

# GRAHAM RECREATION AND PARKS

## MASTER PLAN 2020

## Acknowledgments

This report was prepared by the Piedmont Triad Regional Council (PTRC) on behalf of the City of Graham Recreation and Parks Department. We would like to give a special thanks to all of the local residents, community leaders, educators, business owners, and government staff that participated in the development of this study through meetings, events, volunteering, and plan review. You all make Graham a special place!

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Graham Recreation and Parks Master Plan



2	Acknowledgements
2	Project Team
<b>3</b>	<b>Table of Contents</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Director's Letter</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Introduction</b>
7	Background and Purpose
7	Why Play Matters
<b>8</b>	<b>Demographics</b>
9	Population & Growth
10	Age & Race
10	Summary
<b>13</b>	<b>State of Graham Recreation</b>
13	Park Classification System
17	Park Land and Open Space
17	Existing Conditions
35	Programs and Trends
<b>40</b>	<b>Community Engagement</b>
40	Methods
41	Survey Results
44	Workshops and Focus Groups
<b>47</b>	<b>Implementation</b>
47	Mission, Vision, and Goals
48	Recommendations
53	Funding and Financing
55	Access & Equity
57	Partnership
<b>59</b>	<b>Site Specific Plans</b>
59	Guiding Principals
61	Graham Regional Park
63	Bill Cooke Park
67	Potential Active Transportation Network
<b>71</b>	<b>Appendix</b>

# DIRECTOR'S LETTER

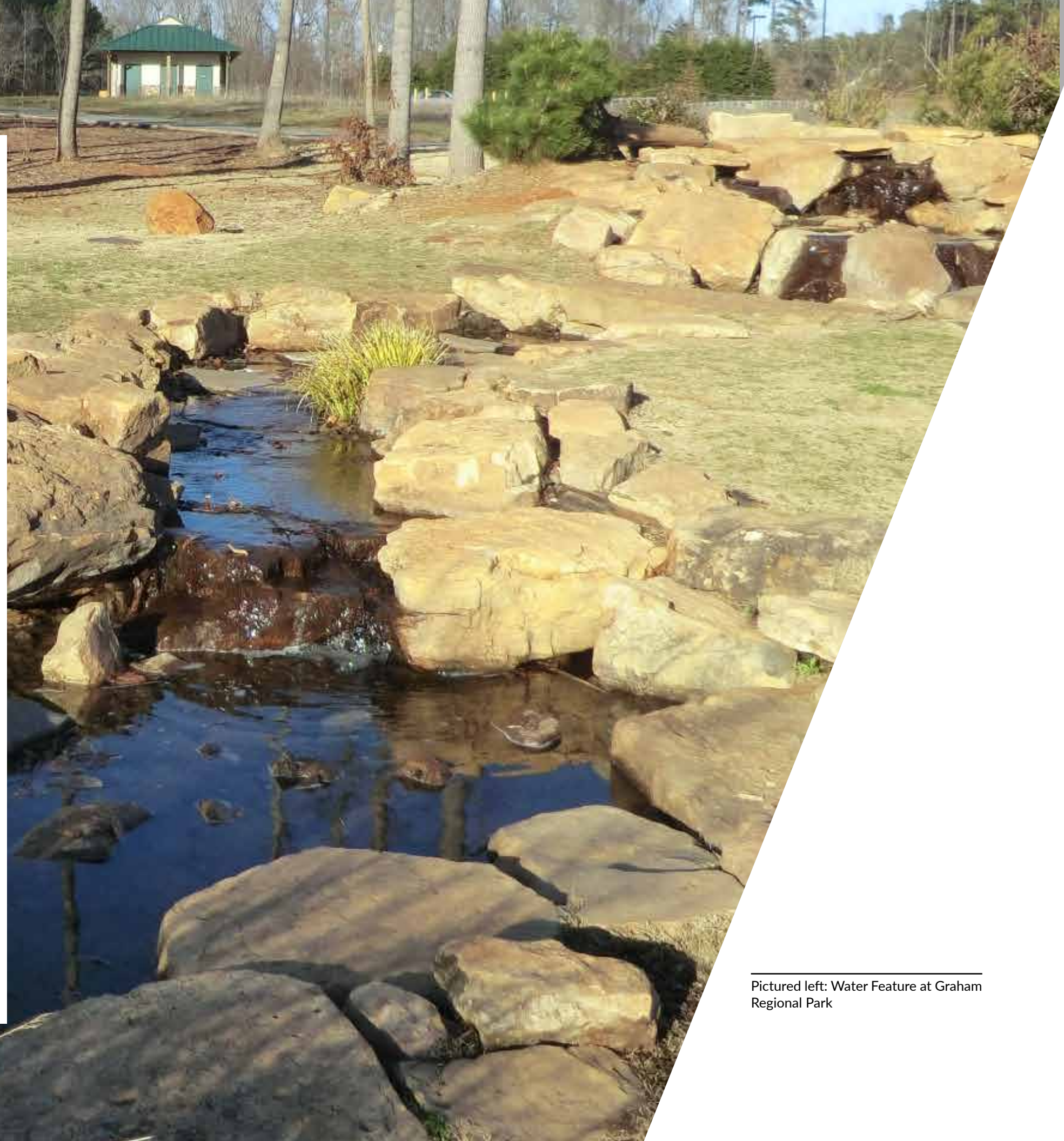
"To Inspire A Happy, Healthy Community By Creating A Stimulating And Engaging Environment Through Elite, Diversified Recreational Experiences"  
- Mission for the Graham Recreation and Parks Department

The Graham Recreation and Parks Department (GRPD) is committed to enhancing the quality of life for Graham residents and playing a significant role in shaping the character of the city through recreation and leisure activities. By creating a sense of place, GRPD services provide critical connections for residents through recreational pursuits, historic appreciation, and special events. This sense of place helps to shape the community's vision, values, and identity while promoting an active lifestyle for all ages. The department strives to enrich the entire community through positive and fulfilling recreational experiences.

The Master Plan introduced here will serve as a guide for the City of Graham staff, administration, and elected officials to continue the development of the GRPD over the next 5-10 years. In addition, the Plan provides an inventory of current programs and facilities as well as an expected Level of Service developed for the recreation industry. The Master Plan will also be used to assist staff in securing grants and other financial opportunities.

I thank the steering committee for their work in directing the development of this Master Plan. In addition, I thank the citizens of Graham, our participants, community partners, the Graham Recreation Commission, and professional staff whose input and insights will be used to continue to connect our citizens through "elite, diversified recreational experiences."

Brian Faucette  
Graham Recreation and Parks Director



Pictured left: Water Feature at Graham Regional Park



Graham-Mebane Lake offers sport fishing, boating, skiing, bank fishing, picnicking, and the peace of a relaxing afternoon.

# INTRODUCTION

## Background and Purpose

The City of Graham has a long tradition of providing high-quality recreation programs and facilities to its residents. Since the inception of the Graham Recreation and Parks Department (GRPD) in 1995, the City has steadily enhanced its recreation program offerings, park facilities, and services. Over the years, the department has developed and retained a highly qualified staff of recreation professionals.

The first recreation and parks master plan was adopted by the City in 1998 and updated in 2008. The purpose of this document is to revisit the adopted vision for recreation services in Graham and update the statistical data from the 2008 plan. This updated planning document will provide staff, decision-makers, and the public with:

- A snapshot of community recreation needs;
- Inventories of existing facilities, programs, and conditions;
- Priorities for staff, program, and facility improvements; and
- A framework of data and information to support decision-making.

The master planning process provides opportunities for the general public, recreation program users, commission members, and elected officials to participate in the development of the plan and its recommendations. This is achieved through interactive public meetings, focus groups, and the use of survey instruments.

## Why Play Matters

Play is an important aspect of healthy living. The need for play stretches across all ages, income levels, and cultures. It is an essential part of what makes us human. Access to recreational opportunities is a critical service provided by the City that directly impacts the quality of life and health of its citizens in numerous ways.

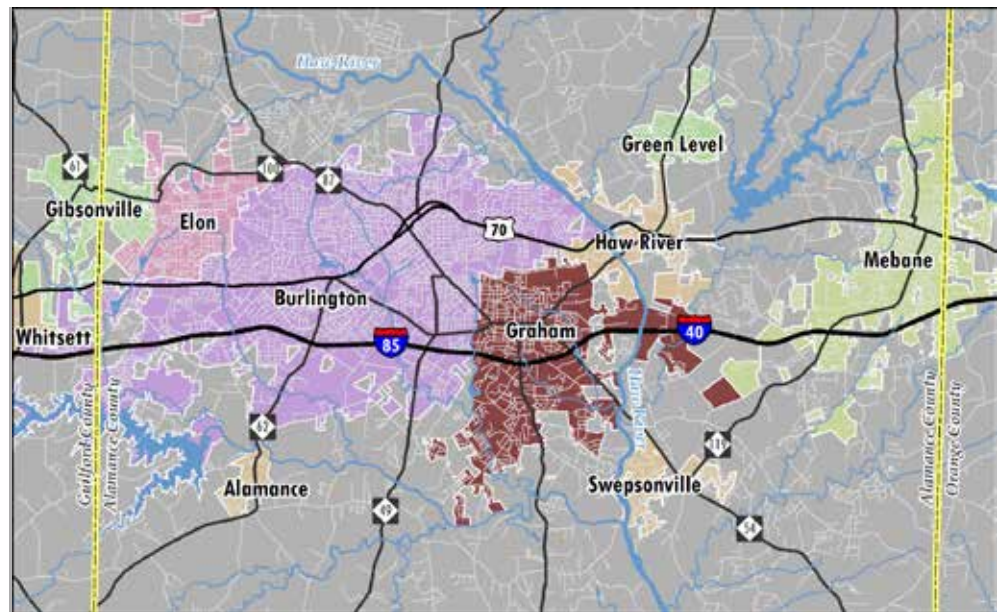
Municipal recreation programs and facilities are a tool to combat obesity and some of its underlying causes such as chronic disease, stress, and depression. A vibrant City recreation program allows participants to establish and maintain a strong social network and sense of community. Parks and recreation programs can also act as an economic development tool, attracting tourists, and new development.

It is the mission of the GRPD to “to inspire a happy, healthy community by creating a stimulating and engaging environment through elite, diversified recreational experiences.” The City has shown its longstanding commitment to this mission by providing high-quality recreational opportunities to its residents, and with this updated master plan demonstrates its intention to carry that tradition far into the future.

# DEMOGRAPHICS

To plan for adequate recreational facilities and programs, the Recreation and Parks Department needs to understand who its citizens are, how old they are, where they live within the community, and their racial and ethnic makeup.

The City of Graham is a community of just over 15,000 people located in the central part of Alamance County. The City serves as the county seat of Alamance County.



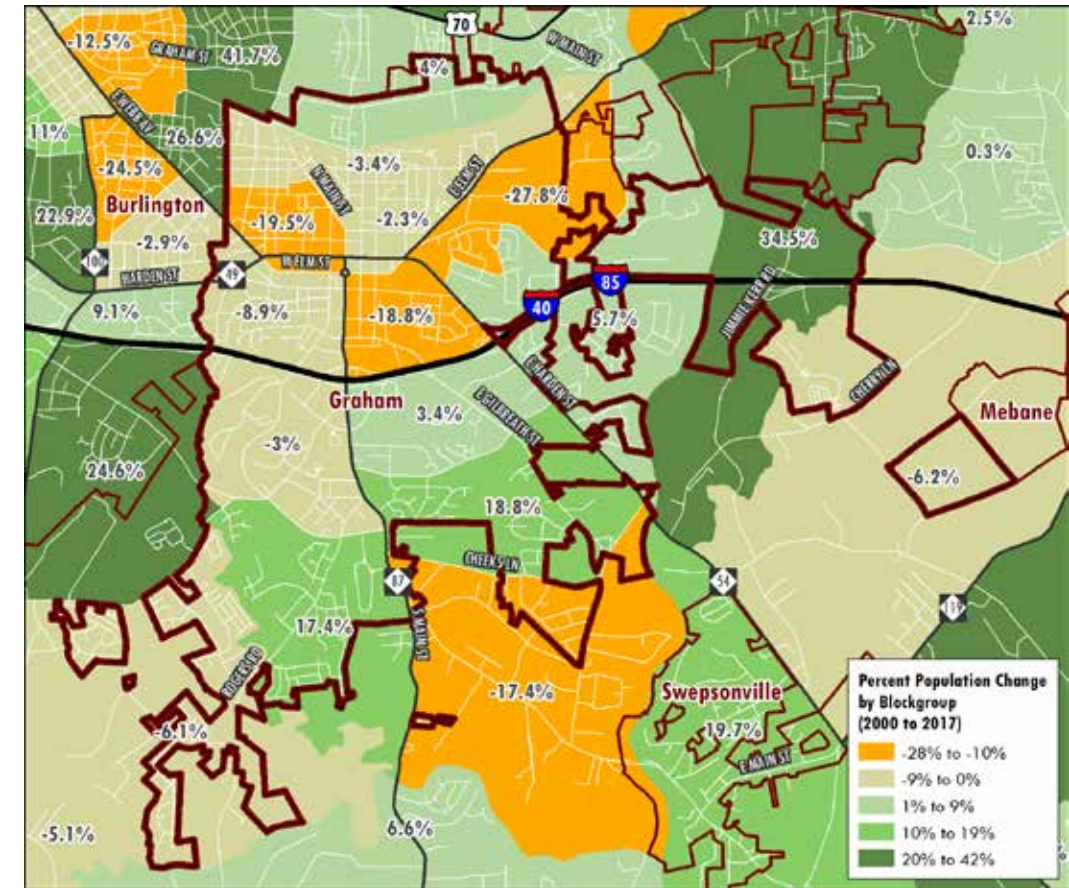
Map 1: Location Overview

Figure 1: Historic and Projected Population Growth

Year	City of Graham		Alamance County	
	Population	% Change	Population	% Change
1970	8,172	-	96,502	-
1980	7,674	6.10%	99,319	2.90%
1990	10,426	20.20%	108,213	9.00%
2000	12,833	23.10%	130,800	20.90%
2010	14,153	10.30%	151,131	15.50%
2020	15,751	11.30%	171,207	13.30%
2030	17,757	12.70%	193,013	12.70%

Source: Source: US Decennial Census; NC State Demographer County Population Projections (Dec 2018); PTRC

Graham is located on Interstate 40/85 between the urban centers of Raleigh-Durham and Greensboro-High Point. This corridor, sometimes referred to as the Piedmont Crescent, is one of the fastest-growing urban areas in the southeast and is regarded as having numerous opportunities for industrial and commercial development. Graham is located in the center of this developing corridor, with the City of Burlington bordering to the north and west and the Town of Haw River bordering to the northeast. The Haw River lies to the east, passing through and bordering the City limits as it flows to Jordan Lake (Map 1).



Map 2: Percent Population Growth (2010-2017)

## Population & Growth

The City of Graham’s official population in the 2010 census was 14,153, with a 2018 certified population estimate of 15,136. Of these additional 983 people, 60% were from an increase in population within the 2010 City limits and 40% from an increase in population in annexed areas.

Graham experienced a high rate of growth in the 1980s and 1990s with a percent change of 20.2% and 23.1%, respectively, each decade. During this time, growth rates were higher in Graham than Alamance County as a whole. However, since 2000, growth rates have slowed in Graham and across the County. Between 2000 and 2010, Graham’s population only grew by 10.3% while the County grew by 15.5% (Figure 1).

The NC State Demographer estimates projected population growth for counties. Figure 1 shows the estimated population for Alamance County in 2020 and 2030. On average, 9.2% of the County’s total population has resided in Graham over recent years. Assuming this trend will continue, Graham's estimated population in 2030 is 17,757

A comparison of census data between 2010 and 2017 indicates that the downtown Graham block groups have been losing population. Higher growth rates have been seen in the southern part of the City around Rogers Road and north of Cheeks Lane (Map 2). An analysis of parcel data by year residential structures were built indicates many new homes in the southern part of the City. Population densities, however, remain the highest north of the interstate and in the downtown area (Map 3).

**Age & Race**

Most noteworthy about Graham’s population is the change in the minority population over the past few decades. In 1990, the Hispanic population (97 people) only represented 0.9% of Graham’s population. In 2017, the Hispanic population (2,665 people) represented 18.3% of the total population – a 2,647% increase in 27 years. The African American population saw an increase during this same time (89.2%) and now represents 21.7% of the population. The White population has seen a 5.1% decrease between 1990 and 2017, and now represents 56.1% of the City’s population (Figure 2).

The age distribution of Graham’s population has remained fairly steady over the last three decades, with a slight increase in the population percentage of older adults and children, and a slight decrease in working adults ages 18 to 59 (Figure 3). About half of the population is in the working adult age range, indicating Graham is an affordable, family-friendly community within reasonable commuting distance to employment centers in both the Triangle and Triad. An increase in the child population indicates an important need to keep expanding recreation programs.

**Summary**

Graham’s population is predicted to grow steadily in the coming years, with a stable percentage of adults, but a growing percentage of children and older adults. Each of these age groups represents unique recreation needs which can be addressed with age-appropriate programming and facilities flexible enough to accommodate a wide range of needs. With significant increases in the Hispanic population likely to continue, enhancements to existing programs and services may be required to address language barriers and cultural differences.

As the population continues to increase, demands for recreation services will grow. Programs and facilities must be provided to keep pace with population growth in order to maintain the existing high quality services. The placement of new facilities in high growth areas should also be a priority.

Map 3: Population Density (2017)

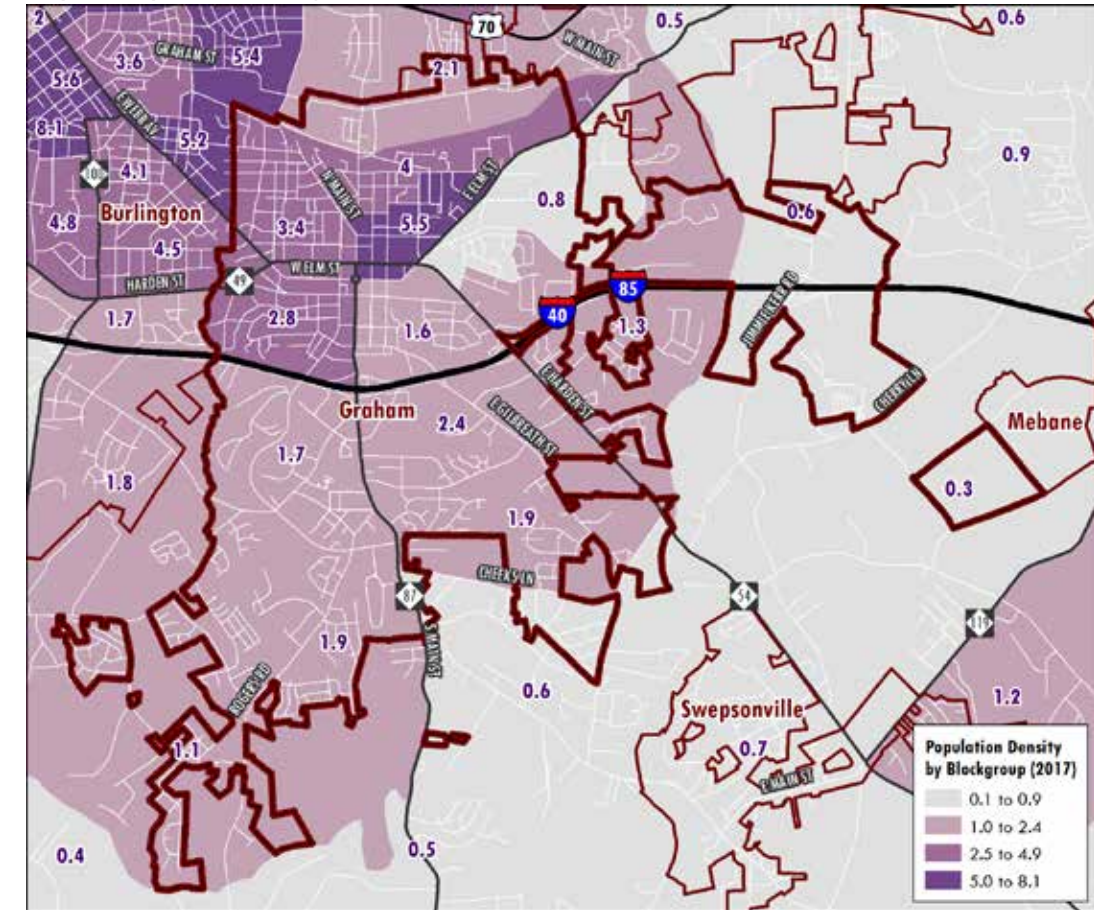


Figure 2: City of Graham Trends in Race and Ethnic Origin (1990-2017)

Year	White		Black		Hispanic		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
1990	8,588	82.37%	1,667	15.99%	97	0.93%	10,426	
2000	8,530	66.47%	2,753	21.45%	1,301	10.14%	12,833	
2010	8,241	58.23%	3,191	22.55%	2,229	15.75%	14,153	
2017	8,151	56.06%	3,154	21.69%	2,665	18.33%	14,540	
<b>Change:</b>								
<b>1990-2017</b>	-437	-5.09%	1,487	89.20%	2,568	2647.42%	4,114	39.46%

Source: US Decennial Census, ACS 2013-2017 5-Year Estimates

Figure 3: City of Graham Trends in Age Ranges (1970-2017)

Year	Children (Ages 0-17)		Adults (Ages 18-59)		Older Adults (Ages 60+)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
1970	2,706	33.10%	4,359	53.30%	1,107	13.50%
1980	2,108	24.30%	4,872	56.20%	1,694	19.50%
1990	2,210	21.20%	5,911	56.70%	2,305	22.10%
2000	3,075	24.00%	7,438	58.00%	2,320	18.10%
2010	3,573	25.20%	7,736	54.70%	2,844	20.10%
2017	4,063	27.90%	7,297	50.20%	3,180	21.90%

Source: US Decennial Census, ACS 2013-2017 5-Year Estimates



# STATE OF GRAHAM RECREATION

The Graham Recreation and Parks Department (GRPD) offers a wealth of recreational and leisure activities for residents and visitors to experience. The Department has the vision to energize their community by inspiring healthy play for all and is inspired by the mission to inspire a happy, healthy community by creating a stimulating and engaging environment through elite, diversified recreational experiences. The GRPD accomplishes its mission and vision by offering: park and recreation facilities, athletics, family events, summer day camp, concerts, fitness and health programs, activities for older adults, and a historical museum. The GRPD has an official Friends of Graham Recreation & Parks group, a recreation commission, and a historical museum advisory board.

