

An aerial photograph of a park. In the foreground, there is a large, circular green field. To the left of the field, there is a playground with colorful equipment and a picnic shelter with a red roof. In the background, there are more trees and some buildings. The image is partially covered by a blue curved shape on the left side.

# CLAYTON

## PARKS & RECREATION

**2024 Parks and Recreation Master Plan**

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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**Thank you to all of the Departmental staff involved in this process:**

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- › Cultural Arts
- › Economic Development
- › Engineering
- › Parks and Recreation
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Gretchen Williams | Council member

Porter Casey | Council member

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Rebecca Bradford | Committee Member

Karen Beatty-Phinazee | Committee Member

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

- Connected Community
- Economic Vitality
- Environmental Stewardship
- Celebration of Arts and Culture
- Health and Wellness

## PUBLIC INPUT SUMMARY

**Most used parks:**  
Clayton Community Park  
East Clayton Community Park  
Clayton River Walk on the Neuse

**1097 touchpoints**  
320 SVS Surveys Completed  
300 Open Link +  
Over 1097 touchpoints

**87%**  
responded positively  
on park quality

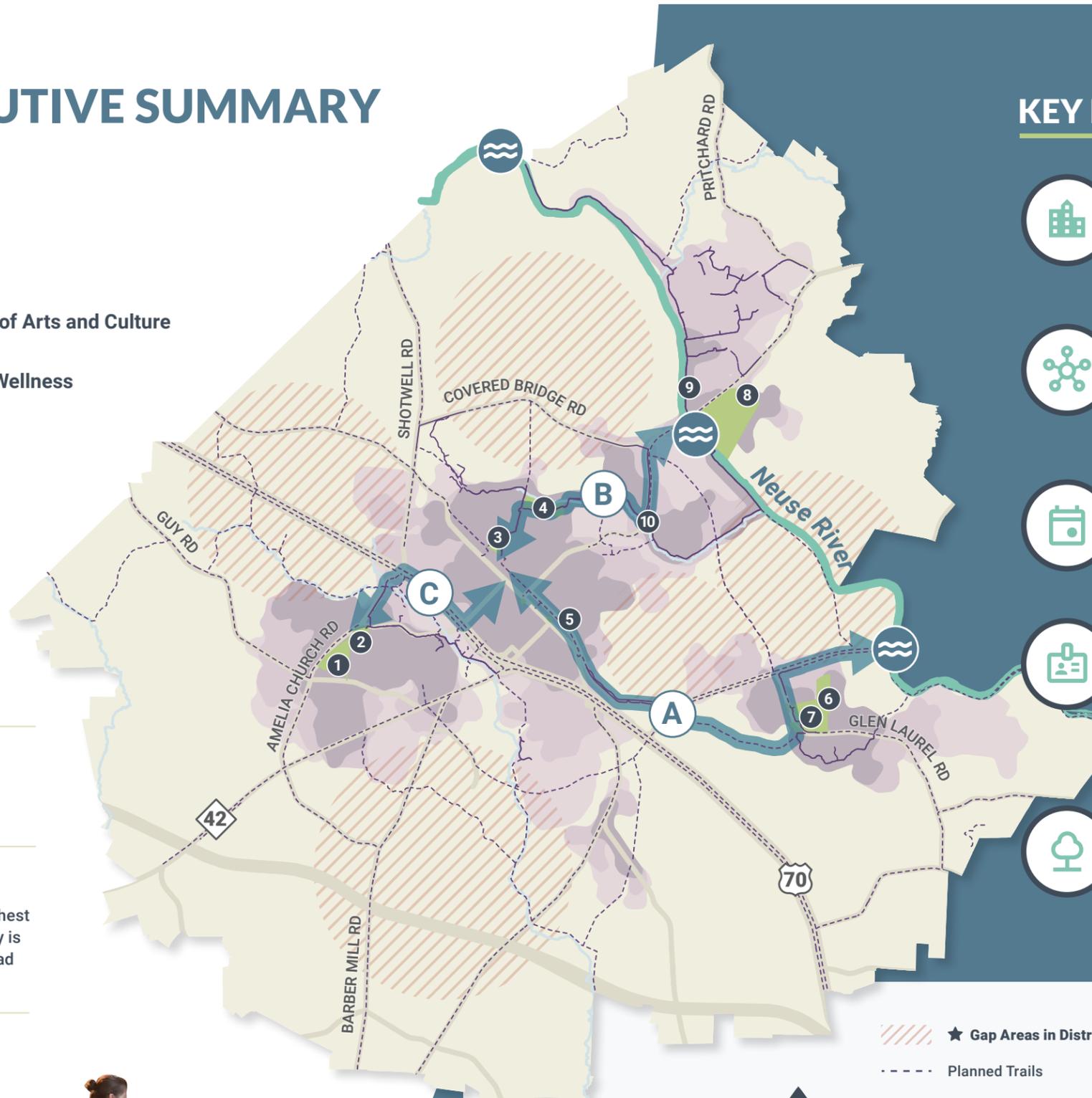
**72%**  
of users reached  
through social media

**97%**  
support the values  
that parks add

**81%**  
drive to parks but highest  
priority by community is  
greenway and trailhead  
access to parks

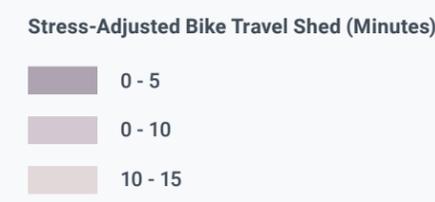
**50.8%**  
of responses were female

**19%**  
of all respondents  
were 65+



## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- FACILITIES**  
Indoor recreation, trails, access to water, adventure, passive recreation, intergenerational facilities
- CONNECTIVITY**  
Blueway, greenways that link parks to each other and downtown, accessibility to park resources
- PROGRAMS**  
More special events, health and wellness, and intergenerational activities
- STAFF**  
Staff needed to meet current Level of Service (LOS) for programming, need to set LOS goals to meet program and operations demands (Clayton is currently below LOS for operational demand)
- LAND ACQUISITION & PARK DEVELOPMENT**  
Need to acquire land to meet current demand for facilities, need additional acreage to meet growth needs, link parks and fill gap areas



- ★ Gap Areas in Distribution of Services**
- Planned Trails
- Existing Trails
- Connection from East Clayton Park and Donald Sinclair to Downtown
- Connection from Municipal to Downtown
- Connection from Community Center and Schools across 70, to Downtown
- Neuse River
- Proposed Neuse River Access

- 1** Clayton Community Park
- 2** Clayton Community Center
- 3** Municipal Park
- 4** Legend Park Trail Head
- 5** Donald "Clyde" Sinclair Park
- 6** East Clayton Community Park
- 7** East Clayton Dog Park
- 8** Future Loop Road Park
- 9** Clayton River Walk On The Neuse
- 10** Sam's Branch Greenway



## RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTION: A CLOSER LOOK

With over 1097 touchpoints of in-person/online engagement and surveys, along with inventory and analysis findings, Clayton was able to identify immediate, near term, and long term goals in order to best meet the parks and recreation needs of its community.



### FACILITIES

- ◆ Add new facilities following benchmark guidelines to meet current and future demand
- ◆ Demand for additional indoor recreation space
- ◆ Increased access to water: swimming pools, splashpad, and paddling/kayaking/fishing
- ◆ Provide adventure recreation & intergenerational features
- ◆ Nature based play
- ◆ Offer unique recreation tourism opportunities
- ◆ Apply universal design principals so that park features are accessible
- ◆ Incorporate arts that celebrate Clayton
- ◆ Continue environmental best practices for park planning & development
- ◆ Incorporate operational needs in townwide & park design processes
- ◆ Start positive messaging about current environmental practices



### CONNECTIVITY

- ◆ Enhance and celebrate Blueway system
  - Provide access to and support services for this system
- ◆ Continue planning and design efforts to:
  - Create a system-wide greenway master plan
  - Link municipal and Donald "Clyde" Sinclair Park to Downtown,
  - Link East Clayton Community Park to the river and Downtown,
  - Link community park/community center/school across 70 to Downtown
- ◆ Provide access to park features through universal design
- ◆ Link parks and areas with identified "gap" in service
- ◆ Create internal park loops and convey routes in time and distance
- ◆ Create park trail heads at parks with connectivity: restrooms, art, trail ID and info, access to drinking water, signage, and bike repair



### PROGRAMS

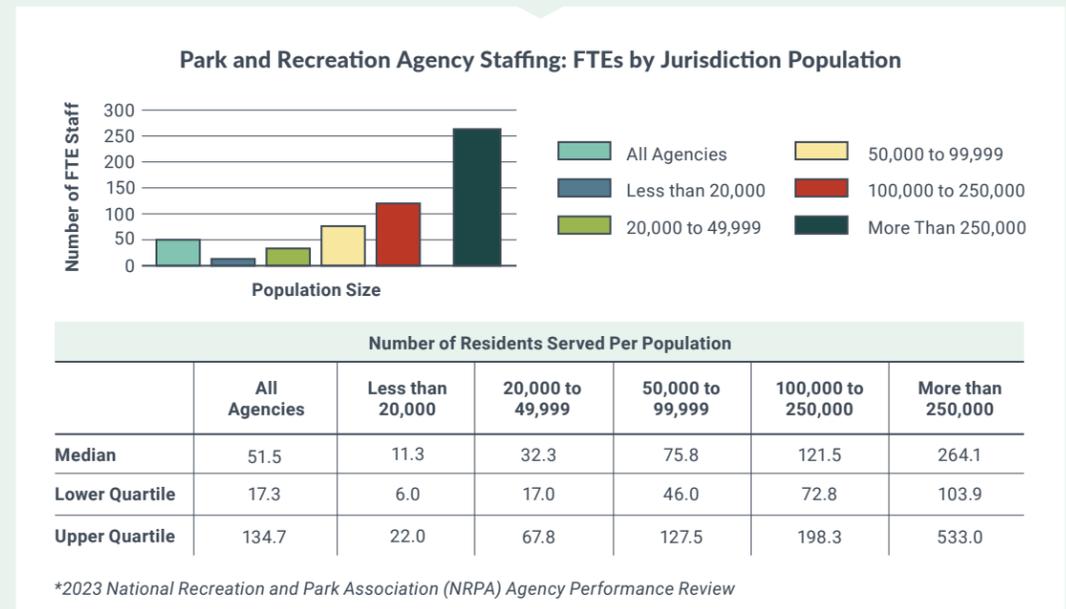
- ◆ Expand special events programs that focus on family (concerts and movies)
- ◆ Programs in demand:
  - Fitness and wellness programs
  - Water sports and programs
  - Adult programs
  - Senior programs and travel trips
  - Trails, cycling, and mountain biking programs
  - Arts (performance, music, and fine arts)
  - Life skills programs (teen specific)
  - Youth camps (full day)



### STAFFING

- ◆ Set staffing goals to meet current and future program and operational demands. Both are currently operating in the lower benchmark quartile, and demand is in the upper quartile
- ◆ Determine program opportunities with current and future resources
- ◆ Look for program partners to provide specialty recreation opportunities
- ◆ Continue departmental & interdepartmental resource communication regarding shared resources

Clayton has a population of 29,445 and currently provides 18 Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) divided among administration, programming, and operations. The figures below show that Clayton's department numbers fall below the national median comparison\* for communities of similar size.



### LAND ACQUISITION

- ◆ Acquire land to meet current demand (100 acres) and plan for growth and future recreational needs (300 acres)
- ◆ As acreage is acquired, look in areas identified as gaps
- ◆ Consider greenway connectivity as part of the acquisition goals
- ◆ Consider distribution of resources for future elements: dog parks, more playgrounds, open space
- ◆ Consider balance of usable open space and developed recreation space to meet recreation & environmental goals

## WHAT THE PUBLIC WANTS

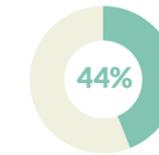
The following percentages of responses were rated as high priority values for investment for residents:



Creating connections and developing a sense of community



Ensuring affordability to users



Promoting health and wellness programming

The resident survey revealed the following needs and amenities were the most requested:



Adventure, camping, access to river



More staff to support park programs



Indoor space



Connectivity between parks and downtown



Intergenerational programs and special events



More amenities (splash pad, new playground, dog park)

Top 3 Outdoor Experiences (for tourism and residents)



Aquatics facilities



Greenways and trails



Water sports access



# INTRODUCTION

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan is to understand community recreational needs in order to ensure the Town of Clayton is meeting current demand and planning for the future. This long-term plan describes how the Town will address the identified recreational needs of the citizens within its jurisdiction over the immediate (0-2 years), near term (3-5 years), and long term (6-10 years). Best practices recommend this plan be updated every ten years; the previous plan was completed in 2013, with an interim report completed in 2019 in order to understand the status of the 2013 findings.

## VISION

In the Town of Clayton Strategic Plan several key elements were identified as priorities. The strategic plan vision is “Clayton is a beautiful Town with a unique, alive downtown, a growing economy, and a reputation as an arts community.” Clayton focuses its services around the goal of keeping **“Clayton- the Premier Community for Active Families.”**

To build upon the Strategic Plan, and follow themes presented by the National Recreation and Park Association, several focus areas were identified in this planning process as core values for the Town and project moving forward. Those values are:

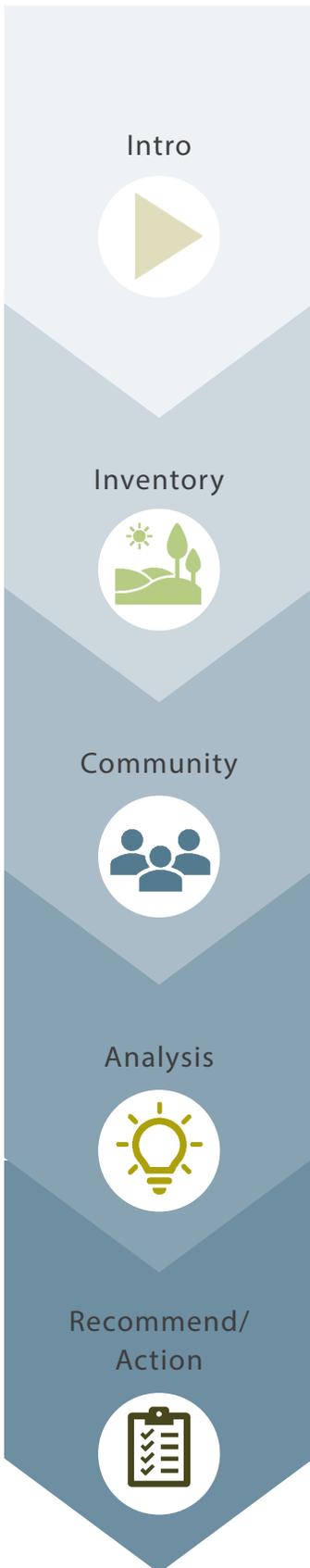
<b>A Connected Community</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inclusive</li><li>• Small Town Character</li></ul>
<b>Economic Vitality</b>
<b>Environmental Stewardship</b>
<b>Celebration of Arts and Culture</b>
<b>Health and Wellness</b>

## **Parks and Recreation Department Mission Statement:**

*“To inspire active and healthy living by providing diverse opportunities through parks, facilities, programs, and people.”*



# PROCESS



## Process

The Town of Clayton has continued to utilize best practices in the industry to best understand community recreational needs. This process has continued to evolve since the 2013 Parks and Recreation Plan. In order to align with local, state, and national parks and recreation standards the following process has been utilized for this update:

The Inventory is comprised of several different steps in order to inform the team of existing resources and offerings.

- › Understanding the population and the make up of the Clayton community
- › Review of Past and Related Plans
- › Current Departmental Staffing
- › Current Programs and Program offerings
- › Facilities Inventory

The Town of Clayton committed to a robust engagement process throughout the duration of this plan in order to ensure it is complete and representative of the Clayton community. The Town involved the community online, at community wide events, through in person planning session with elected officials, stakeholders, and staff, and through statistically valid and open link surveys. This engagement resulted in representative input to guide the plan.

The purpose of the analysis is to help prioritize solutions to address gaps in services and help plan for future community recreational needs. These efforts compare the Town of Clayton Inventory and Needs Assessment to National Best Practices benchmarking in the National Recreation and Park Association (**NRPA**) 2023 Agency Performance Review. The Town also completed two additional analysis evaluations:

- › The Recreation Economic Analysis
- › The Green Infrastructure and Resiliency Benefits Analysis

Recommendations and action are driven by demand and need. The higher priority items are elements where there is a gap in demand compared to the level of service being provided, and where a need has been identified repeatedly over time. Recommendations and action are broken down into immediate (0-2 years), near term (3-5 years), and long term (6-10 years) and include:

- › Facilities
- › Land Acquisition
- › Connectivity
- › Programs
- › Staffing



# INVENTORY

# THE COMMUNITY

## ABOUT

Clayton is located on the western edge of Johnston County, east of I-40 and northwest of I-95. Clayton was incorporated in 1869 and has a rich history, starting with an agricultural base and transitioning over the years. Clayton has seen rapid growth and development, and has a current town population of approximately **29,445**, in part due to location. The community is close to several major cities: Raleigh, Chapel Hill, and Durham. Several research farms and laboratories have been established in the area because of Clayton's proximity to the above cities, and to North Carolina State University, the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, and Research Triangle Park.

However, even with the growth Clayton has seen, downtown Clayton and the greater Clayton community still maintains that quaint small-town feel. The Town of Clayton and downtown businesses have successfully partnered to preserve the small-town charm with more than \$20 million invested in revitalization projects in the last decade,

## THE PEOPLE

The approximately **29,445** people that make up the population of Clayton are a median age of 33.9 and fairly evenly distributed between males and females.

## AGE

The Median Age of 33.9 is comprised of the following break down in age range according to the US 2023 Census data:

Age and Sex	
Persons under 5 years	6.4%
Persons under 18 years	28.1%
Persons 65 years & over	11.2%
Female Persons	50.6%

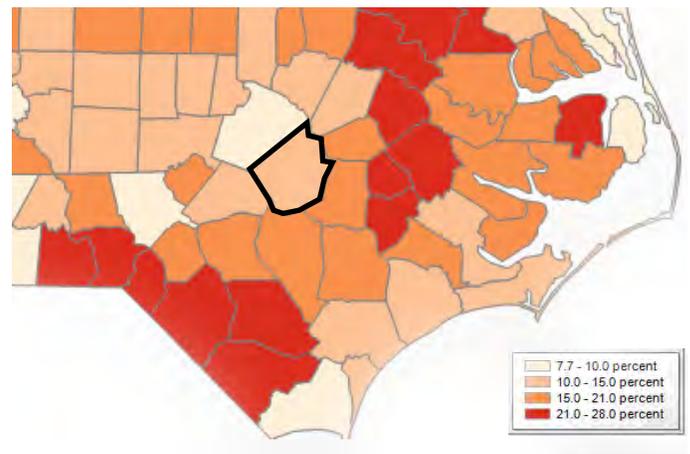
## POVERTY



■ Male ■ Female

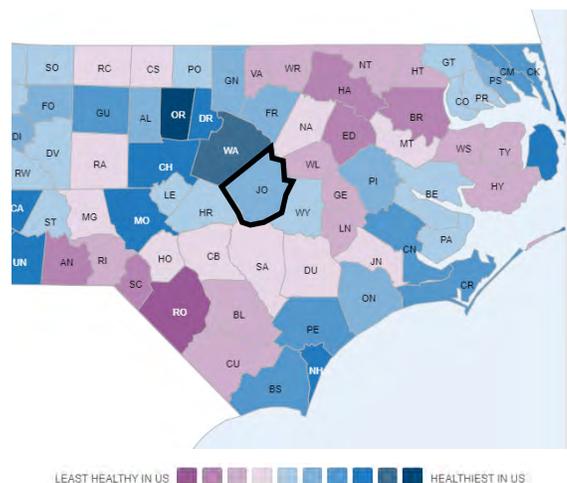
In a USDA document from 2021 "Percent of total population in Poverty in North Carolina," Johnston County ranked as having 11.8 percent of persons living below poverty level. This data is extracted from US Census Bureau data and small area income poverty estimates that are updated annually.

The Clayton median household income is \$59,338 according to the US Census Bureau.



## HEALTH

According to The County Healthy Ranking Report, Health Outcomes tell us how long people live on average within a community, and how much physical and mental health people experience in a community while they are alive. Johnston County is faring as a better than the average county in North Carolina for Health Outcomes, and better than the average county in the nation.



LEAST HEALTHY IN US [color scale] HEALTHIEST IN US

# THE COMMUNITY

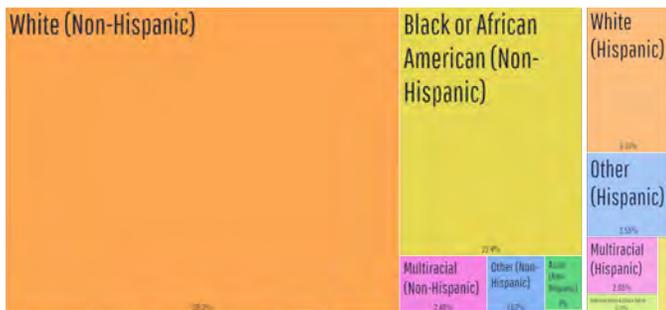
## ETHNIC BREAKDOWN

According to Data USA which bases its information off of the US Census, the three largest ethnic groups in Clayton, NC are:

1. White (Non-Hispanic) 15.1k ± 1.23k
2. Black or African American (Non-Hispanic) 5.7k ± 1.02k
3. White (Hispanic) 1.61k ± 649

According to Data USA, in 2021, there were 2.65 times more White (Non-Hispanic) residents (15.1k people) in Clayton, NC than any other race or ethnicity. There were 5.7k Black or African American (Non-Hispanic) and 1.61k White (Hispanic) residents, the second and third most common ethnic groups.

13.2% of the people in Clayton, NC are Hispanic (3.36k people).



Clayton residents at the Clayton Harvest Festival - photo from the Town of Clayton

## PAST AND RELATED PLANNING EFFORTS

Key past and related planning efforts were identified by staff and the project team. This review was conducted to understand common findings and recommendations within each of these plans and to ensure common themes and findings are aligned with these efforts. An action item review of the 2013 Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan was conducted to understand outstanding action items from that plan.

