



Parks and Recreation Master Plan

May 2023



Acknowledgments

Organizing and facilitating a robust process that results in a creative, forward-looking and inclusive parks master plan is significant endeavor. The Consultant Team would like to thank the numerous members of the community, partner organizations, and city leadership and staff that generously contributed to the development of the *Cullman Parks and Recreation Master Plan*. This includes but is not limited to those listed below.

City Staff

Nathan Anderson, Executive Director, Cullman Parks, Recreation and Sports Tourism
Kyle Clark, Assistant Director, Cullman Parks, Recreation and Sports Tourism
City of Cullman Parks, Recreation and Sports Tourism Staff
City of Cullman Information Technology Department

Cullman City Council

Mayor Woody Jacobs
Council President Jenny Folsom
Councilmember John W. Cook
Councilmember Brad Smith
Councilmember David Moss, Jr.
Councilmember Clint Hollingsworth

Cullman Parks Board

Rusty Turner, Chair
Mark Aderhold
Herbert Arnold
Will Harding
Dr. Beth Bownes-Johnson
Trent Lowry
Richard Orr

Partner and Stakeholder Organizations

Cullman Parks and Recreation Foundation Board	Cullman Police Department
Cullman Chamber of Commerce	Cullman County Sheriff's Office
Cullman Tourism Bureau	Wallace State Community College
Cullman Economic Development Office	Cullman County Elected Officials
Cullman Business Leaders	Cullman Art Council
Cullman City Schools	Cullman County Emergency Management Agency
Cullman County Schools	Sports and Special Interest Group Representatives
AgriPlex	

Numerous community members who attended and participated in public forums, interviews, focus groups, and surveys.

Thank You!



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Demographics & Recreational Trends Analysis.....	11
Demographic Analysis	11
Recreation Trends Analysis	19
Community Engagement Process and Results	33
Qualitative Community Input Summary.....	33
Detailed Findings	36
Electronic Survey	39
Parks and Facilities Assessment and Analysis.....	55
Park Classifications	55
Level of Service Standards.....	59
GIS Mapping	61
Facility / Amenity Priority Ranking Model.....	63
Recreation Program Analysis	65
Overview	65
Core Program Areas	67
Community Survey Program Priorities	71
Program Strategy Analysis.....	72
Operational and Financial Review.....	81
Operational Review	81
Funding and Revenue Strategies	85
Strategic Actions and Capital Improvement Plan.....	91
Strategic Action Plan	91
Capital Improvement Plan.....	97

Executive Summary

A Playbook for the Future

A parks master plan is a guiding document for a community on how a parks system can meet the current and emerging needs of residents and creates vibrancy in a community. The park and recreation system of Cullman is the canvas on which so much of that is made possible, and provides the venues through which the community pursues healthy lifestyles, comes together, and builds connections. This *Park and Recreation Master Plan* is built on that vision, embraces the history of the community, is accountable to the present, and looks to the future.

This *Park and Recreation Master Plan* (“Master Plan”) establishes a long-term plan focusing on sustainability and maximizing resources while providing an appropriate level/balance of facilities and amenities throughout the community. The Master Plan is aligned to the goals and values of the Cullman community and creates a new “playbook” for the City to follow for the next 10 years.

The Parks, Recreation, and Sports Tourism Department (“Department”) maintains 1,662 acres of public lands within the city which includes developed parklands, undeveloped parklands, open space, trails, and public facilities and rights-of-way. The Department operates and maintains several facilities including the Active Adult Center, Cullman Wellness and Aquatic Center, WildWater Water Park, Cullman Gymnastics and Cheer Academy, Cross Creek and Terri Pines Golf Courses, Festhalle Farmers Market, Cullman Indoor Archery Range, Palomino RV Resort, Skate Depot, and the Little House at Art Park. Finally, the Department also organizes a robust portfolio of recreation programs and services and community events to fully activate these public spaces and assets and bring the community together.

The Master Plan sought community input to identify and confirm the Department’s vision and expectations for the future of the park and recreation system. Community input was received via in-person focus groups and key stakeholder interviews, public meetings, and a community online survey as well. The information gathered from the community engagement process was combined with technical



Master Plan Goals

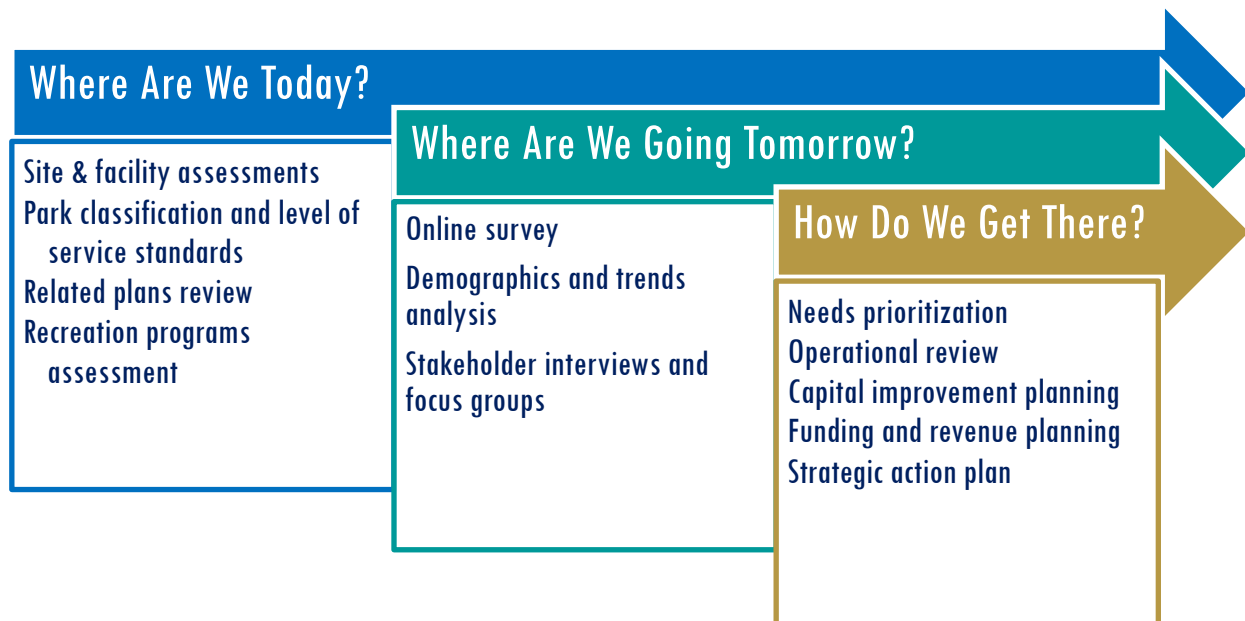
The Master Plan establishes a prioritized framework for future development or redevelopment of the City's parks and recreation system over the next 10 years. The Master Plan is a resource to develop policies and guidelines related to location, use, resource allocation, and level of service that will provide direction to City Council, City staff, and the community at large.

The goals of the Master Plan include:

- **Engage the community**, leadership, and stakeholders through innovative public input means to build a shared vision for parks, recreation, facilities, and open space for the next 10 years.
- **Utilize a wide variety of data sources and best practices**, including a statistically-valid survey to predict trends and patterns of use and how to address unmet needs in the City.
- **Determine unique Level of Service Standards** to develop appropriate actions regarding parks, recreation, facilities, and greenways that reflects the City's strong commitment in providing high quality recreational activities for the community.
- **Shape financial and operational preparedness** through innovative and "next" practices to achieve the strategic objectives and recommended actions.
- **Develop a dynamic and realistic strategic action plan** that creates a road map to ensure long-term success and financial sustainability for the City's parks, recreation facilities, programs, and greenways.

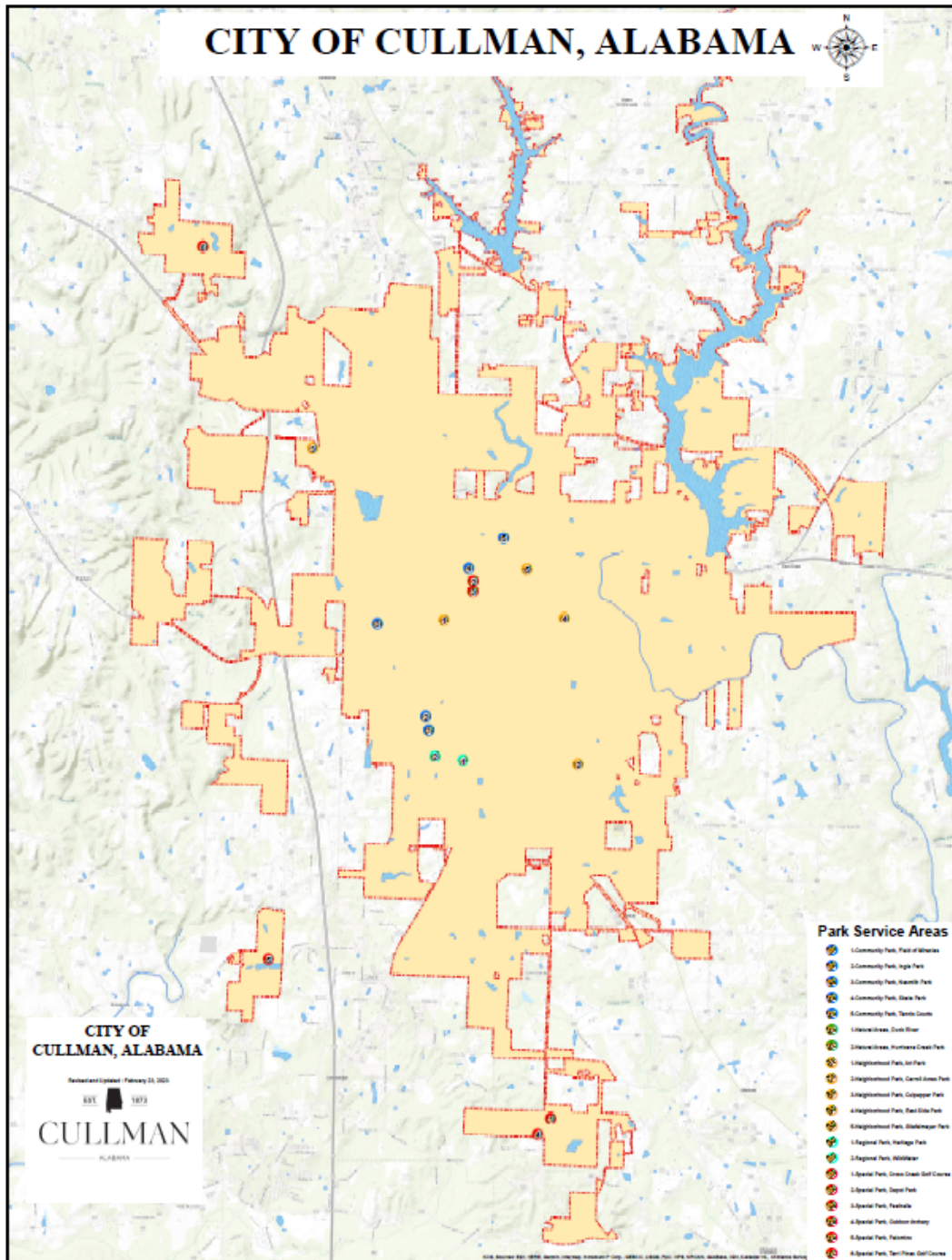
Project Process

The Master Plan followed a process of data collection, public input, on-the-ground study, assessment of existing conditions, market research, and open dialogue with local leadership and key stakeholders. The project process followed a planning path, as illustrated below:



Current Parks Map and Definition of Planning Area

The planning area for this Master Plan includes all areas within the boundaries of the City of Cullman. This plan recognizes the actual service areas of some Cullman parks and facilities extend beyond the defined boundaries of the defined planning area as Cullman has parks that have regional draw. Similarly, there are other public parks and lands within Cullman that also assist to meet the park and recreation needs of Cullman residents. The primary purpose of this plan is to first and foremost identify and address the park and recreation needs of Cullman residents. The map below depicts the planning area and location of city-owned parks and facilities.



Cullman Parks Inventory

Current developed park inventory¹ by park name, address, park classification and size are detailed below:

Park	Address	Classification	Size (Acres)
Art Park	1031 2nd St. SW	Community Park	1.5
Carroll Acres Park	1853 Pine Circle SE	Neighborhood Park	1
Cross Creek Golf Course	2321 County Road 490	Special Use Area	130
Culpepper Park	1724 Primrose Dr NW	Neighborhood Park	1
Depot Park	107 Arnold Street NE	Special Use Area	2-4
Duck River Trails	68 County Road 1640	Natural Area	50
East Side Park	1315 7 th Street SE	Neighborhood Park	2
Festhalle Market Platz	209 1 st Avenue SE	Special Use Area	0.4
Field of Miracles Park	1630 Field of Miracles Drive SW	Community Park	19
Heritage Park	1705 Lee Avenue SW	Regional Park	65
Hurricane Creek Park	22600 US Hwy 31 N	Natural Area	62
Ingle Park	1625 Cleveland Ave SW	Community Park	5
Nesmith Park	311 McNabb Dr SW	Community Park	17
Outdoor Archery Center	2602 County Road 490	Special Use Area	30
Palmino RV Resort	1315 County Road 222	Special Use Area	110
Skate Depot Park	601 2 nd Avenue NE	Community Park	0.67
Stiefelmeyer Park	205 8 th Avenue NE	Neighborhood Park	3
Tennis Park	510 13 th Street N	Community Park	2
Terri Pines Golf Course	700 Pine Hills Drive	Special Use Area	110
WildWater Water Park	1707 Main Avenue SW	Regional Park	12
TOTAL			623.57

¹ This inventory are those parks that are developed and currently open to the public. Undeveloped parklands or developed parks that are closed to the public for the foreseeable future are not included.

Vision, Mission and Core Values

The process to develop this plan was grounded in inclusive, accessible, and creative public input and engagement. This is a plan that reflects the community, its interests and needs, and its directional growth. In the course of the process, the City of Cullman has fine-tuned their mission statement as it pertains specifically to the provision of parks and recreation services, which clearly defines how the City intends to serve the community through this plan over the next 10 years. The vision and core values are those developed in the *Cullman 2040 Future Ready Strategic Plan*.

Vision

"For every person to have the opportunity to Get Out And Live."

Mission

"Cullman Parks, Recreation and Sports Tourism is dedicated to improving quality of life through exceptional parks, facilities, events, and recreational opportunities for all."

Core Values

Integrity
Tradition
Visionary Innovative Thinking
Unity
Teamwork
Community

Key Issues and Themes

Throughout the Master Plan process there emerged multiple themes and issues that were clear as priorities to address over the next 10 years. These represent input and insights from a broad segment of city residents, leadership, partner organizations, and the observations and assessments of the consultant team.

City Growth and Increased Diversity

The City of Cullman is the economic epicenter of Cullman County and is a community that continues to experience overall growth. Additionally, Cullman is becoming increasingly diverse across a number of attributes including race/ethnicity, age, and household income. This is noted within the analyses of this Master Plan as well as that of the *Cullman Five Year Strategic Plan* adopted in 2019. This places demands and expectations to continue to advance and evolve offerings of sites, amenities, facilities and services to meet the needs of this evolving community. As outlined in the *Strategic Plan*, this Master Plan supports four of the five Quality of Life goals:

1. **Connectivity**
2. **Arts**
3. **Parks and Recreation**
4. **Sense of Place**

Trails and Connectivity are a Priority

Cullman is an active community that enjoys broad ranging recreational opportunities for personal enjoyment, health, and wellness. The highest rated priority from community input, key local stakeholders, City leadership, and the consultant team is additional trail development. Both multi-use paved trails and unpaved trails were identified as the highest rated priorities to add over the next 10 years. Trail development should be considered to improve overall connectivity within the community and among parks. Additionally, the development of multi-use unpaved trails should be considered within existing or new park sites where appropriate to further enhance the recreational opportunities and enjoyment afforded to Cullman residents.

Preparedness for Long Term Lifecycle Needs of Capital Assets

Cullman Parks, Recreation and Sports Tourism Department is exceptionally innovative in the development and operation of numerous unique and state-of-the-art facilities including, but not limited to Heritage Park, Field of Miracles, WildWater, Palomino RV Resort, two golf courses, and the new indoor multi-purpose facility under construction at the time this Master Plan was completed. The Department is nimble and forward-thinking, and driven to assertively pursue earned revenues wherever possible. It was noted in several discussions with members of City Council, the Parks Board, and other community leadership that the Department is properly prepared and resourced into the future for the significant long-term capital needs of these sites and facilities as they age and are heavily used. This plan seeks to identify additional opportunities to further build the financial resiliency of the Department to do so.

Promoting Community and Economic Development

It is clear that developing a system of sites and facilities that not only meet the needs of local residents but also promote significant sports tourism and unique experiences for out-of-area visitors has been very successful for Cullman. The City of Cullman is a relatively small community to typically have the major facilities overseen by the Parks, Recreation and Sports Tourism Department. The economic impact generated from these facilities and their use has stimulated significant economic and community impacts and is often utilized as a primary attractor by local economic development agencies in promoting Cullman. Continuing this tradition over the next 10 years is an important strategy of this Master Plan.

Parks for All

Equity, diversity, and inclusion are essential building blocks and a driving force of a modern and forward-looking public park system today. Park locations, design, and amenities should be reflective of and equitably accessible by the *whole* community. That core value was evident throughout the community process as well. Specific opportunities to grow the diversity, equity, and inclusion of the Cullman parks system include but are not limited to additional playgrounds and recreation amenities that meet the needs of users of all physical, cognitive, emotional/behavioral, and mobility requirements; amenities that meet the needs of senior adults and other specific age segments; and amenities that meet the needs of residents of diverse cultural backgrounds.



Key Recommendations

The following key recommendations have been developed through robust community and stakeholder engagement throughout the planning process, consultant assessment and analyses, and industry best practices.

Revitalization and Maintenance of Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks are important assets in the Cullman Parks, Recreation and Sports Tourism system as these are the places families gather closest to their homes to play and recreate. They are integral to providing a high quality of life for the neighborhoods in which they sit. Over the last 15 years, the City of Cullman has invested substantially in the development of large community and special use parks that are both local treasures and regional destinations. These parks have been wildly popular and very successful in positioning Cullman as a high-quality park community. Several neighborhood parks have been refreshed and revitalized, but it is important to ensure that all neighborhood parks are updated to meet current and emerging needs. Therefore, it is a priority area of focus that neighborhood parks are appropriately updated to meet current and emerging needs.

Enhancing and Upgrading Community and Regional Parks

Community and regional parks are where not only Cullman residents come out to play and celebrate; they are regional draws that bring people from around the Alabama and Southeast to enjoy all that Cullman has to offer. These facilities are heavily used and some are considerably older than others, so there are three primary objectives for addressing these sites and facilities in this Master Plan:

- to improve usability and overall versatility of the sites
- to better meet current and emerging public needs, and
- to further enhance the local recreational value of these sites while also optimizing their ability to drive economic activity in the city.

Trails and Connectivity

One of the more prominent areas of public need and interest that was heard in the various forms of community engagement in this master plan process was the strong desire for more trails (paved and unpaved). Improving overall connectivity in the City between parks and other notable sites of interests or areas within the city will produce health and wellness benefits, strengthen the sense of place in Cullman, and weave the community together more tightly. This Master Plan acknowledges and supports the recommendations of that plan. A trail system that improves overall connectivity in the community between existing parks and amenities is the primary priority, as well as trails that provide unique recreational opportunities currently not available in the city.

Growing the System to Meet Community Needs

As it has for decades, the Cullman Parks, Recreation and Sports Tourism system must continue to grow to serve its growing population as well as that of Cullman County. Based on our analysis of the system, there are no significant park deserts or areas currently outside the service area of public greenspaces. While this is true, the Cullman community has diverse recreational interests and needs. Needs were identified through a variety of public engagement processes and assessments of existing parks and amenities. Existing sites and facilities can be enhanced to further meet these needs in the years to come. As the community continues to grow and evolve, so should the parks and recreation system evolve to stay aligned with both existing community needs as well as those that are emerging.

Demographics & Recreational Trends Analysis

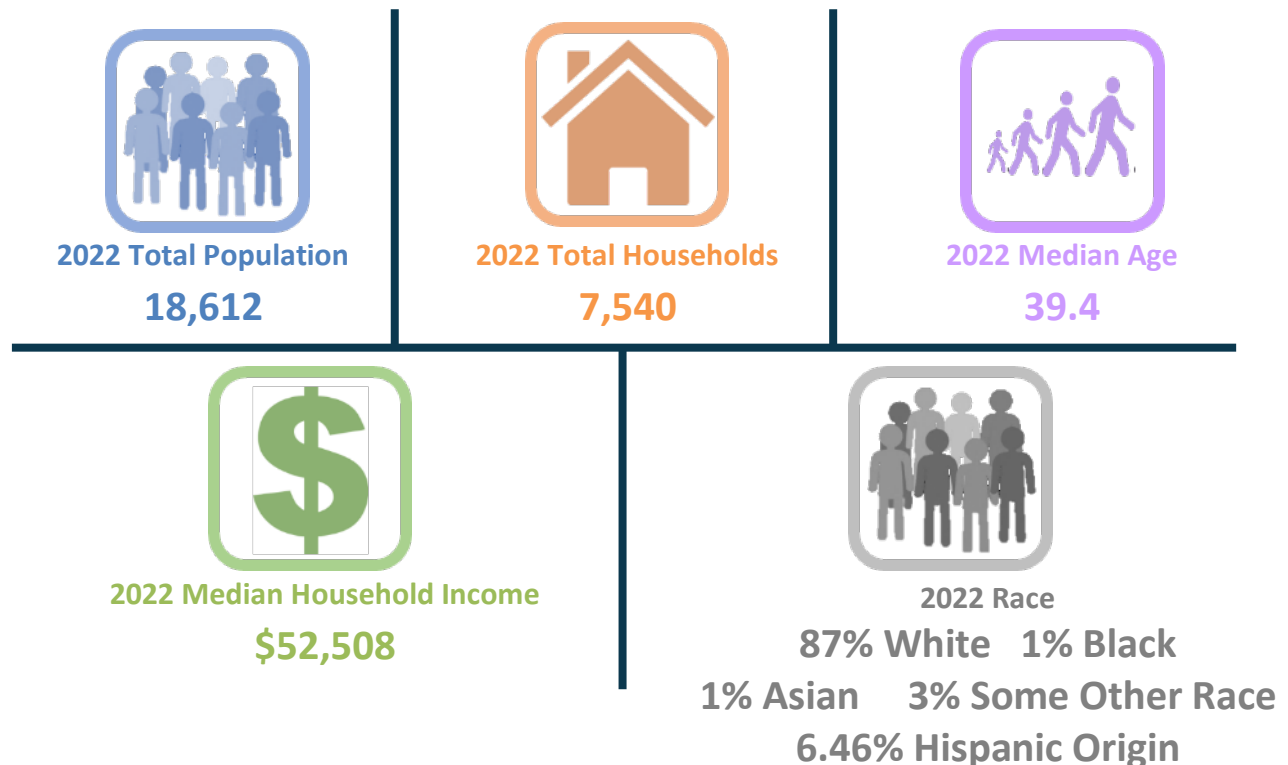
Introduction

The City of Cullman selected PROS Consulting to assist in completing the 2022 Parks and Recreation Master Plan that will serve the community over the next 10 years providing strategic direction and vision for the redevelopment and expansion of parks and open space, facilities, and recreational opportunities. The focus of this master plan is to develop strategies based on both qualitative and quantitative information to guide the future management of the parks and recreation system. A key component of the plan is a demographics and recreational trends analysis which helps provide a thorough understanding of the demographic makeup of residents within the city, assesses key economic factors, as well as identifies national, regional, and local recreational trends that are relevant to the planning process.

Demographic Analysis

The demographic analysis describes the population within Cullman, Alabama. This assessment is reflective of the city's total population and its key characteristics such as age segments, race, ethnicity, income levels, and gender. It is important to note that future projections are based on historical patterns and unforeseen circumstances during or after the time of the analysis could have a significant bearing on the validity of the projected figures.

City Demographic Overview



Methodology

Demographic data used for the analysis was obtained from U.S. Census Bureau and from Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI), the largest research and development organization dedicated to Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and specializing in population projections and market trends. All data was acquired in March 2022 and reflects estimates based on actual numbers for total population as reported in the 2010 Census, as well as estimates for 2027, 2032 and 2037 as obtained by ESRI. Straight line linear regression was utilized for future year projections in this analysis.

The City of Cullman's boundaries shown below were utilized for the demographic and local trends analysis. (See Figure 1)

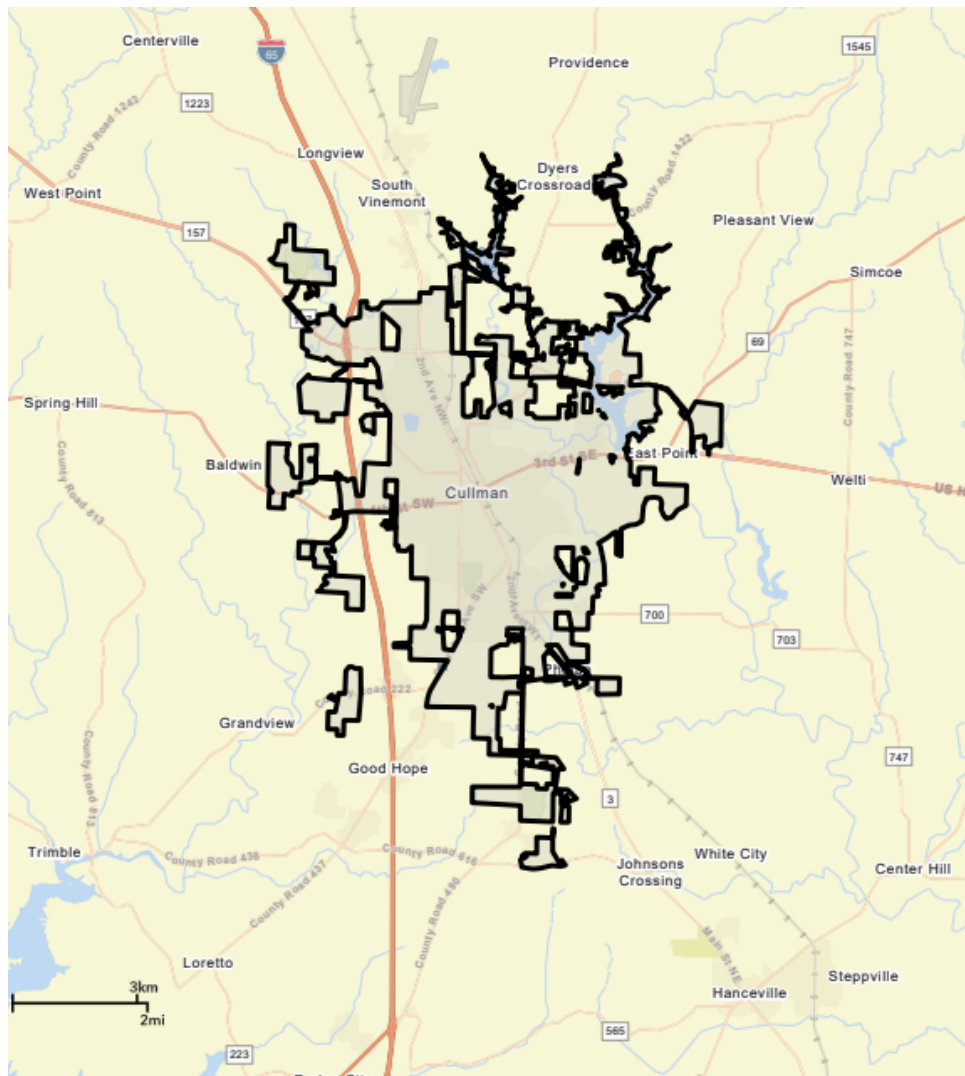


Figure 1: Service Area Boundaries

RACE AND ETHNICITY DEFINITIONS

The minimum categories for data on race and ethnicity for federal statistics, program administrative reporting, and civil rights compliance reporting are defined as below. The Census 2010 data on race are not directly comparable with data from the 2000 Census and earlier censuses; therefore, caution must be used when interpreting changes in the racial composition of the US population over time. The latest (Census 2020) definitions and nomenclature are used within this analysis.

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

*Please Note: The Census Bureau defines Race as a person's self-identification with one or more of the following social groups: White, Black or African American, Asian, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, some other race, or a combination of these. While Ethnicity is defined as whether a person is of Hispanic / Latino origin or not. **For this reason, the Hispanic / Latino ethnicity is viewed separate from race throughout this demographic analysis.***

City Populace

POPULATION

The city's population experienced a significant growing trend in recent years, increasing 15.77% from 2010 to 2022 (1.3% per year). This is considerably higher than the national annual growth rate of 0.86% (from 2010-2020), albeit the national annual growth rate has slowed significantly since 2019. Similar to the population, the total number of households also experienced a large increase in recent years (12.55% since 2010).

Currently, the 2022 population is estimated as 18,612 individuals. Based on ESRI projections, in 2022 there were 7,540 households. Projecting ahead, the total population and total number of households are both expected to continue growing over the next 10 years. Based on 2032 predictions, Cullman is expected to have 20,091 residents living within approximately 8,043 households. (See Figure 2)

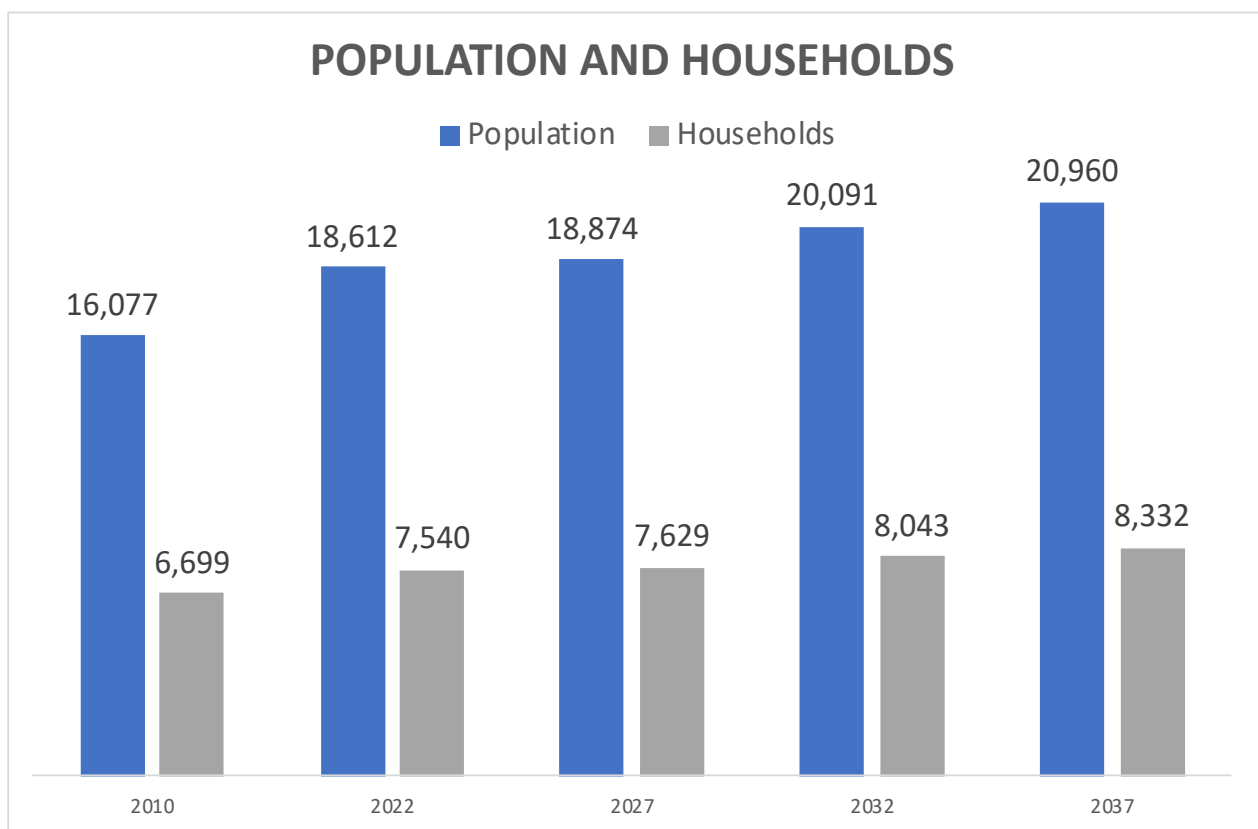


Figure 2: Service Area's Total Population and Households

AGE SEGMENT

Evaluating the city by age segments, Cullman is predominantly middle-aged with the largest age segments being 18-34 and 35-54 years, both of which representing roughly 24% of the population. The service area has a median age of 39.4 years old which is slightly above the U.S. median age of 38.1 years. Assessing the population as a whole, the City is projected to continue its current aging trend, with potential increases in the elderly age segments. (See Figure 3).

