

Greensboro Plan2Play

Parks and Recreation Master Plan

2019 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





People enjoying Keeley Sprayground.

Letter from the Director

Greensboro Parks and Recreation provides professional and diverse leisure opportunities through inclusive programs, facilities, parks, and open spaces. That is our mission, but it only scratches the surface of what we offer to the city. Parks and Recreation spaces represent cultural and creative hubs; places that make us healthier, happier, and more vibrant; social gathering spaces that connect us to our natural environment and to each other; valuable economic and tourism assets; and opportunities to better lives, which in turn, creates a better community. We make Greensboro a desirable place to work, live, and play.

With much excitement, I introduce you to Plan2Play, the Greensboro Parks and Recreation Department's 20-year comprehensive master plan! This plan analyzes where we are currently and where we envision our parks and open spaces to be in the next 20 years. It lays out how we

will “enhance, expand, and connect” the department to keep pace with the growth and development in our city.

The recommendations within Plan2Play prioritize how, over the next 20 years, we maintain and improve existing parks and facilities, invest and plan for future parks and facilities, expand programs, and allocate funding and other resources to meet current and future community needs and expectations. Most importantly, the recommendations reflect the values and expectations of more than 7,000 Greensboro residents and park users who provided input about our park and recreation system and translate those into action items that ensure we are effectively and efficiently investing our resources.

I would like to thank every Greensboro resident, stakeholder, and park and facility user who participated in the Plan2Play process and for your insight to help us

shape the future of Greensboro's park system. We appreciate the support and dedication shown by our City Council, our Parks and Recreation Commission, our many community partners, and our residents who utilize our parks, gardens, lakes, trails, facilities and programs every day. With your continued support and under the guidance from this plan, Greensboro Parks and Recreation will be well-positioned to continue to provide high-quality programs, well-maintained facilities, transformative experiences, and a great quality of life for all for Greensboro.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ednasha', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Ednasha McCray, Director, Greensboro Parks and Recreation

Introduction

The City of Greensboro has an impressive parks and recreation system that contributes significantly to the overall health, quality of life, and economic vitality of both residents and the city as a whole. The City of Greensboro Parks and Recreation Department (the Department) currently oversees over 8,500 acres of parks, trails, drainageways and greenways, lakes and reservoirs, public gardens, open spaces, and facilities that provide a myriad of recreational and enrichment opportunities.

The *Greensboro Plan2Play Parks and Recreation Master Plan (Plan2Play)* is the comprehensive parks and recreation master plan intended to guide the planning and development of the parks and

recreation system within the city over the next twenty years (2018-2038). It builds on the Departmental vision which states “We see ourselves as leaders, building better lives to build a better community.”

Plan2Play comes at a critical time for the city. The last comprehensive master plan was completed in 1998, with a 2005 update. During this time, the city has seen many changes with regards to demographics, growth, recreational trends, and funding. These changes have created an ideal moment to reimagine what parks and recreation could be in Greensboro.

The plan also builds off momentum established by the *2015 Bicycle, Pedestrian, Trails, & Greenway Plan Update*

(*BiPed Plan*), individual park plans such as the *Battleground Parks District Master Plan*, and the city’s parallel process for the *Connections 2025 Comprehensive Plan*.

Plan recommendations are framed around three themes: **Enhance, Expand and Connect**. These ideas establish a framework for reinvesting in the city’s legacy of parks and recreation facilities, while strategically expanding the Department’s reach to new areas of need and programming.

Plan2Play Process

The development of Plan2Play was an 11-month process, beginning in late 2017 and concluding in the fall of 2018. The planning process was framed largely around significant engagement efforts to ensure the desires of the community and Department staff were accurately reflected in the plan's recommendations. Plan development was also shepherded by a Master Plan Leadership Committee within the Department that included key staff from Planning and Project Management (PPD), Parks Operations Division (POD), Community Recreation Services (CRS), and City Communications.



50+ stakeholders
at focus groups



500+ participants at
in-person workshops



17 pop-up
events



2,225 participants in
community polls



300 statistically-valid
survey responses



3,000 online survey
responses



Plan2Play is the result of a robust community engagement process. Beginning in January of 2018 engagement spanned a seven-month period, concluding in July with the unveiling of the top nine Master Plan concepts at Greensboro's well-attended Parks and Rec Fest. Overall the team touched approximately 7,000 individuals in-person, on-line, and through hard-copy mailers.

