



# NORCROSS

naturally connected

**Final Report**



**Parks, Greenspaces, Trails & Green Infrastructure Master Plan**

August 2024



Accepted  
by  
Mayor and City  
Council on  
Monday, August 5,  
2024

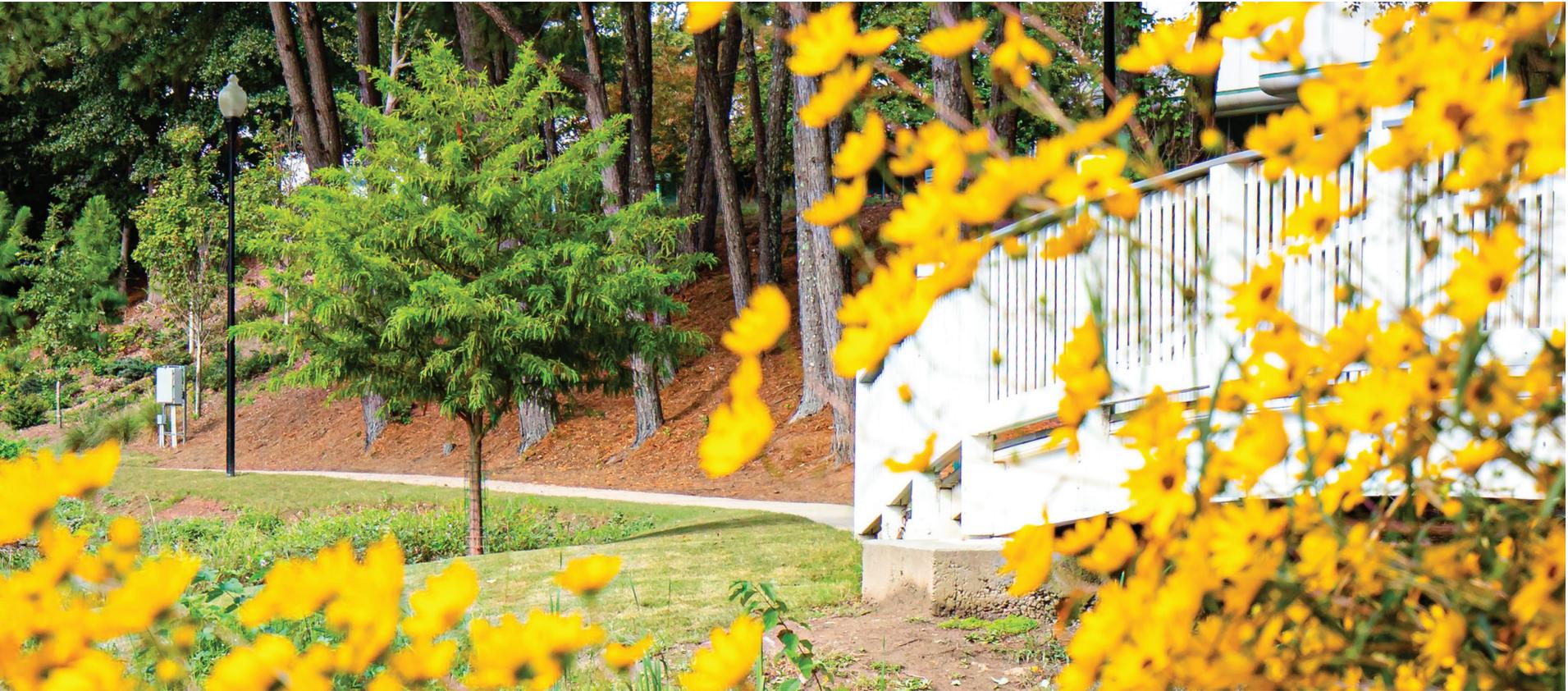
## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

### Elected Officials

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Josh Bare, Councilmember  
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Matt Myers, Councilmember  
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Kassie Diehl  
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## Citizens of Norcross

A special thank you to all the community members, park users, and greenspace advocates who attended meetings, provided input, and helped to shape this plan. Your contributions are truly appreciated and this plan is a reflection of your imagination for a greener Norcross!

## Project Team

Perez Planning + Design  
Biohabitats

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**EX**  
Executive  
Summary

## Plan Purpose

Parks and the broader public realm—including greenspaces, streets, trails, conservation areas, civic spaces, and green infrastructure —can help create jobs, increase revenues, protect natural resources, shape urban form and character, expand transportation access, improve health and education, and strengthen families. And, in light of worsening wealth inequality, climate change, and political exhaustion, parks and recreation systems can be an oasis, bringing people together, mitigating effects of storms and severe weather, and providing an outlet for stress relief and opportunities to improve overall wellness for community members.

Parks, greenspaces, trails, and green infrastructure planning provides an opportunity to think long-term about how the parks system should be improved to help achieve these many benefits.

- Are additional facilities needed, like new playgrounds or splashpads in fast-growing areas?
- What are state-of-the-art and innovative strategies for incorporating green infrastructure?
- Is there land that should be protected as forest before it becomes developed?
- Is the whole community being served equitably, through a variety of programs and park spaces?
- How can we guide future investment and programming choices?

This document serves to answer these questions and many more, creating a framework and vision for the next five years of progress, growth, and adaptation within Norcross' Department of Public Works, Utilities, Parks, and Recreation.



## Planning Process

This project follows a four-step strategic planning process, rooted in data and designed for adaptation and flexibility. Each phase of the process builds on the findings and conclusions from the previous phases. The following pages contain key summary findings from each of these phases.

1

**CHAPTER 1 - Discover** establishes the context of the park system within the City's ongoing planning efforts, and the role of this plan. This focus includes a review of previously completed plans, the inventory of parks and recreation facilities, and the establishment of project goals based on staff and community input. It begins the process of extensive community engagement that continues through all phases.

2

**CHAPTER 2 - Analyze** examines the existing conditions of the parks and recreation system relative to Norcross' challenges and opportunities. It assesses the quantity and quality of parks and stormwater facilities, and identifies gaps between the existing and desired conditions of these systems. The process is based on a proven "triangulated" approach to identifying needs and priorities, which includes various anecdotal, qualitative, and quantitative methods to determine top priorities from different perspectives.

3

**CHAPTER 3 - Create** outlines a vision for the plan based on:

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

The vision provides a framework to assess areas for site-specific planning recommendations and conceptual plans.

4

**CHAPTER 4 - Refine** includes a summary of revenue projections, and a phasing/funding plan to implement top priorities based on available and projected funding.

## CHAPTER 1 - Discover Summary Findings

### Public Engagement Highlights

Norcross has a rapidly growing population and a high degree of diversity across age, ethnicity, and national origin.

Because the parks, greenspace, trails, and green infrastructure system is intended to serve all residents regardless of background or socioeconomic status it is important that this plan incorporates the input of residents from a broad spectrum of the City. Multiple strategies were employed to collect input from residents about their parks and recreation needs and priorities.

The project was promoted via various printed, online, and social media outlets, including a project website that received over 2,300 visits, by over 1,350 unique users.

Collectively, over 1,650 people participated in the process. Summary findings of top priority needs are discussed in the following page.



**1,350+**  
Unique Users

**320+**  
Survey + Map Comments

**2,300+**  
Website Visits

**5** Steering Committee Meetings

## Summary High-Priority Facility/ Amenity Summary Findings

The chart below compares the facility/ amenity findings across all the techniques used to identify patterns of consensus of what facility/ amenities were most important to residents. This summary chart identifies the facilities/ amenities that were most important to residents.

Identified High-Priority Facility/ Amenity Summary Findings	Public Engagement Technique				
	1. Online Survey	2. Public Meetings/ Special Events	3. Steering Committee	4. Focus Group Interviews	5. City Leadership Interviews
<b>Public Engagement Technique Findings Legend</b>					
	Mentioned in Discussion (Percentile N/A)				
Shaded Paved Multi-Purpose Trails					
Unpaved Walking + Walking Trails					
Shaded Sidewalks					
Natural Shade					
Dog Parks					
Natural Areas/ Forested Nature Parks					
Nature Based Solutions to Stormwater Management				-	
Pollinator Gardens					-
Restrooms at Parks			-		-
Rain Gardens		-		-	-
Outdoor Pools			-	-	-

## Summary High-Priority Program/ Activity Summary Findings

The chart below compares the program/ activity findings across all the techniques used to identify patterns of consensus of what programs/ activities were most important to residents. This summary chart identifies the programs/ activities that were most important to residents.

Identified High-Priority Program/ Activity Summary Findings	Public Engagement Technique				
Public Engagement Technique Findings Legend	1. Online Survey	2. Public Meetings/ Special Events	3. Steering Committee	4. Focus Group Interviews	5. City Leadership Interviews
Cooking Classes	●	●	●	-	-
Nature Based Adult Programs	●	○	●	-	-
Nature Based Youth Programs	○	○	●	-	-
Teen Programs	●	-	●	-	-
Adult Fitness and Wellness	●	●	-	-	-
Language Classes	○	●	-	-	-
Parent and Child Programs	○	●	-	-	-
Digital Media, Photography Programs	○	-	●	-	-
Before and After School Programs	○	-	●	-	-
Camps (Summer/School Break	○	-	○	-	-
Video Gaming/ Virtual Gaming	-	●	-	-	-
Movies in the Park	●	-	-	-	-

## CHAPTER 2 - Analyze Summary Findings

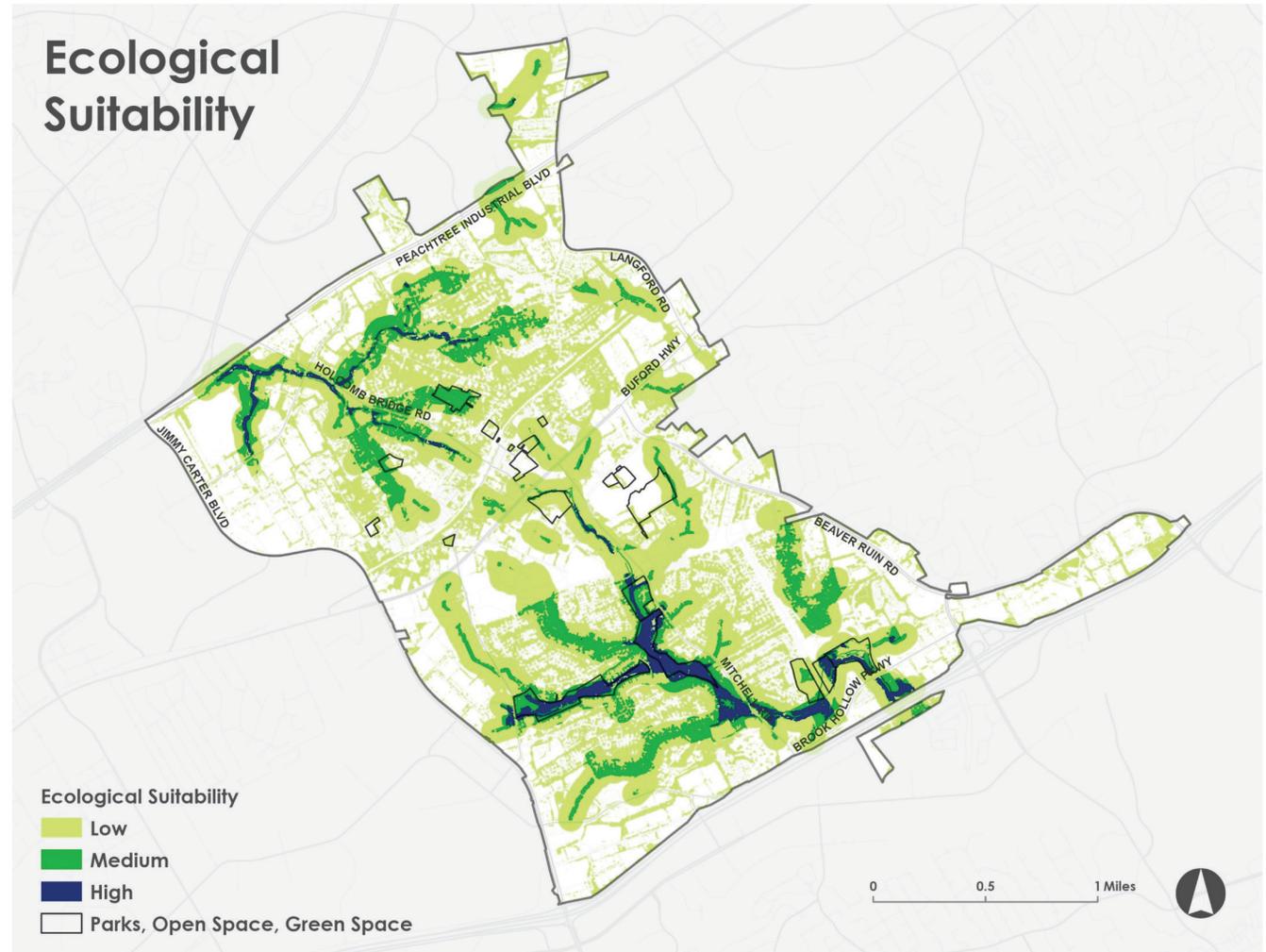
### Ecological Suitability Analysis

GIS-based suitability analysis was completed to uncover the highest ecological suitability for future stewardship and protection: inclusive of streams and stream buffers, floodplains, wetlands, forest patch size, and forest configuration.

The analysis uncovered that existing parks and open space currently hold most of the highest suitability lands.

Additionally, most suitable ecological lands align with the two significant stream corridors that help define the City.

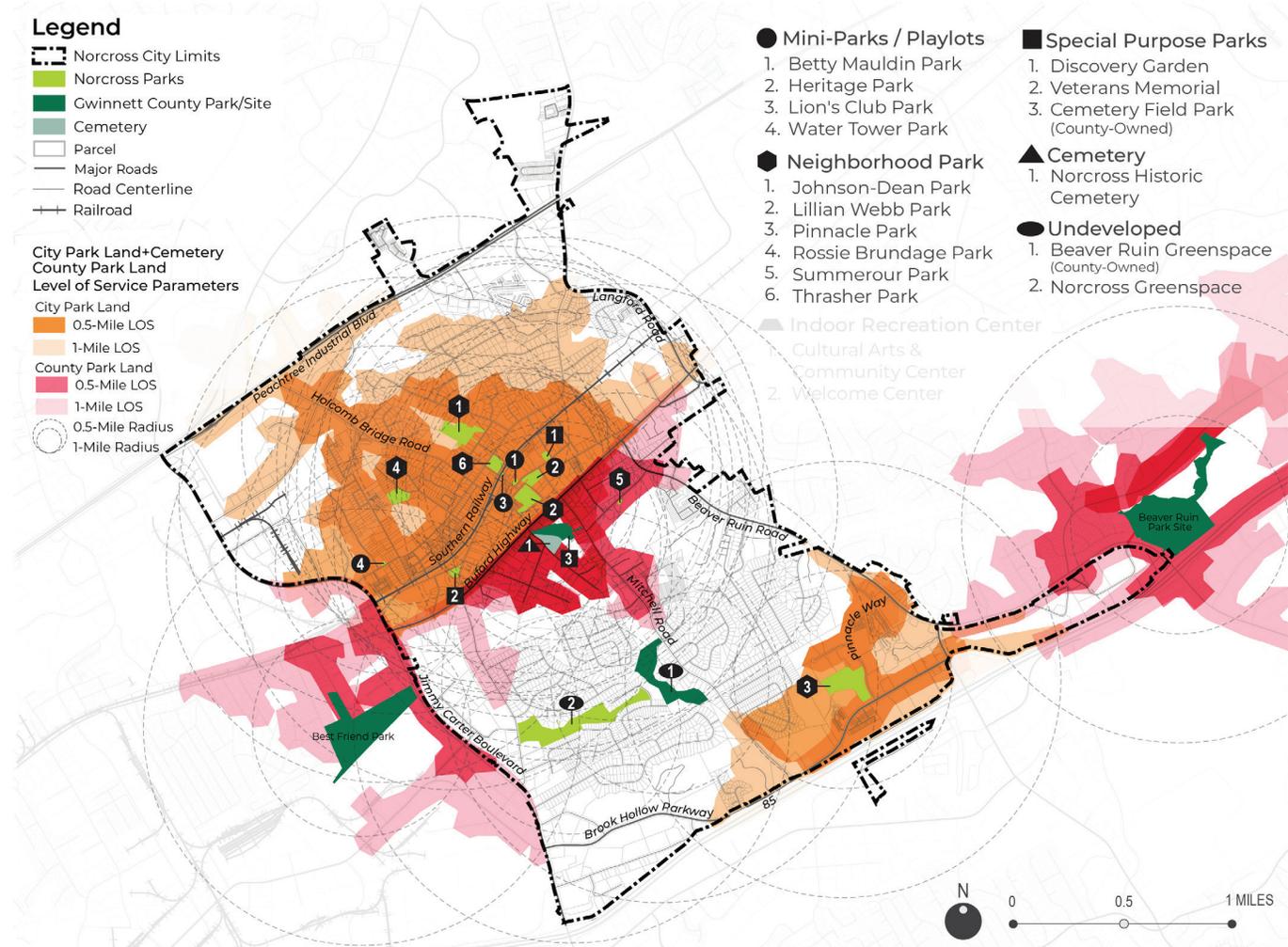
There is an opportunity to look to protect those areas of high suitability contiguous to protected lands and expand to potentially protect areas of medium suitability from future development impacts.



## Access Level of Service Analysis

Access Level of Service Analysis was completed to determine which areas in the City are served by parks, greenspaces, and trails. The map on the right shows the areas in the City of Norcross that are served by a developed City and County Park within a walkable 1/2 mile or 1 mile of resident homes. This map also considers Buford Highway and Jimmy Carter Boulevard as barriers to pedestrian walking/crossability given their high traffic volumes and high speeds.

The map shows that the areas east/south of Buford Highway do not have as much walkable access to developed parks as the areas west/ north of Buford Highway.



## CHAPTER 3 - Create Summary Findings

### Protect the City's Ecological Bones

The City will protect the ecologically sensitive network of corridors and patches present within Norcross through a variety of strategies, from fee simple acquisition to conservation easements, to strengthening the City's environmental protection ordinances and providing further information to city residents on how to best steward natural areas within the public and private realm.

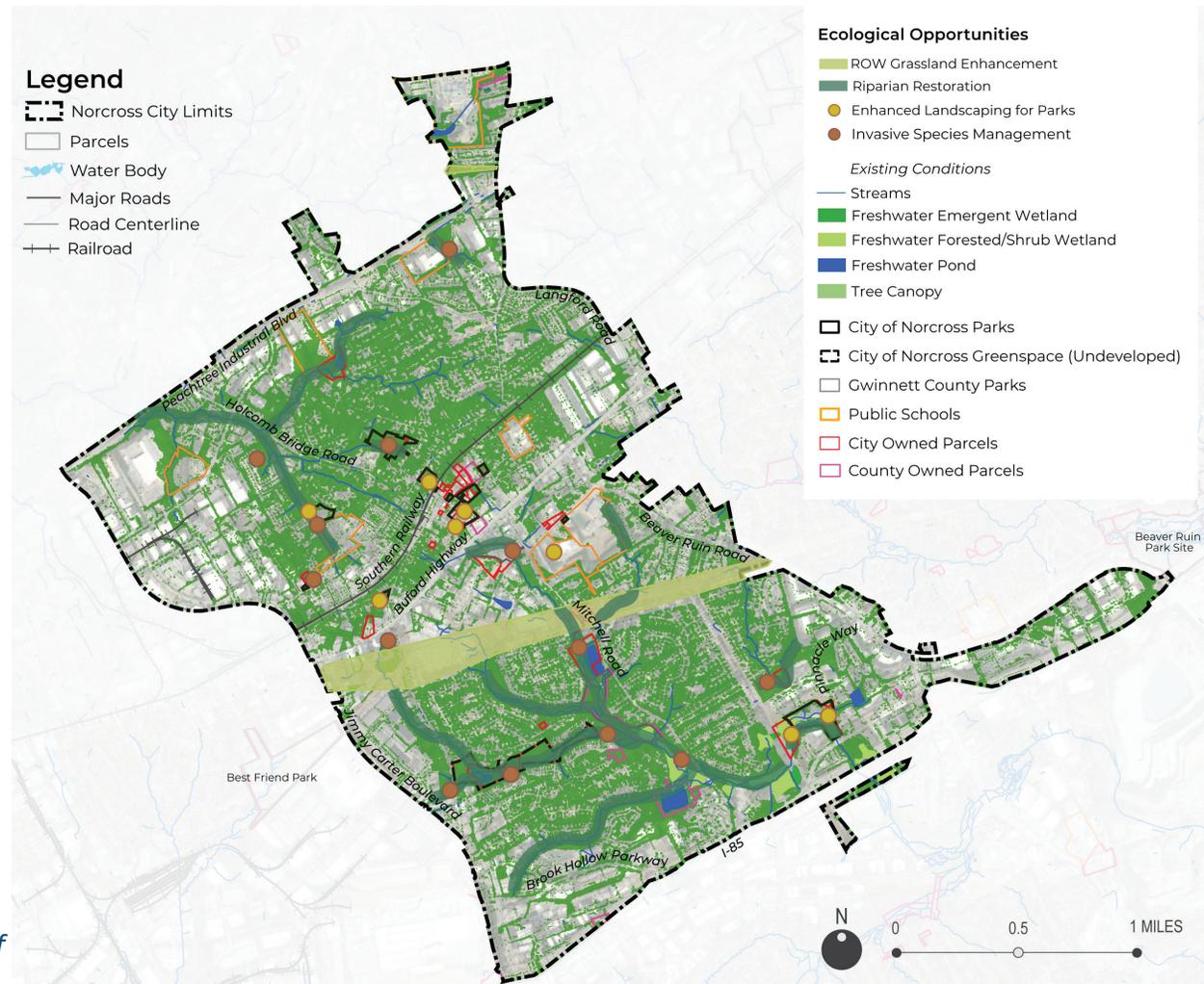
Priority lands for protection are guided by the rapid GIS-based suitability analysis results (right) focused on uncovering the highest ecological suitability for future stewardship and protection: inclusive of streams and stream buffers, floodplains, wetlands, forest patch size, and forest configuration.



## Strategic Stewardship to Enhance Nature

The Department will guide the City's land management strategy to strengthen ecological function. Stewardship strategies will enhance and restore native vegetation, both beautifying natural areas and facilitating streamlined maintenance. Some of the potential outcomes of these efforts include:

- Maintaining and enhancing functional landscapes to realize stacked environmental benefits (ecosystem services) such as:
  - Improving water quality flowing into stream systems
  - Improving ecological health & biodiversity of the natural areas within the city
  - Supporting long-term resilience & habitat function
  - Providing education and stewardship opportunities
  - Lowering carbon emissions
  - Strengthening Norcross' sense of place and civic identity through its connection to place (the ecological context unique to Norcross)

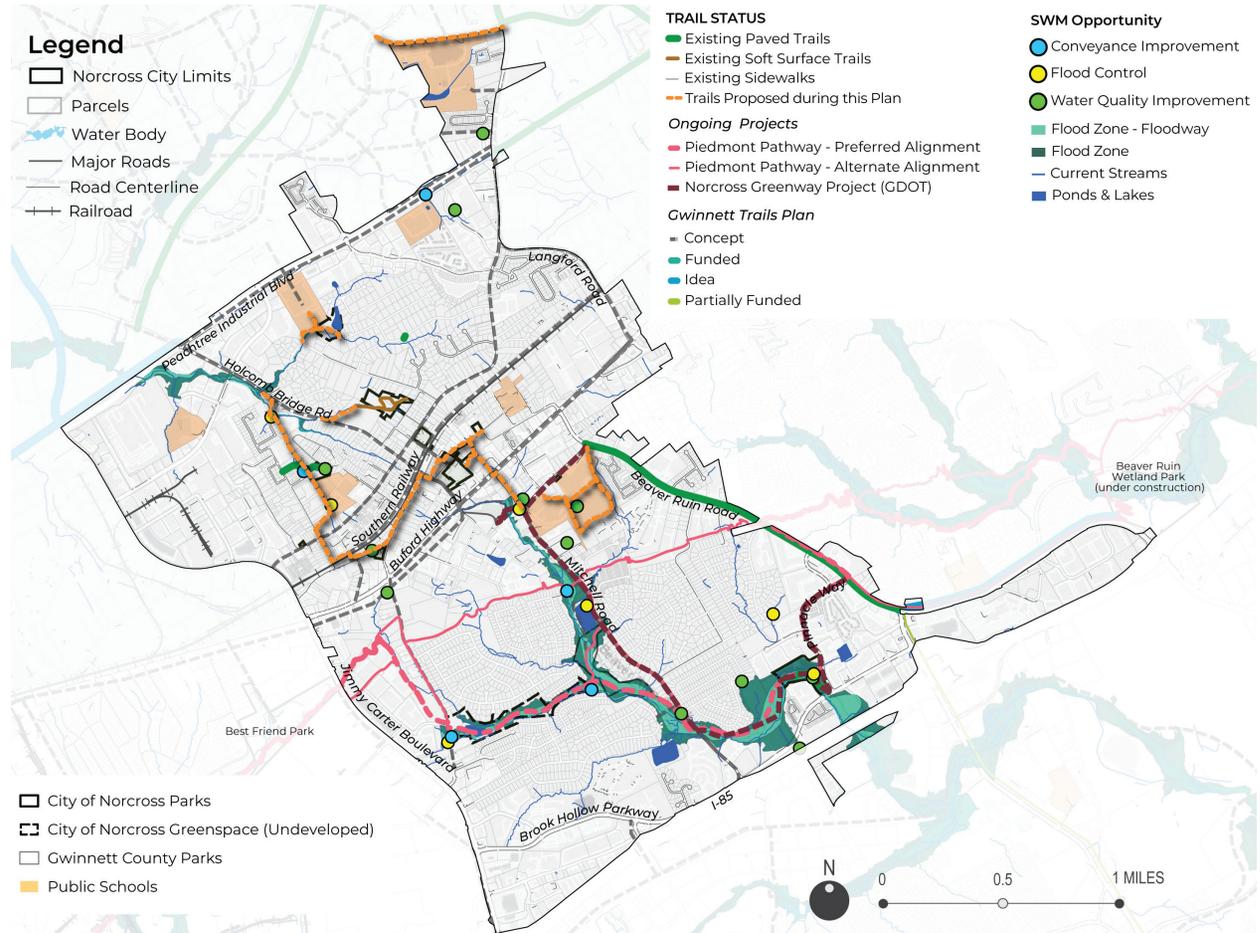


## Create “Natural Connections” to Recreation

The Department will increase access and awareness of the parks and recreation system, better connecting the community to the public realm.

This will be accomplished through physical elements, such as coordinating pedestrian and bicycle+ improvements across the City to ensure that sidewalks, trails, and urban design elements foster active transportation to parks and schools.

Additionally, new programs and outreach efforts will keep the public informed and engaged with parks and recreation opportunities.

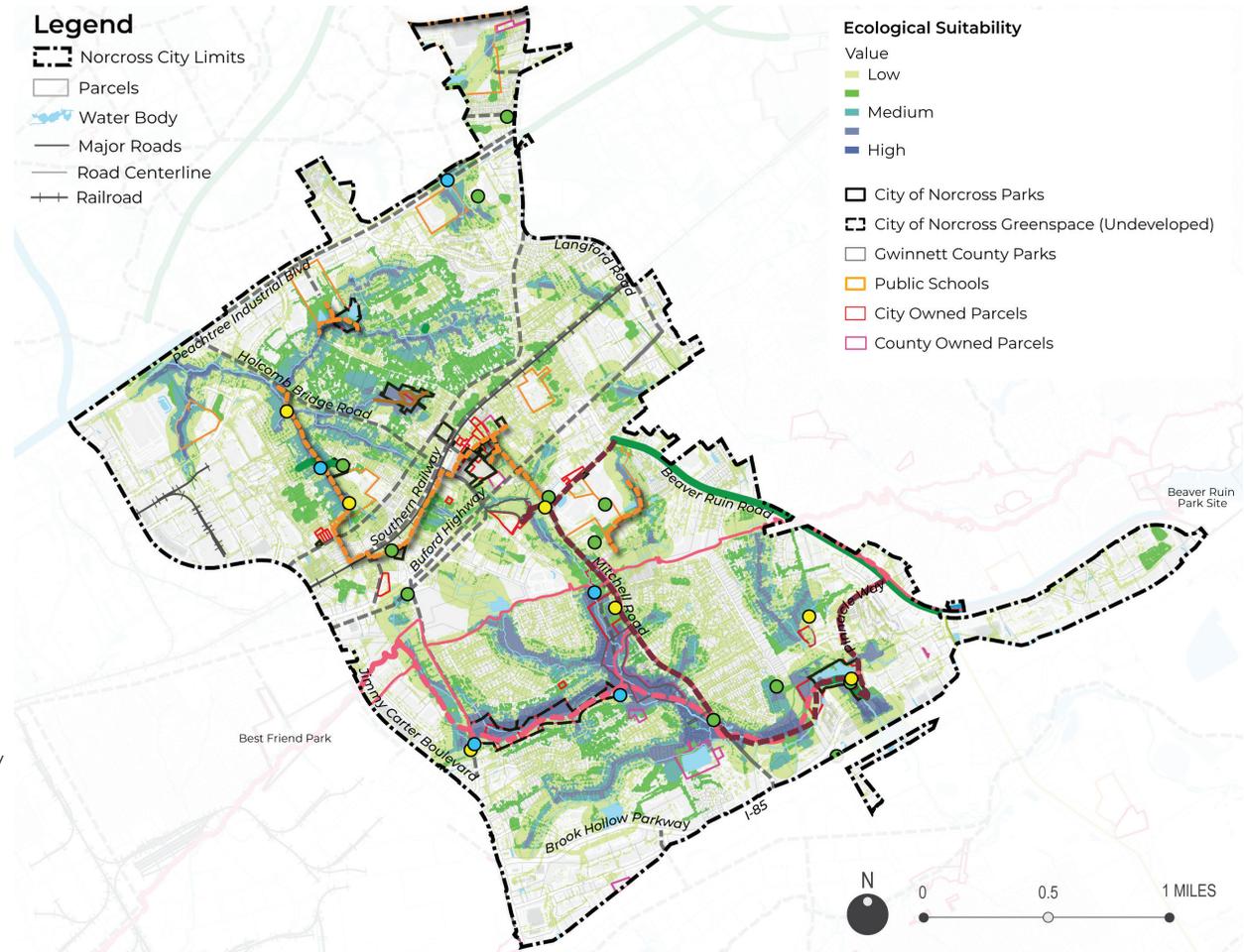


## Optimize Green Spaces to Serve Community Needs

*The Department will make upgrades to existing parks, and design new green spaces, to effectively serve a variety of uses, based on needs expressed through community engagement.*

One of the proposed projects that fulfills all the guiding principles is the Beaver Ruin Greenway - Piedmont Pathway. The project also provides significant benefits, including:

- 25+ acres of new developed park land east/ south of Buford Highway, with the majority protected and enhanced as “nature preserve.”
- Connection to the Norcross Greenway project
- A variety of new facilities to support programs and park activation



# Piedmont Pathway Concept

## RIGHT

Concept for the Piedmont Pathway.

Three new park spaces and a variety of amenities are proposed along the Piedmont Pathway. Top-down construction of the trail would minimize impacts to trees and wetlands while providing opportunities for stream restoration and green infrastructure installations.



**RIGHT**

The West Entry park concept fronts Norcross Tucker Road and provides a variety of easily accessible amenities, including a playground, restrooms, pavilion, and open space. The open space and constructed wetland occupy an area that previously was the site of a sewer facility for surrounding neighborhoods.



**ABOVE**

The East Entry park fronts Mitchell Road and proposes a variety of easily accessible amenities, including a plaza, restrooms, pavilion, and zone for games like horseshoes or bocce. Opportunities exist for stream restoration and floodplain reconnection in conjunction with trail construction.



**RIGHT**

The North Entry park fronts Mitchell Road and occupies a ~10-acre city-owned property that was formerly a dumping ground. Space is provided for a dog park, parking lot, open space, playground, and more.

## CHAPTER 4 - Refine Summary Findings

### Projects

Thirty-nine projects emerged from the Vision. Criteria were developed to prioritize these projects and based on the project scores, the table and map on the right identify the highest priority projects that fulfill all the guiding principles and provide significant benefits.

Project Name	Order of Magnitude Planning Level Costs
1. Gwinnett County Water Pond	Public Owned
2. Piedmont Pathway R.O.W.	\$600,000
3. Pinnacle Park Hydrological Improvements	\$3,000,000
4. Johnson-Dean Restoration	\$400,000
5. Piedmont Pathway Green Infrastructure Park - East Entry	\$4,000,000
6. Piedmont Pathway Green Infrastructure Park - West Entry	\$6,000,000
7. Piedmont Pathway - North	\$12,000,000
8. Piedmont Pathway - East	\$7,300,000
9. Piedmont Pathway - West	\$5,000,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$38,300,000</b>

**Project Location Map**



**Project Type Legend**

- Park Land Acquisition Project
- Existing Park Improvement Project
- New Park Facility Project
- New Trail Project

## Funding Allocation Steps

The ability to implement proposed projects is directly linked to the amount of funding that will be available over the next 5 years and beyond.

As noted earlier, the City of Norcross currently has \$3.6 Million to spend on parks, greenspace, trails, and green infrastructure capital projects over the next 5 years.

There is an opportunity for the City to balance the use of these focused funds to both advance projects and leverage grant funding by using some of the City's funding as match amounts. The figure below proposes a strategy for the use of the City's funds. Specifically, it suggests using \$1.6 Million of the City's funds as a grants match to obtain an additional \$6.4 Million dollars. This would increase the City's availability of funds to \$10 Million.

Funding Allocation of \$3.6M
\$2M to advance Projects
\$1.6M for Grant Matching (20% Match of \$8M)
\$6.4M from obtained Grants
<b>\$10M</b>

The figure below illustrates the steps for how these funds could be allocated over the next 5 years. After the next 5 years, the City can see how much funding they would receive from the 2030 SPLOST, explore what additional funding sources could be obtained, and re-evaluate the prioritization of projects to continue implementing projects.

As new park and trail projects are implemented, it will be important for the City to ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to the proper maintenance and upkeep of these spaces. Establishing a volunteer program that organizes park and trail clean-up days is a strategy that many municipalities use to help with the maintenance of parks and trails. The City of Norcross should consider establishing a Volunteer Program for the City's parks, greenspaces, trails, and green infrastructure system.

Timeline	Per Year Amount	Project Description
2024	\$600K	Pursue Acquisition of Remaining Piedmont Pathway Parcels
2025 to 2026	\$900K	Design and Engineering for East and West Piedmont Pathway Green Infrastructure Parks
	\$300K	Design and Engineering of Pinnacle Park Hydrological Improvements
	\$175K	Johnson-Dean Restoration
	\$25k+	Other Improvements
2027 to 2029	\$8M	Depending on grants obtained, pursue the implementation of Piedmont Pathway Entry Parks, Pinnacle Park Hydrological Improvements, and Design and Engineering of Piedmont Pathway.
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$10M</b>	
2030+	?	Re-evaluate Prioritization of Projects and Continue Implementation with 2030 SPLOST



# Chapter 0

## Introduction

# Growing a Greener City

The City of Norcross is a small town with big aspirations for its parks, greenspaces, and trails.

The community has a strong, and long-standing, appreciation for its parks and recreation amenities, as well as for the vitality of all of its natural features, from tree canopy to streams and wetlands.

This plan represents an effort to bring a heightened focus to protecting, conserving, and maximizing parks and recreation opportunities as development and redevelopment continue to transform the City's urban fabric.

Taking a holistic approach to nature in the city, this plan seeks to improve understanding of how the City can use low-impact development, green infrastructure, and other sustainable strategies to strengthen native ecosystems, not only in City parks, but across the entire community.

At the same time, it explores the overall recreational needs of the community within a rapidly growing and diverse population.



## Plan Purpose

Parks and the broader public realm—including greenspaces, streets, trails, conservation areas, civic spaces, and green infrastructure —can help create jobs, increase revenues, protect natural resources, shape urban form and character, expand transportation access, improve health and education, and strengthen families. And, in light of worsening wealth inequality, climate change, and political exhaustion, parks and recreation systems can be an oasis, bringing people together, mitigating effects of storms and severe weather, and providing an outlet for stress relief and opportunities to improve overall wellness for community members.

Parks, greenspaces, trails, and green infrastructure planning provides an opportunity to think long-term about how the parks system should be improved to help achieve these many benefits.

- Are additional facilities needed, like new playgrounds or splashpads in fast-growing areas?
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- Is there land that should be protected as forest before it becomes developed?
- Is the whole community being served equitably, through a variety of programs and park spaces?
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This document serves to answer these questions and many more, creating a framework and vision for the next five years of progress, growth, and adaptation within Norcross' Department of Public Works, Utilities, Parks, and Recreation.



The plan seeks to employ three overall strategies:

# 1

Use a data-driven approach to understand the existing conditions of the parks and recreation system and establish a framework for decision-making about the allocation of parks and recreation resources that is responsive to users' social, economic, and environmental needs and priorities now and into the future.



# 2

Recommend a vision for an integrated public realm – including parks, natural areas, civic spaces, rights of ways, and other linear greenspace corridors – that link communities and generate multiple economic, social, and ecological benefits for the City.



# 3

Establish a realistic and achievable implementation strategy that allocates and leverages resources to improve, manage, and operate Norcross' Parks and Recreation system.



## Planning Process

This project follows a four-step strategic planning process, rooted in data and designed for adaptation and flexibility. Each phase of the process builds on the findings and conclusions from the previous phases.

1

**CHAPTER 1 - Discover** establishes the context of the park system within the City's ongoing planning efforts, and the role of this plan. This focus includes a review of previously completed plans, the inventory of parks and recreation facilities, and the establishment of project goals based on staff and community input. It begins the process of extensive community engagement that continues through all phases.

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**CHAPTER 2 - Analyze** examines the existing conditions of the parks and recreation system relative to Norcross' challenges and opportunities. It assesses the quantity and quality of parks and stormwater facilities, and identifies gaps between the existing and desired conditions of these systems. The process is based on a proven "triangulated" approach to identifying needs and priorities, which includes various anecdotal, qualitative, and quantitative methods to determine top priorities from different perspectives.

3

**CHAPTER 3 - Create** outlines a vision for the plan based on:

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

The vision provides a framework to assess areas for site-specific planning recommendations and conceptual plans. It will also include an evaluation of existing and proposed ecosystem services.

4

**CHAPTER 4 - Refine** includes a summary of revenue projections, and a phasing/funding plan to implement top priorities based on available and projected funding.

# Process Overview

## 1 DISCOVER

### PLANNING CONTEXT

- Existing documents and plans review

### PARKS SYSTEM CONTEXT

- Parks, greenspaces, and trail facilities inventory
- Goals and needs development

## 2 ANALYZE

### ANECDOTAL METHODS:

- Park site evaluations

### QUANTITATIVE METHODS:

- Online Survey
- Parks and recreation Level-of-Service Analysis
- GIS-based ecosystem services analysis

### QUALITATIVE METHODS:

- City leader interviews
- Staff interviews
- Focus group and special events public engagement
- Steering Committee Meetings
- Project website

## 4 REFINE

- Implementation workshop + strategy
- Cost estimates
- Phasing and funding plan

## 3 CREATE

- Visioning workshop
- Conceptual plans
- Recommendations + strategies

## Background

With a strong local economy, diverse and growing population, and a convenient location, Norcross offers residents a high quality of life and a small town feel nestled within southwestern Gwinnett County, part of metropolitan Atlanta's booming north side.