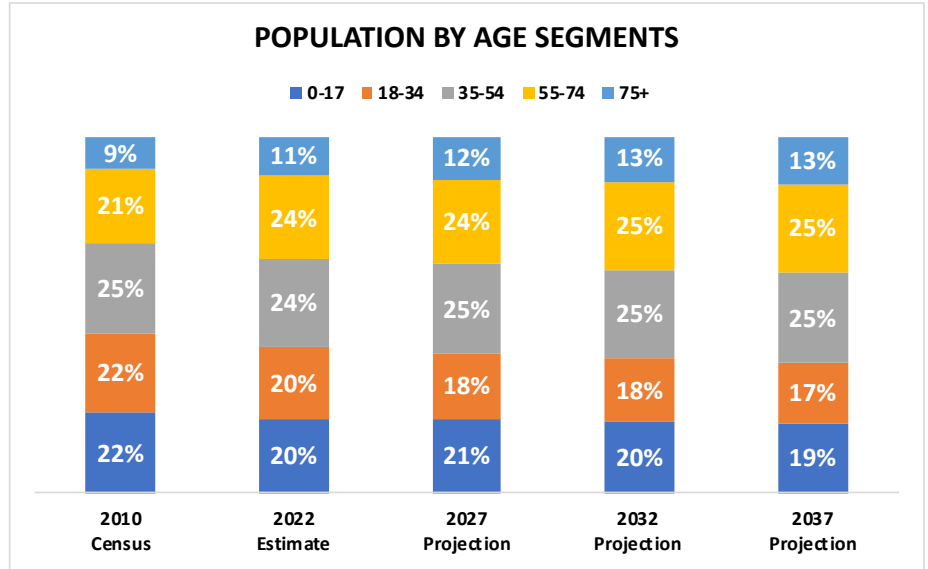


Figure 3: Service Area's Population by Age Segments

Due to the continued growth of the older age segments, it may be useful to further segment the "Senior" population beyond the traditional 55+ designation. Within the field of parks and recreation, there are two commonly used ways to partition this age segment. One is to simply segment by age: 55-64, 65-74, and 75+. However, as these age segments are engaged in programming, the variability of health and wellness can be a more relevant factor. For example, a 55-year-old may be struggling with rheumatoid arthritis and need different recreational opportunities than a healthy 65-year-old who is running marathons once a year. Therefore, it may be more useful to divide this age segment into "Active," "Low-Impact," and/or "Social" Seniors.

RACE

Analyzing race, the service area's current population is primarily White Alone with a trend of diversity taking place over the next few years. The 2022 estimate shows that 87% of the population falls into the White Alone category, while the Two or More Races (6%) and Some Other Race (3%) categories represent the largest minority categories. The racial diversification of Cullman is relatively less diverse than the national population, which is approximately 70% White Alone, 13% Black Alone, and 7% Some Other Race. The predictions for 2032 expect the city's population to continue diversifying at a moderate rate, with the White Alone population projected to decrease by another 5% by 2037 as a proportion of the entire population and the minority categories are expected to experience slight increases. (Figure 4)

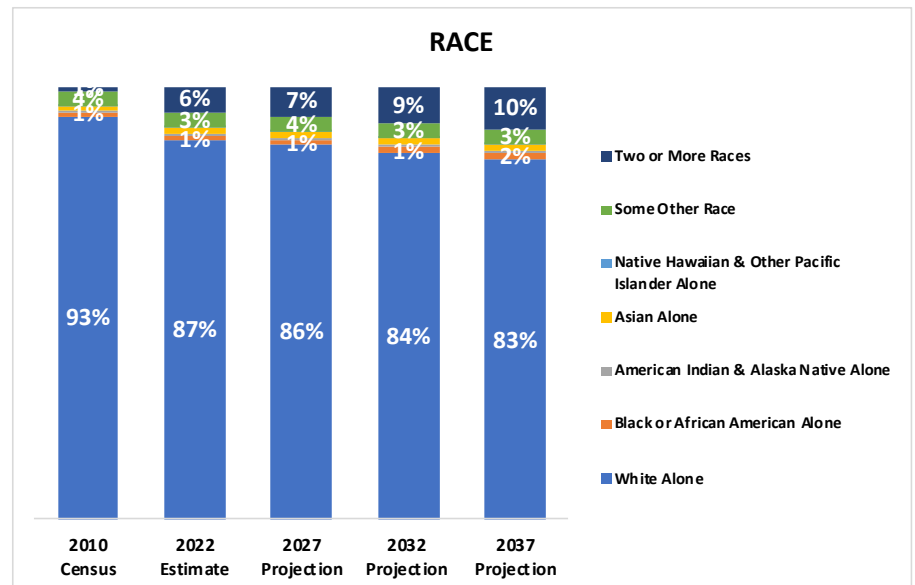


Figure 4: Service Area's Population by Race

ETHNICITY

Cullman’s population was also assessed based on Hispanic/Latino ethnicity, which by the Census Bureau definition is viewed independently from race. It is important to note that individuals who are Hispanic / Latino in ethnicity can also identify with any of the racial categories from above. Based on the 2010 Census, it is estimated in 2022 those of Hispanic/Latino origin represent 6% of the service area’s current population, which is considerably lower than the national average (18% Hispanic/Latino) but is higher than the Alabama average (4.8%). The Hispanic/ Latino population is expected to decline slightly over the next 10 years, increasing to 7% of the city’s total population by 2027 but then dropping to 5% by 2032. **(Figure 5)**

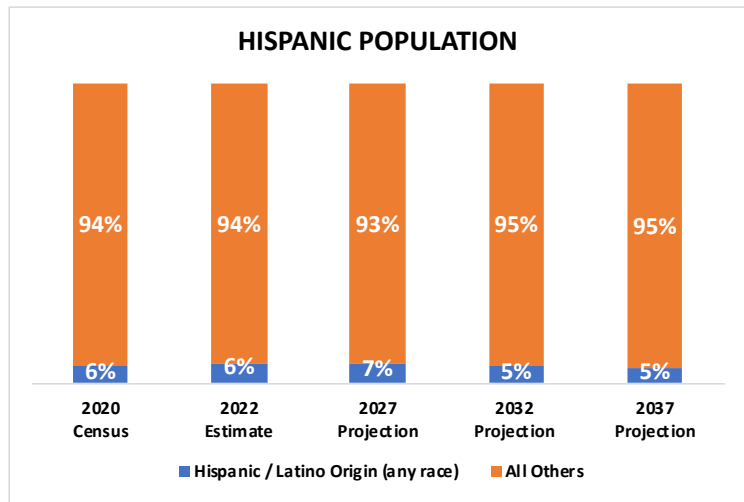


Figure 5: Service Area’s Population by Ethnicity

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

The city’s per capita income (\$28,948) and median household income (\$52,508) are on par with the Alabama state averages (\$28,934 and \$52,035 respectively), but slightly below the national averages (\$35,672 and \$65,712 respectively). Additionally, as seen in **Figure 6**, both Cullman’s per capita income and median household income are expected to continue growing over the next 10 years reaching \$33,920 and \$58,190 (respectively) by 2032. A comparison of income characteristics of Cullman with that of Alabama (state-wide) and the U.S. is provided in **Figure 7**.

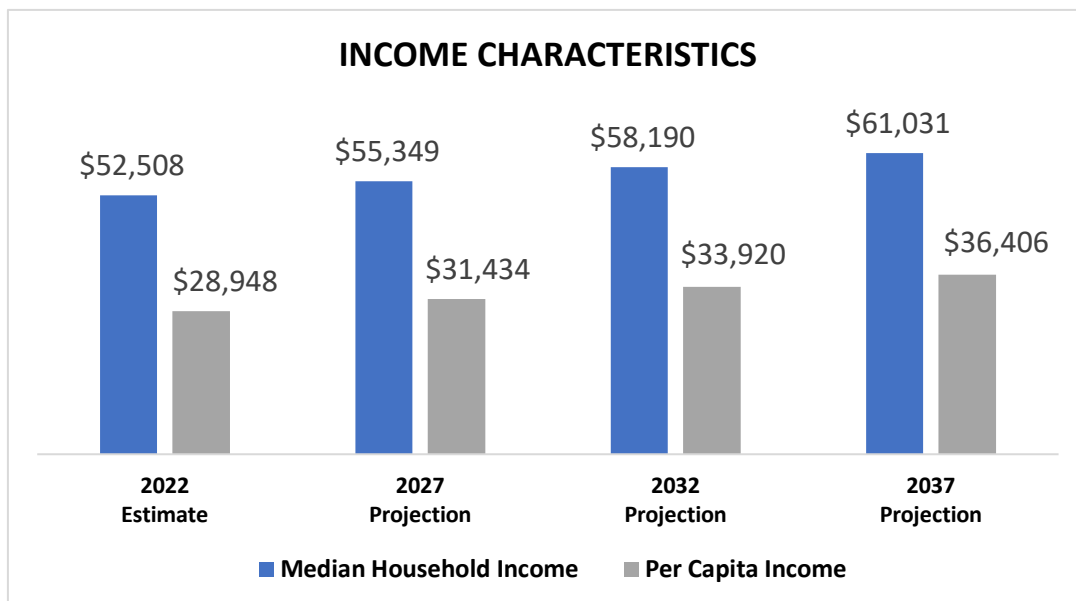
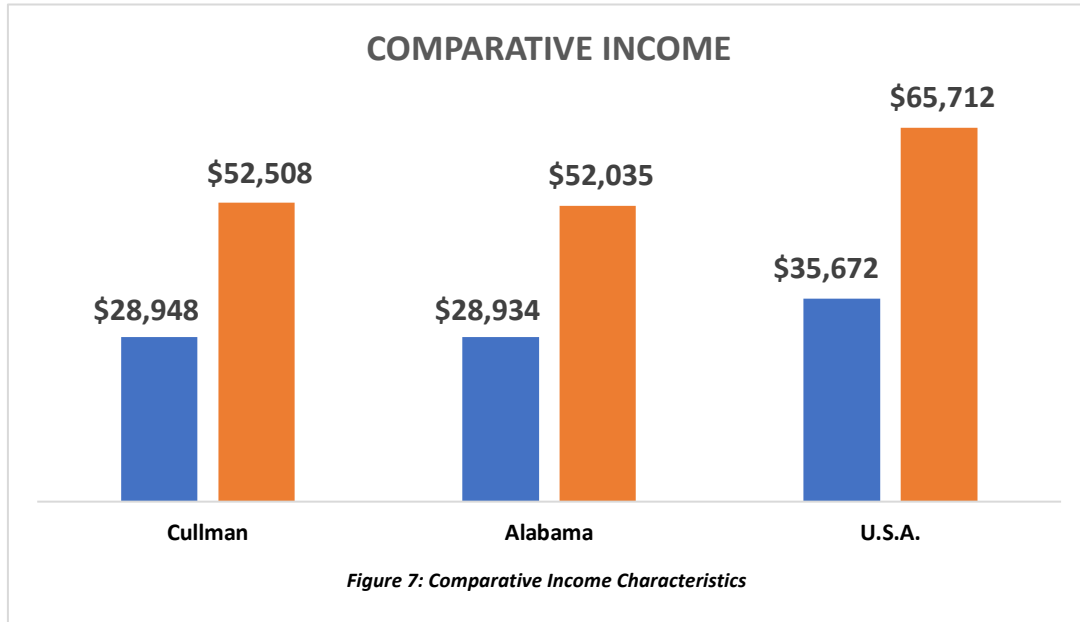


Figure 6: Service Area’s Income Characteristics



GENDER

Cullman currently has a slightly higher female population (51%) than male (49%). This is expected to remain fairly unchanged over the next 10 years, after shifting from a predominantly female population (52% female) since 2010, as shown in **Figure 8**.

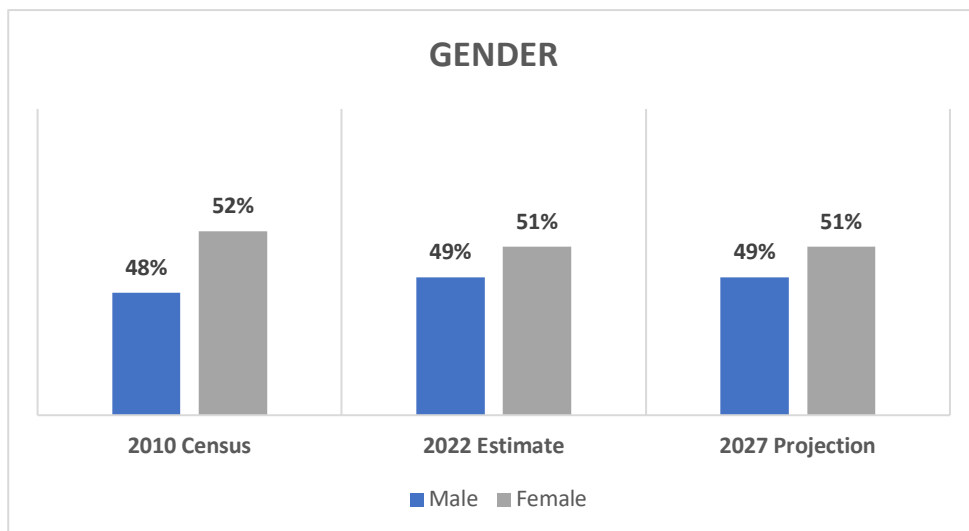


Figure 3: Service Area's Gender Breakdown

HOUSING PROFILE

The housing market in Cullman is strong with considerably more owner-occupied housing than renter-occupied. Since 2010, both owner-occupied and renter-occupied units have increased at a rate of 16.6% and 3.9% respectively, with owner-occupied units growing at a much faster pace. In fact, by 2027, renter-occupied units are projected to decline slightly while owner-occupied units will continue to grow. In that same time frame, family households have steadily increased at a rate of 9.7%, which will be accommodated by the growth in both Owner and Renter-Occupied units. These statistics are featured in Figure 9.

	2010	2022	2027
Owner-occupied units	3,890	4,536	4,690
Renter-occupied units	2,809	3,004	2,940
Families	4,170	4,575	4,622

Figure 9: Service Area's Housing Profile

KEY DEMOGRAPHIC FINDINGS

- A. Cullman's **annual population growth rate** (0.88%) is slightly higher than the national (0.86%) growth rate, reflecting a steadily growing resident population that may remain mostly the same for the foreseeable future.
- B. The City's **average household size** (2.37) is slightly lower than both the state (2.53) average and the national (2.53) average.
- C. When assessing **age segments**, the service area's reflects a predominantly middle-aged populace with slight growth in the proportion of older adults (55+ years) to the entire population anticipated over the next 10 years.
- D. The city's **racial distribution** is not diverse relative to the national average, but is on par with the state average. At the same time, Cullman is steadily diversifying, with the largest racial segment of White Alone slowly decreasing over the next ten years in place of mostly the Two or More Races and the Some Other Race categories.
- E. Cullman's percentage of **Hispanic/Latino population** (6%) is much lower than the national average (18.3%), but is higher than Alabama's average (4.8%).
- F. Cullman's **per capita income** (\$28,948) and **median house income** (\$52,508) are roughly the same as Alabama's averages (\$32,267 and \$64,034) and slightly lower than the national (\$35,672 and \$65,712) income characteristics.

Additionally, we are seeing the annual trends (**detailed below in Figure 10**) in total population growth, growth of number of households, number of family households, number of owner-occupied households, and median household income over the next five years (2022-2027).

Trends: 2022-2027 Annual Rate			
Population			0.28%
Households			0.23%
Families			0.20%
Owner Households			0.67%
Median Household Income			1.06%

Figure 10: 2022-2027 Annual Rate Trends

Recreation Trends Analysis

The trends analysis is intended to provide an understanding of national, regional, and local recreational trends. This analysis examines participation trends, activity levels, and programming trends. It is important to note that all trends are based on current and/or historical patterns and participation rates.

National Trends in Recreation

METHODOLOGY

The Sports & Fitness Industry Association's (SFIA) *Sports, Fitness & Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report 2021* was utilized in evaluating the following trends:

- National Recreation Participatory Trends
- Core vs. Casual Participation Trends
- Non-Participant Interest by Age Segment



The study is based on findings from surveys carried out in 2020 by the Physical Activity Council (PAC), resulting in a total of 18,000 online interviews. Surveys were administered to all genders, ages, income levels, regions, and ethnicities to allow for statistical accuracy of the national population. A sample size of 18,000 completed interviews is considered by SFIA to result in a high degree of statistical accuracy. A sport with a participation rate of five percent has a confidence interval of plus or minus 0.32 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level. Using a weighting technique, survey results are applied to the total U.S. population figure of 303,971,652 people (ages six and older).

The purpose of the report is to establish levels of activity and identify key participatory trends in recreation across the U.S. This study looked at 118 different sports/activities and subdivided them into various categories including: sports, fitness, outdoor activities, aquatics, etc.

CORE VS. CASUAL PARTICIPATION

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

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

INACTIVITY RATES / ACTIVITY LEVEL TRENDS

SFIA also categorizes participation rates by intensity, dividing activity levels into five categories based on the caloric implication (i.e., high calorie burning, low/med calorie burning, or inactive) and the frequency of participation (i.e., 1-50 times, 50-150 times, or above) for a given activity. Participation rates are expressed as 'super active' or 'active to a healthy level' (high calorie burning, 151+ times), 'active' (high calorie burning, 50-150 times), 'casual' (high calorie burning, 1-50 times), 'low/med calorie burning', and 'inactive'. These participation rates are then assessed based on the total population trend over the last five years, as well as breaking down these rates by generation.

IMPACT OF COVID-19

229.7 million people ages 6 and over reported being active in 2020, which is a 3.6% increase from 2019 and the greatest number of active Americans since 2007. With a shift towards working remotely and children moved to virtual learning, free time increased. This, coupled with stay-at-home orders and general decisions to keep out of public places, put an emphasis on the public finding ways to occupy their time.

Participation in sports and activities that allowed people to be socially distant saw significant increases. These activities included *pickleball*, *tennis*, *golf*, *trail running*, *skateboarding*, *surfing*, *day hiking*, and *recreational kayaking*. In general, outdoor sports and racquet sports had the largest increase in participation compared to their 2019 numbers.

As could be expected, team sports, showed consistent drops in participation with all but 5 of the 23 tracked team sports showing decreases in overall participation. The team sports like Basketball and Soccer, that did show an increase of participation in 2020 can be attributed to recreational or backyard play, which is counter to the trend of the past decade.

With gyms and health clubs being forced to close in most of the country, fitness participation levels overall decreased in 2020. However, home fitness activities that can be practiced at home, like *Yoga*, *Pilates*, and *Dumbbells/Hand Weights*, showed significant participation increases, while activities done generally in health clubs, studios, or pools like *Aquatic Exercise*, *Group Stationary Cycling*, *Stair-Climbing Machine*, and *Cardio Kickboxing*, experienced substantial declines.

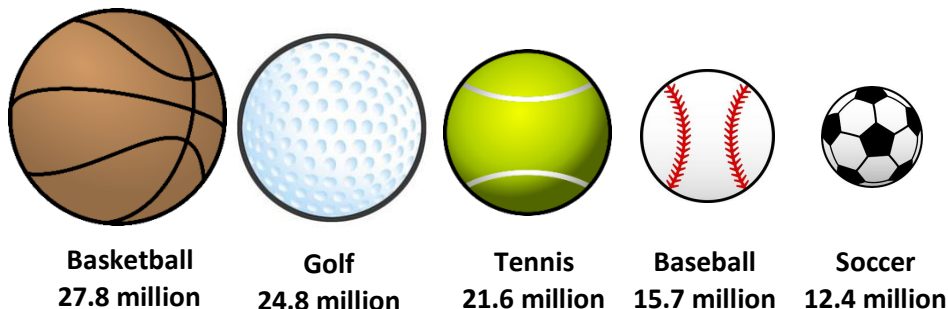
National Sport and Fitness Participatory Trends

NATIONAL TRENDS IN GENERAL SPORTS

Participation Levels

The sports most heavily participated in the United States were *Basketball* (27.9 million), *Golf* (24.8 million), and *Tennis* (21.6 million) which have participation figures well in excess of the other activities within the general sports category. *Baseball* (15.7 million), and *Outdoor Soccer* (12.4 million) round out the top five.

The popularity of Basketball, Golf, and Tennis can be attributed to the ability to compete with relatively small number of participants, this coupled with an ability to be played outdoors and/or properly distanced helps explain their popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Basketball's overall success can also be attributed to the limited amount of equipment needed to participate and the limited space requirements necessary, which makes basketball the only traditional sport that can be played at the majority of American dwellings as a drive-way pickup game. Golf continues to benefit from its wide age segment appeal and is considered a life-long sport. In Addition, target type game venues or *Golf Entertainment Venues* have increased drastically (72.3%) as a 5-year trend, using *Golf Entertainment* as a new alternative to breathe life back into the game of golf.



Five-Year Trend

Since 2015, *Golf- Entertainment Venues* (72.3%), *Pickleball* (67.6%), and *Tennis* (20.5%) have shown the largest increase in participation. Similarly, *Flag Football* (20.1%) and *Basketball* (18.6%) have also experienced significant growth. Based on the five-year trend from 2015-2020, the sports that are most rapidly declining in participation include *Ultimate Frisbee* (-47.3%), *Squash* (-32.0%), *Fast Pitch Softball* (-26.4%), *Touch Football* (-25.3%), and *Roller Hockey* (-21.3%).

One-Year Trend

In general, the most recent year shares a similar pattern with the five-year trends; with *Tennis* (22.4%), *Golf- Entertainment Venues* (21.7%), and *Pickleball* (21.4%) experiencing the greatest increases in participation this past year. *Baseball* (-0.5%) is the only sport that shows a five-year trend increase, but a one-year trend decrease. This is likely a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, other team sports such as *Fast Pitch Softball* (-19.2%), *Gymnastics* (-18.1%), and *Volleyball* (-16.6%) also had significant decreases in participation over the last year.

Core vs. Casual Trends in General Sports

Highly participated in sports, such as *Basketball*, *Baseball*, and *Slow Pitch Softball* generally have a larger core participant base (participate 13+ times per year) than casual participant base (participate 1-12 times per year). In the past year, we see the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic as most activities showed a decrease in their percentage of core participants. However, there were significant increases in the percentage of casual participation for both *Indoor* and *Outdoor Soccer*, *Baseball*, and *Ice Hockey* in the past year. **(Please see Appendix A for full Core vs. Casual Participation breakdown.)**

National Participatory Trends - General Sports					
Activity	Participation Levels			% Change	
	2015	2019	2020	5-Year Trend	1-Year Trend
Basketball	23,410	24,917	27,753	18.6%	11.4%
Golf (9 or 18-Hole Course)	24,120	24,271	24,804	2.8%	2.2%
Tennis	17,963	17,684	21,642	20.5%	22.4%
Baseball	13,711	15,804	15,731	14.7%	-0.5%
Soccer (Outdoor)	12,646	11,913	12,444	-1.6%	4.5%
Golf (Entertainment Venue)	6,998	9,905	12,057	72.3%	21.7%
Football (Flag)	5,829	6,783	7,001	20.1%	3.2%
Softball (Slow Pitch)	7,114	7,071	6,349	-10.8%	-10.2%
Badminton	7,198	6,095	5,862	-18.6%	-3.8%
Soccer (Indoor)	4,813	5,336	5,440	13.0%	1.9%
Volleyball (Court)	6,423	6,487	5,410	-15.8%	-16.6%
Football (Tackle)	6,222	5,107	5,054	-18.8%	-1.0%
Football (Touch)	6,487	5,171	4,846	-25.3%	-6.3%
Volleyball (Sand/Beach)	4,785	4,400	4,320	-9.7%	-1.8%
Pickleball	2,506	3,460	4,199	67.6%	21.4%
Gymnastics	4,679	4,699	3,848	-17.8%	-18.1%
Track and Field	4,222	4,139	3,636	-13.9%	-12.2%
Racquetball	3,883	3,453	3,426	-11.8%	-0.8%
Cheerleading	3,608	3,752	3,308	-8.3%	-11.8%
Ultimate Frisbee	4,409	2,290	2,325	-47.3%	1.5%
Ice Hockey	2,546	2,357	2,270	-10.8%	-3.7%
Wrestling	1,978	1,944	1,931	-2.4%	-0.7%
Lacrosse	2,094	2,115	1,884	-10.0%	-10.9%
Softball (Fast Pitch)	2,460	2,242	1,811	-26.4%	-19.2%
Roller Hockey	1,907	1,616	1,500	-21.3%	-7.2%
Rugby	1,349	1,392	1,242	-7.9%	-10.8%
Squash	1,710	1,222	1,163	-32.0%	-4.8%
NOTE: Participation figures are in 000's for the US population ages 6 and over					
Legend:	Large Increase	Moderate Increase	Moderate Decrease	Large Decrease	

Figure 11: General Sports Participatory Trends

NATIONAL TRENDS IN GENERAL FITNESS

Participation Levels

Overall, national participatory trends in fitness have experienced strong growth in recent years. Many of these activities have become popular due to an increased interest among Americans to improve their health and enhance quality of life by engaging in an active lifestyle. The most popular general fitness activities in 2020 also were those that could be done at home or in a virtual class environment. The activities with the most participation were *Fitness Walking* (114.0 million), *Free Weights* (53.3 million), *Running/Jogging* (50.7 million), *Treadmill* (49.8 million), and *Yoga* (32.8 million).



Fitness Walking
114.0 million



**Dumbbell
Free Weights**
53.3 million



**Running/
Jogging**
50.7 million



Treadmill
49.8 million



Yoga
32.8 million

Five-Year Trend

Over the last five years (2015-2020), the activities growing at the highest rate are *Trail Running* (45.6%), *Yoga* (29.7%), *Dance, Step, & Choreographed Exercise* (17.1%), and *Pilates Training* (15.3%). Over the same time frame, the activities that have undergone the biggest decline include: *Group Stationary Cycling* (-30.2%), *Boot Camp Style Training* (-26.1%), *Traditional Triathlons* (-26.1%), and *Cross-Training Style Workout* (-21.6%).

One-Year Trend

In the last year, activities with the largest gains in participation were those that can be done alone at home or socially distanced outdoors. The top increases were in *Trail Running* (7.8%), *Yoga* (7.7%), and *Pilates Training* (7.2%). In the same span, the activities that had the largest decline in participation were those that would generally take place in a gym or fitness class. The greatest drops were seen in *Group Stationary Cycling* (-39.0%), *Cross-Training Style Workouts* (-32.2%), *Boot Camp Style Training* (-27.2%), and *Stair Climbing Machine* (-26.7%).

Core vs. Casual trends in general fitness

The most participated in fitness activities all had increases in their core users base (participating 50+ times per year) over the last year. These fitness activities include: *Fitness Walking*, *Free Weights*, *Running/Jogging*, *Treadmills*, *Yoga*, and *Recumbent/Upright Stationary Cycling*. Please see **Appendix A** for full Core vs. Casual Participation breakdown.

National Participatory Trends - General Fitness					
Activity	Participation Levels			% Change	
	2015	2019	2020	5-Year Trend	1-Year Trend
Fitness Walking	109,829	111,439	114,044	3.8%	2.3%
Free Weights (Dumbbells/Hand Weights)	54,716	51,450	53,256	-2.7%	3.5%
Running/Jogging	48,496	50,052	50,652	4.4%	1.2%
Treadmill	50,398	56,823	49,832	-1.1%	-12.3%
Yoga	25,289	30,456	32,808	29.7%	7.7%
Stationary Cycling (Recumbent/Upright)	35,553	37,085	31,287	-12.0%	-15.6%
Weight/Resistant Machines	35,310	36,181	30,651	-13.2%	-15.3%
Free Weights (Barbells)	25,381	28,379	28,790	13.4%	1.4%
Elliptical Motion Trainer	32,321	33,056	27,920	-13.6%	-15.5%
Dance, Step, & Choreographed Exercise	21,487	23,957	25,160	17.1%	5.0%
Bodyweight Exercise	22,146	23,504	22,845	3.2%	-2.8%
Aerobics (High Impact/Intensity Training HIIT)	20,464	22,044	22,487	9.9%	2.0%
Trail Running	8,139	10,997	11,854	45.6%	7.8%
Stair-Climbing Machine	13,234	15,359	11,261	-14.9%	-26.7%
Pilates Training	8,594	9,243	9,905	15.3%	7.2%
Cross-Training Style Workout	11,710	13,542	9,179	-21.6%	-32.2%
Martial Arts	5,507	6,068	6,064	10.1%	-0.1%
Stationary Cycling (Group)	8,677	9,930	6,054	-30.2%	-39.0%
Cardio Kickboxing	6,708	7,026	5,295	-21.1%	-24.6%
Boxing for Fitness	5,419	5,198	5,230	-3.5%	0.6%
Boot Camp Style Training	6,722	6,830	4,969	-26.1%	-27.2%
Barre	3,583	3,665	3,579	-0.1%	-2.3%
Tai Chi	3,651	3,793	3,300	-9.6%	-13.0%
Triathlon (Traditional/Road)	2,498	2,001	1,846	-26.1%	-7.7%
Triathlon (Non-Traditional/Off Road)	1,744	1,472	1,363	-21.8%	-7.4%
NOTE: Participation figures are in 000's for the US population ages 6 and over					
Legend: <div>Large Increase (greater than 25%)</div> <div>Moderate Increase (0% to 25%)</div> <div>Moderate Decrease (0% to -25%)</div> <div>Large Decrease (less than -25%)</div>					

Figure 12: General Fitness National Participatory Trends

NATIONAL TRENDS IN OUTDOOR RECREATION

Participation Levels

Results from the SFIA report demonstrate strong growth in participation regarding outdoor/adventure recreation activities. Much like the general fitness activities, these activities encourage an active lifestyle, can be performed individually or with proper social distancing in a group, and are not as limited by time constraints. In 2020, the most popular activities, in terms of total participants, from the outdoor/adventure recreation category include: *Day Hiking* (57.8 million), *Road Bicycling* (44.5 million), *Freshwater Fishing* (42.6 million), *Camping within ¼ mile of Vehicle/Home* (36.1 million), and *Recreational Vehicle Camping* (17.8 million).



**Hiking
(Day)**
57.8 million



**Bicycling
(Road)**
44.5 million



**Fishing
(Freshwater)**
42.6 million



**Camping
(<¼mi. of Car/Home)**
36.1 million



**Camping
(Recreational Vehicle)**
17.8 million

Five-Year Trend

From 2015-2020, *Day Hiking* (55.3%), *BMX Bicycling* (44.2%), *Skateboarding* (37.8%), *Camping within ¼ mile of Vehicle/Home* (30.1%), and *Fly Fishing* (27.3%) have undergone the largest increases in participation. The five-year trend also shows activities such as *Adventure Racing* (-31.4%), *In-Line Roller Skating* (-18.8%), *Archery* (-13.5%), and *Traditional Climbing* (-4.5%) to be the only activities with decreases in participation.

