



## **PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN JULY 2019**





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# Acknowledgements

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

The Chatham County Parks and Recreation Department provides a comprehensive system of public parks, trails, a community center, boat ramps and fishing piers, nature preserves, an indoor pool, an award-winning weight lifting center, and additional recreation amenities that greatly contribute to the quality of life for residents and visitors to the County. Chatham County is the northernmost of Georgia's coastal counties on the Atlantic Ocean. It is bounded on the northeast by the Savannah River and on the southwest by the Ogeechee River. The abundance of water access via the Atlantic Ocean and the Savannah and Ogeechee Rivers allows for a variety of aquatic recreation opportunities to include boating, fishing, and surfing. The Department prides itself on providing diverse and affordable recreation opportunities for people of all ages, interests, and abilities. To plan for the future of this valuable system, the County hired GreenPlay, LLC, to develop this Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

## Overview of Chatham County

Chatham County is the fifth largest county in Georgia and is located on the state's Atlantic Coast. It is the home of the Port of Savannah, one of the top three busiest ports in the United States. Chatham County's population is 292,686 (2017) making it the most populous Georgia county outside of the Atlanta metropolitan area. The majority of working residents (age 16+) are employed in jobs in the service industry (52%).

On July 1, 2016 the Chatham County Parks & Recreation Department went from being a division of Chatham County Public Works, where it had been moved in response to budget restraints more than a decade earlier, to becoming a department of its own. The Parks & Recreation Department maintains ten boat ramps and/or fishing piers, six community parks, ten neighborhood parks, seven sports facilities, one community center, one golf course, four nature preserves, one swimming pool, and one weight lifting center.

*Chatham County Parks & Recreation Department –  
“provides exceptional parks, facilities, programs, and services to improve the quality of life for the citizens of Chatham County.”*

## Purpose of this Plan

The Parks and Recreation Department engaged in this effort to create a long-range planning tool for best management practices in maintaining and enhancing the County's parks, trails, a community center, boat ramps and fishing piers, nature preserves, an indoor pool, an award-winning weight lifting center, and public recreation opportunities for the benefit of residents and visitors. The plan incorporates extensive public input, stakeholder and focus group interaction, engagement of elected officials and municipal leaders, a detailed inventory and analysis of existing assets, and staff knowledge to create a roadmap for success.

# The Planning Process

A project team including County staff from Parks and Recreation, Public Works, and Planning, along with a representative from the County Manager's office guided this project and provided input to the consultant team throughout the planning process. This collaborative effort created a plan that fully utilizes the consultants' expertise and incorporates the local knowledge and institutional history of staff and community members.

The project consisted of the following tasks:

- Review and Assessment of Existing Plans and Conditions
- Community/Stakeholder Engagement, Community Surveys, and a Statistically-Valid Survey
- Leadership Summits with County Municipalities
- Comprehensive Facility Inventory and Level of Service Analysis
- Trends and Demographic Analysis
- Community Needs Assessment
- Operational and Maintenance Analysis
- Recommendations: Goals, Objectives, and Action Plan

## Key Issues

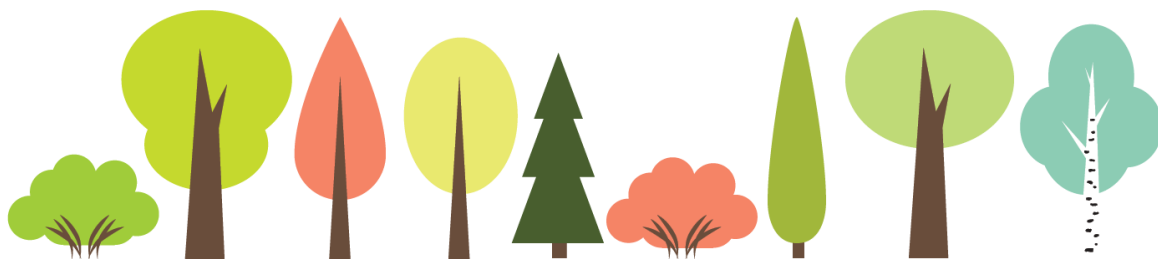
Key issues were identified using a number of tools, including a review of existing plans and documents, focus groups, stakeholder meetings, leadership summits, a community survey, inventory and level of service analysis, and community presentations. A summary of the information gathered from these sources is included in **Section II.C** and is further detailed in **Appendix A**. The information gathered was evaluated, and recommendations were developed that address these key issues:

- Maintain, improve, and repair existing facilities
- Increase availability for indoor space for athletics
- Improve connectivity: develop trails, bikeways, and walking paths
- Need new facilities: gyms, another pool, and dog parks
- Equitable distribution of facilities, programs, and equipment
- Continue to develop partnerships and engage cities, schools, and youth organizations
- Preserve open space
- Improve communication and marketing
- Lack of an overall County policy outlining how to develop and maintain parks
- Address accessibility: ADA, neighborhoods, and high growth areas of the county
- Increase programming and outreach to youth and teens
- Need additional funding sources: grants, impact fees, transient tax, etc.



## Recommendations

Goals and recommendations for enhancing Chatham County's system of public parks and recreation amenities are rooted in the Key Issues of the master planning process. The County Board of Commissioners, County residents, staff, and the project team all recognize the positive impact public parks, open spaces, and recreation services have on the community's quality of life. In Chatham County's densely-developed landscape, the county's parks provide much needed opportunities for people to play outdoors; participate in fitness, leisure, and wellness activities; be social; and enjoy a small break from the built environment. The goals developed focus on improving the great amenities the County currently operates, and enhancing service delivery. The recommendations describe ways to enhance the level of service and the quality of life through organizational efficiencies, financial opportunities, improved programming, service delivery and maintenance, and improvements to facilities and amenities. Details are provided in **Section V**.



## Chatham County Parks & Recreation Action Plan



### Goal 1:

#### Improve Facilities and Amenities

- Support the expansion of greenways, bike paths and trails connectivity
- Continue to maintain and improve existing facilities
- Expand open space and parks
- Make improvement to or replace some existing facilities and amenities or develop new amenities at existing parks based on level of service analysis
- Continue to improve ADA accessibility at all facilities
- Upgrade convenience and customer service amenities to existing facilities
- Explore options for parking at parks and popular venues



### Goal 2:

#### Continue to Improve Organizational Efficiencies

- Build on existing and look for opportunities to increase appropriate partnerships within the County
- Staff appropriately to meet current demand and maintain established quality of service
- Continue to enhance and improve internal and external communication regarding Department activities and services
- Continue to engage the County Municipalities



### Goal 3:

#### Continue to Improve Programs/Service Delivery

- Work with other service providers to develop programs and services to meet demand and trends
- Develop additional recreational programs and services
- Explore opportunities to increase the number of community events based on demand and trends
- Partner with Municipalities program and services



### Goal 4:

#### Increase Financial Opportunities

- Explore additional funding options
- Pursue grant and philanthropic opportunities
- Explore opportunities to increase sponsorships
- Explore Developing and Implementing Cost Recovery and Pricing Philosophy and Practice



# Priority Recommendations

This recommended Action Plan is further defined in the following list of the Top 7 Priority Recommendations:

1. Expand open space and parks.
  - a. Explore opportunities to acquire open space identified in the Master Plan to provide equitable distribution throughout the county and service to low or no services areas. Prioritize areas in the west county.
  - b. Expand the Joint Use Agreements with SCCPSS and the municipalities in the county to provide open space and parks to the community.
2. Support expansion of greenways, bike paths, and trail connectivity.
  - a. Continue working with other agencies and the municipalities in the county to provide connectivity to neighborhoods, schools, parks, and the community.
3. Make improvements to or replace some existing facilities and amenities or develop new amenities at existing parks based on current level of service analysis.
  - a. Develop and implement a schedule to make needed maintenance repairs to the Aquatic Center.
  - b. Conduct a feasibility study to verify the community's desire for a new recreation center and the best location in the county and develop the program components of the facility.
  - c. Conduct a feasibility study to verify the community's desire for a new aquatic center and the best location in the county and develop the program components of the facility.
  - d. Based on the Inventory and LOS recommendations, develop individual park master plans to address low scoring components and repurpose spaces for better usage.
4. Implement improvements based on master planning (3.d) to address the findings of the inventory and assessment from the master plan. Continue to enhance and improve internal and external communication regarding department activities and services.
  - a. Develop a marketing plan to promote department programs, services, and parks.
5. Develop additional recreational opportunities.
  - a. Explore ways to increase recreational opportunities for girls, seniors, and teens.
6. Explore additional funding options.
  - a. Develop and implement a strategy to seek alternative funding sources that includes donations, grants, sponsorships, and tax initiatives.
  - b. Pursue the implementation of a parks impact fees as a dedicated revenue source for park maintenance.
7. Build on existing opportunities and look for new opportunities to increase appropriate partnerships within the county.
  - a. Develop and employ a strategy to increase and pursue additional partnerships with local youth athletic organizations, municipal parks and recreation departments, and SCCPSS to provide parks, trails, facilities, programs, and services.

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# I. Plan Background and Introduction

## A. Purpose of this Plan

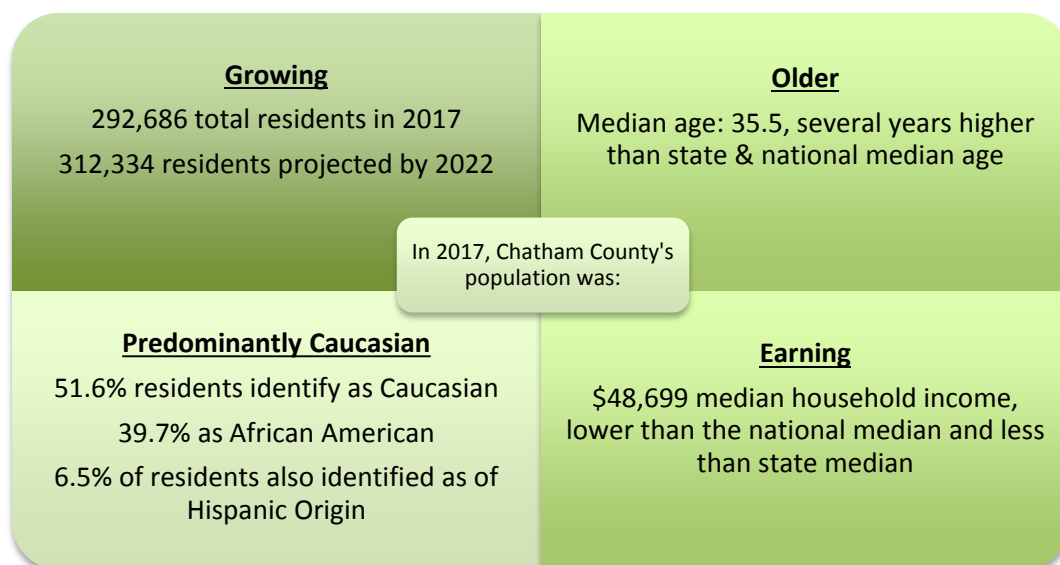
The Parks and Recreation Department engaged in this effort to create a long-range planning tool for best management practices in maintaining and enhancing the County's parks, trails, a community center, boat ramps and fishing piers, nature preserves, an indoor pool, an award-winning weight lifting center, and public recreation opportunities for the benefit of residents and visitors. The plan incorporates extensive public input, stakeholder, and focus group interaction, engagement of elected officials and municipal leaders, a detailed inventory and analysis of existing assets, and staff knowledge to create a roadmap for success.

The focus of the Chatham County Parks and Recreation Master Plan is on identifying park facilities and service needs for active, passive, and linear recreation opportunities and incorporates all the major components of an effective parks and recreation system. The Master Plan also addresses the development of partnership opportunities to avoid duplicating services with the municipalities and other agencies that offer recreational opportunities for Chatham County citizens.

The plan identifies needed improvements to current parks, as well as identification of required new parks, types, locations, and recommended facilities. Public involvement in identifying the current and emerging needs shall be solicited through community workshops, surveys, and interviews with local officials and organizations (county, municipal, school board, and others). A prioritized and phased project list shall be developed based on identified needs, demands, feasibility, funding, and scheduling considerations.

## B. The Community Context

Chatham County is located on the state's Atlantic Coast. Originally founded in 1777, Chatham County is the most populous Georgia County outside the Atlanta metropolitan area. It is the core county of the Savannah metropolitan area.



## C. The Chatham County Parks & Recreation Department –

*“Providing safe, useful, and attractive recreational facilities for citizens of all ages”*

On July 1, 2016 the Chatham County Parks & Recreation Department went from being a division of Chatham County Public Works, where it had been moved in response to budget restraints more than a decade ago, to becoming a department of its own. The Chatham County Parks & Recreation Department is funded by the Chatham County Board of Commissioners in the General Maintenance and Operation Fund. The budget is adopted on a fiscal calendar from July 1 – June 30 of each year. Additional sources of funding and/or improvements are through CIP and Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST). The SPLOST has funded the creation of many recreation facilities in the last 20 years, some as an Olympic Legacy celebrating the 1996 Summer Olympics in Georgia. Those facilities include the Aquatic Center, Anderson/Cohen Weightlifting Center, Henderson Golf Course, Walter Parker Pier and Pavilion, Jennifer Ross Soccer Complex, and the Abolt-O'Brien Soccer Complex.

The Chatham County Parks and Recreation Department operates and maintains ten boat ramps and/or fishing piers, six community parks, ten neighborhood parks, seven sports facilities, one community center, one golf course, four nature preserves, one swimming pool, and one weight lifting center, and recreation amenities that greatly contribute to the quality of residents and visitors of the county. The Department prides itself on providing diverse and affordable recreation opportunities for people of all ages, interests, and abilities.

*“Chatham County has developed the Chatham Community Blueprint to develop and prioritize the needs, goals, strategies, and action steps needed to implement change for the good of all Chatham County.”*  
Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition

The Chatham County Board of Commissioners consists of a chairman who is elected at-large and eight district commissioners. All members are elected to four-year terms. Chatham County operates under the Commission-Manager Plan of local government. The Board of Commissioners makes policy, adopts laws, sets budget limits, sets tax rates, and hears zoning cases. The Board appoints a County Manager who serves as the chief administrative officer to carry out the policies and handle day-to-day responsibilities. The Parks and Recreation Division reports to the Assistant County Manager.

Parks and Recreation are essential elements of Chatham County's quality of life, and their importance will only increase as the County becomes denser and more populous. The 2015 Strategic Plan set the direction for the Department by identifying the standards, policies, and resources required to achieve the County's goals for Parks and Recreation.

Chatham County has grown since the last census (2013) and currently has a population of 283,379. The population has grown by 6.9 percent since 2013. Chatham County owns and operates park facilities that serve its entire population. It should be noted that some County facilities are frequented by citizens outside the county such as boat ramps, the Aquatic Center, ballfields, and fishing piers. Pavilion rentals have come from outside the state, particularly at the Walter Parker Pier and Pavilion Tybee Island. In addition, each municipality provides many of the same type of park facilities as Chatham County that serve a County-wide population.

During the 1960s when the Parks and Recreation Department was established, the philosophy of the County was to create a neighborhood park in all unincorporated and municipality areas for the enjoyment of the residents. Over the next several decades, 30 neighborhood parks were created. During that time, the focus of the Department was on outdoor activities, special events, and programs for children and adults. The special programs included a bus program to neighborhood parks with lunch included, educational work programs as well as community service programs. Due to budget cuts in the 1990s, many neighborhood parks were turned over to the municipality in which they were located. Currently, the County has a long term lease agreement for several parks and boat ramps.

Key Staff Members of the Chatham County Parks and Recreation Department:

- Steve Proper – Parks and Recreation Director
- Lorenzo Bryant – Recreation Manager
- Holly Holdsworth – Recreation Facility Manager
- Mark Burgess – Maintenance Superintendent
- Vicki Blumberg – Recreation Superintendent
- Michael Cohen – Anderson Cohen Weightlifting Center
- Gordon Gnann – Henderson Golf Course Manager
- Peter Hershey – Aquatic Superintendent
- Mary Ryan Almar – Program Coordinator, Aquatic Center

The Chatham County Parks and Recreation Department had a total of forty-four (44) full time equivalents and twelve (12) part time positions in 2017.

## **D. Methodology of this Planning Process**

The process utilized in developing this Master Plan included the formation of an integrated project team comprised of staff and appointed officials, a review of institutional history, analysis of existing conditions, and engagement with members of the Chatham County community. The development of this plan included the following key tasks:

- Document collection and review
- Community engagement
- Facility inventory
- Level of Service analysis with alternative service providers identified
- Needs assessment
- SWOT analysis
- Operations and maintenance analysis
- Financial analysis
- Program analysis
- Recommendations: Goals, Objectives, and Action Plan

## **Community Engagement**

A variety of methods for community participation resulted in rich data for analysis. The following methods were used:

- Focus groups
- Stakeholder meetings
- Leadership summits
- Leadership interviews
- Community-wide public meetings
- Statistically-valid community interest and opinion survey
- Open link survey

## **Facility Inventory**

The facility inventory included:

- An inventory of parks and facilities using existing mapping, staff interviews, and on-site visits to verify amenities and assess the condition of the facilities and grounds

## **Level of Service Analysis**

The level of service analysis included:

- Interviews with staff-provided information about parks and recreation facilities and services, along with insight regarding the current practices and experiences in serving residents and visitors.
- Identification of alternative providers of recreation services provided insight regarding the market opportunities in the area for potential new facilities and services.
- The Level of Service Analysis provided an accurate measurement of the current delivery of service for parks and recreation facilities.
- The analysis targeted a level of service that is both feasible and aligned with the desires of citizens as expressed through the statistically-valid survey and other public outreach methods.

## **Needs Assessment**

The needs assessment:

- Considered the profile of the community and demographics, including population growth and projections of demographic changes
- Identified community interests and opinions using information gathered from the statistically-valid and open link surveys
- Researched trends related to recreation and the delivery of service as well as American lifestyle trends to help guide the efforts to improve the delivery of parks and recreation services

## **Financial Analysis**

The financial analysis included:

- A review of financial data

## **Program Analysis**

The program analysis included:

- A review of recreation programs, events, and practices



## **Operational Analysis**

The operational analysis included:

- A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis
- A Review of the current organizational structure

## **Recommendations: Goals, Objectives, and Action Plan**

The summary of recommended actions:

- Identified and categorized recommendations into themes with goals, objectives, and an action plan for implementation
- Developed an action plan for capital improvements, including operational impacts, and timeframe to support implementation of the plan

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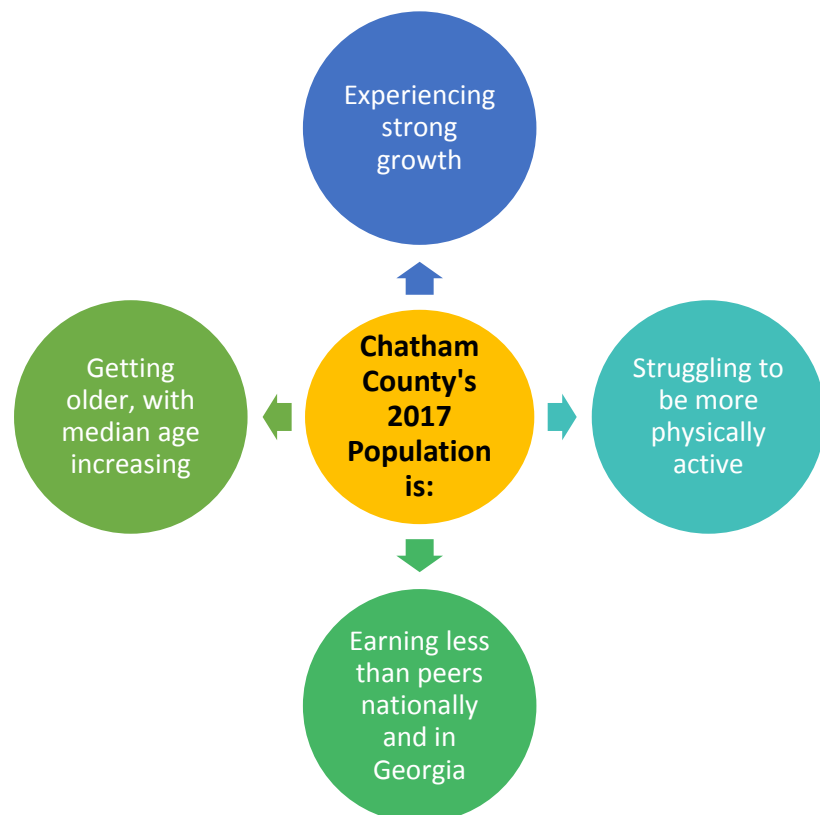
## II. Chatham County at a Glance – Community Needs Assessment

### A. Demographic Profile

Gaining a clear understanding of the existing and projected demographic character of the county is an important component of the planning process for the Chatham County Parks Master Plan. By analyzing population data, trends emerge that can inform decision making and resource allocation strategies for the provision of public parks, recreation amenities, and open spaces. For example, if the population of young children was steadily on the rise and existing public recreation facilities for young children, such as playgrounds, were barely meeting existing user demand, then the County may want to consider targeting investments to meet the increasing needs of this growing segment of the population.

Key areas were analyzed to identify current demographic statistics and trends that can impact the planning and provision of public parks and recreation services in Chatham County. Community characteristics analyzed and discussed consist of:

- Existing and projected total population
- Age and gender distribution
- Ethnic/Racial diversity
- Housing and household information
- Educational attainment
- Employment
- State and Local Health Ranking



The population of Chatham County is experiencing strong growth. Between 2000 and 2017, the population grew by 26 percent, and is projected to grow by an additional 13 percent by 2027. The resident base is slowly getting older, generally earns less per household when compared to peers statewide and nationally, and struggles with public health concerns, including a general lack of physical activity.

This demographic profile was completed using the most current data available (as of June 2017) from Esri Business Analyst, the U.S. Census Bureau data, and U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey. A summary of demographic highlights is noted in **Table 1** below, followed by a more detailed demographic analysis.

**Table 1: 2017 Chatham County General Demographic Profile**

<b>Population</b>	<b>292,686</b>
<b>Median Age</b>	<b>35.5</b>
<b>Households</b>	<b>112,699</b>
<b>Median Household Income</b>	<b>\$48,699</b>

*Source: Esri Business Analyst*

Key general 2017 demographic comparisons – County, State, and National:

- The estimated median age of Chatham County residents was 35.5 years, lower than both the median age for Georgia (36.5) and the United States (38.2).
- The median household income for Chatham County in 2017 was estimated to be \$48,699. This is lower than the median household income of \$52,336 in Georgia, and lower than the national median household income of \$56,124.
- Chatham County's estimated population was almost evenly split between male (48.3%) and female (51.7%) residents. The populations of Georgia and the United States, are also roughly evenly divided between the sexes.

## B. Park and Recreation Influencing Trends

The provision of public parks and recreation services can be influenced by a wide variety of trends, including the desires of different age groups within the population, community values, and popularity of a variety of recreational activities and amenities. Within this section of the plan, a number of local and national trends are reviewed that should be considered by the County when determining where to allocate resources toward the provision of parks, recreational facilities, and recreational programming to its residents and visitors.

This report is generally organized into two sections:

1. Review of estimated Chatham County household participation in, and spending on, a variety of recreational, sports, fitness, and leisure activities. Opportunities for participation in many of the activities analyzed are provided through County facilities and programs.
2. Overview of key national recreation trends pertinent to the provision of parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces relevant to the population of Chatham County.

## Estimated Household Participation Rates and Spending

Through Esri Business Analyst, a combination of information from the U.S. Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and other data sources that gauge national tendencies to participate and spend on various recreation, fitness, and leisure activities, is weighed against current Esri local demographic characteristics. These include population, age, and household income. Analysis of the data yields an estimate (June 2017) of household participation in recreation, fitness, and leisure activities in Chatham County, and of the household spending on fees, equipment, and other typical costs associated with participation.

## Estimated Participation

Esri models and resulting data indicate that Chatham County households included members that participated in a number of recreation, sports, fitness, and leisure activities in the past year. The activities reviewed are representative of those that are often offered through parks and recreation facilities and programs throughout the country. **Figures 1 and 2** provide insight into the various fees and costs Chatham County residents paid to participate in sports, recreation, fitness, and leisure activities.

## Estimated Spending

The strong participation in various recreation, sports, fitness, and leisure activities of Chatham County households was also likely of benefit to the local economy. **Figure 1** illustrates that of the \$85 million in total county household spending on recreation, nearly three quarters of this total, or almost \$60 million was spent on admissions and other fees associated with participation in entertainment and recreation activities. The estimated spending on entertainment, recreation fees, and admissions is further detailed in **Figure 2**.

2016 County Household Spending  
on Recreation

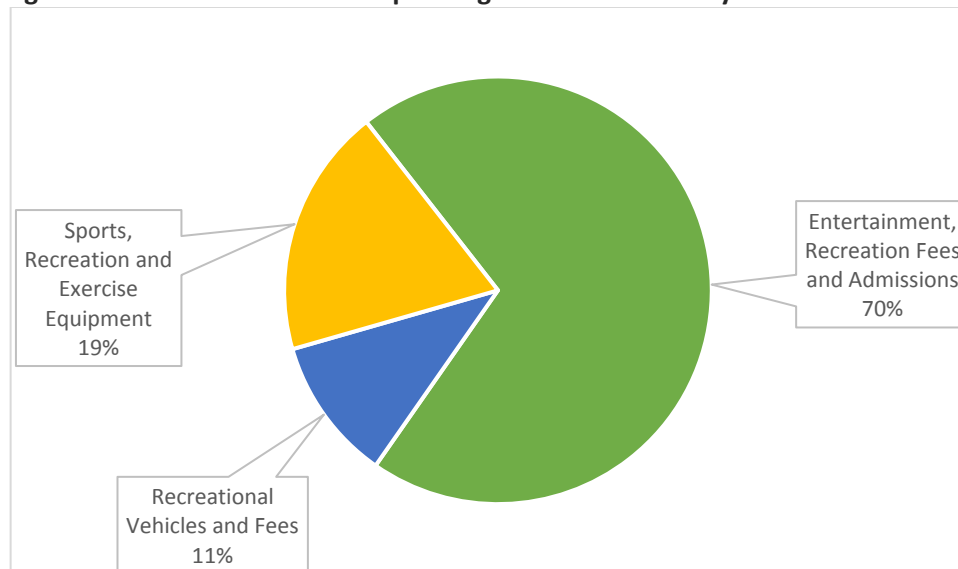
**\$85 million**

Estimated total spending of all households

**\$754**

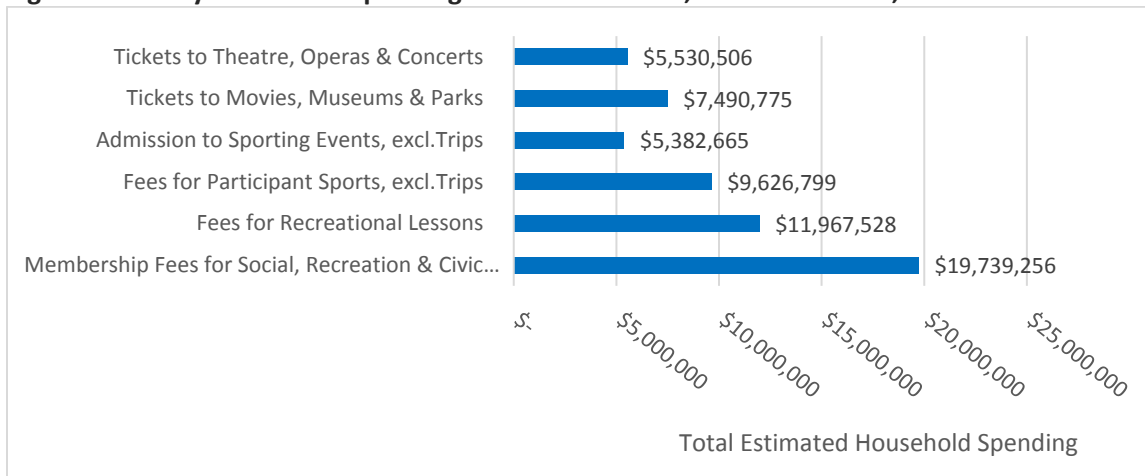
Estimated average spending per household

**Figure 1: General Recreational Spending of Chatham County Households**



Source: Esri Business Analyst, Recreation Expenditures, January 2017

**Figure 2: County Household Spending on Entertainment, Recreation Fees, and Admissions**



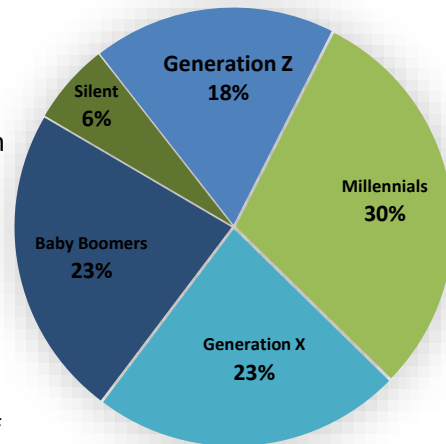
Source: Esri Business Analyst, Recreation Expenditures, June 2017

### National Demographic Trends in Recreation

#### Chatham County Generation Trends

Three major age groups, the Baby Boomers, Millennials, and Generation Z, are having significant impacts on the planning and provision of parks and recreation services nationwide. In 2017, approximately 73 percent of Chatham County residents fell into one of these age groupings. Roughly 18 percent of the population were members of Generation Z, 30 percent were Millennials, and 23 percent were Baby Boomers.

Generation X made up a one-fourth of the population, the same percentage of Baby Boomers, in 2017. The Silent Generation, those 72 and older, only made up 6 percent of the population.





The 2017 "Participation Report"<sup>1</sup> from the Physical Activity Council characterized generational participation in recreation, sports, fitness, and other physical activities as:

Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials	Generation Z
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Least active generation</li> <li>• Top 3 activity preferences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual sports</li> <li>• Outdoor sports</li> <li>• Adventure programs</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Varied activity level with 37% super active and 27% inactive</li> <li>• Top 3 activity preferences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual sports</li> <li>• Fitness sports</li> <li>• Outdoor sports</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderately active</li> <li>• Top 3 activity preferences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fitness Sports</li> <li>• Outdoor sports</li> <li>• individual sports</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most active generation</li> <li>• Top 3 activity preferences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outdoor sports</li> <li>• Team sports</li> <li>• Fitness sports</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

### Adults – Baby Boomers

Baby Boomers are defined as individuals born between 1946 and 1964, as stated in "Leisure Programming for Baby Boomers."<sup>2</sup> They are a generation that consists of nearly 76 million Americans, and comprised 23 percent of Chatham County's population in 2017.

In the leisure profession, this generation's devotion to exercise and fitness is an example of its influence on society. As Boomers matured and moved into the workplace, they took their desire for exercise and fitness with them, and have continued to participate at high rates in their retirement.<sup>3</sup>

### Adult – Generation X

This generational group is comprised of individuals in the 37 to 52-year-old age range. In 2017, the median age of Chatham County residents was 35.5 years, and 23 percent of the County's population was a member of Generation X. This was the second largest single age group in the county in 2017. Many members of this generation are in the peak of their careers, raising families, and growing their connections within the community.

As suggested by the 2017 "Participation Report" from the Physical Activity Council, members of Generation X were "all or nothing" in terms of their levels of physical activity, with 37 percent reported as highly active, and 27 percent reported as completely inactive. As further noted in the report, over 50 percent of Generation X was likely to have participated in fitness and outdoor sports activities. An additional 37 percent participated in individual sports.

<sup>1</sup> Physical Activity Council, 2017 Participation Report, <http://www.physicalactivitycouncil.com/PDFs/current.pdf>; accessed June 2017

<sup>2</sup> Linda Cochran, Anne Roshchadl, and Jodi Rudick, "Leisure Programming For Baby Boomers," *Human Kinetics*, 2009.

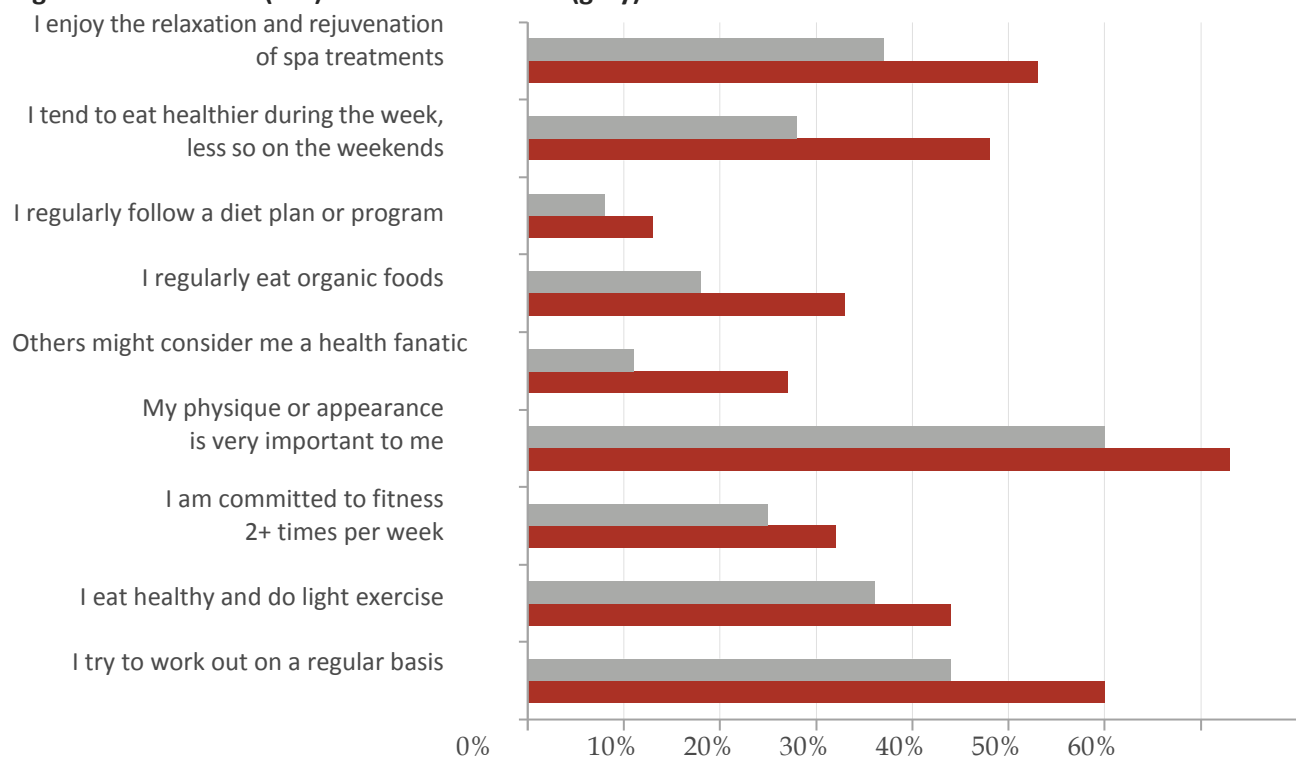
<sup>3</sup>Physical Activity Council, 2012 Participation Report, 2012.

## Adult – The Millennial Generation

The Millennial Generation is generally considered those born between about 1980 and 1999, and in April 2016, the Pew Research Center reported that this generation had surpassed the Baby Boomers as the nation's most populous age group.<sup>4</sup> Millennials comprised approximately 30 percent of Chatham County's 2016 total population. Making up the largest generational cohort in Chatham County, Millennials are influential, and having an understanding of some of their general characteristics can help guide decision making in the provision of parks and recreation services to this significant segment of the local population.

**Figure 3** illustrates contrasts between Millennials and non-Millennials regarding a number of health and fitness topics.

**Figure 3: Millennials (red) vs. Non-Millennials (grey) on Health and Fitness**



Source: *American Millennials: Deciphering the Enigma Generation*

<sup>4</sup> Richard Fry, "Millennials overtake Baby Boomers as America's Largest Generation," *Pew Research Center Fact Tank*, April 25, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/04/25/millennials-overtake-baby-boomers/>, accessed May 2015

In addition to being health conscious, Millennials often look for local and relatively inexpensive ways to experience the outdoors close to home – on trails, bike paths, and in community parks.<sup>5</sup> They, along with the Baby Boomer generation, highly value walkability, and in a 2014 study by the American Planning Association, two-thirds noted that improving walkability in a community is directly related to strengthening the local economy. The study also noted that 46 percent of Millennials and Baby Boomers place a high priority on having sidewalks, hiking trails, bike paths, and fitness choices available to them in their community. In fact, these community features were viewed by study respondents to be of higher preference than a great school system, vibrant centers of entertainment and culture, and affordable and convenient transportation choices.<sup>6</sup>

## Youth – Generation Z

In the July 2012 issue of *Parks and Recreation* magazine, published by NRPA, Emily Sheffield, Chair of the University of California Chico Department of Recreation, Hospitality, and Parks Management, contributed an article titled “Five Trends Shaping Tomorrow Today.” In it, she identified that the proportion of youth is smaller than in the past, but still essential to our future. As of the 2010 Census, the age group under age 18 forms about a quarter of the U.S. population. Nationwide, nearly half of the youth population is ethnically diverse, and 25 percent is Hispanic. In Chatham County, roughly 18 percent of the population was under the age of 18 in 2017.

With regard to physical activity, a 2013 article published by academics at Georgia Southern University noted that the prevalence of obesity in Generation Z (which they describe as individuals born since the year 2000) is triple that of Generation X (born between 1965 and 1979). It suggests that due to increased use of technology, Generation Z spends more time indoors, is less physically active, and more obese compared to previous generations.

## Facilities

According to *Recreation Management* magazine’s 2016 “State of the Industry Report,”<sup>7</sup> an annual survey of parks and recreation facility operators and service providers, current national trends influencing recreation facilities included:

- Partnerships – The popularity of partnering with outside organizations to share facility spaces to extend programming capabilities or potentially increase funding is continuing to grow in popularity nationally. Over 87 percent of agencies reported partnering with another agency in 2016. Of these partnerships, nearly three-fifths were with local schools, and nearly 52 percent with local government agencies.

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<sup>5</sup> “Sneakernomics: How The ‘Outdoor’ Industry Became The ‘Outside’ Industry,” *Forbes*, September 21, 2015, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/mattpowell/2015/09/21/sneakernomics-how-the-outdoor-industry-became-the-outside-industry/2/#50958385e34d>, accessed May 2016

<sup>6</sup> American Planning Association, “Investing in Place: Two generation’s view on the future of communities: millennials, boomers, and new directions for planning and economic development,” <https://www.planning.org/policy/polls/investing>, accessed May 2015

<sup>7</sup> *Recreation Management*, 2016 “State of the Industry Report,” <http://recmanagement.com/state-of-the-industry/>; accessed June 2017

- Cost Recovery – More recreation, sports, and fitness providers are being tasked to recover higher percentages of their operating costs through increasing revenues. The average level of cost recovery from public organizations nationwide was approximately 43 percent, with levels of cost recovery varying widely between different types of providers and facilities. The most common operating cost reduction action taken by parks and recreation providers was to improve the energy efficiency of facilities. Over half of agencies surveyed reported investing in energy efficiencies as an overall cost reduction strategy.
- Memberships and Usage Fees – Nearly 60 percent of service providers surveyed charged membership or usage fees for their facilities. The vast majority of YMCAs (93.1%), health clubs (90.6%), and community recreation centers (69.3%) charged fees for memberships or facility use.
- Facility Use – In 2014 and 2015, the majority (59.8%) of survey respondents reported that they had expected use of their facilities to increase. In 2016, over 54 percent of survey respondents reported increased facility usage in the previous two years. Providers in urban areas were 10 percent more likely to have reported increased usage of their facilities when compared to rural providers.
- Existing Facilities – Park agencies reported providing a variety of facilities and amenities. Compared to other recreation providers, park agencies were more likely to provide:
 

▪ Playgrounds	▪ Disc golf courses
▪ Picnic shelters	▪ Fitness trails or outdoor fitness equipment
▪ Outdoor sport courts	▪ Splash play areas
▪ Community centers	▪ Golf courses
▪ Bike trails	▪ Water parks
▪ Skate parks	▪ Ice rinks
▪ Dog parks	▪ Bikes/BMX parks
▪ Community gardens	
- Construction Plans – With aging facilities being commonplace, and general increase of facility usage reported nationally, the majority (66.4%) of 2016 survey respondents reported having plans to renovate existing facilities or construct new ones to enhance service provision. This percentage of recreation service providers planning capital investments increased 3.7 percent from 2013 to 2016. The average planned capital improvement budget for public organizations in 2016 was expected to be \$3,887,000.

## Dog Parks

Dog parks are increasingly popular community amenities and have remained among the top planned additions to parks and recreational facilities over the past three years. In fact, the 10 largest cities in the U.S. increased the number of dog parks in their systems by 34 percent between 2005 and 2010. Dog parks not only provide safe spaces for animals to socialize and exercise, they are also places where dog owners socialize and enjoy the outdoors. They help build a sense of community and can draw potential new community members and tourists traveling with pets.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Joe Bush, "Four-Legged-Friendly Parks," *Recreation Management*, February 2, 2016.

## Programming

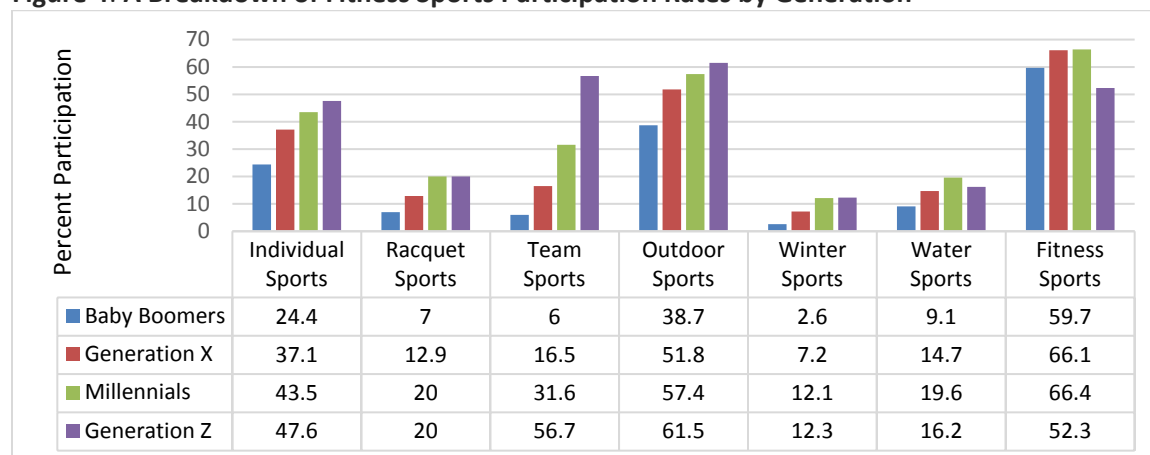
### Current National Trends in Public Parks and Recreational Programming

According to *Recreation Management* magazine's 2016 "State of the Industry Report," 96.5 percent of survey respondents provided recreation, sports, fitness, and leisure programs of some kind. The most common programming offered included:

1. Holiday/special events
2. Fitness programs
3. Educational programs
4. Day and summer camps
5. Youth sports teams
6. Mind-body/balance programs
7. Sports tournaments and races
8. Swimming programs
9. Adult sports teams
10. Active senior/older adult programs

According to the 2017 "Participation Report" by the Physical Activity Council, over half of each generation participates in fitness sports, with roughly 2/3 of Millennials and Generation X'ers participating in fitness activities. Generation Z, those generally under the age of 18, participated at higher rates than their older peers in individual, team, and outdoor sports. Baby Boomers participated the least; however, roughly 1/4 of this generation participated in individual sports, more than 1/3 participated in outdoor sports, and nearly 60 percent participated in fitness sports. **Figure 4** illustrates participation rates by generation.<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 4: A Breakdown of Fitness Sports Participation Rates by Generation**



Source: Physical Activity Council 2017 Participation Report

<sup>9</sup> 2017 Participation Report," Physical Activity Council, 2017

### **Older Adults and Senior Programming**

Many older adults and seniors are choosing to maintain active lifestyles and recognize the health benefits of regular physical activities. With the large number of adults in these age cohorts, many communities have found a need to offer more programming, activities, and facilities that support the active lifestyle this generation desires. Public parks and recreation agencies are increasingly expected to be significant providers of such services and facilities. The American Academy of Sports Medicine issues a yearly survey of the top 20 fitness trends.<sup>10</sup> It ranks senior fitness programs eighth among most popular fitness trends for 2015. Programs including Silver Sneakers, a freestyle low-impact cardio class, and water aerobics are becoming increasingly popular as more Americans are realizing the many benefits of staying active throughout life. According to the National Sporting Goods Association, common senior programming trends include hiking, birding, and swimming.

### **Festivals and Special Events**

Festivals and other special events are often popular activities in communities that not only entertain, generate economic activity, and serve to celebrate community identity, they are also fantastic means of introducing people to the community's public parks and recreation system. Public parks and recreation agencies play a major role in planning, managing, and hosting festivals and other community programs that often serve to draw new users into their facilities. Attendees of events hosted in parks, or recreation centers, who enjoy their experience may want to return for another event or program, or simply to enjoy the park or recreation facility. Participants in these special programs can become interested in visiting other parks and/or recreation facilities or participating in programs.

### **Healthy Lifestyle Trends and Active Living**

#### **Active Transportation – Bicycling and Walking**

In many surveys and studies on participation in recreational activities, walking, running, jogging, and cycling are nearly universally rated as the most popular activities among youth and adults. Walking, jogging, and running are often the most highly participated in recreational activity, and cycling often ranks as the second or third most popular activity. These activities are attractive, as they require little equipment, or financial investment, to get started, and are open to participation to nearly all segments of the population. For these reasons, participation in these activities are often promoted as a means of spurring physical activity and increasing public health. Higher levels of bicycling and walking also coincide with increased bicycle and pedestrian safety and higher levels of physical activity. Increasing bicycling and walking in a community can have a major impact on improving public health and life expectancy.