## Park Classification System

A park classification system is an important tool that Recreation and Park departments use to categorize and classify managed park facilities. The classification system can be used to incorporate not only the vision of an existing park facility but also its design and use. Thus, this report proposes a park classification system that caters to the City of Graham and should be used as a tool for classification and land area requirements. The Park Classification System Categories include:

- Blueway
- Community Park
- Greenway and Multi-use Path/Trail
- Joint-Venture Facility
- Neighborhood Park
- Open Space or Natural Area

- Pocket Park
- Regional Park
- Special Use Park or Facility

## Blueway

Blueways are water-based trails that provide recreational opportunities for boating and other water sports. Blueways follow rivers and streams but must be accessible at multiple locations and to a variety of experience levels. A blueway requires designated public access to put-ins and take-outs every 6 miles and should provide wayfinding elements to paddlers on the river. Ideally, a well-planned blueway will at some point connect to an existing greenway or trail system to provide wide-range alternative transportation options.

## Community Park

Community parks are facilities that may be easily accessed throughout

multiple neighborhoods. These facilities should be heavily invested in community-based recreational needs and work towards complimenting a community vision or culture. Open space and natural areas should be present at the park facility. It is important to link community parks to a variety of transportation systems within Graham. This includes sidewalks, bus-routes, PART routes, greenways, and blueways. Additionally, community parks should always compliment bicyclists by providing designated parking.

**Greenway and Multi-use Path/Trail**

Greenway and multi-use paths/trails are essential elements of municipal park systems that create connections between recreational spaces, service spaces, community spaces, and other jurisdictional spaces. As essential tools for providing linkages among the places where people live, work, and play, greenway and multi-use paths/trails should provide users enough room to accommodate a variety of transportation alternatives while not sacrificing safety concerns. Although this type of park facility should not sacrifice a wide variety of use for safety concerns. Another important feature of greenway and multi-use paths/trails is that they should provide urban wildlife corridors and offer stations for outdoor recreation, passive recreation, and environmental education.

**Joint-Venture Facility**

Joint-venture facilities allow municipal agencies to maximize resources by allowing the Recreation and Park Department the ability to enter an agreement with another entity to benefit from the shared use of facilities and land resources. Examples of these partnerships are visible in local school systems, local businesses, local non-profits, and a variety of other public departments.

**Neighborhood Park**

Similar to community parks, neighborhood parks offer a variety of recreational opportunities that connect people to where they live, work, and play. These parks receive daily use and are typically nestled away within neighborhoods. These parks are limited in use and traditionally provide play equipment such as playgrounds. As parts of the neighborhood, these parks work as integral pieces in community culture and neighborhood pride.



The Haw River Paddle Trail is an example of a blueway.

**Open Space and Natural Areas**

Open space and natural areas are undeveloped spaces that offer important passive recreation opportunities for park users. These facilities emphasize their natural aesthetic to provide a unique experience for park-goers to discover new ways to recreate.

**Pocket Park**

Pocket parks are facilities that provide access to small spaces within urban centers that provide play areas to children, relaxation, and socializing. Pocket parks are highly connected to destinations where people either work or intend to travel. They offer a safe environment where people are able to practice leisure activities. These park facilities typically service less than a quarter-mile and cater to pedestrians.

**Regional Park**

Regional parks offer large-scale recreational opportunities that cater to regional needs rather than singular, municipal needs. They offer access and recreational opportunities suited to larger areas such as disc golf, mountain biking, sports, and organized outdoor/experiential recreation. These parks are key components of robust, regional destinations and provide amenities that attract a large number of visitors such as multiple bathroom buildings and multiple family picnic shelters.

**Special Use Park or Facility**



Special use parks or facilities are tailored for a very specific purpose. Thus, they inherently receive fewer visitation rates than traditional parks but are still justified in the competitive park economy of the 21st century. A special use park or facility will require an additional lens of inspection, accreditation, and sometimes maintenance. Examples of special use parks or facilities are skate parks, challenge courses, and pump tracks.

**Level of Service**

**Facilities**

The purpose of the Level of Service (LOS) is to determine how the existing Recreation and Park system is meeting the needs of the City of Graham's residents. Furthermore, a LOS reveals whether or not residents have an equal opportunity to access recreational amenities within Graham.

The number of facilities needed in Graham to meet National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) performance standards is calculated by taking the population estimates (15,751) and dividing it by the number of facilities in Graham to arrive at the population served per facility. This number is then divided by the population standards provided by NRPA data to provide a





decimal number. Any number that is listed below 1.0 is within the level of service calculation for Graham. Any number that is above 1.0 is outside the level of service calculation for Graham. Facilities whose numbers are outside the LOS calculation should be investigated for future addition or expansion. Finally, if there are no existing facilities within Graham for a specific category there is an immediate need.

The immediate needs that Graham should investigate (Figure 4) are Community Gardens, Amphitheatres, and Nature/Outdoor Centers. Based on the level of service calculation, Graham should investigate Soccer Fields (1.97), a Swimming Pool (1.83), and a Recreation Center (1.70).

When the LOS analysis utilizes Graham’s growth to project 2030 needs, the results do not change from 2020 population projections. Community Gardens, Amphitheatres, and Nature/Outdoor Centers still represent immediate needs while Soccer Fields (2.22), a Swimming Pool (2.07), and a Recreation Center (1.92) should be investigated.

Graham is projected to provide access to the majority of recreational facilities for the foreseeable future but should investigate those recreational facilities that fall below the NRPA’s recommended LOS. To reach the ideal LOS for its residents, Graham should explore a variety of tactics such as inter-municipal cooperation, joint venture agreements, and public-private partnerships.

**Priority Ranks**

In order to simplify the LOS calculations, a table listing the priority ranks was developed (Figure 5). Facility categories with zero existing facilities demand the highest priority consideration, followed by facility categories with a LOS greater than 1.0 in descending order.

Figure 4: Level of Service Calculations

NRPA Population Standard per Facility	Population Served per Facility	Facility	Existing Number of City Facilities	Level of Service Need	Level of Service Need (2030)
7,812	3,150	Baseball/Softball	5	0.403	0.455
8,586	15,751	Swimming Pools	1*	1.834^	2.068^
10,000	15,751	Dog Park	1	1.575^	1.776^
7,300	-	Community Garden	0	Need	Need
9,250	15,751	Recreation Center	1	1.703^	1.920^
10,000	5,250	Community Center	3	0.525	0.592
10,430	-	Amphitheater	0	Need	Need
9,924	-	Nature/Outdoor Center	0	Need	Need
8,000	15,751	Soccer	1*	1.969^	2.220^
2,500	1,969	Tennis	8*	0.788	0.888
3,975	3,150	Basketball	5*	0.793	0.893
7,656	3,938	Volleyball	4	0.514	0.58
3,875	2,625	Multipurpose Field	6	0.677	0.764
2,269	1,313	Playground	12*	0.578	0.652

\* - Current partnership adds to the inventory count.  
 ^ - If LOS Need number is above 1.0 then facility is needed

**Park Land and Open Space**

In the field of recreation, public recreation providers are constantly being compared to one another. Although some may see this comparison unnecessary, it retains value when issuing standards and expectations across the public service sector. The NRPA reviews recreation providers across the nation to establish their Performance Review. This review is an interactive tool that offers insights into the recreation and planning process. For this Master Plan, the tool is used to calculate Graham’s position against agencies of a similar size across the nation (Figure 6). Of this interactive tool, two measurements were analyzed:

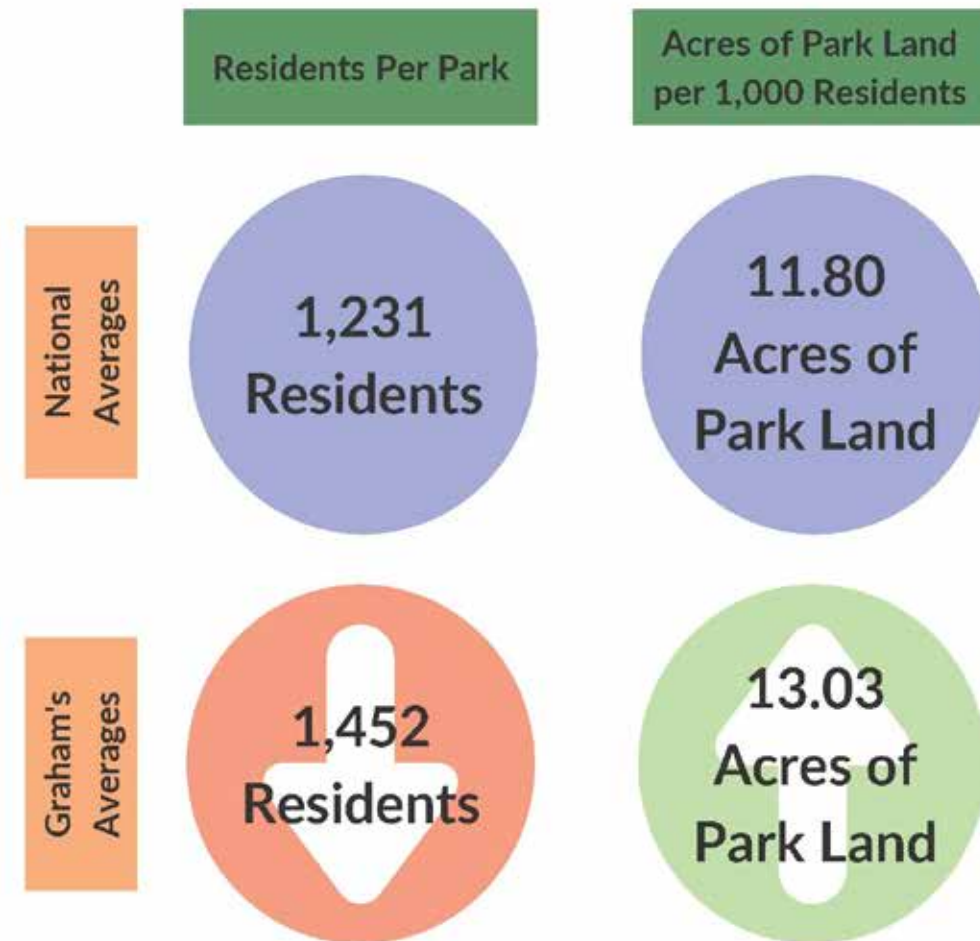
1. Residents per Park
2. Acres of Park Land per 1,000 Residents

Figure 6 reveals Graham is under-performing in the Residents Per Park metric but over-performing in the Acres of Park Land per 1,000 Residents metric.

Figure 5: Priority Ranks Determined from LOS Calculations

Rank	Facility
1	Community Garden
1	Amphitheater
1	Nature/Outdoor Center
2	Soccer
3	Swimming Pool
4	Recreation Center
5	Dog Park
6	Basketball
7	Tennis
8	Multipurpose Fields
9	Playground
10	Community Center
11	Volleyball
12	Baseball/Softball

Figure 6: Performance Comparison: Graham and Other US Jurisdictions with a Population Less Than 20,000





**Existing Conditions**

Any recreation master plan must consider the condition and use of existing facilities, primarily to identify opportunities to expand programs and services before capital expenses are incurred on new park development and land acquisition.

In February 2019 an audit of existing recreation facilities was conducted by GRPD staff in conjunction with PTRC staff. This included consideration of the unique characteristics of each site within the framework of the following categories:

**Natural Areas**

Open playfields and undeveloped areas within the park boundaries.

**Leisure Facilities**

Picnic shelters, playgrounds, and other non-competitive, man-made features.

**Recreation Facilities**

Ballfields, courts, and other active facilities.

**Access & Parking**

Pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular linkages to and through the site and supporting parking facilities.

**Comfort & Amenities**

Restrooms, staff offices, maintenance facilities, and other support services located on-site and intangible elements including general patterns of use, visual quality, and overall experience.

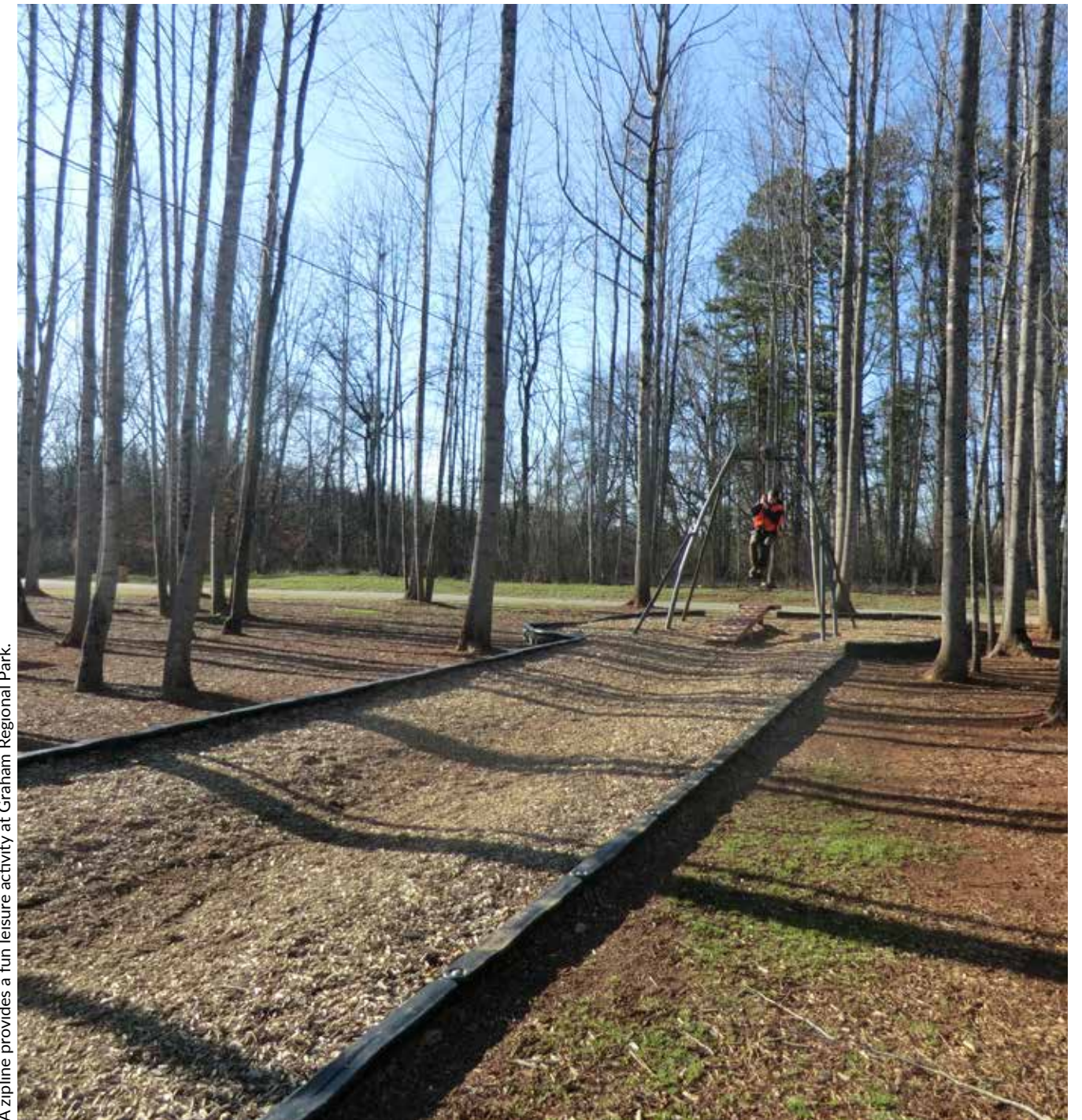
**Opportunities**

The consideration and identification of recreation improvements were made at each site. Conditions in each category were rated on a scale of 1 to 5; with 1 being the lowest score possible and 5 the highest.

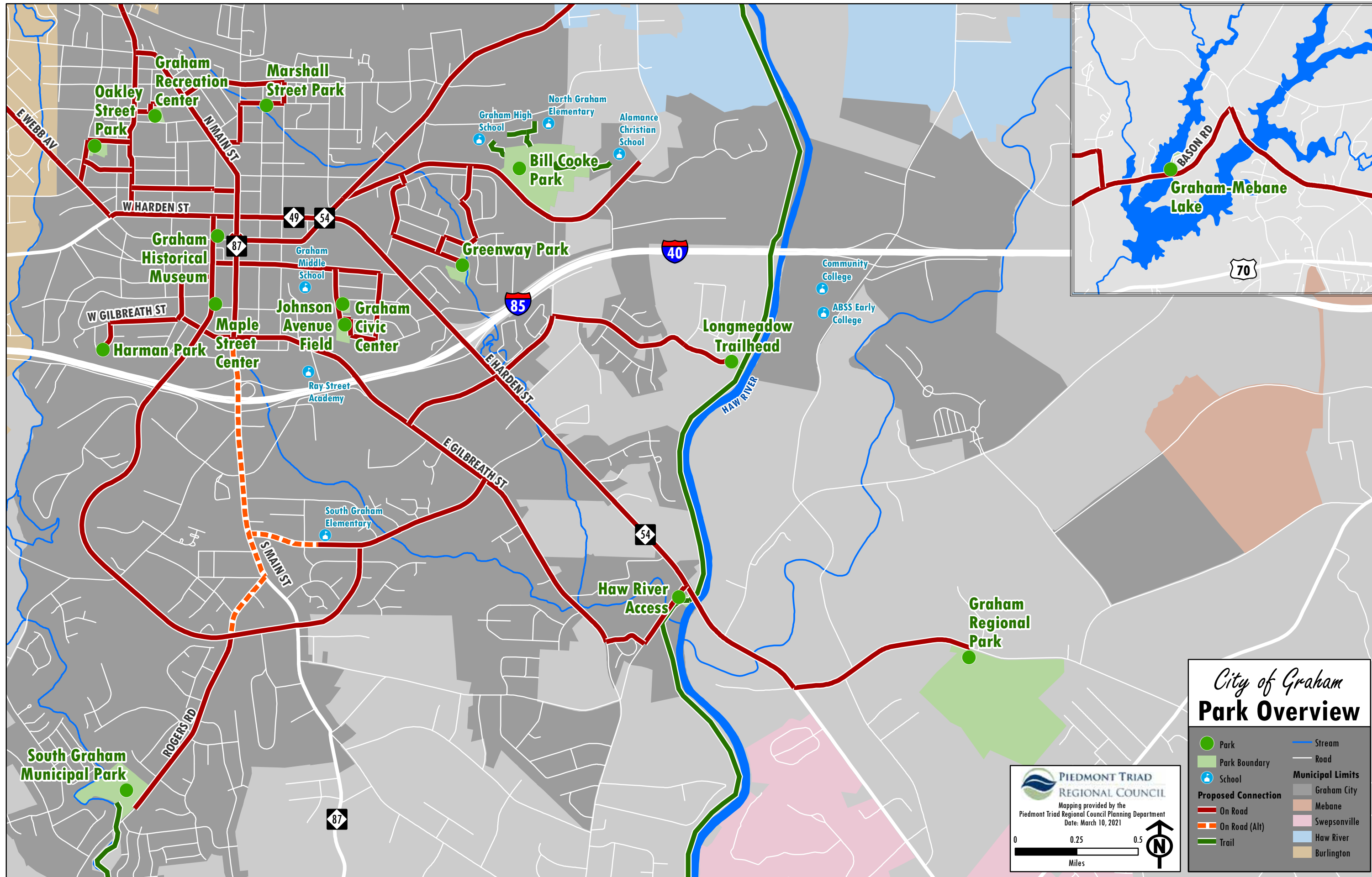
For example, a recreation site with no open playfields or natural buffers would score a 1 or 2, while a recreation site with significant open play areas and well established natural areas would score a 5.

