




ALPHARETTA RECREATION AND PARKS MASTER PLAN


The New Standard of Fun!



Parks Equestrian Center



Programs



Trails



Arts + Culture

FEBRUARY 2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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And many thanks to the City of Alpharetta residents and stakeholders whom participated in this planning process.

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1. HELLO!

Welcome to Alpharetta! At the heart of prosperous North Fulton County, Alpharetta has had an unbelievable past decade full of growth, development, and excitement. A thriving downtown, a regional shopping and entertainment attraction at Avalon, and a host of new high-style developments in the pipeline all point to a bright future.

This bright future is the impetus for updating the City's Recreation and Parks Plan. Last completed in 2014, this update takes a closer look at existing parks, the equestrian center, trail connections, programs, and an emerging arts and culture scene. How do all of these facilities fit into Alpharetta's future? And how does the Department of Recreation and Parks lead the way?

Parks and open spaces are an essential part of the rich quality of life people have come to expect in Alpharetta. This plan creates a roadmap to the **"New Standard"** of recreation and parks in the city: one that exemplifies quality, beauty, and above all—fun.



A LOT HAS HAPPENED SINCE 2014....

In the past three years....

- Alpharetta has seen unprecedented growth: *Business Insider* named the city the fastest growing large city in Georgia in 2017
- The City passed a bond referendum that included \$25 million for Recreation and Parks

And so the Recreation and Parks Department has been busy. Since then, we:

- Bought the old Fulton County Library and are transforming it into the City's first Arts Center
- Began the renovation of the Wills Park pool

- Started the Alpha Loop, our version of the Beltline
- Purchased five pieces of land for more parks across the city
- Finished Brooke Street Park, complete with babbling brook
- Funded the missing link: the last piece of the Big Creek Greenway that will connect us to Forsyth County
- Developed new master plans for Union Hill Park and Windward Soccer Complex

This plan is an update to the extensive study done in 2014—not a replacement! It focuses attention on new parts of the parks system, and folds in all of the exciting things that are now underway or planned in Alpharetta.

...AND WE'RE NOT STARTING FROM SCRATCH.

2014 PLAN SUMMARY

The 2014 Plan was a deep dive into Alpharetta's parks and recreation facilities. Through a number of types of analysis, the plan found that the City needed more of the following:

- Multi-use rectangular athletic fields
- Play fields
- Swimming pool
- Dog parks
- A new recreation center
- A second senior center

It also established some general goals for the Department, including support for:

- The acquisition of new park land when feasible and cost-effective,
- Continuation of the current practice of making improvements to all existing parks and facilities,
- The completion of the remaining segment of the Big Creek Greenway,
- The repurposing of parks that no longer receive high utilization.

These goals are still relevant today in 2017, but with one caveat. The recommendation to repurpose some parks met with resistance after the 2014 plan was adopted. Specifically, the call to transition the Equestrian Center into a different type of facility caused a lot of concern in the community. As a result, the City has decided to continue operating the Equestrian Center, and made this facility a key focus of this 2017 update.

Because the 2014 plan is still relatively fresh, the recreation and parks needs voiced by residents then are assumed to still be pretty much the same today. For this reason, this update focuses on a few target areas—existing parks, trails, the Equestrian Center, programs, and arts and culture—rather than replicating a city-wide needs assessment.

Additionally, a lot of other City of Alpharetta plans and neighboring cities' plan have studied other specific areas and topics, and contribute their own recommendations. Turn the page to see what these documents have to say....



WHAT OUR PLANS SAY

Each of the plans discussed below has a different focus, but they all have one thing in common: they each have something to say about recreation and parks in Alpharetta. Figure 1 on page 9 illustrates all of these recommendations in a single place, and is our starting point for planning.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A comprehensive plan is a high-level, zoomed out look at the city, and the policies that we need to put in place now to reach our vision of the future.

Alpharetta wrapped up an update to its Comprehensive Plan in the summer of 2016 under the banner of striving to be a “Signature City.” Recreation and parks play such an important role in it that language was added to the vision to talk about the importance of green space, arts, and culture. The plan states a bold goal for the city: at least 20 percent of Alpharetta should be green space. Specifically, the plans says that:

- We need to better connect greenway/ pedestrian facilities across GA 400
- We need more parks in western Alpharetta
- Completing the Big Creek Greenway is a high priority

DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

Unlike the Comprehensive Plan, the Downtown Master Plan just looked at central Alpharetta, and has an equal focus on policy and design. Adopted in 2015, the plan proposes a series of small parks and green spaces that connect to each other, and will help make Downtown Alpharetta a fun and enjoyable place to walk and explore.

ALPHA LOOP PLAN

Sometimes referred to as Alpharetta’s “Beltline,” the Alpha Loop is a trail project that will connect people, places, activities, and jobs in the core of the city. Actually two loops—a 3-mile inner loop and a 5-mile outer loop—the majority of the trail is being built through private development.

ALPHARETTA NORTH POINT LCI

An older plan, the North Point Livable Communities Initiative study looked at redevelopment potential in the area around North Point Mall. The focus of the plan was on land use and transportation, but it proposed a number of ways to better connect the area to the Big Creek Greenway, and to the center of Alpharetta. This plan is currently being updated.

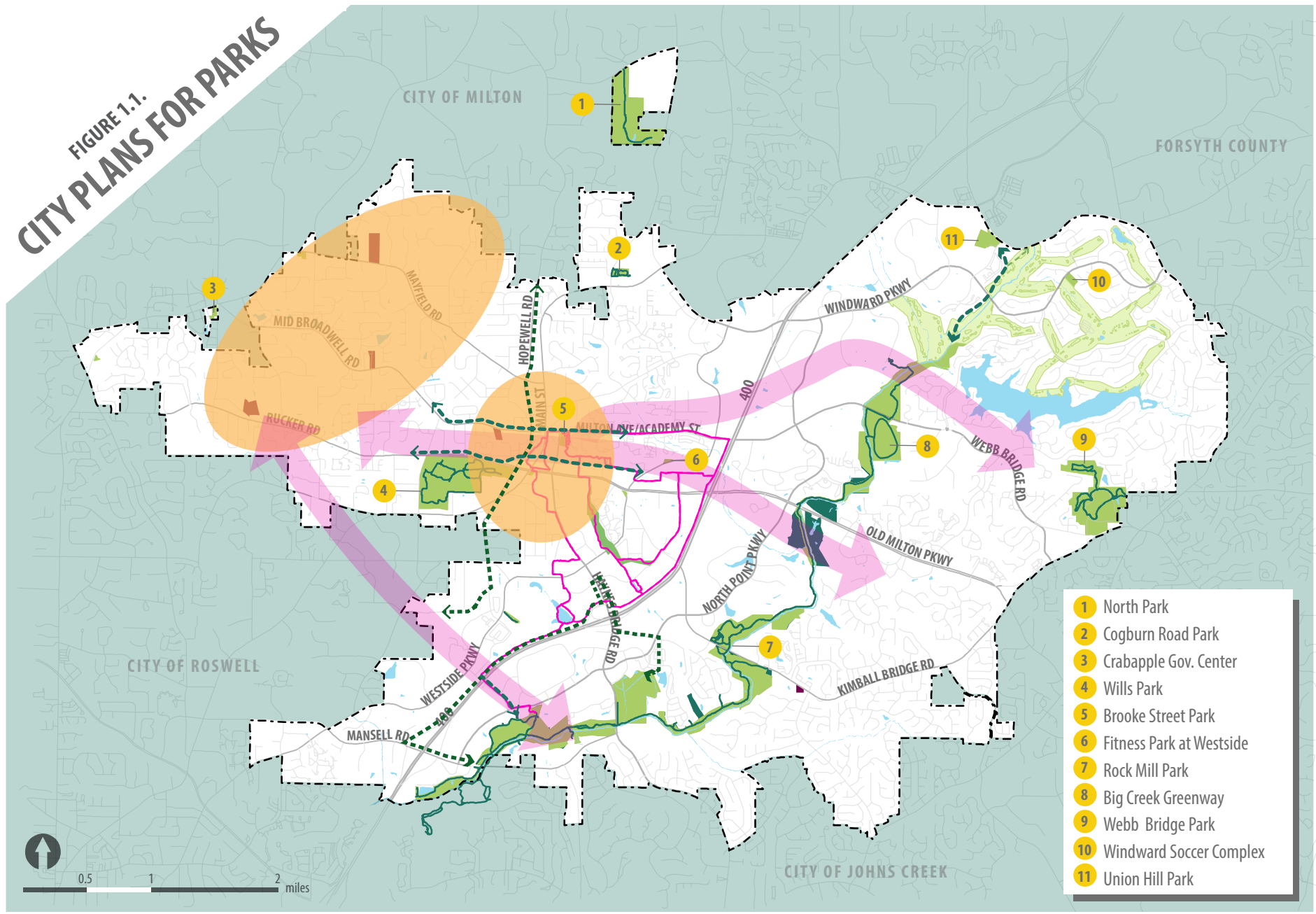
BIG CREEK GREENWAY FEASIBILITY STUDY

Since the 1990s, Alpharetta has been building the Big Creek Greenway mile by mile. Now there is just one final segment left: the connection up to Forsyth County. Finishing the greenway is a consistent priority across many different plans, but identifying the best route is a challenge. Currently the City is studying the best way to make this connection.

SO WHAT?

The City already has a lot of recreation, parks, and trails facilities planned or proposed. This update takes those projects and builds on them, making sure that all Alpharetta residents can easily get to a park and experience the **New Standard** of fun in the city.

FIGURE 1.1.
CITY PLANS FOR PARKS



- 1 North Park
- 2 Cogburn Road Park
- 3 Crabapple Gov. Center
- 4 Wills Park
- 5 Brooke Street Park
- 6 Fitness Park at Westside
- 7 Rock Mill Park
- 8 Big Creek Greenway
- 9 Webb Bridge Park
- 10 Windward Soccer Complex
- 11 Union Hill Park

 City Parkland	 Golf Course (Private)	 Water Body	 City Boundary	 Other Road	 Alpha Loop	 Proposed Trail
 City Green Space	 Newly Acquired Parkland	 General Area for New Parks	 Major Road	 Existing Trail	 General Area for New Trail Connection	

WHAT OUR NEIGHBORS SAY

Our neighbors have also been busy planning their futures. We wanted to check in with them and see what their plans are for recreation, parks, and trails.

NORTH FULTON COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The North Fulton Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) is a study that spans six cities in North Fulton County: Alpharetta, Roswell, Johns Creek, Sandy Springs, Milton, and Mountain Park. Its main purpose is to coordinate transportation planning at a larger scale across all modes. Currently the CTP is being updated, but a draft project list was available at the time of this plan. A very large network of multi-purpose trails is proposed that links all the North Fulton County cities together. Trails shown in the plan that are within Alpharetta include the Alpha Loop and a multi-use trail parallel to GA 400.

MILTON

Alpharetta and the City of Milton have very strong ties to one another. In fact, the two cities signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2012 that enable residents of both cities to use each other's facilities and programs at resident rates.

Currently Milton is updating its own parks and recreation master plan. Its previous plan from 2012 looked at the whole city's system, but paid special attention to its trails and Birmingham Park on its north side. Along the border with Alpharetta, the plan proposes eight small urban parks and two larger parks. Parks on the western half of the border with Alpharetta would be connected by a system of urban trails, paved paths, and unpaved paths; the proposed parks in the east also have proposed trail connectivity.

ROSWELL

Roswell has two plans that are particularly relevant to recreation and parks in Alpharetta. The first is its parks system plan for 2017-2021, that envisions Roswell as "the premier riverside community." As such, it focuses strongly on developing its parks and green spaces along the Chattahoochee River. It also recommends

priority investments in trails, aquatics, and gymnastics.

Roswell completed an update to its Transportation Master Plan in 2014. One of its stated goals was to increase bicycle and pedestrian mobility. Although Roswell already has a good network of sidewalks and bicycle facilities, it identified a large number of trail projects to enhance the city.

JOHNS CREEK

The City of Johns Creek completed a recreation and parks strategic plan in 2016. One of Johns Creek's top priorities is to acquire more land for future parks, and to start building a system of greenways and trails. Most of the proposed new parks were recommended for eastern and central Johns Creek. The two parks near Alpharetta, Ocee Park and Newtown Park, both have recommended upgrades including a perimeter walking trail at Newtown Park and unpaved trails in the wooded area of Ocee Park.

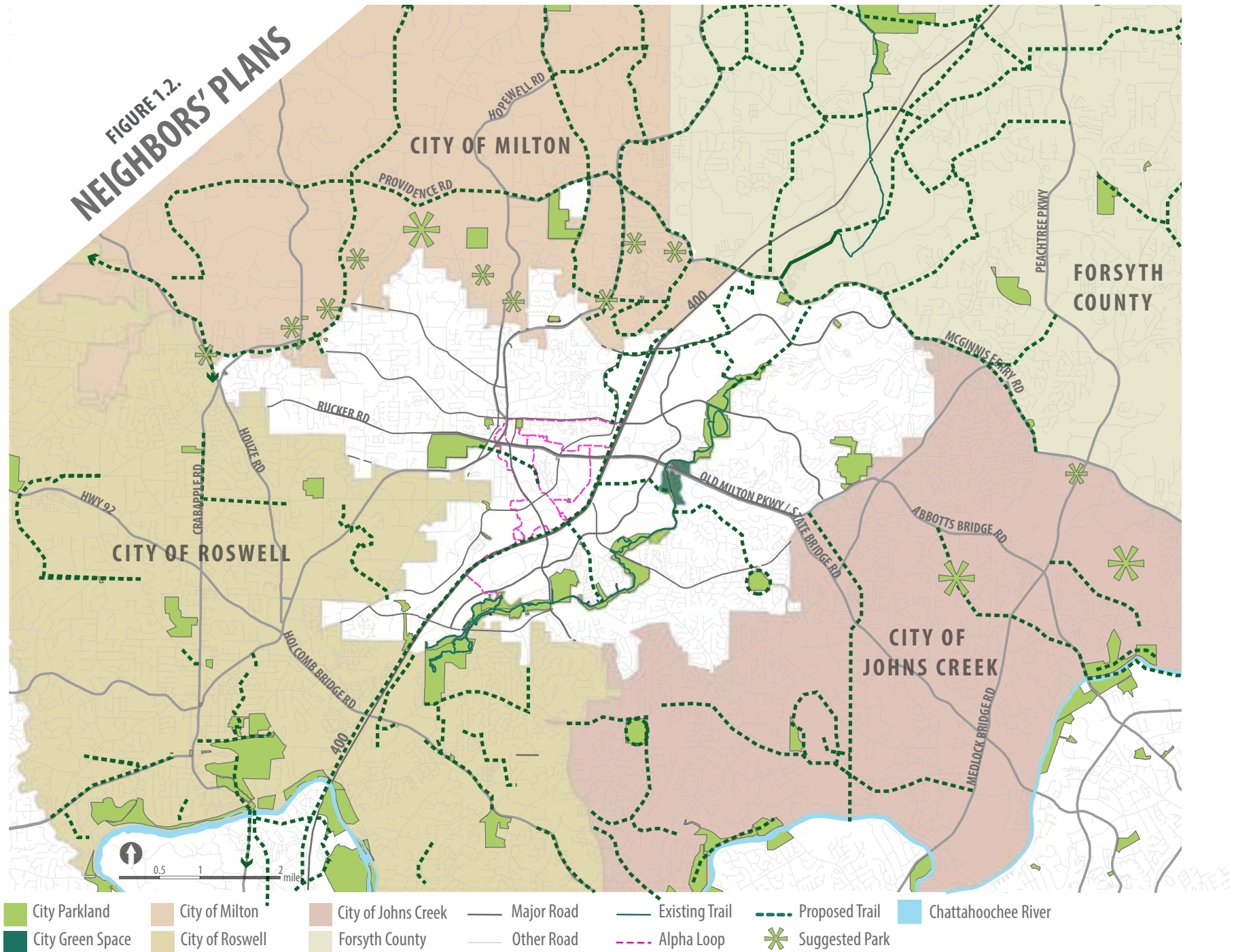
FORSYTH COUNTY

Alpharetta's neighbor to the north, Forsyth County completed a parks and recreation plan in 2016, and is currently working on its Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP). The parks and recreation plan identified the need for many new parks in the county, but the recommended locations are fairly far from Alpharetta and unlikely to make an impact on most of our residents. The CTP, however, identified many miles of sidewalks/multi-use paths in the southern section of the county that have the potential to link up to future trails in Alpharetta.