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<sup>10</sup> American College of Sports Medicine, "Survey Predicts Top 20 Fitness Trends for 2015," <http://www.acsm.org/about-acsm/media-room/news-releases/2014/10/24/survey-predicts-top-20-fitness-trends-for-2015>, accessed January 2015.



## Trends in Adult and Youth Recreation

### Adult Recreation: Pickleball

No adult recreational sport is taking off faster than pickleball.<sup>11</sup> Pickleball is a racquet sport played on a badminton court with a lowered net, perforated plastic ball, and wood paddles. While it originated in the Pacific Northwest in the 1960s, it has grown exponentially since 2000. The USA Pickleball Association (USAPA) estimates that there were about 500 pickleball players in 2000, with that number growing to 125,000 in 2013. It is especially popular with the 50+ crowd because it is low impact but gets the heart rate pumping.<sup>12</sup> Pickle ball is an attractive programming option for recreation managers because it is adaptable to a variety of existing facilities – four pickleball courts fit in one tennis court.

### Adult Sport Teams in and After the Work Place

Adult sports teams of all sorts, from competitive volleyball to local flag football teams to casual kickball, are becoming more and more popular around the country, especially among Millennials who grew up with a full extra-curricular schedule of team sports. While adult team sport participation is not limited to the Millennial generation by any means, a recent survey conducted on behalf of the Sports Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) found that Millennials are twice as likely as Generation Xers (born between 1965 and 1979) to participate in team sports as adults.<sup>13</sup>

### Youth Sports

The Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) produces a yearly report on sports, fitness, and leisure activities in the United States. The following findings regarding youth and sports were highlighted in the 2016 report.<sup>14</sup> In 2015, participation was highest for outdoor (62%), team (59%), and fitness sports (51%) among youth aged 6 to 16 (Generation Z). Camping was a top interest for youth across the age spectrum, age 6 to 24.

### Role and Response of Local Government

Collectively, these trends have created profound implications for the way local governments conduct business. Some local governments are now accepting the role of providing preventative health care through parks and recreation services. The following concepts are from the International City/ County Management Association.<sup>15</sup>

- Parks and recreation departments should take the lead in developing communities conducive to active living.
- There is growing support for recreation programs that encourage active living within the community.
- One of the highest priorities is a cohesive system of parks and trails and accessible neighborhood parks.

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<sup>11</sup> Chris Gelbach, "Never Stop Playing: Trends in Adult Recreational Sports" *Recreation Management*, September 2013, [http://recmanagement.com/feature\\_print.php?fid=201309fe02](http://recmanagement.com/feature_print.php?fid=201309fe02), accessed January 2015

<sup>12</sup> David Crumpler, "Pickleball a fast-growing sport, especially for the 50 and older crowd," *Florida Times Union*, January 26, 2015, <http://jacksonville.com/prime-time/2015-01-26/story/pickleball-fast-growing-sport-especially-50-and-older-crowd>, accessed January 2015

<sup>13</sup> Sarah M. Wojcik, "Millennials Fuel Rise of For-profit Recreation Leagues," *The Morning Call*, <http://www.mcall.com/news/local/mc-millennials-adult-sports-leagues-20190727-story.html>, July 27, 2015, accessed July, 2015

<sup>14</sup> Sports and Fitness Industry Association, *2016 Sports, Fitness and Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report*, <http://www.sfia.org/reports/all/>.

<sup>15</sup> International City/County Management Association, [www.icma.org](http://www.icma.org), accessed June 2012.

In summary, the United States, its states, and its communities share the enormous task of reducing the health and economic burden of obesity. While numerous programs, policies, and products have been designed to address the problem, there is no magic bullet to make it go away. The role of public parks and recreation as a health promotion and prevention agency has come of age. What matters is refocusing efforts to ensure the health, well-being, and economic prosperity of communities and their citizens.

### **Administration Trends for Recreation and Parks**

Municipal parks and recreation structures and delivery systems have changed, and more alternative methods of delivering services are emerging. Certain services are being contracted out, and cooperative agreements with non-profit groups and other public institutions are being developed. Newer partners include the health care system, social services, the justice system, education, the corporate sector, and community service agencies. These partnerships reflect both a broader interpretation of the mandate of parks and recreation agencies and the increased willingness of other sectors to work together to address community issues. The relationship with health agencies is vital in promoting wellness.

The traditional relationship with education and the sharing of facilities through joint-use agreements is evolving into cooperative planning and programming aimed at addressing youth inactivity levels and community needs.

## **C. Community and Stakeholder Input**

Public Process for the Chatham County Master Planning Process was held October 24 - 26, 2017 and consisted of 56 participants in six focus groups, 10 participants in the stakeholder meeting, and 6 participants in the leadership summit. This section summarizes the key issues and input that was mentioned in several of the meetings. A full summary of input can be found in **Appendix A**.

Key issues were identified using several tools including review of existing plans and documents, focus groups, stakeholder meetings, inventory, and level of service analysis. The information gathered from these sources was evaluated, and the following key issues were developed. The community input summary is categorized below with brief details of the input from the many focus group meetings, the stakeholder meeting, and the leadership summit.

### **Strengths of the Chatham County Parks and Recreation Department**

When asked what the strengths of the Chatham County Parks and Recreation Department were, participants expressed great pride around the youth programs offered throughout the County, including soccer, swimming, football, and track and summer camps. There was an expressed desire that these programs and opportunities should be expanded over the next several years to include an indoor gym so that a youth basketball and volleyball program could be developed. Focus group members also felt a sense of pride around the recent improvements to the Henderson Golf Course which is now under the supervision of the Parks and Recreation Department. In addition, the Chatham County Aquatic Center and the Anderson/Cohen Weightlifting Center are considered to be great assets to the County.

The natural beauty of the region was a recurring theme in the focus groups. The amount of nearby walking/biking trails were designed to accentuate that beauty as most were loop trails that went around lakes and bordered woodlands. Participants also felt the green spaces within and around the parks were well maintained.

Participants shared that the sheer number of the available assets – running, tennis, soccer, kickball, football, and basketball – are of great value to the county and the youth who are served by these facilities and programs. The programs for County residents at the Frank Murray Community Center were met with wide approval. Although this center will be reverting back to the school system in 2018, there will be continuity, as the County will take over space within the former Island Library building.

Communications between the Parks and Recreation staff and the public were considered to be very good to excellent with specific mention made of how prompt and efficient inquiries were handled by the staff.

### **Areas of Improvement**

Focus group participants identified many areas of improvement to expand for future recreational opportunities. One theme that repeatedly surfaced was the need for improved communication and collaboration between the County and the municipalities located in and around its service area so that duplication of many youth athletic programs could be avoided. Many within the focus groups expressed the need for a more equitable opportunity for the usage of facilities in lieu of, for example, outside usage by private, paying groups.

There was an expressed desire to foster an improved relationship with the school district for the usage of its facilities and fields for recreation and athletic programs. There was also confusion between what facilities belonged to the County or to the City. Several focus group participants came in thinking their neighborhood park was a county park when in reality it was a city park.

Although stakeholders were proud of the many assets of the Department and the number of youth programs offered, there was consensus that there is lack of indoor facilities for these programs. It was noted that there are no gyms within the Chatham County Parks and Recreation Department. Hence, there are no youth basketball programs or opportunities for girls to participate in basketball or volleyball. Participants also felt that there is a lack of sufficient number of multi-purpose outdoor fields. A track facility is non-existent which has hampered the development of a youth track program.

Focus group participants expressed both appreciation and frustration with the SPLOST as a financing method for capital projects in Georgia. On the one hand, participants were appreciative that there were funds made available for building new facilities within the parks. On the other hand, they were frustrated that this money could only be used for initial capital funding for new construction which has often led to facilities not being maintained over time due to the cost of maintenance and repairs. Therefore, there was consensus that the County Parks and Recreation maintenance budget needs to be allocated more funds, as they felt many of the facilities were falling into disrepair. Specifically mentioned was the Anderson/Cohen Aquatic Facility where it was noted that the showers and locker rooms need refurbishing and painting.

Participants saw the need for beginner mountain bike trails such as pump tracks and small loops, but also cited the need for additional volunteers to help build and maintain those trails. There was concern around creating additional parks and trails without the adequate funding or staff to maintain new amenities. Drainage was often expressed as a concern throughout the focus group sessions as even moderate rains caused flooding in and around the parks often obstructing access to trails and parking lots.

There was a consensus that there is a great need for additional parking throughout the County Parks and Recreation system as well as a need for better lighting. To coincide with the need for better lighting, safety, and security was often cited as a concern by participants.

Greater connectivity was identified consistently throughout the process. Participants wanted more biking/walking trails to be completed to connect all the neighborhoods within Chatham County, but also throughout the region. County roads tend to not have shoulders, making them unsafe for biking, especially for young riders and beginners.

Additional areas for improvement noted in the focus groups included athletic programs for females, arts and cultural programming, and enhanced senior health and wellness opportunities. Participants also expressed a need for better communication regarding timetables for projects and better marketing for existing programs to include better signage.

### **Newly Identified Recreation Opportunities**

Focus group participants saw the need for what they referred to as “the unification of youth sports” in Chatham County. They reiterated the need to communicate and collaborate with the surrounding municipalities to avoid duplication and enhance communications.

The lack of an indoor gym for the Parks and Recreation department is a clear weakness in Chatham County where youth basketball was identified as a key opportunity.

While participants were very satisfied with the Anderson/Cohen Aquatic Facility, they also expressed a need for an aquatic center in the Western part of the County.

Other identified opportunities included pickleball courts, dog parks, a track complex – for youth track and field, more community playgrounds, a performing arts center, recreation centers with “learning labs,” and sand volleyball courts. Also mentioned were lacrosse, the expansion of disc golf and mountain biking, and adventure sports (challenge courses and zip lines).

### **Underserved Population Segments**

A key recurring theme within the Focus Groups was that Chatham County is “facility poor” and “field short” when it comes to youth athletics. In addition, there was consensus that females were underserved when it comes to athletic program offerings.

It was also felt that low income families are underserved in Chatham County. Exacerbating that issue is the lack of public transportation to the parks. This limits low income families and those without transportation from experiencing these natural areas. In addition, the lack of connected biking/walking trails (connectivity) adds to this dilemma, as those without transportation are unable to ride their bikes or even walk to most of the parks. Canebrake Park and Runaway Point were specifically identified as being underutilized.

The western part of the county is not served by County parks or facilities. However, they are served by city parks. While many senior residents were served well within the Frank Murray Community Center, it was felt that those seniors were being underserved in the areas of health and wellness. The elderly retirement community was being isolated and disengaged from the community. Although it was recognized that the Anderson/Cohen Weightlifting Center has a highly recognized program for people with disabilities, some focus group members pointed out that there was a lack of programs for this portion of the population within the Parks and Recreation Department. Transportation was a major hurdle for those with mobility issues.

The Arts Community was also recognized as being underserved as there is no performing arts center in Chatham County and limited arts or cultural programming within the Parks and Recreation Department.

### **Parks, Trails, Facilities, Open Space, and/or Recreational Programs that should be Repurposed or Eliminated**

Participants specifically named Runaway Point, stating that it has two baseball fields which are not used for baseball and could therefore be repurposed.

Focus Group participants mentioned existing empty buildings that could be used for recreation facilities, K-mart being one along with a former Paula Dean owned building and a Piggly-Wiggly. They also identified some specific parcels of land that could possibly be developed for parks and recreation use. There was also the suggestion that White Marsh Preserve be converted to an active space.

### **Key Partners and Stakeholders**

Focus group members were then asked about the partnership opportunities within the county. It was recognized that there is the potential to partner with the YMCA, private schools, and St. Joseph Hospital for wellness programs.

Participants pointed out the need to work with the Sports Council – a division of the Chamber of Commerce – to promote sports tourism within Chatham County.

As previously mentioned, focus group participants recognize the need to partner with the public schools to share facilities and fields for recreation. They also mentioned the need to partner with the colleges within the area. The Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) was recognized as a potential partner to assist with the development of more arts and cultural activities within Chatham County.

Gulfstream and Mitsubishi were mentioned as potential private enterprise partners while Abilities Unlimited was mentioned for its assistance with people who have disabilities.

### **Key Issues and Values**

Participants agreed that existing facilities should be refurbished and maintained before any new construction starts in the county. However, a balance with refurbishment and new construction will help address community concerns and new and existing demand for facilities.

A recurring, and overriding theme is that of “Unity in Youth Athletics.” Youth development is a core value of the Chatham County Parks and Recreation Department. The attention to this value brings great pride to the community.

Key issues that were mentioned in the focus groups include the desire for a more equitable distribution of SPLOST funds throughout the county, a need to improve communications between the cities and the County to better define the roles, responsibilities, and sharing of facilities. It was also felt that the facilities within Chatham County should be usable “all the time” – meaning during hours of normal operation.

Other key issues include concerns over an aging infrastructure, safety, and security, accessibility, what is perceived as an “islands” versus “city” attitude. Participants also felt that the physical and mental engagement of citizens should remain a core value of Chatham County as well as the preservation of the natural beauty and environment of the area.

### **Top Priorities for Next 5 Years**

The following top priorities were identified by focus group participants.

1. Repair existing facilities – while SPLOST funds are welcome, the consensus is that existing facilities should be refurbished and maintained first. Along with this, participants expressed the desire that the Thomas Avenue Plan be completed.
  - a. A subset of the above is a desire to develop maintenance standards and practices for all facilities.
  - b. Maintain focus on safety and security with improved lighting throughout the park system.
2. Improve marketing and communications – this refers to better communications with County staff as well as improved marketing of the Parks and Recreation programs, so residents will have better awareness of what is being offered.
3. Account for population growth and changes in population density to have an equitable distribution of programs and equipment.
4. Collaborate with local, state, and regional entities to make Chatham County a destination for sports and recreation – sports tourism.
5. Improve connectivity to parks via bike and walking trails.
6. Learn who the willing partners are in the County and engage the stakeholders and volunteers to help with partnerships.

## **D. Leadership Summit Input Summary**

An element of the public process for the Chatham County Parks and Recreation Master Plan was to hold a leadership summit. The purpose of the leadership summit was to bring together the administrators and parks and recreation leaders from each community that makes up Chatham County, as well as the administration of the Board of Education to discuss key issues, common goals, and the role each community playing in providing services to the citizens and visitors. This section summarizes the key issues and input that came out of the leadership summit.

Invited to the leadership summit were key stakeholders from all the municipalities in Chatham County:

- |                  |                |
|------------------|----------------|
| • Bloomingdale   | • Savannah     |
| • Garden City    | • Thunderbolt  |
| • Pooler         | • Tybee Island |
| • Port Wentworth | • Vernonburg   |

The leadership summit was held October 26, 2017 and there were 12 individuals who attended from the following: City of Savannah, Pooler, Garden City, and Chatham County. The input summary is categorized below.

### **Key issues or values in the service area and communities that make up Chatham County that should be considered in the development of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan**

Participants agreed that the condition of existing facilities should be monitored and maintained and weighed against any new construction in the county. All wanted operating and maintenance costs to be a major focus.

Equal access and sustainability were prevalent themes within the leadership summit group. There was agreement that residents should be able to have equal access to recreation offerings within the county and that these programs should be sustainable. Although there was expressed concern about equal access, there was also concerns about redundancy of those same services, programs, and facilities within the City of Savannah and Chatham County. While there is agreement that redundancy is occurring, there is also agreement that there are gaps in other service areas.

It was felt that the County should consider how the programs and services being offered could generate additional income as “sports tourism” to provide value to the County. For this to become reality, it was felt that marketing and branding should be enhanced to promote the area. In conjunction with this concern, it was felt that the County should consider public/private partnerships as well as public/public partnerships.

Other recurring themes and concerns included the availability of land, parking, safety, and security as well as offering recreation for all ages to improve the quality of life within Chatham County.

### **Desired Outcome of the Planning Process**

Leadership summit participants want to be certain that the County has a blueprint document that ties everything back together. They want this process – the summit and the public engagement process – to tie back to the master plan update. This should include all the comprehensive plans with the recreation plans for each area.

Participants also identified the need to determine what should be regional and what is local and/or County-wide. In addition, participants want better linking of the City/County with greater ease of access to recreation and neighborhood – a theme of connectivity also expressed in the other focus groups.

Summit attendees want to ensure that the public is involved in the Recreation Master Plan process. They also want to make certain that the Board of Education is involved at a higher level. NOTE: A Representative of the BOE was invited to this meeting but did not attend. However, the BOE Athletic Director attended one of the stakeholder meetings.

### **Role of the County in Providing Indoor Facilities, Outdoor Facilities, Programs, Parks, and Services**

Leadership summit participants felt that a strong focus should be on collaboration with others, the City of Savannah, and the surrounding municipalities and that this collaboration should be maintained to enhance service offerings to residents.



Participants felt each area should identify those things we are best at and take care to avoid duplication of services. The overriding theme was that we should “consider the participants we serve and how we can serve them best.”

### **The collective vision of the County and what Chatham County Parks and Recreation Department can do to help achieve that key vision**

Leadership summit participants felt that the best thing the Parks and Recreation Department can do is to serve the public with the opportunities they desire based on recognized needs and trends.

Summit participants want a focus on collaboration and an avoidance of duplication. At the same time, they want the County to identify its best offerings to community participants within the Parks and Recreation Department.

A shared vision of the participants was to broaden the reach of the County via enhanced regional branding and marketing to “let the public know” what is available in the parks, trails, and facilities of Chatham County. It was felt that this could enhance the economic development of the County.

### **Key Partners and Stakeholders**

Leadership summit participants identified the following potential partners that the County should consider working with in the future:

<b>Board of Education</b> <b>Private schools</b> <b>Chamber of Commerce</b> <b>Local industry</b> <b>Area colleges</b> <b>Churches</b> <b>Jewish Education Alliance</b> <b>Sports Medicine Groups</b> <b>Georgia Ports</b>	<b>Civic groups</b> <b>Adult sports leagues</b> <b>Youth sports clubs</b> <b>YMCA</b> <b>Arts and Cultural Alliance</b> <b>Chatham Area Transit</b> <b>SORBA* and IMBA**</b> <b>Healthy Savannah</b> <b>Coastal Regional Commission</b>
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\*Southern Off-Road Biking Association

\*\*International Mountain Biking Association

### **What Chatham County Parks and Recreation should look like in 1, 5, and 10 Years**

The following top priorities were identified by leadership summit group participants:

1. Draft a logical strategic plan
2. Develop and implement a marketing/branding plan within five (5) years
3. Have an ongoing discussion with all entities within the surrounding municipalities and the Board of Education with clear direction and responsibilities for all
4. Develop plans for Parks and Recreation so there is less duplication of services, facilities, and programs; identify the economic output and the quality of life impact for those plans
5. Identify funding needs for SPLOST grants
6. Consider the regional impact of space and facilities for sports tourism and what industries might come to Savannah with more services

## E. Random Invitation Community Survey Summary

### Introduction & Methodology

The purpose of this study was to gather public feedback on Chatham County parks and recreation facilities, services, and programs. This survey research effort and subsequent analysis were designed to assist Chatham County in developing a master plan regarding existing and potential future facilities and services.

The survey was conducted using three primary methods:

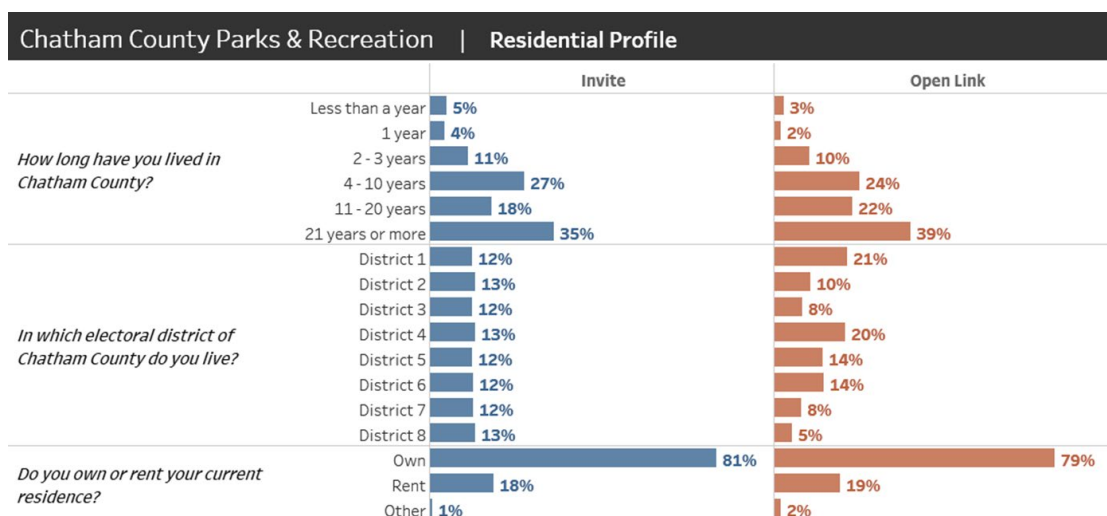
- 1) A mailed survey to randomly selected residents of Chatham County.
- 2) An online invitation survey accessed through a password-protected website as an additional option for those residents who received the initial survey.
- 3) An “open-link” online survey for members of the public who were not part of the invitation sample. Multiple means for promotion were used including internal lists and social media.

In total, 380 invitation surveys were completed through a variety of survey approaches. In addition, 1,019 open-link surveys were received. The invitation sample includes responses gathered from the mailed survey and online invitation sample. The margin of error for the invitation sample is +/- 5%.

### Summary of Selected Findings

This section provides a brief overview of key findings of the statistically-valid invitation sample. A full copy of the final survey report is included as **Appendix B**.

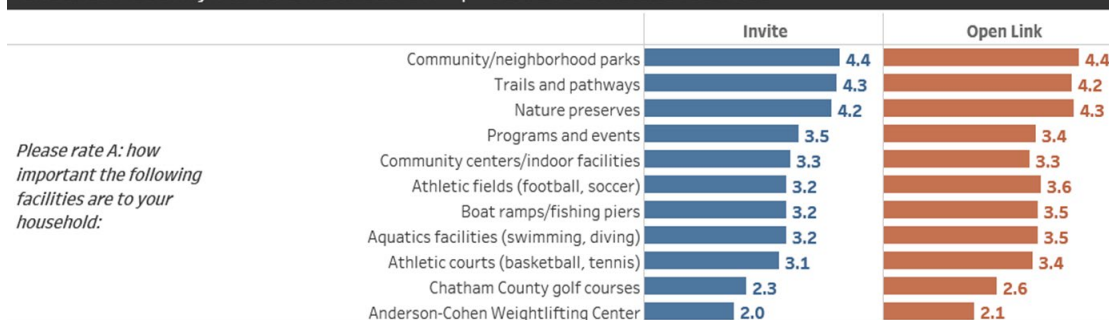
- **Chatham County respondents somewhat familiar with the County’s parks and recreation offerings.** On average, respondents rated their level of familiarity 2.9 out of 5.0 with 28 percent saying they are familiar and 32 percent unfamiliar.
- Respondents to both the invitation and open-link survey are demographically diverse. **Respondents are well distributed across all electoral districts and include a wide array of income profiles, ages, and household statuses.**



Source: RRC Associates and Greenplay

- **Trails and pathways and community/ neighborhood parks were rated most important by the majority of respondents.** Most facilities had a moderate importance to respondents with a few applying only to a niche audience (e.g., Anderson-Cohen Weightlifting Center).

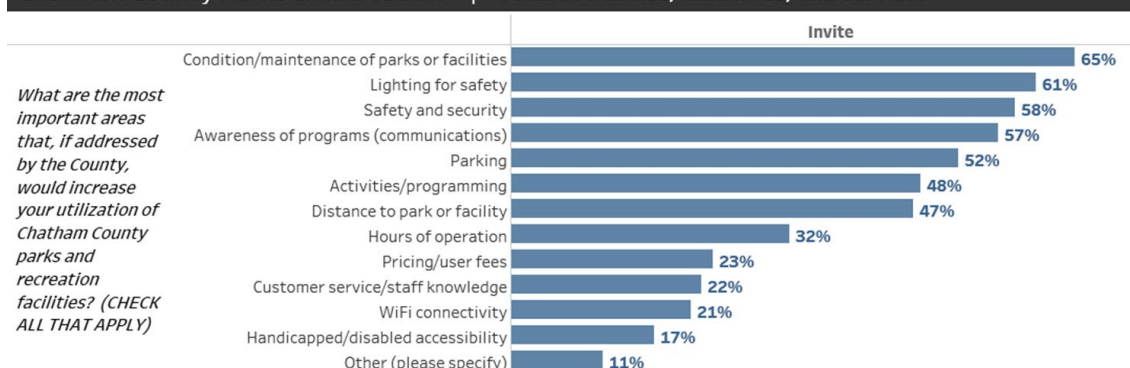
## Chatham County Parks & Recreation | Current Parks and Facilities



Source: RRC Associates and Greenplay

- Chatham County's facilities received high ratings on the degree to which they meet resident needs. **Nearly all facilities had over 50 percent of respondents stating the current facilities were meeting the needs of their household.**
- The importance-performance matrix highlights programs and events as the only aspect which has high importance and lower needs met. **Community/neighborhood parks, nature preserves, and trails and pathways all are high importance with high needs met.**
- Condition or maintenance of existing parks or facilities and lighting/safety are highlighted as the most important areas to address.** Awareness of programs, additional activities/programming, and parking were also high on the list.

## Chatham County Parks & Recreation | Future Facilities, Amenities, and Services



Source: RRC Associates and Greenplay





- By far, trail and pathway connectivity is highlighted as the highest priority item to be added, expanded, or improved.** Open space preservation, protection of wildlife, and new community parks, and maintenance for existing facilities followed.

	Invite				Open Link			
Trail and pathway connectivity (for walking, biking, hiking)	25%	21%	15%	62%	18%	16%	19%	53%
Open space preservation/regeneration/protection of wildlife	11%	15%	13%	39%	8%	18%	13%	39%
New community/neighborhood parks	11%	10%	9%	30%	7%	9%	14%	29%
Maintain or repurpose existing facilities	7%	7%	16%	30%	7%	9%	10%	26%
Playgrounds	7%	11%	8%	27%	6%	7%		18%
Dog park	8%	5%	8%	21%	14%	5%	5%	24%
New/improved boat ramps/beach amenities	6%	5%	7%	18%	4%	7%	6%	18%
New/improved aquatic facilities (swimming, diving)	6%	5%	5%	16%	4%	5%	5%	14%
Increased adult activity programming	6%	5%	5%	16%	7%	5%		15%
New/improved athletic courts	5%	5%		12%	6%	5%		13%
New/improved athletic fields (soccer, football, lacrosse)				10%	13%	5%		21%
New/improved indoor multi-purpose facilities (gymnasiums)	5%			10%	5%	6%		12%
Additional sports programming				6%				7%
Updates to County golf courses				5%	7%			12%

## F. Organizational and Marketing Analysis

### Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

Public Input was conducted including a leadership summit with stakeholders from other municipal agencies, input sessions with programming staff and maintenance staff, as well as input received from the general public. A summary of the operational and marketing SWOT input follows.

	<b>Strengths</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Communications from staff</li><li>Efficient resolution of issues</li><li>Staff is supportive, innovative, organized, and accessible</li><li>Number of assets</li><li>Volunteer support</li><li>Parks are well used</li></ul>		<b>Weaknesses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Duplication of sports/teams offered between Cities/County</li><li>Revenues go into General Fund</li><li>Marketing/Communications to public</li><li>Safety/security</li><li>Lack of funding</li><li>Lack of manpower</li><li>Access for citizens with disabilities</li><li>Use of schools for programs</li></ul>
	<b>Opportunities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Marketing plan</li><li>Continue leadership summit meetings</li><li>Formalize partnership agreements with equity and annual reviews</li><li>Partner with school system for use of facilities</li><li>Increase use of technology</li><li>Increase utilization of social media</li><li>Increase safety in parks and facilities</li><li>Increase staff pay for retention</li><li>Increase maintenance staff to elevate standards</li><li>Unification and county run youth sports leagues</li><li>Increase and improve signage</li></ul>		<b>Threats</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Funding cuts</li><li>Lack of staff</li><li>Aging infrastructure</li><li>Safety and security perception</li><li>Existing facilities conditions</li><li>Lack of equity in distribution of programs and equipment</li><li>Lack of communication with county staff</li><li>Lack of ADA accessibility</li></ul>

### Organizational Analysis

The consultant team broadly assessed the organizational and management structure of the Chatham County Parks and Recreation Department and staffing to determine effectiveness and efficiency in meeting current and future departmental responsibilities as related to the community's needs. The needs assessment – including input from a leadership summit, staff interviews, community and key stakeholder engagement, and level of service analysis, along with the consultant's expertise – has identified a few areas for operational enhancement.

These key organizational issues identified and observed as areas for improvement include:

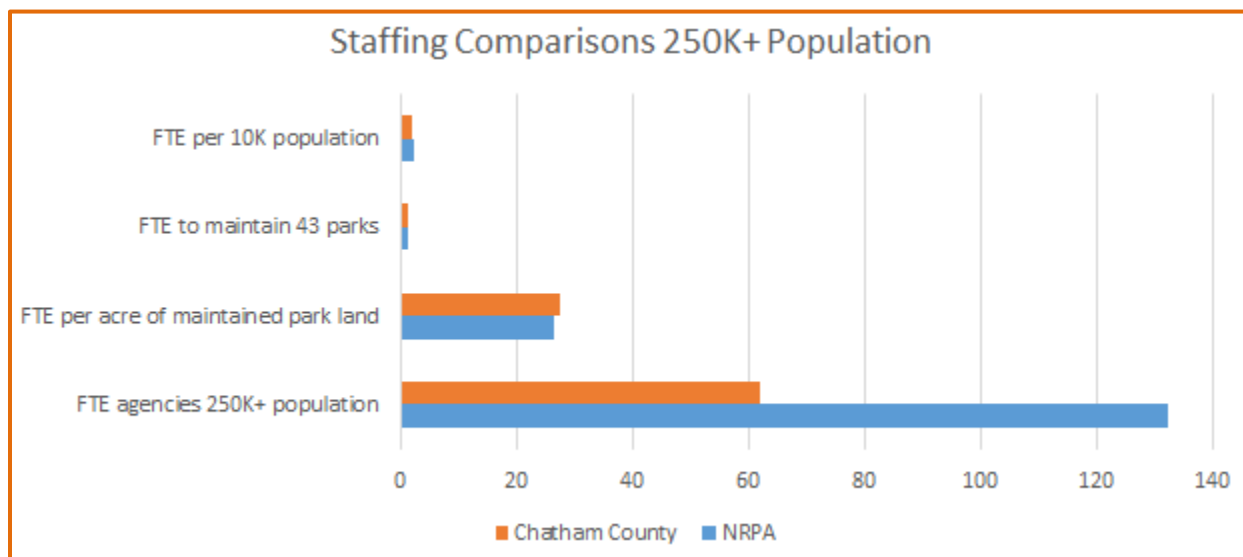
- Increase marketing and communication of activities and facilities
- Increase communication between the county and municipalities
- Increase partnerships to accomplish mission
- Increase usage of schools for needed recreation and open space
- Increase use of technology and social media
- Improve the safety and security perception to increase park use and participation
- Increase staff pay rates for retention of good employees
- Increase staffing for maintenance to meet current and future demands for services

## Staffing Analysis

GreenPlay broadly assessed the management structure and staffing levels of the Chatham County Parks and Recreation Department to determine effectiveness and efficiency in meeting current and future departmental responsibilities as related to the community's needs. Many observations were taken into account to determine if the Department had the right mix of staffing in the right places.

Staff has done a remarkable job of delivering quality service in the operation of its current system. However, when compared to communities of similar size and demographics using the 2017 NRPA Agency Performance Review, the Department falls short for agencies with population over 250,000. Chatham County is very adequate based on the number of acres maintained, number of parks, and per 10,000 capita. **Figure 5** illustrates the differences compared to the median of responses.

**Figure 5: Staffing Comparisons with NRPA Agency Performance Review**



The staffing analysis process included the observations and assessments of:

- Community input
- Community satisfaction rates
- Staff focus group
- Facility tours
- Observations of quality of maintenance
- SWOT analysis
- Organizational chart



### **Staffing Considerations**

After considering all of the organizational observations and staffing assessment, the consultant team has determined that the Chatham County Parks and Recreation Department has an adequate number of staff to operate its current system with the right mix of staff in the right places within the Department with the exception of park maintenance. To continue to meet the recreation needs of the County's growing population, and to operate more effectively in the future, the Parks and Recreation Department needs to hire additional positions to supplement existing maintenance staff. This will ensure that staffing resource levels can deliver park and recreation services and programming, and maintain existing and new facilities at or above acceptable standards as this Master Plan is implemented. Pay rates for similar positions should be investigated within the region and increased where necessary to ensure the retention of good employees.

### **Marketing**

The Chatham County Parks and Recreation Department utilizes a number of effective marketing tools and strategies to actively promote parks and recreation services in the community. These tools include, but are not limited to, proactive use of program flyers, the County website, and press releases. The Department hopes to have developed a brand when implementing this master planning, which can set a foundation to further position the value of parks, trails, greenways, boat ramps, and recreation facilities in the county. Continued efforts will further enhance the Department's marketing plan and communication efforts within the community.

## **G. Financial Analysis**

### **Current Circumstances**

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

The County should seek another SPLOST (an optional sales tax of one cent per dollar approved by local referendum) for voter approval in 2019 to pay for the capital expenditures and renovations in this master plan and make it a priority to leverage partnerships wherever possible to help fund the facilities, programs, and services that it provides to the community.

Focus group and survey respondents expressed concern over the access and affordability of programs and services. The Parks and Recreation Department staff needs to continue to work diligently to implement and monitor equitable user fees to improve revenues while maintaining the level of affordability that residents of Chatham County find acceptable through the implementation of a scholarship funding process that the local business community supports.

## **Financial Sustainability for Program Delivery**

It is important for the County to develop a resource allocation and pricing philosophy that reflects the values of the community and the responsibility it has to the community. This philosophy will be especially important if the County moves forward in the development of new programs and additional and/or renovated facilities, and as it strives for sustainability and determines how much it is willing to subsidize operations with tax dollars.

One means of accomplishing this goal is applying a process using an industry tool called the “Pyramid Methodology.” This methodology develops and implements a refined cost recovery philosophy and pricing policy based on current “best practices” as determined by the mission of the agency and the program’s benefit to the community and/or individual. A cost recovery philosophy and policy would support the current Chatham County financial policy to “review and update fees and charges at least annually to ensure they keep pace with actual program costs, cost-of-living changes, and methods or levels of service delivery.”

Critical to this philosophical undertaking is the support and understanding of elected officials, and ultimately, residents. Whether or not significant changes are called for, the agency wants to be certain that it is philosophically-aligned with its residents. The development of the core services and cost recovery philosophy and policy is built on a very logical foundation, using the understanding of who is benefitting from recreation services to determine how the costs for that service should be offset. Recreation programs and services are sorted along a continuum of what delivers the greatest individual benefit to what delivers the greatest community benefit. The amount of subsidy for each level (not necessarily each individual program) is then determined to create an overall cost recovery philosophy. Developing effective ongoing systems that help measure success in reaching cost recovery goals and anticipate potential pitfalls are dependent on the following:

- Understanding of current revenue streams and their sustainability.
- Tracking all expenses and revenues for programs, facilities, and services to understand their contributions to overall department cost recovery.
- Analyzing who is benefiting from programs, facilities, and services and to what degree they should be subsidized.
- Acknowledging the full cost of each program (those direct and indirect costs associated with program delivery) and where the program fits on the continuum of who benefits from the program or service to determine appropriate cost recovery targets.
- Defining direct costs as those that typically exist purely because of the program and the change with the program.
- Defining indirect costs as those that would typically exist anyway (like full-time staff, utilities, administration, debt service, etc.).
- Program fees should not be based on ability to pay, but an objective program should be in place that allows for easy access for lower income participants through availability of scholarships and/or discounts.



### Potential Funding Support

Lack of funding was one key theme from focus group participants and survey respondents. The Department should continue to pursue funding strategies from the Master Plan action steps including:

- Explore alternative funding sources for the Parks and Recreation Department that strategically align with targeted services such as increasing developer impact fees and transient tax
- Expand alternative funding for strategic initiatives through grants
- Explore new community partnerships
- Implementation of a cost recovery and equitable pricing philosophy and policy where revenue go back into the Parks and Recreation Department where they are created to enhance sustainability
- Explore the opportunities for (and use of) sponsorships, in accordance with an approved Sponsorship Policy

Based on the capital and O&M budget estimates identified in this master plan as well as the unfunded capital improvement projects, it is imperative that the County maximize funding and revenue opportunities listed above while balancing the affordability issue within the community.

## H. Sports Tourism

Chatham County is well known as a tourism destination. Savannah, Tybee Island, and Hilton Head have a long and successful history of tourism. The County and the Department of Parks and Recreation has expressed an interest in expanding sports tourism, specifically:

- Evaluating existing facilities and propose improvements to increase the impact of sports tourism while balancing access and impact on recreation programs and facilities in Chatham County
- Evaluating the need and desire for regional recreation facilities in coordination with the eight municipalities in the county
- Evaluating possible funding strategies for sports tourism

The following have also been identified by the consultant team as necessary to accurately analyzing the potential for sports tourism in Chatham County:

- Defining sports tourism
- Defining the regional competition for sports tourism
- Determining the appropriate sports tourism market for Chatham County

### Defining Sports Tourism

Sports tourism is defined as any activity in which people are attracted to a particular location as a participant or a spectator to attend sporting events or sport related activities. These people may travel one way from home and/or stay overnight, whose primary reason to travel is to participate in an organized sports related activity, while also taking advantage of other amenities available in the community.

An organized sports-related activity can include organized competitive events, trials, try-outs or training camps, clinics, exhibitions, and sports related meetings.

Participants can include:

- Individuals who engage (actively participate) in sport for the purposes of competition with others, or to improve their personal sporting performance

- Family members who accompany competitors or provide transportation and supervision if under age
- Individuals who attend sporting games or events to observe
- Individuals who volunteer their time and expertise in sports (for example, as a coach, a driver, an official, or a fundraiser)

Sports tourism events can be classified as:

- A single or multi-sport contest
- A local or regional focus
- Recreational or competitive events
- Professional sport team exhibitions

Sports tourism events can include the following formats:

- Tournaments for a single sport (such as softball, soccer, pickleball, etc.)
- Non-traditional activities (such as Tough Mudder runs, color runs, Police Games, etc.)
- Camps, clinics, courses, and conferences: Although sports tourism is most often associated with competitive activity, training camps, skills clinics, training programs for coaches and officials, annual general meetings, and conferences related to sports are also considered sports tourism activities
- Special events created by a community, facility, or corporation primarily for commercial or tourism purposes (such as marathons, half marathons, and fun runs)

### **Determining the Appropriate Sports Tourism Market for Chatham County**

Opportunities for expanding sports tourism in Chatham County are currently available. Typically, a community can attract individual sports participants within a 30-minute drive for regular participation. Participants driving up to 90 minutes or more typically involve multiple family members who are looking for additional amenities such as restaurants, shopping, entertainment, and hotels. The county has a more than sufficient supply of restaurants, shopping, entertainment, and hotels that would welcome the additional visitors with the proper planning and scheduling of events and tournaments.

The eight municipalities, the local school system, and higher education should all be considered as potential partners to work with the County and the Department of Parks and Recreation in the sports tourism efforts in the region.

Key Factors to determine the appropriate sports tourism market include:

- Sports tourism capacity – reflects the County’s market base for visitation, advertising and sponsorships, event hosting experience and organizational capacity, and event hosting infrastructure. The County would rate high in its ability in these areas.
- Facilities – number and quality of available facilities. The County would rate average on its ability to provide facilities.
- Motivation to host sports tourism. The County would rate high.
- Amenities – the non-tournament experience for participants and their families and friends (restaurants, accommodations, shopping, activities outside of the sport tourism events). The County would rate high.
- Volunteers – The County would need to develop a larger volunteer program.
- Experience – The County would rate high.
- Identifying the Shoulder Seasons (season with lower visitor traffic)

### **The Need and Desire for Regional Recreation Facilities**

The Chatham County Department of Parks and Recreation has existing agreements with the eight municipalities related to recreational programming and facilities usage. For the County to be fiscally responsible and successful, development partnerships need to be expanded. Meetings with representatives from the eight municipalities to discuss the need, desire, and feasibility for regional shared recreation facilities should be a top priority. Additionally, coordination and involvement with local chambers of commerce is imperative to be successful.

# III. Chatham County Assets, Inventory, and Level of Service Analysis

## A. Inventory Methods and Process

### Field Work

The Chatham County Parks and Recreation Department currently has 43 existing facilities within its purview, ranging from multi-purpose trails to community parks and golf courses. During the inventory analysis portion of this master plan, the local consultants visited each of the 43 facilities evaluating and scored them on a scale of 1-3. During site visits, parks and recreation facilities were photographed, and notes were taken to verify the quantity and condition of the existing amenities. An inventory of amenities at each facility was compiled, examples of which include features such as restrooms, drinking fountains, picnic table, barbecue grills, accessibility elements like parking and security lighting, as well as more subjective components for instance shade and design/ambiance. These individual amenities were each scored on a scale of 1 to 3, and the scores for all amenities at the recreation facility were then averaged to obtain the facility's overall score.

The ranking score was as follows:

1 = Poor/Below Expectations

Examples include: not having a bathroom, no ADA accessibility, damaged/unusable equipment, bare earth, unkempt turf areas

2 = Average/Meets Expectations

Examples include: Equipment which looks and functions as intended or may be in need of some minor/typical maintenance, minimum landscaping

3 = Excellent/Exceeds Expectations

Examples include: All facilities & amenities in tip-top shape, updated seasonal plantings

Detailed reports for each facility can be found in the accompanying Existing Conditions Report.

## B. Existing Facilities

Chatham County maintains 43 facilities, encompassing approximately 1,700 acres of parkland, scattered throughout the County. The 43 facilities are comprised of six (6) community parks, ten (10) neighborhood parks, seven (7) sports facilities, four (4) nature preserves, two (2) multipurpose trails, ten (10) boat ramps/fishing piers, one (1) dedicated community center, one (1) aquatic center, one (1) weightlifting center, and one (1) golf course.

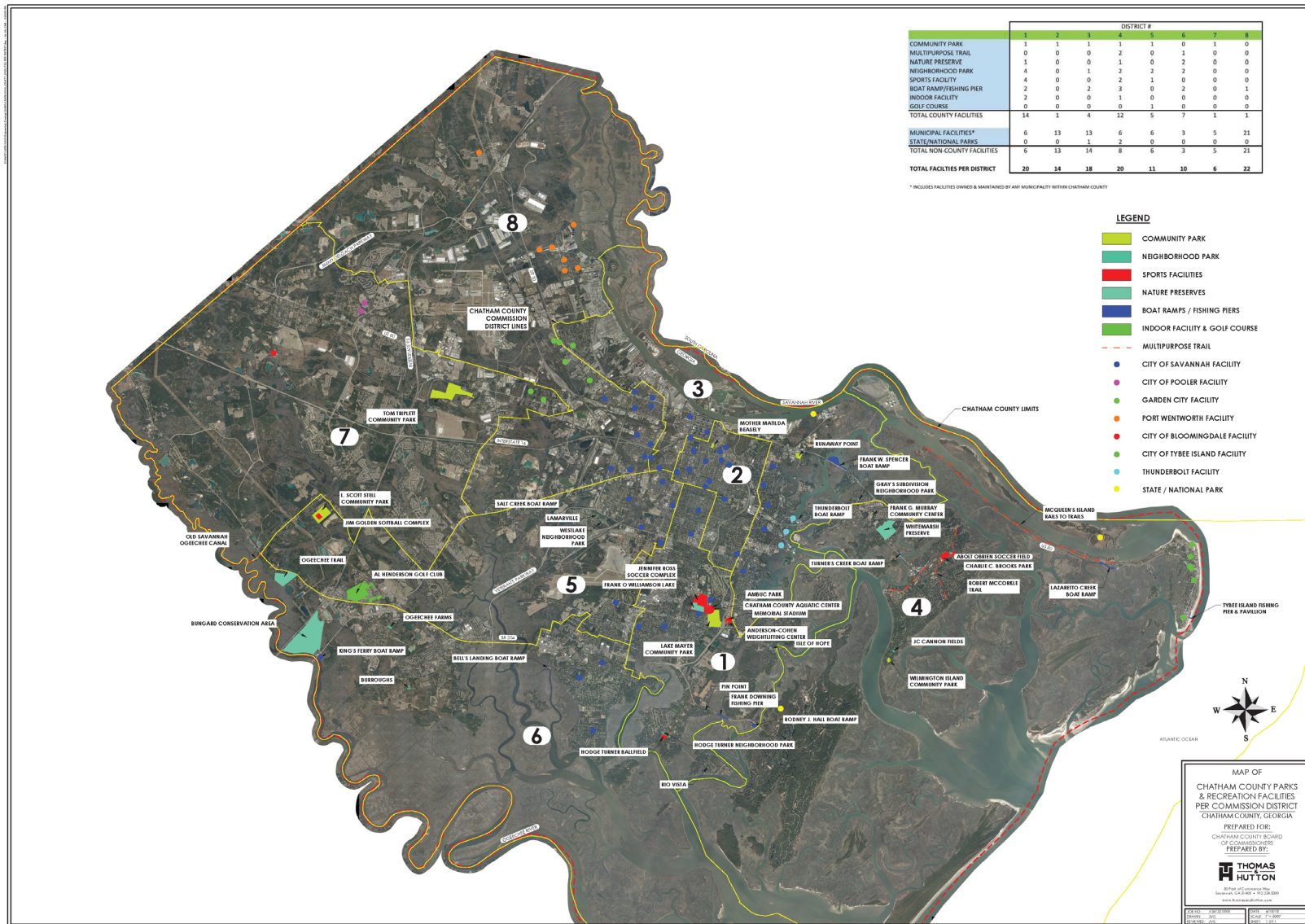
Chatham County is +/-440 square miles and includes eight municipalities as well as a portion of the county which is unincorporated. As of July 2017, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated the population of Chatham County at approximately 290,000. As of now, there are no notable joint-use programs between the County and any of the municipalities or the local school board for shared use of facilities.

