



**CITY OF HUNTSVILLE, TX**  
**PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN**  
**Adopted 8-5-2025**





Parks and Recreation Master Plan



## Parks and Recreation Master Plan

### Mayor & City Council

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## || Executive Summary

### 01 Inventory & Analysis

- Project Overview
- Methodology
- Community Profile
- Existing Parks and Recreation Facilities
- Standards Analysis

### 02 Demand Assessment

- Stakeholder Input Summary
- Priority Projects

### 03 Walkability

- Planning for Walkability

### 04 Plan Recommendations

- Comprehensive Initiatives
- Targeted Improvements

### 05 Plan Implementation



Bayou Bend Park

# HUNTSVILLE

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## PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN

“Parks and playgrounds are the soul of a city.”  
- Marty Rubin



*Eastham Thomason Park*

The City of Huntsville's Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for maintaining and operating various parks, facilities, and programs for residents and visitors. The latest update to the city's Parks Master Plan took place in 2016, resulting in numerous projects aimed at enhancing recreational spaces. The 2025 update provides direction for the City's ongoing efforts to foster community engagement and promoting recreation activities.

Typically, a parks and recreation master plan has a lifespan of 5 to 10 years before requiring updates. The planning process generally focuses on the upcoming 5 years while maintaining a long-term vision for the parks system. This planning effort aims to evaluate existing parks and recreation facilities to identify opportunities for improvements and additions, as well as pinpoint new park and facility opportunities to support the recreation needs of Huntsville residents.

Burditt Consultants, LLC was engaged by the City to develop a Parks and Recreation Master Plan that addresses current and future recreation needs, incorporating stakeholder input. The following approaches were implemented in developing the master plan:

- Standards-Based Approach- Utilizing traditional park standards and evaluating current trends.
- Demand-Based Approach- Gathering input from staff, Council, working groups, sports leagues, and residents to identify current and future needs and desires.
- Resource-Based Approach – Leveraging available land, natural features, rights-of-way, and city facilities to enhance park and recreation opportunities.

The following studies were conducted in developing the master plan:

- Inventory of existing parks and facilities
- Evaluation of growth and demographic data, trends, and projections
- Assessment of the city's comprehensive plan
- Analysis of stakeholder input conducted by the City, including survey input, public workshops, and guidance from a Steering Committee, City Staff, and Elected Officials
- Identification of Priority Projects
- Development of concepts for new and renovated facilities
- Probable cost estimation for priority projects
- Evaluation of cost impacts per household

### Existing Parks and Facilities

The Parks and Recreation Department in Huntsville maintains 35 parks and green spaces, which serve various purposes such as league sports, community events, passive recreation, environmental quality, and wildlife habitat. These parks and facilities are maintained in generally good condition, though they vary in age and operational status.

Survey findings indicate that 50.46% of participants visit Huntsville's parks multiple times a week. The most visited parks are Kate Barr Ross (71.75%) and Eastham Thomason (56.82%). A total of 64.78% of responses rated them as good to excellent. Furthermore, 68% of respondents believe that maintaining and improving existing parks should be a priority, while 50% consider the development of new parks and facilities to be very important. Key priorities identified through stakeholder outreach include:

- Hike and Bike Trails (31%)
- Playgrounds (27%)
- Pickleball Courts (26%)
- Recreation Center (22%)
- Indoor Swimming Pool (18%)
- Sports Fields (Soccer 16%, Baseball 14%, Softball 13%, Football 4%)

The planning process integrated stakeholder input alongside an on-site evaluation of conditions. The objective was to identify projects for further study that would enhance recreational opportunities while achieving as many of the specified goals as possible. Projects were categorized as either "Comprehensive Initiatives" or "Targeted Improvements." Comprehensive Initiatives include conceptual drawings and estimated costs, whereas Targeted Improvements suggest recommended smaller-scale projects.

### Comprehensive Initiatives

1. Renovate Kate Barr Ross Sports Complex
2. Renovate Eastham Thomason Park with addition of a new recreation center and natatorium

### Targeted Improvements

Other identified needs for improvements to existing park amenities and opportunities for additions to the park system are categorized as 'targeted improvements'. The following improvements are recommended for consideration:

3. Neighborhood Park Improvements
4. Complete subsequent phases of Emancipation Park master plan
5. Develop soccer complex with fields, parking, lighting, and restrooms at Landfill

### Staffing Needs

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) reports that the typical park agency 8.9 full-time equivalent employees (FTEs) per 10,000 residents. The City of Huntsville's Parks and Leisure Department currently has 6.8 FTEs per 10,000 residents, suggesting the need to add 2.1 FTEs to meet the current standard.

# Inventory & **Analysis**



Kate Barr Ross Park

01

Inventory &  
Analysis

02

Demand  
Assessment

03

**Walkability**

04

Plan  
Recommendations

05

Plan  
Implementation

# Project Overview

## Introduction

### **The Benefits of Parks & Open Space**

Parks and open spaces offer various advantages to communities, supporting physical and mental health, promoting social connections, boosting local economies, and providing environmental benefits.

**Health and Well-Being:** Parks offer accessible areas for exercise and recreational activities, which can reduce obesity rates and improve cardiovascular health. Additionally, spending time in natural settings has been shown to lower stress levels and enhance overall mental wellness.

**Social and Community Benefits:** Parks serve as communal hubs where community members can gather for events and activities, promoting a sense of belonging and strengthening community ties.

**Economic Advantages:** Proximity to well-maintained parks is often associated with higher property values, making neighborhoods more desirable. Attractive parks can drive local tourism and support community events that create economic opportunities, benefiting homeowners and local businesses alike.

**Environmental and Ecological Impact:** Parks help purify the air by absorbing pollutants and carbon dioxide, improving the surrounding area's health. They also support biodiversity by providing habitats for local flora and fauna and play a role in managing stormwater and reducing urban heat island effects.

### **Park Standards**

Traditional techniques for park and recreation planning have utilized standards established by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) to determine the quantity and type of amenities a city should provide. For example, the

NRPA recommends a minimum of 6.25 to 10.5 acres of park land per 1,000 population. Based on this standard, Huntsville should provide between 207 to 308 acres of park land for its residents. Currently, Huntsville provides 18 parks totaling approximately 183.2 acres of developed park land and 275.20 acres of total park land. The NRPA also recommends minimum numbers of specific park facilities according to population (e.g., 1 soccer field per 1,000 population). However, they acknowledge that communities have unique needs and standards should be used as benchmarks rather than absolute rules for determining facility requirements.

### **Local Demand**

The Demand Assessment phase of this master plan development was executed by City Staff through various outreach efforts commencing in August 2024. This included a series of workshops and open house meetings held at multiple locations, including City Hall, the MLK Community Center, and the Service Center. Group sizes ranged from 6 to 25 participants who were guided through several topics and questions. Feedback for each topic was meticulously documented and compiled for analysis. Additionally, an online survey was conducted from August 2024 to May 2025, featuring a series of questions regarding parks and recreation needs and opinions. The results of these public engagement activities are detailed in the Demand Assessment chapter of this plan.

### **Planning Principles**

The Huntsville Comprehensive Plan 2040 outlines key planning principles and underscores the significance of parks, recreational facilities, and green spaces in enhancing Huntsville's livability. This plan sets forth Recreation and Amenities Goals aimed at directing the future development of parks, recreation programs, and related facilities.



## Methodology

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan was developed using a three-fold technique that follows general methodologies accepted by TPWD for local park master plans and by the Department of the Interior for local park system Recovery Action Plans (RAP). The following approaches were implemented:

**1. Standard-Based Approach** – uses standards established by the City to determine the quantity of park facilities required to meet the City’s need for a given population. Standards are usually expressed as the quantity of park facilities needed to adequately serve every 1,000 citizens of the City.

Standards are established to provide the level of service that the City believes is most responsive to the amount of use and interests of its citizens. This plan establishes individual standards for the City.

**2. Demand-Based Approach** – uses public meetings, participation rates, league usage data, and surveys to determine how much the population uses and desires certain types of recreation facilities.

**3. Resource-Based Approach** – is based on the usefulness of available physical resources to provide recreation opportunities. For example, the City’s street rights-of-way, floodplains, and drainage corridors provide opportunities for trail connections.

All three methods are important in their own manner, but individually do not represent the entire picture. The assessment component of the project utilizes all three methods to determine what types of recreation facilities and park requirements are needed.

Typical assessments evaluate Level of Service (LOS). While this is important, we believe it is also critical to also understand and evaluate the

Quality of Service. QOS evaluation requires intense community involvement and yields critical information of how the facility or park amenity is performing according to the expectations of citizens overall. Quality of Service is most easily identified through conversation. Engaging park users is the most direct method of understanding the user experience for a given facility.

As national guidelines and standards are based on demographic trends rather than specific local desires, they must be fine-tuned to meet local conditions. It is important to recognize that national standards are simply guidelines or benchmarks that are intended to serve as a starting point for park planning. Each city has its own unique geographic, demographic, and socio-economic composition, and as such, the arbitrary application of national standards, as is often done, would not necessarily meet the needs of Huntsville.

### Inventory and Analysis

The inventory phase includes inspection of the City’s existing parks and recreation facilities to determine overall condition, maintenance needs, and opportunities for additions/improvements. Observations of site, equipment and facility conditions are noted.

In addition to the City’s facilities, recreational facilities provided by other entities are noted to identify service gaps, duplication of service and to gather a complete picture of recreation in Huntsville.

### Demographics, Growth and Trends

A key component of any master plan is understanding patterns of growth in the community and region. Huntsville is a mature community, positioned far enough from the Houston Metropolitan Region to limit immediate growth pressure. On the other hand, the City’s location is ideal for offering tournament

opportunities for baseball, soccer or football. Regional, state and national trends in recreation are also considered, as the types of facilities and activities desired by the public are ever-changing.

### Priority Projects & Recommendations

The results of data collection, analysis and stakeholder input result in the identification of priority projects for enhancement of Huntsville’s parks and recreation system. Some of these projects are recommended to provide upgrades and improvements to existing facilities, whereas others are opportunities to add new features to the parks system that address growing needs for recreation.

Priority Projects have been classified as either “Priority Projects” or “Targeted Improvements.” Priority Projects have been studied to determine feasibility and probable costs to the level of detail appropriate at the conceptual level. Targeted Improvements suggest recommended smaller-scale projects. Further study during a “design development” phase with a planning and design consultant will be needed to further vet the details, programming and costs for a given project.

## Alignment with City Priorities

### Strategic Plan and Comprehensive Plan Review

Review of the City's Comprehensive Plan 2040, 2024 Strategic Plan, and FY 24-25 Budget, the City of Huntsville's goals and priorities for parks and recreation are addressed primarily under the Quality of Life strategic initiative

The City's Vision is to be a community that is beautiful, historic, culturally diverse, affordable, safe, and well-planned, with great opportunity for its citizens. Its Mission is to maintain and enhance the quality of life and achieve this vision by providing, facilitating, and regulating services, facilities, and infrastructure

The Recreation and Amenities section of the Comprehensive Plan emphasizes the essential contribution that natural resources, parks, open space, and recreation facilities make to Huntsville's quality of life. Huntsville offers a variety of well-utilized parks and recreation facilities, as well as natural resources like Huntsville State Park and Sam Houston National Forest.

#### **Recreation and Amenities Goals (from the Comprehensive Plan):**

- **Goal RA1:** Conservation of natural resources, including trees, environmentally sensitive areas, and future park areas in planning for future growth and development.
- **Goal RA2:** A park and recreation system that adds to the positive image of Huntsville, provides enjoyment to residents, and attracts new visitors.
- **Goal RA3:** A park and recreation system that promotes healthy and active living and is connected to the rest of the community through safe multi-modal trails, sidewalks, and/or bicycle facilities.

#### **Strategic Action Priorities and Objectives related to Parks and Recreation:**

• **Enhancing Quality of Life:** Establish an environment where citizens can thrive and enjoy the city, providing services that enhance the quality of life for all life stages (children, students, families, and retirees) by creating amenities that support physical, mental, and social well-being. Support access to recreation and the natural environment.

• **Maintaining and Enhancing the Park System:** Continue implementation of the priority projects identified in the 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan. These include the renovation of Kate Barr Ross Sports Complex,

construction of a multi-purpose recreation center at Eastham Thomason Park, improvements at Emancipation Park, and the development of a City-Wide Trail System.

• **Parks Master Plan Update:** Complete the updates to the Parks Master Plan and review recommendations for implementation. The plan recommends five-year updates to maintain eligibility for Local Parks Grants funding. The update should assess progress toward implementing items from the 2016 plan.

• **Evaluating Future Park Needs:** Evaluate future park needs and identify potential locations for regional-scale parks. Areas west of I-45 have fewer parks. The 2016 plan noted that the acres per 1,000 residents could fall significantly with projected population growth if no additional park acreage is developed, although development regulations require parkland dedication.

• **Improving Existing Parks and Amenities:** Identify upgrades and improvements desired by the community for enhancing existing parks. Expand the range of amenities based on resident desires, targeting improvements for varying age groups, such as outdoor exercise equipment for seniors, a spray park, local art park, wildlife observation area, frisbee golf, and additional fields for sports leagues. Ensure safety within parks is a key improvement factor. Monitor usage of the new skate park at Eastham Thomason Park to determine the feasibility and need for an additional skate park at Emancipation Park. Specific FY 2024-25 objectives for Parks Maintenance include installing a fence at KBR Park, leveling the Hodges Building at the Statue, leveling the Soccer Restroom at KBR Park, and familiarizing staff with new facilities. The Aquatics Center objectives for FY 2024-25 include continuing preventive maintenance, replastering the splashpad and replacing expansion joints, replacing the slide for safety, replacing the roof on the office and restrooms, and replacing picnic tables.

• **Trail and Multi-modal Connectivity:** Develop a City-Wide Trail System. Enhance walkability through improvements identified in the transportation and parks master plans. Evaluate funding for multi-modal improvements recommended in the 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the 2019 Transportation Master Plan, including sidewalk, trail, and bicycle networks. Coordinate with public and private entities to provide access for new trails across easements and rights-of-way. Ensure on-street

bicycle facilities, off-street trails, and complete streets improvements are considered in future TxDOT projects.

•[Promoting Health and Active Living](#): Provide high-quality recreational and park facilities and options for safe pedestrian and bicycle circulation to enhance opportunities for active and healthy lifestyles, particularly for youth. Well-designed parks and trails can encourage safe exercise and provide mental health benefits. Enhance the park system to meet the needs of a diverse population and increasing number of residents served. Evaluate additional passive recreational enhancements for demographics not engaged in organized sports, such as young people, adults, and elderly citizens, which could include low-cost options like community meeting space.

•[Natural Resource Awareness and Access](#): Enhance awareness of and access to the Huntsville area's natural resources, including the Sam Houston National Forest and Huntsville State Park. Maintain partnerships and communication with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and U.S. Forest Service for the long-term management and conservation of Huntsville State Park and Sam Houston National Forest.

Seek to boost visitation, awareness, and accessibility of these resources to promote economic development, eco-tourism, and environmental education. This could involve coordinating tours, promoting awareness among SHSU students, soliciting corporate sponsorship for State Park memberships to offset visitation costs (identified as a barrier), and pursuing educational initiatives like plaques or signage. Potential off-road trail linkages between the community and these assets should be explored cooperatively.

•[Enhancing Visitor Experience and Tourism](#): A park and recreation system is desired that attracts new visitors. Bolster tourism by focusing on elements where Huntsville can differentiate itself, such as proximity to natural resources and historic/cultural amenities. Work with partners to create more cultural and eco-tourism events centered on history, SHSU, natural resources, and local sporting events.

This includes events tied to education about natural resources in coordination with Huntsville State Park. Partner with HISD and SHSU to explore ways Huntsville can better promote Sports Tourism, including new athletic complexes and Gibbs Ranch. Evaluate the feasibility of new

sports and recreational facilities, including those with the potential to bring economic benefits by attracting tournaments or minor league sports teams. A feasibility study on the potential economic impact of developing or upgrading a sports complex is a near-term priority identified in the Action Agenda table.

•[Community Engagement and Partnerships](#): Build strong relationships within the community, providing a welcoming environment that fosters mutual partnership between city government, community organizations, and residents. Leverage Huntsville's volunteer spirit for park clean-ups, plantings, maintenance, and fundraising. Formalize standards for these activities. Continue coordination with HISD and SHSU on the use of sports fields and recreational facilities, identifying additional opportunities for leveraging resources. Continue emphasis on progress through partnerships (public/public, public/private, public/non-profit).

•[Capital Improvements Program \(CIP\)](#): Continue use of, and focused implementation of short- to mid-term capital projects with a formalized CIP process for identifying, prioritizing, and funding essential capital projects, including parks, trails, and sidewalks. Grants can be utilized to supplement capital improvement projects. Capital improvement projects in the CIP may include parks. For FY 2024-25, the Capital Project Budget Summary includes funds for Parks. Prioritizing capital projects near sites identified as prime residential neighborhood development opportunities is also a strategy.

The City has 25 parks and greenspace properties covering over 298 acres, including community parks, neighborhood parks, "mini" parks, walking trails, natural areas, and open spaces. It also operates an aquatic center. Parks Maintenance is responsible for maintaining city parks, neighborhood parks, green spaces, Oakwood Cemetery and its additions, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center, and other specific city properties.

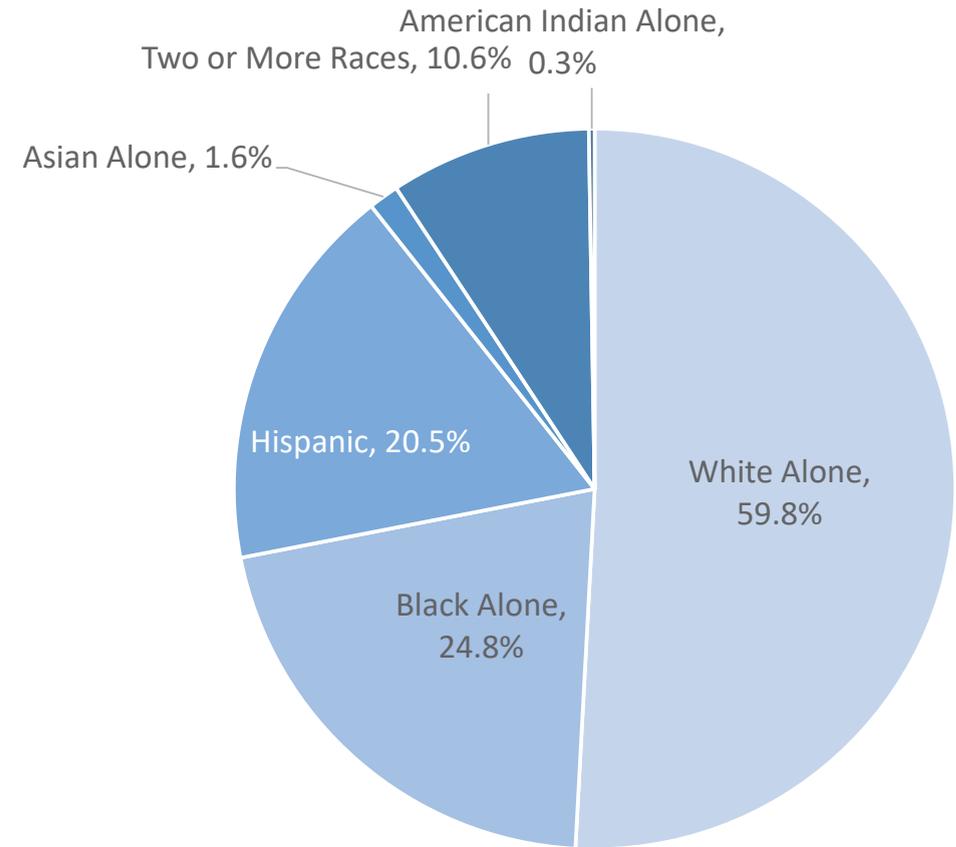
Overall, the City aims to provide a park and recreation system that is well-maintained, serves resident/visitor/business needs, supports growth, enhances quality of life, promotes health, conserves natural resources, and contributes to the city's positive image and economic development, including through tourism.

# Community Profile

## Planning for the Future of Huntsville

The City of Huntsville, Texas is one of the oldest cities in Texas, founded in 1836. The City has rich natural and historic resources and offers a diverse range of economic and recreational opportunities. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates Huntsville to have a population of 48,552 residents. Of that number, approximately 33,123 are residents (including university students), and the remaining 15,429 are housed in prisons operated by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

The City of Huntsville is a thriving, livable community situated in the pineywoods and rolling hills of East Texas on the northern edge of the Sam Houston National Forest. The county seat of Walker County, Huntsville has presence on Interstate 45 with easy access to Houston and fast-growing suburb Montgomery County along with easy access to the Dallas metropolitan area, just 170 miles away.

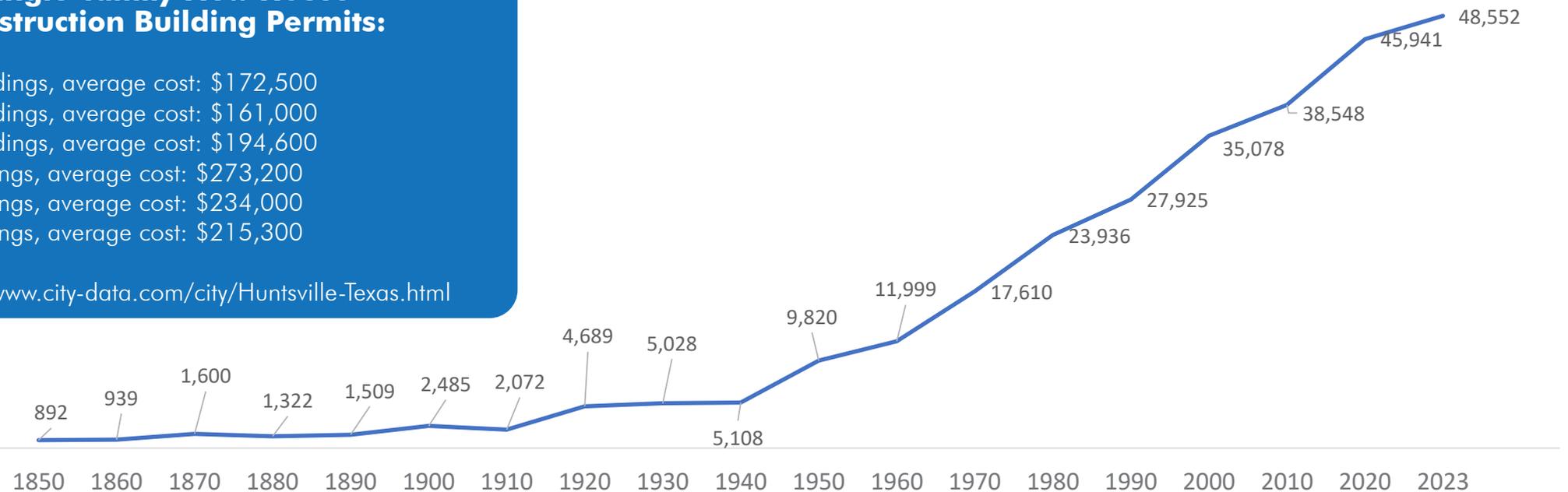


U.S. Census Bureau population estimate, Race and Hispanic Origin - July 2023.

### Single-family New House Construction Building Permits:

- 2022: 301 buildings, average cost: \$172,500
- 2021: 247 buildings, average cost: \$161,000
- 2020: 117 buildings, average cost: \$194,600
- 2019: 44 buildings, average cost: \$273,200
- 2018: 53 buildings, average cost: \$234,000
- 2017: 58 buildings, average cost: \$215,300

Source: <https://www.city-data.com/city/Huntsville-Texas.html>



\*Census population estimates above include prison populations.



**High school graduate or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+ - 84.4%**

**Bachelor's degree or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+ - 21.1%**

*\*U.S. Census 2018-2022*



**Households - 14,680**

**Persons Per Household - 2.35**

**Owner-Occupied Housing Units - 36.5%**

**Median Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Units - \$207,300**

**Median Gross Rent - \$970**

*\*U.S. Census 2018-2022*



**Median Household Income - \$37,419 (in 2022 Dollars)**

**Per Capita Income in Past 12 Months - \$19,277**

**Persons in Poverty - 27.1%**

*\*U.S. Census 2018-2022, includes prison population.*

## The Huntsville Parks System

### Existing Parks and Recreation Facilities

Huntsville manages and operates a total of 18 parks and 8 green space properties. These parks encompass 70 structures, including field houses, restrooms, concession stands, pavilions, a community center, an aquatics center, and a visitor’s center. Altogether, the park system covers 288.37 acres, including 275.20 acres of developed park land and incorporating 13.17 acres of undeveloped green spaces and natural areas. Additionally, the park system features approximately 2 miles of multi-purpose trails within City parks.

Huntsville’s parks are organized based on their use, service area, and size. Parks designed to meet the recreational needs of all Huntsville residents are classified as “City Parks” and usually have multiple features or specific uses. In contrast, “Neighborhood Parks” are intended to provide playgrounds, picnic areas, and open space within residential neighborhoods.

“Passive Parks” may include cultural features such as historical monuments or offer a shaded, well-maintained area for visitors., while “Green Spaces” preserve natural areas important for stormwater management, wildlife habitat, and land use screening.

Huntsville’s current system includes nine green space properties, mostly acquired through the City’s Park Land Dedication Ordinance (Article 19.900 Parks and Open Space) of the Code of Ordinances. They are generally undeveloped properties featuring trees, shrubs, or other natural landscapes, and have potential to become developed park spaces in the future.

