



Dekalb County Parks and Recreation

Master Plan

September 2007

EDAW | **AECOM**

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Introduction

2.0



Figure 2.1

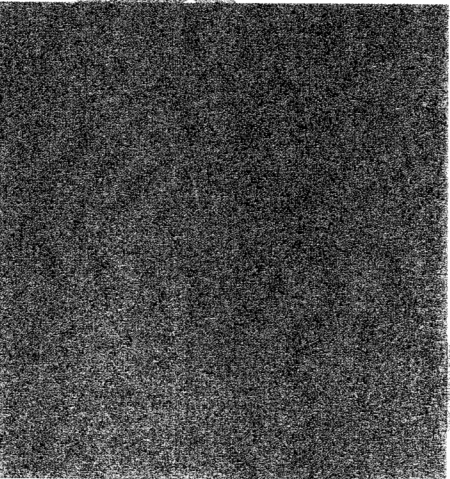


Figure 2.2

DeKalb County is located in the Atlanta Metropolitan area, and with a population rapidly approaching 700,000 people, DeKalb is the second most densely populated county in Georgia. The population is no longer expanding at the rate it was in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s, but it is becoming more ethnically and culturally diverse.

The Atlanta Regional Commission forecasts the influx of a million new residents to the Atlanta Region by 2030. This will present a complex and dynamic challenge to DeKalb County Department of Parks and Recreation as it strives to provide services. DeKalb County total area comprises 268.3 square miles. It is a mature county, and it is approximately 87 percent developed. The density rate of the County is 4.03 persons per acre. It has by far the highest density rate in the Atlanta Region and the State of Georgia.

The continued urbanization and scarcity of availability of land in the County presents both challenges and opportunities for local parks and recreational services. The DeKalb County Department of Parks and Recreation has an operating budget of approximately 18 million dollars, 327 employees, and is divided into four collaborative divisions: Park Services, Park Planning and Development, Administration, and Recreational Services.

The goal is for this Comprehensive Master Plan to set the direction for the Department by identifying the standards, policies, and resources required to achieve the county's goals for its Parks and Recreation Department. The Plan also includes planning for operations, programs, facilities, open space and park land needs, as well as an assessment of service, organizational structure and administration.

2.1 Acknowledgements

As part of the 2000 Plan, a Vision Statement was developed for the Department. It states:

A dedicated and professional team commits to leading the community into the 21st century to make parks and recreation the community's connection to a prosperous future, through equitable levels of quality neighborhood and signature parks and recreation services that enhance quality of life and promote a thriving community.

2.2 Purpose of the Plan

Parks, greenways and similar leisure facilities and services for the public are an integral part of the fabric of a healthy community. Each serves to strengthen structure, culture, connectivity, image and unique sense of place for residents, visitors and business development. These resources help define the quality of life. The significance of such quality of life resources will undoubtedly reflect the diverse character and culture of DeKalb County.

The primary purpose of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is to help create a collective vision for the County and to define the direction for providing recreational opportunities for the next decade.

To achieve this goal, the DeKalb County Parks and Recreation Department initiated a process that builds upon previous planning efforts, elicit the opinions of stake holders and constituents, and develop a plan of action that would lead to the improvement of recreational opportunities in the County.

The premise of the Master Plan is that strong parks and recreation programs have the ability to:

- Provide social benefits by connecting people with neighbors of other ages, incomes, backgrounds, and abilities. Parks and recreation build community pride and spirit.
 - Provide economic benefits by improving the quality of life in the community and helping to attract businesses and residents to the County. Top-rate parks and recreation programs and facilities are a competitive advantage for DeKalb County in economic development.
 - Provide benefits to the environment by connecting people with and educating them about nature. In addition, greenways can provide alternative transportation opportunities. Parks and open space are essential weapons in the County's arsenal against sprawl and environmental degradation.
 - Provide benefits to individuals by promoting physical fitness and self-improvement.
 - Opportunities for exercise and being outdoors result in greater physical fitness, emotional well-being, and connectivity to nature.
- This Plan for the DeKalb County Department of Parks and Recreation is an opportunity to establish the value and importance of parks, recreation, and open space as the shaper and lifetime for community stability and growth. The Plan will create a flexible strategy to maximize the quality of life for the DeKalb community through the development and operations of parks, open space, natural, manmade, cultural, and landscape elements. Through the planning process, the Master Plan will:
- Meet the stated vision and goals of the County;
 - Identify standards, policies, and resources required to help achieve this vision and goals;
 - Cover a period of ten (10) years;
 - Consider existing conditions that may influence current and future recreation needs;
 - Develop an understanding of existing park and recreation service in the County;
 - Assess the demand for park and recreation services in the County for current and future residents;



- Provide an action plan to help define direction for the County;
 - Establish standards that address facilities, maintenance, risk management, staffing, and program requirements;
 - Identify providers of recreation and leisure activities, and determine how these impact and/or augment services provided by the County;
 - Evaluate and develop a policy recommendation for addressing the implementation of fee-based programs;
 - Ensure that facilities take into account concerns about risk exposure, safety, vandalism and security, and develop a recommended policy for incorporating this information into future design and planning decisions;
 - Be fiscally responsible and consider the County's financial ability to implement recommendations;
 - Be consistent with and complement other existing planning tools that guide decision-making within DeKalb County.
- Public parks, open space facilities and leisure time services are not separate from the community, but instead serve to connect and strengthen the community. This connectivity will enhance quality of life as population in DeKalb County continues to grow and develop.

2.3 Scope of the Plan and Summary of the Planning Process

What DeKalb County needs is a 10-year "action plan" that is a living dynamic document, constantly growing and changing to reflect the needs of the County. The action plan should be reviewed annually, and adjustments made as needed to ensure the Master Plan is meeting its stated goals.

The objective of the planning process is to develop a plan with measurable implementation goals in which the parks, recreation and green space needs of the community and the fiscal responsibility of the County are balanced. The result is a realistic plan that accounts for the needs of the citizens while enhancing community connectivity, including land use patterns and the realities of economics and politics.

The idea was to approach the Countywide Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan as a series of interrelated tasks that can be tracked on the project schedule, with deliverables associated with each task.

- Project Initiation and Establishment of the Master Plan Direction - The purpose was to establish an understanding of what the plan would accomplish and to assure that the plan is responsive to the needs of DeKalb County.
- Public Involvement/Communications Plan - Because of the importance of stakeholder involvement, a comprehensive and inclusive public participation

plan was developed to ensure the public had opportunities for input. The Public Involvement/Communications Plan described how meetings would be publicized, how comments would be organized and responded to, and all other public communications efforts.

- Data Collection - Necessary documents, plans, and other data that would benefit the planning process were compiled.

• Inventory of Existing Parks, Recreation, Open Space Areas and Facilities- Existing park assets were inventoried, as well as undeveloped areas and other resources that could contribute to meeting existing and future standards. The inventory included County parkland, open spaces, trails, cultural areas, historic and environmental features and other properties maintained as community resources.

- Inventory of Other Leisure and Recreation Providers - Other recreation opportunities and leisure providers' in the County that are owned and operated by other public, private and non-profit organizations were inventoried.

- Fee-based Programs Review - Fee-based programs in the County were inventoried and analyzed, and policies to guide existing and future decisions about fee-based programs were recommended.

• Establish Needs - A countywide needs assessment was conducted to determine the demand for services. The needs assessment, in association with the inventory of existing facilities, highlights potential areas of shortfall or oversupply. The needs assessment included a survey of DeKalb County residents.

• Establishment of Park Standards - A standard classification system of parks, recreation opportunities, and open space types was recommended based upon benchmarks and NRPA Standards and Guidelines.

• Review of Security Issues - Potential security and vandalism issues were reviewed, and a strategy was developed for making the parks safer.

• Development of Action Plan - The focus of this task was on presenting recommendations and exploring methods of funding them.

2.4 Public Participation Process

While accurate facts are essential, it is the public's vision, trust and support that truly drive the effort. Stakeholder involvement is paramount in generating enthusiasm and building the broad community support for innovative parks, recreation, and open space planning in the years ahead.

One of the first tasks was to prepare a Public Involvement and Communications Plan. The plan identified how many public meetings would be conducted, as well as a strategy for communicating with press, a web strategy, and all other communications efforts. The public involvement strategy included the following:

- Development of a short presentation, suitable for use at each subsequent meeting, to inform citizens about the planning process and opportunities for involvement.
- Interviews with key stakeholders.
- Public meetings to discuss project goals.
- Public meetings to present draft recommendations.

A more complete overview of the public participation process is presented in "SECTION 5: Public Input Process" of this report.

2.5 Organization of the Report

Following this introduction, the report is organized as follows:

SECTION 3: "History of DeKalb County Parks and Recreation" examines the history of the Department prior to 2000, when the last strategic plan was completed. It also looks at developments in parks and recreation and changes in the county since 2000, and also reviews the update of the Greenspace Plan in 2005.

SECTION 4: "Facilities and Programming Inventory and Analysis" provides an overview of the County. It provides an inventory of parks and recreation facilities that includes county, city, state, and private facilities, and reviews issues about consistency with previous inventories. Also included are discussion of park and open space expansion, increased funding, demographics and house, and a comparison of standards.

SECTION 5: "Public Input Process" looks at opportunities for others to get involved in the planning process. It provides an overview of the process and a summary of comments from a public survey, public meetings, and interviews with Department employees, Executive Team, Board of Commissioners, and County Advisory Board.

SECTION 6: "Trends Analysis" offers an analysis of changes and events that may have an impact on recreational opportunities in the future. These include: demographic analysis, technology, policy trends, delivery services,

facilities, economics and financial issues, fees, maintenance, health and wellness, and social programming.

SECTION 7: "Park System Concept" provides an overview of parks and facilities, and includes recommendations on the type and number of each.

SECTION 8: "Recommendations" presents a series of recommendations on a variety of issues. These include: organization and structure recommendations; park and facilities; land acquisition, delivery services, economics and finances, fees, maintenance, health and wellness, and social programming.

SECTION 9: "Sources" provides all of the background information that is included in this report.

"TECHNICAL REPORT" is under a separate cover, and includes notes, surveys, forms, a detailed inventory, and other information used to identify trends, make recommendations, and provide support for decisions.

History of Dekalb County Parks and Recreation

3.0

3.1 History

Dekalb was established from parts of Henry, Fayette and Gwinnett Counties, with the General Assembly of the State of Georgia appointing five commissioners who picked land lot 246 in the 15th militia district as the county site. The county was named after Baron Johann de Kolb, a native of Germany and self proclaimed baron who aided the colonists in their fight for independence. The county seat was named for Stephen Decatur, a naval hero in the War of 1812.

According to the 2000 Parks Strategic Plan, Dekalb County created the Parks and Recreation Department in 1953. The department took a major step forward in 1987 with its People for Parks Bond Program. Many felt that despite the potential the program did not achieve its stated goals.

In response to the 1987 Bond Program, a new planning initiative was completed for Dekalb County Parks and Recreation in 1996 by the Blue Ribbon Committee. The Blue Ribbon Committee's final report highlighted a variety of issues and trends that were the impetus for the effort. The report determined that rapid

urbanization, changes in demographic patterns, and budgetary restraints created a need for re-evaluation of the current system.

The 2000 Dekalb County Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan explains that the Blue Ribbon Committee's "key findings and strategies reflect a renewed commitment to programs, policies, facilities, and funding that address many of the current deficits in the system."

3.2 Departmental Mission

The Dekalb County Parks and Recreation Department has crafted a Mission Statement in order to reflect their goals and values. This mission statement is as follows:

"Creating and connecting communities through people, parks and programs."

Figure 2.2



- Emphasizing the individual, social, economic and environmental benefits of parks and recreation—the community's connection to a prosperous future; enhance quality of life and promote a thriving community.
- Equity in parks and recreation service delivery—equitable levels of... parks and recreation services.
- High-quality facilities and programs—quality... parks and recreation services.
- Making parks and recreation a symbol of DeKalb County as an "All-American City"—signature parks and recreation services

3.3 2000 DeKalb Parks Strategic Plan

According to the Executive Summary of the 2000 DeKalb Parks Strategic Plan, the Parks and Recreation Department "lacked dedicated fiscal and governmental support," prior to the 2000 plan. The plan was an effort to overcome barriers to park development and to prepare the county for the population growth it was experiencing.

At the onset of the decade, DeKalb County Parks and Recreation experienced several significant problems, including a lack of funding, staff, and programs. The Parks and Recreation Department felt that the voice of DeKalb citizenry was not being reflected in the actions of the department, and needed to be incorporated into the planning process. The 2000 Plan sought to engage the public through systemized involvement opportunities such

as kick-off meetings, mail surveys, and public meetings.

The plan sought to establish a base-line of data that could drive level-of-service guidelines and benchmarks. Thus, the plan was largely a fact-finding effort to document the existing conditions of DeKalb County's parks and recreation facilities. The plan also attempted to incorporate consideration of state and national influences on demand for park services by focusing on trends analysis. A variety of trends were assessed, including performance-based budgeting, land value, recreation facility trends, and matrix management.

The 2000 Plan not only presented data, but made a series of recommendations for the Department. Crafting a new strategic approach, the 2000 Plan sought to move the Parks and Recreation Department to a market-driven system that could leverage County resources to pursue or acquire other public funds. Furthermore, the 2000 plan helped craft a Vision Statement for the Department that helped homogenize management goals.

The 2000 Plan also created a list of Action Strategies for implementation for the plan. These Action Strategies guided financial assessments needed for implementation. The final assessment declared \$260 million was needed for capital improvements. Moreover, it specified that the parks system needed a consistent revenue stream and a commitment of General Fund dollars for park upkeep and maintenance.

According to the 2000 Strategic Plan, the Department feels this Mission Statement captures four main points:

- Connect people to the larger community
- Connect people to each other
- Connect people to nature
- Connect significant places in the County

DeKalb also went through a visioning process to identify the commitments necessary to fulfilling the Mission Statement by:

- Serving DeKalb citizens—a dedicated team.
- Upholding professional standards in the delivery of parks and recreation services—a professional team.

3.4 Major Accomplishments Since 2000 Plan

Adapting to various changes in the county's recreation needs, the County has undertaken a number of development and improvement projects for parks and recreational facilities in recent years. The funding for these projects is provided by a \$125 million parks bond program issued in 2001. Although the majority of the bond funds have gone toward acquisition, a sizable amount, \$38 million, has been allocated to facilities maintenance and construction. As of April 2006, the department had completed, or had under contract, \$21,829,866 in development projects. A number of additional projects are being pursued during the current fiscal year as well.

Some of the county's athletic facilities have received much needed improvements. As of April 2006, 39 of the county's 158 athletic fields have received substantial renovations and additions. Improvements have generally focused on the county's larger complexes, such as Murphy Candler, and included maintenance such as new lighting, dugouts, turf replacements, and irrigation. Additionally, 92 sets of aging wooden bleachers have been replaced with new aluminum bleachers. Fifty-five tennis courts and 11 multi-purpose courts have received improvement work as well at a total of 16 different park sites throughout the county. Projects have included repaving, site drainage, windscreens installation, new fencing, and new basketball goals at the multi-purpose courts.

Aside from athletic facilities, the county has invested in a host of improvements to its other recreational facilities. Thirteen swimming pools have received needed upgrades and repairs, including replacement of gas chlorination systems with saline systems, assessments of pool tanks, diving boards, and bath houses. Likewise, playground projects at eight of the County's parks have resulted in new swing sets, modular play structures, and impact-absorbing surfaces.

Funds from the bond have also enabled the County to invest in a few major new facility and redevelopment projects. Twenty-five new park master plans have been created, and studies of 18 dams and lakes have been conducted to guide future parks development. Many of these plans have already been implemented; and three notable examples are the redevelopment of Wade Walker Park, the Children's Adventure Garden, and the brand new Brook Run Skate Park. The county has also added, through acquisition, 666 acres in new park space and 1,562 acres in park expansions. The 2001 bond allocated \$67 million for acquisition.

3.5 Assessment of Current Park System

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xxxxxx
xxxxxx

3.5 Changes Since 2000 Plan

Aside from demographic shifts, DeKalb County has experienced a number of other changes that have implications for parks and recreation. One key change is the fact that the county has been rapidly approaching build-out in recent years, and this has resulted in development density increases throughout the county. In 2001, detached, single-family home sales outnumbered attached housing sales by a 3 to 1 ratio. However, while around 65 percent of DeKalb County residents still occupy single-family homes, sales of attached housing have been outstripping those of detached homes by a growing margin since 2005. The increase in urban density has become a major issue in the, manifesting itself in ways such as the backlash against infill housing in many neighborhoods, which led to the County creating a new infill zoning overlay district. Scarcity of land can also mean scarcity of potential future open space, so the issue directly related to parks and recreation.

A series of policies designed to provide incentives for positive development have been enacted in recent years. Related to the density issue, a number of Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) grants have been granted by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) to cities or unincorporated areas in DeKalb. ARC created the LCI program in 1999 to leverage federal transportation dollars and encourage cities and communities to devise Smart Growth land use and transportation policies. Four notable LCI studies and plans have been developed for Tucker, Doraville, Brookhaven, and Avondale. Another incentive-based policy, the Empowerment Zone program, has encouraged economic development throughout the county. A number of corridors have been designated Empowerment Zones and targeted for since the County passed Empowerment Zone enabling legislation in 2001. The Empowerment Zone program provides business incentives for investment in designated areas.

Finally, while the change has not yet occurred, a major development in the County is the announcement by General Motors that it will close its Doraville manufacturing plant in 2008. The plant currently employs 3,100 workers, and its closing will alter the balance of jobs in the county and impact surrounding land uses. Numerous proposals have been made to redevelop the site of the plant after its closing, perhaps as a mixed-use development. The site will likely not maintain its industrial land use.

Demographics & Socio-Economics

4.0

4.1 Demographics & Housing

Regional Demographics

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) is the official planning and intergovernmental coordination agency for a 10-county region that includes Dekalb County. ARC's '2006 Population and Housing in the Atlanta Region' presents population and housing estimates for the City of Atlanta and the 10 counties in the Atlanta Region as of April 1, 2006.

TABLE 1. POPULATION OF THE ATLANTA REGION, 1900-2006

| Year | Total Population | Population increase per year | Percent increase per year |
|------|------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
|------|------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|

| | | | |
|------|-----------|---------|------|
| 1900 | 274,912 | | |
| 1910 | 357,324 | 8,241 | 2.7% |
| 1920 | 437,557 | 8,023 | 2.0% |
| 1930 | 540,319 | 10,276 | 2.1% |
| 1940 | 620,034 | 7,972 | 1.4% |
| 1950 | 792,211 | 17,218 | 2.5% |
| 1960 | 1,093,220 | 30,101 | 3.3% |
| 1970 | 1,500,823 | 40,760 | 3.2% |
| 1980 | 1,896,382 | 39,556 | 2.4% |
| 1990 | 2,557,800 | 66,142 | 3.0% |
| 2000 | 3,429,379 | 87,158 | 3.0% |
| 2005 | 3,813,700 | 76,864 | 2.1% |
| 2006 | 3,925,400 | 111,700 | 2.9% |

Note: 1990 population is adjusted for Census undercount.

Source: Atlanta Regional Commission

As of April 1, 2006, the population in the 10-county Atlanta region was 3,925,400, an increase of 496,021 from the 2000 Census. (See Figure 1) The region has averaged more than 85,000 new residents per year since 1990.

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Dekalb is currently the third most populated county in the region with 710,400 people. It is interesting to note, though, that Dekalb County's share of the region's population declined from 25.1 percent in 1980 to 18.1 percent in 2006. (ARC 2006 Population and Housing)

Dekalb County Demographics

Dekalb County has experienced significant growth over the last twenty years, and that trend is expected to continue. Population in the County increased 40% from 1980 to 2000 (483,024 to 665,865), and by 2020 the population is expected to be at 848,706, an additional increase of approximately 28%. (Figure 3, 4 & 5)

The Dekalb County Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan 2000-2010 stated, "Dekalb County continues to grow but at a slower rate than most of the other metro Atlanta counties, mostly due to lack of developable land." Growth in the county occurred much faster than most predicted, and as a result parks and recreation facilities in the County have not been able to meet demands.

Since the mid 1990s, growth has accelerated south of I-20, and that trend is continuing. South Dekalb is one of the areas in the region that is attracting the greatest number of new residents. Most growth is expected to continue in the southeastern portions of the County because that is where the most vacant land is located. (Dekalb Comp Plan 2005-2025)



POPULATION PROJECTIONS: DEKALB COUNTY (2000-2025)

| Year | Total Population | Change from Previous Census | Change Since 1980 |
|------|------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
|------|------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|

| | | | |
|------|---------|---------|-------|
| 1980 | 483,024 | | |
| 1985 | 514,430 | | |
| 1990 | 545,837 | 62,813 | 13.0% |
| 1995 | 585,400 | | |
| 2000 | 665,865 | 120,028 | 22.0% |
| 2005 | 711,577 | 182,841 | 37.5% |

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, DCA
DataViews (Figure 6)

| Year | Change from Previous Census | Change Since 2000 | Total Percent Change |
|------|-----------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
|------|-----------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|

| | | | |
|------|---------|---------|-------|
| 2000 | 665,865 | | |
| 2005 | 711,577 | | |
| 2010 | 757,286 | 91,421 | 13.7% |
| 2015 | 802,996 | | |
| 2020 | 848,706 | 91,420 | 12.1% |
| 2025 | 894,416 | 182,841 | 27.5% |

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, DCA
DataViews

As the population in DeKalb County continues to increase, so too does the need for public open space, woodlands, trails and open play areas. The pace of development has resulted in a loss of green space within the County, and that trend is going to continue. As population density goes up, the amount of vacant or available land decreases. Land costs continue to go up and the availability of affordable land suitable for future parks will continue to decrease.

Population by Race and Ethnicity

Ethnicity is important because some immigrant groups demand different kinds of facilities. The ethnic makeup of population in DeKalb County has changed significantly in the last decade. The majority population of DeKalb is African American, comprising 54% of the population in 2000. This is an increase from 42% in 1990. Projections indicate that more than 70% of the population will be Black or African American by 2025. There have been a large number of immigrants classified as being African American, with many being from Sub-Saharan African nations. (DeKalb Comp Plan 2005-2025)

The Hispanic population, although not identified as a separate ethnic classification, is one of the fastest growing populations in the County. The population has increased from 15,619 in 1990 to 52,542 in 2000, an increase of 236%, and that number is expected to rise in upcoming years. Persons classified under "other race" also increased dramatically and will continue to do so. (DeKalb Comp Plan 2005-2025)

In contrast, 36% of the population in the County was White in 2000, compared to 54% in 1990. That number is expected to continue to drop to less than 12% by 2025.

Population by Age

In DeKalb County, there is an aging senior population, and that trend is expected to continue. According to projections, the largest population increase will occur within the 35-44 age groups (56%), and the senior population of 65 and older will grow significantly (45%). According to the County Action Plan for Senior Services 2003-2007, the County has the second largest population of seniors 60 years and older in metropolitan Atlanta. (DeKalb Comp Plan 2005-2025)

In contrast, the 14-17 age groups are expected to experience a substantial decrease (53%). The 5-13 and 18-20 age groups have increased in recent years. The 14-17 age groups have been on the decline since 1980. This trend will have a significant impact on the types of recreation facilities provided by the County. This suggests that facilities used frequently by this age group, such as skateboard boards and sports courts and fields,

Housing

The region's housing stock increased by 276,015 units between 2000 and 2006, with single-family detached accounting for two of every three units built during this time period. The region has an average of 2.63 persons per household. (ARC 2006 Population and Housing)

A significant portion of DeKalb County's housing is relatively new, with a 40% increase in total available housing since 1980. The majority of the housing units constructed during this time period are single family detached and multiple unit structures that include triplexes and small multi-family apartment buildings. Total housing units are expected to increase by 28% between 2005 and 2025 to meet population demands. (DeKalb Comp Plan 2005-2025)

In DeKalb County, the number of multi-family homes is significantly higher than the average across the region and this trend is expected to continue in the form of townhouses and cluster home developments. There are also a number of apartments in the County, although the County's Comprehensive Plan 2005-2025 encourages the development of single-family residential homes.

One trend over the last decade or so is that residential lots have decreased significantly in size, so yards are no longer a viable option for active recreation. In addition, the high percentage of multi-family homes and apartments in the County means that many families do not have private yards.

Facilities, Inventory and Analysis

5.0

Recreational use patterns do not always respect political boundaries; if you want to play tennis, you frequently use courts close to where you live or work, even if they are located in a different county. As a result, we inventoried city, county, and state facilities within a one-mile radius of the county boundary since these facilities are most likely used by DeKalb County residents. Among others, the facilities included Piedmont Park, Yellow River Park, North Fulton Tennis Center, Mountain Park Aquatic Facility, and Big Tree Forest Preserve, just to name a few.

For each park and recreation site, the inventory identifies the following: Site Code; Maintenance District; Public Safety Precinct; Commission District; Super District; Park Class; and Acreage.

The inventory also identifies the types of facilities available at each site, including: Softball/Baseball fields; Football; Soccer; Tennis Court; Multi-Use Court; Picnic Shelter; Playground; Pool; Nature Trail; Lake; Nature Preserve; Parking Lots; Recreation Center; and Golf Course (holes).

There is also an opportunity to identify special features and add notes for each site.

5.2 County Facilities

According to the DeKalb County web site, the County's park system includes 130 parks consisting of approximately 6,000 acres of parkland and open space, 151 playgrounds, 2 golf courses, 105 tennis courts, 90 pavilions, 158 ball fields, and 11 recreational facilities, just to list some of the facilities. (Tables 3 & 4) These numbers differ slightly from the County's Inventory Matrix, but they do accurately depict the diversity and richness of the County's park and recreation system.

Parks range from small neighborhood parks to regional parks and recreation centers that serve a much greater number of people. Parks with ballfields, tennis courts, and swimming pools are very active, while other parks are more passive and are intended for walking and sitting, and help preserve valuable natural resources. The largest County recreation facility is the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area, which is almost 1800 acres in size. It is rich in natural, historical and cultural resources and provides opportunities for recreation, environmental education and heritage preservation.

5.1 Inventory

One of the first steps in developing a comprehensive parks and recreation plan is to understand what you have. From the identification and appreciation allows the preparation of an inventory that provides an adequate picture of all existing facilities. Such an inventory was prepared as part of the DeKalb County Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan 2000-2010. For this master plan, the inventory has been updated and expanded to include additional private facilities such as selected churches and private recreation providers.

5.3 City & State Facilities

There are 44 city facilities in or around DeKalb County. (Table 7) These include facilities in Doraville, Clarkston, Atlanta, Decatur, Chamblee, Avondale Estates, and Stone Mountain. Collectively, these facilities provide almost 329 acres of parks and open space. They have a significant impact on recreational use within the County, and residents make extensive use of the different recreation opportunities. For example, there are 6 swimming pools, 28 playgrounds, 32 tennis courts, 7 soccer fields, 6 recreation centers, and many other recreation facilities in these city parks.

5.4 Private Facilities

There are numerous recreation opportunities in DeKalb County, many of which are outside the purview of the County. This plan considers selected samples of different private recreation providers in order to develop a basic understanding of how they are influencing recreation patterns in the County.

A study of selected counties around the country indicates that the vast majority encourages and supports the development of private recreation facilities. Collaborative efforts between the private and public sectors can result in better appreciation, protection, and stewardship of natural and cultural resources, and a park and recreation system that better meets the needs of County residents.

A comprehensive approach to planning and acquisition for parks, recreation, and open space is the most efficient way to maximize utilization of the resources of the public and private sectors to maximum advantage.

Private recreation providers do offer a valuable service to County residents, but recreation opportunities they provide are available only to those who pay for the service. Privately owned, commercial facilities typically provide recreation opportunities for a fee. Examples of such facilities include amusement parks, gaming centers, exercise and fitness centers, golf courses, and skating rinks. Some of these facilities are geared more toward children or adults, while others accommodate both.