**Table 3** below presents basic demographic and geographic information for Chatham County and its facilities. Additionally, **Figure 6** displays the current facilities and their distribution throughout the county. Subsequent mapping found in **Appendix C** shows the inventory of facilities within the county, their relationship to municipal facilities as well as their distribution within the County Commission Districts.

**Table 2: Demographic and Geographic Information**

<b>Total Population</b> (2017 estimate, US Census Bureau)	<b>290,000</b>
<b>City Area</b> (square miles)	440
<b>Population Density</b> (residents/square mile)	659
<b># of Parks &amp; Rec Facilities</b>	43
<b>Total Acres of Parks &amp; Rec Facilities</b>	1,700

Figure 6: Existing Chatham County Facilities





## Community Parks

- Six (6) facilities spread throughout County
- Average Rating = 1.8
- Lowest Rating = 1.2
- Highest Rating = 2.5
- Active and passive activities
- Unique features – garden plots, archery range, historic significance, skatepark, RC park, disc golf, and mountain bike trails
- Common themes to be improved upon:
  - General maintenance & upkeep of grounds (grass, plantings, etc.)
  - ADA Accessibility
  - Update playground equipment, pavilions, restrooms, etc.
- Improvements to one park currently under construction, improvements to another are currently in design

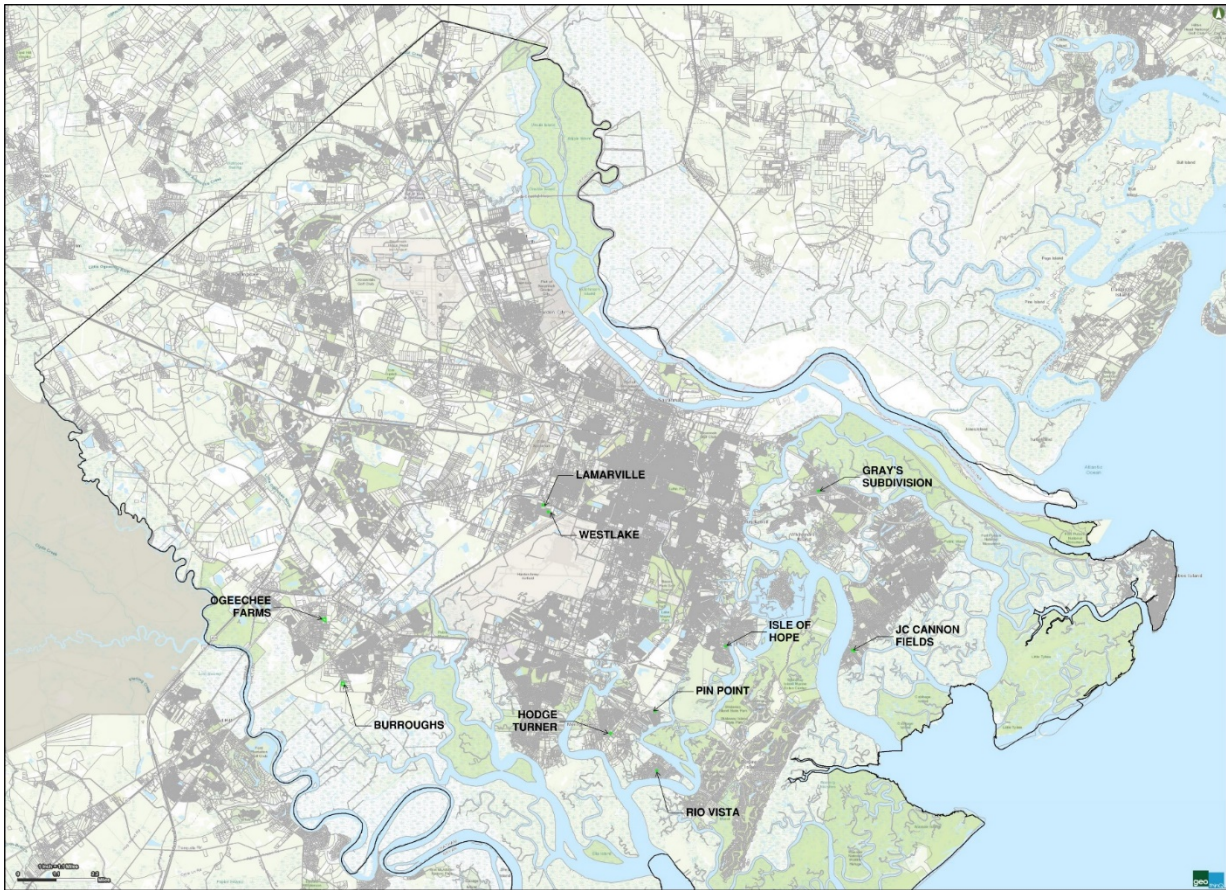
Figure 7: Existing Chatham County Community Parks



## Neighborhood Parks

- Ten (10) facilities spread throughout County
- Average Rating = 1.2
- Lowest Rating = 1.0
- Highest Rating = 1.6
- Common themes to be improved upon:
  - General maintenance & upkeep of grounds (grass, plantings, etc.)
  - ADA Accessibility
  - Vehicular and/or pedestrian accessibility
  - No restrooms available
  - Update playground equipment, pavilions, etc.
  - No facilities for dogs
- During site visits a resident informed Consultant of suspected drug activities
- Appears from tax records that some of the parcels are not owned by Chatham County

**Figure 8: Existing Chatham County Neighborhood Parks**

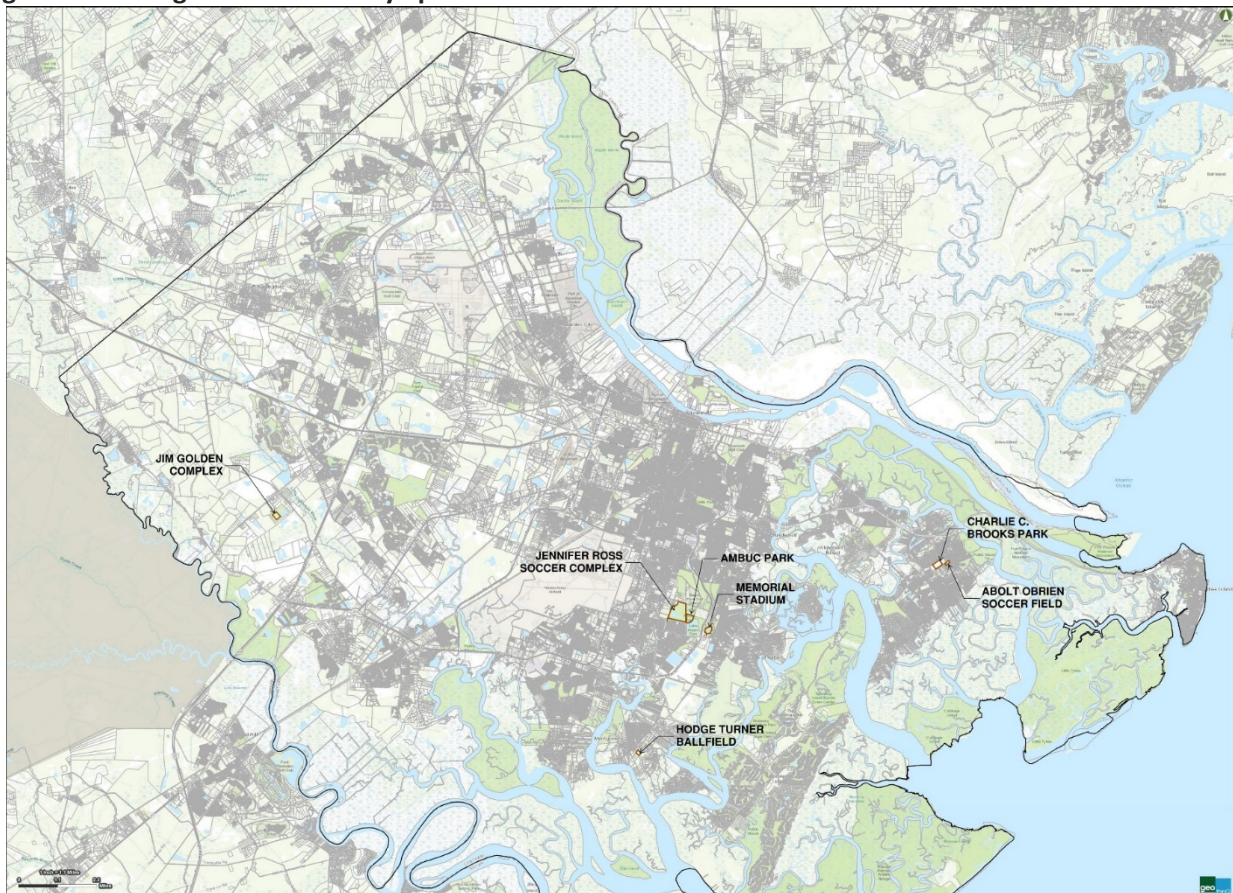




## Sports Facilities

- 7 facilities – predominately located on south side of Savannah and Islands community. Only one facility located on west side.
- Average Rating = 1.6
- Lowest Rating = 1.1
- Highest Rating = 2.2
- Common themes to be improved upon:
  - General maintenance & upkeep of grounds (grass, plantings, etc.) and fields – many fields appear worn down from constant play
  - ADA Accessibility
  - Improvements to restrooms, concessions, water fountains, lighting
  - Update playground equipment, pavilions, etc.
  - No facilities for dogs

Figure 9: Existing Chatham County Sports Facilities



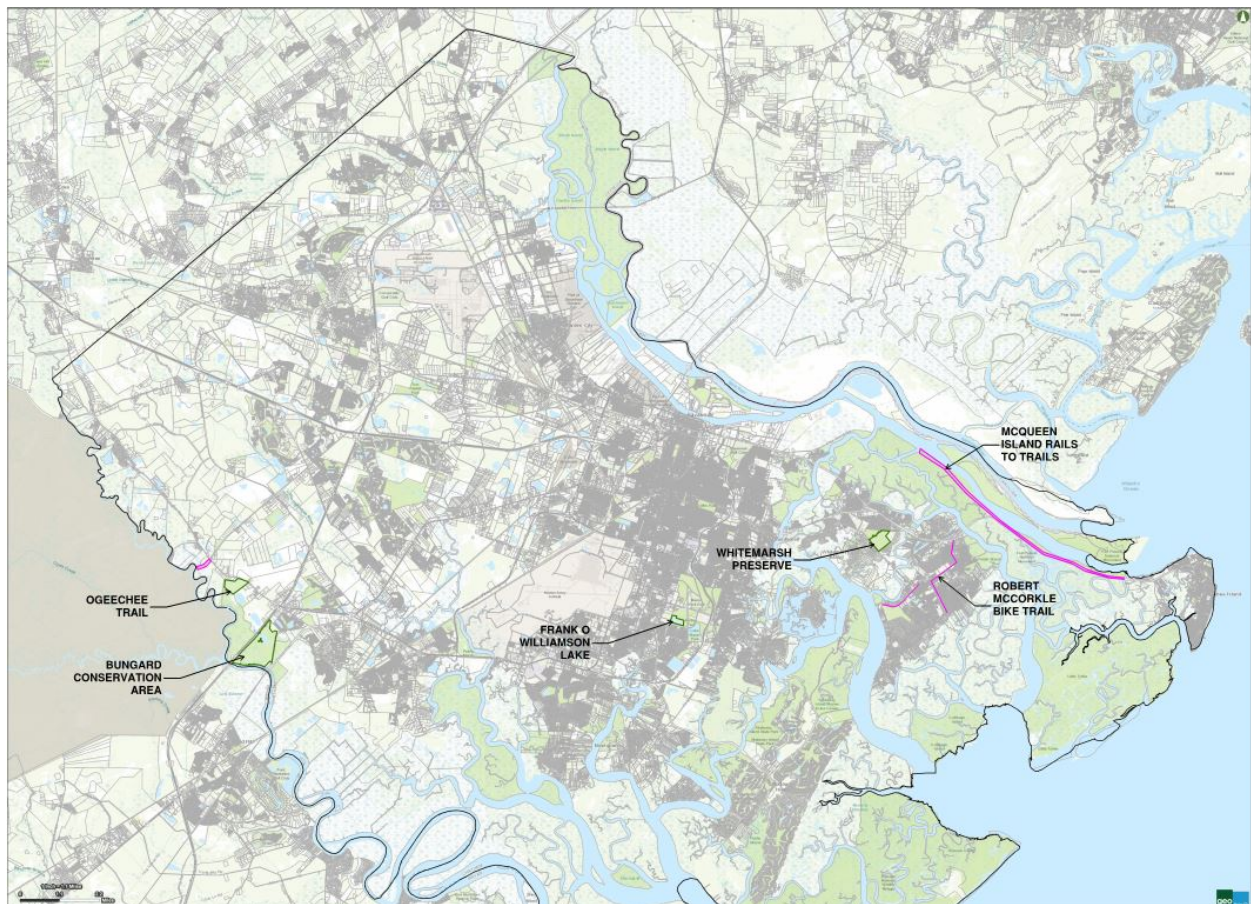
## Nature Preserves

- Four (4) sites
- Average Rating = 1.7
- Lowest Rating = 1.1
- Highest Rating = 2.1
- Items to consider for improvement:
  - Dog stations
  - Security lighting in parking areas
  - Improvements to vehicular access, parking, ADA improvements

## Multipurpose Trails

- Two (2) sites
- Average Rating = 1.4
- Lowest Rating = 1.1
- Highest Rating = 1.6
- Items to consider for improvement:
  - Dog stations
  - Security lighting in parking areas
  - Improvements to vehicular access, parking, ADA improvements

**Figure 10: Existing Chatham County Nature Preserves & Multipurpose Trails**

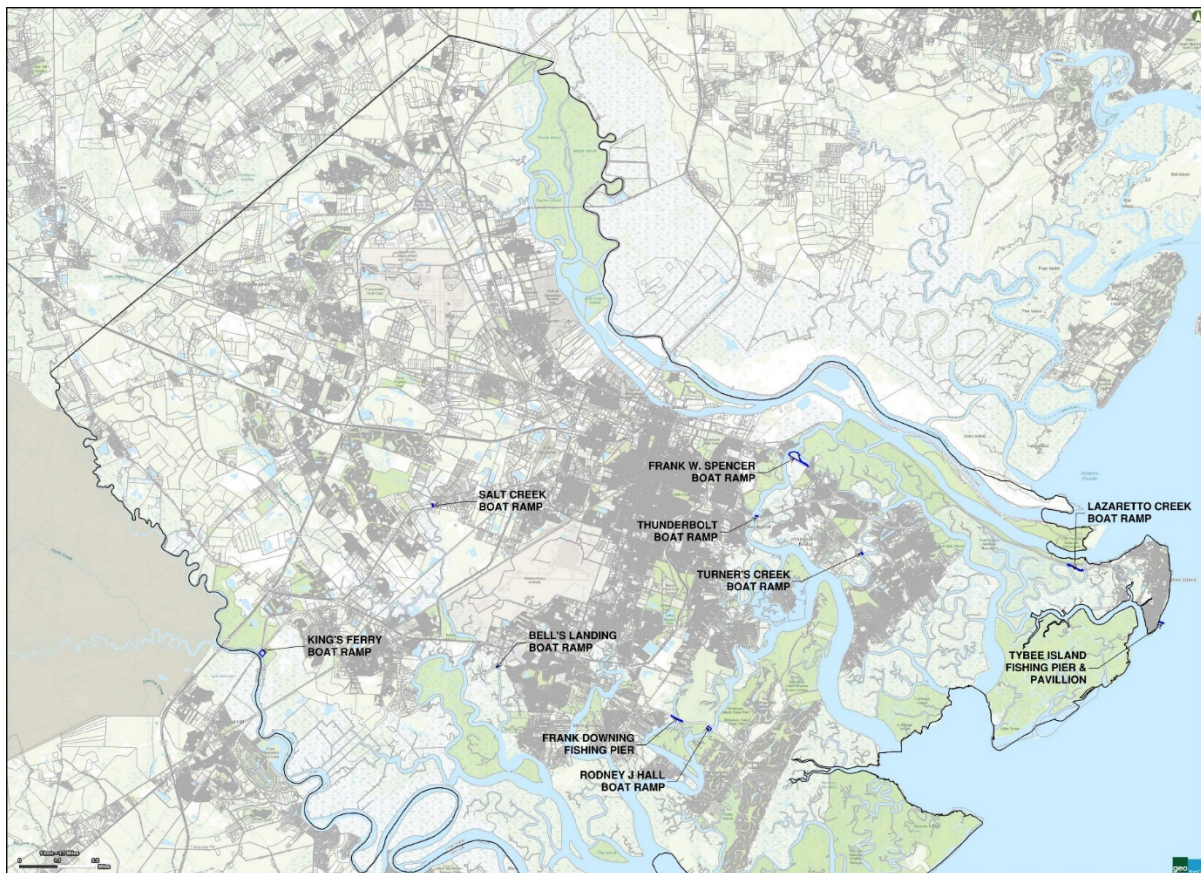




## Boat Ramps/Fishing Piers

- 10 facilities
- Average Rating = 1.4
- Lowest Rating = 1.0
- Highest Rating = 2.1
- Three sites located on/adjacent to Intracoastal Waterway
- Two ramps appear to have been constructed/improved within the last 5-6 years.
- Common themes to be improved upon:
  - General maintenance & upkeep of grounds (grass, plantings, etc.)
  - Installation/upgrade of restrooms
  - Update pavilions, grills, etc.
  - Improve parking and access
  - Dog facilities

Figure 11: Existing Chatham County Boat Ramps/Fishing Piers



## Indoor Facilities & Golf Course

### Frank G Murray Community Center

- Rating = 2.3
- Facility serves its purpose well and is well maintained

### Chatham County Aquatic Center

- Rating = 3.0
- Facility exceeded all expectations. Very well maintained

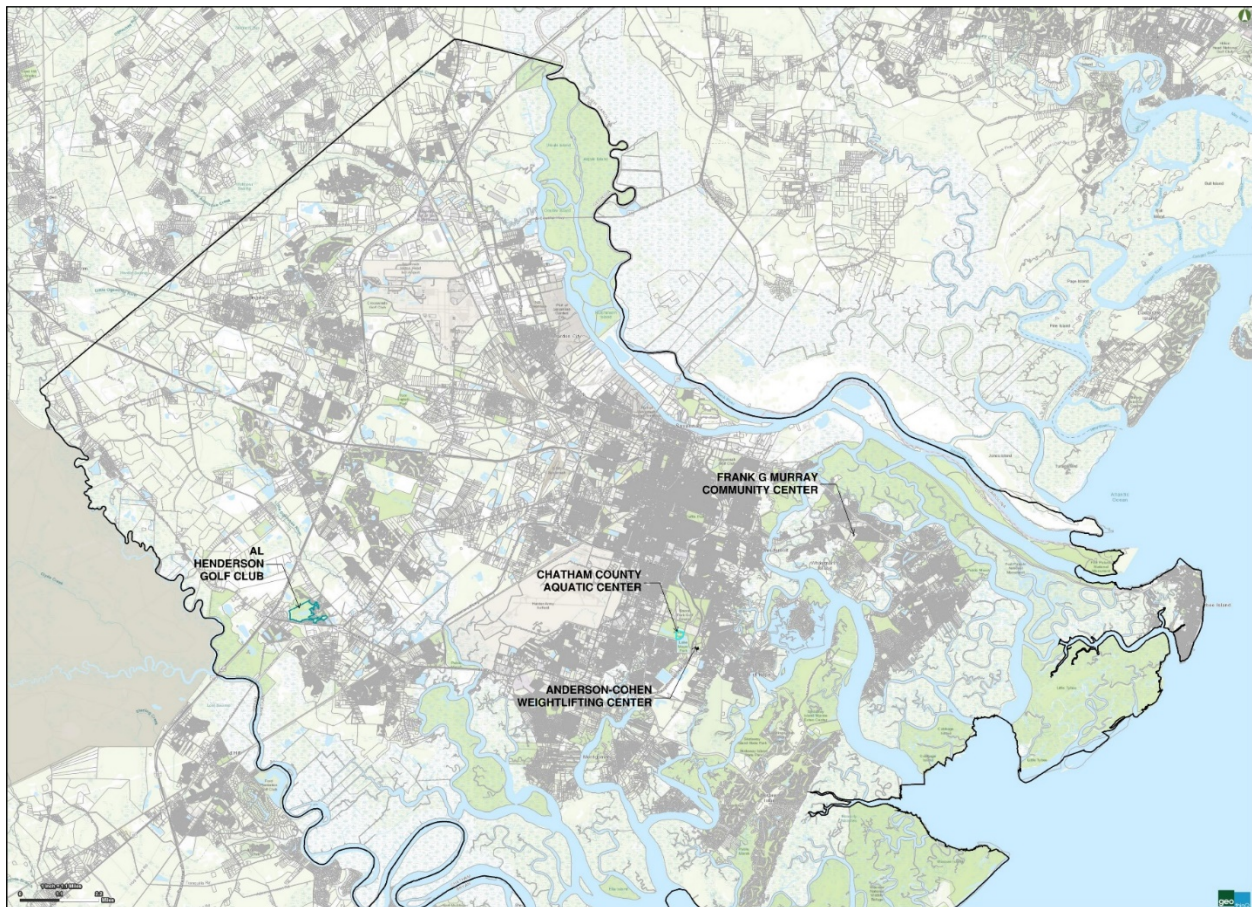
### Anderson-Cohen Weightlifting Center

- Rating = 2.7
- Facility exceeded all expectations. Very well maintained

### Al Henderson Golf Club

- Rating = 2.3
- Very nice public facility, well maintained grounds

Figure 12: Existing Chatham County Indoor Facilities & Golf Course





## C. Park Amenities & Level of Service Analysis

Once all active use areas were assessed and data was compiled into the GIS database, a level of service analysis was performed. To get an overall snapshot of Chatham County's parks and recreation resources, several high-level metrics were calculated. Using results from the National Recreation and Park Association's 2018 "Agency Performance Review" as a reference, similar metrics were calculated for Chatham County and compared to the national results. **Table 3** below details two common metrics used to assess parks and recreation level of service, residents per park and acres of park per resident. Based on these national averages, Chatham County currently has a deficit in park acres and has a higher demand per park than is seen, on average, in other jurisdictions across the country.

**Table 3: National Comparison**

Standard Metrics	Chatham County	National Recreation and Park Association Averages
Residents per Park (>250,000 population)	11,257	4,451
Acres of Park Land per 1,000 Residents	5.81	18.1

To gain a geographic perspective of park assets and deficiencies, a GIS-based watershed analysis was then performed. For each neighborhood park, the GIS analysis generated a polygon representing the 15-minute watershed, given a walking speed of 3 mph. Community Parks were given a more generous watershed of 15-minutes given their larger size and more diverse amenities offered. Resulting watershed polygons were overlaid on the city base map to see which regions were well covered by park access and to estimate the number of residents served by park type. A copy of this heat map can be found in **Appendix C**.

**Table 4** outlines the estimates of population served by neighborhood and community parks. Given current resources, 95 percent of residents have access to a County community park within a 15 minute drive, and 65 percent are within a 10 minute walk of a community or neighborhood park. However, less than a quarter (20%) of residents have access to a County park by way of a 10-minute walk. It should be noted that while the County has poor neighborhood park coverage, the municipalities within the County fill in the gaps and providing coverage in the gap areas.

**Table 4: Populations Served**

Type of Facility (Walk/Drive Shed)	# of Residents Served	% of Residents Served
Served by Community Parks (15 min drive)	276,722	95%
Served by Neighborhood Park (10 min walk)	57,833	20%

### Park Standards

While there is not a single industry standard for evaluating park systems, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) collects and analyzes park system data from hundreds of communities nationwide and conducts yearly evaluations with findings being distributed to parks and recreation professionals. The primary tool for this data collection and analysis is the NRPA Park Metrics system. The Park Metrics system is a voluntary program within which parks administrators register and then input the key metrics of their respective park system including total land managed, budgets, staff totals, and amenity offerings.

Based on the 2018 NRPA Agency Performance Review (based on the overall average of all communities participating within the database), the current average nationwide is 10.1 acres of park land per 1,000 residents. Chatham County has an estimated population density of approximately 660 people per square mile. That calculates to 5.8 acres per 1,000 residents in the county. When looking at just the counties similar to the size and density of Chatham County, the park land per 1,000 people ranges from 6.2 acres to 18.1 acres. The median for these counties is 12.7 acres. So the county is below the national average in all categories.

When evaluating population growth trends for the next ten years, and if the park system did not expand, the approximate acres of parkland per 1,000 residents would continue to be below the national average and growing.

For Chatham County, a long-term management goal would be to increase the current level of service provided across the county. Beyond a maintenance approach, expanding the provided recreational opportunities to meet and exceed the average amount of parks and recreation opportunities offered by peer counties to Chatham County would have tangible benefits in terms of community retention and increased growth.

Within Chatham County, there are park systems managed by the municipalities of Bloomingdale, Garden City, Pooler, Port Wentworth, Savannah, Thunderbolt, Tybee Island, and Vernonburg in addition to the facilities operated by the County. These other municipal offerings have been reviewed in conjunction with land area evaluations in order to provide a more realistic assessment of the available opportunities within the County for its residents. **Table 5** provides a summary of parks and recreation opportunities available to residents within Chatham County.

**Table 5: Summary of Parks per Jurisdiction**

Jurisdiction	Acreage	Parks	Boat Ramp/Fishing	Rectangle Fields	Diamond fields	Aquatic Facilities	Indoor Facilities
Bloomingdale		2	0	1	3	0	1
Garden City		2	0	1	6	0	1
Pooler		3	0	3	9	0	2
Port Wentworth		4	1	1	3	0	3
Savannah	378.5	59	1	12	16	17	7
Thunderbolt	4	3	1	0	0	0	0
Tybee Island	12.5	6	0	1	1	0	2
Vernonburg	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
State of Georgia	590						
Chatham County	1895	26	12	16	14	1	2
Total	2,880.00	105	15	35	52	18	18

In summary, this data indicates that each citizen is not being adequately served by the amount of park land provided solely by the County. Based on this table and understanding that the 292,686 residents in unincorporated Chatham County are not currently being adequately served by a county park, it should be noted that many of these amenities are grouped only in the most populous parks of the County and are not equitably placed throughout the community.

## Park Amenities Benchmarking

This type of evaluation provides guidance on what type of distinct recreational opportunities are being provided in a format that compares the existing park and recreation facilities located within the County and to the average number of amenities per a given population ratio. This evaluation is based on community guidance data provided by the National Recreation and Parks Association. Please note that this table is provided only as one tool for evaluating the level of service. **Table 6** provides a summary of the park and recreation facilities based on the number of amenities provided per a given population ratio.<sup>16</sup>

**Table 6: Park Amenity Benchmarks**

Total Population		2017	2022	2027	
Estimated		292,686	312,334	331,170	
Population per square mile		665	710	755	
Amenity	Ratio-Goal	Average Provided	Currently Provided	Surplus/Deficiency	Projected S/D 2027
Recreation Centers	1/65,577	4	0	-4	-5
Gyms	1/70,073	4	2	-2	-2
Senior centers	1/245,876	1	1	0	0
Fitness centers	1/111,005	3	0	-3	-3
Playgrounds	1/3,558	83	15	-68	-78
Basketball courts	1/7,040	41	15	-26	-32
Multipurpose courts - basketball, volleyball	1/12,105	24	1	-23	-26
Diamond fields - baseball (youth)	1/5,358	55	17	-38	-44
Diamond fields - softball (youth)	1/8,181	36	0	-36	-40
Diamond Fields - softball (adult)	1/9,491	31	4	-27	-30
Rectangle field - multipurpose	1/6,158	48	10	-38	-43
Rectangle field - soccer	1/9,833	30	8	-22	-25
Rectangle field - football	1/19,023	15	0	-15	-17
Rectangle field - lacrosse	1/17,500	16	0	-16	-18
Multipurpose synthetic field	1/20,888	14	0	-14	-11
Dog park	1/37,000	8	1	-7	-8
Fishing access	1/10,000	29	15	-14	-18
Kayak access	1/50,000	6	13	7	7
Parks available	Ratio - Goal	National Average	Currently Provided	Surplus/Deficiency	Projected S/D
Number of parks	1/2,114	1/4,451	1/11,257	-6,806	-8,286
Park acreage	10.1/1,000	18.1/1,000	5.81/1,000	-12.29	-12.97

This analysis also utilizes the comparison analysis information provided by NRPA 2018 Agency Performance Review. When utilized together, both tables will help identify areas of potential improvement as well as guide prioritization based on need.

<sup>16</sup> Recreation, Park, and Open Space Standards and Guidelines. [http://www.prm.nau.edu/prm423/recreation\\_standards.htm](http://www.prm.nau.edu/prm423/recreation_standards.htm). Original source: Lancaster, R.A. (Ed.). (1990). Recreation, Park, and Open Space Standards and Guidelines. Ashburn, VA: National Recreation and Park Association.

Currently, the parks and open spaces are concentrated on the eastern side of the county; this is primarily a combined result of locating facilities where population growth was occurring in the county around Savannah. As the park system is expanded in the future, it will be important to consider the following points:

1. Resources provided by the municipalities and school system must be considered as providing recreational resources to all county residents. This takes advantage of limited resources and reduces unnecessary duplication.
2. County leaders should take a community-based approach for distributing park resources by concentrating facilities and amenities in new growth areas.
3. County, school, and municipality leaders must work cooperatively to maximize resources and reduce duplication.
4. The County should take the lead with the development of regional recreational facilities like a fieldhouse, recreation centers, and regional parks using SPLOST funds for construction and the municipalities using SPLOST funds to operate.
5. Renovating existing neighborhood parks, fields, and open spaces to support current operations is desirable by survey respondents.
6. Neighborhood park development should be addressed as part of new development in the county.
7. Transportation to the park sites is predominately car based.

These figures are provided as a loose guideline only using historical NRPA findings, these numbers do not reflect the capacities maintained by peer communities to Chatham County. The intent of this table is to provide a neutral comparison of the current level of service provided to residents of Chatham County.

The survey provides a range of information valuable in determining the best use of county resources to improve park user experience to the largest number of residents possible. One area of analysis compares the importance of certain recreational amenities to their respective needs met within the community. Areas where there was a high importance with a low number of amenities provided should be the primary focus to provide the most impact possible. In the survey these areas included indoor facilities (gyms), community and neighborhood parks, and girls' athletic leagues. Several amenities noted of high importance in the survey are programmatic rather than physical features. Respondents desired a greater communications outreach concerning program availability as well as a greater number of youth, senior, and fitness programs. These services may be easier to implement as short-term goals compared to larger facility improvement projects.



Following the inventory phase, a detailed amenities level of service analysis was performed. During field work amenity condition was recorded on a Good, Fair, or Poor scale. During this analysis, it was noted that with the exception of the indoor facilities and the golf course, the average scores were all Below Average/Not Meeting Expectations. The average scores per facility type were calculated as follows:

	<u>Average Score</u>
Community Parks	1.8
Neighborhood Parks	1.2
Sports Facilities	1.6
Nature Preserves	1.7
Multipurpose Trails	1.4
Boat Ramps/Fishing Piers	1.4
Community Center	2.3
Swimming Pools	3.0
Weight Lifting Center	2.7
Golf Courses	2.3

Deficiencies were noted in a variety of areas and have been noted on the write ups for the individual parks in the Existing Conditions Report.

## IV. Key Issues

### A. Triangulation Matrix

Key issues and themes for focus were identified using a number of tools, including review of existing plans and documents, focus groups, stakeholder meetings, a community survey, the leadership summit, leadership interviews, inventory and level of service analysis, and staff/project team input. The information gathered from these sources was evaluated, and the following recommendations and action plans were developed.

The findings are summarized on the **Key Issues Matrix**, which captures all of the key issues that surfaced during the Master Plan process and prioritizes them on one matrix. The key issues were placed into categories on the matrix:

- a) Priority
- b) Opportunity to Improve
- ☐ Left Blank means the issue did not come up or wasn't addressed in that venue


The qualitative data planning tools used to determine the priority of key issues include:

1. Consultant team's expertise
2. Staff input
3. Public forum input
4. Leadership Summit
5. Leadership Interviews

The quantitative data planning tools used to determine the priority of the key issues include:

1. Community Survey
2. Existing planning documents
3. Facility Assessment/LOS

Preliminary recommendations are listed for each key issue and presented to the Parks and Recreation project team to gather input on the prioritization of the final recommendations and action plans. The Key Issues Matrix summarizes the areas that need immediate attention and determine the direction of the implementation of recommendations in the Master Plan.

2018 Data Source	Qualitative Data					Quantitative Data		
	Consultant Team	Staff Input	Public Input	Leadership Summit	Leadership Interviews	Community Survey	Other County Documents	Facility Assessment/LOS
 <p><b>Key Issue - Rating Scale</b></p> <p>a - priority b - opportunity to improve c - minor or future issue blank means the issue didn't come up or wasn't addressed</p>								
<b>Organizational</b>								
Perceived lack of marketing and communication of activities and facilities	a	a	a		a	a		
Perceived lack of communication between County and Municipalities	a	a	a		a			
Partnerships are vital to accomplishing mission	a	a	a	a	a			a
Schools can provide needed recreation and open spaces	a	a	a	a	a	a		a
Better use of technology and social media	a	a	a	a	a	a		
Safety and security identified as a barrier to use and participation	a	a	a	a	a			
Staffing lost to other departments because a higher pay	a	a		a				
Inadquate staffing creates maintenance vs improvement scenario	a	a	a	a	a	a		a
<b>Programs and Service Delivery</b>								
Programs and services not distributed equally throughout County	a	a	a			a		
Teens identified as underserved population	a	a	a			a		
Girls athletic programming identified as a priority	a	a	a			a		
Events identified as priority for additional programming	a	a	a			a		
Walking for fitness and health is a top activity	a	a	a			a		
Youth sports perceived as not a priority and disjointed	a	a	a			a		
Involve local businesses to assist with providing program opportunities	a	a	a	a	a	a		
Health and wellness programs and activities a priority - seniors and youth	a	a	a	a	a	a		
Increase overall number of program opportunities	a	a	a	a	a	a		
<b>Facilities and Amenities</b>								
Aging infrastructure and amenities	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a
Condition and maintenance of park major factor affecting use	a	a	a	a		a	a	a
Connections with bike paths and walking trails	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a
Lack of gym space for athletics and activities	a	a	a		a	a	a	a
No hard surface oval track in the county for public	a	a	a		a	a	a	a
Desire for an off leash dog park	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a
Accessibility identified as a community need	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a
Parking issues identified as a barrier for participation	a	a	a			a	a	a
Restrooms identified as a barrier for participation	a	a	a			a	a	a
<b>Level of Service</b>								
Identified gaps to service from LOS analysis	a	a	a			a	a	a
County has desire for additional open sapce and parks				a	a	a	a	a
Schools available to assist in filling gaps in gyms and athletic fields	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a
Current community center reverting back to school system	a	a						a
Community desires a walkable and bikeable experience	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a
Existing infrastructure provide opportunities for connectivity	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a
Aquatic center in need of repairs and preventative maintenance	a	a			a	a		a
Neighborhood parks in need of the most improvement to make them "usable"	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a
Sports facilities are older and showing age	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a
Boating and fishing facilities well used and range widely in condition	a	a		a		a	a	a
Parks and facilities concentrated east of I-95 and south of I-16	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a
<b>Finance</b>								
Community's ability to handle user fee	a	a	a	a	a	a		
Need to find alternative funding opportunities	a	a	a	a	a	a		
County needs parks and recreation facilities improvements and additions	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a
SPLOST funding good for new facilities	a	a	a	a	a	a		
Current revenues go back into the General Fund	a	a			a	a		

## V. Recommendations and Action Plans

### A. Recommendations

After analyzing the issues that resulted from this process, including the Key Issues Matrix, qualitative and quantitative data, inventory of existing assets, Level of Service analyses, citizen surveys, the leadership summit, interviews with elected officials, and stakeholder and public input, a variety of recommended goals and objectives were developed to provide guidance for the improvement of parks, recreation facilities, and greenways, trails, and bike paths in Chatham County. These recommendations focus on enhancing public recreation in the County through improvements to existing park facilities and recreation amenities, increased organizational efficiency, improved programming and service delivery, and expanded financial opportunities.



## Chatham County Parks & Recreation Action Plan



### Goal 1:

#### Improve Facilities and Amenities

- Support the expansion of greenways, bike paths and trails connectivity
- Continue to maintain and improve existing facilities
- Expand open space and parks
- Make improvement to or replace some existing facilities and amenities or develop new amenities at existing parks based on level of service analysis
- Continue to improve ADA accessibility at all facilities
- Upgrade convenience and customer service amenities to existing facilities
- Explore options for parking at parks and popular venues



### Goal 2:

#### Continue to Improve Organizational Efficiencies

- Build on existing and look for opportunities to increase appropriate partnerships within the County
- Staff appropriately to meet current demand and maintain established quality of service
- Continue to enhance and improve internal and external communication regarding Department activities and services
- Continue to engage the County Municipalities



### Goal 3:

#### Continue to Improve Programs/Service Delivery

- Work with other service providers to develop programs and services to meet demand and trends
- Develop additional recreational programs and services
- Explore opportunities to increase the number of community events based on demand and trends
- Partner with Municipalities program and services



### Goal 4:

#### Increase Financial Opportunities

- Explore additional funding options
- Pursue grant and philanthropic opportunities
- Explore opportunities to increase sponsorships
- Explore Developing and Implementing Cost Recovery and Pricing Philosophy and Practice

## **Goal 1: Improve Facilities and Amenities**

### **Objective 1.1 – Expand greenways, bike paths and trails connectivity**

Another high priority from the public engagement process was the desire for expanded and improved connectivity of the existing trails and public pathway system. The Department should continue working with the other agencies and county municipalities as it looks to develop and expand greenways, bike paths, and trails that regionally connect communities, neighborhoods, schools, and parks.

Using the gap analysis and current existing and planned greenways, the Department should make trails and greenways that link the regional system to existing and future parks and facilities a priority. These linkages can provide the “last mile” for citizens and visitors to connect to the County’s parks system.

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

- Development and implementation of a wayfinding signage program for pedestrians and cyclists: The program should cover signage standards, directional and distance signage, maps, and the use of apps. The wayfinding system will help connect residents and visitors to greenways, bike paths, and trails, as well as create an awareness of these amenities. These should all be accomplished in coordination with the county-wide greenways development planning.

### **Objective 1.2 – Continue to maintain and improve existing facilities**

The top factor identified by survey respondents that would increase their use of facilities was the condition and maintenance of parks and amenities. The Department has done an excellent job with routine maintenance; however, asset replacement and upgrades to amenities need to be addressed. The age and usage of many facilities present additional challenges in maintaining and upgrading these facilities and amenities. The Department currently has several projects underway or in the planning stages. Existing plans and projects identified in the Capital Improvement Plan should continue to be implemented. Additionally, the Existing Conditions Report should be used to address the deferred maintenance backlog and create an asset replacement schedule that will address the low scoring components identified as part of the inventory. These plans should be reviewed annually and updated as needed.

One way to improve the existing parks and the park system in general is to widen the user group for each park site by providing secondary facilities that complement and expand the primary use. One example is that boat ramp sites could include picnic shelters, fishing docks, or water-edge trails. Based on the Existing Conditions Report, the majority of existing parks scored below acceptable levels: Community Park average 1.8 and Neighborhood Parks average 1.2. The Department should look to implement existing individual park master plans or where not in place develop individual park master plans to address current community needs.

The County currently has 10 facilities offering access to the coastal waters for boating and fishing. These are unique facilities that attract visitors and recreational opportunities for residents. These facilities are in various stages of maintenance. Based on the inventory from the master plan, a maintenance plan should be developed for these facilities to address their condition and level of maintenance.

The Department should maintain the GIS database for parks and trails assets using the current inventory from the Master Plan. As new parks, trails, and amenities are added or existing assets are upgraded, replaced, or repurposed, the GIS database should be updated to reflect those changes and current condition of assets.

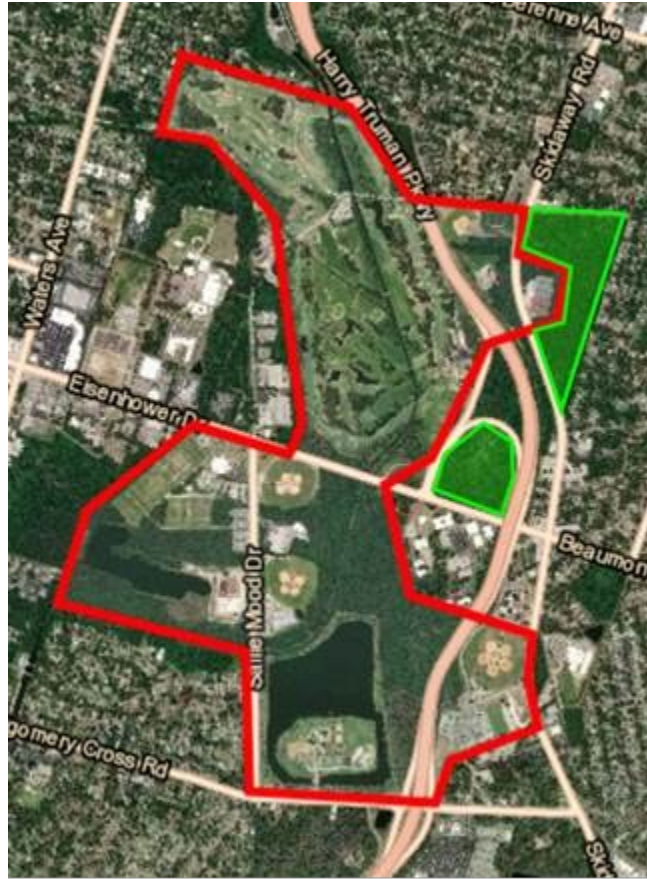
### **Objective 1.3 – Expand open space and parks**

A top priority of leadership interviews, survey respondents, focus groups, and other public engagement respondents was the expansion of open spaces and parks in Chatham County. Based on the LOS analysis, there are community parks within a 15 minute drive of 95 percent of the County’s population. While there is a community perception that additional park land is needed, in many cases park land is provided by the municipalities in the county. Additionally, the County has Joint Use Agreements with SCCPSS. These should be reviewed and updated to provide maximum for use of the facilities, and reciprocity, thus opening school grounds for community access. Joint use should be expanded where appropriate.

Comparing Chatham County to other communities reporting in the NRPA 2018 Agency Performance Report, the national average of population served by a park is 1 park for every 4,451 residents. In 2018, Chatham County is providing 1 park for every 11,257 residents. This is 6,806 residents greater than the average community. The municipalities within the county provide an additional 79 parks. As development expands west of I-95 and traffic increases, the percentage of the County’s population within easy access of Community Parks will decrease. As this occurs, the County, in conjunction with the local municipalities, should re-examine the LOS in these areas.

Park equity was another top priority from leadership interviews, survey respondents, focus groups, and other public engagement respondents. The addition of an aquatic facility on the west side and other new “sports” facilities were also top priorities. To address these priorities, the project team looked at unincorporated areas in the county and the heat map to identify which neighborhoods or areas can be targeted to increase park equity. The following areas are potential to address the issue:

- The Georgetown/King George Boulevard area would be one area to consider based on increased population and gaps in the system.
- The areas around Berwick and south of Garden City/River Road area.
- Consider a joint master planning approach for the Sallie Mood/Truman corridor complexes to include a second aquatic center. The plan should include the City of Poolers and Bloomingdale. This area should include City-owned areas of Bacon Park Forest and the Bacon Park Tract.



**Objective 1.4 – Improve existing facilities and amenities and consider expanding current park features based on level of service analysis**

Demand for usage of Chatham County parks, trails, and facilities continues to grow, and the Department should look for opportunities to add new park sites and recreation amenities to enhance the experience for users. Other opportunities exist to expand the user base of individual parks by adding secondary uses that support the primary park use. This will create more activity at the parks and potentially expand the times of day that the site is active.

Additionally, based on the level of service analysis, the Department should look for opportunities to add new components at existing parks where the level of service may be below the desired threshold. Refer to the Existing Conditions Report section of the Master Plan for those areas identified most in need of improvement on a park by park basis.

A high priority from the leadership interviews, focus groups, and survey respondents was the need for additional indoor recreation space, specifically gym space. Currently, the limited space does not allow for girls to have their own athletic leagues in basketball and volleyball.



The Aquatic Center is well used and is an asset for the community. It is in need of general maintenance repairs that require shutting down the facility to accomplish the maintenance. Repairs to the Aquatic Center will enhance the experience for users and extend the life of the facility. Leadership interviews, focus group participants, and survey respondents indicated the need for a second aquatic facility to serve the county. To verify the need and desire from the community, a facility-specific needs assessment should be conducted. The needs assessment will include a feasibility study, program identification, revenue potential, and funding options for design, construction, operations, and maintenance.

Leadership interviews, focus group participants, and survey respondents identified addressing conditions of existing neighborhood parks and public-private ownership issues as priorities. Using the inventory and assessment, the Department should develop a schedule to address the low scoring components and amenities at each park. Low-scoring parks with a threshold of 1.5 and below need extensive renovations to make them functional. For those parks, a master plan and site design process is recommended to comprehensively address the required program elements and incorporate the features to remain. Medium-scoring parks with a threshold of 1.5 to 2.5 need significant equipment and/or site improvements to certain areas of the park. For those parks, a partial master plan and site design process may be indicated depending on the extent to which park that is impacted. Finally, high-scoring parks likely need targeted equipment replacement which can be addressed through the Capital Improvement Plan.

