



CLARKSTON PATHWAYS TO PLAY

REIMAGINING PARKS, ● PLAY, AND POSSIBILITY

FOR ALL OUR PARKS. ● OUR PEOPLE. ● OUR POSSIBILITY.

PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN
2026

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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PLAN ADOPTED AUGUST 2026

CITIZENS OF CLARKSTON

A special thank you to all the community members who attended meetings, shared input, and helped to shape this plan.

Your contributions as residents, park users, and greenspace advocates are truly appreciated and this plan is a reflection of your imagination for a greener, greater, and more playful Clarkston!



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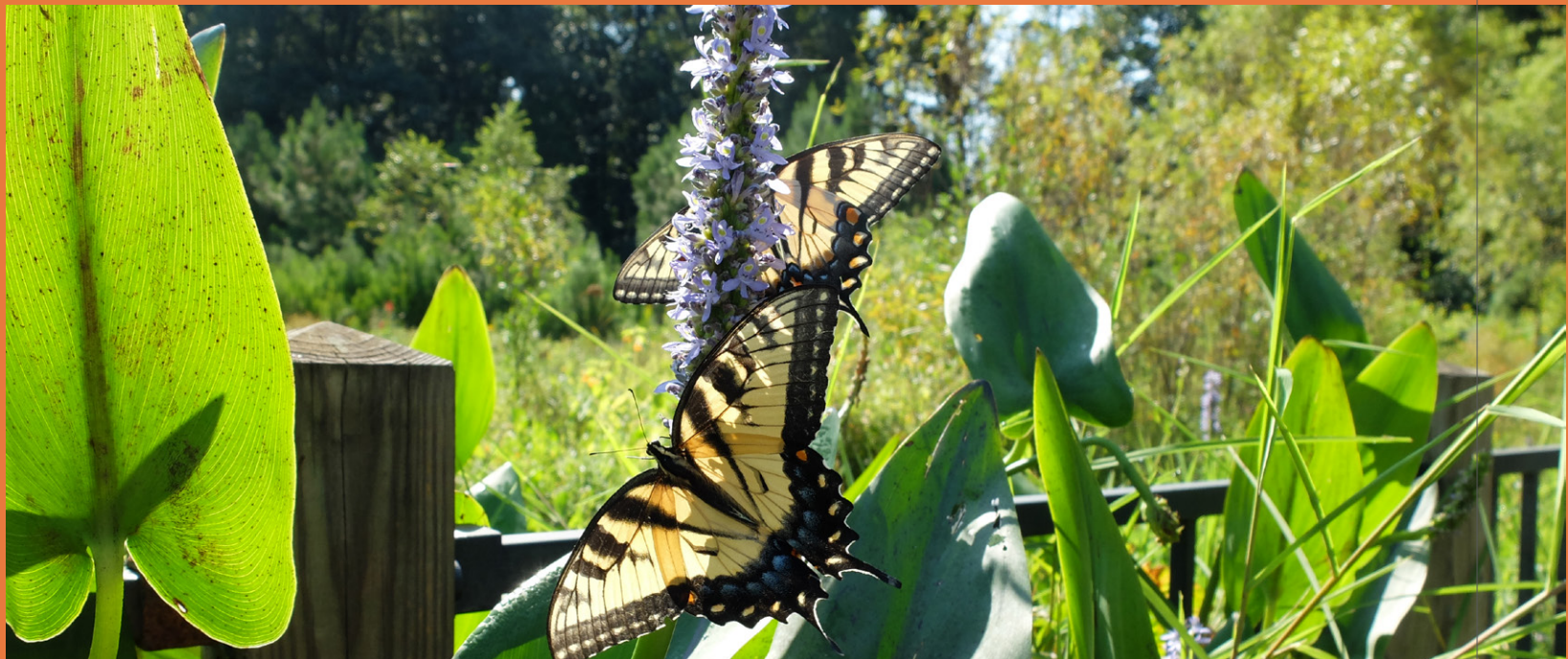
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1

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A CITY WHERE POSSIBILITIES GROW
- 1.2 PLAN PURPOSE
- 1.3 PLANNING PROCESS



CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Why is a parks and recreation master plan needed?

Parks, recreation amenities, indoor centers, and the programs provided at these facilities are an essential service of any city and are typically some of the most visited attractions. Clarkston is no exception.

This Parks and Recreation Master Plan provides a comprehensive framework to evaluate existing conditions, identify service gaps, and guide future investment in parks, facilities, and programs.

The plan supports Clarkston's goal of creating an equitable, accessible, and sustainable community through a parks system that serves residents of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities.

A CITY WHERE POSSIBILITIES GROW

Clarkston Background

Known as "the most diverse square mile in America" the City of Clarkston is a small town with a remarkable story. Originally developed in the mid-1800s as a stop on the Georgia Railroad between Atlanta and Athens, Clarkston (officially incorporated in 1882) was a typical small town on the outskirts of Atlanta for over a century. Many residents commuted into Atlanta on the railroad, and later streetcars, making it one of the South's first suburban communities.

Clarkston experienced gradual growth from 1900 through the 1950s, counting just 1,524 residents in 1960. As much of metro Atlanta began to boom with suburban development, Clarkston also saw growth but largely maintained its small town character. Starting in the 1980s, Clarkston entered a new chapter, as refugee asylum programs identified the city as a good location to resettle refugees given its low housing costs, access to public transportation, and proximity to opportunities in Atlanta.

The city's population began to grow with a new wave of diversity as the newcomers settled and were successfully integrated into the community.

By 2010, Clarkston High School had students from more than 50 countries and roughly half the population was born outside the US.

Following two annexations that increased the city's size and population, the continued growth spurred local officials to make infrastructure investments, including major streetscape improvements over the last 10 years.

Private development has also been making a mark in Clarkston, with new housing developments and commercial spaces filling previously vacant lots.

While refugee resettlement has slowed significantly in recent years, Clarkston's reputation for social diversity in a convenient location with the character of a historic southern railroad town continues to attract new residents.



The Pathway to Play - Parks & Recreation Background

While Clarkston's system of parks and recreation facilities is not large, its history is notable.

The Clarkston Woman's Club building, now used as a community center for meetings and events, was built in 1913 in a prominent location facing the railroad near the city center. It was the first club house in DeKalb County to be owned by a woman's group, and today it is the third oldest Woman's Club building in Georgia.



Milam Park, the City's premier greenspace, was created through the advocacy of community members. In 1927, residents Mrs. A.P. Milam, Mrs. Sadie Ray, and other mothers and women of Clarkston asked the City Council to support a public park, seeing a need for space for children to play. Following the transfer of a piece of land from P.R.G. Clark, DeKalb County's first public park and playground, Clark Park opened in August of 1927. The name was later changed to honor Mrs. Milam and the women's original vision for a public park.



DEKALB COUNTY'S ROLE

A Longstanding Partnership

In the early 20th century, the City of Clarkston managed Milam Park, and the City's other parks. Following the establishment of the DeKalb County Parks Department in 1953, the County started to add more greenspaces in and around Clarkston and make improvements such as installing picnic tables and grills and grading ball fields, often in collaboration with DeKalb's cities. The County's 1967 Park Plan identified a swimming pool and bathhouse, baseball field, five picnic shelters, tables, grills, and two tennis courts in Milam Park. Many of these elements remain today, though renovations have occurred.

1970s

By the late 1970s, there were four parks listed in Clarkston:

- Clark Street Park (City owned and maintained—this would later become Friendship Forest)
- Milam Park (City owned and maintained)
- Forty Oaks Park (County owned and maintained)
- Clarkston Park (County owned and operated)

Over the next decade, the park system appears to have remained largely the same.

CLARKSTON PARK INVENTORY			
A. Vest Pocket Parks	V-9	CLARK STREET PARK - 2.4 Acres	CT 220
		Baseball Field ✓ Basketball Court ✓ Playground Equipment ✓	Picnic Shelters ✓ Barbecue Grill ✓ Tennis Courts (2) ✓
B. Neighborhood Parks	N-35	MILAM PARK - 12.5 Acres	CT 220
		2 Concession Stands ✓ 4 Shelters ✓ Large Pavilion ✓ Playground Equipment ✓ Rest Rooms	Little League Field ✓ Swimming Pool with Bathhouse ✓ Football Stadium (Lighted) ✓ 2 Tennis Courts (Lighted) ✓
	N-36	FORTY OAKS PARK - 10.5 Acres (County owned and maintained park)	CT 220
		Not Developed	
	N-30	CLARKSTON PARK - 16.0 Acres (Owned and Operated by DeKalb County)	CT 220
		Open Field Area* Playground Equipment*	2 Multi-Use Courts* Basketball Court* Picnic Pavilion*
*Facilities to be developed during 1979			

1990s

Following the city's growth that began in the 1980s, and as a result of regional parks and trail planning, new recreation amenities began to be introduced in the 1990s. A significant development was the creation of the PATH Stone Mountain Trail, which provided a popular multi-use path connecting downtown Atlanta all the way to Stone Mountain, with Clarkston gaining a trail that transects the city. Starting in the early 2000s, the City added four pocket parks, mostly in areas of public road right-of-way, bringing the total park inventory to eight.

TODAY

Given the significant changes Clarkston has experienced over the last few decades, City leadership saw a need to ensure that residents' recreation needs are being well served. First, by hiring a Director of Parks and Recreation (the City's first) and then by commissioning this plan to prepare Clarkston for a new era of parks and programs.

ABOVE The Atlanta Regional Commission's 1979 "Areawide Outdoor Recreation Planning in the Atlanta Region" document included an inventory of Clarkston's parks, showing a mix of City and County maintenance.

BELOW The PATH Foundation Stone Mountain Trail originally built in Clarkston in the 1990s continues to provide new recreation opportunities, such as the development of Trilside Green, the pocket park added along the trail in 2019.



1.2 PLAN PURPOSE

A Playbook for the Future

This plan encompasses all aspects of the parks and recreation system, from the physical park spaces, amenities, and buildings, to programming, funding, staffing, and administration.

THE PLAN SEEKS TO ACHIEVE FOUR OVERALL OBJECTIVES:

- 1 Develop a **guiding document** for future development and redevelopment of the community's **parks and recreation system** over the next 10-years.
- 2 Establish a road map for **ensuring equitable proximity** and **connections** to the parks and recreation system, now and into the future.
- 3 Utilize a **system-wide approach** to develop goals, policies, and guidelines.
- 4 **Prioritize strategies** based on **current and future funding** scenarios.



1.3 PLANNING PROCESS

Initiated in April 2025, the year-long parks and recreation planning process follows a multi-phase strategy, rooted in data and designed for adaptation and flexibility. It consists of an analysis of the City's existing Context, a Needs and Priorities Assessment, a Long-Range Vision, and an Implementation Strategy. Each phase of the process builds on the findings and conclusions from the previous phases.

Following is an overview of each of the report chapters and a description of how the planning process is integrated into each chapter.

CHAPTER 2

This chapter includes an analysis of the existing conditions of both the city and the parks and recreation system. The existing conditions analysis focuses on understanding the parks and recreation system within Clarkston's existing challenges and opportunities.

This focus includes a review of previously completed plans and a review of Clarkston's existing and projected demographics. The parks and recreation system analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the state of the department, its recreation programs, and parks and recreation facilities.

CHAPTER 3

This chapter identifies the gaps between the existing conditions and the desired future for the parks and recreation system. The process is based on a proven "triangulated" approach to identifying needs and priorities. It includes various primary qualitative, primary quantitative, and secondary methods to determine top priorities from different perspectives. Specifically, these include the following:

Primary Quantitative Methods:

- Statistically Valid Survey
- Level-of-Service Analysis and benchmarking

Primary Qualitative Methods:

- Mayor/ Council interviews
- Staff interviews
- Focus group interviews
- Special events public engagement
- Intercept park user interviews

Secondary Data Methods:

- Park site evaluations
- Parks and recreation trends analyses

CHAPTER 4

VISION provides recommendations that form a vision for the system based on:

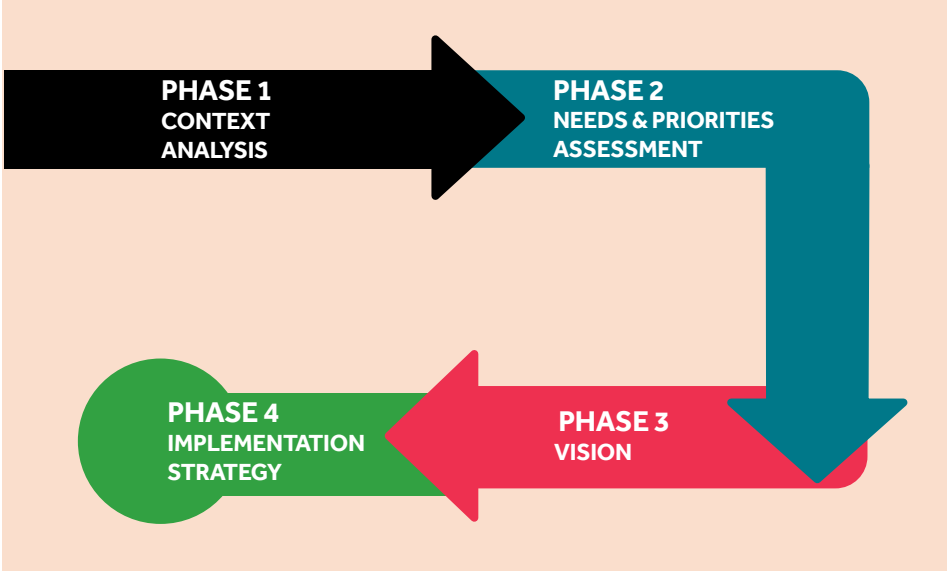
1. Findings from the first two phases of the process;
2. Best planning practices and principles; and
3. The unique desires and aspirations of the community.

The vision includes a description of the parks, recreation, and cultural "subsystems", service-delivery models, classifications, and level-of-service metrics. The Vision also includes an estimate of costs to maintain and sustain the existing system, and construct and maintain the capital improvements and programs identified in the vision.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY includes a summary of revenue projections, and a phasing/funding plan to implement top priorities based on available and projected funding. The Implementation Strategy also discusses the proposed role of the City, and other partners in realizing the vision.

THE PROCESS



2

CONTEXT ANALYSIS

2.1 CONTEXT ANALYSIS INTRODUCTION

2.2 CLARKSTON'S PLANNING CONTEXT

2.3 CLARKSTON'S DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

2.4 CLARKSTON'S PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM CONTEXT



CHAPTER 2 CONTEXT ANALYSIS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Parks and recreation systems occupy a unique space at the intersection between the physical environment of a place, the people who live there, and their culture. For many people, parks are the public spaces they interact with most directly. Additionally, parks and recreation represents a service of the government with the rare power to provide environmental, social, and cultural benefits, both on an individual level, and for the community as a whole. For these reasons, the quality and health of a parks and recreation system can be a strong indicator of the quality and health of its surrounding community.

Because every park system and community is different, understanding the nuances of Clarkston's park system within its local context is extremely valuable to contributing to the overall success of this plan and its impact within the community. The Consultant Team reviewed existing documents, analyzed demographics and trends, inventoried the existing parks system, visited and evaluated parks, conducted a Level of Service (LOS) analysis, and benchmarked aspects of the City of Clarkston's Parks and Recreation Department against other comparable jurisdictions in order to assess existing conditions through the following three specific contexts:



CLARKSTON'S PLANNING CONTEXT

The landscape of the built and natural environment, plus plans, initiatives, and projects shaping Clarkston.



CLARKSTON'S DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

The characteristics of the existing and projected population of Clarkston.



CLARKSTON'S PARKS SYSTEM CONTEXT

The organizational, programmatic, and physical condition of Clarkston's existing parks and recreation system.

2.2 PLANNING CONTEXT

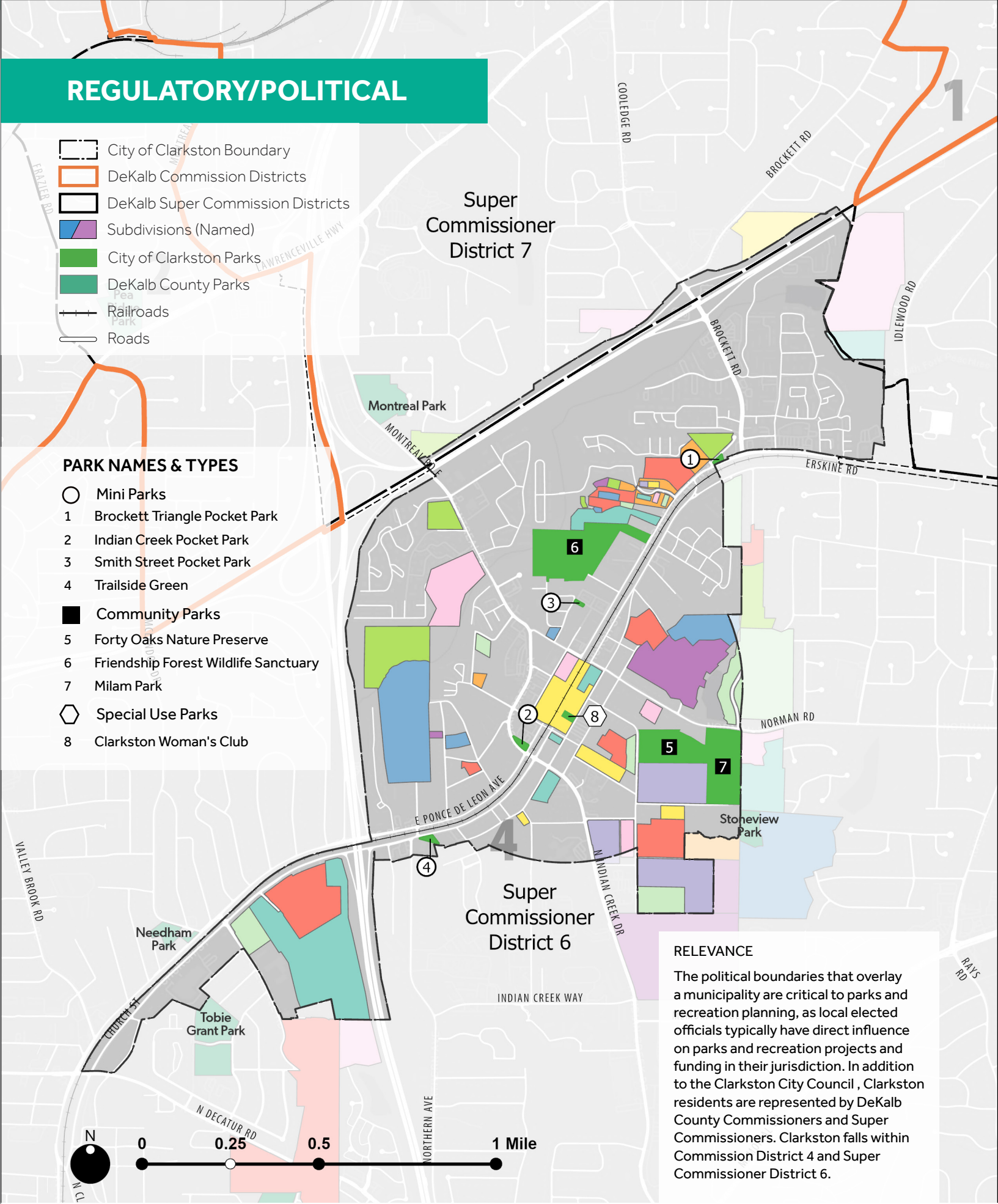
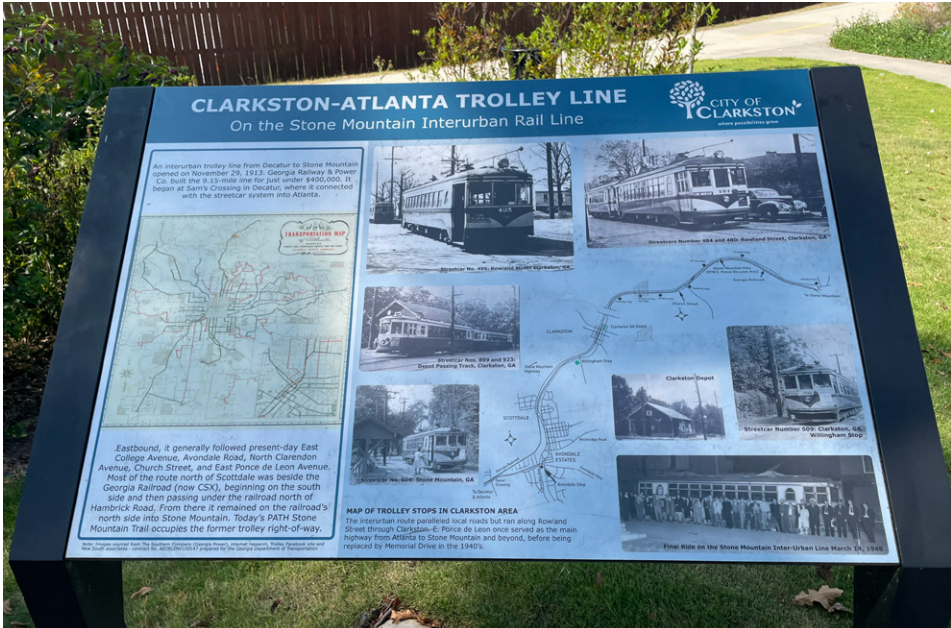
Modern community planning involves a complex layering of regulatory, infrastructure, and environmental systems, including zoning, political representation, transportation and education, just to name a few.

Community planning typically functions best when it ensures that there is coordination across this broad spectrum of activities, embodying the idea of “breaking down silos” between the isolated structure of government agencies and departments.

The complexities of engineering complex physical infrastructure in the built environment, while ensuring the health and vitality of the natural environment; uplifting culture, educating all citizens, and providing a strong economic outlook for every household, these are the challenges of modern community planning.

Political decision makers must navigate this multilayered reality as they lead our communities and seek to represent their constituents. On top of it all, cities are almost always in constant flux, with “change as the only constant” certainly a reality for Clarkston over the last 50 years.

Given this context, it is critical to understand the ongoing planning and development in the City of Clarkston to ensure that parks and recreation planning is designed to integrate with and support other efforts and initiatives. This section maps the existing and planned conditions of Clarkston with relevance to this Parks and Recreation Master Plan.



RELEVANCE

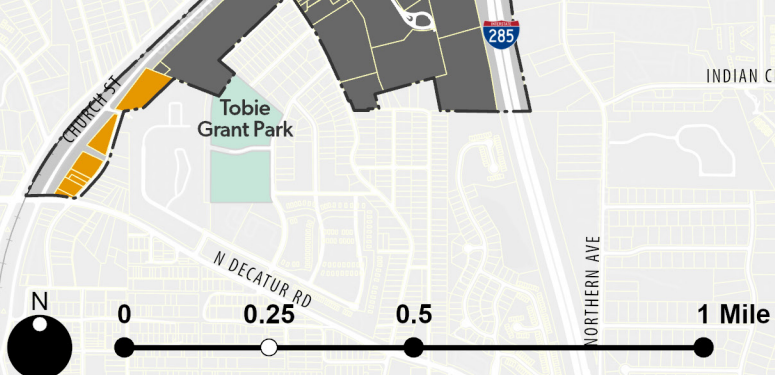
The political boundaries that overlay a municipality are critical to parks and recreation planning, as local elected officials typically have direct influence on parks and recreation projects and funding in their jurisdiction. In addition to the Clarkston City Council, Clarkston residents are represented by DeKalb County Commissioners and Super Commissioners. Clarkston falls within Commission District 4 and Super Commissioner District 6.

FUTURE LAND USE

- City of Clarkston Boundary
- Future Land Use - Traditional Neighborhoods
- Future Land Use - Single Family Home Areas
- Future Land Use - Mixed Use
- Future Land Use - Industrial
- City of Clarkston Parks
- DeKalb County Parks
- Railroads
- Roads

PARK NAMES & TYPES

- Mini Parks
 - 1 Brockett Triangle Pocket Park
 - 2 Indian Creek Pocket Park
 - 3 Smith Street Pocket Park
 - 4 Trailside Green
- Community Parks
 - 5 Forty Oaks Nature Preserve
 - 6 Friendship Forest Wildlife Sanctuary
 - 7 Milam Park
- Special Use Parks
 - 8 Clarkston Woman's Club



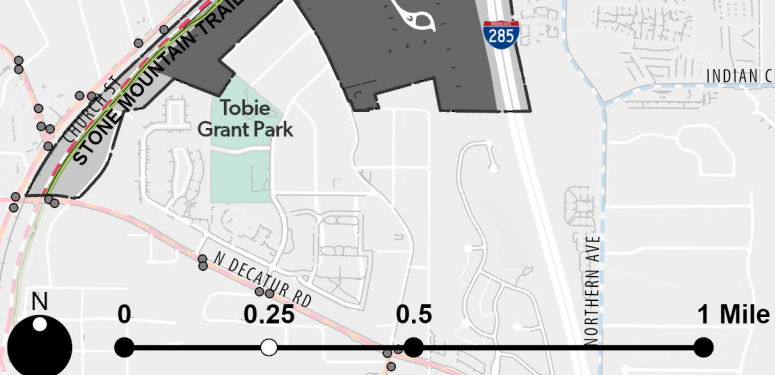
RELEVANCE
Along with zoning, Future Land Use is one of the most powerful mechanisms municipalities have for shaping the character of their jurisdiction. The Future Land Use map from the Clarkston Comprehensive Plan identifies 4 land use categories, which impact zoning and development decisions.

TRANSPORTATION

- City of Clarkston Boundary
- City of Clarkston Parks
- DeKalb County Parks
- MARTA Bus Routes
- MARTA Bus Stops
- Sidewalks
- Shared Use Paths
- Railroads
- Roads
- Roads - Arterials
- Roads - Collector

PARK NAMES & TYPES

- Mini Parks
 - 1 Brockett Triangle Pocket Park
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RELEVANCE
Transportation infrastructure, in particular road right-of-way, constitutes a large segment of the public realm and offers numerous opportunities for integration with parks and recreation, from sidewalks to bike lanes to greenway linear parks.
Clarkston is continuing to improve and expand its network of pedestrian and bicycle facilities and these developments will be important to consider in parks and recreation planning.
Additionally, Clarkston is served by multiple MARTA bus routes with numerous stops. Stops may also provide opportunities for integrating recreation or signage to increase awareness of nearby parks.

ENVIRONMENTAL

- City of Clarkston Boundary
- City of Clarkston Parks
- DeKalb County Parks
- County Parks
- Railroads
- Roads
- 2 Ft Contour Lines
- Streams & Waterbodies
- Floodplain
- % Tree Canopy
 - 0 - 25%
 - 26 - 50%
 - 51 - 75%
 - 76 - 100%

PARK NAMES & TYPES

- Mini Parks
 - 1 Brockett Triangle Pocket Park
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 - 3 Smith Street Pocket Park
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RELEVANCE

Environmental conditions are important to consider when determining appropriate uses within park land, and for selecting land with potential for recreational uses.

Flood zones, wetlands, steep slopes and forested areas are particularly critical to document as these sensitive areas provide significant environmental value, and typically have development restrictions making them advantageous for development as parkland.

REGIONAL GREENSPACE

- DeKalb County Boundary
- City of Clarkston Boundary
- DeKalb Cities Boundaries
- City of Clarkston Parks
- DeKalb County Parks
- Other Parks & Greenspaces
- Golf Courses (Public & Private)
- Shared Use Paths/Trails (Existing)

RELEVANCE

Clarkston's location provides residents with access to a range of other city, county and state parks within a 5-mile radius, including a variety of regional scale parks with unique and extensive recreation opportunities.

Notably, Stone Mountain Park is roughly four miles due east and is accessible via the PATH trail. Significant DeKalb county regional parks include Henderson, Wade Walker, and Mason Mill Park, all within 3-5 miles. Further west, the City of Atlanta's Piedmont and Grant Parks are roughly 8 miles from Clarkston.

PLAN REVIEW

This Parks and Recreation Master Plan is intended to integrate into the fabric of the City, expanding and improving parks and recreation services for every resident. This planning does not occur in a vacuum--it builds on previous park planning and ongoing projects, as well as the many other related plans completed in recent years.

The following section includes reviews of recent Clarkston plans, highlighting the relevant components that will inform this effort.

CLARKSTON 2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE (2021)

The Clarkston 2040 Comprehensive Plan Update is a long-range policy and development framework guiding growth, land use, housing, transportation, economic development, and community wellbeing in the City of Clarkston through 2040. The plan builds on prior planning efforts, particularly the 2015 Livable Centers Initiative, and focuses on revitalizing downtown, supporting diverse populations, and improving quality of life through inclusive, sustainable development strategies. It serves as the primary framework for shaping Clarkston's physical, economic, and social development through 2040.



Themes / Analysis

1. Demographics and Diversity

- Highly diverse population with many refugees and immigrants.
- Lower median incomes, high renter population (87%), and younger population compared to the region.
- Language barriers and socioeconomic challenges affect engagement and opportunity.

2. Housing

- Dominated by aging multifamily rental housing.
- Strong need for affordable housing, improved apartment quality, and renter protections.
- Rising housing costs and gentrification risks threaten affordability.

3. Economic Development

- Limited employment opportunities within the city; most residents commute elsewhere.
- Small-scale, locally owned businesses dominate.
- Downtown lacks vitality, essential services, and investment.

4. Land Use and Urban Form

- Weak downtown core and lack of gathering spaces.
- Presence of incompatible land uses and underdeveloped parcels.
- Opportunity for mixed-use redevelopment and creation of a stronger town center.

5. Transportation and Connectivity

- Limited walkability outside downtown due to disconnected streets, railroad barriers, and incomplete sidewalks.
- Need for improved bike infrastructure, pedestrian safety, and transit connectivity.

6. Community and Environmental Resources

- Need for more parks, open spaces, and environmental protection.
- Desire for improved public spaces, community programming, and cultural preservation.

Recommendations / Vision:

• Downtown Revitalization

Create mixed-use downtown and public gathering spaces
Develop Town Green and support commercial growth

• Housing Improvements

Provide affordable and diverse housing
Improve existing housing quality

• Economic Development

Support small businesses and job creation
Attract essential services

• Transportation and Connectivity

Expand sidewalks, trails, and bike lanes
Improve access and connectivity

• Public Realm and Community Development

Expand parks and open spaces
Support inclusive community spaces

Relevance to this Plan:

This plan is highly relevant as a guiding policy document that:

- Provides direction for downtown redevelopment and mixed-use growth.
- Emphasizes affordable housing, community equity, and inclusive planning.
- Supports transportation connectivity and walkability improvements.
- Identifies opportunities for economic development and public space creation.

CLARKSTON CITY AGRICULTURE PLAN (2025)

The Clarkston City Agriculture Plan is a strategic policy and implementation framework designed to strengthen Clarkston's local food system over the next 3–5 years. It focuses on integrating food production, distribution, education, and waste management into city planning, programs, and infrastructure. The plan was developed through extensive community engagement, stakeholder collaboration, and leadership from the Atlanta Regional Commission and Food Well Alliance.

The plan aims to create a coordinated, equitable, and sustainable food tem that benefits residents, growers, and the local economy.

The plan's vision is:

"To cultivate an inclusive and affordable local food system that empowers residents and builds sustainable infrastructure through vibrant agricultural spaces, shared knowledge, and education."



Themes / Analysis

Five key themes emerged through community engagement and analysis:

1. Improve Community Infrastructure and Access

- Need for more community gardens, growing spaces, composting, and food infrastructure.
- Existing food system assets exist but are fragmented and difficult to access.

2.Supportive Zoning and Environmental Policies

- Existing zoning and regulations limit food production and sales opportunities.
- Need for clearer policies to support urban agriculture and food entrepreneurship.

3. Cultural and Communication Barriers

- Clarkston's diverse population faces language and communication barriers.
- Need for inclusive outreach, education, and engagement strategies.

4. Food Access and Economic Opportunity

- Limited access to fresh, affordable, culturally appropriate food.
- Opportunity to strengthen local markets, mobile food systems, and food entrepreneurship.

5. Education and Capacity Building

- Residents expressed interest in learning farming, composting, and food production skills.
- Need for training, networks, and resource sharing among growers.

Recommendations / Vision:

- Priority A: Sustainable Practices
Support food policies and urban agriculture
Integrate food systems into planning
- Priority B: Support Growers
Expand community gardens
Improve growing infrastructure
- Priority C: Food Access
Expand farmers and mobile markets
Provide food education
- Priority D: Community Outreach
Improve outreach and youth programs
Support food-based economic development.

Relevance to this Plan:

This plan is highly relevant as it:

- Provides a framework for integrating food systems into urban design and public space planning.
- Identifies opportunities for community gardens, public spaces, and productive landscapes.
- Supports economic development through food-based entrepreneurship.
- Enhances social equity, sustainability, and community resilience.
- Aligns with broader comprehensive planning and sustainability goals.

CLARKSTON GREENWAY STUDY (ADOPTED AUGUST 8, 2024)

The Clarkston Greenway Study is a Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) planning document that provides a feasibility analysis, design framework, and implementation strategy for developing a citywide greenway trail network in Clarkston. Funded by the Atlanta Regional Commission, the plan builds on prior planning efforts such as the Clarkston 2040 Comprehensive Plan and the 2015 LCI Update to improve mobility, connectivity, access to parks, and public health outcomes.

The proposed greenway is envisioned as a 5.8-mile trail network, primarily along the South Fork of Peachtree Creek, connecting apartment communities, parks, schools, downtown, and regional trails. The plan also responds to Clarkston’s social vulnerability, limited access to parks and fresh food, and need for safe walking and biking infrastructure.

Themes / Analysis

1. Connectivity Barriers and Mobility Challenges

- The CSX railroad, highways, and disconnected apartment complexes limit connectivity.
- Many residents lack safe pedestrian and bicycle routes to jobs, parks, and services.

2. Social Vulnerability, Health, and Equity

- Clarkston is identified as “extremely vulnerable” based on the CDC Social Vulnerability Index.
- Many residents face poverty, limited access to healthy food, and poor access to recreational infrastructure.
- The greenway is seen as a tool to improve physical and mental health and equitable access to resources.

3. Environmental and Natural Resource Opportunities

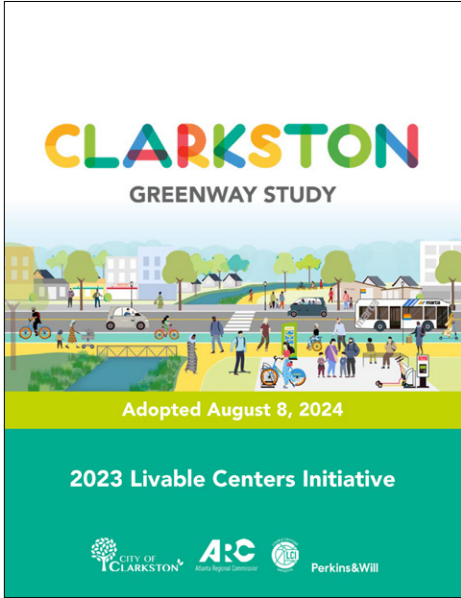
- South Fork Peachtree Creek is a major natural asset but currently inaccessible.
- The greenway offers opportunities for environmental restoration and improved access to nature.
- Existing parks like Friendship Forest and Milam Park are key anchors.

4. Community Engagement and Resident Priorities

- Extensive engagement included ambassadors, public events, surveys, and interviews.
- Residents preferred a greenway along the creek connecting apartments and parks.
- Over 150 comments and 80 survey responses shaped the final route.

5. Equity, Affordability, and Displacement Concerns

- The plan recognizes the risk of displacement from new infrastructure investments.
- Recommends policies like affordable housing protections and anti-displacement measures.



Recommendations / Vision:

Trail and Connectivity

- Develop a 5.8-mile greenway trail network connecting neighborhoods, parks, schools, and regional trails.
- Improve crossings and regional connections.

Public Realm and Placemaking

- Add pocket parks and gathering spaces.
- Improve trail amenities and environmental access.

Equity and Housing

- Protect affordable housing and prevent displacement.
- Ensure equitable community benefits.

Implementation

- Develop greenway in phases.
- Secure funding and prioritize key connections.

Relevance to this Plan:

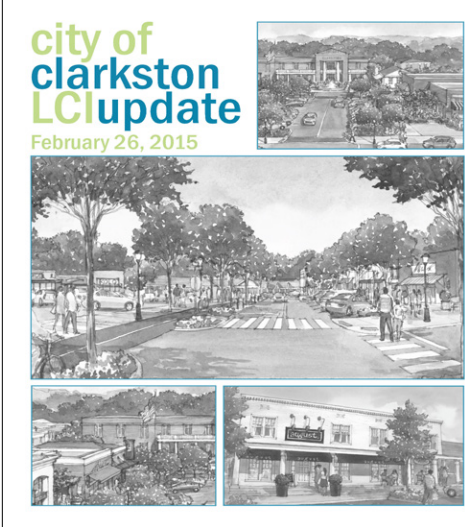
This plan is highly relevant because it:

- Provides a framework for greenway and public realm design.
- Supports connectivity, walkability, and multimodal transportation.
- Enhances access to parks, nature, and public spaces.
- Addresses social equity, health, and environmental resilience.
- Serves as a key precedent for open space planning and urban design interventions in Clarkston.

CITY OF CLARKSTON LIVABLE CENTERS INITIATIVE (LCI) 10-YEAR UPDATE (FEBRUARY 26, 2015)

The Clarkston LCI 10-Year Update is a strategic planning document that revisits and updates the original 2004 Livable Centers Initiative plan. The purpose is to promote livability, mobility, and sustainable mixed-use development within Clarkston by directing growth toward existing infrastructure and reducing sprawl. The plan focuses on downtown revitalization, transportation improvements, land use planning, economic development, and enhancing quality of life for Clarkston’s highly diverse population.

The study area covers approximately 678 acres (1.1 square miles), including downtown Clarkston and major corridors such as East Ponce de Leon Avenue and Market Street.



Themes / Analysis

1. Land Use and Downtown Structure

- Majority of land use is residential, including both medium-density single-family and multifamily housing.
- Commercial uses are concentrated along major corridors and downtown, but the downtown core is underutilized.
- Significant redevelopment potential exists in aging multifamily areas and downtown.

2. Transportation and Connectivity Challenges

- Clarkston has a multimodal system including MARTA buses, PATH trail, sidewalks, and streets.
- However, sidewalk networks are incomplete, fragmented, and in poor condition in some areas.
- The CSX railroad divides the city and creates connectivity barriers.
- High reliance on walking, biking, and transit due to lower vehicle ownership. For example, commute data shows Clarkston residents use transit, biking, and walking more than regional averages, highlighting the importance of multimodal infrastructure.

3. Economic and Market Conditions

- Clarkston has limited commercial development and employment opportunities.
- Downtown has potential for redevelopment but lacks strong economic activity.
- Market analysis identified opportunities for residential and commercial redevelopment.

4. Urban Design and Public Space Deficiencies

- Lack of consistent streetscape design, sidewalks, and pedestrian infrastructure.
- Limited public gathering spaces and smaller public open spaces.
- Opportunity to improve streetscapes, public spaces, and civic identity.

5. Social and Demographic Context

- Social and Demographic Contextgrowers.
- Clarkston is one of the most diverse cities in the U.S., with over 60 languages spoken.
- Significant refugee and immigrant population influences housing, transportation, and economic needs.
- Inclusive engagement and planning strategies are critical.

Recommendations / Vision:

Land Use and Downtown

- Promote mixed-use and downtown redevelopment.
- Strengthen downtown as city center.

Transportation and Connectivity

- Expand sidewalks, bike, and trail connections.
- Improve pedestrian safety.

Economic Development

- Encourage investment and mixed-use growth.
- Support local businesses.

Urban Design and Public Realm

- Improve streetscapes and public spaces.
- Create walkable, active environments.

Relevance to this Plan:

This housing analysis is highly relevant because it:

- Provides a detailed framework for downtown redevelopment and mixed-use development.
- Identifies strategies for walkability, connectivity, and multimodal infrastructure.
- Supports public space and streetscape improvements.
- Addresses housing redevelopment and economic development opportunities.
- Serves as a key foundation for later plans such as the Clarkston 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

CITY OF CLARKSTON HOUSING SUMMIT (MAY 22, 2025)

The Clarkston Housing Summit Presentation provides an overview of housing trends, challenges, and opportunities in Clarkston based on research conducted by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) and community input. The summit aimed to inform city officials, planners, and residents about housing affordability, demographic trends, housing supply, and projected growth, while supporting future housing planning efforts and policy development.

The presentation emphasizes Clarkston's rapid growth, increasing housing costs, and the need for strategic housing planning to accommodate future population growth while maintaining affordability and quality of life.

Themes / Analysis

1. Rapid Housing Price Increases and Affordability Challenges
- Median home sale prices increased by 67% between 2018 and 2023, with price per square foot increasing by 80%.
 - Average rent is approximately \$1,465 per month, while affordable rent for Clarkston residents should average around \$1,285 per month.
 - Clarkston's median household income is \$46,495, making many housing options unaffordable.
 - Cost-burdened households (spending more than 30% of income on housing) are increasing.
2. Predominantly Rental and Aging Housing Stock
- Approximately 83.5% of Clarkston households are renters, significantly higher than regional averages.
 - Nearly 80% of housing units are apartments, many built before 2000.
 - Housing stock is older and includes mostly Class B and Class C apartments.
3. Population Growth and Future Housing Demand
- Clarkston's diverse population faces language and communication barriers.
 - Need for inclusive outreach, education, and engagement strategies.
4. Unique Demographics and Housing Needs
- Limited access to fresh, affordable, culturally appropriate food.
 - Opportunity to strengthen local markets, mobile food systems, and food entrepreneurship.
5. Housing Supply and Development Trends
- Residents expressed interest in learning farming, composting, and food production skills.
 - Need for training, networks, and resource sharing among growers.



Recommendations / Vision:

Housing Planning

- Conduct housing studies and planning.
- Support affordability programs.

Housing Affordability

- Increase and preserve affordable housing.
- Reduce housing cost burden.

Future Growth

- Plan for housing and population growth.
- Align housing with infrastructure.

Implementation Tools

- Use housing funds and tax incentives.
- Apply planning and code tools.

Relevance to this Plan:

This housing analysis is highly relevant because it:

- Identifies housing affordability and displacement risks.
- Highlights population growth and housing demand trends.
- Provides guidance for future housing and urban development planning.
- Supports equitable, inclusive, and sustainable urban growth strategies.
- Informs decisions related to land use, housing design, and community development.

CLARKSTON LAKE & CRYSTAL POND MASTER PLANNING (2025)

The Clarkston Lake and Crystal Pond Master Plan is a preliminary planning and design framework to guide the ecological restoration, public access, and recreational development of Clarkston Lake and Crystal Pond. Developed by Perkins&Will in collaboration with the City of Clarkston, Clarkston Shores residents, and DeKalb County, the plan aims to enhance environmental quality, improve community access, and create sustainable public spaces around the lake and pond.

The plan responds to aging infrastructure, environmental degradation, and the opportunity presented by the Norman Road bridge replacement project, which requires draining the lake and offers a chance to invest in improvements.

Themes / Analysis

1. Environmental Restoration and Infrastructure Needs
- The lake and pond require remediation, stormwater management, and shoreline restoration.
 - Existing infrastructure such as the Norman Road dam and bridge needs improvements.
 - The lake functions as part of the regional sewer and watershed system, highlighting its ecological importance.
2. Public Access and Recreational Opportunities
- Limited public access currently exists, but there is strong potential to expand access through partnerships.
 - Opportunity to create trails, boardwalks, pathways, and nature-based recreation areas.
 - Proposed features include small boat docks, fishing areas, and public gathering spaces.
 - For example, the landscape design diagrams show proposed boardwalks, pathways, seating, and pavilions to enhance accessibility and recreational use.
3. Community Engagement and Partnerships
- The plan emphasizes collaboration with Clarkston Shores residents, DeKalb County, and city leadership.
 - Community input, focus groups, and design charrettes are included in the planning process.
 - Partnerships are needed for funding, implementation, and long-term maintenance.
4. Connectivity and Greenway Integration
- Opportunity to connect the lake and pond to the broader Clarkston Greenway network.
 - These connections would improve pedestrian and ecological connectivity.
5. Community Programming and Education
- The plan proposes programs such as:
- Public fishing and boating
 - Cultural and recreational events

Clarkston Lake and Crystal Pond Master Plan

Neighborhood Meeting | January 18, 2025, 3:00 PM | Clarkston Woman's Club

- Environmental education programs
- Partnerships with schools and regional environmental organizations

These initiatives would enhance community engagement and environmental awareness.

Recommendations / Vision:

Environmental Improvements

- Restore habitats and improve stormwater systems.
- Upgrade infrastructure and water quality.

Recreation and Public Space

- Develop trails, boardwalks, and gathering spaces.
- Improve lake access and connectivity.

Community Activation

- Support events and education programs.
- Promote lake as a community destination.

Implementation

- Conduct site analysis and community engagement.
- Develop design and implementation plan.

Relevance to this Plan:

This conceptual planning is relevant because it:

- Supports development of public open spaces and recreational infrastructure.
- Demonstrates strategies for waterfront redevelopment and ecological restoration.
- Provides guidance for greenway connectivity and pedestrian infrastructure.
- Enhances community identity and public realm design.
- Integrates environmental resilience and landscape-based urban design.

This plan serves as a key precedent for designing nature-based public spaces and waterfront environments in Clarkston.

PROJECT PROGRESS

Tracking the progress of projects and recommendations from other city plans and initiatives is key to understanding how this parks and recreation plan can successfully be integrated into ongoing work. The table below provides an overview of projects and policies that are relevant to parks and recreation and their current status.

Plan	Project ID	Project Name/Description	Project Status	PRMP Notes
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (2021 UPDATE)	LU.01	Move and enhance community gateways to City limits	Underway	Potential to design gateways as parks where feasible with amenities like seating, fitness equipment, and art.
	LU.02	New City Hall that incorporates vertical mixed use (commercial below, city offices above)	Underway	Potential to incorporate indoor recreation space at new city hall.
	LU.03	Create Town Green/Central multi purpose public space	Underway	Potential to create iconic new park.
	LU.04	Comprehensive bicycle infrastructure plan	Underway	Potential for the bicycle infrastructure plan to ensure connectivity to parks and trails.
	LU.05	Update existing parks master plan	Underway	Recommended through this plan.
	LU.06	Uniform sign program and ordinance	Underway	Potential to establish uniform park signage.
	LU.07	Design/create public spaces and pocket parks	Underway	This plan's Vision will inform recommendations.
	LU.08	Implement design guidelines for all non-residential uses	Underway	Potential for design guidelines to relate to city guidelines.
	LU.09	Incorporate South Fork Creek Park	Underway	This plan's Vision will inform recommendations.
	LU.11	South Fork Peachtree Creek multi-use trail	Underway	Potential to incorporate park space and amenities along trail.
	LU.12	North Indian Creek Multi-Use trail	Underway	Potential to incorporate park space and amenities along trail.
	CF.01	Reassess recreation uses at Milam Park and development of strategic plan	Underway	Ongoing efforts to be furthered by this plan.
	CF.05	Conduct a needs assessment for City facility space planning, prepare alternatives analysis for site location(s) and siting options that would resolve space deficiencies	Underway	Potential to identify new locations for parks and improved maintenance operations.
	T.04	Brockett Street Multi-Use trail	Underway	Potential to incorporate park space and amenities along trail.
	T.33	Provide pedestrian improvements to Clarkston Lake dock area	Underway	Ongoing efforts to be furthered by this plan.
	IC.01	Coordinate with DeKalb County Parks & Rec regarding all County owned land focused on trail and parks planning, coordinate with PATH to build on bike path along CSX	Dropped	Potential recommendations through this plan.
	CR.01	Identify and create database of cultural/historic resources	Underway	Ongoing efforts to be furthered by this plan.
CITY AGRICULTURE PLAN (2025)	A-4	Incorporate food and agriculture programming and infrastructure into ongoing City planning	Long Term	Ongoing efforts to be furthered by this plan.
	B-2	Improve water access at community gardens	Long Term	Potential to incorporate water access into other park improvements.
	B-3	Increase growing space at accessible locations throughout the City	Short Term	Ongoing efforts to be furthered by this plan's Vision.
	C-3	Manage a sustainable weekly Farmers Market	Long Term	Potential to host Farmers Market in park, increasing access and awareness of City services.
	D-1	Increase youth food and agriculture programming	Short Term	Potential to incorporate food and agriculture programming into new City-run offerings.

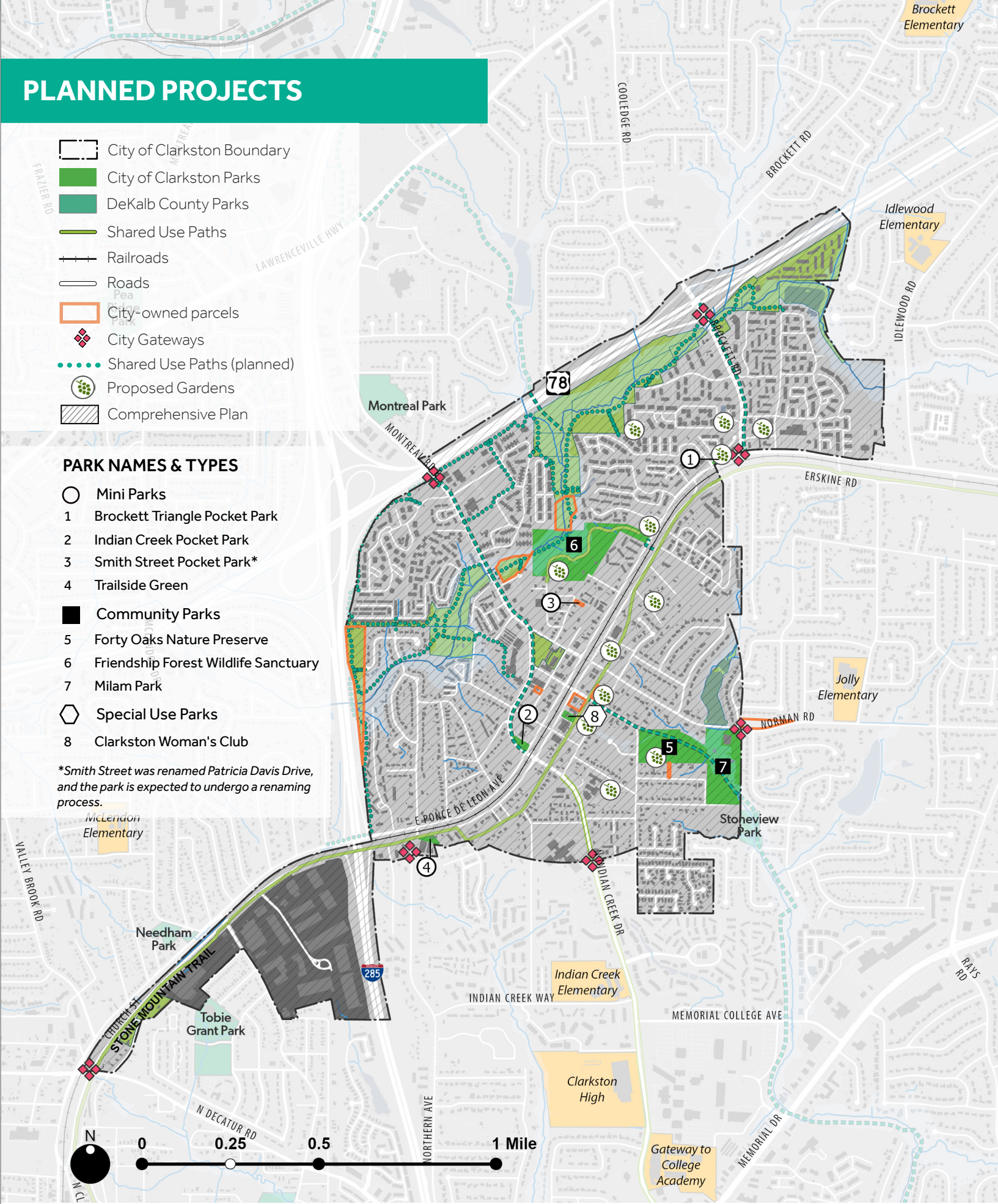
PLANNED PROJECTS

- City of Clarkston Boundary
- City of Clarkston Parks
- DeKalb County Parks
- Shared Use Paths
- Railroads
- Roads
- City-owned parcels
- City Gateways
- Shared Use Paths (planned)
- Proposed Gardens
- Comprehensive Plan

PARK NAMES & TYPES

- Mini Parks
 - 1 Brockett Triangle Pocket Park
 - 2 Indian Creek Pocket Park
 - 3 Smith Street Pocket Park*
 - 4 Trailside Green
- Community Parks
 - 5 Forty Oaks Nature Preserve
 - 6 Friendship Forest Wildlife Sanctuary
 - 7 Milam Park
- Special Use Parks
 - 8 Clarkston Woman's Club

*Smith Street was renamed Patricia Davis Drive, and the park is expected to undergo a renaming process.



2.3 DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

The characteristics of Clarkston's residents can provide important insights into the potential role that this plan can play in improving the social, environmental, and economic quality of life across the city.

The following section provides the key findings from the analysis of specific demographic attributes, including:

- Population and Population Change
- Population Density
- Age Distribution
- Race and Ethnicity
- Median Household Income and Poverty
- Socioeconomic Opportunity Index

A UNIQUELY AMERICAN COMMUNITY

No assessment of Clarkston's demographics is complete without a mention of the remarkable diversity represented in the city. A true melting pot, the following statistics all point to Clarkston's status not only as the most diverse municipality in Georgia, but one of the most diverse communities in all of America.

37% Foreign born

50% Speak a language other than English at home

40+ Nations represented by residents' places of birth

POPULATION AND POPULATION CHANGE

Total population and population change are two of the most important demographics to consider in parks and recreation system planning.

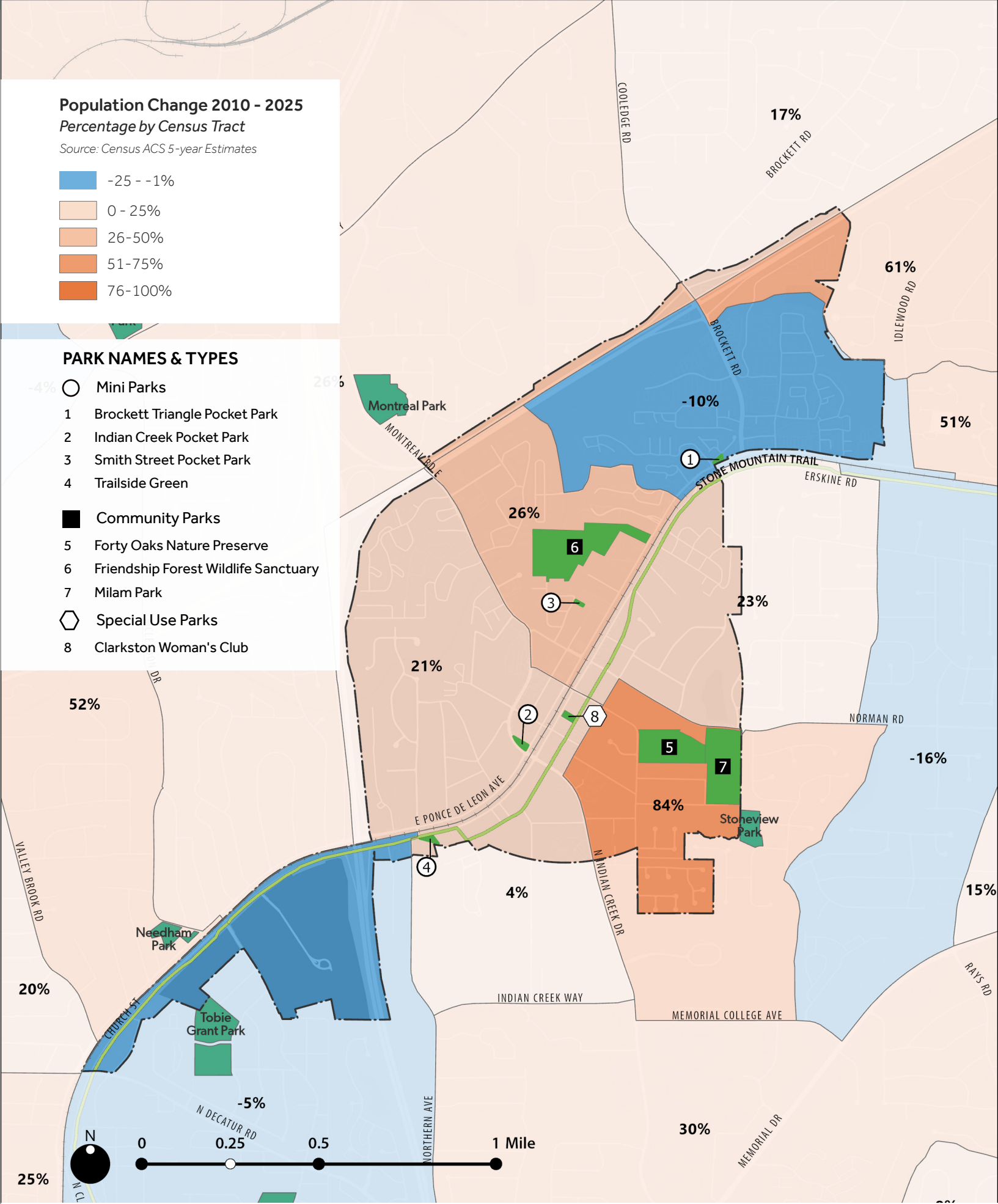
Total population allows the system to be benchmarked against other municipalities of similar size, with many of the Level of Service (LOS) recommendations based on population. And by understanding the recent trends in population change, the Department can prepare to expand or contract parks and recreation services as needed going into the future.