There are also numerous townhouse and apartment communities in the County. Many of these communities provide some type of recreation facilities, such as a club house, game room, basketball court, tennis courts, and swimming pool. The availability of these facilities undoubtedly has an impact on how residents recreate. Many churches in DeKalb County also provide some type of recreation opportunities, ranging from facilities such as those mentioned above to programmed activities that require few if any facilities other than interior or exterior space. (Table 8)

We conducted a preliminary inventory to get a feel for the types of opportunities available from private recreation providers in the County. This inventory consists of a sampling of churches, private facilities, neighborhoods and subdivisions, and apartment complexes.

Some of the larger churches have constructed gymnasiums for their members, and these include indoor basketball courts, volleyball courts, racquetball courts, and fitness centers. Many churches also provide ballfields and open space that can be used for a variety of active and passive recreation activities. Several churches also provide playgrounds. (Table 9)

Private facilities primarily include golf clubs, fitness clubs, pools, tennis centers, and YMCA. Most require some type of membership fee to use the facilities. Many of these private facilities are located in or near neighborhoods, and it is logical to assume that many of the members are from that particular area.

Several neighborhoods include trails, playgrounds, and open space for more informal activities. Many newer housing developments include a clubhouse, pool, fitness center, and other recreation opportunities. (Table 6)

Many apartments or townhouse complexes have small swimming pools, fitness centers, and occasionally other facilities such as trails, tennis courts, basketball court, and playgrounds.

Most recreation facilities associated with churches, homeowners associations, apartment complexes, and the like are not intended for public use. They do have a significant impact on the total recreational demands of the county, though, because a family that has access to a swimming pool in their neighborhood would probably use County swimming facilities less than if the neighborhood pool was not available.

5.5 Consistency in Inventory

Comparing the 2005 facility inventory from the Greenspace report with the facility inventory developed by the DeKalb County Parks & Recreation Department reveals some minor differences. There are many parks that have a larger acreage amount in the park inventory acreage spreadsheet as compared to the acreage listed in the Greenspace report. For the most part it looks like this is due to expansions, or to parks being combined.

Some of the parks inventoried in the Greenspace report are not listed in the County's new inventory matrix, and vice-versa. This discrepancy

could be due in part to name changes for specific parks – one park may be listed under one name in the Greenspace report, and a different name in the County inventory.

For purposes of this inventory we utilized the County's inventory matrix.

5.6 Park and Open Space Expansion

There have been significant changes to the DeKalb County Parks and Recreation system since publication of the DeKalb County Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan 2000-2010. The most noticeable change is the dramatic increase in the amount of parks and open space in the County.

Results of the Parks and Recreation Plan indicated that as of September 2000, when the plan was completed, the supply of the County parks and recreational system did not meet the demand of the county residents. Residents wanted new, more modern facilities, new ball fields and athletic centers, and more trails. The County aggressively addressed these concerns.

The County has also been a lot more proactive in the development of their parks and recreation system. The County has been a member of the Georgia Community Greenspace Program since November 29, 2000. The Joint DeKalb/Municipal Greenspace Program presented a plan that would preserve approximately 37,860 acres, or 22% of the land in the County. The Board of Commissioners created "The Initiative

for a Green DeKalb" in an effort to implement the Greenspace program.

As of December 31, 2005, 1562 acres of additional land was acquired to expand the size of 23 existing parks. At Arabia Mountain, for example, 1240 acres were purchased at a cost of \$20.60 Million, and this acquisition dramatically increased the size of the park. An additional 666 acres were procured and used to create 22 new parks.

MAP 1 - PARK EXPANSIONS SINCE 2000
PARKS & RECREATION PLAN (AS OF
DECEMBER 31, 2005)

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Arabia Mountain | 1240 acres |
| Rock Chapel | 70 acres |
| Fowler | 33 acres |
| Gresham Greenway | 32 acres |
| Fork Creek Mountain | 21 acres |
| Kittedge | 27 acres |
| Mason Mill | 19 acres |
| Hidden Acres | 17 acres |
| Sugar Creek Expansion | 17 acres |
| South East Athletic Complex | 17 acres |
| Gregory Mosley | 14 acres |
| Arabia Mountain Trail | 12 acres |
| Henderson | 7 acres |
| Avondale Dunaire (8 Parcels) | 6 acres |
| Browns Mill | 6 acres |
| Shoal Creek | 5 acres |
| Yellow River South | 4 acres |
| Dearborn (8 Parcels) | 5 acres |
| Miscellaneous Park Expansions | 3 acres |
| Glen Emerald Rock Garden | 2 acres |
| Redan | 2 acres |
| Dresden | 2 acres |
| Gresham Athletic Complex | 1 acre |
| Total Park Expansions | 1,562 acres |

MAP 2 - NEW PARKS/GREENSPACE SINCE
2000 PARKS & RECREATION PLAN (AS OF
DECEMBER 31, 2005)

| | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| Intrinchment Creek | 136 acres |
| Constitution Lakes | 125 acres |
| South River Initiative: | |
| Bouldercrest & Sugar Creek Dr. | 62 acres |
| River Road near Snappinger Road | 26 acres |
| Flat Shoals & Warriors Path | 18 acres |
| North Deshon | 60 acres |
| River Road - Ellenwood | 46 acres |
| Little Creek Farm | 39 acres |
| Chestnut Lakes | 27 acres |
| Lawrenceville Hwy | 23 acres |
| - J. Homestead | |
| Rockbridge Road | 19 acres |
| Flat Shoals Parkway | 20 acres |
| Memorial Drive - Delano | 12 acres |
| Hugh Howell Road | 11 acres |
| Mary Scott Park (Briarcliff Road) | 11 acres |
| Tucker Nature Preserve | |
| (Lawrenceville Highway) | 9 acres |
| Memorial Drive | 8 acres |
| - Kensington | |
| Libburn Stone Mountain Road | 6 acres |
| Chamblee Dunwoody - Chestnut | 3 acres |
| Perimeter Center - MetLife | 3 acres |
| South Fork Peachtree Creek Trail | 1 acre |
| Mathis Dairy (Wonderland Gardens) | 1 acre |
| Markan | 0.2 acres |
| Total New Parks / Greenspace | 666 acres |

5.7 Increased Funding

The County has been able to increase the amount of parks and open space due to the availability of significant funds geared specifically toward enhancing parks and recreation. As of January 1, 2006, the County's Office of Parks Bond and Greenspace had overseen the expenditure of approximately 68% of the more than \$151 million in acquisition funds allocated from a number of sources. \$130 million was from the Parks Bond Funds, where were approved by DeKalb citizens on March 20, 2001. These bonds are to be repaid from property tax revenue levied in the unincorporated portion of the County.

SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT

| | |
|---|----------------------|
| 2001 Parks and Greenspace Bond Issue (Includes Interest) | |
| Acquisition | 93,486,983 |
| Development | 40,705,334 |
| Total Parks and Greenspace Bond Issue | \$134,192,317 |
| Georgia Greenspace Grant Program (Includes Interest) | |
| 2001 Grant | \$3,156,206 |
| 2002 Grant | \$3,143,433 |
| Total Georgia Greenspace Grant Program | \$6,299,639 |
| 2002 Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation Grant | \$1,480,627 |
| 2003 Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation Grant | \$2,106,950 |

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| 2004 Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation Grant | \$1,325,000 |
| Total Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation Grant | \$4,912,577 |
| Federal Emergency Management Agency Grants (FEMA) | |
| (Includes all FEMA funding) | \$4,743,530 |

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Other Funding | |
| Georgia DOT | \$700,000 |
| Other County Departments | \$526,500 |
| Land & Water Conservation | |
| Grants | \$150,000 |
| Waterfall Foundation | \$50,000 |
| Total Other Funding | \$1,426,500 |

TOTAL PARKS AND GREENSPACE FUNDING \$151,574,563

Source - <http://dekalbgreenspace.com/funding.htm>

5.8 Impact of Other Policies

5.9 Comparison of Standards

Standards are important because they provide quantifiable ways to determine if there are sufficient parks and recreation facilities to meet the needs of the County.

To establish a baseline from which to make decisions, we compared standards established in the DeKalb County Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan 2000-2010 to those established by other counties in the preparation of their parks and recreation master plans. The two counties used for comparison include Fairfax County, Virginia, and Gwinnett County, Georgia. We also looked at standards established by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA). (Table 1)

METHODOLOGY

DeKalb County, Ga.

To determine provision standards for DeKalb County, the authors of the DeKalb County Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan 2000-2010 consulted a number of sources, including historical provision of service, public preferences, NRPA guidelines, and the current standards in "benchmark" communities. The consultants took an extensive inventory of existing facilities and compared the data to the county's estimated 1998 population to determine "current" level of service. To determine a benchmark standard, the consultants surveyed the provision standards of five counties that share demographic characteristics with DeKalb and have been recognized as outstanding agen-

cies by the NRPA. The surveyed results were combined to create the benchmark standard.

Benchmark agencies:

- Fairfax County, VA.
- Gwinnett County, GA.
- Hamilton County, OH.
- Johnson County, KS.
- Wake County, NC.

The consultants then compiled data on the level of service of each facility and public preferences (derived from surveys and public meetings), and benchmark and national standards to determine a realistic "Target Standard" for the County.

For each facility, the plan lays out the existing level of service, compares it to the benchmark standard, and provides a target standard, which may or may not be equal to, less than, or in some cases, greater than the benchmark standard. Unfortunately, insight into the analysis for actually developing the benchmark and target standards is not provided in the plan.

Gwinnett County, Ga.

The preparers of the ____ (check date) Gwinnett County ____ Plan used a combination of accepted industry standards (based upon the NRPA), market-driven factors (demand, trends, and demographics), and past and present circumstances of the community in order to determine provision standards for the county.

The standards were established by:

- compiling the required demographic data (historic and projected, by age cohort groupings and census tract)
- completing the detailed inventory of all publicly-accessible parks and facilities within Gwinnett County in order to identify distribution of each facility type
- reviewing the standards proposed by the NRPA, as well as those employed by other jurisdictions.
- identifying trends in recreation participation and facility design and assessing their implications on facility provision in the county/
- undertaking public consultation program to identify issues and discuss areas of facility over and under supply

Fairfax County, VA.

Information is not provided on how the standards were developed for the Fairfax County Parks & Recreation Master Plan.

RECREATION CENTERS

The DeKalb County Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan 2000-2010 DeKalb (pp. 13, 22) groups all indoor community facilities under the single classification of "Recreation Center." Recreation Centers can include a broad range of amenities from indoor basketball courts to meeting rooms. The plan assumes that facilities typically range from 50,000 SF to 100,000 SF, and serve virtually every sector of the population.

The plan claims that the average center is currently 20,452 SF, which is undersized and cannot serve the population optimally.

Benchmark and Target Standard:

The plan lists a benchmark standard as 1 sq ft/person, and sets the target standard for DeKalb County at the same level.

Gwinnett County, GA.

The Gwinnett plan includes a broad category for "Indoor Community Facilities," and within that category are five distinct types: Community Centers, Activity Buildings, Senior Recreation Centers, All of the Above (large facilities that include the above types), and Gymsnasiums. There is no single standard listed for the greater classification, but rather standards for each type (See table.)

INDOOR COMMUNITY FACILITIES STANDARD

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Community Centers | 1 per 100,000 pop. |
| Activity Buildings | 1 per 50,000 pop. |
| Senior Recreation Centers | 1 per 75,000 pop. |
| All of the Above (CCs, ABs, & SRCs) | 1 per 30,000 pop. |
| Gymnasiums | 1 per 20,000 pop. |

In Section 6 of the plan, each type is explained in more detail. Services, provision level, size, and operation are all discussed and a comparison of existing levels to standard levels is included (for implementation purposes.)

Fairfax County, VA.

The Parks and Recreation section of the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2007 contains two categories corresponding to recreation centers: "REC centers including indoor aquatics, fitness and other community uses" and "Indoor Gyms." There is no detailed description or qualification of the particular standards that are provided, aside from the initial explanation of how standards are arrived at for the County.

STANDARDS FOR FAIRFAX COUNTY:

| | |
|---|---------------|
| RECenters including Indoor Aquatics, Fitness and other Community Uses | 1.1 sf/person |
| Indoor Gyms | 2.8 sf/person |

NRPA Standards

The 1990 handbook does not include a standard for recreation centers.

AQUATIC FACILITIES

Dekalb County, GA

The Dekalb County Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan 2000-2010 (pp. 13, 25) groups all swimming pool facilities into the single model: "Family Aquatic Centers." The plan states capacity levels to be a minimum of 450 for outdoor and 1200 for indoor. According to the plan, each center usually includes a minimum of three separate pools with varying complementary amenities.

The plan recommends two types of aquatic facilities, community pools and signature aquatic centers, for future implementation; however, the provision standard given only refers to the broad category.

BENCHMARK AND TARGET STANDARDS:

The benchmark standard given in the plan is .6 sq ft/person; however, the existing level is only .11 sq ft/person, which means that Dekalb County has less than 20% of what they believe they should have. Therefore, they set a realistic target standard at .24 sq ft/person.

Gwinnett County, GA

The Gwinnett plan (pp. 9, 127, 128) identifies four types of aquatic facility and provides a standard for each type. The four types are: Indoor lane/competition pools, Indoor leisure/family pools, Outdoor lane/competition pools, and Outdoor leisure/family pools. Finally, the plan also gives a standard for All Outdoor Pools, which is simply the sum of the standards of the two outdoor types. See Table:

AQUATICS STANDARD

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Indoor Lane/ Competition Pools | 1 per 80,000 pop. |
| Indoor Leisure/ Family Pools | 1 per 200,000 pop. |
| Outdoor Lane/ Competition Pools | 1 per 80,000 pop. |
| Outdoor Leisure/ Family Pools | 1 per 80,000 pop. |
| Outdoor Pools - All | 1 per 40,000 pop. |

In developing the standards, the County recognized that demand for leisurely outdoor aquatic activities greatly exceeds that for indoor aquatic activities, therefore, the stan-

dards are much higher. The plan is primarily concerned with provision of outdoor leisure pools, because they offer the most appeal to the community. The plan notes that nationwide, few recreation departments are building new lane pools (the demand of which is largely met by private institutions), choosing instead to provide outdoor leisure pools.

Fairfax County, VA

The Parks and Recreation section of the Fairfax County plan includes indoor aquatic facilities into the Recreational Centers category (discussed previously) and has a separate category for "Outdoor Family Aquatics Facilities."

The standard for outdoor pools given in the plan is 1 site/570,000. The standard seems extremely low (and may not even be correct); however, methodology for arriving at the standard is not provided in the plan. Possible explanations could include that there are more incorporated cities in Fairfax County which provide these services and that the cooler climate (compared with Georgia) in Northern Virginia creates a lower demand for outdoor facilities.

NRPA Standards:

The NRPA lists a single category for "swimming pool." The standard is 1 pool/20,000 people.

ATHLETIC/BALL FIELDS

DeKalb County, GA

The DeKalb County (pp.14, 27) plan lists two categories for ball/athletic fields: "Ballfields" and "Soccer fields." Ballfields is a broad category that groups all of the major field types—baseball, softball, football, and possibly soccer (the plan is unclear). The plan claims that today, these fields are built in complexes of 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, and 16 fields. One presumes that such complexes include a mixture of the listed types, although this is not explicitly stated in the plan.

The plan lists a special category for soccer fields because "interest in and demand for soccer fields is increasing, with DeKalb's growing diverse population." The plan notes that, although demand for the other field types currently outstrips supply, "the availability of baseball/softball/football fields is much greater than that of soccer."

BENCHMARK STANDARD:

- 120 fields for a population of 598,600 (approx. 1 field/5,000)
- 1 soccer field/10,000

A comparison of DeKalb's existing facilities with the benchmark standard found that the County is above the standard athletic fields. However, youth sports associations have made a strong case for additional fields. Therefore the target standard is higher than the benchmark

TARGET STANDARD:

- 4,275 people per baseball/softball/football field
- 10,000 people per soccer field

Gwinnett County, GA.

The Gwinnett plan (pp.97, 110-116) lists three types of fields, and provisions for each, under the heading "Sports Fields." The three types are: "Baseball/Softball Diamonds," "Soccer Fields," and "Football Fields."

The plan provides some information about soccer fields and baseball/softball diamonds (although not football), which qualifies the standards. According to the plan, the well-documented growth of soccer in the late 1990s significantly increased demand for soccer facilities. The plan notes that participation rates appear to be leveling off among youth; however, participation among ethnic communities is expected to remain strong, and participation of adults is expected to increase in the coming years. The plan notes that baseball and softball have the highest participation rate for organized sports in the county. However, local and national trends suggest that participation is declining among youth, although adult participation is remaining strong.

SPORTS FIELDS

| | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| Baseball / Softball | |
| Diamonds | 1 per 5,000 pop. |
| Soccer Fields | 1 per 6,000 pop. |
| Football Fields | 1 per 35,000 pop. |

Fairfax County, VA.

The Fairfax County plan separates athletic fields into 5 categories: "Rectangle Fields (soccer, football, lacrosse, field hockey, cricket fields)," "Adult Softball Diamonds with Skinned Infields," "Youth Softball Diamonds with Skinned Infields," "Adult Baseball Diamonds with Grassed Infields," and "Youth Baseball Diamonds with Grassed Infields." The baseball/softball fields are clearly much more specifically identified than the other fields. The specialized design of baseball and softball fields as compared to the more versatile design of rectangle fields may account for this. However, perhaps because of the numerous types included under the rectangular fields category, the standard for is very high (see table below.)

THE STANDARDS FOR EACH ARE AS FOLLOWS:

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Park Facility Population-based Countywide | |
| Rectangle Fields | |
| (soccer, football, lacrosse, field hockey and cricket fields) | 1 field/2,700 |
| Adult Softball Diamonds with Skinned Infields | 1 field/22,000 |
| Youth Softball Diamonds with Skinned Infields | 1 field/8,800 |
| Youth Baseball Diamonds with Grassed Infields | 1 field/7,200 |
| Adult Baseball Diamonds with Grassed Infields | 1 field/24,000 |

NRPA Standards

The NRPA handbook lists six classifications that correspond to the athletic/ball fields. The type classifications are: Baseball (Official), Baseball (Little League), Field Hockey, Football, Soccer, and Softball.

STANDARDS:

| Facility / Park Type Recommended Standard | |
|---|------------------|
| Baseball (Official) | 1 field / 5,000 |
| Baseball (Little League) | 1 field / 30,000 |
| Field hockey | 1 field / 20,000 |
| Football | 1 field / 20,000 |
| Soccer | 1 field / 10,000 |
| Softball | 1 field / 5,000 |

The handbook provides additional information for and about each field type. Official baseball fields tend to be part of neighborhood complexes. Little league baseball fields should be lighted and be part of a larger community complex. The handbook states that field hockey fields and football fields are often part of a baseball, football, soccer complex in a community park or adjacent to a high school. For soccer fields, the handbook recommends evaluating the popularity of the sport in the area before applying the standards. It also suggests that soccer fields be included in neighborhood parks. Finally, the handbook suggests that softball fields can be used for youth baseball, as well.

TENNIS COURTS

DeKalb County

The DeKalb County plan has a specific category for tennis courts (pp. 29). The plan does not provide much analysis of trends either national or local regarding demand facilities. The plan suggests that appropriate areas for tennis courts are: "community parks" (40 to 200 acres) and/or "neighborhood parks" (4 to 10 acres). The plan also recommends that the County consider closing small community courts and constructing a revenue-generating "tennis center."

BENCHMARK AND TARGET STANDARDS

The benchmark standard for tennis courts is 1 court/5,400 people (111 courts for population of 598,600). At the time of the plan's writing, DeKalb had 105 tennis courts. Therefore, the benchmark standard was close in reach, and the target standard would be set equal to the benchmark standard.

Gwinnett County, GA.

The Gwinnett plan (pp 97, 132) includes tennis courts, along with basketball courts and sand volleyball courts, under the broader category "Outdoor Courts." The plan provides standards for each of the three types of outdoor courts, but no single standard for the broader category is given. In developing the standard for tennis courts, the County took inventory of existing facilities, including private courts.

The plan recommends a provision standard of 1 court/4,000 people. Evaluating existing courts revealed that the current number is sufficient; however, the plan makes an argument in Section 6 that tennis courts should be supplied in nearly every community park. Therefore, the consideration of new tennis courts should be dictated in part by new park development, and the standard should only be loosely considered in this case.

Fairfax County, VA.

Interestingly, the Fairfax County plan does not include a standard for tennis courts.

NRPA Standards

For tennis courts, the NRPA suggests 1 court / 2,000 people. The handbook also recommends that courts be constructed in batteries of 2-4 and included in neighborhood and/or community parks, or adjacent to a school.

BASKETBALL COURTS

DeKalb County, GA

The DeKalb County plan (pp.14, 31) lists "basketball courts" as a single category with a specific provision standard. The plan suggests, as it does for tennis courts, that community and neighborhood parks are appropriate sites for basketball courts.

BENCHMARK AND TARGET STANDARDS:

According to an existing facilities survey, the County is very close, in terms of sheer numbers, to the benchmark standard of 1 court/10,000 people. The County (at the time of writing the plan) currently has 1 court per/10,146. Therefore, the target standard is set equal to the benchmark standard.

However, the plan notes that members of the community have requested additional facilities and that links have been suggested between basketball and opportunities to reduce youth crime and other at-risk behavior. Therefore, one assumes that the standard should not be considered a maximum.

Gwinnett County, GA.

As was noted previously, the Gwinnett County count play (pp. 97, 134) lists basketball courts, along with tennis courts and sand volleyball courts, under the broad heading of "Outdoor Courts." The plan notes that basketball courts are essential in meeting the needs of youth recreation. As in the case of tennis courts, the plan recommends that basketball courts be included in nearly every park in the County.

The recommended standard is 1 court/10,000 people (the same as DeKalb County).

Fairfax County, VA.

The Fairfax County plan does not provide a standard for basketball courts.

NRPA Standards

The NRPA does not make a distinction outdoor and indoor basketball courts, but has a single category. The handbook suggests a provision standard of 1 court/5,000 people.

The organization also suggests that outdoor courts be included in neighborhood and community parks, as well as active recreation area in other park settings.

GOLF COURSES

DeKalb County, GA

The DeKalb County (pp.32) plan has a category entitled "golf courses." It is notable that the plan uses "courses" as opposed to "number of

holes" in its analysis of golf facilities. An inventory of existing facilities shows that the County has 1 course/299,300, and recommends adding one facility to the three that already exist. The plan is unclear whether private facilities were considered in the evaluation.

BENCHMARK AND TARGET STANDARDS

The benchmark standard for golf courses is 1 course/138,617 people. The benchmark is much higher than the current (at the time of writing the plan) level of service. Therefore, the target standard is set at a more achievable level of 1 course/200,000 people.

Gwinnett County, GA.

Interestingly, the Gwinnett County standards do not include golf.

Fairfax County, VA.

The Fairfax plan measures golf by number of holes, as opposed to number of courses. The standard level of service is 1 hole/3,200 people.

NRPA Standards

The NRPA has three classifications for the category "Golf," and are measured by course, as opposed to hole. The classifications are: "Par 3 (18-hole)," "9-hole Standard," and "18-hole Standard."

For a 9-hole standard course, the NRPA suggests a standard of 1 course/25,000 people. For an 18-hole standard course, a standard of 1 course/50,000 people is suggested. No provision standard is provided for a Par 3 course.

COUNTY PARK ACREAGE

Dekalb County

The Dekalb County plan (pp. 33) includes a single category called "County Park Acreage." The plan briefly compares two types of parks: neighborhood and community parks. Neighborhood parks are much smaller and have smaller service radii, while community parks are larger and serve more people. Both, however, can contain a wide range of programmed and un-programmed space.

BENCHMARK AND TARGET STANDARDS

The benchmark standard for park acreage is 23 acres/1,000 people. The existing level provision in Dekalb County is 6 acres/1,000, well below the benchmark. Therefore, the plan recommends that the County set the target at the national standard of 18 acres/1,000 people.

Gwinnett County, GA.

The Gwinnett County plan lists five classifications for park acreage under the broad heading of "Parkland." The first class is called "Parkland-County, City, and Federal" and includes all parkland. The next class is a subclass of the first called "Parkland-County Only." The next three classifications are subclasses within county parkland called "County Parkland (Community)," "County Parkland (Open Space)," and "County Parkland (Other)." The plan does not offer additional analysis of the parkland categories; however, they are somewhat self-explanatory.

The standards of provision for each category are listed in this table:

| PARKLAND | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Parkland-County, City, Federal | 20 acres/1,000 pop. |
| Parkland-County Only (All) | 15 acres/1,000 pop. |
| County Parkland (Community) | 7 acres/1,000 pop. |
| County Parkland (Open Space) | 7 acres/1,000 pop. |
| County Parkland (Other) | 1 acres/1,000 pop. |
| Fairfax County, VA. | |

The Fairfax County plan provides park acreage standards for two categories: "Local Parkland" and "District and County Wide Parkland."

The plan lists suitable recreational activities for applicable acreage under the two designations. "Local Parkland" acreage includes land suitable for: publicly owned local parks, publicly accessible urban parks, and privately owned local parkland. "District and County Wide Parkland" acreage includes land suitable for: publicly owned district or county wide parks, Regional, state and federal parks, or portions thereof, that provide District and Countywide-serving recreation activities.

The standard for Local Parkland is 5 acres per 1,000 people.

The standard for District and County Wide Parkland is 13 acres per 1,000 people.

NRPA Standards

The NRPA suggests that any park system, at a minimum, be composed of a "core" system of parklands with a total of 6.25 to 10.5 acres of developed open space per 1,000 people.

A total of at least 6.25 to 10.5 acres per 1,000 people is suggested for local or "close-to-home" space. This category is broken into three subclasses: "Mini-park," "Neighborhood Park," and "Community Park." Mini-parks have a recommended standard of .25 to .5 acres/1,000 people, neighborhood parks have a standard of 1 to 2 acres/1,000 people, and community parks are recommended at 5 to 8 acres/1,000 people.

A standard provision of 15-20 acres/1,000 people is recommended for "Regional Space," which is further broken down into "Regional/Metropolitan Parks," and "Regional Park Reserves." A standard of 5 to 10 acres/1,000 people is recommended for regional/metro parks; however, a standard is not provided for regional park reserves.

OTHER STANDARDS

DeKalb County's plan does not include standards for a host of other facility types that are often included in other Counties' parks and recreation plans. For example, both Gwinnett and Fairfax Counties provide standards for skate parks, which in recent years have proven to be quite important to youth recreation. Another example is dog parks. Although the DeKalb plan mentions dog parks as a desirable use to be included in neighborhood and community parks, no analysis or standard is provided in the plan. This differs markedly from the Fairfax plan, which has two dog park standards, one for those that are neighborhood-serving, and another for those that serve the greater region.

NOTE: add information on standards for dog parks, aquatic facilities, skate parks, lighting, historic properties, lacrosse, cricket, and other nontraditional activities

Public Participation

6.0

6.1 Overview

During the process of developing a parks and recreation master plan, it is important that citizens and stakeholders (including those who do and those who do not utilize assets) have an opportunity to share their thoughts, concerns, and suggestions. For this project, there was an extensive outreach effort by the project team to provide these opportunities. A random public survey was conducted to obtain statistically valid responses from households across the County. Five public meetings were conducted – one each of each of the five political Districts. At each meeting, citizens had an opportunity for input during small group sessions, and all of their comments are documented.

Department of Parks and Recreation employees were interviewed during four separate sessions. They offered their thoughts, observations and opinions about the needs of the Department, and how to improve parks, facilities, operations and programs. Division leaders were also interviewed individually, and their comments were recorded.