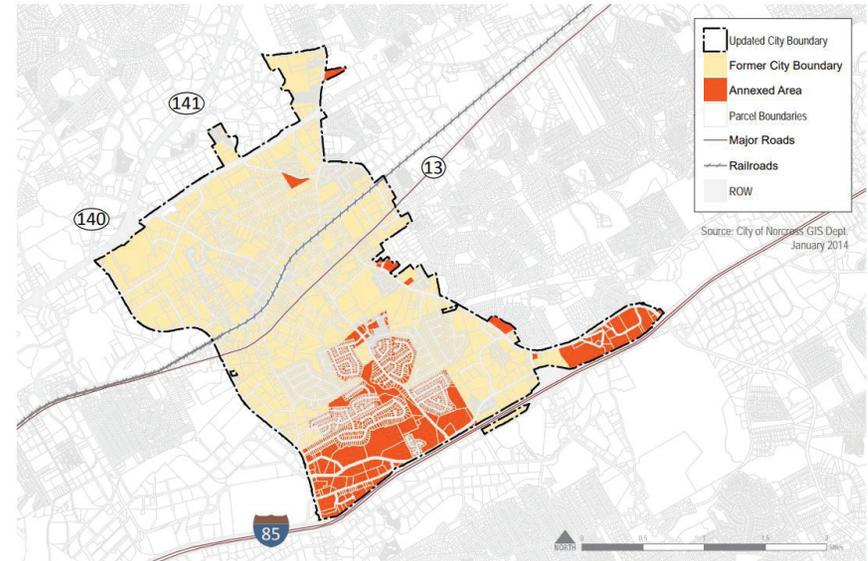
Founded in 1870, Norcross was developed along a rail line heading northeast out of Atlanta towards South Carolina and the Atlantic seaboard beyond. This railroad corridor continues to be an active element of the City's historic downtown.

For most of the 20th century, the City's population grew steadily, mirroring the surrounding Gwinnett County. Starting in the 1970s, Gwinnett County experienced a population boom, becoming one of the fastest growing counties in America over the next two decades.

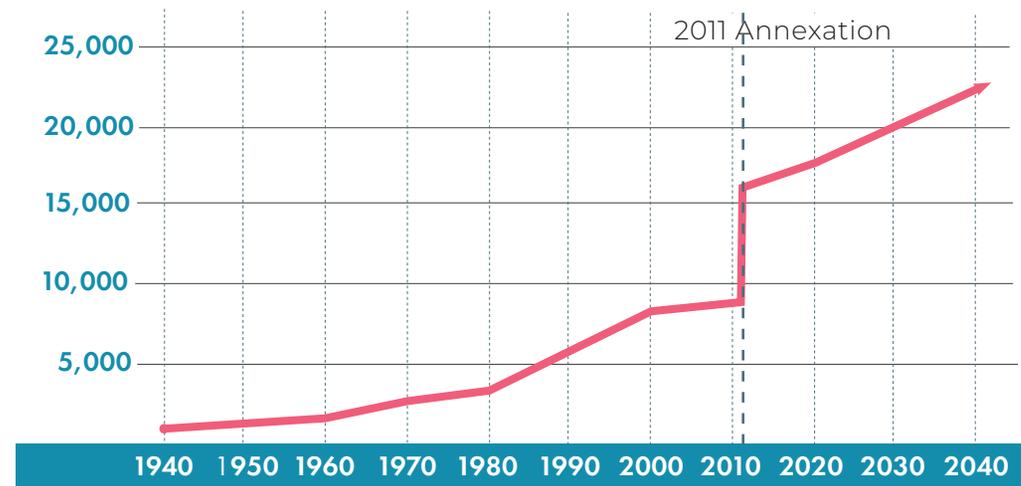
Norcross' growth followed with a significant spike, with a 77% increase across the 1980s. However, by 2010 growth had slowed, with the City only adding 706 new residents between 2000 and 2010, for a total population of 9,116.

In 2011, Norcross annexed over 2.1 square miles of land, primarily south of Buford Highway and north of I-85, adding over 6,600 residents and bringing a large proportion of Hispanic residents into the city.

Discussions of additional annexations have continued in recent years, although none have progressed. Barring annexations, the 2040 Comprehensive Plan projected a population of roughly 24,000 by 2040, based on the annual growth rate of around 2% since 2012.



## A Century of Growth





*“Look at the city as a forest.”*

**“Streets are our biggest greenspace.”**

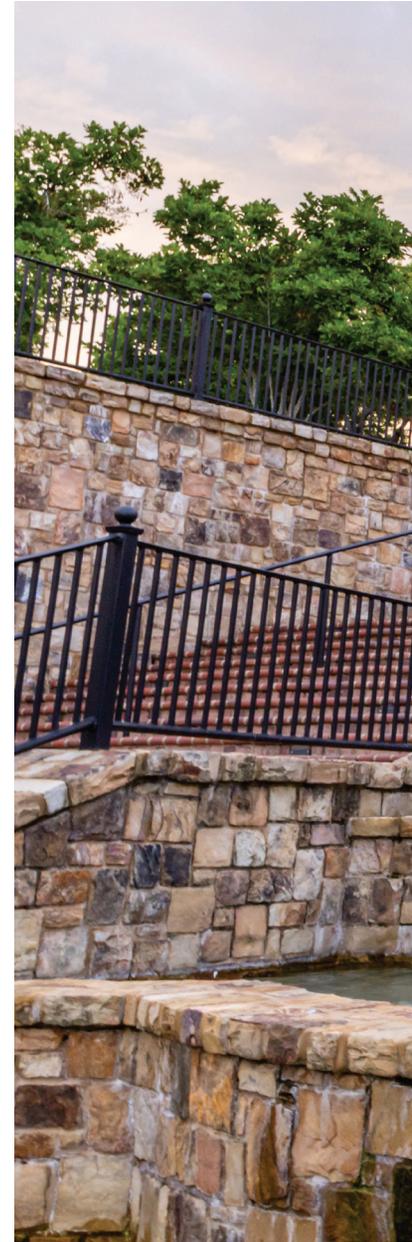
*“Maximizing natural assets to gain environmental, economic, and social benefits.”*

**“Stewardship of our remaining old forest remnants.”**

- Comments from Parks, Greenspaces, and Trails Committee members at project kickoff

## Building on a Strong Foundation

A significant amount of planning over the last two decades has resulted in the City of Norcross making numerous improvements to its parks system in recent years. The photos below and in the following page illustrate some of the park improvements that the City has implemented since 2011.







# Chapter 1

## Discover

# Introduction

Parks have a unique and multi-faceted power to serve their community. By providing spaces for people to gather and play, protecting natural resources, and representing the area's physical and social character, parks weave together nature, public health, and culture in ways that benefit everyone.

Deceptively complex, parks and recreation resources embody both the remarkable challenges and opportunities of modern community planning. Much more than simply public green spaces, parks and recreation systems are deeply intertwined with all the other systems, like education and transportation, that make up our communities.

The first step to Chapter 1 - Discover is understanding the context of Norcross' parks, greenspace, trails and green infrastructure system within the existing conditions of the city, and as it relates to ongoing planning efforts.

Next, establishing goals and priorities for this plan lays the framework for Chapter 2 - Analyze, which will support Chapter 3 - Create, which will establish the vision for a greener city.



## Park System Context

The City of Norcross parks and recreation system is currently comprised of 13 maintained parks, totaling 41 acres (including the Historic Cemetery). These facilities range from Lillian Webb Park, which features a splashpad and picnic pavilion, to the recently developed Pinnacle Park, which features a lake (stormwater detention), walking trail, playground and restrooms, to the Johnson-Dean Forest Preserve, which includes unpaved trails through a forested area.

There are two sites within the City that have been designated for future park use but have not been developed for public access: the City-owned space east of N Norcross Tucker Road (Undeveloped #2 - also referred to as the Margeson Parcel) and the County-owned Beaver Ruin Greenspace (Undeveloped #1).

The system also includes two indoor facilities—The Norcross Welcome Center and Museum and the Cultural Arts & Community Center.

Other public and non-profit recreational resources are also located in and around the City of Norcross.

These include facilities provided by Gwinnett County Schools and Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation, as well as a YMCA in nearby Peachtree Corners.

The Gwinnett County Parks within three miles of the city center provide a significant amount of the parks and recreation resources easily accessible to Norcross residents. These include:

- Best Friend Park
- Beaver Ruin Wetland Park Site (under construction)
- Cemetery Field Park (within City limits)
- Pinckneyville Park & Community Center
- West Gwinnett Park & Aquatic Center

## CITY OF NORCROSS PARKS, GREENSPACES, AND TRAILS SYSTEM HIGHLIGHTS

 **13 Parks**  
**41 Acres**

**4 Playgrounds**

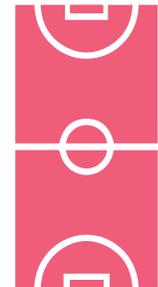
**1 Basketball Court**



**2 Diamond Fields**

**1 Splashpad** 

**1 Rectangle Field**



 **4 Pavilions**

# Legend

- Norcross City Limits
- Norcross Parks
- Gwinnett County Park/Site
- Cemetery
- School Parcels
- Parcel
- Water Body
- Major Roads
- Road Centerline
- Railroad

## ● Mini-Parks / Playlots

1. Betty Mauldin Park
2. Heritage Park
3. Lion's Club Park
4. Water Tower Park

## ◆ Neighborhood Park

1. Johnson-Dean Park
2. Lillian Webb Park
3. Pinnacle Park
4. Rossie Brundage Park
5. Summerour Park
6. Thrasher Park

## ▲ Indoor Recreation Center

1. Cultural Arts & Community Center
2. Welcome Center

## ■ Special Purpose Parks

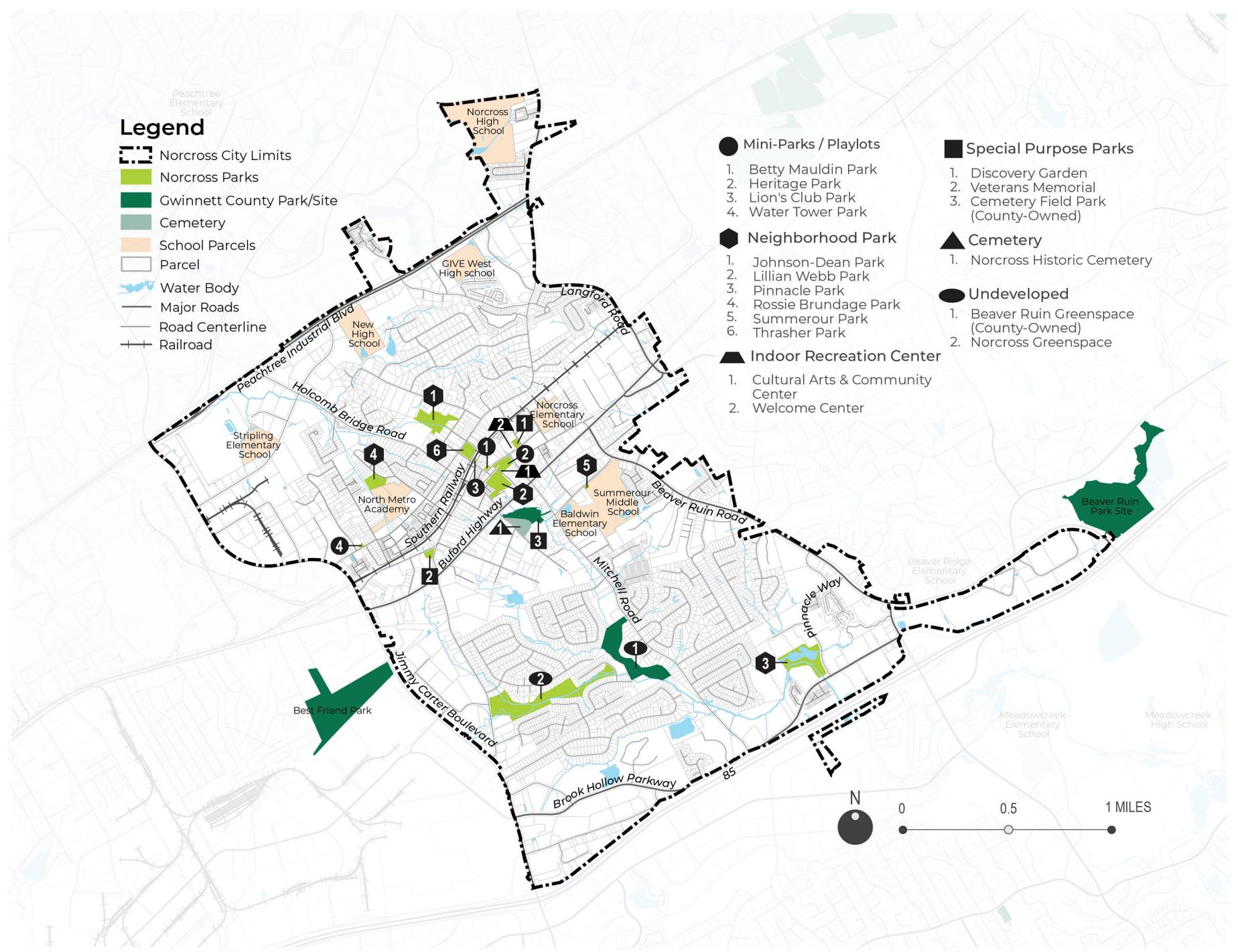
1. Discovery Garden
2. Veterans Memorial
3. Cemetery Field Park (County-Owned)

## ▲ Cemetery

1. Norcross Historic Cemetery

## ● Undeveloped

1. Beaver Ruin Greenspace (County-Owned)
2. Norcross Greenspace



## Park Classifications

Classifying parks based on a combination of their features, uses, and size can be a useful tool for prescribing the optimal management and maintenance strategy. The classifications described here build on the descriptions in the 2016 Parks Master Plan Update, and are currently in use by the department:

- Mini-Parks/Playlots - these very small parks, mini-parks (also called playlots or pocket parks), are typically a site less than two acres. The park is designed primarily to attract residents who live within a quarter mile of the park. The park is generally a walk-to park, meaning no parking facilities for vehicles are typically provided. Mini-parks' service levels are 0.25 to 0.5 acres per thousand residents. Size normally prescribes these parks to be passive, limited-activity park facilities. Common elements include benches, playgrounds, open lawns, and tables in an attractively landscaped setting.
- Neighborhood Parks - neighborhood parks are the basic units of the park system and serve a

recreational and social purpose. The park normally has 2 to 10 acres and typically serves a population living within a half mile of the park. The focus of neighborhood parks is on informal recreation and providing neighborhood residents with a local outlet for play and social activities. Neighborhood parks occasionally concentrate active recreation activities and facilities into a limited amount of space. Facilities typical to this park include:

- Playgrounds
  - Shelters
  - Walking Paths
  - Basketball and/or tennis courts
  - Playing Fields
  - Splash pads
  - Pools
  - Parking Facilities
  - Restrooms/Concessions
- Community Parks - Community parks serve a slightly broader area/population than neighborhood parks. A park of this size and scope commonly has from 20 to 50 acres. The focus is more on meeting community-based recreational and

social needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. Community Parks vary in size and function but typically are able to house a recreation center or recreational facilities, such as a swimming pool or athletic facilities, with programming on-site. Community parks generally offer both day and night activities, through either indoor facilities or lighted outdoor facilities.

- Natural Area/Preserve - Land set aside for preserving natural resources, historic landscapes, open space, and providing visual aesthetics/buffering. Provides passive-use opportunities such as low impact trail corridors with an emphasis on ecological stewardship and wildlife protection. Typical examples include:
  - Individual sites exhibiting natural resources
  - Lands unsuitable for development but offering natural resource potential (examples: parcels with steep slopes and natural vegetation, drainage ways and ravines, surface water management areas and utility easements)

- Protected land, such as wetlands, lowlands and shorelines along waterways, lakes and ponds
- Special Purpose Parks - This classification covers a range of parks and recreation facilities, which share the trait of being designed to meet the needs of a specific user group. Often sites with unique or historic structures, oriented toward purposes that do not fall into other classification categories, such as gardens, golf courses, or museums.

The following pages illustrates the inventory for the City of Norcross' parks and recreation system.



## Park System Inventory

				Number of Indoor Facilities																
Park Name	Acres	Indoor Recreation Center Square Footage	Park Type/ Classification	Recreation Centers	Community Centers	Senior Centers	Teen Centers	Nature Centers/ History exhibit	Fitness Centers	Gyms	Stadiums	Arena	Performance Amphitheater	Indoor Track	Indoor Competitive Swimming Pools: 25 Meter	Indoor Competitive Swimming Pools: 50 Meter	Indoor pool designated exclusively for leisure (i.e. non-competitive)	Therapeutic Pool		
City Parks	Betty Mauldin	0.58		Mini Park																
	Discovery Garden	1.10		Mini Park																
	Heritage	0.31		Mini Park																
	Water Tower	1.85		Mini Park																
	Johnson-Dean	8.00		Natural Area/Preserve																
	Lillian Webb	4.20		Special use																
	Lion's Club Park	0.09		Mini Park																
	Norcross Historic Cemetery	3.40		Special use																
	Pinnacle	13.00		Natural Area/Preserve																
	Rossie Brundage	2.20		Neighborhood Park																
	Thrasher	2.00		Neighborhood Park																
	Veterans Memorial	1.00		Special use																
	Summerour	3.30		Community Park																
	Welcome Center		1,500	Indoor Facility					1											
	Cultural Arts & Community Center		8,000	Indoor Facility		1														
<b>Totals - City Parks Only</b>				<b>41.03</b>	<b>9500.00</b>					<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
County Parks	Best Friend Park	43.38	12,500	Community Park							1									
	Beaver Ruin Wetland Park	68.50		Passive Community Park																
	Cemetery Field Park	6.00		Special Purpose Neighborhood Park																
	Pinckneyville Park & Community Center	108.90	19,000	Community Park		1														
	West Gwinnett Park & Aquatic Center	22.52		Community Park												1		1		
<b>Totals - City Parks + County Parks (3 mi radius)</b>				<b>290.3</b>	<b>41,000</b>					<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	



## Previous Plan Review

This master plan is intended to integrate into the fabric of the City.

This planning does not occur in a vacuum—it builds on previous park planning and ongoing projects, as well as the many other related plans completed in recent years.

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

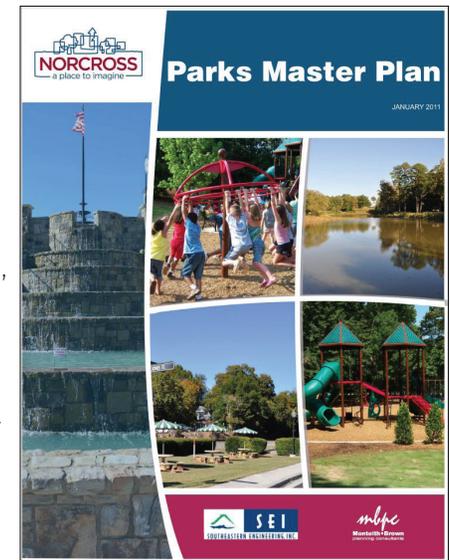
## PARKS MASTER PLAN (2011)

### Overview

This plan was the City's first ever parks master plan, originating from a recommendation in the 2030 comprehensive plan (2008). It included a vision for improvements, uses, acquisitions, and planning of parks and greenspace projects. The plan was intended to both guide capital improvements to the parks system for the next 20 years, as well as lay the groundwork for future planning, policy development, and grant securement.

### Goals + Outcomes

1. Add parkland in the southeastern part of the city
2. Improve connectivity
3. Add more soccer/informal play fields
4. Add more play facilities
5. Add more picnic/passive recreation opportunities



### Relevance to this Plan

Many of the recommendations from this plan have been implemented and others are in various degrees of completion. Understanding what elements of the vision have not been completed and if they are still priorities will help guide ongoing recommendations, especially because the 2011 plan was completed just before the City annexed large areas.

## PARKS MASTER PLAN UPDATE (2016)

### Overview

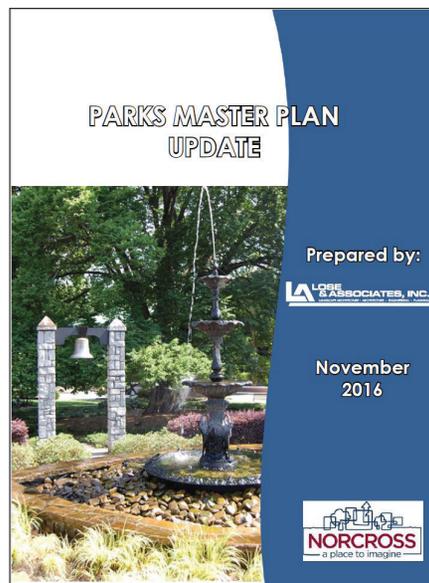
Following the annexation of approximately 2.1 square miles along Norcross' previous southeastern edge, it was determined that an update to the 2011 Parks Master Plan was necessary to address the parks and recreation needs of the city's 6,600+ new residents. This plan applies the priorities and facility recommendations from the 2011 plan to the southern annexed area and identifies gaps in service.

### Goals + Outcomes

- Implement Pinnacle Park Master Plan
- Develop two new neighborhood parks on the south side
- Build a mini park on the "Margeson parcel" (part of Beaver Ruin Creek Greenway/ Norcross Greenway)
- Look into the "Fickling parcel" on the north side as a potential park
- Implement plans for Beaver Ruin Creek Greenway

### Relevance to this Plan

As with the 2011 plan, many of the recommendations from this plan have been implemented, while others are in various



degrees of completion. Understanding what elements of the vision have not been completed and if they are still priorities will help guide ongoing recommendations.

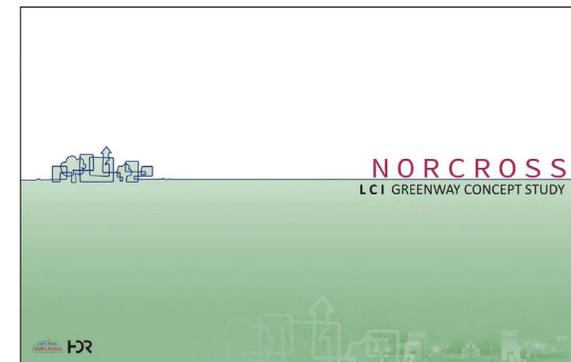
## NORCROSS LCI GREENWAY CONCEPT STUDY (2016)

### Overview

The City launched the Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) Greenway Concept Plan with support from ARC, which integrates regional stormwater improvements with a proposed bicycle and pedestrian network in the Beaver Ruin Creek Watershed. Recommendations to be completed include off-road bicycle facilities, sidewalks, stream restoration projects, and shared-use trails that will provide a host of sustainability benefits. The City has begun implementation, particularly with the development of Pinnacle Park, which is key to the formation of the greenway.

### Goals + Outcomes

- A trail network connecting the southside of the City to downtown and other destinations along the Buford Highway corridor
- A wide variety of stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs)



### Relevance to this Plan

This plan is highly applicable for existing conditions evaluation, concept development, watershed/stormwater improvement recommendations (BMPs), greenway/network recommendations that align with stream tributaries, and an understanding of what public involvement has been in closely aligned planning efforts. Two proposed concept plans provide an interconnected network of routes connecting neighborhoods to significant destinations.

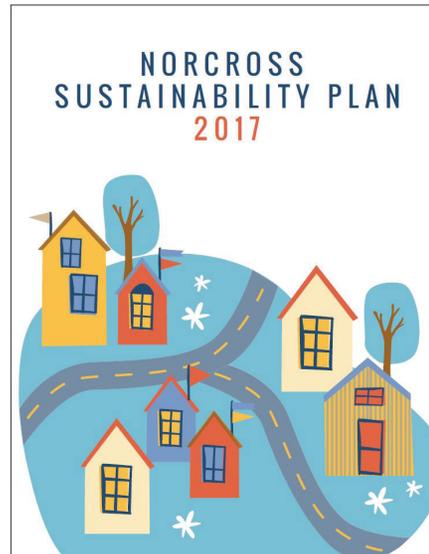
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## NORCROSS SUSTAINABILITY PLAN (2017)

### Overview

The purpose of this plan was to increase accountability towards the City's goals of Healthy People, Healthy Places, and Healthy Economy.

It summarizes and synthesizes sustainability related planning efforts to date; accomplishments to date; community survey results after extensive outreach; and the plan's goals and recommendations. Its recommendations have a direct correlation to the ARC Green Communities 2020 recertification submission.



### Goals + Outcomes

- #3: Flourishing Nature (Protected natural spaces and enhance existing ones);
- #4: Well Residents (Accessible parks, recreational classes, programs, leagues);
- #5: Good Neighbors (Opportunities to get to know each other + Accessible events and public art celebrating cultural diversity);
- #7: Accessible Transportation (Build connectivity between neighborhoods (walking, cycling, etc.))

### Relevance to this Plan

Several of the stated goals, objectives, and long-term outcomes have direct applicability to this plan. The plan provides a rationale and mandate for this plan, as well as specific recommendations related to parks operations and management.

## NORCROSS TREES TO OFFSET STORMWATER CASE STUDY (2018)

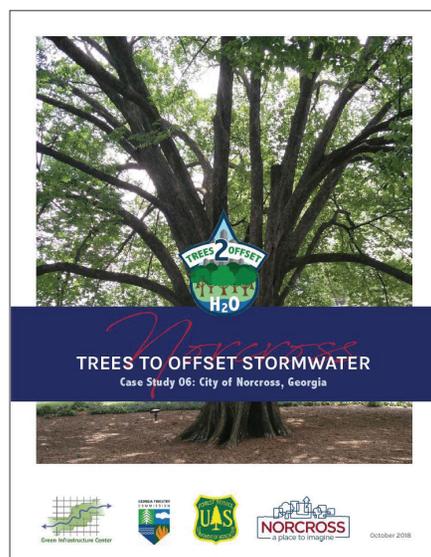
### Overview

This was a study of Norcross's tree canopy and its role in taking up, storing, and releasing water. This study was undertaken to assist Norcross in evaluating how to better integrate trees into their stormwater management programs. More specifically, the study covers the role that trees play in stormwater management and shows how the City can benefit from tree conservation and replanting. It also evaluates ways for the City to improve forest management as the City re-develops.

### Goals + Outcomes

Top priority recommendations include:

- Develop an urban tree canopy coverage goal;
- Determine the benefits of maintaining or increasing tree canopy goals by watershed.
- Establish a tree bank to help fund planting and maintenance.
- Hire a certified arborist.



OUTCOMES INCLUDE:

- Analysis of urban forest extents;
- Possible Planting Area locations;
- Potential Canopy Area locations;
- Optimal tree planting locations identified for stormwater management;

### Relevance to this Plan

This study can help set goals and develop a management plan for retaining or expanding total tree canopy by watershed. It can help improve management practices so trees will be appropriately planted and well-managed.

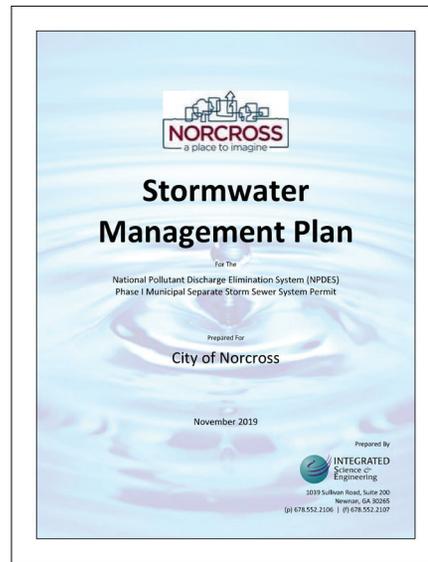
## CITY OF NORCROSS STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN (2019)

### Overview

The 2019 Stormwater Management Plan outlines the City of Norcross's strategies for compliance with the EPA's NPDES permit as a Phase I municipality. It includes a summary of the current stormwater management controls and practices; reporting form their illicit discharge detection and elimination program (IDDE); an overview of Industrial facilities, construction management activities, and highly visible pollutant sources (HVPS) with the City's purview; description of public education and outreach strategies; a review of applicable ordinances; and presents their GI/LID program. The document highlights the City's emphasis on inspection, maintenance, strategic redevelopment, and implementation of green infrastructure and low impact design.

### Goals + Outcomes

- Continue to implement the approved Green Infrastructure/ Low Impact Development (GI/LID) program
- Annually review program for any potential changes and submit to EPD for review and approval with each annual report.
- Conduct maintenance on all publicly owned GI/



LID structures, as needed. Provide the number and percentage of the total structures maintained during the reporting period in each annual report.

### Relevance to this Plan

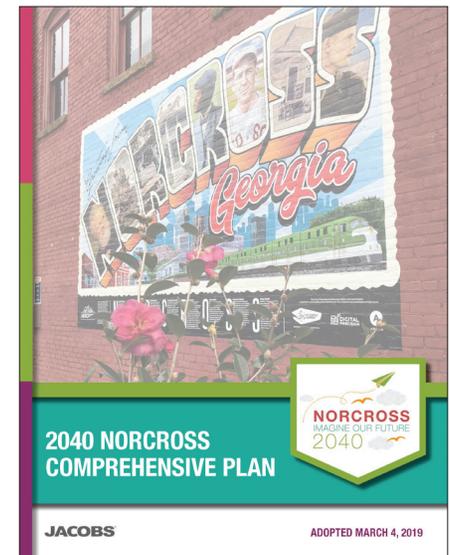
Requirements and recommendations for green infrastructure and LID, as established during the 2016-2017 reporting period, should be reflected in proposed park and greenspace development.

## 2040 NORCROSS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (2019)

### Overview

This was a Comprehensive Plan update, required every five years by the state Dept. of Community Affairs. Three main components: 1) Community Vision lays out the future vision and goals that the community wants to achieve; 2) Needs and Opportunities, an overview of Norcross context and changes since the last plan; also includes a list of priority needs and opportunities; 3) Community Work Program, a five-year work program of distinct activities, initiatives, programs, and administrative systems that are recommended to implement the plan.

Also includes Future Development Map with 13 character areas.



## Goals + Outcomes

### Goal 1: Continue to Define Norcross' Sense of Place

- Policy 1-5: Encourage greenspace in all new development.
- Policy 1-7: Protect natural resources, mature tree canopy, environmentally sensitive areas, and valuable historic, archaeological or cultural resources from human encroachment through land development regulations and/or incentives.
- Policy 1-8: Add value to our community through landscaping, lighting, signage, underground utilities, and building design.

### Goal 2: Continue to Strengthen Norcross as a Livable, Inclusive, and Safe Environment

- Policy 2-2: Support existing neighborhoods through regular public investment in recreational amenities and maintenance programs.
- Policy 2-3: Promote walkable, bicycle friendly, safe neighborhoods.
- Policy 2-4: Encourage walkability, interaction among businesses, clear visibility of entryways and centralized open space.
- Policy 2-5: Provide pleasant, accessible public gathering places.
- Policy 2-6: Encourage new parks and community facilities to be located as focal points in neighborhoods.
- Policy 2-8: Integrate educational opportunities into parks and recreational services, public libraries, museums, and other cultural amenities.

- Policy 2-9: Ensure adequate supplies of quality water through protection of ground and surface water sources.
- Policy 2-10: Encourage and incentivize the construction of publicly accessible plazas and greenspace through redevelopment.

### Goal 3: Increase Opportunities for Travel via Different Modes within and Outside Community

- Policy 3-6: Improve pedestrian and bicycle access to existing facilities.

### Goal 4: Maintain a Vibrant Economy and Continue to Facilitate Job Growth

- Policy 4-7: Invest in parks and open space to encourage private reinvestment.

### Goal 5: Ensure that Norcross Residents have a Variety of Attainable, Quality Housing Options

### Goal 6: Further the City's Tradition of Strong Leadership and High Level of Quality Services

- Policy 6-2: Maximize the use of existing facilities and services.
- Policy 6-3: Do not over commit to long-term operation and maintenance costs in making capital investments.
- Policy 6-4: Coordinate public facilities and services with land use planning to promote efficient public investments.

### Relevance to this Plan

Of the six goals laid out in the plan, all but one (Goal 5) have policies with direct implications for the development and/or operations of parks. These policies also include specific projects that were previously proposed in parks and trails plans. Some of these projects are now in progress, while others should be assessed for their need and priority going forward.

## ARC “GREEN COMMUNITIES” CERTIFICATION (2020)

### Overview

In 2010, the City of Norcross was one of the first communities to be certified under the Green Communities Program.

The City reaffirmed its commitment twice, progressing up the ranks in the program and ultimately being recertified at the Platinum level in 2016 - making Norcross one of only two certified Platinum communities in the region. Two components of the certification process have direct impact on parks planning: Land Use and Greenspace.

LAND USE : This document summarizes instances where the City of Norcross has sought to redevelop



underutilized spaces into City amenities. It highlights a brownfield site was converted to a park after remediation, a former shopping center (greyfield site) was converted to a library, and revitalization of areas through infill. In addition to these case studies, the document includes the Community Historic Preservation Ordinance, defines Community Smart Growth incentives in addition to Community Revitalization Incentives/Strategies. Collectively, readers gain an understanding of the City’s approach and priorities to Land Use and Development.

GREENSPACE: Documentation of recertification for ARC for Greenspace Benchmark detailing how the City of Norcross has met the requirements relating to the following metrics/endeavors: amount and accessibility of green space; tree loss policy; greenspace plan; landscaping practices; forest master plan; community gardens; and community habitat certification.

### Goals + Outcomes

- Inform the City’s Comprehensive Plan
- Recommended the creation of the Unified Development Ordinance which would incentivize low impact design, redevelopment in the Buford Highway Corridor, support transit expansion, and diversify housing options.
- Increased green space since the last application: Pinnacle Park and Discovery Garden Park--this increases amount of green space in walking distance for many city residents (1/2 mile);
- Govt. no-net-loss of trees policy;
- Confirms that the Parks Master Plan (2016) is a greenspace plan for the City;
- The City is not pursuing a green roof plan/policy;
- The City does utilize a Landscape Maintenance Specs. to

support healthy natural environments including specs. for native and drought tolerant plants to replace others;

- The City has the Tree USA designation from the Arbor Foundation;
- Parking lots have tree canopy requirements;
- City is not pursuing an urban forest master plan;
- Community gardens and orchards are supported in the City including the new Discovery Garden Park;
- Community farmers markets are supported by the city;
- The City is not pursuing Community Local food systems plan;
- Norcross has met the standards for Community Bee City USA.

#### Relevance to this Plan

Highly applicable given direct correlation of goals for green spaces. The City achieves certification via one of three metric options; this plan could expand goals to meet or exceed multiple metrics.

### **BUFORD HIGHWAY MASTER PLAN (2021)**

#### **Overview**

This corridor study is focused on redevelopment of the Buford Highway corridor within the City of Norcross, particularly focused on improving connections between Buford Highway and Historic Downtown. It includes analysis of existing conditions, market analysis, inventory of community assets, opportunities and challenges, and the community vision and goals.

#### **Goals + Outcomes**

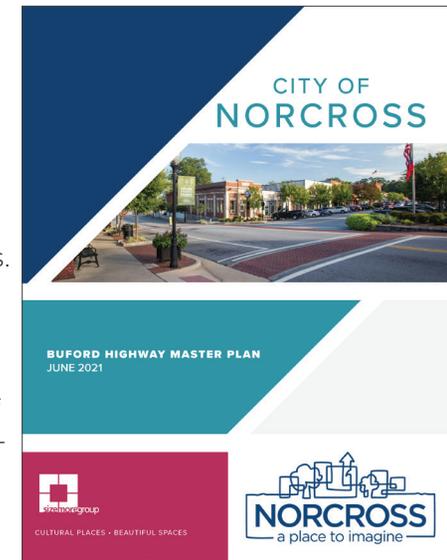
The Community Vision is: A thriving multi-modal and multi-cultural corridor that serves the diverse Norcross population and connects to the character, charm, and beauty of Downtown Norcross.

Community Goals:

1. Preserve and enhance the community character: multi-cultural character of the corridor and the small-town historic character of Downtown
2. Create a destination, places to walk to
3. Connect to Downtown
4. Enhance transit along corridor
5. Increase safety for pedestrians and cyclist – crossings/intersections
6. Beautify
7. Green/open space is important to the community
8. Mix of incomes and affordability
9. Address parking

#### Relevance to this Plan

There are design concepts for three different areas: Downtown Node, Jimmy Carter Node, and Beaver Ruin Node. Each includes relevant greenspace elements and trails which should be considered for inclusion as potential developments.



## GWINNETT COUNTY TRAILS MASTER PLAN (2018)

### Overview

In 2018, the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners adopted Gwinnett Trails - Countywide Trails Master Plan. This Master Plan proposed an extensive network of paved, shared use paths throughout the county, including nine Signature Trail corridors to be further analyzed for implementation.

Two of the “Signature Trails,” which are priorities for implementation, bisect the city of Norcross--the Piedmont Pathway and the Norcross to Lilburn Trail.

### Goals + Outcomes

- Incremental implementation of projects as funding allows (total cost for all proposed projects is approximately \$1B)



### Relevance to this Plan

The trail design standards, wayfinding signage, and project prioritization all have direct influence on the implementation of trail projects within Norcross.

## GWINNETT COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN (2022)

### Overview

The 2020 GCPRMP builds directly on the Gwinnett 30-year planning history, establishing a road map that considers Gwinnett’s existing and projected demographics, city, regional and national parks, local and national recreation trends, community parks and recreation needs and priorities, and future financial outlook. This plan analyzes Gwinnett’s ability to provide service based on the existing capital facilities and identifies service gaps and needs.

### Goals + Outcomes

- The long-range vision presents a new Decision-Making Framework (DMF) that will guide the Parks and Recreation Division over the next 10 years and beyond.
- Includes a summary of recommendations for implementing the proposed long-range parks and



recreation system vision. It includes capital funding scenarios, revenue projections, and implementation recommendations for parks, recreation amenities, trails, resource areas, and expenditure prioritization. The implementation plan also includes finance, asset management, program and services, resource area, and marketing recommendations.

#### Relevance to this Plan

This plan provides recommendations for park improvements and development surrounding the City. Closely coordinating with the County will be crucial to ensuring that improvements consider and build on those proposed by the County.

## Project Goals

Based on the City's recent planning efforts and the park system's current context, the PG&T Commission established four overarching goals that this project should achieve:

# GOAL 1

## Preservation of Natural Areas in Norcross (such as forests, meadows, wetlands, etc.)

### Comprehensive Plan

"Protect natural resources, mature tree canopy, environmentally sensitive areas, and valuable historic, archaeological or cultural resources from human encroachment through land development regulations and/or incentives."

### Parks Master Plan

"Add more picnic/passive recreation opportunities"

### Trees to Offset Stormwater Plan

"Use the urban forestry funding calculator to develop an urban tree canopy coverage goal and determine the cost of achieving that goal."

### Norcross Sustainability Plan

"Goal #3: Flourishing Nature (Protected natural spaces and enhance existing ones)"

# GOAL 2

## Enhancement of Natural Resources in Norcross (projects such as invasive species management, tree planting, streambank restoration, stormwater management/green infrastructure, etc.)

### Comprehensive Plan

“Goal 1: Continue to Define Norcross’ Sense of Place”

### Parks Master Plan

“In order to maintain and enhance the tree canopy, Norcross should seek grants to develop a Community Forest Master Plan for City-owned properties.” & “Establish a landscaping policy for City parks and facilities that provides focus for reducing the use of pesticides and chemicals, adopting integrated pest management practices, encouraging the use of native and drought tolerant plants, etc.”

### Trees to Offset Stormwater Plan

“Develop an Urban Forest Management Plan (UMFP).”  
+ Many Others

### Norcross Sustainability Plan

“Goal #3: Flourishing Nature (Protected natural spaces and enhance existing ones)”

# GOAL 3

## Providing Connections between Parks and Natural Areas

(projects to implement new/improved sidewalks and trails to connect parks with surrounding communities)

### Comprehensive Plan

“Goal 3: Increase Opportunities for Travel via Different Modes within and Outside Community”

+

“Develop a city-wide bicycle and pedestrian master plan and evaluate establishing a sidewalk fund.”

### Parks Master Plan

“Goal 2. Improve connectivity.”

### Parks Master Plan Update

“Implement the various greenway plans for increased connectivity within the city for bicycles and pedestrians.”

### Norcross Sustainability Plan

“Goal #7: Accessible Transportation (Build connectivity between neighborhoods [walking, cycling, etc.]”

# GOAL 4

**Identifying New General Recreation Parkland**  
(land that will be developed for recreation uses, i.e. open lawns, splashpads, playgrounds, etc.)

---

## Comprehensive Plan

“Policy 1-5: Encourage greenspace in all new development.”

