Action Requested/Required:

- [x] Vote/Action Requested
- [ ] Discussion or Presentation Only
- [ ] Public Hearing

Report Date: _____
Hearing Date: _____
Voting Date: _____

Department: Parks and Recreation **Presenter(s) & Title:** Adam Dodson - Parks and Recreation Manager

Agenda Item Title:

Discussion and Possible Action on the Approval of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Summary:

October of 2023 staff hired Brandstetter Carroll Inc (BCI) to create our first ever Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Over the past 10-11 BCI has worked with staff, stakeholders and community leaders to put together the final draft of our Master Plan.

Budget Implications:

Budgeted? ☑ Yes ☐ No ☐ **N/A**

Total Cost of Project: _____ Check if Estimated ☐

Fund Source: General Fund ☐ Water & Sewer ☐ Sales Tax ☐ Other: _____

Staff Recommendations:

Staff recommends a motion to approve and adopt the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Reviews:

Has this been reviewed by Management and Legal Counsel, if required? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Attachments:

Parks and Recreation Master Plan
https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:US:cd551c15-9b70-4f94-b5be-6df7980e1bc3





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GEORGIA

2024
Parks and Recreation Master Plan

City of Canton, Georgia

August, 2024

BRANDSTETTER CARROLL INC

ARCHITECTS + ENGINEERS + PLANNERS

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

2024 Canton Parks and Recreation Master Plan

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Sandy McGrew, Councilmember Ward 1
Bryan Roach, Councilmember Ward 2
Shawn Tolan, Councilmember Ward 2
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Need for a Plan

Canton is a small city located in Cherokee County, Georgia in the greater Atlanta metropolitan area in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. Canton experienced rapid growth since 2010, and the 2023 population of 37,042 is expected to increase to nearly 53,000 by 2040. With this growth, Canton's population is becoming older, wealthier, more highly educated, and more diverse. Going forward, Canton should continue to attract families with children as well as seniors.

Overall, only 37% of Canton residents live within a 10-minute walk to a neighborhood or community park; however, most of that (22%) is provided by private homeowners associations (HOA). The only residents not within a 10-minute drive to a community park live in communities with amenities provided by the HOA. Canton invested significantly in trails and parks since 2010, but considerable demand still exists for more trail miles, playgrounds, and athletic fields of all types. The City of Canton does not currently offer indoor recreation facilities. The Parks and Recreation Department manages several large community events each year that service several thousand residents and visitors and relies on partner organizations such as youth sports leagues to offer programs for Canton residents.



This plan will be Canton's first comprehensive parks and recreation master plan. Meant to instill focus, establish priorities, and inspire action, the plan was produced with guidance from an active steering committee appointed by city officials and staff. It is supported by robust data collection, including hours of in-person engagement, and provides a foundation for continuous improvement of Canton's parks and recreation offerings. This plan is important because it…

- Provides a vision for the future of parks and recreation in Canton
- Aligns department offerings with community needs
- Fosters civic engagement and creates a sense of community
- Outlines clear priorities based on community needs and desires
- Identifies gaps & inequities in service delivery
- Strengthens fiscal responsibility, sustainability, and efficiency
- Identifies future funding requirements and potential sources
- Increases user participation, satisfaction, revenue, and capital investment
- Enables the city to keep up with parks and recreation trends
- Reduces duplication of service and improves partnerships



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Vision, Mission, and Values for Parks and Recreation in Canton

Developed from all the input gathered during the engagement phase, and approved by the steering committee, this strategic plan articulates a freshly inspired vision, mission, and set of defining values. These strategic elements will help pilot implementation of actions identified in this Master Plan, and thereby shape the future of parks and recreation in Canton.

Vision

Canton Parks provide exceptional experiences that connect the entire community to nature and play

Mission

Provide outstanding parks that promote wellness and play



Values

Community – attract residents and visitors to events and programs that cultivate pride and build relationships

Connectivity – provide safe, convenient, and equitable access to facilities and programs

Nature – promote sustainability through education and physical connections to natural areas

Service – support a responsive and creative staff in providing quality recreation experiences and spaces

Goals & Objectives

The following goals and objectives will guide parks and recreation operations, improvements, and services in Canton for the next 10 years.

Goal 1: Variety of spaces and facilities

Objective 1.1 – More parks and nature access

Objective 1.2 – Multiuse parks and increased variety of features

Objective 1.3 – Improved access to Etowah River and Lake Canton

Goal 2: Improved community access to wellness and health opportunities

Objective 2.1 – Promote equitable access to parks and facilities

Objective 2.2 – Additional park visitation and trail usage

Objective 2.3 – Increased program availability and participation

Goal 3: Improved community connectivity and engagement

Objective 3.1 – Improve connectivity within Canton parks

Objective 3.2 – Add/improve connections to Canton parks and other popular destinations

Objective 3.3 – Prepare and implement clear marketing strategies and communications

Objective 3.4 – Build and maintain collaborative relationships with the community and partners to address community priorities

Goal 4: Excellent operations and leadership

Objective 4.1 – Optimize services with performance standards and staff growth opportunities

Objective 4.2 – Employ creative strategies to increase funding for facilities and programs

Objective 4.3 – Maintain clear standards and maintenance practices for quality, flexibility, and stewardship

Moving Forward – Let's Play

This plan will guide Canton and its partners in their efforts to expand and upgrade programs, facilities, and services to meet community needs. Additionally, the plan offers improvements to Parks and Recreation Department operations.

Public input (Chapter 3) and an analysis of existing conditions (Chapter 2) together informed the recommendations for improvements outlined in Chapters 5 and 6. The following items are the top priorities determined by the Master Plan process along with direction from the steering committee.

Systemwide Capital Improvement Recommendations

1. Continue to develop trails that connect to parks, schools, and commercial areas
2. Restore and upgrade Tippens Gym as a community recreation center
3. Acquire land/develop new fields and community parks as population grows

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4. Develop new neighborhood and pocket parks in priority investment/underserved areas
5. Create new master plans for neighborhood parks to better serve neighborhood residents (existing and future)
6. Improve access to Etowah River (canoe/kayak launches and fishing)



Facility Improvement Recommendations

1. Develop a downtown amphitheater
2. Develop a splash pad
3. Add pickleball courts at a city park
4. Develop more inclusive playgrounds
5. Add picnic shelters/rental opportunities
6. Improve ADA accessibility in all parks
7. Improve wayfinding (to and within) and park signage
8. Coordinate with Public Art Committee to add public art to parks and trails
9. Add and improve support features to parks (restrooms, shade, picnic tables, benches, drinking fountains, parking, lighting)



Program Recommendations

1. Create or find partners to add programs in the following areas: arts/crafts, adult sports, nature, summer camps, fitness, performing arts
2. Continue to offer high quality festivals and special events, add new ones as resources allow (e.g., movies and concerts)
3. Utilize newly developed facilities for programs & events
4. Add dedicated staff to plan and deliver programs for people of all ages
5. Partner to promote new and existing programs, events, and opportunities



Operational Recommendations

1. Develop an ADA Transition Plan – ensure everyone can access facilities and participate in programs
2. Improve marketing and outreach to increase exposure, promote the Parks and Recreation Department, and share opportunities to participate
3. Consider staffing needs of new parks, facilities, and programs (e.g., community center)
4. Maintain consistent contracts with all partner groups – standard template for all
5. Explore additional/alternate funding strategies – grants, a Park Foundation, sponsorships, etc.
6. Identify and allocate funding for staff development and networking opportunities



Action Plan

The *2024 Canton Parks and Recreation Master Plan* concludes with an action plan of strategies and recommendations to improve facilities, programs, and

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overall service. The specific action items outlined in Chapter 6 offer a path towards successful implementation of the Master Plan.

The Process – Why are these actions needed

Existing Conditions of Parks and Recreation

A park system should be evaluated as a composite of recreation areas with each meeting a particular public need. The system should provide a combination of smaller neighborhood parks, larger community parks, special use parks, and indoor recreation facilities. For all residents, whatever their background, parks and recreation facilities help provide a variety of passive and active recreational opportunities. Proximity to these valuable resources invariably improves community health and wellness while creating more adaptable, robust local economies. [1]

Canton Maintains...

292 Acres of parkland

4 Neighborhood
- Brown
- Burge
- Harmon
- McCanless

3 Community
- Boling
- Etowah River
- Heritage

3 Special use parks
- Cannon Park
- Canton Paw Park
- Hickory Log Creek Boat Ramp

+Etowah River Trail

Demographic and Benchmarking Analysis

The Canton community experienced considerable change over the past decade. The city's population is becoming more educated, more diverse, and older. As Canton continues to grow, the number of families and seniors are both expected to increase and create varied demand for recreation programs and facilities.

Canton's level of service for recreation facilities and programs has not kept up with the city's population growth, despite HOAs offering recreation amenities and Canton developing new high-quality parks. Canton has a need for additional programs, neighborhood parks, playgrounds, fields, trail miles, and indoor recreation spaces.



Service Area Analysis

Maps of service areas for various parks and facilities were used to identify service gaps or underserved areas within Canton. Maps were also created to illustrate levels of access to various park categories and facilities. The analysis indicated that only about 15% of Canton residents live within a 10-minute walk to a Canton city park. An additional 22% are withing a 10-minute walk to HOA parks.

A composite service areas map shows the overall level of service for parks and facilities, ranked from high to low, in turn revealing areas of need and opportunity. Shades of green indicate high service levels, while red areas show those with the lowest level of service to parks and recreation facilities. Approximately 28% of Canton residents live in areas with high or medium-high levels of service.

Service Level	Population	Cumulative Population
High	3%	3%
Medium-High	25%	28%
Medium	31%	59%
Medium-Low	8%	67%
Low	33%	100%

Priority Investment Areas

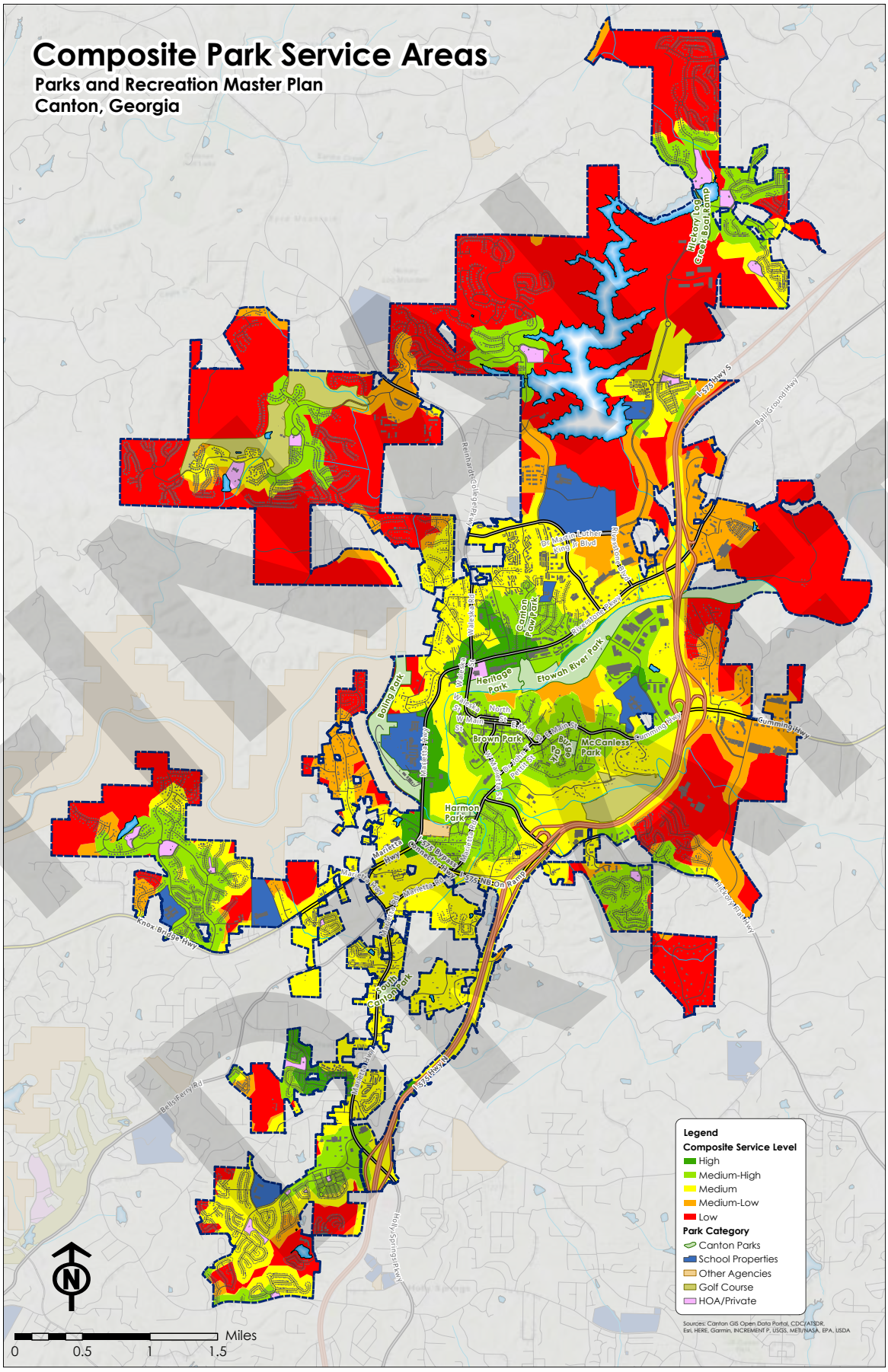
Any additional level of analysis combined social vulnerability with the service areas. Data obtained from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) identifying areas with higher social vulnerability to highlight priority investment areas. The areas combine low level of service with high levels of vulnerability to identify most in need of investment by Parks and Recreation.

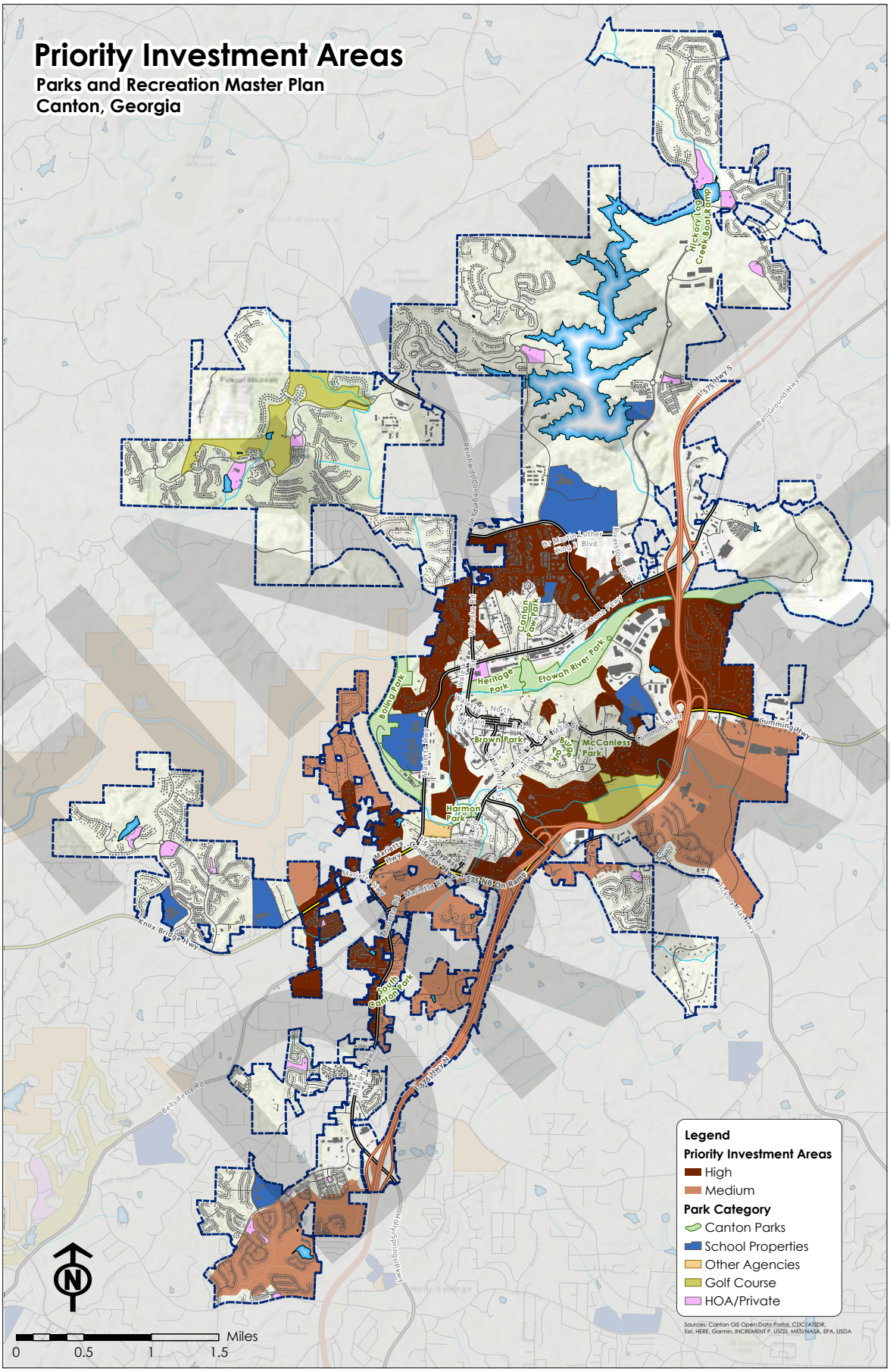
What Canton Residents Said

Understanding the needs and wants of Canton residents was essential to developing the Master Plan. Residents were engaged through a variety of methods, including a random sample mail survey, web survey, open house workshop, booths at Mistletoe on Main and Merry Market, and conversations with key stakeholder groups. These options for involvement gave park users and non-users

[1] https://www.fastcompany.com/90624316/great-parks-dont-just-haverec-space-they-create-jobs?mc_cid=105f89bd93&mc_eid=6c9b6b28d4

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Composite Park Service Areas
Parks and Recreation Master Plan
Canton, Georgia
Legend
Composite Service Level
High
Medium-High
Medium
Medium-Low
Low
Park Category
Canton Parks
School Properties
Other Agencies
Golf Course
HOA/Private
Miles
0
0.5
1
1.5
Sources: Canton GIS Open Data Portal, CDC/ATSDR, Esri, HERE, Garmin, INCREMENT P, USGS, METI/NASA, EPA, USDA


Priority Investment Areas
Parks and Recreation Master Plan
Canton, Georgia
Legend
Priority Investment Areas
High
Medium
Park Category
Canton Parks
School Properties
Other Agencies
Golf Course
HOA/Private
Miles
0
0.5
1
1.5
Sources: Canton GIS Open Data Portal, CDC/ATSDR, Esri, HERE, Garmin, INCREMENT P, USGS, METI/NASA, EPA, USDA

a means to share their individual needs, perceptions, concerns, and desires for the park system.

Open House Workshop & Engagement Events

Nearly 360 people participated in three engagement events in December of 2023. During the workshops, participants were asked how to improve the city's parks and programs.

Popular responses included:

- Festivals
- Trails
- Splash pads
- Nature programs and natural areas
- Movies and converts
- Youth sports
- Dog parks

Participants were also asked to "spend" $1,000 to indicate how they would support funding for parks and recreation facilities. Over 355 participants allocated $355,600. "Trails and connectivity" received the most support with $60,300 (17%) allocated. "Splash pad" was next with $47,500 (13%) allocated. Third most popular was "outdoor parks and facilities" with $40,900 (12%) allocated and "new dog park" ($40,300 or 11%).



Stakeholder Groups

Stakeholder groups interviewed during the planning process included sports groups/leagues, government officials/agencies, and community organizations such as:

- YMCA
- Faith-based organizations
- Fire Department
- Tourism Board
- Cultural Arts Commission
- Chamber of Commerce,
- Youth sports leagues
- Partner groups

Stakeholders indicated need for:

- More/better restrooms
- Better Etowah River access, safety
- Rentable spaces for events/gatherings
- Dog parks
- Lighting at Boling Park
- Pickleball
- Disc golf
- Art
- Indoor courts
- Parking
- Signage, wayfinding, & trail maps
- Adaptive/inclusive playground
- More playgrounds & natural/art play areas
- Indoor space – gyms/multiuse
- Safety & accessibility, lighting
- Trail connectivity & bike/ped access
- Volunteer/friends organization
- More fields – grass and artificial turf

Surveys

The city utilized a representative random sample survey (Mail Survey) of households to represent the population of Canton as a whole, both users and non-users. 421 surveys were returned allowing for a precision of at least +/–4.7% at the 95% level of confidence. An online and handout survey (Web Survey) was completed by 422 respondents. This type of survey tends to be completed by residents that already have a connection to parks and recreation in Canton, either as users or stakeholders.

The top results for support for investment in facilities and programs is provided below. These results from the Mail Survey show the percentage of households desiring investment.

Highest priority facilities for investment

1. Trails-walking/hiking (72%)
2. Natural areas/nature parks (64%)
3. Multiuse trails (44%)
4. Large community parks (41%)
5. Nature center (39%)
6. Playgrounds (38%)
7. Canoe/kayak launches (36%)

Highest priority programs for investment

1. Festivals (54%)
2. Concerts/art performances (49%)

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3. Fishing, canoeing, or boating (36%)
4. Nature programs (34%)
5. Programs for persons ages 50+ (32%)
6. Adult fitness and wellness programs (31%)
7. Outdoor movies (29%)

Continued public engagement will be necessary as Canton implements the Master Plan. Public input is an important part of the design process for development of new park facilities and in evaluating programs for improvement. Engagement efforts should be flexible and creative, utilizing tools like on-site feedback and interactive online platforms.

Overall Engagement Findings (All Methods)

Canton residents and others who participated in the community engagement activities of this planning process expressed clear support for several types of recreation facilities and features. The most consistent support across all engagement methods was for trails and natural areas, including a nature center. Participants expressed the strongest support for the following items:

- Trails – all types
- Natural areas and a nature center
- Access to the Etowah River
- Support Features
- Small neighborhood parks
- Splash pad
- Picnic shelters/picnic areas
- Dog parks
- Indoor spaces



On the program and activities side, participants indicated they really enjoy Canton's trails, festivals and events, and would like the city to offer more of them. They also expressed strong interest in nature programs and activities that offer access to the Etowah River. Participants expressed the strongest support for the following programs and activities:

- Festivals, concerts, and art performances
- Nature programs including fishing, canoeing, and
- Boating
- Adult and 50+ programs – fitness/wellness, arts,
- and sports
- Marketing and sharing facility and program information

One Page Summary

The final page of this executive summary provides a graphic representation of the overall findings of the *2024 Canton Parks and Recreation Master Plan*. The image presents the whole document in a single page and can serve as an easy reference for those looking for the highlights of the plan.







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City of Canton

2024 Parks & Recreation Master Plan

Introduction

This Master Plan provides a clear vision for parks and recreation in Canton, responding to the community's desires, the city's rapid growth, and the need for strategic partnerships.

Fortunately, the city has a large amount of existing parkland with significant potential for new and expanded features.

GOAL 1: VARIETY OF SPACES & FACILITIES

1.1 – More parks and nature access
1.2 – Multiuse parks and increased variety of features
1.3 – Improved access to Etowah River and Lake Canton

GOAL 2: IMPROVED COMMUNITY ACCESS TO WELLNESS & HEALTH OPPORTUNITIES

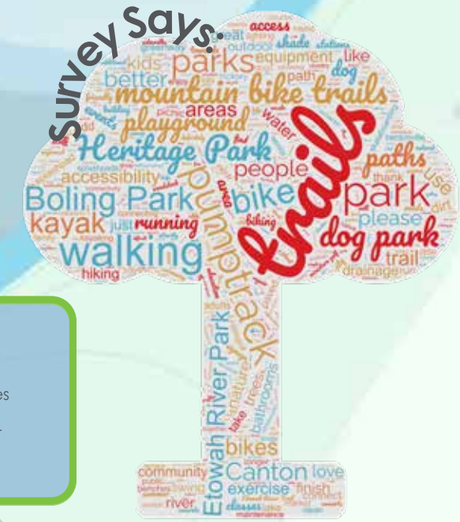
2.1 – Promote equitable access to parks and facilities
2.2 – Additional park visitation and trail usage
2.3 – Increased program availability and participation

GOAL 3: IMPROVED COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY & ENGAGEMENT

3.1 – Improve connectivity within Canton parks
3.2 – Add/improve connections to Canton parks and other popular destinations
3.3 – Prepare and implement clear marketing strategies and communications
3.4 – Build and maintain collaborative relationships with the community and partners to address community priorities

GOAL 4: EXCELLENT OPERATIONS & LEADERSHIP

4.1 – Optimize services with performance standards and staff growth opportunities
4.2 – Employ creative strategies to increase funding for facilities and programs
4.3 – Maintain clear standards and maintenance practices for quality, flexibility, and stewardship



Mission

Provide outstanding parks that promote wellness and play

Vision

Canton Parks provide exceptional experiences that connect the entire community to nature and play

The Canton Community Desires:

Facilities

- Trails – all types
- Natural areas and a nature center
- Access to the Etowah River
- Support Features
- Small neighborhood parks
- Splash pad
- Picnic shelters/picnic areas
- Dog parks
- Indoor spaces

Programs/Services

- Festivals, concerts and art performances
- Nature programs including fishing, canoeing, and boating
- Adult and 50+ programs (fitness/ wellness, arts, and sports)
- Improved engagement and awareness

Values

Community – attract residents and visitors to events and programs that cultivate pride and build relationships

Nature – promote sustainability through education and physical connections to natural areas

Connectivity – provide safe, convenient, and equitable access to facilities and programs

Service – support a responsive and creative staff in providing quality recreation experiences and spaces and physical connections to natural areas

How do we get there?

Capital Improvements

1. Continue to develop trails that connect the community
2. Restore and upgrade Tippens Gym
3. Acquire land/develop for new parks and facilities as population grows
4. Develop new parks in underserved areas
5. Improve access to Etowah River
6. Develop downtown amphitheater
7. Develop a splash pad
8. Add pickleball courts at a city park
9. Develop more inclusive playgrounds
10. Add picnic shelters/rental opportunities
11. Improve ADA accessibility
12. Improve wayfinding (to and within) and park signage
13. Add public art to parks and trails
14. Add and improve support feature

Programs

1. Create or find partners for desired programs
2. Continue and grow high quality festivals and special events
3. Utilize newly developed facilities for programs & events
4. Add dedicated staff to plan and deliver programs for people of all ages
5. Partner to promote programs, events, and opportunities

Operations

1. Improve marketing and outreach
2. Consider staffing needs as services grows and promote professional development
3. Maintain consistent contracts with all partner groups
4. Explore additional/alternate funding strategies (grants, a Park Foundation, sponsorships, etc.)
5. Partner to promote programs, events, and opportunities



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INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Need for a Plan

The purpose of this *2024 Canton Parks and Recreation Master Plan* is to provide an ambitious yet feasible roadmap for the future that encompasses the needs and desires of Canton residents and city staff. This plan is important because it…

- Provides a vision for the future of parks and recreation in Canton
- Aligns department offerings with community needs
- Fosters civic engagement and creates a sense of community
- Outlines clear priorities based on community needs and desires
- Identifies gaps & inequities in service delivery
- Strengthens fiscal responsibility, sustainability, and efficiency
- Identifies future funding requirements and potential sources
- Increases user participation, satisfaction, revenue, and capital investment
- Enables the city to keep up with parks and recreation trends
- Reduces duplication of service and improves partnerships

Parks and Recreation Facilities are Essential to Public Health

Through programs, facilities, open space, and other services, parks and recreation agencies are essential to improving health outcomes and enhancing quality of life. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) highlights a few of the primary benefits of utilizing parks and recreation facilities and programs:[1]

- **Help reduce obesity and incidence of chronic disease by providing opportunities to increase rigorous physical activity in a variety of forms**
- **Provide a connection to nature which studies demonstrate relieves stress levels, tightens interpersonal relationships, and improves mental health**
- **Aid in reducing hunger in America and increasing access to nutritious food options**
- **Foster overall wellness and healthful habits, such as becoming tobacco-free and engaging in enrichment opportunities that add balance to life**

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) prepares ParkScore every year to rank the park systems of the 100 most populous cities in the U.S. In 2023, TPL added data about the positive health outcomes of the top-scoring cities. A recent report, "The Power of Parks" to Promote Health,[2] breaks down the new data to show communities how to make parks a more formal part of their health programs, helping to ensure more are able to experience the physical and mental health benefits of public parks and green spaces.

TPL found that "people are on average 9% less likely to suffer from poor mental health and 21% less likely to be physically inactive" in the top 25 ranking cities, compared to the lower-ranked cities, even after controlling for race/ethnicity, income, age, and population density. The report offers examples of how public agencies, non-profit community organizations, and healthcare providers can leverage public park space to improve health outcomes.

Two key findings from the ParkScore data were that **close-to-home parks are associated with lower obesity rates and improved health in both young people and adults and that staffed programming, such as fitness classes, dramatically increased physical activity. Each additional supervised activity increased park use by 48% and**

[1] Role of Parks and Recreation on Health and Wellness. National Recreation and Parks Association. Accessed 2/26/2024. https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/Three-Pillars/role-of-parks-and-recreation-on-health-and-wellness/

[2] The Power of Parks to Promote Health: A Special Report. Trust for Public Land. 2023. https://www.tpl.org/parks-promote-health-report

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moderate to vigorous physical activity time by 37%. The report also highlights a program in Columbus, Ohio where doctors prescribe an 11-week fitness program offered free through the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department to patients struggling with obesity and high blood pressure.

Community Background

Canton is located in Cherokee County, Georgia in the greater Atlanta metropolitan area. The city's population has grown exponentially over the past 20 years. This trend is expected to continue into the future. Since 2010, household size decreased slightly, and the median age increased from 31.9 to 35.7. This trend is consistent with the percentage of residents over 65 increasing, while the percentage of residents under 18 decreased. The parks offered by Canton Parks and Recreation for residents include:

- 4 neighborhood parks
- 3 community parks
- 1 dog park
- 1 downtown plaza
- 1 boat ramp

The City of Canton approved funding for a new park in south Canton in 2024. This park will include a dog park, playground, walking path, an amphitheater, and more.

1.2 The Master Planning Process

This Master Plan acts as a compass for the department and incorporates findings from the four-phase process including:

- Evaluating existing facilities and programs combined with analyzing current trends and benchmarking
- Engaging with a steering committee, community stakeholders, staff, and the public (open house, booth at Mistletoe on Main & the Merry Market, online survey, random sample mail survey, and stakeholder meetings)
- Visioning sessions
- Reviewing recommendations and strategy prioritization



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1.2.1 How to Read the Master Plan

Evaluate CH 1-2

The **EVALUATE** phase is summarized in Chapter 2 and provides a baseline understanding of the existing conditions of Canton's recreation facilities and programs. The chapter includes an evaluation of the make-up of the population and the levels of service in the community. Additionally, Chapter 2 includes trends and benchmarking analysis which reveals how Canton measures up to nearby communities of similar make up and to national recreation trends. Contents include:

- Parkland and facility inventory & analysis
- Program analysis
- Benchmark comparisons of similar agencies
- Geographic park and facility service area mapping
- Trends in parks and recreation

Engage CH 3

The **ENGAGE** phase is summarized in Chapter 3 and ultimately leads the discussions throughout the rest of the Master Plan. Identifying what the community desires is essential to determine and prioritize the future of the parks, recreation facilities, and special events/programming.

- Open house workshops and engagement events
- Web/handout & mail surveys
- Stakeholder group meetings

Envision CH 4

The **ENVISION** phase is driven by the visioning sessions and meetings with the steering committee and can be found in Chapter 4. Findings from the evaluate and engage phase are reviewed and used to produce a new vision, mission, values, goals, and objectives for the department.

- Steering committee visioning sessions
- Needs, standards, & guidelines for parks and recreation
- Facility needs analysis & level of service standards

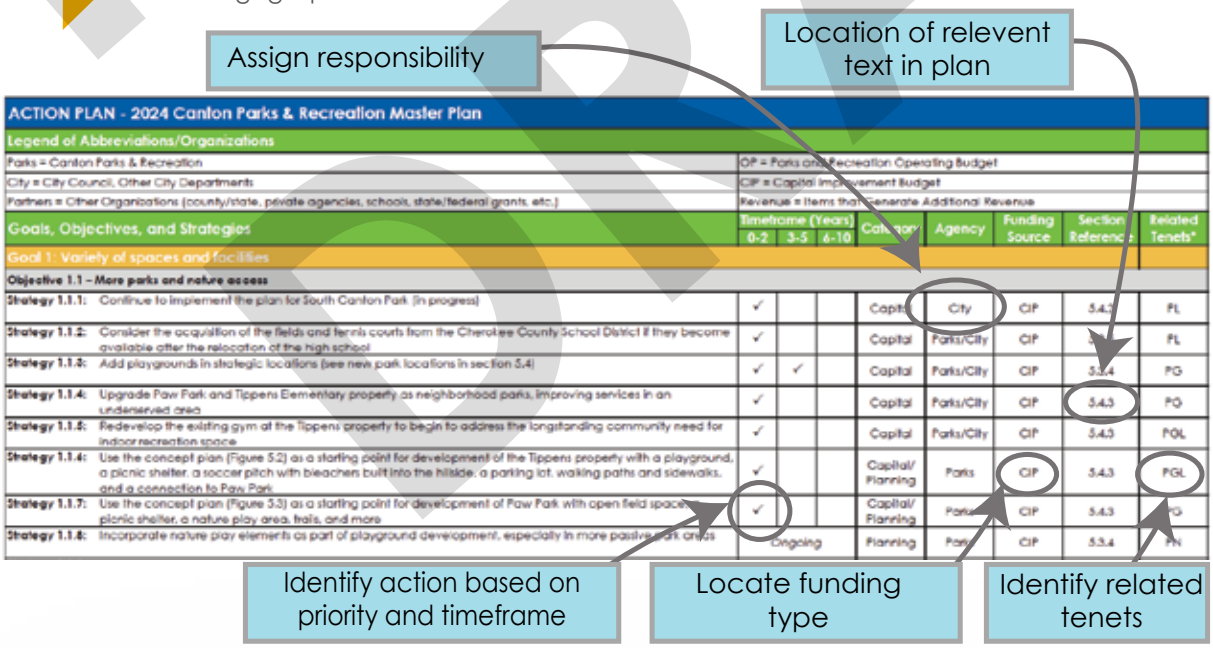
Plan CH 5-6

The **PLAN** phase combines all the information gathered throughout the first three phases of the planning process and formulates operational and capital – both systemwide and individual park related – recommendations to meet the goals for the future. Chapters 5 & 6 discuss these topics at length and help provide direction for the city for the next 5-10 years. Chapter 5 presents recommendations for programs, facilities, and operations. Chapter 6 presents the action plan that can be used as a checklist for implementation.

- Systemwide recommendations
- Individual park recommendations
- Capital improvements and estimated costs
- Operational and programming recommendations
- Action plan

1.3 How to Use this Plan

The action plan is a living document that will act as a guide over the next 10 years for Canton and should be revisited annually to measure progress. The recommendations found in the latter half of the plan include capital and operational improvements that prioritize systemwide, departmental, and individual park enhancements. Upon acceptance of this plan, the action plan provided in Chapter 6 will begin to guide and bring to life the needs and desires of Canton Parks and Recreation and the community.



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1.4 Related Planning Efforts

This *2024 Parks and Recreation Master Plan* will be Canton's first dedicated parks plan, so background information and potential recommendations will be incorporated from related planning efforts completed by Canton, Cherokee County and partner agencies. The *Canton 2045 Comprehensive Plan* updated in 2023 includes several goals and objectives related to park properties and recreation facilities, particularly trails. Summaries of these and other planning efforts are provided in Appendix C.

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2

COMMUNITY BACKGROUND & NEEDS ASSESSMENT

2.1 Introduction

The Community Background & Needs Assessment chapter provides an evaluation of the existing conditions of parks and recreation in Canton. This chapter provides detailed analysis of the following:

- Population demographics
- Inventory of existing parks and facilities
- Benchmarking against other agencies
- Service areas of parks and facilities
- Trends in parks and recreation

The data and information presented in this chapter provides the context needed to understand existing and potential future needs of the community. The data compiled in this chapter will assist in understanding and interpreting community preferences and recreation needs summarized in Chapter 3.

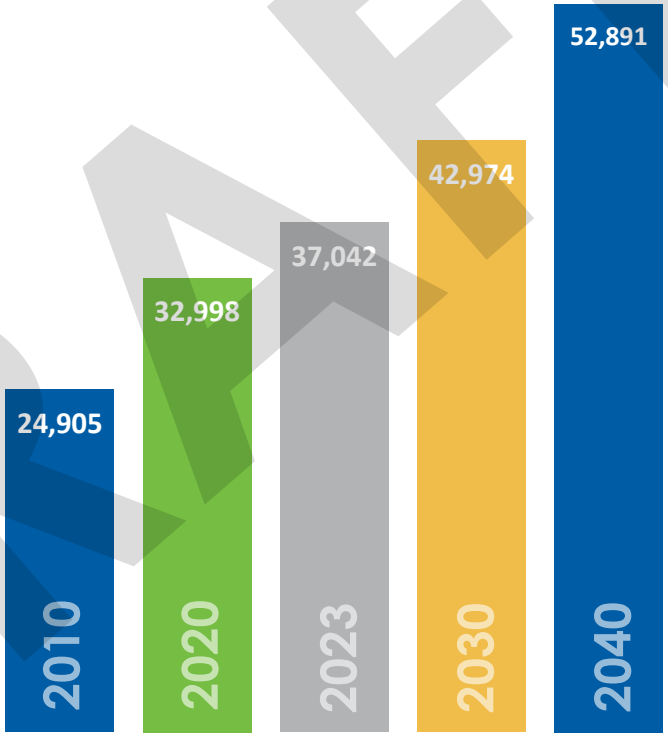
2.2 Population and Demographic Trends

Needs and preferences vary between demographic groups and change over time. The percentage of the total population these demographic groups represent also changes over time. Exploring Canton's demographic trends and characteristics helps identify current and potentially future demand for parks and recreation services in the community. The data for this demographic analysis was gathered from the US Census Bureau, Esri Forecasts, and the *Canton 2045 Comprehensive Plan*.

2.2.1 Population Change

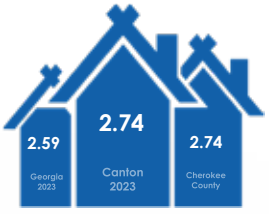
Figure 2.1 illustrates the forecasted population change in Canton from 2010 to 2040. The figure shows how rapidly Canton's population is growing, which is projected to continue through 2040 with a population of 52,891. This continuous growth in population is significant and must be considered as the parks and recreation system plans to meet the community's needs over the next 10 years and beyond.

Figure 2.1: Population Change in Canton



2.2.2 Household Size

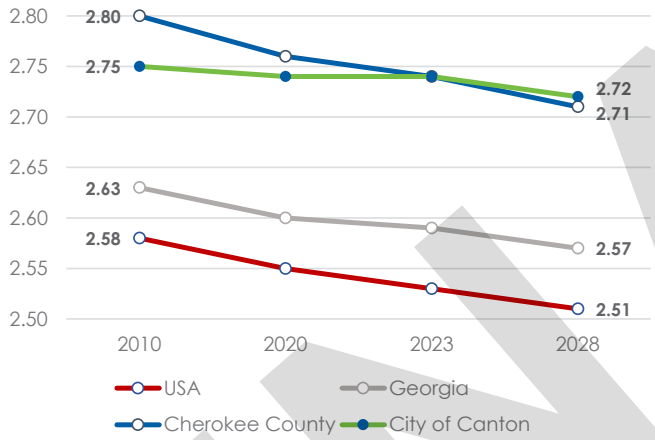
As of 2023, the average household size nationwide was 2.53 and has been decreasing since before 2000. The average household sizes for both Canton (2.74) and Cherokee County (2.74) are larger



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than the nation and the rest of Georgia (2.59). Canton's household size appears to be decreasing at a slower rate than Cherokee County and Georgia. This trend will be influenced by the development patterns in new and annexed communities. Although parks and recreation facilities and programs are used by all, a larger household size suggests a greater demand for family friendly recreation activities. Figure 2.2 shows the trend in household size for Canton, Cherokee County, the state, and the nation.

Figure 2.2: Average Household Size



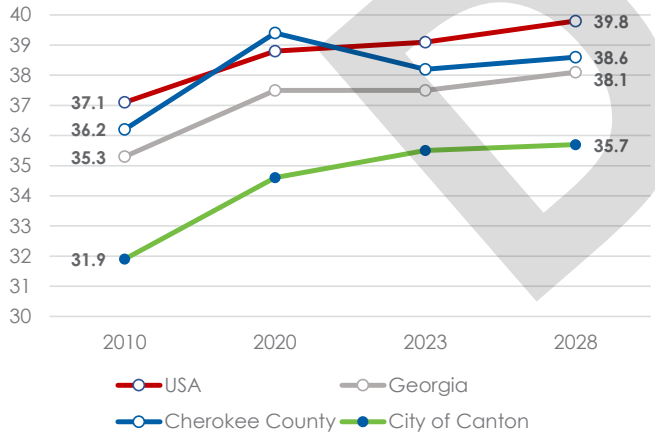
2.2.3 Age

Because many facilities and programs are targeted to specific age groups, it is important to understand changes to Canton's age composition. The senior population will have different preferences than those under 18. Understanding how different age groups are growing or shrinking as a percentage of the total population will be an important factor in decision making around investments in parks and recreation programs and facilities.

Median Age

Figure 2.3 shows the increase in the median age since 2010. As apparent in the chart, age is increasing in all geographies. While Canton's remains lower, it is on an upward trend that may slow in the future.

Figure 2.3: Median Age



Senior Population

Along with the median age, the senior population (65+) is increasing in the USA (Figure 2.4). Canton's is also increasing, but the total senior population is lower than Cherokee County, the state, and the nation. This chart illustrates the uncertainty of the aging trend in Canton. For a city the size of Canton, new developments and annexations can impact these percentages and should be considered when planning for future parks and recreation services.

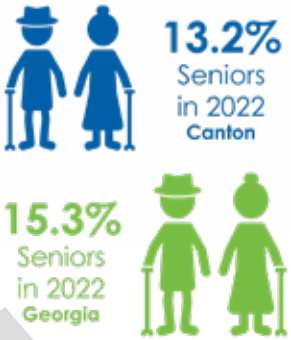
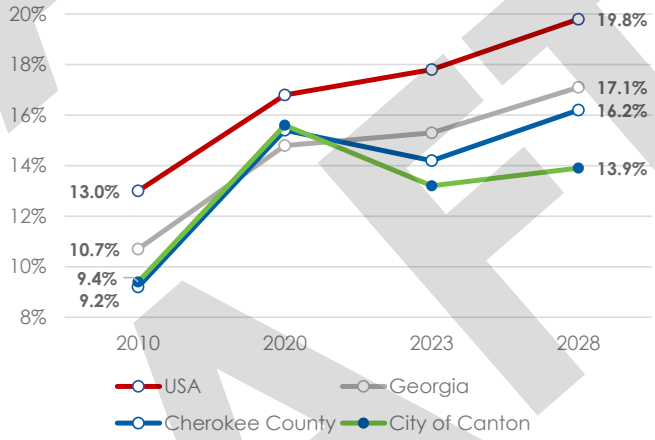
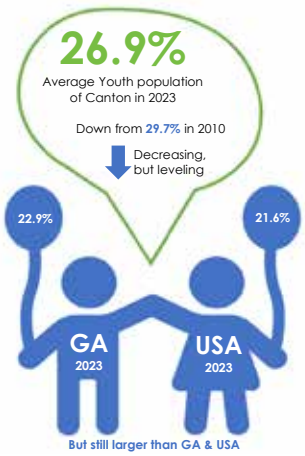


Figure 2.4: Population Age 65 and Older



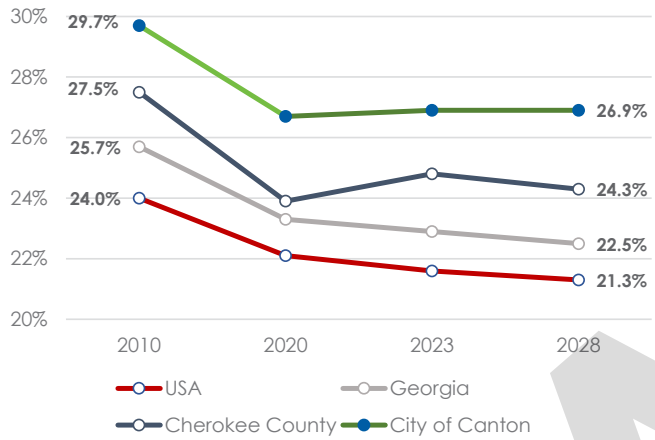
Children

Figure 2.5 shows that Canton has a larger proportion of the population under 18 years of age than Cherokee County, the state and the nation. Youth populations have been declining as a percentage of the population and this trend is expected to continue. Canton, however, has seen a leveling of this percentage and youth populations will continue to be one of the largest user groups. For a city the size of Canton, new developments and annexations can impact these percentages and should be considered when planning for future parks and recreation services.



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Figure 2.5: Population Under Age 18



2.2.4 Poverty

Table 2.1 shows the proportion of the population living below the poverty line for individuals and children. Poverty levels in Canton are considerably higher than in the rest of Cherokee County and have increased for children despite a decrease across the state and nation. The presence of significant populations living below the poverty line indicates a responsibility to provide affordable programming in facilities withing a walkable distance.

Table 2.1: Population Below Poverty Line

		2010	2022
USA	All	15.3%	12.6%
	Children	21.6%	16.3%
Georgia	All	17.9%	12.7%
	Children	24.8%	16.6%
Cherokee County	All	8.4%	5.0%
	Children	10.9%	3.0%
City of Canton	All	17.6%	15.1%
	Children	22.2%	25.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS

2.2.5 Income and Educational Attainment

The median household income values in Table 2.2 show a considerable increase in Canton that surpasses the inflation adjusted income. Canton's median household income has also increased from a position lower than the state and nation to higher than both. Cherokee County as a whole has consistently enjoyed higher incomes than Canton. Per capita income reflects much of the same findings as for households. Canton's per capita income for 2023 is similar to the rest of the state and lower than the county.

Table 2.2: Household Income

	2010	2010 Adjusted	2023	2028
Median Household Income				
USA	$50,046	$69,096	$72,603	$82,410
Georgia	$46,430	$64,104	$69,506	$80,622
Cherokee County	$61,834	$85,371	$100,996	$113,095
City of Canton	$43,043	$59,428	$76,690	$87,773
Per Capita Income				
USA	$26,059	$35,978	$41,310	$47,525
Georgia	$23,383	$32,284	$38,215	$44,236
Cherokee County	$28,455	$39,287	$46,002	$52,518
City of Canton	$20,775	$28,683	$37,108	$43,096

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2019 ACS 5-year Estimates, Esri forecasts, BLS

Table 2.3 shows increasing educational attainment between 2000 and 2023 for Canton, with similar numbers as the state and the nation. Educational attainment in Canton continues to be lower than Cherokee County as a whole. These numbers show an increasingly educated population in Canton with potentially changing interests.

Table 2.3: Educational Attainment Age 25 and Over

Educational Attainment (Highest Level)	City of Canton		Cherokee County		Georgia		USA	
	2010	2023	2010	2023	2010	2023	2010	2023
No High School Diploma	22.4%	13.6%	10.2%	6.7%	15.7%	10.0%	14.4%	9.6%
High School/GED	25.8%	24.1%	22.3%	22.5%	29.3%	27.4%	28.5%	27.0%
Some College, No Degree	19.7%	22.3%	26.2%	20.0%	21.0%	17.6%	21.3%	17.7%
Associates Degree	7.6%	7.6%	6.1%	9.2%	6.8%	9.3%	7.6%	9.5%
Bachelors Degree	17.9%	21.5%	25.7%	29.1%	17.5%	21.9%	17.7%	22.3%
Graduate/Professional/Doctorate Degree	6.5%	10.8%	9.4%	12.5%	9.8%	13.9%	10.4%	13.9%

Source: Esri forecasts, ACS 5-year estimates

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2.2.6 Population Diversity

As shown in Figure 2.6, Canton became more diverse between 2010 and 2020. The proportion of white, non-Hispanic residents decreased from 65% to 60%, while the total numbers grew with the overall population. The city's racial composition is clearly shifting, and minority populations will likely continue to grow (despite often being undercounted), potentially bringing changes to demand for recreation activities.

2.2.7 Conclusion

The Canton community has experienced considerable change over the past decade. The city's population is becoming more educated, more diverse, and older. These changes point to potential shifts in demand and preferences for parks and recreation services in the community. Programming, development, and other services must consider the changing demographic landscape to offer inclusive services that can be enjoyed by everyone. As the population continues to grow, change, and diversify, Canton will benefit from parks and recreation opportunities that meet the needs and expectations of this evolving community.

2.3 Inventory of Parks and Recreation in Canton

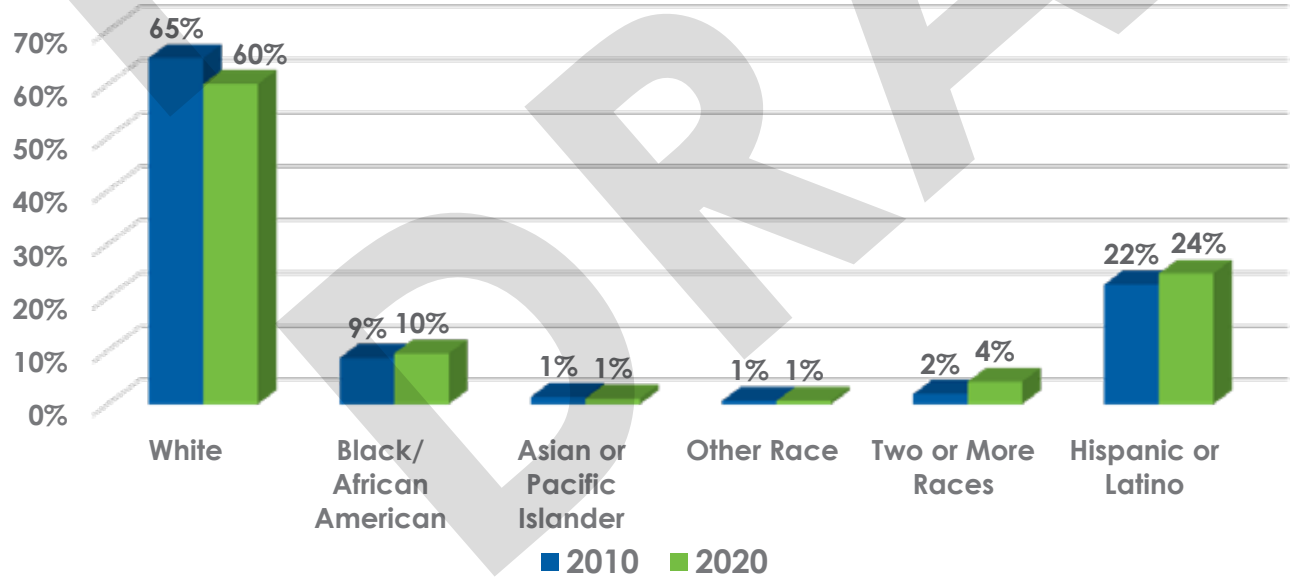
Classification of parks helps to evaluate the overall recreation opportunities available to the public. A park system should be evaluated as a composite of recreation areas that collectively meet public needs. Park systems should provide a combination of smaller neighborhood parks, larger community parks, special use parks, and natural areas, dispersed throughout the community.