One-Year Trend

The one-year trend shows almost all activities growing in participation from the previous year. The most rapid growth being in *Skateboarding* (34.2%), *Camping within ¼ mile of Vehicle/Home* (28.0%), *Birdwatching* (18.8%), and *Day Hiking* (16.3%). Over the last year, the only activities that underwent decreases in participation were *Adventure Racing* (-8.3%) and *Archery* (-2.7%).

Core vs. Casual Trends in Outdoor Recreation

A majority of outdoor activities have experienced participation growth in the last five years. Although this a positive trend, it should be noted that all outdoor activities participation, besides adventure racing, consist primarily of casual users. Please see **Appendix A** for full Core vs. Casual Participation breakdown.

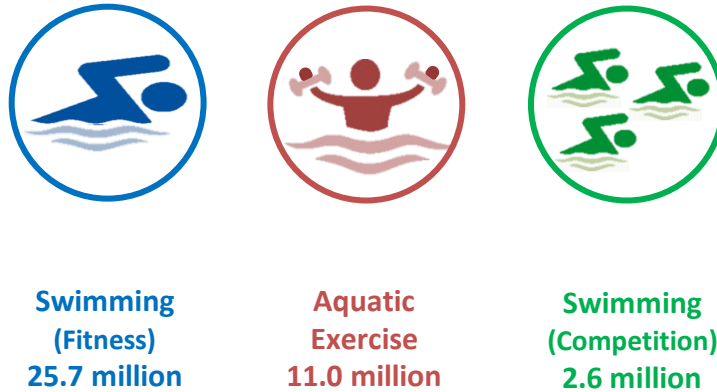
National Participatory Trends - Outdoor / Adventure Recreation					
Activity	Participation Levels			% Change	
	2015	2019	2020	5-Year Trend	1-Year Trend
Hiking (Day)	37,232	49,697	57,808	55.3%	16.3%
Bicycling (Road)	38,280	39,388	44,471	16.2%	12.9%
Fishing (Freshwater)	37,682	39,185	42,556	12.9%	8.6%
Camping (< 1/4 Mile of Vehicle/Home)	27,742	28,183	36,082	30.1%	28.0%
Camping (Recreational Vehicle)	14,699	15,426	17,825	21.3%	15.6%
Birdwatching (>1/4 mile of Vehicle/Home)	13,093	12,817	15,228	16.3%	18.8%
Fishing (Saltwater)	11,975	13,193	14,527	21.3%	10.1%
Backpacking Overnight	10,100	10,660	10,746	6.4%	0.8%
Bicycling (Mountain)	8,316	8,622	8,998	8.2%	4.4%
Skateboarding	6,436	6,610	8,872	37.8%	34.2%
Fishing (Fly)	6,089	7,014	7,753	27.3%	10.5%
Archery	8,378	7,449	7,249	-13.5%	-2.7%
Climbing (Indoor)		5,309	5,535	n/a	4.3%
Roller Skating, In-Line	6,024	4,816	4,892	-18.8%	1.6%
Bicycling (BMX)	2,690	3,648	3,880	44.2%	6.4%
Climbing (Traditional/Ice/Mountaineering)	2,571	2,400	2,456	-4.5%	2.3%
Climbing (Sport/Boulder)		2,183	2,290	n/a	4.9%
Adventure Racing	2,864	2,143	1,966	-31.4%	-8.3%
NOTE: Participation figures are in 000's for the US population ages 6 and over					
Legend:		Large Increase (greater than 25%)	Moderate Increase (0% to 25%)	Moderate Decrease (0% to -25%)	Large Decrease (less than -25%)

Figure 13: Outdoor / Adventure Recreation Participatory Trends

NATIONAL TRENDS IN AQUATICS

Participation Levels

Swimming is deemed as a lifetime activity, which is most likely why it continues to have such strong participation. In 2020, *Fitness Swimming* remained the overall leader in participation (25.7 million) amongst aquatic activities, despite the fact that most, if not all, aquatic facilities were forced to close at some point due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Five-Year Trend

Assessing the five-year trend, only *Aquatic Exercise* has experienced an increase (18.7%) from 2015-2020, most likely due to the ongoing research that demonstrates the activity's great therapeutic benefit. While both *Fitness* and *Competitive Swimming* underwent a slight decline, dropping -2.5% and -9.6% respectively.

One-Year Trend

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is seen here as most aquatic facilities were forced to shut down for some part of the year. This caused decreases to all activities with *Fitness Swimming* (-9.0%) having the largest decline, followed by *Competitive Swimming* (-7.3%) and *Aquatic Exercise* (-2.1%).

Core vs. Casual Trends in Aquatics

All aquatic activities have undergone increases in casual participation (1-49 times per year) over the last five years, however, they have all seem a drop in core participation (50+ times per year) in the same time frame. This was happening before the COVID-19 pandemic, and the large decreases in all participation over the last year have furthered this trend. **Please see Appendix A for full Core vs. Casual Participation breakdown.**

National Participatory Trends - Aquatics					
Activity	Participation Levels			% Change	
	2015	2019	2020	5-Year Trend	1-Year Trend
Swimming (Fitness)	26,319	28,219	25,666	-2.5%	-9.0%
Aquatic Exercise	9,226	11,189	10,954	18.7%	-2.1%
Swimming (Competition)	2,892	2,822	2,615	-9.6%	-7.3%
NOTE: Participation figures are in 000's for the US population ages 6 and over					
Legend:	Large Increase (greater than 25%)	Moderate Increase (0% to 25%)	Moderate Decrease (0% to -25%)	Large Decrease (less than -25%)	

Figure 14: Aquatic Participatory Trends

NATIONAL TRENDS IN WATER SPORTS / ACTIVITIES

Participation Levels

The most popular water sports / activities based on total participants in 2020 were *Recreational Kayaking* (13.0 million), *Canoeing* (9.6 million), and *Snorkeling* (7.7 million). It should be noted that water activity participation tends to vary based on regional, seasonal, and environmental factors. A region with more water access and a warmer climate is more likely to have a higher participation rate in water activities than a region that has a long winter season or limited water access. Therefore, when assessing trends in water sports and activities, it is important to understand that fluctuations may be the result of environmental barriers which can greatly influence water activity participation.



Kayaking
13.0 million



Canoeing
9.6 million



Snorkeling
7.7 million



Jet Skiing
4.9 million



Surfing
3.8 million

Five-Year Trend

Over the last five years, *Surfing* (40.7%), *Recreational Kayaking* (36.9%) and *Stand-Up Paddling* (21.7%) were the fastest growing water activities. *White Water Kayaking* (3.5%) was the only other activity with an increase in participation. From 2015-2020, activities declining in participation most rapidly were *Boardsailing/Windsurfing* (-28.2%), *Water Skiing* (-22.7%), *Jet Skiing* (-21.8%), *Scuba Diving* (-21.0%), *Sea Kayaking* (-18.5%), and *Sailing* (-15.0%).

One-Year Trend

Similarly, to the five-year trend, *Surfing* (28.2%) and *Recreational Kayaking* (14.2%) also had the greatest one-year growth in participation, from 2019-2020. Activities which experienced the largest decreases in participation in the most recent year include: *Boardsailing/Windsurfing* (-9.8%), *Sea Kayaking* (-5.4%), and *Water Skiing* (-4.8%).

Core VS. CASUAL trends in Water Sports/Activities

As mentioned previously, regional, seasonal, and environmental limiting factors may influence the participation rate of water sport and activities. These factors may also explain why all water-based activities have drastically more casual participants than core participants, since frequencies of activities may be constrained by uncontrollable factors. These high causal user numbers are likely why a majority of water sports/activities have experienced decreases in participation in recent years. **Please see Appendix A for full Core vs. Casual Participation breakdown.**

National Participatory Trends - Water Sports / Activities					
Activity	Participation Levels			% Change	
	2015	2019	2020	5-Year Trend	1-Year Trend
Kayaking (Recreational)	9,499	11,382	13,002	36.9%	14.2%
Canoeing	10,236	8,995	9,595	-6.3%	6.7%
Snorkeling	8,874	7,659	7,729	-12.9%	0.9%
Jet Skiing	6,263	5,108	4,900	-21.8%	-4.1%
Surfing	2,701	2,964	3,800	40.7%	28.2%
Stand-Up Paddling	3,020	3,562	3,675	21.7%	3.2%
Sailing	4,099	3,618	3,486	-15.0%	-3.6%
Rafting	3,883	3,438	3,474	-10.5%	1.0%
Water Skiing	3,948	3,203	3,050	-22.7%	-4.8%
Wakeboarding	3,226	2,729	2,754	-14.6%	0.9%
Kayaking (White Water)	2,518	2,583	2,605	3.5%	0.9%
Scuba Diving	3,274	2,715	2,588	-21.0%	-4.7%
Kayaking (Sea/Touring)	3,079	2,652	2,508	-18.5%	-5.4%
Boardsailing/Windsurfing	1,766	1,405	1,268	-28.2%	-9.8%
NOTE: Participation figures are in 000's for the US population ages 6 and over					
Legend:	Large Increase (greater than 25%)	Moderate Increase (0% to 25%)	Moderate Decrease (0% to -25%)	Large Decrease (less than -25%)	

Figure 15: Water Sports/Activities Participatory Trends

Local Sports and Leisure Market Potential

The following charts show sport and leisure market potential data for City residents, as provided by ESRI. Market Potential Index (MPI) measures the probable demand for a product or service within the defined service areas. The MPI shows the likelihood that an adult resident will participate in certain activities when compared to the U.S. national average. The national average is 100; therefore, numbers below 100 would represent lower than average participation rates, and numbers above 100 would represent higher than average participation rates. The service area is compared to the national average in four (4) categories – **general sports, fitness, outdoor activity, and commercial recreation**.

MPI scores are a tool that the Cullman Parks, Recreation, and Sports Tourism Department can use for consideration when starting new programs or developing new facilities and amenities. The market potential gives the Department a starting point for estimating resident attendance and participation for a broad set of recreational activities.

MPIs for City residents demonstrate **relatively low** market potential figures for all four categories that were assessed. The top five activities based on MPI were *Freshwater Fishing (126)*, *Archery (105)*, *Spent \$1-\$99 on sports/recreational equipment (104)*, *Canoeing/Kayaking (101)*, and *Played video/electronic game (console)*. **Nearly 95% of all activities assessed had MPI scores below the national average, which suggests there may be some areas of potential in for improving resident activity in Cullman.**

The following charts compare MPI scores for 42 sport and leisure activities that are prevalent for residents within the City. The activities are categorized by activity type and listed in descending order, from highest to lowest MPI score. High index numbers (100+) are significant because they demonstrate that there is a greater likelihood that residents within the service areas will actively participate in offerings provided by the Department.

GENERAL SPORTS MARKET POTENTIAL

The General Sports category includes sports such as *Soccer, Softball, and Football*. Activities that have the greatest market potential are *Baseball (92), Football (88), Basketball (84), Volleyball (84), and Softball (81)*. All eight of the general sports activities featured local MPI scores lower than the national average.

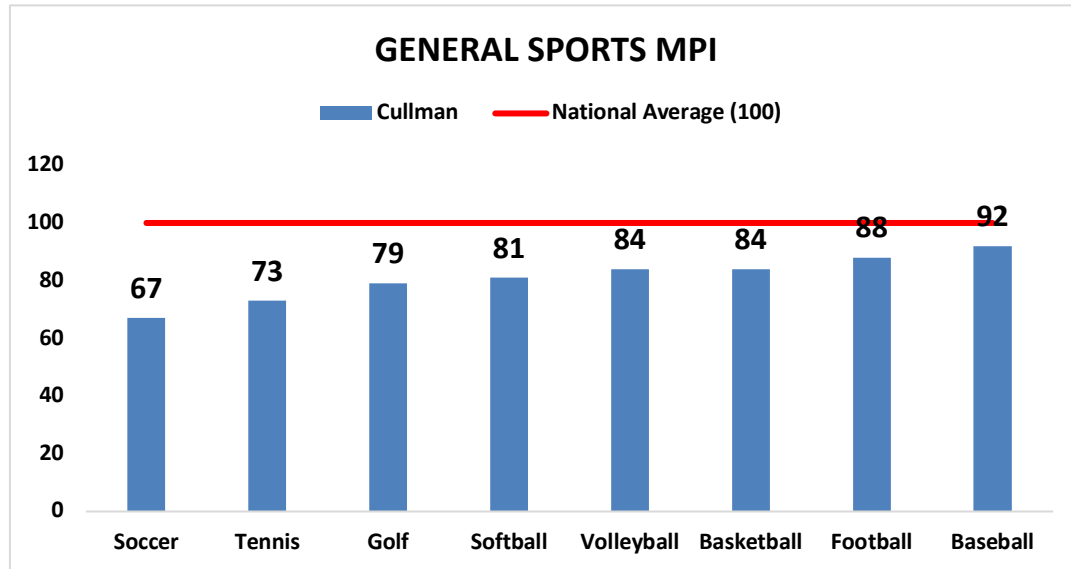


Figure 16: General Sports MPI

Key General Sports Market Findings:

- A. The general sports market for Cullman is **well balanced**, with the leading sport being only four points higher than the next highest sport. This may mean that there is opportunity in multiple areas for growth and increased activity within multiple different sports.
- B. Several **primarily outdoor sports** such as baseball, football, softball, and golf may indicate a point of potential for the City's future recreation investments. Some **primarily indoor sports**, such as basketball may require more public indoor courts. Collaborating with local school districts or recreation centers could be a way to make this happen.



Image from cullmanrecreation.org

FITNESS MARKET POTENTIAL

All activities in the Fitness category have MPI scores lower than the national average. The top three activities in this category include *Swimming* (90), *Walking for Exercise* (87), and *Yoga* (78). *Zumba* (68) has the lowest MPI of all activities assessed, though in this case, it may be caused by limited access to fitness facilities with group fitness classes.

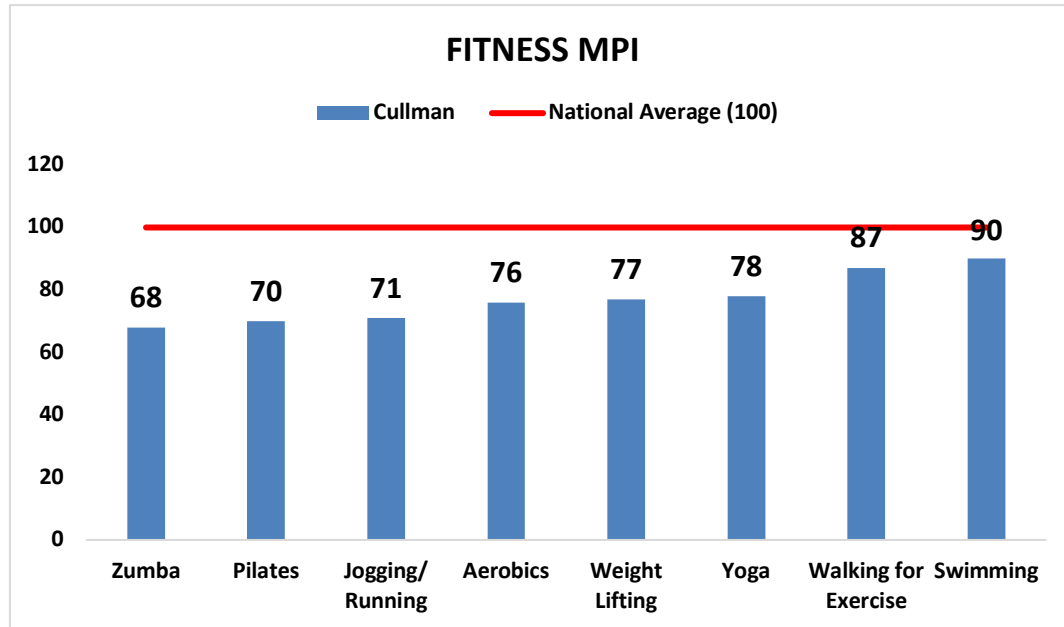


Figure 17: Fitness MPI

Key Fitness Findings:

- A. Swimming is widely acknowledged as a premier fitness activity. The Cullman Wellness and Aquatic Center stands as a testament to current infrastructure that meets the diverse needs of residents.
- B. *Walking for Exercise* is the second highest rated fitness activity, meaning that parks, trails, and even local tracks could be utilized to get residents more active in the future.
- C. Most of the highest rated fitness activities in Cullman require little equipment, including several activities that may have more of an emphasis on instruction-based activity (such as *Yoga* or *Pilates* classes). Putting more emphasis on public recreation centers holding classes, like the ones already held in Active Adult Center, may prove beneficial.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITY MARKET POTENTIAL

Assessing MPI scores for the Outdoor Activity Category reveals almost all of the activities are below national average MPI with the top five being *Fishing (fresh water)* (126), *Archery* (105), *Canoeing/Kayaking*

(101), *Road Bicycling* (84), and *Hiking* (81). The lowest activities based on MPI were *Horseback Riding* (68) and *Mountain Biking* (67).

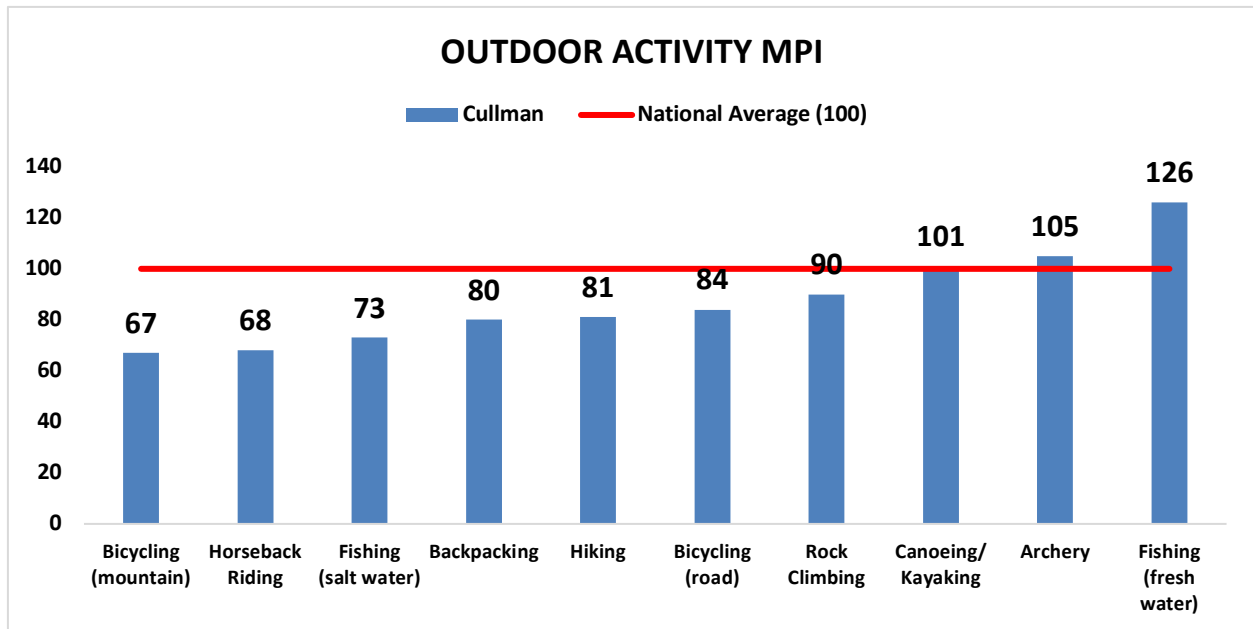


Figure 18: Outdoor/Adventure Activities MPI

Key Outdoor Activity Findings:

- A. **Freshwater fishing** is a major activity for Cullman, with over 20 points higher than the next highest activity. This may be worth promoting more as a Parks and Rec Department, with possible classes or collaborations with programs or entities like the *Festhalle Farmer's Market*.
- B. The Cullman Indoor Archery Range may be a strong example of induced demand for the City's archery activity. Having access to an indoor & outdoor archery range has contributed to the **second highest activity score** going to archery, and more accessibility to the sport may even increase that.



Image from cullmanrecreation.org

- C. Further promotion for **nearby nature attractions** may increase outdoor sports such as Hiking, Backpacking, or Rock Climbing. Classes, informational sessions, and guided expeditions could also amplify the amount of activity in those areas.

COMMERCIAL RECREATION MARKET POTENTIAL

The Commercial Recreation category reveals a few activities with MPI scores above the national average. *Spent \$1-99 on sports/rec equip* (104), *Played video/electronic game (console)* (101), *Played video/electronic game (portable)* (100), *Went overnight camping* (98), and *Flew a drone* (96) were the top five activities for the last 12 months in Cullman. The lowest MPI activities were *Went to Art Gallery* (63) and *Participated in a book club* (71).

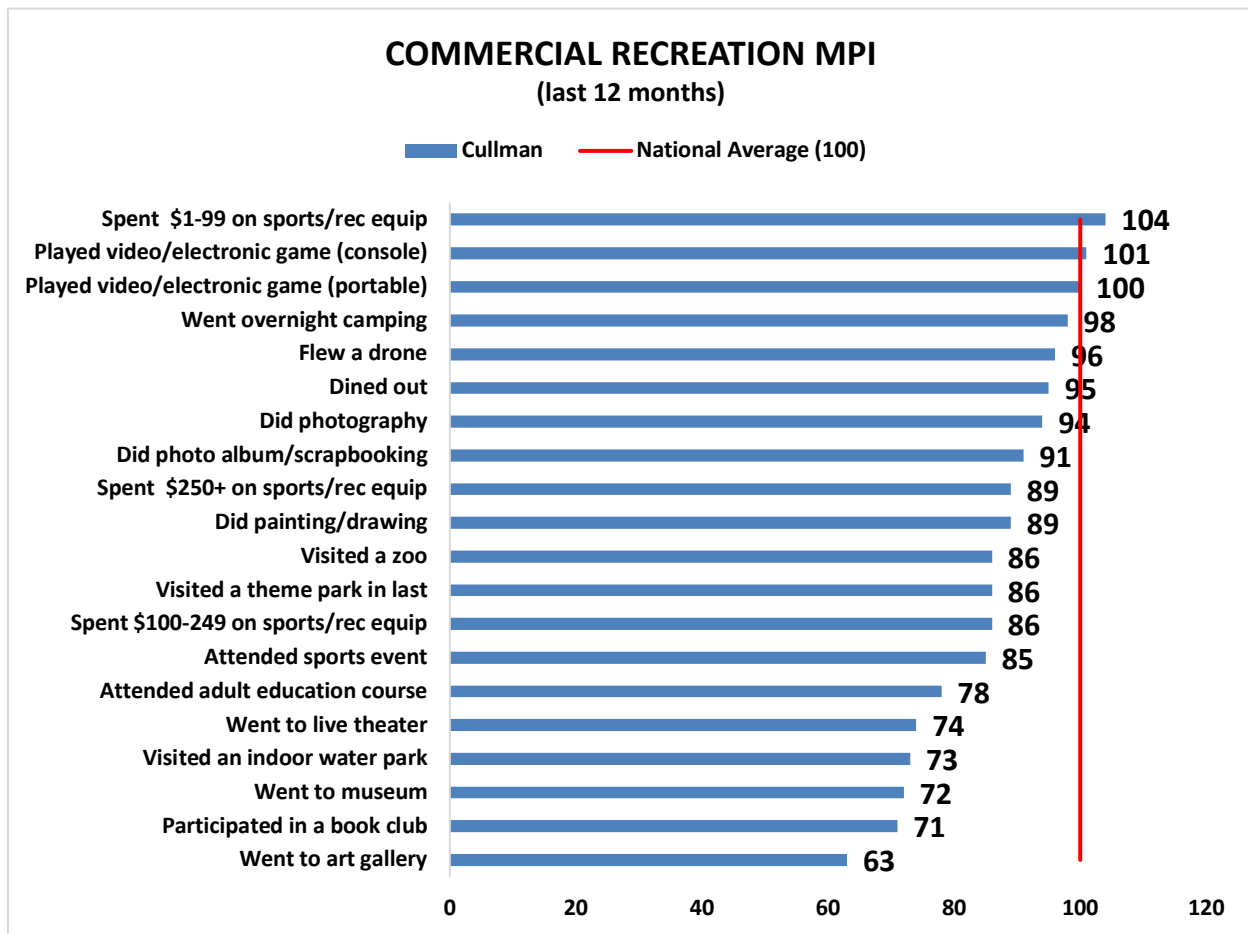


Figure 19: Commercial Recreation MPI

Key Commercial recreation Findings:

- A. Residents of Cullman are **willing to spend** to pursue their favorite sports, as evidenced by the highest rated activity being *Spent \$1-\$99 on sports/recreation equipment*. This could be used to the City's advantage in working to get people more interested in activities that require equipment, such as archery, rock climbing, or golf.
- B. The next highest categories have to do with **playing video games**. One interesting solution to promoting activity within Cullman may be to invest in virtual technology, such as more public gaming stations or even investing in virtual reality setups to keep people active.

Community Engagement Process and Results

The Master Plan has included a robust public engagement process to inventory the current conditions of the system and to help determine the needs and priorities for the future. The planning process incorporated a variety of input from the community. This included a series of key stakeholder interviews and focus group discussions, public forums, event participant intercept surveys, a community advisory group, and a statistically valid survey. Details on specific strategies included the following outreach methods:

- Conducted 12 Community Focus Groups and Stakeholder Interviews
- Two (2) public forums
- Community Online Survey
 - Over 631 responses
 - Open for eight weeks (August – September 2022)

The following sections in this chapter summarize and highlight the key findings from each stage of the community engagement process.



Qualitative Community Input Summary

As part of the Master Plan, a thorough and robust process of collecting qualitative input from the community began at the very start of the project. This included key stakeholder interviews and focus groups conducted from June 2022 through September 2022 to provide a foundation for identifying community issues and key themes, as well as public meetings that had diverse attendance. All of these aspects of community engagement provide valuable insight and assisted in the development of question topics that were beneficial for the statistically valid and community surveys. A series of questions that spurred conversation and follow up questions were asked when appropriate. Invited stakeholders were identified by City staff and included representatives from the following entities:

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Mayor and City Council Members | • Athletic and Sports Organizations |
| • Parks Board | • Wallace Community College |
| • City Staff | • Arts and Culture Groups |
| • Public School Districts (City and County) | • Special Interest Groups |
| • Neighborhood Groups | • Economic Development and Business Leaders |

After speaking with many stakeholders and interest groups, it is apparent the community pride in the park system and what can be accomplished with coordinated efforts and allocated resources.

Vision for the Parks and Recreation System

Community members and leaders expressed a strong vision for parks and recreation in Cullman in this Master Plan as identified in the public engagement process. That vision is summarized below.

Safety and Maintenance

- Maintained as a high-quality parks and recreation system
- Amenity replacement at end of lifecycle
- Preparation for long-term lifecycle costs of capital assets
- Overall cleanliness

Accessibility

- Accessible because capacity meets demand
- Accessible by inclusive design

Innovation and Economic Development

- Best in class facilities
- Creative programming that meets current and emerging needs
- Expanding recreation to include arts, culture and technology
- Drives local tourism and economic impacts

Connectivity

- Parks and trails that connect the community
- Programs and events that bring the community together

Quality of Life Attributes

- Meets diverse recreational needs and interests of community members
- Supports healthy lifestyles
- Enriches neighborhoods and sectors of the city



Residents Value Most

Residents understand that the park system contributes to the overall quality of life, and they value the size and scope of the park system and the investment the City has made in parks. The graphic below depicts responses from members of the public when asked what are the things they value most about parks and recreation in Cullman. In this word cloud, the more frequently something was mentioned the larger the word became.



General Perceptions of the Parks and Recreation System

- Strong programs, well-loved sites and facilities
- Reliable and trusted provider and partner in the community
- High standard of quality in facilities and programs
- Great diversity of facilities and programs
- Desire to stay modern and responsive to emerging trends
- Facilities generally are in good repair and very well maintained
- A few facilities are in need of refreshment or redevelopment to meet needs and demand
- The parks and recreation system is a strong economic driver in the community

Most Important Priorities

- Trails and connectivity within the community
- Arts and culture built into facilities and programs
- Multi-purpose indoor facilities
- Sport and recreational facilities that are versatile and usable throughout the year
- Ensuring inclusivity and accessibility throughout the entire system
- Staying modern, creative and responsive to emerging trends

Most Significant Concerns

- Reliability and availability of sufficient funding to take care of the rapidly evolving system into the future
- Equitable presence of neighborhood parks throughout the community
- Strengthening partnerships with school systems, businesses, and other potential partners
- Addressing gaps in service to ensure accessibility and inclusivity to park and recreation opportunities
- Need to broaden what is considered “recreation” to include STEAM, arts and cultural opportunities

Key Desired Outcomes of the Comprehensive Master Plan

- A clear vision for Cullman Parks, Recreation and Sports Tourism Department
- Maintaining the world-class standard for facilities and programs as a point of distinction for the community of Cullman
- A strategy and resources for taking care of what we already have and what is currently being planned
- A system that is fully inclusive and accessible by all
- A creative and evolving system of parks and recreation facilities and programs
- A resilient approach for funding and resources into the future

Detailed Findings

In June 2022, the Consultant Team facilitated a series of focus groups that included members of the Parks Board, Mayor and City Council, local business leaders, city and county school officials, Wallace State Community College staff, economic development and chamber of commerce leadership, and several individuals representing special interests and system users. This included over 25 individual leaders and stakeholders as a part of community engagement process of this master plan. A detailed summary of feedback received from these focus groups is provided below and on the following pages.

Based on feedback from these stakeholder interviews and focus groups, the following key themes regarding the Cullman Parks, Recreation and Sports Tourism Department Parks and Recreation system emerged.

- A. People highly value the parks and recreation services provided by Cullman Parks, Recreation and Sports Tourism Department,** especially the access to a broad variety of experiences within the system along with partnerships in the community to make it all happen. All agree the quality of parks, sports fields and athletic complexes, special use facilities (archery, RV resort, etc.), the Wellness and Aquatic Center, and the numerous programs, and events are great assets to the residents within and around Cullman. Interviewees commended the importance that the Department puts on maintenance and recognized there will be upcoming challenges to maintain that same standard of maintenance as new and complex facilities age and are heavily used.
- B. The general perception of parks and recreation in Cullman is a world class system of facilities and programs that is uncommon among similar-sized communities.** There is clear agreement among community leaders and key partners that the system of park and recreation facilities and programs developed by the City of Cullman is world class and not common among communities of similar size. The development of inclusive facilities, the Wellness and Aquatic Center, the newly developed Wild Water Waterpark, Palomino RV Resort, and Art Park just name a few. Additionally, the future opportunities that come with the acquisition of Terri Pines Country Club and Golf Course, the upcoming indoor recreation facility near Heritage Park, and renovation of Depot Park as an events destination has set a high bar for communities of only 25,000 approximate residents. There was strong support for the overall quality of developments that are advancing the community of Cullman socially, economically, and in its larger health and wellness needs.
- C. An overarching strength of the Cullman Parks, Recreation and Sports Tourism Department is the ability to provide high quality parks and facilities, and recreation programs and services.** Several organizations and partners highlight the parks and recreation system and all it offers when attracting new residents and new businesses. Sound planning has provided great opportunities that are beneficial to residents and visitors including the growing number of partnerships among schools, non-profit organizations, and user groups. Well maintained parks and facilities allow assets to reach their full life providing many years of enjoyment for residents. The commitment to strong customer services by the City is much appreciated and apparent in the responses from interviewees and City staff were commonly praised for how they engage partners and the public.
- D. Equity, inclusion and accessibility is important to the future of Cullman Parks, Recreation and Sports Tourism Department parks and recreation services.** People interviewed in focus groups commented on the equitable distribution of parks as a strength that makes Cullman Parks, Recreation and Sports Tourism Department such a great place to live, however there is opportunity for exploring new neighborhood parks in neighborhoods that currently do not have them. It will be important in the level of service planning work to verify how the Department can address any equity issues in the community with regards to park access and usability, and how to keep pace with growing need as the community evolves over time. Parks and recreation facilities and programs should also reflect strong values of inclusivity and accessibility in how they are designed and provided to the community so that all residents feel welcome and a sense of value from the parks and recreation system.

