

# McMinn COUNTY

## RECREATION MASTER PLAN

INCLUDING THE CITIES OF ATHENS,  
ETOWAH, NIOTA AND THE TOWNS  
OF CALHOUN, ENGLEWOOD

JULY 2021



Kimley»Horn



# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN





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## INTRODUCTION

McMinn County, located in Southeast Tennessee at the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains, is a family-oriented community rich in heritage and history. Located between Knoxville and Chattanooga, McMinn County encompasses five incorporated communities. Included and studied as part of this master plan are the cities of Athens, Etowah, Niota, and the towns of Calhoun and Englewood. Economic progress and strong industrial growth in the County are balanced with the quaint, friendly communities that make up the cities and towns.

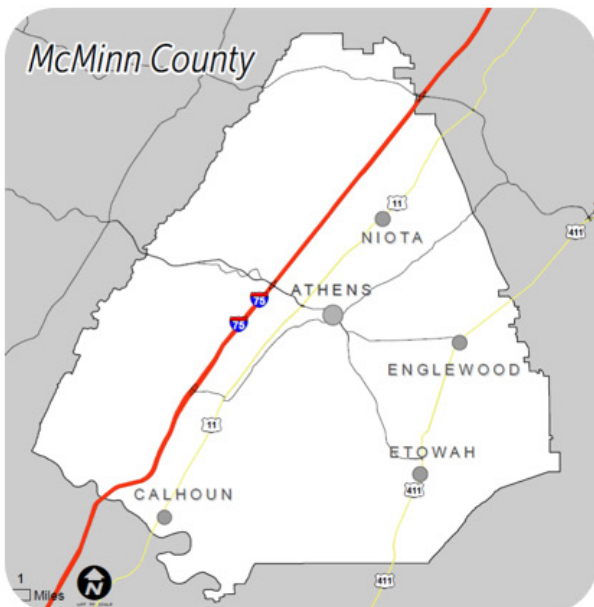
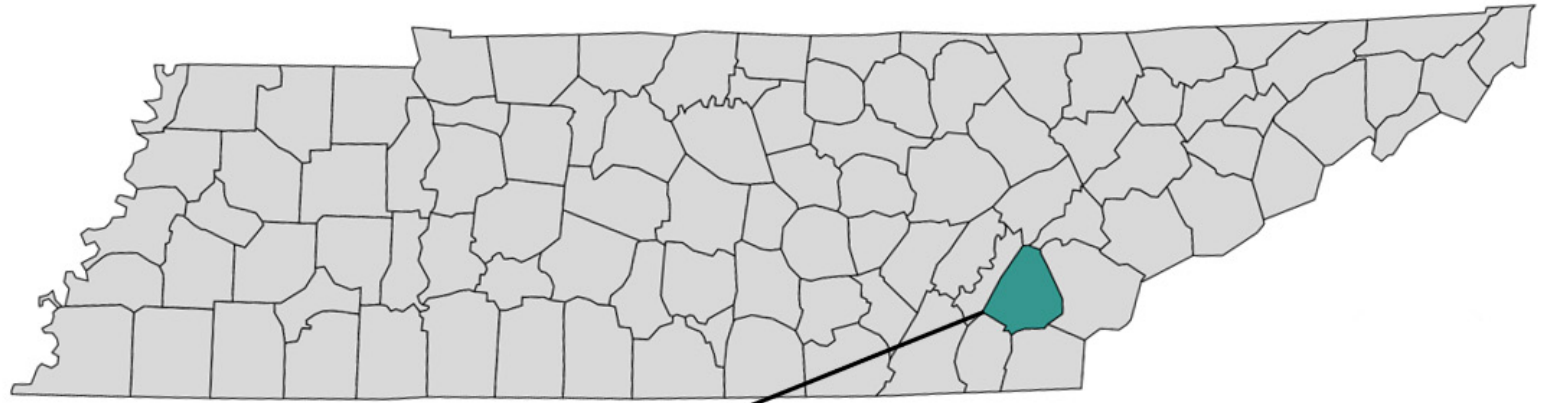
This Master Plan was developed as an update to the existing Recreation Planning Report to evaluate current recreational facilities and amenities in order to provide achievable future recreation goals. This document should provide support and a framework for guiding the County's park system over the next 10 years.

Divided into six chapters, this Master Plan analyzes the previous Recreation Report, current demographics, relevant community engagement efforts, existing recreation assets and facilities, benchmarking peer communities, and finally, presents an implementation plan. Throughout the document, the theme of maintaining McMinn's unique character and building on existing efforts is emphasized.

As part of the Needs Assessment Study in 2019, the City of Athens and McMinn County commissioned Management Learning Laboratories (MLL) to collect citizen input and conduct social science research to initiate this Recreation Master Plan process. The goal of the Needs Assessment Study was to "elicit interest, behavior, demographic, and attitude information from the citizens served by the client concerning recreation and leisure." The study concludes with recommendations for the community supported by the information collected, which provided detailed data for this Recreation Master Plan.









## CHAPTER 1: SUMMARY OF EXISTING PLANS

### CITY OF ATHENS AND MCMINN COUNTY RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY - JULY 2019

#### PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW

The City of Athens and McMinn County Recreation Needs Assessment Survey was conducted by Management Learning Laboratories (MLL) to obtain information to aid the County in responding to the recreational needs of its residents and visitors, anticipating future needs, and planning an approach to continue to meet residential needs in the future. This effort was expected to serve as a resource in the master planning process.

Information to help develop the study questionnaire was gathered through personal interviews and focus group meetings. Beginning with a random sample of 9,000 residents, the study's final data set consisted of 282 responses. As a follow up to the initial phase of data collection, the questionnaire remained available via website through July 2020.

#### STUDY RESULTS

The study questionnaire contained four sections focused on the following topics: demographics of respondents, recreational facility and program interest, personal opinions about County offerings and marketing/publicity effectiveness, and recreational "areas of emphasis," which were questions regarding a list of programmatic and facility additions that had been previously requested by constituents.

##### Demographics of Respondents

When considering the demographics of the study, the gender and age of the study's sample respondents were comparable to the County's census distribution. In total, two-thirds of respondents indicated a household with at least one child under the age of 18 living at home, while 15% of respondents indicated a person with a disability in their home. 80% of respondents had some college education with 45% claiming to have graduated from college with a 4-year degree. Given the demographic responses to questions in this section of the survey, it can be concluded that overall, respondents represent a somewhat affluent family-oriented segment of the population. Based on the census, the respondents to the survey can be considered to be generally representative of the community.

##### Facility/Program Interest

Generally, the community was interested in active recreation with a strong support for activities related to sports, athletics, and recreation with health and wellness implications. The community is also interested in passive social recreational offerings such as outdoor dining, travel, tourism, performing arts, and special events.

A word cloud titled "Hiking" and "Walking" in large, bold, pink letters. The words are arranged in a circular pattern around the center. Other words include: mountain, plays, gaming, crafts, travel, shooting, trails, park, events, social, travel, yoga, exercise, church, also, music, basketball, games, nature, softball, classes, fishing, riding, camping, and eating outdoor.

Barriers to participation centered around a lack of time, a lack of overlap of program offerings and resident availability, or a lack of information. Generally, the survey indicated that this is a busy community with competing demands on its time. Fewer concerns were related to facility quality (safety, staffing, cost), except for maintenance and parking concerns.



Beyond digital methods, data also suggested the community would look for information in flyers distributed in public places or through schools.

Questions related to personal opinions about recreation garnered responses that further strengthened the theme that the community is interested in nature, dining out (especially in downtown Athens), and being able to enjoy recreational opportunities with their families. The community understood the value in these opportunities and are willing to support events/activities with taxes and user fees.

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## "Areas of Emphasis"

When respondents were surveyed on "areas of emphasis" (or recreational need) the general response demonstrated that the community is multi-faceted and there are some concerns about a lack of opportunities. A need for family-based activities including dining options (such as concessions) and special events (concerts and seasonal activities) were the most common themes as indicated by survey responses. This answer is reflective of people using parks for events and noticing needs for dining options. When residents frequently visit and enjoy a park, the desire arises for economical investment in that location.



*(Areas of Emphasis, page 23).*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Facilities

Results suggested the community is satisfied with the state of the recreation facilities. Key outcomes included the following:

- Facilities are safe and clean with a high quality of maintenance; efforts should be made to keep up these standards
- Offer adequate facilities for walking, hiking, and bicycle riding
- Offer more dining options to the community, especially through the availability of affordable concessions at facilities
- Create a multi-use community center that would make it possible for the community to have a space for a large number of different activities including family events
- Offer multiple additional community centers throughout the County
- Develop the downtown of Athens as a recreation destination with special emphasis on dining opportunities
- Work toward a greater equity between the different facilities in different parts of the County



## Programming

Results suggested that the community has multiple programming interests with a focus on family, dining out, and active recreation.

Key outcomes included the following points:

- Offer programming that would attract the entire family
- More recreation opportunities for all age groups, including concerts, special events, season festivals and opportunities for adults
- Develop active recreation opportunities for all age groups, these could include swimming and year-round sports
- Offer programs when people are available to participate, such as on the weekends and weekday evenings, as identified in the 2019 Recreation Needs Assessment
- Offer more programming for people with disabilities

## Management Issues

Results suggested the community is satisfied with the way public recreation is managed, and made the following suggestions for improvement:

- Consider the best ways of taking advantage of reasonable user fees to provide new programs that will be of interest to the residents
- Widely publicize recreational opportunities to inform residents
- Disseminate information about recreational opportunities digitally (such as through social media or website) and traditionally (such as through flyers or newspaper) to reach a wide variety of residents
- Maintain the positive public perceptions by continuing to prioritize customer service and to offer high quality facilities and programs



## CHAPTER 1: SUMMARY OF EXISTING PLANS (CONTINUED)

### 2000 MCMINN COUNTY RECREATION PLANNING REPORT

McMinn previously completed a Recreation Planning Report, updating the identified needs to improve recreation facilities, programs, and services to all residents of McMinn County. The following pages list main summary items from that report.

#### PROJECT BACKGROUND

McMinn County contains five incorporated communities, all of which provide some level of recreation service to its residents. The resources needed to develop quality recreation programs are limited, and all five communities are vying for these same resources to develop their own recreation facilities and programs. This competition limits potential recreational opportunities within McMinn County because the resources are being divided into smaller portions. The splitting of resources has resulted in unbalanced distribution of recreation opportunities. To develop a more balanced recreation system in the County, existing recreation trends in McMinn County need to be evaluated to determine where changes should be made to provide quality recreation to all residents, as well as to increase each community's chances of receiving grants for funding.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

This planning study contained several recommendations organized into the following categories: new policies, taking advantage of the Tennessee Recreation Initiative Program, area-specific recommendations, funding, programs and special events, facilities, facility development, and new facilities. Each recommendation is explained in the following sections below:

##### New Policies

The plan recommended that new policies be written by each community as it relates to administration procedures. Recreation committees should pursue policies concerning organization and structure, fundraising processes and regulations, planning processes, level of planning requirements, and documentation requirements of the City. Administration of facilities should pursue policies concerning the process for scheduling use of facilities, fees for use of facilities (as applicable), and maintenance schedule and task list. Finally, league administration of programs should pursue policies concerning times and duration of seasons, facilities to be used, documentation requirements of the City, issues of liability, and maintenance requirements of leagues.

##### Tennessee Recreation Initiative Program

The plan made a general recommendation to utilize the Tennessee Recreation Initiative Program

# 1 SUMMARY OF EXISTING PLANS



as a funding mechanism for professional recreation staff. This would essentially function as a grant program to develop municipal and county recreation systems.

## Area-specific Recommendations

For McMinn County (unincorporated), the study recommended that the County should increase their per capita expenditure to meet the state average, phased over five years, to be used to increase the funding amount provided to the local communities, provide additional facilities, renovate existing facilities, and initiate capital improvement projects. Other additional funding could be sought through increases to the hotel/motel tax, building and programming revenue-generating facilities, and additional money from the general fund. Finally, it was recommended that the County hire a grants administrator to administer and allocate additional funding throughout the district.

The plan recommended that the City of Athens reallocate funding to renovate and maintain existing facilities, renovate offices, and update office's maintenance equipment, computer systems, and telephone systems. The plan also recommended the City hire contract labor to aid in general park lawn upkeep, a program manager as part of the programming division, a maintenance assistant as part of the maintenance and operations division, and a patrol officer from the Athens Police Department to patrol park events. A general recommendation related to staff was that the City should update the personnel organizational chart to be more consistent with present day operations. Finally, it was mentioned that the City should prioritize the continued relationships with the Parks Department Advisory Board, Athens Schools, Tennessee Wesleyan College, and the Athens Area Youth Association.

For Calhoun, the plan recommended continuing recreation administration as a cooperative effort due to the lack of financial ability to hire staff dedicated to this area solely. Cooperative parties should continue to include volunteer committees responsible for organizing and fundraising for the development of recreation facilities, City employees to regulate and schedule facility use, and presidents of sports leagues to provide organization and control of those various leagues. Calhoun should increase current funding amounts of per capita expenditure for recreation to meet the state average.





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In Englewood, the plan also cited the need to increase per capita expenditure to meet the state average, phased over five years, to provide additional facilities, renovate existing facilities, and initiate capital improvement projects. Englewood's population is projected to decrease; however, if planned developments come to fruition and result in the population staying the same or increasing, the County should employ a full-time staff person committed to Englewood.

For Etowah, a decrease in funding is expected for the next fiscal year, which will impact the ability to invest in recreation facility construction or renovation. Therefore, it is recommended that Etowah increase funding to meet the state per capita average. The City should employ a full-time director to be responsible for programming leagues, developing new programs and special events, conducting public input sessions, implementing long-range community goals, and applying for state and federal project funding grants. Impact fees (if implemented) and a larger tax base could generate funds if a proposed industrial plant development comes to fruition in Etowah.

## Area-specific Recommendations (continued)

Niota's plan recommendations were similar to Calhoun; given the limited funding and size of the community, it is challenging to employ dedicated personnel. Recommendations for Niota echoed that the County should increase per capita expenditure to meet the state average for funding additional facilities, land acquisition, and programming over the next five years. Further, the study mentioned the City should fund the Niota Youth Association, and the City should consider alternatives to serve as a point of contact/administrator of funds and manager of construction, including contracting with a professional firm or grant-funding a position.

## Funding Recommendations

Funding recommendations included an array of different options, including bond programs; zoning and regulatory funds, including local sales tax referendums and donations; grants; fees and charges.

## Programs and Special Events Recommendations

These included priorities for new programs including the addition of seniors, teen, and family programs, as well as an increased emphasis on advertising to maximize participation. It mentioned program instructors could include local instructors and volunteers, contract personnel, and special guest instructors. Additionally, programs may be no-fee, self-supporting, or revenue generating, depending on the attendees' appetite.

## Facility Recommendations

In general, the plan outlined general facility recommendations to be considered, including site master planning, ADA, and ASTM and CPSC standards. Individual facility recommendations were then provided for each recreation facility in the County, with each detailing a description, analysis, and specific recommendations section per facility.

## Facility Development Recommendations

According to public input, the predominant improvements were renovations to existing facilities; thus, the plan recommended existing recreation facilities be renovated according to each park's individual needs as listed in the previous section. It was recommended that selected County school facilities be made accessible to the public so residents can utilize these outdoor facilities for recreation. Further, to accommodate this growing interest, it was recommended that a cooperative effort be started to develop an arts center. Finally, it was recommended that a countywide greenway system be planned and developed.

## New Facility Recommendations

The plan outlined two feasible approaches for recreation facility additions: Community-Based Facility Development (allows for planning based on individual community needs) and Overall Facility Needs and Development (allows for planning of more centralized facilities).





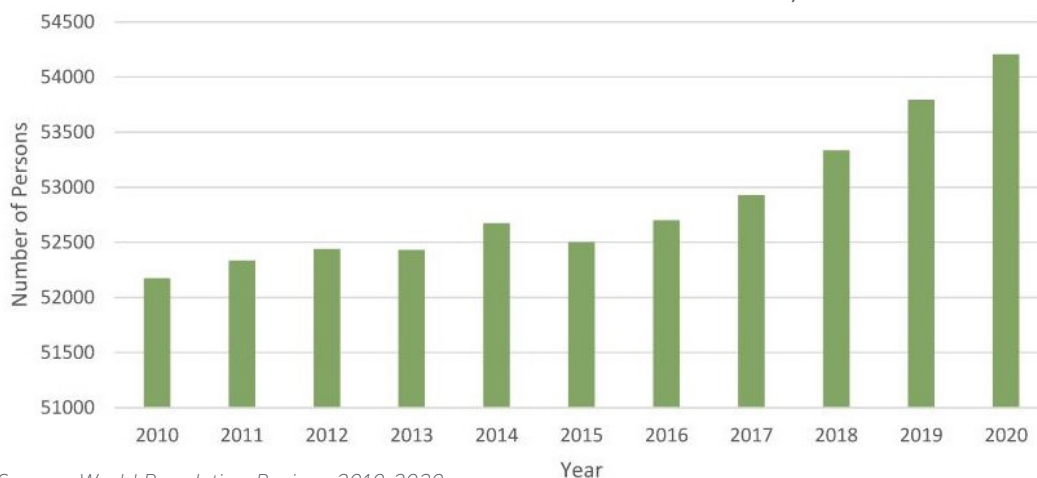
## CHAPTER 2: DEMOGRAPHICS AND TRENDS

### POPULATION TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS

The population of McMinn County has slowly increased from 32,024 in 1950 to an estimated 54,208 in 2020 according to the World Population Review. At the time of the previous plan in 2000, the population was 46,000, meaning the county has experienced a 15% increase over the previous twenty years. The Census Bureau projects that McMinn County will have a population of 55,514 by the year 2030, which equates to a 2.4% increase expected over the next 10 years.

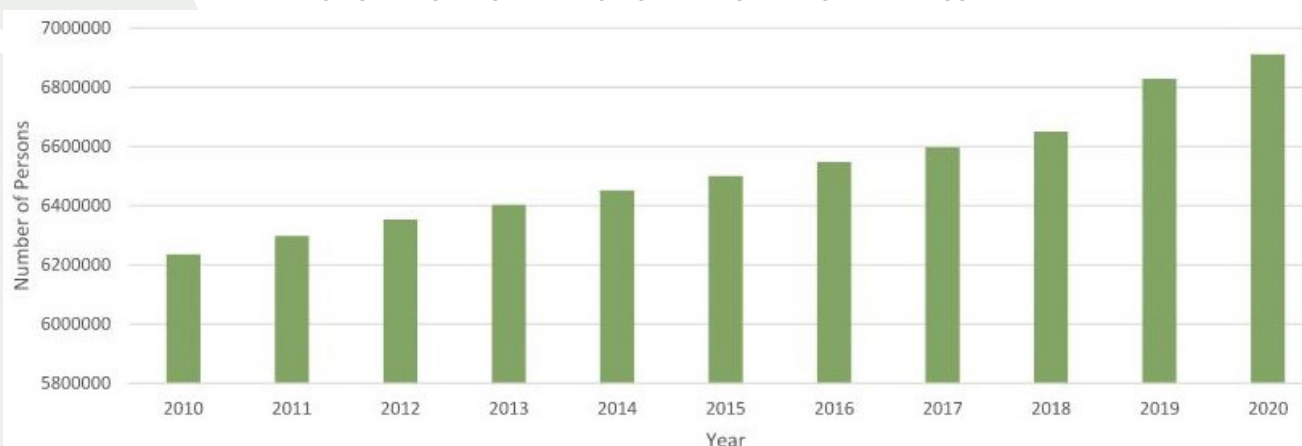
The graphs below illustrate the change in population estimates between 2010 and 2020 in McMinn County and the state of Tennessee. There has been a steady rate of growth at the County and State level, with the exception of a slight decrease in McMinn County population from 2012-2013 and again in 2014-2015. Despite this, the population has seen an overall increase over the past 10 years.

*POPULATION ESTIMATES FOR MCMINN COUNTY, TENNESSEE*



Source: World Population Review, 2010-2020.

*POPULATION ESTIMATES FOR THE STATE OF TENNESSEE*



Source: World Population Review, 2010-2020.



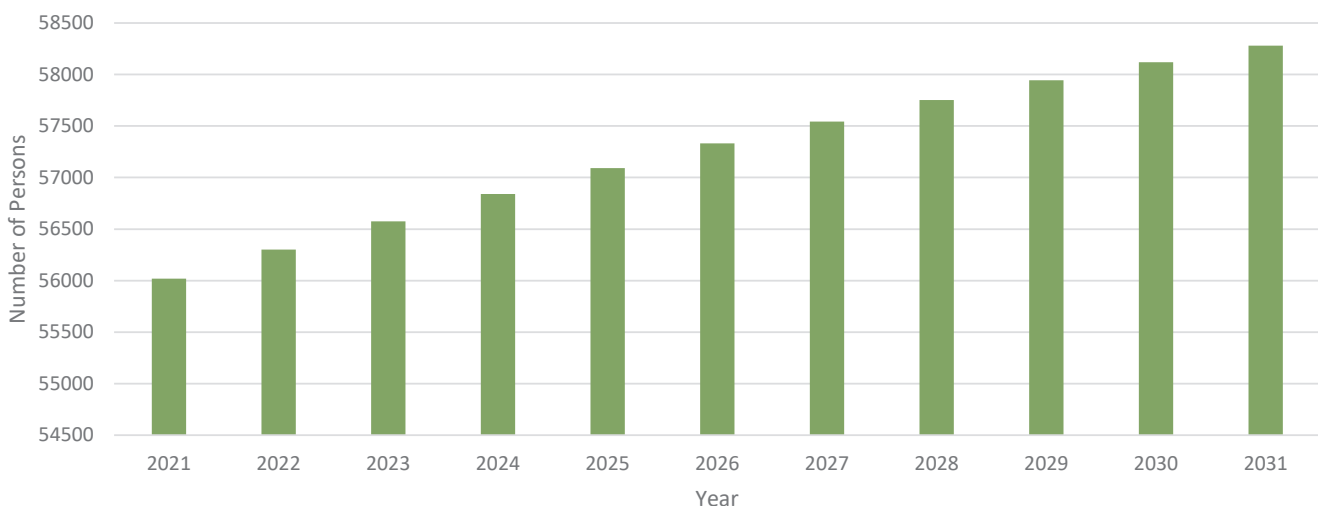
Population growth charts from 2010 to 2020 indicate inconsistent growth throughout the years. The population grew at a rate of .3% between 2010 and 2011, with small increases and decreases between 2011-2018. Population had the largest increase in 2019 with a growth rate of 86%. Overall, this shows a population increase of 3.8% between 2010-2020.

Population Percent Change in McMinn County	
2011	0.30%
2012	0.20%
2013	-0.02%
2014	0.47%
2015	-0.33%
2016	0.38%
2017	0.44%
2018	0.77%
2019	0.86%
2020	0.77%

Source: World Population Review, 2010-2020.

The population in McMinn County is expected to steadily increase at a rate of about 0.5% each year. Overall, projected rates show a 3.9% population increase in McMinn in the next ten years.

## POPULATION PROJECTIONS FOR MCMINN COUNTY, TENNESSEE



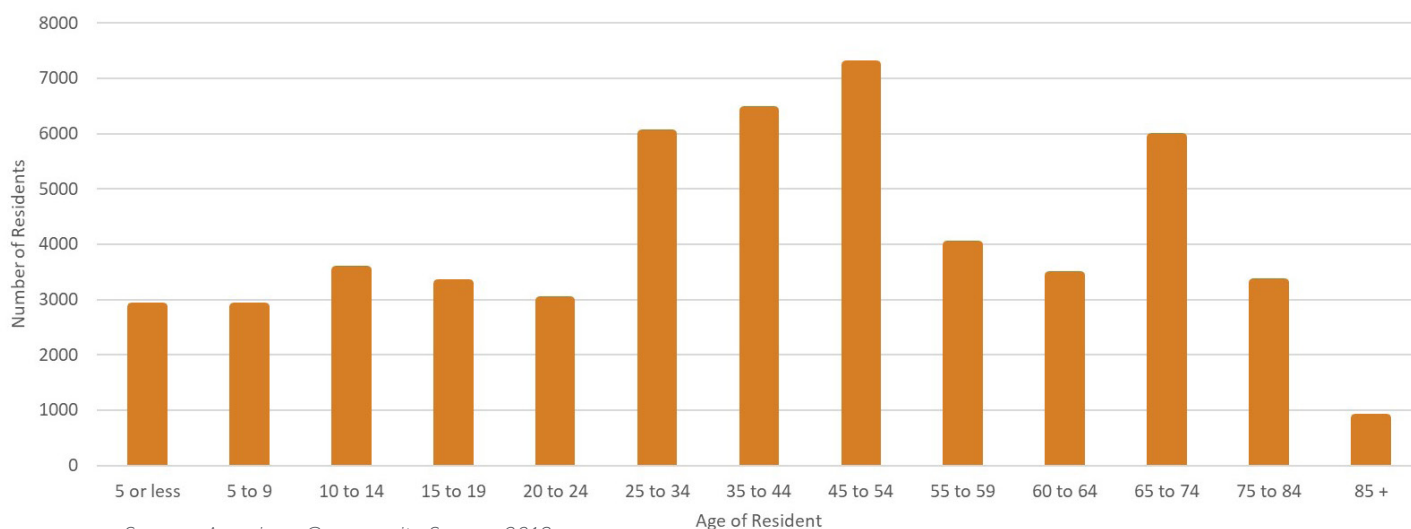
Source: US Census Bureau

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## AGE

Residents of McMinn County have a median age of 42.7 years, which is slightly higher than the Tennessee state median age of 38.7. McMinn County's largest grouping of age brackets consists of adults ages 25 to 54, comprising nearly 40% of the total population. Children and teenagers ages 19 and under make up approximately 24% of population, while seniors ages 65 and older make up approximately 19%. This equates to a total of roughly 43% of the population consisting of children, teens, and seniors. The remaining 20% of the population is split between young adults (ages 20 to 24) and older adults (ages 55 to 64) who may or may not still be part of the workforce.

AGE OF RESIDENTS IN MCMINN COUNTY, TENNESSEE



Source: American Community Survey, 2018.

## EDUCATION

Of the County's population ages 25 years and over, 43% are high school graduates (including equivalencies), 19% have attended some college, and 10% have attained a bachelor's degree or higher. This figure is lower than the state of Tennessee overall, where 26.6% of the population (ages 25 and over) have attained a bachelor's degree or higher.

McMinn County, Tennessee	
Educational Attainment	Percent of Population (ages 25 and over)
Less than 9th grade	5%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	10%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	43%
Some college, no degree	19%
Associate degree	8%
Bachelor's degree or higher	10%
Graduate or professional degree	5%

Source: American Community Survey, 2018.



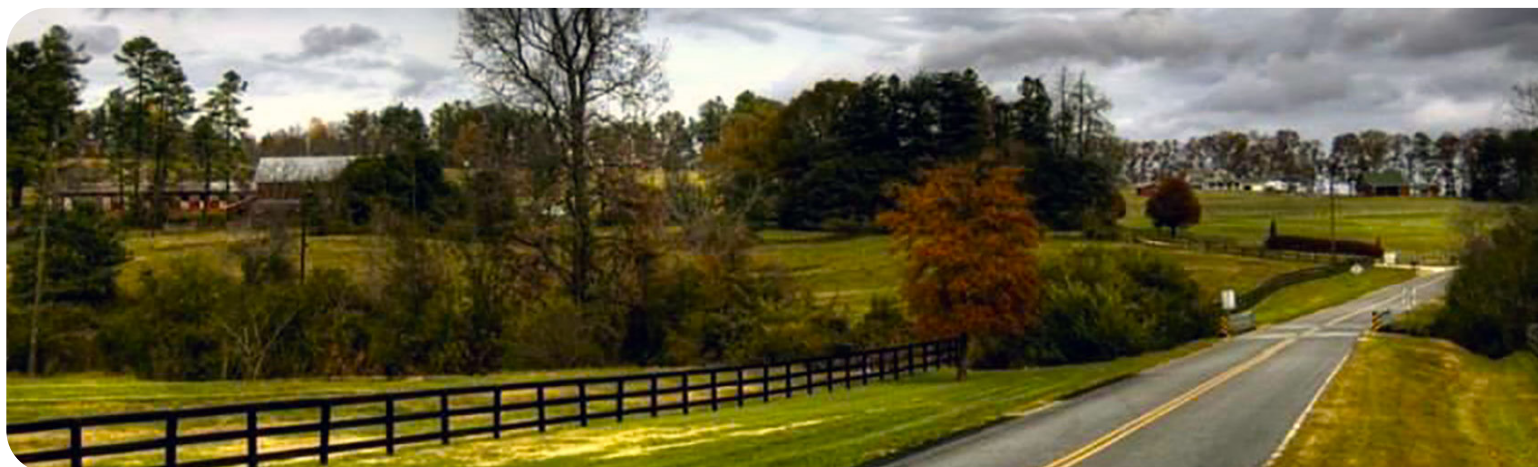
## EMPLOYMENT

The civilian employed population of McMinn County (ages 16 and over) is 21,141 persons. The American Community Survey categorizes employment into thirteen industry types, as illustrated in the pie chart below. The most prevalent industries in McMinn County include manufacturing (26%); educational services and healthcare and social assistance (19%); and retail trade (13%); followed by arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services (10%). When compared to the state of Tennessee overall, the predominant top four industry sectors are the same, however, the top sector is educational services and healthcare and social assistance (23%) followed by manufacturing (13%).

INDUSTRY SECTOR OF EMPLOYED POPULATION



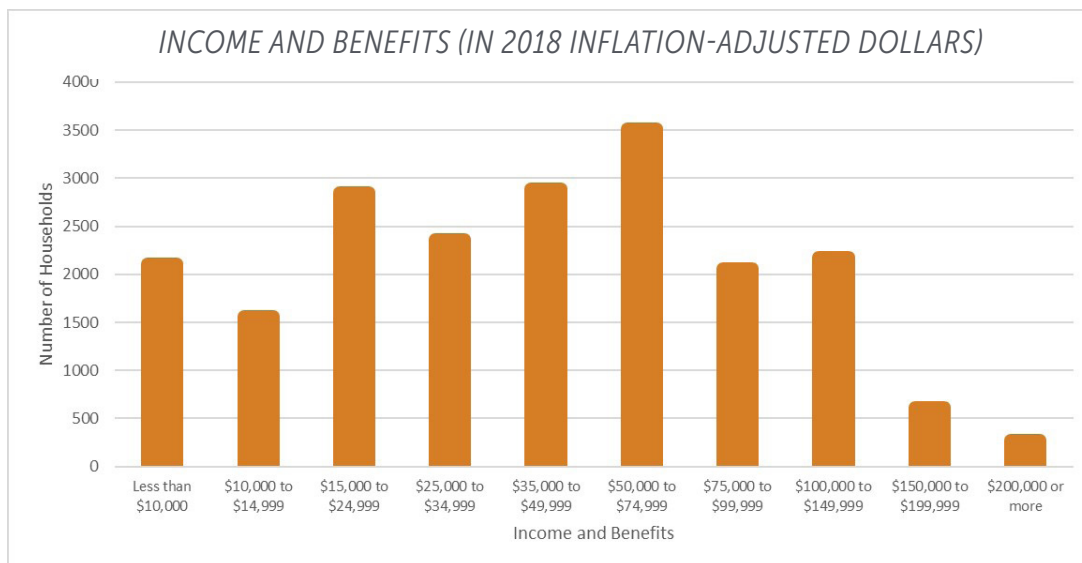
Source: American Community Survey, 2018.



# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## INCOME

The median household income in McMinn County was \$43,285 (in 2019 dollars) based on data collected between 2014-2018. Per capita income was \$23,885 (in 2019 dollars), roughly half of the median household income figure. McMinn County has 15.90% persons living in poverty. The Census Bureau uses a set of income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty. If a family's total income is less than the family's threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty. The official poverty thresholds do not vary geographically.



Source: American Community Survey, 2018.

## HOUSING

Based on data from the 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Data Profile, the owner-occupied housing unit rate during this time for McMinn County was 74.30%, with 25.70% of housing units being renter-occupied. The median value of these owner-occupied housing units was \$125,300. This compares to 66.3% of owner-occupied housing units for the state of Tennessee.