The facilities inventory in this chapter identifies each park by its classification and lists the specific facilities it provides. Table 2.4 defines each park category by its typical size and service area, population served, typical features and facilities, and desirable characteristics. Categories and descriptions are adapted to meet the specific needs of the Canton system from "Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines," by the National Recreation and Park Association.

Residents of Canton are offered a variety of parks and recreation facilities. The Parks and Recreation Inventory (Table 2.5) provides a summary of all the offerings by Canton with the classification for each property.

The Existing Parks and Trails map (Figure 2.7) shows the location of each of the parks and recreation areas offered by Canton, as well as others. The following text provides a summary of these facilities. Photos with amenity lists and condition assessments for each park are presented in Appendix A.

Figure 2.6: Population Percentages by Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin



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Table 2.4: Park Classifications

Park Classification	Typical Size and Service Area	Typical Features/ Facilities	Desirable Characteristics
Local Space			
Mini Park (MP)	▪ Size: Less than 2 acres of developed parkland; less than 3 total acres ▪ 1/2-mile service area ▪ 10-minute walk	▪ Typical facilities may include playgrounds, small multi-use court area, and benches.	▪ Often provided in association with school facilities. Some developed as part of residential developments. ▪ May also provide open space as needed to serve high density neighborhoods where households have limited yard space.
Neighborhood Park (NP)	▪ Size: 2-10 acres of developed parkland; 3-15 total acres ▪ 1-mile service area ▪ 10-minute walk ▪ To serve a population up to 5,000	▪ Suited for intense development ▪ Typical facilities include athletic fields, game courts, playgrounds, drinking fountains, picnic areas/shelters, and walking paths.	▪ Easily accessible to neighborhood population (safe walking and bike distance). ▪ May be developed as park/school facility or in conjunction with service agency facility. ▪ May not be needed in areas served locally by larger parks.
Community Park (CP)	▪ 10-30+ acres of developed parkland; 20 or more total acres ▪ 2-mile service radius ▪ 5-minute drive ▪ To serve several neighborhoods with populations up to 20,000	▪ Typical facilities include all those listed for neighborhood parks, plus swimming pool, field or game court complex, dog park, recreation or community center, etc. ▪ May include natural areas for picnicking, walking, etc. ▪ May have an active or passive recreation focus or a balance of both. Parks with passive focus will have a higher percentage of undeveloped land.	▪ Capable of providing a range of intensive recreational activities or provides one or two activities that attract users from multi-neighborhood areas. ▪ May meet neighborhood park needs for users within a 10-minute walk.
Special Use (SU)	▪ Serves community-wide area	▪ Area for specialized or single purpose recreational activities such as plazas, major pools, riverfront park areas, golf courses, athletic complexes, indoor facilities, etc.	▪ Area should be located to meet the specific needs of the intended use.

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Table 2.4: Park Classifications (Continued)

Park Classification	Typical Size and Service Area	Typical Features/ Facilities	Desirable Characteristics
Regional Space			
Natural Area/Open Space (OS)	▪ N/A ▪ Can be local or regional spaces.	▪ Areas of low or limited development. Includes undeveloped areas, urban greenspaces, and small designated natural areas. ▪ May include urban greenspaces (mowed and landscaped areas) of any size that are considered developed but have predominantly passive uses. ▪ Typical facilities include walking/hiking trails, picnic areas, gardens, and open grass areas.	▪ Includes undeveloped properties that may be developed in the future. ▪ May also function as small nature parks. ▪ Educational opportunities desirable in developed or undeveloped areas.
Nature Parks (NP)	▪ Size as needed to protect the resource	▪ Majority of park to remain in its natural state (less than 20% developed) ▪ Facilities should focus on education by use of "nature activities" and should reinforce that philosophy by offering habitat enhancement, trails, nature centers, and interpretive signage. Should also include parking and restrooms.	▪ The park should be of sufficient size to protect the natural resource and provide a buffer from offsite conditions. Should include unique natural areas with ecological interest. ▪ Typical size should be over 50 acres for management efficiency and to promote ecosystem services.
State Parks (SP)	▪ Size as needed to protect natural resources of State or regional significance	▪ The majority of park to remain in its natural state. ▪ The park should be of sufficient size to protect the natural resource and provide a buffer from offsite conditions.	▪ Should include unique natural areas with ecological interest, lakes, or other features of state or regional interest. ▪ Serve state-wide area or beyond. ▪ Size will vary based on the area required to protect the resource.

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Table 2.5: Parks and Recreation Inventory

Canton Parks and Recreation Master Plan																									
				Athletic Fields				Game Courts				Outdoor Facilities			Trails & Passive Facilities							Support			
Park Name	Park Type	Total	Developed*	Small Diamond	Large Diamond	Small Rectangular	Large Rectangular	Basketball Courts	Soccer Pitch	Tennis Courts	Racket Ball Courts	Playgrounds	Dog Park	Fitness Court	Paved/Hard Surface (Miles)	Fishing Access	Boat Launch/Ramp	Amphitheater	Large Shelters	Medium Shelters	Gazebos/Small Shelters	Restroom Buildings	Concessions Buildings	Parking (Off-Street)	Special Feature/Notes
Canton Parks and Recreation																									
Neighborhood Parks																									
Brown Park	Mini	1.2	1.2									1												10	War monument, 2 statues
Burge Park	Mini	0.5	0.5					1				1												0	
Harmon Park	Neighborhood	9.5	6.0	2					1			1								1		1	1	83	
McCanless Park	Neighborhood	3.0	1.2									1								2				UL	Boy Scout building
Subtotal - Neighborhood Parks		**14.2**	**8.9**	**2**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**4**	**0**	**0**	**0.0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**3**	**0**	**1**	**1**	**93**	
Community Parks																									
Boling Park	Community	73.0	29.8	3			1	1		4	4				1.2	1			1	1		1		341	Large parking lot shared w/ Cherokee HS
Etowah River Park	Community/Nature	143.7	51.8				3	1				1			3.7	1	1	1		1	2	1	1	203	Additional gravel lot, canoe/kayak launch
Heritage Park	Community	31.4	25.8				2					1		1	1.1	1						1		45	Restroom at upper entrance
Subtotal - Community Parks		**248.1**	**107.5**	**3**	**0**	**0**	**6**	**2**	**0**	**4**	**4**	**2**	**0**	**1**	**5.9**	**3**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**2**	**2**	**3**	**1**	**589**	
Special Use Parks																									
Cannon Park	Plaza	0.4	0.4																		1			44	
Canton Paw Park	Single Use	2.8	1.5										1											UL	
Hickory Log Creek Boat Ramp	Single Use/Open Space	20.3	2.1													1	1							UL	
South Canton Park	Undeveloped	6.2	0.0																						
Subtotal - Special Use Parks		**29.7**	**4.0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**0.0**	**1**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**44**	
Total - Parks and Recreation		**292.0**	**120.4**	**5**	**0**	**0**	**6**	**3**	**1**	**4**	**4**	**6**	**1**	**1**	**5.9**	**4**	**2**	**1**	**1**	**5**	**3**	**4**	**2**	**726**	

*Developed acreage measured in ArcGIS, UL=Unlined

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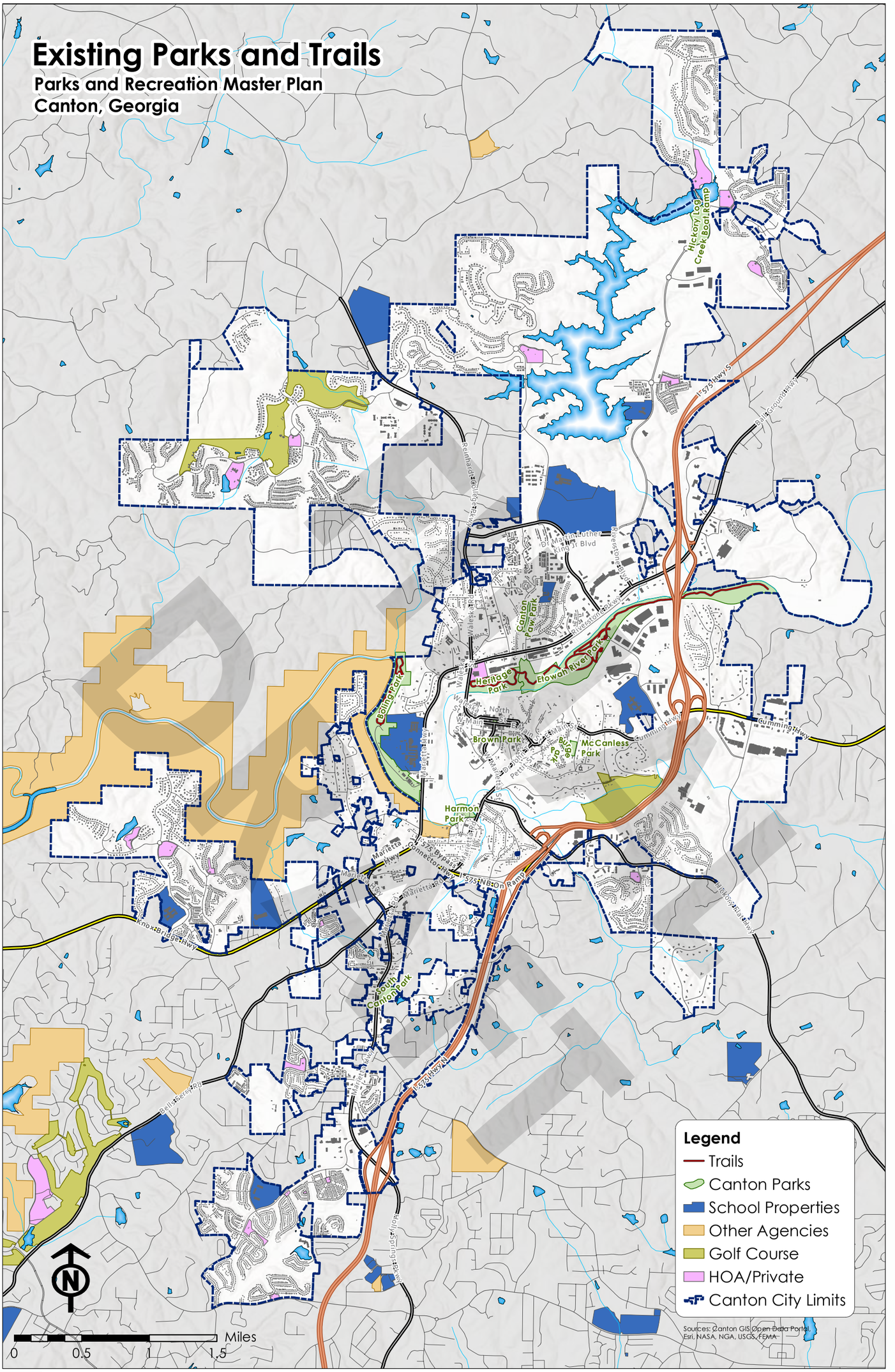


Figure 2.7: Existing Parks and Trails

2.3.1 Neighborhood Parks

A neighborhood park is a small but highly developed park located within a short (10-minute) walking or biking distance of residents with facilities such as game courts, playgrounds, picnic areas/shelters, athletic fields, and walking trails. Canton offers four neighborhood parks.

Brown Park

Brown Park is a small neighborhood park in downtown Canton where the city hosts small events and a farmers market. The facilities are generally in good condition, and the restrooms are currently being upgraded.






Brown Park

Burge Park

Burge Park is a small neighborhood park located east of downtown very close to McCanless Park. The park contains a basketball court and playground, which are in fair to good condition. The park has limited ADA compliant access to the park's features.






Burge Park

Harmon Park

Harmon Park is a neighborhood park based on its size, however it includes features more typical of a community park. The park received a complete upgrade in 2023 and 2024 and is in overall good condition. The park's features include a picnic shelter, two youth baseball fields, a basketball court, a playground, and a new dedicated soccer pitch.






Harman Park

McCanless Park

McCanless Park is a neighborhood park near Burge Park east of downtown Canton. The park includes a small building used by local Scout troops, a playground, and two picnic shelters. The park is in overall poor condition.






McCanless Park

2.3.2 Community Parks

Community parks are larger parks that serve multiple neighborhoods and offer a wider variety of facilities. Community parks should be conveniently located (within approximately a 5-minute drive) and easily accessible with

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facilities intended to occupy visitors for extended periods of time (field or game court complex, disc golf, etc.). Canton offers three community parks, all located along the Etowah River.

Boling Park

Boling Park is a community park located between the Etowah River and Cherokee High School. Features include multiple fields, basketball court, picnic shelters, tennis courts, racquetball courts, and trails. The park is overall in fair to good condition and needs ADA compliant access to the fields and other features. When the wastewater treatment plant construction completes in 2024, the parking lot near the park entrance will serve as a trailhead for the Etowah River Trail that will connect to Etowah River Park.






Boling Park

Etowah River Park

Etowah River Park is a community park located on the river northeast of downtown Canton and is a popular location for festivals and concerts. The park is in overall good condition. Features include 3.7 miles of trails, amphitheater, multipurpose fields, picnic shelters, basketball/volleyball court, and a canoe/kayak launch. The parking lot at the east end of the park needs resurfacing and ADA compliant access. New restrooms and boat launch improvements are scheduled to be completed in 2024.






Etowah River Park

Heritage Park

Heritage Park is a large community park on the north side of the Etowah River near downtown. Park features include trails, playground, fitness court, and multipurpose fields. The park is in overall good condition; however, it experiences periodic flooding. The park has limited parking and can be difficult to find due to the location of the entrance.






Heritage Park

2.3.3 Special Use Parks & Facilities

Special use parks are areas designed for specialized or single purpose recreational activity, and can include places such as plazas, singe use facilities, sports complexes, and indoor spaces. Canton offers four special use parks, including one plaza, one dog park, one boat ramp, and one undeveloped property.

Cannon Park

Cannon Park is a popular plaza in the center of downtown Canton. The plaza is in overall good condition and is a popular location for special events. The park's primary feature is a small gazebo.






Cannon Park

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Canton Paw Park

The Canton Paw Park is a small dog park just north of Riverstone Parkway behind the Riverstone Mill Shopping Center. The park is in poor condition with limited parking. The city recognizes the opportunity to develop a replacement dog park in another area while potentially transitioning this location to a neighborhood park.






Canton Paw Park

The Hickory Log Creek Boat Ramp

The Hickory Log Creek Boat Ramp is located at the northern end of Lake Canton at Hickory Log Creek Reservoir. The property includes a boat ramp and a parking lot. The facility is located in a 58 acre parcel adjacent to a city owned parcel with an additional 198 acres. The city recognizes the potential to develop new trails along the reservoir on city property.






Hickory Log Creek Boat Ramp

South Canton Park (undeveloped)

Development of South Canton Park will begin following Council approval. This new community park in the southern part of the city will include a playground, dog park, walking path, and amphitheater.





2.3.4 Parks by Others

Table 2.6 shows parks and recreation areas that may be available to Canton residents but are not owned or operated by the city. These properties are located either within the city or nearby. They are owned and maintained either by the County, school system, a nonprofit, homeowners association (HOA), another government agency, a local university, or a private entity. Each of these spaces contributes to the full spectrum of recreational opportunities available to Canton residents.

These parks are included to create a full inventory of all recreation amenities available to residents. If major improvements are made in any of these parks, the city and the owners/operators of these spaces should coordinate their efforts to best address the community's needs and to avoid potentially costly and inefficient duplication of services and amenities.

One important aspect of recreational opportunities in Canton is the prevalence of HOAs that provide pools, playgrounds, tennis courts, pickleball courts, and more. Fourteen HOAs and one private golf club offer 17 pools, 13 playgrounds, 37 tennis courts, and 19 pickleball courts to their members. Canton also includes the G. Cecil Pruett Community Center Family YMCA which also includes a playground and outdoor pool. This property is city owned and leased to the YMCA.

2.4 Benchmarking Comparisons

One method for evaluating parks and recreation services offered in a community is to use benchmark comparisons to other communities. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Park Metrics program provides a variety of data for use in benchmarking. The following analysis uses data from 32 agencies located in Georgia, South Carolina, Florida, North Carolina, and Tennessee (serving populations between 20,000 and 60,000) that participated in the Park Metrics program (Table 2.7). Additionally, NRPA provides an annual report[1] which includes national performance benchmarks; these figures are also used in this evaluation process.

Totals for Canton were calculated based on information provided by the city. Because the data for other park systems was limited to parks and facilities managed by those agencies, only parks and facilities managed by Canton are included in this analysis (other agencies, schools, and private facilities were not included). The data used in this analysis for Canton are actual numbers for fiscal year 2023. The totals for the comparison municipalities were the most recent available of those entered for 2021, 2022, or 2023. The values presented in these comparisons are based on information reported to Park Metrics by the agencies and may vary from actual budgets and measurements. Table 2.8 presents the data specific to Canton Parks and Recreation used in the analysis.

[1] National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), "2023 NRPA Agency Performance Review"

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Table 2.6: Parks by Others

Canton Parks and Recreation Master Plan																				
Facility Name	**Agency**	**Park Type**	**Playgrounds**	**Basketball Courts**	**Tennis Courts**	**Pickleball Courts**	**Volleyball Court**	**Diamond Fields**	**Multipurpose Fields**	**Artificial Turf Field**	**Batting Cages**	**Picnic Shelters**	**Outdoor Pool**	**Indoor Pool**	**Recreation Center**	**Skate Park**	**Boat Ramp**	**Dog Park**	**Golf (Holes)**	**Trails (Miles)**
School Parks																				
Avery Elementary School	Cherokee County School District	Mini	1	3																
Clayton Elementary School	Cherokee County School District	Neighborhood	1					1												
Free Home Elementary School	Cherokee County School District	Neighborhood	1	2					1											
Hasty Elementary School Fine Arts Academy	Cherokee County School District	Mini	1	3																
Hickory Flat Elementary School	Cherokee County School District	Mini	1	1																
Holly Springs Elementary School STEM Academy	Cherokee County School District	Neighborhood	1	2				1												
Indian Knoll Elementary School	Cherokee County School District	Neighborhood	1	3					1											
Knox Elementary School STEM Academy	Cherokee County School District	Mini	1	2																
Liberty Elementary School	Cherokee County School District	Mini	1	3					1											
Macedonia Elementary School	Cherokee County School District	Mini	1	2																
Sixes Elementary School	Cherokee County School District	Neighborhood	1						1											
Subtotal - School Parks			**11**	**21**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**2**	**4**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Private/Non-Profit Parks and Facilities in Canton																				
Amenity Complex at Great Sky	Great Sky HOA	Neighborhood	1	1	4	4							1							
American Legion	American Legion	Special Use						1												
Canton Golf Club	Canton Golf Club	Special Use											1						9	
Canton Heights	Canton Heights TD	Special Use											1							
Diamond Ridge	Diamond Ridge HOA	Neighborhood	1	1	2								1							
G. Cecil Pruett Community Center Family YMCA	YMCA of Metro Atlanta	Special Use	1										1		1					
Hickory Bluffs HOA	Hickory Bluffs HOA	Neighborhood			4	3							1							
Holly Mill Pool 1	Holly Mill CA	Neighborhood	1		2								1							
Holly Mill Pool 2	Holly Mill CA	Special Use											1							
Laurel Canyon Community Cottage and Fairways	Laurel Canyon CA	Neighborhood	1	1	2	6							1						18	
Mountain View	Mountain View CA	Neighborhood	1	1	2								1							
Park Village	Park Village CA	Neighborhood	1									1	1							
Preserve @ Holly Springs	Preserve @ Holly Springs HOA	Neighborhood	1										1							
Prominence Court 1	Prominence Court HOA	Neighborhood	1										1							
Prominence Court 2	Prominence Court HOA	Mini	1																	
River Green Central Park	River Green CA	Neighborhood	1	1	6				1											
River Green Heritage Club	River Green CA	Special Use											1							
River Green Summer Club	River Green CA	Neighborhood	1										1							
Soleil Laurel Canyon (55+)	Soleil Laurel Canyon CA	Neighborhood			7	6							1							
Summer Walk Community	Summer Walk Community HOA	Neighborhood	1	1	2								1							
Towne Mill Avenue Community Open Space	Towne Mill HOA	Neighborhood	1	1	6			1	1				1							
Subtotal - Parks by Others In Cherokee County			**14**	**7**	**37**	**19**	**0**	**2**	**2**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**18**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**27**	**0**
Parks by Others Near Canton																				
Badger Creek Park	Cherokee County	Special Use					2		14											
Barnett Park	Cherokee County	Community	1					3			2	1								0.5
Blankets Creek Mountain Bike Trails	SORBA	Open Space										3								14.3
Cherokee County Aquatic Center	Cherokee County	Special Use											1	1						
Cherokee Veterans Park	Cherokee County	Community	1		2	2			2	1		1			1	1				1.7
Fields Landing Park	Cherokee County	Neighborhood	1									2					1			
Hobgood Park	Cherokee County	Community	1		4			10		1	2	3								0.5
J.B. Owens Park	Holly Springs Parks & Recreation	Neighborhood	1						1			2								1.2
Mauldin/Kenney Askew Park	Cherokee County	Community	2		2	6		6	1			2								0.3
McGraw Ford WMA	Georgia DNR	Open Space															1			
Olde Rope Mill Park	Woodstock Parks and Recreation	Open Space										1								4.4
Patriots Park	Cherokee County	Community	1					2		1	2	2						1		1.0
Weatherby Park	Cherokee County	Community	1					3	1			1								0.4
Subtotal - Parks by Others Near Canton			**9**	**0**	**8**	**8**	**2**	**24**	**19**	**3**	**6**	**18**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**2**	**1**	**0**	**24.2**
Total - Other Parks			**34**	**27**	**45**	**27**	**2**	**28**	**25**	**3**	**6**	**19**	**19**	**1**	**2**	**1**	**2**	**1**	**27**	**24.2**

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Table 2.7: Benchmark Agencies

Agency	State	Year	Population	Agency Budget
Canton				
Acworth Parks & Recreation	GA	2021	22,000	$3,500,000
Aiken (City of) PRT	SC	2022	31,895	$4,580,450
Bartlett (City of) Parks & Recreation	TN	2022	57,318	$6,801,533
Chamblee Parks and Recreation Department	GA	2021	31,603	$1,170,281
Clemson (City of)	SC	2022	20,000	$1,700,000
Coral Gables (City of)	FL	2023	52,500	$14,610,361
Cornelius Parks, Arts, Recreation & Culture (PARC) Department	NC	2022	32,000	$2,424,292
Douglasville Parks and Recreation	GA	2022	35,561	$1,589,272
Gainesville Parks and Recreation	GA	2022	42,296	$7,519,067
Garner (Town of)	NC	2022	34,799	$2,482,687
Germantown Parks & Recreation, TN	TN	2022	41,333	$2,565,699
Greer Parks & Recreation Dept	SC	2022	38,865	$4,390,571
Hickory Parks, Recreation & Sports Tourism	NC	2022	44,000	$1,800,000
Holly Springs Parks and Recreation	NC	2022	47,245	$4,390,171
Homewood Parks & Recreation	AL	2021	25,534	N/A
Kannapolis (City of) Parks and Recreation	NC	2022	50,841	$1,950,001
Kernersville Parks & Recreation	NC	2022	26,481	$859,241
Kingsport Parks & Recreation	TN	2022	55,442	$1,769,800
Margate (City of) Parks and Recreation	FL	2023	58,712	$5,456,577
Miami Lakes	FL	2022	32,000	$2,659,800
Morristown Parks and Recreation	TN	2022	30,431	$2,450,001
Morrisville (Town of)	NC	2022	33,000	$2,378,799
North Augusta (City of) parks, Recreation & Leisure Services	SC	2021	24,421	$2,788,214
Ocoee (City of)	FL	2023	49,959	$4,741,020
Ormond Beach (City of) Leisure Services	FL	2021	42,545	N/A
Oviedo (City of)	FL	2021	40,145	N/A
Palm Beach Gardens (City of)	FL	2022	59,755	$13,864,881
Perry Leisure Services	GA	2022	23,538	$1,319,004
Stockbridge (City of)	GA	2021	25,637	N/A
Tullahoma Parks and Recreation Department	TN	2021	20,339	$2,059,044
Wake Forest Parks and Recreation	NC	2023	47,601	$2,092,390
Wilson (City of) Parks and Recreation	NC	2022	49,459	$5,685,050

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Table 2.8: Canton Parks and Recreation Agency Data

Data	Canton	Source/Notes
County Values		
Total SQMI	19.2	GIS
Total Acres	12,317	GIS
Population	37,042	Esri Forecasts (2023)
Department Values		
# of Parks	10	Inventory
Total Park Acres	292	GIS
Developed Acres	120.4	GIS
Trail Miles	5.9	Inventory
Parks & Rec OP Budget	$632,366	FY2024 Budget - FY2022
Parks & Rec Revenue	$46,694	FY2024 Budget - FY2022
Parks & Rec Capital Budget	$2,513,020	3-yr. Avg. FY20-FY22
Full Time Staff	9	Staff
FTE Staff	10	Staff

2.4.1 Agency Operations and Budget

Table 2.9 shows various measures of recreation and parks operations by Canton. The table also shows the median values for the 32 benchmark agencies and the national benchmark provided by the 2023 NRPA annual report.

Parkland

Canton provides 7.9 acres of parkland per thousand population, noticeable lower than the benchmark median (10.0 acres). The 6.2 acres intended for South Canton Park are included in this benchmarking analysis only as undeveloped acreage. The benchmark data only includes 20.3 acres of city-owned property adjacent to Lake Canton. Only about 41% of Canton's parkland is developed, well below the benchmark median (77%).

Trails

Canton maintains 5.9 total trail miles, lower than the benchmark median of 9.0. Canton is below the benchmark for both trails per square mile and per 10,000 population. Canton's trail miles are set to increase by another mile when the Etowah River trail extension opens between Heritage Park and Boling Park. If trails are developed on the city-owned properties at Lake Canton, Canton would outpace the benchmark agencies. The benchmark data does not include the Scout maintained trails northwest of Boling Park.

Operating Budget

Canton's operating expenditures are significantly lower than the benchmarks, overall and when considered per capita or per acre. Canton's cost recovery percentage is also significantly lower than the benchmarks. These large differences result from Canton not operating a recreation center, community center, or swimming pool and offering few programs beyond special events.

Staffing

Canton's staffing levels appear to be significantly lower than the benchmark agencies; however, the staffing levels represent the reality that Canton's parks and recreation staff only maintain outdoor facilities and support special events. Managing recreation centers and offering programming require significantly more staff than maintaining outdoor recreation facilities.

Capital Budget

Canton's capital budget for the most recent fiscal year is considerably higher than the benchmark cities, $68 per capita compared to $22. This difference is due to Canton's sizeable investments in Harmon Park, Boling Park, and the Etowah River Trail.

Table 2.9: Agency Operations and Budget

Benchmark	Canton	Benchmark	National
PARKLAND INFORMATION			
Acreage of Parkland	292.0	387.0	N/A
Acreage of Parkland per 1,000 Pop.	7.9	10.0	10.8
Parks per 10,000 Pop.	2.7	4.9	N/A
Parkland as a % of Jurisdiction	2.4%	2.8%	N/A
Percent of Acreage Developed	41%	77%	N/A
TRAILS			
Trail Miles Managed or Maintained	5.9	9.0	N/A
Trail Miles per Jurisdiction Sq. Mi.	0.3	0.5	N/A
Trail Miles per 10,000 Pop.	1.6	3.0	N/A
OPERATING BUDGET			
Operating Expenditures (Annual)	$632,366	$2,565,699	N/A
Non-Tax Revenue (Annual)	$46,694	$651,936	N/A
Cost Recovery	7%	21%	25%
Operating Expenditures per Capita	$17	$85	$95
Operating Expenditures per Acre	$2,166	$9,471	N/A
Operating Exp. per Developed Acre	$5,252	$21,051	N/A
Non-Tax Revenue per Capita	$1	$19	$22
STAFFING			
Full-Time Employees	9	24.5	N/A
Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Employees	10.0	34.0	N/A
FTE per 10,000 Population	2.7	11.0	8.9
Acres of Parkland per FTE	29.2	10.2	N/A
Developed Acres of Parkland per FTE	12.0	4.5	N/A
Operating Expenditures per FTE	$63,237	$89,182	$105,484
CAPITAL BUDGET			
Capital Park Budget for Next 5-Years	TBD	$6,587,500	N/A
Capital Budget per Year	$2,513,020	$970,450	N/A
Capital Expenditures per Capita	$68	$22	N/A

1. See Table 2.8 for Canton data sources
2. National medians obtained from NRPA 2023 Annual Report

2.4.2 Programs

The list of program categories in Table 2.10 provides the percentage of benchmark agencies that offer each type of program and whether Canton offers them. The data in the table is separated into two groups: "activities," which cover programs intended for all users, and "out-of-school-time activities" (OST), which include programs for specific user groups (children, seniors, etc.).

Canton Parks and Recreation offers limited programming, mostly in the form of festivals, special events, and races. Partner organizations provide the sports programs offered in Canton parks. Canton does not offer any OST activities.

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Table 2.10: Programs

Programs	Canton	Benchmark	National
Activities			
Themed special events	✓	97%	89%
Team sports	✓	94%	86%
Social recreation events	✓	90%	88%
Fitness enhancement classes		83%	81%
Individual sports	✓	80%	77%
Racquet sports	✓	80%	71%
Health and wellness education		77%	80%
Performing arts		70%	62%
Cultural crafts		63%	62%
Martial arts		60%	57%
Safety training		57%	71%
Running/cycling races	✓	57%	52%
Trips and tours		53%	61%
Natural and cultural history activities		53%	63%
Visual arts		50%	61%
Aquatics		43%	69%
eSports/eGaming		37%	23%
Golf		27%	48%
Out-of-School Time (OST) Activities			
Summer camp		90%	82%
Specific senior programs		77%	77%
Specific teen programs		60%	65%
After school programs		57%	53%
Programs for people with disabilities		53%	63%
STEM Programs		43%	58%
Preschool		37%	33%
Before school programs		13%	19%
Full daycare		7%	7%

2.4.3 Facilities

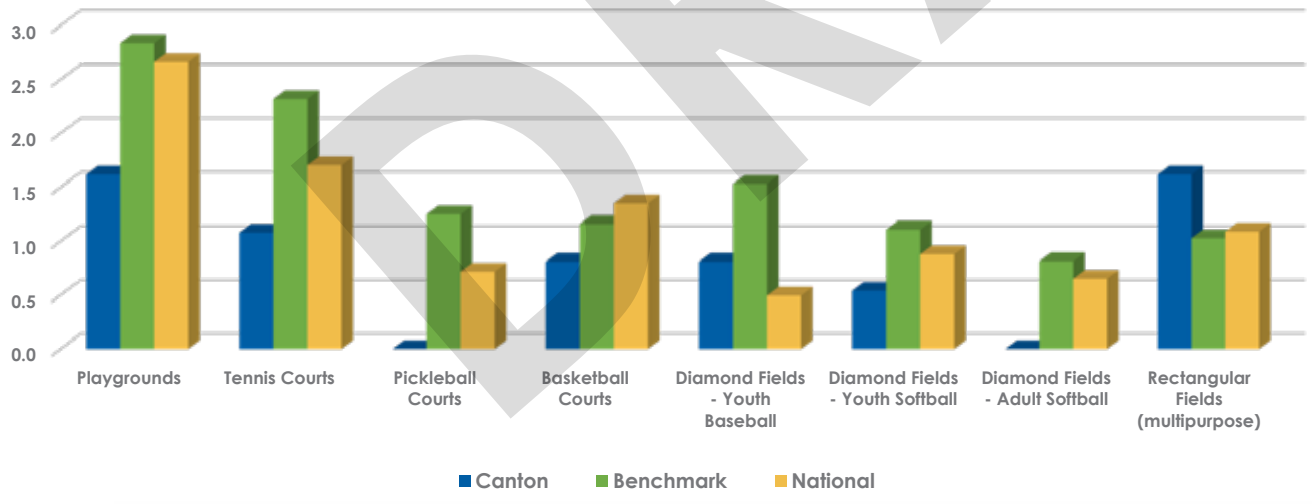
Table 2.11 compares population per facility to evaluate the existing supply. Looking at population served per facility can help identify new facilities that the city may want to add in the future. This table shows the benchmark median values for a range of facilities – outdoor and indoor. A lower population per facility value indicates a higher level of service. The table also shows the percentage of benchmark agencies that offer the facilities. Figure 2.8 displays the same information, but as facilities per 10,000 population. This version allows for a more direct comparison of the number of each type of facility Canton offers compared to the benchmark agencies.

Canton generally provides a lower level of service than the benchmark agencies; however, some of this difference is mitigated by the high number of HOA's offering recreation facilities for their residents. Canton currently does not operate any indoor recreation facilities. While the city owns the G. Cecil Pruett Community Center, the YMCA of Metro Atlanta leases the facility, and it is only available to YMCA members.

Table 2.11: Population Per Facility

Facilities	Canton		Benchmark		National	
	Offered	Pop. per	% Offered	Pop. Per	% Offered	Pop. per
Outdoor Activity Areas						
Playgrounds	✓	6,174	100%	3,525	95%	3,759
Basketball courts	✓	12,347	97%	8,630	86%	7,404
Diamond fields - youth baseball	✓	12,347	93%	6,524	79%	20,228
Tennis courts (outdoor only)	✓	9,261	86%	4,318	76%	5,860
Rectangular fields: multipurpose	✓	6,174	83%	9,732	69%	9,177
Dog park	✓	37,042	66%	32,000	68%	43,532
Diamond fields - youth softball	✓	18,521	62%	9,032	62%	11,384
Community gardens		N/A	52%	32,000	52%	31,395
Pickleball courts		N/A	45%	8,000	31%	13,922
Performance amphitheater	✓	37,042	48%	33,400	37%	67,862
Diamond fields - adult softball		N/A	69%	12,282	63%	15,345
Swimming pools (outdoor only)		N/A	28%	25,513	51%	38,365
Skatepark		N/A	31%	44,000	41%	53,144
Multipurpose artificial turf field		N/A	28%	20,786	25%	36,844
Indoor Activity Areas						
Recreation centers		N/A	76%	23,670	63%	31,215
Community centers		N/A	66%	23,538	59%	29,494
Senior centers		N/A	45%	34,799	41%	59,727
Indoor competitive swimming pool		N/A	14%	37,648	N/A	N/A
Teen centers		N/A	14%	27,000	13%	55,494
Nature centers		N/A	14%	42,421	N/A	N/A

Figure 2.8: Facilities Per 10,000 Population



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2.5 Geographic Distribution of Parks and Recreation Areas

The spatial distribution of parks throughout Canton is important to consider because residents are better able and more willing to utilize facilities that are close to their homes. The methodology for this analysis (and the facility analysis) can be found in Appendix B. Of note, these service areas are not necessarily representative of all users of the parks; after all, some users may be more willing to travel greater distances than those defined in the figures below. However, the most frequent users generally live within the areas indicated and usage rates tend to decline sharply in relation to travel times.

A 10-minute walking distance represents about a half mile range and is a commonly used measurement for the walkability of an area. Most residents can easily travel this distance without using a car. The Trust for Public Land, NRPA, and the Urban Land Institute have all joined forces to develop the "10-minute Walk Campaign" which strives for healthy, walkable communities and easy access to greenspace for everyone in the country. As part of their multi-pronged campaign, cities all over the U.S. are committed to ensuring that by 2050 all residents will have access to a park within a 10-minute walk of their home.[2]

2.5.1 Park Service Areas

Figure 2.9 shows areas in Canton that are within a 10-minute walking distance to a neighborhood park or larger. Walkable access to Canton's parks is concentrated in the central part of the city. When completed, South Canton Park will make a small improvement in the southern part of the city but was not included in this analysis.

Overall, 37% of Canton's population live within walking distance to a neighborhood park. Most of that access is provided by private/HOA parks (22%), which are only available to their members. City of Canton parks provide walkable access to 14% of the population and the elementary schools provide access to another 1%. Providing walkable access to all residents everywhere in the city will be an ongoing challenge, made more difficult by the dispersed nature of the city boundary caused by the annexation process.

Figure 2.10 shows 5-minute and 10-minute drivetime areas to community parks. This figure demonstrates that most of the city is within a short drive to a larger park. The only residents not within a 10-minute drive of a community park are located within communities with amenities provided by the HOA.

The service area analysis also involved examining the population served by each of Canton's parks. The analysis (Table 2.12) included the total population with a 10-minute walk and a 5-minute drive. Within the 10-minute walk areas, the analysis also included the population under 15, 55 and older, diversity, and median household income. Diversity is reported using the US Census Bureau's Diversity Index, which measures the probability that two people from the same area will be from different race/ethnic groups. This analysis can help inform the types of programs and features the city may want to offer in these parks.

Canton Paw Park, Harmon Park, and Heritage Park serve the most people within a 10-minute walk, all over 1,600. Harmon Park serves a higher percentage of people under 15, but a considerably lower percentage of people 55 and over. All of Canton's parks serve diverse areas, with the exception of Hickory Log Creek Boat Ramp. Etowah River Park stands out because there are no residents living within a 10-minute walk and only 1,754 within a 5-minute drive, compared to almost 16,000 for Boling Park.

Table 2.12: 2023 Population Estimate and Characteristics Near Parks

Park Name	10-Minute Walk					5-Minute Drive
	Total	Under 15 Years	55+ Years	Diversity Index	Median HH Income	
Boling	221	25%	16%	80.2	$50,722	15,904
Brown	1,013	23%	25%	79.0	$46,250	8,783
Burge	899	24%	21%	83.8	$31,534	4,688
Cannon	1,013	23%	25%	79.0	$46,250	11,461
Canton Paw	1,743	22%	22%	79.3	$48,909	8,919
Etowah River	0	0%	0%	0.0	$0	1,754
Harmon	1,607	30%	12%	74.7	$27,690	9,595
Heritage	1,623	23%	21%	79.8	$49,165	11,898
Hickory Log	49	19%	29%	39.8	$85,714	3,350
McCanless	797	24%	21%	83.8	$31,494	4,283
South Canton*	552	19%	29%	70.9	$76,399	11,032

*Planned future park included for reference only

2.5.2 Facility Service Areas

This portion of the needs analysis focuses on the distribution of recreation facilities provided for Canton residents, including those not maintained by the city. Service areas for these key facilities are illustrated in Figures 2.11 through 2.21. As with the geographic distribution of parks, 10-minute walk, 5-minute drive, and 10-minute drive times are used for defining service areas.

Larger and unique facilities are intended to serve greater populations; typically, residents are willing to travel longer distances to access these amenities. In contrast, smaller and more common facilities usually serve more localized (smaller) populations and are more often within walking distance. The following sections outline the overall need for facilities in Canton. Even though some portions of the city are highlighted that are located outside of facility service areas, a new facility is not necessarily recommended for these areas.

[2] https://10minutewalk.org/

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Figure 2.9: Neighborhood Park Service Areas

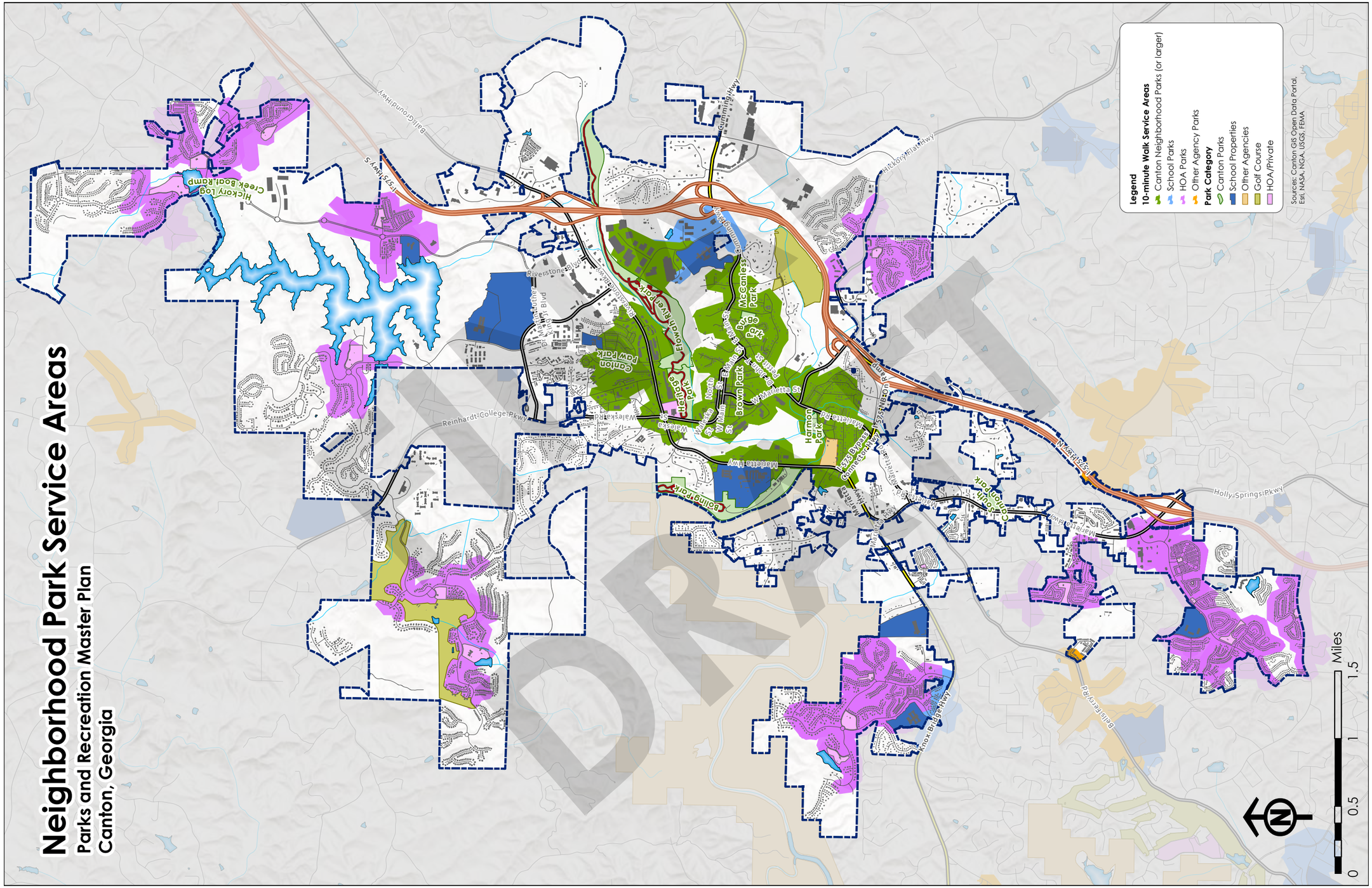
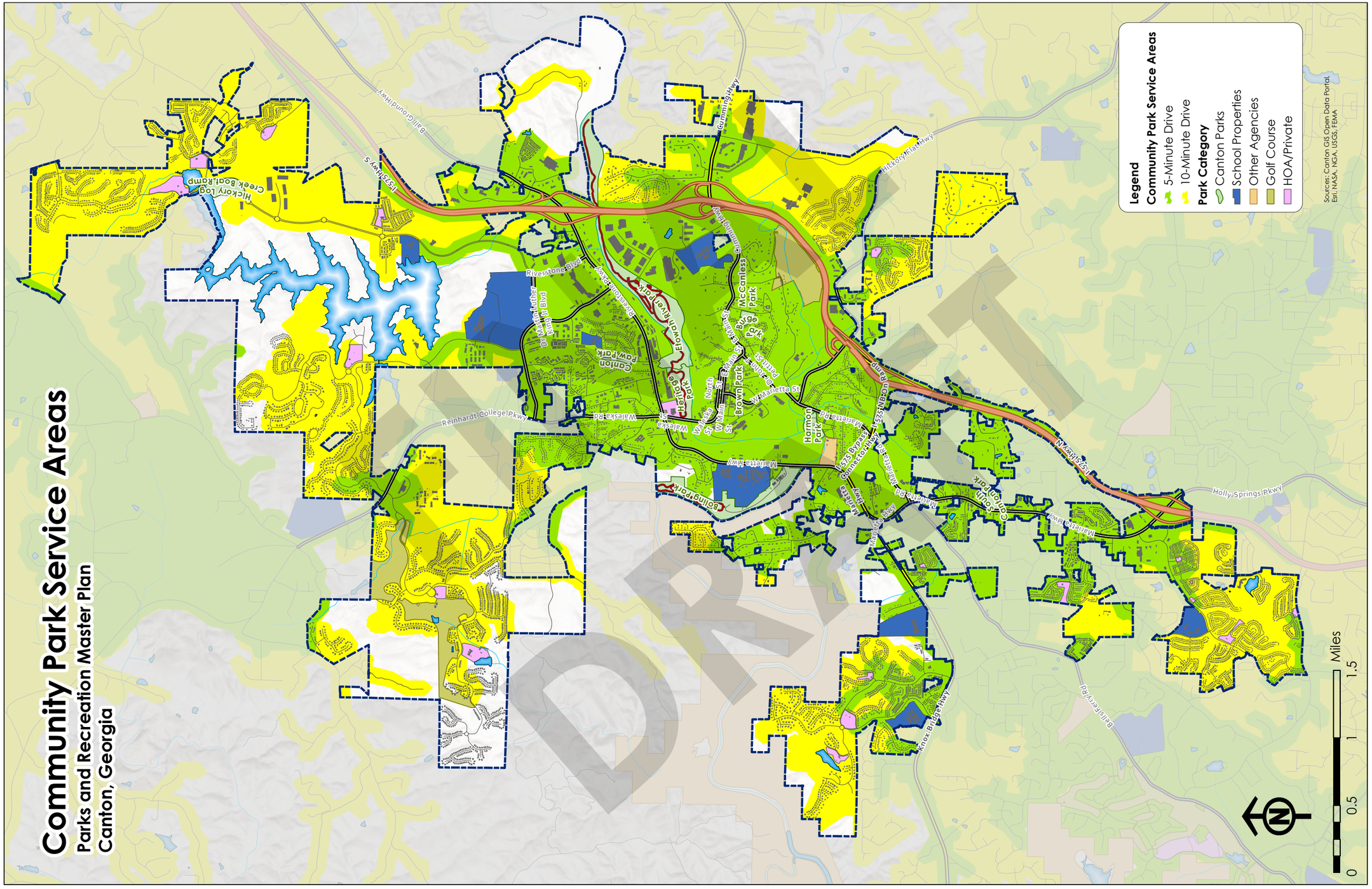


Figure 2.10: Community Park Service Areas



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Playgrounds (Figure 2.11)

- Walking access to playgrounds offered by Canton is concentrated in the central part of the city. Knox Elementary and Hasty Elementary offer playgrounds that serve a few residents. HOA playgrounds serve large numbers of Canton residents, though only their members.
- Most city residents are within 5-minute drive to a playground. Nearly all are within a 10-minute drive.
- South Canton will offer limited 10-minute walk access in the southern part of the city where access is most needed. New playgrounds in the northern part of the city near Canton Paw Park and near the new Cherokee High School would offer 10-minute walk access to large numbers of Canton residents.



Heritage Park

Outdoor Basketball Courts (Figure 2.12)

- Canton offers minimal walking access to outdoor basketball courts. Only the Burge and Boling Park courts have residents within a 10-minute walk. Knox Elementary's basketball court is available to a few residents within a 10-minute walk.



Boling Park

- 5-minute drive access covers all of the central part of the city, and 10-minute drive access covers most residents.
- New basketball courts in the northern part of the city near Canton Paw Park and near the new Cherokee High School would offer 10-minute walk access to large numbers of Canton residents. Large numbers of residents in the far southern part of the city also lack 5-minute drive access.

Baseball/Softball Diamond Fields (Figure 2.13)

- Canton only offers 10-minute walk service to diamond fields to residents near Boling Park and Harmon Park.
- 5-minute drive access covers most of the central part of the city, and 10-minute drive access covers nearly all of the city.

Multipurpose Rectangular Fields (Figure 2.14)

- Boling Park and Heritage Park offer limited 10-minute walk access to multipurpose rectangular fields for residents.
- 5-minute drive access covers most of the central part of the city, and 10-minute drive access covers nearly all of the city.

Tennis Courts (Figure 2.15)

- Canton only offers tennis courts at Boling Park., but very few residents have 10-minute walk access to Boling Park.



Boling Park

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- 5-minute drive access to tennis courts covers most of the central part of the city, and 10-minute drive access covers almost all of the city.
- HOA's offer considerable 10-minute walk access to tennis courts for their members.

Picnic Shelters (Figure 2.16)

- Boling Park, Harmon Park, and McCanless Park offer 10-minute walk access to many residents in central part of the city.
- 5-minute drive access covers most of the central part of the city, and 10-minute drive access covers most of the city.
- Additional shelters north of Riverstone Parkway and near the new Cherokee High School would greatly improve access for Canton residents.



Harmon Park

Pickleball Courts (Figure 2.17)

- The City of Canton does not currently offer pickleball courts. Thus, 10-minute walk access for residents is provided by only HOA's for their members. Fortunately, there are many courts provided by these HOA's.
- Cherokee County offers pickleball courts at Kenny Askew Park, providing 5-minute drive access to a small area in the southern part of the city. Most of the central and southern parts of the city are within a 10-minute drive.
- Adding pickleball courts at Boling Park would greatly improve 10-minute walk and 5-minute drive access for Canton residents.

Outdoor Swimming Pools (Figure 2.18)

- Canton does not currently offer a swimming pool. All 10-minute walk access to pools is provided by the G. Cecil Pruett Community Center and HOAs for their members.
- Only a portion of the southern part of the city is within a 10-minute drive to the Cherokee County Aquatic Center.
- The lack of service presents Canton with an opportunity to fill a recognized need with either a pool or splash pad in the central part of the city.

Dog Parks (Figure 2.19)

- Canton offers one dog park, which provides minimal 10-minute walking service to residents.
- 5-minute drive access is limited to the central part of the city, and 10-minute drive access covers all but the furthest reaches the city.
- The planned future South Canton Park includes a new dog park, which will greatly improve 5-minute drive access in the southern part of the city. However, the loss of the Canton Paw Park will reduce access for the north part of the city.

Trails (Figure 2.20)

- Canton offers trails in Heritage Park, Etowah River Park, and Boling Park. Construction of a trail connecting Heritage Park to Boling Park is underway. Only a few residents in the central part of the city have 10-minute walk access to these trails.
- 5-minute drive access covers most of the central part of the city, and 10-minute drive access to these trails covers almost all of the city.



