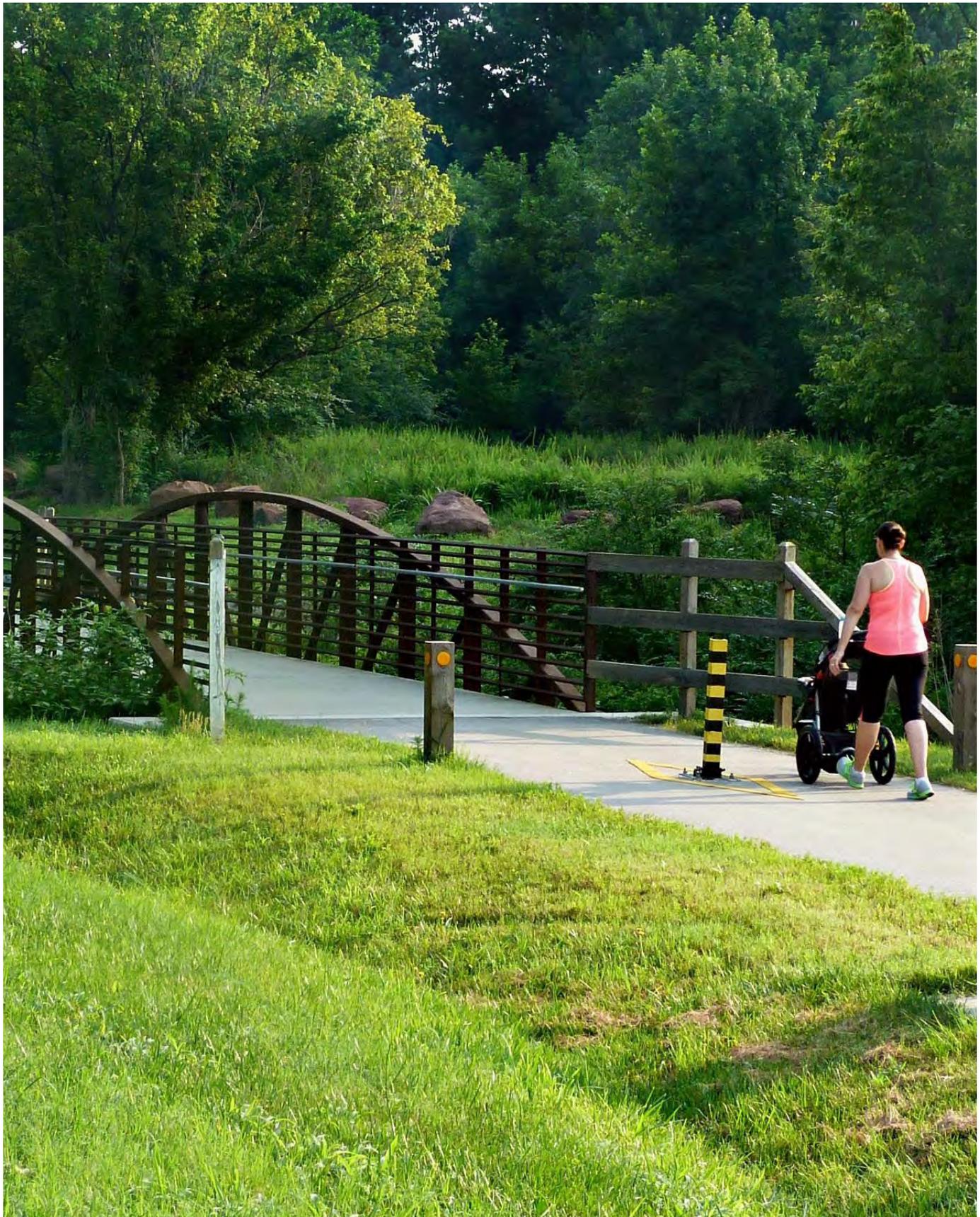
policies to maintain consistent guidelines and implementation standard across the Agency. Examples of programming for individuals with physical and cognitive disabilities include physical activity programming, volunteer and employment activities, and health and wellness programs.

Acknowledgment 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 helps brings 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.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

As Sanford's population grows and changes in the coming decade, the community's recreation needs will grow and change.

- › While population growth showed minimal change at the time of the 2017 Master Plan's drafting, the overall population growth rate has increased – indicating a need for expanding parks and recreation services and suggesting a growing tax base to support that work.
- › Compared to the 2017 Master Plan, growth among the City's adult and senior populations suggests that it would behoove the City to take a closer look at the needs and preferences of this demographic group to ensure that the services provided align with their specific desires. By considering their interests, abilities, and desires for social interaction and active lifestyles, Sanford can ensure parks and recreation services remain attractive and accessible to adults and seniors.
- › Demonstrated lower than average demand in Sanford for activities popular nationwide – like xxxxx, and higher demand for niche activities like horseback riding and archery should be considered when assessing needs and desires to make sure investments in parks and recreation facilities are making the best use of committed funding and staffing.
- › The average and median household income levels in Sanford have increased since the development of the 2017 City of Sanford Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan. This means that programs requiring financial contributions will become more attainable to residents. However, a low median income compared to the national average suggests that the City should maintain options for affordable access.
- › Sanford's already diverse racial demographics will continue to shift moderately during the next ten years, indicative of the need for equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts to ensure equitable provision of parks, facilities, amenities and programs.
- › In addition to Sanford's specific community context, emerging trends in parks and recreation include understanding the many far-reaching benefits of parks and incorporating parks and greenway planning into larger connected networks of infrastructure.





2 INVENTORY + ANALYSIS



IN THIS CHAPTER

Parks Assessment

Operations + Maintenance Assessment

PARKS ASSESSMENT

OVERVIEW

Understanding the ground realities of each City of Sanford park informs opportunities to provide high quality experiences for park visitors. The current parks assessment consisted of a systemwide parks and recreational amenity inventory and an evaluation of each of the City's parks. Both of these can be analyzed separately and at different times, but when taken together provide holistic insight into the level of service and quality that Sanford Parks is providing.

Each park owned or maintained by the City of Sanford was observed objectively and with the understanding that each park within the system is layered with complexities of natural resources that inform the land development pattern. Site topography, vegetation, water bodies, soils, and climatic conditions determine the basic structure and organization of the built environment. Additionally, the regulatory requirements, access to utilities, and infrastructure improvements further dictate the site capacity and design parameters. Furthermore, the operations and management practices determine the parks and recreational amenity conditions throughout their lifespan.

This assessment also considers the parks' intangible qualities such as park visitors' initial impressions of the space upon arrival, feelings of safety, sense of belonging, and community connections. Park systems not only fulfill the needs and desires of the community for recreation, but also provide the physical, mental, and social health benefits through diversity of amenities and programs. The visitor experience within a public space is a complex layering of physiological comfort, sense of place, perception, and personal and emotional connection with the place through one's past experiences, culture, and history.

The project team evaluated Sanford's parks focusing on several key characteristics explained below.

- **Park Infrastructure:** Do the built and natural assets within the park adequately support the intended activity or program? Are the existing support facilities adequately functioning? What infrastructure components are missing?
- **Condition + Maintenance:** What is the overall physical condition of the park? Are the recreational amenities need of replacement or improvement? Is the park maintained at a high standard?
- **Diversity of Amenities:** Has the department sought intentionally to ensure that recreation facilities across the system are varied? Is the broadest possible user-base and greatest number of residents being served?
- **Sense of Place:** Is the park a place, or simply space? Do its tangible and intangible qualities make it identifiable and meaningful to people? Are people able to identify the facility as a City of Sanford park? What meaningful and valuable aspects of user-park interactions exist? Does the park design and amenities facilitate engaging encounters? Is there opportunity for park users to co-create their experience?

DEPOT PARK (1.64 acres) - 106 Charlotte Ave, Sanford, NC 27330

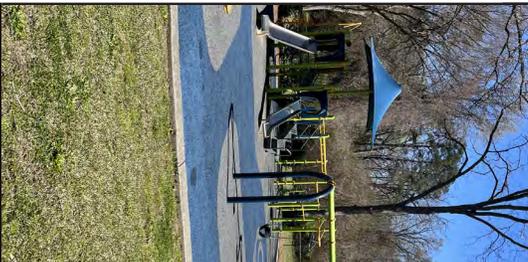
Amenities	2017 Observations	2023 Observations	Opportunities
<p>Amphitheater, Event Lawn (+750 People), interactive splash fountain, restrooms, play area, landscaping, lighting, ornamental fencing</p>	<p>Outstanding civic park. Depot Park fountain and musical events serve the public well. Is the second-most visited park in Sanford (60% have visited). Recommendation from 2010 Lee County plan was for the County to partner with Sanford to acquire the depot building. There is limited sidewalk access.</p>	<p>Unique park with well maintained amenities and grounds. The site design/layout is welcoming to most visitors. Signage is contemporary and easy to understand. Artwork and amenities are reflective of the City's history + heritage. The City has made recent upgrades to the AV system for stage performances. The site is well suited for programmed activities that take place here including Sanford City Parks' events like Eggapalooza + summer concerts). Park visitors are permitted to play in/around the water fountain, which has declined in popularity since the splashpad was installed at Kiwanis Park. Downtown Sanford, Inc.'s offices are located within the former railroad station.</p>	<p>Because the City owns the property and facilities on the site there is opportunity to consider recreational uses of the depot building - which is currently occupied by Downtown Sanford Inc. The water fountain is an iconic representation of recreation and leisure in Sanford and the park and park users would benefit from its enhancement The bollards lining the brick pathway could be removed in the absence of historical or cultural significance. There is opportunity to increase the park's visibility and subsequent usage by identifying additional programmatic features like dedicated seating areas with tables, benches and shade coverings</p>



KIWANIS FAMILY PARK (14.09) - 1800 Wicker Street

Amenities	2017 Observations	2023 Observations	Opportunities
 <p>Playground (PIP Surfacing), Splashpad, Shelters (2), 1/2 Mile Asphalt Walking Loop, Restrooms, Site Amenities</p>	<p>This is a passive park with large open lawn. Largely used as a Civic Park, Kiwanis Family Park has a playground, walking trails, restrooms, picnic shelter, and gazebo. There are opportunities to connect this park to other facilities along Persimmon Creek and Skunk Creek via greenway. ADA improvements are needed throughout the park.</p>	<p>In 2018, Lee County Government gave the City of Sanford the front area of Kiwanis Family Park to redevelop. In September 2019, the City unveiled a brand new inclusive playground. Sanford's first splash pad, 1/2 walking trail, 2 new shelters, and new bathroom facility No needed ADA improvements were observed. Sanford Parks is planning to install a small amphitheater on an existing concrete pad that sits between a wooded area, paved trails and playground.</p>	<p>Although all parks can be enhanced in some way, the City of Sanford's recent and ongoing improvements to Kiwanis Family Park since its acquisition in 2018 justifies the City's rationale to not invest in further capital improvements in the short term. As in 2017, the opportunity still exists to connect Kiwanis Family Park to other parks and amenities along Persimmon and Skunk Creeks via greenways.</p>

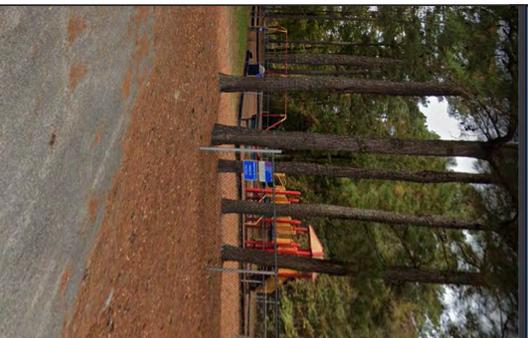
MAPLE AVENUE PARK (.36 acres) - 305 S. Fourth Street

Amenities	2017 Observations	2023 Observations	Opportunities
 <p>Playground, Benches</p>	<p>Maple Avenue Park is a new playground at the corner of Fourth Street and Maple Avenue. The park has a very nice playground with swings, slides and climbing platforms on a rubberized safety surface. Amenities include a bench and sidewalk. ADA improvements are needed throughout the park.</p>	<p>As noted in 2017, the City installed a contemporary playground with rubberized surfacing and modern play structure. Mature hardwoods shade a portion of the playground. A concrete path creates a designated entranceway. No designated parking. The park is underused due to instances of crime and vandalism.</p>	<p>Park usage is currently at a minimum due to the real and perceived threats of crime and encounters with trespassers. There is opportunity to encourage the public's use of Maple Avenue Park by activating/drawing positive attention to it through special events / weekend's events.</p>

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. MEMORIAL PARK (1.59 acres) - 645 S. Horner Blvd.

Amenities	2017 Observations	2023 Observations	Opportunities
 <p>Brick memorial wall with Dr. King's image. Benches, Decorative Lighting, Flag poles, planters</p> <p>Future park improvements include a landscaped noise barrier, bridge to access a parking lot, a walking trail</p>	<p>Very nice civic memorial for Martin Luther King Jr. located on Horner Boulevard at Washington Avenue.</p> <p>The park includes a brick monument with sculpture of Dr. King.</p> <p>Other amenities include flags, ornamental lights and benches.</p>	<p>There were no observed physical changes to the site and amenities since 2017.</p> <p>There is no designated parking.</p> <p>Sanford Parks conveyed to the team that there may be an option for the City to retain control of what is now a through street adjacent to the backside of the property. This would allow the City to install designated paved parking, allowing enhanced public access to the park site.</p> <p>The memorial structure is located at the front of the park, adjacent to busy rte. 421 business.</p>	<p>There is opportunity to enhance visitor accessibility and experience with dedicated parking, sidewalk connectivity and an ADA route to the monument.</p> <p>The park is bisected by a stream and dense vegetation, with one side comprised of flat, grassy open space and the other at the top of the park's highest point where the monument rests. Connecting the two sides would encourage a variety of recreational activity and increase visitation to the park site.</p> <p>Because the site is located within a residential neighborhood, residents should be consulted and feedback</p>

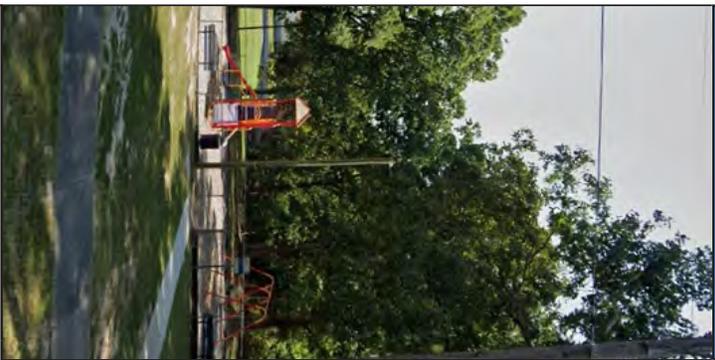
CARR CREEK PARK (.49 acres) - 2645 Mt. Pisgah Church Road

Amenities	2017 Observations	2023 Observations	Opportunities
 <p>Playground, Benches</p>	<p>Carr Creek Park is a Mini Park with a small modular play structure.</p> <p>The park is fenced with a separate fence surrounding the play structure.</p> <p>A small gravel parking area is provided. ADA improvements are needed throughout the park.</p>	<p>The park is on the outskirts of Sanford, within the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction</p> <p>There were no observed physical changes to the site and amenities since 2017</p> <p>A picnic table with grill is located next to the fenced playground</p> <p>Most of the park is shaded by mature pines</p> <p>The playground is located on Mt. Pisgah Church road with 55 MPH speed limits</p>	<p>There is opportunity to enhance the aesthetics and overall feelings of comfort and being welcome at Carr Creek Park by repairing or preferably replacing the outer fence with something shorter, more durable, and more visually appealing.</p> <p>Larger groups/gatherings could be accommodated with a covered seating amenity with benches and tables. The City has the opportunity to recover parks and recreation spending costs with fees collected for amenity rentals.</p>

ENDOR IRON FURNACE GREENWAY			
Amenities	2017 Observations	2023 Observations	2023 Observations
 <p>The Endor Iron Furnace Greenway is a 1.43 mile paved trail that leads from Caribonton Road to Boone Circle. Donald Buie Memorial Trailhead- Located off Douglas Dr.</p>	<p>Phase 1 of the Greenway was completed in 2011 using funds from the Federal Highway Administration and Sanford City Council. In 2013, voters approved a \$14.5 million bond package that included \$4 million in Greenways and Trails Bonds. The Greenway is Lee County's premier facility for walking, running, and biking</p>	<p>The City had planned to issue the \$4 million in 2020 to extend the current greenway toward downtown. However, due to the fiscal impact of the pandemic, the City has put the greenway extension on hold. Sanford hopes to work with Lee County and community partners to extend the Endor Iron Furnace Greenway all the way to the historic Endor Iron Furnace.</p>	
WALTER MCNEIL JR. NEIGHBORHOOD PARK (1.03 acres) - 917 Martin Street			
Amenities	2017 Observations	2023 Observations	Opportunities
 <p>Playground, Benches, Horseshoe Pit</p>	<p>This park is named in honor of Walter McNeil, Jr. was the first Black person elected to Sanford City Council and became the longest serving Council member in the City's history. The park provides a large playground structure with swings, slides and climbing platforms. The park also provides horseshoe pits and grills. The site is relatively open and has many large pines to provide shade. There is space for parking, although it is unpaved. ADA improvements are needed throughout the park.</p>	<p>There were no noted physical changes to the park and its amenities since 2017. The park is clean, and well-maintained. There is no designated parking. The playground's location is ideal - in the back corner of the park under mature shade. Adjacent and uses of residential property may negatively impact the park's usage.</p>	<p>Although it is located on a cul-de-sac, the park would benefit from parking, consistent signage, and updated furnishings. Similar to Sanford's other neighborhood parks, this park would benefit from playground improvements and additional amenities like looped trails and seating areas. There is opportunity to formally recognize Councilman McNeil, Jr.'s contribution to the City as its first African American member of Council with signage, kiosks, etc.</p>

THIRD STREET NEIGHBORHOOD PARK (1.39 acres) - 228 North Avenue

Amenities	2017 Observations	2023 Observations	Opportunities
<p>Playground, Benches</p>	<p>This park includes a fenced play structure with swings and slide. The area is well lit and maintained and has safety surfacing. Several benches are provided at the play area and the street. Large trees provide excellent shade. ADA improvements are needed throughout the park.</p>	<p>There were no noted physical changes to the park and its amenities since 2017. The park is clean, well-maintained and inviting. There is no designated parking. The park is enhanced by its natural features like being buffered by old growth wooded corridors and its location on a corner lot within a residential neighborhood. There is a large swath of shaded open space appealing to park visitors seeking out unprogrammed space for passive leisure.</p>	<p>The park features abundant open space well suited for additional recreational amenities like sports courts, covered gathering spaces, and walking trails all of which diversify the City's recreation offerings. Park visitor experience can be improved with parking, City of Sanford brand signage, and new furnishings. Visitor's sense of being welcome would be enhanced by a corner treatment to encourage visually appealing park frontage. Intersection improvements like pedestrian signals and crosswalks would create safe crossings. Sidewalk expansion could double as a greenway connection to downtown.</p>



SUNSET PARK (2.94 acres) - 533 Sunset Drive

Amenities	2017 Observations	2023 Observations	Opportunities
<p>Undeveloped greenspace with large shade trees and a bench</p>	<p>None noted in plan.</p>	<p>This park/public greenspace is located in one of Sanford's historic and most affluent neighborhoods. Old-growth hardwoods create a natural property boundary. A short concrete path allows for visitors to explore a portion of the property. There is no designated parking.</p>	<p>The park's visibility would be enhanced by maintaining vegetation via clearing underbrush and opening up sight lines. This property rests within a historic, residential neighborhood and is currently not programmed as a park, therefore it is important to involve neighborhood residents in planning for the future of the site. There is opportunity to emphasize the site's woodlands character by keeping amenities to a minimum. Suggestions include gardens, paved or unpaved loop trails, small play area, designated covered seating.</p>



OPERATIONS + MAINTENANCE ASSESSMENT

The Sanford community supports the City's existing parks and recreational activities and are asking for more. In many instances, the requests are from new residents who have moved to Sanford from communities with parks and recreation departments providing a wider range of resources. As such, new residents may expect more from Sanford than the City currently provides. Robust demand for high-quality parks, recreational amenities, and greenways in growing communities is driven by a combination of factors, including population growth, a focus on quality of life, health considerations, economic benefits, property values, and the diverse needs and interests of residents.

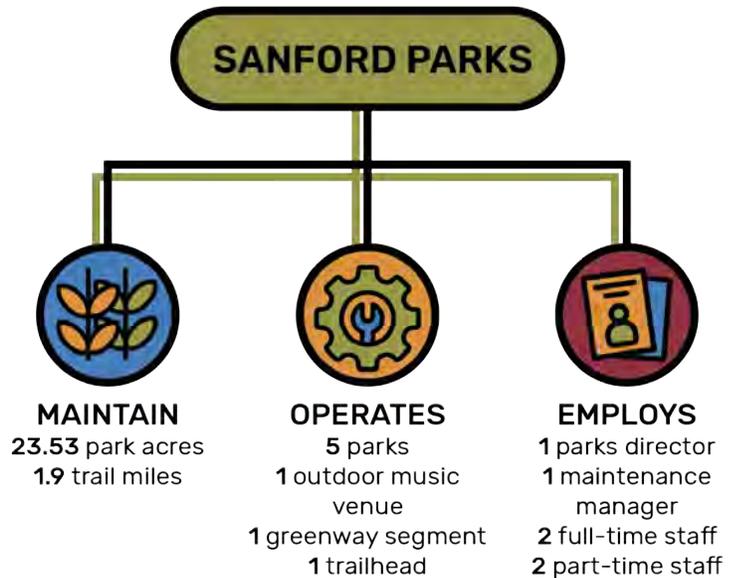
Recognizing and meeting this demand

contributes to the overall attractiveness and quality of life within any community.

City leadership is committed to providing a well-functioning, clean and safe park system as well as high-quality recreation activities and events for its residents and visitors. Therefore, an assessment of maintenance and operations is an integral component of the current comprehensive parks and recreation master plan update. This evaluation seeks to qualify additional aspects of parks and recreation management not addressed in the 2017 City of Sanford Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

The following assessment considers how operational resources are applied to ensure efficient and effective functioning of parks, facilities, and amenities throughout Sanford's park system. It aims to illuminate Sanford Parks' capacity to consistently meet functionality, cleanliness, and safety standards required for the community's enjoyment and well-being. What follows is a summary of key findings from the assessment, which included on-site observations of parks and recreational amenities, a review of current maintenance and operations policies, and engagement with Sanford Parks staff.

In terms of maintenance practices, Sanford Parks does not currently utilize an operations and maintenance management plan that would include maintenance standards and asset lifecycle replacement recommendations. While asset lifecycle replacement standards are established for City vehicles and vehicular equipment, managed by the public works department, no such standards exist for playgrounds and site amenities such as tables, benches, waste receptacles, etc. Sanford Parks employs a work order system and utilizes tablets and inspection forms, indicating a commitment to utilizing technology for efficient operations. Further, there is a maintenance budget determined each fiscal year to support for larger improvements like maintaining the poured-in-place surfacing at the Kiwanis playground.



Sanford leadership has a fairly comprehensive understanding of a park system’s maintenance needs, it is important to have records of the time and funding expenditures required to achieve all maintenance needs, so the department can be adequately 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.

Operations refers to the standard procedures that guide daily, seasonal, annual, and ongoing departmental functions. These functions will vary depending on the parks and recreation agency’s mission, purpose, and the types of activities it offers. For example, some agencies own and maintain recreational amenities and facilities like athletic fields but do not have a role in providing sports programs; they instead rent the fields to sports leagues for a fee. Other agencies play the role of both amenity and program provider. Agency functions of the latter type would include administration and strategies for addressing the staff needed to adequately maintain the existing park systems and manage programming. Parks and recreation agencies take a variety of shapes, and no matter the shape, each plays a vital role in the health and well-being of the communities they serve.

CITY OF SANFORD Population: 31,321 Park Acreage: 25		NRPA Median Population: 20,000-49,999	
Parks Department Staffing Level: 1.5 FTEs/10,000 Population		Parks Department Staffing Level: 10.7 FTEs/10,000 Population (Median); 5.6 FTEs/10,000 (Lower Quartile)	
Full-Time	Part-Time		
Director	Seasonal Maintenance Worker		
Maintenance Supervisor	Seasonal Maintenance Worker		
Maintenance Worker			
Maintenance Worker			

To this end, it is critical to ensure parks and recreation agencies are adequately staffed and operating at an optimal scale to meet demand and ensure that parks and amenities are clean, safe, and well-maintained. Similarly, high-functioning agencies have the capacity to organize and oversee a diverse range of recreational programs, activities, and events throughout the community. Agencies operating efficiently can offer an array of recreational programs and activities that cater to various interests, age groups, and abilities within the community. This diversity ensures that there are options for everyone, fostering greater community cohesion.

The City of Sanford operates and maintains seven (7) parks, an outdoor event venue, and nearly two (2) miles of greenway trails. The majority of Sanford’s park acreage and amenities are found at Kiwanis Family Park. Sanford Park’s primary role is that of park and recreational amenity provider. However,

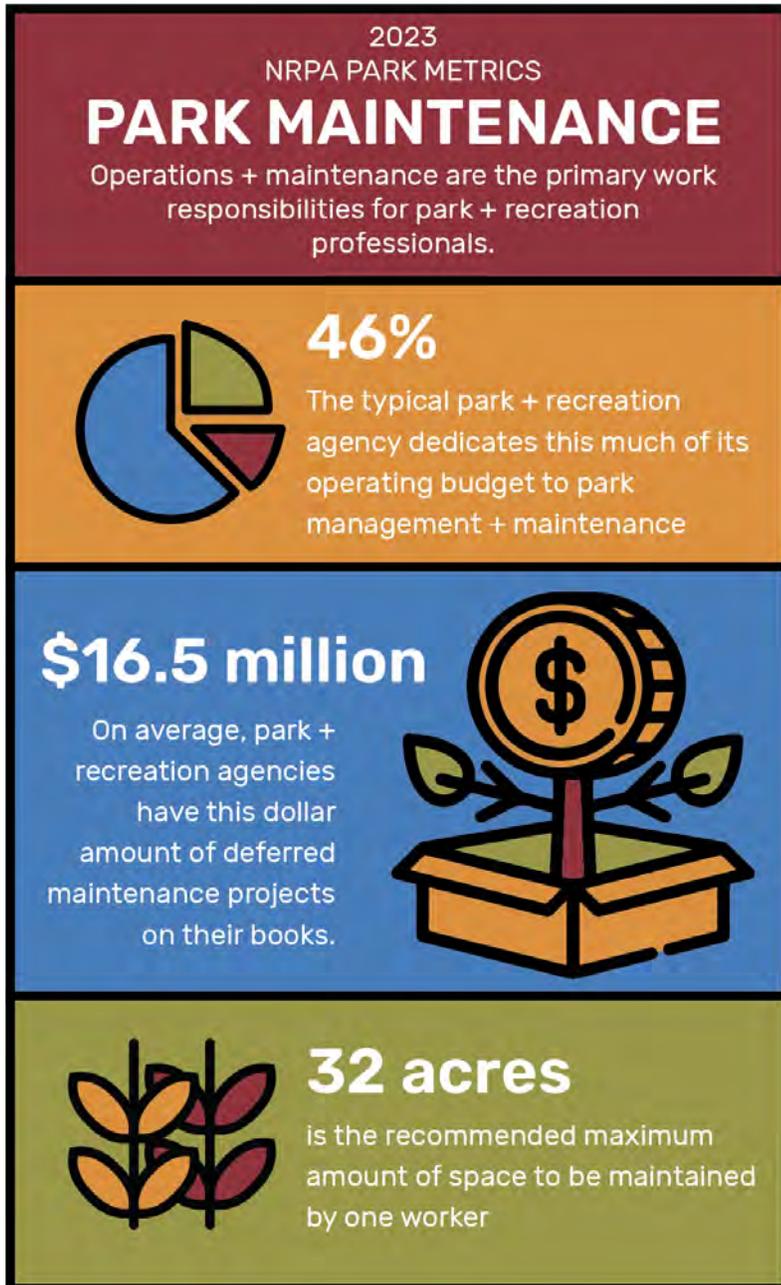
since it was established in 2017 it has expanded its role, now offering several special events, outdoor movies, and concerts to residents and visitors.

Sanford Parks has a small and effective staff comprised of a director, maintenance supervisor, two full-time maintenance workers, and two seasonal maintenance workers. Each staff member

is hard-working, professional, and are highly regarded by members of the community. Because the system provides limited recreational programs and activities, staff duties and responsibilities are centered primarily in maintenance work. Park maintenance is a critical aspect of managing and preserving public parks and recreational facilities. It encompasses a range of activities and procedures designed to ensure the functionality, safety, and aesthetic appeal of these spaces. The maintenance and operation of parks are fundamental responsibilities for any community, ensuring the safety and quality of recreational spaces. As emphasized by the National Recreation and Park Association, these tasks hold principal importance in the realm of park and recreation management.

According to the 2023 National Recreation and Parks Association Performance Review, the median number of FTEs per 10,000 residents is 10.7 for parks and recreation agencies serving communities with a population size of 20,000 to 49,999. Parks and recreation agencies operating within the lower quartile employ 5.6 FTE per 10,000 residents. With a current population of 31,321 and five (5)

FTE parks and recreation staff members, the City of Sanford is operating with 1.5 FTEs per 10,000 population. This rate is far below both the NRPA median and the lower quartile benchmark. This finding, however, must be put into the context of Sanford's park system and staff responsibilities. The NRPA Agency Performance Review's categorization of agency types by acres of parks-maintained ends with agencies maintaining 250 acres or less. Sanford Parks maintains less than 25 park



acres across a system of primarily passive recreational amenities and open space. Although it is useful to understand national benchmarks as a measure of determining success, this information mustn't be taken at face value, but rather woven into the observations of current conditions and future goals. To that end, the project team observed a high-quality park system operated by passionate staff dedicated and determined to have a positive impact on the community.

The full-time and part-time Sanford Parks staff report to the maintenance supervisor who then reports to the director. This hierarchical structure allows for a coordinated approach to park maintenance and operation. Staff indicated receiving very few complaints about maintenance or cleanliness. Instead, the majority of community feedback pertains to requests for additional amenities, indicating a generally positive perception of maintenance efforts. The staff employs a park inspection sheet that can be used on tablets for weekly playground inspections and daily park checks. Additionally, there is a staff person at Kiwanis Family Park throughout the day during the operation of the splash pad which spans from late May to mid-September.

Several noteworthy concerns and challenges came to light during the project team's discussions with Sanford Parks staff. First, staff reported that having a dedicated cart or vehicle to access the greenway and off-road areas of Kiwanis Park would help to alleviate challenges with and inefficiencies in hauling trash over long distances. Secondly, addressing playground maintenance has become imperative, as frequent breakdowns in playground equipment due to normal wear and tear demand attention and resources. Staff also reported that littering within the

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) provides park and recreation professionals across the country with the most up-to-date data that inform current and future decisions. With this, leaders are equipped with insights that help those professionals make the case to key stakeholders and elected officials for greater, more sustainable funding.

Data is a powerful tool, but does not, by itself, provide final answers to the question of what is best for your individual park and recreation agency. NRPA Park Metrics help inform conversations among internal colleagues, external consultants, partners, and policymakers about the role of parks and recreation.

However, there is not one single set of standards for parks and recreation because different agencies serve different communities that have unique needs, desires, and challenges. A combination of insights from NRPA data and community-specific information help public recreation providers to tailor their agency's operations offerings to meet the needs and demands of all community members .

parks primarily occurs overnight, underscoring the importance of morning cleanup efforts. Demand for additional lighting, especially in the Kiwanis parking lot emphasizes the need for enhanced illumination in specific areas within the parks and recreational spaces. Lastly, staff conveyed that the absence of a dedicated maintenance shop has highlighted the necessity for a satellite station, particularly in preparation for the anticipated growth, especially in greenways.

Other insights gleaned from the conversation with staff involved ideas relating to resources and training that would make staff's job more pleasant and productive. Staff expressed several key areas for improvement including the establishment of a designated, comfortable space at the splash pad for those required to be present throughout the day. They believe that a more comfortable workspace is an operational consideration to improve staff competency and effectiveness. Furthermore, staff's desire for improved ventilation within the restrooms at Kiwanis Family Park highlights the importance of enhancing support amenities within the parks to elevate the visitor experience related to increased comfort and satisfaction. Lastly, staff emphasized the need for more finely-tuned approaches in managing interactions with the homeless population, acknowledging the need to balance personal and community safety with fostering inclusivity and addressing critical needs.

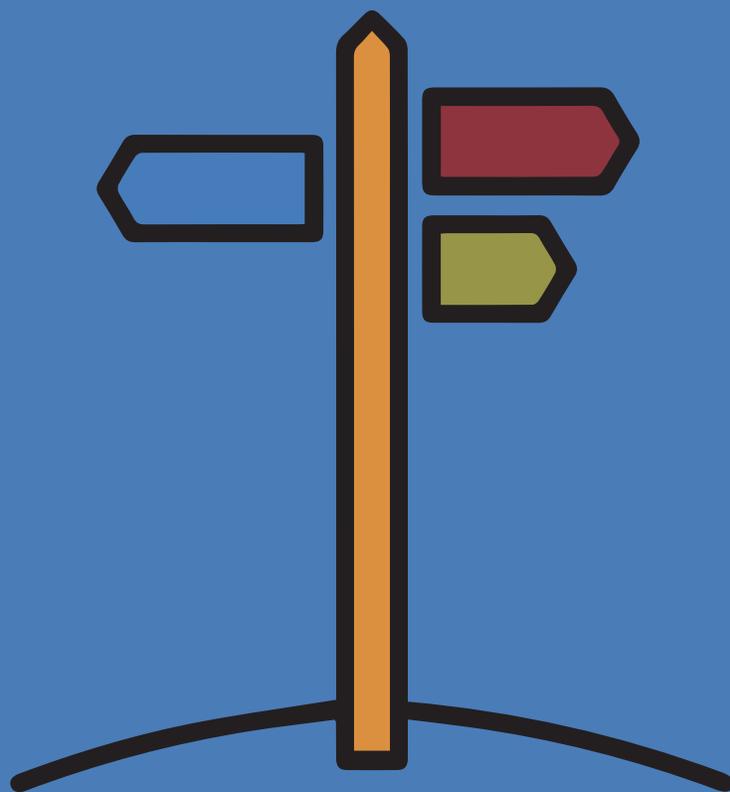
In conclusion, staff perceptions contribute to the development of strategies aimed at enhancing Sanford Parks' operational efficiency and service quality. This assessment provides insight into Sanford Parks' maintenance and operations practices. It underscores the dedication of the staff and reveals areas for potential improvement to ensure the continued provision of safe, functional, and well-maintained recreational space. Addressing the challenges identified, while building on the positive aspects, will contribute to a more efficient and effective park system in Sanford.

KEY FINDINGS

- ▶ The Sanford community is supportive of existing parks and recreational activities, but there is a growing demand, particularly from new residents, for more diverse and extensive recreational resources.
- ▶ Community feedback mainly focuses on requests for additional amenities rather than complaints about maintenance or cleanliness, indicating a positive perception of maintenance efforts
- ▶ The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) median staffing level for communities of similar size is 10.7 Full-Time Equivalent (FTEs) per 10,000 residents. Sanford operates with only 1.5 FTEs per 10,000 population, significantly below the benchmark, creating potential challenges in meeting community needs
- ▶ Concerns and challenges identified include the need for a dedicated vehicle for greenway access, addressing playground maintenance, handling overnight littering, improving lighting, and establishing a dedicated maintenance shop.
- ▶ Staff expresses the need for resources and training, including a comfortable workspace at the splash pad, improved restroom ventilation, and refined approaches to managing interactions with the homeless population.
- ▶ These improvements are seen as critical operational considerations to enhance staff competency and effectiveness.

- › Sanford Parks lacks an operations and maintenance management plan for comprehensive record-keeping and budgeting. A well-planned maintenance strategy, accounting for time and budget requirements, is essential for adequately staffing and funding the department to meet short-term, long-term, and unplanned maintenance needs.
- › Staff perceptions contribute to the development of strategies aimed at enhancing Sanford Parks' operational efficiency and service quality, addressing challenges, and building on positive aspects for a more effective park system
- › Addressing challenges while capitalizing on positive aspects will contribute to building a more efficient and effective park system in Sanford.





3 GREENWAYS + TRAILS



IN THIS CHAPTER

Greenways + Trails Assessment

Related Greenways Planning + Policy

Policy Recommendations

Funding Considerations

Evaluation + Prioritization

Priority Projects

GREENWAYS + TRAILS ASSESSMENT

OVERVIEW

The City of Sanford is interested in expanding the greenway network to enhance bicycle and pedestrian safety and the ability to use alternative modes of transportation to get to key destinations within the City. The need for an expanded greenway network is identified in previous plans including the 2017 Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the recently adopted Lee County Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan. The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the existing conditions of the greenway system, identify new opportunities, and make recommendations for future greenway planning efforts.

EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

The project team surveyed existing conditions, reviewed relevant planning efforts and policies, and conducted an opportunities and constraints analysis to gain a better understanding of greenway needs for Sanford. Findings gathered were used to inform policy, program, and network recommendations made for the Greenway Planning component of the City of Sanford Parks, Recreation and Greenways Master Plan Update.

The Existing Conditions Analysis includes the following:

- Mapping Analysis
- Previous Planning Efforts
- Policy Review
- Opportunities + Constraints



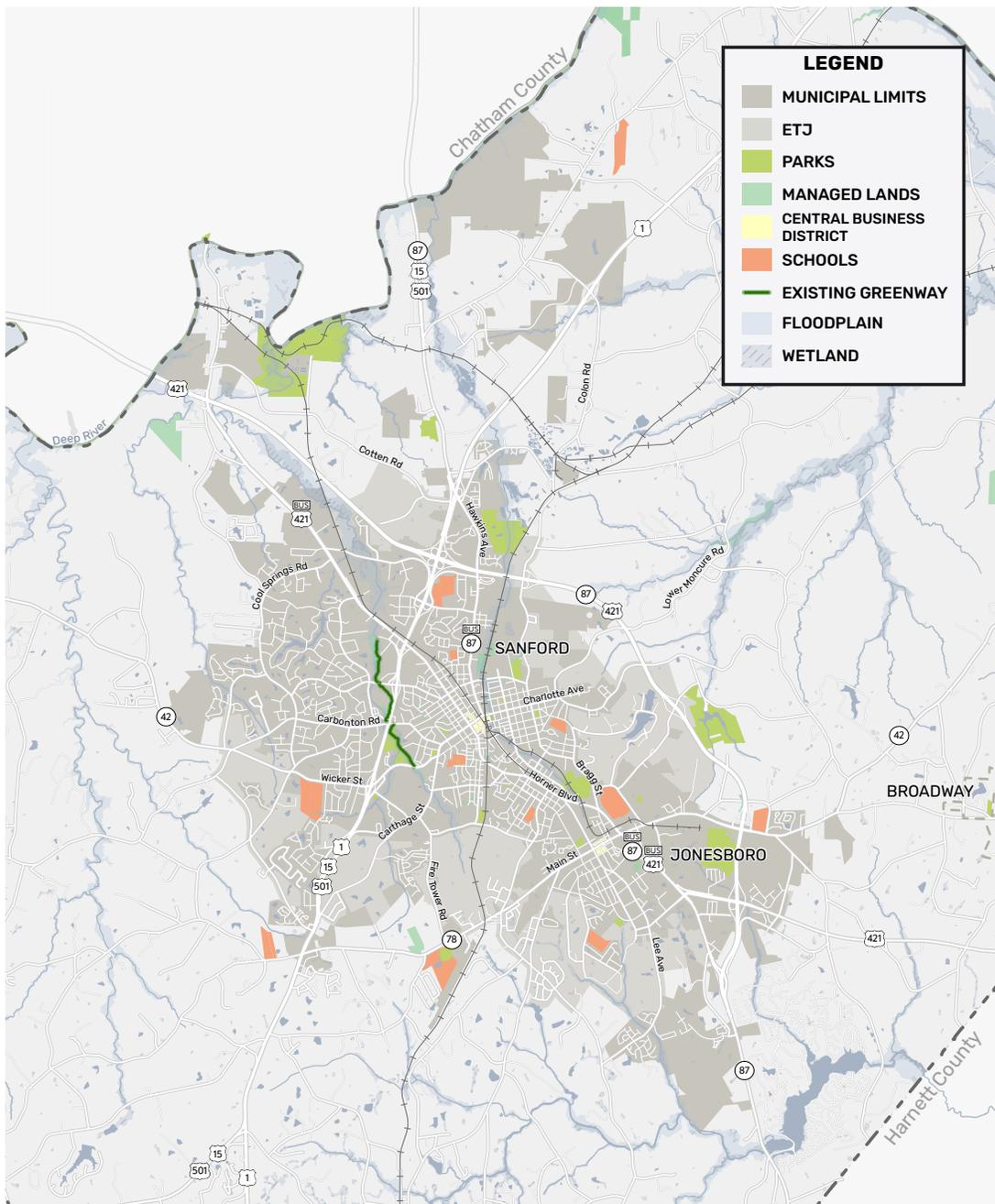
MAPPING ANALYSIS

The project team used geographic information systems (GIS) to prepare detailed maps of the study area, comprising Sanford city limits and the extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ). Environmental features such as floodplains, wetlands, and topography were analyzed and juxtaposed with previous City of Sanford planning considerations such as land use and previous greenway proposals. Lastly, roadway characteristics such as traffic volumes, speed limits, and right-of-way (ROW) were analyzed to create an understanding of the existing conditions in Sanford as they relate to greenway development.