- E. The overarching challenge of the Cullman Parks, Recreation and Sports Tourism Department is to ensure sufficient funding and resources to maintain the quality of the system in the future.** Cullman Parks, Recreation and Sports Tourism Department has built and continues to build world-class facilities largely unprecedented for a community of this size. These facilities and subsequent programs not only provide outstanding services to the local residents, but also drive significant tourism to the community that generates sizeable economic impact. Understanding and support between the community and city leaders is required as these facilities age and are heavily used as to the needs of maintaining a high-quality system. Almost all interviewees expressed the importance of maintaining the quality of facilities and programs over time.
- F. The key outcome desired from the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is a unified vision involving residents, leaders, and staff for the system to continue to meet the needs of residents while also providing important economic impact from visitors.** There can be strong opinions about how much the City has invested in facilities that serve both residents and visitors. It is important for the community to understand the true value of these investments as they provide high-quality recreational amenities and opportunities for the residents of Cullman, and also attract visitors from outside the city that inject significant economic impact in the form of public funding (sales taxes and user fees) and local business support. It is critical to community leaders and the stakeholders interviewed that a unified vision of these investments include how facilities will be supported and protected over time, and that the system will continue to evolve to pursue thoughtful opportunities aligned with the objectives of the community.
- G. Specific program, facility, amenity and service needs most frequently identified by interviewees included:**
- Improved connectivity of trails and parks in the community
 - Multi-purpose indoor recreation facilities
 - Performing arts spaces (indoor and/or outdoor)
 - Outdoor turf fields
 - Pickleball courts
 - Improved sport courts
 - Disc golf
 - Shade structures
 - Opportunities for older teens and young adults
 - Opportunities for older adults
 - Adventure tourism elements that tie into regional attractions
 - Universal accessibility
 - Facilities, amenities and programs that are geared towards all age segments and abilities
 - Facilities and programs that are responsive to communities needs and interests
 - Clear strategy for facility management/maintenance and future capital improvements

Electronic Survey

Executive Summary

PROS Consulting conducted an online survey to gain a better understanding of the characteristics, preferences, and satisfaction levels of Cullman Parks, Recreation, and Sports Tourism users. The survey responses were able to give insight into what respondents wanted to see prioritized and funded, as well as their satisfaction with CPRST as a whole.

Demographically, the survey was answered by mostly female respondents; females made up 87% of respondents, while males only made up 13%. The respondents were also overwhelmingly white or Caucasian (98.5% white to be precise). At the same time, the survey asked respondents to answer several questions for their family or household, both regarding demographics but also for facility/amenity usage. One important note, however, is that the demographics questions had a much higher percentage of skipped responses, meaning that the full picture of survey demographics may not be completely accurate.

There were several key takeaways from the survey. For one, several parks/facilities went underused in comparison to others. On top of this, only 45% of respondents said that they had attended a CPRST program in the past 12 months, with some of the key reasoning being that fees are too high or that they do not know what is offered by the CPRST.

Although the usage numbers were relatively low, CPRST had positive reviews from respondents who had participated in programs or visited parks and facilities. There was a high satisfaction with park/facility conditions, along with strong program quality. Overall, most respondents also mentioned that they would either maintain current funding levels or even increase the funding levels for CPRST.

Respondents gave some input about programs and facilities, and many said that the location of program facility is important. In regards to specific amenities, some specific offerings such as outdoor sand volleyball courts, Esports/VR gaming centers, and skate parks were indicated as the least important out to respondents and their households. Respondents indicated a higher need for Adult fitness, wellness, and art programs, while many niche sports or hobbies had less support.

METHODOLOGY

This online survey was powered by SurveyMonkey, and was open for just over eight weeks, from August 1st through September 29th, 2022 and received a total of 631 responses.

This survey allowed residents who may have not participated in other forms of community engagement associated with the project an opportunity to be part of the community input process.

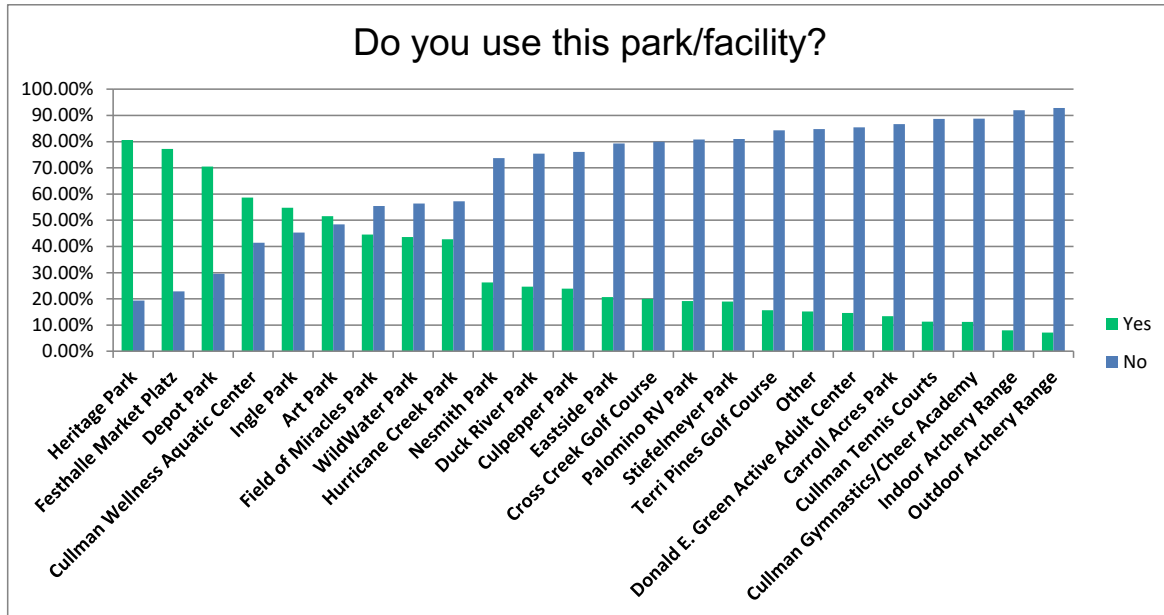
Note: the language used in this document is not always word for word with the survey. Some questions or responses were shortened for the sake of brevity.



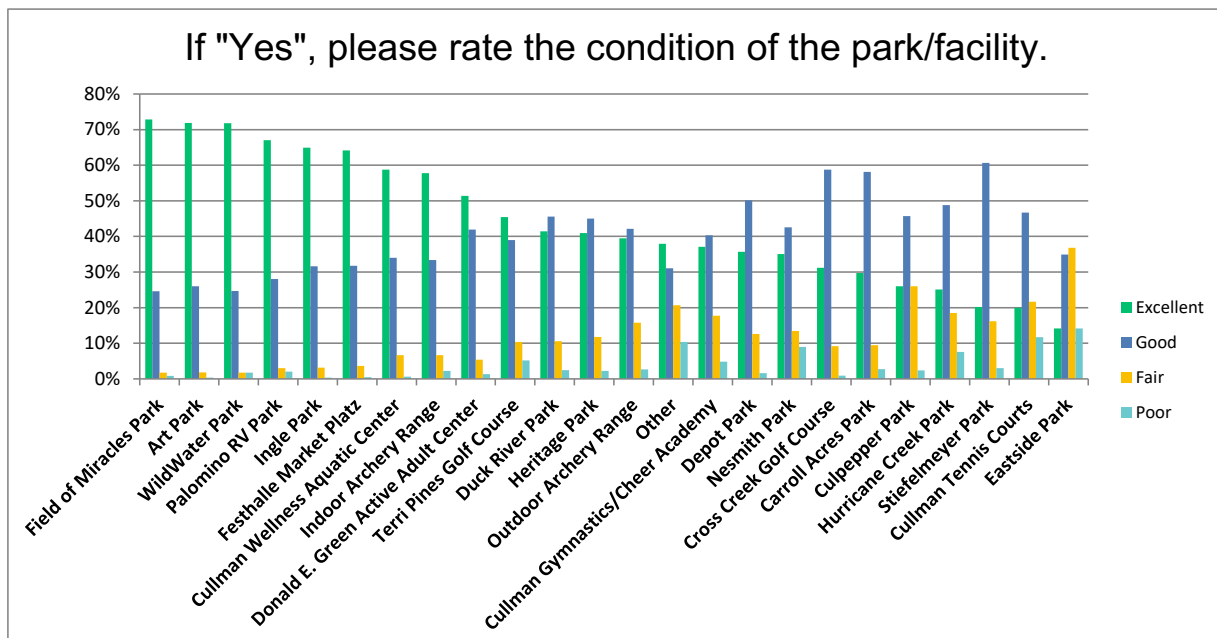
Findings

PARK USAGE

There was varied usage for the different parks and facilities that Cullman offers. Some extremes include a high rate of usage in Heritage Park and Festhalle Market Platz (both at close to 80% usage) along with lower rates of usage at Carroll Acres Park, Cullman Tennis Courts, and both types of Archery Ranges.

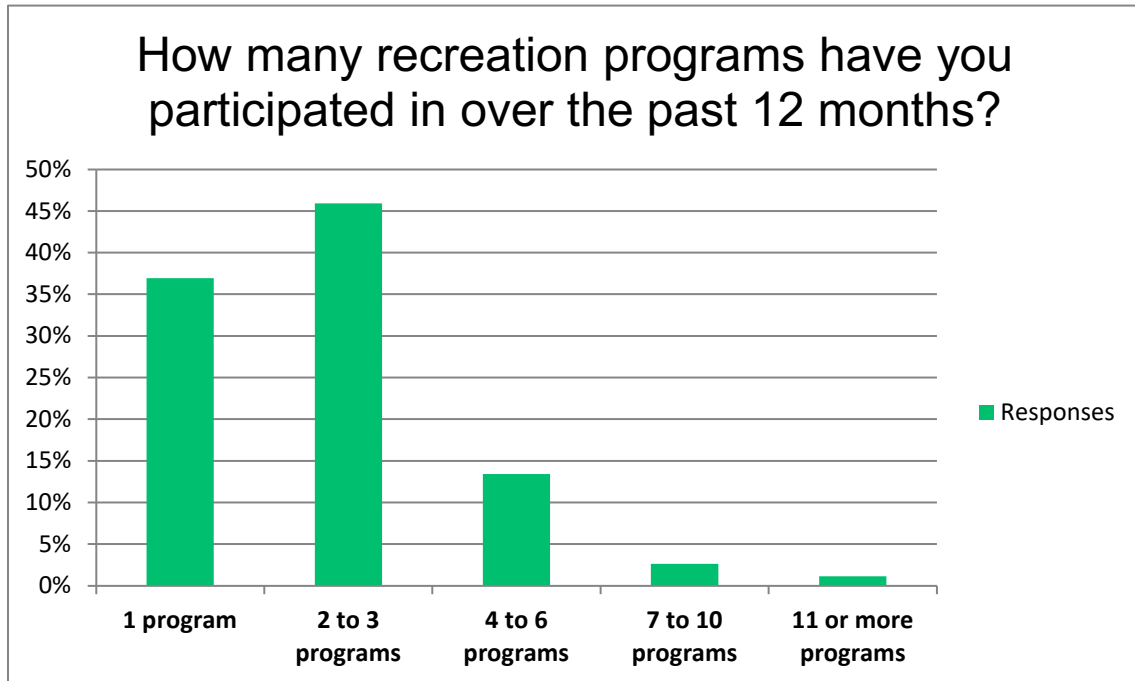


Along with the usage of Cullman offerings, the reported conditions of different offerings fluctuated within the survey as well. Some of the parks/facilities with more favorable conditions according to the survey are Field of Miracles Park, Art Park, and WildWater Park. Some parks/facilities, such as Cullman Tennis Courts and Eastside Park, had lower scores, although the lower scores still indicated mostly “good” or “fair” reviews from respondents.



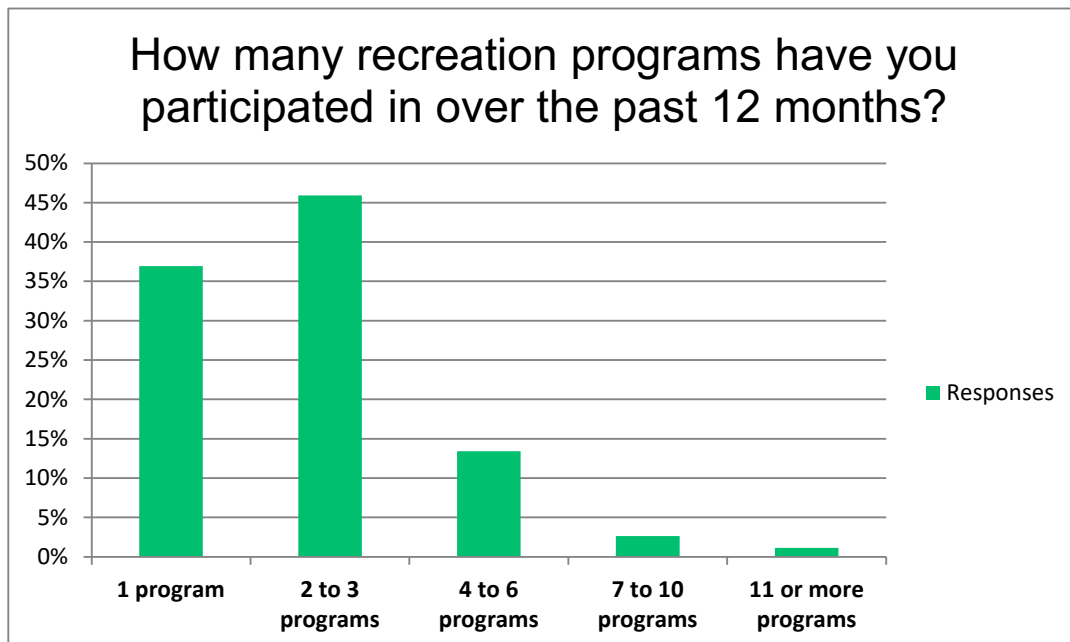
RECREATION PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

When asked if the respondent or any members of their household participated in any recreation programs offered by CPRST in the last 12 months, 45% responded “Yes” while 55% responded “No”.



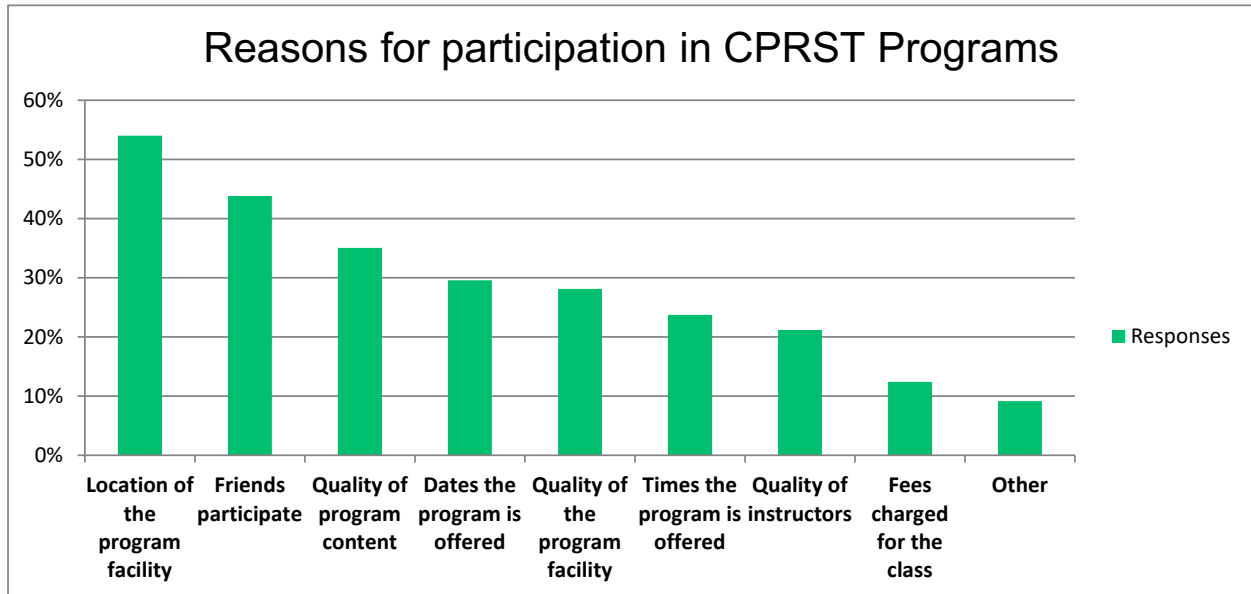
RECREATION PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

There is a varied response for how many CPRST recreation programs were participated in for recreation and sports, with the majority of respondents participating in 1 to 3 programs over the past 12 months.



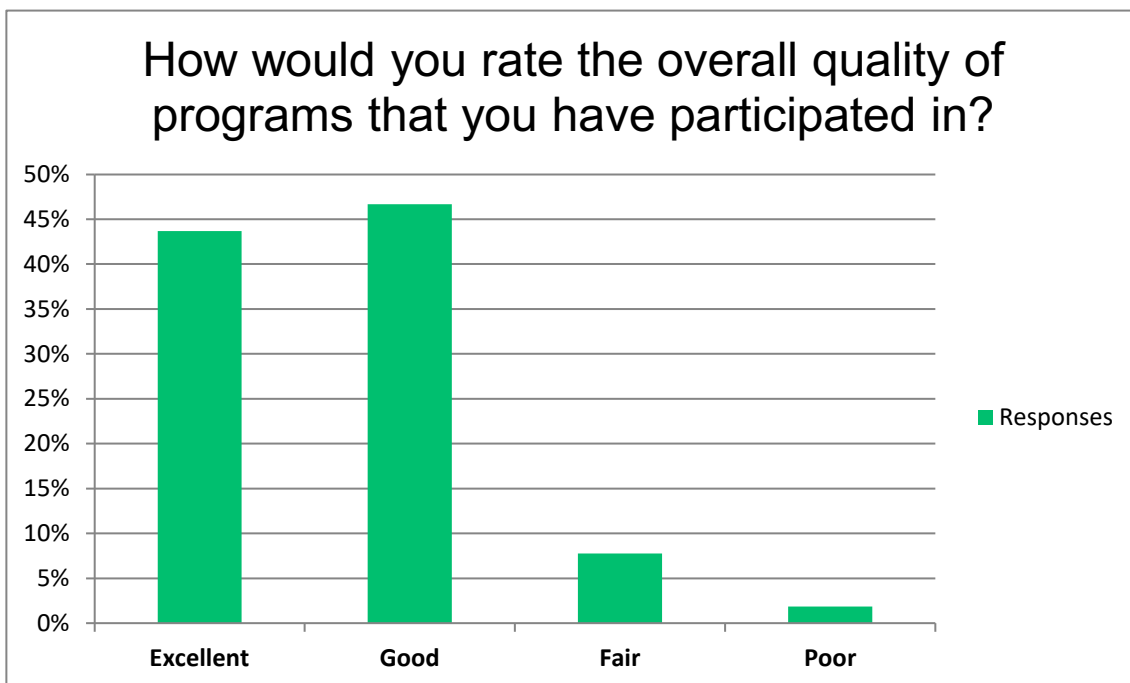
REASONS FOR PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

Respondents gave some insight into their reasoning for participating in recreation programs and events. The majority were influenced by the location of the program facility, having friends participate, and the quality of the program's content.



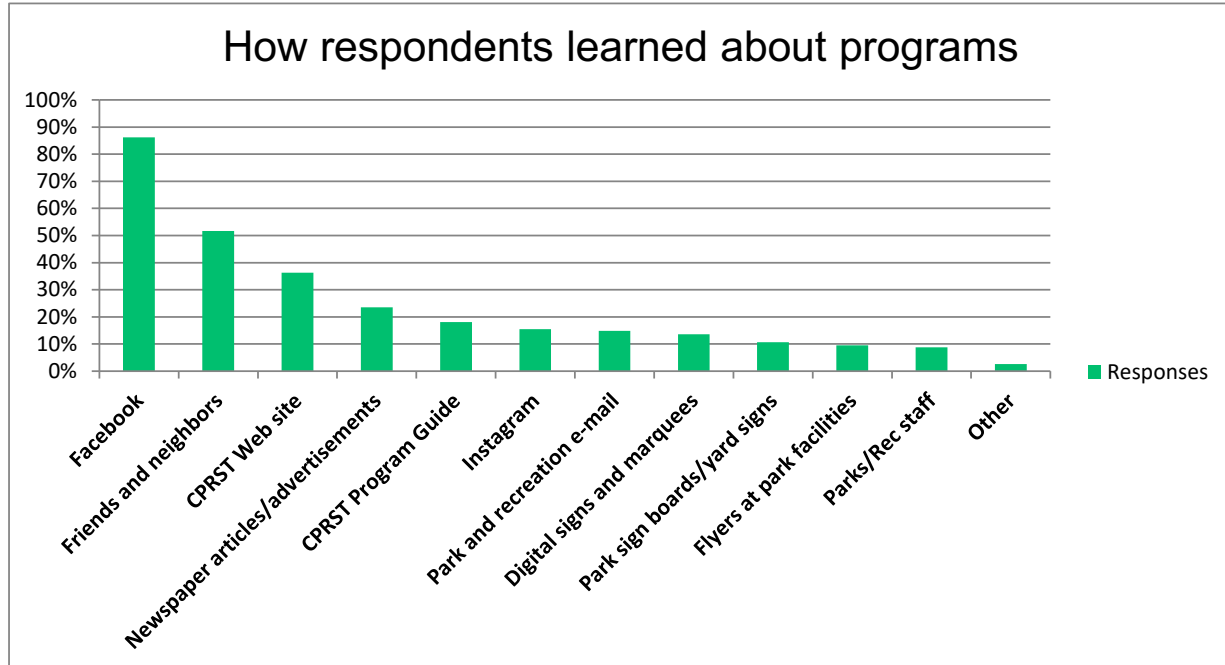
PROGRAM QUALITY

When asked to rate overall program quality, respondents had overwhelmingly positive reviews. While the majority chose "Good" or "Excellent", less than 10% chose "Fair" and less than 5% chose "Poor".



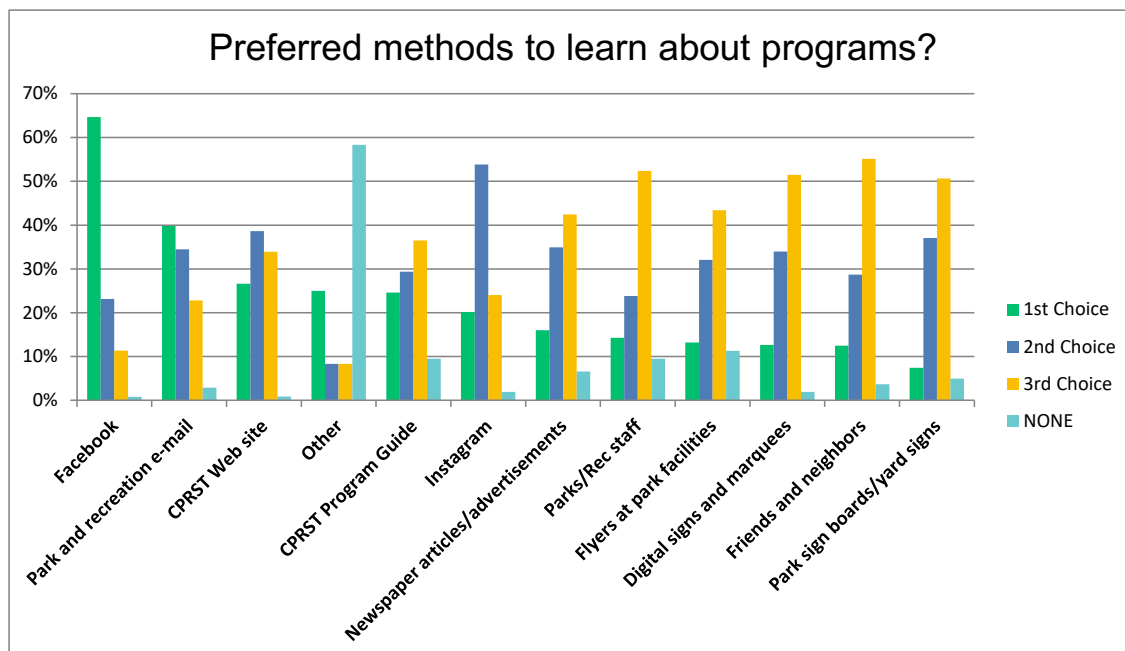
HOW RESPONDENTS LEARNED ABOUT PROGRAMS

There were several reported methods of learning about recreation programs for respondents. Facebook had an overwhelming majority, while more traditional options like “Friends and Neighbors” and “Newspaper articles/advertisements” were also common answers.



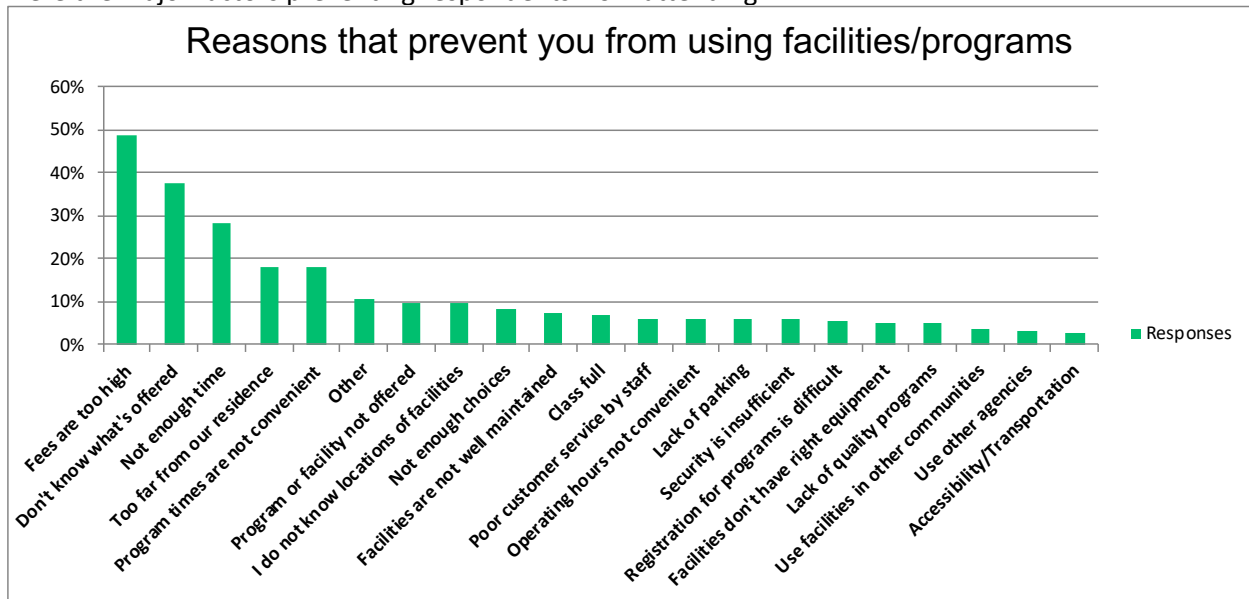
RESPONDENTS' PREFERRED METHODS TO LEARN ABOUT PROGRAMS

When asked their preferred methods of learning about programs, answers stayed fairly consistent. Technology based communication, such as Facebook, email, and the CPRST website, provided a large portion of the preferred methods.



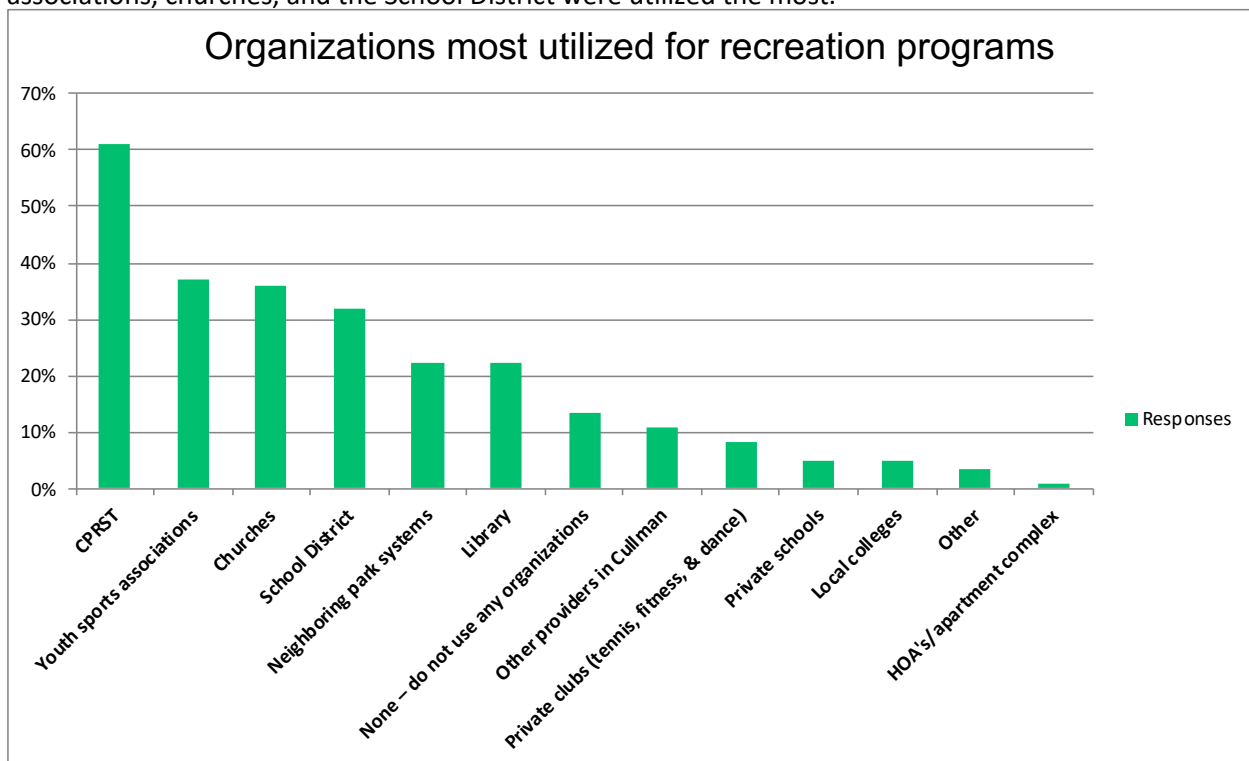
REASONS RESPONDENTS DID NOT USE FACILITIES/PROGRAMS

Three answers had most of the response when respondents were asked **why** they did not use CPRST facilities or programs. Fees being too high, not knowing what is offered, and not having enough time were the major factors preventing respondents from attending.