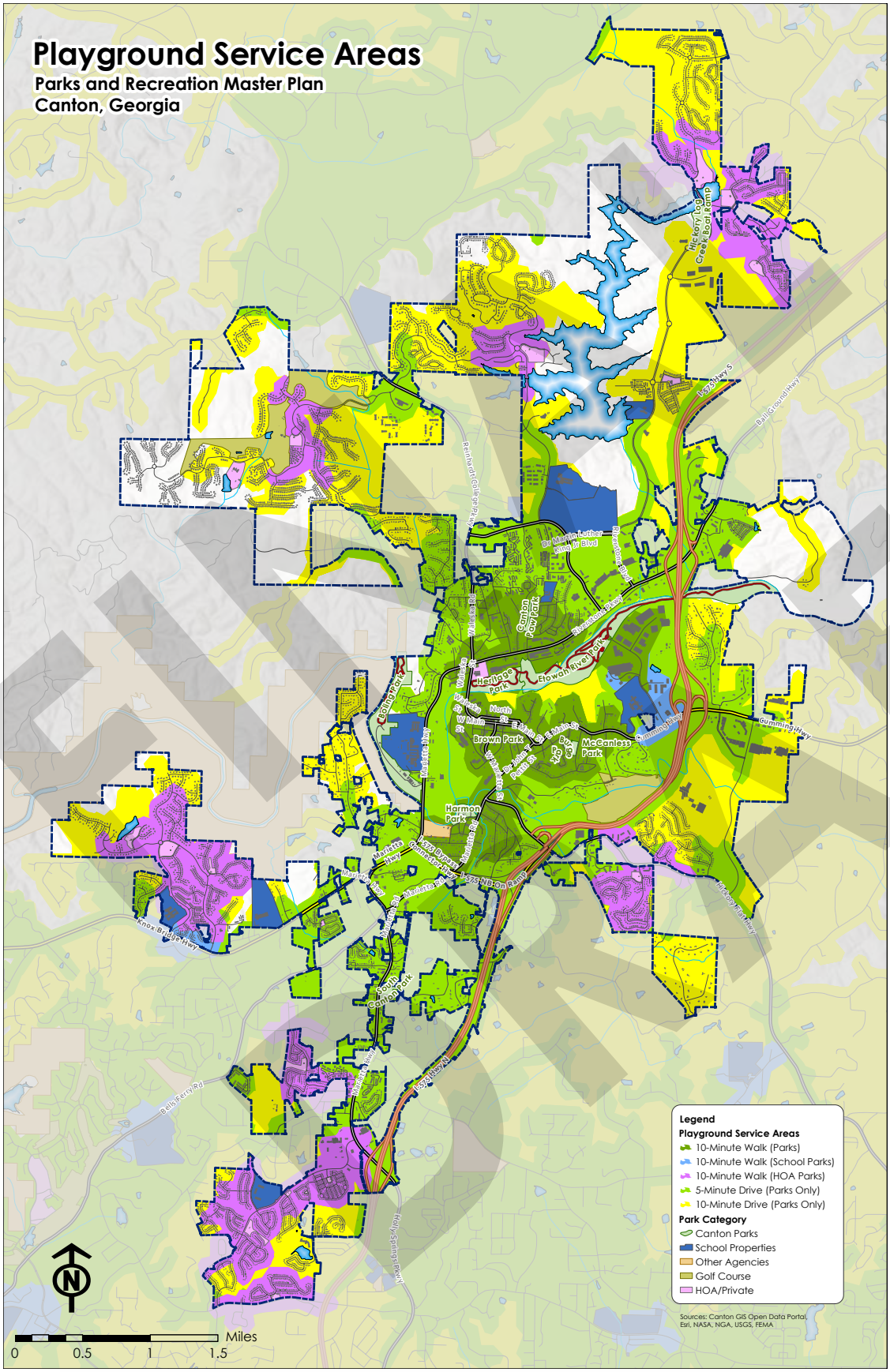
Heritage Park

Skate Parks (Figure 2.21)

- Canton does not currently offer a skate park. A small portion of the eastern part of the city is within a 10-minute drive to the skate park offered by Cherokee County at Cherokee Veterans Park.
- A new Canton skate park in the central part of the city would bring most residents within a 5-minute drive and nearly all within a 10-minute drive of a skate park.

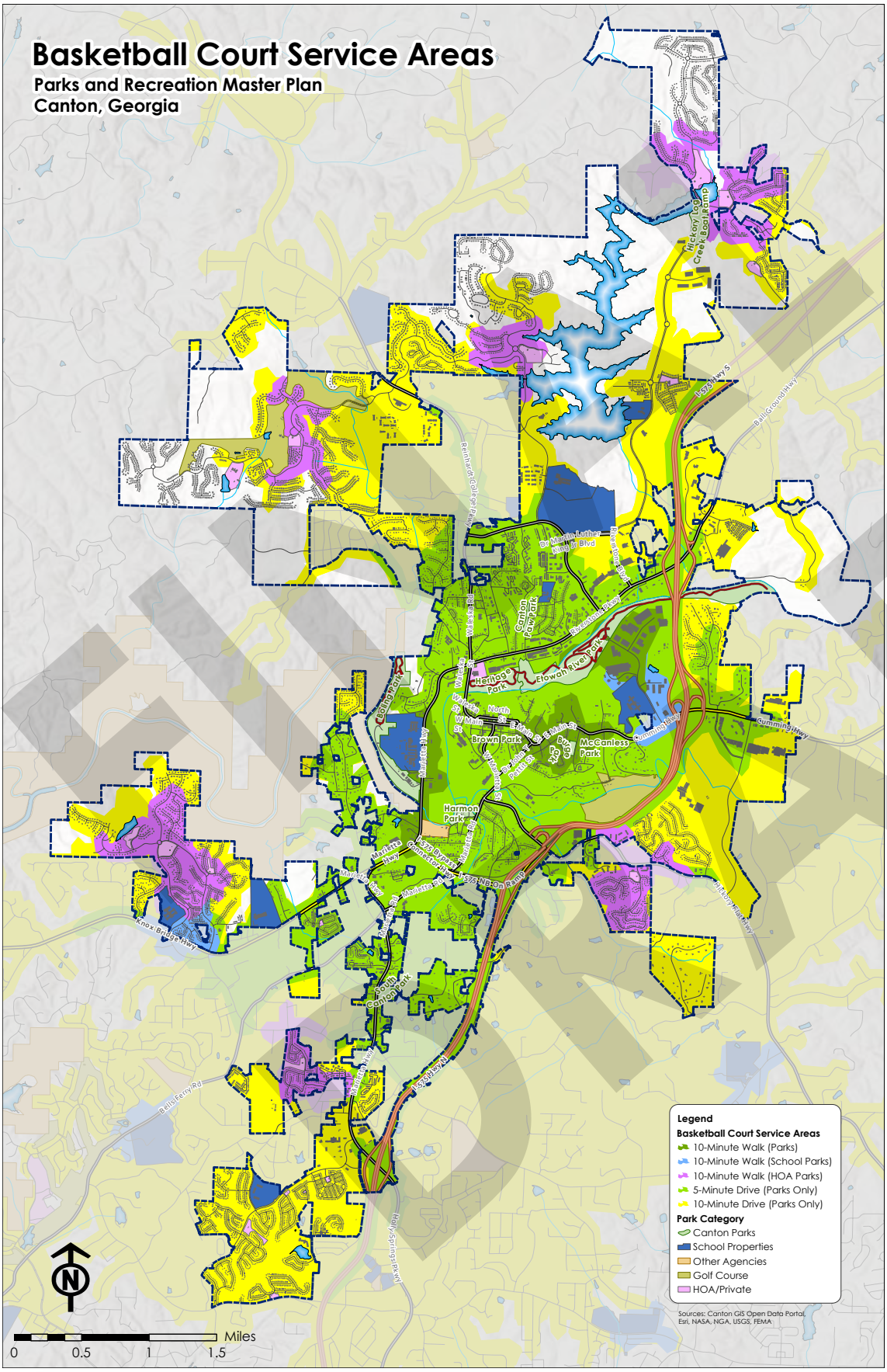
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Figure 2.11: Playground Service Areas



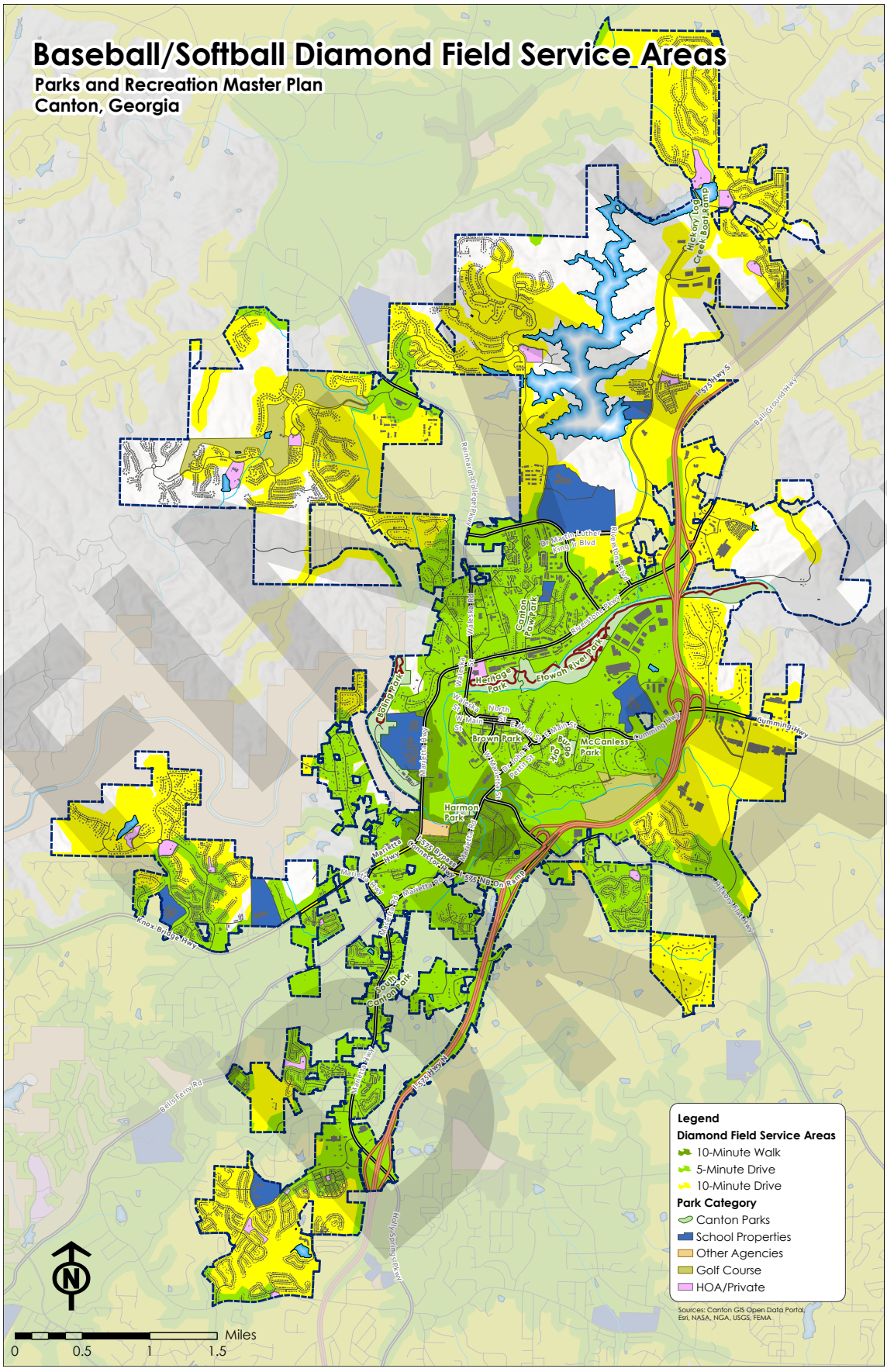
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Figure 2.12: Outdoor Basketball Court Service Areas



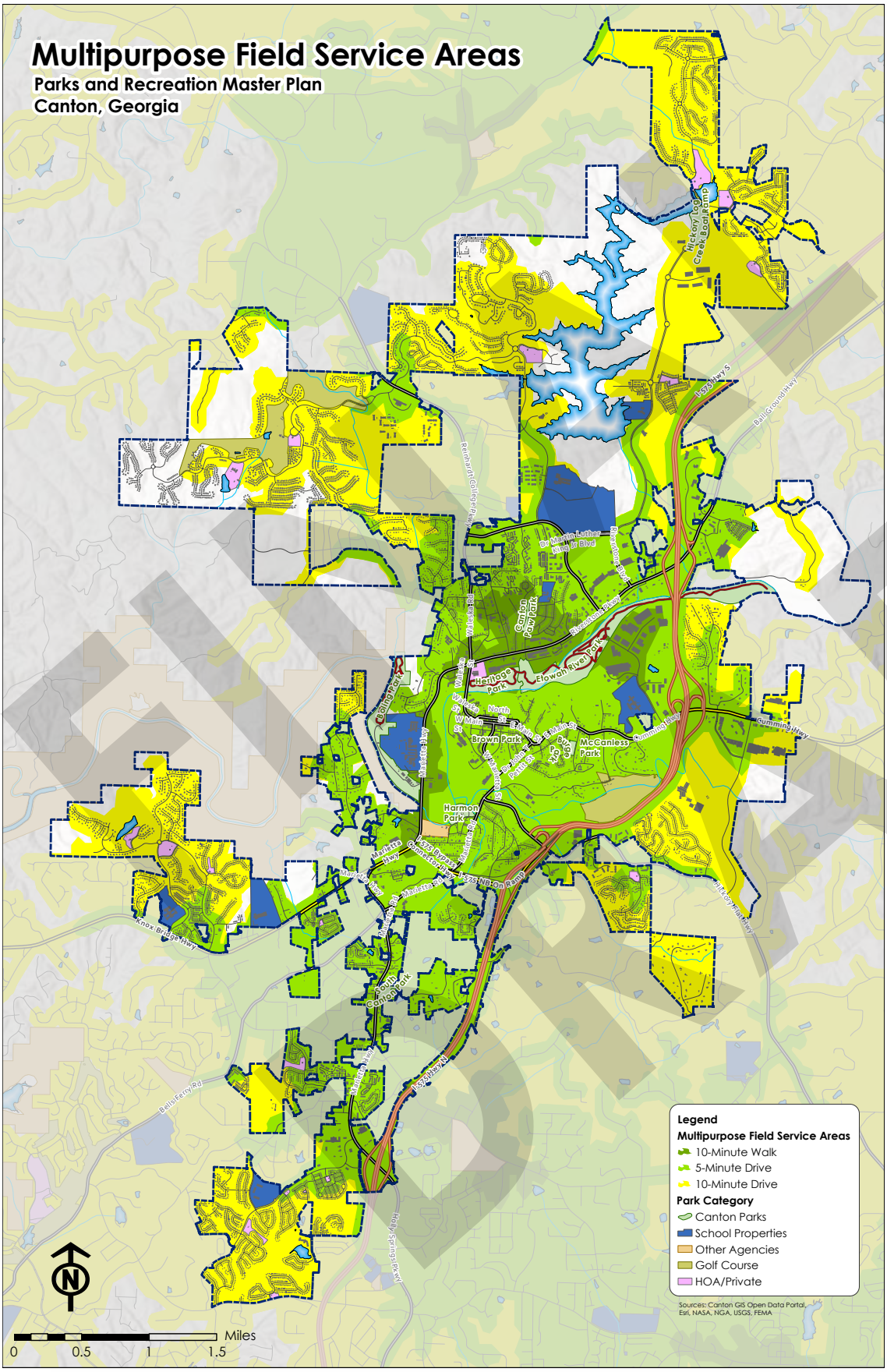
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Figure 2.13: Diamond Field Service Areas



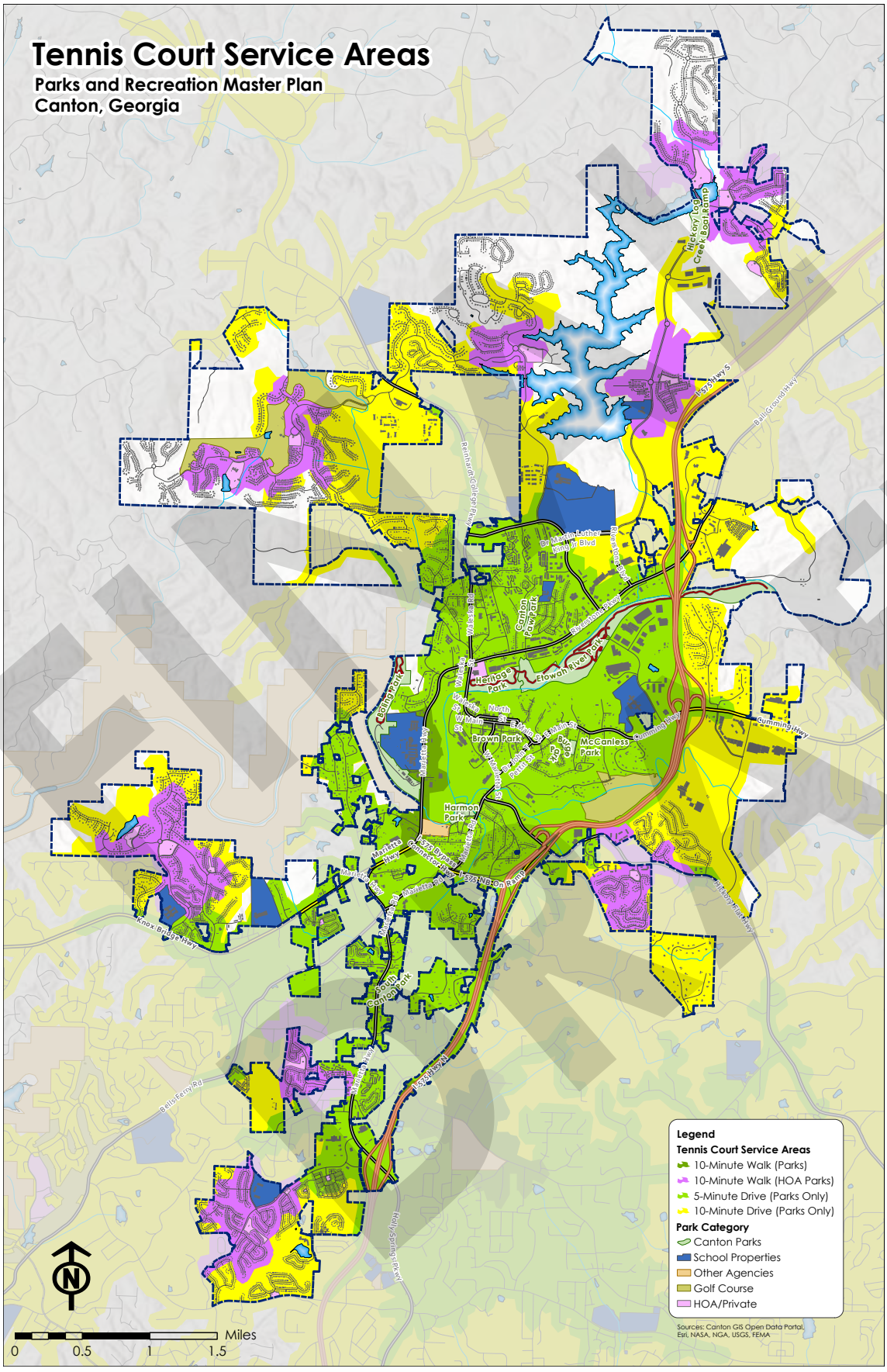
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Figure 2.14: Multipurpose Rectangular Field Service Areas



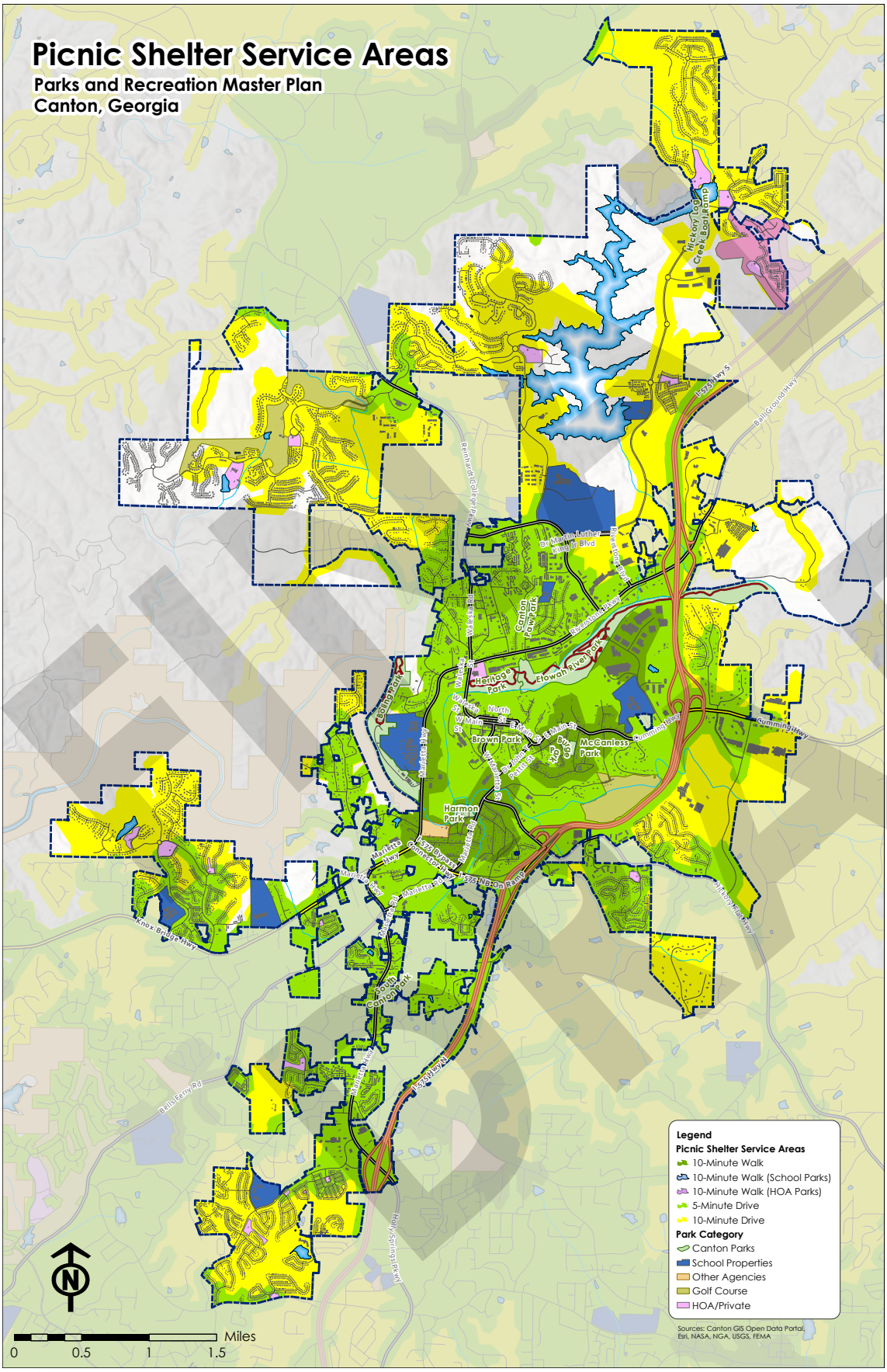
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Figure 2.15: Tennis Service Areas



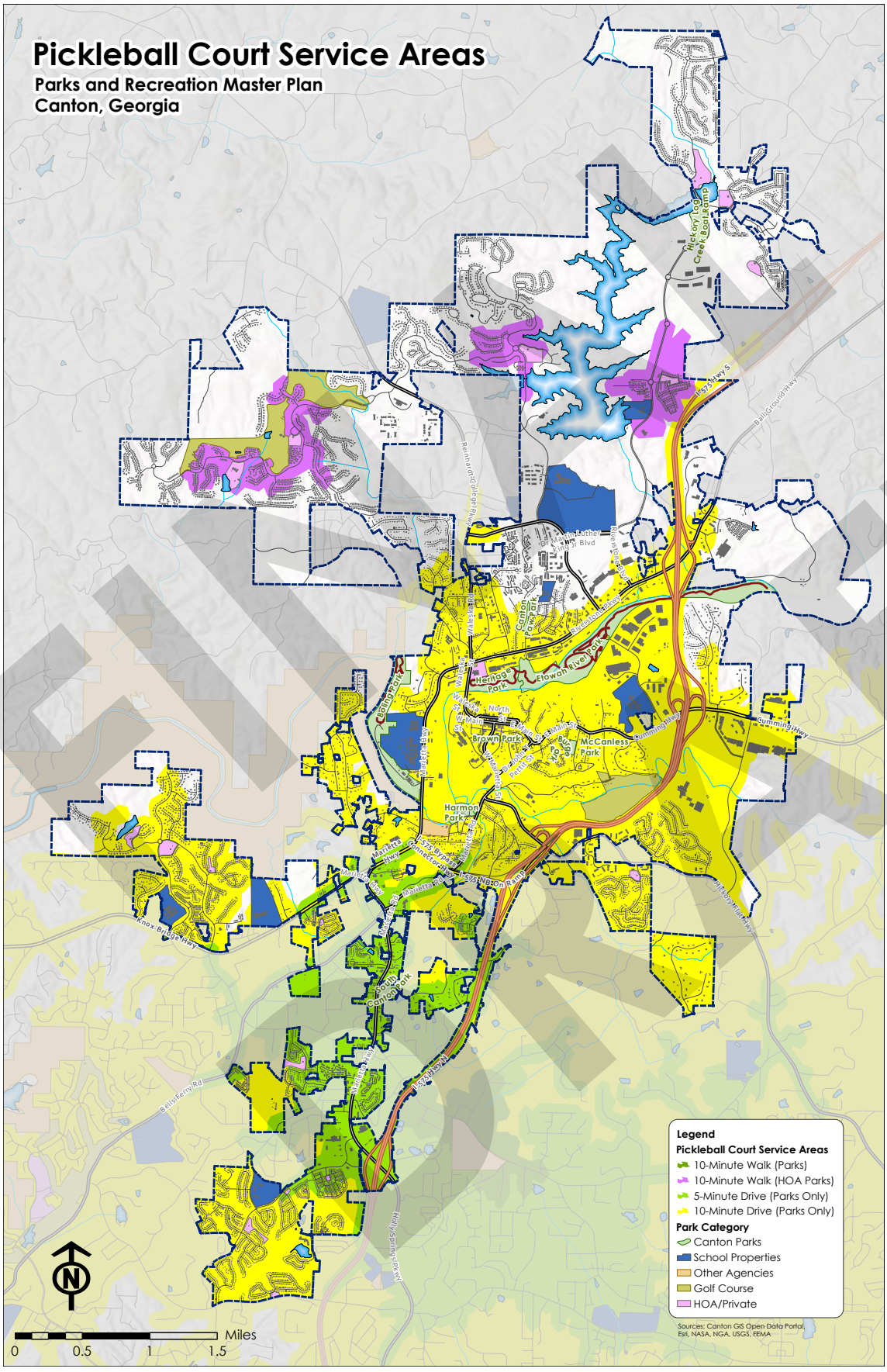
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Figure 2.16: Picnic Shelter Service Areas



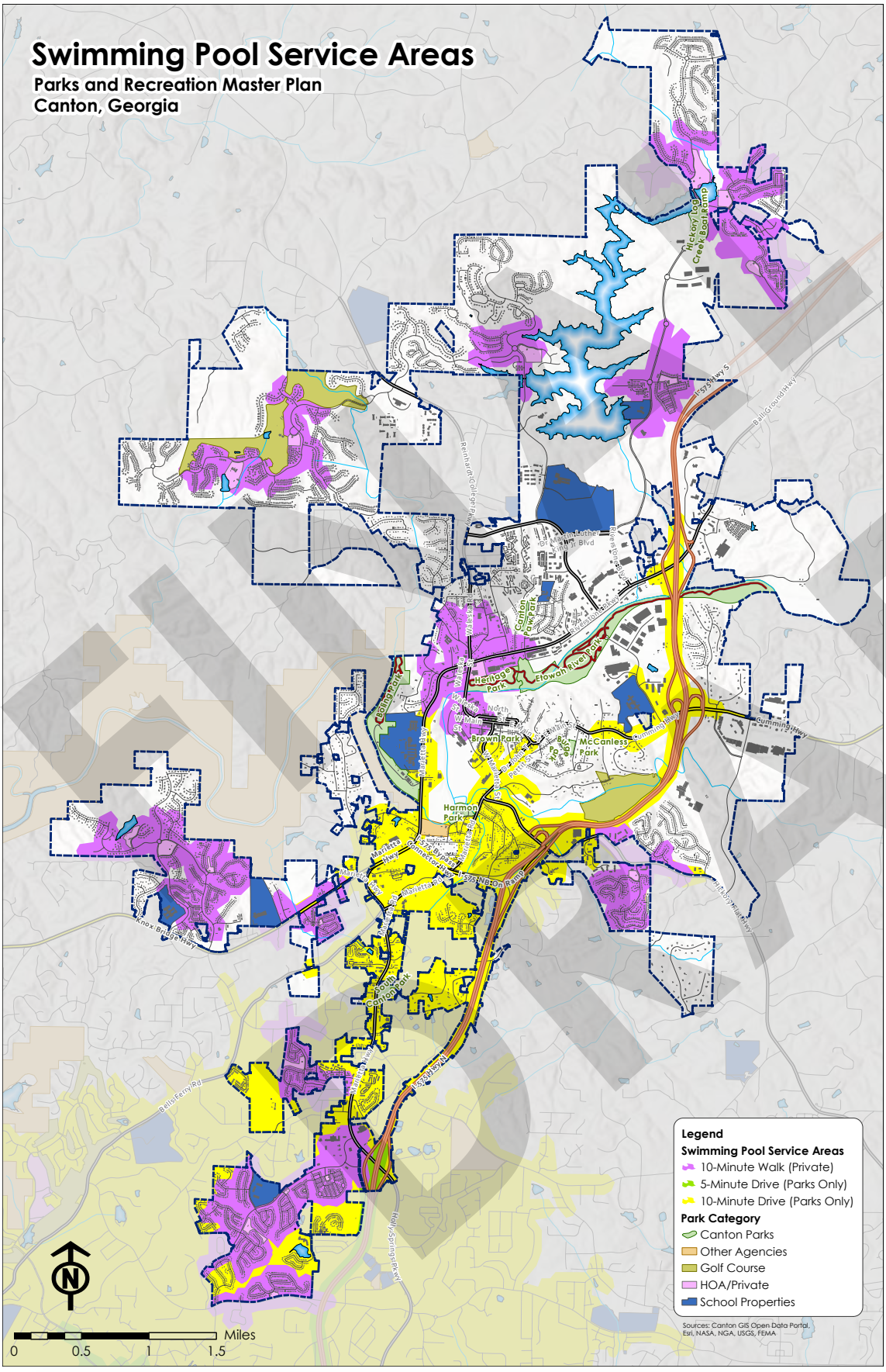
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Figure 2.17: Pickleball Court Service Area



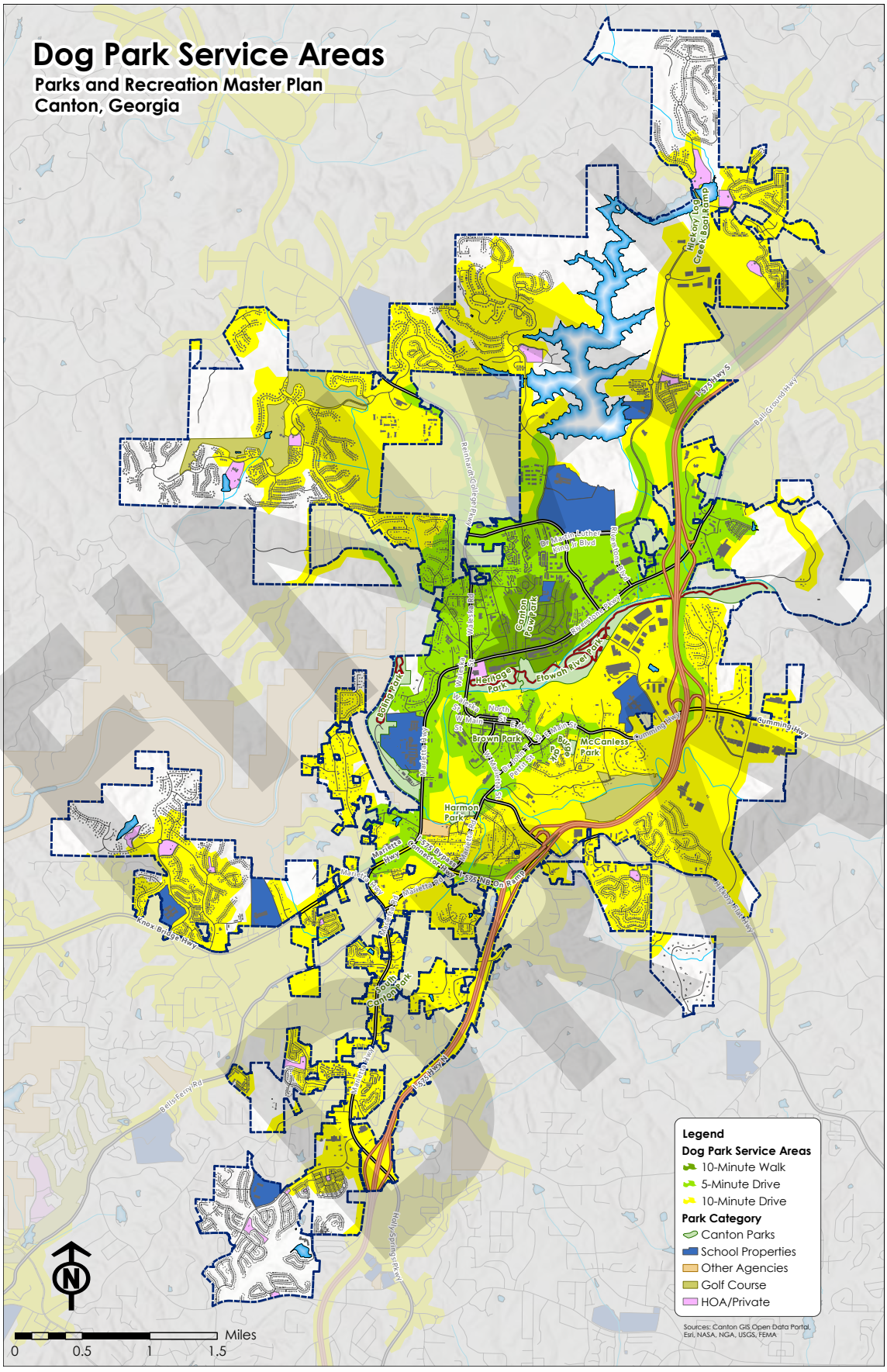
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Figure 2.18: Outdoor Swimming Pool Service Areas



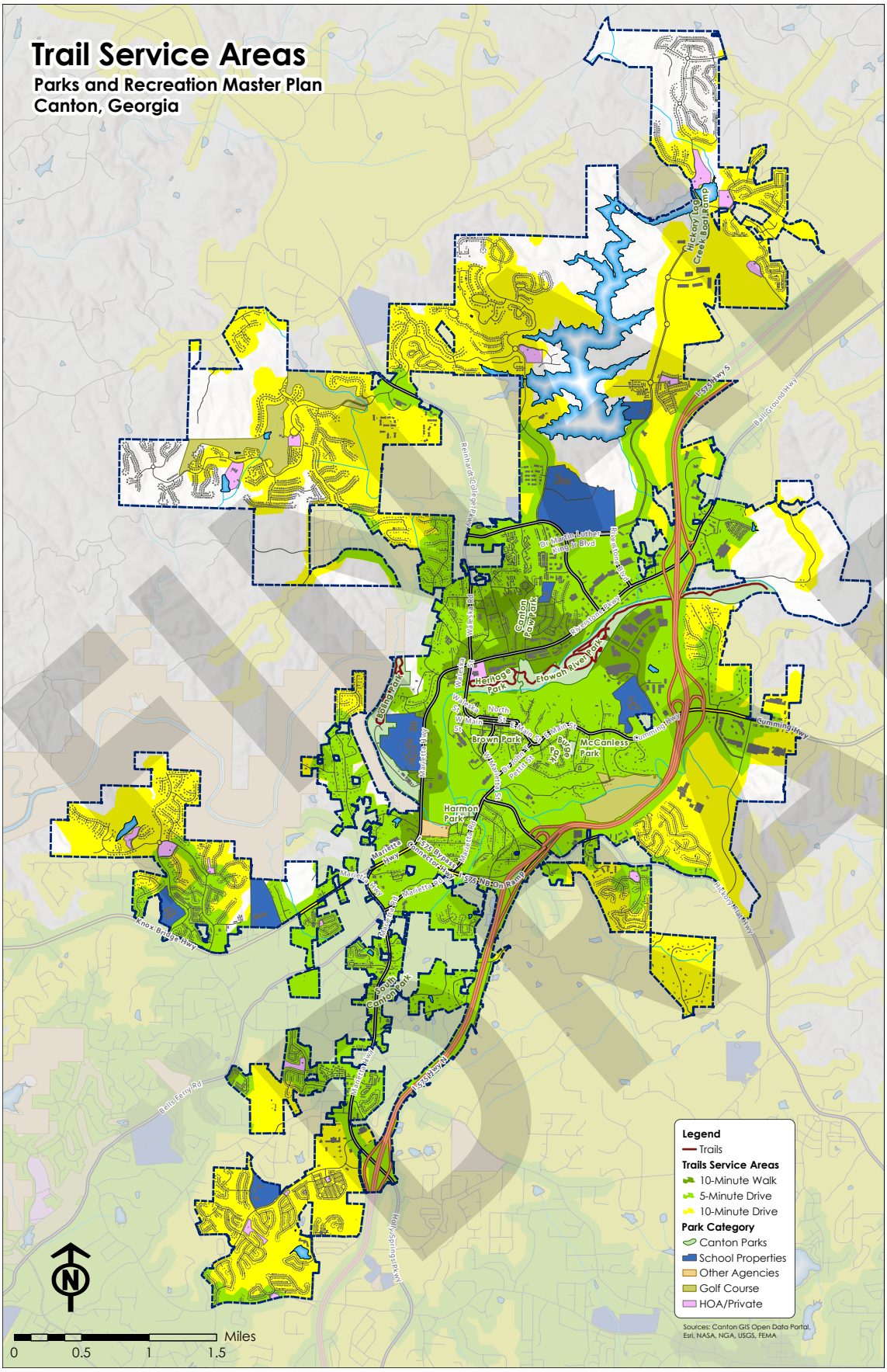
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Figure 2.19: Dog Park Service Areas



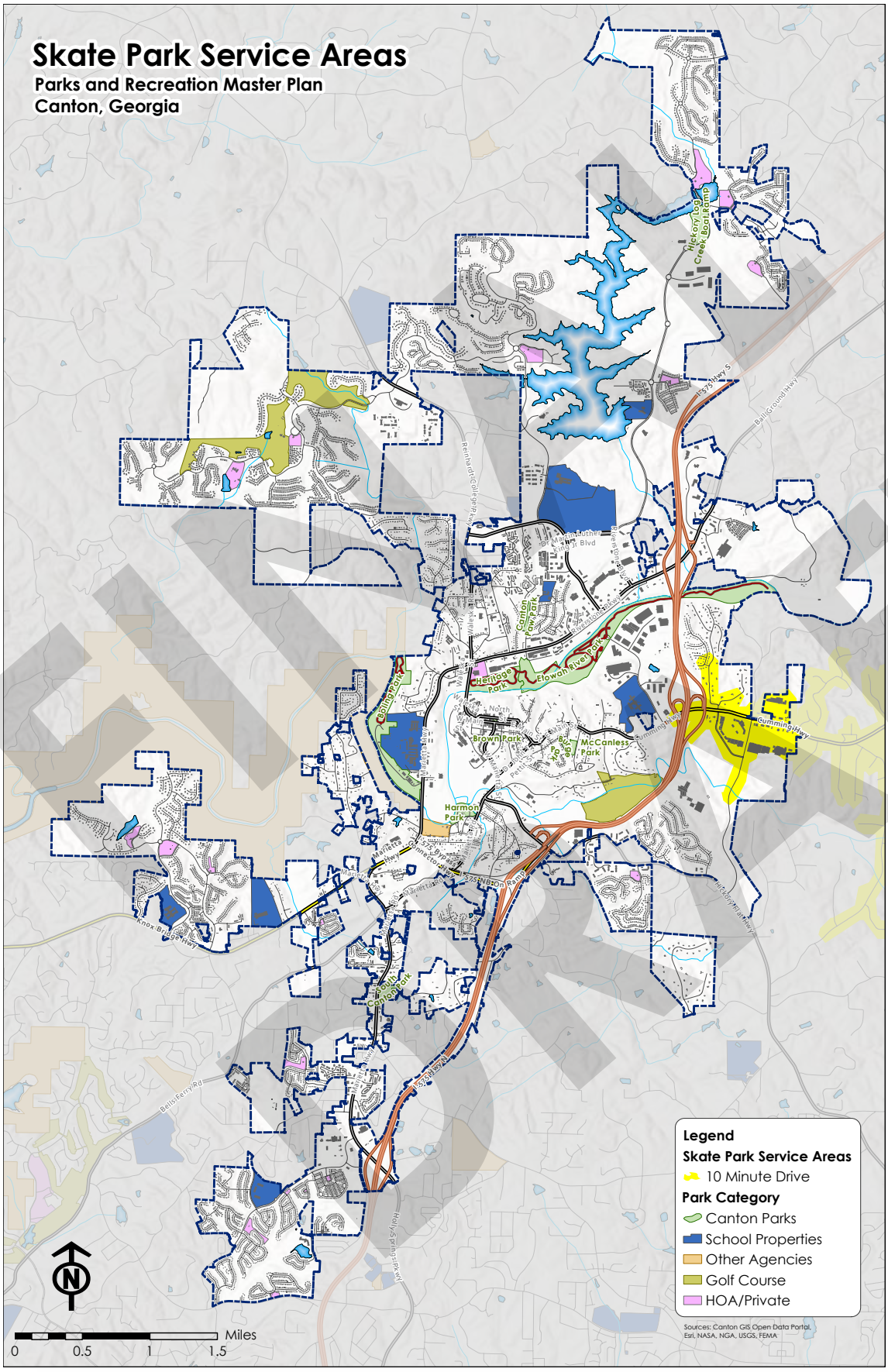
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Figure 2.20: Trail Service Areas



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Figure 2.21: Skate Park Service Areas



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2.6 Social Vulnerability Index

Analyzing demographic and socioeconomic characteristics is a critical step towards identifying what public programs, services, and facilities Canton residents are most likely to need and utilize. The analysis that follows presents results that can be applied to services beyond those related to parks and recreation. Essentially, the following descriptions help to indicate which portions of the city are most likely to benefit from community services.

2.6.1 Methodology

Designed to identify communities most likely to need support before, during, or after a hazardous event, the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) uses 16 social factors to calculate a score (between 0 and 1) that compares all census tracts in the USA to each other – a score of 0 being the least vulnerable and 1 being the most. The 16 factors make up four categories as seen in Figure 2.22. Each factor is scored individually, and they are combined to create the category scores. The category scores are combined to determine the overall SVI score.[3]

Figure 2.22: Social Vulnerability Factors



This information provides a valuable data source because vulnerable populations are most likely to need other types of assistance as well, lacking the resources needed to respond to all types of threats. Accordingly, vulnerable populations are most likely to need community services overall, including parks and recreation. The demographic data used for the 2020 SVI (the most recent available) comes from the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates from (2016-2020).

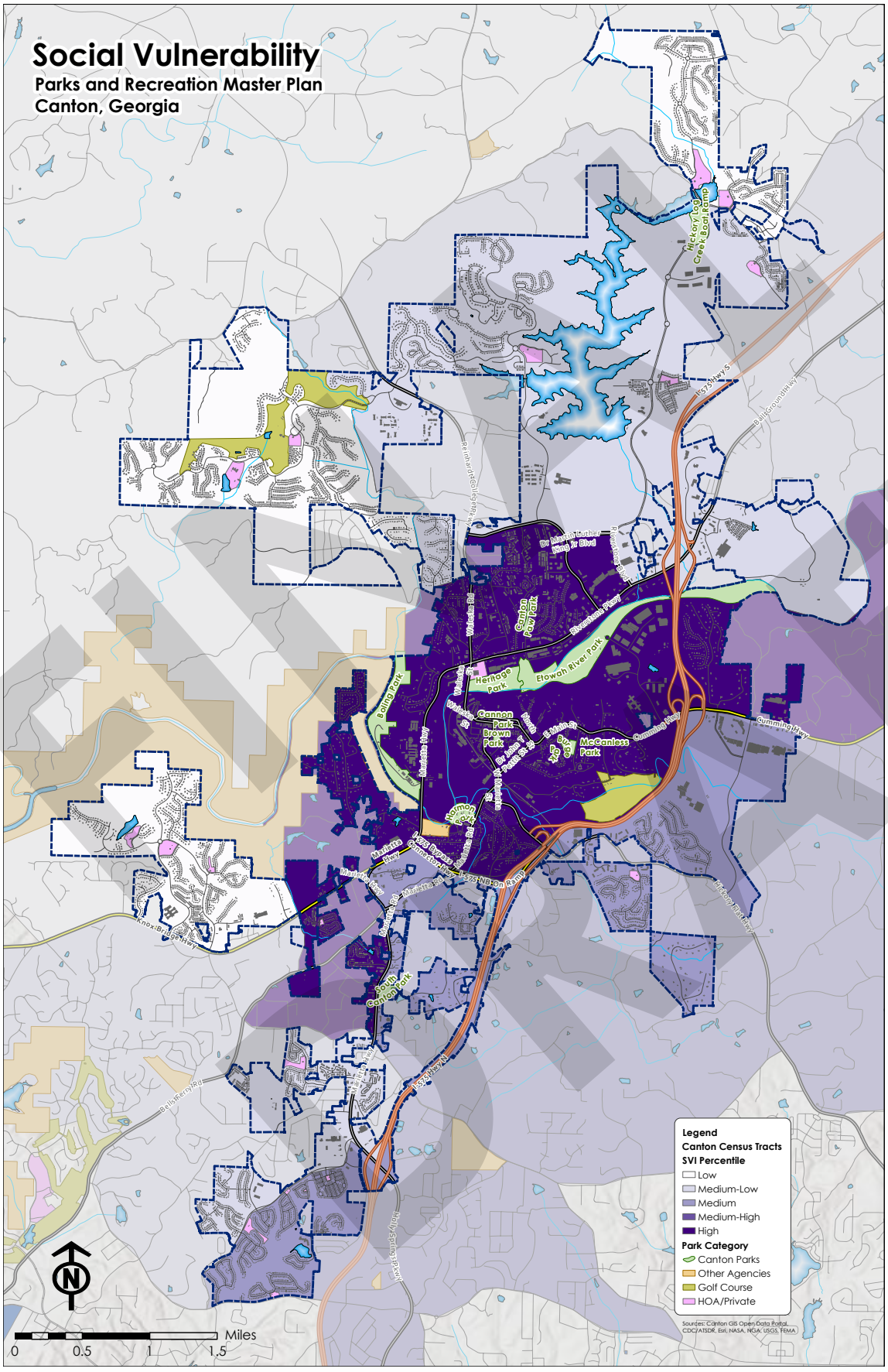
2.6.2 Results

Once the SVI was collected for each census tract that includes part of Canton, the results were divided into five categories which can be seen in Figure 2.23. The categories represent equal intervals, with each category covering 20 percentile rankings. This map shows areas with higher levels of social vulnerability in darker shades and areas with lower levels in lighter shades. This data is only available at the census tract level, which means some areas may be presented as highly vulnerable when they are not, because other areas of the census tract are highly vulnerable. The opposite may be true as well, where highly vulnerable areas are located in census tracts with overall low vulnerability.

[3] Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, "CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index," https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/index.html

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Figure 2.23: Social Vulnerability Index



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2.6.3 Vulnerable Populations

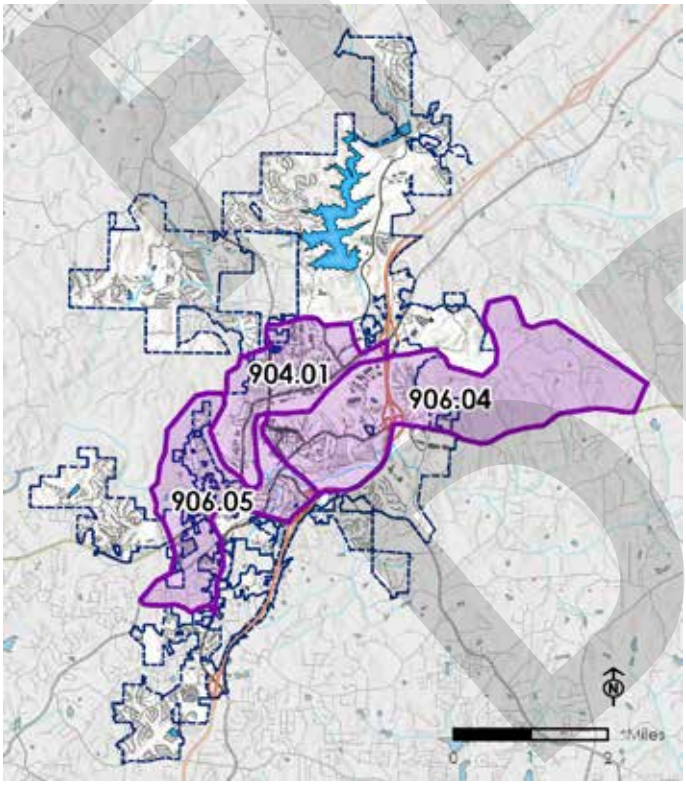
This section takes a closer look at the portion of the city with the highest levels of vulnerability (High or Medium-High) according to the SVI. Table 2.13 shows a selection of the social factors used to determine the SVI and helps explain what makes these populations more vulnerable.