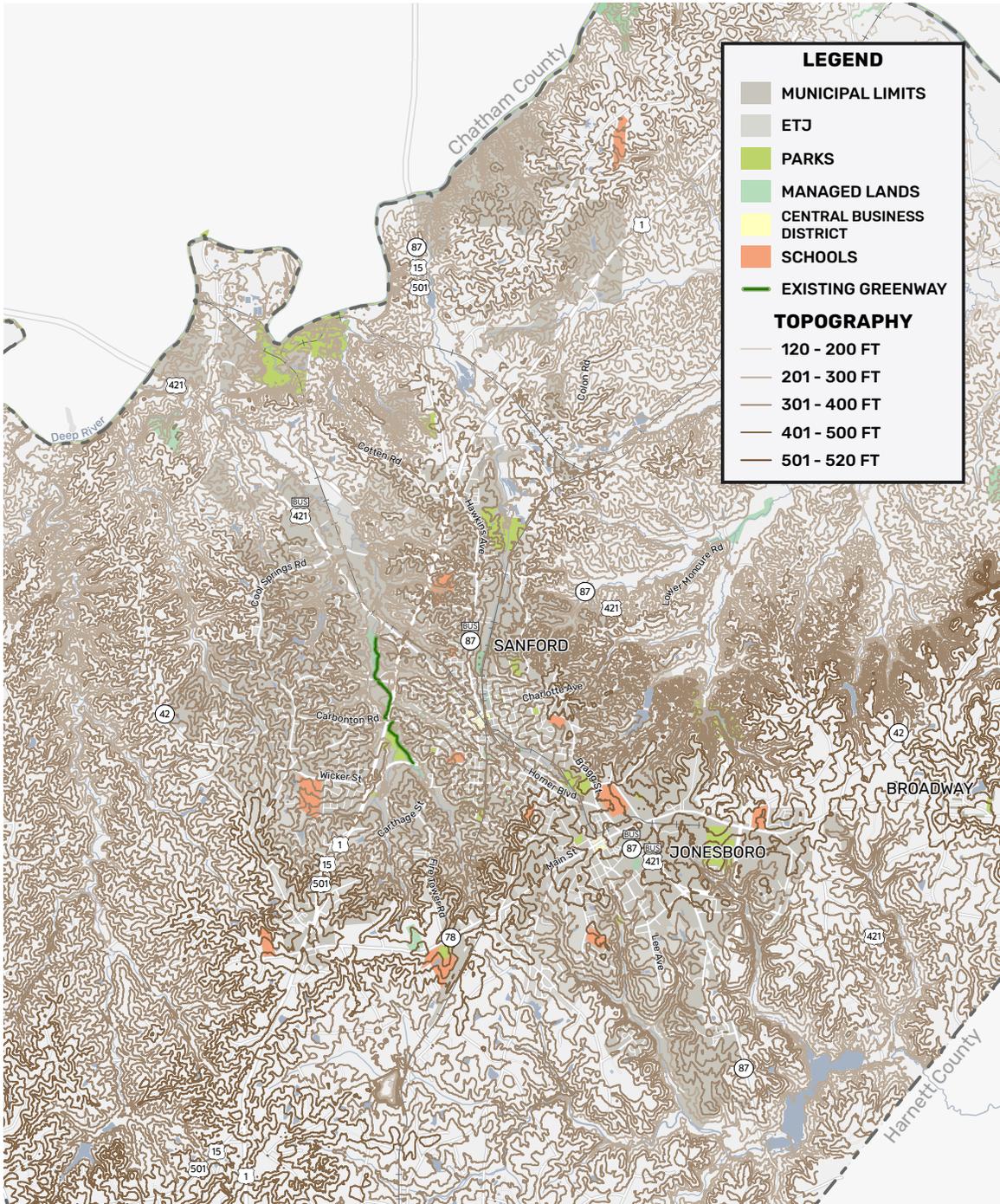
FLOODPLAINS + WETLANDS

Sanford lies within the Cape Fear River Basin, with most streams draining north and east to the Deep River and Cape Fear River. Land along creeks including Big Buffalo Creek, Little Buffalo Creek, and Roberts Creek is classified as floodplain. Major areas classified as wetlands are found on Big Buffalo Creek between US-421 and US-421 BUS, adjacent to the Endor Iron Furnace Greenway, and along tributaries draining into the Cape Fear River. Sanford's major water bodies include Holiday Lake, Oldham Lake, and Lake Trace to the south of the city. Greenway development is restricted in floodplain and wetland areas, often requiring boardwalk structures, permitting, and flood studies that



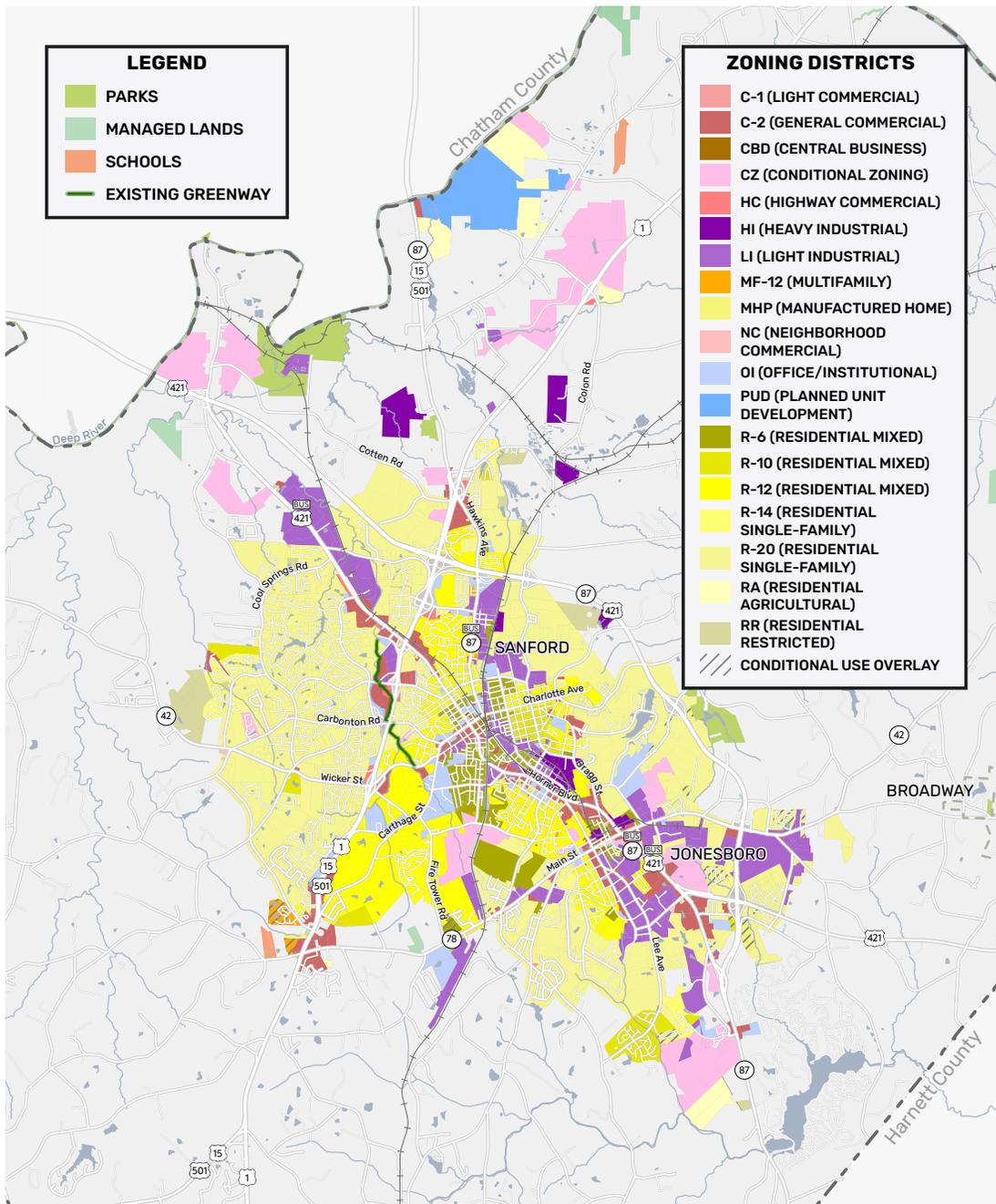
TOPOGRAPHY

The topography of Sanford varies greatly, rising from low-lying areas near the confluence of the Deep River and Haw River that are approximately 120 feet above sea level to a small ridge between Broadway and Jonesboro that surpasses 500 feet. The region is characterized by small hills and valleys carved out by streams. Sloping topography makes greenway development challenging, potentially requiring additional space or switchbacks to achieve a grade accessible for users of all ages and abilities.



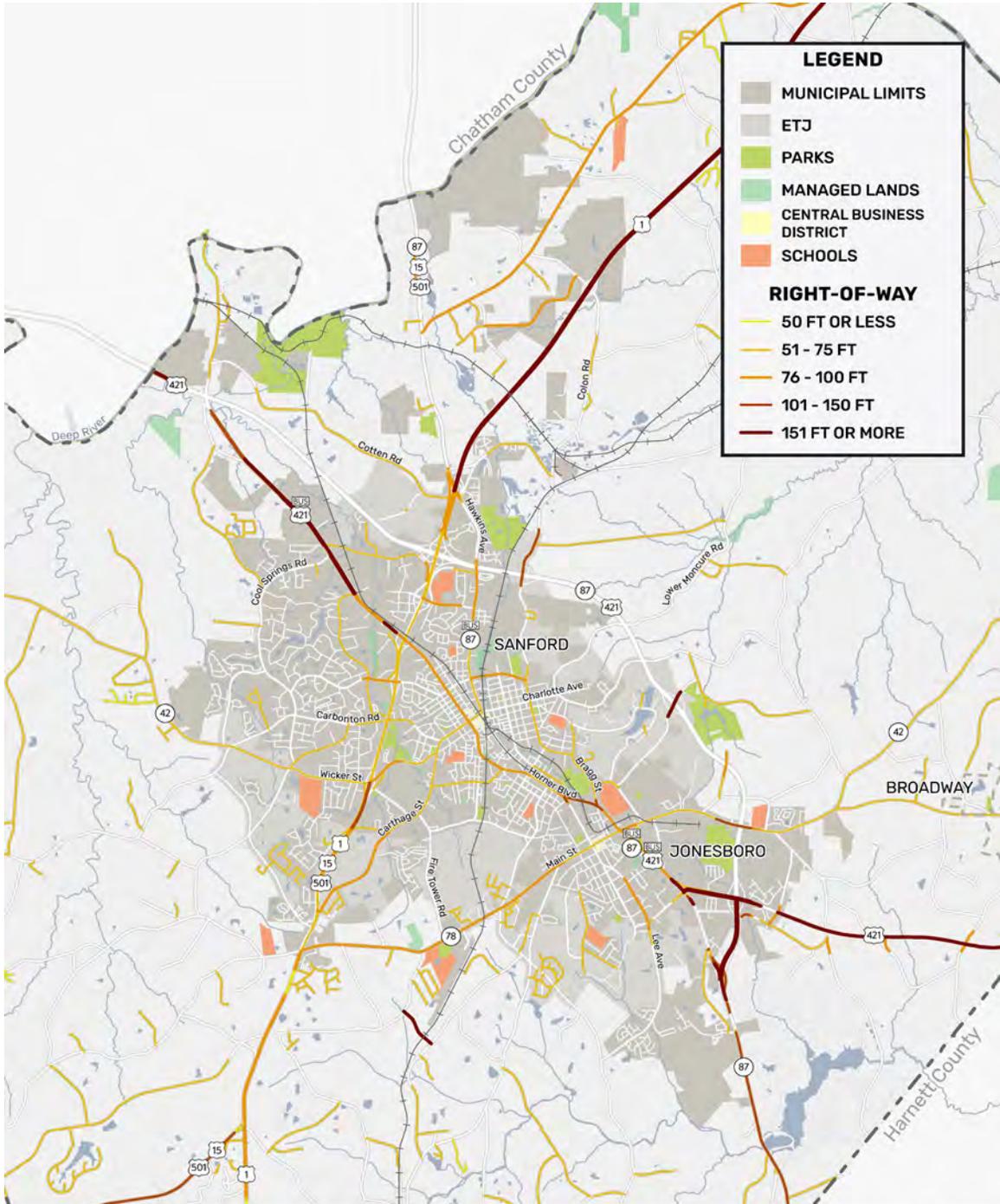
ZONING

Zoning in Sanford is characterized by a Central Business District in downtown Sanford and Jonesboro, Commercial and Highway Commercial along major roadway corridors, and Industrial zoning primarily in Jonesboro and along US-421 BUS. Large parcels in northern Lee County are zoned conditionally and for Planned Unit Development. In residential areas surrounding the downtown and commercial corridors, zoning is primarily Single-Family with some areas zoned for Residential Restricted, Residential Mixed, and Residential Agricultural. Greenways are suitable in a variety of zoning contexts and can be used to connect residential and commercial areas as well as recreational destinations and schools.



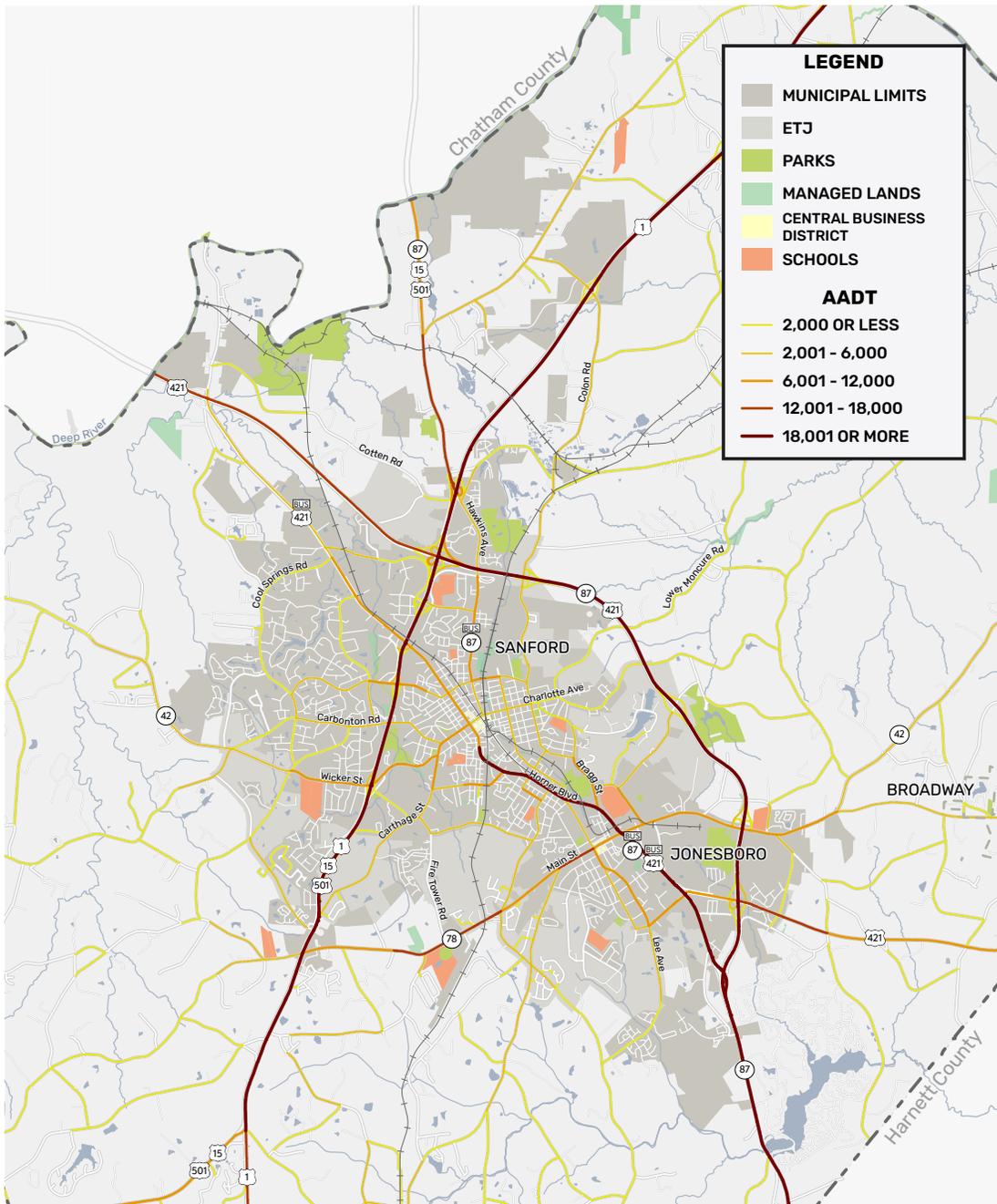
NCDOT RIGHT-OF-WAY (ROW)

In Sanford, most local roadways have a right-of-way (ROW) of between 51 and 75 feet wide. State and US-designated highways in the county have a right-of-way between 76 and greater than 150 feet. US-421, and US-421 BUS have a ROW greater than 150 feet along most of the corridor, and US-1 varies between 51 and over 150 feet. Roadways with wide rights-of-way provide potential opportunities for sidepaths within the future greenway network, but highways are not ideal corridors due to heavy and high-speed traffic that makes greenway users feel uncomfortable and unsafe.



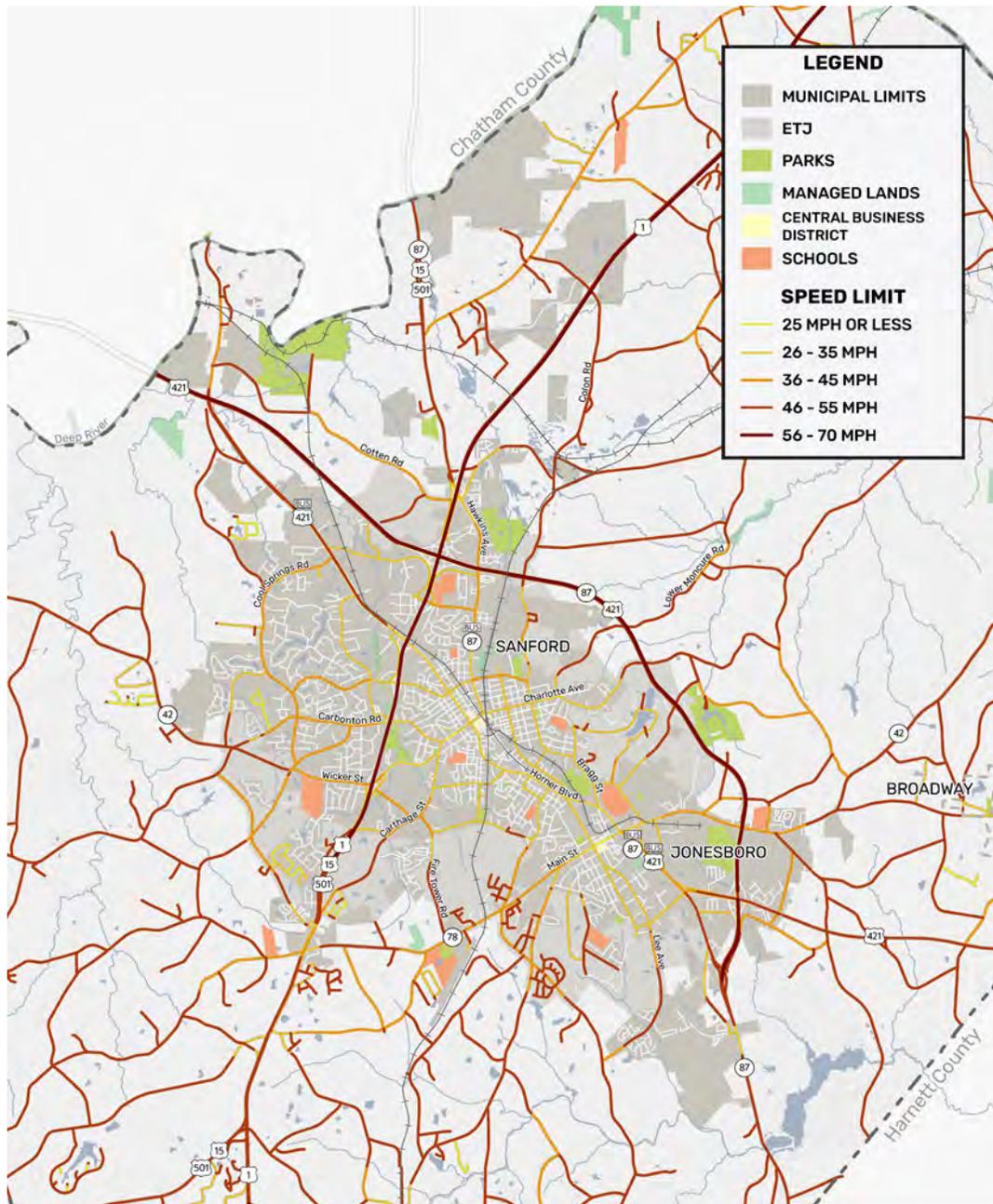
NCDOT TRAFFIC VOLUMES (AADT)

In 2021, the annual average daily traffic (AADT) for Sanford roadways ranged between less than 1,000 vehicles per day to over 43,000. The most heavily trafficked roadway in Lee County, US-1, averaged between 25,000 and 43,000 vehicles per day within Sanford city limits, followed by NC-87 and US-421 BUS with averages between 25,000 to 35,000 vehicles per day. AADT and design speeds influence clear zone requirements for the edge of the roadway. When greenways must be designed alongside roadways, high traffic volumes such as those found on US-1, NC-87, and US-421 BUS can make the facility uncomfortable and unsafe. Roads and streets carrying a low or moderate volume of traffic are preferred for greenway corridors when necessary.



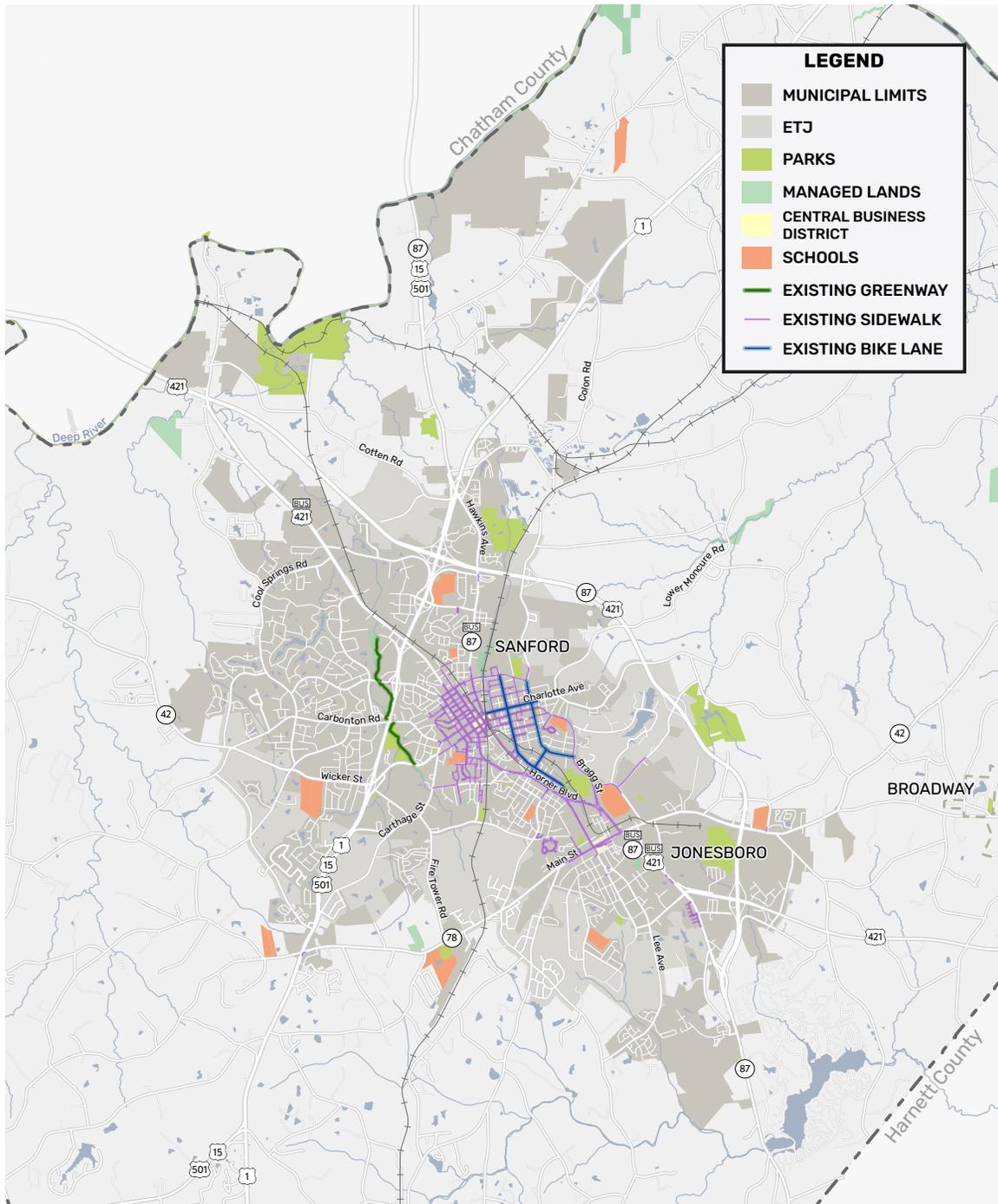
NCDOT SPEED LIMITS

Roadway speed is a key consideration when planning bicycle and pedestrian facilities along roadways and crossing treatments at intersections or mid-block locations. Sidepath may be considered for roadways with a speed limit greater than 35 miles per hour (MPH). US-1 and US-421 have the highest speed limits in Sanford with posted speed limits of 70 MPH and 65 MPH respectively, creating a barrier to bicycle and pedestrian connectivity between the central and northern parts of the city. Most rural roadways have posted speeds of 55 MPH, while local roads in Sanford typically have lower speed limits of 35 MPH or less. Roads with higher speed limits should include greater separation from bicycle and pedestrian facilities such as sidepath and include safe signal-controlled crossings where necessary..



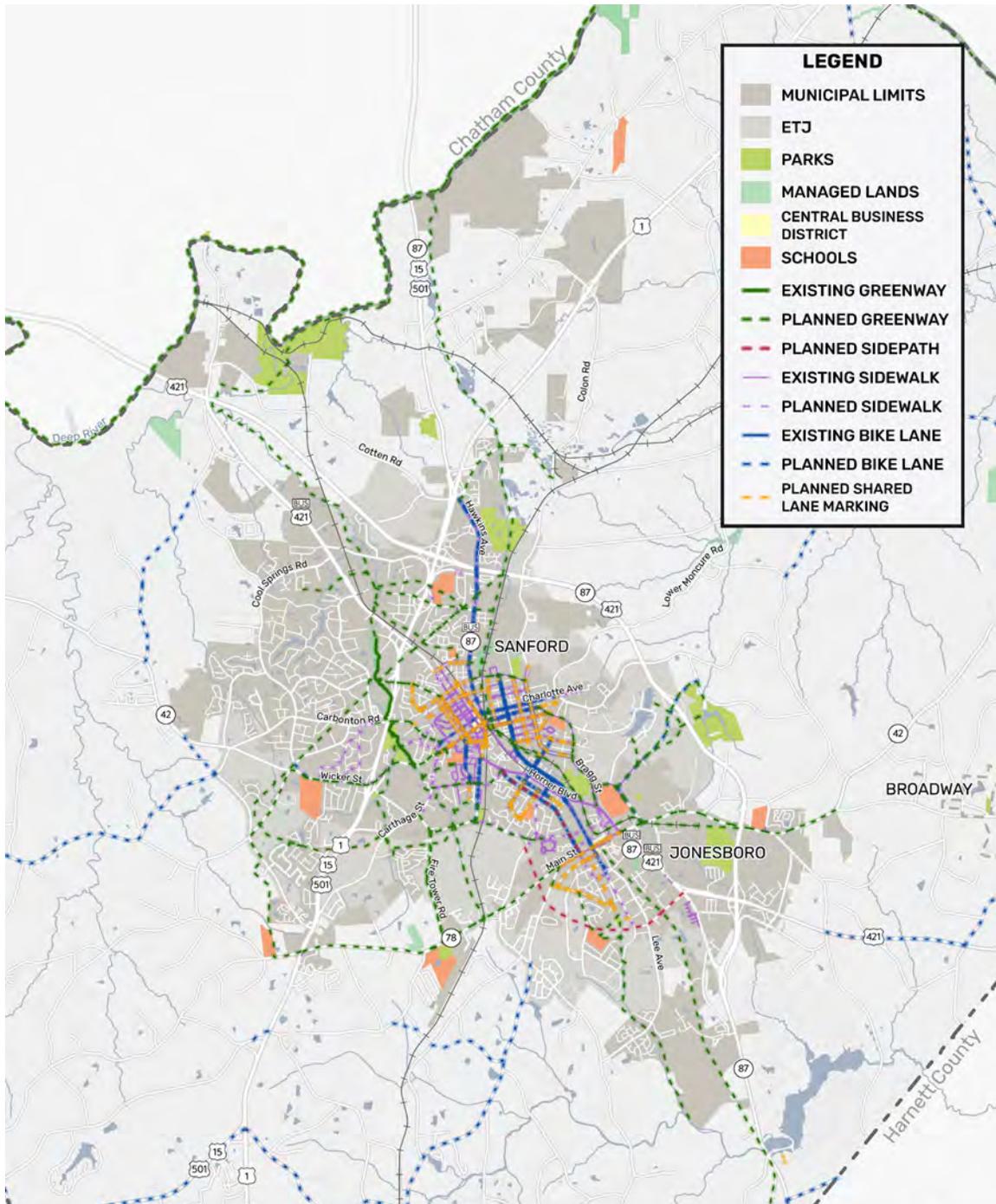
EXISTING BICYCLE + PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

Sanford has a network of sidewalks within the central region of the city as well as in the Jonesboro district, but many streets and neighborhoods outside of this area lack any pedestrian accommodations. Bicycle lanes were recently added to 3rd St, 7th St, Charlotte Ave, and Rose St through restriping, creating a small network of on-street bicycle facilities in east Sanford. The Endor Iron Furnace Greenway is the city's only existing greenway, extending from Wicker St and Kiwanis Family Park to Douglas Dr with an underpass crossing of US-1 at Carbondon Rd.



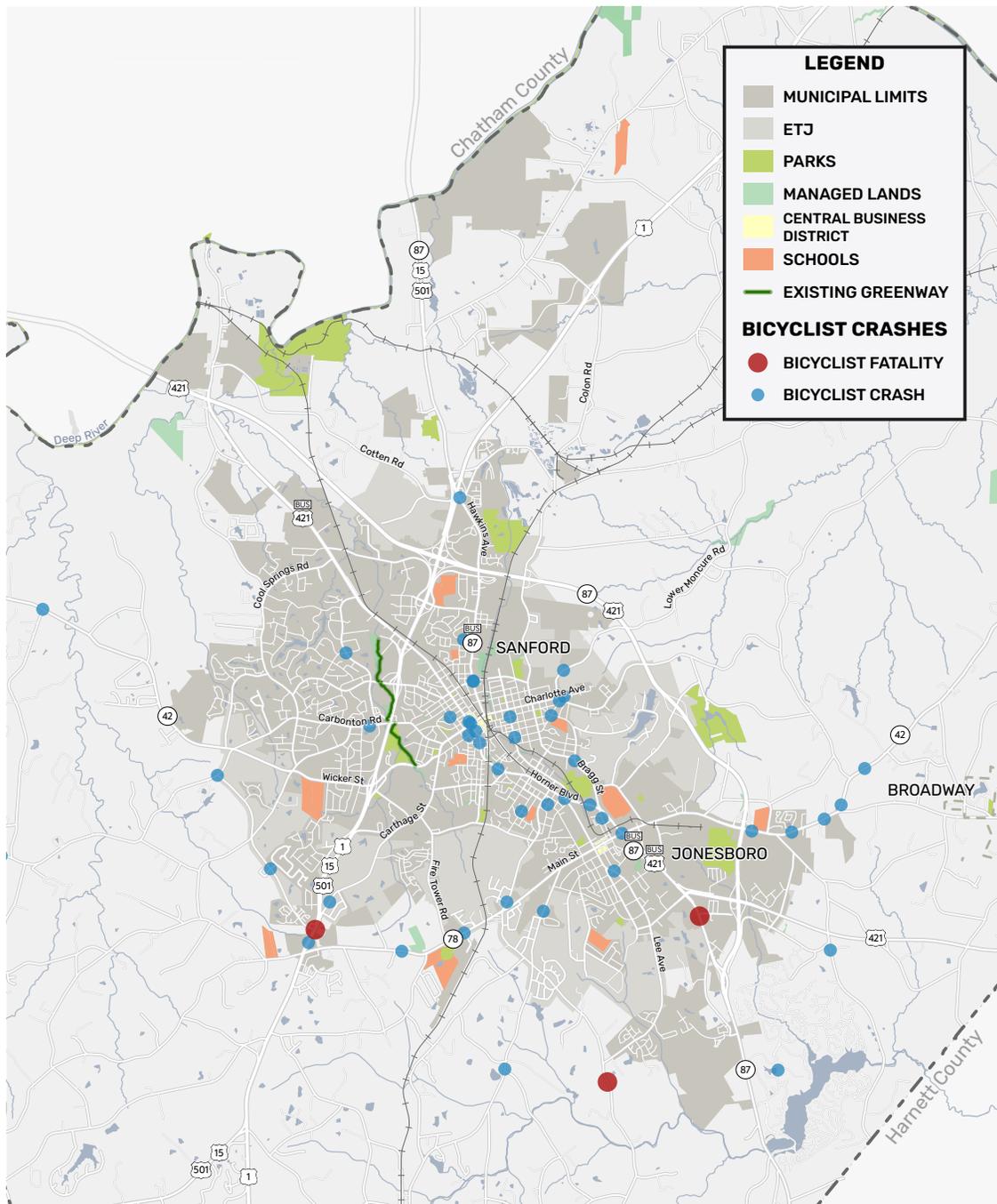
EXISTING AND PLANNED BICYCLE + PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

Previous plans have proposed a network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout Sanford. Sidewalks are planned along most major streets, with sidepaths proposed along Wilson Rd and Woodland Ave. Greenways are proposed along major streams including Little Buffalo Creek, Big Buffalo Creek, and the Deep River. A network of shared lane markings for bicycles has also been proposed for the central region of the city, and bicycle lanes are proposed on roads including Hawkins Ave, Lee Ave, Woodland Ave, Washington Ave, and Carthage St.



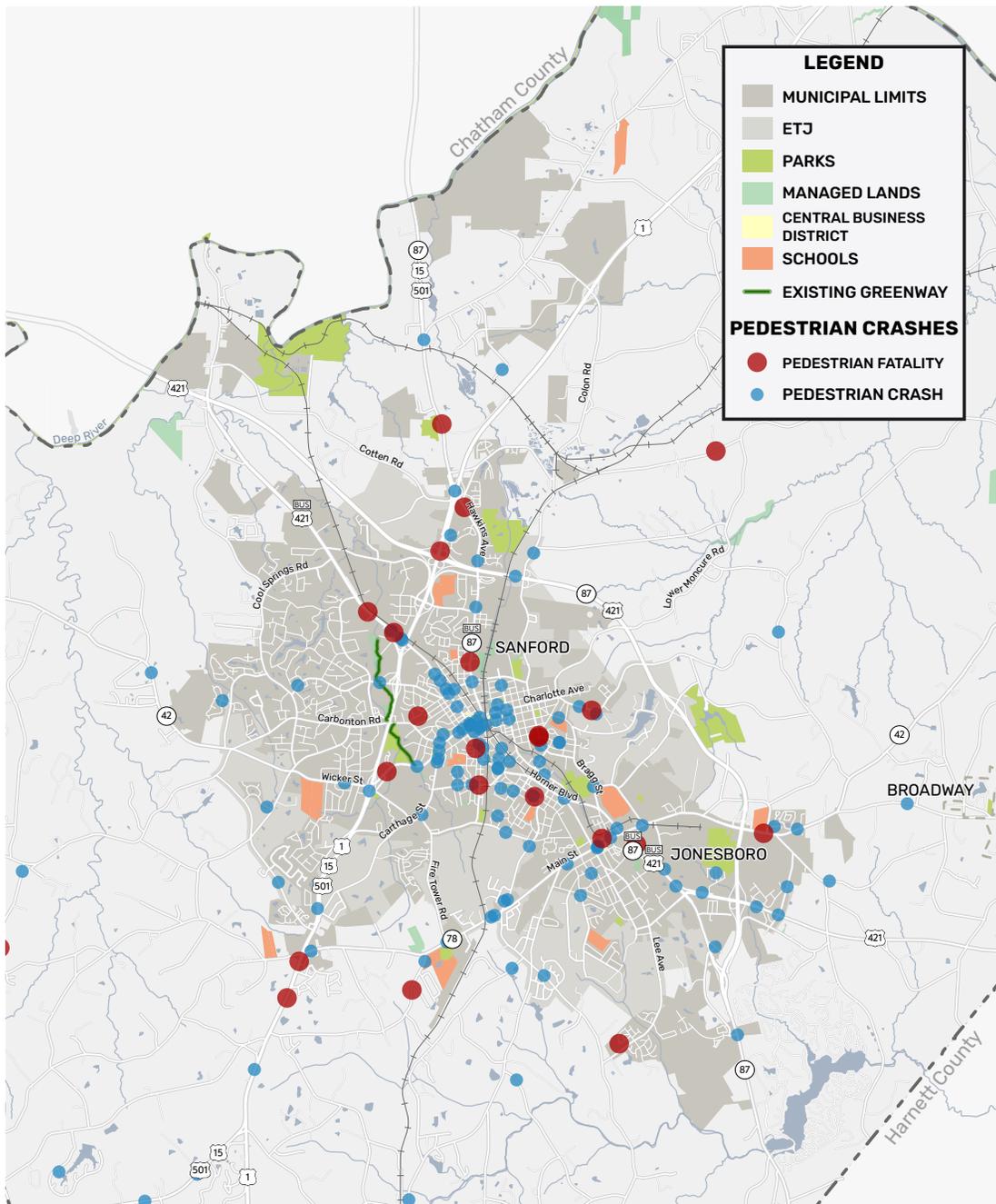
BICYCLIST CRASHES

Crashes involving bicyclists have been recorded in a number of locations across Sanford. During the period 2007-2021 for which data is available, a total of 38 bicycle crashes were recorded in Sanford, including two fatalities. The largest concentration of crashes is near downtown Sanford along US-421 BUS. Other concentrations of crashes have been recorded on NC-42, NC-87, and NC-78. Two bicyclist fatalities have been recorded in the area, one located at the intersection of NC-87 and Cox Maddox Rd, and another at US-1 and Pendergrass Rd. A third bicyclist fatality occurred just outside city limits on St Andrews Church Rd.