## Huntsville Park Inventory

Park Name	Address	Classification	Acreage	Maintenance Level
Boettcher Mill	101 Boettcher Mill Rd	Neighborhood	0.632	Medium - High
Bush Miller	546 Normal Park Dr	Passive	3.662	Medium - High
Eastham-Thomason	1500 7th St	City	142.520	
Emancipation	300 Martin Luther King Jr Dr	City	8.801	Medium - High
Emma Etheredge	242 Autumn Rd	Neighborhood	13.886	Medium - High
Forest Hills	130 Pine Valley	Neighborhood	0.840	Medium - High
Founders	1000 University Ave	Passive	0.282	High
Gillaspie	890 Ave I	Passive	0.450	High
John Henry Rather	1223 University Ave	Passive	0.709	High
Kate Barr Ross	486A SH 75 N	Regional Park	77.190	Medium - High
New Addition	1249 Goodrich Dr	Neighborhood	6.704	HISD
Pine Shadows	3336 Knob Oaks Dr	Neighborhood	1.266	Medium - High
Pineview	2335 Ave N 1/2	Neighborhood	1.952	Medium - High
Sallie E. Gibbs	1227A 11th St	Passive	0.153	High
Sam Houston Statue	7600 SH 75 S	Passive	10.821	High
Sandbrook	3166 Clay Cir	Neighborhood	0.502	Medium - High
Thomas Clifton Gibbs	1890 Ave S	Passive	4.267	Medium
Town Creek	1200 Ave M	Passive	0.565	High
<b>Total Park Acreage</b>			<b>275.20</b>	

## Huntsville Greenspace Inventory

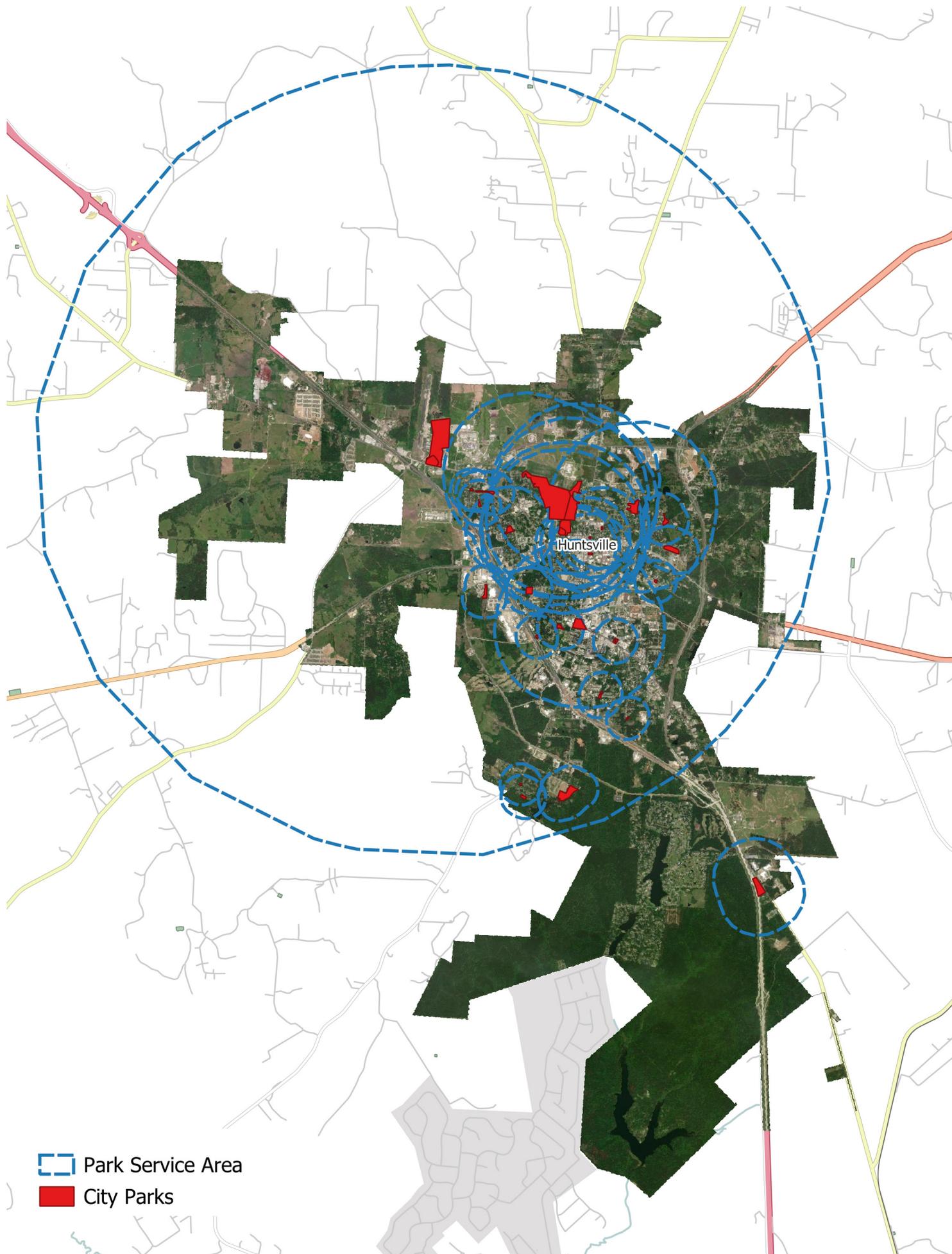
Park Name	Address	Classification	Acres	Maintenance Level
Bayou Bend	97 Magnolia Way	Green Space	2.466	Low
Montgomery Road	2533 Sam Houston Ave	Green Space	1.297	Medium
Pine Shadows II	3760 Raven Hill Drive	Green Space	0.352	Very Low
Raven Terrace	671 SH 30 E	Green Space	2.740	Very Low
Shady Acres / Elks	698 Vicki Dr	Green Space	1.320	Low
Smither	2420 Ave S	Green Space	0.605	Low
West Hill	139 Col Etheredge Blvd	Green Space	3.754	Low
Woods Addition	3001 Paul Knox Rd	Green Space	0.636	Low

**Total Park Acreage 13.169**

# Inventory & Analysis 01

## Park Distribution

The distribution of parks throughout a city greatly determines the frequency of use and accessibility of parks by residents and visitors. Parks classified as “City” parks aim to serve the entire community rather than just a neighborhood, therefore a central location is ideal. Also of consideration is the expected service area of a park. “Neighborhood” parks are ideally accessible within a 1/4 mile or 5-minute walk, whereas “City” parks serve an area within 1-mile or a 5-minute drive. The map to the left shows the classification of Huntsville’s parks along with each park’s service area radius. Notably, the areas of the community west of Interstate 45 have fewer parks due to a lower demand in those neighborhoods. As the City continues to grow, it will be important to ensure that underserved neighborhoods are not left behind.



Classification	Service Area
City Park	1 Mile
Neighborhood Park	1/4 Mile
Passive Park	1/2 Mile
Green Space	1/4 Mile
Regional Park	5 Miles

## Level of Service

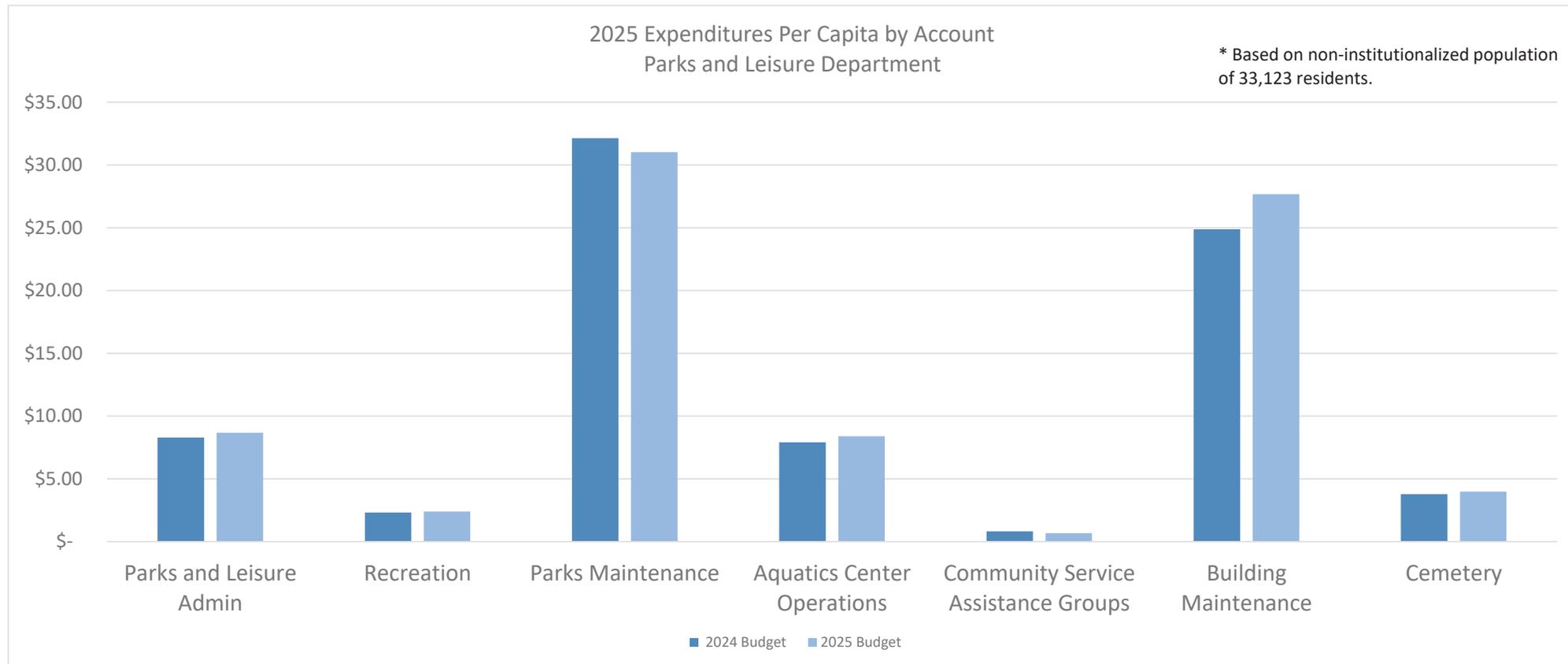
### National Benchmarks and Huntsville Parks and Leisure Performance

The makeup of parks and recreation agencies varies greatly due to unique characteristics such as population density, demand for recreation, and available resources such as land, capital, and political will. As communities grow, the demand for parks and recreation facilities tends to increase as well.

Measuring Level of Service of a parks system provides an understanding of where ‘service gaps’ may exist with regard to parks, trails, amenities, and services. To measure Level of Service, the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) collects nationwide data from parks and recreation agencies to serve as guidelines for communities to evaluate the type and number of facilities to provide for residents. Rather than serving as strict standards, the benchmarks should be used as a point of conversation as City staff, elected officials, planning groups, and other stakeholders plan for the future parks system.

### Park Land and Facilities

These benchmarks typically provide a metric of park land, facilities, and services for a given population. For example, the 2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review reports that the typical park and recreation agency manage 10.6 acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents and 2,386 residents per park. Agencies serving between 20,000 and 50,000 residents have a median of 11.2 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents and 2,062 residents per park.



While benchmarks are reported for Huntsville’s population, Walker County has an estimated population of 83,722 residents with no other city parks outside of Huntsville. County residents are frequent users of the Huntsville parks system.

### Huntsville Parks & Leisure Workload 2024-2025 Full-Time Equivalent Staff (FTEs)

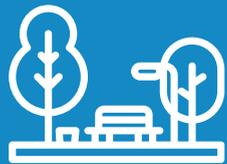
- Parks & Leisure Administration: 1.50 FTEs
- Recreation: - 0.5 FTEs
- Parks Maintenance: 12.75 FTEs
- Aquatic Center: 2.50 FTEs
- Cemetery: 1.00 FTE
- Building Services: 4.00 FTEs

### 2024 NPRA Agency Performance Review Findings

The Typical Parks and Recreation Agency Has:

**2,386**

Residents Per Park



**10.6**

Acres of parkland per 1,000 residents

**8.9**

Full-time equivalent employees per 10,000 residents



**\$99.47**

Operating expenditures per capita

**46%**

Percentage of full-time staff dedicated to operations/maintenance

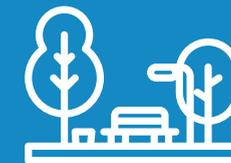


# Inventory & Analysis 01

The Huntsville Parks and Leisure Department Has:

**1,743**

Residents Per Park



**8.48**

Acres of parkland per 1,000 residents

**6.8**

Full-time equivalent employees per 10,000 residents



**\$50.65**

Operating expenditures per capita

**35%**

Percentage of full-time staff dedicated to operations/maintenance



# Parks Amenities & Facilities Inventory

\*PT = Portable Toilet  
P = Practice Field  
X = Feature(s) Available

PARK NAME	ADDRESS	CLASSIFICATION	ACREAGE	MAINTENANCE LEVEL	RESTROOM	PAVILION	PICNIC AREA	PLAY MODULE	SWINGSET	BASKETBALL	SOCCER	BASEBALL
Eastham-Thomason	1500 7th St	City	142.520		2	1	X	2	1	1	P	P
Emancipation	300 Martin Luther King Jr Dr	City	8.801	Medium - High	1	1	X	2	2	2	P	P
Boettchers Mill	101 Boettcher Mill Rd	Neighborhood	0.632	Medium - High			X	1				
Emma Etheredge	242 Autumn Rd	Neighborhood	13.886	Medium - High			X		1			
Forest Hills	130 Pine Valley	Neighborhood	0.840	Medium - High			X	1	2			
New Addition	1249 Goodrich Dr	Neighborhood	6.704	HISD	PT						P	P
Pine Shadows	3336 Knob Oaks Dr	Neighborhood	1.266	Medium - High			X		1			
Pineview	2335 Ave N 1/2	Neighborhood	1.952	Medium - High								
Sandbrook	3166 Clay Cir	Neighborhood	0.502	Medium - High			X		1			
Bush Miller	546 Normal Park Dr	Passive	3.662	Medium - High		1	X					
Founders	1000 University Ave	Passive	0.282	High								
Gillaspie	890 Ave I	Passive	0.450	High			X					
John Henry Rather	1223 University Ave	Passive	0.709	High			X					
Sallie E. Gibbs	1227A 11th St	Passive	0.153	High			X					
Sam Houston Statue	7600 SH 75 S	Passive	10.821	High	1		X					
Thomas Clifton Gibbs	1890 Ave S	Passive	4.267	Medium			X					
Town Creek	1200 Ave M	Passive	0.565	High			X					
Kate Barr Ross	486A SH 75 N	Regional Park	77.190	Medium - High	4	1	X	2	1	1	8	5

**Total Park Acreage 275.20**

# Inventory & Analysis 01

SOFTBALL	FOOTBALL	VOLLEYBALL	SWIMMING POOL	SPLASH PAD	DOG PARK	TRAIL	GREEN SPACE	CULTURAL	DISC GOLF	PARKING	SKATEPARK	SAND VOLLEYBALL	FITNESS EQUIPMENT	AMPHITHEATER	COMMUNITY CENTER
		1	1	1	1	X	X		X	50	1	1	X		
		1					X	X		102		1			X
													X		
					X					5					
						X									
								X		SHARED					
								X		SHARED					
								X		X				X	
								X		50+					
							X								
						X				60					
3	2									360					

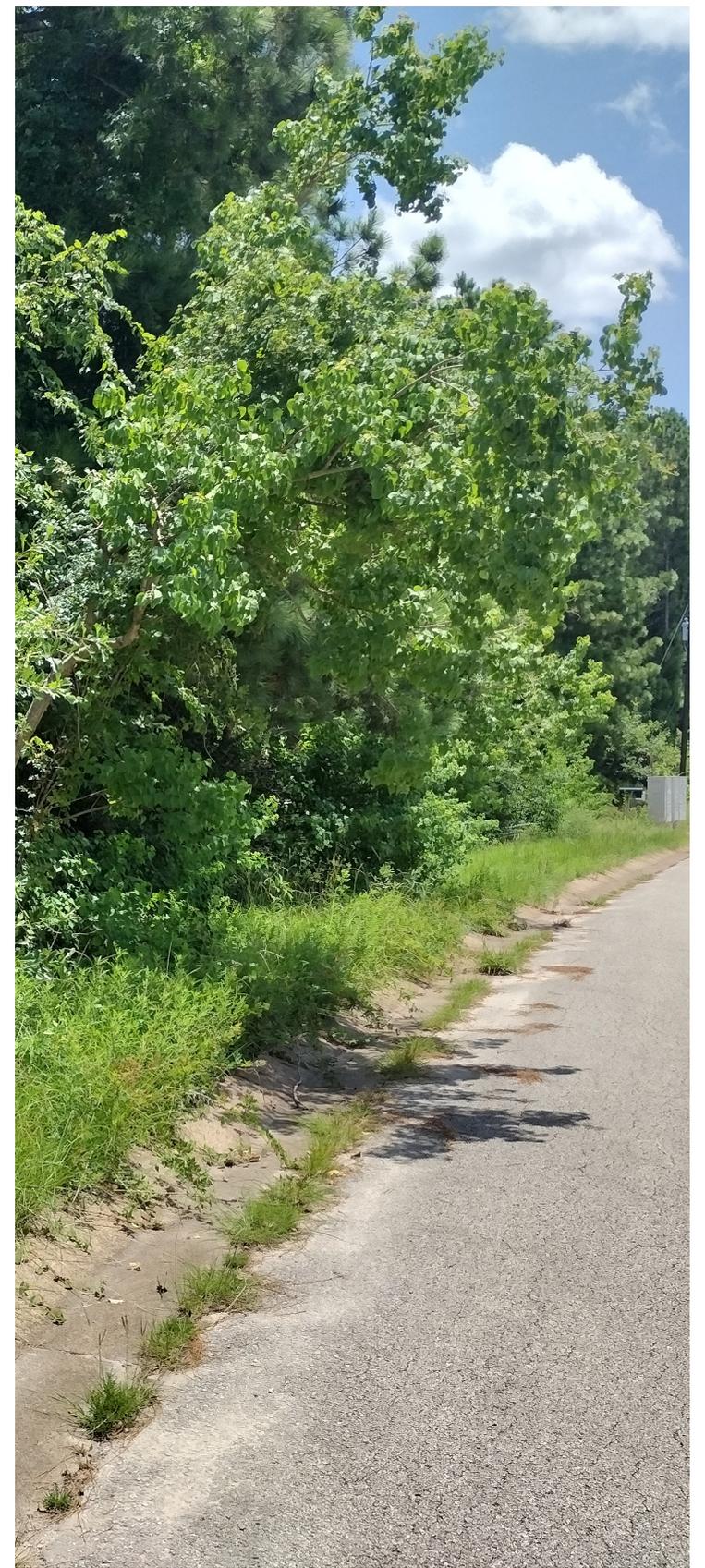
## Greenspace Inventory

The Parks and Leisure Department is tasked with the upkeep of various properties classified as 'greenspace'. These areas encompass parks and expansive forested regions that are either minimally developed or left in their natural state. Acquired through park land dedications or other means, these greenspaces serve multiple purposes. They may be transformed into bustling active park lands featuring amenities like playgrounds, sports fields, and walking trails. Alternatively, they can be conserved as pristine natural habitats, providing sanctuary for wildlife, serving as scenic buffers between different land uses, and allowing stormwater to naturally seep into the earth, replenishing groundwater reserves and preventing flooding.

In addition to dedicated greenspace properties, Eastham Thomason Park contains a significant amount of natural greenspace that is enjoyed by residents and visitors throughout the year. Hiking trails provide access into the interior of the property. The natural areas serve as important habitat for wildlife and provide ecosystem services such as stormwater runoff reduction, carbon sequestration, air pollution removal, and other benefits. It's important to consider preservation of these natural areas when developing new park facilities and amenities.



*Pine Shadows II is one of the newer additions to the parks system. This greenspace property has the potential to be developed into a small neighborhood park with picnic areas, play elements, or other passive recreation features.*



*Raven Terrace is a greenspace located adjacent to the Raven Terrace Mobile Home Park. At 2.74 acres, the property could be developed into a small neighborhood park in a somewhat underserved area of the community.*

# Inventory & Analysis 01



*The Montgomery Road Park greenspace includes a picnic area and is a maintained landscape*



*The Woods Addition greenspace is an unmaintained forested area located behind Walmart.*



*Smither Park is a linear greenspace property between Avenue S and the I-45 Frontage Road.*



*Bayou Bend Park is a maintained greenspace along Normal Park Drive that includes a bench under large, mature Live Oak trees.*

# Parks & Leisure Department

## Resources and Budgets

The reality of a municipal parks and recreation system is that their success is largely determined by the available resources of staffing and the annual budget. Interviews with Department Staff indicate that they are at maximum capacity for all operations. Additionally, they are strained in their ability to keep up with maintenance and operations demands currently. They have expressed a need for more full-time staff to address current needs and recommendations for additional staff or any expansion of the parks system or programs. Review of the City Budget and other planning documents reveals the following information about the Parks & Leisure Department's current resources and responsibilities.

The department includes several divisions: Parks & Leisure Administration, Recreation, Parks Maintenance, Aquatic Center Operations, Library, Cemetery, and Building Maintenance

According to the Summary of Budgeted Personnel (FTEs) by Fund and Department for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025, the City of Huntsville's Parks & Leisure Department has a total budgeted 20 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) employees

The breakdown of budgeted FTEs per division for FY 2025 is as follows:

- Parks & Leisure Administration: 1.50 FTEs
- Recreation: - 0.5 FTEs
- Parks Maintenance: 12.75 FTEs
- Aquatic Center: 2.50 FTEs
- Cemetery: 1.00 FTE
- Building Services: 4.00 FTEs



Within the Parks Maintenance area, discussions have indicated there are approximately five full-time equivalents specifically for mowing, which does not include other tasks like trash pickup or repairs.

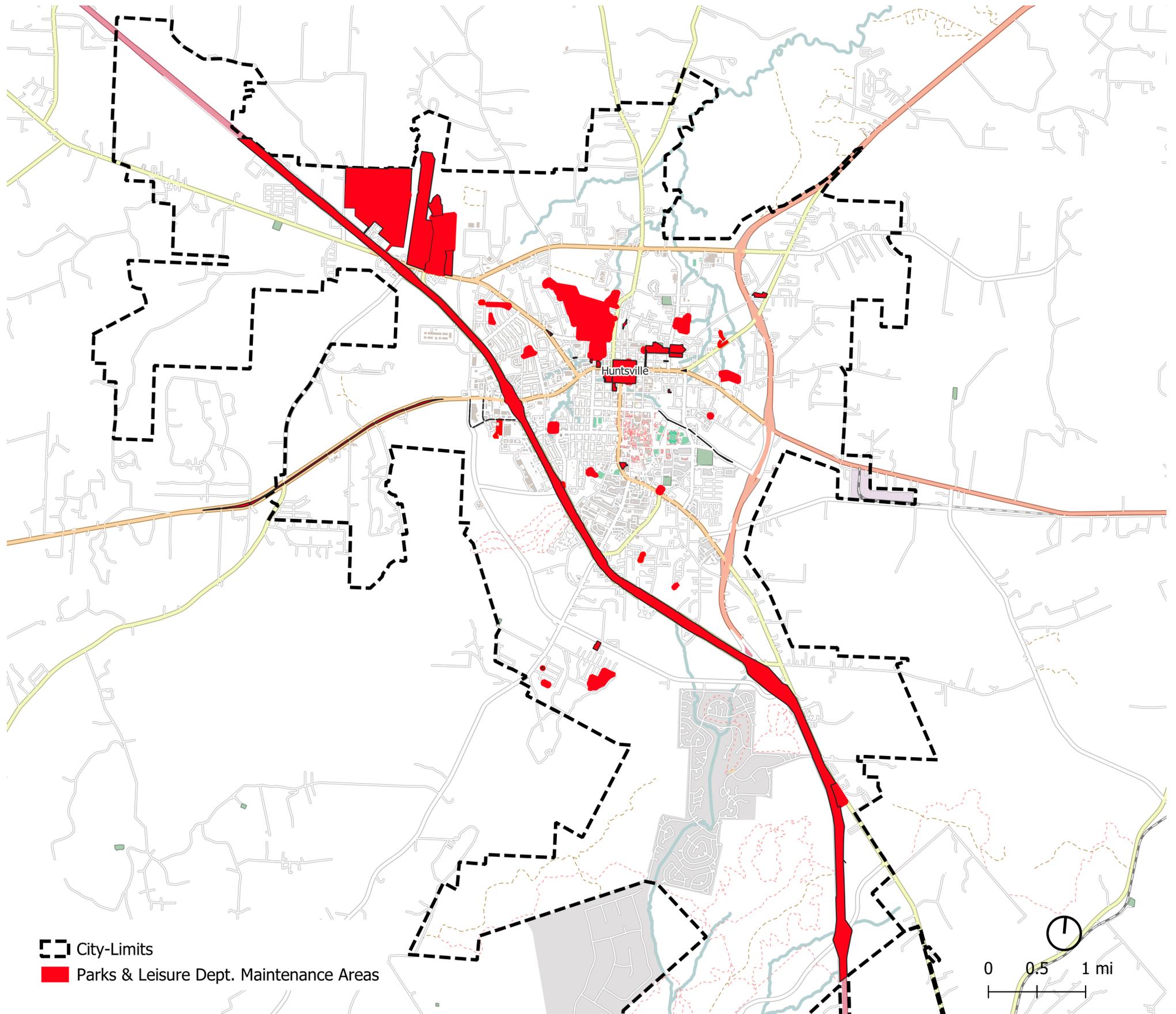
The Parks Maintenance division is responsible for maintaining city parks, cemeteries, recreational facilities like baseball, softball, and soccer fields, and grounds keeping at City facilities.

The Aquatic Center Division is responsible for operating and maintaining the aquatic facility and coordinating recreational swimming, swim lessons, and use by swim teams

## Workload and Responsibilities:

- The Parks & Leisure Department is responsible for providing quality maintenance of City-owned parks, cemeteries, and recreational facilities so that citizens and visitors can enjoy and safely utilize them. They are also responsible for operating and maintaining the aquatic facility and City-owned buildings and facilities.
- The City currently has 25 parks and greenspaces comprised of over 298 acres, including community, neighborhood, "mini" parks, walking trails, natural areas, and open spaces. Major parks maintained include Eastham-Thomason Park, Kate Barr Ross Park, and Emancipation Park.

The budget for the Parks & Leisure Department for FY 2024-25 is projected at \$3,495,395. This budget includes expenditures for personnel services, supplies, maintenance, services, utilities, programs/projects, and capital outlays across its various divisions.



# The 10-Minute Walk Challenge

## A Park Within a 10-Minute Walk From Home

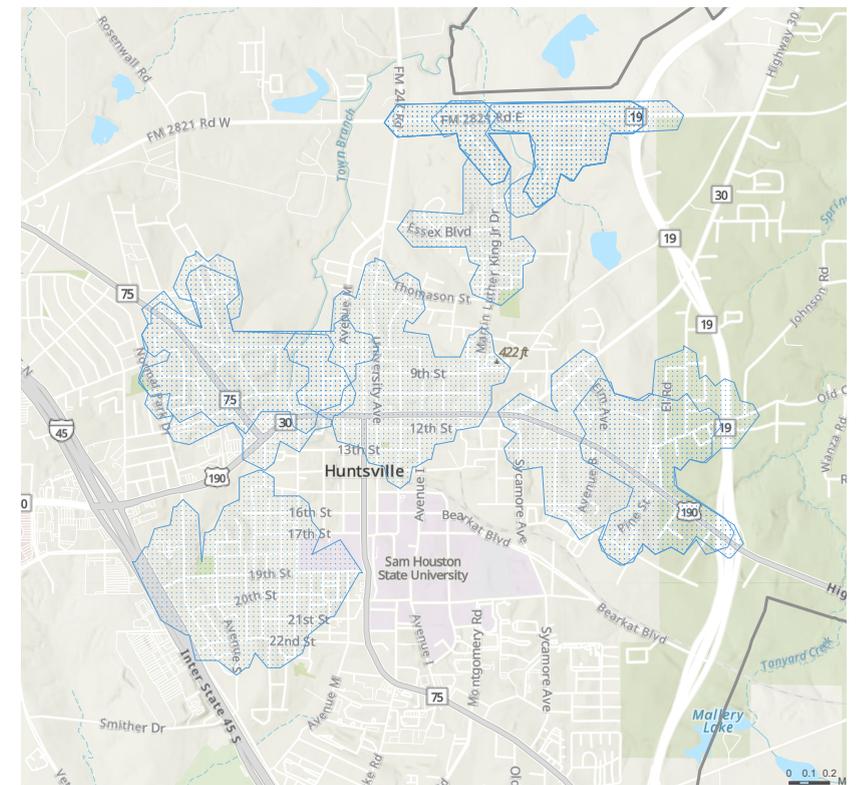
A collaborative effort between The Trust for Public Land, the Urban Land Institute, and the National Recreation and Park Association initiated a campaign called “10 minute Walk” with a goal to “ensure there’s a park within a 10 minute walk of every person, in every neighborhood, in every City across America”. The movement challenges mayors to make a commitment to achieving this goal in their communities. Cities can join the movement by signing up online at [10minutewalk.org](http://10minutewalk.org).