Table 2.13: Demographic Indicators for Vulnerable Areas

	Tract 904.01	Tract 906.04	Tract 906.05	City of Canton
Total Population	5,526	2,165	3,195	31,556
Households	2514	766	898	11431
Square Miles	1.86	2.31	1.36	19.25
Median Age	31.9	34.6	32.6	35.4
% Age 65+	13.8%	16.0%	8.6%	16%
% age <18	27.4%	27.2%	32.7%	26.4%
% below 150% poverty line	39.6%	40.7%	32.1%	22.6%
% with no high school diploma	13.7%	20.7%	27.1%	10.3%
% with limited English proficiency	11.4%	10.3%	27.6%	7.1%
% Minority	54.4%	56.7%	66.7%	39.2%
Diversity Index	79.8%	77.8%	84.2%	70%
% of households with 1+ person with a disability	30.0%	32.0%	20.8%	25.3%
% of households with no vehicle access	13.4%	9.4%	21.4%	5.5%
% of households with no internet service	10.1%	8.5%	31.2%	7.2%

Source: All data from 2021 Esri Forecasts and 2017-2021 American Community Survey

Figure 2.24: SVI Tracts



Those living in these three census tracts represent 34% of Canton's total population. Compared to Canton as a whole, the vulnerable areas have many more residents under 150% of the poverty line and much larger minority populations. Two of the tracts have considerably higher percentages of people who have not completed high school. Two factors with important implications for parks and recreation services and facilities are the percent of households with no vehicle access and the percent of households with no internet service. All three tracts have much higher percentages of households without vehicle access. This characteristic indicates a need for more neighborhood parks in these tracts within a walkable distance. Tract 906.5 includes an estimated 31.2% of households without internet access. This characteristic indicates a need for multiple outreach efforts beyond social media, email, and announcements on the City website.

2.7 Composite Geographic Park Service Areas

While an earlier section (2.5) outlined the level of access to parks and facilities by geographic distribution and type, a composite analysis provides a more robust depiction of the level of service residents experience across the city. Service areas for two park classifications and 11 features were assigned scores based on distance from the amenity (e.g., 5-minute drive vs. 10-minute walk), then GIS software (ArcGIS) was used to produce an overlay map with a combined score for all areas of Canton. Figure 2.24 shows the composite service areas for the city based on this multilayered level of access analysis. A more detailed description of the methodology can be found in Appendix B.

In the figure, green indicates a higher level of service for parks and facilities per location (the deeper the shade, the better) while red areas have the lowest level of service (similarly, the deeper the red, the lower the service level). For example, a resident living within one of the dark green areas would more likely be within a short walk to a park and/or many of the facilities previously described (e.g., playgrounds and basketball courts).

Canton has a few areas with overall high levels of service, including one just north of Riverstone Parkway near Heritage Park and a neighborhood in the southern part of the city with several HOA provided features. Only 3% of Canton residents live in an area with high service levels; however, over half **(56%) of Canton residents live in areas with medium to medium-high levels of service. With 41% of Canton residents living in areas with low or medium low service levels, the city has clear opportunities to improve parks and facility access in the community.**

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Table 2.14: Population by Composite Service Area

Service Level (Rank)	Percentage at Composite Service Level				Median Household Income	Diversity Index	Median Age	Children	Seniors
	Population[1]	Cumulative Population	Area	Cumulative Area					
High	3%	3%	3%	3%	$57,763	74.8	32.2	924	91
Medium-High	25%	28%	18%	21%	$65,924	76.2	35.4	2,566	1,274
Medium	31%	59%	26%	48%	$70,355	75.2	33.7	3,346	1,341
Medium-Low	8%	67%	11%	59%	$83,483	64.6	37.3	740	432
Low	33%	100%	41%	100%	$87,085	54.4	37.2	3,123	1,797

1. % of population of each area

2.8 Priority Investment Areas

While the composite service areas analysis helps identify portions of Canton with lower levels of access to parks and recreation services, the Social Vulnerability Index (Figure 2.23) aids in identifying locations with the greatest need for public services, including parks and recreation facilities. The combination of these two datasets can help to identify areas within Canton most in need of additional park investment (higher vulnerability and lower service levels).

The portions of the city indicated in this combined map (Figure 2.25) may need special consideration for park improvements, including additional features or potentially new parks. The "high" areas are those with a combination of low or medium-low service levels and high or medium-high social vulnerability. The "medium" category represents areas that are combination of low or medium-low service levels and medium levels of vulnerability or low or medium service levels and high or medium-high levels of vulnerability. A few neighborhoods were removed from the priority investment areas because even though they are located in census tracts with higher overall vulnerability, their home values are relatively high ($250,000+). A more detailed description of the methodology can be found in Appendix B.

Overall, **the map highlights the greatest need for park investment in the areas surrounding the core of the city, especially north of Heritage Park.** This includes areas around Reinhardt College Parkway and Waleska Road. Other areas with a high need for investment include the neighborhoods near the Canton Golf Club and areas around the Marrietta Highway and Know Bridge Highway intersection. South Canton Park will help address some of the need in this area.

2.9 Trends in Parks and Recreation

The following text analyzes national trends in recreation, including types of activities and their associated facilities. First, a look at participation rates for various activities – using data from the Sport and Fitness Industry Association – then a deeper dive into the latest trends (relevant to Canton) occurring in programming and facilities across the nation.

This analysis explores overall patterns in the country with specific emphasis and consideration to Canton. Looking through a broader lens can provide insight into the origin and trajectory of more localized preferences.

Understanding how trends in fitness, recreation, athletics, and cultural resources reflect in the parks and recreation industry illuminates present conditions and future possibilities for parks and recreation facilities and programs in Canton. Equipped with industry context, the city can better sustain, expand, and realign its existing offerings.

2.9.1 Trends in Participation

The Sport and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) conducts an annual survey of individuals and households throughout the United States to determine participation in a variety of sports and fitness activities.[4] By using a weighting technique, the survey produces results reflective of the total U.S. population age 6 and older; the 2023 sample consisted of 18,000 online interviews of households. The following text examines the findings of this SFIA report and connects relevant data to generate insights for Canton.

Generational Differences

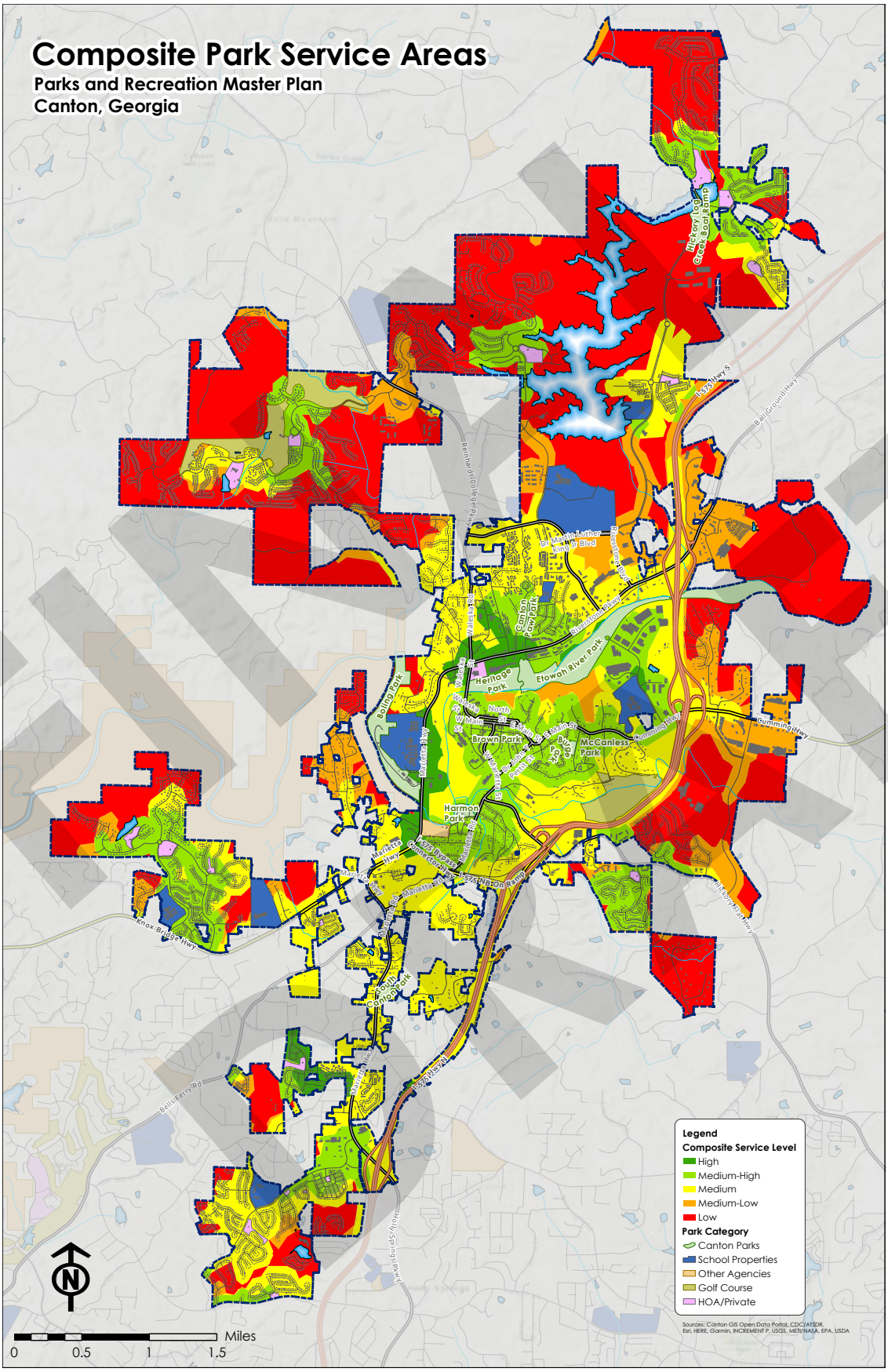
Figure 2.26 shows the difference in participation rates between generations for seven types of sports. All generations share high participation rates in fitness sports (e.g., barre, weight-training, kettlebells, etc.). Unlike the other sports categories, participation does not fall off considerably with age. With growing percentages of residents in the older two generations, demand for fitness and outdoor sports programming is likely to increase into the future. Even though participation diminishes with age, outdoor sports remain popular with all age groups (45% of Boomers take advantage of outdoor activities).

Team sports, on the other hand, continue to have the highest participation rate with Gen Z. Their rate of participation in team sports has remained constant since 2019. Team sports participation has grown in all other generations since 2019 (Boomers +28%, Gen X +49%, and Millennials +23%). While participation in racquet sports appears to be relatively low compared to other sports, an import element of the data is that participation in racquet sports has increased dramatically across the generations since 2019 (Boomers +55%, Gen X +40%, Millennials +20%, and Gen Z +35%).

4 Topline Sport Participation Report, Sports & Fitness Industry Association, 2024

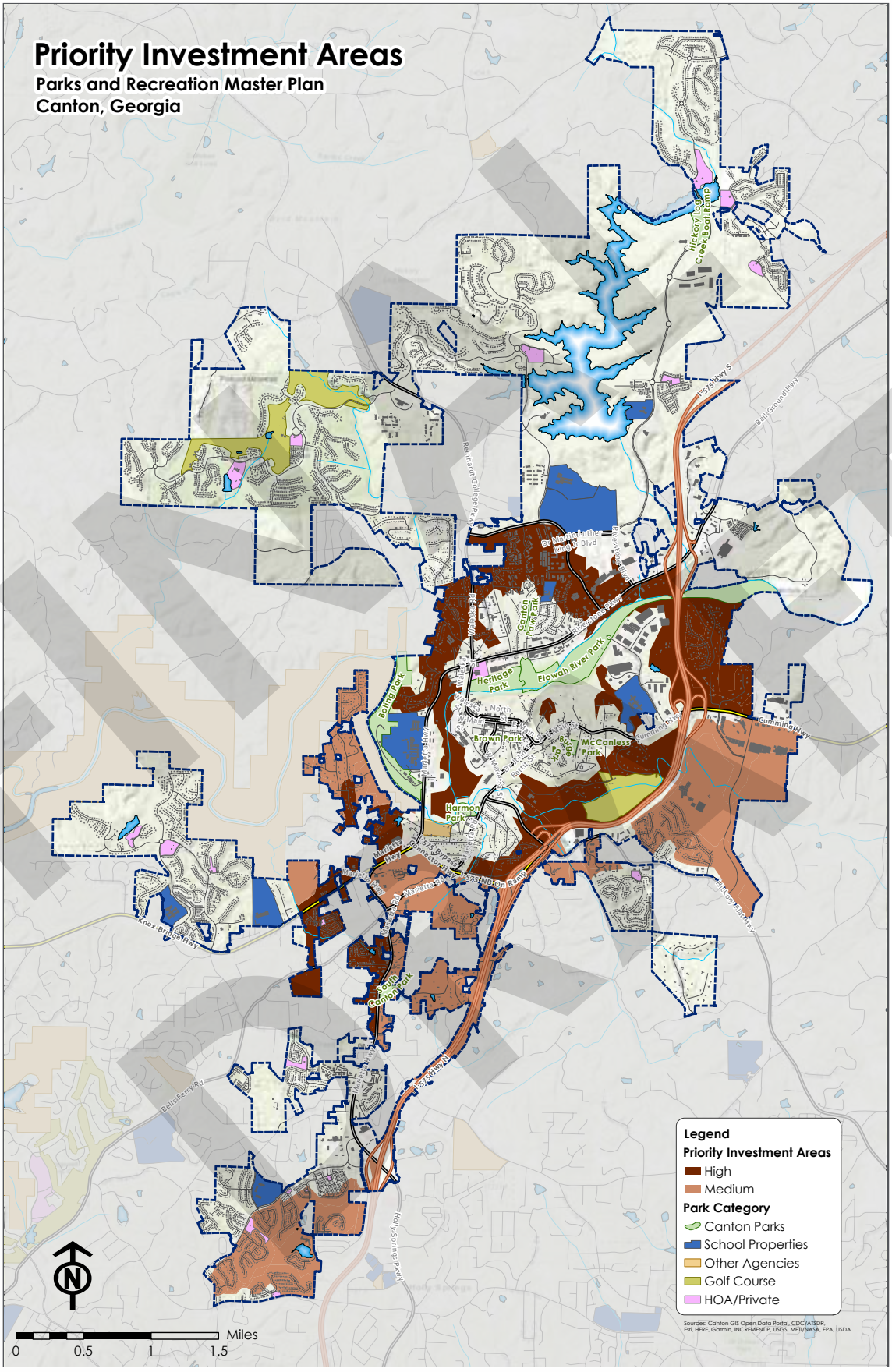
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Figure 2.25: Composite Park Service Areas



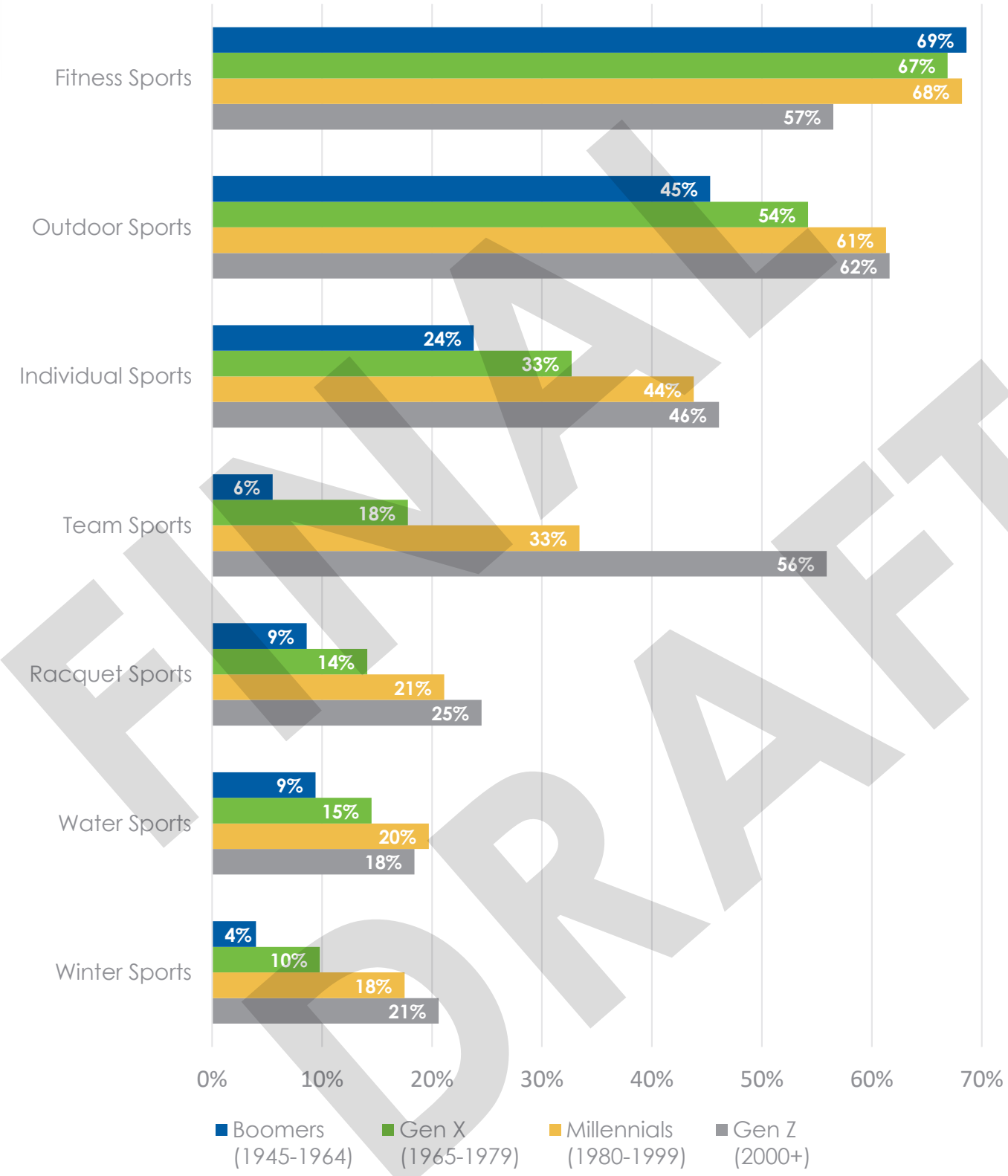
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Figure 2.26: Priority Investment Areas



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Figure 2.27: Participation Rates by Generation



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Trends by Activity

Table 2.15 displays the 5-year participation rates for 56 different sports and fitness activities from the 2024 SFIA report. This table also shows the 5-year annual growth rate and highlights which activities show either significant growth or decline in participation rates. The fastest growing sports are highlighted in blue. Pickleball continues to be the fastest growing activity with a 5-year growth rate of 35.7%. Other fast growing activities include trail running (8.3%), cardio tennis (7.9%), skateboarding (7.3%), tennis (6.3%), birdwatching (6.1%), and recreational kayaking (6.1%).

Walking for fitness (over 114 million participants) remains the most popular activity, with nearly twice the participants as the second most popular activity, day hiking (61 million). Treadmill, free weights (hand weights), running/jogging, fishing (freshwater), bicycling (paved surface) all claim over 41 million participants. With many of the top activities potentially utilizing trails, it is no surprise these facilities are in such high demand. Canton's investment in trails is impressive and supported by public engagement conducted in developing this and other related planning efforts (see Chapter 3).

COVID related impacts are apparent in these participation rates. Many outdoor activities, such as skateboarding, tennis, pickleball, birdwatching, and hiking, grew substantially from 2019 to 2020 and have maintained or increased usage levels since. Conversely, some indoor activities, such as stationary cycling, weight/resistance machines and elliptical motion trainer, declined in 2020 and never recovered.

Table 2.15: Nationwide 5-Year History of Selected Sports Participation

Sport/Fitness Activity	Category	Participants (in Thousands)						5-Year Average Annual Growth
		2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
Adventure Racing	Individual Sports	2,215	2,143	1,966	1,826	1,714	1,808	-3.9%
Aquatic Exercise	Aerobic Activities	10,518	11,189	10,954	10,400	10,676	11,307	1.6%
Archery	Individual Sports	7,654	7,449	7,249	7,342	7,428	7,662	0.0%
Badminton	Racquet Sports	6,337	6,095	5,862	6,061	6,490	6,513	0.6%
Baseball	Team Sports	15,877	15,804	15,731	15,587	15,478	16,655	1.0%
Basketball	Team Sports	24,225	24,917	27,753	27,135	28,149	29,725	4.3%
Bicycling (BMX)	Outdoor Sports	3,439	3,648	3,880	3,861	4,181	4,462	5.4%
Bicycling (Non-Paved Surface)	Outdoor Sports	8,690	8,622	8,998	8,963	8,916	9,289	1.4%
Bicycling (Paved Surface)	Outdoor Sports	39,041	39,388	44,471	42,775	43,554	42,243	1.8%
Birdwatching (>¼ Mile from Home)	Outdoor Sports	12,344	12,817	15,228	14,815	15,818	16,423	6.1%
Bodyweight Exercise	Conditioning	24,183	23,504	22,845	22,629	22,034	22,578	-1.3%
Boxing/Martial Arts for Fitness	Individual Sports	7,650	8,638	9,856	9,345	9,787	8,378	2.4%
Cardio Tennis	Racquet Sports	2,499	2,501	2,503	2,608	2,812	3,581	7.9%
Cheerleading	Team Sports	3,841	3,752	3,308	3,465	3,507	3,797	0.0%
Elliptical Motion Trainer	Aerobic Activities	33,238	33,056	27,920	27,618	27,051	27,062	-3.8%
Fishing (Fly)	Outdoor Sports	6,939	7,014	7,753	7,458	7,631	8,077	3.2%
Fishing (Freshwater)	Outdoor Sports	38,998	39,185	42,556	40,853	41,821	42,605	1.9%
Football (Flag)	Team Sports	6,572	6,783	7,001	6,889	7,104	7,266	2.0%
Football (Tackle)	Team Sports	5,157	5,107	5,054	5,228	5,436	5,618	1.8%
Free Weights (Hand Weights)	Strength	51,291	51,450	53,256	52,636	53,140	53,858	1.0%
Golf	Individual Sports	24,240	24,271	24,804	25,111	25,566	26,565	1.9%
Gymnastics	Team Sports	4,770	4,699	3,848	4,268	4,569	4,758	0.5%
High Impact/Intensity & Training	Aerobic Activities	21,611	22,044	22,487	21,973	21,821	21,801	0.2%
Hiking (Day)	Outdoor Sports	47,860	49,697	57,808	58,697	59,578	61,444	5.3%
Ice Hockey	Team Sports	2,447	2,357	2,270	2,306	2,278	2,496	0.5%
Ice Skating	Individual Sports	9,721	9,460	9,857	9,481	10,086	11,438	3.5%
Kayaking (Recreational)	Water Sports	11,017	11,382	13,002	13,351	13,561	14,726	6.1%
Kayaking (White Water)	Water Sports	2,562	2,583	2,605	2,623	2,726	2,995	3.2%
Lacrosse	Team Sports	2,098	2,115	1,884	1,892	1,875	1,979	-1.0%
Martial Arts	Individual Sports	5,821	6,068	6,064	6,186	6,355	6,610	2.6%

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Table 2.15: Nationwide 5-Year History of Selected Sports Participation (Continued)

Sport/Fitness Activity	Category	Participants (in Thousands)						5-Year Average Annual Growth
		2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
Pickleball	Racquet Sports	3,301	3,460	4,199	4,819	8,949	13,582	35.7%
Pilates Training	Conditioning	9,084	9,243	9,905	9,745	10,311	11,862	5.6%
Racquetball	Racquet Sports	3,480	3,453	3,426	3,260	3,521	3,550	0.5%
Roller Hockey	Team Sports	1,734	1,616	1,500	1,425	1,368	3,550	-6.5%
Rugby	Team Sports	1,560	1,392	1,242	1,238	1,166	1,112	-6.5%
Running/Jogging	Aerobic Activities	49,459	50,052	50,652	48,977	47,816	48,305	-0.5%
Scuba Diving	Water Sports	2,849	2,715	2,588	2,476	2,658	3,063	1.8%
Skateboarding	Individual Sports	6,500	6,610	8,872	8,747	9,019	8,923	7.3%
Soccer (Outdoor)	Team Sports	11,405	11,913	12,444	12,556	13,018	14,074	4.3%
Softball (Fast Pitch)	Team Sports	2,303	2,242	1,811	2,088	2,146	2,323	0.9%
Softball (Slow-Pitch)	Team Sports	7,386	7,071	6,349	6,008	6,036	6,356	-2.8%
Stand Up Paddling	Water Sports	3,453	3,562	3,675	3,739	3,777	4,129	3.7%
Stationary Cycling	Aerobic Activities	36,668	37,085	31,287	32,453	32,102	32,628	-2.0%
Swimming for Fitness	Aerobic Activities	27,575	28,219	25,666	25,620	26,272	28,173	0.6%
Swimming on a Team	Team Sports	3,045	2,822	2,615	2,824	2,904	3,327	2.1%
Table Tennis	Racquet Sports	15,592	14,908	16,854	15,390	15,824	15,359	0.0%
Tai Chi	Conditioning	3,761	3,793	3,300	3,393	3,394	3,948	1.4%
Tennis	Racquet Sports	17,841	17,684	21,642	22,617	23,595	23,835	6.3%
Track and Field	Team Sports	2,710	2,290	2,325	3,587	3,690	3,905	-1.0%
Trail Running	Individual Sports	10,010	10,997	11,854	12,520	13,253	14,885	8.3%
Treadmill	Aerobic Activities	53,737	56,823	49,832	53,627	53,589	54,829	0.7%
Triathlon (Traditional/Road)	Individual Sports	2,168	2,001	1,846	1,748	1,780	1,738	-4.3%
Ultimate Frisbee	Team Sports	2,710	2,290	2,325	2,190	2,142	2,086	-4.9%
Volleyball (Beach/Sand)	Team Sports	4,770	4,400	4,320	4,184	4,128	3,917	-3.8%
Volleyball (Court)	Team Sports	6,317	6,487	5,410	5,849	6,092	6,905	2.3%
Walking for Fitness	Aerobic Activities	111,001	111,439	114,044	115,814	114,759	114,039	0.5%
Weight/Resistance Machines	Strength	36,372	36,181	30,651	30,577	30,010	29,426	-4.0%
Yoga	Conditioning	28,745	30,456	32,808	34,347	33,636	34,249	3.6%

2.9.2 Aging Communities

Throughout the United States, the median age of the population is increasing along with the number of persons 65 years and older. Census data indicates that the percentage of the population age 65 and older in Canton was only 9.4% in 2000 but is expected to increase to nearly 14% by 2028.



Photo: The Conversation (2017) "Why Communities Should Be Designing Parks for Older Adults"

Active Seniors in Parks

Senior centers are shifting from a focus on activities like card games to more active programming such as fitness and outdoor activities such as hiking, biking, and nature programs.

>3% Increase
1-3% Increase
Minimal Change
1-3% Decrease
>3% Decrease

While the aging population should inspire parks and recreation agencies to invest more in activities, programs, and facilities for older users such as walking trails, fishing areas, community gardens, and cultural and nature education programs, many of these more involved and nature-oriented activities are appealing to all generations.

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2.9.3 Universal Access

Many park systems are developing unique facilities designed to go well beyond the minimum requirement for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Park system administrators are uniquely positioned to set the best example for inclusivity – by creating an environment that is totally accessible to persons of all ages and abilities. Parks and recreation agencies are changing the landscape not just physically but also culturally and in terms of mental health.

Universal access extends beyond the physical to include interpretive signage, buildings, and all programs. **Providing barrier-free parks should become an essential part of the process for any park improvement.** Most equipment providers have available options for individual features, but it is necessary to take a holistic approach to the design process to guarantee fully inclusive experiences.

Universal design is defined as the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.[5] These principles, developed by Ronald Mace, FAIA, and promoted by the Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University, were originally intended to guide design of housing, public and commercial facilities, and related products. Architects, landscape architects, and engineers often utilize these principles of designing parks and recreation facilities.

1. **Equitable Use** – The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.
2. **Flexibility in Use** – The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
3. **Simple and Intuitive** – Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills or current concentration level.
4. **Perceptible Information** – The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.
5. **Tolerance for Error** – The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.
6. **Low Physical Effort** – The design can be used efficiently and comfortably, and with minimum fatigue.
7. **Size and Space for Approach and Use** – Appropriate size and space are provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use, regardless of the user's body size, posture, or mobility.

More recently, the Center for Persons with Disabilities at Utah State University, in collaboration with PlayCore, adapted the principles of Universal Design to form a set of guidelines for designing outdoor play environments for children (Figure 2.28).[6] These "7 Principles of Inclusive Playground Design" are intended to guide communities in creating "universally designed play environments that are usable by more people, to the greatest extent possible, and therefore better serve a diverse community through outdoor play destinations where everyone is welcomed as a valued participant." Among other additions, the "7 Principles of Inclusive Playground Design" support inclusion of people with disabilities and chronic health conditions by providing opportunities for physical, sensory, communicative, social-emotional, and cognitive states of play.

Canton has two newer playgrounds in Etowah River Park and Heritage Park that include some elements that follow the universal and inclusive design principles and others that do not. As new playground features are added, the city has an opportunity to make even more progress in offering accessible and inclusive playgrounds. The playground at the new South Canton Park will be fully inclusive and should be a model for future playgrounds in Canton.



Etowah River Park Playground



Heritage Park Playground

[5] The Principles of Universal Design. 1997. NC State University, The Center for Universal Design
[6] 7 Principles of Inclusive Playground Design. 2016. PlayCore & Center for Persons with Disabilities, Utah State University

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Figure 2.28: Universal Design to Inclusive Playground Design

Universal Design	Inclusive Playground Design
Equitable Use The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.	**Be Fair** • Address the needs of the whole child. • Encourage multigenerational play. • Program the space for inclusion.
Flexibility in Use The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.	**Be Included** • Offer various types and forms of play. • Ensure variety and graduated levels of challenge. • Provide choices.
Simple and Intuitive Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills or current concentration level.	**Be Smart** • Provide behavioral cues. • Support intuitive play patterns. • Define play settings.
Perceptible Information The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.	**Be Independent** • Promote diversity, acceptance, and mutual respect. • Provide accessible surfacing and routes of travel. • Offer sensory rich experiences. • Encourage independent play.
Tolerance for Error The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.	**Be Safe** • Apply safety standards and address. potential hazards. • Integrate emotional well-being. • Accommodate for comfortable supervision.
Low Physical Effort The design can be used efficiently and comfortably, and with minimum fatigue.	**Be Active** • Accommodate children's diverse physical needs. • Integrate equitable alternatives. • Encourage cooperation and socialization.
Size and Space for Approach and Use Appropriate size and space are provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use, regardless of the user's body size, posture, or mobility.	**Be Comfortable** • Address approach and reach ranges. • Provide adequate space for movement and gathering. • Offer a balance of environmental conditions. • Plan for amenities.

2.9.4 Pickleball

Pickleball is a court sport played on a badminton-sized court with the net set to a height of 34 inches at the center. It is played with a perforated plastic ball and composite or wooden paddles about twice the size of ping-pong paddles. It can be played one on one or two on two. According to the 2024 Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) report (Table 2.15), pickleball participation grew by nearly 36% over the last five years. While growth of the sport began with seniors, popularity is growing with all ages. The largest age group is 18-34, making up 28.8% of all players.[7]

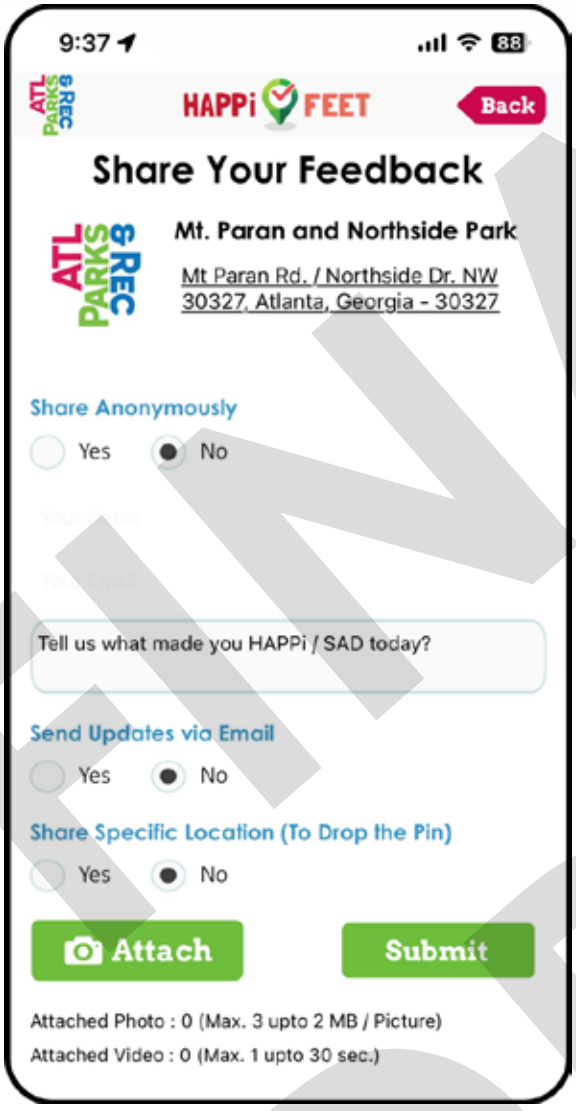
The City of Canton currently does not offer pickleball courts. Several HOA's in the city offer pickleball courts to their members. Cherokee County offers six pickleball courts in Kenny Askew Park.

[7] Pickleball statistics - the numbers behind America's fastest growing sport in 2024 (March 13, 2024). Retrieved on March 29, 2024 from https://www.pickleheads.com/blog/pickleball-statistics

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2.9.5 Technology

The use of technology is becoming increasingly common in parks and recreation. Many park users want to remain connected while visiting parks and expect instant access to information about facilities and programs at those parks. They also want to be able to register for the events and programs they discover on their mobile device.



Atlanta Parks and Recreation offers the HAPPi FEET app to allow users to share their feedback in real-time through text, pictures, or video from chosen locations in their parks and greenways.

While there may sometimes be concerns about distraction, especially in nature-oriented spaces, technology – when applied intentionally – can be a tool to enhance park experience. Considering the extent to which technology is part of many user experiences across sectors, it is likely going to be an element necessary to keep people – especially youth – engaged. Potential applications of technology in parks:

- **Wi-Fi hotspots** – to record the number of connections or searches to create a picture of visitation trends[8]



Social Media prompts in Etowah River Park



Wi-Fi in Etowah River Park

- **Beacon counters** – to detect cellphone signals to help determine the number of users in an area[9]
- **Device-charging areas**
- **QR codes** – to promote and inform
- **Trail counters** – to detect record types of users

Canton offers solar panel covered picnic tables with charging stations in Heritage Park and Wi-Fi in most parks. The city also utilizes various social media platforms to promote recreation events with prompts in kiosks in parks. Keeping these platforms relevant with varied posts (e.g., video content, informational flyers, community polls, etc.) will be helpful for attracting followers and expanding impact. These posts would, in turn, provide the city with additional means of gathering information on park conditions, plant health, visitation levels, and more. YouTube is the most popular platform with 83% of Americans reporting usage in 2023. Facebook is the second most popular (68%) followed by Instagram (47%). Age matters in social media preferences and in choosing which one to use. For example, 78% of Americans age 18-29 use Instagram, while only 15% of those age 65 and over use it.[10]

[8] National Recreation and Park Association, "Parks Using Technology to Engage and Inspire," https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2017/may/parks-using-technology-to-engage-and-inspire/. (May 1, 2017)
[9] Dolesh, R. J. (2019, January). Top Trends in Parks and Recreation for 2019. Parks & Recreation.
[10] Social Media Fact Sheet. Pew Research Center. Retrieved on March 29, 2024 from https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/social-media/

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2.9.6 Nature Interaction, Education, and Programming

Geocaching


Photo credit: NRPA

Geocaching

Geocaching is a technology-based activity that has been growing in popularity since the early 2000s, when GPS technology improved significantly. Participants travel to local parks and open spaces to hunt for objects previously hidden by others using a set of coordinates and a digital GPS device (typically on a smart phone). Once found, participants sign a log and sometimes exchange the now-discovered item for a new item. The search can have varying levels of complexity – one cache leads to another, or a puzzle must be completed.[11]

Several geocaching routes already exist in Canton parks and throughout the city. **Partnering with geocaching groups to formalize and promote these existing and future activities could provide residents with opportunities to recreate and more reasons to get outside and visit Canton's parks.**

Environmental Education

There is a need for expanded environmental education and parks and recreation agencies have a considerable role to play. Environmental education centers throughout the country are having great success as communities are seeking out better access to engage with and learn from their natural environment. Potential subjects include natural processes, resource management, and wildlife habitats.

Environmental education programs instill a lasting connection to the natural world and present opportunities to promote and encourage greater use and appreciation of local parks in the community, while creating opportunities for collaboration between organizations, institutions, and advocacy groups such as the Upper Etowah River Alliance.

Wildlife Watching

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 146.5 million (56%) Americans participated in wildlife watching in 2022. Bird watching is the most popular form of wildlife watching in the United States. Approximately 96.3 million people participated in some form of bird watching in 2022, with 95% (91.1 million) of those observing birds within one mile of their home for an average of 67 days per year.[12]

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service report also includes an analysis of the economic impact of wildlife watching activities. Wildlife watchers direct substantial amounts of dollars into the economy because of trip-related ($42.1 billion) and equipment expenditures ($118.6 billion).

In the engagement for this Master Plan, a recurring need emerged for opportunities to connect and interact with nature.


Photo credit: Birdwatching in Georgia, Felipe Solera Vindas

Environmental Best Management Practices (BMPs)

Many communities utilize parks as examples of best management practices (BMPs) to serve as models for minimizing environmental impacts and maximizing the sustainability of both park sites and operations. Parks and recreation departments are in great positions to lead in the implementation of these practices because they are typically among the largest landowners (if not the largest) in their jurisdictions. To assist in the implementation of these practices, some park departments establish manuals detailing the BMPs which are generally divided into categories.[13] Some potential categories include (with examples):

1. Site Selection – which properties to acquire and protect
2. Design – strategies for management of stormwater, water quality, riparian/wetland buffers; use of vegetation; choice of building materials
3. Construction – controlling of pollutants, soil restoration, recycling of construction materials
4. Operation and Maintenance – practices for water conservation, use of organics, weed control, composting, energy use, etc.
5. Programs and Special Events – consider carrying capacity of facility, provide recycling receptacles

Canton manages a large amount of parkland along the Etowah River. Heritage Park and Etowah River Park experience periodic flooding and experience drainage problems following rain events. Stormwater improvements in these parks present opportunities to incorporate green infrastructure and nature-based solutions. All improvements, even small elements such as rain and butterfly gardens, provide educational opportunities.

[11] National Recreation and Park Association, "How to Leverage Geocaching to Promote Park and Recreation Events," https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2017/october/how-to-leverage-geocaching-to-promote-park-and-recreation-events/. (October 5, 2017)
[12] 2022 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2023.
[13] Environmental Best Management Practices Manual. City of Fort Collins Parks and Recreation. 2011.

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Nature Play Areas

Many parks and recreation agencies are placing increased emphasis on the availability of nature play areas and programming for children. The Natural Learning Initiative (NLI) and the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) created a document titled Nature Play & Learning Places, which provides a series of national guidelines for the creation of places for children to interact with nature. The guidelines are meant to support communities in providing opportunities for children to learn about their natural environment and to develop healthy active habits. The guidelines also encourage incorporating natural materials like plants, stones, water, fallen trees, etc. to augment sensory experience and facilitate tactile play. According to the guidelines, a nature play or learning place is:

"A designated, managed area in an existing or modified outdoor environment where children of all ages and abilities play and learn by engaging with and manipulating diverse natural elements, materials, organisms, and habitats, through sensory, fine motor and gross motor experiences."[14]



Natural play structure (Silver Falls State Park – Oregon)

The following are examples of nature play features:

- Natural Play Structures
- Multipurpose Lawns
- Meadows and Woodlands
- Vegetable Gardens
- Natural Aquatics
- Gathering and Performance Structures

Canton has multiple locations where nature play areas could be introduced. Any playground addition or replacement is an opportunity to incorporate natural features.

2.9.7 Trails and Connectivity

Demand for trails, linkages, and pathways that connect parks, open spaces, and other destination sites (like downtown districts) has been growing all over the U.S., including in Canton and neighboring cities in suburban Atlanta. Where our surveys have been conducted, high levels of demand for connectivity are found. Communities with existing and extensive trail systems express pride and continued desire to build trails between neighborhoods and develop pathways to schools, shopping areas, other community attractions, and neighborhoods. Livable communities where residents report a high quality of life generally have robust trail systems and reliable connectivity that support active, engaged lifestyles.

Canton's other planning efforts, including the Comprehensive Plan and Transportation Plan, showed strong support for trails and connectivity. Trails remained a high priority for Canton residents in this planning effort. The city recognizes the high demand for trails and has invested considerable resources in building trails in new parks and along the Etowah River. Canton residents may also utilize hiking trails maintained by the Scouts in the Sutallee Trace Greenspace.



Etowah River Trail in Heritage Park

2.9.8 Bike Facilities

Off-road bicycling activities are growing in popularity, although they still represent a relatively small percentage of all bicycling activities. Modern mountain biking (MTB) originated in the 1970s in California with a group of enthusiasts who modified existing bikes for off-road use. These cyclists organized first downhill races which they called "Repack." This name referred to the need to "repack" the brakes with fresh grease after each race due to the excessive heat from braking during the descent.[15]

During the early years of mountain biking, enthusiasts used single-track trails intended for hiking as bikes were not specifically forbidden from using these trails. However, as the sport gained in popularly, bikes have been banned from most hiking trails, and single-track trails designed specifically for mountain bikes have been established.[16] As shown previously in Table 2.15, BMX biking is becoming more popular, with a 23.6% increase in participation over the past three years. Two type of bike facilities have become popular with both BMX and mountain bike riders, flow trails and pump tracks.

[14] Moore, R. (2014). Nature Play & Learning Places. Creating and managing places where children engage with nature. Raleigh, NC: Natural Learning Initiative and Reston, VA: National Wildlife Federation. Version 1.6. (pages vii, 5, 7-8, 51, 65, 71-83).
[15] Marin Museum of Bicycling, "Mountain Biking History," http://mmbhof.org/mtn-bike-hall-of-fame/history/, (April 8, 2019).
[16] Singletracks, "Visiting the Birthplace of Mountain Biking: Marin County, California," http://www.singletracks.com/blog/mtb-trails/visiting-the-birthplace-of-mountain-biking-marin-county-california/, (April 8, 2019).

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Flow trails provide more predictable surfaces, banked turns, and a lack of obstacles. These trails require little peddling and minimal braking that appeal to a wider variety of users, including families. These trails can be designed to allow beginners to bypass any more technical segments.[17]

Another trend in off-road bicycle facilities is the pump track. These tracks, which began to appear in the 2000s, are looping tracks that can be ridden continuously without the need to pedal. A user's speed is dependent on "pumping" the terrain transitions of the track. A pump track requires approximately 50' by 50' of space (minimum) and generally feature a series of rollers and steeply bermed corners.[18]



North Cooper Lake Mountain Bike Park, Smyrna, Georgia

Canton does not currently offer any bike specific trails or tracks. Cherokee County offers the Blankets Creek Mountain Bike Trails with over 15 miles of trails for riders of all levels. Canton owns nearly 200 undeveloped acres adjacent to Lake Canton where mountain bike trails could be developed.

2.9.9 Creative Placemaking

The Trust for Public Land – a nonprofit organization with a mission to bring high-quality parks within a 10-minute walk of every person in the U.S. – is a leading champion of creative placemaking as a strategy for affecting change. Creative placemaking is a collaborative, community-based process that captures the power of art, vibrancy of local heritage, and potential of place to build memorable spaces rooted in culture and local identity. Parks and recreation agencies around the nation offer community connection in physical and social forms; creative-placemaking is just another tool for ensuring successful parks that equitably reflect the people who use them.[19] Many agencies partner with local entities (like other government departments, nonprofits, schools, places of worship, art institutions, and other groups) to put in place opportunities for resident-led installations, programs, and events.

Creative placemaking can take countless forms. It may look like an outdoor sculpture walk at the center of the neighborhood park featuring resident and local artists' work. It might be an annual arts performance downtown that showcases immigrant and refugee cultures in the community. The Canton Public Arts Master Plan offers several recommendations for incorporating art into placemaking that can happen in Canton's parks. One recommendation called for working with an artist to develop a signature monumental playground in one of Canton's parks.



Creative Placemaking in the Madisonville Neighborhood of Cincinnati (2015)

Creative placemaking can also be as low-profile as a pollinator garden, including interpretive signage about the plants chosen and why. Whatever it may look like, it is essential that the community be inclusively integrated into every phase: ideation, selection (of artist(s), piece(s), feature(s), etc.), installation, activation, and long-term care..

When parks and recreation agencies prioritize local traditions, cultural identities, and native resources, making sure these are reflected in program and facility offerings, users will be more likely to participate and do their part to sustain the system. A reciprocal relationship forms, where community engages with parks and recreation to the extent that parks and recreation agencies seek to provide place-based resources.

Canton could include creative placemaking into any future park improvement by incorporating it into the planning process. It provides an opportunity to make every park unique and to build and connect community around these parks. With clear expectations, fair compensation, and meaningful engagement, the arts community has the power to enliven parks and community spaces in Canton.

2.9.10 Drones

Since the late 2000s, the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) has increased tremendously. Used for both military and civilian purposes, these devices are having a considerable impact on parks and recreation agencies nationwide. A contentious activity, tensions exist around safety, privacy, and environmental impact, as well as applications (professional and recreational) like habitat and wildlife monitoring, photography, and map-making.

The popularity of drones is only growing, but regulations at the federal, state, and local levels have been slow to prevent, mitigate, or manage negative impacts. Many

[17] IMBA, "Flow Trails," https://www.imba.com/model-trails/flow-trails, (April 15, 2016).
[18] Adventure Sports Journal, "Pumpin': An Introduction to the World of Pump Tracks," http://adventuresportsjournal.com/pumpin-an-introduction-to-the-world-of-pump-tracks/, (April 8, 2019).
[19] Trust for Public Land, Creative Placemaking, https://www.tpl.org/our-work/creative-placemaking

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cities have enacted no-fly zones and other restrictions which means UAV-users – licensed or not – have limited available spaces. Drone pilots have begun to look to parks and public open space for flying opportunities.



Photo: NRPA 2018

Requiring permits (day or seasonal) and designating fly areas with set times for flying are tactics agencies are using. These measures help legitimize UAV use and maintain safe park spaces; permitting is also a potential revenue opportunity. Since drone use is only increasing, the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) offers useful insight into the future of drone-use in parks:

"Park agencies will face increasing public pressure to look at allowing hobbyist flights and commercial-use drones in parks… By creating stronger guidelines and policies about how to fly drones in parks instead of adopting blanket restrictions, parks can give people an outlet and place to fly recreationally. New programming and events can be planned around drones, bringing in visitors and related businesses that benefit the parks…Keep it focused on safety and respect for all parties. Acceptance will protect the public and park resources and enable an exciting new form of recreation to take place."[20]

Canton has an ordinance that prohibits launching and landing drones (and other aircraft) in parks. Given their popularity, the city may want to designate a location and post clear rules and regulations in all parks.

2.10 Key Findings from the Evaluate Phase

The findings of the Evaluate Phase will be considered with the findings of the Engage Phase to direct the Envision Phase which will help develop recommendations and the action plan. Highlights and key findings about Canton and its parks and recreation offerings from the Evaluate Phase include:

- Services have not kept up with the city's population growth, even with the many HOAs offering recreation amenities
- An aging population that is becoming more educated, more diverse, and wealthier
- Identification of socially vulnerable residents, particularly in the central part of the city where priority investment areas were identified
- Need for high quality trails, playgrounds, and multipurpose fields at new and renovated parks
- Need for significant upgrades and additional features at several parks
- Need for additional parks and indoor recreation space to fill service gaps, with a focus on increasing the number of people within a 10-minute walk to a park
- Potential for partnerships to begin offering programming
- Opportunities to incorporate up and coming trends in parks and recreation with new programs and facilities

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[20] Wootton, Courtney; Bradley, Michael J.; Ray Neal NRPA. Drones in Parks: It's All About Perspective. https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2018/december/drones-in-parks-its-all-about-perspective/

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3

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the processes used and the public input gathered throughout the planning process and summarizes the following elements:

1. Open House Workshop
2. Community Events
3. Stakeholder Conversations
4. Surveys – Web/Handout Survey & Random Sample Mail Survey

The public engagement process is essential for identifying the needs and preferences of Canton residents. The findings of the public engagement process are, therefore, integral to the vision for the future and serve as the foundation for the recommendations of this Master Plan.

3.2 Open House Workshops and Community Events

Canton hosted one open house meeting December 7, 2023 to introduce the project to the public and to solicit feedback from the community regarding the present and future of parks and recreation. The workshop allowed participants to visit a series of stations to provide their input and learn more about the Master Plan. The city also set up a tent with similar input stations during Mistletoe on Main and the Merry Market on December 8 and 9. Over 350 people were engaged in Canton at these three events.



Participants were given three red dots to place on images of park features they would like Canton to add or improve. They were given three blue dots to place on images of recreation programs they would like Canton to add or improve. In another activity, participants were given $1,000 in play money to "spend" on parks and recreation improvements they would support in Canton. Participants were also asked to write in answers to two questions: what do you like about existing opportunities and what would you like to see improved.

3.2.1 Preference Boards (Dot Voting)

Attendees of the open house workshop and community events were given three red dots to place on a board indicating their preferences for park features along with three green dots to place on another board indicating their preferences for programs. The boards provided a list of park amenities and programs (16 each) with pictures. Children were also invited to participate. Around 360 community members participated in these activities. Results of the selections are presented in Figures 3.1 and 3.2.



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On the features board (Figure 3.2), trails received the largest number of dots (134 or 13%), followed by splash pads (125 or 11%) and natural areas (120 or 11%). The options provided on the boards were intended to be general, so features were combined into categories whenever possible. On the programs board (Figure 3.3), festivals received the largest number of dots (148 or 14%), followed by nature programs (121 or 12%), movies/music concerts (108 or 10%) and youth sports (107 or 10%). Most of the participants were engaged at two different events which may have increased support for these activities.