**General Observations**

These facilities are well cared for and provide users a wide range of passive and active recreational choices. In many cases, park sites have been utilized to their maximum potential, with the majority of the recommended improvements from the 2008 Master Plan implemented at each site.



A zipline provides a fun leisure activity at Graham Regional Park.



# Graham Recreation Center

Located northwest of downtown Graham, the Graham Recreation Center provides a mixture of indoor and outdoor recreation and leisure opportunities. The Recreation Center has been renovated in the past to expand recreational amenities and staff office space, however the facility is in need of some improvements.



## Natural Areas

While no large natural areas are present on the site, appropriate plantings are provided and are well maintained.

## Leisure Facilities

A large fenced playground lies on the south side of the property, and two community meeting rooms are provided indoors. A senior nutrition site occupies one room on a regular basis.

## Recreation Facilities

Two gymnasiums, a weight room, outdoor shuffleboard, and horseshoe pits are provided.

## Access and Parking

Adequate, well-lit parking is provided on-site. Improvements should be considered to connect all outdoor facilities with an easily accessible sidewalk. The site is connected by sidewalk to neighboring land uses.

## Comfort and Amenities

Restrooms, locker rooms, and staff offices are provided. Concessions are available during basketball season.

## Opportunities

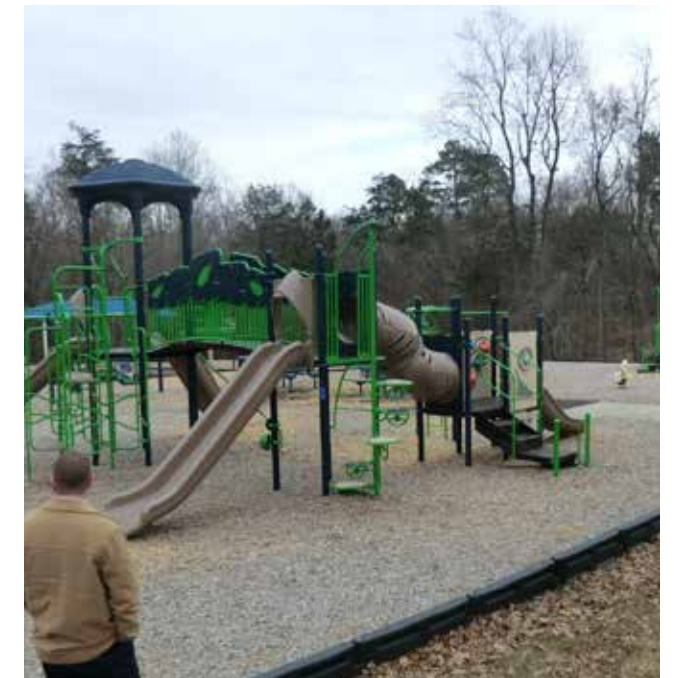
The Graham Recreation Center is well used, but the facilities currently provided are not adequate to meet the demands placed upon them. Improvement of the multi-purpose room is needed to provide multiple use opportunities (including storage) and re-orienting the kitchen equipment is important. The weight room is moderately used, but equipment is aging. The gymnasium needs a new floor and bleachers with a railing for safety; in addition, the gymnasium could use a sound system.

### 311 College Street

RATING	CATEGORY
NA	NATURAL AREAS
4	LEISURE FACILITIES
3	RECREATION FACILITIES
4	ACCESS AND PARKING
3	COMFORT AND AMENITIES
14/20	TOTAL

# Bill Cooke Park

Located in the northeastern quadrant of the City, Bill Cooke is an expansive community park site offering a wide range of outdoor recreation and leisure facilities, including athletic fields and courts, picnic shelters, a playground, walking trail and dog park.



## Natural Areas

Mature tree natural areas buffer the property from adjacent uses. A paved walking trail meanders through the park's natural areas around the perimeter of the property.

## Leisure Facilities

Two picnic shelters are provided on the site, along with a large playground that includes a toddler structure. A dog park is provided in the wooded areas next to the two picnic shelters thanks to support from the local kennel club.

## Recreation Facilities

Tennis courts and three multi-purpose ball fields are provided.

## Access and Parking

Parking for larger events needs improvement, a better walking connection to and around ball fields from the parking lots is needed. Sidewalk connections to adjacent neighborhoods and schools should be provided and improved.

## Comfort and Amenities

Restrooms and a concession stand are provided but are in need of improvements. Bleachers overlooking the ball fields need site angle improvements to better see the ball fields.

## Opportunities

Facility improvements should include upgrades to field amenities, picnic shelters (new: roof, gutters, water tap, and grill) and bathrooms next to shelters. Develop partnerships with the adjacent schools to encourage walking to school from the park. Stormwater management adjacent to the main parking lot and creek between the picnic shelters and the playground are needed.

### 1010 Townbranch Road

RATING	CATEGORY
4	NATURAL AREAS
4	LEISURE FACILITIES
4.5	RECREATION FACILITIES
3	ACCESS AND PARKING
4	COMFORT AND AMENITIES
19.5/25	TOTAL

# Goley St., Johnson Ave., & Apollo Fields (Graham Middle School Complex)

The recreation facilities located in proximity to the Graham Middle School include a walking track, and several play and practice fields.

## Natural Areas

The site provides a walking trail and ADA accessible sidewalk access to some viewing areas that meanders through a mature natural area adjacent to the school, and each athletic field is bordered with mature trees, providing buffers to adjacent uses.

## Leisure Facilities

Limited opportunities for leisure facilities exist on the site beyond the existing walking trail and sidewalk.

## Recreation Facilities

Two quality lighted fields for youth baseball, soccer, and football are provided on the site, along with a practice field located across the street from the main complex.

## Access and Parking

Parking is shared with the school site, which occasionally reaches capacity at peak use. Walkway connections between the sites, the school, and the public roadway would enhance ease of access. Bicycle parking should be considered at each field.

## Comfort and Amenities

Lighting, seating, and concessions are provided. Replacement of the bleacher seating area with a retaining wall at the Goley Street field was recently completed and will enhance the viewing experience.



## Opportunities

Conflicts over site control, programming, and maintenance between the school system and Graham Recreation and Parks have made it difficult to maintain a consistent and reliable maintenance schedule. Discussions with the Alamance-Burlington School System regarding field management and programming authority must continue in order to find a more favorable balance of access for recreation users. Additional improvements include a left-field fence and marked parking spaces at the Johnson Avenue field.

### 311 E. Pine Street

RATING	CATEGORY
3	NATURAL AREAS
2	LEISURE FACILITIES
4	RECREATION FACILITIES
3	ACCESS AND PARKING
4	COMFORT AND AMENITIES
<b>16/25</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>

# South Graham Municipal Park

Located in southwestern Graham adjacent to Little Alamance Creek, this community park provides a balanced mixture of passive and active recreation opportunities. There is significant residential development in close proximity to this park increasing demand for the park.

## Natural Areas

The site provides a significant open play area and an expansive natural buffer along the creek. A natural wooded trail is offered along the creek, but the old fence to this area should be removed.

## Leisure Facilities

The site provides a large playground, walking track, nature trail, and three picnic shelters. The playground equipment was recently updated. The picnic shelters need to be painted.

## Recreation Facilities

High-quality tennis courts, sand volleyball courts, and a basketball court are available on site.

## Access and Parking

The site has adequate parking and is connected to the neighborhoods to the north and south by a new sidewalk. The new development across the main access road may encourage additional walking and bicycling traffic. Better signage on the park property to different amenities is warranted.

## Comfort and Amenities

Seating is available throughout the site, and restrooms are available. The maintenance building appears to be in good condition. It is easy to get onto the walking track and next to the playground for wheelchair viewing.



## Opportunities

A multi-use trail connection to the Haw River along Little Alamance Creek would enhance opportunities for passive recreation and create connectivity between existing recreation facilities. An additional volleyball court and a re-orientation of the multi-use field would be helpful. Additional improvements could include improving drainage around the walking track, which may include a retaining wall. Programming opportunities with the nearby subdivision residents and River Mill Academy should also be explored further.

### 1609 Rogers Road

RATING	CATEGORY
4	NATURAL AREAS
4.5	LEISURE FACILITIES
4.5	RECREATION FACILITIES
3.5	ACCESS AND PARKING
4.5	COMFORT AND AMENITIES
<b>20/25</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>

# Greenway Park

Located in a neighborhood north of Interstate 40/85, Greenway Park is the city's largest neighborhood park, providing exclusively passive recreation. A large multi-family apartment complex constructed in 2019 in close proximity to this park has no authorized access currently to/from the park.



## Natural Areas

The site provides large open playfields and mature natural buffers to most adjacent residences and along the adjoining creek. A stormwater protection project along the creek bank exists.

## Leisure Facilities.

A modest playground is provided.

## Recreation Facilities

None currently provided.

## Access and Parking

No structured off-street parking is provided. Accessibility to the playground could be enhanced with an internal walkway and ADA gap or ramp. No sidewalks are provided on the street leading to the park. Bicycle parking could be provided near the playground. Access to the multi-family development across the creek should be prioritized.

## Comfort and Amenities

One bench is provided in the playground area.

## Opportunities

Greenway Park has the greatest potential for increasing the number and variety of facilities available. Possibilities include a gazebo, picnic facilities, a short disc golf course, community gardens and greenway paths to adjoining neighborhoods. Additional facilities would require consideration for an off-street parking area.

### 815 Brookgreen Terrace

RATING	CATEGORY
4	NATURAL AREAS
3.5	LEISURE FACILITIES
NA	RECREATION FACILITIES
2	ACCESS AND PARKING
2	COMFORT AND AMENITIES
11.5/20	TOTAL

# Graham Civic Center

Situated adjacent to the Graham Middle School complex, the Graham Civic Center provides a mixture of indoor and outdoor recreation opportunities. The Civic Center offers a spacious, light-filled meeting room accompanied by a kitchen. This space offers opportunities for organized use.



## Natural Areas

The site is wooded to the rear, providing a nice backdrop to the site and buffer to adjoining residences.

## Leisure Facilities

The Civic Center has a fully equipped meeting space available, with kitchen and storage. Outside the center there is an existing playground equipped with a gazebo and cooking stations.

## Recreation Facilities

A sand volleyball court is present.

## Access and Parking

Accessible parking and walkways are present. There is no organized location for bicycle parking. There are limited way-finding elements surrounding this park.

## Comfort and Amenities

The site is well situated and provides enhanced indoor and outdoor amenities when open. However, indoor guest amenities are not accessible as the facility stays locked outside of organized use.

## Opportunities

A community garden should be considered to enhance the site.

### 503 McGee Street

RATING	CATEGORY
3.5	NATURAL AREAS
4	LEISURE FACILITIES
3	RECREATION FACILITIES
4	ACCESS AND PARKING
3	COMFORT AND AMENITIES
17.5/25	TOTAL

# Maple Street Center for Performing Arts

The performing arts center is located in the heart of downtown Graham, adjacent to the children’s museum. While modest in size, the site provides convenient indoor classroom and meeting space for a wide range of users.



## Natural Areas

Due to site constraints, large natural areas are not provided. However, the grounds of the facility are well maintained, and a natural buffer to adjoining uses is provided. Seasonal plantings could enhance the appearance of the grounds.

## Leisure Facilities

No leisure facilities are currently provided.

## Recreation Facilities

The site provides limited indoor space appropriate for dance and fitness classes and small community group meetings. Concerns regarding the condition of the floor, roof, and sound system have been raised.

## Access and Parking

The site is in close proximity to downtown but is not well connected to the existing sidewalk system. The parking lot is small, and often full during peak use.

## Comfort and Amenities

Storage is a concern and indoor amenities need attention such as the bathrooms, roof, floor, and seating.

## Opportunities

Partnerships with local groups and the arts community could yield aesthetic enhancements to the grounds. Further opportunities to provide leisure facilities to the Alamance County Children's Museum should be explored. Consideration should be given to refinishing the wood floor and fixing the roof.

### 306 South Maple Street

RATING	CATEGORY
2.5	NATURAL AREAS
NA	LEISURE FACILITIES
3	RECREATION FACILITIES
3	ACCESS AND PARKING
3.5	COMFORT AND AMENITIES
12/20	TOTAL

# Graham-Mebane Lake

Located northeast of Graham, Graham-Mebane Lake offers 650 acres of sport fishing, boating, skiing, bank fishing, picnicking, and the peace of a relaxing afternoon. The marina provides a boat launch and docking facilities, pier and bank fishing along with picnic facilities. There is no swimming or wading permitted at the lake due to the lake being the municipal water supply for the citizens of Graham, Mebane, Green Level, and Swepsonville.



## Natural Areas

The marina and lake are surrounded by undisturbed natural areas, with few exceptions.

## Leisure Facilities

A picnic shelter is available in the bank fishing area and there is an observation deck at the marina offices. There is limited area to provide additional leisure facilities.

## Recreation Facilities

Additional docking area would provide greater capacity at the marina during severe weather, events, and peak use.

## Access and Parking

Well-marked parking for passenger vehicles and trailers is provided, although insufficient during peak times.

## Comfort and Amenities

Scattered seating, trash receptacles, and restrooms are provided. Improved visibility of the lake from the marina offices would enhance safety for boaters but would require renovation to the marina building.

## Opportunities

The placement of way-finding signage from Interstate 40/85, along NC 49, and Bason Road would lead users from Graham to the marina. Installation of walking trails along the banks of the lake, even in limited locations, would provide significant opportunities for passive recreation, nature study, and environmental education. To enhance user experience, the expansion of parking should be explored. The exploration of playground facilities on site would make Graham-Mebane Lake more welcoming to younger families.

### 3218 Bason Road, Mebane, NC 27302

RATING	CATEGORY
5	NATURAL AREAS
3	LEISURE FACILITIES
3	RECREATION FACILITIES
3	ACCESS AND PARKING
3	COMFORT AND AMENITIES
17/25	TOTAL

# Marshall Street Park

Located in a well-established higher density neighborhood north of Interstate 40/85 and near downtown, this neighborhood park provides exclusively passive recreation.



### Natural Areas

The site provides a modest open playfield bordering an open drainage area with a sewer easement.

### Leisure Facilities

A playground is provided and is in need of an upgrade.

### Recreation Facilities

There are no facilities provided.

### Access and Parking

No structured off-street parking is provided. Playground accessibility could be enhanced with an internal walkway and accessible gap or ramp over the border. Sidewalks are provided on some approaching blocks, but not on the park site. Bicycle parking could be provided near the playground

### Comfort and Amenities

A bench is provided in the playground area.

### Opportunities

Possible enhancements to the existing facilities include shade structures with an updated playground, sidewalks on Marshall Street with lighting, additional seating and a community garden. Better natural vegetative fencing of the creek and exercise equipment for parents would be beneficial.

### 519 North Marshall Street

RATING	CATEGORY
3	NATURAL AREAS
3.5	LEISURE FACILITIES
NA	RECREATION FACILITIES
2.5	ACCESS AND PARKING
2.5	COMFORT AND AMENITIES
11.5/20	TOTAL

# Oakley Street Park

Located just blocks from the Recreation Center, this neighborhood park site is tucked-away in a higher density neighborhood north of Interstate 40/85.



### Natural Areas

The site provides plenty of open play areas and natural areas bordering the site to the west.

### Leisure Facilities

The site includes a walking track and playground that is complimented by lighting elements which provide additional safety aesthetics. The impact these new features and elements have on this park is major.

### Recreation Facilities

The site includes plenty of open space.

### Access and Parking

No structured off-street parking is provided. No sidewalks are provided on the streets leading to the park. Bicycle parking could be provided. Wayfinding elements should be enhanced.

### Comfort and Amenities

A bench is provided, and the site appears underutilized.

### Opportunities

With community participation, the site can serve as a gathering place and enhance the quality of life in the neighborhood. Potential improvements include the inclusion of a gazebo, additional public seating/eating accessories such as picnic tables, and/or a community garden.

### 409 Oakley Street

RATING	CATEGORY
3.5	NATURAL AREAS
4	LEISURE FACILITIES
2	RECREATION FACILITIES
2	ACCESS AND PARKING
1	COMFORT AND AMENITIES
12.5/25	TOTAL



# Harman Park

This is a neighborhood park that was established in collaboration with local non-profit partnerships. It features green space and a playground area.



## Natural Areas

The site has little to no natural areas present. This is primarily due to its location as a pocket park within a neighborhood. Woods that are present are not well-maintained.

## Leisure Facilities

A playground is provided at this site and it appears to be well maintained and used.

## Recreation Facilities

There are no facilities provided.

## Access and Parking

There is minimal signage leading to the park and it is tucked away within a neighborhood. However, the park utilizes a walking path that provides a connection to a neighboring street.

## Comfort and Amenities

Seating is provided and the park appears to be inviting. The park appears to be clean and well maintained.

## Opportunities

The horseshoe pit can be improved and the undergrowth in the natural area should be cleared.

### 708 Ben Court

RATING	CATEGORY
2	NATURAL AREAS
3	LEISURE FACILITIES
NA	RECREATION FACILITIES
2	ACCESS AND PARKING
4	COMFORT AND AMENITIES
<b>11/20</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>

# Graham Regional Park

The first 18 of the total 118 acres developed feature a youth challenge course, zip line, a paved accessible mixed-use trail (.3 mile), swings, slides, climbing boulders, a water landscaping feature, workout equipment, bike rack, and plenty of open green space.



## Natural Areas

The park site has undeveloped areas that appear to be well managed and have the potential to provide expanded recreational opportunities. Open playfields that are present appear to be well managed and offer a variety of uses.

## Leisure Facilities

There are two picnic shelters, one with a grill, as well as adequate safety signage at playground equipment and features.

## Recreation Facilities

The park offers a variety of recreational facilities that appear to be well managed and frequently used. Furthermore, the facility supports the programming needs of the Department to expand recreational programming opportunities.

## Access and Parking

This park can easily be reached by vehicle and offers multiple bicycle parking stations throughout. Graham Regional Park is handicap accessible. Parking locations do not detract from the park site and the park safely separates access and parking from a majority of recreation and leisure features.

## Comfort and Amenities

The park offers seating in various locations; however, seating is not provided throughout the park in a uniform fashion. Guest amenities, lighting, and cleanliness of the park are exceptional elements of this park.

## Opportunities

Graham Regional Park brings various recreational opportunities that are not currently offered. With public input and community engagement, recreation and leisure features such as an adult challenge course, pump track, splash pad, and amphitheater could offer unique development opportunities. The park also provides Graham with a capacity to answer soccer programming demands at a regional scale. Some partnership opportunities exist with Alamance Burlington School System, the City of Mebane, Alamance Community College, and private industries.