Figure 2.2a compares the past, existing, and projected population and population growth of the City of Clarkston to DeKalb County and the State of Georgia.

Figure 2.2a
Population Change 2010 - 2035

	2010*	2025*	% Change 2010-2025	2030	2035	% Change 2025-2035
Clarkston	7,554	14,557	93%	15,224 ¹	15,891 ¹	9%
DeKalb County	691,893	770,307	11%	818,748 [^]	844,928 [^]	10%
Georgia	9,687,653	11,302,748	17%	11,877,232 [^]	12,371,249 [^]	7%

* Source: US Census Bureau (Decennial & ACS 5-year Estimates)
[^] Source: Georgia Governor's Office of Planning & Budget
¹ Source: ESRI



POPULATION DENSITY

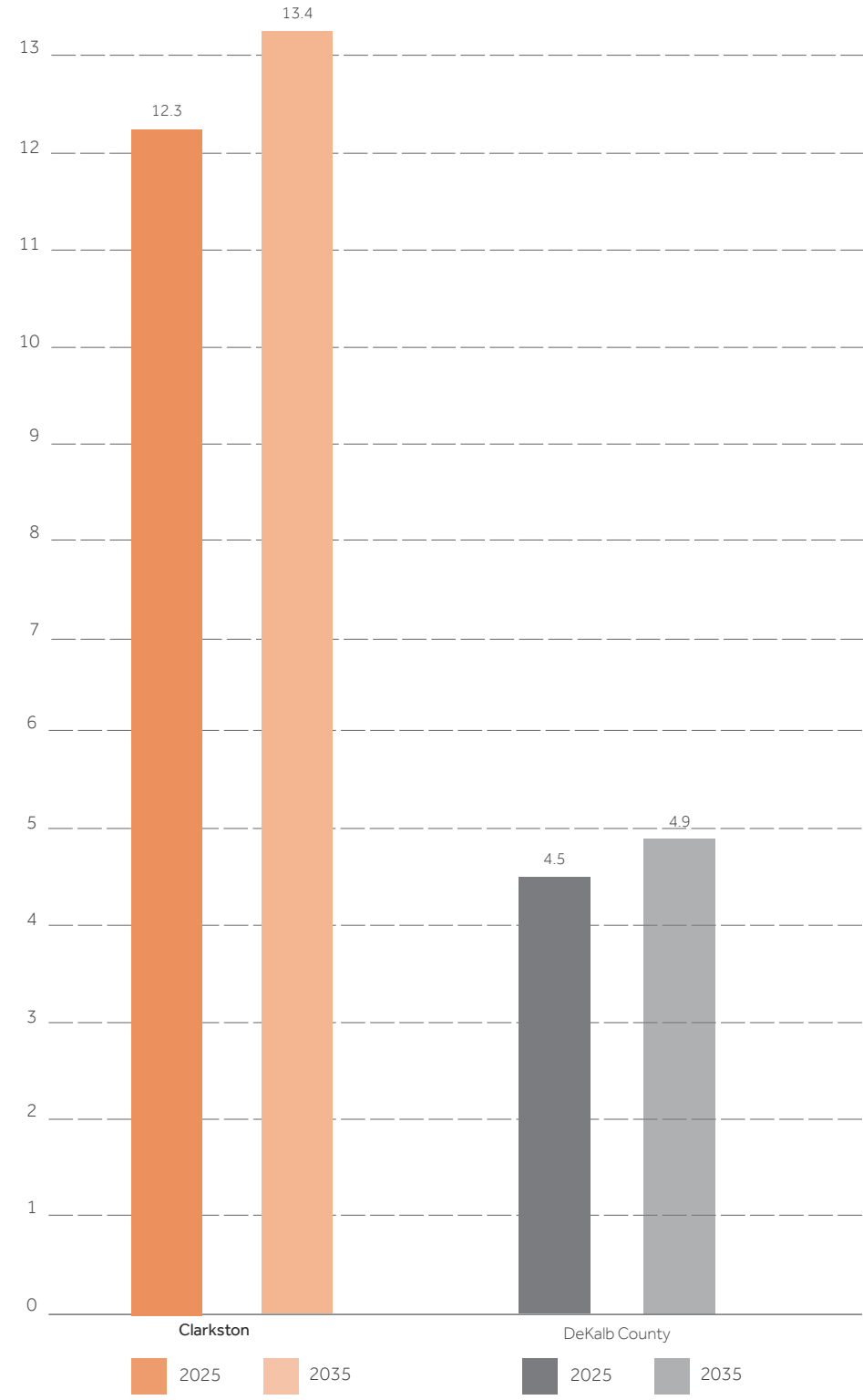
Population density is a very important factor to consider in parks and recreation system planning because it influences the demand that residents place on parks and recreation services. The higher the population density, the more residents living in a defined geographic area (Census Tract, Council District, etc.). More density typically creates a larger demand both for park land generally, as well as for specific recreation facilities, like ballfields, pools, and programs.

Additionally, higher densities often indicate the presence of multi-unit buildings versus single-family homes. Residents living in multi-unit buildings often rely more on public parks to provide basic, close-to-home recreational opportunities such as playgrounds, lawns to play catch, or dog parks. These are some of the every-day recreational activities that a family living in a single-family home may enjoy on their own property.

Figure 2.2b demonstrates existing and projected population density for Clarkston and DeKalb County. As of 2025, Clarkston has density of 12.3 residents per acre (7,869 per sq. mile), which is roughly three times the County's overall density of 4.5 residents per acre. Based on projected population increases, Clarkston's density may rise to 13.4 in 2035, with the County rising to 4.9. Clarkston's density is comparable to cities such as Baltimore, Maryland, Los Angeles, California, Oakland, California, and Seattle, Washington.

Clarkston's overall density of **more than 12 residents per acre** makes it one of the densest communities in all of metro Atlanta, reflective of its very high proportion of multi-family housing.

Figure 2.2b
Population Density for Clarkston and DeKalb County 2025 - 2035
Sources: Clarkston: Census ACS 5-year Estimates (2025); ESRI (2035)
DeKalb: Census ACS 5-year Estimates (2025); Governor's Office of Planning & Budget (2035)



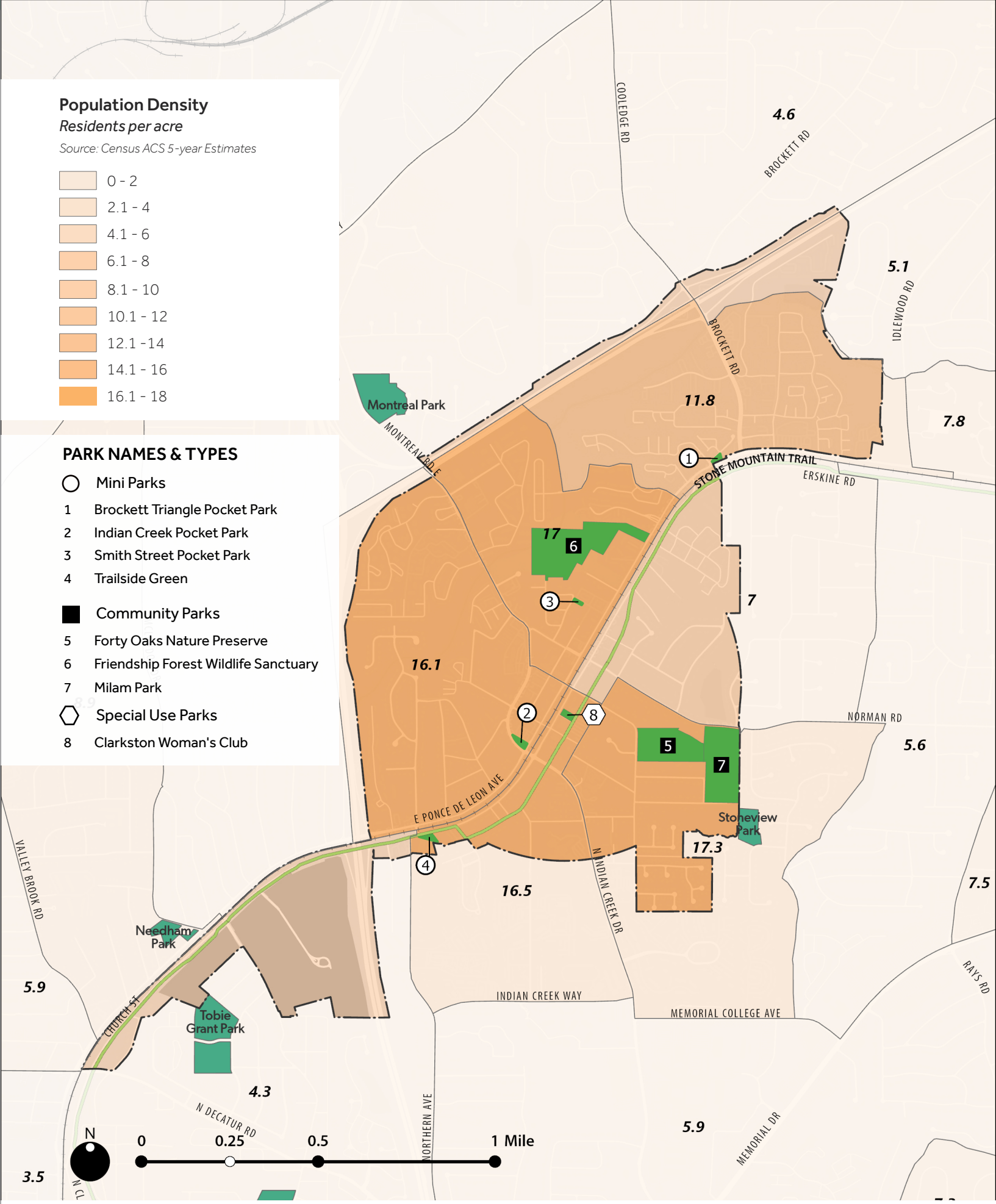
Population Density
Residents per acre

Source: Census ACS 5-year Estimates

- 0 - 2
- 2.1 - 4
- 4.1 - 6
- 6.1 - 8
- 8.1 - 10
- 10.1 - 12
- 12.1 - 14
- 14.1 - 16
- 16.1 - 18

PARK NAMES & TYPES

- Mini Parks
 - 1 Brockett Triangle Pocket Park
 - 2 Indian Creek Pocket Park
 - 3 Smith Street Pocket Park
 - 4 Trailside Green
- Community Parks
 - 5 Forty Oaks Nature Preserve
 - 6 Friendship Forest Wildlife Sanctuary
 - 7 Milam Park
- Special Use Parks
 - 8 Clarkston Woman's Club



AGE DISTRIBUTION

Best practices in parks and recreation planning recommend that the type of programs and recreation facilities that a community provides its residents should reflect the age distribution of the community’s population.

Communities with a high concentration of residents ages 0-9 and 10-19 for example, may have a higher need for youth activities such as before-school or after-school care programs and youth athletics. These communities may also require more playgrounds and athletic fields.

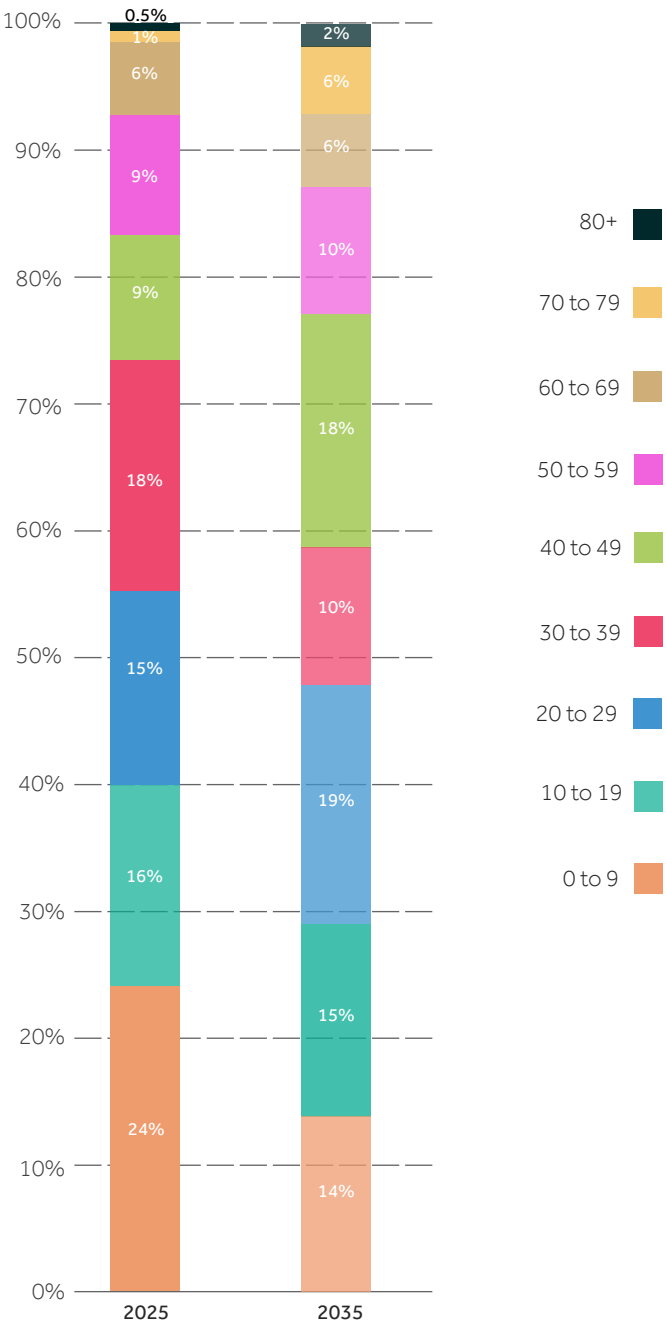
Communities with a high concentration of residents ages 65 and older on the other hand, may require more senior related activities, such as senior leisure programs, health related services, senior center space, and transportation services to transport seniors to activities.

Age distribution by nine age groups (0-9, 10-19, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70-79 and 80 and older) was analyzed for the City for 2025 and projected for 2035. Age distribution was also mapped for the year 2025 for the 0-9 and 65+ age groups, based on the particular needs that these groups are typically expected to demand on the parks and recreation system.

The analysis suggests that Clarkston currently has a dominant youth (0-19) population, represented by roughly 40% of residents. Middle aged adults constitute a particularly low demographic, with only 18% of residents aged 40-59. The population over 60 is also notably low, with only approximately 8% of residents in that cohort.

Looking forward to 2035, sizable shifts are projected, with the population under 5 falling substantially, from 24% to 14%. In contrast, all age groups over 40 are expected to see increases, with significant growth in the 40-49 and 70-79 age groups.

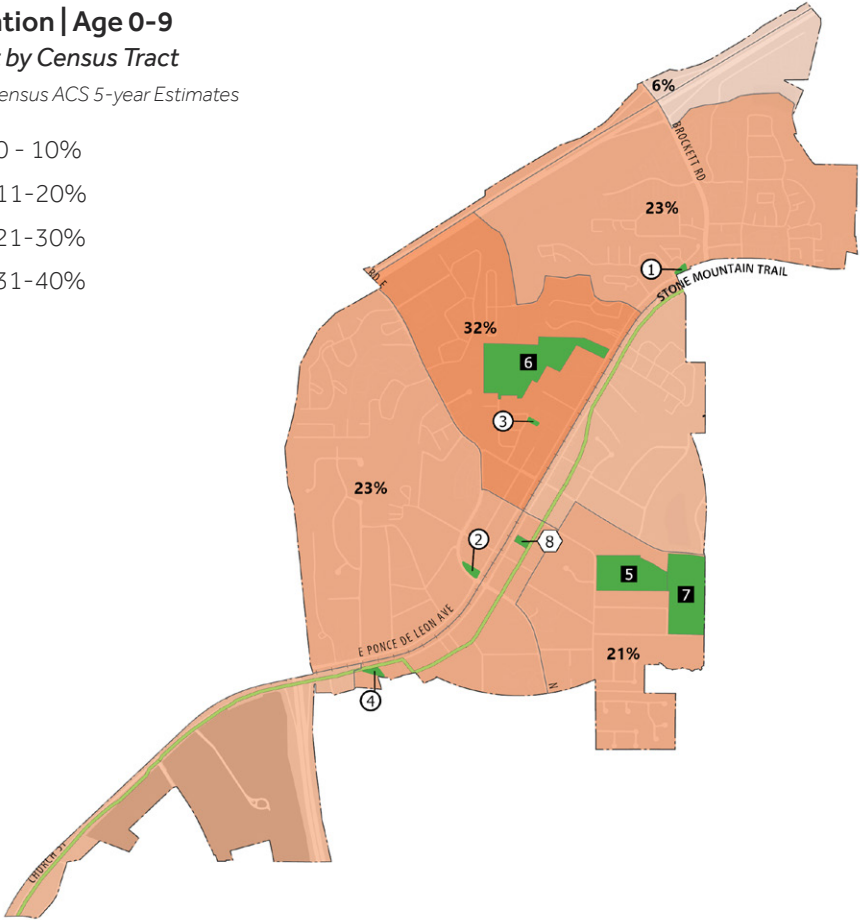
Figure 2.2c
Age Distribution for Clarkston 2025 – 2035
Sources: Census ACS 5-year Estimates (2025); ESRI (2035)



Population | Age 0-9
Percent by Census Tract

Source: Census ACS 5-year Estimates

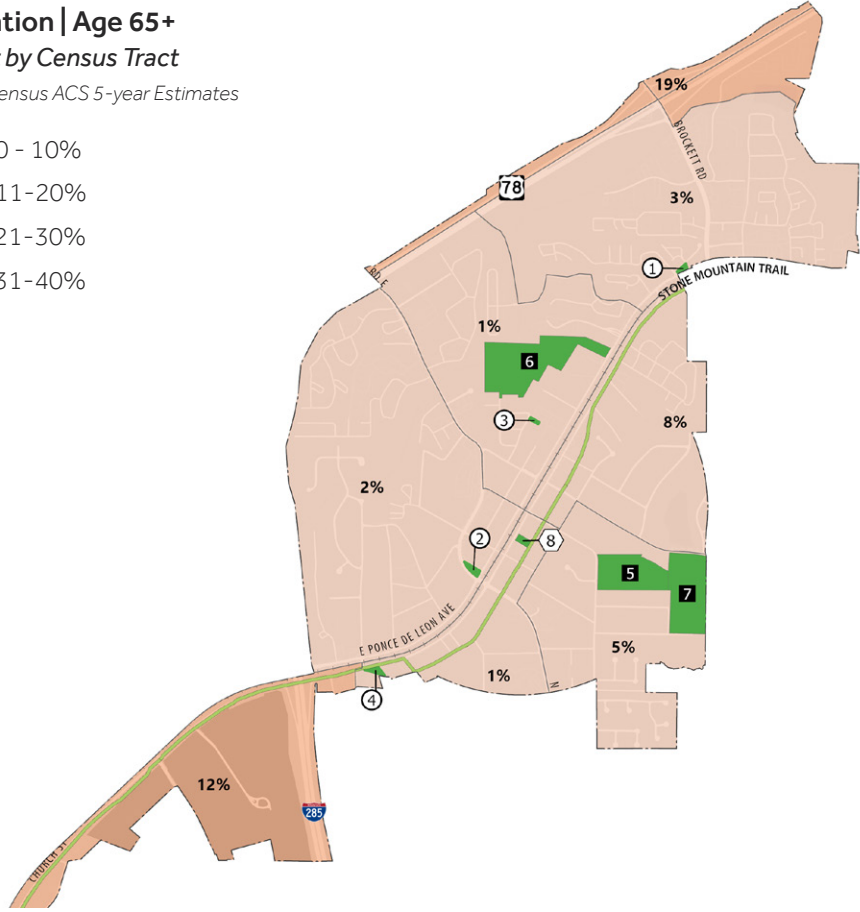
- 0 - 10%
- 11-20%
- 21-30%
- 31-40%



Population | Age 65+
Percent by Census Tract

Source: Census ACS 5-year Estimates

- 0 - 10%
- 11-20%
- 21-30%
- 31-40%



RACE AND ETHNICITY DISTRIBUTION

Race and ethnicity can be relevant indicators of recreation program and facility needs and desires. Various academic studies have shown that individuals' preferences towards specific park settings, activities, or amenities can vary by racial and ethnic identification.

Additionally, Clarkston's noted diversity presents opportunities to celebrate the wide variety of cultures and nations represented and to memorialize past and present figures and local hallmarks that make the city and its communities unique.

Race and ethnicity were analyzed citywide based on 2025 Census data and projected for 2035. These demographics were also mapped for the year 2025.

The analysis demonstrates that Clarkston has high diversity, both racially and ethnically (based on Census data standards, this analysis includes 5 categories of race, which are separate from the ethnic category of Hispanic or Latino). Residents identifying as Black/African American are the largest single category, at 70%. Asians and Pacific Islanders represent 15% of the population, Whites are 9% and residents of Some other race represent 4%.

Figure 2.2d
Race Distribution for Clarkston 2025

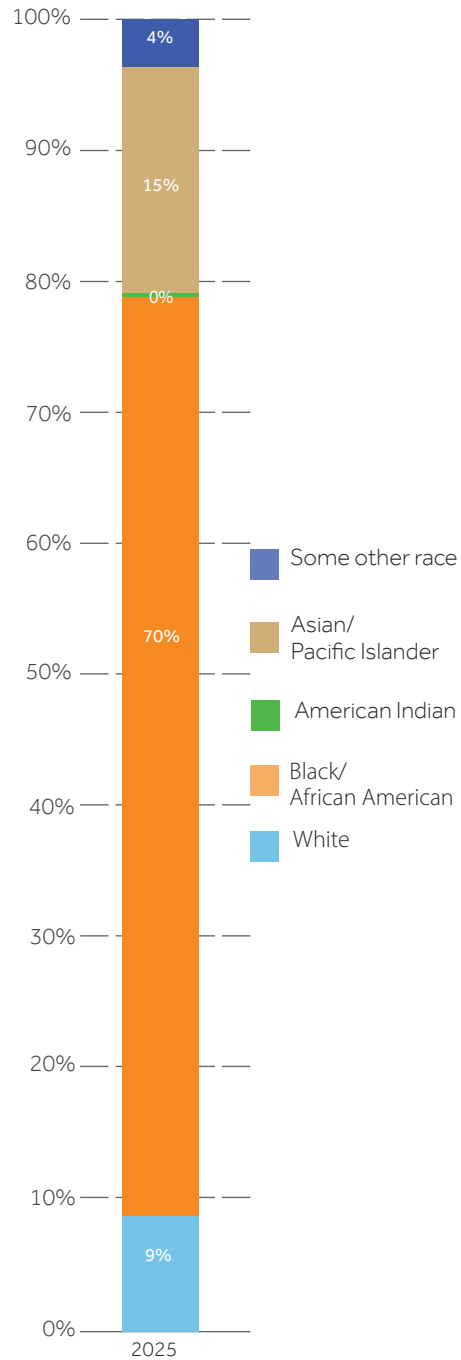
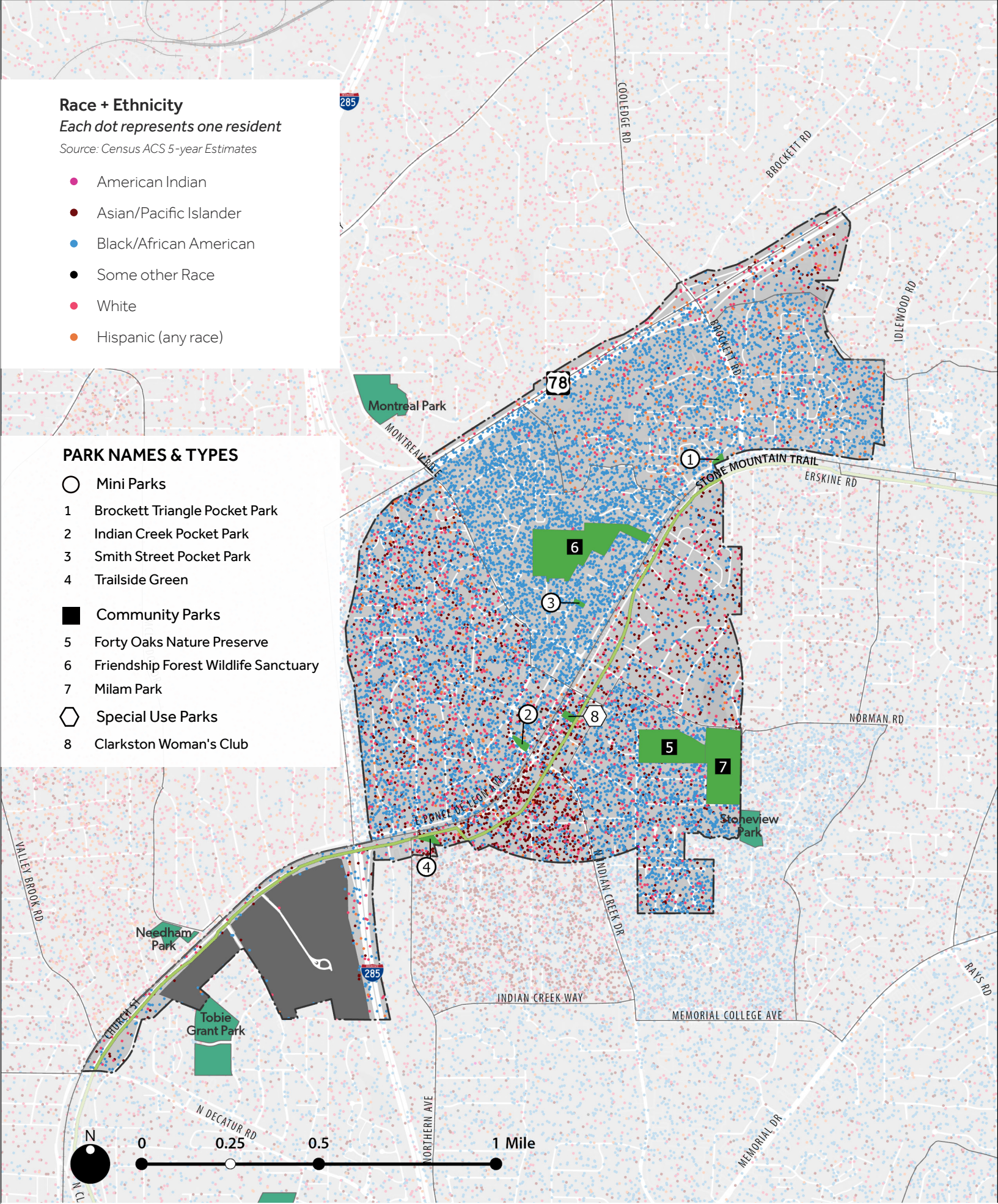
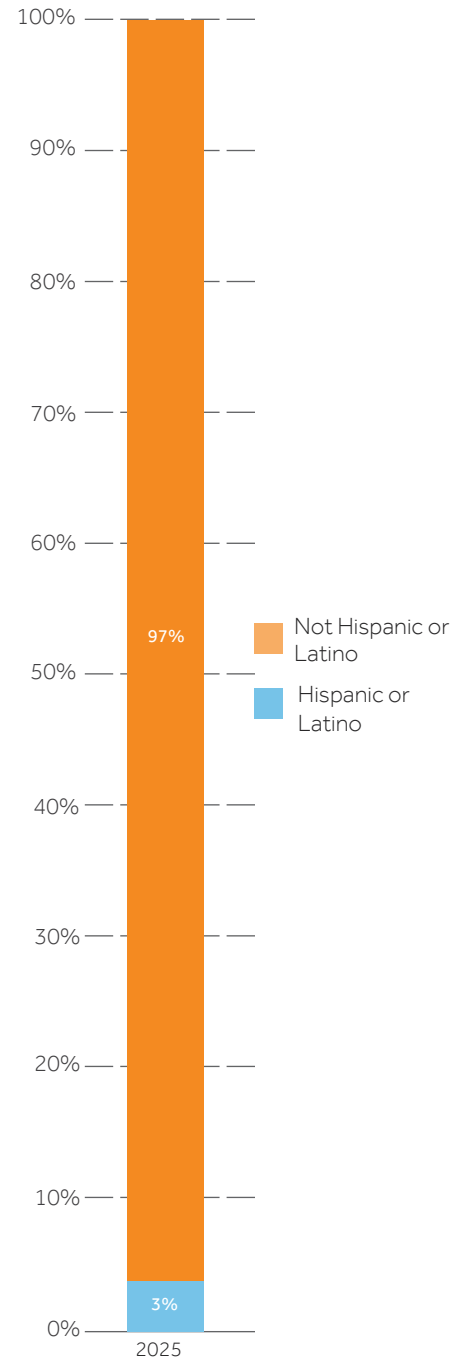


Figure 2.2e
Ethnic Distribution for Clarkston 2025



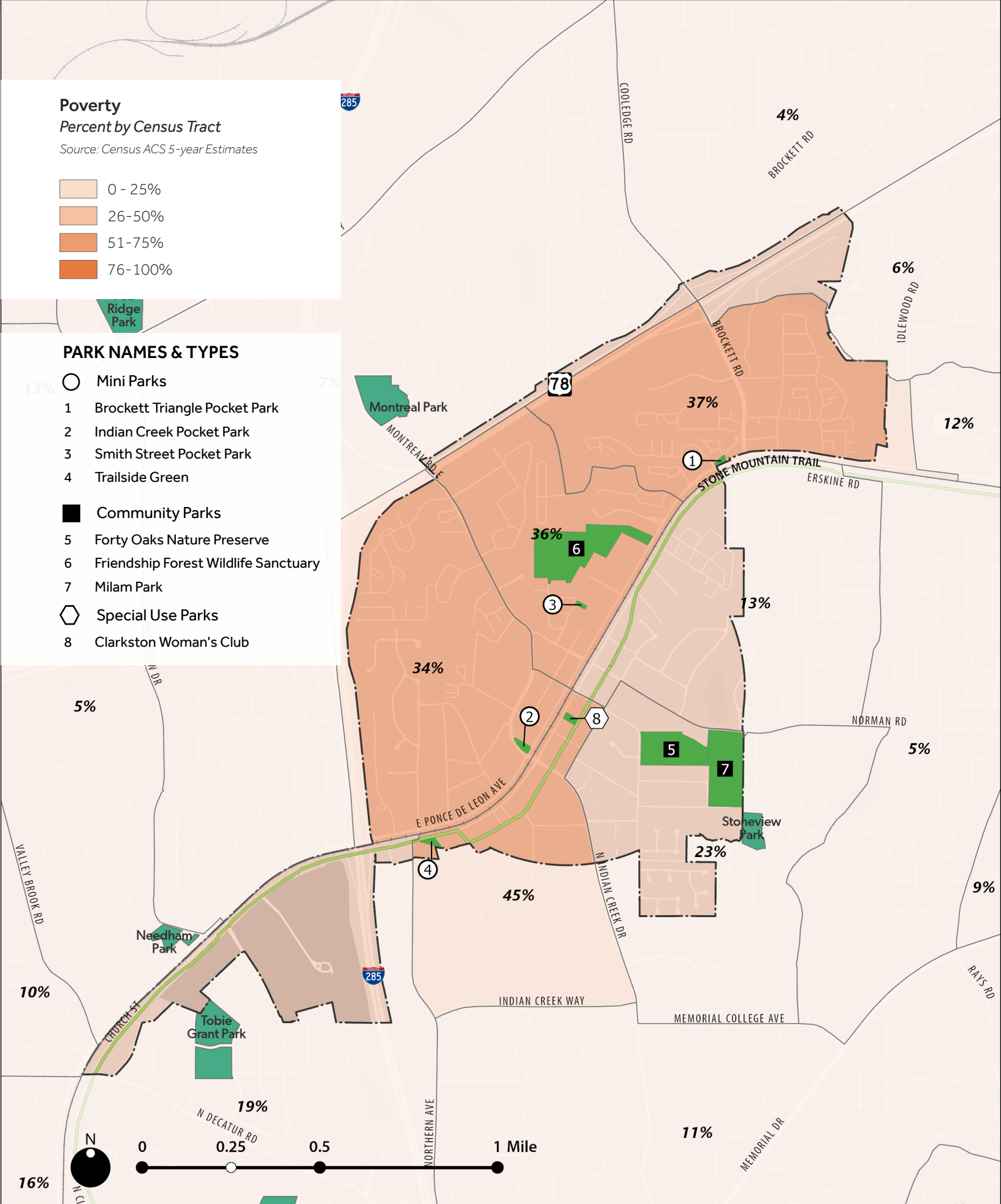
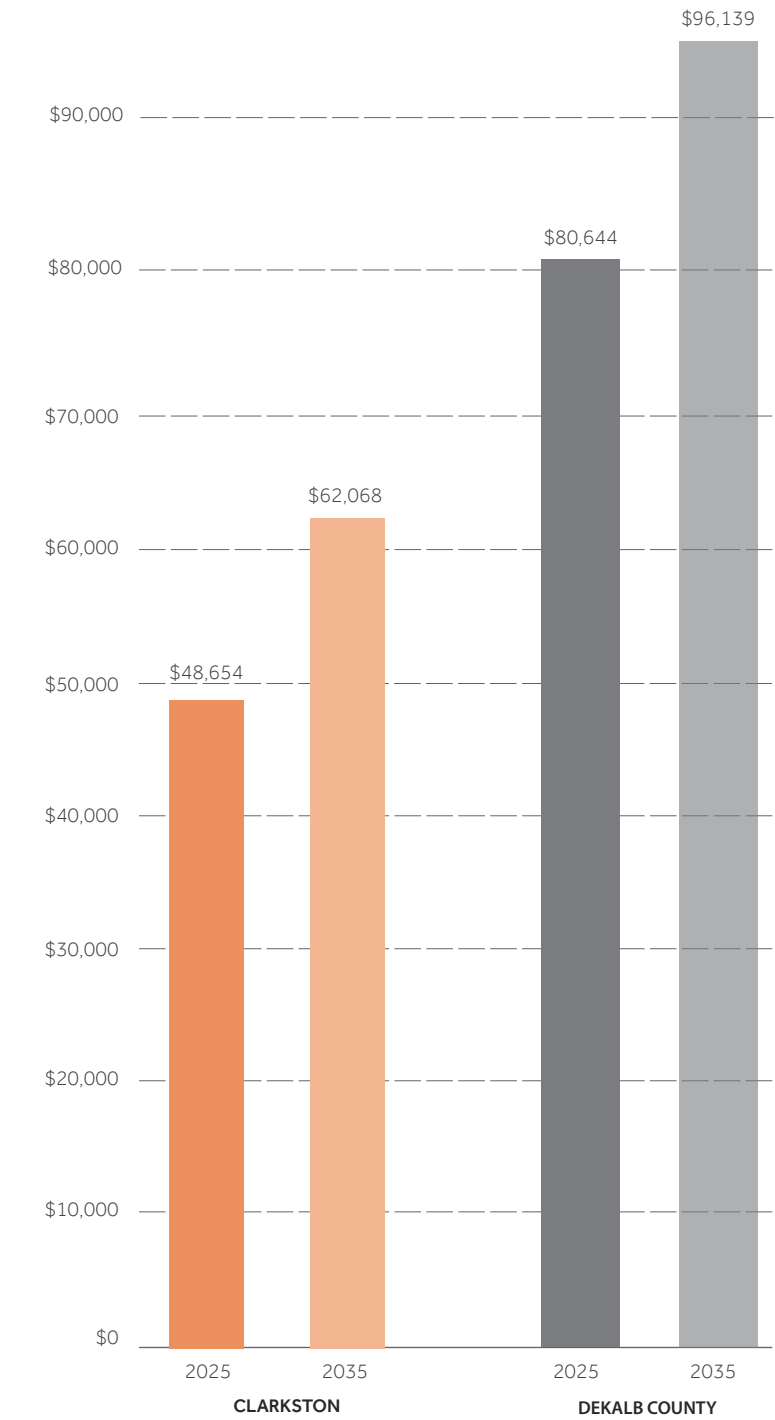
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME & POVERTY

Income levels provide a glimpse of the potential purchasing power of city residents. Simply stated, the higher the household income, the greater the potential that residents have disposable income to spend on fee-based leisure programs and activities. The lower the household income, the more residents may rely on local government or partners to provide free or low-cost parks, recreation, and social programs and services. This is particularly true for families living under the poverty threshold.

Figure 2.2f demonstrates existing and projected median household incomes for Clarkston and DeKalb County over the next 10 years. The city's MHI of \$48,654 is more than \$30,000 less than the county's. Over the next 10 years, Clarkston's MHI is projected to rise by more than \$12,000 to \$62,068, while DeKalb County is projected to rise to nearly \$100,000.

The map on page 35 displays the poverty rate in Clarkston's census tracts. Rates range from 13% to 45%, with the three largest tracts on the north side of the railroad all above 34%.

Figure 2.2f
Median Household Income for Clarkston and DeKalb County 2025 - 2035
Sources: Census ACS 5-year Estimates (2025); ESRI (2035)



SOCIOECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ZONES

While demographic attributes on their own have important parks and recreation implications, they can also be combined to identify a comprehensive assessment of needs and opportunities in the form of an index.

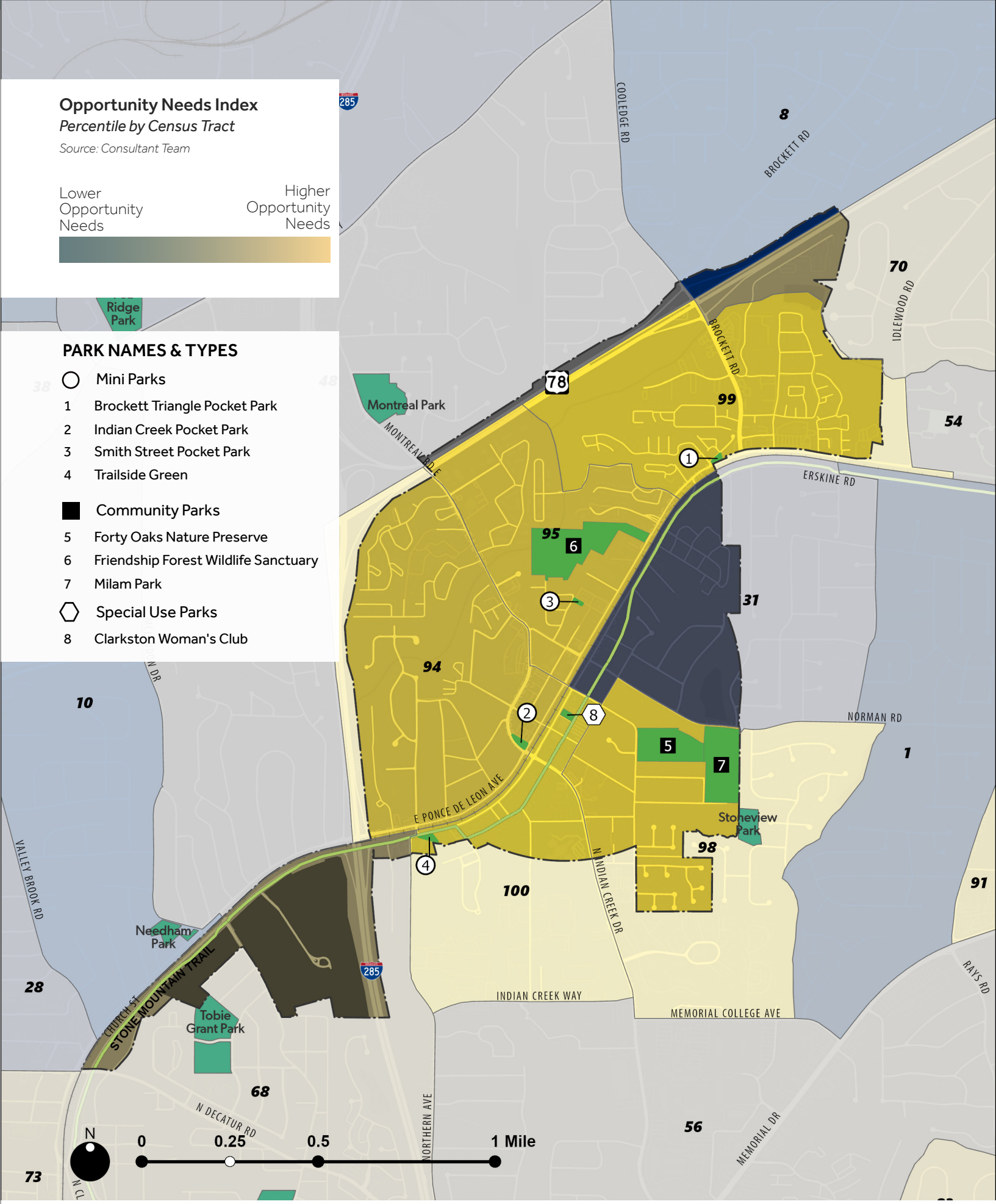
To this end, the Consultant Team developed a Socioeconomic Opportunity Needs Index. The purpose of developing this Index is to understand which areas of the city are facing greater challenges, based on integrating a broad range of neighborhood conditions and demographic data, including population density, poverty, age, crime rate, and others.

One potential outcome of this index is to use the scores as an attribute when prioritizing projects. Prioritizing higher need areas in effect renders them "opportunity zones," where the investment in public parks and recreation has the potential to help address the ongoing challenges.

This Socioeconomic Opportunity Needs Index analysis utilizes ten demographic and socioeconomic indicators to measure the level of potential socioeconomic need in the six census tracts that intersect the City of Clarkston. Most of the demographic data included in this analysis comes from the American Community Survey (ACS) five-year estimates from 2019-2023, accessed use ESRI's ArcGIS online.

DEMOGRAPHIC ATTRIBUTES ANALYZED

- 1. Population Density (weighted x2)
- 2. Poverty (weighted x2)
- 3. Residents under age 18
- 4. Residents age 65 or over
- 5. Median Household Income
- 6. Crime
- 7. Unemployment
- 8. Education Level
- 9. Single Parent Households
- 10. Residents with disabilities



2.4 PARKS SYSTEM CONTEXT

This section analyzes the parks and recreation spaces and facilities available to Clarkston residents.

PARK LAND AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Parks

The City of Clarkston's parks system is currently comprised of 8 parks, totaling 43+ acres.

Parks are classified by three categories to assist with management and maintenance operations:

Minipark

Smallest parks (typically 3 acres or less).

Designed to serve residents who live within walking distance (may have little to no parking or located in a residential neighborhood).

Little to no programming or reservable amenities.

Community Park

Larger than neighborhood parks, typically 10+ acres.

Serve a broader population and purpose and offers a wider range of activities/amenities than neighborhood parks.

Special Use Park

Intended for specialized or single-purpose recreational activities, such as indoor facilities, standalone dog parks, skate parks, etc.

Indoor Facilities

The City of Clarkston's parks system currently includes one indoor community center, the Clarkston Woman's Club. This historic building totals approximately 2,000 square feet. It features a large multi-purpose room used for meetings and occasional programs. The Club also features a kitchen.

The inventory also includes a historic farmhouse within Forty Oaks Nature Preserve. That structure is in a dilapidated condition and is currently fenced off for public protection. While it was previously used for meetings and programs, its condition has deteriorated and requires significant renovation for use. Options for future uses will be discussed in the Vision section.

Other Providers

As is common in communities across America, other public, semi-public, and private parks and recreational resources are also located in the City of Clarkston and just beyond its boundaries, which are patronized by Clarkston residents. These include facilities provided by DeKalb County, adjacent cities, the State, and organizations like the YMCA, and the Upper 90 soccer club.

The map on page 39 depicts the City's parks and recreation system while Figure 2.4a includes an inventory of the system.

BELOW The bridge between Milam Park and the Forty Oaks Nature Preserve is a valuable connection for two of Clarkston's largest and most visited parks.

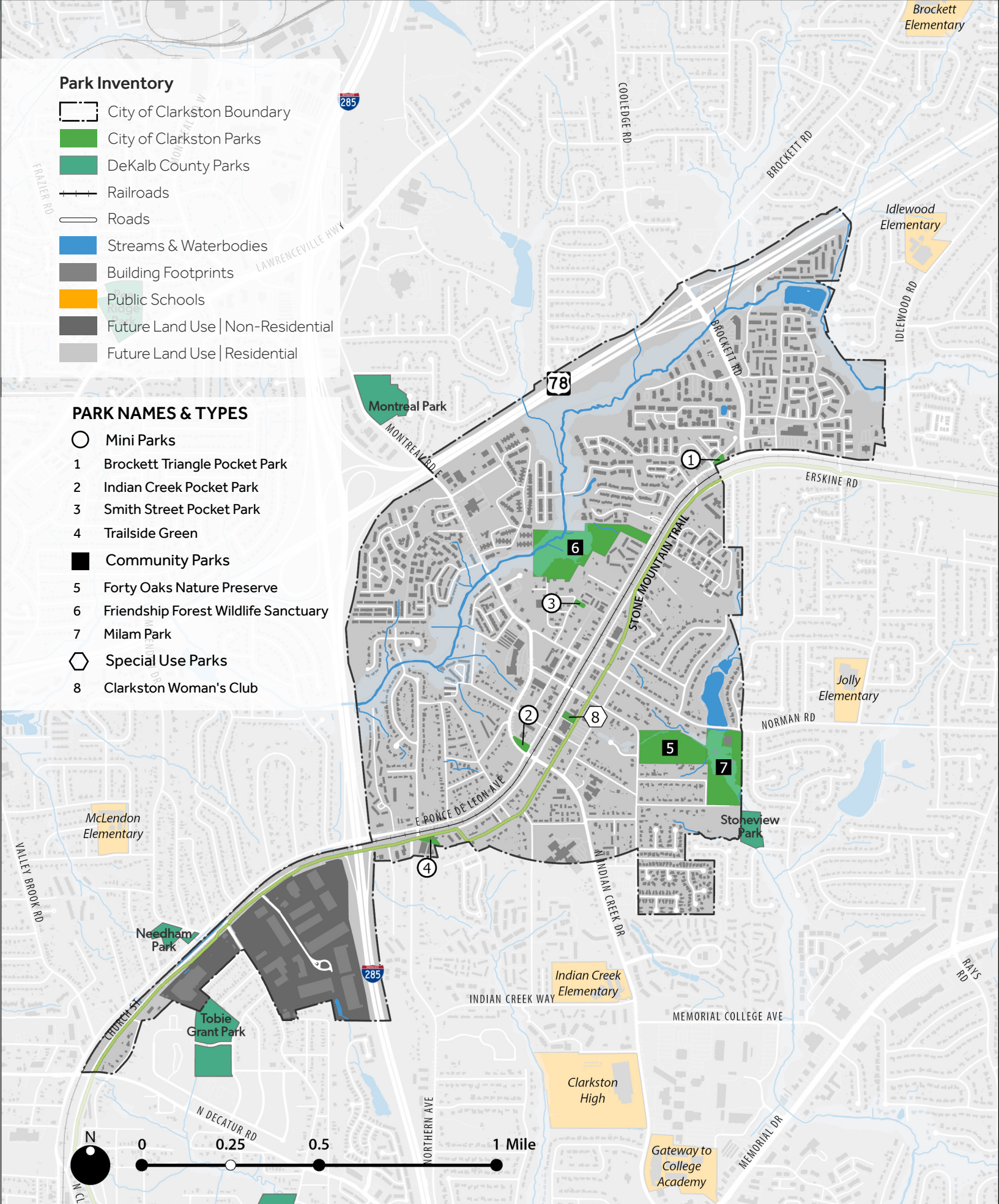


Fig. 2.4a Clarkston Parks and Recreation Master Plan Facilities Inventory

				Number of Indoor Facilities										
Park Name	Park Acres	Square Footage of Indoor Center Space	Park Type/Classification	Recreation Centers	Community Centers	Senior Centers	Teen Centers	Nature Centers	Fitness Centers (Weight room, etc.)	Gyms (Basketball, etc.)	Performance Amphitheater	Indoor Track	Indoor Competitive Swimming Pools	Indoor pool designated exclusively for leisure (i.e. non-competitive)
Brockett Triangle Pocket Park	0.17		Mini Park											
Indian Creek Pocket Park	0.34		Mini Park											
Smith Street Pocket Park*	0.10		Mini Park											
Trailside Green	0.31		Mini Park											
Forty Oaks Nature Preserve	10.21		Community Park											
Friendship Forest Wildlife Sanctuary	20.77		Community Park											
Milam Park	13.35		Community Park											
Clarkston Woman's Club	0.48	2,000	Special Use Park		1									
TOTALS	45.73	2,000		0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

*Smith Street was renamed Patricia Davis Drive, and the park is expected to undergo a renaming process.

OTHER PARKS & FACILITIES (within 1 mile of Clarkston Limits)

DeKalb County														
Brookside Park	7.41		Neighborhood											
Cedar Park	2.40		Mini											
Hamilton Park	5.82	18,000	Neighborhood	1										
Montreal Park	9.12		Neighborhood											
Needham Park	2.62		Neighborhood											
Pea Ridge Park	3.67		Neighborhood											
Stoneview Park	3.55		Neighborhood											
Tobie Grant Park	12.67	24,000	Community	1										
Washington Park	1.10		Mini											
County Totals	33.73	42,000		2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DeKalb School Board														
Clarkston Community Center ¹	6.73	10,000	Community		1									

¹The Clarkston Community Center, owned by the DeKalb School Board, has served a variety of roles over the years. Originally built in 1924 as the Clarkston High School, the building was vacant for roughly 30 years from the 1960s through the 1990s. Since 1997 it has been managed by the Clarkston Community Center Foundation, a non-profit organization. The organization currently provides a variety of programs in the building. The outdoor recreation amenities on the site, including a rectangle field, community garden space, and court are not currently open to the public but have been used in recent years.

Number of Outdoor Facilities																											
Playgrounds																											
Tot lots (0-5yrs old)																											
Restrooms																											
Outdoor Fitness Equipment																											
Pavilions																											
Walking Loops																											
Multi-Use Trails (miles)						0.1																					
Community Gardens							1																				
Skate Parks																											
Dog Parks																											
Disc Golf Course																											
Performance Amphitheaters																											
Basketball Courts																											
Tennis Courts																											
Pickleball Courts																											
Volleyball Court																											
Multi-use Courts (Tennis + Pickleball)																											
Multi-use Courts (Basketball + Volleyball)																											
Diamond Fields: baseball - adult																											
Diamond Fields: baseball - youth																											
Diamond Fields: softball fields - adult																											
Diamond Fields: softball fields - youth																											
Rectangular Fields: Multi-purpose (Natural Turf)																											
Rectangular Fields: Multi-purpose Synthetic																											
Rectangular fields: football field																											
Rectangular fields: soccer field - adult																											
Rectangular fields: soccer field - youth																											
Splash Pads/ Spray Grounds																											
Swimming Pools (Outdoor Only)																											

1				1							2										1							
1																	1		x		x							
																							1					
1				1																								
1				1																		1						
1				1																1		1						
1				1																								1
6	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	1
							1				1										1							

GENERAL PARK AND FACILITY EVALUATIONS

Research by park experts has shown that all successful parks and public spaces share common qualities:

- They are easily accessible
- They are comfortable and attractive
- They allow users of all ages and abilities to engage in a variety of activities and allow people to gather and meet one another
- They are sustainable – meaning that they help meet existing needs while not compromising the needs of future generations
- Their elements, such as site structures, amenities, furnishings, landscape, and hardscape are in good, functional condition

Considering these qualities, parks were evaluated collaboratively by City Staff and the Consultant Team. The following pages identify the findings from the two types of park evaluations that were completed.

1. **Park Function Evaluation:**
Evaluates how parks function based on criteria inspired by the Project for Public Spaces of the characteristics that make up a successful public space.
- The criteria is comprised of four categories and 27 sub-categories, described on the following pages.

The five-point scale shown in Figure 2.4b (p. 46) and accompanying table illustrate the function evaluation scores including:

- Total function evaluation average score for the park system
- Total function evaluation average score per park
- Total function evaluation average score per characteristic
- Function evaluation score per characteristic, per park.



ACCESS
Proximity, Access, and Linkages

- **Visibility from a distance**
Can one easily see into the park?
- **Ease in walking to the park**
Can someone walk directly into the park safely and easily from surrounding streets?
- **Clarity of information/signage**
Is there signage that identifies the park, and/or signage that provides additional information for users?
- **Interior Path Connectivity**
Is the park designed with an appropriate network of paths providing access to amenities and access points?
- **ADA Compliance**
Does the site generally appear to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) laws for accessibility?



COMFORT
Comfort and Image

- **First impression/overall attractiveness**
Is the park attractive at first glance?
- **Feeling of safety**
Does the park feel safe at the time of the visit?
- **Lighting**
Is the park lighted appropriately for its context and use?
- **Cleanliness/overall quality of maintenance (Exterior)**
Is the park clean and free of litter?
- **Comfort of places to sit**
Are there comfortable places to sit?
- **Protection from bad weather**
Is there shelter in case of bad weather?
- **Condition and effectiveness of any equipment or operating systems**
Is the equipment and/or operating system in good, functional condition?
- **Branding**
Does the park exhibit appropriate branding that unifies it with other parks in the community?



USE
Uses, Activities, and Sociability

- **Mix of uses/things to do**
Is there a variety of things to do given the type of park?
- **Level of activity**
How active is the park with visitors?
- **Sense of pride/ownership**
Is there evidence of community pride in the park?
- **Programming flexibility**
How flexible is the park in accommodating multiple uses?
- **Ability of facility to effectively support current organized programming**
Is the site meeting the needs of organized programs?
- **Marketing or promotional efforts for the facility**
Is the site being marketed effectively?



BUILDINGS
Buildings and Architecture

- **Image and aesthetics**
Is the building generally well designed and attractive?
- **Clarity of entry and connection to the park**
Is the building well integrated into its surroundings?
- **Interior layout**
Is the layout functional?
- **Interior finishes, furniture, and equipment**
Are the furnishings and equipment inside the building of good condition and quality?
- **Functioning dimensions of spaces**
Does the organization of space support the building's intended function?
- **Building enclosure**
Is there any obvious need for repairs to the building shell?
- **Building systems**
Are all the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems in working order?
- **Energy and sustainability**
Is there evidence that the building is energy efficient?

Fig. 2.4b Park Function Evaluations

Fig. 2.4b Park Function Evaluations		TOTAL SYSTEM AVERAGE																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																									
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2. Park Site Condition Evaluation: This analysis (Fig. 2.4c) evaluates the physical condition of elements in parks such as structures, amenities, furnishings, landscape, and hardscape based on a 3-point scale. The score suggests when the park element may need to be replaced or improved.



CONDITION
Site

- Site Structures/ Amenities**
What are the condition of the park's amenities?
- Site Furnishings**
What are the condition of the park's furnishings?
- Landscape/ Hardscape**
What are the conditions of the park's landscapes and hardscapes?