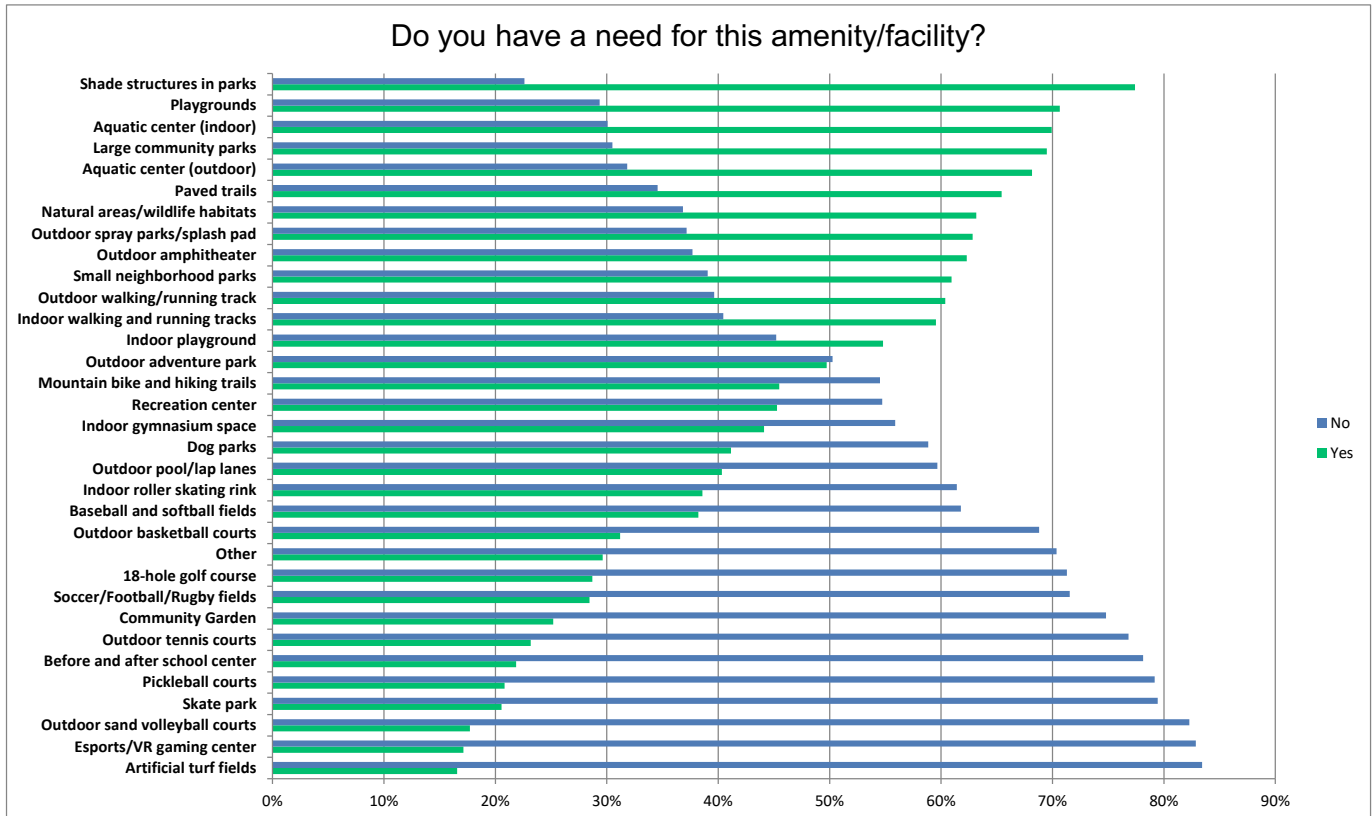
ORGANIZATIONS USED FOR RECREATION PROGRAMS

The most used organization for recreation programs was CPRST itself. Aside from CPRST, Youth sports associations, churches, and the School District were utilized the most.



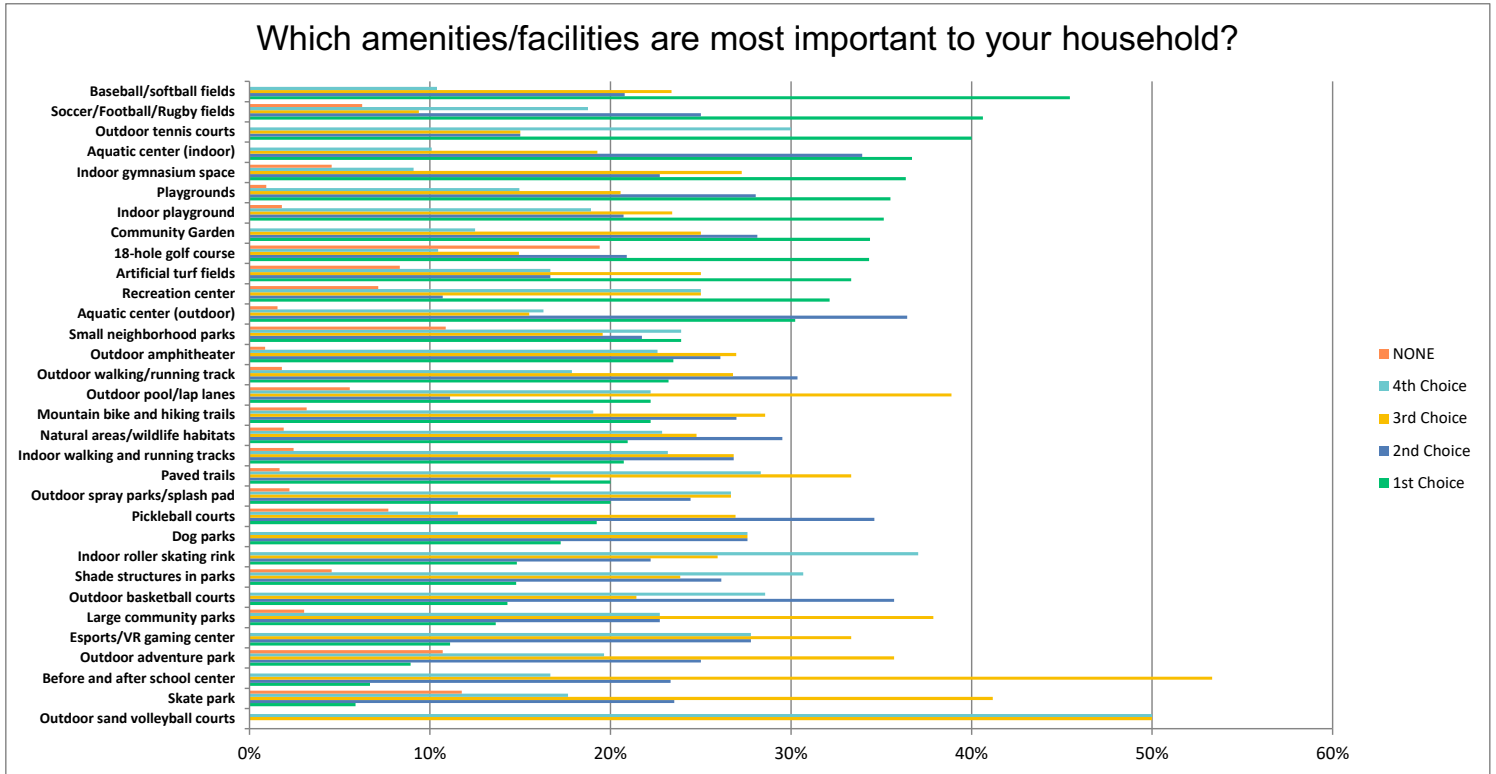
AMENITY/FACILITY NEEDS

The chart below reveals the number of survey respondents who answered “Yes, my household has a need”. which helps to identify specific facilities/amenities with the highest level of community need. Shade structures in parks, Playgrounds, and Indoor Aquatic Center ranked highest in terms of resident needs. At the same time, Artificial Turf Fields, Esports/Virtual Reality Gaming Center, and Outdoor sand volleyball courts were chosen as the amenities with the least need.



AMENITY/FACILITY IMPORTANCE TO RESPONDENTS

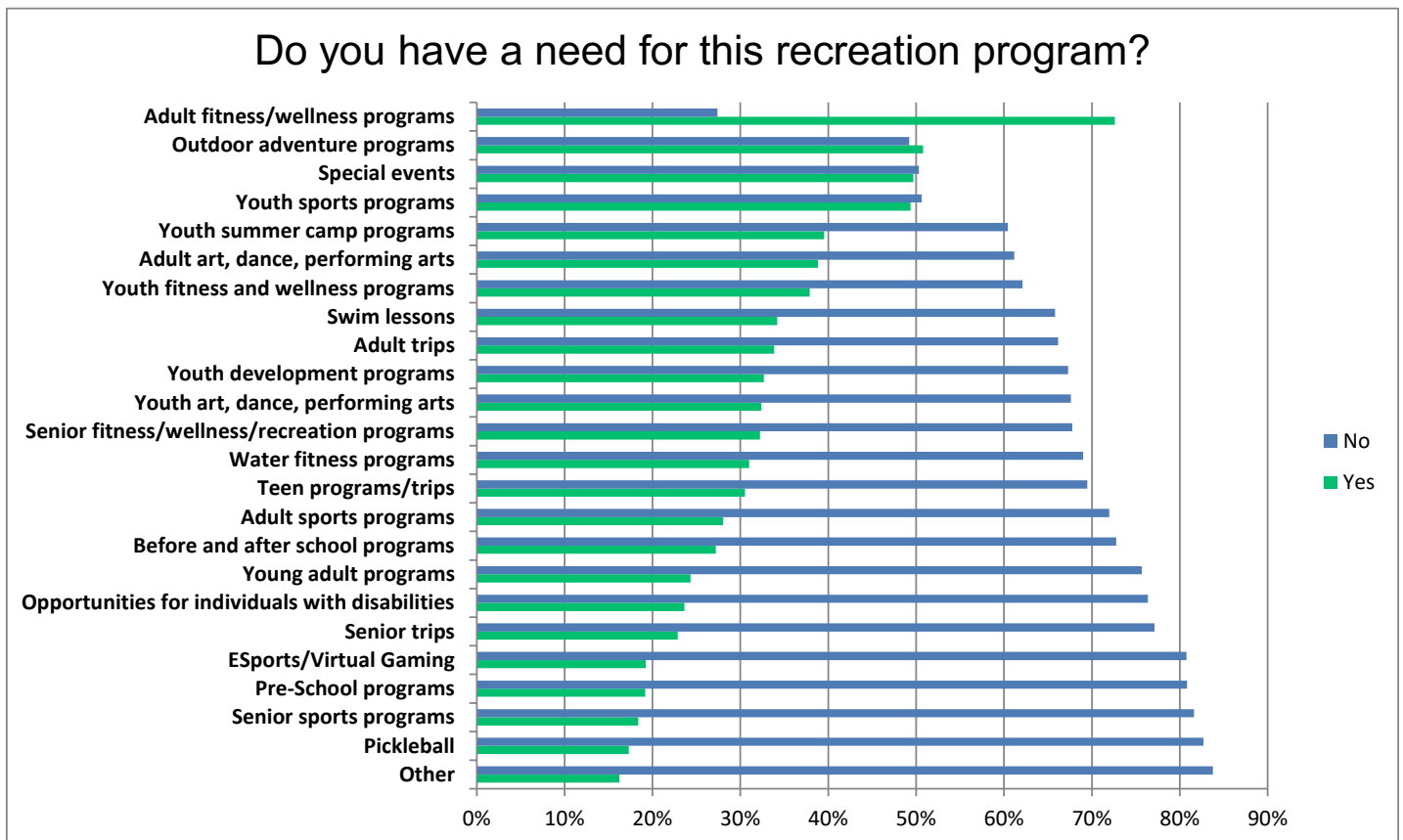
Along with asking about necessity, the survey also asked for specific facilities/amenities that households found important. Some of the more popular ones included Baseball/Softball Fields, Fields for Soccer/Football/Rugby, and Outdoor Tennis courts.



RECREATION PROGRAM NEEDS

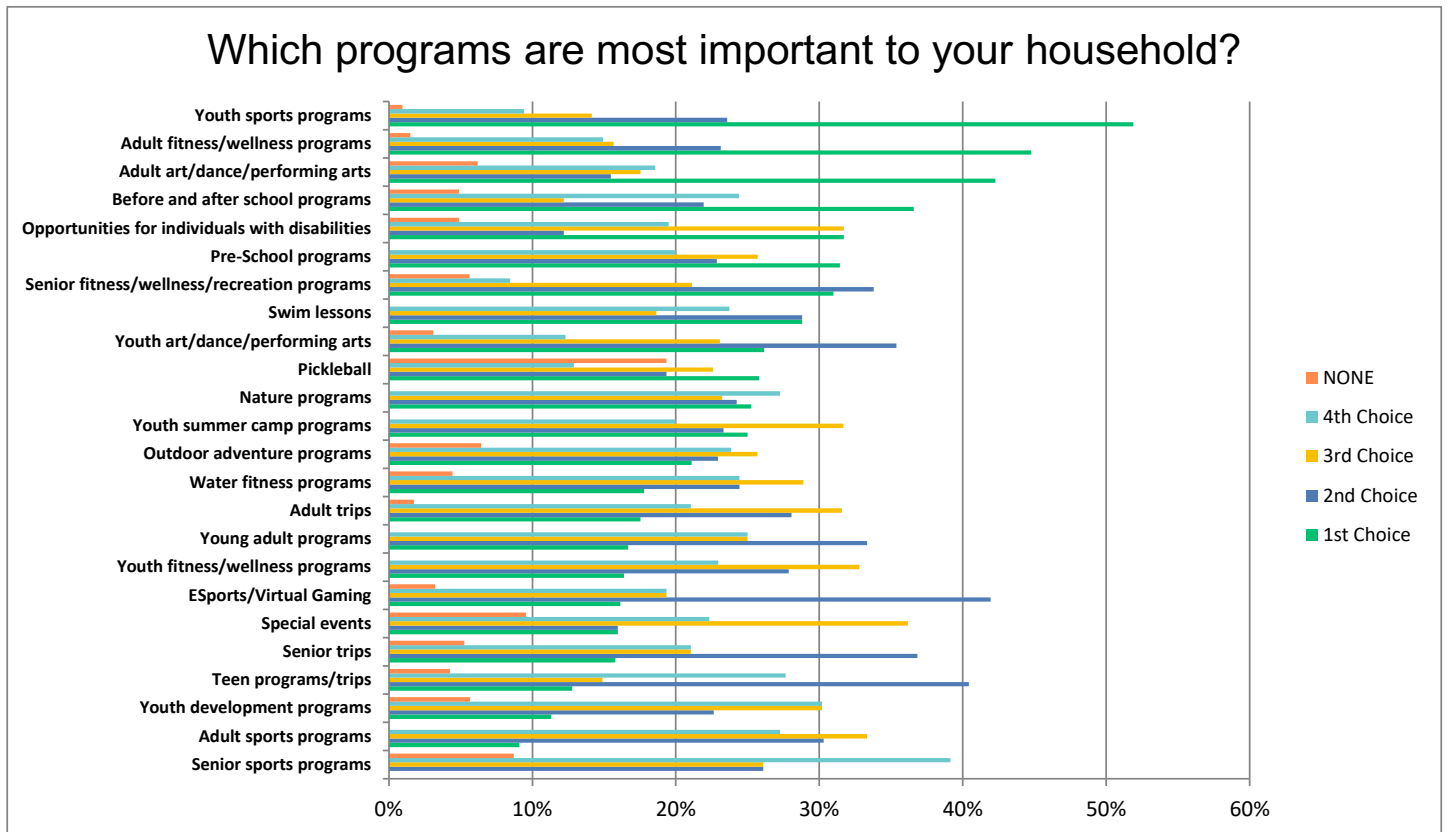
Survey respondents indicated that the most necessary programs to them and their households were Adult fitness/wellness programs, Outdoor Adventure programs, Special events, and Youth Sports programs. The least necessary facilities/amenities indicated were Pickleball, Senior Sports programs, and Pre-School programs.

It is also important to understand that programs that are usually rated the highest tend to serve a much broader audience (e.g., Adult fitness and wellness) while programs that are rated low are much more specific ones (e.g., E-sports gaming or Pickleball) or tailored to a smaller group (e.g., People with special needs). It is, thus, important for CPRST staff to ensure that they balance a broader community importance with being inclusive with programs for smaller groups.



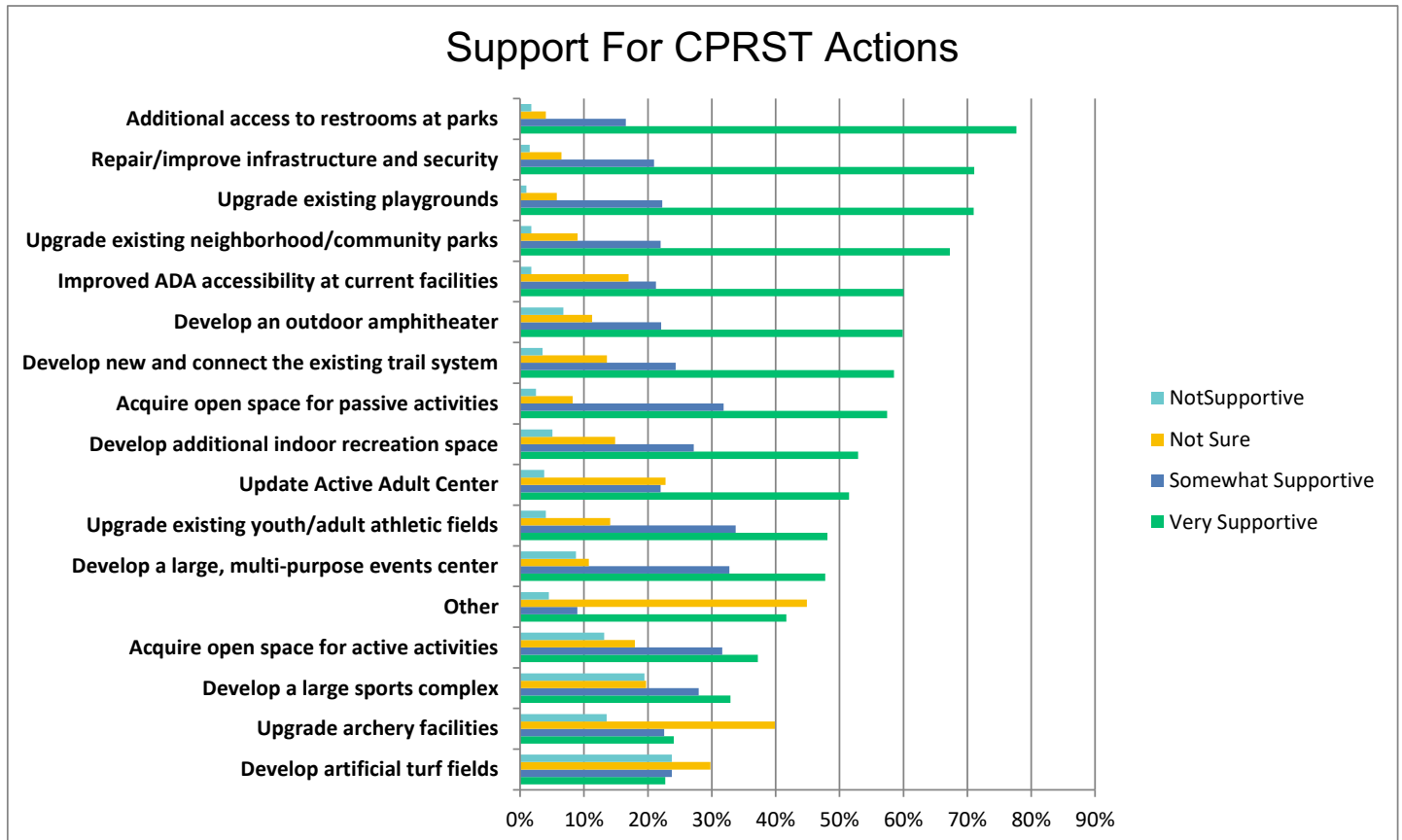
PROGRAM IMPORTANCE TO RESPONDENTS

The chart below shows how respondents felt about specific programs and their importance to their household. In general, Youth Sports Programs and Adult programs (both fitness/wellness based as well as art based) were often claimed as the most important. The least important programs were adult/senior sports programs, as well as Youth development programs.



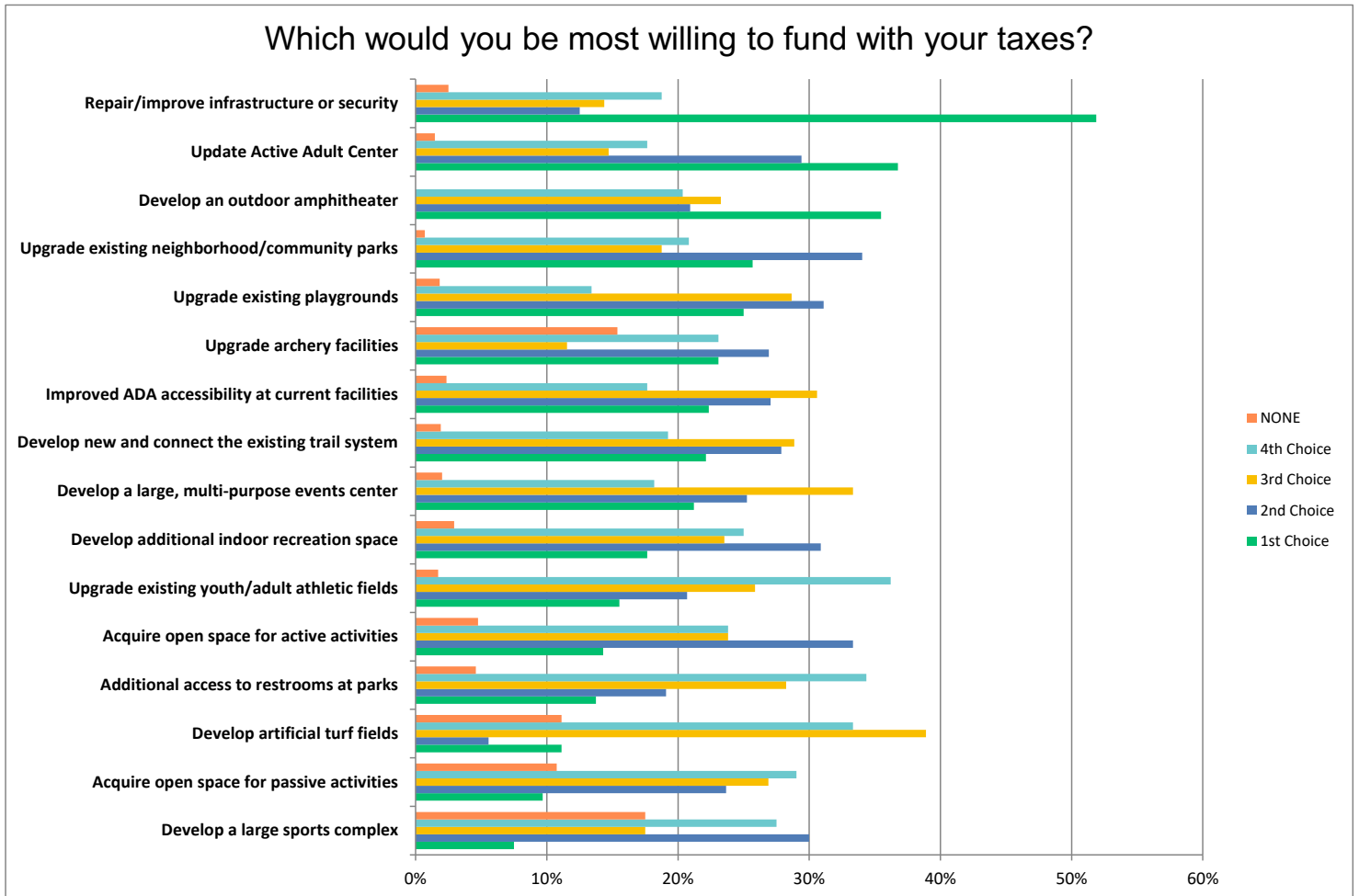
SUPPORT FOR POTENTIAL CPRST ACTIONS

Survey respondents were asked to indicate the level of support they would have for potential actions that CPRST could take to improve their services. The actions that respondents supported the most included Additional access to restrooms at parks, Repairing/Improving infrastructure and security, Upgrading existing playgrounds and neighborhood/community parks, and Improving ADA accessibility at current facilities. The least supported actions included Developing Artificial turf fields and Upgrading archery facilities.



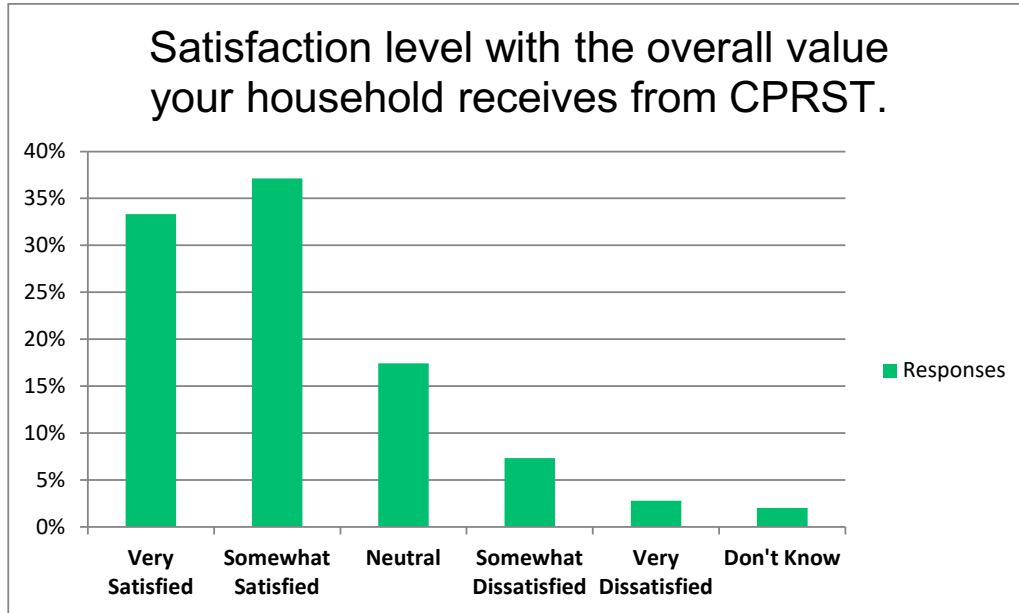
POTENTIAL CPRST SPENDING

Respondents were asked to indicate how much they would be willing to fund potential actions with their taxpayer dollars. They were most willing to fund Repairs/Improvements for Infrastructure or security, an update to an Active Adult Center, or Developing an outdoor amphitheater. Respondents were most hesitant to fund the Development of a large sports complex, artificial turf fields, or acquiring open space for passive activities.



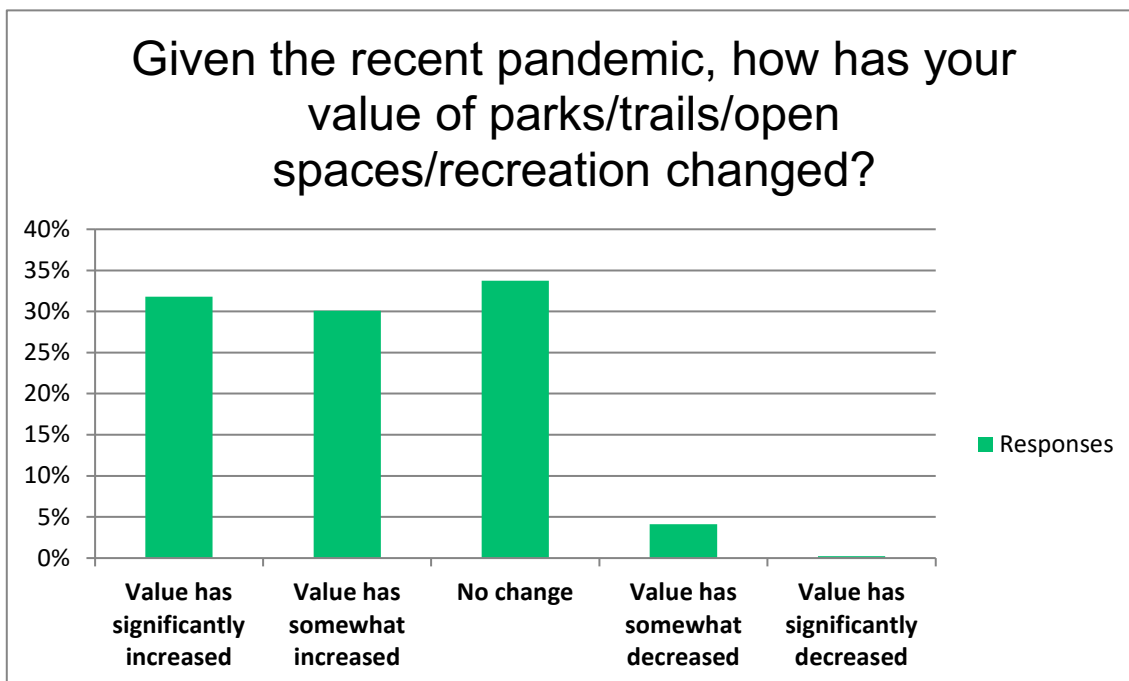
CPRST SATISFACTION

When asked about their level of satisfaction with Cullman Parks, most respondents answered with either somewhat satisfied or very satisfied. Less than 10% responded that they were somewhat dissatisfied, while less than 5% said that they were very dissatisfied.



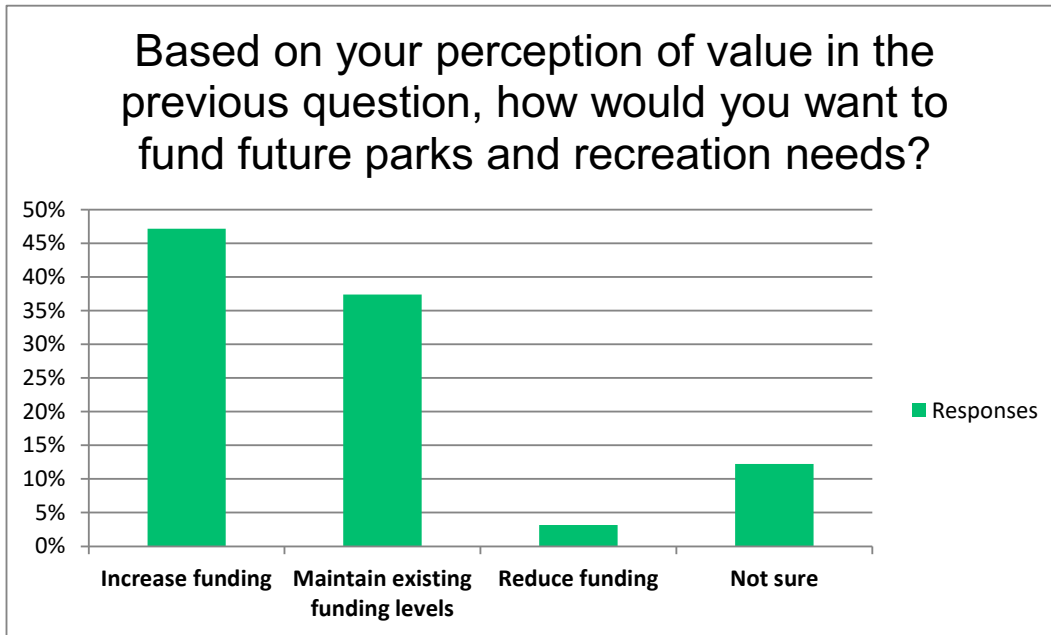
CHANGES IN VALUE FOLLOWING THE COVID-19/CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

In regards to the COVID-19/Coronavirus pandemic, we can see that many households have had major positive changes in the value of parks, trails, open spaces, and recreation near them. In most cases, the value for parks and recreation functions increased either somewhat or significantly following the pandemic.