## Parks Master Plan

“New parkland in southeast” +  
“Additional space for soccer fields and informal play fields”

## Parks Master Plan Update

“Develop two new neighborhood parks”



# Chapter 2

## Analyze

# Introduction

Well-designed parks intentionally provide an appearance of elegance and simplicity in their maintenance and operation. And for many people, parks may seem to be relatively simple to operate: mow the grass, mulch the trees, maintain a few concrete paths, and manage some ballfields with a restroom building. However, to truly maximize park and recreation spaces and reap the many benefits that they offer requires a remarkably thorough mix of science, engineering, culture, and artistry.

As Peter Harnik, a leading park expert, wrote:

*People frequently say, "It's not rocket science, it's just a park." No! For rockets you need to be good at math. Parks require math plus horticulture, hydrology, psychology, sociology, and communication...[parks] are immensely complicated.*

The "triangulated" approach (shown right) to identifying needs, included a variety of quantitative, qualitative, and anecdotal techniques to determine top priorities from different perspectives.

Given that parks encompass a diverse range of needs and expertise to operate successfully requires that a park system be analyzed through a variety of means. This chapter includes the results of a variety of analysis methods to understand how well the City of Norcross parks system is functioning, incorporating:

- Public Input
- Community Context + Ecosystem Analysis
- Park Site Assessments
- Park Access Level-of-Service
- Park Acreage Level-of-Service
- Facilities Level-of-Service



## Public Input

Norcross has a rapidly growing population and a high degree of diversity across age, ethnicity, and national origin. Because the parks, greenspace, trails, and green infrastructure system is intended to serve all residents regardless of background or socioeconomic status it is important that this plan incorporates the input of residents from a broad spectrum of the City. Multiple strategies were employed to collect input from residents about their parks and recreation needs and priorities.

The project was promoted via various printed, online, and social media outlets, including a project website that received over 2,300 visits, by over 1,350 unique users.

Collectively, over 1,650 people participated in the process. Findings from each of the needs assessment techniques, as well as a summary of top priority needs are discussed in this chapter.



Public Engagement	Dot Exercises	Survey	Open Discussion	Multilingual
Stakeholder Committee	●		●	
Special Events	●		●	●
PGT Committee Meetings	●		●	
Public Meetings	●		●	●
Focus Groups			●	
Website		●		●

ABOVE & OPPOSITE Residents participated in public input exercises at local events. Additional input was provided in the steering committee meetings and through the project website.



MEASUREMENT OF OBJECTIVES.  
 CONNECTING NEIGHBORHOODS, VERSUS  
 JUST TO PARKS AND NATURE:  
 "PROVIDING CONNECTIONS TO PARKS, SCHOOLS,  
 NATURAL AREAS, NEIGHBORHOODS, AND  
 SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES."

WHAT ELSE IS ON YOUR MIND?

- RETHINK "PARKS" - GROW FOOD, NOT LAWNS.
- RECONSIDER "PARKS" TO INCLUDE "GREENSPACE" SUCH AS PRIVATE SET BACK SPACES, AND DESIGN POLICIES TO SUPPORT THAT, ECOLOGICALLY SOUND.
- ACQUIRE DISTRESSED LAND FOR PARKS & GREENSPACE.
- HOMEOWNER MAY NEED ASSISTANCE ON A VALUED CITY ASSET, SUCH AS A BIG TREE, THAT IS PROVIDING ECO-SYSTEM SERVICES TO THE CITY. HOW CAN THE CITY HELP TO MAINTAIN IT / MANAGE IT.



socialpinpoint

How to use this map

This map allow users to provide geo-located public input on the Norcross parks and recreation system.

Feedback can be provided through one of 5 options along the top bar:

- Enhance Nature:** Drag and release a turquoise icon at any location to leave a comment about an area that should be improved naturally (tree planting, native landscaping, green infrastructure, streambank restoration, etc.)
- Protect Nature:** Drag and release a green icon at any location to leave a comment about a natural area (forest, stream, wetland, etc.) that has potential for new recreational opportunities.
- Park Opportunity:** Drag and release a dark green icon at any location to leave a comment about a location where a new park should be created.
- Connectivity:** Drag and release a gray icon at any location to leave a comment about improving access to parks, whether a new pedestrian or bike connection, or some other connectivity need. By clicking multiple times, you can create a line to indicate where a proposed path or connection should be.
- Park Improvement Idea:** Drag and release an orange icon at any location to share your idea about how to improve a park. It could be "Add lighting here" or "Repair bathroom" or "Convert baseball field to soccer." Every idea is welcome!
- I like this:** Drag and release a blue icon at any location to let the parks department know about something you like in the park today! Feel free to describe other locations where this amenity/program could be implemented.

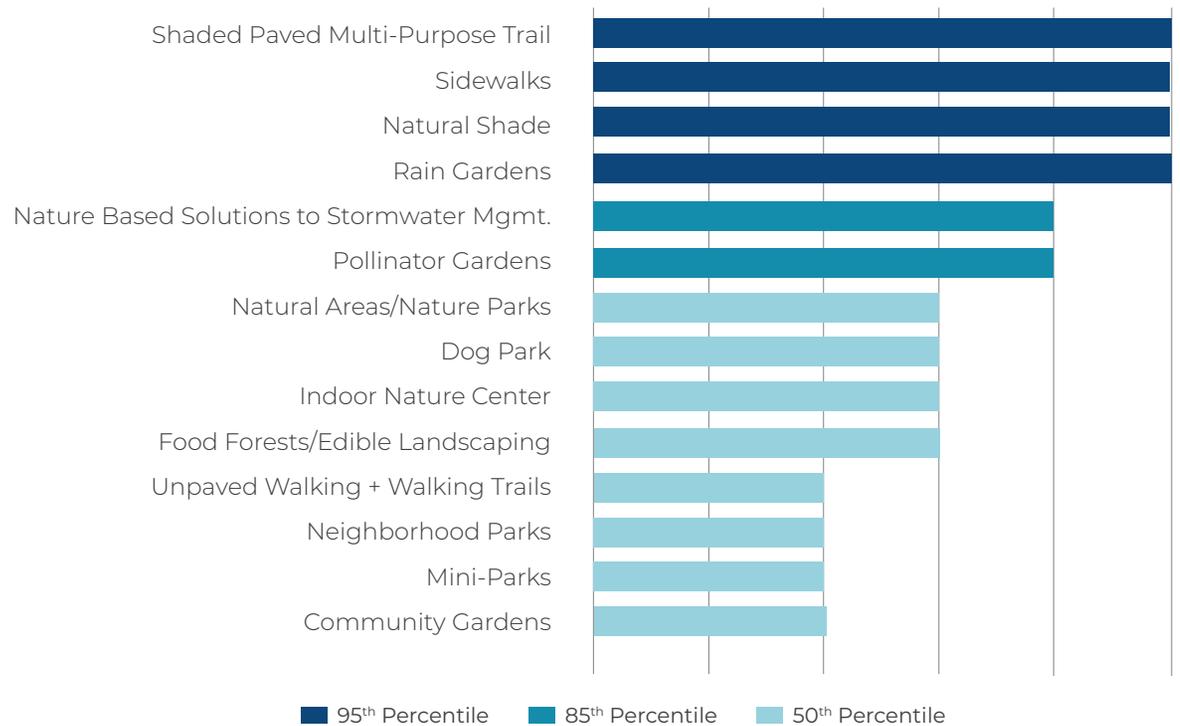
## Project Goals and Objectives Steering Meeting

The project steering committee comprised of the PG&T Commission provided strategic direction, advice, and expertise; served as influential advocates that challenge conventional thinking; and helped implement the plan.

Thursday, September 14, 2023- 5:00 pm to 6:30 pm

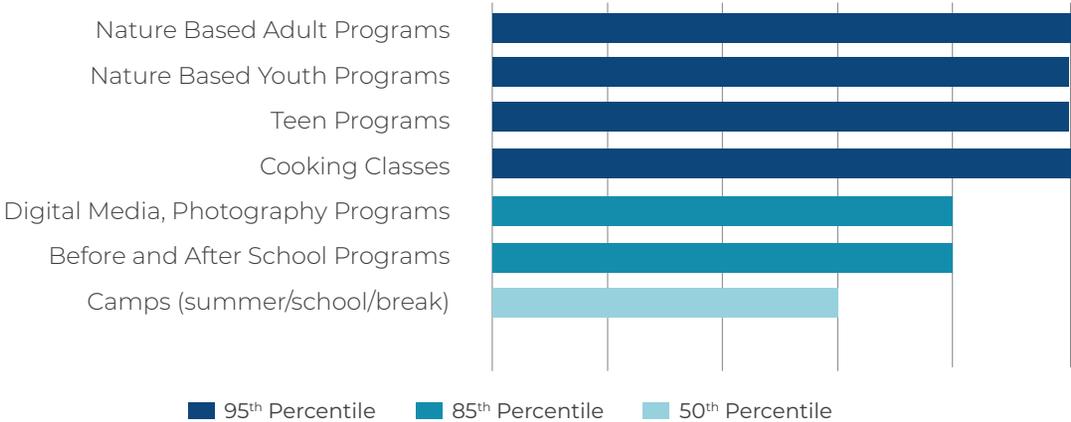
## Facilities Priorities

Based on a matrix with images and names of over 30 facilities and amenities, participants were asked to place a dot on the facilities and amenities that they believed were important, but not adequately provided in the city. Following are the findings.



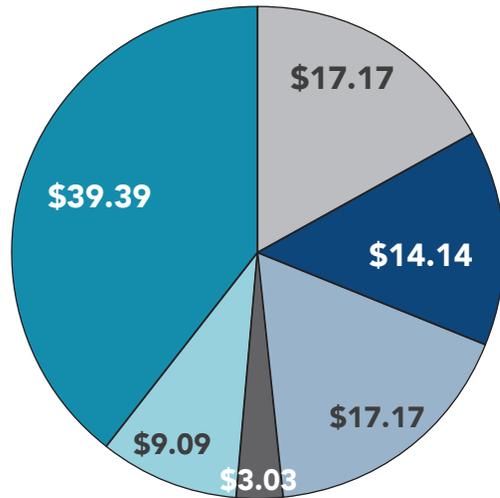
### Program Priorities

Based on a matrix with images and names of over 35 programs and activities, participants were asked to place a dot on the programs and activities that they believed were important, but not adequately provided in the city. Following are the findings.



## Funding Facility Priorities

Participants were given \$100 dollars to spend on eight different facilities/capital improvement categories. Following are the findings.

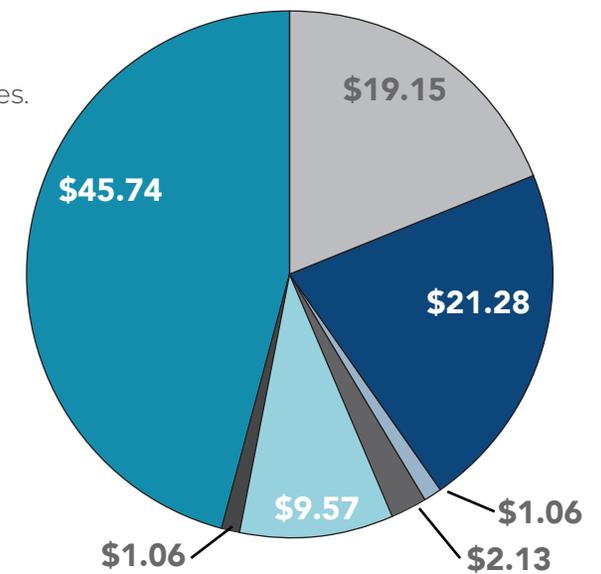


- Development of New Park Facilities (e.g. athletic fields, playground, restrooms, etc.) in Existing Parks
- Development of New Walking and Biking Facilities (paved and/or unpaved paths)
- Development of New Indoor Recreation Center (\$0)
- Improvement to Existing Parks and Recreation Facilities (e.g. repairs, replacements or renovations to playgrounds, athletic fields, restrooms, etc.)
- Improvements to Existing Indoor Recreation Centers (e.g. repairs, replacements or renovations)
- Improvements/maintenance to Existing Walking and Biking Facilities (e.g. repairs, repaving or renovations, etc.)
- Acquiring New Park Land

## Funding Program Priorities

Participants were given \$100 dollars to spend on eight different programs/operations categories. Following are the findings.

- Additional Adult Recreation Programs and/or Classes (excluding athletics)
- Additional Youth Recreation Programs and/or Classes (excluding athletics)
- Additional Senior Recreation Programs and/or Classes (excluding athletics)
- Additional Adult Athletic Programs/Leagues
- Additional Youth Athletic Programs/Leagues
- Increase Frequency of Programs/Classes and/or Extend Hours of Programming
- Increase Staff to Improve Maintenance of Parks and Facilities (additional cleaning, mowing, tree trimming, etc.)



## What Else is on Your Mind?

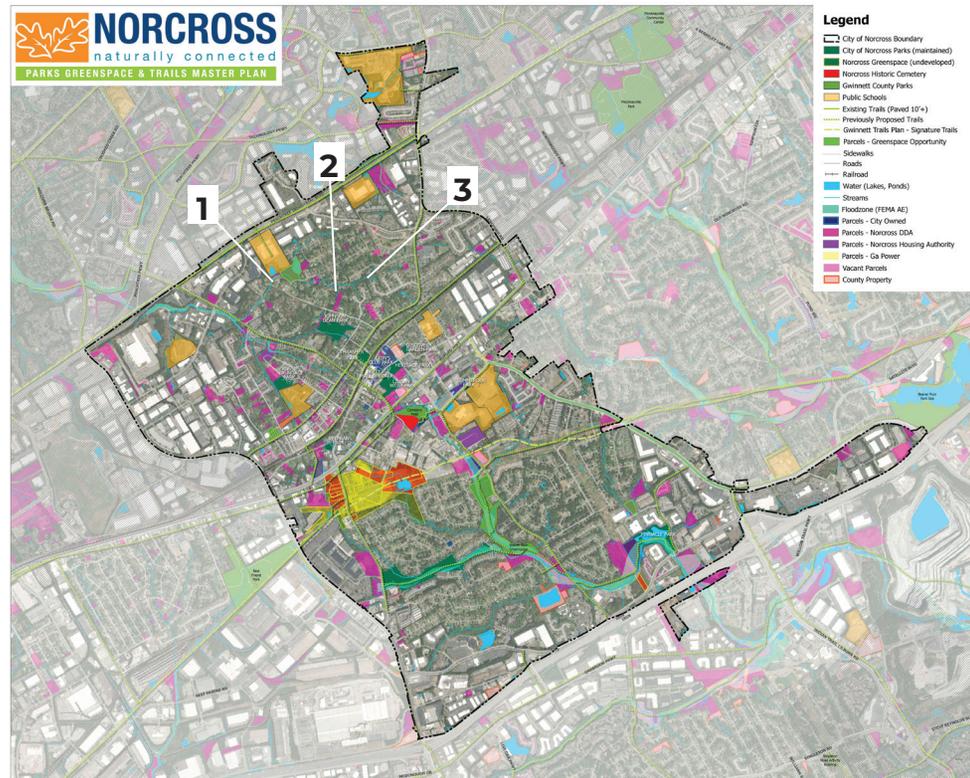
Participants were asked to share anything else that was on their mind regarding the master plan that should be considered. Participants expressed that there is a need for:

- Rethink “Parks;” reconsider “parks” to include greenspace such as private setbacks, and develop policies to support ecologically sound protection of natural spaces.
- “Grow food, not lawns”
- Acquire distressed land for parks and greenspaces
- Homeowners may need assistance with a valued city asset, such as a big tree, which is providing eco-system services to the city; how can the city help to maintain it/manage it?
- Provide connectivity between neighborhoods (ex. Valley Cochran Pedestrian Connection)
- Formalize key pedestrian connections that currently exist and enhance connections to schools and between neighborhoods.
- More pavilions and clear spaces for parties/get togethers for high school students, especially in parks near high schools.

## Map Input

Participants were asked to share any ideas or relevant information based on specific locations in Norcross.

1. Unofficial trail that provides access to school
2. Proposed connection
3. Unofficial trail on private property



## Public Meetings and Events

Members of the project team and stakeholder committee attended the following public events to collect input:

City of Norcross Hispanic Heritage Celebration

Saturday, September 16, 2023- 2:00 pm to 6:00 pm

\*Spanish language materials

PG&T Commission Meeting

Thursday, September 21, 2023- 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm

Council Debate

Thursday, October 5, 2023- 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm

Pedal Norcross

Saturday, October 21, 2023- 10:00 am to 1:00 pm

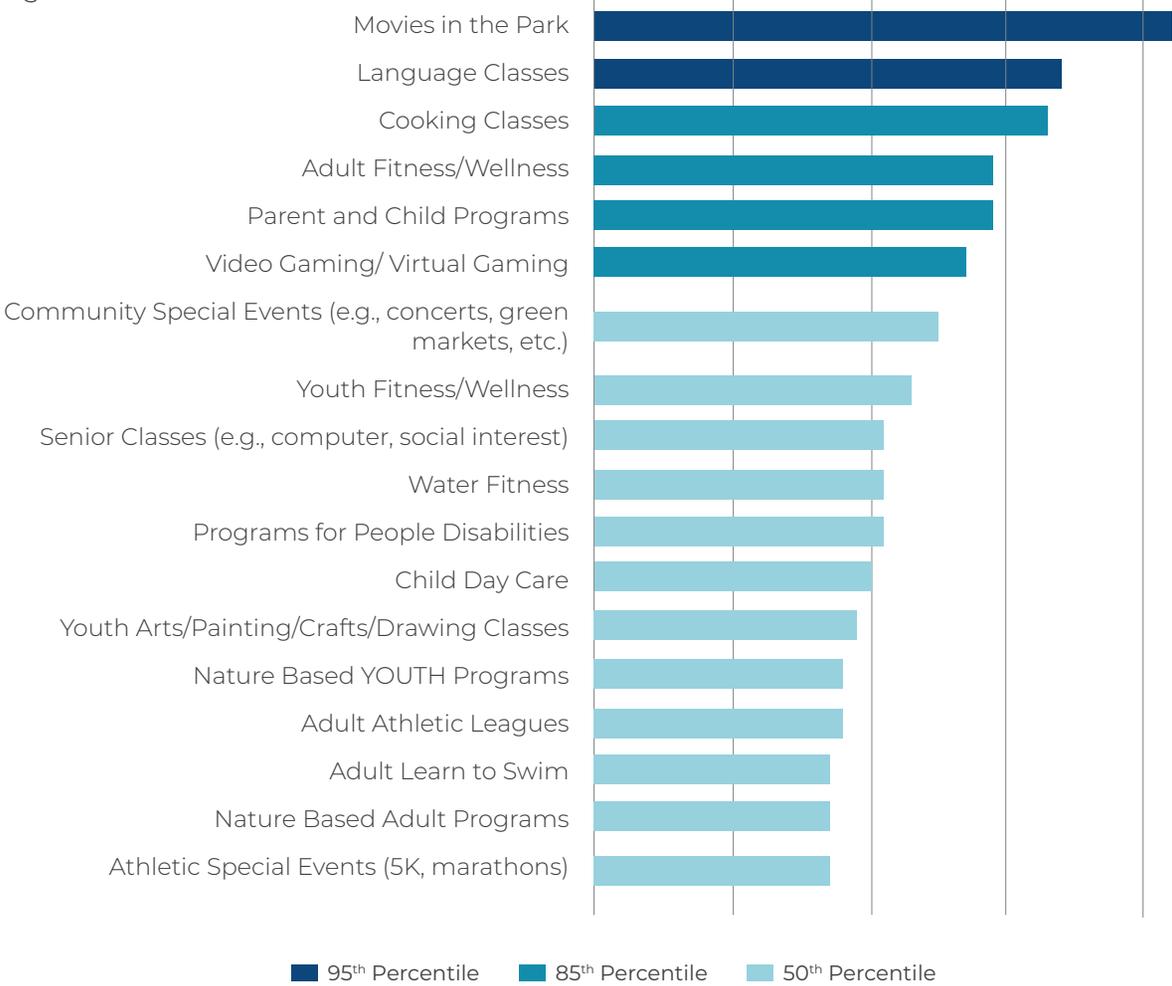
## Facilities Priorities

Based on a matrix with images and names of over 30 facilities and amenities, participants were asked to place a dot on the facilities and amenities that they believed were important, but not adequately provided in the city. Following are the findings.



### Program Priorities

Based on a matrix with images and names of over 35 programs and activities, participants were asked to place a dot on the programs and activities that they believed were important, but not adequately provided in the city. Following are the findings.



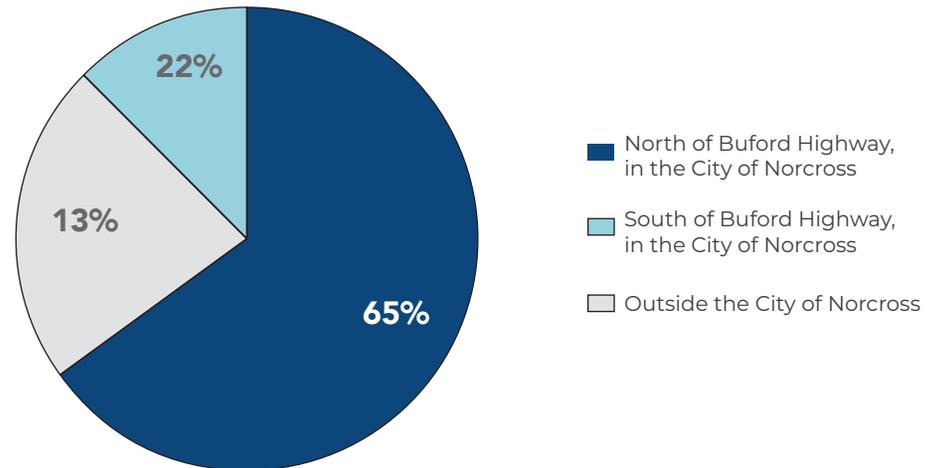
### Website - Online Survey

The project team developed a custom website for the project, accessible at [norcrossga.net/parksplan](http://norcrossga.net/parksplan). The website featured information about the project, as well as two features for public engagement: a survey and a map for location-based input.

The 17-question survey was available from September 15, 2023 through December 31, 2023. A total of 188 surveys were completed.

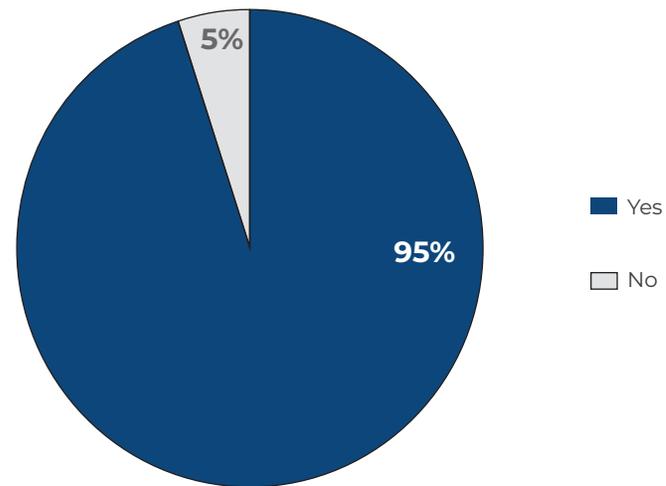
### Residence Location of Survey Respondents

Respondents were asked to identify where they live, to provide perspective on the location-based aspects of the survey.



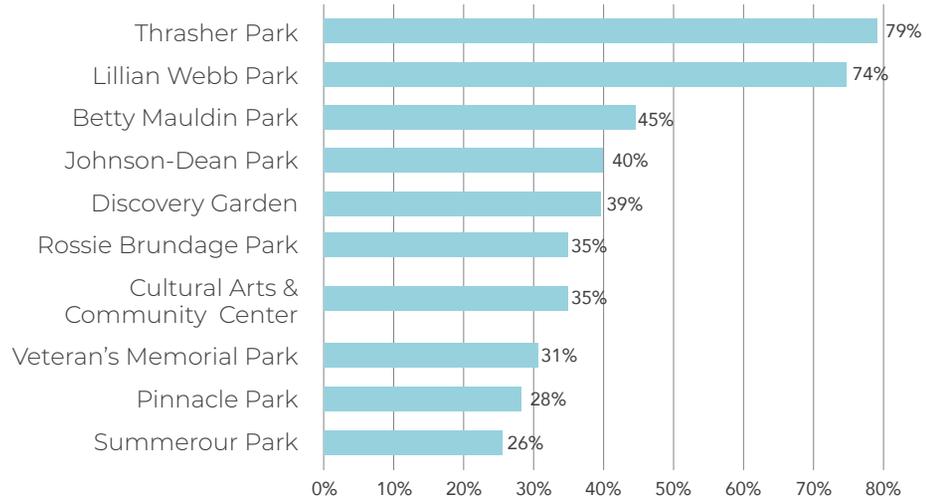
### Use of Parks and Recreation Facilities

Respondents were asked if they had used the City of Norcross parks or recreation facilities within the past two years.



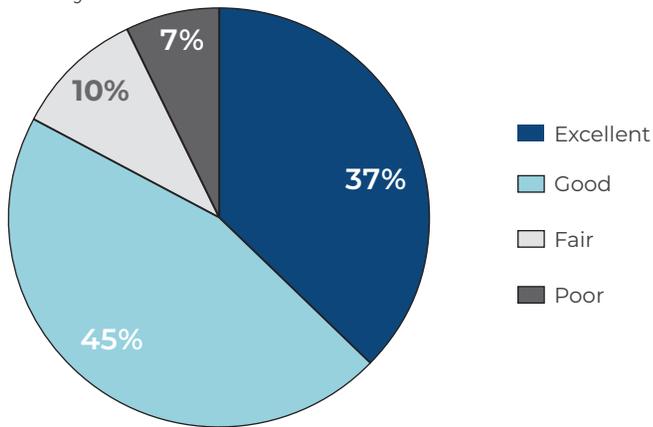
### Most Visited Parks

Respondents were asked to identify which parks they had visited over the past two years.



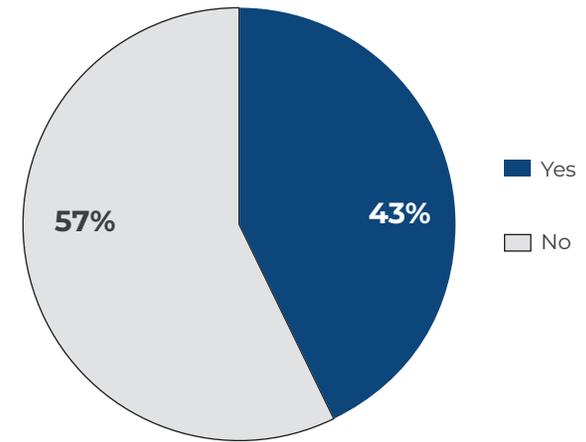
### Quality of Parks and Recreation Facilities

Respondents were asked to rate the condition of the parks and recreation facilities they had visited in Norcross within the last two years.



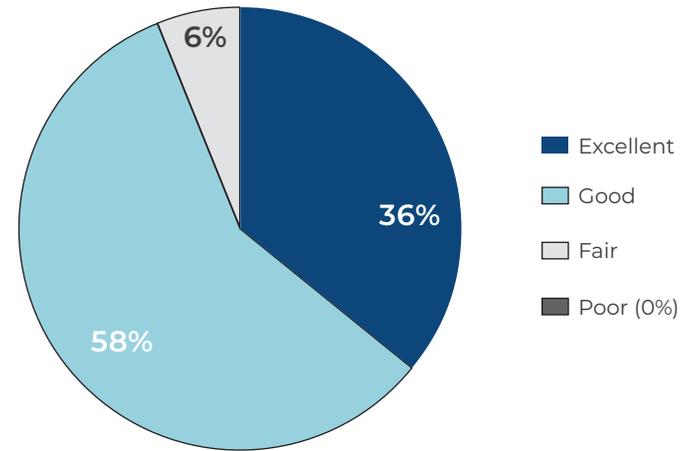
### Use of Parks and Recreation Programs

Respondents were asked if they had participated in City of Norcross parks or recreation programs within the past two years.



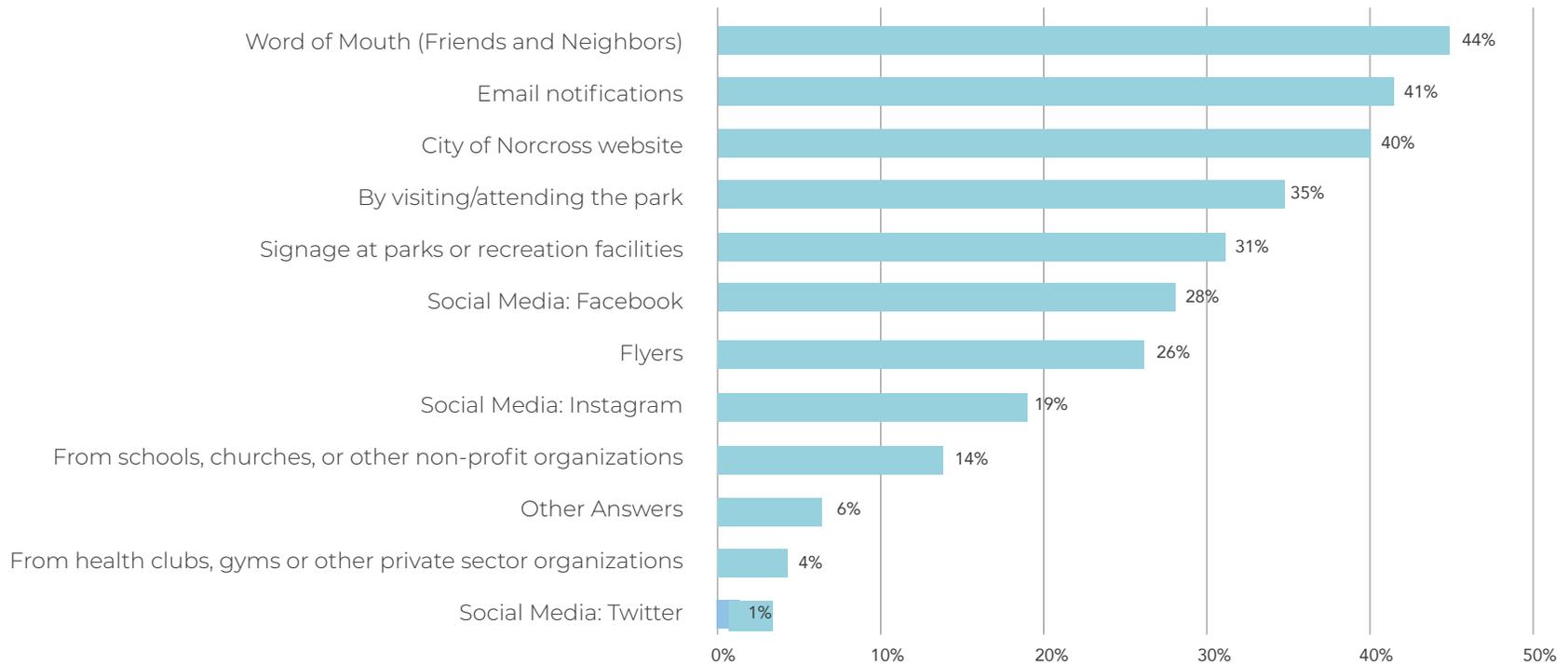
### Quality of Parks and Recreation Programs

Respondents were asked to rate the experience of the parks and recreation programs they had participated in within the last two years.



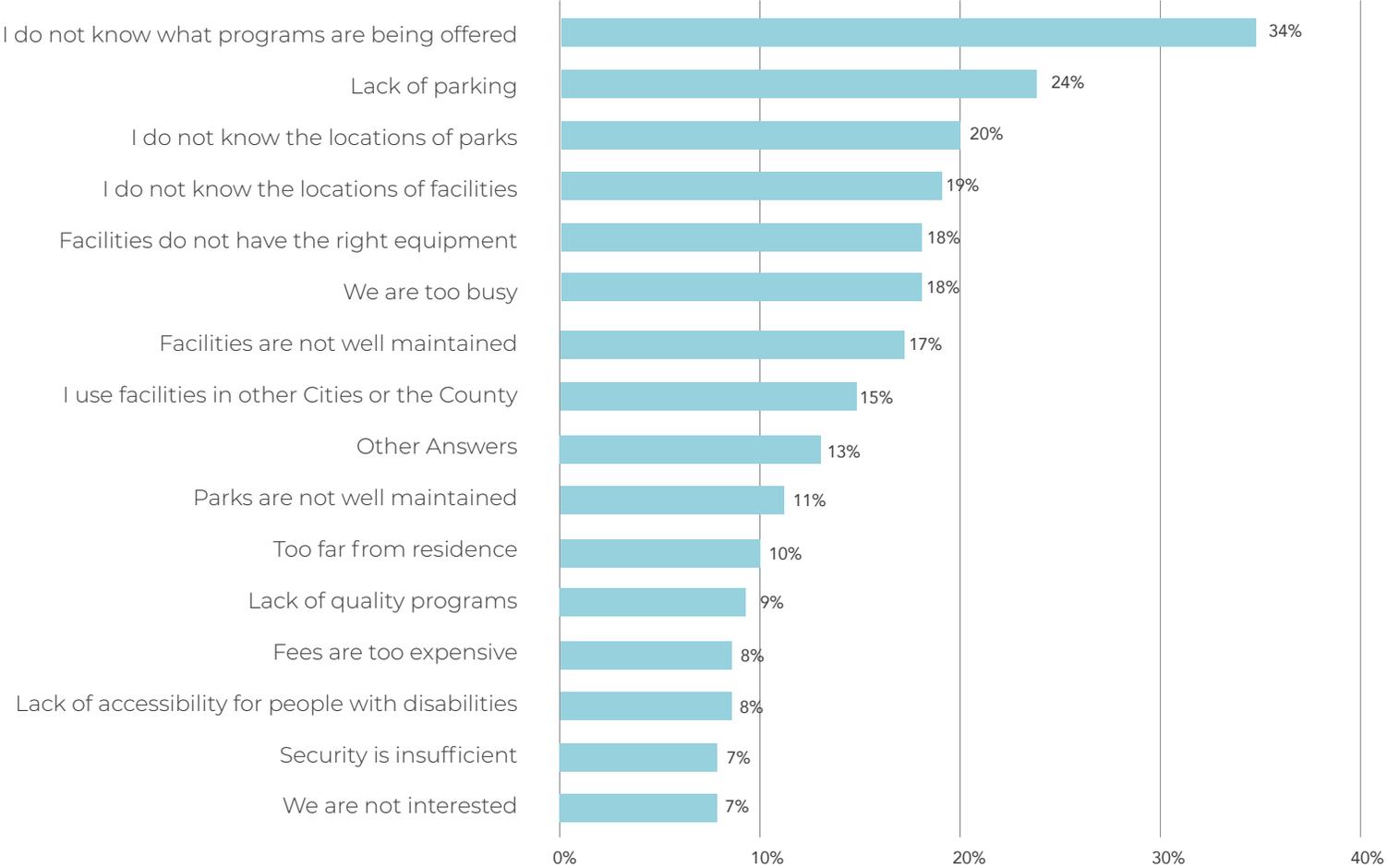
## Communication Methods

Respondents were asked to identify how they learned about the programs, activities, and events offered by the City of Norcross.



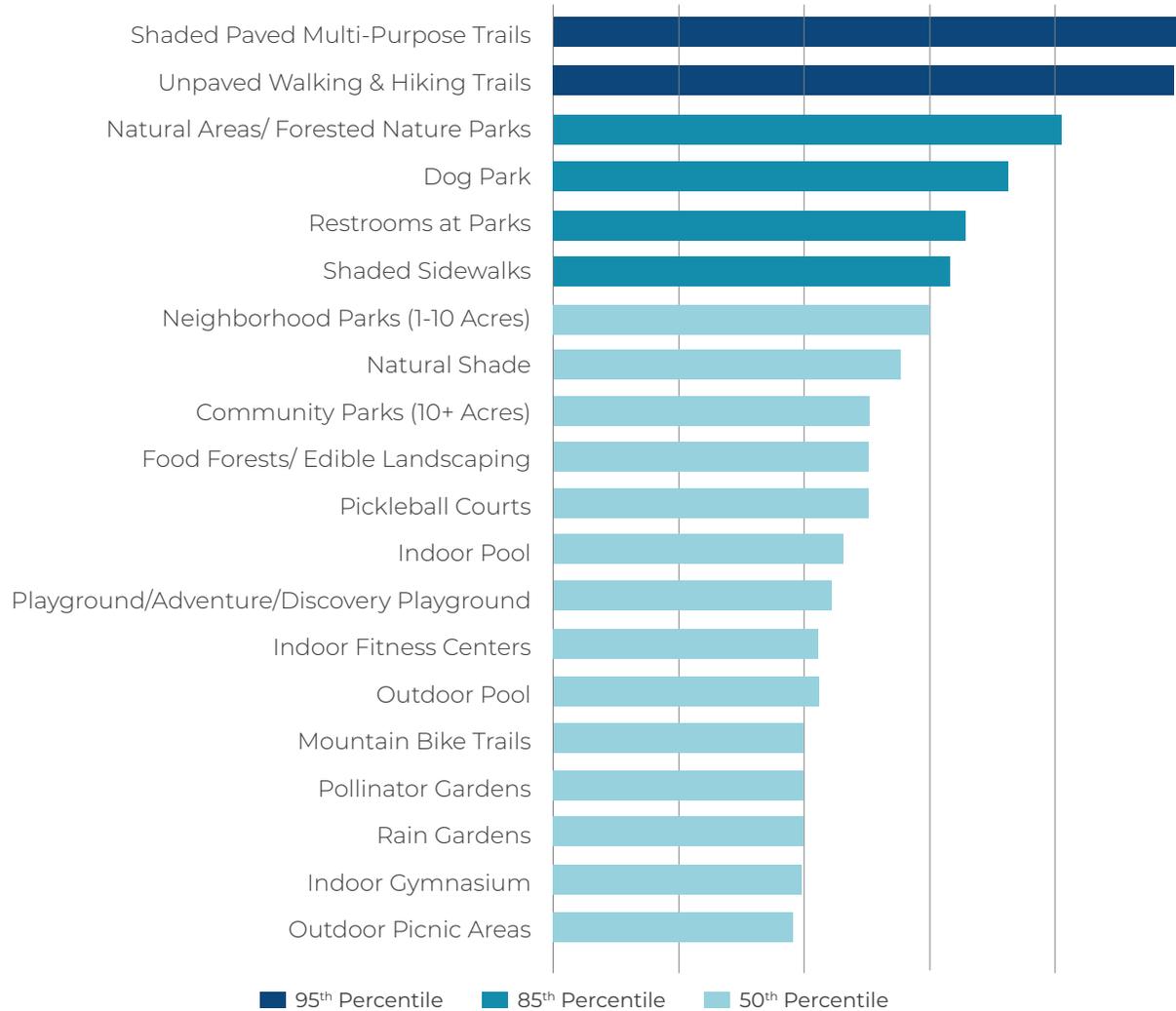
### Barriers to Use

Respondents were asked to indicate the reasons that have discouraged you or members of your household from using the City of Norcross parks, recreation facilities, trails, or programs more often during the past two years



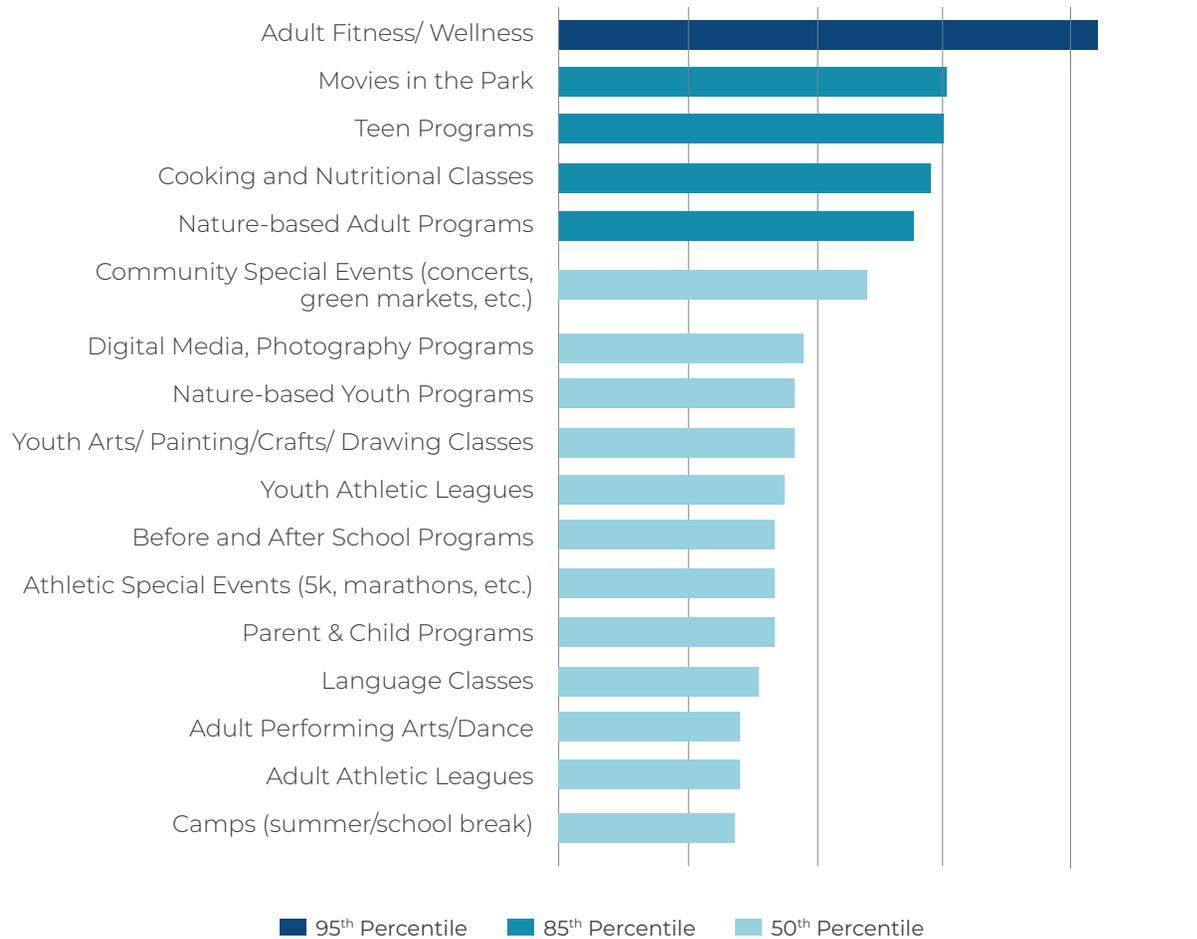
## Facility/Amenity Needs

Respondents were provided with a list of 35 parks and recreation facilities/amenities and asked to select those which are important to them but not adequately provided in the community.