### 1575 N. Jim Minor Road, Haw River, NC 27258

RATING	CATEGORY
4	NATURAL AREAS
5	LEISURE FACILITIES
5	RECREATION FACILITIES
4	ACCESS AND PARKING
4	COMFORT AND AMENITIES
<b>22/25</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>

# Haw River Trail - Graham Paddle Access and Longmeadow Trailhead

The Haw River Trail is an approximately 60-mile long multi-use paddling and hiking trail following the path of the Haw River from Haw River State Park in southern Rockingham County to Jordan Lake State Recreation Area, through Graham. The continued development of the blueway trail is being coordinated by the local governments of Alamance County. As part of this trail system, the department operates a canoe and kayak launch site on Highway 54 in southeast Graham.

The Longmeadow Trailhead opened in early October 2017 and features nearly two miles of new trail along the river in Graham. The trail runs through The Challenge Golf Club and between the Sellars Falls section to the north and the Swepsonville River Park to the south.



**Paddle Access: 1124 Cooper Road**



**Longmeadow Trail: 1120 Valley Drive**

# Graham Historical Museum

Originally known as the “Fireman’s Building”, this circa 1911 landmark in downtown Graham is now home to the Graham Historical Museum. A beautifully restored 1930 Seagrave firetruck is on display in the museum as a reminder of the building’s original occupants.

Graham’s story unfolds the minute visitors walk through the front door. Folk life, public safety, and military exhibits are designed to capture the spirit of those who settled in Graham, and the staff works diligently to collect artifacts and create new displays that give life to the town’s history.



**135 West Elm Street**

## Programs and Trends

The Graham Recreation and Parks Department provides a broad range of recreation and leisure programs for citizens of all ages and interests through direct program offerings. These programs are occasionally supplemented with partnerships from Alamance County Recreation and Parks, Burlington Recreation and Parks, Alamance Arts, Alamance Community College, Mebane Recreation and Parks, and Gibsonville Parks and Recreation.

Figure 7: Athletic Programs as of 2019

Sports	Users	Camps	Users	Season	Users
Soccer	657	Football Camp	18	Spring	456
T/Base/Softball	324	Basketball Camp	32	Summer	351
Basketball	347	Soccer Camp	15	Fall	424
Lacrosse	71	Lacrosse Camp	18	Summer	379
Flag Football	64				
Grow Golf	152				
Sport Camp	83				

## Athletics

The Graham Recreation and Parks Department offers seven athletic programs and four camps.

When analyzing the facility and program usage data between the years of 2017 and 2019, the athletics category revealed valuable information for the Recreation and Parks Department; soccer is the program with the most participation with 657 participants across two seasons in 2019. Soccer has also recognized a percent change increase of 11% from 2018 to 2019. However, Lacrosse is the program that has experienced the greatest percentage change between 2017 and 2019 with a 56% increase. Golf is another priority program as it relates to athletics for Graham. The program Grow Golf Now has surged between the year 2018 and 2019 with a 140% increase in the spring and 100% in the fall.

## Special Programs

Another area that has recorded measurable changes between the years 2017 and 2019 is the special programs offered by the Recreation and Parks Department.

Figure 8: Special Programs as of 2019

Program	Users
Pumpkin Bash	5,000
Thursday at Seven Concert Series	4,300
Slice of Summer	2,000
Ice Skating Rink	1,300
Movies in the Park	300
Christmas Tree Lighting	300
Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony	265
Grown-Up Egg Hunt	220
Catfish Tournament	211
Summer Day Camp	210
Graham Walks - Spring	185
Graham Walks - Fall	154
Youth Fishing Day	65
Family Day at the Lake	65
Big Bass Tournament	45

Information gathered for the special programs category revealed valuable information to guide the planning and program implementation efforts for the Recreation and Parks Department. Of all the special programs, Graham Walks has experienced the greatest percent increase between 2017 and 2019. In total, this percentage change is 389% (140% Fall; 249% Spring). Meanwhile, the special program experiencing the greatest percent decrease between 2017 and 2019 is Movies in the Park. Between the three years, Movies in the Park percentage change totaled 77% (-52% 2017-2018 percent change; -25% 2018-2019 percent change).

## Instructional Classes

The final program area that is analyzed in this report is the instructional classes category. Of all the instructional classes, Tai Chi has experienced the most growth from 2017 to 2019. Meanwhile, Super Tots is the most participated class from 2017 to 2019.

**Trends**

After analyzing the data offered by program and facility usage metrics, there are some clear trends in each of the three aforementioned focus areas. For athletic programs, the primary trend is the escalation of Lacrosse as a sport of interest among Youth. For special programs, Graham Walks is championing walking for leisure and exercise. This special program is expected to continue snowballing into larger populations with continued promotion. For instructional classes, Tai Chi is beginning to gain popularity. With the correct amount of promotion and operational investment, it may contend with some of the more popular instructional classes such as Super Tots and Back Creek Line Dancers.

Figure 9: Instructional Classes as of 2019

Class	Users
Back Creek Line Dancers	5,000
Pound Fit	4,300
Super Tots	2,000
Middle Eastern Dance	1,300
Mahjong/Cards	300
Tai Chi	300
Ballroom Dance	265

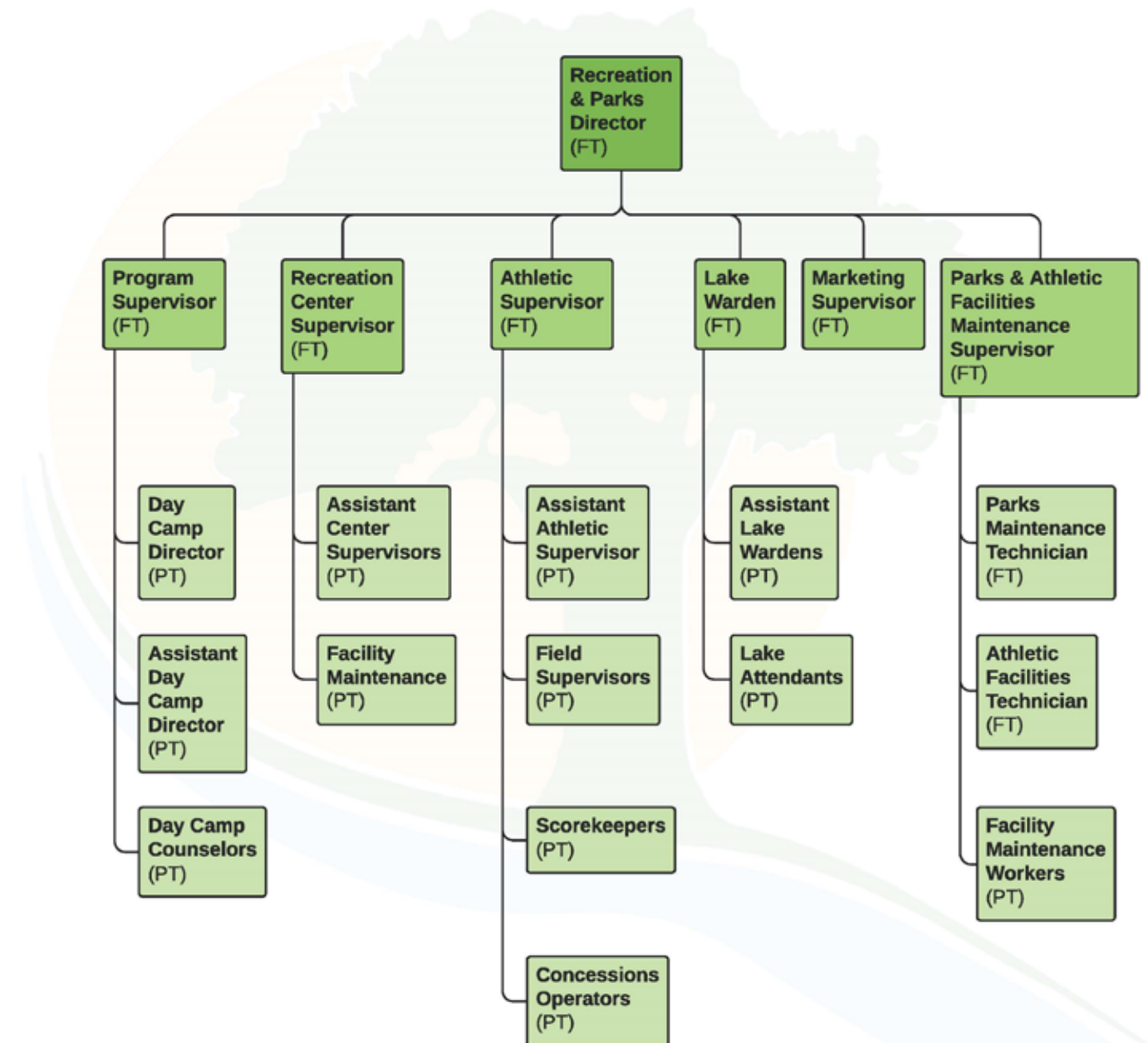
**Administration & Organization**

The recreation programs and park facilities in Graham are administered by the Recreation and Parks Department. The department director is responsible for oversight of six professional full-time staff, numerous part-time staff, and seasonal staff. Staff is responsible for implementing recreation programs, overseeing capital improvements, and managing day-to-day activities. See Figure 10 for a Department Organizational Chart.

**Operating & Capital Funds**

Funds for recreation operations for the Department are authorized on an annual basis by the Graham City Council. Total funding in the fiscal year 2018-2019 was \$928,100 while funding in the fiscal year 2019-2020 adopted budget totaled \$918,000 resulting in a net change of -\$9,800 (-1.06%). To offset increasing expenses, a 5% increase on some Recreation Fees was approved. To further the City's investment in recreational opportunities, a \$30,000 appropriation to match a Healthy Play and Recreation

Figure 10: Graham Recreation and Parks Organizational Chart



Participants play basketball at Graham Recreation Center.

Grant for a new playground at the Recreation Center was included. One of the unmet capital needs during the fiscal year 2019-2020 adopted budget is the repaving of Bill Cooke Park (\$235,000).

Although an organizational element of the Recreation and Parks Department, Graham-Mebane Lake has a unique budget, shared 50/50 between Graham and Mebane. Total funding in the fiscal year 2018-2019 was \$173,000 while funding in the fiscal year 2019-2020 adopted budget totaled \$187,000 resulting in a net change of \$14,000 (8.09%). One of the unmet capital needs during the fiscal year 2019-2020 adopted budget is a Lake Master Plan (\$15,000).

Additional and notable financing elements to the Recreation and Parks Department's operating and capital funds include a \$500,000 Connect NC Bond grant in the fiscal year 2017-2018 and a \$30,000 grant from GameTime in the fiscal year 2019-2020. Both of these grants are public knowledge and required a matching percentage from Graham. Furthermore, the new Alamance-Burlington School System High School is planned to be built near the new Graham Regional Park development.

### Financing Elements and Fee Schedule

The GRPD offers two different fee schedules that apply to two different criteria. One fee schedule applies to individuals that live within Graham’s jurisdiction, the other applies to individuals that live outside Graham’s jurisdiction but want to utilize GRPD’s services and facilities.

Additionally, the operations of Graham-Mebane Lake have a unique fee schedule. Unlike the general Recreation and Parks Department fee schedule, Graham-Mebane Lake’s fee schedule separates users into two categories, Alamance County and Mebane Residents in Orange County or Non-Alamance County Residents.

### Operational Tools

The GRPD uses the Community Pass platform to enhance day-to-day operations. The Department also provides users with access to a calendar of events and programs that detail facility events, closings, and special programs.

Park users enjoy a picnic at one of Graham’s many picnic shelters available for rent.



Figure 11: Camp Fees (Grades K-8)

Packages	Resident	General Public
10-weeks	\$575 - 1st child	\$745 - 1st child
6-weeks	\$350 - 1st child	\$450 - 1st child
Weekly*	\$70/child	\$86/child
Daily*	\$21/child	\$26/child
Multiple child discount**	\$30/child	\$30/child

\*limited based on availability

\*\*discounts will not be given on weekly or daily rates

Figure 12: Field Rental

Packages	Resident	General Public	Commercial
Rental of single field	\$100/day* or \$15/hr	\$150/day* or \$20/hr	\$225/day* or \$30/hr
Field Prep	\$20ea	\$20ea	\$20ea
Lining of field	\$10ea	\$10ea	\$10ea
Lights (single field)	\$24.50/hr	\$24.50/hr	\$24.50/hr
Scoreboard	\$20/hr	\$20/hr	\$20/hr
Staff Supervision**	\$20/hr	\$20/hr	\$20/hr

\* a day for this table is considered to be 10 hours

\*\* Supervision Fee may be waived for full-time City of Graham employees upon approval of the GRPD Director or Athletic Supervisor

Figure 13: Recreation Center and Facility Rentals

Center	Facility	Resident	General Public	Commercial
Graham Recreation Center	Entire Center (Gym #1, Gym #2, Room #1 & kitchen)	\$60/hr + staff fee	\$120/hr + staff fee	\$240/hr + staff fee
	Room #1 (Multi-Purpose room, includes kitchen)	\$20/hr + staff fee	\$40/hr + staff fee	\$80/hr + staff fee
	Gym #1 (Full Gym, includes kitchen)	\$30/hr + staff fee	\$60/h + staff fee	\$120/hr + staff fee
	Gym #2 (Half Gym, includes kitchen)	\$25/hr + staff fee	\$50/hr + staff fee	\$100/hr + staff fee
Graham Civic Center	Full Center (includes kitchen)	\$20/hr + staff fee \$75/5hrs + staff fee \$132/10hrs + staff fee	\$40/hr + staff fee \$150/5hr + staff fee \$265/10hrs + staff fee	\$80/hr + staff fee \$300/5hr + staff fee \$530/10hrs + staff fee
Maple Street Center	Full Center (does not include a kitchen)	\$15/hr + staff fee	\$30/hr + staff fee	\$60/hr + staff fee
Supervisory Staff Fee	Supervisory fees must be paid for all centers*	\$20/hr	\$20/hr	\$20/hr
Cleaning Deposit	Refundable and included in all rentals	\$50	\$50	\$50

\*An additional hour will be added to all rentals for staff preparations. Supervisory fees may be waived for the Graham Recreation Center during regular business hours and for full-time employees of the City of Graham upon approval of the GRPD Director or Center Supervisor.

Figure 14: Graham-Mebane Lake Fee Schedule

Activity/Category	Alamance County and Mebane Residents in Orange County	Non-Alamance County Residents
<b>Boat Launching</b>		
All motorized vessels	\$5/boat + \$2/person	\$8/boat + \$2/person
Senior Citizens	\$3/boat + \$1/person	\$3/boat + \$1/person
Non-motorized vessels	\$5/boat	\$8/boat
Senior Citizens	\$3/boat	\$3/boat
<b>Bank Fishing</b>		
Ages 13 and Older	\$2/person	\$3/person
Senior Citizens and Persons with 100% Disability	\$1/person	\$1/person
<b>Annual User Fee Permit</b>		
Annual User Fee	\$60/year	\$85/year
Senior Annual User Fee	\$50/year	\$60/year

Senior Citizen age is 65 and older. Customer must present proof of residency and age.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Participants learn more about the park plan at an Open House.

## Methods

### Sample

Sampling procedures for this Master Plan Report's Survey component focused on in-person survey administration, online surveys, and business card survey-linked distribution. Of the initial sampling, two primary methods were used to categorize survey respondents, Online and Manual. Demographics varied and were not limited to any ethnicity, gender, family, or age. Provided that data was collected from community members, findings may not be generalizable to other rural communities, townships, or cities.

### Materials

After survey collection, an analysis of the data was used to develop tables and graphs to create visual aids to easily compare information. Variables such as mean, median, mode, and descriptive statistics were developed using Microsoft Excel.

## Procedures

Participants were asked multiple questions relating to their time, practices, and preferences outdoors. Surveys were distributed in person, by email, and by business cards using Survey Monkey software in the Summer and Fall of 2019. Additionally, a Survey Open House was administered in the Summer of 2019. Control mechanisms used included limitations to the broadness of questions, short answer/ fill in the blank questions, and confounding questions. Various questions developed indices by categorical relevance. A mini-survey was administered in the Fall of 2019 to yield a broader set of answers that complimented fill-in-the-blank question results. Compared to the primary survey, the mini-survey was half in length and completion time.

## Survey Results

A survey was distributed both electronically and in print to get feedback from citizens to identify the needs and preferences for recreational opportunities. The survey included questions about recreational needs, programming, park facility use, and demographic information. The survey provided "other" as an option for all applicable questions to allow for a broad scope of citizen needs.

A total of 336 survey responses were received. The full survey consisting of 25 questions over five sections was completed by 311 participants. The mini-survey, a shortened version of the full survey, consisting of 14 questions over four sections was completed by 25 participants.

## Frequency of Resource Utilization

Park and Recreation Center use was measured by daily, weekly, monthly, and never options. A weighted response based on use reveals that Bill Cooke is the most used park, followed by Graham Regional Park, and Graham Recreation Center. Oakley Street and Marshall Street Park were frequented the least.



**Importance of Program by Category**

Recreation needs based on programming, amenities, facilities, and special events were surveyed. "Other" options were also available in these sections to allow for user input.

The most requested programming is for non-athletic children and youth programming (64.2%). Over 50% of respondents would also like to see seasonal special events, health, wellness, and fitness programs, and arts & crafts (for all ages), offered by GRPD. Repeated "other" answers include nature/hiking events and swimming classes.

Special events that survey participants most want to attend are Live Music, Slice of Summer, and a new 4th of July event. Adult egg hunt had the least interest with only two survey participants marking it as "Most Important".

Providing varied programming is important to ensure all demographics are reached. When asked how GRPD is serving different ages, responses for Elementary, Families, Middle School, and pre-school age groups were overall positive. Survey participants did not think High School and Young Adults are adequately served at this time and Active Adults had a moderate response.

When asked if survey participants are in favor of new or expanded financial methods to help fund recreation and park expansions and renovations 62% of participants said yes while 36% were unsure. Only 2% of participants said they would disagree with new or expanded financial methods.

**Activity Frequency Rates**

Recreation activities were broken into 10 categories to determine in which activities survey contributors currently participate. Categories included Games & Activities, Arts, Adult Athletics, Youth Athletics, General Athletics, Outdoor Pursuits, Instructional Classes, Recreation Center Programs, Fitness Activities, and Special Events.

Top rankings by category include Yard Games, Concerts, Basketball (Adult), Soccer (Youth),



Downtown events were listed as a top activity.



Graham Rec. Center provides activities for all age-ranges, including pre-school and elementary.

Swimming, Walking, Aerobics/Pilates/Yoga, Summer Camp, Fitness Activities, and Downtown Events.

**Desired Amenities**

Amenities to be added to and/or renovated at GRPD Parks were based on a weighted answer from Most Important (5) to Least Important (1). Based on this scale, Improved Restrooms at Bill Cooke Park was the most important improvement followed by a multi-use room and kitchen improvements at the recreation center. Additional Parking at Bill Cooke Park had the least interest. Repeated "other" responses included enforcement (vehicle speed, after dark visitors, shelter rentals) and more benches around walking tracks/paths.

When surveyed about what new facilities were desired in Graham Parks, splash pads were ranked most important by 60% of respondents. The next ranked amenity was an amphitheater with 31% ranking most important. Repeated "other" responses included an inclusive playground, dog park, disc golf, longer trails/greenways, and a community pool.

The location of new trails was ranked on a weighted scale, providing options based on safety, connections to existing facilities, and connections to downtown or schools. The location of trails to address safety concerns was ranked as the most important factor in the determination of where trails should be located. Connection to schools was ranked as least important.

**Demographics**

Of the 220 responses regarding age, the most represented age range was 40-49, followed by 0-9. There was no household representation for ages 85+. Of the survey participants, 78% were female and 22% were male. The majority of survey participants (66%) were from the 27253 zip code. Household income had most respondents (25%) ranging from \$75,000 - \$100,000, the next most common household income was over \$100,000 (21%).



Shaded seating allows for comfortable seating at Graham Civic Center.

### Workshops and Focus Groups

During the GRPD Master Planning process, there were a variety of workshops and focus groups that engaged citizens to provide considerable input and recommendations.