According to the most recent data from Parkserve™, the 10 Minute Walk database from the Trust for Public Land (TPL), Huntsville has 63% (24,651 residents) of the population living within a 10 minute walk to a park. Approximately 21% of Huntsville’s land is used for parks and recreation. Comparing with other cities in Texas, Huntsville has significant park coverage. The TPL data is based on the ESRI Demographic Forecast Block Groups data.

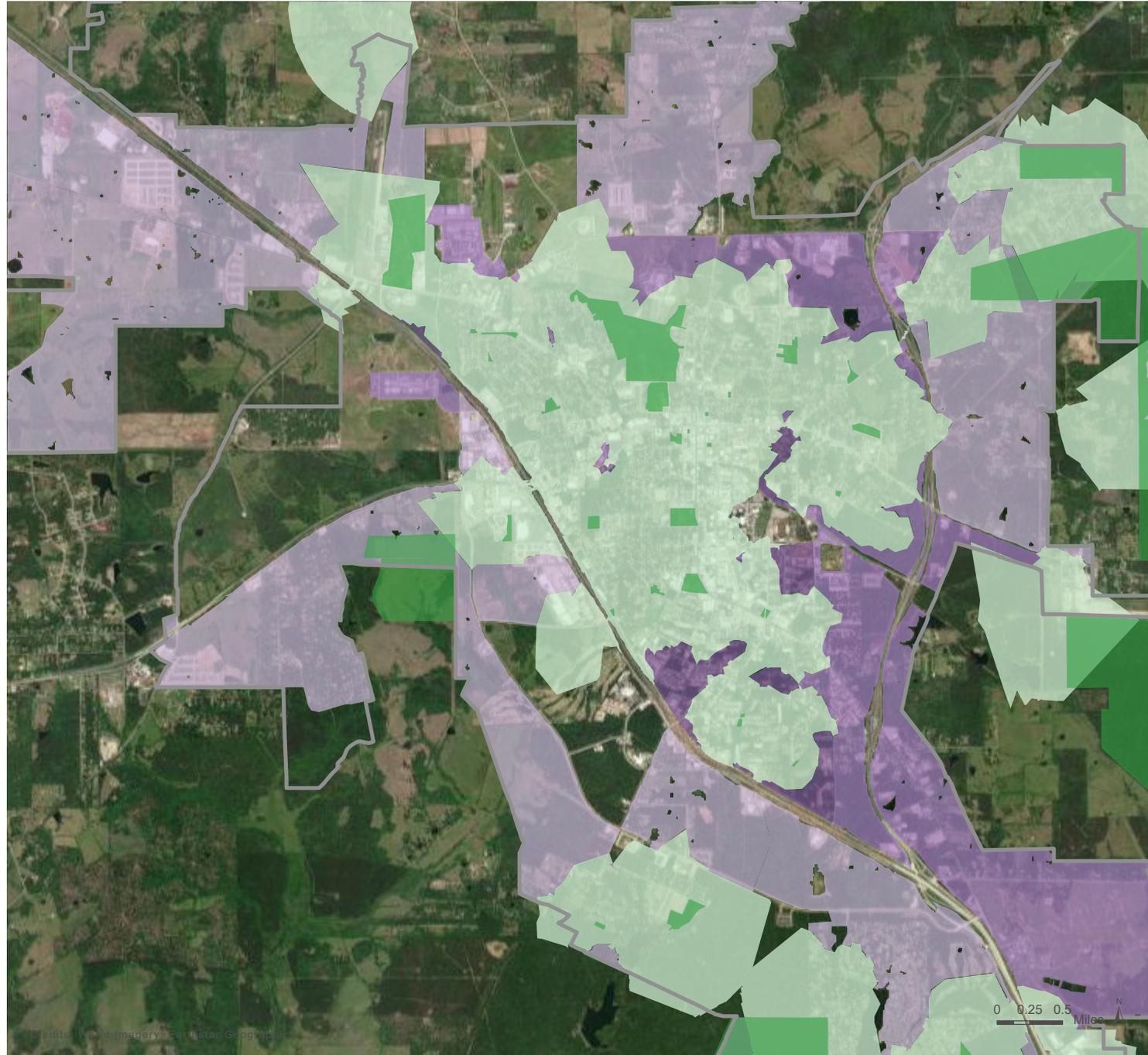
The map on the following page illustrates the areas of the community within a 10 minute walk of a park in LIGHT GREEN. The PURPLE shaded areas highlight residential areas that are not within that distance and are known as ‘service gaps’. Where opportunities are available, these are target areas to consider for development of parks if land is available.

Comparison of Texas cities’ 10 minute walk level of service. Source: Parkserve™ by the Trust for Public Land, <https://parkserve.tpl.org>

City Name	Population within a 10 minute Walk to a park	Number of Residents living within a 10-minute walk of a park
<b>Huntsville, TX</b>	<b>63.0%</b>	<b>24,651</b>
Jersey Village, TX	80.2%	6,771
Bellaire, TX	79.6%	13,786
Cedar Park, TX	79.0%	52,513
Deer Park, TX	71.2%	24,929
Live Oak, TX	74.0	10,764
Seabrook, TX	59.5%	8,475
Texas City, TX	58.8%	32,135
La Porte, TX	55.3%	19,538
Brenham, TX	48.4%	8,213
Leander, TX	53.8%	22,919
Georgetown, TX	52.7%	32,895



Areas within a 10-minute walk of public schools.



-  ParkServe Place
-  Park with public access
-  10-minute walk service area
- Priority areas for new parks (place)**
-  Very high priority
-  High priority
-  Moderate priority

## League Sports in Huntsville

Huntsville is home to a vibrant and engaged population that actively participates in a wide range of sports and recreational activities. Recognizing the significance of promoting active lifestyles, the City is committed to providing both ample and high-quality facilities to accommodate current and future demands.

Soccer, football, and baseball/softball are particularly valued among youth and adult leagues, with games held at the expansive Kate Barr Ross Park. All league sports have reported continuous growth and have voiced a strong desire for upgraded or additional facilities. In Huntsville, the dynamic world of sports is managed by dedicated league organizations, while the City ensures the provision and upkeep of the necessary facilities, allowing the community to thrive in their athletic pursuits.

### The Kate Barr Ross Sports Complex

The sports complex currently offers eight fields for tee-ball, baseball, and softball, two football fields, and multiple soccer fields suitable for various ages. The facility is well-equipped with bleachers, restrooms, concessions, a field house, scorer's stands, and batting cages. Additional amenities include playgrounds, a pavilion/gazebo with a barbecue pit, and picnic areas. Kate Barr Ross is the main venue for community events such as Independence Day celebrations, Movies in the Park, and various other activities.

The park is the center of athletics in Huntsville, so input from the sports leagues is key to understanding the needs for improvements and additions in the future. Although not all sports leagues responded to outreach efforts, the following needs were identified:

### Huntsville Youth Baseball League

- Game Fields - 4 more to accommodate current needs and growth
- Practice Fields
- More Parking
- Larger Concession Stands
- Equipment Storage
- Restrooms - Larger, Air-Conditioned
- Covered Seating Area
- Electrical Improvements
- 26% Growth last year, expect to double

### Huntsville Girls Softball Association

- Fields - at least 1 or 2 more for tournaments and growth
- Parking
- Improved Facilities
- ADA Accessibility
- Safety Nets over Seating Area
- Improved Concession Stand
- Electrical Improvements
- Improved Field Drainage

### Huntsville Youth Football League

- Fencing: Essential for safety and proper crowd control.
- Seating: Increased seating capacity is needed for the growing number of spectators, particularly for families who regularly attend games.
- Shade: The addition of shaded areas is critical for the comfort of both spectators and players, especially during hot weather.
- Pavilion: A pavilion would be highly beneficial as a central area for spectators, events, and team gatherings, providing protection from the elements and a spot to relax and enjoy the concession stand.
- Viewing Tower: A viewing tower is needed to allow coaches, referees, and officials a better vantage point to manage and video the game and practices efficiently.
- Parking: Parking areas are necessary to accommodate the increasing number of participants and visitors, especially during tournaments and peak game days.
- Accessibility for the Handicapped: We need to improve accessibility to ensure all community members, including those with disabilities, can enjoy our events and facilities safely and comfortably

### Current Sports Rosters

League	Roster	# of Players
Huntsville Girl's Softball Association	20 Teams	140 - 170
Huntsville Men's Softball League	6+ Teams	
Huntsville Youth Baseball League	32 Teams	362 Fall, 400+ Spring
Huntsville Youth Football League	5 Football Teams, 1 Cheerleading Team	150
Huntsville Youth Soccer Association	4U, 8U, 12U, 15U	
Huntsville Lakers (Swim Team)	1 Team	
East Texas Ultra Volleyball	5 Ultra Teams, 16 Club Teams	



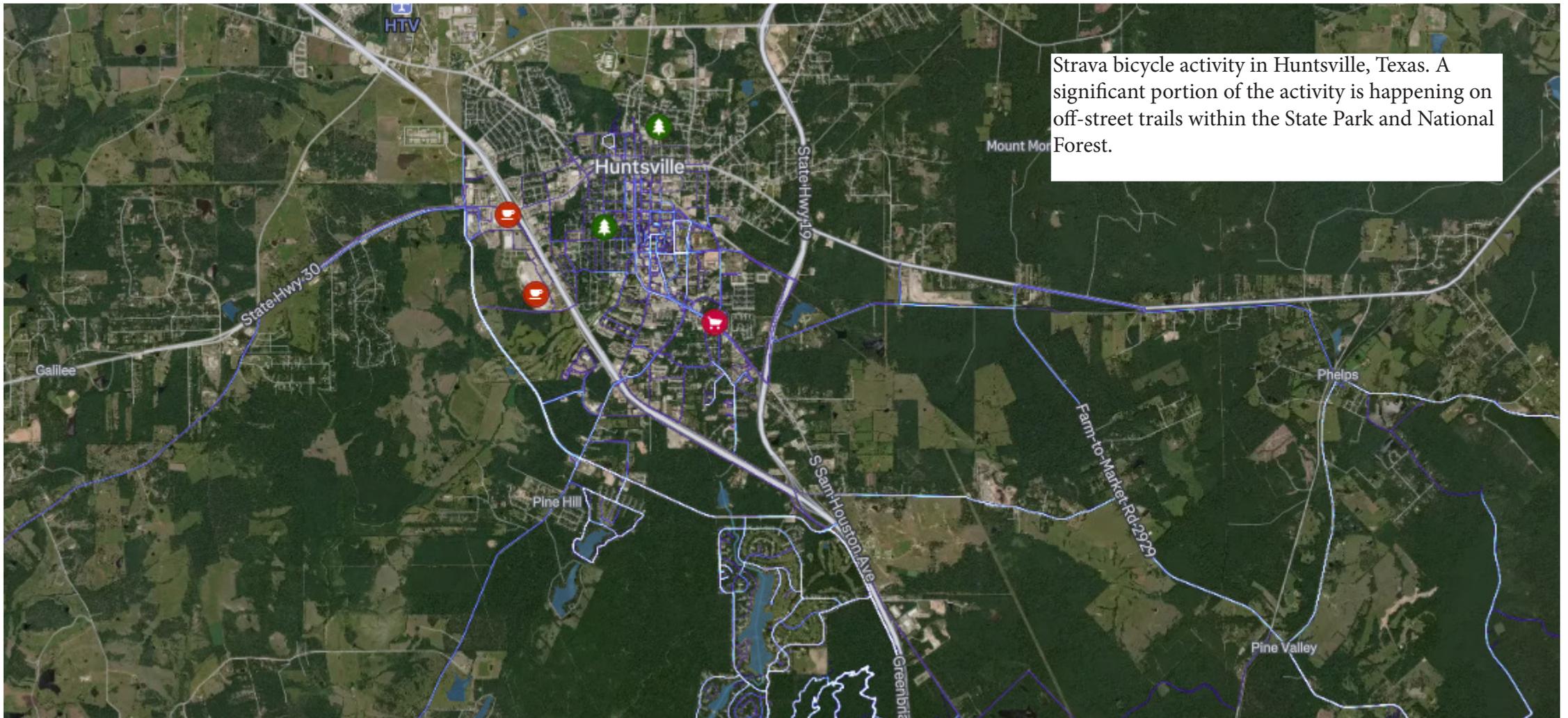
## Pedestrian and Bicycle Activity in Huntsville

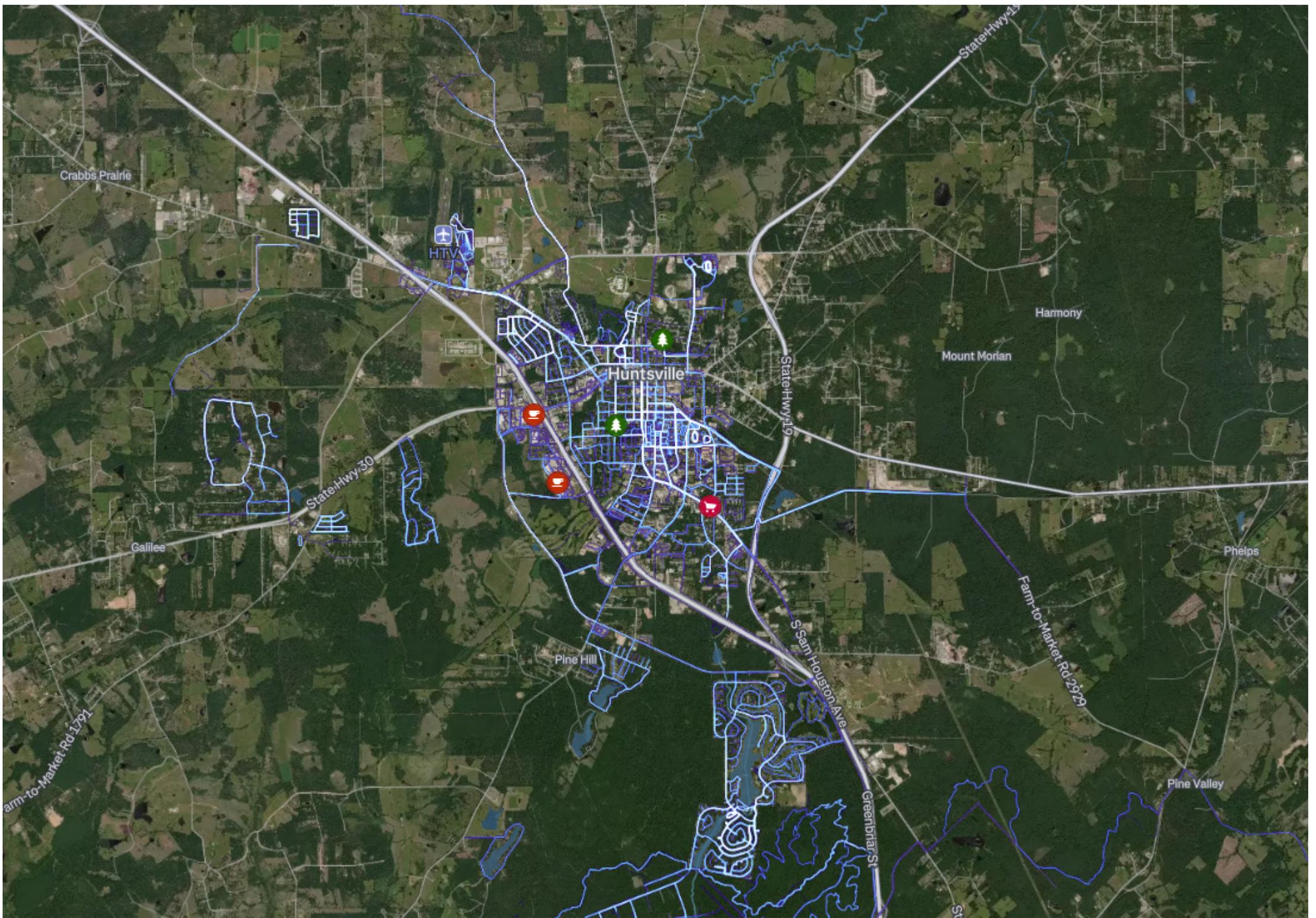
Tracking the level of pedestrian and bicycle activity in a community can be challenging, however the popularity of fitness trackers, smartwatches and apps for cell phones provide rich datasets that can help to identify patterns of activity. One such application is available through STRAVA, a social network for runners, cyclists and other fitness enthusiasts. Using strava.com and its associated apps for mobile devices, users can track their running and cycling activity using built-in GPS hardware. Users then upload their data to the website to keep track of progress, share routes, and contribute to the network.

Over time, the dataset has yielded a rich source of information about where people are running and cycling in communities across the globe. The data can be viewed through STRAVA Global Heatmap at <https://www.strava.com/heatmap> where an interactive map lets users explore patterns of activity.

The data from STRAVA does not represent all walking, running and cycling activity, however it does provide a significant sample that is useful for pedestrian and bike infrastructure planning that is often used by TXDOT and other planning organizations.

Activity tracking data from of cyclists, mountain bikers, walkers, hikers, and runners on the following maps show the pattern of running/walking and cycling rides routes. The colored lines represent the GPS tracking of activities, with varied intensity of color to illustrate higher frequency of activity. In the adjacent visualizations, the blue lines represent moderate levels of pedestrian and bicycle activity, while the brighter blues and whites represent highest frequencies of activity.





The Strava Global Heatmap illustrates hiking, walking, and running activity in the map above. Lighter blues and whites indicate higher activity in the heart of town, around Elkins Lake, within Huntsville State Park, and Sam Houston National Forest. With a significant draw of trail users from Huntsville as well as the surrounding region and state, it would be prudent to seek opportunities for trail connections from Huntsville to the Huntsville State Park and the Sam Houston National Forest.

## Programs and Community Events

### Bringing the Community Together

Community events and programs in Huntsville are available year-round from a variety of organizations and entities. The focus of this section is events and programs offered through or supported by the City Parks and Leisure Department, Huntsville Main Street, the Huntsville-Walker County Chamber of Commerce. The following lists are not exhaustive, but provide a glimpse into the entertainment and recreation opportunities available.

#### Special Events

The following list is a sampling of the special events held in Huntsville throughout the year. As a thriving, engaged community and the home to Sam Houston State University, there is always something to do in Huntsville:

- Haunted Trail at Kate Barr Ross Park, hosted by the City Parks and Leisure Department
- Scare on the Square, Downtown, hosted by Huntsville Main Street
- Fair on the Square, 1st Saturday in October, Downtown, hosted by the Huntsville-Walker County Chamber of Commerce
- Fourth of July Fireworks at Kate Barr Ross Park, hosted by the City Parks and Recreation Department
- Huntsville Music Festival – every April in Rather Park (corner of 13th Street and University Avenue), hosted by Huntsville Main Street
- Huntsville Downtown Farmers Market, Saturdays in October and November, hosted by Huntsville Main Street
- Wine Down, Shop Small – Downtown in May, hosted by Huntsville Main Street

#### Recreation Programs:

- 4th of July Celebration
- Movies in the Park
- Dance Fitness Classes
- Haunted Trails
- Winter in the Park
- Annual Kickball Tournament
- MLB's Pitch Hit & Run
- Pictures with the Easter Bunny
- Pictures with Santa

#### Huntsville Aquatic Center Programs:

- Water Aerobics
- Lap Swimming
- Nadadores Swim Team
- Huntsville Lakers Swim Team
- Huntsville High School Swim Team
- Swim Lessons
- Junior Guard Program
- Dive-In Movies

#### Special Attractions:

- Sam Walker Houston Museum and Cultural Center
- Sam Houston Statue and Visitor Center
- The Texas Prison Museum
- Wynne Home Arts and Visitor Center
- The Blue Lagoon
- Gibbs-Powell Home Museum
- H.E.A.R.T.S. Veterans Museum
- Huntsville State Park
- Museum of Texas Arts
- Museum of Texas Furniture
- Huntsville Historical Ghost Tours
- Sam Houston National Forest
- Republic of Texas Presidential Library



## Recreation Behavior of Huntsville Residents

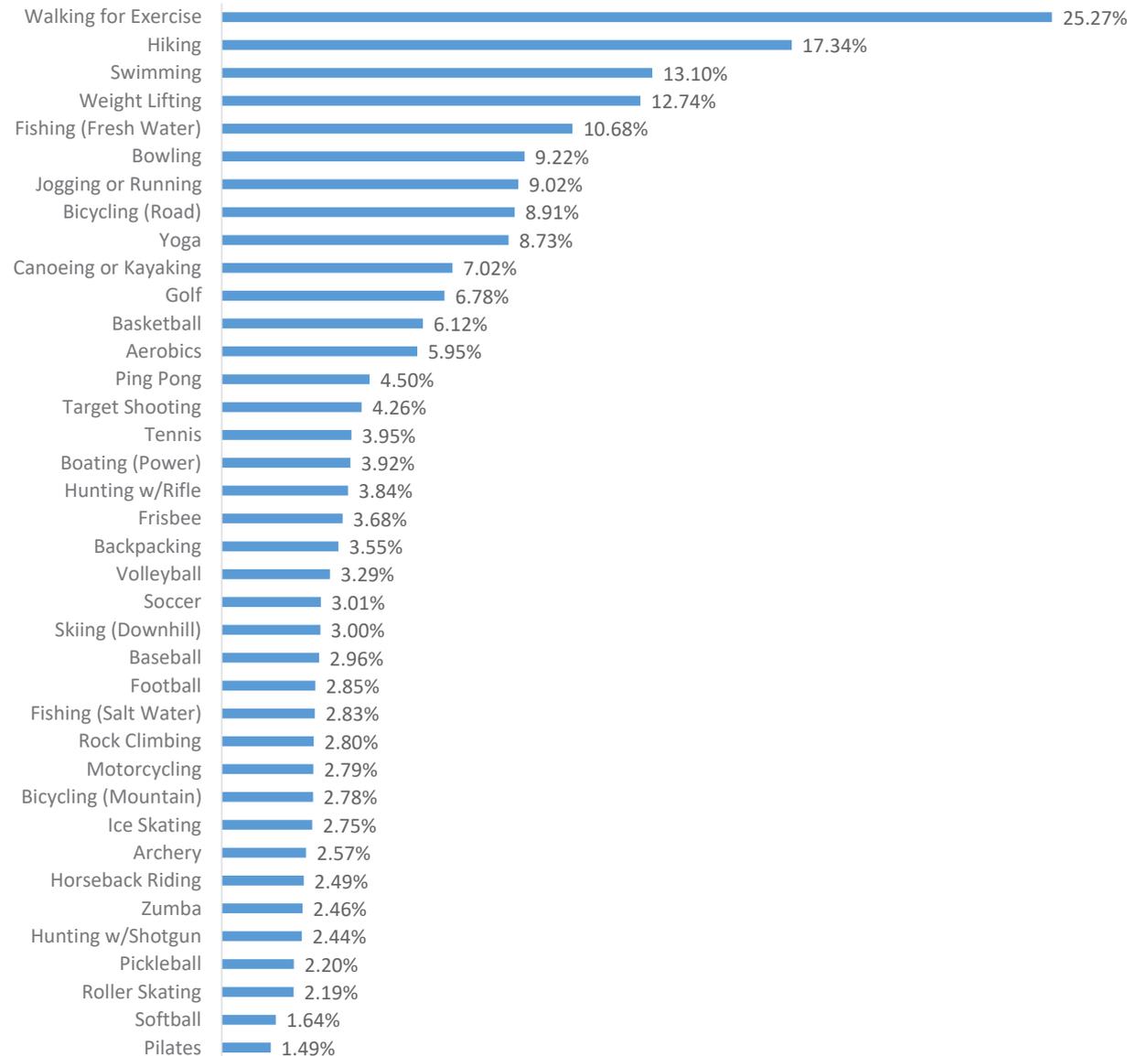
Huntsville residents are highly-active in a wide variety of recreation activities. Keeping up with the latest trends in recreation requires looking into a variety of data sources to find out what activities are the most popular and may warrant further attention.

One tool for monitoring these trends is to use ‘big data’ sources such as those provided by the sports and leisure industry. The Earth Systems Research Institute, ESRI is an industry leader in geographic data who provides rich data sets for targeted areas. A search of their proprietary dataset, which includes information from sporting goods sales, intercept surveys, and other sources, yields detailed insight into recreation behavior in Huntsville and the surrounding ETJ.

A search of this area for sports participation shows some trends that align with the desired features and activities identified in an online survey conducted during development of this master plan.

Walking, hiking, jogging, and running are in the top ten list of most popular recreation activities in Huntsville. Swimming is also popular along with a variety of fitness activities.

2024 Sports Participation in Last 12 Months  
Huntsville City Limits and ETJ



2024 Spending on Sports/Recreation Equipment

Amount Spent	# of Residents
\$1 to 99	2,714
\$100 to \$250	2,026
More than \$250	3,266

## Recreation by Others

When assessing the level of service provided by the City’s Parks and Recreation Department, it is essential to take into account the facilities and services offered by private organizations, businesses, and other entities.

The identification of these facilities and service locations and availability can assist in pinpointing areas requiring additional recreational opportunities. These recreation providers were systematically inventoried and mapped, resulting in the identification of a total of 66 facilities.

## Inventory of Non-City Recreation Providers

Owner	Number of Facilities
Commercial	20
University	14
Homeowner’s Association	4
Education	13
Religious	1
Non-Profit	2
Apartment	10
County	1
Private	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>



Newly-constructed Boys and Girls Club of Walker County



Sand volleyball court at the Grove at Huntsville apartments.