Plan Name	Year
2006 Comprehensive Bicycle Plan	2006
Johnston County Comprehensive Transportation Plan	2011
Parks & Recreation Master Plan	2013
Clayton Recreation Progress Report	2019
Clayton Comprehensive Growth Plan 2045	2021
Clayton Pedestrian Plan	2022

## THE FOLLOWING ARE COMMON PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED IN THE PAST AND RELATED PLANS:

- › Trails, greenways, and connectivity
- › On-going communication & marketing improvements
- › Natural resource protection
- › Celebration of arts and culture
- › Downtown connectivity improvements
- › Land acquisition to meet future need
- › Desire to be a regional destination for recreation

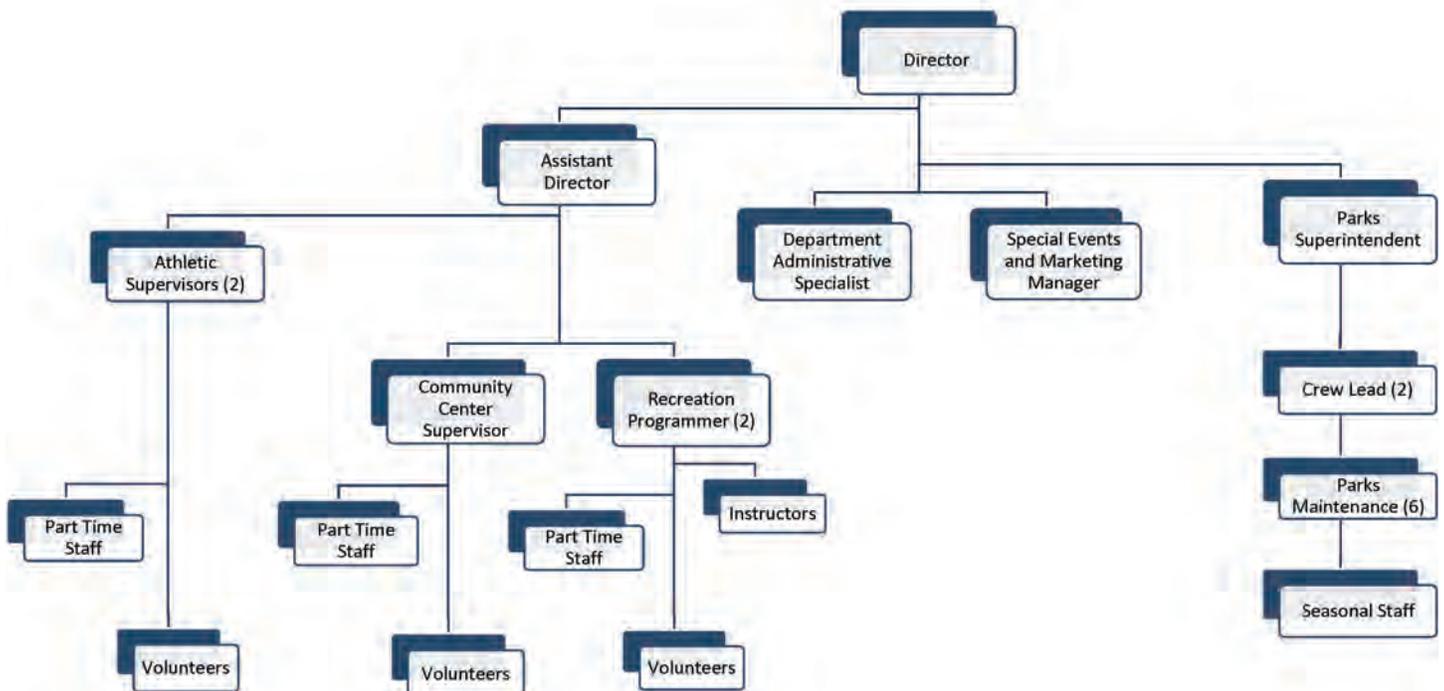
# STAFFING

The Town of Clayton Parks and Recreation is comprised of Full-time (FTE's) staff, Part-time staff, and seasonal staff. Parks and recreation staff fall into three general departmental categories, programming, park operations, and support.



Clayton staff talks to residents about the 2024 Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the Department offerings at the Clayton Harvest Festival

# ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



# PROGRAMS

## ABOUT

The Town of Clayton Parks and Recreation Department offers a wide variety of programs for residents and visitors. Many of the offerings are provided at the Clayton Community Center which provides free membership to all Town of Clayton residents. In addition to this resource, programming is provided at locations throughout Town. Program offerings are listed online, through registration, and within the Program Guide in the following general categories:

Athletics/Sports	
	Preschool
	Youth and Teen
	Adult
Fitness	
	Teen
	Adult
	Senior
Adaptive	
	all ages
Arts	
	Youth
	Teen Adults
	Seniors
Skills and Social	
	Youth
	Teen
	Adults
	Seniors

## PROGRAMS

The Town of Clayton programs span all ages and create opportunity for participants to become involved in arts, fitness, athletics, senior activities, camps, youth and teen activities, special and seasonal programming, life skills classes, and more. This variety of programming takes place predominantly at the Community Center with camps, athletics, senior trips, and some fitness taking place in other locations within the park system.

Collectively, the Town of Clayton Parks and Recreation Department programs served approximately 5400 participants in 2023. This number does not include those served through special events such as movie nights and concerts at Municipal Park. Programs continue to be in high demand with 2023 seeing over 680 people on the waitlist for programs offered. This illustrates the high demand for programming being offered within the Town. Of those programs seeing high waitlist numbers, over 80% of waitlisted programs are offered within the Community Center including programs such as arts, fitness, dance, youth programs, camps, and athletics. Other programs also had wait lists in 2023, including athletics, senior trips, tennis, and pickleball. The demand for programs can be attributed to several factors: increased population, especially younger families, not having enough specialty instructors to meet demand, and not having the space to expand program offerings.



*Youth athletics is one of the many program offerings Clayton provides the community.*

# FACILITIES

## ABOUT

The purpose of the facilities inventory assessment is to determine how well the Town of Clayton Parks and Recreation Department is meeting the needs of Town residents and visitors with its parks, greenways, open space, and facilities. These findings contribute to determining the overall level of service findings for the Town, and help establish the vision for the future parks and recreation system.

According to the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), the basic definition of Level of Service (LOS) is expressed as an allocation mechanism for the delivery of park and recreation facilities. By understanding the current level of service for parks and recreation facilities within the Town, a community can better understand how and if residents have equal opportunity to basic parks and recreation services. To do this, the team evaluated the facilities that exist utilizing the community values identified in the planning process. These values are unique to Clayton and provide the lens for which each park was assessed. This process helps determine if the parks and the amenities within them are meeting the goals and vision.

Each park was evaluated using the community values to understand if it is falling below the goals for the Town (N= needs improvement - 50% or less of the criteria were observed), meeting the goals (S=Satisfactory - Approximately 50% of the criteria were observed), or performing above expectations (C=Commendable- 75% or more of the criteria were observed). All of the criteria below helped determine how a park is performing to meet the needs and expectations of the Clayton community.

## A CONNECTED COMMUNITY

Public, staff, and stakeholder involvement all highlighted the desire to maintain the small-town charm of the Town and provide opportunities for connectivity, community interaction, and inclusion. This part of the assessment evaluated connectivity within the park, to and from the park, and what resources are available that allow users to use alternative transportation. The greenways evaluation section of this report will go into greater detail regarding the overall townwide greenway system.

## PHYSICAL CONNECTIVITY:

- › Is there nearby transit?
- › Is there a community greenway connection to the park and are there contiguous sidewalks to connect to park entrances?
- › Are there proposed greenway connections?
- › Is the park internally connected?
- › Can you get from amenity to amenity within large and small parks?
- › Is the surface and width accessible?
- › Do you know where you are in the park and/or Clayton?
- › Do you know how long it might take you to walk a trail?

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS:

- › Does the park promote social interaction?
- › Does the park contain opportunities for passive and/or active recreation?
- › Is there a balance of sun and shade?
- › What is the noise level? Are there opportunities for both quiet and engaged spaces?
- › Is there an opportunity for seating?
- › Does the park allow users to connect with nature and the features within the park?
- › Can the user quantify their experience in time or distance?
- › Are there intergenerational activities?

## INCLUSION:

- › Is there wifi in the park?
- › Is there accessible seating?
- › Is there power and/or charging stations?
- › Are the amenities open to the general public?
- › Are reservations systems and information solely online?
- › Is there a fee based facility?
- › Is information communicated in the park as well as online?
- › Is the park in a socially vulnerable area?
- › What is the overall park quality?
- › Do the amenities look well maintained?
- › Does the park feel welcoming for all ages and abilities?
- › Do the amenities support use by multiple age groups?

# FACILITIES

## ECONOMIC VITALITY

Throughout the engagement process participants highlighted the importance of economic development within Clayton and interest in increasing access to recreation tourism. There is a strong desire to find parks and recreation offerings that are unique to Clayton and provide something that will encourage visitors to the area. The town also wants to ensure it is meeting the recreation demand of its residents.

- › Are there features unique to the area?
- › Does the park offer something you cannot get somewhere else?
- › Are the features new or old?
- › Is there an opportunity for a unique special event or vendor?
- › Is there a partnership opportunity?



*Harmony Playground was made possible through community partners, donations, and cooperation to promote local business and increase access to play!*

## ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Sustainability is a goal for Clayton and was identified during the townwide strategic planning process as a priority. During interdepartmental input sessions several ways to ensure the town is meeting environmental best practices were identified. Each of these factors contribute to the overall users' ability to experience nature and the overall sustainability of the park. The following factors were identified:

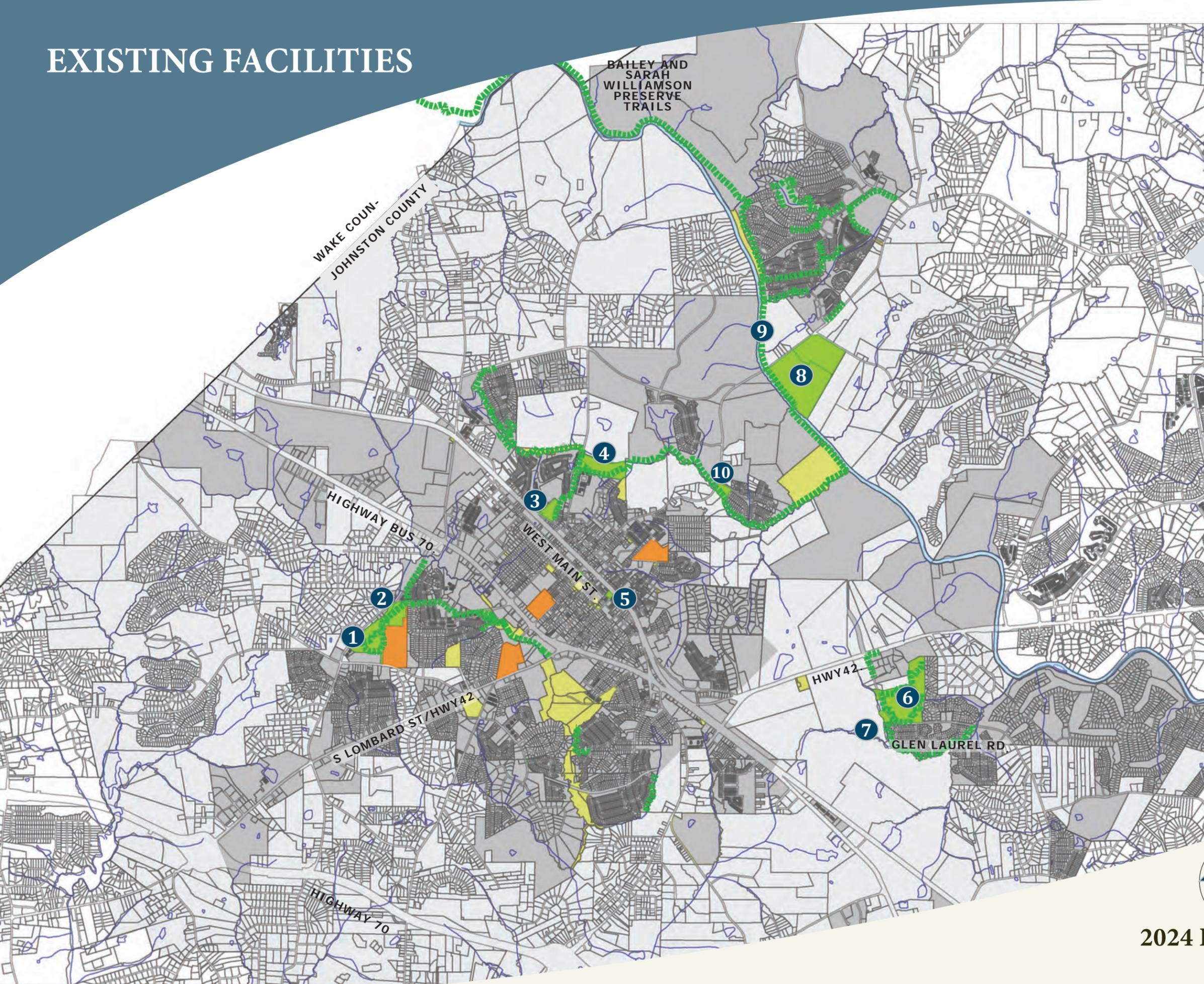
- › Are park features in a floodprone area?
- › Are features designed to endure natural impact?
- › Is there green infrastructure present? (pavement, lighting, solar, stormwater, etc.)
- › Is there a feature that requires consistent maintenance?
- › Are there opportunities to reduce land management?
- › Have maintenance practices been evaluated for impact?
- › Are there any furnishings or site features sourced from sustainable materials, recycling and composting options?
- › Is there a focus on use of native, drought tolerant vegetation?

## ARTS AND CULTURE

The Town of Clayton wants to ensure its park users have the opportunity to experience new and engaging opportunities in their parks and civic spaces. This can be done through unique programming, unusual material use, unique facility development, or unique site plan layout. Each of these factors contribute to the overall users' ability to experience something that is unique to Clayton and help maintain the small-town character. The following factors were evaluated:

- › Are there park features present that are only provided in this park?
- › Are features something that celebrate Clayton?
- › Is there an experience that a user can only get in Clayton and not nearby?
- › Does the feature highlight what makes Clayton unique?

# EXISTING FACILITIES



## LEGEND

- EXISTING CLAYTON PARKS
- TOWN OWNED LAND
- SCHOOLS
- CLAYTON TOWN LIMITS
- CLAYTON ETJ
- EXISTING GREENWAYS AND TRAILS
- NEUSE RIVER BLUEWAY

## EXISTING PARKS

- 1 CLAYTON COMMUNITY PARK
- 2 CLAYTON COMMUNITY CENTER
- 3 MUNICIPAL PARK
- 4 LEGEND PARK TRAIL HEAD
- 5 DONALD "CLYDE" SINCLAIR PARK
- 6 EAST CLAYTON COMMUNITY PARK
- 7 EAST CLAYTON DOG PARK
- 8 FUTURE LOOP ROAD PARK
- 9 CLAYTON RIVER WALK ON THE NEUSE
- 10 SAM'S BRANCH GREENWAY

SCALE: 1" = 3600'  | 7200'  
0 3600'



**CLAYTON**  
PARKS & RECREATION

## 2024 PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

# FACILITY OVERVIEW

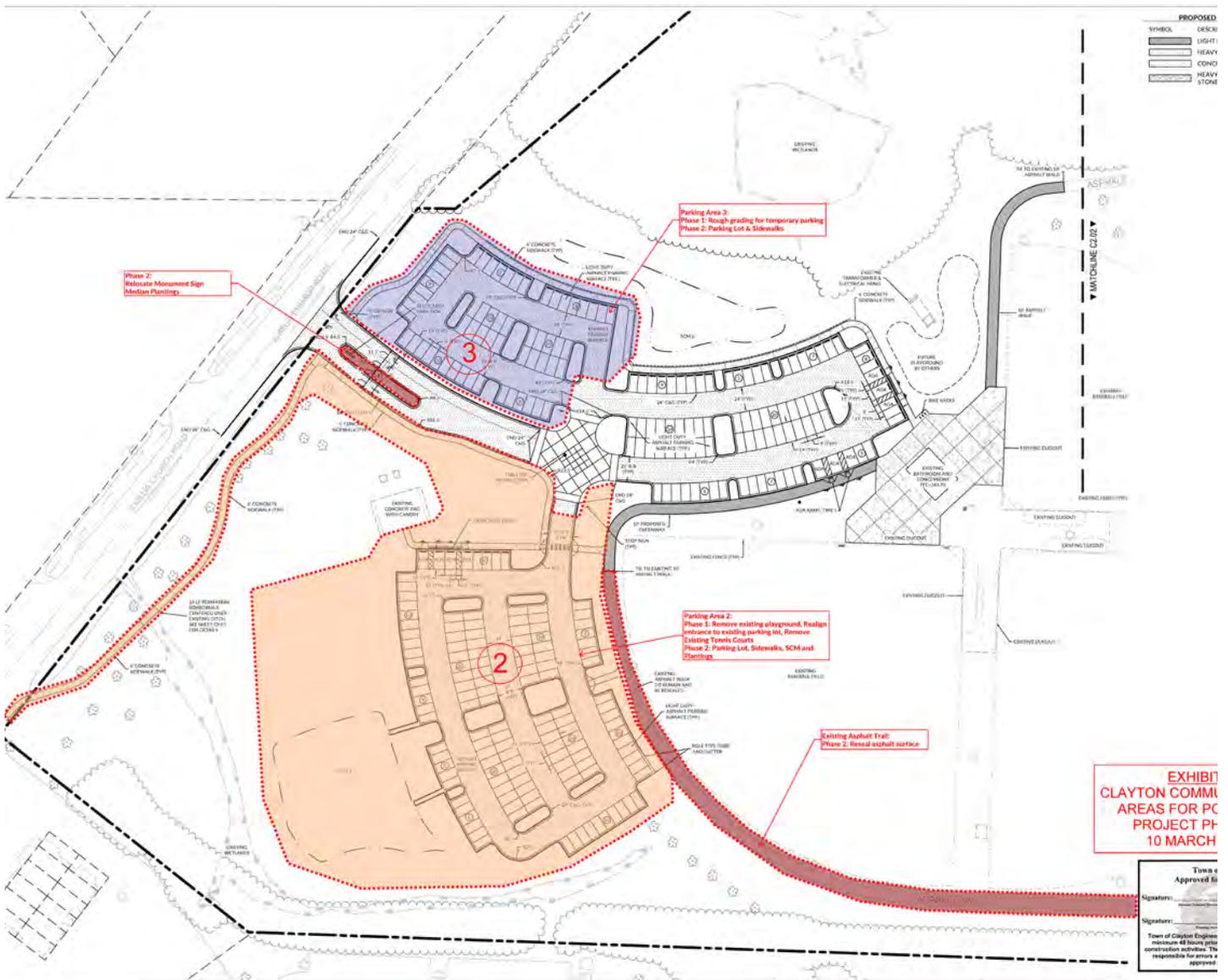
	Facility Name & Address	Acreage	Hours of Operation	Indoor Bldg, s.f.	Baseball / Softball Fields	Batting Cages	Bocce	Shuffleboard	Multi-purpose Field	Open Play Area	Outdoor Basketball Courts	Tennis Courts	Pickleball Courts	Sand Volleyball Courts	Disc Golf	Natural Trails	Paved Trails	Playgrounds	Splash Pad	Picnic Shelters	Multi-purpose Indoor Bldg.	Gymnasiums	Outdoor Performance Area	Restrooms	Dog Park
1	Clayton Community Center 715 Amelia Church Rd	17.68	Hours: M-F 7am-9pm Sat. 8am-4pm Sun. 1-8pm	32,000 sf			6	6				4	8					1			✓	1	✓	Y	
2	Clayton Community Park 1075 Amelia Church Road	32	Dawn to Dusk		3					1						0.5	0.5	1		1				Y	
3	Municipal Park 325 McCullers St	8.12	Park: Dawn to Dusk  Splash pad hours:  Summer: 9:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.							✓	2						0.25	1	1	3					Y
4	Legend Park Trail Head 553 City Rd	25.1	n/a																						
5	Donald "Clyde" Sinclair Park 400 E. Front Street	1.45	Dawn to Dusk								1							1		1				Y	
6	East Clayton Community Park 1774 Glen Laurel Road	65.46	Dawn to Dusk		1	1			3	✓					18		1	1		4				Y	
7	East Clayton Dog Park 2027 Glen Laurel Road	3	Dawn to Dusk																					1	
8	Future Loop Road Park	120.13	Dawn to Dusk																						
9	Clayton River Walk on the Neuse 2886 Covered Bridge Road		Dawn to Dusk														5.5								
10	Sam's Branch Greenway 1358 N O'Neil Street		Dawn to Dusk														2.5								
	Summertyn Greenway																1								
	Bailey and Sarah Williamson Preserve (Partnership)															1									
	<b>Existing Acreage</b>	<b>146.81</b>	<b>Totals:</b>	<b>32,000</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Future Acreage</b> (Loop Road)	<b>120.13</b>																							
	<b>Total</b>	<b>266.94</b>																							



Harmony Playground inclusive play space at East Clayton Park

# CLAYTON COMMUNITY PARK

1075 AMELIA CHURCH ROAD		HOURS: DAWN TO DUSK	32 ACRES
Baseball	3 (L)	Paved Trail	.5
Benches/Picnic Tables	Y	Unpaved Wetland Trail	.5
Picnic Shelter	1		
Playground (being updated)	1		



Renovation of Community Park is underway

**CONNECTED COMMUNITY**

Clayton Community Park is located adjacent to the Community Center, existing neighborhoods, and Clayton Middle School. Scheduled trail improvements will connect this site to the Community Center. Additional park improvements are occurring which will also improve access to site features such as the playground and ballfields. The park could be better connected to the adjacent school with the inclusion of internal trail connectivity, or sidewalk and trail connection access along Guy Road.

**ECONOMIC VITALITY**

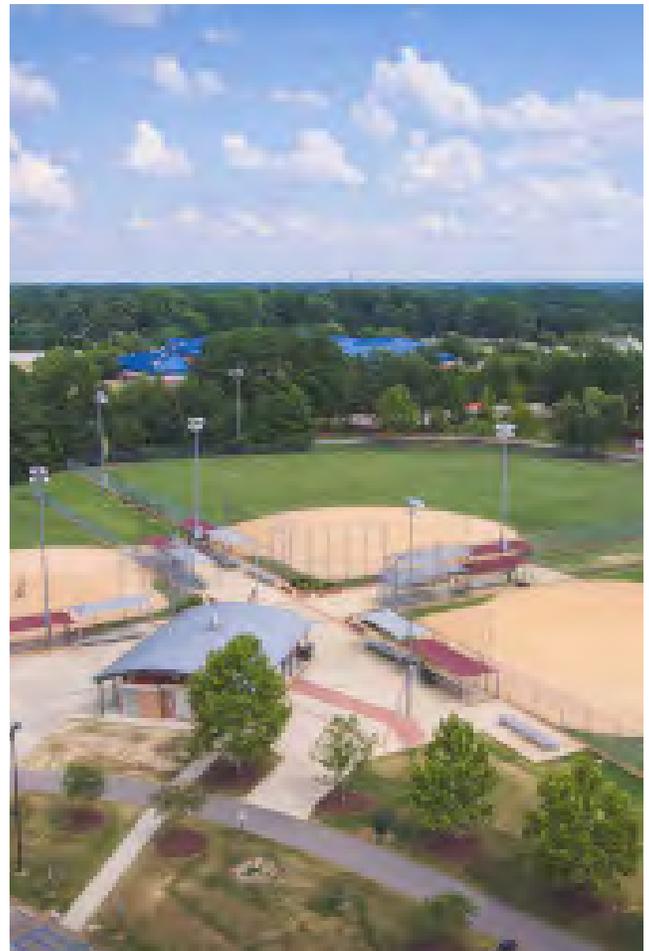
Clayton Community Park is home to three ballfields and Senior Games which brings players and families to this site. Communicating community support features such as restaurants and shops will help visitors understand nearby resources. Likewise, offering opportunities for food trucks and vendors can highlight Clayton’s resources.

**ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP**

This site has a positive balance of active and passive recreation, open space, and wooded area. By redeveloping in areas already impacted and protecting forested and wetlands areas, Clayton Community Park is following best practices.

**ARTS AND CULTURE** There does not appear to be anything on site that highlights the Clayton Community arts and community.

**HEALTH AND WELLNESS** This site has a good balance of active and passive recreation and offers features that serve a variety of recreational needs and ages. With the upgrade of the playground and connection to the Community Center, this site will expand its opportunity to better serve residents.



**PAVED PARK TRAIL**  
*The existing park is undergoing upgrades including trail connections to Clayton Community Center and a new playground.*

THEMES	N	S	C
CONNECTED COMMUNITY	[Green bar]		
ECONOMIC VITALITY	[Green bar]		
ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP	[Green bar]		
ARTS AND CULTURE	[Green bar]		
HEALTH AND WELLNESS	[Green bar]		

# CLAYTON COMMUNITY PARK



*Park renovations are underway*



*Demolition of older features has occurred*



*Existing restroom building to remain*



*Existing ballfields to remain*

# CLAYTON COMMUNITY CENTER

715 AMELIA CHURCH RD	32,000 SF	HOURS: M-F 7AM-9PM SAT. 8AM-4PM SUN. 1PM-6PM	11.68ACRES
Multi-purpose Court/Gymnasium	1	Meeting Room	Y
Fitness Equipment	Y	Community Garden	Y
Indoor Walking Track	1/16 of a mile	Tennis Courts (future)	4
Art and Pottery Room	2	Outdoor Pickleball (future)	8
Offices	Y	Shuffleboard (future)	6
Game Zone and Gathering Space	Y	Bocce (future)	6
		Maintenance Area (future)	



**CONNECTED COMMUNITY**

Clayton Community Center provides access to active and passive recreation and serves as a hub for community recreation information and programs. It is a good example of intergenerational offerings. Continuing to improve sidewalk and trail connections with crosswalks, signage, and missing links, this site could be better accessed by nearby neighborhoods, commercial, and school. Demand for the well-loved resources is high.

**ECONOMIC VITALITY**

This site is a high quality center and is serving its residents and users with programs, health and wellness, and fitness. It demonstrates the Town’s commitment to health and wellness.

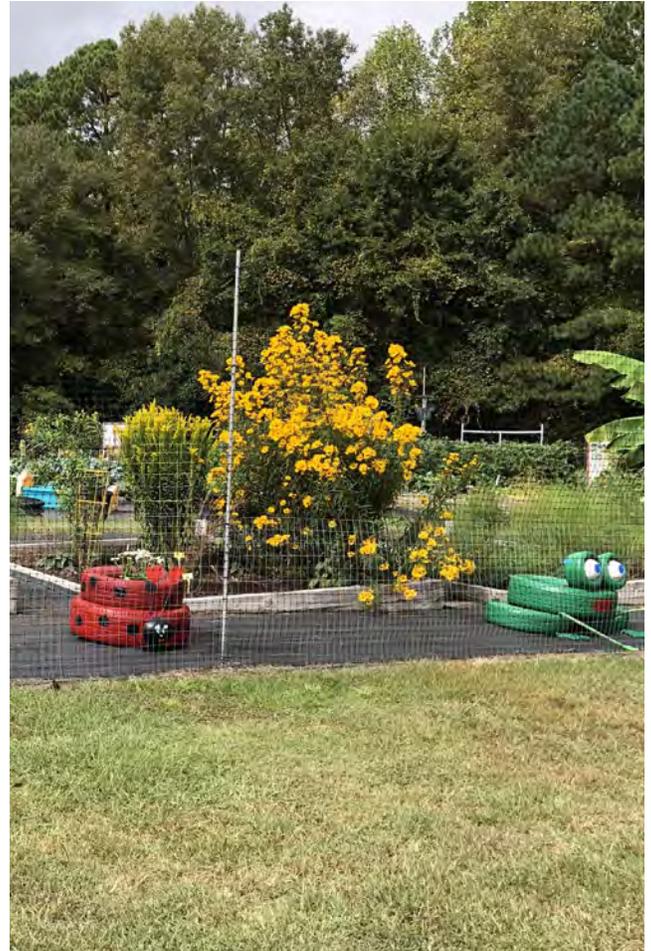
**ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP**

Park redevelopment is occurring in areas already impacted and/or will be reusing sites already developed.

**ARTS AND CULTURE** Indoor programs and spaces offer access to arts, as well as the community garden space. These features should be celebrated inside, outside, and online to highlight Clayton’s arts offerings.

**HEALTH AND WELLNESS**

Users can access sports, fitness, educational courses, and the arts. This space is a good example of meeting community needs in one location. It also provides a unique setting for intergenerational interaction and community connection. The access to this indoor recreational resource is high.



**CLAYTON COMMUNITY GARDENS**  
*The Town of Clayton has been in partnership with Johnston County Cooperative Extension for Community Gardens at the Community Center since 2011, Photo, Johnston County Cooperative Extension*

THEMES	N	S	C
CONNECTED COMMUNITY	[Green bar]		
ECONOMIC VITALITY	[Green bar]		
ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP	[Green bar]		
ARTS AND CULTURE	[Green bar]		
HEALTH AND WELLNESS	[Green bar]		

# CLAYTON COMMUNITY CENTER



Multi-purpose indoor gymnasium- photo by Town of Clayton



Multi-purpose gymnasium space - photo by Town of Clayton



Game room - photo by Town of Clayton



Outdoor play space at Clayton Community Center - photo by Town of Clayton



New pickleball courts at Clayton Community Center - photo by Town of Clayton



New trail and parking - photo by Town of Clayton

# MUNICIPAL PARK

325 MCCULLERS ST		<b>PARK: DAWN TO DUSK</b> <b>SPLASH PAD HOURS:</b> <b>SUMMER: 9:00 A.M. - 8:00 P.M</b>	<b>8.12</b> <b>ACRES</b>
Basketball	1	Event/Multi-Purpose Lawn	Y
Basketball/ Futsal	1	Playground	1
Benches/Picnic Tables	Y	Splashpad	1
Paved Trail & Greenway Trailhead	.25	Restrooms	1
Picnic Shelter	3		
Performance Shelter	1		



Municipal Park aerial photo- photo from Town of Clayton

**CONNECTED COMMUNITY**

Municipal Park is a recently renovated well-connected space. There are improvements that can enhance this as a connected space including sidewalk and signage improvements into downtown and a true trail head sign and bike support showing the connection to Sam’s Branch and the Clayton River Walk on the Neuse.

**ECONOMIC VITALITY**

Municipal Park serves as a positive example of ways parks can bring together the community and local businesses through vending, concerts, and festivals. This could be enhanced more through walking connections and walking tours directly to and from downtown.

**ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP**

The site helps retain open space in an already developed community. The park also has visible site stormwater controls which could serve as educational tools to park visitors. The park needs access to additional shade. Since it is new, the newly planted trees are not providing heat reduction or shade for users yet.

**ARTS AND CULTURE** The site provides a link to concerts, festivals, and family events as well as displaying signage of upcoming local events. There could be the incorporation of local art into this space along the walking loop.

**HEALTH AND WELLNESS** The site promotes positive health and wellness by providing activities for various ages and user groups. It also provides a setting for users to interact, socialize, and be outdoors.



*The entrance into Municipal Park could also serve as a trailhead for the community-wide greenway*



*Existing performance pavilion*

THEMES	N	S	C
CONNECTED COMMUNITY	[Green bar]		
ECONOMIC VITALITY	[Green bar]		
ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP	[Green bar]		
ARTS AND CULTURE	[Green bar]		
HEALTH AND WELLNESS	[Green bar]		

# MUNICIPAL PARK



*New and accessible playgrounds*



*Existing stormwater features could educate users*



*Celebration and communication of local events*



*Campers come to use the park site*



*New playground and splashpad*



*Three new shelters help provide shade and spaces for gathering*

# DONALD "CLYDE" SINCLAIR PARK

400 E. FRONT STREET		HOURS: DAWN TO DUSK	1.45 ACRES
Basketball Court	1 (L)	Shelter	1
Restroom	Y	Little Free Library Borrow Box	Y
Playground	1		



**CONNECTED COMMUNITY**

Donald “Clyde” Sinclair park is located in downtown Clayton with the opportunity to be better connected to the overall downtown sidewalk system. The park itself has good internal connectivity, but sidewalks leading to and from downtown, and access to the basketball court need improvement along East Front Street.

**ECONOMIC VITALITY**

The improvements made to this park not only celebrate the history of the site, but also make the entire space more inviting and user friendly.

**ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP**

The site provides gathering and open space in the downtown area.

**ARTS AND CULTURE** This site is named after Clayton resident Donald Clyde Sinclair. This site could further celebrate the history through art.

**HEALTH AND WELLNESS**

The site offers opportunity for intergenerational interaction, active play on the court and playground, social gathering, and learning about a Clayton community member. It could better serve the community if it were part of the overall trail and sidewalk system.



**LITTLE FREE LIBRARY BORROW BOX**  
*Donald “Clyde” Sinclair Park is a small community gathering location that celebrates local basketball legend & former Harlem Globetrotter Donald “Clyde” Sinclair*

THEMES	N	S	C
CONNECTED COMMUNITY	[Green bar]		
ECONOMIC VITALITY	[Green bar]		
ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP	[Green bar]		
ARTS AND CULTURE	[Green bar]		
HEALTH AND WELLNESS	[Green bar]		

# DONALD "CLYDE" SINCLAIR PARK



*Seasonal flower box at the park entry*



*Fenced playground with shade*



*Basketball court*



*Small park signage at parking area*



*Opportunity to connect to downtown*

# EAST CLAYTON COMMUNITY PARK

1774 GLEN LAUREL ROAD		HOURS: DAWN TO DUSK	65.46 ACRES
Baseball Field (home to Clayton Clovers)	1	Multi-Purpose Fields	3
Batting Cage	1	Restrooms	2
Disc Golf	18 holes	Shelters	3



East Clayton Park rendering from the Town



East Clayton Park multi-purpose fields

## CONNECTED COMMUNITY

East Clayton Park has a variety of trail offerings including a multi-purpose paved park loop trail, natural surface trails, and sidewalks. There is potential to connect this site regionally via nearby greenways, future greenway along Glen Laurel Road, and ultimately via Highway 42 to downtown and the Neuse River. There is also an opportunity to link the apartments and commercial area along Briarcliff Drive via greenway. Several of these connections were also identified as priority projects in the 2022 Clayton Pedestrian Plan.

In addition to greenway trail connections, further evaluation should be conducted for Glen Laurel Road pedestrian crossings. Crossing recommendations were presented in the 2022 Clayton Pedestrian Plan and identified by residents as a need during this planning process.

## ECONOMIC VITALITY

This site has several unique features including the Harmony Playground, summer professional baseball league the Clayton Clovers, and several multi-purpose fields, bringing local and regional teams to the area. The site could further enhance impact by incorporating local businesses and food trucks, connecting to downtown, and informing visitors of nearby community resources.

## ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

The site has recently been redeveloped and did so in a way to impact areas already cleared and developed and improve stormwater treatment on site. It preserves open space and wooded area in the Neuse River watershed.

## ARTS AND CULTURE

This site celebrates local businesses and events on-site through the signage acknowledging local partners and events.



*Clayton disc golf course serves as an opportunity to draw regional users to a local park*

## HEALTH AND WELLNESS

East Clayton Park is truly an intergenerational park offering a wide variety of active and passive recreational activities for all users. The elements that could be improved are access to shade, highlighting distances of trails and how long it may take a user to walk various routes, and connecting this park to the dog park and community-wide trail system.

THEMES	N	S	C
CONNECTED COMMUNITY			
ECONOMIC VITALITY			
ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP			
ARTS AND CULTURE			
HEALTH AND WELLNESS			

# EAST CLAYTON COMMUNITY PARK



*Existing restrooms and entry to multi-use fields*



*Harmony Playground*



*Harmony Playground space*



*Unique archways and playspace*



*Batting cage*



*Existing multi-purpose fields*

# EAST CLAYTON DOG PARK

<b>2027 GLEN LAUREL ROAD</b>	Y	<b>HOURS: DAWN TO DUSK</b>	<b>3 ACRES</b>
Small dog and large dog fenced-in area	Y	* No Restroom	0
Gravel Parking	Y	Water/ Clean up Station	Y
Picnic Tables	Y		

## CONNECTED COMMUNITY

East Clayton Dog Park is located directly across from East Clayton Park on Glen Laurel Road; however there is currently not a safe crossing between the two locations. Both parks would be better served with a crossing at Oak Alley Trail. This would connect several communities to East Clayton Park as well. Internally the site could be better connected with internal sidewalks.

## ECONOMIC VITALITY

This site is a community-wide asset but is currently the only dog park within the system. There is an opportunity to partner and showcase local businesses that provide animal products and services at this site or the expansion at another location.

## ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

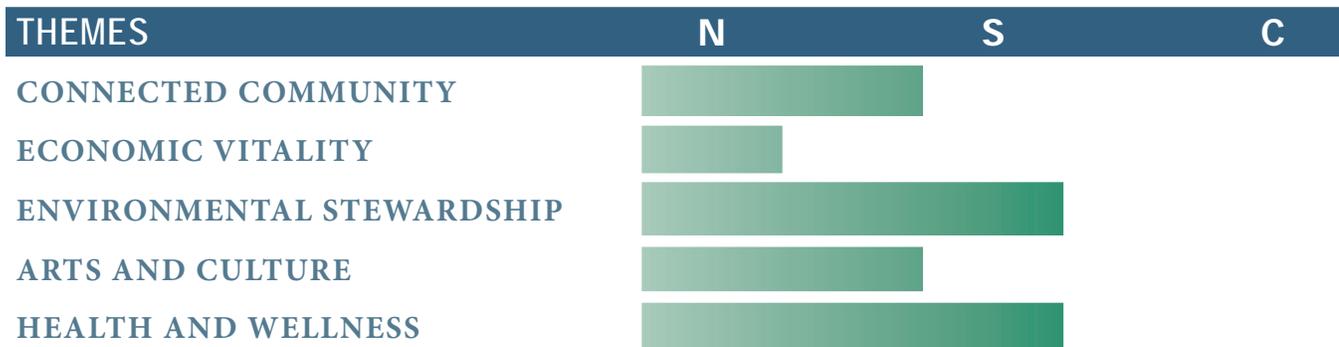
This site preserves open space and wooded area in a highly developed and developing area of the Town.

## ARTS AND CULTURE

There is a great opportunity to have themed arts and highlight local business through art on this site; there is currently not any on-site.

## HEALTH AND WELLNESS

This space provides an opportunity for pet owners to be outside and connect with their community. Dog parks state and nationwide have demonstrated a positive impact on creating community connections and intergenerational recreation opportunities. There should be improved internal access at this site and connections to East Clayton Park for restrooms. Demand is high for access to dog parks in Clayton and additional locations should be considered to help meet this demand.



# EAST CLAYTON DOG PARK



*Dog park entry across from East Clayton Park*



*Dog support features*



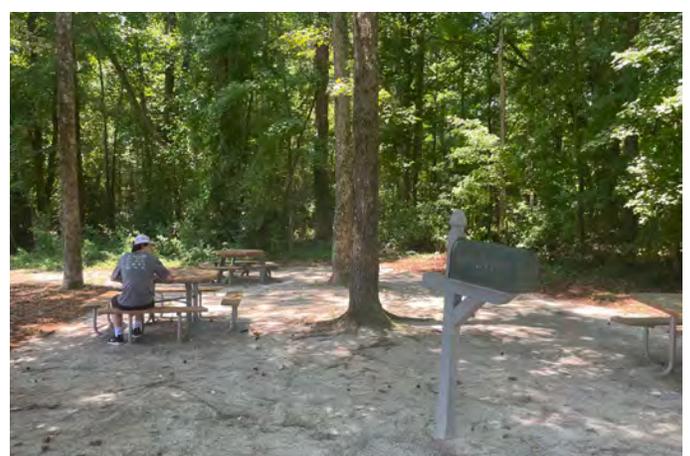
*Rules and signage*



*Entry to leash free zone*



*ADA parking and gravel lot*



*Informal picnic area*

# FUTURE LOOP ROAD PARK

SOUTHEAST CORNER OF LOOP ROAD AND COVERED BRIDGE ROAD		HOURS: N/A	120 ACRES
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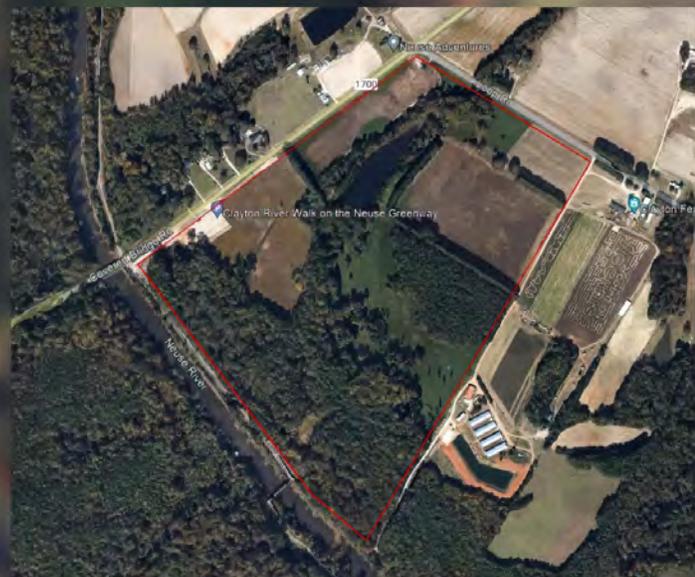
## ABOUT FUTURE LOOP ROAD PARK

The future Loop Road Park planning began in 2023 to get initial input and community guidance. The planning process for the future Loop Road Park will continue upon the completion of 2024 Clayton Parks and Recreation Master Plan.



## Loop Road Property Master Plan Open House

Monday • March 27  
 4:30 PM - 7:00 PM  
 Town Hall  
 111 E. Second St.



# TRAILS AND GREENWAYS:

- › Clayton River Walk on the Neuse
- › Sam's Branch Greenway
- › Bailey and Sarah Williamson Preserve

GREENWAYS AND TRAILS	SURFACE & FEATURES	PARTNERSHIPS	DISTANCE
Bailey and Sarah Williamson Preserve  (Owned by Triangle Land Conservancy)	natural surface multi-purpose trails with 1 mile designated for walking; partially located in Wake County	Clayton, Wake County, the Land and Water Fund, Johnston County, the Environmental Enhancement Grant Program, and the Williamson family	17 miles
<b>CLAYTON RIVER WALK ON THE NEUSE</b> 2686 Covered Bridge Road  (accessed also at Legend Park Trail Head- 553 City Rd, Clayton, NC 27520)	10' wide paved	Designated as part of the East Coast Greenway, statewide Mountains-to-Sea Trail, and connects to the 32 mile Neuse River Greenway which currently ends at Falls Lake	4 miles
<b>NEUSE RIVER BLUEWAY</b> 3 informal access locations:  › Mial Plantation Rd. › Covered Bridge Rd. › Hwy. 42, Clayton	Natural river with fluctuating water levels	Part of the 250 mile Neuse River	7.5 miles
<b>SAM'S BRANCH GREENWAY</b> 1358 N O'Neil Street  (accessed also at Legend Park Trail Head- 553 City Rd, Clayton, NC 27520)	10' wide paved with public art	NCDOT grant	2.85 miles
<b>PARKS WITH TRAILS:</b>  › Municipal Park › East Clayton Park › Clayton Community Park			1.25 miles



## CONNECTED COMMUNITY

The Town of Clayton has worked hard to be a better connected community by including trail resources such as Sam’s Branch Greenway, Clayton River Walk on the Neuse, and the Neuse River itself serving as a regional Blueway. Continued effort should be made to follow the priority projects identified in the 2022 Pedestrian Plan by internally connecting park resources and connecting these resources to the downtown core of historic Clayton.

## ECONOMIC VITALITY

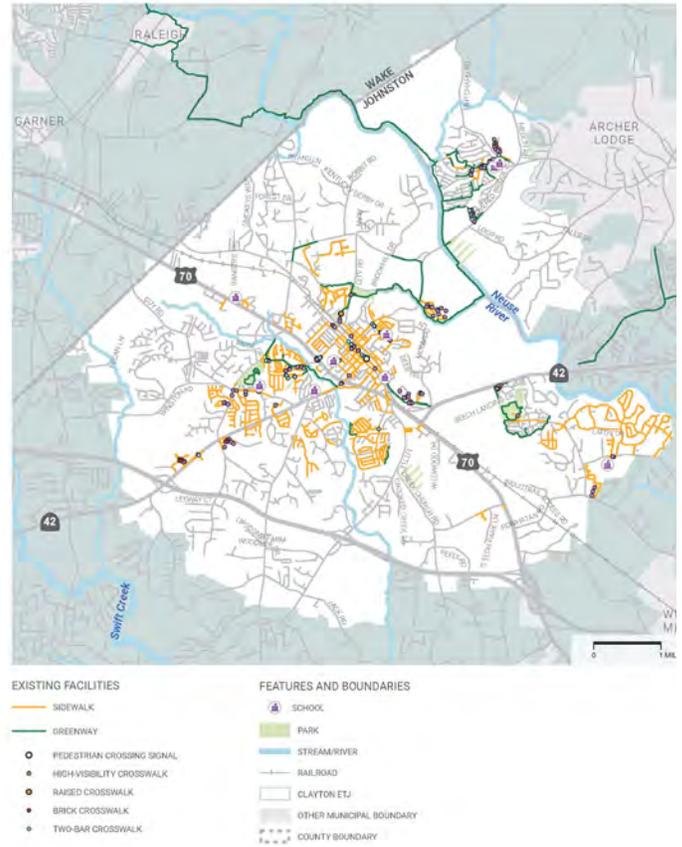
The regional trails of the River Walk on the Neuse, The Neuse River Blueway, and Sarah Williamson Preserve provide the opportunity to celebrate what makes Clayton unique along the Neuse River. Expanding opportunities to get to these resources, and support facilities along them, may not only increase visitors to Clayton, but also enhance user experience for residents. Focus should be on these regional resources and connecting parks to the downtown core.

## ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

As discussed further in the report in the 2023 Green Infrastructure and Resiliency Benefits Analysis, Clayton is growing rapidly and ensuring the preservation of a regional network of parks and green spaces will directly mitigate the potential risk of natural disasters, through providing ecosystem services that will directly increase Clayton’s resiliency. Clayton is already doing many of the things necessary to help protect these resources through parks and open space and should look to quantify and educate on the benefits of these efforts.

**ARTS AND CULTURE** Sam’s Branch Greenway is a wonderful example of celebrating local arts and culture, as are the opportunities for events, concerts and programs at Municipal Park. Linking these art resources through an arts opportunity walk may not only get visitors and users to explore other parts of the system, but also enhance the system for current users.