The Board of Commissioners serves as the legislative branch of the DeKalb County government. The Board is comprised of seven part-time commissioners, all elected to a four-year term. DeKalb County is divided into five districts with one commissioner serving each

district. There are also two “super districts,” one on the east end of the county and the other on the west end, each making up about half of the county population. Each super district is served by one commissioner. Four of the seven Commissioners were interviewed individually. They have provided invaluable insight and perspective on the Department.

The DeKalb County Parks and Recreation Department Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) consists of 11 members; each of the County Commissioners appoints one member, and one is appointed by the CEO, one by the DeKalb Municipal Association, one by the DeKalb County Board of Education, and one by the DeKalb Legislative Delegation. The purpose of the board is “to provide advice on the types of activities, necessary facilities, general direction and to assist the Park and Recreation Department in their efforts to provide leisure services to all citizens of DeKalb County.” The CAB was interviewed twice during the planning process – the first being early on in the process, and the second after the public meetings were completed.



Figure 2.1

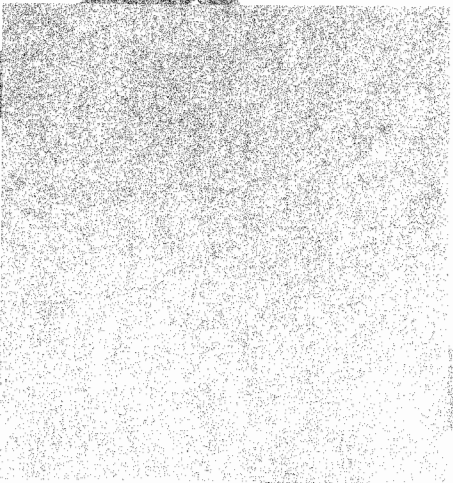


Figure 2.2

6.2 Public Survey

Dekalb County conducted a Community Interest and Opinion Survey in the spring and summer of 2007 to assist in the development of its ten-year master plan for parks, recreation programs, facilities, greenspace and governance of the park system. The survey was designed to obtain statistically valid results from households throughout Dekalb County. The survey was administered by a combination of mail and phone contact.

Leisure Vision, an experienced national research organization, worked extensively with Dekalb County officials, as well as members of the EDAP, Inc. project team in the development of the survey questionnaire. This work allowed the survey to be tailored to issues of strategic importance to effectively gauge current conditions and perceptions and plan the future system. Leisure Vision mailed surveys to a

random sample of 5,000 households in Dekalb County. Approximately three days after the surveys were mailed each household that received a survey also received an electronic voice message encouraging them to complete the survey. In addition, about two weeks after the surveys were mailed Leisure Vision began contacting households by phone. Those who indicated that they had not returned the survey were given the courtesy option of completing it by phone.

The goal was to obtain a minimum total of 1,000 completed surveys. This goal was exceeded, with a total of 1,076 surveys having been completed. The results of the random sample households has a 95% level of confidence that is accurate to within $\pm 3.0\%$.

A summary of the major survey findings is as follows:

- Seventy percent (70%) of respondent households visited Dekalb County parks and recreation facilities during the past year. Of these, 60% rated the facilities as either "excellent" (10%) or "good" (50%).

- Fifteen percent (15%) of respondent households have participated in recreation programs offered by Dekalb County during the past year. Of these, 69% rated the programs as either excellent (19%) or good (50%).

- Friends and neighbors (54%) are how many respondents learned about Dekalb County programs and activities.
- Dekalb County Parks and Recreation was the most frequently mentioned organizations

that 41% of respondent households use for parks and recreation programs and services, followed closely by the State of Georgia Parks (39%), churches (35%), private/public schools (29%), and cities in Dekalb County (22%).

- The types of parks and recreation facilities that the highest percentage of respondents rated as either "excellent" or "good" are: park sites (49%), trails (37%), playgrounds (36%), picnic shelters/pavilions (36%) and outdoor athletic fields (33%).

- The parks and recreation facilities that the highest percentage of respondents have a need for are: small neighborhood parks (67%), walking and biking trails (64%), picnic areas and pavilions (60%), nature trails and nature centers (50%), historic sites and museums (49%), large regional parks (49%) and indoor fitness and exercise facilities (49%).

- For all 32 facilities in Dekalb County, less than 25% of respondent households indicated the facility completely meets the needs of their household.

- Facilities that respondents rated as the most important are: walking and biking trails (30%), small neighborhood parks (27%) and indoor fitness and exercise facilities (17%).

- The programs that the highest percentage of respondent households have a need for include: adult fitness and wellness programs (56%), water fitness programs (41%), nature programs (38%), special events (33%) and adult art, dance, performing arts (33%).



- For all 18 programs, less than 20% of respondents indicated that the program completely meets the needs of their household.
- The programs as the most important are: adult fitness and wellness programs (38%), water fitness programs (18%), senior adult programs (16%) and adult art, dance, performing arts (16%).
- Based on the sum of their top 4 choices, the programs that respondent households participate in the most are: adult fitness and wellness programs (21%) and nature programs (10%).
- There are five actions that over 50% of respondents are very supportive of for DeKalb County to take: renovate existing playgrounds and picnic areas (60%), purchase land to develop passive parks/recreation facilities (59%), purchase land to preserve open space (55%), renovate existing walking and biking trails (54%), and develop new walking and biking trails (53%).
- Based on the sum of their top four choices, the actions that respondents would be most willing to fund include: purchase land to preserve open space (28%), purchase land to develop passive parks/recreation facilities (26%), renovate existing playgrounds and picnic areas (23%) and develop new walking and biking trails (22%).
- Sixty-three percent (63%) of respondents are either very supportive (29%) or somewhat supportive (34%) of implementing or increasing the fees for recreation and cultural facilities, programs, and services to help pay for increased operating expenses.
- Respondents indicated they would allocate \$30 out of every \$100 allocation of park funding for improvements within existing parks and facilities.
- Seventy-three percent (73%) of respondents indicated they would either vote in favor of (47%) or might vote in favor (26%) of a bond referendum to fund the acquisition, improvement, and development of the parks, trails, green space, and recreation facilities.
- Sixty-six percent (66%) of respondents indicated they were either very supportive (37%) or somewhat supportive (29%) of supporting a dedicated DeKalb County funding source for the parks and recreation system in the County.
- Ninety percent (90%) of respondents indicated that parks and recreation is either very important (70%) or somewhat important (20%) to the livability of DeKalb County.

6.3 Public Meetings

The DeKalb County Department of Parks and Recreation hosted five public meetings throughout the county from June 25th through July 16th, , 2007. The intent of the meetings was to engage members of the public in the planning process and to assess the needs and desires of current and future park users. Each meeting included a short presentation, a question and comment portion, as well as small group breakout sessions geared toward public input. In general, each meeting yielded unique concerns and suggestions, but a number of key similarities also clearly emerged.

The first public meeting was held June 25th at the Gresham Recreation Center in south DeKalb County. Participants broke into two focus groups for discussions. A number of attendees felt that recreational facilities and programs are in short supply, and that more should be provided. Both groups identified a need for increased recreational opportunities for senior citizens.

There was also concern over safety and security in parks and facilities. Many noted the lack of lighting in and around facilities as a major issue. Maintenance was identified as a significant issue, and is one reason recreational facilities are under used. Some noted that participation in programs and use of facilities is unaffordable to many residents. Lack of awareness of assets and programs among residents was also identified as a possible cause, and was attributed to poor communications on the part of the County. The county's summer programming for youth was noted as a strong point that should be maintained. Some expressed satisfaction with walking trails and greenspace as well, and added that these should be expanded.

A second meeting was held on June 28th at the Hamilton Recreation Center in Scottsdale. Biking was identified as an important issue to many attendees, and suggestions were made to expand trails for biking and other uses. Skate parks were also important to the meeting participants. The most pervasive theme at the meeting was the need for increased publicity and use of parks. Participants suggested that the County develop promotional events and activities in order to spread knowledge about parks and recreational facilities. Greenspace and youth summer activities were identified as strong points in recreational services. Many felt parks are unsafe and not maintained well. Some also suggested that better coordination between schools and the County is necessary.

The third public meeting was held July 9th at Luscious Sanders Recreation Center in Lithonia. A major theme at this meeting was the need for expanded opportunities for tennis.

Security and maintenance were a major concern for users. Many wanted additional lighting for tennis courts. Affordability of programs was a concern, but there were also suggestions about raising fees to pay for needed improvements. A significant theme was poor communication between residents and the Department. Some expressed frustration over the previous planning of Wade Walker Park. The incident resulted in some public distrust with the Department. Many gave high points for playgrounds, greenspace, and senior programs. Some also noted that the Citizen Advisory Board is a useful institution that should be maintained.

The fourth public meeting was held July 12th in Decatur at the Mason Mill Recreation Center. One of the most important issues that emerged during the meeting is the desire for more trails for mountain biking as well as multi-purpose uses. Attendees also expressed a desire to maintain and increase the number of multi-use facilities. Being a relatively affluent part of the county, another issue that emerged is the need for the County to improve opportunities for private initiatives, such as volunteering and philanthropic giving. Maintenance, security, communications and information were identified as areas in need of much improvement. Participants felt that these issues contributed to under use of recreational facilities and parks. On the other hand, participants identified opportunities for senior citizens as an area of strength to be maintained.

The fifth and final meeting was held on July 28th at the Lynwood Recreation Center in northern DeKalb. Security and maintenance

were areas identified in need of improvement. These issues, along with poor communication and lack of awareness among residents, were associated with under use of County facilities. Lack of parking was another issue. Summer youth programs were identified as a strong point.

6.4 Interviews with Department Employees

Interviews with Department employees were conducted in four separate on-site sessions over a two-day period. Interviews revealed a number of common issues, many of which are interrelated and include security, equipment, marketing, administrative structure, recreational programming, budgeting, financial administration, maintenance, policies and procedures and human resources issues.

Most of the issues identified by employees relate to the over arching issue of resources — funding, staff, and equipment — both in terms of amount available and how they are organized and distributed. Employees noted that the lack of capital improvement financing has left the Department under financed especially in critical needs areas. Lack of funding has implications for a number of areas, such as maintenance scheduling, where the Department is forced to choose between emergency repairs, long term or deferred maintenance. Vandalism, also identified as a major problem, has a significant impact on maintenance. Some suggested that higher fees be charged for facility usage in order to mitigate some of the budget shortfalls.

Lack of funding has resulted in understaffing and un-met equipment needs. The interviews suggest that understaffing has wide-ranging implications, from administration to maintenance, and has contributed to low-morale and high turnover in the department. Organization and employee distribution was also identified as a concern. In terms of administrative structure, a common theme throughout the interviews was that, while hierarchical structure is clearly defined, communication is lacking. Employees feel that they are unable to perform their day-to-day tasks as a result of these chasms.

The need for more and better assets was pervasive throughout the interviews. Another theme was the need for efficiency in managing Department resources. Information and communication, as well as administrative structure, are key issues in this regard. A number of employees noted that they are not empowered to make decisions on day-to-day operations, and that communication with superiors is often limited. Some interviewees suggested that more standardization in operations would improve efficiency. Among the suggestions were: alignment of financial decision-making, an automated work order system for maintenance, more clearly defined procedures, and a manual of policies and procedures.

6.5 Interviews with Executive Team

A prevalent issue that emerged from interviews with the executive team, which consists of the heads of the four divisions in the Department as well as the Department Director, is that the

Department needs a clear vision and direction for the future. The desire was to focus on future goals and objectives and the means of achieving those results. Some of the parks inventoried in the Greenspace report are not listed in the County's new inventory matrix, and vice-versa. This discrepancy could be due in part to name changes for specific parks – one park may be listed under one name in the Greenspace report, and a different name in the County inventory.

Some felt the Department was 'top-heavy' and too many decisions and responsibilities fell on those in senior and executive positions.

Some thought the Department could be restructured so decision-making is more dispersed throughout the department. Some suggested a more codified approach to administration, in which policies, procedures, and expectations are laid out in a manual.

Interviewees identified the current system of green space acquisition as one example that could be improved if Parks and Recreation staff were involved in the process. Criteria need to be established for purchase decisions to ensure a clear relationship to the county's recreation needs and future. The same issues apply to new facility construction. One concern is that emphasis has been placed on new facility construction, while other needs, such as maintenance and modernization of current facilities, are not being met.

Funding is another major concern. Most feel that a sustainable source and system of funding is essential, not only to expand services and facilities, but also to maintain the current level of service. Some suggested the need for CIP funding for maintenance and the more traditional capital improvements.

Maintenance is one of the most pervasive issues. Many of the county's community centers were built some 50 years ago, and are in dire need of modernization or replacement. Some facilities do not have air conditioning, which has obvious implications for their continuing use, particularly in summertime. While funding is a concern when considering maintenance issues, it is only one of many operational issues mentioned. Prioritization of existing funding allocations and a focus on efficiency could significantly improve maintenance problems. Maintenance is currently largely reactionary, focusing on things like mowing and litter pick-up, while a majority of funds are focused on programming often at the expense of long-term maintenance needs. A suggestion was made for a standardized system of maintenance provi-

sion, including a standard of care manual, time lines on deliverables, individual maintenance plans for each park, a refined preventive maintenance program and a standardized work order system.

Another major area of concern is the need for better communication with the public. Interviewees recognized the importance of a two-way dialogue between the department and the public if the needs of communities are to be met. However, many also noted that the department currently has no formal feedback mechanisms in place. Marketing for recreational facilities and programs could be improved, along with the web site as part of a wider effort to reach out to the public in an organized, seamless and systematic manner.

Better coordination with partners, especially schools and athletic associations, is needed. A management plan is needed to lay out the various responsibilities of both the department and the associations to improve efficiency and to ensure that assets will remain available for future generations. A few other issues also emerged from the interviews. Security is also clearly a concern. One interviewee suggested a special parks police unit be created that would report both to the police department and to the parks and recreation department. Another issue to emerge is a general concern about walkability and connectivity between the parks and enhanced public accessibility. Interviewees also noted the importance of affordability when it comes to facilities and programs provided by the county. Fees should not be so high that residents are financially barred from participating in recreational activities.

6.6 Interviews with Board of Commissioners

The overall feeling by the commissioners was that parks and recreation should enhance the overall quality of life for all DeKalb County residents. This involves looking at parks as part of our day-to-day lives. These facilities should also be intergenerational and focused on the family.

The consensus was that there is an overall lack of public open space within the county. One issue is that the County does not have one signature park that is a focal point such as Piedmont Park for Atlanta, Grants Park in Chicago, or Central Park in New York City. The County needs more spaces for playing fields and active uses. We should also take advantage of density and build parks where the people are. One overall thought was that the Department will need to be creative in acquiring land for new parks. The two golf courses in the county have much land that is not used for golf and could be developed into compatible parks. Watershed management provides an opportunity for acquisition. Other opportunities may arise due to the redevelopment of housing, apartments, malls, and other larger structures. There exists a need to evaluate all county property holdings for possible park and/or green space use.

Accessibility to the local community is important, and sidewalks are an important part of that. One commissioner strongly supports providing small parks closer to where people live. There is a need to improve and better utilize existing parks, and this should be the first priority. One commissioner commented

that many of the existing recreation facilities had reached the end of their life cycle and the best solution is to get bond money, tear them down, and start over.

Safety was viewed as a major issue. If people do not feel safe they will not use the parks. Being able to see police officers patrolling the parks will help. Another option would be to have an adopt-a-park program or a park watch program. It is important to get communities involved in making their parks safe. Increased site lighting and reorientation of site elements are suggested to improve passive surveillance by security controls and citizens.

There needs to be a stronger focus on health care and wellness. Poor nutritional habits and sedentary life styles result in obesity was cited as being a big problem, especially among children. One suggestion was to look into sponsors donating exercise equipment. There needs to be more exercise equipment and opportunities located within the parks. These could be donated by sponsors. There was a lot of discussion about youth at risk, but we also need to include seniors at risk. One approach of bringing the two populations together would be a mentoring program.

The Commissioners interviewed felt there need needed to be an emphasis on creative public/private partnerships, especially with the schools. Coordinating new schools with new parks just makes good fiscal, physical and functional sense. One approach would be to commit to a pilot study (one existing and one new or proposed project) as the first step of working together. Joint venturing with YMCA,

churches, and other organizations could result in mutually benefit operations. For example, with the YMCA, a partnership could involve them being in charge of indoor programs and the Department handling outdoor programs and activities.

Funding was viewed as a critical issue that was just going to get worse. The feeling was that there is not sufficient staff or funding to implement all the programs that are needed. It will be important to evaluate budgets and determine what is effective and what needs to be revised or eliminated. There is a need to address fee programs. There was a general feeling that existing fees were reasonable, but that more effort needed to be made to increase revenue and to provide programs that pay for themselves. Fees have not been increased in the recent past. Fees are not structured against real costs or market trends.

Another concern is that the County is reaching a crisis on the burden of maintaining a public labor force. Volunteerism and outsourcing were mentioned as ways to address this issue, but we have to understand it takes staff to manage contracts and to organize volunteers. There needs to be an organized core of volunteers that can provide meaningful value in all areas of park and recreation operations.

All of the commissioners interviewed believed that marketing was critical to the success of Parks and Recreation. The goal is to introduce people to these assets. There needs to be a strong outreach effort to reach constituents. This should include working with local churches and schools as well as local media

and newspapers. There could be more activities in the parks, including parties, festivals, concerts, and other events. Marketing needs to take advantage of the county hosted web page and television station. Except in very limited cases there is a need to move away from in-house hard copy flyers towards the information highway.

One commissioner said one of the biggest mistakes was to split maintenance for parks and recreation under the department and within facilities management. A return to the former maintenance arrangement is suggested. The idea was to rid of duplication of effort, but the results have not been positive. What is currently needed is a comprehensive list of what needs to be repaired.

One option mentioned was the development of an independent park district, while another option would be a multi-jurisdictional approach to guard against irrevocable losses and increased hindrances brought about through pending municipal annexations.

6.7 Interviews with Citizens Advisory Board

Interviews with the Citizens Advisory Board, conducted on August 28th, and focused on future directions for parks and recreation in DeKalb County. An overriding theme was to take a holistic and futuristic look at the parks and to provide something for every member of the family. It was pointed out that politics should be taken out of the process and parks and recreation should be viewed as a whole system rather than so many districts pitted against one another in order to determine the best way to utilize resources.

One issue was communicating with constituents. One idea was to establish an online survey. It was emphasized that parks and recreation need to be re-evaluated on a regular basis. One interviewee recommended continuing to build on the recommendations of the 2000 Parks and Recreation Plan.

Emphasis needs to be placed on the acquisition of multi-purpose facilities that can meet a variety of short and long range needs. It is important to serve seniors, teens, younger children, toddlers, and the handicapped, and to develop programming that meets these needs. Marketing of the recreation department needs to be part of the master plan process. It is important that people know about opportunities and activities. Sometimes children do not have the money to get involved. The County needs to address this issue through creative funding methods not currently used to ensure that fees are not the sole reason for someone to not participate in activities.

Specific issues included: lighting tennis centers; establishing multi-purpose recreation facilities that serve as regional attracters; renovating existing structures in parks; wi-fi in the parks; emphasizing horticulture; more aquatic centers; art programs; playground equipment for children under the age of three; facilities for pre-school; fitness equipment; and outdoor classrooms. Health and wellness for all ages and levels of ability was considered a major issue that needed to be addressed.

Maintenance is identified as a major concern. There are insufficient monies to maintain existing facilities, and concern about how to maintain the new recreation centers being built. There needs to be dedicated, ongoing funding for maintenance. It was felt that money needed to be allocated to county parks and recreation so the Department did not have to be totally dependent on bond referendums.

Public / private partnerships are critical to the success of the Department. Emphasis was on developing partnerships and sharing resources. One interviewee noted that the best counties in America work with school boards. It was stressed that the Department needed to think outside the box and get different associations, agencies and organized groups involved. The school board, police department, Board of Commissioners, and CEO should all be working together in helping with parks and recreation. There were discussions about the roles that private organizations, such as sports organizations, play in providing recreation opportunities. Some thought the best approach with sports associations is a combination of private for profit groups as well as some that are part

of Parks and Recreation. Private organizations could also assist with maintenance and in the renovation of sports fields and amenities.

A critical point was to see an equitable distribution to all parts of the county. There is and will be a need for more parks. All existing parks need to be brought up to a consistent standard. Some parks were viewed as an eyesore and require the decision to restore or demolish.

Access needs to be addressed at a broader level, including providing sidewalks and links to parks. Parks need to be close to where people live, work and gather. For example, it would be nice to have a park or open space within ten blocks for each resident, and major regional parks such as Arabia Mountain should be within 10 miles.

Trends Analysis

7.0

7.1 Introduction

What has changed is our entire philosophy of planning for parks, recreation, and open space as well as how we go about providing these resources for future generations. (Source: NRPA Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines – 1995)

An understanding of trends and their implications is essential as the population increases and the rate of demographic changes accelerate. Political, social, economic and technological changes all influence how we recreate. The parks and recreation departments of today are much different then they were even five years ago. Some of the public park and recreation trends across the country that are presenting challenges and opportunities for building successful systems include the following:

- Financial concerns, with traditional budget sources shrinking at the same time service demands and variety are increasing.

- Deteriorating park and recreation infrastructure resulting from age, use, abuse and deferred maintenance practices
- More local, state and federal requirements and expectations
- Enhanced demands for services for a diverse population
- Increased concern about holistic health and wellness
- Greater diversity of program requirements catering to different lifestyles
- Greater cultural diversity
- A changing work force
- Increasing competition for shrinking federal, state, and local funding resources
- Movement toward out-sourcing of operations
- Increased computerization
- Changing priority and public image of the importance of parks and recreation in competition with police, transportation, and other infrastructure needs
- Increasing crime, violence, drug use, and vandalism in communities and parks
- Declining quality of life in urban areas
- Increased public demand for participation, accountability, productivity and transparency in government

The top issue of concern for parks and recreation departments around the country is budget.

Across the country, people are recreating in less traditional ways than five years ago. Studies by the National Sporting Goods Association and American Sports Data, a research firm, show a dramatic decline in the past decade in such outdoor activities. (Louw, 2007)

Trends in the ways we work, conduct business and lead our lives have been predicted by respected futurist writers like Alvin Toffler in his books *The Third Wave* and *Power Shift*. As we continue to move toward an information-based economy, the typical work day involving going to an office and working 8:00 to 5:00 is changing. Telecommuting, flexible work schedules, and other alternative approaches are also becoming popular. Technologies such as Blackberries, wireless laptops, and web-

based activities make it easier to work from anywhere and at any time.

According to the SCORP 2008-2013 report, rapid urbanization and demographic shifts are resulting in the loss of natural resources, a greater demand for outdoor recreation opportunities and the need for diverse recreational offerings. Georgia's population is growing and will reach nearly 11 million by 2015. Statewide, over 106 acres are lost each day to development—55 acres/day in Atlanta alone. Georgia is also home to an increasingly diverse population in terms of ethnicity, age and income. Forty percent of Georgia's new residents are foreign-born. By 2015, ten percent of Georgia's population will be Hispanic and Georgia will have the largest proportion of African Americans when compared to the other top ten most populous states. As we grow more diverse, we are also seeing increases in both our elderly and youth populations. (SCORP 2008-2013)

Dekalb County, like many county parks and recreation departments, is suffering from the challenges that come with growing from a rural and suburban community to an urban center. The Urban Summit on Parks and Recreation adopted a national agenda in support of revitalizing urban parks and recreation in America. This national agenda is based on four guiding principles for urban parks and recreation:

- Urban parks promote health and wellness;
- Urban parks strengthen our diverse communities and stimulate economic development;
- Urban parks protect the environment;
- Urban parks and recreation educate, protect, and enrich America's youth.

The SCORP Report also identified Georgians' increasingly sedentary lifestyles and disconnection from nature as a major concern that is resulting in alarming health declines and a diminished conservation ethic. Another trend is that Americans and Georgians are financially supporting outdoor recreation at record levels. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of Georgians support public investments in parks and outdoor recreation areas, according to the telephone survey conducted for SCORP. Georgians are demonstrating their support for city and county bond referendums for local park improvements in record numbers.

7.2 Parks & Open Space Analysis

Parks, trails, open space and greenways are an essential component of the mission most parks and recreation departments serve. One common trend across the country is that demands on parks and open space continue to increase. One reason is that in many areas, the population is growing faster than a city or county's ability to provide recreation opportunities. Space scarcities for facilities such as trails, soccer fields, ball fields, play equipment areas and community centers is becoming more of an issue and challenge, especially in urban areas.

Traditional parks and playgrounds are what most people think of first when considering parks and recreation departments. In a national survey, playgrounds, park structures, trails, and open spaces were the facilities most often mentioned as components found within a park. Outdoor sport courts, spectator areas



and other seating, natural turf sports fields and concession areas were also included in the facilities by a majority of parks and recreation respondents. (Recreationmanagement.com)

A number of parks and recreation departments have emphasized redesigning existing parks and facilities to meet updated user demands and department goals. These improvements focus on more environmentally sustainable practices, multiuse recreation opportunities, improving accessibility, and flexibility in meeting user demands.

One current trend is to link parks, schools, neighborhoods and similar destinations together with green corridors and trail systems. Most parks and recreation departments have developed a comprehensive greenway and trail plan that explores opportunities for linking parks, open space, recreation facilities, and public gathering areas with existing, planned and desired residential areas and transportation routes. Greenway corridors have a capacity to utilize and appreciate major drainage ways, existing easements, rights-of-way, and abandoned transportation links through a community. These greenways offer a wide diversity of recreational opportunities within a natural setting such as walking, jogging, sightseeing, bird watching, picnicking, and interpretive areas.

In *Americans Outdoors* (1987), a report from the President's Commission, the protection of natural resources and open space was the highest first priority for the future. Although this is still a priority, there is also an emphasis to utilize our park lands efficiently in order to

meet the recreational needs of society.

Another trend is to develop parks that are based on the concept of walkability. That means developing parks that are within walking distance of neighborhoods, providing sidewalks and trails that connect to parks, and include walking trails in the parks themselves. A limitation in DeKalb County is that the parks are not currently conducive to walking. One problem is that neighborhoods are designed around cul-de-sacs that do not offer connectivity. With Wade Walker, for example, even people who live close to the park do not walk there because of man-made, natural and artificial barriers such as fencing, street layout, topography, and the design of the park.

For playgrounds, there is a trend away from the more traditional equipment and toward equipment that is age appropriate, challenging and creative. There is an emphasis on 'play value,' which refers to things that spontaneously encourage children to challenge themselves and reach out beyond the traditional rides and climbing equipment. These include things like climbing walls, boulders, and other creative approaches that include natural elements.

Rather than a "one-size-fits-all" approach to single playgrounds parks now offer areas and equipment appropriate for age, interest and ability. It is increasingly common to find one playground for infants, another for young children, another for older children and adults and yet one more for physically challenged visitors. Play spaces for adults and senior citizens are also gaining in popularity. These go

beyond the fitness trails we typically see.

Parks are being adapted to include more interaction between children and adults. This includes more linear park designs that can be used for long walks or long bike rides by children and adults.

Parks departments are seeking to adopt forward-looking policies that help protect natural resources, encourage sustainable economic development and preserve a standard of living. There is a sense of urgency for conserving natural resources and wildlife in the state due to expected population growth, resulting urbanization and land use competition.

7.3 Demographic Analysis

Parks and recreation use is being influenced by the generation known as the "Baby Boomers." Nationally, the two biggest demographic groups that have to be addressed are the baby boomers, which are in and nearing retirement, and their children, who are in their late 20s and 30s and are starting their own families. Much of the added pressure to get entire families involved is coming from the baby boomer generation. The baby boomer generation is moving into retirement and expects to stay active.