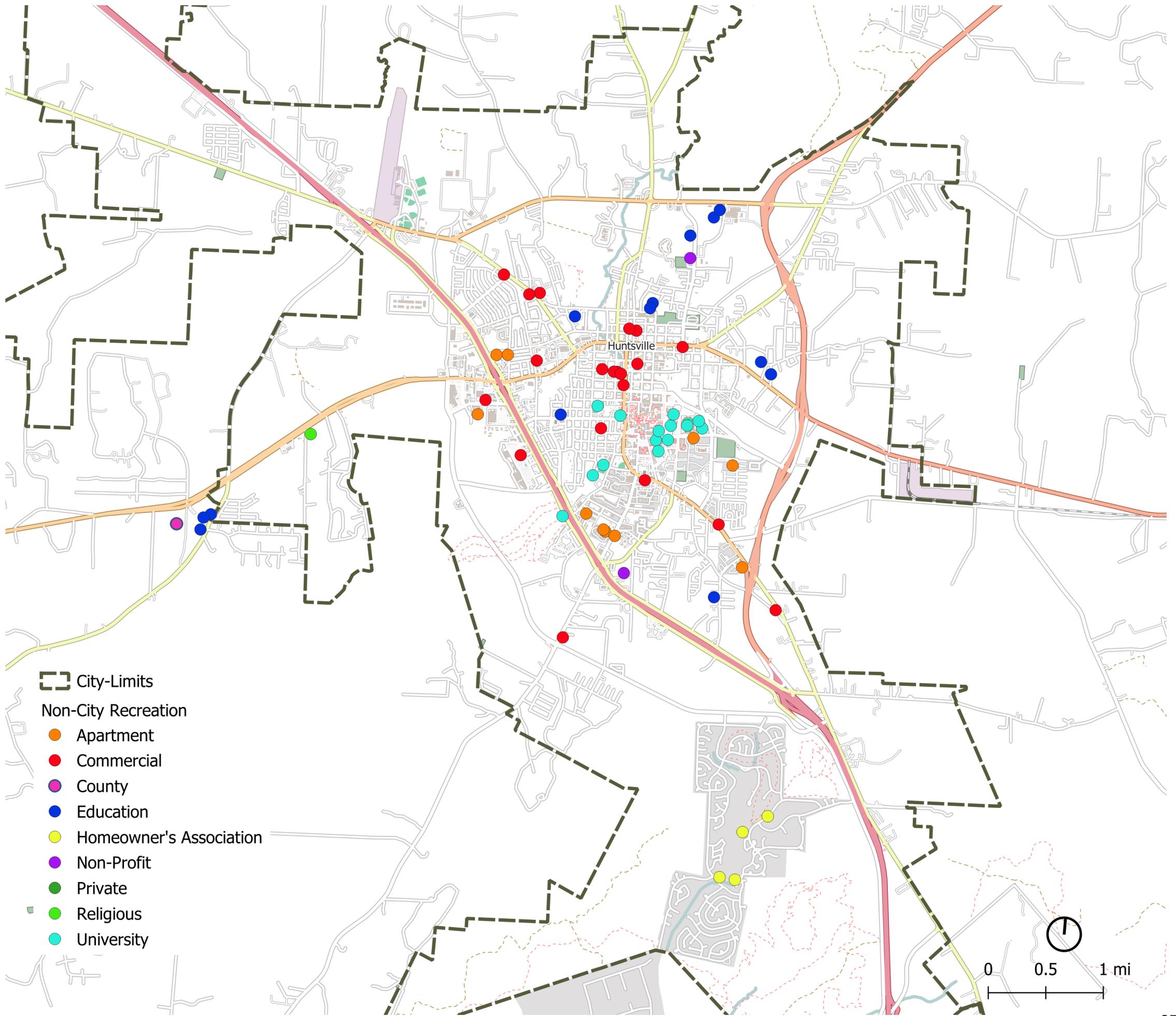
Recreation Sports Center at Sam Houston State University.



Olympic-sized pool owned and operated by the Elkins Lake homeowners association.



Sam Houston State University provides a number of recreational facilities and programs for intermural sports and activities.



# Demand **Assessment**



01

Inventory &  
**Analysis**

02

Demand  
**Assessment**

03

**Walkability**

04

Plan  
**Recommendations**

05

Plan  
**Implementation**

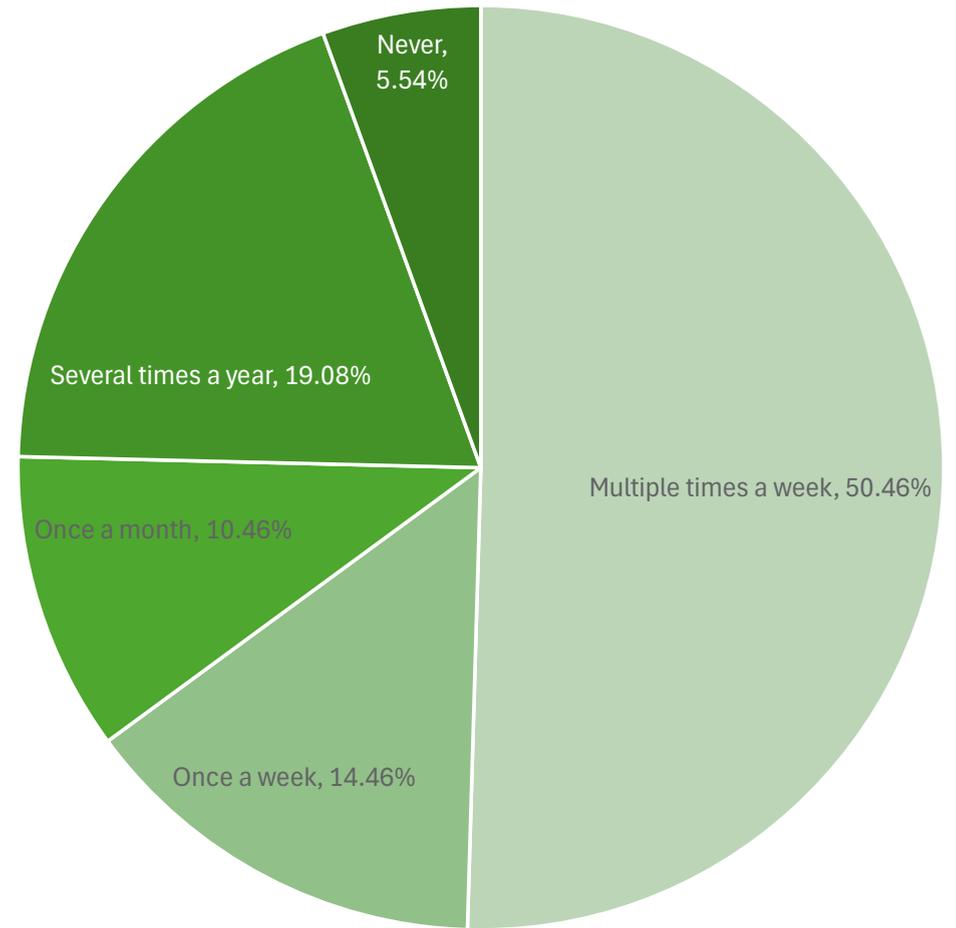
# How often do you and your family visit parks in Huntsville?

## Stakeholder Input

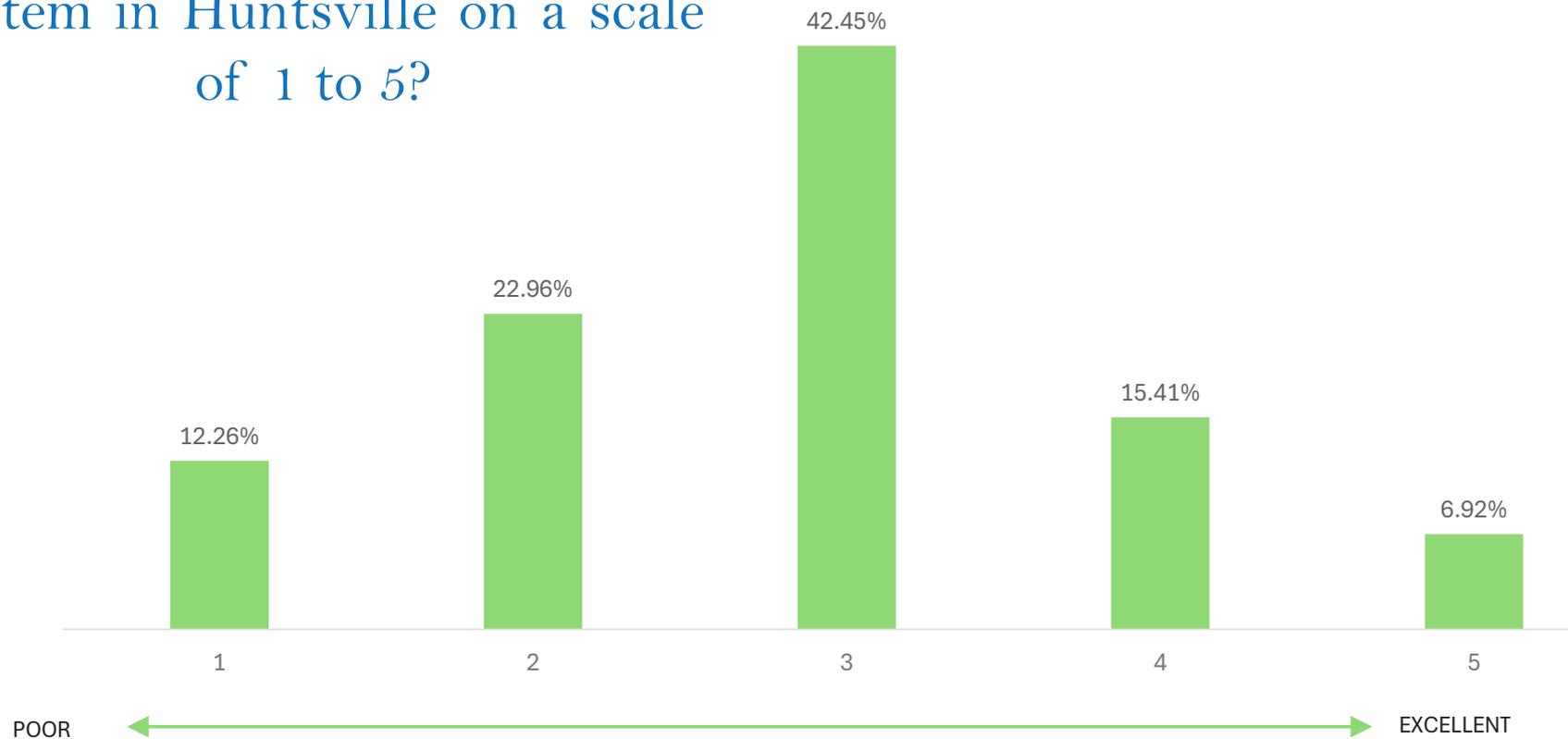
### Parks Master Plan Survey

An online survey was conducted to identify residents' priorities for new and improved parks, facilities, programs, and amenities. The survey was open from 8-16-2024 through April 22, 2025.

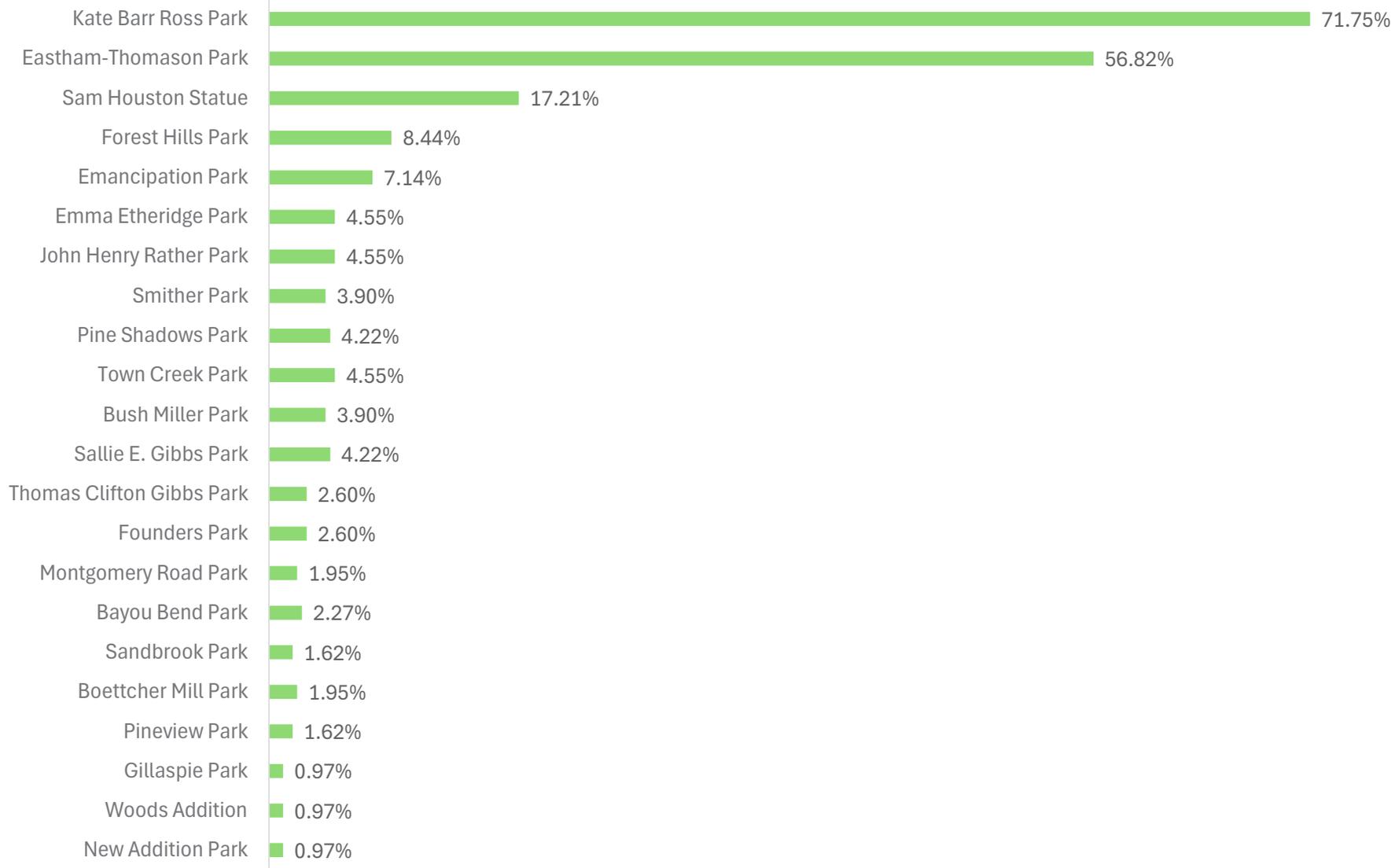
A total of 333 responses were received, which provides results with a 93.3% confidence level and a 5.34% margin of error. In addition to the quantitative data provided by the survey, the responses also provided some detailed qualitative data about topics that weren't directly addressed in the questions.



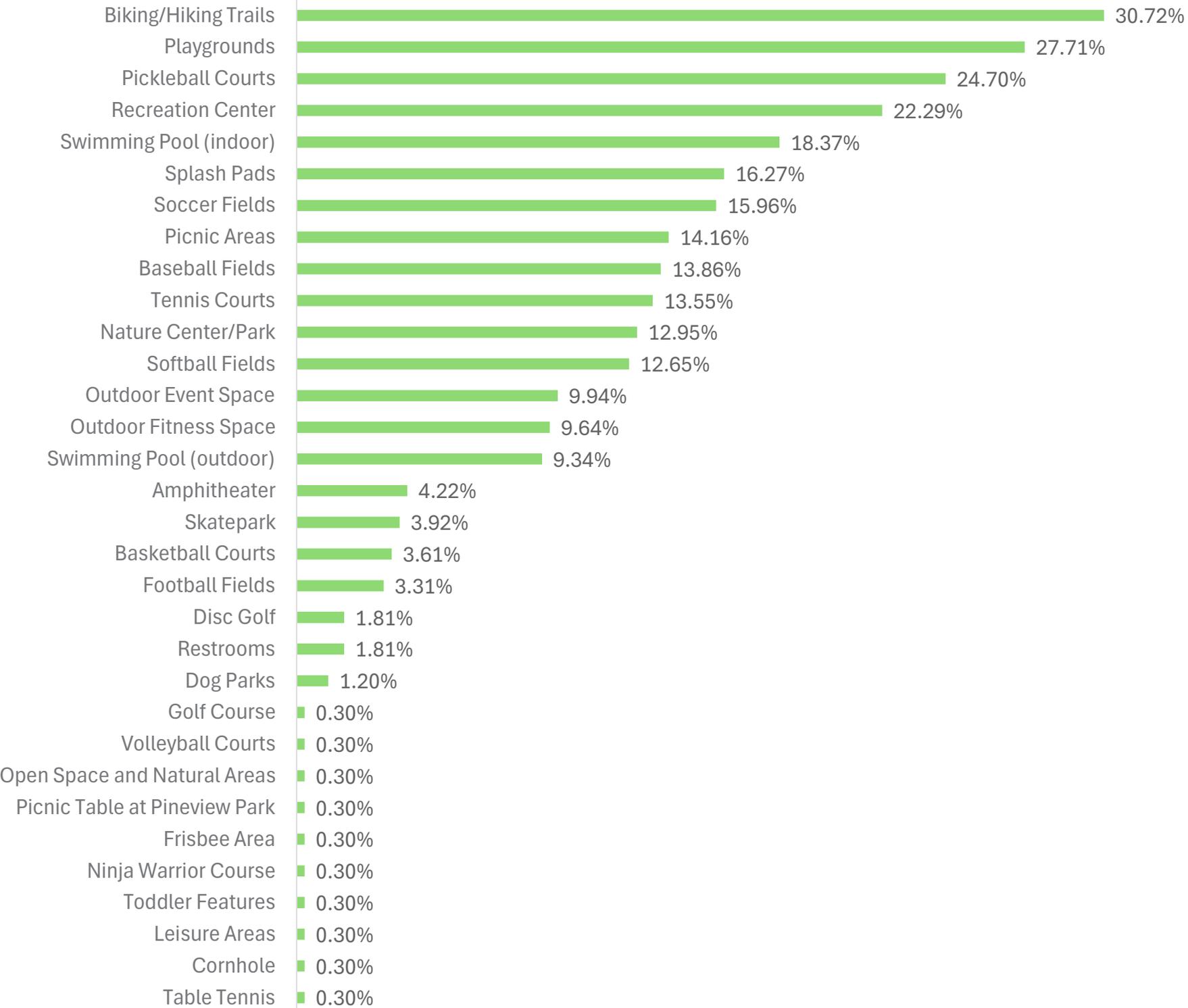
## How would you rate the parks system in Huntsville on a scale of 1 to 5?



# Which City parks do you and your family visit most often?

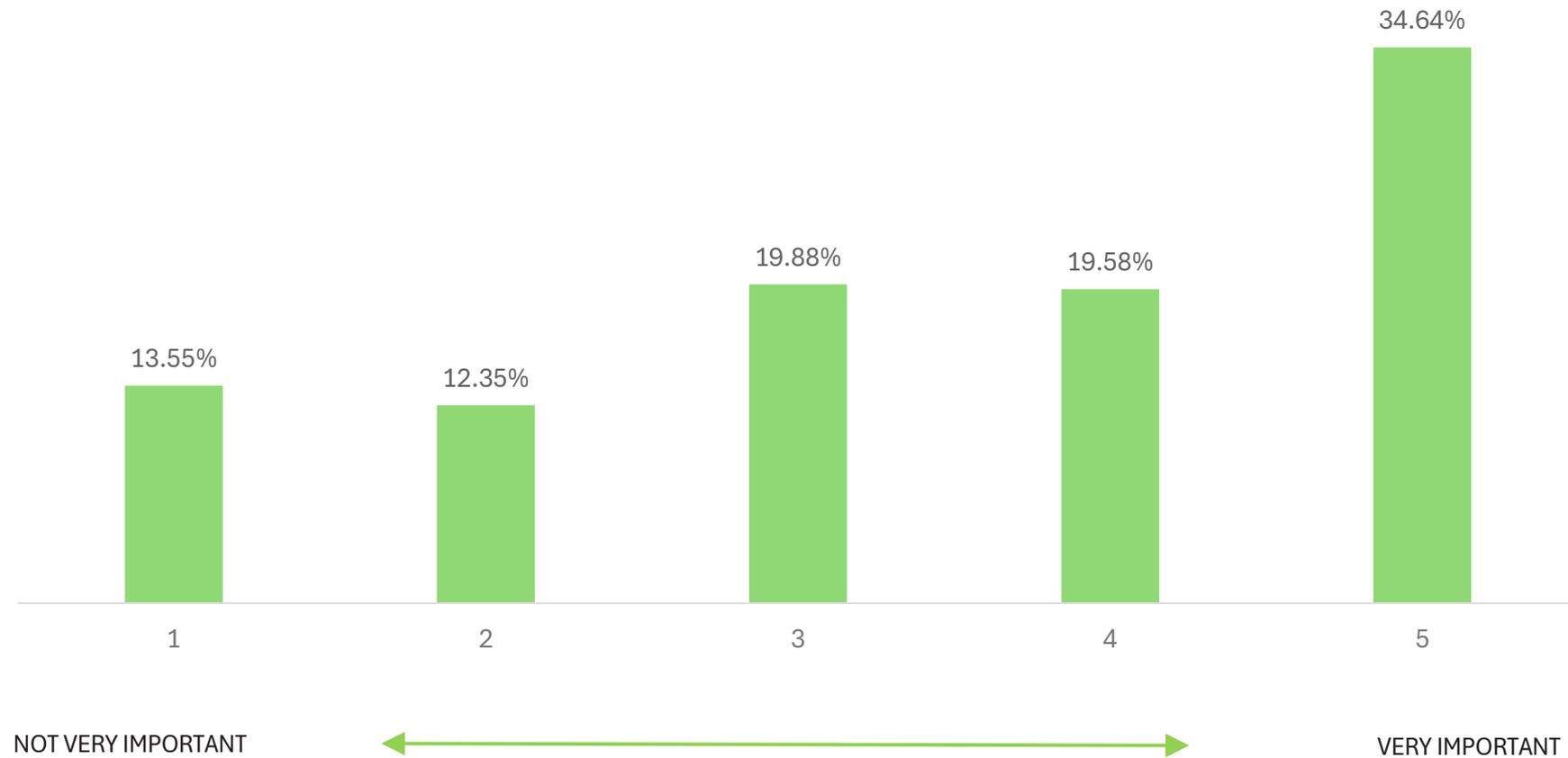


# What are the top 3 new or improved features that you and your family would like to see in existing or future City parks?

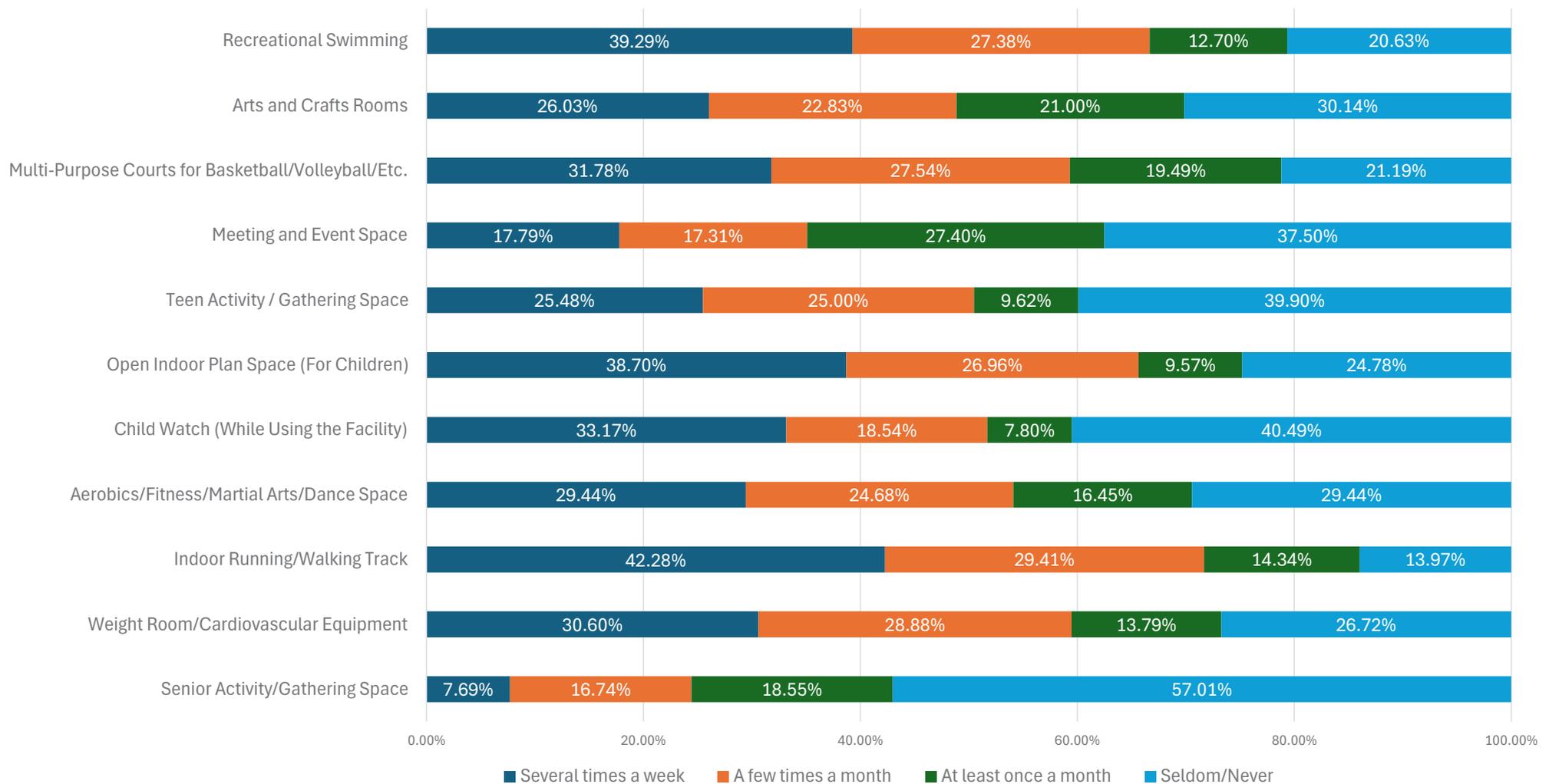


# Demand Assessment 02

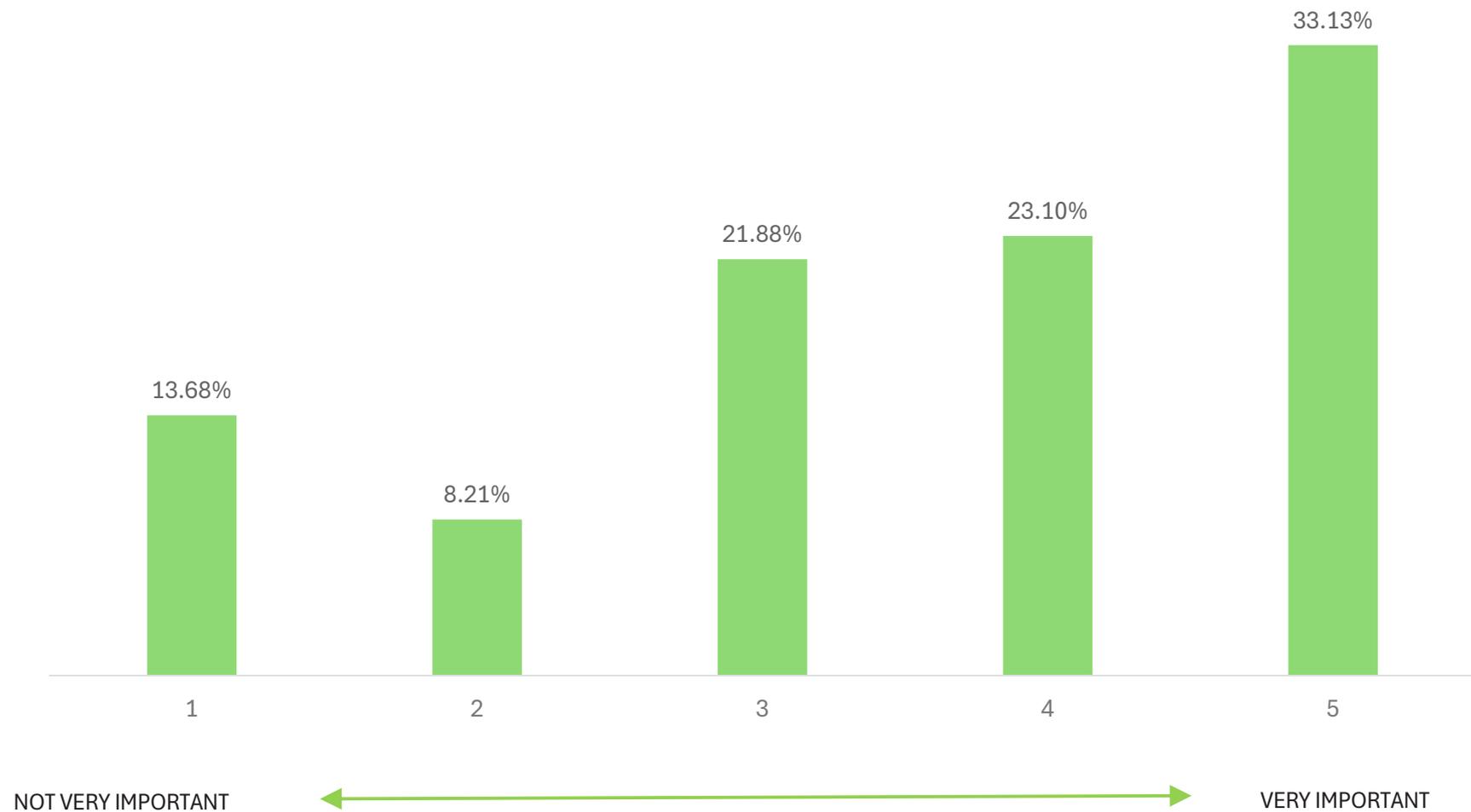
How important is having an indoor recreation facility to you and your family?