Fig. 2.4c Park Site Evaluations

Fig. 2.4c Park Site Evaluations		TOTAL SITE EVALUATIONS AVERAGE	SITE AMENITIES AVERAGE	AMPHITHEATER	BASEBALL	COMMUNITY/ REC CENTER	DOG PARK	MULTI PURPOSE FIELD	OUTDOOR GYM/ FITNESS	PAVILION	PLAY GROUND (5-12)	PLAY GROUND (2-5)	POOL	RESTROOMS			SOCCER FIELD	SPORTS LIGHTING	TENNIS COURTS	OTHER: YOUTH TENNIS	FURNISHINGS AVERAGE	BENCHES	BIKE RACKS	DOG WASTE	DRINKING FOUNTAIN	FENCING	PICNIC TABLES	TRASH RECEPTACLES	SIGNAGE	SHADE STRUCTURES	LIGHTING	GENERAL HARDSCAPE LANDSCAPE AVERAGE	LANDSCAPING	WALKWAYS/PATHS (PAVED)	TRAILS (UNPAVED)	BOARDWALKS	PARKING LOTS	GARDENS	TURF	TREES	
LEGEND	Site																																								Score Implications
Performance	Score																																								Potential Improvement Timeline
Excellent	3.0																																								7-9 years
Fair	2.0																																								4-6 years
Poor	1.0																																								1-3 years
-	n/a																																								
PARK NAMES		TYPE																																							
Brockett Triangle Pocket Park		Mini Park	1.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.0	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	1.5	1	-	1	-	-	2	-	2			
Indian Creek Pocket Park		Mini Park	2.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.4	3	-	-	-	3	-	3	1	2	-	2.7	2	3	-	-	-	-	-	3	
Smith Street Pocket Park		Mini Park	1.7	3.0	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.0	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1.0	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-			
Trailside Green		Mini Park	2.9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.0	3	3	-	-	3	3	-	3	2.8	3	3	3	-	-	-	2	3			
Forty Oaks Nature Preserve		Community Park	2.3	3.0	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.8	-	-	-	-	3	2	1	-	1	2.0	2	-	1	-	1	3	-	3		
Friendship Forest Wildlife Sanctuary		Community Park	2.6	2.5	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	2.8	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	2	-	3	2.7	2	3	2	3	3	-	-	3	
Milam Park		Community Park	2.1	2.2	-	1	-	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	3	2	3	2.1	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	-	2	2.0	2	2	2	3	1	-	2	2		
Clarkston Woman's Club		Special Use Park	2.0	2.0	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2.0	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	2			
TOTALS			2.2	2.4	3.0	1.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	3.0	2.7	2.0	2.0	3.0	2.0			2.0	3.0	2.0	3.0	2.1	3.0	2.7	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.6	1.6	2.0	2.3	2.1	1.9	2.3	1.8	3.0	1.7	2.5	2.0	2.6

GENERAL PARK FUNCTION EVALUATIONS SUMMARY

Based on the evaluation of the City of Clarkston's parks and recreation system using the park function evaluation criteria previously described it appears that the parks and recreation system is in fair condition, with an overall score of 2.9. The system displayed a variety of strengths that Clarkston should build on, as well as some opportunities to improve. These will be further explored during Phase 3 - Vision of the project. Following is an overview of these strengths and opportunities.



ACCESS
Proximity, Access, and Linkages

STRENGTHS

- Ease in walking to the park**
Many of the parks offer visitors the opportunity to walk to the park along sidewalks, low traffic streets, or the Stone Mountain Trail that connect the park to the surrounding neighborhood. Great examples are Trailside Green, Friendship Forest, and the Clarkston Woman's Club.
- Visibility from a distance**
Many of the parks provide adequate visibility into the park from at least two or three sides with clear sight lines into the park. The Clarkston Woman's Club, Trailside Green, and Milam Park are great examples of parks that have strong visibility into the park.



OPPORTUNITIES

- Clarity of information/signage**
Most of the parks would benefit from an improved hierarchy of signage including gateway signage, location map, identification, directional, and educational signage.
- ADA Compliance**
Many of the parks would benefit from improvements to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) laws for accessibility.



COMFORT
Comfort and Image

STRENGTHS

- Feeling of safety**
Many of the Clarkston's parks provide an adequate feeling of safety, through a combination of design, positive uses, and visibility.
- Condition and effectiveness of any equipment or operating systems**
The operating systems for restrooms, pool, and other functional equipment is generally in good condition. Milam Park and Friendship Forest are strong examples.



OPPORTUNITIES

- Lighting**
Most of the parks would benefit from improved lighting, both pedestrian lighting along paths as well as recreational lighting at facilities like playgrounds and ballfields (the recent installation of field lighting on the soccer field at Milam Park is a significant step towards improving this category).
- Branding**
Clarkston's parks would benefit from cohesive branding through unified design details, materials, colors/ aesthetics, condition, image, etc. The recent development of Trailside Green and improvements at Friendship Forest provide a strong precedent for future projects.
- Comfort of places to sit**
While there are examples of good seating in Trailside Green and Indian Creek Pocket Park, there is an opportunity to upgrade existing seating and provide additional seating in most of the parks.





USE

Uses, Activities, and Sociability

STRENGTHS

- **Ability of facility to effectively support current organized programming**

Between the community gardens at Forty Oaks, the pool and ballfields at Milam Park, and the Woman's Club, the current programming is well supported.

- **Sense of pride/ownership**

Many of the parks exhibit evidence of community pride and a sense of ownership, in particular through the role of community gardening, such as at Forty Oaks.



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Mix of uses/things to do**

While some of Clarkston's parks include a mix of facilities for users of various age groups and abilities, others are lacking. The City should look for opportunities to diversify parks and recreation facilities and program offerings to cater to a diversity of park users. This would also enhance the level of activity in parks as well as sense of pride and ownership.

- **Level of activity**

Related to the lack of a mix of uses in many parks, most of the parks exhibited a low level of activity during the site visits, suggesting the potential for additional amenities and better awareness for community members.

- **Marketing or promotional efforts for the facility**

There were limited examples of signage, display boards, or other forms of marketing for parks and programs.



BUILDINGS

Buildings and Architecture

STRENGTHS

- **Image and aesthetics**

Both the Clarkston Woman's Club and the Milam Poolhouse are well designed and attractive buildings that have been well maintained.

- **Clarity of entry and connection to the park**

All of the buildings are well sited in their parks with clear and effective ingress and egress and well defined connections to the surrounding park.

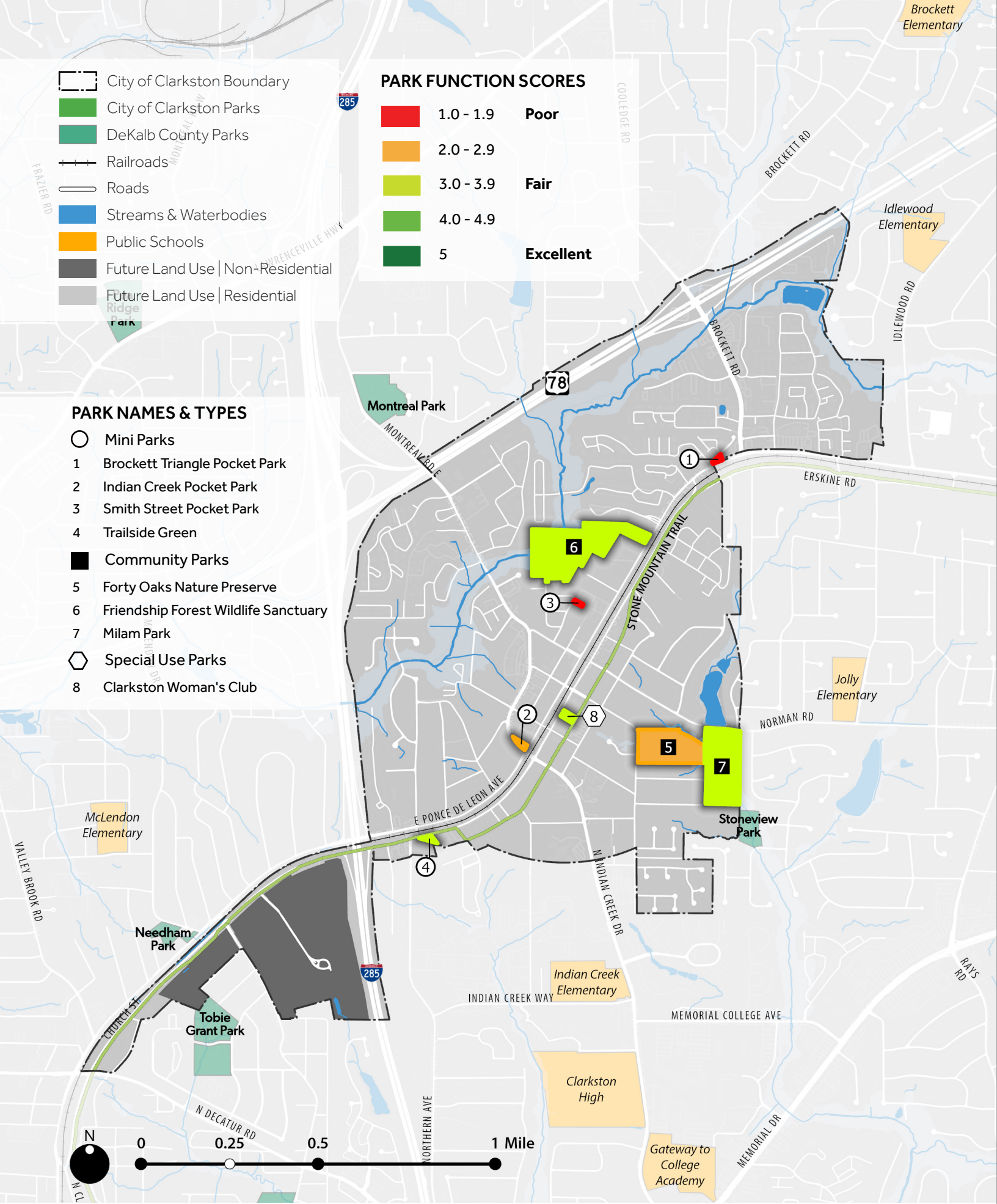


OPPORTUNITIES

- **Structural Integrity**

Despite good structural integrity conditions at the pool and Woman's Club, the overall score is fair to due to the historic farmhouse, which continues to deteriorate and needs immediate attention to avoid further structural collapse.





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3

NEEDS + PRIORITIES ASSESSMENT

- 3.1 INTRODUCTION TO NEEDS + PRIORITIES ASSESSMENT
- 3.2 NEEDS + PRIORITIES ASSESSMENT FINDINGS
- 3.3 SUMMARY FINDINGS



CHAPTER 3 NEEDS + PRIORITIES ASSESSMENT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Needs and Priorities Assessment is to determine the gaps between existing conditions and desired conditions. There are no nationally accepted standards (or state-level requirements) for identifying residents' needs and determining ideal Level-of-Service (LOS) standards for recreation facilities, whether parks, indoor centers, athletic fields, playgrounds, trails, or other amenities. Therefore, each community must determine the appropriate needs assessment techniques and Levels-of-Service required to meet the specific needs and priorities of its residents and leaders.

The strategy employed here is to use a mixed-methods, "triangulated" approach to identifying needs. Mixed-methods research combines the use of various primary data sources (quantitative and qualitative) collected through the planning process, with secondary data from other sources such as census data and previous reports.

The term triangulation refers to the comparison of findings from the various techniques to identify consistent themes and top priorities. For example, the findings from the statistically-valid survey are compared to the findings from the other techniques – such as public workshops, interviews, focus group meetings, and level-of-service analysis – to identify consistent priorities.

Historically, planning for parks and other elements of the public realm has been more art than science. This plan attempts to ensure that a scientific process with verifiable data supports all recommendations and future decision-making. Findings from each of the needs assessment techniques, as well as a summary of top priority needs are discussed in this chapter.



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Given Clarkston's population growth over the last two decades and the city's exceptional diversity, elected officials and Department leadership understood the need to hear from as many residents as possible about how the parks and recreation system could better serve their needs. From the beginning of this project, a broad public engagement strategy was a priority, with the intention of connecting deeply to the community.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM PUBLIC OUTREACH

With the awareness that roughly 1 in 2 Clarkston households speaks a language other than English at home, providing input opportunities in foreign languages was a key objective. Both public event engagement and the statistically valid survey were translated into the 10 most widely spoken languages in Clarkston, with translators provided to assist residents as needed.



Statistically Valid Survey

Overview

A statistically-representative survey is the most reliable and credible of the needs assessment techniques, as it involves a large, randomly-selected sample of residents. ETC Institute administered the parks and recreation needs assessment survey for the City of Clarkston during the fall of 2025. The survey serves as the baseline source of public engagement data to which other methods are compared.

Methodology

ETC Institute mailed a survey packet to a random sample of households in Clarkston. Each survey packet contained a cover letter, a copy of the survey, and a postage paid return envelope.

After the surveys were mailed, ETC Institute followed up with residents to encourage participation.

The goal was to collect a minimum of 250 surveys from residents. The goal was met with 281 surveys collected. The overall results for the sample of 281 surveys has a precision of at least +/-5.8 at the 95% level of confidence.

Following is a summary of the findings. Additional information is provided in the Appendix.

PARKS VISITATION & QUALITY

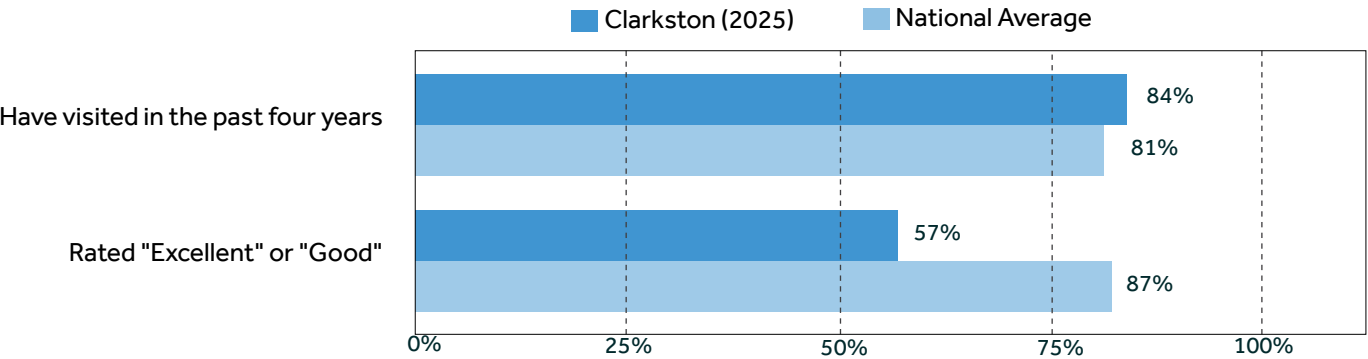
Respondents were asked to indicate if they had visited parks/facilities operated by the City of Clarkston during the past four years, and to rate the quality of those facilities.

A majority of respondents (84%) indicated that they have visited parks and recreation facilities operated by the City of Clarkston during the past four years. This is slightly higher than the national average of 81%.

Among those who visited, 57% rated the facilities as either "Excellent" (15%) or "Good" (42%). This is 30% below the national average of 87%.

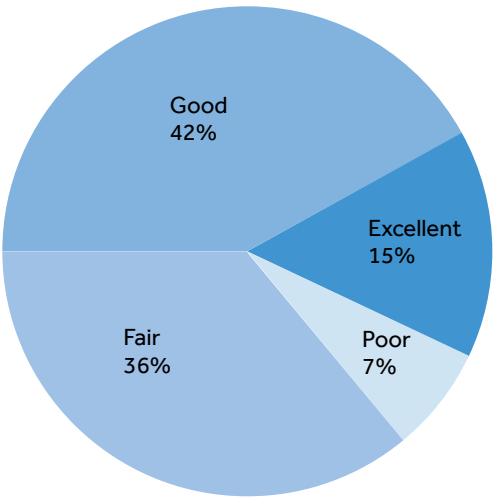
Park Visitation

by percentage of respondents
with National Benchmarking Analysis



Park and Facility Quality

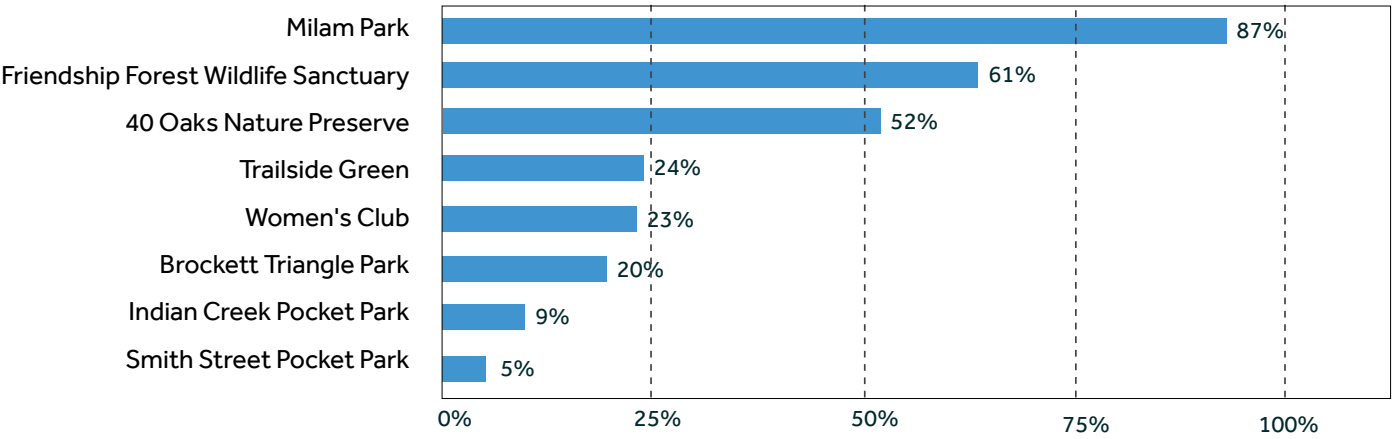
by percentage of respondents (excluding "not provided")



PARK SITE VISITATION

Respondents were asked to indicate which parks/facilities operated by the City of Clarkston they have visited during the past four years.

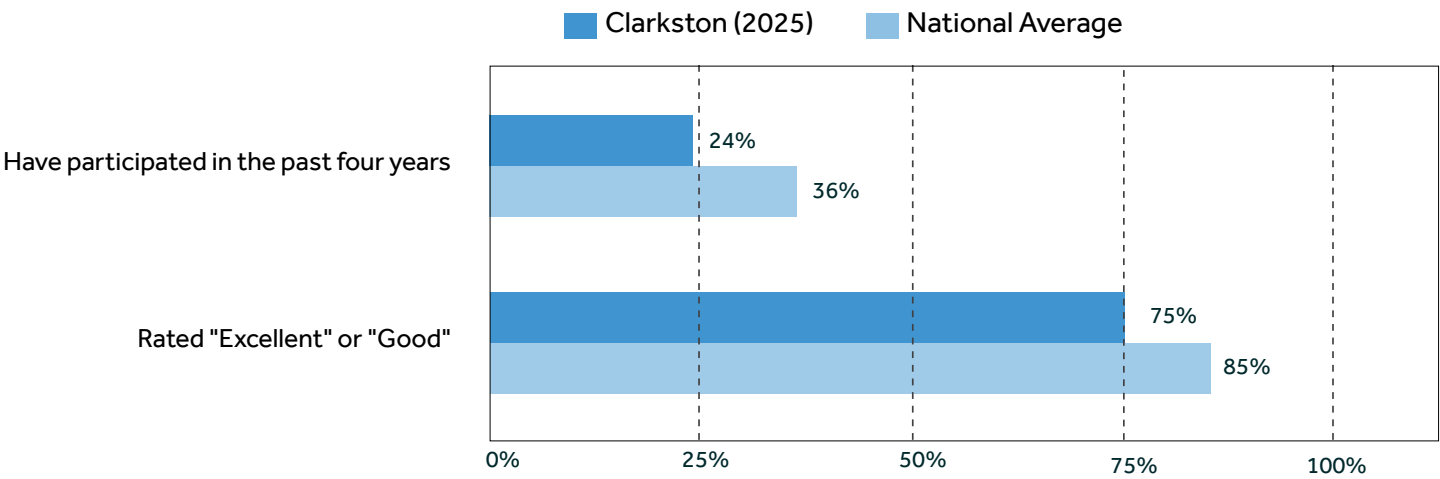
Results largely corresponded with the size and uses of parks, with Community Parks Milam (87%), Friendship Forest (61%), and the 40 Oaks Nature Preserve (52%) all receiving visits from a majority of respondents. The smaller parks were visited most often by fewer than a quarter of residents.



PROGRAM USE AND QUALITY

Respondents were asked to indicate if they had participated in any recreation programs offered by the City of Clarkston over the last four years. They were also asked to indicate the quality of any programs they participated in.

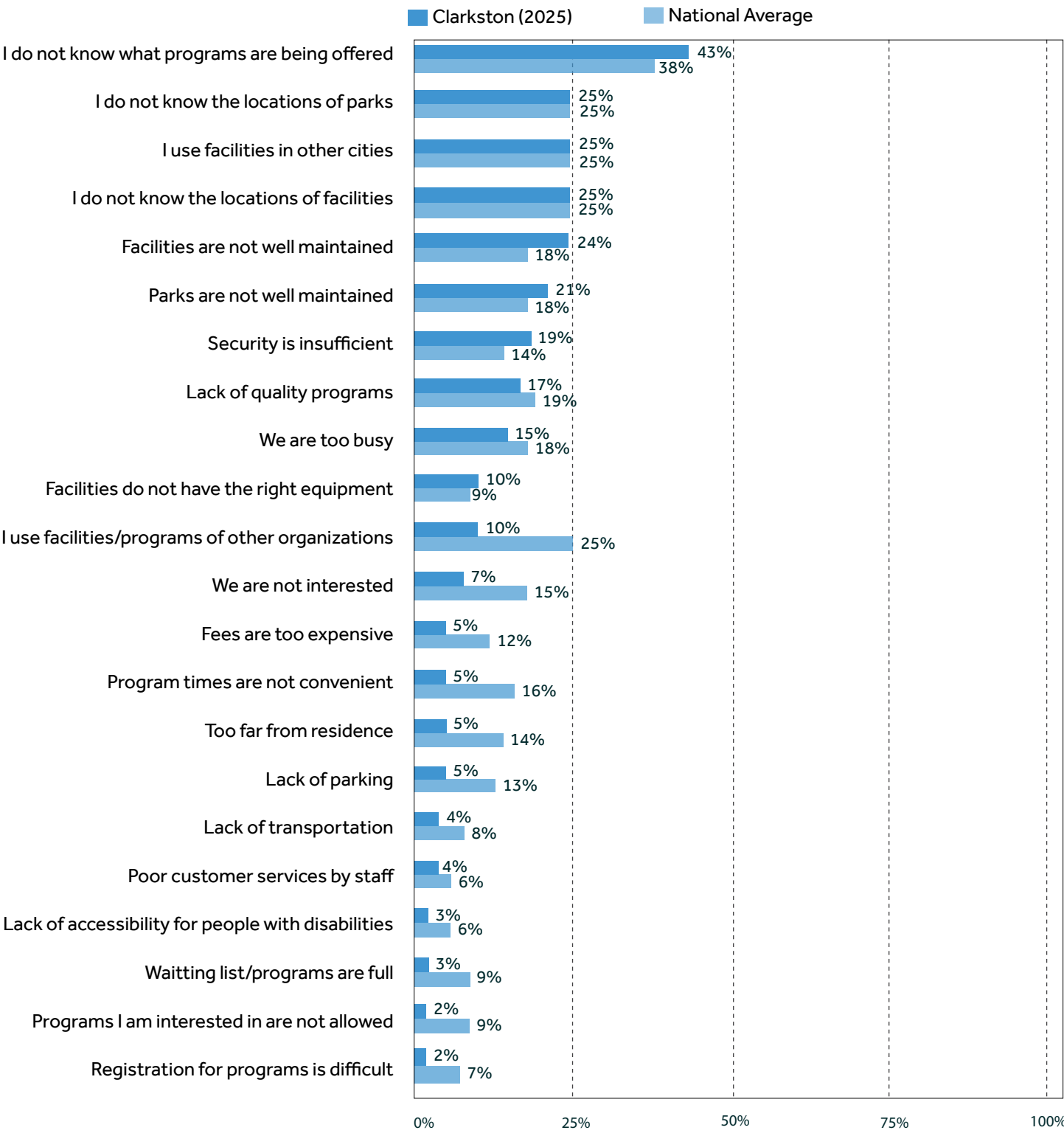
Just under a quarter of respondents (24%) indicated that they had participated in a program in the past four years, approximately 12% below the national average. Three quarters of program users rated their experience as Excellent or Good, which is 10% below the national average.



BARRIERS TO PARK VISITATION & USE

Respondents were asked to indicate the social and environmental barriers that prevent them from using parks more often. Survey results indicate that the primary barriers to participation in parks and recreation programs are related to awareness and information.

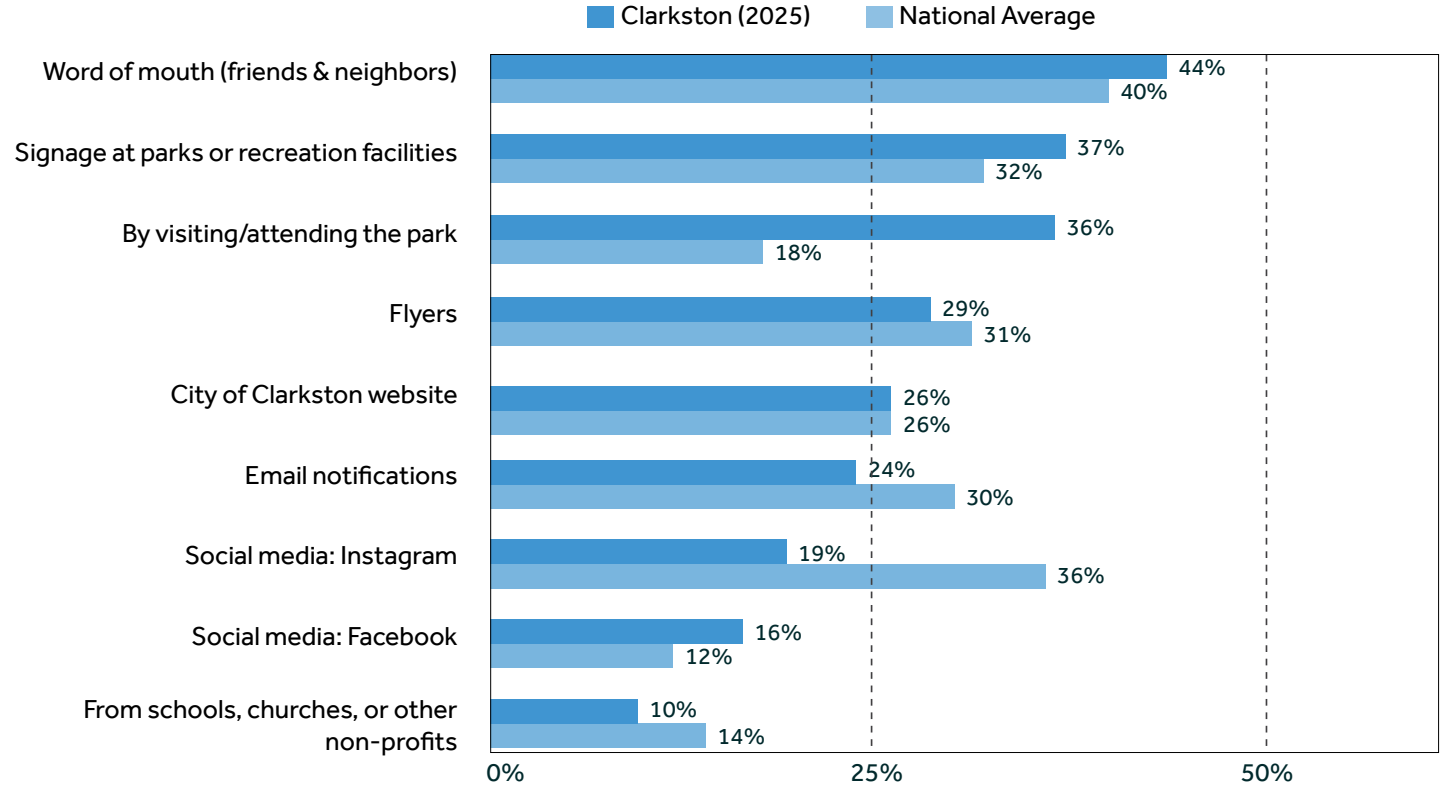
The most common barrier identified was not knowing what programs are being offered (38%), followed by not knowing the locations of facilities (25%) and not knowing the locations of parks (25%). Additionally, some respondents reported using facilities in other cities (25%) and concerns related to facility maintenance (24%). Other barriers such as lack of time, transportation, and program convenience were identified less frequently, and often well below the national average.



AWARENESS OF PARKS AND PROGRAMS

Respondents were asked to indicate the ways they currently use to learn about parks and recreation programs, activities, and events in the community.

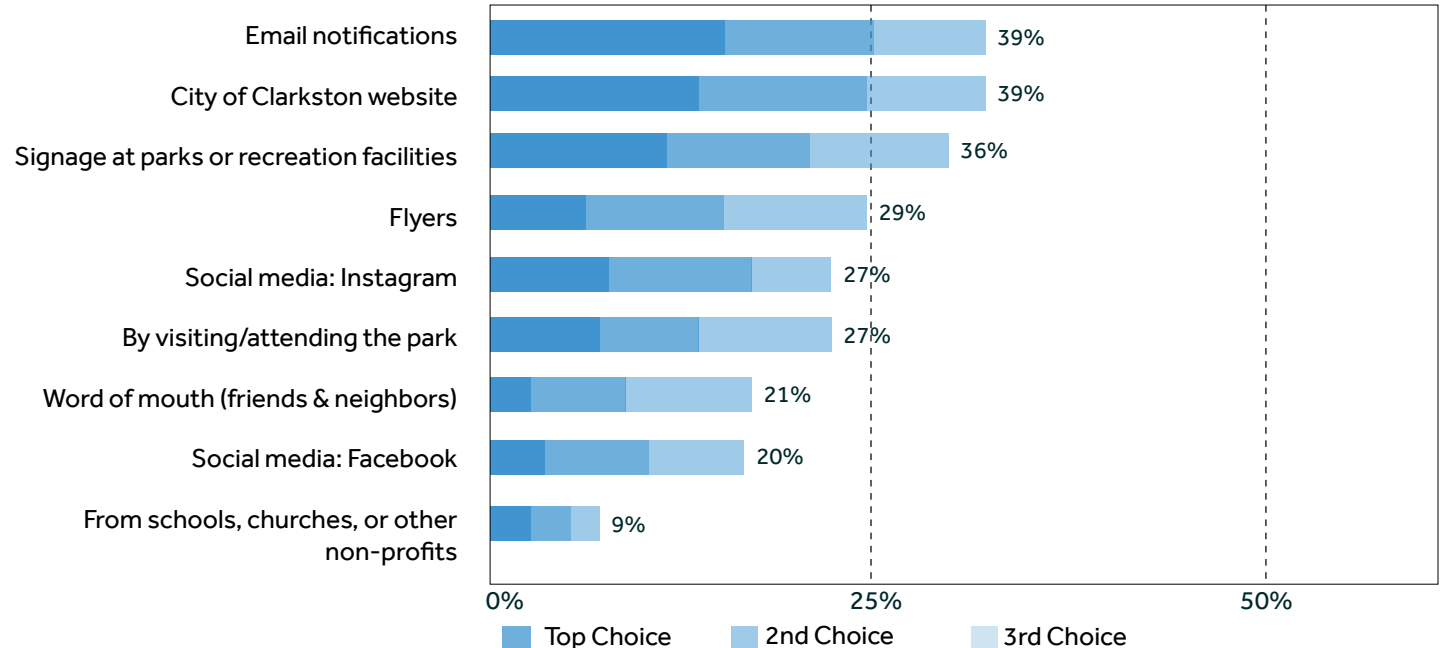
The top three ways residents learn about parks, programs and events are Word of mouth (44%), Signage at parks (37%) and By visiting the park (36%). All of these scored above the National Average. Most of the other methods are within 5% of the National Average although Instagram is 15% below.



PREFERENCES FOR AWARENESS OF PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

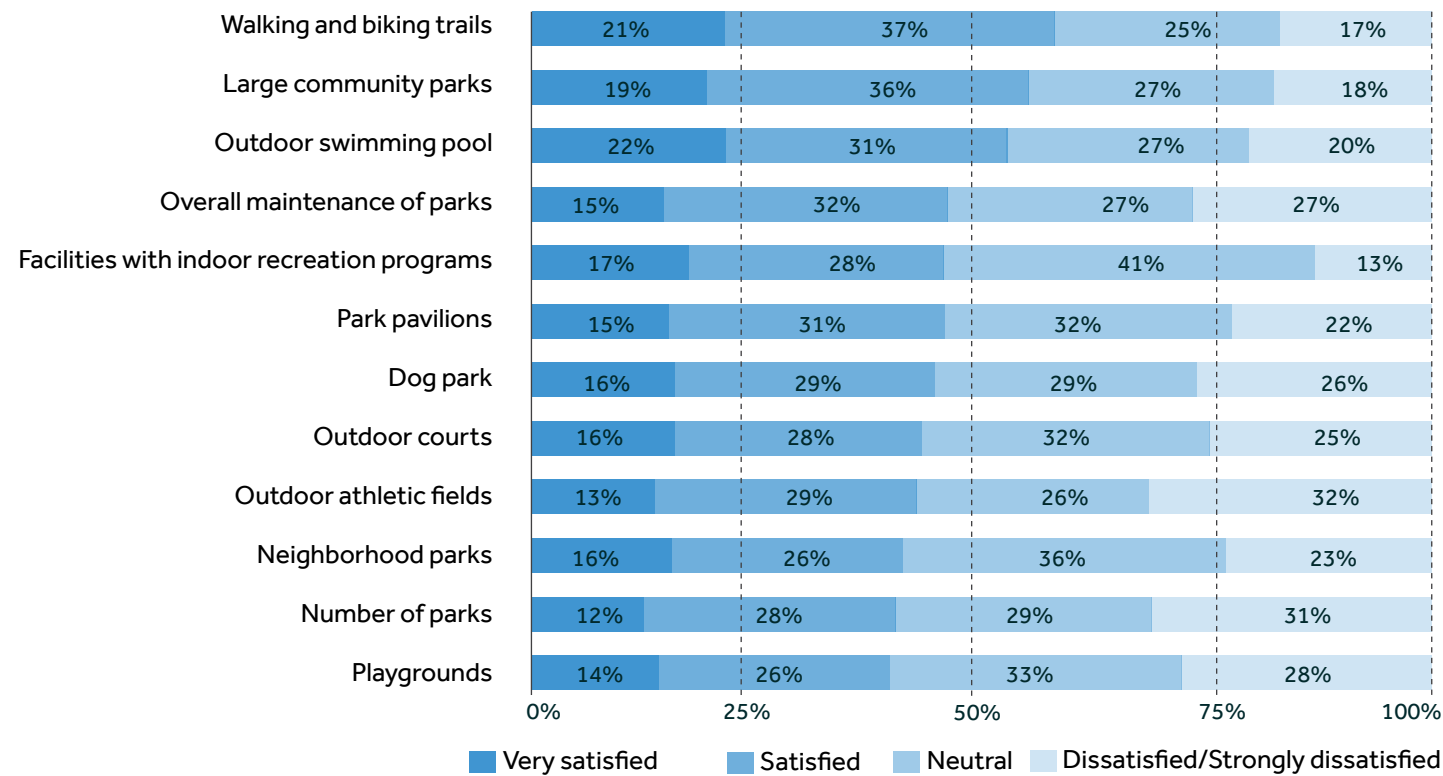
Respondents were asked to indicate the ways they would prefer to learn about parks and programs.

The top three choices were Email notifications (39%), the City website (39%), and signage at parks (36%), indicating a desire for the City to significantly increase the use of email and the website to share information on the parks and recreation system.



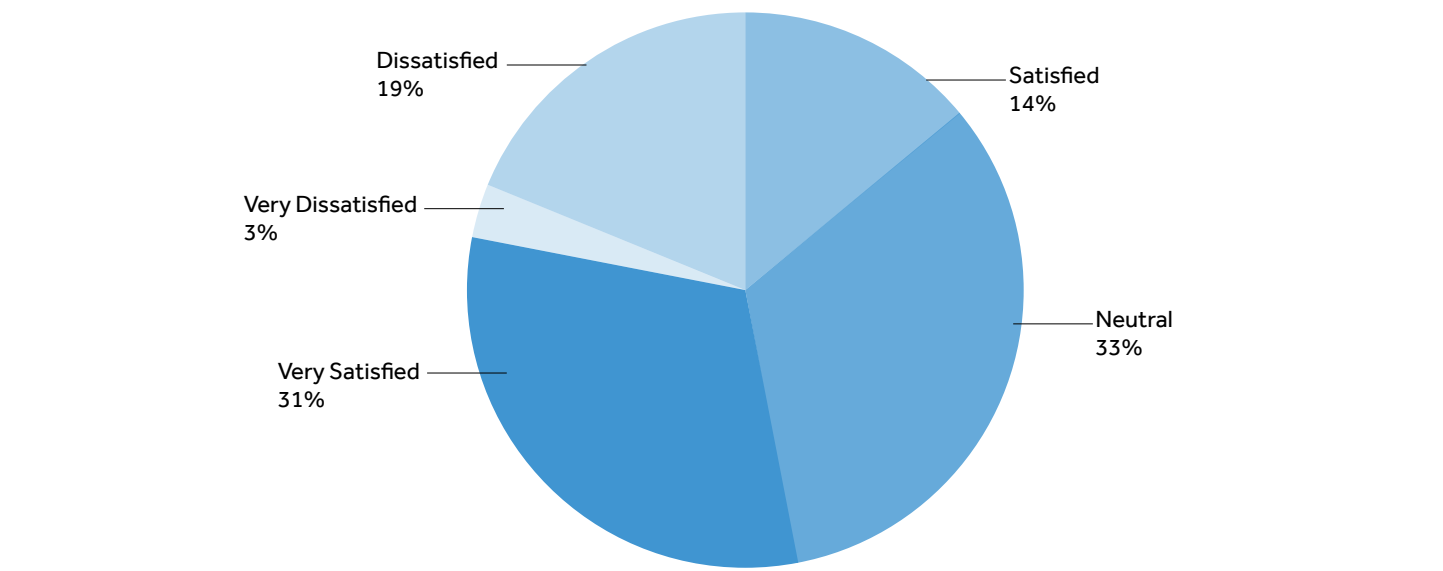
SATISFACTION WITH PARKS AND FACILITIES

Respondents were asked to indicate their satisfaction with the existing parks and facilities. Survey results indicate that residents generally report moderate to high levels of satisfaction with Clarkston's parks and recreation facilities. Walking and biking trails (58%), large community parks (55%), and outdoor swimming pools (53%) received the highest levels of satisfaction. Facilities with indoor recreation programs (45%) and park pavilions (46%) also received favorable ratings.



SATISFACTION WITH AQUATIC PROGRAMS

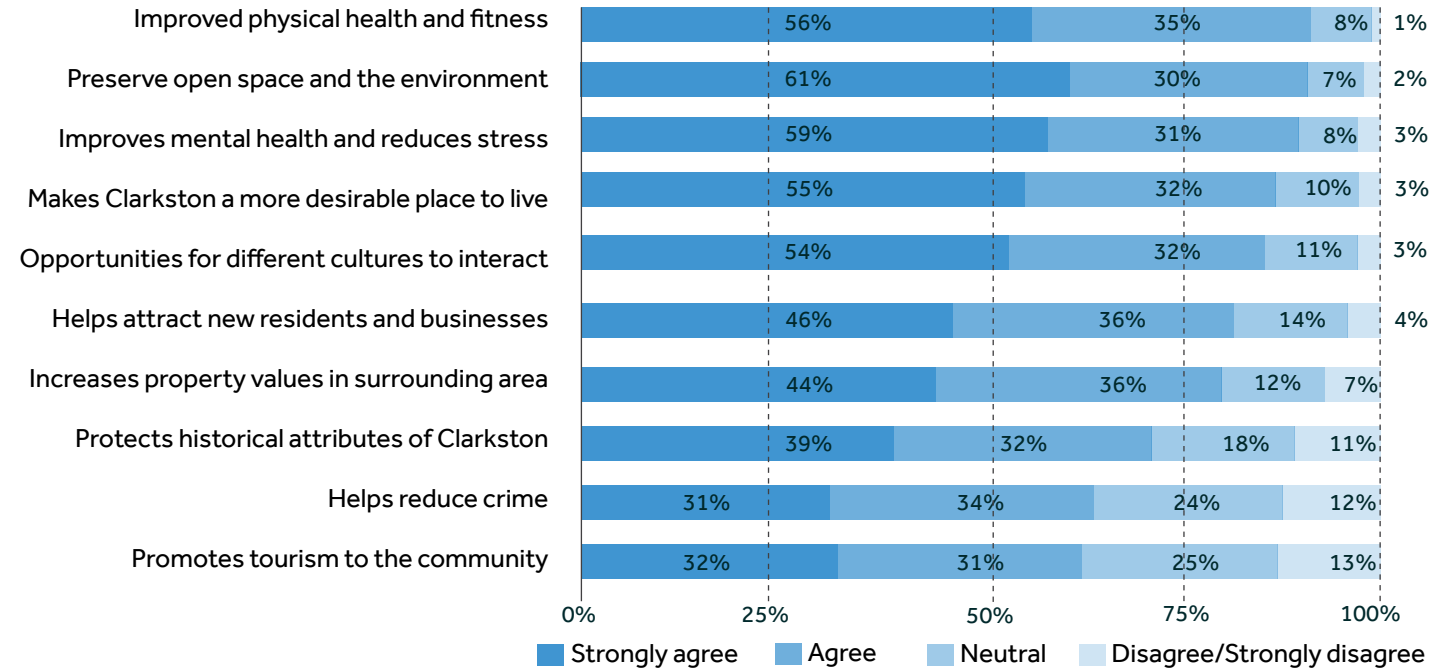
Respondents were asked to indicate their satisfaction with the aquatic programs they have participated in. Survey results indicate that residents generally report moderate to high levels of satisfaction with Clarkston's aquatic programs, with 45% reporting Very satisfied (31%) or Satisfied.



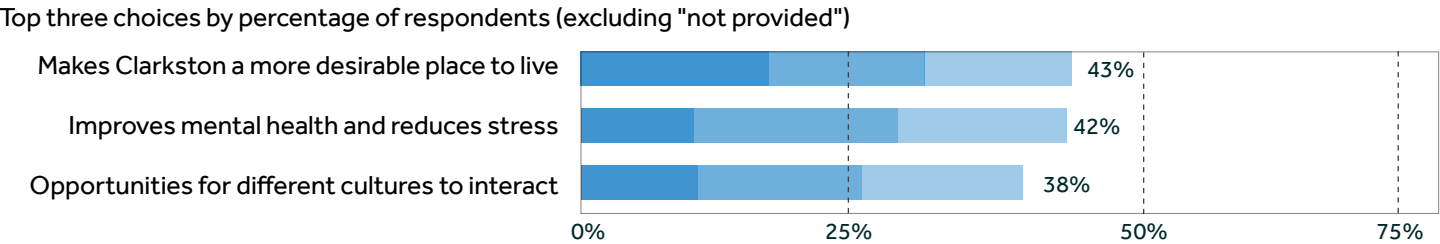
BENEFITS OF PARKS AND FACILITIES

Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with a variety of benefits the parks and recreation system can provide to the City of Clarkston.

Survey results indicate that residents strongly recognize the benefits provided by parks and recreation facilities. The highest levels of agreement were related to improving physical health and fitness (89%), preserving open space and the environment (85%), improving mental health and reducing stress (85%), and making Clarkston a more desirable place to live (84%). Residents also identified benefits related to increasing property values, attracting new residents and businesses, and promoting tourism.



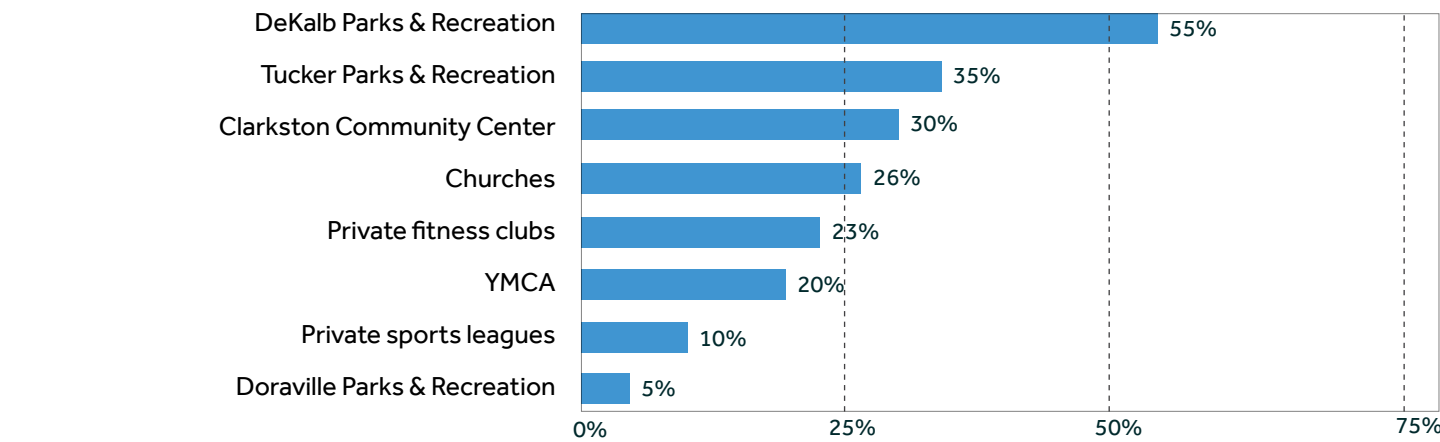
Respondents were also asked to indicate the benefits that are Most Important to their household.



OTHER RECREATION PROVIDERS

Respondents were asked to indicate the other recreation facilities around Clarkston that they have visited.

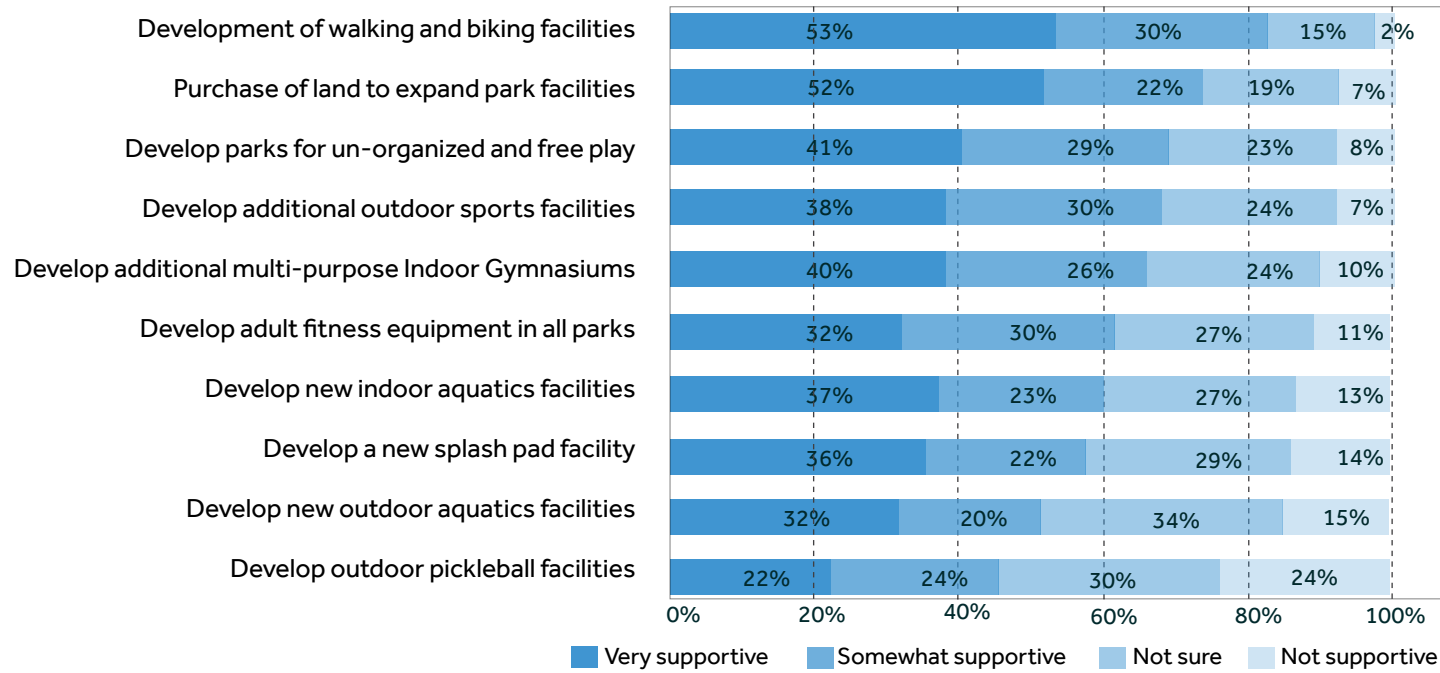
These findings highlight the important role of both local and regional providers in meeting recreation needs, especially given that a majority of Clarkston respondents have visited a DeKalb County Park.



SUPPORT FOR SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

Respondents were asked to indicate their support for a variety of actions that the City of Clarkston could take to improve the parks and recreation system.

Survey results show strong support for improving and expanding Clarkston's parks and recreation system. The highest levels of support were for developing walking and biking facilities (83%), purchasing land to expand park facilities (74%), and developing parks for unorganized and free play (70%). Residents also expressed majority support for additional sports facilities, and strong support for indoor recreation spaces, and aquatic facilities. These results indicate broad community support for investments that improve park access, recreation opportunities, and overall system quality.

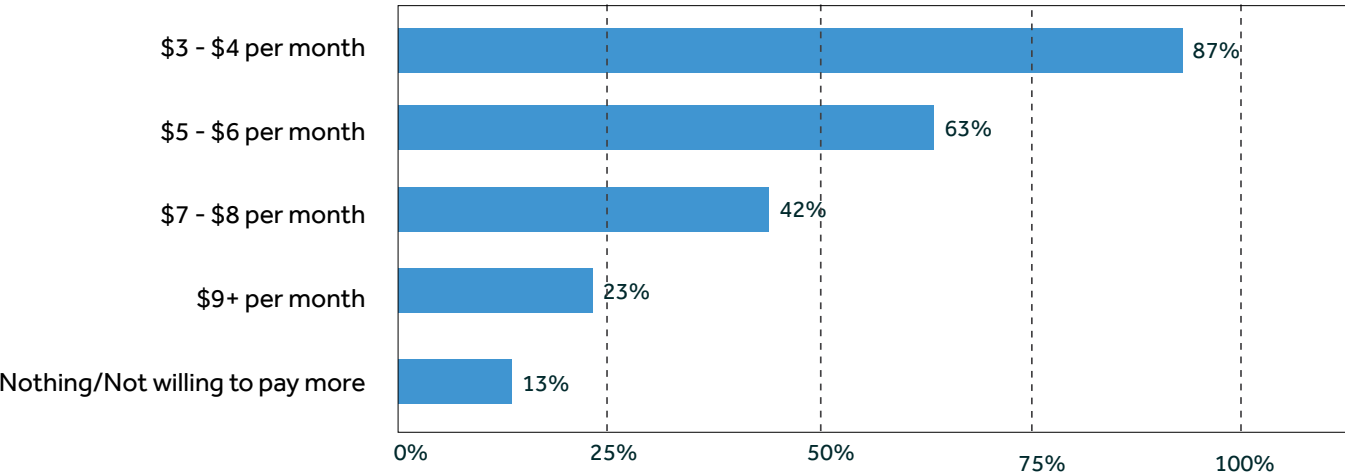


WILLINGNESS TO PAY ADDITIONAL TAXES

Respondents were asked to indicate the maximum amount of additional tax revenue they would be willing to pay to develop and operate the type of parks, trails, aquatics, sports, and cultural facilities that are most important to their household.

Survey results indicate that a majority of residents are willing to pay additional monthly taxes to support parks and recreation improvements. The largest percentage of respondents were willing to pay \$3–\$4 per month (87%), with a significant majority also willing to pay \$5–\$6 per month (63%). Only 13% of respondents indicated they were not willing to pay any additional amount.

These findings demonstrate overall community support for funding parks and recreation system enhancements.

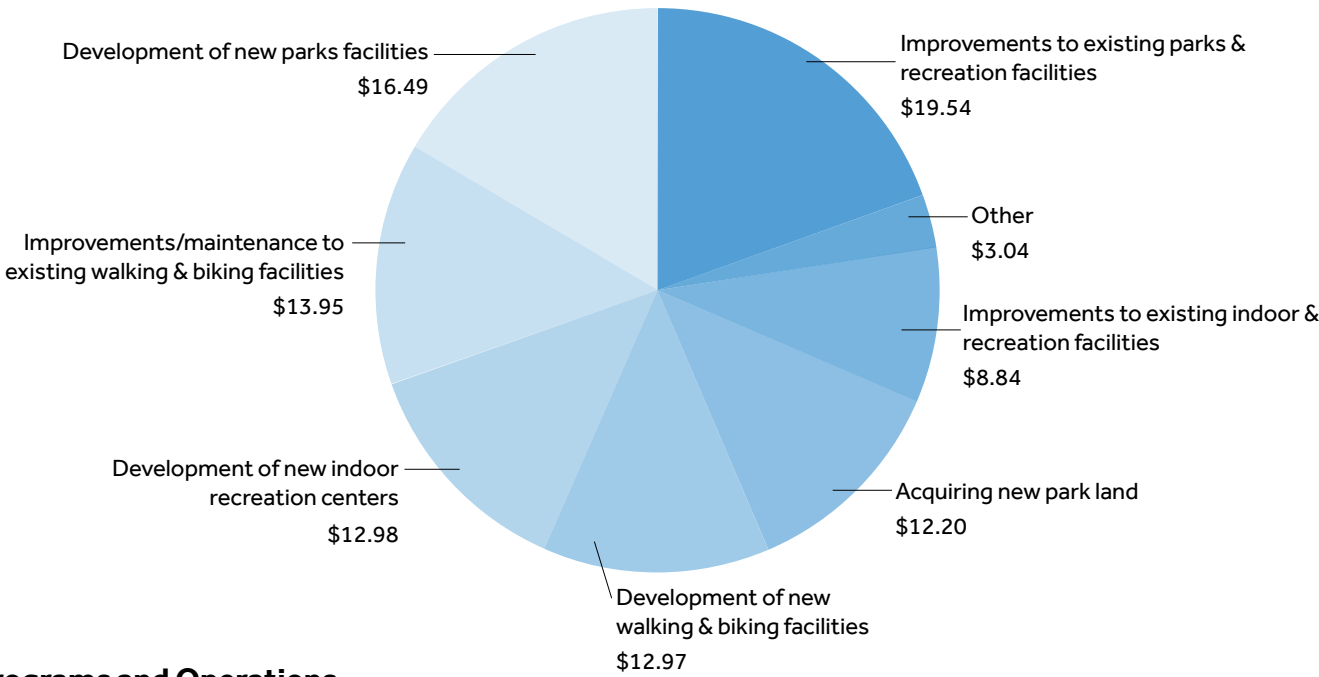


FUNDING PRIORITIES

Facilities and Capital Improvements

Respondents were asked how they would allocate \$100 of funding for park FACILITIES/CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS among eight categories.

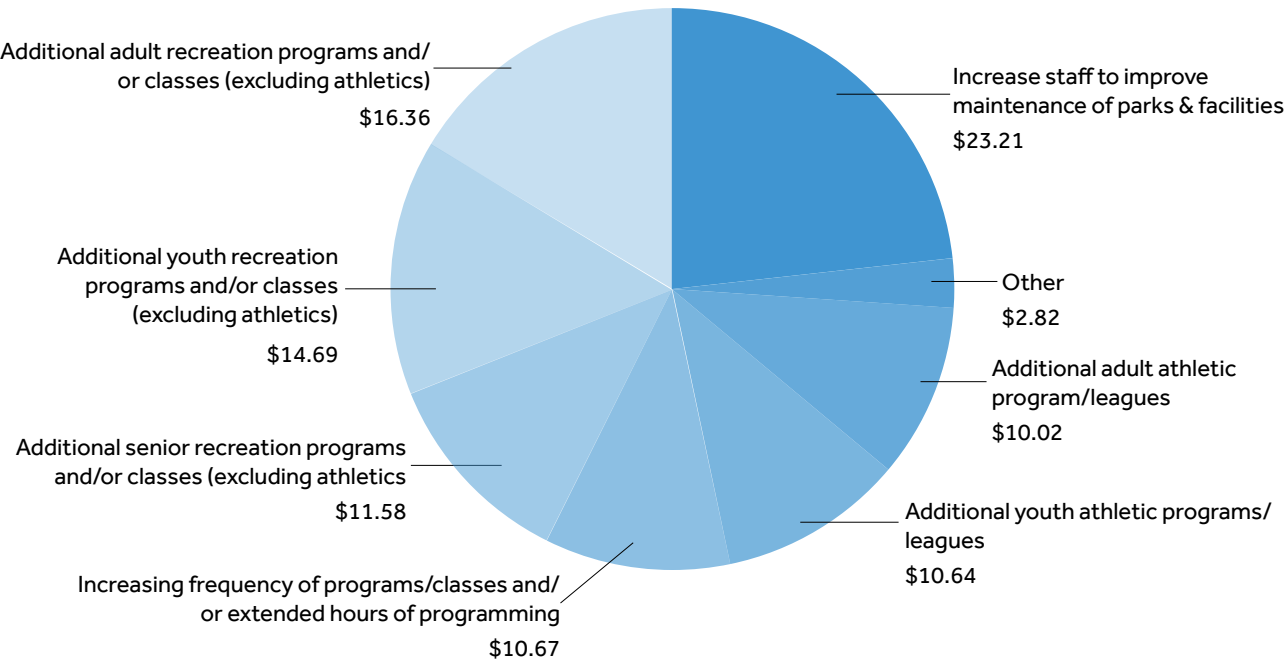
Responses indicate that residents prioritized improvements to existing parks and recreation facilities (\$19.54), improvements to indoor recreation facilities (\$19.54), and development of new park facilities (\$16.49). Funding for walking and biking facilities and land acquisition were also identified as important priorities. These results highlight the importance of maintaining existing parks while expanding recreation opportunities.