Shifts in ethnicity and culture do result in changes in recreation preferences. Also important is an understanding of the barriers or constraints to recreation participation, such as discomfort due to the perception of discrimi-

7.4 Technology

Technological changes have had a significant impact on recreation opportunities. New technologies have lead to new activities such as mountain-boarding, slack-lining, just to name a few. Many youth today are bored without technology, so outdoor recreation providers will need to find ways to challenge and attract them. Geo-caching, outdoor treasure hunts using handheld GPS (global positioning system), and similar "gadget" oriented activities should be considered. (SCORP 2007)

Technological advances have also lead to the creation of new materials, such as metals like titanium and alloys that are used to make bikes, skateboards, bats, and skis lighter and stronger than before. Manufacturers are using light weight, durable metals and improved synthetic fabrics for athletic shoes, clothing, tents, rackets and other recreation equipment.

Equipment-aided outdoor recreation can be costly to the consumer and to service providers. Park and recreation facility managers will increasingly be put in the position where the demand for a specific form of recreation activity may be cost prohibitive and may conflict with existing uses.

The Internet has become an integral part of most parks and recreation departments. The internet has increased access to information about opportunities for outdoor recreation and is used to efficiently communicate with the public on a real time basis.

nation and possible language barriers. The ability to pay for outdoor recreation can vary considerably as a result of income disparities. Outdoor recreation opportunities must also accommodate a growing active senior population as well as an expanding youth and special needs populations.

Due to population growth in the County, demand for outdoor recreation will soon outpace the supply of land and available recreation resources as well as the ability of recreation providers, including local and state government, to afford to meet this need. (SCORP)

7.5 Policy Trends

Policy and procedures had been relegated to fundamental personnel and administrative explanations and expectations. Modifications and updates were driven by changes in legislation handed down from Federal, State and local governance supplemented by interpretations and directives from a multitude of enforcement agencies, legal challenges and findings, judgments and court decisions. For these reasons the "shelf-life" of a policies and procedures handbook are intentionally short lived. The cost to litigate and/or defend one's self has become a financial burden further complicated by the ill prepared parties prosecuting or defending themselves. The well written, managed current and executed policies and procedures manual found in practice the more efficiently an agency can operate, prosecute and/or defend itself when challenged. Clearly written and easily understood policies remain critically important within the administration of personnel and human resources management. Long gone are the days when personnel decisions can be made on arbitrary or capricious terms.

The older form of policy and procedure statement and manuals continue to have relevance today. It is not uncommon to find expanded and widely diverse policies and procedure statements functioning in the dual role of stating expected and required practices for a multitude of activities to systematic compliance measurements. Reasons why these policy statements have grown in importance are exemplified in examples of Federal legislation directly impacting access-

sibility (Americans with Disabilities Act) and playground safety within park and recreation operations. Properly written and enforced policies and procedures will ensure consistency in operations and expectations, provide a professional organizational structure and will reduce administrative time. Proper policy and procedure writing requires systems design, testing, application, and revision. Policy and procedures are meant to educate thus requiring a "learning curve" to reach a satisfactory level as the readers become familiar with the department protocol within the workplace and with all assets.

No longer can a parks and recreation departments safely assume that the old style policy and procedure statements can adequately satisfy the greater needs and public expectations of today. The policy manual identifies the purpose of the agency, values, principals and the strategic approach adopted by the department. In addition to the "usual" the DeKalb County Department of Parks and Recreation should have (or develop where missing) the following policy and procedures enhancements. Each sub-area should begin with the approved policy statement(s) with approval and/or revision dates and the goal and objective statements for that area or specialty. An alphabetical listing of unique definitions utilized throughout the document is found within the "Recommendations" portion of this plan. Additional assistance in writing policy and procedures is found throughout the internet.

7.6 Delivery Systems

Annexation and Multi-Jurisdiction Consolidation

Multi-jurisdictional parks and recreation departments are gaining in popularity. In large part it is more efficient to combine resources in an effort to meet recreational needs. A common approach is for cities and counties to join forces since there is frequently an overlap in the services they offer. In Georgia, the City of Athens and Clarke County have established such a multi-jurisdictional entity. The largest multi-jurisdictional park system in the nation is found in the southeast in Jacksonville, Florida. The trends towards service specific consolidation are driven by many proven factors, including:

- Lower cost per any measurable unit of output
- Shared benefits
- Reductions in staffing levels
- Reduced asset redundancies
- Reduced taxes (millage rate)
- Increased program opportunities

The Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area is an example of a multi-jurisdictional initiative that protects and interprets natural and cultural resources in DeKalb, Rockdale and Henry Counties. The State of Georgia is working with each of these jurisdictions, the Arabia Alliance and local community groups to create a green corridor that will connect Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve, Panola Mountain State Park, the South River and the Monastery of the Holy Spirit to other resources in the area.

One issue across the country is the trend of small cities to move toward incorporation. When that happens, a city takes over control of the parks within their political boundary. In

DeKalb County, Dunwoody is one of several areas that may consider moving toward incorporation because they have a broad tax base that includes the Perimeter area. If one or more areas in the county become incorporated this would have an impact on the services offered by the County through a reduced tax base and loss of park assets.

Outsourcing

The trend is growing for parks and recreation departments to consider outsourcing selected tasks. Many have found it is more affordable with a better return on their investment by outsourcing maintenance tasks such as mowing, electronics, and other tasks that were once considered a staple of a parks department. Many departments also outsource the management of specialized facilities and programs such as golf courses, tennis centers, performing arts, aquatic facilities, senior centers, pre and after school programs, equestrian programs and some are also outsourcing an all inclusive management of recreating centers.

Other tasks frequently outsourced include food services, organization of special events, additional security for events, and other specialized activities. If anything, we will see more outsourcing because of limitations in funding. Departments are also finding that for many activities it is more economical and efficient to have private companies involved.

Existing Operational Structure & Department Organization

Parks and recreation departments are continuing to work toward improving operational efficiencies while meeting the needs of their constituents. The key for most departments is to establish a strong set of policies and procedures that help ensure a consistent approach that focuses on quality. Most departments also have an advisory board that plays a major role in the defining the direction for parks and recreation.

The traditional organizational structure within both the public and private sectors are changing significantly in response to several common factors. The common denominators include the following key considerations.

- The need to control and reduce costs for products and services generated.
- Improve the quality of products and services generated to the consumer.
- Exploit differences found within each operational unit,
- A greater need for autonomy among units to encourage initiative and innovation.
- Reduce conflicts in innovations and communications.
- Improve job sharing opportunities while expanding the value of all employees.

- A redefined organizational structure recognizes the differences in work styles, dress, culture and similar subtle differences that define the unit.

- The need for fewer levels of management (physically and functionally).

- The desire to empower workers to make decisions thus increasing the speed of responses required to resolve issues up and down a bureaucratic chain of command.

- The revised organizational structure reflects bottom up decision making with fewer differences in responsibility (not in pay) across each level. This allows for the creation of decision making networks with fewer levels in the chain of command. Further, this approach will result in efficient and attainable career paths for all levels of employees. Promotion becomes a reality again.

- With the increased reliance on technology to convey information and instructions there is less reliance on a middle managers level within the organization.

The DeKalb County Department of Parks and Recreation is in need of redefining its organizational structure to better delineate the roles and responsibilities of units and individuals. Further there is a need to streamline functional operations through the elimination of management redundancies and gaps in areas of responsibilities among employees at all levels. Common complaints expressed by employees include "there is no where to go within my position," "there are too many

bosses and not enough workers," and "it takes too long to get decisions made." Another concern is the submission of work orders by those not directly involved in the department or with little working knowledge of current work loads and ability to respond. Basically people are becoming overworked and not able to contribute positive thinking to problem resolutions. The revision of the organizational structure to the current "bottom - up" methodology can reduce employee numbers, reduce response time and control costs. This is never an easy task but it can pay significant dividends - including a boost to employee morale, quality of work, quantity of output and retention of employees and the knowledge they have accumulated within the agency.

Defining County's Core Services

It is important that DeKalb County clearly define their role and limitations in providing recreation services. This is a question that many parks and recreation departments have had to address in recent years. A popular trend is for departments to take the approach of providing basic services for free, but charging for other services.

Many departments develop business plans based on the recognition that recreation is becoming a business, and they have to find a balance between providing services and balancing budgets.

It is important to identify basic services that can be provided in each park and each recreation center. A common approach is to not charge for access to a park, or for activities such as playgrounds, picnic areas, open play areas, trails, and other similar features traditionally paid for through tax dollars.

The cost to create, upgrade and maintain these areas are value added expenses absorbed by government for a healthy and wholesome community.

The trend is towards charging fees to those utilizing and benefiting from unique or specialized programs. Although public parks are not expected to generate profits such programs are expected to return a reasonable portion of recognized cost. For example, fitness centers typically require additional staff as trainers and equipment monitors to calibrate and clean equipment after use. Further fitness equipment requires cost for replacement on a regular basis to reduce agency risk exposure. Fees can generate sinking funds to offset these added costs without compromising other budget line items. Recreation centers are a little different because activities typically have to be programmed.

One question is what role the County decides to take in regards to providing opportunities for children. There are a number of latchkey kids in poor neighborhoods that would most likely participate in after school recreation programs if there was no charge. The accepted trend in these cases involves active sponsorships and grants for scholarships and sustaining funding to help offset reoccurring costs.

Staffing

Staffing issues are closely connected to budget challenges. In large part because of budget constraints, respondents in a national survey from parks and recreation departments expect minimal changes in the number of paid employees staffing their facilities in the next few years. Most departments expect minor increases in full-time and part-time staff, with a slight decrease in the number of seasonal and temporary workers. (Recreation.com)

There is also a trend to bring in volunteers and/or outsourcing of basic responsibilities instead of hiring additional staff. A full staff may not be needed all the time.

Another national trend is that park professionals from the baby-boomer generation are retiring, and the result is an incredible drop in skill and experience for a parks department. (Westrup, 2006) These same retiring individuals can be seen as an important source of knowledgeable, reliable and experienced volunteers. Replacement workers may lack the training, management skill, education and experience to effectively provide the vision and leadership needed to move an organization forward. For the DeKalb County Department of Parks and Recreation, which has not developed comprehensive policy and procedure manual or career path opportunities for new employees, this loss of institutional memory is having a significant impact.

The most successful parks and recreation departments base staffing needs on the defined direction of the department and on the recreation programs being offered. Supervisors clearly define responsibilities and share those with staff. It is also important to empower and authorize staff to allow them to be more accountable and responsible.

NOTE: ... add section comparing staff numbers to those of other departments.

One trend is that parks and recreation departments are being more selective in the kinds of services they offer.

It is simply not viable to offer a smorgasbord of recreation opportunities to choose from. The department must be in regular communication with the park user population to ensure proper and adequate programming for THAT unique population of consumers.

One problem that many departments have had, including Dekalb County, is they offer programs. If there is not sufficient interest in the program it is cancelled. The result frustrates individuals who signed up, but were denied the recreation opportunity they expected. The Department then has a vacant time slot that could be used for other activities.

Many departments are utilizing interactive web-based applications to share information on programs with the public and allow them to sign up and pay online. Another popular trend is to have on-going, online surveys that give the public an opportunity to share their opinions.

One of the biggest complaints from parks and recreation users is they do not feel like their voices are heard. Some parks and recreation departments are exploring interactive web-based applications that allow constituents to voice a concern online. The agency responds immediately while providing the constituent with instructions on how they can track how their concern is being actively addressed.

Performance Measurement

Performance measures are being used by city departments to respond to increased demands for accountability and greater interest from public officials concerned with evaluating program effectiveness and allocating resources.

The best argument for increased funding in parks and recreation is to demonstrate and prove benefits garnered from the use of public assets. We must track and evaluate how the health of the users of our facilities, spaces and programs improves over time. We need to evaluate participation rates, durations of use or enrollment numbers. With an emphasis on health and wellness, the key is to engage with the public health community to learn the most effective surveillance and monitoring methods. We need to determine the long-term health and economic benefits associated with access to park and recreation resources.

One place to start is by working with community service providers and public health specialists. Public health surveillance systems, such as the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), School Health Policies and Programs Study (SHPPS), Youth Media Campaign Longitudinal Survey (YMCLS), Youth Risk Behavioral Surveillance System (YRBSS) and National Household Transportation Survey (NHTS) provide alternatives for measuring performance.

There are also other ways to measure performance. Input indicators tell the amount of resources that have been used for a specific

Customer Service

Public parks and recreation must remain customer oriented. Several professional studies support the contention that the experiences of one consumer can influence the purchasing decisions of several hundred other consumers. The high cost of losing a customer means: (a) the average wronged customer will tell 8 - 16 others, (b) 92% of unhappy customers never purchase the service/goods again, and (c) it costs five times as much to recruit a new customer than to retain an old customer (Biondo, 1990).

service or program. Output/workload indicators tell the units produced or services provided by a program. Efficiency/cost-effectiveness indicators tell us how the quantity of services compares to the costs of labor. Outcome/effectiveness indicators report the results, including the quality of programs and services.

Joint Ventures and Partnerships

One common trend is that parks and recreation departments are making more of an effort to form partnerships with other public and private organizations. More than 96 percent of parks and recreation departments around the country have formed some kind of partnership with the most common partners being local schools, local government and nonprofit organizations. The key is to look for partnerships that can grow and bring lasting value, rather than a one-time convenience arrangement.

Sports associations control most of the youth sports activities in the county and are among the most common partners for parks and recreation departments. DeKalb County currently works closely with sports associations, which operates under a Memorandum of Understanding. The MOU needs to be reevaluated each year when it is renewed. In the past this has not always happened.

Charitable social organizations—like YMCA/YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, Boy and Girl Scouts, and churches—provide outdoor recreation facilities for public use, some for a user-fee. Facilities typically consist of high-infrastructure sites (e.g., athletic fields for softball, baseball and soccer programs). Churches

in urban areas, particularly the large “mega” churches, are increasingly providing high-infrastructure facilities for their congregations and in many cases for the surrounding community. (SCORP)

One significant example of a non-profit partner in the provision of outdoor recreation opportunities is the PATH Foundation. Working with the state and several local governments, PATH has constructed more than 100 miles of hiking, biking and walking trails with endowments for perpetual maintenance. (SCORP)

Another popular partnership is with public and private school systems. There has been discussions for decades about schools and park departments working together to share resources. Ball fields could be used during the day by a school, and then in evenings and on weekends by park departments. With before-and-after-school programs, a parks and recreation department would utilize school facilities to offer programs for school-age kids.

There is a growing interest in the development of partnerships with health organizations. Lack of available or proper programming space has caused park departments to actively seek alternative solutions. Among current choices we find decentralized programs provided in store fronts, schools, churches, hospitals, community centers, and assisted living centers. Community-based initiatives such as NRPAs Health and Livability Summit provide opportunities for parks and recreation departments from around the country described how they incorporated public engagement in healthy behaviors in park and recreation programs.

Programming Inventory and Analysis

There have been significant changes in the types of programming offered by parks and recreation departments in recent years. Creating new and innovative programming options is one of the top five issues parks and recreation systems are concerned about. (Recmanagement.com) We have long passed the fiscal climate where park and recreation professionals can build a park, expand a trail or improve upon a recreational facility and leave it up to the public to use it. (Vinluan, 2006) In many parks and recreation systems, participation rates have dropped considerably over the years because of the drastic changes in society and life styles.

In a national survey, the programs most commonly offered by parks and recreation departments surveyed included holiday events and other special events, programming for youth sports teams, arts and crafts, day camps and summer camps and educational programs. Also popular is programming for adult sports teams, active older adults, swimming, sport training such as golf or tennis instruction, sports tournaments and competitions, teens, fitness programs and mind/body balance programs such as yoga and tai chi. (Recmanagement.com)

The top 10 programs parks and recreation departments are planning to add within the next three years include:

1. Environmental education
2. Fitness programs
3. Teen programming
4. Mind/body balance programs

5. Performing arts
6. Educational programs
7. Active older adults
8. Holiday and other special events
9. Day camps and summer camps
10. Trips
(Recmanagement.com)

According to SCORP, the top 5 outdoor recreation activities in Georgia are: Walking, jogging or running (62%), Picnicking or outdoor social gatherings (50%), Swimming outdoors (42%), Viewing, identifying & photographing nature (39%), and Fishing (33%).

Public park and recreation agencies are the largest providers and facilitators of community-based youth sport opportunities in America. Not only do park and recreation agencies provide instructional programs and coordinate youth sport leagues, they manage an estimated 500,000 facilities that are permitted to independent youth sport organizations to conduct their own programs and leagues. (Spangler and Vinluan, 2006) According to the United States Tennis Association (USTA), nearly 70 percent of tennis is played on public courts.

Park and recreation departments have been developing programs for at risk youths for decades, and that trend is continuing. Recreation opportunities can give them a chance to discover healthy interests and strengthen leadership skills in safe environments, and provide opportunities for youth to positively socialize with peers and to relieve stress. (Sprouse and Klitzing, 2005) Youth is also a focus of Healthy People 2010, a national prevention agenda for the next 10 years (Howard, Russomuello, & Rogers, 2004). The agenda includes goals relating to youth, and the factors that place youth at risk. Substance abuse education is an important part of most programs. Other components focused on self esteem; communication; managing stress; relationships; decision-making; and alcohol, tobacco and other drug abuse management programs.

The National League of Cities, the oldest and largest organization representing municipal governments throughout the US, established the "City Platform for Strengthening Families and Improving Outcomes for Children and Youth." The platform highlights the mechanisms required for sustained progress, while recommending a series of concrete action steps, including:

- Identifying and improving safe places for children to play in every neighborhood in order to promote physical activity, healthy development and positive interactions with peers;
- Expanding opportunities for youth participation and leadership through programs offered by city recreation departments, libraries, museums and other organizations;
- Establishing local coalitions that work to identify new funding sources and create quality standards for after-school programs; and
- Holding media events, community forums and site visits to local programs as a way of keeping these needs in the spotlight

Many recreation departments are offering programs that the entire family can become involved in, rather than focusing on specific age groups. One popular trend is to add performing arts programs, such as dance, music or theater, adult sports teams, sports tournaments and races, personal training, youth sports teams, sport training and swimming programs. Recreation programs enhance self-esteem, physical activity and development of skills, but they also need to provide knowledge and skills to enhance protective factors and counter the risk factors in the life of our youth.

Environmental education programs, such as trail guides, nature guides, bird watching, classes on environmental impact and sustainability and more, are becoming more popular. Indoor climbing facilities provide recreation opportunities for a wide variety of users, from casual climbers to experienced "rock jocks." There are many different types and sizes of indoor, outdoor and portable climbing facilities across the country, and interest in climbing continues to grow. Training courses, competitions, and climbing exhibitions are often offered to help encourage a greater level of participation. One approach is to link indoor and outdoor climbing activities by teaching courses inside, then taking the climbers outside when they have developed sufficient skills. American Mountain Guides Association-certified instructors help insure that the students learn safe ways to climb.

Space for community gardens could be provided in selective parks. Community gardeners typically are assigned "allotment" plots or work in common public gardens. In Seattle, the parks department's P-Patch community gardening program is extremely popular and gardens have been established in numerous neighborhoods. Community gardens are nothing new; the Victory Gardens during WWII were used to grow food for the war effort. Today many cities promote community gardens. Successful community gardening programs frequently have nonprofit volunteer organizations and private partners that help support activities.

Community gardens provide many benefits including health and well-being, intergenerational recreation, enhanced food security

and nutrition, opportunities for education and social development, youth civic engagement, and reduction of neighborhood crime and vandalism. Cities such as Sacramento, California, Portland, Oregon, and Bloomington, Indiana have community garden coordinators that help ensure the project runs smoothly. In many cities, nonprofit organizations oversee the community garden program and a coordinator acting as the liaison to the city. The gardeners themselves become "eyes and ears" for the park and the adjacent communities.

Seniors are looking for more active recreation opportunities. One trend is toward non-traditional recreation programs that offer opportunities for socialization. These include board games, card games, bocce ball, table tennis, lawn bowling, SCUBA, day trips, organized vacations, special interest clubs and other similar activities.

Monitoring and Updating the Master Plan

One limitation with master plans is that too often they sit on a shelf and are not used to guide the direction of a department, or the plan quickly becomes static and outdated. A county grows faster than expected, the economy changes, bonds for park expansion are passed, or facilities are constructed, and the assumptions used to develop recommendations change.

One common approach is for a master plan to be adopted by a city council or board of commissioners. This helps ensure a plan is followed even if there are changes in an administration. In DeKalb County, for example, the parks and recreation master plan needs to be adopted by the Board of Commissioners so that it will serve as a roadmap for the Department over the next ten years. Rather than being viewed as a 10-year plan this document should be considered a living plan that is reviewed and renewed annually over a 10-year period.

Volunteerism

The Fulton County Department of Parks and Recreation honored volunteers in 2003. One hundred sixty five volunteers logged 212,000 hours of volunteerism for the year. The Independent Sector in Washington, D.C., a non-profit organization specializing in philanthropy and volunteerism has placed an average dollar value for each hour of volunteerism in 2003 at \$17.19. In 2007 that value has increased to \$18.77 an hour. Hence, the community had provided the equivalent of \$3,644,280.00 in labor through known volunteer hours. Adjusting values for 2007 that impact equals just under \$4 million.

Parks and recreation departments are depending more on volunteers than ever before. Most departments predicted a significant increase in the number of volunteers involved in their programs. The average number of volunteers was expected to increase from over 63% from 92.5 volunteers in 2005 to nearly 147 projected in 2008. (Recreationmanagement.com)

According to 2004 Bureau of Labor Statistics data collected for its monthly Current Population Survey (CPS, U.S. Department of Labor), about 64.5 million (28 percent) of the population age 16 or older had volunteered for various organizations at least once during the previous year. This volunteer labor force spent a median of 52 hours on volunteer activities. (Strigas, 2006) The significant findings from the report include the following:

- 1/4 of all men and 1/3 of all women volunteered.
 - Women volunteered at a higher rate than men across age groups, educational levels, and other major characteristics.
 - 35 to 44 year olds were the most likely to volunteer. Teenagers and 45-54 year olds also had a relatively high volunteer rate.
 - 30% of whites, 22% of blacks, 20% of Asians and 14% of Hispanics volunteered.
 - Married persons volunteered at a higher rate (34%) than never-married persons (23%).
 - Parents with children under age 18 were more likely to volunteer than persons without children of that age.
 - 31% of employed persons volunteered, compared to 26% of unemployed persons.
- As the baby boomers retire, many will volunteer their services for a wide variety of activities, including some that are recreation oriented.

Volunteers often contribute because they have an interest in giving back to their community. According to studies by Strigas and Jackson (2001, 2003), the primary motives for volunteering were because it was fun to volunteer services for recreational sport events; the volunteer wanted to help make the event a success; volunteering creates a better society; the volunteer wanted to put something back in their community; and volunteering makes the volunteer feel better about himself or herself.

Volunteers can help the Department sustain services and to expand the quantity, quality and diversity of recreation services, and to do so within budget. (Strigas & Jackson, 2004) The estimated value of a volunteer is currently \$18.77 per hour (Independent Sector, 2006).

Short-term volunteers usually work on special events, such as senior outings, trail maintenance or creek or river clean-up events, lasting a day, a weekend or for a specific number of consecutive days. Minimal job skills, training and supervision are needed to accomplish the required tasks. Long-term volunteers work scheduled hours on long-term projects will need position descriptions, job training, on-going supervision, communications and regular evaluations. Examples of long-term projects are staffing community centers and seasonal instructor or program aides.

Most departments have determined that the benefits of utilizing volunteers generally outweigh concerns of liabilities as long as reasonable precautions are taken. One way to limit liability is to require coaching certifications or personal training certifications of volunteers involved with specific activities where they work directly with youth. Most departments also run extensive background checks of their volunteers required for those working with youth, the elderly and the disabled. Many agencies will conduct credit reports for those volunteers that handle money.

It does take staff time to help organize and coordinate volunteers and to ensure their efforts are being utilized in the most beneficial way. Some departments are hiring full-time volunteer coordinators that are responsible for recruiting, screening, training, supervising, and organizing volunteers. Some of the responsibilities of a volunteer coordinator include the following:

- Working with the agency's staff to create a volunteer manual.
- Targeted marketing and recruitment plan.
- Training staff in volunteer management.
- Recruiting volunteers for various activities, events, projects and programs.
- Screening and selecting volunteers
- Matching volunteer skills to the needs of the agency.
- Working with staff members to orient the volunteers.
- Organizing training.
- Coordinating all volunteer work.
- Motivating and acknowledging the volunteers work (award parties, etc.).
- Scheduling, coordinating and preparing for events and projects, preparing newsletters and event flyers.
- Assessing and monitoring the effectiveness of the role of volunteers versus staff. (Westrup, 2006)

Communication

Communication is critical for every parks and recreation department. The trend in communication is for departments to be more aggressive about reaching out to their constituents. Potential park visitors expect to have adequate signage to find a park, and a recreation center. Programs and activities will not be successful if potential users do not know about the event or cannot easily find the location. Effective marketing plans and signage programs are basic ingredients for success.

Many departments are also finding they need to be more proactive about the services they provide, and the value they bring to a

community. Marketing and increasing participation was one of the top five current issues of concern for parks and recreation respondents. (Recremanagement.com)

The Internet has become a major tool for reaching potential and existing recreation users. It is used to share information with users, and many departments even allow interested individuals to sign up for recreation classes and pay for them online. This greatly streamlines the process while reducing cost..

One common trend is that parks and recreation departments are still depending on fliers and other printed documents to reach their constituents. Many departments produce a family fun guide of similar product to advertise and generate excitement about upcoming programs and events. Most of the costs of these types of publications can be covered by sponsorships, partnerships, grants, or advertisements. Perhaps the greater concern is in knowing how effective hard copy marketing penetration is in this age of electronic communications.

7.8 Facilities

Recreation facilities are a critical and expected part of any parks and recreation department. By 2008, nearly three-quarters of parks and recreation respondents expected increases in facilities, and less than 2 percent expected to see a decrease in these numbers. (Recreationmanagement.com) Facility managers must decide whether to construct new buildings, fix what they have and program existing spaces or seek alternatives.

It is expensive to build new recreation centers. As a result, many departments have had to make older facilities accommodate their specific and changing needs. In DeKalb County, for example, many of the existing centers are dilapidated and are not appealing to the public. In recent years, emphasis has been on creating new recreation facilities for the County. Much of the funding for this construction is from the 2005 bond issue. Recreation facilities in the County will drive opportunities.

Maintaining older facilities will demand greater financial burdens to operate. The “Catch-22” dilemma for a limited budget is that increased operational cost allocations must be taken from elsewhere. This inherently leaves less available funding for programming.

Programming innovations, indoor activity pools, technology integration, and collaborative financing are just a few ways that recreation centers have evolved in the last decade. In the past, most of the programs at recreation centers have focused on kids and have become youth centers. This is changing, and programs are

being geared for a wider demographic. Locker rooms in recreation centers, in particular, will be heavily influenced by changing demographics and expectations. Some recreation departments are doing away with traditional locker rooms and moving toward cabana-style wet and dry lockers.

Instead of boxed buildings with walled-off rooms, newer recreation centers are more spatially exciting, offering greater visual experiences and opportunities for interaction. There is more of a focus on space allocations. Instead of building a gymnasium, for example, there is greater revenue potential for allocating the same space to multiple uses.

In response to foul air and seasonal weather extremes new recreation centers are focusing on things like indoor walking, fitness and aquatics. One trend is to build community centers with a fitness area and multipurpose rooms to serve various programming needs such as yoga and educational programs. Pilates and Spinning courses are among the most current hot trends. Swimming pools that include interactive water features as part of the facility attract a greater number of users and offer a wider variety of potential applications.

A key to flexibility is to figure out ways to incorporate multiple demographics into a single facility. Instead of constructing separate senior centers and other types of facilities, community centers are being constructed to accommodate their needs. The senior citizen center in DeKalb County, for example, has a list of more than 1600 senior citizens waiting for recreation

opportunities. The needs of these citizens may be addressed in a recreation center.