Ocee Park is a City of Johns Creek park **completely surrounded by Alpharetta**. It is a 37-acre park mostly devoted to baseball and softball, but also has a playground, sand volleyball, tennis, and basketball courts.

FIGURE 1.2.
NEIGHBORS' PLANS



WHAT OUR COMMUNITY SAYS

We also wanted to check in with our residents and other stakeholders: what do people really want from Alpharetta recreation and parks? As it turns out, connectivity, flexibility, and a whole lot of fun! At a community workshop on October 24, 2017, participants learned about how the Alpharetta Department of Recreation and Parks currently serves the community, plans already on the books for improvement, and the goals of the Recreation and Parks Master Plan Update. They then discussed their dream recreation system of the future. Check out their big ideas:

EXPAND AND ENHANCE TRAILS

Alpharetta residents are ready to embrace a fully connected trail system with wide, off-road paths, mile markers, and good lighting for nighttime users. They love the trails proposed in previous plans and have a few ideas for more:

- Walking path from Wills Park to Downtown
- Loop connecting new parks on Rucker Road, Mid Broadwell Road, and Mayfield Road to the proposed trail on Milton Avenue
- Connections to Webb Bridge Park
- Continue the trail along GA 400 to McFarland
- Paths between schools and parks

They're most excited to comfortably walk or bike to Downtown Alpharetta, Avalon, Wills Park, and the Big Creek Greenway.

PARTNER FOOD AND FUN

Everything is better with food! From growing local crops at community gardens to buying local produce at farmers markets or creating the final dishes in culinary arts classes, they want it all. Improved concessions and potential food trucks at parks will make the home team wins even sweeter.

MAXIMIZE FLEXIBILITY

Create space for people with different interests and conserve land by choosing multi-purpose facilities whenever possible. For example, rectangular fields can have markings for multiple sports (soccer, football, cricket!); provide large, open green spaces; and design event spaces with movable walls. Keep spaces loose enough to encourage creativity and maintain functionality.

LOAD UP THE AMENITIES

Make parks inviting spaces for people to linger by including benches and seating, pavilions, Wi-Fi, and solar charging stations. Give Fido a place to play, too.

KEEP IT NATURAL

Residents want more than activities, they want spaces to connect with nature. Include natural areas, some unpaved trails, and natural play elements for children's playgrounds.

DON'T FORGET THE NIGHT OWLS

Adults and kids alike are often busy during the day and ready to unwind and play at night. Keep paths and parks well lit for evening strollers (solar lighting, please!) and expand program offerings to include more evening and weekend classes and events.

BRING MORE FACILITIES (ESPECIALLY INDOOR!) TO THE EAST SIDE OF TOWN

The eastern half of Alpharetta has few public parks or recreation facilities compared to the rest of the city, and they want more! An indoor facility with a pool would be preferred, and residents are open to a partnership with the YMCA, as long as prices are affordable.

PLAY TO OUR STRENGTHS

Focus on improving the quality of existing parks and emphasize unique aspects. Add new facilities within existing, underutilized properties like Union Hill Park, Windward Soccer Facility, and Webb Bridge Park. Maintain and upgrade existing facilities. Keep unique character where it exists, like at the Equestrian Center and the Adult Activity Center at North Park, and add creative new elements when possible. Locate any new parks around population centers to maximize their use.

WHAT BELONGS WHERE?

Participants in the community workshop suggested specific locations for new or upgraded features within existing facilities and newly acquired parcels for soon-to-be parks. They want:

EXISTING FACILITIES

WILLS PARK

- Larger pavilion to accommodate 50+ people
- Festivals
- Outdoor exercise equipment
- Senior programs
- Challenge course
- Improved equestrian spectator facilities
- Weekday uses for the equestrian center (such as meeting rooms)

BIG CREEK GREENWAY

- Increase the number of access points and quality of bike infrastructure leading up to them

WEBB BRIDGE PARK

- Connect to the trail system
- Community garden
- Community center
- Outdoor track
- Ninja challenge course
- Indoor pool
- Programs for children with special needs
- ADA accessibility

NORTH PARK

- Upgrade concession stands and bathrooms at fields 1-4, or consider food trucks as an alternative
- Connect walking trails
- Bocce ball court

ROCK MILL PARK

- Gardening
- Benches and seating
- Playground
- Splash pad

UNION HILL PARK

- Concert venue
- Natural playgrounds
- Youth and teen programs

COGBURN ROAD PARK

- Keep it up! This is a beloved and frequented neighborhood park.

BROOKE STREET PARK

- Activate the bandstand with outdoor concerts
- Dog park
- Dance classes

WINDWARD SOCCER FACILITY

- Dog park
- Community garden
- Beach volleyball
- Not enough parking for use as soccer facility

FITNESS PARK AT WESTSIDE

- Improve visibility and use

CRABAPPLE GOVERNMENT CENTER

- Senior programs
- Adaptive programs

NEW FACILITIES

ARTS CENTER

- Sculpture and ceramics
- Music
- Culinary arts
- Jewelry and metalsmithing
- Performances

RUCKER ROAD PARK

- Community garden and farmers market
- Farm camp
- Trails

MID BROADWELL ROAD PARK

- Large, flexible green spaces
- Ropes course
- Natural areas
- Unpaved trail
- Community garden

MILTON AVENUE PARK

- Trails

MAYFIELD ROAD PARK

- Trails
- Art classes
- Events facility
- Sand volleyball court

KIMBALL BRIDGE ROAD PARK

- Playground
- Benches and seating



OUR AREAS OF FOCUS



PARKS

**Do we have
enough?**

**How good
are they?**

**What can
we do to
improve
them?**

PAGES 16-33



EQUESTRIAN CENTER

**What does
the future
of this
facility look
like?**

PAGES 34-39



TRAILS

**How do we
maximize
the Big
Creek
Greenway?**

**What
connections
are we
missing?**

PAGES 40-49



PROGRAMS

**What are
we doing
well with
programs?**

**What's
missing?**

**How do we
improve?**

PAGES 50-56



ARTS + CULTURE

**What's the
role of the
new Arts
Center?**

**How do we
get more
art in the
community?**

PAGES 57-62





2

PARKS

2. PARKS OVERVIEW

Alpharetta has 10 main parks:

- Brooke Street Park
- Cogburn Road Park
- Crabapple Government Center
- Fitness Park at West Side
- North Park
- Rock Mill Park
- Union Hill Park
- Webb Bridge Park
- Wills Park
- Windward Soccer Complex

The City also has five pocket parks, which are small parks (less than an acre) and are mostly concentrated in central Alpharetta. In total, the City has 339 acres of parks, and another 459 acres in the Big Creek Greenway. With the park bond money, the City has also purchased 28.5 more parcels for parks: four in western Alpharetta, and one in eastern Alpharetta.

PARKS IN THE PERIPHERY

In 2005 and 2006, the landscape of North Fulton County changed forever: the Cities of Milton, Johns Creek, and Sandy Springs were created out of the remaining parts of unincorporated Fulton County.

One of the unanticipated outcomes of this was the location of many of Alpharetta's parks now at the City's periphery. When these parks were developed, it was

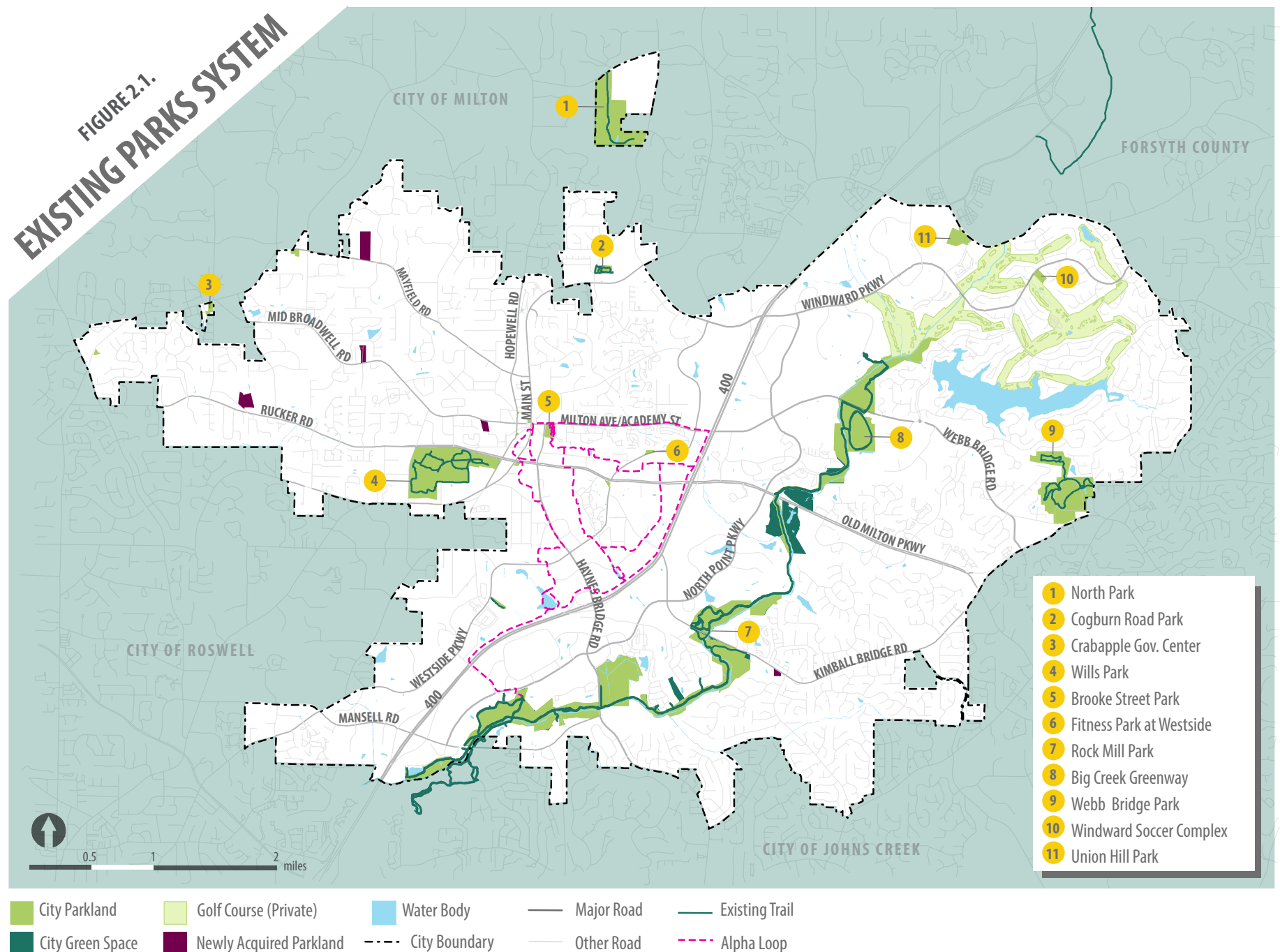
assumed that Alpharetta would grow and eventually annex land beyond them. With the creation of Milton and Johns Creek, these annexations are no longer possible. The result is that many of Alpharetta's parks are located on the edge of other cities: North Park and Crabapple Government Center are essentially in the City of Milton, and Webb Bridge Park is on the border of the City of Johns Creek.

Conversely, there are also parks owned and managed by other municipalities close to Alpharetta: Johns Creek's Ocee Park and Newtown Park and Roswell's Big Creek Park and Hembree Park.

Most people don't care which city owns which park—they go to the parks they like and that are close to them. As a result, many of Alpharetta's parks serve residents from other cities, and vice versa.



FIGURE 2.1.
EXISTING PARKS SYSTEM



OUR PARKS AS A GROUP

MEASURING OUR PARKS: HOW DO WE STACK UP?

One way to look at how well a city is doing in providing parks is to figure out its level of service, or “LOS.” Usually, a city’s LOS is expressed as the number of acres of parks for every 1,000 residents.

According to United States Census Community Survey in 2016, Alpharetta has about 65,338 residents. When this number is plugged into an equation with the City’s parks acreage, Alpharetta’s LOS is 5.19 acres per 1,000 residents. This number is just counting existing parks (and not the land recently acquired for future parks). When the Big Creek Greenway is included, the City’s LOS is 12.21 acres per 1,000 residents.

A LOS can also be projected out to tell us more about the future, and how growth will impact recreation and parks. When looking at Alpharetta’s future LOS, we are going to assume that the City will develop its 28.5 acres of parks it has already acquired, but not acquire anything else. With this assumption in mind, the Table 1 below shows how Alpharetta’s LOS will change over the coming years.

TABLE 1. LEVEL OF SERVICE: PARKS

Year	Population	LOS - Just Parks	LOS - Parks + Greenway
2020	67,494	5.45	12.25
2025	72,638	5.06	11.38
2030	77,035	4.77	10.73

So what does this mean? Are these numbers good?

Well, it depends. For some communities, this LOS would be very good. For others, it may just be OK. The most useful thing about an LOS calculation is that it makes it easier to compare your city to others, which is sometimes referred to as benchmarking.

BENCHMARKING: CITY OF FRANKLIN

Franklin, Tennessee is widely seen as one of the best places to live in the Nashville area. It is known for its charming downtown, and its beautiful parks and green spaces. In many ways, it’s a great point of comparison for Alpharetta.