A total of six Focus Group meetings (GRPD staff, Coaches and Volunteers, Alamance-Burlington School System, Churches and Community Service Organizations, Lake Users, Seniors and Parents of Children with Disabilities) were held. Participants were asked to share their thoughts of the GRPD, the strengths and weaknesses of the department or program offerings, and what insights and recommendations they would offer to the Recreation and Parks Department.

Focus Group results yielded a consensus that participants were somewhat satisfied with the Recreation and Parks Department, should engage with youth aged 14 and up more frequently, and should explore the development of coaching, staff, and volunteer education materials. Furthermore, the participants indicated that the Recreation and Parks Department does an excellent job at program development, implementation, and staff support.

When revealing particular areas of development for the department to explore, strategically serving underserved populations of the community was a key development point. Particularly, catering to the cultural and programmatic needs of minority populations, senior citizens, and youth aged 14



Graham Open House Flyer

and up was a strongly emphasized position. Another area the GRPD may consider enhancing is the frequency and formats used to collect community feedback and public input.

In regards to future considerations, the GRPD should heavily consider the implications of aging infrastructure, fatigued partnerships, outdoor recreation needs, programming, and keeping up with the level of growth that Alamance County and the Piedmont



Focus group reviewed survey results and individual parks.

Triad region is experiencing. Additionally, it was revealed that the GRPD might benefit from a formal evaluation system across volunteer, coaching, staff, and program needs. Having a formalized evaluation system was suggested to help track the development and enhancement of program offerings, staff satisfaction, and volunteer safety needs.

Focus Group participants offered multiple partnership opportunities and enhancements that GRPD should explore. If GRPD currently has a relationship with these organizations, the department should consider leveraging resources to enhance the current relationship. Enhanced partnerships can provide increased capacity, service delivery, access to new resources, and the ability to fill participation gaps across diverse communities. For more information refer to Figure 16: Recommended Partnerships on page 58.

### Community Engagement in Review

When using the estimated 2020 population for the City of Graham (15,751), survey participants (336) represent 2.13% of the total population. Thus, continued community engagement activities are needed for the GRPD to achieve their goals. The survey and focus groups yielded results to help guide recreation and park service delivery efforts across the lifetime of this plan. However, the community must continue to be engaged through a variety of strategies so that all populations are provided an opportunity to share their voices. The users of the GRPD's services can expect a commitment to participatory service delivery, and an understanding of the importance of community engagement. In review, the community engagement efforts undertaken to complete this plan are only the beginning of a strong and committed relationship moving forward.

Kayaks at Graham-Mebane Lake





A gazebo at the Haw River Paddle Trail Access allows for a shaded leisure area.

# IMPLEMENTATION



The tennis practice wall at Bill Cooke combines art and play.

## Mission, Vision, and Goals

### Graham Recreation and Parks Department Mission Statement

"To inspire a happy, healthy community by creating a stimulating and engaging environment through elite, diversified recreational experiences."

### Graham Recreation and Parks Department Vision Statement

"To energize our community by inspiring healthy play for all."

#### Goal #1

The Recreation and Parks Department plans to add an emphasis to nature by enhancing natural amenities and recall appropriate past developments to a more natural setting.

#### Goal #2

The Recreation and Parks Department envisions a more well-connected park system to create a more inclusive recreation and park system.

#### Goal #3

The Recreation and Parks Department wants to inspire a healthy and engaged community through collaborative and intentional recreation and park services.



## Recommendations

Following a review of the public input, the Recreation Commission prioritized recreation needs into three time horizons: Near-term (1-5 years), Mid-term (6-10 years) and Long-term (11-20 years).

### Short -Term

These improvements are generally recommended to begin or be completed within the next one to five years.

### Existing Facilities

- Continue to implement adopted Pedestrian Transportation Plan, particularly to improve sidewalk accessibility to park sites and ADA compliance within park sites;
- Develop standardized signage and brochures in English and Spanish for programs, recreation facilities, shelters, and park and lake regulations.

### Recreation Division

- Install electric, retractable bleachers at the Graham Recreation Center;
- Replace existing basketball goals with power, folding goals featuring electric height adjusters;
- Install changing tables in the locker rooms at the Graham Recreation Center; and
- Explore adding capacity to the Lacrosse program.

### Parks Division

- Continue to expand open space for use for “pick-up” games;
- Provide covered dugouts at all baseball and softball fields;
- Increase access to water fountains near all fields;

Existing bleachers at Graham Recreation Center



- Improve spectator seating accommodations at all fields and tennis courts;
- Update parking at Bill Cooke Park by reducing impervious surfaces and adding capacity;
- Install shade structures at all playground sites;
- Provide modern bicycle parking ‘art’ at park sites;
- Install outfield fence at Johnson Avenue Field; and
- Add signage and improve nature trails at South Graham Municipal Park.

### Lake Division

- Replace/expand existing boat docks; and
- Perform bathymetric survey of Graham-Mebane Lake to produce a high quality lake depth chart and establish an accurate lake volume.

### New Facilities

#### Recreation Division

- Continue exploring the placement of

recreation sites in conjunction with other community facilities such as fire stations and police sub-stations;

- Establish study group and appropriate county and regional partnerships to investigate active recreation network opportunities; and
- Develop an E-sports game room.

### Parks Division

- Develop multi-purpose fields at Graham Regional Park.



Stormwater SMART provides interactive lessons about water quality.

### Lake Division

- Install a National Weather Service approved weather station and implement a Severe Weather Warning System.

### Programs

- Continue implementing a POS system throughout all facilities; and
- Enhance methods for community feedback and create a formal evaluation system.

### Recreation Division

- Develop community gardening/ orchard program in cooperation with the County Extension Service, Healthy Alamance, and Piedmont Triad Regional Food Council;
- Establish adult athletic programming to include traditional adult leagues (softball, basketball, soccer, sand volleyball, etc.) and alternative recreation offerings (kick ball, dodge ball, etc.) targeted to 18-45 age group;
- Strengthen partnership with Alamance Arts to provide and promote art-based classes and opportunities;
- Develop environmental education program in conjunction with Stormwater SMART and Alamance-Burlington School System;
- Develop adventure programming; and
- Create “pop-up” programming.

### Lake Division

- Continue to grow the vessel rental program to include permanent vessel storage and dock slips for jon-boats;
- Continue maintenance schedule to replace and install new buoys;



Fishing at Graham-Mebane Lake

- Develop policy and implement a schedule to install artificial fish structure;
- Implement comprehensive boating safety training programs for staff and patrons; and
- Explore programming opportunities featuring the pontoon boat.

Signage at Bill Cooke Park



**Administration**

- Prepare a Strategic Plan for the department;
- Conduct Site Specific Master Plans of all parks and facilities;
- Develop and implement Standard Operation Procedures in all Divisions;
- Review existing enabling ordinances to ensure maximum access and equity of programs and facilities;
- Create and install consistent wayfinding signage to all facilities and within park facilities;
- Clarify roles and responsibilities for sites leased from Alamance-Burlington School System;
- Prepare an Inclusion Policy for adoption by the City Council; and
- Continue to implement the City's adopted Growth Management Plan, particularly environmental and land use policies which benefit recreation.

*Recreation Division*

- Refine the marketing plan to actively promote existing and new recreation opportunities through various media.

*Parks Division*

- Provide specialized turf management training for maintenance staff responsible for athletic field maintenance to maximize playability;
- Review development dedication policies for parks, open space and greenways;
- Review easement acquisition policies for sewer outfalls to provide public greenway access; and
- Encourage functional art in all facilities.

**Mid-Term**

These improvements are generally recommended to begin, continue or be completed within the next six to ten years.

**Existing Facilities**

- Establish a Natural Resources Conservation Plan that identifies aspects of Green Design to incorporate more natural elements in current and future facilities;
- Complete a Greenway Master Plan to improve and promote the trail network throughout Graham's park system and link trails to surrounding recreation opportunities and places of interest; and
- Develop plan to replace shelters at Graham-Mebane Lake, Bill Cooke and South Graham Municipal Parks.

*Recreation Division*

- Update flooring in the Graham Recreation Center, Maple St. Center and Graham Civic Center.



Baseball fields at Bill Cooke Park

*Parks Division*

- Develop additional recreation facilities at Greenway Park;
- Provide inclusive alternatives at all playground sites;
- Install irrigation on fields at Bill Cooke Park; and
- Replace field lighting and scoreboard at Goley St. Field.

*Lake Division*

- Repair boat launch ramps; and
- Expand and relocate the boathouse to house all motorized boats and add locked storage.

**New Facilities**

*Recreation Division*

- Establish a Senior Center.

*Parks Division*

- Acquire and begin phased development of pocket, community and neighborhood park sites;
- Complete Haw River Greenway with added connections to South Graham Municipal Park and Bill Cooke Park;
- Construct storage buildings at Bill Cooke Park and Graham Recreation Center;

The Haw River provides opportunities for paddling in kayaks and canoes.



- Partner with Alamance Parks to enhance access to the Haw River;
- Develop multi-sport courts in appropriate existing neighborhood parks; and
- Formally establish trail systems within existing parks.

*Lake Division*

- Install a seawall in the bank fishing area to include safety railing, benches and a revised parking area; and
- Replace or remove the fuel tank at Graham-Mebane Lake.

**Programs**

*Recreation Division*

- Broaden adult and older adult league and leisure opportunities;
- Increase adolescent recreation and leisure opportunities;
- Seek state and regional tournament hosting opportunities;
- Provide additional community-wide

programs and special events; and

- Create a volunteer trails program.

**Administration**

- Complete the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) process;
- Establish an asset replacement plan to include vehicles, equipment, playgrounds, shelters, etc; and
- Identify critical parcels surrounding parks and lake boundaries to expand protection of vulnerable resources.

*Recreation Division*

- Establish new professional and support staff positions to handle additional special event, athletic, adventure and educational programming and facility maintenance responsibilities;
- Support improvements to on-road bicycling accommodations to improve park access and seek bicycle transportation master planning funds from NCDOT;
- Provide special training in grant writing for professional staff;
- Develop a ParkRx program in collaboration with Cone Health, Healthy Alamance, and other local, regional, and statewide stakeholders; and
- Negotiate shared rate structure with other recreation providers for specialized facilities and programs.

*Parks Division*

- Develop and implement a stormwater management plan for the park system.

**Long Term**

These improvements are generally recommended to begin, continue or be completed within the next 11 - 20 years.

**Existing Facilities**

*Lake Division*

- Establish trail system at Graham-Mebane Lake; and
- Replace or renovate the marina building to include new offices, storage and work bays.

**New Facilities**

*Recreation Division*

- Complete development of multi-use recreation center;
- Establish an Outdoor Recreation Center; and
- Explore construction of free-standing, outdoor Pickleball courts.

*Parks Division*

- Continue development of pocket parks, community and neighborhood parks concurrent with development.

**Programs**

*Recreation Division*

- Continue to broaden non-traditional athletic and leisure programming opportunities.

**Administration**

- Update Recreation and Parks master plan.

**Funding and Financing**

Adequate funding is critical to the success of a public Recreation and Parks Program. Traditional finance structures for Recreation and Park Departments rely on in-house revenue sources such as taxation, user fees, and memberships. However, new alternatives to funding and financing Recreation service delivery are useful for the City of Graham and the Department to seize. The alternatives the GRPD will continue to consider are corporate sponsorship, donations, and grants.



Examples of commercial sponsorship at Graham Civic Center

### Commercial Sponsorship

The contemporary definitions of corporate sponsorship define it as a monetary transaction in return for access to exploitable commercial representation on a property (Pitas et al. 2015, 3). Furthermore, the public perception of commercial sponsorship varies as it relates to benefits and expectations. Though, corporate sponsorship can be a useful tool in securing monetary, service, consumer, business, and community benefits if done right. However, the GRPD commits to consider the appropriate settings for corporate sponsorship. Where corporate sponsorship is most successful and accepted is athletics and planned programs, not parks and open space. If executed inappropriately, corporate sponsorship may dampen community experiences, cause a detrimental impact to park and facility settings, caution ownership and privatization, and sponsor conflict or mission drift (Pitas et al. 2015, 8).

### Donations

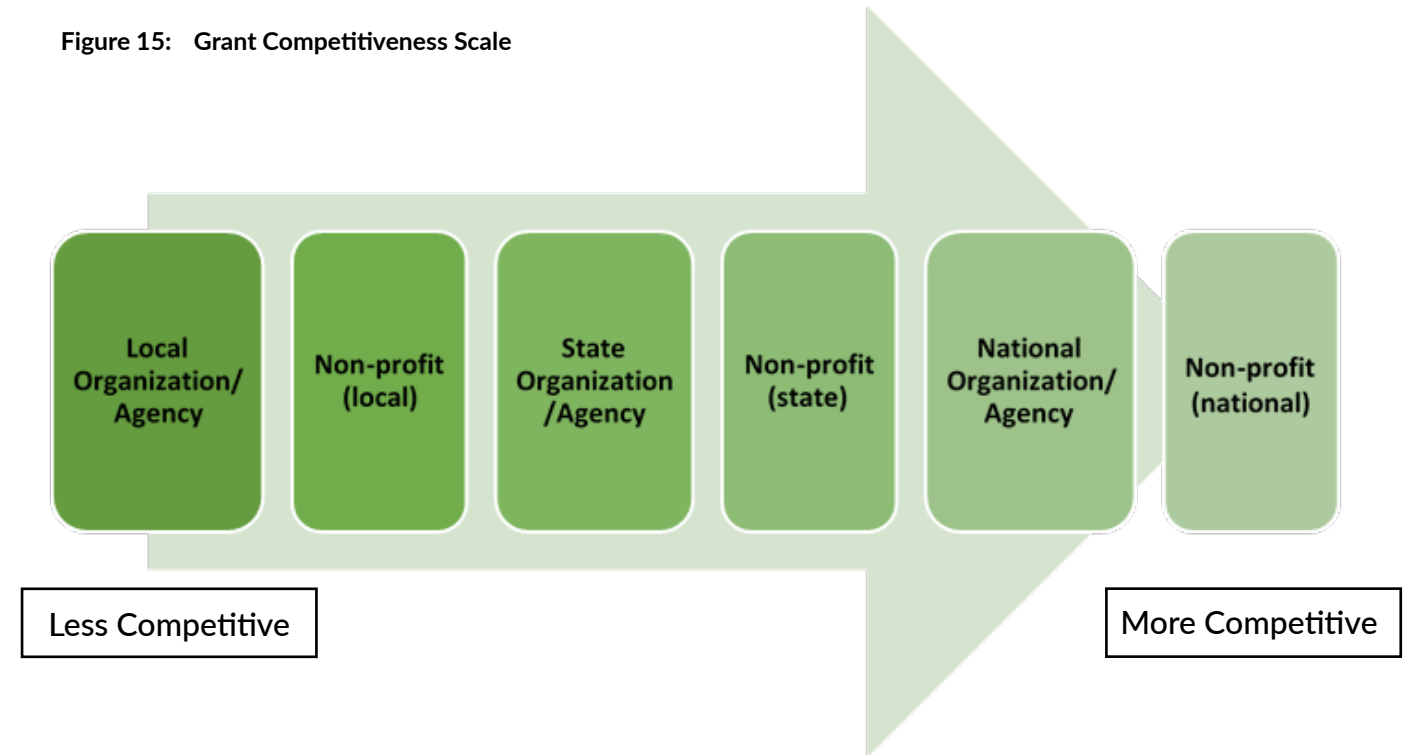
Donations are a very useful and low-risk tool that the GRPD uses for the benefit of supporting operational costs. In 2015, the Friends of Graham Recreation and Parks was created to receive and distribute gifts of donors or other contributors to deserving projects associated with Graham Recreation and Parks services. The organization also offers a catalog of unique inventory to drive donations such as commemorative flagstone pavers that meander through the landscape of their latest facility, Graham Regional Park. Expanding the catalog of what the Friends group may provide will be a great benefit in driving future donations. A useful tool for other Recreation and Park Departments has been to utilize the Friends group, when large enough, for operation and management of select facilities, elements, and amenities. If cultivated enough, Friends groups have been recognized to become large enough to donate volunteer hours to the Recreation and Parks Department. In fact, some Friends groups are used successfully as discrete components of Recreation and Park Departments to apply for funding opportunities for which a department would otherwise be ineligible.

### Grants

Grants can be an incredibly useful tool when bridging the financial gap between project plans and the final product. Although, because grants offer gap financing at limited matching funds, they are highly competitive in nature. It is important to recognize the scale of competitiveness as it relates to grants since they are offered in so many shapes and sizes. In the figure below, the grant opportunities to the right of the scale are more sought after, the proposal or application must be highly competitive to ensure funding is received. It is important that the Recreation and Parks Department continues to identify grant opportunities that are best suited for them. GRPD has a strong relationship when it comes to securing grants of multiple sizes from a variety of entities. Most notably, the department's ability to secure State Organization/Agency, Non-profit (local) and Local Organization/Agency related grants are highly efficient.

Unfortunately, grant opportunities for Recreation and Parks related projects are rapidly disappearing. This lack of opportunities is why it is very important to maintain a list of current and future funding opportunities that the Department may utilize. The GRPD should continue to be creative when seeking grant opportunities as well.

Figure 15: Grant Competitiveness Scale



### Access & Equity

The GRPD identifies the genuine need for the topics of access and equity to be addressed in public recreation and park planning. The GRPD intends to uphold the philosophy that all people – no matter the color of their skin, age, gender, income level, sexual orientation, religion, or ability – have access to facilities, programs, and parks that make their lives great. In order to accomplish this philosophy, the GRPD has identified three priority areas: inclusive recreation, health and wellness, and active recreation.

### Inclusive Recreation

The Recreation and Parks Department has made great moves towards building a more inclusive recreation and park system. The attention inclusive recreation has received is no less than progressive for the municipality's size and stature, and the initiative is guided by a clear vision from the administration to provide recreation opportunities to people regardless of their skin, age, gender, income level, sexual orientation, religion, and ability. To build upon this vision, the Recreation and Park Department expects an inclusive playground to be constructed at Graham Regional Park. Even so, inclusivity in public recreation and parks remains a priority area for the Department. Therefore, there are some national-level trends that the Department should look to for assistance.

Exercise equipment at the Recreation Center



Paved and marked paths at Graham Regional Park





Double slides at Harman Park

In 2018 the NRPA released the Park and Recreation Inclusion Report that introduced a new initiative, Parks for Inclusion, to improve access to health and wellness activities in parks for over one million people over the next three years. As one of the access and equity priority areas, the Recreation and Parks Department should join the NRPA's effort and goals of Parks for Inclusion. The report revealed some key findings that Graham can take note of and improve upon. One such finding is that two in five park and recreation agencies have a formal policy that ensures their offerings and facilities are inclusive to all members of the community. To help communities build these inclusion policies, the NRPA offers guidelines for developing an inclusion policy which includes an inclusion policy template and statement.

**Health and Wellness**

There is no question that the relationship between parks, recreation, and wellness is strong. The strong relationship these fields share is the reason health and wellness remains a priority area for the Graham Recreation and Parks Department. Some of the health-related benefits affecting park users are weight control, muscle and bone strengthening, improved mental health and mood, and improved life expectancy. Furthermore, exercise reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease and access to park and recreation facilities can help satisfy physical activity needs. Investing in health and wellness opportunities will

also strategically mobilize Graham to collaborate with County-wide goals and objectives recognized in the 2018 Community Health Assessment. Specifically, the 2018 Community Health Assessment recognized three health priorities for the Alamance County region; access to care, education, and economic issues. GRPD's priority of health and wellness satisfies some conditions identified in the Community Health Assessment's priority of access to care.

To compliment County-wide health and wellness efforts, the

Enjoying ice skating during the holidays



(left) Fishing Pier at Graham - Mebane Lake



(right) Playground at Marshall St Park

GRPD should explore Recreation and Parks as a prescription, a new trend reimagining the perception of recreation and park facilities.

The Recreation and Parks Department can look towards multiple case studies and a variety of scales for the successful implementation of Park Prescription programs. However, it would be most appropriate to locate a model similar in size and capabilities to Graham. The suggested Case Study this report looks at is offered by Marin City, California. Marin City's ParkRx program involves the collaboration of local, state, and federal stakeholders. The program uses accessible parks and nutritional guidance as alternatives to prescription medicine. To accomplish this, a health educator was hired to work with participants to create individual care plans. The health educator prescribes various wellness programs and activities based in nearby parks and trails. The health educator also participates in program implementation.