There is also a trend toward constructing new facilities that are more environmentally friendly. Many believe that parks and recreation departments should become leaders in constructing buildings certified by the U.S. Green Building Council with the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System. Construction costs on LEED buildings may be higher, but the savings in energy costs can be significant. The lifecycle costs of a building need to be considered, not just construction costs.

One major concern is that young people are not as active and are not experiencing hands on nature. The National Audubon Society is encouraging the creation of family-focused nature centers.

Many departments are also paying more attention to the economics of facilities. It is difficult to justify continuing to finance programs that lose money. If a golf course, tennis center, or recreation center is losing money on a regular basis, then it is time to determine why this is happening and to reconsider doing something different.

7.9 Land Acquisition

Lands, programs, services and facilities are continuously being expanded to accommodate the future influx of park and recreation users.

Acquiring land for parks and open space is becoming more difficult for many departments. Land is becoming more expensive at the same time budgets are becoming tighter. In areas that are growing rapidly it can be difficult to find suitable undeveloped land in sufficient surface area to accommodate a park. The dilemma, though, is if a department does not acquire land now, it may be unavailable or too costly in the near future.

In many municipalities, developers are required to donate land for parks and recreation. One common problem though, is that this is often land that is not developable, being in a floodplain or having extremely steep slopes or unstable soils. This has been the case in DeKalb County. The County has significantly expanded the amount of park land in recent years, but much of this land is difficult to access and is not suitable for meeting active recreation needs. In addition, some of the land will be difficult to maintain or program. In certain cases these sites may have long term value to sell, trade, or swap for a more suitable site, or portion thereof.

In recent years, the priority for land acquisition has focused on lands that are suitable for specific active recreation opportunities.

One trend is that many parks departments around the county are acquiring less land for parks then in the past because of the increased

cost of the land, shrinking budgets to purchase and develop the land, and smaller maintenance staffs to care for the land. Unfortunately, that means an even stronger demand on existing services and facilities.

In DeKalb County, the past two bond issues have provided funds that were used primarily for land acquisition. This was important because it increased the inventory of park acreage. Without bond funds this would not have happened. The Greenspace Office, which is not affiliated with Parks & Recreation, managed all acquisitions. There was an open nomination process, and Greenspace staff reviewed properties nominated, but Parks & Recreation were not involved in that process.

7.10 Economic and Financial Trends

In the past, parks and recreation departments have traditionally been able to rely on a consistent "piece of the pie" for funding of operational and capital needs to sustain services. Sustainability has become less assured as the "pie" has gotten smaller, and portions of the pie have been re-allocated to reflect increased competition for the limited funds available.

Parks and recreation, although largely accepted as integral to 'quality of life,' issues continue to be overlooked when budgets are being discussed. The value of parks and recreation opportunities has been somewhat devalued because of headline grabbing stories such as a major steam line rupture in New York, bridge collapse in Minnesota, the need for sewer and water upgrades in Atlanta, and locally as a

lack of air conditioning in local schools during record breaking heat. Funding for parks and recreation are not a priority as questions about local infrastructure deterioration arise.

Competition for parks related funding is increasing, and it is unclear where this funding will come from. Reliance on Federal grants for local park and recreation initiatives are becoming scarce with a shift from Federal to local control and initiatives to solve and pay for local needs. State funding is available, but allocations for parks and recreation are rarely enough to sustain growth.

The explosive population and business growth within the State of Georgia has required an increase in funding to meet infrastructure demands. Greater growth gives rise to increased annexation, and this movement further reduces the size of the funding pie through reduced taxes available for existing county services.

In response to challenges in financing, most park and recreation services agencies are moving away from a reliance on taxes and traditional practices to funding of services from a wider variety of sources. Agencies can no longer base their existence on budgetary precedence within an ever-increasing competitive environment. Rather, agencies must justify budget in quantitative terms by successfully meeting the needs of the individual, the family, the community and the environment. Programs and services must be results oriented, measured against accepted standards. Success in the solicitation of alternative funding is enhanced in direct proportion to achievement. DeKalb County will have to pursue a range of alternative

funding sources and resources.

The assumption seems to be that the parks and recreation departments will have to continue to do more with less. Research certainly supports this, as operating expenditures are projected to increase at a rate much slower than that of other governmental agencies. (Recmanagement.com)

One continuing trend is that departments are concerned about internal costs. It is essential that planning help minimize the need for staffing and maintenance. According to a recent study, over a 40-year lifecycle, building costs and construction costs are just 2 percent of the total outlay. Maintenance and operations are 6 percent. Ninety-two percent is salaries and benefits associated with people. The trend is to reduce full-time staff and depend more on part-time staff and volunteers for results.

Twenty years ago there was a question of whether public recreation and park delivery systems should be market driven. Today, there is a definite trend toward this management philosophy, primarily because of budget constraints. With public, private, and not-for-profit entities all vying for the same markets, knowing when, where, and how much to invest in a particular facility or program is critical. Many parks & recreation departments are offering recreational opportunities that are the most desirable to those with discretionary funds. Many departments are also proactively developing new or expanded customer bases. New developments can provide revenues for additional facilities to be established or for

existing facilities to be improved.

Many federal, state and foundational grants are available to park and recreation agencies. Grant opportunities exist for a wide variety of purposes and many can help pay for park and recreation needs. In 2005, Congress allocated more than \$1 billion per year for parks and recreation in transportation-related projects.

The NRPA's National Legislative and Policy Platform for 2007 included several recommendations associated with improving funding for parks. These include support for funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) state assistance program, the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Act and the River Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program, among others.

7.11 Fees

The question of fees is always a difficult issue with parks and recreation departments. Most departments take the approach that they have a responsibility to provide recreation opportunities to their constituents.

People generally express their displeasure with higher fees and their unwillingness to pay for park and recreation opportunities, in part because of the basic idea that they are already paying taxes. However, when confronted with the reality of closing parks, they typically demonstrate support for fees. Input from the public suggests people in DeKalb County are willing to pay to support parks and recreation.

A growing trend is for parks and recreation

departments to increase fees in order to help provide the funding needed to maintain and support parks and recreation facilities. That becomes an issue, though, if the increased fees prevent residents from participating in recreation opportunities. The SCORP survey found that 40% of residents statewide reported that "not having enough money" was a barrier to their participation in outdoor recreation activities.

7.12 Maintenance

Maintenance has become an issue in all parks and recreation departments across the country. A fundamental question is what does it take to implement a standard of care? Every park department is trying to determine what kind of service they can provide with their respective resources. Expectations need to be clearly understood, agreed upon and met to make things happen.

The more maintenance crews understand what is expected of them, the better they will be able to do their job. One trend is regular training including field trips so the crews can see other facilities. It would also help to develop a catalog of photographs showing examples of the type of quality expected for a particular type of maintenance project.

Departments are also realizing that it is important to look at budgeting and maintenance needs over the entire lifecycle of a facility rather than just the initial cost of buying and installing equipment. Failure to look at these issues in the past has lead to a backlog of maintenance. For many departments, deferred maintenance

backlog at park facilities is at a crisis stage. Doing nothing is the most expensive choice. In certain circumstances deferred maintenance must yield to increased risk exposure and asset closure.

The size and maturity of a park system directly affects the specific issues a city must deal with. Older park systems frequently have structures that require major work, such as roof repairs, heating and air conditioning repairs, and field replacements. DeKalb County is dealing with issues associated with older park systems, such as deteriorating parks and antiquated layouts. The County's park system is not that old, but many of its structures are hand-me-downs and are out-dated. The DeKalb County park system has grown significantly since 2001, and it has been difficult for the Department to keep up with these changes.

Departments need to balance life cycle cost versus performance when it comes to purchasing equipment. For example, a mower with a bigger cutting size may be more expensive, but if it greatly reduces the time for regular maintenance that it would quickly pay for itself. It may also be possible for the Department to expand their services, such as cutting the grass for a particular school in return for the shared use of facilities for programs.

To establish a standard of care, a maintenance division has to establish records of how long it takes to complete a task. Lack of this information makes it impossible to schedule tasks and have a reasonable expectation of the work being completed in a timely manner. Once a standard of care manual is established, it needs to be

revisited periodically to gauge performance with updates as needed. Supervisors have to understand the standard of care, and be able to direct workers on how to complete a specific task.

A maintenance plan needs to be developed for each park and for each recreation center. The plan should include a list of all maintenance tasks required for a particular facility, the time it takes for each, how often the maintenance needs to occur, and if it is seasonal, when it starts and ends. It also needs to address involvement with other organizations, such as sports associations. Maintenance departments sometimes receive assistance from some athletic associations for tasks such as mowing, field dressing, and other maintenance directly associated with ball fields. One problem is that sometimes there is confusion over what the associations are doing. It would be a serious problem, for example, if the Department fertilized the fields, and then one of the sports associations did the same the following week.

Departments have to address dilapidated facilities and equipment that need to be replaced. For example, playgrounds have a functional lifecycle of about 12 to 15 years. There is also the question of overusing athletic fields and multiuse areas in parks. Sports fields can not be used on a continuous basis. They need to be allowed to rejuvenate, and this means taking them out of play. Otherwise a field gets worn down and the cost to repair it far exceeds the cost in regular maintenance and downtime is applied. When possible, designing the field as one big open area is much better than laying out a true soccer field. Using portable goals

and backstops, and changing the direction and location of fields helps alleviate wear and tear in these areas. In baseball, 85% of the game occurs in the infield, so that part of the field has more wear and tear than the outfield. Some fields are designated 'game-only' and not allowed for practice.

7.13 Health and Wellness

Health and wellness issues have increased in importance in recent years, and parks and recreation programs have a major role in promoting healthy lifestyles. According to an article in Trendscan, May 2005, Adolescents Increasingly Inactive, UCLA Health Policy Brief, April 2005, 74% of Americans are not active. One in four teens nationally have no safe park or open space near their home. Only 6 percent of kids between 9 and 13 years old play outside on their own during a typical week. (Louv, 2007) Adults are also not as active in the past. On problem is that Americans are working longer hours today than ever before, and our lifestyle has become more sedentary.

The Task Force on Community Preventive Services, a 15-member, nonfederal, panel working in conjunction with the Centers for Disease Control, recommended one way to get more people active is the "creation of or enhanced access to places for physical activity combined with informational outreach activities."

Recreation providers, public health officials, planners and policy-makers must collaborate to fight Georgia's obesity epidemic, combat other serious health conditions and improve overall

health by promoting and accommodating active lifestyles. The connection between positive physical and mental health and spending time outdoors is undeniable. (SCORP, 2007)

The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) completed a survey that found that 89 percent of city managers believe it is the responsibility of parks and recreation departments to lead the way in creating communities that promote active lifestyles. That same study also showed that nearly half of city managers felt that the most important action to take in order to build these communities is to build an interconnected system of parks and trails.

The Trust for Public Land's (TPL) Center for Parks and Health found teens who did not have access to a safe park, playground or open space were significantly more likely not to engage in any physical activity compared to teens who had access to such settings. They also found that more than one-third of teens in grades 9 to 12 do not exercise at least 20 minutes a day, three times a week. There is a need to create more opportunities for physical activity in communities that are traditionally underserved, including low-income areas, higher-poverty areas, and communities with a higher proportion of racial and ethnic minorities. Research has shown that these citizens are at a higher risk of being sedentary and overweight.

Community Fitness

According to SCORP 2007, the link between health, quality of life, and outdoor recreation

can be reinforced by the following:

- Educate the public and officials at all levels, in both the public and private sectors, on the importance outdoor recreation and the role it will play in helping Georgians live healthier.
- Improve access to outdoor recreation resources and facilities including locations nearer to work and home; reducing the cost of participation; improving transportation to sites; and accessibility to those with physical limitations.
- Enhance security in outdoor recreation areas where needed and reduce perceptions that participating in outdoor recreation activities is unsafe.
- Explore ways to help providers in the public and private sectors with funding for maintenance and operations of existing and future outdoor recreation areas.
- Explore ways of meeting the needs of a population that is becoming more diverse, ethnically and culturally.
- Explore ways of meeting the needs of both the young and retirees.
- Strengthen communication and collaboration among providers at all levels to broaden and enrich partnerships to improve the health of all Georgians through participating in outdoor recreation.

According to the "Surgeon General's Report on Physical Activity and Health," higher levels of

physical activities lower mortality rates for all ages, decrease the risk of cancer, heart disease and high blood pressure. Research from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control determined that creating places where people can get active can lead to a 25 percent increase in the number of people who exercise at least three times a week.

Creative Programming

Fitness is expanding to be much more than a room with weight and cardio machines. Cross training among disciplines is highly desirable and offers greater balance to the fitness experience. Fitness programs must provide opportunities to cross train utilizing progressive resistant equipment, running, swimming, free weights, cardiovascular and aerobic training. Many departments across the country are developing creative partnerships with health providers. In the spring of 2007, Emory University and the Rollins School of Public Health started a survey to assess the levels of physical activity of people visiting county parks as well as residents near those parks. The goal of the survey is to identify the factors that predict park-use and physical activity. The Neighborhood Parks and Active Living (NPAL) survey is being conducted in 12 DeKalb County parks. Participants answer a series of questions and wear an 'accelerometer' that attaches to their belt and takes precise measurements of movement and calculates physical activity. Preliminary results should be available late in 2007. Results of this survey can be used to help DeKalb County develop

programs that meet the needs of constituents.

Environmental Education

Conservation of our natural resources and wildlife is becoming more of a priority, and environmental education programs are an important part of this process. Spending time in nature is a popular family-oriented activity. There are documented economic benefits, and there are clearly defined environmental quality benefits of conservation. As noted in the Georgia Land Conservation Partnership Plan, the most important benefits that conservation lands can provide are clean and abundant water, clean air and biodiversity.

Environmental education can provide a way to get children outdoors and encourage activity.

Status of Health in DeKalb Report

The Status of Health in DeKalb Report (2005) is the sixth in a series produced by the DeKalb County Board of Health that describes time and geographic patterns of diseases and injuries, birth trends, leading causes of death and premature death, and health behaviors. The purpose of the Status of Health report series is to identify priority areas for health improvement and to serve as a catalyst for community action. It analyzes available data through 2003 on the leading health issues and some of the risk factors associated with these issues in DeKalb County. This report emphasizes information related to priority areas and provides specific opportunities for prevention in these areas.

An essential function of county boards of

health is to assess the status of health in their communities and to present this information to the public in order to identify opportunities for health promotion and disease prevention. The Report paints a picture of a county that is not as healthy as it should be.

Compared to national averages, DeKalb County high school students, grades 9-12, are overweight, have poorer dietary habits and are less physically active. In 2003, 17% were overweight, and 12% of students were obese. Only 23% of students engaged in moderate physical activity (compared to the U.S. rate of 25%), and 58% of students engaged in vigorous physical activity (compared to the U.S. rate of 63%). Sixty-six percent (66%) of students did not attend physical education class on a daily basis (compared to the U.S. rate of 56%). The nutrition and physical activity behaviors indicate that our DeKalb youth are at increased risk for cardiovascular disease and cancer-related problems later in life.

Approximately 35% of DeKalb County adults are overweight, 21% are obese, and 36% were trying to lose weight. Less than half of adults reported that they engaged in vigorous physical activities (e.g., running, aerobics).

Because of the diversity in the County, there are health disparities based on certain characteristics (race/ethnicity, gender, education, income, disability, geographic location, sexual orientation, etc.). Based on 2000 U.S. Census data, communities in south DeKalb County have a higher proportion of African Americans, persons with lower educational attainment and lower economic status than the northern part of the county. Communities in south DeKalb

have a higher rate of premature death due to chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes and heart disease. Overall, premature death rates from cancer are higher in blacks than whites. The premature death rate of diabetes is 1.7 times greater in south DeKalb when compared to the remainder of the county. The premature death rate for heart disease is 2.3 times higher for black females than for white females.

Communities in north DeKalb have a higher proportion of Hispanics and Asians than the southern part of the county. Residents in north DeKalb are more likely to be foreign-born, to speak a language other than English at home and to be linguistically isolated. Hispanic high school students are more likely to be overweight than other races/ethnicities and less likely to engage in vigorous physical activities. Hispanic students also report a higher percentage of current tobacco use. Hispanics and Asians face numerous challenges, such as language and cultural barriers and limited access to adequate health care. It is suspected that additional health disparities affect immigrants and refugees, but details are lacking because existing data sources do not record whether a person is an immigrant or refugee.

The Report also identifies opportunities for preventing diseases and premature death throughout DeKalb County and its communities. One recommendation is to increase physical activity and eat better. The DeKalb County Parks and Recreation Department is in a position to help with

increasing physical activity.

7.14 Security

Security is one of the top concerns in parks across the country. When parks, trails and greenways are not well-maintained or security is a concern, people are hesitant to visit these facilities.

One common trend is to focus on putting “eyes and ears” in the parks. That means the more people use the park, and the more people there are, the safer the parks will be. Some cities and counties promote Adopt a Park programs while others focus on Park Watch programs. Organized activities such as sports activities, group walks or exercise courses, community gardens, and other actions all bring people into a park.

More organized forces are also needed to provide security. A park police unit would have a significant impact on improving security in the parks. Some departments have a park police unit that reports directly, while others utilize a unit that is part of the regular police department, but are assigned exclusively to Parks & Recreation.

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Park System Concept

8.0

8.1 Park Classification

DeKalb County has a significant inventory of parks in terms of number and variety. The County has a wide range of park sites offering both passive and active recreation opportunities. Parks range from small neighborhood parks to regional parks and recreation centers that serve a much greater number of people.

Park classifications for DeKalb County are defined as follows:

- Pocket Parks
- Neighborhood parks
- Community parks
- Linear Parks
- Special use parks
- Open Space or Nature Parks

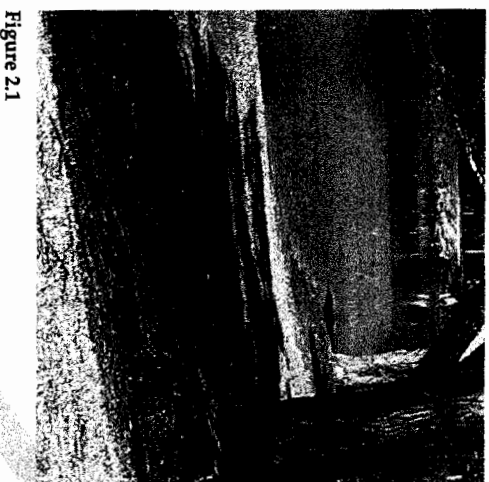


Figure 2.1

8.2 Pocket Parks

Pocket parks are small gathering spaces typically less than 1 acre in size. These are parks that you walk to, and they typically include benches, landscaping, and other amenities that help define a small gathering area. These types of parks are typically near major pedestrian activities and are used most often in urban areas. DeKalb County has not supported the concept of pocket parks in the past, in large part because they can be difficult to maintain, and there are other priorities for the County.

NRPA recommends that there be .25 to .50 acres per 1,000 residents for pocket parks, and that these parks be within .25 mile of service areas. Based upon DeKalb County's 2005 population (711,577), 178 to 356 acres of land would need to be set aside for pocket parks. Using the DeKalb County 2015 population (802,996), 201 to 401 acres is recommended.

These numbers seem high given the context that much of the County, although growing rapidly, is suburban or rural. In DeKalb County, pocket parks should be located in urban areas such as Decatur, where they would provide much needed passive recreation opportunities. A major issue with pocket parks is maintenance. Smaller parks are more costly to maintain per acre than larger parks, and given the difficulties the County is already having with maintenance, there needs to be a clearly defined plan in place to ensure the pocket parks are maintained. One option would be for local businesses to take over responsibility of maintaining pocket parks near them. This would be a viable option since these businesses should benefit from the enhanced walkability in their areas.

Figure 2.2

8.3 Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks are among the most common parks, and they serve as the foundation for most park systems. Neighborhood parks typically range in size from 4 acres to 10 acres. They typically include picnic areas, playgrounds, outdoor courts for basketball or tennis, walking paths, practice areas and informal athletic fields, and low-lighting. Emphasis is on providing facilities and recreation space for the entire family. Neighborhood parks typically do not include restrooms and have limited parking since most users are expected to come from nearby residential areas. Traditionally lights for sports fields and tennis courts have not been included because of the impact they would have on surrounding residential areas.



Neighborhood parks should be located near the neighborhoods they serve. They should be within easy walking or bicycling distance and are accessible to residents without having to cross major arterial streets. The neighborhood park typically serves one large or several smaller neighborhoods. Neighborhood streets typically are lined with sidewalks to help improve walkability.

Neighborhood parks are frequently located adjacent to elementary schools in cities and counties where parks and school departments work together.

Neighborhood parks generally serve a population residing in a half-mile radius around the park. A long term goal for DeKalb County, however, is to establish a quarter mile service radius since this would support the goal of creating walkable communities. This is consistent with NRPA standards and also supports efforts to improve health and wellness in DeKalb County.

NRPA recommends 5 to 15 acres for each neighborhood park, and between 1 and 2 acres per 1,000 residents. Based upon DeKalb County's 2005 population (711,577), 712 to 1423 acres of land would need to be allocated for neighborhood parks. Using the DeKalb County 2015 population (802,996), 803 to 1606 acres is recommended for neighborhood parks. It is critical that the County look at how this park acreage is distributed in order to ensure that all residents have access to a neighborhood park.

8.4 Community Parks

Community parks are large parks that serve a group of neighborhoods or a portion of a city. They range in size from 40 to 200 acres and provide a variety of active and passive uses. The typical community park should be large enough so it can provide a variety of facilities while still leaving open space for unstructured recreation and natural areas. Some of these uses include: lighted athletic fields, indoor and outdoor recreation centers and pools, walking paths, picnic areas, playgrounds, tennis courts, special event areas, ponds, entertainment areas, concessions, restrooms, natural areas, gardens, and other amenities.

Community parks are usually reached by automobiles, so parking, traffic, and congestion are an issue. The NRPA recommends a minimum of five parking spaces per acre for general park use, and additional park for athletic fields and other activities.

Community parks generally serve a population residing in a one to two mile radius around the park. NRPA recommends a minimum of 25 acres for each community park, and 5 to 8 acres per 1,000 residents.

The 2000 Plan recommended the acquisition and development of four new community parks. This would respond to the demand for additional open space, including nonprogrammed open space suitable for all types of outdoor recreation.

Using DeKalb County's 2005 population (711,577), 3558 to 5693 acres of land is needed for community parks. Using the DeKalb County 2015 population (802,996), 4015 to 6424 acres is recommended for community parks.

8.5 Regional Parks

Regional parks are large parks that serve an entire region. These parks typically are more than 100 acres in size and provide a wide variety of facilities and activities, and attract a large number of visitors. In Atlanta, for example, Piedmont Park would be considered a regional park. In DeKalb County, Stone Mountain is a good example of a regional park.

Because people typically drive to regional parks, traffic and congestion may be an issue, and expansive parking areas are required. Regional parks are also good locations for festivals and other outdoor activities where large spaces are needed to accommodate a large number of visitors.

For regional parks, NRPA recommends a minimum of 200 acres. It also recommends 5 to 10 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. Based on DeKalb County's 2005 population (711,577), 3558 to 7116 acres of land is recommended for regional parks. Using the DeKalb County 2015 population (802,996), 4015 to 8030 acres is recommended for regional parks.

8.6 Linear Parks

Linear parks are open park areas that typically follow streams, power line corridor easements, railroad rights-of-way, highway rights-of-way, drainage ditches, and other natural or man-made features that are linear in nature. They are frequently used for paths and trails that help connect parks, recreation facilities, open space, and other public areas with neighborhoods and population centers.

DeKalb County is very deficient in park land whether you apply the national average of 18 acres of park land per 1,000 people or the Georgia Community Green Space goal of protecting 20% of the county's land area.

Many opportunities for linear parks exist in DeKalb County. Linear parks are typically very cost effective because the land used for such parks is usually not developable and is frequently donated to parks and recreation departments by developers and entities such as railroad and utility companies.

One goal for DeKalb County should be to utilize linear parks as a means to helping create walkability communities. The 2000 Plan recommended development of 8 miles of greenways per year. This is a standard used by many parks and recreation departments around the country, and represents a reasonable plan of action for the County. The Department needs to identify a staff member to be responsible for plan implementation.

8.7 Special Purpose Parks

Special purpose parks typically focus on providing a specific type of recreational opportunity. Examples of special purpose parks include: skate parks; dog parks; tennis complexes; golf courses; athletic complexes, and aquatic centers. All of these types of parks are represented in DeKalb County, with athletic complexes being the most common. All seem to be very popular and are heavily used.

The 2000 Plan recommended updating and expanding a minimum of five special facilities to generate revenue and provide destination parks. The idea was that this would also increase the visibility of parks in the community, while enhancing County revenue. The Department was to identify which parks are suitable for development of special-use facilities and produce business plans for each of the selected parks and facilities. The skate park at Brook Run is an example of one of these special use facilities.

8.9 Park Recommendations

DeKalb County has an overall shortage in parks, and many of the parks are smaller than recommended size. Another issue is that there is insufficient space for the ballfields, soccer fields, and other active recreation opportunities that are needed.

The County has made significant efforts to increase the size of the park system. As of December 31, 2005, 1562 acres of additional land was acquired to expand the size of 23 existing parks, and 666 acres were acquired and developed into new parks since the completion of the 2000 Plan.

The benchmark standard for park acreage in DeKalb County is 23 acres/1,000 people. Using this standard, the County should currently have 16,366 acres and 18,469 acres by 2015. The 2000 plan recommends that the County set the target at the national standard of 18 acres/1,000 people. Using this standard, the County should have 12,808 acres, and 14,454 by the year 2015.

The 2000 Plan recommended acquisition of 200 acres of open space per year to provide for parks, recreation facilities, and trails, but even that rate will be insufficient for meeting County needs. The County needs to move than double than level of acquisition, and strive for around 400 to 500 acres of new park space per year. This will be a difficult task, but land will never be any less expensive than it is now, and the amount of undeveloped land in the County is decreasing rapidly. Many needs can be addressed by acquiring new parkland and connected corridors, including equity, diversity

of use, access, and an enhanced ability to meet current and future recreation needs.

Capital cost: High. Land prices in DeKalb County are continuing to rise, and if the County does not acquire land suitable for active development, soon the cost of this land will prevent the acquisition of new park land.

Priority: High. The County needs to continue to acquire land for parks while it is still available and affordable. Emphasis needs to be on land that can be developed for active recreation uses.

8.8 Natural Resource and Open Space Parks & Preserves

Natural Resource and Open Space Parks and Preserves provide valuable green space for a city or county. The intent of these types of parks is to protect areas that have significant natural resources such as wetlands, forests, geologic features, and grasslands. They are particularly important in areas with rapid growth that threatens to engulf all undeveloped areas.

The Department should continue to play a major role in protecting natural resources and preserving green space in the County. Nature preserves, greenways, linear parks, and passive parks are important features of any park system and should be developed by the county as a way of protecting important natural resources.

8.10 Facilities

Recreation Centers

The 2000-2010 Plan classified all indoor community facilities as being Recreation Centers. In 2000, the average recreation center in the County was 20,452 SF, which is rather small for a recreation center. Typically, recreation centers range in size from 50,000 SF to 100,000 SF.

Recreation Centers can include a broad range of amenities from indoor basketball courts to meeting rooms. They should be designed to accommodate users of all ages. Some of the amenities include: gymnasiums; indoor walking tracks; game rooms; classrooms; meeting rooms; aerobic and dance rooms; art studios; performing art spaces; climbing walls; fitness and free weight rooms; and community gathering spaces. They also include more utilitarian spaces, including: locker rooms; administrative offices; storage space; concession areas; and restaurants.

Recreation centers should be a major revenue generator for the County. There is insufficient data to determine how much money is currently generated by the existing recreation centers in DeKalb County.