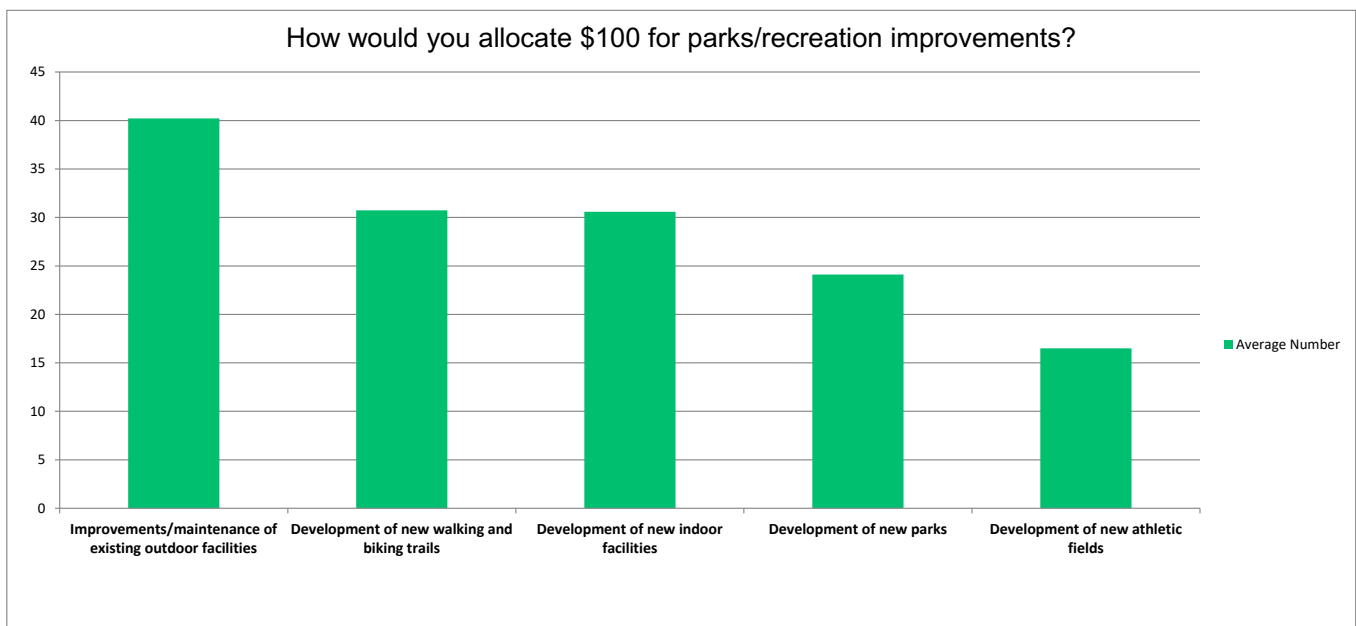
FUTURE CPRST FUNDING FOLLOWING THE PANDEMIC

Most survey respondents indicated that they would either maintain existing funding levels or increase funding levels for the future of CPRST.



POTENTIAL CPRST SPENDING

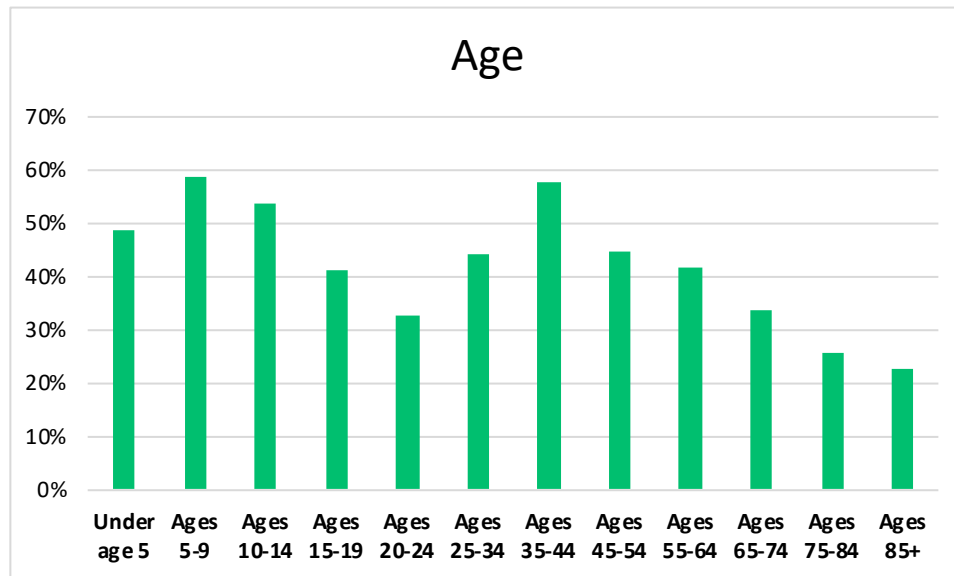
Respondents were given a scenario where they had \$100 of budget to spend on Parks and Recreation improvements. While most respondents answered with Other, many people wanted to see the development of new walking/biking trails as well as new indoor recreation facilities.



Demographics

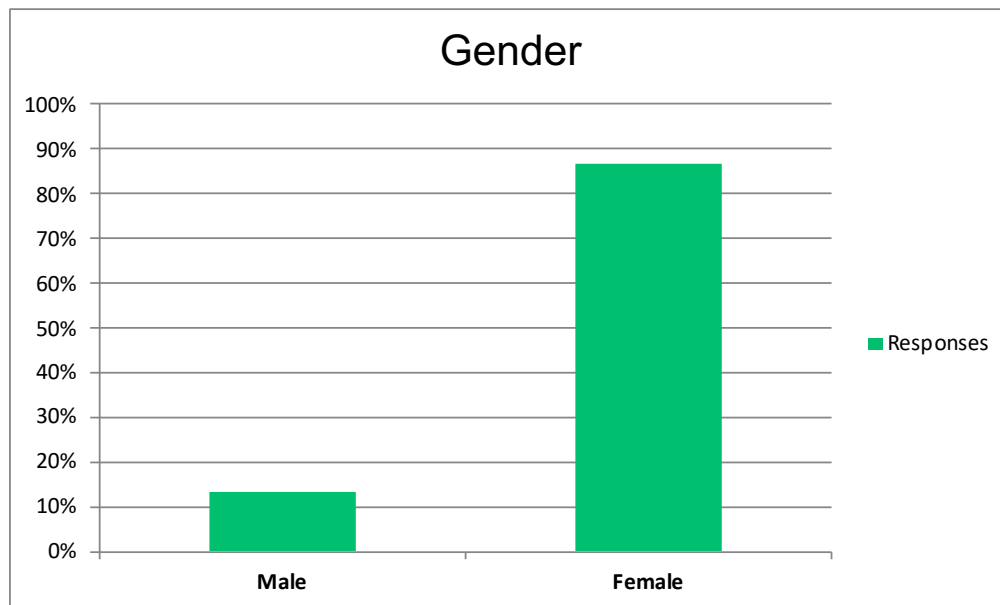
AGE DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS

The chart below shows the makeup of survey respondents' households by age. Most respondents had at least one household member in their youth, while household members above the age of 85 were much less common.



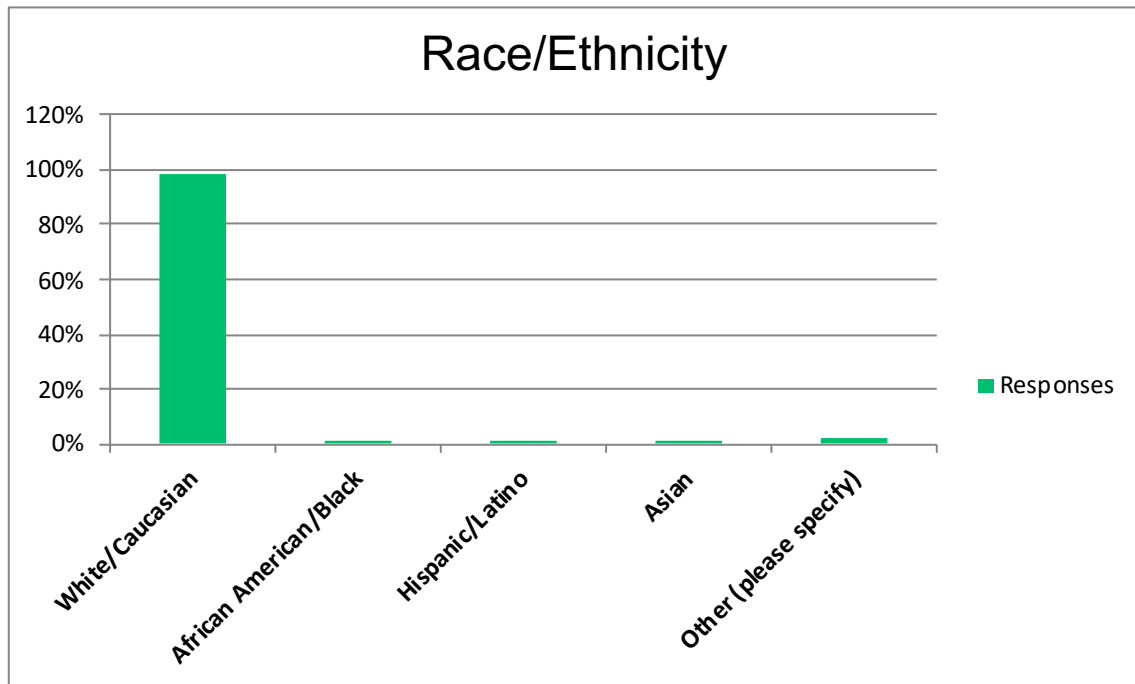
GENDER DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS

The chart below reveals the makeup of survey respondent households by gender, where a majority of participants were female with 87%. This makes the respondents overwhelmingly female, which could lead to potential skewing of data based on gender. However, something to note is that 228 (36%) of total respondents skipped this question, meaning the data may be different than it first appears.



RACE/ETHNICITY DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS

Regarding race and ethnicity, the majority of respondents were White/Caucasian. The Other category had the second most respondents with 2.24%.



Parks and Facilities Assessment and Analysis

Park Classifications

Overview

As part of the Master Plan development, the consultant team conducted an assessment and analysis of the Cullman parks and facilities. Included in the Appendix, the information includes technical details and descriptions related to park classification categories. Park classifications include neighborhood park, community park, special use parks, and natural areas. Selected information is included below related to the kinds of parks in Cullman.

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

A neighborhood park is typically 3-10 acres in size; however, some neighborhood parks are determined by use and facilities offered and not by size alone. The service radius for a neighborhood park is one half mile or six blocks. Neighborhood parks should have safe pedestrian access for surrounding residents; parking may or may not be included but if included accounts for less than ten cars and provides for ADA access. Neighborhood parks serve the recreational and social focus of the adjoining neighborhoods and contribute to a distinct neighborhood identity. Currently, the Neighborhood Parks in the City of Cullman include Carroll Acres Park, Culpepper Park, East Side Park, and Stiefelmeyer Park.

COMMUNITY PARKS

Community parks provide diverse recreation opportunities to serve the residents of Cullman. These include active and passive recreation, as well as self-directed and organized recreation opportunities for individuals, families, and small groups. Community Parks often include facilities that promote outdoor recreation and activities such as walking and biking, picnicking, playing sports, playing on playgrounds, and fishing. These sites also include natural areas, emphasizing public access to important natural features. Since community parks may attract people from a wide geographic area, support facilities are required, such as parking and restrooms. Self-directed recreation activities such as meditation, quiet reflection, and wildlife watching also take place at community parks.

Community parks generally range from 10 to 100 acres depending on the surrounding community. Community parks serve a larger area – radius of one to three miles – and contain more recreation amenities than a neighborhood park. Currently, the City of Cullman has six Community Parks that include Art Park, Ingle Park, Nesmith Park, Skate Depot Park, and Tennis Park.

REGIONAL PARKS

Regional parks provide access to unique recreation features, natural areas, and facilities that attract visitors from the entire community and beyond. Regional parks often accommodate small and large group activities and have infrastructure to support group picnics. As community attractions, Regional Parks can enhance the economic vitality and identity of the entire region. These parks may include significant natural areas and wetlands, trails and pathways, gardens and arboretums, ponds, and other water features. They add unique facilities, such as destination or thematic playgrounds, community centers, aquatic centers, amphitheaters, viewing knolls, skateparks, and other interesting elements.

Regional parks can and should promote tourism and economic development. Regional parks can enhance the economic vitality and identity of the entire region. Regional parks are typically 100 or more acres in size. Currently, Cullman has three (3) parks that fall under the regional park designation – Heritage Park, Field of Miracles and WildWater Water Park.

SPECIAL USE PARK

Special use parks are those spaces that do not fall within a typical park classification. A major difference between a special use park and other parks is that they usually serve a single purpose whereas other park classifications are designed to offer multiple recreation opportunities. It is possible for a special use facility to be located inside another park.

The City of Cullman actually has several special use facilities within its current inventory including Cross Creek Golf Course, Depot Park, Festhalle Farmers Market, Outdoor Archery Center, Palomino RV Resort, and Terri Pines Golf Course.

NATURAL AREAS

Natural areas/open space are undeveloped but may include natural or paved trails. Open grasslands under power line corridors are one example and creek areas are another. Natural areas/open space contain natural resources that can be managed for recreation and natural resource conservation values such as a desire to protect wildlife habitat, water quality, and endangered species. Natural areas/open space also can provide opportunities for nature-based, self-directed, low-impact recreational opportunities such as walking and nature viewing, and sometimes even can be managed for more intense recreation such as camping, rock climbing, and more rigorous hiking. These lands consist of:

- Individual sites exhibiting natural resources.
- Lands that are unsuitable for development but offer natural resource potential.
- Parcels with steep slopes and natural vegetation, drainage ways and ravines, surface water management areas (man-made ponding areas), and utility easements.
- Protected lands, such as wetlands/lowlands, riparian areas, and shorelines along waterways, lakes, and ponds.

The intent of natural areas/open space is to enhance the livability and character of a community by preserving as many of its natural amenities as possible. Integration of the human element with that of the natural environment that surrounds them enhances the overall experience. The two major natural areas in Cullman are Hurricane Creek and Duck River Natural Areas.

Inventory by Classification

The tables that follow inventory the Cullman Park System by the aforementioned classifications.

Neighborhood Parks
Carroll Acres Park
Culpepper Park
East Side Park
Stiefelmeyer Park

Community Parks
Art Park
Ingle Park
Nesmith Park
Skate Depot Park
Tennis Park

Regional Parks
Heritage Park
Field of Miracles
WildWater

Special Use Parks	
Cross Creek Golf Course	Outdoor Archery Center
Depot Park	Palomino RV Resort
Festhalle Farmers Market	Terri Pines Golf Course

Natural Areas	
Hurricane Creek Natural Area	Duck River Natural Area

Park and Facility Assessments

As part of the life-cycle asset plan, a park assessment of the entire Cullman park system was completed. The full Assessment is located in **Appendix B**. Below is a detailed methodology and general findings.

In order to understand the current park, open space, and facility resources owned or managed by the City of Cullman, an inventory and assessment of all of these resources and assets in the Fall of 2023. This assessment was conducted in partnership with City staff who are most familiar with all of the sites and their amenities. The purpose of this assessment was to inventory the park system's existing amenities, evaluate the condition and identify opportunities for improvement. The assessment was utilized, along with other technical research reports, to assist with 'Level of Service' analysis and the final Park and Recreation Master Plan including recommendations and action strategies.

Assessment Methodology

Each facility or amenity visited was inventoried and assessed for quality. The following sections, categorizations, and ratings were used to assess each asset:

- **Site Location & General Site Description:** This section includes a physical address, the size of the asset, classification of the amenity (ex, Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Special Use Park, etc.), and any special maintenance requirements associated with the park or facility.
- **Inventory of Amenities & Condition:** This section includes a comprehensive list of amenities available at the site, as well as a notation regarding ADA accessibility. The condition of each

amenity is rated using a 3-point scale: Excellent Condition (+); Good Condition (0); Needs Attention (-).

- **Strengths & Opportunities:** In this section, the Consultant lists the relative strengths and improvement considerations associated with the resource. This can be used to inform maintenance priorities and the Capital Improvement Plan.
- **Photo Inventory:** This section shows photos of the site at the time it was assessed, to complement the written descriptions of the site's current status.

Summary of Assessments

As noted previously, the detailed site and facility assessment results are feature in **Appendix B** of this plan. The table below provides a summary of overall condition ratings for each park from these findings.

Assessment Ratings

Excellent Assessment

Park and amenities are in excellent condition with little or no maintenance problems noted. Park and amenities do not feature any major design issues that contribute to diminished use or maintenance.

Good Assessment

Park and amenities are in good condition and feature only minor maintenance problems. Generally, most maintenance issues with the park and/or amenity appear to be the result of age and/or heavy use. Park and amenities may feature minor design issues that contribute to diminished use or maintenance (i.e., drainage, structural, utilities, etc.).

Fair Assessment

Park and amenities are in fair condition and indicate on-going maintenance problems. Generally, most maintenance issues appear to be the result of age or heavy use. Some maintenance issues may be compounded over time due to deferred maintenance because of issues such as budget or resource limitations.

Poor Assessment

Park and amenities are in poor condition and clearly show ongoing maintenance problems that may result in suspended use for repair or replacement. Maintenance issues with these park amenities are the result of poor design, age, and/or heavy use and are generally compounded over time due to deferred maintenance as a result of budget and/or resource limitations.

Park	Condition Rating
Art Park	Excellent
Carroll Acres Park	Fair
Cross Creek Golf Course	Good
Culpepper Park	Fair
Depot Park	Good
Duck River Bike Trails	Excellent
East Side Park	Fair
Festhalle Market Platz	Excellent
Field of Miracles Park	Good
Heritage Park	Good
Hurricane Creek Park	Fair
Ingle Park	Excellent
Nesmith Park	Good
Outdoor Archery Center	Excellent
Palomino RV Resort	Excellent
Skate Depot Park	Excellent
Stiefelmeyer Park	Good
Tennis Park	Good
Terri Pines Golf Course	Good
WildWater Water Park	Excellent

Level of Service Standards

Overview

Level of Service (LOS) standards are guidelines that define service areas based on population that support investment decisions related to parks, facilities, and amenities. LOS standards are updated over time as industry trends and community demographics change.

The consulting team evaluated park facility standards using a combination of resources. These resources included market trends, demographic data, community and stakeholder input, the statistically-valid community survey, and general observations. The existing level of service detailed on the following page is based on current inventory and on analysis of the park system and other service providers in the City (e.g., School Districts, Cullman County, private providers, etc.). This information allowed standards to be customized to Cullman.

It is important to note that these LOS standards should be viewed as a guide. The standards are to be coupled with conventional wisdom and judgment related to the particular situation and needs of the community. By applying these standards to the population of Cullman, gaps or surpluses in park and facility types are revealed.

Per Capita “Gaps”

According to the LOS, the largest area of need to properly serve the Cullman community today are paved and natural surface trails. Paved trails would largely be added to improve connectivity around the community and between parks. Natural surface trails can be explored in existing parks or in new parks / green spaces that have sufficient land area and offer access to nature experiences. There are limited needs in recreational amenities/facilities, with the most notable being tennis/pickleball courts, dog parks, and splashpads. Additionally, indoor recreation spaces is needed.

The existing level of service meets and exceeds best practices and recommended service levels for many items; however, as the community is projected to grow over the next 10 years there are several areas that will not meet recommended standards. This is particularly the case in added parklands, trails, and indoor recreation space.

The standards that follow are based upon population figures for 2022, 2030, and 2037, the latest estimates available at the time of analysis.

Cullman Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Cullman Parks Level of Service Standards

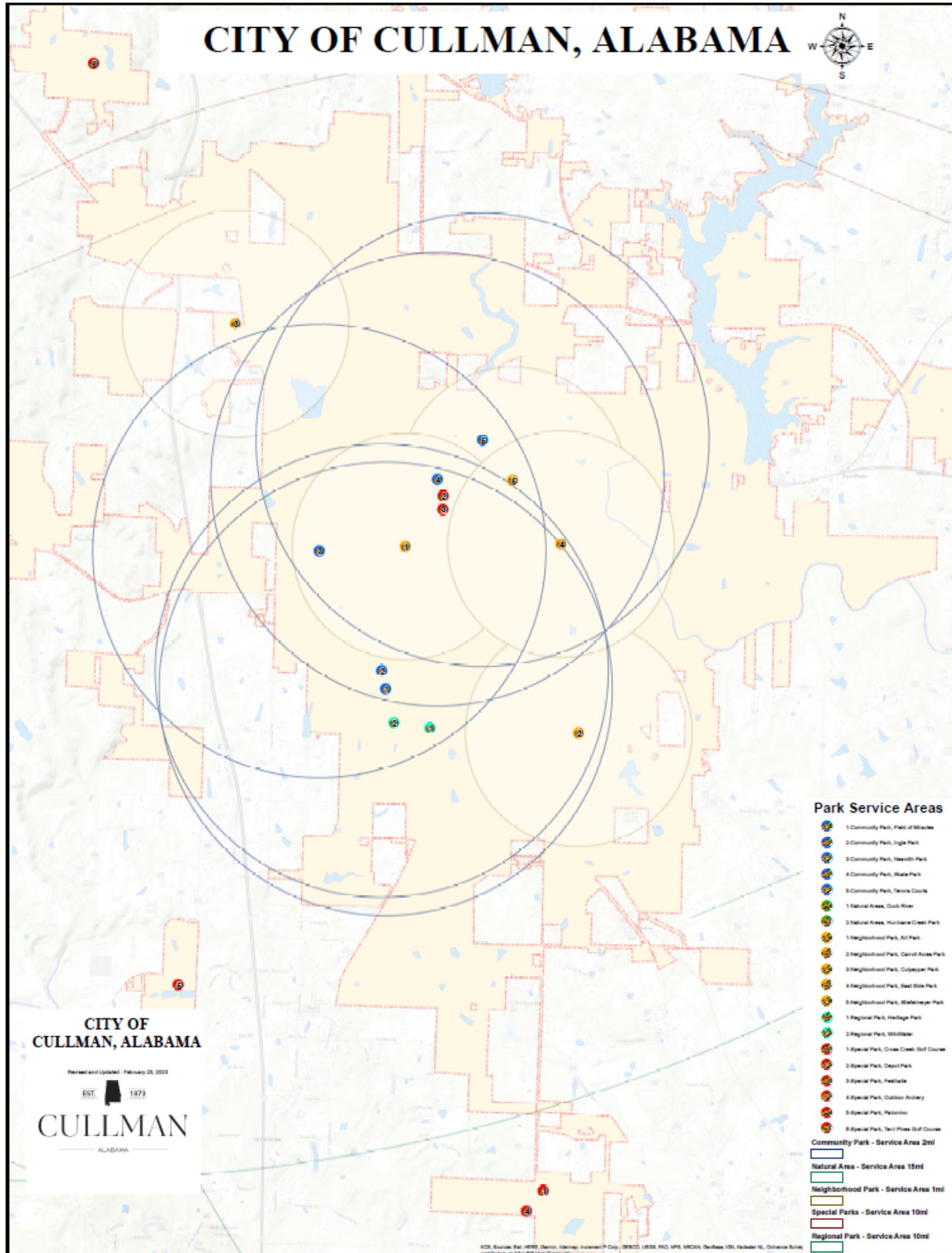
2022 Inventory - Developed Facilities								Current Facility Standards			10 Year Projected Facility Standards			15-year Projected Facility Standards		
Amenities	Cullman Inventory	Current Service Level based upon population			Recommended Service Levels; Revised for Local Service Area			Meet Standard/ Need Exists	Additional Facilities/ Amenities Needed		Meet Standard/ Need Exists	Additional Facilities/ Amenities Needed		Meet Standard/ Need Exists	Additional Facilities/ Amenities Needed	
PARK TYPE:																
Mini/Pocket Parks	-	-	acres per	1,000	0.00	acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	-	Acres(s)	Meets Standard	-	Acres(s)	Meets Standard	-	Acres(s)
Neighborhood Parks	9.50	0.51	acres per	1,000	1.00	acres per	1,000	Need Exists	9.11	Acres(s)	Need Exists	10.59	Acres(s)	Need Exists	11.46	Acres(s)
Community Parks	43.67	2.35	acres per	1,000	2.30	acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	-	Acres(s)	Need Exists	2.54	Acres(s)	Need Exists	4.54	Acres(s)
Special Use Parks	382.40	20.55	acres per	1,000	15.00	acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	-	Acres(s)	Meets Standard	-	Acres(s)	Meets Standard	-	Acres(s)
Regional Parks	77.00	4.14	0.00	1,000	4.10	acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	-	-	Meets Standard	-	-	Meets Standard	-	-
Natural Areas	1,149.00	61.73	0.00	1,000	61.00	acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	-	-	Meets Standard	-	-	Meets Standard	-	-
School Parks	-	-	acres per	1,000	0.00	acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	-	Acres(s)	Meets Standard	-	Acres(s)	Meets Standard	-	Acres(s)
Total Developed Park Acres	1,661.57	89.27	acres per	1,000	83.40	acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	-	Acres(s)	Need Exists	13.13	Acres(s)	Need Exists	16.00	Acres(s)
Undeveloped (Open Spaces)	-	-	acres per	1,000	-	acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	-	Acres(s)	Meets Standard	-	Acres(s)	Meets Standard	-	Acres(s)
Total Park Acres	1,661.57	89.27	acres per	1,000	83.40	acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	-	Acres(s)	Need Exists	13.13	Acres(s)	Need Exists	16.00	Acres(s)
TRAILS:																
Paved Park Trails	2.00	0.11	miles per	1,000	0.35	miles per	1,000	Need Exists	4.51	Mile(s)	Need Exists	5.03	Mile(s)	Need Exists	5.34	Mile(s)
Natural Park Trails	22.70	1.22	miles per	1,000	1.00	miles per	1,000	Meets Standard	-	Mile(s)	Meets Standard	-	Mile(s)	Meets Standard	-	Mile(s)
Total Park Trail Miles	24.70	1.33	miles per	1,000	1.35	miles per	1,000	Need Exists	4.51	Mile(s)	Need Exists	5.03	Mile(s)	Need Exists	5.34	Mile(s)
On Street Bicycle Trail Miles	-	0.00	miles per	1,000	0.00	miles per	1,000	Meets Standard	-	Mile(s)	Meets Standard	-	Mile(s)	Meets Standard	-	Mile(s)
OUTDOOR AMENITIES:																
Small Shelters	8.00	1.00	site per	2,327	1.00	site per	5,000	Meets Standard	-	Sites(s)	Meets Standard	-	Sites(s)	Meets Standard	-	Sites(s)
Large Shelters	11.00	1.00	site per	1,692	1.00	site per	5,000	Meets Standard	-	Sites(s)	Meets Standard	-	Sites(s)	Meets Standard	-	Sites(s)
Youth Baseball Fields	16.00	1.00	field per	1,163	1.00	field per	5,000	Meets Standard	-	Field(s)	Meets Standard	-	Field(s)	Meets Standard	-	Field(s)
Adult Baseball Fields	5.00	1.00	field per	n/a	1.00	field per	20,000	Meets Standard	-	Field(s)	Meets Standard	-	Field(s)	Meets Standard	-	Field(s)
Softball Fields	14.00	1.00	field per	1,329	1.00	field per	5,000	Meets Standard	-	Field(s)	Meets Standard	-	Field(s)	Meets Standard	-	Field(s)
Rectangular Multi-Purpose Fields	3.00	1.00	field per	6,204	1.00	field per	4,000	Need Exists	2	Field(s)	Need Exists	2	Field(s)	Need Exists	2	Field(s)
Basketball Courts	4.00	1.00	court per	4,653	1.00	court per	2,500	Need Exists	3	Court(s)	Need Exists	4	Court(s)	Need Exists	4	Court(s)
Tennis / Pickleball Courts	10.00	1.00	court per	n/a	1.00	court per	2,500	Meets Standard	-	Court(s)	Meets Standard	-	Court(s)	Meets Standard	-	Court(s)
Playgrounds	16.00	1.00	site per	1,163	1.00	site per	2,500	Meets Standard	-	Site(s)	Meets Standard	-	Site(s)	Meets Standard	-	Site(s)
Sand Volleyball Courts	1.00	1.00	court per	18,612	1.00	court per	5,000	Need Exists	3	Court(s)	Need Exists	3	Court(s)	Need Exists	3	Court(s)
Dog Parks	1.00	1.00	site per	18,612	1.00	site per	30,000	Meets Standard	-	Site(s)	Meets Standard	-	Site(s)	Meets Standard	-	Site(s)
Skateparks	1.00	1.00	site per	18,612	1.00	site per	40,000	Meets Standard	-	Site(s)	Meets Standard	-	Site(s)	Meets Standard	-	Site(s)
Splashpads	1.00	1.00	site per	18,612	1.00	site per	10,000	Need Exists	1	Site(s)	Need Exists	1	Site(s)	Need Exists	1	Site(s)
Outdoor Pools	6.00	1.00	site per	3,102	1.00	site per	40,000	Meets Standard	-	Site(s)	Meets Standard	-	Site(s)	Meets Standard	-	Site(s)
INDOOR AMENITIES:																
Indoor Recreation Space (Square Feet)	109,000.00	5.86	SF per person	0.50	SF per person	0.25	SF per person	Meets Standard	-	Square Feet	Meets Standard	-	Square Feet	Meets Standard	-	Square Feet
Indoor Special Use Space (Square Feet)	77,100.00	4.14	SF per person	0.25	SF per person	0.25	SF per person	Meets Standard	-	Square Feet	Meets Standard	-	Square Feet	Meets Standard	-	Square Feet
Indoor Aquatic Space (Square Feet)	10,500.00	0.56	SF per person	0.25	SF per person	0.25	SF per person	Meets Standard	-	Square Feet	Meets Standard	-	Square Feet	Meets Standard	-	Square Feet
Current Estimated Population	18,612															
10-Year Projected Population	20,091															
15-Year Project Population	20,960															

GIS Mapping

Service area maps and standards assist Cullman in assessing and identifying where services are offered, how equitable the service distribution and delivery is across the Cullman service area, and how effective the service is as it compares to the demographic densities. In addition, looking at guidelines with reference to population enables Cullman to assess gaps in services, where facilities are needed, or where an area is over saturated. This allows City leadership to make appropriate capital improvement decisions based upon need for a system as a whole and the ramifications those decisions may have on a specific area.

The maps contain several circles, which represent the recommended per capita LOS found on the previous page. The circles' size varies dependent upon the quantity of a given amenity (or acre type) located at one site and the surrounding distance to the park. The bigger the circle, the more people a given amenity or park acre serves and vice versa. The areas of overlapping circles represent adequate service, or duplicated service, and the areas outside the circles represents the areas not served by a given amenity or park acre type. It should be noted that overall Cullman generally has excellent coverage of parks throughout the City, albeit there seems to be some gaps in service in the northwest, far east, and southern portions of the City for neighborhood and community parks.





Facility / Amenity Priority Ranking Model

The purpose of the Facility/Amenity and Program Priority Rankings is to provide a prioritized list of facility/amenity needs for the community served by the Cullman Parks and Recreation Department. Quantitative data was used from the statistically-valid community survey as the most heavily weighted variable as this is the most representative sample of the community at-large. Additional variables include the qualitative input received through public forums, stakeholder interviews and focus groups, as well as the prioritization scores received from City staff and the Consultant team. Of all these methodologies, the results of the statistically valid survey receives the greatest weighting when determining prioritized needs because it is most representative of the entire Cullman community. This culminates into a weighted scoring system is used to determine the priorities for Cullman parks and recreation facilities/amenities as detailed below.

Data Source	Component	Weighting
Qualitative Community Input	Relative importance of park and recreation facilities/amenities as communicated in public forums, stakeholder interviews, and focus groups.	50%
Quantitative Community Input	Importance Rankings Reported by the Community Survey – This is used as a factor from the importance allocated to a facility/amenity by the community.	20%
City Staff Input	Relative importance of park and recreation facilities/amenities as ranked by leadership staff of the City of Cullman.	15%
Consultant Team Input	Relative importance of park and recreation facilities/amenities as ranked by the Consultant team.	15%



The following prioritization scoring depicts ranked facility/amenity priorities overall for the 35 facility/amenities evaluated in the community input process.