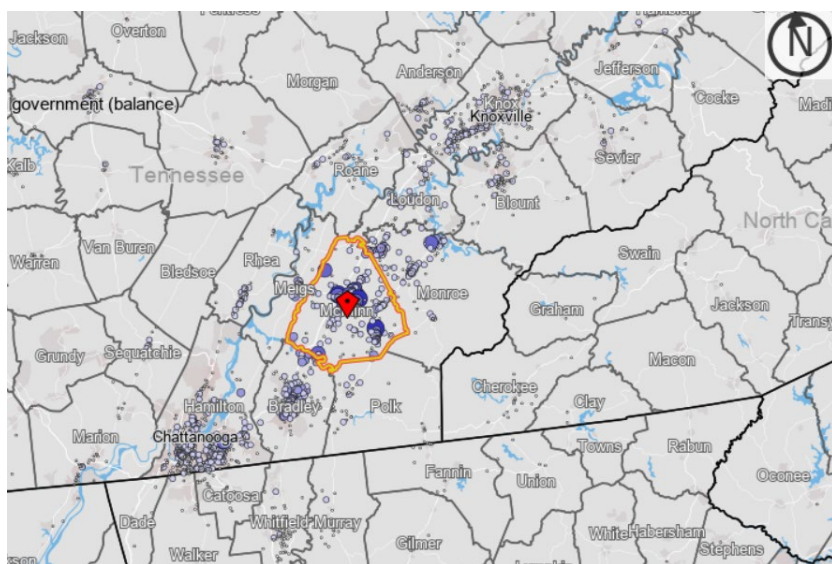
## DIGITAL ACCESS

Of the total households in McMinn County, most have access to a household computer (79%), with slightly fewer also having a broadband internet subscription (69%). These figures are slightly below the percentages for the state of Tennessee overall, which reports more households having access to a household computer (85%), having a broadband internet subscription (75%). The differences in household access to a computer and internet are relatively stable between the two geographies with a 6% drop when moving from the state to the County level.

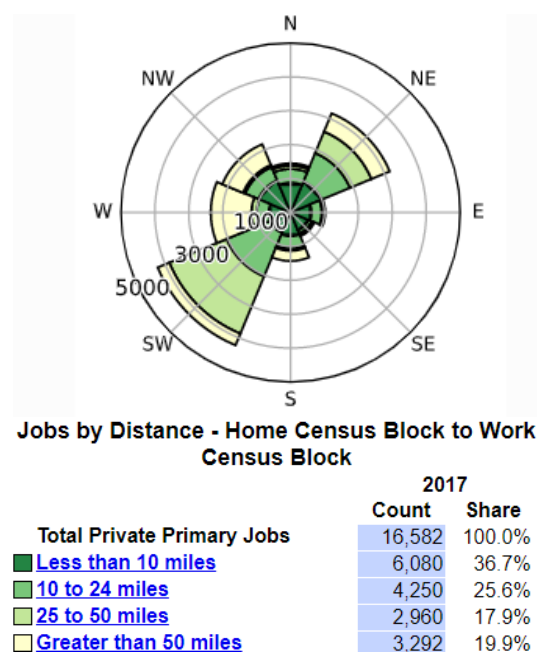
## COMMUTING PATTERNS

Using Census on the Map, a web-based mapping platform that is based on census data taken from 2017, commuting patterns can be analyzed both for McMinn County residents who may work in or out of the County, as well as to visualize the home locations of people who work in McMinn County but may or may not live in the County. In terms of scale and precision, this data is gathered based on census block geographies.

The first analysis considers where residents of McMinn County work to evaluate distance and directionality of commuting patterns. Based on the map visualization below, as well as the directionality illustration, nearly 20% of McMinn residents travel a distance greater than 50 miles one way each workday, with concentrations of job locations being visible as far southwest as Chattanooga and as far northeast as Knoxville. However, 36.7% of McMinn County residents have work locations that are fairly local, traveling less than 10 miles each workday one way.



Source: Census on the Map, US Census, 2017.



Source: Census on the Map, US Census, 2017.

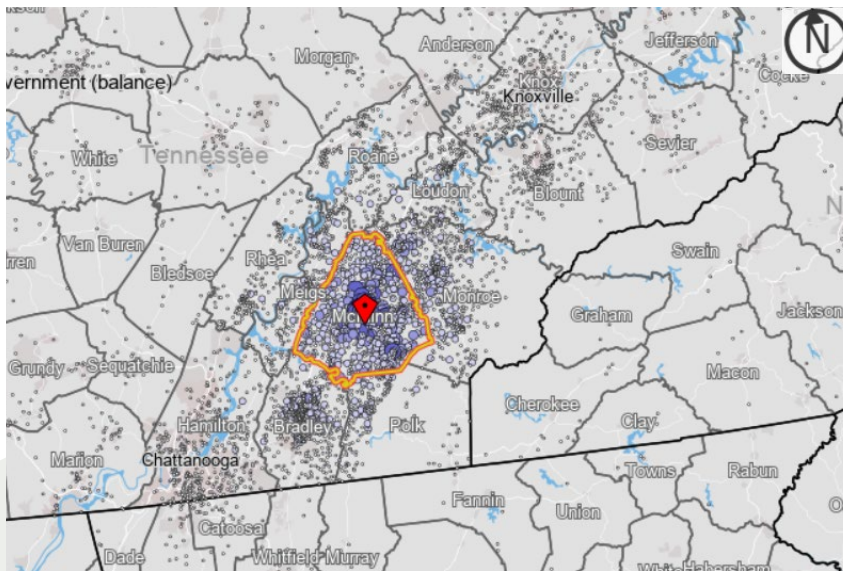


# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## COMMUTING PATTERNS (CONTINUED)

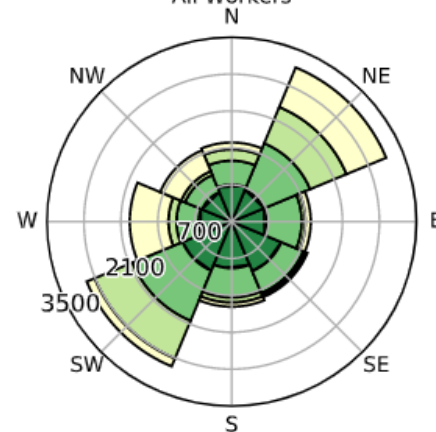
The second analysis measures where workers whose workplaces are located in McMinn County live. Based on the visualizations below, while it is evident that a pattern still exists arcing from the southwest to northeast, anchored by Chattanooga and Knoxville, there is an overwhelming majority characterized by a commuting pattern of less than 10 miles per workday one way. This means that if a person's place of work is in McMinn County, they are likely to find a location suitable and/or desirable to live relatively close by. In all, approximately 70% of all people who work in McMinn County commute 24 miles or less each workday one way.

The influx of commuters into McMinn during the work day increases the County's population by nearly 15,700 people. This additional daytime population must be accounted for as it can pose a recreation challenge with high levels of facility use before and after work and during lunch breaks. The additional demand is also experienced on the weekends as day-time commuters into the County see the park facilities and come back with their families to enjoy these on the weekends.



Source: Census on the Map, US Census, 2017.

Job Counts by Distance/Direction in 2017  
All Workers



Jobs by Distance - Work Census Block to Home  
Census Block

	2017	
	Count	Share
Total Private Primary Jobs	15,703	100.0%
Less than 10 miles	6,164	39.3%
10 to 24 miles	4,883	31.1%
25 to 50 miles	2,166	13.8%
Greater than 50 miles	2,490	15.9%

Source: Census on the Map, US Census, 2017.



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## CHAPTER 3: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### KICKOFF MEETING, INTERVIEWS, AND SITE EVALUATIONS

#### COUNTYWIDE INTRODUCTION MEETINGS

The project began with introduction meetings on October 8-9, 2020 with key staff and identified stakeholders. These meetings included interviews with City and County mayors, City Council members, County commissioners, City Managers, and Athens parks and recreation staff. These meetings provided consultant staff with key takeaways. Many noted positive feedback about the staff doing their best with what limited resources they get and parks being a great asset to the community. Many have expressed that leveraging the baseball facilities is key to seeing expanded growth in the involvement in the community from local residents and tourists. Many existing facilities need upgrades, but there are many opportunities for growth, given the pride residents take in their parks despite some inequities across different facilities. There is an imbalance among the more popular and updated parks that draw tourists and residents in and the local parks that do not receive the same attention.

#### COUNTYWIDE SITE VISITS

Beyond initial introduction meetings, the project management team performed site evaluations of existing facilities in McMinn County to determine the current condition of many parks and recreation spaces. Photos and notes were taken at each facility, and the findings allowed the project management team to understand the strengths, weaknesses, features, and potential improvements for each facility. Many of the facilities have a need for renovation and refreshing, and could use an update to their amenities. In general, facilities seem safe and are being enjoyed by visitors.





## SWOT ANALYSIS

At the joint Recreation and Foundation Board Meeting, the consultant team led stakeholders in a SWOT analysis exercise. Several strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were identified by project stakeholders:

### STRENGTHS

- Eureka Trail
- We have come a long way!
- Grants
- Countywide Relationships (need to do more with Parks/Rec)
- City and County partnership stronger over time
- Department has vision and drive

### WEAKNESSES

- Economic development
- Lack of government sponsored recreational leagues outside of Athens
- People don't know what we have
- Lack of awareness
  - Grant money, how it is matched
  - Time it takes to implement projects
  - Facilities

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Continue Eureka Trail
- Need good marketing/PR plan
  - Social media
  - Brochures at hotels for marketing
- Tournaments
  - Opportunity to buy surrounding land adjacent to Regional for more fields
  - Hotels
  - Leverage location—interstate, Knoxville/Cleveland/Chattanooga
- Regional—need traffic signal
- Greenway loop at Regional Park to connect to Cleveland
- Fishing opportunities
- Track/field
- County Forest
- Hiwassee River
- Expand Bicentennial Park property

### THREATS

- Failure to maintain high caliber maintenance
- Cost for future
- Funding—increase revenue
- Population stagnant
- Public only hear the amount of money spent, not how much a grant leverages
- Educate
- Lack of awareness
- Support of Parks and Recreation from Council
- Growing number of travel teams in competition with programmed, recreational leagues

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## SWOT ANALYSIS (CONTINUED)

In addition to the comments and feedback regarding McMinn County's recreational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, the following additional comments were offered at the Recreation and Foundation Board Meeting by stakeholders:

### ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- Turf soccer and baseball fields
- Indoor facility: soccer/multi-purpose like Knoxville Emerald
- Conference Center buildout
- User fee analysis
- Question: City vs. YMCA. City is serving the public, YMCA is a private entity
- Utilization: regional scope
- 1 point of contact county-wide
- Market Park: should go through with the amphitheater
- Pool at Regional Park
- Driving range
- How do we get kids off couch to play outside? (Sports/skills camp)

## PUBLIC SURVEY

### METHODOLOGY

One of the key strategies for public input used by the project team was a public survey used to gather feedback from the community. In addition to the 2019 Recreation Needs Assessment survey, the Master Plan team developed a follow-up 21 question survey to gather data regarding perceptions, programming, and usership trends across the community's parks and recreational facilities. Data collected from this was then used in comparison to the 2019 survey. McMinn County promoted awareness and participation for the survey through social media, a press release, posted on City of Athens's website, and sent over 2,000 e-mails. The online survey utilized Survey Monkey and was live between January 11, 2020 and February 10, 2021.

### MAJOR FINDINGS

The results summarized in the exhibits on the following pages reflect the feedback provided by the 367 participants that completed the survey. The input they gave provided critical insights that were used to help the County begin prioritizing future investments and improvements.





# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

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## SURVEY QUESTIONS

The online survey had a total of 21 questions which could be broadly grouped into 5 categories:

### DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

- Which best describes your place of residence?
- Provide the number of people in each age group present in your household.
- What is your total household income?
- What ethnicity/race is represented in your household?

### FUTURE FACILITY AND AMENITIES QUESTIONS

- What programs/activities would you like McMinn County to add or expand?
- What type of athletic facilities/programming would your household utilize, if available?
- What type of facilities would you like the County to add or expand?

### ATHENS REGIONAL PARK CONFERENCE CENTER QUESTIONS

- Are you aware of the Conference Center at Athens Regional Park?
- Have you used the Conference Center?
- Are you aware of the expansion Master Plan for the Conference Center?
- Would you use the Conference Center if it was fully built out to hold large corporate events and larger meeting spaces?

### FACILITY AND AMENITY USAGE QUESTIONS

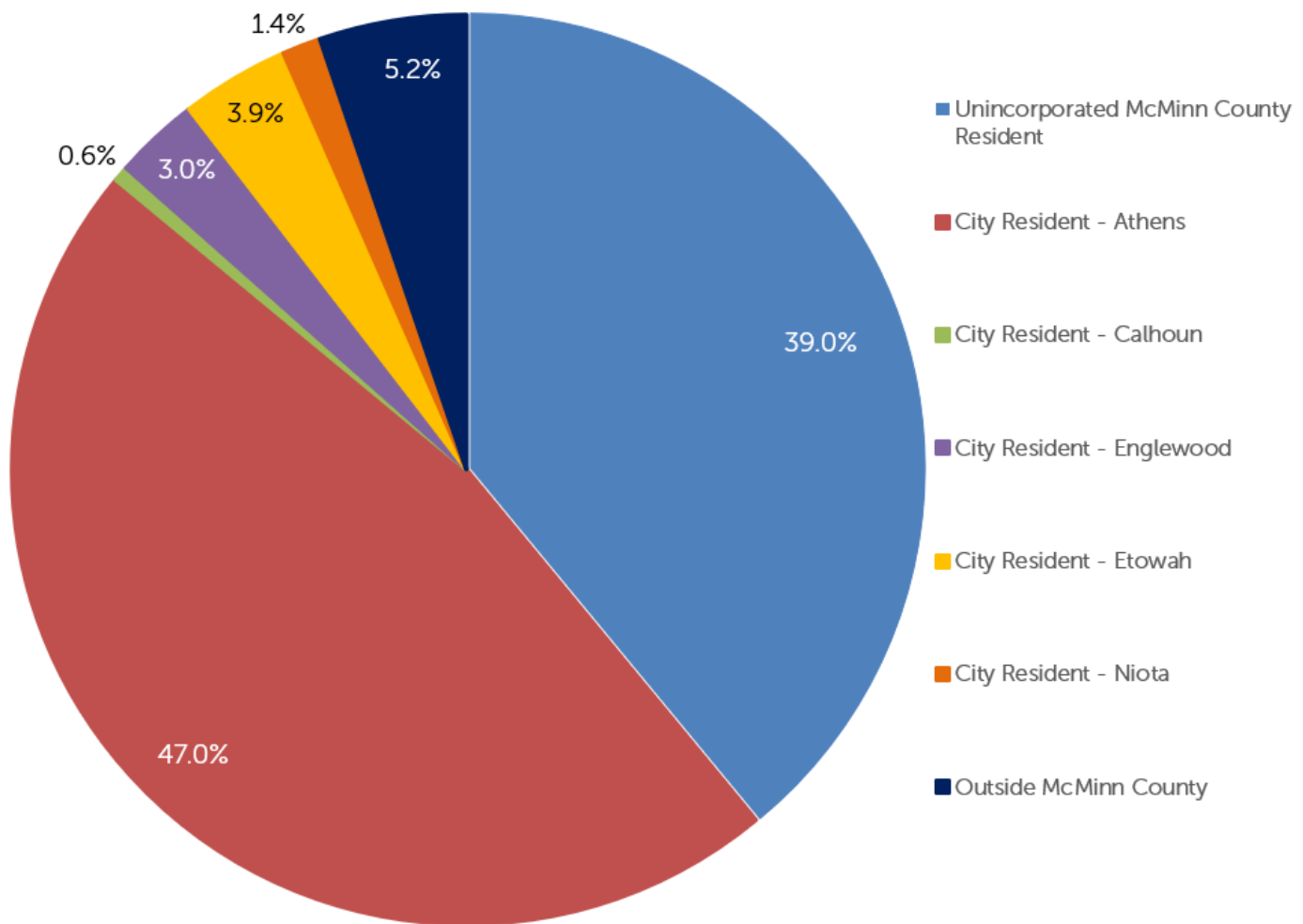
- How often does your household visit the listed McMinn County parks and greenways?
- Which programs and activities does your household participate in?
- Which facilities and amenities does your household use?
- What type of athletic facilities/programming does your household utilize?

### FACILITY AND AMENITY PERCEPTION QUESTIONS

- What attracts you to the parks and/or recreation facilities?
- What could the County do to increase the number of times you visit a McMinn County park or facility?
- What are the strengths of the parks in McMinn County that we need to build on for this Master Plan?
- On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being superior, how would you rate the County's parks and recreation system?
- What positive change could the County focus on to improve parks and recreation opportunities?
- Do the County's recreational facilities have operational or maintenance issues that need to be addressed and improved upon?

## Which Best Describes Your Place Of Residence?

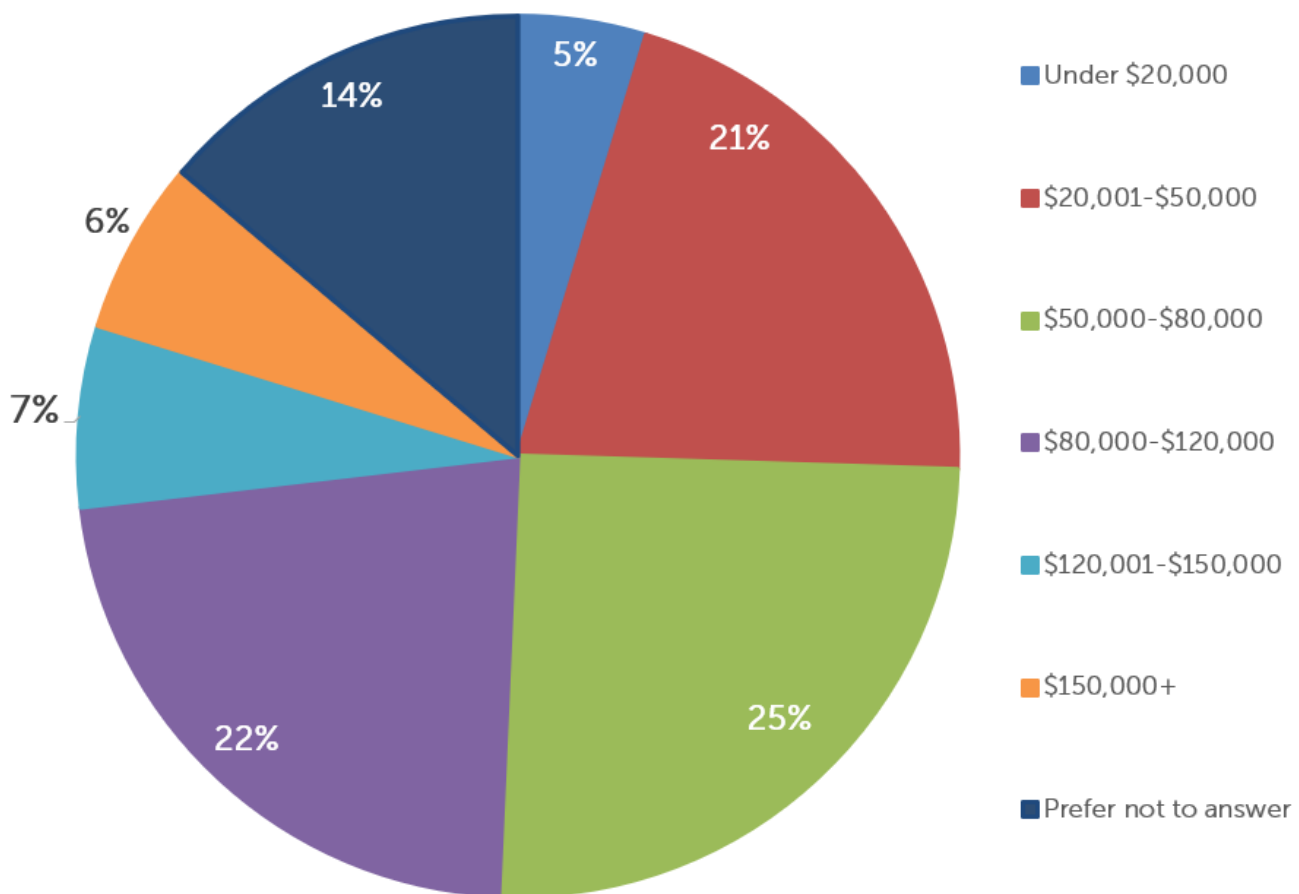
Survey participants were asked about their place of residence so that the distribution of survey participants could be compared with the distribution of the County's overall population distribution. As shown in the figure, 95% of survey participants were residents of McMinn County, with the largest group (47%) residing within the City of Athens. This is most likely due to a higher percentage of Athens residents being active in recreation and more likely to respond to the survey. Approximately 5% of residents reside outside of McMinn County, and the remaining respondents live within the cities of Calhoun (<1% of the survey result versus 1% of the County population), Englewood (3% survey result versus 3% population), Etowah (4% survey result versus 1% of population), Niota (1% survey result versus 2% population), or an unincorporated area of McMinn County (40% of the survey result versus 62% of the population).



# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## What is your household income?

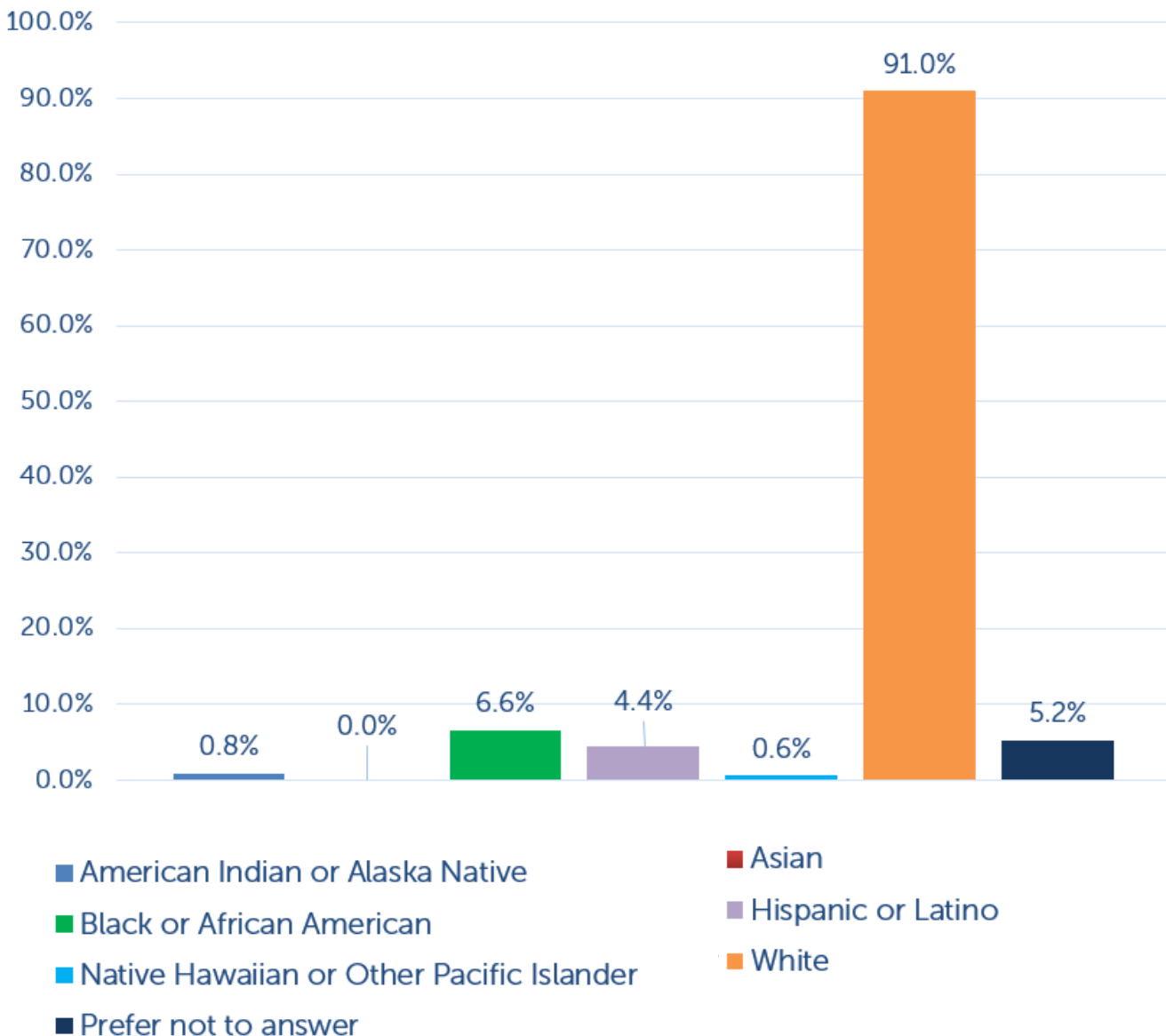
Survey participants were asked to share their household income to compare the demographics of the respondents with the median household income in the county. Approximately 14% of the respondents left the question blank or chose the option “prefer not to answer,” which could be due to the sensitive nature of the question. The 2019 American Community Survey found a median household income of \$43,285 in McMinn County. The median household income range of those who did answer the question was \$50,000-\$80,000, indicating the average survey participant has a slightly higher yearly income than the average McMinn County resident.





## What races / ethnicities are represented in your household?

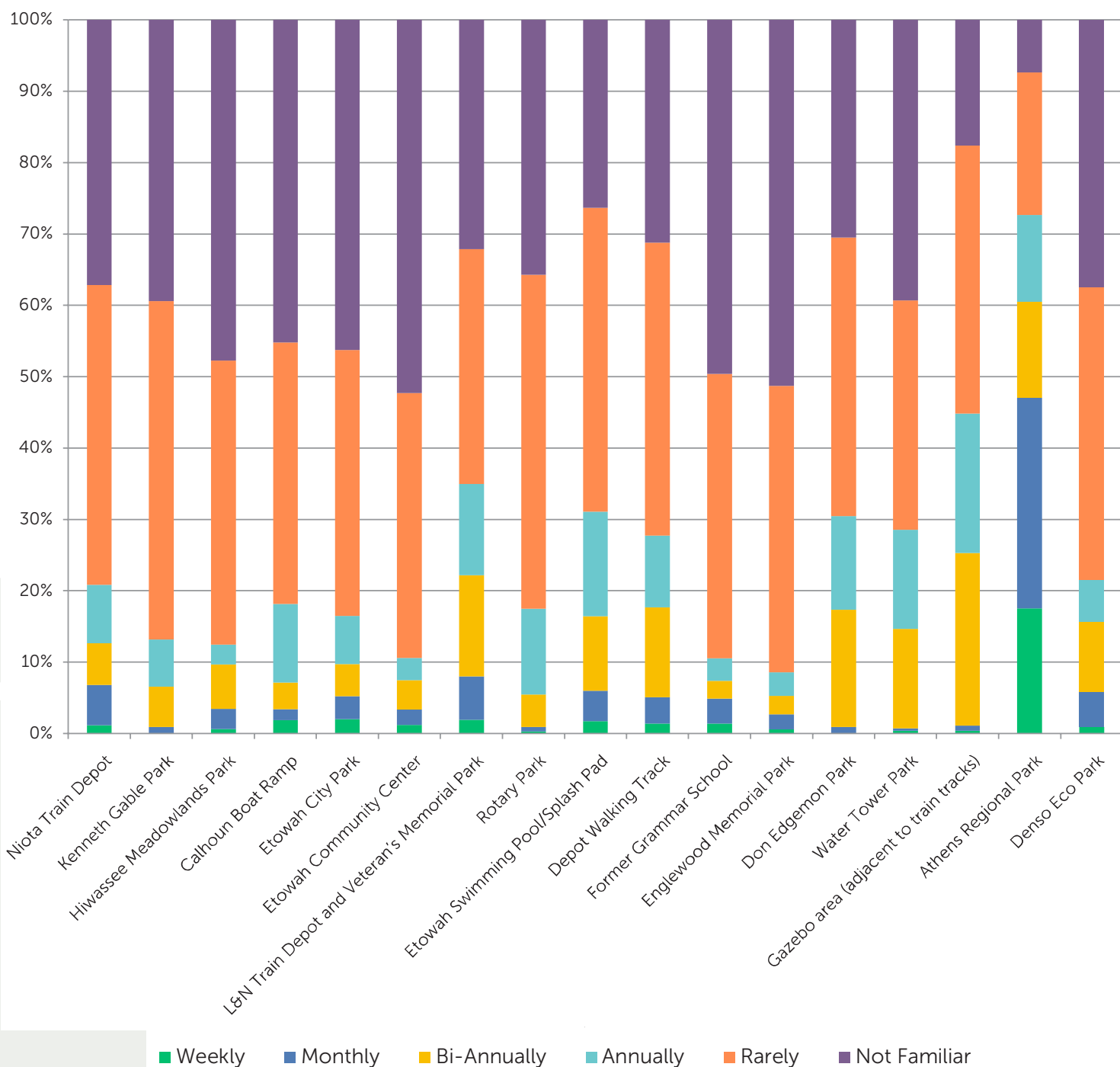
The ethnic distribution of survey participant's households was similar to the ethnic and racial demographics of McMinn County. Survey respondent's households were 91% white, 6.6% Black or African American, and 4.4% Hispanic or Latino. Less than 1% of respondents identify as Native American or Alaska Native and approximately 0.5% of respondents identify as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. There were no Asian households represented in the survey. Approximately 5% of respondents declined to share their ethnic identification. The total percentages of ethnicities have a sum greater than 100%, presumably due to some households having multiple races or ethnicities present.



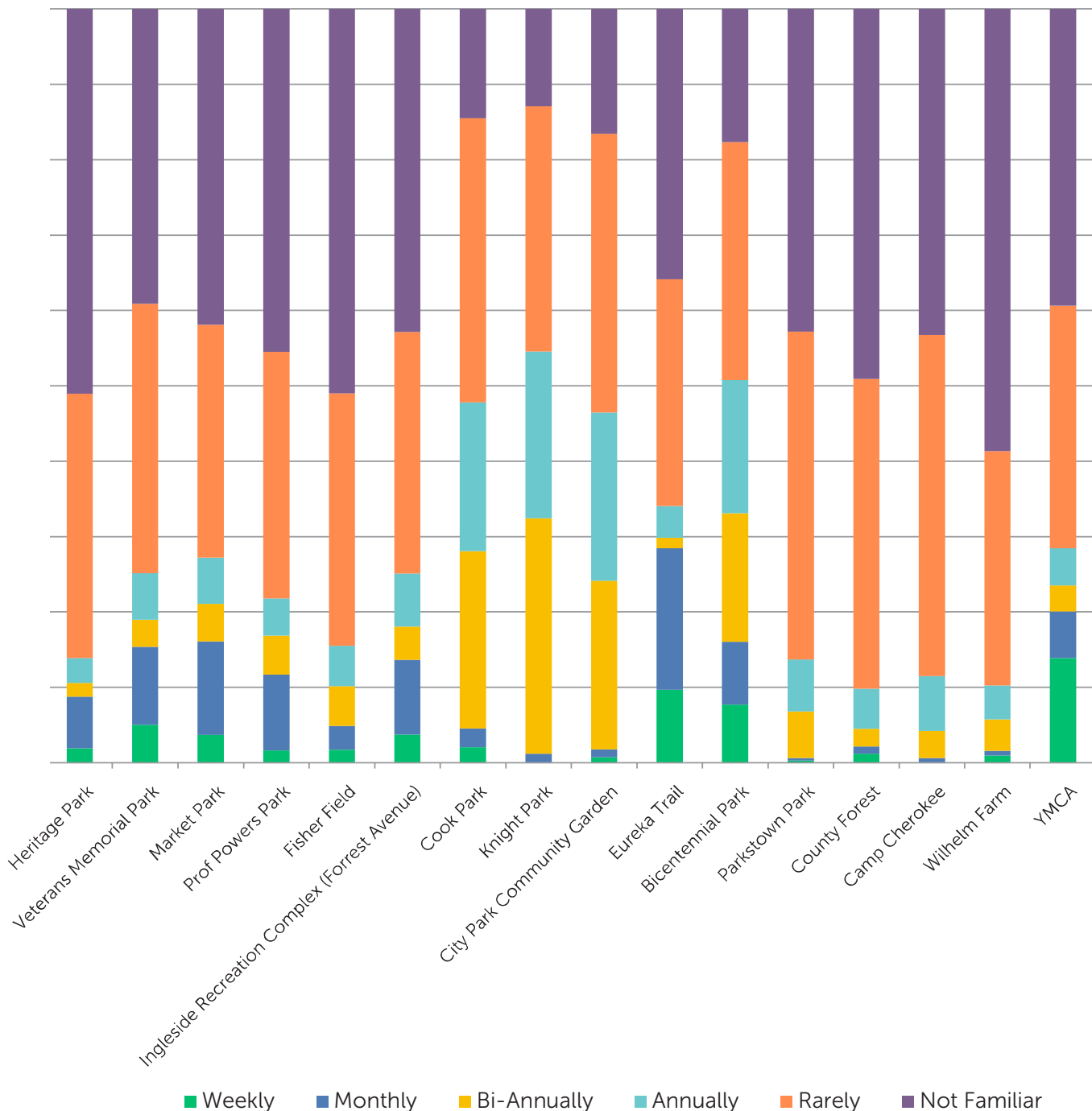
# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## How often does your household visit the McMinn County parks and greenways?

When participants were asked how often they visit the various parks in McMinn County, the most frequently visited parks were Athens Regional Park, the YMCA, and the Eureka Trail, with many residents visiting on a weekly basis. When monthly attendance was considered, Athens Regional Park and Eureka Trail remained popular. Less popular, however, still frequently visited were the Veteran's Memorial Park, Memorial Park, Prof Powers Park, and Ingleside Recreation Complex (Forrest Avenue).