Programs and Operations

Respondents were asked how they would allocate \$100 of funding for PROGRAMS/OPERATIONS improvements among eight categories.

Survey results indicate that residents placed the highest priority on increasing staff to improve maintenance of parks and facilities (\$23.21), followed by additional adult recreation programs (\$16.36) and additional youth programs (\$11.58). Expanding program offerings and increasing program hours were also identified as important priorities. These findings emphasize the importance of maintaining high-quality parks and expanding recreation programming to serve community needs.



PRIORITY INVESTMENT RATINGS

The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) was developed by ETC Institute to provide governments with an objective tool for evaluating the priority that should be placed on parks and recreation investments. The priority investment rating reflects the *importance* residents place on items (sum of top 4 choices) and the *unmet needs* (needs that are only being partly or not met) for each facility/program relative to the facility/program that rated the highest overall. Since decisions related to future investments should consider both the level of unmet need and the importance of facilities and programs, the PIR weights each of these components equally.

The PIR reflects the sum of the Unmet Needs Rating and the Importance Rating as shown in the equation below:

PIR = UNR + IR

For example, suppose the Unmet Needs Rating for playgrounds is 26.5 (out of 100) and the Importance Rating for playgrounds is 52 (out of 100), the Priority Investment Rating for playgrounds would be 78.5 (out of 200).

How to Analyze the Charts:

High Priority Areas are those with a PIR of at least 120. A rating of 100 or above generally indicates there is a relatively high level of unmet need and residents generally think it is important to fund improvements in these areas. Improvements in this area are likely to have a positive impact on the greatest number of households.

Medium Priority Areas are those with a PIR of 60-119. A rating in this range generally indicates there is a medium to high level of unmet need or a significant percentage of residents generally think it is important to fund improvements in these areas.

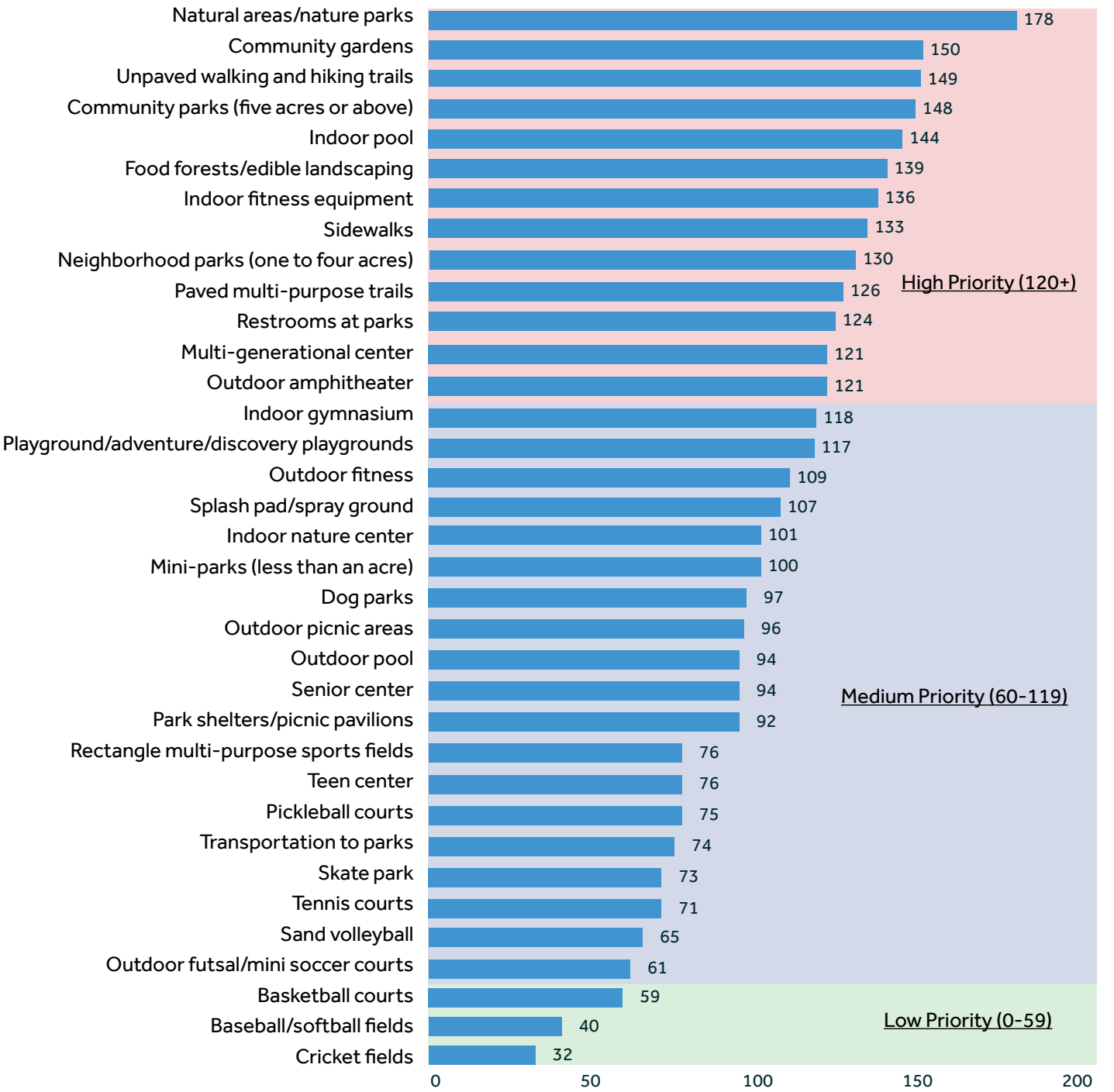
Low Priority Areas are those with a PIR below 60. A rating in this range generally indicates there is a relatively low level of unmet need and residents do not think it is important to fund improvements in these areas. Improvements may be warranted if the needs of very specialized populations are being targeted.

FACILITIES/AMENITIES PRIORITIES

Respondents were asked to identify if their household had a need for 35 specific recreation facilities/amenities and to rate how well their needs for each were currently being met. They were also asked how important each of the facilities/amenities is to their household.

Based on the Priority Investment Rating (PIR), the following programs/activities were identified as the highest priorities for investment:

- Natural areas and nature parks (PIR = 178)
 - Community gardens (PIR = 150)
 - Unpaved walking and biking trails (PIR = 149)
 - Community parks (PIR = 148)
 - Indoor pool (PIR = 144)
 - Food forests/edible landscaping (PIR = 139)
- Indoor fitness equipment (PIR = 136)
 - Sidewalks (PIR = 133)
 - Neighborhood parks (one to four acres) (PIR = 130)
 - Paved multi-purpose trails (PIR = 126)

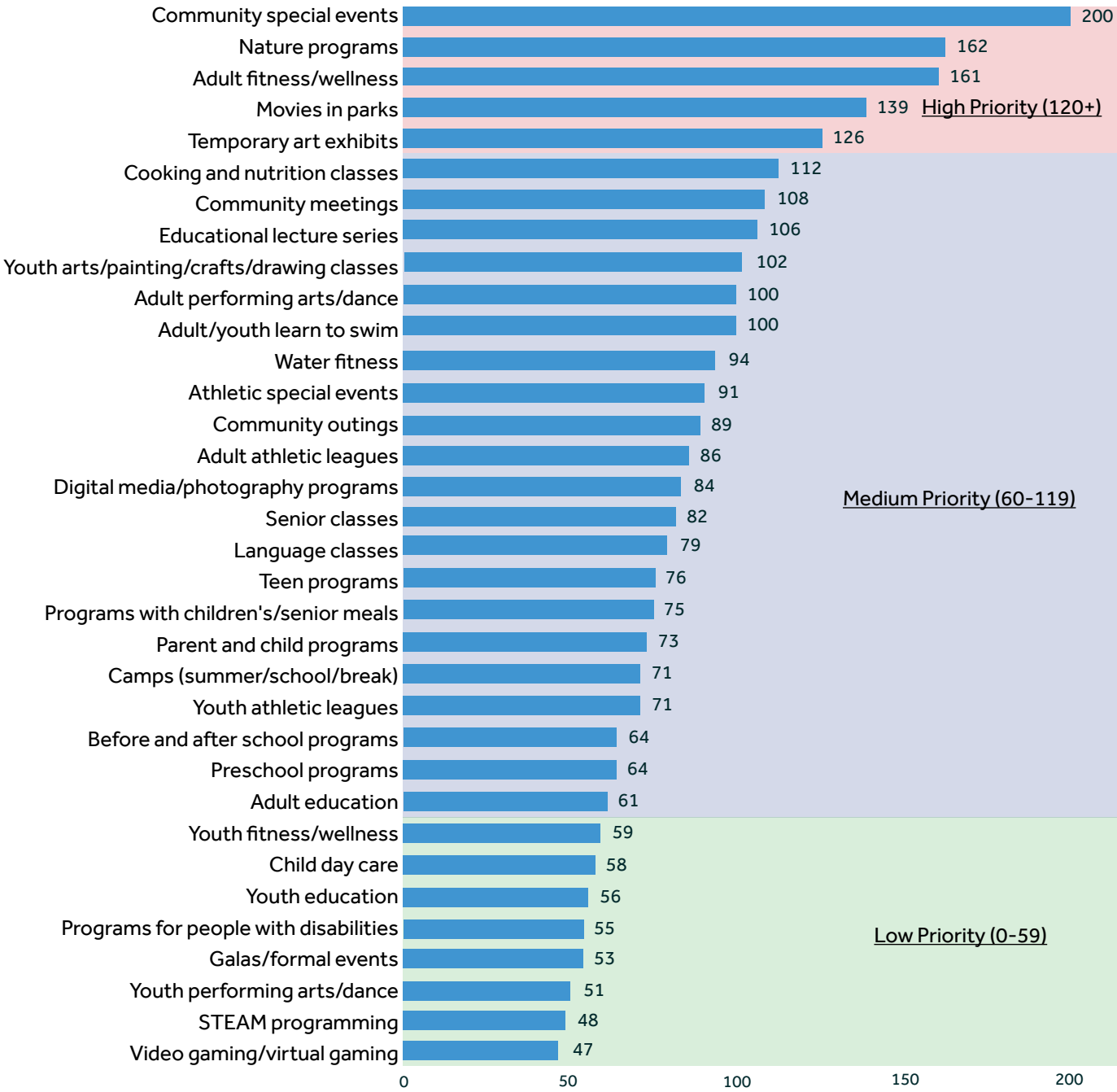


PROGRAMS/ACTIVITIES PRIORITIES

Respondents were asked to identify if their household had a need for 34 specific recreation programs/activities and to rate how well their needs for each were currently being met. They were also asked how important each of the programs/activities is to their household.

Based on the Priority Investment Rating (PIR), the following programs/activities were identified as the highest priorities for investment:

- Community special events (PIR = 200)
- Nature programs (PIR = 162)
- Adult fitness and wellness programs (PIR = 161)
- Movies in parks (PIR = 139)
- Temporary art exhibits (PIR = 126)
- Cooking and nutrition classes (PIR = 112)
- Community meetings and educational programs (PIR = 106)



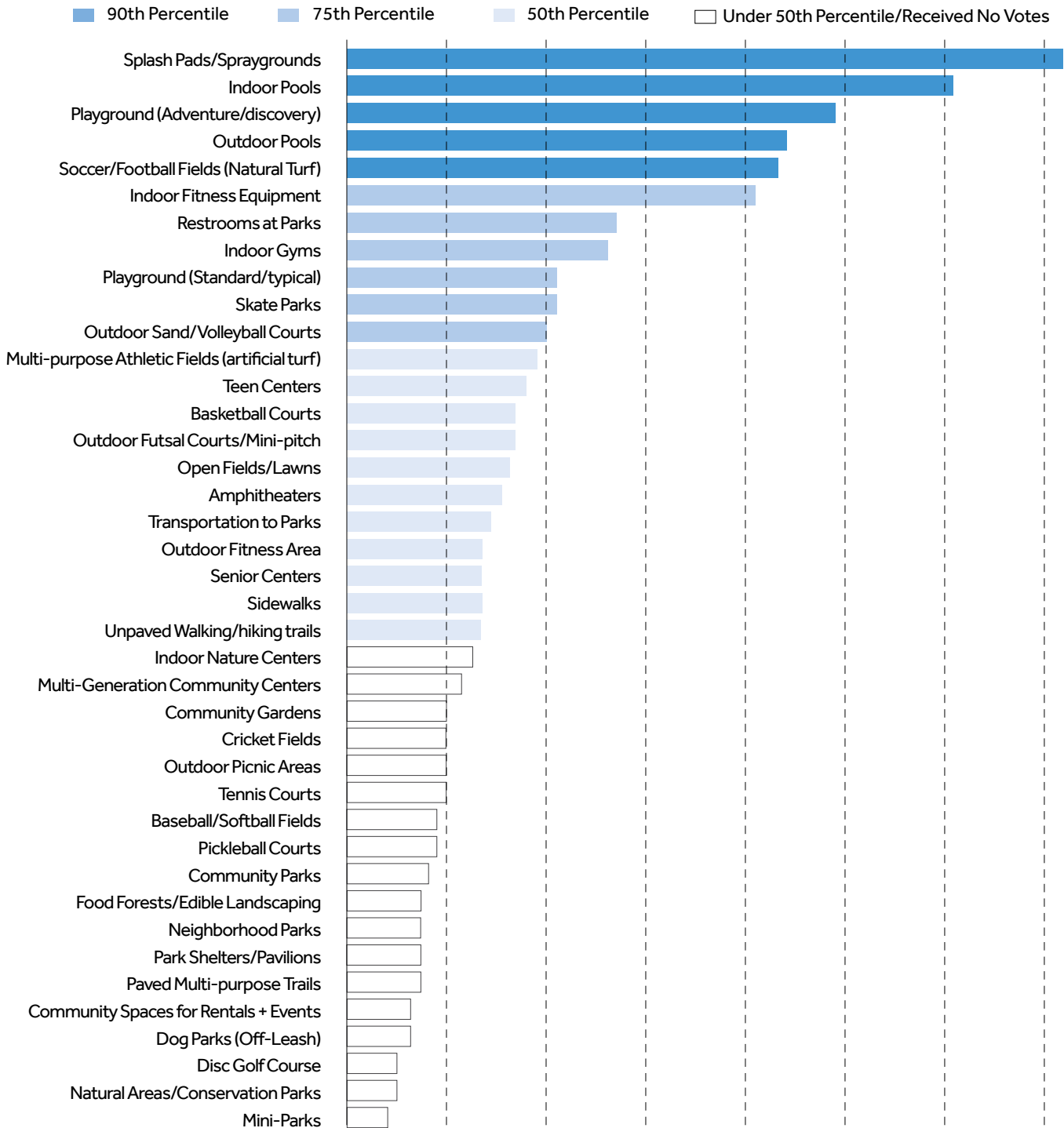
Public Event Input

Overview

The Clarkston Parks and Recreation Master Plan project team attended the annual Backpack Giveaway hosted by the City on August 14, 2025 in Milam Park. The team provided six public input exercises for residents to complete, with responses collected using sticky dots on large boards. All the exercises were translated into the 10 most commonly spoken languages in Clarkston. There were also translators hired to assist residents with completing the exercises and providing general information on the parks and recreation plan.

FACILITIES PRIORITIES

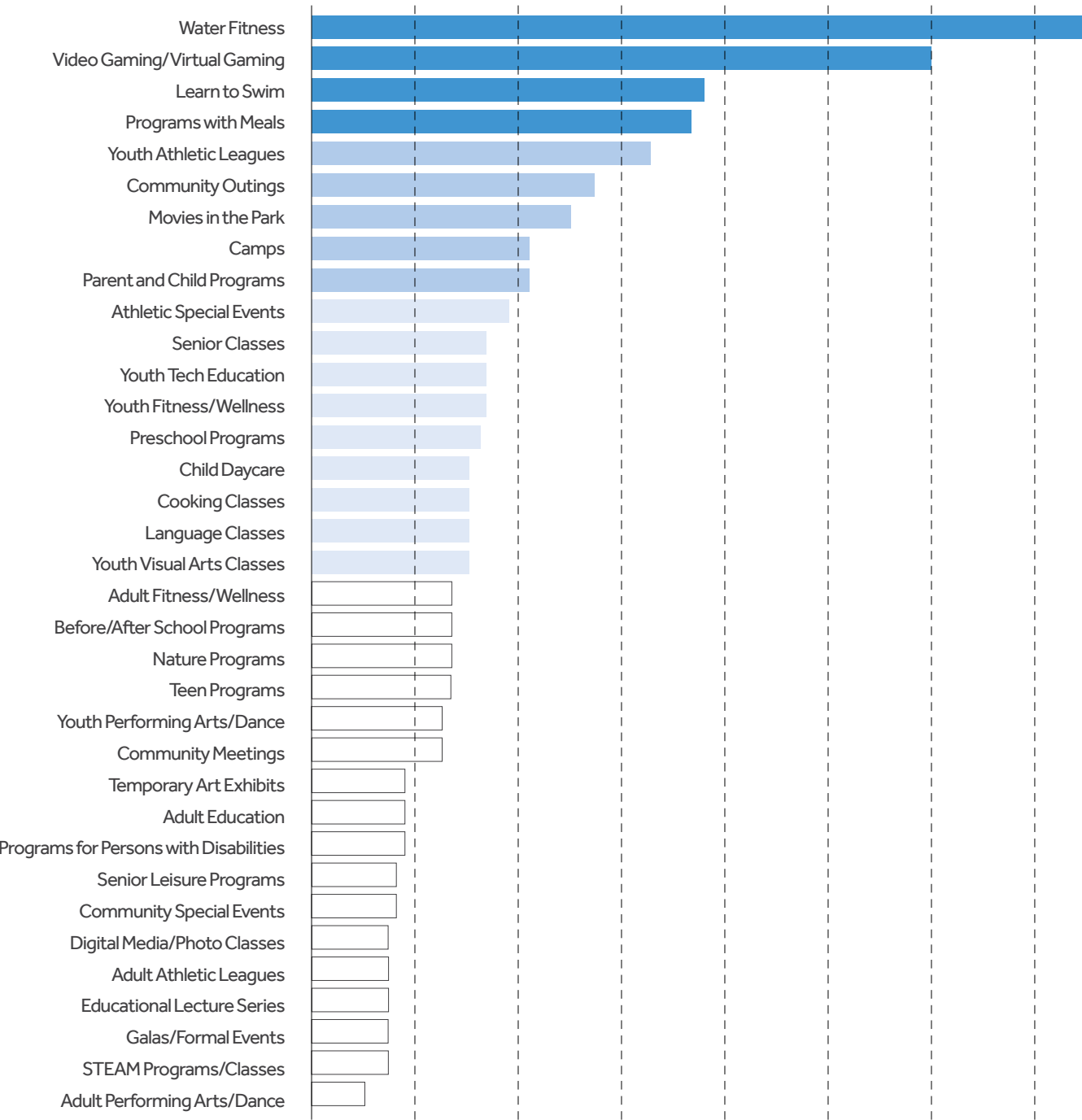
Respondents were asked to review a table with 40 different recreation facilities/amenities and to identify those that are IMPORTANT to their household but NOT being well provided.



PROGRAM PRIORITIES

Respondents were asked to review a table with 35 different recreation programs/activities and to identify those that are IMPORTANT to their household but NOT being well provided.

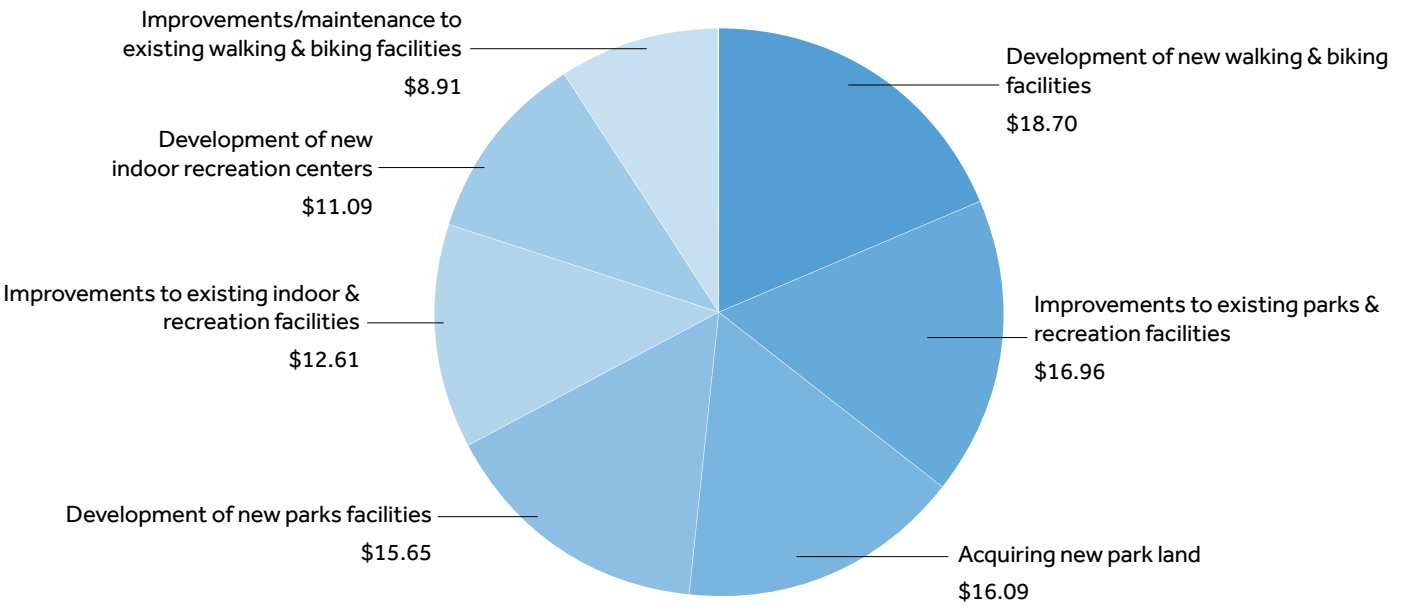
90th Percentile 75th Percentile 50th Percentile Under 50th Percentile/Received No Votes



FUNDING PRIORITIES

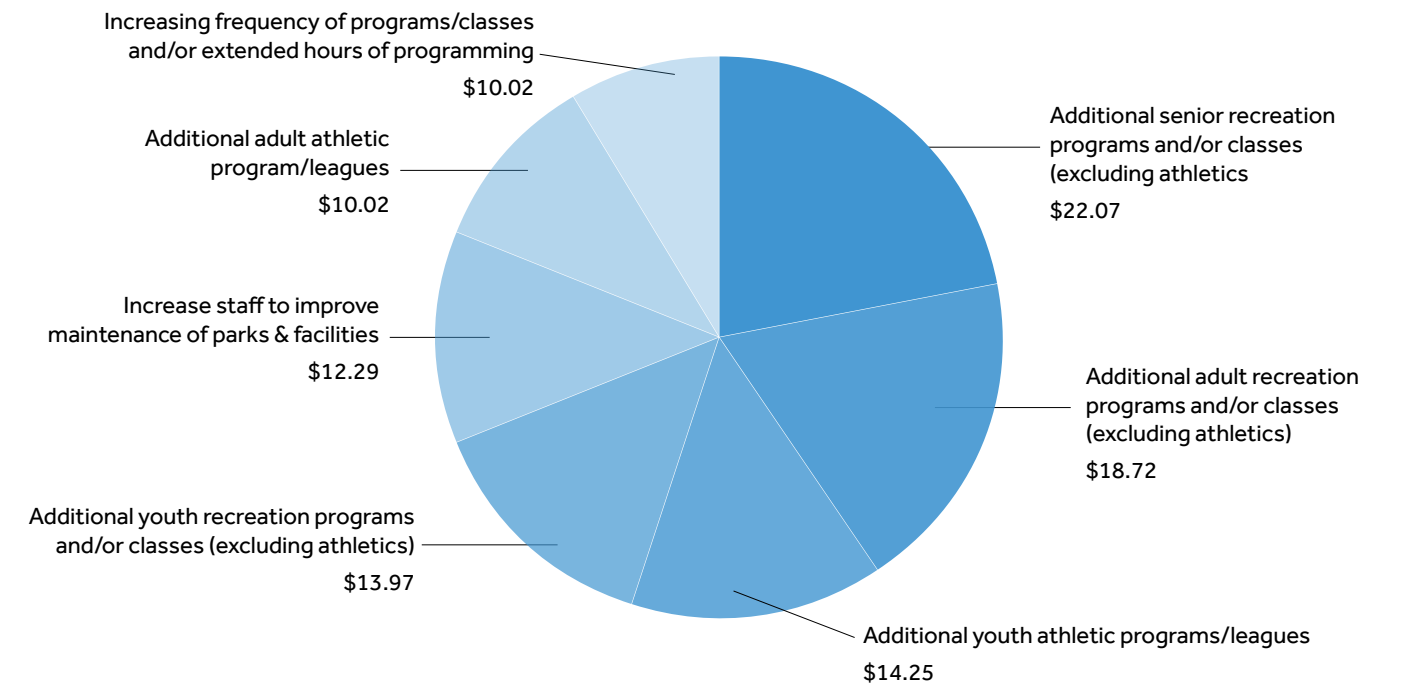
Facilities and Capital Improvements

Respondents were asked how they would allocate \$100 of funding for park FACILITIES/CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS among eight categories. Responses indicate that residents prioritized development of new walking and biking facilities (\$18.70), improvements to existing parks and recreation facilities (\$16.96), and park land acquisition (\$16.09) were identified as the predominant priorities.



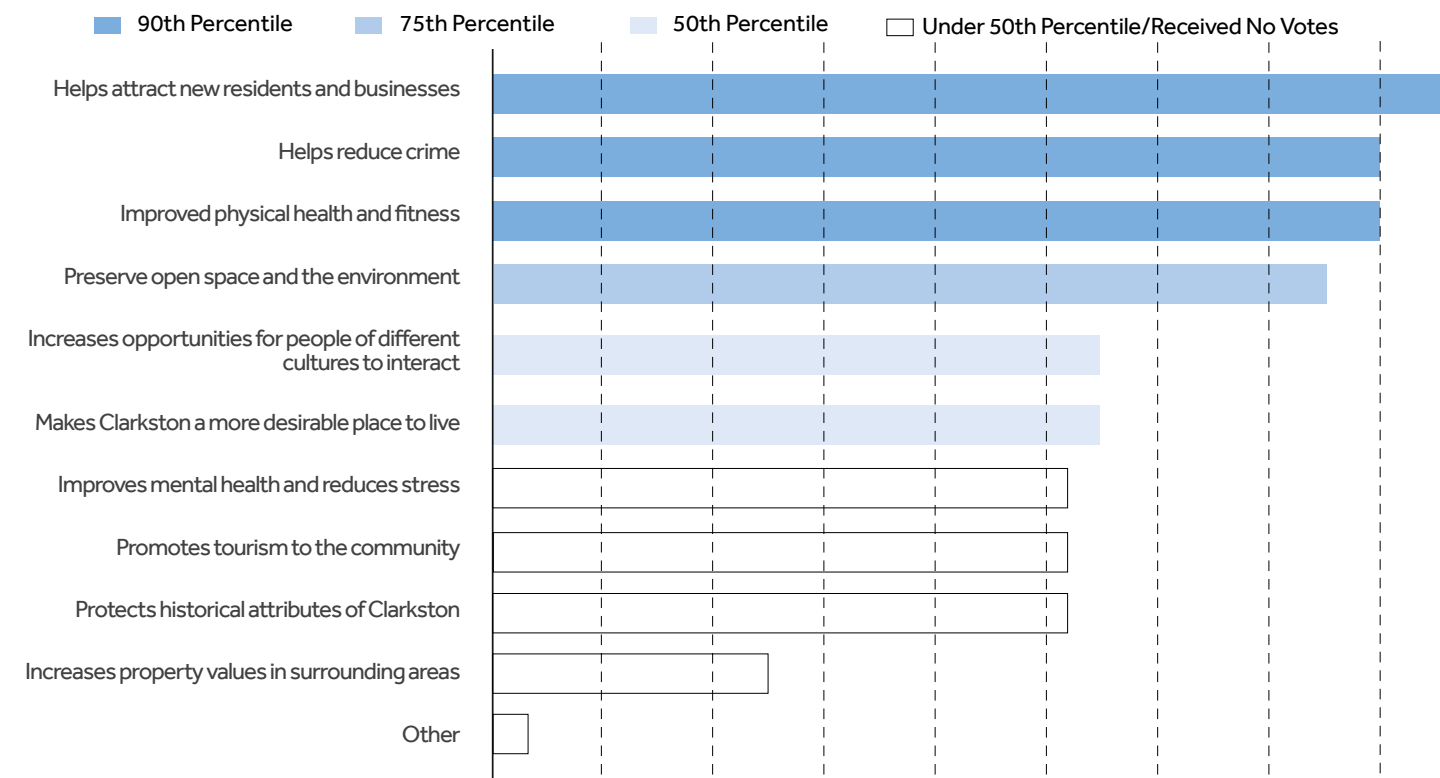
Programs and Operations

Respondents were asked how they would allocate \$100 of funding for PROGRAMS/OPERATIONS improvements among eight categories. Responses indicate that residents placed the highest priority on Additional senior recreation programs and/or classes (excluding athletics) (\$22.07), followed by additional adult recreation programs (\$18.72) and additional youth athletic programs (\$14.25).



BENEFITS OF PARKS & RECREATION

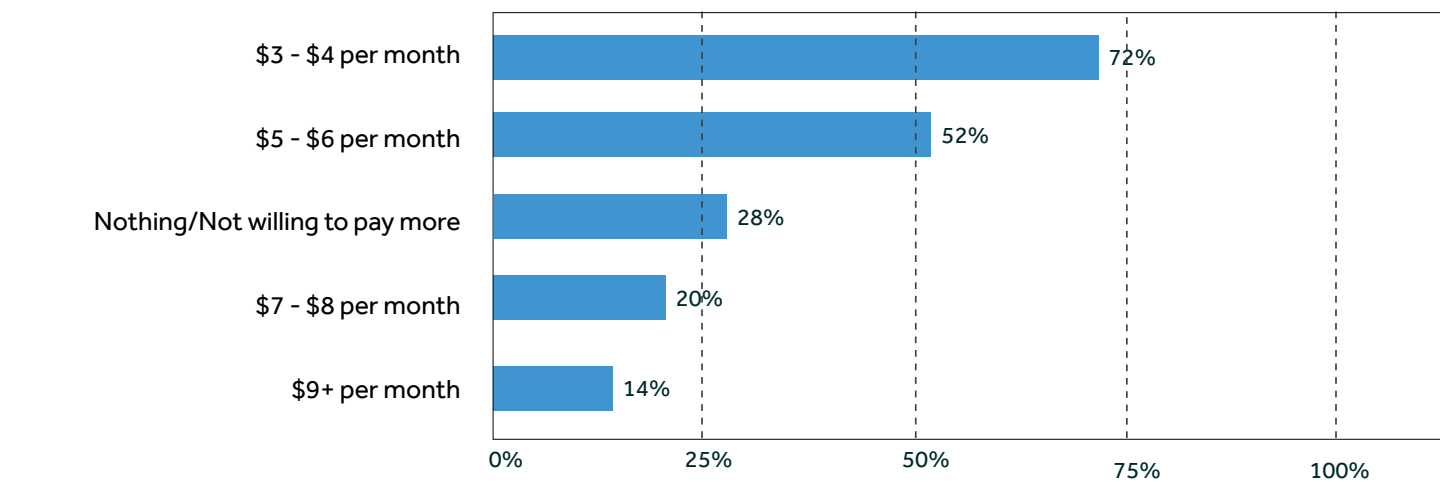
Based on a list of 13 attributes which parks & recreation could provide as a benefit to the city, participants were asked to place a dot on those most important to them.



WILLINGNESS TO PAY ADDITIONAL TAXES

Respondents were asked to indicate the maximum amount of additional tax revenue they would be willing to pay to develop and operate the type of parks, trails, aquatics, sports, and cultural facilities that are most important to their household.

Survey results indicate that a majority of residents are willing to pay additional monthly taxes to support parks and recreation improvements. The largest percentage of respondents were willing to pay \$3–\$4 per month (72%, when combined with higher amounts). Only 28% of respondents indicated they were not willing to pay any additional amount. These findings demonstrate overall community support for funding parks and recreation system enhancements.



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Elected Officials Input

Overview

Interviews were conducted with all of Clarkston’s Council Members during the master planning process. Interviewees were asked six questions. Following is a summary of the responses.

REVIEW OF PROJECT SCOPE/ SCHEDULE

Interviewees were asked: "Do you have any questions about the project scope/ methodology?"

- There is interest in understanding the business side of recommendations, specifically as it relates to Community Centers. What are some creative ways to leverage investments.

PARKS AND RECREATION NEEDS

Interviewees were asked: "Based on what you know, see, and hear about your community, what do you believe are the top priority parks and recreation needs including physical improvements and programming?"

Land, Greenspace, and Equity

- Strong desire for more greenspaces, especially small, walkable pocket parks with benches, trees, and trash cans.
- Eastern side of the city lacks greenspace--prioritize aggressive land acquisition, including small undeveloped parcels.
- Explore acquisition of Brackett Triangle (78 to East Ponce) and potential coordination with CSX.
- Equity concerns: Non-American side of the tracks lacks amenities, causing community tension.
- "We can't address equity without land" -- land is the foundation for all improvements.
- Need clarity on the 40 Oaks Nature Preserve deed and role of Friendship Forest.

Park Design, Safety, and Accessibility

- Preserve and increase shade, especially around playgrounds (Milam Park is the model).
- Prefer natural, easily maintainable playground surfaces (e.g., mulch) over rubber.
- Install barriers between cars and playgrounds for child safety.
- Improve drainage and stormwater management (avoid Medlock Park problems).
- Increase security lighting, especially for early darkness in winter.
- Provide changing tables in all restrooms, including men's.
- Improve ADA compliance, walkability, and senior-friendly access.
- Enhance visibility and safety in areas like the dog park; consider relocating or redesigning.
- Ensure parks feel safe at all hours; explore ideas around lighting and possibly 24/7 access.

Maintenance and Operations

- Need a realistic, funded maintenance plan.
- Establish a Rapid Response Team for timely repairs.
- Provide training and ensure new projects are maintainable long-term.
- Prevent eye-sores through good planning and durable materials.
- Consider alternative maintenance models (city staff vs. contractor, especially for the pool).

Youth, Teens, and Family Programming

- Youth programming is essential to support middle-high school students, prevent gang involvement, and create safe supervised spaces.
- Interest in music studio, tutoring support, and creative programming for teens.
- Need more indoor spaces for youth who cannot comfortably use outdoor fitness settings.
- Existing partnerships (e.g., Upper 90 soccer) show potential but require safe venues.
- Expand successful programs like Youth Swim and after school activities.
- Demand for more basketball courts (indoor & outdoor) and a City gym.

Recreation Facilities and Multi-Use Spaces

- Need more basketball courts, tennis court improvements, and soccer fields (goals missing in some locations).
- Interest in a Splash Pad that doubles as a multi-use plaza (food trucks, outdoor classroom, events in winter).

Elected Officials Input (continued)

- Milam Park pool could be expanded; consider indoor pool in a future indoor center.
- Explore creating a new Indoor Recreation Center, potentially multi-story.
- Need multi-purpose spaces for events, classes, and community gatherings (current options too small or restricted).
- Desire for fitness equipment in pocket parks.

Trails, Connectivity, and Mobility

- Improve trail networks and connections to parks; work with DeKalb on Stone Mountain Trail.
- Need better signage and wayfinding so parks feel more connected and discoverable.
- Add designated bike facilities, even basic on-street lanes.
- Community would like to host 5K runs and similar events for visibility and activation.

Natural Resources, Conservation, and Education

- Support for passive recreation, conservation of Friendship Forest and 40 Oaks.
- Emphasize trees as critical urban infrastructure for shade, climate, and flood control.
- Interest in nature exploration, scavenger hunts, wetlands interpretation, and "surprise moments" in parks.
- Integrate wildlife education and sustainable programming strategies.
- Desire for community gardens, fruit trees, and partnerships with schools.

Public Art & Cultural Identity

- Support for more public art and murals, with an emphasis on representing all demographics, including African American residents.
- Interest in quirky, identity-building features (e.g., Mice on Main-style elements).
- Friendship Forest amphitheater has potential for low-impact programming.

Community Needs, Demographics, and Inclusivity

- Clarkston's diverse immigrant and refugee populations rely heavily on parks.
- Need to ensure all communities and cultures are served, not just the most vocal.
- Understand and reflect demographics of participation in planning.
- Programs should accommodate foreign-born young families and working parents (many with third-shift jobs).

Future Growth and Annexation

- Annexation of ZIP 30021 (expected 2027) will bring additional park spaces and a Community Center.
- This may be the last major opportunity for city expansion—critical for long-term planning.

BROADER CITY NEEDS

Interviewees were asked: "Thinking more broadly about your community, what do you believe are the top priority social, economic, and environmental needs of the community?"

Land, Growth, and Multi Use Planning

- Need more land to meet current and future community needs; prioritize multi use, not single use development.
- Annexation will add affordable housing and revitalized apartments (in partnership with DeKalb Housing Authority).
- Limited land supply makes smart zoning and strategic annexation essential.
- Land decisions must connect housing, parks, transportation, and economic opportunity.

Community Identity, Culture, and Inclusivity

- Clarkston’s unique mix of cultures, socio-economic groups, generations, and gender identities must be honored.
- Parks and public spaces should bridge differences, not reinforce barriers.
- Federal funding no longer prioritizes "diversity" alone—City needs new narrative drivers.

Accessibility, Mobility, and Transportation

- Ensure parks and programs are walkable, accessible to seniors and people with disabilities, and safely reached.
- Many residents rely on walking; consider transportation assistance, including shuttle/bus service to programs.
- Improve signage and wayfinding, especially linking Downtown, Milan Park, trails, and major corridors.
- Address traffic congestion and limited event parking downtown.

Elected Officials Input (continued)

Housing, Economic Mobility, and Workforce

- Support for affordable housing and a healthy, mixed-income housing mix.
- Help renters move toward homeownership (down-payment assistance).
- Strengthen workforce: high-quality jobs are limited; many residents operate in cultural or religious silos.
- Promote economic mobility through partnerships (ARC, DCA, ICMA, Economic Mobility Leadership).
- Encourage businesses to locate in Clarkston—residents want more options (e.g., “Why can’t we get a pizza place?”).
- Promote entrepreneurship, including spaces for mobile food vendors and micro-businesses.

Safety, Public Health, and Crime Prevention

- Public safety is closely tied to youth engagement and giving kids alternatives to gangs.
- Gangs are concentrated on the side of the city with few parks—parks can play a major prevention role.
- Need to improve lighting, especially in winter when evenings are dark.
- More visible, accessible parks help create safer neighborhoods.

Recreation, Youth Programs, and Community Life

- Recreation is viewed as a core component of a thriving community.
- Need more programming: financial literacy, health fairs, yoga, farmers markets, cultural events.
- Outdoor entertainment (movies, concerts) builds community connection.
- Parks should support education, entertainment, art, and sustainability.
- Increase youth and teen opportunities to divert from crime, provide mentorship, and build skills.

Economic & Community Development

- The City and DDA (Downtown Development Authority) need clearer roles and stronger collaboration.
- Review zoning to ensure it supports smart, favorable development.
- Need additional drivers of economic activity beyond cultural diversity—parks, events, and public spaces can help attract visitors.
- Use parks as economic assets, e.g., markets, food vendors, and cultural programming.

Sustainability, Environment, and Green Infrastructure

- Emphasis on sustainability: green roofs, stormwater management, resilient design, community education.
- Parks can be used for environmental education and sustainability demonstrations.
- Desire for community gardens along trails and access to healthy foods (test market underway).
- Integrate stormwater measures into park design.

Parks, Public Spaces, and Programming

- More parks are needed to serve a diverse community of all ages and cultures.
- Parks should be walkable, safe, and welcoming.
- Use parks for art, creative features, and “Instagram moments.”
- Technology could enhance park experiences (interactive elements, smart lighting, etc.).
- Encourage smart design and partnerships (MOUs with nonprofits for experiential learning).

PRIORITIES

Interviewees were asked: "Of the needs discussed, what are your top 3 parks and recreation and priorities?"

1. Land Acquisition, Indoor Center, and Multi-Use Planning

- Secure land for parks, secure space for an indoor center, use it efficiently, think multi-use, and leverage annexation for long-term growth.

2. Programming and Community Service

- Creative, inclusive, youth-focused and family-focused programming as the heart of community life.

3. Maintenance, Safety, and Connectivity

- Improve lighting, signage, accessibility, safety, and connect parks to each other and downtown.

FUNDING/ IMPLEMENTATION

Interviewees were asked: "Considering that the Parks and Recreation System Master Plan may identify tens or hundreds of millions of dollars in desired/ needed improvements, what funding source(s) would you support?"

Funding Must Follow a Clear Plan

- Funding options are acceptable only when tied to a transparent, well justified plan with pros/cons.

Preferred Revenue Sources

- Sales tax and SPLOST are the most supported options, with interest in reallocating SPLOST toward Parks.
- Impact fees are possible but may affect development costs.

Grants, Partnerships & Philanthropy

- Strong preference for grants, strategic partnerships, and philanthropic support to reduce city burden.

Bonds & Borrowing

- General Obligation Bonds and potential low cost state borrowing are viable, but maintenance impacts must be considered.

Affordability & User Fees

- User fees should remain low or minimal due to residents’ financial constraints.

General Fund Limitations

- General Fund is tight, taxes just increased, and raising them further is undesirable.

Cost Effective Approaches

- Prioritize modest, creative, lower cost improvements over large capital projects.

Existing Funding Resources

- Current SPLOST for parks, unused event funds, and confiscated funds provide some near term financial flexibility.

Focus Groups Input

Overview

Four interviews were conducted with groups of residents active in the parks and recreation community during the master planning process. Following is a summary of the responses.

PARKS AND RECREATION NEEDS

Interviewees were asked: "Based on what you know, see, and hear about your community, what do you believe are the top priority parks and recreation needs including physical improvements and programming?"

Athletic Fields and Youth Sports

- Significant demand for soccer fields and practice space, especially among immigrant youth. Programs such as Upper 90 serve 70–100 players but struggle to secure consistent field access.
- Milam Park is currently the primary large-field facility but faces drainage problems, overuse, and scheduling conflicts.
- Additional needs include cricket fields, women’s sports opportunities, and potentially volleyball facilities.

Improve Existing Parks and Facilities

- Stakeholders emphasized investing in existing parks before building new facilities.
- Key improvements include:
 - Fixing drainage and usability issues at Milam Park
 - Potential turf and lighting upgrades
 - Improving park visibility and safety
- There is also interest in restoring underused spaces, such as fields behind the community center.

Green Space, Trails, and Nature Programming

- Strong support for the “Green Necklace” greenway trail concept, which would connect parks through trails across the city.
- Interest in a trail connection between Milam Park and Forty Oaks.
- Participants emphasized protecting existing forested land and green space while locating active recreation on previously disturbed sites.
- Interest in nature education programming, including environmental activities and partnerships with schools.

Community Spaces and Programming

- Participants expressed concern that the Clarkston Community Center no longer functions as a true community facility, limiting programming and access for residents.
 - Groups that lost space following its operational changes include senior clubs and small community groups.
- Suggested solutions include:
 - Repurposing the Forty Oaks farmhouse as a nature center, visitor center, or history center
 - Using existing buildings (e.g., old City Hall or vacant warehouses) as community gathering spaces.

BROADER CITY NEEDS

Interviewees were asked: "Thinking more broadly about your community, what do you believe are the top priority social, economic, and environmental needs of the community?"

Social Needs

- Food insecurity and limited transportation access to grocery stores affect many residents.
- Youth benefit from sports programs but need additional educational and career development programming.
- Residents expressed the need for safe community spaces for youth, seniors, and families.

Economic Needs

- Rising housing costs are a major challenge, with many residents paying a large share of income toward rent.
- Recreation program fees can be a barrier for lower-income families.

Environmental Needs

- Strong community support for preserving green space and natural areas.
- Interest in environmental stewardship and nature education within the parks system.

Focus Groups Input (continued)

Coordination and Partnerships

- Participants noted challenges related to coordination between the City, DeKalb County, schools, and community organizations.
- Greater public–private collaboration with churches, nonprofits, and sports programs could expand recreation opportunities.

PRIORITIES

Interviewees were asked: "Of the needs discussed, what are your top 3 parks and recreation and priorities?"

1. Expand Access to Recreational Space

- Increase field availability for soccer and other sports.
- Improve existing sports facilities, such as at Milam Park.

2. Strengthen Community Spaces and Programming

- Restore or create new accessible community gathering spaces, with a focus on indoor spaces for multi-purpose and multi-generational use.
- Expand programming for all ages, with a focus on youth, seniors, and families.

3. Preserve and Connect Green Spaces

- Protect Clarkston's remaining forested land and natural areas, especially streambeds and wetlands.
- Implement trail connections and the Green Necklace vision.

4. Improve Partnerships and Coordination

- Strengthen collaboration with county agencies, schools, churches, and nonprofits to support recreation programming and facility development.

LAKESHORE RESIDENTS GROUP

A specific meeting was held with the Lakeshore community to understand their needs and priorities related to improving the lake for public recreation.

- There was broad support for partnering with the city for new public access opportunities and the development of limited amenities (path, benches, picnic tables, overlook) along Norman Road.
- Attendees had overall interest in environmental improvements to lake ecology and function.
- The group expressed interest in programmed activities (fishing, birdwatching, etc.) organized by the City or in partnership with local nature education organizations (Birds Georgia, etc.).

RIGHT Residents who live in the Lakeshore community met at the Woman's Club for a special focus group to discuss how to better activate the lake for public recreation.



LEVEL-OF-SERVICE ANALYSES

Data that tells the story of Clarkston's Parks

Unlike some other public infrastructure, such as roadway design or stormwater management guidelines, there are no industry standards or regulations for establishing Levels of Service (LOS) for parks and recreation services. Neither the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) nor the State of Georgia publish traditional population-based LOS standards such as park acres and facilities per 1,000 residents.

Without required standards, communities are encouraged to conduct community-wide needs assessments and benchmark themselves against other similar communities in order to establish their own LOS standards.

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) has developed its benchmarking website Park Metrics to be “the most comprehensive source of data standards and insights for park and recreation agencies” to help municipalities develop LOS metrics. Clarkston’s LOS findings were benchmarked against communities that have a similar population and population density as Clarkston.

Four different LOS methods were used to determine how well the Clarkston’s parks and recreation system is meeting residents’ needs:

- **Access LOS:** Measures the geographic areas (and population) served by parks or recreation facilities.
- **Acreage LOS:** Measures the quantity of parkland acreage that is available for every 1,000 residents.
- **Indoor Center Space LOS:** Measures the quantity of indoor recreation space available per resident.
- **Facilities LOS:** Measures the number of recreation facilities available per resident.

It is important to note that these LOS Analyses are just one tool for determining the community’s needs. The findings alone may not be indicative of residents’ needs and priorities. LOS analyses are based on the gross population of a community, not preferences or priorities based on unique community demographics, lifestyles, or values. The findings from the LOS analyses must be compared to the findings from the other needs assessment techniques in order to verify parks and recreation needs and priorities.

ACCESS LOS

Access LOS measures the distance residents have to travel to access parks and recreation facilities. It is used to understand how park access varies between different neighborhoods in a city. The distance used in the calculation of LOS is important; for example, should a City aim for all residents to have a park within 1 mile of their homes, within ½ mile, or even less?

Informed by industry best practices for a community of Clarkston’s population, density, and development pattern, the following distances were used to analyze Access LOS for Clarkston’s park system.

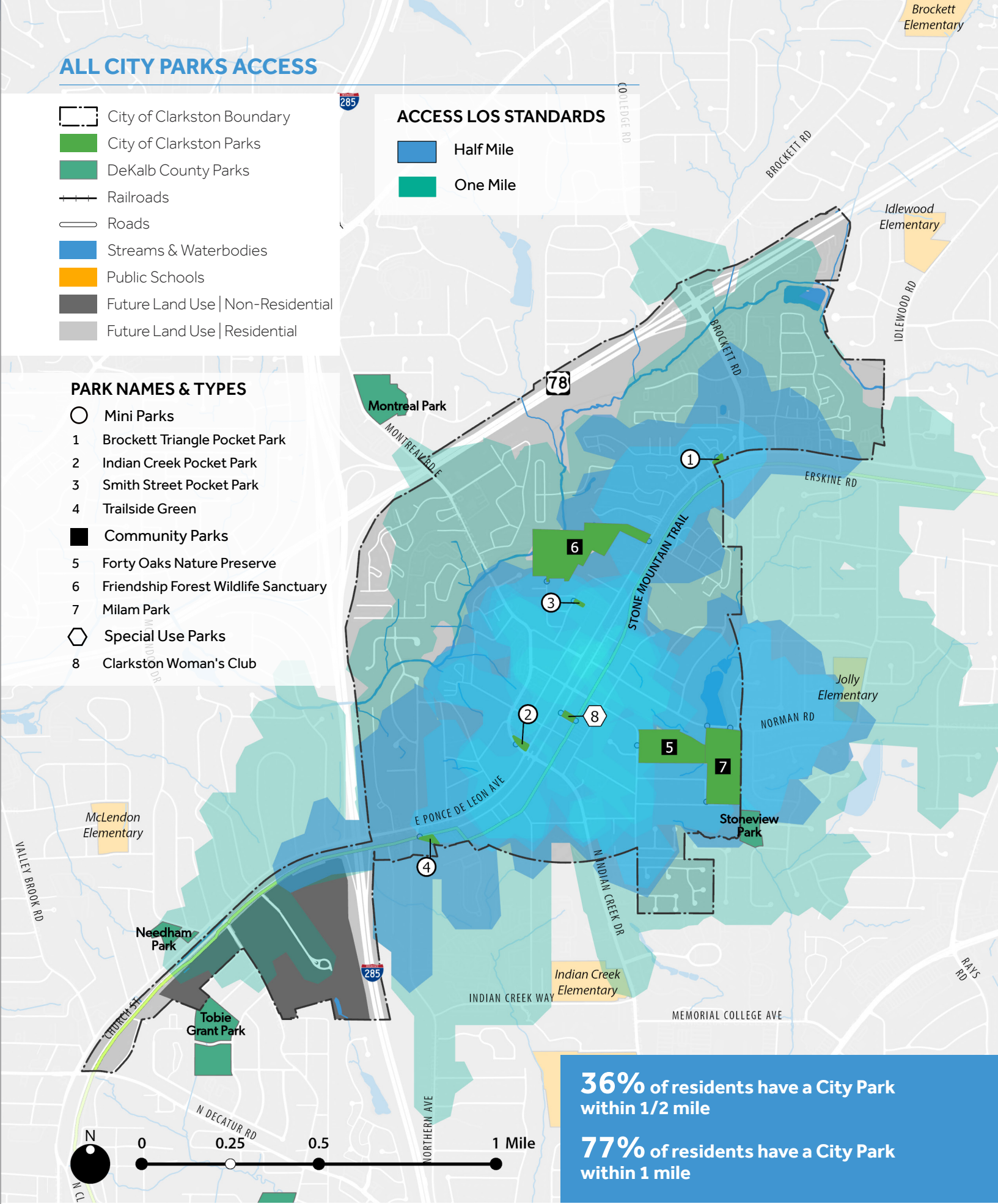
- All City Parks - 1/2 mile, 1 mile
- All City Parks + Other Parks (County) - 1/2 mile, 1 mile
- City Community Parks - 1 mile, 2 miles
- Indoor Centers – 1 mile, 3 miles

Pages 69-72 provide the results from this mapping analysis while the table (right) provides a summary of these findings.

Park Type Analyzed	½ Mile	1 Mile	3 Miles
All City Parks	●	●	
All City Parks + County Parks	●	●	
City + County Parks - Community		●	
Indoor Centers		●	+

● Partial-Coverage

+ Full-Coverage



ALL CITY + COUNTY PARKS ACCESS

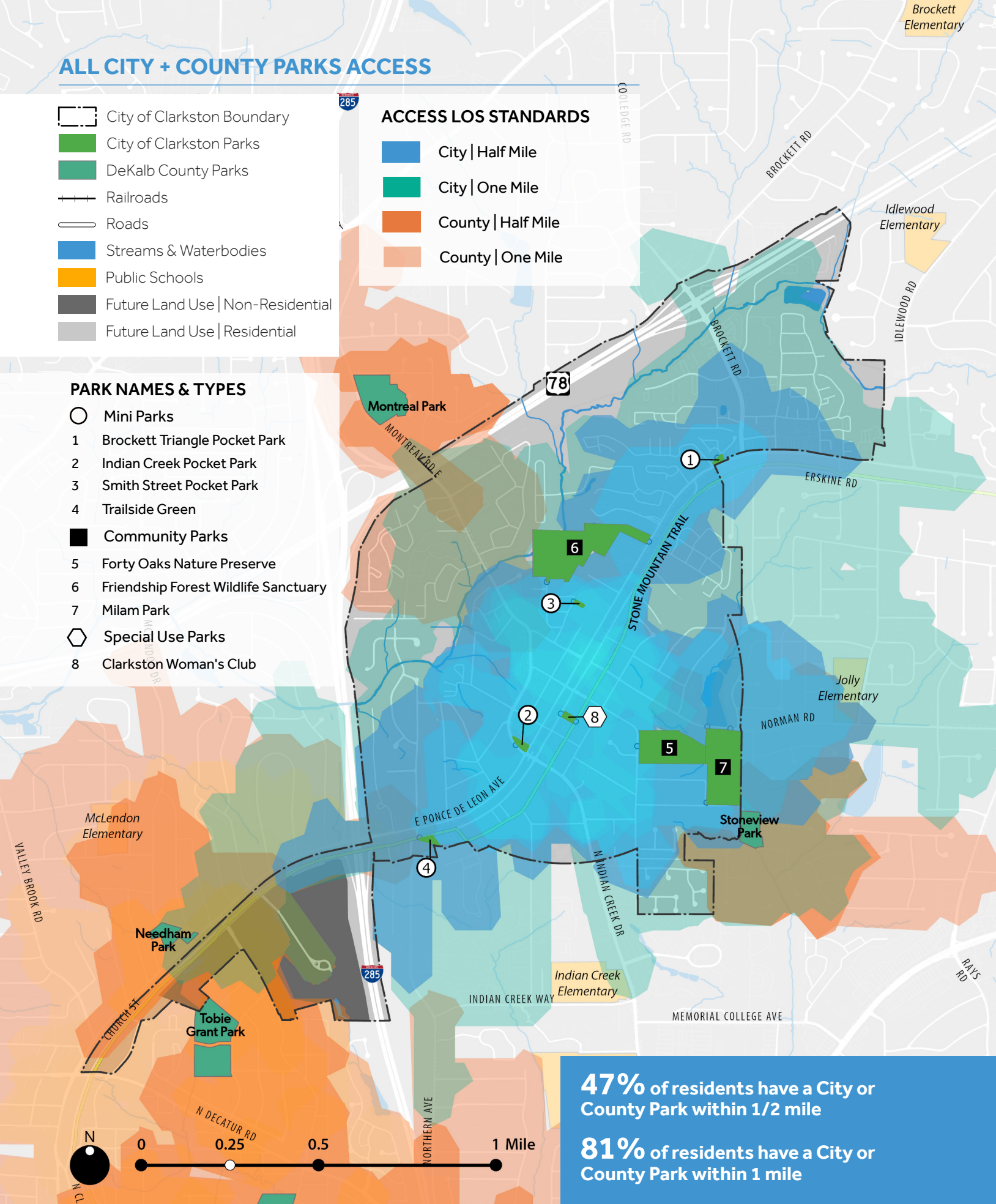
- City of Clarkston Boundary
- City of Clarkston Parks
- DeKalb County Parks
- Railroads
- Roads
- Streams & Waterbodies
- Public Schools
- Future Land Use | Non-Residential
- Future Land Use | Residential

ACCESS LOS STANDARDS

- City | Half Mile
- City | One Mile
- County | Half Mile
- County | One Mile

PARK NAMES & TYPES

- Mini Parks
 - 1 Brockett Triangle Pocket Park
 - 2 Indian Creek Pocket Park
 - 3 Smith Street Pocket Park
 - 4 Trailside Green
- Community Parks
 - 5 Forty Oaks Nature Preserve
 - 6 Friendship Forest Wildlife Sanctuary
 - 7 Milam Park
- Special Use Parks
 - 8 Clarkston Woman's Club



CITY + COUNTY COMMUNITY PARKS ACCESS

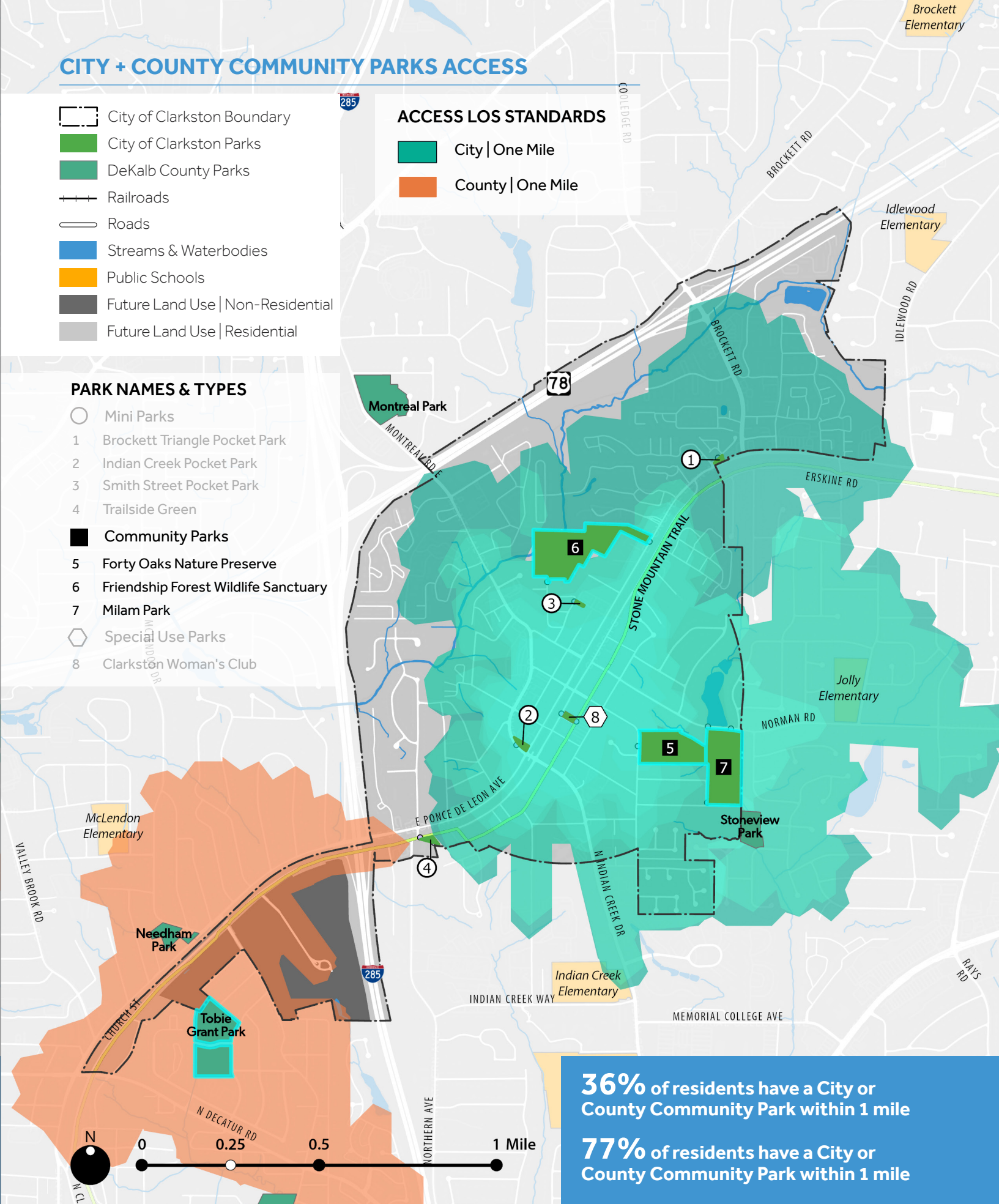
- City of Clarkston Boundary
- City of Clarkston Parks
- DeKalb County Parks
- Railroads
- Roads
- Streams & Waterbodies
- Public Schools
- Future Land Use | Non-Residential
- Future Land Use | Residential

ACCESS LOS STANDARDS

- City | One Mile
- County | One Mile

PARK NAMES & TYPES

- Mini Parks
 - 1 Brockett Triangle Pocket Park
 - 2 Indian Creek Pocket Park
 - 3 Smith Street Pocket Park
 - 4 Trailside Green
- Community Parks
 - 5 Forty Oaks Nature Preserve
 - 6 Friendship Forest Wildlife Sanctuary
 - 7 Milam Park
- Special Use Parks
 - 8 Clarkston Woman's Club



Indoor Centers Analysis

Indoor Community and Recreation Centers play a central role in any parks and recreation system, serving as hubs for programming, as well as providing locations for meetings, voting, and other critical municipal services. They also may function as significant revenue generators through rentals and leasing.