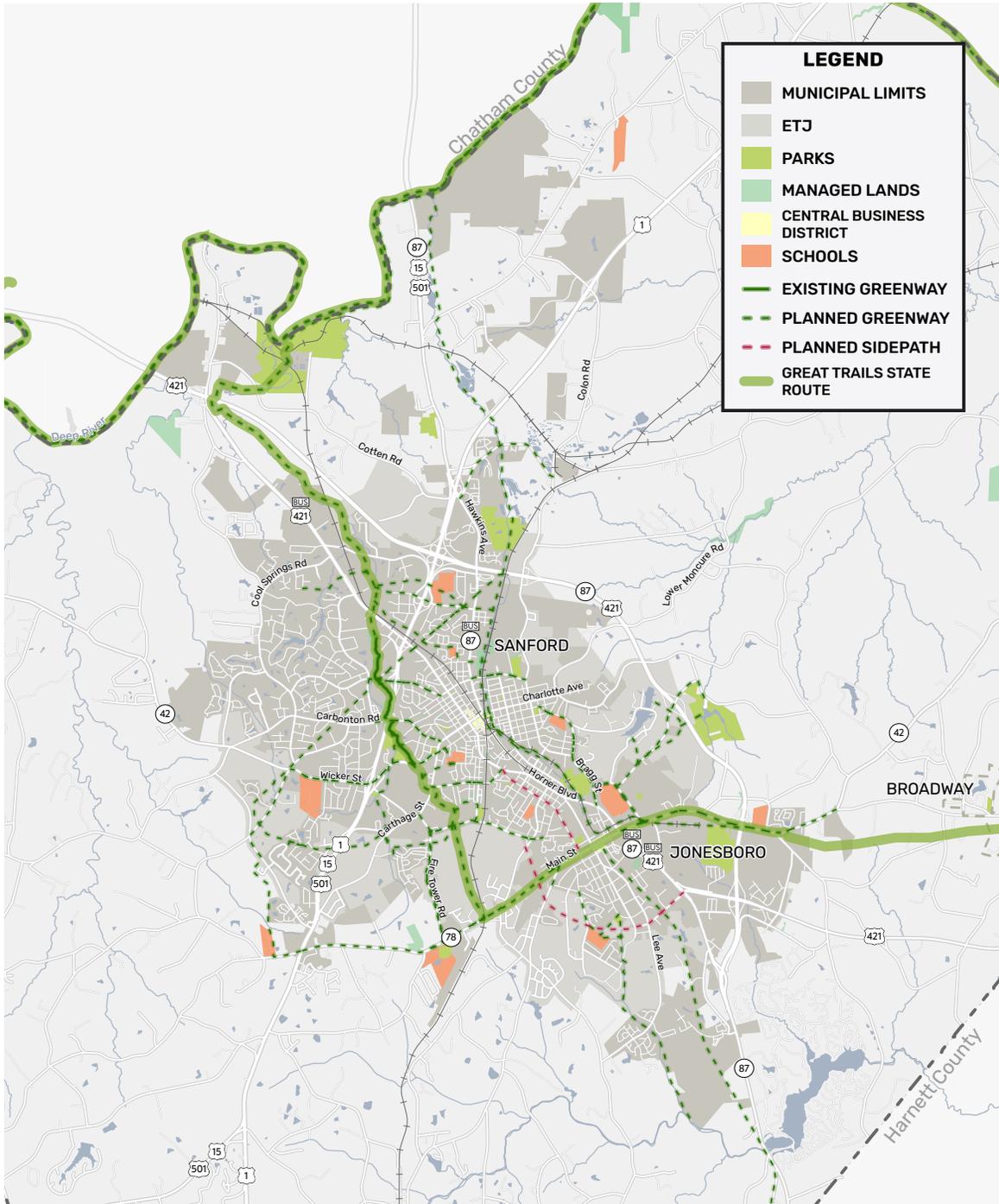
PEDESTRIAN CRASHES

In Sanford, pedestrian safety remains a concern with crashes involving pedestrians recorded in locations across the city. During the period 2007-2021 for which data is available, a total of 120 pedestrian crashes were reported, including 17 fatalities. Crashes are largely concentrated in downtown Sanford along Carthage St, Horner Blvd, and Wicker St, but several crashes and fatalities have also occurred in suburban and rural areas of Sanford, including on NC-87, NC-78, NC-42, US-1, and US-421. 17 pedestrian fatalities have been reported within Sanford city limits, including two on US-421 BUS near Comfort Ln, and two on Hawkins Ave between downtown and US-1. Other fatalities have occurred on Wicker St, Fields Dr, Woodland Ave, and in Jonesboro Heights.



EXISTING AND PLANNED GREENWAYS

Previous plans have recommended a network of greenways and sidepaths in Sanford to expand on the existing Endor Iron Furnace Greenway. Proposed routes include Little Buffalo Creek, Big Buffalo Creek, utility easements along the northwestern side of the city, and roads including Kelly Dr, Tramway Rd, and Wicker St. At a state and regional planning level, the Great Trails State Plan developed by NCDOT proposes a Deep River Trail as well as a Lee County route that connects to the Endor Iron Furnace Greenway, downtown Jonesboro, and Broadway.



RELATED GREENWAY PLANNING + POLICY

PREVIOUS PLANS

The City of Sanford Parks, Recreation and Greenways Master Plan Update builds on a legacy of local, regional, and statewide plans prioritizing greenways. The table below provides a summary of key bicycle and pedestrian facility recommendations from previous plans that are relevant to the current planning effort.

EXISTING PLAN / STUDY	KEY RECOMMENDATIONS
Sanford Community Development Plan	<p>In 2008, the City of Sanford developed a community development plan in response to the City's growing population. The purpose and intent of this plan was to inventory and assess residential housing needs, with a key goal of leveraging the plan and its findings in the City's efforts to seek grant funding. The plan suggests the City of Sanford seek out developers of planned unit developments (PUDs) because they often include a variety of uses including open space and recreation, and states further that a key characteristic of sustainable communities is the availability of parks, recreation, open space, and greenways. According to the plan, in the late 2000s the Sanford UDO provided for PUDs to encourage development of land with a mix of uses including the provision of parks and open space and to provide recreational opportunities amongst residential spaces. The City's UDO also provided for Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TNDs) that foster community by promoting the area as an activity hub for cultural and recreational activities and providing park, open space, and natural areas. The plan recommends creating a neighborhood park strategy to investigate potential sites, gather community feedback, develop funding options, and create an operations and maintenance plan.</p>
Greenwood Small Area Plan	<p>The Greenwood Small Area Plan covers southern Lee County including the Tramway and Lemon Springs communities. Identified as a critical piece of Lee County's future growth, the Greenwood area is currently sparsely developed. Among the goals of the Greenwood Small Area Plan is a system of parks and greenways that emphasize natural area conservation, recreation, and floodplain protection. The plan recommends requiring or encouraging new development to provide greenway connections. An emphasis is also placed on coordinating local park and greenway planning with regional efforts to ensure a comprehensive system.</p>

<p>Sanford Pedestrian Plan</p>	<p>The 2010 Sanford Pedestrian Plan envisions a livable community with pedestrian-friendly transportation corridors throughout the city. Goals of the plan include recreation and leisure related objectives to encourage walkability such as ensuring pedestrian corridors are well-landscaped and feature resting places. The plan also recommends partnering with recreation providers to create walking programs and events. The pedestrian network assessment found that the system is incomplete, aging, contains poor connectivity, and none of the parks or schools are accessed by pedestrian facilities. Community feedback gleaned during the development of the plan found that parks were the most desired walking destination, and the public believed that areas near parks where sidewalks do not exist are the greatest need for the pedestrian network. The plan also includes recommendations for greenways, and of the plan's 11 priority corridors, seven contain parks or schools including the Bullock Greenway, Sanlee Park Greenway, and Horton Park Connector. Corridor development priority was determined through public input and guidance from stakeholders and City of Sanford staff. Lastly, the plan notes that in Sanford, the residents living within neighborhoods with the lowest annual household income also have the lowest rate of motor vehicle ownership and make up the highest concentration of residents over the age of 60. The plan therefore recommends prioritizing these neighborhoods for pedestrian improvements.</p>
<p>Lee County Comprehensive Transportation Plan</p>	<p>The 2011 Lee County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) is a long-range planning effort to identify improvements needed to the county's transportation system within a 25-30-year timeframe. This list is not fiscally constrained. The bicycle component of the CTP recommends greenways along Big Buffalo Creek between Carthage St and Iron Furnace Rd and along Little Buffalo Creek between Charlotte Ave and the Chatham County line. On-road bicycle improvements are also recommended, including bike lanes on US Bike Route 1 which traverses the county. Additional on-road bike recommendations include Avents Ferry Rd, Carbonton Rd, and Carthage St, among others. There are no pedestrian facility recommendations in the CTP.</p>
<p>NCDOT Great Trails State Plan (2022)</p>	<p>The NCDOT statewide trail plan proposes a comprehensive network of greenways and sidepaths to connect all one hundred counties via non-motorized transportation. In Sanford the existing Endor Iron Furnace Trail is included as part of the state network, and extensions are proposed north to Chatham County and east to Broadway and Harnett County.</p>

<p>Sanford Comprehensive Bicycle Transportation Plan</p>	<p>To complement its recently adopted Pedestrian Plan, in 2013 the City of Sanford adopted a Comprehensive Bicycle Transportation Plan. Goals of the plan were to improve local and regional bicycle connectivity, increase number of miles of bicycle facilities, and promote bicycling as both a form of transportation and a component of a healthy lifestyle. The plan found that bicycle connections are incomplete in Sanford, with many roadways being designed for cars rather than bicycles. Community engagement found that most residents don't feel safe biking in Sanford and would like to be able to access greenways, parks, and downtown safely. Recommendations from the plan include bike lanes, shared lane markings, and bicycle boulevards within the core of Sanford and Historic Jonesboro, while wide shoulders are recommended on roads farther from the core. Priority on-road segments include bike lanes on Woodland Ave, Charlotte Ave, 3rd St, and Carthage St, paved shoulders on Broadway Rd, and bike lanes and bike boulevards on Vance St. The plan also recommends off-road improvements to expand the City's greenway network beyond what previous planning efforts included. A new greenway trail is recommended along Buffalo Creek, and sidepaths are recommended on several corridors including Carbonton Rd, Nash St, and Spring Ln.</p>
<p>Sanford Complete Streets Study</p>	<p>The Sanford Complete Streets Study was completed in 2019 to provide a vision for multimodal improvements along the main east-west corridor in downtown Sanford. The project focuses on Carthage St between Wicker St and Moore St, and Charlotte Ave between Moore St and 11th St. The primary guiding principle of the project was safety for all users, especially bicyclists and pedestrians. Community engagement efforts included a design charrette to identify desired features and alternatives for the project. Key recommendations for the project include working with NCDOT to implement a road diet on the corridor, reducing the number of travel lanes from four to two and a center median. Bike lanes are recommended throughout the corridor, including protected lanes on Carthage St. Roundabouts are proposed at either end of the project to create a gateway to the downtown area. A sidepath would be installed on the north side of Carthage St between Wicker St and Horner Blvd that would connect to proposed sidepath on Carbonton Rd with a protected bicycle intersection. High-visibility crosswalks are proposed throughout the corridor, and other streetscape improvements such as street parking, lighting, and trees are recommended where appropriate.</p>

POLICY REVIEW

This table provides an overview of key federal, state, and local policies that may guide or impact the development of Sanford’s greenway network.

EXISTING POLICY	KEY COMPONENTS TO IMPACT SANFORD
<p>FHWA Guidance on Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation</p>	<p>Under the US Department of Transportation – Federal Highway Administration Policy Statement on Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation, "The DOT policy is to incorporate safe and convenient walking and bicycling facilities into transportation projects. Every transportation agency, including DOT, has the responsibility to improve conditions and opportunities for walking and bicycling and to integrate walking and bicycling into their transportation systems...transportation agencies are encouraged to go beyond minimum standards to provide safe and convenient facilities for these modes." There are no Federal laws or regulations that prohibit shared use paths or bicycle use along or near Interstate highways or other freeways. Bicycle and pedestrian accommodations may be allowed on Interstate and other major highways and freeways. Bridges are essential in any transportation network, and many Interstate or other freeway bridges often are the only possible bridges across rivers, canyons, railroads, other highways, or other major barriers. Major highway bridges often are necessary links for nonmotorized transportation networks.</p> <p>Under 23 U.S.C. 217(g), transportation plans must consider bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.</p> <p>23 U.S.C. 217(g) Planning and Design. –</p> <p>1. In General. --Bicyclists and pedestrians shall be given due consideration in the comprehensive transportation plans developed by each metropolitan planning organization and State in accordance with sections 134 and 135, respectively. Bicycle transportation facilities and pedestrian walkways shall be considered, where appropriate, in conjunction with all new construction and reconstruction of transportation facilities, except where bicycle and pedestrian use are not permitted.</p> <p>2.Safety considerations. --Transportation plans and projects shall provide due consideration for safety and contiguous routes for bicyclists and pedestrians. Safety considerations shall include the installation, where appropriate, and maintenance of audible traffic signals and audible signs at street crossings.</p>

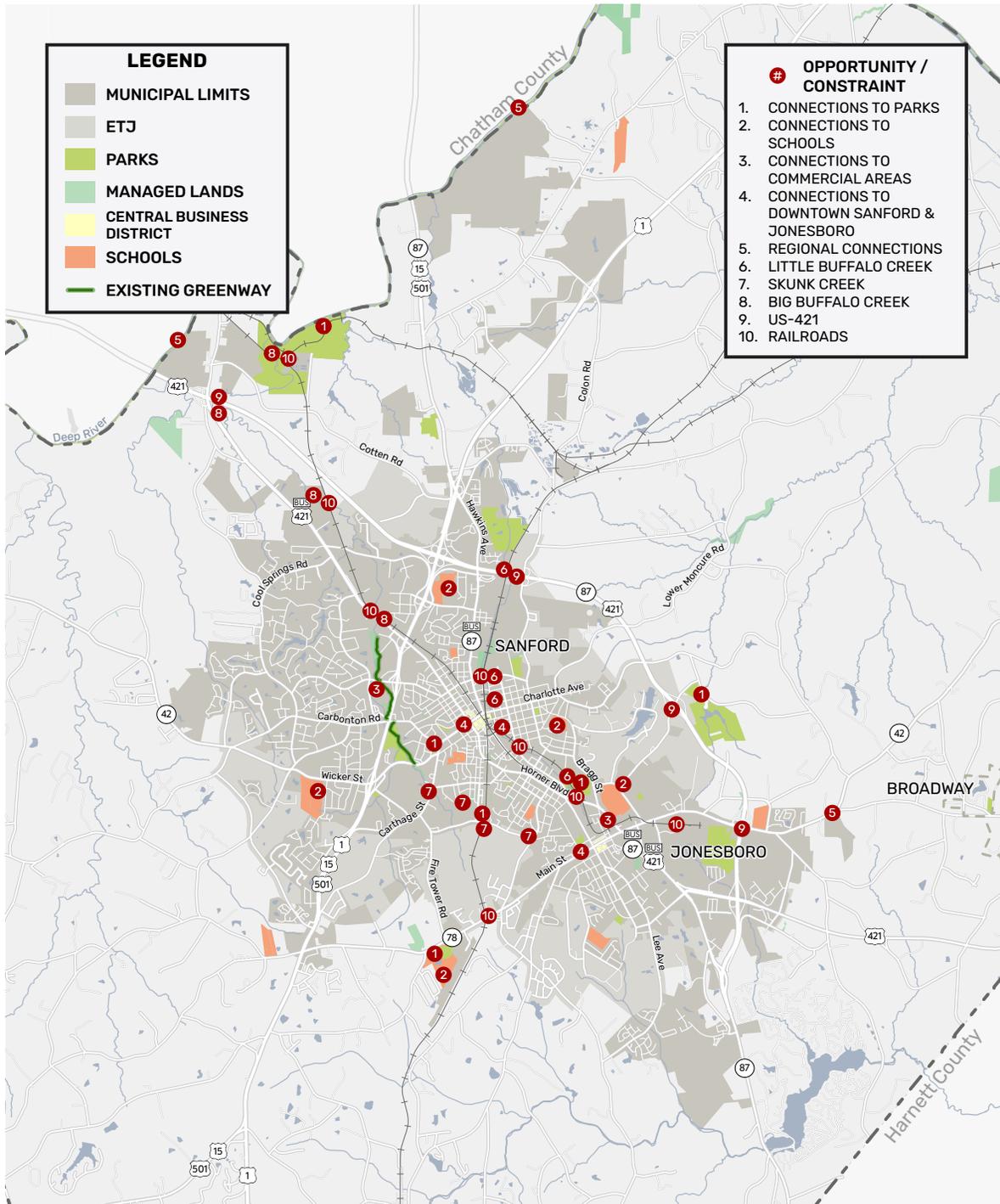
<p>NCDOT Complete Streets Policy</p>	<p>The NCDOT Complete Streets Policy Update was adopted by the Board of Transportation in August 2019. This policy requires NCDOT to consider and incorporate multimodal facilities in the design and improvement of all transportation projects in North Carolina. The 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. The policy also establishes maintenance responsibility for active transportation facilities. Bicycle, pedestrian, and transit improvements inside a municipal boundary are subject to local maintenance. For non-separated facilities outside of a municipal boundary where a county maintenance agreement has not been executed to maintain the facility, NCDOT will maintain the facility after construction if the bicycle or pedestrian facility lies within NCDOT right-of-way. Projects that have not completed environmental review prior to August 2019 are subject to the Complete Streets Policy.</p>
<p>NCDOT Roadway Design Manual</p>	<p>The manual provides general design information, criteria, and plan preparation guidance for NCDOT roadways. Guidance on clear zones can be referenced in Part 1, Chapter 1-4N. Guidance states that the recommended clear zone range for flat, level terrain adjacent to a straight section of a 60mph highway with an average daily traffic of 6000 vehicles is a width of 30 to 32 feet. For steeper slopes on a 70-mph roadway, the clear zone range increases to 38 to 46 feet. Additional clear zone guidance is provided for roadway facilities based on design speed, ADT, and slope.</p> <p>Guidance on multimodal design elements can be referenced in Part 1, Chapter 4 Sections 4.14, 4.15, and 4.16. Guidance states that shared-use paths, often referred to as greenways, are paths physically separated from motor vehicle traffic and used by pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized users. The width of a shared-use path may vary, based on user volumes and context. [Desirable Width – 12 to 14 feet; Minimum Width – 10 feet; 8 feet in exceptionally constrained areas; Minimum Vertical Clearance – 8 feet]</p>

<p>NCDOT Bridge Policy</p>	<p>This policy establishes design elements of new and reconstructed bridges on the North Carolina Highway System. Vertical clearances for new structures shall be designed above all sections of pavement including the usable shoulder. Future widening and pavement cross slope will be considered in design clearance. Vertical clearances for facilities are as follows: over interstates, freeways, and arterials: 16'-6" to 17'-0"; over local and collector roads and streets: 15'-0" to 15'-6"; over all railroads: 23'-0" to 23'-6" or less if approved by Railroads; pedestrian overpasses and sign structures vertical clearance: 17'-0" to 17'-6". Sidewalks shall be included on new bridges with curb and gutter approach roadways that are without control of access. A minimum handrail height of 42" is required.</p>
<p>City of Sanford Code of Ordinances</p>	<p>Sanford's Code of Ordinances, in Sec. 36-9 (c), states that "No person shall ride a bicycle or motorcycle on any sidewalk or walkway within the city."</p>
<p>City of Sanford Unified Development Ordinance</p>	<p>The City of Sanford Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) regulates development and land use within Sanford.</p> <p>In Article 4.14.2.2, the UDO requires a 30-foot vegetative buffer against all perennial streams or waterbodies for new development within Watershed Overlay Districts. No new development is permitted except small structures such as signs and flagpoles, and greenways where no practicable alternative exists. This buffer may be conveyed to a local government for preservation as a park or greenway, or to a property owners association, conservation organization, or placed in a permanent preservation easement. A maintenance agreement must be included with the deed.</p> <p>In Article 6.5, the UDO requires subdivisions to dedicate a percentage of the lot as open space based on the number of lots to be created. For subdivisions with fewer than 100 lots, no dedication is required, while subdivisions with 100-249 lots must dedicate five percent for open space and developments with 250 or more lots must dedicate 10 percent. A maximum of 50 percent of the total open space can be within a floodway designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). A fee-in-lieu alternative is provided. Any development adjacent to a park or greenway included in an adopted plan must provide and maintain a connection or dedicate the trail connection to the public.</p>



OPPORTUNITIES + CONSTRAINTS

The map and associated table provide a summary of opportunities and constraints that may impact the development of Sanford’s greenway network. Numbers marked on the map correspond to specific opportunities and constraints listed in the table..



POLICY REVIEW

This table provides an overview of key federal, state, and local policies that may guide or impact the development of Sanford’s greenway network.

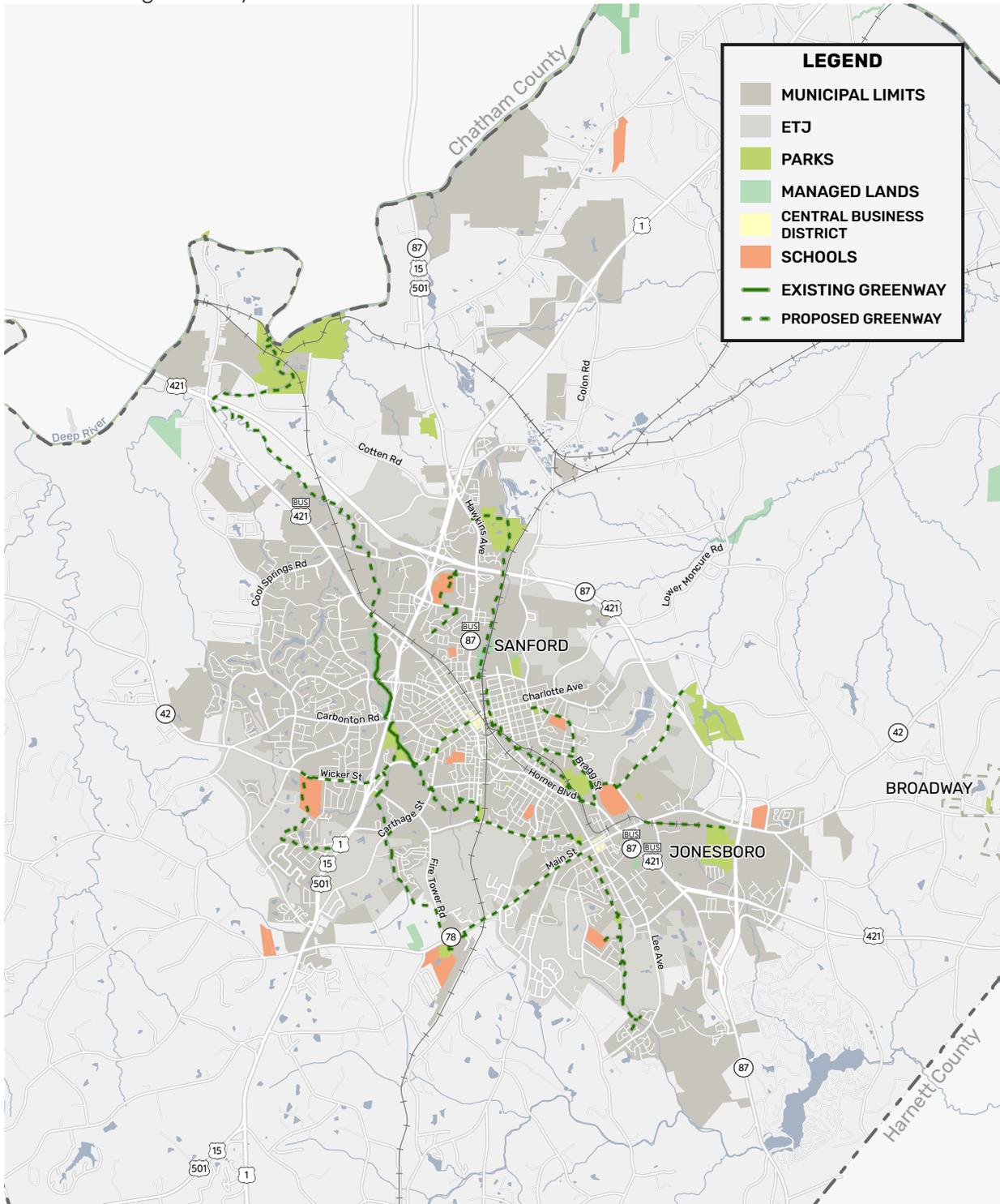
OPPORTUNITIES + CONSTRAINTS	DESCRIPTION
Connections to Parks	Sanford’s existing greenway network provides connections to Kiwanis Park via the Endor Iron Furnace Trail. The southern terminus of trail in Kiwanis Park ends at Wicker St. The lack of existing sidewalks along Wicker St and absence of a trailhead poses safety challenges for trail users accessing the trail in this area. Previous plans and community input have identified an opportunity to extend the greenway to Kiwanis Children’s Park. Other parks identified as priorities for greenway connections include Horton Park, OT Sloan Park, San-Lee Park, and park facilities at Southern Lee High School.
Connections to Schools	Sanford residents have voiced a need to provide greenway connections from residential neighborhoods to schools, so that students can safely bike or walk to school. Schools with opportunities for potential greenway connections via the Little Buffalo Creek, Big Buffalo Creek, Persimmon Creek, Gasters Creek, and other proposed greenway corridors include BT Bullock Elementary School, Warren Williams School, Southern Lee High School, SanLee Middle School, West Lee Middle School, JR Ingram Elementary School, Bragg Street Academy, and Lee County High School. Opportunities to improve bicycle and pedestrian access to Central Carolina Community College exist via proposed greenway corridors, planned bicycle facilities, and existing sidewalks.
Connections to Commercial Areas	Connecting to commercial areas via greenway expands multi-modal transportation options within the city. In Sanford, the Endor Iron Furnace Trail runs adjacent to Riverbirch Shopping Center and other commercial areas but does not provide a direct connection. Potential for trail connectors between the existing greenway and adjacent shopping centers should be explored. The proposed Little Buffalo Creek Greenway may provide opportunities for greenway or sidepath path connections to commercial areas in Downtown and along Horner Blvd (US-421 BUS).

<p>Connections to Downtown Sanford/ Jonesboro</p>	<p>Community input and previous plans have identified a need to improve multimodal connectivity to Downtown Sanford and Jonesboro. The Sanford Complete Streets Study recommended a sidepath on the north side of Carthage St between Wicker St and Horner Blvd and a greenway along the Little Buffalo Creek corridor through downtown. Greenways could also connect Jonesboro with Dalrymple Park and other neighborhoods. Direct connections to Downtown and Jonesboro via proposed greenways may pose challenges due to right-of-way constraints, on-street parking, and existing sidewalk gaps.</p>
<p>Regional Connections</p>	<p>Greenways are linear parks and often serve and connect residents across communities. Greenway connectivity between Sanford and the Town of Broadway should be a consideration along the NC-42 and Broadway Rd corridors. Sanford is also well positioned to connect to greenway networks within the Greater Triangle Region. As communities in southwest Wake County, such as Apex, Holly Springs, and Fuquay-Varina continue to grow and expand their local greenway networks, Sanford may connect to the region via the S-Line corridor and proposed trails along the Deep River and Cape Fear River.</p> <p>A statewide trail network is also envisioned for North Carolina via the NCDOT Great Trails State Plan. The Great Trails State Network includes spine corridors connecting Sanford, Broadway, and Lee County to the Deep River corridor</p>
<p>Little Buffalo Creek</p>	<p>Little Buffalo Creek offers the potential for greenway connectivity between Jonesboro and Sanford, including a section in Downtown Sanford. This corridor parallels the railroad, which creates constraints to crossings and overall greenway connectivity, particularly at OT Sloan Park. Topography constraints at Weatherspoon St also make greenway crossings in this area challenging, but an existing underpass of US-421 provides the opportunity to create a grade-separated crossing to the north side of Sanford and Lee County.</p>

Skunk Creek	<p>The Skunk Creek corridor creates an opportunity to connect the existing Endor Iron Furnace Trail with the “Medical Mile” on Carthage St and Horton Park. There are several publicly-owned parcels and undeveloped street rights-of-way between Summerset Pl and Washington Ave that could be used for greenway development and provide neighborhood connections. A greenway extension along Harkey Rd would enable the City to provide connections to Dalrymple Park and the Jonesboro District. Crossings would be required at several points, including a crossing over the CSX rail corridor, the unsignalized intersection of Harkey Rd and Courtland Dr, Carthage St, and Wicker St.</p>
Big Buffalo Creek	<p>A northern extension of the Endor Iron Furnace Trail could be made using the Big Buffalo Creek corridor, creating a connection to the Endor Iron Furnace and the Deep River. Several major crossings would be required, including US-421, US-421 BUS, and the Norfolk Southern and Atlantic & Western railroads. Existing bridges and culverts provide opportunities to close these gaps along the greenway corridor.</p>
US-421	<p>US-421 is a major barrier to multimodal connectivity in Sanford. There are no existing greenway crossings, but opportunities for connections at Big Buffalo Creek, Little Buffalo Creek, Kelly Dr, and Broadway Rd would help expand the greenway network to recreation destinations including the Endor Iron Furnace Trail, San-Lee Park, and Sanford Golf Course.</p>
Railroads	<p>Railroads are a major barrier to greenway connectivity in Sanford, with CSX, Norfolk Southern, and Atlantic & Western Railway operating rail corridors in the city. At-grade rail crossings must use an existing roadway crossing, and rail companies typically limit additional at-grade and grade-separated crossings. Near the Endor Iron Furnace Trail, there are two sets of railway tracks that must be crossed to reach the Deep River and may require coordination with the rail companies to make these connections. In addition, Sanford should take steps to ensure that railroad right-of-way can be preserved in the event of abandonment for rails-to-trails corridors.</p>

NETWORK RECOMMENDATIONS

The project team reviewed existing conditions within Sanford as well as previous plans and recommendations for greenways to create a citywide network that is realistic and attainable. The network includes greenways as well as sidepath where facilities are proposed to be constructed parallel to existing roadways.



PROPOSED CORRIDOR	EXTENT	FACILITY RECOMMENDATION	INTERSECTION TREATMENT + CROSSING
Skunk Creek	Wicker St to Carthage St	Greenway	Rectangular rapid flashing beacon
Skunk Creek	Carthage St to Hooker St	Greenway	Rectangular rapid flashing beacon
S Vance St Connector	Hooker St to Horton Park	Greenway/Sidepath	Rectangular rapid flashing beacon
Washington Ave/W Garden St/Harkey St	Horton Park to Courtland Dr	Greenway/Sidepath	Rectangular rapid flashing beacon, crosswalk, railroad crossing
Harkey Rd/Woodland Ave/Dalrymple Park	Courtland Dr to W Globe St	Greenway/Sidepath	Rectangular rapid flashing beacon
Wicker St	Endor Iron Furnace Greenway to Carthage St	Sidepath	Crosswalk
Carthage St	Wicker St to Horner Blvd	Sidepath	Crosswalk
Cameron Dr	W Raleigh St to Buchanan Park	Sidepath	Crosswalk
Gasters Creek	Buchanan Park to Hiawatha Trail/Woodridge Dr/Fernridge Dr	Greenway/Greenway Connector	Crosswalk
Gasters Creek Connector	Gasters Creek Greenway to J Glenn Edwards Elementary School	Greenway Connector	N/A
Atlantic and Western Railway	Main St to future park site	Greenway	Crosswalk
Persimmon Creek/Wicker St	Endor Iron Furnace Greenway to Legion Dr	Greenway/Sidepath	N/A
Wicker St	Legion Dr to JR Ingram Jr Elementary School	Sidepath	Crosswalk
JR Ingram Jr Elementary School/West Landing Neighborhood	Wicker St to Wickfield Dr/Westover Dr	Greenway/Greenway Connector	Rectangular rapid flashing beacon, crosswalk
Persimmon Creek/Keller-Andrews Rd	Wicker St to Carthage St	Greenway/Sidepath	Rectangular rapid flashing beacon

Carthage St/ Persimmon Creek	Keller-Andrews Rd to Gloucester Dr	Greenway/Sidepath	Rectangular rapid flashing beacon
Persimmon Creek	Gloucester Dr to Fire Tower Rd	Greenway	N/A
Fire Tower Rd	Persimmon Creek Greenway to Southern Lee High School	Sidepath	Crosswalk
Airport Rd	Fire Tower Rd to Tramway Rd	Greenway/Sidepath	Crosswalk
Tramway Rd/Main St	Airport Rd to Academy Rd	Sidepath	Crosswalk, railroad crossing
Big Buffalo Creek	Endor Iron Furnace Greenway to McNeil Rd	Greenway	Rectangular rapid flashing beacon, high-intensity activated crosswalk, railroad crossing
Big Buffalo Creek	McNeil Rd to Cotten Rd	Greenway	Rectangular rapid flashing beacon, railroad crossing
Big Buffalo Creek	Cotton Rd to Deep River	Greenway	Rectangular rapid flashing beacon, railroad crossing
Utility Corridor/Friars Dr	Crusaders Dr to Burns Dr	Greenway/Sidepath	Crosswalk
Burns Dr	Friars Dr to Candlewood Apartments	Sidepath	Rectangular rapid flashing beacon
BT Bullock Elementary School	Burns Dr to McNeil Rd	Greenway	Rectangular rapid flashing beacon
Little Buffalo Creek	E Weatherspoon Rd to Hawkins Ave	Greenway	N/A
E Weatherspoon Rd	Hawkins Ave to Little Buffalo Creek	Sidepath	Crosswalk
Little Buffalo Creek/ Maple Ave/Market St	Chisolm St to Hickory Ave	Greenway/Sidepath	Crosswalk
Little Buffalo Creek	Hickory Ave to E Makepeace St	Greenway	Rectangular rapid flashing beacon
Little Buffalo Creek	E Spruce St to S Horner Blvd	Greenway	Crosswalk

Bragg St/Mclver St	S 7th St to Temple Park	Sidepath	Crosswalk
S 7th St	Bragg St to E Rose St	Sidepath	Crosswalk
E Rose St	S 7th St to S 4th St	Sidepath	Crosswalk
Nash St	Bragg St to Kelly Dr	Sidepath	Crosswalk
Kelly Dr	Friars Dr to Candlewood Apartments	Sidepath	Rectangular rapid flashing beacon

DESIGN STANDARDS + TYPICAL SECTIONS

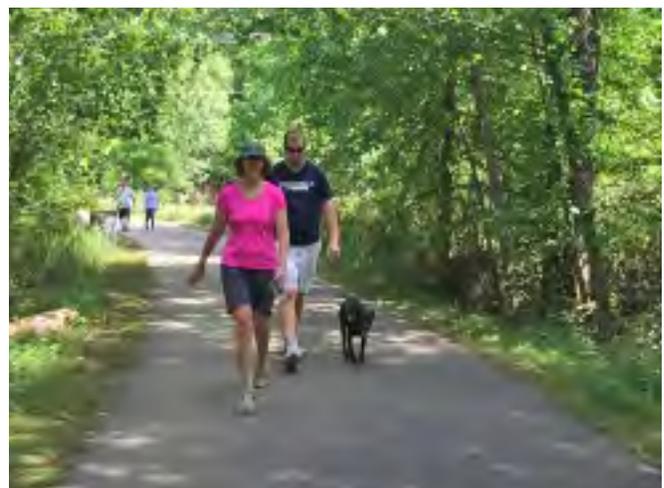
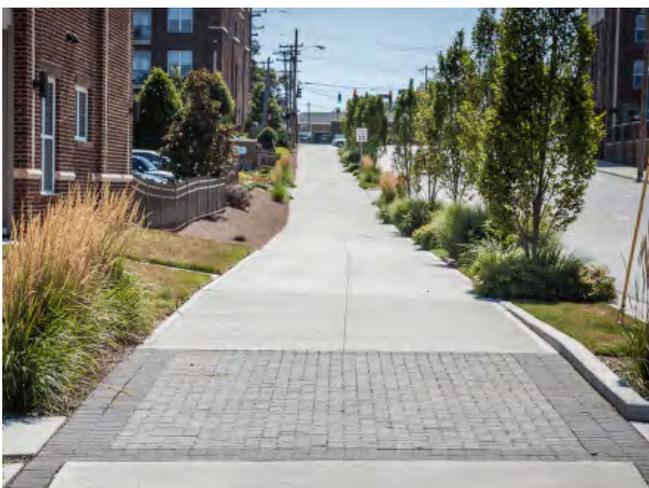
The standards and methods in which greenways are designed impact the experience and safety of users that visit greenways for a variety of recreational, health, and transportation purposes. This section illustrates aspects of facility design to guide decisions by Sanford and its partners in planning for, designing, constructing, and maintaining greenways that connect to a variety of destinations, provide 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 greenway users, environmental conditions, construction cost, maintenance burden and costs, and funding source requirements among others.

PAVED SURFACE

Paved greenway 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 greenways. Concrete pavement is more durable, but costs more than asphalt pavement. As such, concrete greenways are typically more common in urban settings (where projected user volumes are high or the greenway may be subject to vehicular loading more often) or in areas subject to heavy flooding forces that may cause damage to the greenway.

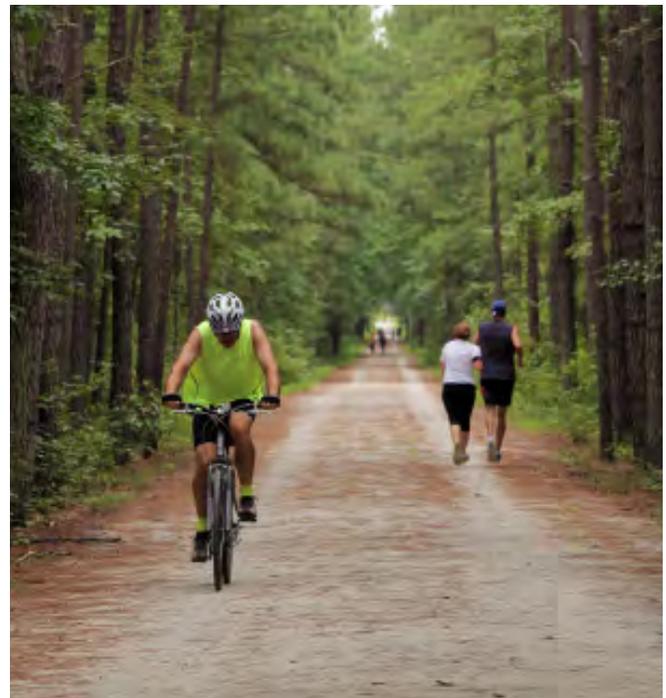


NATURAL SURFACE

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 greenway systems across North Carolina and beyond to provide a durable alternative to paved greenways.

Compacted aggregates have proven to be a durable, affordable, and readily available means of providing a natural surface for greenway 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 greenway'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 greenway surface as a result of regular rain events. It is critical to establish drainage adjacent to the greenway during construction to ensure concentrated runoff is not allowed to cross the greenway perpendicularly. Over time these types of flows will erode the greenway 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 greenway 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 greenway to prevent washout and rills within the walking surface. Annual maintenance is required and includes re-compaction to ensure the greenway remains crowned to properly pitch water to adjacent drainage features. Installation of additional soil in rain wash out areas may also be required.



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 /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.