One striking observation that can be made from the data is the high level of unfamiliarity respondents had with many of the County's park and recreational assets. Athens Regional Park was familiar to over 98% of respondents, however that is the exception. Most of the remaining parks were unfamiliar to an average of 50% of residents.

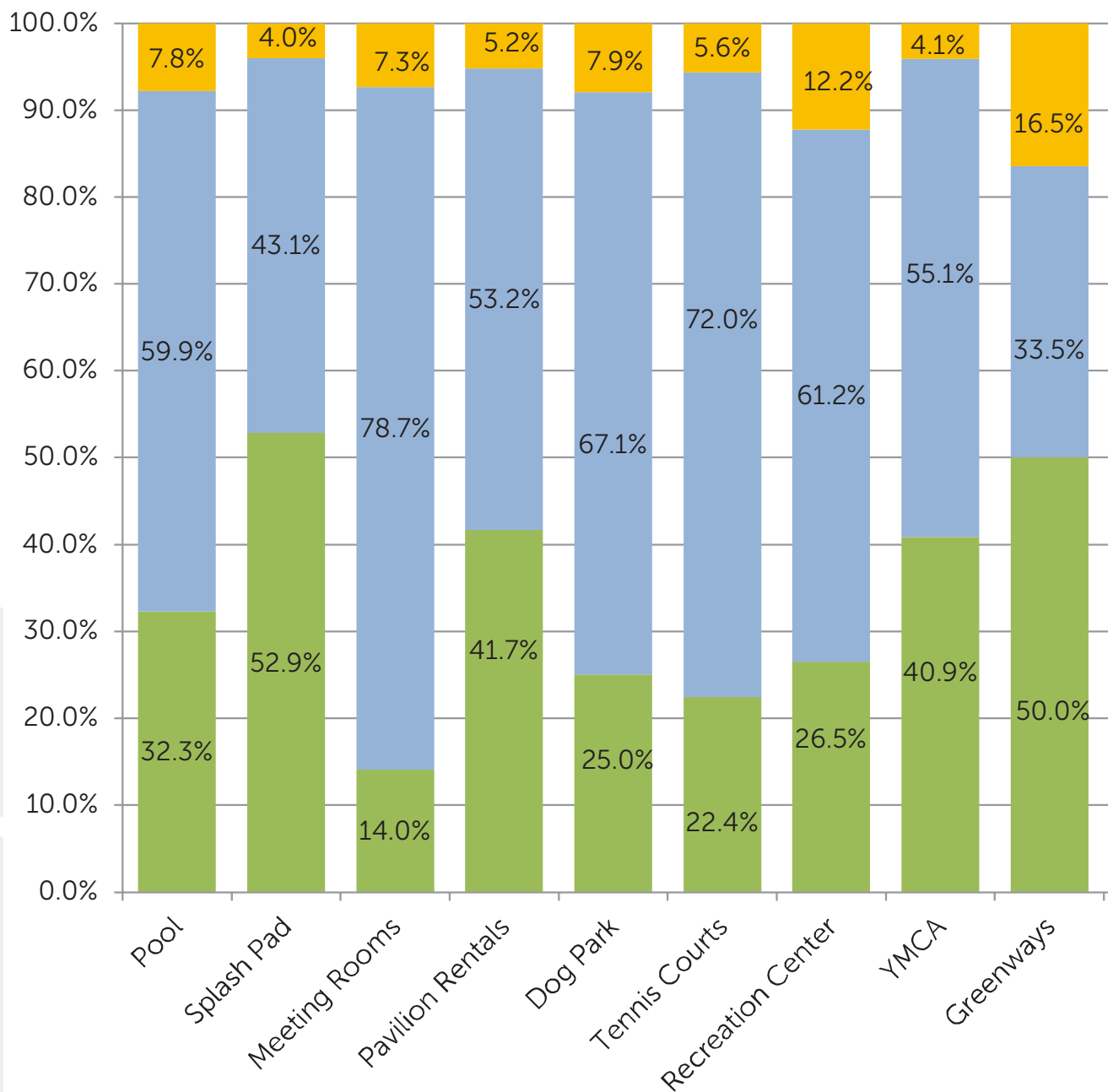




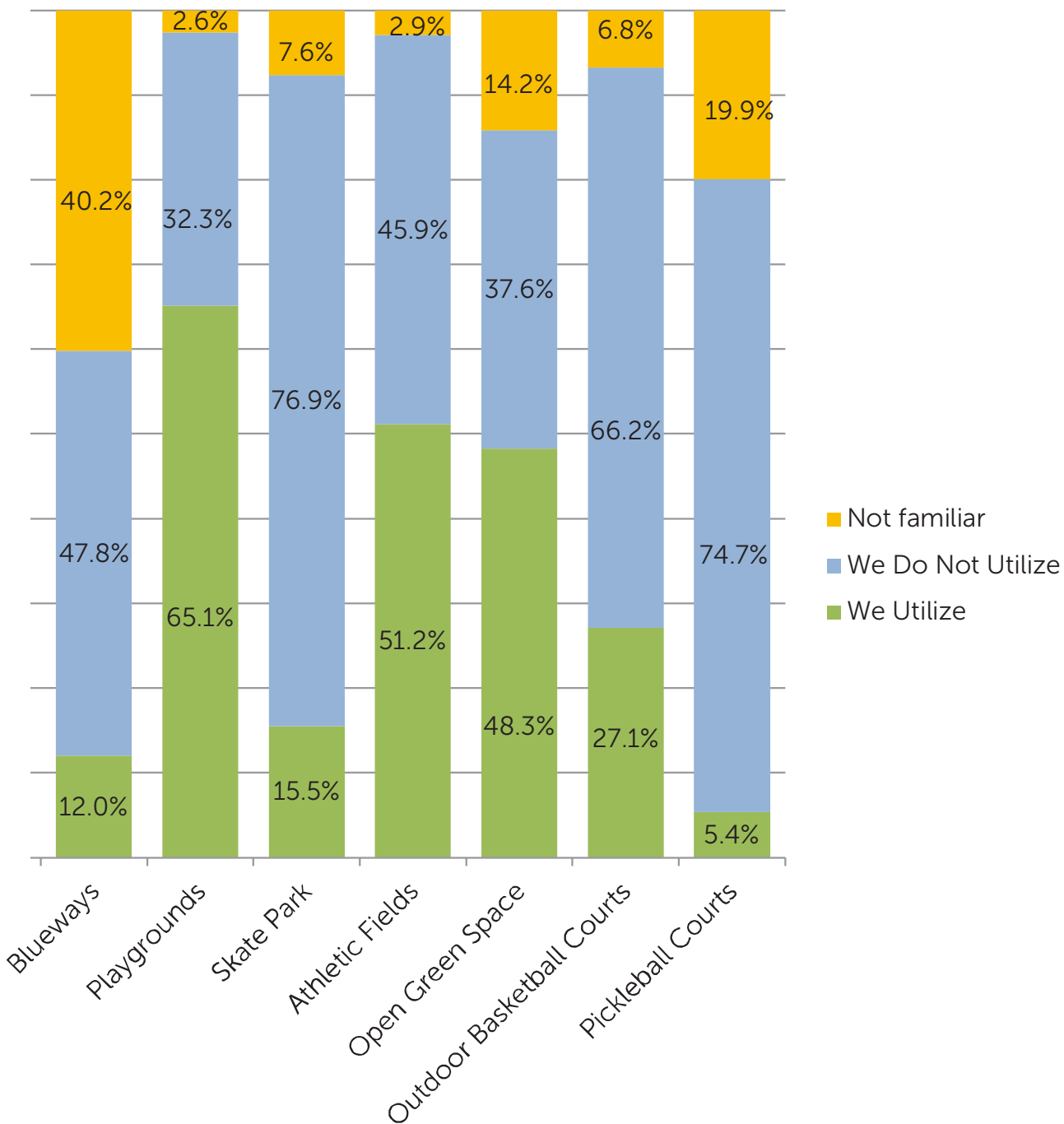
# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## What facilities and amenities does your household utilize?

When participants were asked which facilities and amenities they use, playgrounds (65%), splash pads (53%), athletic fields (51%), and greenways (50%) were identified as the most utilized facilities. Conversely, the least utilized facilities in the community included pickleball courts (5%), blueways (12%), meeting rooms (14%), and skate parks (15.5%).



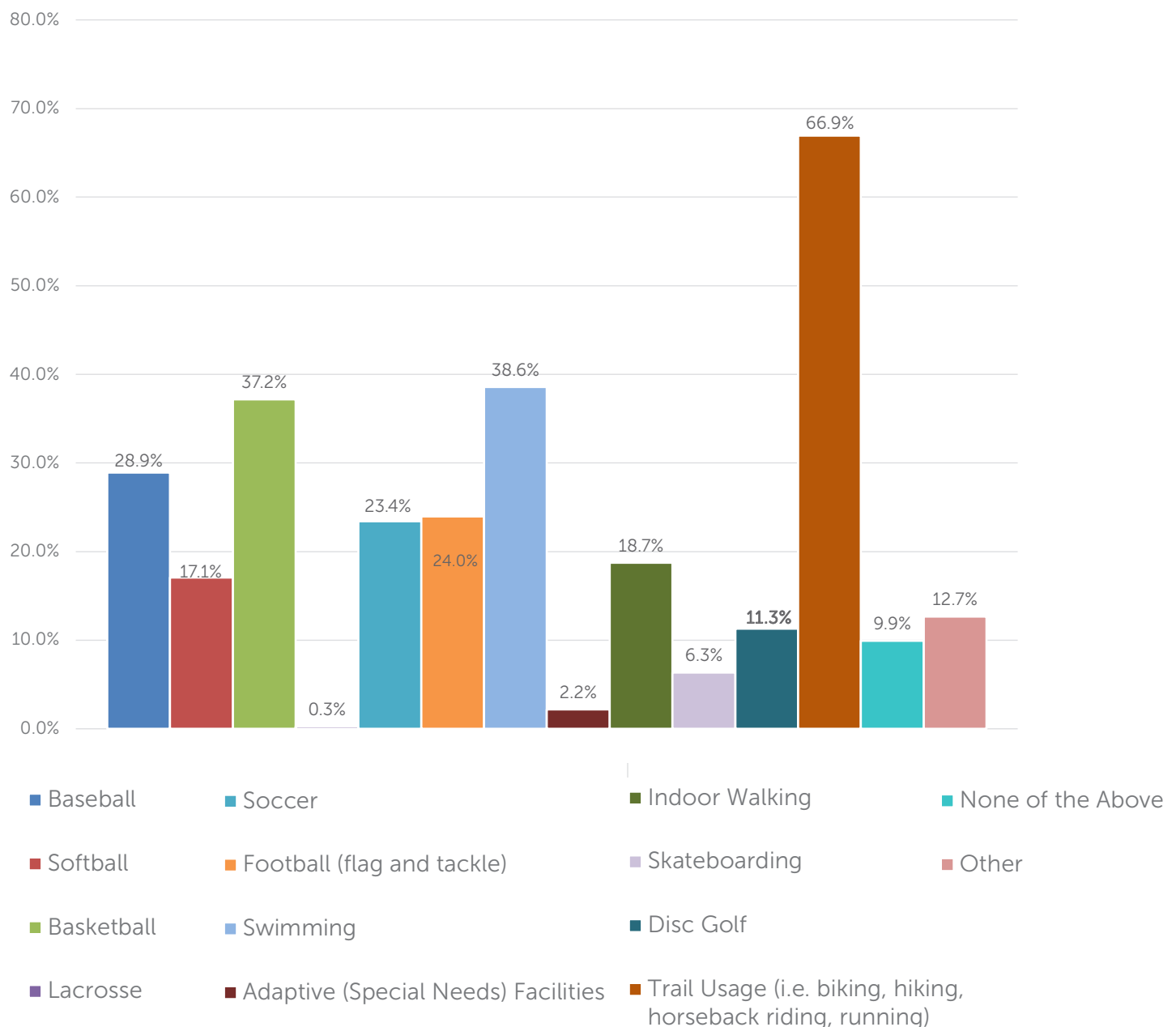
Interestingly, the facilities that the community reported the highest rates of unfamiliarity with included the relatively unused pickleball courts, blueways, and the well-utilized greenways. This suggests that improving awareness of the various facilities available within the County could potentially boost their utilization, particularly for popular facilities like greenways. The table below illustrates the facilities that respondents utilize, are familiar with, and are unfamiliar with.



# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## What type of athletic facilities and programming does your household utilize?

This question asked survey respondents to identify the athletic facilities and programs they use, with the table below showing the percentage of respondents that reported using each of the facility types. Trail usage (for biking, hiking, horseback riding, and running) had the highest usage among survey respondents (67%), followed by use of swimming (39%) and basketball (37%) facilities. Approximately 10% of respondents reported not using any athletic facilities or programming. Adaptive Facilities (special needs) and lacrosse were the least used facilities, garnering less than 3% collectively from respondents.





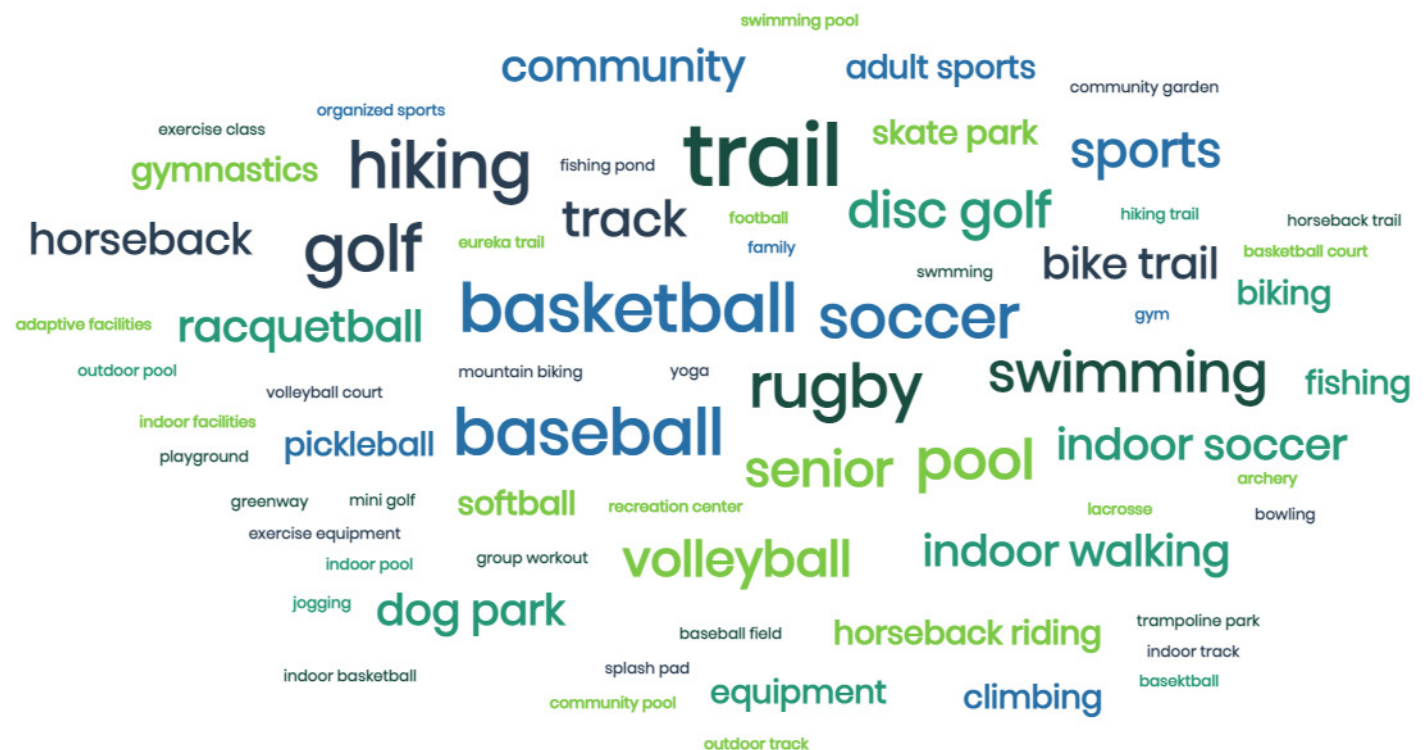
The most popular responses to this question include trails, basketball, and swimming pools. Many also referred to the need for improved information distribution and more avenues to getting the word out about upcoming programming and events. Less commonly received, but still relatively popular responses include festivals, outdoor events, and live music. The word cloud below illustrates respondents' interest in various activities.



# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## What type of athletic facilities and programming does your household utilize?

In contrast to the previous question, this item asked participants to identify the athletic facilities and programming that they would use if it were available to them. The most popular responses were trails (34 times), indoor athletic facilities (17 times), rugby (17 times), basketball (11 times), and pools (8 times). Trails and swimming, which were identified as two of the most frequently used types of facilities/programming earlier in the survey, also received responses from many respondents.



Respondents were also asked to list facilities and programs that they would like to see added. Similar to the previous above, the most popular responses were indoor athletic facilities (30 times), trails (23 times), swimming pools (18 times), basketball courts (15 times), and rugby fields (15 times). Unique responses for this question included a community garden and shooting range.



# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

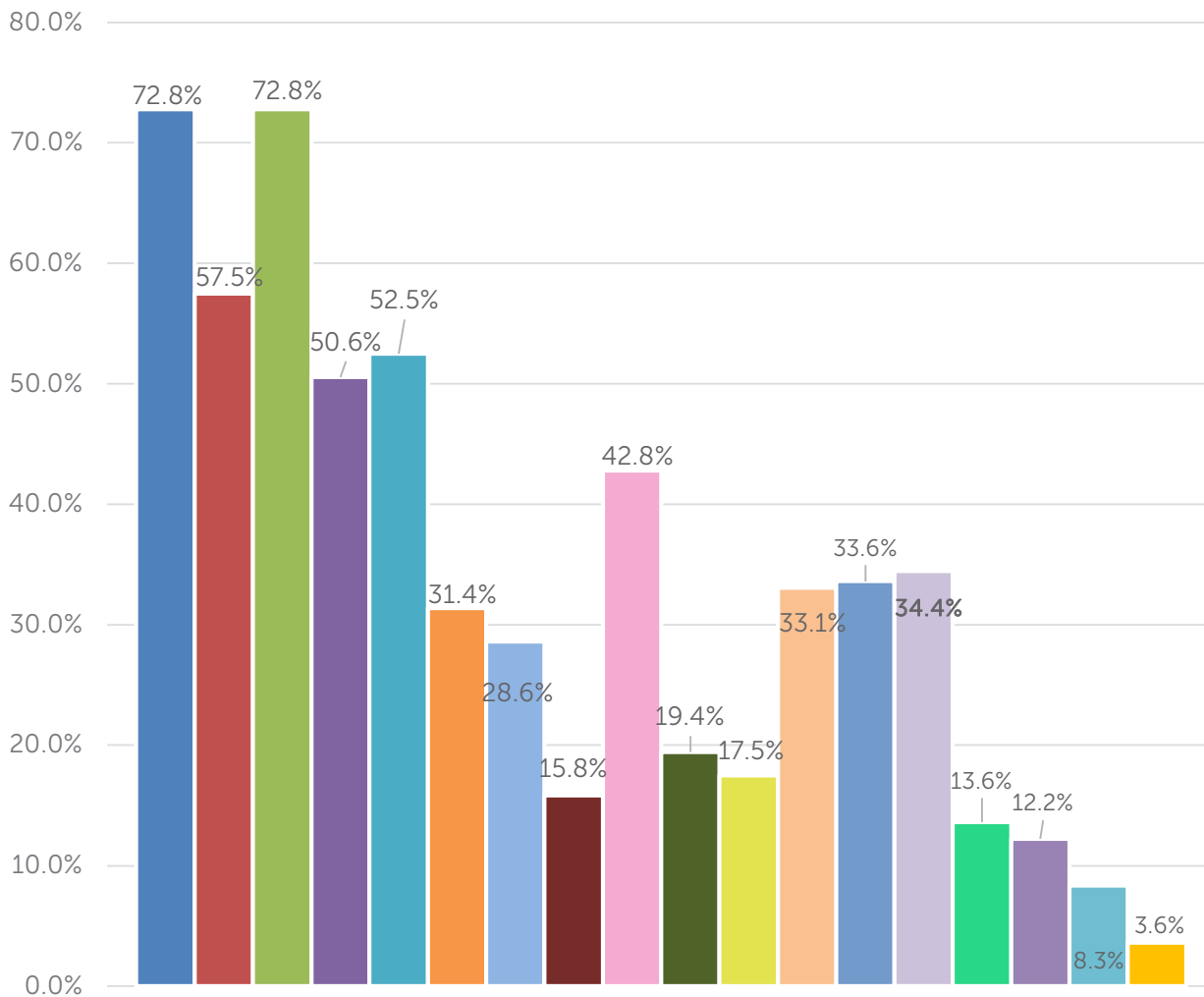
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## What attracts you to the parks and/or recreational facilities?

Survey respondents cited a wide variety of elements that attracted them to the parks and recreation facilities in McMinn County. As shown in the exhibit on the following page, access to nature and walking/running were the most frequently cited reasons, while playgrounds, pools/splash pads, and public events such as festivals or road races were referenced by approximately half of respondents. The least frequently referenced attractions were horseback riding, skate parks, tennis courts, and other options not presented. The respondents submitted disc golf, biking, and rugby as additional features that attract them to parks and recreation facilities.





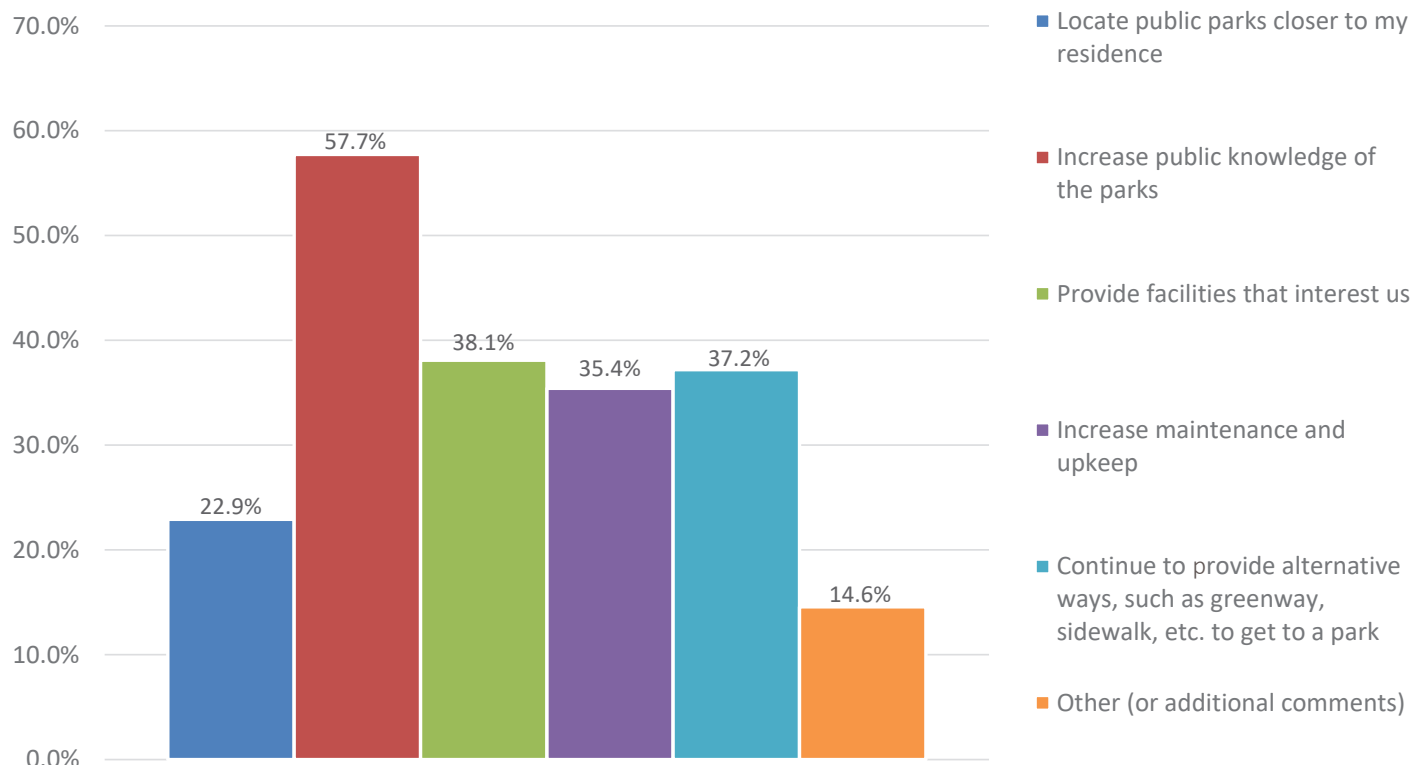


- Nature
- Walking/Running
- Public Events/Festivals/Road Races
- Dog Walking/Dog Park
- Team Sports (baseball, softball, etc.)
- Enrichment/Educational Activities
- Fishing
- Horseback Riding
- Skate Park
- Playgrounds
- Pool/Splash Pad
- Private Events/Party Rentals/Family Reunions
- Indoor Programs
- Art
- Open Space
- Health/Healthy lifestyle
- Tennis Courts
- Other

# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## What could McMinn County do to increase the number of times you visit a County park or facility?

Survey respondents cited increasing public knowledge of the parks as the number one thing the County could do to increase the frequency of their visits to parks and recreational facilities, with 57.7% of respondents selecting this option. This was followed by providing facilities of interest (38.1%), providing alternate ways to get to the facility (greenways, sidewalks, etc.) (37.2%), increase maintenance efforts (35.4%), and locate parks closer to residences (22.9%). In the 2019 Recreation Needs Assessment report, access and location is also mentioned as 73% of respondents suggested that there should be more amenities provided in the downtown area for young adults and families. The results from both the 2019 survey as well as this Master Plan survey suggest that respondents are relatively satisfied with the condition of the facilities in the community, but desire both more diversity in the types of facilities, and greater connectivity to access the parks and facilities. Additional comments that expanded upon the given answer choices included adding safety measures and improving cleanliness at the parks.



## What are the strengths of parks and recreation in McMinn County?

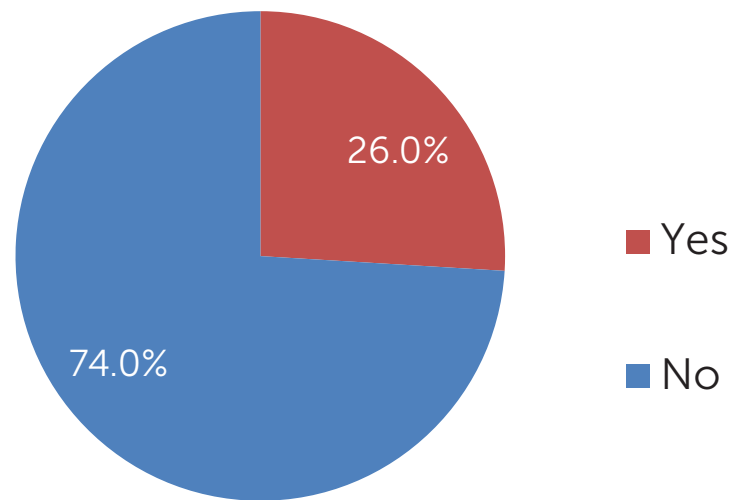
Respondents identified several strengths of the parks and recreation system in McMinn County, including trails, Athens Regional Park, and the Eureka Trail. Many respondents highlighted Athens Regional Park, Eureka Trail, and the splash pad as facilities that they would like to see replicated in other parts of the County. Other descriptors frequently mentioned as strengths were safety, cleanliness, variety, and availability. The word cloud below illustrates the strengths of McMinn County identified by respondents.



# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## Are there barriers that hinder your use of parks and recreation? If so, what are they?

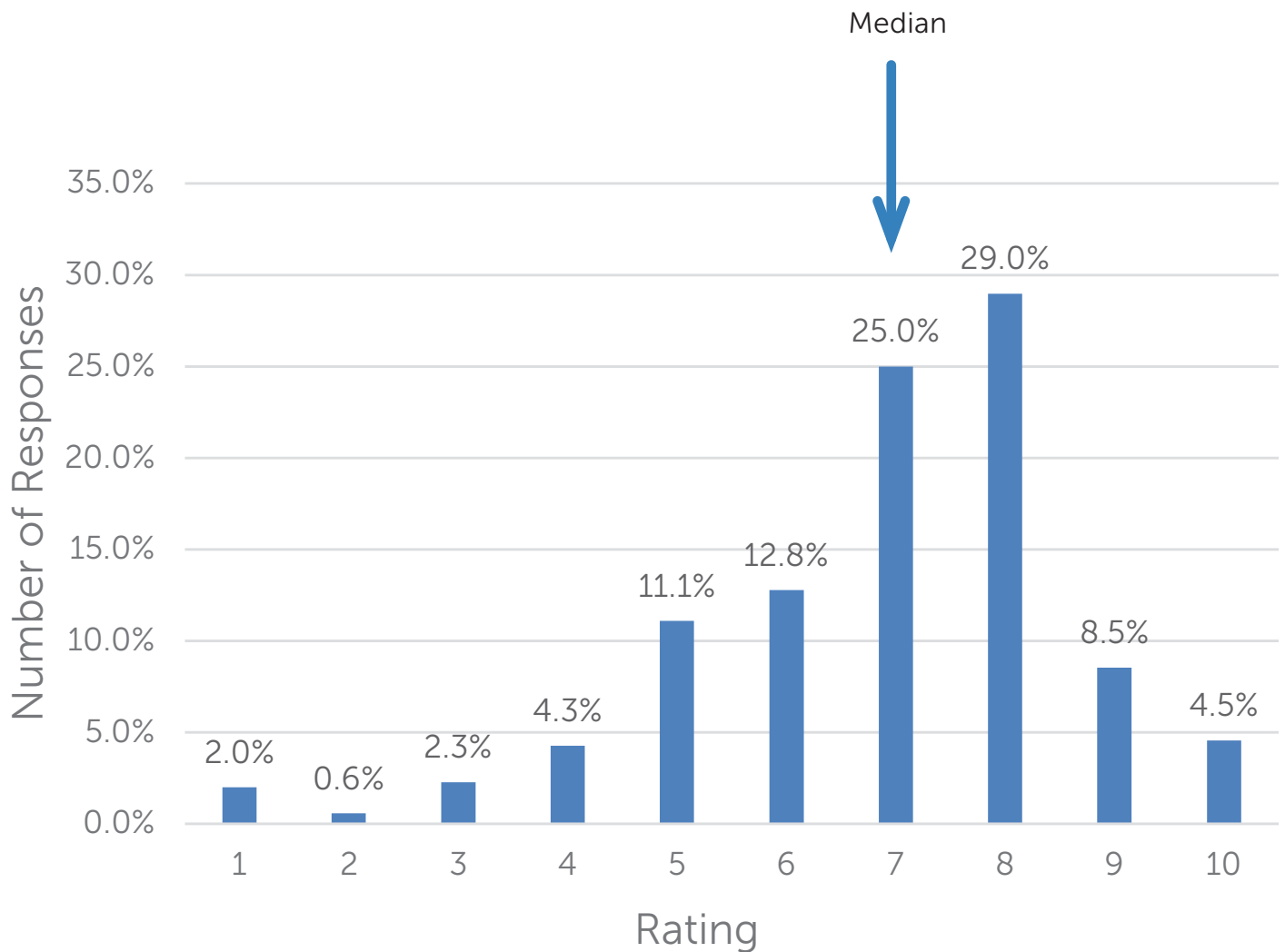
In response to this question, approximately 26% of individuals surveyed claimed that there are barriers that hinder their park use. Some frequently mentioned barriers include safety, accessibility, and proximity of parks, illustrated in the word cloud below. While most survey respondents do not cite barriers that hinder their use of parks and recreation and McMinn County, it is apparent that some issues reside. Residents are not aware of the features many parks have to offer, cannot use the parks because of accessibility issues, and choose not to drive to many parks due to long distance from their place of residence.





## On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being Superior, how would you rate the County's Parks and Recreation System?

When asked to rate the County's park system on a scale of 1 to 10, the median rating assigned to the County's Park and Recreation was a **7 out of 10**, suggesting that most respondents feel the Park and Recreation system is adequate with areas that could be improved.



# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

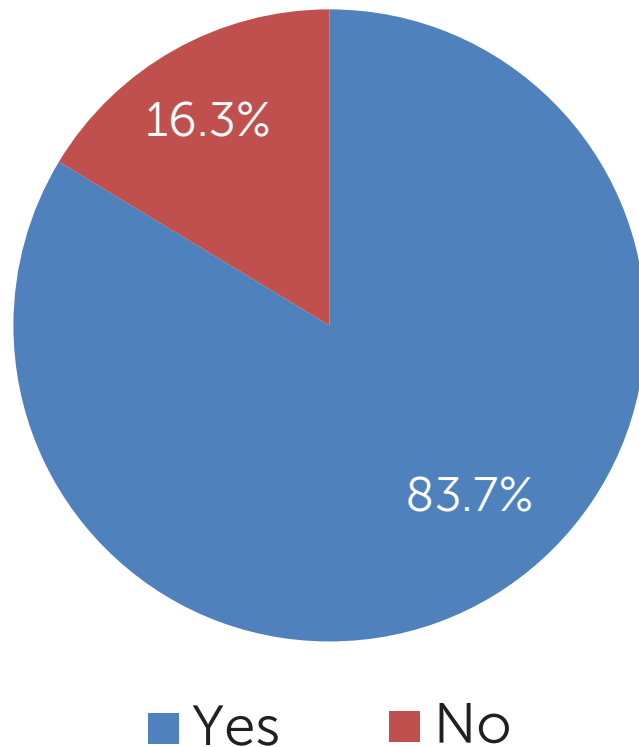
## What positive change could the County focus on to improve Parks and Recreation opportunities?

Of the 242 responses to this question, the most popular key words included upkeep, events, safety, maintenance, and activities. Several responses included accessibility improvements, such as seat belt swings for disabled individuals and pavement improvements, which indicates that there is a need to make facilities usable for a wider range of abilities. Some unique responses included creating a directory so that more information on the parks McMinn County offers are more readily available. Overall, the results of the survey indicate that the cities and McMinn County should focus on increasing park maintenance and broadening available programs to increase accessibility and use of parks by a wider range of individuals.



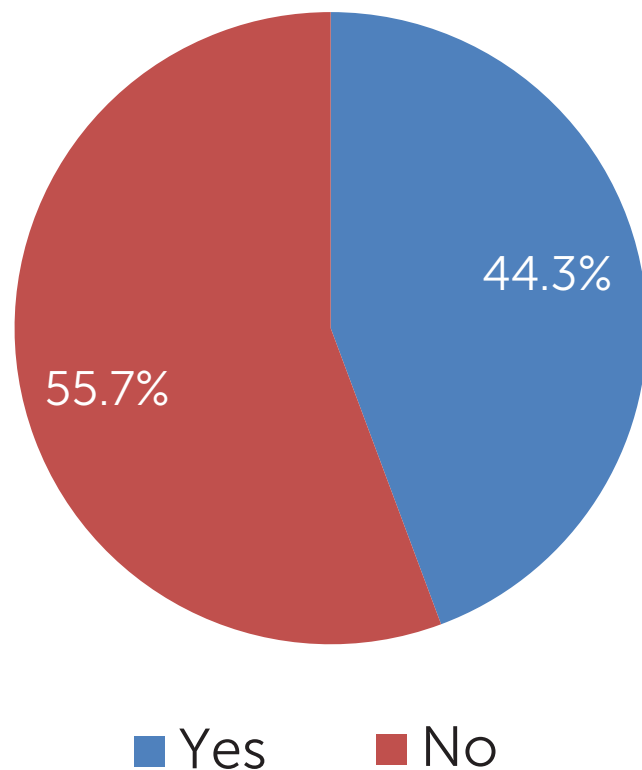
## Are you aware of the Conference Center at Athens Regional Park?

When respondents were asked if they were aware of the Conference Center, approximately 84% of the respondents were aware and 16% of respondents were not aware.



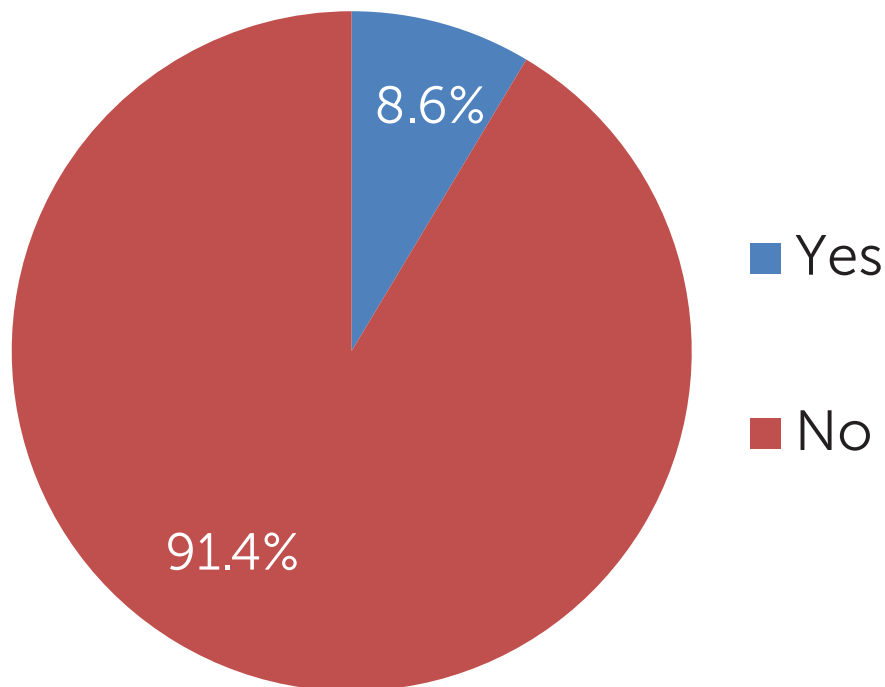
## Have you used the Conference Center at Athens Regional Park?

Approximately 44% of the respondents have used the Conference Center and 56% have not.



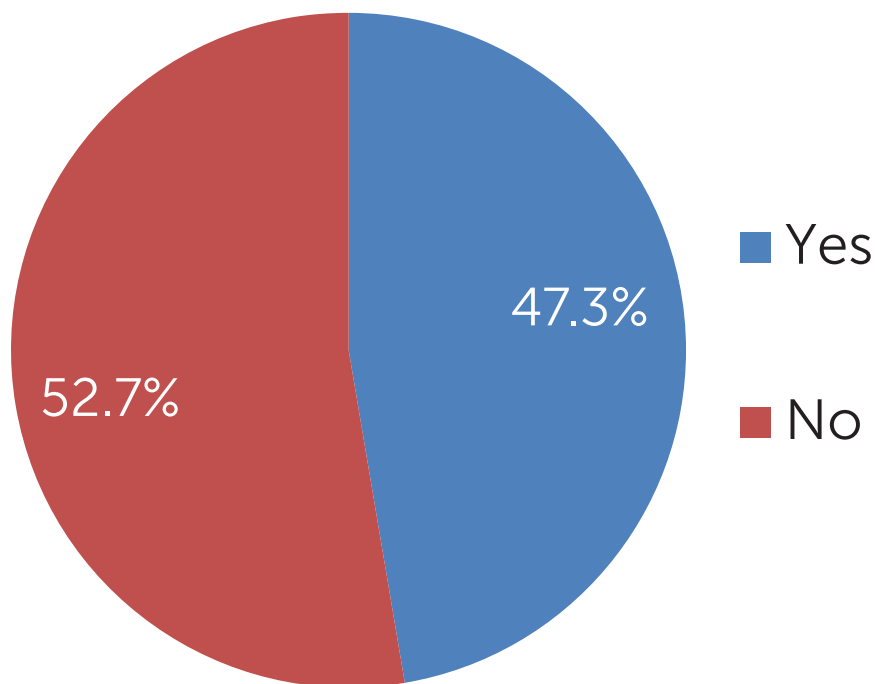
## Are you aware of the expansion master plan for the Conference Center?

More than 91% of respondents were not aware of the expansion master plan in place for the Conference Center, which seeks to implement larger meeting space and other important amenities.



## Would you use the Conference Center if it was fully built out to hold large corporate events and larger meeting space?

When asked if they would use the expanded Conference Center for large corporate events and meeting space, approximately 47% of respondents said that they would use the space, an increase from the 43% who currently utilize the Conference Center. This is an opportunity to reach a larger percentage of the population and provide additional recreation space to those who have not used the Conference Center in the past.





## 2019 MASTER PLAN PREVIOUS RESULTS

Previous community input was received in 2019, when City of Athens reported a Recreation Needs Assessment Survey for the City of Athens and McMinn County. The 2020 survey had a slightly higher response rate than the one in 2019 (367 compared to 282) and had a similar demographic sample of the County. While many of the questions in the previous survey were not present in the 2020 survey, the following questions were duplicated and therefore their responses are compared for consistency below:

### 1. Visits to Facilities:

The 2019 Needs Assessment Survey asked the survey participants how often (quantitative) they visit the parks in McMinn County in the span of a year. The 2020 survey posed a similar question and asked how often parks and greenways are visited in a more qualitative way, with answer choices like weekly, monthly, and unfamiliar.

2019 NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY	2020 MASTER PLAN SURVEY
<b>Visits to Facilities (Frequency in the past year)</b>	<b>How often does your household visit the listed McMinn County parks and greenways?</b>
Less than 50% "Never Visited" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional Park</li> <li>Market Park</li> <li>Veterans Park</li> </ul> Greater than 75% "Never Visited" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fisher Field</li> <li>Eco Park</li> <li>Cook Park</li> <li>Ingleside Tennis Courts</li> <li>Knight Park</li> <li>Ingleside Skate Park/Pickleball</li> </ul>	Most familiar / visited parks and facilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Athens Regional Parks</li> <li>Eureka Trail</li> <li>YMCA</li> <li>Bicentennial Park</li> </ul> Least familiar / visited parks and facilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Englewood Memorial Park</li> <li>Forest Grammar School</li> <li>Etowah Community Center</li> <li>Kenneth Gable Park</li> </ul>
KEY TAKEAWAYS	
The two questions were posed differently, which may have caused slight differences for certain parks. The 2020 survey provided options for weekly, monthly, bi-annually, annually, rarely, and not familiar, while the 2019 survey asked how many times in the past year a respondent had visited the facility. Despite those differences, the highlights remain the same. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Athens Regional Park is the most familiar and most visited facility</li> <li>Many respondents are unfamiliar with the Ingleside facilities</li> <li>There was a perception of inequity regarding quality of recreation opportunities at different facilities</li> </ul>	

# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## 2. Opinions about Recreation:

The question in the 2019 survey refers to general opinions about recreation and how the respondents feel about certain aspects of McMinn County facilities. This question does not directly correlate to a question in the 2020 survey, however, is most similar to two of the open-ended questions that asks respondents about positive changes that the parks and recreation department could focus on and what currently attracts them to the parks and recreational facilities.

2019 NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY	2020 MASTER PLAN SURVEY
Opinions about Recreation	What positive change could the County focus on to improve the parks and recreation opportunities?
<p>Highlighted opinions, in order from most popular to less popular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Well-maintained parks adds to quality of life (85% Yes, 15% No)</li> <li>I believe the facilities I visit are safe (79% Agree, 11% Disagree)</li> <li>The facilities I visit are well maintained (75% Agree, 18% Disagree)</li> <li><b>There should be more activities where the whole family can participate (74% Agree, 6% Disagree)</b></li> <li><b>There needs to be more equity between the different facilities (47% Agree, 10% Disagree)</b></li> <li>There is adequate recreation for seniors (19% Agree, 50% Disagree)</li> </ul>	<p>Common short answers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintenance upkeep</li> <li><b>Make all parks equal</b></li> <li>More public knowledge</li> <li><b>More events for the family</b></li> <li>Youth sports</li> <li>Family mindset</li> </ul>
	What attracts you to the parks and/or recreational facilities?
	<p>Common short answers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nature (73%)</li> <li>Walking / Running (73%)</li> <li>Public Events (53%)</li> </ul>
KEY TAKEAWAYS	
<p>There are similarities between the 2019 and 2020 surveys in that respondents agree well-maintained parks are important and there should be more equity across the parks. There is also a need for recreation for seniors as well as activities for the whole family, shown in both surveys. The 2019 survey has a more positive outlook on maintenance and safety than the 2020 survey. This difference can be likely be attributed to the difference in question format, as those most passionate about maintenance and safety are more likely to write a short-answer response than those who believe maintenance and safety are adequate.</p>	

## 3. Areas of Emphasis:

In 2019, survey respondents responded “Yes” or “No” to a multitude of recreation options, ranging from Adult Events to Miniature Golf Courses. This question can be compared to the question in this Master Plan titled “What programs or activities would you like to see offered?”.

2019 NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY	2020 MASTER PLAN SURVEY
Areas of Emphasis	What programs or activities would you like to see offered?
<p>Highlighted areas of emphasis, in order from most popular to less popular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concerts in Parks (85% Yes, 15% No)</li> <li>• Dining Options (84% Yes, 16% No)</li> <li>• Adult Events (78% Yes, 22% No)</li> <li>• Walking Trails (78% Yes, 22% No)</li> <li>• Arts and Crafts Programs (65%, 35% No)</li> <li>• Swimming Pools (56% Yes, 44% No)</li> <li>• Basketball Facilities (40% Yes, 60% No)</li> </ul>	<p>Common short answers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anything for Kids</li> <li>• More Walking and Cycling</li> <li>• Horseback Riding</li> <li>• Pool/Swimming</li> <li>• Hiking</li> <li>• Rugby</li> <li>• Basketball</li> <li>• Activities</li> </ul>
KEY TAKEAWAYS	
<p>The answers received in both surveys have similarities, such as the emphasis on programming and activities for children and walking/hiking opportunities. The largest differences between the surveys are the support for pools and basketball in the 2020 survey that was not as prevalent in the 2019 survey. This irregularity could be attributed to the significant difference in question formatting, as the 2019 survey question was a simple Yes and No while the 2020 survey required short answers. This could imply that those who are interested in swimming pools and basketball are passionate and outspoken about these facilities, while most survey respondents are apathetic.</p>	

## CHAPTER 4: RECREATION INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

### EXISTING FACILITY EVALUATION

#### OVERVIEW AND EVALUATION COMPONENTS

The consultant team performed an existing facility evaluation of all recreation facilities in McMinn County including existing facilities, equipment, property, programming, and department operation in correlation with the present and projected needs of the community and partners (when applicable) over the course of the next ten years. Each facility evaluation consisted of the following components:

- Strengths and weaknesses
- Natural features
- Pedestrian and vehicular access and parking
- Land utilization for active and passive areas
- Compatible usage and alternatives
- ADA compatibility
- Facility and structure safety
- Public safety
- Greenways, trails, blueways, and connections
- Potential for expansion
- Adequate resources for current and future use and/or development

It is crucial to evaluate the current status of the above components of each facility, so that recommendations can be made for each facility with a base understanding of what is in existence today.

JURISDICTION		PARK FACILITIES	
CITIES	ATHENS	Athens Regional Park	
		City Park Community Garden	
		Cook Park	
		Denso Eco Park	
		Eureka Trail	
		Fisher Field	
		Heritage Park	
		Ingleside Recreational Facility	
		Knight Park	
		Market Park	
		Prof Powers Park	
		Veterans Memorial Park	
	CALHOUN	Calhoun Boat Ramp	
		Hiwassee Meadowlands Park	
	ENGLEWOOD	Englewood Memorial Park	
		Don Edgemon Park	
		Water Tower Park	
		Englewood Eureka Trailhead	
		Gazebo area beside railroad tracks	
	ETOWAH	Etowah City Park and Splash Pad	
		Etowah Chew Chew Dog Park	
		Etowah Community Center	
		L&N Train Depot and Walking Track	
		Rotary Park	
	NIOTA	Kenneth Gable Memorial Park	
		Niota Park and Depot	
UNINCORP. MCMINN COUNTY	COUNTY	Bicentennial Park	
		County Forest - Camp Cherokee	
		Old McMinn Fields/McMinn Senior Center	
		Parkstown Park	
		Wilhelm Farm (surrounding Bicentennial Park)	
		TOTALS	



# 4 RECREATION INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS



ACRES OF LAND	BASEBALL	BASKETBALL (OUTDOOR)	COMMUNITY CENTER	GYMNASIUM	HANDBALL	LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD	1/4 MILE TRACK	PICNIC SHELTER/GAZEBO	PLAYGROUND	PRACTICE FIELD	SOCCER	SOFTBALL	SWIMMING POOL (OUTDOOR)	TENNIS COURT	TRAILS (IN MILES)	VOLLEYBALL (OUTDOOR)
156								2	1	2	4	4			2.6	1
8.8		1									2	1				
2.3		1						1	1						.32	
11.5								1							.75	
-															5.6	
4.7	1															
7.3		1			1			1	1	1		1		2		1
1.5																
.07																
3.26								1								
20						1		1								
11																
-																
4.5	1	1						2	1						0.3	
30							1	1	2		3	4	1	2		
2.29																
.30																
-																
.01								1								
20	1		1	1		1		1	1				1	4	0.7	
.08																
4.6			1	1												
-																
-																
1.7									1							
5			1													
23									1							
264																
6																
10.5																
44																
642.41	3	4	3	2	1	2	1	12	9	3	9	10	2	8	10.27	2

# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## ATHENS REGIONAL PARK

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amenities (playground, splash pad, open space for soccer practice, baseball fields, pavilions, beginning of a convention center, expo center, pond, disc golf, benches)</li> <li>Paved paths around the entire park</li> <li>Large parking area</li> <li>Land area to expand</li> <li>Natural features including a pond, trees, open grassy areas, scenic views of mountains and hills</li> <li>Adequate signage</li> <li>Environmentally-friendly construction with pervious concrete and bonded rubber surface</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not very visible from roadway</li> <li>Conference Center is not finished being constructed, results in the Center having a disconnected appearance</li> </ul>
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shade trees, open grassy areas, pond with fish, and hills</li> </ul>
Pedestrian/Vehicular Access and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ample parking</li> <li>Primary way to access is by vehicle, but once you are there it is very walkable due to the paved paths throughout</li> </ul>
Land Utilization - Active and Passive Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active: Baseball field, splash pad, playground, disc golf, Conference Center</li> <li>Passive: Paved and natural trails for walking/biking, green space (flexible - soccer, picnics, etc.), shaded areas, picnic tables, pavilions</li> </ul>
Compatible Usage and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The playground and splash pad complement each other; both served by nearby parking</li> <li>Open fields (used for soccer practice) are far enough removed to not be disrupted; located nearby the baseball fields as the two major sports amenities</li> <li>Pond has associated active uses (fishing, biking, running/walking, disc golf)</li> <li>Pavilion and picnic tables allow for passive uses</li> </ul>
ADA Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Built to ADA standards. The trails are paved nicely and are accessible from the parking lots.</li> </ul>
Facility and Structure Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilities and structures looked well maintained and fairly new</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facility appears to be well-traveled; many activities and people in this park, especially families with kids</li> <li>Adequate lighting</li> </ul>
Greenways, Trails, Blueways, and Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The entire park is connected through paved paths</li> <li>Nice path around the pond</li> </ul>
Potential for Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Conference Center is a significant opportunity for expansion. Presently, this area appears to be cleared/leveled. It could eventually connect to the expo center to become a hub of activity.</li> <li>Overlook Road is one of the highest spots in the County and provides potential for radio infrastructure, a pavilion and an Emergency Operations Center</li> </ul>
Adequate Resources for Current and Future Use and/or Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Park appears to be performing well and is an asset to Athens and the region</li> <li>Potential for ample continued future use</li> </ul>







# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## CITY PARK COMMUNITY GARDEN

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adds to the diversity of park and recreation outdoor offerings for a diverse population</li> <li>Dedicated space to promote local food production and/or education on agricultural practices</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sidewalk along parking lot is not well-defined and could be unsafe for pedestrians</li> <li>Limited number of gardening beds; may need to analyze whether there is adequate supply for the community demand</li> </ul>
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shade trees, open space</li> </ul>
Pedestrian/Vehicular Access and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parking lot is located adjacent to community garden and easily accessible</li> <li>Garden is embedded in a residential area and in close proximity to McMinn Senior Center, McMinn City Park Field (soccer), City Park Elementary School and Athens Middle School</li> </ul>
Land Utilization - Active and Passive Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Passive: Gardening, educational opportunities</li> </ul>
Compatible Usage and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educational partnership with local schools and food production</li> </ul>
ADA Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Area is relatively flat and accessible, however, there are not paved pathways through the park (only the adjacent cemetery)</li> </ul>
Facility and Structure Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raised beds, gardening shed, and small shade signage appear to be well-maintained</li> <li>Parking lot could benefit from repaving/re-striping</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The park is very visible from the roadway although there does not appear to be any lighting</li> </ul>
Greenways, Trails, Blueways, and Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Close proximity to McMinn Senior Center, McMinn City Park Field (soccer), and close to City Park Elementary School and Athens Middle School</li> </ul>
Potential for Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not much room for expansion, but potential for the raised beds to be laid out more effectively to maximize land area</li> <li>Potential to reclaim some land area for green/gardening space if the parking lot is larger than needed</li> </ul>
Adequate Resources for Current and Future Use and/or Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adequate for current and future use</li> </ul>



## COOK PARK

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Numerous amenities (playground, walking path, covered pavilion, restrooms, basketball courts)</li> <li>Memorial/observation area in honor of Cook High School former site</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Could benefit from additional shade trees or structures along walking path</li> </ul>
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open grassy areas</li> </ul>
Pedestrian/Vehicular Access and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nicely maintained paved parking area</li> <li>Accessible by vehicle. Adjacent residential areas could potentially access by bicycle/on foot.</li> <li>More foot traffic here than any other park</li> </ul>
Land Utilization - Active and Passive Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active: Basketball courts, playground</li> <li>Passive: Paved trails for walking/biking, flexible green space, covered pavilion, Cook High School memorial/observation area</li> </ul>
Compatible Usage and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The playground and basketball courts complement each other</li> <li>Pavilion useful for planned events, can be reserved</li> <li>Cook High School alumni host reunions here</li> </ul>
ADA Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moderate ADA accessibility</li> <li>Trails are paved nicely and are accessible from the parking lots</li> </ul>
Facility and Structure Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilities and structures looked well maintained and fairly new</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facility appears to be well-traveled</li> </ul>
Greenways, Trails, Blueways, and Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Park is connected through paved concrete paths</li> </ul>
Potential for Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Park is bounded on three sides by residential properties and fronts a road that is bordered by a railroad track</li> <li>The green space on the park-side of the railroad track could one day be used for a linear path, particularly if the tracks are ever phased out of use</li> <li>NPS-inspired historical plaques should be placed along the walking trail and along the street in recognition of Cook School</li> <li>Sidewalk on Cook Drive and the overflow parking area should be maintained as part of the park</li> </ul>
Adequate Resources for Current and Future Use and/or Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Park appears to be performing well and is an asset to Athens</li> </ul>





# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## DENSO ECO PARK

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11.5 acre park delivered through partnership with local manufacturing company and City of Athens</li> <li>Multiple amenities including water features, arboretum trees and dense canopy, trails, signage, restrooms, and pavilions</li> <li>Community orchard, green infrastructure</li> <li>In a growing area of town</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to increase community knowledge of this unique gem</li> </ul>
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arboretum trees/abundant shade canopy</li> <li>Two major water bodies, wetland areas</li> <li>Wildlife</li> <li>Community orchard</li> </ul>
Pedestrian/Vehicular Access and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accessed often by Denso staff as well as new school users</li> <li>Well-maintained paver parking area serves as green infrastructure component</li> </ul>
Land Utilization - Active and Passive Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Passive: Shaded pavilion, observation deck/dock, restrooms, soft surface walking trails, "Little Free Library," interpretive/educational signage</li> </ul>
Compatible Usage and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Park setup/organization seems to be well thought out and prioritizes preservation of natural areas and wildlife habitat while still providing areas for rest, respite, picnic tables, etc.</li> </ul>
ADA Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ADA parking provided but access beyond is not ADA compatible since paths are gravel/soft surface</li> </ul>
Facility and Structure Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pavilion seems well-maintained as well as observation areas</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has the perception of safety, but could benefit from increased lighting or installation of security cameras since visibility is limited along trail system</li> </ul>
Greenways, Trails, Blueways, and Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trail interior to park forms three loops of varying distances</li> </ul>
Potential for Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Park is situated adjacent to manufacturing site on two sides and bounded by I-75 on the rear</li> </ul>
Adequate Resources for Current and Future Use and/or Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Park seems to be very well-maintained and enjoyed. Continued upkeep at this level will be necessary to continue if it is to remain perceived as a safe and enjoyable park facility.</li> <li>The recent opening of the McMinn Higher Education Center near the park is bringing additional people to the area and increasing use</li> </ul>



## EUREKA TRAIL

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following a former railroad bed, the gravel trail winds approximately 5.6 miles between Athens and Englewood</li> <li>Boasts nature/foliage, wildlife observation</li> <li>Flexible trail is open to pedestrians, bicycles, and is equestrian-friendly</li> <li>Athens trailhead new in 2020</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trail branding could be elevated</li> <li>Needs additional spurs for connection to City urban routes</li> <li>Englewood trailhead cannot be completed until more rail is abandoned</li> </ul>
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trail traverses a range of landscapes (rural, woodland)</li> </ul>
Pedestrian/Vehicular Access and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Athens Trailhead has a well-marked concrete, asphalt, and geo-grid material</li> <li>Complete partnership with TDOT and utilize existing funding to provide the underpass crossing at Highway 39</li> </ul>
Land Utilization - Active and Passive Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Passive: Hard-packed surface trail through varying terrain and open and wooded areas</li> </ul>
Compatible Usage and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walking groups, cross country teams, wildlife interest groups, bootcamps and exercise focused activities</li> <li>Growing in popularity but competing uses with bikes, horses, and walkers; evaluate potential for limiting horse use to specific days</li> </ul>
ADA Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Purchased and constructed with federal funding compliant with ADA guidelines</li> </ul>
Facility and Structure Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>N/A</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only open daylight to dark, implement safety solar lighting</li> </ul>
Greenways, Trails, Blueways, and Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing 5.6 mile trail extending from Athens to Englewood</li> </ul>
Potential for Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extend and implement full master plan through Englewood and downtown Athens</li> <li>Implement rubber walking surface and lighting at Athens trailhead exercise loop</li> </ul>
Adequate Resources for Current and Future Use and/or Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Usable in current condition; parking areas could use some maintenance and formalization, and additional signage types could be added including wayfinding, directional/destination, and/or interpretive/educational signage (existing signage focuses on healthy living but could add wildlife/plant educational info)</li> </ul>





# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## FISHER FIELD

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This park consists of a single baseball field in Athens utilized daily for practice</li> <li>Adequate lighting</li> <li>Used as only field for 13-14 year-old baseball and is the Middle School's team home field</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parking area not well-maintained</li> <li>Limited area and use</li> </ul>
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grassy area, trees</li> </ul>
Pedestrian/Vehicular Access and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parking lot at park entrance</li> </ul>
Land Utilization - Active and Passive Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active: Baseball field</li> <li>Passive: Bleachers</li> </ul>
Compatible Usage and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>
ADA Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Built prior to ADA and currently is not compatible, should be rebuilt in order to be accessible</li> </ul>
Facility and Structure Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dugouts and bleachers seem to be well-maintained, fencing should be replaced and appears to be rusted chain-link</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Field is adjacent to train tracks; could pose a potential hazard to children</li> </ul>
Greenways, Trails, Blueways, and Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>
Potential for Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential to expand and build on the industrial property across the street, adding an indoor facility here can be a public/private partnership opportunity</li> <li>Add an additional field for tournament rentals</li> </ul>



## HERITAGE PARK

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Park is popular and has space for active areas</li> <li>Has been master planned and phases being implemented</li> <li>Good visibility from the roadway</li> <li>Recently built new basketball courts at former tennis court location</li> <li>Newly renovated pavilion in 2020</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Much of the park is poorly maintained</li> <li>ADA ramp is not very functional, playground is dated and in disrepair (hazard)</li> <li>Parking lot needs repaving and re-striping</li> </ul>
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grass appears healthy, wooded area surrounding the park</li> </ul>
Pedestrian/Vehicular Access and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parking lot is in disrepair, not safe for wheelchairs</li> </ul>
Land Utilization - Active and Passive Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active: Playground, baseball field, basketball court, tennis courts</li> <li>Passive: Pavilion with seating</li> </ul>
Compatible Usage and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Layout is well-planned (if equipment was brought up to safe standards and/or updated)</li> </ul>
ADA Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sidewalks and parking lot/ramp need to be in better condition</li> </ul>
Facility and Structure Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ball fields, basketball courts need maintenance. Playground needs updating. Pavilion was recently renovated</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The view from the street and setback with the parking lot is a nice layout for the park and helps it feel safe</li> </ul>
Greenways, Trails, Blueways, and Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Possible trail on south side of the park-Walker Branch</li> </ul>
Potential for Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wooded area in the rear of the park; existing trail here already and could expand upon that</li> <li>Continue implementing the master plan</li> </ul>
Adequate Resources for Current and Future Use and/or Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This park would be an asset for Athens if updated/maintained</li> </ul>





# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## INGLESIDE RECREATIONAL FACILITY

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skatepark</li> <li>Pool with slide, concessions, restrooms, showers</li> <li>Eight lighted tennis courts</li> <li>Open grassy area</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As a whole, park looks like it needs maintenance and attention</li> <li>Lacking proper signage leads to confusion about this park's name (not good for branding or public knowledge/access of park facility)</li> </ul>
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open grass</li> <li>Not much shade on site, but trees border the park</li> </ul>
Pedestrian/Vehicular Access and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parking lot is flat and accessible, located at the entrance of the park</li> <li>Could walk to this park, in a more residential area</li> <li>Sidewalks are paved</li> </ul>
Land Utilization - Active and Passive Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active: Skatepark, tennis courts, pool</li> <li>Passive: Bleachers next to tennis courts, open green space</li> </ul>
Compatible Usage and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Everything in this park is sectioned off by a chain link fence</li> <li>There is not much cohesion between active areas</li> <li>Could use additional seating areas/passive activity space</li> <li>Park would benefit from additional shade trees and a walking trail</li> </ul>
ADA Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Park is completely flat and mostly ADA accessible</li> </ul>
Facility and Structure Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structures need maintenance and care, but good activity areas</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Borders a residential street with a sidewalk and Ingleside Elementary School</li> </ul>
Greenways, Trails, Blueways, and Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can be connected to Eureka Urban Trail</li> </ul>
Potential for Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential for more amenities here, open flat grass for expansion</li> <li>Could connect to elementary school yard better</li> <li>New pickleball courts to be added with trees planted</li> </ul>
Adequate Resources for Current and Future Use and/or Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes; this is a very usable area</li> </ul>





## KNIGHT PARK

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Located between Jackson Street, White Street, and College Street, this park offers a sitting area and gravel walking path</li> <li>Park signage on a "Welcome to Athens" sign successfully designates this area</li> <li>Successful as a pocket park in the midst of a fine-grained urban environment</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Could have space limitations based on park size</li> </ul>
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shade trees</li> <li>Evergreen shrubs</li> <li>Open grassy area</li> </ul>
Pedestrian/Vehicular Access and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Street parking along College Street or within street grid nearby</li> <li>No crosswalks or sidewalk connections</li> </ul>
Land Utilization - Active and Passive Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Passive: Community gathering space</li> </ul>
Compatible Usage and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small group outdoor meetings or lunches, outdoor reading</li> </ul>
ADA Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gravel pathways need to be paved to be ADA compliant</li> </ul>
Facility and Structure Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appears to be well-maintained</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very visible from the street</li> <li>Need crosswalks to connect to nearby sidewalks and allow pedestrians to safely access the park</li> </ul>
Greenways, Trails, Blueways, and Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential to connect to college campus</li> </ul>
Potential for Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City and college should work together to implement park master plan</li> <li>Build gazebo as per the plan</li> </ul>
Adequate Resources for Current and Future Use and/or Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes; adequate for current and future use</li> </ul>



# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## MARKET PARK

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Well-kept area in the heart of downtown Athens and flexible enough to host a number of different types of events/programs</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accompanied by large parking lot that is not well landscaped and could benefit from some green infrastructure or additional planting</li> <li>Signage is minimal; consider how to improve park branding</li> <li>Grassy area is patchy in some areas; consider adding some seating, walkways, or public art installations to enhance the space</li> </ul>
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grassy areas with street trees located immediately behind pavilion</li> </ul>
Pedestrian/Vehicular Access and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accompanied by large parking lot and parallel street parking</li> </ul>
Land Utilization - Active and Passive Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All activities here are passive: events, shopping, farmer's market, gathering</li> </ul>
Compatible Usage and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walking groups, festivals, open-air markets or farmer's markets</li> </ul>
ADA Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moderately ADA accessible; grades are flat and most areas are paved with the exception of the grass area behind the pavilion</li> </ul>
Facility and Structure Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pavilion structure appears to be well-maintained</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Area is visible from the street and well-lit parking area</li> <li>Grassy area behind the structures could pose a safety risk as it is partially obscured from view and doesn't have much fronting on it</li> </ul>
Greenways, Trails, Blueways, and Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Within the heart of downtown and is very walkable, short distance from Knight Park</li> </ul>
Potential for Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Park takes up the majority of the block but could expand if adjacent business uses were to go out of business and the land were acquired</li> <li>Park could choose to re-dedicate its land area and either reduce its parking to provide more programmable space or re-appropriate its hardscape and landscape areas</li> <li>Implement master plan</li> <li>Purchase surrounding property as it becomes available</li> </ul>
Adequate Resources for Current and Future Use and/or Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes; adequate for current and future use</li> <li>Market Park and Veterans Park connected by road crossing, need to implement the remaining portions as designed</li> </ul>