Greensboro residents participate in pop-up events for Plan2Play.

System Needs

Based on a careful analysis of the system, an overview of comparable peer city systems and projected growth, we can estimate the following future needs:

Have Today | Need by 2038

2,937 | 3,328
ACRES

148 | 186
STAFF

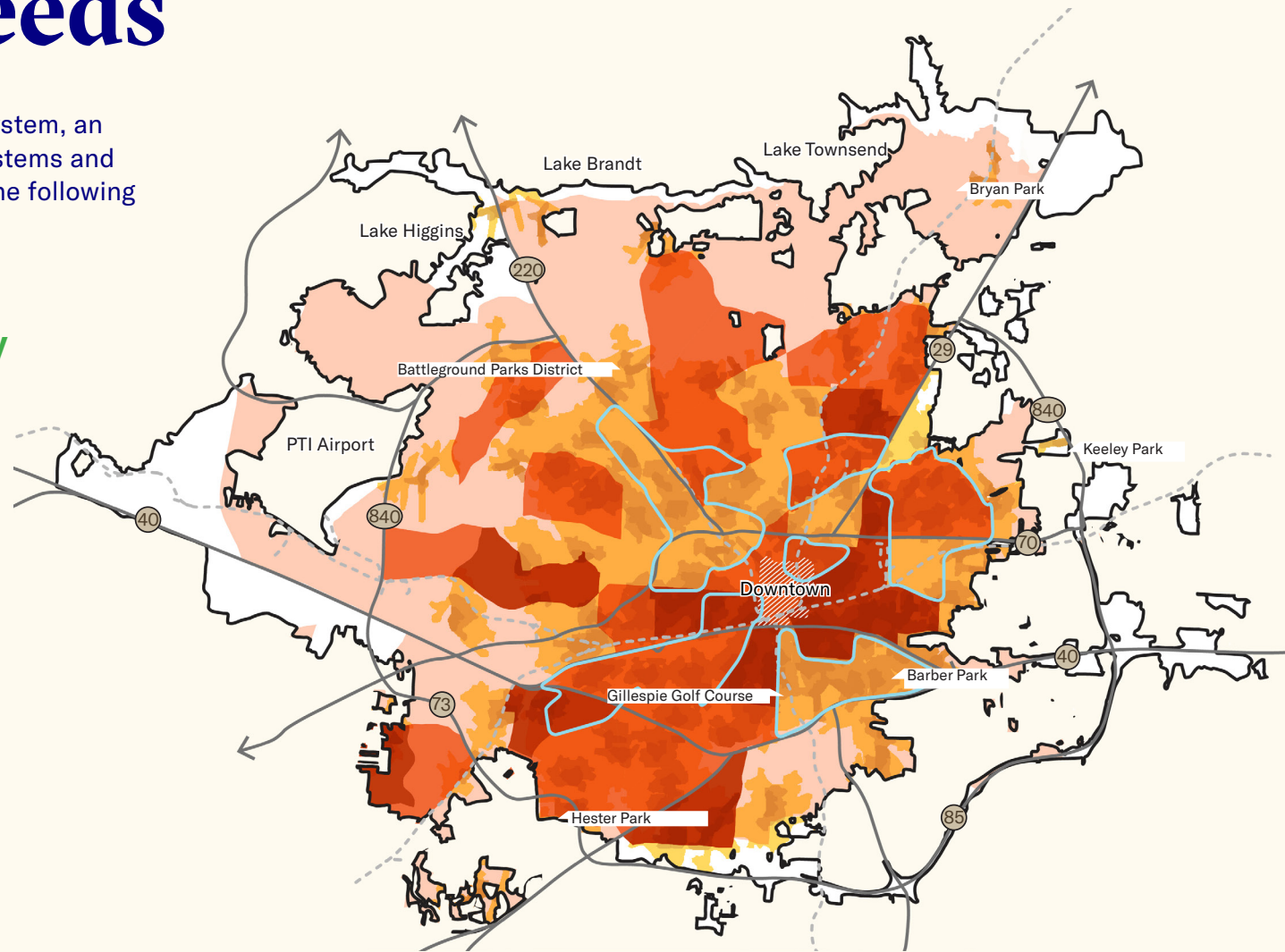
98 | 201
TRAILS

1 | 2
SENIOR CENTER

67 | 76
TENNIS COURTS

6 | 9
FITNESS CENTERS

38 | 53
OUTDOOR MULTI-PURPOSE FIELDS



Population Growth from 2010 to 2016 and Zones with High Need and Access to Park Spaces