Top priority parks, sports facilities, and boat ramps with an average score of 1.1 or less:

- McQueen Island Rails to Trails
- Frank O Williamson Lake
- JC Cannon Fields
- Ogeechee Farms
- Pin Point
- Westlake
- Ambuc Park
- Hodge Turner Ballfield
- Frank Downing Fishing Pier
- Lazaretto Creek
- Thunderbolt Boat Ramp

Sports facilities are aging, overused, and need upgrades. Many facilities have been reconfigured to meet current demand. This has created additional stress on the field as they are not able to recover from previous seasons. Additionally, the need for hard surface, oval tracks was identified as a need. The County should continue to pursue Joint Use Agreements with the School District and Savannah State University to use existing tracks. Additionally, the inventory and assessment of each sports facility indicate that, based on site use, some may require expanded improvements such as trails and playgrounds to create new park features that complement the exclusive field sports use.

Boating facilities are well used and need upgrades. These facilities are in various stages of maintenance. Based on the inventory from the master plan, a maintenance plan should be developed for these facilities to address their condition and level of maintenance. Additionally, the inventory and assessment of some boating facilities indicate that, based on site use, they may require expanded passive park improvements such as pavilions and paths to create new park features that complement the exclusive boating use.

The Frank Murray Community Center is reverting back to SCCPSS in 2018. The County has obtained the former Island Library building to convert into a community center. This building will need to be renovated and upgraded to meet ADA requirements. In addition to renovating the existing library building to a community center, leadership interviews, public engagement, and survey responses indicated an interest in the development of a new recreation center and fieldhouse. To verify the need and desire from the community, a formal needs assessment should be conducted. The needs assessment should include a feasibility study, program identification, revenue potential, and funding options for design, construction, operations, and maintenance.

There is also a desire in the community to develop an off-leash dog park either at an existing park or as part of another identified opportunity site. Consider the opportunity to partner with the municipalities in the County for the development of dog parks.

Most importantly, as the County looks to develop new amenities or upgrade existing amenities, it must consider the impacts to neighborhoods as well as safety and security concerns. Enforcement of rules and regulations must remain a priority.

**Objective 1.5 – Continue to improve ADA accessibility at all facilities**

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

The Department should continue to inspect existing facilities, conduct self-evaluations, and update its transition plan as needed to continue to improve accessibility for all citizens.

**Objective 1.6 – Upgrade convenience and customer service amenities to existing facilities**

As the Department upgrades and improves existing facilities, it should explore opportunities to add shade, storage, restrooms, drinking fountains/water bottle filling stations, security lighting, public art, and other amenities appropriately at existing facilities.

**Objective 1.7 – Explore options parking at parks and popular venues**

In general, parking was an issue that was identified at most of the focus groups and public meetings. The Department should continue to monitor parking during peak usage times and explore the need to improve or develop parking plans to accommodate peak usage or events. Existing parking at facilities should be evaluated for reconfiguration for more efficient use. Another consideration would be to explore shared parking with neighboring facilities and possible alternative transportation options to reduce parking demand. Parking surfaces were also identified as an issue. Many are rutted, hold water, and do not have designated spaces.

## **Goal 2: Continue to Improve Organizational Efficiencies**

### **Objective 2.1 – Build on existing and look for opportunities to increase appropriate partnerships within the County**

The Chatham County Parks and Recreation Department currently partners with a number of youth serving organizations, agencies, and businesses to provide programs and activities to the community. The Department also partners with SCCPSS through Joint Use Agreements to provide open space and use of school facilities for the community. The Department should continue to explore additional opportunities as well as build on existing partnerships. Where not already in place, the Department should ensure that all existing and future partnerships are accurately documented in a signed partnership agreement.

There are eight municipalities in Chatham County that provide parks, trails, facilities, and amenities. The County should continue working with the municipalities for the delivery of parks and services to the citizens. Collaboration with county-wide and regional greenway efforts are recommended. To eliminate duplication of facilities and services, the County should develop agreements by which it builds facilities and amenities and the municipalities operate and maintain them.

There are several volunteer-based youth athletic organizations servicing young people in the county. The Department should continue working with these youth athletic organizations and provide training and expertise to help them be successful.

In addition, there are several local and regional greenways efforts that can be leveraged by the County to achieve increased trail opportunities. Recommended partnerships with Healthy Savannah, Bike Walk Savannah (formerly the Savannah Bicycle Campaign), the Friends of the Tide to Town Greenway, East Coast Greenway, and Coastal Georgia Greenway will help to reinforce community priorities with existing and proposed facilities.

### **Objective 2.2 – Staff appropriately to meet current demand and maintain established quality of service**

As recommendations in the Master Plan for expanded programs, services, new facilities, greenways, bike paths and trails, parks, and facility upgrades are implemented, it will be vital for the County to increase staffing levels as the Department's responsibilities grow. This will require new positions in both recreation programming and facility maintenance. Additionally, the use of contractual part-time and seasonal employees could be considered to ensure that the practice is meeting the needs of the Department and the customers being served.

The Department is currently experiencing a loss of skilled staff in the Parks Division. Staff are leaving to go to other departments with higher pay rates for comparative positions. The County should conduct a pay study with other departments and private contractors to reduce loss of skilled personnel and to be competitive in the work environment.

### **Objective 2.3 – Continue to enhance and improve internal and external communication regarding Department activities and services**

The Department currently does a good job of promoting its programs and activities through its website, flyers, and social media. When asked how they prefer to receive their information from the County, survey respondents noted that local media, the internet/website, and social media were the best means. To continue to be successful, the Department should develop a marketing plan that will guide communication and promotion of its activities and facilities. Such a marketing effort will create greater awareness of county recreation offerings, and should include branding for the Department, use of social media, and development of the Department website and partnership opportunities. If developed, the Marketing Plan should be updated every five years or as needed and include marketing strategies that incorporate the efforts of partner departments, other local parks and recreation departments, and projects.

As part of the Marketing Plan, the Department should evaluate wayfinding signage to facilities on roadway, pathways, and within parks. The Department should develop signage standards for parks and trails for identification and providing measured distances and loops. Improved wayfinding signage will contribute to a greater sense of connectivity to parks, facilities, and pathways.

Additionally, the Department should consider developing park stewardship groups and activities to foster committed and long-term broad-based support for investment in civic assets. Communities nationwide who are involved in the park stewardship movement have found that physical improvements to parks are only part of what is required to transform a park. Local citizens caring for parks are key to success. Park stewards create grassroots-level “eyes on the park,” support on-going maintenance and reinforce safety and security while cultivating, celebrating, and supporting diverse groups to care for parks and facilities.

### **Objective 2.4 – Continue to engage the County Municipalities**

The Department’s outreach and engagement efforts should continue to use a variety of methods to engage the community and the municipalities in the County in current and future parks, recreation, and trails planning efforts. Chatham County is a diverse recreation-based community, and the Department must continue its current efforts to promote and create awareness of the impact that these amenities have on the community as well as the public health benefits. As such, it is important to provide accessible, well maintained open spaces to help improve the health and vitality of the community.

## **Goal 3: Continue to Improve Programs and Service Delivery**

### **Objective 3.1 – Work with other service providers to develop programs and services to meet demand and trends**

Leadership interviews and focus group participants indicated that programs and services are not equally distributed throughout the county. Many programs and services are provided by youth organizations or other service providers. The Department should continue to evaluate programs and services, and work with other municipal government agencies to provide recreational opportunities and services for county residents.

As popularity in program offerings and activities increases, continue to look for opportunities to expand programs while working with the other service providers within the county, and formalize these agreements in writing. Continue to expand on the Joint Use Agreements with SCCPSS and municipalities that provide both open space and amenities for the community but also facility space for additional programming to neighborhoods and underserved portions of the county.

**Objective 3.2 – Develop additional recreational programs and services**

Girls’ athletics were identified as a top priority area for development of programming and services. Lack of available facilities is a major contributing factor. The County needs to continue working with SCCPSS and Parks and Recreation Departments in municipalities within the County to fill the gap in girls’ athletic opportunities.

The Department should continue to look for opportunities to expand recreational programs and activities based on community demand and current trends. The community would like to see nature/environmental and fitness and wellness programs expanded, as well as additional programs for special needs, teens, and seniors.

The Department should continue to monitor recreational trends and community needs to stay current with programming and demand. As new programs and services are developed and implemented, continue to create a balance between passive and active recreation.

**Objective 3.3 – Explore opportunities to increase the number of community events based on demand and trends**

Increased community events were a priority for focus group participants and survey respondents. The Department should continue to look for opportunities to expand neighborhood and community special events. Working with the municipalities in the county and neighborhood groups, the Department can help facilitate the growth of community events throughout the county. In order to ensure that the events reflect the diversity of the community, the Department should continue to engage the community in event development.

**Objective 3.4 – Partner with Municipalities to provide programs and services**

As part of the master planning process, key leaders from the eight municipalities and SCCPSS were brought together for a leadership summit. This summit served to identify common goals, visions, and opportunities within the county, and develop lines of communication. These meetings should continue as a way of providing programs and services to the community and not duplicating services. The Department should serve as the convener of these meetings.

**Goal 4: Increase Financial Opportunities**

**Objective 4.1 – Explore additional funding options**

The County currently uses SPLOST funding for large capital projects. The next cycle of funding will be available in 2019, and the County will pursue funding for future projects. As identified through the master planning process, the County has the ability to construct facilities and park amenities, while the local governments have the ability to operate and maintain them. This partnership model should be pursued to accomplish facility goals from the Master Plan.

The County currently does not assess a developer impact fee for new construction that creates additional users of parks and facilities. The implementation of an impact fees for development in unincorporated portions of the county could supplement SPLOST funding for large capital projects.

In November of 2018, voters had an opportunity to approve the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Act. This legislation will re-appropriate current state tax revenue to outdoor recreation. If passed, this will provide additional funding to the County for outdoor recreation projects.

Other funding strategy options include donations, grants, and sponsorships. These are more short term, specific to a project or amenity, and normally require some matching funds. These strategies are a great source of supplemental funds but are not a long term solution.

For long term funding for park maintenance, the County could consider a transient tax that would tax visitors who stay in hotels, bed and breakfasts, and short term rentals (i.e. Airbnb). This would tax visitors who are using parks and trails, increasing maintenance, and relieving residents of some of the burden.

#### **Objective 4.2 – Pursue grant and philanthropic opportunities**

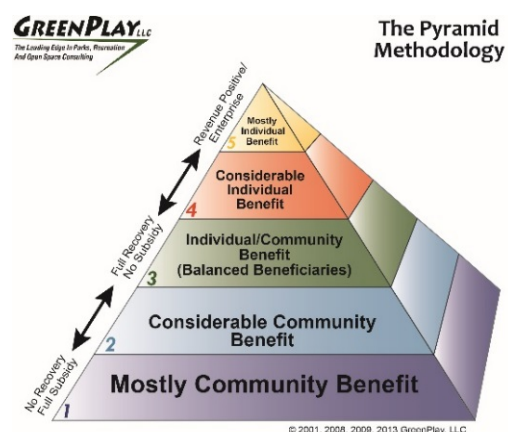
The Department currently takes advantage of grant opportunities available for programming and facility improvements. The Department should continue to pursue any and all grant opportunities at the federal, state, regional, and local levels. To accomplish this, the Department should continue contracting with a dedicated grant writer to research, submit, and track such grants.

#### **Objective 4.3 – Explore opportunities to increase sponsorships**

The Department currently has sponsorship arrangements for special events, programs, and activities, and it should continue to explore additional sponsorship opportunities and build on existing sponsorships. All existing and future sponsorships should be evaluated to ensure that they are accurately portrayed in a signed sponsorship agreement.

#### **Objective 4.4 –Explore Developing and Implementing Cost Recovery and Pricing Philosophy and Practice**

The Department currently tracks its expenses and revenues (cost recovery) for programs and events. The Department should pursue a formal resource allocation and cost recovery philosophy, model, and policy that is grounded in the values, vision, and mission of Chatham County. The GreenPlay team conducted a workshop for staff on the Pyramid Methodology and provided resource materials for the Department. The Department should consider developing a pricing methodology that reflects the community's values, while generating revenues to help sustain Chatham County facilities, parks, programs, and services. As part of the policy, the current scholarship program should be expanded and publicized to allow for inclusion and equity for all participants and families.



## B. Action Plan, Cost Estimates, and Prioritization

The following Goals, Objectives, and Action Items were developed from public input, surveys, intercept surveys, inventory, level of service analysis, issues feedback, and all of the information gathered during the master planning process. The primary focus is for Chatham County to build upon its existing assets, and to maintain, sustain, and improve parks, recreation, and trails/bike paths. All cost estimates are in 2018 figures where applicable. Most capital and operational cost estimates are dependent on the extent of the enhancements and improvements determined. The Operational Budget Impact is a dollar range calculated as the annual number of hours estimated multiplied by an average hourly rate of \$24 per hour to cover all levels of staff including benefits.

Timeframe designations recommended to complete tasks are noted as:

- Short-term (up to 3 years)
- Mid-term (4-6 years)
- Long-term (7-10 years)
- Ongoing (occurs on a continuous basis)



## Priority Recommendations

<b>Recommendation P-1.1</b> <i>Expand open space and parks</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>P-1.1.a</b> Explore opportunities to acquire open space identified in the 2018 Parks and Recreation Master Plan to provide equitable distribution throughout the county and service to low or no services areas. Prioritize areas in the west county.	A range of \$12,000 - \$100,000 depending on location, condition, and existence of site elements	Additional staff for maintenance (\$25,000 - \$50,000) is necessary for any new developed park land	Ongoing
<b>P-1.1.b</b> Expand the Joint Use Agreements with SCCPSS and the municipalities in the county to provide open space and parks to the community.	Cost will vary based on specific projects	Additional staff for maintenance (\$2,500 - \$5,000) is necessary for any new developed park land	Short-Term
<b>Recommendation P-1.2:</b> <i>Support expansion of greenways, bike paths, and trails connectivity</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>P-1.2.a</b> Continue working with other agencies and the municipalities in the county to provide connectivity to neighborhoods, schools, parks and the community.	State road Class 1: \$520,000/mile Local road Class 1: \$400,000/mile Off-road greenway: \$1,300,000/mile	Additional staff for maintenance (\$3,000 - \$5,000) is necessary for any new developed park land	Short-Term
<b>Recommendation P-1.3:</b> <i>Make improvements to or replace some existing facilities and amenities or develop new amenities at existing parks based on current level of service analysis</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>P-1.3.a</b> Develop and implement a schedule to make needed maintenance repairs to the Aquatic Center.	Development of annual maintenance schedule: Cost for third-party consultant \$30,000-\$50,000	Staff time for maintenance and contract management for repairs (\$5,000 - \$7,500)	Short-Term

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
<b>P-1.3.b</b> Conduct a feasibility study to verify the community's desire for a new recreation center and the best location in the county, and develop the program components of the facility.	Will vary based on design and approach used Average \$65,000	Additional operational and maintenance staff (\$250,000 - \$300,000) is necessary for a new recreation center	Short-Term
<b>P-1.3.c</b> Conduct a feasibility study to verify the community's desire for a new aquatic center and the best location in the county, and develop the program components of the facility.	Will vary based on location, design and approach used Average \$80,000	Same staff utilized plus (\$60,000 - \$80,000) for additional leisure pool staff	Short-Term
<b>P-1.3.d</b> Based on the Inventory and LOS recommendations, develop individual park master plans to address low scoring components and repurpose spaces for better usage. Top priority parks: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Retha Mae McCoy (fka Runaway Point)</li> <li>2. Wilmington Island Park</li> <li>3. Hodge Turner Neighborhood Park</li> </ol>	Master planning costs are \$25,000 - \$100,000 a park depending on park size and complexity	Potential Additional staff for operations and maintenance (\$35,000 - \$50,000) based on what is each park master plans	Short-Term Mid-Term
<b>P-1.3.e</b> Implement improvements based on master planning (P-1.3.d) to address the findings of the inventory and assessment from the master plan.  Facilities included are those with average facility scores that are Below Average/Not Meeting Expectations: Community Parks, Neighborhood Parks, Sports Facilities, Nature Preserves, Multi-purpose Trails, Boat Ramps/Fishing Piers	Capital cost estimates per park should be included in each master planning process  For general budgeting purposes, <b>Neighborhood Park</b> Improvements are \$500K - \$1M per park; <b>Community Park</b> Improvements are \$1.25M - \$8M per park	Potential additional staff or contact management (\$10,000 – \$25,000) for maintenance per park	Short-Term

<p>Top priority parks, sports facilities and boat ramps with an average score of 1.1 or less:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• McQueen Island Rails to Trails</li> <li>• Frank O Williamson Lake</li> <li>• JC Cannon Fields</li> <li>• Ogeechee Farms</li> <li>• Pin Point</li> <li>• Westlake</li> <li>• Ambuc Park</li> <li>• Hodge Turner Park and Ballfield</li> <li>• Frank Downing Fishing Pier</li> <li>• Lazaretto Creek</li> <li>• Thunderbolt Boat Ramp</li> </ul>	<p><b>Sports Facility</b> Improvements are \$2M - \$4M per facilities;</p> <p><b>Multi-use Trails</b> are \$100K - \$150K per mile;</p> <p><b>Nature Preserves</b> are \$200K - \$500K per acre;</p> <p><b>Boat Ramps/ Fishing Pier</b> \$200,000 - \$3M (depending on level of improvements necessary)</p>		
<p><b>Recommendation P-1.4:</b> <i>Continue to enhance and improve internal and external communication regarding department activities and services</i></p>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<p><b>P-1.4.a</b> Develop a marketing plan to promote department programs, services, and parks.</p>	\$0	Staff Time (\$25,000) or (\$40,000) to hire consultant	Short-Term
<p><b>Recommendation P-1.5:</b> <i>Develop additional recreational opportunities</i></p>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<p><b>P-1.5.a</b> Explore ways to increase recreational opportunities based on community demand and current trends.</p>	\$0	Staff time to plan with instructors conducting programs including required supplies (\$8,000 - \$12,000)	Short-Term
<p><b>Recommendation P-1.6:</b> <i>Explore additional funding options</i></p>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<p><b>P-1.6.a</b> Develop and implement a strategy to seek alternative funding sources that includes donations, grants, sponsorships, and tax initiatives.</p>	\$0	Staff Time or hire a part-time grant writer (\$20,000 - \$30,000)	Short-Term

<b>P-1.6.b</b> Continue to pursue sports tourism events that create positive economic impact and generate revenue from hosted events.	\$0	Staff Time (\$5,000)	Short-Term
<b>Recommendation P-1.7:</b> <i>Build on existing and look for opportunities to increase appropriate partnerships within the County</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>P-1.7.a</b> Develop and employ a strategy to increase and pursue additional partnerships with local youth athletic organizations, municipal parks and recreation departments, and SCCPSS to provide parks, trails, facilities, programs, and services.	May vary based on project and approach	Staff Time (\$5,000 - \$7,500)	Short-Term

## Secondary Goals, Objectives, and Action Steps

### Goal 1: Improve Facilities and Amenities

<b>Objective 1.1:</b> <i>Expand greenways, bike paths, and trails connectivity</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>1.1.a</b> Continue working with other departments and municipalities to develop and expand greenways, bike paths, and trails to connect communities, neighborhoods, and parks.	Recommend this as a County-wide policy action item. Parks Department would support the Transportation Department in implementation	Potential additional staff or contract management (\$5,000 - \$8,000) for maintenance of new trails per mile annually	Ongoing
<b>1.1.b</b> Consider barriers to service when addressing connectivity with greenways, bike paths, and trails.	\$0	None	Ongoing
<b>1.1.c</b> Develop and implement a wayfinding program that covers signage standards, directional and distance signage, maps, and the use of apps.	Major trailhead/ trail junction signage: \$10,000 per sign Secondary and directional signage: \$3,000 – \$5,000/sign	Staff Time (\$5,000)	Mid-Term

**Objective 1.2***Continue to maintain and improve existing facilities and amenities*

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>1.2.a</b> Address low scoring components and amenities from the 2018 Parks and Recreation Master Plan inventory by upgrading, replacing, or repurposing components or amenities where appropriate.  Facilities included are those with average facility scores of 1.8 and better: Community Center, Swimming Pool, Weight Lifting Center, and Golf Course.	Cost for third-party assessment and due diligence \$30,000-\$50,000  Capital cost estimates per facility should be included in each master planning process	Staff time or contract management (\$8,000 - \$12,000)	Ongoing
<b>1.2.b</b> Develop a maintenance plan and schedule to address the condition and maintenance of the County's boat ramps and access points to the coastal waters.	Will vary based on condition and scope of project	Staff time (\$5,000)	Mid-Term
<b>1.2.c</b> Develop an asset replacement schedule to monitor assets and keep replacement up to date based on recurring inventory updates and assessments.	Will vary based on asset	Staff time (\$5,000)	Ongoing
<b>1.2.d</b> Maintain GIS database for parks and trails assets by continuing to build on GIS dataset from the Master Plan inventory and include new or additional amenities or components.	\$0	Staff time (\$7,500)	Ongoing

**Objective 1.3:**

*Make improvements to or replace some existing facilities and amenities or develop new amenities at existing parks based on current level of service analysis*

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>1.3.a</b> Look for opportunities to work with county municipalities or develop new off-leash dog parks at an existing park or as part of another identified opportunity site.	Cost per acre \$150,000/ acre	Additional staff (\$10,000) for maintenance	Short-Term
<b>1.3.b</b> Develop and implement a renovation plan for the existing sports facilities using the inventory and conditions report from the master plan that addresses needed repairs and upgrades for modernization and efficiencies, and implement the current Master Plan.	Master planning costs are \$25,000 - \$100,000 park depending on park size and complexity. Capital cost estimates per facility should be included in each master planning process	Staff Time (\$5,000 - \$7,500)	Mid-Term
<b>1.3.c</b> Explore opportunities to provide access to a hard surface track for community programs. Pursue agreements with local secondary and post-secondary educational facilities to use existing facilities.  As part of the redevelopment of existing sports facilities or new facilities, include a 400 meter track as part of the facilities provided.	Only if a new facility is needed  400 m Track - \$600,000 - \$1M Track (Latex surface with channel drain) - \$500K-\$550K Field Events - \$60K - \$75K Synthetic Field - \$7.50- \$8/sf Natural - \$3.50 - 4.50/sf depending on soil profile needed	Staff Time and maintenance (\$5,000 - \$7,500)	Short-Term
<b>1.3.d</b> Consider safety, security, lighting, and neighborhood impacts when developing and installing new park amenities.	\$0	Staff Time (\$5,000)	Short-Term



<b>Objective 1.4:</b> <i>Continue to improve ADA accessibility at all facilities</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>1.4.a</b> Continue to inspect facilities for accessibility challenges and improve access for all citizens.	Will vary based on location and amenity	Staff time for inspections, upgrades or contract management (\$5,000 - \$7,500)	Ongoing
<b>1.4.b</b> Review and update the ADA Accessibility Transition Plan as needed.	\$0	Staff Time (\$3,000)	Ongoing
<b>Objective 1.5:</b> <i>Upgrade convenience and customer service amenities to existing facilities</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>1.5.a</b> Explore opportunities to add restrooms, drinking fountains/water filling stations, shade, storage, public art, seating, etc. appropriately at existing parks and facilities.	Include these types of amenities within the master planning process for each park and facility	Additional staff (\$30,000 - \$40,000) for maintenance	Mid-Term
<b>Objective 1.6:</b> <i>Explore options to improve parking at parks and popular venues</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>1.6.a</b> Explore the need to improve and potentially add additional parking at appropriate facilities and parks.	Cost per parking space: \$3,000 per parking space for asphalt parking lot with curb and gutter (no lighting)	Additional staff or contract management (\$5,000 - \$8,000) for maintenance	Mid-Term
<b>1.6.a</b> Renovate or replace existing parking surfaces to reduce maintenance and provide for more efficient parking. Address low areas prone to flooding and standing water.	Cost per renovated asphalt parking space: \$500 - \$1,000/parking space	None – Potentially decrease expenses	Long-Term

## Goal 2: Continue to Improve Organizational Efficiencies

<b>Objective 2.1:</b>			
<i>Build on existing and look for opportunities to increase appropriate partnerships within the community</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>2.1.a</b> Work with other municipalities and the local schools to provide open space, recreation amenities, and programs to the community.	\$0	Staff Time (\$2,500 - \$5,000) Potential increased revenue or decreased expenses	Ongoing
<b>2.1.b</b> Continue to ensure all that existing and future partnerships are accurately portrayed in a signed agreement.	\$0	Staff Time (\$2,500 - \$3,500)	Short-Term
<b>Objective 2.2:</b>			
<i>Staff appropriately to meet current demand and maintain established quality of service</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>2.2.a</b> Hire and train staff for current and future park, facilities, and greenway/trails/bike path maintenance demands.	\$0	Staff Time (\$2,500 - \$3,000)	Short-Term
<b>2.2.b</b> Hire, conduct orientation with, and train staff for current and future recreation programming and facility usage demands.	\$0	Staff Time (\$2,500 - \$3,000)	Mid-Term
<b>2.2.c</b> Assess the advantages and disadvantages of using contractual services for part time, instructional, and seasonal staff.	\$0	Staff Time (\$5,000 - \$7,500)	Mid-Term
<b>2.2.d</b> Conduct a pay study, looking at other County departments and the other municipalities departments to potentially reduce loss of skilled staff and be competitive in the region.	\$0	Staff Time (\$3,000 - \$4,000)	Mid-Term

**Objective 2.3:**

*Continue to enhance and improve internal and external communication regarding department activities and services*

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>2.3.a</b> Develop a marketing plan for the Department that includes but is not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Branding of the Department</li> <li>• Wayfinding and signage standards</li> <li>• Increased use of social media</li> <li>• Use and development of the Department's website</li> <li>• Partnership opportunities</li> </ul>	\$0	Staff Time (\$25,000) or \$40,000 to hire consultant	Mid-Term
<b>2.3.b</b> Review marketing plan annually. Update the marketing plan every five years.	\$0	Staff Time (\$5,000)	Ongoing
<b>2.3.c</b> Continue to engage the community in current and future parks, recreation, and open space planning efforts. Form Park Stewardship Groups to create "eyes on the park" and address on-going maintenance and security concerns.	\$0	Staff Time (\$5,000 - \$8,000)	Ongoing
<b>2.3.d</b> Continue to promote and create awareness of the programs and activities through the County website and social media, and expand the use of technology department wide such as expanded mobile applications, online registration, and facility reservations.	Will vary based on the software requirements and application.	Staff Time (\$5,000 - \$7,500)	Ongoing
<b>Objective 2.4:</b> <i>Continue to engage the County Municipalities</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>2.4.a</b> Continue to engage the eight municipalities in the County in current and future parks, recreation, open space, and sports tourism planning efforts.	\$0	Staff Time (\$2,000 - \$3,000)	Ongoing

### Goal 3: Continue to Improve Programs and Service Delivery

<b>Objective 3.1:</b> <i>Work with other service providers to develop programs and service to meet demand and trends</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
<b>3.1.a</b> Continue to look for opportunities to expand programs while working with other service providers within the county. Work with the county municipalities to avoid duplication of programs and services. Formalize partnership agreements in writing.	\$0	Staff time (\$3,000 - \$4,000)	Ongoing
<b>Objective 3.2:</b> <i>Develop additional recreational opportunities</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
<b>3.2.a</b> Develop and implement a plan to address the specific needs of girls in the county, identified as the most underserved segment of the community. Specific programs identified were volleyball, basketball, and girls soccer.	\$0	Staff time to plan with instructors conducting programs (\$8,000 - \$12,000) including required supplies	Short-Term
<b>3.2.b</b> Identify and explore additional recreational opportunities for fitness and wellness programs and services. Opportunities exist to add outdoor fitness stations at existing parks as part the renovations and upgrades.	Will vary based on recommended equipment and amenities	Staff time to plan with instructors conducting programs (\$8,000 - \$12,000) including required supplies	Ongoing
<b>3.2.c</b> Explore opportunities to provide additional programming and services for teens and seniors.	\$0	Staff time to plan with instructors conducting programs (\$8,000 - \$12,000) including required supplies	Ongoing
<b>3.2.d</b> Explore opportunities to provide additional nature/environmental and outdoor recreational programming and services.	\$0	Staff time to plan with instructors conducting programs (\$8,000 - \$12,000) including required supplies	Ongoing
<b>3.2.e</b> Keep current with trends in recreational programming and develop new programs based on current trends and community need and demand.	\$0	Staff time to plan with instructors conducting programs (\$8,000 - \$12,000) including required supplies	Ongoing

<b>3.2.f</b> As new programs and services are developed and implemented, continue to create a balance between passive and active recreation opportunities.	\$0	None	Ongoing
<b>Objective 3.3:</b> <i>Explore opportunities to increase the number of community events based on demand and trends</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>3.3.a</b> Continue to look for opportunities to expand community special events throughout the county.	\$0	Staff time to plan and conduct events (\$10,000 - \$15,000) including required supplies	Ongoing

#### Goal 4: Increase Financial Opportunities

<b>Objective 4.1</b> <i>Explore additional funding options</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>4.1.a</b> Seek increased General Fund allocations to address recommendations from the Master Plan and increased capital funding and operational expenses.	Will vary based on projects recommended	Staff Time (\$2,000 - \$2,500)	Ongoing
<b>4.1.b</b> Continue to pursue SPLOST funding for capital projects identified in the master plan.	Will vary based on projects recommended	Staff Time (\$2,000 - \$2,500)	Short-Term
<b>Objective 4.2:</b> <i>Pursue grant and philanthropic opportunities</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>4.2.a</b> Continue to pursue grant opportunities and philanthropic donations.	Potential Matching Funds	Staff Time or hire a part-time grant writer (\$20,000 - \$30,000)	Short-Term Mid-Term
<b>4.2.b</b> Consider contracting with a dedicated grant writer to research, submit, and track federal, regional, state, and local grants.	Potential Matching Funds	% of successful grants TBD	Mid-Term

**Objective 4.3***Explore opportunities to increase sponsorships*

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>4.3.a</b> Explore additional sponsorship opportunities through sports tourism, special events, naming rights, and in-kind services, as well as continue to build on existing successful sponsorships.	\$0	Staff Time (\$3,000 - \$4,000) Potential increased revenue or decreased expenses	Ongoing
<b>4.3.b</b> Ensure that all existing and future sponsorships are accurately portrayed in signed sponsorship agreements.	\$0	Staff Time (\$2,000 - \$3,000)	Short-Term

**Objective 4.4:***Explore developing and implementing a cost recovery and pricing philosophy and policy*

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>4.4.a</b> Develop a resource allocation and cost recovery philosophy, model, and policy that is grounded in the values, vision, and mission of Chatham County.	\$45-\$65K if contracted	Staff Time	Long-Term
<b>4.4.b</b> Establish a pricing methodology that continuously reflects community values, while generating adequate revenues to sustain Chatham County facilities, parks, open space, programs, and services. Review the user fee structure annually.	\$0	Staff Time	Short-Term



# Appendix A: Public Input Presentation

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# Chatham County Public Engagement Summary October 26, 2017



# Master Planning Process

## 4 Stages of Public Engagement



**Strategic Kick-Off**

- Critical Success Factors
- Key focus areas
- Meeting schedule
- Identification of Key Stakeholders
- Gathering of All Relevant Documents
- Briefing with Decision Makers




**1 Information Gathering**

- Needs Assessment
  - Staff
  - Stakeholders
  - Public Meetings
  - Focus groups
  - Interviews
  - Surveys
  - Online engagement
- Inventory
  - All Assets
  - All Program Locations
  - Other Providers
- Level of Service Analysis
  - GIS component-based mapping
  - Quality, Quantity, Functionality
- Community Profile
  - Historical & Planning Context
  - Demographics
  - Trends





**2 Findings & Visioning**

- Presentation/Feedback Sessions
  - Staff
  - Stakeholders
  - Decision Makers
- What We Have Discovered
- Key Issues Matrix
- Key Ideas and Themes for Improvement
- Analysis
  - Programming
  - Operations
  - Maintenance
  - Marketing & Communications
  - Financial Resources



**3 Draft Recommendations**

- Summary Findings
- Strategies
  - Long-Term Vision
  - Short-Term Action
- Implications
  - Financial
  - Operational
  - Maintenance
- Recommendations
- Action Plan
  - Tasks
  - Timing
  - Costs
- Review & Revisions

**4 Final Plan**

- Review
  - Staff
  - Public
  - Decision Maker
- Distribute/Post




**Implementation**

- Action Plan
- Annual Review



# Information Gathering Summary

- Focus Group meetings 6
- Focus Group attendance 56
- Stakeholder meeting 10
- Leadership Summit 6



## Strengths

- Communications from staff and efficient resolution of issues
- Aquatic facility - Weightlifting Center
- Improvements to Henderson Golf Course
- Supportive, innovative, organized, and accessible parks and recreation staff
- The sheer number of assets
- Sports programs for youth
- Good use of tax dollars with maintenance and repairs
- Frank Murray Community Center and the programs offered



## Strengths

- Own 98% of boat ramps
- Fishing piers
- Nature Trails/Preserves
- Swim program for individuals with special needs
- Volunteer support
- Outdoor hockey rink
- Soccer complex
- Summer camps and Holiday camps

## Areas of Improvement

- Lighting
- Parking
- Project timetables
- Duplication of sports/teams offered between City/County
- Indoor facilities – need more
- Multi-purpose outdoor fields and track – need more
- Youth programs – need more
- Equipment in centers and on playgrounds

## Areas of Improvement

- Connectivity
- Marketing/Communications to public
- Gym(s)
- Drainage
- Safety/security
- Maintenance funding – SPLOST only for new construction
- Manpower
- Access for disabled
- Use of schools for programs

## Additional Desired Programs and Activities

- Unification of youth sports
- County run youth sports leagues
- Athletic programs for females
- Arts and cultural programming
- Senior health and wellness
- Lacrosse
- Expansion of Disc Golf
- Expansion of Mountain biking
- Adventure sports - Zip Lines

## Improvements to Existing Facilities

- Parking
- Lighting
- Maintenance – overall
- Drainage of fields, parking lots, ditches (residential areas)
- Pool facility – shower/locker rooms need refurbishing and painting
- Walking/biking trails
- Signage
- Resurfacing of outdoor basketball courts
- Neighborhood Parks – needs repairs

## Additional Desired Facilities and Amenities

- Dog parks
- Indoor multi-purpose facility - gyms
- Track complex
- Sand volleyball courts
- Completion of a linear bike trail – connectivity
- Community playgrounds
- Pickleball courts
- Another pool
- Performing Arts Center
- More neighborhood parks



## Underserved Portions of Community

- Westside County – no parks/facilities
- Youth – Chatham County is “facility poor” and “field short”
- Canebrake Park
- Female athletes
- Trail connectivity
- Lower income families
- Arts community

## Key Partners and Stakeholders

- Sports Council
- City of Savannah
- Other municipalities
  - Pooler, Garden City, and City of Savannah, Port Wentworth, Bloomingdale, Tybee Island, Thunderbolt, Vernonburg
- Armstrong/Savannah State/Georgia Southern/SCAD
- Board of Education - Schools – sharing facilities
- SORBA – Southern Off-Road Biking Association
- Little League

## Key Partners and Stakeholders

- Adult Sports Leagues
- Private Schools
- Gulfstream
- St. Joseph – new hospital
- YMCA
- Chatham Area Transit System
- Churches
- Arts and Cultural Alliance of Chatham County
- Abilities Unlimited
- Mitsubishi

## Key Issues and Values

- Facilities should be useable “all the time”
- SPLOST Money – more equitable distribution throughout the county
- Priority challenge – maintain existing facilities before new construction
- Youth is our key value – “unity” in Youth Athletics
- Improve communications between city and county – roles/responsibilities/sharing of facilities

## Key Issues and Values

- Improve partnerships with schools
- “Islands” / “City” attitude
- Physical and mental engagement of citizens
- Preserve the physical environment/beauty of the area
- Accessibility
- Aging infrastructure
- Safety and Security

## Priorities in the Next 5 Years

- Repair existing facilities
- Improve marketing and communications
- Complete the Thomas Avenue Plan
- Equitable distribution of programs and equipment
- Address the plans that already exist
- Phase out old equipment
- Standardization of maintenance standards/practices for all facilities
- Account for population growth and changes in density



## Priorities in the Next 5 Years

- Learn who the willing partners are in the County
- Engage the stakeholders and volunteers to help with partnerships
- Safety and Security
- Programs for outreach to children
- Make Chatham County a destination for sports/recreation
  - sport tourism
- Better communication with County staff
- Bike trails and connectivity
- ADA accessibility

# Next Steps

- Community and Stakeholder Engagement
- Invitation Survey Mailed to 3,000 Random
- Open Link Survey
- Program and Facilities Analysis
- Program Identification and Facilities Site Analysis
- Inventory and Level of Service Analysis
- Public Findings Presentation
- Visioning Workshop
- Development of Draft and Final Plans
- Public Presentation

**Questions, Comments,  
Feedback?**

# Thank You!



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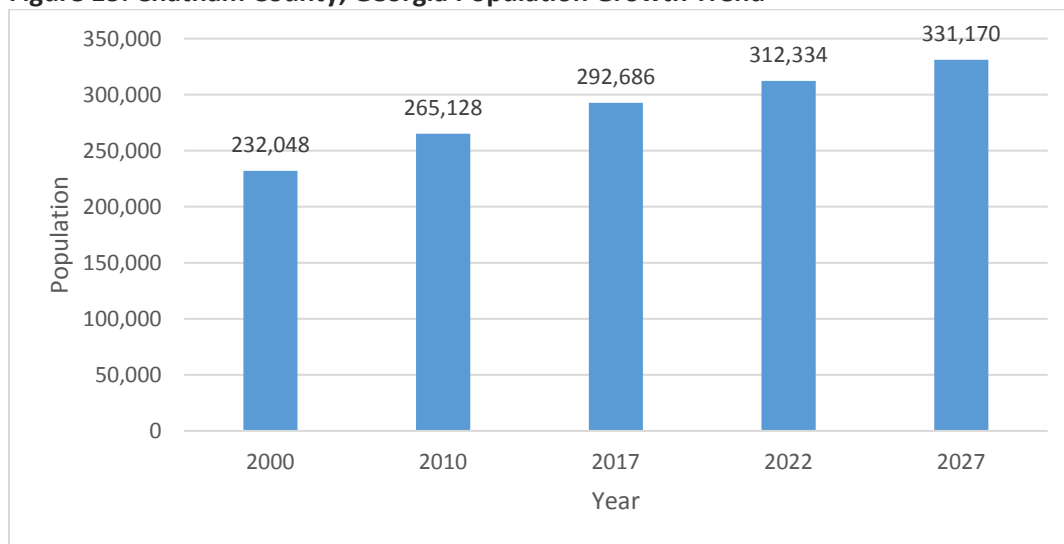
**RRC**  
ASSOCIATES<sub>SM</sub>

# Appendix B: Demographics Report

## Population Projections

Although future population growth cannot be predicted with certainty, it is helpful to make growth projections for planning purposes. **Figure 13** contains actual population figures based on the 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census for Chatham County, and the Esri 2017 estimated population and 2022 projected population. Generally, Chatham County's population grew slightly between 2000 and 2010. Based on current Esri estimates and projections, an annual growth rate of 1.3 percent from 2017 to 2022 is projected. By 2022, the population is projected to reach 312,334. By 2027, the population is projected to reach 331,170.

**Figure 13: Chatham County, Georgia Population Growth Trend**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, and Esri Business Analyst

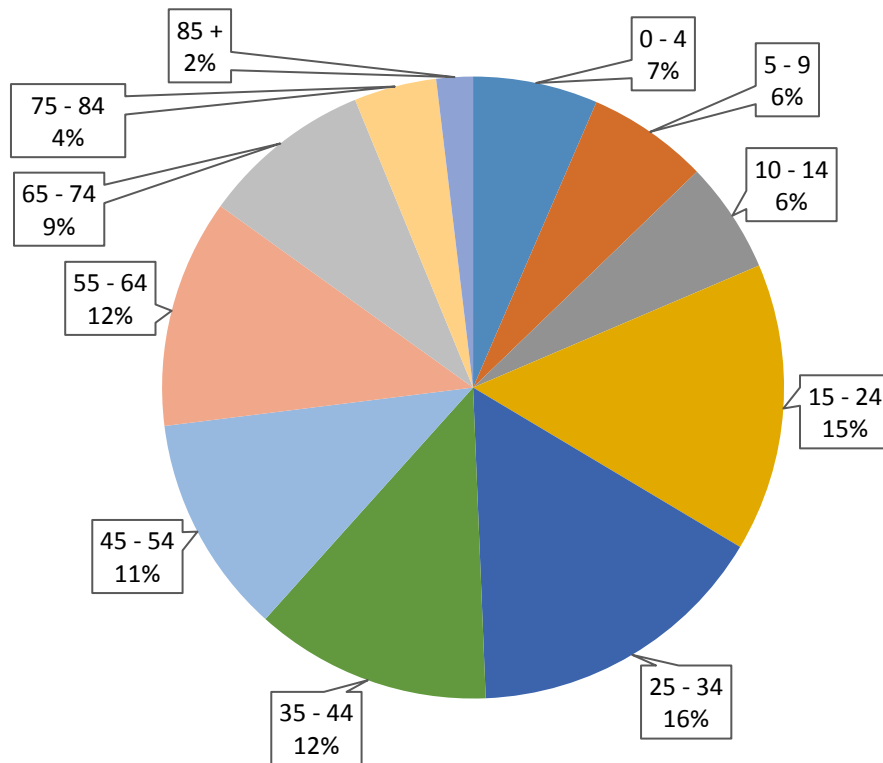
## Population Age Distribution

The existing and projected population of different age groups, or cohorts, within Chatham County is illustrated in the following series of figures. **Figure 14** illustrates the 2017 population by age cohort, and **Figure 15** provides this breakdown for the 2010 population, 2017 estimated population, and 2022 projected population.

Several key age characteristics of the existing and projected county population include:

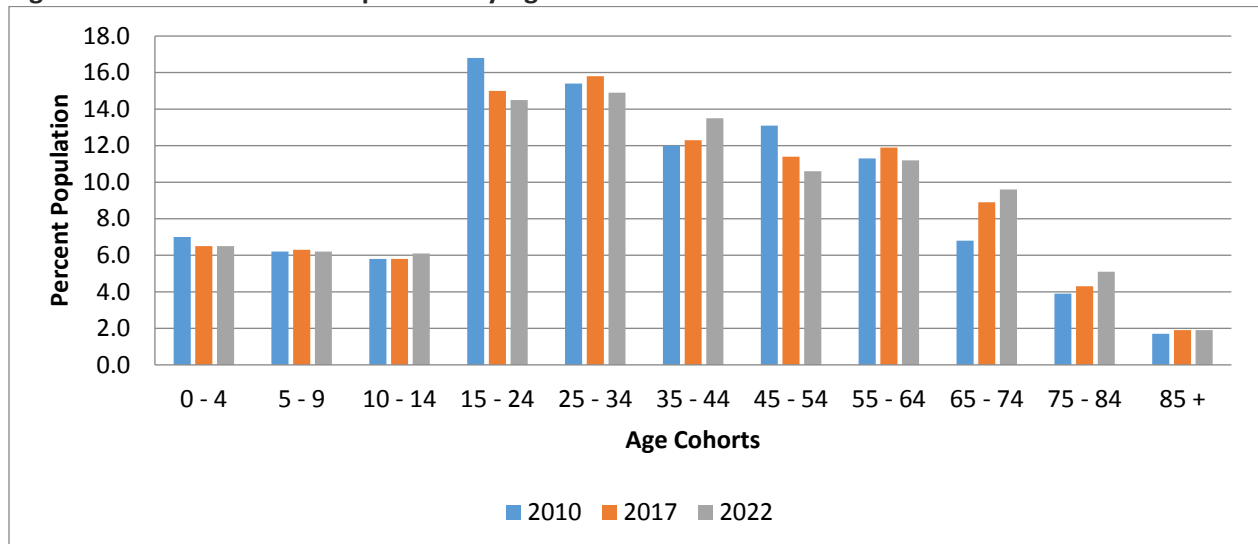
- The median age of residents is increasing. The U.S. Census Bureau reported the median age of Chatham County residents to be 34.1 years in 2010. Esri estimates the median age of the 2017 population to be 35.5 years, and projects this will increase to 36.3 years by 2022.
- As illustrated in **Figure 14**, the 2017 estimated population is greatest between the age cohorts of 25 to 34 and 35 to 44, which combined comprise 28 percent of the total population.
- As illustrated in **Figure 15**, the general population of age cohorts 15 to 24 and 45 to 54 are projected to decrease. Over the same time period, the population of senior residents, over the age of 65 years, is projected to increase by about three percent from 2010 to 2022. The age cohort of 35 to 44 year olds is also expected to increase.

**Figure 14: Population Age Distribution: 2010 to 2022**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Esri Business Analyst

**Figure 15: 2017 Estimated Population by Age Cohort**



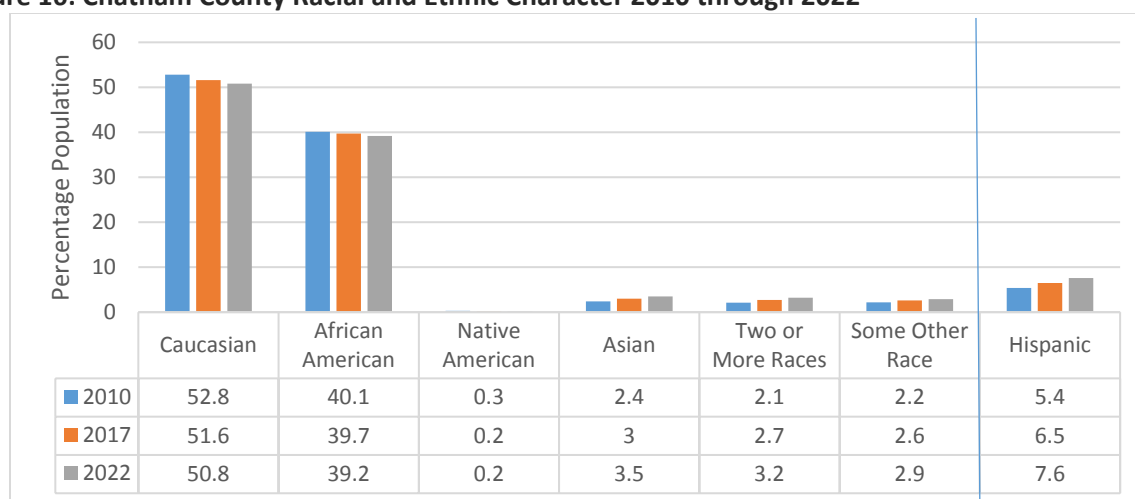
Source: Esri Business Analyst

## Race/Ethnicity

Prior to reviewing demographic data pertaining to a population's racial and ethnic character, it is important to note how the U.S. Census classifies and counts individuals who identify as Hispanic. The Census notes that Hispanic origin can be viewed as the heritage, nationality, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person's parents or ancestors before arrival in the United States. In the U.S. Census, people who identify as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish may be any race and are included in all of the race categories. All race categories add up to 100 percent of the population. The indication of Hispanic origin is a different view of the population and is not considered a race.