## PROF POWERS PARK

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Park is very natural</li> <li>Several learning areas that would be conducive to outdoor learning</li> <li>Large acreage for a park</li> <li>Road throughout makes park areas very accessible</li> <li>Baseball field</li> <li>Pond</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Built in 1950's</li> <li>Old rock quarry, limited for constructability</li> <li>Maintenance issues</li> <li>Not well lit</li> <li>Some areas appear outdated</li> <li>Pavilion looks rundown</li> </ul>
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ample natural beauty</li> <li>Pond, shade trees, grassy areas</li> <li>Natural learning areas: outdoor classrooms, bleachers</li> </ul>
Pedestrian/Vehicular Access and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A winding road exists throughout the park to provide vehicular accessibility</li> <li>Possible walking trails within park area</li> </ul>
Land Utilization - Active and Passive Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active: Baseball field, learning areas, outdoor classrooms</li> <li>Passive: Walking trails, bleachers, fishing in pond, interpretive signage</li> </ul>
Compatible Usage and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Park has multiple features and activities, although it is unclear if these are logically connected/programmed</li> </ul>
ADA Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Built in 1950's</li> </ul>
Facility and Structure Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some structures appeared to be at risk of collapsing. These need to be updated and maintained.</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Could benefit from additional lighting, especially because it is in such a wooded area</li> </ul>
Greenways, Trails, Blueways, and Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trails throughout park</li> </ul>
Potential for Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is still undeveloped land in this park that could be used for park amenities or activities</li> <li>Implement proposed master plan</li> </ul>
Adequate Resources for Current and Future Use and/or Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes; quarry limits development ability</li> </ul>



# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Memorial area at beginning of linear park</li> <li>Paved path with a loop at the end that runs along a river is a nice walking area</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flood area</li> <li>Cannot put in electric</li> </ul>
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grassy areas, shade trees, and trees lining the trail</li> <li>Trail runs next to a creek</li> </ul>
Pedestrian/Vehicular Access and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parking lot adjacent to the street by memorial area</li> <li>Several additional parking lots along trail</li> <li>Linear pedestrian path along entire park</li> </ul>
Land Utilization - Active and Passive Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All activities here are passive: observation of memorial, walking, fishing in creek</li> </ul>
Compatible Usage and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walking groups</li> <li>Could benefit from additional seating near parking lot for walking groups to meet</li> </ul>
ADA Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moderately ADA accessible; the trail is paved and flat and the veteran's memorial is as well</li> </ul>
Facility and Structure Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New and safe facility that is well-maintained</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Front area of park/memorial area appears to be safe</li> </ul>
Greenways, Trails, Blueways, and Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creek adjacent to the park; it could benefit from being connected to a larger trail system</li> </ul>
Potential for Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Park is in a residential area; it doesn't appear to have land area for expansion</li> </ul>
Adequate Resources for Current and Future Use and/or Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes, Market Park and Veterans Park connected by road crossing, need to implement the remaining portions as designed</li> </ul>



## CALHOUN BOAT RAMP (HIWASSEE BLUEWAY ACCESS POINT)

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access point to Hiwassee Blueway, which offers 55 miles of river adventure in Southeast Tennessee, extending from Appalachia Dam near the border of North Carolina to the Tennessee River.</li> <li>The Calhoun section of the river flows through the Cherokee National Forest and is designated a State Scenic River</li> <li>River access offers opportunities for swimming, boating, fishing, paddling, picnicking</li> <li>Blueway signage (directional and interpretive), Blueway branding</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Larger dock could accommodate more users</li> <li>Adjacent to railroad track that must be crossed to access park, and is separated by a chain link fence, which is not a great welcome to the park and not very aesthetically pleasing</li> <li>There is no restroom present at this location, but across the river at the Charleston access point there are restroom facilities.</li> </ul>
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shade trees, open space</li> </ul>
Pedestrian/Vehicular Access and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parking lot just as you cross over the railroad tracks; there is grassy area along the shoreline, but at the park entrance all you can really see is asphalt due to the grade. It could be beneficial to consider enhancing the landscaping.</li> </ul>
Land Utilization - Active and Passive Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Passive: Paddling, swimming, picnicking, boating, fishing</li> </ul>
Compatible Usage and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Swimming, use of areas surrounding dock for picnicking (grassy shoreline, picnic tables)</li> </ul>
ADA Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>
Facility and Structure Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dock appears to be structurally sound and in good shape; picnic tables and trash receptacles, as well as signage appears to be well-maintained</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The park is very visible from both the roadway and the river</li> <li>Adequate lighting is present</li> </ul>
Greenways, Trails, Blueways, and Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hiwassee River Blueway access point</li> </ul>
Potential for Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Could expand in a linear fashion along the shoreline, however, the location of the railroad track may present challenges to this</li> </ul>
Adequate Resources for Current and Future Use and/or Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adequate for current and future use</li> </ul>





# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## HIWASSEE MEADOWLANDS PARK

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Area well-planned for activities: baseball, basketball, a playground and a pavilion</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Busy road (Highway 163) makes it unsafe to walk to/from the library</li> <li>No signage separating park area from adjacent residential area</li> <li>Feels unsafe due to the highway and a thick wooded area making up two sides of the park</li> </ul>
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shade trees</li> <li>Green wooded area on one side has potential to be a greater asset in future</li> </ul>
Pedestrian/Vehicular Access and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One small parking lot with less than twenty spaces</li> <li>No pedestrian or bicycle-friendly access</li> <li>Paved path system within the park improves internal walkability</li> </ul>
Land Utilization - Active and Passive Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active: Baseball fields, basketball court</li> <li>Passive: Pavilion, paved path, shaded grassy seating areas</li> </ul>
Compatible Usage and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>
ADA Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moderately ADA accessible within park on the paved paths</li> </ul>
Facility and Structure Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ball field/basketball courts need maintenance</li> <li>Pavilion structure appears to be well-maintained</li> <li>Playground structure appears to be safe</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Busy road frontage, cemetery, and thick wooded area surrounding the park compromise appearance/perception of safety</li> <li>Park lacks a barrier between the residential and park areas</li> <li>Adjacent residential lot has an unfenced deep pond next to the park's playground making it unsafe for unsupervised children - this should be fenced off for fall protection</li> </ul>
Greenways, Trails, Blueways, and Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concrete paths throughout the park</li> <li>No visible connections to any other area except for cemetery</li> <li>This park seems isolated and does not connect to a larger network</li> </ul>
Potential for Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>
Adequate Resources for Current and Future Use and/or Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Park is usable in present state</li> <li>Park has acceptable program planning with the ball fields, pavilion and playground structure</li> <li>Buffers/barriers needed between the park/highway and the park/residential area</li> <li>Park would be more successful if we could create a connection to the library/ City Hall building</li> </ul>



## ENGLEWOOD MEMORIAL PARK

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple amenities</li> <li>Assets for every age: playground, pool, pavilion, baseball field, track, walking and seating areas</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programs appear to be randomly placed; not well organized</li> <li>Paths are very narrow</li> <li>Grass is patchy</li> <li>Lacking shade</li> <li>Seems to be empty/abandoned</li> <li>Bathrooms are temporary facilities (portable)</li> </ul>
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grassy areas</li> </ul>
Pedestrian/Vehicular Access and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintained parking lot at park entrance, seems like enough parking</li> </ul>
Land Utilization - Active and Passive Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active: Baseball field, swimming pool, track, walking trail, playground, tennis courts (within track oval)</li> <li>Passive: Shaded pavilion</li> </ul>
Compatible Usage and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Park setup/organization does not seem very compatible</li> <li>Things are distant and spread out. Active areas separated by narrow concrete paths set in the grass.</li> </ul>
ADA Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not ADA compatible. Paths too narrow and not enough upkeep to make it safe for wheelchairs</li> </ul>
Facility and Structure Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very outdated and unmaintained structures</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lacks perception/appearance of safety; not well-traveled/few visitors</li> </ul>
Greenways, Trails, Blueways, and Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>
Potential for Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open fields to the north of the park (May have been former soccer fields but now used for hay production)</li> </ul>
Adequate Resources for Current and Future Use and/or Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Park needs significant maintenance and improvement to be used in the future</li> <li>Park is usable presently, but is not a very good quality or experience</li> </ul>





# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## DON EDMON PARK

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Connects to Eureka Trail</li><li>• Currently exists as a trailhead with parking</li></ul>
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Beside the railroad they hope to acquire in future</li></ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Does not go to highway and has house on other end</li><li>• Odd-shaped piece of property</li></ul>



## WATER TOWER PARK

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On November 14, 2020 the Water Tower Committee and other supporters joined together at the base of the water tower to unveil the plaque naming the tower as a National Historical Site, named by the National Register Historical Commission</li> <li>Located in a walkable area where residential transitions to commercial</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Newly dedicated/under construction</li> <li>Would benefit from seating areas</li> </ul>
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grassy area; historical significance</li> </ul>
Pedestrian/Vehicular Access and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No parking but walkable; commercial parking lots nearby may be utilized</li> </ul>
Land Utilization - Active and Passive Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Passive: Walking, enjoyment of historical structure</li> </ul>
Compatible Usage and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walking groups, picnicking, photography</li> </ul>
ADA Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No paved paths for ADA access and no sidewalks along roadway</li> </ul>
Facility and Structure Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structural integrity of water tower seems to be stable</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On triangular piece of land surrounded by residential properties and highly visible</li> </ul>
Greenways, Trails, Blueways, and Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Close to downtown Englewood</li> </ul>
Potential for Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not much potential for expansion due to physical location limitations</li> </ul>
Adequate Resources for Current and Future Use and/or Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Once complete, park will serve an important purpose honoring the area's legacy as well and would be expected to be adequate for future use</li> </ul>

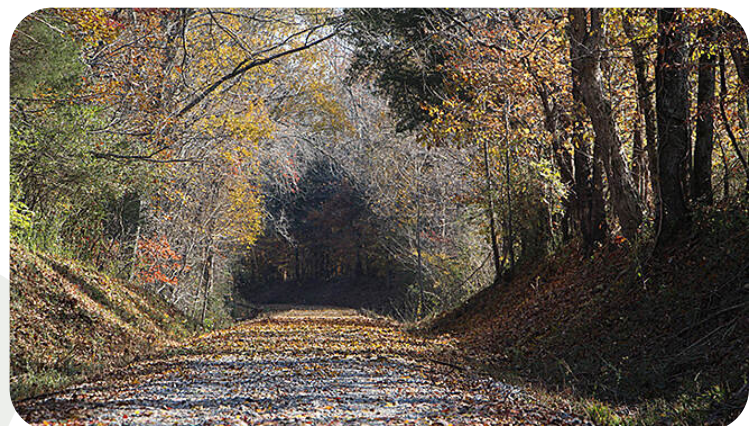
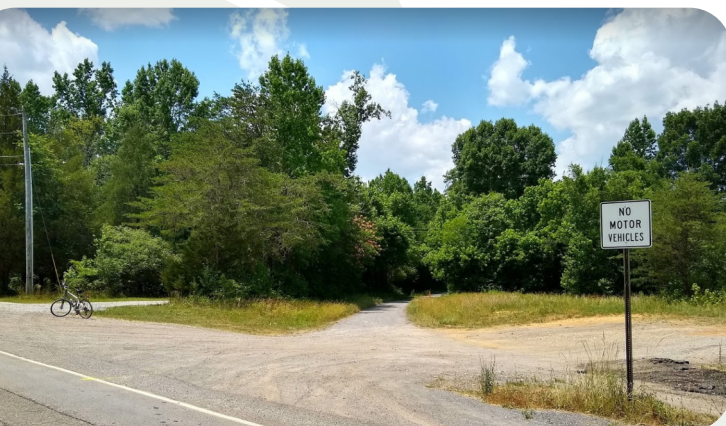




# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## ENGLEWOOD EUREKA TRAILHEAD

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Eureka Trail is an approximately 5-mile long hard-packed gravel trail that follows the path of a former rail line and connects the communities of Athens and Englewood</li> <li>Suitable for walking, running, bicycling, and horseback riding</li> <li>The trail is fairly level, with only gentle inclines</li> <li>Much of the trail is shady as it passes through a mixture of forest and farmland</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trail ends at Highway 39, or New Englewood Road, and then have to cross highway</li> <li>Plans are for the trail to eventually extend another mile and a half into downtown Englewood</li> <li>After crossing the highway near the trailhead, there are two country road crossings along the way</li> </ul>
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grassy areas, woodland, farmland, shade trees and forest</li> </ul>
Pedestrian/Vehicular Access and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parking lot is not striped</li> </ul>
Land Utilization - Active and Passive Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Passive: Walking, running, bicycling, and horseback riding</li> </ul>
Compatible Usage and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walking groups, cross country or distance running practice or races, possible wildlife viewing</li> </ul>
ADA Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not ADA compatible. Paths too narrow and not hard surface</li> </ul>
Facility and Structure Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No structures at this trailhead</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lacks perception/appearance of safety; not well-marked or identifiable from roadway</li> </ul>
Greenways, Trails, Blueways, and Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Part of Eureka Rail Trail</li> </ul>
Potential for Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undeveloped land adjacent to trail entrance could be formalized to provide parking, restrooms, equestrian parking, seating, and/or educational displays</li> </ul>
Adequate Resources for Current and Future Use and/or Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trailhead is significantly informal and not well-marked; will need to be more developed to truly be considered a punctuation mark along the trail, even if the trail is extended further south into downtown Englewood</li> </ul>





## GAZEBO AREA BESIDE RAILROAD TRACKS

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Central location</li> <li>Close to parking lot and residential area</li> <li>Connects to sidewalk</li> <li>Landscaping and trees</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paths are very narrow</li> <li>Grass is patchy</li> <li>No bathroom facilities</li> </ul>
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grassy areas</li> <li>Trees</li> </ul>
Pedestrian/Vehicular Access and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pedestrian access to downtown Englewood</li> <li>Parking spaces across the street</li> </ul>
Land Utilization - Active and Passive Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active: None</li> <li>Passive: Shaded gazebo</li> </ul>
Compatible Usage and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Could be used for Englewood events but would require more parking</li> <li>Could add walking path, but mainly should be used for passive recreation due to proximity to Englewood Memorial Park</li> </ul>
ADA Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not ADA accessible</li> </ul>
Facility and Structure Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bench and gazebo seem safe</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safe during day, very close to railroad tracks</li> <li>Close to downtown</li> </ul>
Greenways, Trails, Blueways, and Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>
Potential for Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CSX Railroad Line to the South</li> <li>Potential for some expansion to the West with similar amenities to existing Gazebo area</li> </ul>
Adequate Resources for Current and Future Use and/or Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Park is usable and could be expanded upon due to proximity to downtown Englewood</li> </ul>



# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## ETOWAH CITY PARK AND SPLASH PAD

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Park's active areas: basketball courts, baseball fields, former splash pad</li> <li>Dog park appears to be recently implemented and well-maintained</li> <li>Playground still in use</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not well-maintained and has fallen into disrepair</li> <li>Splash pad is poorly maintained</li> <li>Sidewalks are overgrown with grass, do not go all the way around the park</li> <li>Pavilion poorly maintained</li> <li>Parking lot/sidewalk layout is confusing</li> <li>Tall wooden poles in one area</li> </ul>
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open grass areas, lacks trees</li> </ul>
Pedestrian/Vehicular Access and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parking lot and paved path by ball fields</li> </ul>
Land Utilization - Active and Passive Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active: baseball fields, splash pad, playground and dog park</li> </ul>
Compatible Usage and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Could add bleachers at ball fields, update lighting structures, and update/repair the splash pad</li> </ul>
ADA Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited ADA accessibility</li> </ul>
Facility and Structure Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Park needs major updating and maintenance. Specifically the pavilion, splash pad and sidewalks</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>N/A</li> </ul>
Greenways, Trails, Blueways, and Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>
Potential for Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large wooded area adjacent to the park could be used as an expansion area</li> </ul>
Adequate Resources for Current and Future Use and/or Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Usable if undergoes proper repair and equipment is maintained</li> </ul>





## ETOWAH CHEW CHEW DOG PARK

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New fenced in dog park (2019) created at the former location of the Etowah Community Center</li> <li>Proximity to Etowah City Park and Splash Pad property</li> <li>Features play equipment and waste receptacle stations appropriate for dogs</li> <li>Canopy shade structure area</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited use/purpose park</li> </ul>
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Surrounded by grassy field</li> </ul>
Pedestrian/Vehicular Access and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paved lot on this same block, as well as across the street at City Park</li> <li>Sited within residential street grid, very accessible to pedestrians/bicyclists</li> </ul>
Land Utilization - Active and Passive Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Passive: Shaded canopy, play structures for dogs</li> </ul>
Compatible Usage and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dog play groups, neighborhood dog walks</li> </ul>
ADA Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some ADA improvements needed</li> </ul>
Facility and Structure Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appears to be new and well-maintained</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has the perception of safety with onsite lighting</li> <li>Open from dawn to dusk</li> </ul>
Greenways, Trails, Blueways, and Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Located across the street from City Park</li> </ul>
Potential for Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remainder of the block on appears to be vacant property/grassy field, with potential for expansion</li> </ul>
Adequate Resources for Current and Future Use and/or Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Park is usable currently and could be expanded due to proximity to City Park and Splash Pad</li> </ul>



# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## ETOWAH COMMUNITY CENTER

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple activities for active and passive recreation in an indoor setting</li> <li>Appears to be well-utilized by the community</li> <li>Flexible spaces for gatherings of a variety of sizes and purposes</li> <li>Activities for a range of age groups</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parking lot could benefit from repaving and restriping</li> <li>Signage at main highway entrance is small and dated; could benefit from updated investment in entrance appearance</li> </ul>
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open grassy area behind/beside the building, as well as wild open grassy field between building and the highway</li> </ul>
Pedestrian/Vehicular Access and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large paved parking lot adjacent to building; appears to have adequate ADA entrance</li> </ul>
Land Utilization - Active and Passive Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active: Weight and fitness rooms, exercise classes, dance, aerobics, summer sport and activity camps, gymnasium</li> <li>Passive: Game room, conference rooms, multipurpose rooms, children party package, free Wi-Fi</li> </ul>
Compatible Usage and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fitness groups, group events/birthday parties, corporate/public meetings</li> </ul>
ADA Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moderate ADA accessibility at entrance to building</li> </ul>
Facility and Structure Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Park needs major updating and maintenance. Specifically the pavilion, splash pad and sidewalks</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facility appears to be safe and well-maintained</li> <li>Parking lot could benefit from repaving and restriping</li> </ul>
Greenways, Trails, Blueways, and Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not appear to be well-connected any other recreational assets and lacks accessibility except by vehicle as a mode of transport</li> </ul>
Potential for Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grassy fields offer ample opportunities for building expansion or to add outdoor recreation activities (track, fitness stations) or playground equipment</li> </ul>
Adequate Resources for Current and Future Use and/or Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adequate for current and future use if parking lot is updated and equipment is maintained</li> </ul>





## L&N TRAIN DEPOT AND VETERAN'S MEMORIAL PARK

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appears to be new and/or well-maintained</li> <li>Walking trail is approximately one-third of a mile long, shaded during the day, and well-lit in the evening.</li> <li>Pavilion with picnic tables</li> <li>Well-maintained public restroom facilities</li> <li>Historical value with refurbished old trains</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shade trees</li> <li>Grassy areas</li> </ul>
Pedestrian/Vehicular Access and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parking lots are well-maintained and allow access to the trails and structures in the park</li> </ul>
Land Utilization - Active and Passive Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This park is predominately passive, consisting of walking trails, open green space, and showcasing old train cars and train depot</li> </ul>
Compatible Usage and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historical value will draw people here, could hold events and celebrations</li> </ul>
ADA Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Could benefit from additional sidewalks to better connect the park to the main street and other areas of town</li> </ul>
Facility and Structure Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilities and structures appear to be well-maintained</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appears to be very safe</li> </ul>
Greenways, Trails, Blueways, and Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adjacent to a railroad</li> </ul>
Potential for Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Could use more sidewalks to lead to other parts of town, make it more connected into Main Street</li> </ul>
Adequate Resources for Current and Future Use and/or Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes</li> </ul>



# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## ROTARY PARK

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Memorial park/intimate gathering space between narrow storefronts in downtown area</li> <li>Local art/murals painted on brick walls featuring City name and paying homage to historic character</li> <li>Focal fountain</li> <li>String lights contribute to creative ambiance</li> <li>Picnic tables and benches for seating</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No dedicated parking</li> <li>Space limitations for larger gathering</li> </ul>
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>
Pedestrian/Vehicular Access and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parking appears to be on-street with the possibility of the large gravel lot at the rear of the storefronts being supplemental parking</li> <li>Pedestrian access is feasible due to the downtown location, local streets, and residential</li> </ul>
Land Utilization - Active and Passive Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All activities here are passive: observation of memorial, events and gathering</li> </ul>
Compatible Usage and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Third place" outdoor meeting space for lunch or coffee</li> <li>Special/significant events</li> </ul>
ADA Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moderately ADA accessible</li> </ul>
Facility and Structure Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outdoor space bounded by adjacent buildings' exterior walls</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of visibility of the semi-enclosed space could pose a safety concern during off-peak hours</li> </ul>
Greenways, Trails, Blueways, and Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not far from other downtown assets such as Etowah Depot</li> </ul>
Potential for Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not much potential unless acquisition of neighboring structures or expand into the gravel parking lot at the rear</li> </ul>
Adequate Resources for Current and Future Use and/or Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes, this is a unique asset that diversifies the total parks and recreation portfolio</li> </ul>





## KENNETH GABLE MEMORIAL PARK

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Located in downtown Niota across the railroad tracks from Niota Depot</li> <li>Shade trees, interior footpath</li> <li>Grassy areas</li> <li>Flexible open spaces</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The paved paths are narrow</li> <li>Physical barrier of railroad tracks separating it from adjacent Niota Depot</li> </ul>
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shade trees</li> <li>Grassy areas</li> </ul>
Pedestrian/Vehicular Access and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inconvenient to walk from the train depot to the park, have to cross train tracks at a different intersection</li> <li>Parking lot shared with Niota Depot was small</li> </ul>
Land Utilization - Active and Passive Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active: Playground, volleyball net</li> <li>Passive: Interior footpath trail, pavilion area, picnic areas</li> </ul>
Compatible Usage and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Could benefit from being better connected to the depot</li> <li>Train tracks currently separate the two areas, a way to cross the tracks from the depot without having to walk to another intersection would be beneficial</li> </ul>
ADA Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Once inside the park the grades are relatively flat, however the footpath is too narrow to meet ADA</li> </ul>
Facility and Structure Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No visitors present at time of evaluation, however it did not feel unsafe</li> </ul>
Greenways, Trails, Blueways, and Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>
Potential for Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unused space around park is a potential for expansion</li> </ul>
Adequate Resources for Current and Future Use and/or Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes</li> </ul>



NIOTA DEPOT

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Refurbished and very nice, this is the biggest draw of the area</li><li>• Historical significance can be leveraged to attract visitors</li><li>• Shade trees</li></ul>





## BICENTENNIAL PARK

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Well-maintained artificial turf baseball fields &amp; soccer fields, everything is fenced and well-lit</li> <li>New playground, ample seating (pavilion and shaded picnic tables) for visitors watching baseball games</li> <li>Is a good location to host tournaments</li> <li>Paved concrete paths make it ADA accessible</li> <li>Concession stand</li> <li>Parking lot has been maintained</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grass is dead in some areas</li> <li>Some clutter/unused sports equipment laying around</li> <li>Main entrance on County Road 750 needs to be relocated to be safer and separate from traffic sharing the same entrance as the landfill</li> <li>Top layer of asphalt should be added to parking lot</li> <li>Turf outfields of Fields 2 and 3 to limit impact of flooding and provide soccer field striping</li> </ul>
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shade trees, open space</li> </ul>
Pedestrian/Vehicular Access and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple parking lots</li> <li>Sidewalks throughout</li> </ul>
Land Utilization - Active and Passive Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active: Playground, baseball fields, soccer fields, concession stand</li> <li>Passive: Pavilion seating, picnic tables, bleachers for watching sports games</li> </ul>
Compatible Usage and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This would be a good location to host a baseball or soccer tournament because of the well lit turf fields</li> <li>There are facilities for many ages with the playground, bleachers, and concessions stand</li> </ul>
ADA Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This park is moderately ADA accessible due to newer sidewalks</li> </ul>
Facility and Structure Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilities are well-kept and appear to be safe</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The park is well lit and used often, giving the impression of safety</li> </ul>
Greenways, Trails, Blueways, and Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paths in this park are mainly used to access the different sports fields/playground</li> </ul>
Potential for Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>200 acres of land open for expansion beside the park</li> <li>Add additional amenities such as a multi-purpose field, rubber surface walking track, horse/mountain bike trails, disc golf course, batting cages, shooting range</li> </ul>
Adequate Resources for Current and Future Use and/or Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adequate resource for current and future use (considering future expansion)</li> </ul>



# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## COUNTY FOREST - CAMP CHEROKEE

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Park features natural undeveloped beauty of 264 acres with access to the Hiwassee River</li> <li>Intent is to use this facility for its natural beauty and the associated activities (mountain biking, kayaking, hiking, fishing etc.)</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undeveloped</li> </ul>
Potential for Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Horses, camping, gun range, boat ramp, picnic area, canoe/kayak boat launch</li> </ul>

## OLD MCMINN FIELDS - SENIOR CENTER

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is where the McMinn Soccer Club practices</li> <li>It is near City Park Elementary School, the Athens City Middle School, and across the street from the senior center</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No other amenities</li> </ul>
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very nice and well-maintained, good landscaping, lighting and signage</li> </ul>
Pedestrian/Vehicular Access and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Well-maintained parking facilities in front of the field</li> </ul>
Land Utilization - Active and Passive Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very active: soccer fields</li> </ul>
Compatible Usage and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Soccer games and bleachers; could potentially hold tournament games here</li> </ul>
ADA Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moderately ADA accessible</li> </ul>
Facility and Structure Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appears to be safe</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appears to be safe</li> </ul>
Greenways, Trails, Blueways, and Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>
Potential for Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No room for expansion</li> </ul>
Adequate Resources for Current and Future Use and/or Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes</li> </ul>





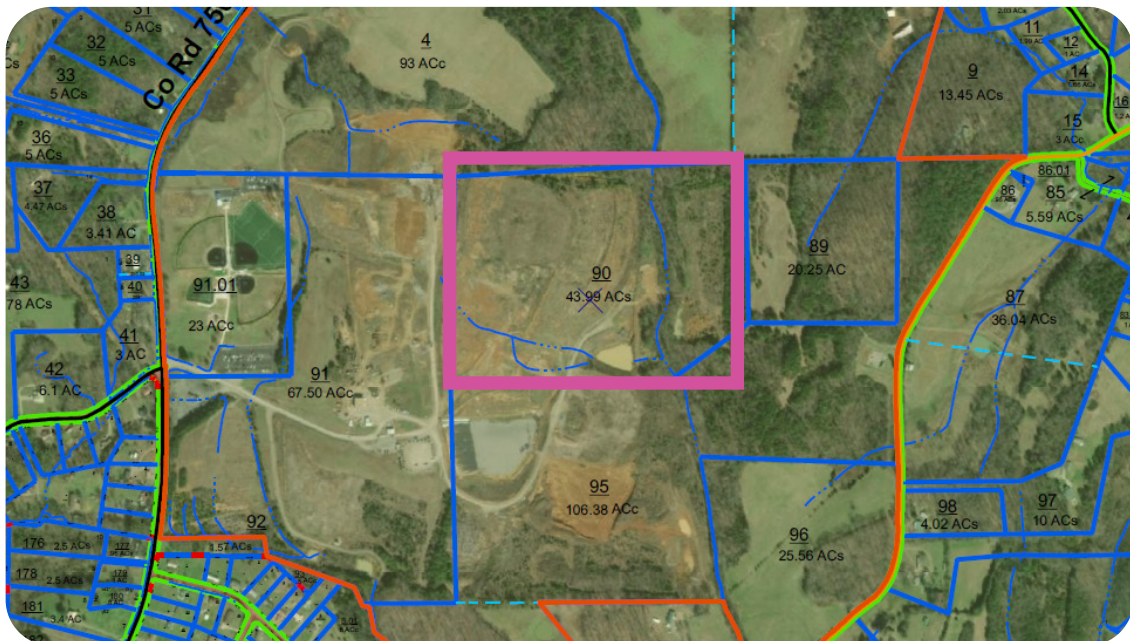
## PARKSTOWN PARK

EVALUATION COMPONENT	FACILITY DESCRIPTION
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paved sidewalk around baseball field</li> <li>Playground, baseball field, and basketball court</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tennis court in poor condition, repurpose for better use</li> <li>Not kept up</li> </ul>
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shade trees</li> </ul>
Pedestrian/Vehicular Access and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adequate parking lot close to bleachers and ball field</li> </ul>
Land Utilization - Active and Passive Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active: Basketball court, baseball field, playground</li> <li>Passive: Bleachers, walking path, pavilion</li> </ul>
Compatible Usage and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adjacent to church</li> </ul>
ADA Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cracked pavement and sidewalks</li> </ul>
Facility and Structure Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>N/A</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Could feel unsafe, but in a residential area</li> </ul>
Greenways, Trails, Blueways, and Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>
Potential for Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Space around park is dense forest</li> </ul>
Adequate Resources for Current and Future Use and/or Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adequate for current and future use if facilities are maintained and park is taken care of, including providing information about this park to residents of Etowah</li> </ul>



## WILHELM FARM (SURROUNDING BICENTENNIAL PARK)

Wilhelm Farm is located adjacent to Bicentennial Park along County Road 750. This land was purchased for future park amenities to complement the existing Bicentennial Park, and will include the land to the east of the existing park. A Master Plan is recommended following this Systemwide Master Plan's completion to evaluate the acquired property and identify which County needs best align with this new site based on its existing conditions, including topography, vegetation, and site constraints and opportunities.







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## ADVISORY AND SUPPORT AGENCIES

### MCMINN COUNTY PARKS DEPARTMENT ADVISORY BOARD

During the 1960s, McMinn County established a Parks Advisory Board to determine the recreation facilities needed by residents, identify appropriate locations for these facilities, and generate funds for construction. The advisory board secured a state grant for the construction of Cooke Park, a facility at the county land fill, which is located at the geographic center of McMinn County. The Board also worked with a neighborhood group in Etowah to develop Parkstown Park. The advisory board remains partially active in McMinn County and consists of five members, one member representing each of the five County districts. It is recommended that this Board meet more regularly and pursue additional grants on a regular basis. The Board Chair should follow the grant cycles more closely and receive grant resource e-mail newsletters, for example the Department of Health's Built Environment regular and informative newsletter.

### ATHENS PARKS DEPARTMENT ADVISORY BOARD

The Parks Advisory Committee is a seven-member board that advises the Director about recreation procedures, regulations, and decisions. Athens City Council members appoint this Committee to represent the community as a whole. According to a Committee member who was interviewed, the Committee currently represents a good cross section of the population and is an active board where members are able to freely voice opinions. The Committee is strictly advisory but beneficial to the Director because they provide a viewpoint of the community on which decisions about policies can be based.

### ATHENS PARKS FOUNDATION, INC.

The Athens Parks Foundation is a nonprofit organization incorporated in 2003 to supplement recreation funds and to expedite key projects. It is operated by an independent five-member board of trustees. Because of the Foundation's status as an incorporated entity, members are appointed by the board of trustees. One member of the council is appointed by the council to serve as a non-voting ex-officio member.

Annually the Foundation organizes the City fireworks show and participates in other programming including Soap Box Derby, Fishing Derby, and Egg Hunt activities.

Projects they have participated in include Athens Regional Park Playground, the Skatepark, Athens Regional Park Splashpad, and portions of Market Park to name a few.

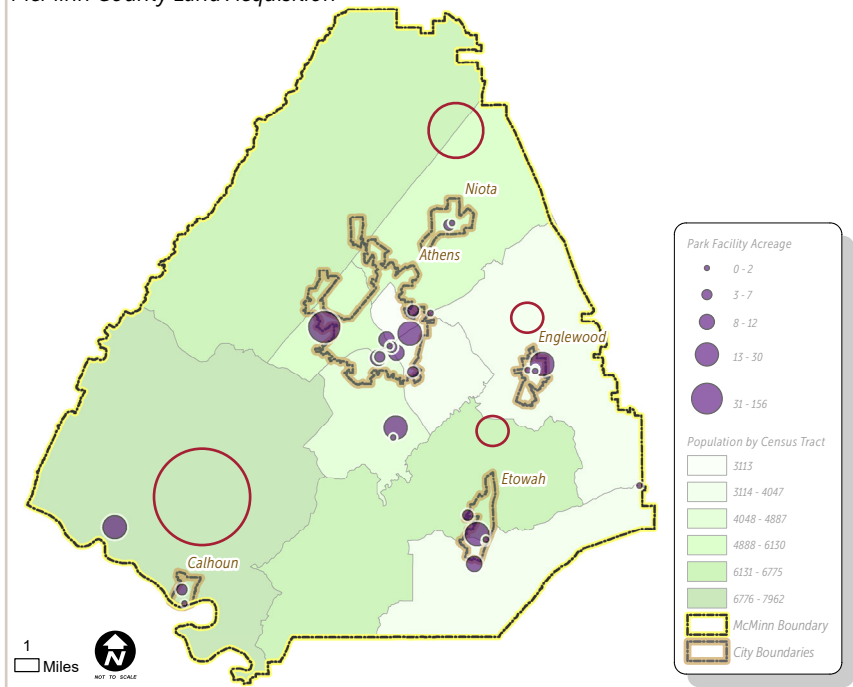
Not only does the organization assist with parks and recreation projects in Athens, but also in the surrounding McMinn County. Foundation funding is received through donations and different government revenues. They help vet projects and donations and wisely distribute funds that best benefit the community's projects.