LEGEND

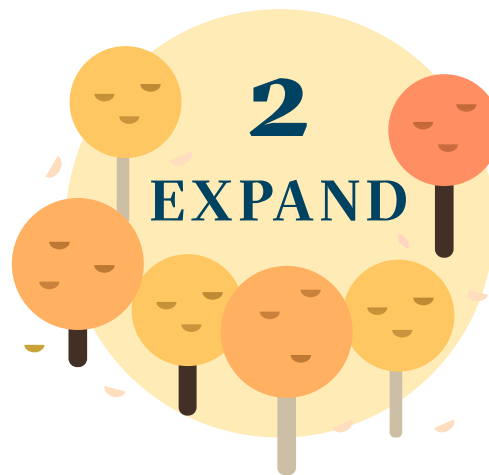
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|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Growing Population (2010 - 2016) | 1/4 Mile Access |
| High Need | 1/2 Mile Access |
| Medium Need | 1 Mile Access |
| Low Need | |

Vision + Framework

Plan2Play expresses a vision that will enhance and expand parks, facilities and programs, and reconnect Greensboro into a healthy community for all generations and neighborhoods. The vision is reinforced by an aspirational yet realistic framework to **enhance** the Department's existing assets, **expand** offerings by strengthening partnerships and creating transformative programs, and **connect** communities into a vibrant, healthy and equitable park system. Importantly, this vision belongs to the community; it is founded on deep, ongoing public input, and engagement.



Greensboro's neighborhood parks distribute open space across the city, but the city needs a new strategy for updating and maintaining them. The plan envisions three big ideas to update and invest in Greensboro's parks, programs and facilities.



With the potential of 45,000 new residents by 2038, Greensboro needs to grow its system within the city to keep pace. These three big ideas dive into strategies to encourage responsible growth and transformative programs that keep up with trends.



Greensboro already has a great system of trails in parks, along waterways and in urban neighborhoods, but this connective infrastructure is in demand. Connectivity is also operational; improved organizational connections and efficiencies will lead to a more successful Department'. The following big ideas identify ways Greensboro can better link parks, people and destinations.

A Replicable and Feasible Vision

The vision to **enhance, expand** and **connect** the system is a holistic approach to achieving these goals, embracing both physical and operational excellence and efficiency. It will help to set expectations for system upgrades, based on financial realities, and to fulfill community aspirations for the Department to provide the best programs and services for the community and focus efforts to create a vibrant future for everyone.

The Plan2Play planning process resulted in the development of ten unique big ideas that aligned one of the three themes. The next pages identify each of the ten ideas and summarize the key strategies for implementing the plan over the next ten to twenty years.

This commitment to a community guided plan ensures the Department will continue to have a significant role in service to the community and further improve our amazing park system.

You help to create our big ideas and inspired this plan! Here are a few of the ideas you had for the



Many parks and facilities are so well-loved, that many of them are tired and would benefit from some attention.

Head to Big Idea #1 to learn how we plan to invest in the parks we have and make them more interactive!



We heard you ask for playgrounds that are accessible to everyone and we want to apply that idea to all classes, activities and spaces.

Check out Big Idea #7 to learn more!



At First Friday, we heard that many of you would like to add more things to do at popular parks. One idea was to bring back midnight basketball!

Check out Big Idea #5 and #6 to find out about how we can refresh our most loved parks & create more things to do!



During the Parisian Promenade, we talked about ways to maintain and connect trails to the amenities we enjoy most.

See Big Idea #8 and #9 to find out how we plan to make those connections.

Enhance

#1. Bring Up the Basics

Goal: Ensure resources are in place so that all Greensboro parks, facilities and programs are high quality, safe and well-maintained.

Create and fund a sustainable plan to address deferred maintenance for all Department assets.

Assess and upgrade basic infrastructure within and in proximity to parks/facilities.

Prioritize renovation of facilities with critical issues that currently impact the ability of the Department to serve the community.

Identify a phased strategy for facility upgrades to ensure the city provides the highest quality spaces, equitably distributed across the city, including implementation of existing park master plans.

Develop a GIS model prioritizing transportation projects based on circuitry, safety, and vulnerability

Continue to engage the community in the planning and design of future, innovative facilities.