TYPICAL CROSS SECTIONS

The standards and methods in which greenways are designed impact the experience and safety of users that visit greenways for a variety of recreational, health, and transportation purposes. This section illustrates aspects of facility design to guide decisions by Sanford and its partners in planning for, designing, constructing, and maintaining greenways that connect to a variety of destinations, provide diverse user experience, and is built to a maintainable scale.

GREENWAYS (PREFERRED)

A 10'-12' wide paved greenway 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 Sanford, 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 greenway 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'-12' 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.



SIDEPATH

A 10'-12' 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 Sanford, 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 is present.



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





RECTANGULAR RAPID FLASH BEACON (RRFB)

A Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacon 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.

HIGH INTENSITY ACTIVATED CROSSWALK (HAWK)

A High-Intensity Activated Crosswalk 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, roadways, and railroads 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 that create a comfortable and inviting environment for users.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The project team reviewed existing policies and ordinances in Sanford to identify policy changes or

POLICY RECOMMENDATION	DESCRIPTION
<p>Adopt a Complete Streets Ordinance and/or Program</p>	<p>The City of Sanford should adopt a municipal Complete Streets Policy, similar to NCDOT’s statewide policy, to guide multi-modal improvements for the local street network. The City of Raleigh is a local example of a municipality that has adopted a similar policy.</p> <p>The City of Raleigh recently adopted a Complete Streets Policy and initiated a Complete Streets Implementation Program with the goal of constructing projects that improve safety, access, mobility, and connectivity of existing streets for all users. Improvements made under this program may include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Sidewalks and pedestrian safety improvements, such as traffic signals, roundabouts, curb extensions, high visibility crossings, and shared-use pathways; > Bicycle safety improvements, such as bike lanes, separated bicycle facilities, sharrows, and signal detection; > ADA compliance and accessibility; > Transit infrastructure, such as bus shelters, benches, trash cans, and pads; > Street trees, landscaping, pedestrian-level lighting, street furniture; > Adequate storm water/drainage facilities; > Updated traffic markings, and signage
<p>Build multimodal infrastructure with development projects</p>	<p>The City of Sanford should ask developers to construct planned side paths, greenways, trails, and sidewalks as a requirement to development in municipal limits, and continue to ask for construction of connections to parks and greenways. Planning staff should coordinate with developers to provide guidance on ordinance requirements and processes. In addition, they may also include specifications for greenway design standards. Planning and Parks staff should also refer to adopted plans for opportunities to fill in gaps within the bicycle and pedestrian system.</p>

<p>Establish design guidelines for greenways and trails</p>	<p>City staff should create design guidelines for greenways that include context-sensitive design standards and consider the character of the area that a greenway (or similar facility) is constructed within. Greenways often traverse many different land uses and communities so it is important for the City to focus on incorporating consistent design elements, wayfinding signage, and amenities that will help contribute to a sense of place. Wayfinding standards should encourage consistent placement, use, and design of wayfinding signage that complements the existing greenway, park, and multi-use facility signage standards to create a comprehensive multi-modal wayfinding system.</p>
<p>Establish a Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee or expand role of the existing Parks Commission</p>	<p>The City of Sanford should consider establishing a pedestrian advisory committee or expand the role of the Parks Commission to guide the implementation of recommended pedestrian infrastructure, programs, and policies outlined in the Sanford Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update for the City Board and staff.</p>
<p>Add and Update Definitions for Active Transportation Facilities in the UDO</p>	<p>The City should update the glossary in the UDO with common active transportation terms that include definitions for each facility type (i.e., bike facilities, sidewalks, and greenways). Greenways are currently listed in reference to Section 6.5 Open Space, but the UDO does not include a definition of the facility. Sidepath facilities are not currently included.</p>
<p>Establish a greenway facility maintenance policy and operations plan</p>	<p>The City of Sanford should consider establishing a greenway facility maintenance plan that includes debris and snow removal policies and schedules for trail clean-up coordination, routine and special maintenance of crossing signals and trail signage, and re-striping and resurfacing schedules for paved multi-use paths along City-maintained roadways.</p>
<p>Reduce City-wide speed limit to 25 mph</p>	<p>The City of Sanford should consider adopting an ordinance lowering the City-wide speed limit to 25 mph to improve the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians crossing roadways to connect to greenway segments. Reducing the speed limit to 25 mph significantly lowers the risk of injury for bicyclists and pedestrians in crashes with motorists.</p>

<p>Minimize the number of cul-de-sacs constructed and promote greenway connections at existing cul-de-sacs</p>	<p>Cul-de-sacs limit walkability due to their lack of connectivity. Constructing roadway connections to existing cul-de-sacs is also challenging, therefore greenway connections can help address limitations in terms of pedestrian connectivity and walkability.</p>
<p>An adopted code may mandate that paths be placed between any proposed greenway or recreational facility within “x” feet from any point on the cul-de-sac or when cul-de-sacs are proposed, the City could mandate that a minimum of “x” feet wide pedestrian or bicyclist pathway that connects to an existing street, greenway, recreational area, commercial area, or school must be included.</p>	<p>The City of Sanford should consider establishing a pedestrian advisory committee or expand the role of the Parks Commission to guide the implementation of recommended pedestrian infrastructure, programs, and policies outlined in the Sanford Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update for the City Board and staff.</p>
<p>Encourage land and easement acquisition along greenway corridors to ensure permanent use as greenway</p>	<p>A greenway easement is a type of easement that allows the public to use a piece of private property for recreational purposes. Access may be limited to specific users (i.e., hikers or mountain bikers) and should be determined at the time the easement is established. The easement stays with the land so if the original landowner sells the property, the greenway remains permanently protected. Working with landowners may be essential to acquiring property and constructing a continuous and comprehensive greenway network. Standard greenway easement widths vary between 20-30 ft with 30 ft as the preferred width, 20 ft constrained.</p>

<p>Rails-to-Trails facilities, such as the American Tobacco Trail, are also an effective method of implementing greenways. In the event of abandonment of a railroad corridor, the City should work with the state and railroad companies to ensure the right-of-way can be preserved for future use as a greenway.</p>	<p>The City of Sanford should consider establishing a greenway facility maintenance plan that includes debris and snow removal policies and schedules for trail clean-up coordination, routine and special maintenance of crossing signals and trail signage, and re-striping and resurfacing schedules for paved multi-use paths along City-maintained roadways.</p>
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FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

BOND FUNDING

Local governments commonly fund greenway and park projects by placing a bond referendum on the ballot for voter approval. In recent years, several Triangle-area municipalities have pursued bond initiatives for greenways, including Raleigh, Garner, Wake Forest, and Apex. In 2013, Sanford placed on the ballot, and voters approved, four separate bond initiatives which included up to \$4 million to extend the Endor Iron Furnace Greenway. For large capital projects that benefit the entire community, using general obligation (GO) bond funding allows the community to repay the bond amount over a long period of time, typically about 20 years. The funding to repay the bond is obtained through a small increase in local property taxes.

Ensuring a successful bond campaign requires careful planning and coordination. Lessons from successful bond referendums show that key factors include a clear vision shared among community leaders and the public, and the National Recreation and Park Association (<https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2020/october/ballot-initiatives-for-dedicated-park-funding-exhibit-resilience-during-covid-19/>) identifies specificity and transparency about how the funding will be used as critical elements of a successful bond campaign. Projects funded by the bond should be able to be delivered soon after its passage to show progress and maintain voter confidence in the community's ability to use bond funding effectively. Projects that are shovel-ready, have completed feasibility studies, or do not require additional years of planning and design are ideal for bond campaigns as what is being promised contingent on voter approval is likely to be realized without significant changes. While bonds are rarely rejected by the public in North Carolina, a bond program

should nevertheless be carefully analyzed within the context of the community’s needs and appetite for referenda, as an unpopular bond referendum may be defeated at the ballot box with political repercussions for leaders who support it. Finally, external project partners such as state and local agencies should be in support of the campaign and be prepared to do their part to implement the bond program.

If the bond is passed, community leaders should maintain realistic expectations for project implementation as often there are unforeseen delays that push back the issuance of the debt or increase the cost of project delivery. Community leaders should be committed to the bond program and prepared to take additional steps or seek additional funding in the event of changes to the project budget. Project management teams should be assembled with contracts in place soon after securing funding, and the status of the bond project implementation should be clearly communicated to the public on a regular basis. Lastly, community leaders should responsibly repay the funding and

EVALUATION + PRIORITIZATION

Evaluation and prioritization are key steps to preparing to implement a plan with many recommendations and may help guide planning for future public investments and coordination with proposed development. Key to these steps is defining a set of evaluation criteria to be used for prioritization.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Based on priorities identified through community engagement and existing plans in Sanford, the project team developed a set of six evaluation criteria for scoring proposed greenways and trails. These include providing connections to schools or colleges, connections to parks or recreation centers, connections to activity centers, connections to existing bicycle or pedestrian facilities, connections across a major barrier, and connections to disadvantaged or undeserved communities. Each criteria includes a tiered ranking to evaluate different levels of fulfillment and a score that reflects the degree to which the criteria is met. For each proposed project evaluated, a direct connection is assumed to be one that is provided by the proposed facility, while an indirect connection is one that is provided in conjunction with other existing facilities within a short distance.

CRITERION	DESCRIPTION	RANK	MEASUREMENT	POINTS
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Connects to Schools or Colleges	Greenway provides connections to schools or colleges.	High	Greenway provides a direct connection to a school or college.	10
		Medium	Greenway provides an indirect connection to a school or college.	5
		Low	Greenway does not connect to a school or college.	0
Connects to Parks or Recreation Centers	Greenway provides connections to parks or recreation centers.	High	Greenway provides a direct connection to a park or recreation center.	10
		Medium	Greenway provides an indirect connection to a park or recreation center.	5
		Low	Greenway does not connect to a park or recreation center. Greenway does not connect to a park or recreation center.	0
Connects to Activity Centers	Greenway provides connections to areas proposed as Village Center, Mixed Use Activity Center, or Downtown land uses in the Plan SanLee Land Use Plan.	High	Greenway provides a direct connection to areas proposed as Village Center, Mixed Use Activity Center, or Downtown land uses.	10
		Medium	Greenway provides an indirect connection to areas proposed as Village Center, Mixed Use Activity Center, or Downtown land uses.	5
		Low	Greenway does not connect to an activity center.	0

Connects to Existing Bicycle or Pedestrian Facilities	Greenway provides connections to existing bicycle or pedestrian facilities.	High	Greenway connects to an existing greenway	10
		Medium	Greenway connects to existing sidewalks or bicycle lanes.	5
		Low	Greenway does not connect to existing bicycle or pedestrian facilities.	0
Provides Connections Across a Major Barrier	Greenway provides connections across a major bicycle or pedestrian barrier, such as a railroad, major roadway or interstate corridor, or river.	High	Greenway provides connections across a major barrier.	10
		Medium	Greenway connects to existing bicycle or pedestrian facilities that provide access across a major barrier.	5
		Low	Greenway does not provide access across a major barrier.	0
Connects to Disadvantaged or Underserved Communities	Greenway serves an area with higher socioeconomic disadvantage as measured by the CDC's Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) tool.	High	Greenway serves a Census Tract with an SVI score of 0.7500 or higher.	10
		Medium	Greenway serves a Census Tract with an SVI score between 0.3500 and 0.7499.	5
		Low	Greenway serves a Census Tract with an SVI score below 0.3500.	0
5	Nash St	Bragg St to Kelly Dr	Sidepath	45
6	Kelly Dr	Nash St to San-Lee Park	Sidepath	45
7	Skunk Creek	Wicker St to Carthage St	Greenway	40
8	Harkey Rd/ Woodland Ave/Dalrymple Park	Courtland Dr to W Globe St	Greenway/Sidepath	40
9	Big Buffalo Creek	Endor Iron Furnace Greenway to McNeil Rd	Greenway	40

10	Little Buffalo Creek	E Weatherspoon Rd to Hawkins Ave	Greenway	40
11	Little Buffalo Creek/Maple Ave/Market St	Chisolm St to Hickory Ave	Greenway/Sidepath	40
12	S Horner Blvd	Little Buffalo Creek to Bragg St	Sidepath	40
13	Skunk Creek	Carthage St to Hooker St	Greenway	35
14	Washington Ave/W Garden St/Harkey St	Horton Park to Courtland Dr	Greenway/Sidepath	35
15	Wicker St	Endor Iron Furnace Greenway to Carthage St	Sidepath	35
16	Persimmon Creek/Keller-Andrews Rd	Endor Iron Furnace Greenway to Legion Dr	Greenway/Sidepath	35
17	E Weatherspoon Rd	Hawkins Ave to Little Buffalo Creek	Sidepath	35
18	Cameron Dr	W Raleigh St to Buchanan Park	Sidepath	30
19	Gasters Creek	Buchanan Park to Hiawatha Trail/Woodridge Dr/Fernridge Dr	Greenway/Greenway Connector	30
20	Atlantic and Western Railway	Main St to future park site	Greenway	30
21	Persimmon Creek/Wicker St	Endor Iron Furnace Greenway to Legion Dr	Greenway/Sidepath	30
22	Wicker St	Legion Dr to JR Ingram Jr Elementary School	Sidepath	30
23	Persimmon Creek/Keller-Andrews Rd	Wicker St to Carthage St	Greenway/Sidepath	30

24	Airport Rd	Fire Tower Rd to Tramway Rd	Greenway/Sidepath	30
25	BT Bullock Elementary School	Burns Dr to McNeil Rd	Greenway	30
26	Little Buffalo Creek	Hickory Ave to E Makepeace St	Greenway	30
27	Little Buffalo Creek	E Spruce St to S Horner Blvd	Greenway	30
28	S Vance St Connector	Hooker St to Horton Park	Greenway/Sidepath	25
29	E Rose St	S 7th St to S 4th St	Sidepath	25
30	Gasters Creek Connector	Gasters Creek Greenway to J Glenn Edwards Elementary School	Greenway Connector	20
31	Carthage St/ Persimmon Creek	Keller-Andrews Rd to Gloucester Dr	Greenway/Sidepath	20
32	Big Buffalo Creek	Cotten Rd to Deep River	Greenway	20
33	Utility Corridor/Friars Dr	Crusaders Dr to Burns Dr	Greenway/Sidepath	15
34	Burns Dr	Friars Dr to Candlewood Apartments	Sidepath	15
35	S 7th St	Bragg St to E Rose St	Sidepath	15

PRIORITY PROJECTS

The two proposed projects which scored highest in the prioritization phase are examined in greater detail in project cutsheets below. These projects do not necessarily reflect what is easiest or most cost-effective to build, but only what performed best under the criteria established for this plan. Availability of funding, willing property owners, community priorities, and projects by development partners and NCDOT are factors which will influence the implementation of recommended projects in this plan.

PRIORITY PROJECT 1: CARTHAGE ST SIDEPATH, WICK-

DESCRIPTION

The proposed project will construct a sidepath on the north side of Carthage St between Wicker St and Horner Blvd, providing a key connection between Downtown Sanford and Kiwanis Children’s Park with an opportunity to extend the sidepath to connect to the existing Endor Iron Furnace Greenway in the future. The project will also fill a gap in the existing pedestrian network between Carbonton Rd and Park Ave and include crossing improvements at several intersections.

LENGTH

0.6 miles

EXISTING ROADWAY CONDITIONS

The existing roadway is two lanes with a center turn lane between Wicker St and Carbonton Rd, and four lanes with a center turn lane east of Carbonton Rd. Traffic volumes are between 7,000 and 7,400 vehicles per day, and the speed limit is posted at 35 miles per hour (MPH) west of Gulf St and 20 MPH east of Gulf St. The roadway is maintained by NCDOT.

PROPOSED CROSS-SECTION

A 10 ft paved travel is proposed on the north side of the roadway with a planting strip where right-of-way (ROW) permits. The planting strip may include landscaping elements such as trees, as well as utility poles, lighting, and signage. A concrete paved surface is recommended due to expected user volumes and the number of driveway crossings.



PROPOSED INTERSECTION + CROSSING TREATMENTS

Crosswalks are proposed at each intersection along the project corridor and should be painted with high-visibility markings to alert drivers to the presence of trail users. Intersections include Park Ave, Carbonton Rd, Hillcrest Dr, N Vance St, N Gulf St, and N Horner Blvd. Decorative crossing markings, such as those used elsewhere in Downtown Sanford, may be employed at select intersections to further elevate the presence of the corridor and visually connect it with the downtown area.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS

Right-of-way is constrained at several points along the corridor, including near N Vance St and Carbonton Rd. Planting strip may need to be eliminated at these locations or the width of the trail reduced. Portions of the project may also be implemented through the redevelopment of parcels. While reducing the width of the roadway to install a sidepath is likely cost-prohibitive due to the necessary relocation of utilities and curb, future roadway projects which may include a road diet should consider incorporating a sidepath into the design.

PLANNING-LEVEL COST ESTIMATE

\$1,578,000

The planning level cost to construct the facility is provided in 2023 dollars. The cost estimate was developed using the most recent available version of the NCDOT Bicycle & Pedestrian Cost Estimator Tool, which determines facility cost estimates based on the following factors: project type, project length, facility width, construction market region, and existing roadway characteristics. The estimate does not include costs of design, ROW acquisition, or utility relocation.

PRIORITIZATION SCORE

Connects to Schools: **5/10**

Connects to Parks or Recreation Centers: **10/10**

Connects to Downtown and Mixed Use Centers: **10/10**

Connects to Existing Bicycle or Pedestrian Facilities: **5/10**

Provides Connections Across a Major Barrier: **10/10**

Connects to Disadvantaged or Underserved Communities: **10/10**

Total: 50/60

PRIORITY PROJECT 2: BRAGG ST/MCIVER ST

DESCRIPTION

The proposed project will construct a sidepath on the south side of McIver St at Temple Park and on the west side of Bragg St between S 8th St and S 7th St, closing multiple gaps in the existing sidewalk network and connecting to Temple Park and Bragg Street Academy as well as multiple places of worship and retail stores. The project will also include crossing improvements at several intersections, improving pedestrian and bicyclist safety in east Sanford.

LENGTH

0.95 miles

EXISTING ROADWAY CONDITIONS

McIver St is a two-lane road maintained by the City of Sanford with a posted speed limit of 35 MPH. Bragg St is a four-lane road with no center turn lane, a posted speed limit of 35 MPH, and traffic volumes of 4,600 or below. The roadway is maintained by NCDOT south of Clearwater Dr.

PROPOSED CROSS-SECTION

A minimum 10 ft paved trail is proposed on the south and west side of the corridor with a planting strip where ROW permits. The trail width should be increased to 12 ft where feasible. The planting strip may include landscaping elements such as trees, as well as utility poles, lighting, and signage. An asphalt paved surface is recommended along much of the corridor, but limited sections of concrete may be necessary where driveway crossings exist.



Mixed Surface Sidepath
12 ft preferred, 10 ft constrained

Planting Strip
2-5 ft

Roadway
Width varies

PROPOSED INTERSECTION + CROSSING TREATMENTS

Crosswalks are proposed at each controlled intersection along the project corridor and should be painted with high-visibility markings to alert drivers to the presence of trail users. Intersections along the corridor include S 8th St, Maple Ave, Oakwood Ave, Cooper St, Goldsboro Ave, and Ray Ave. Pedestrian signal heads should be installed at Oakwood Ave, and midblock crossings should be considered at points along the corridor including Clearwater Dr and Goldsboro Ave.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS

Right-of-way is limited along the corridor, and existing buildings and businesses are located close to the roadway near Oakwood Ave. The width of the planting strip or the trail may need to be reduced at this location. Landscaping and slope conditions near Cooper St and Goldsboro Ave may require the limited use of retaining wall. Portions of the project may also be implemented through the redevelopment of parcels. While reducing the width of the roadway to install a sidepath is likely cost-prohibitive due to the necessary relocation of utilities and curb, future roadway projects which may include a road diet should consider incorporating a sidepath into the design.

PLANNING-LEVEL COST ESTIMATE

\$2,300,000

The planning level cost to construct the facility is provided in 2023 dollars. The cost estimate was developed using the most recent available version of the NCDOT Bicycle & Pedestrian Cost Estimator Tool, which determines facility cost estimates based on the following factors: project type, project length, facility width, construction market region, and existing roadway characteristics. The estimate does not include costs of design, ROW acquisition, or utility relocation.

PRIORITIZATION SCORE

Connects to Schools: **10/10**

Connects to Parks or Recreation Centers: **10/10**

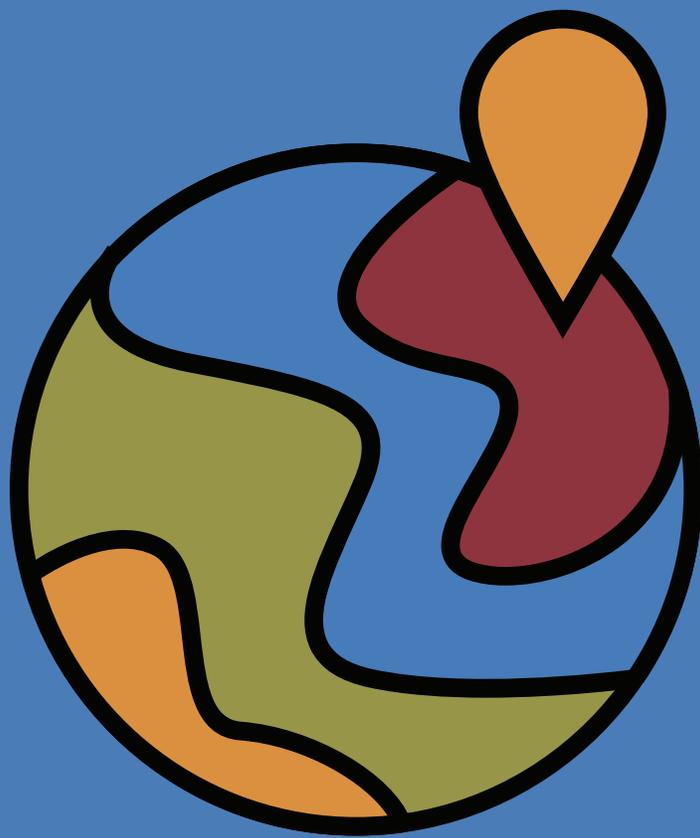
Connects to Downtown and Mixed Use Centers: **5/10**

Connects to Existing Bicycle or Pedestrian Facilities: **5/10**

Provides Connections Across a Major Barrier: **10/10**

Connects to Disadvantaged or Underserved Communities: **10/10**

Total: 50/60



4 LEVEL OF SERVICE



IN THIS CHAPTER

Benchmarking + National Standards

Geographic Distribution of Parks, Facilities + Amenities

Parkland Distribution Access

Opportunity Mapping

Growth Patterns

Parkland Acquisition Strategies

OVERVIEW

Ensuring a consistent, high-quality, and equitable provision of leisure services is at the center of success for parks and recreation agencies. Understanding what services are available and how to best facilitate public access allows providers to efficiently deliver recreation opportunities in a fair manner across their communities. There are many tools and metrics that agencies have historically implemented to measure the availability and distribution of parks and recreation resources. They have and continue to include strategies such as assigning typologies to parks across the system, comparing the number of parks, programs, operational components to those of the agency's peers, and benchmarking various metrics.

These metrics will play a fundamental role in guiding future growth of the City of Sanford's parks and greenway system. Such measurements provide valuable quantitative data that allows for a comprehensive understanding of the current state of parks and recreation facilities not only within Sanford, but also in similar jurisdictions and nationwide. This understanding has come to be accepted by parks and recreation industry professionals and is referred to as level of service (LOS). In the context of parks and recreation, the term level of service refers to the quality, quantity, and accessibility of the parks, amenities, facilities, and services parks and recreation departments provide to the community. It is a measure of how well the recreational needs and desires of the community are being met. The level of service for parks and recreation can vary depending on factors such as the size of the community, available resources, budget constraints, and the overall priorities of the department.

The purpose of the LOS analysis is to establish parameters to measure whether Sanford is currently meeting the community's needs for parks and recreation services. For the purpose of this analysis, metrics include determining current surpluses or deficits in parkland and facilities by comparing the park system's current inventory and the jurisdiction's total population and mapping the geographic distribution of parks and amenities. Findings are then used to predict future needs and inform recommendations for enhancing the equitable distribution of recreation opportunities based on 10-year population projections and growth patterns.

The 2023 NRPA Agency Performance Review does not present a set of specific standards because different agencies serve different communities that have unique needs, desires, and challenges. By combining insights from NRPA Metrics with Sanford-specific characteristics, feedback, and trends the City can create an ideal mix of parks and amenities—ensuring that Sanford parks will continue delivering services that are well-suited to the community's specific needs.

BENCHMARKING + NATIONAL STANDARDS

INTRODUCTION

The current level of service (LOS) analysis utilizes reporting from the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) to establish benchmarks and measure the City of Sanford’s performance against median values prevalent among peer agencies. These median values are derived from a subset of parks and recreation departments serving similar-sized populations, thereby providing a comparative reference for evaluating the City’s performance. NRPA is the leading industry association supporting parks and recreation professionals and advancing public parks, recreation, and conservation. For over a decade, NRPA has been polling parks and recreation departments to establish a nationwide benchmarking tool to assist park and recreation professionals in the effective management and planning of their operating resources and capital facilities. Today, NRPA Park Metrics is the most comprehensive source of data benchmarks and insights for park and recreation agencies. Every spring, NRPA publishes its Agency Performance Review, which summarizes the key finding from NRPA Metrics. The 2023 annual report summarized benchmarking data contributed by more than 1,000 park and recreation agencies reported between 2020 and 2022.

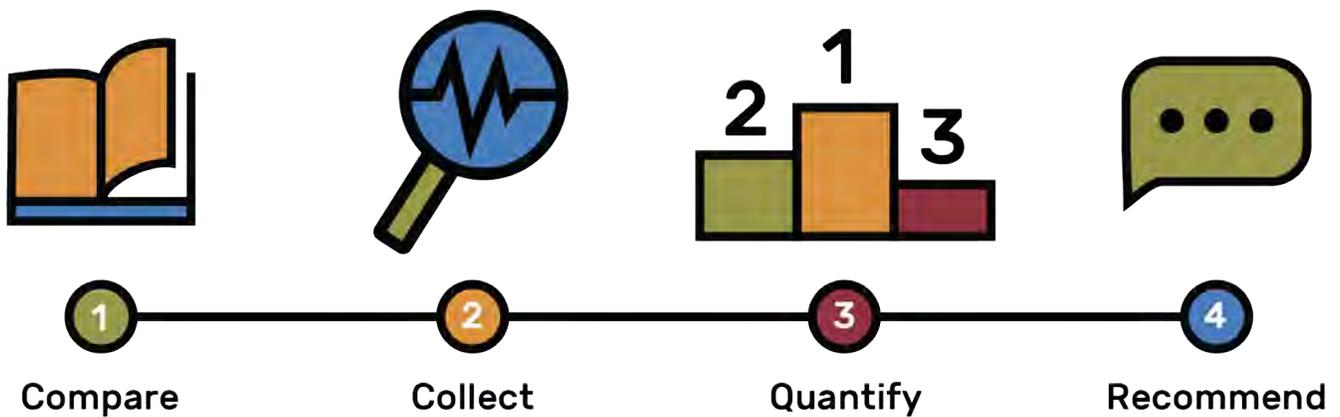
PARKS AND RECREATION INVENTORY

Sanford owns and maintains nearly 24 acres of publicly accessible park land. The City’s park system is primarily comprised of traditional recreational amenities such as playgrounds, picnic shelters, and unprogrammed open spaces. Kiwanis Park is the City’s flagship facility, providing a splashpad featuring many interactive features, alongside an inclusive playground, ½ mile paved walking loop, and two shelters with a restroom after the City was deeded 14 acres of the existing park previously owned and managed by Lee County.

 <p>PARKLAND</p>	 <p>TRAILS</p>	 <p>PARK AMENITIES</p>
<p>23.53 acres of developed parkland</p>	<p>1.9 miles of trails and greenways 1 trailhead</p>	<p>6 playgrounds 2 shelters 2 amphitheatres 1 splash pad 1 paved walking loop 1 horseshoe court</p>

PROCESS

The initial step in the four-step process of conducting the benchmarking component of the level of service (LOS) analysis involves documenting the parks and recreational amenities available in the City. The second step compares Sanford’s inventory to the baseline benchmarks established by NRPA for departments serving similar-sized populations (ranging from 20,000 to 49,999). In the third step, the target LOS is evaluated against the current and projected population figures to determine any surpluses or deficits in parkland and facilities. Finally, the findings are put into local context by considering factors such as existing offerings, recreation trends, demand, annual budgets, land use, land availability, and other relevant considerations in order to propose a recommended level of service.



The LOS is then presented as a ratio which includes the current parks and recreation inventory of parkland and trails, as well as Sanford Parks’ operational resources – divided by a portion of the current population based on a rate per 1,000 residents.

$$\frac{\text{parks and recreation offering}}{\text{portion of population*}} = \text{Level of Service}$$

(*EITHER per 1,000 population
 OR per capita)

The rate per 1,000 population is a commonly used indicator of the level of service for parks and recreation because it allows for a consistent and standardized measure comparable across different regions or communities. A higher rate per 1,000 population suggests that there are more parks and recreational resources available relative to the size of the population. This can be an important factor in evaluating the overall level of service provided by the City of Sanford. While the rate per 1,000 population is a useful indicator, it should be considered alongside other factors such as park size, diversity of amenities, maintenance standards, and programming to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the level of service for parks and recreation in a given area.

BENCHMARKING ANALYSIS

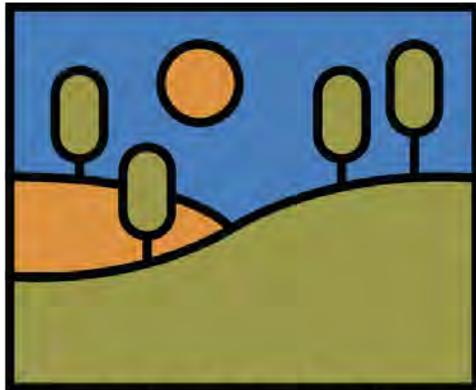
Department benchmark data was derived from the following information:

- > 2017 City Population – 29,144
- > 2022 City Population – 31,321
- > 2032 City Projection – 34,461
- > 23.53 Park Acres
- > 1.9 Miles of Trails
- > \$705,000 Operating Expenditures
- > 5 Full Time Employees (FTE)

2017 Population = 29,144 2022 Population=31,321 2032 Projected = 34, 461 2017 Total Park Acreage: 9.44 2023 Total Park Acreage: 23.53					
National Recreation and Parks Association Metrics (Population Range = 20,000-49,999)					
Metric	2017 City of Sanford LOS	2017 LOS Recommendations	2023 City of Sanford	2023 NRPA Lower Quartile	2023 NRPA Median
Acres of Parkland per 1,000 residents	.32 Acres	+ 38 Acres = 1.63 Acres/1000 Population	.75 Acres	5.9 Acres	11.2 Acres
Trail Miles	1.4 Miles	+ 4.5 Miles	1.9 Miles/.06 Miles per 1000 Population	5 Miles	8.2 Miles
Total Operating Expenditures			\$705,000	\$1,996,538	\$3,255,771
Total Expenditures Per Capita			\$22.51	\$69.65	\$120.79
Operating Expenditures per Park Acres			\$29,962	\$3,950	\$8,188
Staffing (FTEs) per 10,000 Residents			1.6 FTEs	5.6 FTEs	11.1 FTEs

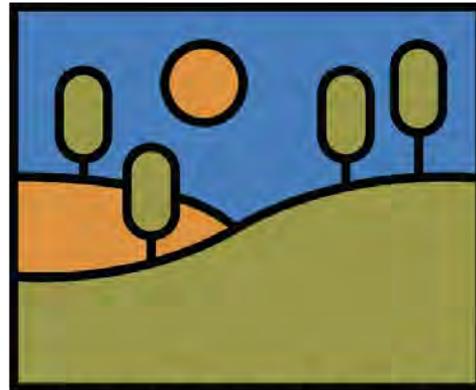
PARKLAND + FACILITIES

NRPA Park Metrics calculates acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. The City of Sanford’s level of service for parkland is calculated using the same ratio of total park acreage within the system to the number of residents. Sanford currently has .75 acres per 1,000 residents. This is approximately 5 acres per 1,000 residents less than agencies in the NRPA low quartile (5.9 acres per 1,000 residents), and 10.5 acres per 1,000 residents lower than the NRPA median (11.2 acres per 1,000 population).



City of Sanford

.75 acres/1,000 population



National Recreation + Park Association Lower Quartile

5.9 acres/1,000 population

	Current Offerings	Current LOS	Recommended LOS	Needed to Meet Recommended LOS (Current)	Needed to Meet Recommended LOS (Future)
	Total Acres	Acres/Per 1,000 Population		Additional Acres	
Option 1 (LOS Lower Quartile)	23.53	.75	5.9	184.8 (+ 161.26)	203.3 (+ 179.79)
Option 1 (National Median)	23.53	.75	11.2	350.8 (+ 327.27)	386 (+ 362.47)

The analysis reveals a substantial deficit of park acreage per 1,000 population in the City of Sanford when compared to the lower quartile and national median for cities of similar population size. While the lower quartile stands at 5.9 park acres per 1,000 population, Sanford falls significantly short with only 0.75 park acres per 1,000 population. The City would need to increase its current park acreage by an additional 161.26 acres to be in line with parks and recreation agencies in the lower quartile of park acreage provision.

As the City continues to grow over the 10-year planning horizon, an additional 161.26 acres of parkland would need to be acquired in order to continue providing the lower quartile level of service. If Sanford would like to increase the LOS to the national median of 11.2 acres per 1,000 population, it would require the immediate acquisition 351 acres to serve the current population and 35 additional acres to serve the 2032 projected population at that level of service.

Yet, an accurate understanding of the degree to which the Sanford community is being provided access to parks and recreational amenities requires recognizing the additional park acreage and amenities provided by Lee County. At the time the 2017 Parks and Recreation Master Plan was developed, the City of Sanford did not have a governmental department or division responsible for the provision of parks and recreation services. Sanford, at that time and for many decades prior, relied on the County to provide the public with parks and recreational activities.

Since then, as mentioned throughout the current master plan update, the City established Sanford Parks as an arm of City government tasked with providing the community with parks, amenities, and open spaces. This came in response to a successful parks and greenways bond referendum in 2013, and subsequent acquisition of the front portion of Kiwanis Family Park from Lee County in 2018. At that time, this portion of the park was primarily undeveloped and cleared of trees, providing Sanford with a canvas to create a park of its own making. The park further developed, keeping in mind the City's goal to improve sense of community and quality of life for residents.

The City of Sanford answered that call to action by elevating the leisure experience in the community with the addition of first-in-class amenities such as contemporary and inclusive play structures, superior shelters accommodating up to 100 park visitors, a half-mile walking trail, and the City's first splashpad. Despite this effort, as illustrated above, the demand for parkland in Sanford is decidedly not being met. However, as Sanford Parks continues to establish itself as the primary provider of parks, recreation, and greenways in the community it is important to acknowledge the ten (10) Lee County owned and managed parks existing within Sanford City limits and ETJ as part of the current LOS analysis.

Park	Acres	Amenities	Recommended Improvements (2017 City of Sanford P+R Master Plan, 2021 Lee County P+R Master Plan)
Buchanan Park	5.4	1 Playground, 1 Lighted Baseball Diamond, 1 Picnic Shelter w/ 5 Picnic Tables + Grill, Restrooms	Consider adding new amenities on western side, renovate or replace existing playground, replace shelter, develop walking trail and bridge, improve internal wayfinding and sidewalk access.
Dalrymple Park	6.3	1 Playground, 2 Lighted Baseball Diamonds, 2 Outdoor Basketball Courts, Batting Cages, Press Box, Concessions Building with Restrooms, Ingram Center (100 Person Capacity Indoor Facility)	Improve ballfield drainage, relocate and expand amenity access to the north of Ingram Center including new play and outdoor fitness equipment, renovate Ingram Center, add picnic shelter, create a paved walking loop, improve internal wayfinding and enhance stream feature.
Horton Community Park	9.6	1 Modern Inclusive Playground, 1 Lighted Baseball Diamond, 2 Shelters (80-person) w/8 Tables + Grill each, 1 Basketball Court,	Renovate and reactivate swimming pool, or replace with splashpad, improve parking, signage, landscaping, and ballfield drainage.
Kiwanis Children's Park	4.7	1 Playground (Modern+ Inclusive), 7 Lighted Outdoor Pickleball Courts, 3 Tennis Courts, Shelter -30-person w/3 Tables + Grill, Restrooms	Expand parking and improve ADA access.
Kiwanis Family Park	51.8	Kiwanis Shelter-100 Person w/10 Tables + Grill, Gazebo- 50-person, Exercise Equipment, Walking Trails, Endor Iron Furnace Greenway Trailhead	Consider paving greenway through flood-prone areas and stream restoration, create greenway links, replace existing shelters, expand walking loop, improve wayfinding and trail signage.

Lett Family Park	7.8	2 Playgrounds, 2 Lighted Baseball Diamonds, 1 Large Shelter, Concessions Building w/Restrooms, Lett Center (65-person Capacity Indoor Facility)	Expand recreation opportunities at the northern end: like disc golf, fitness stations, shelters adjacent to playground, create paved walking loop, shade the playground, pave parking area, improve internal wayfinding/ accessible routes.
O.T Sloan Park	42	1 Playground, 4 Lighted Baseball Diamonds, 3 Tennis Courts, 4 Pickleball Courts, 1 Disc Golf Course, 1 Dog Park, 1 50-meter Swimming Pool, 1 Shaded 100-person Picnic Area w/10 Tables, 60-person Shelter w/6 Tables, 1 Volleyball Court	Relocate dog park to accommodate new entrance road, construct offices for Lee County P+R Department, add splashpad, improve ADA access.
Temple Park	4.6	2 Basketball Courts, Open Space	Improve sidewalk access, upgrade and expand parking, re-grade infields, stabilize batter boxes.
Tramway Road Park	21.5	4 Lighted Baseball Fields, Batting Cages, 1 Soccer Field, 1 Playground, Walking Half-Loop, Concession Building w/ Restrooms, Lee County P+R Offices	Provide accessible surfacing to playground, pave northern walking loop segment, complete walking loop, relocate offices to O.T. Sloan park and demolish house to re-purpose site to accommodate unique amenities, close drive access from tramway road, create parking access from interior road. Complete Phase III
TOTAL ACREAGE	149		

It is clear that both the city of Sanford and Lee County offer a range of recreational activities, in consideration of limited parkland, but it is evident that many recreational demands remain unfulfilled. Notably, a significant number of existing parks within the region are aging and require enhancements to better serve the community. This underscores a pressing need for revitalization and expansion of recreational facilities to address the current inadequacies and ensure that the residents have access to diverse and modern recreational opportunities that promote health and well-being.

However, while recognizing the imperative for improved recreational infrastructure, it is crucial to approach these ambitions within the framework of realistic planning. Aspirations for extensive enhancements must be balanced with a pragmatic understanding of available resources and true demand among the population. A comprehensive assessment of the local preferences, demographics, and level of service standards outlined in the current City of Sanford Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update should guide a responsive approach to meeting the recreational needs of Sanford and Lee County.