Currently, Franklin has 706.6 acres of parkland spread among 18 different parks. When this is converted to a LOS, Franklin has 10.61 acres per 1,000 residents. Like Alpharetta, Franklin has a lot of acreage in sites that may not be considered to be parks by a standard definition. For example, about 275 acres of Franklin’s parks are in passive, natural parks, and an additional 120 acres are battlefields.

What does this tell us? Alpharetta is pretty much on par with the City of Franklin, and actually has a slightly better LOS. Although this doesn’t mean that Alpharetta’s work is done, it does mean that it is keeping pace with its peers in terms of its amount of parkland. To remain competitive, the city will need to continue to keep up this current LOS as it grows.

Recommendation

To maintain its current LOS, Alpharetta should acquire at least another 52 acres for parks by 2030. This is in addition to the 28.5 acres of land that were acquired in 2017.



The Comprehensive Plan has a goal that the City be **20 percent green/open space**. Right now, we’re at about 10 percent. To meet the full goal, the City would need to make 1,740 more acres green.

SO WE HAVE THE PARKS....BUT CAN WE GET TO THEM EASILY?

Another way to look at a city's parks is to map them out, and measure how far people have to travel to reach them.

An unofficial goal for Alpharetta is to have a park or other fun destination within a 10-minute walk of every resident. This translates into a distance of about ½ mile. Figure 2.1 on page 1922 shows 10-minute walking trips from each Alpharetta park, based on the existing network of roadways and actual access points to the parks. Every part of the city that is shown in dark pink can reach a park within a 10-minute walking trip. Those in lighter pink can reach a park within a 20-minute trip (1 mile). Once the new parks are developed on land the City already owns, residents within the dark blue color will be within a 10-minute walk of a park, and those within light blue will be within a 20-minute walk.

Every part of the city shown in white is a residential area that is outside a 1-mile trip to a park. Most of the white areas are in eastern Alpharetta, where the City has fewer recreation and parks facility. However, many neighborhoods on the east side, such as Windward, have private recreation facilities that are likely meeting at least some needs in this part of town.

Recommendation

Acquire more parkland in the eastern part of Alpharetta, particularly to serve residents who don't live in communities with private facilities.

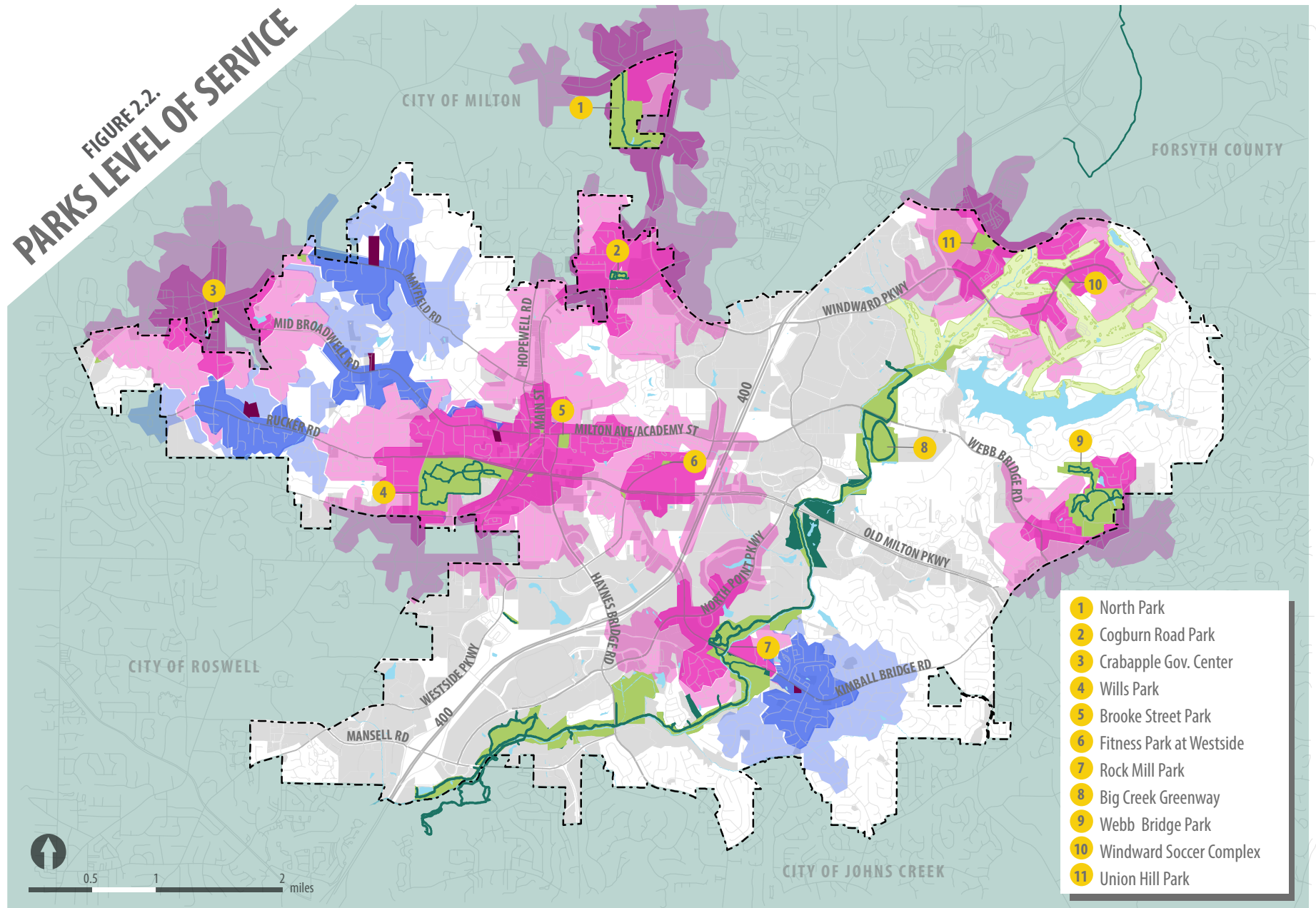
PRIVATE PARKS + OTHER PROVIDERS

One of the tricky parts of recreation and parks planning is that many neighborhoods have their own private parks and facilities. This can be as simple as a small playground or tennis court, to highly developed parks and marinas, like those that are in Windward. So, although the Parks Level of Service map shows that eastern Alpharetta needs parks, in reality many of these neighborhoods have their own facilities already.

The other piece of the parks puzzle is that private and semi-private providers also serve Alpharetta. Places like the YMCA offer a swimming pool, recreation programs, gyms, and classes to residents for the price of memberships. But the amount of service these organizations provide is difficult to measure in comparison to City facilities and programs, which are much less expensive or free.



FIGURE 2.2.
PARKS LEVEL OF SERVICE



OUR PARKS, ONE BY ONE

Looking at acreage and trip distances is helpful to see the bigger picture of recreation and parks in Alpharetta. But it doesn't get into the details of each park, and the quality of experiences they provide. How good are our parks? What are we already doing well, and what can be improved? And what projects can we get done in the next 10 years to make the best of them?

OVERALL, OUR PARKS...

- + Are high quality and well maintained
- + Have great outdoor facilities, particularly sports fields
- + Enjoy strong support from users
- Lack of strong entries, particularly signage
- Lack wayfinding/signage
- Lack a sense of place
- Aren't very visible from roadways
- Have indoor facilities that look institutional and dated



At every park, entrance upgrades are recommended. This means new, consistent entrance signage that announces the park at every major entry, as well as new landscaping to accent the sign and signal to people that they are about the experience The New Standard of Alpharetta parks.





BROOKE STREET PARK

5 acres of new park space next to City Hall with a stage, oval lawn, cool water feature, and arboretum

What's Good

- + Beautifully maintained
- + Central location next to City Hall, the library, and Downtown
- + High-quality facilities and materials
- + Water feature is a unique, engaging element
- + Flexible open space

Needs Improvement

- Lack of crosswalks across Haynes Bridge Road and Academy Street
- Northern third of park (along Academy Street) is not very active
- Currently lacks functionality to support large events

Recommendations

Brooke Street Park was just recently finished. The next step is to activate it with fun programming, and get the word out that the park is done and ready for action. The stage can be used for special events and other programming such as dance and theater classes, but needs to have better support infrastructure such as electrical access.

Over the next few years, the Recreation and Parks Department should pay close attention to how all of the park space is used, and get feedback from residents. With most activity likely centered on the lawn and the stage, the arboretum—the part of the park that faces Academy Street—may not be as well used. If additional parkland in central Alpharetta cannot be acquired, the City may need to use this part of Brooke Street Park to serve the growing population of residents downtown who need close-to-home recreation facilities, like a dog park or playground. These facilities could be designed to be part of the arboretum, with high-end, natural materials.

2018-2027 Projects

- Entrance Upgrades

Additionally, the Recreation and Parks Department should work with Public Works to stripe crosswalks across Academy Street and Haynes Bridge Road. The park is right in the middle of the Alpha Loop project, and should connect seamlessly into both the inner loop and outer loop, with signage that is easy to follow.

COGBURN ROAD PARK

5-acre park in north Alpharetta with lots of flexible green space and a popular playground

What's Good

- + Well maintained
- + Lots of flexible open space
- + Popular playground is shady and pleasant
- + Direct sidewalk to the Park at Cogburn neighborhood and shopping/restaurants to the east
- + Agreement with Lowes for overflow parking

Needs Improvement

- Not very visible from Cogburn Road
- Lack of "eyes" on park
- Park is nice, but doesn't have any special feature or unique character

Recommendations

Cogburn Road Park is a well-used neighborhood park, and is particularly popular for its playground. By 2027, the playground equipment will be up for replacement. At this point, the City could replace it with new, similar equipment but an upgrade to a unique playground specific to Cogburn Park is recommended. This could take the form of a natural playscape, or a custom playground that is a reflection of the **New Standard** of Alpharetta parks.

2018-2027 Projects

- Entrance Upgrades
- Playground Replacement/Upgrade



10 PLACES TO PLAY...

Brooke Street Park

Cogburn Road Park

Crabapple Government Center

Fitness Park at Westside

North Park

Rock Mill Park

Union Hill Park

Webb Bridge Park

Wills Park

Windward Soccer Complex





CRABAPPLE GOVERNMENT CENTER

A shared facility on the periphery of the city, with classrooms, offices, and a gym

What's Good

- + Co-location with City of Milton recreation facilities
- + Co-location with other public services
- + Well maintained

Needs Improvement

- Facility is old and tired feeling, with a very institutional look and feel
- Location is remote from the center of the city
- Arts and crafts rooms feel small and dark
- Gymnasium is stuffy and dark
- No outdoor recreation space
- Lacks crosswalk to City of Milton playground and pavilion across Broadwell Road

Recommendations

Currently the main recreation functions at Crabapple are staff offices, arts and crafts classrooms, and the gymnasium. Arts programming is scheduled to leave the facility next year when the new Arts Center is open. Because of its location adjacent to the City of Milton, Alpharetta should discuss joint use and management of the facility and explore better uses for the center, such as a regional center for therapeutic recreation and special needs programming. In the future, staff with offices here should be relocated to Wills Park or another more central location with the rest of Department staff.

2018-2027 Projects

- Joint study with the City of Milton
- Entrance Upgrades



FITNESS PARK AT WESTSIDE

New 1-acre park on Westside Parkway with outdoor fitness equipment

What's Good?

- + Very visible location on Westside Parkway
- + New equipment

Needs Improvement:

- Lacks connections to nearby neighborhoods and across Westside Parkway
- Lack of variety of things to do

Recommendations

Fitness Park at Westside was recently deeded to the City as part of the Avalon development. Because it is so new, there are no condition issues. It is also difficult to know how much use the park will get used. The City should talk to residents in the neighborhood immediately to the north to see if they would like a direct pedestrian connection to the park. This would also open up easy pedestrian access between the neighborhood and Avalon.

2018-2027 Projects

- Entrance Upgrades



NORTH PARK

83 acres of mostly active recreation facilities nestled in the woods, surrounded by schools and the City of Milton

What's Good

- + Beautifully maintained
- + Adult Center is popular and well loved
- + Miracle League facility is unique
- + High usage of sports fields by nearby schools, some with direct paths to the park

Needs Improvement

- Poor location outside of Alpharetta
- Poor visibility from a distance
- Feels like a series of facilities strung together, rather than a single, unified park
- Adult Center is very small and not laid out well; the split into two separate buildings makes management more difficult
- Bathroom facilities are undersized
- No flexible green space
- Heavily wooded, but not managed or used as an recreation asset

Recommendations

North Park is one of the largest City parks, yet it is surrounded by the City of Milton. As part of a bigger discussion that includes Crabapple Government Center, Alpharetta should meet with the City of Milton to discuss forming an equity partnership to operate and maintain North Park jointly for both communities. One of the first steps in this partnership should be the development of a new master plan that will address circulation, better use and management of the wooded areas, upgrades to existing facilities, and better connections to the surrounding schools, churches, and neighborhoods.

The master plan should take a close look at the Adult Center. Specifically, the entry and circulation areas should be redesigned, and the arts building be directly attached. New outdoor facilities at the Adult Center should also be considered, like a bocce ball court and a covered patio/seating area.

While a partnership with the City of Milton is being developed, Alpharetta should plan for replacement projects that are needed to keep facilities current and in good working condition.

2018-2027 Projects

- Master Plan with City of Milton
- Entrance Upgrade
- Softball Field Restroom/Concessions Facility Replacement/Expansion
- Turf Replacement at Field #1
- Tennis Court Resurfacing
- Turf Replacement at Football Field #2
- Miracle League Field Turf Replacement
- Football Field #1 Restroom/Concession/Press box Facility Replacement



ROCK MILL PARK

A 17-acre park with a focus on environmental education, and a major trailhead of the Big Creek Greenway

What's Good

- + Beautifully designed and well maintained
- + Strong sense of place and a unique look
- + Use of native plants and other green design elements
- + Access to the Big Creek Greenway

Needs Improvement

- Poor visibility and connections to the surrounding area
- Not as well used as other parks

Recommendations

Rock Mill Park is a beautifully designed facility, but it appears to be less visited than many other Alpharetta parks. Bolder, improved signage will help to signal to people that there is a park here to explore. Further into the future, the City should consider additional facilities at the park to help activate it, like a nature-based playground.

2018-2027 Projects

- Entrance Upgrade



UNION HILL PARK

An 11-acre roller hockey park in northeast Alpharetta

What's Good

- + Unique roller hockey facility has the potential to be repurposed

Needs Improvement

- Park is very under-used and facility feels abandoned in comparison to other City facilities
- Not visible from the street
- Lack of connections to the surrounding area

Recommendations

The current focus on roller hockey at Union Hill Park is no longer in tune with the types of recreation the community wants. As the Big Creek Greenway stretches north to Forsyth County, Union Hill Park will shift gears and become an important trailhead for the greenway. Although other facilities were envisioned at Union Hill Park in a master plan completed in 2017, only developing the trailhead facilities is recommended at this time. In the near-term, the City should experiment with ways to use the roller hockey rink such as short-term "indoor" soccer uses that do not require a switch to turf (futsal), and creative programming that bring people to the space for non-roller hockey activities. The park has particular potential for youth/teen programs and parties, like a holiday roller party and dodgeball tournaments.