**Figure 16** reflects the approximate racial/ethnic population distribution for Chatham County based on the 2010 U.S. Census, and the Esri 2017 estimates and 2022 projections.

**Figure 16: Chatham County Racial and Ethnic Character 2010 through 2022**



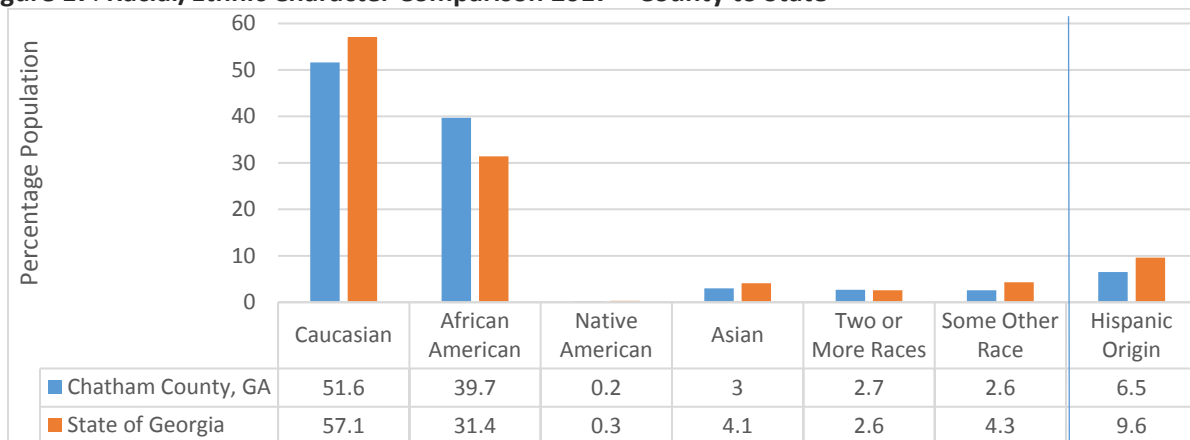
Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Esri Business Analyst

The racial and ethnic composition of Chatham County remains relatively stable through 2022. The majority of the county's population identified as Caucasian (51.6%) in 2017 with the largest minority group being African American (39.7%). There is a modest rise in the Asian, Hispanic, Two or More Races, and Some Other Race categories from 2010 to 2022 with the greatest increase in the Hispanic population – an increase of 2.2 percent from 2010 to 2022.

As illustrated in **Figure 17**, the 2017 racial and ethnic composition of the population of Chatham County is somewhat different than that of the State of Georgia. The makeup of Chatham County reflects a lesser percentage of those who identify as Caucasian when compared to the population of the State. Conversely, those who identify as African American make up a greater percentage of the population of Chatham County when compared to the State of Georgia.



**Figure 17: Racial/Ethnic Character Comparison 2017 – County to State**

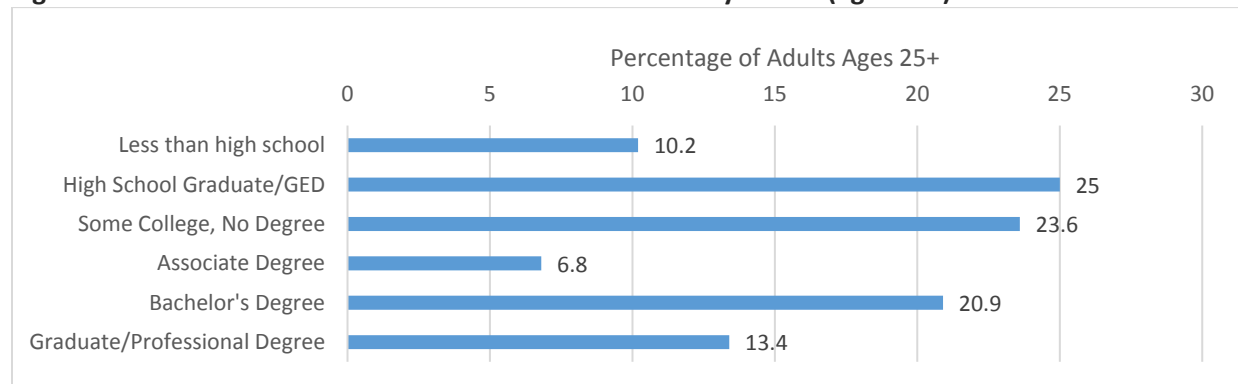


Source: Esri Business Analyst

## Educational Attainment

The educational attainment for Chatham County residents over the age of 25 was measured. In 2017, roughly 67 percent of county residents were 25 years or older. As illustrated in **Figure 18**, roughly 90 percent of county residents had attained a high school level education or higher. The most common educational attainment in Chatham County in 2017 was high school graduate/GED (25%), some college, no degree (23.6%), or Bachelor's degree (20.9%).

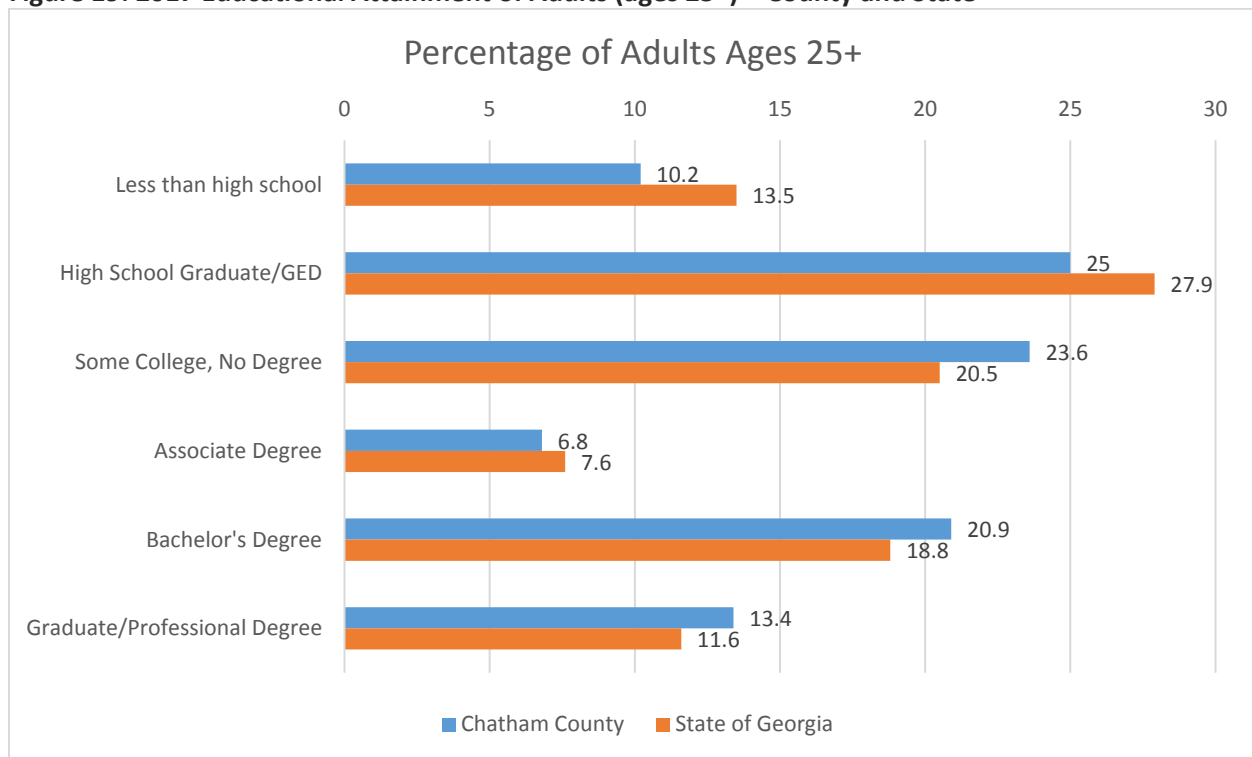
**Figure 18: 2017 Educational Attainment of Chatham County Adults (ages 25+)**



Source: Esri Business Analyst

As illustrated in **Figure 19**, when compared to their peers at the statewide level, the county's population has a higher percentage of individuals with a Bachelor's and Graduate/Professional degree.

**Figure 19: 2017 Educational Attainment of Adults (ages 25+) – County and State**

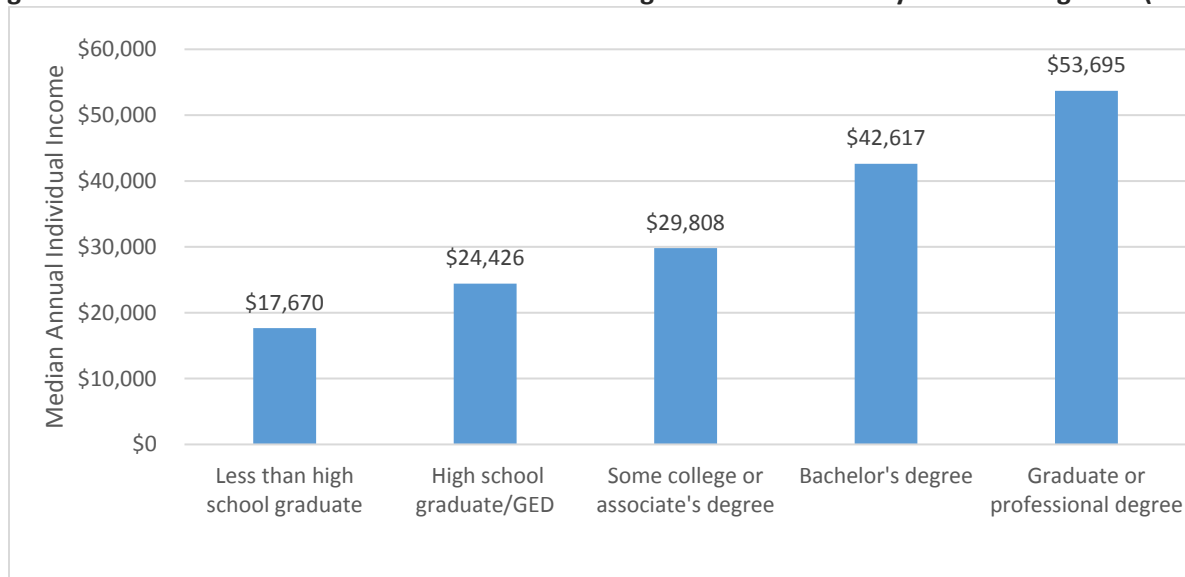


Source: Esri Business Analyst

According to a Census study, education levels had more effect on earnings over a 40-year span in the workforce than any other demographic factor, such as gender, race, and ethnic origin.<sup>17</sup> This link between education and earnings appears clearly illustrated in Chatham County. As **Figure 20** shows, the Census Bureau's 2015 American Community Survey reported that Chatham County residents (age 25+) with a Bachelor's degree earned more than double that of residents who had not completed a high school education. Residents with graduate or professional degrees had median earnings that were just over \$53,600. This number is more than double the earnings of high school graduates, and more than triple that of residents without a high school education.

<sup>17</sup> Tiffany Julian and Robert Kominski, "Education and Synthetic Work-Life Earnings Estimates" American Community Survey Reports, US Census Bureau, <http://www.Census.gov/prod/2011pubs/acs-14.pdf>, September 2011.

**Figure 20: Educational Attainment and Median Earnings of Chatham County Residents Age 25+ (2015)**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2015 American Community Survey

### Household Information

As reflected in **Table 7**, the total number of housing units and households in Chatham County is projected to slowly increase through 2022. The majority of homes in the county were, and are projected to continue to be owner occupied. Rates of homeownership and housing vacancy are projected to remain relatively stable.

**Table 7: Chatham County Housing Profile 2010 to 2022**

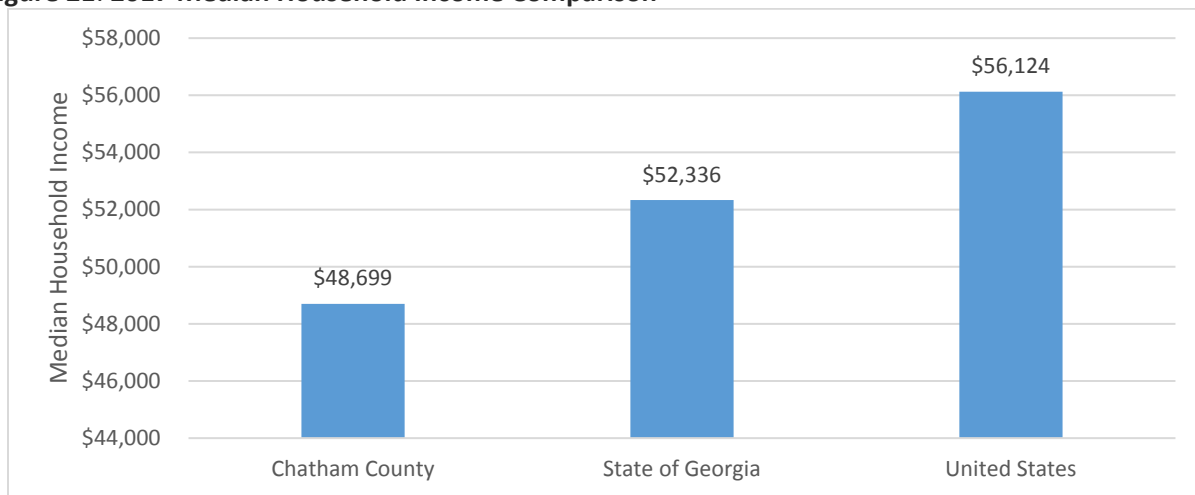
	2010	2017	2022
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	119,323	129,616	137,750
<b>Number of Households</b>	103,038	112,699	120,098
<b>Owner Occupied Housing Units</b>	59,423	60,401	64,054
<b>Renter Occupied Housing Units</b>	43,553	52,235	55,927
<b>Vacant Housing Units</b>	16,228	16,980	17,632

Source: Esri Business Analyst

### Household Income

Data from Esri Business Analyst, illustrated in **Figure 21**, indicates that the 2017 median household income in Chatham County was lower than the median household incomes in Georgia and the United States.

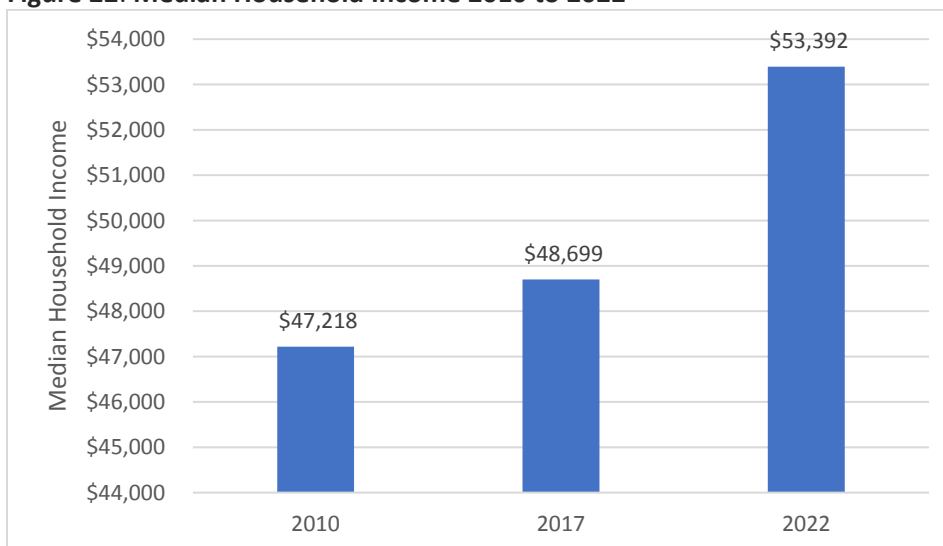
**Figure 21: 2017 Median Household Income Comparison**



Source: Esri Business Analyst

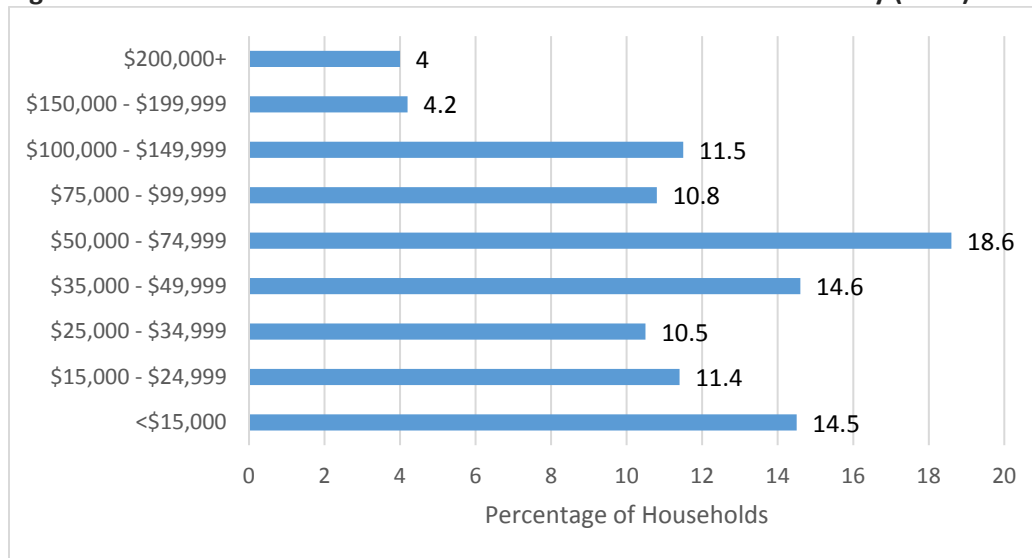
As **Figure 22** illustrates, the median income of Chatham County households has been increasing, and is predicted to continue to rise through 2022. In 2017, the median household income in the county was \$48,699, which is higher than the 2010 median household income of \$47,218. By 2022, the median household income of county households is projected to rise by over \$6,000, to \$53,392. **Figure 23** illustrates the distribution of household median income by earnings bracket in Chatham County in 2017.

**Figure 22: Median Household Income 2010 to 2022**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Esri Business Analyst

**Figure 23: Distribution of Median Household Income in Chatham County (2017)**

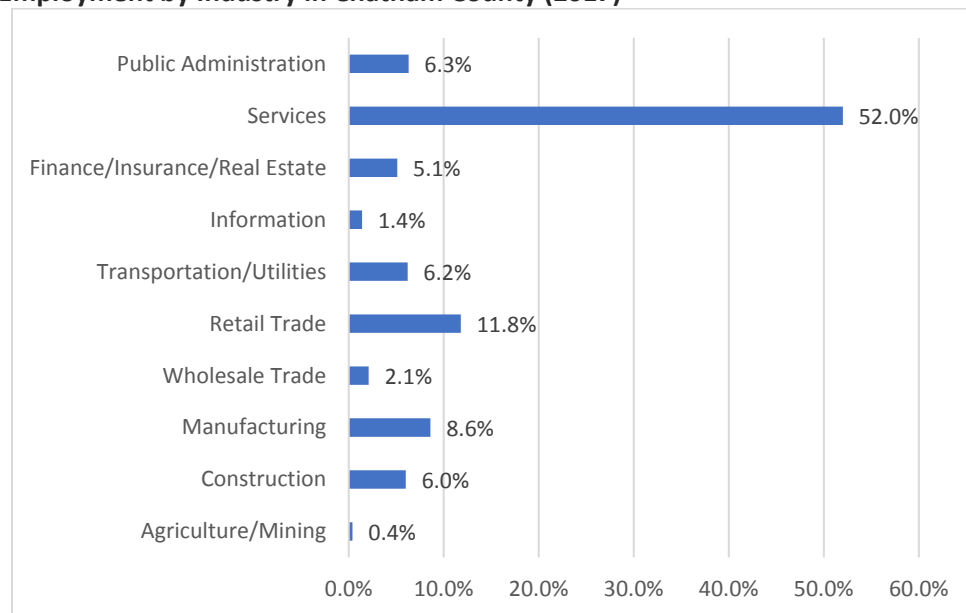


Source: Esri Business Analyst

## Employment

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that in 2017, the majority of working residents (age 16+) in Chatham County were employed in jobs in the service industry (52%) as illustrated in **Figure 24**. The retail trade was the only other industry making up more than 10 percent of employment.

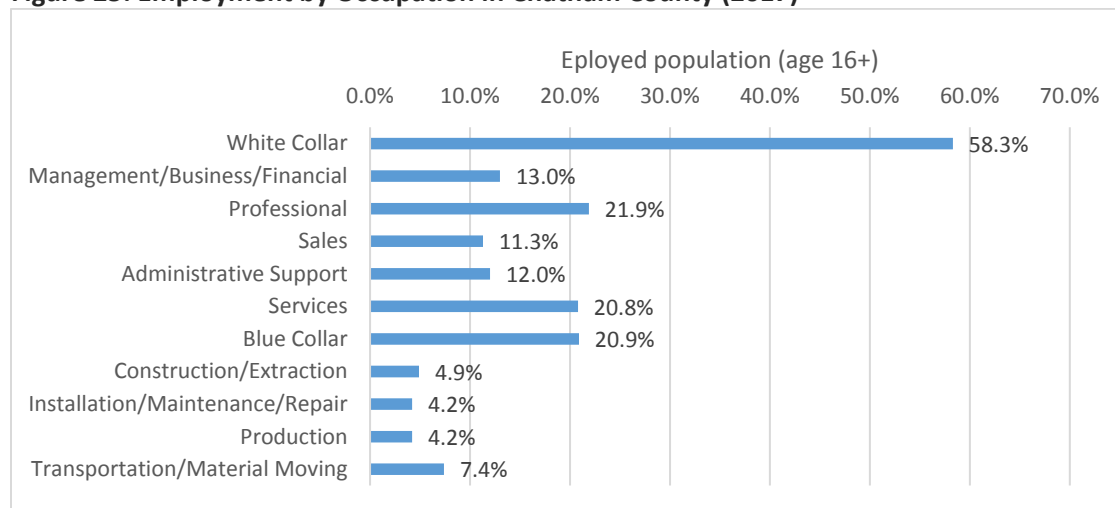
**Figure 24: Employment by Industry in Chatham County (2017)**



Source: Esri Business Analyst

As illustrated in **Figure 25**, the majority of working residents (58.3%) were employed in white collar occupations, such as professional jobs (21.9%). Blue collar occupations, such as transportation/material moving (7.4%) and construction/extraction (4.9%), installation/maintenance/repair (4.2%), and production (4.2%) also employed about 20.9 percent of the working residents.

**Figure 25: Employment by Occupation in Chatham County (2017)**



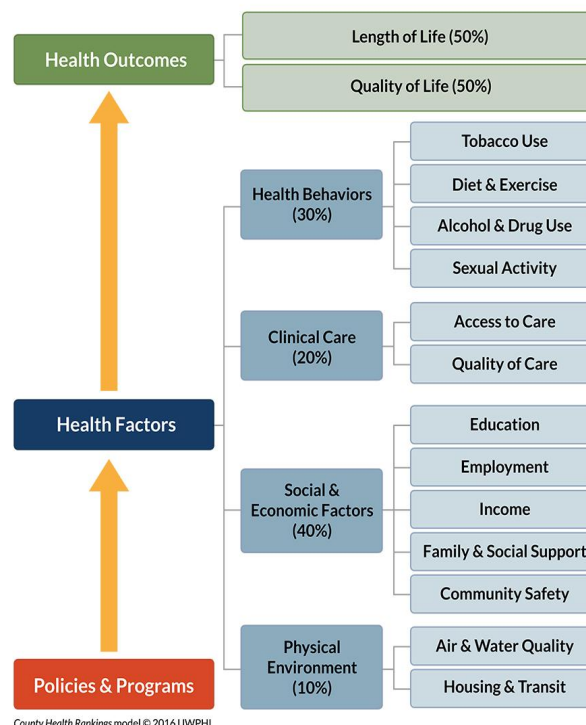
Source: Esri Business Analyst

### Health Ranking

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's "County Health Rankings and Roadmaps" provides annual insight on the general health of national, state, and county populations. According to the Foundation, its modeling of population health "emphasizes many factors that, if improved can help make communities healthier places to live, learn, work, and play." The 2017 Rankings model shown in **Figure 26** highlights the topic areas reviewed by the Foundation.

The health ranking for Chatham County, Georgia gauged the public health of the population based on "how long people live and how healthy people feel while alive," coupled with ranking factors including healthy behaviors, clinical care, social and economic, and physical environment factors.<sup>18</sup> Out of the 159 Georgia counties reviewed, Chatham County was ranked as 41<sup>st</sup> for overall health outcomes, and 34<sup>th</sup> for health factors.

**Figure 26: County Health Ranking Model**



Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

<sup>18</sup> University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute & Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, *County Health Rankings 2016*, <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org>

Several significant social challenges impacting the public health in the County included physical inactivity, excessive drinking, alcohol-impaired driving deaths, and extremely high levels of sexually transmitted diseases and teen births.

In 2017, the United Health Foundation's "America's Health Rankings Annual Report" ranked Georgia as the 41<sup>st</sup> healthiest state nationally. The health rankings consider and weigh social, environmental, factors that tend to directly impact the overall health of state populations.

Georgia's public health ranking strengths and highlights included:

- Low rate of drug deaths
- Increase in physical activity
- High immunization coverage among children



## Appendix C: Survey Report

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# Chatham County Parks and Recreation Master Plan Survey April 2018 - Draft Report



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

-  METHODOLOGY & SELECTED FINDINGS
-  DEMOGRAPHICS
-  CURRENT USAGE
-  FACILITIES, PROGRAMS, AMENITIES & SERVICES
-  FINANCIAL CHOICES/FEES
-  COMMUNICATION
-  SUGGESTIONS



# METHODOLOGY & SELECTED FINDINGS



# INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to gather public feedback on Chatham County parks and recreation facilities, services, and programs.

This survey research effort and subsequent analysis were designed to assist the County in updating their master plan regarding existing and future facilities and services.



# METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted using three primary methods:

- 1) A mailed, survey to randomly selected residents of Chatham County.
- 2) An online invitation survey accessed through a password-protected website as an additional option for those residents who received the initial survey.
- 3) An “open-link” online survey for members of the public who were not part of the invitation sample. Multiple means for promotion were used including internal lists and social media.

The primary list source used for the mailing was purchased from Melissa Data Corp., a leading provider of data with emphasis on U.S., Canadian, and international address and phone verification as well as postal software. Use of the Melissa Data list also includes renters in the sample who are frequently missed in other list sources such as utility billing lists.

## METHODOLOGY

In total, 380 invitation surveys were completed through a variety of survey approaches. In addition, 1,019 open-link surveys were received. The invitation sample includes responses gathered from the mailed survey and online invitation sample. The margin of error for the invitation sample is +/- 5%.

The analysis herein primarily focuses on responses from the invitation survey. However, invitation sample results are compared to the open-link results throughout the report.





# WEIGHTING THE DATA

The underlying data were weighted by age to ensure appropriate representation of Chatham County, GA residents across different demographic cohorts in the sample.



Using U.S. Census Data, the age and electoral district distribution were adjusted to more closely match the demographic profile of the Chatham County.



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



# TOP 10 FINDINGS

1

**Chatham County respondents somewhat familiar with the County's parks and recreation offerings.** On average, respondents rated their level of familiarity 2.9 out of 5.0 with 28% saying they are familiar and 32% unfamiliar.

2

Respondents to both the invitation and open-link survey are demographically diverse. **Respondents are well distributed across all electoral districts and include a wide array of income profiles, ages, and household statuses.**

3

**Trails and pathways and community/neighborhood parks were rated most important by the majority of respondents.** Most facilities had a moderate importance to respondents with a few applying only to a niche audience (e.g., Anderson-Cohen Weightlifting Center).

4

Chatham County's facilities received high ratings on the degree to which they meet resident needs. **Nearly all facilities had over 50% of respondents stating the current facilities were meeting the needs of their household.**

5

**The importance-performance matrix highlights programs and events as the only aspect which has high importance and lower needs met.** Community / neighborhood parks, nature preserves, and trails and pathways all are high importance with high needs met.



# TOP 10 FINDINGS

6

**Condition or maintenance of existing parks or facilities and lighting/safety are highlighted as the most important areas to address.**

Awareness of programs, additional activities/programming, and parking were also high on the list.

7

**By far, trail and pathway connectivity is highlighted as the highest priority item to be added, expanded, or improved.** Open space preservation, protection of wildlife, and new community parks, and maintenance for existing facilities followed.

8

Respondents are split on whether increased fees would alter their use. 30% of respondents say it would not affect their participation, but 48% said it would somewhat or significantly limit their use. 22% are unsure on whether it would change their participation.

9

**Communication appears to be an area for improvement for Chatham County.** 44% of invitation respondents stated the effectiveness of community is “not at all effective”. Only 2% stated communication was “very effective”.

10

**Open-ended comments highlighted a need for increased maintenance, considerations of allowing dogs at some parks, and additional safety and security measures.** Respondents also highlighted their appreciation for the existing parks in the region.



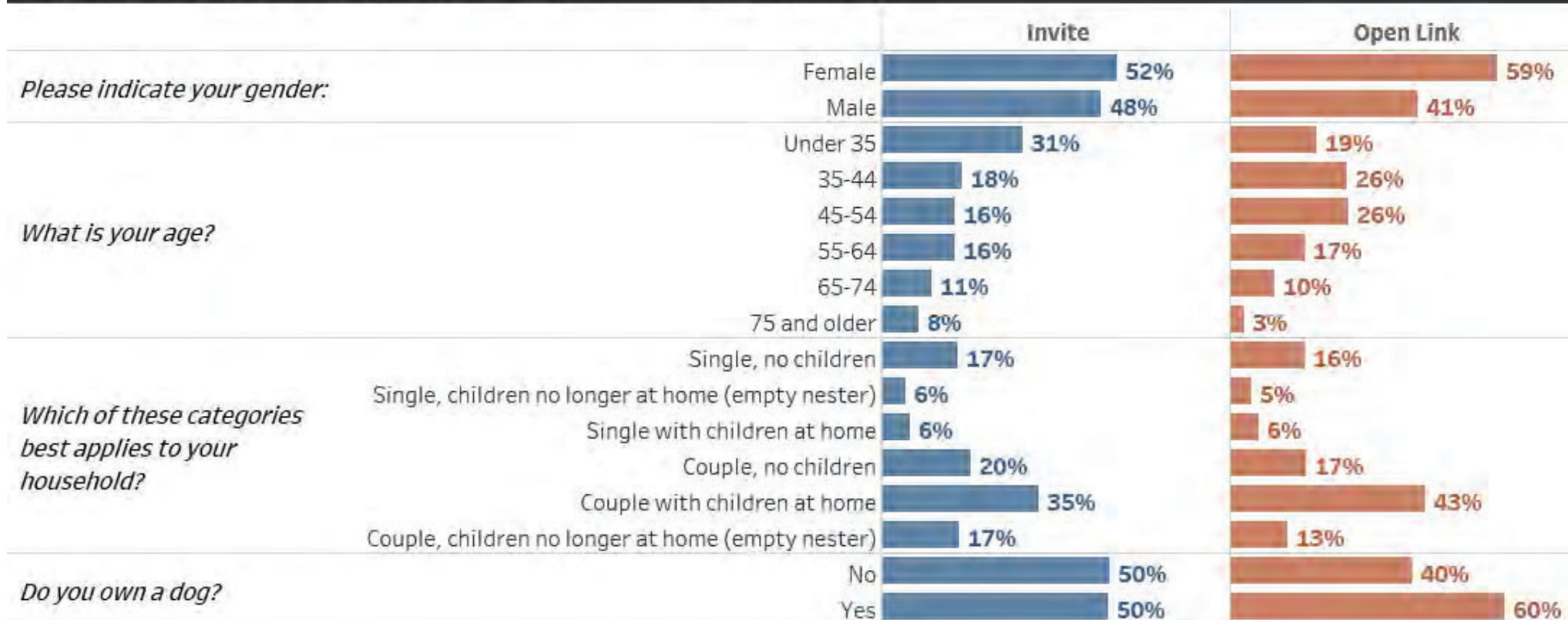
# DEMOGRAPHICS



# DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Both the invitation and open link sample skews slightly female (52% and 59% respectively). Forty-nine percent of respondents are under age 45 with 51% above. A total of 41% of invitation and 49% open link respondents live with children in their household. In addition, 50% of invitation respondents own a dog vs. 40% of open link.

## Chatham County Parks & Recreation | Residential Profile



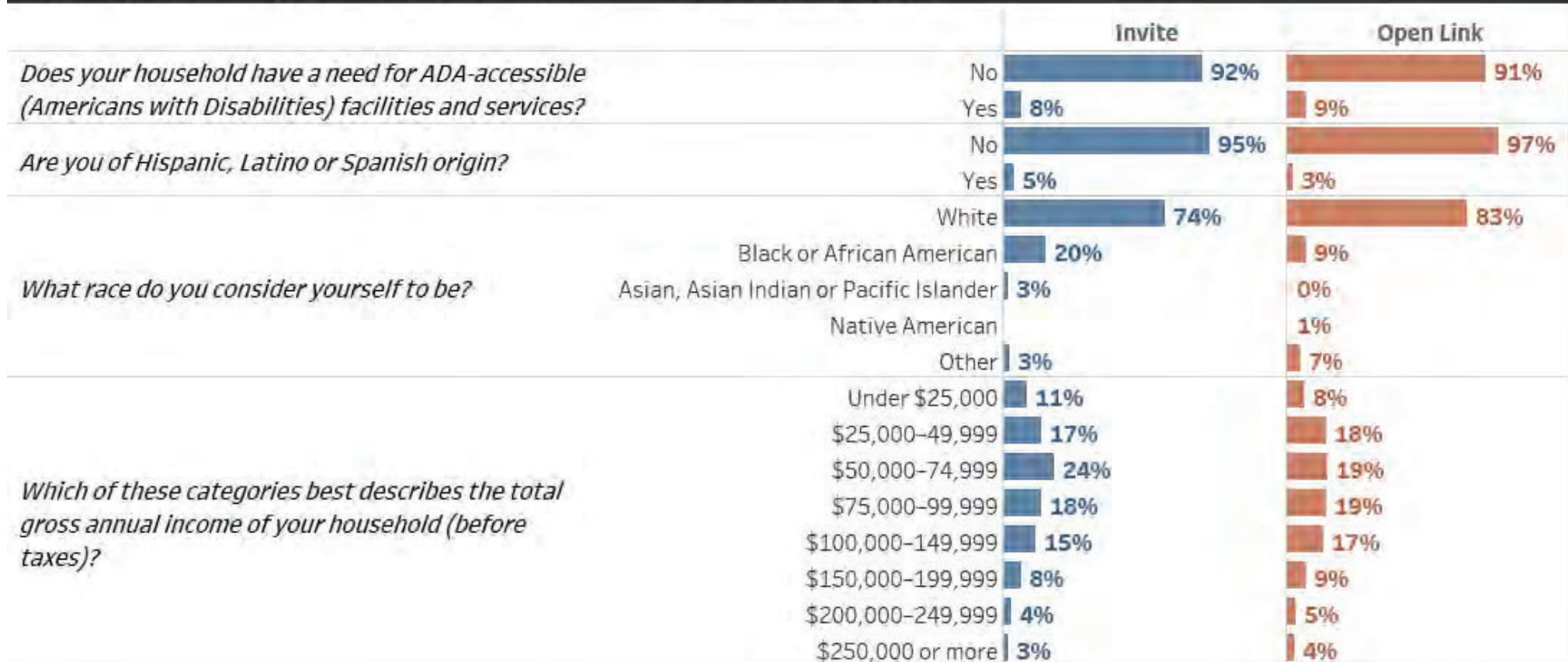
Source: RRC Associates and Greenplay



# DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Fifty-two percent of invitation respondent households earn under \$75,000 annually, 18% earn \$75-\$99,999k and 30% over \$100k. 75% of respondents are White, 20% Black or African American, 3% Asian, and 3% “other” races. Five percent of respondents are of Hispanic/Latino/Spanish origin. Of invitation respondents, 8% has a household that requires ADA-accessible facilities.

## Chatham County Parks & Recreation | Residential Profile



Source: RRC Associates and Greenplay



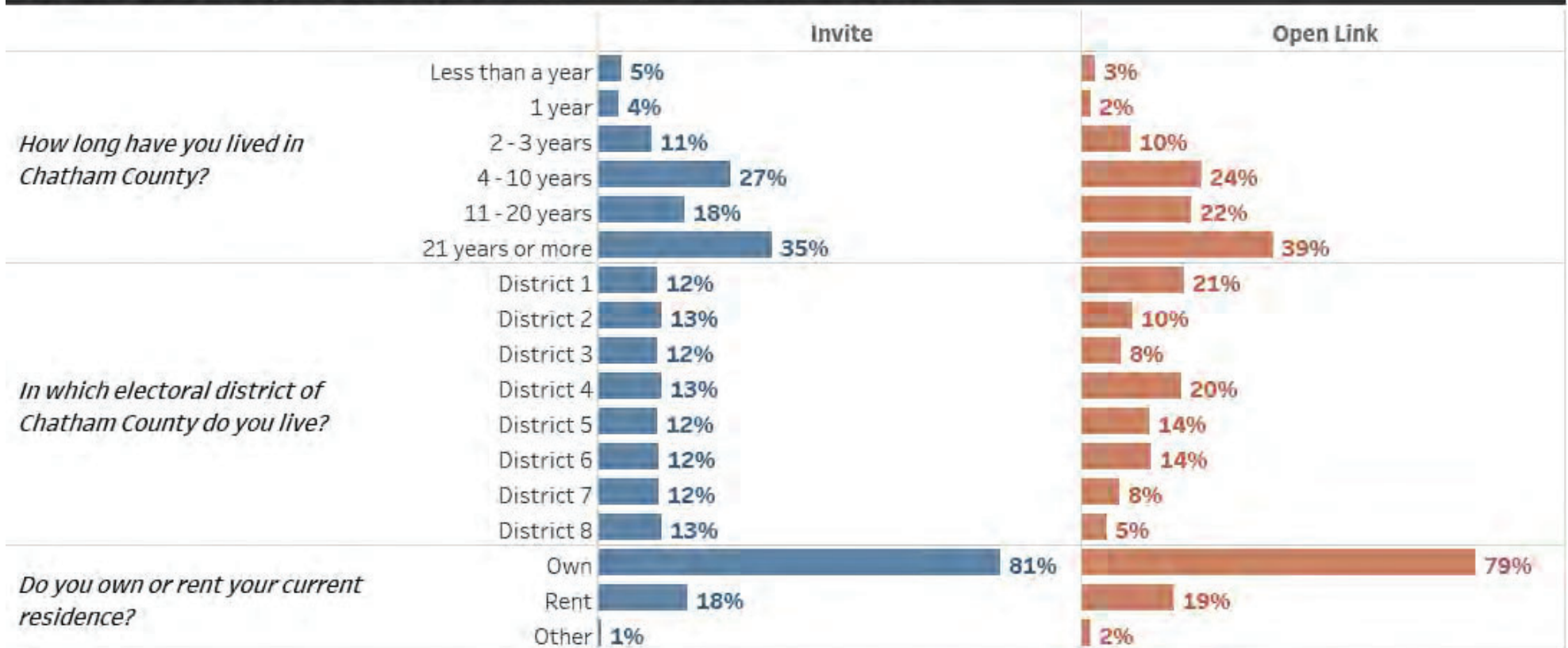


# RESIDENTIAL PROFILE

Respondents were asked which electoral district they lived in Chatham County. Responses were weighted by district population in Chatham County to provide equal representation. On average, invitation respondents have lived in Chatham County for just over 20 years.

Eighty-one percent of invitation respondents own their residence, 18% rent, and 1% have other types of tenure. Open link results trend very similar, with a slightly higher average length in the County and a more varied distribution of district residency.

## Chatham County Parks & Recreation | Residential Profile



Source: RRC Associates and Greenplay

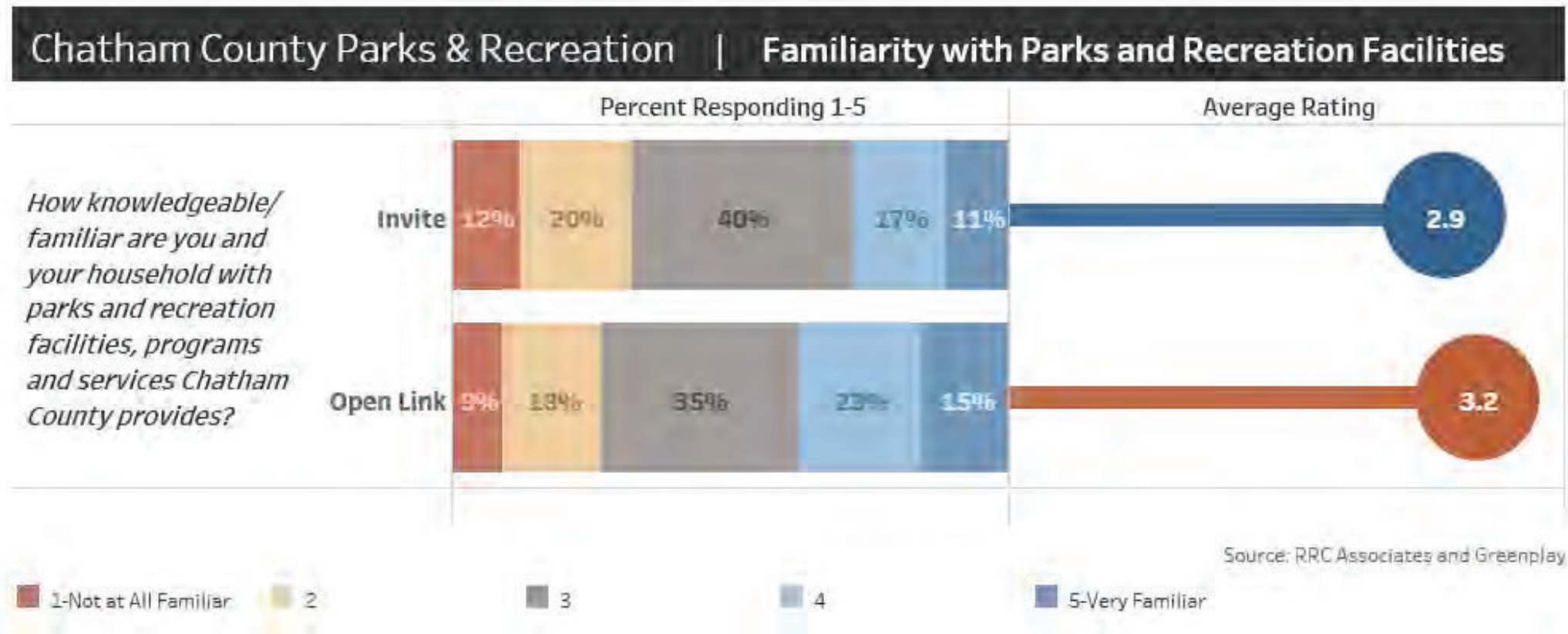


## CURRENT USAGE



# USAGE OF PARKS/FACILITIES IN PAST YEAR

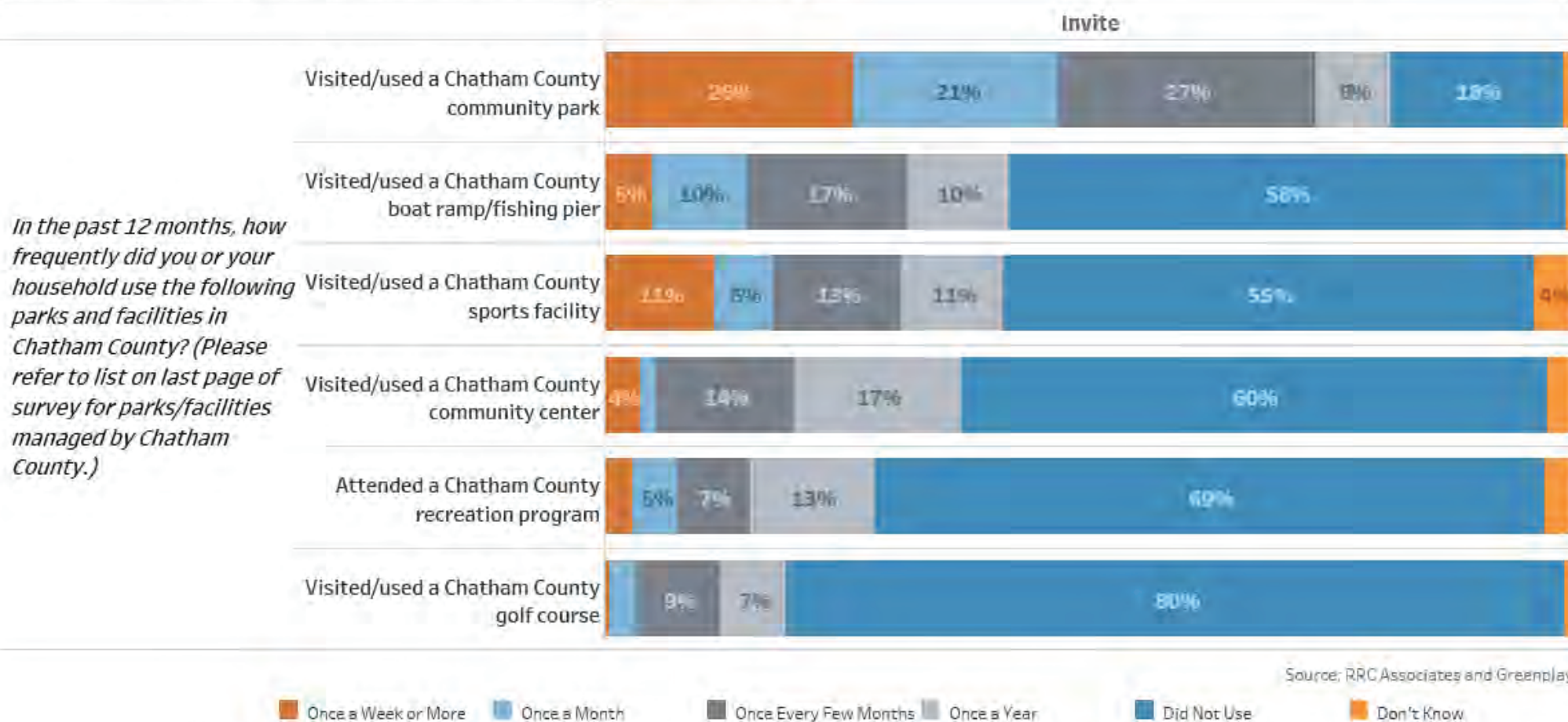
Invitation respondents are split in familiarity with Chatham County parks and recreation offerings with 28% rating familiar (rated 4 or 5), 32% unfamiliar (rated 1 or 2), and 40% somewhat familiar. Invitation respondents' average rating on their familiarity with parks and recreation offerings is 2.9 out of 5.0, a slightly below average level of familiarity.