#2. Create a Strong Brand

Goal: Clearly communicate the Department's mission, offerings, and high quality brand to the community.

Create a department-wide, central marketing plan with dedicated resources to strengthen outreach and communications with partners, other organizations and the public.

Dedicate staff and resources to get the word out about parks and programs. Create a comprehensive community engagement strategy to guide planning, design, and implementation activities and ensure consistent messaging.

Grow technology capabilities including web and social media presence.

Develop a comprehensive facility and program catalog.

Fully integrate the centralized registration process.

Create consistent wayfinding and signage to communicate Department offerings and ensure safe connections to parks and trails.

#3. Bring Nature Into Our Back Yards

Goal: Celebrate and enhance the natural environment within the city limits to provide clean water, protect wildlife populations, and improve biodiversity.

Encourage external efforts to enhance environmental stewardship beyond park boundaries through collaborative environmental education and STEAM programs.

Create "green infrastructure" by formally adopting the drainageways and designing them for water resilience. Reduce the need for mowing to increase wildlife habitat and lower maintenance.

Increase shade through planting of native tree species.

Expand

#4. Create Community Hearts

Goal: Transform a selection of existing assets into community gathering spaces that provide programming that is inclusive and contemporary.

Identify Community Hearts based on a common set of principles.

Use community hearts to address gaps, community need and requests in a centralized location.

Distribute Community Hearts equitably throughout the city and provide for a range of activities and connections into the surrounding neighborhoods.

Create a land dedication policy to address future deficits and needs.

#5. Create Transformative Programs

Goal: Provide a range of community programs that are adaptable to resident needs, inclusive, informed by trends, and delivered efficiently and effectively.

Address Existing Program Gaps and Invest in Competitive, High Quality Programming.

Expand Arts and Cultural Programs and Partnerships.

Address Current and Future Needs for Senior Services.

Create transformational program pilot projects at each recreation center.

Review and define goals for parks and recreation programming to align fees with cost recovery, cost containment and revenue goals.

Connect

#6. Strengthen Partnerships

Goal: Formalize, expand, and measure the success of partnerships used to deliver parks and recreation services.

Strategically form new partnerships aligned with gaps in service.

Formalize existing partnerships and develop needed staff support or skills.

Continue to Support Significant Partnership Arrangements.

Create a proactive strategy for corporate partnerships.

Create or expand local non-profit, health and government partnerships.

#7. Connect the Trail System

Goal: Ensure resources are in place so that all Greensboro parks, facilities and programs are high quality, safe and well-maintained.

Complete a city-wide outer "Community Loop" trail that connects to the region and the Downtown Loop.

Increase density and diversity of trails within Parks.

Connect trails into the overall multi-modal system and link plans with other planning efforts to seek federal, state, and local funding.

Build on the existing watershed trail network and extend the blueway trail network (paddling trails).

#8. Improve Connectivity to Parks and Community Hearts

Goal: Create safe, clear, and accessible pedestrian, bike, and bus routes tie parks and trails into the broader city fabric.

Establish safe walking routes from neighborhoods to parks, by participating in National Recreation and Park (NRPA) Safe Routes to Parks Program.

Create opportunities for bike rentals (like Lime Bike stations) and facilities at strategic trailhead and park locations.

Examine City bus routes to identify places to link transit to trails and parks.

#9. Make Greensboro Accessible

Goal: Help the city build a culture of inclusion.

Make improvements to enable universal access to all parks, facilities and programs.

Expand learning places and programs for all ages, including additional space for the growing senior population.

#10. Connect & Empower Individuals Across the Department

Goal: Mitigate current and future service gaps and enhance the clarity of POD's internal organization.

Streamline divisions to ensure maximum efficiency. The current POD organizational structure has existed for many years within the Department and has succeeded with the help of unofficial partnerships, excellent teamwork, and hard work.

Enhance opportunities for collaboration within the Department.

Align individual responsibilities with the Department-wide vision.

Plan for Change.

Ten Big Ideas, One Vision

"We see ourselves as leaders, building better lives to build a better community."

- PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT VISION

Strategic Projects

The Department is already hard at work making many of your ideas and strategies from this plan a reality. You can follow along with the Department as they check off projects that are completed or underway. We can all work together to Plan2Play! For more information about specific projects and their status, check out the Plan2Play full master plan document.