**Partnership**

A partnership is one of the most useful tools at any Recreation and Parks professional's disposal. Partnerships can add capacity to existing programs, increase access to resources, and bridge the participation gap across diverse communities. However, partnerships do not translate into accomplishment right away. Since there are many factors that go into the success of a partnership and end

(below) 1930 Graham Fire Engine on display at the Historical Museum



result, the Recreation and Parks Department intends to follow the below procedure.

All partnerships should be endorsed by the Department and commit to:

- Meeting with or reporting to department staff on a regular basis to plan and share activity-based costs and equity invested.
- Establishing measurable outcomes and benchmark metrics.
- Reviewing measurable outcomes quarterly.
- Developing a partnership agreement.

However, simply detailing the procedure for partnerships is not enough. This plan recognizes that partnership comes in many shapes and sizes and that it may take a combination of partnerships to achieve large dreams. For instance, a well-designed public-private partnership greatly improves a department’s ability to meet its goals and objectives while maintaining a reasonable level of accountability and stability. As a type of partnership, public-private partnerships are excellent motivators of change since each sector shares in the planning, funding, and delivery of public services. However, the GRPD acknowledges that some so-called Partnerships are actually contracting arrangements in which the Department or City pays a non-governmental organization to provide a good or service. Although similar to a partnership, in this case, the Department or City cedes equity in the program or operation to a non-governmental organization. Thus, the Recreation and Parks Department will strive to establish genuine partnerships across a variety of sectors to achieve municipal and departmental goals and objectives.

During the planning process of this Master Plan, focus groups indicated and recommended a willingness to pursue partnerships with a variety of national, state, and local agencies or organizations. Refer to the Recommended Partnership figure for more information.

Figure 16: Recommended Partnerships

Recommended Partnerships
Alamance-Burlington School System
Alamance Arts
Alamance County
Be Healthy Now!
Churches*
City of Burlington
City of Mebane
Community and Human Service Organizations
Cone Health
Elon Univeristy
Glen Raven, Inc
Impact Alamance
Lab Corps
Maintenance Service Providers*
National Federation of State High School Associations
NC Wildlife Resources Commission
Piedmont Triad Regional Council
Samet Corporation
Sporting Goods Stores*
Transportation Service Providers*
Walmart

\*General partnership not specific to any organization or entity

# SITE SPECIFIC PLANS

## Guiding Principles

### Emphasis on Nature and Natural Play

Recreation and Park facilities should be designed around nature and natural play. Allowing certain areas in parks to remain natural not only assists in keeping maintenance costs low, but the aesthetics of natural play areas also blend in better with existing neighborhoods and the surrounding areas in which they are located.

Another important reason to emphasize nature and natural play is the impact they have on children. With the increasing number of children kept indoors, limited to short recesses at school, and focused for hours on digital devices, the need for outdoor physical activity is needed now, more than ever. According to North Carolina State University’s Natural Learning Initiative, outdoor play for children:

- Supports gross motor skills.
- Encourages healthy eating.
- Improves eyesight.
- Promotes cognitive development.
- Improves academic performance.
- Lessens ADHD symptoms.
- Promotes self-confidence.
- Reduces stress.
- May boost the immune system.

Children play on boulders at Graham Regional Park



The plan suggests that each park in Graham provide a unique experience for participants, and therefore recommends that further study will be needed to how best incorporate nature and natural play into existing facilities.

### Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is an urban planning concept that has existed for nearly four decades and is steadily gaining popularity across the world. CPTED is an approach to deterring criminal behavior through the effective design and use of the built environment. CPTED is proven to reduce crime, reduce the fear of crime, and improve the overall quality of life in a community. CPTED utilizes the following principles:

1. **Natural Surveillance:** Natural surveillance occurs by designing the alignment and features of public spaces in such a way as to maximize visibility and foster positive social interaction among legitimate users. The desire is to improve visibility and diminish the opportunity for criminal activity.
2. **Natural Access Control:** Natural access control limits the opportunity for crime by taking steps to clearly differentiate between public space and private space. By determining the location of entrances and exits, fencing, lighting, and landscape to limit access or control flow, natural access control occurs.
3. **Natural Territorial Reinforcement:** Territorial reinforcement promotes social control through the increased definition of space. First, create a sense of ownership. Owners will have a vested interest and are more likely to challenge intruders or report them to the police. Second, create an environment where “strangers” or “intruders” stand out and are more easily identified. By using fences, pavement, signs, lighting, security cameras and the entire landscape to define ownership and public, semi-public and private space.
4. **Maintenance:** Maintenance is an expression of “ownership” of property. Deterioration indicates less control by the intended users of a site and indicates a greater tolerance of disorder. This principle is influenced by the Broken Windows Theory, which maintains that the presence of a broken window (or other kinds of vandalism such as graffiti) will entice vandals to break more windows in the vicinity. The sooner broken windows are fixed, the less likely it is that such vandalism will occur in the future. Having a positive image in the community shows a sense of pride and self-worth that can help deter future criminal activity.

Natural colors on the equipment at Graham Regional Park



This plan encourages the use of CPTED principles when new amenities, public facilities, or upgrades are constructed within park boundaries.

## Graham Regional Park

Graham Regional Park, which opened on April 12, 2017, currently features: a youth challenge course, zip line, a paved accessible mixed-use trail (.3 mile), swing-set, slides, climbing boulders, a landscaped water feature, workout equipment, bike rack, and plenty of open green space.

### Natural Areas

- Implement urban forestry management best practices to the existing tree canopy.
- Transform current undeveloped grassy areas, in all types of terrain and not used for recreational purposes, into prairie grasslands or wildflower fields.
- Before purchasing, consider new playground and similar equipment that make use of natural surfaces and colorings.

### Leisure Facilities

- Continue the installation of picnic shelters, high-quality grills, and seating accommodations.

### Recreation Facilities

- Continue exploring recreation opportunities for senior adults and persons with disabilities.

### Access and Parking

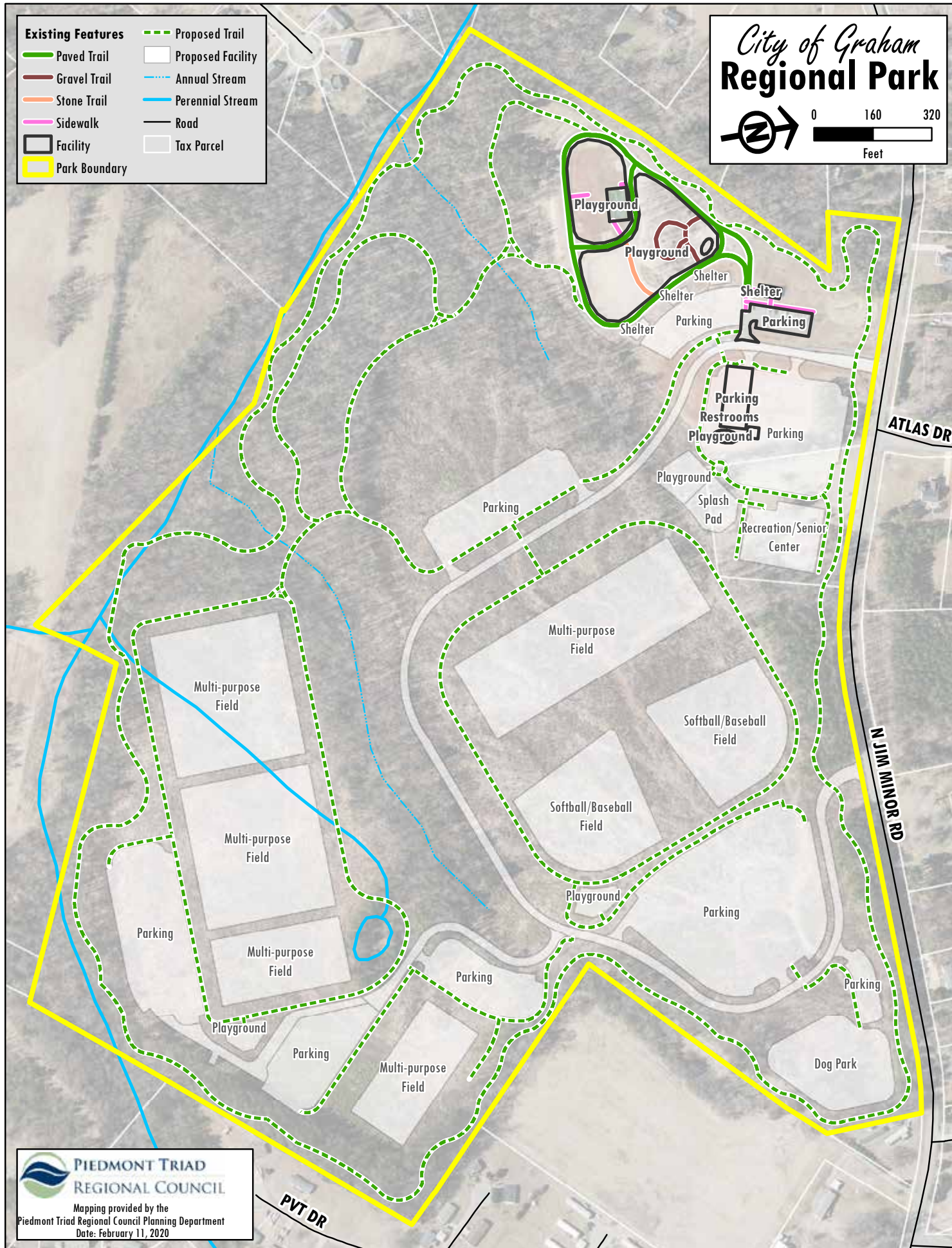
- Review current parking and existing plans to determine if expansion is needed to accommodate larger events.
- New parking lots should be built using techniques to reduce impermeable surfaces.
- Construct a network of pedestrian connections to and around the park boundary.
- Connect park to adjacent neighborhoods through new sidewalks.
- Ensure new access and parking facilities meet guidelines established by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

### Comfort and Amenities

- Install lighting to enhance safety and surveillance as determined by industry best practices.
- Ensure a safe separation of recreational and leisure activities to accommodate all park users.



Picnic shelter at Graham Regional Park.



**PIEDMONT TRIAD REGIONAL COUNCIL**  
 Mapping provided by the  
 Piedmont Triad Regional Council Planning Department  
 Date: February 11, 2020

### Bill Cooke Park

Bill Cooke Park is an expansive community park site offering a wide range of outdoor recreation and leisure facilities, including athletic fields and courts, picnic shelters, a playground, walking trail and dog park.

As part of the vision for the City of Graham, Bill Cooke Park would be more beneficial to users with several upgrades and improvements. The following recommendations are made to improve user experience and safety within the park boundaries.

#### Natural Areas

- Implement urban forestry management best practices to existing tree canopy.
- Transform maintained grassy areas, not used for recreational purposes, into prairie grasslands or wildflower fields.

#### Stormwater Recommendations

- Remove rocks and debris clogging culvert near Townbranch Rd.
- Plant riparian buffers along stream and between tennis courts and stream.
- Install two raingardens or similar vegetated buffer between the two parking lots and stream to prevent erosion along drainage lines.

#### Stream Restoration Recommendations

- Remove retaining wall along stream banks, regrade, and replace with natural bank stabilization materials (native plants, wood, rip rap, etc.).



Figure 17: Clogged Culvert at Townbranch Rd



Figure 18: Create buffer of grasses or bushes



Figure 19: Install rain gardens where parking lots drain



Figure 20: Remove retaining wall and restore bank



Map 6: Stream Improvement Opportunities



- Major erosion is occurring where the stream passes under the trail. Potential solutions: Improve tree cover and vegetation uphill (towards playground), regrade, use natural bank stabilization materials (native plants, wood, rip rap, etc.).
- Improve footbridge between shelters and playground and establish new footbridge along wooded trail on northeast side of park.



Figure 21: Improve major erosion along stream bank

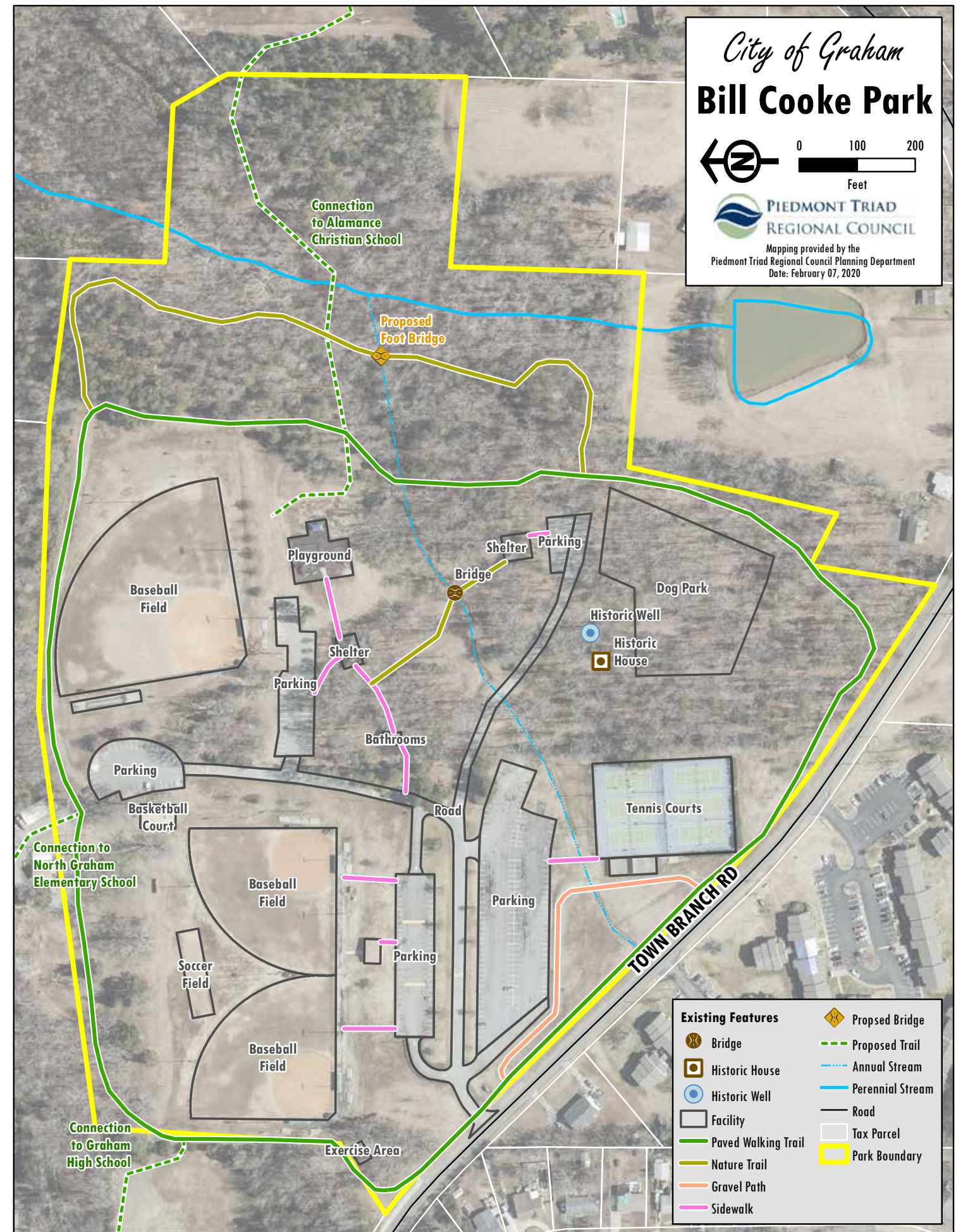


Figure 22: Improve footbridge between shelters



Figure 23: Establish new foot bridge on nature trail

Map 7: Bill Cooke Park



**Recreation Facilities**

- Continue to maintain tennis courts and three multi-purpose ball fields.
- Increase recreation opportunities for senior adults and persons with disabilities.

**Access and Parking**

- Review current parking to determine if expansion is needed to accommodate larger events.
- New or improved parking lots should be built using techniques to reduce impermeable surfaces.
- Construct better pedestrian connections to and around ball fields from the parking lots.
- Connect park to adjacent neighborhoods and schools through new or improved sidewalks.
- Ensure new access and parking facilities meet guidelines established by the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Repair existing trail network to connect nearby schools using best practices in sustainable trail design.
- Upgrade lighting to enhance safety and surveillance.

**Comfort and Amenities**

- Restrooms and a concession stand are provided but need improvements.
- Bleachers overlooking the ball fields need site angle improvements to better see the ball fields.
- Repair existing picnic shelters and install new ones as needed.



Figure 24: Formalize existing paths or “goat trails” from adjacent fields



Figure 25: Formalize existing paths or “goat trails” from adjacent schools

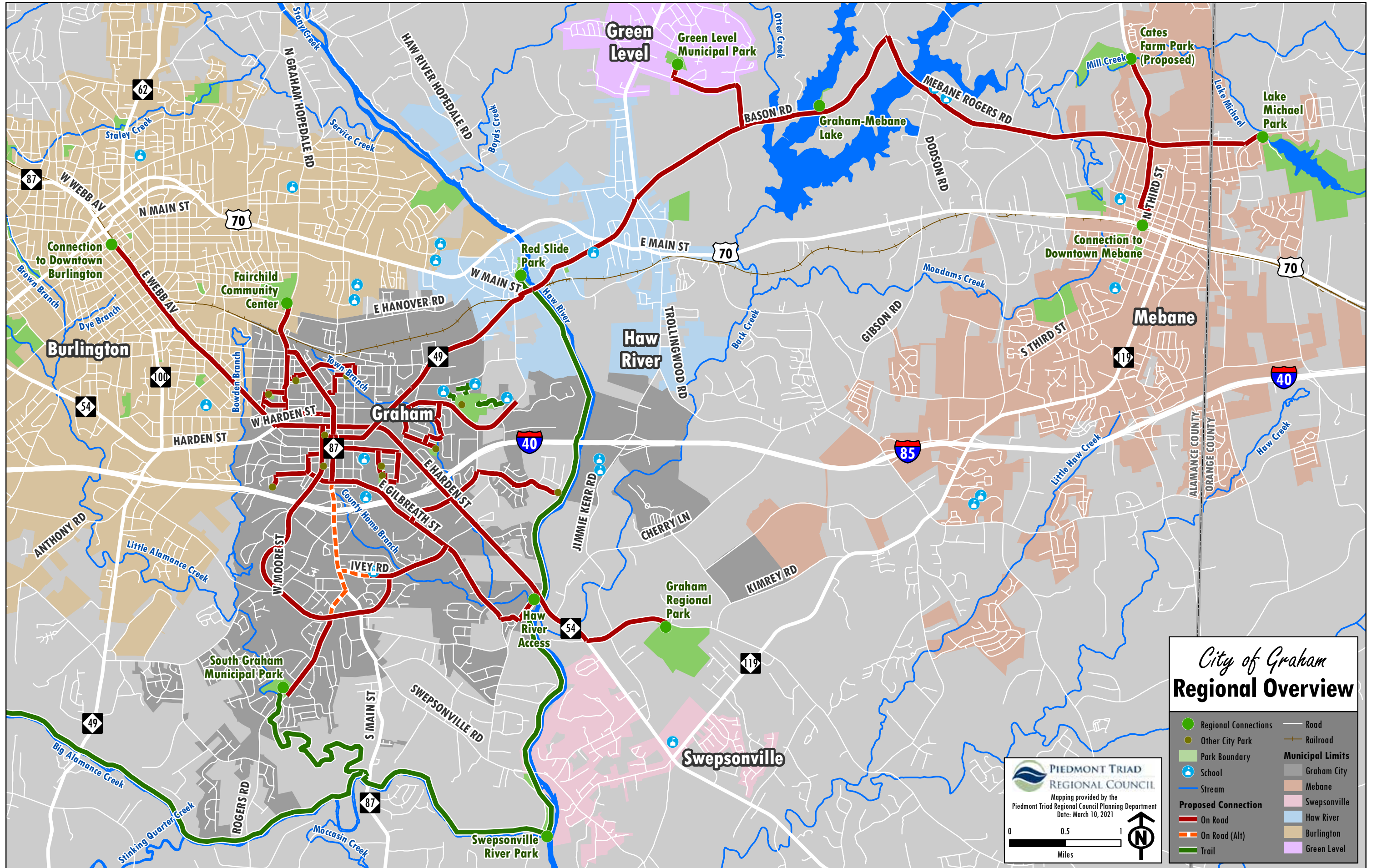


The Haw River Trail is being developed to follow over 70-miles from Haw River State Park to Jordan Lake State Recreation Area.