Figure 3.1: Feature Preference Results

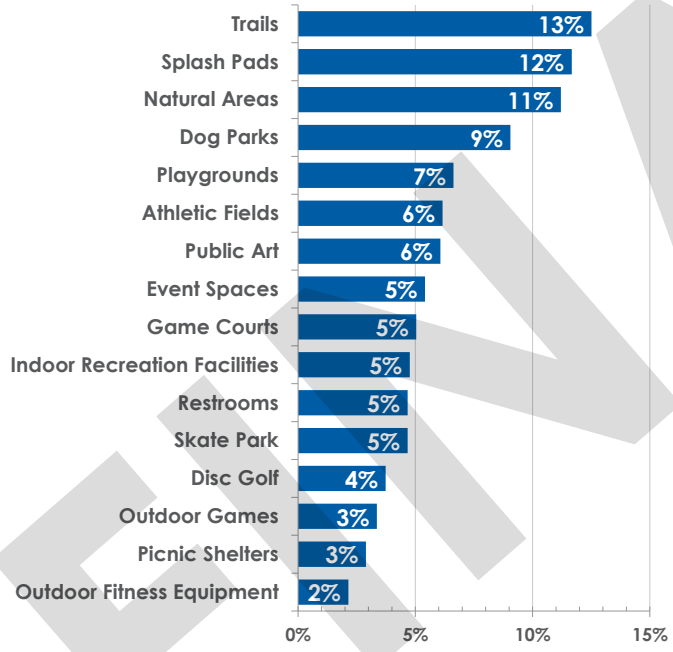
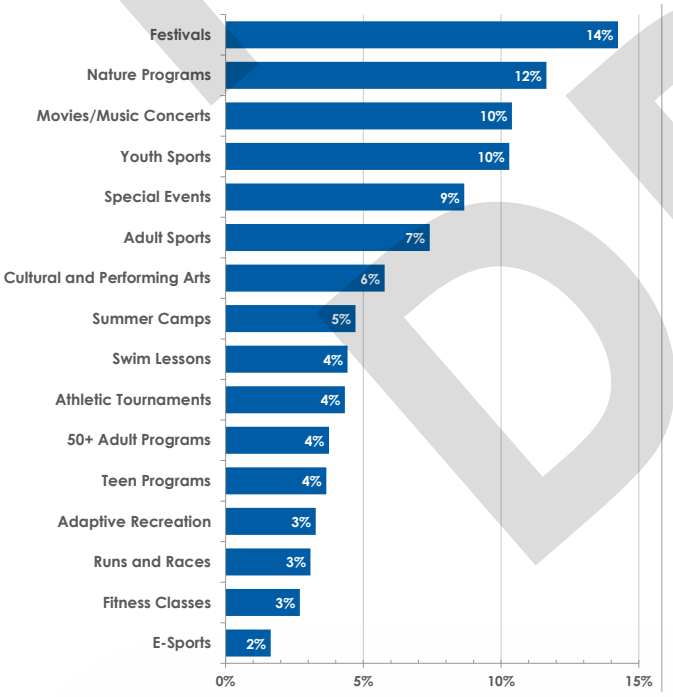


Figure 3.2: Program Preference Results



3.2.2 Dollar Voting

Participants at the open house workshop and community events were given $1,000 in play money to place into boxes to indicate how they would like Canton to allocate funds for parks and recreation. Table 3.1 shows the total allocations for each of eight categories (or boxes). Participants could also choose to place money into a box marked "other" to request specific amenities or improvements not included in one of the eight provided categories.



Of the provided options, trails & connectivity received the largest allocation with $60,300 or 17% of total dollars. Splash Pad was second with $47,500 or 13%. Outdoor parks and facilities and new dog park were the next most popular options with 12% and 11% of total dollars. Individual "other" comments can be found in Appendix D.

Table 3.1: Dollar Voting Allocation

Action (Box Title)	Open House City Hall	Mistletoe on Main 12/8/2023	Merry Market 12/9/2023	Total
Trails & Connectivity	$4,900	$25,200	$30,200	**$60,300**
	29%	*15%*	*17%*	*17%*
Splash Pad	$1,400	$24,100	$22,000	**$47,500**
	8%	*15%*	*13%*	*13%*
Outdoor Parks and Facilities	$3,900	$18,000	$19,000	**$40,900**
	23%	*11%*	*11%*	*12%*
New Dog Park	$2,200	$21,500	$16,600	**$40,300**
	13%	*13%*	*9%*	*11%*
Athletic Fields	$500	$16,600	$19,900	**$37,000**
	3%	*10%*	*11%*	*10%*
Programs & Special Events	$1,000	$16,800	$17,400	**$35,200**
	6%	*10%*	*10%*	*10%*
New Parks	$700	$11,200	$18,300	**$30,200**
	4%	*7%*	*10%*	*8%*
Indoor Recreation Facilities	$400	$12,500	$13,900	**$26,800**
	2%	*8%*	*8%*	*8%*
Pickleball Courts	$300	$9,600	$11,800	**$21,700**
	2%	*6%*	*7%*	*6%*
Support Features	$500	$4,200	$4,200	**$8,900**
	3%	*3%*	*2%*	*3%*
Other	$1,300	$3,000	$2,500	**$6,800**
	8%	*2%*	*1%*	*2%*
Total	**$17,100**	**$162,700**	**$175,800**	**$355,600**

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3.2.3 Input Stations

At the open house, three topics were provided for participants to provide feedback: Parks & Facilities, Trails & Natural Areas, and Programs & Special Events. Due to space limitations, only one area for all comments was provided at the two events at Cannon Park. The summaries of comments in the ensuing text reflect the top noted items from all three events. The full text of comments can be found in Appendix D.

Parks & Facilities

This topic represented built amenities and general recommendations for parks. The largest number of comments were related to new or additional features at the parks with an emphasis on types of courts.

What do you like about existing opportunities?

- Game courts
- Great parks

What would you like to see improved?

- Soccer goals
- Shade structures
- New dog park
- More art features
- Picnic shelters
- Permanent outdoor games
- Indoor sports facilities
- Tennis and volleyball courts at Etowah River Park
- Dedicated indoor pickleball courts
- Indoor racquetball



Trails & Natural Areas

This station encouraged discussion of natural areas and trails. The most comments were related to desire for more trails and access to the Etowah River.

What do you like about existing opportunities?

- Paved trails
- Trails in Boling Park
- Canoe/kayak ramps
- Natural areas

What would you like to see improved?

- More bike trails
- Connectivity
- Add mountain bike/gravel bike trails
- Trail lighting
- More kayak input and take out sites
- River overlooks
- Add zip lines/ropes courses
- Add horse trails



Programs & Special Events

This topic provided a location for comments about programs, including sports, special events, and more. Overall, participants indicated a desire for program opportunities that are not currently available, especially nature programs, art and cultural programs, and pickleball leagues. Despite the large number of existing events, participants would like to see more, especially concerts and performances.

What do you like about existing opportunities?

- Softball
- Senior programs
- Movies and concerts
- Staff

What would you like to see improved?

- Nature programs
- Pickleball leagues

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- More outdoor concerts, movies, theater
- Arts programs
- Cultural programs
- Competitive swimming
- Indoor dance/gymnastics
- Programs/events for special needs adults
- Adult sports



3.3 Stakeholder Groups

In December of 2023, the consultant met with a series of stakeholders to determine their priorities for parks and recreation in Canton. More than 15 stakeholder groups participated in these discussions, contributing their respective visions to this Master Plan. At these meetings, stakeholders were asked a series of questions about Canton parks, recreation facilities, and programs that included discussions of strengths as well as future opportunities. Summaries of the meetings with complete comments are included in Appendix D.

3.3.1 Groups Engaged

The following stakeholder groups were engaged as part of this Master Plan:

- YMCA
- Faith Based Organizations
- Fire Department
- Cultural Arts Commission
- Chamber of Commerce
- Tourism Board
- UGA Extension
- ARMUS&PEC
- Service League
- Canton Baseball
- GA Prime Softball
- Cherokee Impact Soccer
- Revival Events Group
- Reinhardt University
- Cherokee County Schools
- City of Woodstock Parks and Recreation

3.3.2 Stakeholder Broad Recommendations

Facility Needs

- Improved bike/ped connectivity
- More trails
- More and improved public river access – launches and fishing areas
- Search & rescue river access
- Rentable indoor & outdoor event spaces
- Indoor courts for volleyball and basketball
- More/better restrooms
- More/designated sports fields for soccer
- Access to baseball fields
- Artificial turf fields
- Pickleball courts
- Accessible playgrounds
- New dog park
- More parking
- Indoor soccer fields/courts
- Security lighting
- Riverwalk – events, art, connection to river
- Public art
- Emergency call boxes
- Nature and art play areas
- Community gardens
- Covered outdoor classrooms
- Sand volleyball

Programming/Operations Needs

- Multilingual or symbol-based signage
- Improved trail maps
- Park information for visitors and new residents
- Better wayfinding/directional signage to and within parks
- Mile markers on river
- Art festival
- Summer camps
- Bluebird Trail signage
- Friends group for Canton parks
- Power at Etowah River Park for events
- Opportunity to host tournaments
- Better cooperation between sports groups
- Pickleball programs
- Common calendar for events

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3.4 Public Opinion Surveys

The following pages summarize the findings of the online/handout (Web Survey) and the random sample survey (Mail Survey). Because the Mail Survey results were collected using a representative random sample, they are intended to represent Canton residents as a whole, both users and non-users. On the other hand, the Web Survey results reflect the views of respondents who are often already engaged in some way with the city's parks and programs and not representative of Canton residents as a whole. The figures in this section display side-by-side the results from both surveys. Of the figures that follow, some show only the top results for a survey question; however, full results can be found in Appendices E and F.

3.4.1 Representative Random Sample Survey – Overview and Methodology

The ETC Institute conducted a Parks and Recreation Survey (Mail Survey) during the winter of 2023 – 2024 to help establish priorities for parks/open space, programs, and trails in Canton. This Mail Survey was designed to obtain representative results from households throughout the city.

The Brandstetter Carroll Inc. (BCI) project team worked with City of Canton staff to develop the survey questionnaire. Tailored to issues of strategic local importance, the survey was mailed to a random sample of households throughout Canton. Recipients we given the option to complete the survey online or complete a paper survey.

ETC Institute had a goal of 400 survey responses for representative results and met this goal with a total of 421 completed surveys collected. Based on this random sample, the overall results have a precision of at least +/–4.7% at the 95% level of confidence.

3.4.2 National Benchmarking

Since 1998, ETC Institute has conducted household surveys for Parks and Recreation issues in more than 700 communities across all 50 states. The results of these surveys provide a database to compare responses from households in client communities. This National Benchmarking summary is included in Appendix E with the full survey report. Select information from the benchmarking is included below.

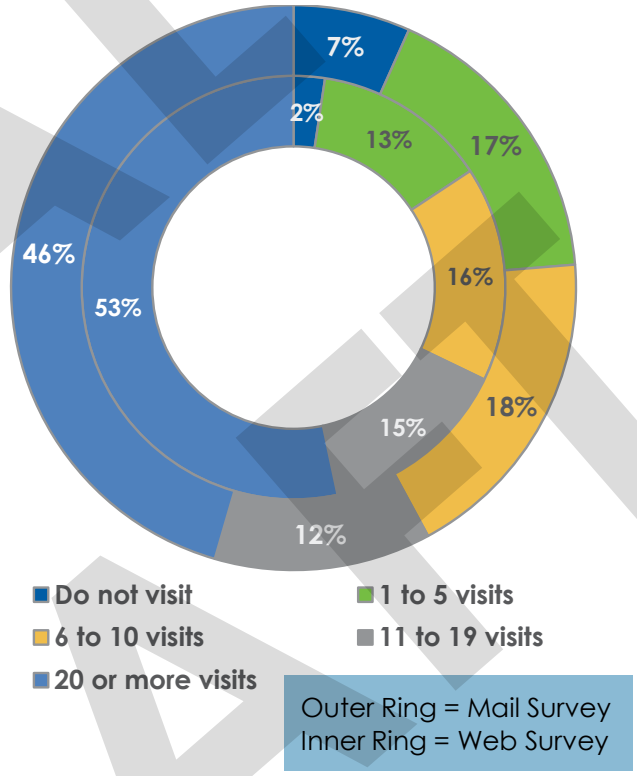
3.4.3 Web Survey – Overview and Methodology

In addition to the random sample survey conducted by ETC Institute, a web and handout survey (Web Survey) was administered by BCI during the same timeframe. The questions in this Web Survey were similar to the Mail Survey with the overall length reduced. This version, available in English and Spanish, was powered by Survey Monkey with a total of 422 completed surveys. The full survey report can be found in Appendix F.

3.4.4 Frequency of Visits to Parks & Recreation Facilities

According to the Mail Survey, 93% of Canton households visited a park or recreation facility in the past year (Figure 3.3), and **46% of households visited 20 or more times**. Web Survey respondents reported visiting at higher rates (53% visited 20 or more times), an expected result as these surveys were also sent to programs users, including sports leagues.

Figure 3.3: Frequency of Visitation



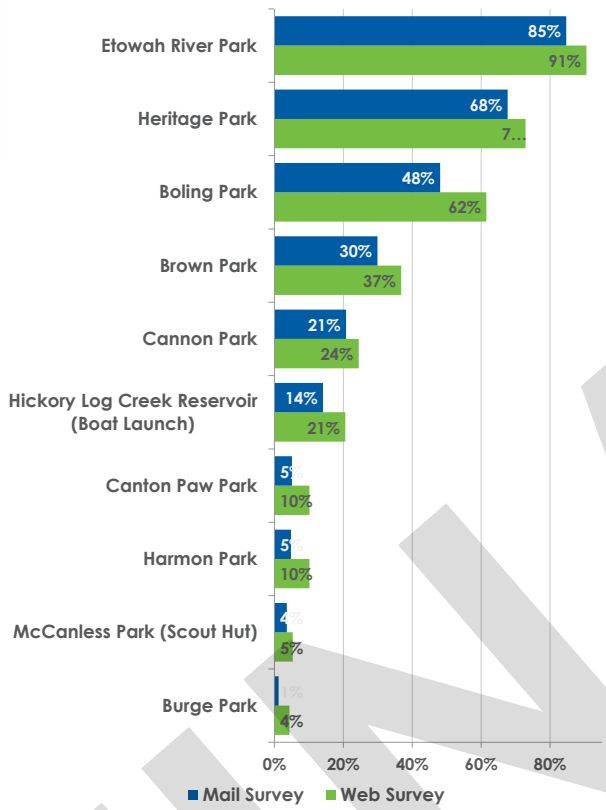
3.4.5 Recreation Facilities and Parks Visited

Figure 3.4 shows the rate of visitation to parks in Canton over the past year. Etowah River Park was the most visited by both Mail and Web survey respondents followed by Heritage Park and Boling Park. Web Survey respondents visited Boling Park at a much higher rate than Mail Survey respondents, which is expected due to Boling Park being home to organized youth sports activities.

Harmon Park's visitation numbers are artificially low because the park was under construction for the year prior to the surveys being released. McCanless Park and Burge Park have very low, as expected visitation rates. McCanless Park is a small neighborhood park with a perception that it belongs to local Scouts troops. Burge Park is a small neighborhood park with only a basketball court and playground.

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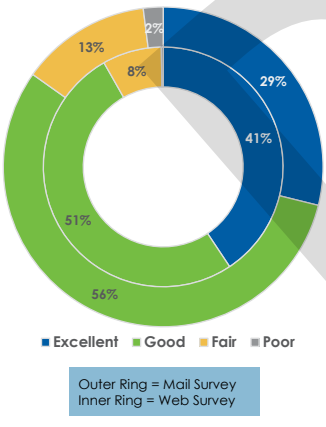
Figure 3.4: Parks Visited in the Past Year



3.4.6 Physical Condition of Parks

Through the Mail Survey, 56% of households rated the condition of Canton parks as good and **29% rated the condition of the parks as excellent** (Figure 3.5). **Eighty Five percent (85%) of Mail Survey households identified the condition of the parks as excellent or good, compared to 92% of Web Survey respondents**. The survey results related to condition of the parks reflect the investments Canton has made in new and renovated parks. Individual comments received from stakeholders and during engagement events indicate specific parks and features need improvement; however, consensus indicates that the overall condition of Canton's parks is good.

Figure 3.5: Condition of Parks



3.4.7 Results – Quality of City Sponsored Events

Recreation programming offered by Canton includes several city sponsored events. Other programming, including sports leagues, are offered by partner organizations. Respondents were asked about the quality of city sponsored events. The results in Figure 3.6 below show high ratings for both Web and Mail Survey respondents. Nearly all **(96%) Web Survey respondents and 92% of Mail Survey respondents rated city sponsored events as either excellent or good**. Canton residents attend the city sponsored events in high numbers. Well over half of Mail Survey respondents (57%) and Web Survey respondents (59%) indicate they attend city sponsored events (Figure 3.7). Figure 3.15 later in this chapter provides guidance for the city on the types of recreational programming desired by residents in addition to special events.

Figure 3.6: Quality of City Sponsored Events

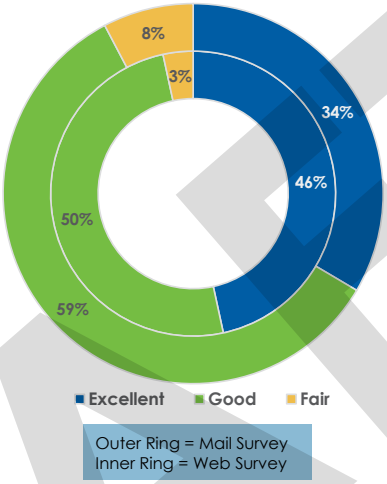
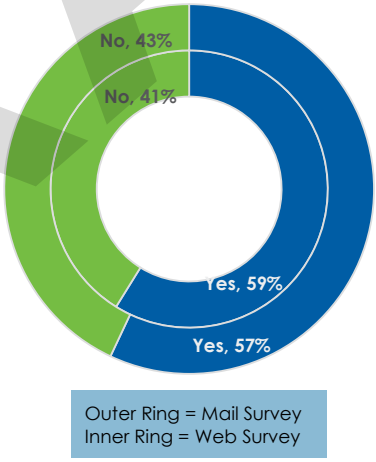


Figure 3.7: Attendance of City Sponsored Events

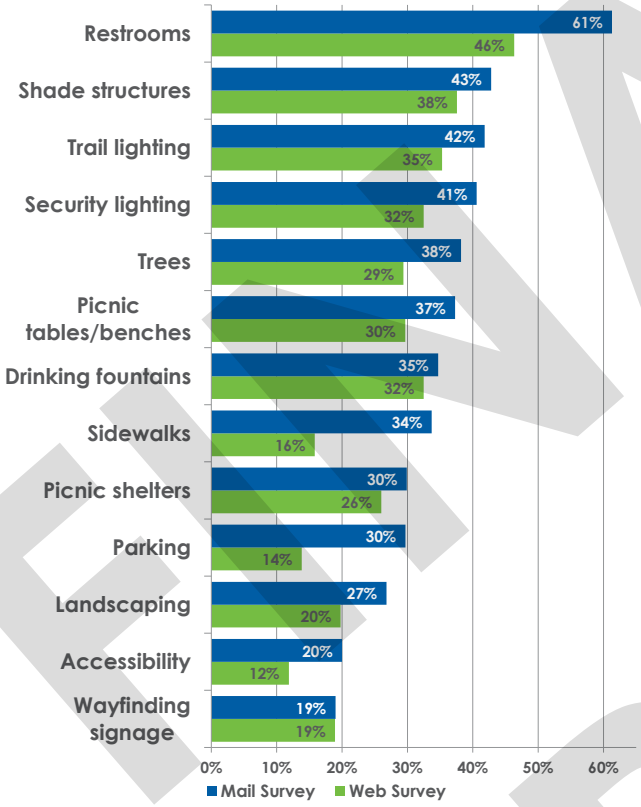


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3.4.8 Support Amenities

Respondents to both surveys were asked which improvements they would like to see in Canton's parks to improve their experiences (Figure 3.8). Restrooms were by far the most chosen improvement in both surveys, a result consistent with most communities. Households would also like to see additional shade structures, lighting, and trees. Other top items focus on support amenities such as picnic areas and drinking fountains.

Figure 3.8: Desired Additional Improvements to Support Amenities

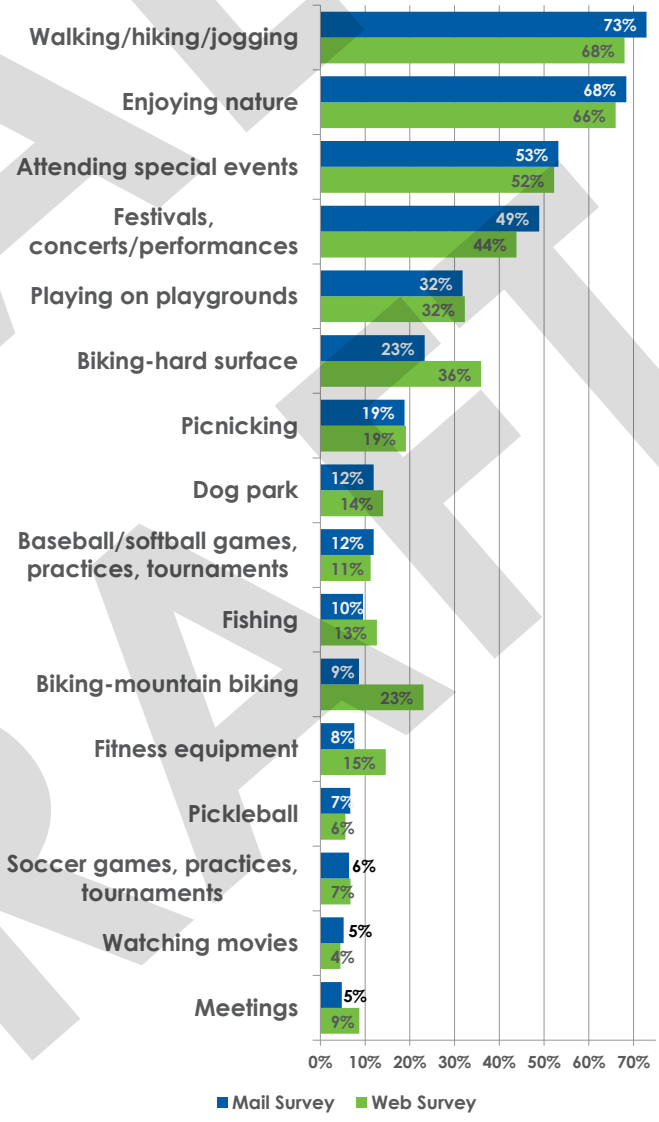


3.4.9 Household Needs and Desire for Facility Investment

Both surveys asked what activities respondents enjoy in Canton parks (Figure 3.9) and what activities they would like to find more opportunities to enjoy in the future (Figure 3.10). **Canton residents enjoy walking, hiking, and jogging in their parks more than any other activity** according to both the Mail Survey and Web Survey. Not far behind are enjoying nature and attending special events, festivals, concerts, and performances. These results are not surprising given the extensive and growing network of walking paths in Canton's parks and the number of special events offered by the city and its partners.

Results for activities residents enjoy in parks showed consistency between the Web and Mail Surveys, however that consistency decreased when residents indicated what activities they would like to find more opportunities to enjoy in the future. Walking, hiking, and jogging remained the top choice in both surveys. Mountain biking and hard surface biking received much more support in the Web Survey than the Mail Survey. Overall, both surveys support offering more opportunities for enjoying nature and attending events, festivals, concerts and performances. While the other activities included in the surveys (i.e., pickleball, disc golf, dog park, splash pads, and fishing) may not be as universally popular as other options, they received enough support to be considered for appropriately sized investments.

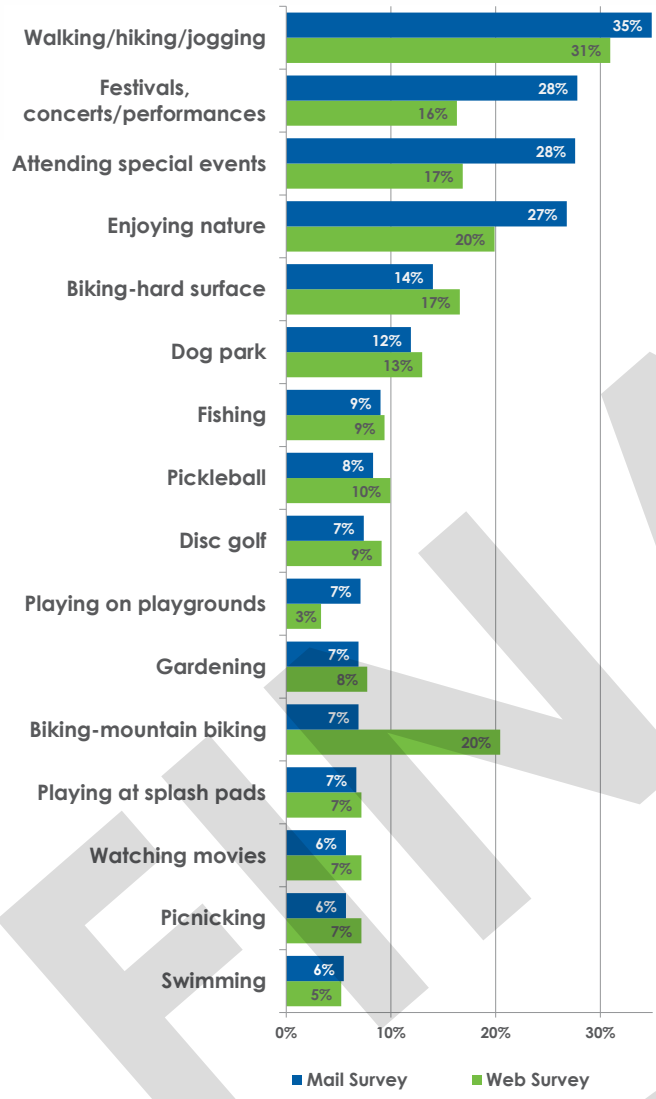
Figure 3.9: Activities Enjoyed in Parks



Pickleball was the most desired of the court or field sports. Disc golf was also highly requested compared to many of the other activities. Mountain biking received much more support in the web survey (over 20%), liked, due to heavy participation by the particular group.

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Figure 3.10: More Opportunities to Enjoy



The Mail Survey included an additional section asking residents what facilities and features they use or would like to use if available. This question allows residents to choose options not currently available in Canton. Respondents were also asked to rank their top three most important facilities or features. **Trails and natural areas received considerably more support than any other facilities or amenities** (Figure 3.11). Other facilities and features that earned considerable support included playgrounds, canoe/kayak launches, dog parks, large community parks, and fishing piers.

This section of the survey also asked respondents to indicate what type of investment they would like to see in each of the facility and feature types: "revitalization/upgrades to existing," "new development," "both," and "no investment needed." Trails and natural areas enjoy the strongest support for both types of investment (Figure 3.12). Other facilities and features receiving strong support for both types of investment include nature center, canoe/kayak launches, large community parks, neighborhood parks, playgrounds and picnic shelters. **Development of a nature center received the most support for new investment**. Other facilities and features receiving notable support for new investment included swimming pools, neighborhood parks, fishing piers, dog parks, and splash pads. The distinction between new versus upgraded facilities indicates that simply upgrading existing facilities will not meet demand or a new/different location should be considered.

Based on these findings, the **highest priority facilities for investment** are:

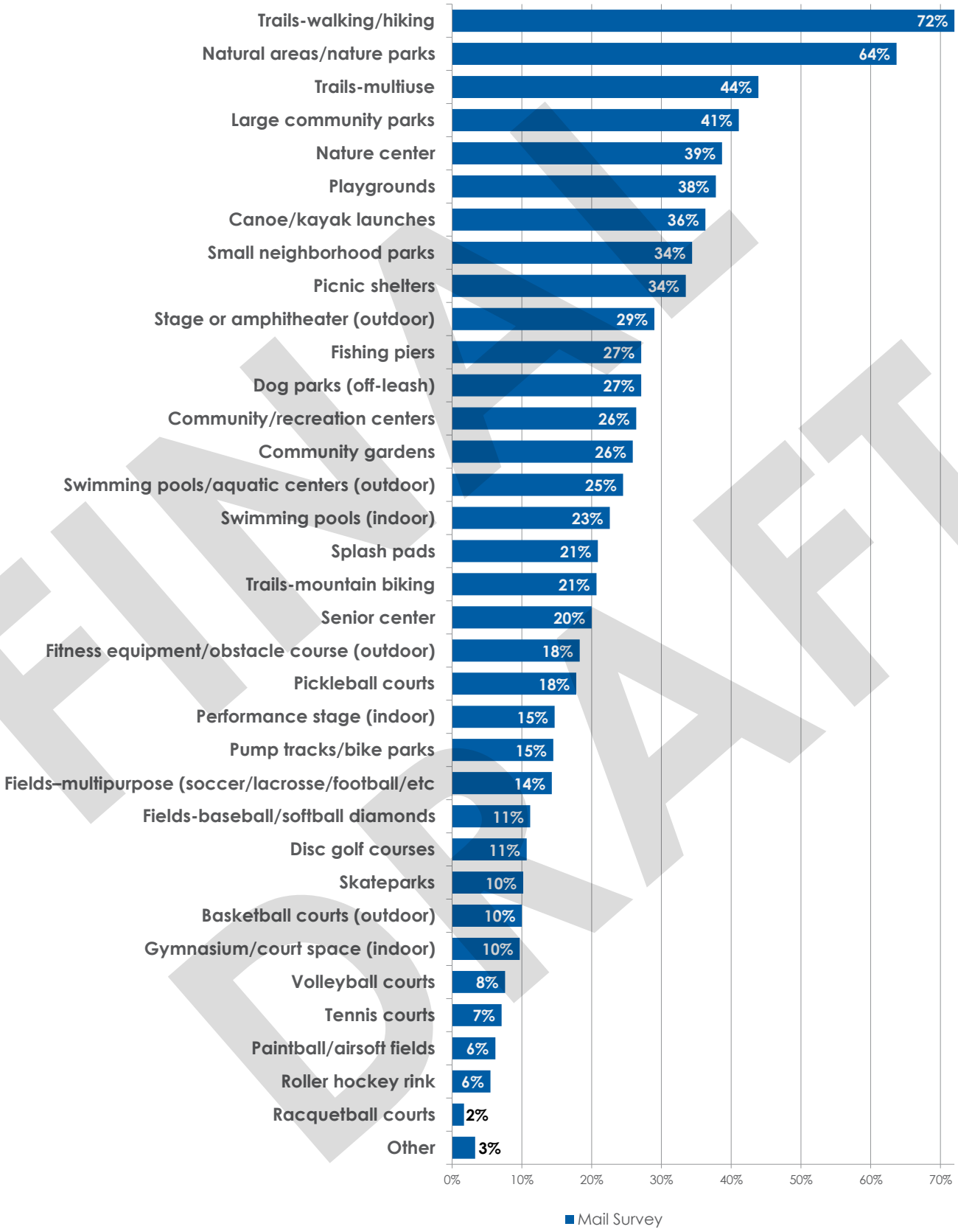
1. **Trails – all types**
2. **Natural areas and a nature center**
3. **Canoe/kayak launches & fishing access**
4. **New/upgraded parks**
5. **Playgrounds**
6. **Picnic shelters/picnic areas**
7. **Dog parks**
8. **Community recreation centers**
9. **Community gardens**
10. **Aquatic facilities**

3.4.10 Household Needs and Desire for Program Investment

The Mail Survey included a section asking residents what programs they participate in or would like to participate in if available. This question allows residents to choose options not currently available in Canton. **Festivals, concerts, and art performances were the most popular program options** followed by fishing, canoeing, or boating and nature programs (Figure 3.13). Programs for persons age 50+ and adult fitness and wellness programs also enjoyed received considerable support. Respondents were also asked to rank their top three most important programs. Results were similar for this question with festivals, concerts, and art performances receiving the most support followed by nature programs and fishing, canoeing, or boating.

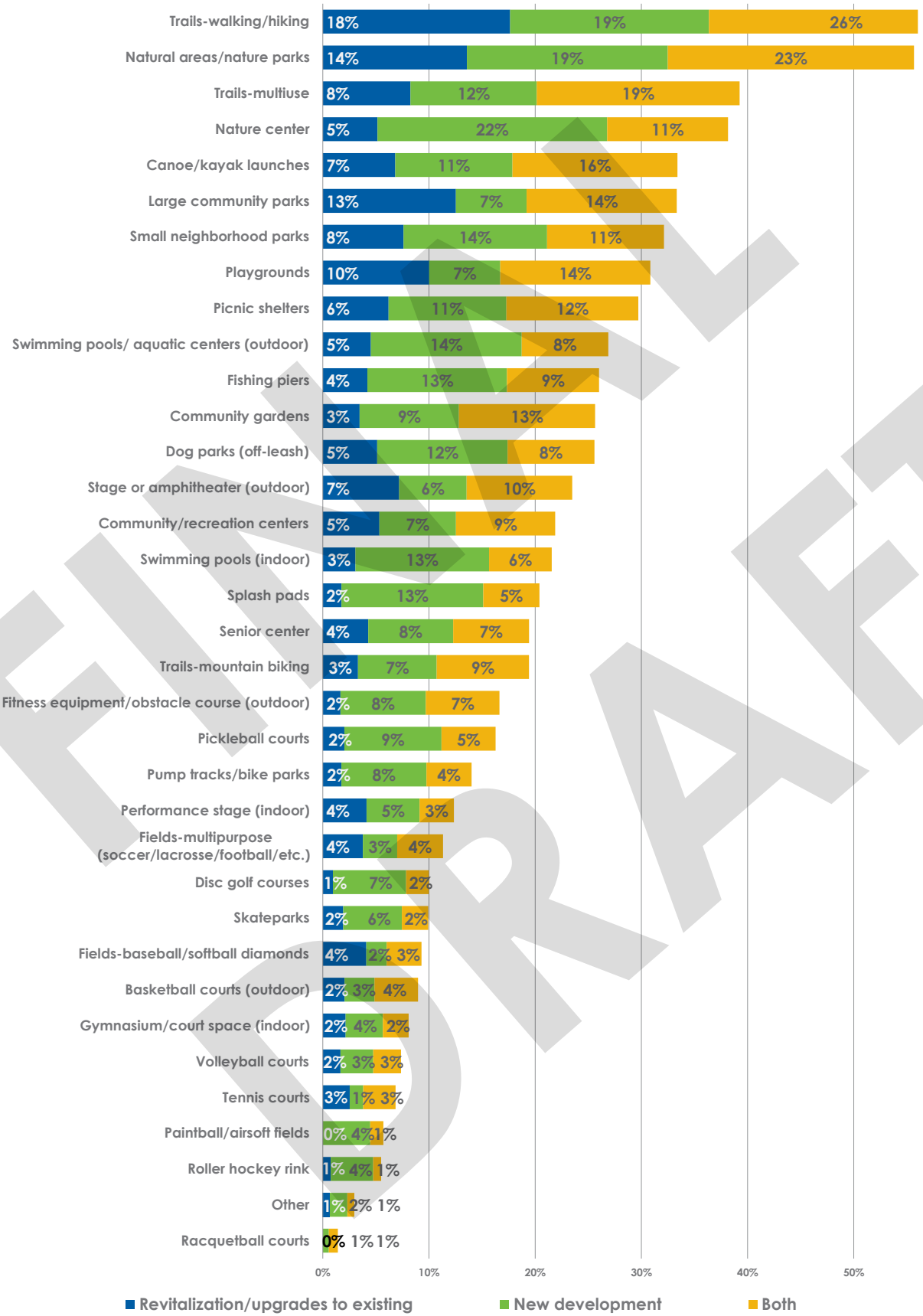
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Figure 3.11: Most Important Facilities Used or Would Like to Use if Available (Mail Survey Only)



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Figure 3.12: Desire for Investment in Facilities (Mail Survey Only)



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Figure 3.13: Programs Used or Would Like Use (Mail Survey Only)

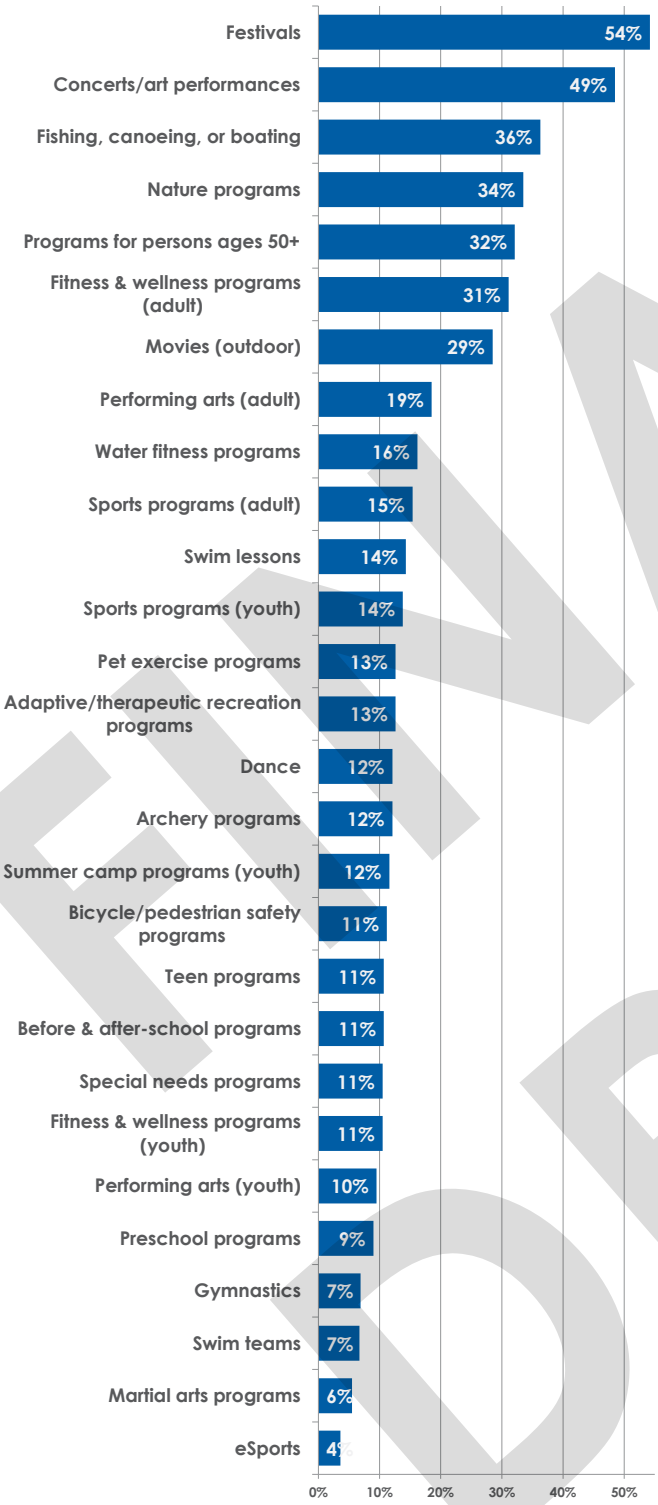
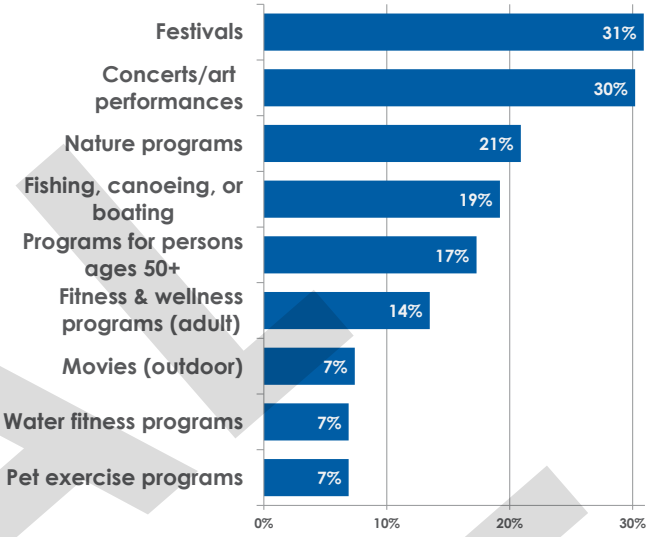


Figure 3.14: Most Important Programs (Sum of Top Choices Mail Survey Only)

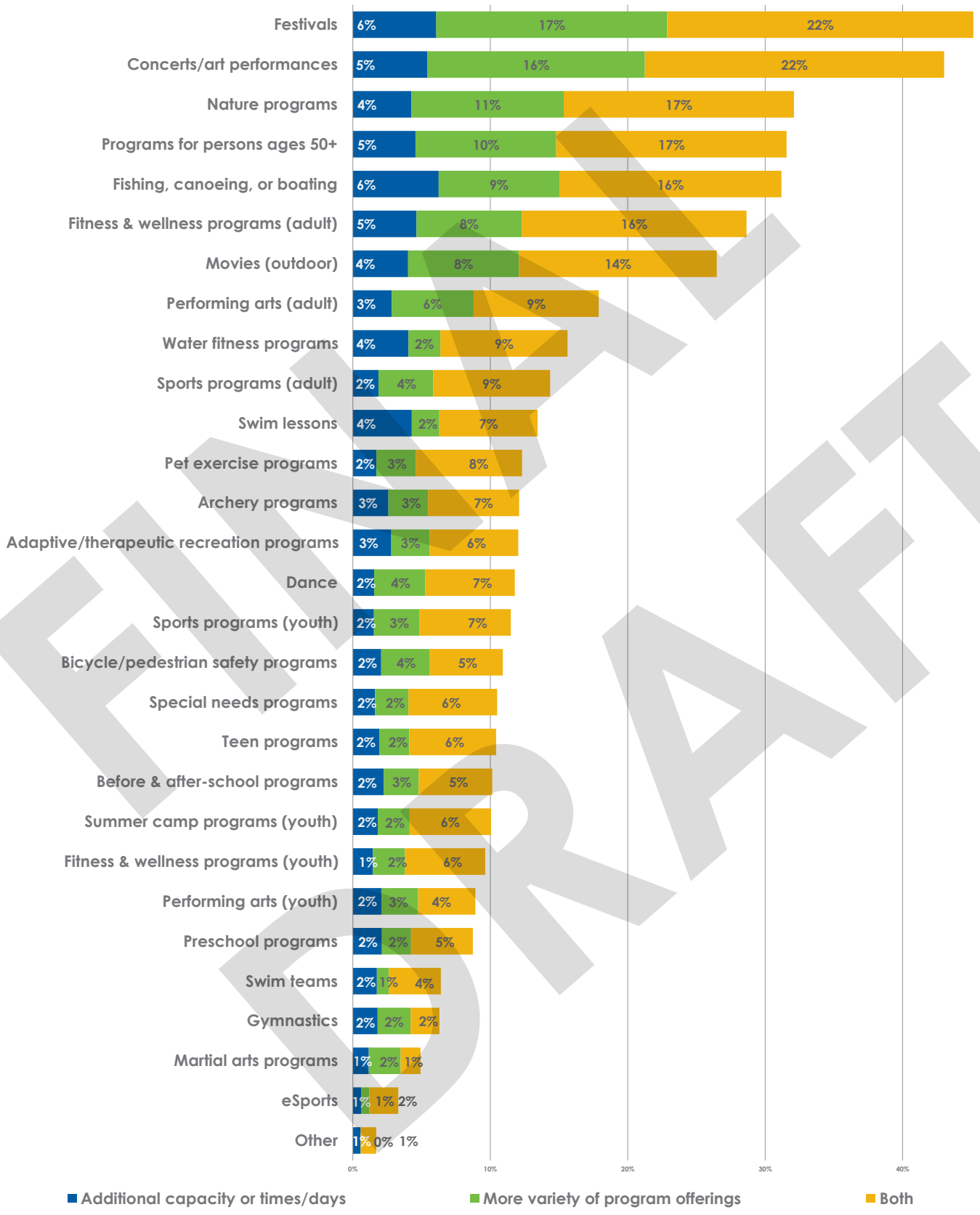


When asked to indicate the type of investment they would like to see for each type of program (additional capacity or times/days, more variety, or both), the results were similar to the previous findings. **Respondents want more events and variety for festivals, concerts, and art performances (Figure 3.15)**. Residents also support investment in additional and more types of adult, 50+ programs, and nature programs. Based on these finding, the highest priority program categories for investment are:

1. **Festivals**
2. **Concerts and art performances**
2. **Nature programs**
3. **Adult/50+ programs – fitness/wellness, arts, and sports**
4. **Age 50+ programs**
5. **Fishing, canoeing, and boating**
6. **Fitness and wellness**
7. **Outdoor movies**
8. **Performing arts**
9. **Aquatics programs**
10. **Adult sports**

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Figure 3.15: Desire for Investment in Programs (Mail Survey Only)

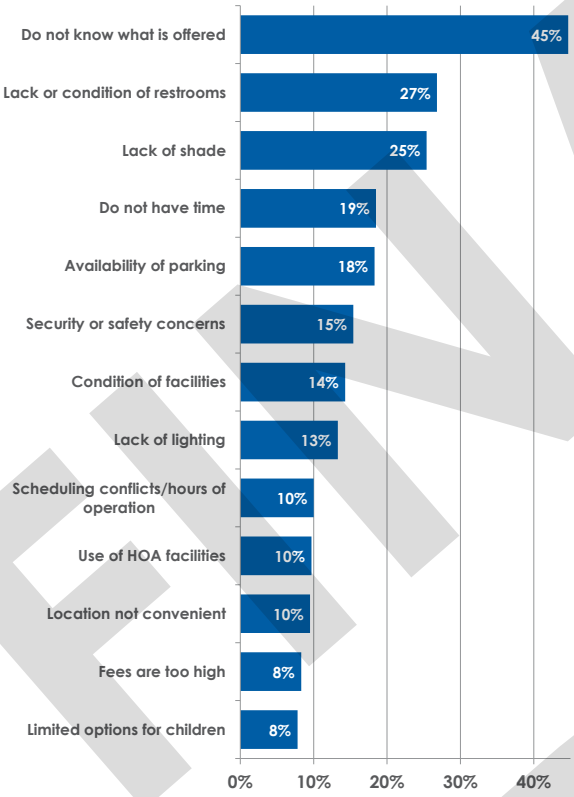


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3.4.11 Reasons for Not Using Canton's Parks, Recreation Facilities, and Programs

The Mail Survey included a question asking respondents their reasons for not using parks and recreation. Nearly 45% of households indicated they do not participate because they do not know what is offered (Figure 3.16). Other popular reasons for not participating were the lack or condition of restrooms (27%), lack of shade (25%), do not have time (19%), and the availability of parking (18%).

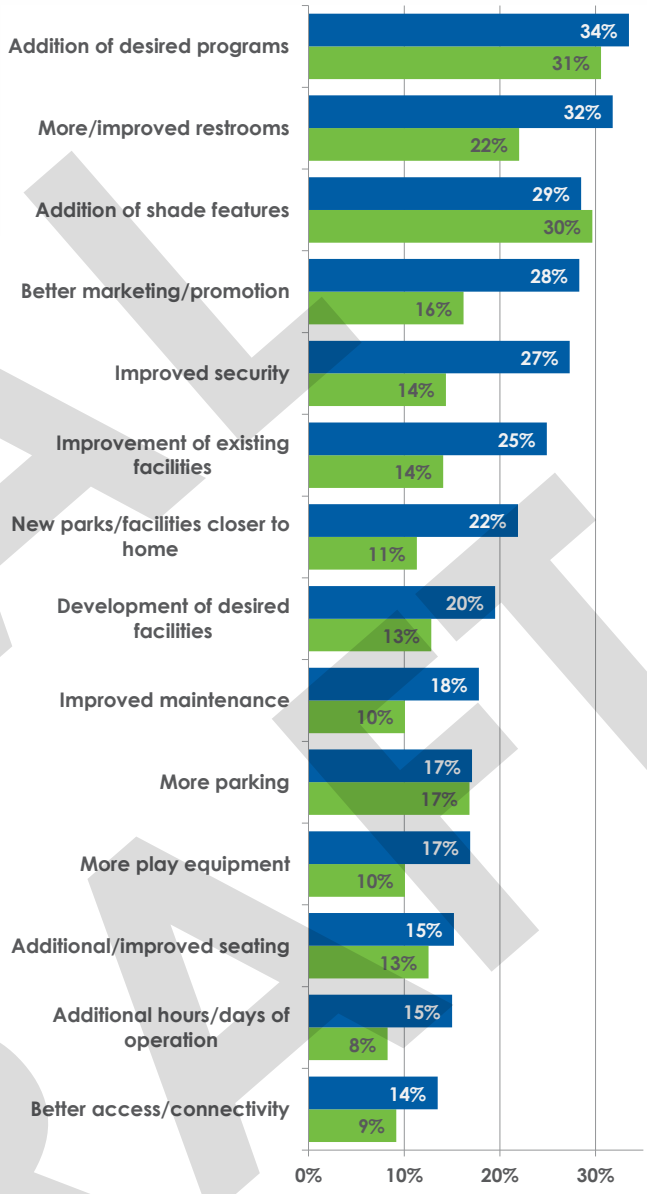
Figure 3.16: Reasons for Not Using Parks and Recreation



Respondents to both surveys were asked what would encourage them to use Canton's parks and recreation offerings more often. As would be expected, the program and facility improvements they indicated earlier in the survey would encourage them to take better advantage of parks and programs.

As Figure 3.17 shows, households would like to see additional programs, more or improved restrooms, shade, and improvements to existing facilities. **Overall, the results indicate that improvements to parks and additional programs would lead to increased use along with improved marketing to increase awareness**.

Figure 3.17: What Would Encourage More Use of Facilities & Programs

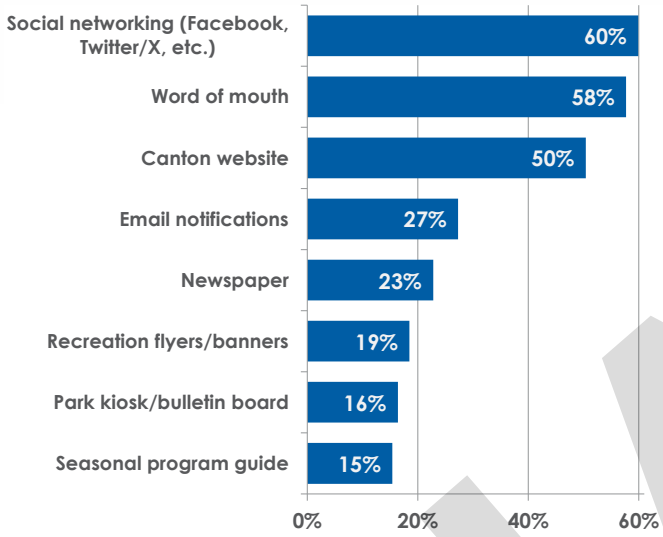


3.4.12 Preferred Method of Learning about Programs and Activities

Households were asked to indicate their preferred methods of learning about programs and activities. As indicated in Figure 3.18, most households would prefer to see this information via social networking, followed by word of mouth, the City of Canton website and email. Utilizing multiple sources for spreading information will help reach diverse groups of Canton residents and engage many who are not currently participating in programs or visiting parks and facilities.