## Existing Facilities



*Greenway Map from 2022 Clayton Pedestrian Plan*

## HEALTH AND WELLNESS

The Town of Clayton should communicate connectivity opportunities through maps online and information in parks, distances and times it may take to use a trail, difficulty level, and the accessibility of support facilities. All of these elements enhance the experience for users. Further developing the greenway resources with support features such as benches, signage, restrooms, shade, access to water, and links to public transportation improves overall access and the opportunity for positive health and wellness.

THEMES	N	S	C
CONNECTED COMMUNITY	[Green bar]		
ECONOMIC VITALITY	[Green bar]		
ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP	[Green bar]		
ARTS AND CULTURE	[Green bar]		
HEALTH AND WELLNESS	[Green bar]		

# GREENWAYS AND TRAILS IN CLAYTON



*Clayton River Walk on the Neuse Trailhead*



*Paved greenway trail with regional connections*



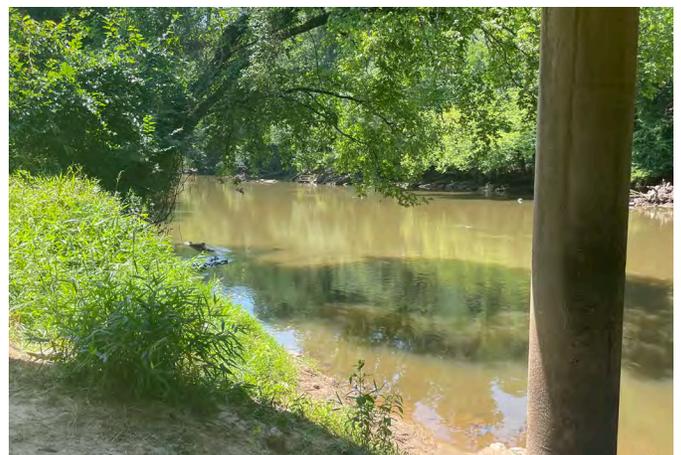
*Sam's Branch Greenway*



*Communicating Greenway system!*



*Linking Neighborhoods to parks*



*Neuse River Blueway opportunities!*

A group of seven cheerleaders in white and blue uniforms are posing on a wooden deck. They are holding large signs that say "Think Clayton". The word "Think" is in a script font, and "CLAYTON" is in a bold, sans-serif font. Below "CLAYTON" is a smaller line of text that is partially obscured. The cheerleaders are arranged in two rows, with three in the back and four in the front. The background shows a wooden railing and a view of a town or city. The word "COMMUNITY" is overlaid in the center in a serif font, with a decorative flourish above and below it.

COMMUNITY

# COMMUNITY

## ABOUT

The Town of Clayton committed to inclusive community engagement throughout the planning process, utilizing a variety of engagement approaches to reach a varied and representative population. Community engagement is one of the most important components to the success of the recreation and parks master planning process. The Town of Clayton conducted engagement in a variety of ways in order to ensure input and outreach were accessible to the entire community.

## THE PEOPLE

The approximately **29,445** people that make up the population of Clayton are a median age of 33.9 and fairly evenly distributed between males and females. The statistically valid responses represent that demographic.

## AGE

The Median Age of 33.9 is comprised of the following break down in age range according to the US 2023 Census data:

Age and Sex	
Persons under 5 years	6.4%
Persons under 18 years	28.1%
Persons 65 years & over	11.2%
Female Persons	50.6%

## IN PERSON

Over 590 in person touchpoints were made with the community including staff, department partners, community stakeholders, elected officials, committees, park users, and Clayton residents.

## ONLINE

In order to reach a wider variety of park users and non-users, an online survey was distributed via email, social media including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and via the Town and departmental website. Responses were differentiated between Town of Clayton residents and non-residents.

## STATISTICALLY VALID SURVEY

A statistically valid survey was conducted via project partner ETC Institute to ensure representative input was received from Town of Clayton residents.

## INPUT SUMMARY

Group	Date	Touchpoints
Kick off Meeting	04/27/23	13
Core Team Meetings	10 Total	6 (each time)
Parks & Recreation Interdepartmental Staff Input	05/18/23 & 06/07/23	46
Parks and Recreation Advisory Board	06/12/23; 05/13/24 09/09/24 10/14/24	10 (each time)
Planning Board	10/28/24	15+
Administration Input and Visioning	05/22/23	6
Open Houses (3 Sessions)	09/21/23	70+
Town Council	09/25/23; 06/3/24; 10/07/24; 10/22/24; 11/04/24	18+ each session= 90
Clayton Music Night and Movie Night	10/28 & 29/23	30 & 45
Clayton Harvest Festival	10/28/23	200+

Survey	Responses
Statistically Valid Surveys to Clayton residents	320
Online Public Engagement survey	253
<b>Total Surveys:</b>	<b>573</b>

<b>Touchpoints</b>	<b>1160</b>
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# SURVEY

## 2023 TOWN OF CLAYTON PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN SURVEY

ETC Institute administered a Parks and Recreation Master Plan Survey for the Town of Clayton during the fall of 2023. The survey was used to assess community parks and recreation needs and priorities.

### METHODOLOGY

ETC Institute mailed a survey packet to a random sample of households in Clayton. Each survey packet contained a cover letter, a copy of the survey, and a postage paid return envelope. Residents who received the survey were given the option of returning the survey by mail or completing it online at Clayton-NCSurvey.org. After the surveys were mailed, ETC Institute followed up with residents to encourage participation. To prevent people who were not residents of Clayton from participating, everyone who completed the survey online was required to enter their home address prior to submitting the survey. ETC Institute then matched the addresses that were entered online with the addresses that were originally selected for the random sample. If the address from a survey completed online did not match one of the addresses selected for the sample, the online survey was not included in the final database for this report.

The goal was to collect a minimum of 300 completed surveys from residents. The goal was met with 320 completed surveys collected. The overall results for the sample of 320 households has a precision of at least +/- 5.5 at the 95% level of confidence.

**The full survey findings can be found in the appendix, the following findings summarize the priority findings using the Priority Investment Rating (PIR).**

### SUMMARY

Priority Investment Rating – The Priority Investment Rating is an objective tool to evaluate the priority that should be placed on investments in parks and recreation facilities, amenities and programs, especially as resources become available.

### THE PRIORITY INVESTMENT RATING COMBINES MEASURES OF:

1. The importance residents place on certain facilities, amenities and programs and
2. How many residents have unmet needs for that facility, amenity or program.



# SURVEY RESPONSE HIGHLIGHTS

320 SVS Surveys Completed

300 Open Link

50.8%

Female Response

Demographics of respondents reflect Clayton community composition

Residents are being reached through social media! 62%

87% Positivity on Park Quality

97% Support for Park = Parks Add Value

81% Currently Drive to Parks

Most Used = East Clayton Park, Clayton Community Park, Clayton River Walk on the Neuse

#### Investment Values:

Creating connections and developing a sense of community (56%),  
Ensuring affordability to users (46%),  
Promoting health and wellness programming (44%)



# SURVEY RESPONSE HIGHLIGHTS

**Top 3**  
Aquatics  
Trails and  
Greenways &  
Water Sports

**High  
Demand  
for Indoor  
Space**

**Recreation Tourism  
Demand in Clayton Calls  
for Unique Outdoor  
Experiences** : adventure,  
camping, access to the  
river! This aligns with  
community demand.

**Demand for more  
Special Events!**

**Desire for  
intergenerational  
programs and  
experiences**

**Distribution  
of new  
playgrounds,  
splash pad,  
dog park**

**More Staff  
to Support  
More Parks  
Programs**

**More  
Opportunity  
for Health  
and  
Wellness**

**High Demand for  
Connectivity! Link Parks to  
Downtown!**

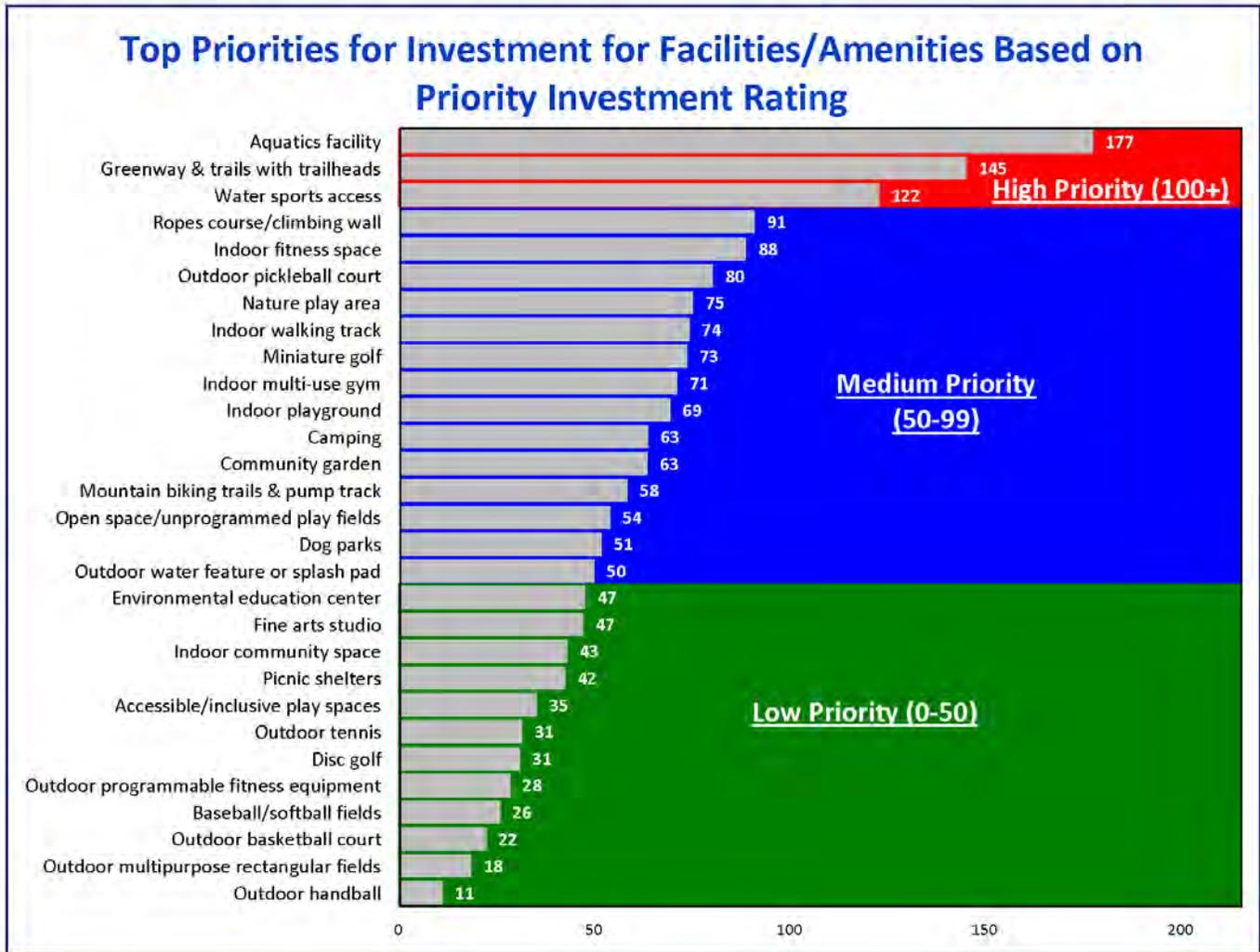


**TOP PRIORITIES FOR INVESTMENT:**

Based on the Priority Investment Rating (PIR), the following parks/facilities were rated as high priorities for investment:

- PARKS/FACILITIES:**
- Aquatic Facility (PIR=177)
  - Greenways & Trails with Trailheads (PIR=144)
  - Water Sports Access (PIR=122)
  - Ropes/Climbing Wall (PIR=91)
  - Indoor Fitness (PIR=88)

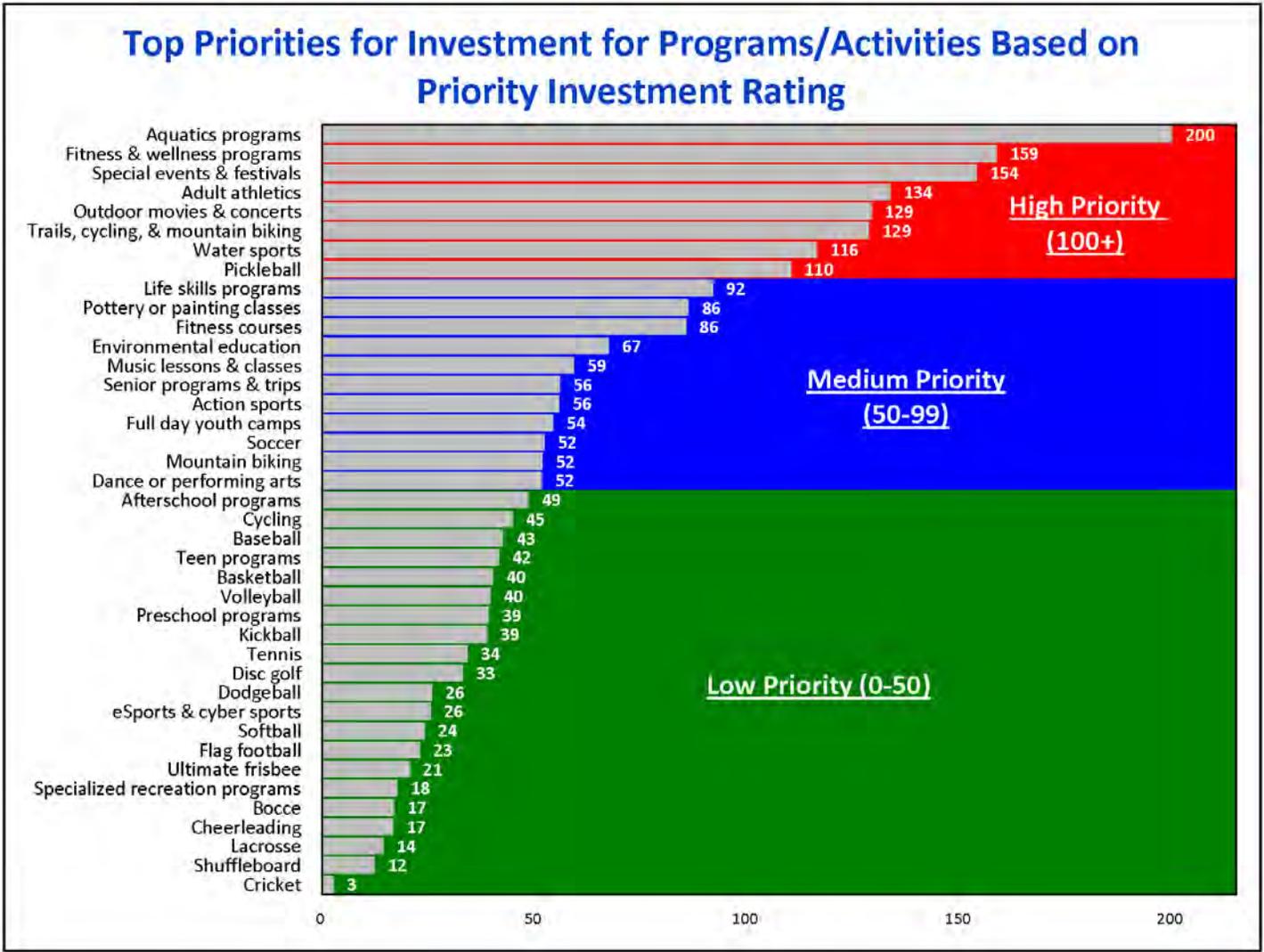
The chart below shows the Priority Investment Rating for each of the 29 facilities/parks assessed on the survey.



**TOP PRIORITIES FOR INVESTMENT:**

Based on the Priority Investment Rating (PIR), the following sports/programs were rated as high priorities for investment:

- SPORTS/PROGRAMS:**
- Aquatics Programs (PIR=200)
  - Fitness and Wellness Programs (PIR=159)
  - Special Events and Festivals (PIR=154)
  - Adult Athletics (PIR=134)
  - Outdoor Movies and Concerts (PIR=129)
  - Trails, Cycling, and Mountain Biking (PIR=129)
  - Water sports (PIR=116)
  - Pickleball (PIR=110)

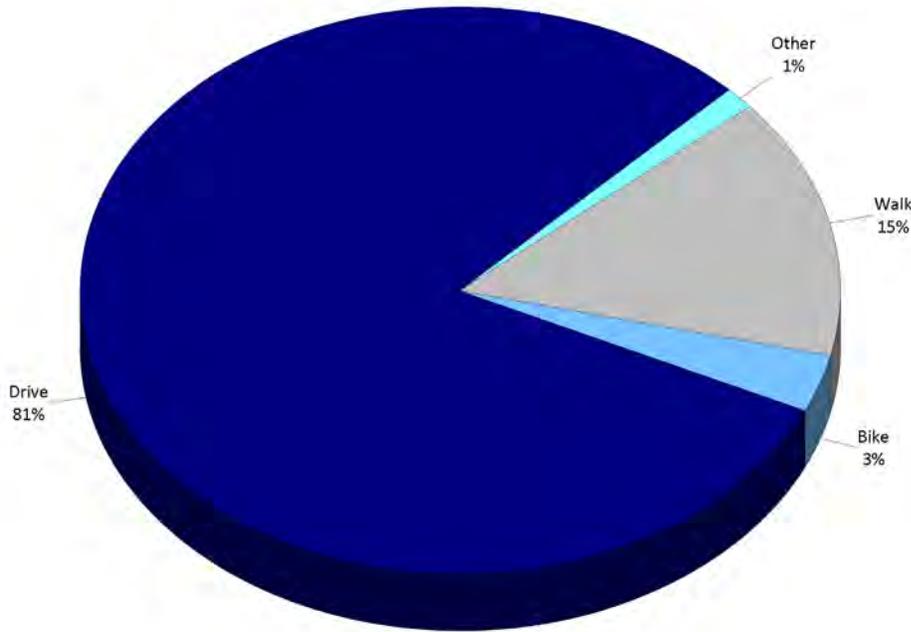


## CONNECTED COMMUNITY

Residents would like to see continued efforts on creating a connected community. Trails and Greenways with trailheads is identified as the highest priority for Clayton households, and yet most residents are currently driving (81%) to Town parks.

### Q3. How do you most often access Clayton parks and facilities?

by percentage of respondents (excluding "not provided")



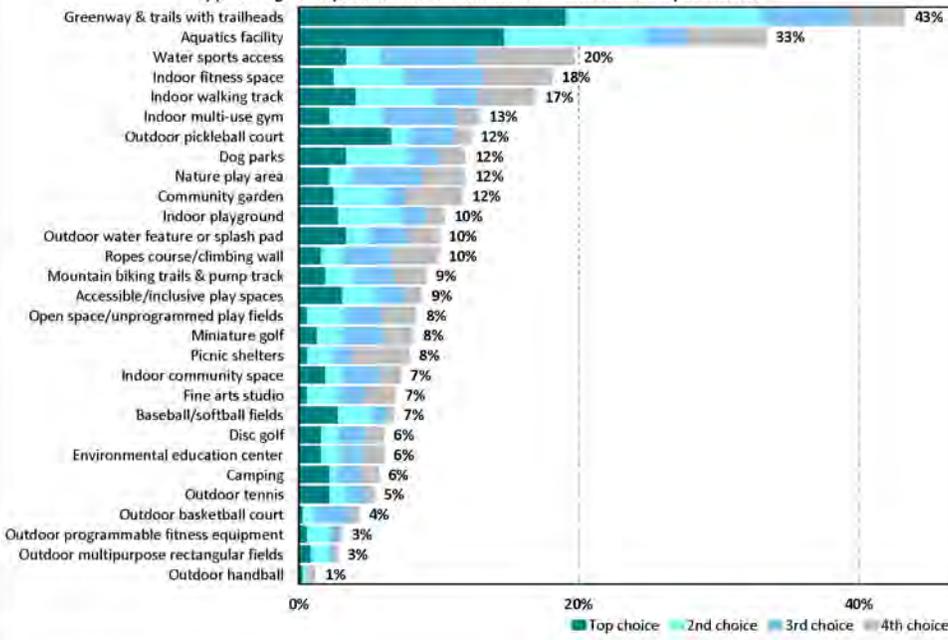
ETC Chart Question 3, full report Page 21

The percentage of residents who selected each amenity/facility as one of their top four choices is shown in the chart below.

ETC Chart Question 6, full report Page 8

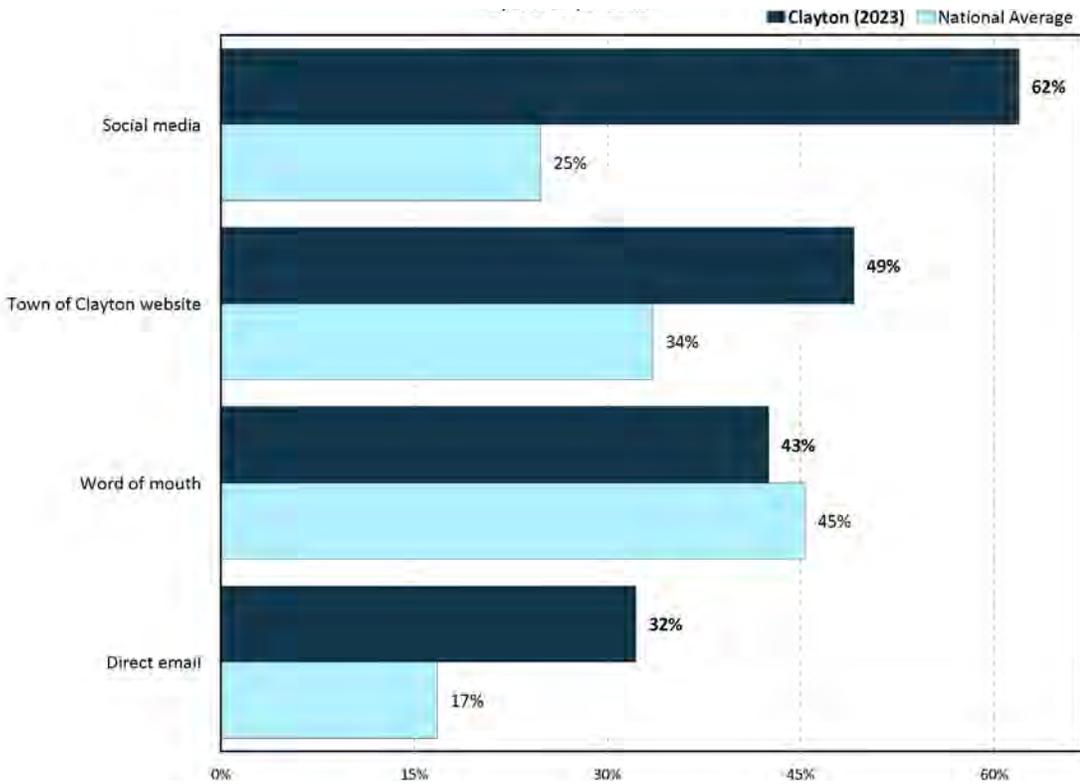
### Q6. Which FOUR of the facilities or amenities from the list in Question 5 are MOST IMPORTANT to your household?

by percentage of respondents who selected the items as one of their top four choices



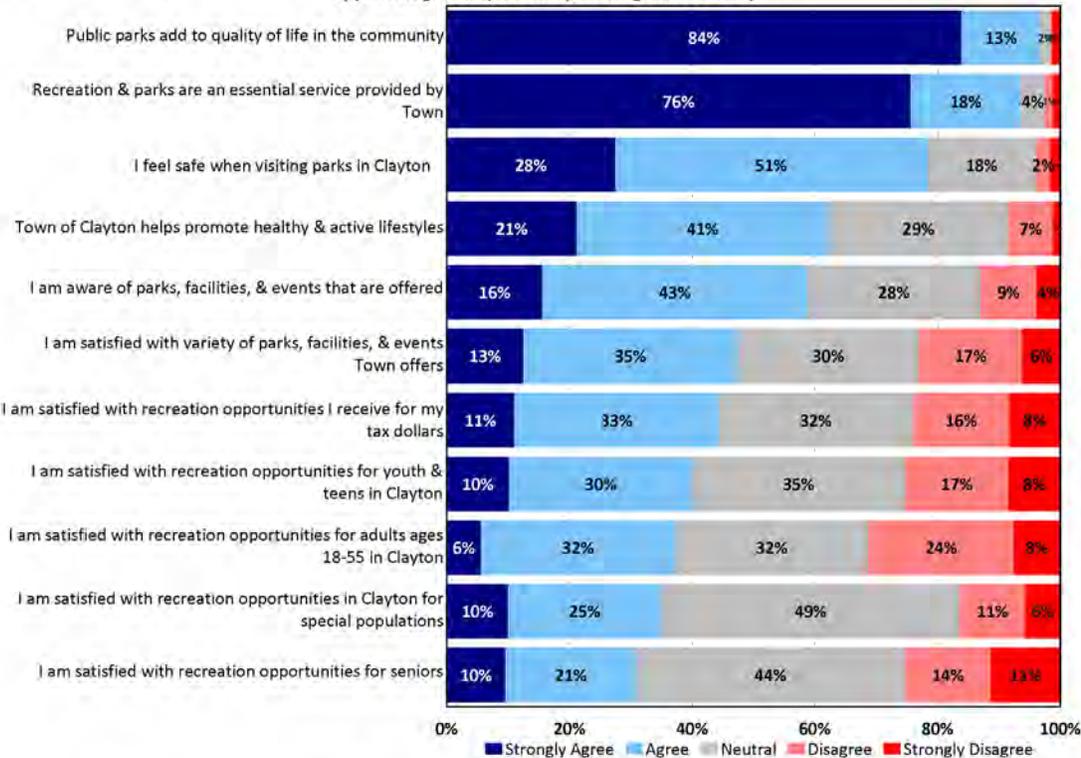
## NATIONAL BENCHMARKS

The Town of Clayton is performing at or above in relationship to many national benchmarks including reaching the community through a variety of social media platforms, perception on park positivity, and that Parks and Open Space contribute to a high quality of life within the community.