## Program/Activity Needs

Respondents were provided with a list of 35 parks and recreation programs/activities to select and identify which they believed were needed in the community.



## Capital Improvement Strategies

Respondents were asked to rank seven Capital Improvement Strategies, with 1 being most important and 7 being least important to the household. The results reflect the weighted scores.

1. Development of New/Additional Park Areas, Recreation Facilities, Natural Areas (ex. passive greenspace, restoring forested areas, athletic fields, playgrounds, restrooms, etc.)
2. Development of New Walking and Biking Facilities (ex. additional shaded paved and/or unpaved trails that connect to surrounding city and county trails, neighborhoods, schools, parks, retail destinations, commercial areas, etc. )
3. Improvements/Maintenance of Existing Parks, Recreation Facilities, and Natural Areas (ex. maintaining forested areas, updates, improvements, repairs or renovations to playgrounds, greenspace, foot bridges, fields, restrooms, etc.)
4. Acquiring Land for New Parks, Recreation Facilities, and Natural Areas
5. Improvements/Maintenance of Existing Walking and Biking Facilities (ex. planting more trees, maintaining trees, repairs, repaving, or renovations, etc.)
6. Development of New Indoor Community Centers (ex. indoor recreation, environmental educational, cultural, historical centers.)
7. Improvements/Maintenance of Existing Community Centers (ex. repairs, replacements, or renovations, etc.)

## Programs and Operations Strategies

Respondents were asked to rank seven Programs and Operations Strategies, with 1 being most important and 7 being least important to the household. The results reflect the weighted scores.

1. Additional Adult Recreation Programs and/or Classes (excluding athletics)
2. Additional Youth (Middle and High School Age) Recreation Programs and/or Classes (excluding athletics)
3. Increase Staff/Staff Training to Improve Maintenance of Parks and Facilities (ex. additional cleaning, mowing, tree trimming, invasive plant removal, training and ongoing education for parks staff to improve their ability to bring new, innovative practices and ideas to parks and facilities development and management, etc.)
4. Additional Senior Recreation Programs and/or Classes (excluding athletics)
5. Additional Youth (Middle and High School Age) Athletic Programs/Leagues
6. Increase Frequency of Programs/Classes and/or Extend Hours of Programming
7. Additional Adult Athletic Programs/Leagues

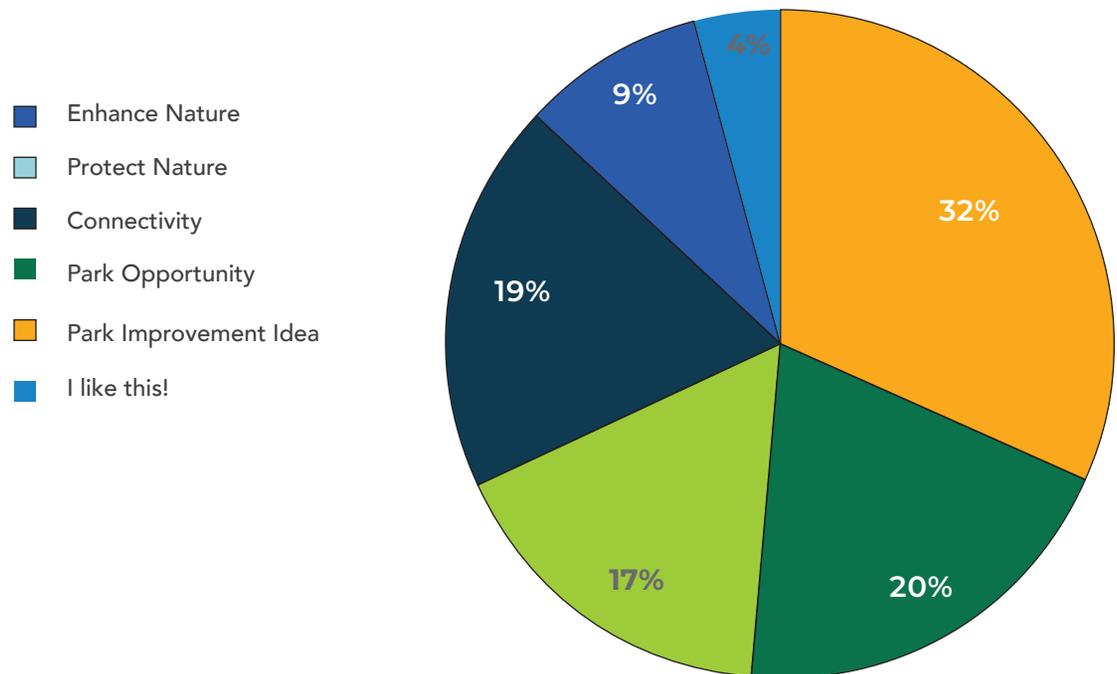
## Website - Map Comments

The website featured a map where respondents could provide location-specific input. Six comment types were provided to help organize responses:

- Enhance Nature: to leave a comment about an area that should be improved naturally (tree planting, native landscaping, green infrastructure, streambank restoration, etc.)
- Protect Nature: to leave a comment about a natural area (forest, stream, wetland, etc.) that has potential for new recreational opportunities.
- Connectivity: to leave a comment about improving access to parks, whether a new pedestrian or bike connection, or some other connectivity need.
- Park Opportunity: to leave a comment about a location where a new park should be created.
- Park Improvement Idea: to share your idea about how to improve a park.
- I like this! To let the parks department know about something you like in the park today.

Respondents also had the option to “Like” or “Dislike” comments that others had previously left, as well as to reply to previous comments.

There were 114 total comments. The chart below displays their distribution across the six comment types.

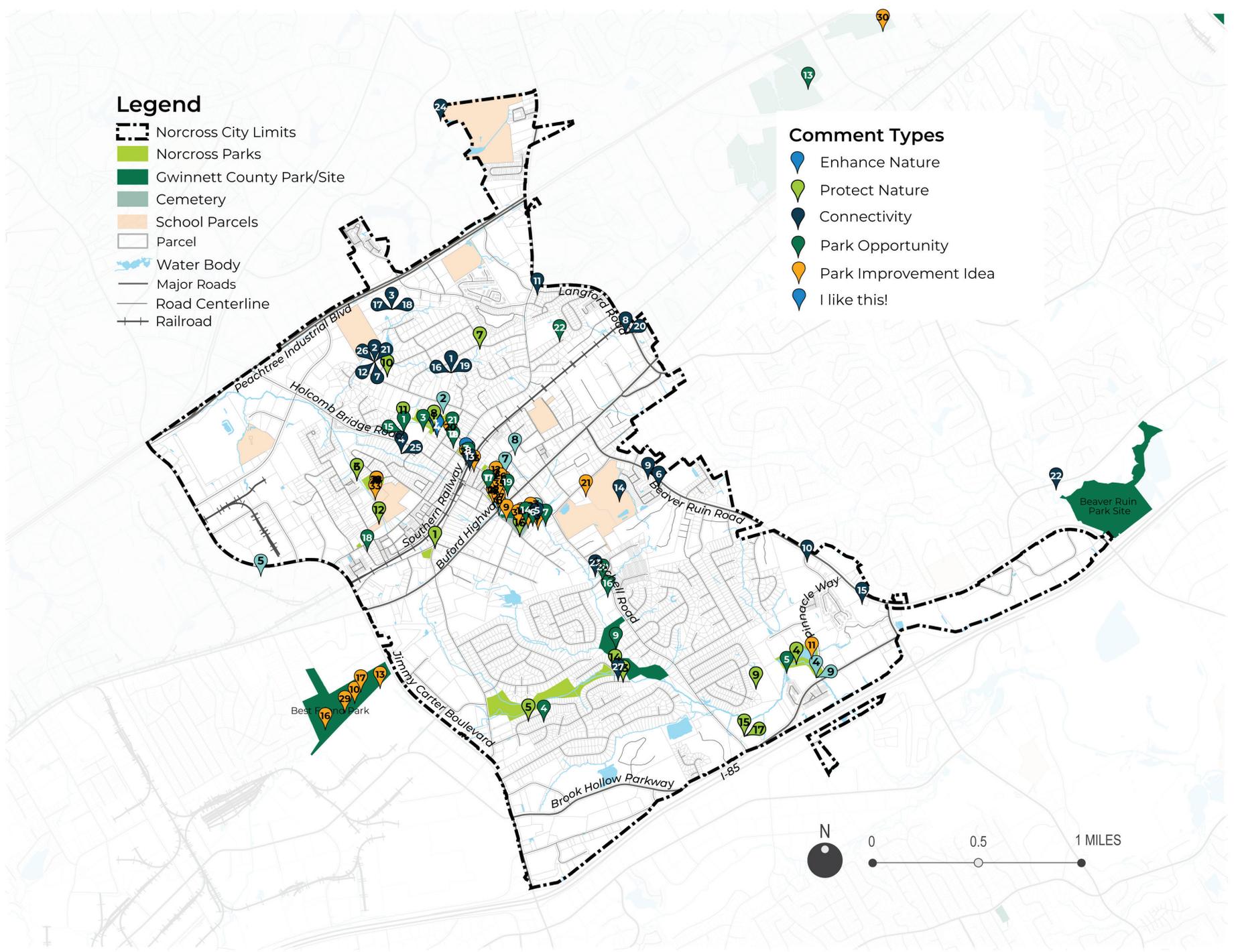


## Legend

-  Norcross City Limits
-  Norcross Parks
-  Gwinnett County Park/Site
-  Cemetery
-  School Parcels
-  Parcel
-  Water Body
-  Major Roads
-  Road Centerline
-  Railroad

## Comment Types

-  Enhance Nature
-  Protect Nature
-  Connectivity
-  Park Opportunity
-  Park Improvement Idea
-  I like this!



## Web Map Input

The following comments represent the top 10 (or total) from each category, based on the “Likes” received. A full list of comments is included in the appendix.

### Enhance Nature

1. Erosion seems to be taking its toll on the banks of the creek flowing through this area. Professional work on it would likely work wonders for it, especially in the long-term.
2. I would love to see some trees in this area of Sunset. They would enhance the beauty, provide a habitat, and add shade for walkers.
3. Enhancing green nature back to these area would really add presence to this area.
4. This is a nice end of the park that could use some enhancing or adding some seating to get some use of it.
5. Would love to see more landscaping/trees added along Jimmy Carter to break up all the stripmall/warehouse buildings
6. Stretches of Buford Hwy could use some increased landscaping/tree planting.
7. Not sure what’s going on here. Can we add a walking track? Places to sit outside and read? More trees? Flowers? Etc
8. More robust plants and a walking path.
9. The park could definitely use 1 or 2 more of the one piece covered picnic tables (like on the far side, near the dam). On the weekends, finding seating to picnic is a challenge, especially if the pavilion is reserved.

### Protect Nature

1. This tree/green space has been offered for sale for some time. The City of Norcross should acquire the property and preserve it as a natural screen between Flint Hill and the railroad tracks. It is not a very useful location for commercial development.
2. Let’s preserve and protect areas like this. Having a trail here (the Piedmont Pathway) would be really nice, but needs to be done in a way that isn’t terribly destructive.
3. This area has an unofficial trail through the woods, between the end of Dogwood zig-zagging down the hill to Cochran. I haven’t walked it myself because it isn’t public. But this space is quite beautiful, when you look out over from Dogwood. It would be a great location for the city to protect and conserve nature.
4. This portion of Lillian Webb has been offered for restaurant development. In my opinion, this would be an unfortunate loss of green space.
5. The green space served by the Hunter-Walker Trail is a wonderful asset for the City, providing additional connection between Hunter Street residences and downtown.
6. Pinnacle Park is an absolute gem. Let’s preserve this park and enhance it, and also preserve the creek.

7. The natural part of JD is the best part. Keeping this as a passive park (with some slightly improved trails) will maintain its charm.
8. See property description at Gwinnett GIS for parcel 6214 182 for 10.28 acres in floodplain. It would be a great green space/nature preserve. It could be accessed from the curve in Station Way or from Brookhollow Pkwy and maybe even from city owned property at Pinnacle Pond going thru the utility easement. Former owner Bo Sasnett tried to sell to city but it is now owned by WHM Copper Mountain Investments, LLC which filed for Chapter 11 Bankruptcy in 2008/2009. Connectivity possible.
9. Agreed! I would love to see more short trails like Hunter-Walker Trail that give bike/ped shortcuts. Plus this one is really very beautiful.
10. City owned former Fickling property should be a forest preserve with minimal access. Keep it for the trees, sound buffer, space for critters, view shed. Fix the pond that is heavily silted and overtops dam in heavy rain. It serves as detention pond for entire neighborhood and its watershed goes to Rebs Miller and the east side of PIB. It is one of the few urban forests left and should be preserved.

#### Connectivity

1. I'm looking forward to the Valley-Cochran trail that will be installed here. Please seek opportunities for more short trails like this to give walkers and cyclists more options that are safer and healthier for our community.
2. Connecting the neighborhood to the school with a walking (and maybe bike?) path would provide connectivity and reduce emissions from drivers.
3. Bike trails pls. need them on Buford hwy, Peachtree ind, Langford, and N Peachtree - within city boundaries. very dangerous to ride, and existing sidewalks are narrow and have been beaten up over the years. also co-ordination with neighboring counties to ensure clear bike trail connections.
4. A small opening currently leads into the woods and some trails by which Johnson Dean Park can be accessed. If a strip of land could be acquired leading into here it would provide a convenient point of entry for people who live in this direction. When the house here was owned by the church we were comfortable walking across the parking lot to the entrance, but not so much now that it has been sold to a private owner.
5. Add Walking path around field.
6. Re connectivity in terms of protecting our citizens: past comments to City, County, & State entities have so far not led to any action. This area contains a fairly-new crosswalk, which has now (to my knowledge) been destroyed at least 7 times by cars driving right over it (it is located parallel to traffic lanes in the turn lane). Thank God that so far no one was IN it at the time. PLEASE INSTALL LIGHTING along this area--it's dark as a cave; the crosswalk can barely be seen at night.
7. All city planning for paths and trails needs to be interconnected with the ultimate objective being broad multi-use paths for cyclists and pedestrians throughout our city.
8. Rails with Trails is a really neat idea to provide connectivity in Norcross to our surrounding areas (like up to Pinckneyville Park) while also leaning into our identity as a train town.

9. Streetlights are needed here, too. They are on the south side of Beaver Ruin but not the north side, and (again) it's dark as a cave along that stretch of road and on the sidewalk, and is I believe a major factor in people repeatedly running into and demolishing the crosswalk posts/ fixtures in front of Norcross Methodist Church.
10. Traffic light is much needed here. It's surprising that even though it's right in front of the DMV and no traffic control has been established. It's horrible when traffic gets packed, there is no way to cross from one side to the other as it gets jammed. Many cars choose to take a right and then u-turn back just to make it in the direction they headed, but there should be no need when this can be an easy fix, as and help prevent accidents.

#### Park Opportunity

1. More trails originally set out by the Episcopal church are connected to those in Johnson Dean Park. They extend the natural forested area available here, and if given a path to the sidewalk along Holcomb Bridge would provide an additional entrance to the area, but they have not been maintained in recent years and could use some cleaning up.
2. This area was recently largely cleared out for potential development, but to my knowledge no construction has yet started there. A lot of forest has already been lost, reducing potential park value, but the land could still be reclaimed and with replanting be made into a nice green space.
3. JD, Norcross's forest and wildlife preserve, that is easily accessible to our citizens, has the potential to double in size! The connecting creek and forest land is available for conservation and enlargement of the preserve.
4. This land looks like a great opportunity to create something special for Norcross.
5. There is trail here that hasn't been completed. It would be nice to have this finished so people can access and use it.
6. Additional Turf Space for Teams to warm up while other teams are play. A space for smaller kids to run and play.
7. Acquire for additional parking, small play equipment, splashpad or additional Turf, basketball court.
8. Such a nice commodity. This park could be improved by fencing all around it. Bring in peace of mind for parents with little ones as streets are very nearby.
9. Maintain as much green area, and adding some public access soccer fields and playground for the community in this area.
10. We need to maintain as much green space as we can within our boundaries for the environment and for wildlife. That is what enamored us to come to Norcross from asphalt city Alpharetta. We love the ability walk within wooded neighborhoods and parks within a few miles (walking distance) from our home.

#### Park Improvement Idea

1. Needs to be Handicap accessible. Very Dangerous to use cane, wheelchair, stroller, walker to get to the stands. It is also a long walk.
2. Additional Space to add stands for opposing team.

3. Additional Turf for: smaller kids to play; Game day warm ups; Team check ins.
4. There is plenty of opportunity here (i.e. space) to create a playground. Thrasher Park is becoming overcrowded and is showing signs of overuse. Its conveniently located to the beautiful library.
5. An updated/larger amphitheater (compared to the Thrasher Park stage) here would be really cool.
6. The baseball field has been locked recently. It should be opened for public use.
7. The fountains in Lillian Webb Park are beautiful and draw people from all over for pics. But lighting frequently malfunctions, and people are disappointed with no lights at night. I suggest updating lighting systems and include lights that could change colors (red white and blue for Fourth of July, red and green for Christmas, etc.)
8. I never knew this was "Lions Club Park"! Is there any signage here indicating that? If not, I'd love to see it added! The Lions Club is a great group that does much good in our community, and should receive this recognition!
9. Acquire Space to: For additional Parking; A Sign for Cemetery the park; Additional turning lane.
10. Update the community Center to add indoor walking track, weight lifting room, additional courts.

I like this!

1. Love the simple "walking through the forest" feel of this park and the lack of major structures or paving. Comparatively untouched natural areas like these are like gold in the metro area today.
2. Facilities and playground here are great for our family.
3. I love Thrasher Park. The facilities, amenities, the landscaping, the art... It's a wonderful and simple place that gets a lot of use!
4. JD Park is awesome! Maintain the natural feel that allows exploration and improve!

## Focus Groups

Interviews were conducted with six different focus groups to ascertain needs and priorities for the master plan:

- Local Businesses and Organizations | November 2, 2023 at 5:00 pm
- Faith-Based Community | November 6, 2023 at 5:00 pm
- City Board Members | November 7, 2023 at 5:00 pm
- Young Adults | November 9, 2023 at 5:00 pm
- Youth Groups & Schools | November 13, 2023 at 5:00 pm
- City Staff | November 14, 2023 at 5:30 pm
- 

## Parks and Recreation Needs

- Enhanced use of utility easements (sewer/overhead power) for recreation and wildlife
- More pollinator gardens/native plantings
- Programs for residents to implement on their own
- More trails, connected sidewalks
- More events in parks to increase community awareness
- Lillian Webb should be maximized for gatherings
- Need to acquire land now before it's too late
- Need a dog park
- More nature-based play areas
- Conserve and better manage existing forests and wild spaces
- More athletic fields
- Need pickleball courts
- Better outreach about facilities and programs
- Park map and Park System Map online and in parks
- Safety and security around restrooms
- Upgrades to playgrounds, especially at Thrasher Park

- More shade at playgrounds
- Support local food movement through gardens/farms in parks
- Improved collaboration between city boards (arts, PG&T Commission, etc.)

## Priorities

- Provide trails and sidewalks to connect people to parks
- Improve existing parks and facilities before building new
- Acquire limited remaining land with high ecological value
- Activate parks through strategic programs and facilities

## Funding and Implementation

- Mixed interest in raising property taxes to support a bond
- Interest in exploring developer/impact fees for new development
- Continue pursuing ARC grants and other grants; PG&T Commission and City have been successful with this
- Ensure greenspace is fundamental to large-scale redevelopment (i.e. Buford Highway LCI plan)

## Stakeholder Interviews

City leaders were provided with an opportunity to provide input on the master plan. Interviews focused around 3 primary questions associated with parks and recreation needs, priorities, and funding strategies. Following is a summary of findings from the interviews.

### Parks, Greenspace, Trails, and Green Infrastructure Needs

- The City has great parks and amenities and the City needs to market them. They are part of the City's DNA.
- Proximity to Gwinnett Parks is great, including West Gwinnett Aquatics Center, Best Friend Park, and Beaver Ruin Wetland Park.
- The City needs a Dog Park. There are some in the vicinity outside of the City that require driving, but none within the City that residents can walk to.
- The City needs to have better walking and biking options, including a Linear Park in Norcross.
  - The Norcross Greenway has the potential to be great, but it needs to be safe.
- A specific linear park could extend from Veteran's Park to Downtown along storm drain, it would then jog over to the Big Elm, and then head to Discovery Garden Park. It could be very simply completed using signage, digital promotion on Google Maps, and could be branded using consistent plantings such as Daffodils, Daylilies, and Red Buds.
- Need to be intentional about filling gaps in sidewalks and connecting all the paths. Having a lot of paths, but not connected is an issue. There is a lot of disjointedness. We need a plan to fix it.
- Concerned about restrooms being used in the wrong way as they get vandalized a lot.
- Do not do enough with parks, greenspace, and trails around railroad tracks and throughout the City to enhance the curb appeal of the City. For example, from Trasher Park to Kelly Street, there is an opportunity to enhance that area and beautify it. There is an opportunity to be able to walk on the side of the railroad tracks with foliage and path lighting that highlight and beautify the area.
- The City needs a Marketing Strategy for the Norcross Greenway. It is one of the most transformative opportunities in the City, but there is no plan articulated around what it will look like, when it will be built, how people can help with it, etc. Everything that we do next needs to connect to this project. The project needs to cross through Buford Highway to the historic area, so it connects to the downtown walking area.
- Would like to see the last phase completed in Discovery Garden Park to make it into a Botanical Garden that expands on the existing Community Garden. Would also like to build a building that resembles a Green House but is not a Green House, with a staff person that also has an office and meeting rooms. For the Botanical Garden, it can be as simple as investing in additional plantings and adding labels to the plants.
- For the Southside of Norcross where there is not as much access to greenspace, there is an opportunity to take advantage of

underutilized home lots and turn those lots into parks.

- We need a list of projects to implement with existing and future SPLOST funds, and any other funds that may be available.
- Not having an ADA ramp from the top of the hill at Lillian Webb Park to get to the Splash Pad is a big problem. It needs to be accessible to parents with strollers. At the moment, you have to walk on the street to get to the Splash Pad. Once the residential pads are developed adjacent to the park, it will be even harder to get to the Splash Pad.
- We need to place Wi-fi in our parks and general common areas. That should also be integrated with safety, security, lighting, callboxes, etc.
- We need to explore how we can solve infrastructure issues through parks.

- For Johnson Dean, the park needs to remain a Nature Preserve. It should not have bathrooms, plumbing, paving, electricity, etc. A pavilion and covered shelter with a living roof would be nice but keep it natural.
- Need to have themes for parks, each one needs to be focused – nature park, children’s park, etc.

#### **Priorities**

- Completing the Norcross Greenway, expanding it, connecting it to the City’s historic Downtown area, and developing a Communications and Marketing Strategy around it.
- Other Priorities
  - Linear Park
  - Discovery Garden Park Botanical Gardens and Green House.

- Taking a look at areas within the City that can be beautified through plants and strategies so when we enter Norcross, we feel differently. We need to improve the City’s Curb Appeal.
- Parks, greensapce, and trails strategy with timeline, budget, project manager, etc. that we can place on autopilot so we can implement.

#### **Funding**

- SPLOST
- Naming rights, donations, fund raising through special events.
- Supportive of a General Obligation Bond (GOB) as a last effort if it makes sense.

### Summary High-Priority Facility/ Amenity Summary Findings

The chart below compares the facility/ amenity findings across all the techniques used to identify patterns of consensus of what facility/ amenities were most important to residents. This summary chart identifies the facilities/ amenities that were most important to residents.

Identified High-Priority Facility/ Amenity Summary Findings	Public Engagement Technique				
Public Engagement Technique Findings Legend	1. Online Survey	2. Public Meetings/ Special Events	3. Steering Committee	4. Focus Group Interviews	5. City Leadership Interviews
Shaded Paved Multi-Purpose Trails	●	●	●	○	○
Unpaved Walking + Hiking Trails	●	●	○	○	○
Shaded Sidewalks	●	●	●	○	○
Natural Shade	○	●	●	○	○
Dog Parks	●	●	○	○	○
Natural Areas/ Forested Nature Parks	●	○	○	○	○
Nature Based Solutions to Stormwater Management	○	○	●	-	○
Pollinator Gardens	○	○	●	○	-
Restrooms at Parks	●	○	-	○	-
Rain Gardens	○	-	●	-	-
Outdoor Pools	○	●	-	-	-

### Summary High-Priority Program/ Activity Summary Findings

The chart below compares the program/ activity findings across all the techniques used to identify patterns of consensus of what programs/ activities were most important to residents. This summary chart identifies the programs/ activities that were most important to residents.

Identified High-Priority Program/ Activity Summary Findings	Public Engagement Technique				
Public Engagement Technique Findings Legend	1. Online Survey	2. Public Meetings/ Special Events	3. Steering Committee	4. Focus Group Interviews	5. City Leadership Interviews
Cooking Classes				-	-
Nature Based Adult Programs				-	-
Nature Based Youth Programs				-	-
Teen Programs		-		-	-
Adult Fitness and Wellness			-	-	-
Language Classes			-	-	-
Parent and Child Programs			-	-	-
Digital Media, Photography Programs		-		-	-
Before and After School Programs		-		-	-
Camps (Summer/School Break		-		-	-
Video Gaming/ Virtual Gaming	-		-	-	-
Movies in the Park		-	-	-	-

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## Revealing the Modern Landscape

Twenty-first century planning involves a complex layering of elements, from transportation and utility networks, to regulatory and legal structures. These systems incorporate land use, zoning, taxation, political representation, and resource management strategies, just to name a few. Much like a quilt, all these polices and practices are stitched together to create the patchwork of land uses and infrastructure that support our daily lives.

The natural and environmental systems that support all life in the community are foundational to the built and regulatory environments. From butterflies and songbirds, to coyotes and turtles, mosses and champion trees, the urban environment of the City of Norcross' experiences the ancient geological and biological processes, the current climate patterns and ecosystems, within the modern built environment, interacting and evolving.

Parks, greenspace, trails, and green infrastructure systems intersect with these many layers of the civic fabric in numerous ways, including funding, physical connections, recreational uses, and more. Within Norcross, parks, greenspace, trails, and green infrastructure services are provided both by the City, as well as by Gwinnett County, and in some cases, a single park site is managed through a partnership between multiple agencies. All of these factors are important to understanding how the overall system should be improved in the coming years.





ABOVE The images show a similar aerial perspective, on the left from the 1960s and on the right from the present day. Lillian Webb Park is notable for its transition from a baseball field to a more formal passive space. Recent construction surrounding the park is also reflective of the increasing development value placed on public greenspaces in densifying areas.

The maps on the following pages provide an overview of the City's ecological and infrastructural context, all with specific relevance to the parks, greenspace, trails, and green infrastructure system.

## TOPOGRAPHY

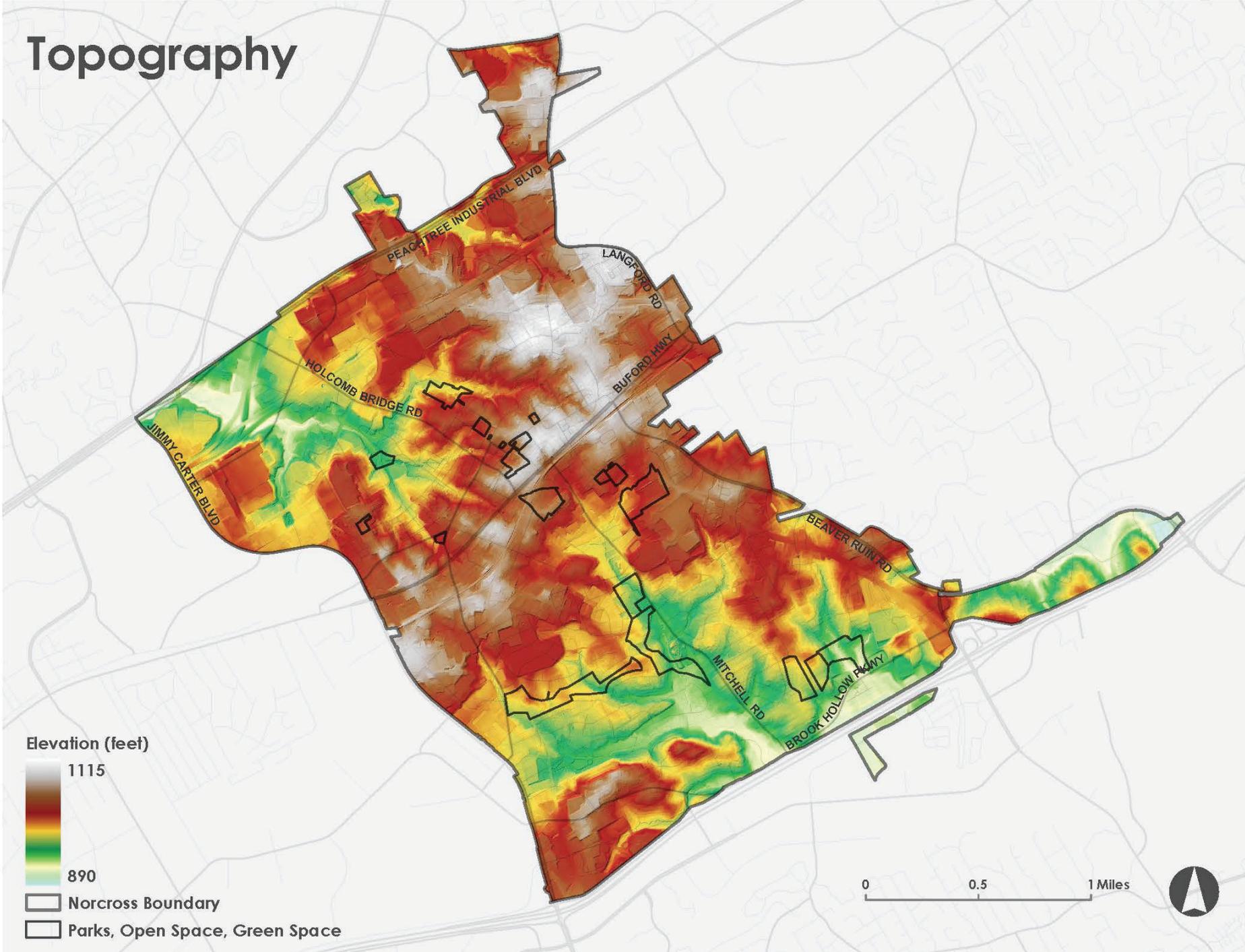
Topography represents the patterns of elevational change across the city, a product of the geologic foundations and processes underlying the surface conditions.

Norcross has a very distinctive ridgeline through the center of the City, running primarily north-south. The topography also shows two very distinct drainages (one west of Holcomb Bridge Road and one west of Mitchell Road) that are explored further in the hydrology mapping.

The elevation ranges from a high around 1,115 feet to a low of 890 feet, for a total change of roughly 225 feet.



# Topography



Elevation (feet)

1115

890

□ Norcross Boundary

□ Parks, Open Space, Green Space

0 0.5 1 Miles



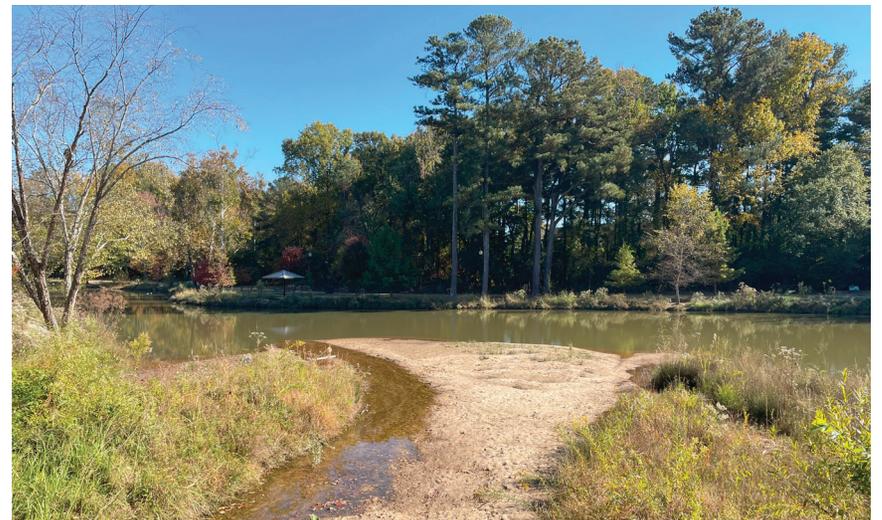
## WETLANDS, STREAMS + WATER BODIES

The hydrologic patterns across Norcross show two distinct drainages, in two separate watersheds, one to the northwest of the continental divide ridgeline and one to the southeast.

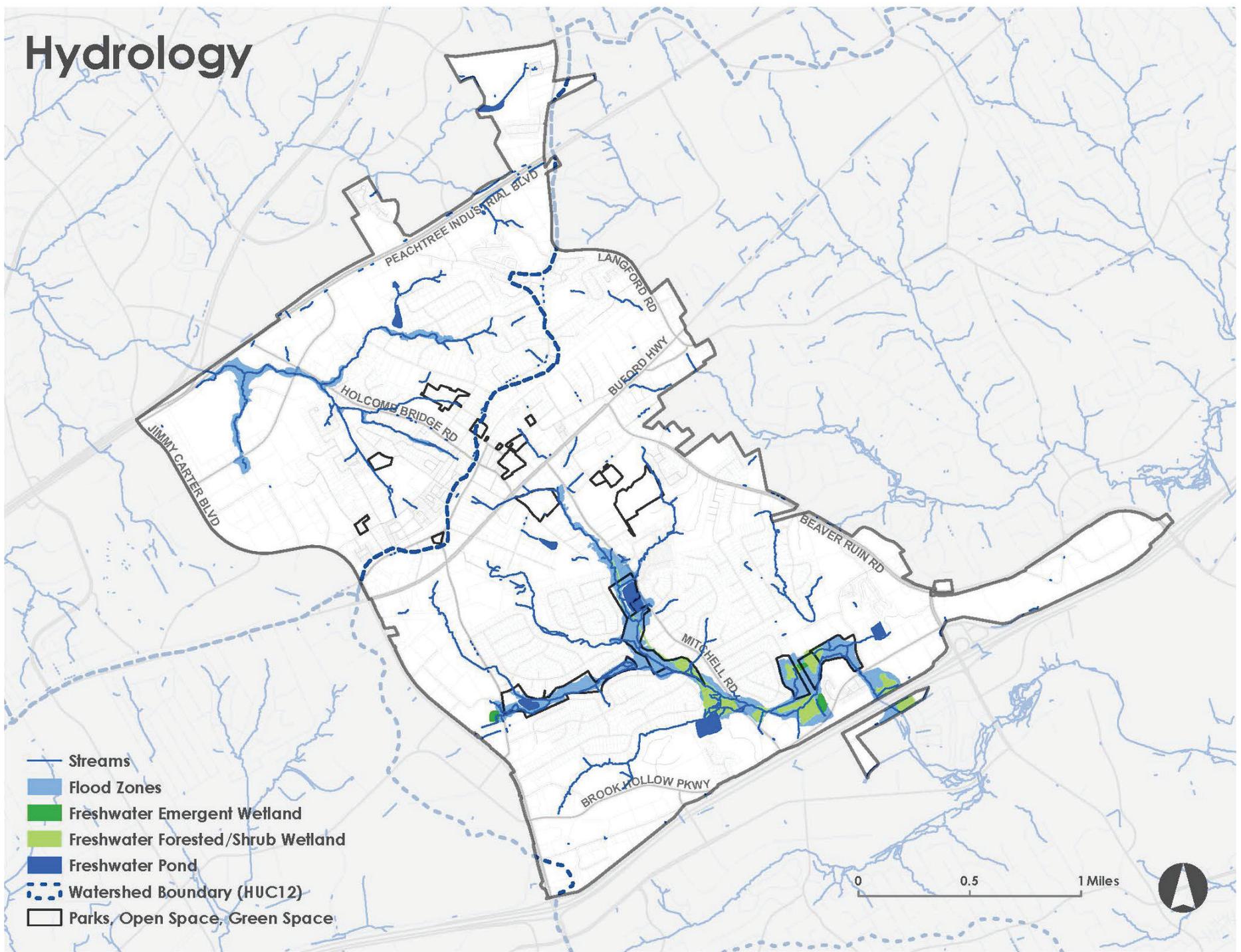
To the northwest, the Crooked Creek-Chattahoochee River watershed eventually empties into the Gulf of Mexico. To the southeast, the Beaver Ruin Creek watershed drains to Sweetwater Creek and then to the Yellow River, towards the Atlantic Ocean.

The map depicts two types of vegetated wetlands providing critical ecological function. Opportunities to expand, steward, or improve those areas are significant for both water quality and habitat potential.

It is notable that portions of the stream corridors in wetland/flood zones are in existing parks, open space where they are potentially protected.