2018-2027 Projects

- Entrance Upgrade
- Trailhead Development



WEBB BRIDGE PARK

The largest park in east Alpharetta at 96 acres, with sports fields, wooded trails, a special children's play area, tennis courts, and flexible open space

What's Good

- + Well-loved, highly used children's play area
- + New tiered seating at soccer field is unique and beautiful
- + Park is well maintained
- + Trails through wooded areas are used frequently and some of the best in the city

Needs Improvement

- Odd layout
- Lacks sense of place and arrival
- Flexible green space in far north of park is hidden and underused
- Bathrooms at back of park are not well used
- Heavily wooded, but forest is not actively managed
- Stormwater management could be improved using green methods
- Hard to see from outside the park
- Lacks strong connections to the surrounding neighborhoods
- No direct entry from Kimball Bridge Road

Recommendations

Webb Bridge Park is the only major public park on the east side of Alpharetta. Although its facilities are well maintained and certain parts are well-loved by the community, the park's layout is not intuitive, and some areas are very underused and hidden. There are also a number of facilities that are due for replacement in the next 10 years. Although the Webb Zone community playground requires a large amount of upkeep and maintenance, it is treasured by the community and should remain in place.

A new master plan is recommended to address circulation and use of all aspects of the park. This plan should also address erosion issues at a site-wide scale; active care and management of wooded areas; and ways to open up access to the park directly from Kimball Bridge Road. Other facilities to consider during the master plan process are a new multi-generational community center to serve east side residents, community gardens, an outdoor track, challenge courses, and a universal playground. This study should be part of a broader recreation plan undertaken jointly with the City of Johns Creek, in which Ocee Park (a Johns Creek Park) should also be studied and planned for based off of both communities' needs.

In the near term, access to the park can be improved through a few trail projects. One would create a sidewalk that directly links Webb Bridge Park with Lake Windward Elementary School, including a safe crossing on Fox Road. As part of the recommended master plan, a trail connection to Southlake Drive should be looked at and discussed with the neighborhood.

2018-2027 Projects

- Entrance Upgrades
- Joint Master Plan with Ocee Park (Johns Creek)
- Implementation of Phase I of Joint Master Plan
- Restroom/Concession Replacement/Expansion at Soccer Fields
- Turf Replacement at Lower Soccer Field
- Tennis Court Resurfacing
- Trail to Lake Windward Elementary School



WILLS PARK

The crown jewel of Alpharetta's recreation and parks system, Wills Park is a central, 116-acre park that has something for everyone

What's Good

- + Large diversity of activities and facilities
- + Beautifully maintained
- + Centrally located
- + Unique equestrian facility
- + Wills Park Community Center is highly used
- + Sports fields are well used
- + Outdoor recreation facilities are in excellent condition
- + Pool renovation will improve aquatics for the city by providing both a competition and leisure pool

Needs Improvement


- Lacks sense of entry, welcome signage is inadequate
- Circulation is confusing: park feels like a series of facilities instead of one cohesive place
- Bathroom facilities are too small for demand
- Lack of signs and wayfinding
- Wooded area is not used
- Maintenance facility for the entire park is located at the Equestrian Center, rather than central to all facilities
- Recreation Center is small and limited in its uses
- Community Center lacks space to meet program demand, especially gymnastics
- Presence of two centers—a community center and a recreation center—is confusing, and not an efficient distribution of resources

Recommendations

Wills Park is the crown jewel of the system, and should be a high priority for investment and improvement. Key recommendations include proactively acquiring adjacent parcels along South Main Street and Roswell Street, upgrading restroom facilities, and making aesthetic improvements to the Community Center.

Additionally, the City should develop a master plan to better tie all of its facilities together into a park with intuitive ways to get around and a unique sense of place. Working under the assumption that the park will expand in size over time, the master plan should consider the following:

- Relocation of the main maintenance shed from the Equestrian Center to a more centralized location
- A sub-plan for the Equestrian Center that includes improvements at existing facilities, new facilities, and upgraded footing
- Location of a direct trail connection to the Alpha Loop
- A feasibility study for indoor aquatics
- Improved circulation
- Solutions to streambank erosion and water quality issues
- System of signs for wayfinding
- A perimeter/loop trail around the park
- Expansion (and potential relocation) of the community garden



WILLS PARK (CONTINUED)

- Location for a centralized Recreation and Parks Department administrative office
- Cricket pitch
- Trails through wooded areas
- Large pavilion (to hold parties of over 50 people)
- Challenge course/outdoor exercise equipment

Ideally, the plan should phase improvements in a way that enables the City to continue to acquire adjacent land without holding up improvements to existing facilities.

The plan should also look specifically at the Community Center, and ways to make it the primary indoor recreation facility on the west side of town. Recommendations include:

- Expand the gymnastics center into the small adjoining gym
- Add a larger viewing to the front of the building
- Add another full-sized gym to the back of the center
- Add additional classroom space to the building for general recreation

2018-2027 Projects

- Entrance Upgrades
- Master Plan
- Master Plan Implementation – Phase I
- Bathroom Renovation/Expansion at Fields A-D
- Bathroom Renovation/Expansion at Wacky World
- Field #4 Turf Replacement
- Tennis Court Resurfacing
- Outdoor Basketball Court Resurfacing
- Kings Ridge Playground Replacement
- Community Center Renovation
- Recreation Center Playground Replacement

WINDWARD SOCCER COMPLEX

A small (3 acres), secluded park with a soccer field

What's Good

+ Well maintained

Needs Improvement

- Facility is "one note" with a single soccer field
- Park is locked when there is no scheduled use
- Very little visibility from the roadway
- No connections to the surrounding neighborhoods

Recommendations

Windward Hill Soccer Complex is currently a single use facility with a soccer field. It is difficult to see the park from the road, and the gate is often locked. The City should move forward in developing the park according to the master plan created in 2017. In addition to the facilities shown in the master plan, the heavily forested frontage of the park on Windward Parkway should be thinned to provide some visibility into the facility. Additionally, the City should engage nearby neighborhoods to see if they want direct pedestrian/bike connections to the park.

2018-2027 Projects

- Entrance Upgrades
- Master Plan Implementation – Phase I



NEW PARKS

As part of the parks bond passed in 2016, the City purchased five parcels of land for new parks. Each of these parks now needs a master plan, discussions with surrounding neighborhoods, and development of park facilities.

OLD RUCKER ROAD PARK

The Old Rucker Road property was previously used as a residence and plant nursery. When Whole Foods approached Alpharetta about donating its working farm facilities to the City, the Old Rucker Road property appeared to be a perfect fit. Because of the quick timeframe for the farm facility donation, the City needs to rapidly develop a master plan for the park, as well as determine a strategy for operating it. The master plan should also include initial programming ideas for environmental education.

KIMBALL BRIDGE ROAD PARK

This future park is located only about 1/3 mile east of the Big Creek Greenway. To help boost the amount of parkland in the east side of town, expanding this park west to the greenway is recommended. In the near term, a wide sidewalk should be provided between the park and the trail access point at Alpharetta Fire Station 86.

The master plan process for this park should be done under the assumption that the park will expand. Facilities to consider include a playground, flexible green space, a dog park, and trails that tie directly into the greenway. This expanded park should also be considered as an alternative location to Webb Bridge Park for an east side community center.

MILTON AVENUE PARK + MID BROADWELL ROAD PARK + MAYFIELD ROAD PARK

For each of these parks, the City needs to engage the surrounding neighborhoods to talk about the kinds of facilities they want to see, and

develop a master plan. For Mayfield Road Park, this process will include the City of Milton, who shares ownership of the land with the City of Alpharetta. At Milton Avenue Park, there is an opportunity to build off the character provided by the recently relocated log cabin.

Over the next 10 years, the goal should be to develop at least the first phase of facilities for each.

2018-2027 PROJECTS

- Old Rucker Road Master Plan
- Old Rucker Road Master Plan Implementation – Phase I
- Kimball Bridge Road Master Plan
- Kimball Bridge Road Master Plan Implementation – Phase I
- Milton Avenue Park Master Plan
- Milton Avenue Park Master Plan Implementation – Phase I
- Mid Broadwell Road Park Master Plan
- Mid Broadwell Road Park Plan Implementation – Phase I
- Mayfield Road Master Plan
- Mayfield Road Master Plan Implementation – Phase I

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

is happening in the center of the city. Most of these new developments are not being built with many of their own recreation facilities; as a result, the City will need to be prepared to provide close-to-home parks and recreation to these new residents. These facilities are likely to include flexible open space, dog parks, and playgrounds. Acquiring 3-5 acres of land in central Alpharetta is recommended for this purpose. The need for trails and greenways should be met by the Alpha Loop.

PLAYGROUNDS



FLEXIBLE OPEN SPACE



PLACES FOR PUPS







EQUESTRIAN

3

CENTER



3. EQUESTRIAN CENTER

Built in the 1960s, the Equestrian Center was a Fulton County facility until Alpharetta purchased all of Wills Park in the late 1990s. It has long been a key recreation amenity in the community, and is an important part of the city's heritage.

There is something happening at the Equestrian Center almost every week of the year. In 2017, there were 50 horse shows, 8 dog shows, a rodeo, concerts, and a number of corporate rentals. This pace of events is unlikely to slow down: 50 weekends are already booked for events in 2018.

Although multiple types of events happen at the Equestrian Center, the focus is definitely on horse shows. The center is very well respected in the equestrian community as a premier site for shows. Mostly it serves as a regional level facility, with its primary market being local and A-level Hunter Jumper shows.



SHOW RING



COVERED ARENA



Because of its small size and relatively old facilities, the Equestrian Center cannot compete with other large venues in the southeast for nationally rated horse shows. Although it is well maintained, most of the buildings and structures date back to the 1960s and have an institutional look. The entry area, maintenance building, barns, covered show arena and the outdoor rings—pretty much all of the facilities—are in need of a major upgrade. To keep its position in the equestrian event market into the future, the Equestrian Center will need to be updated.

One of the facility's most unique assets, however, is its intown location. The vast majority of equestrian venues are rural, meaning most people bring everything they need with them when they come for events. With its location right in Wills Park, top-notch restaurants, shopping, and hotels are just minutes away. Its adjacency to the rest of the facilities at Wills Park is also a plus, as it brings in more people to events and offers activities for the whole family. Although this location within the park does occasionally cause security concerns and operational issues, overall it's a significant plus.

Recommendations

- The City will need to publicly commit to maintaining and improving the Wills Park Equestrian Center as a long-term recreation amenity for the community and the region.
- The City should develop an updated, long-range, capital improvement plan for the center based on the plan that was established previously. This plan, which should be part of the overall Wills Park Master Plan, needs to take a phased approach that matches available capital and operations dollars. The master plan should include the following:
 - Another show ring, schooling ring, and lunging ring
 - Relocation of the maintenance shed out of the Equestrian Center to a more centralized place in the park to better serve the rest of Wills Park
 - Phased replacement of the horse barns over a five-year period
 - Better and more spectator-friendly areas
 - Design features that provide a unique sense of place and celebrate Alpharetta's heritage
 - An economic impact study that quantifies the impact from out of town visitors/participants on the Alpharetta community



HORSE STALLS



BARN



OFFICE

- The “footing” is the key aspect of any top-flight equestrian center. This should be a top priority for improvement.
- The existing covered arena needs to be improved. This should begin with repainting the ceiling as well as installation of sun shades to eliminate the afternoon sun from crossing the arena floor.
- When the maintenance function is relocated, the existing building should be renovated into an office and indoor meeting/event site that serves as a gateway to the equestrian center. Ideally, this building should anchor the equestrian center and celebrate the history of the facility.
- There needs to be improved entry signage to the center and the overall entry experience should be upgraded to make it more inviting.
- Establish a location so food trucks can better serve horse shows and other events at the center.
- Update the P.A. system at the center.

- Promote the value of the facility to the community and attempt to provide more activities and events that will draw the general community to the center.
- Develop a private fundraising and sponsorship campaign for the center. This will require the City to update its policy on sponsorships.
- Establish a “Friends group” for the center.

2018-2027 Projects

- Entrance Upgrades
- Equestrian Center Master Plan (part of Wills Park Master Plan)
- P.A. System Upgrade

BENCHMARKING: TRYON INTERNATIONAL EQUESTRIAN CENTER

Tryon International Equestrian Center is a world-class equestrian venue located 45 miles southeast of Asheville, North Carolina. Though the facility opened recently in 2014, it already has over 40 equestrian events annually, boasts over 500,000 in attendance, and has awarded over \$5 million in prize money.

The center is huge: located on over 1,400 acres in the foothills of North Carolina, it has 1,200 state-of-the-art stalls, 10 competition rings, a cross-country course, a derby field, and a host of support facilities including schooling rings, 200 RV pads, on-site cabins, and 10 restaurants.

Beyond equestrian activities, the Tryon Center hosts a packed calendar of special events. This includes Saturday Night Lights, a free event in the arena offered more than 20 times per year featuring family entertainment and performances. Other events include Derby Days, movie nights, Silo Bar concerts, holiday events, art exhibits, and BMW test drives. These events bring great crowds, and also introduce new people to the world of equestrian sports.

One of the major forces behind the Tryon Center's success is the leadership of the Tryon Equestrian Partners and deep sponsor support. This private investment has catapulted the center into being one of the highest caliber equestrian centers globally.

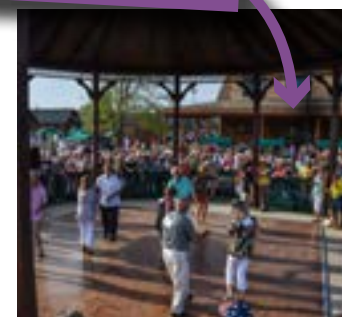
Although much smaller and run by a municipality, the Wills Park Equestrian Center can benefit from some of the same strategies that have made Tryon a great success. The abundance and variety of special events available at Tryon could be replicated at Wills Park at a smaller scale, and attract a larger audience of people to enjoy the facility. Additionally, private sponsorships and fundraising are currently relatively untapped at Wills Park. Drawing from private funding streams would help the facility see improvements faster, and at a larger scale than what is possible through relying solely on public money.

Image Sources: Tryon International Equestrian Center

EQUESTRIAN EVENTS



FOOD + LIVE MUSIC



+ HOTEL



A photograph of a paved trail winding through a forest. The trail is light-colored and curves through the trees. The background is filled with dense foliage and trees. The overall tone is natural and serene.

4 TRAILS

4. TRAILS

Trails are having a moment—across the country, communities are seeing greater and greater demand for trail facilities. The need for trails is both for recreation, and also for having alternative ways of getting around town.

Alpharetta and the greater Atlanta area are no different. The past decade has seen a surge of trails projects, from the high-profile Beltline in intown Atlanta to many smaller trails along streams and old railroad corridors.