*ETC National Benchmark, full report Page 64*

### Q13. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. by percentage of respondents (excluding "don't know")



*ETC National Benchmark, full report Page 38*

# THE COMMUNITY

## IN PERSON ENGAGEMENT

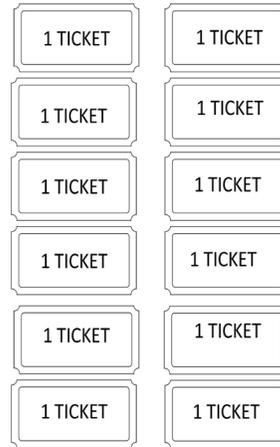
The Town of Clayton conducted a robust in-person engagement process for the planing efforts in order to reach a broad and representative population.

## DEPARTMENTAL AND INTERDEPARTMENTAL ENGAGEMENT

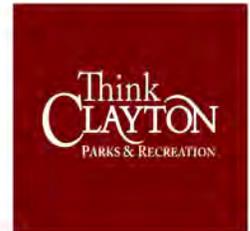
Several input sessions were conducted with staff, stakeholders, administration, elected officials, and the advisory board to understand parks and recreation strengths, opportunities, and weaknesses. Several different input methods were used in each engagement session to really understand common findings amongst the groups. The results were compared to help identify common themes.

## THE LOTTERY TICKET

Participants were asked to identify one improvement they would make to the system, either a program, staff, or facility need. Participants could fill out one "winning lottery ticket" to help determine their main priority.



WHAT WILL YOU SPEND YOUR WINNING LOTTERY TICKET ON?



## STRENGTHS, OPPORTUNITIES, AND WEAKNESSES

Participants were asked to fill out a sticky note that highlighted what they felt the Parks and Recreation Department was doing successfully, what additional opportunities may exist, and where improvements may occur.



# THE COMMUNITY

## STAKEHOLDERS, ADMINISTRATION, AND ELECTED OFFICIALS

In person engagement included several opportunities for input to ensure ideas, findings, and themes were identified to help align the plan with townwide goals, partner organization goals and needs, and identified communities' needs.

## COMMON THEMES

Participants were asked to identify what community goals were important to them and/or their organization to ensure recommendations and inventory were evaluated against these common goals.

In addition to helping prioritize community goals, participants helped identify various ways the Town could help meet these goals through Parks and Recreation.



*Participants helped prioritize community goals*



*Ideas to incorporate environmental stewardship*



*Ideas to incorporate small-town character*



*Ideas to create economic vitality*



*Ideas to celebrate arts and culture*





# ANALYSIS

# ANALYSIS

**THE PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN IS TO UNDERSTAND COMMUNITY RECREATIONAL NEEDS IN ORDER TO ENSURE THE TOWN OF CLAYTON IS MEETING CURRENT DEMAND AND PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE.**

## ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

All of the study findings and information presented in this report have contributed to the analysis and will help guide the recommendations. Sources utilized include existing recreation resources, environmental conditions, history, past plans, community and staff involvement, green infrastructure analysis, regional recreation tourism trends and influences, and how these findings compare to local, state, and national trends. This information will help formulate the recommendations. In order to help identify common findings, all information was placed into a recreational resources matrix. Data summary was compiled highlighting past plans and findings and input results were charted to identify common needs throughout the planning process. All of the factors contribute to the analysis of the Town of Clayton recreation system.

These cumulative findings are then compared to the 2023 National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Agency Performance Review. According to the Agency Performance Review, the Review summarizes key findings from NRPA Park Metrics — the benchmarking resource that assists park and recreation professionals in the effective management and planning of their operating resources and capital facilities. Taken together, the 2023 NRPA Agency Performance Review and NRPA Park Metrics deliver a comprehensive collection of park and recreation related benchmarks and insights. This is a national database of comparative analytics and allows the Town to benchmark against current best practices and offerings in Parks and Recreation. These comparisons are then evaluated against the Town of Clayton Needs Assessment to determine if a recreation and park program or feature is currently a priority for the Clayton community.

The NRPA Agency Performance Review breaks down their national database findings by population

size, and in many of the results, offers guidance on whether metrics meet the median for a particular finding, fall in the lower quartile, or upper quartile. Again, these are best practices guidance tools to help prioritize deficiencies and identify gaps based upon the cumulative information evaluated.

**THE TOWN OF CLAYTON HAS A POPULATION OF 29,445 AND THIS NUMBER WILL BE USED FOR THE COMPARISON AND ANALYSIS PORTION. IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THE RAPID GROWTH AND THE LARGER SIZE OF THE EXTRATERRITORIAL JURISDICTION (ETJ) THE SYSTEM CURRENTLY SUPPORTS.**

## FACILITY HIGHLIGHTS

The inventory included all of the parks within the Clayton system. Below is the overview of this inventory which highlights some of the in-demand features from the Community Needs Assessment.



## PARK DEMAND

To understand overall park demand, NRPA evaluates access to parks using parks per resident by jurisdiction population and park acreage per 1000 residents. Currently, the Town of Clayton is serving 3271 residents per park; the median number for the population is 2014, meaning Clayton has fewer parks for its residents than the national average for comparable populations.

Clayton is currently providing 4.9 acres of developed parkland per 1000 residents, and with the addition of future recreation acres, Clayton will be providing approximately 9 acres of parkland per 1000 residents. Both of these numbers fall below the median acreage of 11.3 acres per 1000 residents. The upper quartile provides 17.9 acres/1000 residents and the lower quartile provides 5.9 acres/1000 residents. It is also important to note the only new park to be brought on line from the previous two planning efforts is East Clayton Dog Park.

## GREENWAYS AND TRAILS

Demand for greenways, trails, blueways, and connectivity ranked high for Clayton residents during the public engagement process. According to the 2023 NRPA Agency Report, the median miles of trail by jurisdiction population of 20,000 - 49,999 provides 8 miles of trail on average. Clayton currently meets this median by providing approximately 11 miles. Trails and greenways are a high local, regional, statewide, and national trend. Due to demand presented in this planning process, Clayton should continue its long range planning to provide services that fit into the upper quartile by jurisdiction population. As presented in the 2023 Agency Report, this is approximately 20 miles of trail or greater.

It is also important to factor in water-access miles because of the existing Neuse River. Blueways do not currently have a metric in the database. However, Clayton has a very unique opportunity to improve access and support features in and along the Neuse River which could link to nearby communities and serve as a draw to the Clayton community.

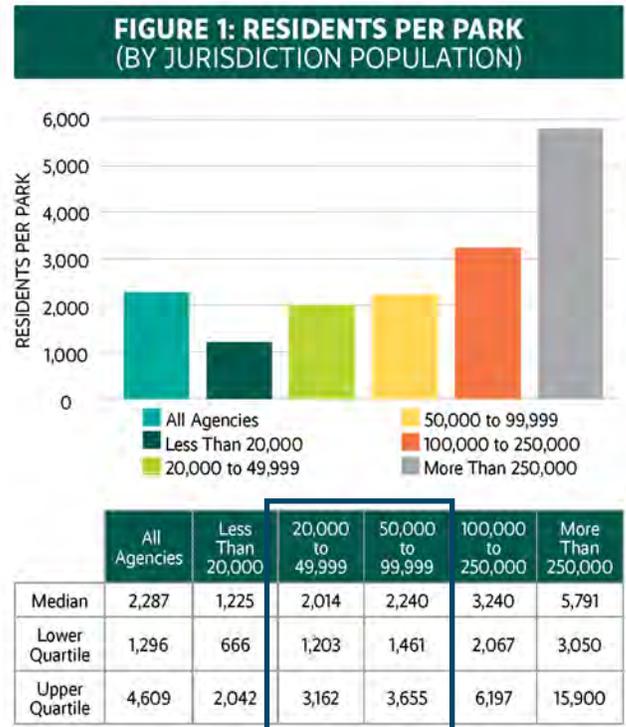


Figure 1. 2023 NRPA Agency Performance Review

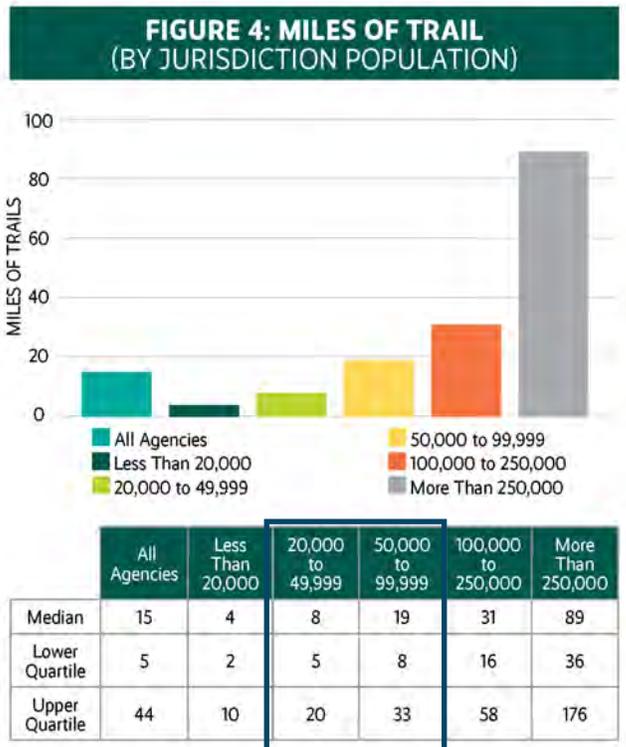


Figure 4. 2023 NRPA Agency Performance Review

## FACILITY LEVEL OF SERVICE COMPARISON

Types of Facilities	Percent of Agencies	Median Number of Residents per Facility					
		All Agencies	Population of Jurisdiction				
			Less Than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 250,000	More Than 250,000
Playgrounds	95%	3,759	2,014	3,028	3,779	5,024	10,811
Basketball courts	86	7,404	3,729	7,117	8,790	8,792	15,214
Diamond fields: baseball field – youth	79	6,863	3,114	5,033	7,237	14,564	26,826
Tennis courts (outdoor)	76	5,860	2,805	5,815	5,577	7,797	12,033
Rectangular fields: multi-purpose	69	9,177	3,859	7,674	13,244	14,471	23,771
Dog parks	68	43,532	11,100	28,000	54,119	78,526	131,943
Diamond fields: softball field – adult	63	15,345	5,800	11,802	17,078	26,508	39,652
Diamond fields: softball field – youth	62	11,384	5,079	9,060	12,716	26,313	44,265
Diamond fields: baseball field – adult	55	20,228	7,627	19,556	27,566	45,257	54,004
Community gardens	52	31,395	8,178	26,741	52,906	56,297	114,666
Swimming pools (outdoor)	51	38,635	9,745	25,191	43,100	67,267	108,245
Rectangular fields: soccer field – youth	50	7,228	3,600	4,947	7,207	12,875	47,204
Multiuse courts – basketball, volleyball	49	17,475	5,093	14,800	22,960	40,667	62,018
Totlots	48	11,649	5,816	11,195	11,641	17,703	37,441
Rectangular fields: soccer field – adult	42	13,692	6,955	10,775	17,741	18,215	42,136
Skate parks	41	53,144	10,726	32,000	62,927	110,000	235,209
Rectangular fields: football field	35	26,780	8,637	18,785	29,374	50,837	73,556
Pickleball (outdoor)	31	13,922	3,252	9,257	11,150	29,836	46,801
Regulation 18-hole courses	29	94,109	9,587	32,990	69,374	114,842	239,241
Multiuse courts – tennis, pickleball (outdoor)	27	15,948	4,868	9,667	16,556	36,876	45,455
Multipurpose synthetic field	25	36,884	9,518	25,330	34,814	57,011	144,306
Ice rinks (outdoor)	18	17,741	8,045	13,247	33,214	108,000	543,242
Rectangular fields: cricket field	14	139,248	ISD	34,706	62,943	118,709	362,153
Rectangular fields: lacrosse field	11	26,411	9,786	16,584	49,348	56,000	126,912
Overlay fields	9	14,763	8,707	9,468	16,398	25,452	27,737
Rectangular fields: field hockey field	4	20,909	18,000	17,292	44,292	53,895	ISD

**The 2023 report outlines the median number of residents served per population:**

*It is important to note in Figure 3, the Town of Clayton falls within the 20,000- 49,999 population range and these metrics should serve as a guide to growth. We evaluate quantity, quality, and location, and compare to “All Agency” and “20,000- 49,999” and the demand presented by the Clayton residents in the Needs Assessment Survey.*

*Figure 3. 2023 NRPA Agency Performance Review*

## FACILITIES

In reviewing facilities within the recreation and parks system, several of the high demand features currently fall at or below the median benchmark for populations of 20,000-49,999.

- ▶ Playgrounds - Clayton has 5 (5889/resident), which currently falls below the median of 3028 residents per playground (median =3779 residents /playground)
- ▶ Dog parks also ranked high; Clayton currently has one and is just under the service level for that serving 29,445 residents per dog park (median = 28,000 residents/dog park)
- ▶ Indoor space is a top priority and Clayton is just under the service level for all types serving 29,445 residents per indoor space. (median = 30,000/resident range for all types)
- ▶ Community Gardens were highlighted as an additional need or expansion, Clayton is slightly below the service level serving 29,445 residents/per community garden area (median = 26,341 residents/garden area)

## INDOOR SPACE

Indoor space ranked as one of the highest priorities for the Town of Clayton. The Town has done a really good job providing varied programs and recreation resources within the one Community Center in the system. Clayton currently serves residents with 1 facility totaling 32,000 square feet. This total falls at or below the median for individual facility types shown for a service population of 20,000 - 49,000.

- › Clayton Community Center

<b>FIGURE 5: INDOOR PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES – POPULATION PER FACILITY (BY PREVALENCE AND POPULATION PER FACILITY)</b>							
Types of Facilities		Median Number of Residents per Facility					
		Percent of Agencies	All Agencies	Less Than 20,000	Population of Jurisdiction		
20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999				100,000 to 250,000	More Than 250,000	
Recreation centers (including gyms)	63%	31,215	9,745	24,380	38,018	54,125	65,909
Community centers	59	29,494	8,829	26,696	53,331	54,354	109,710
Senior centers	41	59,727	14,000	31,199	67,139	123,882	294,394
Performance amphitheatres	37	67,862	11,100	30,283	60,495	121,000	298,416
Nature centers	33	120,000	10,633	32,000	71,360	129,859	358,431
Aquatics centers	28	53,950	11,650	31,645	60,116	108,843	273,914
Stadiums	20	79,866	9,250	31,000	64,150	156,798	432,000
Teen centers	13	55,494	14,593	31,645	58,174	127,301	426,501
Indoor ice rinks	12	53,224	8,000	24,838	53,224	102,132	395,699
Arenas	8	79,828	5,531	24,626	68,208	104,774	578,231

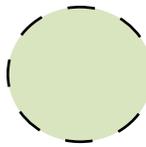
## FACILITIES

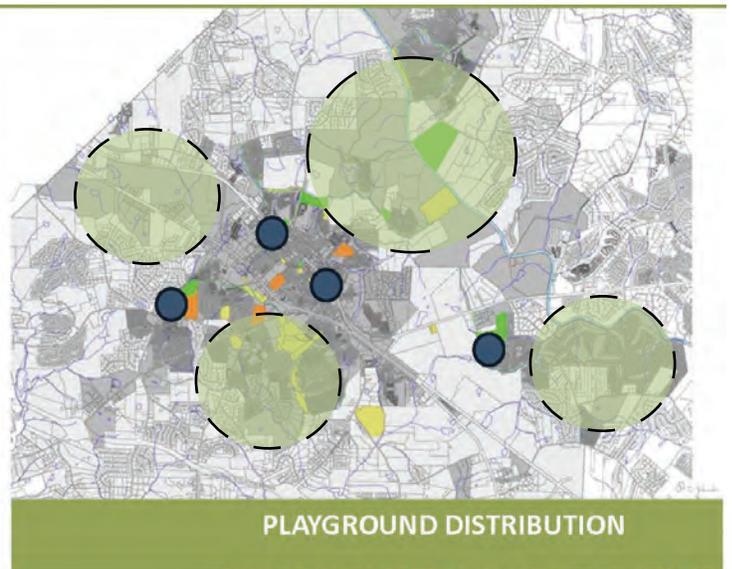
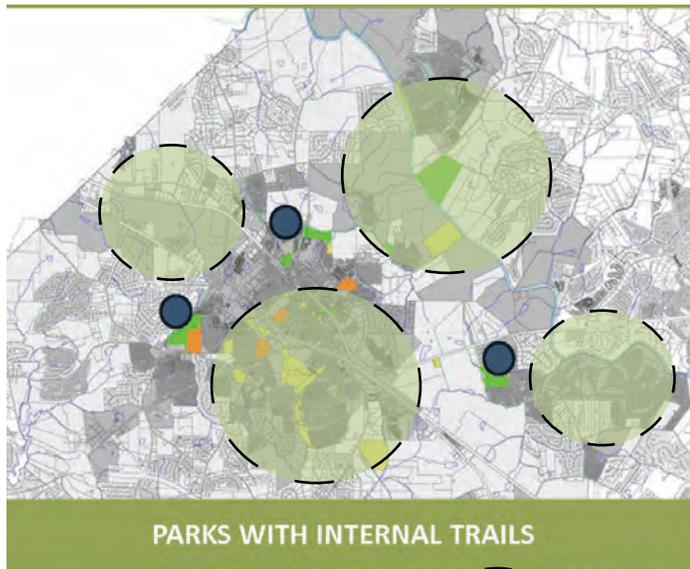
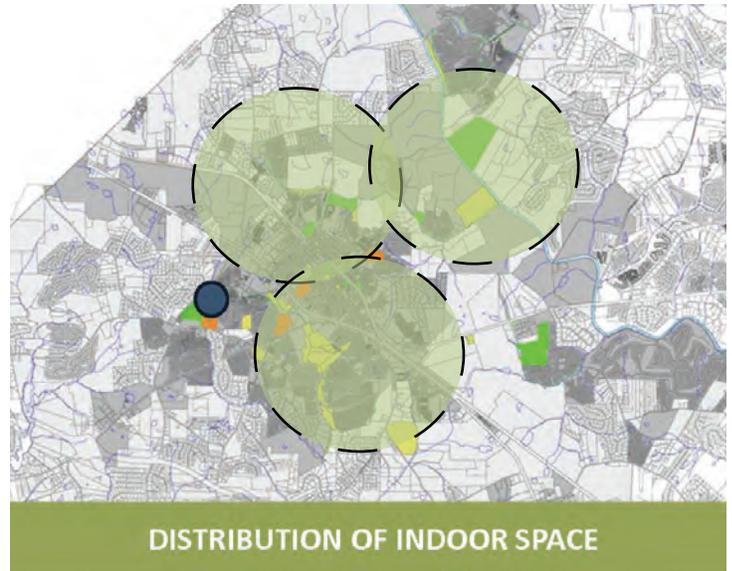
The existing Center does not meet the type of demand presented in the survey based upon the Priority Index Rating from the Needs Assessment. With population growth, this gap will continue to increase. The type, quantity, and access to indoor space is in demand and below the median presented.

There is overall demand for two types of space: fitness and indoor sports and increased access to classes and expanded programming. Demand for indoor space is not mutually exclusive as outlined above, but the demand for each type of space in the Town of Clayton is high. The demand is reflected across all age groups and highlight the need for additional multi-purpose, intergenerational indoor space.

## DISTRIBUTION HIGHLIGHTS

The facility inventory not only examined each facility and the features within each park space, but also how those parks and features are distributed to provide access to recreation and park resources within Clayton. This helps determine where gaps in access may exist, and where demand may be fulfilled when the gaps identified in the Needs Assessment Summary.

 = These areas represent a gap in service area. A gap in service area distribution is when a user is greater than a 10 minute walk or bike to a park feature.



## SPECIALTY RECREATION

The Community Input and Needs Assessment revealed there is strong interest in participating in unique recreation opportunities. The ideas and responses were varied and presented a wide range of ideas such as water adventure (kayaking, canoeing, paddling, fishing), indoor activities and walking, climbing, nature-based play, miniature golf, more dog parks, and a focus on intergenerational activities and spaces. These are just a few highlights. Where there are currently unique features, such as the Community Gardens at the Community Center and the Dog Park near East Clayton Park, the spaces are in high use, well recognized, and continue to be in demand. More of these opportunities need to be identified and provided as improvements are made.