# If a new recreation center were developed, what types of indoor recreation activities would be important to you and your family, and how often would you use them?



How important are biking and hiking trails to you and your family? (on a scale of 1 to 5)



# What types of recreation programs and community events would you like to see hosted by the City of Huntsville?

## **Top Priorities (Most Mentioned):**

### **1. Pickleball (Tournaments, Events, Courts, Lessons)**

- Mentioned 35+ times
- Requests include: tournaments, lessons, casual games, court upgrades, indoor/outdoor facilities.

### **2. Family & Kid-Friendly Activities**

- Mentioned 30+ times
- Includes: arts and crafts, concerts, petting zoos, stroller-friendly events, indoor play, educational programs, toddler & youth focus.

### **3. Fitness & Wellness Programs**

- Mentioned 25+ times
- Yoga, Pilates, group workouts, water aerobics, senior fitness, "Fitness in the Park", cycling classes, walking clubs, low-impact options.

### **4. Teen/Youth Programs**

- Mentioned 20+ times
- Suggestions: teen centers, pre-teen/tween events, non-competitive sports, game nights, teen theater, youth leagues, and community engagement activities.

## **Mid-Level Priorities:**

### **5. Outdoor Concerts & Music Events**

- Mentioned 15+ times
- Free music in parks, community concerts, local bands, and music festivals (including cultural music).

### **6. Sports Tournaments (Non-Pickleball)**

- Mentioned 15+ times
- Baseball, softball, volleyball, disc golf, soccer, tennis, and 5K races. Also includes adult and co-ed leagues.

### **7. Arts & Culture Events**

- Mentioned 10+ times
- Theater, ballet, art shows, craft fairs, cultural festivals, comedy, and educational seminars.

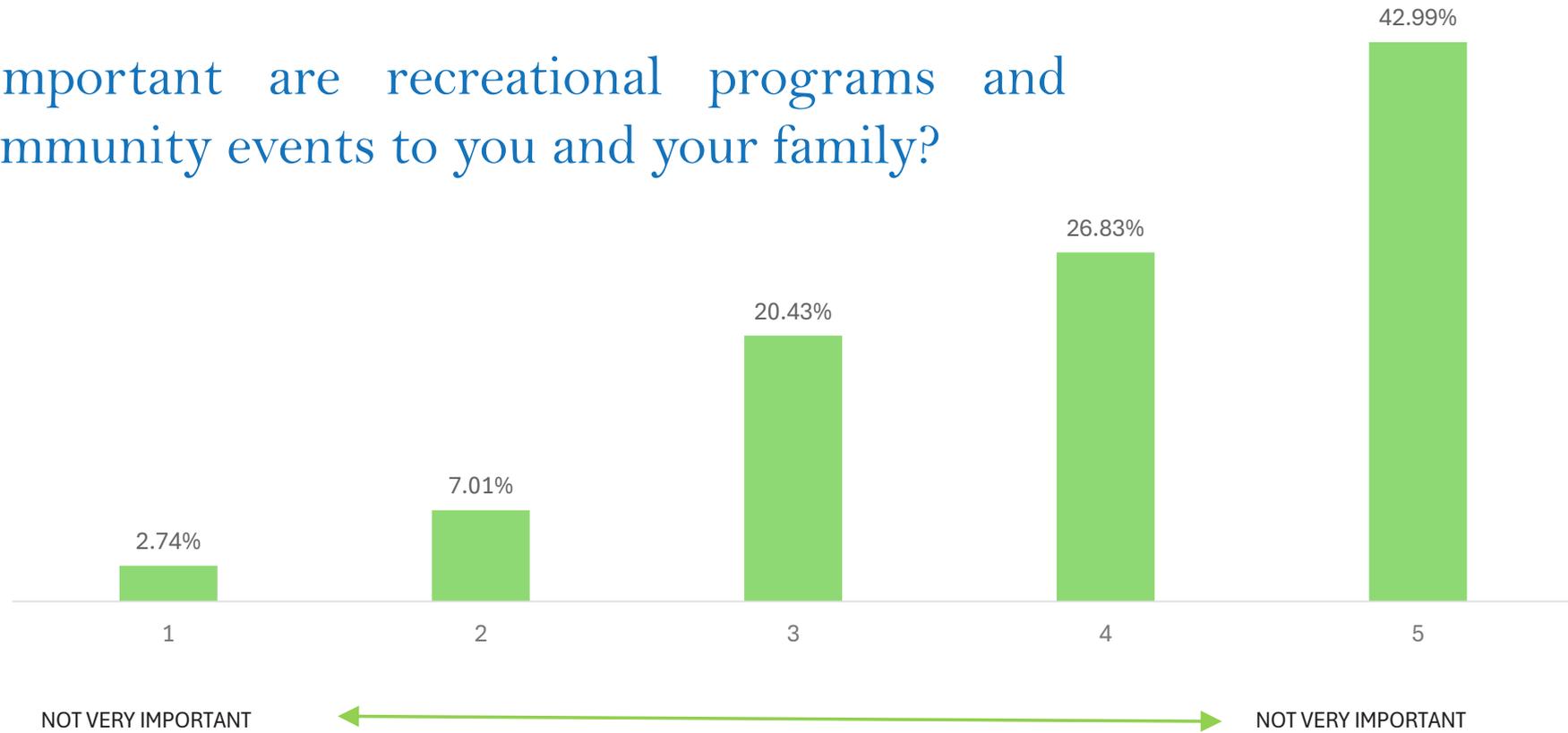
### **8. Improved Parks & Facilities**

- Mentioned 10+ times
- Emphasis on field drainage, lighting, restrooms, scoreboards, and general upkeep, especially for softball/baseball fields.

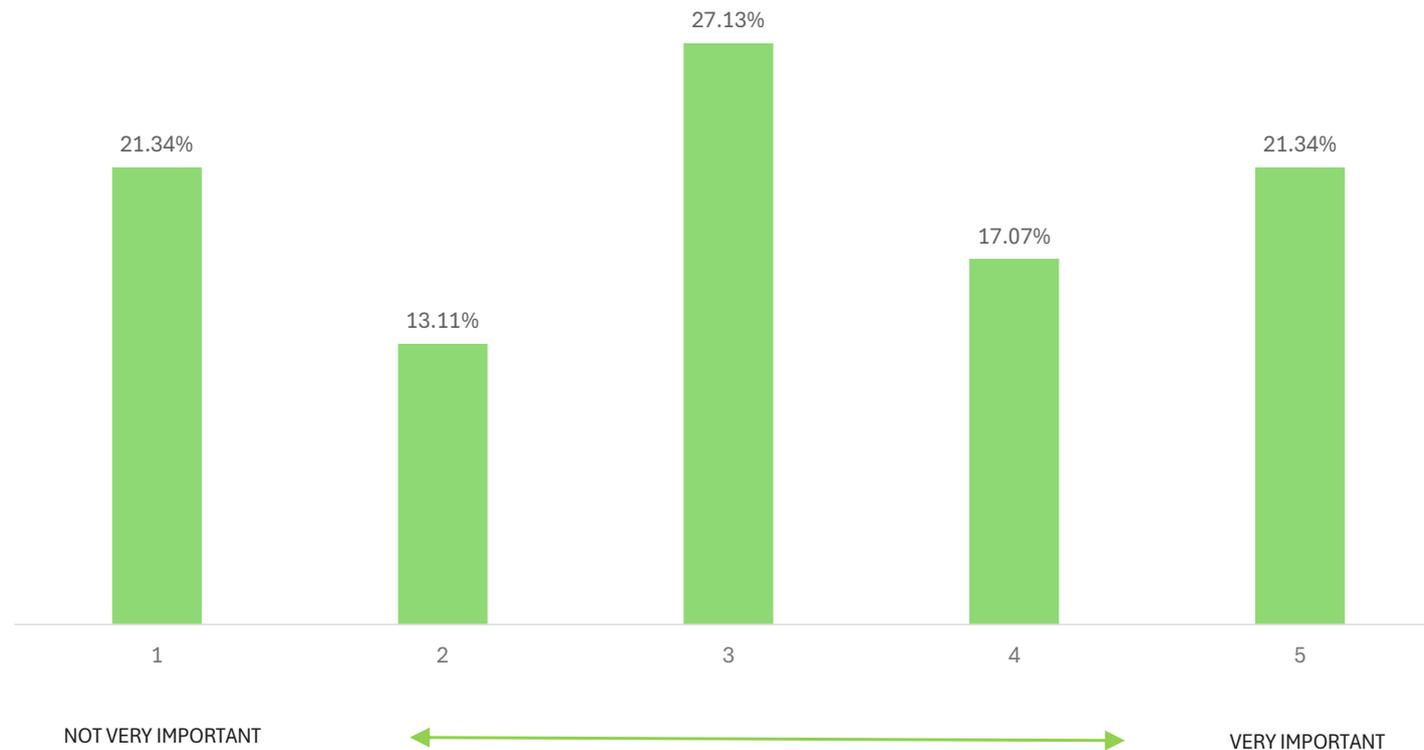
## **Additional Popular Suggestions:**

- Soccer Programs/Fields – Youth and adult leagues, better facilities.
- Swimming Facilities/Programs – Dive team, indoor swimming, lessons, and water safety.
- Events for Seniors – Social clubs, fitness, stretching classes, dances.
- Biking Infrastructure – Bike lanes, trails, community rides.
- Indoor Rec Options – For hot months and younger kids (soft play, toddler activities).
- Community-Wide Celebrations – Picnics, fairs, seasonal festivals beyond July 4th.
- Inclusive Events – For college students, special needs, multi-generational families.
- Skateboarding/BMX – Skate contests and dedicated space.
- Nature & Hiking Events – Organized hikes, wildlife/nature education.

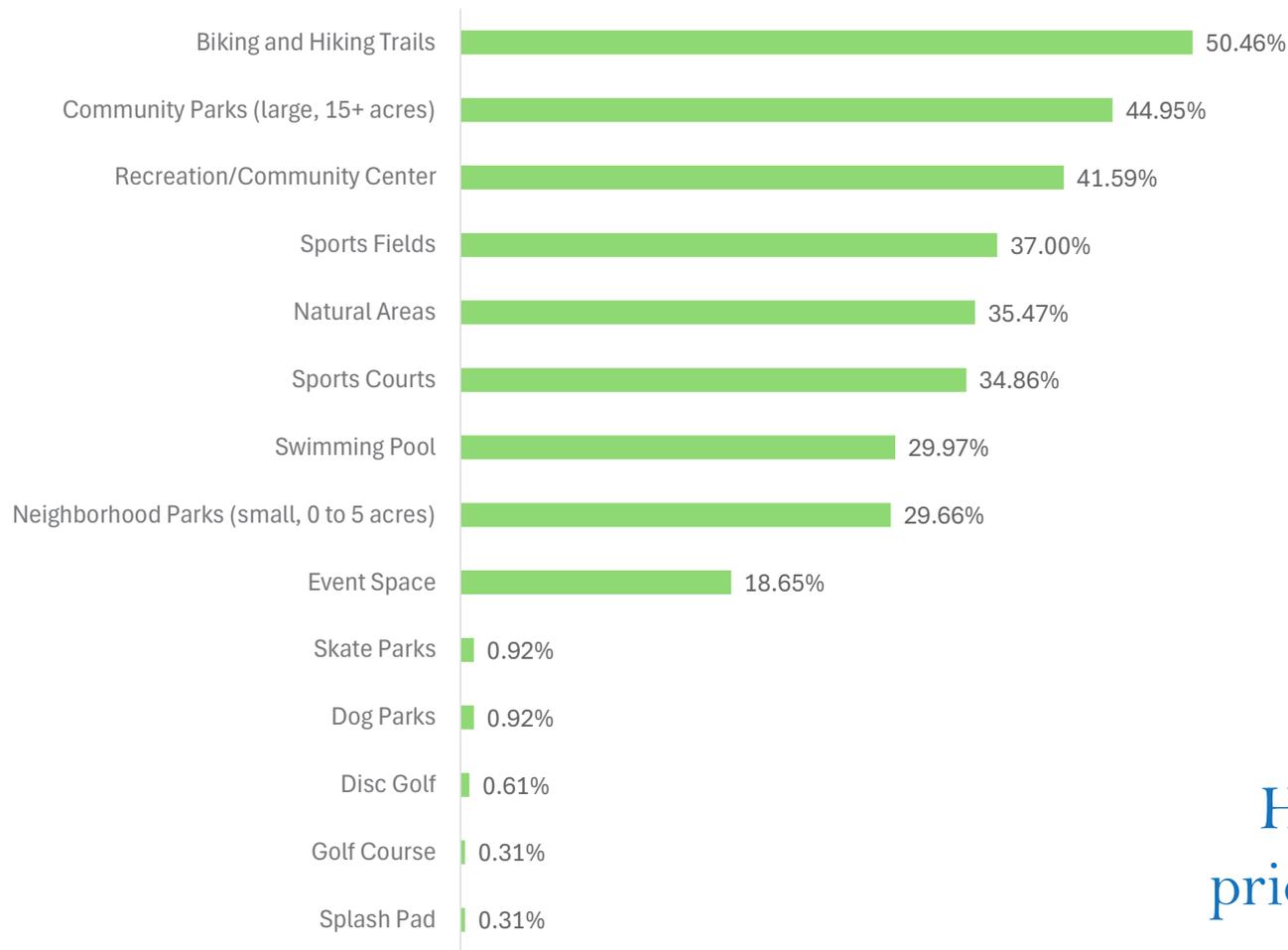
How Important are recreational programs and community events to you and your family?



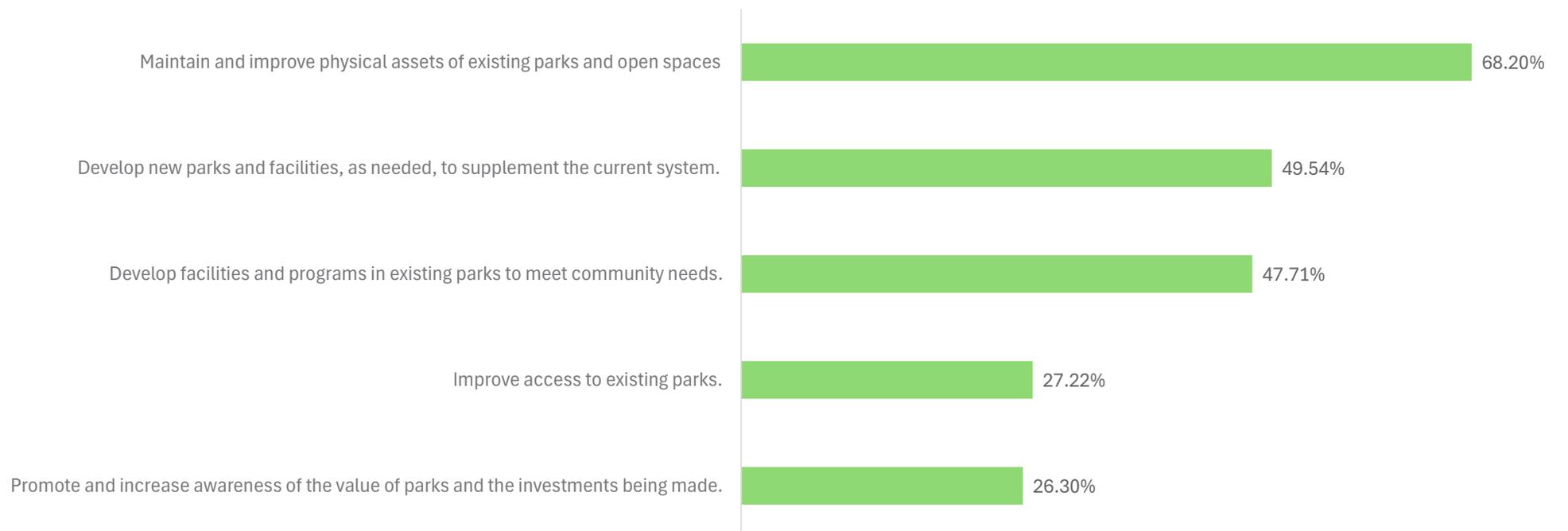
How important is having public art throughout the City and parks to you and your family?



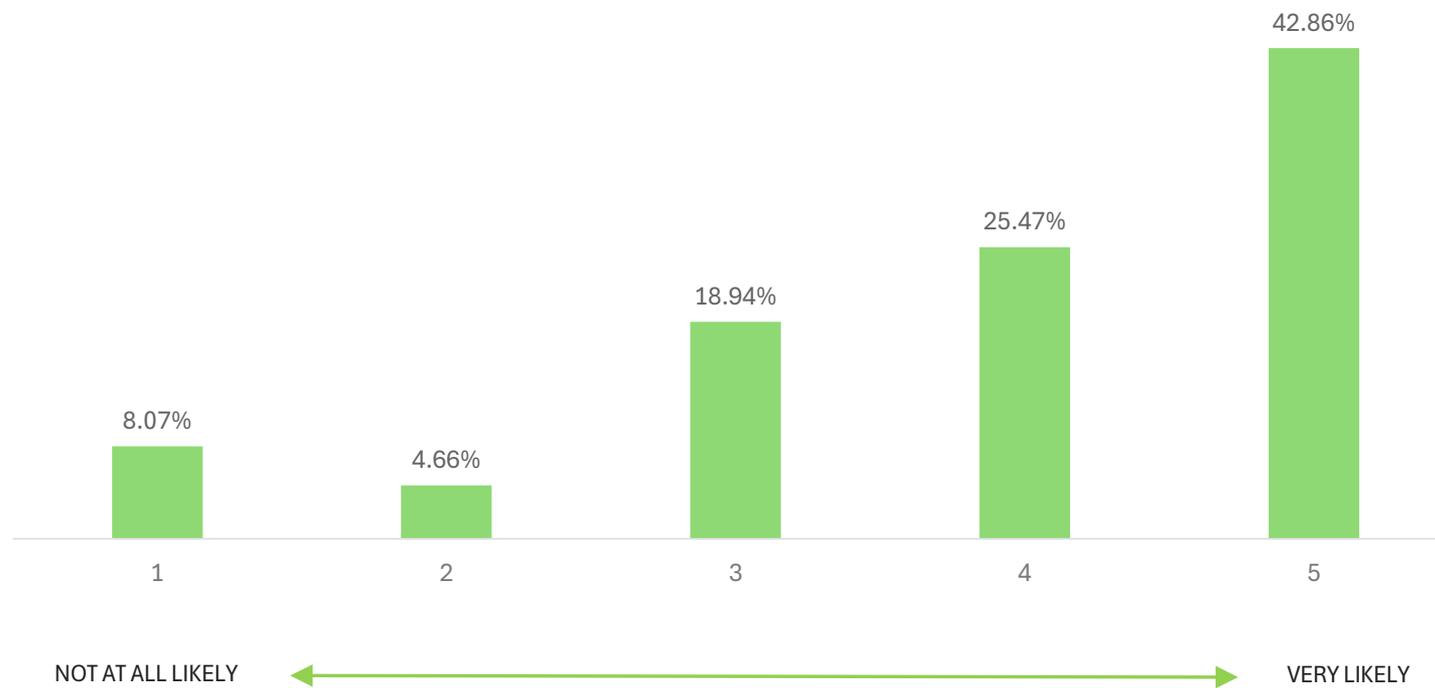
# If the City were to acquire more parkland in the future, what types of parks should be developed?



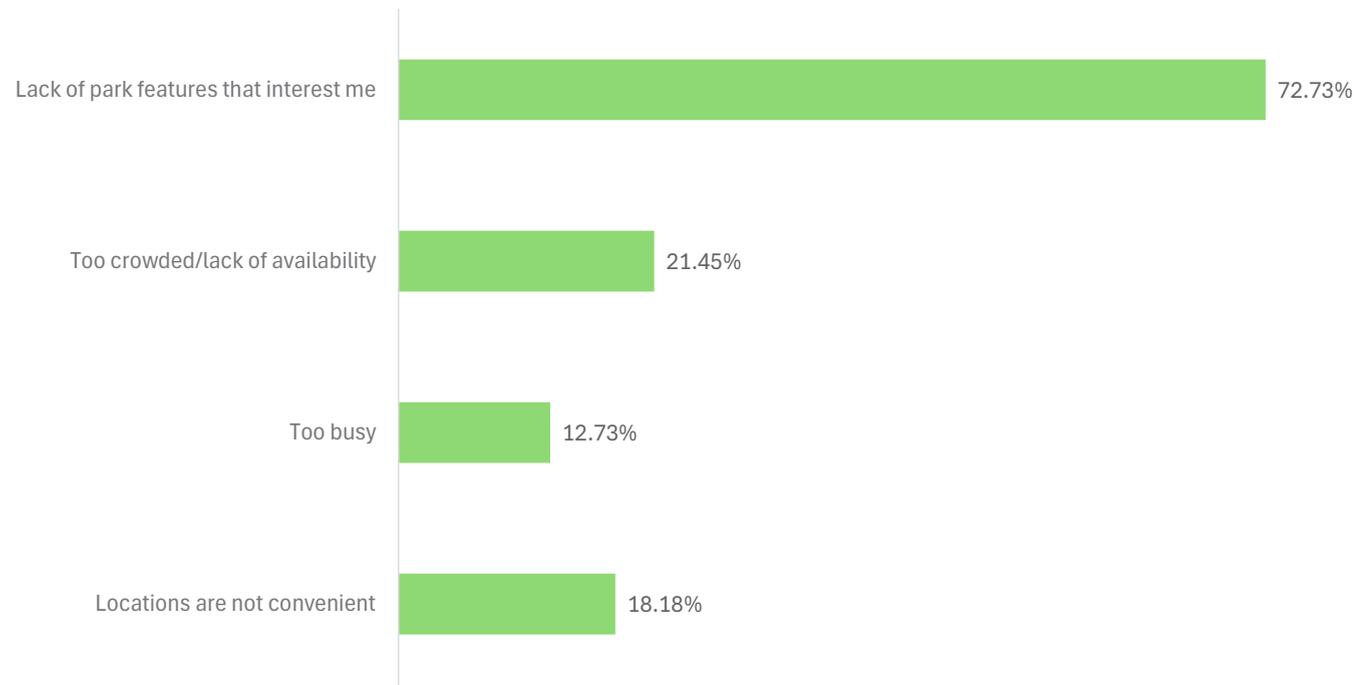
## How should the City of Huntsville prioritize efforts for improving parks and recreation?



# How likely would you be willing to support a municipal bond to fund the development of new parks and facilities in Huntsville?



Please indicate which of the following prevent you or anyone in your household from using the City's parks, fields, facilities, or amenities **MORE OFTEN**.



### Summary of other Comments:

#### Desire for More Engaging Amenities

Many residents are looking for park features that better match their interests and activities. Suggestions include more diverse recreation options, updated equipment, and new spaces for all ages.

#### Improving Accessibility and Convenience

Several respondents mentioned that park locations can feel too far from home or not easily accessible. Exploring opportunities for better geographic distribution or improved connectivity could help.

#### Managing Capacity and Crowding

Popular parks and amenities are sometimes crowded, especially during peak times. Enhancing capacity or creating additional gathering spaces could improve the visitor experience.

#### Ongoing Maintenance and Cleanliness

Clean, well-maintained parks are important to residents. Comments indicate a desire for more regular upkeep, especially for restrooms, landscaping, and playgrounds.

#### Ensuring Safety and Comfort

Lighting, visibility, and general upkeep contribute to a sense of safety. Some residents noted areas where added lighting, shade, or seating could make parks more welcoming.

#### Time and Scheduling Flexibility

Busy schedules can limit park visits. Offering flexible program times or features that support quick, spontaneous visits may help meet community needs.

Please indicate which of the following stop you or members of your household from participating in recreation programs offered by the City.