# Hydrology



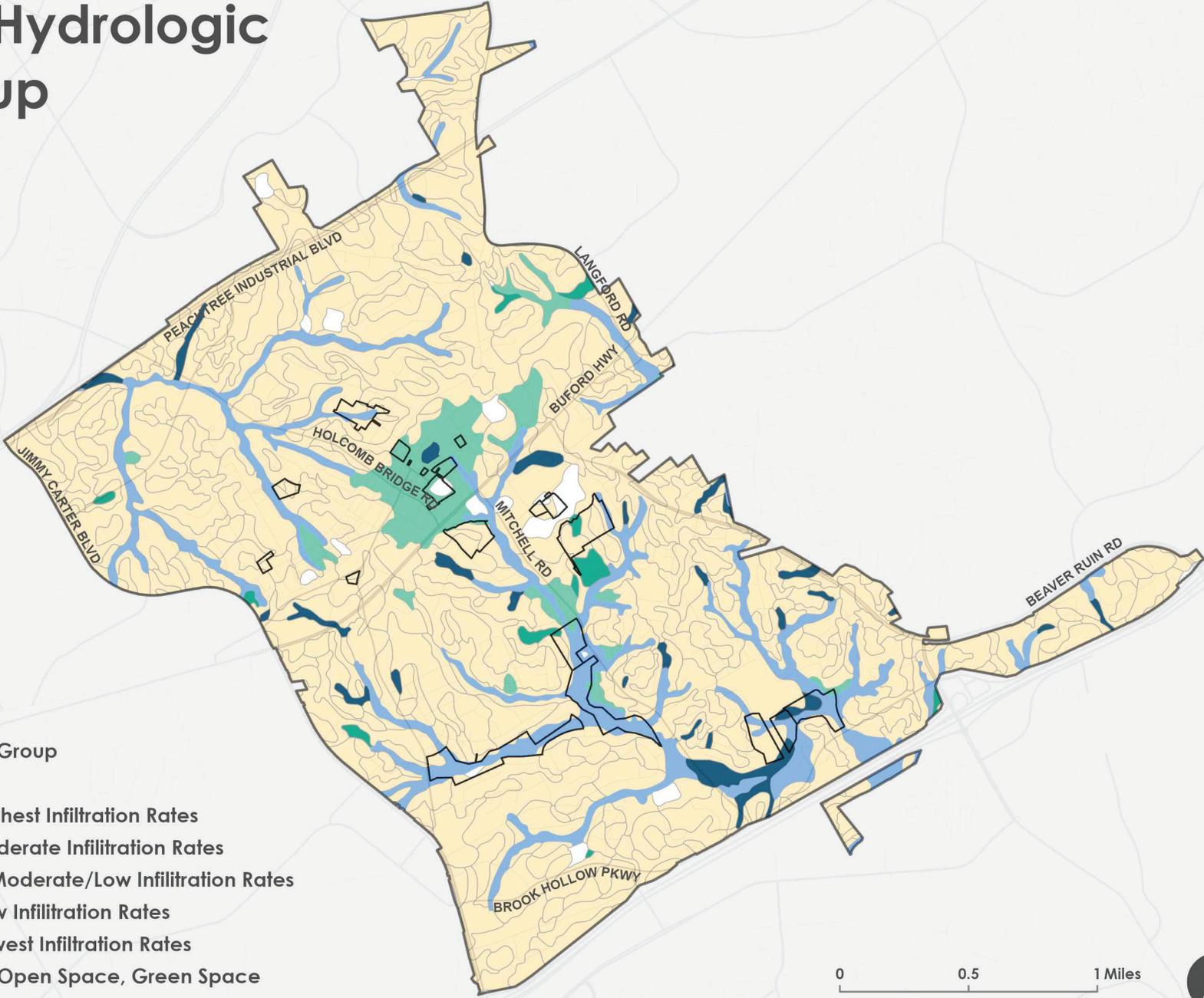
## SOILS

In line with the hydrology data, the soils data further uncovers soil types most common in wetland locations, as well as those areas likely to support the infiltration of precipitation, and where designed infiltration practices may have the most impact. A and B soils have the best potential for infiltration, whereas B/D, D, and C indicate riparian zones.

It is notable that significant portions of the stream corridors and floodplain are near or in existing parks and open spaces, where infiltration is less likely given soil conditions. The best soils for integrated stormwater management strategies primarily occur upland or upstream outside of the corridors.



# Soil Hydrologic Group



Note: For dual hydrologic groups, the first letter represents drained areas and the second letter is for undrained areas.

## VEGETATION COMMUNITIES

The forested areas of Norcross are diverse in character and potential function, when considered from an ecological perspective. The size, shape, and continuity of a given forest patch informs how it is categorized.

Urban Forest Cores are the most ecologically valuable, relatively larger and more intact forests, consisting of areas equal to or greater than 300' wide and 5 acres total or more.

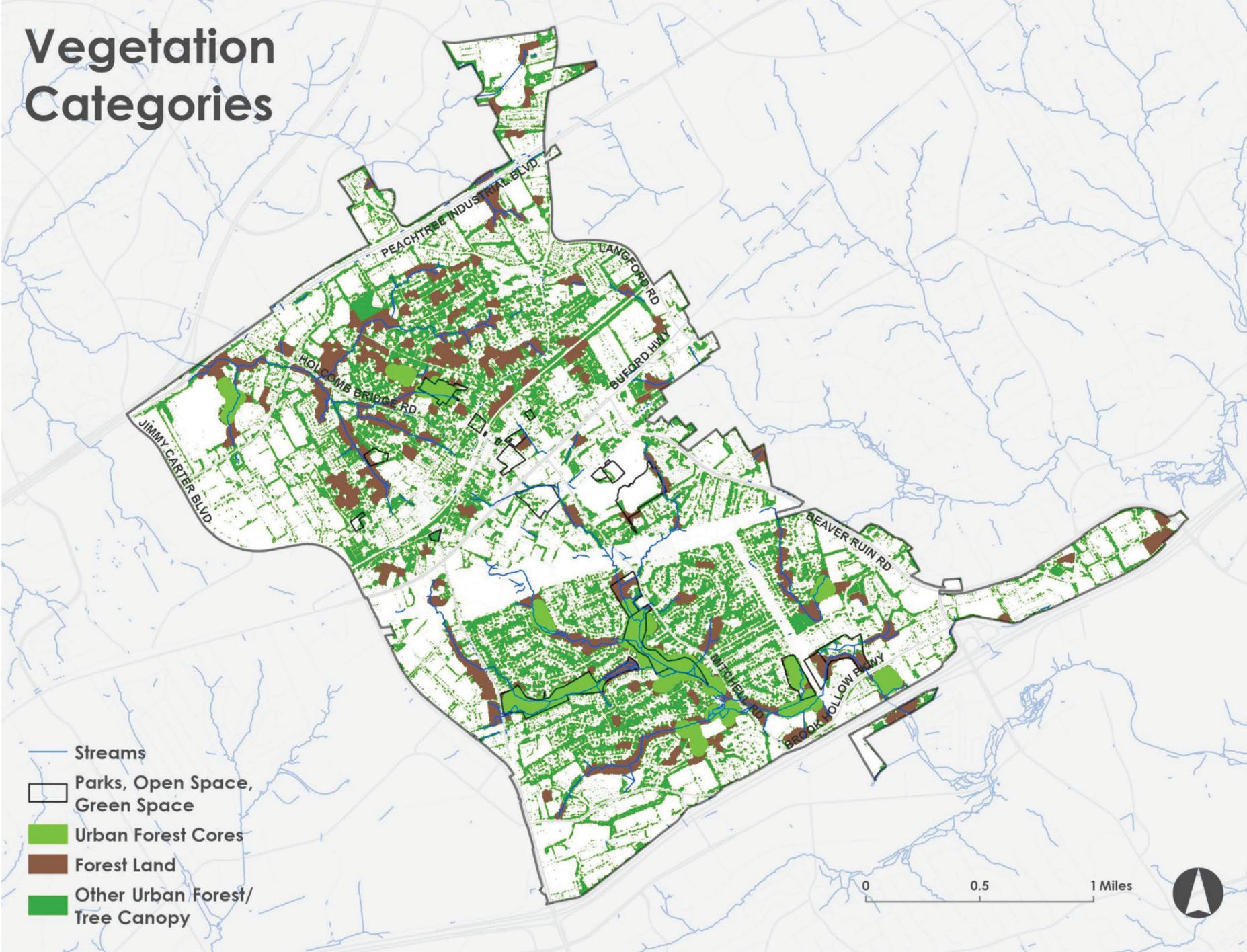
Forest Land follows the US Forest Service definition for forest land and includes areas equal to or greater than 120' wide and 1 acre total or more.

Other Urban Forest/Tree Canopy includes areas smaller than the other categories, such as street trees and trees in a front or back yard and smaller forest patches.

Note: Available data did not include forest health, but the consultant team learned from City staff that many areas exhibit some impact from nonnative invasive species, which limit the forest's capacity to provide healthy and diverse native habitat.



# Vegetation Categories



## Ecological Site Assessment

Following Desktop Data Gathering and Suitability Analysis, a one-day Rapid Site Assessment was conducted on October 19, 2023.

Representative landscapes/typologies identified with the potential to improve water quality and ecological function were prioritized for the site visit to assess typical conditions and identify overarching opportunities that could be applied in the planning process.

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### STREAM CORRIDORS - Beaver Ruin Creek Corridor

Representative Typologies: Forest, Wetland, Stream Valley

Dominant Land Use: Forest, Open space

Observations (generalizable to all watersheds within city boundaries):

- Invasive species dominate the understory
- Typically wide, flat wooded floodplain with wetlands
- Stream channel shows signs of erosion on banks and bed, incised channel, areas of accreted sediment
- Sewer line within floodplain disconnecting adjacent wetlands and drainage paths. Local drainage networks discharge to floodplain and erode channel to stream.
- Development generally located on steep slopes, minimal encroachment to stream



Top Left: Beaver  
Ruin Creek  
tributary with  
relatively healthy  
habitat and  
good floodplain  
connection



Top Right: Beaver  
Ruin Creek  
tributary clogged  
with sediment  
from upstream  
erosion and  
overgrown with  
kudzu



Below Left:  
Crooked Creek  
tributary with  
invasives and  
abandoned pipe



Below Right:  
Beaver Ruin Creek  
tributary with  
silted culvert



## RIGHTS OF WAY/EASEMENTS - Georgia Power Easement

Representative Typologies: Open Space

Dominant Land Use: Private easement

### Observations:

- Varied topography
- Appears to be maintained as a meadow
- Access generally limited (some parcels appear to be under HOA control)
- Densely vegetated with moderate species diversity

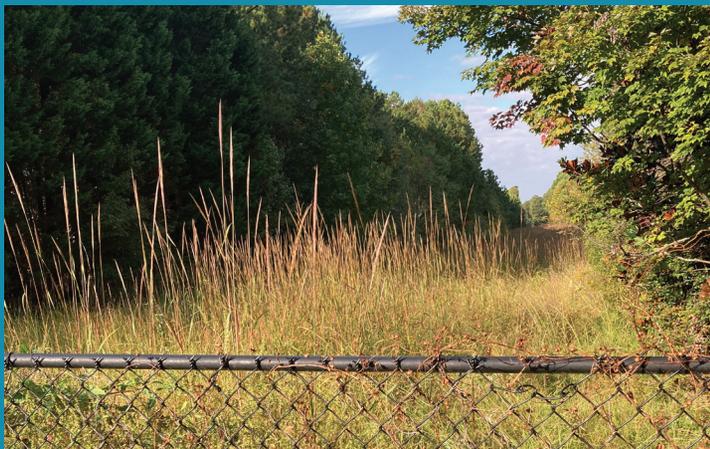


Regular maintenance regime lends itself to formation of grassland / native meadow.

Upper left: Unknown pesticide application

Lower left: Native grassland in easement

Right: Goldenrod and aster blooming profusely



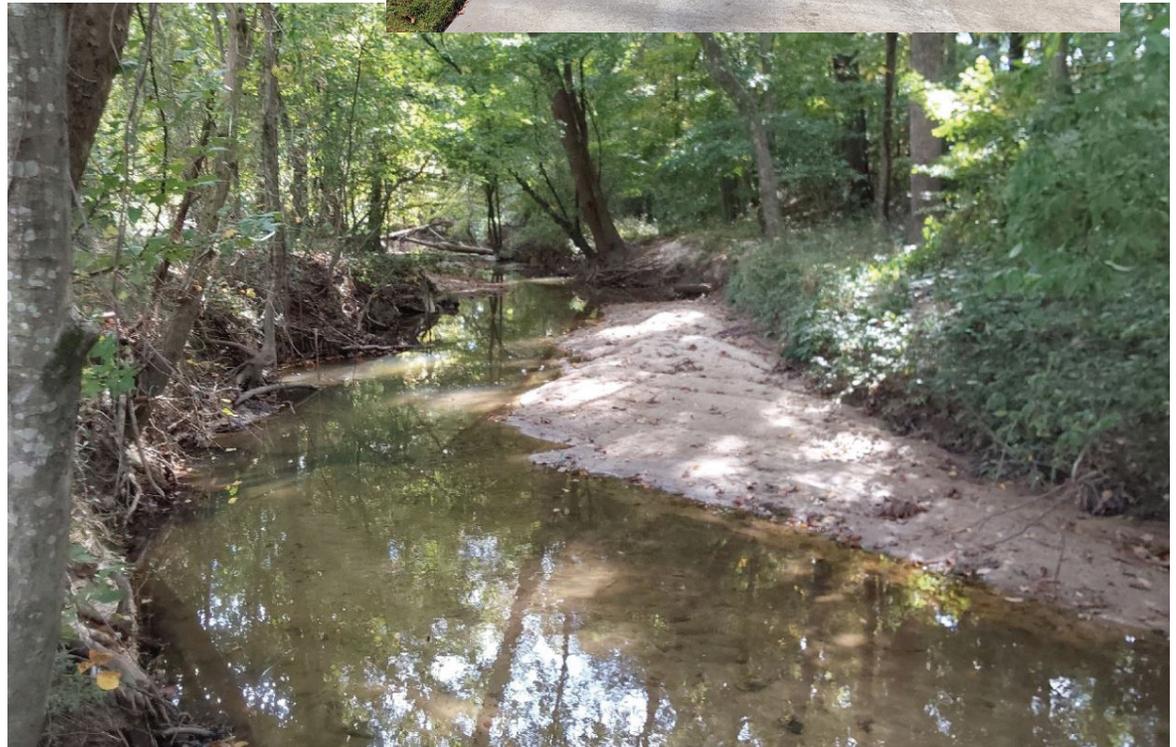
## EXISTING PARK SYSTEM - Pinnacle Park

**Representative Typologies:** Open Space, Play areas, Trail, Stream Valley

**Dominant Land Use:** Public park, parking

### **Observations:**

- City has installed native landscaping along pond edge; signage
- Nature-themed play features
- Paved walking path with bridges over ponds, overlook of stream, signage for future trails.
- Pond – primary feature within park. Shallow throughout with sediment plume downstream of primary inflow
- Stream – not primary feature within the park. Incised channel shows signs of erosion on banks and bed, exposed sewer lines



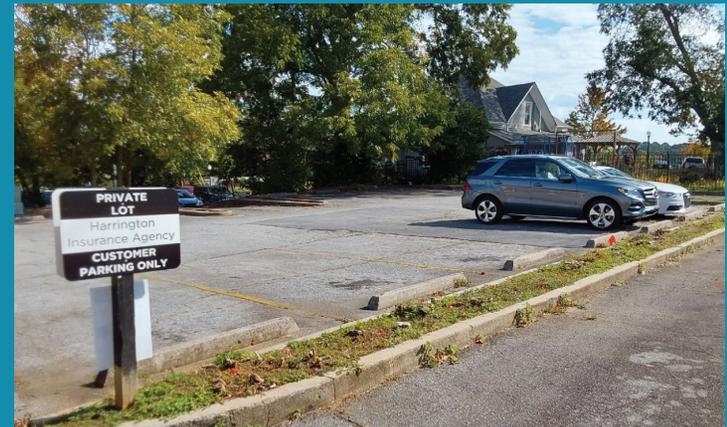
## URBAN CORE - Downtown Norcross

Representative Typologies: Parking, Interstitial spaces between buildings, Open Space

Dominant Land Use: Government, Commercial, Parks

Observations (generalizable to all watersheds within city boundaries):

- City has implemented pilot practices on City-owned spaces with signage and artwork
  - » Floodplain/Stream project
  - » SWM retrofit project
  - » Pollinator garden
- Pilot projects appear to balance a traditional aesthetic with more naturalized aesthetic using intentional edge treatments.
  - » Turf
  - » Hardscaping
- Limited ecological function (i.e. impervious surface, primarily introduced species)



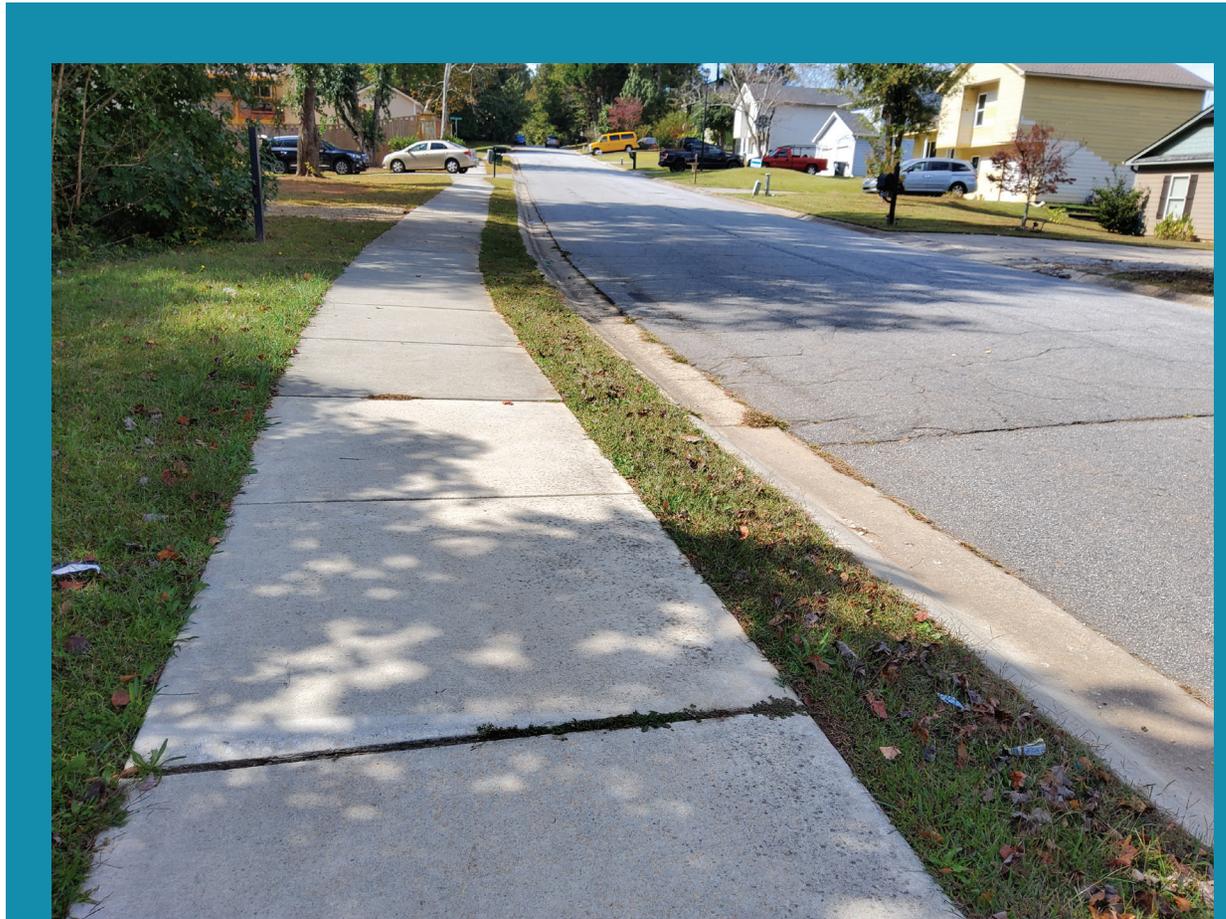
## TRAILS/SIDEWALKS - Corridors for Pedestrians and Bicycles

Representative Typologies: Forest, Stream Valley, Streetscapes

Dominant Land Use: Residential, Forest, Open space

### Observations:

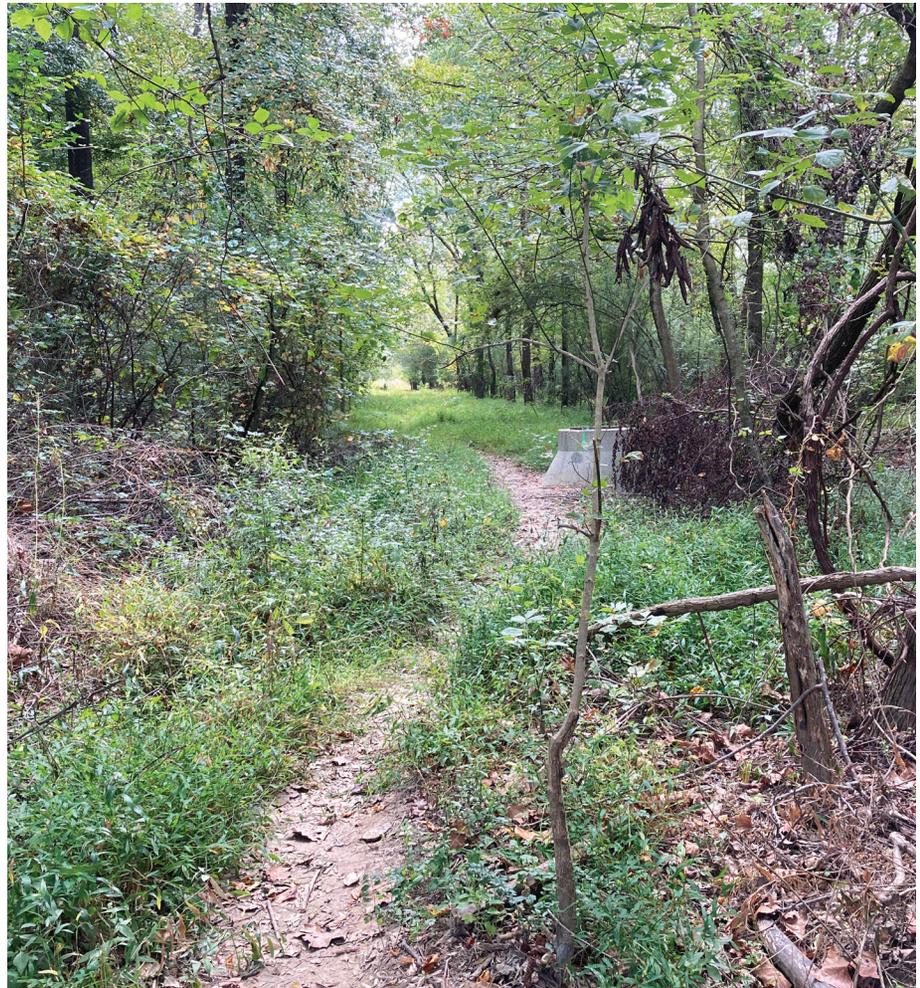
- Trails are primarily paved, with exception of stream valleys
- Mix of sidewalks and standalone trails
- Well signed
- Stormwater does not appear to be managed consistently for quantity or quality
- Evidence of uncontrolled runoff (erosion adjacent to trail or riprap conveyance channels)



Upper left: Typical narrow residential sidewalk, potential green-way trail site

Lower left: Missing sidewalk at public park, common to side streets and arterial

Right: Social trail through undeveloped green space



## SCHOOLS

### Representative Typologies:

Parking, Playground areas, recreation fields (lawn)

### Dominant Land Use:

Institutional

### Observations (generalizable to all watersheds within city boundaries):

- Built out and predominantly impervious (parking)
- Manicured landscaping, primarily introduced species (turf lawns)
- Traditional SWM – grey infrastructure to SD network or pond
- Limited ecological value unless including unused adjacent green space



Left: Open space at Baldwin Elementary School

Below: Underutilized land at Summerour Middle School



## EXISTING STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE

Representative Typologies: Streetscape, Residential

Dominant Land Use: Residential, Transportation

### Observations:

- Primarily closed grey infrastructure consisting of inlets, pipes, and outfalls
- Stormwater Outfalls often discharge at floodplain extents. Uncontrolled runoff erodes a flow path to stream channel
- Open drainage swales largely unvegetated, stabilized with rounded river rock or angular riprap
- Minimal ecological value
- Untreated stormwater likely contaminating nearby waterways



## URBAN TREE CANOPY

**Representative Typologies:** Streetscape, Parks, Greenspace

**Dominant Land Use:** Streets, Parking, Parks, Residential

### Observations:

- Major asset of City
- Largest concentrations along forested stream corridors
- Largely absent from major commercial-industrial corridors.
- Few street trees with stormwater connections
- Mix of native and non-native species



## OPEN SPACE: Invasive Species

Representative Typologies: Parks, Greenspace, Forest, Stream Valleys

Dominant Land Use: Parks, Greenspace

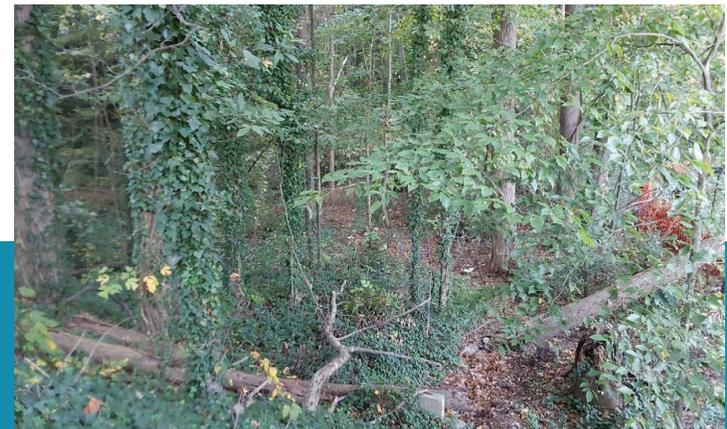
### Observations:

- Impenetrable at points along proposed greenway trail
- Some form monocultures especially in untended green spaces (stiltgrass, kudzu, English ivy)
- Signs of control measures (possible spraying)
- Some likely planted purposefully (Bradford pear), some escaped from gardens (privet), some potentially spread by disturbance (stiltgrass)

Lower left: Kudzu dominating a disturbed forest

Upper right: English ivy choking side of Crooked Creek stream valley

Lower right: Privet restricts movement along Beaver Ruin Creek corridor



## VACANT PARCELS - Rapid Development & Conversion

**Representative Typologies:** Parking, Suburban Lots, Stream Valleys

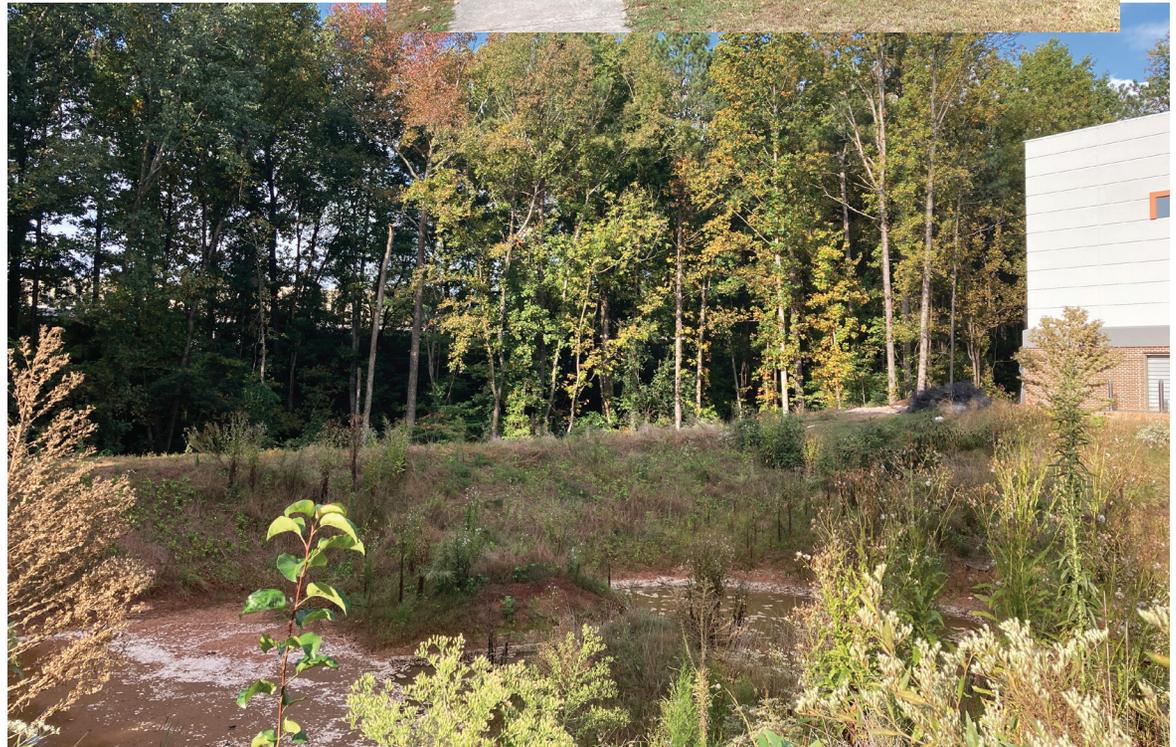
**Dominant Land Use:** Vacant

### Observations:

- Numerous “vacant” lots as identified in existing GIS data have been subsequently developed or are currently in the process of being developed
- Clusters of lots exist throughout the city, where maintenance and/or restoration would enhance ecological function
- Many vacant lots contain invasive species
- Many vacant lots contain impervious surfaces (used and unused)

Upper: Cluster of semi-maintained vacant lots

Lower: Lot marked “vacant” in GIS data, recently built out with large corporate building and SWM facility



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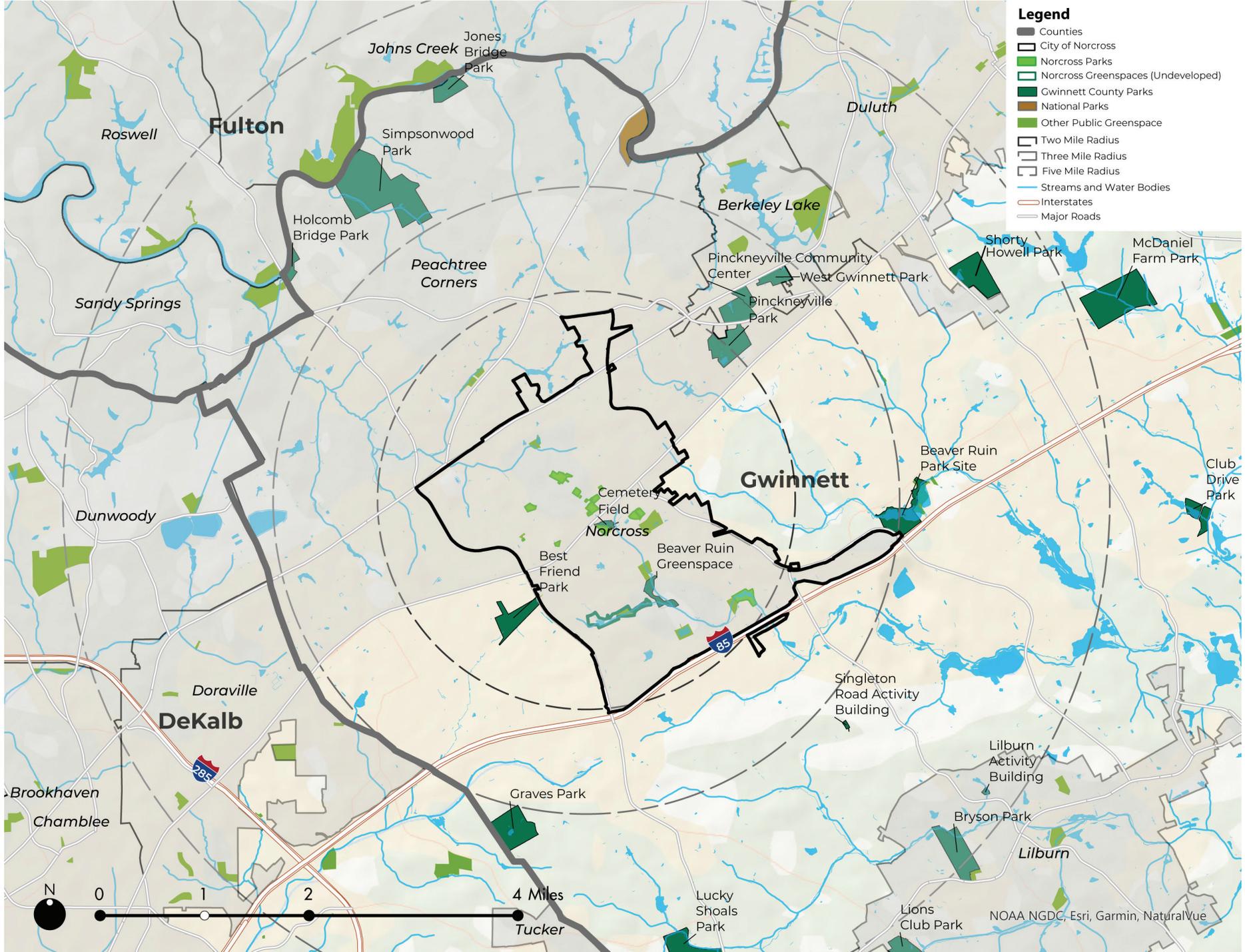
## METRO RECREATION CONTEXT

Situated three miles from the western edge of Gwinnett County, Norcross benefits from an advantageous location with access to a wide variety of parks and recreation facilities within five miles of the City's center.

Most notably, two Gwinnett County parks are adjacent to the Norcross City Limits--Best Friend Park and the forthcoming Beaver Ruin Park.

Over a dozen Gwinnett County parks, multiple city parks in neighboring cities (including Berkeley Lake, Dunwoody, Sandy Springs, etc.) and the Medlock Bridge unit of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area are all within a short drive, providing a range of recreational opportunities to supplement Norcross' local parks.



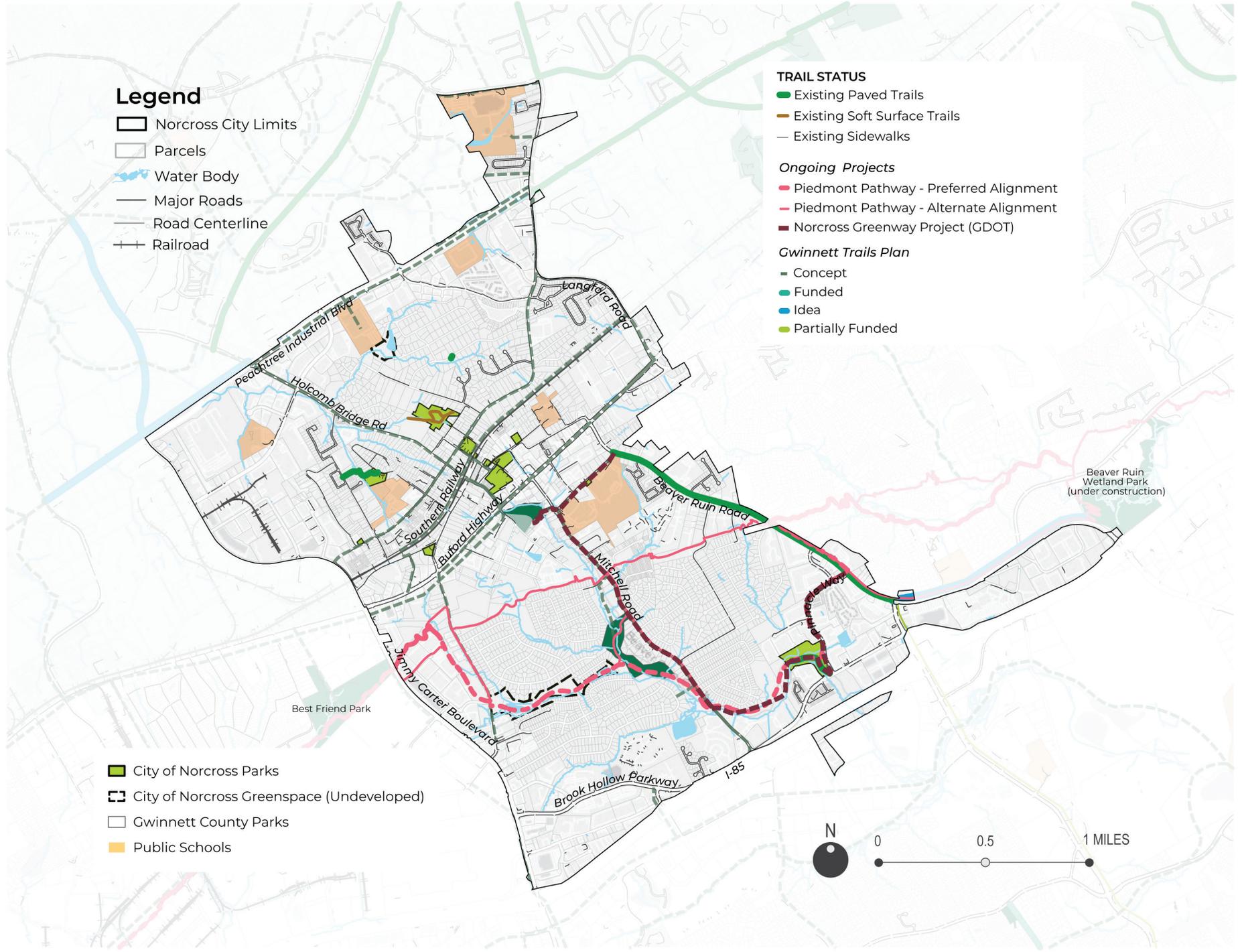


# TRAIL NETWORK

Trails are a very popular and fundamental component of the parks, greenspace, trails, and green infrastructure system. Although the network of existing paved trails in Norcross is limited, with only the Beaver Ruin Road sidepath and the Hunter-Walker Trail in Rossie Brundage Park, numerous plans over the last 20 years have proposed a comprehensive network linking parks and destinations across the City.

The Georgia Department of Transportation is currently moving forward with the Norcross Greenway project that will create a 3 mile loop from the Beaver Ruin Road trail to Mitchell Road to Pinnacle Park. And Gwinnett County is in planning for the Piedmont Pathway, an extensive trail that is proposed to run across the city center in the Georgia Power utility corridor.