Some of the features that are unique to this system are:

- › The Splash Pad and Futsal Court at Municipal Park
- › The inclusive Harmony Playground space and disc golf course at East Clayton Park
- › The Community Gardens at the Community Center
- › The Clayton River Walk on the Neuse



*Opportunity for Futsal*



*Gardens and Educational Features*



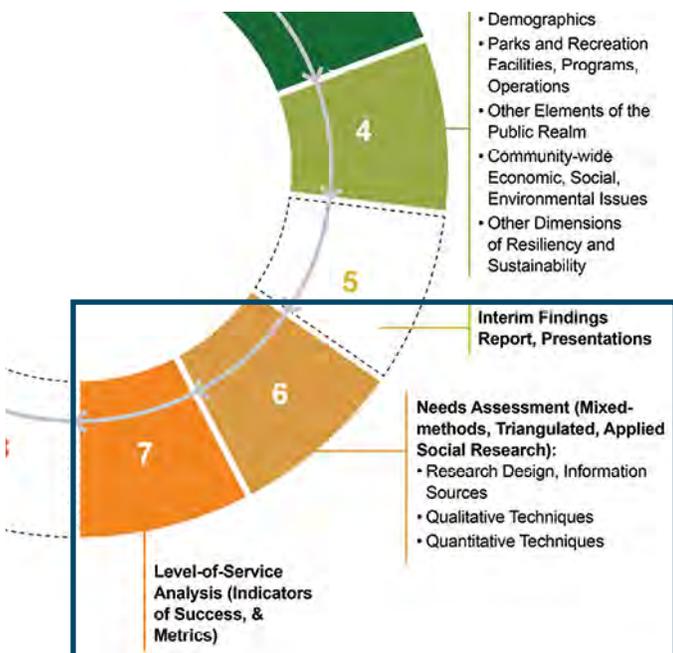
*Outdoor Adventure and Rope Climbing*

## STAFFING

A key component to facility and program operations and expansion is the inclusion of staff to provide park services. This was identified as a need or is currently in demand. The Town of Clayton parks services offerings are strongly supported by its residents. They are supportive of the park quality and types of services provided. There is a high level of satisfaction with current facilities and strong desire to grow park offerings and programs to meet demand.

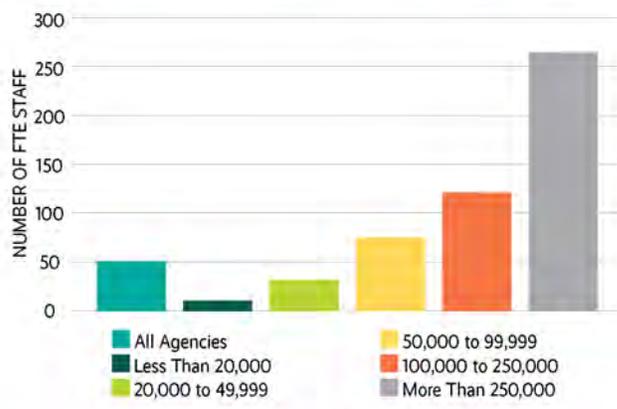
Staff Full-Time Equivalents (FTE's) are typically measured by the population they serve. For example, the typical parks and recreation agency with a population of 20,000 to 49,999 has a median of 32.3 FTE's. Currently, Clayton's Parks and Recreation Department has 18 full-time employees (FTE's); 3 serving in Administration, 6 serving Programs, and 9 serving Operations. The FTE's are split between Programming (6), and Operations (9). The cumulative number falls below the national median of comparable systems, and is just meeting the lower quartile of 17.

It is important to note, these benchmarks reflect departmental comparisons. Currently, park Operations serves not only the department, but also townwide operations responsibilities, and shared programming responsibilities for special events. This puts Operations staffing well below current operations best practices for communities of similar size.



Graphic Source, NRPA Agency Performance Review process graphic.

**FIGURE 10: PARK AND RECREATION AGENCY STAFFING: FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS (FTEs) (BY JURISDICTION POPULATION)**



	All Agencies	Less Than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 250,000	More Than 250,000
Median	51.5	11.3	32.3	75.8	121.5	264.1
Lower Quartile	17.3	6.0	17.0	46.0	72.8	103.9
Upper Quartile	134.7	22.0	67.8	127.5	198.3	533.0

Figure 10. 2023 NRPA Agency Performance Review

Additionally, the demand for expanded recreation programming services is high, including demand for special events programs, specialty adventure programming, after school, full-day youth camps, adult and senior programs, expanded health and wellness opportunities and specialty services such as nature, adventure, and special needs programs and facilities. Staffing numbers will need to be evaluated in comparison to level of service and the growth of the recreation and park system to fill this gap.

The system is currently operating in the lower quartile for departments of similar size; however, recreation programming and facilities demand is in the upper quartile.

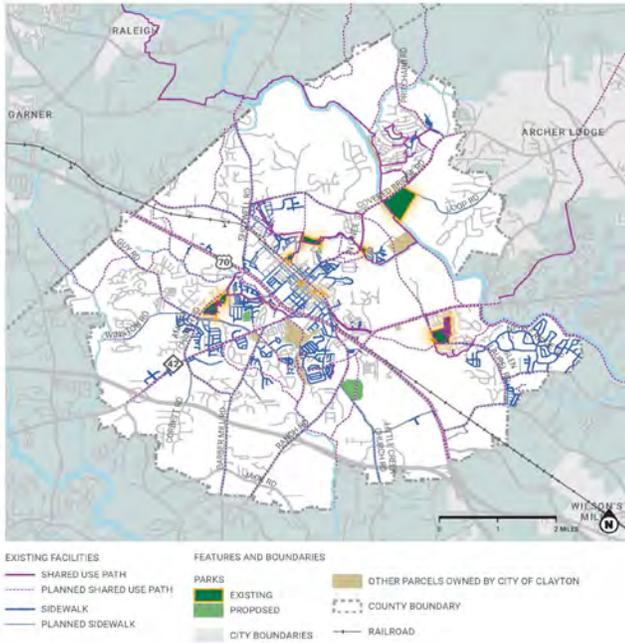
*Using the findings in this process to determine the need for services and the gaps in services will help Clayton continue to address staff demand needs.*



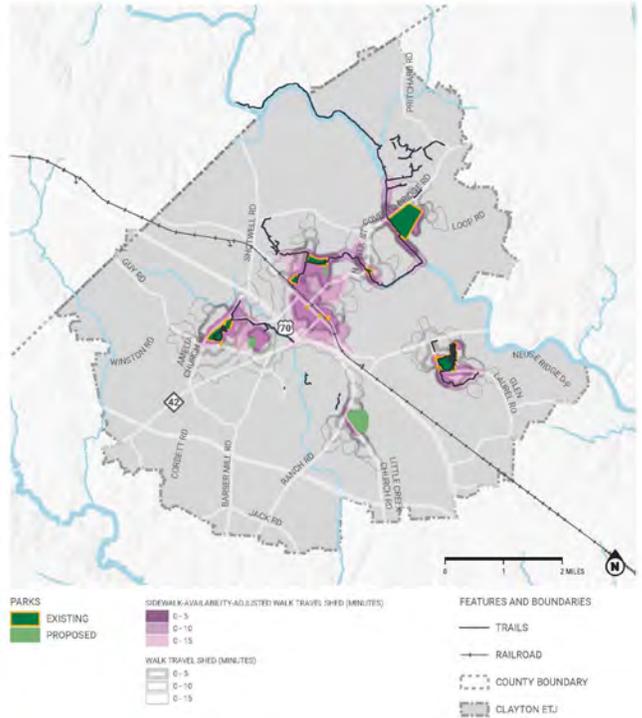
# ANALYSIS

Figures from Recreation Economic Analysis report

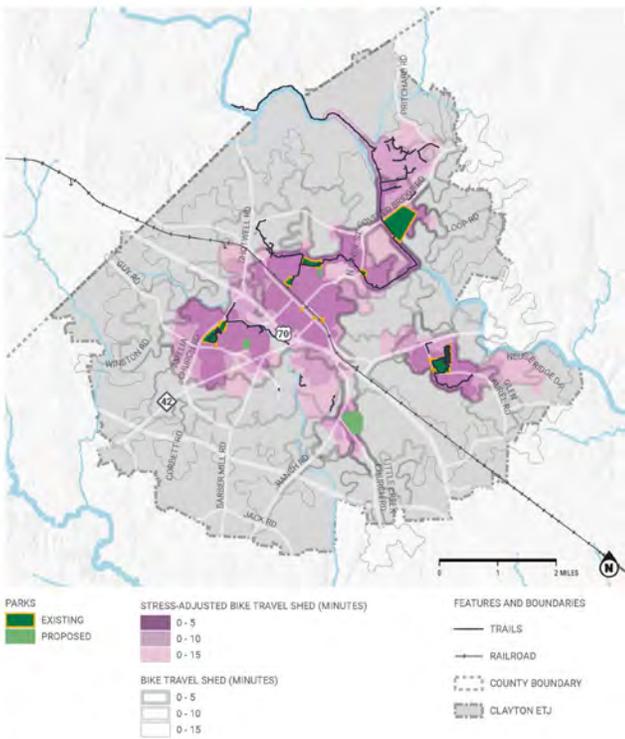
## Access to Parks



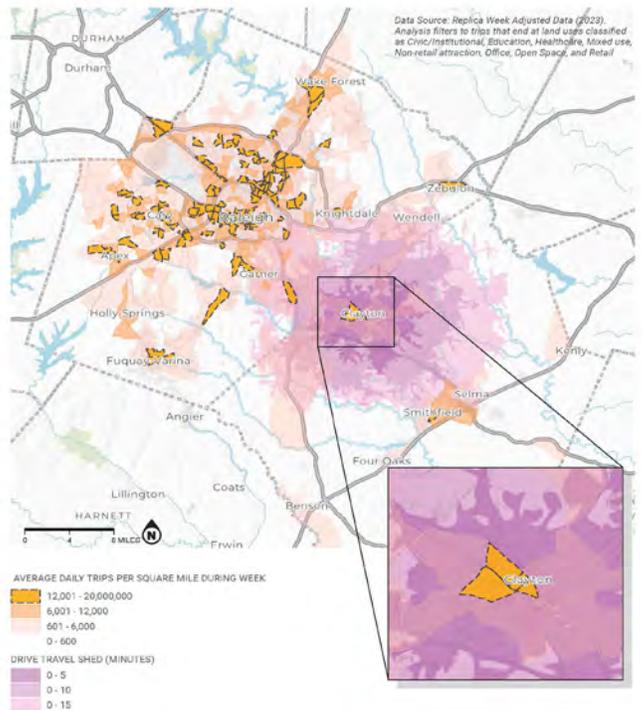
## Access to Parks by Walking



## Access to Parks by Biking



## Drive Access to Parks Relative to Average Daily Trips



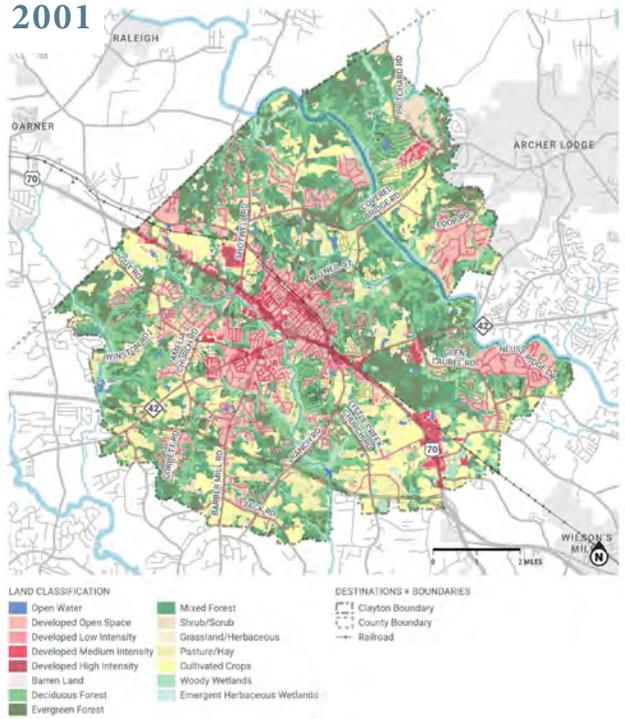
**Key Takeaway:**  
 Connect local users & fill gaps for increased park accessibility & regional recreation markets

# ANALYSIS

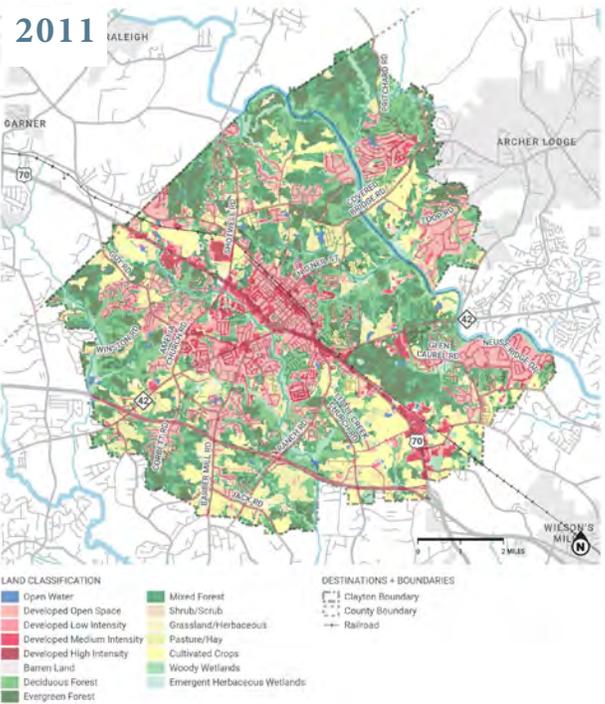
## GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE ANALYSIS

These maps show land cover classifications within Clayton's boundaries using NLCD (National Land Cover Database) imagery from 2001, 2011, 2021

2001

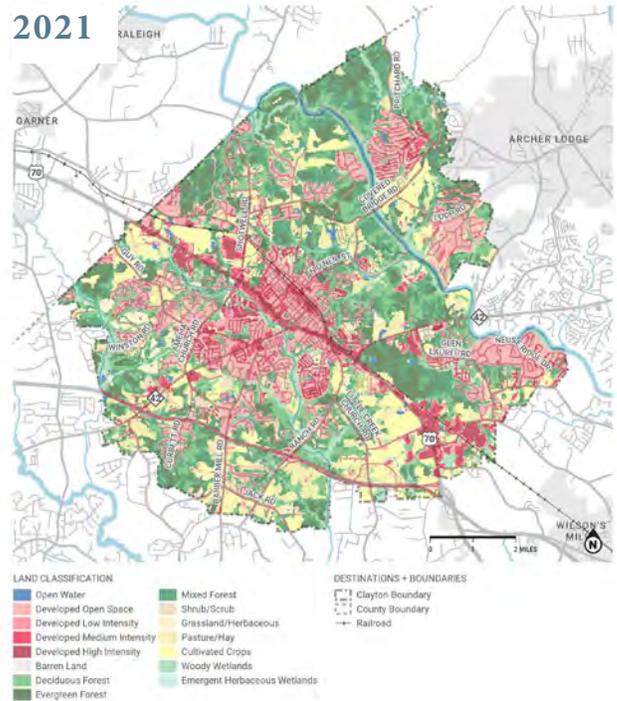


2001 - The total land cover assessed was 20452.26 acres, with 3076.84 acres (or 15.04%) classed as urban land cover.



2011 - Total land cover assessed was 19968.52 acres, with 4141.42 acres, or 20.74% of total area, classed as urban land cover. This urban land cover acreage amounts to a 34.6% increase from 2001.

2021



2021 - Total land cover assessed was 19486.41 acres, with 5012.32 acres (25.72% of total area) classed as urban land cover. This amounts to a 62.9% increase in urban land cover acreage between 2001 and 2021.

**Key Takeaways:**  
 Celebrate and educate residents on the best practices in place for land resource protection. Understand the rapid loss of landcover to ensure there is land set aside for future recreation use



**RECOMMENDATIONS  
& ACTION**

# RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTION

The Town of Clayton has followed best practices for parks and recreation in planning for and providing services to address recreational needs. As with previous planning efforts, there have been opportunities in this process to give input in person, through surveys, through community input sessions, and as a part of the Comprehensive Recreation Master Plan updates to understand what is working well in the system and where gaps may exist. This input, along with the inventory and analysis findings, has allowed Clayton to identify immediate (0-2 years), Near term (3-5 year), and long term (6-10 year) goals in order to best meet the parks and recreation needs of its community. A critical outcome of this plan is to see action in meeting immediate (0-2 year) demands.

## ALIGNING THE DEPARTMENT WITH COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Evaluation and recommendations are presented through the lens of community-wide goals. Previous and simultaneous planning efforts helped identify the overarching themes and goals for the plan.

## COMMUNITY GOALS AND PLANNING THEMES:

- › A Connected Community
- › Economic Vitality
- › Environmental Stewardship
- › Celebration of Arts and Culture
- › Health and Wellness



## CONNECTED COMMUNITY

There is strong desire to have a connected community. This means not only physically connected via sidewalks, trails, and greenways, but also through programs, events, and by maintaining the small-town character that Clayton has worked hard to preserve. Clayton residents would like parks that are user friendly, accessible, and for facilities and services to bring the community together. There is a strong desire to have intergenerational and accessible programs and facilities. This focus on bringing Clayton together will help guide connectivity priorities, program needs, park designs and features, and staffing needs.

## ECONOMIC VITALITY

The Town of Clayton has worked hard to bring businesses to the town that celebrate its small-town character and active living!

Town parks can serve as a support to economic development by providing open space, access, connectivity to each other, and business. As a part of this planning effort the Town conducted a Recreation Economic Analysis to help identify where current users are coming from and what may bring new users to the area.

There is an opportunity to create destination park spaces and features that offer something unique to the area that is not provided in neighboring communities. The study recommends celebrating features that make Clayton different, such as the Neuse River, the small-town character, the agricultural and culture highlights within the Town, and building upon the unique recreation offerings that already exist, such as mountain biking and special events like hayrides and movies in the park.

## ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Clayton has been practicing conservation and resiliency many different ways; one is by placing park services out of flood-prone areas and preserving open space in these areas to buffer residential areas and businesses. This approach should continue, not only to protect recreation infrastructure, but also to serve as a resiliency tool for the Clayton community. Where possible, materials, designs, and new features should always ask, “What is the least impactful solution?” Clayton is already doing many things for environmental stewardship. These need to be celebrated to serve as an educational tool for the community. Features such as the open space and conservation land along the Neuse River, the brownfield land acquisition and transitional land use plan along covered bridge road, referred to as “Loop Road Park”, and trail connectivity opportunities to reduce the need for vehicular trips to parks should all be highlighted in the Town’s successes.



*Educate and celebrate the environmental practices in place such as how your greenways help provide floodzones and buffers from town infrastructure*

## CELEBRATION OF ARTS AND CULTURE

There is so much that makes Clayton unique: its population, its downtown charm, the natural resources present such as the Neuse River, and its cultural events and people. All of these things exist and should and can be highlighted in the park system through art, signage, material selection, access, and helping tell the story online and in person. The Town has already started to do this in its Downtown core, and with features in the Harmony Playground. These efforts should continue to link the park system to community arts and history.



*Incorporate the established art programs in Town including the Sculpture Trail and murals into the parks*

## HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Health and wellness is a key priority to the community. Clayton residents want increased access to health and wellness resources being provided. Improving access through connectivity, increased hours of operation, and expansion of programs will better serve the recreation population. A number of recreation programs are offered within the system to meet this need, but expanding age groups, locations, and hours will help meet demand. Additionally, making all of the parks better connected will improve overall health of all users, and in some cases, encourage users to come to the park. There were several requests to increase access to fitness and wellness programming, life skills programming, and partnership programs for wellness.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

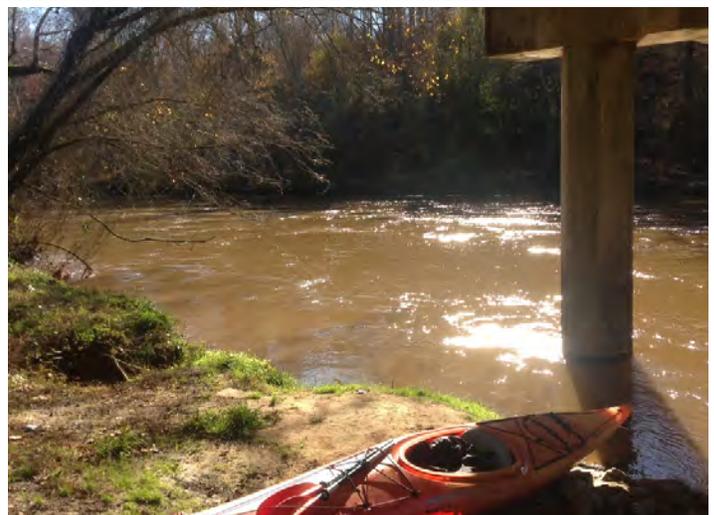
	CONNECTED COMMUNITY	ECONOMIC VITALITY	ENVIRON- MENTAL STEWARD- SHIP	ARTS AND CULTURE	HEALTH & WELLNESS
<b>FACILITIES NEEDS OVERVIEW</b>					
<b>IMMEDIATE NEEDS (0-2 YEARS)</b>					
Communicate and coordinate findings for facilities, connectivity, programs, staff, and land acquisition with Johnston County staff and Commissioners					
There is demand for and deficit in access to indoor recreation space. Evaluate total spatial needs for athletics, fitness, arts, and wellness classes to meet intergenerational demand					
Address current gaps in recreation facility demand (playgrounds, dog parks, splash pads, indoor space, community gardens, access to water, rectangular multi-purpose fields, and basketball courts) and address distribution gaps as these resources are added to the system (ie. dog parks, playgrounds, greenway trails, and access to water, etc. should be located in areas with a service area radius gap)					
Complete park master planning process for the Loop Road site					
Provide adventure recreation opportunities					
Conduct planning efforts to offer Unique to Clayton recreation tourism opportunities (ie. rope courses, mountain biking, camping, celebration of agriculture)					
Continue to follow environmental best practices for park planning and design and align these efforts interdepartmentally for education					
(on-going) Incorporate arts that celebrate Clayton					
Incorporate operational needs in Townwide and park planning design processes					
<b>NEAR TERM NEEDS (3-5 YEARS)</b>					
There is demand for increased access to water including: swimming pools, splashpads, and kayaking/fishing/paddling. Where new facilities are considered, incorporate increased access to water					
Provide increased access to nature-based play					
Conduct design and implementation efforts to offer Unique to Clayton recreation tourism opportunities (ie. rope courses, mountain biking, camping, celebration of agriculture)					
<b>LONG TERM NEEDS (6-10 YEARS)</b>					
Apply Universal Design principals to park design so that parks and recreation facilities are accessible to all users					
Incorporate arts that celebrate Clayton					
Continue to follow environmental best practices for park planning and design and align these efforts interdepartmentally for education					