**Top Reasons Residents Don't Participate (by frequency):**

- 1. "I don't know what is offered" – ~120 mentions**
  - Lack of awareness and poor communication were by far the most frequently cited issues.
- 2. "Desired programs are not offered" – ~100 mentions**
  - Residents want different or more relevant activities than what's currently available.
- 3. "Too busy" – ~30 mentions**
  - Time constraints due to work, family, or other commitments.
- 4. "Fees are too high" – ~20 mentions**
  - Cost is a barrier, especially for families or those comparing with other cities.
- 5. Facility or Park Conditions (e.g. outdated, unsafe, unclean) – ~15 mentions**
  - Includes restrooms, soccer fields, and general lack of maintenance.
- 6. Safety concerns – ~5 mentions**
  - Specific parks were called out for crime or loitering that made families uncomfortable.
- 7. Lack of marketing / late or poor communication – ~3–5 mentions**
  - Some residents noted information arrives too late or isn't visible.
- 8. Children too young / Not age appropriate – ~1–2 mentions**
  - A few responses noted family age gaps made participation difficult.

# Is there anything else you would like us to know about your parks and recreation needs?

## Summary of Citizen Comments on Recreation Needs

### Key Themes and Needs Identified:

#### **Caring for What We Have: Facility Maintenance and Upgrades**

Residents consistently express a strong appreciation for city parks and a desire to see them maintained to a higher standard. There's clear enthusiasm for reinvesting in existing spaces—ensuring that grass is trimmed, equipment works safely, restrooms are clean, and public areas are inviting. Many support allocating more staff to park upkeep and suggest improvements to restrooms, concession areas, and sidewalks to enhance the overall visitor experience.

#### **Expanding Opportunities: Pickleball and Tennis Courts**

There's tremendous interest in adding public pickleball and tennis courts. Residents see pickleball as a fun, fast-growing activity for all ages and are eager to have both indoor and outdoor options. Some also propose dual-striping existing courts and incorporating these facilities into future bond programs or park plans.

#### **Growing Support for Soccer and Youth Sports Equity**

Soccer is gaining strong momentum locally, and residents are excited to see investment in new fields, better drainage, and upgraded amenities like shaded bleachers and modern restrooms. Many emphasized the importance of equitable support across all sports to ensure every child has a quality place to play and grow.

#### **Year-Round Enjoyment: Indoor Recreation Spaces**

Families, seniors, and individuals of all ages are seeking more indoor options to stay active and connected throughout the year. Community suggestions include swimming pools, volleyball courts, pickleball venues, bowling alleys, and indoor play spaces—particularly inspired by impressive facilities in nearby cities.

#### **Healthier Living Through Trails and Nature Access**

Residents are eager for more trails for walking, running, and biking, with special attention to safe, shaded, and ADA-accessible paths. There's a clear interest in expanding access to nature through dog parks, greenways, and quiet natural spaces that support wellness and relaxation.

#### **Fun for All Ages: Playgrounds, Splash Pads, and Child-Friendly Spaces**

Residents envision vibrant, inclusive play areas—featuring updated equipment, nature themes, larger structures for older kids, and more seating for parents. Parks like Etheridge were specifically mentioned as great candidates for new amenities like picnic areas, nature trails, and creative playground designs.

#### **Enhancing Experiences: Skate Park and Disc Golf Improvements**

The community continues to support alternative recreation like skateboarding and disc golf. Requests included beginner-friendly skate features, better lighting and shade, and maintenance of the disc golf course—which is already in progress thanks to recent city efforts.

#### **Improving Comfort and Safety: Parking, Lighting, and Accessibility**

Visitors appreciate parks most when they feel safe and supported. Residents recommend improvements to parking layouts, enhanced lighting, ADA-friendly pathways, and increased visibility and security at major parks and athletic fields.

### **Enriching Lives Through Programming and Classes**

There's strong interest in diverse, family-oriented programming—from arts and crafts to gardening, fitness, and music. Residents hope to see more multi-session classes that allow for skill-building, with flexible options that consider childcare needs and accessibility for all families.

### **In Summary**

The community is deeply engaged and excited about the future of parks and recreation. Residents are calling for thoughtful investments in existing facilities, expanded access to diverse recreational activities, and programs that reflect the needs of families, youth, and individuals of all ages. With a focus on equity, upkeep, and inclusion, the city has a unique opportunity to build a parks system that brings people together and enhances quality of life for everyone.

# Parks Planning Workshop

September 10, 2024

A parks and recreation planning workshop was held at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center at Emancipation Park on September 10, 2024. The workshop was a public event that was advertised on the City’s website and social media. Residents were seated in small groups and guided by facilitators through a series of discussion topics about parks, facilities, programs, amenities, and activities. The following are the priorities identified by frequency of comment:

## Top Priority: Trails, Paths & Connectivity

Most frequently mentioned.

- Concrete, ADA-accessible trails connecting key locations (City Hall, campus, The Square).
- Need for safe, connected bike and pedestrian routes.
- Nature trails with mile markers, lighting, and emergency access.
- Link parks and historical/cultural destinations via hike/bike trail system.

## High Priority: Recreational Facilities (Tennis, Pickleball, Recreation Centers)

Consistently emphasized across all groups.

- Pickleball courts (4–6), multi-use courts, and covered/indoor options.
- Public tennis courts, especially on the west side of town.
- Access to SHSU/HISD facilities through partnerships.
- New recreation centers: teen-focused near high school, senior center, centrally located general rec space.
- Consider adaptive reuse (e.g., strip malls, old buildings) for indoor recreation.

## High Priority: Park Improvements & Amenities

Frequent mentions, especially specific parks.

- Kate Barr Ross Park: add shade, restrooms, fencing, parking, and convert it into a tournament-ready site.
- Bush Miller Park: needs more pavilions and updates.
- Reduce underused green spaces that strain maintenance.
- Improve signage, seating (avoid lonely benches), and general usability.

## Moderate Priority: Youth & Teen Programs

Strong recurring theme.

- Need more healthy, active spaces for teens (vs. only having Boys & Girls Club for younger kids).
- Support for guided teen programs, events, and hangout areas.
- Outdoor adventure programs (fishing, kickball).
- Expansion of skate park, addition of bike pump track.

## Moderate Priority: Shelter & Shade

- More pavilions and shaded areas throughout parks.
- Need for public shelters, not just rental-only spaces.
- Interest in using City Hall Cafe green space and mall for recreational shelters.



## **Moderate Priority: Aquatics**

- Community pool is inadequate; request for natatorium to support residents and swim teams.
- Interest in water features and cooling amenities throughout parks.

## **Moderate Priority: Maintenance & Staffing**

- Repeated concerns about limited staff (6 for 400+ acres; only 2 for ballfields).
- Need to prioritize projects that reduce maintenance burdens.
- Volunteer programs welcomed to support upkeep.

## **Lower Priority (but notable): Accessibility & Infrastructure**

- Improve ADA access: sidewalks, restrooms, trail surfaces.
- Lighting upgrades, including smart/automatic systems.
- More restrooms, water fountains, and places to cool off.

## **Lower Priority: Events & Community Life**

- Expand events like Fair on the Square and Christmas celebrations.
- Need for venues for weddings and music events.
- Encourage community-building spaces and promote use of under-visited parks.

## **Lower Priority: Governance & Partnerships**

- City-school district cooperation needed for facility access and funding alignment.
- Mention of grant funding opportunities and concerns about transparency.
- Desire for community representation on parks boards.



# Parks Planning Workshop

**October 29, 2024**

A second public workshop was held on October 29, 2024 at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center to further explore residents' needs for parks, facilities, and programs. The most recent online survey results were shared with participants, and they worked in small groups through a series of guided discussion topics. Many of the same topics came up during discussion, yielding some trends in priorities. The following priorities were identified at this meeting:

## **Top Priorities (Most Frequently Mentioned)**

1. Recreation/Community Center
  - Strong demand for a central facility that includes:
    - Indoor track, gym, volleyball, flexible class spaces
    - Accessible, family-friendly amenities
    - Potential location: 7th Street or Eastham Thomason Park
    - Importance of accessibility and inclusion
  - Mentioned in all groups and multiple times.
2. Athletic Complexes and Field Improvements
  - Upgrade existing fields (especially at Kate Barr Ross - "5 plex" requested)
  - Need for new athletic complexes to boost sports tourism
  - Include baseball, softball, basketball, volleyball, pickleball
  - Focus on maintenance, restrooms, shade, and concessions
  - Mentioned across all groups
3. Splash Pads and Water Amenities
  - Improve or expand current splash pads (especially at Emancipation Park)
  - Include toddler-friendly features and accessible restrooms
  - Renovation and shade also mentioned frequently
  - Noted in Group 2, Group 4, Comment Cards
4. Park Restrooms and General Maintenance
  - Restrooms at all parks were a major concern
  - Call for increased mowing, staffing, and trash management
  - Highlighted in Group 2, 3, 4, and comment cards
5. Preserve and Enhance Green Spaces & Trails
  - Emphasis on keeping natural areas, especially Eastham Thomason Park
  - More hike and bike trails, tree planting, shade, and dog parks
  - Desire to balance development with nature preservation
  - Recurring theme across groups and comment cards

## **Mid-Level Priorities**

6. Pickleball Courts
  - Existing and proposed courts at Eastham Thomason Park and others
  - Mixed opinions: wait and see how private indoor facility performs
  - Frequently mentioned, but less consensus
7. Partnerships & Grants
  - Collaborate with:
    - TDCJ and jail for beautification programs
    - SHSU and county
    - Seek grants (e.g., TPWD)
  - Mentioned as a strategy in multiple groups
8. Emancipation Park Improvements
  - Need for new restrooms, bleachers, shaded seating
  - Trail and dog park requested
  - Fence baseball area
  - Enclose basketball court
9. Playgrounds & Child Amenities
  - More modern, shaded playgrounds with monkey bars
  - Play structures at Etheridge, Bush Miller, Forest Hills, etc.
10. Walkability and Bike Lanes
  - Desire for more walkable areas and bike lanes
  - Focus on connectivity between parks, especially Town Creek area
  - Mentioned in Group 1 and 3

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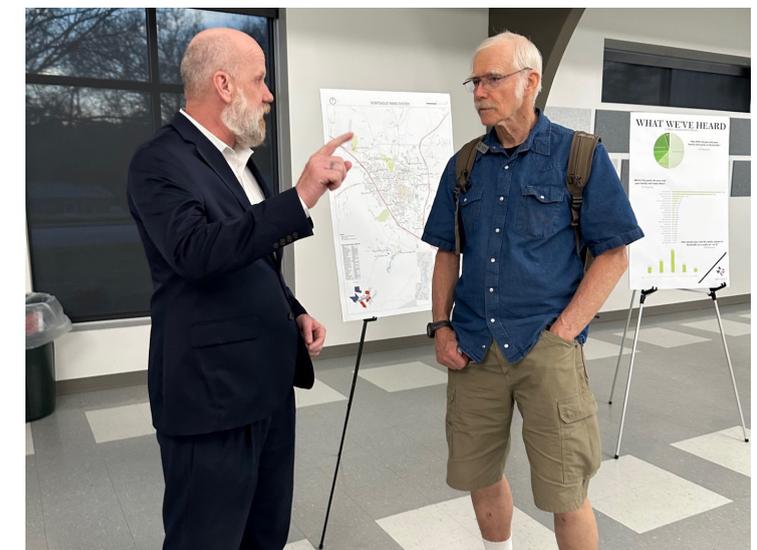
## **Lower Frequency but Notable Mentions**

- Special needs areas for children and adults
- Teen center
- Pump track for scooters/bikes
- Amphitheater at Town Creek (event space)
- Disc golf course
- More courts (basketball, pickleball, volleyball)
- Parking concerns near parks and centers
- Interest in event programming (First Friday, music series)

# Parks Master Plan Open House

March 6, 2025 6:00-7:30 p.m.

An open house event was hosted at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center to showcase the latest recommendations for park and recreation in Huntsville. The Parks & Leisure staff cooked hot dogs and provided refreshments while participants came to review concepts for park improvements, public input results, and share their opinions. A total of 13 residents participated in the event including some leadership from City Staff and City Council.



# Walkability



01

Inventory &  
**Analysis**

02

Demand  
**Assessment**

03

**Walkability**

04

Plan  
**Recommendations**

05

Plan  
**Implementation**

# Planning for Walkability

## Pedestrian and Bicycle Routes

Significant efforts have been made in the planning of bicycle and pedestrian mobility in Huntsville. The updated 2019 Transportation Master Plan and the 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan provide clear direction on the ways to improve non-vehicular travel through the community for both mobility and direction. The following are the key take-aways from these documents:

### 1. Develop and Implement Multi-Modal Plans:

- The City seeks to uphold established precedents while framing a future transportation network focused on multi-modal mobility, connectivity, and accessibility.
- The goal is to enhance mobility, connectivity, and accessibility of Huntsville and offer alternate modes of transportation as an ultimate goal.
- A multi-modal approach, incorporating various modes of transportation based on travel demand analysis and community costs/benefits, is a major idea from the previous transportation master plan implemented in the update.
- Implementing the Sidewalk and Bicycle Plan developed in the 2019 Transportation Master Plan (TMP) in phases is a recommendation.
- Enhance walkability through improvements identified in the transportation and parks master plans.
- Multi-modal improvements aim to move people rather than vehicles, integrating different modes into the transportation system to reduce dependency on single-occupancy vehicles.

### 2. Improve Sidewalk Infrastructure:

- Identify what percentage of City roadways require sidewalks and develop an implementation schedule.
- Conduct an extensive sidewalk inventory to upgrade sidewalks to ADA standards.
- Improve existing pedestrian infrastructure such as sidewalks, crosswalks, and curb ramps.
- Prioritize completing sidewalk gaps, particularly within the five and ten-minute walk sheds of schools.
- Repair, replace, or install new sidewalks, crosswalks, and curb cuts in high pedestrian use areas adjacent to, and leading to and from schools (including SHSU), public buildings, highly utilized parks, and other areas.
- Ensure sidewalks comply with ADA requirements.

### 3. Enhance Pedestrian Safety and Crossings:

- Improve the pedestrian infrastructure at major crossings along Sam Houston Avenue to increase safety.
- Increase the visibility of crosswalks by updating pavement markings or painting wider crosswalks.
- Implement protected left-turn only signal operation to allocate time for safe left turns without conflicts with pedestrians. Adding a leading pedestrian interval can increase visibility.
- Add pedestrian push buttons and signals where they are missing, such as at the intersection of Sam Houston Avenue and Avenue I.
- Monitor pedestrian traffic and determine which intersections need improved infrastructure and adequate walk time.
- Consider midblock pedestrian crossings with various treatments like signs, pavement markings, illumination, raised crosswalks, or RRFB/HAWK signals.
- Evaluate the feasibility and practicality of a pedestrian bridge across Sam Houston Avenue, potentially between 17th Street and Lake Road, as a long-term option to address heavy pedestrian conflicts and improve safety. This may require a detailed analysis, cost-benefit evaluation, and public-private partnerships.
- Lowering the speed limit and improving pedestrian walkability can contribute to a downtown atmosphere.
- Ensure safety within parks is a key improvement factor.

### 4. Develop and Implement a Bicycle Network:

- Identify what percentage of City roadways requires bike lanes, the type of bike lanes needed, and develop a schedule for implementation.
- Develop a network of safe, connected bike facilities that would connect people to important destinations in Huntsville.
- Prioritize bikeway projects in areas with low automobile ownership, low incomes, and near employment, shopping, SHSU, Huntsville State Park, and the bat colony on 14th Street.
- Utilize floodplains/channels, abandoned railroad rights-of-way, and electrical/transmission easements for bikeways where constraints exist.
- Consider implementing four types of bike lanes: Neighborhood Bikeway, Bikeway Sidepath, Buffered Bikeway, and Raised Cycletracks. Raised cycletracks provide the highest level of comfort by separating cyclists from vehicular traffic.
- Implement a network of fifteen miles of bikeways proposed in the plan, with nine miles serving specific areas.

- Add bicycle lanes where appropriate, potentially by decreasing the width of travel lanes.
- Bike lanes along 11th Street are expected to provide circulation and access to students.
- Develop a dedicated bike program focused on making bicycling safer and developing a long-term plan for access.
- Promote and provide biking options, especially for the young population, to relieve congestion and parking requirements.

## **5. Create a City-Wide Trail System:**

- Develop a City-Wide Trail System.
- Evaluate funding for multi-modal improvements recommended in the 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan (24.6 miles of multi-use trails) and the 2019 TMP.
- Coordinate with public and private entities to provide access for new trails across easements and rights-of-way.
- Explore potential off-road trail linkages between the community and regional recreational assets like Huntsville State Park and Sam Houston National Forest.

## **6. Integrate Multi-Modal Concepts (Complete Streets):**

- Implement Complete Streets concepts.
- Integrate the “Complete Streets” concept into local transportation planning and projects, recognizing that streets should be designed for all users (pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, transit) of all ages and abilities.
- Apply Complete Streets design to major arterials like 11th Street and Sam Houston Avenue to provide an enhanced user experience.
- A complete streets policy should apply to new and retrofit projects, design, planning, maintenance, and operations for the entire right-of-way. It should aim to create a comprehensive, integrated, connected network for all modes.
- Ensure on-street bicycle facilities, off-street recreational trails, and complete streets-related improvements are considered within any future TxDOT improvements.

## **7. Enhance Connectivity:**

- Enhance connectivity throughout the city that allows residents and visitors to travel safely by multiple modes.
- Expand the range of options for traveling within Huntsville, with a focus on safely linking Sam Houston State University (SHSU), downtown, and other key areas for pedestrians and cyclists.

- Connect neighborhoods to key destinations (connectivity issues).
- Provide pedestrian connections between parks, schools, residential areas, and employment centers.
- Ensure new development links neighborhoods and parks with schools and commercial centers.

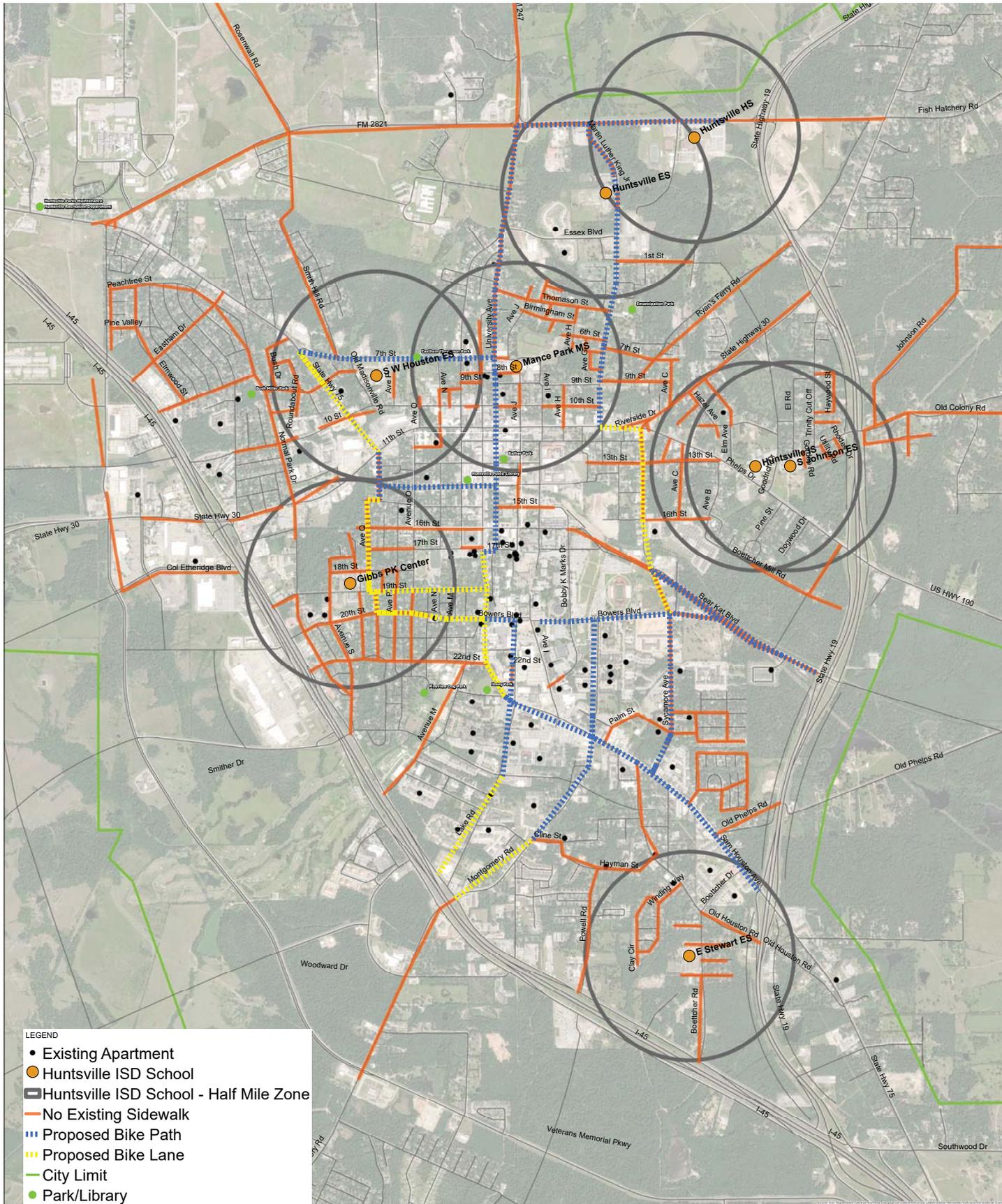
## **8. Utilize Planning and Coordination:**

- Continue implementation of the short to mid-term projects identified in the 2019 Transportation Master Plan, incorporating them into the Capital Improvement Program (CIP).
- Evaluate potential to fund design and implementation of multi-modal improvements recommended in the 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan and 2019 Transportation Master Plan.
- Coordinate with TxDOT on projects, as many recommended capital projects are on TxDOT maintained roadways.
- Repair, replace, or install new sidewalks, crosswalks, and curb cuts based on recommendations from the 2019 TMP.
- Keep pedestrian and bicycle components of the 2019 TMP up to date and continue to examine potential improvements.
- Coordinate with Huntsville Independent School District (HISD) on sidewalk and pedestrian improvements near schools.
- Develop standards for signage and utilize wayfinding signage for new pedestrian and bicycle facilities.
- Review development regulations to ensure consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, potentially requiring dedication of easements or rights-of-way for trail network development.

## **9. Promote Health and Active Living:**

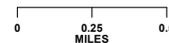
- Enhance opportunities for residents, particularly youth, to have active and healthy lifestyles through recreational facilities and safe pedestrian and bicycle circulation.
- Well-designed parks and trails can encourage safe exercise and provide mental health benefits.
- A well-planned bicycle network promotes healthy living.
- Improve health outcomes and reduce pollution through active transportation connections to destinations like parks.

These approaches highlight a commitment to creating a more walkable and bikeable city, integrating pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure into the overall transportation network, and leveraging these improvements to enhance safety, quality of life, and connectivity throughout Huntsville.

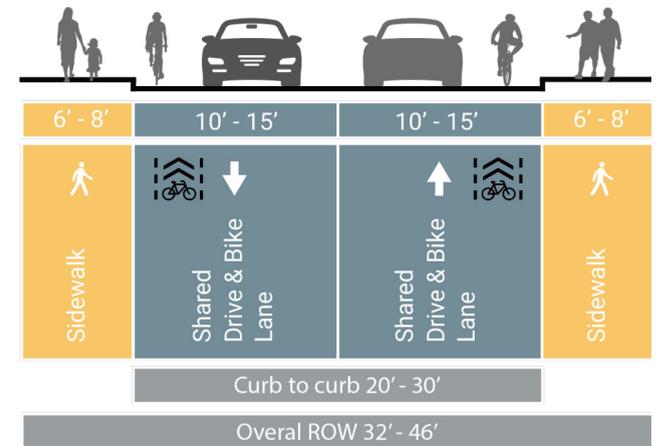


- LEGEND
- Existing Apartment
  - Huntsville ISD School
  - Huntsville ISD School - Half Mile Zone
  - No Existing Sidewalk
  - Proposed Bike Path
  - Proposed Bike Lane
  - City Limit
  - Park/Library

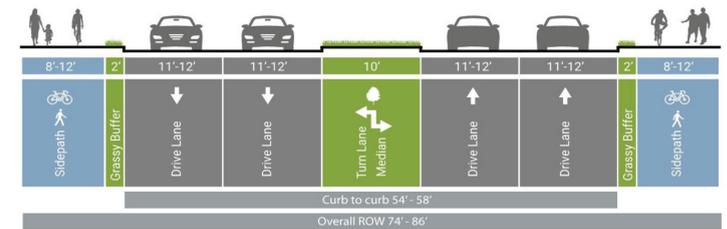
**CITY OF HUNTSVILLE TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN  
PROPOSED BIKE & PEDESTRIAN PLAN**  
PRELIMINARY DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION - NOT YET ADOPTED



The 2019 City of Huntsville Transportation Master Plan has identified a number of gaps in the pedestrian and bicycle network and planned for new proposed bike paths and bike lanes in addition to recommendations for additional sidewalks. The plan identified timelines and cost estimates for implementation.



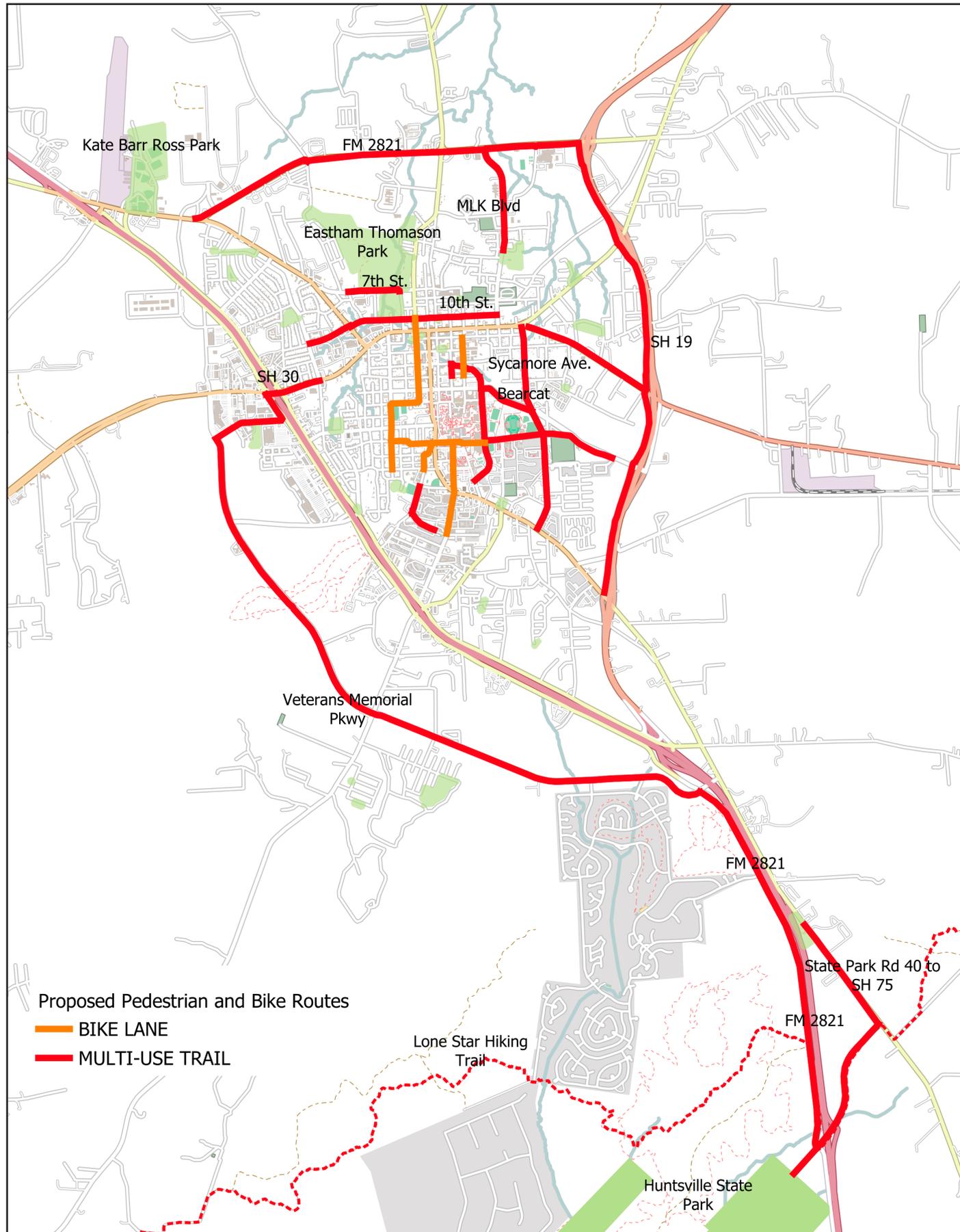
Proposed neighborhood bikeway section from the 2019 Transportation Plan.