Clarkston currently only offers one indoor facility, the historic Clarkston Woman's Club. The building offers limited program uses due to its size and layout.

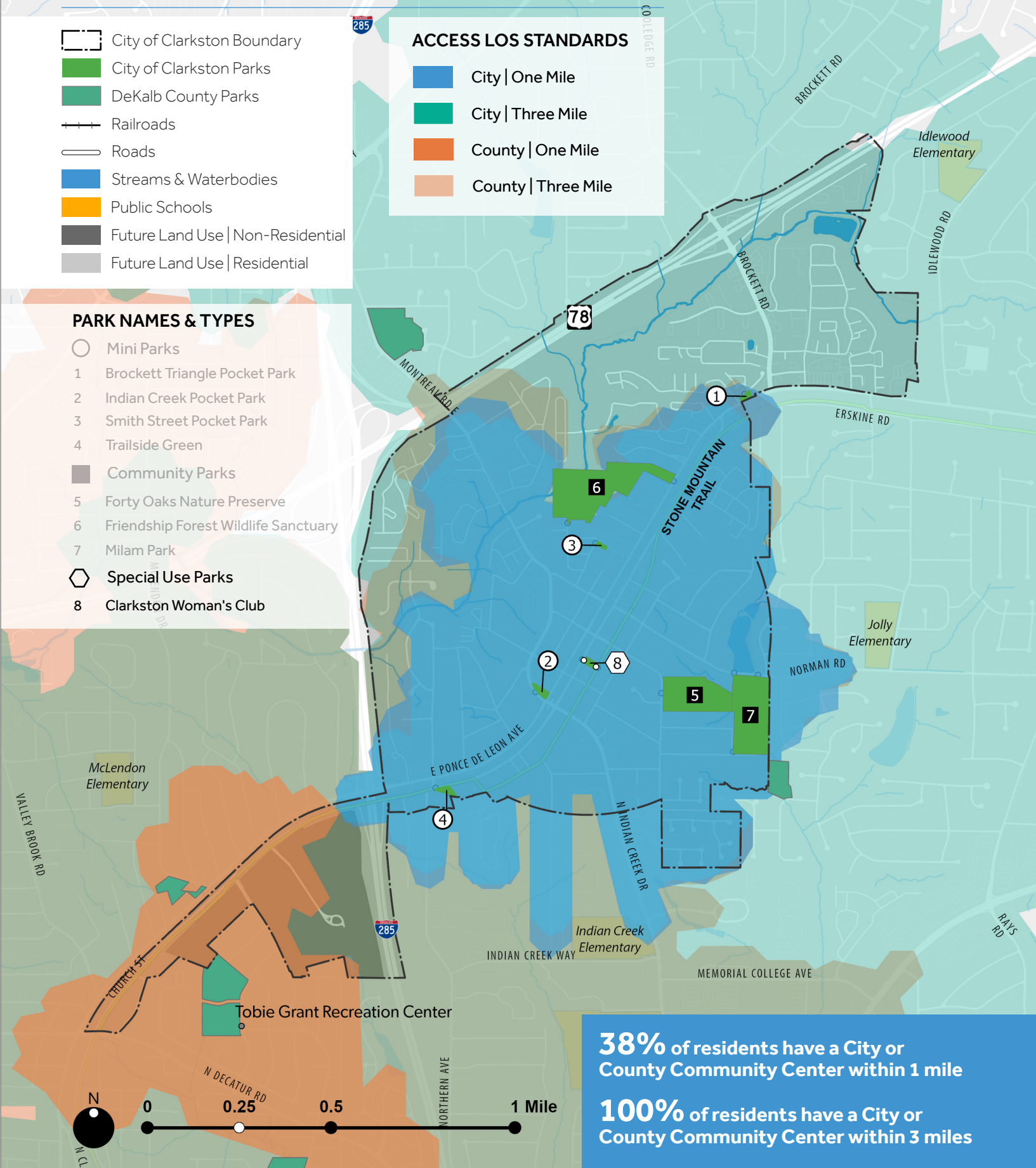
As noted in the Facilities Inventory (p.40-41) there are a few public and non-profit operated buildings within 1 mile of Clarkston that offer programming, or the potential for future programming.

For the Community Center Access LOS map on page 73, only the Woman's Club and DeKalb County's Tobie Grant Recreation Center were considered, as these serve as the primary functioning centers for Clarkston residents. The distances of 1 mile and 3 miles are recommended standards for Clarkston based on vehicular and bicycle access and given the draw that community centers provide.

The **Indoor Centers Vision** will explore a full range of potential future scenarios for indoor space to serve Clarkston's needs.



CITY + COUNTY COMMUNITY CENTERS ACCESS



ACREAGE LOS

Acreage LOS measures the total park acreage available for every 1,000 members of the population.

Park Acreage LOS was analyzed using three different acreage considerations:

- City of Clarkston Parks (open as of 2025)
- City of Clarkston Parks + Planned Parks (only City-owned parcels as of 2026)
- City of Clarkston Parks + Planned Parks (includes City-owned and private parcels)
- City of Clarkston Parks + DeKalb County Parks (within one mile of Clarkston City Limits)

Acreage amounts were divided by the population estimates for the years 2025, 2030, and 2035. Figure 2.2.1 illustrates the findings from these analyses and compares the City's 2025 Acreage LOS to NRPA benchmarks for cities with a similar population and population density as Clarkston.

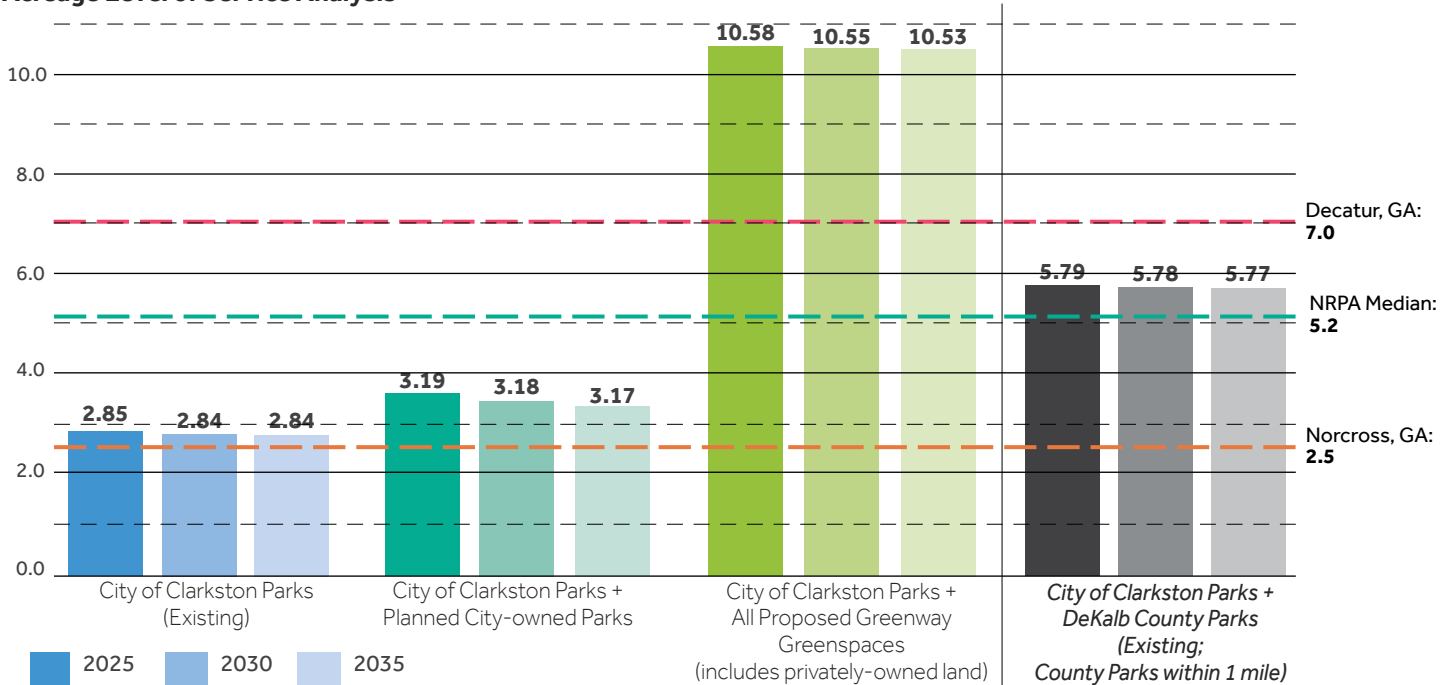
Based on the Acreage LOS analyses, Clarkston's Acreage LOS in 2025 is 2.85 acres per 1,000 population.

When Clarkston's **planned and proposed greenspaces** are included, the score rises to either 3.19 (when including only proposed greenspaces on City-owned parcels) or up to 10.58 when including all the greenspaces proposed in the Clarkston Greenways plan. This broad range reflects the opportunity to maximize available publicly and privately owned lands for recreation opportunities.

If the Department does not acquire or open any additional park land by the year 2035, park acreage LOS would decline to 2.84 acres per 1,000 residents. However, when including all proposed parks and greenspaces, the score of 10.53 would be well above the Median benchmark.

The gray chart on the far right represents Clarkston's parks combined with the existing Dekalb County Parks within one mile of Clarkston. While most communities have parks provided by others around their boundary, Clarkston is notable for the number of parks in very close proximity, including three parks that are directly adjacent to the city boundary. For many Clarkston residents, these may be their most visited parks, based on convenience.

Acreage Level of Service Analysis



36 acres

Parkland Needed to Meet the Benchmark Median

To meet the Median Percentile Acreage LOS benchmark of 5.2 acres per 1,000 residents by the year 2035, Clarkston would need to add approximately 36 acres of new parkland.

INDOOR CENTER SPACE LOS

Indoor Center Space LOS measures the square feet of indoor community recreation center space available per resident in the jurisdiction, calculated by dividing the total square footage of all indoor centers by the number of residents.

Clarkston currently offers approximately 1,600 square feet of indoor community center space at the Woman's Club. This equates to approximately 0.11 square feet of indoor space per resident in 2025 and 0.11 based on 2035 project population.

Industry best practices suggest that communities with high quality indoor recreation services should have a minimum of 1.5 square feet of space per resident, with 2.0 square feet considered ideal. The chart below illustrates the findings from this analysis considering Clarkston's 2025, 2030, and 2035 population estimates.

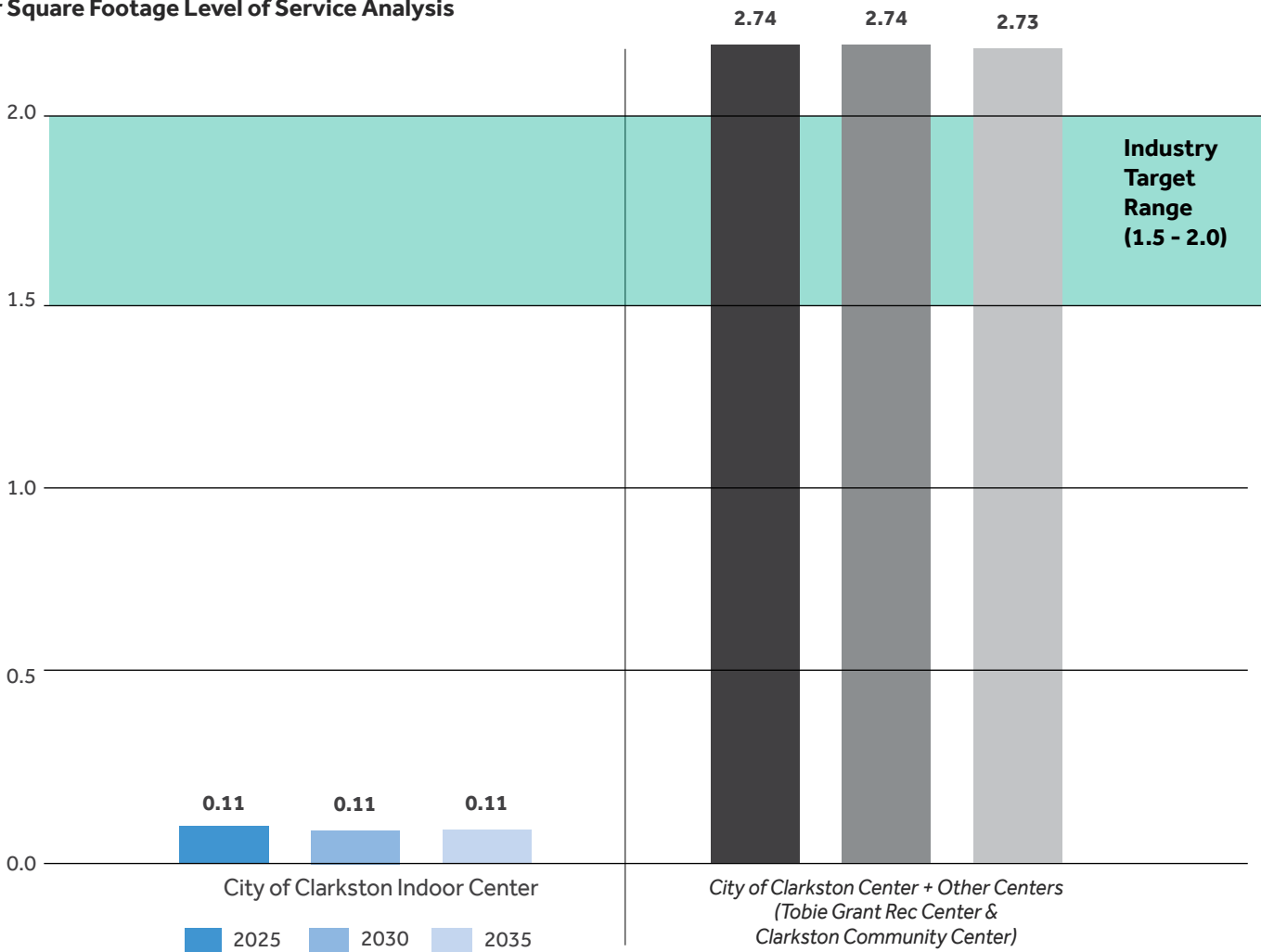
As noted with all the LOS analyses, it is relevant to consider the other publicly available community center spaces in and close to Clarkston (within 1 mile), as these facilities are currently available to residents, and may present opportunities for further use by the City through collaboration with the County or other agencies. The Other Providers analyzed in the chart below includes DeKalb County's Tobie Grant Recreation Center (~24,000 SF) and the Clarkston Community Center (~16,000 SF).

21,000+ Sq Ft

Indoor Center Space Needed to Meet the Industry Recommendation

To meet the Industry Target LOS benchmark of 1.5 SF per resident by the year 2035, Clarkston would need to add approximately 21,000 square feet of new indoor center space.

Indoor Square Footage Level of Service Analysis



FACILITIES LOS

Facilities LOS measures the number of a certain type of recreation facility (playgrounds, tennis courts, pools, etc.) available to each resident. It is calculated by dividing the population by the total number of the specific facility. The higher the number, the fewer facilities there are per resident, and the more of a need there may be for that particular recreation facility. The lower the number, the more facilities there are per resident, and the less of a need there may be for that particular recreation facility.

Population estimates for the years 2025 and 2035 were divided by the number of existing facilities to identify the Facilities LOS. The NRPA Median Facility LOS benchmarks were then used to calculate the need or surplus of facilities based on the projected 2035 population. The chart on the next page illustrates the findings to this analysis.

Based on this analysis, it appears that Clarkston may have a need for the following parks and recreation facilities:

- Recreation Centers
- Playgrounds (designed for 5-12 years old)
- Tot lots (for 2-5 years old)
- Fitness Zones/Exercise Stations
- Community Gardens
- Skate Park
- Basketball Courts
- Multi-Use Courts (Basketball & volleyball)
- Diamond fields (baseball/softball)
- Rectangular Fields
- Rectangular Fields (synthetic turf)
- Splash Pad
- Walking Loops
- Tennis Courts
- Multi-use Courts (Tennis & Pickleball)

Facilities Level of Service Analysis

	Facilities	City of Clarkston			Benchmark Local Cities		NRPA Park Metrics			Need/Surplus
		Inventory	2025	2035	Decatur, GA	Norcross, GA	Aggregated Benchmarks (Pop. 10k-25k; Dens. 5,000-10,000/sq mi.)			Based on NRPA Median Benchmark
							25th	Median	75th	
Indoor Facilities	Recreation Centers	0	-	-	9,337	-	11,000	17,000	20,787	-1
	Community Centers	1	15,192	15,256	-	18,272	13,500	17,000	20,787	1
	Senior Centers	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Teen Centers	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Nature Centers	1	15,192	15,256	-	-	-	-	-	-
Outdoor Facilities	Playgrounds	1	15,192	15,256	3,502	4,568	5,248	5,290	6,548	-2
	Totlots	0	-	-	-	-	4,735	6,346	7,450	-3
	Fitness Stations/Outdoor Gym	0	-	-	-	-	5,875	6,750	7,625	-3
	Community gardens	1	15,192	15,256	28,012	18,272	11,750	13,500	15,250	-1
	Skate parks	0	-	-	-	-	18,894	20,787	22,681	-1
	Dog parks	1	15,192	15,256	9,337	-	13,644	17,287	20,931	1
	Basketball courts	0	-	-	4,669	18,272	3,003	3,172	3,341	-5
	Multiuse courts - basketball, volleyball	0	-	-	-	-	8,500	8,500	8,500	-2
	Diamond fields: Total	1	15,192	15,256	-	-	2,782	2,833	6,417	-5
	Rectangular fields: Total	1	15,192	15,256	5,602	18,272	5,040	8,191	9,096	-1
	Multipurpose synthetic field	0	-	-	28,012	-	24,574	24,574	24,574	-1
	Restrooms (Permanent & Semi-permanent)	2	7,596	7,628	-	-	5,083	8,500	10,394	1
	Splash Pad/Sprayground	0	-	-	-	18,272	29,241	50,250	66,792	-1
	Volleyball Courts (sand/grass)	0	-	-	-	-	6,259	8,269	10,278	-2
	Walking Loops/Running Tracks	0	-	-	-	-	11,750	13,500	15,250	-2
	Trail Miles Maintained	1	6	6	-	-				-
Swimming/ Aquatics	Swimming pools (outdoor only)	1	-	-	7,003	-	17,000	17,000	17,000	1
	Indoor pool designated exclusively for leisure (i.e. non-competitive)	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Racquet Sports	Tennis courts (outdoor only)	1	15,192	15,256	3,112		2,276	2,428	2,579	-6
	Pickleball (outdoor)	4	3,798	3,814	14,006	-	3,661	4,488	5,316	1
	Multiuse courts - Tennis, Pickleball (outdoor)	0	-	-	-	-	2,875	4,750	6,625	-4
	Racquetball/handball/squash courts (outdoor)	0	-	-	-	-	4,625	5,917	7,208	-3

FINANCIAL LOS

Financial LOS metrics are used to gauge whether a community is adequately funded to manage their parks and recreation system. These typically include:

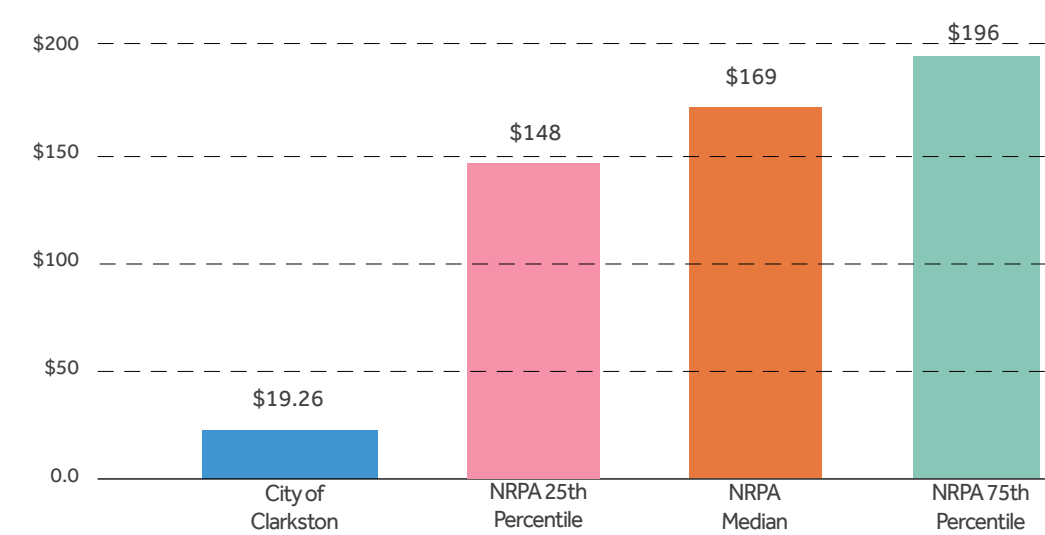
- **Operations and Maintenance Spending Per Capita** - the amount of operations and maintenance dollars spent on parks and recreation services per resident
- **Capital Spending Per Capita** - the amount of capital dollars spent on parks and recreation services per resident
- **FTEs per 10,000 Population** - the amount of operations, maintenance, and capital dollars spent on parks and recreation services per resident

Funding LOS analyses were completed for FY 2022-2026 and compared to NRPA Benchmarks as well as nearby communities.

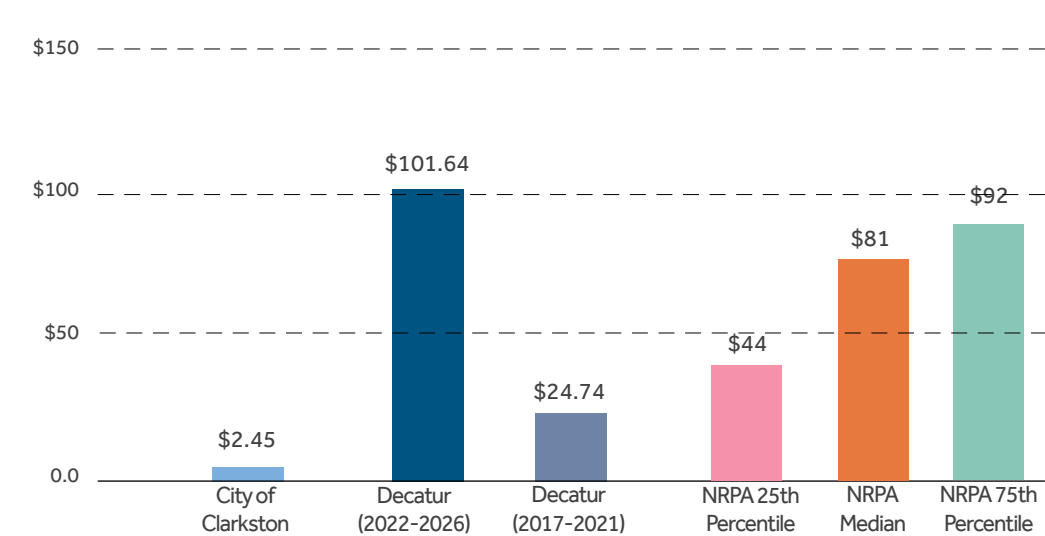
The chart (right) illustrates the 5-year average per capita Operations and Maintenance spending. Based on this analysis, Clarkston's per capita spending of \$19.26 is below the Median of NRPA Benchmarks for cities with a similar population and density as the City of Clarkston.

The chart (right, below) illustrates 5-year average annual per capita spending for parks and recreation Capital Improvements. As compared to NRPA benchmarks and Decatur, GA, Clarkston's spending is well below all others.

Operations and Maintenance Spending Per Capita (5-year average)



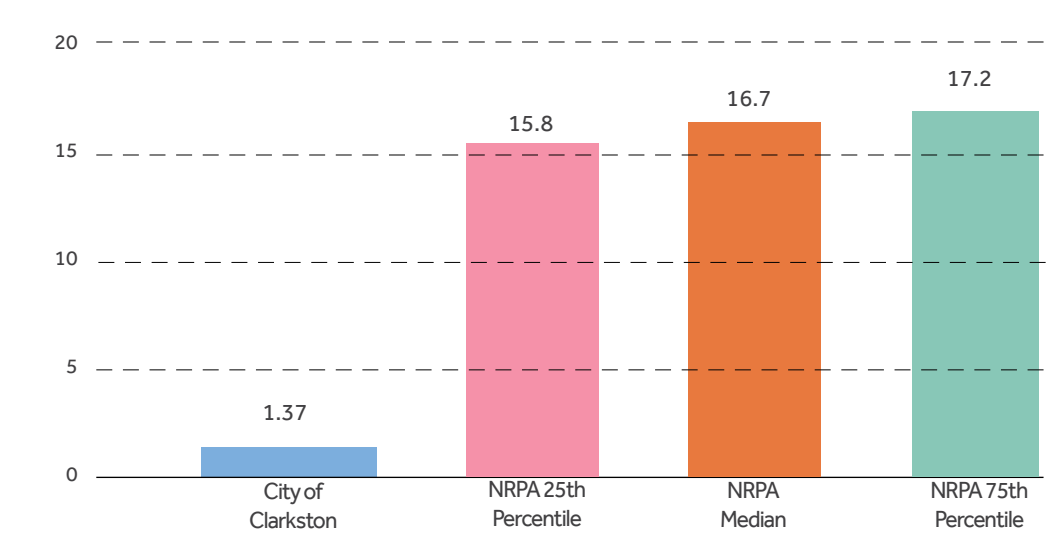
Capital Projects Spending Per Capita (5-year average)



The chart (right) illustrates Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees in the Parks and Recreation Department per 10,000 residents, the typical standard for parks and recreation agencies.

Based on this analysis, Clarkston is below all NRPA benchmarks.

FTEs per 10,000 Residents



3.3 SUMMARY FINDINGS

THE COMPLETE PICTURE

Based on the all the information collected, the charts on the following pages provide an overall comparison to indicate how the findings from the statistically-valid survey - the most reliable and credible of the needs assessment techniques, with the largest sample size - relate to the other techniques with regard to facilities/ amenities, programs/activities, areas of community concern, actions, and funding allocation for facilities/ capital improvements and programs/operations.

Following is a summary list of the priority rankings followed by the comparison matrices.

These findings can be summarized around the following three recommendations:

- A need to **Upgrade** the existing parks and facilities, continuing to repair, replace, and modernize the system as the City has done since its inception, and especially over the last couple years.
- A need to **Expand** the parks and recreation system, building on recent planning work and momentum the City has developed for key infrastructure projects. Additionally, a need to grow programming, with a diverse array of options serving all ages.
- A need to better **Connect** the parks and recreation system to residents--both through policies like a focus on increasing multi-lingual resources, as well as working across City departments and with partners to maximize the impact of all infrastructure investments, like the Clarkston Greenway--given the City's limited resources.

Chapter 3: Vision of this report discusses recommendations for responding to these concepts and the top priority parks and recreation needs.

TOP PRIORITY FACILITIES/ AMENITIES RECOMMENDATIONS

- Natural areas/nature parks
- Community gardens
- Unpaved walking and hiking trails
- Community parks (five acres or above)
- Indoor pool
- Food forests/ediblelandscaping
- Indoor fitness equipment
- Sidewalks
- Neighborhood parks (one to four acres)
- Paved multi-purpose trails
- Restrooms at parks
- Multi-generational center
- Outdoor amphitheater
- Synthetic turf at Milam Park multi-use rectangle field
- Athletic track around Milam Park multi-use rectangle field

TOP PRIORITY PROGRAMS/ ACTIVITIES RECOMMENDATIONS

- Community special events
- Nature programs
- Adult fitness/wellness programs
- Movies in parks
- Temporary art exhibits
- Cooking and nutrition classes
- Youth arts/painting/crafts/ drawing classes
- Adult performing arts/dance
- Adult/youth learn to swim classes
- Language Classes
- Youth Athletic Leagues

Findings Summary and Comparison - Facilities/Amenities

		1. Statistically Valid Survey	2. City Leadership Interviews	3. Public Event	4. Focus Groups	5. Level-of-Service Analysis + Benchmarks
NEEDS ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUE:						
FACILITIES/AMENITIES PRIORITIES:						
SVS High Priority	Natural areas/nature parks	●	●	-	●	-
	Community gardens	●	●	-	-	●
	Unpaved walking and hiking trails	●	●	●	-	-
	Community parks (five acres or above)	●	-	-	-	-
	Indoor pool	●	●	●	-	-
	Food forests/edible landscaping	●	●	-	-	-
	Indoor fitness equipment	●	-	●	-	-
	Sidewalks	●	-	●	-	-
	Neighborhood parks (one to four acres)	●	●	-	●	●
	Paved multi-purpose trails	●	●	-	●	-
	Restrooms at parks	●	-	●	-	-
	Multi-generational center	●	●	-	-	●
SVS Medium Priority	Outdoor amphitheater	●	-	●	-	-
	Indoor gymnasium	●	●	●	-	●
	Playground/adventure/discovery playgrounds	●	-	●	-	●
	Outdoor fitness	●	-	●	-	●
	Splash pad/spray ground	●	●	●	-	●
	Indoor nature center	●	-	-	-	-
	Mini-parks (less than an acre)	●	●	-	-	-
	Dog parks	●	-	-	-	-
	Outdoor picnic areas	●	-	-	-	-
	Outdoor pool	●	-	●	-	-
	Senior center	●	-	●	-	-
	Park shelters/picnic pavilions	●	-	-	-	-
	Rectangle multi-purpose sports fields (natural)	●	●	●	●	●
	Rectangle multi-purpose sports fields (synthetic)	●	●	●	●	●
	Teen center	●	-	-	-	-
	Pickleball courts	●	-	●	-	-
	Transportation to parks	●	-	●	-	●
	Skate park	●	-	-	-	●
SVS Low Priority	Tennis courts	●	-	●	-	●
	Sand volleyball	●	-	●	●	-
	Outdoor futsal/mini soccer courts	●	-	●	-	●
	Basketball courts	●	●	-	-	●
	Baseball/softball fields	●	-	-	●	●
	Cricket fields	●	-	-	-	-

● High Priority (per SVS PIR rating; >90th Percentile in other Surveys, mention in interviews)

● Medium Priority (per SVS PIR rating; >75th Percentile in Other techniques)

● Low Priority (per SVS PIR rating; >50th Percentile in Other techniques)

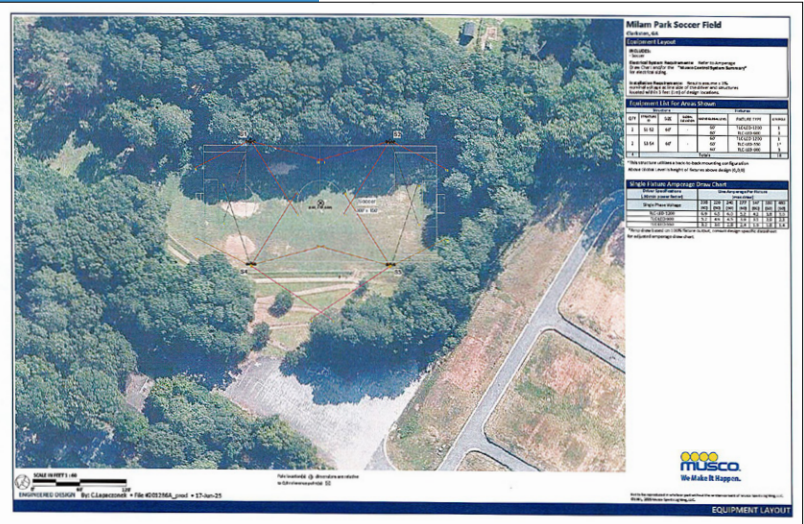
A SHORT-TERM OPPORTUNITY - RECTANGLE FIELD RECOMMENDATIONS

- In line with the first summary concept—a need to Upgrade the existing parks and facilities—findings from the Needs Assessment provided strong support for the need to implement a synthetic turf field in Clarkston, given the priority need for Rectangle Fields across all needs assessment techniques and the lack of opportunity for additional fields.
- The Facilities Level of Service indicated a need for one (1) synthetic turf field, based on the NRPA Median Benchmark of agencies with similar attributes.
- Focus group conversations indicated that there is “so much competition for field space” and “huge demand for soccer leagues” in the Clarkston area, along with a need for “more fields in general, to support cricket space and women’s sports.” Focus group conversations also highlighted the impact of overuse contributing to the closure of the field at the Clarkston Community Center.
- Additionally, the Park Site Evaluations found that the existing Milam grass field is currently in poor condition due to overuse (right). With an expected increase in use in evening hours provided by the new lighting, further deterioration is expected.
- Finally, given the City’s recent installation of athletic lighting (below right) at the Milam field—which will significantly increase the field’s hours of usability—the installation of synthetic turf would provide a complementary level of durability to support the considerable new opportunities for general use and expanded programming, in line with industry best practices for athletic fields with high levels of activity.



PROPOSED PHASING:

- » Phase 1 - Install synthetic turf
- » Phase 2 - Install athletic track around field



Findings Summary and Comparison - Programs/Activities

		1. Statistically Valid Survey	2. City Leadership Interviews	3. Public Event	4. Focus Groups
NEEDS ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUE:					
PROGRAMS/ACTIVITIES:					
SVSHigh Priority	Community special events	●	●	-	●
	Nature programs	●	●	-	●
	Adult fitness/wellness	●	●	●	●
	Movies in parks	●	●	●	●
	Temporary art exhibits	●	●	●	●
SVSMedium Priority	Cooking and nutrition classes	●	●	●	●
	Community meetings	●	-	●	-
	Educational lecture series	●	-	●	-
	Youth arts/painting/crafts/drawing classes	●	●	●	●
	Adult performing arts/dance	●	-	-	●
	Adult/youth learn to swim	●	●	●	-
	Water fitness	●	-	●	-
	Athletic special events	●	●	●	-
	Community outings	●	-	●	-
	Adult athletic leagues	●	-	-	●
	Digital media/photography programs	●	-	●	-
	Senior classes	●	-	●	●
	Language classes	●	●	●	●
	Teen programs	●	●	-	●
	Programs with children's/senior meals	●	-	●	●
	Parent and child programs	●	-	●	-
	Camps (summer/school/break)	●	-	●	●
SVSLow Priority	Youth athletic leagues	●	●	●	●
	Before and after school programs	●	●	-	●
	Preschool programs	●	-	●	●
	Adult education	●	●	●	-
	Youth fitness/wellness	●	●	-	-
	Child day care	●	-	●	-
	Youth education	●	●	●	-
	Programs for people with disabilities	●	-	-	-
	Galas/formal events	●	-	-	-
	Youth performing arts/dance	●	●	-	●
	STEAM programming	●	●	-	-
	Video gaming/virtual gaming	●	-	-	-

- **High Priority**
(per SVS PIR rating;
>90th Percentile in other Surveys,
mention in interviews
- **Medium Priority**
(per SVS PIR rating;
>75th Percentile in Other techniques
- **Low Priority**
(per SVS PIR rating;
>50th Percentile in Other
techniques

Summary Findings for Willingness to Pay Additional Taxes

NEEDS ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUE:	1. Statistically Valid Survey	2. Public Event
INCREASED TAX AMOUNT		
\$3-4 per month	87%	72%
\$5-6 per month	63%	52%
\$7-8 per month	42%	20%
\$9+ per month	23%	14%
I am not willing to pay additional taxes	13%	28%

Majority Support

The results demonstrate that based on the Statistically Valid Survey, and considering all other input methods, a majority of Clarkston residents may be willing to **pay an additional \$5-6 per month (\$60-72 annually)** to fund parks and recreation improvements and maintenance.

Findings Summary and Comparison - Funding Allocations for Facility/Capital Improvements and Programs/Activities

NEEDS ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUE:	1. Statistically Valid Survey	2. Public Event
FUNDING ALLOCATION FOR FACILITY/ CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS:		
Improvements/maintenance of existing parks & recreation facilities	\$19.54	\$24.00
Development of new/additional parks facilities in existing parks	\$16.49	\$15.11
Improvements/maintenance of existing walking & biking facilities	\$13.95	\$12.44
Development of new indoor recreation centers	\$12.98	\$5.78
Development of new walking & biking facilities	\$12.97	\$16.89
Acquiring new park land	\$12.20	\$5.33
Improvements/maintenance of existing indoor recreation centers	\$8.84	\$20.44
Other	\$3.04	\$0.00
FUNDING ALLOCATION FOR PROGRAMS/OPERATIONS:		
Increase staff to improve maintenance of parks & facilities	\$23.21	\$26.76
Additional adult recreation programs and/or classes (excluding athletics)	\$16.36	\$18.72
Additional youth recreation programs and/or classes (excluding athletics)	\$14.69	\$13.97
Additional senior recreation programs and/or classes (excluding athletics)	\$11.58	\$22.07
Increase frequency of programs/classes and/or extended hours of programming	\$10.67	\$8.38
Additional youth athletic program/leagues	\$10.64	\$14.25
Additional adult athletic program/leagues	\$10.02	\$10.34
Other	\$2.82	\$0

4

VISION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.2 VISION GOALS

4.3 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

4.4 AN INTEGRATED PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM VISION



CHAPTER 4 VISION

From what we are... to what we want to be.

The Vision provides a complete framework of recommendations that respond to the needs and priorities previously identified.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Like a fitness plan for the parks and recreation system, the Vision lays out a long-term strategy, the first of its kind, for the Parks and Recreation Department to comprehensively address the challenges and opportunities facing Clarkston's parks, programming, and operations. Through goals, policies, and solutions, this Vision lays out a course of action to improve every aspect of the parks and recreation system.

VISION FRAMEWORK

The findings of the first two phases produced a broad range of ideas, needs, challenges, and opportunities. These elements generally align under three overarching themes:

- A need to **Upgrade** the existing parks and facilities.
- A need to **Expand** the system, adding parks and facilities, as well as new programming, staff, and operational capacity.
- A need to better **Connect** residents to their parks and recreation resources, both through physical improvements like trails, and through marketing and outreach.
- Organizational Culture – Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals
- Upgrade
 - › Pending Projects Discussion
 - › Park Site Improvements
- Expand
 - › Programming
 - › Pending Projects Discussion
 - › Parkland/Natural Areas Opportunities
 - › Facilities Needs
 - › Indoor Center Opportunities
- Connect
 - › Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities
 - › Marketing and Outreach Strategies

Based on these themes, and informed by specific results from the Context Analysis and Needs and Priorities Assessments, a Visioning Workshop was scheduled with City of Clarkston Staff in March 2026 to explore the following topics under each of these themes:



The Visioning Workshop began the process of developing a unified Vision to guide the Department over the next 10 years and beyond. This Vision is organized around a framework that includes the elements of the illustrated below – beginning with the foundation of the Department's Mission and Vision, then leading to the Goals, Objectives, and Actions/Policies, and finally the Steps. The Steps will be discussed in the Implementation Strategy. This framework is intended to guide the Department over the next 10 years and beyond.

The following recommendations build directly on the Context Analysis and Needs and Priorities Assessment, which offered a portrait of the community's trajectory and its current recreational resources. By reflecting the needs of residents, staff, and stakeholders the Vision promotes a collaborative effort to better integrate parks and recreation into the fabric of the community.



DEPARTMENT MISSION AND VISION

The purpose of the Mission Statement is to express why the City of Clarkston Parks and Recreation Department exists.

The purpose of the Vision Statement is to identify the future state and aspirations of the Department.

MISSION

Creating a safe & inclusive community, for a better quality of life, for all.

VISION

Providing vibrant spaces to build community, with activities and amenities that lead to a healthier, more engaged public.

4.2 VISION GOALS

The Vision Goals provide focused, overarching targets for implementing the Department's Vision over the next 10 years while also describing the aspirations the Department will seek to achieve.

The three overarching themes previously outlined (Upgrade, Expand, Connect), provided a structure for organizing the Vision Workshop. During the workshop discussion, it was determined that the three themes could transition to serve as Goals for improving the parks and recreation system over the next 10 years. Two additional goals were also developed to provide a fully integrated strategy based on the staff's values and aspirations for the parks and recreation department.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

Included within each of the Vision Goals are Objectives and Actions. The Objectives establish the measurable outcomes to advance the overarching Goals. The Actions describe regular internal functions of the Department Staff to advance the Department's reach and impact. The following section describes these Objectives and Actions organized under the five Vision Goals.

GOAL 1

SERVE the community through a responsive, modern, accessible department.

GOAL 2

CONNECT the community to the parks and recreation system through effective outreach and high-quality infrastructure.

GOAL 3

UPGRADE the parks, recreation facilities, and indoor spaces to ensure they are vibrant, high-performing places.

GOAL 4

EXPAND the total park land, facilities, programs, and indoor spaces.

GOAL 5

SUSTAIN the system through comprehensive strategies for management, maintenance, and funding.



GOAL 1 SERVE the community through a responsive, modern, accessible department.

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFFING

Objective 1.1: Formalize the organizational structure of the Parks and Recreation Department to improve service delivery.

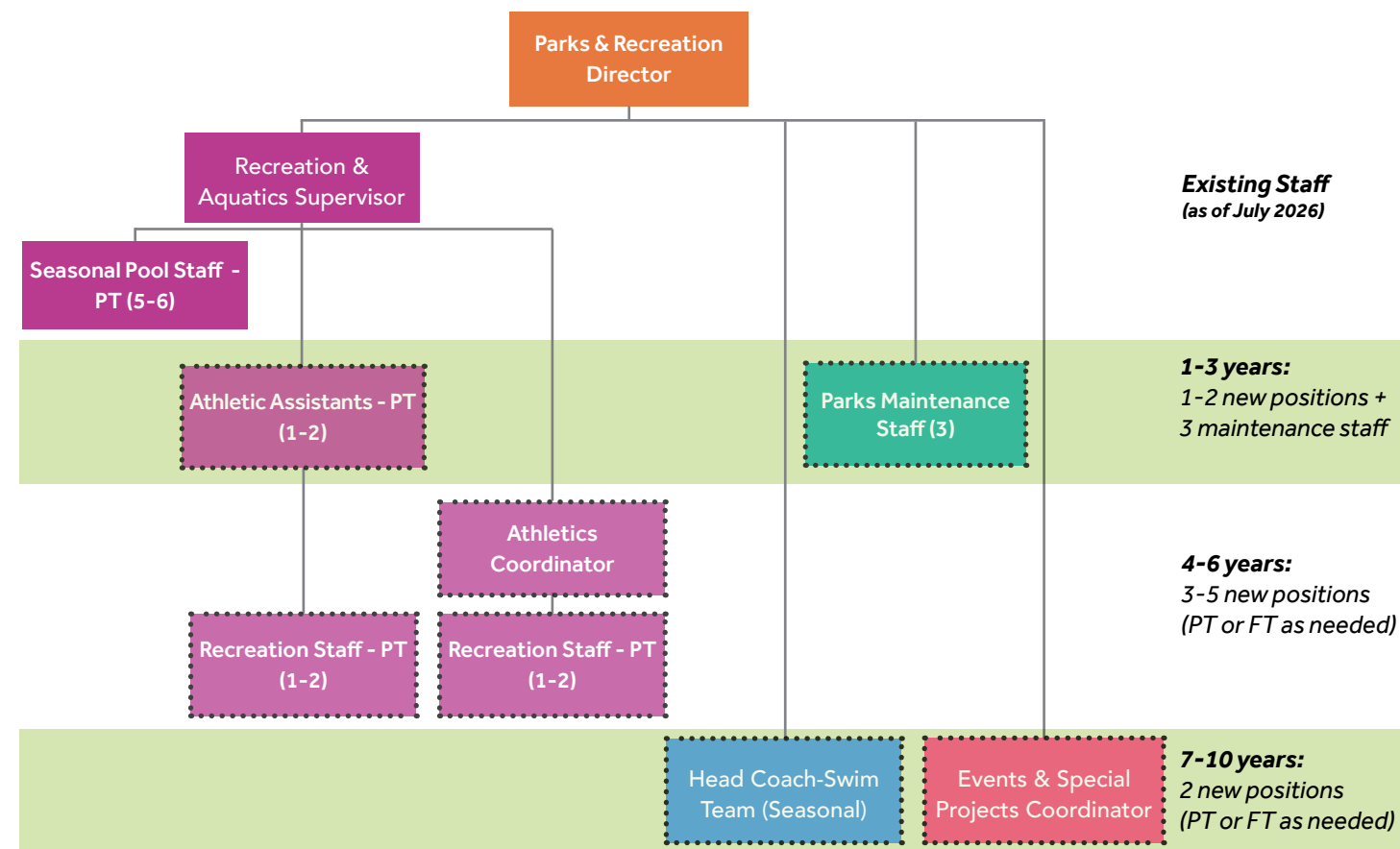
» Action 1.1.1 – Establish a phased and flexible staffing model for part-time and full-time positions.

The city and its needs have grown over the last decade and are expected to continue evolving. New positions in the Department of Parks and Recreation are critical to ensuring success as the parks and recreation system grows and adapts. Given the City's early-stage program system and current facility limitations, a phased and flexible staffing model is recommended.

In the near term, programming should be supported through a combination of core staff oversight and part-time or seasonal hires, particularly for youth sports, special events, and enrichment programs. A "hire-as-needed" model allows the City to scale programs responsibly while monitoring participation levels, demand, and cost recovery.

As offerings expand, particularly in afterschool, teen, wellness, and aquatics programming, additional dedicated recreation staff may be warranted to ensure consistent program quality, supervision, safety, and customer service. Staffing growth should align with phased program expansion and future facility development.

It is recommended that the City develop a 10-year personnel plan, and identify costs and funding sources to ensure sustainability. This preliminary organizational chart suggests how the department could grow its staff over the next 3, 6, and 10 years to prepare for new parks, programs, and improved maintenance.



» Action 1.1.2 – Establish standards for third-party operator agreements for programs and maintenance needs, including specialty maintenance.

Review the existing agreements and explore comparable examples to establish standards to ensure that third-party operators are providing the Department appropriate and effective services, based on resident needs and priorities.

» Action 1.1.3 – Enhance integration with Public Works Department staff.

Review the park site maintenance staffing structure to determine how to optimize resources. Establish regular joint Department meetings to review ongoing maintenance challenges and successes.

Objective 1.2: Develop the "Clarkston Way" for customer experience.

» Action 1.2.1 – Develop a "Clarkston Way" training program for all staff as part of the overall training program and include refreshers at least once annually for all staff.

Coordinate with public-facing Departments and staff to provide information on the diversity of the park system's users, their needs, and how best to deliver service the "Clarkston Way". Training and cultural competency should remain priorities. Given Clarkston's diversity, staff should be equipped to engage residents across cultures and languages, reinforcing recreation's role as a welcoming and inclusive City service.

MAINTENANCE

Objective 1.3: Optimize maintenance practices to ensure high-quality maintenance with limited resources.

» Action 1.3.1 – Develop an asset management system.

Detailing all the elements the Department is responsible for is foundational to caring for its resources. Create a GIS-based digital inventory of park elements that contains lifecycle, condition, and location data. Utilize this system when generating capital improvement plans to ensure that long-term maintenance and replacement needs are planned for.

» Action 1.3.2 – Develop specific maintenance levels of service for parks and trail corridors utilizing the National Recreation and Park Association's (NRPA) maintenance standards.

Coordinate with Public Works to review maintenance standards and analyze parks by areas of use to consider revisions to maintenance standards based on the NRPA standards:

- Level 1 – High visibility areas that require the highest level of maintenance.
- Level 2 – The normal standard and what an individual expects to see on a regular basis.
- Level 3 and 4 – Levels just below the norm and include reductions in frequency of maintenance with a focus on safety. These levels are often utilized when there are budget and manpower reductions.
- Level 5 – This level is one step above allowing the land to return to its original state.
- Level 6 – This level allows the land to return to its original natural state or open space that is already in its natural condition.

Establish new schedule and zones of maintenance, adjusting frequency and standard to maximize resources.

SAFETY

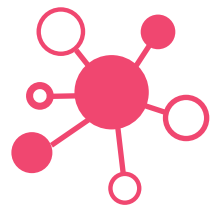
Objective 1.4: Collaboratively enhance the safety and security of parks and recreation facilities.

» Action 1.4.1 – Enhance safety through design and maintenance.

Consider Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) strategies in the design and redesign of parks and recreation facilities. Add security cameras in key parks, ensure adequate lighting in parks after dark, and encourage more patrolling in parks.

» Action 1.4.2: Enhance safety through programming.

In collaboration with partners, develop programs and activities for at-risk youth focused on reducing youth/ young adult crime and improved community safety.



GOAL 2 CONNECT the community to the parks and recreation system through effective outreach and high-quality infrastructure.

MARKETING AND OUTREACH

Objective 2.1: Improve marketing and outreach to inform residents about programs and park facilities.

- » **Action 2.1.1 – Improve the Parks and Recreation page on the City of Clarkston website.**

Update the site with a system map and information on each of the City's parks and their facilities.

- » **Action 2.1.2 – Use a wide array of outreach methods to reach the city's diverse demographics, particularly younger residents.**

Employ forward-thinking means, including a focus on digital media, to provide residents with the latest information about park improvements, programs and events, and opportunities to get involved.



ABOVE The City newsletter provides a great opportunity to incorporate a dedicated Parks and Rec section with all the Department's news and latest offerings.

FEEDBACK → RESPONSE

Email notifications and the City of Clarkston website were residents' top two preferred sources for news about the Parks and Recreation Department, per the statistically valid survey.

Objective 2.2: Develop new strategic opportunities for on-going community input.

- » **Action 2.2.1 – Implement a multi-faceted system of resident feedback.**

Understand changing community desires and support rapid adaptation through regular communication and input from park and program users and non-users, using a mix of online and in-person surveys.

- » **Action 2.2.2 – Establish a Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee.**

Provide engaged residents with the opportunity to provide formal recommendations on parks and recreation improvements, strategies, and key decisions.

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE IMPROVEMENTS

Objective 2.3: Enhance multi-modal accessibility to parks, including micro-mobility and transit.

- » **Action 2.3.1 – Pursue collaborative efforts to construct new paths to—and through—parks, including the ongoing Clarkston Greenway.**

Coordinate with all City Departments and partners to advance the pedestrian and bicycle network vision (see next page).

- » **Action 2.3.2 – Leverage greenways and paths to provide park experiences.**

As new paved shared use paths are developed, the City should also consider opportunities to creatively use Right-of-Way (ROW) for recreational amenities. Recent shared use path projects in Atlanta (including the Beltline, PATH400, and Peachtree Creek Greenway) provide numerous precedents that Clarkston could look to for inspiration. Along PATH400 (see before/after images right), extra space adjacent to the trail was used to create community garden beds and seating areas.

- » **Action 2.3.3 – Support the installation of additional wayfinding signage throughout the city, especially at key intersections and transit stops.**

As recommended in the 2021 Comprehensive Plan update, the City should develop a wayfinding signage plan of action and implement strategic wayfinding signage. Pursue easy-to-understand diagrammatic and multi-lingual signage to accommodate Clarkston's diverse residents.

- » **Action 2.3.4 – Provide bike racks, fix-it stations, e-bike outlets, and other amenities to support non-vehicular access to parks.**

Providing an adequate amount of secure bike parking is a critical piece to increasing ridership. Identify **key, high-traffic locations** for bike parking along trails, in addition to providing bike parking at every park.