The plan lists a benchmark standard as 1 square foot per person, and sets the target standard for DeKalb County at the same level. In 2000, there was 224,975 square feet of space in recreation centers in 11 facilities, for an average of .38 square feet per person. That is approximately one-third of what the County should have based on NRPDA standards.

The 2000 Plan recommended five new multi-purpose centers (1 per commission district, beginning in District 5) be built to replace any closed facilities unable to be renovated or redirected to alternate uses. The 2000 Plan noted that the standards actually called for 12 new recreation centers, each a minimum of 50,000 square feet in size, but that this was probably not an achievable goal.

As noted this report, the 2000 plan determined that the average recreation center in DeKalb County was 20,452 SF, which is undersized and cannot serve the population optimally.

Since 2000, the County has added _____ square feet of space in _____ recreation centers, and is in the process of building 3 new recreation centers. These three centers _____

Using the standard of 1 square foot per person, the County should have 711, 577 square feet of recreation space based on 2005 demographics. Based on the same standard, in 2015 the County should have 802, 966 sq. ft. of recreation space.

The County needs to provide _____ square feet of space in recreation centers, and this would equate to _____ or _____ new centers. The County needs to develop larger recreation centers that offer a wider variety of uses, offer flexible multi-use spaces, and function as major attractions for both local and regional activities.

Capital cost: High. Recreation centers are expensive, and the County needs to construct a minimum of _____ more to meet standards. The three recreation centers being constructed

in DeKalb County cost _____, _____, and _____ respectively, so this gives a pretty good indication of the amount funding required.

Priority: High. The County is far behind in providing indoor space in recreation centers, and many of the existing facilities should be closed.

Aquatic Centers

Warm water pools typically drive outdoor and/or indoor aquatic facilities. Aquatic facilities are typically high revenue producers and are among the most used facilities in a parks and recreation system. Some of the amenities you may find at an aquatic center include: zero depth entry; in-water playgrounds; water slides; lap pools; therapeutic pools; resistant water areas; diving wells; deep water areas; lazy rivers; and other water play areas. These centers also include lockers, restrooms, concession areas, and multipurpose rooms for rents and activities.

The NRPA lists a single category for "swimming pool," and it suggests a standard of one pool for every 20,000 people. This standard is rather generic and does not address the size of a particular pool, or the types of activities planned. NRPA recommends a benchmark of .60 square feet of swimming pool per person. The 2000 Plan recommended the County strive for a standard of .24 square feet per person. A 2-mile service area is typically recommended for Aquatic Centers.

The 2000 plan noted the need for new swimming pools and aquatic centers as well as the need to renovate and repair existing pools. It also points out that many of the swimming pools were overused.

In 2000, DeKalb County had 63,175 square feet of swimming area distributed in 11 swimming pools. This equates to .11 sq ft per person, or about one fifth of that recommended by NRPA standards. Based on NRPA standards, the 2000

Plan called for ten new aquatic facilities by 2010, but noted that goal may not be achievable. As a result, the Plan recommended three signature facilities and the renovation of existing pools.

Using the recommended standard of .24 square feet per person, the County should have 170,788 square feet of space using 2005 demographics, and 192,719 square feet of space by the year 2015.

Capital cost: High. The aquatic center at _____ costs _____ and this gives us an idea of what the cost would be for future facilities.

Priority: High. Aquatic centers are potentially a major source of revenue for the County, and they are among the most visible and highly used facilities the County can develop.

Ballfields and Soccer Fields

The 2000 Plan lists two categories for ball/athletic fields: "Ballfields" and "Soccer fields." Ballfields is a category that includes baseball, softball, football, and possibly soccer.

Both ballfields and soccer fields are typically part of large sports complexes that are able to accommodate leagues, tournaments, and other events. These facilities are typically high revenue producers because of the special tournaments they can attract. Sports associations are actively involved in organizing and managing tournaments and leagues.

These sports complexes range in size from 15 to 40 acres. Some of the amenities typically found in these complexes include: a variety of types of size of fields; lighting; concessions; restrooms; batting cages; picnic areas; irrigated fields; scoreboards; sound systems; covered dugouts; good quality turf; and covered play areas for children

Recommended standards include 1 ballfield for every 5,000 people and 1 soccer field for every 10,000 people. A target of 1 ballfield per 4,275 people was for the County because of high demand for such facilities. In the 2000 Plan, the inventory indicated there were 112 ballfields in the County, and 34 soccer fields. Football fields were not listed separately.

Changing demographics would suggest that the County go back to the original recommended standard of 1 ballfield for every 5,000 people. As the population gets older, the need for these types of facilities will decrease

slightly. Utilizing these standards, the County should have 142 ballfields based upon the 2005 demographics, and 161 based on 2015 demographics.

The County currently has 112 ballfields and 13 football fields, for a total of 125 fields. The result is that the County needs to add 63 ballfields by the year 2015. This will only be possible if the County acquires additional land that can be developed as active recreation areas.

Using the standard of 1 field for every 10,000 people, the County should 71 soccer fields based on 2005 demographics, and 80 soccer fields based on 2015 demographics. The County currently has 33 soccer fields, so an additional 47 fields will need to be added by 2015 to meet standards. As mentioned previously, this will require the addition of more park land that can be developed for active recreation.

Capital cost: High to Medium. The biggest costs associated with the development of new ballfields and soccer fields are the land that will be required. Where existing parks will accommodate new fields, costs will be much lower.

Priority: High to Medium. Ballfields and soccer fields are among the most widely used facilities in the County. Even with the changing demographics, the demand will continue to increase, and the County is already short on facilities.

Tennis Courts

Tennis courts are typically dispersed about community and neighborhood parks, or located in tennis centers that have a large number of fields. The uses of the courts are very different depending upon location. Courts in community and neighborhood parks are more for informal uses while tennis centers are geared toward leagues, tournaments, and other activities. Tennis centers should be a major source of revenue, especially via major tournaments. In the Atlanta region, tennis is a very popular outdoor activity.

The benchmark standard for tennis courts in DeKalb County is 1 court for every 5,400 people. Based on this standard, the County should have 132 courts using 2005 demographics, and 149 courts based on 2015 demographics.

In 2000, the County had 105 tennis courts and was close to meeting the recommended benchmark standard. Since then the County population has grown considerable, and not many new tennis courts have been added. The County currently has 106 tennis courts. This means that 33 more courts will need to be added by 2015.

Capital cost: Medium. Tennis courts may be able to be accommodated on existing park land. There may be a need for a tennis complex to function as a major revenue generator.

Priority: Low. The County is short on tennis courts, but in comparison to other facilities, this need is not as critical as some.

Basketball Courts

Recommended standards for basketball courts is 1 court per 10,000 people. Using that standard, the County should currently have 71 courts, and 80 by the year 2015. There currently are 59 basketball courts in the County. New recreation centers being constructed by the County also provide opportunities to play basketball indoors.

Capital cost: Medium. Tennis courts may be able to be accommodated on existing park land. There may be a need for a tennis complex to function as a major revenue generator.

Priority: Low. The 2000 Plan identified the addition of more basketball courts as being a priority, but considering the change in demographics and other County needs, development of other facilities is a greater priority.

DRAFT

Recommendations

9.0

9.1 Organization and Structure Recommendations

- The Department needs to take a comprehensive, holistic look at the parks and recreation system. Decisions need to be based upon the entire county, not individual districts, sites and/or issues.
- Reevaluate the functional organization of the Department. Once a vision for the Department is clearly defined, the Department needs to be reorganized in such a way as to support and strengthen the vision. Develop an organization chart for the Department inclusive of all divisions and position classifications that provides the framework for making Department's visions a reality.
- Reevaluate how the advisory board is selected. The advisory board plays a major role in the development of parks & recreation. Currently the advisory board is appointed by each district commissioner. The advisory board needs to be an advocate for the entire county, not a particular district. Suggested membership includes traditional appointed individuals from each commission district and representation enhanced with individuals from the senior citizen sector, youth, handicapped, school board, police, fire, athletic associations, and similar groups.
- Develop clearly defined goals and objectives. Update goals and objectives per division and/or for the department to include objectives, barriers, tasks, and action plans, just to name a few.
- From the revised and completed goals and objectives, develop a renewed mission statement, vision and statement of core values.
- Upgrade and distribute a system wide policies and procedures manual to all divisions. This manual should be updated quarterly in order to ensure that it reflects the current status of the Department. New employee orientation should include a copy of the manual and an overview of key components.
- Develop a formal emergency preparedness plan and a disaster recovery program for each major asset.
- Establish a mid-managers meeting process to improve communications within divisions, establish a collaborative process within the ranks and for greater efficiency in all areas of operations.

9.2 Park System Concept Recommendations

- Redesign existing parks that need to be updated in order to make them more efficient, accessible and consistent with the goals and objectives and mission statement of the park system. For example, redesign the area around Wade Walker Park adjacent to the road to improve walkability and pedestrian access to the park from neighboring residential areas.
- Ensure parks and recreation assets provide something for every individual member of the community.
- Develop a stronger focus on sustainable and less maintenance intensive landscapes, with green approaches being incorporated into landscape design in traditional parks. Establish a goal of becoming a leader in developing all parks and recreation buildings in keeping with the U.S. Green Building Council with the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System.
- Develop the concept of parks as economic resources, and develop a business plan for the Department based on the recognition that parks and recreation is a business.
- Improve access to outdoor recreation resources and facilities by establishing parks near where people live and work and by exploring ways to connect existing facilities for pedestrians and non-motorized vehicles (bikes, in-line skates, horses, etc.).
- Establish a cost center for risk management to ensure safe operations for employees and visitors alike.
- Investigate opportunities for a campus setting of compatible facilities and programs within Parks and Recreation and with other county agencies.
- Improve the efficiency of department meetings. Agendas should be shared prior to the day of the meeting, and emphasis should focus on what should be done, not critiques or criticism. Retain and distribute formal minutes to track and include discussion points, completed business, issues, resolutions, ongoing or pending business, action plans and notice of upcoming meetings.

- Focus on gender, age and ability neutral life-long recreation opportunities.

9.3 Park Inventory/Analysis and Development Recommendations

- Create conceptual site master plans for each park site and open space to serve as a bench mark for future alternatives based on user supported programs. Each plan would present a functional vision of what each site could be, and would address issues such as potential uses, response to change, accessibility, circulation and transportation, security, maintenance, aesthetics, programming, and cost, just to name a few.
- Provide play spaces for adults and senior citizens that go beyond the fitness trails typically seen in parks.
- Put an emphasis on 'play value,' which refers to things that spontaneously encourage visitors to challenge themselves and reach out beyond the traditional rides and climbing equipment. Provide playground equipment that is age and ability appropriate, challenging, creative durable and safe. These include things like climbing walls, boulders, and other creative approaches that include natural elements.
- Participate in a county-wide GIS inventory of all county property holdings to seek opportunities for expansion, trade, joint venturing and/or disposition of existing county resources.

- Utilize existing technologies to enhance recreational opportunities. For example, add wireless Internet nodes to major parks.

- Designate select athletic fields as 'game-only' and do not allow them to be used for practice. That will help reduce wear and tear on these fields.

- Develop parks to provide for greater flexibility of spaces. Design some fields as one big open area. This allows the goals to be moved on a regular basis and keep a wear pattern from forming. Include large, level open areas in new parks to allow for informal games and activities.

- Invest more in horticulture, the use of indigenous flowers and plants, and the greening of parks. Explore options for acquiring discontinued or discounted plants from nurseries and home supply stores. Require undisturbed green space set aside at each site.

- Ensure staff is involved in the pre-design, programming and post construction activities of new parks and recreation facilities.

- Continue to add trails and walkways as part of all parks in order to make the parks more conducive to walking.

- Provide space for community gardens in selective parks. Assign community gardeners "allotment" plots in public gardens. Encourage sponsorships and "friendly" competitions within sites and among parks.

9.4 Greenway and Natural Resource Area Development Recommendations

- Develop a comprehensive greenway and trail plan that explores opportunities for linking parks, open space, recreation facilities, and public gathering areas with residential areas and transportation routes.

- Provide more linear parks and greenways that can be used for long walks or long bike rides by children and adults. Linear parks and greenways should help connect the other parks in the County's system. Seek connectivity opportunities with other existing or planned public and private systems.

- Implement key recommendations to conserve and properly use natural resources from the SCORP 2008-2013 report. These include:

- Identify and prioritize key lands for acquisition, particularly in the fastest-growing areas of the state.

- Establish and provide resource data and tools by establishing a Technical Assistance Unit within the Parks, Recreation and Historic Sites Division to aid local governments that are focusing on land conservation needs in accordance with SCORP 2008-2013, the Georgia Land Conservation Plan and the Georgia Wildlife Action Plan.

- Expand the SCORP inventory of outdoor recreation resources and other GIS databases to identify lands suitable for conservation.

- Support land use planning that encourages conservation of natural resources and opportunities for outdoor recreation opportunities.

- Expand nature-based programming opportunities at the state and local level.

- Participate in the creation of a multi-jurisdictional Georgia Scenic Trails System as outlined in Ga. Code 12-3-113 and ~.114. (NOTE: Include a copy in the technical report.)

9.5 Land Acquisition Recommendations

- Expand lands, programs, services and facilities to accommodate the future influx of park and recreation users. Lands not acquired now may be unavailable or too costly in the near future. Establish a land bank program to acquire and hold properties for future generations.
- Continue to utilize funds from previous bond issues for land acquisition and park expansion. This remains important because it increases the amount of park acreage. Without bond funds this could not have happened.
- Establish minimum criteria for land acquisition on those lands that are suitable for active recreational opportunities. Land is not developable, such as that in flood plains, should not be pursued at this point. That land may be available in the future.
- Ensure Parks and Recreation staff is actively involved in determining land acquisition. In the past the Greenspace Office, which is not affiliated with Parks & Recreation, managed land acquisition. It would be helpful for the Greenspace Office to work with Parks & Recreation during the process of reviewing potential acquisition sites.
- Establish a review process for lands to be donated by developers. Too often, developers want to donate unusable land that could not be developed into a useable park site. The Department should not accept such

land that becomes a maintenance, security and/or risk liability. Instead, the land could become open space maintained by a home owners association or non-profit organization. Another approach would be to accept an impact fee in lieu of land. These fees could go into a fund for future land banking.

9.6 Facilities Recommendations

- Ensure that planning for new recreation centers help minimize the need for staffing and maintenance. For example, relationship diagrams should ensure that site lines make it possible for staff manning a front desk to also monitor movement throughout the facility.
- Incorporate multiple demographic programming into a single facility. In the past, many recreation centers have become defacto youth centers. Instead of constructing separate senior centers and other types of facilities, incorporate these uses into future recreation centers.
- Add interactive water features as part of new swimming pools to attract a greater number of users and offer a wider variety of potential applications.
- Coordinate efforts with Senior Citizen Centers to offer additional senior programs in recreation centers, or perhaps the recreation staff could utilize SSC facilities to offer decentralized programs.
- Utilize construction of the three new recreation centers to refine new standards within the county, and articulate the direction of the Department.
- Develop an inventory of all available indoor and outdoor program spaces. Schedule a maximum use of spatial opportunities through visual schedules to maximize human, man-made, physical and financial resources.
- Utilize more durable materials than in the past in order to reduce maintenance and to improve life cycle costs.
- Reconsider current policy for upgrading and maintaining existing facilities. Some existing facilities should be sold or replaced with newer facilities because they have reached the end of their life. Conventional wisdom dictates that a facility should be replaced or removed if the cost to renovate or remove exceeds the value of the structure and the site.
- Build community centers with cross training fitness areas and multipurpose rooms to serve various programming needs such as yoga, educational, social and exercise programs such as Pilates and spinning courses.
- Place emphasis on developing multipurpose spaces that can be quickly and easily adjusted to meet specific needs. Focus more on space allocations. Instead of building a gymnasium, for example, there is greater revenue potential for allocating the same space to multipurpose uses through game lineage and recessed floor anchors for equipment.

- Consider the development of family-focused nature centers as recommended by the National Audubon Society. One option is to incorporate the Dunwoody Nature Center as part of the Parks & Recreation system. Also consider this a joint venture opportunity with the school system.
- Ensure recreation centers have sufficient critical resources to function effectively. For example, not every center has access to a multi passenger van. Being unable to transport people has had a negative impact on a center's ability to present specific programs. icipal annexations.

9.7 Policy Recommendations

- Support the Urban Summit on Parks and Recreation a national agenda for revitalizing urban parks and recreation in America. This national agenda is based on four guiding principles for urban parks and recreation: Urban parks promote health and wellness; Urban parks strengthen our diverse communities and stimulate economic development; Urban parks protect the environment; Urban parks and recreation educate, protect, and enrich America's youth.
- Support the National League of Cities' "Platform for Strengthening Families and Improving Outcomes for Children and Youth."
- Develop a Parks Foundation and/or Authority as an optional means of having greater control and flexibility over non-county

- funding to address increased public and private service needs. A foundation can seek funding and in-kind donations from a wide variety of sources including fees, donations, grants, bonds, sales, interagency agreements, the private sector and more. They can create and manage a "development fund" similar to corporate venture capital. (NOTE: To be expanded.)
- Encourage the countywide adoption of a system of capital improvements review similar to the Federal A-95 Process. (NOTE: To be expanded.)

- Participate in the Georgia Outdoor Recreation Partnership (GORP) recommended by SCORP for implementing Strategic Actions.
- Focus on establishing the Department as a facilitator instead of a service provider.
- Establish more advocates for Parks and Recreation. Currently the Parks Advisory Board is the only organization that serves that role.
- Modify existing enabling legislation to give the Parks and Recreation director authority.
- Implement policies and practices that are environmentally friendly and sustainable. These include policies about recycling, the use of sustainable materials and recycled materials, the use of native plants that require less watering and fertilizing, minimizing surface runoff, and energy efficiency, just to name a few.

- Revise the policies of the Department in terms of credit cards. In 2001, the decision was made not to accept credit cards because there is a 1.5% cost per transaction for using credit cards, and this would result in a loss of revenue. The loss associated with bounced checks and misplaced cash, however, most likely matches or exceeds the cost associated with using credit cards. A fee structure that utilizes only credit cards will help improve efficiency. The system can then be expanded to include registration and reservation fee payments collected over a web page.

- Implement local "adopt-a-park" and park watch programs from within local communities and the service area(s).
- Develop policies for working with potential donors. It should be easy for interested individuals and organizations to make donations (of time, in-kind and money) beneficial to Parks and Recreation. This includes developing procedures that allow donors to select choices from a detailed menu of opportunities and see how their contribution is spent.
- Update the design standard notebook to include field dimensions, grades, types of bench, gauge of fencing, lighting plan, scoring booth construction, scoreboard specifications, spectator seating, foot and motorized traffic circulation, sanitation, waste management, utilities and other design criteria, and implement these standards on all future parks and recreation projects.

9.8 Delivery Services

Multi-Jurisdictional Consolidation

- Investigate a potential for a multi jurisdictional consolidation within DeKalb County for the service specific purpose of parks, recreation, cultural, natural and historic preservation, conservation and performing arts. This discussion can be held concurrently with the evolution of a park and recreation authority.

County's Role in Recreation Service Delivery

- Define the role of the County in providing recreation service for residents. The County needs to work closely with other recreation providers to develop a comprehensive recreation plan for the county.

- Establish a DeKalb Recreation Association that includes all public and non-profit recreation providers in the county. This organization should meet monthly, and should work together to establish common goals and objectives for best meeting the needs of all DeKalb County residents.

Defining County's Core Services

- Take the approach of providing basic services for free, but charging for other services. The first step is to identify basic services that should be provided in every recreation center and in each park.

- Identify the core services that need to be provided in each park and in each recreation center. These services should be available in all parts of the County.

Staffing

- Work more closely with the Department of Human Resources (HR) to identify the needs and minimum qualifications for specific job openings. Currently HR is not as familiar with Parks and Recreation as they need to be to provide adequate support for the Department.

- Staffing trends need to be driven by the recreation programs offered by the Department. New positions need to be established to support this vision, and other staff positions that no longer are critical to help in this goal should be phased out.

- Hire a full-time or shared-time community garden coordinator to help ensure this new program would run smoothly. Responsibilities need to be clearly defined, and may include other community outreach activities as well as community gardening.

- Clearly define the hiring and firing process for all positions within the Department. For hiring, request a "pre-qualification" process for hiring employment candidates. For leadership positions in the Department, a search committee should be involved. In all cases there should be a three to six month performance probation period for evaluation.

- Refine job descriptions to more accurately reflect work performed and expected. The redefinition should include consideration of career path opportunities for all employees.

- Improve performance evaluation procedures by deleting "pay-for-performance" in favor of a more efficient and current system, such as "the balanced scorecard" and/or self-appraisals. Ensure that evaluations are conducted as scheduled, and employees get a timely response on the results of the evaluation.

- Increase employee training opportunities through a mandatory annual line item allocation and encourage employee participation. Each employee performing at an acceptable level should have an opportunity for training every year.

- Improve employee morale by offering spot bonuses, awards and recognition. All supervisors should be trained in this phase of people and production management.

- Empower staff and allow them to be more accountable and responsible for their actions. Eliminate any practice of micro management since it is counter productive.

- Reevaluate the ratio of supervisors to workers. In some divisions the number of supervisors appears to be high compared to the number workers.

Community Development

- Promote the priorities established in SCORP 2008-2013. These include: Promote Health/Fitness and Livability of All Communities; Enhance Economic Vitality; and Conserve and Properly Use Natural Resources.

Customer Service

- Develop an on-going instrument to measure what constituents consider important. These would include ongoing surveys seeking input about the types of programs the public wants to see offered. These could be paper surveys that can be picked up and turned in at recreation centers, schools, and libraries. It could also be an ongoing web-based survey. The Department has not conducted a mail out survey to determine the types of programs that would be of interest to the public, but instead has relied on feedback from questionnaires completed at the end of current programs. Mail out surveys enjoy greater success if mailed out with utility bills and returned with the payment.

- Develop "no questions asked" customer policies that help improve customer relations. Customers need to feel that there are opinions and concerns are important.

- Request from everyone that registers for a recreation class or park activity to provide their email address so they may be included in future communications regarding parks and recreation activities.

- Provide comment boxes at all recreation centers and major parks, and follow through with comments and suggestions. These could be posted on the Department web site, or posted in the recreation centers or parks where the comments were made.

- Establish a phone-line for communication with the Department, and establish a policy that ensures comments will receive a response. For example, every phone call should receive a follow up response within two working days.

Performance Measurement

- Conduct feasibility studies for new facilities, land acquisitions, and major redevelopment projects that combine market analysis, physical planning, and financial projections to determine if a project or activity has an acceptable return on investment.

- Establish performance measures that allow public officials, department managers, and the community to evaluate the effectiveness and quality of public services. Performance measures include:

- Input indicators that tell the amount of resources that have been used for a specific service or program
- Output/workload indicators that measure the units produced or services provided by a program.
- Efficiency/cost-effectiveness indicators that provide the ratio of quantity of services to costs in dollars or labor.

- Outcome/effectiveness indicators that report the results, including the quality of programs and services.
- Productivity indicators that combine efficiency and effectiveness indicators into a single measure.
- The department currently is limited to measuring program inputs and outputs.

Access and Equity

- Develop a connectivity study to seek opportunities to improve access to user populations from schools, residential communities, between park assets and to other public use areas within the county and within neighboring counties where overlapping services, facilities, programs and user populations are found. Results may include greater use of assets, more green space, and less reliance on motorized vehicles.
- Ensure access and equity distributed to all parts of the county. For example, all recreation centers in the county should have air conditioning. Some facilities do not, and in the summer some gyms get so hot that lights are turned off.
- Ensure the Department utilizes materials of equal quality for all parks and recreation facilities in the county.
- Address access in the broadest terms. Ensure that every resident has access to a park or open space. Work with other departments and organizations to ensure the implementation of sidewalks to help improve accessibility and connectivity.
- Update automation and web page to improve public access to park operations and marketing efforts.

Special Events and Tourism

- Expand the inclusion of special events and holiday activities in the parks. Encourage the population to utilize the parks in the celebration of the county's growing cultural diversity.
- Explore the possibility of constructing one or more super centers that would be used as a regional attraction for major events. The center could include facilities for major indoor and outdoor track meets, swimming meetings, cheerleading competitions, gymnastics, and other major activities. It could also be used for meetings, conventions, competitions, performing arts and other group activities.

Joint Ventures / Partnerships

- Reevaluate the current Memorandum of Understanding with the sports associations. It should be reviewed each year when it is renewed. This has not always happened. Review terms, conditions and policies to ensure that the MOU clearly defines roles, responsibilities, expectations and limitations for all parties involved.
- Establishing local coalitions that work to identify new funding sources and create quality standards for after-school programs. The Department could utilize school facilities and employees (i.e. off duty teachers, coaches, etc.) to offer recreation programs and holiday camps for school-age children.
- Explore joint venture opportunities within government and from throughout the public and private sectors. (Examples: churches, schools, health clubs, hospitals, child and senior care, YM/YWCA, Boys/Girls Clubs, libraries, swimming facilities, golf courses, recreation centers, bowling alleys, store front operations, skating rinks/parks, tennis courts/centers, performing arts facilities and similar).
- Create and sustain partnerships to minimize reliance on tax revenues to support the operation and maintenance of public parks and outdoor recreation areas. (SCORP)

- Work with the School District to find better ways to work together for maximizing leisure time opportunities. Establish communications with the School District so that they consult with Parks & Recreation prior to building or planning a new school.
- Develop a partnership with Home Depot, the nation's largest home improvement retailer, and KABOOM!, a national nonprofit organization that focuses on building safe play spaces, to build playgrounds throughout the County.
- Develop partnerships with developers of high-tech products in order to make this equipment available to DeKalb County residents. For example, skateboard developers may offer demo boards and other discounted boards to users of County facilities.

Programming Inventory and Analysis

- Offer programs that the entire family can become involved with while focusing on specific age groups.
- Add performing arts programs, such as dance, music or theater, adult sports teams, sports tournaments and races, personal training, youth sports teams, sport training and swimming programs.
- Develop environmental education programs such as trail guides, nature guides, bird watching, astronomy, botany, geology, forestry, agriculture and classes on environmental impact and sustainability.

- Offer family education programs to provide general education on substance use and chemical dependency, geriatric issues, family roles, community resources, raising a drug-free child and other related issues.

- Expand opportunities for youth participation and leadership through programs offered by city recreation departments, libraries, museums, schools and other organizations.

- Develop programs that help improve social and leadership skills, and provide a sense of belonging and safety. Other components should focus on self esteem, communication, managing stress, relationships, decision-making, and alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

- Consider dropping low participation programs that are losing participants and money. With a limited amount of resources, emphasis should be on those programs that generate higher participation rates and are more economically viable.

- Develop a walking program to get local citizens engaged.

- Establish community gardening programs supported by nonprofit volunteer organizations and private partners to help support activities. Encourage gardeners to become "eyes and ears" for the security of parks and the adjacent communities.

- Reach out in an organized way to offer more programs for adults and senior citizens.

- Increase efforts to adequately meet the needs of physically and mentally challenged people.

- Make services more accessible to low income groups, single parents, and homeless people. One way to do this is to offer special classes, or provide fee waivers for those with demonstrated need.

- Provide online access to recreation opportunities and programs, and ensure the information is updated in a timely manner. If a class is cancelled, for example, that information needs to be posted immediately. It should also be possible for interested individuals to sign up and pay registration fees online. This will greatly improve efficiency, lower administrative costs and should result in a significant increase in participation.

- Provide art programs for all ages. These could include ceramics, pottery, drawing, photography, computer graphics, and other activities.

- Lower the ratio of counselors to students for after school programs. Currently the ratio is 1 to 15, and this has been the standard since 2003. A ration of 1 to 10 would be more appropriate.