Currently most of the trails within Alpharetta are part of the Big Creek Greenway. Stretching from the southern border of the City with Roswell up to Marconi Drive in the north, the greenway has approximately 8 miles of paved trail traveling roughly parallel to Big Creek. It connects to Roswell in the south and will soon link to Forsyth County in the north.

One of the most exciting projects right now in Alpharetta is the creation of the Alpha Loop. The Alpha Loop is actually a planned double loop of greenways and trail connecting destinations in central Alpharetta. The inner loop is planned to be about 3 miles in length, and the outer loop will be approximately 5 miles. The trails will mostly be built piece by piece by private developers but will be open for everyone to enjoy.

The only other trails currently in Alpharetta are loops contained within parks, like at Wills Park and Webb Bridge Park. The City does have some bicycle routes identified, but these are mostly roadways with wide shoulders that do not have official bicycle facilities.

BENCHMARK: ARVADA, COLORADO

Located northwest of Denver, Arvada is a wealthy suburb of about 117,000 residents. Like Alpharetta, it successfully competes for businesses with much larger cities, while still retaining its small town charm.

One of the things Arvada is best known for is its huge network of trails and bike lanes. In all, the city has 149 miles of paved hiking and biking trails, as well as an additional 30 miles of unpaved horseback riding trails. These trails are supplemented by another 54 miles of on-road bicycle lanes. In total, about one out of every ten streets in the city has official bicycle facilities.

What would it take to match this number of trails in Alpharetta? For the City's current population, Alpharetta would need about 83 miles of trail to be equal to Arvada. Right now, the City has about 15 total miles of trail when all of the Big Creek Greenway trails and trails in existing parks are counted. The Alpha Loop will add another 8. To make up the difference, Alpharetta would need to build another 60 miles of trails—the equivalent of over 7 Big Creek Greenways!



Image Sources (Clockwise from top): Fitt Co, Arvada Press, Railsnet, and City of Arvada

BIG CREEK GREENWAY

The Big Creek Greenway is the green backbone of Alpharetta's trail system. Since the 1990s, the City has been developing a 12-foot wide, concrete trail that meanders along Big Creek. The main trail is now 8 miles long, with spurs that connect to nearby areas. Currently the trail connects south to City of Roswell trail facilities, where there are plans to eventually bring the trail down all the way to the Chattahoochee River. To the north, Forsyth County has almost 10 miles of greenway along Big Creek, with another 5 miles planned. There is a 3-mile gap between Alpharetta's greenway trail and Forsyth County's, which the City is actively working to fill.

Like other City of Alpharetta facilities, the Big Creek Greenway is very well maintained. The City maintains everything within a 25-foot centerline of the trail; spur trails are cared for by their respective neighborhoods.

The greenway provides a recreation experience that is unmatched by other places in the city: while on the trail, you truly have a sense of being away from it all and immersed in nature. It also is a great resource for joggers, runners, cyclists, and skaters, who can take advantage of over 8 miles of uninterrupted trail.



There are some areas for improvement though. One of the biggest needs is for more signage to point the way and label paths to different areas—it would be very easy to get lost on the trail and all of its spurs as a first-time (or even fifth-time) visitor.

On a related note, the trail is pleasant and a great way to get into nature, but there is no special feature or aspect of it that makes it feel like a unique experience. Better signage and wayfinding could help brand the trail, as well as add more character and visual interest.

Although the main trail is in pretty good shape, there are some segments of secondary trails that are not. This is particularly true of boardwalks where the wood is not holding up well to the wet environment of Big Creek. These segments need to be replaced with materials that can stand up to the moist conditions better.

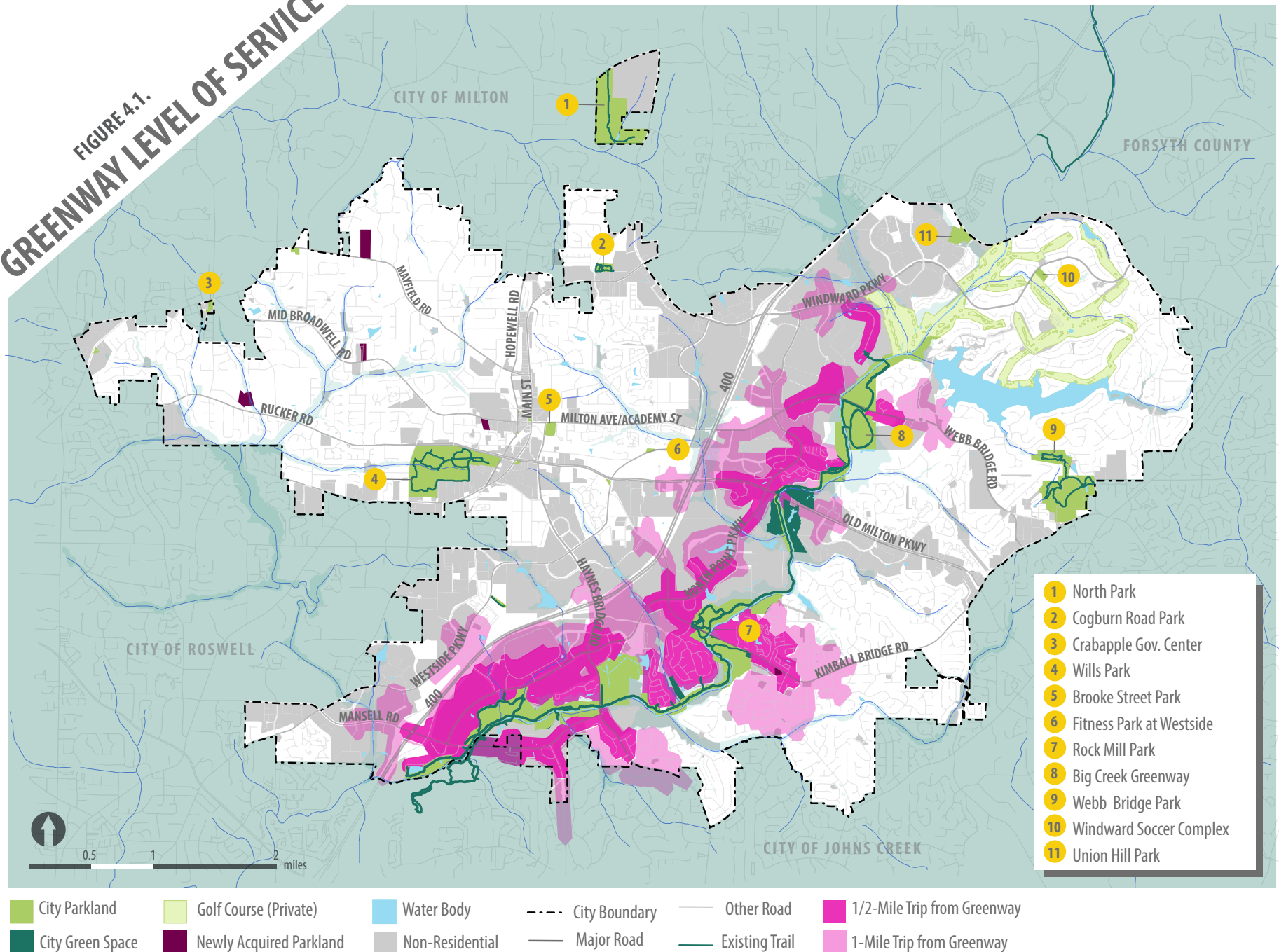
One of the biggest areas for improvement is access. Although some trailheads are very well developed, many are almost hidden and can be very hard to see.

The larger issue, however, is the location and number of access points. To figure out how easy (or difficult) it is to reach the greenway's trails, a level of service (LOS) access analysis was done. This analysis measured both 10-minute and 20-minute walking trips (Figure 4.1) from each of the official trail access points. A 10-minute walk is equal to about ½ mile, or an easy 3-minute bike ride, and a 20-minute walk trip is about a 1-mile trip, or about 6 minutes by bike.

Looking at the map, most of the areas that are within a 10-minute walk of the greenway are to the west side. Much of this area is also not residential, but shopping and/or offices. As a result, very few people east of the greenway—even those who live right next to it—are within a 10-minute walk.

When the time is increased to a 20-minute walk, the coverage is better, particularly along Kimball Bridge Road, but there are still many east side neighborhoods that don't have easy access to the trail.

FIGURE 4.1.
GREENWAY LEVEL OF SERVICE



Big Creek Greenway Recommendations

The Big Creek Greenway is one of Alpharetta's best recreation resources, and the easiest place to get immersed in nature quickly. The first priority for Alpharetta's trails is to complete the Big Creek Greenway by building the last piece that connects to Forsyth County. Plans for this are underway, and the City should continue to pursue this aggressively.

In the meantime, more benefits can be generated from the greenway, mostly in terms of access. All of the current trailheads should connect to a larger trail system. An example of this is the trailhead on Kimball Bridge Road near Fire House 86. There are no official trailhead facilities, and no way to cross Kimball Bridge Road to reach the residences on the other side.

There should also be more trailheads on the east side of the greenway. New trailheads are recommended for access to Lake Windward Drive; Alpharetta High School; multi-family communities along Kimball Bridge Road; and communities along Long Indian Creek. New trail access points should only be built in communities where there is a clear consensus of support for the project.

Additionally, some of the secondary trails in the greenway have boardwalk sections that need to be addressed. As they reach the end of their usable lives, the City should replace the boardwalks with structures made of more durable materials that can

hold up better to the moisture in the floodplain, such as concrete.

And finally, Alpharetta should elevate the user experience on the greenway by adding wayfinding signage, and integrating context-sensitive public art.

Big Creek Greenway 2018-2027 Projects

- Northern Extension
- Sewer Infrastructure Art Pilot
- Wildwings Boardwalk Replacement
- "Old Boardwalk" Creek Stabilization
- Restroom Replacement at North Point Parkway
- Entrance Upgrades
- Wayfinding
- New Access A: Lake Windward Drive
- New Access B: Alpharetta High School
- New Access C: Kimball Bridge Multi-Family Communities
- New Access D: Long Indian Creek Communities





BENCHMARK: SWAMP RABBIT TRAIL, GREENVILLE, SC

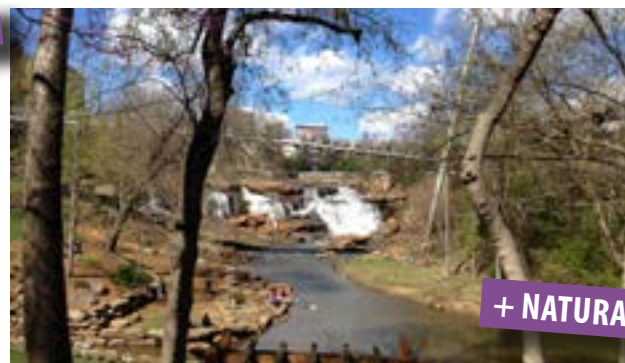
One of the most celebrated trails in the southeast, Greenville's Swamp Rabbit Trail is an example of the positive impact that trails can have on a community.

Originally a rail bed, the Swamp Rabbit Trail is now 22 miles of paved trail connecting Downtown Greenville to the nearby small town of Travelers Rest. It follows the Reedy River for much of its length, and hits area landmarks such as the picturesque waterfalls at Falls Park and the beautiful campus of Furman University.

The trail's popularity has spurred a number of new businesses—many of which reference the swamp rabbit in their name or logos—and even inspired the city's minor league hockey team to change their name to the Swamp Rabbits ("Fear the Ears!"). So many restaurants have popped up along the trail that a quarterly publication, "The Carrot," now serves as a guide to the options.

Officially the trail is called the GHS Swamp Rabbit Trail. GHS stands for Greenville Health System, which is the largest corporate sponsor of the trail. Funding from GHS was essential to getting the trail built and marketed. This demonstrates the importance of sponsorships, and also the natural partnership that exists between public health and recreation facilities.

Although there are no rail-trail opportunities in Alpharetta, the Alpha Loop has the potential to serve a similar purpose to the Swamp Rabbit Trail. Its connections between major destinations in the community, and its location in areas that are attractive for new businesses, suggest that its impacts could go far beyond recreation, by spurring even more economic development and providing much-needed alternatives to driving for short trips.



ALPHA LOOP

Along with finishing the Big Creek Greenway, the major trail project in Alpharetta right now is building the Alpha Loop. As currently planned, the Loop is a system of two loops of 12- to 16-foot wide trails that will connect Downtown Alpharetta, Avalon, and the Northwinds area. The outer loop will be about 5 miles in length and run along Academy Street, Georgia 400, and a meandering trail west of Haynes Bridge Road. It will be woven into the existing city landscape, primarily along roadways.

The inner loop will originate at Brooke Street Park, then thread its way east into the core of Avalon. It then turns south on Northwinds Parkway, and turns northwest along the existing stream bed roughly parallel to Haynes Bridge Road. This part of the loop will be more of a greenway experience.

Throughout both loops there will be a series of small pocket parks, plazas, and public art. The project in its entirety will be an important asset to central Alpharetta, and may give the Big Creek Greenway a run for its money as the most popular recreation asset in town!

FIGURE 4.2. ALPHA LOOP CONCEPTUAL MASTER PLAN



MIND THE GAPS!

A quick look at the trail plans of Alpharetta's neighbors — Johns Creek, Roswell, Milton, and Forsyth County—reveals that there is an exciting, cross-regional network of trails underway. Although the majority of the trails will not be built for many years, it signals a growing demand and desire of people to get out and get active.

Figure 4.3 shows all of the trails currently planned in and around Alpharetta. Importantly, this map also shows areas (very loudly in bright yellow) where these trail plans may not be lining up exactly with one another. Of the 19 “missed connections” identified on the map, 12 are between Alpharetta and its neighbors. This points to a need for a regional look at trails and greenway planning. The remaining seven “missed connections” also suggest that Alpharetta would benefit from a more detailed trail planning project within its own borders.