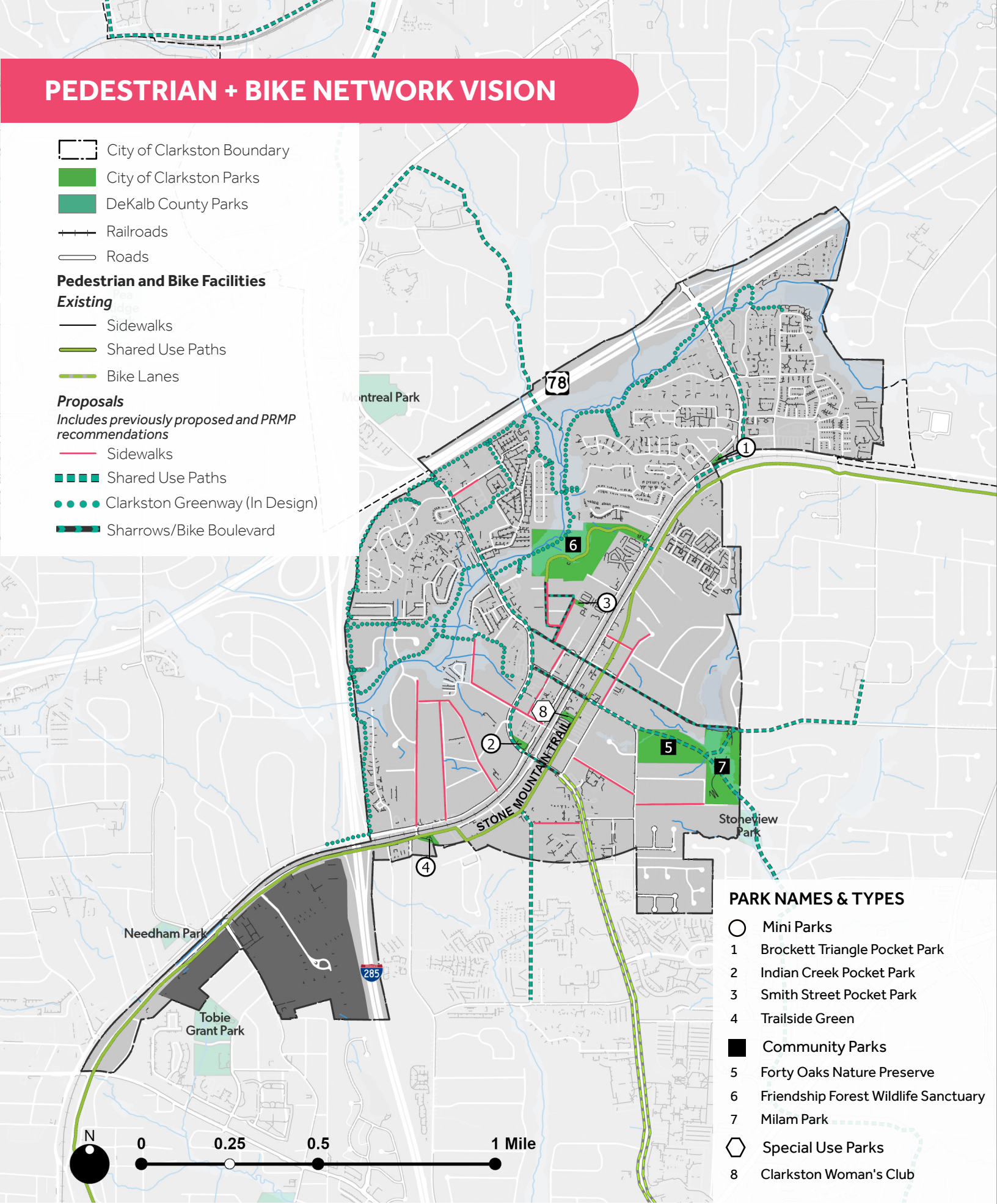
FEEDBACK → RESPONSE

Sidewalks (#8), and Paved multi-purpose trails (#10) were high priorities for residents, per the statistically valid survey, as well as in focus group input. The City should continue the momentum from recent ped/bike efforts, building on the streetscapes completed in the 2010s and the ongoing design of the Clarkston Greenway.



PEDESTRIAN + BIKE NETWORK VISION

- City of Clarkston Boundary
- City of Clarkston Parks
- DeKalb County Parks
- Railroads
- Roads
- Pedestrian and Bike Facilities Existing**
 - Sidewalks
 - Shared Use Paths
 - Bike Lanes
- Proposals**
Includes previously proposed and PRMP recommendations
 - Sidewalks
 - Shared Use Paths
 - Clarkston Greenway (In Design)
 - Sharrows/Bike Boulevard



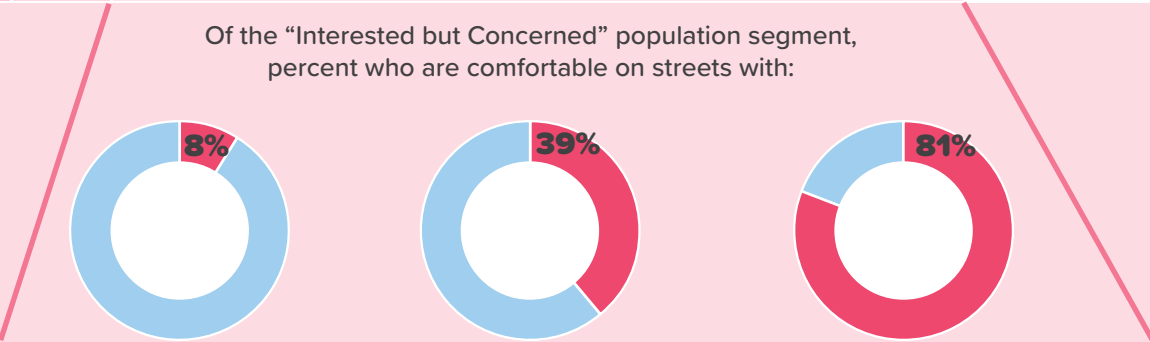
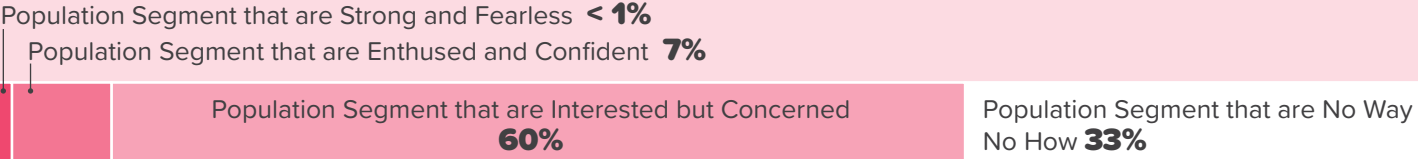
PARK NAMES & TYPES

- Mini Parks
 - 1 Brockett Triangle Pocket Park
 - 2 Indian Creek Pocket Park
 - 3 Smith Street Pocket Park
 - 4 Trailside Green
- Community Parks
 - 5 Forty Oaks Nature Preserve
 - 6 Friendship Forest Wildlife Sanctuary
 - 7 Milam Park
- Special Use Parks
 - 8 Clarkston Woman's Club

The Needs and Benefits of High Quality Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections

The goal of connecting the community through high-quality pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure aligns with national trends and best practices in urban design, mobility, and recreation. Walking and biking are two of the most popular recreational activities in the United States. These activities have grown in popularity over the last decade as the trend of improving personal health and wellness through active living continues to grow.

Additionally, the creation of high-quality infrastructure for walking and biking has been shown to provide multiple benefits. First, the creation of high quality bike infrastructure has been proven to encourage residents to use their cars less and their bicycles more. For example, studies show that separated or protected bicycle facilities increase ridership and safety by wide margins. And research has shown that lack of sidewalks and safe places to bike are primary reasons people give when asked why they do not walk or bicycle more.



NO BIKE FACILITY



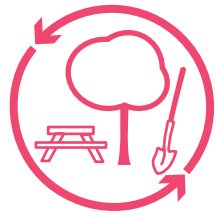
A BIKE LANE



HIGH-QUALITY SEPARATED BIKE FACILITY

Source: Roger Geller (2005) and Jennifer Dill (2012)

Creating high quality bike/ped infrastructure could also play a significant role in a shift of the share of trips from vehicles to active modes. Approximately 50 percent of trips taken in the United States can be accomplished by riding a bicycle for 20 minutes and 25 percent of short trips can be completed by walking 20 minutes or less. However, nationally less than 1 percent of daily trips are made by bicycling and less than 11 percent by walking — meaning that people are getting in cars to make these very short journeys. In American cities, 28 percent of trips are less than 1 mile, yet 60 percent of these trips are made using cars.



GOAL 3 UPGRADE the parks, recreation facilities, and indoor spaces to ensure they are vibrant, high-performing places.

PARKS AND FACILITIES

Objective 3.1: Develop Clarkston Parks design standards to reinforce the City’s “brand identity.”

- » *Action 3.1.1 – Establish typical standards for amenities, signage, furniture, materials, etc. to ensure a unified “look and feel” as capital improvements occur.*

Build on the City’s recent improvements, such as the entry signage, stonework, and planting design at Trailside Green, and the pergolas and benches in Indian Creek Pocket Park, to create a portfolio of design standards for future improvements. This will help ensure that Clarkston parks are recognizable and share common characteristics, and can help lower design, replacement, and repair costs across the system.



ABOVE The design details at Trailside Green could serve as the standard for future improvements in other Clarkston parks.

Objective 3.2: Complete capital improvements in parks, in collaboration with the community, to provide high-quality park experiences across the board.

- » *Action 3.2.1 – Address deferred capital maintenance and proactively complete capital improvement projects based on the identified facility needs discussed previously, and recommendations collected through the planning process.*

Include a collaborative public engagement process to ensure improvements reflect community knowledge and needs, and incorporate the design frameworks (as applicable) in the prototypical park diagrams illustrated in the following pages as a starting point for discussions. Employ the Department’s design standards (3.1.1) when repairing or replacing park features, and appropriately incorporate new elements into the Department’s asset management system (1.3.1) to prepare for lifecycle maintenance tracking.

FEEDBACK → RESPONSE

At \$19.54, **Improvements to Existing Parks and Facilities** was the top priority category where residents would like to direct the Parks Capital budget. Resident feedback on funding priorities will help inform project prioritization.

PARK SITE IMPROVEMENTS | MINI PARKS

The following capital improvements reflect Actions 3.2.1 and 3.2.2.

BROCKETT TRIANGLE POCKET PARK

- Provide baseline amenities:
 - » signage (regulatory and wayfinding)
 - » walking paths
 - » benches
 - » bike rack
 - » small shade pavilion
 - » picnic table
- Continue to develop “food forest” with edible permaculture plantings (fruit trees, berries, vines, etc.).



INDIAN CREEK POCKET PARK

- Provide baseline amenities:
 - » signage (regulatory and wayfinding)
 - » bike rack
- Enhance landscaping around pergolas (limb the trees, add additional plantings).
- Enhance adjacent stormwater management parcel through riparian plantings and streambank stabilization for aesthetic and wildlife benefit.
- Explore installation of bench swings (relocate metal benches).
- Implement art, either on fence or as sculpture.



SMITH STREET* POCKET PARK

- Provide baseline amenities:
 - » signage (regulatory and wayfinding)
 - » bike rack
 - » benches
 - » picnic table under pavilion (pavilion must be upgraded to code)
- Conduct a design process, including renaming the park and providing upgraded amenities, to elevate the design quality to the standard established at Trailside Green.



*Smith Street was renamed Patricia Davis Drive.

PARK SITE IMPROVEMENTS | MINI PARKS

The following capital improvements reflect Actions 3.2.1 and 3.2.2.

TRAILSIDE GREEN

- Provide baseline amenities:
 - » signage (regulatory and wayfinding)
 - » bike rack
 - » drinking fountain
 - » picnic table
- Implement art, potentially on boundary fence and/or integrated in planting zones, continuing tradition established with "Heart of Mother Earth" installation.
- Continue to implement and maintain a balanced design, coordinating with partners to provide both flowering and edible permaculture plantings, as well as lawn areas.
- Provide additional shade, through tree plantings along trail.

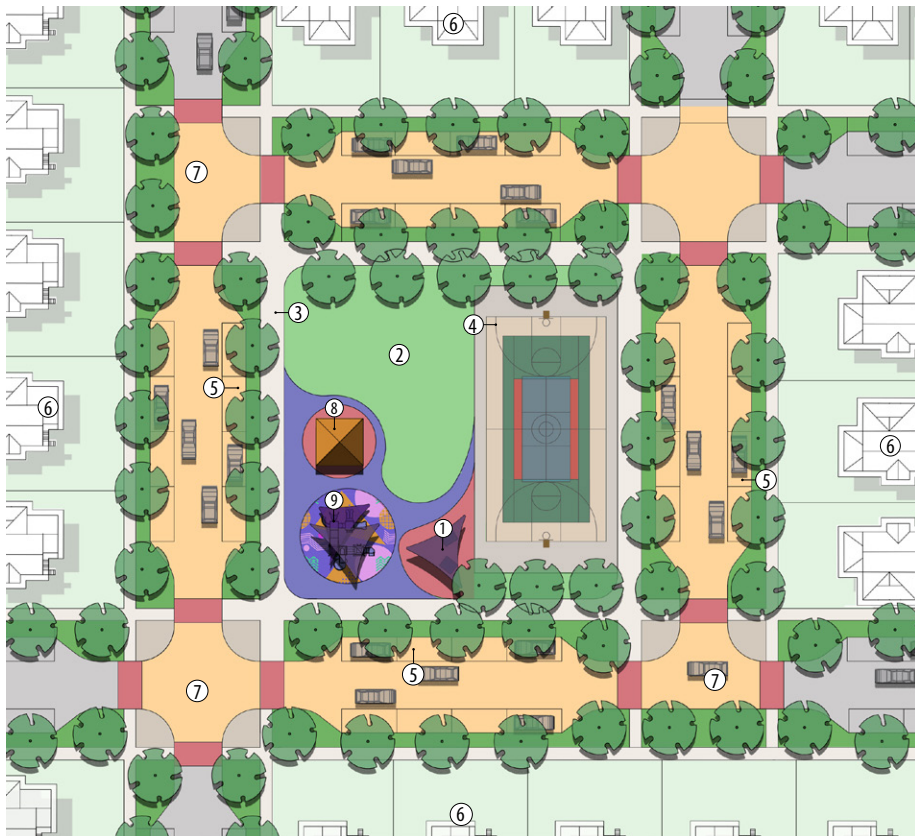


PROTOTYPICAL MINI-PARK CONCEPT

This prototypical park diagram (for a 0.5 acre park) could be used as a starting point for discussions with residents and stakeholders for future park improvements, including addressing parks and recreation needs.

Mini Parks are the smallest park classification typically used to address parks and recreation needs, including limited passive and active uses. Any programmed events should be limited to neighborhood-serving events focused on the surrounding blocks.

A Mini Park within the range of 0.25 to 0.5 acres with a balanced variety of amenities is recommended as the minimum size park to provide a high-quality park experience within a 10-minute walk. Mini Parks can also provide opportunities to address environmental challenges, albeit in a limited way, such as local stormwater management issues, urban heat island effect, biological diversity, native habitat restoration, and the incorporation of bird-friendly design standards.



Legend

- ① Exercise Stations with Canopy
- ② Multi-Purpose Open Space
- ③ Multi-Purpose Trail

- ④ Multi-Purpose Sport Court:
 - Basketball Court
 - Pickleball Court
 - Tennis Court
 - Volleyball Court
- ⑤ On-Street Parking

- ⑥ Park Oriented Development
- ⑦ Park Zone Markings
- ⑧ Pavilion
- ⑨ Playground with Canopy

PARK SITE IMPROVEMENTS | COMMUNITY PARKS

The following capital improvements reflect Actions 3.2.1 and 3.2.2

FORTY OAKS NATURE PRESERVE

- Advance the implementation of the concept vision (see page 117-118), incorporating further public engagment opportunities. Proposed baseline improvements include:
 - » upgrade signage (provide multi-lingual regulatory and wayfinding)
 - » upgrade and expand soft-surface hiking trails
 - » upgrade benches
- Develop new community gardening space.
- Develop shared use path connecting Stone Mountain PATH to Forty Oaks/Milam and neighborhoods to the east and south.
- Perform forest and streambank restoration, focused on removal of invasive species and replanting with natives (see Objective 3.3).
- Develop a "food forest" of edible fruit trees and shrubs.



RIGHT
Trees Atlanta, The Conservation Fund, and other partners helped the City of Atlanta develop the Urban Food Forest at Browns Mill, adding dozens of fruit trees and shrubs to a forested 7-acre site.

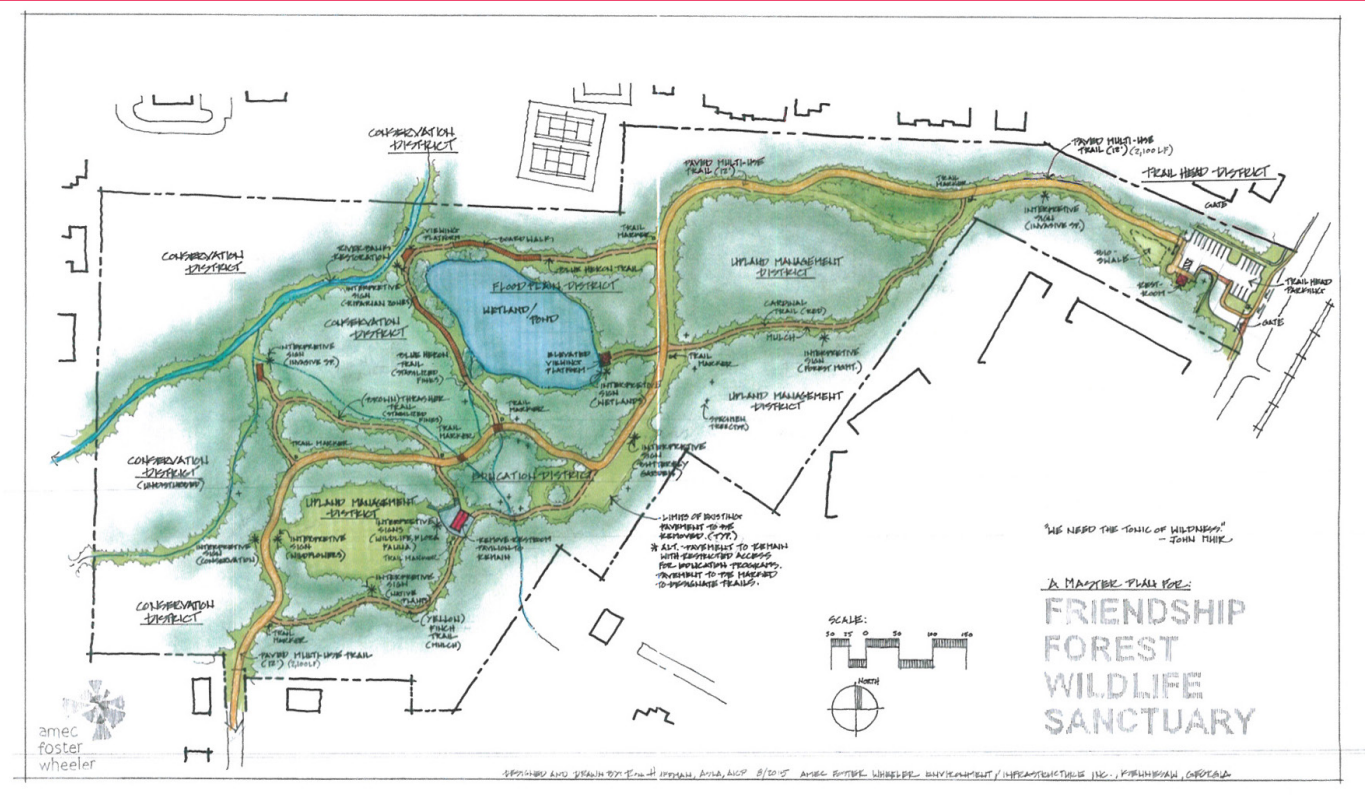


PARK SITE IMPROVEMENTS | COMMUNITY PARKS

The following capital improvements reflect Actions 3.2.1 and 3.2.2

FRIENDSHIP FOREST WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

- Install additional soft-surface walking paths, as identified in Master Plan (below).
- Perform forest and streambank restoration, focused on removal of invasive species and replanting with natives (see Objective 3.3).
- Re-pave existing multi-use trail at 12' width, as recommended in the 2016 Park Master Plan, to provide seamless connection with Clarkston Greenway (in design). Potentially coordinate construction to align with Clarkston Greenway development.



RIGHT
A native rivercane (*Arundinaria gigantea*) restoration project along a streambank. This type of environmental stewardship can stabilize the streambed, increase biodiversity, and support a stronger floodplain ecosystem that reduces flooding.



PARK SITE IMPROVEMENTS | COMMUNITY PARKS

The following capital improvements reflect Actions 3.2.1 and 3.2.2

FRIENDSHIP FOREST WILDLIFE SANCTUARY



LEFT/BELOW
The existing conditions along the South Fork of Peachtree Creek in Friendship Forest could be enhanced with the recommended improvements, such as additional soft surface trails connecting to the Clarkston Greenway, signage, and invasive species management with native woodland plantings.



PARK SITE IMPROVEMENTS | COMMUNITY PARKS

The following capital improvements reflect Actions 3.2.1 and 3.2.2

MILAM PARK

- Advance the implementation of the concept vision (see pages 116-117), incorporating further public engagment opportunities. Proposed improvements to existing elements include:
 - » upgrade signage (provide multi-lingual regulatory and wayfinding)
 - » upgrade the multi-purpose field west of the pool with improved lighting, fencing and turf conditions to maximize use for a variety of activities, including programmed youth sports as well as pick-up games and events
 - » upgrade tennis and pickleball (redevelop existing youth tennis court space with dedicated pickleball)
 - » improve and expand parking lots

RIGHT

The athletic field west of the pool is a well-used space that has served many uses over the years, from baseball, to soccer, to pickup cricket games (shown here), as well as hosting events and gatherings. The recommendation is to make improvements to the field based on refined design—with public input—with the goal of maximizing its function for a range of activities.



RIGHT

The existing upper parking lot along Poplar Drive is in poor condition and is underused. Redesign and repaving would add additional spaces and provide better vehicle movement.



PARK SITE IMPROVEMENTS | COMMUNITY PARKS

The following capital improvements reflect Actions 3.2.1 and 3.2.2

MILAM PARK



EXISTING

LEFT/BELOW

The athletic field at Milam Park is a heavily used space that the Department has begun upgrading to improve its functionality. Field lighting was installed in 2026 and additional proposed improvements will provide greater access and use for more activities more often.



PROPOSED

MILAM PARK & FORTY OAKS NATURE PRESERVE

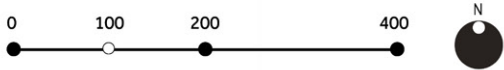
CONCEPTUAL VISION

EXISTING FACILITIES/AMENITIES (UPGRADED PER NEEDS)

- 1. Pool & Poolhouse
- 2. Multi-purpose Field (improved fencing, lighting, turf, and accessibility)
- 3. Boardwalk
- 4. Large Pavilion
- 5. Stone Pavilion (converted to indoor facility)
- 6. Medium Pavilion
- 7. Small Pavilions (3, relocated)
- 8. Adult Fitness Equipment (relocated)
- 9. Tennis Court (with markings for two Pickleball courts)
- 10. Parking lot (redesigned and expanded, ~100 spaces)
- 11. Restroom (upgraded)
- 12. Playground (redesigned and upgraded)
- 13. Building for Gardeners' Use
- 14. Community Gardens
- 15. Entry Drive (with upgraded signage)
- 16. Multi-Purpose Field (lighted, artificial turf)
- 17. Access Ramp (redesigned with integrated seating)
- 18. Parking lot (redesigned and expanded, ~75 spaces)

NEW FACILITIES/AMENITIES

- A. Walking Path Network (typ. 6' width)
- B. Shared Use Path (typ. 12' width)
- C. Multi-Use Court (1 basketball court, 3 volleyball courts, futsal)
- D. Pickleball Courts (8 dedicated)
- E. Multi-use Field (marked for (3) U-8 soccer fields)
- F. Athletic Track
- G. Walking Path (mulch)
- H. On-Street Parking (~40 spaces)
- I. Boardwalk with Seating and Overlook Pavilion
- J. DeKalb County-Owned Park Site



PARK SITE IMPROVEMENTS | COMMUNITY CENTER

The following capital improvements reflect Actions 3.2.1 and 3.2.2

CLARKSTON WOMAN'S CLUB

- Conduct a building systems analysis to determine lifecycle needs for HVAC, plumbing, electrical, etc.
- Advance interior improvements with the goal of serving both programming needs and revenue-generating rental uses. Proposed improvements include:
 - » digital projector
 - » kitchen upgrades, to serve both cooking programs and catering needs for events
- Provide baseline amenities for the exterior property:
 - » ADA accessibility
 - » signage (regulatory, wayfinding and historical information on the significance of the building)
 - » lighting
 - » benches
 - » bike parking
 - » picnic table(s)
 - » drinking fountain



Objective 3.3: Perform specialized ecological restoration in natural areas.

- » *Action 3.3.1 – Remove invasive planting and restore areas with native planting while considering opportunities to improve sight lines, increase safety, and provide opportunities for better use of the restored areas.*

Non-native invasive plant species decrease biodiversity and reduce ecological health by gradually crowding out and out-competing native plant species, which have evolved in community with other native wildlife specific to this ecoregion and physiographic province. Non-native species do not provide the full host of benefits and ecosystem services offered by a more intact native palette, leading to cascading negative impacts to the entire ecosystem. Management of these species is paramount to long-term ecological resilience.

It is recommended to identify and prioritize areas with invasive species impacts and develop a strategy to remove and replant, considering opportunities to coordinate with other projects, such as trail construction. Minimize the use of chemical treatments, consider alternatives to mowing or the use of low-mow turf alternatives that cut emissions, and pursue integrated pest management.

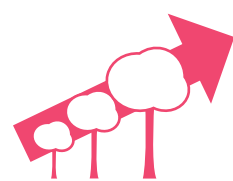
FEEDBACK → RESPONSE

Natural areas/nature parks was the top priority category for investment, based on their importance to residents and the unmet needs.

BELOW

Trees Atlanta supports forest stewardship projects in DeKalb County and could be a valuable partner in coordinating ecological restoration work. Volunteers often contribute a significant portion of the labor, reducing costs to the park departments.





GOAL 4 EXPAND the total park land, facilities, programs, and indoor spaces.

PARK LAND

Objective 4.1: Achieve equitable access to parks and increase the City's total parkland through a creative, multi-pronged strategy.

» **Action 4.1.1: Develop existing City-owned sites proposed to be new park spaces.**

Prioritize development of new parks on sites already owned by the City. Conduct a collaborative park design process with community engagement for each site.

» **Action 4.1.2: Pursue partnerships and the development of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) to increase publicly accessible park land acreage in the City based on areas of need identified in this Master Plan.**

Coordinate with the DeKalb School Board and DeKalb County to provide more publicly-accessible parks and recreation facilities.

» **Action 4.1.3: Pursue the creation of new park land through fee simple acquisition, securing conservation and recreation easements, and redevelopment on a parcel-by-parcel basis strategically, and as opportunities become available.**

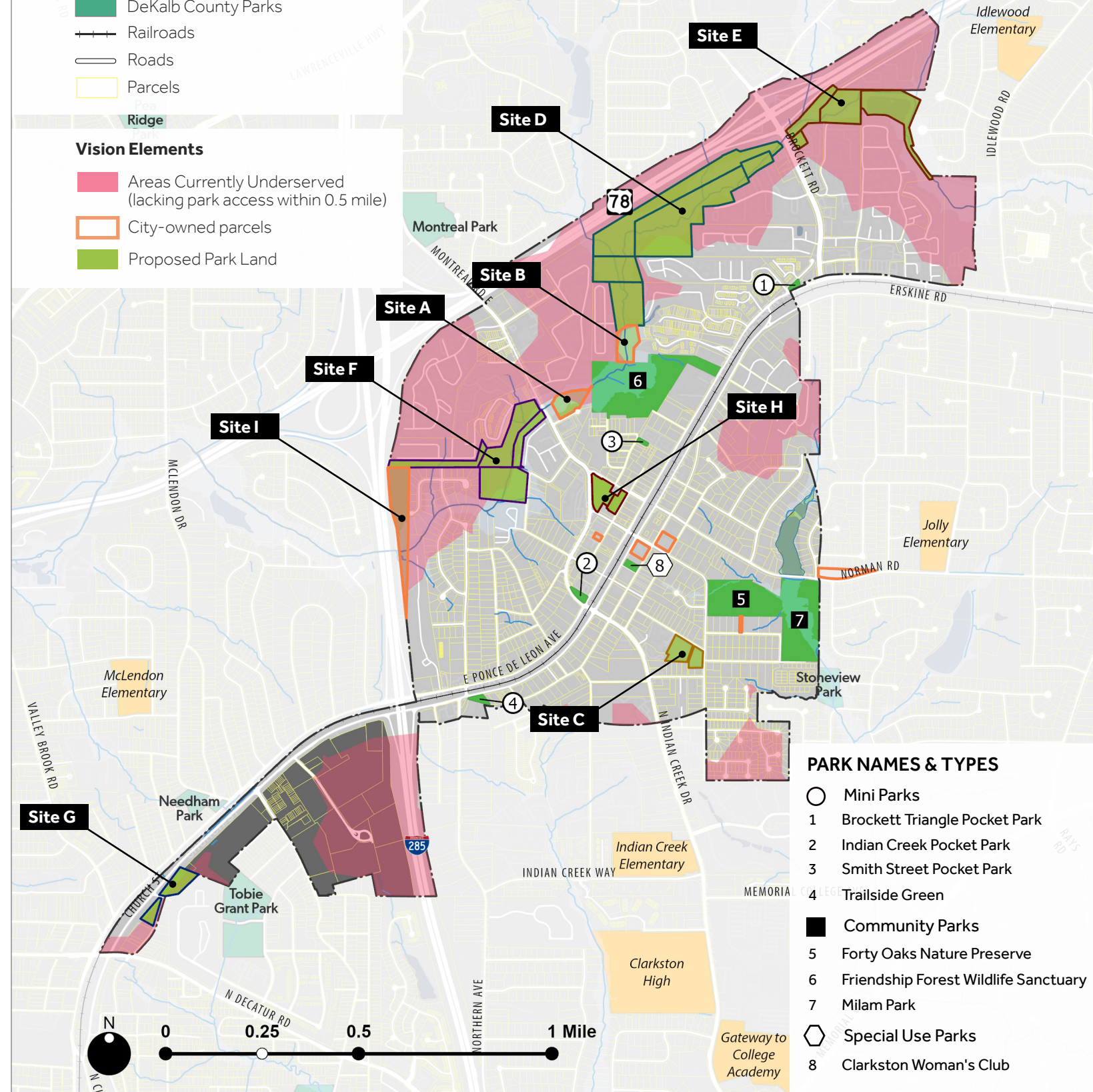
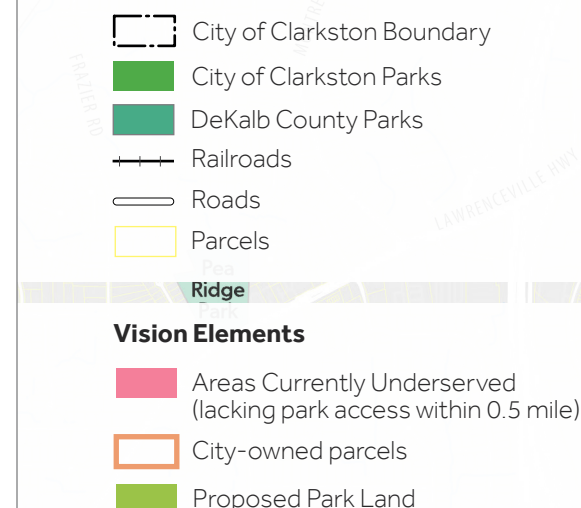
Acquiring new parkland can be a challenging process that typically evolves on a parcel-by-parcel basis, with opportunities arising on a sporadic basis and timing typically out of the city's control. Encouraging the owners of parcels with high recreation value to pursue conservation easements is one opportunity to help protect sensitive landscapes and associated riparian corridors, with the owner benefiting from a tax break and the City avoiding the need to acquire the land. The City may also want to explore the option of allocating grants to private property owners (specifically, the large parcels with multi-family housing at Sites D, E, and F) to develop public recreation amenities on private property, with an MOU securing public access in perpetuity.

ANALYSIS → RESPONSE

The Acreage and Access Levels of Service indicated a need for more parkland to better serve residents. Additionally, **Natural Areas/ Nature Parks (#1), Community Parks (#4) and Neighborhood Parks (#9)** were all High Priority Facilities in the statistically valid survey, indicating a need from residents for more parks of all kinds.

Based on comparable system benchmarks and industry best practices, it is recommended that Clarkston adopt a goal of providing **5 acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents.**

PARK LAND VISION



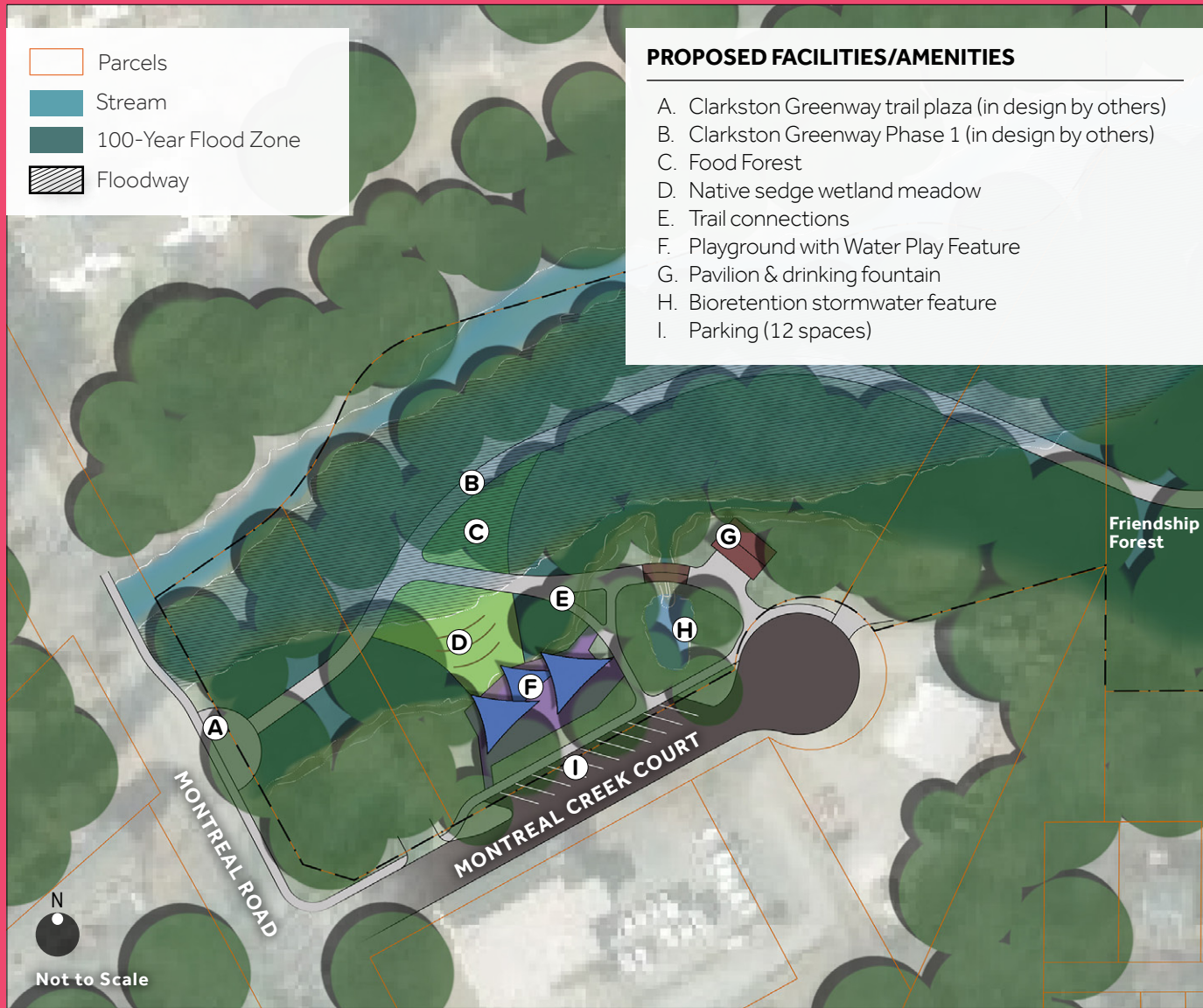
PARK LAND PROPOSALS

The following proposed new park sites reflect Actions 4.1.1, 4.1.2 and 4.1.3

SITE A

- This 2.25-acre City-owned parcel previously identified for new park land will be served by the Clarkston Greenway Phase 1 (in design).
- Ongoing discussions suggest the implementation of limited amenities close to the Montreal Creek Court frontage, given that ~70% of the site falls within the 100-year flood zone. Potential amenities & improvements include:
 - » Playground with small water play feature (misting fountain or small spray ground)
 - » Pavilion/Picnic area
 - » Greenway connection and walking paths
 - » Streambank restoration and invasive species removal
 - » Edible plantings/food forest

PRELIMINARY CONCEPT VISION FOR SITE A ON MONTREAL CREEK COURT



PARK LAND PROPOSALS

The following proposed new park sites reflect Actions 4.1.1, 4.1.2 and 4.1.3

SITE B

- This 2.9 acre City-owned parcel previously identified for new park land will be served by the Clarkston Greenway Phase 1 (in design), and can function as an expansion of Friendship Forest.
- Preliminary discussions suggest the implementation of very limited amenities, given that more than 90% of the site falls within the 100-year flood zone. Potential amenities and improvements include:
 - » Unpaved walking paths
 - » Streambank restoration and invasive species removal
 - » Edible plantings/food forest

SITE C

- This 2.1-acre site is comprised of two parcels owned by the DeKalb County School Board. The site is currently leased to the Clarkston Community Center and has previously been available to residents for programmed and public recreation.
- The use of this site will require further coordination with DeKalb School Board.



ABOVE The existing conditions at Site C include amenities that could be upgraded and re-activated, in coordination with the DeKalb School Board.

SITE D

- This 46.4-acre site is comprised of five parcels owned by five separate property owners. The South Fork of Peachtree Creek, as well as multiple tributary streams, run through the site. Clarkston Greenway Phase 2 is planned to traverse through this site.
- Any future use of this site will require further coordination with each of the property owners. City may explore the option of allocating grants to property owners to develop public recreation amenities on their property, with an MOU/easement securing public access in perpetuity.
- Previous planning and preliminary discussions suggest the implementation of very limited amenities, given that more than 70% of the site falls within the 100-year flood zone. Potential amenities and improvements include:
 - » Trail entry plaza(s) with seating, lighting, and drinking fountain
 - » Unpaved walking paths
 - » Streambank restoration and invasive species removal
 - » Edible plantings/food forest
 - » Dog park - must be developed on upland areas outside of the floodplain. Potential to coordinate with property owners to develop as a public-private partnership.

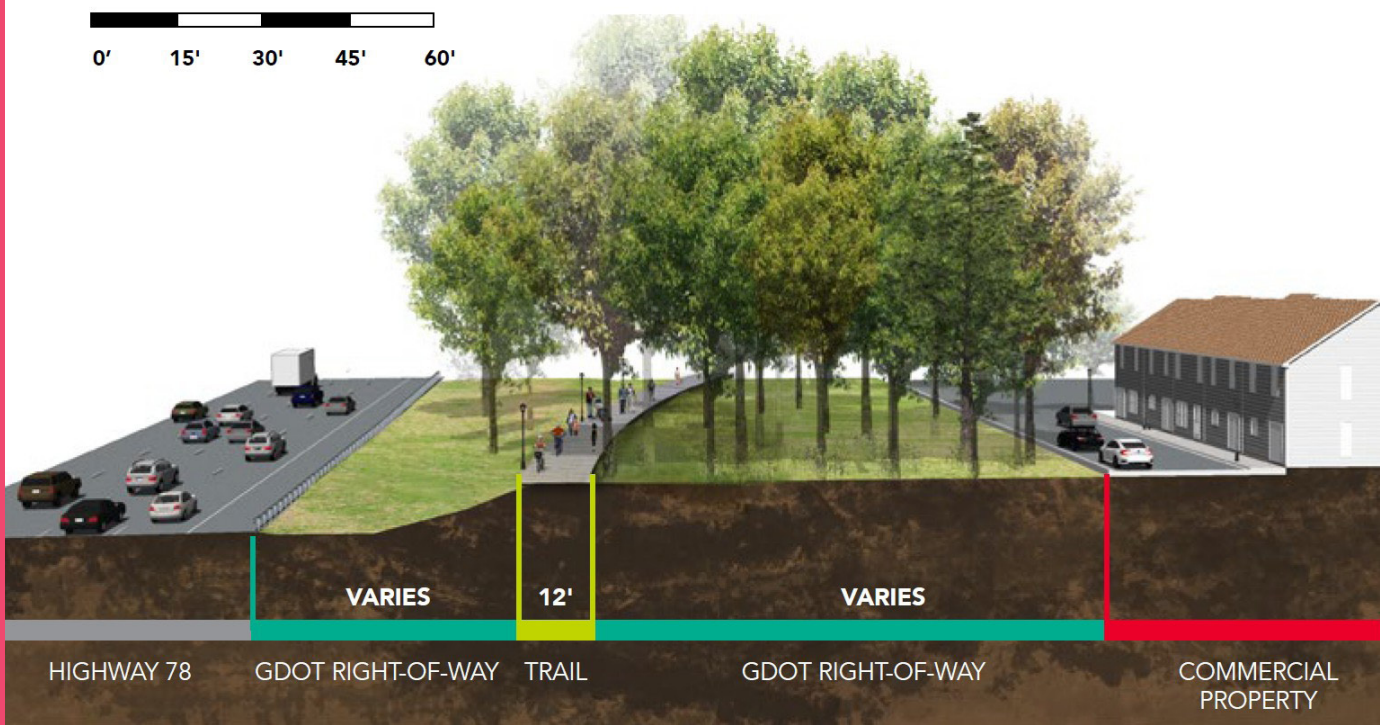
PARK LAND PROPOSALS

The following proposed new park sites reflect Actions 4.1.1, 4.1.2 and 4.1.3

SITE E

- This 16.4-acre site is comprised of four parcels owned by four separate property owners, including GDOT within the US78 right of way. Clarkston Greenway Phase 2 is planned to traverse through this site.
- Any future use of this site will require further coordination with each of the property owners. City may explore the option of allocating grants to property owners to develop public recreation amenities on their property, with an MOU/easement securing public access in perpetuity.
- Potential amenities and improvements include:
 - » Clarkston Gateway Plaza along Brockett Road
 - » Unpaved walking paths
 - » Streambank restoration and invasive species removal
 - » Edible plantings/food forest
 - » Dog park - must be developed on upland areas outside of the floodplain. Potential to coordinate with property owners to develop as a public-private partnership.

S.3 Trail Section Along Highway 78 in GDOT Right-of-Way



ABOVE This rendering from the Clarkston Greenway plan depicts the proposed path alignment and improvements through Site E.

PARK LAND PROPOSALS

The following proposed new park sites reflect Actions 4.1.1, 4.1.2 and 4.1.3

SITE F

- This 17.9 acre is comprised of four parcels owned by three separate property owners. The South Fork of Peachtree Creek, as well as multiple tributary streams, run through the site. Clarkston Greenway Phase 3 is planned to traverse through this site.
- Any future use of this site will require further coordination with each of the property owners. City may explore the option of allocating grants to property owners to develop public recreation amenities on their property, with an MOU/easement securing public access in perpetuity.
- Previous planning and preliminary discussions suggest the implementation of very limited amenities in coordination with the Greenway development, given that more than 90% of the site falls within the 100-year flood zone. Potential amenities and improvements include:
 - » Trail entry plaza(s) with seating, lighting, and drinking fountain
 - » Unpaved walking paths
 - » Streambank restoration and invasive species removal
 - » Edible plantings/food forest
 - » Dog park - must be developed on upland areas outside of the floodplain. Potential to coordinate with property owners to develop as a public-private partnership.



ABOVE This rendering from the Clarkston Greenway plan depicts the proposed path alignment and improvements through Site F.

SITE G

- This 3.3-acre site is comprised of two parcels owned by two separate property owners. The existing Stone Mountain Trail runs along the Church Street side of the properties. The site was previously identified for potential park space in the Clarkston 2040 Comprehensive Plan.
- Any future use of this site will require further coordination/acquisition with each of the properties.
- Potential amenities and improvements include:
 - » Clarkston Gateway Plaza along Church Street (previously proposed in Clarkston 2040 Comprehensive Plan)
 - » Unpaved walking paths
 - » Pavilion/Restroom
 - » Playground
 - » Adult Fitness Equipment
 - » Community Gardens
 - » Permaculture edible plantings
 - » Multi-use Open Lawn
 - » Multi-Use Court (basketball, volleyball, futsal)

PARK LAND PROPOSALS

The following proposed new park sites reflect Actions 4.1.1, 4.1.2 and 4.1.3

SITE H

- This 3.3-acre site is comprised of two parcels currently owned by two separate property owners. The site was previously identified for a potential Town Green park space as part of a new City Hall complex in the Clarkston LCI and 2040 Comprehensive Plan.
- Any future use of this site will require further coordination/acquisition of each of the properties.

PROTOTYPICAL TOWN GREEN PARK CONCEPT

Town Center Parks serve as the heart of the community. They are the primary location where civic, political, holiday, and special events are held. Facilities, amenities, and programmed events should consider the social, cultural, and civic needs of the community at-large as well as some of the needs of local residents living within walking distance of the park.

Additionally, Town Center Parks provide opportunities to address environmental challenges such as local stormwater management, and provide ecological benefits like increasing tree canopy and biological diversity.

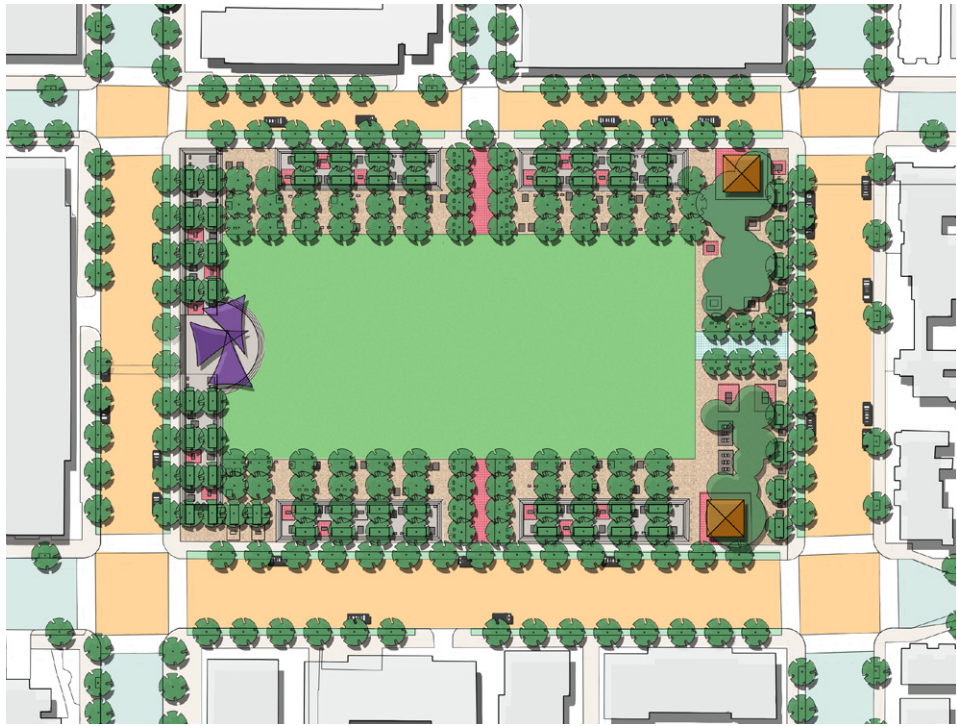
Size:
Generally 1 to 4 acres (average 2 acres)

Recommended Amenities:

- Formal/informal stage/ amphitheater
- Multi-purpose open space
- Movable tables and chairs
- Multi-purpose walking path
- Outdoor table games (e.g., ping pong, foosball, chess, checkers etc.)
- Picnic area(s)
- Public art
- Play area
- Restroom
- Splash pad
- Wi-fi

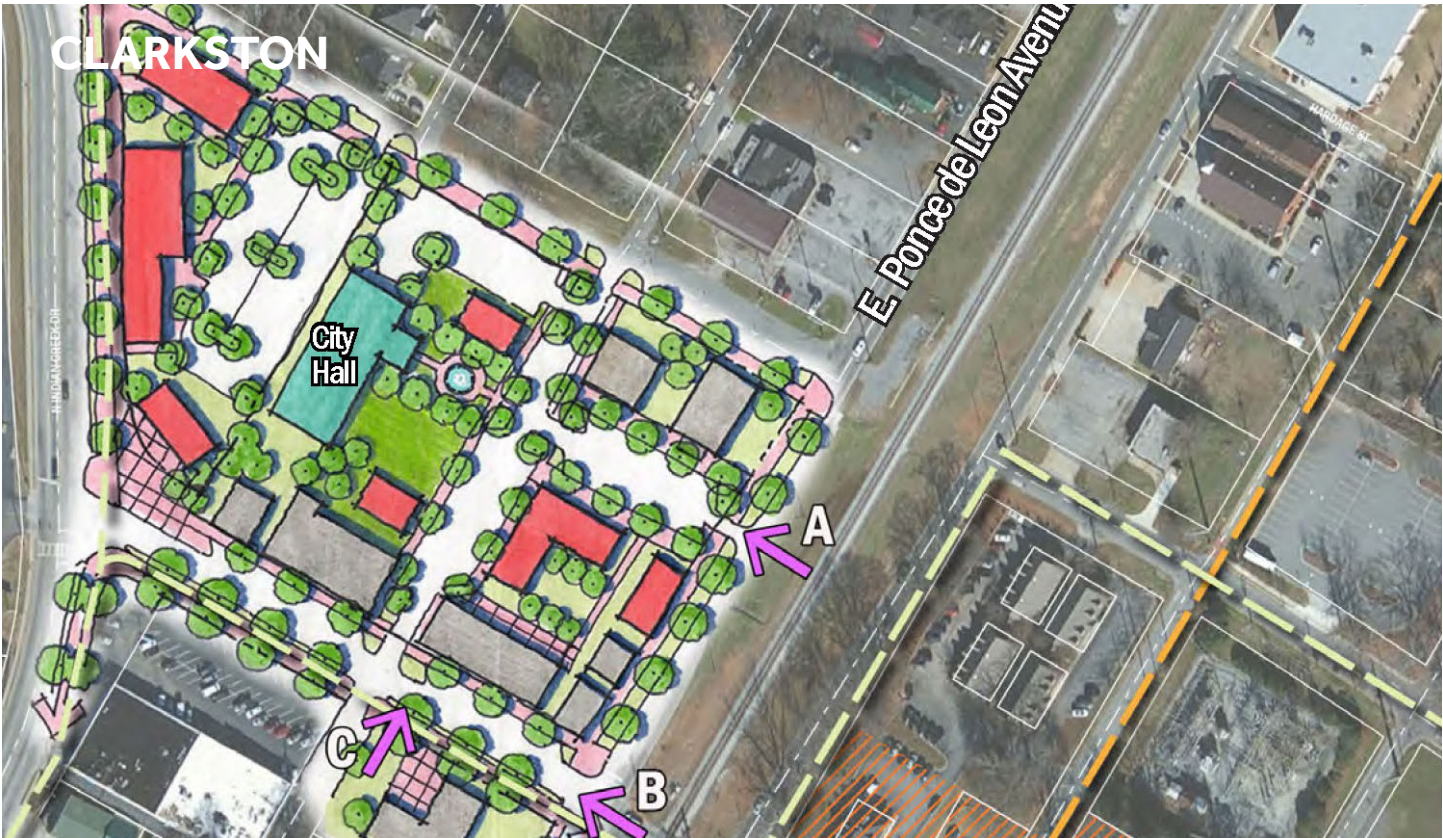
Sustainable Features:

- Storm water management
- Native plants
- Recycling receptacles
- Energy efficient/Solar powered lighting



Design Considerations:

- Park edges should be open, accessible, and surrounded by public rights of way.
- Consider designing adjacent roadways as shared-use streets that allow park activities to extend into the street therefore expanding the size of the park space.
- Park design should reflect the existing or anticipated need of the Town Center and compatible needs of local residents leaving immediately around the Town Center Park.
- Parking should be limited to on-street perimeter parking.
- Well-marked and signed crosswalks are required to ensure safe access to the parks.
- Recommend "park zones" that encourage motorists to reduce their speed should be incorporated on roads that surround the park.
- Fencing should not be used. If needed, consider ornamental and low fencing.
- Development surrounding the park should face onto the park. Wide sidewalks with shade trees should extend from the park into the surrounding development.



ABOVE Clarkston's 2025 LCI Update recommended a new City Hall and civic center—with greenspace—in a roughly 1.25 acre-area directly within the core of Clarkston's downtown businesses.

BELOW The City of Powder Springs opened Thurman Springs Park in 2021. The 1.2 acre space includes an amphitheater, gathering lawn, splashpad, and small play space, all connected to nearby businesses by high-quality pedestrian infrastructure.



Credit: TSW

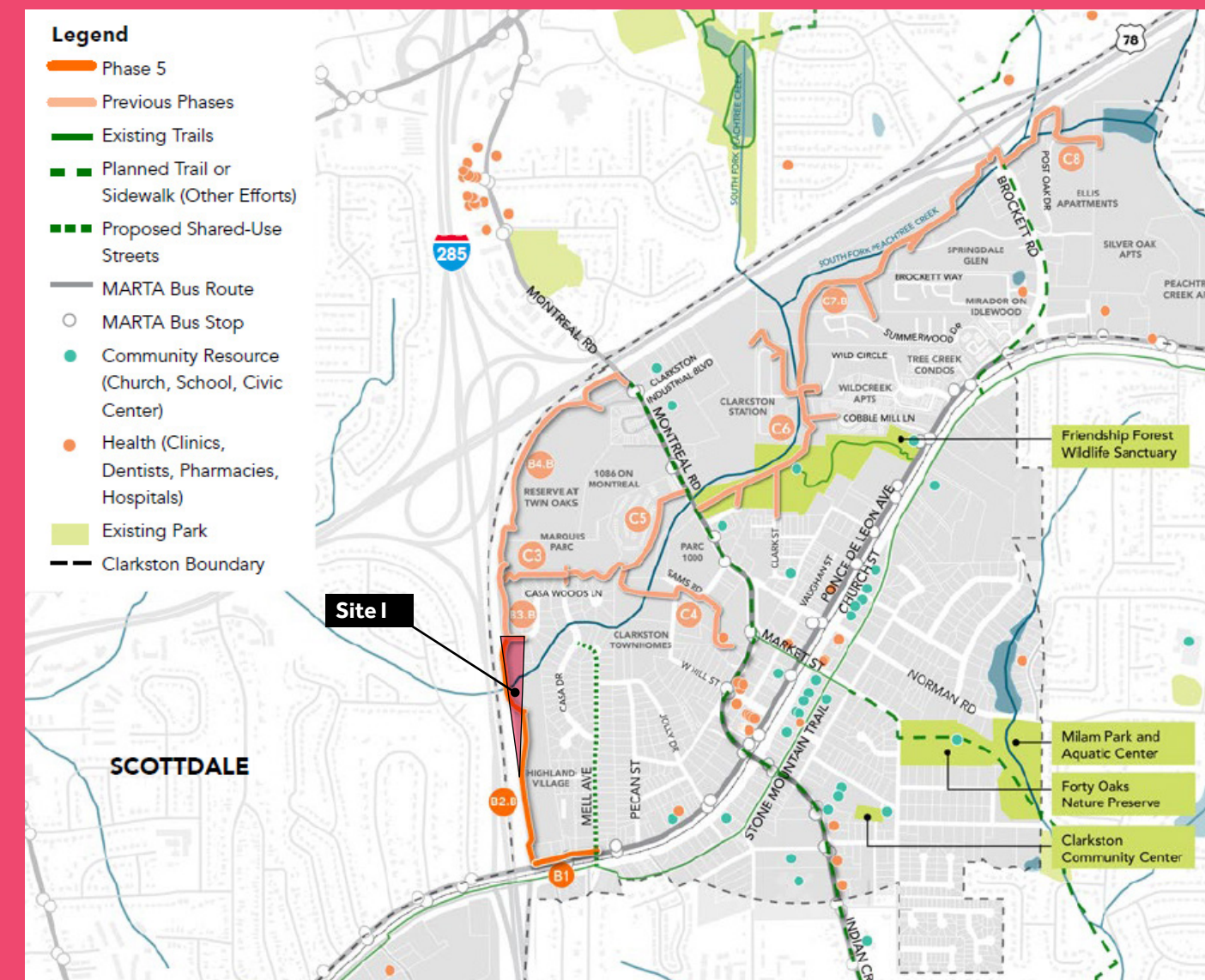
PARK LAND PROPOSALS

The following proposed new park sites reflect Actions 4.1.1, 4.1.2 and 4.1.3

SITE I

- This 6.8-acre City-owned parcel previously identified for new park land will be served by the Clarkston Greenway Phases 4 and 5.
- Due to the site's challenging topography and its proximity to I-285, recreation uses will be very limited.

BELOW This map from the Clarkston Greenway plan depicts the proposed path alignment of segments B.2.B and B.3.B through Site I.



Objective 4.2: Provide Parks and Recreation Facilities Equitably throughout the City.

» Action 4.2.1 – Implement new facilities in existing and new parks to fill needs in underserved areas.

Prioritize development of high priority facilities/amenities. Incorporate a collaborative design process with community engagement for each site.