Proposed sidepath section from the 2019 Transportation Plan.



# Walkability 03



## Proposed Bicycle and Pedestrian Routes

Much of the Transportation Master Plan is focused on sidewalks, bike lanes, crosswalks, and traffic signals. Some of these relate more to mobility than recreation, although all are important components of a complete transportation system.

Recreation routes are proposed to not only make for good mobility, but also connect destinations and origins that are significant or create longer routes for exercise and enjoyment. Bike lanes shown in the proposed routes on the left aim to connect public spaces to the University and neighborhoods.

Some multi-use trails are proposed within the core urban areas while others, such as the Veterans Memorial Parkway route and State Highway 19 route are envisioned as longer routes for cycling, accessing the Lone Star Hiking Trail, and even a connection to the Huntsville State Park and Sam Houston Memorial.

Implementing most of the proposed bicycle and pedestrian routes is most easily accomplished in the course of street reconstruction projects. Some routes may qualify for funding through TXDOT's Transportation Set-Aside Program or Safe Routes to School program.

# Plan **Recommendations**



01

Inventory &  
**Analysis**

02

Demand  
**Assessment**

03

**Walkability**

04

Plan  
**Recommendations**

05

Plan  
**Implementation**

# Priority Project

## New Multi-Purpose Recreation Center/Natatorium at Eastham-Thomason Park

Indoor Recreation has been identified as a priority for Huntsville residents. When asked how important an indoor recreation facility is to survey participants on a scale of 1 (not very important) to 5 (very important), 34.64% of participants rated it as very important, followed by 19.58% rating it as 4 (important). The top 5 features for an indoor recreation center that survey participants said they would use 'several times a week' were:

1. Indoor Running/Walking Track
2. Recreational Swimming
3. Indoor Play Space (for children)
4. Multi-Purpose Courts for Basketball, Volleyball, Etc.
5. Aerobics/Fitness/Martial Arts/Dance Space

A variety of other indoor recreation features were identified that would likely be used at least a few times a month or once a month. Overall, there is a demand for flexible multi-use space for many different activities that suggest the need for further study. The City-owned properties were evaluated to determine the most appropriate location for a future recreation center and identified two candidate: Eastham-Thomason Park and Kate Barr Ross Park. These locations were deemed appropriate due to the available space and the high visitation rates for each park.

A conceptual master plan was developed to illustrate how a new recreation facility could fit at Eastham-Thomason Park. The proposed recreation center is conceived as 56,850 square feet of indoor recreation space. The facility includes interior and exterior space for the following features:

- Fitness/Cardio Room
- Aerobic Room
- Cycling Room
- Natatorium
- Activity Pool
- Lockers, Showers & Dressing Areas
- Saunas
- Basketball Gymnasium
- Lounge
- Raquetball Courts
- Administration
- Pickleball Courts
- Sand Volleyball Courts

This preliminary concept illustrates how the proposed recreation elements could fit the site. A feasibility study should be considered to further develop the program and refine the opinion of probable costs. It's at this phase where key programmatic decisions can be made.



## Recreation Center and Natatorium at Eastham Thomason Park



- AMENITIES**
- Fitness/Cardio Room
  - Aerobic Room
  - Cycling Room
  - Natorium
  - Activity Pool
  - Lockers, Showers & Dressing Areas
  - Saunas
  - Basketball Gymnasium
  - Lounge
  - Raquetball Courts
  - Administration
  - Pickleball Courts
  - Sand Volleyball Courts

# Conceptual Master Plan

NTS

# Priority Project

## Recreation Center/Natatorium Operations

### Estimated Operation Costs

In addition to capital costs, an preliminary analysis of operation costs was conducted to understand potential staffing needs and revenues. The following summary outlines an estimated range for total annual operating costs based on the hours of operation model, average staffing expenses, and typical operational expenditures. The estimated total annual operating costs range from \$936,800 to \$1,925,600. This range offers a comprehensive overview of the potential financial requirements for operations, contingent on variables such as actual hours of operation, utility consumption, maintenance demands, program offerings, and service levels.

### Operating Hours (model)

Monday to Thursday: 5:30 AM - 9:00 PM

Friday: 5:30 AM - 8:00 PM

Saturday: 7:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Sunday: 12:00 PM - 6:00 PM

### Part Time Shifts (based on model)

#### Monday - Thursday:

5:30 AM - 9:00 AM: 2 Customer Service Representatives, 1 Program Leader, 3 Lifeguards

9:00 AM - 12:00 PM: 2 Customer Service Representatives, 1 Program Leader, 3 Lifeguards

12:00 PM - 3:00 PM: 2 Customer Service Representatives, 1 Program Leader, 3 Lifeguards

3:00 PM - 6:00 PM: 2 Customer Service Representatives, 1 Program Leader, 3 Lifeguards

6:00 PM - 9:00 PM: 2 Customer Service Representatives, 1 Program Leader, 3 Lifeguards

#### Friday:

5:30 AM - 9:00 AM: 2 Customer Service Representatives, 1 Program Leader, 3 Lifeguards

9:00 AM - 12:00 PM: 2 Customer Service Representatives, 1 Program Leader, 3 Lifeguards

12:00 PM - 3:00 PM: 2 Customer Service Representatives, 1 Program Leader, 3 Lifeguards

3:00 PM - 6:00 PM: 2 Customer Service Representatives, 1 Program Leader, 3 Lifeguards

6:00 PM - 8:00 PM: 2 Customer Service Representatives, 1 Program Leader, 3 Lifeguards

#### Saturday:

7:00 AM - 12:00 PM: 2 Customer Service Representatives, 1 Program Leader, 3 Lifeguards

12:00 PM - 5:00 PM: 2 Customer Service Representatives, 1 Program Leader, 3 Lifeguards

#### Sunday:

12:00 PM - 3:00 PM: 2 Customer Service Representatives, 3 Lifeguards

3:00 PM - 6:00 PM: 2 Customer Service Representatives, 3 Lifeguards



## Staffing Costs

### Full-Time Positions:

Based on an average annual salary of \$60,000 per full-time staff member:

- Center Supervisor: \$60,000
- Admin Coordinator: \$60,000
- Program Manager: \$60,000
- Aquatics Manager: \$60,000

Total for Full-Time Positions: \$240,000 annually

### Part-Time Positions:

Assuming an average hourly wage of \$15 for part-time staff working 20 hours per week:

- Customer Service (12):  $\$15 * 20 \text{ hours} * 52 \text{ weeks} * 12 = \$187,200$  annually
- Program Leader Fitness Center (3):  $\$15 * 20 \text{ hours} * 52 \text{ weeks} * 3 = \$46,800$  annually
- Fitness Instructors: Pending number of classes
- Lifeguards (16):  $\$15 * 20 \text{ hours} * 52 \text{ weeks} * 16 = \$249,600$  annually
- Swim Instructors: Pending number of classes

Total for Part-Time Positions (excluding pending positions): \$483,600 annually

### Combined Annual Staffing Costs

- Full-Time Positions: \$240,000
  - Part-Time Positions: \$483,600
- \$723,600

### Factors Influencing Staffing:

- Operating Hours:
  - Extended hours require more staff to cover early mornings, late evenings, and weekends.
- Programming and Services:
  - A diverse range of classes and activities increases the need for specialized staff.
- Peak Usage Times:
  - Additional staff during high-traffic periods ensure safety and customer satisfaction.
- Regulatory Requirements:
  - Local laws may dictate minimum staffing levels, especially for

aquatics and youth programs.

- Facility Layout and Design:
  - Larger or more complex spaces may need extra staff for adequate supervision.
- Holistic Approach (Natatorium)
  - Effective lifeguard staffing is determined by combining factors like pool design, bather load, and response times—not just square footage.
  - Allocate additional lifeguards for attractions like slides or diving boards.

### Other Operational Costs (utilities, maintenance, supplies, etc.):

- Utilities: \$24,000 - \$120,000
- Maintenance: \$36,000 - \$240,000
- Supplies: \$66,000 - \$300,000
- Insurance: \$12,000 - \$60,000
- Marketing and Advertising: \$6,000 - \$60,000
- Licenses and Permits: \$1,200 - \$12,000
- Staff Training and Development: \$12,000 - \$60,000
- Rent or Lease Payments: \$60,000 - \$240,000
- Program and Activity Supplies: \$6,000 - \$60,000
- Equipment Rental: \$10,000 - \$50,000

Total Annual Operational Costs (Excluding Staffing): \$213,200 - \$1,202,000

Total Annual Operational Cost (Including Staffing): \$936,800 - \$1,925,600

### Industry Resources and Benchmarks

- National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)
  - Provides comprehensive guidelines and resources for staffing and operations.
- International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association (IHRSA)
  - Offers industry data and best practices for health clubs and fitness facilities.
- American Red Cross
  - Offers certifications and standards for aquatics staffing and safety protocols.

# Priority Project

## Renovation of the Kate Barr Ross Sports Complex

Kate Barr Ross Sports Complex is arguably the flagship of Huntsville's parks system. The park is comprised of 77.19 acres of land with a diverse range of facilities and amenities to host a wide range of recreational activities. The park is heavily used for athletics including soccer, baseball, softball, football, and basketball. Other amenities include playgrounds, picnic areas, a community garden, Safety Village, restrooms, concessions, and parking.

The facilities and infrastructure are aging and due for renovation to elevate the user experience and expand capacity for sports. Over the years, the facilities have been upgraded in a piecemeal fashion as needed, but this approach limits the park to its current configuration. Through a complete renovation of the park, features can be rearranged to be more efficient, add much-needed parking, and add more fields and amenities.

During the planning process, three concepts for renovation were developed to demonstrate options for renovation of the park to meet needs identified through stakeholder input. The preferred concept as determined by stakeholder input at an Open House Event was further developed with opinions of probable cost for renovation.

The concept on the following page responds to feedback from athletic organizations, residents, staff, and leadership. The overall goal of the concept is to meet the growing demand for more sports, elevated user experience, and diverse recreation. Key issues to address also included more and better-distributed parking, new restrooms and concessions, more playgrounds, and walking paths. One area of the site is set aside in this concept to include an optional 54,000 indoor recreation facility as an alternative to the proposed location at Eastham-Thomason Park.



### Proposed Features

- 10 Diamond Fields
- 2 Football Fields with Covered Bleachers
- 4 Soccer Fields with Covered Bleachers
- New Concessions and Restrooms
- 884 Parking Spaces
- 2 New Playgrounds
- Walking Paths
- 8 Pickleball Courts
- 2 Basketball Courts



# Plan 05 Recommendations



## Conceptual Master Plan

NTS

# Opinions of Probable Cost - Priority Projects



EASTHAM THOMASON PARK

4/22/2025

Preliminary Opinion of Probable Costs (OPC)  
CONCEPTUAL MASTER PLAN

#	Item / Description	Qty	Unit	Unit Rate	Range	
					Low	High
<b>1</b>	<b>General Requirements</b>				<b>\$ 2,062,500</b>	<b>\$ 2,268,750</b>
	Mobilization, Demobilization & Maintenance	1	allow	3.5%	\$ 962,500	\$ 1,058,750
	Bonds & Insurance	1	allow	3%	\$ 825,000	\$ 907,500
	Traffic Control, Surveying, Safety Plan	1	allow	1%	\$ 275,000	\$ 302,500
<b>2</b>	<b>Demolition/Preservation</b>				<b>\$ 47,289</b>	<b>\$ 52,018</b>
	Demolition, Clearing & Tree Removal	1	allow	\$ 42,990	\$ 47,289	\$ 52,018
<b>3</b>	<b>Grading, Drainage &amp; Utilities</b>				<b>\$ 713,633</b>	<b>\$ 784,997</b>
	Mass Grading, Site Work, & Erosion Control	114429	sf	\$ 0.50	\$ 62,936	\$ 69,230
	Misc. Utilities/Water/Sewer	1	allow	2%	\$ 550,000	\$ 605,000
	Storm, Piping, Inlets Etc.	114429	sf	\$ 0.80	\$ 100,698	\$ 110,767
<b>4</b>	<b>Site Paving Infrastructure</b>				<b>\$ 415,215</b>	<b>\$ 456,737</b>
	Parking Stalls (102 sp)	41,576	sf	\$ 7.50	\$ 343,002	\$ 377,302
	Parking Curbs, Striping & Ramps	1	allow	\$ 35,870	\$ 39,457	\$ 43,403
	Sidewalks	2,115	sf	\$ 6.20	\$ 14,424	\$ 15,867
	Trails	2,688	sf	\$ 6.20	\$ 18,332	\$ 20,165
<b>5</b>	<b>Site Lighting</b>				<b>\$ 123,200</b>	<b>\$ 135,520</b>
	Site Electrical Service Allowance	1	allow	\$ 50,000	\$ 55,000	\$ 60,500
	Parking Lot Lighting	6	ea	\$ 7,000	\$ 46,200	\$ 50,820
	Trail Lighting	4	ea	\$ 5,000	\$ 22,000	\$ 24,200
<b>6</b>	<b>Architecture</b>				<b>\$ 21,829,500</b>	<b>\$ 24,012,450</b>
	Recreatin Center (56,850 sf)	1	allow	\$ 19,845,000	\$ 21,829,500	\$ 24,012,450
<b>7</b>	<b>Site Paving &amp; Hardscapes</b>				<b>\$ 29,700</b>	<b>\$ 32,670</b>
	Pedestrian Bridge	60	lf	\$ 450	\$ 29,700	\$ 32,670
<b>8</b>	<b>Sports Fields/Courts</b>				<b>\$ 181,130</b>	<b>\$ 199,243</b>
	Pickleball Courts	4	ea	\$ 41,166	\$ 181,130	\$ 199,243
	Volleyball Court	2	ea	\$ 8,500	\$ 18,700	\$ 20,570
<b>9</b>	<b>Site Furnishings</b>				<b>\$ 79,475</b>	<b>\$ 87,423</b>
	Site Furniture Allowance	1	allow	\$ 72,250	\$ 79,475	\$ 87,423
<b>10</b>	<b>Playground Furnishings</b>				<b>\$ 253,000</b>	<b>\$ 278,300</b>
	Skate Park	1	allow	\$ 230,000	\$ 253,000	\$ 278,300
<b>11</b>	<b>Softscapes</b>				<b>\$ 27,693</b>	<b>\$ 30,462</b>
	Planting/Irrigation	1	allow	\$ 25,175	\$ 27,693	\$ 30,462
	<b>Subtotal</b>				<b>\$ 25,581,205</b>	<b>\$ 28,139,326</b>
	<b>General Conditions</b>	1	allow	7.5%	\$ 1,918,590	\$ 2,110,449
	<b>Design Contingency</b>	1	allow	5%	\$ 1,374,990	\$ 1,512,489
	<b>Total Project Cost with Range</b>				<b>\$ 28,874,786</b>	<b>\$ 31,762,264</b>

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KATE BARR ROSS  
OVERALL MASTER PLAN

4/28/2025

Preliminary Opinion of Probable Costs (OPC)  
CONCEPTUAL MASTER PLAN

#	Item / Description	Range	
		Low	High
1	General Requirements	\$ 1,773,750	\$ 1,951,125
2	Demolition/Preservation	\$ 1,519,106	\$ 1,671,016
3	Grading, Drainage & Utilities	\$ 1,111,352	\$ 1,222,487
4	Site Paving Infrastructure	\$ 6,919,567	\$ 7,611,523
5	Site Lighting	\$ 1,387,540	\$ 1,526,294
6	Architecture	\$ 3,548,600	\$ 3,903,460
7	Site Paving & Hardscapes	\$ 505,450	\$ 555,995
8	Sports Fields/Courts	\$ 10,547,191	\$ 11,601,910
9	Site Furnishings	\$ 374,110	\$ 411,521
10	Playground Furnishings	\$ 1,905,228	\$ 2,095,750
11	Softscapes	\$ 696,193	\$ 765,813
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 30,288,086</b>	<b>\$ 33,316,894</b>
	General Conditions	\$ 2,271,606	\$ 2,498,767
	Design Contingency	\$ 1,627,985	\$ 1,790,783
	<b>Total Project Cost with Range</b>	<b>\$ 34,187,677</b>	<b>\$ 37,606,445</b>
<p><i>Burditt Consultants has no control over the cost of labor, materials, equipment, or services furnished by others, or over the Contractor's methods of determining prices, or over competitive bidding or market conditions. Burditt Consultants cannot and does not guarantee that proposals, bids or actual construction will not vary from opinion of probable costs.</i></p>			

Priliminary Opinion of Probable Costs (OPC)  
CONCEPTUAL MASTER PLAN

#	Item / Description	Qty	Unit	Unit Rate	Range	
					Low	High
<b>1</b>	<b>General Requirements</b>				<b>\$ 1,237,500</b>	<b>\$ 1,361,250</b>
	Mobilization, Demobilization & Maintenance	1	allow	3.5%	\$ 577,500	\$ 635,250
	Bonds & Insurance	1	allow	3%	\$ 495,000	\$ 544,500
	Traffic Control, Surveying, Safety Plan	1	allow	1%	\$ 165,000	\$ 181,500
<b>2</b>	<b>Demolition/Preservation</b>				<b>\$ 1,471,289</b>	<b>\$ 1,618,417</b>
	Demolition, Clearing & Tree Removal	1	allow	\$ 1,337,535	\$ 1,471,289	\$ 1,618,417
<b>3</b>	<b>Grading, Drainage &amp; Utilities</b>				<b>\$ 805,089</b>	<b>\$ 885,598</b>
	Mass Grading, Site Work, & Erosion Control	332230	sf	\$ 0.50	\$ 182,727	\$ 200,999
	Misc. Utilities/Water/Sewer	1	allow	2%	\$ 330,000	\$ 363,000
	Storm, Piping, Inlets Etc.	332230	sf	\$ 0.80	\$ 292,362	\$ 321,599
<b>4</b>	<b>Site Paving Infrastructure</b>				<b>\$ 5,217,991</b>	<b>\$ 5,739,790</b>
	Drive 8" Concrete	79,200	sf	\$ 10.50	\$ 914,760	\$ 1,006,236
	Parking Stalls (640 sp)	284,333	sf	\$ 7.50	\$ 2,345,747	\$ 2,580,322
	Parking Curbs, Striping & Ramps	1	allow	\$ 311,185	\$ 342,304	\$ 376,534
	Sidewalks	188,304	sf	\$ 6.20	\$ 1,284,233	\$ 1,412,657
	Loop Trail (+/-1mi)	48,526	sf	\$ 6.20	\$ 330,947	\$ 364,042
<b>5</b>	<b>Site Lighting</b>				<b>\$ 935,385</b>	<b>\$ 1,028,924</b>
	Site Electrical Service Allowance	1	allow	\$ 50,000	\$ 55,000	\$ 60,500
	Site Lighting	6	ea	\$ 6,500	\$ 42,900	\$ 47,190
	Roadway Lighting	41	ea	\$ 7,000	\$ 316,085	\$ 347,694
	Parking Lot Lighting	32	ea	\$ 7,000	\$ 246,400	\$ 271,040
	Trail Lighting	50	ea	\$ 5,000	\$ 275,000	\$ 302,500
<b>6</b>	<b>Architecture</b>				<b>\$ 1,774,300</b>	<b>\$ 1,951,730</b>
	Family Restroom/Pavilion	1	allow	\$ 180,000	\$ 198,000	\$ 217,800
	Concession/Restroom	2	ea	\$ 700,000	\$ 1,540,000	\$ 1,694,000
	Picnic Shelter	3	ea	\$ 11,000	\$ 36,300	\$ 39,930
<b>7</b>	<b>Site Paving &amp; Hardscapes</b>				<b>\$ 339,350</b>	<b>\$ 373,285</b>
	Wayfindng / Monument Signage	1	allow	\$ 218,500	\$ 240,350	\$ 264,385
	Special Fencing	525	lf	\$ 120	\$ 69,300	\$ 76,230
	Decomposed Granite	4500	allow	\$ 6	\$ 29,700	\$ 32,670
<b>8</b>	<b>Sports Fields/Courts</b>				<b>\$ 6,760,529</b>	<b>\$ 7,436,582</b>
	Baseball Fields 200'	6	ea	\$ 617,377	\$ 4,074,690	\$ 4,482,159
	Softball Fields 200'	4	ea	\$ 610,418	\$ 2,685,839	\$ 2,954,423
<b>9</b>	<b>Site Furnishings</b>				<b>\$ 187,055</b>	<b>\$ 205,761</b>
	Site Furniture Allowance	1	allow	\$ 170,050	\$ 187,055	\$ 205,761
<b>10</b>	<b>Playground Furnishings</b>				<b>\$ 1,397,578</b>	<b>\$ 1,537,335</b>
	Playground (All Abilities)	1	allow	\$ 463,550	\$ 509,905	\$ 560,896
	Playground @ Fiveplex	1	allow	\$ 344,600	\$ 379,060	\$ 416,966
	Playground @ Gardens	1	allow	\$ 462,375	\$ 508,613	\$ 559,474
<b>11</b>	<b>Softscapes</b>				<b>\$ 475,548</b>	<b>\$ 523,102</b>
	Planting/Irrigation	1	allow	\$ 432,316	\$ 475,548	\$ 523,102
	<b>Subtotal</b>				<b>\$ 20,601,613</b>	<b>\$ 22,661,774</b>
	<b>General Conditions</b>	1	allow	7.5%	\$ 1,545,121	\$ 1,699,633
	<b>Design Contingency</b>	1	allow	5%	\$ 1,107,337	\$ 1,218,070
	<b>Total Project Cost with Range</b>				<b>\$ 23,254,071</b>	<b>\$ 25,579,478</b>

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Preliminary Opinion of Probable Costs (OPC)  
CONCEPTUAL MASTER PLAN

#	Item / Description	Qty	Unit	Unit Rate	Range	
					Low	High
<b>1</b>	<b>General Requirements</b>				<b>\$ 536,250</b>	<b>\$ 589,875</b>
	Mobilization, Demobilization & Maintenance	1	allow	3.5%	\$ 250,250	\$ 275,275
	Bonds & Insurance	1	allow	3%	\$ 214,500	\$ 235,950
	Traffic Control, Surveying, Safety Plan	1	allow	1%	\$ 71,500	\$ 78,650
<b>2</b>	<b>Demolition/Preservation</b>				<b>\$ 47,817</b>	<b>\$ 52,599</b>
	Demolition, Clearing & Tree Removal	1	allow	\$ 43,470	\$ 47,817	\$ 52,599
<b>3</b>	<b>Grading, Drainage &amp; Utilities</b>				<b>\$ 306,263</b>	<b>\$ 336,889</b>
	Mass Grading, Site Work, & Erosion Control	114170	sf	\$ 0.50	\$ 62,794	\$ 69,073
	Misc. Utilities/Water/Sewer	1	allow	2%	\$ 143,000	\$ 157,300
	Storm, Piping, Inlets Etc.	114170	sf	\$ 0.80	\$ 100,470	\$ 110,517
<b>4</b>	<b>Site Paving Infrastructure</b>				<b>\$ 1,701,575</b>	<b>\$ 1,871,733</b>
	Parking Stalls (243 sp)	113,329	sf	\$ 7.50	\$ 934,964	\$ 1,028,461
	Parking Curbs, Striping & Ramps	1	allow	\$ 89,505	\$ 98,456	\$ 108,301
	Sidewalks	49,700	sf	\$ 6.20	\$ 338,954	\$ 372,849
	Loop Trail (+/-1mi)	48,270	sf	\$ 6.20	\$ 329,201	\$ 362,122
<b>5</b>	<b>Site Lighting</b>				<b>\$ 452,155</b>	<b>\$ 497,371</b>
	Site Electrical Service Allowance	1	allow	\$ 50,000	\$ 55,000	\$ 60,500
	Site Lighting	4	ea	\$ 6,500	\$ 28,600	\$ 31,460
	Parking Lot Lighting	12	ea	\$ 7,000	\$ 93,555	\$ 102,911
	Trail Lighting	50	ea	\$ 5,000	\$ 275,000	\$ 302,500
<b>6</b>	<b>Architecture</b>				<b>\$ 1,774,300</b>	<b>\$ 1,951,730</b>
	Family Restroom/Pavilion	1	allow	\$ 180,000	\$ 198,000	\$ 217,800
	Concession/Restroom	2	ea	\$ 700,000	\$ 1,540,000	\$ 1,694,000
	Picnic Shelter	3	ea	\$ 11,000	\$ 36,300	\$ 39,930
<b>7</b>	<b>Site Paving &amp; Hardscapes</b>				<b>\$ 166,100</b>	<b>\$ 182,710</b>
	Wayfinding / Monument Signage	1	allow	\$ 151,000	\$ 166,100	\$ 182,710
<b>8</b>	<b>Sports Fields/Courts</b>				<b>\$ 3,786,662</b>	<b>\$ 4,165,328</b>
	Soccer Fields	4	ea	\$ 321,625	\$ 1,415,150	\$ 1,556,665
	Football Fields	2	ea	\$ 751,500	\$ 1,653,300	\$ 1,818,630
	Pickleball Courts	8	ea	\$ 48,919	\$ 430,487	\$ 473,536
	Basketball Courts	2	ea	\$ 130,784	\$ 287,725	\$ 316,497
<b>9</b>	<b>Site Furnishings</b>				<b>\$ 187,055</b>	<b>\$ 205,761</b>
	Site Furniture Allowance	1	allow	\$ 170,050	\$ 187,055	\$ 205,761
<b>10</b>	<b>Playground Furnishings</b>				<b>\$ 507,650</b>	<b>\$ 558,415</b>
	Playground	1	allow	\$ 461,500	\$ 507,650	\$ 558,415
<b>11</b>	<b>Softscapes</b>				<b>\$ 220,646</b>	<b>\$ 242,710</b>
	Planting/Irrigation	1	allow	\$ 200,587	\$ 220,646	\$ 242,710
	<b>Subtotal</b>				<b>\$ 9,686,473</b>	<b>\$ 10,655,120</b>
	<b>General Conditions</b>	1	allow	7.5%	\$ 726,485	\$ 799,134
	<b>Design Contingency</b>	1	allow	5%	\$ 520,648	\$ 572,713
	<b>Total Project Cost with Range</b>				<b>\$ 10,933,606</b>	<b>\$ 12,026,967</b>

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# Opinion of Maintenance Cost - Kate Barr Ross Park

### Unit Cost Estimates

Category	Low Estimate	High Estimate	Likely Average
Grounds Maintenance	\$2,800/acre	\$3,800/acre	\$3,300/acre
Athletic Fields	\$18,000/field	\$28,000/field	\$23,000/field
Concession Stands	\$6,000/unit	\$9,000/unit	\$7,500/unit
Restrooms	\$12,000/unit	\$18,000/unit	\$15,000/unit
Basketball Courts	\$1,500/court	\$2,000/court	\$1,750/court
Pickleball Courts	\$1,200/court	\$1,800/court	\$1,500/court
Playgrounds	\$6,000/unit	\$9,000/unit	\$7,500/unit
Utilities (overall)	\$60,000	\$90,000	\$75,000
Staffing (6 FTEs)	\$270,000	\$330,000	\$300,000

### Total Annual Cost (Rounded)

Category	Refined Low	Refined High	Likely Average
Grounds (77 acres)	\$215,600	\$292,600	\$254,100
Fields (16 total)	\$288,000	\$448,000	\$368,000
Concession (4)	\$24,000	\$36,000	\$30,000
Restrooms (4)	\$48,000	\$72,000	\$60,000
Basketball (2)	\$3,000	\$4,000	\$3,500
Pickleball (8)	\$9,600	\$14,400	\$12,000
Playgrounds (3)	\$18,000	\$27,000	\$22,500
Utilities	\$60,000	\$90,000	\$75,000
Staffing	\$270,000	\$330,000	\$300,000
<b>Total Annual</b>	<b>\$936,200</b>	<b>\$1,314,000</b>	<b>\$1,124,100</b>





# Targeted Improvements

## Emancipation Park

### Phase 2 Park Improvements and Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center

Emancipation Park is a landmark in Huntsville and provides more than 8 acres of open space and recreation amenities for residents. The park offers a large covered pavilion, playgrounds, athletic practice fields, a basketball court and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center. Also located on the property is the local Masonic Lodge. Overall the park is in good working condition and is used frequently by residents and visitors alike.