- Expand new fitness programs being offered, such as aerobics classes, cardio sessions, and strength training.

- Develop recreation opportunities that build upon our interest in technology to provide access to the outdoors. This would include activities such as geocaching and indoor climbing.

- Offer more non-traditional recreation programs that present opportunities for socialization. These include board games, table games, book clubs, public speaking, music/art appreciation, pre/post natal care, cooking for one, travel club, bocce ball, table tennis, and other similar activities.

- Provide a greater variety of programs offered at different times of the day in recognition of the changes in work schedules caused by the shift to an information-based economy.

- Inventory all available programmable space against a schedule of spatial availability. Then plan to fill these spaces with events, programs and activities. It is better to wear out a facility than to allow it to rust out from lack of use.

Monitoring & Updating the Master Plan

- Submit plan for adoption by the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners so that it will serve as a roadmap for the Department over the next ten years.
- Annually review and update the adopted master plan. This will make this a non-static document with measurable results for planning, expansion and growth.

- Annually prepare a listing of major accomplishments and achievements per division and/or as a department. These should be shared with the public and with other departments in the county.

- Establish an annual target date for completion of the annual review and distribution of updates to stakeholders. The update should contain a revised table of contents, annual report, page updates and instructions on properly updating personal copies of the current plan.

- Utilize the county wide survey that was part of the master planning process as a benchmark to conduct local area needs assessments before planning or initiating major changes within defined service areas. This will keep the public informed and involved. This practice will highlight the unique differences and needs found within each service area.

Volunteerism

- Expand the existing volunteerism program in an effort to bring in more volunteers to assist with parks and recreation activities.

- Improve volunteerism through a full time "Volunteer Coordinator", job descriptions, inventory of opportunities, increased marketing, volunteer appreciation events and greatly expanded networking. The Metro Atlanta Corporate Volunteer Council is a good example of a marketing network.

- Establish guidelines to limit the legal exposure of the Department and its volunteers. These include: develop volunteer position descriptions; use volunteer applications and carefully screen applicants; fingerprint and run background checks and credit checks for those handling money on any volunteer who will be in contact with minors; train and closely supervise volunteers; advise volunteers of all applicable policies they must follow; promptly investigate and respond to any complaints or concerns regarding a volunteer's action; secure insurance protection for volunteers.

- Require coaching certifications or personal training certifications of volunteers involved with specific activities. Identify acceptable certification sources and make inquiries of volunteers' active service and record.

Communication

- Conduct public meetings on a regular basis in order to give the public an opportunity to express their needs and concerns. Hold media events, community forums and site visits to local programs as a way of keeping these needs in the spotlight. Ensure that the Board of Commissioners has advance knowledge of all meetings, events, openings and media events.
- Improve internal bottom up communications within the department and between divisions. Be more proactive in working with other departments in the County, many of which have little understanding of what is being done in Parks & Recreation.
- Establish regular meeting times for Department representatives to meet with the Board of Commissioners on a regular basis. The BOC is one of the biggest advocates for the Department.
- Resolve communication needs for upper management, supervisors, event coordinator and similar employees with major responsibility and authority. One step may be to provide Blackberries for all upper management.
- Upgrade information technology hardware, software and training as a means of increasing overall efficiencies, reduced unit cost of output and to improve web page management.
- Develop a uniform system wide signage program.

- Update web page to reflect current assets inventory, program offerings, special events, project status, online registration and reservations making it interactive to encourage feedback.

- Put control of the Parks and Recreation web site in the hands of the Department in order to ensure that changes and updates can be completed in a timely manner. The Internet should be an integral part of how the Department communicates with its constituents.
- Design and adopt a unique logo for the department for use on all signage, promotional materials, vehicles, and uniforms. The logo should be distinct, vibrant, and exciting, and help convey the direction of the Department. It should be "cool" enough that kids want t-shirts with the DeKalb Parks and Recreation Department logo.
- Add marquee boards at the entrance to parks to post important information, such as if games have been cancelled or fields are closed due to inclement weather. Automated signs are recommended since they will be most effective at updating information in a timely manner.

Marketing

- Improve marketing by developing an annual marketing plan and budget. This plan should utilize in-house abilities, identify opportunities for partnering with other organizations, and determine potential outsourcing options. One major limitation is that the Department does not have the resources to adequately address marketing issues.
- Increase marketing for special events. The number of people participating in these events could increase with better advertising.
- Increase visibility of Parks and Recreation within the County. One option would be to develop regular programs for the internal DeKalb County TV channel. Currently Parks & Recreation do not utilize the TV channel at all. There could be scheduled programs that feature different recreation opportunities and highlight a different park, speaker, topic or center each week. Special events could be advertised.
- Continue to market parks and recreation as a 'quality of life' issue and business incubator.

- Enhance public recognition of benefits associated with parks and recreation in terms of the health and well being of society

- Move marketing responsibilities from the CEO office to the Department. This will help the Department develop a consistent vision and provide timely information on marketing and promotions.

- Continue to produce a family fun guide. The Department used to produce a family fun guide, and it would be beneficial to continue that practice. Most major parks departments around the country produce such a guide, and it is an effective way to generate excitement about the upcoming season. Much if not all the costs if this a family fun guide can be covered by sponsorships, partnerships, grants, or advertisements.

9.9 Economic and Financial Recommendations

- Review NRPAs's National Legislative and Policy Platform for 2007, which included several recommendations associated with improving funding for parks. These include support for funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) state assistance program, the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Act and the River Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program, among others.

- Explore the use of Expression of Interest (EOI) documents. These are requests that are sent out through the purchasing department and are used to determine interest from contractors, vendors, and other suppliers to maximize efficient use of lagging assets.

- Include terms and conditions for long and short term interest bearing sinking funds within all contracts especially lease-use agreements.

- Refine Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) terms and conditions.

- Expand the capital improvements program to be all inclusive driven by recognized need and community expectations. The plan cannot be limited by a hypothetical cost "ceiling"

- Address asset acquisition considerations for each project. These could include the following:

- Traditional design / bid / construct
- Design / Build
- Negotiated Bid
- Lease / Purchase (county as lessee or lesser)
- Phased
- Turn Key

- Create a one time capital improvements request for "emergencies" that can be utilized with authorized approval and replenished through other predetermined means.

- Explore a wide range of funding options, including the following:
 - Sales Tax Increase ("A Penny For A Park").

- Sale of outstanding community development block grant loans.
- Bonds (LOB, GOB, TMB, Revenue, SPLIT and similar).
- Lease / purchase financing.
- Mandatory Deductions
- Certificates of Participation
- Facilities Benefit Assessment Districts
- Community Rehabilitation Districts
- Benefits Assessment Districts
- Tax incremental financing (approved in 40 •state, Dekalb may already be using it).
- Landscape and Lighting Districts
- State to County conveyances.
- "Mello – Roos" Assessment Districts (a California concept)
- Divestitures ("trim-the-fat").
- Parcel tax (used in NC).

- Real Estate Transfer Tax (similar to parcel tax).
- Federal Government Initiatives (limited and/or special programs).
- Impact Fees
- Recreation Impact Fee
- Joint Ventures
- Multi-jurisdictional consolidation of park and recreation services.
- Time sharing (public/private partnership).
- Recreation Tax (like a hotel/motel tax, luxury tax and similar).
- Livable Centers Initiative (LCI)
- Transportation Enhancement (TE)
- Rural Business Enterprise Grant
- Renovation Surcharge (a sinking fund levied against existing users including groups for future renovations, development and expansion).
- Sponsorships
- Out Sourcing
- Reduction in overhead and operational costs.
- User fee increases.
- Establish a functional contractor evaluation process and request a policy that ensures the use of the data when the county considers bids to eliminate marginal and non performing contractors.
- Facilitate collaborations between government agencies and the private sector to advance the economic benefits of outdoor recreation and natural resource conservation.
- Market our natural and recreation resources to increase public participation and foster support, advance tourism and opportunities for economic development and encourage volunteerism.
- Rehabilitate, update and upgrade existing public outdoor recreation facilities to maximize marketability.
- Promote outdoor recreation events, programs and facilities that attract day travelers and overnight visitation by creating partnerships with local businesses such as local convention and visitor bureaus, recreation equipment vendors and guide services.
- Investigate opportunities for the contracting or out sourcing of basic services, programs and/or facilities as a means of cost control and service enhancement.
- Continue to offer price bundling options, where two or more services are put together into a single "package" at a discounted price.
- Improve cash management systems and practices. Establish a no cash policy. This will help simplify the financial policies of the Department.
- Look at budgeting and maintenance needs over the entire lifecycle of a facility rather than just the initial cost of buying and installing equipment.
- Increase grants expectations. Pursue federal, state and foundational grants available to park and recreation agencies. Establish a three year plan to achieve or exceed a higher plateau of grant awards in all operational and administrative areas. (Examples: LWCF, UPARR, Heritage Trust, private industry, foundations, philanthropy, community development block grants and similar). Nationally over \$1 billion annually is available and let on the table every year. Pursue grants available from groups such as the USTA to expand tennis facilities in the County.
- Aggressively pursue sponsorship opportunities to reduce cost, increase exposure or to reduce costs to users through scholarship and supplemental revenues. Seek sponsorships for special events and to sustain operations.
- Conduct training on the existing accounting process to insure that it is used effectively. The current system is automated, but not always used correctly.
- Bring all financial responsibilities together in one central location. This will help improve efficiency and ensure a more consistent approach to financial management.
- Support the SCORP 2008-2013 recommendations to Enhance Economic Vitality. These include:
 - Document the economic benefits of outdoor recreation in Georgia and track the financial return from investing in outdoor recreation facilities.

- Establish incentives for cost savings. This could be in the form of awards, spot bonuses, or other recognition.

- Advocate for the continuation of state and local funding assistance through the Land and Water Conservation Fund program and other federal programs that support outdoor recreation opportunities in Georgia. Beginning in 2008, LWCF application criteria will directly correlate with the SCORP 2008–2013 strategic recommendations.

- Formalize the policy of charging location fees for commercials, photo shoots, and other activities, establish consistent fees, and promote these types of events.
- Balance cost versus performance when it comes to purchasing equipment. For example, a mower with a bigger cutting size may be more expensive, but it will also reduce the time required for regular maintenance.

- Explore the option of generating revenue by selling advertising on scoreboards, fences, and other structures that are visible to the public and consider selling the naming rights for new facilities. If this option is approved, clearly defined criteria need to be established to ensure that advertising is done in a way that is visually acceptable.

- Reconsider the policies on how some facilities are managed. Some recreation facilities need a major overhaul in order to make them more financially viable. The tennis center and golf course at Sugar Creek both lose money for the Department and have to be subsidized.

Perhaps it is time to change the function of these subsidized operations through issuance of an Expression of Interest process.

- Establish adequate funding for the Department, such as a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to provide support for maintenance and new capital for development. A dedicated funding stream is required. It may be the only way this department is going to meet the demands of its constituents.

9.10 Fees Recommendation

- Update fees schedule based upon research into current practices and local fees to establish benchmark fees, annual increases, free versus funded programs and seeking supplemental/sustaining support as required. Reference review and policy consideration of the LERN Research Report #02-883 - How to Measure and Improve the Financial Success of Recreation Programs.

- Establish a policy to evaluate cost – benefit – risk against continuation of individual programs.

- Consider a reciprocal fee arrangement with neighboring counties and municipalities that fall within the service area of DeKalb County citizens.

- Consider a wide range of fees, including: entrance fees, admission fees, rental fees, sales revenues, license and permit fees, special services fees and user fees.

- Explore alternatives for reducing fees associated with activities offered by sports associations and other private partners. For example, instead of charging for facilities, the Department could require a sports association to accept a larger responsibility for maintenance. The savings could result in lower fees and lower operational costs for the department.
- Explore options for privatization, including: subcontracting park maintenance, security services, golf operations, building maintenance, tree trimming, and other tasks.

9.11 Maintenance Recommendations

should be pulled from play for the upcoming season.

- Develop a consistent policy for maintaining recreation centers. Of the eleven existing recreation centers, nine are currently maintained with park employees while 2 are maintained with the use of contract employees.
- Develop a playground replacement program based on a functional lifecycle of about 12 to 15 years.
- Develop a functional basic preventive maintenance process.
- Develop a Standard of Care to serve as a road map for the Department. Revise standard of care manual periodically once it has been established in order to help gauge performance based on actual practices.
- Close at least some of the athletic fields during the off-season to reduce wear and tear. At least one field should be left open for public use. Close one if five soccer fields from play in a given season to allow it to rejuvenate. That means every field will have a chance to recover a minimum of every five years. When a field is pulled from play, it would be helpful to have signage that explains the need to allow the field to rejuvenate. This will help alleviate misconceptions about not utilizing all of the fields.
- Evaluate every field before and after each season to determine its condition, potential maintenance requirements, and whether it should be pulled from play for the upcoming season.
- Conduct field trips so the crews can see other facilities and develop a catalog of photographs showing examples of the type of quality expected for a maintenance practice. The more maintenance crews understand what is expected of them, the better they will be able to do their job.
- If an agreement can be reached with local schools to have access to their athletic fields after school hours, Parks & Recreation could do the maintenance, and the school would use the fields for their normal activities and special events
- Use more soil amendments such as sand and compost with plug aeration in the center of fields since this is where most damage takes place. This helps provide a cushion so even after damage is incurred the grass root zone will rejuvenate more quickly.
- Expand the amount of maintenance required by athletic associations to alleviate some of the pressures for the Department. These tasks could include mowing, field dressing, and other maintenance directly associated with ball fields. Require sports associations to help fund sod and turf replacement between seasons.
- Re-emphasize the maintenance division's Resource Enhancement and Protection program that focuses on lifecycles. Apparently many of the records were lost and others were not kept up-to-date. The division needs to start collecting that data again, put it in a digital format that can be cross-referenced with other data, and then backed up to ensure the data is not lost again.
- Utilize native grasses and wildflowers in specific areas to reduce maintenance requirements. These areas would only have to be mowed a couple of times per year in comparison to every two weeks or so.
- Develop a maintenance plan for each park and for each recreation center. The plan should include a list of all maintenance tasks required for a particular facility, the time it takes for each, how often the maintenance needs occur, and if it is seasonal, when the plan starts and ends.
- Conduct a cost analysis comparing the cost of completing specific maintenance items in-house versus contracting them out. If the in-house cost estimate cannot match or significantly (>10%) undercut bids then the work should be outsourced.
- Establish records in the maintenance division for how long it takes to get things done. This information will help schedule tasks and determine standard of care.

9.12 Security Recommendations

- Establish a cost center for all security measures including personnel, equipment, signage, training and outreach.
- Establish a policy for the overnight parking and possible abandonment of vehicles within park sites.
- Purchase and install deterrents to crime, such as cameras, alarms, gates, lighting, and other devices.
- Establish park watch programs within communities surrounding park sites. These help increase the concept of "eyes and ears in the parks."
- Establish a park police unit with officers that have police powers. One approach would be to have the park police unit report directly to Parks & Recreation. Another is for the unit to be a part of the regular police department, but has a first response assigned exclusively to Parks & Recreation.
- Take a more proactive role in developing a greater security presence in the parks.

9.13 Health and Wellness Recommendations

- Build on the wellness movement to promote alternative programs to drug abuse, anti-social behavior, etc.
- Participate in events that focus on community-based initiatives, such as NRPAs Health and Livability Summit held earlier in 2007.
- Begin research to determine the long-term health and economic benefits associated with access to park and recreation resources. One place to start is by working with community service providers and public health specialists. Track and evaluate how the health of the users of facilities, parks and programs improves over time.
- Identify and improve safe places for children to play in every neighborhood in order to promote physical activity, healthy development and positive interactions with peers.
- Establish a Wellness Coordinator to take the lead in addressing the integration of health issues with parks and recreation.
- Work with statewide organizations such as the Department of Natural Resources, the Georgia Recreation and Park Association and others to develop programs that promote health and livability and to incorporate those programs into state and local outdoor recreation.
- Develop creative partnerships with health providers.
- Evaluate participation rates, durations of use, and enrollment numbers.
- Work with the public health community to learn the most effective evaluation methods.

Sources

10.0

10.1 Comprehensive Strategic Plan Steering Committee

This document consists of information put together to help the Steering Committee develop a comprehensive strategic plan. The five goals in the strategic planning effort, as stated in the document, are:

1. Create a vision and mission for the department and outline basic service delivery philosophies;
2. Outline policies and processes for critical service delivery issues;
3. Create and prioritize five-year actions plans – operational and capital improvement and acquisition;
4. Develop strategies and recommend mechanisms for funding;
5. Position the department for national accreditation.

The objective of the process is to develop a plan with realistic implementation goals in which the recreational needs of the community and the fiscal responsibility of the County are balanced.

The document includes a copy of the project understanding and approach, and scope of work developed by EDAW. Also included is a list of stakeholders, the 1999 survey developed by ETC Institute, 1999 budget and budget history, statistics about the park system, and



Figure 2.1

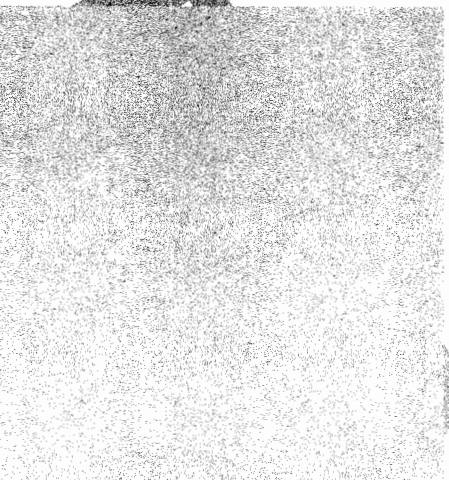
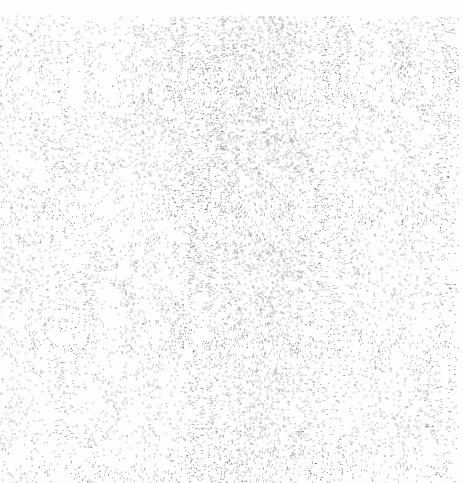


Figure 2.2

a copy of the 1996 Final Report of the Blue Ribbon Committee for DeKalb County Parks & Recreation.

10.2 Final Report of the Blue Ribbon Committee for DeKalb County Parks & Recreation 1996

This report contains recommendations by the Committee, which assessed the current issues and conditions facing the DeKalb County Parks and Recreation Department. The report was made available in public facilities throughout the county.





The charge of the Committee was to:

- Create a vision for the future of parks and recreation;
- Generate long-range goals and objectives which will direct the parks and recreation master planning effort;
- Identify critical issues facing parks and recreation in the community;
- Build a set of initiatives to fulfill those issues; and
- Assist in identifying the desired future for parks and recreation services in the county by charting a course which the county and the department may follow to manage future growth and achieve common goals.

Ten town hall meetings were conducted to give citizens an opportunity to participate in the process. Following the meetings, the Committee held a 2-day conference to synthe-

size information and outline a recommended growth management plan. The report includes a series of issues, opportunities, and strategic actions.

10.3 Status of Health in DeKalb Report: Opportunities for Prevention and Community Service

Presented by the Status of Health in DeKalb Committee and the DeKalb County Board of Health. 2005

This report is the sixth in a series produced by the DeKalb County Board of Health that describes time and geographic patterns of diseases and injuries, birth trends, leading causes of death and premature death, and health behaviors. The purpose of the Status of Health report series is to identify priority areas for health improvement and to serve as a catalyst for community action. The 2005 report analyzes available data through 2003 on the leading health issues and some of the risk factors associated with these issues in DeKalb County. It emphasizes information related to priority areas and provides specific opportunities for prevention in these areas. The report is broken up into chapters that include: Demographics in DeKalb County; Health Priority Areas; Health Behaviors; Infectious Diseases and Leading Causes of Hospitalizations; Causes of Death; Opportunities for Prevention; and Appendices.

The report identifies opportunities for preventing diseases and premature death in the County. These include:

- Actions for Healthy Lifestyles
 - Increase physical activity and eat better
 - Avoid tobacco
 - Drive responsibility and practice injury prevention
- Actions for the Health Care System
 - Increase culturally competent resources
- Promote comprehensive plan for health and disease prevention
- Actions for Healthy Policies
 - Support clean indoor air ordinances
 - Develop healthy workplaces
 - Implement a plan for healthy schools
- Actions for a Healthy Environment
 - Build and maintain safe communities
 - Participate in partnerships with community groups

10.4 DeKalb County Park And Recreation Department Parks Services Division Reorganization/Management Plan

October 2003.

The objective of this document is to enhance service and streamline operations in DeKalb County through the development and implementation of a reorganization and management plan. The plan takes into consideration a



number of factors, including: existing resources available; current park system inventory; new acquisitions; maintenance programs (existing and proposed); and industry standards relating to parks, grounds, and natural resource management.

The major objectives of the plan are:

Structure the organization to maximize productivity

- Re-District: Create a third maintenance district.
 - Create "zones" within each District to promote accountability and pride, and provide a presence in the parks.
 - Compress the number of existing classifications by eliminating several classifications.
 - Remove layers of supervision
 - Design specific functional units to promote the use of volunteers and create partnerships to assist with maintenance.
- Create support functions to address park system needs

- Enhance and expand the Natural Resource Management Unit to include management programs relating to environmental stewardship, urban forestry, horticultural management and park image.
- Enhance administrative functions relating to work order processing, cost accounting, performance measurements, safety and training.

The report looks at the efficiencies and outcomes associated with selected initiatives. There is also an analysis of the time spent on selective tasks. For example, the time required to mow, aerate, fertilize, weed, seed, lime, or remove clippings is documented, as is the number of times this service would have to be performed. There are also comparisons of the existing management structure to a proposed structure, and the existing park maintenance structure versus a proposed structure. A new organization chart defines key staff roles, responsibilities, and expectations.

10.5 DeKalb County Park and Recreation Comprehensive Strategic Plan 2000-2010.

September 2000.

The Strategic Plan is a conceptual planning document that incorporates the County's Comprehensive Land Use Plan, and is intended to help guide the management and growth of the County. It begins the process of making parks and recreation programs a catalyst for positive change within the County. The final draft of the document was made available

to the public at recreation centers, special facilities, and libraries within the County. To ensure adequate public involvement, a kick-off meeting was conducted, five public meetings were held – one in each of the Commission Districts, a household survey was sent out to County residents, and a Steering Committee was formed to insure continuity between this planning effort and previous planning projects. The plan looks at existing services and facilities in the County, analyzes standards and level of service, and makes recommendations for future action strategies.

A three-step planning process was used for the planning effort. The first step was the Findings Phase, which focused on gathering data to serve as a common baseline for making decisions. The second step is the Recommendations Phase; in this phase, all data from the first phase is analyzed. Strategies are developed to address potential concerns, and one of the products was a Vision Statement that served as a catalyst and a guidepost for recommenda-

tions. Once recommendations are adopted, the Implementation Phase begins.

10.6 Parks and Recreation Citizen Survey - DeKalb County Department of Parks and Recreation, Leisure Vision, April 1999

DeKalb County Department of Parks and Recreation, Leisure Vision, April 1999.

This document includes the results of a 1999 survey by ETC of residents in DeKalb County. The survey asked 31 questions that, collectively, provided information about how DeKalb residents were currently using parks and recreation facilities and programs, the level

of satisfaction for existing facilities, what types of activities and facilities they thought were most important, and what types of programs and facilities they wanted to see in the future. The responses are categorized into two groups: DeKalb Black/African American Residents, and DeKalb White Residents.

Each question is broken down into the number and percentage of respondents for each option. Also listed is the percentage of participants in the questionnaire that responded to a particular question.

10.7 Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation 2000 Caption Improvements Plan.

EDAW, Leon Younger, and PROS
March 2000

The purpose of the plan was to provide both a planning framework and a context for a specific recommendations and funding direction. The planning process was used to provide a forum for public involvement, as well as a mechanism for incorporating the concerns of the public into the plan. Features of this update include a revised inventory of the park system and its facilities, analysis of current levels of service within the County, a narrative description of salient issues, and an updated Capital Improvement Plan.

The document includes: an introduction; inventory; demographics and service area analyses; park service concepts, and a capital improve-

ments plan. Under Park System Concepts, the plan discusses three features of the Gwinnett County park system: the community park concept, facilities for teens, and open space. The purpose of this section was to amplify, expand, and update the park system concepts included in and adopted as part of the 1996 Gwinnett County parks plan. The recommended capital improvements were developed in response to priorities developed by the Recreation Authority, as well as needs expressed in the public meetings and other venues. The plan includes a balance of land acquisition and development, as well as a balance of active and passive activities.

10.8 Georgia Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

<http://gastateparks.org/net/content/go.aspx?s=132975.0.1.5>

The Georgia Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) consists of a comprehensive statewide recreation policy developed by the Department of Natural Resources' Parks, Recreation and Historic Sites Division (PRHSD). The plan, which is updated every five years, meets the eligibility requirements of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), which provides funding for grants that support state, county and city outdoor recreation projects.

Because Georgia's current SCORP expires in September 2007, PRHSD has partnered with the University of Georgia, local communities,

and organizations across the state to develop SCORP 2008 - 2013. This updated plan will assess Georgia's outdoor recreation opportunities as well as reflect the attitudes, needs, and priorities for and about outdoor recreation in Georgia as well as set the direction for the future of outdoor recreation statewide. (SCORP web site)

Fundamental elements of Georgia SCORP 2008-2013 include:

- Extensive public involvement
- A thorough inventory of all existing public-access land and water recreational facilities (federal, state, county and city; major quasi-public and private)
- An examination of social, demographic and recreation trends for Georgia based on data from the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment
- Application of GIS technology to map important factors such as existing recreational areas and greenspace, important natural habitats, socio, demographic and economic trends, etc.
- Surveys of Georgians and stakeholders to determine supply, needs, demand and attitudes, and to establish priorities for future outdoor recreation actions and policies
- Review and analysis of other guiding policy documents such as the 2003-2007 Georgia SCORP, Georgia Land Conservation Act, the Georgia Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, the Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites New Day, New Way Strategic Plan and other statewide or regional conservation and recreation plans including those developed by ACCG, GMA and others.

- Establishment of clear roles and responsibilities for public, quasi-public and private outdoor recreation service providers
- Discussion of the benefits of outdoor recreation to include economic, health, natural and social

- Recommendations regarding messaging and marketing of the benefits of outdoor recreation
- Presentation of data so that it can be reported statewide and/or excerpted by local jurisdiction as well as by congressional and state legislative district
- Clear short and long-term action priorities for policy directives, LWCF criteria and implementation options and recommendations
- Discussion of issues and options to implement plan recommendations

Upon completion and following public review and comment, the Georgia Board of Natural Resources will adopt the Georgia SCORP 2008 - 2013 and then forward it to the Governor for execution. It will then be forwarded to the National Park Service for approval by September 2007.

10.9 SCORP: Planning for the Future of Outdoor Recreation in Georgia.

Becky Kelley, Director of State Parks & Historic Sites, Georgia Department of Natural Resources

November 7, 2006

SCORP allows Georgia to receive federal grants from the Land and Water Conservation Fund that supports state, county and city outdoor recreation projects in three categories: land acquisition, facility development and rehabilitation. An essential part of the update process is to gather public input from outdoor recre-

ation users, and DNR is using a series of town hall meetings and an on-line survey to assess preferences.

In addition to public meetings and an online questionnaire, the DNR conducted random telephone surveys, as well as focus groups with land management agencies and companies, government agencies and user groups.