## PARK LAND ACQUISITION

The need for future park land acquisition in McMinn County is dependent upon several factors, including demographics, current and proposed major developments, and survey input. The map below depicts McMinn County with population estimates by census tract, based on 2020 data from the US Census. There are presently 642.41 acres of park land within the County and a total county population of 54,208, which equates to 11.9 acres of park land per one thousand residents. McMinn County's ratio of park land per resident is above the NRPA median statistic of 9.9 acres of parkland per one thousand residents and just below the upper quartile (17.1 acres per 1,000 residents) for similarly sized communities.

The map below demonstrates that nearly all parks are contained within city boundaries, with the heaviest concentration of facilities being located in the central portion of the County (Athens). Concentration of facilities does not necessarily correlate with tract size; for example the southwestern-most tract is the most heavily populated, but is not necessarily the most rich in parkland. Interestingly, McMinn County spans five different census tracts with vastly different populations. When considering the acquisition of additional land for parks, consideration should be given to where residents live (currently or planned in the future) as well as community input. In terms of the latter, residents mentioned in the survey the desire for additional park land closer to Etowah and Englewood. They also mentioned the need for a longer greenway and more paved trails for walking and biking in Athens. Many residents agreed that expansion of the Eureka Trail would greatly benefit the parks. A Regional Community Center with a pool is another desire for community

*McMinn County Land Acquisition*



members. As McMinn County acquires more land for parks, it is recommended that a site-specific master plan be completed for each new parcel in addition to this systemwide master plan. The site plan should evaluate any acquired property to identify how the land can best serve McMinn County. The evaluation should analyze existing conditions, such as topography, vegetation, site constraints, and site opportunities.

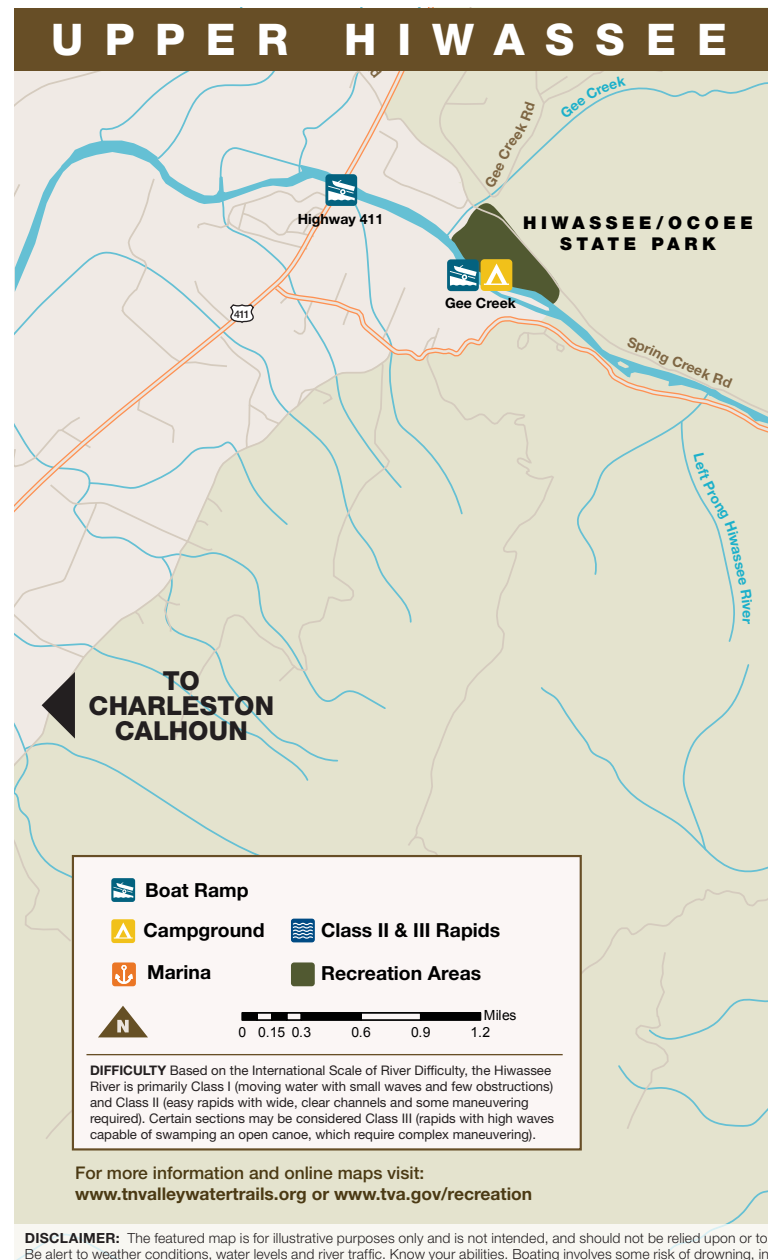


## BLUEWAY EVALUATION

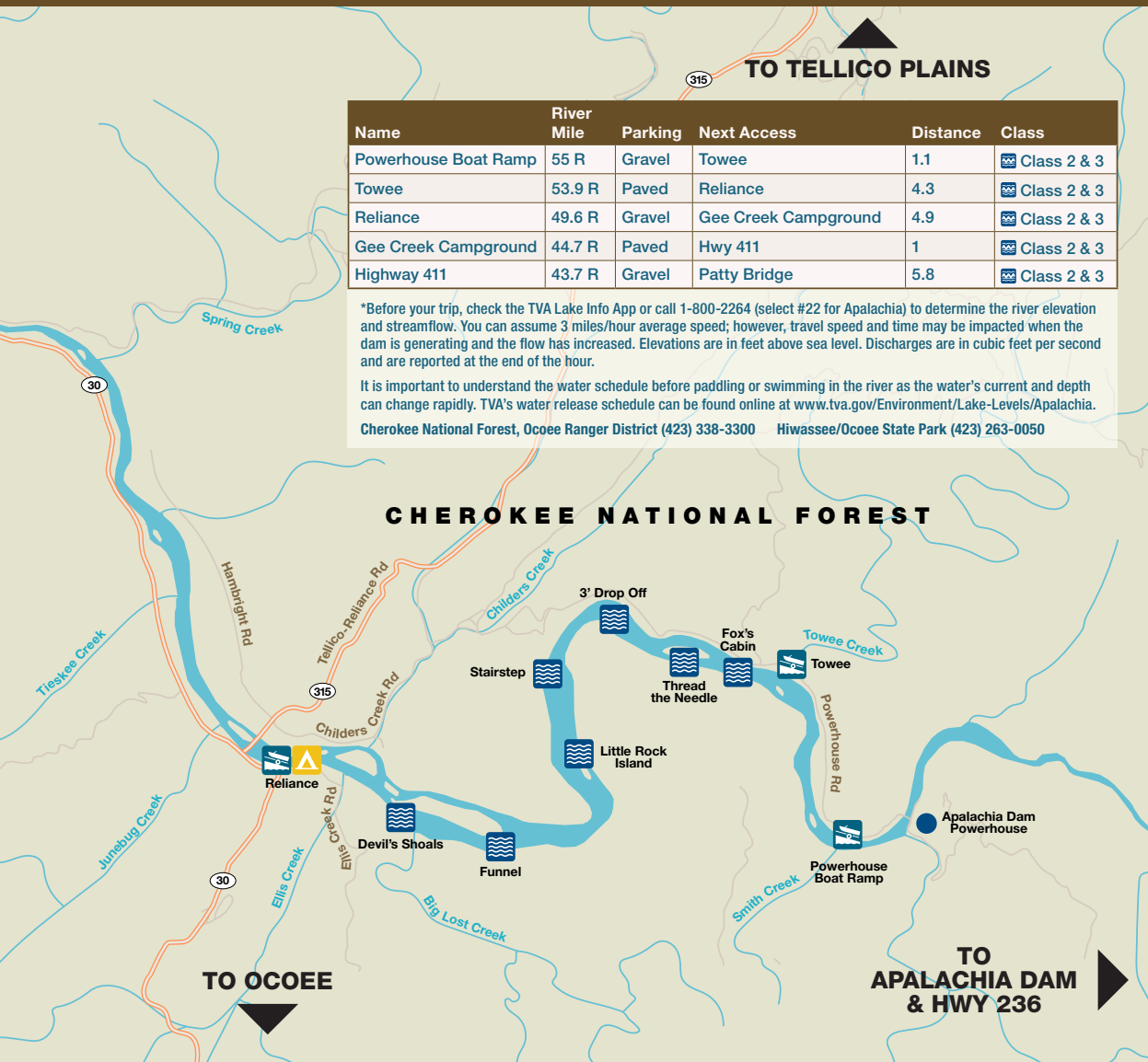
### HIWASSEE RIVER BLUEWAY

The Hiwassee River Blueway is a 55 mile section of river in Southeast Tennessee. This area of the river provides a variety of recreation activities such as fishing, kayaking, hiking, rafting, and paddleboarding.

The upper section of the river is the most popular section of the river for locals and visitors alike, providing a variety of whitewater rafting experiences and adventures along this scenic corridor. The upper section of the blueway is also the best for fishing as it has a diverse habitat for local trout.



## RIVER



provide accurate locations, directions or data. Paddle at your own risk. Fallen trees, built structures, and other hazards are present in the water throughout the Hiwassee River Blueway system. injury, or death. TVA is not responsible for your personal safety or for your vehicle, and is not liable for injury to you or damage to your vehicle, boat or personal property.

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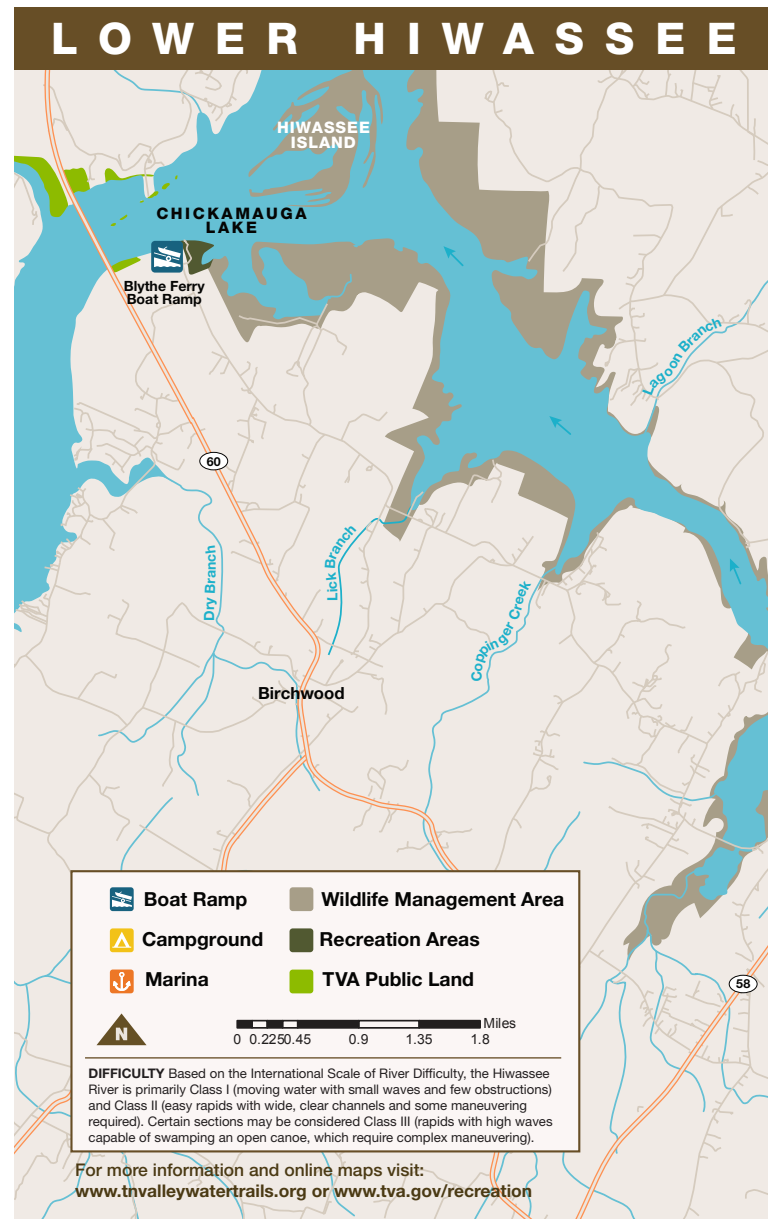
## BLUEWAY EVALUATION (CONTINUED)

The lower part of the river is used mostly for boating, swimming, and fishing. The water moves slower here because it contains larger portions of lakes and coves. Multiple marinas offer lake and river access in this area of the river, as well as restaurants and fueling stations.

The blueway creates revenue from fishing licenses, rafting experiences, park passes, and other recreational activities.

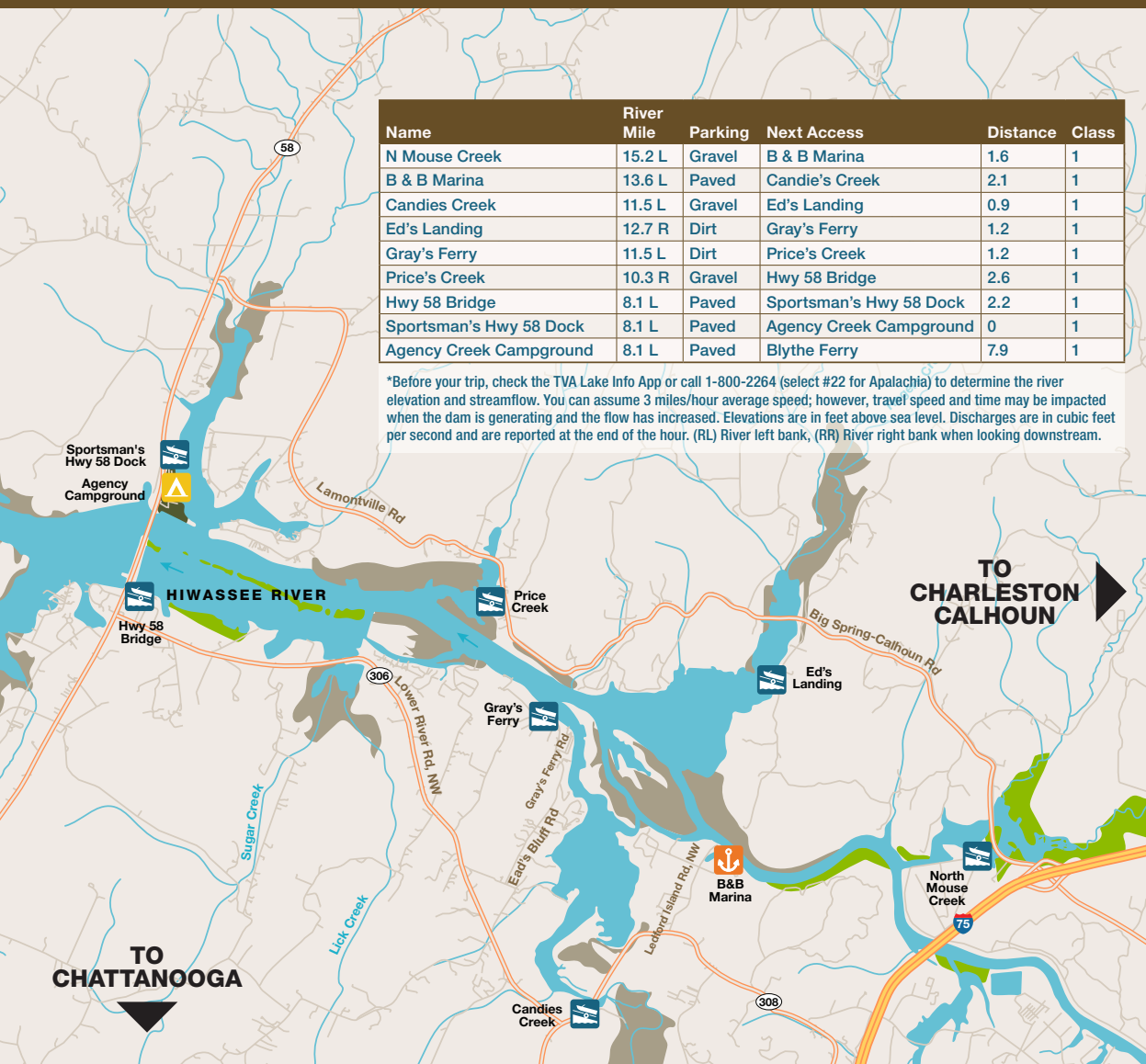
### BLUEWAY OPPORTUNITIES

Additional access and connection opportunities would best be provided near the Calhoun river access areas.



**DISCLAIMER:** The featured map is for illustrative purposes only and is not intended, and should not be relied upon or to. Be alert to weather conditions, water levels and river traffic. Know your abilities. Boating involves some risk of drowning, in

## RIVER



provide accurate locations, directions or data. Paddle at your own risk. Fallen trees, built structures, and other hazards are present in the water throughout the Hiwassee River Blueway system. injury, or death. TVA is not responsible for your personal safety or for your vehicle, and is not liable for injury to you or damage to your vehicle, boat or personal property.

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# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

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## PROGRAMMING AND FEES

### OVERVIEW

Programs are generally defined as organized activities facilitated by the park and recreation system. This definition can include classes that last for several weeks in succession, as well as events that are hosted one time a year. As a key method of engagement that connects the park and recreational facilities with users, programs - when paired with registration fees - generally exist as the largest source of non-tax revenue for most agencies, according to the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) Agency Performance Review. Program composition varies by locality and demographics, but agency program offerings generally can be tied back to NRPA's Three Pillars: Conservation, Health and Wellness, and Social Equity. NRPA has published the most common programming activities offered by at least sixty percent of park and recreation agencies nationwide, which includes:

- Themed special events (offered by 88% of agencies)
- Team sports (87%)
- Social recreation events (87%)
- Fitness enhancement classes (82%)
- Health and wellness education (81%)
- Individual sports (74%)
- Safety training (72%)
- Aquatics (71%)
- Racquet sports (67%)
- Performing arts (64%)
- Trips and tours (63%)
- Cultural crafts (61%)
- Martial arts (60%)

Programs available in McMinn County can be divided into three categories: active recreation, passive recreation, and special events. Active recreation programs typically require physical exertion. Not all active recreation has to be programmed, especially individual activities such as running, walking, and biking. However, many active recreation events are team-oriented and require organization and planning. Passive recreation encompasses activities that are culturally-oriented instead of physically-oriented. These programs include music lessons, art classes, and theater productions. Special events take place once or twice each year and can be organized around holidays, themes, or significant aspects of a community.

## ACTIVE RECREATION

Each community in McMinn County offers active recreation activities. The table below identifies the programs provided by each community and the number of participants in that program.

It is important to note that leagues and activities available in McMinn County are not exclusively organized through public departments. Instead, Booster Clubs for the leagues are responsible for the organization of their own activities, which can create challenges because of a deficit of facility space compared to the demand for space and sheer number of leagues desiring space. Citizens indicated difficulty coordinating and scheduling practices and games in the absence of a central point of contact for the facilities.

This table shows that the majority of programs are for the youth of the County. This is an important population group needing recreation programs that is well represented by the types of active recreation programs offered. When these youth enter the 10 to 13 years age group, coinciding with the start of middle school, many schools have a stipulation where students can only play for the school team and cannot participate in a recreation/travel league at the same time.

# OF PARTICIPANTS IN MCMINN COUNTY\*

LEAGUE SPORT	ATHENS	ETOWAH	ENGLEWOOD	CALHOUN	NIOTA	TOTAL *VARIES BASED ON TIME OF YEAR
Youth Basketball	125	225	200	-	400	400-425*
Youth Football	-	80	140	-	-	220
AYSO Soccer	160	-	80	-	-	240
Youth Baseball	330	200	150	150	75	905
13/14 Baseball AUW	-	-	-	-	-	0
Swim Team	-	60	20	-	-	80
Cheerleading	-	-	28	-	-	28
Youth Softball	20	-	-	-	-	20
Adult Softball	100	-	-	-	-	100
Adult Kickball	100	-	-	-	-	100

\*PARTICIPANT NUMBERS PROVIDED BY INDIVIDUAL CITY LEAGUES

Nearly all of the recreation programs for teens are currently available through the school system. Due to limits on activities offered, as well as capacity on each team, the number of teens who are able to participate in sports is minimal. Oftentimes, involvement statistics are misleading because the same

# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

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individual will participate in multiple activities - giving the impression that a larger percentage of teens are engaged, when in actuality a small minority is more heavily engaged. With more than 3,000 residents of McMinn County between the ages of 15 and 19, there is a lack of recreational opportunities for this age group, potentially exacerbated because of dependence upon school athletic programs.

## YOUTH SPORTS AT PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES (2020)

Published by NRPA, the Youth Sports at Park and Recreation Agencies report provides valuable information related to youth sports offerings, partnerships, fees and registration, and equitable access. In addition, the report addresses the impacts of COVID-19 on youth sports for the summer-fall period of 2020.

Park and recreation professionals and their agencies nationwide provide organized and unorganized programs, offering safe spaces where youth are equipped to learn how to be part of a team, build relationships, and grow healthy habits. This is true in McMinn County, as well. Because of the correlation between household formation, income, and future success with children's engagement in recreational programming, this report has a special focus on equity of access for all community members, including youth from under-resourced neighborhoods and/or households that cannot afford participation on other sports teams. Unfortunately, nationwide there are significant disparities in the population that has access to youth sports opportunities. Key findings from the report include the following statistics:

- Five in six park and recreation agencies work with partners to deliver youth sports activities
- Eighty-six percent of park and recreation professionals agree that they and their peers contribute to a fair and just future for youth sports by identifying inequities in access to organized sports offerings
- Ninety-two percent of park and recreation agencies charge registration fees for all of their youth sports offerings
- Two in three agencies offer reduced or discounted fees for lower income residents
- Ninety percent of park and recreation professionals report that the pandemic negatively impacts their agencies' youth sports programming during the summer and fall of 2020

## PASSIVE RECREATION

Passive recreation programs are offered through several different public agencies, including the Athens Recreation Department, McMinn County Senior Center, Athens Area Council for the Arts, Tennessee Wesleyan University, and the Tennessee Technology Center.

Certain activities that were previously available through the Athens Parks Department are now being offered by other entities, instead of being County services. These include guitar lessons (10 participants), swing dance lessons (24 participants), dog obedience classes (39 participants), StartSmart (8 participants), and artificial artistry (5 participants).

According to the previous plan, “The McMinn County Senior Center is funded through several sources, including McMinn County government, Athens City government, and the United Way. Residents of McMinn County who are 55 years or older can become members and use the Center. Facilities that are available include a large activity room, a library, a computer room, exercise equipment, a kitchen, a crafts and ceramics room, an outdoor walking trail, and shuffleboard court. These facilities are programmed with craft activities, exercise classes, a seniors’ choir, dancing, and computer classes.” The facility is funded in part by several annual fundraising events, including a Christmas Bazaar, chili supper, cookbook sales, and dances. A second, more limited facility associated with the McMinn County Senior Center is located in Etowah and provides similar programs.

The Athens Area Council for the Arts organizes several programming opportunities, including five to six theater productions per season, adult art classes, seasonal art shows, Saturday children’s programming, and a children’s choir for children in grades 4 through 8. This program includes weekly rehearsals and multiple annual performances. Future expansion of the program is desired. While at the time of the previous plan the council was experiencing limited studio space and a lack of equipment, it has recently acquired a building adjacent to its main location which could serve as meeting space, storage/set building space, or stage space.

## SPECIAL EVENTS

Special events in McMinn County are organized in every community and by nearly every organization. Many of these events are unique, providing recreation opportunities for all interests. The table below outlines where these events are held and, when information was available, the number of participants. People from all over the southeast attend many of these special events, which helps bring recognition and tourist dollars to the area.





# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

SPECIAL EVENTS (# OF EVENTS PER YEAR IF >1)	# OF PARTICIPANTS		
	ATHENS	ETOWAH	MCMINN COUNTY SENIORS CENTER*
Halloween Festival	2500		
Mother Son Dance	350		
Father Daughter Dance	1400		
Christmas Parade	-		
Flag Football	130		
Arbor Day	50		
Fishing Derby	540		
Soapbox Derby	30		
4th of July	3600		
Schools in-Pools out	147		
Soapbox Derby Clinic	30		
Halloween Booger Hill		-	
Community Easter Egg Hunt		-	
Christmas in the Park		-	
Community Picnics		-	
Local Plays		-	
Bijoi Theater Presentations (4)		-	
Young Authors Conference		500	
Blue Grass Festival		1000	
Chili Supper			200
Christmas Bazaar			600
Cookbook Sales			-
Dances			-
Community Theater (2-3)			-
Children's Theater Camp (2 weeks)			75

\*25% OF PARTICIPANTS ORIGINATE FROM OUTSIDE OF MCMINN COUNTY

## FEE BREAKDOWN BY PROGRAM/EVENT

Program and special event fees vary per activity. A snapshot of fees for a number of programs and events in the City of Athens is captured in the table below. A number of these are free to participants, while others have either a per-participant fee or per-team fee. In addition to fee information, the table below details whether each event or program is growing, mature, or declining and who the target audience is.

PROGRAM/ SPECIAL EVENT	FEE	TARGET AUDIENCE	GROWING/ MATURE/ DECLINING
Daddy Daughter Dance	\$12/participant	All ages	Growing
Shamrock Shuffle	\$25/participant (discount for multiple family members)	All ages allowed, typically late teen to seniors	Growing
Spring/Fall Rally Cats	\$35	Youth (4-10)	Growing
Youth Baseball	\$75	Youth (4-12)	Mature
Youth Softball	\$70	Youth (4-12)	Declining
Youth Basketball	\$70	Youth (4-12)	Mature/ Declining
Spring/Fall Brick Ceremonies	\$50/brick (free to attend)	Families attend	Growing
Learn to Swim	\$5	Youth (6-10)	Mature
Soap Box Derby	\$90	Youth (7-18)	Mature
Disc Golf	\$25-75 (course is free; fees reflect tournament entry)	All ages	Growing
Adult Softball	\$400/team	Adult (16+)	Mature
Adult Kickball	\$350/team	Adult (16+)	Growing
Whiffle Ball	\$50/team	All ages	Declining
Mother Son Dance	\$10/participant	All ages	Mature

# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## PROGRAMMING AND FEES FINDINGS

McMinn County and associated partner agencies have a general offering of programming opportunities available to area residents and beyond, as detailed in the sections prior. However, it is important to measure the current status of this suite of programs against what is being offered on a national level for peer communities, in order to determine where gaps might exist as well as areas for improvement or expansion. Recommendations can then be based upon these findings, which are discussed in detail in Chapter 6 of this report.

Based on the program guidance from NRPA, which detailed the most common programming activities offered by at least sixty percent of park and recreation agencies nationwide, McMinn County offers a number of the same options in some form or another. A comparison in the table below depicts this in detail.

Beyond the types of programs offered, the audience being reached and actually engaged in these activities is another consideration altogether. There is a lack of opportunities available for seniors and teens, as well as a lack of ADA accessibility at many of the facilities inventoried over the course of this planning effort. These disparities create an unbalanced system and highlight areas worth assessing so that methods can be developed to overcome the low amount of offerings to these groups in particular.

NRPA'S LIST OF MOST COMMONLY OFFERED PROGRAMMING	OFFERED BY MCMINN COUNTY	NOTES
Themed special events (offered by 88% of agencies)	Yes	-
Team sports (87%)	Yes	-
Social recreation events (87%)	Yes	-
Fitness enhancement classes (82%)	Yes	Organized by YMCA and Senior Center
Health and wellness education (81%)	Yes	Organized by University of Tennessee and Farmers' Market vendors
Individual sports (74%)	Yes	-
Safety training (72%)	Yes	-
Aquatics (71%)	Yes	-
Racquet sports (67%)	Yes	-
Performing arts (64%)	Yes	Organized with Athens Area Council for the Arts
Trips and tours (63%)	Yes	Organized in coordination with local banks
Cultural crafts (61%)	Yes	Organized with Athens Area Council for the Arts and the Farmers' Market
Martial arts (60%)	Yes	Offered by privately-owned businesses

Beyond the suite of programs offered, it is also important to consider the guidance discussed in the Youth Sports at Park and Recreation Agencies report regarding fees and social equity. Of the reports key findings, current conditions in McMinn County are generally a reflection of the report's nationwide trends.

McMinn County partners with other park and recreation agencies, particularly the five cities within the County limits, to deliver youth sports activities. In terms of fees, the County falls within the majority of agencies nationwide by charging registration fees for nearly all their youth sports offerings. The County offers alternative options for low income families and individuals who cannot afford to pay the advertised fee, or cannot afford to pay the entire fee at one time. This policy contributes to the agency's overall integration of social equity into their programs, promoting equitable access for all community members.

The majority of programming is provided by the City of Athens, as it is the only city within the County with a dedicated Parks Department. This allows for McMinn County residents to receive purposeful programming from an organized body with dedicated staff. Athens maintains commonly offered programming, such as youth sports, concerts, and community events, while managing their parks that receive daily use from local residents as well as visitors.

Another key finding of the NRPA Youth Sports at Park and Recreation Agencies report was that "ninety percent of park and recreation professionals report that the pandemic negatively impacts their agencies' youth sports programming during the summer and fall of 2020." Similar to what the overwhelming majority reported, McMinn County has not been immune to the effects of COVID-19. The County reported that several youth sports, including basketball and baseball, were not able to take place, because they use the City school facilities which were closed to public use. There is a general expectation that future registration in sports will be affected since many past participants shifted their involvement to another region, system, or league.

For youth programming, in-person programs have not been attempted in the current pandemic environment. Similarly, mini sports camps were cancelled because partners were not able to assist this year due to the nature of their status as a college and/or academic institution. Dance, large group swim lessons, and Halloween events were also cancelled due to crowd size in an effort to maintain social distancing. Another takeaway from the COVID-19 pandemic is the shift to online registrations and rentals in McMinn County. While this began as a measure to adhere to social distancing guidelines and limit interactions, it has resulted in a more simple registration process and should be utilized moving forward.





## CHAPTER 5: BENCHMARKING

### THE BENCHMARKING PROCESS

#### OVERVIEW

The process of benchmarking measures the Athens City, Etowah City and McMinn County park and recreation systems against other park and recreation systems in peer communities. The process is data-driven and does not take into account the unique details of each municipality. Rather, benchmarking captures a high-level comparison to communities that are similar in size.

#### NRPA PARK METRICS

The NRPA Park Metrics tool collects data and performance measures from multiple agencies and park and recreation departments nationwide. To benchmark Etowah, Athens and McMinn, the NRPA Agency Performance Review standards were used based on 2020 information as the most recent figures available. It is important to note that information reported by NRPA is self-reported by different jurisdictions and geographies and thus can have variations and discrepancies as a result of differences in individual entities' tracking methods. In fact, NRPA emphasizes that "data is a powerful tool, but not the final answer for what is best for your agency." This is because every community has individual programming, facility, and staff needs to serve its diverse constituents.

There are multiple criteria to choose from in the process of selecting comparable agencies. These can include selecting communities of similar population size, communities with similar annual budgets, or communities of similar census geographies - in this case, the county level. For this master plan, the population size was used as the comparison criteria.

According to the US Census American Community Survey, McMinn County had a reported population of 54,208 in 2020. The population was 46,000 at the time of the previous plan (2000). Therefore, the County experienced a 15% increase in growth from 2000-2020. The Census Bureau projects that McMinn County will have a population of 55,514 by the year 2030, which equates to a 3.9% increase expected over the next 10 years. Given this information, this benchmarking effort uses comparison communities with populations ranging from 50,000 to 99,999.



## NRPA PARK METRICS KEY FINDINGS

NRPA's 2020 Agency Performance Review report features data reported from 1,053 park and recreation agencies across the United States, collected between 2017-2019. Of all the data collected, a few key findings are presented for consideration, detailed in the following section. Further detail on each of these measures and more are provided on the following pages in this chapter.

## SELECTED KEY FINDINGS

### PARK FACILITIES

- There are on average nationally 2,281 residents per one park facility according to NRPA. In McMinn County, Athens provides one park facility for every 1,283 residents, Calhoun one for every 250 residents, Englewood one for every 384 residents, Etowah one for every 705 residents, Niota one for every 369 residents, and greater McMinn County one for every 6,756 residents.
- McMinn County is home to approximately 11 miles of walking, hiking, running, and biking trails. McMinn County manages approximately 10.27 miles of trails, with plans for expansion.