Facility / Amenity Priority Ranking Model

Facility / Amenity	Priority Ranking
Playgrounds	12.00
Paved trails	12.00
Shade structures in parks	12.00
Outdoor amphitheater/Concert Venue	12.00
Recreation center	11.20
Indoor gymnasium space	11.20
Indoor walking/running tracks	10.60
Pickleball courts	10.40
Indoor playground	10.00
Small neighborhood parks	9.70
Outdoor spray parks/splashpads	9.60
Aquatic center (outdoor)	9.40
Outdoor walking/running track	9.40
Outdoor adventure park	9.00
Aquatic center (indoor)	8.80
Large community parks	8.80
Mountain biking and hiking trails	8.30
Esports / VR gaming center	8.20
Dog parks	8.10
Soccer/football/rugby fields	8.00
Community garden	8.00
Outdoor pool/lap lanes	8.00
Outdoor tennis courts	8.00
Baseball and softball fields	7.80
Before and after school center	7.80
Skate park	7.20
Outdoor basketball courts	7.20
Outdoor sand volleyball courts	6.60
Natural areas/wildlife habitats	5.60
Indoor roller skating rink	5.40
18-hole golf course	5.00

Priority Ranking	Score
High Priority	8.0-12.0
Moderate Priority	5.0-7.9
Low Priority	1.0-4.9

Recreation Program Analysis

Overview

As part of the Cullman Parks and Recreation Master Plan the consulting team conducted a Recreation Program Analysis of the services offered by the City's Parks, Recreation and Sports Tourism Department ("Department"). The assessment offers an in-depth perspective of program and service offerings and helps identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities regarding programming. The assessment also assists in identifying Core Program Areas, program gaps within the community, key system-wide issues, areas of improvement, and future programs and services for residents and visitors.

The consulting team based these program findings and recommendations based on a review of information provided by the Department including program descriptions, financial data, website content, and discussions with staff. This report addresses the program offerings from a systems perspective for the entire portfolio of programs.

Framework

The Mission of the Department is as follows: "Cullman Parks, Recreation, and Sports Tourism is dedicated to improving quality of life through exceptional parks, facilities, events, and recreational opportunities for all". In order to help achieve these goals, the Department provides a broad range of youth and adult public recreational activities. These program offerings are supported with dedicated spaces which include over parks, trails, indoor athletic facilities, an active adult center, a Wellness and Aquatics center, and more.



Program Assessment Overview

Below are some overall observations that stood out when analyzing the program assessment sheet:

- Overall, the **program descriptions/goals** do an excellent job of effectively communicating to the public key benefits and desired outcomes of each Core Program Area.
- **Age segment distribution** is aligned with the community's current population but needs to be monitored annually to ensure program distribution continues to match evolving Cullman demographics.
- **Program lifecycles:** Approximately 12% of the system's current programs are categorized in the Introduction Stage, while none of the programs fall into the Decline Stage. A more complete description of Lifecycle Stages can be found later in this analysis.
- From a **marketing and promotions** standpoint, the staff utilizes a variety of marketing methods when promoting their programs including: printed and online program guide, the Department's website, flyers/posters, Email blasts, in-facility signage, e-news updates, and various social media platforms as a part of the marketing mix.
- There is potential opportunity to increase the number of cross-promotions of programs.
- Currently, **customer feedback methods** do not appear to be consistently and systematically collected and utilized across core program areas. Moving forward, it is highly recommended that the Department begins incorporating user feedback as a key performance measure that can be tracked over time. Specifically, pre-program evaluation and lost customer surveys are highly recommended feedback tools that should be considered moving forward.
- **Pricing strategies** are varied across the board. Currently, the most frequently used approaches are pricing based on age segment, pricing based on family/household status, group discounts, and pricing based on ability of the customer to pay. This should be continued in addition to implementing some new and additional pricing strategies which can be found later in this analysis. Furthermore, it is essential to understand current cost of service in order to determine ideal cost recovery goals.

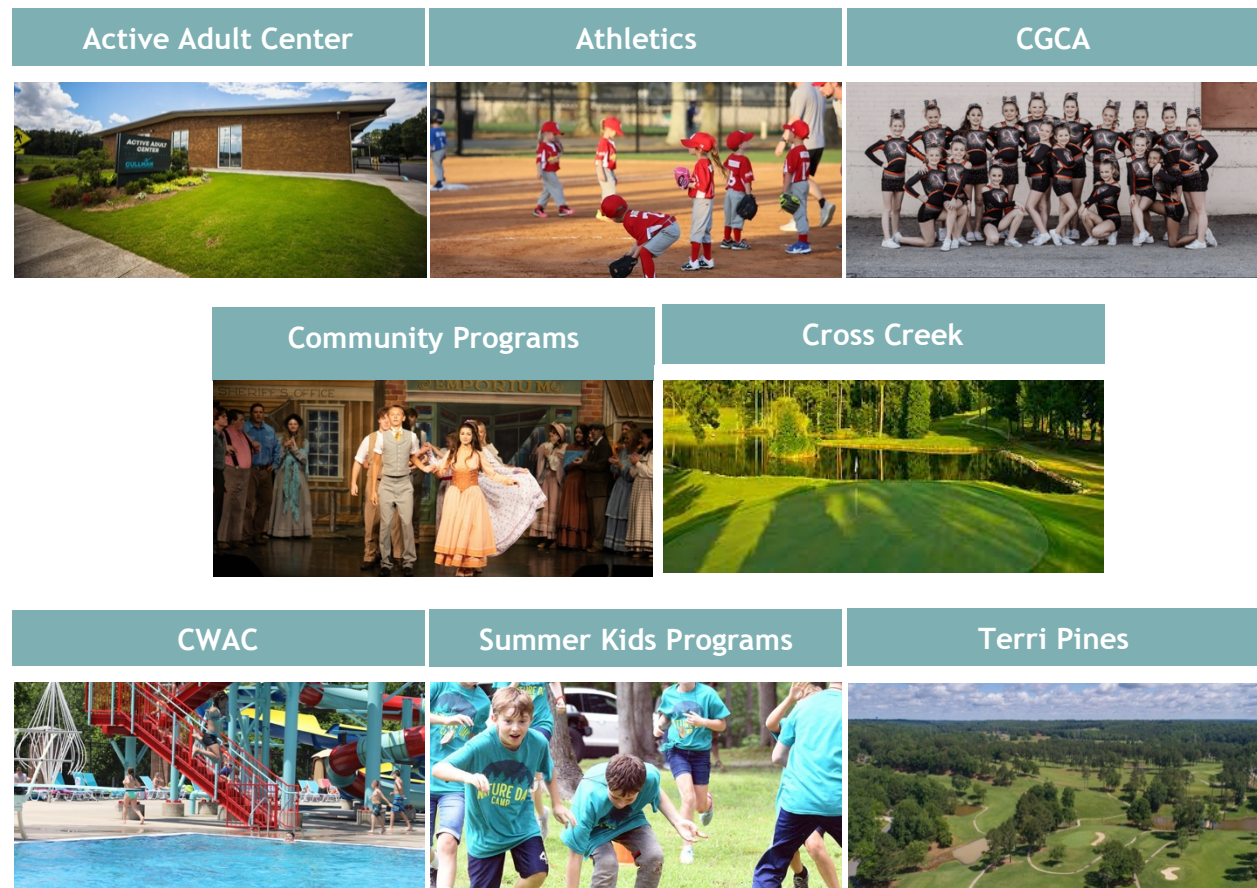
Core Program Areas

To help achieve the Department's mission, it is important to identify Core Program Areas based on current and future needs to create a sense of focus around specific program areas of greatest importance to the community. Public recreation is challenged by the premise of being all things to all people. The philosophy of the Core Program Area is to assist staff, policy makers, and the public to focus on what is most important to the community. Program areas are considered as Core if they meet a majority of the following criteria:

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

Existing Core Program Areas





Through discussions with the Department staff, (8) Core Program Areas were identified that are currently being offered.



Major Program Type Descriptions, Goals and Example Programs

Across and within each of the Core Program Areas there are major program types that are designed to meet current and emerging needs of Cullman residents. Those are described in the table below and on the following page.

Active Adult Center	<p>Description: The Active Adult Center provides a fun and motivating environment for seniors ages 50 and older. The Center offers a variety of classes and activities that support each participant's quest for a healthier lifestyle.</p> <p>Goals: Get more seniors involved and create more programs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weight Training • Yoga • Walking • Art Classes • Pickleball • Jam Session • Cards & Games
Athletics	<p>Description: Youth and Adult Sports Leagues</p> <p>Goals: To grow each league and have more teams and participation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseball • Basketball • Archery • Softball • Flag Football • Tennis Clinics • Adult Sports
CGCA	<p>Description: Preschool & Youth Gymnastics & Cheer/Tumbling for recreation and competitive athletes.</p> <p>Goals: We want our young athletes to love their gymnastics and cheerleading experience. Youth sports should be fun, so we focus on creating a high-energy atmosphere that allows young athletes to delight in their experience, fulfilling their natural desire to climb, jump, and tumble while celebrating their development and capabilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreation & Competition Gymnastics • Recreation & Competition Cheerleading • Camps & Clinics
Community Programs	<p>Description: Programs geared toward adults and kids in the community within the Arts category.</p> <p>Goals: To grow each adult program and add new programs for adults in the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Theatre • Healthy Foundations • All ages

 Cross Creek	<p>Description: Instructional golf lessons and tournaments that are held for players to compete in different forms of events. These events may be a team event or individual events.</p> <p>Goals: To introduce and improve golf skills and to provide a venue for local tournaments to take place.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Golf Instruction • Tournaments • All ages
 CWAC	<p>Description: Primarily located at Cullman Wellness and Aquatic Center, we offer fitness classes to meet all walks of fitness within all stages of life.</p> <p>Goals: To grow our class numbers and to create more diverse classes to fit the needs of our community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cycling • Water Aerobics • Fit Kidz • Cardio Boot Camp • Yoga • Pilates • Sit, Stand, & Move
 Summer Kids Programs	<p>Description: 3-5 Day camps that follow the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art & Math) curriculum.</p> <p>Goals: To Grow each camp and add new events that go along with STEAM.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science Camp • Technology Camp • Music Camp • Art Camp • Creative Writing Camp • Nature Day Camp • Theatre Camp
 Terri Pines	<p>Description: Instructional golf lessons and Quarterly wine, bourbon, & other food tasting events.</p> <p>Goals: To introduce and improve golf skills and to further elevate food and beverage offerings in our community and provide cultural education to our citizens.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service • Golf Instruction • Food and Beverage • Cultural awareness • Social

Core Program Area Recommendations

The existing Core Program Areas and Program Types provide a generally well-rounded and diverse array of programs for the community. Based upon the observations of the consulting team as well as demographic and recreation trends information, Department staff should evaluate Core Program Areas and individual programs on an annual basis in order to ensure offerings are relevant to evolving demographics and trends in the local community. Furthermore, based on key leadership/focus group input, statically-valid survey results, and discussions with Department staff, the following overarching recommendations are provided for the Core Program Areas.

ARTS / CULTURAL EVENTS AND PROGRAMMING

The Cullman community has expressed strong interest in arts, music and theater programs. Similar results were seen in local participation trend data. There are several existing festivals and community events that are extremely well attended, with none of them experiencing apparent decline in participation. This does not come as a surprise as many communities not only in Alabama, but across the U.S. are requesting an expanded definition of “recreation programming” from their municipal parks and recreation departments to include more arts, cultural and STEAM experiences and opportunities. The consultant team has seen this in just about all communities they are recently working in, and particularly communities that are increasing in their diversity and activity levels similar to Cullman. It is recommended the Department continue to provide the current high-quality events and programs in this area of focus, as well as explore additional events or programs that meet these interests and needs.



AREAS OF HIGH DEMAND AND GROWTH

There are certain areas of programming that are experiencing high demand and growth, as well as those that are already operating at capacity where additional resource to expand these programs may be necessary. Currently there is high demand for **youth and high school golf** in this community. Additionally, **youth sports** overall in Cullman are experiencing high levels of participation and demand. The **gymnastics and cheer** program is operating at capacity with a sizeable waiting list possibly requiring expansion of existing facilities to meet demand. The **wellness programs** experience high participation, as does the **childcare** program at the Wellness Center. Finally, other areas of program need are **after school / non-sports** programming, as well as programming focused on meeting the needs and interests of **minority populations** within the city and surrounding area.

POTENTIAL NEW AREAS OF PROGRAMMING

Currently, the Department provides its residents with a variety of programs focused within eight Core Program Areas. In addition to these existing offerings, the Department should explore providing additional programs to assist in fulfilling existing/future unmet needs. Throughout the community engagement process, several key programming themes emerged including: Arts and Cultural Programs, Fitness/Wellness Programs, Nature/Outdoor Programs, Competitive Events (races), Active Adult Programs (both youth adult and early retiree), and possibly even Adventure Programs.

Community Survey Program Priorities

Below you will find some of the programs that were indicated to be of higher importance to residents from the CPRST Needs Assessment Survey. The following recreational program areas were ranked as the most important programs to survey respondents:

1. Youth sports programs (52%)
2. Adult fitness/wellness programs (45%)
3. Adult art/dancing/performing arts (42%)
4. Before and after school programs (36%)
5. Opportunities for individuals with disabilities (32%)

Additionally, the chart below shows the programs that had the highest amount of community need, indicated by survey respondents.



When asked whether or not the respondent had a need for a specific program, over 70% responded “Yes” to Adult fitness/wellness programs, which was overwhelmingly higher than the next highest option. Certain niche programs such as Pickleball and Senior sports programs had a higher percentage of “No” as an answer, however, that is likely due to the nature of the programs being less popular with all demographics.

Program Strategy Analysis

Age Segment Analysis

For this report, an Age Segment Analysis was completed by Core Program Area, exhibiting an over-arching view of the age segments served by different program areas, and displaying any gaps in segments served. It is also useful to perform an Age Segment Analysis by individual programs, in order to gain a more nuanced view of the data. The table below depicts each Core Program Area and the most prominent age segments they serve. Under each Core Program Area, an 'X' was indicated if that program serves a certain age segment.

Age Segment Analysis						
Core Program Area	Preschool (5 and Under)	Elementary (6-12)	Teens (13-17)	Adult (18+)	Senior (55+)	All Ages Programs
Active Adult Center					X	
Athletics	X	X		X		
CGCA	X	X	X			
Community Programs		X	X	X	X	
Cross Creek						X
CWAC						X
Summer Kids Programs		X				
Terri Pines						X

Based on the age demographics of the Cullman community, current program offerings seem to be well-aligned with the community's age profile. Cullman does a great job of having offerings for all ages, as well as offering programs for more specific age groups. With a higher population of Seniors, the Active Adult Center, along with several community programs, is crucial to serving that population. Though two of the eight core program areas are golf courses, Cullman still does well to serve younger populations with other core program areas, such as CGCA, CWAC, and Community Programs.

The Department has also done a great job catering to the remainder of the community, by ensuring all age segments have dedicated programming geared towards them. Moving forward, it is recommended that the Department continues introducing new programs in order to address any potential unmet needs in the future. Particularly, dedicated senior programs, as the community's population is projected to continue aging over the next decade.

Staff should continue to monitor demographic shifts and program offerings to ensure that the needs of each age group are being met. It would be best practice to establish a plan including what age segment to target, establish messaging, identify which marketing method(s) to utilize, create a social media campaign, and determine what to measure for success before allocating resources towards a particular effort.

Program Lifecycle Analysis

A Program Lifecycle Analysis involves reviewing each program offered by the Department to determine the stage of growth or decline for each. This provides a way of informing strategic decisions about the overall mix of programs managed by the Department to ensure that an appropriate number of programs are “fresh” and that relatively few programs, if any, need to be discontinued. This analysis is not based on strict quantitative data, but rather, is based on staff members’ knowledge of their programs. The following table shows the percentage distribution of the various lifecycle categories of the Department’s programs. These percentages were obtained by dividing the number of programs in each individual stage with the total number of programs listed by staff members.

Lifecycle Analysis				
Stages	Description	Actual Programs Distribution		Recommended Distribution
Introduction	New Programs; modest participation	12%	95%	50%-60% Total
Take-Off	Rapid participation growth	11%		
Growth	Moderate, but consistent participation growth	72%		
Mature	Slow participation growth	5%	5%	40%
Saturated	Minimal to no participation growth; extreme competition	0%	0%	0%-10% Total
Decline	Declining participation	0%		

Overall, the Lifecycle Analysis depicts a large concentration of programs in their early lifecycle stages. Approximately 95% of all programs fall within the beginning stages (Introduction, Take-Off, & Growth), with 72% of those programs being specifically in the Growth stage. It is recommended to have 50%-60% of all programs within these beginning stages as they provide the Department an avenue to energize its programmatic offerings, so the Department is meeting that quota and then some. These stages ensure the pipeline for new programs is there prior to programs transitioning into the Mature stage. However, according to staff, only 5% of all program offerings fall into the Mature Stage. This stage anchors a program portfolio and it is recommended to have roughly 40% of programs within this stage in order to achieve a stable foundation.

Additionally, none of the assessed programs are identified as being Saturated or Declining. It is a natural progression for programs to eventually transition into Saturation and Decline Stages. However, if programs reach these stages rapidly, it could be an indication that the quality of the programs does not meet expectations, or there is not as much of a demand for those programs. As programs enter into the Decline Stage, they must be closely reviewed and evaluated for repositioning or elimination. When this occurs, the Department should modify these programs to begin a new lifecycle within the Introductory Stage or replace the existing programs with new programs based upon community needs and trends.

Staff should complete a Program Lifecycle Analysis on an annual basis and ensure that the percentage distribution closely aligns with desired performance. Furthermore, the Department could include annual performance measures for each Core Program Area to track participation growth, customer retention, and percentage of new programs as an incentive for innovation and alignment with community trends.

Program Classification

Conducting a classification of services analysis informs how each program serves the overall organization mission, the goals and objectives of each Core Program Area, and how the program should be funded regarding tax dollars and/or user fees and charges. How a program is classified can help to determine the most appropriate management, funding, and marketing strategies.

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

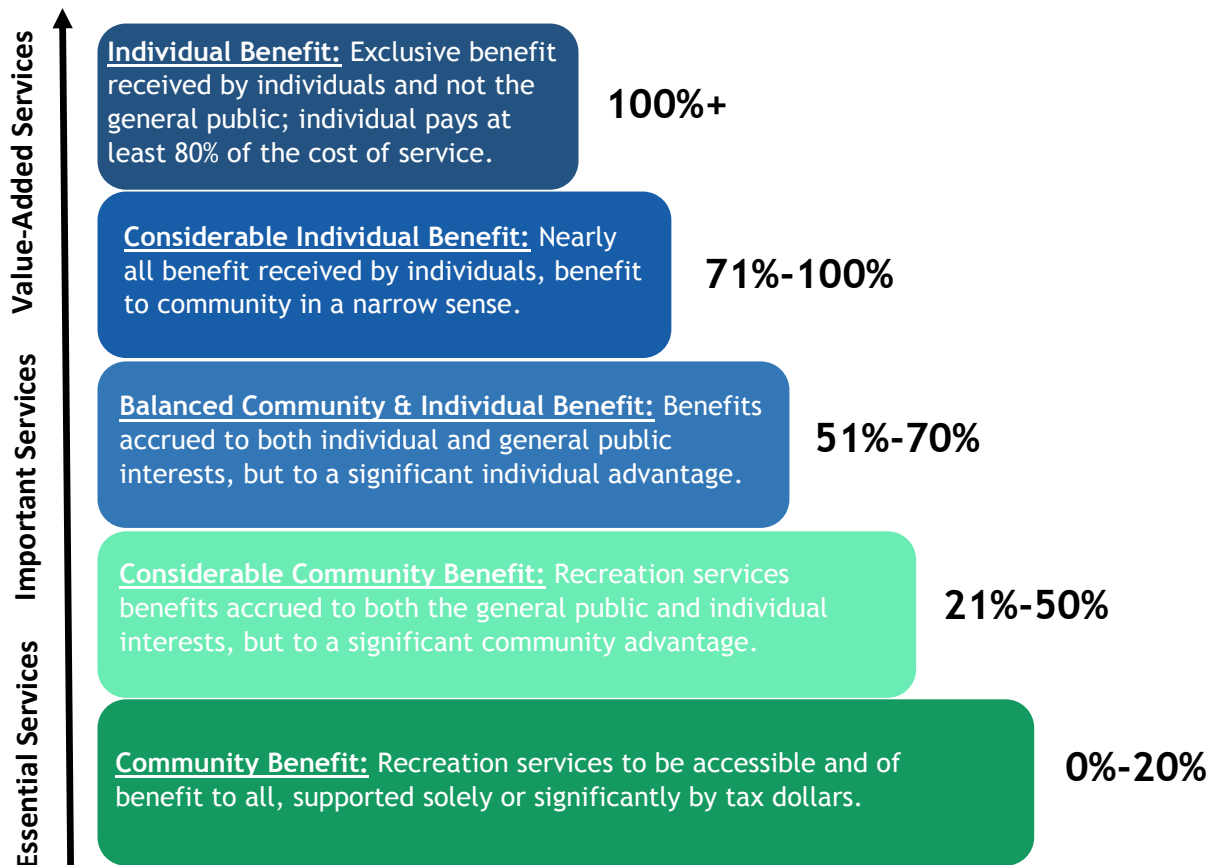
For this exercise, the Department used a classification method based on three categories: Essential Services, Important Services, and Value-Added Services. Where a program or service is classified depends upon alignment with the organizational mission, how the public perceives a program, legal mandates, financial sustainability, personal benefit, competition in the marketplace, and access by participants. The following graphic describes each of the three program classifications.



With assistance from staff, a classification of programs and services was conducted for all of the recreation programs offered by the Department. The results presented in the following table represent the current classification distribution of recreation program services. Programs should be assigned cost recovery goal ranges within those overall categories.

Program Classification Distribution		
Essential	Important	Value-Added
8%	88%	4%

As the Department continues to evolve to better meet the community's needs, there could be an added benefit to managing the services if they all were classified according to the Cost Recovery Model for Sustainable Services depicted below.



Given the broad range of cost recovery goals (i.e., 0%-40% for Essential Services or 40%-80% for Important Services), it would be helpful to further distribute programs internally within sub-ranges of cost recovery as depicted above. This will allow for programs to fall within an overall service classification tier while still demonstrating a difference in expected/desired cost recovery goals based on a greater understanding of the program's goals (e.g., Pure Community Services versus Mostly Community Services or Community and Individual Mix versus Mostly Individual Mix).

Cost of Service and Cost Recovery Recommendations

Cost recovery targets should at least be identified for each Core Program Area at a minimum, and for specific programs or events when realistic. The identified Core Program Areas would serve as an effective breakdown for tracking cost recovery metrics including administrative costs. Theoretically, staff should review how programs are grouped for similar cost recovery and subsidy goals to determine if current practices still meet management outcomes.

Determining cost recovery performance and using it to make informed pricing decisions involves a three-step process:

- Classify all programs and services based on the public or private benefit they provide (as completed in the previous section).
- Conduct a Cost-of-Service Analysis to calculate the full cost of each program.
- Establish a cost recovery percentage, through Department policy, for each program or program type based on the outcomes of the previous two steps and adjust program prices accordingly.

The following section provide more details on the these steps.

UNDERSTANDING THE FULL COST OF SERVICE

To develop specific cost recovery targets, full cost of accounting needs to be created on each class or program that accurately calculates direct and indirect costs. Cost recovery goals are established once these numbers are in place, and the Department's program staff should be trained on this process. A Cost-of-Service Analysis should be conducted on each program, or program type, that accurately calculates direct (i.e., program-specific) and indirect (i.e., comprehensive, including administrative overhead) costs. Completing a Cost-of-Service Analysis not only helps determine the true and full cost of offering a program, but it also provides information that can be used to price programs based upon accurate delivery costs. This illustrates the common types of costs that must be accounted for in a Cost-of-Service Analysis.



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

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

Agencies use Cost-of-Service Analyses to determine what financial resources are required to provide specific programs at specific levels of service. Results are used to determine and track cost recovery as well as to benchmark different programs provided by the Department between one another. Cost recovery goals are established once Cost-of-Service totals have been calculated. Program staff should be trained on the process of conducting a Cost-of-Service Analysis and the process should be undertaken on a regular basis.

Actual cost recovery can vary based on the Core Program Type, and even at the individual program level within a Core Program Area. Several variables can influence the cost recovery target, including lifecycle stage, demographic served, and perhaps most important, program classification. It is normal for programs within each Core Program Area to vary in price and subsidy level. The program mix within each Core Program Area will determine the cost recovery capabilities.

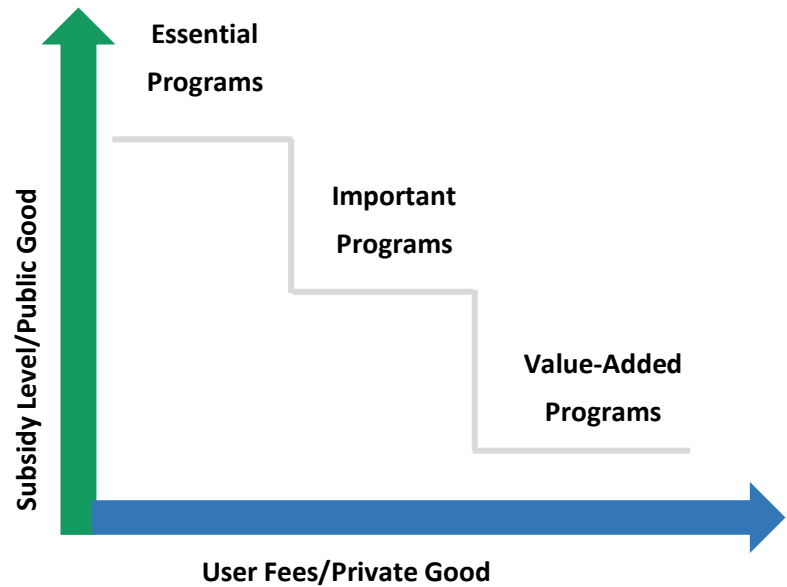
With approved cost recovery goals, annual tracking, and quality assurance, actual cost recovery will improve. Use the key performance indicator on the previous page and update it annually to include the cost recovery goal and the actual cost recovery achieved. Each Core Program Type can be benchmarked against itself on an annual basis.

COST RECOVERY BEST PRACTICES

Cost recovery targets should reflect the degree to which a program provides a public versus individual good. Programs providing public benefits (i.e., Essential programs) should be subsidized more by the Department; programs providing individual benefits (i.e., Value-Added programs) should seek to recover costs and/or generate revenue for other services. To help plan and implement cost recovery policies, the consulting team has developed the following definitions to help classify specific programs within program areas.

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

Classification of Programs and Cost Recovery Expectations



Pricing

Pricing strategies are one mechanism agencies can use to influence cost recovery. Overall, the degree to which the Department uses various pricing strategies is rather sporadic. However, pricing tactics are primarily concentrated in age segments, family/household status, residency status, and customer's ability to pay.

Currently, the Core Program Area that utilizes the largest variety of pricing strategies are the CGCA (5 of 10) followed by Athletics and the CWAC (4 of 10 respectively). Moving forward, the Department should consider implementing some additional strategies, when deemed appropriate, such as location rates and by cost recovery goals, as they are both valuable strategies when setting prices. Additionally, applying weekday/weekend rates, prime/non-prime time rates, and group discounts more frequently is encouraged. These pricing strategies are useful to help stabilize usage patterns and help with cost recovery for higher quality amenities and services.

Staff should continue to monitor the effectiveness of the various pricing strategies they employ and adjust as necessary. It is also important to regularly monitor for local competitors and other similar service providers as an increase in competition may alter program pricing. The table to the right details pricing methods currently in place by each Core Program Area and additional areas for strategies to be implemented over time.

Pricing Strategies										
Core Program Area	Age Segment	Family/ Household Status	Residency	Weekday/ Weekend	Prime / Non-Prime Time	Group Discounts	By Location	By Competition (Market Rate)	By Cost Recovery Goals	By Customer's Ability to Pay
Active Adult Center										
Athletics	X	X				X				X
CGCA	X	X				X		X		X
Community Programs	X		X							
Cross Creek	X									
CWAC	X	X	X			X				
Summer Kids Programs										X
Terri Pines	X		X							

Program Strategy Recommendations

In general, the Department program staff should continue the cycle of evaluating programs on both individual merit as well as the program mix as a whole. This can be completed at one time on an annual basis, or in batches at key seasonal points of the year, as long as each program is checked once per year. The following tools and strategies can help facilitate this evaluation process:

MINI BUSINESS PLANS

The consulting team recommends that Mini Business Plans (2-3 pages) for each Core Program Area be updated on a yearly basis. These plans should evaluate the Core Program Area based on meeting the outcomes desired for participants, cost recovery, percentage of the market and business controls, Cost-of-Service, pricing strategy for the next year, and marketing strategies that are to be implemented. If developed regularly and consistently, they can be effective tools for budget construction and justification processes in addition to marketing and communication tools.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT & DECISION-MAKING MATRIX

When developing program plans and strategies, it is useful to consider all of the Core Program Areas and individual program analysis discussed in this Program Assessment. Lifecycle, Age Segment, Classification, and Cost Recovery Goals should all be tracked, and this information, along with the latest demographic trends and community input, should be factors that lead to program decision-making. Community input can help staff focus in on specific program areas to develop new opportunities for various target markets including the best marketing methods to use.

A simple, easy-to-use tool similar to the figure below will help compare programs and prioritize resources using multiple data points, rather than relying solely on cost recovery. In addition, this analysis will help staff make an informed, objective case to the public when a program in decline, but beloved by a few, is retired. If the program/service is determined to have strong priority, appropriate cost recovery, good age segment appeal, good partnership potential, and strong market conditions the next step is to determine the marketing methods by completing a similar exercise as the one seen below.