Kiwanis Park Inclusive Playground – Sanford Parks



Third Street Park Aging Playground + Undeveloped Open Space – Sanford Parks



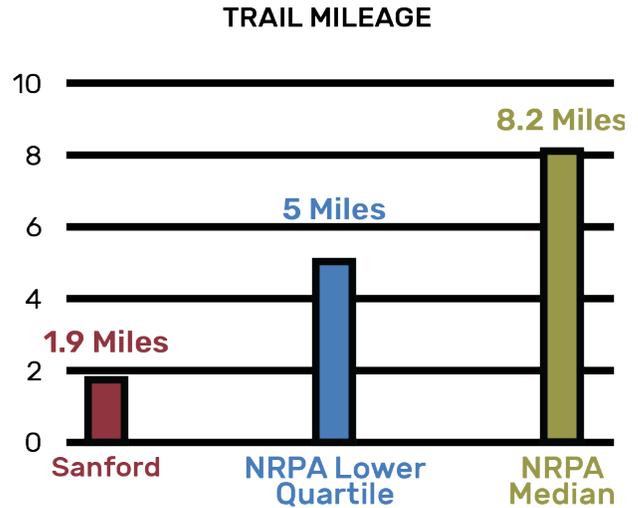
Horton Park Modern Playground – Lee County Parks + Recreation



Buchanan Park Aging Playground + Undeveloped Open Space – Lee County Parks

GREENWAY TRAIL MILES

The Sanford Community currently has access to 1.9 miles of trails in the park system compared to 5 miles per NRPA’s lower quartile data and 8.2 per the NRPA median. Parks and recreation researchers and industry leaders have generally agreed that anywhere between one-half to one mile of trail per 1,000 population is an acceptable level of service for recreational trails and greenway provisions in a community. With a population of 31,321 residents and 1.9 miles of trails, the City of Sanford is providing far less than a half to a mile of greenway (.06) per 1,000 residents. Greenways are almost universally appreciated for their aesthetic appeal, recreational opportunities, social interaction, environmental benefits, and the improved quality of life they bring. Trails and greenways are linear green spaces that play a vital role in creating vibrant, livable communities that prioritize the well-being of their residents. They also add value to neighborhoods, attracting potential homebuyers and fostering a sense of pride in the community.



	Current Offering	Current LOS	Recommended LOS	Needed to Meet Recommended LOS (Current Pop)	Needed to Meet Recommended LOS (Future Pop)
	Total Miles	Miles/Per 1,000 Population		Miles	
Option 1 (1/2 Mile per 1,000 Pop.)	1.9	.06	.5	15.7	17.2
Option 1 (1 Mile per 1,000 Pop.)	1.9	.06	1	31.3	34.5

As evidenced in the table above, the City of Sanford’s current greenway trail mileage falls below NRPA’s lower quartile recommendation and national median. In order to meet the lower end national best practice of a half mile of greenway per 1,000 population, the City currently needs to build close to 16 miles of trails and will need to develop another two miles over the next ten years to accommodate the needs of a growing population. To meet the higher end recommendation of one mile per 1,000 population, the City would currently need to double that amount as indicated in the table, and plan for an additional 31.3 miles of trail to meet the needs of the future population.

Community feedback is another metric that can be used in tandem with the physical gap analysis to understand the level of service and demand for access to greenways and trails. The need for prioritizing investments in trails and greenways in Sanford and Lee County is evident from various community engagement sources and surveys employed by the two local governments over the past five years. The City of Sanford 2017 plan recognized walking or biking trails as the number one recreation gap in Sanford based on results of the scientific survey. Results from Lee County's 2021 recreational needs survey determined that natural trails and an expanded greenway system should be priorities for investment. Lastly, community feedback received across the various engagement efforts for the current parks and recreation master plan update revealed a high level of current greenway and trail usage and a strong demand for an extended greenway system, natural trails, and bike trails. For example, focus groups highlighted the benefits of greenways for physical activity, aesthetic appeal, and a way to draw people to downtown Sanford. Proposed investments in natural trails and greenway systems, along with water access, are considered high-priority investments based on residents' needs. A recommended goal of the Lee County 2021 plan is the creation of a county-wide greenway master plan, including extending the Endor Iron Furnace Greenway.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF PARKS, FACILITIES AND AMENITIES

OVERVIEW

Identifying gaps in the distribution of parks and recreational facilities through the level of service analysis allows for a targeted approach to addressing underserved areas. By understanding the factors that contribute to these gaps, such as population density, geographic limitations, or historical and future development patterns, recommendations can be made to ensure a more equitable distribution of recreation opportunities. This helps promote fair access to the benefits that parks, and green spaces provide, contributing to the overall well-being and livability of the Sanford community. One aspect of accessibility is the ability to walk to a park. Ensuring neighborhoods have parks within walking distance enhances opportunities for physical activity and recreation, especially for those who may not have access to private transportation. It allows individuals to incorporate exercise into their daily routines, leading to improved physical health and reduced rates of chronic diseases.

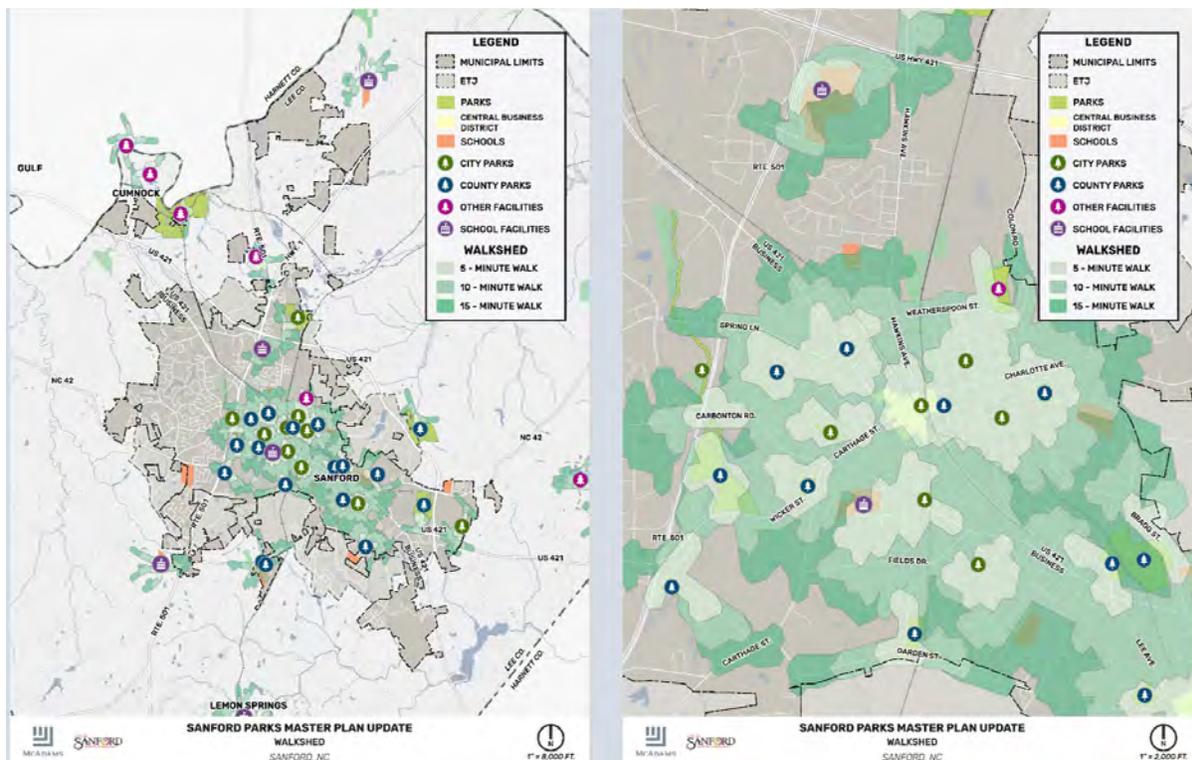
However, it is also important to recognize that not all residents can easily walk to a park due to factors such as distance or physical limitations. Providing accessible transportation options and ensuring that parks are within a reasonable driving distance for these individuals is equally vital. By considering the geographic distribution of parks and recreational facilities, policymakers can determine areas that lack convenient access and develop strategies to address transportation barriers. This approach ensures that all residents, regardless of their mobility, have opportunities to benefit from park amenities. The presence of parks and green spaces has a significant impact on public health. Access to parks provides opportunities for physical activity, such as walking, jogging, and cycling, which contribute to maintaining a healthy weight, reducing the risk of chronic diseases, and enhancing mental well-being. Regular park visits have been linked to stress reduction, improved mood, and better cognitive function. Communities providing equal access to parks and recreational facilities promote healthier lifestyles and mitigate health disparities.

Furthermore, addressing gaps in park distribution helps reduce social inequalities. Historically, marginalized communities have faced limited access to parks and recreational amenities, perpetuating social and health inequities. By prioritizing underserved areas and implementing initiatives to develop or enhance parks, the City of Sanford can address these disparities and promote social inclusion. Parks serve as community gathering spaces where residents from diverse backgrounds can come together, fostering social connections and strengthening community bonds. This shared sense of place and opportunity for social interaction contributes to a more inclusive and equitable community

PARKLAND DISTRIBUTION ACCESS

WALKABILITY

Park walkability pertains to the convenience and comfort of walking to and navigating within a park. Communities that prioritize walkable parks not only create accessible and enjoyable spaces but also encourage people to choose walking as a means of reaching parks for exercise instead of relying on vehicles. Having parks within walking distance is particularly beneficial for households without cars, enabling individuals and families to access green spaces and recreational amenities without the need for private transportation. In pursuit of this goal, The Trust for Public Land (TPL), Urban Land Institute, and NRPA have collaborated to establish the 10-Minute Walk Program. The objective of this initiative is to ensure that everyone can reach the nearest park or open space within a ten-minute walk or a distance of half a mile from their residence. Parks and recreation agencies nationwide have embraced this program to foster equitable access to parks, recreation facilities, and programs, thereby facilitating positive health outcomes associated with walkability and access to spaces that promote physical activity.



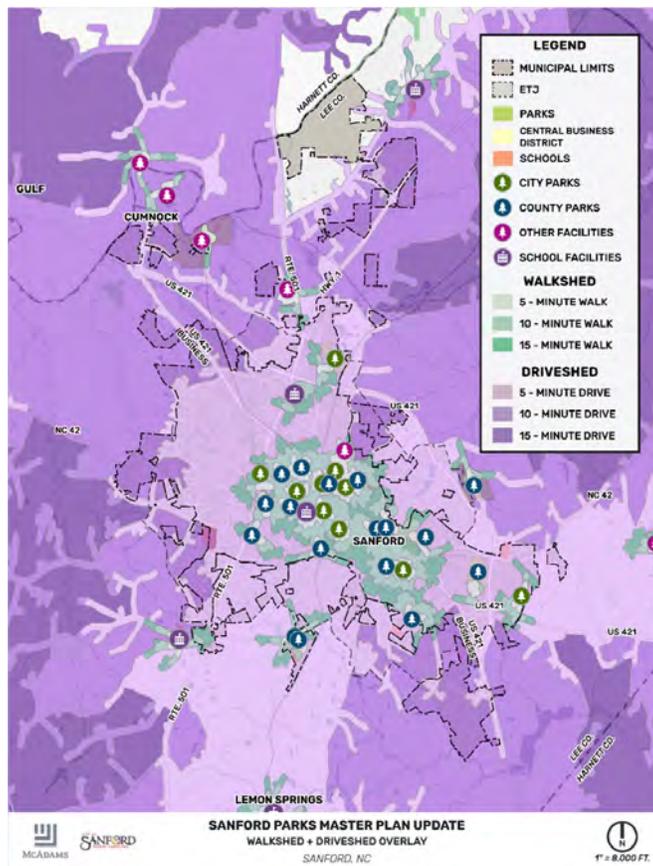
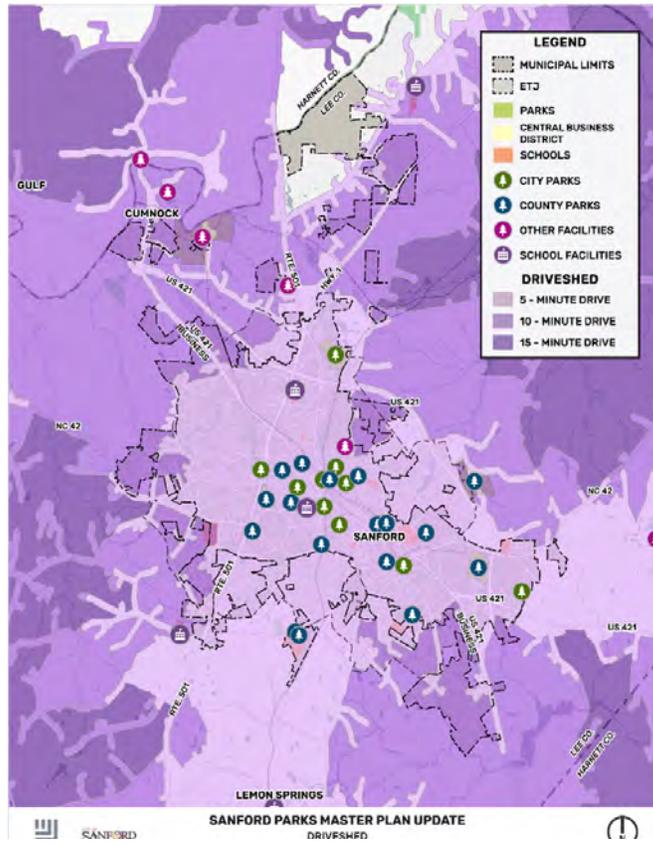
According to the 2023 TPL report, 36 percent of Sanford residents are within a 10-minute walk of a park, which is below the national average of 55 percent. As shown in the 10-minute walk to a park map above, other than Carr Creek and Kiwanis Family Park, the majority of City of Sanford parks are accessible within a 10-minute walk. Kiwanis Park is connected to the Endor Iron Furnace Greenway; however, the greenway terminates at either the park or the trailhead, providing only out-and-back walking opportunities. The remainder of Sanford Parks, and Lee County Parks for that matter are not attached to the greenway and are generally disconnected from one another across the system. As shown on the map for walkability, the eastern and southeastern portions of the City shows a significant absence of parks, open space, and greenways despite this area being a more developed part of the City. Lastly, the northern portion of Central Sanford, north of Weatherspoon St. and south of US 421, has little access to parks facilities within walking distance compared to the rest of the central portion of the City.

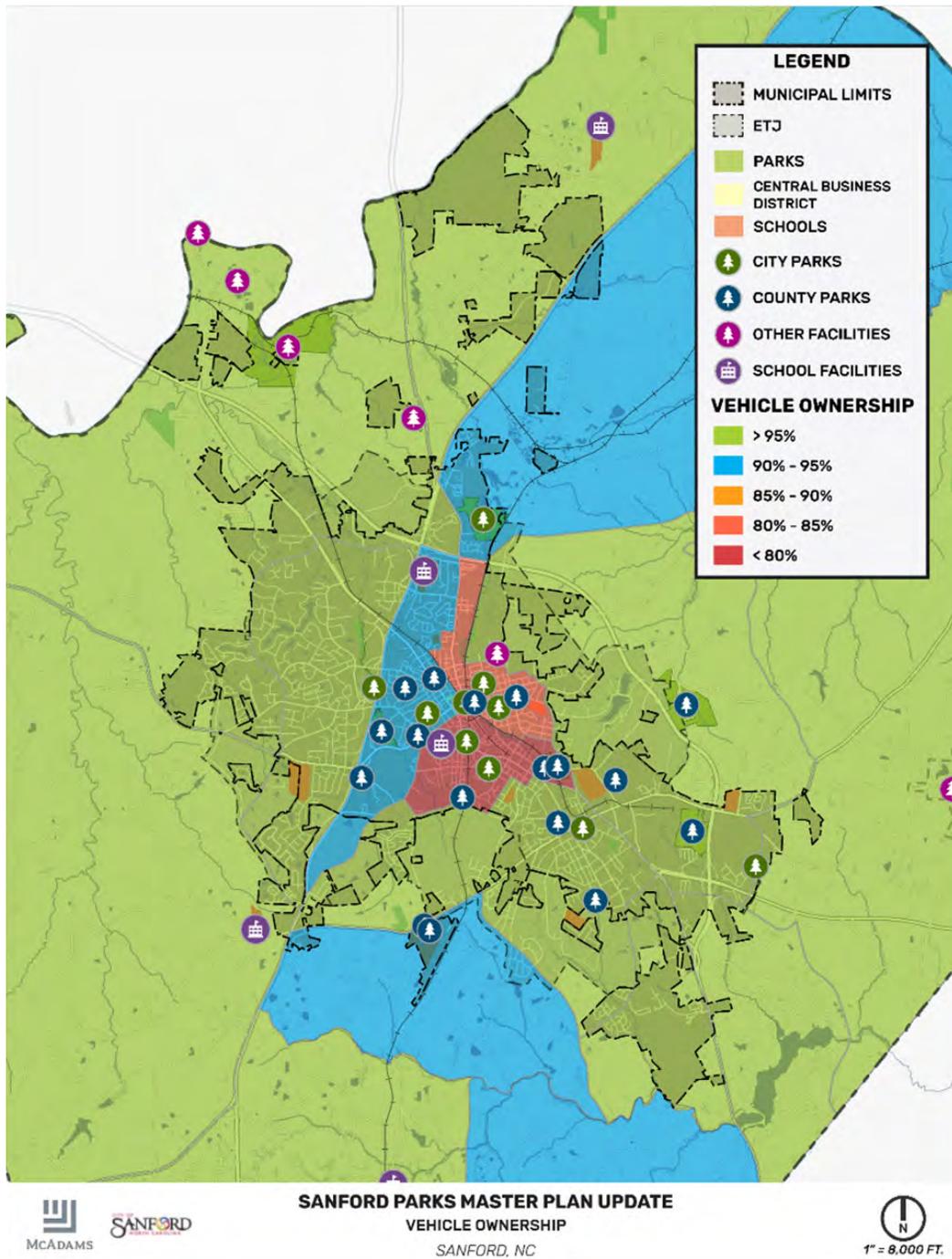
DISTANCE OR TRAVEL TIME TO ACCESS

Although the 10-Minute Walk Program is frequently employed as a measure to evaluate access to parks and open spaces, numerous suburban and rural communities across the country have acknowledged that low population density poses challenges in establishing the necessary infrastructure to achieve this objective. In such cases, having the ability to reach a park within a five-minute drive offers distinct advantages in terms of convenience and opportunity cost. Proximity to a nearby park simplifies the inclusion of park visits in one's daily routine. Community members with a park in close driving proximity can optimize their time by spending more of it in the park rather than on the road. Reduced travel distances result in more time available for engaging in activities within the park setting.

The drivetime map presented below reveals a positive finding, indicating that the majority of the City of Sanford enjoys the convenience of having a park within a five-minute drive. Most of the City's footprint is within a 5 minute drive of a park. The only portion of Sanford not within a 15 minute drive to a park is the portion just inside the Lee County line in the northernmost extent of the City. This accessibility to nearby parks is an encouraging aspect, suggesting that residents have relatively easy access to recreational opportunities and green spaces. However, it is important to consider that this positive finding can be influenced by several factors that may limit its impact.

One such factor is automobile sufficiency, which refers to the availability and ownership of private vehicles within households. While the drivetime map indicates proximity to parks, it assumes that individuals have access to private transportation to reach these destinations. In households where car ownership is limited, reliance on public transportation or alternative modes of travel may present challenges in utilizing the parks within a short driving distance. To ensure fair and equitable access to parks, it is important to address these limitations. Efforts should be made to improve alternative transportation options, such as public transit or active transportation infrastructure, to provide viable means of reaching parks for individuals without private vehicles.





Vehicle ownership is lowest in the central-most portion of the City but walkability in this area is quite high due to the existence of pedestrian infrastructure such as sidewalk connections to nearby destinations. Vehicle ownership in the rest of the City is 90% or higher. The eastern half of Sanford, the central-most portion, has a higher social vulnerability than City in aggregate. The southeastern portion of the City, again, the central-most portion, has the highest health vulnerability in Sanford. Both of these vulnerability indicators are highest in areas where access, both from a walkability and drivability perspective, is high. This indicates that more targeted outreach or programming could improve access and use by vulnerable populations.

OPPORTUNITY MAPPING

OVERVIEW

Fair access to parks, open spaces, and greenways can be analyzed through the lens of equitable distribution of parks and amenities across the City of Sanford. Government investment in parks is intended to create benefits for the whole community. For example, providing places to exercise in parks creates an individual benefit for those who use the space, but provides expanded benefit to the community by improving health outcomes and minimizing health care costs that individuals with sedentary lifestyle habits tend to incur. The intent of this assessment is to highlight opportunities for the City to provide vulnerable populations with enhanced access to parks and recreation amenities.

SOCIAL VULNERABILITY

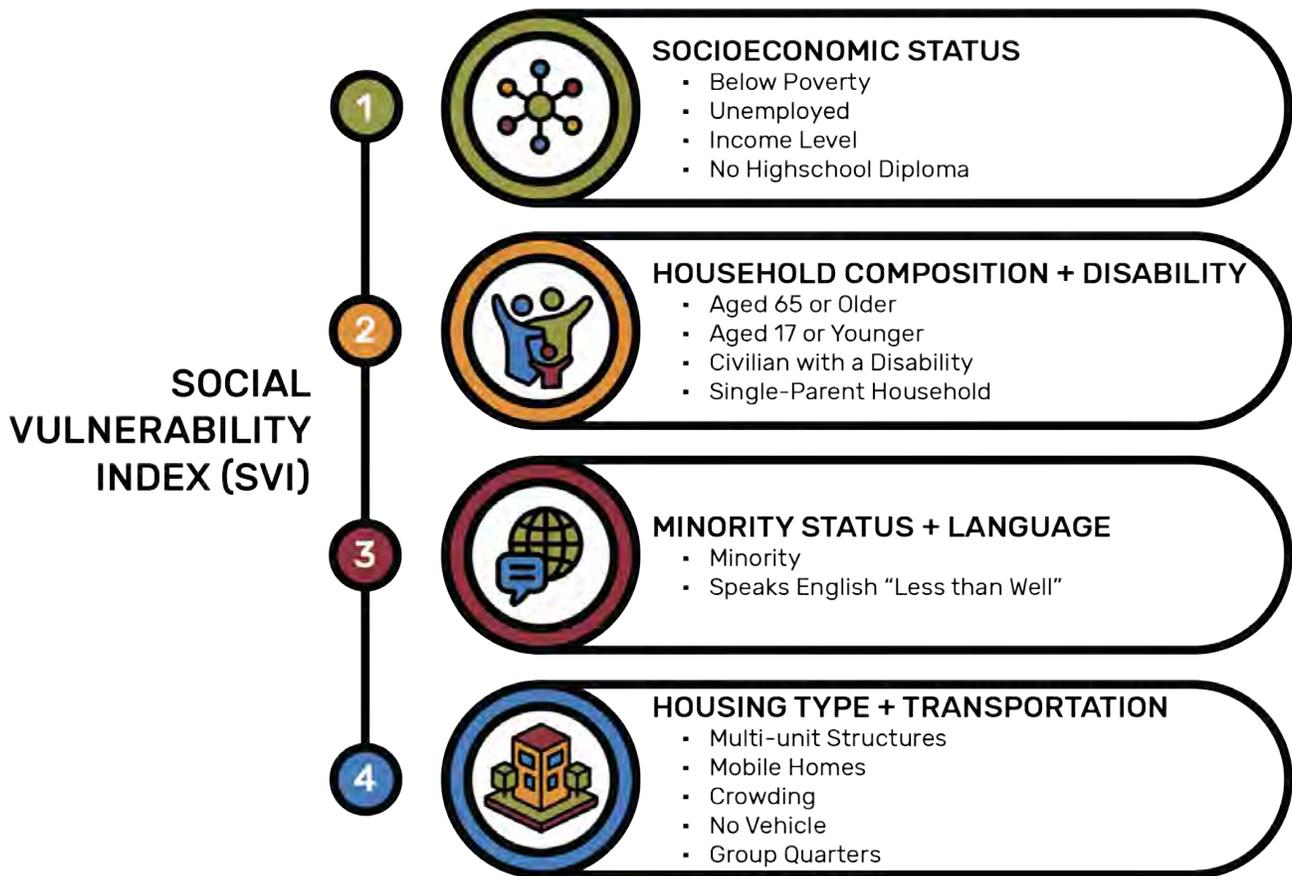
Social vulnerability is a measure of the degree to which individuals or groups are at risk due to their social, economic, or demographic characteristics – coupled with their ability to prepare for, cope with, and recover from disruptive events or crises. The Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) used for this assessment was created by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention with the intention of assisting communities after a natural disaster. Social vulnerability research frequently focuses on risk management analysis, particularly related to the impacts of natural hazards.

SVI indicates the relative vulnerability of every U.S. Census tract. Census tracts are subdivisions of counties for which the Census collects statistical data. They are a particularly useful variable as they are smaller than city or county-wide boundaries and provide the ability to drill down on specific areas within a community. This level of specificity is helpful in further understanding the different levels of vulnerability within larger geographic areas (such as city, county, state). For example, a census tract analysis will allow you to compare the vulnerability of one part of a jurisdiction to another. Such granular comparison may illuminate differences in vulnerability (or inequities) that may exist within communities – thus, helping to guide future capital and operational investments.

This assessment recognizes that many of the factors that determine a community's resilience to natural hazards are the same factors that leave communities vulnerable to ongoing public health risks, such as a lack of access to parks and open space. The data also has implications for community planning in the area of parks and recreation. In areas with higher social vulnerability, a park may provide a valuable resource an individual may not otherwise have access to.

The Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) combines demographic characteristics commonly used as indicators for areas considered at risk of experiencing negative social or health outcomes. Social vulnerability equally weighs socioeconomic status, household composition and disability, minority status and language, and housing and transportation to determine the area's vulnerability. Each census tract is ranked on 15 social factors, including poverty, lack of vehicle access, and crowded housing grouping them into four related themes. Each tract receives a separate ranking for each of the four themes, as well as an overall ranking. The scope of the current assessment considers overall ranking only.

Residents living in areas with lower social vulnerability may be better suited to access the services needed to improve social and health outcomes than residents living in areas with higher social vulnerability. In areas with higher social vulnerability, a park may provide a valuable resource an



individual may not otherwise have access to. This assessment is intended to serve as a baseline to guide decision making related to establishing and prioritizing parks and recreation services investments.

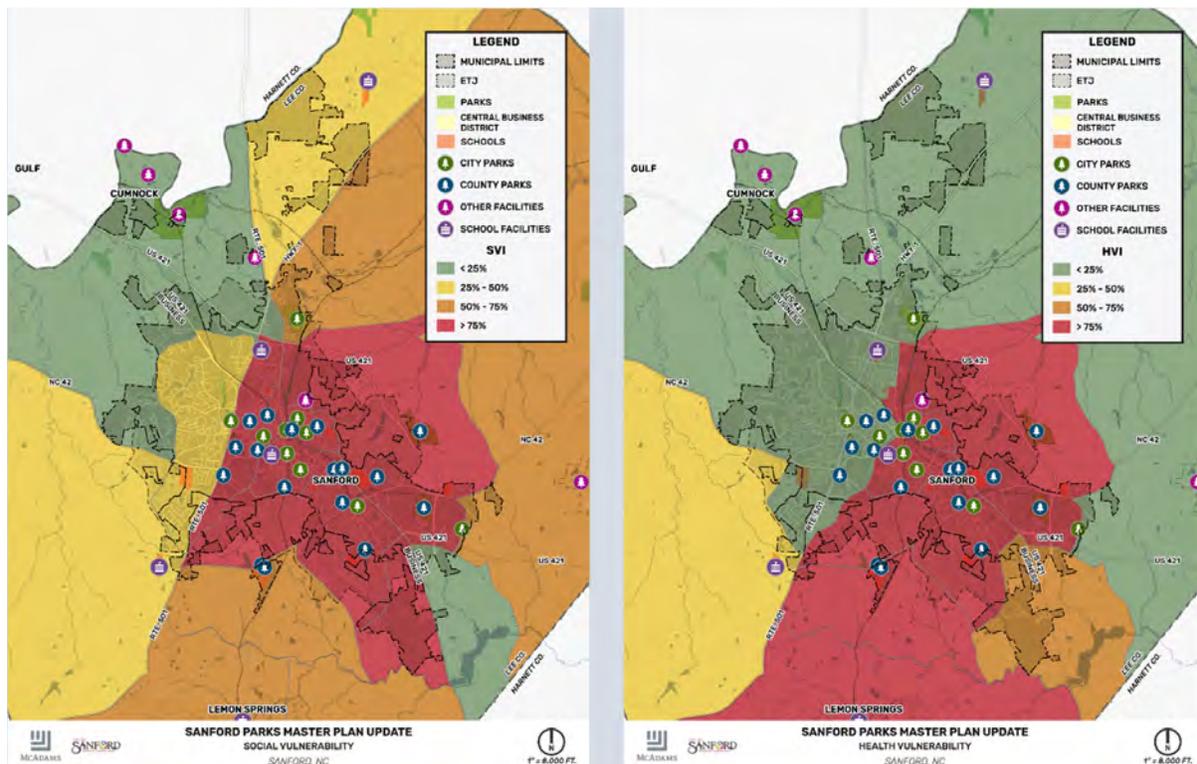
SOCIAL AND HEALTH VULNERABILITY

As shown in the corresponding map, the index indicates most of Sanford’s parks are located within the City’s most socially vulnerable areas, which includes the downtown area and the small radius surrounding it. It appears the most vulnerable areas appear to have geographically equitable park provision while areas least vulnerable may experience lesser public park provisions. The absence of public parks in areas with low SVI may also be in part due to the number of planned communities with private parks interior to the developments.

Health vulnerability mapping is a process that involves identifying and mapping areas within a community that may be more susceptible to health challenges or have limited access to healthcare resources. The map below overlays health vulnerability data with park and recreational amenity distribution, providing a visual depiction of an important metric that City of Sanford staff can point to when requesting resources from City leadership and decision makers. This approach contributes to a more informed allocation of resources. City leaders can prioritize investments in parks and recreational amenities in those underserved communities by understanding the areas with higher health vulnerabilities.

The index shows that the majority of the most at-risk populations within Sanford city limits have

access to a park either via a 10-minute walk or five-minute drive. Yet, in order to improve health outcomes and promote wellness, it is important to consider factors beyond the simple existence of a park in the most health averse geographic segments of the population. The specific needs within these communities should be addressed to ensure equitable access and improved health outcomes. One consideration is the quality and range of amenities available within parks. It is essential to consider the diverse needs of the population. For instance, older people may benefit from features such as walking paths, seating areas, or exercise stations designed to accommodate their abilities and encourage physical activity.



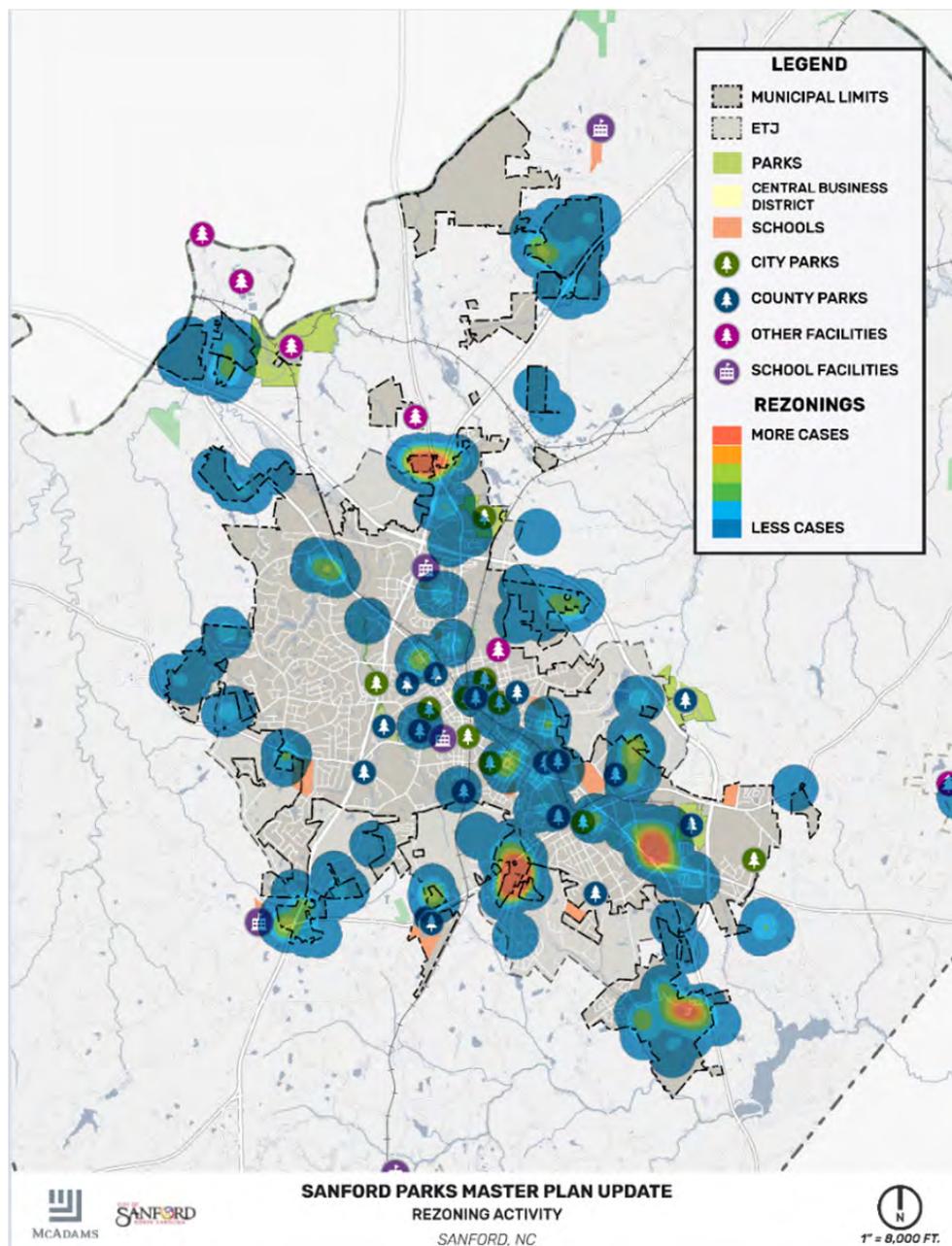
GROWTH PATTERNS

OVERVIEW

Understanding jurisdictional growth patterns plays a significant role in determining LOS for parks and recreation and assessing access to recreation amenities. Growth patterns help identify areas that require additional parks and recreational facilities. By analyzing where new developments, neighborhoods, or population clusters are emerging, decision-makers can strategically allocate resources to ensure equitable access to recreation amenities. This involves assessing gaps in existing park infrastructure and determining where new parks or expansions should be prioritized to meet the needs of growing and/or changing communities. There are three major indicators of growth used to understand patterns within a municipality: rezonings, annexations, and permitted development for both mixed-use/multifamily as well as single family residential development.

REZONINGS

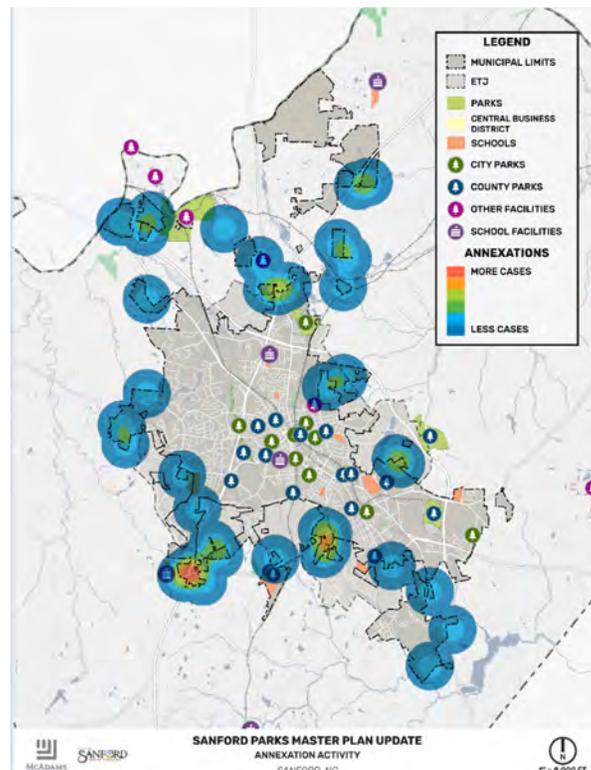
Rezoning is a tool that allows local governments to adapt to population growth and shape development. By strategically rezoning land, municipalities can ensure that parks and open spaces are adequately considered and integrated into the fabric of the community. Through rezoning, local governments can establish regulations that limit the amount of development in certain areas, thus preserving open spaces and investing in parks and recreational amenity development over the long-term. When looking at rezonings in Sanford, the highest intensity of rezoning activity is in the central and southeastern portions of the City as well as the north of central portion of the City. Access is high in the central and southeastern portions of the City but low in the North central portion, this is an area to look for expansion in order to absorb demand from future growth.



ANNEXATION

Land annexation refers to the process by which a municipality or local government expands its boundaries to incorporate additional areas of land into its jurisdiction. Local governments typically annex neighboring or adjacent property to accommodate an increasing population as it relates to the provision of housing, essential services, and access to commodities. Annexation allows the government to extend its authority over the newly acquired land, which was previously under the jurisdiction of another municipality or more commonly, an unincorporated area. In the context of planning for parks, recreation, greenways, and open space, land annexation can play a significant role. It is important to note that both the annexation data and rezoning data presented earlier is from July 2023 and used as a snapshot in time for this project.

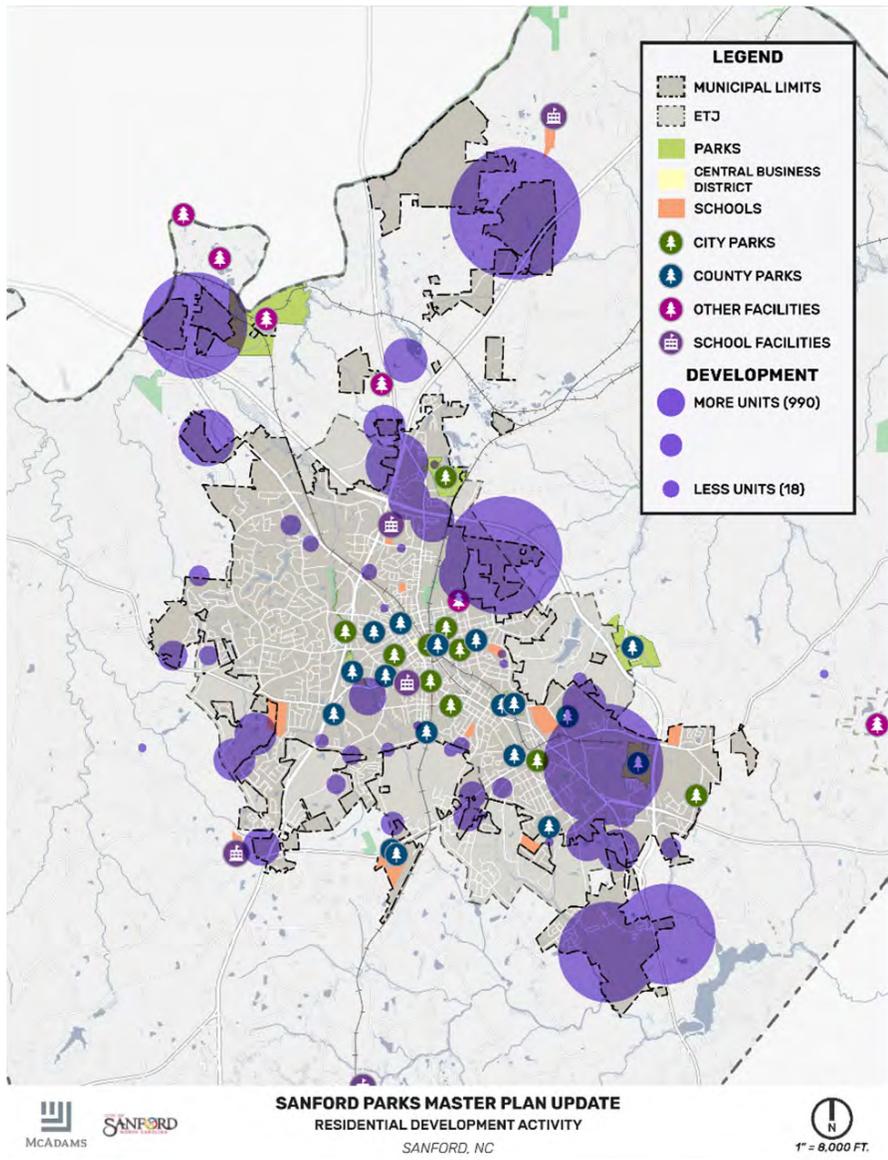
For example, local governments can strategically allocate land for parks and open spaces, ensuring that the needs of a larger population are met. Population growth often leads to increased development pressure, which can threaten the availability of suitable land for parks and open spaces. Annexation can help secure larger tracts of land that are well-suited for parks, ensuring that there is enough space to create and maintain green areas that enhance residents' quality of life. Furthermore, expanded boundaries allow municipalities to strategically acquire land in different areas, allowing for the development of a network of parks and open spaces that are distributed equitably across the community. The majority of annexation activity in the City of Sanford is occurring in the westernmost point of the City's south, near the unincorporated community of Tramway. Currently, the closest park to this area is a Lee County Park, Tramway Road Park. Although it provides primarily athletic facilities – specifically, baseball fields – this park also features a walking path and small playground. It is likely that this growing area of Sanford will be in need of a park at some point during the 10-year planning period.



DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

Development activity refers to the various construction and land development projects that occur to accommodate the needs of a growing population. It includes the construction of residential, commercial, and industrial buildings, infrastructure development, and the expansion of public amenities and services. In planning for parks and open space, development activity provides an opportunity for local governments to require that developers set aside a certain percentage of land within new developments for public parks or open spaces. This helps to ensure that as the population grows, there is an accompanying provision for recreational areas and green spaces. When done thoughtfully and in line with best practices, local governments can align development activity goals with long-term objectives to conserve land, develop open spaces, build greenways, and create a comprehensive and connected parks and recreation system.

Development activity in Sanford, in terms of number of new units, is highest in the southeastern and north central portion of the City. Given access and other growth indicators, the eastern portion of the City is a prime target for expanding the parks system.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- The park system in Sanford is predominantly composed of traditional recreational amenities such as playgrounds, picnic shelters, and open spaces. Kiwanis Park stands out as the City's flagship facility and exemplifies the city's commitment to providing diverse and engaging recreational opportunities for the Sanford community.
- There is a notable deficit in park acreage per 1,000 population in Sanford when compared to benchmarks set by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), indicating that leisure activities, exercise, and community gatherings are restricted by limited access to parks and open space.
- However, the majority of Lee County parks are located within Sanford's jurisdictional boundaries, thus providing additional open space and recreational amenities for Sanford residents.
- A positive finding of the analysis is that the majority of Sanford's population has parks accessible within a five-minute drive. This proximity allows for convenient access to recreational amenities and encourages residents to engage in park activities.
- Yet, it is important to note that some parks in Sanford lack sufficient parking spaces and contain minimal recreational amenities. Limited parking options may pose challenges for individuals who rely on private vehicles, which as an exurban area the majority of Sanford residents do, to visit parks.
- There is a need for substantial expansion of the greenway network in Sanford to meet the recreational needs of the community. The public have consistently indicated a strong desire for greenways and trails, across multiple City of Sanford planning efforts. This, coupled with the finding that the City's current greenway trail mileage falls considerably below national benchmarks, should be considered compelling justification for investing in trails and greenways.
- An encouraging finding of the analysis is that the majority of Sanford residents have parks accessible within a 10-minute walk. While Sanford and Lee County parks within the city may be within a walkable distance, the absence of high-quality amenities at most of these parks limits their use and negates the otherwise positive quality of being able to be accessed by foot.
- The social vulnerability analysis findings indicate that a significant number of parks are situated in socially vulnerable areas. While the presence of parks in socially vulnerable areas is a positive aspect in terms of providing access to green spaces, it is equally important to assess the range of recreational amenities and the overall quality of these parks. The site inventory and analysis chapter describes the conditions of existing parks and opportunities for park improvements.
- Future annexations and subsequent rezonings and subdivision of land for the purposes of neighborhood development may provide opportunities for additional public recreation infrastructure as the city grows into these areas.
- Other than the City's western portion, development activity is occurring throughout Sanford, and as a result, there is a need to ensure that developers are aligned with the City's UDO and land dedication policies that require land be set aside for public parks and recreation. A deeper dive into this area of parks and recreation planning follows in the next section.

PARKLAND ACQUISITION STRATEGIES

PURPOSE

This report aims to offer guidance to the City of Sanford by identifying necessary policy changes for more effective land dedication or fee-in-lieu strategies. The Planning and Community Development Department, a comprehensive and collaborative agency serving the City of Sanford, Town of Broadway, and Lee County, plays a fundamental role in shaping the region's growth and development. With a mandate spanning multiple jurisdictions, this group is tasked with conducting studies, recommending plans and policies, and making recommendations on land use matters.

The Department is currently nearing the end of the process of updating its Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), including amendments to open space requirements. Staff are anticipating that the proposed amendments will be adopted before end of year. Therefore, this assessment and findings report comes at a time where City and County leadership is in an opportune position to make further changes that would lead to the acquisition of suitable property, or fees-in-lieu to develop new and renovate current parks and recreational amenities. It is the hope that the City will consider and potentially adopt some recommendations from this report, or if not, use them as framework for considering future amendments.

The methodology used to develop this report included a critical analysis of existing regulations, recommendations, and other factors of influence. The second means of approach was to conduct a peer analysis of regional jurisdictions, either by population estimates, combined city/county planning departments, or by sphere of growth influence, primarily as it relates to North Carolina's Triangle region. These approaches framed within a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis provided opportunities to begin a comprehensive solution-based approach in that readily attainable objectives be achieved first in order to build confidence and gain strength.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Section 6.5 of the current UDO lays out open space requirements placed on residential developers. Although the requirements stipulate that developers set aside dedicated open space within their planned communities, the specific criteria and constraints within Section 6.5 pose significant barriers to obtaining cultivatable, developer-provided land for parks or collecting fees-in-lieu to support park and greenway expansion and enhancement. The criteria mentioned, such as the stipulation that only major subdivisions or multi-family developments with 100 or more cumulative lots or dwelling units, restrict the application of open space regulations to a relatively narrow range of development projects. This means that smaller-scale developments, which may still impact the community's need for open space and parks, are not subject to these requirements. As a result, a substantial portion of residential development projects can bypass the obligation to provide open space.

Moreover, the provision that allows FEMA designated floodway to account for 50% of the total open space area and places no limit on the amount of floodplain area that can count toward open space introduces an additional challenge. While it may appear as a way to encourage open space creation, it places major limitations on what can be built on the dedicated land, as there are restrictions on the

level of built infrastructure that can be developed in the floodway. Similarly, although less restricted, there are also limitations on what can be built within the floodplain. If the local governments were to develop parks and recreation infrastructure in the floodway or floodplain, they would encounter additional burdens such as the costs of permit fees, specialized engineering and design requirements, and regulatory compliance measures. Therefore, because it does not stipulate that the land should be able to be developed with relative ease, Section 6.5. empirically enables residential developers to set aside substandard property and thus the ability to sidestep fee-in-lieu requirements.

Lastly, The limitation of open space regulations to specific zoning categories further narrows the scope of their application. Developments in other zoning categories are not subject to these regulations, even if they could potentially have a significant impact on the need for recreational spaces. This zoning-based restriction may result in inequitable access to parks and open spaces across different neighborhoods. All of the aforementioned findings reveal the likelihood of a future disconnected system of open space in areas unlikely to be desirable either as they exist or could be activated.

CONSIDERATIONS

In light of the impending revisions to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), the current report on the recreational level of service in the City of Sanford recommends careful consideration of amendments to maximize the potential for parkland and open space within the city. These revisions should be undertaken before they enter the public realm for adoption to streamline the process, optimize resource utilization, and reduce redundancy. Specifically, it would be prudent to eliminate both floodplain and floodway allowances. As described previously, current UDO is enabling developers to opt for dedicating land that is difficult to build upon, thus skirting any potential requirement of paying a fee-in-lieu. Additionally, establishing minimum land dedication sizes and accessibility standards is preferred to ensure land dedication results in usable open space.

Recognizing their potential impact on the community's open space and park needs, the current stipulation that no development under 100 units should be subject to reserving open space, should be reconsidered. The Planning and Development Department may consider a tiered structure to align with level of service goals thereby allowing manageable actions to be woven into development plans. The language may stipulate that projects consisting of 15-49 dwelling units must provide (1) mini park or playground; 50-99 dwelling units, two (2) mini park and/or playground, etc.

Similarly, the City of Sanford's forthcoming adoption of its parks and greenways plan, coupled with Lee County's recent adoption of its parks and recreation master plan gives the Department a platform for increasing the enforceability Section 6.5.5 of the UDO – Connection to Existing Public Parks, Open Space and/or Greenways. Furthermore, the adoption of these comprehensive plans will allow staff to enforce long-term goals effectively. As the current City of Sanford Parks and Greenways Plan Update nears completion, it should serve as a catalyst for adopting a broader plan to aid in development reviews. Post-plan adoption efforts could include feasibility studies to address infrastructure gaps in the greenway network and identify any deficiencies between existing parkland and planned facilities. As growth continues in Sanford, Broadway, and Lee County, proactive planning and programming will be essential to meet the rising demand for services. Given the approval of approximately 2,500

residential units annually in the City of Sanford. It's imperative to anticipate and prepare for these demands and provide the expected level of service for future residents.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the level of recreational services provided by the City of Sanford underscores the importance of assessing the quality, quantity, and accessibility of parks, amenities, and facilities in meeting the recreational needs of the community. Through this assessment, it becomes evident that there are both strengths and areas for improvement in Sanford's recreational offerings.

While the majority of the population has convenient access to parks within a short drive, challenges persist in terms of limited parking options and the absence of sidewalks, potentially hindering access for certain residents. Additionally, the deficit in park acreage per 1,000 population, as compared to national benchmarks, highlights the need for expanding the parks and greenway system to better serve the community's desires for outdoor recreational opportunities. Furthermore, the size and developable areas within existing parks are restricted by the presence of flood-prone areas, thus limiting the ability to develop new and unique recreational amenities that would otherwise afford park users diverse experiences.

The presence of parks in socially vulnerable areas is a positive step toward equitable access to green spaces, but there is room for enhancing the range of recreational amenities and overall park quality in these areas. Furthermore, the impending revisions to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) present an opportunity to maximize the potential for parkland and open space within the city. In light of the continuous growth experienced in Sanford, proactive planning and programming are imperative to meet the anticipated demands and ensure that the expected level of service for future residents is achieved. It is crucial that the City remains dedicated to improving and expanding its recreational offerings to enhance the overall well-being and livability of the Sanford community.





5

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



IN THIS CHAPTER

Public Input Events

Recreational Needs Survey

Comparison of Survey Findings

Focus Group Meetings

City Staff Listening Session

What We Heard

OVERVIEW

PREMISE

Community engagement is an essential part of any planning process. It helps foster a sense of belonging, promotes collaboration, builds trust and enhances social cohesion. The most effective plans are firmly rooted in the realities and vision of the community that created them. Such visionary documents influence recommendations for the development of future parks and the enhancement of recreation programs and services. The community engagement approach for the current plan included a combination of input from the City of Sanford community members, Sanford Parks staff and focus groups.

METHODOLOGY

The Project Team designed the public engagement process to maximize the amount of input and feedback. 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 sharing their input.



- › City of Sanford Staff Listening Sessions - Spring 2023
- › Public Input Events: Splash Pad Opening Day + City Summer Concert Series - Summer 2023
- › Recreational Needs Survey - Spring 2023
- › Focus Group Meetings - Summer 2023
 - ›› Greenways
 - ›› Special Events
 - ›› Sanford's Downtown

PUBLIC INPUT EVENTS

WHO

Sanford Parks Staff and approximately 100 members of the Sanford community.

WHAT

Sanford Parks staff hosted opportunities for the public to provide input on the current parks, recreation, and greenways master plan at the Kiwanis Family Park splash pad season kickoff event and several City Summer Concert Series performances. This engagement effort allowed community members to offer their feedback and ask questions about the City of Sanford’s commitment to developing a comprehensive parks and recreation systemwide plan to capture the community’s leisure needs over a 10-year planning horizon. The Department publicized the input opportunities via website postings, social media announcements, notices to public officials, and information posted at parks facilities.

WHEN

Summer 2023

WHERE

Kiwanis Family Park and Depot Park

WHY + HOW

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 community members. This exercise was conducted as a means of understanding public sentiment towards parks and recreation, and community-wide need for parks, facilities, greenways and leisure services in the City of Sanford.

A series of engagement boards were displayed at selected areas within Kiwanis Family Park and Depot Park’s multipurpose room, whereby attendees could provide their input using sticky notes and dots. Participants provided input regarding park usage, community values, park amenity needs and greenway amenity needs. Participants were also asked to indicate where in the city they would like to see greenways.

Each touch point provided background information on the comprehensive planning effort, and several interactive stations for sharing feedback through dot exercises and discussions with Sanford Parks staff.



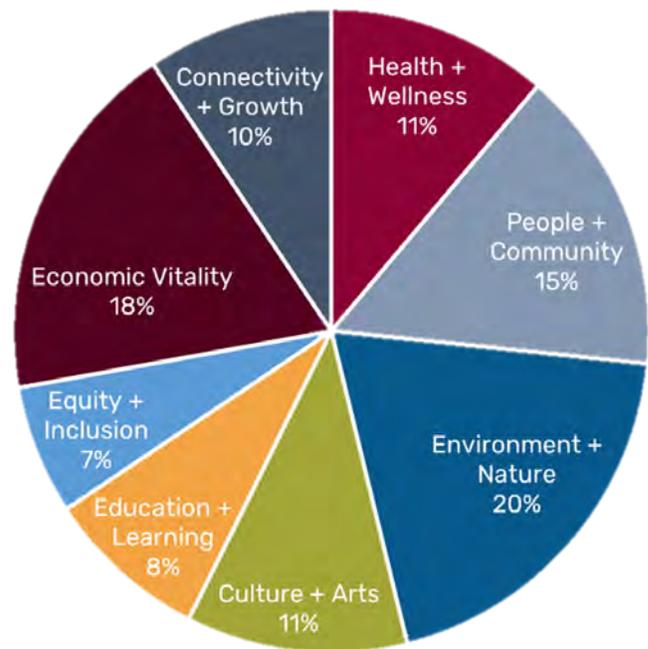
COMMUNITY VALUES

Community values reflect core beliefs or principles that residents wish to maintain. They are appreciated at an individual level and shared by the majority of the community. Sanford community members who participated in the public engagement activity indicated that the City should create spaces programmed for access to and participation in recreational activities designed to provide access to the outdoors. “Environment and Nature” emerged as the top community value.

As shown in the chart below, the Sanford community’s emphasis on connecting to the environment and nature is evidenced by some of their most in-demand recreational amenities. The top amenities catering to outdoor recreation experiences include natural surface trails, bike trails, and nature-based recreation.

The community value “Economic Vitality” ranked second. Economic Vitality refers to the understanding that investing in the improvement and expansion of parks and recreation services in the City of Sanford, can have a positive economic impact on the community. “People + Community” stands out as a value for Sanford residents as the foundation for community connections, positive growth, and identity. This value fosters a culture of empathy and collective progress contributing to the overall well-being of the community.

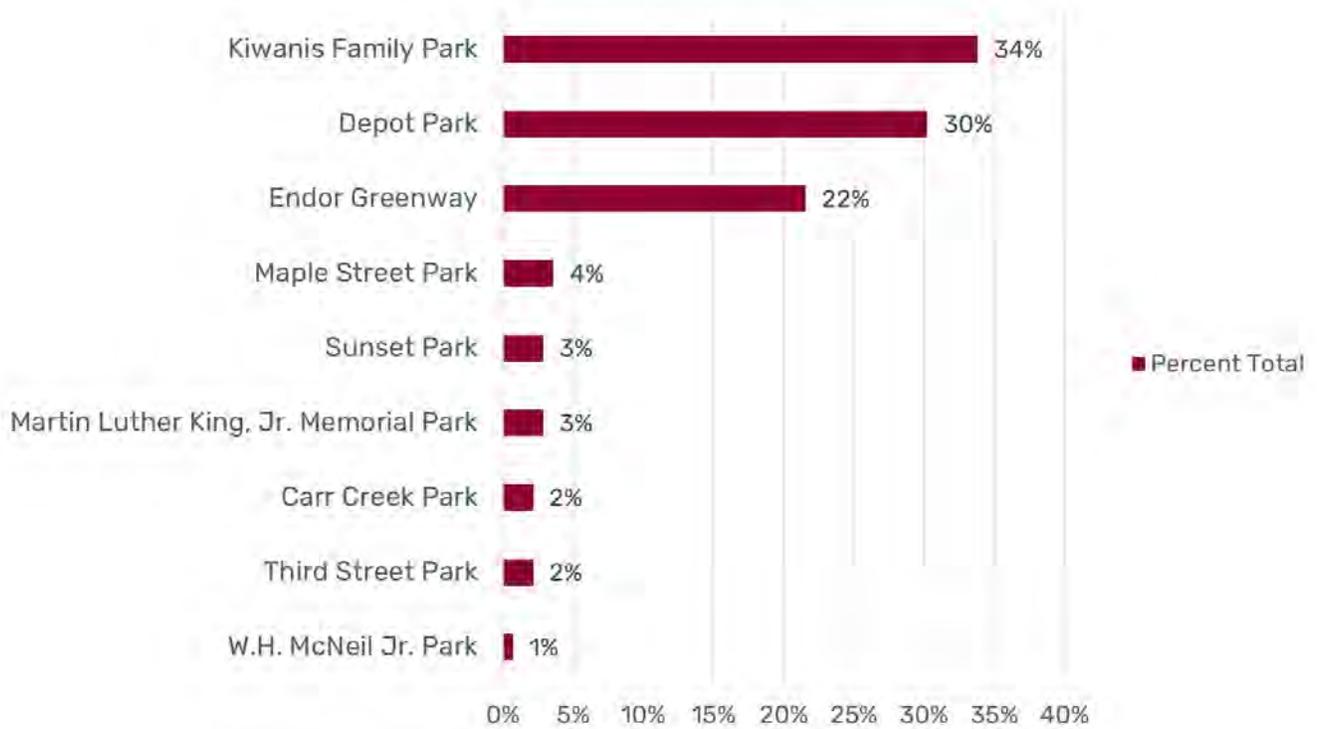
A further look at the implications of these findings will be discussed later in this chapter.



PARK USAGE

Respondents were asked to select all the parks and facilities their household used during the past year. The most popular parks were the Kiwanis Family Park (34%), Depot Park (30%) and the Endor Iron Furnace Greenway.

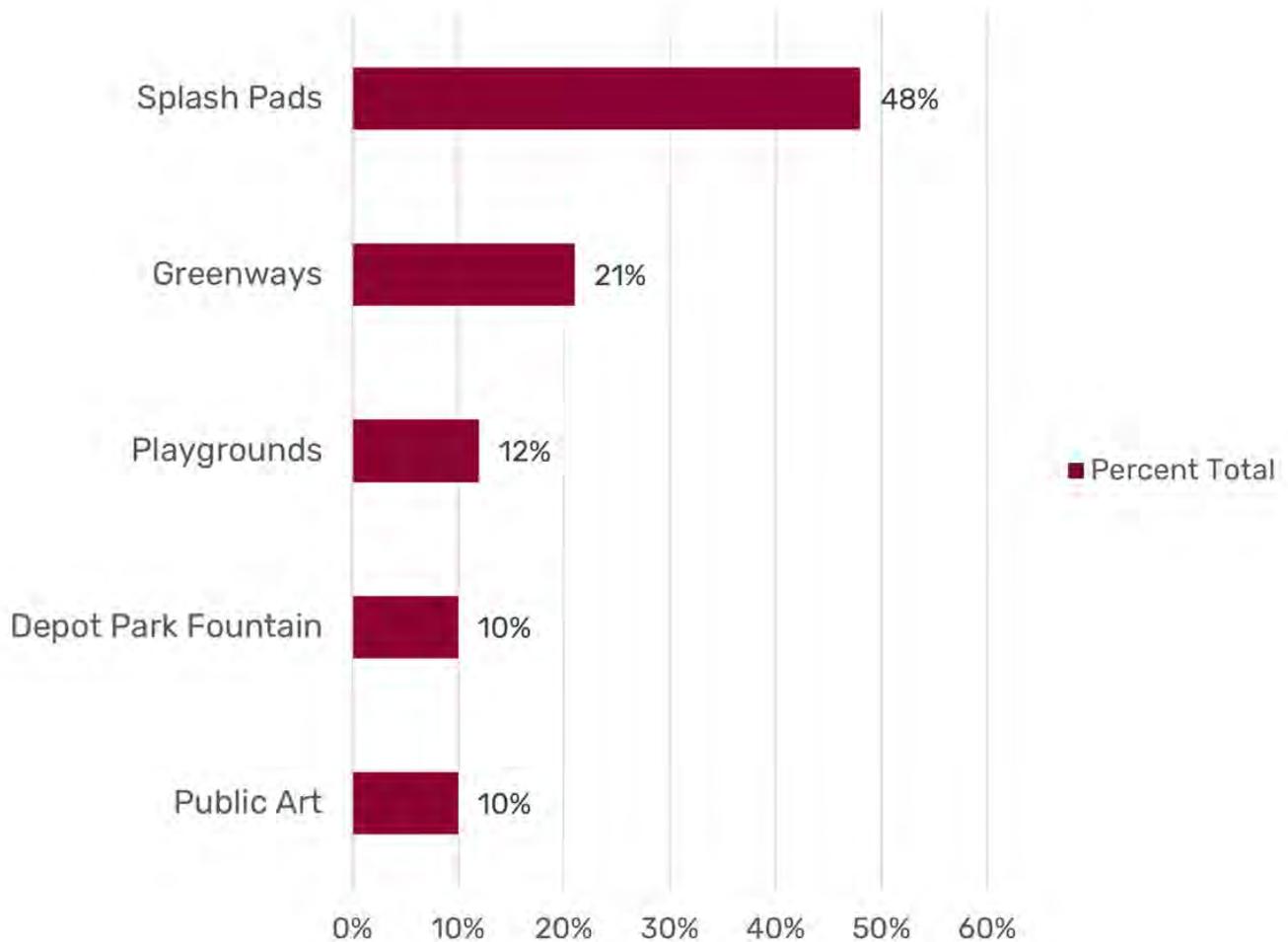
MOST VISITED PARKS



COMMUNITY'S FAVORITES

The community's feedback on what they love about the City of Sanford parks reveals a clear preference for specific features. The top choice, with 48% of responses, is the splashpad, indicating a strong enthusiasm for water play areas. Greenways, comprising 20% of the responses, emerged as the second most beloved aspect. This highlights the community's appreciation for the connectivity and natural surroundings that greenways provide. Playgrounds, mentioned by 12% of participants, demonstrate their importance as spaces for active play and recreation. The Depot Park fountain and public art both garnered 10% of the responses, reflecting the community's admiration for artistic elements within park spaces. These results emphasize the significance of water-based amenities, greenways, and spaces that offer engaging and artistic experiences in the City of Sanford parks.

FAVORITE ASPECTS OF SANFORD'S PARKS



AMENITIES

The project team compiled the list of possible amenities from department recommendations, references to previous community input, and items in line with current national trends. Participants ranked the top three amenities they would like to see Sanford Parks offer or expand in the future.

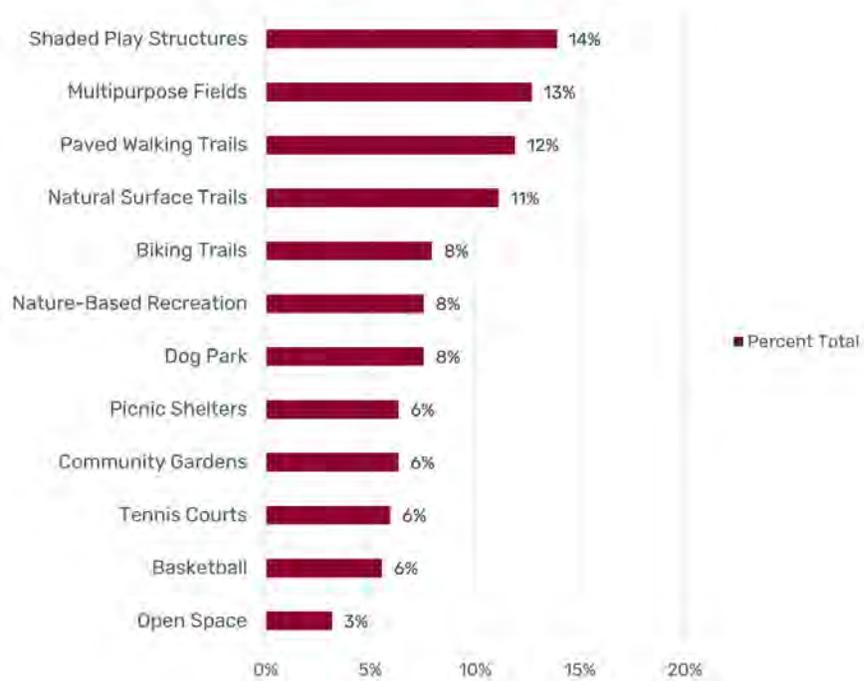
Engagement activity participants assigned a generally equal preference across four park amenities. Shaded play structures ranked first by only a few percentage points as the most in-demand recreational amenity for the Sanford community. As the City continues to advance the system, it will be important to consider community members' desire for shaded areas within the parks. Shade provides a comfortable environment for people to recreate whether it be active like working out, or passive like reading a book.

The preference for multipurpose fields, suggests that this feedback, along with the demographics of the community suggest an inclination for active sports and desire for flexible spaces for diversity of programming, vitality. Multipurpose fields are versatile spaces that can accommodate a wide range of recreational activities such as sports, events, and community gatherings.

Lastly, the high ranking of paved and natural surface walking trails indicates the community's emphasis on the environment, nature, and economic vitality.

Walking trails provide opportunities for outdoor exercise, connection with nature, and enhanced quality of life. By expressing a desire for expanded walking trails, the community exhibits its appreciation for the environment while also recognizing the potential economic benefits. Well-designed and well-maintained trails can attract outdoor enthusiasts, tourists, and health-conscious individuals, thereby contributing to economic growth through increased tourism, recreational spending, and the promotion of a vibrant and active community.

MOST DESIRED PARK AMENITIES



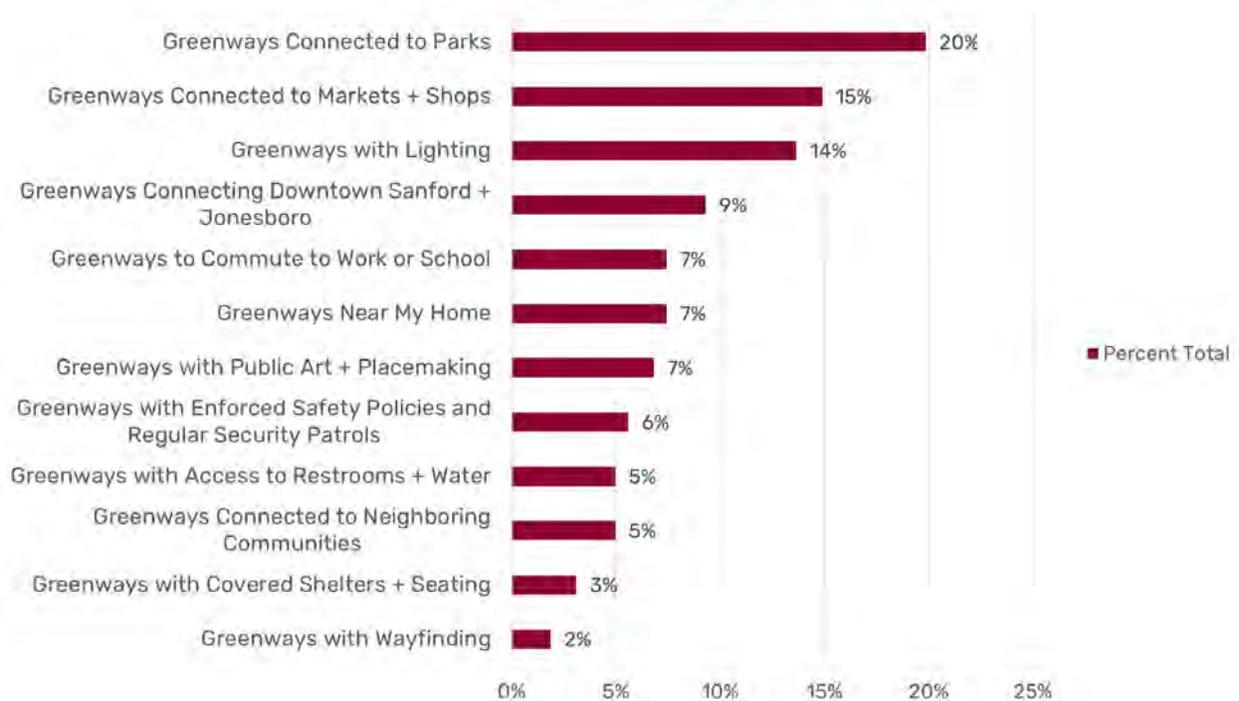
GREENWAYS + TRAILS

Furthering the discussion of trails and greenway needs in the City of Sanford, participants were asked what aspects of greenway infrastructure compel their usage. 20% of Participants stated that they were most inclined to use greenways if they were connected to parks.

Trails can be used for both recreational and transportation-related purposes. Trails serve as off-road linkages to neighborhoods, as well as centers for shopping, entertainment, education, and employment. Trails, greenways, and multi-use paths provide users with a safe and enjoyable way to travel. Oftentimes, they are used for short trips, especially trips less than one mile. Reducing distances between key destinations is an effective way to attract residents and visitors to bicycle and walk to locations that are closer to home. Combining this practice with the improvement of existing trails, greenways, and parking makes the use of the facilities more predictable and comfortable for users.

Moreover, trails help foster a sense of place and community by connecting people and destinations. People often feel more welcomed and engaged when trails provide opportunities for neighbors to gather and strengthen relationships. Trails help bridge the gap between cultures and serve as neutral gathering places and recreational areas for communities. The integration and promotion of trails within communities helps associate trails with specific places. In these cases, trails become a symbol of the community, and in return ignite community pride.

DESIRED GREENWAY AMENITIES



EVOLVING RECREATIONAL NEEDS

From 2017 to 2023, the community of Sanford witnessed notable shifts in its recreation amenity needs. During this period, shade structures emerged as a high-desire amenity, indicating a growing preference for comfortable and sheltered spaces. Multipurpose fields and paved walking trails consistently remained in high demand, reflecting an enduring popularity among residents. Similarly, natural surface trails and bike trails continued to receive high levels of interest.

Nature-based recreation and dog parks maintained a medium-desire status, indicating their importance to a substantial portion of the population. Notably, picnic shelters, which were previously of lower desire, experienced an increase in demand and are now categorized as medium-desire amenities. However, some amenities saw negative changes in their level of desirability. Community gardens, once highly desired, shifted towards a medium-desire status, and open spaces, once moderately desired, are now in lower demand.

Understanding these changing recreational needs is essential for Sanford’s community planners. By recognizing the shifts in preferences, planners can allocate resources more effectively and develop new recreational spaces that align with the evolving interests of the residents. A thorough comprehension of these changes will help enhance the overall quality of life, promote community engagement, and cater to the recreational needs of the community in a factual and data-driven manner. The items below were extrapolated from community meeting findings. Recreational need survey findings will be explored in the next section.

Recreation Amenity Desire Shifts 2017-2023		
Amenity	2017	2023
Basketball Courts	High Desire	Medium Desire
Bike Trails	High Desire	Medium Desire
Community Gardens	High Desire	Medium Desire
Dog Park	Lower Desire	Medium Desire
Multipurpose Fields	High Desire	High Desire
Natural Surface Trails	High Desire	High Desire
Nature-Based Recreation	Medium Desire	Medium Desire
Paved Walking Trails	High Desire	High Desire
Picnic Shelters	Lower Desire	Medium Desire
Shade Structures	NA	High Desire
Tennis Courts	Medium Desire	Medium Desire
Open Space	Medium Desire	Lower Desire

IN-PERSON ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY FINDINGS

- The Sanford community places a strong emphasis on the preservation of the environment, the vitality of the local economy, and the well-being of its people and community. By valuing both the protection of natural spaces and the socioeconomic benefits associated with parks, community members demonstrate a desire to strike a balance between the conservation of green spaces and the economic and social well-being of its residents.
- Collective demand for shaded play structures highlights the community's focus on creating comfortable and safe outdoor environments that foster the well-being and comfort of individuals (particularly children) when engaging in outdoor activities.
- Acknowledgement of the positive economic impacts that parks can bring to the local economy demonstrates a forward-thinking perspective on the part of Sanford community members. Individuals are attuned to the idea that parks not only provide recreational opportunities to the current community, but also attract new residents, visitors, and local businesses. They understand parks contribution to the overall appeal of living, working, and playing in Sanford and how it will inevitably enhance the local economy and quality of life for residents.
- Community members indicated a need for multipurpose fields within the City. Although multipurpose fields are commonly thought of as amenities that support athletic programming, they also offer versatility, allowing for a wide range of activities such as sports, fitness classes, community events, and cultural gatherings. Additionally, multipurpose fields provide opportunities for hosting tournaments, competitions, and other organized events.
- The community's prioritization of walking trails reflects their desire to adopt an active lifestyle, and their propensity to do so in an outdoor environment in natural settings that all ages and interest groups can use .
- High demand for greenways connecting parks demonstrates the community's desire for the ability to transition from one park to another, expanding the range of recreational amenities and experiences available to them.
- Multipurpose fields and paved walking trails consistently remained in high demand throughout the six-year period, highlighting their enduring popularity among residents. Shade structures emerged as a high-desire amenity, indicating a growing preference for comfortable and sheltered spaces in Sanford's community from 2017 to 2023. However, some amenities experienced negative changes in their level of desirability, with community gardens shifting from highly desired to medium-desire status, and open spaces moving from moderately desired to lower demand.

RECREATIONAL NEEDS SURVEY

2023 CITY OF SANFORD RECREATIONAL NEEDS SURVEY

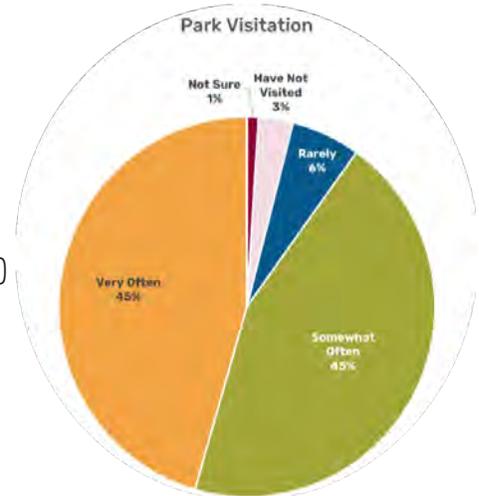
A survey of recreational needs was administered as part of the community outreach effort. Surveys provide a convenient opportunity for community members to provide input and feedback. Online non-scientific, or self-selecting surveys are valuable because they are easier to implement and are less costly than statistically valid/scientific surveys.

The project team made every effort to perform due diligence to ensure the broadest level of outreach and equitable participation.. It was promoted and distributed via QR code on the City’s social media platforms and at special events. A fair amount of responses were captured in consideration of the limited way the survey was distributed. A total of 110 individuals participated in the survey effort.

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT WITH SANFORD PARKS + RECREATION SERVICES

PARK VISITATION

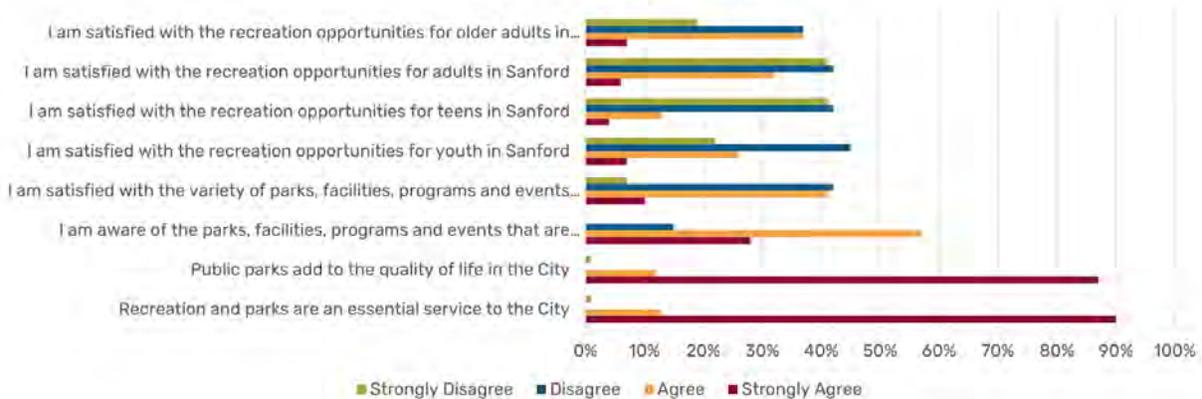
The survey findings indicate that a significant portion of respondents visit parks very often (46%) and somewhat often (45%), making up the majority of park visitors. Only a small percentage (6%) reported rarely visiting Sanford’s parks.



GENERAL ATTITUDES

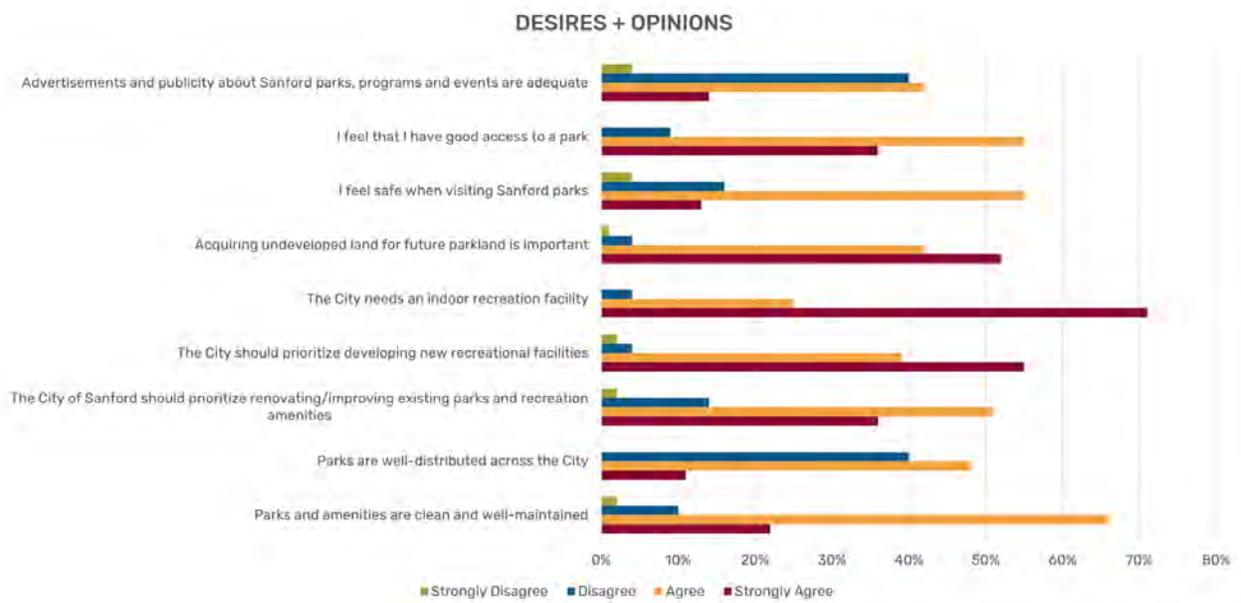
Responses demonstrate that a large majority strongly agree (90%) that recreation and parks are essential services to contributing to the quality of life in the City of Sanford, (87%). However, only a smaller percentage (28%) are fully aware of the parks, facilities, programs, and events offered. In terms of satisfaction, respondents express lower levels of satisfaction with the variety of parks, facilities, programs, and events (10%) and recreational opportunities for various age groups, including youth (7%), teens (4%), adults (6%), and older adults (7%).