**Legend**

- Norcross City Limits
- Parcels
- ~ Water Body
- Major Roads
- Road Centerline
- Railroad

**TRAIL STATUS**

- Existing Paved Trails
- Existing Soft Surface Trails
- Existing Sidewalks

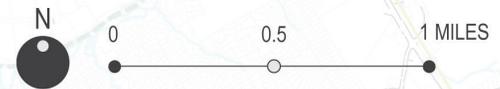
**Ongoing Projects**

- Piedmont Pathway - Preferred Alignment
- Piedmont Pathway - Alternate Alignment
- Norcross Greenway Project (GDOT)

**Gwinnett Trails Plan**

- Concept
- Funded
- Idea
- Partially Funded

- City of Norcross Parks
- City of Norcross Greenspace (Undeveloped)
- Gwinnett County Parks
- Public Schools



# SCHOOLS

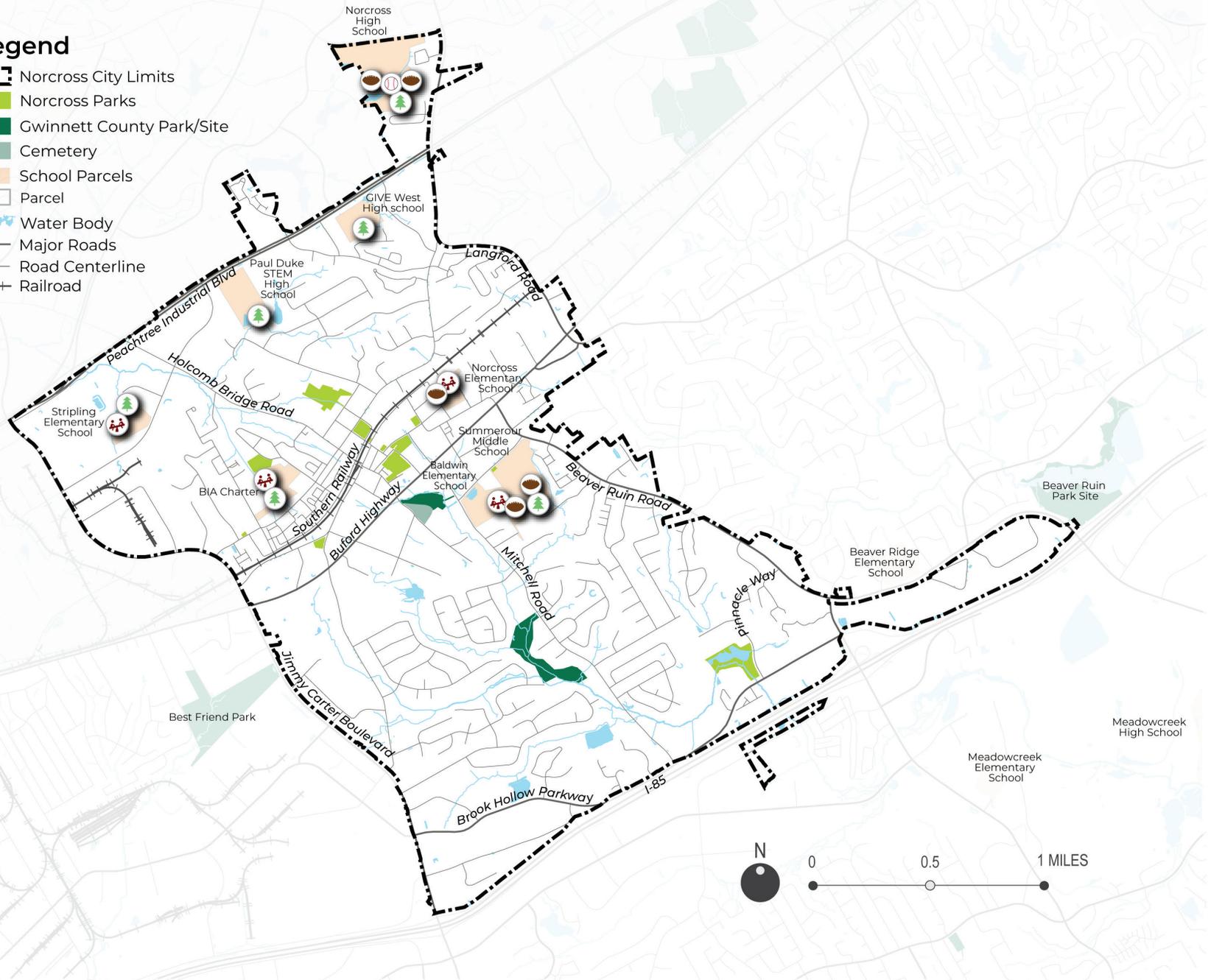
Public schools in Norcross, as across the country, are a critical part of the parks, greenspace, trails, and green infrastructure system, offering children and youth a variety of sports and recreation opportunities. Fields, gyms, and other recreational facilities at schools supplement the facilities provided in public parks.

School	Amenities on School Property			
	Play-ground	Rectangle Field	Diamond Field	Forested Area
Baldwin Elementary				
Norcross Elementary				
Stripling Elementary				
Summerour Middle				
GIVE West High				
Norcross High				
Paul Duke STEM High				
BIA Charter				



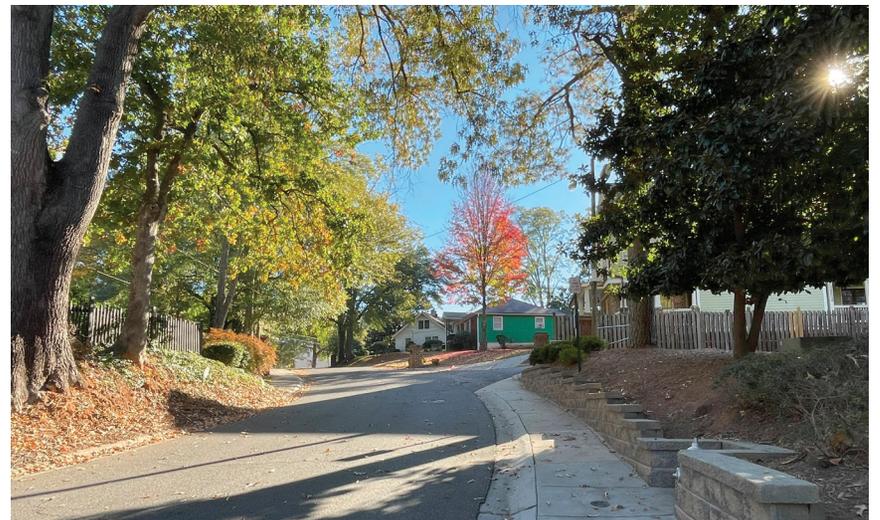
# Legend

-  Norcross City Limits
-  Norcross Parks
-  Gwinnett County Park/Site
-  Cemetery
-  School Parcels
-  Parcel
-  Water Body
-  Major Roads
-  Road Centerline
-  Railroad



## CHARACTER AREAS

The 2040 Norcross Comprehensive Plan established 13 Character Areas that serve as the City's future development map. Each of these Character Areas includes prescriptions for land uses and building form, which are important to consider in relation to park uses and facilities.

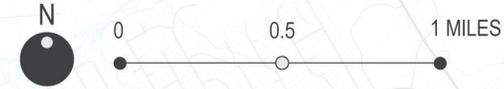
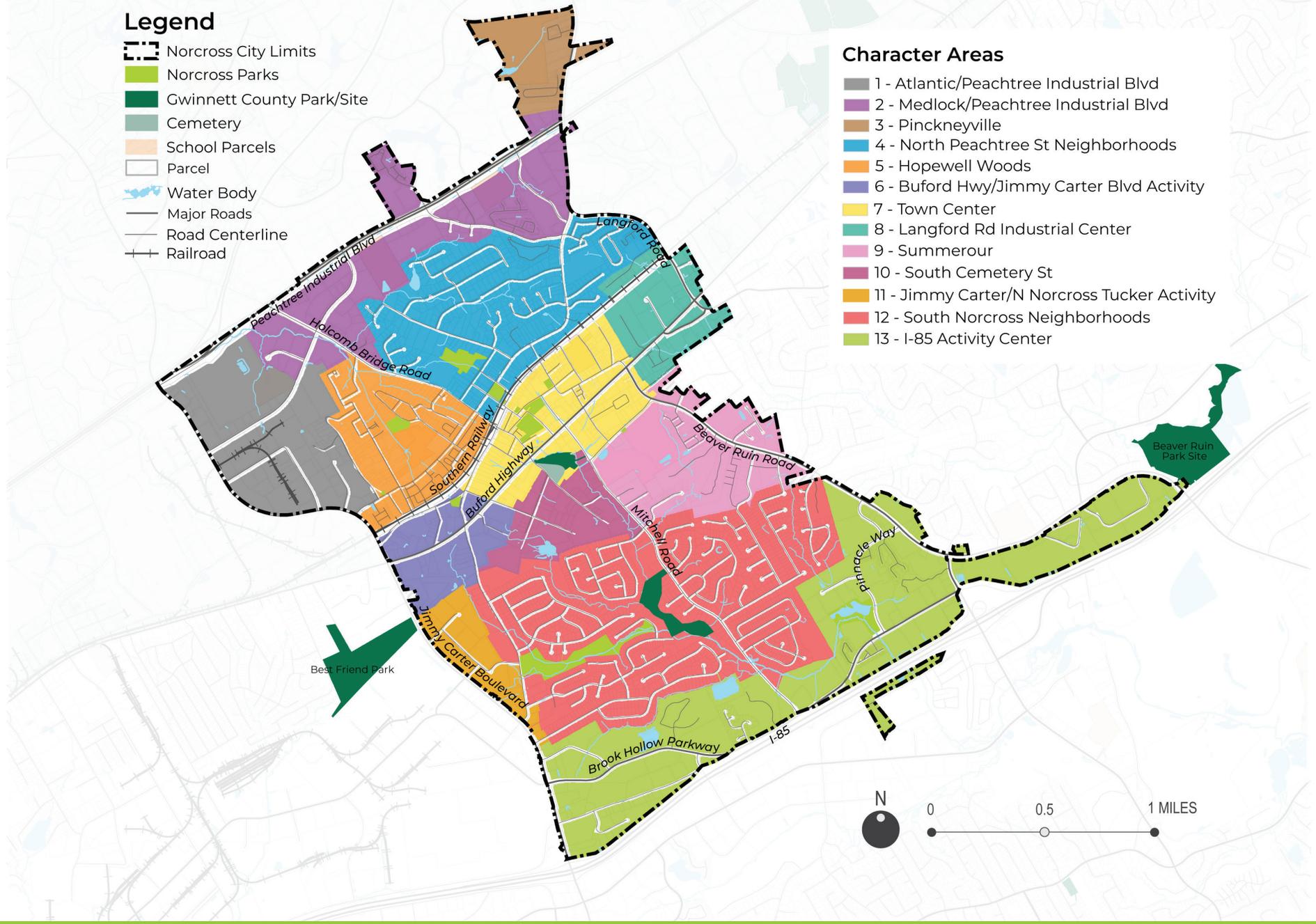


## Legend

-  Norcross City Limits
-  Norcross Parks
-  Gwinnett County Park/Site
-  Cemetery
-  School Parcels
-  Parcel
-  Water Body
-  Major Roads
-  Road Centerline
-  Railroad

## Character Areas

-  1 - Atlantic/Peachtree Industrial Blvd
-  2 - Medlock/Peachtree Industrial Blvd
-  3 - Pinckneyville
-  4 - North Peachtree St Neighborhoods
-  5 - Hopewell Woods
-  6 - Buford Hwy/Jimmy Carter Blvd Activity
-  7 - Town Center
-  8 - Langford Rd Industrial Center
-  9 - Summerour
-  10 - South Cemetery St
-  11 - Jimmy Carter/N Norcross Tucker Activity
-  12 - South Norcross Neighborhoods
-  13 - I-85 Activity Center



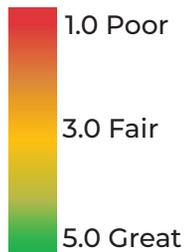
## General Park and Facility Evaluations

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

- They are easily accessible
- They are comfortable and have an attractive image
- They allow users of all ages to engage in a variety of activities and allow people to gather and meet one another
- They are sustainable – meaning that they help meet existing needs while not compromising the needs of future generations

Considering these qualities, the City of Norcross parks were evaluated based on 5 categories and 34 sub-categories using Lillian Webb Park as the benchmark for the rest of the park system.

Parks were evaluated collaboratively by City staff and the Consultant using a five-point scale:



### ACCESS

#### Proximity, Access, and Linkages

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



### COMFORT

#### Comfort and Image

- **First impression/overall attractiveness**  
*Is the park attractive at first glance?*
- **Feeling of safety**  
*Does the park feel safe at the time of the visit?*
- **Lighting**  
*Is the park lighted appropriately for use at night? (if applicable)*
- **Cleanliness/overall quality of maintenance (Exterior /Interior)**  
*Is the park clean and free of litter?*
- **Comfort of places to sit**  
*Are there comfortable places to sit?*
- **Protection from bad weather**  
*Is there shelter in case of bad weather?*
- **Evidence of management/stewardship (Exterior/ Interior)**  
*Is there visual evidence of site management?*
- **Condition and effectiveness of any equipment or operation systems**  
*Is the equipment and/or operating system in good condition?*
- **Branding**  
*Does the park exhibit appropriate branding?*



## USE

### Uses, Activities, and Sociability

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

*Is there a variety of things to do given the type of park?*

- **Level of activity**

*How active is the park with visitors?*

- **Sense of pride/ownership**

*Is there evidence of community pride in the park?*

- **Programming flexibility**

*How flexible is the park in accommodating multiple uses?*

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

*Is the site meeting the needs of organized programs?*

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

*Is the site being marketed effectively?*



## ENVIRONMENTAL

### Sustainability

- **Tree Canopy (coverage)**

*Is there an extensive tree canopy?*

- **Native Plant Palette/Biodiversity**

*Is the park mainly planted in a diverse native plant palette?*

- **Invasive Species Impacts**

*Are invasive species appropriately managed and minimally present?*

- **Stormwater Management**

*Is stormwater effectively treated through a variety of strategies (appropriate to the use of the park), including green infrastructure and low impact development practices?*

- **Environmental Stewardship**

*Is there a high level of environmental stewardship, such as ecological management/maintenance, education, and programming strategies?*

- **Materials Use**

*Is there evidence of the use of sustainable, low-carbon materials, including recycled, reused, or re-purposed materials?*

- **Energy Efficiency**

*Does the park incorporate energy efficiency strategies, such as LED bulbs, solar power/lighting, electric vehicle charging, etc.?*

## General Park and Facility Evaluations



### BUILDINGS Buildings and Architecture

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

Below are the total averages for the overall parks system as well as for each of the parks.

	TOTAL SYSTEM AVERAGES
<b>Overall Average</b>	<b>3.7</b>
Betty Mauldin Park	3.9
Discovery Garden Park	4.1
Heritage Park	3.5
Johnson-Dean Nature Preserve	3.2
Lillian Webb Park	4.3
Lion's Club Park	2.8
Norcross Historic Cemetery	3.3
Pinnacle Park	4.5
Rossie Brundage Park	4.3
Summerour Park	3.7
Thrasher Park	4.3
Veterans Memorial Park	4.1
Water Tower Park	2.1

Below and in the following pages are the category and subcategory overall averages and averages per park.

	PROXIMITY/ ACCESS/ LINKAGES	Ease in walking to the park	Visibility from a distance	Clarity of information/ signage	Interior Path Connectivity	ADA Compliance	COMFORT & IMAGE	First Impression / overall attractiveness	Feeling of safety	Lighting	Cleanliness/overall quality of maintenance (Exterior Site)	Cleanliness/overall quality of maintenance (Facilities Interior)	Comfort of places to sit	Protection from bad weather	Condition and Effectiveness of any Equipment or Operating Systems	Branding
<b>Overall Average</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>3.7</b>
Betty Mauldin Park	4.6	5	5	5	4	4	5.0	5	5	5	5	-	5	-	-	5
Discovery Garden Park	4.6	5	5	4	5	4	4.9	5	5	5	4	-	5	5	5	5
Heritage Park	4.4	5	4	4	4	5	4.2	4	4	5	4	-	5	-	-	3
Johnson-Dean Nature Preserve	3.4	4	4	2	4	3	2.4	3	3	1	4	-	3	1	-	2
Lillian Webb Park	5.0	5	5	5	5	5	4.7	5	5	5	4	4	5	4	5	5
Lion's Club Park	3.0	4	5	3	1	2	4.2	3	5	5	5	-	5	-	-	2
Norcross Historic Cemetery	4.0	3	5	4	4	4	3.4	4	4	3	4	-	2	4	-	3
Pinnacle Park	4.8	5	5	4	5	5	4.8	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	4	5
Rossie Brundage Park	4.6	4	5	5	4	5	4.6	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	4	4
Summerour Park	4.2	5	5	3	3	5	4.0	4	5	5	5	-	5	2	3	3
Thrasher Park	4.8	5	5	5	5	4	4.8	5	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	5
Veterans Memorial Park	4.8	5	5	4	5	5	4.8	5	5	4	5	-	5	-	-	5
Water Tower Park	2.2	4	4	1	1	1	2.0	2	3	1	2	-	3	-	-	1

## General Park and Facility Evaluations

	USES, ACTIVITIES & SOCIABILITY	Mix of uses/things to do	Level of activity	Sense of pride/ownership	Programming Flexibility	Ability of Facility to Effectively Support Current Organized Programming	Marketing or Promotional Efforts for the Facility or Activities	ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY	Tree Canopy (Coverage)	Native Plant Palette/Biodiversity	Invasive Species Impacts	Stormwater Management	Environmental Stewardship	Materials Use	Facility Energy Efficiency
<b>Overall Average</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>2.8</b>					<b>3.0</b>
Betty Mauldin Park	2.4	2	1	4	1	-	4	3.4	4	3	2	4	4	4	3
Discovery Garden Park	3.0	3	1	4	2	4	4	4.0	4	4	5	4	4	4	3
Heritage Park	1.8	1	1	3	1	3	2	3.7	5	3	4	4	3	3	-
Johnson-Dean Nature Preserve	2.8	2	2	4	2	4	3	4.0	5	4	4	3	4	4	-
Lillian Webb Park	4.0	4	3	4	4	4	5	3.0	3	2	5	3	2	3	3
Lion's Club Park	1.5	1	1	3	1	-	-	2.4	1	1	4	3	1	4	3
Norcross Historic Cemetery	2.8	3	2	2	2	5	3	3.0	4	3	3	3	2	4	2
Pinnacle Park	4.2	4	4	4	4	5	4	4.1	5	5	3	4	4	4	4
Rossie Brundage Park	4.5	5	3	4	5	5	5	3.3	5	3	3	4	2	3	3
Summerour Park	3.3	4	1	3	4	4	4	2.5	2	1	4	3	2	3	-
Thrasher Park	4.3	4	4	5	4	4	5	3.6	4	3	5	4	3	3	3
Veterans Memorial Park	3.2	3	2	3	3	-	5	3.6	5	2	4	4	3	4	3
Water Tower Park	1.0	1	1	1	-	-	-	3.2	4	3	3	4	1	4	-

	<b>BUILDINGS &amp; ARCHITECTURE</b>	Image and Aesthetics	Clarity of Entry and Connections to Park	Interior Layout	Interior Finishes and Furniture and Equipment	Functioning Dimensions of spaces	Structural Integrity	Building Enclosure	Building Systems	Energy and Sustainability
<b>Overall Average</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>3.8</b>
Betty Mauldin Park	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Discovery Garden Park	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Heritage Park	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Johnson-Dean Nature Preserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lillian Webb Park	4.6	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	3
Lion's Club Park	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Norcross Historic Cemetery	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pinnacle Park	4.6	5	5	5	3	4	5	5	5	4
Rossie Brundage Park	4.3	3	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	4
Summerour Park	4.6	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5
Thrasher Park	4.2	4	4	5	3	4	5	5	5	3
Veterans Memorial Park	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Water Tower Park	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

## Level-of-Service Analysis & Benchmarking

There are no industry standards or regulations regarding how communities should establish Levels of Service (LOS) for parks and recreation services. Neither the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) nor the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) publish traditional population-based LOS standards such as park acres and facilities per 1,000 residents.

Instead, cities are encouraged to conduct community-wide needs assessments and benchmark themselves against other similar communities in order to establish their own LOS standards.

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) has developed its benchmarking website Park Metrics, “the most comprehensive source of data standards and insights for park and recreation agencies” to help cities develop LOS metrics.

City of Norcross LOS findings were benchmarked against communities that have a similar population and population density as the City of Norcross.

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

1. **Access LOS:** Measures the geographic areas served by parks or recreation facilities.
2. **Acres LOS:** Measures the quantity of parkland acreage that is available per 1,000 residents.
3. **Facilities LOS:** Measures the number of recreation facilities available per capita.
4. **Indoor Recreation Center Square Footage LOS:** Measures the quantity of indoor recreation space available per resident.

It is important to note that these LOS Analyses are just one tool for determining the community’s needs. The findings alone may not be indicative of residents’ needs and priorities.

LOS analyses are based on the gross population of a community, not preferences or priorities based on unique community demographics, lifestyles, or values. The findings from the LOS analyses must be compared to the findings from the other needs assessment techniques in order to verify parks and recreation needs and priorities.

## Access LOS

Access LOS measures the distance residents have to travel to access parks and recreation facilities. It is used to understand how park access varies between different areas across a city. Informed by industry best practices, the following distances were used to analyze Access LOS for the City's parks and key recreation facilities :

- City Parks (Developed + Undeveloped) – ½ mile, 1 mile
- City Parks + Cemetery – ½ mile, 1 mile
- City Parks + Cemetery + County Park Land (Within City Limits) – ½ mile, 1 mile

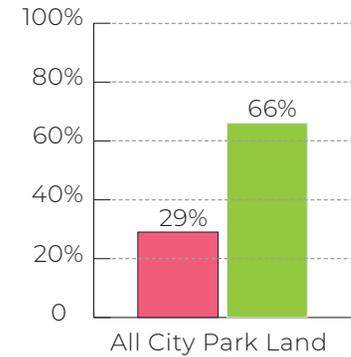
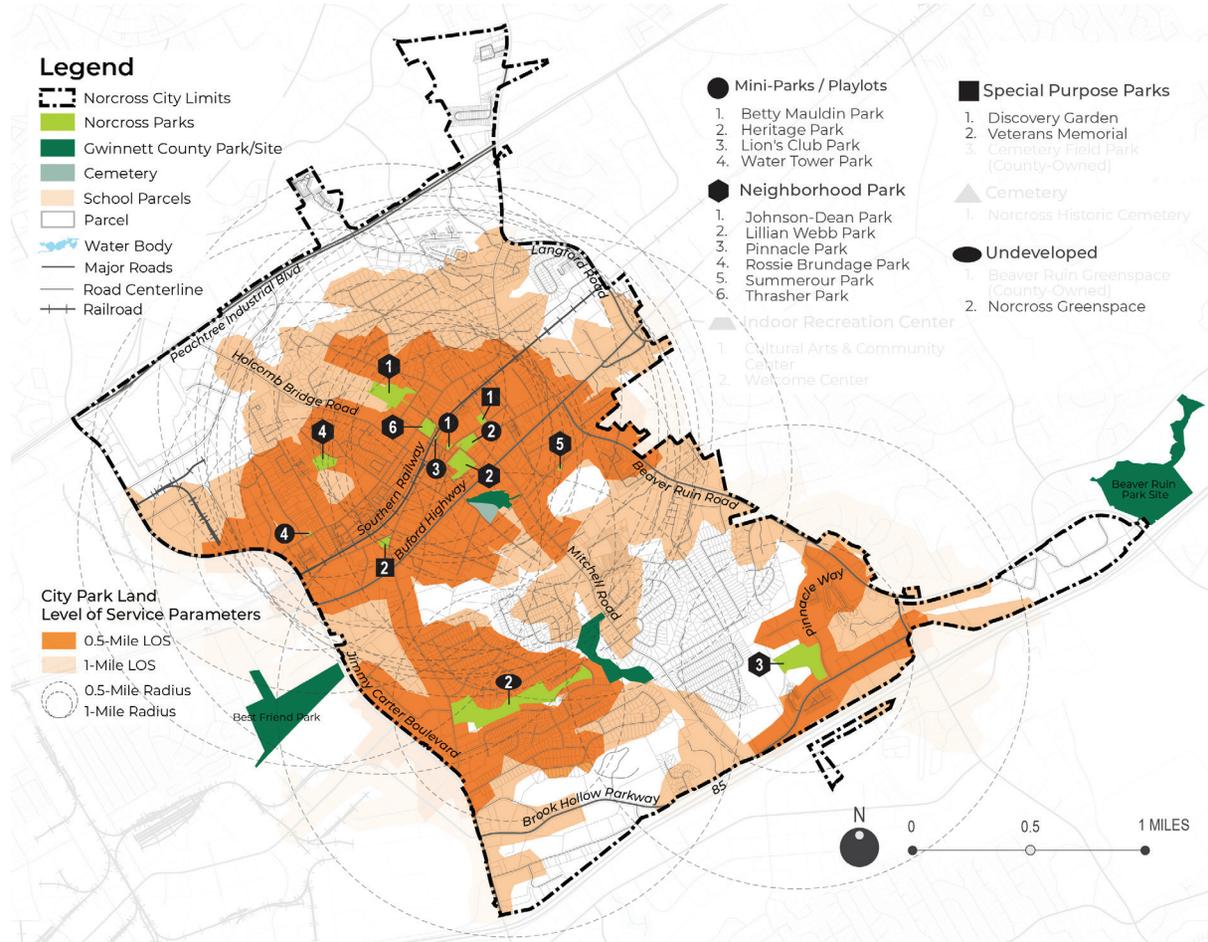
- Mini Park + Neighborhood Park – ½ mile, 1 mile
- Indoor Recreation Centers – 2 miles, 3 miles
- Developed City Parks + Cemetery + County Park Land (Within City Limits Considering Streets as Barriers to Walkability) – ½ mile, 1 mile

Park Type Analyzed	1/2 Mile	1 Mile	2 Mile	3 Mile
City Parks (Developed + Undeveloped)	●	●	-	-
City Parks + Cemetery	●	●	-	-
City Parks + Cemetery + County Park Land (Within City Limits)	●	●	-	-
Mini Park + Neighborhood Park	●	●	-	-
Indoor Recreation Center	-	-	●	+

● Partial-Coverage

⊕ Full-Coverage

# City Park Land LOS

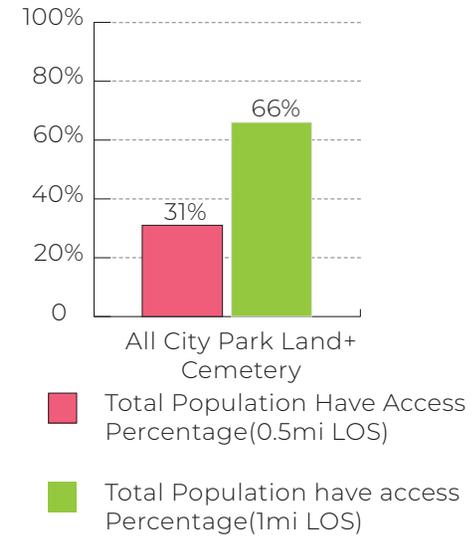
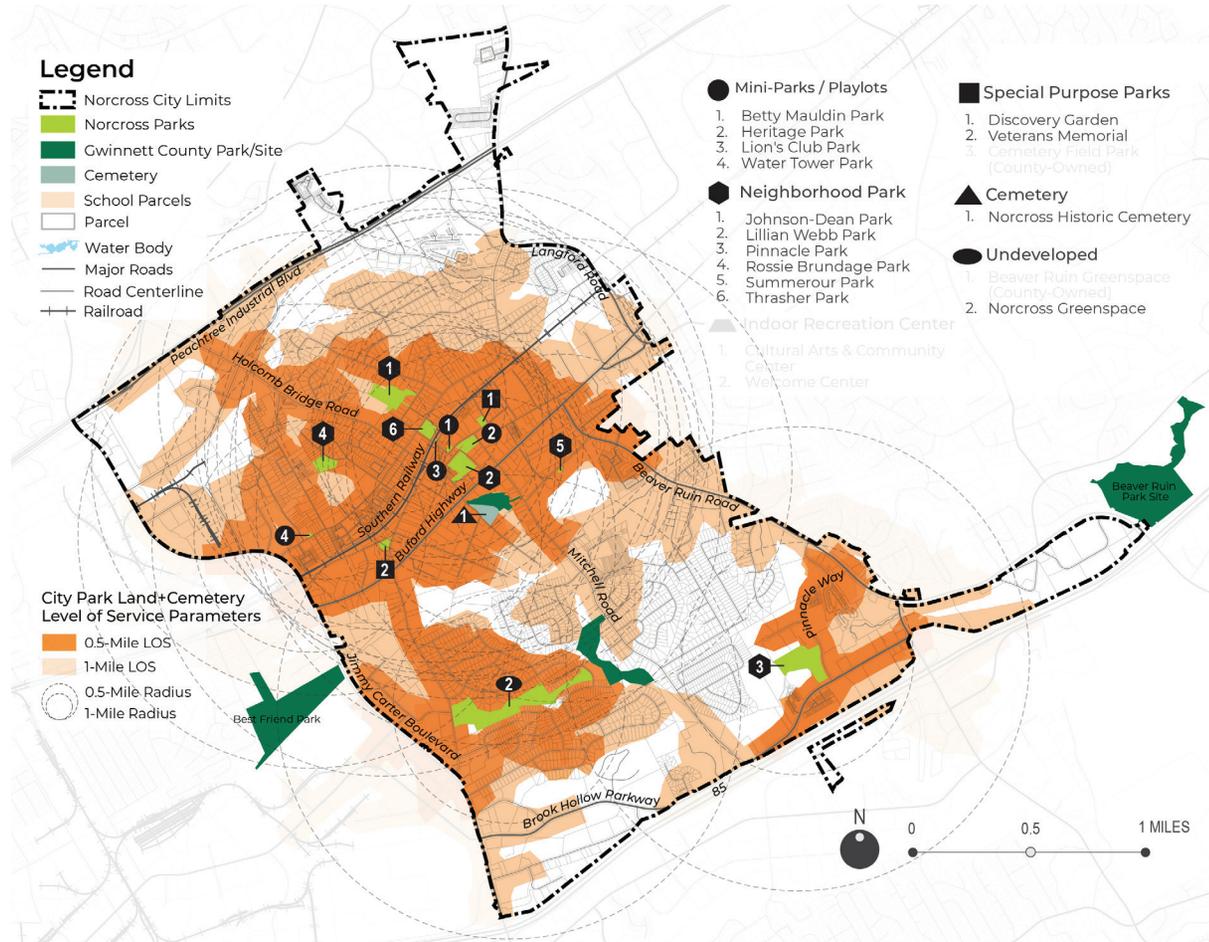


All City Park Land

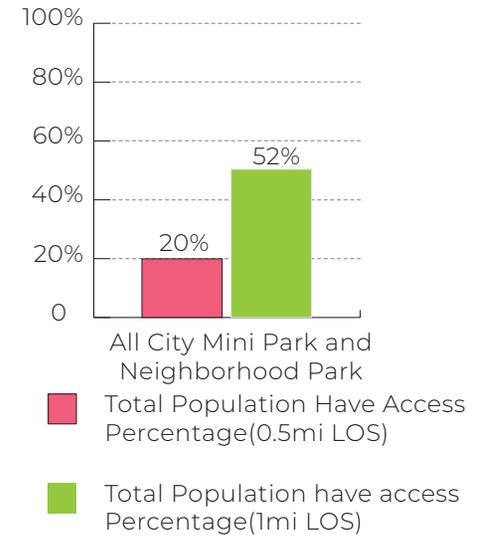
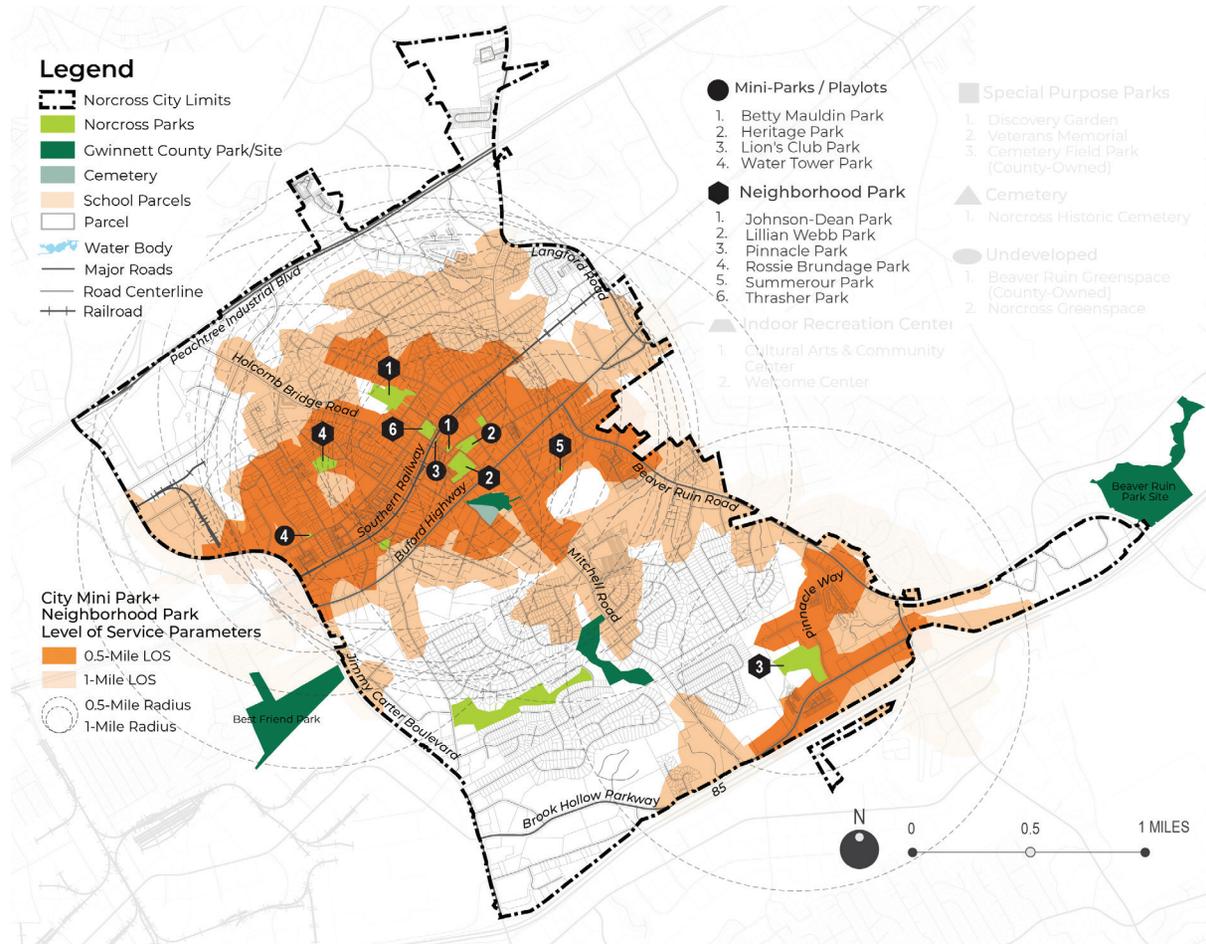
Total Population Have Access Percentage(0.5mi LOS)

Total Population have access Percentage(1mi LOS)

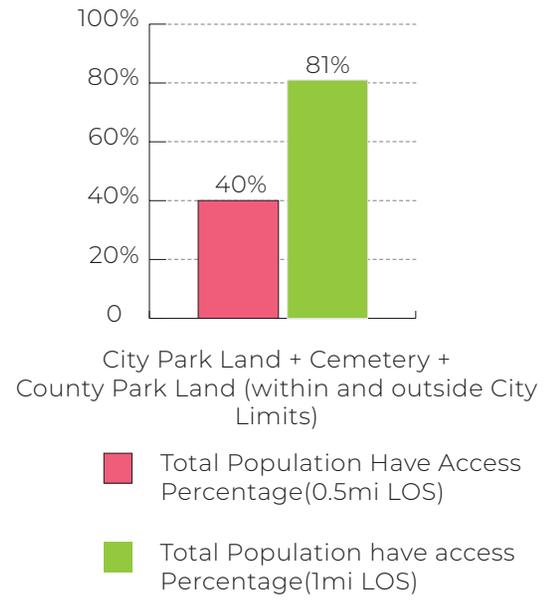
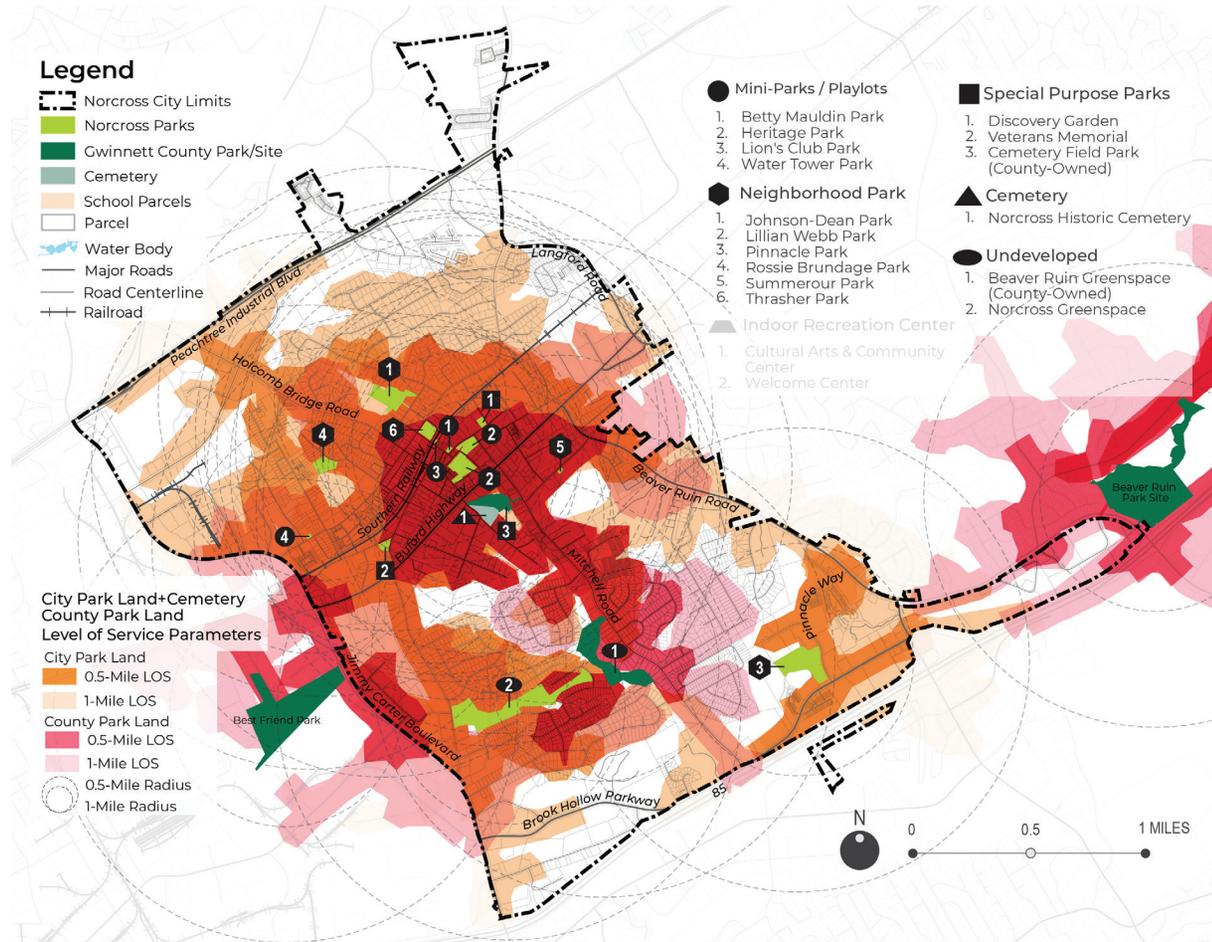
# City Park Land and City Cemetery LOS