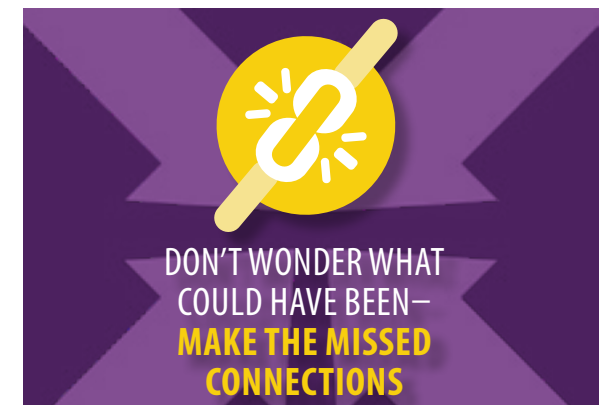
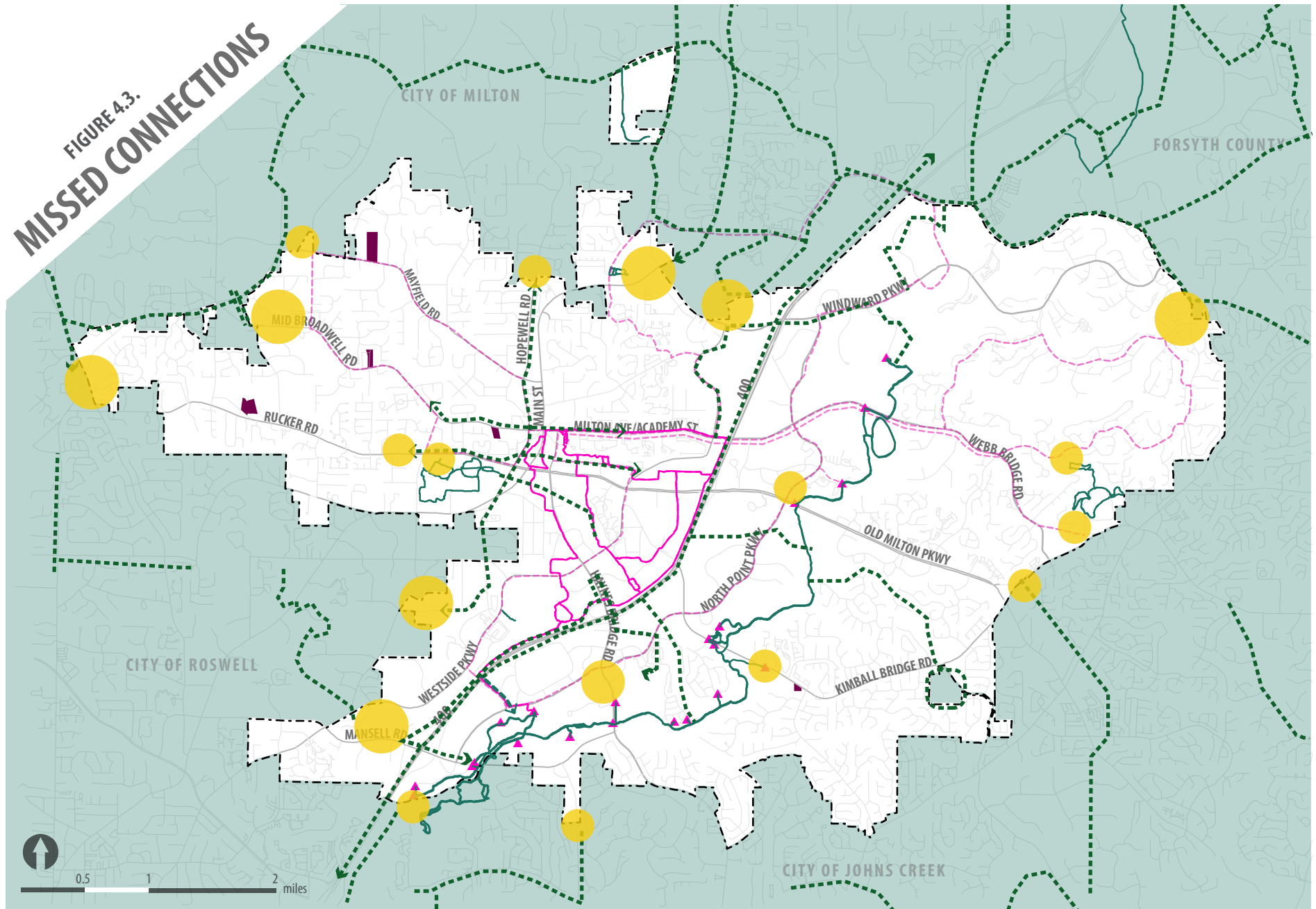


FIGURE 4.3.
MISSED CONNECTIONS



- | | | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|---|---|
| City Parkland | Newly Acquired Parkland | Big Creek Greenway Access Point | Major Road | Existing Trail | Alpha Loop |
| City Green Space | Trail Gap | City Boundary | Other Road | Proposed Trail | Bike Route |

Other Trail Recommendations

Alpharetta, along with the Cities of Johns Creek, Roswell, and Milton and Forsyth County should band together and jointly develop a regional greenways plan. This plan should not be a deep dive into exact alignments of any trails. Instead, it should identify regional greenway corridors that are important for both recreational and environmental purposes; figure out the best ways for the jurisdictions to work together; and prioritize top greenway corridors. It should also identify and “plug” any gaps in the planned trail system, including those shown in Figure 4.3.

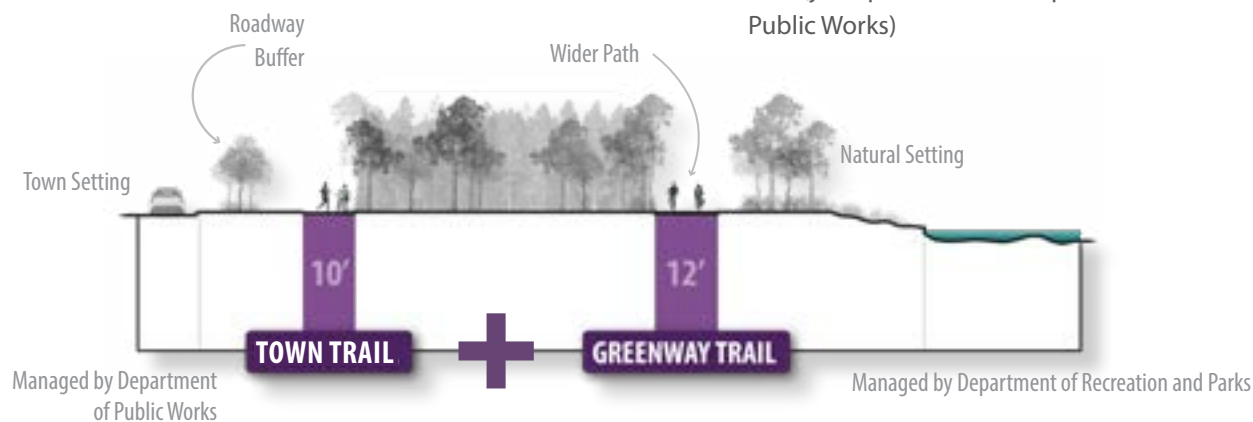
Once this broad regional greenway plan is in place, the City of Alpharetta should do a more detailed plan for its own trails. Two general types of trails are recommended: town trails and greenway trails.

Town trails are trails that would be in areas that are highly developed, like along roads. In general, these trails should be about 8 feet to 10 feet wide, and have at least a 5-foot buffer from roadways. This type of trail would be built and maintained by the Department of Public Works, and would essentially be part of the sidewalk system.

Greenway trails are more like what already exists in the Big Creek Greenway. These are trails that are much more natural in their surroundings, and are typically wider (12 feet is recommended). Greenway trails would be built and managed by the Department of Recreation and Trails.

Other Trail 2018-2027 Projects

- North Fulton/Forsyth Regional Greenways Plan
- City of Alpharetta Greenways and Trails Plan (joint plan with the Department of Public Works)



When Alpharetta starts planning trails in more detail, here are some suggested **PRINCIPLES** to get started:

- Squeeze more out of the **Big Creek Greenway**: more access points to the east, and no “orphan” trailheads—everything should connect to a bigger system
- **Fill the gaps** in the proposed system: mostly these are less than half a mile, and will have a lot of bang for the buck
- More **east-west connections**
- **Connect all parks** to the trails system
- **Connect major community destinations**—schools, shopping centers, other community facilities—to the system
- Use the **creeks as greenways**—an escape in nature throughout the city





5

PROGRAMS



Youth baseball



Adult softball at North Park

5. PROGRAMS

The City of Alpharetta’s Recreation and Parks Department offers a wide range of recreation activities and special events for the community. But like most cities in the United States, Alpharetta faces challenges getting these services to residents in an efficient, cost-effective way.

About 50 to 70 percent of most program registrants are residents of Alpharetta. Senior activities has a much lower percentage of non-residents at 20 to 40 percent. Most of the program participants who do not live in Alpharetta are coming from nearby Milton.

Key program areas include:

Program Areas	Example Programs
Special Events	Aquatics, Holiday, Cultural, Outdoor, etc.
Aquatics	Lessons, Teams, Passes
Youth Athletics	Baseball, Softball, Football, Basketball, Cheerleading, Soccer, Lacrosse
Adult Sports	Basketball, Softball, Volleyball
Recreation Programs	Sports Camps and Clinics, Gymnastics, Art, Fitness, Summer Camps, Other
Seniors	Monthly Programs: Clubs, Movies, Bingo Weekly Programs: Fitness, Games, Dance, Ping Pong, Pickleball

Programs and events take place at locations across the city. This includes both indoor and outdoor facilities, parks, athletic field complexes and specialty facilities. While this brings recreation services directly to the community, it is also more expensive and requires more staff.

The chart to the right shows the results of a program assessment, which identified current programming strengths and weaknesses. Some programs are currently stronger than others. For example, the Department conducts most of the organized team sports programs for youth in the community in cooperation with youth sports organizations, and excels in providing a variety of community-wide special events. In addition to the recreation programs and services that are provided by the City, there are a number of other organizations and facilities that are present in the market from other communities (Milton, Roswell, etc.) as well as non-profits (YMCA) and private providers.

+	Programming Strengths	-	Programming Weaknesses
	Aquatics		Fitness/Wellness
	Seniors		Outdoor Education/Recreation
	Gymnastics		Special Needs
	Youth Sports		Education
	Adult Sports		General Interest
	Summer Camps		Teens
	Special Events		-

Cultural Arts (with the new center)





The City cannot meet all of the recreation program needs of the community. Instead, the Department should fill the role of being a **“clearinghouse” for information about recreation services** provided by other organizations in the community and the surrounding area.

Program Recommendations

Although many of the Department’s program offerings are strong, there are two overarching things that the City can do to improve its services:

1. Establish a Program Plan
2. Track and Evaluate Programs Regularly

The Program Plan

The Department should establish a new program plan for recreation services. This plan needs to take into consideration the needs of the community, the role of the City, and the expectations and role of other organizations and recreation providers in the area. There should be clearly identified areas of programmatic responsibility to make sure that overlaps are minimized, and that there are no gaps in services. As part of this planning effort, it will be important to match Department programming efforts with available staff and financial resources. This will require prioritizing programming opportunities and developing areas of specific focus.

One recommended analysis is a lifecycle study for all programs offered by the Department. Programs should be classified in three categories:

- New – programs in the start-up phase that are just starting to build in popularity.
- Mature – programs that have consistently high levels of registrations and are still growing in popularity.
- Old – programs that are seeing a decline in popularity.

Ideally, the Department should have program offerings distributed equally among each category.

Through the Program Plan, the Department will also need to identify which programs and services will be offered directly by the recreation staff and which will be contracted to other individuals or organizations. Increasingly recreation departments are turning to contracted services or the outright rental of facilities to other providers to broaden programming, and limiting the role of in-house employees.

Additionally, the Department should track program trends on a regional and national basis to make sure that program offerings are current and reflect what people want today--and may want tomorrow.

Program scheduling should also be evaluated as part of this planning process. For example, the Department should look at bundling programs so that pre-school aged/youth programs have adult classes offered at the same time. The need for evening and weekend classes for working parents with children should also be evaluated.

Finally, this plan should include a more detailed look at special events. A special events analysis should answer the following questions:

- What is our philosophy behind special events? Some communities put on events with the goal of attracting people from outside the community, promoting the community, and/or bringing a diverse community together. Others

are more focused on providing entertainment to residents, and/or economic development.

- What are our key areas of focus? Sample focus areas include youth, adults, families, celebrating history, health and wellness, cultural activities, and holidays.
- What is the role of the City? This question should address the role of not just the Recreation and Parks Department, but other City departments as well. It should also explore the number of in-house events that can be supported on an annual basis, as well as those the City can co-sponsor/support.
- What is the role of other providers? Specifically, what assistance can other organizations expect from the City?
- How will the special events program be run? The topic of administration needs to be fully explored, including how proposals for new events would be handled; fees and charges for outside events; permitting; and tracking of metrics.

Tracking + Evaluating

The Department needs to make sure there are mechanisms in place to evaluate programs at each stage. For example, every new program or service should be required to fill out a program proposal form to determine the direct cost of offering it, as well as the minimum number of participants needed to conduct the program. This proposal form should also evaluate the need for the program, its market focus, and how it fits into the Program Plan and priorities of the Department.

At the end of each program or service, staff should create a report that itemizes the exact cost and revenues that were generated and the number of people served. This will determine if the program or service met its financial and service goals. Likewise, the Department should track actual costs and revenues generated by each special event that is offered by the City. When possible, the City should also try to determine total number of attendees.

Here are some key metrics to track:

- Rates of fill for classes and programs (number of registrants compared to the capacity)
- Participation numbers by individual programs and totals by program areas, along with comparisons to past years/seasons (3- to 5-year comparisons)



S'mores, Stories and Songs
at Rock Mill Park



Atlanta Braves Youth Baseball
Tournament at Wills Park



Summer Day Camp at Wills Park

- Rate of program cancellations
- Financial performance of individual programs (operating expenses versus revenues) including cost per participant
- Evaluations from participants with a numeric scoring system for comparative purposes

Though this can be tricky, the Department should also try to track use and attendance numbers for key programs and activities provided by others that use City parks and indoor facilities. This should include youth sports organizations that use City fields/facilities as well as other contract service providers.

And finally, the City should require that all contract service providers for the Department pay a minimum of 30 percent of gross revenues to the Department. If this is not possible, the City should develop straight rental agreements for use based not only on the space being used but also on the number of participants and the fee for the class.

Specific Program Recommendations

Looking ahead, the Department should start to emphasize recreation programs that focus on family/multi-generational opportunities, active seniors, and teens. Following are recommendations for each program area:

- **AQUATICS.** The Department should strongly consider operating the new aquatic center's lesson program in-house rather than contracting it out. This will provide greater consistency in programming and should also contribute a strong revenue stream for the aquatic center.
- **FITNESS/WELLNESS.** This area should have special emphasis and needs to go beyond fitness classes to include programs on wellness and healthy living. This effort should focus on youth obesity as well as senior wellness activities. Providing these programs in existing indoor facilities will be challenging, but outdoor fitness programming can be implemented immediately.
- **GENERAL INTEREST.** Developing a series of general interest programming (such as dog obedience classes and trip programs) for youth, teens, adults, families and seniors should be a priority.
- **SPECIAL NEEDS.** It is difficult for most recreation agencies to have a broad special needs program on their own. As a result, many departments in a region will often band together to provide these services in a more cost-effective manner. The Department should consider partnering

with other organizations for special needs programming; this could occur at Crabapple Government Center once the arts programming has moved out.