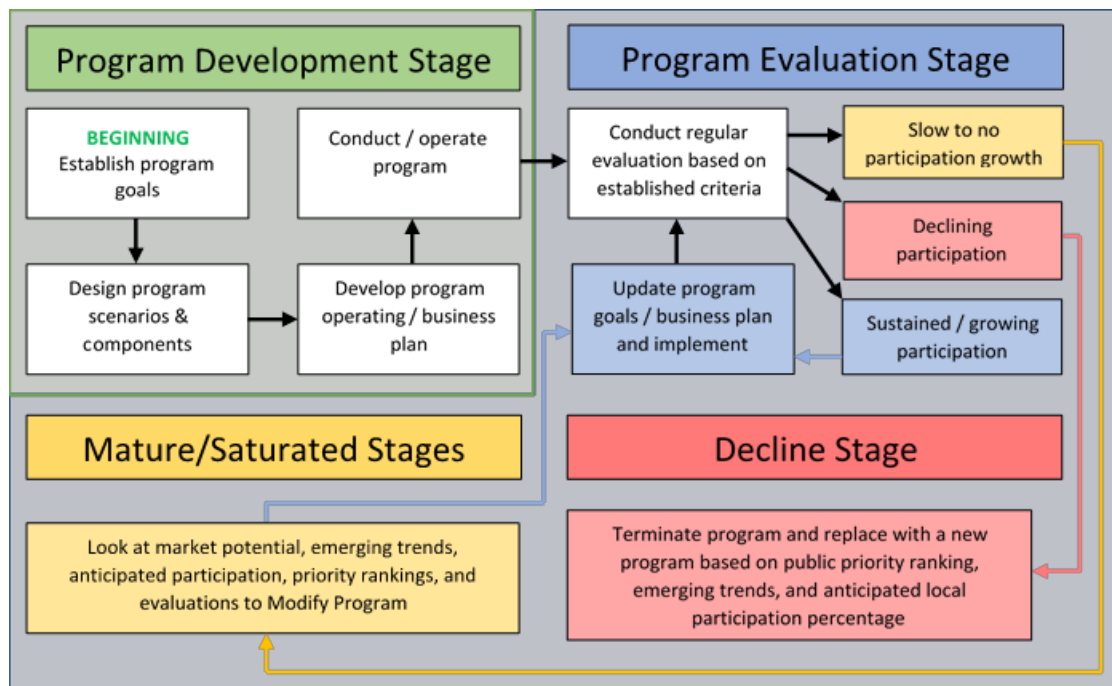
Marketing & Promotion Methods			
Program Idea (Name or Concept): _____			
Marketing Methods	Content Developed	Contact Information	Start Date
Activity Guide			
Website			
Newspaper Article			
Radio			
Social Media			
Flyers - Public Places			
Newspaper Ad			
Email Notification			
Event Website			
School Flyer/Newsletter			
Television			
Digital Sign			
Friends & Neighbors Groups			
Staff Promotion @ Events			

Internal Factors			
Priority Ranking:	High	Medium	Low
Program Area:	Core	Non-core	
Classification	Essential	Important	Discretionary
Cost Recovery Range	0-40%	60-80%	80+%
Age Segment	Primary	Secondary	
Sponsorship/Partnership			
Potential Partnerships	Monetary	Volunteers	Partner Skill Location/Space
Potential Sponsors	Monetary	Volunteers	Sponsor Skill Location/Space
Market Competition			
Number of Competitors			
Competitiveness	High	Medium	Low
Growth Potential	High	Low	

PROGRAM EVALUATION CYCLE (WITH LIFECYCLE STAGES)

Using the Age Segment and Lifecycle analysis, and other established criteria, program staff should evaluate programs on an annual basis to determine program mix. This can be incorporated into the Program Operating/Business Plan process. A diagram of the program evaluation cycle and program lifecycle is found in the figure below. During the Introductory Stages, program staff should establish program goals, design program scenarios and components, and develop the program operating/business plan. Regular program evaluations will help determine the future of a program.

If participation levels are still growing, continue to provide the program. When participation growth is slowing (or non-existent) or competition increases, staff should look at modifying the program to re-energize the customers to participate. When program participation is consistently declining, staff should terminate the program and replace it with a new program based on the public's priority ranking and/or program areas that are trending nationally/locally, while taking into consideration the anticipated local participation percentage.



Operational and Financial Review

Operational Review

Cullman Parks and Recreation is responsible for park, facility, and amenity maintenance and development, and the organization and facilitation of community events and recreational programs. The operational budget of the Department is supported by earned revenues generated from programs, services, and facility usage, and by the City of Cullman only on personnel costs. It is impressive the Department is so successful in supporting all but labor costs through generated earned revenues and it appears this is a model that will be sustainable moving into the future.

Park Site and Facility Maintenance

In 2023, there are a total of 30 full-time employees assigned to park and facility maintenance in the Cullman Parks and Recreation Department. This team is responsible for the maintenance all the developed parks and natural areas in the parks inventory, all amenities in the parks, trails, sports fields and complexes, pools, and major facilities. Additionally, this team is responsible for maintaining right-of-way and other landscaped areas around city buildings and facilities.

IDENTIFIED PRIORITIES

There were several priorities identified during the process of this operational review in order to maintain and continue the level of service enjoyed by the residents of Cullman in their parks and recreation system today. These are detailed below.

- 1. Elevating the importance of maintaining what we already have.** While there are a few exciting opportunities to add to the parks and recreation system detailed in this plan, including updating existing parks with new amenities, it is critical we prioritize taking care of what we already have before we turn a lot of attention to building new sites, amenities and facilities.
- 2. There needs to be a capital asset maintenance and replacement plan.** As the infrastructure of the parks system continues to age and get heavily used, a more formalized strategy for long-term capital maintenance and replacement schedules needs to be developed to keep the park system in high quality condition and to support more accurate future planning.
- 3. Natural infrastructure ages too.** It is true that built infrastructure ages and needs a repair and replacement plan to keep sites and facilities in good working condition, and natural infrastructure such as landscaping and trees also age and need to be replaced at times to ensure public safety. This should be planned and budgeted for.
- 4. Maintenance resources need to grow as the system grows and ages.** It is critical to properly resource maintenance resources in the Department, including staff, especially as the system grows over time. Currently there is likely need for additional park infrastructure staff, as well staff dedicated to indoor facilities maintenance as this aspect of the portfolio grows. As the park system grows in size and complexity, so should the maintenance resources supporting the long-term integrity of the system.

MAINTENANCE EXPENSE UNIT COSTS

Another metric evaluated in this analysis was the annual operational/maintenance expense per developed acre and expense per square foot of indoor facilities owned or managed by the Cullman Parks and Recreation Department. This is a good metric to analyze the level of investment in the park system today and as the system grows.

As noted in the table below, the annual maintenance expense per developed acre (not including natural areas) is currently approximately \$1,431 per acre. Similarly, the current annual maintenance expense per square foot of indoor facilities is \$2.62 per square foot.

It is recommended to expect annual maintenance expenditures to increase by 5-6% based on recent annual cost escalations seen by the consultant team both in Alabama and across the United States. This annual multiplier for the operating budget is recommended to be included in future budgets. Additionally, the PROS Consulting Team recommends the city further increase the operational expense to \$1,500 per acre and \$3.50 per square foot of indoor facilities in future years to account for costs supporting the organizational staffing needs in maintaining a high-quality parks and recreation system. This recommendation is based on our industry experience and the best practice for annual investment in maintenance of sites and facilities to ensure high-quality parks that are fully usable by the public. This is a sentiment that was also reflected in the community input received in this master planning process.

A table showing annual maintenance expense per acre and per square foot (2023) as well as recommended maintenance expense per acre and per square foot is below.

	Operations Costs	Labor Costs	Current Totals	Current Unit Costs*	Target Unit Costs**	Target Totals
Grounds Maintenance	\$243,810	\$490,455	\$734,265	\$1,431.31	\$1,500.00	\$769,500
Facilities Maintenance	\$170,780	\$343,545	\$514,325	\$2.62	\$3.50	\$688,100
	\$414,590	\$834,000	\$1,248,590			\$1,457,600

*Current unit costs are current cost per developed acre of parkland and cost per square foot of indoor facilities.

**Target unit costs are the recommended cost per developed acre of parkland and cost per square foot of indoor facilities.



Recreation Programs and Services

The Recreation Programs Team was heavily engaged in this master plan process especially in the process of conducting the *Recreation Programs Assessment* featured earlier in the plan. To accentuate the findings of that assessment, staff were interviewed to identify their priorities that would be detailed in the master plan. These are outlined below.

1. **Strong need for an additional multi-purpose recreation facility.** Staff feel strongly the community needs an additional indoor recreation facility provide more programmable spaces, support additional adult programming, and diversify and broaden membership opportunities. The current facility is under construction and anticipated to be completed in 2024/2025.
2. **Need to evaluate how to better meet demand.** There are several areas of recreational and leisure programming that are in high demand and are pushing the Department in its capacity to meet those needs. These areas include youth golf, gymnastics and cheer, youth sports, and adult fitness / wellness. Similarly, there are increasing pressures to add more arts and cultural programming, as well as active adult programs that could possibly include adult trip and travel opportunities.
3. **Childcare should be further evaluated as a service.** Providing childcare at the community or recreation centers is an important service that improves the accessibility and use of the facilities, however these services now go beyond just supporting users of the community center. That said, further exploration of the overall community need for childcare should be pursued and further definition as to the role of the Parks and Recreation Department in being a part of the ecosystem that meets those needs should be determined.
4. **Need to develop cost recovery goals for programs and services.** As noted in the *Recreation Program Assessment*, cost recovery goals for each core program area should be developed in accordance with their service classification (Essential, Important, Value-added).
5. **Additional staffing needed.** There are specific areas of additional staff needs based on expansion of facilities, as well as existing demand. It is estimated there is a need for four (4) additional FTEs plus seasonal staff needed for the new indoor facility. Additionally, there is a need to pursue seasonal staffing to support Christkindlmarkt.



Funding and Revenue Strategies

Park systems often rely on the same typical funding sources for their projects, programs, and capital improvements, as well as the ongoing financial support that their agency requires. Funding sources can change, however, regarding how they provide funding and what organizations they will support. Therefore it is critical for a department to continually evaluate new funding and revenue strategies that will support the system's operational and capital needs and opportunities.

Understanding the type of sources and opportunities available can be valuable to the sustainability of a park and recreation system. It is important to expand the range of sources where funding is obtained and develop a strategy to locate new sources. Developing new funding strategies, understanding new potential funding sources, and successfully obtaining new funding can be lengthy and time consuming, yet it can provide capital and operational dollars when normal funding channels change.

Successful Parks and Recreation Funding Options

The following three categories are examples of sources considered to be viable methods used in the parks and recreation industry:

- **Dedicated Funding:** These funds (often in the form of various tax options) are appropriated or set aside for a limited purpose.
- **Earned Income:** Revenue generated by membership fees, facility rentals, program fees and other sources where the agency is paid for services or what they provide.
- **Financial Support:** These monies are acquired by applying for grants, through foundation fundraising, corporations, organizations, as well as state and federal sources.

Dedicated Funding Sources

- **Taxable Bonds** through Voter Approved Referenda are used primarily to support the development of large community-based projects like a community center, field house, signature park, trails system
- **Transient Occupancy Tax from Hotels** are used to help pay for recreation facilities that have a high level of tourism involved such as sport tournaments for youth and adults held in the city by the Department and are used to help build and pay for the development and management of those facilities.
- **Land Value Captive Taxes** such as a Tax Increment Finance Funds are used to help support community centers and field houses whereby businesses benefit from higher property values based on their location to these amenities and the difference between the existing property values and the new property value is used to fund the development until the development is paid off.
- **Local Improvement Districts or Business Improvement Districts** are typically established in communities that are in a downtown business district. The BID district requires 60% of the owners to support the BID before it can be put into place and the money is used for improving the aesthetics such as streetscapes, flowers, sidewalk cleaning, signage, sidewalk furniture, hosting concerts and special events that attract people to spend time and money in the downtown area.
- **Developer Impact Fees** are used to support neighborhood park development in the property near or in their development as a way of enticing new homeowners to move into the development. The developer pays the impact fee at the time of the permit like impact fees for roads, sewers, and general utilities based on the value of the homes that are being built.

- **Real-Estate Transfer Fees** are established at usually 1% of the sale price of a home and is paid by the buyer to support ongoing park infrastructure in the area where the house is located.

Earned Income

- **Land Leases** allow park system to lease prime property to developers for restaurants along trails or in parks, retail operations that benefit users in the park to support the ongoing operation of the park over a period of time.
- **Health Care/Hospital Partnerships** are becoming a major partner for park and recreation agencies to help support the development of community centers that have health related amenities in them like fitness centers, therapy pools and walking tracks. Some health care providers put in rehab centers inside of the community center and pay the development cost associated with the ongoing building costs.
- **Fees for Services** are typically used to support the operational cost and capital cost for parks and recreation programs and amenities which is occurring in Cullman now.
- **Room Override Rates** from hotels used for major tournaments. These revenues go back to the city to help pay for the management and cost of hosting the tournament.
- **Establishment of a Park Foundation** is an appropriate revenue source for the Department to consider especially in a college town. The Park Foundation typically raised money for park related improvements, programs for disadvantaged users and they support the development of new facilities that are needed in the city.
- **Local Not-for-Profit Foundations Gifts** usually help pay for specific music at special events or for helping to provide a running event in the city or a sports tournament.
- **Capital Fee on top of an Access Fee** to pay for a revenue producing facility need. This type of fee is usually associated with an amenity like a golf course where the users help to improve an irrigation system or improve cart paths because they benefit most from the capital fee. The fee is removed once the improvement is paid off.
- **Corporate Sponsorships** help to pay for the operations of signature facilities like sports complexes, indoor community centers, ice rinks and they pay for an impression point usually in the \$0.35 to \$0.50 per impression point on an annual basis.
- **Naming Rights** are used to help to capitalize a community center or special use facility and typically are good for 10 to 20 years before it is removed.
- **Public/ Not-for-Profit/ Private Partnerships** are used to help offset operational costs or capital costs for community-based facilities like trails, nature centers, sport complexes, community centers, ice rinks, signature parks, special event sites that bring in and support a high level of users.
- **Licensing Fees** for a signature park or event that others want to use to make money from can be applied to elements of a park from a user or business as it applies to products sold on site, music, advertising, and ongoing events to be held on site.
- **Outsource Operations** to the private sector to save money where the cost is less costly to provide the same level of service. This can be in any form of service the system provides now from contracting with instructors, managing forestry operations, managing landscapes in the city, care of park related equipment are a few examples.
- **Volunteerism** is an indirect funding source use by many departments to support the operations of parks and recreation services. The time the volunteer gives can be used for in kind support matches on state and federal grants in lieu of money. Best practices agencies try to get 15% of the work force hours from volunteers.

- **Maintenance Endowments** are established as new facilities are developed like all-weather turf to support replacement costs when the asset life is used up and need replaced.
- **User Fees** are currently used by the Department is using now to offset their operational cost based on the private good that the service is providing to the user.
- **Entrance Fees** (pools, community centers, parks)
 - Daily Fees
 - Non-Resident Fees
 - Group Fees
 - Prime Time and Non-Prime Time fees
 - Group and Volume Fees
 - Permit Fees
 - Reservation Fees
 - Catering Fees
 - Food Truck Fees
 - Ticket Sales
 - Photography Fees
 - Price by loyalty, length of stay and level of exclusivity.

Financial Support

- **Land and Water Conservation Fund** is the primary funding source for federal grants and requires a match from the local jurisdiction of 50%.
- **Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)** provides greenways and trails grants for park systems across the system.
- **Recreation Trails Funding Program** for development of urban linkages, trail head and trailside facilities.
- **Private Donations** can be sought to help develop community-based facilities like community centers, sports complexes, outdoor theatres, and nature education facilities.

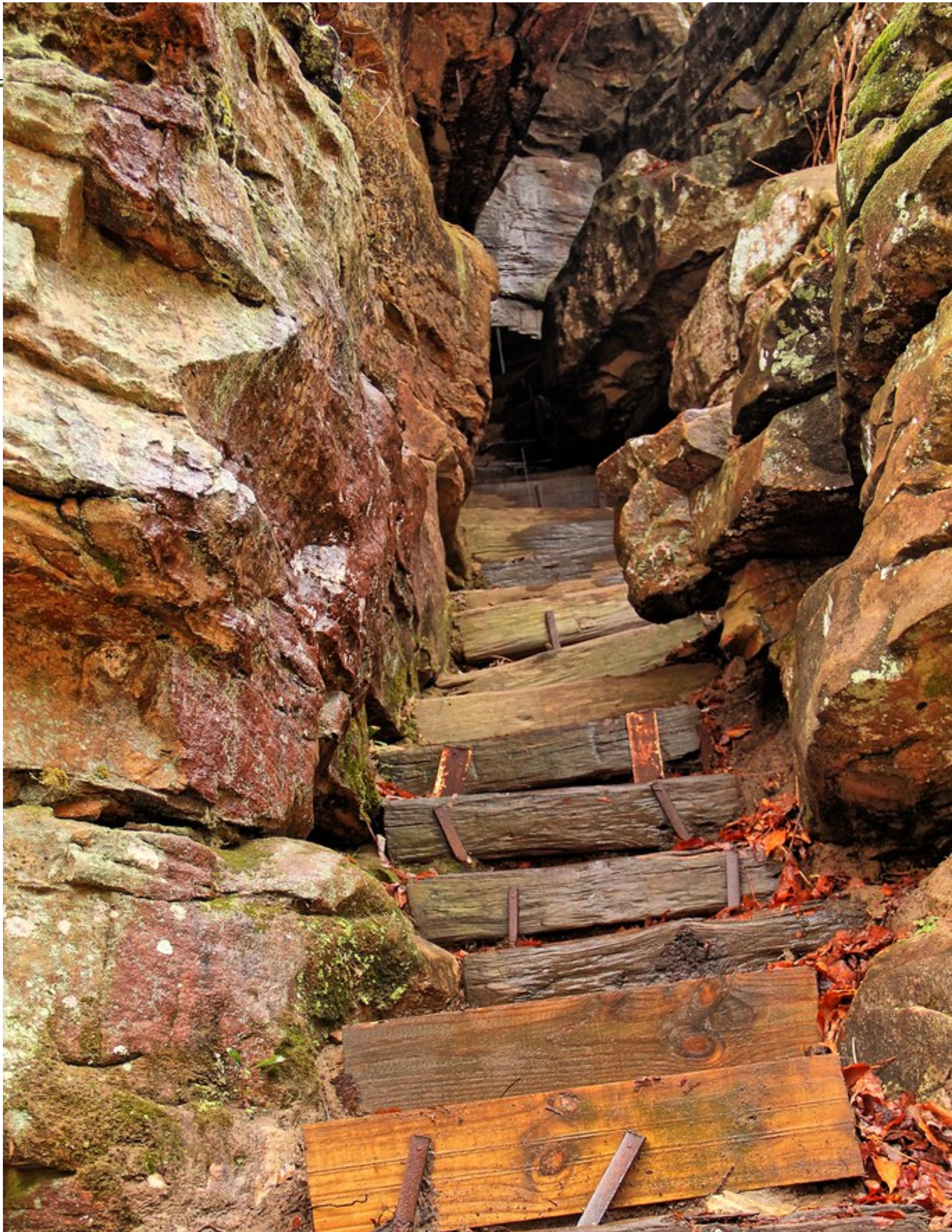


Recommended Funding Options to Explore

In consultation with leadership and community forum participants during the master planning process, there are specific alternative funding recommendations that are more preferred for consideration over the next 10 years. These include, but are not limited to:

- **Tax Incremental Financing (TIF)** can be used with an established “TIF District” in which incremental increases in property taxes over a 20–25-year period is utilized to pay or reimburse initial development costs. Establishing a TIF district in areas that are anticipated to experience significant economic development and growth over the next 20 years can fund initial park/trail/greenway development that initially serves as a catalyst for that development. This could be particularly effective around any future development of major facilities or complexes.
- A **Greenway Utility** is often used to finance acquisition of greenways and development of the greenways by selling the development rights underground for the fiber optic types of businesses. This creates more options to develop the infrastructure within a trail easement, but must include terms for notification, minimal impact to users, and replacing/repairing damage caused by utility company.
- A **Public Improvement District (PID)** or **Special Improvement District** can support new developments when authorized by the City Council and legally set up according to state law. This taxing district provides funds especially for the operation and maintenance of public amenities such as parks and major boulevards.
- The expanded use of **Corporate Sponsorships** to support more facilities and programs beyond just special and community events as it is utilized currently. The value of these sponsorships can be developed based on annual “impressions” that are rooted in overall visitation and participation levels. That recommended value should be calculated on \$0.35 to \$0.50 per impression point on an annual basis. This could also be considered a form of **Advertising Sales** as well.
- Expanded utilization of **Partnerships** that are joint development funding sources or operational funding sources between two separate agencies, such as two government entities, a non-profit and a City department, or a private business and a City agency. Two partners jointly develop revenue producing park and recreation facilities and share risk, operational costs, responsibilities and asset management, based on the strengths and weaknesses of each partner.
- The current **Transient Tax** collected in Cullman to support tourism and economic development should have a portion dedicated to parks and recreation needs. Cullman Parks and Recreation facilities are major drivers of regional, statewide and national tourism in the area through events, tournaments, and special programs. Dedicated hotel/motel tax funds could strongly support the needs of the system in continuing to do this well.
- **Developer Impact Fees** are used to support neighborhood park development in the property near or in their development as a way of enticing new homeowners to move into the development. The developer pays the impact fee at the time of the permit like impact fees for roads, sewers, and general utilities based on the value of the homes that are being built.
- **Pouring Rights** are when private soft drink companies execute agreements with the City for exclusive pouring rights within park facilities. A portion of the gross sales goes back to the City. The City of Westfield, IN recently signed a 10 year, \$2 million pouring rights deal at their sports complex with Pepsi.

- **Catering Permits and Fees** are licenses to allow caterers to work in the park system on a permit basis with a set fee or a percentage of food sales returning to the City. Also many cities have their own catering service and receive a percentage of dollars off the sale of their food. This could be something considered in the future with food trucks servicing special and community events. This also includes the use of **Private Concessionaires** for operating select facilities/amenities within certain parks or facilities.
- **Land Leases** could be utilized where appropriate and include options where developers / agencies lease space from City-owned land through a subordinate lease that pays out a set dollar amount plus a percentage of gross dollars for recreation enhancements. These could include a golf course, marina, restaurants, driving ranges, sports complexes, equestrian facilities, recreation centers and ice arenas. Similarly, **Leasebacks** are instances whereby a private individual or company builds a community center or sports complex and the revenue earned comes back to pay the development costs. These could be considered where appropriate as well.
- **BUILD Grants** (Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development) of the U.S. Department of Transportation, formerly known as TIGER grants, can be sizeable federal funds that can be utilized for large development projects that involve transportation infrastructure. This intersects well with Parks and Recreation on the potential development of trails/greenways and blueways, or water trails.
- **Revenue Bonds** are a category of municipal bond supported by the revenue from a specific project, such as a toll bridge, highway, or local stadium. Revenue bonds that finance income-producing projects are thus secured by a specified revenue source. Typically, revenue bonds can be issued by any government agency or fund that is managed in the manner of a business, such as entities having both operating revenues and expenses.
- The **Interlocal Agreements** between the City and local school districts, as well as Cullman County, should be evaluated to ensure they are updated, reflect current conditions and needs within the community, and support the partners equitably in the agreement.



Strategic Actions and Capital Improvement Plan

The successful implementation of this Master Plan should be focused around five (5) strategic initiatives that correspond to community needs and what was heard in the community engagement process. These initiatives will be forwarded through a series of capital improvement projects as well as more operational actions. In the sections that follow, the recommended strategic initiatives are discussed and then the traditional Capital Improvement Plan is outlined for the 10-year implementation period. These are not recommended as a linear action plan, but rather these initiatives can and should be pursued concurrently as is possible.

Strategic Action Plan

The five strategic initiatives identified by the community are:

- Further revitalization and Maintenance of Neighborhood Parks
- Enhancing and Upgrading Community and Regional Parks
- Trails and Connectivity
- Growing the System to Meeting Community Needs
- Organizational Excellence

Of note, the five strategic initiatives are not listed in order of priority and were not prioritized by the community inasmuch as different users have different needs of the park and recreation system. The City should balance its efforts to advance each strategic initiative rather than focus on them consecutively. In the action plan that follows, specific strategic actions are identified within each initiative, on a temporal scale of “Short Term” (1-3 years), “Mid Term” (4-6 years), and “Long Term” (7-10 years).



Revitalization and Maintenance of Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks are a major part of the Cullman Parks and Recreation system. They are integral to providing a high quality of life for the neighborhoods in which they sit. The following neighborhood parks are examples of those in need of reinvestment in multiple ways (playground replacement, pavement repair, shelter replacement, signage, lighting, etc.). Making these investments will speak loudly to the residents of these neighborhoods in all corners of the city.

- Eastside Park
- Complete Nesmith Park Phase 1
- Design Nesmith Park Phase 2
- Complete Phase 1 of Culpepper Park
- Nesmith – replace/rebuild football field restrooms

Strategic Initiative	Strategic Actions	Recommended Timeline
Revitalization and Maintenance of Neighborhood Parks	Identify improvement projects by priority and available funding. Higher priority projects are playgrounds, shade infrastructure (natural and built), splashpads, and inclusive recreational amenities.	Short Term
	Identify and acquire capital funding source(s).	Mid Term
	Initiate public engagement process, site design and competitive bid selection process for construction.	Long Term
	Begin and complete construction within approved budget requirements.	Mid Term
		Long Term

Enhancing and Upgrading Community and Regional Parks

Community and regional parks are where not only Cullman residents come out to play and celebrate; they are regional draws that bring people from around the region and state to enjoy all that Cullman has to offer. The below community and regional parks each require upgrades to ensure that they remain unique and special attractions for Cullman residents and visitors from other communities.

- Complete Phase 1 and 2 of Depot Park
- Heritage Park – splashpad and playground (redesign and replace)
- Heritage Park – trails and recognition gardens
- Miracle Field – resurfaced
- Ingle Park – add dog park
- Renovating bathrooms in Active Adult Center

Strategic Initiative	Strategic Actions	Recommended Timeline
Enhancing and Upgrading Community and Regional Parks	Develop strategic approach to updating community and regional parks that is a blend of improvements that may have occurred through other related initiatives of this action plan, and more explicit redevelopment projects that are park-wide.	Short Term
	Identify specific redevelopment projects that meet the overall objectives of this initiative and are aligned with the financial and organizational capacity of the city.	Mid Term
	Develop a phased redevelopment plan for community and regional parks.	Mid Term
	Identify and acquire capital funding source(s).	Mid Term
	Initiate public engagement process, site design and competitive bid selection process for construction.	Long Term
		Mid Term
	Begin and complete construction within approved budget requirements.	Long Term



Trails and Connectivity

Trails are consistently listed as the top parks and recreation amenity by the public. The City of Cullman aspires to develop more of a cohesive and linked network of trails and greenways. The below project list considers trail and connectivity improvements that can be made in specific parks and throughout the community.

- Paved trails at Palomino
- Greenway connectivity of districts (~8-10 miles)
 - Alabama Hwy 157 to/around City Lake
 - To City School District
 - To Entertainment/warehouse District
 - To Art District
 - To Sports/Events District
- Wayfinding signs – design and install within Sports and Events District
- Design and build greenway trails connecting sites within the Sports and Events District

Strategic Initiative	Strategic Actions	Recommended Timeline
Trails and Connectivity	Identify specific trail development projects to connect existing and future parks and improve overall connectivity within the community. This should be a blend of natural surface and paved surface multi-use trails. This should prioritize connectivity within existing parks and community connections.	Short Term
	Plan for phased development of paved and unpaved trails.	Mid Term
	Identify and acquire capital funding source(s).	Mid Term
		Long Term
	Initiate appropriate public engagement process, trail design and competitive bid selection process for construction.	Mid Term
		Long Term
	Begin and complete construction within approved budget requirements.	Mid Term
		Long Term

Growing the System to Meet Community Needs

As it has for decades, the Cullman Parks and Recreation system must continue to grow to serve its growing population. Based on our analysis of the system, it's clear that the city has several areas of growth and opportunity. Those areas would be:

- Add professional/amateur disc golf at Palomino
- Terri Pines Country Club renovations
 - Golf course Phase 1 and 2
 - Non-golf recreational amenity rehabilitation
 - Clubhouse redesign and renovations
- Cross Creek Golf Course greens and irrigation renovations
- Complete indoor sports and events center
- Pickleball courts (Terri Pines and Eastside)
- Public art installations
- Christkindlmarkt – expansion of facilities to support 5-week event

Strategic Initiative	Strategic Actions	Recommended Timeline
Growing the System to Meet Community Needs	Develop strategic approach to addressing the park and recreation needs of the community as it grows in population and expands geographically. This may include exploring and developing new or revised policies that engage private developers in the new park acquisition and/or park and trail development process.	Mid Term
	Identify specific growth and expansion projects that meet the overall objectives of this initiative and are aligned with the financial and organizational capacity of the city.	Mid Term
	Develop a phased plan for growth and expansion of the park and trail system	Mid Term
	Identify and acquire capital funding source(s).	Mid Term
		Long Term
	Initiate public engagement process, site design and competitive bid selection process for construction.	Mid Term
		Long Term
	Begin and complete construction within approved budget requirements.	Mid Term
		Long Term

Organizational Excellence

Being a high-quality public service in the parks and recreation field requires the agency to be intentional about its own internal support and standards. It is critical to be a reliable and transparent partner in the city, be a trusted and respected employer, and to be a Department that not only provides tangible and intangible benefits to the community but also to its employees, partners, and volunteers.

Strategic Initiative	Strategic Actions	Recommended Timeline
Organizational Excellence	Improve the resource support for Cullman Parks and Recreation Department with the continuation of the existing budget structure that supports and allows for long-term maintenance needs, and by implementing recommended maintenance budget adjustments starting in 2024.	Short Term
	Evaluate and implement new funding and revenue strategies including, but not limited to partnerships, greenway utility, dedicated transient tax funds, TIF district, and private philanthropy.	Short Term
		Mid Term
	Complete all policy and ordinance changes that are required to implement new funding and revenue strategies and that support new park acquisition and development.	Short Term
		Mid Term
		Long Term
	Maintain an ongoing public information and engagement process that is both efficient and inclusive.	Short Term
		Mid Term
		Long Term
	Evaluate and pursue opportunities for process improvement befitting a high-quality public park department.	Short Term
		Mid Term
		Long Term
	Maintain an effective workforce development program that includes opportunities for staff to attend conferences and trainings and grows their skills and abilities.	Short Term
		Mid Term
		Long Term

Capital Improvement Plan

The following charts summarize the consultant team's recommendations for capital improvement projects. The CIP recommendations are based on the extensive community engagement of the process, the review and expertise of the Consultant Team, and engagement with City staff. These projects are arranged in order of priority. Priority Level 1 corresponds to years 1-3 of the planning horizon. Priority Level 2 corresponds to years 4-6 of the planning horizon. Priority Level 3 corresponds to years 7-10 of the planning horizon. These priority levels are based on the best knowledge and data available to us at this time. As conditions evolve and opportunities arise during the next decade, it is certainly up to the discretion of City of Cullman staff to adjust the priority levels of various projects as appropriate. Within each priority level, each project also includes several pieces of information. The project includes the core area of focus that it serves. Those areas of focus are:

1. Revitalization and Maintenance of **Neighborhood** Parks
2. Enhancing and Upgrading **Community** and Regional Parks
3. **Trails** and Connectivity
4. **Growing** the System to Meet Community Needs

Cullman Parks and Recreation Master Plan	
Trails and Connectivity	
Project	Priority
Complete paved trails at Palomino RV Resort	High
Develop greenway connectivity of city districts	
Highway 157 to/around City Lake	Low
To City School District	High
Depot Park through Entertainment District	High
To Art District	Moderate
To Sports/Events District	Moderate
Connectivity within Sports/Events District	High
Design and install wayfinding signage within Sports/Events District	High

Cullman Parks and Recreation Master Plan	
Revitalizing Neighborhood Parks	
Project	Priority
Update East Side Park	High
Complete Nesmith Park Phase 1	High
Design Nesmith Park Phase 2	Moderate
Complete Culpepper Park Phase 1	High
Replace/rebuild football field restrooms at Nesmith Park	High

Cullman Parks and Recreation Master Plan	
Enhancing Community and Regional Parks	
Project	Priority
Complete Phase 1 and 2 of Depot Park	High
Redesign and replace splashpad and playground at Heritage Park	High
Resurface trails and recognition gardens at Heritage Park	High
Resurface Field of Miracles	High
Add a dog park at Ingle Park	High
Renovate the restrooms at the Active Adult Center	High

Cullman Parks and Recreation Master Plan	
Growing the System with the Community	
Project	Priority
Add professional/amateur disc golf course at Palomino RV Resort	High
Complete renovations at Terri Pines Golf Course	
Complete Phase 1 of Golf Course	High
Complete Phase 2 of Golf Course	Moderate
Rehabilitate non-golf recreational amenities	High
Renovation of Club House that improves accessibility and addresses deferred maintenance	High
Renovations of greens and irrigation system at Cross Creek Golf Course	High
Complete indoor sports and events center	High
WildWater expansion Phase 2	High