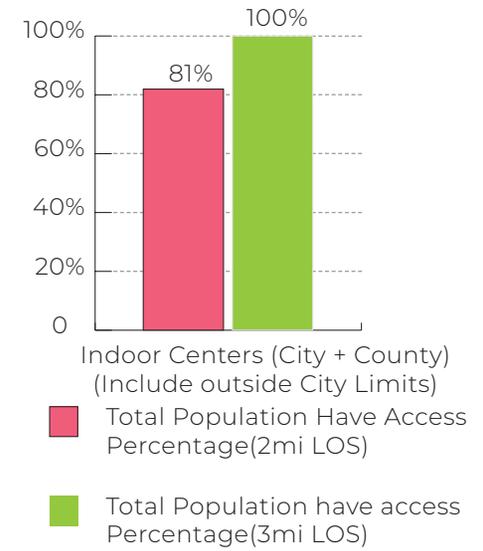
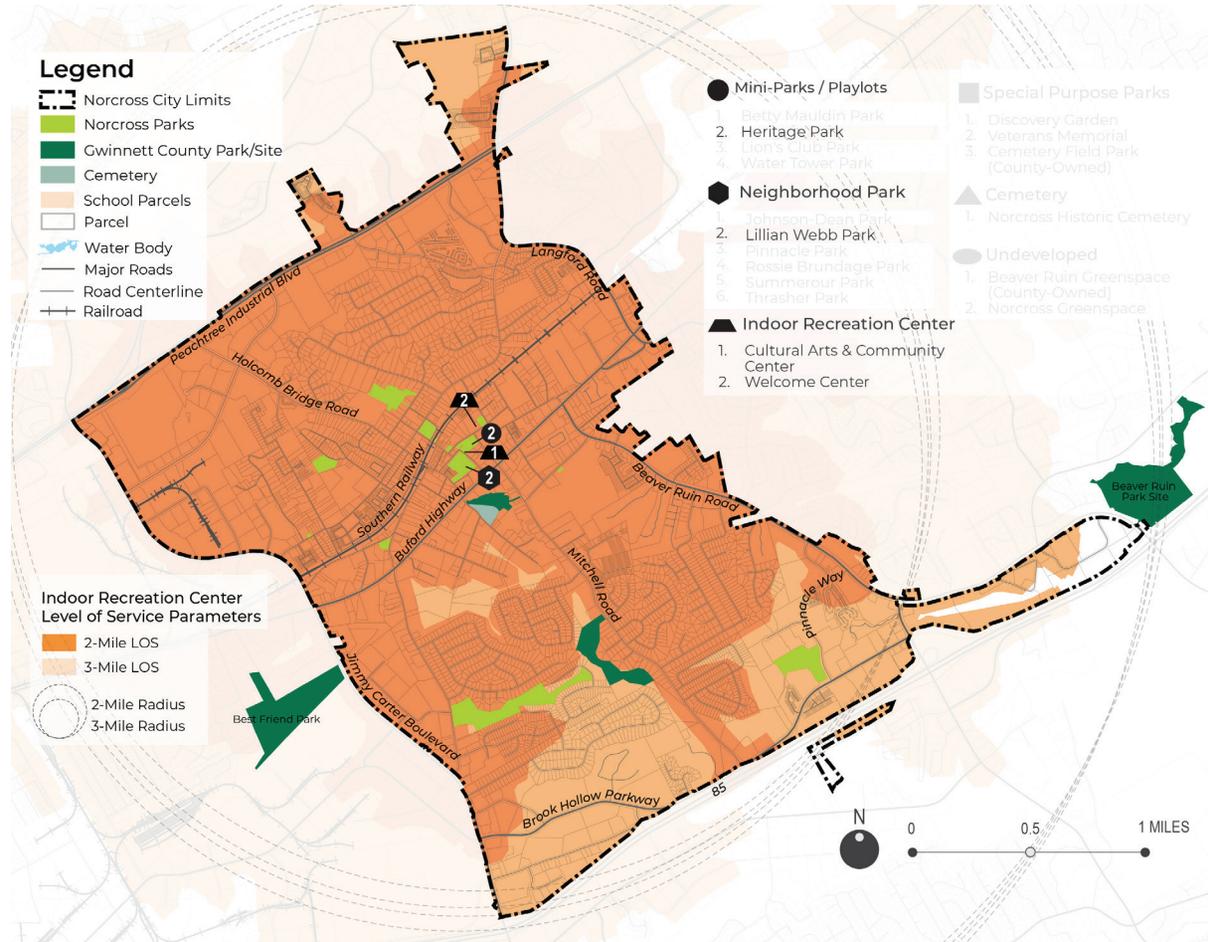
# City Mini Parks and Neighborhood Parks LOS



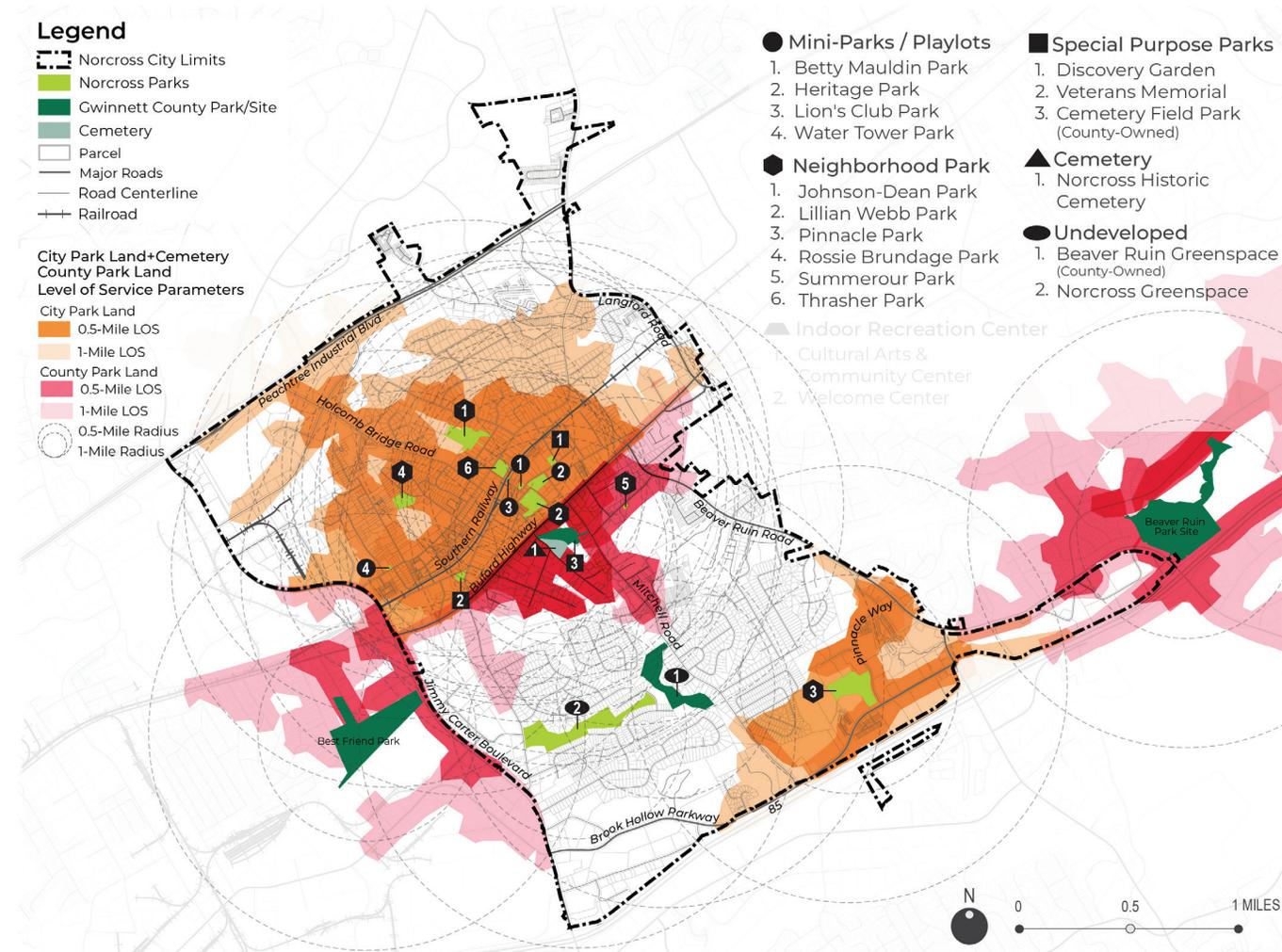
# City Park Land and City Cemetery and County Park Land LOS



# City Indoor Recreation Center LOS



## Developed City Park Land and City Cemetery and County Park Land LOS (Within City Limits Considering Streets as Barriers to Walkability/ Crossability)



The map on the left shows the areas in the City of Norcross that are served by a developed City and County Park within a walkable 1/2 mile or 1 mile of resident homes. Unlike previous maps, this map also considers Buford Highway and Jimmy Carter Boulevard as barriers to pedestrian walking/crossability given their high traffic volumes and high speeds.

The map shows that the areas east/south of Buford Highway do not have as much walkable access to developed parks as the areas west/north of Buford Highway.

This map underscores the importance of developing the greenspaces currently owned by the City and County to ensure residents in this area of the City of access to a walkable developed park.

## Acreage LOS

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

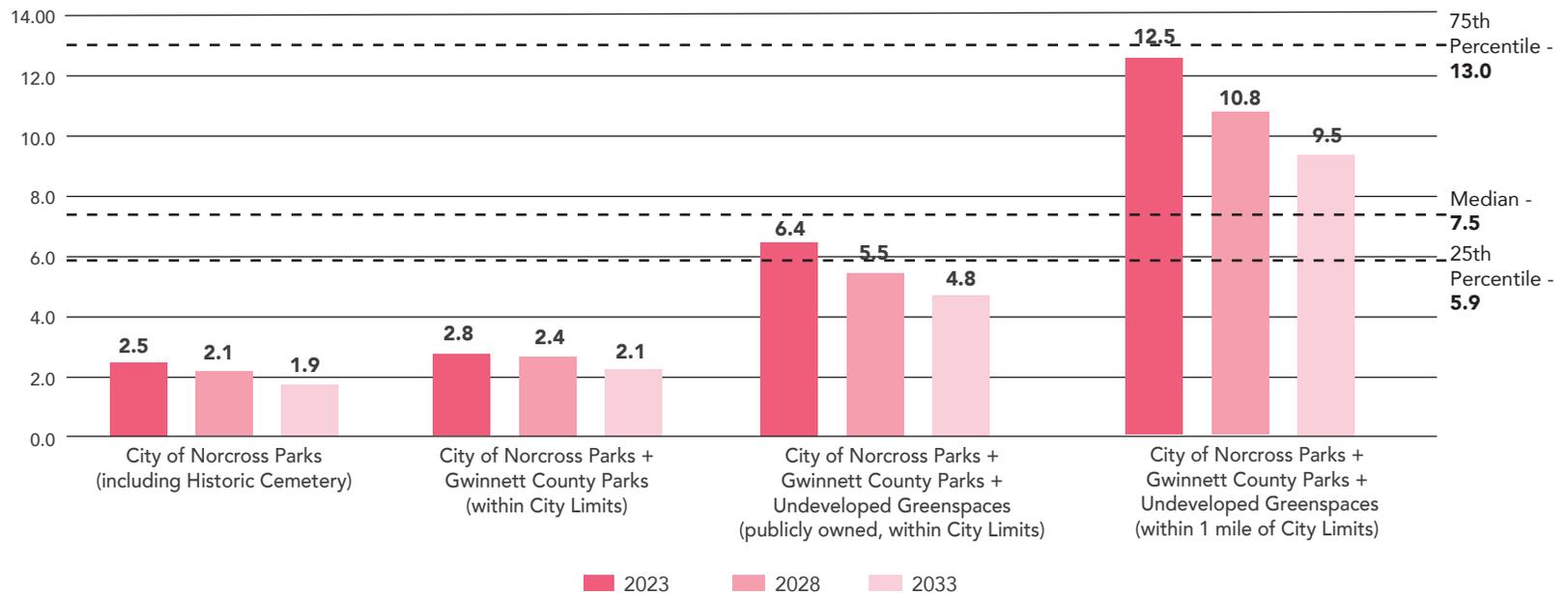
Park Acreage LOS was analyzed using four different acreage considerations:

- Developed City of Norcross Parks (including the Cemetery)
- Developed City of Norcross Parks and Gwinnett County Parks (within City Limits)
- City of Norcross Parks and Gwinnett County Parks and Undeveloped Greenspaces (owned by the City or County and planned for future park land)

Acreage amounts were divided by the population estimates for the years 2023, 2028, and 2033. The figure below illustrates the findings from these analyses and compares the City's 2023 Acreage LOS to NRPA benchmarks for cities with a similar population and population density as the City of Norcross.

Of particular importance is noting the impact that developing the undeveloped greenspaces in the City has in increasing Park Acreage LOS in the City. Considering the population of 2023, Park Acreage LOS increases from 2.8 to 6.4 acres per 1,000 population. This is consistent with the findings from the Access LOS Analysis that shows the areas that currently lack access to developed parks in the east/south side of the City and the need to develop those greenspaces.

Acreage Level of Service Analysis



## Facilities LOS

Facilities LOS is measured by dividing the number of residents by the number of parks and recreation facilities. The higher the number, the fewer facilities there are per resident, and the more of a need there may be for that particular recreation facility. The lower the number, the more facilities there are per resident, and the less of a need there may be for that particular recreation facility.

	Facilities	City of Norcross			NRPA Park Metrics			Need/Surplus
		Inventory	2023	2033	Aggregated Benchmarks (Pop. 15,000-30,000; Dens. 2,500-3,500/sq mi.)			Based on NRPA Median Benchmark
					25th	Median	75th	2033
Indoor Facilities	Recreation Centers	0	-	-	14,259	20,000	22,000	-2
	Community Centers	1	18,272	24,000	10,264	12,630	18,565	-1
	Senior Centers	0	-	-	15,198	16,138	17,077	-2
	Teen Centers	0	-	-	16,194	18,130	20,065	-2
	Performance Amphitheatres	0	-	-	14,259	14,259	14,259	-2
	Nature Centers	1	18,272	24,000	18,016	18,016	18,016	-1
Outdoor Facilities	Playgrounds	4	4,568	6,000	2,014	2,524	3,079	-6
	Totlots	2	9,136	12,000	4,614	5,625	15,232	-3
	Community gardens	1	18,272	24,000	8,574	10,019	15,010	-2
	Basketball courts	1	18,272	24,000	2,792	4,502	7,336	-5
	Multiuse courts -basketball, volleyball	0	-	-	10,510	11,000	15,500	-3
	Diamond fields: baseball - youth	0	-	-	2,409	4,255	7,711	-6
	Diamond fields: baseball - adult	0	-	-	12,018	14,018	16,017	-2
	Diamond fields: softball fields - youth	1	18,272	24,000	9,514	10,019	12,139	-2
	Diamond fields: softball fields - adult	0	-	-	8,230	11,492	14,754	-3
	Skate park	0	-	-	17,077	19,008	21,210	-2
	Dog park	0	-	-	8,003	10,000	12,130	-3
	Rectangular fields: multi-purpose (natural turf)	0	-	-	3,971	6,005	14,907	-4
	Rectangular fields: football field	0	-	-	11,000	11,000	11,000	-3
	Rectangular fields: soccer field - adult	1	18,272	24,000	7,952	13,237	18,523	-1
	Rectangular fields: soccer field - youth	0	-	-	10,452	14,904	19,356	-2
	Multipurpose synthetic field	0	-	-	18,016	18,016	18,016	-2
Trail Miles Maintained	2	2	2	4	5	7.5	-3	
Swimming/ Aquatics	Aquatics centers	0	-	-	14,259	14,259	14,259	-2
	Swimming pools (outdoor only)	0	-	-	6,289	6,952	7,616	-4
	Indoor competitive swimming pools: 25 meters	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Splash Pad/Sprayground	1	18,272	24,000	-	-	-	-
Racquet Sports	Tennis courts (outdoor only)	0	-	-	3,340	4,000	4,504	-6
	Pickleball (outdoor)	0	-	-	20,000	20,000	20,000	-2
	Pickleball (indoor)	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Multiuse courts- Tennis, Pickleball (outdoor)	0	-	-	8,210	12,419	17,460	-2
	Multiuse courts- Tennis, Pickleball (indoor)	0	-	-	-	-	-	-

## Facilities LOS

Population estimates for the years 2023 and 2033 were divided by the number of existing facilities to identify the Facilities LOS. The Median Facility LOS benchmarks were then used to calculate the need or surplus of facilities based on the projected 2033 population.

Based on this analysis, it appears that the City may have a need for all of the analyzed parks and recreation facilities.

With the inclusion of the Gwinnett County parks within one mile of the city limits (Cemetery Field Park, Best Friend Park, Beaver Ruin Wetland Park [under construction]) eight of the categories have a change in their needs, with Community Centers, Adult Baseball Fields, and Tennis Courts moving from a need to a surplus.

	Facilities	City of Norcross Norcross + Gwinnett County Parks (within 1 mile of city)			NRPA Park Metrics	Need/ Surplus
		Inventory	2023	2033	Aggregated Benchmarks (Pop. 15,000-30,000; Dens. 2,500-3,500/ sq mi.)	Based on NRPA Median Benchmark
					Median	2033
<b>Indoor Facilities</b>	Community Centers	2	18,272	24,000	12,630	<b>1</b>
<b>Outdoor Facilities</b>	Playgrounds	7	4,568	6,000	2,524	<b>-3</b>
	Basketball courts	3	18,272	24,000	4,502	<b>-3</b>
	Diamond fields: baseball - adult	2	-	-	14,018	<b>1</b>
	Multipurpose synthetic field	1	-	-	18,016	<b>-1</b>
<b>Swimming/ Aquatics</b>	Aquatics centers	1	-	-	14,259	<b>-1</b>
	Swimming pools (outdoor only)	1	-	-	6,952	<b>-3</b>
<b>Racquet Sports</b>	Tennis courts (outdoor only)	17	-	-	4,000	<b>11</b>

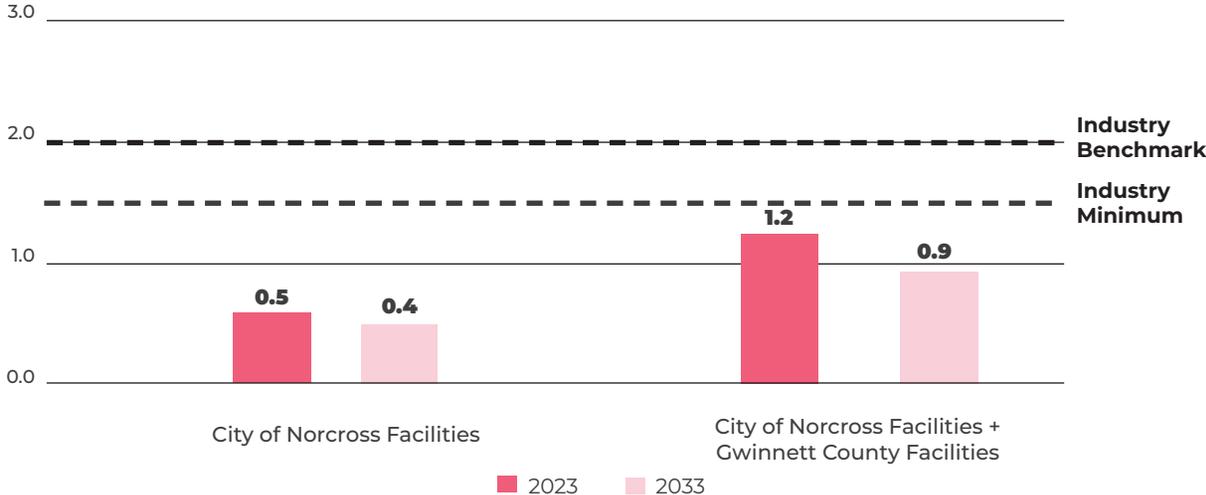
### Indoor Recreation Space LOS

Indoor Recreation Center Space LOS is measured by dividing the amount of indoor and community recreation center space (square footage) available to residents by the number of residents in the city.

Industry guidelines suggest that communities with high quality indoor recreation services should have about 2.0 square foot of interior recreation and community center space per resident. The figure below illustrates the findings from this analysis considering the City of Norcross' 2023 and 2033 population estimates.

The City of Norcross currently has approximately 9,500 square feet of indoor recreation and community center space. This equates to approximately 0.5 square feet of indoor space per resident in 2023 and 0.4 in 2033.

If the square footage of the Best Friend Park Community Center is included, the total indoor recreation center square footage increases by about 12,500 to approximately 22,000 square feet. This equates to approximately 1.2 square feet of indoor space per resident in 2023 and 0.9 in 2033.





# Chapter 3

## Create

# Growing a Greener City

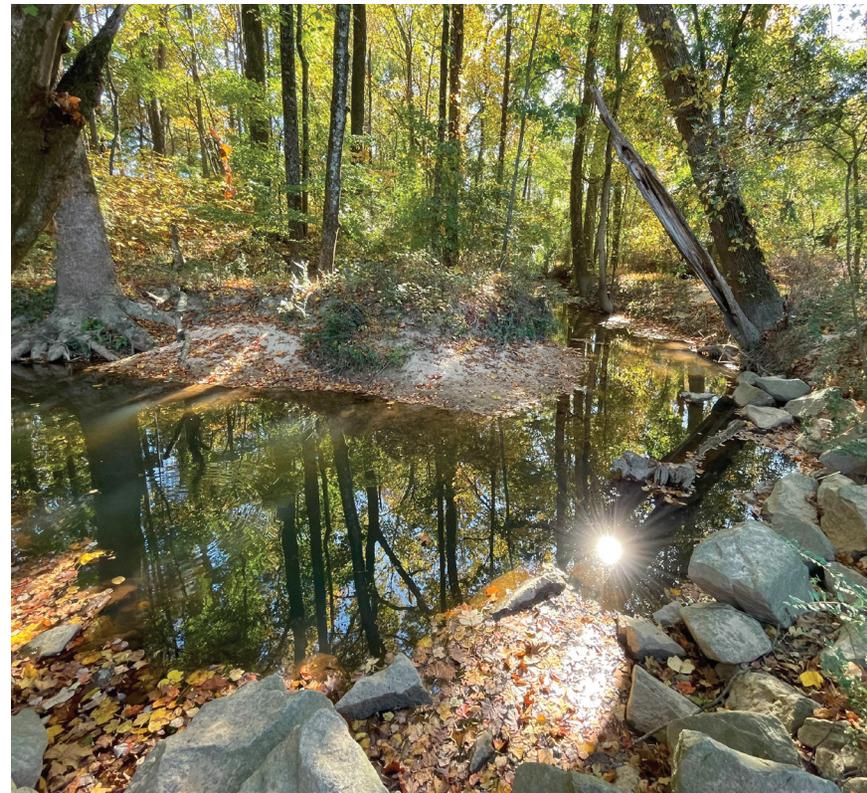
Create introduces a vision for the future of parks, green spaces and trails within Norcross, establishing an aspirational framework for recreation and green infrastructure opportunities in the City over the next 5 years and beyond. It provides a broad range of recommendations, all of which build on the Discover and Analyze phases as their foundation. The findings of those first two phases produced a variety of needs, challenges, ideas, and opportunities, many of which can be organized under the four project goals:

**Goal 1 – Preservation of Natural Areas in Norcross** (such as forests, meadows, wetlands, etc.)

**Goal 2 – Enhancement of Nature in Norcross** (projects such as invasive species management, tree planting, streambank restoration, stormwater management/ green infrastructure, etc.)

**Goal 3 – Providing Connections between Parks and Natural Areas** (projects to implement new and/or improved sidewalks and trails to connect parks and nature with surrounding communities)

**Goal 4 – Identifying New General Recreation Parkland** (land will be developed for recreation uses, i.e. open lawns, splashpads, playgrounds, etc.)



In January 2024, City staff and members of the City's Parks, Greenspace, and Trails (PG&T) Commission along with residents participated in a Visioning Workshop to explore how the initial findings should be addressed going forward. This included a review of the results of the ecological analysis of existing conditions and opportunities, and summary findings that identified priorities from the feedback received.

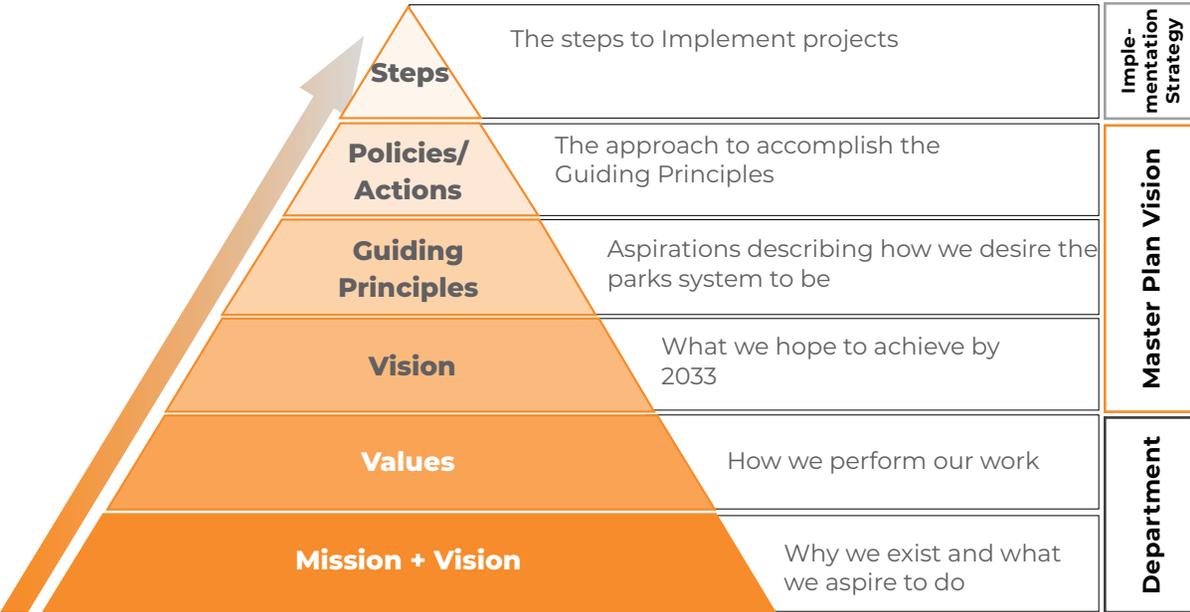
Based on the Vision Workshop discussions, the four goals established at the project inception serve as the basis for the Vision's Guiding Principles.



### Guiding Principles

1. **Protect** the City's Ecological Bones
2. Strategic **Stewardship** to Enhance Nature
3. Create "Natural **Connections**" to Recreation
4. **Optimize** Green Spaces to Serve Community Needs

The framework (right) demonstrates how the Vision elements build on each other, from the Mission + Vision to the Policies/ Actions, with the Steps forming the priorities of the final phase, Refine, which includes the Implementation Plan.



### Policies and Actions

The policies and actions form the central recommendations of this Vision and lay the blueprint for the City's strategy over the next 10 years. While each policy or action falls within one of the guiding principles, they often have relevance to another principle. This interconnectedness is indicated with letters for each Principle: (P) Protect, (S) Steward, (C) Connect, (O) Optimize

When a Policy or Action builds on the recommendations of previous plans (noted with PP).

# Protect the City's Ecological Bones

*The City will protect the ecologically sensitive network of corridors and patches present within Norcross through a variety of strategies, from fee simple acquisition to conservation easements, to strengthening the city's environmental protection ordinances and providing further information to city residents on how to best steward natural areas within the public and private realm.*

*Priority lands for protection are guided by the rapid GIS-based suitability analysis\* results (opposite page) focused on uncovering the highest ecological suitability for future stewardship and protection: inclusive of streams and stream buffers, floodplains, wetlands, forest patch size, and forest configuration.*

## Land Acquisition

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Based on the ecological suitability analysis, the City should pursue the acquisition of medium to high value parcels, to ensure the remaining areas of significant ecological function & value can be protected. Acquiring new parkland can be a challenging process that typically evolves on a parcel-by-parcel basis, with opportunities arising on a sporadic basis and timing typically out of the city's control. That being said, knowing the way that ecosystems form patterns across the urban fabric, the City can continue to build on the foundational ecological network of corridors and patches that are currently present within the city as funding becomes available.

## Conservation Easements

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Encouraging the owners of specific high-medium suitability value parcels to pursue conservation easements is an opportunity to help protect sensitive landscapes and associated riparian corridors, with the owner benefiting from a tax break and the City avoiding the need to acquire the land. In particular, faith-based organizations own a significant amount of land that could be protected through easements.

## Strengthening Environmental Protection Ordinances

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Consider revising the code to strengthen environmental protections:

- Recommend a 100' buffer on all stream channels (riparian buffer protection of 100' from each edge of channel) to support water quality and habitat function - require buffer to be managed for invasive species, vegetated with a diverse native palette of trees, shrubs and groundcover species; restrict any new development within the buffer.
- Recommend increased protection for mature forest, interior forest, and high ecological value parcels.

*\*Based on available data from City of Norcross and open access data sets available in 2023*

## Legend

-  Norcross City Limits
-  Parcels
-  Water Body
-  Major Roads
-  Road Centerline
-  Railroad

## Ecological Suitability

- Value
-  Low
  -  Medium
  -  High
-  City of Norcross Parks
  -  City of Norcross Greenspace (Undeveloped)
  -  Gwinnett County Parks
  -  Public Schools
  -  City Owned Parcels
  -  County Owned Parcels



# Protect the City's Ecological Bones

## Strengthening Environmental Protection Ordinances (cont.)

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- Increase fee for removal of mature native tree canopy or fragmentation of interior forest patches
- Provide financial incentives to retain mature canopy, or plant new trees to support forest regeneration
- Consider increasing the tree density units per acre in all residential, commercial and industrial zones
- Strengthen guidelines for subdivision development to preserve natural areas
- Increase fee for removal of mature native tree canopy or fragmentation of interior forest patches
- Provide financial incentives to retain mature canopy, or plant new trees to support forest regeneration
- Recommend smart-growth principles; high density with smaller footprints and more preservation of green space

### OPPOSITE

This segment of a tributary to Beaver Ruin Creek benefits from a natural buffer to the adjacent homes that often exceeds 100', providing a substantial floodplain and riparian zone that allows for infiltration, avoiding the steep, scoured banks that are frequently seen on other stream segments in the City.



# Strategic Stewardship to Enhance Nature

*The Department will guide the City's land management strategy to strengthen ecological function. Stewardship strategies will enhance and restore native vegetation, both beautifying natural areas and facilitating streamlined maintenance. Some of the potential outcomes of these efforts include:*

- *Maintaining and enhancing functional landscapes to realize stacked environmental benefits (ecosystem services) such as:*
  - » *Improving water quality flowing into stream systems*
  - » *Improving ecological health & biodiversity of the natural areas within the city*
  - » *Supporting long-term resilience & habitat function*
  - » *Providing education and stewardship opportunities*
  - » *Lowering carbon emissions*
  - » *Strengthening Norcross' sense of place and civic identity through its connection to place (the ecological context unique to Norcross)*

## BUILDING ON SUCCESS

The practice of strategic stewardship is not new to Norcross, as over the last 10 years, the Department has implemented projects in line with these recommendations, such as the pollinator garden and rain garden on the City Hall campus. The opportunity going forward is to build on these success stories and expand them across the system, integrating green infrastructure elements in every greenspace.



### Legend

- Norcross City Limits
- Parcels
- Water Body
- Major Roads
- Road Centerline
- Railroad

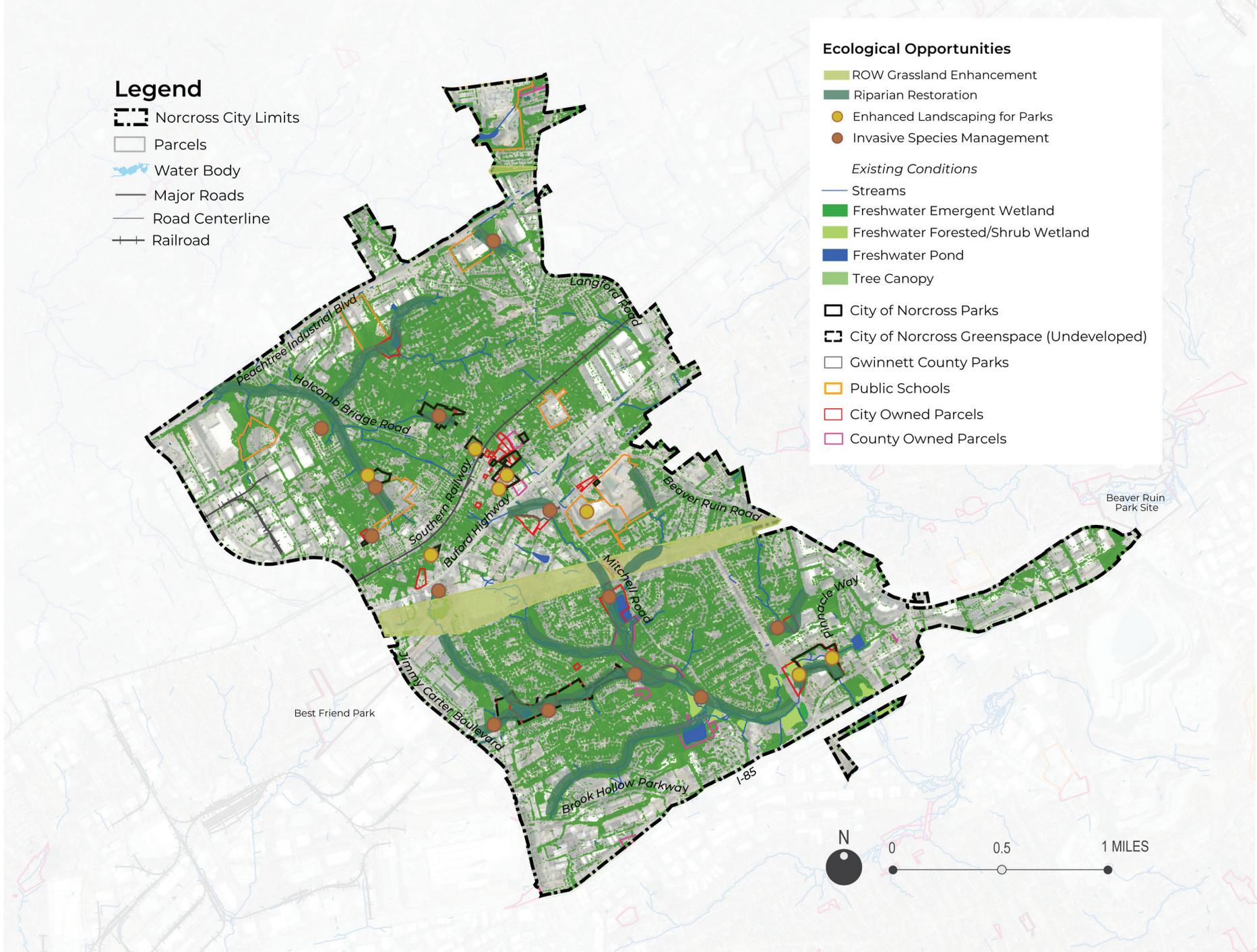
### Ecological Opportunities

- ROW Grassland Enhancement
- Riparian Restoration
- Enhanced Landscaping for Parks
- Invasive Species Management

#### Existing Conditions

- Streams
- Freshwater Emergent Wetland
- Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland
- Freshwater Pond
- Tree Canopy

- City of Norcross Parks
- City of Norcross Greenspace (Undeveloped)
- Gwinnett County Parks
- Public Schools
- City Owned Parcels
- County Owned Parcels



# Strategic Stewardship to Enhance Nature

## Enhanced Landscapes in Parks

The Department has already taken steps to enhance landscaping in parks and public spaces across the City, including the creation of a pollinator garden at City Hall, edible native landscaping at the Discovery Garden Park, and hiring a new Landscape and Beautification Manager. Continuing these efforts and expanding upon them presents a significant opportunity to improve parks and enhance their functional connection to the natural areas across the city of Norcross.



**Perform high-quality, ecologically sensitive park maintenance. [P]** Establish a standardized system (in progress) for park maintenance that accommodates the specific landscape design and plantings, amenities, uses, and unique attributes of each park. Minimize the use of chemical treatments, consider alternatives to mowing or the use of low-mow turf alternatives that cut emissions, and integrated pest management, etc. Deer management may be an issue to keep in mind as forest regeneration continues.



**Increase tree canopy on parkland. [O]** Identify areas for new tree planting and collaborate with partners and volunteers to organize community plantings. Avoid fragmentation of any existing interior forest patches within parks and enhance edge conditions to expand interior forest where plausible. Ensure that Tree Bank funds and Tree Canopy Replacement trees are maximized on parkland, providing a diverse vertical structure of canopy, midstory, and understory trees, as well as shrubs and groundcover.



**Expand edible landscapes. [O]** (Re)design parks, where appropriate, to reduce under-used lawns and expand the use of edible plants where appropriate. Implement edible native shrubs and trees as part of “natural area” restorations.

**Piedmont Native Edible Species:**

- *American Plum/Chickasaw Plum (Prunus americana/angustifolia)*
- *Blackberries (Rubus sp.)*
- *Blueberries (Vaccinium sp.)*
- *Elderberry (Sambucus canadensis)*
- *Muscadines (Vitis rotundifolia)*
- *Paw paw (Asimina triloba)*
- *American Persimmon (Diospyros virginiana)*
- *Serviceberry (Amelanchier arborea)*

Expand native plant palette in parkland and reduce overall turf coverage. (Re)design parks, where appropriate, to reduce under-used lawns and minimize mowing, while expanding native vegetation through meadow plantings and turf conversion.

Prioritize integrated green infrastructure (stormwater management) in parks and greenspaces. [O]

Pursue green infrastructure installations to reduce stormwater runoff volumes and improve water quality of runoff within park lands. Remove impervious surfaces where not needed and replace with native planting zones.



# Strategic Stewardship to Enhance Nature

## Citywide Stream Restoration and Stewardship

Restore or repair existing segments of stream experiencing head cuts, erosion, and other impacts to the channel and floodplain, which hinder function, resilience and degrade water quality and downstream aquatic health. This may include daylighting piped stream segments where feasible, or restoration an existing impacted stream segment based on specific constraints and conditions.

Address Failing Sewer Infrastructure impacting streams. Survey and address issues with failing sewer infrastructure and exposed or vulnerable sewer lines that intersect or impact streams. Beaver Ruin Creek and Crooked Creek are both listed as impaired waterbodies, with Fecal Coliform as the pollutant of concern. The primary sources of fecal coliform are human and animal waste through untreated runoff, failed sewers and septic systems. Exposed or vulnerable sewer lines can be addressed through the following mechanisms: moving sanitary sewers out of the floodplain, where feasible; slip-lining pipes and manholes to prevent leaching; encasement of sewer pipes with concrete; stream restoration (see below). A Total Maximum Daily Load limit (pollution diet) has been adopted and the City is responsible for executing (Previous plans: Beaver Ruin Greenway; Buford Highway MP). Sewer stabilization or relocation should be considered at a minimum, where pipes cross streams.

Prioritize stream restoration opportunities along Beaver Ruin and tributaries adjacent to proposed trails [P]/ Floodplain reconnection. The proposed Piedmont Pathway along Beaver Ruin Creek presents an opportunity to integrate sensitive trail development with needed stream restoration, ensuring trails are designed to have the least impact on the health of these sensitive areas. Coordination with the County is necessary to ensure specialized work is performed successfully. Stream restoration may include reconnection to floodplain, repairing erosion and headcuts, planting the corridor buffer with the appropriate diversity of native plants, respecting necessary stream buffer requirements in siting the trail alignments, locating stream crossings at perpendicular angles to minimize impacts, avoiding all wetlands, choosing appropriate materials in light of runoff, improving stability, and other considerations, etc.

### OPPOSITE

This rendering of a potential multi-use trail along an urban stream segment demonstrates how trails can be a catalyst for improvements to the urban stream system, inclusive of riparian restoration, while also supporting real estate development.



# Strategic Stewardship to Enhance Nature

## Invasive Species Management

Non-native invasive plant species decrease biodiversity and reduce ecological health by out-competing native plant species and eventually crowding out native plants which have evolved in community with a guild of native wildlife specific to this ecoregion and physiographic province. Invasive species typically grow and reproduce faster than native species and starve them of resources needed for survival. They do not provide the full host of benefits and ecosystem services offered by a more intact native palette leading to cascading negative impacts to the entire ecosystem. Management of these species is paramount to long-term ecological resilience.

Develop and incorporate ISM plan into regular maintenance operations. Department to pursue a multi-pronged strategy through internal processes, hiring contract work, or coordinating a volunteer program (potentially through a partnership with Trees Atlanta). Management strategies may need to be mapped out by species and location to optimize effort and success, and must incorporate an adaptive management approach.

Explore innovative approaches to engage community in invasive species management and control.

Coordinate with local innovators using sheep & goats for management and local “weed warrior” community groups volunteering for work parties to remove invasive plants and support light restoration (planting) activities.



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## **Riparian Corridor Management & Stewardship**

Stream banks and the edges of waterways and ponds are some of the most ecologically productive and sensitive environments in the urban fabric. A robust mosaic of mature forest canopy, including trees and understory plant species benefits water quality, stream bank stability and improves aquatic and terrestrial habitat, promoting wildlife diversity. A specified width of forested buffer on either side of a stream channel is recommended to ensure benefits and protection, typically a 100-150 foot minimum. These forested or planted buffers are also quite important in supporting surface water regulations and goals, as the last filter before surface runoff meets a stream.



## **Riparian Forest Protections and Plantings**

In alignment with recommendations under PROTECT, expand and manage the riparian corridor plantings on all significant streams and tributaries to support long-term resilience. Create a reforestation plan for the 150' buffer that may include financial incentive for private owners or a plant palette of suggested woody species to plant and maintain within the buffers.