**Potential Active Transportation Network**

This plan acknowledges that physical activity should not be confined to just designated parks. An active transportation network, that focuses on bicyclists and pedestrians, expands the opportunities available for moving people around the city. As a recommendation of this plan, the City of Graham should undertake a detailed study to determine the best routes that meet both the recreational and transportation needs for both residents and visitors. The following map should be a starting point in this discussion, as any proposed active transportation network should include safe connections to existing and new recreation and parks facilities. A more detailed planning study can determine route directions, facility design recommendations, placement of comfort amenities and lighting, wayfinding, and lastly an implementation plan for project phasing.

Map 8: Active Transportation



### City of Graham Regional Overview

- Regional Connections
- Other City Park
- Park Boundary
- School
- Stream
- Road
- Railroad
- Municipal Limits**
- Graham City
- Mebane
- Swepsonville
- Haw River
- Burlington
- Green Level
- Proposed Connection
- On Road (Alt)
- Trail

**PIEDMONT TRIAD REGIONAL COUNCIL**  
 Mapping provided by the  
 Piedmont Triad Regional Council Planning Department  
 Date: March 10, 2021

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 Miles

# APPENDIX



## APPENDIX CONTENTS

72	APPENDIX 1:	GRAHAM INVENTORY MATRIX
73	APPENDIX 2:	GRAHAM SURVEY
74	APPENDIX 3:	EXPRESS SURVEY (ENGLISH AND SPANISH)
75	APPENDIX 4:	FOCUS GROUP RESULTS
79	APPENDIX 5:	2018-2019 LAKE IMPROVEMENT COMMENTS
81	APPENDIX 6:	EXISTING FACILITIES AUDIT
84	APPENDIX 7:	INCLUSION POLICY TEMPLATE
89	APPENDIX 8:	FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES



Appendix 3: Express Survey (English and Spanish)

Appendix 4: Focus Group Results

Focus Group Results

Focus Groups were administered and revealed a number of details about the City of Graham and the Recreation and Parks Department

List of Focus Groups

- Staff
- Coaches & Volunteers
- ABSS
- Church and CSOs
- Senior
- Lake

Coaches and Volunteer Focus Group

What do you think of first when you hear Graham Recreation? What about Graham Parks?

- Athletics
- Community Program
- Outdoor Activities

Which of the following recreation categories interests you the most?

- Athletics
- Special Events
- Outdoor Pursuits

How satisfied are you with the quality of Recreation in Graham?

- Blue, somewhat satisfied

What should be added and where? What is needed to achieve this?

- Activities for Youth Aged 14+
- Committee for Specific Athletics /or/ Coaches
- Coach, Staff, and Volunteer Education Materials

What are the strengths of Recreation in Graham?

- Staff provide great support
- The push to add more programs and events is great!
- The summer concert series

What are the weaknesses of Graham Recreation and Parks?

- Coach Training
  - Specifically when it relates to safety issues such as heat exhaustion.
- The 'stacking' of scheduled activities.
- Need to have recruitment tool for volunteers and coaches.

What are the developing key issues?

- Keeping up with growth.
- Current state of infrastructure.
- Lack of education among coaches and volunteers.

What portions of the community are underserved?

- 14+ age group
- Children with disabilities

Focus Group Results

**The City of Graham Recreation and Parks Department** is conducting this survey to find out how people feel about the City's recreation and park system, and hear ideas for improvement. When answering the questions, please consider your answers to be on behalf of your entire household. Thank you for your input!

**SECTION I. GRAHAM AREA PARKS USE**  
Which park facility do you use and how often? Please circle: Daily (D), weekly (W), monthly (M), or never (N).

1. Graham Regional Park	D	W	M	N
2. Graham-Mebane Lake	D	W	M	N
3. Bill Cooke Park	D	W	M	N
4. Marshall Street Park	D	W	M	N
5. Greenway Park	D	W	M	N
6. Oakley St. Park	D	W	M	N
7. South Graham Municipal Park	D	W	M	N
8. Maple St. Center	D	W	M	N
9. Graham Civic Center	D	W	M	N
10. Graham Recreation Center	D	W	M	N
11. Historical Museum	D	W	M	N

**SECTION II. WHAT DO WE NEED?**  
What amenities, facilities, or program/activities would you like to see added/renovated to Graham Parks?

Option 1: \_\_\_\_\_  
Option 2: \_\_\_\_\_  
Option 3: \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION III. HOW DO YOU RECREATE?**  
Please check recreation activities in which members of your household currently or would like to participate. Check all that apply.

**Games & Activities**  
 Ultimate Frisbee       Disc Golf  
 Miniature Golf       Horseshoes  
 [OPTIONAL] Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Arts**  
 Art/Craft Show       Concerts  
 Drama/Theater       Art/Craft Classes  
 [OPTIONAL] Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Athletics**  
 Base/Softball       Soccer  
 Basketball       Volleyball  
 Tennis/Pickleball       Swimming  
 [OPTIONAL] Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Outdoor Pursuits**  
 Hiking       Fishing  
 Biking       Water Activities  
 Camping       Picnicking  
 [OPTIONAL] Other \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION IV. ABOUT YOU**  
Please indicate the number of people from each age group in your household. Please enter a number for all ages that apply.

\_\_\_ 0-9    \_\_\_ 10-19    \_\_\_ 20-29    \_\_\_ 30-39  
 \_\_\_ 40-49    \_\_\_ 50-59    \_\_\_ 60-69    \_\_\_ 70-79  
 \_\_\_ 80-84    \_\_\_ 85+

Male \_\_\_ Female \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_

**Zip Code:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What is your household income?**  
 \_\_\_ less than \$15,000    \_\_\_ \$50,000 - \$75,000  
 \_\_\_ \$15,000 - \$25,000    \_\_\_ \$75,000 - \$100,000  
 \_\_\_ \$25,000 - \$35,000    \_\_\_ >\$100,000  
 \_\_\_ \$35,000 - \$50,000

**What is the best way to notify you of programs and activities? Check one.**  
 Text       Email  
 Social media (facebook, etc.)     Newspaper  
 Radio     [OPTIONAL] Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for participating in this survey. Your valuable input will help shape the recreational programs and parks in Graham for years to come. If you would like an update or further information, please provide your contact information.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Town/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**El Departamento de Parques y Recreación de la Ciudad de Graham** está realizando esta encuesta para aprender cómo se siente la gente del sistema de parques y recreación de la Ciudad, y escuchar ideas para mejorarlo. Cuando responda a las preguntas, considere que sus respuestas están a favor de toda su familia. ¡Gracias por su aporte!

**SECCION I. USO DE LOS PARQUES DE LA ZONA GRAHAM**  
¿Qué parque utilizas y con qué frecuencia? Marque con un círculo: Diario (D), Semanal (S), Mensual (M) o Nunca (N).

1. Graham Regional Park	D	S	M	N
2. Graham-Mebane Lake	D	S	M	N
3. Bill Cooke Park	D	S	M	N
4. Marshall Street Park	D	S	M	N
5. Greenway Park	D	S	M	N
6. Oakley St. Park	D	S	M	N
7. South Graham Municipal Park	D	S	M	N
8. Maple St. Center	D	S	M	N
9. Graham Civic Center	D	S	M	N
10. Graham Recreation Center	D	S	M	N
11. Historical Museum	D	S	M	N

**SECCION II. ¿QUÉ NECESITAMOS? No es necesario que responda a las tres (3) categorías. Puede responder a solo una (1) de las categorías.**  
¿Qué servicios, instalaciones o programa / actividades le gustaría que se agregaran o renovar en Graham Parks?

Programa/Actividad 1: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Programa/Actividad 2: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Programa/Actividad 3: \_\_\_\_\_

**SECCION III. ¿CÓMO SE RECREA?**  
Par favor verifique las actividades recreativas en las que los miembros de su hogar participan actualmente o les gustaría participar. Marque todo lo que corresponda.

**Juegos y actividades**  
 Ultimate Frisbee       Disc Golf  
 Mini Golf       Herraduras  
 [OPTIONAL] Otro \_\_\_\_\_

**Artes**  
 Muestra de Arte / Artesanía     Conciertos  
 Drama / Teatro       Arte / Clases de artesanía  
 [OPTIONAL] Otro \_\_\_\_\_

**Atletismo**  
 Base / Softbol       Fútbol  
 Baloncesto       Voleibol  
 Tenis / Pickleball       Natación  
 [OPTIONAL] Otro \_\_\_\_\_

**Actividades al aire libre**  
 Senderismo       Pesca  
 Ciclismo       Actividades acuáticas  
 Camping       Picnic  
 [OPTIONAL] Otro \_\_\_\_\_

**SECCION IV. TU INFORMACION**  
Indique el número de personas de cada grupo de edad en su hogar. Por favor ingrese un número para todas las edades que aplican.

\_\_\_ 0-9    \_\_\_ 10-19    \_\_\_ 20-29    \_\_\_ 30-39  
 \_\_\_ 40-49    \_\_\_ 50-59    \_\_\_ 60-69    \_\_\_ 70-79  
 \_\_\_ 80-84    \_\_\_ 85+

Hombre \_\_\_ Mujer \_\_\_ Otro \_\_\_

**Codigo Postal:** \_\_\_\_\_

**¿Cuál es el ingreso de su hogar?**  
 \_\_\_ Menos de \$15,000    \_\_\_ \$50,000 - \$75,000  
 \_\_\_ \$15,000 - \$25,000    \_\_\_ \$75,000 - \$100,000  
 \_\_\_ \$25,000 - \$35,000    \_\_\_ >\$100,000  
 \_\_\_ \$35,000 - \$50,000

**¿Cuál es la mejor manera de notificarle sobre programas y actividades? Marque uno.**  
 Texto       Email  
 Medios sociales (facebook, etc.)     Periodico  
 Radio     [OPTIONAL] Otro \_\_\_\_\_

**Gracias por participar en esta encuesta. Si desea una actualización o información adicional, ponga su información de contacto.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Town/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

#### How effective is Graham Recreation in seeking feedback?

- Seek feedback, but lack of follow-through.
- Coaches suggested a pre & post season meeting

#### What partners or institutions need to be involved?

- National Federation of State High School Associations
- Dick's Sporting Goods
- Burlington for coach and volunteer training

#### Alamance Burlington School System Focus Group

##### What is working well between ABSS and Graham Recreation and Parks?

- Good relationship and room to improve the relationship.
- The use of resources to accomplish the same goals || Joint use agreement

##### What would you change about current collaboration?

- Expand communication capacity to meet unmet needs
- More communication between ABSS Athletics Director and Graham's
- More opportunities to share and strategize resource allocation

##### What are developing key issues/threats?

- Need formalized open space and multi-sport fields within Graham
- Lack of access to fields outside of operating hours and both school and municipal level.

##### What partners or institutions need to be involved to ensure success?

- Mebane
- Impact Alamance
- Cone Health
- Elon University – Dr. Book
- Glenn Raven
- Lab Corps
- Samet Construction – Rick Davenport
- Public Private Partnership Recreation Center

#### Church and Community Service Organization Focus Group

##### What do you think of first when you hear Graham Recreation? What about Graham Parks?

- Meeting people's needs.
- Hidden assets.
- Events.

##### Which of the following recreation categories interests you the most?

- Outdoor Pursuits
- Passive Recreation
- Accessible Recreation

##### How satisfied are you with the quality of Recreation in Graham?

- Blue, somewhat satisfied

##### What should be added and where? What is needed to achieve this?

- Graham needs to discover its 'third place'
- Maintenance of all the facilities.
- Soccer Fields!

#### What are the strengths of Recreation in Graham?

- Leadership and Staff
- Affordability
- Strong direction

#### What are the weaknesses of Graham Recreation and Parks?

- Capitalizing off the diverse populations in Graham and Alamance County
  - Specifically the Hispanic population
- Language access elements and lack of bilingual material
- Sense of safety for marginalized communities

#### What are the developing key issues?

- Lack of soccer features and ability to meet demands.
- Lack of opportunities for Church and CSO involvement.
- Need to protect outdoor resources.

#### What portions of the community are underserved?

- Hispanic and African American.
- Senior citizens.

#### How effective is Graham Recreation in seeking feedback?

- Somewhat effective
- Potential for a community forum?
- Need clear contact procedure and instructions to solicit input from users.

#### What partners or institutions need to be involved?

- Farmers & Markets
- County & Municipal Recreation Departments

#### Senior Focus Group

##### What do you think of first when you hear Graham Recreation? What about Graham Parks?

- Fellowship; sports; wii games; dominoes; entertainment; running; enjoyment; availability.

##### What are the strengths & weaknesses of the Recreation and Parks Department that should be continued/addressed?

- Strengths include: fellowship, availability, helping people, and current contributions.
- Weaknesses include: equipment upkeep; lack of activities for older adults and youth; lack of accessible activities for seniors; lack of funding for Bingo.

##### How effective is this Graham Recreation and Park Department in seeking feedback from the community and users on improving its performance? *(Use Green, Red or Yellow Sign)*

- Not much connection; need to tap into what the seniors need. Red

##### What partners or institutions need to be involved to ensure success?

- A partner should be identified for transportation needs.
- There should be more local business donations.
- Should partner with an organization that provides programs for seniors.
- Could partner with an organization to locate designated senior space for meeting and get together.

### Lake Focus Group & Fall 2018 Survey

#### What are the strengths & weaknesses of GML?

- Community feedback feels unmet
- Lack of boating and fishing educational offerings
- The current parking demands have unmet needs

#### What are developing key issues at GML?

- The Growth of the region and GML's capacity.
- No boating audit materials.
- Status and Capacity demands of boat ramps

#### What partners or institutions need to be involved?

- NC Fish and Wildlife
- Partner for Maintenance
- Grant Specialist for Funds

#### Fall 2018 Survey (in order of importance)

- During bass spawn make catch and release policy for all bass at point of catch
- Better, softer bunks around docks
- Docks need updating (repairs, extensions, etc.)
- Repair ramps
- Open and close later in all months and all days
- Move shed and van
- Limit organized bass fishing tournaments

### Appendix 5: 2018-2019 Lake Improvement Comments

#### Lake Improvement Comments

Posted question:

**What would you like to see at the Lake?  
Help us make plans for the future.**

(Write a note. Be as general or specific as you'd like.)

#### RESPONSES FROM SEPTEMBER-NOVEMBER 2018:

Open and close later in all months

Open and close later in all months

Open earlier in the months of May, June, July, and August and close later

Employee barbecue. Tim, Roger, James

Open earlier and close later, open earlier on Sunday [original, plus starred, plus checked-marked, plus signature = 4 comments?]

Open early on Sunday

Later closing times!

Crappie tournament

Open early in May, June, July, Aug., and Sept. and on Sunday and close later

Open early on Sunday. Open early in May, June, July, and August and close later

Open early on Sunday

During bass spawn, (mid April – mid June) CATCH AND RELEASE ALL Bass at point of catch

May, June, July, August open @ 6:00

Carp Tournament too

1) Repair ramps 2) Move shed and van

Allow more boats in Bass Tournaments. Have more tournaments

NO organized bass tournaments year round

Open all year

Better, softer bunks around docks

Longer Docks with T on end (arrow)

Sandy bottom here (arrow)

(Arrow) Move no parking signs over to 3 ft. off road surface

Need walking trail

Dock need work, Bathroom = Bridge II Sports [www.bridge2sports.org](http://www.bridge2sports.org); Ashley Thomas, Beyond ADA, 919 452-4147; (kayak ramp new plate drawing) [Three notes from same person]



**Lake Improvement Comments**

SPRING/SUMMER COMMENTS 2019 (FEBRUARY – JULY)

- Rent John boats like all the other lakes do
- Need John Boats!! Please, as soon as possible!!
- Open earlier close later more bank and boat catfish and bass tournaments
- New seawall, 2 story marina building, more parking
- Put another Portapotty on backside near last pier area
- More Lake tournaments. Bass + Catfish Like Both Bank + Boat.
- Allow more boats in bass tournaments 25 to 30 boats
- Have a Crappie tournament with 35 or 40 Boats Please
- Up the numbers of boats in tournaments to 35 or 40 Boats
- Would love to fish here but you don't have any Jon Boats You have all kinds of kayaks but don't care about people who wants to fish out of a Jon boat
- Need JonBoats to fish out of.
- Need Jon Boats to rent
- Please Please Please Get us some John boats Canoes are not for us 250 lbs'ers

**Appendix 6: Existing Facilities Audit**

**Facility Audit**

A field audit of existing recreation sites owned or operated by the City of Graham will be conducted as part of the Recreation & Parks Comprehensive Plan. The audit is conducted jointly by PTRC and local recreation staff that rate the characteristics and conditions of each park facility in the following categories:

<b>Natural Areas</b>	This category includes open play fields and undeveloped areas within the park boundaries.
<b>Leisure Facilities</b>	This category includes facilities such as picnic shelters, playgrounds and other non-competitive, man-made features.
<b>Recreation Facilities</b>	This category includes facilities such as ball fields, courts and other active facilities.
<b>Access &amp; Parking</b>	This category includes pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular linkages to and through the site, and supporting parking facilities.
<b>Comfort &amp; Amenities</b>	This category includes tangible elements including restrooms, staff offices, maintenance facilities and other support services located within the park site and intangible elements including general patterns of use, visual quality and overall experience.

**Opportunities** This category includes the consideration and identification of recreation improvements at each site.

Facility conditions were rated on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being highest and 5 being lowest. Individual park assessment worksheets can be found in the Appendix.