The table below provides recommended Facilities Level of Service guidelines, based on the NRPA median, best practices, and local needs. Facility Visions were developed for the following (see maps on pages 121-123), based on priorities and needs:

- Natural Areas/Unpaved Hiking Trails
- Community Gardens
- Playgrounds (including Tot-lots)
- Restrooms
- Amphitheater
- Basketball Courts
- Rectangle Fields
- Tennis Courts
- Splash Pads/Spraygrounds

Recommended Facilities and Access Level of Service Guidelines

		2026	2036	Need/Surplus	SVS	
		Clarkston	Level of Service	Based on Proposed LOS	Priority Ranking	Access LOS Distances
Facilities Category		Inventory	Proposed	2036		Proposed
Indoor Facilities	Recreation Center	0	17,000	-1	High	Citywide
	Indoor Pool	0	NA	0	High	*Served by Regional Partners
Outdoor Facilities	Amphitheater	1	NA	-1	High	Citywide
	Baseball/Softball Fields	1	15,000	0	Low	Citywide
	Basketball Courts	0 ¹	5,000	-2	Low	1 mile
	Community Gardens	3	4,000	0	High	0.5 mile
	Dog Parks	1	17,000	0	Medium	Citywide
	Rectangular Fields: multi-purpose (natural turf)	1	8,000	-1	Medium	Citywide
	Rectangular Fields: multi-purpose (artificial turf)	0	20,000	-1	Medium	Citywide
	Tennis Courts	1	6,000	-1	Medium	Citywide
	Pickleball Courts	4 ²	4,000	1	Medium	Citywide
	Playgrounds (5-12 year old)	1	6,000	-2	Medium	0.5 Mile
	Playgrounds:Tot-lot (2-5 year old)	0	6,000	-2	Medium	0.5 Mile
	Restrooms	2	5,000	-1	High	Citywide
	Sprayground/Splash Pad	0	25,000	-1	Medium	Citywide
	Swimming Pools	1	17,000	1	Medium	Citywide

¹One basketball court exists on the Clarkston Community Center property, currently closed to the public.
²The four existing courts in Milam Park typically used for pickleball are technically designed for youth tennis.

NATURAL AREAS/HIKING TRAILS VISION

- City of Clarkston Boundary
- City of Clarkston Parks
- DeKalb County Parks
- Railroads
- Roads
- Streams and Waterbodies
- 100-Year Flood Zone
- Natural Area Park Land
- Tree Canopy Coverage
 - >75%
 - 50 - 75%
 - 25 -50%

Vision Elements

Sites for Improved/Expanded Unpaved Hiking Paths

This plan recommends improvements and expansion of the existing hiking paths at 40 Oaks and Friendship Forest (per the Friendship Forest Master Plan)

Sites for New Unpaved Hiking Paths

This plan recommends advancing feasibility study for new hiking paths at five sites. These forested sites are all along the Clarkston Greenway alignment, and could be developed prior to the paved trail or in conjunction.



CLARKSTON



ABOVE An existing trail through Forty Oaks Nature Preserve. Maintenance is needed to address encroaching invasive plants like English ivy and privet.

BELOW A well maintained trail through a healthy native forest at the nearby Stone Mountain Park.

PRECEDENT



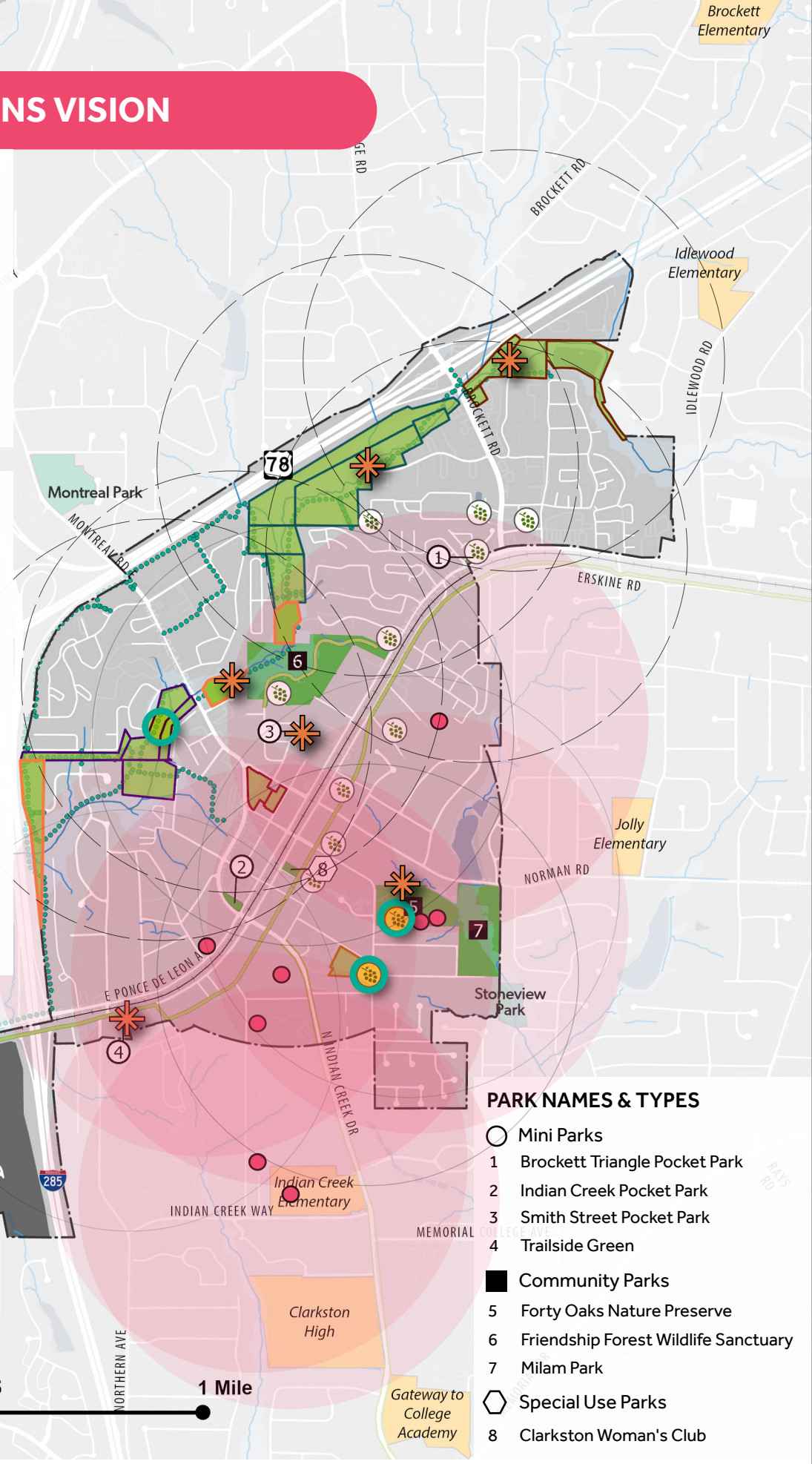
Credit: Stone Mountain Park

COMMUNITY GARDENS VISION

- City of Clarkston Boundary
- City of Clarkston Parks
- DeKalb County Parks
- Railroads
- Roads
- Streams and Waterbodies
- 100-Year Flood Zone
- Gardens (Existing)
- Gardens - 0.5 Mile Access

Vision Elements

- Proposed Garden Locations from City Agriculture Plan
The City Agriculture Plan (CAP) identified 12 potential growing locations, four of which are in existing parks.
- Recommended Garden Locations
This plan recommends the Department focus on developing growing spaces in three locations, two from the CAP and Site F.
- Proposed Sites for Food Forest
This plan recommends planting native fruit trees and shrubs at five sites to create Food Forests. Planting at sites along the Clarkston Greenway is recommended to occur in coordination with trail development, to ensure trail construction does not impact existing trees.



- PARK NAMES & TYPES**
- Mini Parks
 - 1 Brockett Triangle Pocket Park
 - 2 Indian Creek Pocket Park
 - 3 Smith Street Pocket Park
 - 4 Trailside Green
 - Community Parks
 - 5 Forty Oaks Nature Preserve
 - 6 Friendship Forest Wildlife Sanctuary
 - 7 Milam Park
 - Special Use Parks
 - 8 Clarkston Woman's Club

CLARKSTON



ABOVE The Global Growers Network garden in Forty Oaks is a thriving space that demonstrates the value of committed partners in maintaining designated community garden spaces.

BELOW The community garden at Discovery Garden Park in Norcross demonstrates how investment in permanent, high-quality facilities for community gardening can foster consistent use, and represents a potential strategy for one of the recommended garden sites in Clarkston.

PRECEDENT

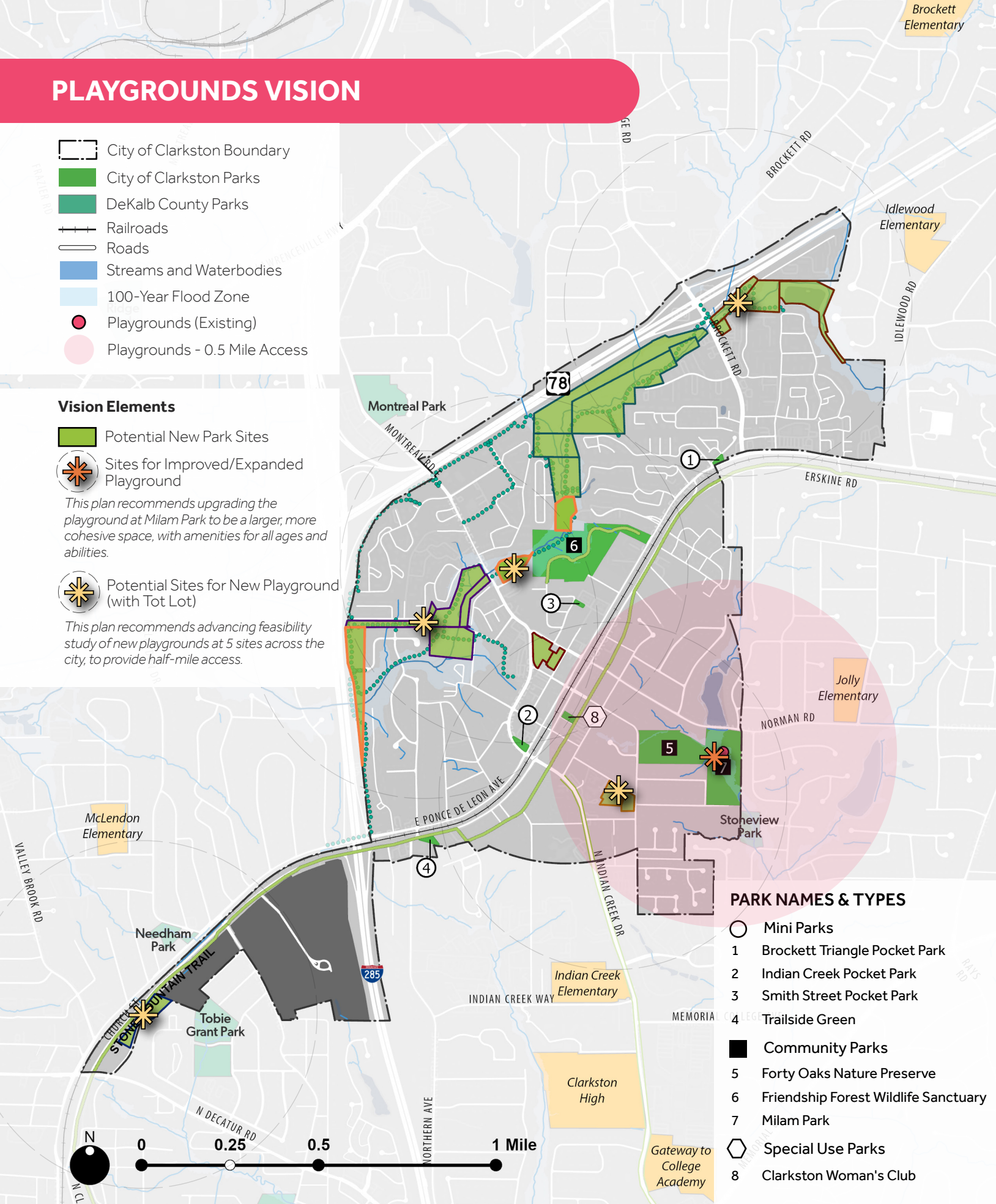


PLAYGROUNDS VISION

- City of Clarkston Boundary
- City of Clarkston Parks
- DeKalb County Parks
- Railroads
- Roads
- Streams and Waterbodies
- 100-Year Flood Zone
- Playgrounds (Existing)
- Playgrounds - 0.5 Mile Access

Vision Elements

- Potential New Park Sites
- Sites for Improved/Expanded Playground
This plan recommends upgrading the playground at Milam Park to be a larger, more cohesive space, with amenities for all ages and abilities.
- Potential Sites for New Playground (with Tot Lot)
This plan recommends advancing feasibility study of new playgrounds at 5 sites across the city, to provide half-mile access.



CLARKSTON



ABOVE The existing, well-used playground at Milam Park includes a mix of play elements in different styles which are well maintained but are scattered in multiple areas and could be upgraded to a unified space that fosters collaborative play and is personalized to reflect Clarkston's local character.

BELOW The PlayTown Suwanee playground, updated in 2023, offers separate areas for toddlers and older children, and a continuous loop design crafted for inclusivity and accessibility, fostering imaginative play for every child.

PRECEDENT



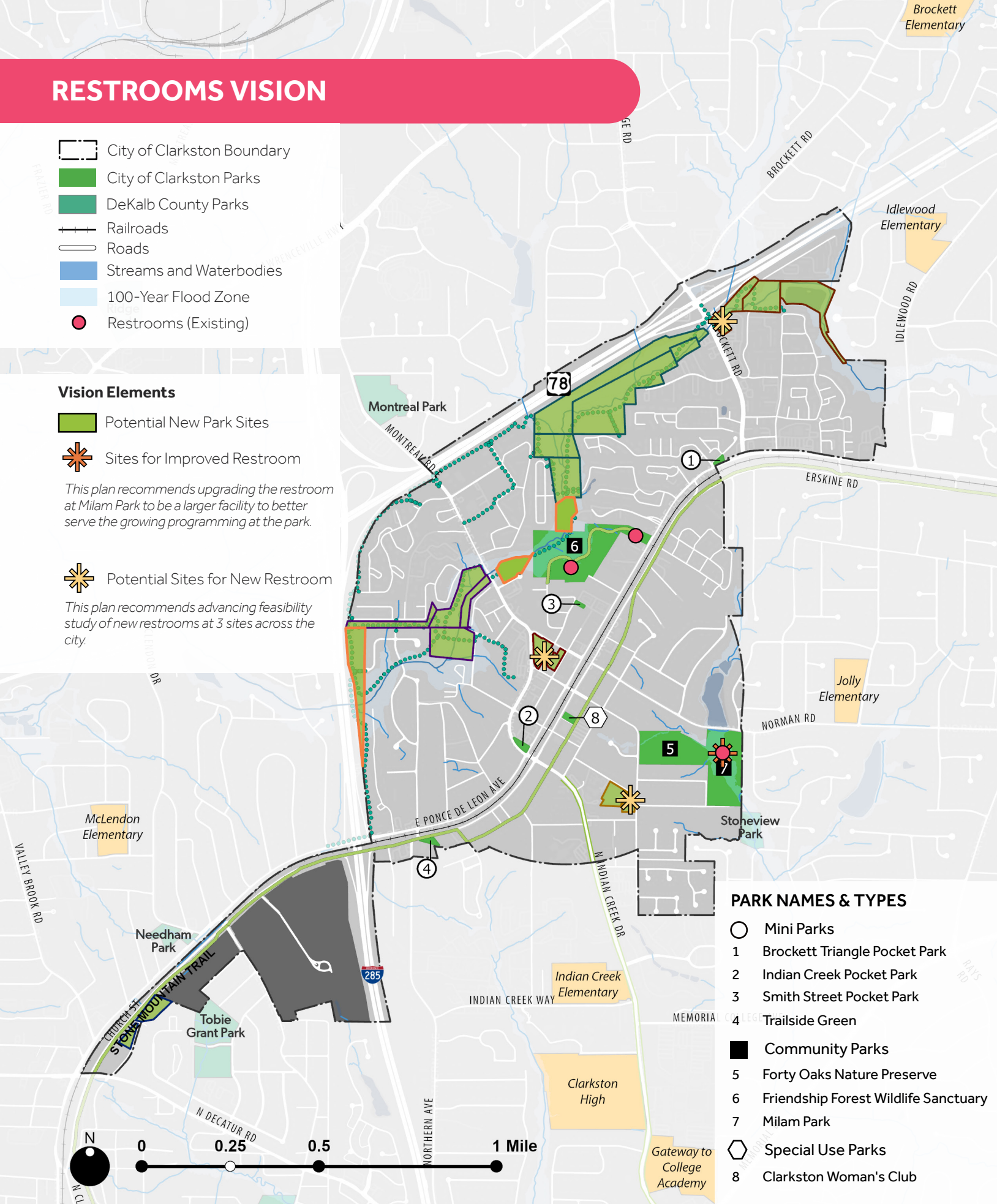
Credit: Gwinnett Daily Post

RESTROOMS VISION

- City of Clarkston Boundary
- City of Clarkston Parks
- DeKalb County Parks
- Railroads
- Roads
- Streams and Waterbodies
- 100-Year Flood Zone
- Restrooms (Existing)

Vision Elements

- Potential New Park Sites
- Sites for Improved Restroom
 - This plan recommends upgrading the restroom at Milam Park to be a larger facility to better serve the growing programming at the park.
- Potential Sites for New Restroom
 - This plan recommends advancing feasibility study of new restrooms at 3 sites across the city.



CLARKSTON



ABOVE The restroom installed at Friendship Forest in 2021 offers a high-quality standard that the City may want to establish for all future restroom projects.

BELOW New prefabricated bathrooms installed in the City of Doraville in 2024 helped save installation costs across multiple parks.

PRECEDENT



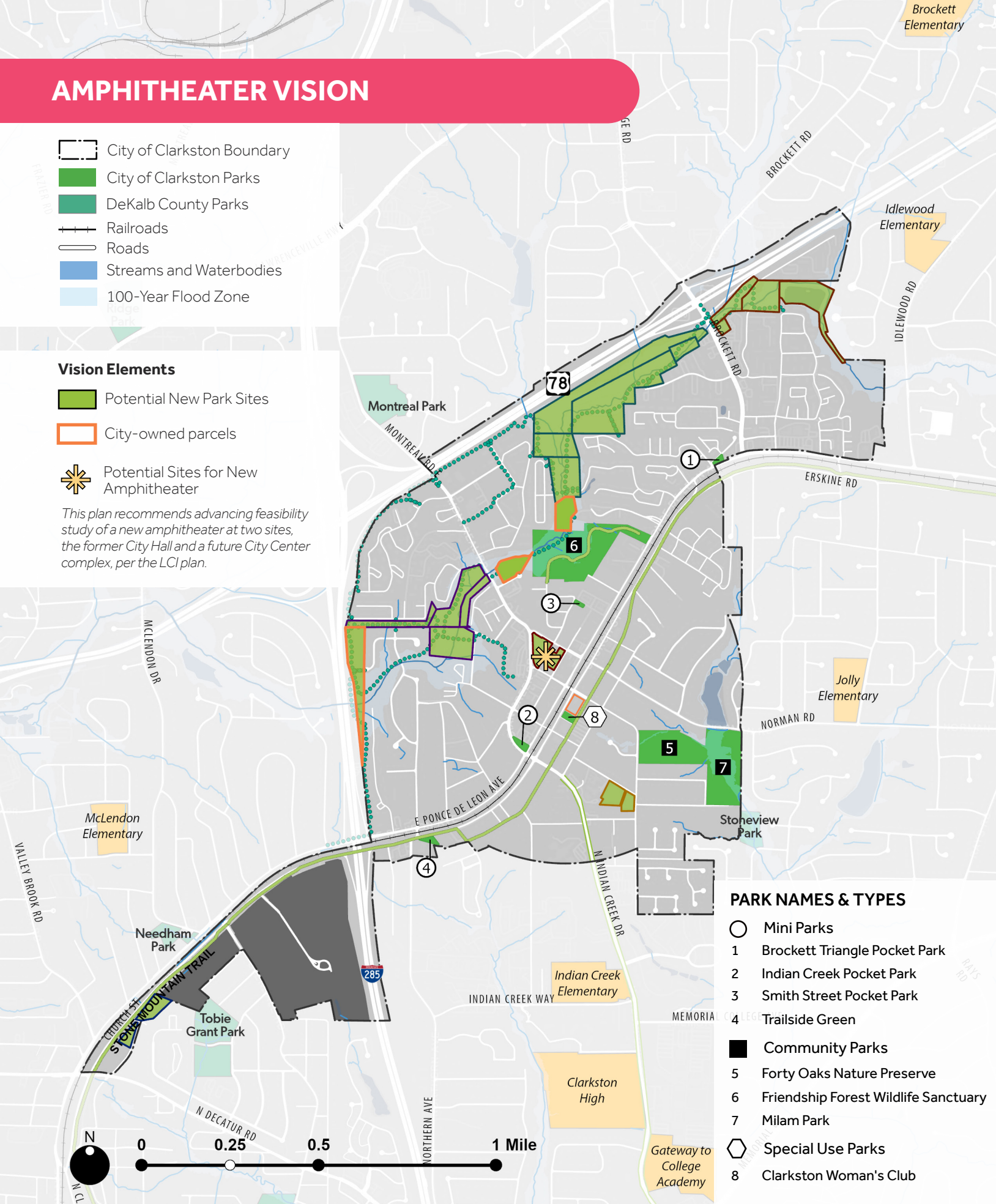
AMPHITHEATER VISION

- City of Clarkston Boundary
- City of Clarkston Parks
- DeKalb County Parks
- Railroads
- Roads
- Streams and Waterbodies
- 100-Year Flood Zone

Vision Elements

- Potential New Park Sites
- City-owned parcels
- Potential Sites for New Amphitheater

This plan recommends advancing feasibility study of a new amphitheater at two sites, the former City Hall and a future City Center complex, per the LCI plan.



- PARK NAMES & TYPES**
- Mini Parks
 - 1 Brockett Triangle Pocket Park
 - 2 Indian Creek Pocket Park
 - 3 Smith Street Pocket Park
 - Trailside Green
 - 4
 - Community Parks
 - 5 Forty Oaks Nature Preserve
 - 6 Friendship Forest Wildlife Sanctuary
 - 7 Milam Park
 - Special Use Parks
 - 8 Clarkston Woman's Club

PRECEDENT



Credit: AtlantaAreaParks

ABOVE The Hardy Family Automotive Amphitheater in Powder Springs is programmed with regular concerts throughout the summer months. The adjacent splashpad is turned off during events but serves as a popular feature during regular park use.

BELOW The new amphitheater and town green space opened in Avondale Estates in 2024 provides a good example of the scale of a stage (~1500 SF) and lawn (~0.8 acres), that could be appropriate for downtown Clarkston.

PRECEDENT



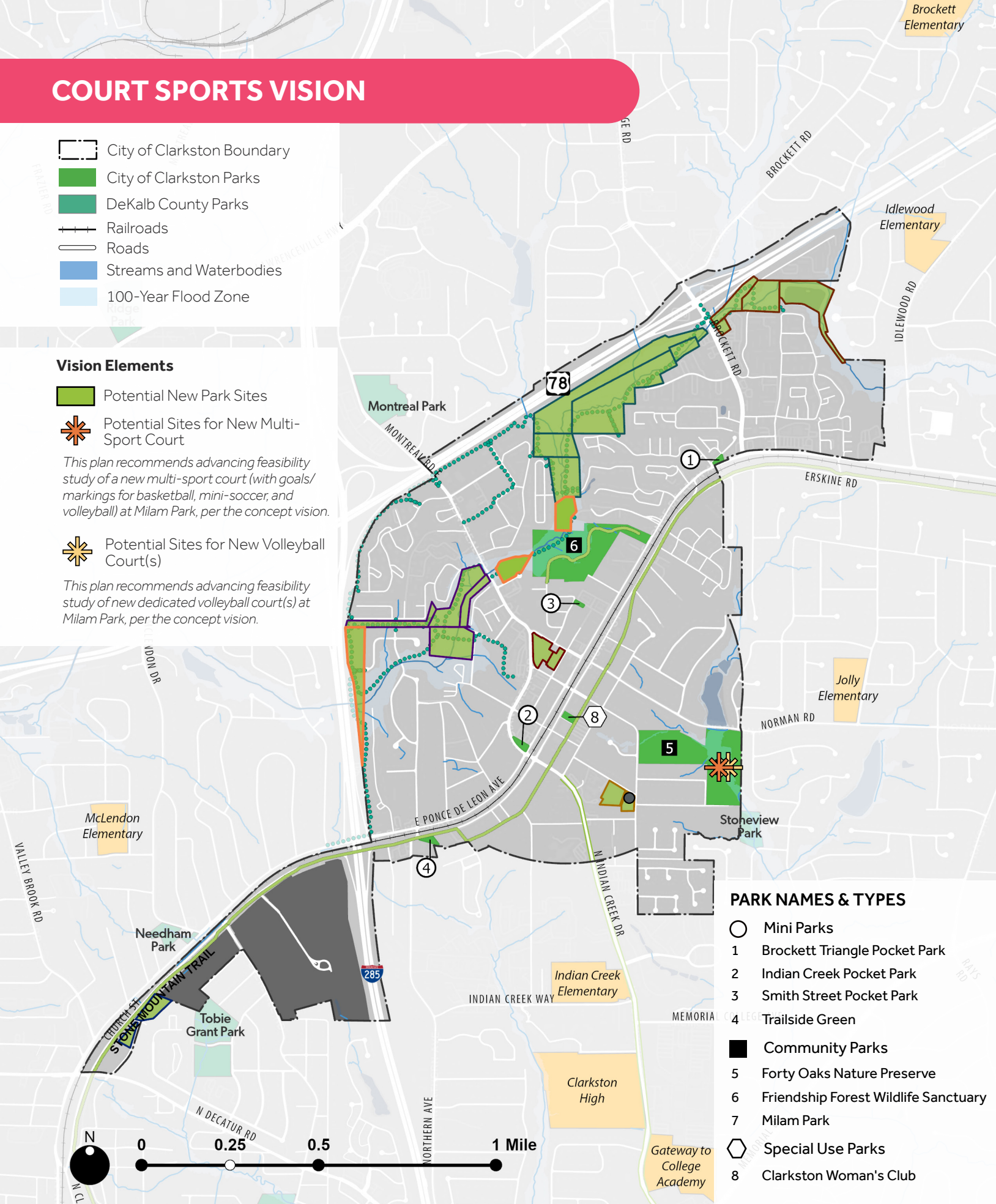
Credit: WABE

COURT SPORTS VISION

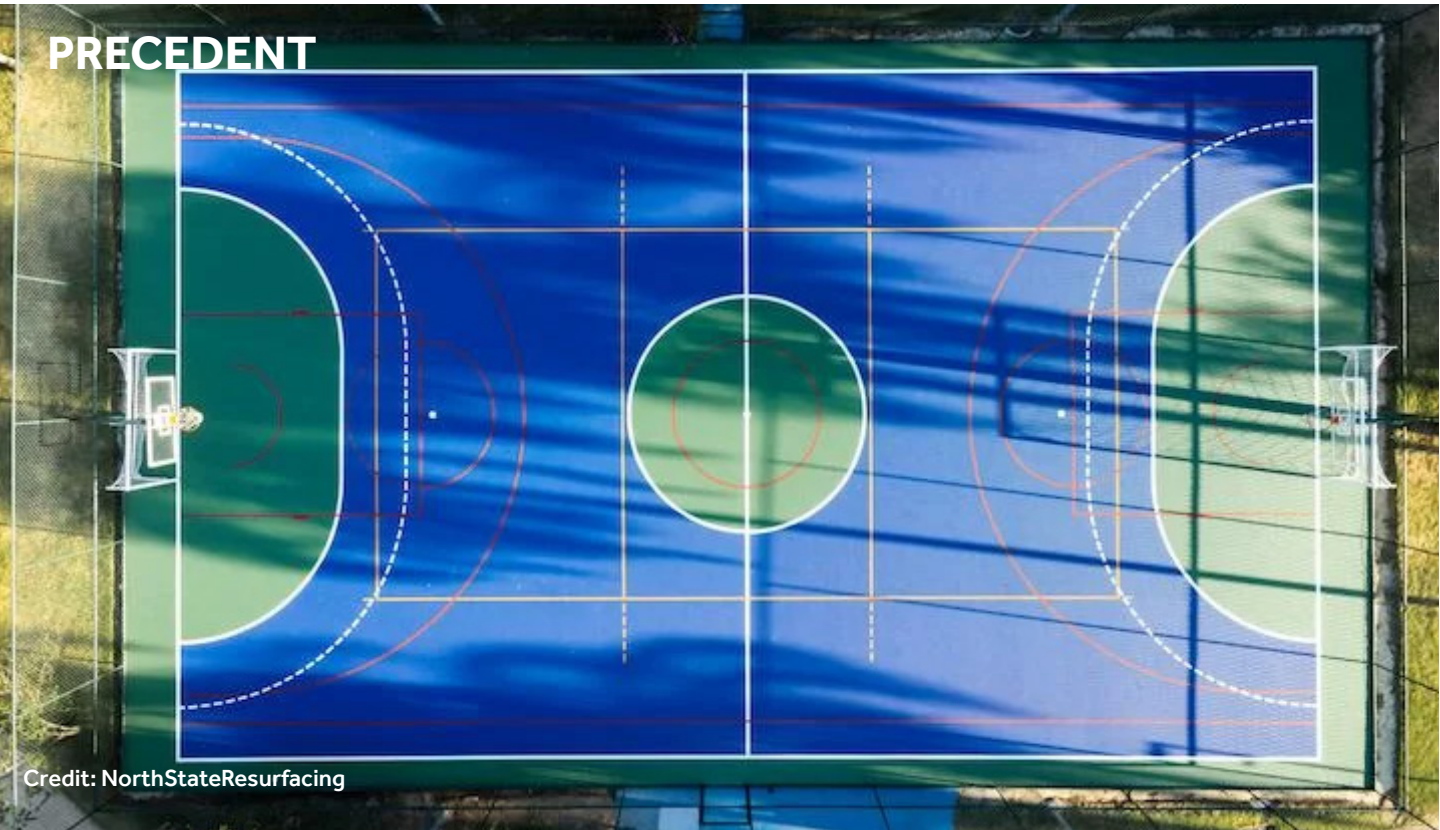
- City of Clarkston Boundary
- City of Clarkston Parks
- DeKalb County Parks
- Railroads
- Roads
- Streams and Waterbodies
- 100-Year Flood Zone

Vision Elements

- Potential New Park Sites
- Potential Sites for New Multi-Sport Court
 - This plan recommends advancing feasibility study of a new multi-sport court (with goals/markings for basketball, mini-soccer, and volleyball) at Milam Park, per the concept vision.
- Potential Sites for New Volleyball Court(s)
 - This plan recommends advancing feasibility study of new dedicated volleyball court(s) at Milam Park, per the concept vision.



PRECEDENT



Credit: NorthStateResurfacing

ABOVE This example of a multi-sport court demonstrates how the lines and goals for basketball, futsal/mini-soccer and volleyball can be shared in a single space. The basketball and futsal goals are typically permanent while the volleyball net can be rolled out on portable bases.

BELOW This multi-sport court is an example of a space designed primarily for mini-soccer use, with an artificial turf surface, while also providing basketball goals for casual practice.

PRECEDENT



Credit: KOMPAN

RECTANGLE FIELDS VISION

- City of Clarkston Boundary
- City of Clarkston Parks
- DeKalb County Parks
- Railroads
- Roads
- Streams and Waterbodies
- 100-Year Flood Zone
- Rectangle Field (Existing)

Vision Elements

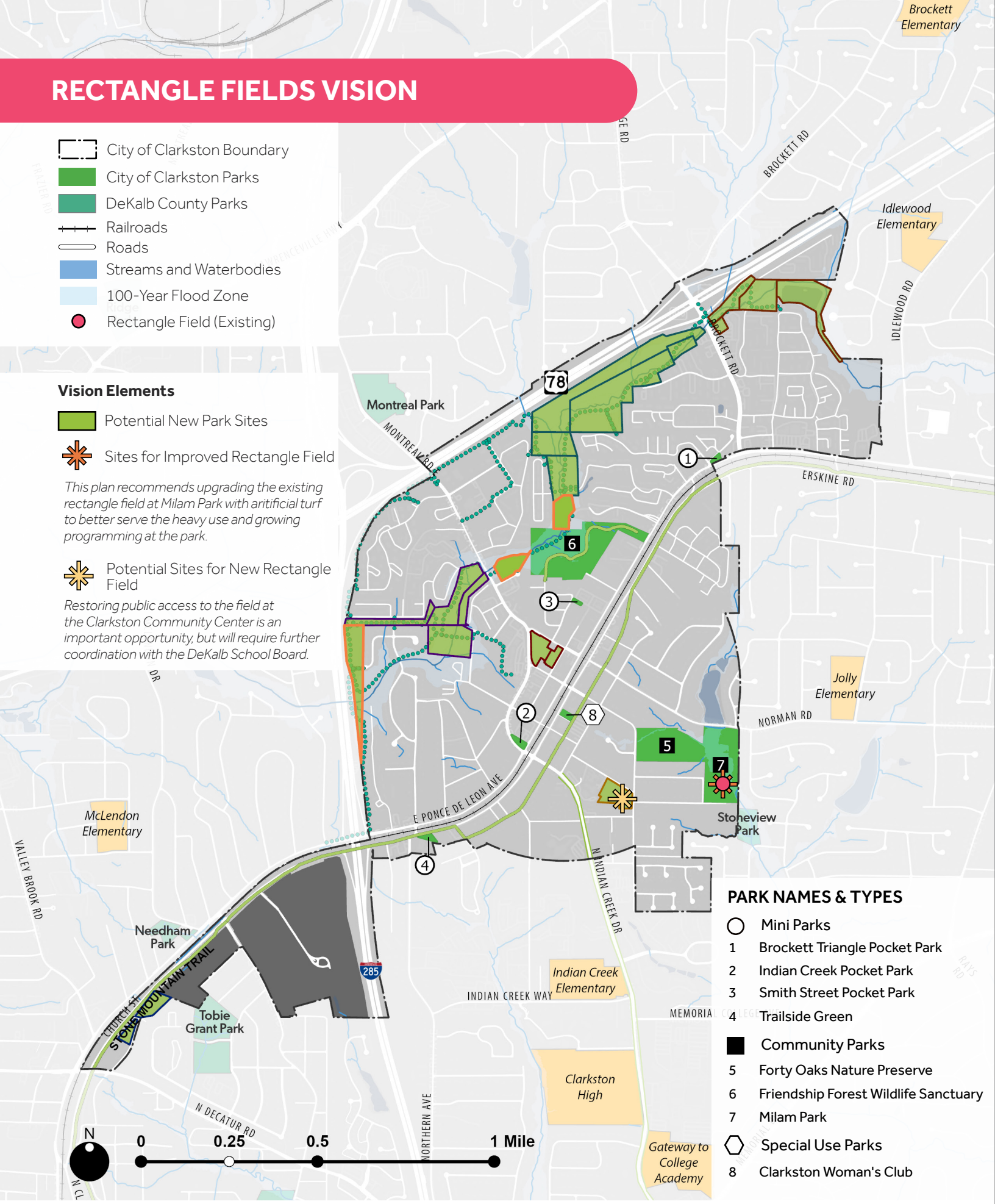
Potential New Park Sites

Sites for Improved Rectangle Field

This plan recommends upgrading the existing rectangle field at Milam Park with artificial turf to better serve the heavy use and growing programming at the park.

Potential Sites for New Rectangle Field

Restoring public access to the field at the Clarkston Community Center is an important opportunity, but will require further coordination with the DeKalb School Board.



CLARKSTON



ABOVE The existing rectangle field at Milam Park has suffered due to heavy use from regular pickup soccer and league use, as well as volleyball, cricket, football, and more. As Clarkston grows its recreational leagues, artificial turf is the option best suited to balancing consistent daily use with maintenance and budget constraints.

BELOW The City of Decatur recently converted its Ebster Park multi-purpose rectangle field to artificial turf. The field has a similar demand from multiple sports and age groups as Milam Park.

PRECEDENT



Credit: Decaturish/Dean Hesse

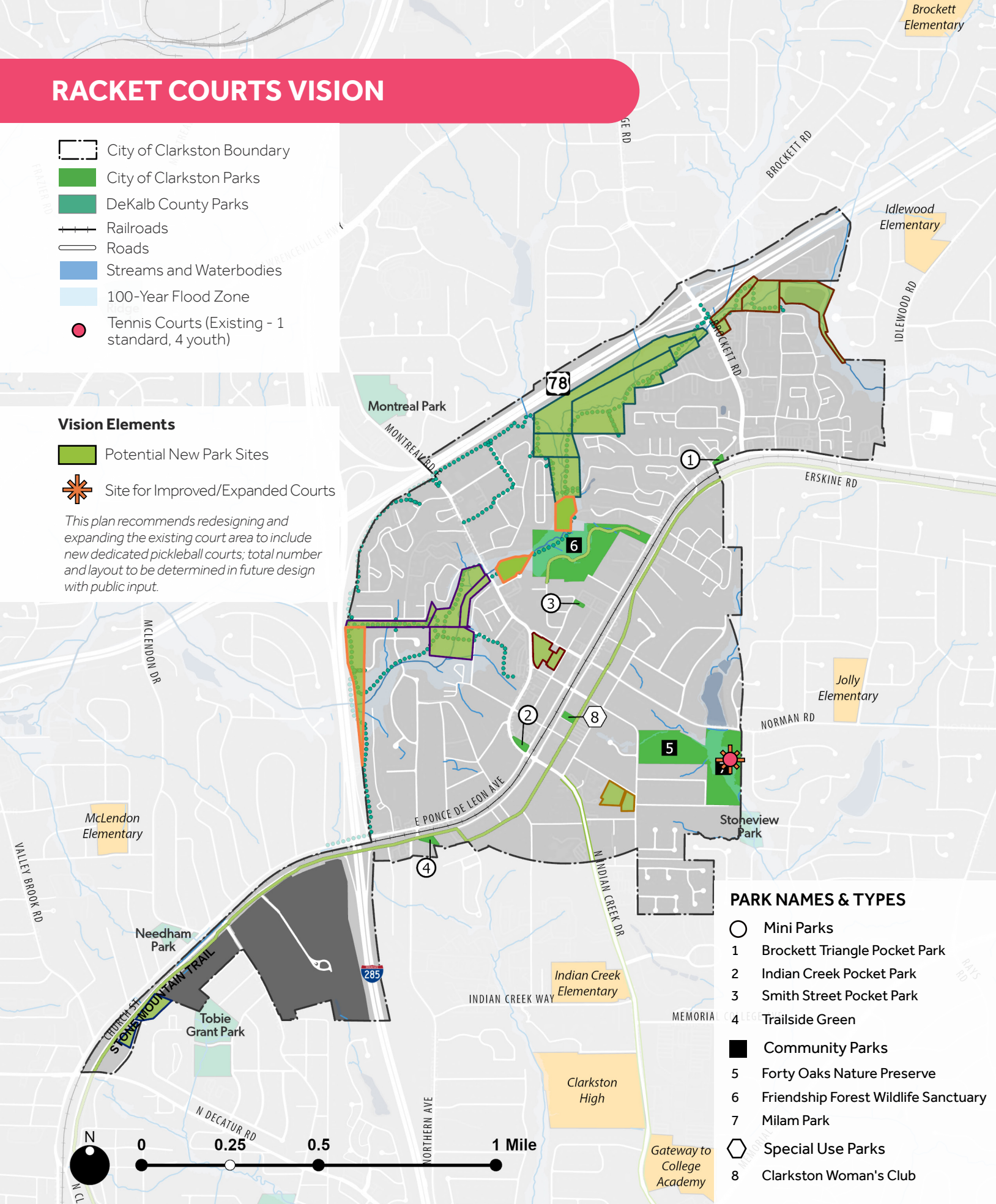
RACKET COURTS VISION

- City of Clarkston Boundary
- City of Clarkston Parks
- DeKalb County Parks
- Railroads
- Roads
- Streams and Waterbodies
- 100-Year Flood Zone
- Tennis Courts (Existing - 1 standard, 4 youth)

Vision Elements

- Potential New Park Sites
- Site for Improved/Expanded Courts

This plan recommends redesigning and expanding the existing court area to include new dedicated pickleball courts; total number and layout to be determined in future design with public input.



ABOVE The four existing youth tennis courts at Milam Park are regularly used for other sports, like these children playing volleyball, and pickleball, despite the courts not having the correct markings for pickleball. Converting them to pickleball was desired in public feedback.

BELOW In addition to providing new dedicated pickleball courts, the potential to add pickleball lines to the tennis court could provide 2-4 more pickleball courts.



PRECEDENT

Credit: RestonNow

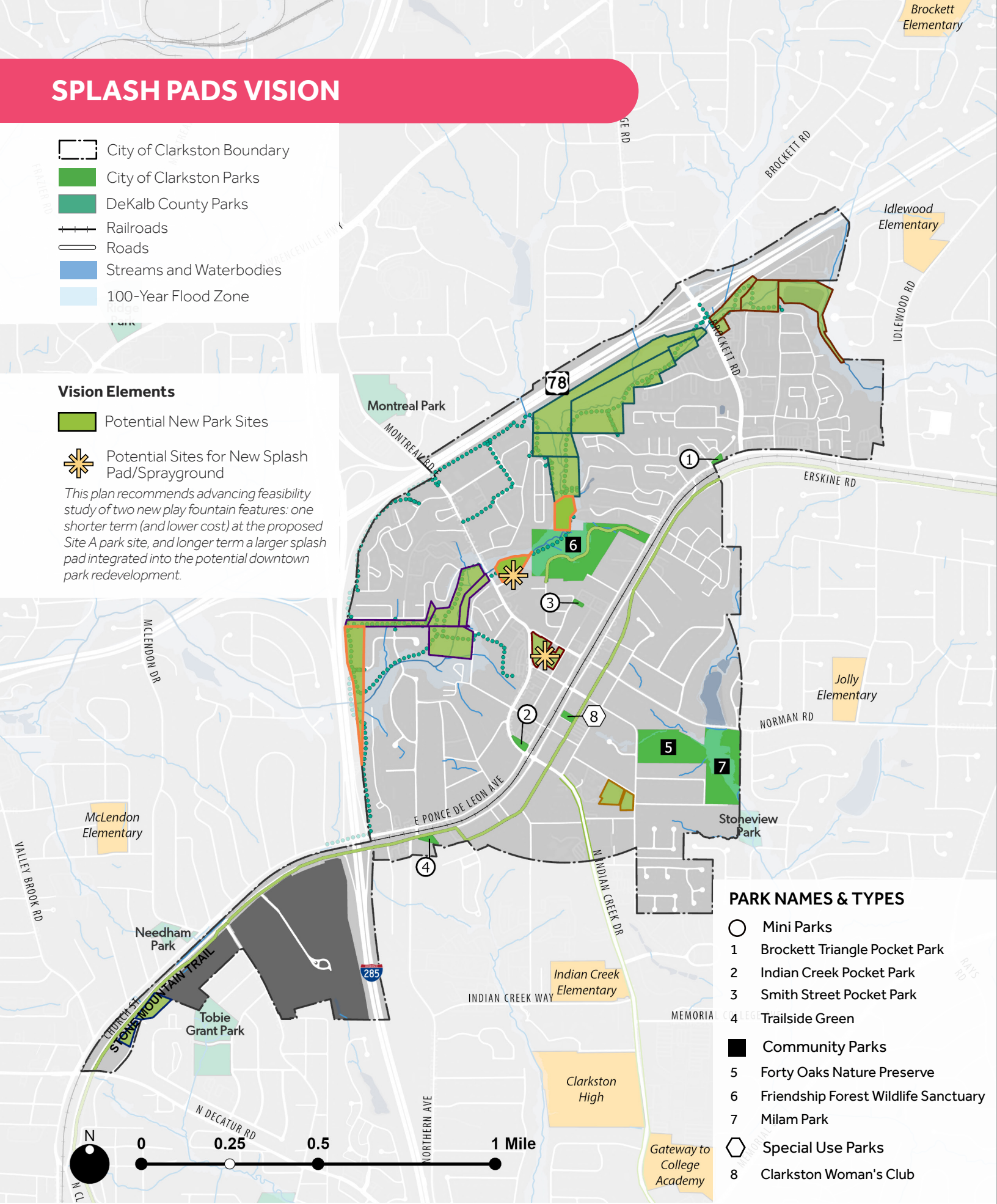
SPLASH PADS VISION

- City of Clarkston Boundary
- City of Clarkston Parks
- DeKalb County Parks
- Railroads
- Roads
- Streams and Waterbodies
- 100-Year Flood Zone

Vision Elements

- Potential New Park Sites
- Potential Sites for New Splash Pad/Sprayground

This plan recommends advancing feasibility study of two new play fountain features: one shorter term (and lower cost) at the proposed Site A park site, and longer term a larger splash pad integrated into the potential downtown park redevelopment.



PRECEDENT



Credit: stlparent.com

ABOVE A small splashpad could be developed as part of the proposed Site A greenspace (on Montreal Creek Court). In keeping with the park's natural area focus, the play area could incorporate natural materials, as shown in this example.

BELOW This misting fountain demonstrates a lower cost option for water play that could be implemented at Site A. The misters provide an exciting play element for children while also offering critical cooling to adults during increasingly hot summer months.

PRECEDENT



Credit: CarolinaParksandPlays

PROGRAMS

Objective 4.3: Develop new programming to serve resident priorities.

- » **Action 4.3.1 – Establish foundational programming and ensure residents have access to basic recreation opportunities.**

To guide the development of a sustainable and well-balanced recreation system, the Department has identified a set of Core Program Areas. These provide a clear framework for organizing programs around community needs, ensuring offerings are aligned and scalable.

Rather than building a wide range of programs all at once, the Department should begin with a targeted set of core programs within each area—those that are high-impact, visible, and feasible with current resources.

To ensure sustainable growth, programming expansion should occur in phases:

Phase 1 (0–2 Years): Build Momentum

This stage emphasizes visibility, participation growth, and operational readiness. Address awareness gaps, as survey respondents indicated they are unaware of current offerings.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Future programming in Clarkston should:

- *Reflect the City's cultural diversity and promote inclusive participation.*
- *Expand access to health, wellness, and water safety opportunities.*
- *Serve residents across all age groups with balanced offerings.*
- *Build awareness and visibility through consistent communication.*
- *Grow in alignment with staffing capacity and future facility investments.*

PROPOSED CORE PROGRAM AREAS - PHASE 1 STRATEGIES

COMMUNITY & CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT

Community special events received the highest program priority ratings in the statistically valid survey. In the near term, the Department should:

- Launch small-scale, high-visibility events (movies in the park, pop-up cultural celebrations)
- Leverage existing community gatherings (backpack drives, festivals) to introduce recreation presence

HEALTH, WELLNESS & AQUATICS

Strong survey support for recreation's role in physical and mental well-being, and for health and aquatics as central service priorities, including learn-to-swim opportunities and indoor aquatic facilities.

Given these findings, the Department should:

- Introduce basic fitness classes (walking clubs, outdoor fitness)
- Partner for introductory swim lessons and water safety programs

YOUTH & TEEN DEVELOPMENT

While youth athletics have begun with the introduction of soccer, survey data indicate broader interest in youth and teen programming. Staff conversations reinforced the desire to expand afterschool, summer, and teen-focused offerings.

In the near term, The Department should:

- Expand beyond soccer into foundational youth leagues (basketball, flag football, T-ball)
- Pilot afterschool-style activities using available space (e.g., former council chambers)

NATURE & OUTDOOR RECREATION

Natural areas and trails received some of the highest priority investment ratings among facility / amenity types. Clarkston's existing outdoor assets provide an opportunity to deliver accessible, low-cost programming that promotes wellness and environmental appreciation.

Given these findings, the Department should:

- Activate parks with simple programming (guided walks, family play days)
- Introduce low-cost, drop-in outdoor activities

- » **Action 4.3.2 – Gradually expand programming through clearly defined focus areas that respond to community demand and reflect operational realities.**

Phase 2 (2–6 Years): Expand & Formalize

As participation grows and capacity increases, programs can expand in both depth and variety. Introduce structured afterschool programming, expanded adult wellness offerings, and consistent multi-generational activities. Over time, this may include additional focus areas such as summer camps, senior programming, and expanded youth sports. Continue planning for indoor recreation and aquatics facilities.

PROPOSED CORE PROGRAM AREAS - PHASE 2 STRATEGIES

COMMUNITY & CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT

- Host (or co-host) multicultural festivals and community storytelling events
- Co-create events with community groups representing different cultures
- Establish an annual event calendar with consistent branding
- Improve event communication (email, signage, multilingual materials)

HEALTH, WELLNESS & AQUATICS

- Offer group-based wellness programs (family fitness nights, culturally relevant fitness classes)
- Provide multilingual swim instruction and outreach
- Standardize program offerings and schedules
- Expand partnerships to ensure reliable aquatics access

YOUTH & TEEN DEVELOPMENT

- Create inclusive youth programming that intentionally mixes schools, neighborhoods, and backgrounds
- Launch teen nights, open gyms, and safe social spaces
- Formalize leagues, schedules, and program pathways (rec > development > advanced)
- Introduce program quality standards and staff training

NATURE & OUTDOOR RECREATION

- Develop recurring programs (weekly walks, seasonal outdoor series)
- Community gardening programs reflecting cultural food traditions
- Nature programs designed for multi-generational participation
- Expand trail-based and passive recreation programming

THIRD-PARTY OPERATORS & CONTRACT PROGRAMMING

In addition to City-led programming, services may be delivered through qualified third-party operators on a contractual basis. This model allows The Department to:

- *Introduce specialized programming without immediately increasing full-time staffing.*
- *Test new program types before long-term investment.*
- *Leverage subject-matter expertise in areas such as fitness instruction, arts education, language classes, or sports training.*
- *Reduce operational risk while maintaining quality standards through clear performance expectations and oversight.*

» **Action 4.3.3 – Ensure long-term viability and system maturity as the system becomes self-reinforcing instead of staff-dependent.**

Phase 3 (7+ Years): Infrastructure Alignment

As the long-range vision for indoor and aquatic facilities becomes more clear, expand year-round programming capacity, league offerings, and comprehensive recreation services based on expected facilities.

PROPOSED CORE PROGRAM AREAS - PHASE 3

COMMUNITY & CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT

- Establish signature events that define Clarkston's identity
- Build long-term sponsorships and community partnerships
- Introduce arts, cultural classes, and community-led programming

HEALTH, WELLNESS & AQUATICS

- Add specialized fitness (yoga, dance, senior wellness, adaptive programs)
- Expand swim programs and explore indoor aquatics development
- Operate year-round wellness and aquatics programming aligned with facility development
- Balance cost recovery with access

YOUTH & TEEN DEVELOPMENT

- Launch full afterschool and summer camp programs
- Expand teen programming (leadership, workforce readiness, enrichment)
- Maintain full program pipelines across all age groups
- Evaluate transitioning key programs from contracted to in-house delivery

NATURE & OUTDOOR RECREATION

- Add environmental education, conservation programs, and outdoor recreation series
- Expand trail-based and passive recreation programming
- Integrate programming with long-term park and trail development
- Position outdoor recreation as a core part of community identity

INDOOR CENTER

Objective 4.4: Pursue increased access to indoor recreation center space.

» **Action 4.4.1 – Continue to explore options for the use of partner indoor recreation centers.**

Collaborate with partners such as DeKalb County, DeKalb County School Board, and others to use existing indoor space for programming. Given the significant cost of building and maintaining a new facility to serve the City of Clarkston, and with the potential for future annexations to incorporate existing facilities within city limits, the opportunity to partner on the use of existing facilities near Clarkston is the most cost-effective option.

Complete an Indoor Center Feasibility Study to identify specific programming, activities, and indoor center needs and potential partners; potential mixed uses, costs, and funding strategies.

» **Action 4.4.2 – Continue to explore options for the long-range development of an indoor recreation center.**

Ensure major redevelopment projects in Clarkston are aligned with long-range planning goals to provide a dedicated recreation center for Clarkston residents. See the strategies outlined on the following pages.

PROTOTYPICAL INDOOR RECREATION CENTER

The included image illustrates a prototypical Indoor Center Space Plan that could be used as a starting point for planing and design purposes.

Size:

Generally 20,000 to 40,000 square feet (average 30,000 sq. ft.)

Location + Context:

Residential and Mixed-Use Areas

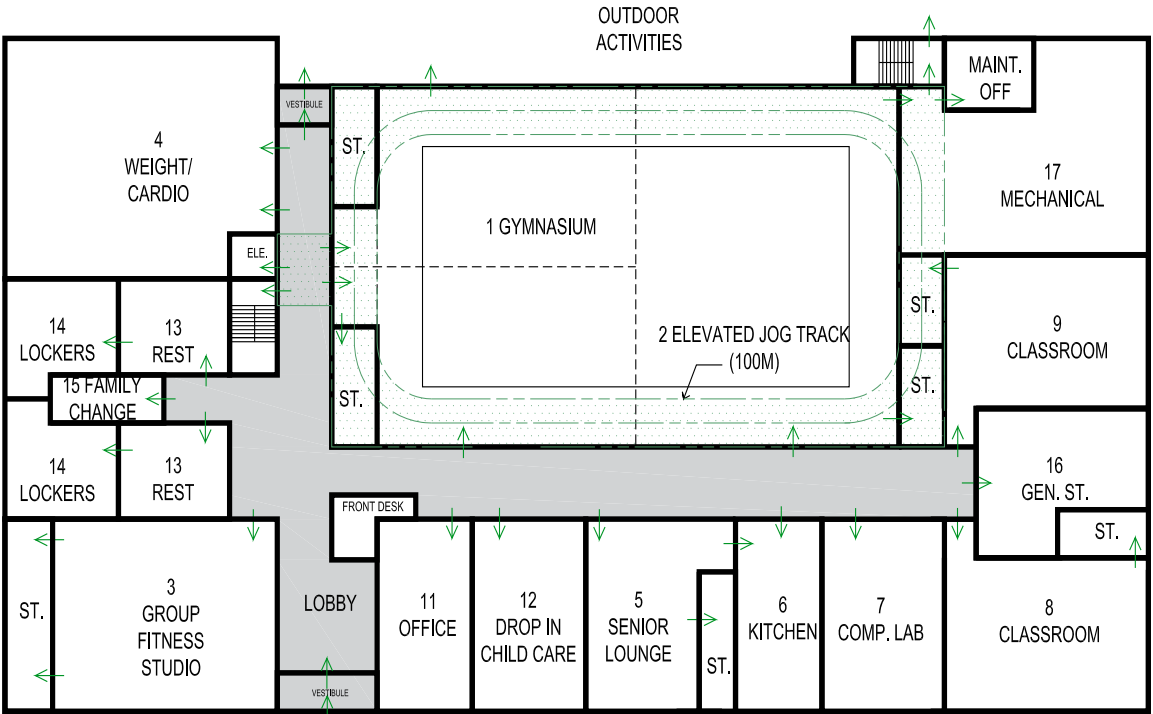
Access Level of Service:

2 Miles-Urban
3 Miles-Suburban

Function:

Indoor Centers are multi-purpose buildings that serve a broad range of ages, needs, and uses

and provide critical social services to the community. Indoor Centers often play a significant role in youth development providing childcare and after-school opportunities and spaces such as computer labs, maker spaces, Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics (STEAM) programs. They also may serve senior populations with specific programming and spaces senior lounges, card rooms, billiards, and meeting rooms. The buildings should also include sustainability best practices, including the incorporation of bird-friendly design standards to minimize operational costs as well as bird fatalities.



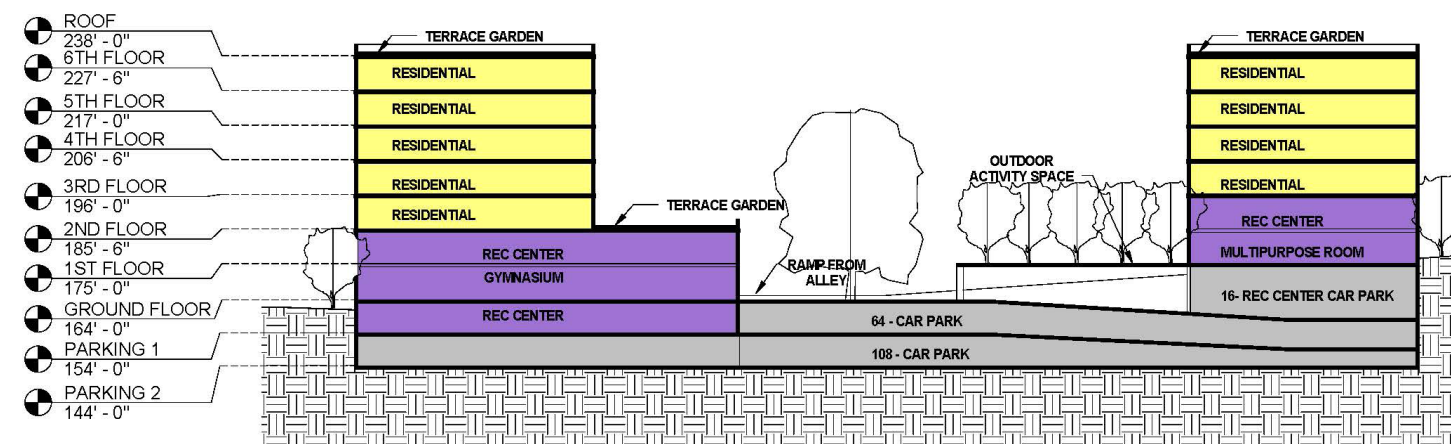
INDOOR CENTER STRATEGY

The Potential to Integrate Indoor Recreation with Affordable Housing or Other Civic Uses

The objective of developing of an indoor recreation center to serve Clarkston's residents is a major opportunity, but one that is costly to implement, and complicated and expensive to manage long-term. One strategy that the City could pursue to help with funding and long-term operations is to integrate the indoor center into an affordable housing complex, or other civic use like the new city hall. By combining multiple uses in a single site and structure, there are potential cost savings versus building a standalone recreation center on a dedicated site. Additionally, by integrating recreation with housing or office uses, recreation users are being "built in" to the facility, helping to ensure it is an activated and safe, thriving space.