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

CONNECTIVITY	CONNECTED COMMUNITY	ECONOMIC VITALITY	ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP	ARTS AND CULTURE	HEALTH & WELLNESS	
<b>IMMEDIATE NEEDS (0-2 YEARS)</b>						
Enhance and celebrate the blueway system: provide access to and support services for this system						
Continue planning and design efforts to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Create one updated Town of Clayton greenway and connectivity master plan map using past and related plans</li> <li>› Link Municipal &amp; Donald “Clyde” Sinclair Park to Downtown</li> <li>› Link East Clayton Community Park to the River and Downtown</li> <li>› Further evaluate Glen Laurel Road pedestrian crossing locations to link neighborhoods to East Clayton Park, and East Clayton Dog Park</li> </ul>						
<b>NEAR TERM NEEDS (3-5 YEARS)</b>						
Continue planning and design efforts to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Link Community Park/Center/School across 70 to Downtown</li> </ul>						
Create internal park loops and convey routes in time and distance						
Create park trail heads at parks with connectivity and provide support features along existing trails: restrooms, art trail ID, access to drinking water, signage, trail information, & bike repair						
<b>LONG TERM NEEDS (6-10 YEARS)</b>						
Provide access to parks through Universal Design						
Link parks and “gap” areas via Greenway						



Link East Clayton to nearby neighborhoods and Downtown.  
 Photo from: <https://www.johnstonnc.com/parks/pcontent.cfm?id=4>



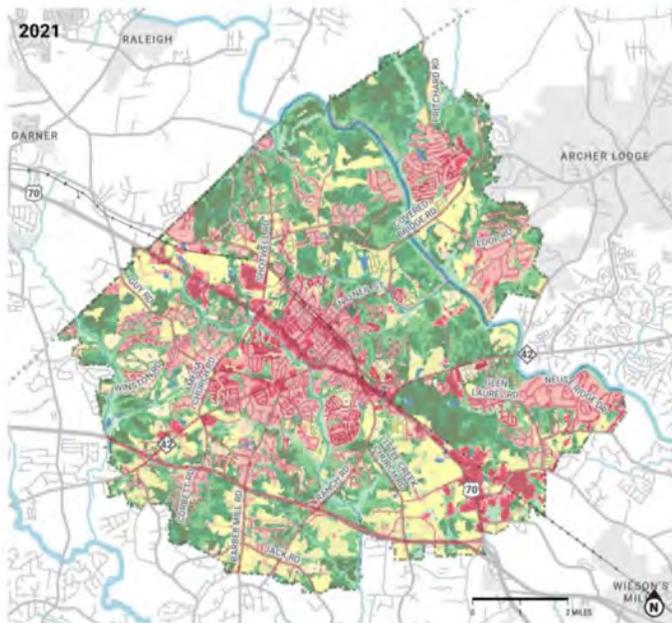
Improve access to and from the Neuse River

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

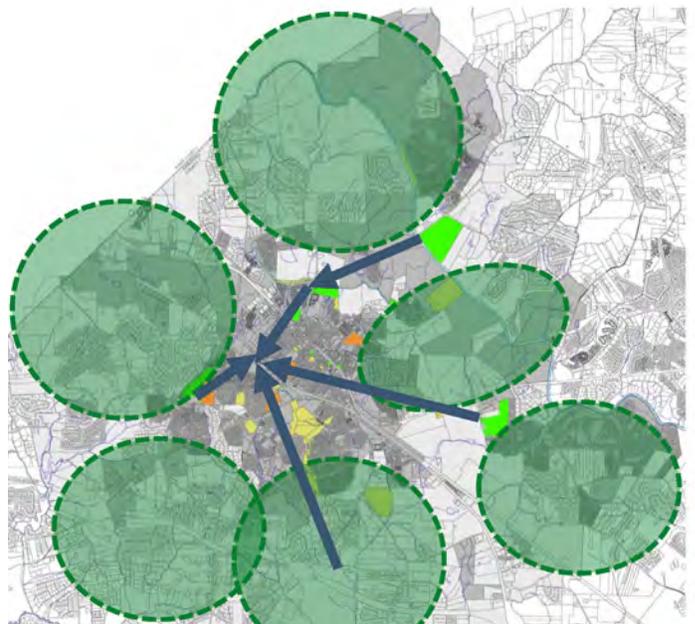
	CONNECTED COMMUNITY	ECONOMIC VITALITY	ENVIRON- MENTAL STEWARD- SHIP	ARTS AND CULTURE	HEALTH & WELLNESS
<b>PROGRAM NEEDS</b>					
<b>IMMEDIATE NEEDS (0-2 YEARS)</b>					
Expand special events programming that focuses on family and inter-generational activities (ie, holidays, concerts, and movies)					
In coordination with staff gaps, add in demand programs to the system:					
‣ More fitness and wellness programs					
‣ Senior travel trips					
‣ Life skills programs (teen specific)					
<b>NEAR TERM NEEDS (3-5 YEARS)</b>					
In coordination with staff gaps, add in-demand programs to the system:					
‣ Continue to add/adjust fitness and wellness programs					
‣ Water sports (via blueway, splash pads, and facility availability)					
‣ Adult programs					
‣ Senior travel trips					
<b>LONG TERM NEEDS (6-10 YEARS)</b>					
In coordination with staff gaps, add in demand programs to the system as facilities and/or partnership providers are established:					
‣ Trails, cycling, and mountain biking programs					
‣ Arts (performing, music, fine arts)					
‣ Life skills programs (teen specific)					
‣ Youth camps (full day)					
<b>STAFF</b>	CONNECTED COMMUNITY	ECONOMIC VITALITY	ENVIRON- MENTAL STEWARD- SHIP	ARTS AND CULTURE	HEALTH & WELLNESS
<b>IMMEDIATE NEEDS (0-2 YEARS)</b>					
Set Demand Goals to meet program demand					
Determine program opportunities with current and future resources					
Look for program partners to provide specialty recreation opportunities					
Continue and improve departmental and interdepartmental resources communication					
Address operational demand needs & shared staff resource gaps					

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

	CONNECTED COMMUNITY	ECONOMIC VI-TALITY	ENVIRONMEN-TAL STEWARD-SHIP	ARTS AND CUL-TURE	HEALTH & WELL-NESS
<b>LAND ACQUISITION AND PARK DEVELOPMENT</b>					
<b>IMMEDIATE NEEDS (0-2 YEARS)</b>					
Acquire land to meet current and anticipated recreational need gaps (immediate gap demand = 100 acres)					
Acquire land in areas identified with gaps in services access					
Greenway connectivity priorities should be considered as part of access demand (obtain easements, encroachments, and/or acquisition for priority connections from Municipal Park and East Clayton Park)					
<b>NEAR TERM NEEDS (3-5 YEARS)</b>					
When land is acquired and new park resources are brought on line, the Town should address distribution access gaps for future recreational resource implementation (playgrounds, dog parks, indoor recreation, etc.)					
<b>LONG TERM NEEDS (6-10 YEARS)</b>					
Acquire land to meet current and anticipated recreational need gaps (immediate gap demand = 300 acres)					
(on-going) Seek to balance open space and recreation space acquisition to meet Townwide recreation and environmental goals					



*Protect Open Space and Recreational Resources for the future by acquiring needed acreage now*



*Acquire acreage in areas that will address gaps in service and provide links for the community*

## FACILITIES AND LAND ACQUISITION

The Town of Clayton has followed best practices for parks and recreation planning on each of the needed ten year horizons with plans being completed in 2004, 2013, and now 2024. The Clayton population grew from 11,000 in 2004, to 16,116 in 2013, with planning numbers for this study reflecting a growing population of 29,445 in Clayton. The Department serves an even larger recreation service area with the ETJ. This growth is an approximate 277% increase from 2000 to 2024 and an anticipated growth rate that could double the population to over 50,000 according to Capital Area planners. Each of the previous Parks and Recreation Master Plans identified demand based upon these population numbers and the expressed interests of the Clayton community.

The 2013 plan outlined the need for recreation land acquisition to meet the anticipated needs of the 10 year population growth. This acquisition has not occurred and these gap area locations still remain the same. The Clayton population is projected to double, and the land coverage loss identified as a part of this planning effort continues. It is critical Clayton set aside recreation lands to meet current gaps and plan for the future.

The analysis identified that Clayton is currently providing 4.9 acres of developed parkland per 1000 residents, and with the addition of future recreation acres, Clayton will be providing approximately 9 acres of parkland per 1000 residents. Both of these numbers fall below the median acreage of 11.3 acres per 1000 residents. The upper quartile provides 17.9 acres/1000 residents and the lower quartile provides 5.9 acres/1000 residents.

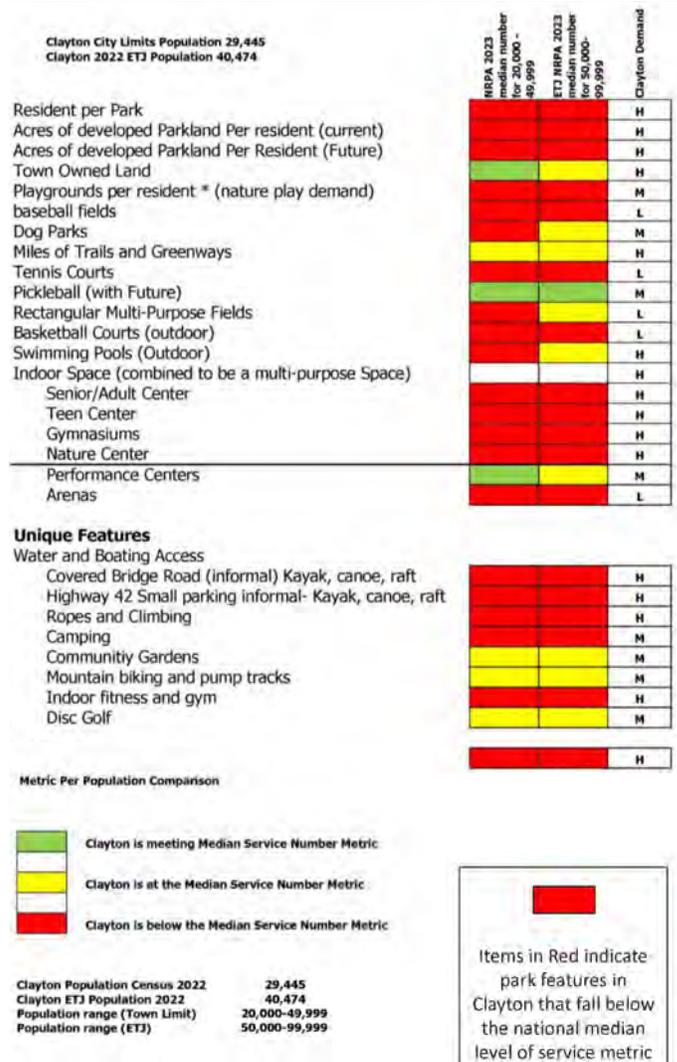
This is less than 1/2 of the acreage to reach the median acreage per resident illustrated as a best practice. In order to meet current demand of 11.3 acres per 1000 residents, an additional **100 acres** of parkland access would be needed, and to plan for the future, an additional **300 acres** would be needed. Land acquisition gap areas are shown on the gaps in resources map (page 66).

## FACILITIES

The Town has recently conducted several improvements to existing park and recreation resources including capital improvements identified in the 2004

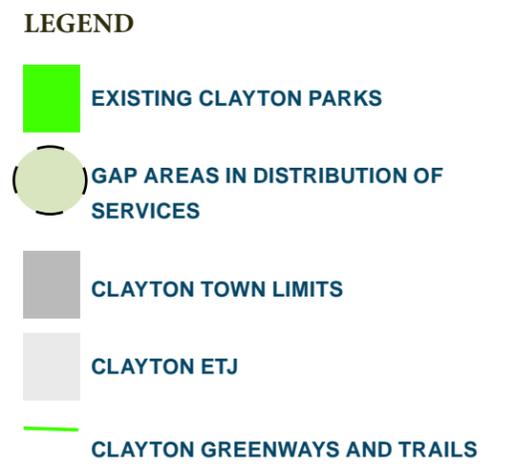
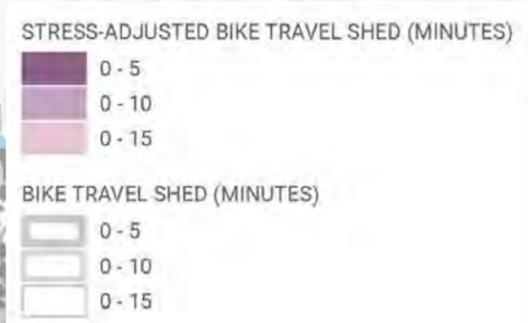
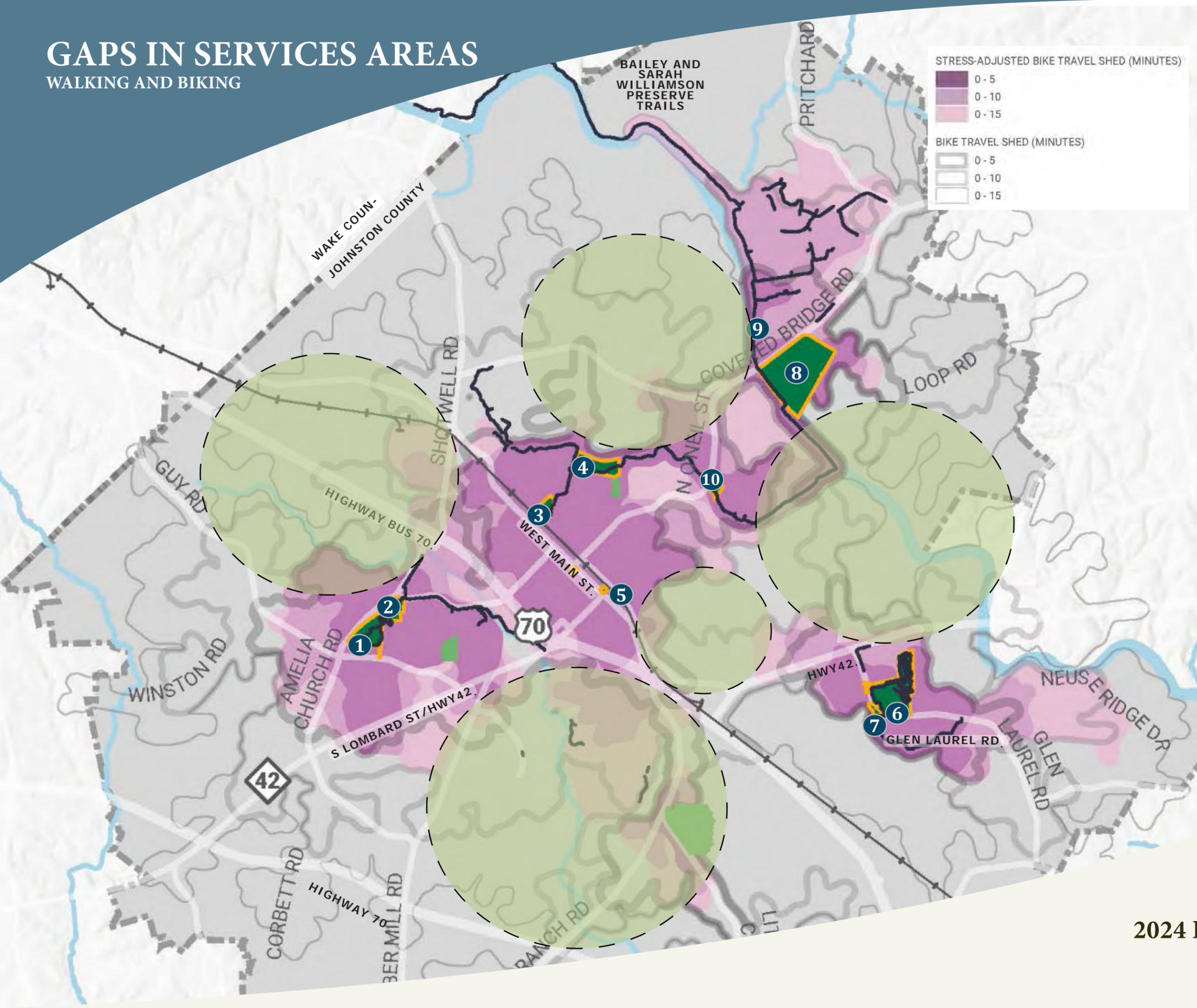
and 2013 plan to Municipal Park, Donald Clyde Sinclair Park, and currently to Community Park. These updates were elements identified in the 2013 plan. This plan evaluates demands presented by the public, via survey and in person, how these demands compare to current service offerings, and how these service offerings and resources compare to the National NRPA median metrics that serve as current benchmarks for best practices. All of these elements contribute to understanding if Clayton falls above, at, or below the level of recreation services they are providing. It is important to note the NRPA metrics are population-based and since the last plan was completed, the Town of Clayton population went from a smaller town population (less than 20,000) to one that falls within larger metric comparisons (20,000-49,999). Long range the population will increase to an even larger metric comparison of (50,000-99,999).

### Evaluation analysis of demand and benchmarks



# GAPS IN SERVICES AREAS

WALKING AND BIKING



- EXISTING PARKS**
- 1 CLAYTON COMMUNITY PARK
  - 2 CLAYTON COMMUNITY CENTER
  - 3 MUNICIPAL PARK
  - 4 LEGEND PARK TRAIL HEAD
  - 5 DONALD "CLYDE" SINCLAIR PARK
  - 6 EAST CLAYTON COMMUNITY PARK
  - 7 EAST CLAYTON DOG PARK
  - 8 FUTURE LOOP ROAD PARK
  - 9 CLAYTON RIVER WALK ON THE NEUSE
  - 10 SAM'S BRANCH GREENWAY



SCALE: 1" = 3600'

**CLAYTON**  
PARKS & RECREATION

**2024 PARKS AND RECREATION  
MASTER PLAN**

## FACILITIES

The growth and growing demand for access to parks and recreation resources require continued expansion of resources to maintain the small-town character, meet demand for parks as they provide community value, and to keep Clayton the active community that it is.



CLIMBING AND ROPES



ACCESS TO WATER SPORTS



INTERGENERATIONAL



NATURE PLAY

## Features in Demand

**Indoor Space**

**Greenways and Trails**

**Access To Water** (Pools, river & splashpads)

**Climbing and Ropes Courses**

**Open Space**

**Camping**

**Nature Play**

**Miniature Golf** (state and national trend)

**Mountain Biking & Pump Tracks**

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS FOR FACILITY NEEDS ARE:

In addition to the above identified features in demand, the Town needs to address the on-going demand for several recreation resources falling below the median benchmarks including access to:

- › Intergenerational and multi-purpose Indoor spaces for recreation and gathering
- › Access to aquatics
- › Access to unique features such as ropes courses, camping, disc golf, mountain biking, and kayaking and canoeing
- › Dog parks
- › Playgrounds and nature-based play
- › Basketball courts
- › Rectangular fields
- › Universally accessible parks and recreation resources in each park



*Continue access to rectangular fields to meet current demand*



*Address gap and distribution to features such as dog parks for increased recreation access*

## CONNECTIVITY

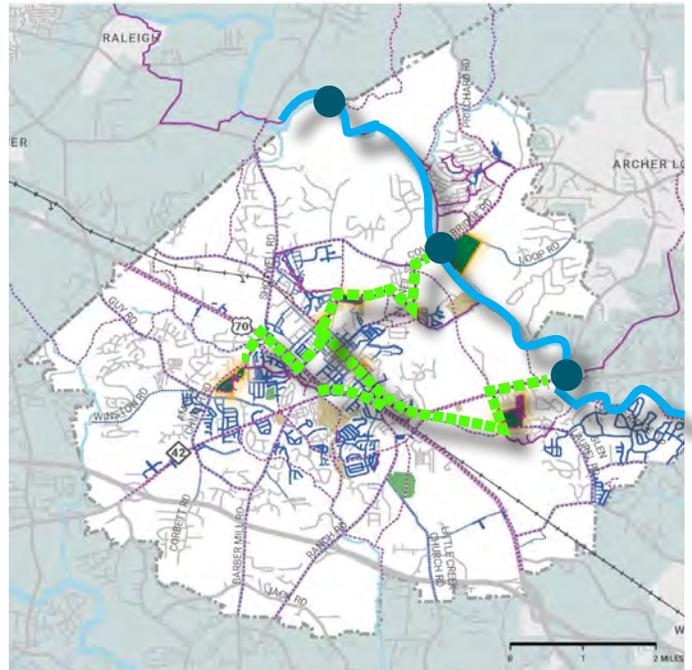
Greenways and Trails ranked the highest priority for facilities provided within the Town, and as one of the highest priorities for new facilities. Residents would like to walk to parks, businesses, and points of interests; however, currently 80% of residents drive to these destinations. The 2022 Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan outlined several key connectivity priorities, and the Recreation Access Study completed as a part of this effort identified the need for improved access and connectivity. Two important connectivity areas were identified:

- Improved connections from several area parks to residential and Clayton Downtown core and
- The need for more formalized and improved access to the Neuse River.

Both of these elements help meet gaps in services in the Town for improved access to water, and increased access to recreation resources within the Town.

The key greenway connection needs identified in this plan were also highlighted in the 2022 plan and include:

- Link Municipal & Donald “Clyde” Sinclair Park to Downtown
- Link East Clayton Community Park to the River and Downtown
- Link Community Park/Center/School across 70 to Downtown and provide more Hwy. 70 pedestrian crossings.
- Further evaluate and plan for Glen Laurel Road pedestrian crossing opportunities.