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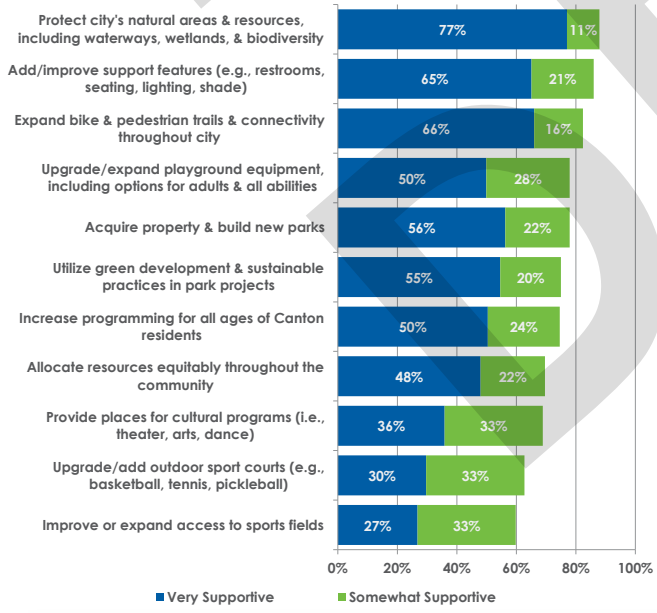
Figure 3.18: Method of Learning about facilities, programs, activities, or events



3.4.13 Actions to Improve Parks and Recreation

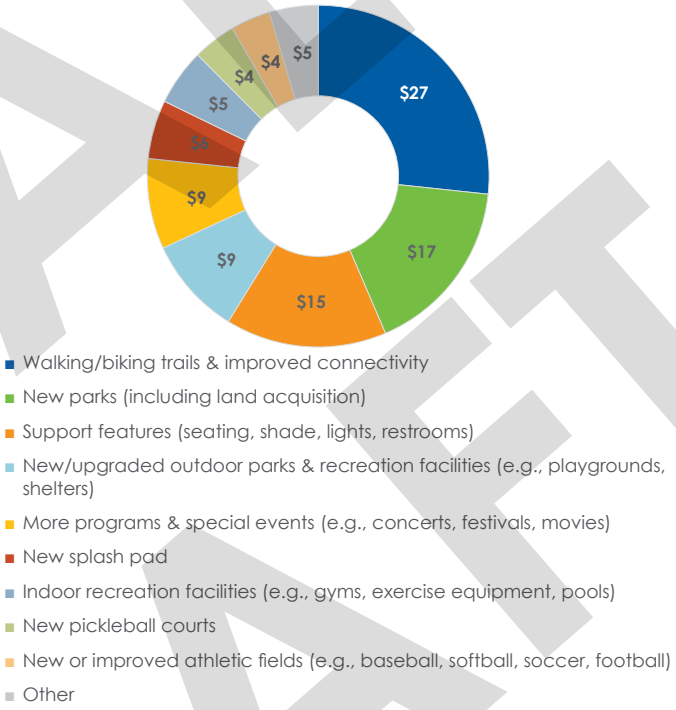
Mail Survey recipients were asked to indicate their level of support for actions the City of Canton could take to improve parks and recreation (Figure 3.19). Residents expressed the most support for protecting the city's natural areas and resources (77% strongly support). Other actions with strong support include adding or improving support features (restrooms, seating, lighting and shade) and expanding bike and pedestrian trails while improving connectivity throughout the city. Support for upgrading and adding outdoor courts (including pickleball) and improving or expanding access to sports fields received the least support but still received support from over 60% of households.

Figure 3.19: Actions to Improve Parks and Recreation (Mail Survey Only)



Another question asked households to allocate funds for different types of park and recreation improvements (Figure 3.20). Walking and biking trails and improved connectivity received the most support, receiving on average $27 of households' $100 of funding. New parks and land acquisition received the next highest level of support ($17) followed by support features ($15). Similar to the previous question, pickleball ($4) and athletic fields ($4) received the least support, although they could also be included under new and upgraded facilities.

Figure 3.20: Allocation of Funds to Improve Parks and Recreation (Mail Survey Only)



3.4.14 Support for Tax to Fund Improvements

Mail Survey recipients were asked to rate their level of support for a potential tax to support improvements that were important to them. About 56% indicated they would strongly or moderately support a potential tax increase (25% strongly, 31% moderately). Only 17% indicated that they would not support such a tax (Figure 3.21). These results indicate that a bond package formulated to respond to community desires – as identified in this plan – would have a high probability of approval by Canton residents if given the opportunity to vote for it.

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Figure 3.21: Support for a Tax to Improve Parks and Recreation (Mail Survey Only)

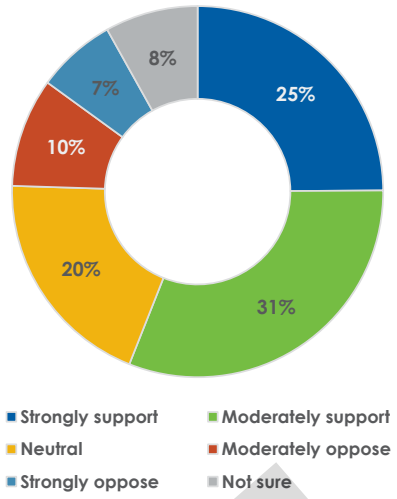


Figure 3.23: Income Comparison

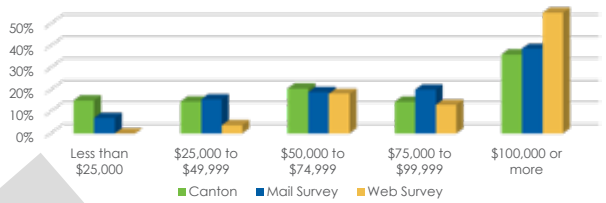
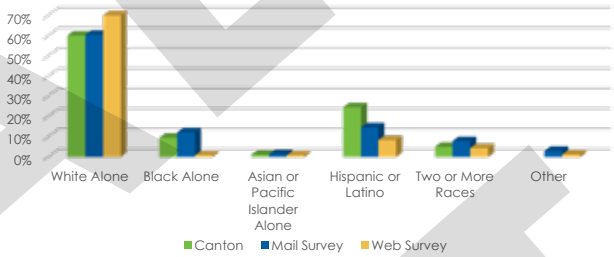


Figure 3.24: Race/Ethnicity Comparison



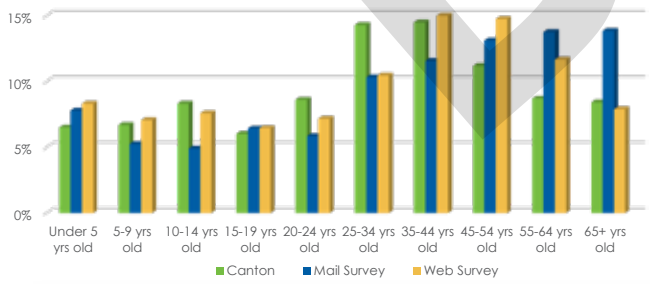
3.4.15 Demographics of Survey Households

Figure 3.22 compares the age ranges represented by survey for to Canton's population as a whole. Compared to Canton's overall population, the oldest cohorts (65+) were overrepresented in the Mail Survey. In the Web Survey, 35-44 and 45-54 were overrepresented. This group includes parents with children who are likely park users for youth sports programs. Not surprisingly, young adults 20-24 and those 25-34 are slightly underrepresented in both surveys.

Figure 3.23 shows Canton's income levels and those of the households who responded to the surveys. Those making over $100,000 per year were overrepresented in the Web Survey. Households making less $25,000 were absent from the Web Survey and underrepresented in the Mail Survey. In general, lower income levels can be more difficult to engage. The Mail Survey representation generally follows the actual income levels in Canton.

Figure 3.24 shows race/ethnicity information collected for both surveys. The race/ethnicity of Mail Survey respondents generally follows the percentages for the city as a whole, with the exception of Hispanic or Latino residents who were underrepresented. In the Web Survey results, residents who identify as Black Alone and as Hispanic or Latino were under represented. These results from the Web Survey highlight the need for additional outreach to these groups to increase engagement.

Figure 3.22: Age Comparison



3.5 Conclusion

Canton residents and others who participated in the community engagement activities of this planning process expressed clear support for several types of recreation facilities and features. The most consistent support across all engagement methods was for trails and natural areas, including a nature center. Participants expressed the strongest support for the following items:

- Trails – all types
- Natural areas and a nature center
- Access to the Etowah River
- Support Features
- Small neighborhood parks
- Splash pad
- Picnic shelters/picnic areas
- Dog parks
- Indoor spaces

On the program and activities side, participants indicated they really enjoy Canton's trails, festivals and events and would like the city to offer more of them. They also expressed strong interest in nature programs and activities that offer access to the Etowah River. Participants expressed the strongest support for the following programs and activities:

- Festivals, concerts and art performances
- Nature programs including fishing, canoeing, and boating
- Adult and 50+ programs – fitness/wellness, arts, and sports

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The survey results also indicate Canton Parks and Recreation needs to improve its marketing efforts. Sharing facility and program information will be most effective by utilizing social media, word of mouth, and the Canton website.

The word cloud image below (Figure 3.25) uses font size to show how frequently a word appears in the survey results. While positive or negative value is not applied to a word, the graphic is valuable because it illustrates the elements of parks and recreation that are most important to the Canton community. This image is provided in conclusion to reinforce the myriad comments, suggestions, and requests heard during the multifaceted public engagement phase.

Figure 3.25: Community Engagement Word Cloud



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4 VISION FOR THE FUTURE

4.1 Introduction

The *2024 Canton Parks and Recreation Master Plan* represents a collective imagination of the future. While the action plan component (Chapter 6) is a detailed account of all the recommendations developed – both operational and capital – to guide investment priorities, the strategic plan component in this chapter is intended to provide the department with a clearly defined purpose and underlying motivation for tackling those action items.

Developed from all the input gathered during the engagement phase, and approved by the steering committee, this strategic plan articulates a freshly inspired vision, mission, and set of defining values. These strategic elements will help pilot implementation of actions identified in this Master Plan, and thereby shape the future of parks and recreation in Canton. Also included at the end of this chapter are goals and objectives. These are incorporated later in the master plan to categorize and better define the wide range of recommendations in the action plan.

Finally, the chapter includes updated level of service (LoS) standards and guidelines that are consistent with the vision for the future of parks and recreation in Canton. These targets help to quantify the future needs of the community and provide measurable outcomes for level of service throughout the city.

4.2 Vision

4.2.1 Purpose of a Vision

A vision describes a unique horizon, an intended outcome. It defines a clear standard of accomplishment and in so doing, helps unify effort. A vision should:

1. Provide clear direction
2. Focus effort
3. Guide long-term action
4. Illustrate the department's purpose
5. Inspire and motivate
6. Visualize an ideal

4.2.2 New Vision for Canton Parks and Recreation

Fully informed by the values and visioning input generated by the steering committee, and with their support and approval, the following vision statement was crafted for Canton Parks and Recreation:

Canton Parks provide exceptional experiences that connect the entire community to nature and play

4.3 Mission

4.3.1 Purpose of a Mission

A mission defines the daily work and an enduring purpose. More specifically, a mission should answer questions like what the department does, how, and why it does this. The mission is an action-oriented statement that informs day-to-day action.

Like the vision statement, the mission should be easy to remember and to share with others. It should be the foundation of all departmental decision-making.

4.3.2 Proposed Mission for Canton Parks and Recreation

Building from the foundational visioning exercise conducted with the Master Plan steering committee and in consideration of the factors described above, the following is the proposed mission statement for Canton Parks and Recreation:

Provide outstanding parks that promote wellness and play

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4.4 Values

4.4.1 Purpose of Values

An organization's values serve as a "lighthouse" of guiding principles, informed by personal and organizational beliefs. Values are straightforward phrases or words that should:

1. Direct staff conduct
2. Express department ideals
3. Reflect department personality
4. Complement community's aspirations
5. Communicate what is important
6. Ensure quality staff experience
7. Instill positive focus system-wide

4.4.2 Core Values

Core values should be unique to the department and indicative of the attitudes, ambitions, and focus shared by the department and the community. Using insights from the steering committee discussions, and feedback generated through public engagement, the following are offered as foundational values for guiding the future work of the department:

Community – attract residents and visitors to events and programs that cultivate pride and build relationships

Connectivity – provide safe, convenient, and equitable access to facilities and programs

Nature – promote sustainability through education and physical connections to natural areas

Service – support a responsive and creative staff in providing quality recreation experiences and spaces

4.5 Goals and Objectives

4.5.1 Function of Goals and Objectives

Goals and objectives identify areas of strategic priority and provide broad, overarching organization for departmental actions. Together, goals and objectives:

1. Provide focus for actions and aspirations
2. Shape a designated timeframe for improvements
3. Create direction for investments of time, skills, and resources
4. Clarify what the department will and will not do

Generally, goals describe elements of the vision, defining what is achievable through the daily execution of the mission. Objectives – and therefore specific strategies or recommendations – fit within the scope of each goal.

Goals:

1. Overarching areas of strategic priority
2. Broad descriptions of intent
3. Rooted in outcome, rather than specific activity
4. Longest timeframe (i.e., as long as it takes to accomplish the vision)

Objectives:

1. Frame individual actions
2. More detailed description of what needs to be done
3. Measurable metrics (e.g., "increase," "reduce," "consolidate," "improve," "distribute," etc.)
4. Variable timeframes (0-2, 3-5, 5-10 years)

4.5.2 Goals and Objectives for Canton Parks and Recreation

The following goals and objectives are intended to help guide improvements, operations, and services in parks and recreation in Canton over the next 10 years.

Goal 1: Variety of spaces and facilities

Objective 1.1 – More parks and nature access

Objective 1.2 – Multiuse parks and increased variety of features

Objective 1.3 – Improved access to Etowah River and Lake Canton

Goal 2: Improved community access to wellness and health opportunities

Objective 2.1 – Promote equitable access to parks and facilities

Objective 2.2 – Additional park visitation and trail usage

Objective 2.3 – Increased program availability and participation

Goal 3: Improved community connectivity and engagement

Objective 3.1 – Improve connectivity within Canton parks

Objective 3.2 – Add/improve connections to Canton parks and other popular destinations

Objective 3.3 – Prepare and implement clear marketing strategies and communications

Objective 3.4 – Build and maintain collaborative relationships with the community and partners to address community priorities

Goal 4: Excellent operations and leadership

Objective 4.1 – Optimize services with performance standards and staff growth opportunities

Objective 4.2 – Employ creative strategies to increase funding for facilities and programs

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Objective 4.3 – Maintain clear standards and maintenance practices for quality, flexibility, and stewardship

4.6 Strategies

As already mentioned, specific strategies are provided for each of the objectives listed above later in this report. These strategies will be discussed in Chapter 5 (organized by category, like "programming" and "facility improvements") as well as listed in the Action Plan (Chapter 6), which also identifies a timeframe, responsible party, and potential funding source.

4.7 Improvement Priority Rating

Following the visioning process, the steering committee was asked to review a series of potential recreation and park improvements in Canton. These operational and capital recommendations were intended to begin to address the City's needs to help reach the new vision. Each of the proposed recommendations was based on the findings of the public engagement and the other analysis of the plan, all of which had been presented to the committee.

Committee members reviewed these potential solutions and participated in an exercise to help verify these priorities for the Action Plan. Committee members were asked to rate each of the potential improvement projects using interactive engagement software (Mentimeter) on a scale of 0-5 with the highest priority (5) and not needed (0).

These priority ratings were then used to help rank the importance of improvements but not necessarily the order in which they should be developed. Figure 4.1 identifies the improvement rating based on the average of the ranking for each item. These ratings were used as part of the process for determining priorities. Overall, the rankings are consistent with the public engagement and other data collected throughout the master planning process.

4.8 Needs, Standards, and Guidelines for Parkland and Recreation Areas in Canton

Analysis of the level of service for parks and recreation requires various perspectives to tell a complete story. A service level might be described as adequate by one method of measurement but deficient by another. For example, acreage standards (i.e., measurement based on the total number of acres) are useful for determining the level at which the city is providing parkland. However, total acreage alone does not account for where park acres are located and, therefore, which residents have access. Accordingly, it is critical to also consider the location of the department's parkland in determining the level of service.

Standards provided in this chapter are meant to be achievable targets (e.g., specific acreage totals and service goals) that can realistically be met over the implementation timeline of this plan. Guidelines are offered to cover more general goals of improvement, acquisition, and maintenance. These standards and guidelines are meant for both developed parkland and total open space in the system. Tailored specifically for the department, they are intended to be obtainable but also ambitious enough to inspire Canton Parks and Recreation in its continuing work of improving the quality of life for residents.

4.8.1 Level of Service Standards for Developed Acres

Parkland is generally considered either developed or undeveloped. Developed acres include features such as athletic fields and courts, picnic shelters, playgrounds, and any mowed areas, while undeveloped acres remain in their natural state – including woodlands, prairies, and wetlands – without developed features or routine maintenance. Both types of land usage can have a tremendous positive impact on the human population and the environment but meet different needs.

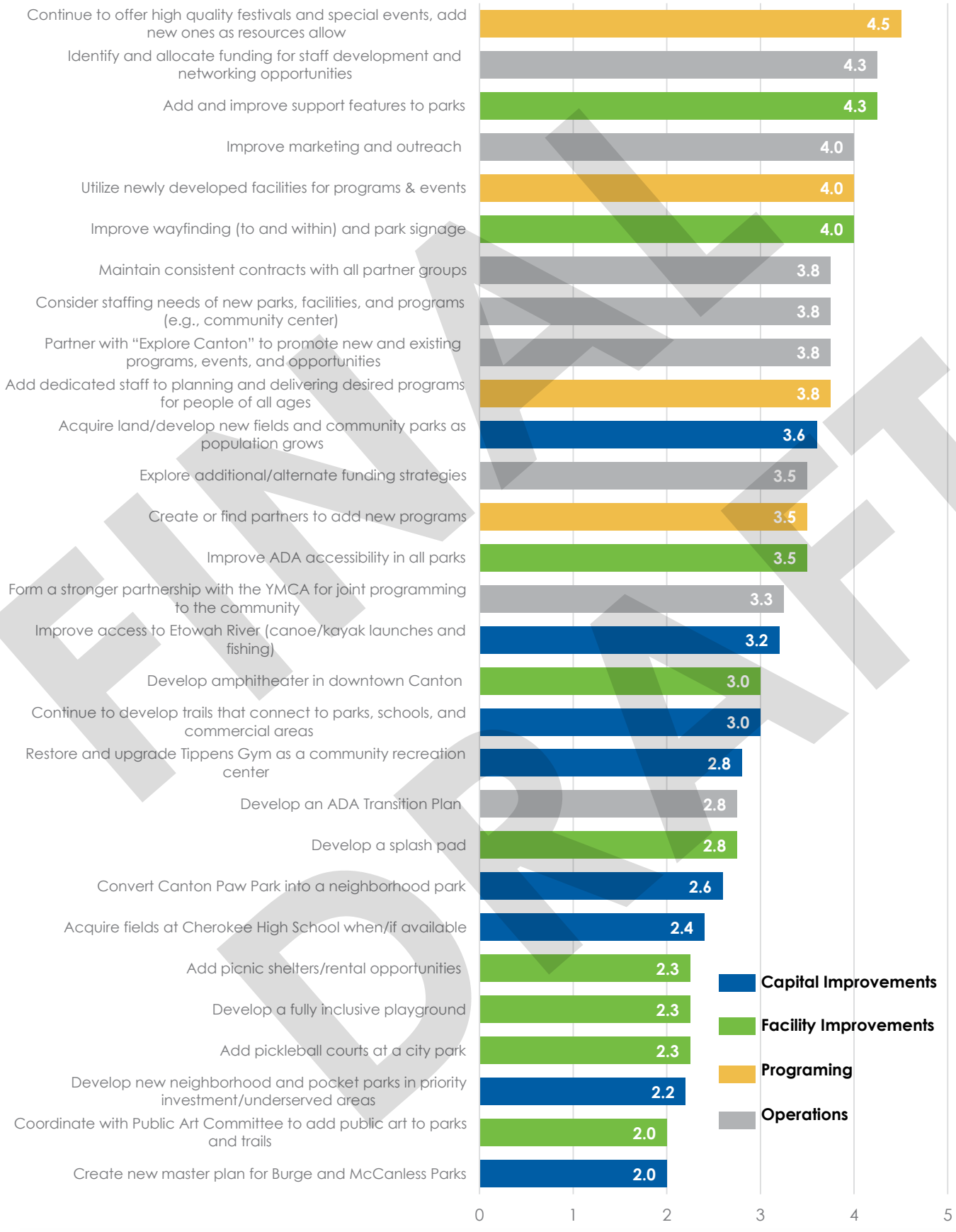
Chapter 2 describes the different classifications of parks and recreational areas and provides an overview of facilities in Canton. That inventory – combined with an examination of existing conditions, a thorough analysis of public input, and most importantly, the vision for the future presented above – assists with accurately defining the level of service standards (acres per thousand population) by park classification.

The chart that follows, Service Level Standards by Park Classification (Table 4.1), offers a breakdown of the needs (or target acres) for each type of park. This table includes only properties offered by Canton. These standards focus on developed acres only, because these acres represent improved land with amenities and are, therefore, the best basis for drawing a comparison between available features.

Canton's population is projected to continue to grow through 2040, potentially increasing by more than 15,000 new residents. With that growth in mind, the 2040 targets were set to maintain the current level of service with limited increases to address unmet needs. To meet the needs of an additional 15,000 residents and address areas in need of improved services, the city will need to add about 18 acres of neighborhood parks, 50 acres of community parks, and 54 acres of special use parks. This acreage translates to about four more neighborhood parks and two more community parks. Special use parks can take many forms and most of the needed acreage could come from developing some of the city's property adjacent to Lake Canton into a nature park. Chapter 5 will highlight potential areas for developing new neighborhood and community parks based on current service gaps and potential new development.

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Figure 4.1: Improvement Priority Rating



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Table 4.1: Service Level Standards for Developed Acreage by Park Classification

Park Classification[1]	Existing Developed Acres[3]	Existing Developed Acres per 1000 Population[2]	Target Acres per 1000 Population	2024 Developed Acres Target	2024 Surplus/ Deficit	2040 Developed Acres Target	2040 Surplus/ Deficit
Neighborhood	8.9	0.2	0.5	18.5	-9.6	26.4	-17.5
Community	107.5	2.9	3.0	111.1	-3.6	158.7	-51.2
Special Use Parks	120.4	3.3	3.3	122.2	-1.8	174.5	-54.1
Total	**236.8**	**6.4**	**6.8**	**251.9**	**-15.1**	**359.7**	**-122.9**

1. See Chapter 2 for classification definitions and park inventory, existing acreage numbers from Table 2.11
2. See Chapter 2 for population estimates
3. Does not include South Canton Park property, parks by others, or school properties

4.8.2 Guidelines for Open Space

Park systems provide invaluable benefits to public health,[1] economies,[2] local environment and ecology,[3] community social fabric, and overall quality of life.[4] Beyond the developed park acreage, a park system includes additional undeveloped open space and natural areas. These acres, while often overlooked, have tremendous potential to benefit the community. Undeveloped open space, or even acres that are lightly developed as parks, can positively impact an entire community through improvements to public health, air and water quality, increased biodiversity, wildlife habitat protection, noise reduction, reduction of erosion, and protection of water resources.[5] Open space preservation also elevates the value of nearby properties.

For these benefits to be shared equitably – benefits typically are higher the closer the proximity – open space should be looked at from a holistic perspective taking into additional consideration natural resources and distribution. Setting acreage targets – aiming for a certain number of parkland acres overall – is one way of achieving a desired level of open space. Target acreage can be a useful way for evaluating the progress of open space acquisition. Effective conservation also requires more intentional acquisitions based on a specific resource and where it is found, including any land needed to develop additional parkland an indicated in Table 4.1. In other words, looking at open space acquisitions through a conservation lens, the amount of land preserved depends on aspects of that resource not just on the number of acres.

Methods of Measurement

Two common metrics for measuring the level of service of open space are acres per population and percentage of total area. Both are provided below to serve as guidelines for evaluating and measuring open space available in Canton. Table 4.2 identifies total acres of parks and open space, including developed and undeveloped areas. Like the previous table, this data shows targets based on the existing acres per 1,000 population levels and the percentage of the total jurisdiction. The target level of service (LoS) values were chosen to show the land needed to match the benchmark agencies presented in Chapter 2. Additionally, public input indicates residents desire development of trails, diversified and additional recreation opportunities on existing parkland, and land preservation (especially of natural areas).

Table 4.2: Open Space Guidelines

Measurement	Existing Acres[1]	Existing LoS	Target LoS	2024 Target Acres	2024 Surplus / Deficit	2040 Target Acres	2040 Surplus/ Deficit
Acres per 1000 pop.[2]	292.0	7.9	10.0	370.4	-78.4	528.9	-236.9
% of Jurisdiction		2.4%	2.8%	344.9	-52.9	492.5	-200.5

1. Existing acreage numbers from Table 2.11 in Chapter 2
2. See Chapter 2 for population estimates

Acres per Population

Using the current LoS of 7.9 acres per 1,000 population, Canton would have an open space deficit of about 237 acres by 2040 to meet the target LoS of 10 acres per 1,000 population, if land is not added to the system. This amount is much higher than the acres of developed parkland needed because some land will not be suitable for development and preservation of resources is also desired. Additionally, the amount of undeveloped acres in Etowah River Park, Boling Park, and Heritage Park allows for development without adding land to the system. The city also already owns land with the potential to become parkland without acquisition, such as the property near the Hickory Log Creek Boat Ramp and the Tippens Gym property.

1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Parks, Trails, and Health Resources. cdc.gov/healthyplaces/healthtopics/parks_resources.htm
2 WeConservePA. (2012). The Economic Benefits of Land Conservation: A Guide. Pennsylvania Land Trust Association.
3 John L. Crompton (2008). Empirical Evidence of the Contributions of Park and Conservation Lands to Environmental Sustainability: The Key to repositioning the Parks Field. World Leisure Journal, 50(3), 154-172
4 John L. Crompton (2008). Empirical Evidence of the Contributions of Leisure Services to Alleviating Social Problems: A Key to Repositioning the Leisure Services Field. World Leisure Journal, 50(4), 243-258.
5 F.D.B. (2007). The economic benefits of land conservation. San Francisco, CA: The Trust for Public Land.

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Percentage of Total City Area

The percentage of total area is not tied to population which means it can potentially represent a more flexible objective that may be adjusted over time. Canton's target (2.8%) is higher than the current level of service based on community engagement and the benchmarking comparisons. To meet this target, Canton would need to add approximately 200 acres of open space, slightly less than the amount required to meet the per population targets. The 2040 target of 492.5 acres assumes the Canton city limits will continue to increase in size at a similar rate to the population through continued annexation.

4.9 Facilities Needs Analysis and Level of Service Standards

Like the recommendations for parkland described previously, level of service standards for individual park facilities and features are useful for determining the quantity of recreation facilities needed in the community, both at present and in the future. These standards emerge through examination of the benchmarking (Chapter 2) and the public input findings (Chapter 3); common industry standards and guidelines are also taken into consideration. Table 4.3 details the facilities by type and compares the available supply with the amount needed to meet the targets identified in the table.

4.9.1 Facility Level of Service Rationale

The following text provides the basis for the per population targets for each of the facilities in Table 5.3. Each section breaks down individual elements by describing how the per population target compares to the existing per population supply and makes justifications for any recommended change. As with previous elements in this chapter, the following analysis combines benchmarking data (Chapter 2) with public input (Chapter 3).

Outdoor Recreation Areas

- Trails – paved (miles) – Set at increase to benchmark due to high demand, trends, current distribution, and soon to open connection between Heritage to Boling
- Picnic pavilions/shelters – Set at increase to due to demand and trends
- Playgrounds – Set at increase to benchmark due to demand and current distribution
- Amphitheaters – Set at increase to the benchmark due to program demands, interest in a small downtown amphitheater, and trends
- Splash pads – Set at increase due to demand and trends, none currently
- Community gardens – Set at 1, similar to benchmark
- Skate parks – Set at 1, offered by 31% of benchmarks
- Dog parks – Set at increase due to demand, trends, and location of new dog park in South Canton

Outdoor Fields & Courts

- Pickleball courts (dedicated) – Set at increase to benchmark, none currently offered
- Basketball courts – Set at increase to benchmark due to limited supply
- Youth softball fields – Set at increase to benchmark due to demand
- Youth baseball fields – Set at increase to benchmark due to demand
- Artificial turf multipurpose fields – Set at increase to benchmark due to demand and trends, none currently offered
- Tennis courts – Set at current level due to minimal additional demand
- Multipurpose fields – Set at slight increase (above benchmark) due to demand, lack of permanent fields, and flooding/drainage issues on current fields

Indoor Areas

- Nature centers – Set at benchmark (1) due to demand and trends, none currently offered
- Recreation centers – Set at 1 due to demand, trends, and potential to develop at Tippens Gym

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Table 4.3: Facility Level of Service Standards

Facility	Population Per Target	Existing Population per Facility[1]	Existing Total Supply	2024 Target	2024 Surplus / Deficit	2040 Target	2040 Surplus / Deficit	*Benchmark Median*
Outdoor Recreation Areas								
Trails - paved (miles)	3,300	6,278	5.9	11.2	-5.3	16.0	-10.1	*3,300*
Picnic pavilions/shelters	5,000	6,174	6	7.4	-1.4	10.6	-4.6	*N/A*
Playgrounds	3,500	6,174	6	10.6	-4.6	15.1	-9.1	*3,500*
Amphitheaters	18,500	37,042	1	2.0	-1.0	2.9	-1.9	*33,400*
Splash pads	37,000	N/A	0	1.0	-1.0	1.4	-1.4	*N/A*
Community gardens	37,000	N/A	0	1.0	-1.0	1.4	-1.4	*32,000*
Skate parks	37,000	N/A	0	1.0	-1.0	1.4	-1.4	*44,000*
Dog parks	18,500	37,042	1	2.0	-1.0	2.9	-1.9	*32,000*
Outdoor Fields & Courts								
Pickleball courts (dedicated)	8,000	N/A	0	4.6	-4.6	6.6	-6.6	*8,000*
Basketball courts	8,500	12,347	3	4.4	-1.4	6.2	-3.2	*8,600*
Youth softball fields	9,000	18,521	2	4.1	-2.1	5.9	-3.9	*9,000*
Youth baseball fields	6,500	12,347	3	5.7	-2.7	8.1	-5.1	*6,500*
Artificial turf multipurpose fields	20,000	N/A	0	1.9	-1.9	2.6	-2.6	*20,800*
Tennis courts	9,000	9,261	4	4.1	-0.1	5.9	-1.9	*4,300*
Multipurpose fields	5,000	6,174	6	7.4	-1.4	10.6	-4.6	*9,700*
Indoor Areas								
Nature centers	37,000	N/A	0	1.0	-1.0	1.4	-1.4	*42,400*
Recreation centers	37,000	N/A	0	1.0	-1.0	1.4	-1.4	*23,700*

1. See Chapter 2 for population estimates and benchmarking

4.9.2 Facility Level of Service Standards

The values in Table 4.3 illustrate potential needs for various facilities. The largest current facility deficits are for pickleball courts (-4.6), playgrounds (-4.6), and miles of trail (-5.6). These deficits will only grow as the population increases through 2040. While values in Table 4.3 highlight what additional facilities are needed to adequately meet the demand, they do not indicate where in Canton these new facilities should be located. The recommendations in Chapter 5 consider this information collectively with the service area analysis in Chapter 2.

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5 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Canton's Parks and Recreation system offers several high-quality facilities as well as a series of popular events. The city has recently been investing in facility improvements and new parks, but, overall, the system has not kept up with population growth, as indicated by a comparison to benchmark agencies (Chapter 2).

This plan will help guide the future of the department as it approaches both revitalization of needed parks and facilities and new development. Continued partnerships between the city and others in the community will be critical to the success of this plan as the department cannot accomplish everything in this Master Plan alone.

VISION: **Canton Parks provide exceptional experiences that connect the entire community to nature and play**

This new vision emphasizes a desire for a unique park system providing experiences that improve the lives of everyone in the community. Families, seniors, youth, and everyone in between need ample opportunity to connect socially, to practice healthy habits, and to enjoy all the benefits of time in nature. This Master Plan will direct Canton in its efforts to shape a brighter, more equitable future.

The COVID-19 pandemic permanently changed usage patterns and desires for parks, and some of these changes are likely here to stay. Some recommendations in this chapter directly result from those changes, while others represent existing trends that were accelerated by the pandemic. This chapter presents observations and findings gained through the first three phases of the master planning process – Evaluate, Engage, and Envision. These recommendations are divided into the following categories:

- Existing Parks and Features
- New Parks and Features
- Operations and Programming
- Potential Funding and Revenue Sources
- Capital Improvements and Cost Estimates

5.2 Systemwide Recommendation Summary

Systemwide recommendations represent high level, aspirational strategies and are, therefore, more general in nature. However, these actions refer to operational and capital improvements and are essential to the successful implementation of the goals of this Master Plan and represent ongoing efforts that require annual review and evaluation.

5.2.1 Systemwide Capital Improvement Recommendations

1. Continue to develop trails that connect to parks, schools, and commercial areas
   - Lake Canton, Etowah River Trail
2. Restore and upgrade Tippens Gym as a community recreation center
3. Acquire land/develop new fields and community parks as population grows
   - Consider additional artificial turf multipurpose fields
4. Develop new neighborhood and pocket parks in priority investment/underserved areas
5. Improve access to Etowah River (canoe/kayak launches and fishing)

5.2.2 Facility Improvement Recommendations

1. Develop downtown amphitheater
2. Develop a splash pad
3. Add pickleball courts at a city park
4. Develop more inclusive playgrounds (like S Canton)

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5. Add picnic shelters/rental opportunities
6. Improve ADA accessibility in all parks
7. Improve wayfinding (to and within) and park signage
8. Coordinate with Public Art Committee to add public art to parks and trails
9. Add and improve support features to parks (restrooms, shade, picnic tables, benches, drinking fountains, parking, lighting)

5.2.3 Program Recommendations

1. Create or find partners to add programs in the following areas: arts/crafts, adult sports, nature, summer camps, fitness, performing arts
2. Continue to offer high quality festivals and special events, add new ones as resources allow (e.g., movies and concerts)
3. Utilize newly developed facilities for programs & events
4. Add dedicated staff to plan and deliver programs for people of all ages
5. Partner to promote new and existing programs, events, and opportunities



Multicultural Festival

5.2.4 Top Operational Recommendations

1. Develop and implement an ADA Transition Plan – ensure everyone can access facilities and participate in programs
2. Improve marketing and outreach to increase exposure, promote the department, and share opportunities to participate
3. Consider staffing needs of new parks, facilities, and programs (e.g., community center)
4. Maintain consistent contracts with all partner groups – standard template for all
5. Explore additional/alternate funding strategies – grants, a Park Foundation, sponsorships, etc.
6. Identify and allocate funding for staff development and networking opportunities
    - Access to shared policies, program ideas, and management solutions

5.3 Existing Parks and Features

5.3.1 Observations and Analysis

Through the public input process, residents voiced a strong desire for improvements to existing parks in the Canton system, primarily to improve their experiences when visiting the parks. Users also requested additional recreation features in existing parks where many opportunities are available.

The stakeholder groups identified various improvements they would like to see in existing parks, and 25% of households indicated through the Mail Survey that improvements would encourage more use of the city's existing parks. The need for athletic facilities will continue to grow with the population. The need for ADA accessibility improvements was also a theme throughout the process, including through the engagement and the park assessments.



Harmon Park Picnic Shelter

5.3.2 Support Features

Some of the most desired improvements to existing parks and facilities relate to improving park users' experiences. Accordingly, both surveys identified that restrooms improvements would increase use of parks, requested by many through engagement meetings and desired by about a third of households through the surveys. Similarly, survey respondents (about 30%) indicated a desire for improvements to shade access over seating and facilities. Picnic shelters, another high-ranking need, would help address the desire for shade while also providing potential community gathering spaces and rental opportunities.

According to the survey results, other support features such as seating, drinking fountains, and lighting would improve experiences and increase visitation to parks. Insufficient parking was also frequently cited as an issue at parks through all methods of input, especially at Heritage Park.

Signage is inconsistent throughout the park system, as noted previously in this Master Plan. Some park entrances lack signage, and wayfinding is limited. Signage is important to ensure that visitors can find their way to the parks and to know they are enjoying a public park provided by Canton Parks and Recreation. It also helps users navigate within the parks once they arrive.

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The city could also better utilize technology, such as beacon counters, park related apps, and mobile device charging stations. Many of these technological improvements would utilize the existing Wi-Fi hotspots in Canton parks, which would help the success of any future app and would also allow the city to collect data about park usage.

5.3.3 ADA Accessibility

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires parks and recreation departments to make reasonable accommodations to facilities and programs to serve those with disabilities. The 2010 revision specifically mentions additional parks and recreation amenities, now including sports facilities, boating facilities, exercise equipment, fishing piers, play areas, and swimming pools as requiring accommodation.

The ADA requires agencies to develop an ADA transition plan to define a strategy to eliminate barriers to accessibility. Canton, like many agencies, has not yet prepared such a plan. An accessibility audit, also required as of 1993, should identify barriers and set a timeline to remove them.

As noted through the site assessments and the public input, many of the parks in Canton need accessibility improvements. Many playgrounds, seating areas, and fields lack accessible paths. Dugouts and spectator seating areas, for example, need to be accessible by wheelchair or other mobility device.

The department should conduct an ADA accessibility audit, in conjunction with a transition plan, to function as a guide for their efforts to improve access throughout the system. The plan will show a "good faith" effort to bring the system into compliance.[1]

5.3.4 Playgrounds

Canton currently offers playgrounds in only six locations, providing a level of service well below the benchmark. As a result, nearly a third of households desire investment in playgrounds, both upgrades and new facilities. Stakeholder groups also mentioned a need for more fully accessible playgrounds. Fortunately, the city has already started to address this need, and the new South Canton Park will provide the first fully accessible park in Canton.



Westmoreland Park Nature Play Playground, Portland, Oregon

When adding and replacing playgrounds, the city should make efforts to ensure variation (e.g., themes and features) to provide unique experiences and reasons for families to visit different parks. The department should consider the seven principles of inclusive playground design (as described in Chapter 2) whenever adding or upgrading playgrounds, so that all children can participate.

The city should also consider incorporating nature play elements into playgrounds, which can also satisfy the desire for greater access to nature as indicated by the survey results. It is important to continue to engage the public, especially park neighbors, when making these improvements.

A great way to get the community involved and create awareness of parks and available amenities is through a community playground build. Community builds require substantial coordination and effort for the department, but the benefits can outweigh the cost. Community participation in construction helps to instill a sense of pride and ownership. These efforts may also mitigate future vandalism and promote volunteerism within the community.

Opportunities to partner with local organizations for funding, labor, or construction materials abound when involving the community in this way.[2] Wacky World in Alpharetta offers a nearby example of a community build playground. First constructed in May 1997 with the help of 2,673 volunteers, the wooden structure has reached the end of its useful life. The community is actively working to rebuild the playground in 2024. Community members started a nonprofit organization to help raise money through sponsorships and donations. The new Wacky World playground will be constructed with the help of volunteers through a series of community build events in 2024 under the supervision of a playground contractor to ensure the project meets ADA standards and safety guidelines.



Wacky World Volunteer Event, Alpharetta, Georgia

5.3.5 Athletic Fields and Courts

Sports programs are of major importance to the Canton community, especially considering the lower median age and larger youth population compared to the rest of Georgia. Compared to the benchmarks, Canton provides

[1] National Recreation and Park Association, "Recreation and the Americans with Disabilities Act," https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2016/august/recreation-and-the-americans-with-disabilities-act/

[2] https://www.wackyworld.org/

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a lower level of service for baseball/softball diamonds but a higher level of service for multipurpose rectangular fields. It is important to note that the city has no dedicated fields as most are shared open space at Heritage Park and Etowah River Park, and the fields at Boling Park are not currently available for use.

The department offers a lower level of service for basketball courts and tennis courts, and no pickleball courts. HOAs in the community help with some of these deficits, but their facilities are not available to all residents and cannot be used for department programs and leagues.

Baseball/Softball Fields

Canton's diamond fields are located at two different parks. The fields at Harmon Park are used for baseball, while the fields at Boling Park are used for baseball, softball, and t-ball. The Harmon Park fields have recently been renovated and are in excellent condition. The Boling Park fields, however, have not been upgraded to the same level.

Both Boling Park Field #1 and Field #2 need significant improvements, including improved ADA access, new dugouts, and covered bleachers. Field #2 also needs a new storage building, LED light fixtures, and additional parking.

Field #3 is the smallest field and the least accessible. Due to its small size, it is only used for t-ball. Combined with substantial accessibility improvements to the adjacent portions of the park, this field could be a great opportunity for the city to add a Miracle Field and program. This field could be an important step toward the new vision for Parks and Recreation.



Harmon Park Field

Additional fields are also needed, especially as the population continues to grow. New fields should be included in the development of future community parks, as no space is available in existing parks for additional fields. The city should also consider the acquisition of the two diamond fields (as well as the other fields and tennis courts) from the Cherokee County School District if they become available after the relocation of the high school, especially considering that these fields are contiguous to Boling Park.

Multipurpose Rectangular Fields

All of the multipurpose rectangular fields in the Canton system are located in Heritage, Etowah River, and Boling parks. As noted previously, none of these fields are dedicated to athletic uses and lack permanent facilities or storage.

Due to construction on the property for the water plant, the Boling Park fields are not currently in use. The return of these fields to the system will mitigate some of the need for additional fields, but they are in need of improvements, including regrading, reseeding, and new fencing. There is also limited parking near the fields.

The demand will continue to grow with the city's population, but, like the diamond fields, new parkland is needed before fields can be added to the system. When fields are added, the city should consider at least one artificial turf rectangular field with lights for extended use and fewer rainouts. The acquisition of the football fields when the high school relocates would add two more fields to the system, including an artificial turf field.



New Multipurpose Turf Field in Roswell, Georgia

Outdoor Courts

Public engagement indicated that pickleball courts were the largest unmet need for courts in Canton. As noted previously, pickleball is a rising trend in parks and recreation across the country, due in part to its popularity with older residents. While many HOAs in Canton offer pickleball courts, the city does not have them in any of their parks.

The best location for pickleball courts is at Boling Park, where most of the city's courts are located, including all of the tennis courts. Initially, the city should add pickleball lines to two of the tennis courts. While sharing court space with tennis is a good opportunity to provide multiple uses of space, these courts sometimes cause friction between users and may not meet the fast-growing needs of the sport. Long-term, the city may want to also add dedicated courts at Boling Park.

Population growth is expected to drive most of the additional needs for other types of courts. Basketball courts should be added as new parks are developed, and other types of courts should be added as needed in response to community demands. Two of the racquetball courts at Boling Park also need resurfacing and new fencing. These courts could also be lined for tennis and pickleball practice.

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Pickleball Tournament

5.3.6 Recommendations

1. Add support features throughout the park system such seating, shade structures, receptacles, drinking fountains/bottle fillers, bike racks, and trees & landscaping
   - Include bottle fillers at all new drinking fountains and when existing features are replaced
   - Provide consistent amenities throughout the system
   - Add and improve parking throughout the system, especially where currently insufficient (e.g., Heritage Park)
2. Add picnic shelters throughout the system to increase overall access to provide shade and to facilitate opportunities for outdoor community gatherings
3. Add or improve restrooms throughout the parks; include family restrooms at larger parks
4. Add and upgrade signage throughout the park system
   - Improve wayfinding to and within parks so users can more easily find and enjoy parks
   - Ensure consistent appearance and branding
   - Develop interpretive and informational signage throughout the park system (following signage plans) to help visitors understand the natural features and history of parks
5. Upgrade and utilize technology in parks for the benefit of both patrons and staff (see trends discussion in Chapter 2)
6. Prepare and implement an ADA transition plan, following an accessibility audit of all facilities, programs, and communications
7. Ensure accessible walkways to all facilities and seating areas
8. Prepare and implement a playground investment program that includes the expected useful life and a timeline for replacement for all playgrounds
   - Add playgrounds in strategic locations (see new park locations in section 5.4)
   - Ensure some playgrounds are fully inclusive and barrier free
   - Include separate age 2-5 equipment
   - Consider themed playground equipment, such as climbing rocks, sensory features, etc., potentially providing for marketing and resident/visitor photo opportunities
   - Incorporate nature play elements as part of playground development, especially in more passive park areas
   - Consider community-built playgrounds to instill pride and a sense of ownerships within the community

Athletic Fields

1. Improve Boling Park Field #1 and Field #2 with improved ADA access, new dugouts, and covered bleachers
   - Add a new storage building, LED light fixtures, and additional parking at Field #2
2. Upgrade Boling Park Field #3 to a Miracle Field to help connect the entire community to exceptional experiences
3. Upgrade the multipurpose rectangular fields at Boling Park and return of them to the system to help address the need for fields
4. Acquire new parkland to develop additional diamond fields and multipurpose rectangular fields meet the needs of the fast-growing population
5. Consider adding at least one artificial turf rectangular field with lights for extended use and fewer rainouts
6. Consider the acquisition of the fields and tennis courts from the Cherokee County School District if they become available after the relocation of the high school
7. Upgrade field lighting to LED fixtures with wireless lighting controls
8. Improve ADA accessibility to fields, seating areas, and dugouts
9. Provide accessible spectator areas with shade at all game fields

Courts

1. Add pickleball lines to two of the tennis courts at Boling Park to provide access to this growing sport in a City of Canton park
2. Add dedicated pickleball courts at Boling Park if demand continues to increase
3. Add and upgrade all types of courts as needed in response to community demands and population growth

5.4 New Parks and Features

5.4.1 Observations and Analyses

The population in Canton has been growing rapidly since 2000, when the population was under 8,000, and is now about 37,000. This growth is expected to continue through at least 2040, potentially reaching over 50,000 residents.

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The population age 65 and over has been increasing as a percentage and is expected to reach 14% by 2028, well above the 9% from 2010.

The percentage of children (under age 18) has declined since 2010 but is expected to remain at about 27% through 2028, well above the Georgia and Cherokee County percentages. These trends indicate that facilities for children will remain important, but demand for senior activities will continue to increase. Other demographic changes will likely continue to lead to changing recreation needs. The needs of specific demographic groups can be addressed during the individual park master planning process.

5.4.2 New and Upgraded Parks

As noted in Chapter 2, Canton has a fast-growing population and a smaller amount of developed parkland than benchmark communities. Additionally, most of the city's recreation facilities are located at the three largest parks (Heritage, Etowah River, and Boling). Much of the future growth will be away from the central location of these parks.

The development of new neighborhood and community parks is necessary to improve access to athletic fields and other features, as requested by residents through public engagement. Some new parks can be developed at existing properties already in the system or owned by the city, such as the Tippens Elementary property and the land along the Lake Canton.

New and Upgraded Park Locations

Development of new parks as indicated in Figure 5.1 – including upgrades to undeveloped or underdeveloped parks – will increase the proportion of residents that live within a walkable range of a park.

The map highlights the following improvements:

- Existing parks and open space upgraded to neighborhood and community parks (Paw Park and Tippens Elementary property) plus the new South Canton Park (in progress)
- New neighborhood parks in underserved areas of Canton (labeled 1 & 2)
- New community parks in the east and west (outside of the current city boundary) – anticipated need in response to population growth

Parks in New Neighborhoods

Additional neighborhood parks should be developed in new residential neighborhoods. These parks can and often should be included as part of residential development and maintained by HOAs once complete. Many neighborhoods in Canton already have HOA-owned parks. The city should encourage developers to follow the park development standards described below. Larger community parks with athletic fields and other unique elements will continue to be provided by the city.

Park Development Standards

All parks (new or existing) undergoing significant development should have master plans finalized prior to construction. These plans will help ensure facilities are accessible, complementary features are located appropriately, and, most importantly, desired features fit on the site. Planning is a critical tool for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of maintenance, making it easier to be proactive, instead of reactive, in the face of challenges and changing circumstances.

Canton should have a standard list of elements to include in each neighborhood or community park. These standards can then be applied to parks when it is time to upgrade (or build new) and should function as a starting point for engagement with the community. Use of these standards can also help ensure that all new parks provide a variety of amenities for all users. Adjustments to both types of parks can and should be made to accommodate specific site conditions or environmental limitations.



Heritage Park Playground

Neighborhood Park Standards

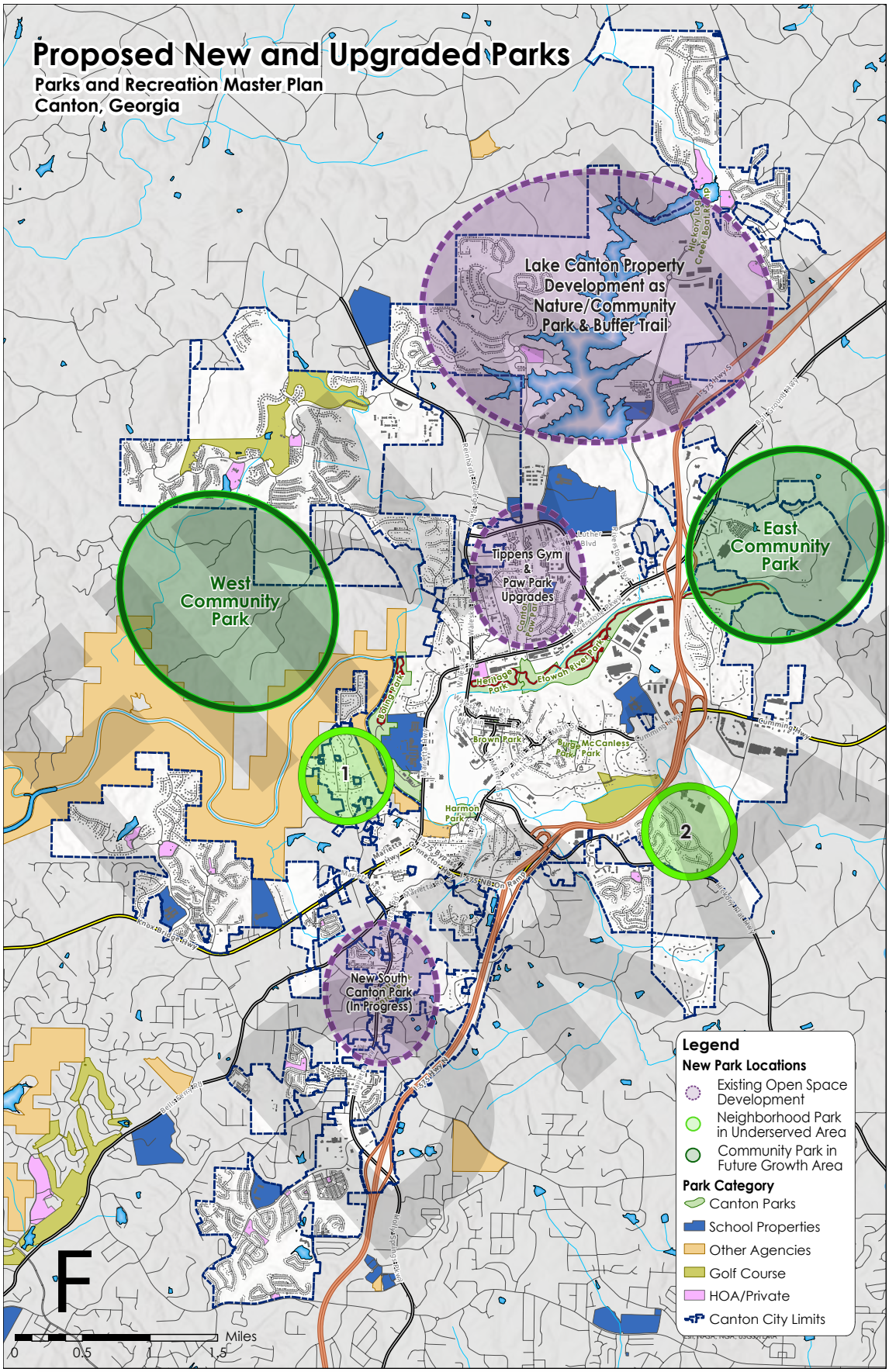
As described in Chapter 2, a neighborhood park should be between 3 and 15 acres with a minimum of 2 acres that can be fully developed to accommodate the features listed below. Partners, including developers, that develop neighborhood parks should be encouraged to follow these standards.