BELOW

This concept example demonstrates how an indoor recreation center could be integrated into an affordable housing complex. The gym and other rec center rooms occupy the first two floors above ground with 4-5 stories of residential above the recreation spaces.



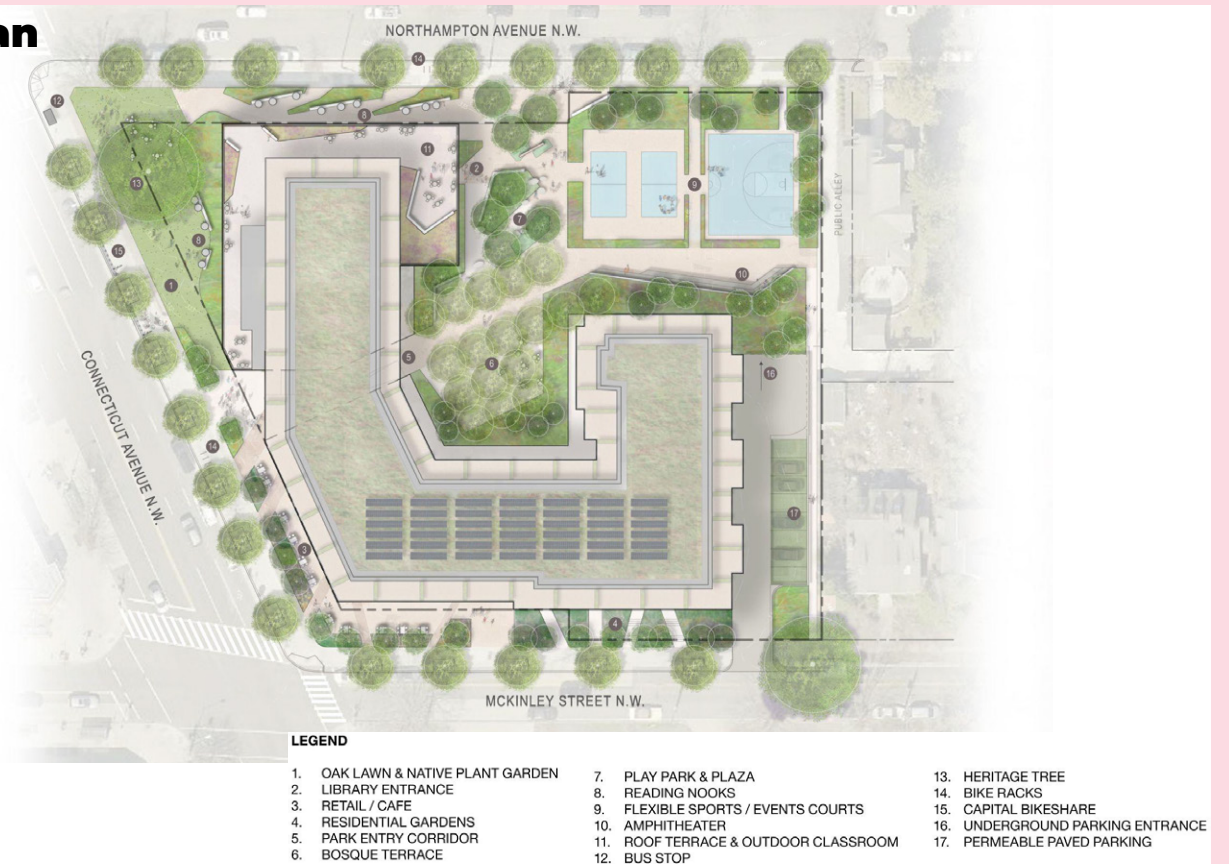
INDOOR CENTER STRATEGY

The Power of Public Private Partnerships

Public Private Partnerships (aka PPP or P3) have become a powerful tool for large-scale infrastructure development due to their ability to leverage multiple resources and funding sources, thereby reducing the risk and cost to any one party. In Transit Oriented Developments, for example, the transit agency that owns the land is often able to provide a discount on their lease of land to a developer, in exchange for the developer providing a larger portion of affordable housing and amenities within the development.

This development under construction in Washington, DC provides an example of a site with multiple civic uses combined with housing.

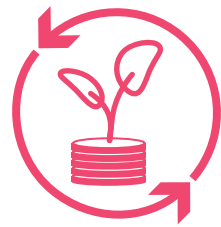
Site Plan



Credit: DC.gov



Project Elements	Size
Community Center	21,600 SF
Public Library	23,500 SF
Housing Units - Total	177
<i>Market Rate</i>	123
<i>Affordable at 30% AMI</i>	27
<i>Affordable at 50% AMI</i>	27
Retail	8,000 SF



GOAL 5 SUSTAIN the system through comprehensive strategies for funding, management, and maintenance.

FUNDING

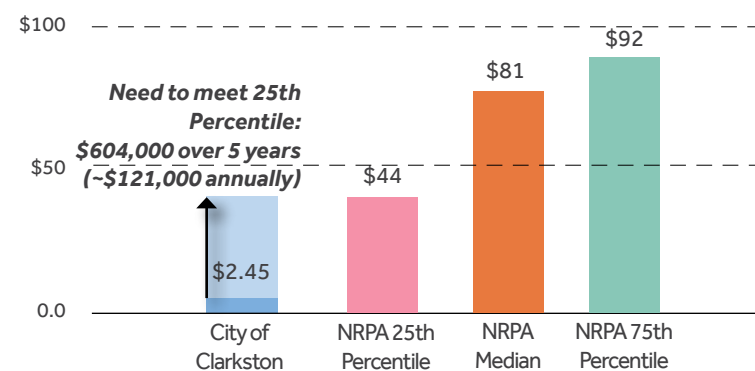
Objective 5.1: Explore all possible strategies to increase funding for parks and recreation capital projects.

» Action 5.1.1. Pursue the growth of dedicated capital funding sources and explore all alternative capital sources.

Continue to coordinate with the finance department and elected officials to increase funding from the General Fund, Special Purpose Local Options Sales Tax (SPLOST), and other sources for capital improvements, with the goal of reaching the 25th percentile for comparable agencies.

Explore alternative funding sources including grants, Public-Private-Partnerships (PPP), sponsorships, and others.

Capital Projects Spending Per Capita (5-year average)



FEEDBACK → RESPONSE

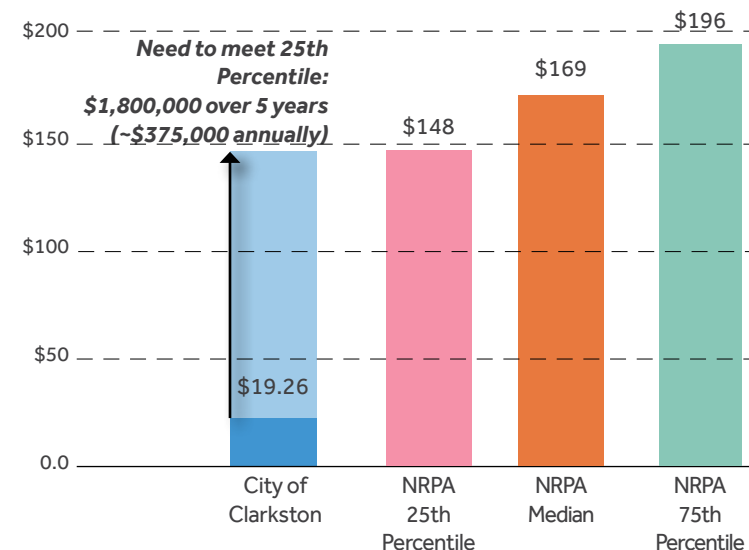
Residents expressed a willingness to pay additional taxes to fund dedicated parks and recreation improvements. A majority of responses across all public input indicated support for up to \$6 per month in additional taxes.

Objective 5.2: Explore all possible strategies to increase funding for parks and recreation operations.

» Action 5.2.1. Pursue the growth of dedicated operations funding sources and explore alternative operations funding sources.

Continue to coordinate with the finance department and elected officials to increase funding allocation for operations to at least match the 25th percentile national benchmark for agencies similar to Clarkston.

Operations and Maintenance Spending Per Capita (5-year average)



Objective 5.3: Develop a Cost Recovery Philosophy.

» Action 5.3.1. Pursue a tiered cost recovery approach based on program purpose.

Programs should be developed with an understanding that not all offerings will generate the same level of cost recovery. A balanced portfolio combining community-benefit programs with revenue-generating activities will support both access and financial responsibility.

- Youth development and water safety programs should prioritize accessibility and community benefit, recognizing their long-term social and health value.
- Community events and cultural programs may require partial subsidy to ensure broad participation and community-building impact.
- Adult fitness, leagues, and specialized instructional programs can target higher cost recovery levels, particularly where market demand supports fee-based participation.
- Contracted or third-party programs may operate under revenue-sharing agreements, reducing direct City risk while generating supplemental revenue.

» Action 5.3.2: Pursue diversified revenue streams

Ensure there is an appropriate pricing model to balance access with financial sustainability, through each of the following revenue streams:

- Program registration fees
- Facility rentals and field use fees
- Sponsorships and event partnerships
- Grants and external funding opportunities
- Revenue-sharing agreements with contracted providers

» Action 5.3.2: Balance Affordability with Sustainability

A clear and intentional pricing philosophy is critical to balancing access with financial sustainability. The Department should adopt an "80% / 20%" pricing strategy, where:

- Program fees are set at levels that are affordable to approximately 80% of the community, based on local income characteristics.
- The remaining 20% of residents are supported through targeted scholarship and fee assistance programs.

MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

Objective 5.4: Foster strategic partnerships.

- » *Action 5.4.1 – Strengthen coordination and partnership with DeKalb County Parks and Recreation.*
- Improve relationship with the county to pursue opportunities like partnership programming on swim lessons and water safety programs, and joint-use agreements for shared facility access, such as at Tobie Grant Recreation Center.
- » *Action 5.4.2 – Pursue new strategic partnerships with non-profit partner organizations such as Park Pride, Trees Atlanta, the Trust for Public Land, and others.*
- Seek to develop relationships with the non-profit parks and recreation community in greater Atlanta and reap the many benefits available from strong partnerships.

Objective 5.5: Promote recreation workforce development through programming.

- » *Action 5.5.1 – Develop Program-to-Work Pipelines*
- Create intentional pathways where participants transition into employment roles:
- Swim lesson participants and swim team members progressing into lifeguard certification and employment
 - Summer camp participants transitioning into camp counselors or program aides
 - Youth sports participants advancing into junior coaches or officials
- » *Action 5.5.2 – Develop Teen Workforce Development Programs*
- Establish a structured teen program focused on:
- Job readiness and soft skill development
 - Resume building and interview preparation
 - Leadership development and peer mentoring
 - Exposure to careers in parks, recreation, and related fields
- » *Action 5.5.3 – Offer Certifications & Skill Building*
- Provide access to industry-recognized certifications that support both program delivery and employability:
- Lifeguarding and water safety instruction
 - Coaching and officiating certifications
 - First Aid/CPR and other foundational credentials
- » *Action 5.5.4 – Foster Partnership-Based Opportunities*
- Collaborate with schools, nonprofits, and workforce agencies to:
- Align programming with career pathways
 - Offer internships or volunteer-to-paid transition opportunities
 - Connect participants to broader employment resources

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4.4 THE INTEGRATED VISION

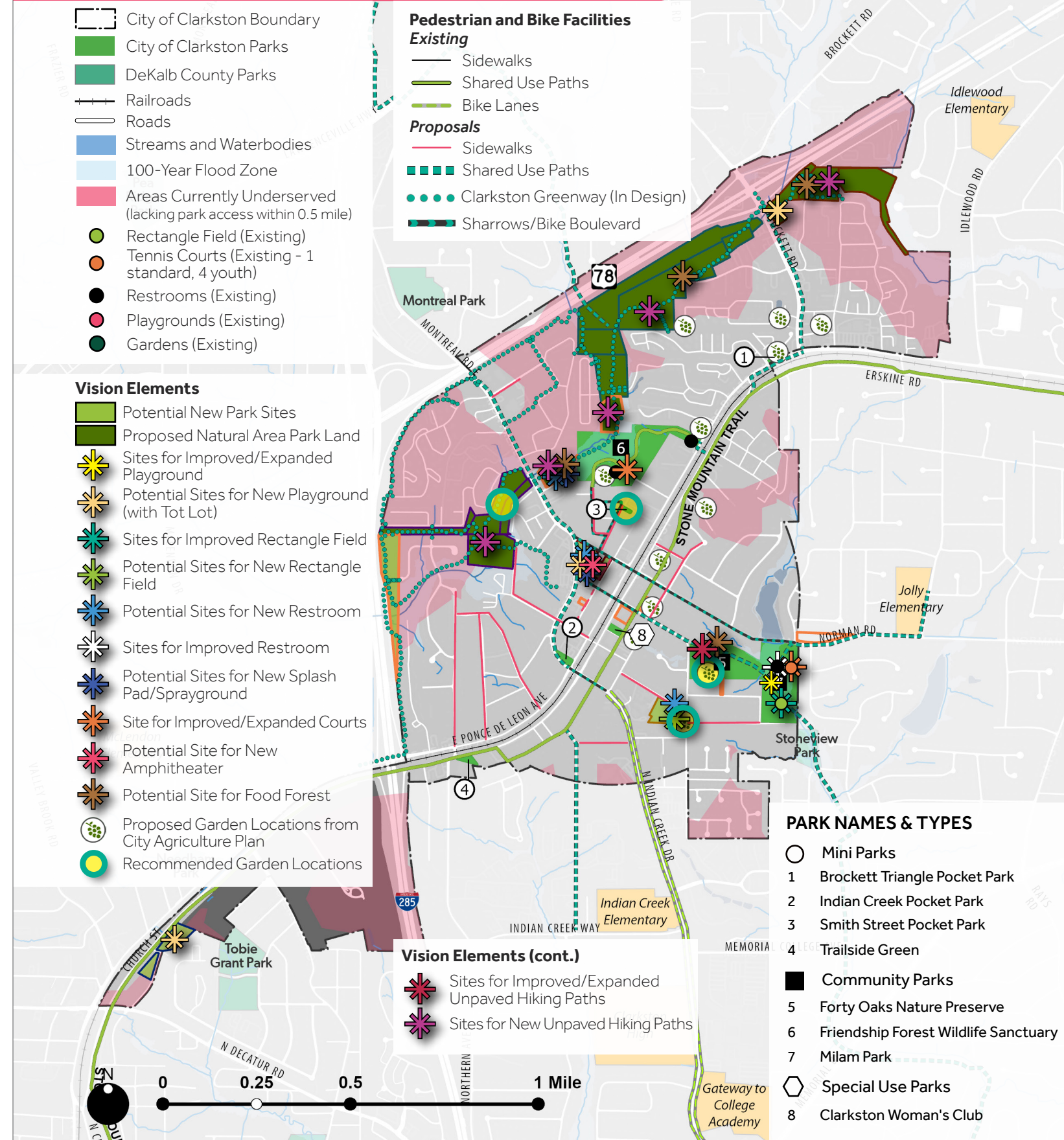
This Vision is about providing meaningful and equitable benefits for all residents of Clarkston, through comprehensive improvements to the parks and recreation system. Its implementation will lead to beautiful parks within a short walk from everyone's home. It will mean a variety of recreation and parks facilities across the city; natural areas for residents to immerse themselves in nature; and a variety of spaces designed to support dynamic programming. Most importantly, it is a commitment to a high quality of life for all Clarkstonians.

The goals, objectives, and actions, along with the proposed visions presented in this plan can each stand alone, but they are even more powerful when they are addressed as an integrated whole. The map on the next page demonstrates what the city's fully realized Vision would look like as an interconnected network. It stitches together the various recreation and park resources to achieve a better functioning system and, ultimately, to strengthen communities throughout the city.

With this Vision, Clarkston is poised to create a vibrant, innovative, healthy, and connected community by harnessing the "power of parks."



INTEGRATED VISION



5

IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1 INTRODUCTION TO IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY
- 5.2 FUNDING THE PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN
- 5.3 CAPITAL PROJECTS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
- 5.4 STAFF ACTIONS + STEPS



CHAPTER 5 IMPLEMENTATION INTRODUCTION

Taking the Vision from Concepts
to Reality

The vision presented in Chapter 4 was a comprehensive program to improve every aspect of the parks system. Fully developing the recommendations is expected to require tens of millions of dollars and may take 10 or more years to fully realize.

Due to the challenges of a limited budget and staff resources, the implementation of the complete vision for the Clarkston parks system should be pursued in gradual phases.

The purpose of this chapter is to outline a strategy for implementation that provides the most benefit with available resources, building momentum and buy-in to support future phases of implementation, all while conforming to available funding.

This Implementation Strategy is comprised of four interrelated parts:

1. FUNDING OPTIONS

The projected capacity to pay for capital projects and staffing needs.

2. CAPITAL PROJECTS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Prioritization and phasing strategy to inform how capital improvement projects could be implemented over the next 10-years and beyond.

3. ACTIONS + STEPS

The steps that Department staff are recommended to take to implement the capital projects and successfully provide programs and services.

FUNDING OPTIONS

The ability to successfully implement the Vision is directly linked to the amount of funding that will be available over the next 10 years.

The complete Vision would likely cost more than \$25 Million to implement. The Consultant Team met with staff to discuss realistic funding strategies for the implementation of the Vision.

These options consider order of magnitude estimates for public funding sources, grants, and potential philanthropic contribution amounts that may be obtained and leveraged.

City Budget Funding

Based on conversations with staff and public funding calculations, the City of Clarkston will be able to provide approximately \$7.6 million for parks and recreation spending over the next 10 years. This funding will be allocated between Operations & Maintenance (\$2.8M) and Capital Projects (\$4.8M).

The SPLOST funding for Capital Projects is derived from the DeKalb County 2023 SPLOST II, which is projected to provide the City about \$17 million total through 2030. Because the SPLOST revenue is based on local retail spending the amount the City receives may fluctuate.

Funding Purpose	Sources	5-Year Average	10-year Projection
Operations & Maintenance	General Fund	\$280,000	\$2.8 Million
Capital Projects	General Fund	\$178,000	\$1.78 Million
	SPLOST	-	\$3.4 Million ¹
Total			\$7.98 Million

¹The City earmarked \$3.4 million for recreational facilities, from its projected \$17.2 million total revenue.

Grants

Grants typically support capital improvement projects, and can be a powerful tool for leveraging city funds, often more than doubling the City's investment. The challenge with grants is that they tend to be competitive, meaning other municipalities are also competing for those some grant dollars. This requires the City to complete thoughtful and comprehensive applications in order to be competitive. Additionally, most large grants require a match, meaning the City would have to include funds from their capital budget to obtain the grant.

In certain instances, grants can be "stacked" or combined to draw funding from several sources. The idea of "Grant Stacking" refers to grouping grants of varying levels (federal, state, and local) to support one project. Careful selection of grants can result in one grant providing the matching funds requirement for another grant and vice versa. This process can address acquisition and development in phases to best meet a project's purpose and schedule.

The following pages includes a list of grants totaling over \$25million that are available for parks, greenspace, trail and green infrastructure projects in Georgia. This list includes including grant amounts, match requirements, eligible items, and deadlines.

Grant Opportunities					
Funding Program	Funding Source	Grant Amount	Match Requirement	Types of Eligible Elements	Anticipated Deadline
Land and Water Conservation Fund Program (LWCF)	Federal	\$500,000*	100%	Ballfields, Courts, Trails, Fishing Facilities, Playground, Restrooms, Shade Structures, Lighting, Landscaping	April
Urban Waters Restoration Program	Federal	\$35,000*	100%	Urban Wildlife Corridors, Green Infrastructure, Stormwater	April
Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program	Federal	\$15,000,000	100%	Land Acquisition and development for Outdoor Recreation Facilities	TBD
Recreational Trails Program (RTP)	Federal*	\$500,000+	20%	Construction of Trails and Support Facilities	April
Section 319(h) Nonpoint Source Implementation Grant	Federal	\$400,000*	40%	Stormwater/Water Quality Projects	December
Our Town Grant	Federal	\$100,000	100%	Innovative Public Art Projects	July
CDBG	Federal	\$100,000*	0%	Open Space & Recreational Facilities	TBD
Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC)	Federal	\$1,500,000	25%	Stormwater facility/flood prevention, infrastructure hardening	July
Community Forestry Assistance Grant Program (UFC)	Federal	\$20,000	100%	Tree plans/programs and planting projects	December
Transportation Alternative Program	Federa/State	\$450,000	20%	Planning or Implementation of Pedestrian & Bicycle Facility, Traffic Calming Development	June
Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program	State	\$3,000,000	25%	Acquisition and development of conservation and recreation land, water access, trails, habitat	October
Georgia Equity Fund Grants	State	\$200,000	-	Water and sewer infrastructure, road, rail and airport improvements, industrial parks, workforce, technology, and tourism	June
Georgia ReLeaf Program	State	\$7,500	20%	Tree planting and revitalization projects	September
REBC Grant Program	State	\$50,000	0%	ROW landscape enhancements	TBD
Georgia Historic Preservation Matching Grants	State	\$10,000	100%	Restoration of historic resources	February

Grant Opportunities					
Funding Program	Funding Source	Grant Amount	Match Requirement	Types of Eligible Elements	Anticipated Deadline
AAD Shade Structure Grant	Private Org.	\$8,000	0%	Shade structures	December
Arbor Day Foundation Grants	Private Org.	\$25,000-\$300,000	0%	Tree Planting	Rolling
Bank of America Community Resilience Grant	Private Org.	\$50,000	0%	Landscaping, Stormwater, LID Elements	March
AARP Community Challenge Grant	Private Org.	\$50,000*	100%	Park Improvements, Mobility, Public Health	April
Bloomberg Public Art Challenge	Private Org.	\$1,000,000	Varies	Temporary public art projects that celebrate creativity, urban identity and foster partnerships	February
TD Bank Green Space Grants	Private Org.	\$20,000	0%	Development of Green Infrastructure such as tree planting and green space expansion	December
Bank of America Community Resilience Grant	Private Org.	\$50,000	0%	Landscaping, Stormwater, LID Elements	March
AARP Community Challenge Grant	Private Org.	\$50,000*	100%	Park Improvements, Mobility, Public Health	April
Community Champions Playground Grant	Private Org.	\$75,000*	100%	Playground Equipment	October

Grants represent a significant opportunity for Clarkston to expand parks funding. Based on a conservative estimate of \$1 million in general grants and \$500,000 in CDBG Grants over the next 10 years, the following table represents the total 10-year projection for Capital Improvement Projects funding. The City's potential grant funding may be many times greater, however, particularly with the support of a dedicated grant writer.

CIP Funding Sources	5-Year Average	10-year Projection
General Fund	\$178,000	\$1.78 Million
SPLOST	-	\$3.4 Million
Grants - General ¹	-	\$1 Million
CDBG Grants	-	\$500,000
TOTAL		\$6.7 Million

¹The City's potential grant funding may be many times greater, particularly with the support of a dedicated grant writer.

Parks Bond

A General Obligation (GO) bond is typically the largest and most reliable source of funding available to municipalities in the State of Georgia to finance public infrastructure. General obligation bonds must be approved by the voters and for that reason are sometimes referred to as an extra-ordinary funding source. A General Obligation bond specifically intended to fund improvements to parks and recreation facilities is referred to as a Parks Bond.

A bond works for a city essentially like a mortgage to a household or a business—it is a long-term lending instrument that enables capital investments to be made in the near-term and paid off over time. Bond holders purchase the bonds now and the city guarantees they will be paid back at a set amount by a certain future date. The bond is secured by the issuing government's pledge to use all available resources — including tax revenues — to repay holders of the bond. The cost is shared not only by taxpayers who will enjoy the facilities now, but also by those who will use them in the future.

Based on the responses from the Statistically Valid Survey (SVS), a significant majority (63 percent) of respondents expressed a willingness to pay an additional \$5-6 per month (\$60-72 annually) in taxes to fund the types of parks and recreation facilities that are most important to their households. The table below illustrates the potential bond revenue that could be generated based on additional property tax contributions identified through increased millage.

Parks Bond Conditions	Scenario 1 20-Year Revenue Collection	Scenario 2 30 -Year Revenue Collection
Average additional annual cost per owner-occupied property: +\$72.02 per year (+\$6 per Month) [Equates to 0.238 Mills]	\$1.8 MILLION	\$2.7 MILLION

CAPITAL PROJECTS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

This section presents a detailed list of projects that represent a potential strategy to build out the Vision. Further design, public input, and City management decisions will inform final plans, costs, and timelines as the projects are advanced.

The Project Team collaboratively developed a prioritization strategy to inform how parks, greenspace, and trail capital projects could be implemented over the next 10 years. Projects are grouped into three categories based on their project management structure and potential funding sources.

1. Parks & Recreation Priority Projects

Projects that the Parks and Recreation Department will lead and prioritize, advancing implementation based on existing funding sources dedicated to Parks and Recreation and the pursuit of additional funding as needed.

2. Parks & Recreation Pending Projects

Projects that the Parks and Recreation Department is expected to lead, pending further planning and design and the collection of additional funding.

3. Partnership Projects

Projects that the Parks and Recreation Department will support through a collaborative implementation process bringing together the City Engineer and other Departments and relevant organizations.

PARKS & RECREATION PRIORITY PROJECTS

The following project list is arranged by park site, but does not represent a particular priority order for implementation. Timeline for implementation will be determined pending further design and funding analysis.

Project Type	Park Site	Project Name	Description
Improve Existing	Systemwide	Signage and wayfinding	Install standardized, multilingual signage at all parks, including entry, regulatory, and wayfinding signs.
Improve Existing	Systemwide	Picnic tables	Establish standard pad design and install updated picnic tables at all parks. Address specific needs at Brockett, Smith, Trailside Green, Milam. 36 total tables.
Improve Existing	Milam Park	Site Layout and Circulation at Milam Park	Infrastructure improvements related to adjustments to the site layout and needs for improved utilities, access, and circulation throughout the park.
Improve Existing	Milam Park	Multi-use Field #1 at Milam	Upgrade former baseball field at Milam Park with improved field surface, movable outfield fence, and other improvements to maximize flexibility for a range of uses.
Improve Existing	Milam Park	Playground at Milam	Upgrade and expand existing playground, including pavilion.
New Amenities	Milam Park	Multi-Use Court at Milam	Install multi-use court with markings & goals for 3 volleyball courts, 1 basketball court, and 1 futsal court. Final amenities and arrangement pending further design.

All of the projects are also categorized under one of the following types:

Improvements to Existing Facilities

Capital projects related to enhancing and replacing aging and deteriorating parks, greenspace, trail, and green infrastructure facilities, amenities, and spaces such as replacing a playground, removing invasive plants, improving stream banks, or improving the natural turf in a field.

New Parks Facilities

Capital projects related to installing and implementing new facilities that were not previously available in parks such as installing a new playground in an underused space, adding a new restroom building, or installing a splash pad in a new park site.

Order of Magnitude Planning Level Construction Costs ¹		Order of Magnitude Planning Level Annual O&M Costs ¹	Notes
Low	High		
\$100,000	\$250,000	\$2,000	
\$50,000	\$140,000	\$2,300	
\$250,000	\$1,000,000	\$2,200	May be developed in conjunction with other Milam Park projects as part of phased development strategy, pending further design.
\$400,000	\$1,000,000	\$16,000	May be developed in conjunction with other Milam Park projects as part of phased development strategy, pending further design.
\$500,000	\$1,485,000	\$24,000	May be developed in conjunction with other Milam Park projects as part of phased development strategy, pending further design.
\$250,000	\$400,000	\$4,000	May be developed in conjunction with other Milam Park projects as part of phased development strategy, pending further design.

¹All costs are 2026 estimates, considering a range of potential construction processes, materials, finishes, etc.

PARKS & RECREATION PRIORITY PROJECTS (CONTINUED)

Project Type	Park Site	Project Name	Description
Improve Existing	Milam Park	Parking lots at Milam	Redesign and repave both the Norman Rd (100 spaces, 30K SF) and East Ave (75 spaces, 25K SF) parking lots, adding lighting as needed
Improve Existing	Milam Park	Bathroom at Milam	Upgrade existing bathroom facility by pavilions. (Full Remodel/ Rebuild)
New Amenities	Milam Park	Soccer/Multi-Use Field at Milam	Install new multi-use field (space for 3 U-8 soccer fields); 24,000 SF/0.55 acres.
Improve Existing	Milam Park	Multi-use Athletic Field #2 at Milam	Convert lighted multi-use athletic field to artificial turf.
Improve Existing	Milam Park	Indoor Center at Milam	Convert the stone pavilion to an indoor community center space with 2-3 rooms for programs, restrooms; 3,000 SF.
New Amenities	Milam Park	Pickleball Courts at Milam	Install 4-8 new pickleball courts. Total number and orientation pending further design.
Improve Existing	Woman's Club	Indoor Improvements at Woman's Club	Upgrade kitchen to serve cooking classes and for use as rentable pop-up kitchen. Install projector and screen for movies and presentations.
Improve Existing	Smith Street Park*	Park Upgrades	Conduct a design process, to include renaming the park and providing upgraded amenities, to improve the park quality to the standard established at Trailside Green.
			PARKS & RECREATION PRIORITY PROJECT TOTALS

*Smith Street was renamed Patricia Davis Drive, and the park is recommended to be renamed.

PARKS & RECREATION PENDING PROJECTS

Project Type	Park Site	Project Name	Description
New Park	Site A	Park Site A Development	Advance community planning for Park Site A (Montreal Creek Court), leading to final design and development of new park with proposed amenities including paths, playground, food forest, pavilion, drinking fountain, on-street parking. Cost inclusive of design and construction for concept. (2.25 Acres)

Order of Magnitude Planning Level Construction Costs ¹		Order of Magnitude Planning Level Annual O&M Costs ¹	Notes
\$1,500,000	\$2,500,000	\$15,000	May be developed in conjunction with other Milam Park projects as part of phased development strategy, pending further design.
\$100,000	\$400,000	\$80,000	May be developed in conjunction with other Milam Park projects as part of phased development strategy, pending further design.
\$200,000	\$400,000	\$22,000	May be developed in conjunction with other Milam Park projects as part of phased development strategy, pending further design.
\$600,000	\$800,000	\$10,000	May be developed in conjunction with other Milam Park projects as part of phased development strategy, pending further design.
\$1,500,000	\$2,400,000	\$22,000	Need contingent on development of new Clarkston City Hall; if indoor center developed as part of City Hall, this project could be removed
\$100,000	\$1,215,000	\$24,000	May be developed in conjunction with other Milam Park projects as part of phased development strategy, pending further design.
\$60,000	\$100,000	-	Operations & Maintenance costs are expected to remain consistent with existing costs.
\$100,000	\$250,000	\$2,000	Cost contingent on final design and inclusion of potential amenities, including paths, seating, and landscaping.
\$5,710,000	\$12,340,000	\$239,500	

Order of Magnitude Planning Level Construction Costs ¹		Order of Magnitude Planning Level Annual O&M Costs ¹	Notes
\$1,200,000	\$2,100,000	\$25,000	Cost contingent on final design and inclusion of potential amenities, including splash pad, restroom, etc.

PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS

The following project list is arranged by park site, but does not represent a particular priority order for implementation. Timeline for implementation will be determined pending partnership development, further design, and funding analysis.

Project Type	Park Site	Project Name	Description
Improve Existing	Brockett Triangle	Food forest at Brockett Triangle	Install additional permaculture edible plantings; 5,000 SF.
Improve Existing	Brockett Triangle	Walking Paths at Brockett Triangle	Install an improved gravel/mulch walking loop; 350 LF.
Improve Existing	Friendship Forest	Walking Paths at Friendship Forest	Upgrade and expand soft-surface hiking trails; 2,000 LF.
Improve Existing	Friendship Forest	Shared Use Path through Friendship Forest	Re-pave shared use path at 12' width, as recommended in the 2016 Park Master Plan, to provide seamless connections with Clarkston Greenway; 1,500 LF.
Improve Existing	Forty Oaks	Walking Paths at Forty Oaks	Upgrade and expand soft-surface hiking trails; 3,000 LF.
New Amenities	Forty Oaks	Community Garden at Forty Oaks	Install new community garden space at Forty Oaks; 15,000 SF.
New Amenities	Forty Oaks	Food forest at Forty Oaks	Install permaculture edible plantings; 5,000 SF.
New Amenities	Forty Oaks/ Milam	Shared Use Path through Forty Oaks & Milam	Develop shared use path connecting Stone Mountain PATH to Forty Oaks/Milam and neighborhoods to the east and south; 2,000 LF.
New Amenities	Site B	Walking Paths at Site B	Develop new unpaved walking paths in proposed park site B in coordination with Clarkston Greenway; 500 LF.
New Amenities	Site D	Walking Paths at Site D	Develop new unpaved walking paths in proposed park site D in coordination with Clarkston Greenway; 2,500 LF. REQUIRES EASEMENT/ACQUISITION
New Amenities	Site E	Walking Paths at Site E	Develop new unpaved walking paths in proposed park site E in coordination with Clarkston Greenway. REQUIRES EASEMENT/ACQUISITION
New Amenities	Site F	Walking Paths at Site F	Develop new unpaved walking paths in proposed park site F in coordination with Clarkston Greenway; 2,500 LF with 500 LF boardwalk. REQUIRES EASEMENT/ACQUISITION
New Amenities	Site H	Splash pad at proposed Town Center Park	Install new splashpad at proposed Town Center Park
			PARTNERSHIP PROJECT TOTALS

Order of Magnitude Planning Level Construction Costs ¹		Order of Magnitude Planning Level Annual O&M Costs ¹	Potential Partners	Notes
\$5,000 + Volunteer Support	\$20,000	\$1,000	Urban Agriculture Organizations	
\$5,000 + Volunteer Support	\$18,000	\$50	Community Trail Groups	
\$15,000 + Volunteer Support	\$30,000	\$500	Community Trail Groups	
\$750,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,800	Engineering; PATH Foundation + Trails Non-profits	
\$25,000 + Volunteer Support	\$40,000	\$500	Community Trail Groups	
\$50,000	\$150,000	\$4,800	Urban Agriculture Organizations	
\$5,000 + Volunteer Support	\$30,000	\$1,000	Urban Agriculture Organizations	
\$1,500,000	\$2,300,000	\$2,200	Engineering; PATH Foundation + Trails Non-profits	
\$5,000 + Volunteer Support	\$13,500	\$100	Community Trail Groups	Timing and project development contingent on Clarkston Greenway
\$5,000 + Volunteer Support	\$30,000	\$500	Community Trail Groups	Timing and project development contingent on Clarkston Greenway
\$5,000 + Volunteer Support	\$30,000	\$250	Community Trail Groups	Timing and project development contingent on Clarkston Greenway
\$100,000 + Volunteer Support	\$800,000	\$800	Community Trail Groups	Timing and project development contingent on Clarkston Greenway
\$500,000	\$1,250,000	\$20,000	Engineering, Community Development	Contingent on project development
\$2,970,000	\$5,711,500	\$33,500		

ACTIONS + STEPS

Advancing the implementation of the Vision requires a coordinated effort across City staff and local partners, to ensure that projects are completed in a timely manner.

The following section complements the phased Capital Improvement Projects and provides detailed processes by which the City will implement the vision.

These steps are organized around the Goals, Objectives and Actions presented in the Vision. It includes thirty-nine (39) Actions with Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), Time Frames, and Potential Partners and one-hundred and four (104) Steps that the City should follow to implement the Vision. This section is intended to be a “living document,” which will be used by staff on a regular basis and updated based on current information.



GOAL 1

SERVE the community through a responsive, modern, accessible department.

Topic: Administration and Staffing			
Objective	Action	KPI	Time Frame
» 1.1 - Formalize the organizational structure of the Parks and Recreation Department to improve service delivery.	1.1.1 – Establish a phased and flexible staffing model for part-time and full-time positions.	New staff hired	Ongoing (as needed)
	1.1.2 – Establish standards for third-party operator agreements for programs and maintenance needs, including specialty maintenance.	New standards developed	Short term
	1.1.3 – Enhance integration with Public Works Department staff.	Maintenance standards updated and regular meetings held	Ongoing
» 1.2: Develop the “Clarkston Way” for customer experience.	1.2.1 – Develop a “Clarkston Way” training program for all staff as part of the overall training program and include refreshers at least once annually for all staff.	Increase “Excellent” perception customer ratings by 3%	Mid term

Steps	Partners
- Annually review staffing needs based on service levels such as population served, program demand, acres maintained, etc. - Ensure open staff position descriptions encourage applications from a diversity of local applicants. - Proactively reach out to local non-profit organizations, educational institutions, and others to recruit potential staff.	- HR - Schools & local organizations
- Review existing agreements and determine areas of need and opportunity. - Develop operating and maintenance standards based on a cost-of-service model for programming, facilities maintenance, and landscaping services. - Use data collected to determine the optimal resources (funding and employees required) to maintain the system at the desired standard. - Work with the City Manager and Council to increase PRD operations and maintenance budget to address needs.	- HR - CM & Council
- Review the park site maintenance staffing structure to determine how to optimize resources. - Establish regular joint Department meetings to review ongoing maintenance challenges and successes.	Public Works
- Conduct customer journey mapping to better understand customers, anticipate their needs and deliver excellent service across the system consistently. - Determine internal culture, service standards and establish the "Clarkston Way" guidelines. - Train all staff, including part-time and seasonal staff. - Obtain ongoing feedback from staff and users to identify effectiveness of the training to make updates as needed.	HR



GOAL 1

SERVE the community through a responsive, modern, accessible department.

Topic: Maintenance			
Objective	Action	KPI	Time Frame
» 1.3: Optimize maintenance practices to ensure high-quality maintenance with limited resources.	1.3.1 - Initiate an asset management system.	Asset Management Software to track and project lifecycle replacement and estimated cost of scheduled replacement within 5-years.	• Short term
	1.3.2 – Develop specific maintenance levels of service for parks and trail corridors utilizing the National Recreation and Park Association’s (NRPA) maintenance standards.	New standards developed	• Mid term
Topic: Safety			
» 1.4: Collaboratively enhance the safety and security of parks and recreation facilities.	1.4.1 – Enhance safety through design and maintenance.	Project List with costs	• Mid term
	1.4.2: Enhance safety through programming.	Programs Offered	• Short term

Steps	Partners
- Develop a GIS-based digital inventory of all park elements that contains lifecycle, condition, and location data. - Research and incorporate a computerized maintenance management software (CMMS) and mobile technology into the Department maximizing productivity for maintenance staff in the field. Examples would be Productive Parks, Facility Dude, MainTrac, Cartegraph, etc.	
- Coordinate with Public Works/parks maintenance staff to review maintenance standards and analyze parks by areas of use to consider revisions to maintenance standards based on the NRPA standards. - Establish updated schedule and zones of maintenance, adjusting frequency and standard to maximize resources, particularly as new park spaces and facilities are added to the system.	
- Conduct an initial evaluation of security and lighting in parks with Clarkston Police Department (CPD). - Identify areas that are in need of security cameras, lighting, and more patrolling. - Develop detailed cost estimates and identify phased implementation strategy based on available capital and operations funding. - Implement based on available capital and operations and funding.	• CPD
- Identify gaps in program needs for at-risk populations along with ideal times for offering them. - Seek partners to collaborate on program delivery or provide space to offer programs.	• Local partners



GOAL 2

CONNECT the community to the parks and recreation system through effective outreach and high-quality infrastructure.

Topic: Marketing & Outreach			
Objective	Action	KPI	Time Frame
» 2.1: Improve marketing and outreach to inform residents about programs and park facilities.	2.1.1 – Improve the Parks and Recreation page on the City of Clarkston website.	Website upgrades	• Short term
	2.1.2 – Use a wide array of multilingual outreach methods to reach the city's diverse demographics, particularly younger residents.	• Frequency of postings on social media and physical signage	• Mid term
» 2.2: Develop new strategic opportunities for on-going community input.	2.2.1 – Implement a multi-faceted system of resident feedback.	• Annual park satisfaction survey	• Short term
	2.2.2 – Establish a Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee.	• Committee established	• Mid term

Steps	Partners
• Upgrade the site with a system map and information on each of the City's parks and their facilities. • Regularly update the website to keep content current including information on projects/improvements	• Communications
• Improve social media presence, including hiring youth to develop content. • Create spotlights on individual parks and services (highlight particular programs/parks on monthly basis) • Provide follow-up posts after events. • Install signs with updatable QR codes at parking lots advertising upcoming events • Increase communication with school system about recreation programs and opportunities. • Pursue digital kiosk signs in parks with Wifi, city info, sign-ups for programs, i.e. Soofa, IKE, etc.	• Community Development Department
• Initiate surveys of residents to identify changing community desires and support rapid adaptation, based on statistically valid survey developed for this plan.	
• Draft a clear mission statement outlining the committee's role (e.g., advising on park planning, programming, community engagement). • Establish bylaws or a charter that defines: ▪ Membership size and composition (e.g., residents, subject-matter experts, youth representation) ▪ Terms of service, term limits, meeting frequency and quorum requirements • Create an application and outreach process to attract candidates reflecting the community's demographics and interests, partnering with community organizations to broaden outreach. • Implement a transparent selection process, involving review by Department leadership and final approval by city officials. • Hold an inaugural meeting with orientation, goal-setting, and priority identification. • Develop an annual work plan aligned with department goals, with ongoing communication channels (e.g., public updates, reports to City Council). • Regularly evaluate committee effectiveness and adjust structure or focus as needed.	• CPD • Community organizations



GOAL 2

CONNECT the community to the parks and recreation system through effective outreach and high-quality infrastructure.

Topic: Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements			
Objective	Action	KPI	Time Frame
» 2.3: Enhance multi-modal accessibility to parks, including micro-mobility and transit.	2.3.1 – Pursue collaborative efforts to construct new paths to—and through—parks, including the ongoing Clarkston Greenway.	Trail Miles Built	• On-going
	2.3.2 – Leverage greenways and paths to provide park experiences.	Park amenities integrated along trails	• On-going
	2.3.3 – Support the installation of additional wayfinding signage throughout the city, especially at key intersections and transit stops.	Number of signs installed	• Short term
	2.3.4 – Provide bike racks, fix-it stations, e-bike outlets, and other amenities to support non-vehicular access to parks.	• Number of bike parking facilities installed	• Mid term

Steps	Partners
- Coordinate with City Departments to review proposed bicycle and pedestrian connectivity projects identified in this Parks and Recreation Master Plan to review their feasibility and integrate feasible projects in the City's prioritized list of projects. - Advocate for prioritizing the implementation of high-quality, safe active-transportation facilities to and near parks.	- Community Development Department - Engineering - DeKalb County
- During the feasibility study or conceptual design phase of a trail project, explore and identify opportunities along the corridor to install needed parks and recreation amenities along the corridor informed by the Needs Assessment and recommendations from the Vision. - Develop detailed cost estimates and identify phased implementation strategy based on available capital and operations and maintenance funding. - Develop construction documents for phased implementation and implement.	- Community Development Department - Trail Project Design teams
- Target prioritized projects from the Pedestrian and Bike Network Vision as opportunities for installing more wayfinding signage. - In accordance with the design standards for signage, wayfinding, and public art, identify opportunities to develop signage, wayfinding, and public art in streetscape projects particularly in commercial districts in collaboration with businesses. - Include signage, wayfinding, and public art design packages for prioritized trails.	
- Consult with active-transportation stewardship partners, like the PATH Foundation, to determine locations with a need for bike parking improvements. - Develop design standards for bike parking areas, compare against needs, and develop implementation strategy that addresses needs based on design standards and considers creative partnerships, such as volunteer-based opportunities (where appropriate) to install facilities. - Identify phased implementation strategy based on available capital and operations and maintenance funding. - Review list of projects yearly and re-prioritize projects based on opportunities and needs.	- CPD - Community organizations



GOAL 3

UPGRADE the parks, recreation facilities, and indoor spaces to ensure they are vibrant, high-performing places.

Topic: Parks and Facilities			
Objective	Action	KPI	Time Frame
» 3.1: Develop Clarkston Parks design standards to reinforce the City's "brand identity."	3.1.1 – Establish typical standards for amenities, signage, furniture, materials, etc. to ensure a unified "look and feel" as capital improvements occur.	Design standards developed	• Mid term
» 3.2: Complete capital improvements in parks, in collaboration with the community, to provide high-quality park experiences across the board.	3.2.1 – Address deferred capital maintenance and proactively complete capital improvement projects based on the identified facility needs discussed previously, and recommendations collected through the planning process.	Number of projects completed annually	• On-going
» 3.3: Perform specialized ecological restoration in natural areas.	3.3.1 – Remove invasive planting and restore areas with native planting while considering opportunities to improve sight lines, increase safety, and provide opportunities for better use of the restored areas.	• Cubic Yards of invasive plants removed • Number of native plants planted	• Mid term

Steps	Partners
• Review existing parks for aspects of infrastructure that best represent the city and the desired Clarkston brand. • Develop a park design guidebook with typical standards and materials for standard park amenities.	
• Review list of prioritized projects and confirm feasibility based on proposed vision, planning level capital costs, and management costs/ implications. • Complete community-based conceptual plans for prioritized projects (when applicable) using the findings from the Needs Assessment and recommendations from the Vision as a starting point for dialogue with the community. Develop detailed cost estimates and identify phased implementation strategy based on available capital and operations and maintenance funding. • Develop construction documents for phased implementation and construct improvements. • Review list of projects yearly and re-prioritize projects based on opportunities and needs.	
• Consult with parks maintenance staff and environmental stewardship partners (Friends of Forty Oaks, Trees Atlanta, etc.) to confirm prioritized list of natural areas that should be improved. • Confirm/update planning level capital costs identified for natural areas to be improved, and develop operations and management costs/ implications for improvements to properties. • Complete a site inventory of natural areas in prioritized parks and confirm areas to be improved in parks. • Develop community-based management plans, conceptual area site improvement plans, and construction documents for properties, based on available/ proposed capital and administrative dollars and implement. • Manage and maintain natural areas per management plans.	• Environmental stewardship organizations

GOAL 4
EXPAND the total park land, facilities, programs, and indoor spaces.

Topic: Park Land			
Objective	Action	KPI	Time Frame
» 4.1: Achieve equitable access to parks and increase the City’s total parkland through a creative, multi-pronged strategy.	4.1.1. Develop existing City-owned sites proposed to be new park spaces.	New park sites developed	Mid to Long-term
	4.1.2: Pursue partnerships and the development of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) to increase publicly accessible park land acreage in the City based on areas of need identified in this Master Plan.	New park sites opened to public	On-going
	4.1.3: Pursue the creation of new park land through fee simple acquisition, securing conservation and recreation easements, and redevelopment on a parcel-by-parcel basis strategically, and as opportunities become available.	Amount of park acres acquired towards target LOS Targets	On-going
» 4.2: Provide Parks and Recreation Facilities Equitably throughout the City.	4.2.1 – Implement new facilities in existing and new parks to fill needs in underserved areas.	Number of projects completed	On-going

Steps	Partners
- Review list of prioritized projects from Vision and confirm feasibility based on proposed vision, planning level capital costs, and management costs/ implications. - Complete community-based conceptual plans for prioritized projects when applicable using the findings from the Needs Assessment and Vision as a starting point for dialogue with the community. Develop detailed cost estimates and identify phased implementation strategy based on available capital and operations and maintenance funding. - Develop construction documents for phased implementation and implement.	
- Meet with property owners to review list of prioritized projects and confirm feasibility based on proposed vision, planning level capital costs, and management costs/ implications. - Develop a mutually beneficial site management strategy for properties determined to be suitable for addressing parks and recreation needs. Discuss Parks and Recreation Department (PRD) property construction, operations, and management needs in relation to partner(s) needs and expectations. - Establish appropriate land management strategy agreement that considers construction, operations, maintenance, and asset management. - Complete community-based conceptual park plans for prioritized projects when applicable using the findings from the Needs Assessment and Vision as a starting point for dialogue with the community. Develop detailed cost estimates and identify phased implementation strategy based on available capital and operations and maintenance funding. - Develop construction documents for phased implementation and implement. - Meet yearly to discuss land management strategy agreement and revise as needed.	
- Establish a Park Land Acquisition Team comprised of representatives from relevant City Departments including City Manager's Office, Parks and Recreation, Planning and Economic Development, Public Works, and others to meet regularly to review and discuss potential properties to be acquired. - Survey real estate listings on a regular basis to identify potential opportunities for acquisition and identify properties that are suitable for acquisition. - Explore potential of property to address both parks and recreation needs and other city-wide needs such as affordable housing, trail connectivity, stormwater management, public safety, etc.	
- Review list of prioritized projects and confirm feasibility based on proposed vision, planning level capital costs, and management costs/ implications. - Complete community-based conceptual plans for prioritized projects when applicable using the findings from the Needs Assessment and recommendations from the Visions as a starting point for dialogue with the community. Develop detailed cost estimates and identify phased implementation strategy based on available capital and operations and maintenance funding. - Develop construction documents for phased implementation and implement. - Review list of projects yearly and re-prioritize projects based on opportunities and needs.	

GOAL 4
EXPAND the total park land, facilities, programs, and indoor spaces.

Topic: Park Land			
Objective	Action	KPI	Time Frame
» 4.3: Develop new programming to serve resident priorities.	4.3.1 – Establish foundational programming and ensure residents have access to basic recreation opportunities.	New programs and events held annually	• Short term
	4.3.2 – Gradually expand programming through clearly defined focus areas that respond to community priorities.	New programs and events held annually	• Mid term
	4.3.3 – Ensure long-term viability and system maturity as the system becomes self-reinforcing instead of staff-dependent.	- New programs and events held annually - Cost recovery target reached	• Long term
» 4.4: Pursue increased access to indoor recreation center space.	4.4.1 – Continue to explore options for the use of partner indoor recreation centers.	• Number of projects completed	• On-going
	4.4.2 – Continue to explore options for the long-range development of an indoor recreation center.	• Regular meetings to discuss project potential	

Steps	Partners
- Build the programming offerings around the four Core Program Areas: - Community & Cultural Engagement - Health, Wellness & Aquatics - Youth & Teen Development - Nature & Outdoor Recreation - Emphasive a limited set of programs that are high impact, visible, and feasible with current resources. - Expand community events and outdoor programming to increase awareness and engagement. - Expand youth athletics beyond the current soccer program, including seasonal sports and introductory leagues.	
- Expand program offerings within the four Core Program Areas, increasing capacity and opportunities. - Introduce structured afterschool programming, expanded adult wellness offerings, and consistent multi-generational activities. - Over time, this may include additional focus areas such as summer camps, senior programming, and expanded youth sports. Continue planning for indoor recreation and aquatics facilities. - Focus on program consistency and service diversification while aligning with capital planning.	
- Expand year-round programming capacity across all age groups. - Increase league offerings and multi-generational programming. - Evaluate transitioning select contracted programs to in-house delivery where financially advantageous. - Continue refining cost recovery strategies and performance metrics based on participation trends.	
- Coordinate with local partners providing indoor recreation center space, particularly DeKalb County, to discuss the feasibility of sharing program space. - Complete an Indoor Center Feasibility Study to identify specific programming, activities, and indoor center needs that could operate out of partner sites.	• DeKalb County Parks and Recreation
Coordinate with Community Development and Planning to ensure major redevelopment projects are aligned with long-range planning goals to provide dedicated recreation center space for Clarkston residents.	• Community Development



GOAL 5

SUSTAIN the system through comprehensive strategies for funding, management, and maintenance.

Topic: Funding			
Objective	Action	KPI	Time Frame
» 5.1: Explore all possible strategies to increase funding for parks and recreation capital projects.	5.1.1. Pursue the growth of dedicated capital funding sources and explore all alternative capital sources.	Capital funding level to reach the 25th percentile for comparable agencies (\$44 per resident)	Mid-term
» 5.2: Explore all possible strategies to increase funding for parks and recreation operations.	5.2.1. Pursue the growth of dedicated operations funding sources and explore alternative operations funding sources.	O&M funding level to reach the 25th percentile for comparable agencies (\$148 per resident)	Long-term
» 5.3: Develop a Cost Recovery Philosophy.	5.3.1. Pursue a tiered cost recovery approach based on program purpose.	Cost recovery levels designed to meet market demand	Mid-term
	5.3.2: Pursue diversified revenue streams.	Revenue streams utilized	Long-term
	5.3.2: Balance Affordability with Sustainability.	Program fees matched to MHI	
Topic: Management & Maintenance			
» 5.4: Foster strategic partnerships.	5.4.1 – Strengthen coordination and partnership with DeKalb County Parks and Recreation.	Annual meeting	Short-term
	5.4.2 – Pursue new strategic partnerships with non-profit partner organizations such as Park Pride, Trees Atlanta, the Trust for Public Land, The Conservation Fund, and others.	Partnership agreements	Mid term

Steps	Partners
- Coordinate with the Finance department, City Manager, and elected officials to increase funding from the General Fund, Special Purpose Local Options Sales Tax (SPLOST), and other sources for capital improvements. - Pursue alternative funding sources including grants, Public-Private-Partnerships (PPP), sponsorships, and others.	Finance Department
Coordinate with the finance department and elected officials to increase funding allocation for operations.	
- Plan for a balanced portfolio combining community-benefit programs with revenue-generating activities will support both access and financial responsibility. - Contracted or third-party programs may operate under revenue-sharing agreements, reducing direct City risk while generating supplemental revenue.	
- The Department should pursue diversified revenue streams, including: - Program registration fees - Facility rentals and field use fees - Sponsorships and event partnerships - Grants and external funding opportunities - Revenue-sharing agreements with contracted providers	
- The Department should adopt an “80% / 20%” pricing strategy, where: - Program fees are set at levels that are affordable to approximately 80% of the community, based on local income characteristics. - The remaining 20% of residents are supported through targeted scholarship and fee assistance programs.	
Establish regular meetings with DeKalb County to discuss on-going and upcoming projects from the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and determine if there are opportunities for partnership or cost-sharing.	DeKalb County Parks and Recreation.
- Establish a list of local organizations that assist with parks and recreation funding and operations. - Contact local organizations to explore partnership strategies and establish plans of action and points of contacts. - Meet with organizations yearly to update action plans and points of contacts.	Parks and recreation non-profits



GOAL 5

SUSTAIN the system through comprehensive strategies for funding, management, and maintenance.

Topic: Management & Maintenance			
Objective	Action	KPI	Time Frame
» 5.5: Promote recreation workforce development through programming.	5.5.1 – Develop Program-to-Work Pipelines	Staff roles filled through program to work pipelines	Long-term
	5.5.2 – Develop Teen Workforce Development Programs	Program established	Mid-term
	5.5.3 – Offer Certifications & Skill Building	• Certifications offered	Long-term
	5.5.4 – Foster Partnership-Based Opportunities	• Annual workshop hosted	Long-term

Steps	Partners
• Create intentional pathways where participants transition into employment roles: ▪ Swim lesson participants and swim team members progressing into lifeguard certification and employment ▪ Summer camp participants transitioning into camp counselors or program aides ▪ Youth sports participants advancing into junior coaches or officials	
• Establish a structured teen program focused on: ▪ Job readiness and soft skill development ▪ Resume building and interview preparation ▪ Leadership development and peer mentoring ▪ Exposure to careers in parks, recreation, and related fields	• Local organizations and businesses
• Provide access to industry-recognized certifications that support both program delivery and employability: ▪ Lifeguarding and water safety instruction ▪ Coaching and officiating certifications ▪ First Aid/CPR and other foundational credentials	
• Establish an annual workshop to meet with schools, nonprofits, and workforce agencies to plan for opportunities to: ▪ Align programming with career pathways ▪ Offer internships or volunteer-to-paid transition opportunities ▪ Connect participants to broader employment resources	• Local schools, nonprofits, and workforce agencies



CITY OF CLARKSTON

PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN

2026