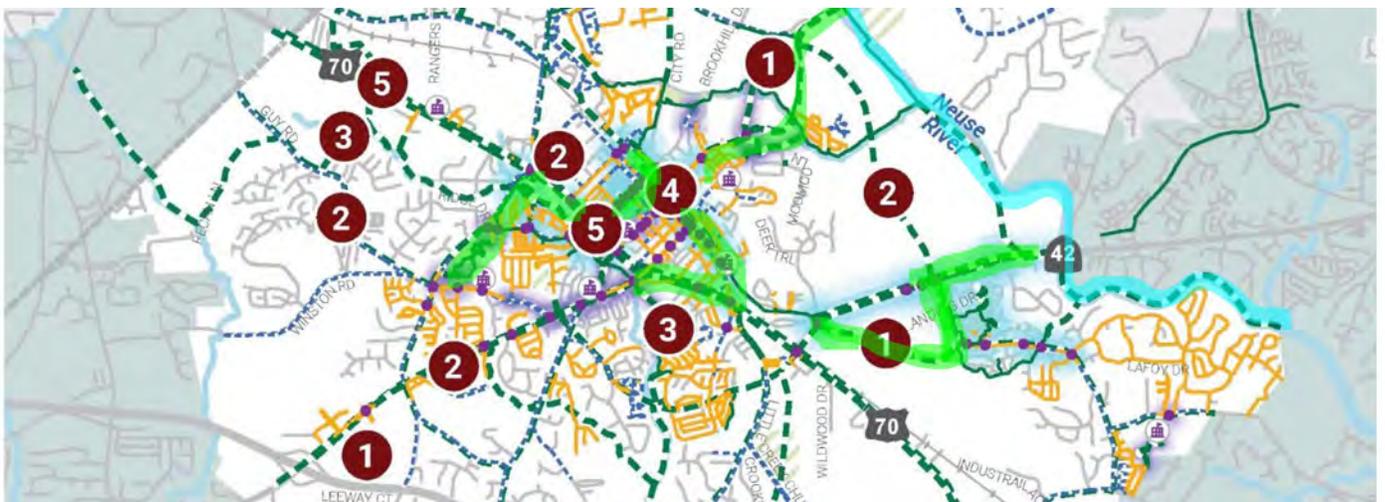
Provide key Greenway connections to Clayton Downtown core and formalize access to the Neuse River

- Connect the Dog Park to the system
- Ensure access and connections follow Universal Design principles

The key blueway connections identified in this plan for more formalized water access for fishing and boating are located at the river:

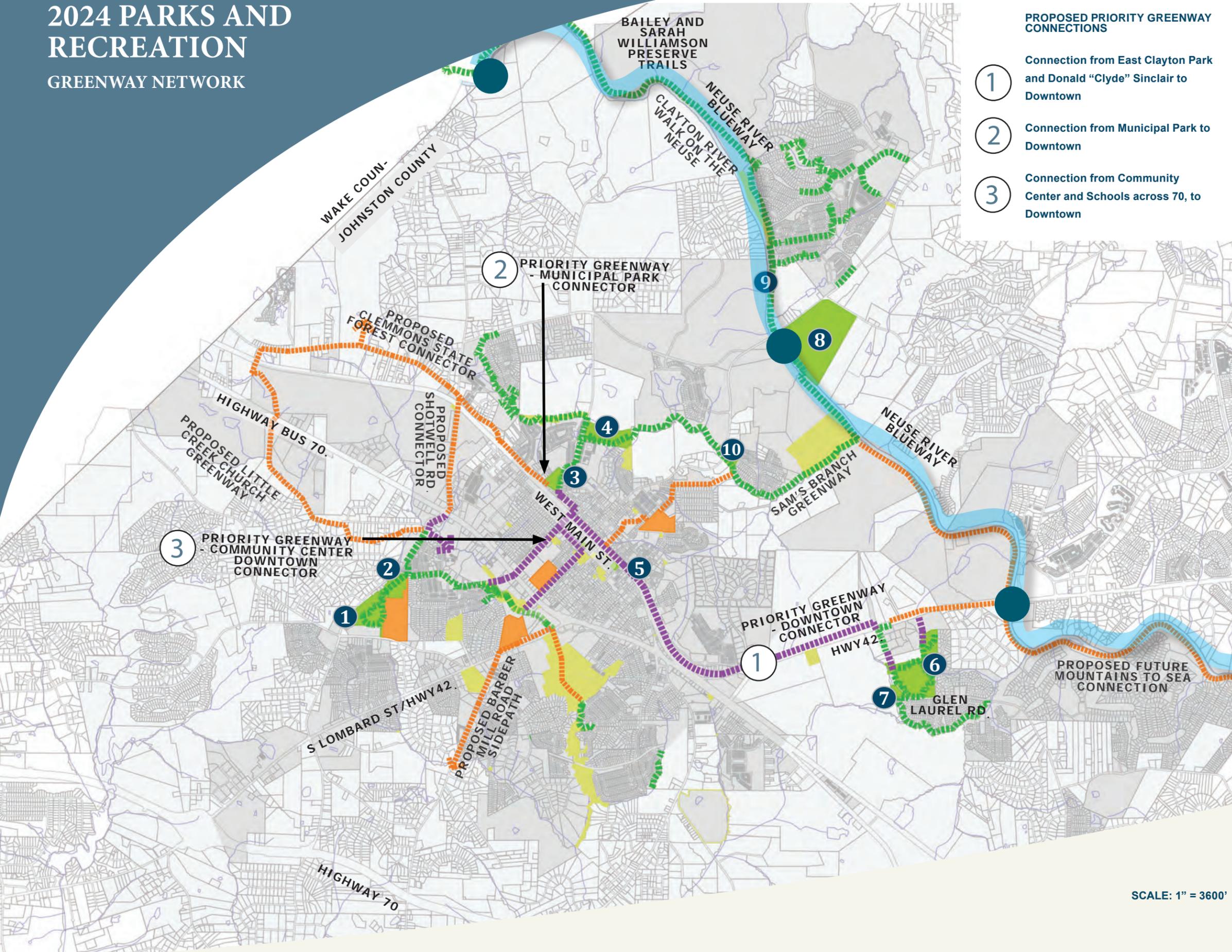
- Mial Plantation Road
- Covered Bridge Road
- Highway 42

While each of these areas provide informal access, there are no support services, vendor service providers, or information regarding safety or the river itself.



Connectivity priorities are also identified and align with routes numbered in the 2022 Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan

# 2024 PARKS AND RECREATION GREENWAY NETWORK



## PROPOSED PRIORITY GREENWAY CONNECTIONS

- 1 Connection from East Clayton Park and Donald "Clyde" Sinclair to Downtown
- 2 Connection from Municipal Park to Downtown
- 3 Connection from Community Center and Schools across 70, to Downtown

## LEGEND

- EXISTING CLAYTON PARKS
- TOWN OWNED LAND
- SCHOOLS
- CLAYTON TOWN LIMITS
- CLAYTON ETJ
- EXISTING GREENWAYS AND TRAILS
- PROPOSED PRIORITY GREENWAY CONNECTIONS
- PROPOSED GREENWAY CONNECTIONS
- NEUSE RIVER BLUEWAY
- PROPOSED NEUSE RIVER BLUEWAY ACCESS

## EXISTING PARKS

- 1 CLAYTON COMMUNITY PARK
- 2 CLAYTON COMMUNITY CENTER
- 3 MUNICIPAL PARK
- 4 LEGEND PARK TRAIL HEAD
- 5 DONALD "CLYDE" SINCLAIR PARK
- 6 EAST CLAYTON COMMUNITY PARK
- 7 EAST CLAYTON DOG PARK
- 8 FUTURE LOOP ROAD PARK
- 9 CLAYTON RIVER WALK ON THE NEUSE
- 10 SAM'S BRANCH GREENWAY



SCALE: 1" = 3600'  7200'  3600'

## PROGRAMS

Expanded special events and health and wellness programs are priorities to the community. Clayton residents want increased access to resources being provided. Improving access through connectivity, increased hours of operation, and expansion of programs will better serve the recreation population. A number of recreation programs are offered within the system to meet this need, but expanding age groups, locations, and hours will help meet demand. Additionally, making all of your parks better connected will improve overall health of all users, and in some cases, encourage users to come to the park. There were several requests to increase access to fitness and wellness programming, life skills programming, and partnership programs for wellness. Clayton falls below the national benchmark for access to private fitness facilities per the ETC survey results and also falls below access to these programs per the NRPA metrics.

In Demand Programs include:

- Expanding Special Events Programs that focus on family
- More fitness and wellness
- Water sports
- Adult programs
- Senior travel trips
- Trails, cycling, and mountain biking programs
- Life skills programs
- Youth camps (full day)



Demand for access to programs for all types is high, specifically those that can be offered indoors and through special events.

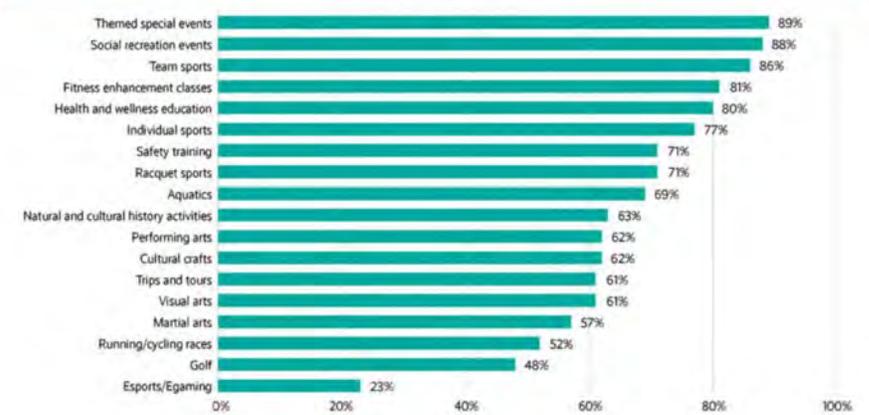
### PROGRAMS

Clayton Residents want more Health and Wellness, Special Events, and Adult Athletics and Outdoor Movies and Concerts

**These Recreational Demands are related to Space and Staff Needs!**

*Benchmark Figures for programming from the 2023 NRPA Agency Performance Review*

**FIGURE 6: PROGRAMMING OFFERED BY PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES (PERCENT OF AGENCIES)**



**FIGURE 7: TARGETED PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN, OLDER ADULTS AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (PERCENT OF AGENCIES BY JURISDICTION POPULATION)**

	Percent of Agencies	Less Than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 250,000	More Than 250,000
Summer camp	82%	60%	86%	93%	86%	90%
Specific senior programs	77	61	77	87	84	77
Specific teen programs	65	43	61	77	77	78
Programs for people with disabilities	63	34	55	80	78	81
Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) programs	58	42	49	68	64	71
After-school programs	53	45	47	53	57	69
Preschool	33	24	32	44	34	33
Before-school programs	19	16	19	21	17	18
Full daycare	7	5	6	11	4	12

## STAFF

The Town of Clayton currently provides 18 Full-Time Equivalents divided among the department administration, programming, and operations. As mentioned in the analysis section, this currently falls below the median comparison for communities of similar size.

This comparison is important for two reasons. One, the department is currently providing program services beyond the staff capacity, and there are currently in demand for programs which cannot be provided. Secondly, the national benchmarks compare FTE's for operations based upon departmental demand. The Town of Clayton Operations department serves beyond its department so not only do these numbers fall below the national median, they are currently serving more than the department benchmarks reference.

The Town needs to determine what level of service they want to have for programming and operations-above, at, or below this median. These staffing numbers will determine the level of service programs can be provided for growth.



*The level of service staff goals will help determine what level of service programs and operations can be run*

## Lower Quartile

Agencies that fall in the Lower Quartile provide 17 FTE's for the population Range of 20,000- 49,999

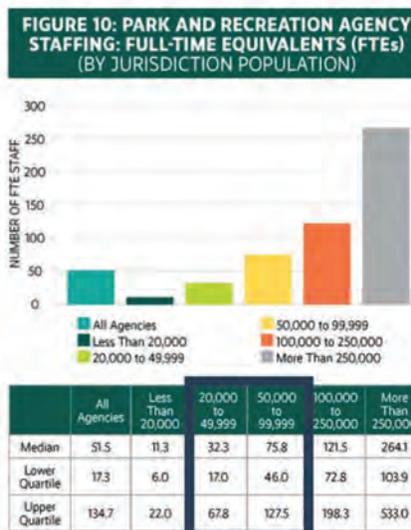
**Clayton**  
**18 FTE's**

Clayton Currently has 18 Full Time Parks & Recreation Employees

3 serving in Administration

6 Serving Programs

9 Serving Operations



## PROGRAMS

Clayton Served **+5365** Program participants in 2023 (this does not account for Special Events participants)

There were over **590** waitlisted participants and **80% of these** were for indoor programs

*The level of service that can be provided for programming is related to staff availability*

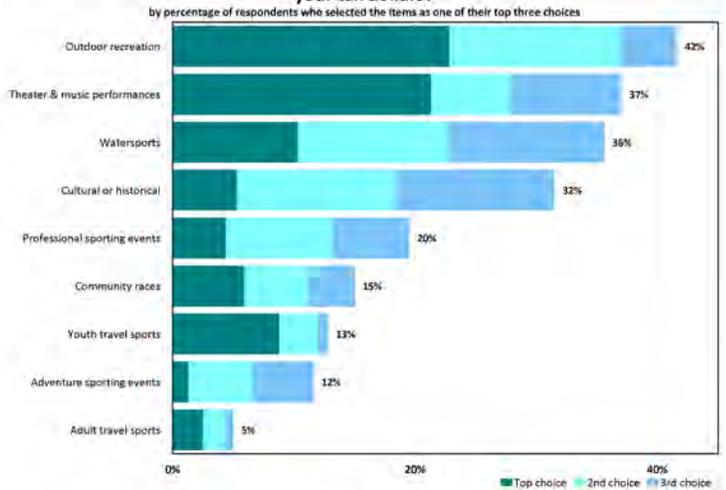
## FUNDING

The Town of Clayton currently has strong support for parks and recreation from its users and residents.



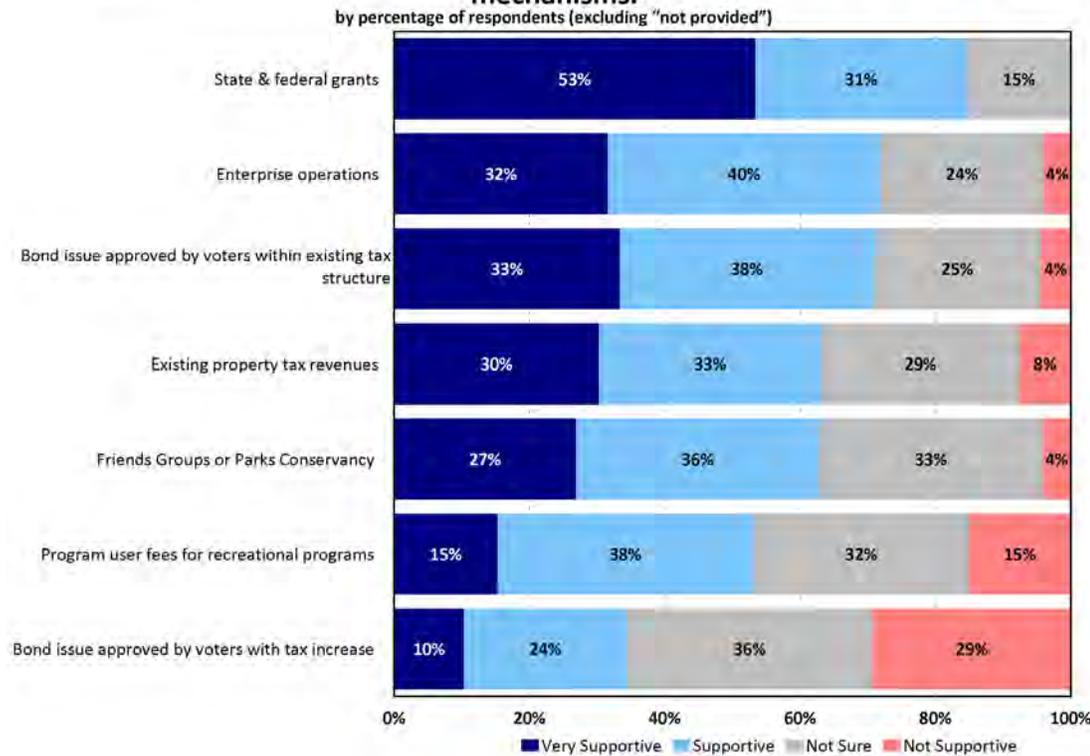
There are several funding tools the Town can use to address needs and move findings to action. Town residents were asked about their support for funding tools and what items they see as priorities for investment. The survey results related to funding priorities are listed below:

### Q15. Which THREE of the items in Question 14 would you be willing to support with your tax dollars?



ETC chart question 15, survey report page 40

### Q16. Please rate your level of support for each of the following funding mechanisms.



ETC chart question 16, survey report page 41

## FUNDING STRATEGY ALTERNATIVES

The Town of Clayton has been providing parks and recreation services to the community using a variety of funding tools since its inception. However, growth demands are increasing level of service demands. Clayton will need to continue evaluating the variety of funding source tools available to help meet community needs.

The following funding tools can be assessed as part of a larger evaluation for new and on-going parks and recreation services.

**BONDS** are a fixed income instrument that represent a loan made by an investor to a borrower (typically corporate or governmental). A bond can be thought of as an I.O.U. between the lender and borrower that includes the details of the loan and its payments. In 2019, the Town of Clayton residents voted “yes” to an 18 million parks bond with over a 74% approval rating. This led to improvements at Municipal Park, Clayton Community Center, Clayton Community Park, and East Clayton Park.

**CROWDFUNDING & “ADOPT A PARK/GREENWAY”** is a way to provide cleanup support and web-based funding. These tools are showing greater use in parks and recreation. Funds are acquired from people who are willing to support a specific project, program, or facility. This tool has been a great resource for greenway development, stream clean-ups, and small projects.

**DEVELOPMENT FEES** can be assessed for the development of residential properties with the proceeds to be used for parks, recreation, and open space acquisitions. This is a typical planning tool used in communities throughout NC, one which Clayton uses through its Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). These tools should be evaluated to determine if there is potential for incentives for developments using best management practice and nature-based strategies.

**FRIENDS OF THE PARK** groups are organized fundraising groups who raise money for specific park projects, areas, or regions. Clayton can partner with a local nonprofit to accept private donations. Fundraising events can provide a means for support in programming and park facility projects.

**GRANTS** are a common funding tool for parks and recreation projects and programs. There are numerous grant opportunities for parks and recreation in NC but the most common sources are:

- › Parks & Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) – including the Accessible Parks program

- › Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
- › Recreational Trails Fund (RTP)
- › Complete the Trails (CTP)

Parks and recreation services have become much more of a community-wide service and trends in grant funding have branched out beyond traditional sources. A listing provided by North Carolina State University Recreation Resource Services (NCSU RRS) maintains updated grant resources in the following categories:

- › Places and Spaces
- › Native Plants
- › Health and Wellbeing
- › Travel and Tourism
- › Community Development
- › Athletics

Grant resource link: <https://rrs.cnr.ncsu.edu/grant-resources/>

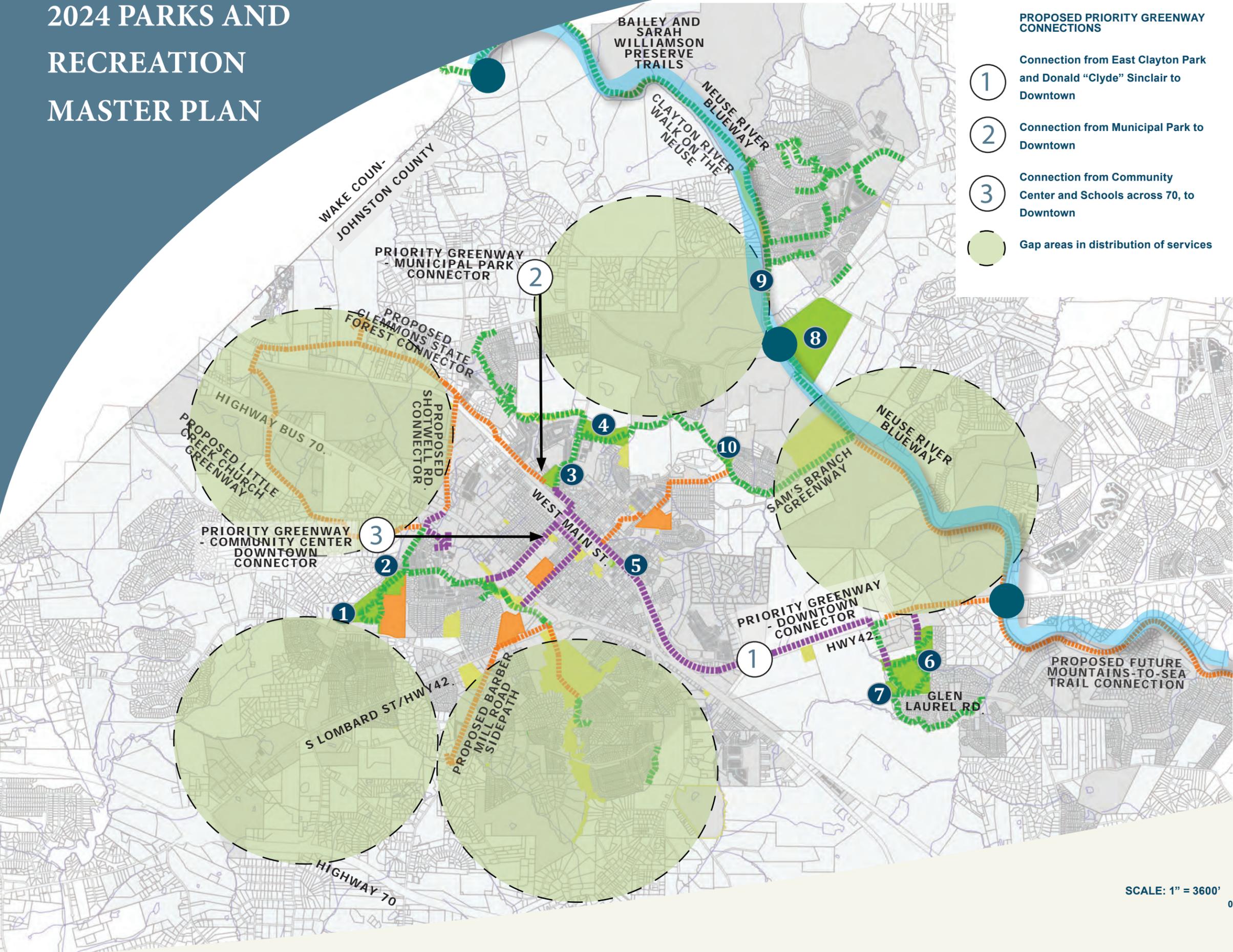
**SPONSORSHIPS/NAMING** can fund events, facilities, or equipment. Sponsorship agreements should clearly articulate expectations between the Town of Clayton and the sponsor. Many cities and counties are now selling naming rights for new buildings or key facilities in parks for the development cost associated with improvement. This was one of the funding source tools used with Harmony Playground located in East Clayton Park and the performance shelter in Municipal Park .

**USER FEES** are used with specialty programs and/or facilities with examples such as sports requiring referees and indoor facility usage.

**UTILITY AGREEMENTS COORDINATION** can be used for more varied infrastructure uses such as greenways, water/sewer, fiber optic, gas, etc. By including greenways in the infrastructure conversation opportunities can increase for connectivity and shared use.

**PUBIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS-** are becoming more of a common tool in parks and recreation. These opportunities occur when there is a partnership between the government and a private sector company. Many agencies are relying on these partnerships as a way to reduce operating budgets – turning these responsibilities over to, or sharing them with, private companies.

# 2024 PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN



## PROPOSED PRIORITY GREENWAY CONNECTIONS

- ① Connection from East Clayton Park and Donald "Clyde" Sinclair to Downtown
- ② Connection from Municipal Park to Downtown
- ③ Connection from Community Center and Schools across 70, to Downtown
- Gap areas in distribution of services

## LEGEND

- EXISTING CLAYTON PARKS
  - TOWN OWNED LAND
  - SCHOOLS
  - CLAYTON TOWN LIMITS
  - CLAYTON ETJ
  - EXISTING GREENWAYS AND TRAILS
  - PROPOSED PRIORITY GREENWAY CONNECTIONS
  - PROPOSED GREENWAY CONNECTIONS
  - NEUSE RIVER BLUEWAY
  - PROPOSED NEUSE RIVER BLUEWAY ACCESS
- ### EXISTING PARKS
- ① CLAYTON COMMUNITY PARK
  - ② CLAYTON COMMUNITY CENTER
  - ③ MUNICIPAL PARK
  - ④ LEGEND PARK TRAIL HEAD
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  - ⑨ CLAYTON RIVER WALK ON THE NEUSE
  - ⑩ SAM'S BRANCH GREENWAY



SCALE: 1" = 3600'  7200'  3600'