Renovation of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center was completed in October of 2023. The renovation was a remarkable success, and the facility is used for a wide variety of events. Since the renovation a new playground has been installed as well.

The design of the Community Center evolved from a single building concept to include a second building to be constructed in a later phase.

The renovation project included significant expansion of parking and added a necessary stormwater detention basin. Which will require relocation of some remaining items from the original master plan such as the Splash Pad and Gazebo during the completion of Emancipation Park renovation. The following features remain for Phase 2 construction:

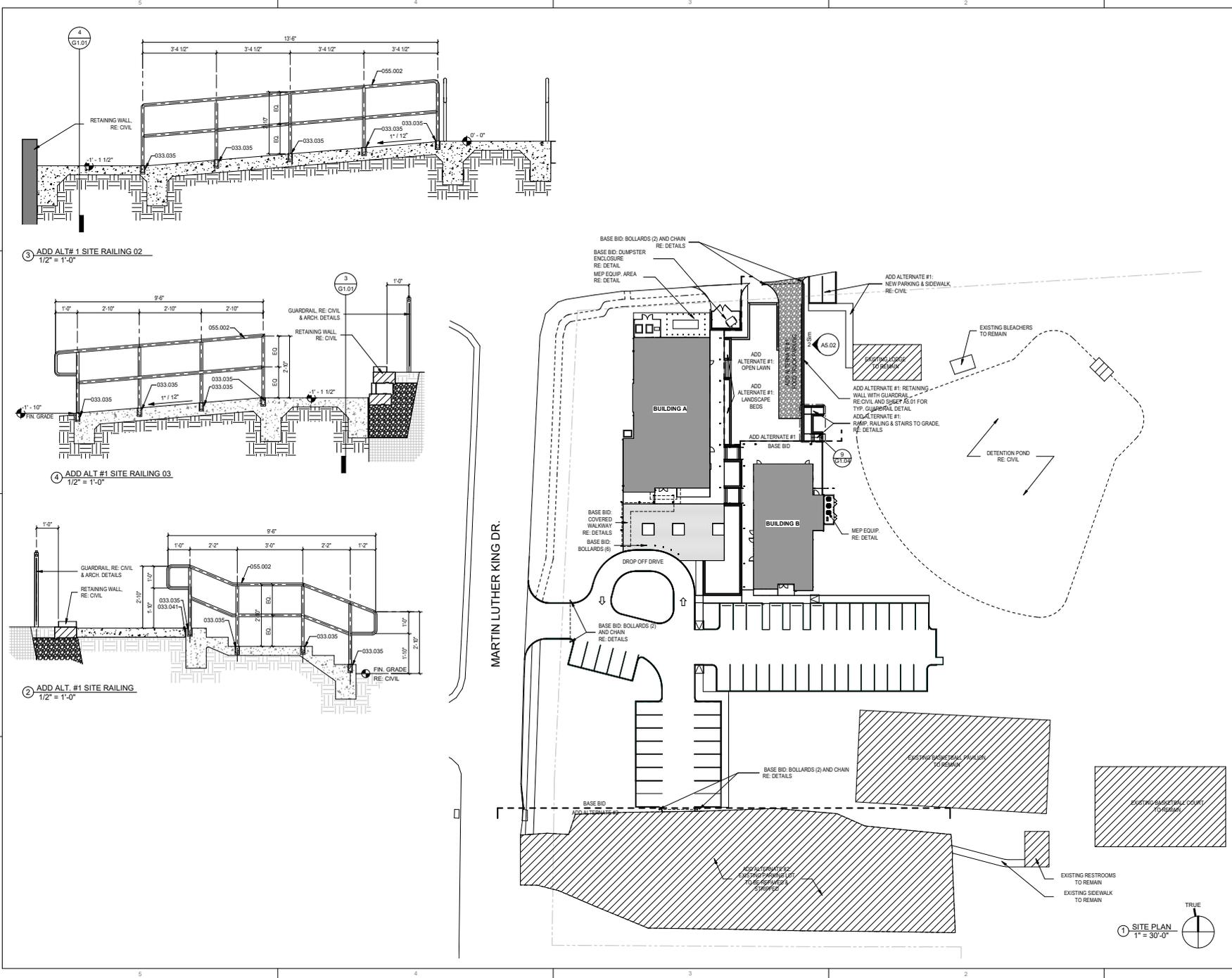
- MLK, Jr. Community Center Building 'B'
- Walking Paths (Loop and Connections)
- Splash Pad
- Gazebo
- Food truck court



*Ribbon-cutting ceremony at the newly-renovated MLK, Jr. Community Center.*



*New playgrounds at Emancipation Park.*



**GENERAL NOTES**



310 Longmire Road  
Copper, TX 77024  
Tel: 936.756.3041

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**KEYNOTES**

- 033.035 NON-SHRINK GROUT
- 033.041 BITUMINOUS EXPANSION JOINT FILLER- FILL W/ SEALANT 1/4" BELOW SURFACE
- 055.002 1 1/4" DIA. STEEL PIPE HANDRAIL: TOP OF HANDRAIL @ 3'-0" AFF., TYP.

**ISSUE FOR CONSTRUCTION**

03/18/2022

CITY OF HUNTSVILLE  
**MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. CENTER**  
310 Martin Luther King Dr., Huntsville, TX 77320

PROJECT NUMBER:  
**1358.003**

ISSUANCES		
No.	Description	Date

DRAWN BY:  
Author

CHECKED BY:  
Checker

SHEET NO.:

**ADD. ALTERNATE SITE PLAN**

**G1.01**  
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Final construction plans for the MLK, Jr. Community Center. The design of the MLK, Jr. Community Center evolved to a two building layout through the design process along with inclusion of a detention pond. Other proposed features to be included in Emancipation Park during future phases include a splash pad, gazebo, food truck court, and walking paths.

# Targeted Improvements

## Emancipation Park

### Phase 2 Park Improvements and Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center



*Rendering of the final design layout for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center. Building 'A' is shown on the left. Building 'B', on the right, is proposed for Phase 2 construction.*



*Rendering that shows a proposed food truck court at the rear of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center buildings.*

# Targeted Improvements

## Smaller Projects and General Park Improvements

Targeted Improvements are smaller projects that have been identified for consideration. These projects offer ways to add new features to existing parks and address aging equipment and amenities. Some of these recommendations respond directly to residents' demand for new and improved park features and others are the result of field observations and opportunities identified during the master planning process.

**Boetcher's Mill Park** - replace play structure. Site observations noted that structure is aging, rusted, and in need of replacement.



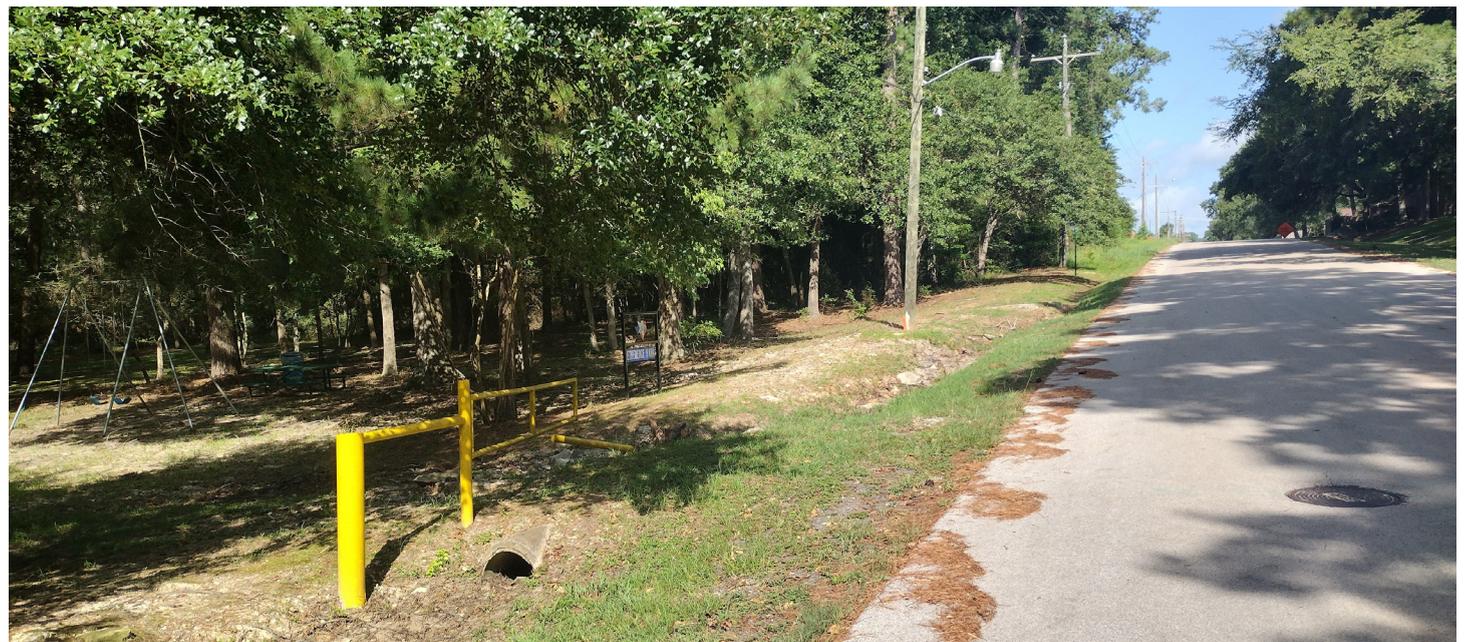
Aging play structure at Boetcher's Mill Park.

**Emma Etheridge Park** — new playground, improve access across ditch, repair water fountain, consider adding parking spaces, address accessibility to playground from road and/or parking, add trail. Residents have mentioned this multiple times in the survey, with comments mostly about lack of amenities. Site observations were that the access to the site is limited with the ditch making it a challenge to walk in, let alone use a wheelchair. There's also no ADA access to the playground.

**Pineview Park** - expand dog park to rest of park property. Approximately 1/2 acres is available for expansion. Residents have asked for dog parks, and the easy solution is to expand the existing one, since there is underutilized space at this park. An alternative would be to develop a dog park at Thomas Clifton Gibbs Park. This would be a well-shaded space with ample room for a large dog park, walking path, parking lot, and other amenities.



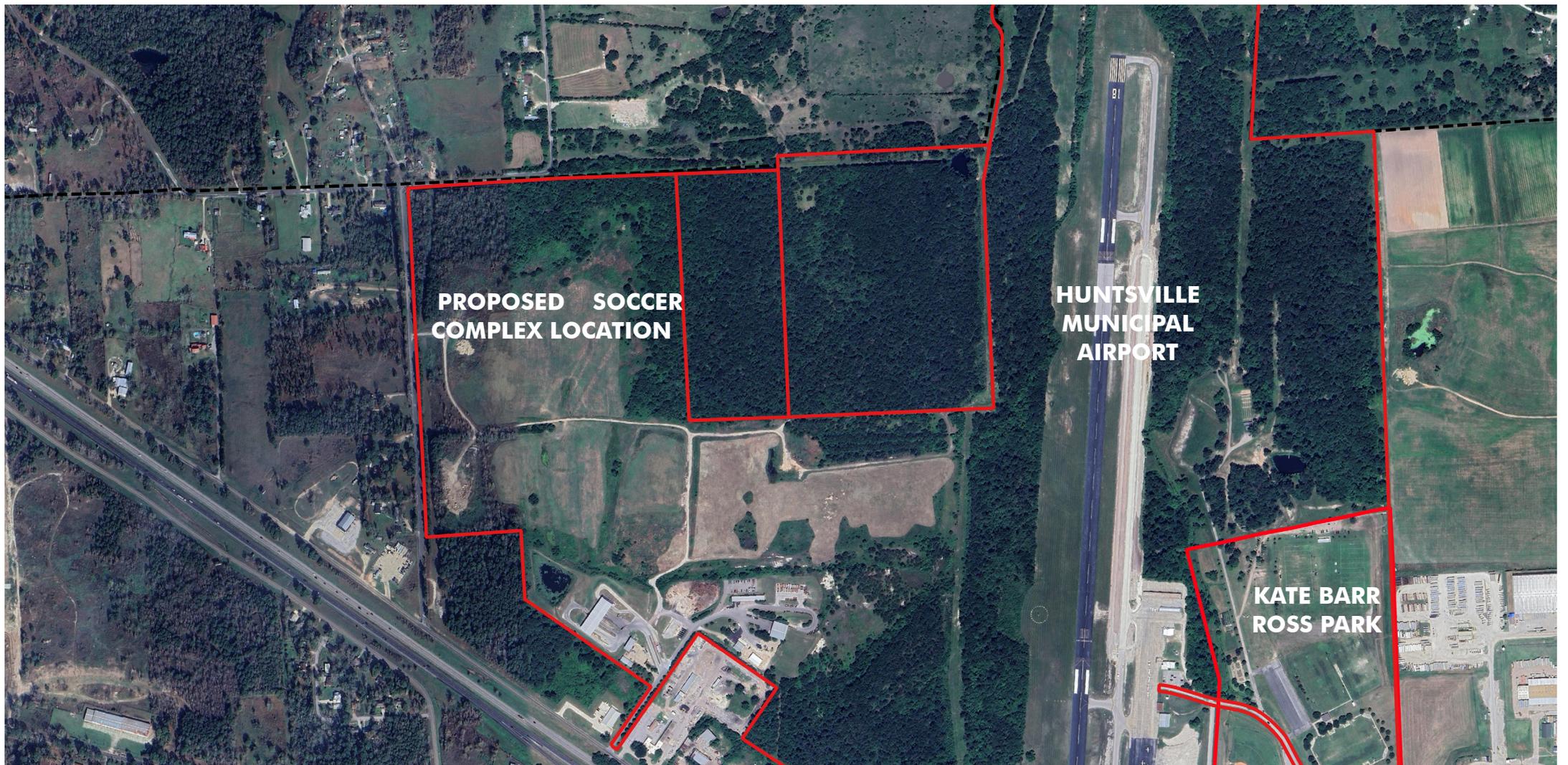
Proposed expansion area for dog park at Pineview Park (circled in yellow).



The open ditch and lack of sidewalks creates access issues at Emma Etheridge Park.

## **Soccer Complex at the Former Landfill**

Soccer continues to be grown in popularity, and finding room for expansion of the program within existing parks is limited. The City owns significant acreage of land to the east of the airport that presents an opportunity to develop a dedicated soccer complex on the former landfill site. Although landfills can have some limitations on large structures, the site has the potential to be converted to a large soccer complex with fields, parking, lighting, restrooms. The site has been regularly mowed and was offered in the past as a place for soccer practice and game play, however the teams preferred the fields at Kate Barr Ross Park. Likely it is the lack of infrastructure, amenities, and play surface quality that make the site less desirable. With the cost of land ever-increasing, the former landfill offers a unique opportunity to expand soccer opportunities with the right investment.



*Red lines denote boundaries of city-owned property.*

# Plan **Implementation**



01

Inventory &  
**Analysis**

02

Demand  
**Assessment**

03

**Walkability**

04

Plan  
**Recommendations**

05

Plan  
**Implementation**

## Where to Begin

### Project Prioritization

The Parks Master Plan identifies the priority projects and justification through stakeholder input. However, the timing of project implementation is largely a function of funding availability and the City's will to move forward on a given project.

City Council will likely use a municipal bond to fund any major improvements to the parks and recreation system. The system-wide goals for improvements include significant expenditures if all proposed projects were to be implemented. Given that not all items can be reasonably developed at one time, it is important to focus on the highest priority components listed above for implementation.

Below is a summary table of probable costs and projected investment by the community. An annual debt service rate was calculated using 2024 taxable property values and City rates for guidance. With an assumption of 15 year bond periods and an annual debt service of 3%, the table below illustrates the level of investment per household projected for key property value categories.

### Project Design and Construction

When it comes to parks and recreation planning, identifying the needs of residents and developing a vision for the future parks system are important first steps. Once a project has been identified and approved for further study, the process of funding, design and construction can begin.

The proposed parks projects would likely be funded through a municipal bond, while also exploring other funding mechanisms. Following a decision to move forward on a priority project, the City will need to engage a qualified design team to further program the details of the project.

The Design Development phase of this process will allow the City to further refine the important details that bring the park and recreation project to life. This process will include several iterations of projected costs, revisions and refinements that ultimately will be turned into construction documents. It is important during to continue to gather input from stakeholders during this process to ensure that key details are not left out.

Construction documentation, bidding and construction of the project is the phase where it will be important to have the right team for the job. Quality construction documents followed by strict adherence to the drawings during construction administration will ultimately determine the quality of the end result. All too often great projects are turned over to a general contractor to be completed with insufficient supervision, resulting in poor performance, change orders and added costs. The City will need the designer to act as an advocate for the City throughout the construction process to ensure success.

## Proposed Parks Department Priority Projects - Cost Per Household Valuation

Capital Project	Project Cost Estimate (avg. low-high)			Annual Cost per Valuation					
	Probable Cost	Annual Debt Svc	I&S Rate per \$100 Value	\$150,000	\$200,000	\$250,000	\$300,000	\$350,000	\$400,000
Renovation of Kate Barr Ross Sports Complex	\$35,897,061	\$3,006,974	0.093	\$140	\$187	\$233	\$280	\$327	\$373
Recreation Center and Natatorium at Eastham Thomason Park	\$30,318,525	\$2,539,679	0.079	\$118	\$158	\$197	\$237	\$276	\$315

The analysis above illustrates what a household could expect to pay in property taxes annually to fund a municipal bond to implement the above-noted capital projects. The analysis uses current tax rates and property valuation within Huntsville, Texas. For example, if a home is valued at \$200,000, then a bond-funded project for Kate Barr Ross park renovation would cost that household an additional \$140 per year for the duration of the payback period on the loan.

\*annual cost per valuation based on 2024 City tax rates and total property valuation.

\*assumes 3% debt service and 15-year bond term.

## Potential Funding Sources

As the City continues with improvements and additions to the parks system, funding is often the key player in the decision making process. The following are a variety of State and Federal grant programs available to aid cities in the enhancement of parks and recreation facilities and other public space projects.

Huntsville's planning documents, such as the Comprehensive Plan and the Parks Master Plan, identify the needs and priorities for parks and recreation improvements. These documents serve as a guide for capital investments and seeking funding. The City of Huntsville actively seeks outside funding to supplement its local budget allocations.

Here are the funding sources identified:

### 1. City of Huntsville's Internal Funds:

- The City utilizes an annual budget and a multi-year Capital Improvements Program (CIP) to identify and budget for major projects, including parks, trails, and recreation facility construction and upgrades.
- The FY 2024-2025 budget includes a set-aside for future implementation of specific improvements identified in the ongoing Parks Master Plan [37b].
- Transfers from operating funds are one source of funding for the City's capital improvement projects.
- The FY 2024-2025 Capital Funding Additions and Sources include \$250,000 from the General Fund for Park Improvement Projects Implementation per the Masterplan.
- The City generates revenue from property taxes, sales tax, permits, licenses, and development fees, and utility user fees (Water, Wastewater, Solid Waste). These revenues support the budget, which can then fund capital improvements or be used as matching funds for grants.
- The City may also explore evaluating the potential to develop impact fees based on the CIP or an Infrastructure Master Plan. Impact fees are intended to ensure new development covers the primary costs of necessary infrastructure upgrades or extensions.
- Potential mechanisms suitable to Huntsville for promoting economic development and facilitating redevelopment, which could include park-related projects, may involve policy enhancements, direct financial assistance, and programming.

### 2. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) Local Park Grants:

- The TPWD Local Park Grant Program is a significant source of funding.
- These are 50/50 matching grants provided on a reimbursement basis to eligible local government entities. The local applicant must provide 50% of the project costs, and this match MUST be available at the time of application.
- Eligible matching sources include voter-approved bonds, City cash and Economic Development Corporation (EDC) funds, City in-house labor/equipment/materials, City-owned non-parkland, fees or cash in-lieu of mandatory dedicated parkland, donated land/cash/labor/equipment/materials, and other grants.
- Funding for these grants comes from a portion of the state sales tax on sporting goods through the Texas Recreation and Parks Account (TRPA) and the Texas Large County & Municipality Recreation & Parks Account, as well as from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund.
- Texas voters overwhelmingly approved Proposition 5 in November 2019, which stabilizes robust funding for state parks and local park grants. The total amount granted annually is likely to increase as a result. The TPW Commission approved a record \$30.9 million in local park grants in January 2025.
- These grants can be used for the acquisition and/or development of public recreation areas and facilities. Eligible development projects include basic outdoor recreation facilities, renovation, or redevelopment.
- State grants for land acquisition are only possible through allocations of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund; the Sporting Goods Sales Tax is not eligible for land acquisition for new parks or conservation areas.
- All grant-assisted sites must be dedicated as parkland in perpetuity, properly maintained, and open to the public.
- Projects that meet priorities identified in a TPWD-accepted, locally-endorsed parks master plan may receive points in the application scoring system (though not specifically in the Small Community criteria, for which Huntsville's population exceeds the limit). Keeping the Parks and Recreation Master Plan updated every five years helps maintain eligibility to apply for these grants.
- The application deadline is annually on August 1st, and applications are submitted through the Recreation Grants Online Grant

### 3. Other Potential State and Federal Grants:

- National Recreational Trails Fund (NRTF): Administered by TPWD under federal approval, this fund supports recreational trail construction, renovation, and acquisition. These are reimbursable grants, potentially covering up to 80% of the project cost.
- Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) Flood Infrastructure Fund (FIF): This fund, created by Proposition 8 in 2019, assists in financing drainage, flood mitigation, and flood control projects. While primarily for flood control, it could potentially be relevant for projects incorporating multi-purpose open space or green infrastructure related to storm water management.
- Supplemental Environmental Projects (SEPs): These allow penalties from environmental violations to be used for beneficial projects, including conservation and land acquisition for water quality benefits. This source is described as unpredictable.
- Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds: Administered by the TWDB, these funds primarily address water infrastructure but encourage funding for "green projects," potentially including land for water quality benefits.
- Federal discretionary grant funding opportunities such as BUILD (Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development) or INFRA (Infrastructure for Rebuilding America) are listed as potential funding strategies in the Transportation Master Plan, though not specifically tied to parks. Grants are seen as supplementing capital improvement projects.
- Community Development Block Grants -potential funding: up to 80% of project cost or maximum of \$200,000. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides assistance to communities across the nation for a wide range of activities through the Community Development Block Grants Program. These funds are often distributed to individual communities by the state as match-grants to fund projects supporting economic development and improved quality of life. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department awards grants from this program annually to develop and enhance parks and open space.
- Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU) - Recreation Trails Program: The Transportation Safety Act, also known as the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), provides for the distribution of funds from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The Federal Highway Administration is the largest source of funding for shared use paths, trails and related projects. The Recreational Trails Program, an assistance program to FHWA, distributes funds for a range of activities including:

- o Maintenance and restoration of existing trails.
- o Development and rehabilitation of trailside and trailhead facilities and trail linkages.
- o Purchase and lease of trail construction and maintenance equipment.
- o Construction of new trails (with restrictions for new trails on Federal lands).
- o Acquisition of easements or property for trails.
- o Assessment of trail conditions for accessibility and maintenance.

### 4. Local Funding Mechanisms:

- Cities can use parkland dedication ordinances, hotel/motel tax, and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) or Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (TIRZ) for park funding. The Hotel/Motel Tax - Tourism & Visitors Center fund is included in Huntsville's budget. The Huntsville Comprehensive Plan mentions bolstering the tourism industry, including cultural and recreational tourism, as an economic development strategy, which can be supported by hotel/motel taxes.
- The City can continue coordination with Sam Houston State University (SHSU) and Huntsville Independent School District (HISD) on the use of sports fields and recreational facilities, identifying opportunities for leveraging resources.

In summary, Huntsville can fund future parks and recreation improvements through its municipal budget and CIP, leveraging local tax revenues, and by aggressively pursuing state and federal grants like the TPWD Local Park Grants, NRTF, and potentially others related to environmental or infrastructure projects. The City's updated Parks Master Plan will be a key tool for prioritizing projects and aligning them with funding opportunities. Securing outside funding is explicitly identified as a strategic goal for the City.