**Summary**

**General Impressions**

**Summary**

**Audit Rating Summary**

Park	Natural Areas	Leisure Facilities	Recreation Facilities	Access & Parking	Comfort & Amenities	Opportunities

**City of Graham Facility Audit**

Park Site:		Date of Field Visit:
<b>Natural Areas</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Description/Comments</b>
Undeveloped areas are present	1 2 3 4 5	
Undeveloped areas appear to be well managed	1 2 3 4 5	
Appropriate plant materials are in use	1 2 3 4 5	
Invasive, non-native plants appear to be minimal	1 2 3 4 5	
The location and appearance of undeveloped areas are visually appealing	1 2 3 4 5	
Open play fields are provided	1 2 3 4 5	
Open play fields appear to be well managed	1 2 3 4 5	
Open play fields support a variety of uses	1 2 3 4 5	
Open play fields are of adequate size	1 2 3 4 5	
	<b>Average Rating:</b>	
<b>Leisure Facilities</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Description/Comments</b>
Picnic shelters are provided	1 2 3 4 5	
Picnic shelters provide appropriate seating and amenities (electrical, grills, etc...)	1 2 3 4 5	
Playground(s) are provided	1 2 3 4 5	
Playground(s) appear to be well maintained	1 2 3 4 5	
Playground(s) provide adequate surface material and depth	1 2 3 4 5	
Playground(s) provide age appropriate equipment	1 2 3 4 5	
Playground (s) provide accessibility to a wide range of users and abilities	1 2 3 4 5	
Playground(s) provide adequate safety signage	1 2 3 4 5	
Playground(s) appear to comply with ASTM and CPSC standards	1 2 3 4 5	

Park Site:		Date of Field Visit:
	<b>Average Rating:</b>	
<b>Recreation Facilities</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Description/Comments</b>
Outdoor recreation facilities are provided	1 2 3 4 5	
Indoor recreation facilities are provided	1 2 3 4 5	
Facilities appear to be well maintained	1 2 3 4 5	
Facilities appear to be well managed	1 2 3 4 5	
Facilities appear to be frequently used	1 2 3 4 5	
There are a variety of facilities to choose from	1 2 3 4 5	
Facilities are of adequate size to support desired uses and minimize user conflicts	1 2 3 4 5	
Facilities support programming needs	1 2 3 4 5	
	<b>Average Rating:</b>	
<b>Access &amp; Parking</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Description/Comments</b>
Park site is connected to existing sidewalk system and can be easily reached on foot	1 2 3 4 5	
Park site can be easily reached by bicycle	1 2 3 4 5	
Park site can be easily reached by vehicle	1 2 3 4 5	

Park Site:		Date of Field Visit:
Internal access to park facilities is adequate and handicapped accessible	1 2 3 4 5	
Internal walkways are well maintained and of adequate width	1 2 3 4 5	
Vehicle parking areas are well delineated and adequately sized	1 2 3 4 5	
Bicycle parking is well delineated and adequately sized	1 2 3 4 5	
Parking locations do not detract from the park site	1 2 3 4 5	
All parking areas appear to be well maintained	1 2 3 4 5	
All parking areas feel safe and secure	1 2 3 4 5	
Adequate handicapped parking is provided	1 2 3 4 5	
	<b>Average Rating:</b>	
<b>Comfort &amp; Amenities</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Description/Comments</b>
Seating is provided and appears to be inviting and easily accessed	1 2 3 4 5	
Guest amenities are provided and appear well maintained and easily accessed	1 2 3 4 5	
Staff offices and maintenance facilities provided are adequate and appear well maintained	1 2 3 4 5	Crowded, need more office space
The park has adequate lighting that is well maintained	1 2 3 4 5	More lighting for ball fields
The park appears clean and well maintained	1 2 3 4 5	
The park is busy throughout the day	1 2 3 4 5	
The park feels safe	1 2 3 4 5	
The park generally projects a positive image	1 2 3 4 5	
Land uses around the park are complementary	1 2 3 4 5	
There is evidence of community stewardship	1 2 3 4 5	

Park Site:		Date of Field Visit:
	<b>Average Rating:</b>	
<b>Opportunities</b>		
What do you like best about this park? * *		
What 5 things would you do to improve the park short-term? * * * * *		
What 5 things would you do to improve the park long-term? * * * * *		
What opportunities exist for community partnerships? * * *		

Appendix 7: Inclusion Policy Template



### Inclusion Policy Template

Use this template as a blueprint for creating your agency's inclusion policy. To use the template, replace yellow highlighted text with information specific to your agency. Make sure yellow highlight and brackets are removed from final document. You should delete this cover page before finalizing your policy. For help completing this template, please refer to the Parks for Inclusion Guidelines for Developing an Inclusion Policy at [www.nrpa.org/parksforinclusion](http://www.nrpa.org/parksforinclusion)



### [Policy Name]

#### Introduction

[AGENCY NAME] is committed to creating and promoting inclusion across all public spaces, places, facilities and programs that the department manages. Through the [POLICY NAME] and supporting practices, we aim to ensure that everyone has access to the benefits of quality parks and recreation, including [INSERT TARGET AUDIENCES--those who have been historically marginalized, including those with a physical or cognitive disability, the LGBTQ community, racial and ethnic minorities, and new Americans, or refugees and immigrants].

[AGENCY NAME] defines inclusion [INSERT DEFINITION OF INCLUSION--as the process of including all persons, regardless of their ethnic origin, socioeconomic level, color, language or abilities].

#### Policy Goals

[POLICY NAME] outlines [AGENCY NAME] approach to ensuring inclusive environments and equitable opportunities for all community members in local parks and recreation.

This policy ensures that:

- Community members utilizing our facilities, programs and services have equitable and appropriate access to programs and services, regardless of ability, race, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion or country of origin.
- Site staff, community partners and stakeholders engage in the support of all community members and promote inclusive behaviors in park and recreation facilities and in public spaces throughout the community.
- [AGENCY NAME] establishes and maintains an organizational infrastructure for management, oversight, implementation, communication about and monitoring of the policy and its established goals and objectives.
- [AGENCY NAME] will continuously measure and improve inclusive practices.
- [INSERT OTHER GOALS]

This policy applies to all community members, staff, and sites in [AGENCY NAME].

#### Staff Training

[AGENCY NAME] staff will regularly participate in trainings grounded in effective training models using evidence-based content. Training will be comprehensive (covers multiple topics), based on credible research and delivered by qualified personnel. All new staff members will be quickly oriented to inclusive policies and practices.

[INSERT TRAINING PLAN AND TRAINING PARTNERS]

#### Organizational Support

[AGENCY NAME] and staff will put in place organizational supports that create a social environment (including positive relationships among staff, youth, families and community) that encourages all to be inclusive. This includes:

#### Staff

Demonstrating an attitude of inclusion, including nondiscriminatory language and actions

Determining and addressing any potential unintended outcomes of activities, programs or parks to ensure that they do not limit participation or cause worse outcomes based on ability, age, sexual orientation, identity, religion or country of origin

Providing educational materials about inclusion to all constituents at community events

Sharing and discussing practices during community meetings

#### Agency

Developing an advisory group and/or community network of groups that support inclusive behaviors in the community

Assessing agency hiring practices to ensure staff is representative of the diverse community and is an equal-opportunity employer

#### Communications

Providing positive messages about diversity and inclusion through written and verbal messaging, posters, pictures and books.

[INSERT OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORTS]

### Environmental Support

[AGENCY NAME] will establish environmental supports and practices that promote inclusion for all community members. Examples of environmental supports include:

- Program adaptation for inclusion, depending on the individual needs and abilities of participants
- One-on-one trained staff support throughout the program
- Language interpretation, including but not limited to:
- Sign language interpreters
- Braille
- Language translation services
- Audio/visual support
- Large-print signage
- Accessible transportation
- Built environment enhancements, including modified equipment and ramps
- Gender-neutral restrooms and changing rooms
- Culturally sensitive program hours (i.e., women-only pool hours);
- Signage and additional facility enhancements (artwork, murals, etc.) that promote diversity and inclusion
- [INSERT OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORTS]

### Continuous Measurement and Improvement

[AGENCY NAME] will work to continuously improve our equity and inclusion efforts, measuring the effectiveness of this policy through staff and community qualitative and quantitative feedback through meetings, community engagement events, public forums, surveys; and monitoring economic and health indicators. [AGENCY NAME] will establish a communications plan for reporting on progress [INSERT PLAN AND TIMELINE FOR PUBLIC REPORTING].

[AGENCY NAME] will monitor the following indicators to track progress of inclusive efforts:

- Does our agency communicate a vision that values the participation of all people as members of the community?
- Does our agency's improvement plan include inclusive practices with action steps to support implementation?
- Is there adequate, regularly scheduled, ongoing planning time for agency staff to collaborate on inclusive programs and events?
- Does our agency engage the whole community by providing multiple opportunities and modes for participating?
- Are there professional development opportunities for staff regarding inclusive strategies and supports?
- Are community members from targeted populations engaged in programing, utilizing facilities and taking part in future planning conversations?

Long-term indicators:

- Are there improvements in health (physical, social, mental) outcomes across targeted populations?
- [LIST OTHER INDICATORS]

### Policy Development

[AGENCY NAME] developed this inclusive policy with the input, engagement and support of key community stakeholders and representatives, including:

- [LIST STAKEHOLDERS]

### Resources

[AGENCY NAME] recognizes that this document is an ever-growing resource and aims to keep it updated on a [TIMELINE] basis. For more on inclusion and equity, we encourage staff and community members to visit [AGENCY WEBSITE] or the National Recreation and Park Association's Parks for Inclusion website, [www.nrpa.org/ParksForInclusion](http://www.nrpa.org/ParksForInclusion).

### Glossary

[AGENCY NAME] provides these definitions for historically marginalized audiences, including those with physical or cognitive disabilities, the LGBTQ+ community, racial and ethnic minorities, and new Americans (refugees and immigrants).

Individuals with a disability include those with:

- Hearing difficulty (e.g., deaf or having serious difficulty hearing [DEAR])
- Vision difficulty (e.g., blind or having serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses [DEYE])
- Cognitive difficulty (e.g., because of a physical, mental or emotional problem, having difficulty remember, concentrating or making decisions [DREM])
- Ambulatory difficulty (e.g., having serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs [DPHY])
- Self-care difficulty (e.g., having difficulty bathing or dressing [DDRS])
- Independent living difficulty (e.g., because of a physical, mental or emotional problem, having difficulty doing errands alone, such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping [DOUT])
- New Americans include immigrants, refugees and/or noncitizens living in America

LGBTQ community (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer), defined as:

- Lesbian: A woman who is attracted to other women.
- Gay: A man who is attracted to other men.
- Bisexual: An individual who is attracted to both genders.
- Trans: An umbrella term that seeks to incorporate individuals whose gender identities do not match their biological sex, for example, someone who is born male-bodied and identifies as a woman.
- Queer or Questioning: Individuals who experience fluidity in their experience of sexuality or gender and, therefore, do not identify strictly as LGB or T. The term 'Queer' can also include those who do not identify as either gender.

Racial/Ethnic communities, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, are composed of several different race categories — black, American Indian, Asian, Pacific Islander, other, and two or more races. Hispanics are also considered a minority, although Hispanic or Latino, is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as an ethnicity rather than as a race. Other considerations include religious communities, such as Muslim, that practice cultural traditions based around gender.

## Appendix 8: Funding Opportunities

### FUNDING SOURCES FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT DOLLARS AND OPERATING COSTS

The following financial options outline opportunities to consider in supporting the capital improvements as well as operational costs associated with managing the system for the future. Some of these funding sources may not be allowed or have never been used but should be considered if appropriate. These funding sources should also be used cautiously as it relates to recreation services. For instance, imposing high fees for recreation facilities may reduce the use of the facilities by marginalized citizens within the City. Marginalized citizen should often be a primary target for recreation services. It should must be noted that fees for library related events, festivals, and programs are inappropriate. G.S. 153A-264 entitles any resident of a county or city that operates or contributes to a public library to free use of the library.

**Admission Fee:** Some park and recreation systems in the United States have admission fees on a per car or per person basis to access a park that can be used to help support operational costs. This is most applicable in regional parks and sports complexes that service large amounts of people. This fee may also be useful for large events and festivals.

**Business Improvement District:** The fees this mechanism generates are used for public projects, based on the notion that a well maintained public space will increase commerce for local businesses. This is generally used in downtown areas. Business Improvement District funding is managed by a nonprofit corporation created through the city and may help support the development of downtown park features, amenities, and facilities.

**Capital Improvement Fund Purpose:** The purpose of the Park and Recreation Capital Improvement Fund is to allow for the collection of fees, donations, and revenue from vending machines, and to allow for depositing those fees, donations, revenues from vending machines in the fund for future land acquisition or specific capital improvements as may be deemed necessary for future improvement or expansion of the Parks Department.

**Concessions:** Concessions are typically public/private partnerships in which the municipality provides land or space for private commercial operations that will enhance the park and recreational experience in exchange for payments to help reduce operating costs. They often take the form of food service restaurant operations an operations generated at marinas or bait shops.

**Corporate Sponsorships:** Corporations can also underwrite a portion, or all the cost of an event, program, or activity based on their name being associated with the service. Sponsorships typically are title sponsors, presenting sponsors, associate sponsors, product sponsors, or in-kind sponsors. Many agencies seek corporate support for these types of activities. Advertising on recreational facilities and amenities is also a form of corporate sponsorship.

**Developer Cash-in-Lieu of meeting the Open Space Requirement:** Ordinances requiring the dedication of open space within developments to meet the park and recreation needs of the new residents often have provisions allowing cash contribution to substitute for the land requirement.

**Food and Beverage Tax:** These dollars can come from the local community as well as visitors to help pay for a bond to finance future park and recreation related improvements. Food and Beverage Taxes are very well accepted in most communities. Many park and recreation agencies have a 1% food and beverage tax to support land acquisition across the country.

**General Obligation Bond:** A general obligation bond is a municipal bond secured by a taxing authority to improve Potential Funding Sources

public assets that benefits the municipal agency involved that oversee some of the parks and recreation facilities in the city. General Obligation Bonds are a tool used by local governments to borrow money. Departments can use revenue generated from the sale of general obligation bonds to fund a park project and repay the bonds and interest with future property tax revenue.

**Impact Development Fees:** These are one-time fees assessed on residential or commercial development based on the theory that growth pays for growth. Revenue generated from impact fees may be allocated to parks. This is a major source of funding for many fast-developing communities.

**Land Leases:** Many communities across the United States have allowed land leases for commercial retail operations along trails as a source of funding. The communities that have used land leases look for retail operations that support the needs of recreation users of the trails. This includes coffee shops, grill and food concessions, small restaurants, ice cream shops, bicycle shops, farmer's markets and small local business. The land leases provide revenue to maintain the trails and/or to be used for in-kind matching.

**Lease Back:** Lease backs are a source of capital funding in which a private sector entity such as a development company buys the park land site or leases the park land and develops a facility such as a park, recreation attraction, recreation center, pool, or sports complex. This funding source is typically used for recreation and aquatic type facilities, stadiums, and civic buildings.

**Park Land Dedication Fee:** A park land dedication fee requires that a portion of any housing or commercial/industrial development be dedicated to public use, in the form of parks, recreation facilities, playgrounds, etc. Alternatively, the development may pay cash in lieu of a land dedication, which would be put in a special fund and used for future park acquisition.

**Park and Recreation Revenue Revolving Fund:** This is a dedicated fund to be used for park purposes only that is replenished on an ongoing basis from various funding sources such as grants, sponsorships, advertising, program user fees and rental fees within the park system.

**Permit Fees:** This fee is incorporated for exclusive reservations for picnic shelters, sports fields, special events that are for competition tournaments by other organizations who make a profit from the Department owned facilities. Permit fees include a base fee for all direct and indirect costs for the Department to provide the space on an exclusive basis plus a percentage of the gross for major special events and tournaments held on park owned permitted facilities. Alcohol permits may be explored and added to these permits to generate more money. These fees could be applied to a Recreation and Park Revolving Fund to help support park improvements and operations in the future.

**Sale of Development Rights below the Ground:** Some public agencies have sold their development rights next to greenways below the ground for fiber optic lines and utility lines for gas and electric on a lineal foot basis.

**Special Purpose Levies:** Public agencies, including parks can receive funding through a tax levy designated to a specific purpose and generally for a limited period.

**User Fees:** User fees are fees paid by a user of recreational facilities or programs to offset the costs of services provided by Departments in operating a park, a recreation facility or in delivering programs and services.

**Utility Lease Fee:** Utility lease fees have been used to support parks in the form of utility companies supporting a park from utility easements, storm water runoff and paying for development rights below the ground. This funding source is derived from fees on property owned based on measures such as the amount of impervious surfacing as well as fees from utility companies having access through the park. It is used by many cities to acquire and develop greenways and other open space resources that provide improvements in the park or development of trails. Improvements can include trails, drainage areas, and retention ponds that serve multiple purposes such as recreation, environmental protection, and storm water management.

## PRIVATE FUNDING SOURCES

**Business/Citizen Donations:** Individual donations from corporations and citizens can be sought to support specific improvements and amenities. Crowd funding is used by many park and recreation agencies.

**Estate Donations:** Wills, estates, and trusts may be also dedicated to the appropriate agency for use in developing and/or operating the greenway system

**Greenways Conservation Groups:** Conservation groups adopt green corridors to support the operations and capital costs for specific greenway corridors. These groups raise needed money for designated greenways for capital and operations costs.

**Greenway Fundraising Programs:** Agencies across the United States have used greenways for not-for-profit fundraisers in the form of walks, runs, bicycle races, and special events.

**Greenway Trust Fund:** An increasingly popular strategy is the creation of a trust fund for land acquisition and facility development that is administered by a private greenway advocacy group, or by a local greenway commission. Money may be contributed to the trust fund from a variety of sources, including the municipal and county general funds, private grants, and gifts.

**Local Private-Sector Funding:** Local industries and private businesses may agree to provide support for greenway development through one or more of the following methods:

- > Donations of cash to a specific greenway segment.
- > Donations of services by large corporations to reduce the cost of greenway implementation, including equipment and labor to construct and install elements of a specific greenway.
- > Reductions in the cost of materials purchased from local businesses that support greenway implementation and can supply essential products for facility development.

**Nonprofit Organizations:** Nonprofit organizations can provide support for green space and parks in various ways. Examples include the following:

- > **Friends Organization:** This type of nonprofit is devoted to supporting a specific park like Graham Regional Park. Friends groups are a major opportunity for funding and volunteers.
- > **Floodway Funding Sources:** Some cities and counties have used floodway funding sources to support development and operations of greenways.

**Private Foundation Funds:** Nonprofit community foundations can be strong sources of support for The Departments and should be pursued for specific park and recreation amenities.

**State Water Management Funds:** Funds established to protect or improve water quality could apply to a greenways/trails project if a strong link exists between the development of a greenway and the adjacent/nearby water quality. Possible uses of these funds include the purchase of critical strips of land along rivers and streams for protection, which could then also be used for greenways; develop educational materials, displays; or for storm water management.

#### OTHER GOVERNMENT FUNDING SOURCES

**AmeriCorps Grants** should be pursued by the Parks Division to support park maintenance and cleanup of drainage areas where trails are located and small neighborhood parks.

**CDBG (Community Development Block Grants):** funds are used by many cities and counties to enhance parks. These funds should be used to support the re-development of major facilities based on its location and what it will do to enhance the neighborhood and schools surrounding the park which is the purpose for CDBG monies.

**Clean Water Management Trust Fund:** This fund was established in 1996 and has become one of the largest sources of money in North Carolina for land and water protection. CWMTF funds may be used to establish a network of riparian buffers and greenways for environmental, educational, and recreational benefits.

**Design Arts Program:** The National Endowment for the Arts provides grants to states and local agencies, individuals and nonprofit organizations for projects that incorporate urban design, historic preservation, planning, architecture, landscape architecture, and other community improvement activities, including greenway development. Grants to organizations and agencies must be matched by a 50-percent local contribution. Agencies can receive up to \$50,000.

**Land and Water Conservation Fund** has been reinstated for 2016 levels at 150 million and can provide capital funds to state and local governments to acquire, develop, and improve outdoor recreation areas.

**National Recreational Trails Program:** These grants are available to government and nonprofit agencies, for amounts ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000, for the building of a trail or piece of a trail. It is a reimbursement grant program (sponsor must fund 100% of the project up front) and requires a 20% local match. This is an annual program with an application deadline at the end of January. The available funds are split such that 30% goes toward motorized trails, 30% to non-motorized trails, and 40% is discretionary for trail construction.

**NCDOT Pedestrian and Bicycle Planning Grant:** These funds are provided through the NCDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Program and require a 30% match for towns and cities between 10,000 and 50,000 in population. Grants are awarded to conduct a pedestrian or bicycle planning process and produce a report.

**Parks and Recreation Trust Fund:** The fund was established in 1994 by the North Carolina General Assembly and is administered by the Parks and Recreation Authority. Through this program, funds are made available to local governments to acquire, development and renovate recreational areas. Applicable projects require a 50/50 match from the local government. Eligible applicants may ask up to \$500,000.

**SAFETULU Funds:** as well as Safe Routes to School Funds should be pursued for the trail improvements outlined in

the plan as well.

**Small Business Tree-Planting Program:** The Small Business Administration provides small grants of up to \$10,000 to purchase trees for planting along streets and within parks or greenways. Grants are used to develop contracts with local businesses for the plantings.

**Transportation Enhancement Funds** available through SAFETELU, the current approved federal transportation bill, can be used for trail and related green space development. Funding requires a 20% match and Safe Routes to School Funds require no match.

**Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program:** The USDA provides small grants of up to \$10,000 to communities for the purchase of trees to plant along city streets and for greenways and parks. To qualify for this program, a community must pledge to develop a street-tree inventory, a municipal tree ordinance, a tree commission, committee or department, and an urban forestry-management plan.

**Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention (Small Watersheds) Grants:** The USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) provides funding to state and local agencies or nonprofit organizations authorized to carry out, maintain, and operate watershed improvements involving less than 250,000 acres. The NRCS provides financial and technical assistance to eligible projects to improve watershed protection, flood prevention, sedimentation control, public water-based fish and wildlife enhancements, and recreation planning. The NRCS requires a 50-percent local match for public recreation, and fish and wildlife projects.

**Wetlands Reserve Program:** The U.S. Department of Agriculture provides direct payments to private landowners who agree to place sensitive wetlands under permanent easements. This program can be used to fund the protection of open space and greenways within riparian corridors.



**Graham Recreation and Parks**

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