Near-term

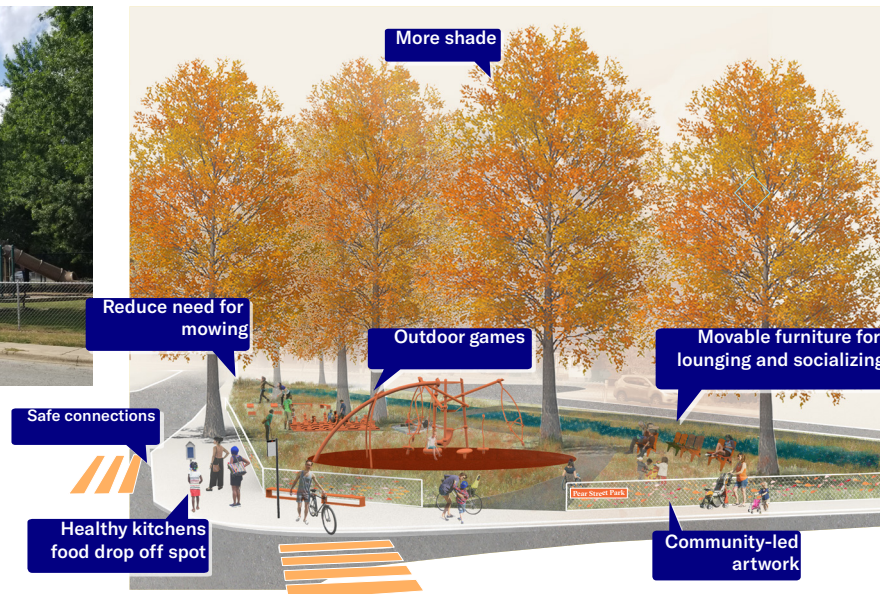
0-5 Years

21 of 65 projects

are already planned or underway, like basic infrastructure improvements in neighborhood parks around the city.



Pear Street Park: Today



Pear Street Park re-imagined with new amenities and infrastructure improvements

Mid-term

5-10 Years

3 of 29 projects

are already planned or underway, like basic infrastructure improvements in neighborhood parks around the city.



Windsor Recreation Center: Today

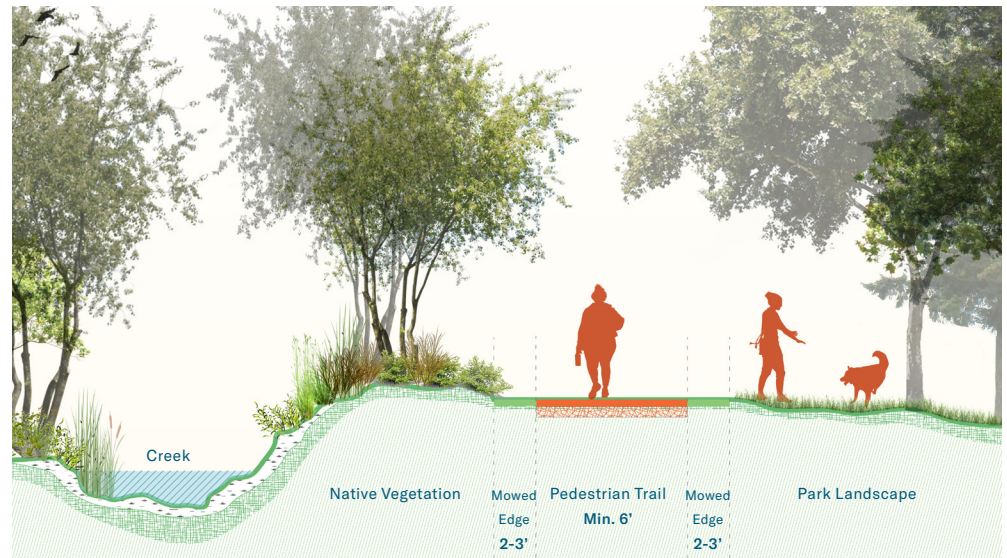
Long-term 10-20 Years

14 projects

that you can help to advocate for in our city to fully implement Plan2Play.



Windsor Recreation Center and Nocho Park daytime programming and facility improvements



Connect all parks and recreation centers to adjacent community resources such as schools, greenways, cultural destinations, and high density housing through a safe and continuous, ADA accessible sidewalk and trail network.