- **TEENS.** Additional services and programs will need to be targeted to this age group. It is anticipated that these will primarily be offered by the City and other providers with experience with teens.
- **OUTDOOR EDUCATION/RECREATION.** The Department has a number of parks with great natural resources, such as forested areas and streams. These sites could be used to expand outdoor recreation programming. Given national trends, this program area is likely to increase in demand over the next years. Programming will likely be a mix of City and other providers. The Department should work with the environmental education staff person in Public Works to expand programming in this area.
- **SPECIAL EVENTS.** As part of the Program Plan, the Department should evaluate its approach to special events. It should consider reducing the number of community-wide special events per year/month that it provides on its own. A good rule of thumb is 15 per year or 2 per month, but the City should determine its own maximum based on its staffing and goals.



6 ARTS + CULTURE

6. ARTS + CULTURE

Up to this point, arts and cultural programming has been limited by the modest facilities available at Crabapple Government Center. However, with the opening of the Arts Center, this area of programming is about to take off.

Currently, the major focus for most cultural arts programs has been on the visual arts with both adult and youth offerings in painting, drawing, and pottery. There are a limited number of music instruction classes as well. The City has also established an outdoor arts program and hopes to grow this over the coming years.

Right now there are virtually no indoor performing arts-based activities available. Although the new center will help support arts programming and arts display, it will not be a location that can easily host larger arts performances. One facility that may help to fill this void is the new 500-seat performing arts center that the school district is building at the former Milton High School site.

Arts + Culture Recommendations

The Arts Center

The new Arts Center should serve as the hub for cultural arts programs and events in the community, and act as an incubator for new programs and cultural arts organizations.

The center will need to have a well-conceived operating plan to fill this role. This plan will need to address how each of the planned spaces in the building will be used and programmed. There will need to be specific priorities for internal Department uses as well as use by other community arts organizations. While the Arts Center should provide a home for many cultural arts groups, no one group or organization should dominate it.



Department staff has set as its goal to have the new Arts Center serve four programming roles:

- Visual/Fine Arts
- Performing Arts
- Gallery Shows and Special Events
- Technology and Community Programs

These four programming areas should form the core of a cultural arts program plan, which should be a sub-section of the recommended Program Plan. This plan needs to detail out the types of programs and services that will be offered by the Department over the next three to five years and the role of other providers in this effort. As part of this effort, the City should evaluate the desire for programs in animation, audio, and film production to capitalize on this growing industry in the region and the strong technology sector already present in the city. Although these programs would require an upfront investment in equipment and technology, they could be a key differentiator between Alpharetta and its peers.

More staff will be needed to manage, operate, and provide programming at the Arts Center. This could include an additional cultural arts coordinator, center facility monitors, and a variety of part-time instructors. To offer a high quality of programming, the City will need to invest in well-educated and talented instructors for all programs and services. The center will also need a comprehensive marketing plan that should include sponsorship opportunities, which would augment City investment in the facility.

Use, event, and programming numbers need to be closely tracked at the center every year. Ideally there should be a separate budget for the Arts Center that also covers all cultural arts programs and activities. The budget should be based on a fee for service concept for most programming and activities that take place at the center. A good goal would be to recover between 30 and 50 percent of its cost of operation. The Arts Center should also have its own “Friends” group as a support group for the center and its programs and services.

CORE PROGRAMMING AREAS

- 1 VISUAL/FINE ARTS
- 2 PERFORMING ARTS
- 3 GALLERY SHOWS AND SPECIAL EVENTS
- 4 TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMS



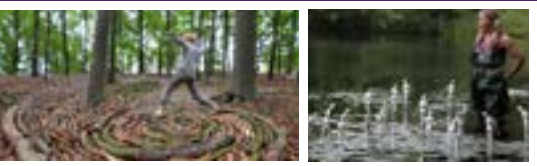
PUBLIC ART: BEYOND THE BRONZE SCULPTURE

Public art is so much more than sculptures. Check out these examples, and imagine what can happen in an Art-Infused Alpharetta.



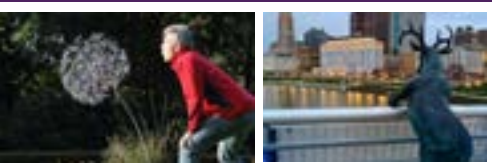
FUNCTIONAL ART

This is exactly what sounds like: art with a function or purpose, like benches, bike racks, and shelters.



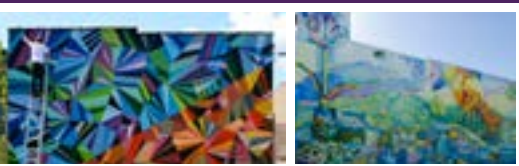
ENVIRONMENTAL ART

Nature-based art that mostly uses natural materials and is made for a specific place.



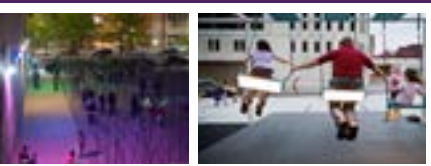
SCULPTURAL ART

What most people think of when they hear “public art,” sculpture can run the gamut between highly traditional to surprising.



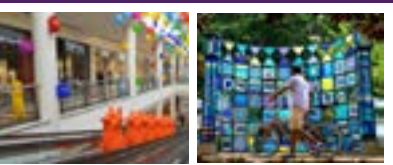
MURALS

Art—usually painted—on publicly-visible surfaces like building walls, retaining walls, and along roadways.



INTERACTIVE ART

This kind of art invites people to not just observe it, but to engage it directly. A lot of these installations take advantage of cool technology, and really shine at night.



TEMPORARY EXHIBITS

Temporary exhibits can be as quick-lived as only a few hours to many months, and are a good way to try out more experimental types of art—without a big commitment.

More than the Arts Center: An Art-Infused Alpharetta

Like the Arts Center serving as a hub for arts in Alpharetta, the City will need to increasingly take on the role of a coordinating agency for arts activities and events in the city. This should include other arts organizations and facilities in the community. Forming an Alpharetta Arts Council would help with this effort. Along these lines, the Arts Center should not be the only location in the city for these types of activities to take place.

The City has an opportunity to lead the future of arts and culture in the community, particularly in how the arts can be incorporated into public spaces. To really accomplish this at a large scale, the City should undertake an Arts and Culture Master Plan, with an emphasis on public art. This plan should include the following:

- An inventory of all arts and cultural organizations operating in Alpharetta, both public and private
- Interviews with representatives from arts and cultural organizations
- At least one public workshop
- Vision and goals for arts and culture in the community
- Plan for art in public spaces, including functional art, environmental art, sculptural art, murals, interactive art, and temporary exhibits; this should include general guidelines for each and a list of potential locations
- Arts and cultural programming needs assessment and recommendations, including a close look at special events (as part of the Program Plan)
- Identification of partners and funding sources, both public and private
- Identification of policy changes required to support the vision for an Arts-Infused Alpharetta

Festivals + Other Cultural Events

A major piece of the arts and culture puzzle is festivals and special events. Festivals can be defined as events, usually put on by a local community, to celebrate some significant or unique aspect of that community. There are three main types of roles the City can play in festivals:



ART-INFUSED ALPHARETTA

- Producing the festival from top to bottom
- Co-sponsoring festivals with other organizations
- Authorizing permits required for other organizations' festivals and events

As part of the special events analysis in the Program Plan, there should be a particular focus on developing a long-term strategy for arts and cultural events. This should start with performing an inventory of all festivals and arts/cultural events in Alpharetta, and identifying any overlaps or gaps. This should also include a high-level look at arts and cultural events happening in nearby jurisdictions to see how “saturated” the market is for certain event types. This process would also be an opportunity to look at combining multiple smaller events into festivals with bigger impact.

In the near term, it is recommended that Alpharetta focus on producing a handful of cultural events that have broad community support, and encourage other organizations to put on events where the City can co-sponsor. This will not only put less pressure on Department staff, but is likely to result in a broader diversity of event types. Like other Department programs, all arts and cultural events should be evaluated following the events' conclusion to determine how successful it was, costs versus revenue, and lessons learned.

It Starts in Parks

The Recreation and Parks Department has the opportunity to lead the way in arts and cultural investment. Every improvement at the parks is an opportunity to integrate art and culture. For example:

- The raised sewer manholes along the Big Creek Greenway are opportunities for public art.
- In upgrading city-wide signage and wayfinding, local artists could be part of the design process and help establish the New Standard of art in parks. And
- Within Wills Park, horse shoes—either painted or embedded—in pathways could lead people to the Equestrian Center
- The upgraded entrance to the Equestrian Center could be a “paddock” populated with horse statues

BENCHMARK: ASHEVILLE

Despite its small size, Asheville, North Carolina, is known throughout the southeast as a premier destination for arts and culture. Although Asheville has long attracted creativity, it wasn't until the late 1990s when the City officially adopted a policy on public art. This policy stated that the City would:

- "Provide public art in buildings and public spaces.
- Promote Asheville as an arts destination city and use public art as a major attraction for cultural tourism and economic development.
- Provide a structured process to acquire public art through donations of money, or direct donation of artwork.
- Provide for maintenance of public art throughout the city.
- Educate the citizens of Asheville and visitors about local culture and history through art."

To help implement the policy, the City has a Public Art and Culture Commission that oversees the public art program. Importantly, the Commission played a vital part in developing a downtown walking trail with over 30 "stations" of public art that tell the story of Asheville's history and culture. The walking trail is considered part of the City's curated collection of public art, which also includes the Energy Loop and Deco Gecko sculptures, City Hall murals, and life-sized bronze sculpture of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Asheville's commitment to arts and culture extends to festivals and special events. To help boost the number of festivals without producing more on its own, Asheville has a program set up for organizations to apply for co-sponsor support from the City. Support ranges from services such as waiving permits, to providing police and fire support, but it does not involve any cash investment from the City.

Importantly, the City of Asheville is not alone in providing arts and culture. Organizations such as the Asheville Art Arts Council (AAAC) play critical roles in not only providing arts programming, but also serving as conveners for arts and culture stakeholders in the region. The AAAC provides a physical home for arts and culture in its Refinery Creator Space, which provides studios for rent, exhibit halls, a media lab, office space for arts organization, special events space, and houses artists in residence.

ART TRAIL



SPECIAL EVENTS





TODO

7. THE TO-DO LIST

The next 10 years will be busy for the Recreation and Parks Department. This master plan points to a number of capital projects that need to be built, more studies to be done, and relationships to strengthen. It can be a lot to keep track of, but here are the big ideas:

BIG IDEAS

1

KEEP ON KEEPIN' ON.

Finish our big projects: the Big Creek Greenway, Alpha Loop, and developing the new neighborhood parks.

2

OUT WITH THE OLD

The major focus for capital projects will be to replace old and aging facilities at our parks. Restroom and concession buildings will also get expanded, and playgrounds should be upgraded with cool new designs and equipment.

3

MAKE AN ENTRANCE

Every park will get a facelift for a better first impression: this includes new signage and beautiful, eye-catching landscaping.

4

WHEN THERE'S A WILLS THERE'S A WAY

At Wills Park, there is something for everyone. We will invest in expanding the park, and also in a master plan that takes the park to a new level of fun.

6

WE'RE ALL IN IT TOGETHER.

Our neighbors are also working hard to improve and manage their parks, trails, and programs. We can net bigger benefits by working together, including joint operations/planning with the Cities of Milton and Johns Creek, and planning regionally for greenways.

5

RISING IN THE EAST.

A lot of improvements are planned for the east. On the Big Creek Greenway, the northern extension will be finished, new trail access points will be added, and a brand new trailhead will be built at Union Hill Park. A new community park is also recommended for the east side, as is a master plan to make better use of Webb Bridge Park.

How do we accomplish this? Through:

- Getting major facilities on a regular replacement schedule
- Updating the City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)
- Pursuing additional funding sources
- Making key internal improvements to keep things running smoothly

Turn the page for all the details!

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

2018-2027

PARKS

- Acquire at least another 52 acres of parkland by 2030; target locations for new acreage should be east Alpharetta, central Alpharetta, land adjacent to Wills Park, and land adjacent to the new Kimball Bridge Road Park.
- Upgrade entrances at all parks with new, bolder signage and landscaping
- For Fitness Park at Westside, the City should talk to residents in the Jamestown neighborhood about building a direct pedestrian connection to the park.
- At Brooke Street Park, activate the space with more programming and evaluate use of the arboretum area over time
- Replace the playground at Cogburn Road Park by 2027
- Develop a joint use/management agreement with the City of Milton to operate Crabapple Government Center and North Park
- Develop a master plan for North Park
- Also at North Park, replace the softball field and football field restrooms/concessions facilities; replace turf at Fields #1, #2, and the Miracle League field; resurface the tennis courts
- Develop the planned trailhead facilities at Union Hill Park; until this happens, program the covered roller hockey rink with a range of events
- Engage Johns Creek to jointly master plan Webb Bridge Park and Ocee Park
- At Webb Bridge Park, replace the restrooms/concessions at the soccer field; replace turf at the lower soccer field; resurface the tennis courts; and build a trail linking the park directly with Lake Windward Elementary School
- Create a master plan for Wills Park that includes a specific plan for the Equestrian Center and a study of its economic impacts; also include a feasibility study for indoor aquatics at the park.
- In the meantime at Wills Park, replace/expand bathrooms at Fields A-D and Wacky World; replace turf at Field #4, resurface tennis and basketball courts; replace the Kings Ridge playground; and renovate the Community Center
- Implement the first phase of the master plan for Windward Soccer Complex
- Develop master plans for all five of the newly acquired parks parcels, and implement a first phase of building at each

EQUESTRIAN CENTER

- Establish a new master plan for the facility as part of the Wills Park master planning process (see Parks, above)
- Improve the footing and address condition issues at the covered arena
- Relocate the maintenance building away from the entrance toward the middle of Wills Park
- Establish a location specifically for food trucks
- Update the P.A. system
- Develop a fundraising and sponsorship campaign, as well as a “Friends group”

TRAILS

- Complete the northern extension of the Big Creek Greenway
- At the Big Creek Greenway, add more trailheads to the east side; address boardwalk maintenance issues; and pilot a public art project for turning the sewer infrastructure into more of an amenity
- Continue to implement the Alpha Loop
- Partner with other North Fulton County cities and Forsyth County to develop a regional greenway plan
- Develop a city-wide trails master plan detailing locations of urban trails and greenways

PROGRAMS

- The Recreation and Parks Department should act as a clearinghouse for recreation programs in the community, including programs offered by other providers
- Establish a Program Plan to guide new programming and track trends
- Increase tracking and evaluating of current programs
- When the new aquatics center at Wills Park is complete, consider operating the swimming lesson program with in-house staff
- Expand programming in fitness/wellness, general interest, special needs, and for teens
- Take a close look at special events run by the Department, and focus on those that are most successful

ARTS + CULTURE

- The new Arts Center should serve as the arts and cultural hub for the community, and be an incubator for new arts initiatives
- Develop an operating plan for the Center
- Include a special focus on arts and culture programming in the Department-wide Program Plan, with an emphasis on visual/ fine arts, performing arts, gallery shows and special events, and technology and community programs
- Develop a city-wide Arts and Culture Master Plan

REPLACEMENT PROGRAM

Almost all recreation and parks facilities and products have a known lifespan, giving the Department a good idea of when to expect to replace them.