General Attitude Statements



OPINIONS + DESIRES

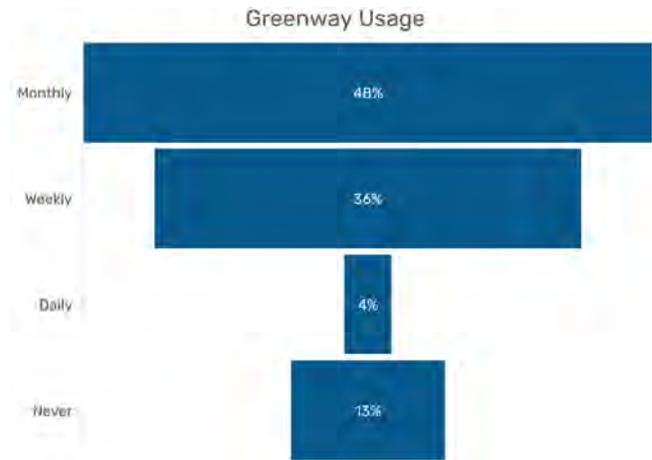
Survey outcomes indicate that the majority of respondents agree that parks and amenities in Sanford are clean and well-maintained (66%) and feel safe when visiting the parks (55%). Fewer respondents (48%) feel that parks are well-distributed across Sanford. While most feel the City should prioritize improving existing recreational amenities, many also agree that developing new recreational facilities should be prioritized. In that vein, nearly three-quarters of respondents believe that an indoor recreation facility is needed (71%). Additionally, the majority of respondents (52%) agreed that acquiring undeveloped land for future parkland should be prioritized by the City. Most reported being dissatisfied with with recreation opportunities for youth (67%), teens (83%), adults (83%), and older adults (56%).



GREENWAYS + TRAILS

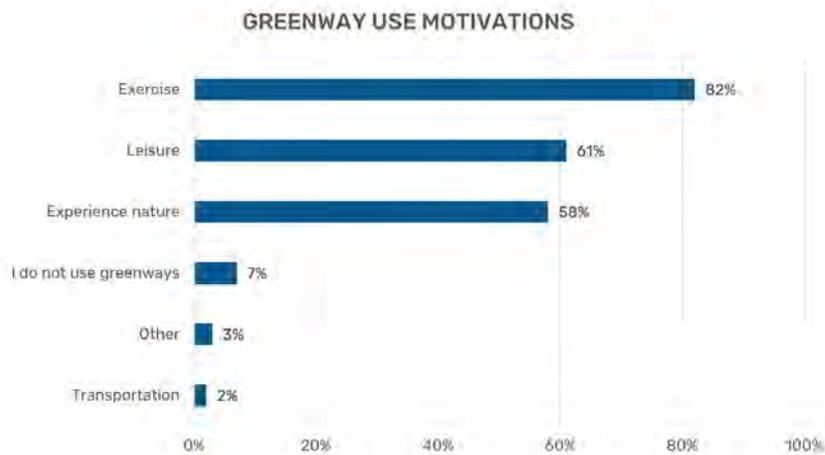
GREENWAYS USAGE

A significant proportion (48%) reported using the greenways on a monthly basis, indicating that they engage with these amenities at least once a month. An additional third (36%) of respondents stated that they use the greenways weekly, suggesting a high level of regular usage by a substantial portion of the community. A smaller percentage, 4%, reported using the greenways daily, indicating that there is a dedicated group of individuals who incorporate these paths into their daily routines. However, it's important to note that 13% of respondents reported never using the greenways, suggesting that there is still a segment of the population that has not yet taken advantage of this recreational resource.



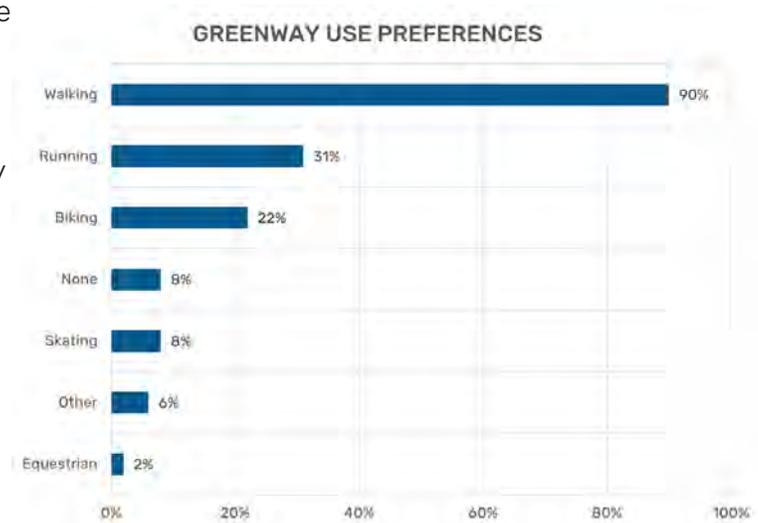
GREENWAYS USE MOTIVATIONS

Overall, the data highlights that people are primarily motivated to use greenways for exercise (82%) and leisure (61%). Not very far behind, "experiencing nature" ranked third (58%). While transportation and other motivations have lower percentages, they still represent a portion of users who value greenways for different purposes.



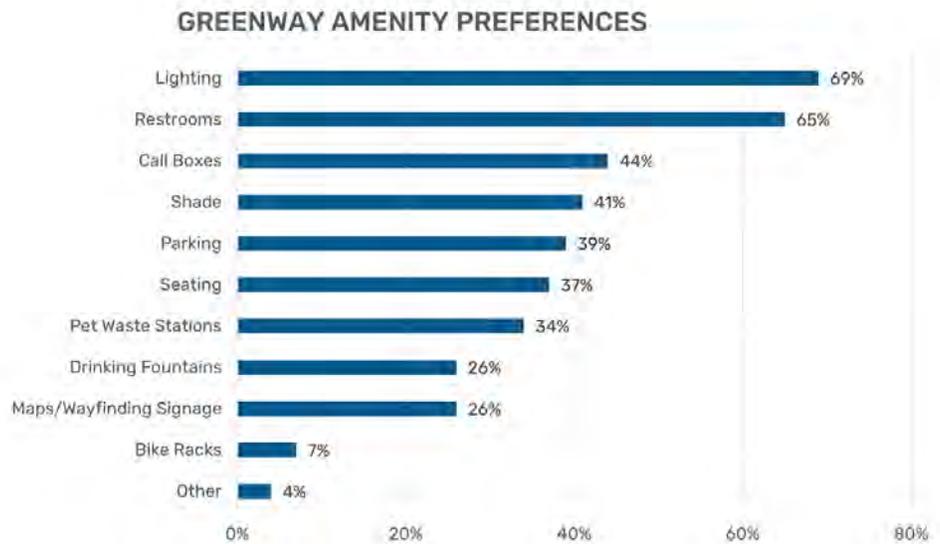
PREFERRED GREENWAY + TRAIL ACTIVITIES

Respondents reported engaging in a diverse range of recreational activities utilizing greenways and trails. Walking emerged as the most popular activity, with nearly all (90%) of respondents indicating this activity as their preference. Running follows, with 31% of participants utilizing greenways for fitness and exercise. Cycling also proves to be a highly favored activity, with 22% of respondents opting for biking on the greenways. This highlights the appeal of these paths for cyclists, offering safe and scenic routes for both recreational and commuting purposes. Skating is another popular activity, with 8% of respondents engaging in this form of recreation on the greenways. The presence of skaters showcases the versatility of these paths in accommodating various sports and activities



GREENWAY AMENITY PREFERENCES

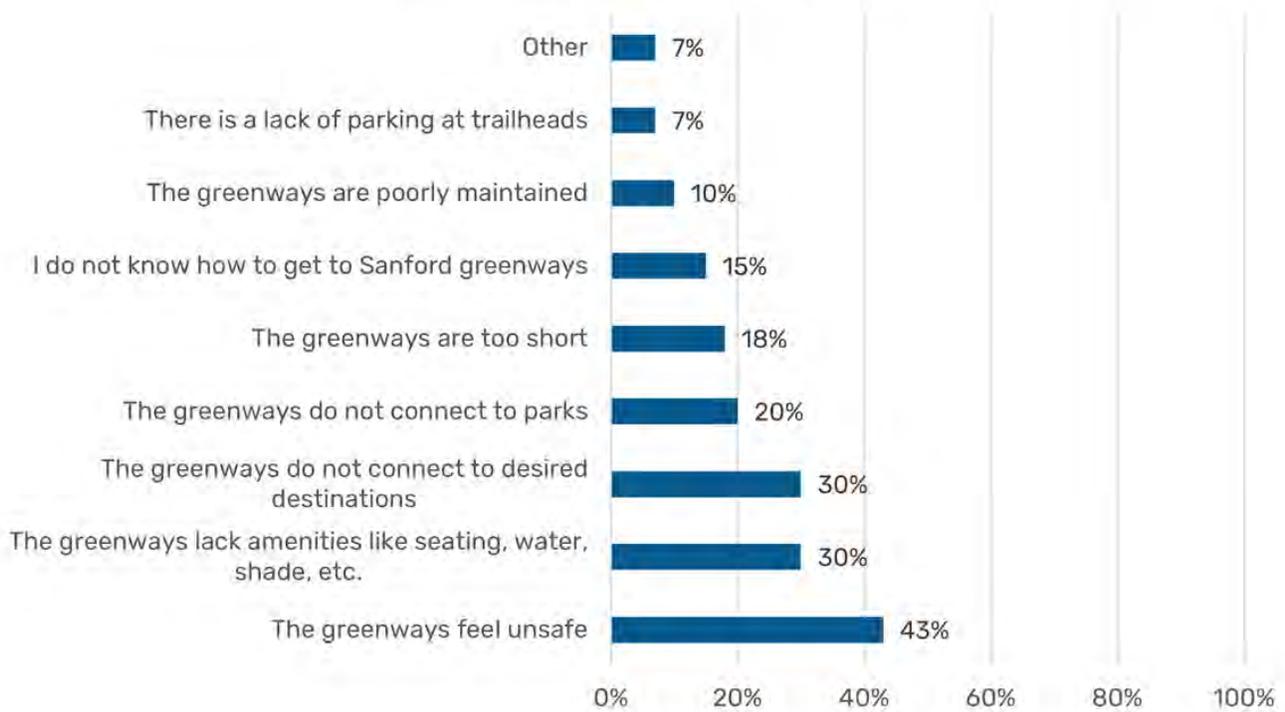
The data on greenway amenity preferences reveals that people have various desires for recreational and support facilities along and around greenways and trails. Restrooms are the most sought-after amenity, with a significant 65% of respondents expressing a preference for restroom facilities. Lighting is also highly desired, with over two-thirds (69%) of respondents valuing well-lit pathways. Adequate lighting enhances safety and extends the usability of greenways beyond daylight hours, making them suitable for evening or early morning activities. Similarly, call boxes are desired by close to half (44%) of respondents, indicating a need for communication and emergency assistance points along the trails to enhance safety and security.



BARRIERS TO GREENWAY USE

Answers to the question of what prevents you from using greenways highlights common obstacles that can diminish people’s level of comfort with getting out onto trails and greenways in their community. In Sanford, the most prominent barrier is the perception of unsafe conditions, with 43% of respondents expressing this concern. Nearly one-third (30%) reported feeling discouraged from using greenways due to the absence of amenities like seating, water fountains, or shade. Lastly, both the lack of connectivity to desired locations, and the absence of connections to parks pose barriers. Greenways that fail to link to popular destinations, parks, and other trails and greenways may limit their appeal for potential users.

Barriers to Greenway Use

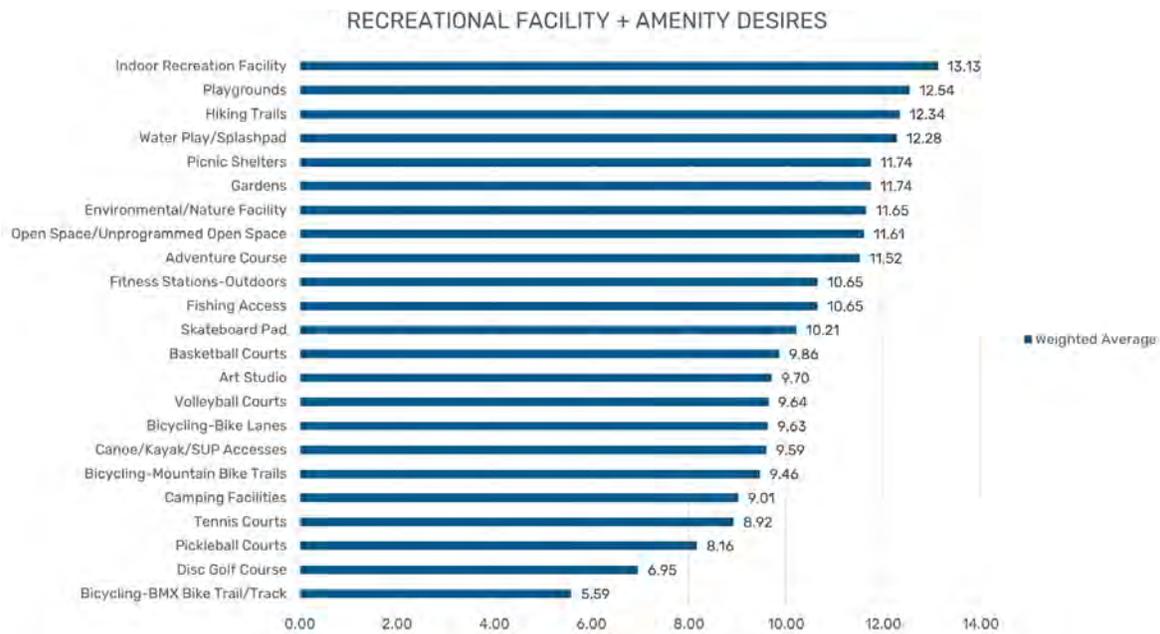


AMENITIES

From a list of recreational amenities, survey takers identified whether they believed the amenities to be ‘very important’, ‘important’, ‘somewhat important’, or ‘not important’ for the City to add or expand over the 10-year planning horizon. The project team compiled the list of possible amenities from department recommendations, references to previous community input, and items in line with current national trends.

The recreational needs survey determined that participants believe the following ten recreational amenities and facilities to be important in consideration of their recreational needs and those of the community. These items are listed in order based on their weighted average. Results in their entirety are presented in the chart below.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 1. Indoor Recreation Facility | 6. Gardens |
| 2. Playgrounds | 7. Environmental/Nature Facility |
| 3. Hiking Trails | 8. Open Space/Unprogrammed Open Space |
| 4. Water Play/Splash Pad | 9. Outdoor Adventure and Fitness Course |
| 5. Picnic Shelters | 10. Fishing Access |



Participants indicated a high need for an indoor recreation facility in Sanford. There are currently three indoor recreation facilities in the City, all of which are owned and managed by Lee County Parks and Recreation. The largest of the three is the Bob E. Hales Center, adapted from a former armory for recreational use. Like most armories in North Carolina, this one was constructed over a half-century ago, sometime in the late 1940’s or early 1950’s. The other two indoor facilities include the Ingram Center at Dalrymple Park (maximum accommodation-100 people) and the Lett Family Park Center (maximum accommodation-65 people). These facilities are not programmed by the county but are available for rental on the weekends only. Results from the 2017 Sanford Parks and Recreation Master Plan survey also pointed to local interest in an indoor recreation facility, with almost 40% of respondents indicating having a “great interest” in a gym/recreation center.

Likewise, current survey participants’ sentiments tended to reflect those of the 2017 participants. Both groups demonstrated having an interest in trails, picnic shelters, and playgrounds, although playgrounds to a lesser extent in 2017. A comparison of results from both surveys is presented in more detail at the end of this assessment.

PROGRAMMING

Practitioners have conveyed the effectiveness of recreation programs across a broad swath of interdisciplinary applications. Outcomes point to benefits including improving or maintaining health and well-being, positive socialization with peers, development of friendships, enhanced self-esteem and self-confidence, and development of inclusive communities accepting to all.¹ Recreation, leisure, and sports activities may involve individuals, small groups, teams, or whole communities and are relevant to people of all different ages, abilities, and levels of skill. The types of recreation, leisure, and sports activities people participate in vary greatly depending on local context, trends, social systems, and values.²

Identical to the previous question about amenity desires, the recreation programs question asked participants to identify whether they believe various recreational activities to be ‘very important’, ‘important’, ‘somewhat important’, or ‘not important’ for the City to add or expand over the 10-year planning horizon. Items included on this list of possible amenities was gleaned from department recommendations, references to previous community input, and items in line with current national trends.

The top four most important programs or activities to survey takers are social in nature and include opportunities to not only gather with friends and other community members but also to take up volunteering. This finding is in line with results from the input boards, which indicated “people and community” to be among participants’ top values. Gardening and hiking were also identified as important and in line with another top community value “environment and nature.”



1 Webber, Martin, and Meredith Fendt-Newlin. “A review of social participation interventions for people with mental health problems.” *Social psychiatry and psychiatric epidemiology* vol. 52,4 (2017): 369-380. doi:10.1007/s00127-017-1372-2

2 Khasnabis C, Heinicke Motsch K, Achu K, et al., editors. “Community-Based Rehabilitation: CBR Guidelines.” Geneva: World Health Organization; 2010. Recreation, leisure and sports. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK310922/>

COMPARISON OF SURVEY FINDINGS

2017 CITY OF SANFORD PARKS + RECREATION MASTER PLAN SURVEY

The City of Sanford conducted a survey of its residents as a component of its 2017 comprehensive parks and recreation master plan. The survey included 203 interviews from random households in Sanford, with respondents aged 18 years or older. Key findings revealed that Kiwanis Family Park was the most frequently used park, and overall, four in five respondents expressed satisfaction with the park and recreation facilities. Additionally, there was a strong demand for new park and recreation areas in Sanford, with over four in five residents reporting a need for additional facilities. Walking or biking trails and open space or natural areas topped the list of desired amenities, followed by athletic fields, a swimming facility, and water access areas. Sanford residents expressed less interest in sport courts like tennis courts and volleyball.

Furthermore, the survey revealed that certain recreational needs in Sanford were not fully met, with the top six recreation gaps identified as facilities for classes or workshops, water access areas, a gymnasium/recreation center, a swimming facility, walking and biking trails, and open space and natural areas. Respondents were also asked about other types of recreation facilities they would like to see provided in Sanford, with roller skating areas, a skateboarding facility, and a swimming pool being among the most requested options.

2021 LEE COUNTY PARKS + RECREATION MASTER PLAN SURVEY

Lee County conducted a random-sample survey as a component of its 2021 Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The goal was to obtain 400 completed surveys from County residents. A total of 416 surveys were collected.

Findings indicated that County residents (the majority of whom reside in Sanford and are considered Sanford residents) believed their needs for water access, an aquatics facility, outdoor amphitheaters, and indoor fitness facilities, respectively, were not being met. While, natural trails, a greenway trail system, playgrounds, aquatic facility, and a dog park were noted as amenities of most importance to households.

The County's survey included a statistical analysis called the Priority Investment Rating (PIR). The analysis tool evaluates the priority that should be placed on Parks and Recreation investments. The PIR equally weighs (1) the importance that households place on each facility/amenity/program and (2) how many households have unmet needs for the facility/amenity/program. Items with a rating of 100 or more are considered to be high priority. To that end, the following nine (9) amenities were considered to be top priorities for investment on the part of Lee County.

1. Natural Trails
2. Greenway Trail System
3. Water Access
4. Aquatics Facility
5. Dog Park
6. Indoor Fitness Facilities
7. Outdoor Amphitheaters
8. Picnic Shelters
9. Playgrounds

The same analysis was applied to recreational program needs, whereby the following programs and activities were found to be top priorities for investment.

1. Adult Fitness + Wellness Programs
2. Outdoor Music/Concerts
3. Special Events + Festivals
4. Aquatic Programs
5. Outdoor Adventure Programs

Comparison of Recreational Amenity Needs			
Amenity	City of Sanford		Lee County
	2017	2023	2021
Adventure Course	NA	Medium Interest	NA
Art Studio	Medium Interest	Medium Interest	Low Interest
Basketball Courts	Medium Interest	Medium Interest	
Bicycling-Bike Lanes	High Interest	Medium Interest	NA
Bicycling-BMX Bike Trail/ Track	NA	Low Interest	Low Interest
Bicycling-Mountain Bike Trails	High Interest	Low Interest	Low Interest
Camping Facilities	NA	Low Interest	
Canoe/Kayak/SUP Accesses	High Interest	Medium Interest	High Interest
Disc Golf Course	Low Interest	Low Interest	Low Interest
Environmental/Nature Facility	Medium Interest	High Interest	NA
Fishing Access	High Interest	High Interest	Medium Interest
Fitness Stations-Outdoors	NA	High Interest	Medium Interest
Gardens	Low Interest	High Interest	Medium Interest
Hiking Trails	High Interest	High Interest	High Interest
Indoor Recreation Facility	Medium Interest	High Interest	High Interest
Maintained Unprogrammed Open Space	High Interest	High Interest	Medium Interest
Pickleball Courts	NA	Low Interest	Low Interest
Picnic Shelters	High Interest	High Interest	High Interest
Playgrounds	High Interest	High Interest	High Interest
Skateboard Pad	NA	High Interest	NA
Tennis Courts	Low Interest	Low Interest	Medium Interest
Volleyball Courts	NA	Medium Interest	Low Interest
Water Play/Splashpad	NA	High Interest	Medium Interest

SUMMARY

The current assessment of recreational amenity needs within a 5-year period of time for the City of Sanford and Lee County in 2021, reveals several key findings. High-interest amenities were identified across each of the three surveys including hiking trails, picnic shelters, and playgrounds. The Sanford and Lee County survey results also point to residents' desire for water access for fishing and boating, unprogrammed open space, and an indoor recreation center, albeit slightly less than the high-interest items.

There is notable variation between the 2023 Sanford and 2021 Lee County surveys. Participants in the 2021 Lee County survey indicated a low level of interest in some of the amenities that participants in both the 2017 and 2023 Sanford surveys indicated an interest for, such as basketball courts and volleyball courts. Gardens grew in popularity over the five-year period as did tennis courts. Each of the three surveys pointed to low interest in disc golf courses, mountain bike trails, BMX tracks, and pickleball courts.

FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

OVERVIEW

Focus groups are a qualitative research tool that involves gathering a small group of individuals with similar characteristics or interests to engage in open discussions and share their opinions, perspectives, and experiences on specific topics. They serve as a valuable tool for planning because they provide in-depth insights and diverse viewpoints that can be used to better understand community needs, preferences, and concerns. Focus groups bring together individuals from various backgrounds, age groups, and interests. This diversity of perspectives enriches the planning process, as it allows planners to consider a wide range of ideas and opinions. A well-represented focus group ensures that the comprehensive plan accommodates the preferences of different segments of the community.

For parks, recreation, and greenway planning, focus groups can be particularly useful as they offer a platform for residents and stakeholders to voice their opinions on current amenities, desired improvements, and priorities for future investment. Moreover, focus group input can play a role in community development goals. By involving residents and stakeholders in the planning process, local authorities can foster a sense of ownership and inclusivity, making the resulting projects more community-driven and sustainable.

The focus group exercise conducted as part of this plan's community engagement strategy was centered around three specific topics – greenways, downtown Sanford, and special events. These topics were selected due to high demand within the community for both greenways and special events, as well as the congruent relationship Sanford Parks has with the City's downtown. The City owns and maintains Sanford's downtown park, Depot Park, and assists Downtown Sanford, Inc. a nonprofit serving of the primary promoter of the City's downtown businesses, civic spaces, and special events.

GREENWAYS

Sanford Parks leadership assisted in identifying focus group participants with an interest in trails and greenways. Participants represented a spectrum of the community and were considered to be a diverse pool of individuals.

The project team posed five questions to participants that included:

1. What are the main benefits you associate with greenway development in a community?
2. In your opinion, what are the key features or amenities that make a greenway attractive and enjoyable?
3. What specific locations or areas of Sanford or Lee County do you feel greenways would be most beneficial?
4. What potential challenges do you foresee with developing greenways in Sanford and how would you address them?

MAIN BENEFITS

Focus group members expressed a strong interest in connected and well-designed greenways that offer a variety of amenities and prioritize safety. They see greenways as beneficial for promoting physical activity, social connections, and a healthy lifestyle. The participants conveyed the importance of greenways for creating aesthetically pleasing public spaces and high-quality communities.

KEY FEATURES

Participants highlighted specific key features and amenities they desired, including seating, lighted greenways, and connections to both nature and people. Additionally, shade, trees, and adequate road buffers were mentioned as essential elements for providing a comfortable and enjoyable experience on the greenways. Safety emerged as a major priority, with participants stressing the importance of well-lit areas, call boxes, and well-maintained paths to ensure a secure environment. Apart from practical considerations, the aesthetics of the community were also deemed significant, with participants expressing a desire for visually attractive and engaging landscaping, and the inclusion of public art to enhance the overall greenway experience.

PRIORITY LOCATIONS

Participants identified several priority locations for greenway development. The area receiving the most discussion was Sanford's downtown and potential connections to parks and civic spaces, including Depot Park, Horton Park, the library, YMCA, and MLK Memorial. Additionally, there was keen interest in regional connectivity, with a desire to link greenways to areas such as the Deep River, San-Lee Park, Southern Sanford, and Jonesboro. Notably, the Tramway area emerged as another potential priority area for greenway development and a critical connection node.

CHALLENGES + CONCERNS

Building greenways in Sanford comes with various challenges that were highlighted during the focus group discussions. Foremost among them was the issue of cost, which emerged as a significant hurdle in the development process. Making regional connections and completing the Endor Greenway were identified as specific challenges that require careful planning and execution. Moreover, the acquisition of land and easements for greenway construction was considered a potential obstacle that demands strategic approaches.

Participants also expressed some reservations about change-aversion, underscoring the importance of addressing community concerns and ensuring transparent communication throughout the development process. Additionally, there were discussions about the need to restart bond initiatives to secure funding and support for greenway projects.

SPECIAL EVENTS

The project team desired to have a focus group on special events and festivals because of the large role they play in the cultural and social fabric of the City. Furthermore, special events and festivals often involve collaboration with multiple stakeholders, such as local businesses, non-profit organizations, and community groups. Sanford Parks currently partners with several organizations to provide special events to the community. These partners include Lee County, Downtown Sanford, Inc., the Visit Sanford TDA, and the Sanford Area Growth Alliance/Chamber of Commerce. The goal of this focus group was to foster direct engagement with stakeholders and partners to glean their valuable insights and receive feedback from participants with regard to opinions of and preferences for the types of events and festivals they value most.

The project team posed four questions to participants that included:

1. What special event or festivals in Sanford, Lee County, or regionally have been your favorite and what did you enjoy most about them?
2. Are there any specific amenities or infrastructure improvements you would like to see in Sanford's parks and public spaces to better accommodate special events and festivals?
3. What locations/sites within the City have been overlooked or undervalued as locations where festivals and special events can be held?
4. What are challenges or considerations you think should be addressed when planning and organizing special events and festivals in Sanford?

FAVORITE EVENTS

Participants expressed their enthusiasm for events like the Strawberry Jamming Festival, Boo + Groove, Touch-A-Truck, Summer Movies, and Depot Park Concerts. They find these events appealing above all because they bring the community together and include live music, diverse food options, a lively atmosphere, and partnerships with local businesses and the farmer's market.

AMENITY DESIRES/INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

The focus group highlighted the need for additional accessible parking and van-accessible parking, elevated aesthetics and landscaping, shade sails, and seating at events like Depot Park Concerts and Street Fest to enhance visitor comfort and experience.

ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS

Suggestions for places to hold events included Horton Park, Kiwanis Children's Park, OT Sloan Park, Temple Park, and smaller neighborhood parks like Maple Avenue. Participants shared the belief that these spaces offer potential for hosting smaller events and fostering community engagement. The Boys & Girls Club was offered as an alternative site due to the large amount of open space to accommodate parking. One focus group member suggested hosting indoor, family-oriented events at the Mann Center. The Mann Center was formerly Sanford High School and now houses several large multipurpose and conference rooms, as well as a 300-seat performance hall.

CHALLENGES + CONSIDERATIONS

The focus group identified several key areas of concern. Safety emerged as a top priority, with participants emphasizing the need for effective emergency response plans, first aid services, and traffic control measures to ensure the well-being of attendees. Parking was another significant challenge, as participants voiced concerns about the availability of accessible and sufficient parking spaces during events. They also raised the issue of road closures, which can impact traffic flow and accessibility to event venues. To address these challenges, the focus group stressed the importance of well-planned and prominent signage to guide attendees and manage event logistics effectively.

Another significant aspect was the need to recruit volunteers to assist with event organization and implementation. Limited support from the City of Sanford and Lee County was also discussed, indicating the importance of building stronger partnerships and collaboration between local authorities to better support and fund special events and festivals. Additionally, the focus group expressed interest in banning open carry of guns during events to enhance safety and create a secure environment for attendees. Lastly, participants mentioned concerns about smoking at events, calling for clear policies and designated smoking areas to ensure a comfortable and enjoyable experience for all participants.

DOWNTOWN SANFORD

The City's downtown is a destination for both residents and visitors. For many years local leadership has worked to make downtown Sanford a sought-out place to enjoy. Depot Park, owned and operated by Sanford Parks, is the nucleus of downtown Sanford's history. The park is home to the Railroad House (1872), Railroad Depot (1910), and Engine No. 12 (1911). Depot Park's more contemporary features include an interactive water fountain, sidewalks, lighting, and a bandstand with lawn seating.

In terms of special events Sanford Parks is the primary provider of the City Summer Concert Series and Eggpalooza at Depot Park, and is a partner supporting Downtown Sanford, Inc. events such as the "downtown alive" concert series, the Downtown Streetfest and Fireworks, and the Santa Train and Tree Lighting. The City also collaborates with other organizations like the Visit Sanford and other nonprofit organizations to support their activities, events and programs that occur downtown.

That having been said, it is critical to involve stakeholders invested in downtown Sanford in the current parks and recreation comprehensive master plan effort. As players actively involved in the enhancement and promotion of the downtown area, they have a deep understanding of the local culture, economic dynamics, and community preferences. Gleaning their insight and opinions will contribute to a well-integrated and cohesive planning approach to ensure healthy, attractive, and inclusive recreational spaces for the Sanford community. Furthermore, these stakeholders represent a diverse group of downtown businesses, property owners, residents, and organizations. Involving them in the planning process encourages support and advocacy for the master plan's successful implementation. Their support can be instrumental in garnering broader community support and overcoming potential challenges.

The project team posed four questions to the downtown Sanford focus group participants including:

1. What aspects of the City's downtown do you find most appealing or significant, and why?
2. Are there specific types of parks, recreational amenities, or leisure activities that you believe would be most beneficial for driving downtown development and attracting visitors?
3. As it relates to the provision of gathering spaces and leisure activities how can Sanford Parks help advance the revitalization and renewal of the City's downtown? Are there other local organizations you view as potential partners, or how could existing partnerships become stronger in the shared purpose of elevating the City's downtown?
4. Downtowns within both large and small cities are making a comeback as lively civic gathering spaces, with parks having played a major role in activating downtowns. How do we make downtown Sanford attractive to a variety of interests centered around existing and future parks?
5. Depot Park is a park seven days a week. Concerts are seasonal and once weekly. What about the other times of year and days of the week? As a member of the Sanford community, what can you think of that would make you visit Depot park for other reasons? What would make you stay longer?

DOWNTOWN APPEAL

The focus group discussion revealed several factors contributing to the appealing nature of downtown Sanford. Notably, Depot Park emerges as a central highlight, appreciated for its green space, family-friendly amenities, and the engaging water fountain that provides a space for kids to play. The historical significance of the depot itself, coupled with its well-maintained landscaping and event hosting capabilities, further adds to its allure. Participants also emphasized the importance of walkability in downtown, enabling easy exploration of the area and creating an engaging and accessible atmosphere. Streetscape improvements, façade enhancements, and the preservation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings are identified as key contributors to the downtown's unique character. Additionally, the diversity of shops, restaurants, and bars, along with the presence of murals and proximity to other local attractions like the Temple Theater, are instrumental in making downtown Sanford an appealing and inviting destination for residents and visitors alike.

ACTIVITIES AND AMENITIES

Participants expressed a desire for downtown open spaces or parks with fitness areas, playgrounds, and dog parks. Additionally, the presence of skate pads and bike lanes were noted as important downtown features promoting an active and youthful atmosphere. The significance of trails connecting to other green spaces and attractions is emphasized repeatedly, indicating a preference for a connected network that facilitates easy exploration of the areas and parks surrounding downtown. Feedback from this focus group also highlighted the importance of cultural and social experiences, with diverse concerts and music genres, special events, and street festivals being seen as integral to fostering a vibrant and engaging downtown environment. Urban green spaces, contemporary and kids' museums, murals, selfie stations, and outdoor dining spaces are identified as additional features that contribute to the downtown's appeal, enhancing its cultural offerings and providing social gathering spaces.

Improved parking, signage, and communication about downtown attractions are deemed essential for ensuring ease of access and navigation, while amenities like drinking fountains and public restrooms are valued for enhancing visitor comfort. Overall, the focus group's insights underscore the mindset that a well-rounded and dynamic downtown environment offering a variety of recreational and

cultural opportunities would serve to support exploration and engagement with downtown Sanford.

SANFORD PARKS + OTHER PARTNERSHIPS

The focus group participants did not specifically address how Sanford Parks, could help activate the City's downtown. However, they did identify a significant roster of potential partner organizations to support the same objectives. Participants believe downtown Sanford would benefit by the involvement of the following organizations: Back to Dirt Conservancy, DSI (Downtown Sanford, Inc.), Lee County Schools, Lee County Arts Council, Lee County Parks and Recreation, private developers, Scouts, 4-H, Temple Teens, Boys & Girls Club, SAGA, civic clubs (Lions, Kiwanis, Rotary), retailers, local restaurants, The Enrichment Center, Sanford Police Department, Sanford Yoga Studio/LGBTQ Resource Center, Visit Sanford, Railroad House Museum, Jimmy Randolph and Jimmy Haire's History Tours, Economic Development, United Ways, PTAs, Chamber of Commerce, Farmers Market (Lee County Cooperative Extension), and high schools (band, orchestra, choir concerts).

By partnering with these organizations, Sanford Parks Department can leverage their unique resources, expertise, and community connections to drive downtown activation efforts. Such collaboration can facilitate a multifaceted approach to promoting cultural events, recreational activities, historic tours, and economic development initiatives that will collectively contribute to the revitalization and vibrancy of downtown Sanford, making it an attractive destination for residents and visitors.

DOWNTOWN ACTIVITIES + LEISURE PURSUITS

Feedback from the group highlighted the importance of providing a diverse range of events, including seasonal attractions, block parties, races, music performances, multicultural celebrations, and street festivals to attract visitors to downtown year-round. Additionally, the incorporation of activities beyond music and concerts, such as interactive art stations and murals, were seen as vital in creating a sought-after downtown experience. The presence of urban green spaces for passive recreation, a bike share program, a skate park, and a downtown trail with clear signage were also suggested to cater to various recreational interests and leisure pursuits to elevate the appeal of downtown Sanford.

VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES AT DEPOT PARK

Participants suggested various ideas to enhance the visitation experience and prolong their stay at Depot Park throughout the year. They emphasized the need for high-quality play equipment, elevated landscaping, and activating the museum to attract families and young children. Additionally, they proposed incorporating seasonal attractions, such as Christmas train rides, food trucks and concessions, as well as hosting regular events like lunch in the park, monthly cultural heritage gatherings, spring flings, Christmas parties, craft fairs, and fall festivals.

Connecting Depot Park to nearby Kiwanis Children's Park, organizing movie nights, and offering athletics programs were also proposed to diversify recreational offerings. Improvements in lighting, music through speakers, art displays, and mini putt-putt golf were suggested to enhance the ambiance and entertainment. The focus group also emphasized the importance of ensuring a welcoming and safe environment through inclusive seating and amenities, better cleanliness, and perceptions of safety, ultimately encouraging community members to visit and spend more time at Depot Park year-round.

CITY STAFF LISTENING SESSION

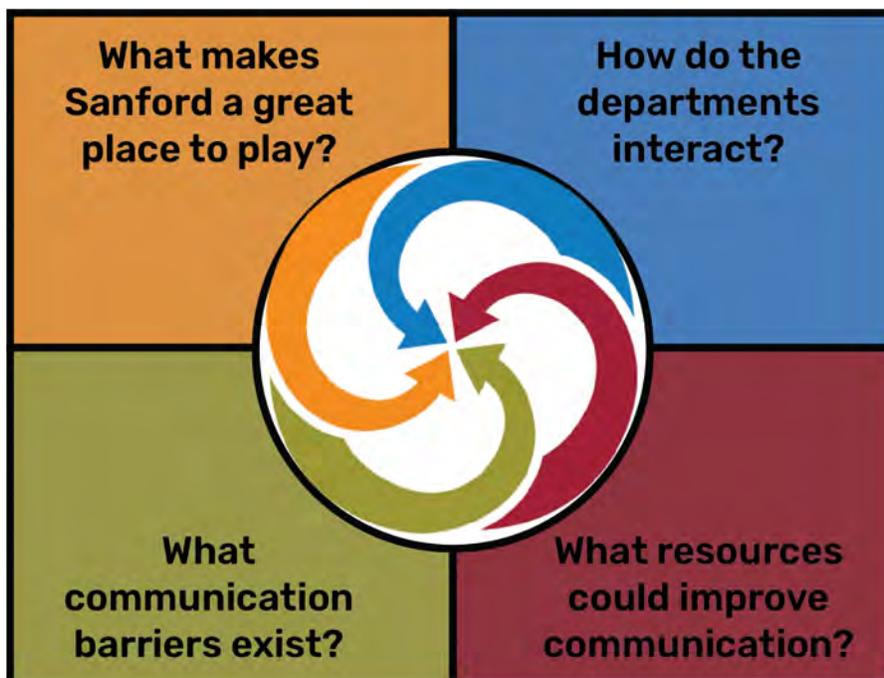
OVERVIEW

As a strategy to construct a staff-informed vision for the City of Sanford’s re-established Parks and Recreation Department, the project team intentionally kicked off the community engagement effort by facilitating a listening session with the heads of the City’s public works, engineering, administration, finance, planning and development, and parks departments. The aim was to understand the role the various departments play in elevating parks and recreation in the City of Sanford, identify opportunities for collaboration, establish mechanisms to drive community support, and garner commitment from City leadership.

Just as with any sector of the economy, there is a need for efficient intra and inter-departmental communication in local government. Multiple departments operating in a vacuum means detached operational strategies, policies, and differing perceptions of public services based on respective job responsibilities. Encouraging collaboration and cooperation within the functions of local government reflects outwardly to the community – ensuring more than just essential services – but outstanding customer service – is being provided to the public.

Parks and recreation provide wide-ranging benefits that can be holistically realized when local government departments are working in tandem. Positive community development including public health and natural resource protection benefits parks and leisure services. To this end, the project team asked participants to reflect on their work, how it fits within the overall provision of parks and leisure services, and how communication systems can be improved to ensure Sanford is a great place to play.

Participants were asked:



SUMMARY

WHAT MAKES SANFORD A GREAT PLACE TO PLAY?

- Participants showed an appreciation for the variety of amenities, events, and things to do in Sanford. They recognize the effort of City leadership to elevate the community by investing in recreation amenities and services. Examples included Kiwanis Park Improvements, particularly the splash pad – and other park and amenity upgrades across the City.
- City of Sanford staff recognize the role city-supported special events – particularly concerts at Depot Park play in providing fun and amusement, as well as creating a sense of place.
- Sanford is unique among municipalities in the region in that it features the near mile and a half Endor Iron Furnace Greenway. Benefits provided by the greenway like encouraging active lifestyles, access to nature, and building community pride are appreciated by City staff and the overall community.
- Accessibility was also noted by staff as a characteristic distinguishing Sanford from surrounding communities, and one which makes Sanford a great place to play. Public parks and recreational amenities are distributed proportionally around the City, making it easy for most residents to get to a park.

HOW DO THE VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS CURRENTLY INTERACT?