The draft document will be presented to the DNR Board during spring 2007 and made available for public comment, and the final SCORP document will be completed by late 2007.

Established in 1965, the LWCF is administered in Georgia by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and provides grants for outdoor recreation projects by both state and local governments. Since its inception, LWCF has provided over \$72 million in matching

funds for recreation-related land purchases, facility development, and rehabilitation of existing facilities throughout Georgia.

The 2003 SCORP had four goals:

- Assess the adequacy of existing recreation opportunities in Georgia.
- Determine the demand and need for additional recreation opportunities.
- Identify major issues facing recreation providers
- Recommend an implementation plan to address these issues.

The SCORP planning process consists of seven steps:

1. Gathering input from users and providers.
2. Analyzing recreation trends.
3. Examining the supply of recreation resources.
4. Determining recreation demand and needs.
5. Identifying issues of statewide significance.
6. Recommending programs and policies.
7. Developing an implementation program.

Conclusions

The following conclusions about the demand for recreation may be drawn from the various local, state, and national sources:

- The continuing rapid increase in Georgia's population has inevitably produced an increased demand for outdoor recreation areas and facilities.

- Demand exists for both active and passive recreational facilities at all provider levels.
- Demand exists for support services and facilities, including improved maintenance and increased staff, as well as for recreation itself.
- The mix of popular recreation activities, as always, is in a state of flux as newer activities—such as skating/ rollerblading, off-road cycling, water parks, and dog parks—compete with traditional activities for Georgians' discretionary time.

DRAFT

Additional Information

11.0

11.1 Significance of 2000 Strategic Plan

Many of the observations and recommendations in the 2000 DeKalb County Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan are still applicable today. The 2000 Plan observed that the role of parks and recreation in DeKalb County is not as strong as it could be, and that parks and recreation do not contribute as much as they could to the quality of life of DeKalb residents. Many of DeKalb's citizens were not familiar with the park system and programs, and many do not take advantage of existing opportunities. Programs had not kept pace with changing preferences and needs of county residents. All of this is still true today.

In the 2000 Plan, the Department identified five desired outcomes of the planning process:

1. Define the Department's mission and basic service delivery philosophies.
2. Set priorities for operation and capital improvement action plans.
3. Identify mechanisms for funding.
4. Outline critical service delivery policies.
5. Position the Department for national accreditation.

The values and mission statement developed during the 2000 planning process is still applicable.



Figure 2.1

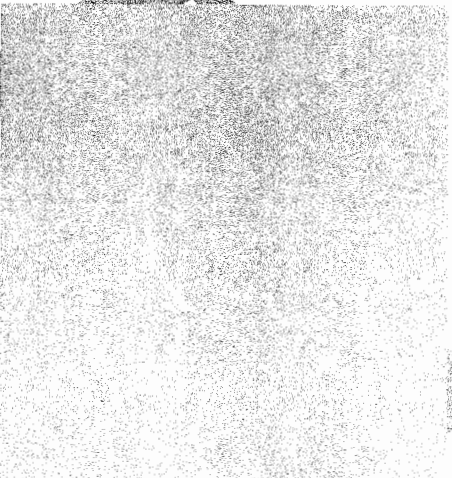


Figure 2.2

growth. For example, although the number of athletic fields was adequate in 2000, there is a shortage of fields in 2007 because of increased demand associated with population growth.

Recommendations about the need for more recreation centers, parks, and other facilities are repeated in this plan. Today there is some debate as to the best way to provide some active reaction opportunities. The 2000 Plan emphasized complexes designed for baseball, softball, football and soccer, and there is still a need for such facilities. In addition, though, there have been discussions about locating some of these kinds of fields in neighborhood parks for a variety of uses.

Since 2000 there has been more of a focus on health and wellness because of concerns about obesity and other issues. In this country there is

a growing awareness of the potential dangers associated with unhealthy lifestyles, and many parks and recreation departments are addressing those issues.

There were a number of recommendations about improving existing facilities and constructing new facilities. The County had accomplished some of these recommendations, at least in part, but many other recommendations still need to be implemented.

The 2000 Plan made several recommendations based on the concept of allocating facilities and parks to districts proportionally based on 2010 population projections.

Facilities and Parks

The Plan recommended future that development of recreation centers be large, signature facilities featuring meeting space, practice and game space, classrooms, sports equipment, and other amenities to the community in the 50,000 – 100,000 SF range. The County is following that plan of action with the construction of three new recreation facilities. The 2000 Plan recommended that by 2010, DeKalb County have a total of 12 multi-purpose centers with an average of 50,000 sq ft to meet recreational needs. More recreation centers need to be built.

The need for new swimming pools and aquatic centers as well as the need to renovate and repair existing pools was identified. Two types of aquatic facilities were recommended: community pools and signature aquatic centers.

The standards call for ten new aquatic facilities by 2010, but that goal may be unachievable, so three signature facilities and the renovation of existing pools were recommended.

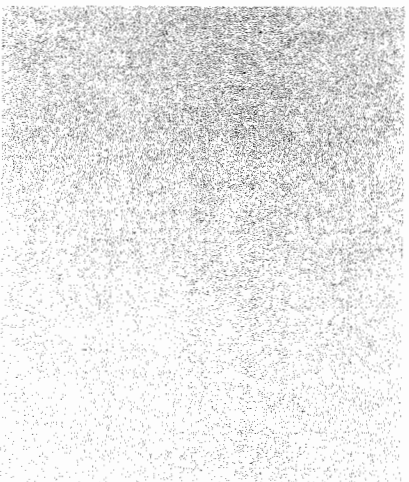
The 2000 Plan recommended 45 new fields: 28 soccer fields and 17 baseball/softball/football fields. With increased population growth, even more fields are needed than was previously projected. The comments about the county being particularly underserved in soccer are still true.

When the 2000 Plan was prepared, DeKalb County had 8 fields above the standard for athletic fields for its population. Youth sports did argue the need for additional fields for their organization. Today, the County no longer has more fields than the recommended standards.

The 2000 Plan noted that approximately half of the tennis courts in the DeKalb County inventory are at three parks: Blackburn, Mason Mill, and Sugar Creek. There was a recommendation to consider closing community courts and constructing a tennis center to bring money into the county. Although there were requests back in 2000 for more courts, and similar requests are occurring today, the overall feeling was that the County was doing an adequate job of meeting demands for tennis.

The addition of more basketball courts was identified as a priority in the 2000 Plan. One reason was the suggestion that opportunities associated with basketball and other similar activities reduced youth crime and other at-risk





behaviors. It was recommended that several signature basketball facilities be constructed. More current research suggests that multi-use facilities and programs have a bigger impact on youth crime and at-risk behaviors.

Given the population in 2000, the County was underserved in terms of Golf Courses. It was recommended that one new county-owned golf course be developed in north DeKalb County.

The basic system of parks, park classification, and service zones outlined in the 2000 Plan is similar to that used in this plan. The 2000 plan recommended the addition of 200 acres of new park land per year, and the County has exceeded this goal. However, with continued population growth in the County, more park land is needed.

Recommended Action Strategies

The framework for making changes in DeKalb's parks is expressed in the sixteen strategies.

These strategies illustrate how the Department will realize its vision and accomplish its mission.

- Action Strategy 1: Implement a management program to protect physical and natural assets.
- Action Strategy 2: Strive to ensure the highest level of safety in parks to increase use and enjoyment.
- Action Strategy 3: Embrace a partnership philosophy to leverage services with other providers before offering new programs or services.
- Action Strategy 4: Measure and actively promote the benefits of parks and recreation services, including economic development benefits.
- Action Strategy 5: Update, realign and implement recreation programs that are economical and market-driven, focusing on youth, teens, seniors, wellness and environmental programs.
- Action Strategy 6: Establish parks and open space standards based on equity of access, optimal level of service and cost effectiveness, and a positive and inviting image.
- Action Strategy 7: Maximize the utility of existing park properties and recreation facilities according to established standards and guidelines.
- Action Strategy 8: Update and expand a minimum of five special facilities to generate revenue and provide destination parks.
- Action Strategy 9: Using creative financing, create four new community parks that provide a balance of active and passive spaces.
- Action Strategy 10: Acquire 200 acres of open space per year to provide for parks, multi-dimensional recreation facilities, and trails.
- Action Strategy 11: Develop 80 miles of greenways as connections to nature for people (8 miles per year).
- Action Strategy 12: Maximize and promote the value of natural resources in the County to increase access and connection to citizens.
- Action Strategy 13: Re-align the organizational structure of the Department to accommodate the phased implementation of the strategic plan, and, if necessary, establish funding for the new alignment.
- Action Strategy 14: Recognize "core businesses" of the Department; concentrate resources on providing those facilities and services.
- Action Strategy 15: Establish a Park and Recreation Authority to create flexibility and focus in the Department.
- Action Strategy 16: Implement a Capital Improvements Plan to construct new facilities and rehabilitate existing parks.

dedicate dollars for three separate funding areas: acquisition, development, and major maintenance. A Capital Improvement Cost through 2010 was identified to be \$260,190,000. The funding strategies identified in the 2000 Plan are still applicable.

11.2 Requested information

This report contains recommendations by the Things we need!

- 1 Number of staff – total, and broken down by divisions
- 2 Organizational chart for Department
- 3 Organizational chart for each Division
- 4 Budget information – for the department, each division, each center, and each special use
- 5 Visitor Information
- 6 Procedural manuals – any from the divisions or administration
- 7 Athletic Association Contracts
- 8 Facility lease use agreements (long term and short term)
- 9 Copy of maintenance process, including documentation they are currently using
- 10 Copy of Athletic Association, Contractor, and short use MOU
- 11 Example of emergency preparedness plan
- 12 CIP for the last 5 years
- 13 Joint use agreement with school system

- 14 Copy of Leon Younger comprehensive facilities management study
- 15 Copy of policies and outcomes from CIP
- 16 Revenue and expenditures analysis from 1994 to current.
- 17 Existing standards – to determine surplus or deficit in facilities
- 18 Copy of personal evaluation forms – pay for performance review
- 19 Maintenance Work Order System (automated and/or manual, including templates)
- 20 "311 Park Emergency" System, policies, procedures. It will be helpful to include a list of 2006/07 submitted requests/issues, responses and real costs for response.

These strategies are still applicable, and the County has had varying levels of success at implementing them. For each of the sixteen strategies, the 200 Plan provided specific recommendations for implementation.

Capital Improvement Program/Major Maintenance

The 2000 Strategic Plan outlined critical actions that must be achieved in order to transform DeKalb County's parks system into the quality of life asset desired by citizens. The plan noted that it was critically important to note that the identification of capital improvement needs and cost projections is a dynamic process that requires continuous review and adjustment. The 2000 Plan recommended that the County

21 Preventive Maintenance System to include policies, procedures, templates and record keeping practices.

22 Marketing policies and procedures - including templates.

23 Web site policies and procedures - who is responsible for updates, etc.?

24 Policies and procedures for grant submittals and building partnerships

25 A fees justification process. We are looking for fees based on quality record keeping based on true activity cost analysis. Will also be looking for added-value to program as a part of the equation.

26 We need a copy of the approved policy, per a comment from Commissioner Johnson, that "a security force was created but never enforced."

27 The current departmental policies and procedures manual.

28 Current maintenance standards of care and how this information is conveyed to employees.

29 Site selection standards.

30 A copy of the typical school playground agreement and the critically important document memorializing the termination or release of responsibility.

31 Employee training and expectations policy and procedures.

32 The formal CIP request for FY2006 and 07 and the proposed list for 2008.

33 New employee orientation summary, outline and agenda.

34 Listing of non parks and recreation and non compensated maintenance activities experienced and logged in 2006 and 2007. This should include investment of man hours, equipment and costs.

35 Connectivity study completed by Dr. Mumford (this was mentioned during our August 9th Steering Committee Meeting).

36 Status of the County's NRPA Accreditation efforts

37 Specifications on new recreation facilities being built (size, costs, materials, programming, scheduled opening date, etc.).

38 Specifications of each existing recreation facility (size, recent renovations, future plans, etc.

39 Staffing - number of total staff, staff per division, and staff responsibilities

40 A list of the different types of meetings currently being held in each Division, and how they are conducted.

41 List of programs offered at each recreation center, and the fee charged for each

11.3 Request to Clarify Inventory

This should be considered a draft set of maps. There are inconsistencies in the inventory matrix information and the GIS shapefile information in terms of the names of parks and therefore what facilities they have. I have made note of

the inconsistencies below. The two datasets that I used to compare are the inventory matrix that was provided in January of 2007 and the GIS data that was provided in April of 2007. More than likely – there are naming discrepancies that can be rectified pretty easily and quickly by members of the park staff. I would be willing to meet with a park staff member to go through this list and then make the updates to their datasets.

The following is a list of parks that are in the inventory that do not have a matching name in the GIS shapefile and therefore will not be shown in maps:

Atherton (has facilities)
 Briarcliff Rd./Armstrong
 Chapel Hill Property (has facilities)
 Fernbank (has facilities)
 Henderson Mill (has facilities)
 Marbut Rd.; Donna L. Wagner (has facilities)
 McDaniel (has facilities)
 Meadowdale (has facilities)
 Rehoboth (has facilities)
 Shoal Creek/Johnson Property
 Skyhaven (has facilities)
 South River/Arnovitz/Warrior
 Stone Mtn. – Lilburn/Smokerise
 Vanderlyn (has facilities)
 Mathis Dairy
 Dunwoody Nature (has facilities)
 North Deshon AKA Kinnett W/Ilcox

The following is a list of parks that are in the GIS shapefile that do not appear to have a corresponding name in the inventory matrix:

Dawn Drive
 Donaldson Homestead
 Hudson
 Johns Homestead
 Little Creek
 Lou Walker (has facilities)
 Lyons
 Markan
 Kinnett
 Mary Scott
 MLK South River
 Perimeter Center East
 Perimeter Trail
 Plunkett
 Rainbow Dr.
 Rogers Lake
 Wesley Chapel/Kelly Chapel

The following is a list of parks without a park class designation:

Dawn Drive
 Donaldson Homestead
 Hudson
 Johns Homestead
 Kensington Executive Sq.
 Kinnett
 Little Creek
 Lyons
 Markan
 Mary Scott
 Memorial/Delano/Line
 MLK South River
 Perimeter Center East
 Perimeter Trail
 Plunkett
 Rainbow Dr.
 Rogers Lake
 Wesley Chapel/Kelly Chapel

11.4 Comparative Programs and Fees for Areas Surrounding DeKalb County

PUBLIC SECTOR

County Information

Cherokee

Fitness

Aerobics: \$28/month

Get Fit Kids: \$25/month

Gentle Joints (low impact): \$25/month

Adult Athletics

Tennis for Adults: \$30/5-weeks

Senior Activities

Water Aerobics: \$25/5-weeks
Spa Sweat: \$25/5-weeks

Arthritis Aquatics: \$13/5-weeks
Beginning Swim: \$36/5-weeks

Intermediate Swim: \$36/5-weeks
Water Tai Chi: \$25/5-weeks

Tai Chi: \$25/5-weeks

Yoga: \$25/5-weeks

Aqua Sculpting: \$30/5-w

Aqua

Youth Track: \$45-\$50; season

Girls Softball: \$100 for slow pitch;
\$110 for fast pitch; season

Youth Weight Lifting: \$28/5-weeks
Basketball: \$30/3-weeks

Hatha Yoga: \$27/5-weeks

Aquatics

H2O Works: \$35/5-weeks

Aqua Boot Camp: \$35/5-weeks

Youth Boxing: \$28/5-weeks

Self Defense: \$28/5-weeks

Karate: \$35/5-weeks

Aerobics – Fitness

Power Sculpting: \$30/5-weeks

Ladies Tone Up & Fat Loss: \$30/5-

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Praise Aerobics: \$20/5-week

Gluts & Abs: \$20/5-week

Spinning: \$20/5-Weeks

Pilates: \$20/5-weeks

Total Body Workout: \$20/5-weeks

PARK SYSTEM CONCEPT / 8-7

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Adult Basics: \$40 resident; \$65 non-resident; 4 classes | Jin-Jitsu: \$100 | Athletic Programs |
| Adult Stroke Development: \$40 res; \$65 non-res; 4 classes | Aquatic Programs | Track: \$50 per person |
| Aqua Aerobics: \$3/class; seniors \$2/class | Children Swim Lessons: \$50 | Adult Softball: \$425/County teams and \$525/non-County teams |
| Parent Tot: \$20 res; \$40 non-res; 4 classes | Water aerobics: \$72-80 | Riptides Swim Team: \$100-\$175, depending on level; \$25 annual booster fee and non-County fees are 50% more than published rate. |
| Child Classes (varying levels): \$20 res; \$40 non-res; 4 classes | Scuba Diving Course: \$175 | Aquatics Programs |
| Learn to Swim: \$40 res; \$65 non-res; 4 classes | Fitness | Hydropower: \$50 per 18 visits for County residents; \$75 per 18 visits for non-County |
| Pool admission: annual family pass \$280 residents; non-residents-additional \$25 fee | Yoga: \$45-\$100/session | Arthritis Aerobics: \$50 per 18 visits for County residents; \$75 per 18 visits for non-County |
| Fulton Tennis | Tai Chi: \$100-110/session | Wet Sets: senior class for members of the Rockdale Co Senior Center, \$1 per class |
| Adult Athletics | Rockdale Tennis | City Information |
| Youth and Child Athletics | Tiny Tots Program: \$5 per half-hour session | City of Roswell |
| Aquatic Programs | Junior Development Program: \$20 per 2-hour session | Adult Tennis |
| Gwinnett Facilities | Open Kids Drop-in: \$10 per 1-hour session | Tri-Level League: \$175, team fee |
| Pool: \$2-5/visit | Junior Team Tennis Season: \$75 per player, 6-week session | Drills N' Skills Clinic: \$54 for residents, \$81 for non-residents |
| Adult Athletics | Tuesday Ladies Drop-in: \$18 per session | Rise and Shine Tennis (age 55+): \$48 for residents, \$72 for non-residents |
| Softball: \$480/team | | Cardio-Tennis: \$56 for residents, \$84 for non-residents |
| Basketball: \$445/team | | Stroke of the Day: \$54 for residents, \$81 for non-residents |
| Volleyball: \$240/team | | Doubles Strategy Classes: \$64 for residents, \$96 for non-residents |
| Women's Self Defense: \$100 | | Weekend Tennis Lessons: \$34 for residents, \$51 for non-residents |
| Youth and Child Athletics | | USA 1, 2, & 3 Beginner Tennis Lessons: \$54 for residents, \$81 for non-residents |
| Team sports handled by private associations | | Yearly Tennis Passes: \$80 for residents, \$120 for non-residents |
| Tennis Classes: \$40-65/3-weeks | | |
| Gymnastics: \$69/5-weeks | | |
| Karate: \$50-69/5-weeks | | |
| Kung Fu: \$90 | | |
| Dance: \$39-198 | | |

Health/Wellness

Fitness Room: \$148 for residents/ year/; \$222 for non-residents/Yearly

A.M. Express Workout: \$36 for residents; \$54 for non-residents; 10 week session

Low-impact/Step Aerobics: \$76 for residents; \$114 for non-residents; 10 week session

Step Aerobics: \$62 for residents; \$93 for non-residents; 10 week session

G.I. Jab: \$58 for residents; \$87 for non-residents; 10 week session

Yoga: \$42 for residents; \$63 for non-residents; 10 week sessions

Teen Yoga: \$50 for residents; \$75 for non-residents; 10 week session

Yoga Ed for Teens: \$46 for residents; \$69 for non-residents; 10 week session

Mat Based Pilates: \$50 for residents; \$75 for non-residents; 10 week sessions

East Roswell Fitness Center: Yearly membership, \$148 for residents; \$222 for non-residents

Body Sculpting: \$124 for residents; \$186 for non-residents; 10 week session

Racquetball/handball: \$2 for residents; \$3 for non-residents

Fitness Evaluations: \$40 for residents; \$60 for non-residents

Stroller Strides: \$90 for residents; \$135 for non-residents; 10 sessions

Ultimate Pilates: \$42 for residents; \$63 for non-residents; 6 week sessions

Adult Athletics
Adult Soccer: \$1100 per team

Youth Tennis
Shooting Stars Tennis Series: \$18 per person each date

Tennis Prep: \$34 for residents; \$51 for non-residents, 5 week sessions

Teen Tennis: \$68 for residents; \$102 for non-residents, 5 week sessions

Youth Athletics
Lead-off Baseball: \$84 for residents; \$126 non-residents, 10-week sessions

Travel Basketball: tryout fee, \$10; if selected, \$90 residents; \$140 non-residents

Recreational Baseball: \$118 residents; \$177 non-residents

Youth Slow Pitch Softball: \$74 residents; \$111 non-residents, season

Select Baseball: tryout fee \$118 residents & \$177 non-residents; if selected, \$60 residents; \$90 non-residents

Teen League Softball: \$460 team fee; season

Track and Field: \$74 residents; \$111 non-residents

Lacrosse: \$108 residents; \$162 non-residents

Tiny Tykes: \$72 residents; \$108 non-residents, 8-week sessions

Sportykes: \$72 residents; \$108 non-residents, 8-week sessions

World Cup Soccer: \$58 residents; \$87 non-residents, 6-week sessions

Recreational Soccer: \$78 residents; \$117 non-residents

Select Soccer: \$78 residents; \$117 non-residents

Aquatics
Pool: Family pass, purchased after March 24th: \$120 residents; \$180 non-residents

City of Alpharetta

Aquatics

Pool: Family Pass \$125 resident;
\$187.50 non-resident
Alpharetta Sharks Swim Team: \$85
res, \$127.50 non

City of Marietta
Basketball Youth League: \$60 resi-
dents, \$95 non-residents, season

City of Forest Park
Aquatics
Adult Swim Lessons: \$30 residents,
\$40 non; monthly
Pre-School Swim Lessons: \$30 resi-
dents, \$40 non; 6-week session
Swim Lessons: \$30 residents, \$40 non;
6-week session
Lifeguard Training: \$90; 1-month
Public Swimming: \$1/\$2 residents;
\$2/\$3 non
Swim for Fun (age 55+): \$1
Water Aerobics: \$25 residents, \$35
non; per class; 6 weeks
Water Exercise: \$15 residents; \$25 non;
per class; monthly
Water Walking: \$15 residents; \$25
non; per class; monthly
Youth Swim Lessons: \$30 residents,
\$40 non; monthly
Adult

Aerobics: \$25 res, \$35 non; monthly
Dog Obedience: \$65 per dog; 6-weeks
Coed Volleyball League: \$150 per
team; 8-weeks
Ladies Fitness: \$10 per 6-weeks
Ladies Full Court Basketball: \$425 per
team; 8-weeks
Martial Arts: \$25 monthly

Men Full Court Basketball: \$425 per
team; 8-weeks
Men PM Fitness: \$10 res, \$20 non,
monthly
Coed Softball League: \$380 per team;
8-10 weeks
Ladies Softball League: \$380 per team;
8-10 weeks
Men Softball League: \$380 per team;
8-10 weeks
Tennis: \$50/month
Yoga: \$15 res, \$25 non; monthly
Youth & Teen
Cardio Kids Funk: \$40/monthly
Girls Basketball: \$45 res, \$55 non;
season
Girls Fast Pitch Softball Clinics: \$20
per person
Girls ASA Softball: \$85; season
Lifeguard Training: \$90
Martial Arts: \$25 monthly

Pee Wee Basketball Camp: \$15; 2-day
session
T-Ball, Pee Wee Baseball: \$55 res, \$65
non
Start Smart Basketball: \$35 res, \$45
non; 6-weeks
Start Smart Soccer: \$35 res, \$45 non;
6-weeks
Teen Weight Lifting: \$10 res, \$20 non;
monthly
Youth Basketball: \$55 res, \$65 non; 3
months
Youth Bowling League: \$90 res, \$100
non; 10 weeks
City of Atlanta

Softball League: \$400 per team; 10 games
 Morningside Recreation Center
 Youth Sports: \$50 res; \$80 non
 Piedmont Tennis Center
 Hard court "day," per hr, per person: \$2.50 res; \$3.25 non
 Hard court "night," per hr, per person: \$3 res; \$3.50 non
 Soft court "day," per hr, per person: \$4 res; \$5 non
 Soft court "night," per hr, per person: \$4.50 res; \$5.50 non
 Court league match play/hard court: \$80/match
 Court league match play/soft court: \$110/match
 Junior league fee/hard court: \$25/match
 Junior league fee/soft court: \$35/match

match
 Tournament fee/hard court: \$6/court/
 match
 Tournament fee/soft court: \$9/court/
 match
 1 Hour Indiv. Lesson: \$40
 Group Lesson (min. 4 people): \$12/hr/
 person
 Team coaching: \$60/hr/team
 Annual passes (hard court): \$120 res;
 \$150 non
 Annual passes (soft court): \$350 res;
 \$450 non
 Senior citizen passes (hard court): \$80
 res; \$100 non
 Senior citizen passes (soft court): \$200
 res; \$270 non

PRIVATE SECTOR

City of Clarkston
 City of Chamblee
 City of Decatur

11.5 Notes on Rec Fees.

Marin County, CA.

- Picnic areas to rent
- o Parking \$8/car in summer
- o \$75/day (five tables) to \$425/day (30 tables, restrooms, volleyball, etc.)

San Diego County

- Exceptions to fee policy should be considered for Recognized youth groups, school groups (through High School), organi-

zations supporting or conducting a youth event or activity, handicapped persons, economically disadvantaged persons and senior citizens

- Areas of parks available for reservation
- o Parking \$3/car
- o \$250-\$400

Fairfax County

- Recreation centers with pools and fitness rooms.
- o Admission is \$8.70 or \$6.25 if Fairfax Co. resident
- o Monthly: \$92/\$64; Yearly: \$823/\$576
- Picnic area, shelter, amphitheater or gazebo ranging from \$70 to \$325/per day.
- Amphitheatre is \$15/hr
- Historic site \$6 adult tour fee
- Camping at parks – nominal fee
- The county has a handful of staffed nature centers and admission is free
- Tennis courts – free to walk ons, reservations: \$7
- Mini golf \$5 - \$6

Montgomery County, MD

- Rec Centers with weights, etc.: member ship fees; 1 yr: \$185 for large facility and \$40 for small facility
- o Some Rec centers have multi-purpose space that is rented out for a fee based upon duration of use and type of event
- Aquatic facilities: \$4 - \$6.50/ visit or yearly and seasonal passes are available
- Ballfields can be reserved for \$45
- Picnic shelters are available at \$125 to \$200

- The county operates two gardens which can be rented for weddings and other events
 - Gyms can be rented at \$29/hr
 - Meeting places can be rented at \$100-\$625/hr
 - Nature centers are operated and can be visited for free
- Johnson County, KS
- Picnic Shelters are available for rent at \$35-\$60 for a half day and \$55 - \$95 for a whole day
 - Athletic fields can be rented for \$15/hr
 - At some parks, recreational equipments can be rented
 - o Sailboat: \$17/half hr and \$66/day
 - o Canoe: \$5/half hr
 - o Kayak: \$5/half hr
 - o Fishing boat w/trolling motor: \$13/hr

- o Pedal boat: \$5/half hr
- o Game bag: includes one set of horse-shoes, soccer ball, softball bat and ball, bases, volleyball standards, net, and volleyball. \$35 (+ refundable \$75 deposit)
- Tennis courts: \$5/hr
- Campgrounds available for \$10-\$20/hr
- The county charges permits and fees for recreational activities such as:
 - o Fishing: \$8 - \$20
 - o Boating: \$15
 - o Archery: \$10
 - Beach passes: \$3-\$5.50/day and \$35-\$72 for season
 - Aquatic facilities: \$5-6/visit

impact fees can not be used for operating/maintenance costs. They can only be used for acquisition.

Note: in a lot of counties that impact fees are being allocated to parks and recreation; however, in many cases, because of state law,

DRAFT