# **USAGE OF PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES**

Among invitation respondents, visiting/using a Chatham County community park (82% used in past year) was most common. Forty-five percent of respondents used a Chatham County sports facility in the past year, with 42% using a boat ramp / fishing pier and 40% using a community center. County golf courses(20% used in past year), and recreation programs (31% used in past year) are used less frequently.

## **Chatham County Parks & Recreation | Current Usage**





# HOW TO BETTER MEET NEEDS AT THE PARK USED MOST OFTEN

Respondents who had used a Chatham County park/facility were asked for comments or suggestions to better meet the needs of their household at their most used place. Commonly mentioned factors and a brief summary of responses are illustrated below, along with a selection of verbatim responses from the overall sample. As shown, the diversity in activities, cleanliness, proximity, and professional customer service provided by staff are all important factors. The full listing of responses is provided in the appendix.

## Comments to better meet household needs

*Allow dogs.  
We like to walk  
our dog on  
family walks.*

- Better maintained facilities / trash pickup
- More restrooms
- More events / movies
- Allow dogs / add a dog park
- Safety and security upgrades (e.g., lighting)
- Add / improve parking areas

*More advertised events;  
feeling of safety*

*Better maintained,  
especially with  
trash pickup*

*Lake Mayer is a wonderful facility  
and has fun recreation. I LOVE  
the ducks/geese and nature that  
is managed there. I also like  
being able to rent a small sail  
boat to go out on the water and  
the improved walking trail.*

*Encourage youth  
groups to clean up  
after themselves.*

*More disc golf courses. It's not  
expensive and provides great  
activities for the community*

*More  
lighting at  
night*

*There isn't anything that you can  
do to make the park any better!  
It's a great park!*





- [illegible]



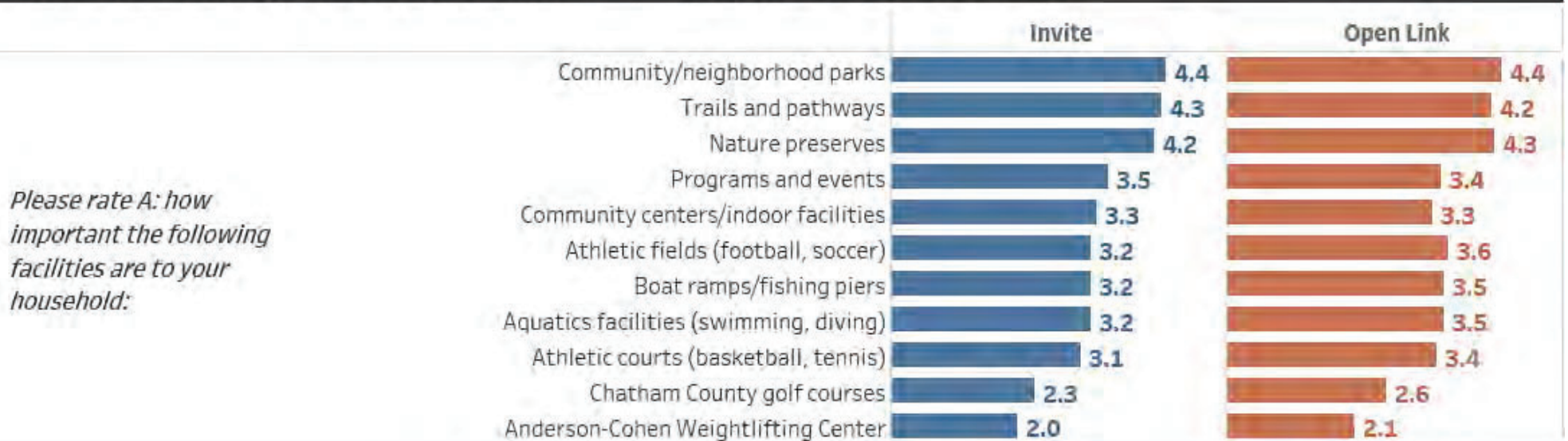
# FACILITIES, PROGRAMS, AMENITIES & SERVICES



# IMPORTANCE OF EXISTING FACILITIES

When invitation respondents were asked how important existing facilities are to their household, community/neighborhood parks (4.4 average), trails and pathways (4.3), and nature preserves (4.2) rise to the top. In contrast, Anderson-Cohen Weightlifting Center (2.0), and golf courses (2.3) are of lower importance, but represent a passionate niche user group.

## Chatham County Parks & Recreation | Current Parks and Facilities



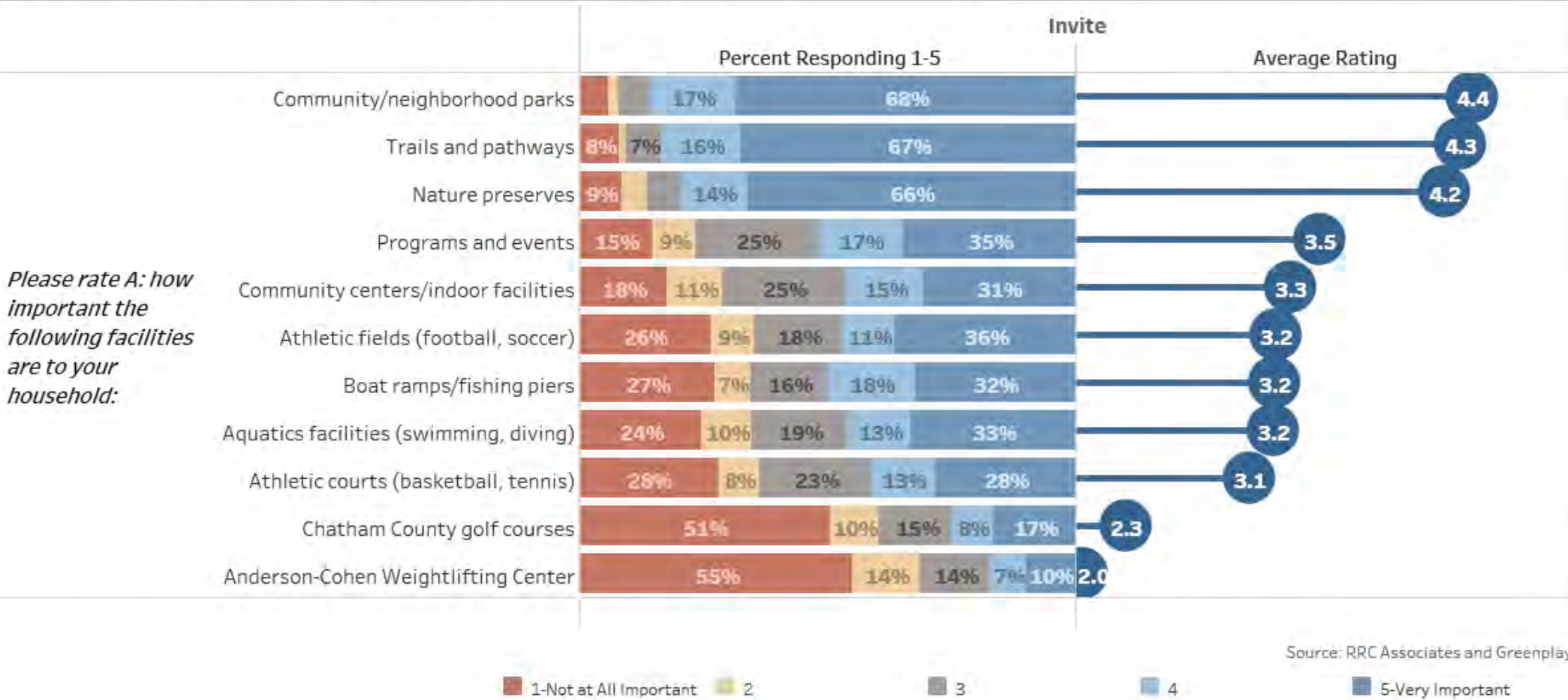
Source: RRC Associates and Greenplay



# IMPORTANCE OF EXISTING FACILITIES

Shown another way, six facilities garnered over 50% of respondents rating it 4 or 5 in importance (Community/neighborhood parks, trails and pathways, nature preserves, programs and events, boat ramps/fishing piers, and community centers/indoor facilities).

## Chatham County Parks & Recreation | Current Parks and Facilities

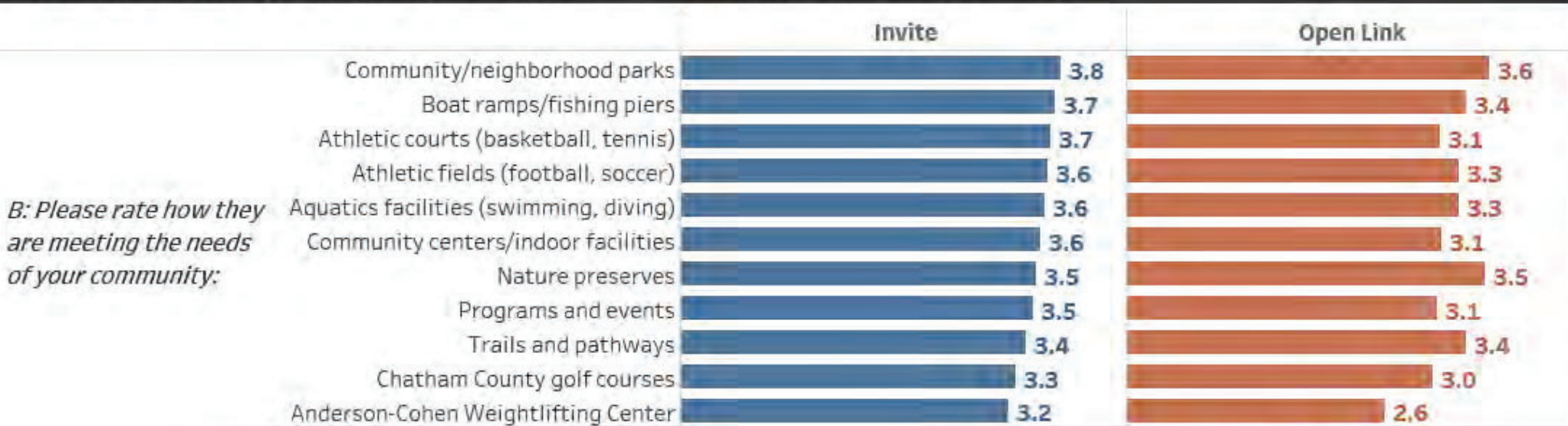




# LEVEL OF NEEDS MET BY EXISTING FACILITIES

When asked to what extent those same facilities are meeting the needs of the County, average ratings varied across facilities. Community/neighborhood parks received the highest average rating (3.8) followed by boat ramps/fishing piers (3.7), and athletic courts (3.7).

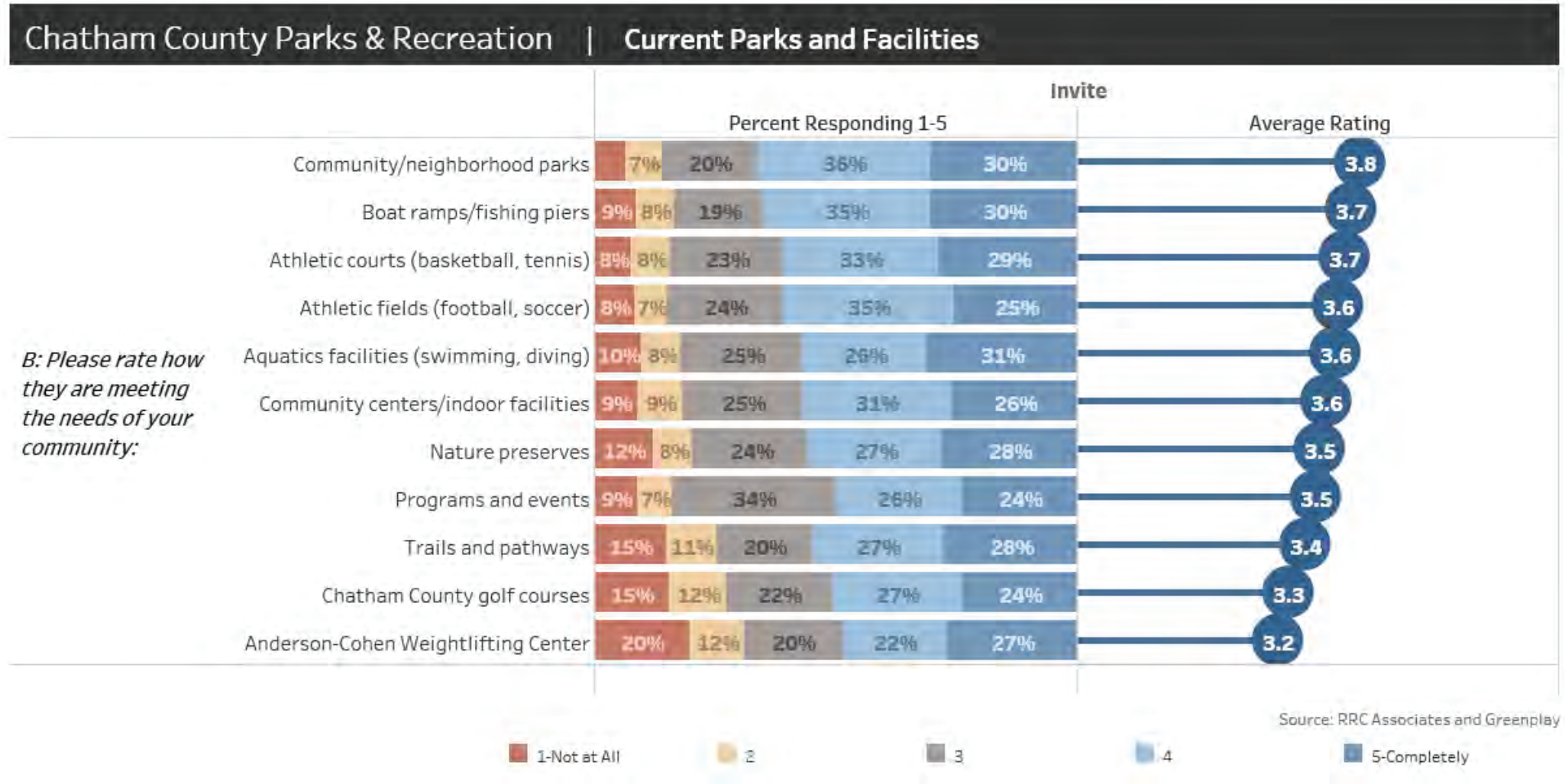
## Chatham County Parks & Recreation | Current Parks and Facilities



Source: RRC Associates and Greenplay

# LEVEL OF NEEDS MET BY EXISTING FACILITIES

Shown another way, nearly all facilities received over 50% of respondents stating it was meeting the needs of Chatham County (rated 4 or 5).





# IMPORTANCE-PERFORMANCE MATRIX

## High Importance/ Low Needs Met

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

## High Importance/ High Needs Met

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

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

## Low Importance/ Low Needs Met

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

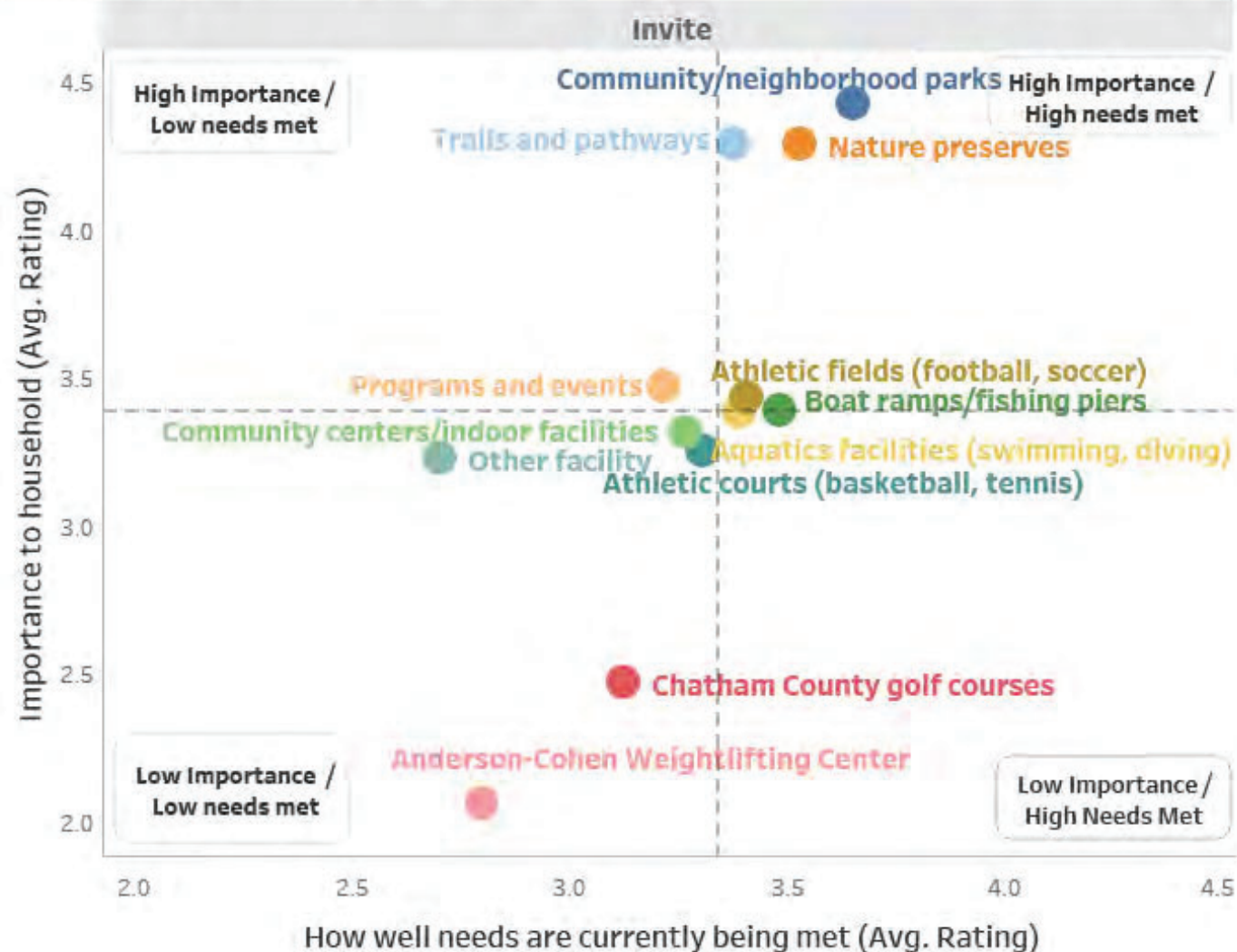
## Low Importance/ High Needs Met



# IMPORTANCE-PERFORMANCE MATRIX (INVITATION SAMPLE)

Chatham County Parks & Recreation  
Needs Met for Current Facilities

Level of Importance vs.

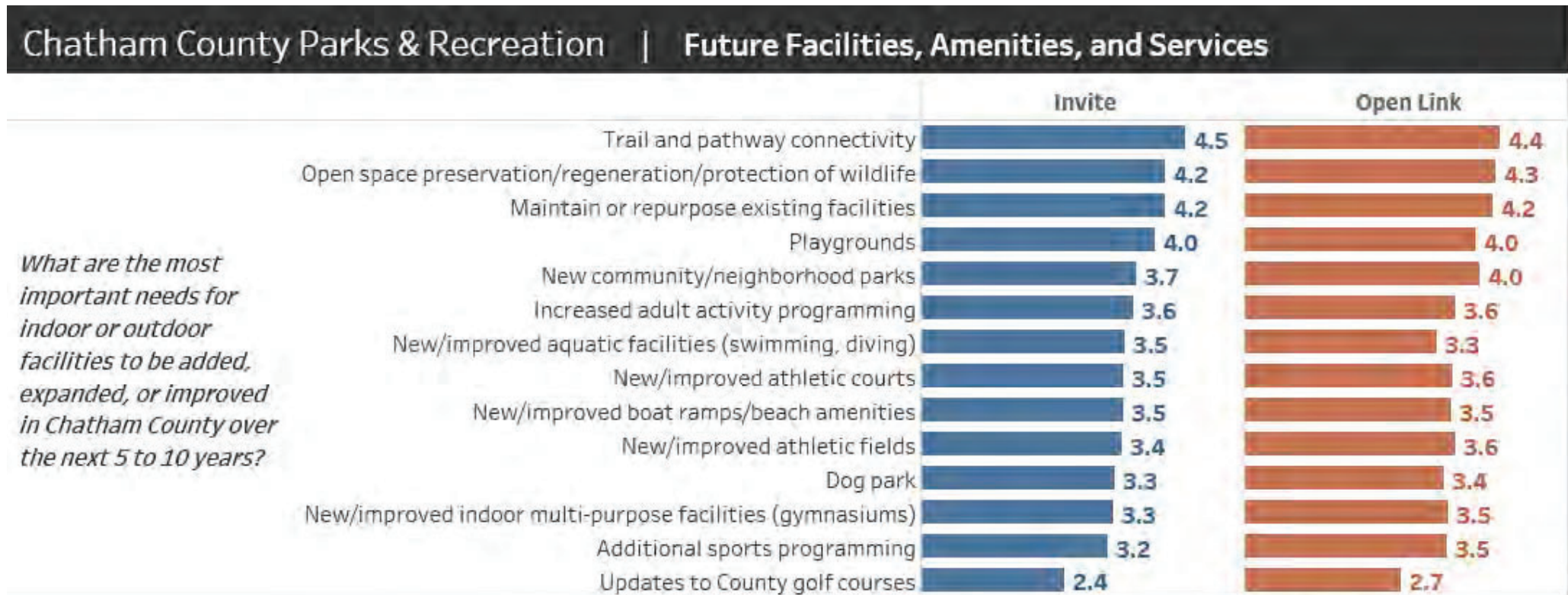


Source: RRC Associates and Greenplay



# IMPORTANCE OF FUTURE FACILITIES & PROGRAMS

Invitation respondents were particularly likely to place importance on trail connectivity (4.5), maintaining or repurposing existing facilities (4.2), open space preservation/regeneration/wildlife protection (4.2), and playgrounds (4.0). Following were new community/neighborhood parks (3.7), increased adult activity programming (3.6), and new/improved aquatic facilities (3.5).

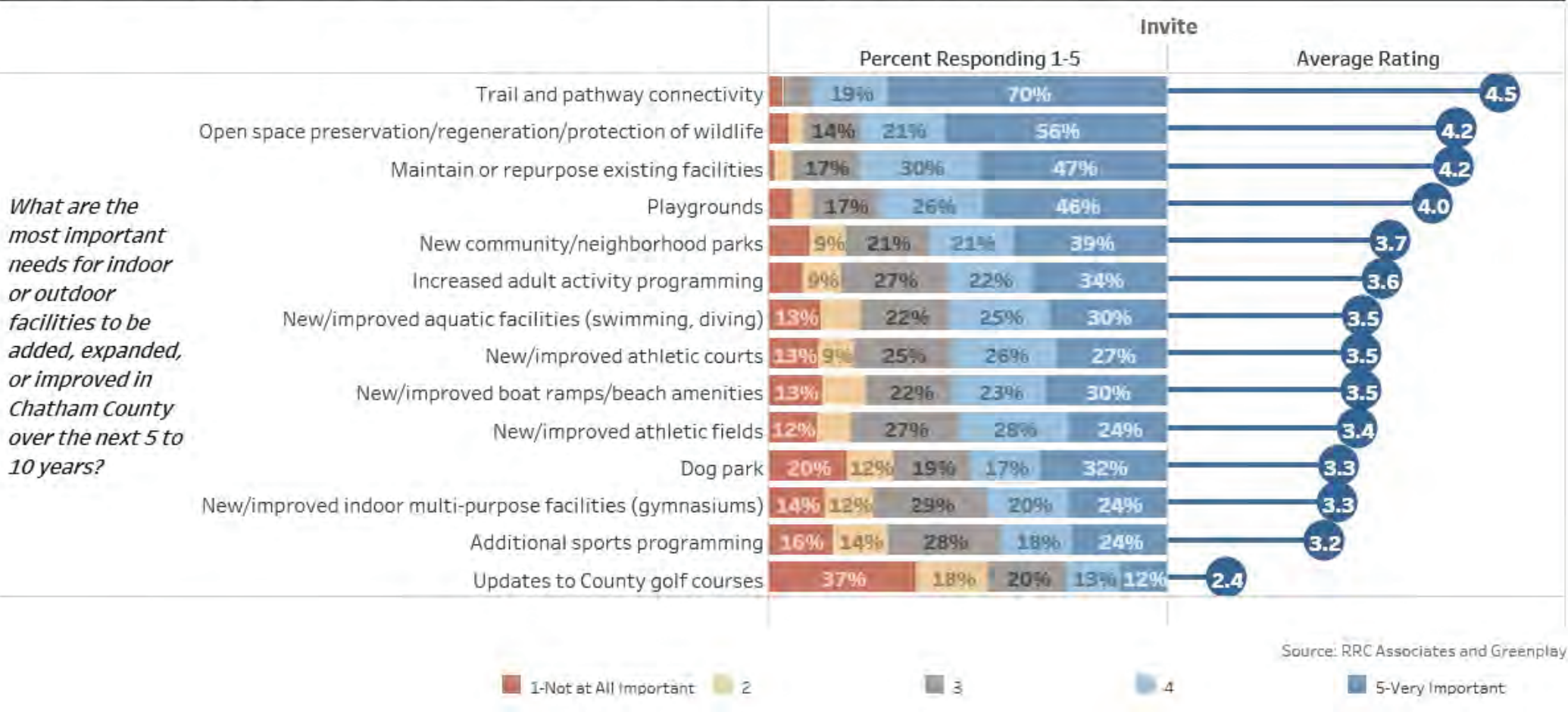


Source: RRC Associates and Greenplay

# IMPORTANCE OF FUTURE FACILITIES & PROGRAMS

Shown in a different way, results highlight the importance of trail connectivity, maintain existing facilities, open space preservation, and playgrounds.

## Chatham County Parks & Recreation | Future Facilities, Amenities, and Services

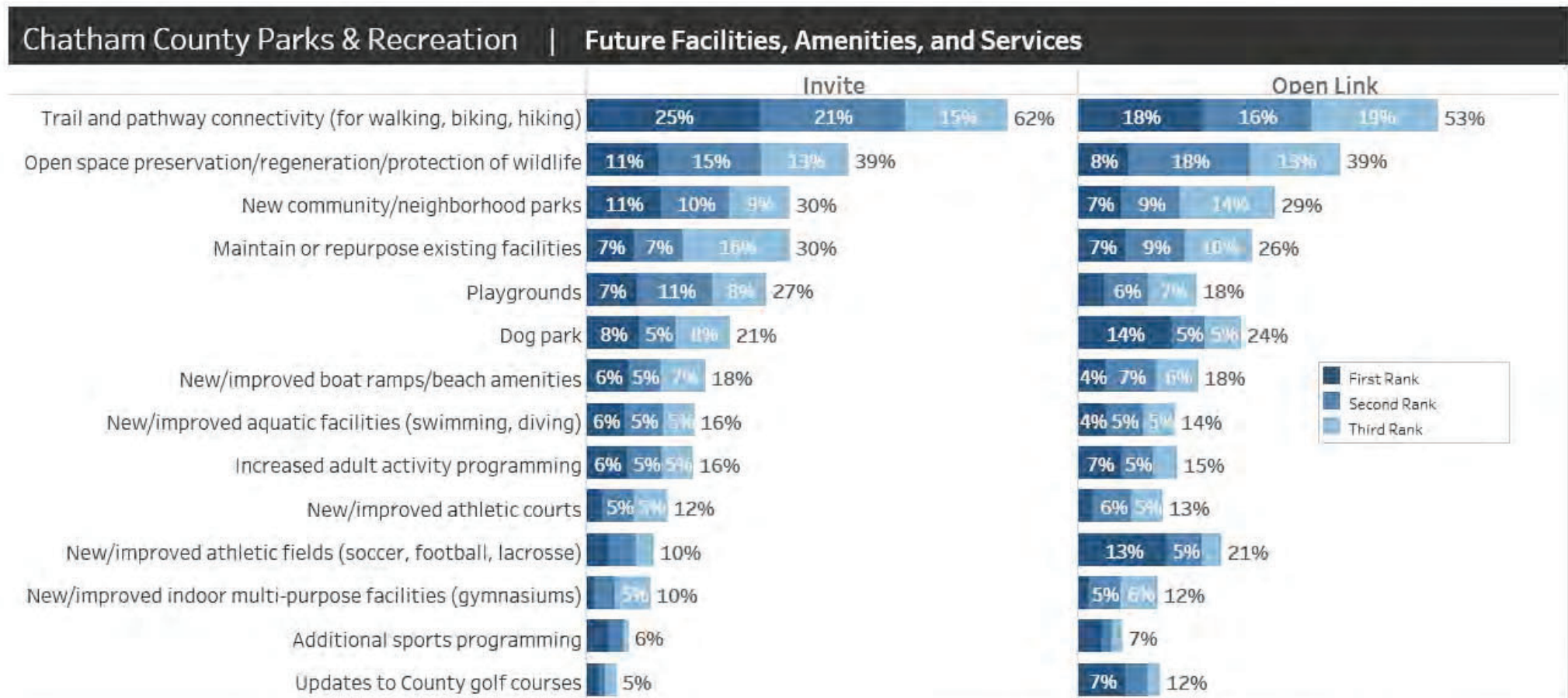






# PRIORITIES TO ADD, EXPAND, AND IMPROVE

When asked to select their top three priorities for Chatham County to add/expand/improve, invitation respondents were most likely to report trail and pathway connectivity (25% first priority; 60% total), open space preservation (38% total), and new community/neighborhood parks and maintaining existing facilities (29% total each). Open link respondents are similar in their priorities.



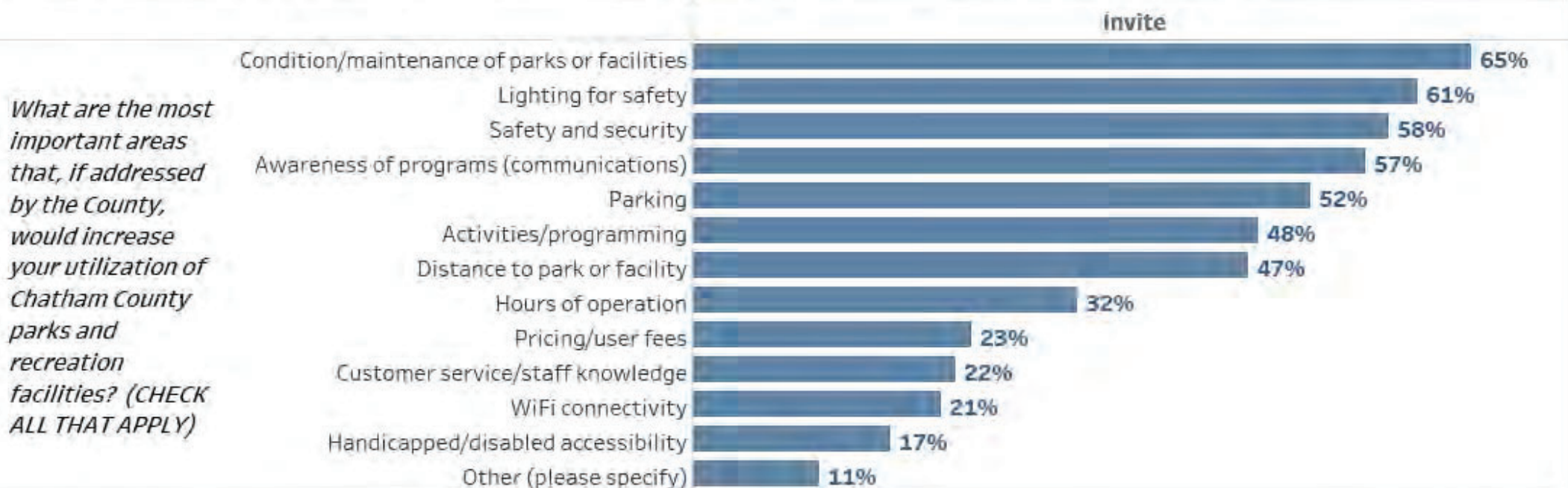
Source: RRC Associates and Greenplay



# FACTORS THAT WOULD INCREASE USAGE

When asked what factors would increase their usage of Chatham County facilities, invitation respondents were most likely to highlight condition/maintenance of parks or facilities (65%), lighting (61%), increased safety/security (58%), and awareness of programs/communication (57%). Respondents were less likely to choose handicapped/disabled access (17%), WiFi connectivity (21%), and customer service/staff knowledge (22%).

## Chatham County Parks & Recreation | Future Facilities, Amenities, and Services



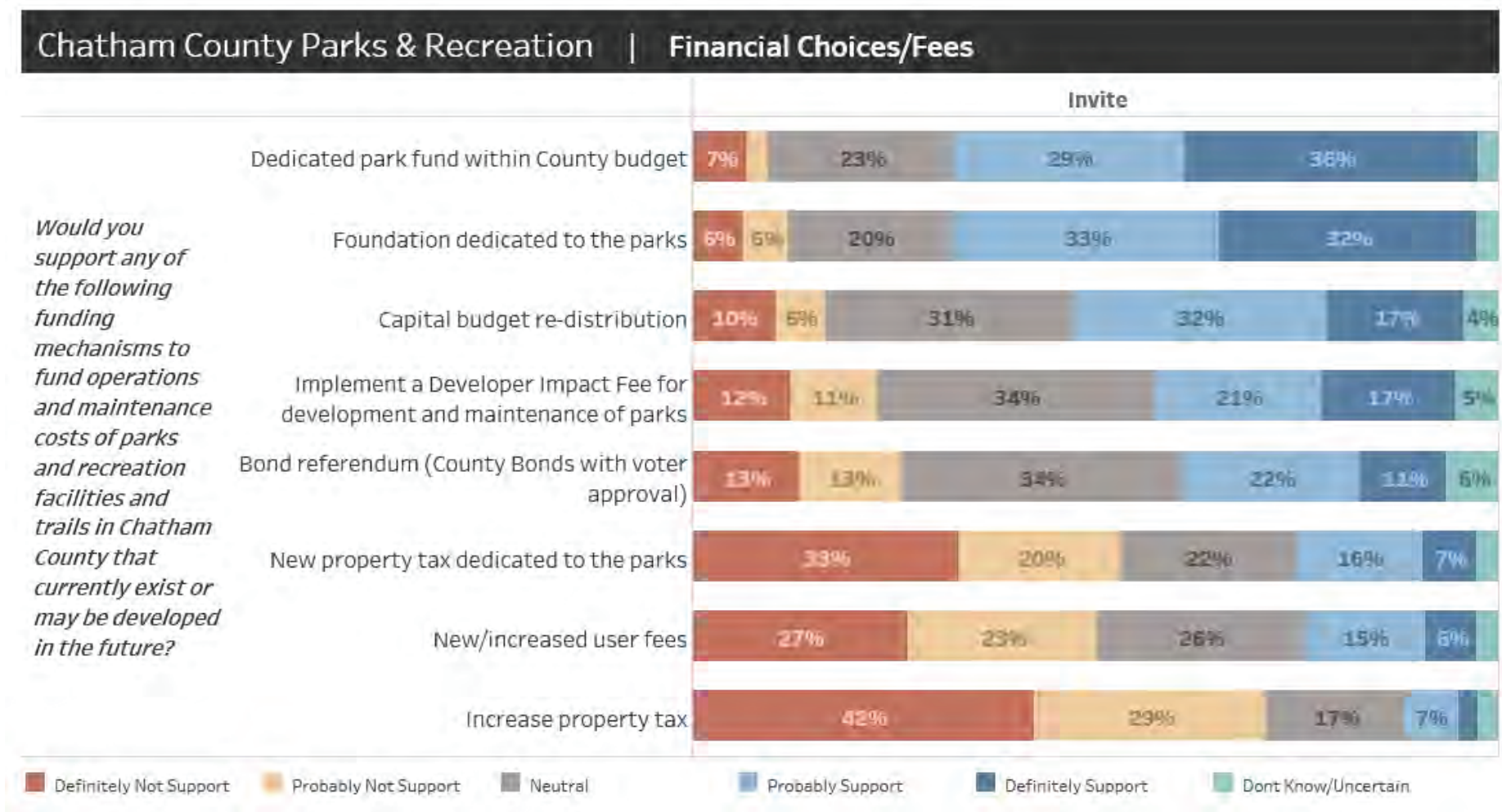
Source: RRC Associates and Greenplay



# FINANCIAL CHOICES/FEES

# \$ LEVEL OF SUPPORT FOR FUNDING

When asked about increasing existing resources, invitation respondents were most supportive of a dedicated park fund within county budget (65% would support), a foundation dedicated to parks (65% would support), and a capital budget re-distribution (49% would support). Invitation respondents were least supportive of increasing property tax (8% would support), new/increased user fees (21% would support), and a new property tax dedicated to parks (23% would support).

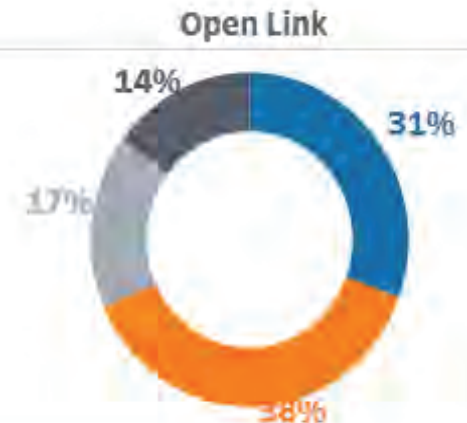
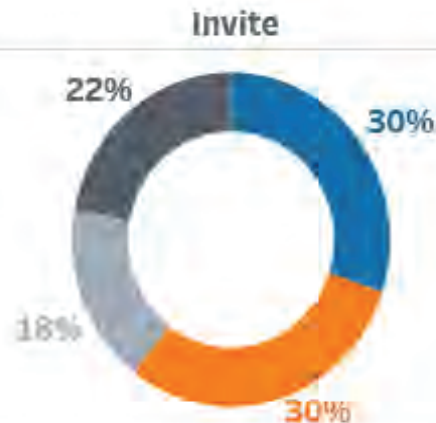


# IMPACT OF FEE INCREASES

When asked about whether increased fees would impact participation, 30% of invitation respondents stated it would not limit their participation, with 30% limiting somewhat and 18% limiting significantly. Twenty-two percent of respondents stated they were uncertain if a fee increase would change their participation.

## Chatham County Parks & Recreation | Financial Choices/Fees

*If adjustments to existing user fees were made (due to increasing costs to provide programs, services, or facilities) which of the following best describes the potential impact, if any, that fee increases would have on your current level of participation?*



Source: RRC Associates and Greenplay

- Fee increases would not limit my/our ability to participate at all
- Fee increases would limit my/our participation somewhat
- Fee increases would limit my/our participation significantly
- Dont know/uncertain



# COMMUNICATION





# EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNICATION EFFORTS

Communication effectiveness was rated by Chatham County invitation respondents on a scale of 1 = “not at all effective” to 5 = “very effective.” On average, respondents rated effectiveness 2.0 out of 5.0. For invitation respondents, 44% rated communication as 1 or “not at all effective” whereas only 9% rated communication a 4 or 5.

## Chatham County Parks & Recreation | Communication

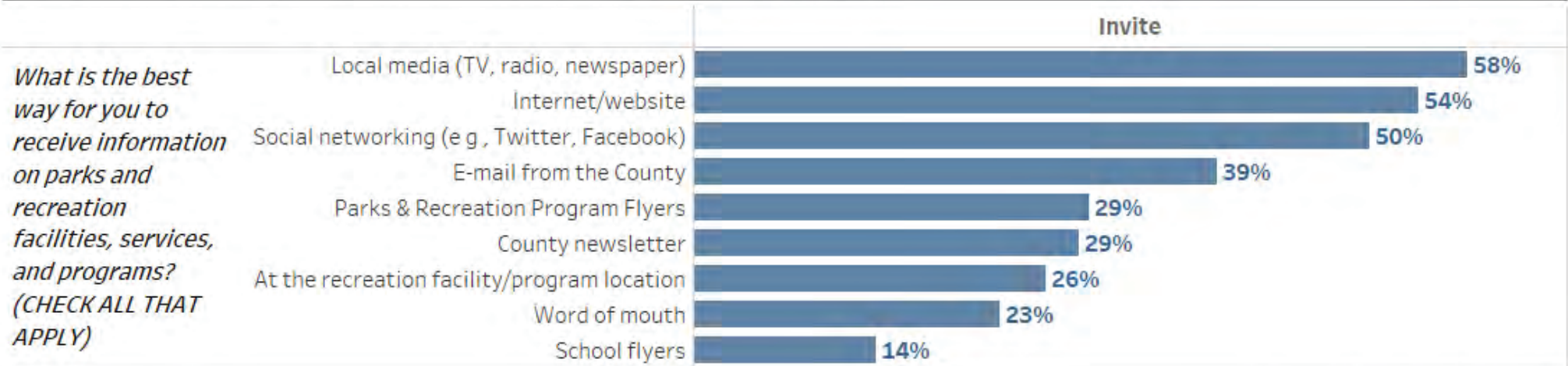




# BEST WAY TO RECEIVE INFORMATION

Respondents indicated local media (TV, radio, newspaper) (58%), internet/website (54%), and social networking (50%) as the best avenues to receive information. Least important areas to receive information were school flyers (14%), word of mouth (23%), and at the recreation facility/program location (26%).

## Chatham County Parks & Recreation | Communication



Source: RRC Associates and Greenplay





# SUGGESTIONS

# ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS

At the end of the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to provide any additional comments or suggestions about parks and recreation facilities and programs in Chatham County. Themes that came up frequently throughout the survey were: increased focus on maintain current facilities before expanding, cycling considerations to parks, dogs in parks, and improved communication strategies. From the open link survey, multiple respondents highlighted adding a new disc golf course. A selection of verbatim invitation responses is shown below. The full listing of responses is provided in the appendix.

*Chatham County has many great parks. Roads inside parks need maintenance and existing amenities need maintenance.*

*Communication of what is available-  
lived here 7 years and have never  
heard of parks listed on back page*

*It would be nice if there were  
more dog friendly trails/parks*

*Thank you for what you do. The  
parks and natural areas of  
Chatham are PRICELESS. Without  
you and your efforts, none of us  
could enjoy nor capitalize from  
these assets to our community.*

*Improving existing parks  
and buildings before  
expanding to include  
new properties.*

*Improve cycling paths, lanes, etc. Support  
cycling as a sport and a means of  
transportation.*

# ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS

- The below word cloud highlights the most popular words used when describing additional comments/suggestions. “Parks”, “need”, “bike”, and “lanes” rise to the top as the most commonly used words.



## Appendix D: LOS Report and Heat Maps

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**EXISTING CONDITIONS REPORT  
CHATHAM COUNTY, GA  
2018**

# INTRODUCTION

## Existing Conditions Report 2018

Thomas & Hutton and Barge Design Solutions completed a detailed assessment of the parks and recreation facilities in Chatham County, GA. The team visited the County's facilities to conduct the assessments during the months of October and November 2017. The County, which is approximately 440 square miles with roughly a quarter of a million residents, is home to 8 municipalities; Bloomingdale, Garden City, Pooler, Port Wentworth, City of Savannah, Thunderbolt, Tybee Island and Vernonburg as well as a large unincorporated contingent.

As part of the assessment, we evaluated each of the 44 existing Chatham County parks and recreation facilities identified on the Chatham County Park Services website. Each site was visited, documented, assessed and scored on a scale of 1-3. During site visits, parks and recreation facilities were photographed and notes were taken to verify the quantity and condition of the existing amenities. An inventory of amenities at each facility was compiled, examples of which include features such as; restrooms, drinking fountains, picnic table, bbq grills, accessibility elements like parking and security lighting as well as more subjective components for instance shade and design/ambiance. These amenities were each scored on a scale of 1 to 3, and the scores for all amenities at the recreation facility were then averaged to obtain the facility's overall score.

The ranking score was as follows:

**1 = Poor / Below Expectations**

Examples include: not having a bathroom, no ADA accessibility, damaged/unusable equipment, bare earth, unkempt turf areas

**2 = Average / Meets Expectations**

Examples include: Equipment which looks and functions as intended or may be in need of some minor/typical maintenance, minimum landscaping

**3 = Excellent / Exceeds Expectations**

Examples include: All facilities & amenities in tip-top shape, updated seasonal plantings

Figure 1, on the following page is summary spreadsheet of all the parks and their scores in each of the assessed subjects, along with their overall average score. The individual reports for each of the sites have been broken into their appropriate categories and included behind Figure 1.