- It was evident from the conversation that the various departments interact on a mostly regular basis. Participants provided both means and methods of interfacing. Among them included electronic interaction via virtual meetings, emails and online messaging. In-person interaction was also discussed as a preferred means of communicating across departments.
- Although the many benefits of virtual communication were realized as a result of the pandemic, staff indicated a preference for in-person communication. They brought up “hallway conversations” as a means by which interdepartmental collaboration is bolstered by idea and knowledge sharing that occurs simply by running into one another. However, staff also recognizes that there will be a need for streamlined standard operating procedures for communication as staffing levels grow in response to Sanford’s growth.
- Connected to the previous statement relating to “hallway conversations” is the notion among staff that they feel fortunate to be part of an organization that is still small enough to accommodate such interactions.
- Staff also reported that they are afforded the opportunity to collaborate during planned/scheduled staff meetings, council meetings, and technical review committee meetings.

WHAT BARRIERS TO INTERDEPARTMENTAL COOPERATION/COLLABORATION EXIST?

- A common refrain among staff is oftentimes a knowledge gap exists regarding City policies and how they impact not only others’ departments, but also the ones they represent.
- Even though in many cases collaboration saves time – lack of time was mentioned as the foremost barrier to interdepartmental collaboration. Most of the participants in the listening sessions were department heads and reported simply not having the capacity for effective cooperation with other departments.
- The lack of a standardized communication protocol was also acknowledged as hampering collaboration. Staff conveyed that this is possibly leading to communication gaps, which has resulted in a lack of clarity about how the various departments can support one another.

- Staff recognized that personal knowledge gaps about the roles other departments play stand in the way of effective cross-disciplinary collaboration to better serve the citizens of Sanford. They conveyed that gaps in knowledge have resulted in misunderstandings about how the various departments can support one another.
- Human Resources + Capacity: A local government's ability to consistently provide a high level of service to its citizens requires that it be staffed in a manner to which it can ensure the health, safety and welfare of its residents at scale. Staff expressed being at capacity in terms of their job responsibilities and expectations. They felt that additional human resources would alleviate some of their workload. Additional staff would free up time to strategize across departments for the greater purpose of achieving long-term goals like working toward the City's long-term strategic initiatives outlined in Plan San-Lee. This was especially true of the Planning Department whose representative conveyed the need for more staff to handle the demand of serving not only the City, but also Lee County and the Town of Broadway.
- Long Range Planning + Growth: As an exurb, Sanford sits on an ever-shifting border between urban and rural places defined by economic ties to a larger metropolitan area. Staff recognized that they are fortunate because Sanford as a local government is still small enough to allow "hallway conversations" during the workday. But they also realize that as they grow, there will be a need for additional staff, resources, and consistent economic investment to provide essential public services to new residents, homes and businesses. At the same time, they also appreciate Sanford's small town charm, character, and history – and to that end City departments understand the need for cross-collaboration that promotes an enhanced level of services while ensuring the small-town character of the Town is preserved across the built environment and within service delivery.
- Variety of Experiences: City of Sanford staff consider diverse parks and recreation offerings accessible across the system an asset to the community. Celebrations, festivals, and special events are some of the ways community members connect and socialize and discover values and beliefs that bind the community together. Interactions through recreation programs also inspire residents to build social cohesion. Staff recognized the Endor Iron Furnace Greenway as a premier recreational amenity in the City that is much beloved by the community.
- Collaborative Leadership: Interdepartmental coordination and collaboration is necessary to achieve City-wide goals and high demand projects. Research has shown that staff who work as a collaborative group have a higher likelihood of implementing actions because they were involved in developing those action items. The same research also demonstrates staff representing a variety of subject areas works together to bring a wealth of information and a variety of perspectives. As a result, the solutions they arrive at are likely to be better than those developed in a vacuum, or by only a small number of people.

WHAT RESOURCES COULD IMPROVE COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION?

- > Participants overwhelmingly supported the idea of continuing education and training in the methods and practices of other disciplines that are useful to their own.
- > Establishing a core vision and alignment around outcomes was another way to alleviate collaboration barriers. The staff agreed that a way to do this is to incorporate Sanford Parks into TRC/site plan review processes.
- > Technology was also recommended as a means of improving interdepartmental communication. As mentioned earlier in this report, the pandemic introduced new digital collaboration tools in the workplace, which have allowed teams to work more closely together. City of Sanford staff believe strengthening this approach and investing in new programs would allow them to connect more efficiently.
- > Fiscal policies and investment priorities will inevitably impact the capacity of Sanford's various departments to adopt an interdisciplinary approach to their work. According to the staff, their departments would likely benefit from additional financial resources and/or reallocating resources to incentivize planning and cooperation between departments.

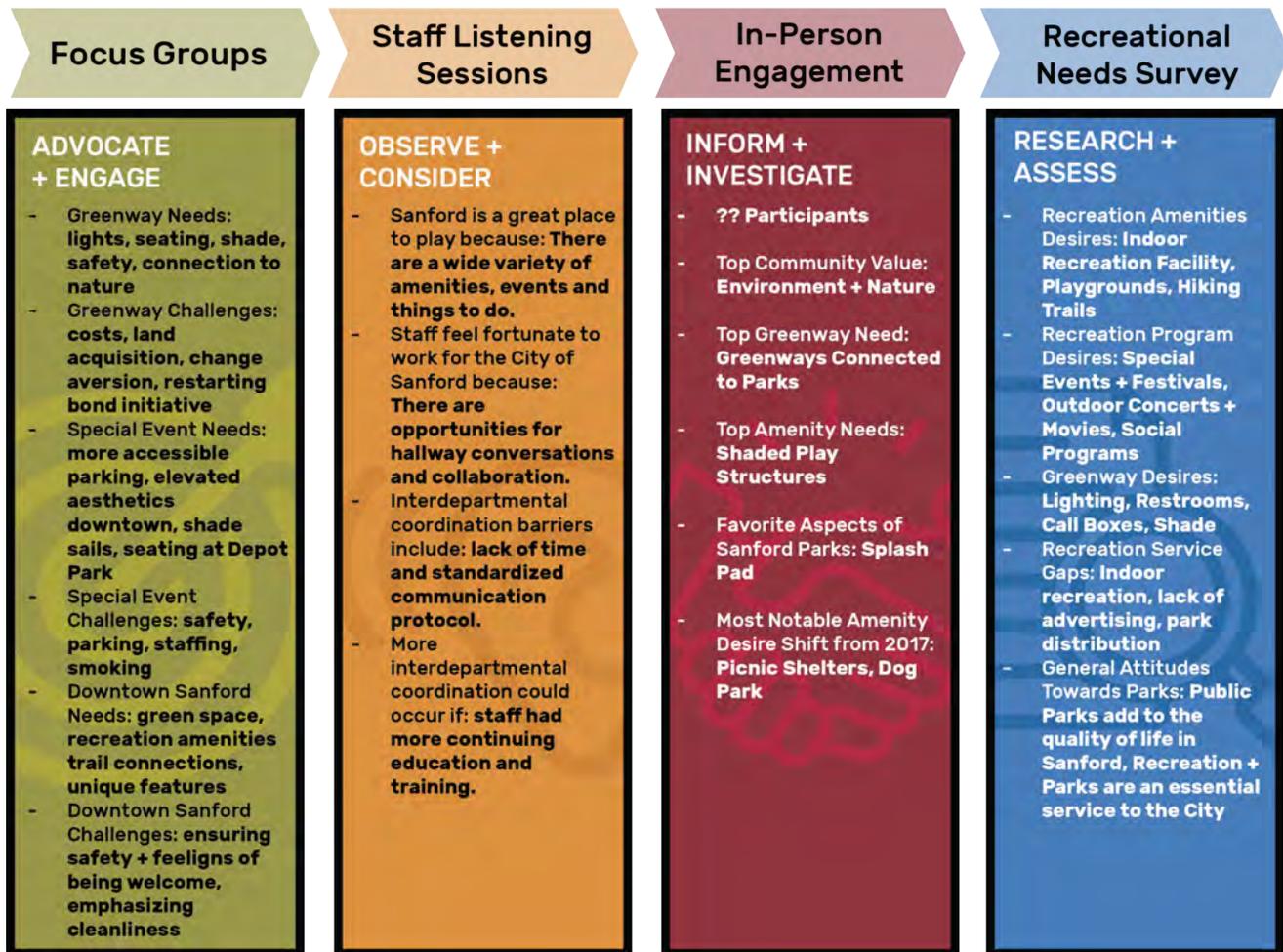
EMERGING THEMES



WHAT WE HEARD

- The Sanford community emphasizes the environment, the economy, and well-being. Participants in each of the community engagement activities placed a strong emphasis on preserving the environment, supporting the local economy, and fostering the well-being of its people. They value both the protection of natural spaces and the socioeconomic benefits that parks bring, seeking a balance between conservation and community development.
- Greenways and trails continue to be the recreational amenity with the greatest level of demand in Sanford. Participants recognize the benefits of connected and well-designed greenways for promoting physical activity, providing safe outdoor spaces, and enhancing the aesthetics and quality of the community. City staff acknowledge the unique value of the Endor Iron Furnace Greenway, which encourages active lifestyles, provides access to nature, and fosters community pride. They see greenways as an important asset for the overall community.
- A common theme across each of the engagement activities was a clear desire among community members to live healthy, active lifestyles. Comments gleaned from public input, focus groups, and City of Sanford staff highlight the community's desire for active lifestyles and recreational opportunities. The demand for walking trails, greenways, fitness courses, and amenities like seating and shade structures at parks all underscore the importance of promoting physical activity and outdoor experiences.
- Safety was a recurring concern across each activity. Participants stressed the importance of well-lit pathways, call boxes, and well-maintained areas to create a secure environment for park users. There was a substantial amount of feedback indicating perceptions of unsafe conditions at the City's parks, and a desire for improving safety standards by lighting greenways and installing call boxes. At the same time, community members seek comfortable and safe outdoor environments for individuals engaging in outdoor activities. Shaded play structures are highly desired, emphasizing the importance of providing sun protection while promoting active play.
- Community engagement participants continue to recognize the economic and cultural contributions of parks and recreational amenities. Community members appreciate the positive economic impact of parks on the local economy, including attracting visitors and businesses. Additionally, there is a keen interest in cultural events, live music, and festivals that enrich the community's social fabric.
- The Downtown Sanford focus group highlighted the significance of downtown Sanford as a cultural and social hub. Members of the community appreciate the appeal of Depot Park and the historical significance of the downtown area. There is a desire to foster downtown development through recreational amenities, special events, urban green spaces, and enhanced infrastructure.
- Findings from the engagement activities indicate a desire for adaptability and flexibility in recreational offerings. The community values the availability of diverse activities and amenities that cater to different interests and age groups, as well as the capacity to host events and festivals throughout the year. True to this statement is the stated demand for multipurpose fields in Sanford, not only for athletic programming but for a wide range of activities including fitness classes, community events, cultural gatherings, and pick-up sports.

- Overall, the findings indicate a community that highly values outdoor spaces, safety, environmental awareness, and a variety of recreational activities. City staff acknowledge the benefits provided by parks and leisure services, including positive community development, public health, and natural resource protection. They appreciate the variety of amenities, events, and recreational opportunities available in Sanford and recognize the efforts of City leadership in investing in park improvements, such as the Kiwanis Park splash pad, and supporting special events like concerts at Depot Park.





6

RECOMMENDATIONS + ACTION PLAN



IN THIS CHAPTER

Previous Plan Recommendations

Community Needs

OVERVIEW

The primary focus of the recommendations presented in this plan is to grow the City of Sanford's existing parks and recreation services and identify the needs and desires of the community to proactively plan for the future. As Sanford continues to grow and evolve, it is crucial to adapt parks and recreation offerings accordingly, taking into account changing recreation trends and the availability of funding.

As presented in the introduction to this plan, Sanford is reimagining how the City delivers parks and recreational services to the community, and with that, has recently established a dedicated parks department known as Sanford Parks. Many new recreational services have been successfully implemented since the City adopted its current systemwide parks and recreation master plan in 2017. Sanford's population is growing as is the demand for parks, amenities, and leisure services. While comprehensive master plans are typically completed every 10 years, the City made the responsible decision to update its 2017 plan in advance 10 years to better understand community needs and develop a tool to assist in prioritizing investment and advancing Sanford Parks.

As the City carries out the implementation process over the next decade, many projects will evolve based on changing recreation trends, availability of funding, and the needs of a growing community. With many opportunities come challenges related to prioritizing and implementing projects. To that end, this plan presents action items for use as a decision-making tool for staff and elected officials. This approach informs and validates decisions that are rooted in guiding principles, community needs, and recommendations from previous plans.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A strong vision for Sanford's parks and recreation future stands on guiding principles established through active engagement with the public, Sanford Parks and Recreation staff, local stakeholders, and elected officials. Guiding principles are further determined by an overall analysis of the City's parks and recreation system including an assessment of parks and publicly available amenities, programs, and services. Rooted in community values, the guiding principles create the foundation for this plan's recommendations and action items.

While the action items of this plan may evolve with changing demographics, industry trends, policy, or availability of resources – guiding principles help ensure the plan aligns with and reflects the community's values, aspirations, and priorities. This plan has established five guiding principles that are pursued in all aspects of recommendations and goals.

- › Outdoor Engagement: Enhance and Expand Outdoor Recreation-Centric Public Spaces
- › Inspired Growth: Preserve the City's Character Amid an Expanding Population
- › Community Pride: Foster Connections Through Recreational Opportunities Adaptability: Seek
- › Adaptability and Flexibility Within Parks and Recreational Offerings
- › Cultural and Social Hub: Emphasize Downtown Sanford as a Vibrant Activity Center

Outdoor Engagement: This principle emphasizes the desire among members of the Sanford community to connect with the outdoors through both active and passive recreation pursuits. It means understanding that there are those not only seeking opportunities for activities like sports and exercise but also desiring the passive enjoyment of natural spaces. The emphasis on outdoor engagement aims to address the diverse recreational preferences within the community, ensuring that the master plan accommodates a wide range of outdoor activities and spaces

Inspired Growth: In the face of growth, this guiding principle highlights a strategic approach to managing Sanford's expanding population while preserving the city's unique character. The emphasis is on thoughtful and intentional development that retains the distinctive features that define the Sanford's identity. It recognizes the importance of balancing urban expansion with the preservation of the culture and heritage that contribute to the city's character.

Community Pride: Fostering connections within the community through recreational opportunities emphasizes the role of parks and recreational spaces as catalysts for building a sense of pride and unity among residents. Sanford Parks will create shared spaces that promote social interaction and strengthen community bonds by providing diverse recreational options over the next 10 years and beyond. These recreational opportunities contribute to residents' overall well-being while fostering a sense of collective ownership and pride in the local recreational amenities.

Adaptability: It is important for the City of Sanford to continue to seek flexibility and adaptability within the design and offerings of parks and green spaces. This principle recognizes the dynamic nature of recreational interests and encourages a forward-thinking approach that considers changing community needs and evolving trends in recreational activities.

Cultural and Social Hub: This principle acknowledges downtown Sanford's role as a central space for cultural and social interactions and serves to elevate its importance within the community. Emphasizing downtown as a cultural and social hub facilitates the promotion of diverse recreational activities, events, and communal gatherings. Cultivating a thriving downtown, making it a focal point for cultural expression, social engagement, and community cohesion, positions it as a key destination for residents and visitors alike.

PREVIOUS PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

In developing the Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan Update for the City of Sanford, it is important to thoroughly reference recommendations and considerations from previous city-wide plans, particularly the adopted Parks and Recreation Master Plan of 2017. The plan update can build upon successful strategies, address any shortcomings, and align with the long-term goals outlined in the city’s broader planning framework by drawing upon the insights and lessons learned from the 2017 plan. This approach fosters a sense of consistency, promotes efficient resource utilization, and facilitates the creation of a cohesive and interconnected network of parks and recreational facilities that cater to the evolving needs of the city’s residents.

It is important to consider that the recommendations presented in the 2023 plan update will include action items that emerged as priorities during the course of evaluating Sanford’s park system, assessing Sanford Park’s operational strategy, understanding the City’s current level of recreation service, and those that remain relevant to current community needs based on public input. Additionally, the framework for the 2023 plan does not incorporate standards that address population-based needs for park amenities and facilities, nor does it use ‘park type’ as methods of formulating recommendations used to develop recommendations for the 2017 plan. Many of the suggestions presented in the 2017 plan were based on both previously outlined standards and are therefore not addressed as part of the recommendations of the 2023 plan update. Lastly, the current plan’s recommendations do not take into consideration recommendations for improvements to Lee County parks and facilities as were included in the 2017 plan.

The 2017 Parks and Recreation Master Plan presented on the following page, alongside this plan’s

GOAL	TIMELINE	TIMELINE CODE
Short-Term	1-5 Years	ST
Mid-Term	5-10 Years	MT
Long-Term	10+ Years	LT
Ongoing	Continual	OG

Parks + Facilities Development		
2017 Recommendation	2023 Recommendation	Timeline
Develop Site Specific Master Plans for Horton Park, Kiwanis Family Park, and OT Sloan Park to guide renovations and expansions.	Horton and OT Sloan parks are owned and managed by Lee County. The City of Sanford developed a site-specific master plan for Kiwanis Family Park as recommended. This plan recommends that the City continue to solicit input for further enhancements at this park into the future and update any plans accordingly.	ST
Address the deficiency in neighborhood parks by planning and constructing three to four additional parks, each preferably in the 6–8-acre range.	Although, as discussed above, the current plan does not make considerations based on 'park type', it does recognize the need to address city-wide deficiencies in geographic access to parks. Therefore, this plan presents a two-fold recommendation to address shortages by (1) making improvements to current parks located within neighborhoods and subdivisions, and (2) seeking out opportunities to develop new parks on land the city currently owns as well as future acquired properties.	MT-LT
Explore opportunities for the development of civic parks in downtown areas and improvements to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial based on public interest.	The City currently offers the community a robust line-up of summer concerts, and partners with Downtown Sanford Inc. to provide spring and fall concerts at the Depot Park Amphitheater. The City also partners with Lee County to host a springtime egg hunt at Depot Park. However, there is an opportunity for further activation of Depot Park to cater to additional recreational interests. This plan recommends that the City invest in a master plan for the park to use as a tool for park amenity additions, as well as incorporating programmatic offerings to capture a broader user base beyond concertgoers and small children.	ST-MT

Facility Renovation + Improvement		
2017 Recommendation	2023 Recommendation	Timeline
Identify locations for additional playgrounds and transition to poured in place (PIP) safety surfacing for wheelchair accessibility and reduced maintenance costs.	The City of Sanford should prioritize replacing outdated playground equipment to align with contemporary play needs for small children and youth. Consideration of modern, accessible surfacing, such as poured-in-place surfacing, is recommended for enhanced safety and inclusivity. Given Lee County’s efforts to improve playground services, the current suggestion is to focus on upgrading existing playgrounds rather than identifying locations for additional ones, ensuring an adequate level of service for recreational spaces in Sanford.	ST-MT
Construct additional soccer fields to meet the demand, following a standard of one field for every 7,500 people.	First, it has been acknowledged that the current plan update does not base recommendations for recreation amenities per proportion of the population. Furthermore, it is determined that there is no need for the construction of additional soccer fields within the city, as Lee County is actively meeting the youth sports needs of Sanford residents. Notably, Lee County’s ongoing development of a 30-million-dollar sports complex, including six full-sized soccer fields, adequately addresses the community’s need for participating in soccer.	NA
Address the need for several outdoor basketball courts based on national and state standards (one court per 5,000 people).	Despite the slightly diminished demand, as indicated in the 2023 online survey compared to the 2017 feedback, it may be beneficial for the City of Sanford to continue to explore the need for basketball courts in the community. Considering its low barrier to entry, positive impact on physical activity, and potential as a recreational alternative for youth and teens, it would behoove community members to assess current needs and preferences. Furthermore, with the youth population expected to be around 20 percent of the city’s residents over the next decade, exploring the demand for basketball courts can help adapt recreational facilities to better meet the evolving needs of the community, especially among youth and teens.	ST-MT

Facility Renovation + Improvement		
2017 Recommendation	2023 Recommendation	Timeline
Develop seven additional picnic shelters in the city based on a standard of one shelter per 2,000 people.	Informed by community input and a comprehensive evaluation of Sanford’s park system, this updated master plan diverges from conventional metrics such as population-based standards. Instead, it emphasizes a qualitative approach, considering the unique needs and preferences of residents while benchmarking against comparable communities. Consequently, the recommendation advocates for the strategic placement of additional picnic shelters to augment recreational amenities across Sanford’s parks	ST-MT
Consider improvements and expansions for amphitheaters and outdoor performing arts areas to support community events.v	The City of Sanford has recently invested in improvements to the Depot Park performance stage as well as purchased more advanced audio-visual equipment to support the concert series that take place there in the spring, summer and fall. The concerts are high in demand and well attended, as are the special events that are held in and adjacent to the park. This plan recommends that the City make improvements to Depot Park to enhance the special event and concert attendee experience based on feedback from the community, including focus groups, dedicated to improving special events and Sanford’s downtown district.	ST-MT

Recreation Programs + Facilities		
2017 Recommendation	2023 Recommendation	Timeline
Evaluate the need for a teen center based on stakeholder input, reinforcing the importance of a detailed feasibility study.	This plan recommends that The City of Sanford address the growing demand for a new, modern, and contemporary community center that can serve as a hub for indoor activities. Presently, the city lacks a dedicated public indoor recreation facility, with the existing Bob Hales Center housed in an antiquated building formerly used as an armory and managed by Lee County. Community feedback since 2017 has consistently underscored the need for an indoor recreation facility, and recent surveys in 2023 for the City of Sanford and 2021 for Lee County confirm this demand. With substantial investments made in enhancing outdoor recreational amenities, there is now an even more pronounced need for a well-equipped indoor space that aligns with the evolving preferences and recreational needs of the Sanford community.	MT-LT
Assess the demand for swimming pools and explore alternatives such as splash pads for outdoor water-based recreational activities.	The recommendation to reassess swimming pool demand is likely not needed given Sanford’s recent accomplishment of a large splash pad at Kiwanis Park. Instead of revisiting this, this plan recommends that the city explore satellite locations for additional splash pads or water-based amenities across the city, promoting geographic equity. This consideration is particularly vital as the existing splash pad is only accessible by vehicle, potentially excluding those reliant on walking or biking as their primary mode of transportation.	MT-LT
Consider future amenities like skateboard parks, off-leash dog areas, and community gardens based on community interests and trends.	The current plan recommends the City of Sanford consider future amenities like skateboard parks, off-leash dog areas, and community gardens. The support for this recommendation is grounded in recent community feedback gathered during the public input effort for the current master plan update and the 2021 Lee County master plan.	ST-MT

The current master plan update involves a more in-depth examination of the department’s operations as compared to the 2017 master plan, which took a broader assessment. This evaluation aims to provide a more refined understanding of how Sanford Parks functions, identifying relevant areas for

Sanford Parks does not currently have an operational plan to include maintenance standards and asset replacement. Currently, maintenance concerns are addressed as they arise, while the best practice is to understand the likelihood of occurrence and planning how to proactively intervene before failures occur. The Department does however, conduct routine inspections to identify issues, and understands that preventative maintenance is key.

Currently, the parks and recreation director is responsible for on-the-ground operational duties such as scheduling, supervising, and maintenance. These responsibilities have the potential to pull the director away from critical duties like training, project management, developing policies and procedures, and strategic planning. These tasks must be held in high regard because of the young age of the department. Positioning the Department strategically will ensure the long-term success.

Operational + Management Considerations		Timeline
Establish a revenue plan for park development and operations, incorporating all available funding resources.	Develop a comprehensive revenue plan for park development and operations by conducting a thorough funding assessment, actively pursuing grant opportunities, fostering public-private partnerships, implementing transparent fee structures, engaging volunteers and donations, exploring naming rights and sponsorships, and conducting regular financial reviews to ensure adaptability and sustainability.	ST
Anticipate operational challenges and staff needs associated with facility expansions and implement a method of delivery for improved park and recreational services.	Given the City of Sanford’s current staffing levels, which are on the lower end compared to national medians, it is crucial to anticipate potential operational challenges associated with facility expansions. In order to enhance park and recreational services, a proactive approach should be taken to assess the additional staff needs that may arise with the expansion. Implementing a method of delivery that emphasizes efficiency and flexibility, such as optimizing staff roles, utilizing technology for streamlined operations, and exploring partnerships with community organizations, will be essential in ensuring that the growth in facilities aligns with the capacity to provide quality services.	ST-MT OG
Allocate additional staff positions for grounds maintenance to effectively operate and maintain new facilities.	The National Recreation and Park Association maintains that one worker should be assigned to maintain no more than 32 acres. With 23.5 acres of parkland and three FTE staff, Sanford Parks is currently operating above the recommended metric for parks department staffing. However, Additional staff and will be needed to efficiently address the associated operational and maintenance demands as the parks and greenway system continues to grow and expand.	ST-MT OG

COMMUNITY NEEDS

This examination is applied two-fold, considering both the findings from the community engagement process, and systemwide park and recreation service gaps identified during the inventory and analysis. The first leverages findings from the variety of input gathering exercises including intercept interviews with community members at special events, online survey results, and conversations with focus group members and City of Sanford staff. The second includes an assessment of the quality and variety of Sanford's parks, amenities in existing parks, the availability and diversity of recreation amenities and programs to address varying interests and age groups.

The following questions can help determine whether a project is aligned with community needs:

1. How is the geographic distribution of park amenities across the city, and are there specific areas lacking equitable access to recreational facilities?
2. During site visits, what were the observed qualities and conditions of existing amenities, and are there consistent patterns indicating areas in need of improvement?
3. What feedback or suggestions have been received from the community regarding the quality and variety of existing amenities, and how can these insights inform improvements?
4. In assessing the availability of recreation programs, are there gaps in catering to diverse interests, age groups, and community preferences?
5. What specific recreational needs and preferences have been identified through public input, and how can park offerings be diversified to address these gaps?

ACTION + IMPLEMENTATION

Action items focus on reasonable approaches to enhancing existing parks and recreation services by revitalizing existing and implementing new amenities and programs over a ten-year planning horizon. With that, it is important to remember that this plan is a dynamic document that will evolve alongside the community it serves. It provides a roadmap for the City of Sanford to create high-quality parks and recreation experiences that reflect the values and aspirations of the community.

The current master plan has updated the 2017 recommendations and incorporated them into the action and implementation plan. This means that moving forward, the focus will be directed towards implementing a new set of action items derived from community engagement and park system inventory and analysis included in the updated master plan. The subsequent information outlines proposed recommendations, goals, and action items that will shape the future of parks and recreational services in Sanford over the next ten years. The following text includes recommendations supported by guiding principles, and supplemented with the action items to accomplish goals.

Recommendation: Position Parks and Recreation as an essential service for the City of Sanford.

Guiding Principles: Inspired Growth, Adaptability, Community Pride

Goal: Regularly communicate and educate the public, stakeholders, and elected officials, about the benefits of community-based recreation.

Action Items	Timeline
1. Celebrate and promote Sanford Parks' accomplishments by regularly sharing positive feedback from park visitors and program participants.	ST-OG
2. Engage community members, City staff, advisory board members and partner organizations like Visit Sanford, Downtown Sanford, Inc. and the Sanford Area Growth Alliance.	ST-OG
3. Incorporate community input and preferences into investment priorities.	ST-OG
4. Foster collaboration and information sharing across departments to achieve common goals.	ST-OG
5. Promote the economic benefits of parks and recreation to local businesses and stakeholders to encourage their active participation.	ST-OG

Recommendation: Establish a relevant selection of parkland and recreational amenities in line with community preferences and contemporary needs.

Guiding Principles: Inspired Growth, Adaptability, Community Pride, Outdoor Engagement, Cultural and Social Hub

Goal: Improve park visitation experience and user satisfaction by prioritizing improvements in existing recreational amenities

Action Items	Timeline
1. Allocate resources for the maintenance and enhancement of existing parks, focusing on improving amenities that have been identified as high demand such as playgrounds and picnic shelters.	ST
2. Allocate funds for the installation of shaded play structures in existing parks and prioritize the inclusion of shaded elements in new park developments.	ST, OG
3. Facilitate community-driven design workshops to gather input and preferences from residents regarding the enhancement of existing outdoor recreation spaces. Involve diverse community members, including those from low-income and underserved populations, to ensure that the design reflects a range of values, cultural preferences, and specific recreational needs.	ST-MT
4. Explore the feasibility of improving equitable geographic access to parks by expanding the system to include developing an additional destination-style park on the eastern side of the City and potentially within the Sanford City Hall campus.	MT-LT
5. Promote the economic benefits of parks and recreation to local businesses and stakeholders to encourage their active participation.	ST, OG

Park Specific Action Items	
Action Items	Timeline
1. Activate depot building at Depot Park collaborate with community partners to explore and implement recreational uses for the depot building, creating a multifunctional space that enhances community engagement.	MT-LT
2. Improve overall park aesthetics and functionality at Depot Park by enhancing iconic elements like the water fountain and reconsidering the design elements such as removing non-essential bollards and adding attractive features like seating areas, tables, benches, and shade coverings.	ST-MT
3. Improve the visibility and safety at Sunset Park by clearing underbrush, opening sight lines, and implementing measures that maintain the natural character of the woodlands.	ST, OG
4. Involve neighborhood residents in the planning process to ensure Sunset Park's future aligns with the community's needs and preferences, transforming it into a well-utilized and valued space.	MT-LT
5. Emphasize Sunset Park's woodlands character by keeping amenities minimal, incorporating elements like gardens, paved or unpaved loop trails, small play areas, and designated covered seating that enhance the park's natural ambiance.	ST-MT
6. Implement targeted safety measures at Maple Avenue Park to address real and perceived threats, collaborating with local law enforcement and community policing initiatives to deter trespassing and criminal activities, creating a safe environment that encourages regular park usage.	ST
7. Organize special events and weekend activities to activate Maple Avenue Park, draw positive attention, and encourage public use, fostering a sense of community engagement and ownership.	ST-MT
8. Improve visitor accessibility at the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park by implementing dedicated parking, enhancing sidewalk connectivity, and establishing an ADA-compliant route to the monument, maximizing the experience for target audiences.	MT-LT
9. Develop a master plan for Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park that would address the possibility of connecting both sides of the park, taking advantage of its diverse topography to encourage various recreational activities, and fostering increased visitation and engagement.	ST-MT

Park Specific Action Items	
Action Items	Timeline
10. Improve Carr Creek Park’s aesthetic appeal and create a more welcoming atmosphere by replacing the outer fence with a shorter, durable, and visually appealing alternative.	ST-MT
11. Enhance Carr Creek Park’s capacity for larger groups and gatherings by installing a medium-size picnic shelter equipped with benches and tables and consider establishing a program for renting these park amenities, allowing the City to recover some parks and recreation spending costs through collected fees.	MT-LT
12. Diversify the City’s recreation offerings by adding sports courts, covered gathering spaces, and walking trails to the availability of developable space at Third Street Park.	MT-LT
13. Improve the visitor experience at Third Street Park by addressing parking needs, incorporating City of Sanford brand signage, and introducing new furnishings to create a more welcoming and enjoyable environment.	ST-MT
14. Enhance Third Street Park’s visual appeal and safety by implementing a corner treatment for visually appealing park frontage and making intersection improvements, including pedestrian signals and crosswalks, to ensure safe crossings for visitors.	MT-LT
15. Improve accessibility to Walter McNeil Jr. Park by adding parking facilities, ensuring consistent signage, and updating furnishings to enhance the overall visitor experience.	ST
16. Upgrade amenities at Walter McNeil Jr. Park by enhancing the playground facilities and adding features such as looped trails, picnic shelters, and additional seating areas.	ST
17. Recognize and celebrate Councilman McNeil, Jr.’s historic contribution to the City as its first African American member of the Council by incorporating signage, kiosks, or other meaningful elements that highlight his legacy within the park.	ST

Goal: Provide a well-balanced and connected system of high-quality parks, recreational amenities, open space, and greenway trails to support a variety of recreation opportunities and programs.

Action Items	Timeline
1. Vitalize and diversify the City’s recreational amenities.	ST, OG
2. Prioritize investment in recreational amenities that have been consistently in high demand since the 2017 City of Sanford Parks and Recreation Master Plan was adopted by the City and the 2021 Lee County Parks and Recreation Master Plan was adopted by the County. <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Indoor Recreation Facility 2. Picnic Shelters 3. Playgrounds 4. Skate Park </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Water Play 6. Basketball Courts 7. Unprogrammed and Maintained Open Space </div> </div>	ST MT LT
3. Conduct ongoing community surveys and host engagement activities to identify preferred park amenity and indoor recreational facility needs.	ST, OG
4. Conduct a feasibility study for the construction of a new indoor recreation facility to address the high demand expressed by the community.	MT-LT
5. Identify potential locations for acquiring undeveloped land for future parkland, taking into consideration the community’s desire for green spaces and diversified recreational opportunities.	MT-LT

Goal: Synchronize recreation infrastructure investment with city-wide growth patterns and development policy.

Action Items	Timeline
1. Evaluate rezoning patterns and identify areas requiring additional parks and recreational facilities to align with growth.	ST, OG
2. Strategically plan annexations to accommodate population growth, ensuring new developments include dedicated areas for parks and open spaces.	ST, OG
3. Ensure developers align with the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) in setting aside land for public parks or open spaces.	ST, OG
4. Consider a tiered structure for open space requirements, tying it to the level of service goals and development scale.	OG

Goal: Explore a diversity of funding strategies to diversify the system’s funding sources.

Funding Sources

1. Corporate funding sponsorships allow corporations to invest in the development or enhancement of new or existing facilities in park systems. Sponsorships are also highly used for programs and events.

2. Partnerships are joint development funding sources or operational funding sources between two separate agencies, such as two government entities, a non-profit and a governmental entity, or a private business and a governmental entity. Two partners jointly develop revenue producing park and recreation facilities and share risk, operational costs, responsibilities and asset management, based on the strengths and weaknesses of each partner.

3. Foundations and gifts are raised from tax-exempt, non-profit organizations established with private donations in promotion of specific causes, activities, or issues. They offer a variety of means to fund capital projects, including capital campaigns, gifts catalogs, fundraisers, endowments, sales of items, etc.

4. Private Donations may also be received in the form of funds, land, facilities, recreation equipment, art or in-kind services. Donations from local and regional businesses as sponsors for events or facilities should be pursued.

5. Irrevocable Remainder Trusts are set up with individuals who typically have more than a million dollars in wealth. They will leave a portion of their wealth to the organization in a trust fund that allows the fund to grow over a period of time and then is available for the organization to use a portion of the interest to support specific park and recreation facilities or programs that are designated by the trustee.

6. Volunteers are an indirect revenue source in that persons donate time to assist the organization in providing a product or service on an hourly basis. This reduces the organization’s cost in providing the services such as recreation events, landscaping, painting, removing invasive species and other needs where a volunteer’s skill is matched with a Department need. It is also helpful to inform volunteers with operational details, as it builds advocates into the system.

Goal: Promote Inclusivity and a sense of belonging by fostering community connections.	
Action Items	Timeline
1. Continue supporting and promoting the City’s Summer Concert Series.	OG
2. Expand the variety of outdoor concerts, incorporating different genres and local talent.	ST, OG
3. Continue to collaborate with Lee County and other community partners to organize special events and festivals such as the annual Egg Hunt and Sanford StreetFest.	ST, OG
4. Authorize funding for conducting programming and additional staff needed to organize events.	ST, OG

Goal: Provide opportunities for community members to connect with each other and encourage social interaction.

Action Items	Timeline
1. Initiate collaborative projects that require community involvement and teamwork. This can include community gardening, mural painting, park beautification, or environmental conservation efforts. Such projects foster a sense of community ownership and pride.	ST, OG
2. Develop “social hubs” in parks.	ST-MT
3. Design parks and recreation areas to include inviting and comfortable gathering spaces. Install benches, picnic areas, and community seating arrangements where people can naturally connect and engage in conversations	ST, OG

The City of Fayetteville, Arkansas, reimagined Wilson Park by repurposing the restroom and shelter building into a central gathering space. Originally intended for facility upgrades, the project expanded to integrate various amenities, creating a multifunctional hub within the park. The renovated space will serve as a social commons, featuring restrooms, picnic tables, a community information board, a changeable mural, and flexible areas for summer camps and other programming. This transformation enhances community connectivity by providing a dynamic social atmosphere at the heart of the park.



Goal: Ensure equitable access to parks and recreational facilities for low-income households by providing high-quality amenities that adequately serve recreational needs of the intended park visitors.

Action Items	Timeline
1. Conduct outreach programs to raise awareness among low-income households about existing park and recreation offerings.	ST, OG
1. Conduct outreach programs to raise awareness among low-income households about existing park and recreation offerings.	ST, OG
3. Diversify funding sources and explore grant opportunities to support the variety of recreational amenities.	ST, OG
4. Conduct periodic assessments to evaluate overall park visitation and use of recreational amenities and make adjustments as needed.	ST, OG

Goal: Accommodate changing population dynamics like age groups, races, and income levels by allocating resources and funding to support a diverse range of recreational facilities and programs.

Action Items	Timeline
1. Address the needs and interests of the senior population.	ST, OG
2. Develop programs and initiatives that promote intergenerational activities and foster a sense of community among different age groups.	ST, OG
3. Enhance inclusion and ensure representation of the growing non-white population.	ST, OG

Goal: Implement the 10-minute walk program.	
Action Items	Timeline
1. Apply resources developed by the Trust for Public Land (TPL), Urban Land Institute, and NRPA to implement the 10-Minute Walk Program, particularly within the well-developed city core. Collaborate with the transportation and planning department to ensure sidewalk connectivity from neighborhoods into the city core.	ST, OG
2. Identify areas lacking 10-minute walk access and prioritize them for new park development or enhancements to existing facilities.	ST, OG

Goal: Diversify park amenities for health equity.	
Action Items	Timeline
1. Assess the diverse needs of the population, especially vulnerable groups, and incorporate amenities like walking paths, seating areas, and exercise stations.	ST, OG
2. Develop programs and initiatives targeting specific health needs within communities, promoting wellness through park activities.	ST-MT, OG
3. Collaborate with health organizations like Central Carolina Hospital to develop targeted programs and activities that address health disparities and promote inclusivity.	ST-MT, OG
4. Allocate resources to upgrade existing parks or create new facilities that cater to a variety of physical abilities and age groups.	ST-MT, OG
5. In existing parks, develop park amenities or “wellness hubs” that support and encourage health and wellness opportunities using NRPA’s new toolkit for health and wellbeing: Community Wellness Hub Development https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/partnerships/initiatives/community-wellness-hubs	MT-LT

Recommendation: Preserve and honor Sanford’s traditions, history, and heritage through meaningful parks and recreation experiences, events, programs, and spaces.

Guiding Principles: Inspired Growth, Community Pride, Cultural and Social Hub

Goal: Develop and implement a comprehensive historical interpretation and preservation program that showcases the value of Sanford’s history and heritage.

Action Items	Timeline
1. Collaborate with the Sanford Historic Preservation Commission and other local history and heritage organizations/programs to ensure that efforts to incorporate City heritage and culture respect the architectural and historical context of the area.	ST, OG
2. Incorporate design elements and landscaping that blend with the City’s existing aesthetics.	MT, OG
3. Develop interpretive signage and educational materials to highlight the historical significance of various landmarks and their connection to parks, public commons, and recreation activities.	ST-MT

Goal: Organize and facilitate heritage-based events and programs that celebrate Sanford’s history, foster civic pride, engage community members and visitors, and preserve the unique heritage of Sanford for future generations.

Action Items	Timeline
1. Collaborate with local cultural organizations, artists, and performers to curate engaging and authentic heritage-based events.	ST-MT
2. Secure appropriate venues and resources to host heritage-based events, ensuring they are accessible and welcoming to a wide range of participants.	MT-LT
3. Incorporate storytelling sessions, presentations, or panel discussions featuring community members who can share personal stories and experiences related to Sanford’s heritage.	ST-MT
4. Continually explore and incorporate new elements of Sanford’s cultural heritage into events and programs to ensure fresh and engaging experiences for attendees.	ST-MT