

Play It » Forward

WAKE FOREST



Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Master Plan EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

May 2015

Acknowledgements

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I. Executive Summary

Purpose of this Plan

The Wake Forest Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Master Plan is intended to help meet the needs of current and future residents by positioning Wake Forest to build on the community's unique parks and recreation assets and identify new opportunities. The citizen-driven plan establishes a clear direction to guide Town staff, advisory boards, and elected officials in their efforts to enhance the community's Parks and Recreation services and facilities.



Planning Process Summary

This project has been guided by a Parks and Recreation project team made up of Town staff, with input from the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and the Town Board of Commissioners. This team provided input to the GreenPlay consulting team throughout the planning process. A collaborative approach creates a plan that fully utilizes the consultant's expertise and incorporates the local knowledge and institutional history that only community members can provide. The project consisted of the following tasks:

Community Engagement

- Review of previous planning efforts, Town historical information.
- Extensive community involvement effort including focus groups, meetings with key stakeholders, and a community-wide public meeting.
- Statistically-valid community interest and opinion survey.
- Online community engagement website – MindMixer.

Facility Inventory

- 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 surrounding areas.

GRASP® Level of Service Analysis

- Interviews with staff to provide information about parks and recreation facilities and services, along with insight regarding the current practices and experiences of the Town in serving its residents and visitors.
- Identification of alternative providers of recreation services to provide insight regarding the market opportunities in the area for potential new facilities and services.
- Analysis addressing recreation, parks, cultural resources, and related services.

Assessment and Analysis

- Review and assessment of relevant plans.
- Measurement of the current delivery of service for parks and recreation facilities using the GRASP® Level of Service Analysis and allowing for a target level of service to be determined that is both feasible and aligned with the desires of citizens as expressed through the citizen survey. This analysis is also represented graphically in GRASP® Perspectives.
- Exploration of finance and funding mechanisms to support development and sustainability within the system.

Needs Assessment

- Consideration of the profile of the community and demographics, including population growth.
- Research of trends related to the Wake Forest region and American lifestyles to help guide the efforts of Parks and Recreation over the next several years.

Operational and Marketing Analysis

- Analyze parks and recreation programming and service delivery.
- Conduct an organizational Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis.
- Develop a broad assessment of the overall parks and recreation operations.

Recommendations: Goals, Objectives, and Action Plan

- Identification and categorization of recommendations into themes with goals, objectives, and an action plan for implementation.
- Development of an action plan for capital improvements including cost, funding source potentials, and timeframe to support the implementation of the plan.

Key Issues Summary

During the initial stages of the project, the following Key Issues were identified for focus:

Organizational:

- Need better marketing and communication of activities and facilities.
- Increased staffing for operations and maintenance to keep up with demand.
- Attract tourism and outdoor recreational opportunities.

Finance:

- Utilize equitable user fees.
- Increase economic impact and revitalize downtown.
- Utilize proceeds from 2014 Bond Referendum.
- Pursue grant opportunities.

Programs and Service Delivery:

- Increase programming for families, seniors, and teens.
- Increase programs in wellness/fitness, cultural, and special needs.
- Increase the number of special events.
- Increase aquatic opportunities.

Facilities and Amenities:

- Maintain and improve existing facilities.
- Develop connections with greenways and trails.
- Meet future population demands through additional recreation facilities.
- Explore an indoor aquatic facility.
- Explore an outdoor amphitheater/special events venue.
- Improve water access to river, lake, and ponds.

Key Level of Service (LOS) Analysis Findings:

- Coverage for access to parks, trails, and facilities in Wake Forest is fairly good. Eighty-six percent (86%) of the land area within the study area boundary has access to at least some Town-provided amenity within a one-mile proximity. If amenities provided by Wake County and other providers were included, the percentage would probably be even greater.
- The LOS value (i.e. the measure of “how much” service there is from parks, trails, and facilities) varies across the study area and is highest in the area north of Dr. Calvin Jones Highway and east of Capital Boulevard. It is lowest in the southernmost part of town.
- When LOS is examined compared to an assumed threshold value equal to a typical local park, it appears that the central parts of Wake Forest are at or above the threshold, with gaps occurring near Wake Forest Middle School (which is served by a Wake County school/park) and on the west side of Capital Boulevard. The eastern edge and southernmost parts of the study area also fall below the threshold.
- Access to recreation opportunities by walking is less available to residents than may be desired; however, this does not take into account amenities offered by other providers, such as Wake County. It does, however, stress the need to work with other providers to ensure that the needs of all Wake Forest residents are met by at least one provider.
- Some areas with walkable level of service below the threshold may be acceptable if they are commercial or industrial areas or more rural settings.
- Wake Forest’s indoor facilities provide a good range of spaces and activities; however, these facilities are concentrated in a limited part of the Town. Consideration should be given to expanding the options by locating new facilities in other parts of town or partnering with other providers to make sure they are available to residents.

Inventory Assessment Summary

- Parks are pleasant and well-maintained throughout the system.
- No components were found to be functioning below expectations due to condition.
- The parks are used and enjoyed by residents.
- Joyner Park is a particular gem, a signature park for Wake Forest and a model for future parks.
- Wake County School parks offer additional facilities and features that serve residents of Wake Forest.

THEN AGAIN . . .

- Some parks could use better circulation system within them, particularly paved walkways and loop walks.
- Natural areas could be better integrated into the parks with transitional edges and pathways.
- Parks could be better connected with the trail system.

- Parks tend to be concentrated in the sector of Wake Forest that lies east of Capital Boulevard and north of Dr. Calvin Jones Highway. Facilities of other providers, such as Wake County, may play a more important role in these outlying areas.