This guide is intended to identify the existing conditions as a baseline for areas of opportunity for improvement within Chatham County's parks and recreation program.



CHATHAM COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN  
INVENTORY & LOS ANALYSIS

Outdoor Facility Name	Design & Ambiance	Drinking Fountains	Seating	BBQ Grill	Dog Station	Security Lighting	Bike Parking	Restrooms w/ Plumbing	Shade	Connection to Trails/ Greenways	Park Access	Parking On-Site	Seasonal Plantings	Ornamental Plantings	Picnic Tables	Other (See Notes)	Average
Community Parks																	1.8
L. Scott Stell	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	2.5	1.5
Lake Mayer	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	1.7
Mother Matilda Beasley	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	3	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	1.9
Runaway Point	2	1	2	3	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	1	1	3	2.5	2.0
Tom Triplett	3	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	2	3	2	2	3	2.5	2.5
Wilmington Island	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1.2
Neighborhood Parks																	1.2
Burroughs	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1.6
Grays Subdivision	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	2.5	1.5
Hodge Turner Park	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1.3
Isle of Hope	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	3	1	1	1	1	2	1.3
JC Cannon Fields	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Lamarville	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1.3
Ogeechee Farms	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1.1
Pin Point	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1.1
Rio Vista	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1.4
Westlake	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1.1
Sports Facilities																	1.6
Ambuc Park	1	1	1	n/a	n/a	1	1	1	1	n/a	2	1	1	1	n/a	1.5	1.1
Charlie C Brooks Park	2	2	3	n/a	n/a	1	1	2	1	3	3	3	1	1	n/a	2.5	2.0
Abolt Obrien Soccer Field	3	1	1	n/a	n/a	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	n/a	2	2.2
Hodge Turner Ballfield	1	1	1	n/a	n/a	1	1	1	2	n/a	1	1	1	1	n/a	1	1.1
Jim Golden Complex	3	1	3	n/a	n/a	2	1	2	1	n/a	2	2	1	1	n/a	2.5	1.8
Memorial Stadium	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Jennifer Ross Soccer Complex	2	1	2	n/a	n/a	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	n/a	n/a	1.5
Nature Preserves																	1.7
Bungard Conservation Area	3	n/a	2	n/a	1	1	1	n/a	2	3	3	2	n/a	n/a	2	3	2.1
Whitemarsh Preserve	3	n/a	2	n/a	1	1	1	n/a	3	3	1	2	n/a	n/a	1	2.5	1.9
Frank O Williamson Lake	1	n/a	1	n/a	1	1	1	n/a	1	1	1	1	n/a	n/a	1	2	1.1
Ogeechee Trail	2	n/a	2	n/a	1	1	1	n/a	3	3	1	1	n/a	n/a	2	1	1.6
Multipurpose Trails																	1.4
McQueen Island Rails to Trails	2	1	1	n/a	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	n/a	2	1.1
Old Savannah Ogeechee Canal	2	1	1	n/a	1	1	1	2	3	3	2	2	1	1	n/a	2	1.6
Boat Ramps/Fishing Piers																	1.4
Bells Landing	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	2	1.3
Frank Downing Fishing Pier	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1.0
Frank W. Spencer	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1		1	1.2
Kings Ferry	2	2	3	1	1	2	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	2.5	2.0
Lazaretto Creek	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1.1
Rodney J Hall	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	1.4
Salt Creek	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	1.5	1.3
Thunderbolt	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1.1
Turner Creek	3	1	1	1	1	3	1	3	3	1	2	3	1	3	1	2	1.9
Tybee Island Fishing Pier & Pavillion	2	2	3	1	1	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	1	3	3	2.5	2.1

Indoor Facility Name	Design & Ambiance	Parking	Component										Average	
Community Centers			Entrance	Open Room	Kitchen	Bathrooms							2.3	
Frank G Murray	2	2	3	3	2	2							2.3	
Swimming Pools			Entrance	Swim Shop	Rest Area	Cardio Room	Bathrooms	Locker Room	50m Pool	25m Pool	Bleachers	Office	3.0	
Chatham County Aquatic Center	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3.0	
Weight Lifting Centers			Entrance	Bathrooms	Training Sta.	Locker Room	Sauna							2.7
Anderson - Cohen Weightlifting Center	3	3	3	3	2	3							2.7	
Golf Courses			Entrance	Clubhouse	Gift Shop	Diner	Bathroom	Driving Rnge	Cart Barn				2.3	
Al Henderson Golf Club	2	2	3	2	2	3		2	3				2.3	



# OUTDOOR FACILITIES

## Community Parks

L. Scott Stell

Retha Mae McCoy

Lake Mayer

Tom Triplett

Mother Matilda Beasley

Wilmington Island

# L. SCOTT STELL

195 Scott Stell Community Park Savannah, GA 31419



## PARK SCORE: 1.5

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Pavilions for rent
- Lighted tennis & basketball courts
- Community garden plots
- Archery range
- Stocked lake with boat

### OVERVIEW:

L. Scott Stell is a unique park interesting features such as a community garden, an archery range and a stocked freshwater lake. Unfortunately, many of the parks amenities are in desperate need of repair. Chatham County has master planned improvements to the park to be completed in phases. At the time of publication, the first phase of the planned improvements were being designed. The Jim Golden Complex is within the park boundaries.

### OBSERVATIONS:

This park scored below average mainly due to upkeep issues rather than a lack of amenities. Other than the softball complex, the park does not appear to be heavily trafficked and has an "empty" feeling associated with it. As a result of this, there is a perception of a lack of safety.

### **AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:**

Much of the asphalt is degraded and the parking lot is littered with potholes. During and after rain storms there is standing water due to lack of drainage infrastructure. The dock/ fishing pier is also in critical need of repairs. General upgrades to the bathroom and other facilities could make this a standout park.

### **PHOTO ASSESSMENT:**



**PHOTO 1:**

Community garden with plots available for rent. Plots are fenced and numbered.



**PHOTO 2:**

This park has a total of 12 lighted courts/ fields. There are 8 lighted tennis courts and 5 baseball/softball ball fields (4 of which are lighted). The baseball/softball fields are part of the Jim Golden Complex.





**PHOTO 3:**

The park has a freshwater lake with a boat ramp and dock / fishing pier. Currently the pier is in need of repairs to address warped, rotting boards and loose hardware.



**PHOTO 4:**

Much of the pavement in this park is degraded and potholed. There appears to be little to no drainage within the park which exacerbates the degradation of the current asphalt paving.



**PHOTO 5:**

There are three restroom buildings located on the property but all are in need of maintenance/replacement. Additional porta-potties are located by the dock.

# LAKE MAYER

1850 E. Montgomery Crossroads Savannah, GA 31406



## PARK SCORE: 1.7

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Large, stocked freshwater lake with boat ramp and fishing pier
- Skate Park
- Lighted hockey rink
- Community center
- Lighted tennis courts
- 1.5 mile paved trail with fitness course

### OVERVIEW:

Lake Mayer is a large, centrally located community park with a multitude of amenities. The large lake is used for fishing and sailing. There are a wide variety of active recreational opportunities including, tennis, baseball/softball, roller hockey, handball, volleyball, remote control cars, basketball and skateboarding. The park offers a paved walking trail and rubberized jogging trail as well as multiple pavilions and benches and a small community center. Chatham County has master planned improvements to the park to be completed in

phases. At the time of publication, the first phase of the planned improvements were under construction.



## **OBSERVATIONS:**

Current construction of improvements has made this park more chaotic however its central location and amenities continue to draw a high level of traffic. The parks aging amenities are in need of maintenance/replacement. The improvements currently under construction will address parking improvements for the island.

## **AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:**

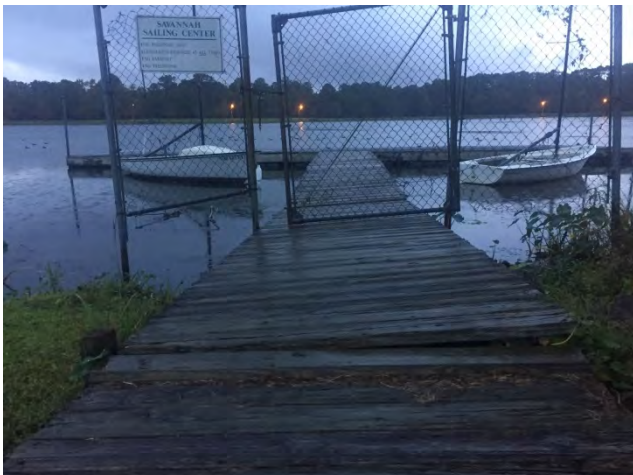
The buildings (community center, restrooms, pavilions) are dated and showing their age. The playgrounds appear to get regular use and are in need of freshening up/replacement of equipment. The docks used by the sailing club are in need of maintenance as well. Additional plantings to "dress up" the parks appearance would create a more inviting and welcoming experience.

## **PHOTO ASSESSMENT:**



**PHOTO 1:**

Existing screened in pavilion. The pavilion functions as intended however shows its age and is in need of maintenance and upkeep.



**PHOTO 2:**

Existing dock used by sailing club which is in need of maintenance. The dock lists to one side, the gate does not close properly and deck boards are in need of replacement.



**PHOTO 3:**

Existing playground equipment. Playground to be regularly maintained and equipment inspected and repaired/replaced as necessary. County to verify compliance with ADA and fall guidelines.



**PHOTO 4:**

Existing restroom in need of maintenance. At the time of visit, one of the stalls had caution tape across it.



**PHOTO 5:**

Remote control car track. The track is maintained by a private club.

# MOTHER MATILDA BEASLEY

500 E. Broad Street Savannah, GA 31401



## PARK SCORE: 1.9

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Beasley Dog Park
- Historic pavilion with 2 playgrounds
- Large play field
- Baseball/ softball field

### OVERVIEW:

Mother Matilda Beasley is a park with historical significance, located near downtown Savannah. The park was named after the first African-American nun in the state of GA. It has a large fenced dog park, 2 playgrounds, a pavilion and 2 sports fields.

### OBSERVATIONS:

This park gets good marks for accessibility. There is good ADA access to both the restrooms and the main facilities. The dog park has good amenities even if it is somewhat small.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

This park has minimal parking and no designated ADA parking space. At the time of visit, there appeared to be issues with fire ants.



## PHOTO ASSESSMENT:



**PHOTO 1:**

Entrance sign. Not consistent with other Chatham County Parks & Rec signage



**PHOTO 2:**

New building built in location of the former cottage that was part of the underground railroad. Good ADA accessibility.



**PHOTO 3:**

The park boasts two playgrounds with amenities for both younger and older children. Playground equipment appears to be in fairly new condition (park updated in 2012), however there are some pieces equipment in need of replacement and maintenance.



**PHOTO 4:**

Large multipurpose field which appeared to be in fair condition with grass covering the majority of the field.



**PHOTO 5:**

Fenced dog park with water station and shade pavilion. Facility had good amenities, but did have some dirt (bare) areas from what appeared to be heavy use.

# RETHA MAE MCCOY

240 Riverview Rd Savannah, GA 31404



## PARK SCORE: 2.0

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Three pavilions for rent
- Basketball and Volleyball courts
- Paved Track
- Two baseball/ softball fields

### OVERVIEW:

Retha Mae McCoy scored the second highest out of the community parks. It has a nice assortment of amenities including restrooms/ concessions, pavilions for rent, playgrounds and multiple fields/ courts for recreational play.

### OBSERVATIONS:

Retha Mae McCoy has great access from the surrounding neighborhood with great ADA access and plenty of trashcans.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

Some graffiti was found on the park's buildings and pavilions and the volleyball net was missing at the time of visit. The reservation requirement/ procedure for pavilions and tennis courts seemed unusual.



## PHOTO ASSESSMENT:



### PHOTO 1:

Retha Mae McCoy has great access from the surrounding neighborhood and good parking availability as well as a designated ADA spot. The name on the sign had not yet been changed at the time of visit.



### PHOTO 2:

Good bike parking was available for neighborhood traffic.



### PHOTO 3:

The playground equipment appeared relatively new and well suited to serve a variety of age groups.



**PHOTO 4:**

The restrooms were well located and in relatively good shape.



**PHOTO 5:**

The pavilions were in good shape with plenty of picnic tables for gathering. The sign about rental/ reservation procedure was confusing and stated that walk-on's would also be charged.

# TOM TRIPLETT

100 Tom Triplett Rd Pooler, GA 31322



## PARK SCORE: 2.5

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Large stocked freshwater lake with boat ramp
- Two fishing piers
- Pavilions and conference room available for rent
- Mountain bike trail
- Disk golf, playground and tennis courts
- 1.5 mile paved trail w/ fitness course

### OVERVIEW:

Tom Triplett was the highest scoring community park in the County. Though somewhat rustic, the park was maintained and had great amenities. It was noted that there are some areas which could benefit from additional maintenance/upkeep. The County currently has plans for a park expansion and reconstruction/repair of the trail.

### OBSERVATIONS:

Although foot traffic to the park is limited, access to Tom Triplett was excellent. The park boasts plenty of parking, good connection to trails and greenways, and more

than adequate security lighting. Facilities were well maintained and appeared to be in good working order.



## **AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:**

Overall park was rated in above average condition. General maintenance and upkeep should be maintained.

## **PHOTO ASSESMENT:**



**PHOTO 1:**

The park has an attractive pavilion overlooking the lake with plenty of picnic tables. Paint on the railing was peeling at the time of site visit and could be replaced.



**PHOTO 2:**

Paved trails were relatively well maintained though they did show some signs of wear. Continued attention to maintenance and repair is required for paved surfaces.



**PHOTO 3:**

The park's two fishing piers were in good condition.



**PHOTO 4:**

View of the lake and floating dock. The lake appeared to be well maintained and per the County's website, is stocked with fish. The floating dock appeared in good condition with typical maintenance required.



**PHOTO 5:**

Rustic grilling station.



# WILMINGTON ISLAND

Cohen Ave at Walthour Rd Savannah, GA 31410



## PARK SCORE: 1.2

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Pavilions for rent
- Bathrooms
- Playground

### OVERVIEW:

This was the lowest scoring of all the community parks in the County. The park is under-utilized because it has virtually no amenities and the few amenities it has have not been repaired after being damaged in the recent hurricanes.

### OBSERVATIONS:

This park is ideally located with close proximity to several family friendly neighborhoods on Wilmington Island.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

Many of the few amenities this park has, were damaged during recent hurricanes, rendering them unusable and/or unsafe. The parking area is a dirt lot that is very rough to traverse due to rutting and roots. The restrooms were old and in need of maintenance. There were no doors on the individual restroom stalls.



## PHOTO ASSESMENT:



**PHOTO 1:**

Picnic pavilion with trash can and power receptacle. Pavilion could use a fresh coat of paint and the roof needed to be cleaned.



**PHOTO 2:**

This park playground was damaged during the hurricanes and is now a safety risk.



**PHOTO 3:**

Volleyball netting damaged by the hurricanes.



**PHOTO 4:**

Parking lot is not paved and therefore not ADA compliant. The parking area was very rough due to rutting and tree roots.



**PHOTO 5:**

Picnic tables and garbage cans also sustained damage from the storms.

# OUTDOOR FACILITIES

## Neighborhood Parks

Burroughs  
Isle of Hope  
Ogeechee Farms  
Westlake

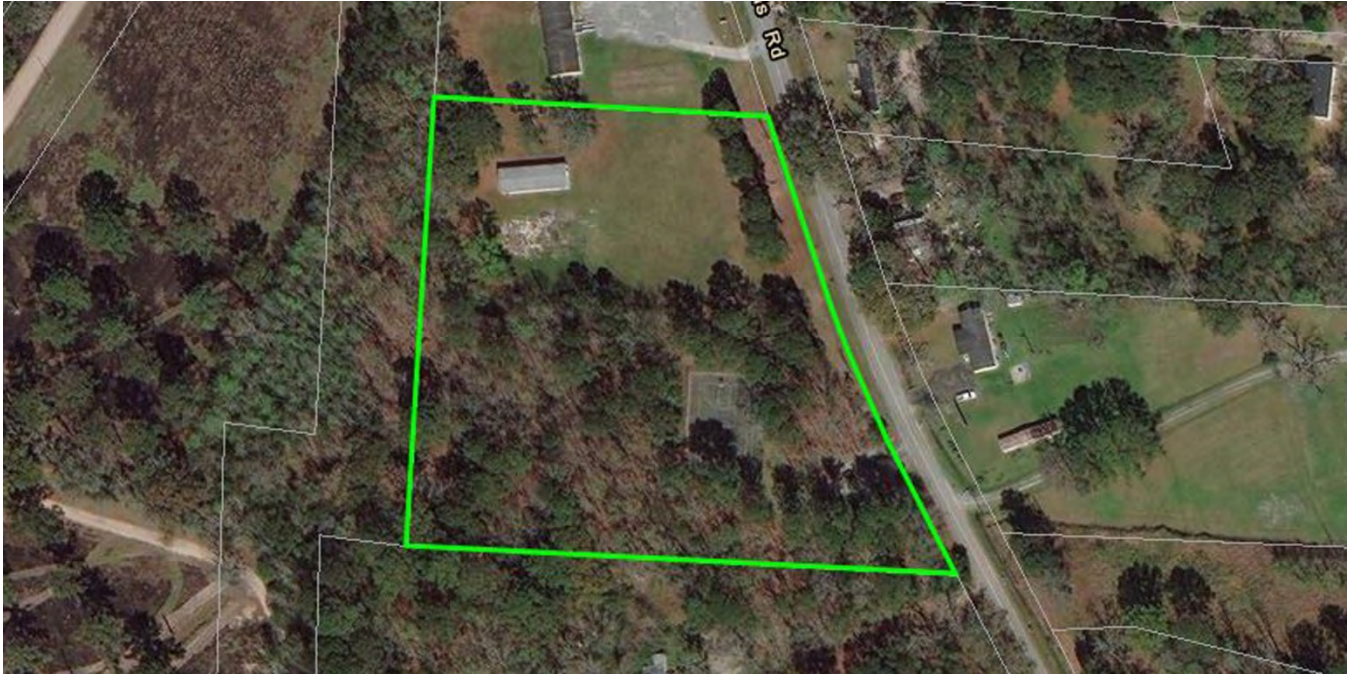
Grays Subdivision  
JC Cannon Fields  
Pin Point

Hodge Turner Park  
Lamarville  
Rio Vista



# BURROUGHS

Chevis Rd Savannah, GA 31419



## PARK SCORE: 1.6

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Playground
- Basketball court
- Picnic Area

### OVERVIEW:

Burroughs is a small, well shaded, neighborhood park located on a dead end road. While it is ADA accessible there is no on-site parking and therefore no ADA parking spot.

### OBSERVATIONS:

Burroughs is a small neighborhood park with limited amenities. Amenities are all showing signs of age. At time of visit there was only a single trash can in the entire park.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

Providing vehicular parking including at least one ADA parking space as well as construction of a restroom facility and addition of site lighting.

## PHOTO ASSESSMENT:



### PHOTO 1:

Entrance to Park – gate is in need of repair



### PHOTO 2:

Playground appeared to be in average condition at time of visit.



### PHOTO 3:

Water fountain and bbq grill are functional.



### PHOTO 4:

Outdoor basketball courts are functional but could be re-vitalized through fresh paint.



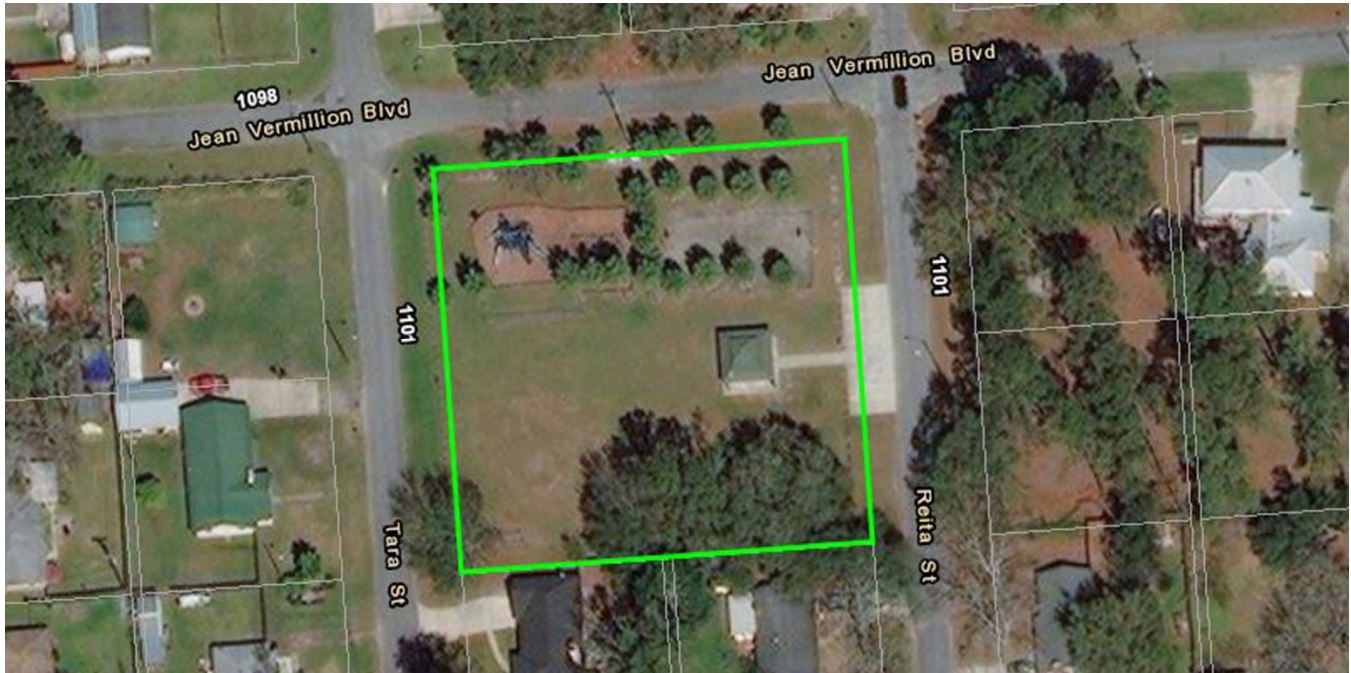
**PHOTO 5:**

Looking back towards entrance to park past grill and playground. Asphalt and concrete pathway appear to be in fair shape. There were some noted areas where the asphalt trail was showing some cracking probably due to tree roots.



# GRAYS SUBDIVISION

Reita St Savannah, GA 31410



## PARK SCORE: 1.5

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Pavilion with picnic table
- Playground
- Large play field
- Basketball court

### OVERVIEW:

Greys Subdivision is a small neighborhood park located within Greys Subdivision neighborhood on Whitmarsh Island.

### OBSERVATIONS:

This park has limited amenities but does have a large play field, a nice pavilion, a decent basketball court and a small playground. The pavilion is in good shape and has sufficient picnic tables. Parking was adequate and ADA spots were available.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

At time of visit the park's one water fountain was not working and there were broken pieces on the playset. The park was also lacking amenities common to other neighborhood parks, such as a bbq grill, dog station and bike parking.

## PHOTO ASSESSMENT:



**PHOTO 1:**

Park has on-site parking and ADA spaces as well as ADA access to the pavilion.



**PHOTO 2:**

Nice pavilion with picnic tables and adequate trash receptacles.



**PHOTO 3:**

The basketball court was in good shape and appeared to be well maintained.



**PHOTO 4:**

Playground was small but adequate. Some of the playground equipment needed repairs, such as the slide which was chipped in several places, and the mulch layer under the equipment was starting to thin out.



**PHOTO 5:**

Nice benches under trees near the playground equipment provide good shade for parents supervising young children.



# HODGE TURNER PARK

Shipyard Rd Savannah, GA 31406



## PARK SCORE: 1.3

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Playground
- Pavilion with picnic table
- Basketball Court
- Bus stop adjacent to park

### OVERVIEW:

Hodge Turner Park is a neighborhood park with limited amenities but lots of potential. The park is adjacent to a bus stop making it accessible despite the lack of parking.

### OBSERVATIONS:

The parking area is rutted and full of exposed roots making it difficult to traverse in a car. There are no provisions for ADA accessibility to the facilities. A sign was observed which indicated that there was to be no playing at the park during church. The building onsite appears to be abandoned.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

In its current state this park is not ADA accessible, and it should be addressed. Renovation of the existing building to provide for a community center along with functioning restrooms. Improvements to parking and site lighting should be considered a priority.

## PHOTO ASSESSMENT:



### PHOTO 1:

Park sign – sign appeared in fair shape. Is not consistent with other Chatham County park entry signs.



### PHOTO 2:

Interesting older building on property appears abandoned.



### PHOTO 3:

Small pavilion with picnic tables was in decent shape but was located under trees and covered with debris. Will need constant maintenance.





**PHOTO 4:**

Example of existing bench in need of maintenance. Aluminum seating surface bent and missing some end caps and exposed foundation.



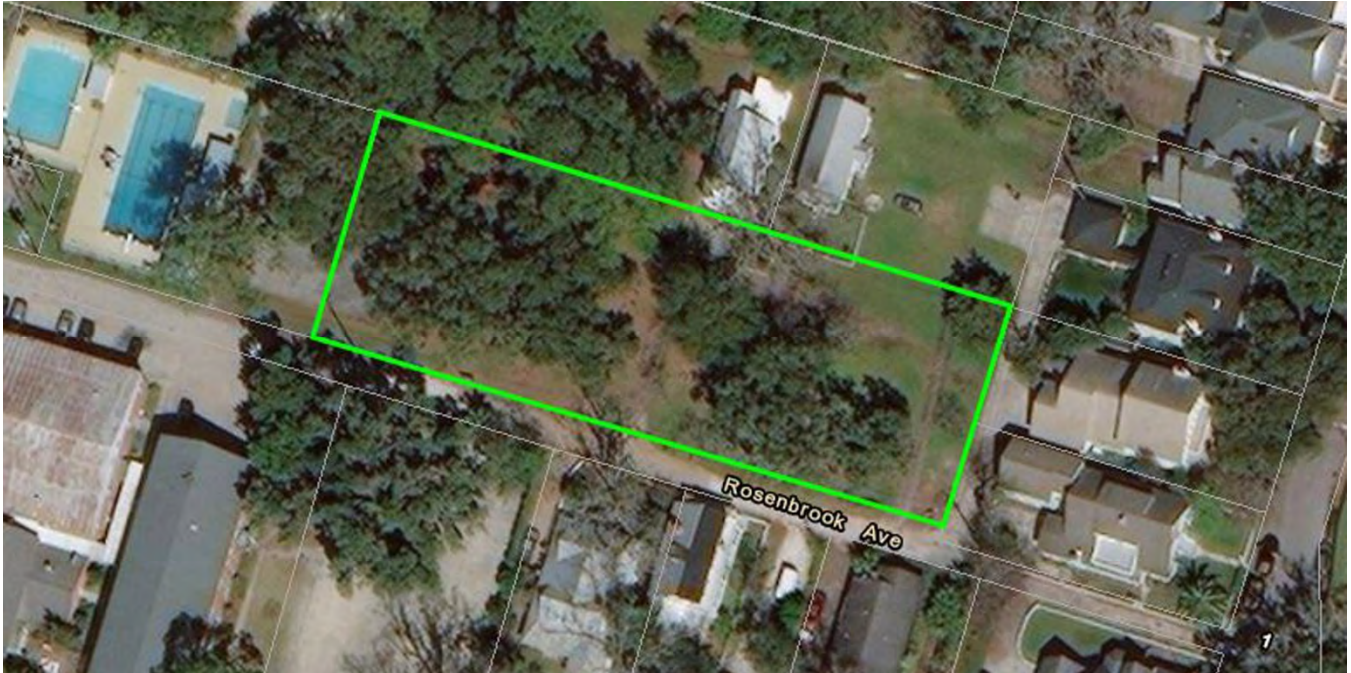
**PHOTO 5:**

No parking available at park entrance. Drive is not paved and had many ruts and exposed roots. Park not ADA accessible.



# ISLE OF HOPE

Cornus Dr Savannah, GA 31406



## PARK SCORE: 1.3

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Large playground
- Basketball court
- Oyster grill
- Well shaded
- Good neighborhood location

### OVERVIEW:

Isle of Hope is a well-situated neighborhood park, convenient to many Isle of Hope neighborhoods and in close proximity to other Isle of Hope assets.

### OBSERVATIONS:

This park had no onsite parking and no ADA access but was in a good walkable location for many neighbors. Amenities were in very poor condition and the park lacked some amenities that seem common at other

neighborhood parks, namely a pavilion with picnic tables.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

This park had a good sized playground that was in need of upkeep and repairs. The basketball court itself was in good condition but the nets need to be replaced.

**PHOTO ASSESSMENT:**



**PHOTO 1:**

Park sign appeared to be fairly new and in good condition



**PHOTO 2:**

Older playground equipment in poor shape.



**PHOTO 3:**

Large playground with lots of equipment in poor shape and no safety surface. Appears to have been donated by a resident.





**PHOTO 4:**

This park boasts a large oyster grill however there is no pavilion or picnic tables to use for an oyster roast.



**PHOTO 5:**

Makeshift foot/ handwashing station is useful but could be improved.

# JC CANNON FIELDS

Lang St Savannah, GA 31410



## PARK SCORE: 1

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Two tennis courts
- Two baseball/ softball fields
- Basketball court

### OVERVIEW:

JC Cannon Fields is a small neighborhood ballfield that also has two tennis courts and a basketball court. The county has indicated that there may be a property ownership issue with this parcel.

### OBSERVATIONS:

The fields and fencing are all in poor condition.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

This park is in major need of repairs to the fencing and fields. Possible property ownership issues may be delaying this process.



**PHOTO ASSESSMENT:**



**PHOTO 1:**

Field and fence in poor shape.



**PHOTO 2:**

Condition of field renders it unplayable for baseball.



**PHOTO 3:**

Condition of field renders it unplayable for baseball.

# LAMARVILLE

ACL Blvd Savannah, GA 31405



## PARK SCORE: 1.3

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Two pavilions with picnic tables
- Basketball court
- Playground

### OVERVIEW:

Lamarville is a small neighborhood park with limited amenities. It has good neighborhood access but is lacking onsite parking.

### OBSERVATIONS:

Most amenities appeared to be in fair shape however, graffiti was observed on the playground equipment. The park is lacking onsite parking and only has limited ADA access.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

Addition of a lighted parking area, improvements to ADA accessibility, removal of graffiti and general maintenance and upkeep.



## PHOTO ASSESSMENT:



### PHOTO 1:

Park sign and sidewalk were in fair shape. Benches and playground equipment were in poor shape and in need of maintenance/repair/replacement.



### PHOTO 2:

Park pavilion was in good shape and playground equipment was in need of maintenance/repair/replacement.



### PHOTO 3:

The playground equipment well suited to serve a variety of age groups however was in need of maintenance/repair/replacement. Some graffiti was noted on playground equipment.



**PHOTO 4:**

The basketball court appeared to be in good shape.



**PHOTO 5:**

The pavilions were in good shape with plenty of picnic tables for gathering.

# OGEECHEE FARMS

Yemessee Rd Savannah, GA 31419



## PARK SCORE: 1.1

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Good location
- Nice large, wooded lot

### OVERVIEW:

Ogeechee Farms is a nice wooded piece of property located off Yemassee Rd.

### OBSERVATIONS:

This park has two small very old pieces of playground equipment and a concrete pad which looks to have been a basketball court at one point. There is a small metal pavilion but at the time of visit there were no picnic tables or seating under the pavilion.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

This park is pretty much a blank slate. Currently, accessibility is limited with no formal parking and no ADA access. The playground equipment needs to be replaced and additional improvements to the park added.



**PHOTO ASSESSMENT:**



**PHOTO 1:**

Concrete pad. At one point a basketball court but basketball hoops were not present at time of visit.



**PHOTO 2:**

Small metal pavilion. No seating or picnic tables.



**PHOTO 3:**

Old playground equipment: one metal slide and one climbing structure.

# PIN POINT

Pinpoint Rd Savannah, GA 31406



## PARK SCORE: 1.1

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Playground
- Basketball court
- Pavilion with picnic tables

### OVERVIEW:

Pin Point is a small neighborhood park across the street from the Pin Point Heritage Museum.

### OBSERVATIONS:

Access to Pin Point is confusing and appears to be a shared driveway with neighbors. The park is small with limited amenities and is suffering from deferred

maintenance issues. Neighbors reported concerns about the park being used for drug activity.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

This park needs defined parking and access as well as lots of overdue maintenance. If access is improved, amenities could be updated.



## PHOTO ASSESSMENT:



**PHOTO 1:**

Access to park is confusing and appears to be a shared drive with neighbors. There is no defined parking lot and no ADA access.



**PHOTO 2:**

Park layout is confusing and not welcoming to neighbors. The closed off nature of the park may encourage loitering and the potential for illegal activity.



**PHOTO 3:**

Vegetation is overgrown and there appears to be a low hanging or down power line on the property.



**PHOTO 4:**

At time of visit, pavilion roof was covered with debris.



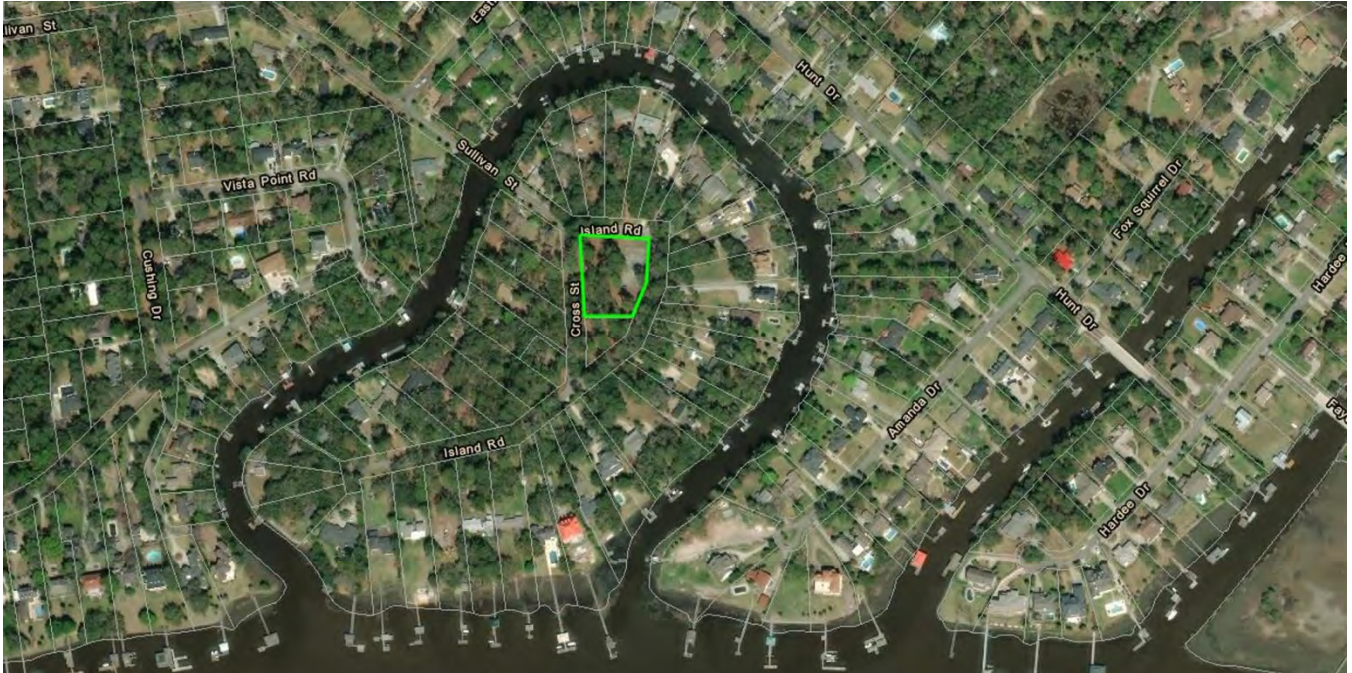
**PHOTO 5:**

Entrance sign and bench both in need of maintenance/replacement. Sign not consistent with other signage at County parks.



# RIO VISTA

Island Rd Savannah, GA 31406



## PARK SCORE: 1.4

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Playground
- Basketball court
- Tennis court

### OVERVIEW:

Rio Vista is a small neighborhood park with limited amenities and wear and tear/ deferred maintenance issues.

### OBSERVATIONS:

The playground equipment is adequate but in need of repair and continued maintenance. The concrete for the shared basketball/ tennis court is in poor shape with multiple cracks and low spots. Picnic tables and benches are in need of being repaired and or replaced.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

Existing facilities at this park are in dire need of maintenance. In addition this park could use additional amenities common to area neighborhood parks, notably a covered pavilion, water fountains and bike parking.

## PHOTO ASSESSMENT:



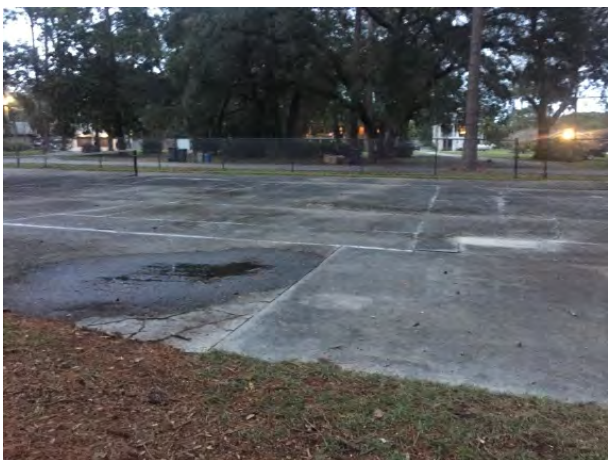
**PHOTO 1:**

Playground equipment was adequate but in need of maintenance and repair. At time of visit, the swings were bent and appeared potentially dangerous.



**PHOTO 2:**

Lack of playground surface under equipment results in no fall protection.



**PHOTO 3:**

Concrete on the shared basketball/ tennis court was cracked and otherwise in poor shape. Will have to be resurfaced to be usable.





**PHOTO 4:**

Picnic table was showing signs of wear and was not under a covered pavilion as is common in other local neighborhood parks.



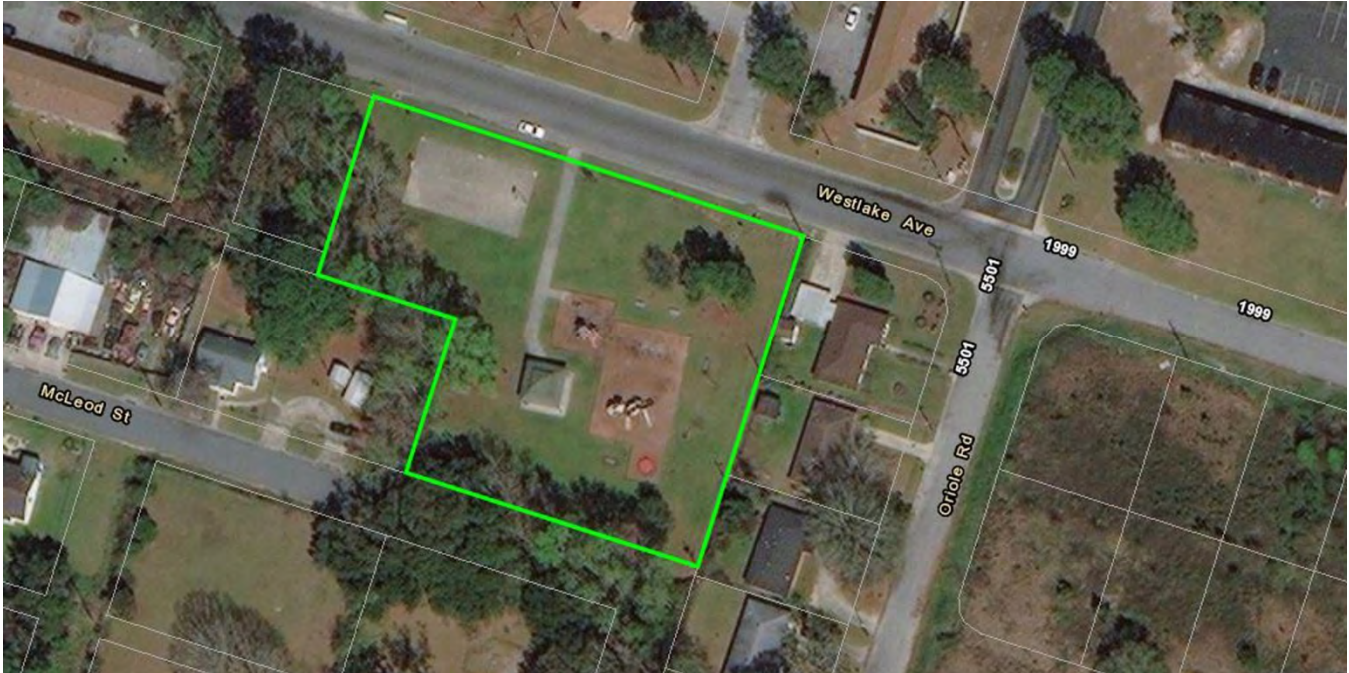
**PHOTO 5:**

Park bench was damaged and falling over. Hazardous to sit on.



# WESTLAKE

West Lake Rd Savannah, GA 31405



## PARK SCORE: 1.1

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Playground
- Pavilion
- Basketball Court

### OVERVIEW:

Westlake is a small neighborhood park centrally located within the county but lacking access and amenities.

### OBSERVATIONS:

Westlake Neighborhood Park has a nice, large, pavilion however at time of visit it was missing picnic tables. The playground is an adequate size but is in need of maintenance and repairs and there is no playground surface under equipment. The basketball court is in rough shape and graffiti can be found throughout the park on the amenities. At time of visit there were no trash receptacles. ADA access was limited and there was no designated parking.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

This park has adequate amenities to be a nice little neighborhood park but is in serious need of maintenance and repairs. Access could also be improved.

## PHOTO ASSESSMENT:



**PHOTO 1:**

Park Sign with graffiti.



**PHOTO 2:**

Playground equipment is adequate in size and variety but is in need of maintenance and repairs. At time of visit, there was not playground surface under equipment



**PHOTO 3:**

Pavilion is in need of maintenance and repairs and was missing picnic tables at time of visit.



**PHOTO 4:**

The basketball court is currently in fair shape but is in need of maintenance before it deteriorates further.

# OUTDOOR FACILITIES

## Sports Facilities

Ambuc Park  
Abolt Obrien Soccer Field  
Jim Golden Complex  
Jennifer Ross Soccer Complex

Charlie C Brooks Park  
Hodge Turner Ballfield  
Memorial Stadium



# AMBUC PARK

7230 Sallie Mood Dr Savannah, GA 31406



## PARK SCORE: 1.1

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Lighted baseball/ softball fields
- Football fields
- Bathrooms
- Concessions

### OVERVIEW:

Ambuc Park is a local sports facility with baseball and softball fields which are often restriped for football fields. It shares the same site and parking as the Chatham County Aquatic Center.

### OBSERVATIONS:

At the time of visit, the fields were worn and in need of general maintenance and upkeep. Football fields were originally laid out for baseball and retrofitted for football. Lighting system was more than adequate for the fields but there was no lighting in the parking lot. ADA access is provided to the fields from the two gravel parking areas

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

Ambuc Park could be improved by paving and lighting the gravel parking lot. Fields could use better maintenance and upkeep. Shallow swales and ditches hold water due to lack of slope. Systems could be piped to address standing water issues.

## PHOTO ASSESSMENT:



**PHOTO 1:**

Ambuc Park is located in close proximity to the Aquatic Center and can make use of their large paved parking lot as overflow parking.



**PHOTO 2:**

Much of the materials and labor for Ambuc Park were donated by the Savannah AMBUCS in the 1970s. The fact that the AMBUCS are “dedicated to creating mobility and independence for people with disabilities” would be another good reason to readdress ADA accessibility for the facility.



**PHOTO 3:**

Clubhouse has restrooms on the first floor and is accessible from the ADA parking spots by ramp.





**PHOTO 4:**

ADA parking spots and ramp to clubhouse. Concrete parking stalls with accessible sidewalk to fields appear in decent condition. Signs could be straightened up and paving and landscaping of parking area would be a functional and aesthetic improvement.

# CHARLIE C BROOKS PARK

Between Johnny Mercer Blvd and Concord Rd Savannah, GA



## PARK SCORE: 2

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Four lighted baseball/ softball fields
- Lighted soccer/ football field
- Digital scoreboards
- Bathrooms
- Concessions

### OVERVIEW:

Charlie C Brooks Park is a sports complex with baseball, softball, soccer and football facilities on Wilmington Island.

### OBSERVATIONS:

This park is well maintained and has a variety of amenities for users including indoor bathrooms, concessions, and good lighting on the fields. It has paved parking and is ADA accessible.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

The concession stand appeared to be in need of some maintenance and repairs and the parking lot was not lit.

## PHOTO ASSESSMENT:



### PHOTO 1:

Concession building & restroom location. Building in need of maintenance (paint, addressing loose deck boards, etc.)



### PHOTO 2:

Football/ soccer field with digital scoreboard. All fields are lit and the park is monitored by a digital surveillance system.

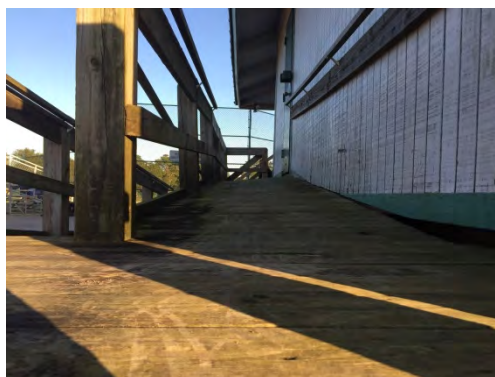


### PHOTO 3:

One of the four lighted baseball/ softball fields. All fields appeared to be well maintained and in good shape.



**PHOTOS 4 & 5:**



ADA ramp to building with bathrooms and concessions. Ramp is starting to show signs for wear and is in need of repairs.