Typical neighborhood park elements include:

1. Playground
2. ½ basketball court (may be swapped for another feature if desired by the community)
3. Gathering area/picnic shelter
4. Walking trail (if space allows)
5. Good circulation – walkways/ADA access
6. Landscaping
7. Shade – trees and/or structures
8. Open grass area/athletic field – practice or pick-up use (if adequate space exists)

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Figure 5.1: Proposed New & Upgraded Parks



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9. Unique neighborhood determined feature(s) based on local interest – could be related to sports, environment, arts, etc., should consider placemaking opportunities
10. Parking (if space allows)

New Community Parks

A community park should be at least 20 acres in size and developed with consideration for a higher volume and extended duration of visitation. The following features are typical of community parks, but any development undertaken by Canton should also include an engagement campaign to solicit direct public input from residents.

Typical community park elements include:

1. Large inclusive playground
2. Basketball court or another preferred feature
3. Tennis and/or pickleballs courts (multiple)
4. Central gathering area/nucleus with seating
5. Walking and/or biking trail
6. Outdoor fitness equipment
7. Good circulation – walkways/ADA access
8. Picnic shelters and event space
9. Landscaping
10. Trees
11. Shade at gathering areas, seating areas, playgrounds, etc.
12. Security cameras/lighting
13. Restrooms
14. Athletic fields – game fields (type depending on needs)
15. Unique elements (splash pads, dog parks, etc.)
16. Parking lot(s)

5.4.3 Tippens Gym and Paw Park Concepts

The Tippens Elementary School property provides a great opportunity for the City of Canton to begin to meet some important needs identified through this planning process. The property is located in a part of the city identified as a priority investment area – an area with lower levels of services for parks and higher social vulnerability. Paw Park is in the same neighborhood and should be considered along with this property as they will serve many of the same users.

Tippens Park Concept

Due to the steep hillsides and existing infrastructure, a concept plan was prepared to highlight potential opportunities at this property. The concept (Figure 5.2) shows how a variety of park amenities could be provided at the site while preserving the central portion – the location of the elementary school building – for future development.

The existing gym is the key feature of the new park, and the renovation of this facility should be a high priority for the city. Canton Parks and Recreation does not currently offer any indoor recreation space. However, the recent acquisition of this property provides a great opportunity for the city to begin to address this longstanding community need. In addition to the engagement in this plan, the city's comprehensive plan, Canton 45, identified the need for a community recreation center.

The gym at the Tippens property has a lower level that could provide classrooms, meeting rooms, and more to address many of the community's needs and desires for programming for all ages. The proposed amenities in the park will be easily accessible from this lower level, providing opportunities for summer camps and other youth programs that need indoor and outdoor space.

The concept shows improvements to the existing entry area to provide a parking lot for those using the center and the park area. An agreement with the adjacent church could potentially provide additional parking for larger programs. A series of walking paths and sidewalks provide connectivity and ADA access to features in the park. Connecting trails will also provide access to residents that live near the park and to Paw Park.

The park features a large playground with a potential slide built into the hillside. A picnic shelter near the building provides a shaded area for visitors to gather. After the success of the soccer pitch at Harmon Park, a second soccer pitch is proposed at this new park. Bleachers could also be built into the hillside to provide a comfortable spot for spectators.



New soccer mini pitch in Harmon Park



Credit: Landscape Structures

Queenston Park Playground, Coquitlam, British Columbia

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Figure 5.2: Tippens Park Concept



Figure 5.3: Paw Park Concept



Paw Park Concept

The concept plan for Paw Park (Figure 5.3) proposes a conversion of the former dog park into a small neighborhood park. An open field space will provide an area for outdoor activities, such sports, for neighborhood residents who currently lack park access. Adjacent to the field space, a pollinator garden would feature a diverse array of native plants and flowers designed to attract and support local pollinators such as bees, butterflies, and birds.

A new picnic shelter would also be added for a shaded community gathering spot. A nature play area with features such as logs and boulders would provide a safe and engaging environment for children to explore and enjoy. Additionally, a paved trail would provide access to all park amenities and link the park to the nearby Tippens Gym. A nature path would complete a 0.6-mile loop through the wooded area.

5.4.4 New Facilities

Aquatics

Canton Parks and Recreation does not currently offer any aquatic facilities. A splash pad was the second ranked option in the dollar voting and dot boards at the engagement events (after trails). According to the Mail Survey, about 20% of households desire investment in splash pads. About 27% desire swimming pools or aquatic centers.

Swimming pools come with high capital and operating costs, and there are many higher priorities for recreation in Canton. However, the department should add a large splash pad or splash park to begin to meet the aquatic needs for Canton residents. The facility should feature unique elements that will attract visitors from all over the city and beyond.

The best potential location for a splash pad in Canton is at Etowah River Park, near the existing restrooms and basketball court. This location allows easy access to the restrooms and the concessions stand. It is also the only part of the park outside of the floodplain.



Mill Park Splash Pad, St. Marys Ohio

Outdoor Stages/Amphitheaters

Canton Parks and Recreation already offers a popular series of events, including performances, but residents want more. The Mail Survey findings indicate that over 40% of households want more concerts and performances, and 26% want more outdoor movies.

A permanent stage downtown would allow the city to accommodate more of these programs, including a weekly concert series. Similarly, a small stage at Brown Park would offer additional program opportunities and could also double as a picnic shelter when not in use for programs. The existing mobile stage is time-consuming to set up and needs replacement.

Relocation of the Etowah River Park amphitheater away from the park entrance may also encourage additional use and programming. Both stages could provide venues for other programs such as fitness programs, another program priority.



Existing stage in Etowah River Park

Dog Parks

Dog parks are becoming increasingly popular amenities for parks and recreation to provide in communities all around Georgia and the USA, and they were frequently requested through the public engagement of this plan. The new dog park at South Canton Park will accommodate many dog owners, but an additional location will likely be needed in the northern part of the city in the future, possibly at the open space near the Lake Canton.

Outdoor Fitness/Obstacle Course

Outdoor fitness equipment has become a popular addition to parks for users of all ages (in addition to active adults/seniors). The equipment could be added at relatively low cost at parks throughout Canton to allow for more fitness opportunities. Small amounts of this equipment can also be incorporated into playground development.



New fitness court in Heritage Park

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Disc Golf

Disc golf is a fast-growing sport throughout the country; however, Canton does not offer disc golf courses in any of their parks. Disc golf courses can utilize land unsuitable for other recreation facilities, such as the wooded area between Heritage and Etowah River parks. The department should look for opportunities to partner with local disc golf groups, including Cherokee County Disc Golf, for a potential course.

Other Potential Features

The community-wide lens of this Master Plan focuses on the needs of the city as a whole but does not necessarily have the data needed to make all of the specific facility recommendations for every park, especially small neighborhood parks. Many specific features were requested throughout the public input that are consistent with trends and community support for development in Canton, but the best locations for some features, such as a skate park and community gardens, are not yet apparent.

As a result, these specific needs should be addressed during the individual park master plan process. During the individual park planning process, it is important to consider specific features to be determined by the neighborhood to ensure inclusion of specific elements desired by nearby residents are included in each park. Planning and budgeting for these elements helps to ensure that development aligns with needs and promotes a sense of local investment and ownership. It also can provide opportunities for placemaking in parks.

Potential **neighborhood determined features** include:

- Game courts (e.g., pickleball, tennis, volleyball, bocce, soccer mini pitch)
- Public art
- Nature area or garden
- Fitness equipment
- Permanent outdoor games (ping pong/corn hole)
- Skate parks (small)
- Dog parks (small)
- Bike park elements (e.g., pump track, BMX course)

5.4.5 Trails, Connectivity, and Nature Access

According to the benchmarking in Chapter 2, Canton manages 5.9 miles of trails, providing 0.5 miles of trail per 10,000 population, well below the median of the benchmark communities (4.3 miles). Trails consistently emerge at the top for desired improvements all over the country, even in jurisdictions with extensive networks of trails.

Canton is no different as clearly communicated by residents requests for more trails within and outside of parks. Through the public input process, residents, stakeholders, and steering committee members voiced a strong desire for more trails, better connectivity, and more access to natural areas. When asked to allocate funds, open house attendees designated the largest amounts toward building trails.

According to the random sample survey, nearly two-thirds (61%) want to see the city invest in walking and hiking trails, and nearly 40% would like to see multiuse trails constructed. Trails were also the top request in the dollar voting and dot boards at the engagement events.



Heritage Park Trail

Similarly, Canton residents want more access to nature, including the Etowah River. Survey results indicate that 56% of households want investment in natural areas. Additionally, 34% desire more canoe/kayak launches, and 26% would like more fishing piers. A recurring theme of the stakeholder groups was additional and safer access to the river.

Trails and Connectivity

Canton already has a great series of trails through Heritage Park and Etowah River Park. The city is currently extending the Etowah River Trail to connect these parks to Boling Park and The Mill on Etowah. There are additional opportunities for trails in Canton parks, at future parks, and throughout the community.

Potential trails in Canton parks include:

- Lake Canton trails, including connection to buffer trail around reservoir
- Paw Park trail – 0.6-mile loop w/ connection to Tippens property
- Tippens trails – perimeter trail w/ connections to Paw Park and adjoining neighborhoods
- Boling Park – trail along river extending Etowah River Trail to city boundary
- McCanless Park nature trail through wooded area

Several previous planning efforts have included trail recommendations (see section 5.7), but the city does not have a long-term comprehensive plan for trails and connectivity. Such a plan is necessary to identify the most important destinations to connect, the trails corridors needed, and the potential costs. It should include standards for design, signage, and maintenance (including staffing requirements) to ensure trail experiences are consistent

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throughout the system. The plan should also prepare for the expected residential growth over the next 10 to 15 years.

The effort to expand the trail system coincides with the "10-Minute Walk Campaign" led by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), Trust for Public Land (TPL), and Urban Land Institute – a national movement supported by hundreds of communities across the country to ensure everyone has walkable access to parks and trails.[3] Trail and connectivity improvements in Canton will establish safe routes, support alternate means of transportation, increase access to parks and destinations throughout the community, as well as contribute to an overall sense of community cohesion. The city has a long way to go to reach this target, but it presents a potential long-term goal for the City of Canton

Nature Access

The open space near Lake Canton provides the best opportunity for improved access to nature. If some of this 200-acre city-owned property becomes a nature park, it could offer many features requested by Canton residents, including a nature center, picnic shelters, and a dog park. The property is a great place for trails, including mountain bike trails, and could be a good location for other bike park elements.



Lake Canton

As noted previously, many residents want more access to the Etowah River and other waterbodies. In addition to the Etowah River Park ramp (currently under renovation), Canton could add canoe/kayak access points at Harmon Park and Boling Park. These access points would also provide fishing opportunities, as would a pier at Hickory Log Creek Boat Ramp. Partnerships could potentially provide additional access opportunities to the river and the reservoir.

5.4.6 Recommendations

1. Utilize existing parkland where feasible to meet unmet facility needs identified in this plan
2. Continually evaluate opportunities to improve park service levels in underserved areas using existing parkland
3. Prepare park master plans for existing parks and any future parks prior to development of facilities to ensure that added features are complementary, desired, and fully accessible



Etowah River Trail

New and Upgraded Parks

1. Use the neighborhood and community park standards as a guide for park improvements throughout the system to ensure equity and fair distribution
2. Seek opportunities to develop new community and neighborhood parks in the areas identified in this plan (see Figure 5.1)
   - Continue to implement the plan for South Canton Park (in progress)
   - Seek opportunities to add neighborhood parks in underserved areas
3. Upgrade Paw Park and Tippens Elementary property as neighborhood parks, improving services in an underserved area
   - Engage the community to plan these two parks together because they will serve the same residents
   - Redevelop the existing gym at the Tippens property to begin to address the longstanding community need for indoor recreation space
   - Use the concept plan (Figure 5.2 as a starting point for development of the Tippens property with a playground, a picnic shelter, a soccer pitch with bleachers built into the hillside, a parking lot, walking paths and sidewalks, and a connection to Paw Park
   - Use the concept plan (Figure 5.3 as a starting point for development of Paw Park with open field space, a picnic shelter, a nature play area, trails, and more
4. Collaborate with developers to continue to include neighborhood parks in in new residential neighborhoods
   - Encourage developers and other partners to follow the neighborhood park standards when developing parks

New Facilities

1. Develop a large splash pad or splash park at Etowah River Park with unique elements to attract visitors from all over the city and beyond

[3] NRPA, TFPL, and ULI's 10-Minute Walk campaign: https://10minutewalk.org/

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2. Develop a downtown amphitheater for more concerts, movies, art performances, and other programs
    - Consider a small stage/shelter at Brown Park for additional programming opportunities
3. Consider additional dog parks in a future park in the northern part of the city, potentially at open space near Lake Canton
4. Add outdoor fitness equipment and/or obstacle courses at select parks to expand opportunities for improved community health and attract additional user groups
5. Seek partnerships with local disc golf groups (e.g., Cherokee County Disc Golf) to add a course at one of Canton's parks
    - Prioritize land unsuitable for other uses
6. Seek a suitable location to add a skate park at an existing or future park
7. Consider a partnership for community gardens in a future park
8. Include a neighborhood determined feature at each neighborhood park, ensuring development aligns with needs and encouraging a sense of local investment and opportunities for placemaking in parks

Trails and Connectivity

1. Develop a comprehensive plan for bike and pedestrian access to identify the most important destinations to connect, the trails corridors needed, and the potential costs
    - Incorporate previous planning efforts
    - Include connections to parks, schools, commercial areas, and other destinations
    - Prepare for the expected residential growth over the next 10 years
    - Include standards for design, signage, and maintenance (including staffing requirements) to ensure trail experiences are consistent throughout the system
    - Update priorities, feasibility, and potential costs
    - Continue to utilize parks as trailheads for the system whenever possible
2. Evaluate opportunities to add new trails in existing parks
    - Include trail connections between parks and adjacent neighborhoods wherever possible, especially when developing new parks
3. Consider signing on to the 10-Minute Walk Mission by the TPL and NRPA to show the city's commitment to connectivity and access to parks
4. Include requirements for sidewalks and pedestrian connections to existing trails and walkways in all new development plans (esp. residential)

Nature Access

1. Develop a master plan for a nature park at Lake Canton to provide access to nature and potential for a nature center, picnic shelters, a dog park, trails (including mountain biking), and other requested outdoor features
2. Add canoe/kayak (and fishing) access points at Harmon Park and Boling Park and a fishing pier at Hickory Log Creek Boat Ramp
3. Continue to seek partnerships to help develop additional access points to the Etowah River and Lake Canton for fishing and canoeing/kayaking

5.5 Operations and Programming

5.5.1 Current Organization Structure

The Parks and Recreation Manager leads Canton's Parks and Recreation Department. The department currently employs two park supervisors. The Downtown Maintenance Supervisor has two direct reports. This staff is responsible for the parks located in the central downtown area (Brown Park, Cannon Park, Burge Park, and McCanless Park). There is also a Parks and Recreation Supervisor, who has four direct reports. They are responsible for the larger community parks (Etowah River Park, Heritage Park, Boling Park), Harmon Park, trails, and Paw Park (the current dog park). Parks and Recreation is part of the Public Works Department and the office is located in the Public Works building.

The Parks and Recreation Manager is responsible for ten parks and 5.9 miles of trails. The Manager directs the planning, promotion, and implementation of several special events and festivals serving thousands of residents and visitors annually. The staff also manage a farmer's market and oversee the permit process for outside groups who wish to rent facilities including pavilions and fields. The past few years they have also been part of the capital project improvement team for renovations to Harmon Park, Brown Park restrooms, and South Canton Park; a new park which will have a playground, dog park, amphitheater, restrooms, and a walking path.

The city also recently purchased the former Tippens Elementary School property on Glenwood Street from the Cherokee County School District. As noted earlier in this chapter, the gymnasium and lower-level classrooms should be renovated to become a community recreation center.

Park and Recreation Job Titles as per NRPA

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) released its bi-annual report on compensation within recreation and park systems in 2023, for use throughout 2024. A 43-question survey was used to gather the salary data for 13 positions in park and recreation agencies, as well as information about benefits and salary policies. More than 400 agencies throughout the country participated. The titles most often used within recreation departments are as follows:

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- Park and Recreation Director (or Executive Director or Superintendent)
- Planning Director (or Superintendent)
- Director of Finance (or Administrative Director or Business Manager)
- Recreation Director (or Recreation Superintendent or Assistant Director – Recreation)
- Park Operations Director (or Maintenance Director or Maintenance Superintendent)
- Park Operations (or Maintenance Foreman)
- Facilities Manager
- Athletics Supervisor (or Athletics Manager)
- Aquatics Supervisor (or Aquatics Manager)
- Recreation Program Coordinator (or Recreations Program Manager)
- Marketing and Communications Director (or Manager)
- Fitness Center Manager
- Administrative Assistant

Park and Recreation Job Titles in Georgia

There are currently 204 park and recreation agencies throughout the United States who have completed the NRPA Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) process. In many ways, these represent the best agencies. This is only 2% of all agencies nationwide. Accredited agencies have built a comprehensive management system of operational best practices. This increases efficiency in their departments and demonstrates accountability within their communities. Implementation of these management practices also strengthens teamwork among organization staff.

Fourteen of the CAPRA accredited agencies are in Georgia – 13 local/county government departments and one military:

- Cherokee County Recreation and Parks
- Columbia County Parks, Recreation, and Events
- Clayton County Parks and Recreation
- Forsyth County Parks and Recreation
- Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation
- Dekalb County Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs
- Atlanta Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs
- Carrollton Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs
- Roswell Recreation, Parks, Historic, and Cultural Affairs
- Douglasville Parks and Recreation
- Gainesville Parks and Recreation
- Woodstock Parks and Recreation
- Columbus Parks and Recreation
- Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay

The City of Canton is currently undertaking a compensation study and also considering possible title changes for Park and Recreation staff. Titles will be needed for new staff that are hired to work at the new community recreation center as well. The 13 nationally CAPRA accredited public agencies are a good source to use to benchmark job titles. The following text reviews the titles used by these agencies for park and recreation management positions. However, they are not inclusive of all positions.

County park systems are larger in the types of facilities they manage, as well as the land that they steward. Cherokee County has a Parks and Recreation Director, as well as five divisional directors who oversee Parks, Athletics, Recreation, Facilities, and Administrative Services. Gwinnett County has a Director and two Deputy Directors of Park Operations and Recreation Programming, as well as two Division Directors, several Recreation Managers, and a Grounds and Maintenance Manager. Forsyth County has a Director, Deputy Directors, and several other management positions. Clayton County has a Director, Assistant Director, and three Administrators of Recreation, Parks, and Leisure Services, as well as two Deputy Administrators of Athletics and Green Space. Dekalb County has a Director, Assistant Director, and three Division Managers of Parks, Recreation, and Arts. They also have Superintendents and Coordinators who report to the Managers. Information about Columbia County was not found other than in addition to the Director, they have a Park Operations Manager.

In the cities, Atlanta's director is titled Commissioner, and they also have Directors and Assistant Directors for four divisions of Parks, Recreation, Park Design, and Administration & Strategy. Roswell has a Director and two Assistant Directors. Carrollton has a Director and three Superintendents of Parks, Leisure Programs, and Athletics & Aquatics. Douglasville has a Director and four Managers of Operations, Park Maintenance, Recreation Programs, and Athletic Programs. They also have a Golf Professional listed as senior staff. Gainesville has a Director and Deputy Director, along with five Managers of Recreation Programs, Athletics, Aquatics, Administration, and Special Projects. Coordinators report to the Managers. Woodstock and Columbus did not share their staff; however, both have various types of facilities including recreation centers, aquatics, athletics, and special events.

Canton Parks and Recreation Suggested Job Titles

Based upon the most common job titles utilized on both a national and state level, the job title of the department and the director (Parks and Recreation Director) both seem to be accurate and appropriate titles to inform the public and the community as to what the responsibilities are and what the mission and vision will be. It is understood that there may be some discussion about changing the name of the department to Parks and Events.

With the advent of the community recreation center opening within the next two years, and more emphasis to be

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placed on programs, as identified in the community needs assessment, it is not suggested that the word "Recreation" be removed from the department title. The word "Events" could be added however, since Canton is known for several festivals that bring visitors to the city, some of whom also spend the night while in attendance. The department could be titled Parks, Recreation, and Community Events. This would be similar to Columbia County, and also similar to four other agencies who incorporate the words "Cultural Affairs", due to the arts programs they offer.

It is recommended that the Downtown Maintenance Supervisor and Parks and Recreation Supervisor have revised titles that are the same. Options could be Park Operations (or Park Maintenance) Supervisor, Superintendent, or Manager. If Canton wishes to distinguish them from each other, the words "Downtown Parks" and "Community Parks" could be added after their titles. Staff that report to them could have the titles Park Technician or Park Maintenance Worker or Park Grounds Maintenance Worker.

Additional Staffing Needs

The proposed new community recreation center will need a full-time supervisory staff member who will manage the community center. This position would be primarily responsible for the daily activities at the center including scheduling and supervising programs, supervising part-time and any seasonal staff, and ensuring building cleanliness and safety. The suggested title is Recreation Supervisor, Superintendent, or Manager. It is recommended that the same supervisory word that is used for the park supervisory positions be used for this new Recreation position, to indicate that these are the leaders of the two divisions (i.e. Supervisor, Superintendent, or Manager). This individual should have a degree in recreation or a related field, and since the facility and programming component is new to the city, the job description should require having prior experience in operating a recreation center.

The community center will also need positions whose primary responsibility is to serve as visitor services representative at the entrance to the community center, although this position may also assist with other duties, such as setting up classrooms, teaching classes, and assisting with scheduling. Based upon the days of the week and hours that the facility is open, this may be a full-time position supplemented with a part-time person or two, or it may be all part-time positions. The position might be called a Recreation Leader, Recreation Assistant, Program Assistant, or Visitor Services Representative, depending upon the duties, and whether the position is full-time or part-time. Other positions would be required as the center grows, and the programs offered are determined.

The community recreation center will also need a position who maintains the building on a daily basis. Unlike other city buildings, this facility will need daily cleaning/sanitizing of the floors in the gym and the classrooms. The bathrooms will also need to be cleaned daily. Responding to safety issues is also critical as they may arise on a regular basis, such as maintaining equipment or cleaning up blood after an accident. The number of visitors in the building will be much greater than a typical city building. In discussions with Building Services and Public Works, it will need to be determined if this is a new full-time position, supplemented with weekend part-time help.

Since Cherokee County is also building a new high school, there is a possibility that the City of Canton may wish to purchase some or all of the current school property, which is adjacent to Boling Park, to expand the park. This has the potential to become a second recreation center in the southern part of the city. This would include a gymnasium and an auditorium, as well as classroom space to be transformed into spaces for fitness classes, wellness programs, STEM activities, and environmental education programs, just to name a few. Additional full-time and part-time staff would also need to be hired at that time.

As the department continues to grow, and as recreation programs continue to increase to meet community needs, perhaps the city could also consider whether Parks and Recreation should be a separate department from Public Works. This would occur when programs become successful, and the additional staff become part of the team.

Staff Development

As the staff continues to expand, it is also important to continue to provide opportunities for continuing professional education, so staff are able to remain current with best practices, trends, and continue to expand their knowledge of the profession. This would include attending the Georgia Recreation and Park Association (GRPA) annual conference and participating in District and Network meetings and events. Additional consideration should be given to department supervisory staff to become certified as CPRP or CPSI from NRPA, as well as appropriate grounds certifications from APWA. Staff who become members of GRPA and NRPA or other professional allied recreation and park associations will have networking opportunities and access to shared policies, program ideas, and management solutions.

Park Maintenance staff should develop maintenance standards that also include best practices for sustainability. There are several maintenance management software programs that track all of the daily, weekly, monthly, and seasonal tasks; and the hours worked per task. This provides complete data on the cost of maintaining each park site.

5.5.2 Enhancing and Expanding Programming

When asked on the survey "What would encourage you to participate more in the parks?" 34% of those who responded to the statistically valid mailed survey stated that "the addition of desired programs" would allow them to participate more; and 28% of respondents said that same on the web-based survey. This response was greater than ten other possible choices (such as improved facilities, more restrooms, and more play equipment). In another survey question, 75% of people said that they were supportive of increased programming for residents of all

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ages. Similarly, 69% said they would like to add places for more cultural programs (such as theater, arts, and dance).

Ninety-three percent (93%) of those who responded to the random sample survey visit and use the parks. (According to data from NRPA, the national average is 84%.) The survey results demonstrate a strong desire for programs. Festivals and concerts are the most popular, but that could be because people are most familiar with them, since that is what is currently offered (and popular and successful!).



Fishing in Lake Canton

A third of households stated that they are interested in nature programs, and 20% ranked them as the highest priority of programs to begin to be offered. People of all ages have a curiosity to explore the natural world. Parks are a perfect place to nurture this curiosity and connect people to nature, as well as help them to foster a sense of responsibility for its care through environmental and recreational learning experiences. There can be programs for all ages from youth nature hikes to explore flora and fauna to birding and wildlife guided nature hikes for adults, as examples. Geocaching is also popular. Local citizens who are experts in ways in which people can reduce their carbon footprint, create less waste, and help the environment in other ways may volunteer their time to present lectures in a park pavilion (or the community center).

A third of people also asked for programs for people ages 55 and older. Retired baby boomers are looking for activities and wellness programs to remain healthy and active. These include active sports such as pickleball and healthy living/ wellness activities such as yoga and aerobics.

A third of respondents also stated that they would like to add fishing programs, as well as watercraft instruction (canoeing and kayaking). The Etowah River should be a great focus to connect people within the community. People who participated in the stakeholder meetings, as well as citizens who responded to the surveys mentioned wanting increased access to the river, more river corridor trails, and more places to launch canoes and kayaks. Part of that is teaching people how to canoe and kayak and even leading paddling trips on the river, led by experienced outdoor enthusiasts who could be volunteers, contractual staff, or part-time staff. Teaching youth how to fish and even hosting a fishing derby would bring many families to the parks and the river.



Kayaking in Etowah River

A quarter of Canton citizens are interested in community gardening. Creating gardening plots in one of the parks is a possibility, and so is programming about gardening topics for the home gardener. Topics could include presentations such as deer and critter/rodent resistant plants, or garden craft programs, such as creating cornucopias and evergreen swags at the holidays and hanging baskets and wreaths during the spring. Staff could also partner with University of Georgia Cooperative Extension programs to explore other types of garden programs.

Approximately 20% of people are looking for places and activities for cultural programs (theater, dance, arts). This would best be effectuated once the community recreation center is open, however it is possible to begin some programming within the parks, such as a painting class along the river or teaching dance in a park pavilion.

The purchase and renovation of the former Tippens Elementary School gymnasium and classrooms to become a community recreation center offers the opportunity to provide many different types of programs. Possible activities could include open gym time (basketball and volleyball), indoor pickleball, party rental rooms, adult enrichment classes, fitness programs (yoga, Pilates, and aerobics), and cultural programs (crafts, dance, and theater arts). A teen drop-in center could be created as well. Indoor nature and STEM activities could also be programmed, especially for youth.

Developing and implementing the types of programs that the public has identified in both the community needs assessment and the public open houses are important to enrich the experiences available to the community.

5.5.3 Park and Program Marketing through Social Media and Tourism

The Parks and Recreation Department currently does not have any staff dedicated to marketing parks, programs, and special events. Many recreation departments that operate as a municipal department may have a webpage on the city's overall website, however, almost all have the ability to use several social media platforms on a daily

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basis by sharing content every day to entice people to participate in programs or to attend a special event that just began, by sharing a small video of the band, for example, or showing people participating in a sporting event or the sun on a beautiful day in a park where people are barbecuing. Those happen in real time. People see them on their phones, and not on a website. Then they act to participate on that day.

The City of Canton does have a website, however 45% of the respondents to the survey stated that they do not know what is available. That is a barrier to participation. The Park staff do not have access to social media. It is suggested that Facebook and Instagram pages be created for the Parks and Recreation Department that park and recreation staff update on a regular basis to increase exposure to the number of people who are interested in what is happening within the Department, as well as sharing opportunities for them to participate. Almost 60% of those who responded preferred to get park information through social networking. Once programs are developed, the website will also need to be updated with an online program guide that can be downloaded, and software may need to be purchased to allow online registration.

Parks and Recreation could also partner with and explore the new tourism "Explore Canton" website, to promote festivals and concerts, the farmers market, canoeing/kayaking and fishing on the Etowah River, and other outdoor activities within the park system. They could jointly develop packages to promote tourism, to bring people from other parts of Georgia to see historic downtown Canton, spend the day at a festival or hiking trails, and then spend the night in a hotel, as well as dine in local restaurants. This also aligns with the tenets from the "Roadmap for Success", as identified in the Master Plan public meetings.

5.5.4 Park and Program Accessibility

In 2010, the US Department of Justice revised ADA regulations to clarify issues, and also delivered ADA Standards for Accessible Design (2010 Standards). All state and local government agencies are required to develop an ADA Transition Plan so that people with disabilities can participate in facilities and programs; and bring the park system in compliance with Title II of the ADA which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs, services, and activities in state and local government agencies. The ADA protects the rights of people whose disabilities substantially limit their ability to perform one or more major life activities. Each agency (local government) must:

1. Designate an ADA Coordinator
2. Provide notice to the public about ADA requirements
3. Establish and publish a grievance procedure
4. Develop an ADA Transition Plan
5. Develop a schedule and budget to implement the Transition Plan
6. Create supplemental policies such as:
   - Service animals
   - Wheelchairs and other power-driven mobility devices
   - Communicating with individuals who have speech, hearing, or visual disabilities
   - Reasonable modifications to Policies and Procedures to ensure that people with disabilities have an equal opportunity to participate[4]

5.5.5 Maintenance Standards and Strategies

Like most agencies, Canton has a backlog of deferred maintenance in the park system. While the Parks and Recreation and Public Works have generally done well at addressing needed repairs, a detailed capital maintenance and replacement plan should be developed for all features. Public input clearly indicated that residents want high-quality parks and facilities, and this plan is essential to ensure the continued realization of this desire.

Of utmost consideration is the high cost of reactive maintenance, rather than proactive action; when maintenance is deferred for too long, the cost increases exponentially each year of delay. It is important for the city to prioritize improvements to existing parks and facilities before or along with investments in new development.

Clearly defined standards and strategies improve efficiency and consistency throughout the system while potentially reducing maintenance demands. Maintenance requirements should be measurable. Each element of park maintenance needs a standard. For example:

- Level 1,2,3,4, or 5 turf – standards set by the department
- Restroom cleaning (e.g., daily, twice daily, etc.) – standards set by the department
- Capital replacement (e.g., roofs, HVAC systems, etc.) requires items to be placed on a list with an "expiration date" based on the general length of time an item lasts in good condition. Costs should be determined and provided to the city's budgetary administration years in advance to ensure the city is prepared for necessary appropriations.
- Painting schedule (e.g., number of years between re-painting, per item) – standards set by the department; painted items should be included on a multi-year list for funding
- Maintenance equipment replacement (e.g., lawnmowers, trucks, irrigation systems, etc.) – standards set by the department in collaboration with the city

[4] The ADA does not require agencies to take any action that would fundamentally alter the nature of its programs or services or impose an undue financial or administrative burden.

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- Coordination with maintenance staff during the park and facility design process; essential to ensuring that staff understand how to maintain what is developed and improves efficiency by ensuring compatibility with maintenance equipment and practices

Canton should decide the level of maintenance service to provide at each park or portion of a park. This decision should be a proactive exercise where funding is put in place in accordance with what level of maintenance service is desired. The above process will also help to address equipment needs proactively rather than reactively.

Table 5.1: Turf Maintenance Levels

1 State of the Art Maintenance

- Park/Land Categories
  - High quality diverse landscapes
  - Urban plazas
  - High visitation parks
  - Athletic game fields
  - Manicured grounds
- Maintenance Standards
  - Mow every 5 days
  - Irrigate
  - Fertilize
  - Aerate
  - <1% weeds
  - Daily inspection

2 High Level Maintenance

- Park/Land Categories
  - Well-developed park areas
  - Reasonably high visitation
  - Athletic practice fields
- Maintenance Standards
  - Mow every week
  - Fertilize, aerate regularly
  - <5% weeds
  - Daily inspection

3 High Level Maintenance

- Park/Land Categories
  - Moderate to low level of development and visitation
  - Non-playing field areas in developed parks
- Maintenance Standards
  - Mow every 10 days
  - Fertilize if needed
  - No irrigation
  - Weekly inspection

4 Moderately Low-Level Maintenance

- Park/Land Categories
  - Moderate to low level of development and visitation
  - Non-playing field areas in developed parks
- Maintenance Standards
  - Mow every 10 days
  - Fertilize if needed
  - No irrigation
  - Weekly inspection

5 High Visitation Natural Areas

- Park/Land Categories
  - Natural areas of high visitation
  - Nature parks
- Maintenance Standards
  - No mowing
  - Annual bush hogging, monthly inspection (prairie/meadow areas)

6 Minimum Maintenance Level

- Park/Land Categories
  - Undeveloped parks
- Maintenance Standards
  - No mowing
  - Occasional bush hogging, monthly inspection

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5.5.6 Current Community Partnerships

It is important to have strong relationships with partners in the community, especially those who use park facilities and who, for example, may also assist in running sports leagues. The Memorandum of Understandings (MOU) should all be reviewed for consistency in written language and to provide a consistent template for all. Responsibilities such as collection of registration fees, maintenance of the fields, hosting tournaments, and liability insurance should all be included.

A stronger partnership with the YMCA should also be established. It has been shared that as per an agreement with the City of Canton, the YMCA is providing swim lessons at no cost to Canton residents on Sundays. However, there is no information about this on the Cecil Pruett Community Center Family YMCA website. Also, two years ago after the outdoor fitness/gym activity space was built in Heritage Park, the YMCA inquired about using this space as a circuit fitness program with an instructor and a set number of YMCA members. This is a great use of the space; however, it needs to be codified in the lease agreement for liability purposes. The Director of the YMCA participated in a stakeholder group meeting for this master plan and shared that the YMCA is interested in partnering to conduct more activities within the park. The Parks and Recreation Director should be provided with a copy of the lease between Canton and the YMCA, and more discussion should occur on how they can partner.

5.5.7 Recommendations

1. Consider using common job titles for new and existing positions to make sure they are accurate and appropriate and to help inform the public and the community of their responsibilities
2. Consider updating the department name to Parks, Recreation, and Community Events to better reflect the function and mission of the department
3. Partner with the new tourism "Explore Canton" website, to promote festivals and concerts, the farmers market, canoeing/kayaking and fishing on the Etowah River, and other outdoor activities within the park system
4. Renovate the recently purchased Tippens gymnasium and classrooms to become a community center with programming
    - Possible activities include open gym time (basketball and volleyball), indoor pickleball, party rental rooms, adult enrichment classes, fitness programs (yoga, Pilates, and aerobics), and cultural programs (crafts, dance, theater arts).
5. Develop and implement programs that the public identified in the community needs assessment and the public open houses that can be started even prior to the community center opening, such as nature activities, watercraft, and wellness and fitness programs
6. Create a new full-time position dedicated to planning and delivering programs for people of all ages as per the outcomes of the community needs assessment (i.e., Recreation Supervisor or Manager)
    - This position will be responsible for planning and scheduling programs and hiring staff to deliver them.
7. Create a part-time position (will need several people to cover all hours seven days a week) whose primary responsibility is to serve as a visitor service representative at the entrance to the community center, although this position may also assist with other duties
8. Determine whether a new full-time maintenance position is needed to ensure building cleanliness and safety (coordinate with the Clean Canton Department Building Services and Public Works)
9. Create Facebook and Instagram pages for the Parks and Recreation Department that staff update daily or on a very regular basis to increase exposure to the number of people who are interested in keeping in closer contact with what is happening within the Department, as well as sharing opportunities for them to participate
10. Explore hosting weekend baseball tournaments in Harmon Park
    - Consider adding Boling Park fields once they are renovated
11. Review the current MOUs with all sport leagues who use park fields and provide a consistent template for all
12. Ensure the same standard for any professional/for-profit entity who applies for permits
13. Form a stronger partnership with the YMCA to offer joint programming to the community; review the lease agreement to determine the parameters regarding swim lessons
14. Develop and implement an ADA Transition Plan so that people with disabilities can participate in facilities and programs; and bring the park system in compliance with Title II of the ADA which prohibits discrimination based on disability in programs, services, and activities in state and local government agencies
15. Identify and allocate funding for critical staff development opportunities (including conferences, training, memberships, etc.) with consideration to licensure and certification requirements
16. Encourage staff to join state and national professional recreation and park associations for networking opportunities and access to shared policies, program ideas, and management solutions
17. Consider whether Parks and Recreation should be a separate department from Public Works, as it continues to grow
18. Develop a detailed capital maintenance and replacement plan for all features
    - Know the value of assets (excluding land values); know where those assets are in their life cycle
19. Create and continuously update a comprehensive preventive maintenance plan for all equipment

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- Plan for eventual replacement of items as they are purchased

20. Determine the level of maintenance service to provide at each park or portion of a park and ensure funding is in place in accordance with the level of maintenance expected
21. Increase staffing levels to meet the expectations of residents and to protect the city's investment once improvements are made
22. Consider maintenance and staffing needs when adding parkland and features to the system

5.6 Potential Funding and Revenue Sources

5.6.1 Background

Parks and recreation projects can be funded in many ways, including maintenance endowment funds, conservation districts, license tags, transient occupancy taxes, income taxes, lease backs, real-estate transfer fees, land dedication and/or park impact fees, and park authorities. The strategies below are the best options for an immediate impact on the operations and capital improvements of CANTON.

5.6.2 Create a Non-Profit Park Foundation

Park Foundations enable Park and Recreation Departments to be eligible to receive grants and donations that may only be available to 501c3 organizations. Park Foundations are a way for citizens and the local business community to help advocate for, invest in, and ensure that the parks and facilities have the necessary funding to support projects that may not be able to be completed through tax dollars.

Park Foundation are managed by community members, with staff serving in an ex-officio capacity. They can be small in scope, just overseeing donations, and they may also develop other fundraising programs such as tribute benches and trees. Some Park Foundations offer options on how to donate charitable bequests, charitable trusts, gifts of life insurance, gifts of securities, gifts of real estate, and creating endowments. Park Foundations may also sponsor fundraising events. Funds raised and donated through grants can be used for anything for which the parks and recreation department has a need such as:

- Preservation of open space and wildlife corridors
- Expansion of trails for increased access to nature
- Purchase of trees to expand the tree canopy in urban park areas
- Scholarships for low-income people of all ages to participate in programs
- Creation of new programs and initiatives
- Staff training

5.6.3 Grant Funding

Devoting staff time to researching and applying for grants from foundations and corporations is important to help fund special programs, such as having a goal to teach all children to swim, which saves kids from drowning – or applying for funds to add youth STEM programs. Grants also can fund trails and specific features, such as mini-soccer pitches and fitness courts.

Canton is experienced in applying for and receiving grants for facility improvements. Recent examples include a GA100 grant for the mini pitch at Harmon Park from the Atlanta United Community Fund (AUCF) and $2.2 million state grant through the Governor's Office for South Canton Park. Canton should continue to be on the lookout for grants that will enhance the park system. Applying to established foundations is often easier and has a higher acceptance rate. There are sometimes local foundations that are more amenable to giving locally. In all, grants can come from the federal government, state sources, and sometimes local entities.

There are several federal grant programs that are administered through individual state agencies, and two of these include the Land and Water Conservation (LWCF) and The Recreational Trails Program, both administered through the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. The National Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Grant is administered through the Georgia Department of Transportation. It promotes walking and bicycling to school through infrastructure improvements, and safety education. SRTS initiatives improve safety and levels of physical activity for students, and the corridors can connect to park trails.

American Trails is the only national, nonprofit organization working to supporting local, regional, and long-distance trails and greenways. Their goal is to support America's trails by funding trail maintenance backlogs aimed toward supporting small local trail projects that engage the community. Georgia DOT partners with the Federal Highway Administration in facilitating the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) to provide opportunities for local governments to pursue non-traditional transportation related activities such as pedestrian facilities, bicycle facilities, and pedestrian streetscaping projects.

The US Department of Agriculture Community and Economic Development Program assists cities through grants for community facilities. Some of the types of projects supported by this program include community centers, among many other community-based initiatives. The Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention (CDC) uses grants to fund public health programs that advance the agency's public health mission to keep Americans safe and healthy where they work, live and play. These could be used to develop wellness programs.

The grants program sponsored by Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Environmental Education Division supports environmental education projects that promote environmental awareness and stewardship and help provide people with the skills to take responsible actions to protect the environment. This grant program

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provides financial support for projects that disseminate environmental education practices, methods, or techniques. The EPA also offers Multipurpose, Assessment, RLF, and Cleanup (MARC) grants through the Brownfields Program. These grants may be used to address sites contaminated by hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants. The program could be an option to help fund some of the costs associated with turning Tippens Gym into a recreation/community center.

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs Historic Preservation Division administers the Georgia Heritage Grant Program. Grants from this program can support development and predevelopment projects. The Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation administers a small grant program to assist with historic preservation projects. The United States National Park Service administers the Historic Preservation Fund. The program assists governments and organizations in recording, documenting, repairing, and protecting properties, landscapes, traditional cultural practices, and archeological sites. All of these programs have the potential to support the revitalization of Tippens Gym.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's Hazard Mitigation Assistance program offers several grants to help communities mitigate hazards such as flooding and wildfires and to build resilience. The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funds projects that reduce future losses. This funding is available following a presidentially declared disaster. Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) supports as they build capability and capacity to reduce hazard risk and become more resilient. These programs could potentially support a project to reduce flooding in Paw Park and neighboring homes. The BRIC program could potentially support upgrades to Tippens Gym that make it a resilience hub. These facilities have backup power and serve as places for people to warm, cool-off, charge devices, pick-up food, and gather information during and following a disaster event. Applying for FEMA grants requires coordination with the Cherokee County Emergency Management Agencies and the State Hazard Mitigation Officer.

Grants from Foundations and Private Organizations

AARP Community Challenge grants help improve public spaces, transportation, and civic engagement with an emphasis on the needs of people ages 50 or older. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's People, Parks, and Power Initiative strives to increase park equity through local policy and systems change. The geographic focus of this initiative is in small and midsized cities. Together Outdoor Grants fund outdoor recreation-related programming, events, and leadership development initiatives that benefit communities of color, underserved regions, people with disabilities, and minority groups.

Connecting Communities grants (Target) help transform local parks to improve access to physical activity, social connection, and create more resilient communities for low-income youth and families. Park improvement projects that emphasize connecting all individuals to nature and healthy living opportunities, aligning with Target's priorities and NRPA's pillars of health and wellness, conservation, and social equity will be prioritized.

Many additional grants sources are available for park, recreation, and wellness programs through national and state corporations such as Home Depot Building Healthy Communities grants, American Express (playgrounds), LL Bean Charitable Giving, REI Activity Fund, Coca-Cola Foundation, AETNA, CVS, Rite-Aid, State Farm, and All State. Specifically in Georgia, in the greater Atlanta area there are also grants that support parks and recreation from Georgia Power, Sarah Giles Moore Foundation, and Resurgens Charitable Foundation.

List of Grant Sources

- National Recreation Trails Program
- Resilient Communities Program (NFWF)
- Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)
- National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program
- America The Beautiful (U.S. Department of the Interior)
- Conservation Reserve Fund
- Community Forest and Open Space Program (Federal)
- Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) Grants (FEMA)
- Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Grants (USDA)
- Land and Water Conservation Fund (Federal)
- Multipurpose, Assessment, RLF, and Cleanup (MARC) Grants (EPA)
- Georgia Heritage Grant Program
- Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation
- National Park Service Rivers Historic Preservation Fund
- AARP Community Challenge
- Private foundations and charities

5.6.4 Scholarship Fund

Around the country, parks and recreation agencies are exploring ways to utilize the patronage of those already paying for recreation services. These strategies can incorporate partner program offerings, including athletic leagues, by streamlining the registration process through the department website. Canton can explore a couple of options for building a robust scholarship fund:

- Apply an additional $2.00 charge to the registration fee for all those who pay for programs. Funnel the funds generated into a scholarship fund that can be accessed for those patrons unable to pay
- Add an option to the registration process where those signing up can opt to donate (e.g., $2.00 or $5.00) to help those in their community who are unable to pay to participate

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5.6.5 Rentals

Multiple outdoor facilities in the Canton system are available for rent for modest fees. Many of the improvements recommended in this plan have potential for rental usage and fees, including picnic shelters/pavilions, amphitheater, courts, and indoor spaces at the Tippens Gym. When any of these amenities are developed, they should be added to the rental inventory, and the fees should be reevaluated on a recurring basis to ensure they match what the public is able and willing to pay.

Finding information about rentals on the department website is difficult. As rental opportunities are added, the department should provide online reservations for rental facilities with a calendar of availability.

Currently, all rental funds go to the general fund rather than back to Canton Parks and Recreation. City officials should consider creating a fund to send rental fees back to Parks and Recreation to fund facility improvements and maintenance. The resulting fund would allow for improved capital maintenance of facilities and users would be more willing to pay, knowing that the funds would be used to improve the facilities.

5.6.6 Tax Funding

The City of Canton has two sources of tax funding that can be used for capital improvements at parks, the special purpose local option sales tax (SPLOST) and impact fees. Despite already approving the SPLOST, 56% of households (Mail Survey) would favor a potential bond referendum to fund improvements; just 17% of the representative random sample would actively oppose a measure. Canton residents clearly support city investment in parks and recreation.

5.6.7 General Funding Sources for Parks, Recreation, and Sports Facility Operations

Below is a general list of ideas that communities have used to supplement the costs of operations. Some of these options may be more effective for Canton than others.

- Official drink for Parks and Recreation
- Tournament fees – if an outside vendor makes money, the city should as well
- Scoreboard sponsors
- Parking fees at events
- Advertising sales
- Wi-Fi revenue through sponsorship, if a vendor provides the Wi-Fi
- Cell tower leases
- Privatization of various park and recreation programs and services
- Sports booster clubs
- Corporate sponsorship in exchange for advertising

5.6.8 Recommendations

1. Explore creating a Park Foundation to enable the Parks and Recreation Department to be eligible for grants and donations only available to 501c3 organizations
   - Encourage the foundation to promote this Master Plan and its goals
   - Seek philanthropists in the community to support the agency's causes
   - Allow potential donors to fund specific parks master plan that they would like to see accomplished
2. Consider recruiting park ambassadors to provide directions, offer assistance, and remind visitors of park policies
3. Establish split revenue percentages for any program partnerships with funding channeled directly to Parks and Recreation
4. Expand sponsorships in parks, including selling naming rights to park amenities, programs, or events
5. Research grants to develop trail linkages, build universal playgrounds, adult fitness, splashpads, wellness programs, nature programs, watercraft, etc.
6. Ensure grant requirements are consistent with the mission of Parks and Recreation, while considering associated costs to the city
7. Create a Scholarship Fund, potentially by requesting an optional additional $2.00 charge during registration for Canton and partner programs
8. Add new facilities to the rental inventory as they are developed
9. Reevaluate rental fees as amenities are updated, replaced, or added to the inventory
10. Identify potential revenue sources at community events, including sponsorships and entry fees
11. Provide discounts for local recreation use compared to travel teams and for-profit tournaments
12. Consider creating a fund to send rental fees back to Parks and Recreation to fund facility improvements and maintenance
13. Consider additional options for revenue from tax dollars to fund capital improvements, if necessary

5.7 Continuity with Other Planning Efforts

5.7.1 Background

As Canton Parks and Recreation moves forward on improvements and development that can make a difference in the lives of the community, they will benefit from aligning efforts with other plans wherever possible. A number of plan documents and studies exist, including plans pursued by other city entities and Cherokee County. Appendix C includes a summary of those plans considered especially relevant to the work of the agency. The following are a few key highlights and subsequent recommendations.

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5.7.2 Primarily Relevant Plan Documents

City of Canton's Roadmap for Success

Canton Mayor Bill Grant led the development of the "Roadmap for Success" to guide City operations through 2035. The Roadmap presents eight tenets for the successful planning of our future. Each tenet is a commitment from the Mayor & Council to our residents, businesses, and partners as a platform for thoughtful review when looking at new projects, developing budget priorities, and approving local rules and procedures for operations in the City.

The tenets include references to projects that relate to parks and recreation including: Atlanta United mini-pitch and other upgrades at Harmon Park, public parks Wifi Program, Etowah River Trail expansion, the outdoor gym in Heritage Park. New recommendations in this plan, as well as the newly developed Core Values, Goals, and Objectives align well with the tenets, which should help make new parks and recreation facilities priorities for the city in funding and completion.

Canton 2045 Comprehensive Plan (Updated 2023)

The *Canton 2045 Comprehensive Plan* is a 5-year update to the *2040 Comprehensive Plan* and is intended to guide local government officials and community leaders in achieving the community's stated vision: "The City of Canton is a destination that is a dynamic, diverse, and developing place to live, work, and play. Ensuring a safe, clean, healthy, and productive city where community is valued, neighborhoods are revitalized, history is preserved, the natural environment is respected, and where all people can reach their full potential through education, commerce, culture, recreation, and wellness. The City of Canton is proud to be the heart of North Georgia, with big city amenities and small-town charm."

The Plan's discussion of Parks and Recreation focused on the Parks and Recreation Master Plan to be completed during the second quarter of 2024. The Master Plan will provide a 5 to 10-year roadmap for recreation, facilities, and maintenance. Additionally, the plan's goals and objectives include multiple items related to parks and recreation. These include developing additional trails and bike paths, improved connections to parks, improved access to the Etowah River, and funding improvements to parks and recreation facilities.

Capital Improvements Element (2019)

The purpose of the capital improvements element is to establish where and when new capital facilities will be provided and the extent to which they may be financed through the impact fee program. The element was amended to the Canton *2040 Comprehensive* plan on March 21, 2019. Impact fee program facilities determined for parks and recreation are based on service area and level of service standards. The current level of service



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calculations account for both the existing population and projected population along with the projected households and household size. Because Parks and Recreation facilities are utilized primarily by the residents of Canton, impact fees can only be applied to housing developments and may only be used to specifically serve new growth and development, and only at the level of service applicable citywide. This program will be an important tool in funding new parks and recreation facilities in Canton.

Etowah River Trail Master Plan (2015)

The *Etowah River Trail Master Plan* envisions a network of trails connecting residents to downtown nearby neighborhoods, the river, and to six of Canton's parks: Etowah River, Heritage, Boling, Harmon, Cannon, and Brown. The plan divides development of the trails into multiple phases and includes cost estimates totaling $21.5million. This master plan supports continued implementation of the Etowah River Trail.