Recommendations with Capital Cost Estimates and Prioritization

The following Goals, Objectives, and Action Items for the recommendations are drawn from the public input, inventory, level of service analysis, findings feedback, and all of the information gathered during the master planning process, with a primary focus on maintaining, sustaining, and improving Town of Wake Forest parks, open space, cultural resources, and trails. All cost estimates are in 2015 figures. Timeframe to complete is designated as Short-term (up to 3 years), Mid-term (3-6 years), and Long-term (7-10 years).

Goal 1: Improve Organizational Credibility and Operational Efficiencies

Objective 1.1: <i>Enhance and improve internal and external communication of activities and services</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
1.1.a Make use of the Town’s Marketing Plan to improve awareness.	\$0	Staff Time	Short-Term
1.1.b Partner with the Communications Department and the Public Information Office to make the best use of the Town’s website and social media outlets.	\$0	Staff, Partners	Short-Term
1.1.c Adopt open lines of communications and meetings with partners and potential partners.	\$0	Staff Time	Short-Term
Objective 1.2: <i>Create new staffing assignments and/or hire new employees for added responsibilities</i>			
1.2.a Add staff to the Maintenance Division to meet current and anticipated future demands.	\$0	TBD	Short to Mid-Term
1.2.b Add staff for facility operations to meet demand for extended hours of operations for facilities.	\$0	TBD	Short-Term
1.2.c Ensure that staffing resource levels can maintain existing and new facilities at or above acceptable standards as master plan is implemented.	\$0	TBD	Short to Long-Term
1.2.d Add staff to the Urban Forestry Division to meet anticipated future demands with development and expansion of the parks and greenways system.	\$0	TBD	Short to Mid-Term

Goal 2: Improve Financial Situations

Objective 2.1: <i>Implement equitable user fees</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
2.1.a Develop a standardized philosophy for pricing programs and services that reflects our community. An example for developing a pricing philosophy is provided (Pyramid Pricing Methodology and Cost Recovery Policy, Appendix F).	\$40,000 – \$60,000	Staff time/ consultant	Short to Mid-Term
Objective 2.2: <i>Pursue grant opportunities</i>			
2.2.a Continue to research, submit, and track federal, regional, state, and local grants.	Matching Funds TBD	Staff Time	Short-Term
Objective 2.3: <i>Implement Parks, Recreation, and Greenways Improvements from the 2014 Bond Referendum</i>			
2.3.a Develop a plan for the implementation of the Parks, Recreation, and Greenways Improvements from the 2014 Bond Referendum.	\$18,800,000	Staff Time	Mid-Term
Objective 2.4: <i>Consider Increase of Tax Increment Levels</i>			
2.4.a Campaign for community investment in long term Master Plan implementation.	\$0	\$0	Short-Term

Goal 3: Improve Programs and Service Delivery

Objective 3.1: <i>Increase programming for families, seniors, and teens</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
3.1.a Expand program opportunities for teens, families, and seniors in all locations.	\$0	TBD	Short-Term
Objective 3.2: <i>Increase programs in wellness/fitness, cultural, and special needs</i>			
3.2.a Expand wellness/fitness, cultural, and special needs programming opportunities.	\$0	TBD	Short to Mid-Term
3.2.b As new facilities are developed and constructed, include appropriate spaces for wellness/fitness, cultural, special needs, and aquatic opportunities.	TBD	TBD	Short to Mid-Term

Objective 3.3: <i>Increase number of special events and festivals</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
3.3.a Expand neighborhood and community special event and festival opportunities at a variety of locations community wide with an emphasis in the downtown area.	\$0	TBD	Short-Term
Objective 3.4: <i>Create greater awareness for and increase participation at the Renaissance Centre</i>			
3.4.a Create a 3-5 year Strategic Plan that focuses on creating awareness and increasing programming and develop a marketing strategy.	\$0	TBD	Short-Term
Objective 3.5: <i>Create greater awareness for the Urban Forestry Division</i>			
3.5.a Develop a marketing strategy for the Urban Forestry Division that creates a greater awareness and public interest in the goals and outcomes of the division.	\$0	TBD	Short-Term
3.5.b Develop implementation strategies and educational opportunities for the Urban Forestry Management Plan.	\$0	TBD	Short-Term

Goal 4: Improve Facilities and Amenities

Objective 4.1: <i>Maintain and improve existing facilities</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
4.1.a Continue to implement maintenance strategies that maintain and make improvements to existing facilities.	TBD	TBD	Ongoing
4.1.b Develop a plan to address the recommendations from the inventory as they relate to individual park improvements.	TBD	TBD	Long-Term

Objective 4.2: <i>Expand trails & connectivity</i>			
4.2.a Complete Greenways System as identified in the 2014 Bond.	\$4,600,000	TBD	Mid-Term
4.2.b Explore the development of Trail Heads at entrance points to the Greenway.	\$332,827	TBD	Long-Term
Objective 4.3: <i>Provide new facilities to meet growing demand</i>			
4.3.a Explore the opportunity to design and construct a 65,000 square foot Recreation Center in the downtown area that includes a competitive pool, water features, gymnasiums, fitness/wellness space, indoor track, and community space.	\$25,653,857	TBD	TBD
4.3.b Explore the opportunity to construct a dedicated Pickleball facility that could serve the region as a tournament and league play hub.	\$232,186	TBD	TBD

The total capital cost estimates for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is in the range of approximately \$45 million to \$55 million with many variables depending on the types, size, and degree of improvements. Details on the improvements and new construction at parks and facilities have been provided in a staff resource document.