**PHOTO 6:**

Bleachers for the fields appeared adequate and in good working order.

# ABOLT OBRIEN SOCCER FIELD

Concord Rd Savannah, GA 31410



## PARK SCORE: 2.2

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Lighted soccer/ multipurpose field
- Indoor restrooms

### OVERVIEW:

Abolt-O'Brien Soccer Field is a lighted soccer/ multipurpose field on Wilmington Island, adjacent to Charlie C. Brooks Park.

### OBSERVATIONS:

Abolt-O'Brien Soccer Field is well maintained and boasts indoor restrooms. The field is well landscaped and attractive but lacks adequate bleachers. ADA Parking is available.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

Addition of bleachers for spectators and a drinking fountain.



## PHOTO ASSESSMENT:



**PHOTO 1:**

Park sign in need of repairs to lettering and some brick damage



**PHOTO 2:**

Indoor bathrooms are in good shape and are easy to secure when not in use.



**PHOTO 3:**

The field is in good condition and appears to be well maintained. At time of visit, no bleachers were present for spectators.



**PHOTO 4:**

The parking lot is nicely landscaped



**PHOTO 5:**

ADA parking and access is in location close to restrooms however there is no access down to the playing fields. Striping needs to be redone to better define parking and access aisles.

# HODGE TURNER BALLFIELD

Shipyard Rd Savannah, GA 31406



## PARK SCORE: 1.1

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Old baseball/ softball field with backstop

### OVERVIEW:

Hodge Turner Ballfield is a baseball/ softball field and backstop that has fallen into disrepair. The facility is not located on County owned property.

### OBSERVATIONS:

Hodge Turner Ballfield is not currently a usable park. It is hard to find and there is no onsite parking. The field itself has fallen into disrepair and is currently unplayable as it is very rough and large mature trees line the area. The field only occupies approximately one quarter of the site and the remainder of which is heavily wooded.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

This ballfield will take a considerable amount of work to make it playable again. The field itself is rough and overgrown. The structures are worn out in need of repair. Unless the lack of on-site

parking was addressed, this field would only be usable for the immediate surrounding neighborhood and makes it difficult to serve as a "sports park".

**PHOTO ASSESSMENT:**





**PHOTO 1:**

A lack of parking combined with a rough overgrown field make this field presently unusable.



**PHOTO 2:**

This large dilapidated metal sign is not only an eyesore but potentially dangerous to children playing in the park.



**PHOTO 3:**

Park structures are in desperate need of repair.



# JIM GOLDEN COMPLEX

195 Scott Stell Rd Savannah, GA



## PARK SCORE: 1.8

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Four lighted baseball/ softball fields
- Dugouts
- Concessions
- Indoor restrooms

### OVERVIEW:

Jim Golden Complex is a set of 4, lighted, baseball/ softball fields inside L. Scott Stell Park.

### OBSERVATIONS:

This park gets good marks for accessibility. The parking lot is paved and there is ADA access. The fields are fairly well maintained and the bleachers

are in good shape.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

Parking is not well defined and could be improved. Paint is peeling in the concession/ restroom building and rotten wood is need of repairs. Improvements are currently planned for park entrance.

## PHOTO ASSESMENT:



**PHOTO 1:**

Fields are well lit and appear to be well maintained. There are some grassed areas and sidewalks in which drainage could be improved during hard rains.



**PHOTO 2:**

Parking is not well defined and parking lot could use work.



**PHOTO 3:**

Concession building. In need of repairs of rotten siding, fascia and soffit. Once repaired, facility should be painted. Inside of building was not assessed.



**PHOTO 4:**

Existing bleachers appeared to be in fair condition. There is no shade for the people seated in the bleachers.



**PHOTO 4:**

Inside of a dugout. Some dugouts are concrete block and some are chainlink fence. All appeared functional, however they did appear to be in need of typical maintenance such as painting and repairs to roofing.



# MEMORIAL STADIUM

101 John J. Scott Dr Savannah, GA 31406



**PARK SCORE: N/A**

## OVERVIEW:

Memorial Stadium is currently being rebuilt and therefore it was not evaluated as part of this process.

# JENNIFER ROSS SOCCER COMPLEX

7221 Sallie Mood Dr Savannah, GA 31406



## PARK SCORE: 1.5

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Eight lighted soccer fields
- Climate controlled restrooms/ locker rooms
- Full concessions

### OVERVIEW:

Jennifer Ross Soccer Complex is a centrally located soccer facility boasting 8 lighted fields and climate controlled restrooms, showers and changing rooms.

### OBSERVATIONS:

Existing amenities at the complex appeared well maintained however ADA access was limited with only 2-3 points of access for the park in total. In addition, while the fields had decent lighting and there was some parking/security lighting, there was no lighting on the path between fields.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:



This complex is well used and well maintained but its field are overused. Additionally a master plan of this highly trafficked park would be useful to better define and organize the park. Users reported that the parking was inadequate. There were not enough trash cans and pavilion picnic areas for the amount of use. For such a large facility, the hours of operation were limited. ADA access could be improved as could parking lot lighting and lighting between fields. Inclusion of additional walking trails and a playground .

#### **PHOTO ASSESMENT:**



**PHOTO 1:**

The 8 fields are well maintained and get lots of use.



**PHOTO 2:**

Rough trail around fields does not provide ADA access to fields.



**PHOTO 3:**

Climate controlled concessions, bathrooms and locker rooms.



**PHOTO 4:**

Users complain that parking is not adequate. ADA access is limited.



**PHOTO 5:**

Path from parking lot off Sallie Mood Dr.

# OUTDOOR FACILITIES

## Nature Preserves

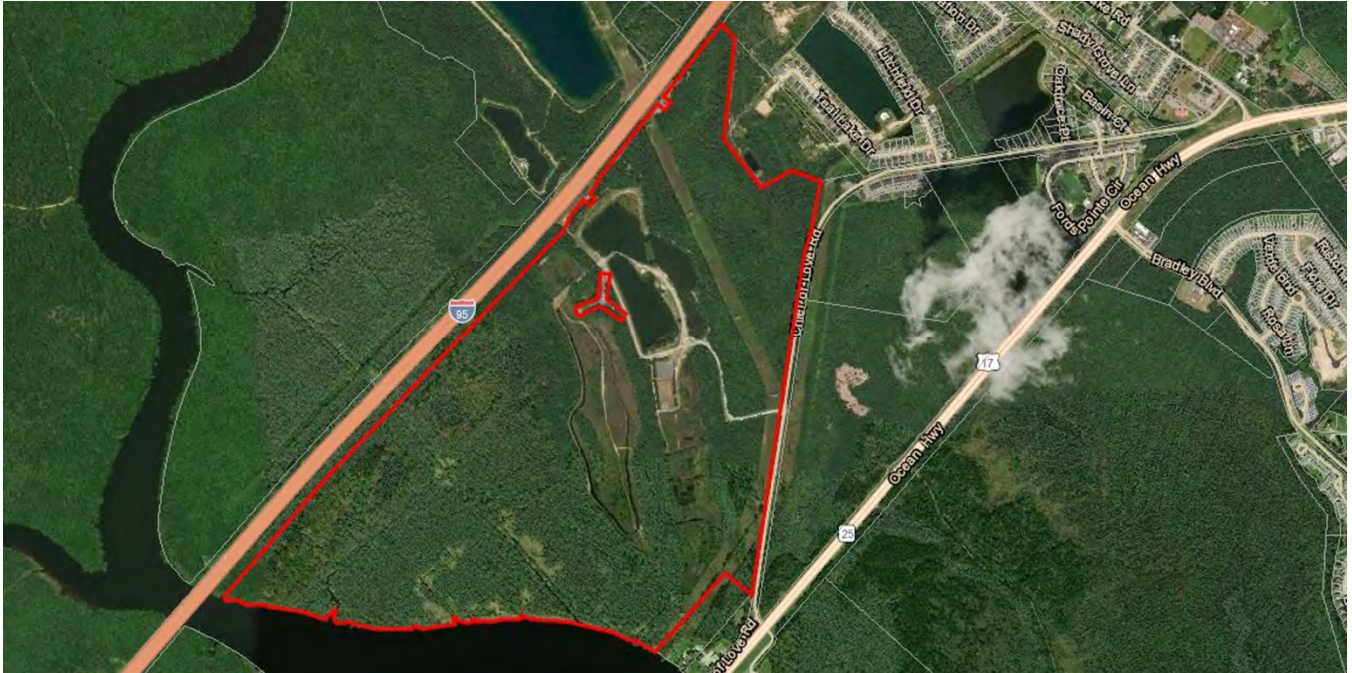
Bungard Conservation Area  
Frank O Williamson Lake

Whitemarsh Preserve  
Ogeechee Trail



# BUNGARD CONSERVATION AREA

Basin Rd. Savannah, GA 31419



## PARK SCORE: 2.1

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Rustic nature preserve
- Canoe trails
- Large fishing lake

### OVERVIEW:

This is a relatively new nature preserve for the County, having only been opened to the public in the last few years. There is a large lake, hiking trails, a canoe trail and a picnic pavilion.

### OBSERVATIONS:

There are no paved roads, parking areas or restroom facilities and ADA accessibility is limited. The existing facilities appear well maintained.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

Improvements in ADA accessibility and addition of a restroom facility are seen as the main areas of improvement.

## PHOTO ASSESMENT:



**PHOTO 1:**

Pavilion with multiple picnic tables and trash receptacles. The facilities appeared in good condition.



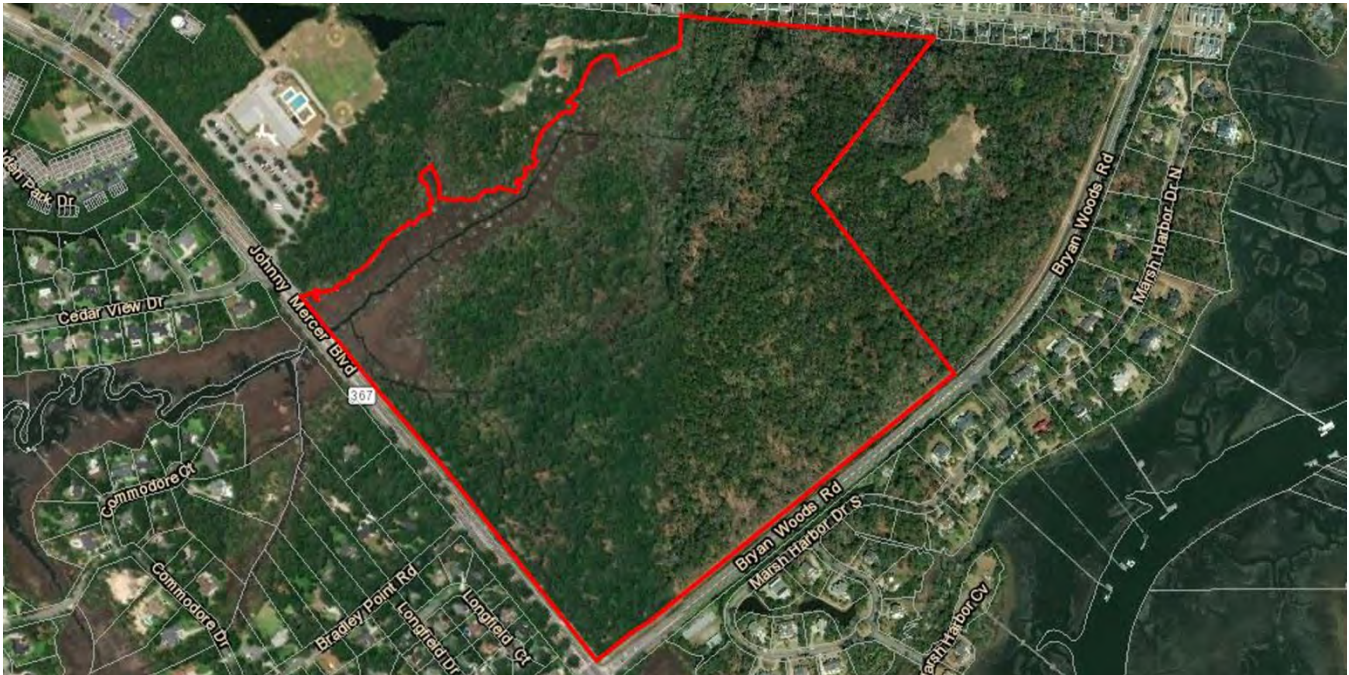
**PHOTO 2:**

Timber boardwalk over large fishing lake. Boardwalk appeared in good condition, typical maintenance of a timber structure will be required.



# WHITEMARSH PRESERVE

Whitemarsh Island Savannah, GA



## PARK SCORE: 1.9

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Paved multiuse trail
- Off-road hiking trails
- Mountain Bike Trail
- Dog friendly

### OVERVIEW:

This 120 acre preserve is located at the corner of Bryan Woods Rd. and Johnny Mercer Blvd. The County has constructed an ADA accessible asphalt perimeter trail along the outside of the preserve which connects to unpaved trails which traverse the interior of the site.

Parking for the preserve is in informal parking areas on the side of the road. ADA accessible parking is at the YMCA to the west on Johnny Mercer Blvd.

### OBSERVATIONS:

The preserve appears to be well used and has an excellent trail network appealing to a variety of users.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

Some observed areas for improvement include a paved parking areas, construction of a restroom facility, addition of seating and rest areas.

## PHOTO ASSESSMENT:



**PHOTO 1:**

Entrance area and informal parking area. Parking access is very poor, with lots of potholes and no defined parking spots. There are no defined ADA parking spots.



**PHOTO 2:**

Informal parking area along Johnny Mercer Blvd. Parking access is very poor, with lots of potholes and no defined parking spots. There are no defined ADA parking spots.



**PHOTO 3:**

Posted trail maps and signage. A color map would better define the individual trails and the dirt accumulation on the plastic covering made it difficult to view in areas.





**PHOTO 4:**

Paved multiuse trail in good condition. There are areas where the asphalt is cracking due to roots, but this is to be expected. These sections will need to be addressed to ensure that ADA accessibility is maintained.



**PHOTO 5:**

Unpaved hiking trail throughout the interior of the preserve. The trails range from rough to well maintained.

# FRANK O WILLIAMSON LAKE

Sallie Mood Dr. Savannah, GA 31406



## PARK SCORE: 1.1

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Large Lake

### OVERVIEW:

The lake sits west of the site previously occupied by the Chatham County Public Works facility. The public works site was vacated as part of a FEMA mitigation grant

which included preservation of this lake and the land surrounding it.

### OBSERVATIONS:

At the time of publication the site is inaccessible to the public.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

Providing formal access and amenities at the site. This facility offers an opportunity to connect with the Soccer Complex to create a much larger facility with multiple amenities.

**PHOTO ASSESMENT:**



**PHOTO 1:**

Fence surrounding the lake limiting access.



**PHOTO 2:**

Single park bench at site which has no formal access to it.



# OGEECHEE TRAIL

Fort Argyle rd. Savannah GA 31419



## PARK SCORE: 1.6

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- 1.69 miles of trails

### OVERVIEW:

The trail has been renamed Blue Sky Preserve Trail and is approx. 1.69 miles and consists of two trail legs and four loop trails.

### OBSERVATIONS:

Trails are clearly identified on map however there is no clearly defined parking area and no ADA accessibility.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

Improvements to the parking area such as paving, lighting and a restroom facility.

## PHOTO ASSESSMENT:



### PHOTO 1:

Trail head map which clearly defines the trails and provides a history of the facility.



### PHOTO 2:

Trail head picnic tables which appear to be in decent shape, however there were some exposed nail heads to be hammered in. Timber picnic tables exposed to the elements will need continued maintenance.

# OUTDOOR FACILITIES

## Multipurpose Trails

McQueen Island Rails to Trails

Robert McCorkle Bike Trail



# MCQUEEN ISLAND RAILS TO TRAILS

Hwy 80 East Savannah, GA 31410



## PARK SCORE: 1.1

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Rails to Trails
- Scenic Views
- Near Ft. Pulaski

### OVERVIEW:

The 6 mile trail sits on the historic Marsh Hen Trail Railroad bed. The trail presents scenic views of the river, marsh and Ft. Pulaski National Monument. There are two parking areas, one near the midpoint of the trail and one at the east end of the trail.

### OBSERVATIONS:

The trail has been subject to repeated maintenance issues associated with the tides and current of the Savannah River. Additionally, the trail was badly damaged during Hurricanes Matthew and Irma. At the time of visit, portions of the trail had been washed away. Additionally, it should be noted that no dogs are permitted on the trail.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

Repair of all hurricane damaged portions of the trail including bridge and washout replacement. Improved parking to access the trail is a necessity for ADA accessibility and overall safety.

## PHOTO ASSESMENT:



**PHOTO 1:**

Trail head sign.



**PHOTO 2:**

Typical section of boardwalk and crushed limestone trail.



**PHOTO 3:**

Access from parking lot at mid-point of trail is impassible at some tides.





**PHOTO 4:**

Photo looking west along trail from parking area near Ft. Pulaski entrance.

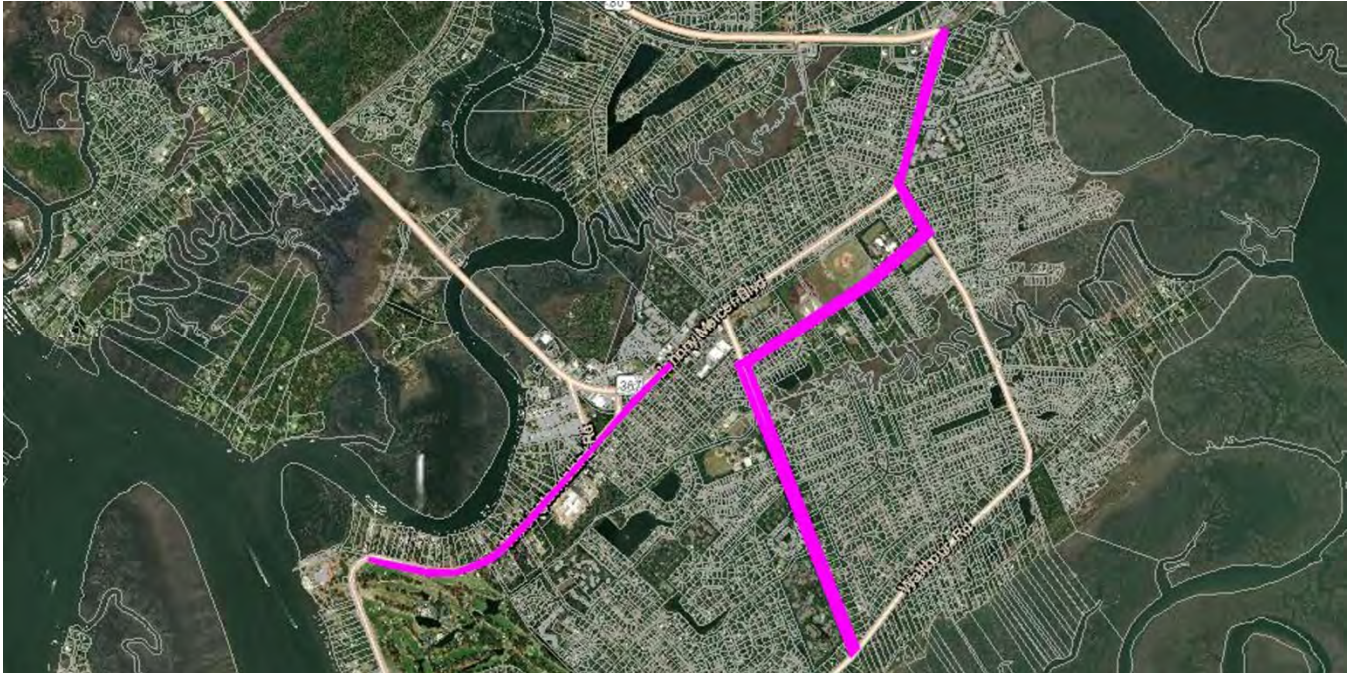


**PHOTO 5:**

Sign noting that no dogs are allowed on trail.

# ROBERT MCCORKLE BIKE TRAIL

Wilmington Island, Savannah, GA



## PARK SCORE: 1.6

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Multiuse Trail
- Links residential neighborhoods as well as commercial districts

### OVERVIEW:

The Robert McCorkle trail is located on Wilmington Island and connects residential neighborhoods as well as commercial districts on the island. The trail has been constructed in multiple phases and there are portions which are not connected. It is our understanding that

there are plans to continue the trail around the island and ultimately link it to the Whitemarsh Preserve to the west and a planned multi-use path on US-80.

### OBSERVATIONS:

There are no designated trail heads and or maps of the trail. The trail has gaps between sections leaving users to navigate between the sections on street. The trail consists of multiple paved surfaces, depending on location.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

Repair/maintenance of damaged portions of the trail and connectivity of the existing sections is key to creating a complete trail.



## PHOTO ASSESSMENT:



**PHOTO 1:**

Existing asphalt trail on Walthour Rd. just north of intersection with Concord Rd. Condition of trail varies from decent to poor. Roots and asphalt failures need to be addressed as well as increase signage and striping.



**PHOTO 2:**

Trail crossing in front of the River Oaks subdivision on Walthour Rd. Condition of trail varies from decent to poor. Roots and asphalt failures need to be addressed as well as increase signage and striping.



**PHOTO 3:**

Asphalt trail on Wilmington Island Rd. in front of churches at intersection with Cromwell Rd. Condition of trail varies from decent to poor. Roots and asphalt failures need to be addressed as well as increase signage and striping.



**PHOTO 4:**

Asphalt trail headed southwest in front of Wilmington Island golf course. Condition of trail varies from decent to poor. Roots and asphalt failures need to be addressed as well as increase signage and striping.

# OUTDOOR FACILITIES

## Boat Ramps & Fishing Piers

Bells Landing

Kings Ferry

Salt Creek

Tybee Island Fishing Pier & Pavillion

Frank Downing Fishing Pier

Lazaretto Creek

Thunderbolt

Frank W. Spencer

Rodney J Hall

Turner Creek



# BELLS LANDING

Apache Ave Savannah GA 31406



## PARK SCORE: 1.3

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- One boat ramp
- Fishing Pier
- Floating dock

### OVERVIEW:

Bells Landing is a boat ramp and fishing pier serving the Southside community.

### OBSERVATIONS:

The boat ramp and fishing pier are adequate and well maintained although it appeared that part of the site had been damaged by the hurricane.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

Areas of improvement include, construction of restroom facility, construction of a floating dock immediately adjacent to the ramp.

## PHOTO ASSESSMENT:



**PHOTO 1:**

View of deep water river from aluminum gangway. River allows access at all tides.



**PHOTO 2:**

Aluminum gangway appears to be in good condition.



**PHOTO 3:**

Park sign in good condition, will require typical maintenance. ADA parking constructed of pervious pavers. Pervious pavers require continued maintenance to ensure proper operation. There is no designated ADA pathway to the sidewalk and ADA parking stall is furthest one away from sidewalk (verify with ADA coordinator that this meets code).



**PHOTO 4:**

Ramp appears to be in good condition.

# FRANK DOWNING FISHING PIER

Diamond Causeway Savannah, GA 31406



## PARK SCORE: 1

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Concrete fishing pier in good fishing spot
- Scenic

### OVERVIEW:

Frank Downing Fishing Pier is scenic albeit utilitarian fishing pier with limited access and no formal parking.

### OBSERVATIONS:

This appears to be a well-used fishing pier with access from a main road. Access to the site is sometimes difficult off 204 and informal entrance/ parking lot is littered with potholes. There is no ADA access to the site and the handrail does not appear to meet current code. There is only one security light and there is no source of freshwater at the site for handwashing or cleaning fish.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

Access to the site could be improved. Additional lighting, parking and a handwashing/ fish cleaning station. The safety of the handrail should also be addressed. An extension to the site of the bike lane which terminates +/-0.5 miles to the east.



## PHOTO ASSESSMENT:



**PHOTO 1:**

Access to the park requires turning directly off Hwy 204 and can sometimes be difficult. The entrance and parking lot are gravel and are in need of maintenance to repair a large number of ruts and potholes.



**PHOTO 2:**

There is no defined parking at the pier and only one security light.



**PHOTO 3:**

Accessibility is an issue requiring maintenance and repairs. There is currently no ADA accessibility at the site.





**PHOTO 4:**

The pier gets a lot of use and would benefit greatly from a freshwater handwashing/ fish cleaning station.

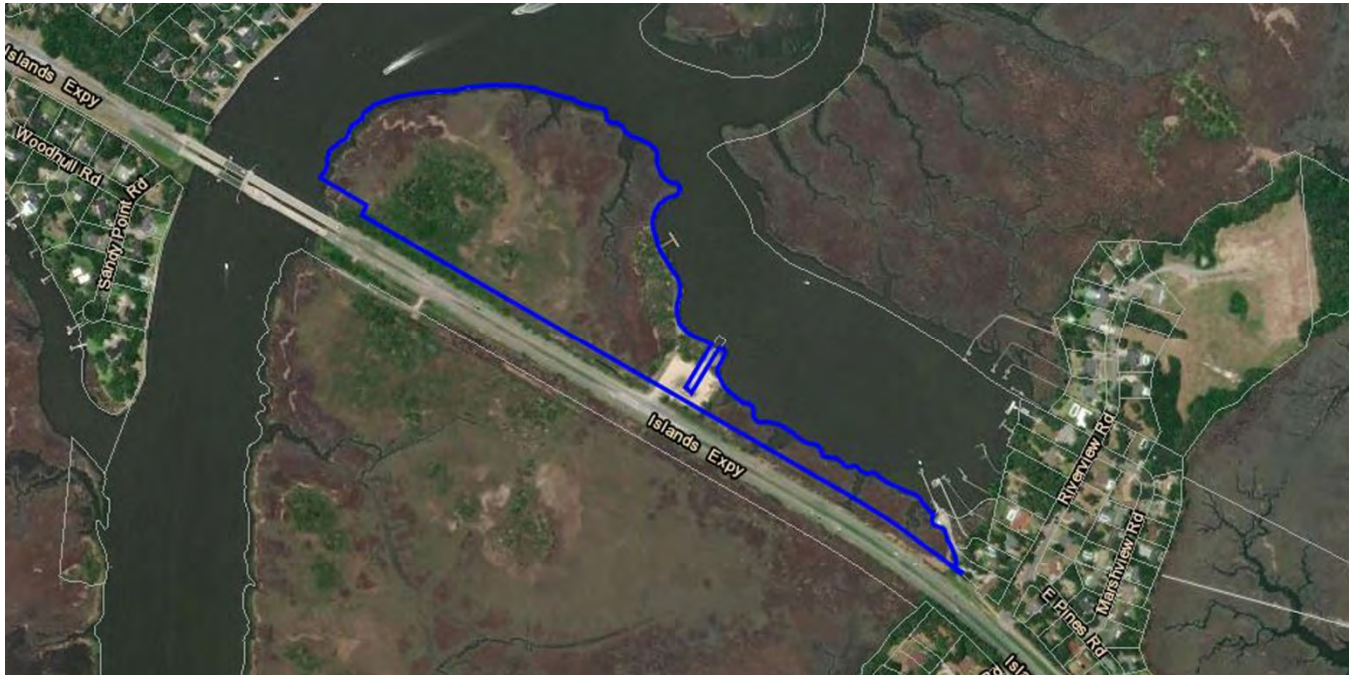


**PHOTO 5:**

The handrail appears to not meet current code and may be a safety issue.

# FRANK W SPENCER

Island Expressway Savannah, GA 31404



## PARK SCORE: 1.2

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Two boat ramps
- One fishing pier

### OVERVIEW:

Frank W. Spencer is a park with two basic boat ramps and a fishing pier.

### OBSERVATIONS:

The boat ramps at Frank W. Spencer are modest and unusable at low tide. There is no dock for the ramps and the dirt parking lot is in need of repairs to fill ruts and potholes. The boardwalk to the fishing pier is unsafe as there are missing boards and some boards which are not attached. Additionally, it did not appear that the boardwalk met ADA or fall requirements. The area surrounding the boardwalk is littered with trash. On a positive note, the pier itself seemed to be in good condition and just in need of typical maintenance. It should be noted that the bathrooms are closed.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

Improvements to the parking area, reconstruction of the restroom facilities, and reconstruction of the boardwalk to the pier are imperative. Ultimately, dredging of a channel to make the boat ramp usable at all tides would be desired.

## PHOTO ASSESSMENT:



**PHOTO 1:**

View down the long boat ramp at a lower tide. Depth of water at the end of the ramp is minimal and therefore the facility is unusable for many vessels at low tide.



**PHOTO 2:**

Dilapidated restroom which has been closed down.



**PHOTO 3:**

Unpaved parking area. Also used for construction staging for projects in the vicinity.





**PHOTO 4:**

Boardwalk to fishing pier w/ missing & unattached boards.



**PHOTO 5:**

Fishing pier which appeared to be in good condition. Typical maintenance is required to keep the pier in good condition.

# KINGS FERRY

Hwy 17 South Savannah, GA 31419



## PARK SCORE: 2

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Four boat ramps
- Fishing Pier
- Floating dock
- Pavilions for rent
- Playground
- Restrooms

### OVERVIEW:

Kings Ferry is the highest ranked boat ramp in the county. It has 4 boat ramps, a pier and floating dock, restrooms, a playground and a pavilion with picnic tables.

### OBSERVATIONS:

Kings Ferry has the most amenities of any boat ramp in the county and appears to be well-maintained. There is adequate trailer parking and it is ADA accessible.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

The park is in good condition and has nice amenities. Regular maintenance is needed as necessary.



**PHOTO ASSESSMENT:**



**PHOTO 1:**

Two of the boat ramps, the fishing pier and floating dock. All appear to be in good shape.



**PHOTO 2:**

The remaining two boat ramps. Also appear to be in good shape.



**PHOTO 3:**

Playground close to pavilion. Equipment appeared to be in fair to good shape. Playground had ADA access.



**PHOTO 4:**

Three pavilions available for rent and appeared in good condition.



**PHOTO 5:**

Restrooms and ADA parking. Restrooms are ADA accessible.

# LAZARETTO CREEK

Hwy 80 Savannah, GA 31410



## PARK SCORE: 1.1

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Three boat ramps
- Fishing pier
- Loaner lifejackets
- Beautiful scenic location

### OVERVIEW:

Lazaretto Creek is a boat ramp and fishing pier off Hwy 80 between Wilmington Island and Tybee Island. It has 3 boat ramps, a fishing pier and a floating dock.

### OBSERVATIONS:

The three boat ramps, fishing pier and floating dock, all appear to be in good working order. The ramps have good grooving, however, they flood and are unusable at high tide. The park has an ADA porta-potty and a loaner child life jacket station.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

This park has minimal parking and no designated ADA parking space. County staff indicated that the National Park Service would be improving the parking lot in the future. The time frame for this work is uncertain.



## PHOTO ASSESMENT:



**PHOTO 1:**

Boat ramps with good grooving. During “flood” tides, the ramps are completely submerged and unusable.



**PHOTO 2:**

Fishing pier on Lazaretto Creek. Typical maintenance is required.



**PHOTO 3:**

Parking at the ramp is in very poor condition. There are no dedicated spots and the areas used for parking are littered with pot holes.



**PHOTO 4:**

The ramp has a Lifejacket Loaner Station for children's loaner child's lifejackets.



**PHOTO 5:**

The park has no permanent restrooms but does have an ADA accessible porta-potty.



# RODNEY J HALL

25 Diamond Causeway Savannah, GA 31406



## PARK SCORE: 1.4

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Two double boat ramps
- Fishing pier and floating dock
- Bait shop and kayak rental
- Bathrooms
- Pavilion for rent

### OVERVIEW:

Rodney J Hall is a boat ramp and fishing pier of Hwy 204 on the Skidaway River.

### OBSERVATIONS:

The boat ramps and fishing pier all appear to be in good working order. Parking lot is paved and lighted and parking is adequate. There is also a bait shop and kayak rental. The permanent bathrooms could use repairs and

updating. The park/facility appears functionally adequate but could have better maintained landscaping and amenities (benches, pavilion, trash cans, etc.).

## **AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:**

The facilities at this ramp could all use updating as well as regular maintenance but the facility as a whole was in relatively good condition. An improved pavilion, beach area/open space area and the installation of new landscaping and freshwater handwashing/fish cleaning station would be a big improvement.

## **PHOTO ASSESMENT:**



### **PHOTO 1:**

The two double boat ramps appeared to be in good condition.



### **PHOTO 2:**

Floating dock was in good condition.



### **PHOTO 3:**

Fishing pier could is in need of some maintenance and repairs but is still in relatively good condition.



**PHOTO 4:**

Permanent restrooms are a plus at boat ramps but these could use a updating and some repairs.



**PHOTO 5:**

Bait shop which is leased from the County. Unaesthetic parking conditions and opportunity to improve the park-like setting.



# SALT CREEK

Hwy 17 South at Salt Creek Rd Savannah, GA 31419



## PARK SCORE: 1.3

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Boat ramp
- Fishing pier
- Pavilion for rent

### OVERVIEW:

Salt Creek is a boat ramp and fishing pier off Ogeechee Road.

### OBSERVATIONS:

Salt Creek was in poor shape at the time of the visit. The parking lot and playground were flooded and much of the site was in disrepair. The playground, boat ramp and pier were all in poor condition. The pavilion was still in fair condition but was in need of a cleaning and maintenance.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

This park is in serious need of maintenance and upgrades. Much of it floods after a rain and the pier needed multiple repairs.



**PHOTO ASSESSMENT:**



**PHOTO 1:**

Much of the parking lot was flooded at time of visit.



**PHOTO 2 & 3:**

The playground equipment was dated and floods after a rain. A lack of playground surface under equipment will lessen fall protection.





**PHOTO 4:**

There was no permanent restroom onsite. Porta-potties were provided. One ADA accessible and one regular, however there was no ADA accessible path to get to the restroom.



**PHOTO 5:**

The pier is in need of maintenance and repairs or replacement.

# THUNDERBOLT

Macco Dr Savannah, GA 31404



## PARK SCORE: 1.1

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Boat ramp
- Floating dock
- Loaner lifejacket station

### OVERVIEW:

Thunderbolt is a single boat ramp and floating dock on the Wilmington River. Fishing is not allowed on the dock.

### OBSERVATIONS:

The ramp, pier and dock appear to be in good condition. The one porta-potty is not ADA accessible. The poorly grassed parking lot however is in very rough shape. Egress out of the park can sometimes be difficult depending on traffic.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

Parking at this ramp could be improved along with improvements to ADA access and addition of a permanent restroom facility. The ramp is very utilitarian, however there are few to no amenities for non-boaters.



## PHOTO ASSESSMENT:



### PHOTO 1:

The ramp appears to be in good shape.



### PHOTO 2:

The pier and floating dock were also in good shape.



### PHOTO 3:

A loaner lifejacket station for child life jackets is onsite.





**PHOTO 4:** The ramp has no permanent bathrooms and the one porta-potty was not ADA compliant.

# TURNER CREEK

Johnny Mercer Blvd Savannah GA 31404



## PARK SCORE: 1.9

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Three boat ramps
- Large covered pavilion
- Floating dock
- Restrooms

### OVERVIEW:

Turner Creek is a boat ramp facility located on Whitemarsh Island adjacent to the bridge over Turner's Creek.

### OBSERVATIONS:

Turner Creek is a newly renovated boat ramp with 3 ramps, a floating dock, a covered pavilion and permanent restrooms. The amenities all appear to be in good condition however there have been reports of difficulty with the ramp at low tide. The ramp has a paved parking lot with plenty of trailer parking and the bathrooms are ADA accessible. No fishing is allowed from the floating dock, however there is area along the bank which is accessible for fishing.

## **AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:**

Addition of minor site amenities such as BBQ grills, water fountain, dog station and seating would further enhance the site.

## **PHOTO ASSESMENT:**



**PHOTO 1:**

New double boat ramp and floating dock. Ramp is in good condition with deep grooving to provide traction.



**PHOTO 2:**

Original single boat ramp and floating dock. Ramp is in good condition. Dock is older and routine maintenance should be performed on an as needed basis.



**PHOTO 3:**

New restroom facility and pavilion. There is no seating or amenities under the pavilion.



**PHOTO 4:**

Restrooms in new facility. Appear to be in good working condition.



**PHOTO 5:**

New angled parking for boat trailers.



# TYBEE ISLAND FISHING PIER & PAVILION

Tybee Island Tybee Island, GA 31328



# PARK SCORE: 2.1

## PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Fishing pier
- Large pavilion available for rent
- Bathrooms
- Concessions

## OVERVIEW:

The Tybee Island Fishing Pier & Pavilion is a large fishing pier and pavilion that extends out into the Atlantic Ocean and is the centerpiece of Tybee Island Beach.

**OBSERVATIONS:**

The pier and pavilion both appeared to be in fair shape though they were in need of regular maintenance. The bathrooms and concessions could use updating and modernizing. The facility is ADA accessible but parking can be difficult to find at times and it requires a fee.

**AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:**

Continued maintenance of the facility as well as updating of the restroom and concession facilities.

## PHOTO ASSESSMENT:



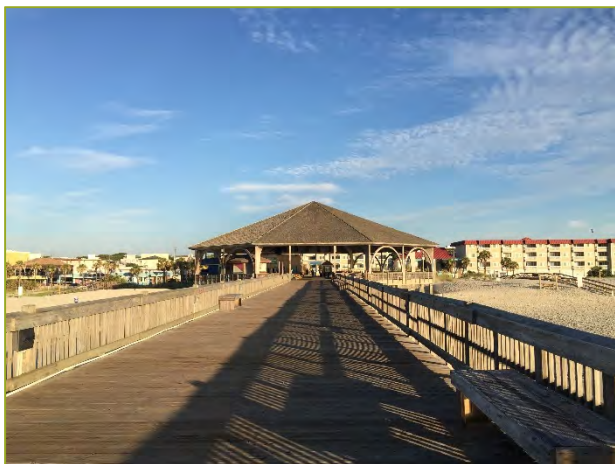
**PHOTO 1:**

Older sign, paint is faded and sign is dirty.



**PHOTO 2:**

Pavilion area with vendors and lots of picnic tables. A rental fee is charged if groups (including walk-ons) of more than 12 are using the tables. All amenities appeared in decent working condition however maintenance/repairs are required as is expected.



**PHOTO 3:**

Looking west towards pavilion area. Wooden pier with benches and lighting. General observations indicated that the pier was in fair shape appearing to only need typical maintenance associated with wooden structures in a marine environment.



**PHOTO 4:**

Fishing bait and tackle vendor located at end of pier. Facility looked dated and in need of maintenance (ie fresh paint, replacement of worn/rotting/warped boards). Constant usage by fisherman can lead to the appearance that the pier may be unclean at times and resulting in a strong fishy odor.



**PHOTO 5:**

Wooden bench on pier. Wooden structures in a harsh marine environment require ongoing maintenance to ensure longevity of the structures. Graffiti was present on the pier as well.

# INDOOR FACILITIES & GOLF COURSE

Frank G Murray Community Center  
Chatham County Aquatic Center  
Anderson - Cohen Weightlifting Center  
Al Henderson Golf Club



# FRANK G MURRAY COMMUNITY CENTER

160 Whitemarsh Rd Savannah, GA 31410



## PARK SCORE: 2.3

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Kitchen
- Conference room for rent
- Restrooms
- Paved Parking
- ADA accessible

### OVERVIEW:

The Frank G Murray Community Center is a Community Center located on Whitemarsh Islands that primarily serves the Islands community. We were recently informed that the County would no longer be operating this facility at this location.

### OBSERVATIONS:

The Frank G Murray Community Center is a nice facility that serves its purpose well. It is well appointed with amenities and offers a wide variety of programs to the local community.

### AREAS OF IMPORVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

The challenge will be to provide the same level of service or better in the new facility.

# CHATHAM COUNTY AQUATIC CENTER

7240 Sallie Mood Dr Savannah, GA 31406



## PARK SCORE: 3

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- Heated 50 meter lap swimming pool
- Heated recreational swimming pool
- Gym
- Locker room
- Birthday Party area

### OVERVIEW:

The Chatham County Aquatic Center was the highest scoring facility, county-wide. It was well appointed and well maintained. In speaking with county residents, users were all very pleased with this facility.

### OBSERVATIONS:

The aquatic center scored well for amenities and accessibility.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

It was noted by staff that the pool was in need of maintenance (repaint the interior, lane line, etc.)

## PHOTO ASSESMENT:



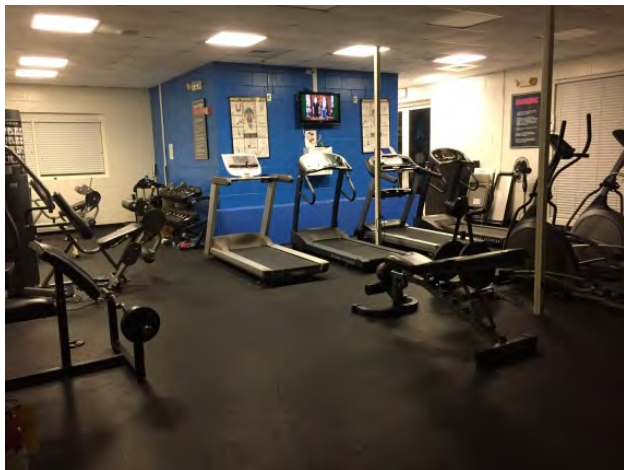
**PHOTO 1:**

One heated 50 meter lap pool and one heated 25 meter recreation pool. Staff noted that there was maintenance issues to be attended to in the pools at the time.



**PHOTO 2:**

Swim shop that serves the needs of local swim teams and recreational swimmers alike.



**PHOTO 3:**

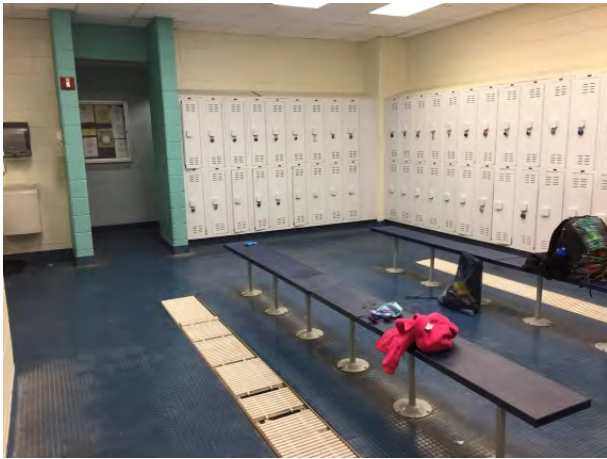
The facility includes a small gym as well which was in decent shape.





**PHOTO 4:**

Restrooms were large and ADA accessible. At the time of visit, the restrooms were relatively clean but it was noted that they could use some freshening up (ie paint and some minor upkeep)



**PHOTO 5:**

Large well-appointed locker rooms in good condition.



# ANDERSON-COHEN WEIGHTLIFTING CENTER

7230 Varnedoe Dr Savannah, GA 31406



## PARK SCORE: 2.7

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- 24 weight training stations
- One competition platform
- Sauna
- ADA accessible equipment

### OVERVIEW:

The Anderson-Cohen Weightlifting Center is a gym/weightlifting center that is open to all residents of Chatham County for a fee. It is also home to Team Savannah, one of the largest Olympic Weightlifting Teams in the country.

### OBSERVATIONS:

The center was well maintained and well appointed. The usage fee may make the facility less accessible to some

county residents.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

None at this time.

## PHOTO ASSESSMENT:



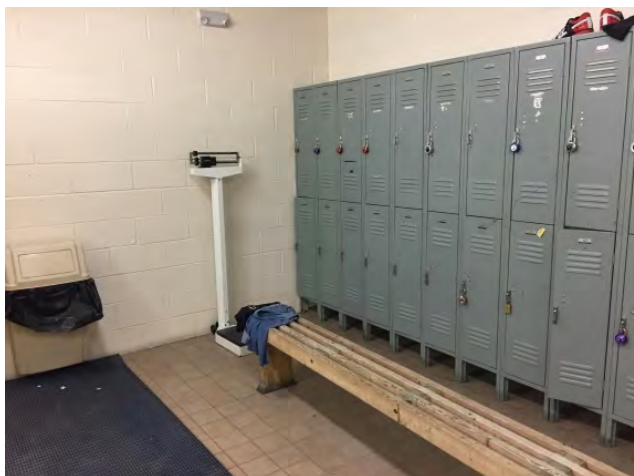
**PHOTO 1:**

Competition platform appeared to be in good condition based on visual observation.



**PHOTO 2:**

24 Olympic weight training stations as well as free weights and Nautilus equipment. Some ADA accessible equipment. At the time of visit the facility was in use and appeared to be in good working condition with some minor maintenance/upkeep required.



**PHOTO 3:**

Locker rooms in good working order, could use some minor maintenance/re-freshening such as paint, new benches and updated lockers.



**PHOTO 4:**

Showers were in good working condition.  
Typical maintenance and upkeep required.



**PHOTO 5:**

Sauna – from limited visual inspection appeared  
to be in good condition.



# AL HENDERSON GOLF CLUB

1 Al Henderson Dr Savannah, GA 31419



## PARK SCORE: 2.3

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- 18 hole regulation course
- Pro shop
- Full service clubhouse
- Full service grill
- Golf school
- Lighted driving range

### OVERVIEW:

Al Henderson Golf Club is an 18 hole golf course available for use by all County residents for a fee. Since the County has taken over operation, the course appears to be revitalized through additional attention to maintenance and upkeep of the course.

### OBSERVATIONS:

The golf club was well appointed and well maintained though dated.

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR CONSIDERATION:

The exterior cart barn was in need of new paint. Remodeling the facility would modernize it and may make it more desirable for the younger crowd.



**PHOTO ASSESSMENT:**



**PHOTO 1:**

The side of the cart barn needs small repairs and a new coat of paint.



**PHOTO 2:**

The exterior of the clubhouse is not as dated as the interior.



**PHOTO 3:**

The clubhouse interior is dated and showing its age although it is clean and well maintained.



**PHOTO 4:**

Bathrooms are clean but dated.



**PHOTO 5:**

The golf course is well maintained and beautiful.