Credit: Atkins

Etowah River Trail Master Plan

Hickory Log Creek Reservoir Buffer Analysis (2021)

Hickory Log Creek Reservoir was developed to help address water storage capacity concerns in the region due to high levels of population growth. To protect water quality, a 150-foot buffer was established around the reservoir restricting infringement by development. In 2021, the City of Canton commissioned a study to understand the recreation potential of the areas inside the buffer. The study included detailed analysis of vegetation, soils, slope, and more. The result was a plan for a low-impact trail system withing the buffer zone with areas for engaging the water and learning about the areas flora, fauna, and geology. This plan fits perfectly with the demand for access to nature and development of a nature center that emerged during the parks and recreation master planning process.


Credit: HGOR

Buffer Trail Concept

City of Canton Transportation Master Plan (2023)

This Plan is intended to develop a comprehensive city-wide transportation master plan to guide future transportation decision-making. The Plan's vision is to "Provide the residents and visitors of City of Canton a plan that outlines safe access and enhanced connectivity to neighborhoods, recreation facilities, local businesses, and natural resources today, while envisioning future transportation solutions that ensure sustainability and implementable action steps. Project recommendations related to parks and recreation include multiple trails connections improving access to parks, schools, and downtown. Recommendations in this master plan related to developing trails align with trail recommendations in the transportation master plan, particularly the trail connecting the Mill to Harmon Park.

Cherokee County Recreation, Parks, Green Space & Trails Master Plan (2019)

The purpose of the *Recreation, Parks, Green Space & Trails Master Plan* is to develop a community-supported plan that directly relates to the mission of the County and provides guidance to better prioritize, fund, develop and manage parks, recreation facilities, green spaces, trails and recreation programs. A few of the plan's recommendations involve Canton facilities and/or cooperation between the City and County including developing a system of linear parks, trails, and greenways connecting high priority locations throughout the county and canoe/kayak launches on the Etowah River in Boling and Etowah River parks.

Public Art Master Plan

The *Public Art Plan* lays the foundation for the future of public art in Canton and prepares the city to begin injecting artwork into all facets of the community. The plan's survey and recommendations included several items that relate to recommendations in this parks and recreation master plan. Survey respondents indicated they would like to see more public art in parks and natural spaces. Plan recommendations include:

- Work with a public artist to develop a signature monumental playground in one of Canton's parks
- Invest in public art along Canton's growing trail system and in parks
- Canton Art Trails
- Guardians of the Mountain (mountain bike destination)

Downtown Master Plans (2014, 2016, & 2024)

Downtown Canton has been the subject of multiple planning efforts in the past 10 years. The *Central City Urban Redevelopment Plan* (2014) is intended to address areas in the city's historic, social, and cultural center in need of redevelopment. This plan recommended trails, paths and other alternative transportation options, investment in parks, open space, and recreation facilities, and protection of natural resources.

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Canton Forward (2014) was a collaborative effort between the Atlanta Regional Commission, the City of Canton, a consultant team, and the people of Canton. The process resulted in the *River Mill District & Downtown Concept Plan*, which includes several items that align with this master plan, including a pedestrian/bicycle bridge connecting downtown to the river and a new riverfront park with a splash pad and canoe/kayak launch. Canton was working on a *new Downtown Master Plan* in 2024 at the time of this writing. While the project schedules did not align, recommendations in this plan including downtown amphitheater, trail connections and new parks should align will with the Downtown Master Plan recommendations.



Canton Forward Downtown Concept (2016)

5.7.3 Recommendations for Parks and Recreation

Canton 2045

1. Create multi-use pathways, sidewalks, and bike lanes to connect the city to communities and points of interest
2. Establish a relationship with Cherokee County Trail Advisory Board and the City of Canton to work together on future projects
3. Construct boat ramps east and west of the city to encourage kayaks and canoes
4. Develop environmentally sensitive ways to make the Etowah River more accessible and attractive
5. Develop a bike/walk path along the river with historical information along the path
6. Continue to preserve and expand parks and green space
7. Connect the River to the city by linking the river to the parks, incorporating the historic fish traps and Indian heritage
8. Preserve the River, Reservoir (Lake Canton) and Lake (Allatoona) as natural land features attract business through quality of life
9. Preserve and enhance parks and recreation to meet all needs of the community
10. Utilize the Etowah River Trail to connect to various areas of the city by building safe walking / cycling routes
11. Expand City's Trail System outward from Etowah River Trail to other areas within the city and link to other communities' trail system
12. Increase pedestrian and bicycle accessibility trails to link current communities together with access to our trail system
13. Enhance trail loop connectivity by building upon existing and proposed / planned trails
14. Coordinate with Cherokee County on buildout of trails to ensure appropriate connectivity and explore funding partnerships
15. Repurpose the old high school to a recreation center or other suitable use
    - This action should be reevaluated after the redevelopment of Tippens Gym to determine if it is still needed

Etowah River Trail Master Plan (2015)

1. Phase IV-A – Etowah Bridge Crossing, Riverwalk, and Connections to Downtown (13,800 LF)
2. Phase IV-B – Ped. R.R. Crossing / Gateway Plaza and Connection Downtown (825 LF)
3. Phase V – Trail Connection to Boling Park along Etowah River (3,850 LF)
4. Phase VI – Harmon Park Trail Connection (1,575 LF)
5. Phase VII – Etowah River Educational / Wildlife Trail
6. Nature Center

Canton Forward (2016)

1. Construct a pedestrian/bicycle bridge over the Etowah River and a connecting promenade along West Main Street to connect Downtown to the River
2. Construct a bicycle loop from the Etowah River through Downtown, to consist of a mix of bike route signage, sharrows, and bicycle lanes, as appropriate
3. Create a new riverfront park, including a splash pad and kayak/canoe launch, to create a gateway between Downtown and the Etowah River
4. Add or enhance family-friendly public spaces near the Square (splash pad, playground, or "safety town")
5. Stabilize streambanks with native plantings along Canton Creek

From other planning efforts

1. Develop the Hickory Log Greek Reservoir Buffer Trail (Hickory Log Greek Reservoir Buffer Analysis)
2. Develop a nature center along the Hickory Log Creek Reservoir(Hickory Log Greek Reservoir Buffer Analysis)

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3. Invest in public art along Canton's growing trail system and in parks (Public Art Plan)
4. Add a canoe/kayak launch in Boling Park (Cherokee County Recreation, Parks, Green Space & Trails Master Plan)
5. Connect The Mill Trail – from The Mill on Etowah to Harmon Park (Canton Transportation Master Plan)
6. Convert Cherokee High School to city community center (Canton Transportation Master Plan)
    - This action should be reevaluated after the redevelopment of Tippens Gym to determine if it is still needed
7. Encourage creation of a community-wide network of roads, railroads, walking paths, bicycle trails, car-pooling, and other alternative transportation choices and facilities to meet multiple functions for roads and transport facilities, including pedestrian facilities, parking, bicycle routes, public transit (bus and/or rail), and local vehicular circulation for access as well as for recreation (Central City Urban Redevelopment Plan)

5.8 Capital Improvements and Estimated Costs

This section provides recommendations for individual park improvements including proposed new facilities and upgrades to existing parks. These recommendations are presented as a starting point for future discussions with users, neighbors, partners, and the community at large. Before pursuing development, each park site will need a deeper investigation into capacity and precise details like placement, materials used, and maintenance considerations.

The improvements by park are presented in Table 5.1. Improvements that apply to the whole system and those without a specific location are listed at the top of the table. These improvements should be reevaluated prior to new development and after any follow-up planning studies. All costs in the table are estimated in 2024 dollars and will need to be evaluated for potential escalation at the time of development. The master planning process completed before large-scale improvements should include a detailed estimate of the costs for the improvements at each park.

Grant opportunities exist and should be explored for many of these improvements, particularly trail system development, helping to reduce the required contributions by the City of Canton. Additionally, partnerships, including for fundraising efforts, should be considered as part of any improvement, particularly those with substantial capital costs.

Table 5.2: Capital Improvements by Park

	Park Name	Term	0-2 Years	3-5 Years	6-10 Years	Total
Systemwide						
1	ADA accessibility assessment	Short	$40,000	$0	$0	$40,000
2	Consistent signage at all park entrances	Short	$60,000	$0	$0	$60,000
3	Land acquisition for new parks	Ongoing	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
4	Wayfinding plan & signage for all parks (coordinate with citywide wayfinding project)	Short	$90,000	$0	$0	$90,000
5	Bike/ped master plan (trails and connectivity)	Short	$50,000	$0	$0	$50,000
6	Drinking fountains/bottle fillers throughout system	Ongoing	$30,000	$30,000	$30,000	$90,000
7	Site furnishing upgrades at all existing parks (trash & recycling receptacles/bike racks/pet waste stations)	Ongoing	$120,000	$120,000	$120,000	$360,000
8	Tree planting and landscaping throughout system	Ongoing	$120,000	$120,000	$250,000	$490,000
9	Community gardens	Ongoing	Partner	Partner	Partner	Partner
10	New neighborhood parks	Medium/Long	$0	$700,000	$700,000	$1,400,000
11	New community park	Long	$0	$0	$25,000,000	$25,000,000
12	Skate park	Long	$0	$0	$500,000	$500,000
13	Amphitheater (downtown)	Long	$0	$0	$500,000	$500,000
14	Public art (coordinate w/ Cultural Arts Commission)	Ongoing	Partner	Partner	Partner	Partner
15	Artificial turf rectangular fields (future park)	Ongoing	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
	Systemwide Total		**$510,000**	**$970,000**	**$27,100,000**	**$28,580,000**
Neighborhood Parks						
Brown Park						
1	Picnic shelter/stage (small/prefabricated)	Short	$250,000	$0	$0	$250,000
2	Neighborhood determined/placemaking feature	Medium	$0	$120,000	$0	$120,000
	Project Total		**$250,000**	**$120,000**	**$0**	**$370,000**
Burge Park						
1	Park master plan (consider w/ McCanless Park and potential relocation)	Short	$30,000	$0	$0	$30,000
2	ADA walkways - 6' wide	Short/Medium	$5,000	$5,000	$0	$10,000
3	Neighborhood determined/placemaking feature	Medium	$0	$120,000	$0	$120,000
	Project Total		**$35,000**	**$125,000**	**$0**	**$160,000**

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Table 5.2: Capital Improvements by Park (Continued)

	Park Name	Term	0-2 Years	3-5 Years	6-10 Years	Total
Harmon Park						
1	Playground replacement	Short	$0	$90,000	$0	$90,000
2	Connection to Etowah River Trail w/ bridge	Medium	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
3	River access - consider potential	Long	$0	$0	$250,000	$250,000
	Project Total		**$0**	**$90,000**	**$250,000**	**$340,000**
McCanless Park						
1	Park master plan (consider w/ Burge Park)	Short	$30,000	$0	$0	$30,000
2	Playground (nature themed)	Short	$250,000	$0	$0	$250,000
3	ADA walkways - 6' wide	Short	$30,000	$0	$0	$30,000
4	Parking lot	Short	$40,000	$0	$0	$40,000
5	Shelter replacement	Short	$100,000	$0	$0	$100,000
6	Nature trail	Medium	$10,000	$10,000	$0	$20,000
7	Neighborhood determined/placemaking feature	Medium	$0	$120,000	$0	$120,000
8	Scout hut improvements	Long	Partner	Partner	Partner	Partner
	Project Total		**$460,000**	**$130,000**	**$0**	**$590,000**
Community Parks						
Boling Park						
1	Restroom building (new)	In Progress	In Progress	In Progress	In Progress	In Progress
2	Park master plan	Short	$60,000	$0	$0	$60,000
3	Tennis court improvements - restripe, add pickleball lines	Short	$30,000	$0	$0	$30,000
4	ADA walkways - 6' wide (throughout park)	Short	$80,000	$0	$0	$80,000
5	Acquisition of fields/courts from school (if available)	Short/Medium	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
6	Fishing pier/canoe/kayak launch (accessible)	Medium	$0	$250,000	$0	$250,000
7	Trail along river, connect existing trails (extend ERT to city boundary)	Medium	$0	$700,000	$0	$700,000
8	Multipurpose rectangular field improvements (regrade, reseed, replace fence)	Medium	$0	$180,000	$0	$180,000
9	Racketball court improvements (replace fence, resurface)	Medium	$0	$10,000	$0	$10,000
10	Picnic shelter	Medium	$0	$120,000	$0	$120,000
11	Diamond Field #1 improvements - Lady Warriors (ADA access, dugouts, covered bleachers)	Medium	$0	$150,000	$0	$150,000
12	Diamond Field #2 improvements - central (ADA access, covered dugouts, covered bleachers, new storage, LED fixtures, new parking lot)	Medium	$0	$620,000	$0	$620,000
13	Diamond Field #3 - replace w/ Miracle Field	Medium	$0	$370,000	$0	$370,000
14	Playground (fully accessible)	Medium	$0	$370,000	$0	$370,000
15	Fitness equipment (outdoor)	Long	$0	$0	$100,000	$100,000
16	Pickleball courts (if demand continues to grow)	Long	$0	$0	$250,000	$250,000
	Project Total		**$170,000**	**$2,770,000**	**$350,000**	**$3,290,000**
Etowah River Park						
1	Restroom building (new)	In Progress	In Progress	In Progress	In Progress	In Progress
2	Canoe/kayak ramp replacement	In Progress	In Progress	In Progress	In Progress	In Progress
3	Park master plan (combined w/ Heritage Park)	Short	$50,000	$0	$0	$50,000
4	ADA walkways - 6' wide	Short/Medium	$20,000	$20,000	$0	$40,000
5	Amphitheater relocation (away from entrance)	Medium	$0	$300,000	$0	$300,000
6	Splash pad - large (near existing restrooms)	Medium	$0	$1,000,000	$0	$1,000,000
7	Fitness equipment (outdoor)	Medium	$0	$100,000	$0	$100,000
8	Parking lot paving (north gravel lot)	Medium	$0	$170,000	$0	$170,000
9	Picnic shelter (near splash pad)	Medium	$0	$100,000	$0	$100,000
	Project Total		**$70,000**	**$1,690,000**	**$0**	**$1,760,000**
Heritage Park						
1	Park master plan (combined w/ Etowah River Park)	Short	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	Playground expansion (inclusive elements)	Short	$92,000	$0	$0	$92,000
3	Picnic shelter (near playground)	Short	$100,000	$0	$0	$100,000
4	Parking expansion (100 spaces - 50 paved, 50 overflow)	Medium	$0	$100,000	$0	$100,000
5	Trail lighting (portion of trail - loop closest to parking)	Long	$0	$0	$310,000	$310,000
6	Disc golf course (wooded area/ERP)	Long	$0	$0	$60,000	$60,000
7	Permanent outdoor games (corn hole, foosball, etc.)	Long	$0	$0	$10,000	$10,000
	Project Total		**$192,000**	**$100,000**	**$380,000**	**$672,000**

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Table 5.2: Capital Improvements by Park (Continued)

	Park Name	Term	0-2 Years	3-5 Years	6-10 Years	Total
Special Use Parks						
Cannon Park						
1	Signage and site amenities only	Short	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Project Total		**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**
Canton Paw Park						
1	Park master plan (consider w/ Tippens Gym)	Short	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	Nature play area	Medium	$0	$150,000	$0	$150,000
3	Open field space	Medium	$0	$60,000	$0	$60,000
4	Parking lot improvements (resurface, restripe)	Medium	$0	$10,000	$0	$10,000
5	Picnic shelter	Medium	$0	$100,000	$0	$100,000
6	Pollenator garden	Medium	$0	$40,000	$0	$40,000
7	Trail - paved - 8' wide w/ connection to Tippens Gym	Medium	$0	$160,000	$0	$160,000
8	Trail through wooded area to complete loop	Medium	$0	$40,000	$0	$40,000
9	Neighborhood determined/placemaking feature	Long	$0	$0	$120,000	$120,000
	Project Total		**$0**	**$560,000**	**$120,000**	**$680,000**
Hickory Log Creek Boat Ramp						
1	ADA walkways - 6' wide	Medium	$0	$40,000	$0	$40,000
2	Fishing pier	Medium	$0	$62,000	$0	$62,000
3	Parking lot improvements (pave a portion)	Medium	$0	$150,000	$0	$150,000
	Project Total		**$0**	**$252,000**	**$0**	**$252,000**
Lake Canton Open Space						
1	Park master plan for new community/nature park	Medium	$0	$40,000	$0	$40,000
2	ADA walkways - 6' wide	Long	$0	$0	$100,000	$100,000
3	Disc golf course (alternate location)	Long	$0	$0	$60,000	$60,000
4	Nature play area w/ zip line	Long	$0	$0	$150,000	$150,000
5	Trail - paved	Long	$0	$0	$290,000	$290,000
6	Trails - nature/MTB	Long	$0	$0	$650,000	$650,000
7	Parking lots	Long	$0	$0	$180,000	$180,000
8	Picnic shelters (2)	Long	$0	$0	$250,000	$250,000
9	Dog park	Long	$0	$0	$120,000	$120,000
10	Nature center w/ restrooms	Long	$0	$0	$620,000	$620,000
11	Pump track/bike park	Long	$0	$0	$250,000	$250,000
	Project Total		**$0**	**$40,000**	**$2,670,000**	**$2,710,000**
South Canton Park						
1	Implement planned construction		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tippens Gym & Park						
1	Park master plan (consider w/ Paw Park)	Short	$60,000	$0	$0	$60,000
2	Gym renovation	Short	$2,000,000	$0	$0	$2,000,000
3	Basement/classroom renovation	Short	$2,000,000	$0	$0	$2,000,000
4	Parking lot improvements	Short	$50,000	$0	$0	$50,000
5	Regraded/naturalized hillside	Short	$14,000	$0	$0	$14,000
6	Trail connection to Paw Park	Medium	$0	$62,000	$0	$62,000
7	ADA walkways - 6' wide w/ access to lower area	Medium	$0	$70,000	$0	$70,000
8	Stairs down hill	Medium	$0	$25,000	$0	$25,000
9	ADA walkways - church parking lot	Medium	$0	$24,000	$0	$24,000
10	Bleachers in hillside	Medium	$0	$62,000	$0	$62,000
11	Soccer mini pitch	Medium	$0	$150,000	$0	$150,000
12	Picnic shelter	Medium	$0	$100,000	$0	$100,000
13	Fitness court	Medium	$0	$120,000	$0	$120,000
14	Playground	Medium	$0	$250,000	$0	$250,000
15	Trail - paved perimeter - 8' wide - around future development	Medium	$0	$70,000	$0	$70,000
16	Trail connection to north neighborhoods	Long	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
17	Neighborhood determined/placemaking feature	Long	$0	$0	$123,000	$123,000
	Project Total		**$4,124,000**	**$933,000**	**$123,000**	**$5,180,000**
TOTAL PARKS			**$5,811,000**	**$7,780,000**	**$30,993,000**	**$44,584,000**

*Values include 10% contingency and 12% for design, engineering, bidding, construction administration, etc. (except non-construction items)

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6 ACTION PLAN

6.1 Introduction

The Action Plan table on the following pages (Table 6.1) provides a detailed list of recommendations for the *2024 Canton Parks and Recreation Master Plan*. These strategies represent specific actions for the Parks and Recreation Department and the City of Canton to complete to implement this plan.

6.2 Action Plan Strategies

These strategies are listed under the four goals and 13 objectives presented in Chapter 4 with the new vision, mission, and core values. The legend at the top of the table identifies the abbreviations used throughout the table. Checkmarks indicate the timeframe for the completion of each strategy within the time periods of 0-2 years, 3-5 years, or 6-10 years. Some strategies are indicated as "Ongoing," because they apply to all timeframes or represent more general actions that should always be considered. A total count of strategies by timeframe is located at the end of the table in the corresponding columns.

The other columns provide information regarding the implementation of each strategy. "Category" describes the type of action within the following four options: capital (capital improvements); policy (guidelines for the Parks and Recreation Department, possibly including legislation); planning (long-term parks outlook, which includes conducting studies); or operations. The column for "Agency" indicates who is expected to implement the strategy, usually the Canton Parks and Recreation Department or city officials. "Funding Source" indicates how the strategy should be funded, or the type of funds used (operating or capital funds). "Section Reference" indicates where in the Master Plan document to find the narrative for the recommendation.

The last column identifies how the action is related to the eight tenets for the Roadmap for Success. Some actions are related to more than one tenet. The tenets are abbreviated in the table as follows:

1. G = Creating Great Neighborhoods
2. D = Celebrating the Diversity of our Community
3. E = Advancing Reginal Economic Success
4. H = Enhancing Historic Downtown Canton
5. N = Sustaining Our Natural Environment
6. P = Connecting our Citizens to Parks and Recreation
7. I = Improving Infrastructure for Future Demands
8. L = Leading with Excellence

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ACTION PLAN - 2024 Canton Parks & Recreation Master Plan

Legend of Abbreviations/Organizations

Parks = Canton Parks & Recreation	OP = Parks and Recreation Operating Budget
City = City Council, Other City Departments	CIP = Capital Improvement Budget
Partners = Other Organizations (county/state, private agencies, schools, state/federal grants, etc.)	Revenue = Items that Generate Additional Revenue

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies		Timeframe (Years) 0-2	3-5	6-10	Category	Agency	Funding Source	Section Reference	Related Tenets*
Goal 1: Variety of spaces and facilities									
Objective 1.1 – More parks and nature access									
Strategy 1.1.1:	Continue to implement the plan for South Canton Park (in progress)	✓			Capital	City	CIP	5.4.2	PL
Strategy 1.1.2:	Consider the acquisition of the fields and tennis courts from the Cherokee County School District if they become available after the relocation of the high school	✓			Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.3.5	PL
Strategy 1.1.3:	Add playgrounds in strategic locations (see new park locations in section 5.4)	✓	✓		Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.3.4	PG
Strategy 1.1.4:	Upgrade Paw Park and Tippens Elementary property as neighborhood parks, improving services in an underserved area	✓			Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.4.3	PG
Strategy 1.1.5:	Redevelop the existing gym at the Tippens property to begin to address the longstanding community need for indoor recreation space	✓			Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.4.3	PGL
Strategy 1.1.6:	Use the concept plan (Figure 5.2) as a starting point for development of the Tippens property with a playground, a picnic shelter, a soccer pitch with bleachers built into the hillside, a parking lot, walking paths and sidewalks, and a connection to Paw Park	✓			Capital/ Planning	Parks	CIP	5.4.3	PGL
Strategy 1.1.7:	Use the concept plan (Figure 5.3) as a starting point for development of Paw Park with open field space, a picnic shelter, a nature play area, trails, and more	✓			Capital/ Planning	Parks	CIP	5.4.3	PG
Strategy 1.1.8:	Incorporate nature play elements as part of playground development, especially in more passive park areas	*Ongoing*			Planning	Parks	CIP	5.3.4	PN
Strategy 1.1.9:	Acquire new parkland to develop additional diamond fields and multipurpose rectangular fields meet the needs of the fast-growing population	*Ongoing*			Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.3.5, 5.7.2	PL
Strategy 1.1.10:	Use the neighborhood and community park standards as a guide for park improvements throughout the system to ensure equity and fair distribution	*Ongoing*			Policy/ Planning	Parks/City	CIP	5.4.2	LI
Strategy 1.1.11:	Seek opportunities to add neighborhood parks in underserved areas	*Ongoing*			Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.4.2	PG
Strategy 1.1.12:	Develop a master plan for a nature park at Lake Canton to provide access to nature and potential for a nature center, picnic shelters, a dog park, trails (including mountain biking), and other requested outdoor features		✓		Capital/ Planning	Parks/City	CIP	5.4.5, 5.7.2	PNL
Strategy 1.1.13:	Seek opportunities to develop new community and neighborhood parks in the areas identified in this plan (see Figure 5.1)		✓	✓	Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.4.2	PIL
Strategy 1.1.14:	Consider adding at least one artificial turf rectangular field with lights for extended use and fewer rainouts			✓	Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.3.5	PL
Strategy 1.1.15:	Seek a suitable location to add a skate park at an existing or future park			✓	Capital	Parks	CIP	5.4.4	PL
Strategy 1.1.16:	Consider additional dog parks in a future park in the northern part of the city, potentially at open space near Lake Canton			✓	Capital/ Planning	Parks	CIP	5.4.4	P
Strategy 1.1.17:	Consider acquiring and converting Cherokee High School into city community center if indoor needs are unmet following the redevelopment of the Tippens Gym			✓	Capital/ Planning	Parks/City	CIP	5.7.2	P
Objective 1.2 – Multiuse parks and increased variety of features									
Strategy 1.2.1:	Utilize existing parkland where feasible to meet unmet facility needs identified in this plan	*Ongoing*			Policy/ Planning	Parks/City	CIP	5.4.2	P
Strategy 1.2.2:	Add support features throughout the park system such seating, shade structures, receptacles, drinking fountains/bottle fillers, bike racks, and trees & landscaping	✓	✓		Capital	Parks	CIP	5.3.2	PL
Strategy 1.2.3:	Add pickleball lines to two of the tennis courts at Boling Park to provide access to this growing sport in a City of Canton park	✓			Capital	Parks	CIP	5.3.5	P
Strategy 1.2.4:	Prepare and implement a playground investment program that includes the expected useful life and a timeline for replacement for all playgrounds	✓			Capital/ Planning	Parks	CIP	5.3.4	PIL
Strategy 1.2.5:	Upgrade the multipurpose rectangular fields at Boling Park and return of them to the system to help address the need for fields	✓			Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.3.5	P

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Table 6.1: Action Plan (Continued)

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies		Timeframe (Years)			Category	Agency	Funding Source	Section Reference	Related Tenets*
		0-2	3-5	6-10					
Strategy 1.2.6:	Develop a large splash pad or splash park at Etowah River Park with unique elements to attract visitors from all over the city and beyond	✓			Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.4.4	PIL
Strategy 1.2.7:	Add outdoor fitness equipment and/or obstacle courses at select parks to expand opportunities for improved community health and attract additional user groups	✓	✓		Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.4.4	PL
Strategy 1.2.8:	Add and upgrade all types of courts as needed in response to community demands and population growth	*Ongoing*			Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.3.5	PI
Strategy 1.2.9:	Add picnic shelters throughout the system to increase overall access to provide shade and to facilitate opportunities for outdoor community gatherings	*Ongoing*			Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.3.2	P
Strategy 1.2.10:	Add or improve restrooms throughout the parks; include family restrooms at larger parks	*Ongoing*			Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.3.2	P
Strategy 1.2.11:	Include a neighborhood determined feature at each neighborhood park, ensuring development aligns with needs and encouraging a sense of local investment and opportunities for placemaking in parks	*Ongoing*			Capital/ Planning	Parks	CIP	5.4.4	PGDL
Strategy 1.2.12:	Upgrade field lighting to LED fixtures with wireless lighting controls		✓		Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.3.5	P
Strategy 1.2.13:	Improve Boling Park Field #1 and Field #2 with improved ADA access, new dugouts, and covered bleachers		✓		Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.3.5	PE
Strategy 1.2.14:	Add a new storage building, LED light fixtures, and additional parking at Boling Park Field #2		✓		Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.3.5	P
Strategy 1.2.15:	Add dedicated pickleball courts at Boling Park if demand continues to increase			✓	Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.3.5	PL
Objective 1.3 – Improved access to Etowah River and Lake Canton									
Strategy 1.3.1:	Add canoe/kayak (and fishing) access points at Harmon Park and Boling Park and a fishing pier at Hickory Log Creek Boat Ramp		✓		Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.4.5, 5.7.2	PN
Strategy 1.3.2:	Continue to seek partnerships to help develop additional access points to the Etowah River and Lake Canton for fishing and canoeing/kayaking	*Ongoing*			Capital	Parks/ Partners	Partners	5.4.5	PN
Strategy 1.3.3:	Construct boat ramps east and west of the city to encourage kayaks and canoes	*Ongoing*			Capital	Parks/ Partners	CIP/ Partners	5.7.2	PN
Strategy 1.3.4:	Develop environmentally sensitive ways to make the Etowah River more accessible and attractive	*Ongoing*			Policy	City	CIP/ Partners	5.7.2	PN
Strategy 1.3.5:	Connect the River to the city by linking the river to the parks, incorporating the historic fish traps and Indian heritage	*Ongoing*			Capital	City	CIP/ Partners	5.7.2	PDN
Strategy 1.3.6:	Preserve the River, Reservoir (Lake Canton), and Lake (Allatoona) as natural land features attract business through quality of life	*Ongoing*			Policy	Parks/City	CIP/ Partners	5.7.2	PN
Goal 2: Improved community access to wellness and health opportunities									
Objective 2.1 – Promote equitable access to parks and facilities									
Strategy 2.1.1:	Provide consistent amenities throughout the system	*Ongoing*			Capital	Parks	CIP	5.3.2	GP
Strategy 2.1.2:	Add and improve parking throughout the system, especially where currently insufficient (e.g., Heritage Park)	*Ongoing*			Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.3.2	GPI
Strategy 2.1.3:	Develop and implement an ADA Transition Plan so that people with disabilities can participate in facilities and programs; and bring the park system in compliance with Title II of the ADA which prohibits discrimination based on disability in programs, services, and activities in state and local government agencies	✓			Policy/ Planning	Parks/City	OP	5.3.3. 5.5.4	DPIL
Strategy 2.1.4:	Ensure accessible walkways to all facilities and seating areas	*Ongoing*			Capital	Parks	CIP	5.3.3	DGPI
Strategy 2.1.5:	Ensure some playgrounds are fully inclusive and barrier free		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP	5.3.4	DPL
Strategy 2.1.6:	Upgrade Boling Park Field #3 to a Miracle Field to help connect the entire community to exceptional experiences		✓		Capital	Parks/ Partners	CIP	5.3.5	DPL
Strategy 2.1.7:	Improve ADA accessibility to fields, seating areas, and dugouts	*Ongoing*			Capital	Parks	CIP	5.3.5	DPL
Strategy 2.1.8:	Provide accessible spectator areas with shade at all game fields	*Ongoing*			Capital	Parks	CIP	5.3.5	DPL

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Table 6.1: Action Plan (Continued)

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies		Timeframe (Years) 0-2	3-5	6-10	Category	Agency	Funding Source	Section Reference	Related Tenets*
Objective 2.2 – Additional park visitation and trail usage									
Strategy 2.2.1:	Develop interpretive and informational signage throughout the park system (following signage plans) to help visitors understand the natural features and history of parks	✓			Planning/ Capital	Parks	CIP/OP	5.3.2	NP
Strategy 2.2.2:	Add and upgrade signage throughout the park system	✓			Planning/ Capital	Parks	CIP/OP	5.3.2	NP
Strategy 2.2.3:	Consider themed playground equipment, such as climbing rocks, sensory features, etc., potentially providing for marketing and resident/visitor photo opportunities		✓		Planning/ Capital	Parks	CIP/OP	5.3.4	NP
Strategy 2.2.4:	Upgrade and utilize technology in parks for the benefit of both patrons and staff (see trends discussion in Chapter 2)	*Ongoing*			Planning/ Capital	Parks	CIP/OP	5.3.2	NP
Objective 2.3 – Increased program availability and participation									
Strategy 2.3.1:	Renovate the recently purchased Tippens gymnasium and classrooms to become a community center with programming	✓			Planning/ Capital	Parks	CIP	5.5.2	GDP
Strategy 2.3.2:	Develop a downtown amphitheater for more concerts, movies, art performances, and other programs			✓	Planning/ Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.4.4	GH
Strategy 2.3.3:	Consider a small stage/shelter at Brown Park for additional programming opportunities	✓			Capital	Parks	CIP	5.4.4	GH
Strategy 2.3.4:	Develop and implement programs that the public identified in the community needs assessment and the public open houses that can be started even prior to the community center opening, such as nature activities,	*Ongoing*			Operations	Parks/ Partners	OP	5.5.2	P
Goal 3: Improved community connectivity and engagement									
Objective 3.1 – Improve connectivity within Canton parks									
Strategy 3.1.1:	Evaluate opportunities to add new trails in existing parks	✓			Planning	Parks	OP	5.4.5	GPI
Strategy 3.1.2:	Continue to utilize parks as trailheads for the system whenever possible	*Ongoing*			Capital	Parks	CIP	5.4.5	PI
Strategy 3.1.3:	Improve wayfinding to and within parks so users can more easily find and enjoy parks	✓			Capital	Parks	CIP	5.3.2	PI
Objective 3.2 – Add/improve connections to Canton parks and other popular destinations									
Strategy 3.2.1:	Develop a comprehensive plan for bike and pedestrian access that incorporate previous planning efforts; prioritizes connections to parks, schools, commercial areas, and other destinations; prepares for expected residential growth; and include standards for design, signage, and maintenance (including staffing requirements)	✓			Planning	Parks	OP	5.4.5, 5.7.2	PI
Strategy 3.2.2:	Connect The Mill on Etowah to Harmon Park	✓			Capital	Parks	CIP	5.7.2	PI
Strategy 3.2.3:	Include trail connections between parks and adjacent neighborhoods wherever possible, especially when developing new parks	*Ongoing*			Planning/ Capital	Parks	CIP	5.4.5	PI
Strategy 3.2.4:	Consider signing on to the 10-Minute Walk Mission by the TPL and NRPA to show the city's commitment to connectivity and access to parks	✓			Policy	Parks/City	OP	5.4.5	GPIL
Strategy 3.2.5:	Include requirements for sidewalks and pedestrian connections to existing trails and walkways in all new development plans (esp. residential)	✓			Policy	Parks/City	CIP/OP	5.4.5	GDPI
Strategy 3.2.6:	Continue to utilize parks as trailheads for the system whenever possible	*Ongoing*			Capital	Parks	CIP	5.4.5	PI
Strategy 3.2.7:	Evaluate opportunities to add new trails in existing parks	✓			Planning	Parks	OP	5.4.5	GPI
Strategy 3.2.8:	Create multi-use pathways, sidewalks, and bike lanes to connect the city to communities and points of interest	*Ongoing*			Planning/ Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.7.2	GPI
Strategy 3.2.9:	Develop a bike/walk path along the river with historical information along the path		✓		Planning/ Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.7.2	GPI
Strategy 3.2.10:	Utilize the Etowah River Trail to connect to various areas of the city by building safe walking/cycling routes	*Ongoing*			Planning/ Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.7.2	GPI
Strategy 3.2.11:	Expand city's Trail System outward from Etowah River Trail to other areas within the city and link to other communities' trail system	*Ongoing*			Planning/ Capital	Parks/ Partners	CIP	5.7.2	EPI
Strategy 3.2.12:	Implement phases IV through VII of the *Etowah River Trail Master Plan*	✓			Capital	Parks	CIP	5.7.2	PI
Strategy 3.2.13:	Construct a pedestrian/bicycle bridge over the Etowah River and a connecting promenade along West Main Street to connect Downtown to the River		✓		Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.7.2	HPI

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Table 6.1: Action Plan (Continued)

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies		Timeframe (Years) 0-2	3-5	6-10	Category	Agency	Funding Source	Section Reference	Related Tenets*
Strategy 3.2.14:	Develop the Hickory Log Greek Reservoir (Lake Canton) Buffer Trail			✓	Planning/ Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.7.2	P
Objective 3.3 – Prepare and implement clear marketing strategies and communications									
Strategy 3.3.1:	Ensure consistent appearance and branding	*Ongoing*			Operations	Parks	OP	5.3.2	P
Strategy 3.3.2:	Create Facebook and Instagram pages for the Parks and Recreation Department that staff update daily or on a very regular basis to increase exposure to the number of people who are interested in keeping in closer contact with what is happening within the Department, as well as sharing opportunities for them to participate	✓			Operations	Parks	OP	5.5.3	P
Objective 3.4 – Build and maintain collaborative relationships with the community and partners to address community priorities									
Strategy 3.4.1:	Form a stronger partnership with the YMCA to offer joint programming to the community; review the lease agreement to determine the parameters regarding swim lessons	✓			Policy/ Operations	Parks/City	OP	5.5.6	I
Strategy 3.4.2:	Consider community-built playgrounds to instill pride and a sense of ownerships within the community	*Ongoing*			Policy	Parks	CIP	5.3.4	GDP
Strategy 3.4.3:	Prepare park master plans for existing parks and any future parks prior to development of facilities to ensure that added features are complementary, desired, and fully accessible	*Ongoing*			Policy	Parks	CIP/OP	5.4.2	GDP
Strategy 3.4.4:	Collaborate with developers to continue to include neighborhood parks in in new residential neighborhoods	*Ongoing*			Policy/ Operations	Parks/City	Partners	5.4.3	GPI
Strategy 3.4.5:	Partner with the new tourism "Explore Canton" website, to promote festivals and concerts, the farmers market, canoeing/kayaking and fishing on the Etowah River, and other outdoor activities within the park system	*Ongoing*			Policy/ Operations	Parks/ Partners	Partners	5.5.3	EP
Strategy 3.4.6:	Encourage developers and other partners to follow the neighborhood park standards when developing parks	*Ongoing*			Policy	Parks/City	Partners	5.4.3	GP
Strategy 3.4.7:	Seek partnerships with local disc golf groups (e.g., Cherokee County Disc Golf) to add a course at one of Canton's parks; prioritize land unsuitable for other uses	✓			Operations	Parks/ Partners	CIP/ Partners	5.4.4	P
Strategy 3.4.8:	Consider a partnership for community gardens in a future park	✓			Policy	Parks/ Partners	CIP/ Partners	5.4.4	NP
Strategy 3.4.9:	Establish a relationship with Cherokee County Trail Advisory Board and the City of Canton to work together on future projects	✓			Policy	Parks/ Partners	OP	5.7.2	EPI
Strategy 3.4.10:	Coordinate with Cherokee County on buildout of trails to ensure appropriate connectivity and explore funding partnerships	✓			Policy	Parks/ Partners	CIP/ Partners	5.7.2	PI
Strategy 3.4.11:	Invest in public art along Canton's growing trail system and in parks	*Ongoing*			Capital	Parks/ Partners	CIP/ Partners	5.7.2	GDP
Goal 4: Excellent operations and leadership									
Objective 4.1 – Optimize services with performance standards and staff growth opportunities									
Strategy 4.1.1:	Consider whether Parks and Recreation should be a separate department from Public Works, as it continues to grow	✓			Policy	Parks/City	OP	5.5.1	L
Strategy 4.1.2:	Consider using common job titles for new and existing positions to make sure they are accurate and appropriate and to help inform the public and the community of their responsibilities	*Ongoing*			Policy	Parks/City	OP	5.5.1	L
Strategy 4.1.3:	Consider updating the department name to Parks, Recreation, and Community Events to better reflect the function and mission of the department	✓			Policy	Parks/City	OP	5.5.1	L
Strategy 4.1.4:	Create a new full-time position dedicated to planning and delivering programs for people of all ages as per the outcomes of the community needs assessment (i.e., Recreation Supervisor or Manager)	✓			Operations	Parks/City	OP	5.5.1	LP
Strategy 4.1.5:	Create a part-time position (will need several people to cover all hours seven days a week) whose primary responsibility is to serve as a visitor service representative at the entrance to the community center, although this position may also assist with other duties	✓			Operations	Parks/City	OP	5.5.1	LP
Strategy 4.1.6:	Encourage staff to join state and national professional recreation and park associations for networking opportunities and access to shared policies, program ideas, and management solutions	*Ongoing*			Operations	Parks	OP	5.5.1	LP
Strategy 4.1.7:	Determine whether a new full-time maintenance position is needed to ensure building cleanliness and safety (coordinate with the Clean Canton Department (Building Services and Public Works)	✓			Operations	Parks/City	OP	5.5.1	LP
Strategy 4.1.8:	Identify and allocate funding for critical staff development opportunities (including conferences, training, memberships, etc.) with consideration to licensure and certification requirements	*Ongoing*			Operations	Parks	OP	5.5.1	LP
Objective 4.2 – Employ creative strategies to increase funding for facilities and programs									
Strategy 4.2.1:	Research grants to develop trail linkages, build universal playgrounds, adult fitness, splashpads, wellness programs, nature programs, watercraft, etc.	*Ongoing*			Operations	Parks	Revenue	5.6.3	PIL
Strategy 4.2.2:	Ensure grant requirements are consistent with the mission of Parks and Recreation, while considering associated costs to the city	*Ongoing*			Operations	Parks	OP	5.6.3	L

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Table 6.1: Action Plan (Continued)

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies		Timeframe (Years)			Category	Agency	Funding Source	Section Reference	Related Tenets*
		0-2	3-5	6-10					
Strategy 4.2.3:	Explore creating a Park Foundation to enable the Parks and Recreation Department to be eligible for grants and donations only available to 501c3 organizations	✓	✓		Operations	Parks	OP	5.6.2	P
Strategy 4.2.4:	Create a Scholarship Fund, potentially by requesting an optional additional $2.00 charge during registration for Canton and partner programs	✓	✓		Operations	Parks	Revenue	5.6.4	PD
Strategy 4.2.5:	Explore hosting weekend baseball tournaments in Harmon Park; consider adding Boling Park fields once they are renovated	✓			Operations	Parks	Revenue	5.5.6	E
Strategy 4.2.6:	Establish split revenue percentages for any program partnerships with funding channeled directly to Parks and Recreation	✓			Policy/ Operations	Parks	Revenue	5.6.7	P
Strategy 4.2.7:	Expand sponsorships in parks, including selling naming rights to park amenities, programs, or events	✓			Policy/ Operations	Parks/City	Revenue	5.6.7	P
Strategy 4.2.8:	Identify potential revenue sources at community events, including sponsorships and entry fees	✓			Operations	Parks	Revenue	5.6.7	P
Strategy 4.2.9:	Encourage the foundation to promote this Master Plan and its goals	*Ongoing*			Operations	Parks	OP	5.6.2	LP
Strategy 4.2.10:	Seek philanthropists in the community to support the agency's causes	*Ongoing*			Operations	Parks	OP	5.6.2	P
Strategy 4.2.11:	Allow potential donors to fund specific parks master plan that they would like to see accomplished	*Ongoing*			Policy	Parks	OP	5.6.2	P
Strategy 4.2.12:	Consider recruiting park ambassadors to provide directions, offer assistance, and remind visitors of park policies	*Ongoing*			Policy/ Operations	Parks/City	OP	5.6.2	P
Strategy 4.2.13:	Reevaluate rental fees as amenities are updated, replaced, or added to the inventory	*Ongoing*			Operations	Parks	OP, Revenue	5.6.5	L
Strategy 4.2.14:	Provide discounts for local recreation use compared to travel teams and for-profit tournaments	*Ongoing*			Policy	Parks	OP	5.6.7	P
Strategy 4.2.15:	Consider creating a fund to send rental fees back to Parks and Recreation to fund facility improvements and maintenance	*Ongoing*			Policy	Parks/City	OP	5.6.7	L
Strategy 4.2.16:	Consider additional options for revenue from tax dollars to fund capital improvements, if necessary	*Ongoing*			Policy	City	Revenue	5.6.6	LP
Strategy 4.2.17:	Add new facilities to the rental inventory as they are developed	*Ongoing*			Operations	Parks	Revenue	5.6.5	P
Objective 4.3 – Maintain clear standards and maintenance practices for quality, flexibility, and stewardship									
Strategy 4.3.1:	Review the current MOUs with all sport leagues who use park fields and provide a consistent template for all	✓			Policy/ Operations	Parks	OP	5.5.6	P
Strategy 4.3.2:	Develop a detailed capital maintenance and replacement plan for all features	✓			Planning/ Operations	Parks	CIP	5.5.5	PL
Strategy 4.3.3:	Create and continuously update a comprehensive preventive maintenance plan for all equipment with a plan for eventual replacement of items as they are purchased	✓			Planning/ Operations	Parks	CIP	5.5.5	PL
Strategy 4.3.4:	Determine the level of maintenance service to provide at each park or portion of a park and ensure funding is in place in accordance with the level of maintenance expected	*Ongoing*			Operations	Parks	OP	5.5.5	PL
Strategy 4.3.5:	Increase staffing levels to meet the expectations of residents and to protect the city's investment once improvements are made	*Ongoing*			Operations	Parks	OP	5.5.5	PL
Strategy 4.3.6:	Consider maintenance and staffing needs when adding parkland and features to the system	*Ongoing*			Operations	Parks	OP	5.5.5	PL
Strategy 4.3.7:	Stabilize streambanks with native plantings along Canton Creek		✓		Capital	Parks/City	Capital	5.7.2	N
Strategy 4.3.8:	Ensure the same standard for any professional/for-profit entity who applies for permits	*Ongoing*			Policy/ Operations	Parks	OP	5.5.6	PL
Totals by Timeframe	**Ongoing = 52**	**46**	**17**	**8**					
Total Number of Strategies = 117									

*See code for abbreviations in Chapter 6

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APPENDIX A - PARK PHOTO INVENTORY
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ETOWAH RIVER A-8
HERITAGE PARK A-10

SPECIAL USE PARKS

CANNON PARK A-12
CANTON PAW PARK A-13
HICKORY LOG CREEK BOAT RAMP A-14

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Legend for Conditions	
	Excellent - New/Well Maintained Condition, No Improvements Needed
	Good - Minor Wear, Minimal Improvements Needed
	Fair - Significant Wear/Damage, Needs Repair
	Poor - Needs Replacement

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BROWN PARK
251 E. Marietta Street
Park Size:
1.2 Acres
Park Classification:
Neighborhood

Park Amenities	Quantity	Condition
Developed Acreage	1.2	
Outdoor Facilities		
Playground	1	
Support		
Benches	5	
Picnic Tables	4	
Trash Receptacles	5	
Parking Spaces	10	













BURGE PARK
Crisler Street
Park Size:
0.5 Acres
Park Classification:
Neighborhood

Park Amenities	Quantity	Condition
Developed Acreage	0.5	
Game Courts		
Basketball Court	1	
Outdoor Facilities		
Playground	1	
Support		
Benches	2	
Trash Receptacles	2	
Pet Waste Stations	1	















HARMON PARK
Harmon Circle
Park Size:
7.5 Acres
Park Classification:
Neighborhood

Park Amenities	Quantity	Condition
Developed Acreage	5.0	
Athletic Fields		
Small Diamonds	2	
Batting Cages	6	
Game Courts		
Mini-Pitch Soccer Court	1	
Outdoor Facilities		
Playground	1	
Benches	7	
Trash Receptacles	10	
Trails & Passive Facilities		
Medium Shelter	1	
Support		
Benches	7	
Trash Receptacles	10	
Restroom/Concessions	1	
Parking Spaces	83	







MCCANLESS PARK
Muriel St
Park Size:
3.0 Acres
Park Classification:
Neighborhood

Park Amenities	Quantity	Condition
Developed Acreage	1.2	
Outdoor Facilities		
Playground	1	
Trails & Passive Facilities		
Medium Shelters	2	
Support		
Trash Receptacles	1	
Parking (unlined)		















BOLING PARK
1098 Marietta Highway
Park Size:
73.0 Acres
Park Classification:
Community

Park Amenities	Quantity	Condition
Developed Acreage	29.8	
Athletic Fields		
Small Diamond	3	
Large Rectangular	2	
Game Courts		
Basketball Courts	1	
Tennis Courts	4	
Benches	2	
Racket Ball Courts	4	
Trails & Passive Facilities		
Trail (miles)	1.2	
Fishing Access	1	
Large Shelter	1	
Tables	4	
Grills	1	
Small Shelter	1	
Support		
Benches	16	
Picnic Tables	19	
Trash Receptacles	36	
Drinking Fountains	1	
Restroom Building Tennis	1	
North Parking (shared with Cherokee HS)	203	
Central Parking (Unlined)		
South Parking (Under Construction)		



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ETOWAH RIVER
600 Brown Industrial Pkwy
Park Size:
143.7Acres
Park Classification:
Community

Park Amenities	Quantity	Condition
Developed Acreage	51.8	
Athletic Fields		
Large Rectangular	3	
Game Courts		
Basketball Court	1	
Outdoor Facilities		
Playground	1	
Chess Table	1	
Table Tennis	1	
Trails & Passive Facilities (Mi)		
Paved Trails (mi)	3.7	
Boat Launch	1	
Amphitheater	1	
Medium Shelter	1	
Tables	2	
Benches	2	
Gazebos/Small Shelters	2	
Support		
Restroom Building/Concessions	1	
Benches	31	
Benches (covered)	6	
Picnic Tables	8	
Trash Receptacles	40	
Drinking Fountains	2	
Parking Lot North (gravel)	53	
Parking Lot South	203	



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HERITAGE PARK
508 Riverstone Pkwy
Park Size:
31.4 Acres
Park Classification:
Community

Park Amenities	Quantity	Condition
Developed Acreage	48	
Athletic Fields		
Large Rectangular	2	
Outdoor Facilities		
Playground	1	
Fitness Court	1	
Benches	11	
Trails & Passive Facilities		
Paved Trails (Mi)		
Support		
Restroom Building		
Swinging Benches	5	
Trash Receptacles	14	
Benches	11	
Parking Spaces	45	















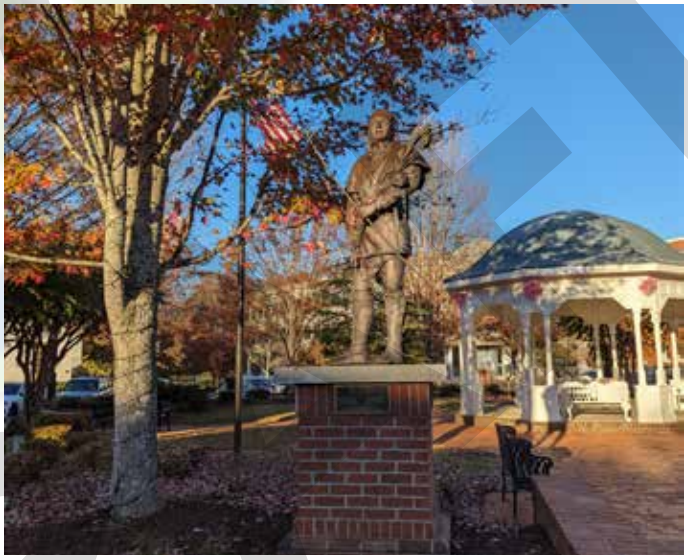




CANNON PARK
130 E. Main Street
Park Size:
0.4 Acres
Park Classification:
Plaza

Park Amenities	Quantity	Condition
Developed Acreage	0.4	
Trails & Passive Facilities		
Gazebo/Small Shelter	1	
Benches	8	
Support		
Benches	8	
Trash Receptacles	5	
Parking Spaces	44	















CANTON PAW PARK
309 Birch Street
Park Size:
1.7 Acres
Park Classification:
Single Use

Park Amenities	Quantity	Condition
Developed Acreage	1.0	
Outdoor Facilities		
Dog Park	1	
Support		
Benches	8	
Trash Receptacles	5	
Parking Spaces	10	







HICKORY LOG CREEK BOAT RAMP
Fate Conn Rd @ Bluffs Pkwy
Park Size:
20.3 Acres
Park Classification:
Single Use/Open Space

Park Amenities	Quantity	Condition
Developed Acreage	2.1	
Trails & Passive Facilities		
Boat Launch	1	
Support		
Trash Receptacles	3	
Parking Lot (gravel)		









FINAL DRAFT