### PROGRAMMING

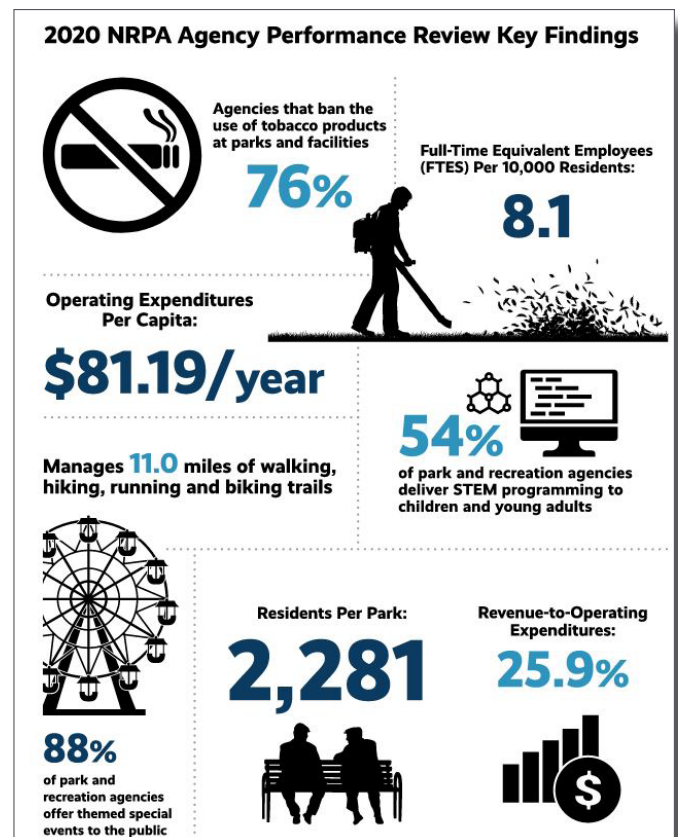
- 88% of agencies, including McMinn County, offer themed special events to the public.

### AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES AND STAFFING

- The typical park and recreation agency has a payroll of 41.9 full-time equivalent staff (FTEs). Athens has 16 FTEs, Etowah has 4 FTEs, and McMinn County has 2 FTEs.

### AGENCY BUDGET AND FUNDING

- Nationally on average the operating expenditures for a community is \$81.19 per capita. For parks and recreation operating expenditures in FY2020, Athens spent \$1,397,700 and McMinn County spent \$102,898 while no other communities within the County tracked parks and recreation spending separately. This created a total parks and recreation operating expenditure of \$1,500,598 and a Countywide per capita of \$27.68.



# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## NRPA REPORT METRICS FROM PEER COMMUNITIES

More detailed data is available normalized by jurisdictional population, beyond the averages based upon all park and recreation agencies across the nation. See the tables below for additional data related to park facilities across the nation for populations ranging from 50,000 to 99,999.

### ACRES OF PARKLAND PER 1,000 RESIDENTS

	All Agencies	Less than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 250,000	Over 250,000
Median	9.9	12.0	9.6	7.7	8.9	10.9
Lower Quartile	5.1	5.2	5.4	4.7	5.0	5.3
Upper Quartile	17.1	20.8	15.0	17.1	14.9	17.9

*McMinn County has approximately 11 acres per 1,000 residents.*

ABOVE MEDIAN,  
BUT BELOW UPPER  
QUARTILE

### RESIDENTS PER PARK

	All Agencies	Less than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 250,000	Over 250,000
Median	2,281	1,300	1,963	2,523	2,889	5,908
Lower Quartile	1,316	908	1,233	1,560	1,914	2,818
Upper Quartile	4,140	2,037	3,140	4,518	5,135	15,286

*McMinn County has 1,748 residents per park facility.*

BELOW MEDIAN,  
BUT ABOVE LOWER  
QUARTILE

### MILES OF TRAIL

	All Agencies	Less than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 250,000	Over 250,000
Median	11.0	3.0	8.5	15.0	25.0	84.5
Lower Quartile	3.0	1.5	3.4	4.1	11.0	38.0
Upper Quartile	32.0	6.8	15.0	28.5	47.0	158.2

*McMinn County manages approximately 10 miles of trails, with plans for expansion.*

BELOW MEDIAN,  
BUT ABOVE LOWER  
QUARTILE

### FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT STAFF

	All Agencies	Less than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 250,000	Over 250,000
Median	41.9	10.0	27.3	60.2	123.2	289.7
Lower Quartile	14.0	5.0	14.7	32.4	61.0	118.2
Upper Quartile	124.2	19.4	50.5	123.1	217.7	486.9

*With 16 FTEs in Athens, 4 FTEs in Etowah, and 2 FTEs in McMinn County, there are a total of 22 FTEs.*

BELOW LOWER  
QUARTILE

### ANNUAL OPERATING EXPENSES

	All Agencies	Less than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 250,000	Over 250,000
Median	\$4,342,495	\$1,075,780	\$2,885,847	\$6,185,614	\$11,795,773	\$28,664,747
Lower Quartile	\$1,487,022	\$496,365	\$1,587,057	\$3,292,562	\$6,054,529	\$10,929,857
Upper Quartile	\$11,833,313	\$1,997,524	\$5,497,877	\$11,005,308	\$19,906,718	\$47,492,476

*McMinn County's Annual Operating Expenditures for Parks and Recreation are \$1,500,598.*

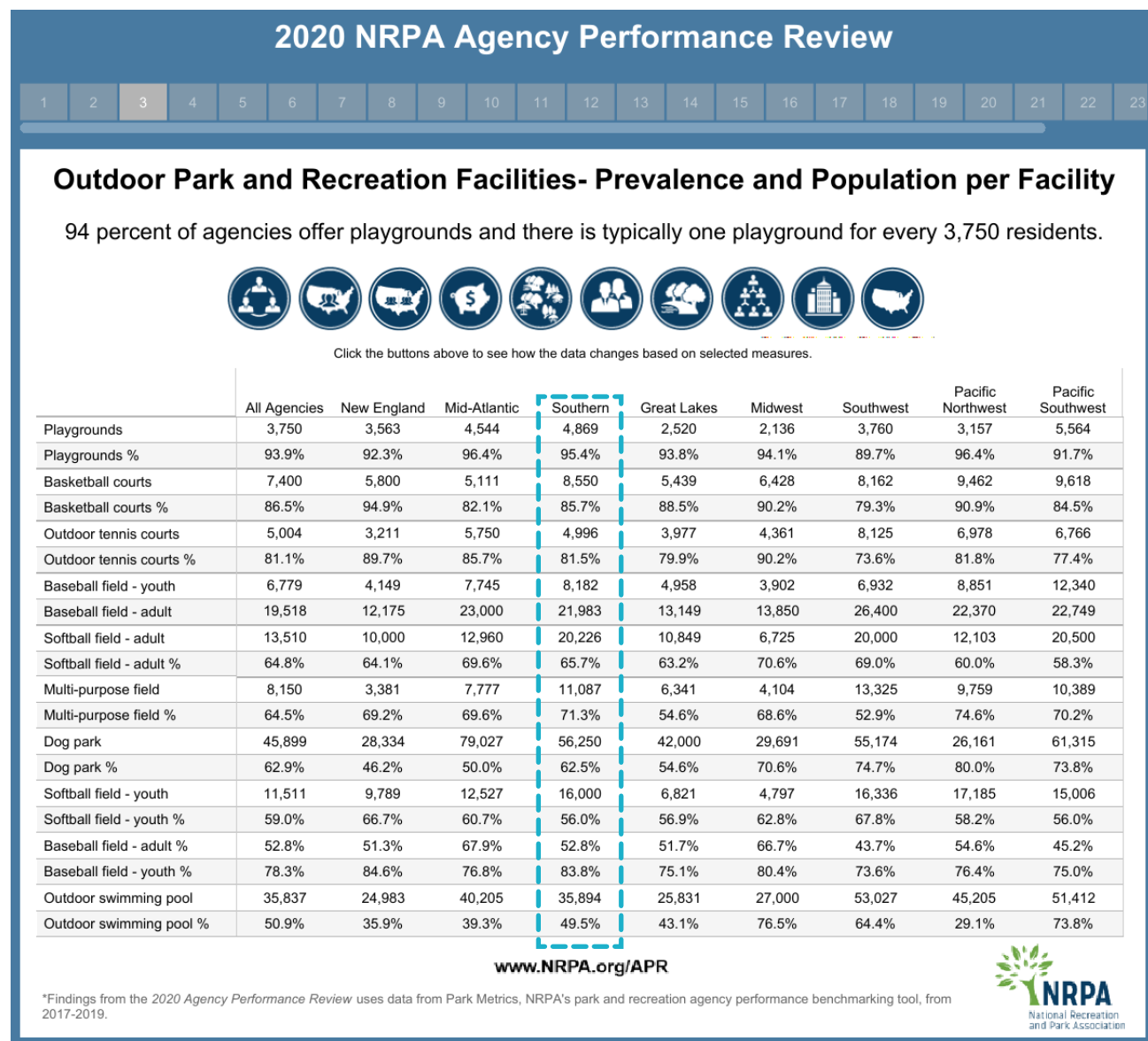
BELOW LOWER  
QUARTILE

## NRPA INTERACTIVE CROSTAB TOOL

NRPA provides 2020 data in a more flexible format via the interactive crosstab tool, where different metrics can be normalized by a variety of factors, including population size, but also jurisdiction type, agency budget size, number of acres of parkland maintained by the agency, number of FTEs, or region. Several of these metrics are described below based on this additional filtering method.

## LEVEL OF SERVICE

The types of facilities an agency provides can vary widely by geography, based not only on climate, but also on the price and availability of land, demographics of the community, and regional differences in trends in sporting activities. In the table below, McMinn County can be compared to a stratified sample of other agencies in the "Southern" column.





# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## MILES OF TRAIL

The measure of "Miles of Trail" varies widely based on the filtering method. The following tables filter by region, but also by jurisdiction type. Thus, for McMinn County, while 15 miles of trail is the median for agencies with 20 to 49 parks, 27.5 miles of trail (nearly double) is the median for other county agencies. In fact, counties overwhelmingly provide the greatest number of miles of trails above any other agency jurisdiction type.

### 2020 NRPA Agency Performance Review

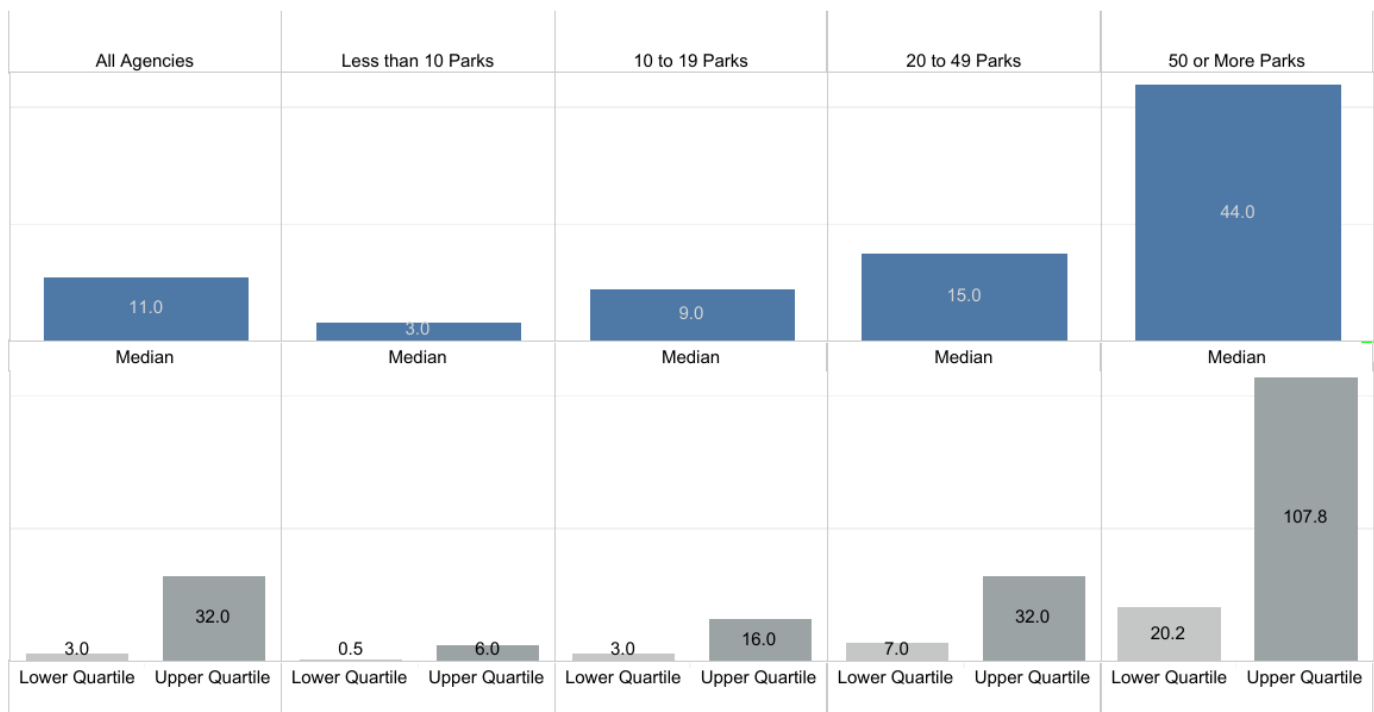
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23

#### Miles of Trail

The typical park and recreation agency manages or maintains 11 miles of trails.



Click the buttons above to see how the data changes based on selected measures.



[www.NRPA.org/APR](http://www.NRPA.org/APR)

\*Findings from the 2020 Agency Performance Review uses data from Park Metrics, NRPA's park and recreation agency performance benchmarking tool, from 2017-2019.



## 2020 NRPA Agency Performance Review

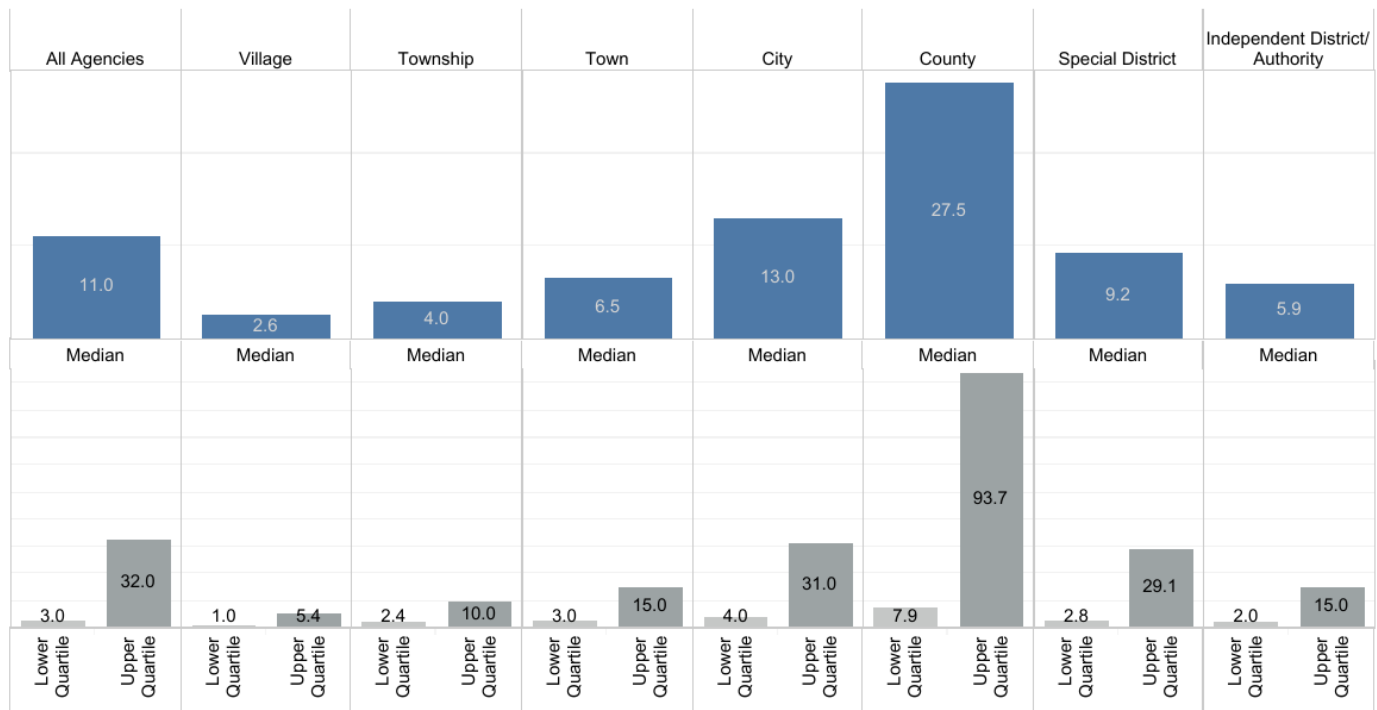
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# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## PROGRAMMING OFFERED

The types of programming offered by park and recreation agencies, filtered by jurisdiction type, shows detailed data available for other counties. McMinn County offers the more common programs amongst all counties analyzed by NRPA, such as themed special events and team sports, as well as some of the more rare offerings, such as racquet sports and aquatics. McMinn County does not provide every program analyzed by NRPA, however private entities supplement the remainder of the offerings featured in the analysis below. McMinn County provides programming in the form of aquatics, racquet sports, and safety training, that only 58%, 59%, and 68% of counties analyzed by NRPA provide. Comparing McMinn to other counties, McMinn provides an above average offering of programs and events.

### 2020 NRPA Agency Performance Review

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23

#### Programming Offered by Park and Recreation Agencies

Nearly nine in 10 agencies offer themed special events, team sports and social recreation events.



Click the buttons above to see how the data changes based on selected measures.

	All Agencies	Village	Township	Town	City	County	Special District	Independent District/..
Themed special events	88%	85%	88%	88%	89%	79%	96%	100%
Team sports	87%	85%	71%	85%	91%	77%	86%	100%
Social recreation events	87%	85%	71%	91%	87%	78%	94%	94%
Fitness enhancement c...	82%	62%	88%	87%	83%	72%	86%	94%
Health and wellness ed...	81%	69%	65%	85%	82%	74%	89%	94%
Individual sports	74%	69%	53%	77%	74%	69%	77%	94%
Safety training	72%	62%	47%	72%	73%	68%	80%	94%
Aquatics	71%	54%	35%	63%	78%	58%	69%	82%
Racquet sports	67%	54%	53%	70%	69%	59%	69%	88%
Performing arts	64%	69%	65%	65%	65%	56%	73%	76%
Trips and tours	63%	77%	47%	71%	62%	54%	65%	88%
Cultural crafts	61%	46%	59%	68%	60%	56%	69%	71%
Martial arts	60%	69%	35%	65%	61%	50%	66%	88%
Visual arts	59%	62%	53%	57%	61%	51%	62%	82%
Natural and cultural his...	59%	46%	47%	57%	57%	74%	63%	59%
Golf	47%	31%	53%	35%	49%	47%	51%	65%
Running/cycling races	35%	62%	24%	32%	34%	33%	41%	53%

24% 100%

[www.NRPA.org/APR](http://www.NRPA.org/APR)



\*Findings from the 2020 Agency Performance Review uses data from Park Metrics, NRPA's park and recreation agency performance benchmarking tool, from 2017-2019.

## TARGETED PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN, SENIORS, AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

McMinn County offers senior programs, which 78% of peer communities also provide, as well as teen programs, which 63% of peer communities also provide. McMinn County does not offer STEM Programs, beyond the annual All American Soap Box Derby, which is a popular program amongst McMinn County youth. Preschool, before-school programs, or full daycare, which most peer communities also do not provide. While McMinn County does not offer these, the YMCA does provide these services. Programs for people with disabilities are offered by 60% of peer communities, but not provided by McMinn County.

### 2020 NRPA Agency Performance Review

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23

#### Targeted Programs for Children, Seniors and People with Disabilities

Nearly four in five agencies offer programs specifically targeted to seniors.



Click the buttons above to see how the data changes based on selected measures.

	All Agencies	36,000 and Under	Less than 250,000	250,000 to 499,999	500,000 or More
Summer camp	83%	73%	82%	89%	90%
Senior programs	78%	71%	78%	78%	81%
Teen programs	65%	54%	63%	74%	81%
Programs for people w/ disabilities	62%	43%	60%	74%	78%
After-school programs	57%	48%	53%	72%	73%
STEM programs	54%	41%	50%	72%	67%
Preschool	36%	34%	37%	33%	36%
Before-school programs	20%	18%	20%	26%	17%
Full daycare	8%	6%	7%	9%	16%

6% 90%

[www.NRPA.org/APR](http://www.NRPA.org/APR)

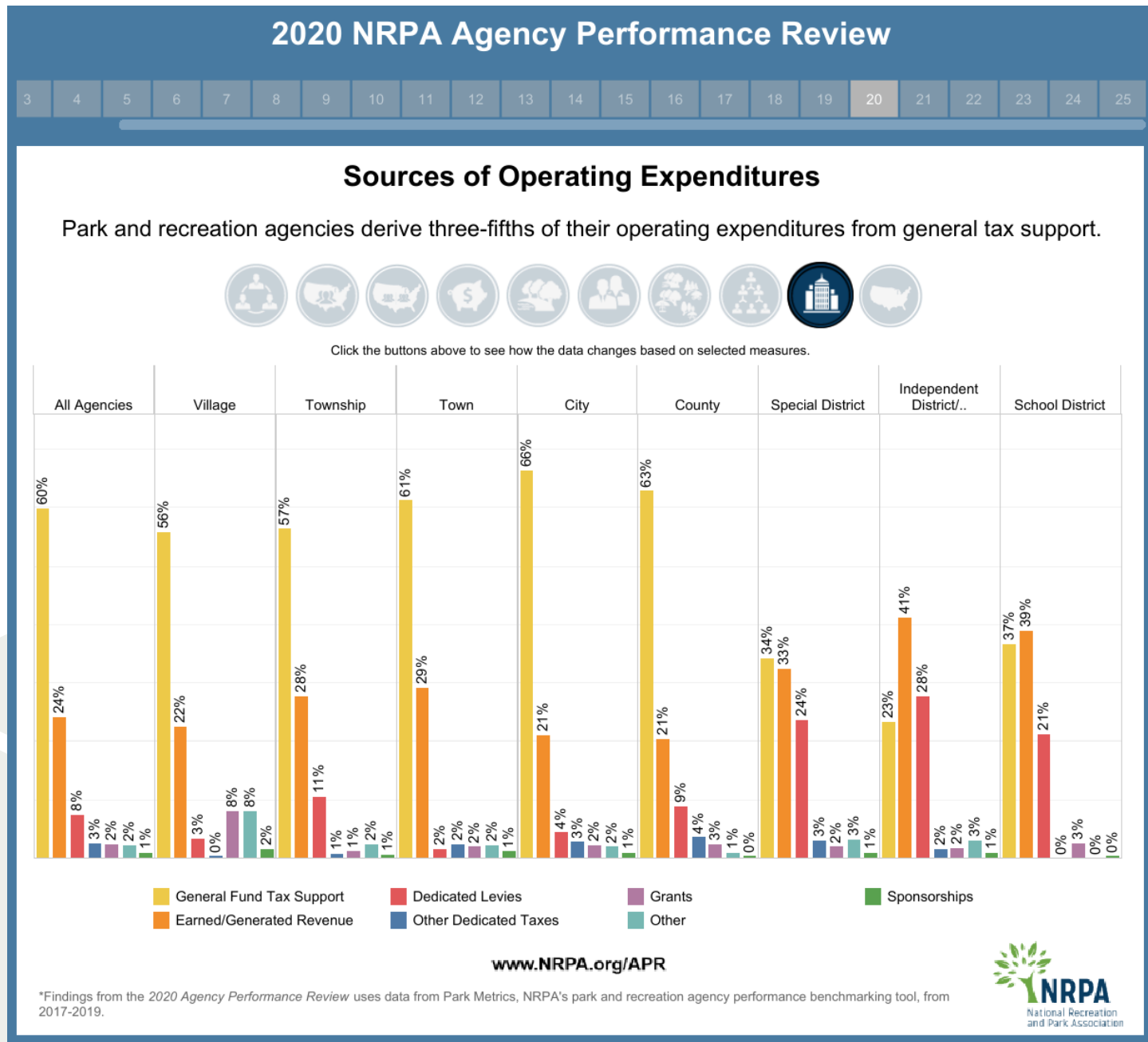


\*Findings from the 2020 Agency Performance Review uses data from Park Metrics, NRPA's park and recreation agency performance benchmarking tool, from 2017-2019.



## SOURCES OF OPERATING EXPENSES

These vary based on jurisdiction type, displayed in the adjacent table. While each jurisdiction includes a mixture of source types, general fund tax support is by far the most common (63% for counties), while earned/generated revenue is generally the second most common source (21% for counties). Counties also collect funds from dedicated levies, other dedicated taxes, and grants.



## AGENCY STAFFING AND NUMBER OF FTEs

The number of full-time equivalent staff (FTEs) varies widely by agency budget and jurisdiction population size. Agencies with less than \$1,000,000 budgets have a median of 3.7 to 7.0 FTEs, while the median for all agencies is 41.9, suggesting that the ability to maintain FTEs is significantly tied to budget size. It is also interesting to note that when reviewing by jurisdiction type, counties have far less FTEs per 10,000 residents than any other jurisdiction type (with the exception of townships). This is a critical nuance to understand, since medians vary widely based on these selected measuring methods.

### 2020 NRPA Agency Performance Review

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23

#### Park and Recreation FTEs per 10,000 Residents

The typical park and recreation agency 8.1 FTEs on staff for every 10,000 residents in the jurisdiction.



Click the buttons above to see how the data changes based on selected measures.



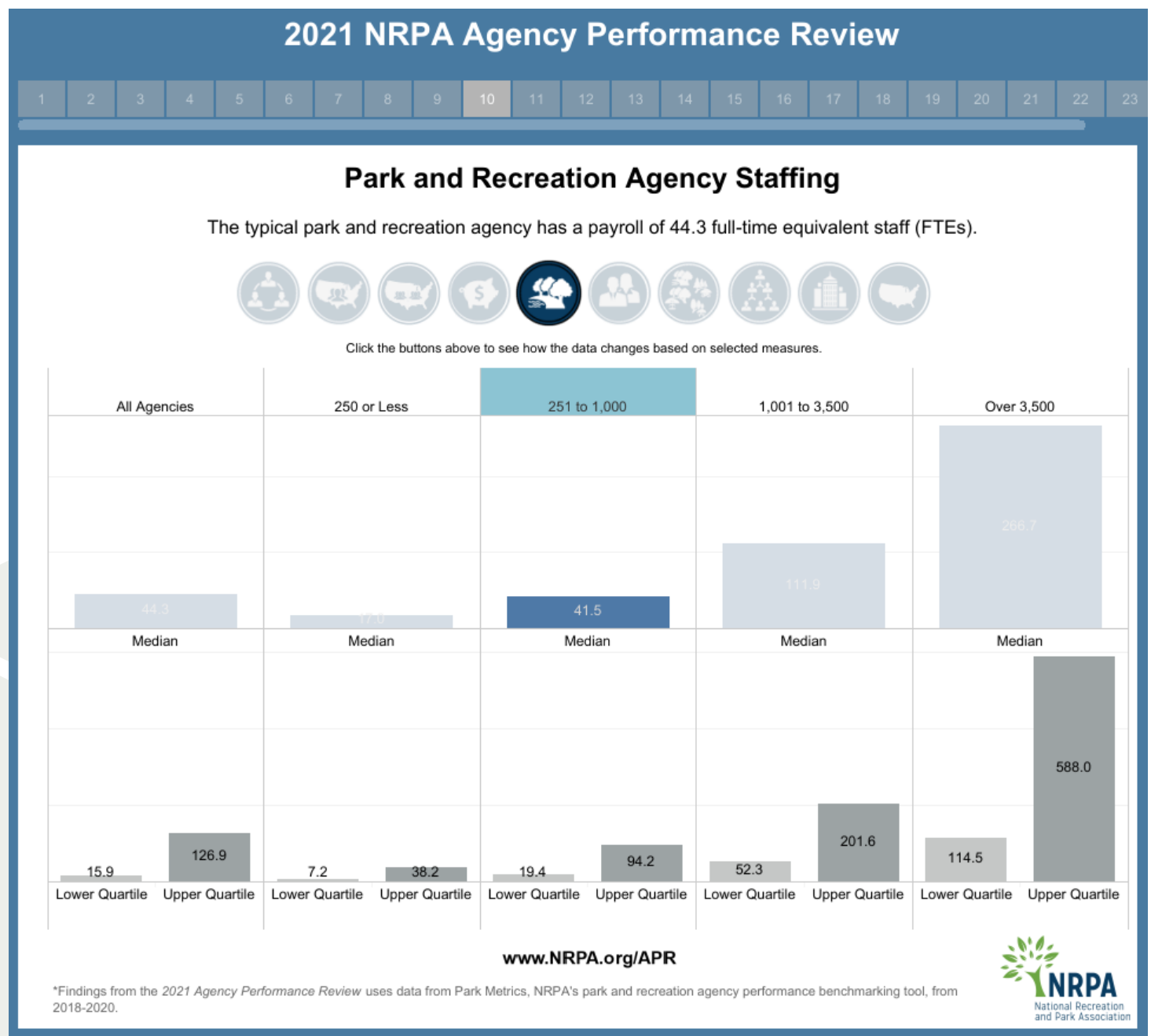
[www.NRPA.org/APR](http://www.NRPA.org/APR)

\*Findings from the 2020 Agency Performance Review uses data from Park Metrics, NRPA's park and recreation agency performance benchmarking tool, from 2017-2019.

# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## AGENCY STAFFING BASED ON ACREAGE

The number of full-time equivalent staff (FTEs) also varies widely by acreage covered by a parks and recreation agency. On average nationally across all agency sizes, the median number of FTEs is 44.3. When analyzing FTEs based on acres maintained, we are able to see the impact on FTEs. McMinn has 642.41 total acres of land managed and operated by Athens and the other communities, so the range of 251-1,000 acres was used for this comparison. Agencies with this amount of acreage on average have 41.5 FTEs.



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## CHAPTER 6: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

### FOUNDATION

In order to provide actionable and strategic recommendations, the master plan considered the needs of the community profile, responses in the assessment survey, input from staff and elected officials, and insight from planning team members. The goal of this analysis is to provide recommendations for modifications to existing parks, programming, and services to better meet the needs of the County's residents.

Additionally, the recommendations for McMinn County were compared to the goals outlined in Tennessee's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). The Tennessee Department of Conservation (TDEC) is currently updating the plan, and therefore both the 2020 plan and 2030 plan were used as guides. The 2030 plan is currently in a draft stage as of writing this document, so the planning team utilized the draft 2030 Plan themes to compare with the McMinn plan themes as follows:

#### 1. IDEAA: Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity, Access, and Affordability

Respondents to the survey expressed an inequity across park quality and park facilities, as well as certain groups that are underserved. This SCORP goal is also a goal for McMinn County. Offering facilities that are accessible and inclusive is a priority for McMinn, and will be addressed in the recommendations by offering additional programming to currently underserved demographics and making improvements to existing parks to remove hindrances to usability.



#### 2. Conservation

Preserving and conserving land is primarily done at the statewide level, however the steps that McMinn takes to be a part of the conservation effort are important and recommended in this Implementation Plan. As McMinn purchases additional parkland and dedicates land to parks, this goal will be met. Passive recreation options at some of the most natural areas of McMinn County are also recommended.

#### 3. Advocacy and Education

Advocacy and outreach within McMinn County is necessary, as many survey respondents noted a lack of information and awareness. Providing better awareness of the parks themselves is recommended, as well as adding educational signage within the parks meets this theme and the two previously mentioned. McMinn citizens are passionate about their community and are the biggest advocates for the parks, and this has been shown by the great response from the public survey.

## 4. Collaboration and Partnership for Economic Success

The recommendations presented in this master plan all rely on the communities within McMinn County to collaborate. With multiple cities and a wide range of parks and facilities, it is paramount that these communities communicate and work together to better serve the County. One way this can be accomplished is through partnership with tournament directors to host events at Athens Regional Park and Bicentennial Park. With a Countywide effort, achieving economic success through this avenue is recommended.

The 2020 SCORP was also used as a guide since the 2030 Plan was not finalized at the time the McMinn Master Plan was written. This plan has 3 major categories with 10 total initiatives. Key initiatives and how they were used with McMinn County are as follows:

- **People: The need of the public for more accessible information about recreation opportunities and better ways to participate in advocacy and planning**

Community members have expressed in the survey that they want to participate and want to enjoy the parks, however there is a disconnect between what is available and what is advertised. Improving the sharing of information about the County's parks and recreation system is recommended.