Four of the most common (and more expensive) facilities to replace/update include restrooms, playgrounds, turf fields, and tennis/basketball courts. Their typical lifespans are:

- Restrooms: 30 years
- Playgrounds: 30 Years
- Turf Fields: 10 years
- Tennis Court Surfaces: 5-8 years

Table 7.1 shows expected replacements for each of these facilities at all Alpharetta parks through 2027. Facilities with a year that has already passed are those that are due for an upgrade as soon as possible.

This calendar should be used as a guideline, not as a hard and fast schedule. Some facilities may experience more wear and tear and require replacement sooner, whereas others may be able to hold up a few years past their typical lifespans. And in some cases, the capital funds may not be available in the exact year identified. Instead, the replacement schedule is a general pattern that can help the Department set aside funds in the CIP at about the right time.

TABLE 7.1. FACILITY REPLACEMENTS, 2015-2027

Year	Location	Facility
2015	North Park	Turf at Football Field #1
2016	North Park	Tennis Court Resurfacing
2017	Wills Park	Wacky World Playground (although “due,” this playground is not recommended for replacement; instead, ongoing maintenance should continue)
2017	Wills Park	Recreation Center Playground
2018	North Park	Softball Field Restroom/Concession Building Replacement
2019	Webb Bridge	Tennis Court Resurfacing
2019	Wills Park	Tennis Court Resurfacing
2020	Wills Park	Outdoor Basketball Court Resurfacing
2020	Wills Park	Restroom Building Replacement at Wacky World Playground
2021	North Park	Turf at Football Field #2
2021	Wills Park	Turf at Field #4
2023	Wills Park	Equestrian Bath House Building Replacement (note: to be deferred until after the master plan for Wills Park)
2023	Wills Park	Kings Ridge Playground Replacement
2024	North Park	Turf at Miracle Field
2027	Big Creek Greenway	Restroom Building Replacement off North Point Parkway
2027	Cogburn Road	Playground Replacement
2027	North Park	Football Field #1 Restroom/Concession/Press Box Building Replacement
2027	Union Hill	Restroom/Concession Building Replacement (note: to be replaced with new trailhead facilities)
2027	Webb Bridge	Soccer Field Restroom/Concession Building Replacement
2027	Webb Bridge	Turf Replacement at Lower Soccer Field
2027	Wills Park	Restroom/Concession Building Replacement at Fields A-D

Beyond 2027, the following facilities should be on the list for replacement:

TABLE 7.2. FACILITY REPLACEMENTS, 2028-2040

Year	Location	Facility
2030	North Park	Restroom/Concession Building Replacement at Fields 6-8
2030	North Park	Playground at Fields #1-4
2031	North Park	Tennis Restroom Building Replacement
2031	Webb Bridge	Baseball Restroom/Concession Building Replacement
2033	Webb Bridge	Tennis Restroom Building Replacement
2034	Big Creek Greenway	Restroom Building Replacement at YMCA
2034	North Park	Miracle League Restroom/Concession Building Replacement
2037	Rock Mill	Restroom Building Replacement
2037	Webb Bridge	Webb Zone Playground (although “due,” this playground is not recommended for replacement; instead, ongoing maintenance should continue)
2039	Webb Bridge	Phase III Restroom Building Replacement

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN, 2018-2017

The Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is a list of projects—mostly physical—that are identified for implementation between 2018 and 2027. These projects have all been identified through the master plan process, and a “rough order of magnitude” cost was calculated for each.

Under the “Implementation” column, those with a note that starts with “CIP” indicate that the project is part of, or can be rolled into a line item in the City’s working CIP; those that say “Request” are projects that need to be requested for inclusion. Some projects have price tags that are beyond what will reasonably be available through the City’s General Fund/Capital Fund; the costs for these are shown in the “\$ Other” column.



Cogburn Road Park Playground



North Park Concession Building

TABLE 7.3. RECOMMENDED PROJECTS, 2018-2027*

	Location	Project	Repl?	\$ CIP	\$ Other	Implementation	Year
Existing Parks	Avalon Fitness Park	Entrance Upgrades		\$20,000		CIP - Parks System Wayfinding Signage	2019-2023
	Big Creek Greenway	Northern Extension			\$6,200,000	Funded by bond	
	Big Creek Greenway	Sewer Infrastructure Art Pilot			\$16,500	Grants/partnerships	
	Big Creek Greenway	Wildwings Boardwalk Replacement		\$1,500,000		Request 2019	
	Big Creek Greenway	"Old Boardwalk" Creek Stabilization		\$220,000		Request 2020	
	Big Creek Greenway	Restroom Replacement at North Point Parkway	Yes	\$350,000		Request 2027	
	Big Creek Greenway	Entrance Upgrades		\$55,000		CIP - Parks System Wayfinding Signage	2019-2023
	Big Creek Greenway	Wayfinding		\$55,000		CIP - Parks System Wayfinding Signage	2019-2023
	Brooke Street Park	Entrance Upgrades		\$30,000		CIP - Parks System Wayfinding Signage	2019-2023
	Cogburn Road Park	Playground Replacement	Yes	\$150,000		Request 2027	
	Cogburn Road Park	Entrance Upgrades		\$20,000		CIP - Parks System Wayfinding Signage	2019-2023
	Crabapple	Entrance Upgrades		\$20,000		CIP - Parks System Wayfinding Signage	2019-2023
	North Park	Entrance Upgrades		\$30,000		CIP - Parks System Wayfinding Signage	2019-2023
	North Park	Joint Use/Management Study and Master Plan with Milton		\$30,000		CIP - Design Services	2026
	North Park	Softball Bathroom/Concessions Replacement	Yes	\$400,000		CIP - Concessions/Restrooms	2019
	North Park	Turf Replacement at Field #1	Yes	\$600,000		CIP - Synthetic Turf Replacement	2020
	North Park	Tennis Court Resurfacing	Yes	\$60,000		CIP - Tennis Court Resurfacing	2019
	North Park	Turf Replacement at Football Field #2	Yes	\$600,000		Request 2021	
	North Park	Miracle League Turf Replacement	Yes	\$400,000		Request 2024	
	North Park	Football Field 1 Restroom/Concession/Pressbox Building at North Park	Yes	\$400,000		Request 2027	
	Rock Hill Park	Entrance Upgrades		\$20,000		CIP - Parks System Wayfinding Signage	2019-2023
	Union Hill Park	Trailhead Development		\$500,000	\$1,000,000	Phase I CIP Neighborhood Park; bond recommended for Phase 2	2021

*This chart does not include all Recreation and Parks Department items currently in the working CIP, just those that are pertinent to this master

	Location	Project	Repl?	\$ CIP	\$ Other	Implementation	Year
Existing Parks	Union Hill Park	Entrance Upgrades		\$20,000		CIP - Parks System Wayfinding Signage	2019-2023
	Webb Bridge Park	Master Plan		\$50,000		CIP - Design Services	2021
	Webb Bridge Park	Master Plan Implementation			\$10,000,000	Bond recommended	
	Webb Bridge Park	Restroom/Concession Replacement/Expansion at Soccer Fields	Yes	\$400,000		CIP-Concession Restroom Improvements	2021
	Webb Bridge Park	Turf Replacement at Lower Soccer Field	Yes	\$600,000		CIP - Synthetic Turf Replacement	2018
	Webb Bridge Park	Tennis Court Resurfacing	Yes	\$40,000		CIP - Tennis Court Resurfacing	2021
	Webb Bridge Park	Entrance Upgrades		\$30,000		CIP - Parks System Wayfinding Signage	2019-2023
	Wills Park	Master Plan		\$200,000		request 2019	
	Wills Park	Master Plan Implementation			\$20,000,000	bond recommended	
	Wills Park	Bathroom Renovation/Expansion Fields A-D	Yes	\$400,000		request 2027	
	Wills Park	Bathroom Renovation/Expansion at Wacky World	Yes	\$400,000		CIP-Concession Restroom Improvements	2020
	Wills Park	Field #4 Turf Replacement	Yes	\$600,000		request 2021	
	Wills Park	Tennis Court Resurfacing	Yes	\$60,000		CIP - Tennis Court Resurfacing	2022
	Wills Park	Outdoor Basketball Court Resurfacing	Yes	\$20,000		request 2020	
	Wills Park	Kings Ridge Playground Replacement	Yes	\$220,000		partial coverage by existing line item; request for 2023	
	Wills Park	Recreation Center Playground Replacement	Yes	\$165,000		request 2019	
	Wills Park	Community Center Renovation		\$1,047,404		request 2026	
	Wills Park	PA System Upgrade at Equestrian Center		\$30,000		request 2019	
	Wills Park	Entrance Upgrades		\$110,000		CIP - Parks System Wayfinding Signage	2019-2023
	Windward Hill	Implement Master Plan		\$500,000	\$1,000,000	Phase I for 500k in CIP - Neighborhood Park Dev; bond for Phase II	2020
	Windward Hill	Entrance Upgrades		\$20,000		CIP - Parks System Wayfinding Signage	2019-2023
	Total			\$10,372,404	\$32,016,500		

	Location	Project	Repl?	\$ CIP	\$ Other	Implementation	Year
New Parks	Old Rucker Road	Master Plan		\$17,000		CIP - Park Master Plan for New Acquired Land	2018
	Old Rucker Road	Implementation		\$500,000	\$1,500,000	Phase I, CIP - Neighborhood Park Renovation/ Development; phase II bond	2019
	Milton Avenue	Master Plan		\$17,000		CIP - Park Master Plan for New Acquired Land	2018
	Milton Avenue	Implementation		\$500,000	\$1,500,000	Phase I, CIP - Neighborhood Park Renovation/ Development; phase II bond	2022
	Mid Broadwell	Master Plan		\$17,000		CIP - Park Master Plan for New Acquired Land	2018
	Mid Broadwell	Implementation		\$500,000	\$1,500,000	Phase I, CIP - Neighborhood Park Renovation/ Development; phase II bond	2023
	Mayfield	Master Plan		\$17,000		CIP - Park Master Plan for New Acquired Land	2018
	Mayfield	Implementation		\$500,000	\$1,500,000	Phase I, CIP - Neighborhood Park Renovation/ Development; phase II bond	2024
	Kimball Bridge	Master Plan		\$35,000		CIP Design Services	2024
	Kimball Bridge	Implementation		\$500,000	\$6,000,000	Phase I, CIP - Neighborhood Park Renovation/ Development; phase II bond	2025
Total				\$2,603,000	\$12,000,000		

	Location	Project	Repl?	\$ CIP	\$ Other	Implementation	Year
Trails	Greenways	North Fulton Greenway Master Plan		\$25,000		CIP - Design Services	2019
	Greenways	Alpharetta Trails Master Plan		\$75,000		CIP - Design Services	2022-2023
	Greenways	Big Creek Greenway Access A: Lake Windward Dr		\$50,000		request 2027	
	Greenways	Big Creek Greenway Access B: Alpharetta High School			\$100,000	Grants/partnerships	
	Greenways	Big Creek Greenway Access C: Kimball Bridge Multi-Family		\$140,000		request 2025	
	Greenways	Big Creek Greenway Access D: Thorn Berry - Hampton Hall		\$275,000		request 2026	
	Greenways	Webb Bridge Park link to Lake Windward Elementary School			\$120,000	Grants/partnerships	
Total				\$565,000	\$220,000		

Recommended Projects Total (All Categories)				\$13,540,404	\$44,236,500		
				Bond	\$44,000,000		



Playground at Wills Park

OTHER CIP RECOMMENDATIONS

- Align playground equipment replacement funding with actual planned playground replacements for the Wills Park Recreation Center Playground (2019), Kings Ridge Playground at Wills Park (2023) and Cogburn Road Park (2027); reserve some money annually for ongoing maintenance of Wacky World and Webb Zone.
- Delay Wills Park drainage and water quality improvements (currently in CIP for 2019-2021) until after Wills Park Master Plan is complete; try to address issues through low-impact dedevelopment (LID) principles and re-location of activities that are exacerbating erosion problems.
- Use the Webb Park Master Plan to examine erosion control issues at a site-wide level, and re-evaluate need and price of Webb Bridge Park Erosion Control/Parking Lot Repaving project (CIP 2026)

BEYOND THE CIP: FUNDING, SPONSORSHIPS, AND PARTNERSHIPS

The CIP project list is based on the City's projected General/Capital Fund. Big ticket items, such as later phases of park development, will require alternative funding sources. In order to reach the **New Standard** of Alpharetta parks, the City should consider asking voters for a Recreation and Parks bond. To cover all of the parks projects in this plan, a bond of about \$44 million would be needed.

Smaller projects, such as public art projects or short trail connections, are candidates for funding through grants and/or partnerships.

The City should also enable people to directly invest in their parks, both in terms of time and money. "Friends of" groups should be started for the City's major parks, which would provide a way for residents and stakeholders to get more involved. The City should also establish a program that allows for naming rights for parks and facilities to help fund bigger projects, such as the construction of new equestrian facilities at Wills Park.

OPERATIONAL COSTS

With every improvement to the recreation and parks system, there will be an increase to the amount of time and money the Department must spend to take care of it. A general rule of thumb is to add 5 percent to the operations budget every year.

INTERNAL TO-DO LIST

The key to instituting the recommendations of the master plan is having a strong administrative process in place to support this effort.

Currently the Recreation and Parks Department does have a strong operations structure in place, and is well-staffed. Budgeting practices are also relatively strong, and facilities are very well maintained. However, staff is located at remote locations throughout the city, and the Department generally does not expand recreation opportunities by partnering a lot with the schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations will help the Department implement this update to the master plan.

- Move towards consolidating most programs and administrative staff at a central facility in Wills Park
- Improve the Department's website to better serve the community and support program registration
- Establish a program that allows naming rights for parks and facilities

- Develop an umbrella Friends of Alpharetta Parks and Recreation organization with subareas dedicated to Wills Park, the Equestrian Center and the Arts and Cultural Center
- Strengthen the relationship with Fulton County Schools to allow more use of school facilities (indoor and outdoor) at reduced fees. This would help expand services without having to add as many new facilities
- Establish a comprehensive fee setting policy that dictates procedures and formulas for setting fees for facility use, recreation programs, and rentals

Follow-on Plans and Studies:

- Create a basic **marketing plan** for the Department's parks, trails, facilities, and programs
- Develop a comprehensive **security and safety plan** for all parks, trails and facilities as well as establish a site-specific **emergency action plan**
- Expand the replacement schedule in this plan into a full **capital replacement plan** that puts all basic equipment in parks maintenance, facilities operations, and program provision on a schedule

At least every five years, the Department should also complete a demographic analysis that examines age distribution, income levels, and ethnicity of the community and the surrounding market area. It is important to recognize the changing character of Alpharetta, such as the densifying downtown area and Avalon, and how this growth will impact the delivery of parks and recreation facilities and services in the future.



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