- **Parks: The need of Tennessee's cities and counties to provide diverse, close-to-home recreation opportunities for all their residents**

Many citizens expressed how spread out the County and its parks are. Offering a wider range of facilities closer to currently underserved communities is recommended. This also will support the first goal in the 2030 plan of offering more equitable options across the County. The City of Calhoun, for example, would benefit greatly from a new park that is close to home for Calhoun citizens and a blueway park would provide a new and diverse option.

- **Landscapes: The need of rural regions for help in harnessing their recreation assets for economic development**

This 2020 goal aligns with the 2030 goal. McMinn would benefit significantly from harnessing their recreational potential and creating economic development. This initiative aligns with the recommendation to reach out to tournament directors and spark interest in hosting sports events in McMinn County. While McMinn is in a rural area, it is situated perfectly along I-75 and near Knoxville and Chattanooga, and is poised for economic development in this realm.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Recommendations and a realistic strategy to implement them are the most important components of the Master Plan. The Implementation Plan lays out strategies to improve the McMinn County Park and Recreation System by first summarizing recommendations for the various parks, facilities, greenways, programming, and staffing, followed by potential funding sources and opportunities. Finally, these recommendations are organized based on priority, scope, and potential budget impacts to help the department approach the implementation plan methodically. These recommendations are intended to help guide the investments in park and recreation, enhancing the level of services provided to the community and building a better park system for future generations.

Implementation of this plan will require more than recommendations and funding strategies, it will also require support from the community and community leaders. One of the recurring themes heard throughout the Master Plan update process was a belief in the community that the time to invest in and expand upon the parks and recreation system is now. McMinn County should capitalize upon this by investing in a few key “early wins” to build momentum for continued investment. Key stakeholders and the general public should be engaged at every step in the planning of these new facilities to ensure that the facilities both reflect the needs of the public and to increase support and ownership from the greater community.

## FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations in this section are intended first and foremost to address facility shortages and deficiencies based on population levels. The overarching goal is to increase the number of facilities to provide a per-capita level-of-service in line with NRPA averages for communities similar to McMinn. The number of required facilities is not static and will increase as McMinn’s population continues to grow.

### *Recreation Centers*

Based on a projected population of 55,514 by 2030, the County would benefit from adding a multi-use recreational center to keep up with demand. The County currently has several facilities for senior citizens, but could benefit from a multi-use facility that would be used by all age groups in the community.

### *Community Centers*

Community Centers play an important role in civic life, offering spaces for various community activities and programs. They may play especially important roles in supporting targeted programming, such as senior, adult, or teen classes. McMinn currently has 1 community center, but a second community center may be necessary in the next 10-15 years to support additional population growth and needs of the community. The community has expressed interest in a Boys and Girls

Club in Athens which could be housed in a community center. There is an existing opportunity to provide a new community center on the open land at Regional Park. This park currently serves as a central recreational location for the community, gaining interest and investment from citizens throughout McMinn. A community center here would be an asset in which all residents could benefit and would follow the original park master plan for this site, saving money in order to not have to purchase additional new land for implementation.

### *Nature Centers*

McMinn County originally planned for a nature center at Athens Regional Park. The County should consider moving the planned nature center to County Forest – Camp Cherokee to provide additional educational and relaxation opportunities in a more natural setting.

### *Sports Complex*

Multi-use and overlay fields can be an effective strategy for a community to provide a variety of recreational and athletic offerings within the same facility. Examples include designing fields large enough to support both soccer or football, depending on the need, or fields that can serve as both football and baseball fields, since these sports generally occur during different parts of the year. Additional athletic programs that utilize multi-purpose fields include rugby and lacrosse. All soccer and baseball fields should provide artificial turf surfacing to support as much current and future game play as possible within the County. Between Bicentennial and Regional Park, there is great potential for the community to host large tournaments and generate revenue. The development of a multi-purpose field in McMinn could also provide a venue for these various athletic tournaments and other community events, along with providing space for multiple sports types that the County currently lacks the facilities to support.





# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

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## *Teen Center*

Teen Centers, also known as youth centers, provide opportunities for community youth to develop their physical, emotional, and social abilities in a safe environment. They offer both structured and unstructured activities, such as dance, theater, sports, games, and socializing, in a supervised space. McMinn does not currently have any dedicated teen centers, but it is recommended that a space within a community center be dedicated to the strong existing Athens Area Youth Council that exists for youth within all of McMinn County. Providing them with a dedicated location would provide additional investment in this important organization.

## *Playgrounds*

There are a number of playgrounds in the community, but some need to be maintained or upgraded. Based on the NRPA's recommended ratio of 1 playground per 3,019 residents, McMinn should consider adding 9 additional playgrounds open to the public by 2030 to provide for both current residents and expected population growth.

## *Basketball*

Basketball is one of the most popular youth sports in America. Athens has issued the contract to begin developing multi-use courts and a state-of-the-art basketball facility at Heritage Park.



## *Sport Courts*

The County has a satisfactory amount of tennis courts, but no pickleball or multi-use courts. These should be implemented and existing courts should be put on a maintenance schedule for resurfacing every 5-7 years and re-building every 15 years.

## *Baseball and Softball*

The County currently has enough youth baseball/softball fields to meet community demand, but could benefit from a little league practice field and field upgrades. Bicentennial and Regional Park should be joint marketed for high-end tournament sites.

## *Soccer Fields*

Soccer fields are well provided in the community compared to the NRPA average. McMinn has 10 soccer fields, compared to the NRPA average of 3. Some fields should be upgraded with artificial turf. Additional multi-purpose fields would also be a benefit to the County.

## Community Gardens

McMinn currently has one community garden, the City Park Community Garden, which provides opportunities for personal, social, and educational enrichment especially for those residents who do not have sufficient space in their own yards to accommodate garden space. It is important that the gardeners maintain this space so that they remain open and usable for the community as long as there are active participants utilizing the gardens.



In order to preserve McMinn County's identity and character, the following recommendations were made to help meet the needs of the community. Recommendations are organized into high and low priority sets in the following categories:

Existing Parks

New Parks

Programming and Events

Maintenance and Operations

# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## EXISTING PARKS

McMinn County currently provides many parks that offer recreational amenities for the community. As with any capital, these parks require upgrades and expansion efforts to ensure that users continue to enjoy the facilities provided. Analyzing the existing parks and facilities, the following improvements and updates are recommended, categorized into High and Low priorities:

### High Priority

PARK	HIGH PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION
Athens Regional Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Add artificial turf fields at the baseball fields (infield priority)</li><li>• Add artificial turf to the soccer fields</li><li>• Add pavilions and a restroom building designed to host ham radio programs for exercises and emergencies on Overlook Road</li><li>• Maintenance staff area improvements</li><li>• Finish Conference Center</li><li>• Maintain disc golf course standards as a Professional Disc Golf Association site</li></ul>
Bicentennial Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Produce master plan for newly purchased farmland around the existing park with additional amenities</li><li>• Add additional structures in the playground area</li><li>• Add sun shades between ballfields</li><li>• Add batting cages</li><li>• Add walking track with rubber surface</li><li>• Turf and stripe the outfields of fields 2 and 3</li><li>• Relocate maintenance on County Road 750 to be safer and separate from landfill traffic</li><li>• Add multi-purpose field</li><li>• Add top layer of asphalt on parking lots</li></ul>
Cook Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Add historical sign and landscaping</li><li>• Remove and rebuild court surface and enhance the wall</li></ul>
County Forest/Camp Cherokee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop hiking and mountain bike trail system</li><li>• Install canoe/kayak boat launch</li><li>• Build hardscape camp sites at river bank area</li></ul>
Englewood Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Build trailhead with restroom facility behind City Hall to fit historic train station feel</li></ul>

PARK	HIGH PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION
Eureka Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement full length of trail</li> <li>Work with TDOT to get under- road crossing at Highway 39</li> </ul>
Heritage Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue with ongoing master plan for Heritage Park</li> <li>Remove tennis court and build outdoor basketball facility</li> </ul>
Ingleside Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add 6 new lighted pickleball courts</li> <li>When school closes, evaluate opportunity for the park to expand to include the school as a Community Center</li> </ul>
Market Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Purchase property surrounding Market Park as it becomes available</li> <li>Build walkways</li> <li>Build a water spray park</li> <li>Brick and wrought iron fence around entire property</li> <li>Add amphitheater and other items as noted on master plan</li> </ul>
Parkstown Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add parking</li> <li>Better utilize area previously used for tennis court</li> <li>Improve playground equipment</li> </ul>
Prof Powers Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add education signage for cemetery</li> <li>Make dog park ADA accessible</li> </ul>

## Low Priority

PARK	LOW PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION
Athens Regional Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Swimming Pool</li> <li>Community Center</li> </ul>
Bicentennial Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement master plan</li> <li>Add horse/mountain bike trails on 200 acres beside park</li> <li>Add disc golf course</li> </ul>
Cook Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to evaluate possible expansion options for parking and facilities</li> </ul>
County Forest/Camp Cherokee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add a shooting range</li> </ul>



# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

PARK	LOW PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION
Englewood Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Add restroom and lights at ballfield</li></ul>
Eureka Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Implement Urban Eureka Trail through Jones Street expansion</li><li>• Add rubber walking surface and lighting at the exercise loop in Athens</li></ul>
Fisher Field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rebuild as tournament-level playing surface ADA compliant baseball field that could be marketed with Bicentennial/Regional as an alternate tournament site location</li><li>• Evaluate purchasing industrial parcels across the street for a public/private partnership to provide indoor facilities</li></ul>
Heritage Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue implementing master plan</li><li>• Remove tennis court and build outdoor basketball facility</li></ul>
Ingleside Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pool stays open until such time the other pool is needed</li><li>• When school closes, opportunity for Community Center</li></ul>
Prof Powers Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Implement master plan</li></ul>

## NEW PARKS

Future parks and recreation facilities are also recommended for McMinn County in addition to improvements at existing parks. These new facilities will provide new recreation opportunities for currently underrepresented demographic groups and underserved communities within McMinn County. Equity across parks was something highlighted in both the 2019 and 2020 surveys that residents feel is lacking, as well as the Tennessee SCORP. In addition, these parks will be located in areas that are currently lacking in facilities. These recommendations are classified as High and Low Priority to provide guidance on which items are the most actionable within the next ten years.

### High Priority

- A master plan should be developed for the Wilhelm Farm land adjacent to Bicentennial Park. This expansion should be implemented as a high priority, as its central location within the County and Bicentennial Park's existing success presents a great opportunity.
- The County should standardize park facilities to improve equity across all new and existing parks.
- Continue working on the Camp Cherokee/County Forest Master Plan and begin implementation of this facility. This will include a hiking and mountain bike trail system, boat launch, hardscape camp sites, and a potential shooting range. It is recommended that the City enhance its partnership with the Baptist Association to better utilize Camp Cherokee land.

- Add 6 pickleball courts with lights.
- Add new turf baseball and softball fields to current facilities
- Add additional multi-purpose fields for youth and adult sports such as rugby, soccer, lacrosse, and flag football.
- Expand upon three outdoor swimming pools to build larger facilities

## Low Priority

- The City of Calhoun is currently isolated within the County and has the potential for expansion, highlighted in analysis and in the community engagement survey. Calhoun currently only has the Hiwassee Meadowlands Park and the Boat Ramp, and therefore could greatly benefit from a dedicated park that focuses on the blueway potential. There are opportunities for programming related to history, nature, and science that could be expanded upon for a nature center or educational facility. The existing Calhoun boat ramp is not a park, but rather a parking lot that could become a new park with direct access to the Hiwassee River Blueway.
- The City of Niota is another location highlighted with potential for new parks. There is a private golf course/country club that provides some recreation, and a playground at the Kenneth Gable Memorial Park, however there is ample room for growth. A park that explores more examples of recreation, such as various sports, walking trails, and access to nature would be well-received from Niota residents.
- Work with Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) to develop a shooting range on the backside of the landfill near Bicentennial Park at the site of the current sheriff's range.
- Add a recreation center with programming for all ages.
- Add a community center and nature center at Camp Cherokee that will provide space for the County's educational programming need.
- Add teen centers such as a Boys and Girls Club.
- Revitalize playgrounds on a schedule.
- Each agency in the County should get playground, pool, and splashpad certifications which will be required by the Health Department.
- Maintain 8 tennis courts at Championship caliber play, and implement a 5-7 year cycle for replacement.
- Add an outdoor performance amphitheater to hold large festivals and events. A master plan should be created for potential locations for this facility.

# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## PROGRAMMING AND EVENTS

McMinn County currently offers a variety of programming types to the community, many of which are well utilized and almost all of which are familiar to community members. The community currently offers all of the most commonly offered programming types as identified by the NRPA.

Programming and events changes are also recommended for McMinn County in addition to the capital improvements at existing and new parks. McMinn should host more festivals, outdoor events, and concerts at their parks facilities. Additional programs for children would also benefit the community such as summer camps, organized family activities, and youth programs. Similar programs for elderly citizens are also desired by the community. Planned events and programs should be advertised on a broader range of platforms such as on social media, on the County website, by e-mail listserv, in local newspapers (printed and online), and flyers.

To increase programming offerings, the County should consider increasing departmental funding to support staff expansion. Compared to the NRPA averages, McMinn has below the median and the lower quartile of full-time employees. This leads to a lower number of interactions, or contacts, with members of the community on a per capita basis. Athletics and other programming are generally the largest drivers of contacts; increasing the size and number of programs offered would provide more opportunities for members of the community to use McMinn's Park and Recreation System.

These improvements will create educational, social, and athletic opportunities for communities that do not currently have access. Due to the broad nature of these recommendations, it is likely they can be implemented in the near future (high priority) with fine-tuning and expansion later on.



## PROGRAMMING AND EVENTS (CONTINUED)

RECOMMENDATIONS	FURTHER IDEAS
Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve web presence with current events, past events, and photos from past events</li> <li>• Consider surveys following events to gauge event satisfaction and potential improvements</li> <li>• This is considered a high priority, due to the prevalence of residents in the survey reporting a lack of information</li> </ul>
Booking and Availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to COVID-19, all bookings for facilities transitioned to an online format - continue using an online tool for rentals and registrations</li> <li>• This is a high priority, as this recommendation is already in place and must be continued</li> </ul>
STEM Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to seek programs that start younger aged residents with STEM activities because very prevalent in local economy (i.e. Soap Box Derby)</li> <li>• Utilize existing successful STEM programs provided by partner agencies like UT Agricultural Extension, Tennessee Technology Center, and McMinn Higher Education Center</li> </ul>
Family-oriented Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outdoor Movies</li> <li>• Craft festivals, food festivals, 5Ks/Fun-Runs for causes</li> <li>• Christmas lights displays</li> <li>• These ideas range from low to high priority. Priority should be given to ideas that residents have expressed interest in and do not require a large initial turnout to be considered successful</li> </ul>
Elderly Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Athletic and non-athletic programming targeted for the elderly (chair yoga, walking, indoor classes)</li> <li>• Continue funding and partnership with McMinn County Senior Citizens Center</li> </ul>
Adult Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult community sports leagues and clubs, such as adult softball, organized running groups, and kickball</li> <li>• Address adult programming so that adults can be active with children included</li> <li>• Walking groups</li> </ul>



## MAINTENANCE, OPERATIONS, AND STAFFING RECOMMENDATIONS

Within McMinn County, there are three divisions of staff. Etowah and Athens each have their own parks and recreation department staff, and McMinn County also employs several staff members who operate the County's park facilities. Overall, Athens by far provides the majority of the staffing at 16 of the total 22 FTEs within the County. Ultimately, a Countywide joint Department should be formed to help spread the burden across the County. Until then, the additional FTEs needed should be hired by Athens in order to continue to provide a high level of service.

### *City of Athens*

The Athens Parks and Recreation Department staff has received high reviews from the community for their maintenance and operations of the Department's parks and facilities. Responses from the community survey indicated that respondents felt there are no significant maintenance or operational issues to address, and interviews with stakeholders and staff revealed satisfaction with the good condition of community facilities.

As the community builds new parks and recreational facilities, additional staff and funding will be necessary to support adequate maintenance of the expanded system. While community members feel the Department has adequate staff and equipment, current staffing levels are lower than those of similarly-sized communities, and the planned expansion of several new parks and greenways will put pressure on the Department's ability to continue providing high quality service. Athens also is the primary provider of parks and recreation services and amenities in the greater 5-county region of Bradley, McMinn, Meigs, Monroe, and Polk counties which populations total more than 230,000 people. In addition to daily park use from this region, Athens/McMinn County regularly schedule regional athletic game use from Hamilton and Knox County users. During a normal operating year, as documented during 2019, the Athens park system serves over 324,000 citizens annually, while operating 365 days a year, 16 hours per day. While a service area of 324,000 people can be assumed, NRPA average staffing for this level of population would be 254 FTEs which is currently 238 less than what they have currently. Although this is a large gap, Athens continues to serve the community and should strive to add new staff each year.

Based on the County population of just over 54,000 and NRPA average staffing levels, there should be a minimum of 43 FTEs. Currently, there are only 22 between Athens, the County, and Etowah. 21 new FTEs should be hired, with the majority of these happening within the Athens Parks Department due to it being the only established Parks Department in the County and providing the majority of the service to the County and beyond. Once a Countywide Parks Department is established, they should work hand-in-hand with Athens Parks Department to leverage resources most efficiently for the citizens.

In addition to adding staff, the City should also implement supplemental contracts to lower the burden of maintenance on staff. One example should be increasing mowing contracts in order to keep up the higher standard of maintenance and allowing staff to focus on larger priorities and serving the community.

Currently, most staff work until 3 pm but the majority of the interaction with the public occurs after this time. The Department should revisit the staff hours and adapt to better serve the community and increase the staff's presence in the parks. Another revision to staffing schedules could include having weekday crews and separate weekend crews to better serve the community on the weekend.

It is recommended that the County apply for a TRIP Grant to implement a countywide joint recreation department. This begins with adding a countywide parks director position to be the head of the Department. A main goal of the person in this position is to promote the benchmarking process through TDEC Recreation Services for all cities within the County. This data will be integral to winning grants to fund and expand the parks and recreation department. It will also be important to ensure that all recreation staff within the County departments become Certified Park and Recreation Professionals (CPRP). Athens has already started this process with three CPRP staff members of four total staff. This should be a goal for all cities within the County to provide a consistent level of service and standardize expectations.



# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

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## MAINTENANCE, OPERATIONS AND STAFFING (CONTINUED)

Athens is creating a park maintenance standard for each park. This schedule will lay out details such as when to cut the grass, pick up trash, resurface courts and other similar facility needs. This will establish the scope and level of maintenance that needs to be performed at each facility on a regular basis so that Department employees will be aware of this timeline. It will also be used to communicate with residents when specific maintenance concerns are brought up. It is recommended that Etowah, McMinn, and eventually the other cities in McMinn follow this model.

Some additional recommendations for McMinn County are listed below, divided into High and Low Priorities.

### High Priority

- Change work hours and maintenance schedules so there is increased interaction between workers and the public
- Analyze benefits of having separate work crews (one weekday crew and one weekend crew)
- Continue to get cameras up everywhere in all parks
- Add a countywide parks director position
- Add mowing contracts at parks where not already in place

### Low Priority

- Continue to evaluate the cost benefit for third party maintenance contracts based on economic cycles





## FUNDING STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES

A considerable investment in parks and facilities expansions will be necessary to bring the level of service provided by McMinn in line with the average service level of similarly-sized communities. These needs become even more acute when considering the continued population growth projected for the community. While the costs associated with purchasing parkland and developing facilities is significant, these projects become more feasible when multiple funding sources are considered. Developing a long-term capital improvement plan to prioritize funding for short-term and long-term needs for the various projects will allow the costs to be spread over longer time horizons, further enhancing funding feasibility.

### *Bond Funding*

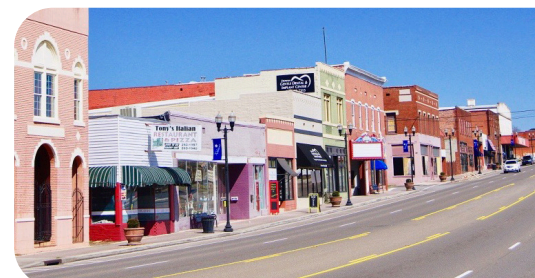
Bond funding has been used by many communities to finance investments in park and recreational infrastructure. In today's low interest rate climate, these can be a particularly cost-effective strategy for capital improvements that are then repaid from a dedicated funding source, such as a hotel tax or portion of local property taxes. These can also be funded through the creation of special taxing authorities, or TIFs, which leverage the value created for adjacent properties by assessing a tax on the increase in value of those properties after the park and recreational improvements are built.

### *Corporate Sponsorships*

Local businesses in the community can also play a role in supporting community park facilities. These businesses are often interested in giving back to the community in the form of funding or in-kind donations (labor, materials, land), and may be interested in positive media attention generated by these partnerships. Additionally, some businesses may be willing to pay for naming rights or signage for advertising.

### *Developer Contributions*

Encouraging developers to donate land or easements for parks or greenways can also be a successful strategy, particularly if the new recreational infrastructure will be located near or adjacent the rest of the new development, enhancing the value of the development. Some communities have found this to be a successful approach for a variety of public improvements, such as trails, parks, or schools.





# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

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## *Grant Funding*

There are a variety of state and federal grant programs that can be used to fund recreational infrastructure. Sometimes, pairing recreational enhancements as a component of other project types can also explore additional avenues for funding. Some examples of grants may include Local Parks and Recreation Fund (LRPF), Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), and the Department of Health's Built Environment Grants.

## *Fundraising and Community Activism*

A successful fundraising strategy in many communities around the country is the implementation of adopt-a-trail or adopt-a-park programs, where community groups or corporate entities can commit to donations of time or money to maintain specific pieces of park and recreation infrastructure. Other options for fundraising can include community events to raise funds, or the ability to pay for names to be included on park equipment, benches, bricks, or other items.

## *Partnerships*

Partnerships can play a key role in leveraging the resources of the community together with other public or non-profit entities to accomplish larger projects or more complex goals than might otherwise be possible by the County alone. Partnerships with other governmental units, such as County school systems, can be particularly effective strategies.

The County could develop partnerships with non-profit agencies to accomplish common goals. Specific partners that should be considered are those groups whose goals are furthered by investments to the Park and Recreation System. Such partners could include the various sports leagues in the community and other youth and adult leagues. These organizations have direct ties to community members impacted by funding levels and the quality of park infrastructure and are thus in a strong position to advocate and fundraise for these facilities.





### *Tax Strategies*

Tax strategies can be an effective way to create a dedicated revenue stream. The County could also consider dedicating a portion of other taxes, such as property taxes or local sales tax, to create dedicated revenue streams for parks and recreational opportunities. This approach has been used for various funding priorities in communities across the state and allowing citizens the option to vote on dedicating a portion of their tax dollars to a specific cause, like parks and recreation, could allow the public to take greater ownership of the funding decision.

As of July 1, 2021, the City of Athens is able to pass a hotel/motel tax. If this additional tax is approved, the revenues should be used to fund tourism through recreation. Tournaments and other recreation tourism will continue to bring additional visitors into the City which will provide additional hotel/motel tax revenues.

### *Usage Fees*

While it should be a priority to provide recreational opportunities free of charge so all members of the community can participate, it may be necessary in some instances to charge usage fees to pay for maintenance or prevent over-use of facilities. McMinn County does not currently charge overall usage fees, but does charge program/special event fees to help fund activities such as youth baseball and the Mother Son Dance.



# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

## IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

The matrix on the following pages details the potential improvements McMinn County can implement as well as potential funding sources and budget impact.

FACILITY	PRIORITY	SCOPE	POTENTIAL BUDGET IMPACT	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
EXISTING PARKS				
Athens Regional Park	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add artificial turf fields at the baseball fields (infield priority)</li> <li>Add artificial turf to the soccer fields</li> <li>Add pavilions and a restroom building designed to host ham radio programs for exercises and emergencies to Overlook Road</li> <li>Maintenance staff area improvements</li> <li>Finish Conference Center</li> <li>Maintain disc golf course standards as a Professional Disc Gold Association site</li> </ul>	\$80,000 \$2,000,000 \$200,000 \$100,000 \$6,500,000 \$20,000	All options, TEMA/ FEMA Grant
	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Swimming Pool</li> <li>Community Center</li> </ul>	\$2,000,000	All options
Bicentennial Park	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce master plan for newly purchased farmland around the existing park with additional amenities</li> <li>Add additional structures in the playground area</li> <li>Add sun shades between ballfields</li> <li>Add batting cages</li> <li>Add walking track with rubber surface</li> <li>Turf the outfields of fields 2 and 3 and stripe the outfield of field 12</li> <li>Relocate entrance on County Road 750 to be safer and separate from landfill traffic</li> <li>Add multi-purpose field</li> <li>Add top layer of asphalt on parking lots</li> </ul>	TBD \$300,000 \$100,000 \$20,000 \$500,000 \$2,000,000 \$50,000 \$200,000 \$35,000	Built Environment Grant or CIP, Hotel/ Motel Tax
	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement master plan</li> <li>Add horse/mountain bike trails on 200 acres beside park</li> <li>Add disc golf course</li> </ul>	TBD \$100,000 \$30,000	All options

FACILITY	PRIORITY	SCOPE	POTENTIAL BUDGET IMPACT	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
EXISTING PARKS				
Cook Park	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add historical sign and landscaping</li> <li>Rebuild basketball court surface and enhance wall</li> </ul>	\$10,000 \$80,000	LRPF Grant
	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to evaluate possible expansion options for parking and facilities</li> </ul>	TBD	LRPF Grant, Private/Public Partnership
County Forest/ Camp Cherokee	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop hiking and mountain bike trail system</li> <li>Install canoe/kayak boat launch</li> <li>Build hardscape camp sites at river bank area</li> </ul>	\$100,000 \$20,000 \$50,000	LRPF Grant, Private/Public Partnership
	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add a shooting range</li> </ul>	\$60,000	LRPF Grant, Private/Public Partnership, Corporate sponsorship
Englewood Memorial Park	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build trailhead with restroom facility behind City Hall to fit historic train station feel</li> </ul>	\$800,000	LRPF Grant
	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add restroom and lights at ballfield</li> </ul>	\$200,000	LRPF Grant
Eureka Trail	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement full length of trail through Englewood and into downtown Athens</li> <li>Work with TDOT to get under- road crossing at Highway 39</li> </ul>	\$225,000	LRPF Grant, Adopt-a-Trail, Rails to Trails, Private/Public Partnership, TDOT
	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement Urban Eureka Trail through Jones Street expansion</li> <li>Add rubber walking surface and lighting at the exercise loop in Athens</li> </ul>	\$50,000 \$500,000	LRPF Grant, Adopt-a-Trail, Rails to Trails
Fisher Field	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rebuild as ADA compliant baseball field that could be an alternate tournament site</li> <li>Evaluate purchasing industrial parcels across the street for a public/private partnership to provide indoor facilities</li> </ul>	\$1,000,000	LRPF Grant, Hotel/Motel Tax, Corporate sponsorship



# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

FACILITY	PRIORITY	SCOPE	POTENTIAL BUDGET IMPACT	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
EXISTING PARKS				
Heritage Park	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue implementing master plan</li> <li>Remove tennis court and build outdoor basketball facility</li> </ul>	\$1,000,000	LPRF Grant
Ingleside Park	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pool stays open until such time the other pool is needed</li> <li>When school closes, evaluate as a Community Center opportunity</li> </ul>	\$1,000,000	LPRF Grant
Market Park	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Purchase property surrounding Market Park as it becomes available</li> <li>Build walkways</li> <li>Build a water spray park</li> <li>Brick and wrought iron fence around entire property</li> <li>Add amphitheater and other items as noted on master plan</li> </ul>	\$4,000,000	LPRF Grants, Corporate Sponsorships, Partnerships
Parkstown Park	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add parking</li> <li>Better utilize area previously used for tennis court</li> <li>Improve playground equipment</li> </ul>	\$50,000 TBD \$300,000	LPRF Grants
Prof Powers Park	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add educational signage for cemetery</li> <li>Make dog park ADA accessible</li> </ul>	\$80,000	LPRF Grants, Corporate Sponsorships, Partnerships
	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement master plan</li> </ul>	\$39,375	LPRF Grants, Corporate Sponsorships, Partnerships



FACILITY	PRIORITY	SCOPE	POTENTIAL BUDGET IMPACT	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
NEW PARKS				
INDOOR FACILITY NEEDS				
Recreation Center	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This need is partially met by the senior centers, however an additional recreation center targeted for all ages would be a good addition</li> </ul>	\$4,000,000	LPRF Grants, CIP
Community Center	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential for nature center at Camp Cherokee</li> <li>Will add to educational programming need</li> </ul>	\$2,000,000	LPRF Grants, Corporate Sponsorships, CIP
Teen Centers (such as a Boys and Girls Club)	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No existing facilities; would benefit from dedicated programming in existing facility</li> </ul>	-	LPRF Grants, Corporate Sponsorships, CIP

FACILITY	PRIORITY	SCOPE	POTENTIAL BUDGET IMPACT	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
NEW PARKS				
OUTDOOR FACILITY NEEDS				
Playgrounds	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revitalize playgrounds on a schedule</li> <li>Each agency in the County should get playground, pool, and splashpad certifications which will be required by Health Department</li> </ul>	\$500,000 - \$2,000,000	LPRF Grant Blue Cross Blue Shield Healthy Place Program Built Environmental Grant
Tennis courts	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 courts need to be kept at Championship caliber play, implement a 5-7 year cycle for replacement</li> </ul>	\$300,000 if resurfacing, \$500,000 if full depth replacement	LPRF Grant
Pickleball Courts	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add 6 courts with lights</li> </ul>	\$300,000	LPRF Grant

# McMinn COUNTY RECREATION MASTER PLAN

FACILITY	PRIORITY	SCOPE	POTENTIAL BUDGET IMPACT	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
NEW PARKS				
OUTDOOR FACILITY NEEDS				
Baseball / softball fields	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are currently 13 fields, adding new turf fields to current facilities needed</li> </ul>	\$4,000,000	LPRF Grant, Corporate Sponsorships, Partnerships
Community gardens	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is 1 existing garden that could benefit from greater attention and investment</li> </ul>	\$10,000	Built Environment Grant
Multi-purpose fields	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More facilities needed for youth and adult sports such as rugby, soccer, lacrosse and flag football</li> </ul>	\$1,000,000	LPRF Grants, Corporate Sponsorships
Swimming pools	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 outdoor pools currently, expansion and larger facilities needed</li> </ul>	\$1,000,000	LPRF Grants Corporate Sponsorships, CIP
Skate parks	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No additional facilities needed</li> <li>Upgrades to Ingleside skate park</li> </ul>	\$100,000	LPRF Grants, CIP
Multi-use courts: basketball/ volleyball	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improvements to existing courts to add additional sports opportunities</li> </ul>	\$100,000	LPRF Grants, CIP
Performance Amphitheater	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilities for large festivals/events</li> <li>Outdoor facility</li> <li>Master plan should be created for potential locations</li> </ul>	\$200,000	LPRF Grants Corporate Sponsorships, CIP
Calhoun Greenway River Park with Blueway Access	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement Master Plan to include blueway, greenway, pedestrian bridge over Hiwassee, Visitors Center, and National Park Service quality interpretive signage and work with critical partners such as TVA, Resolute, Southern Iconics, Cherokee Nation, Bradley Chamber of Commerce, and the Department of Health to improve the built environment for a healthier Tennessee</li> </ul>	--	LPRF and RTP Grants, Sponsorships, Partnerships, Built Environment Grant, CIP

ITEM	PRIORITY	SCOPE	POTENTIAL BUDGET IMPACT	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
GREENWAY AND TRAIL NEEDS				
Eureka Trail Expansion	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Implement full master plan trail length</li></ul>	\$500,000	Rails to Trails Grant, RTP Grant
	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Improvements to current trails and parking facilities</li><li>Bathroom facilities, lighting at parking lots</li></ul>	\$100,000	CIP, TIF, Hotel/Motel, Adopt-a-Trail
STAFFING				
Additional FTEs	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Based on County population, there needs to be 21 additional FTEs hired. Until a County Parks Department is created, Athens should continue to add staff to support this need</li></ul>	\$40,000 / hire	General Fund, TRIP Grant
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Create a County Parks Department and hire a Park Director, work with existing developed Department in Athens to make biggest impact</li></ul>	\$60,000 / year	
PROGRAMMING NEEDS				
Additional programming	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Additional programs for children/teens needed</li></ul>	\$500 / year	General Fund, Cultural arts grants for certain programming



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## CONCLUSION

McMinn County is a desirable place to live that continues to grow and expand. As the County grows, however, the demands and expectations placed on the community's parks and recreation system will also grow. The purpose of this plan is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the community's existing assets and programming to provide a road map for future investments in those assets. Compared to locations with similarly sized populations, McMinn County would benefit from investment in a larger parks and recreation staff as well as implementing improvements to parks and programming.

This plan provides recommendations for how and where to focus the investment within the County and how to improve its parks and recreation system overall. This expansion shows the potential to materially enhance the quality of life for McMinn's citizens, making the County a more active, attractive, and liveable community for people from all walks of life.