## **Wetland protection & enhancement**

Protect existing wetlands across the city (whether or not they exist within a riparian corridor) and enhance wetlands where needed, with a combination of invasive plant management / control and native plantings and restorative design techniques that promote the important function of wetlands as natural sponges in the landscape.

A suggested pilot project at Pinnacle Park would retrofit the existing pond as a multifunctional constructed wetland system, with the ability to provide additional dry storage and enhanced water quality by modifying the outfall, creating deep pools in the areas that are less prone to sedimentation and planting with a diverse native wetland plant palette. There may also be opportunities for modifications within sewer easements to promote hydrologic reconnection. Consider conveyance and storage of stormwater flows in vernal pools or constructed wetlands on streamside opposite the sewer easement.

# Strategic Stewardship to Enhance Nature

## Right-of-Way (utilities or other ROW) Meadow/Grassland Enhancements

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Prioritize the conversion of existing mixed meadow/lawns to diverse native meadows in easements where tree canopy is not recommended to support ecosystem services including pollinator habitat and refuge for ground-dwelling native bird and native mammals.



### **Grassland enhancement opportunity along utility easements adjacent to proposed trails [P]**

The proposed Piedmont Pathway presents an opportunity to combine trail construction with meadow/grassland enhancement through native seeding and removal of invasive species.

## Public Outreach & Policy

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Educate the community on urban ecological resilience and the benefits of functional landscaping.



**Expand the use of signage and programming to highlight the ecosystem value of native trees and urban forests and “green” stormwater management (already in progress).**



### **Create “green” jobs.**

Empower activism by hiring youth and young adults to participate in park planning and ecological improvement projects.



### **Support/cultivate partnerships for community-based stewardship.**

Empower activism and ownership within the community. Build partnerships at the local, regional, and state level; offer opportunities for learning and knowledge sharing; raise awareness of environmental issues across scales; build organizing capacity for volunteer work; and build sense of place and belonging to a community.

### Make schools a model for green infrastructure best practices

Partner with local schools on projects that demonstrate the value of stormwater BMPs, taking advantage of the significant amount of land available and the value of incorporating projects into the STEAM curriculum. Potential opportunities include:

- » Native pollinator gardens with informational signage
- » Conservation landscaping with mown edge on slopes, transitional spaces to adjacent forest or open space, and un-programmed spaces
- » Parking lot retrofits w/ micro-bioretentation, tree boxes, and permeable pavement (right)
- » Develop rain gardens at downspouts with native landscaping and informational signage



# Strategic Stewardship to Enhance Nature

## Public Outreach & Policy (continued)

Educate the community on urban ecological resilience and the benefits of functional landscaping.

## Make schools a model for green infrastructure best practices (continued)

- » Explore retrofitting detention ponds to provide public amenity, through the replacement of chain-link fencing with decorative fencing alternatives, implementation of overlooks, etc.



- » Convert un-programmed lawn to meadow, tree plantings, and gardens



**Existing Condition**  
Driveway to Summerour MS parking lot with unused lawn



**Proposed Condition**  
Develop shared-use path, wildflower pollinator meadow, shade tree plantings, fruit tree orchard

# Create “Natural Connections” to Recreation

The Department will increase access and awareness of the parks and recreation system, better connecting the community to the public realm. This will be accomplished through physical elements, such as coordinating pedestrian and bicycle+ improvements across the City to ensure that sidewalks, trails, and urban design elements foster active transportation to parks and schools. Additionally, new programs and outreach efforts will keep the public informed and engaged with parks and recreation opportunities.

## The Public Realm

Road right-of-way is typically the largest portion of a jurisdiction’s publicly-owned land, exceeding even parks themselves. Although most right-of-way area is taken up by streets designed for cars, urban design policies spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic have led to a widespread reconsideration of the roles of public right-of-way, and the value of creating a public realm that serves a variety of uses, whether bicycling, scooter riding, and walking, outdoor dining, or green infrastructure.

**Leverage trail corridors to provide park experiences.** Design trails to facilitate the incremental integration of park experiences along the trail based on the parks and recreation needs of surrounding residents.

### RESPONDING TO NEEDS

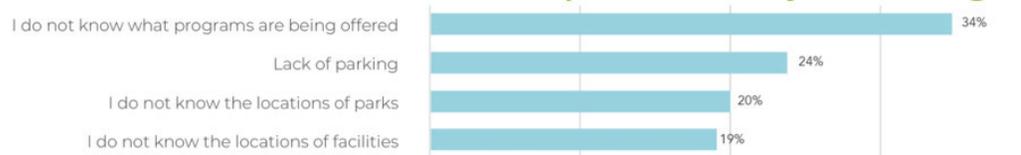
Public engagement results demonstrated that walking and biking facilities were the highest priority facility to residents, with the top 3 facilities all walking related, all scoring above the 85th percentile, and all receiving numerous mentions in public comments and interviews.

Similarly, three of the four biggest barriers to use were related to a lack of knowledge of the recreation system, suggesting a need to better connect residents to their resources.

### High-Priority Facility/ Amenity Needs | Summary Findings

NEEDS ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUE:	1. Online Survey	2. Public Meetings/ Special Events	3. Steering Committee	4. Focus Group Interviews	5. City Leadership Interviews (On-going)
● 95th Percentile	●	●	●	○	○
● 85th Percentile	●	●	●	○	○
● 50th Percentile	●	●	○	○	○
○ Mentioned (Percentile N/A)	○	○	○	○	○
Shaded Paved Multi-Purpose Trails	●	●	●	○	○
Unpaved Walking + Walking Trails	●	●	○	○	○
Shaded Sidewalks	●	●	●	○	○

### Barriers to Use | Summary Findings



**RIGHT**

This rendering of the proposed Piedmont Pathway trail demonstrates how the corridor could be activated through complementary uses like natural play areas and adult fitness equipment.



**Adopt a Complete Streets approach for roadway projects.**

Ensure that future road paving and trail/sidewalk projects along road corridors integrate shade trees and green infrastructure to manage both quantity and quality of stormwater (right). Consider use of permeable paving with subsurface storage where possible. Where trails are in upland areas, consider bioswales and native filter strips for stormwater management.



# Create “Natural Connections” to Recreation

## The Public Realm (continued)

Road right-of-way is typically the largest portion of a jurisdiction’s publicly-owned land, exceeding even parks themselves. Although most right-of-way area is taken up by streets designed for cars, urban design policies spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic have led to a widespread reconsideration of the roles of public right-of-way, and the value of creating a public realm that serves a variety of uses, whether bicycling, scooter riding, and walking, outdoor dining, or green infrastructure.

**Expand the city’s trail network, prioritizing segments that connect to parks and schools, and incorporating stormwater management projects where appropriate.**

List of projects (project prioritization is in Chapter 4 - Refine).

1. Paul Duke-Sunset Connector: Paved and/or Soft Surface trails to connect Paul Duke STEM High School to Sunset Drive and Longview Drive on city-owned property and sewer easements
2. Hunter-Walker Trail Extension: Paved trail from Hunter Street into Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church/BIA Charter School property and north on sewer easement to Holcomb Bridge Road
3. Hunter Street Connector: Paved Sidepath or In-Street Facility connecting Hunter Street to Rowan Street and crossing the railroad track
4. S Peachtree-Lawrenceville Connector: Paved Sidepath from Rowan Street along S Peachtree Street to Holcomb Bridge Road, turning onto Skin Alley and Lawrenceville Street to Rakestraw Street.
5. Mitchell Road Extension: Paved sidepath from Lawrenceville Street to Price Place to connect to ongoing Norcross Greenway Project (GDOT), with spur trail through DDA-owned property to Britt Avenue/Lillian Webb Park.
6. Baldwin Elementary/Summerour Middle Connector: Paved path network to provide improved access throughout Baldwin/Summerour campus and to Reeves Street/Everglades Trail
7. Spalding Drive Connector: Sidepath on south side of Spalding Drive to connect existing trails on Technology Parkway and Medlock Bridge Road to Norcross High School.
8. Piedmont Pathway - West: Coordinate with the County to develop Piedmont Pathway (boardwalk model mile) with streambank and forest restoration
9. Piedmont Pathway - East: Coordinate with the County to develop Piedmont Pathway from Anamanda Close to Mitchell Road with streambank and forest restoration
10. Johnson-Dean Trail Extension: Soft-surface trail to extend existing trail network in Johnson-Dean along stream to Holcomb Bridge Road
11. Piedmont Pathway - North: Develop Piedmont Pathway (boardwalk) with streambank and forest restoration from property owned by the City of Norcross located at 65 Lawrenceville Street to Piedmont Pathway West Entry Park.

## Legend

- Norcross City Limits
- Parcels
- Water Body
- Major Roads
- Road Centerline
- Railroad

- City of Norcross Parks
- City of Norcross Greenspace (Undeveloped)
- Gwinnett County Parks
- Public Schools

## TRAIL STATUS

- Existing Paved Trails
- Existing Soft Surface Trails
- Existing Sidewalks
- Trails Proposed during this Plan

## Ongoing Projects

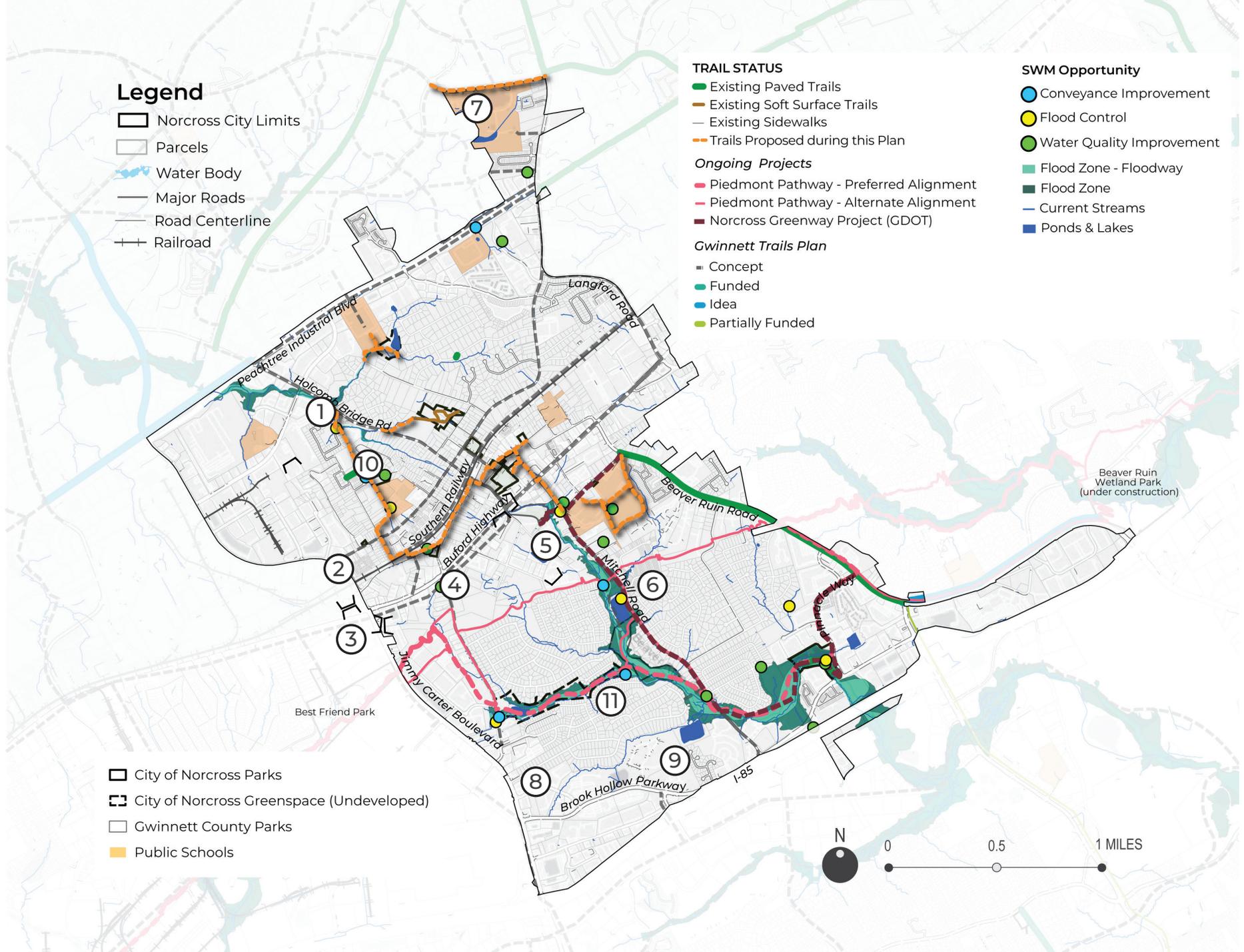
- Piedmont Pathway - Preferred Alignment
- Piedmont Pathway - Alternate Alignment
- Norcross Greenway Project (GDOT)

## Gwinnett Trails Plan

- Concept
- Funded
- Idea
- Partially Funded

## SWM Opportunity

- Conveyance Improvement
- Flood Control
- Water Quality Improvement
- Flood Zone - Floodway
- Flood Zone
- Current Streams
- Ponds & Lakes



# Create “Natural Connections” to Recreation

## Programs & Outreach

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Educate the community on nearby parks, trails, and facilities offered by Gwinnett County and other cities. Pursue opportunities to provide new programs that are collaborative and innovative.



Increase awareness of parks and recreation opportunities offered by nearby County parks through additional information on the website and through signage in parks

For example, “outdoor pools’ were noted as a need in public input. However, Gwinnett County’s Best Friend Park, which is on the city’s southwestern boundary, and the West Gwinnett Aquatic Center (approximately 3 miles northeast of downtown Norcross) may adequately serve residents’ needs.

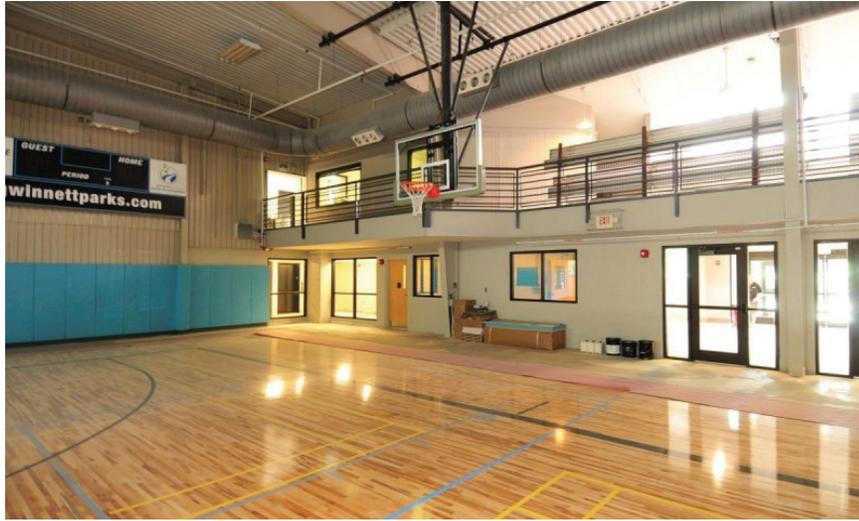


Expand programs provided by the Department through partnerships with Gwinnett County and local non-profits.

Fill program needs through collaboration and shared space opportunities.

Potential examples include:

- Cooking classes, utilizing vegetables and native fruits grown in community gardens, and space provided by a local partner.
- Language classes that incorporate nature programming, such as “Bird watching in Spanish”



### ABOVE + BELOW

Best Friend Park includes both an indoor basketball gym and two outdoor courts, in addition to a pool, Hudlow Tennis Center, softball and baseball fields, and more.



### ABOVE + BELOW

The West Gwinnett Aquatic Center includes two indoor pools and two outdoor pools, with multiple slides and play features.



# Optimize Green Spaces to Serve Community Needs

*The Department will make upgrades to existing parks, and design new green spaces, to effectively serve a variety of uses, based on needs expressed through community engagement.*

## Develop available publicly-owned land for recreation

There are multiple properties that the City of Norcross owns that should be named and formalized as parks. Some are already used by nearby residents for recreational purposes, others are vacant. Additionally, continued coordination and discussion with Gwinnett County present opportunities for further development on County-owned land.

**Expand the city's park land, prioritizing sites based on their ability to fill existing access and facilities gaps and ecological suitability.**

List of projects (project prioritization is in Chapter 4 - Refine).

1. Piedmont Pathway West Entry Park (previous parks plan): signage, Piedmont Pathway trail, riparian restoration. Expanded in this plan to include the development of a park entry space & natural play playground on site's western edge along N Norcross Tucker Road. Implement streambed improvements for water quality and flood control.
2. Fickling Parcel (previous parks plan): signage, paved/soft surface trails, invasive species management
3. Forested land behind Community Center: signage, trail connection to Heritage Park and Lillian Webb
4. Pinnacle Park Expansion: Piedmont Pathway Trail, expanded soft surface trails, invasive species management
5. Water Tower Park: signage, walking path, seating, landscaping, play element
6. *Gwinnett County Water Facility*: coordinate with Gwinnett County Water & Sewer authority to provide public access to this 10-acre parcel, with signage, and a walking trail loop around the pond
7. Piedmont Pathway East Entry Park: Develop a park entry space into playground, multi-purpose open space, outdoor exercise equipment eastern edge along Mitchell Road. Implement streambed improvements for water quality.
8. Piedmont Pathway North Entry Park: Develop a park entry space, playground, dog run, and multi-purpose open space on property owned by the City of Norcross located at 65 Lawrenceville Street. Implement streambed improvements for water quality.

## Legend

-  Norcross City Limits
-  Parcels
-  Water Body
-  Major Roads
-  Road Centerline
-  Railroad

## Ecological Suitability

Value

-  Low
-  Medium
-  High

 City of Norcross Parks

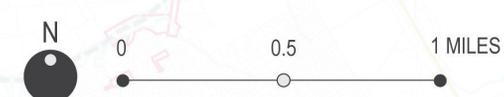
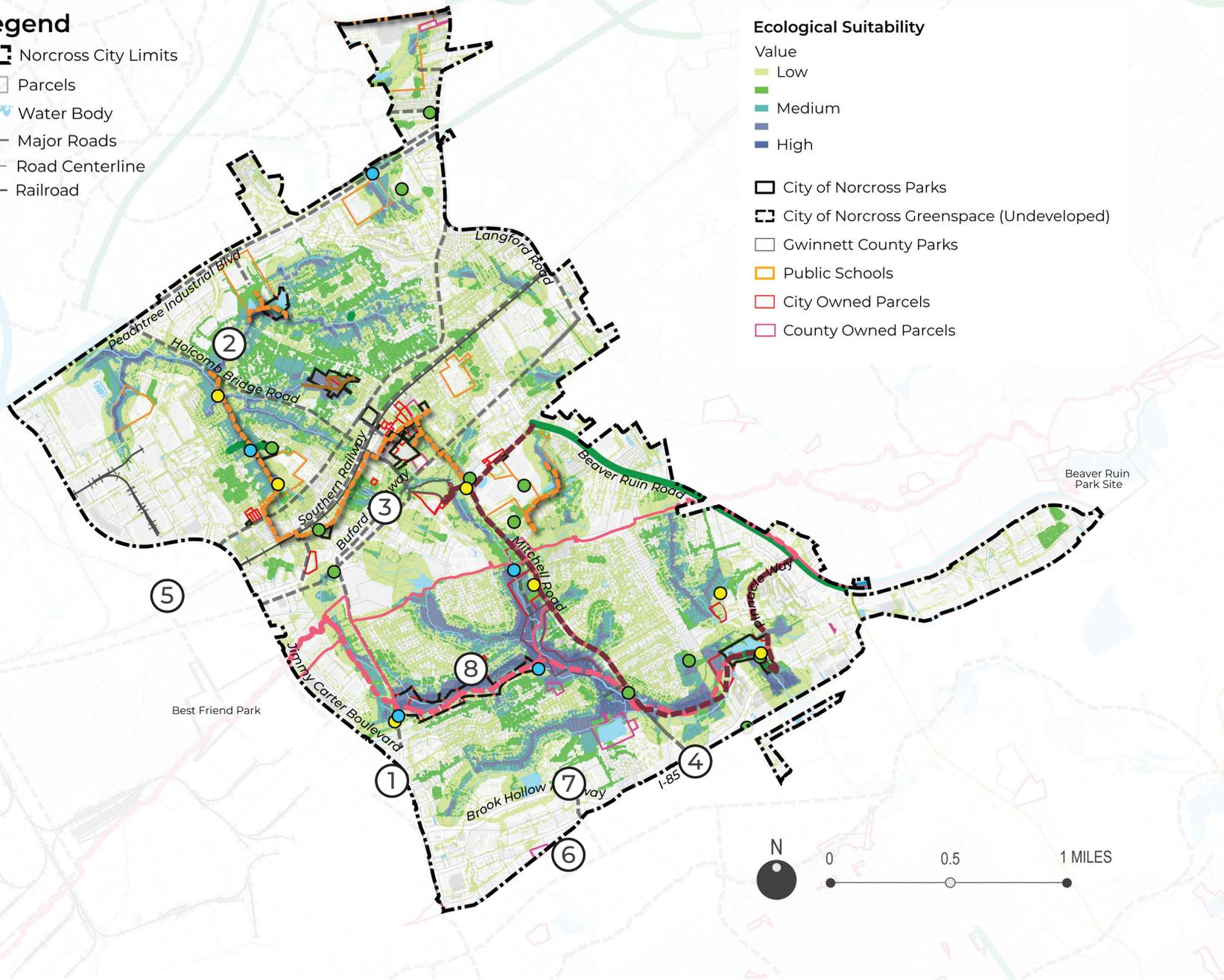
 City of Norcross Greenspace (Undeveloped)

 Gwinnett County Parks

 Public Schools

 City Owned Parcels

 County Owned Parcels



# Optimize Green Spaces to Serve Community Needs

**RIGHT**  
Concept for  
Piedmont  
Pathway.

Three new  
park spaces  
and a variety of  
amenities are  
proposed along  
the Piedmont  
Pathway.  
Top-down  
construction  
of the trail  
would minimize  
impacts to trees  
and wetlands  
while providing  
opportunities for  
stream restoration  
and green  
infrastructure  
installations.



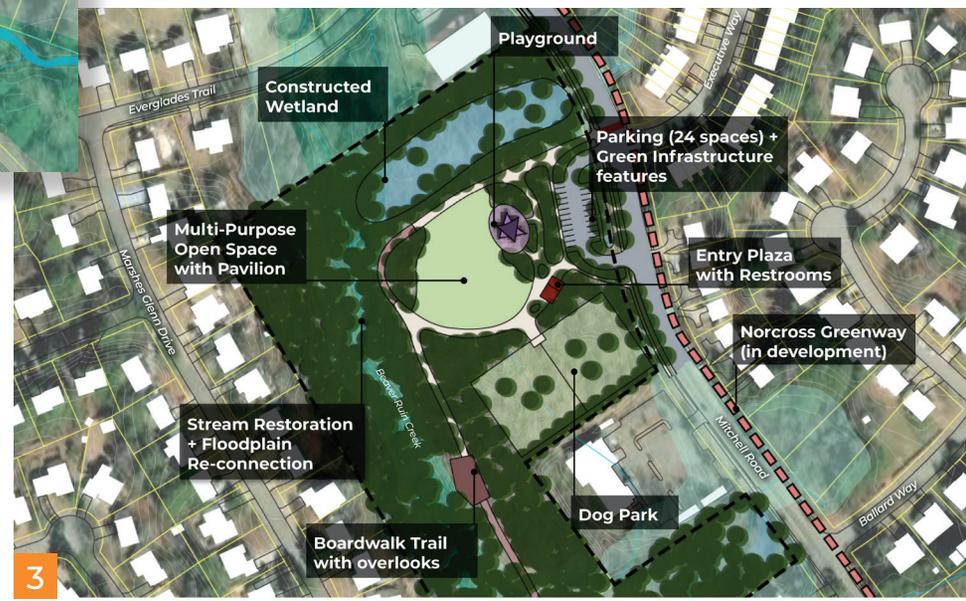
**RIGHT**

The West Entry Park concept fronts Norcross Tucker Road and provides a variety of easily accessible amenities, including a playground, restrooms, pavilion, and open space. The open space and constructed wetland occupy an area that previously was the site of a sewer facility for surrounding neighborhoods.



**ABOVE**

The East Entry Park fronts Mitchell Road and proposes a variety of easily accessible amenities, including a plaza, restrooms, pavilion, and zone for games like horseshoes or bocce. Opportunities exist for stream restoration and floodplain reconnection in conjunction with trail construction.



**RIGHT**

The North Entry Park fronts Mitchell Road and occupies a ~10-acre city-owned property that was formerly a dumping ground. Space is provided for a dog park, parking lot, open space, playground, and more.

# Optimize Green Spaces to Serve Community Needs

## Implement park design and function improvements

Address deferred maintenance and proactively complete capital improvements based on Facility Assessment, identified facility needs discussed previously, and recommendations collected through the planning process and described below. Include a collaborative public engagement process as improvements are completed.



- » **Betty Mauldin** Remove parking (as part of broader downtown parking strategy) to create impervious plaza with movable chairs and tables and space for food trucks (2)
- » **Discovery Garden Park**  
Entry signage at Rakestraw St., expand edible landscape plants and native plantings, highlighting garden and landscape design to make the park a living laboratory of sustainable landscape design, provide informational signage to support this mission.
- » **Heritage Park**  
Enhanced landscaping (in partnership with Norcross Garden Club)
- » **Johnson-Dean**  
Invasive species management, riparian restoration, entryway improvements (in progress) to include standard signage and a shelter for protection from the elements
- » **Lillian Webb**  
Additional shade trees, signage for games area, relocation of performance amphitheater from Thrasher Park to NE corner of lawn
- » **Lion's Club**  
Provide standard entry signage, shade trees, pollinator garden, checkers/chess table, art/sculpture



### LEFT

This example shows the integration of native pollinator plantings and stormwater features in the entry plaza to a library.

- 
- » **Pinnacle Park**  
Retrofit pond to constructed wetlands, riparian restoration of stream, invasive species management
  - » **Rossie Brundage**  
Ensure softball field is open for public access or signage to explain closure, replace basketball court with tennis court, invasive species management in forested areas.
  - » **Summerour**  
Shade structures (in progress), shade trees and edible landscaping (blueberries) around playground and perimeter of soccer field, terraced seating on slopes around soccer field.
  - » **Thrasher**  
Shade structures (in progress), tree planting and enhanced landscaping, relocate performance amphitheater, and expand playground with natural features.
  - » **Veterans Memorial**  
Install street trees in the planting strip on park perimeter



**ABOVE**

This example of a constructed wetland demonstrates a potential future condition for the Pinnacle Park pond. Open water area would be reduced but stormwater management function could be increased through stream conveyance improvements and habitat enhancement.

# Optimize Green Spaces to Serve Community Needs

## Establish a “School Park” model

School Parks combine the resources of multiple agencies and allow for expanded parks, recreation, cultural, and educational opportunities for the community in an efficient and effective manner. Ensuring close coordination between the School Principal and School District will maximize the benefits of the joint-use space.

Coordinate with Gwinnett County Schools to improve public access and usage of the Summerour Middle School and Baldwin Elementary School campuses.



**ABOVE:** The synthetic turf soccer field and playground that were developed in 2016, provide an excellent precedent for the value of partnership between the City and the school system, as the City was able to provide essential amenities for students and all residents, without the expense of land acquisition.

**RIGHT:** An integrated stormwater feature provides a learning and play opportunity for students.

## Case Study: TURNING SCHOOLYARDS INTO COMMUNITY PARKS

Collaborating with schools to provide park space is an efficient and effective strategy to address park needs. Atlanta Public Schools has worked collaboratively with Atlanta-based Park Pride and the Trust for Public Land (TPL)--a national non-profit organization that works with communities to create parks and protect land for people--to renovate and open multiple school yards to the public during non-school hours through the Schoolyards to Playgrounds program.

TPL completed an analysis in 2019 showing that only 10 percent of the approximately 100,000 public schools in the United States provide the general public with formal access to schoolyard sites. The study also suggests that America's public-school grounds have the potential to solve the problem of park access for at least 19.6 million people, including 5.2 million children. The same opportunity exists in the City of Norcross, as many of the city's park deserts could be addressed through partnerships with schools.

In Atlanta, Park Pride has led collaborative design workshops with students at schools within the program, leading to community-supported concepts that support both the school and the neighborhood.



Credit: Park Pride



Credit: Park Pride

# Optimize Green Spaces to Serve Community Needs

## RIGHT

Concept for Summerour Campus Park

The expanded Summerour Campus Park (outlined in red) would build on the existing facilities operated as partnership between the City and Gwinnett Schools (playground and soccer field) to provide public access to a range of needed facilities.

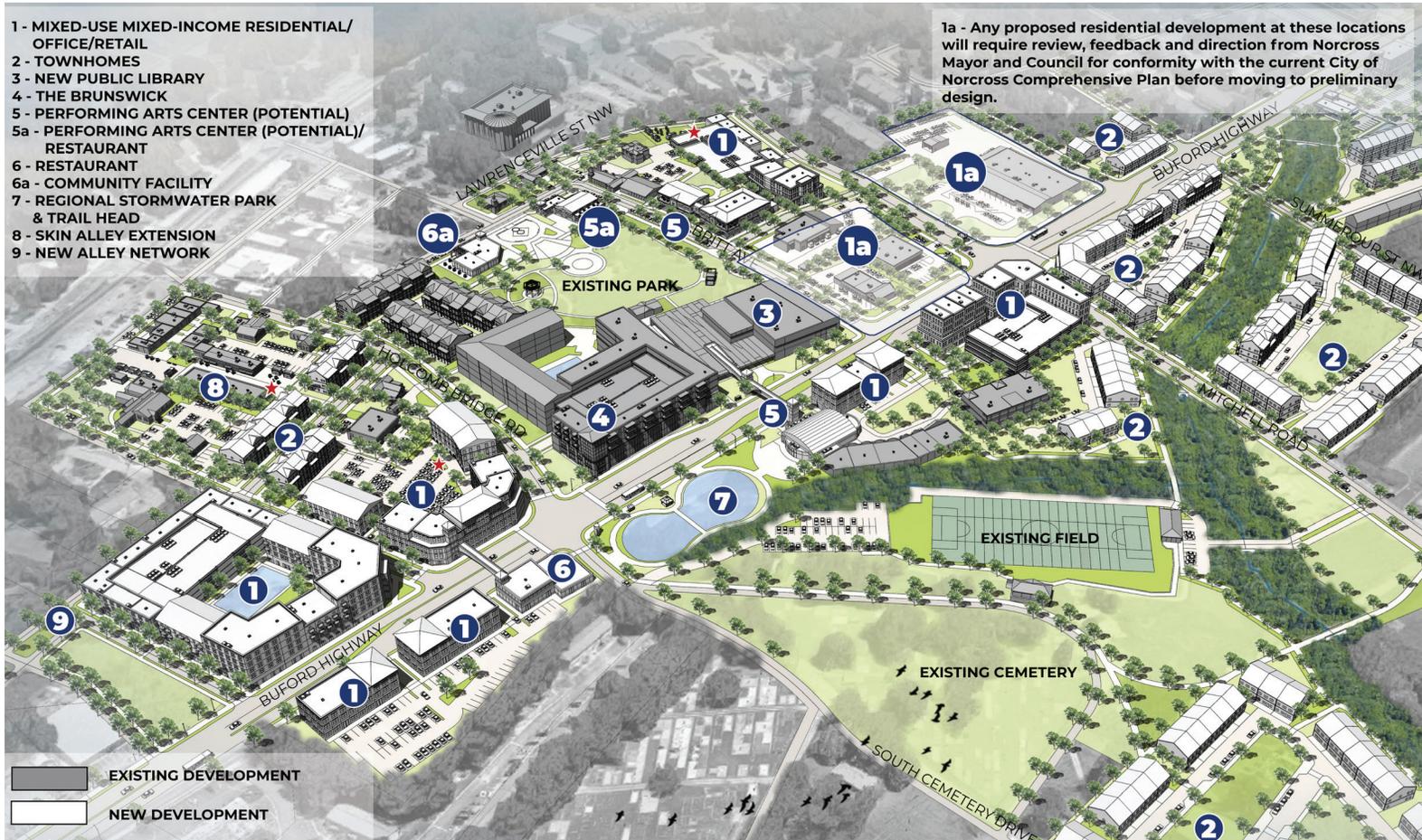
1. Multipurpose field
2. Multipurpose field
3. Shared use path and wildflower meadow
4. Shared use path loop
5. Basketball court
6. Expanded and upgraded playground
7. Entry area with street trees along Price Place
8. Enhanced retention basin with soft surface walking trails
9. Potential path connections to neighborhoods
10. Shade trees and terraced seating on hillside around soccer field



## Advance previously proposed multi-functional public spaces

Develop district-scale stormwater detention projects that create public amenities, as proposed in the Buford Highway Master Plan.

Leverage initial public investment in multi-use stormwater and greenspace amenities (such as project 7, below) to encourage associated private development.





# Chapter 4

## Refine

# From Concept to Reality

The vision presented in Chapter 3 – Create was a comprehensive program to improve every aspect of the parks system. Fully developing the recommendations is expected to require tens of millions of dollars and man years to fully realize. Due to the challenges of a limited budget and staff resources, the implementation of the complete vision for the Norcross parks system presented in Chapter 3 should be pursued in gradual phases. The purpose of this chapter, Refine, is to determine a strategy for implementation that provides the most benefit with available resources, building momentum and buy-in to support future phases of implementation, all while conforming to available funding.

The implementation strategy for Norcross: Naturally Connected is comprised of three interrelated parts:

- Funding: to pay for the implementation of Capital Improvement Projects, including a list of grants for the City to consider pursuing.
- Prioritized Capital Improvement Projects: based on a prioritization strategy, which uses a range of criteria to rank projects in terms of value to the City.
- Phase 1 - Implementation Strategy: that considers the City's existing funding and potential grants to propose a Phase 1 - Implementation Plan.



# Funding

## City Funding

Based on conversations with City Leadership, the City of Norcross currently has \$3.6 Million to spend on parks, greenspace, trails, and green infrastructure capital projects over the next 6 years.

This funding is derived from the 2023 Special Purpose Option Sales Tax (SPLOST). There may be additional dollars available from the 2017 SPLOST. However, the exact amount was not available during the completion of this plan since the City was in the middle of an audit.

## Grants

Grants allow municipalities to leverage public municipal funding dollars. The challenge with grants is that they tend to be competitive, meaning other municipalities are also competing for those some grant dollars. This requires the City to complete thoughtful and comprehensive applications in order to be competitive. Additionally, most large grants require a match, meaning the City would have to include funds from their capital budget to obtain the grant.

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

The following pages includes a list of grants totally over \$50 Million that are available for parks, greenspace, trail and green infrastructure projects in Georgia. This list includes including grant amounts, match requirements, eligible items, and deadlines.

Funding Program	Grant Amount	Match Requirement	Types of Eligible Elements	Anticipated Deadline
Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Program	\$50,000	100%	Water quality, watersheds and the species and habitats improvements/education	January
Recreational Trails Program	\$200,000	20%	Land Based Trails, Kayak/Canoe Facility, Trailhead, and Trailside Facilities	January
Bloomberg Public Art Challenge	\$1,000,000	Varies	Temporary public art projects that celebrate creativity, urban identity and foster partnerships	February
AARP Community Challenge	\$50,000	0%	Pedestrian facilities, signage, decorative features, traffic calming, landscaping, innovative community outreach	March
HMGP/ Flood Mitigation	\$500,000*	25%	Stormwater facility/flood prevention, infrastructure hardening	March
Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program (ORLPP)	\$10,000,000	100%	Land Acquisition, Ballfields, Courts, Trails, Fishing Facilities, Playground, Restrooms, Shade Structures, lighting, and landscaping	April
Section 319 Grant	\$400,000	40%	Water quality, low impact development, stormwater improvement projects	April
Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)	\$500,000	100%	Land acquisition, outdoor recreational facilities	May
CDBG	\$1,000,000	15%	Community revitalization including infrastructure	June
Georgia Equity Fund Grants	\$200,000		Water and sewer infrastructure, road, rail and airport improvements, industrial parks, workforce, technology, and tourism	June
"RTC Trail Development Grants"	\$20,000	0%	Development of community-based trail facilities and systems	June
Our Town Grant	\$100,000	100%	Innovative public projects including heritage trails	July

Funding Program	Grant Amount	Match Requirement	Types of Eligible Elements	Anticipated Deadline
CDBG Innovative	\$2,000,000	15%	Water and sewer facilities, flood and drainage improvements, parking, streets, curbs, gutters, sidewalks, parks and playgrounds	August
Cultural Facilities Grant	\$75,000	100%	Renovation, restoration, construction of arts facilities including permanent equipment	August
Energy Efficiency Block Grants-Competitive	\$TBD	0%	Energy efficiency planning, facility, lighting and equipment retrofits, transportation projects	September
Georgia ReLeaf Program	\$7,500	20%	Tree planting and revitalization projects	September
Reconnecting Communities	\$2,000,000 Planning \$5,000,000 Construction	20%	Planning and capital construction to restore community connectivity through the removal, retrofit, mitigation, or replacement of eligible transportation infrastructure facilities that create barriers to mobility, access, or economic development	October
AAD Shade Structure Grant	\$8,000	0%	Shade structures	December
Community Forestry Assistance Grant Program (UFC)	\$20,000	100%	Tree plans/programs and planting projects	December
TD Bank Green Space Grants	\$20,000	0%	Development of Green Infrastructure such as tree planting and green space expansion	December
Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC)	\$1,500,000	25%	Stormwater facility/flood prevention, infrastructure hardening	Year Round
REBC Grant Program	\$50,000	0%	Row landscape enhancements	TBD

Funding Program	Grant Amount	Match Requirement	Types of Eligible Elements	Anticipated Deadline
Georgia Historic Preservation Matching Grants	\$10,000	100%	Restoration of historic resources	February
Transportation Alternative Program	\$450,000 (Min)	20%	Planning or Implementation of Pedestrian & Bicycle Facility, Traffic Calming Development	June
Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program	\$50,000	45%	Public facilities such water/sewer, community centers, museums, community garden, street improvements	Year Round
Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program	\$3,000,000	25%	Acquisition and development of conservation and recreation land, water access, trails, habitat	October
Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program	\$3,000,000	25%	Acquisition and development of conservation and recreation land, water access, trails, habitat	October
RAISE Grants	\$5,000,000 min.	20%	Transportation related projects with large scale impact. Includes non- motorized safe streets and trails projects	February
Safe Streets & Roads For All	\$1,000,000 Planning \$15,000,000 Construction	20%	Planning and construction of transportation facilities prevent roadway deaths and serious injuries.	July

## Prioritized Capital Improvement Projects

Given the focused amount of funding available to implement projects, prioritizing projects is a critical step.

The Project Team collaboratively developed a prioritization strategy to inform how parks, greenspace, trail, and green infrastructure capital projects could be implemented over the next 5 years.

Prioritization criteria were developed for each of the four main types of parks, greenspace, trail, and green infrastructure projects as listed below.

### **Park Land Acquisition**

The acquisition of land that would be used for parks, greenspace, trail, and green infrastructure projects.

### **Improvements to Existing Facilities**

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

### **New Parks Facilities**

Capital projects related to installing and implementing new facilities that were not previously available in parks such as installing synthetic turf in an existing natural turf field, adding a new restroom building, or installing a splash pad in a vacant site.

### **New Trail Facilities**

Capital projects related to implementing walking and biking facilities including paved and unpaved trails.

The prioritization criteria that were developed were based on the Project Goals discussed in Chapter 1 and the Guiding Principles outlined in Chapter 3 - Create and further informed by the findings from Chapters 1 and 2, industry best practices, and staff input.

### Projects

- Park Land Acquisition
- Improvements to Existing Facilities
- New Park Facilities
- New Trail Facilities



Goals
Protect the City's Ecological Bones
Strategic Stewardship to Enhance Nature
Create Natural Connections
Optimize Greenspace to Serve Community Needs



Criteria
Ecological Suitability
Ecological Condition + Opportunities
Connections to Parks, Schools, Civic Uses
Priority Need
Park Site Condition
LOS Gap
Social Vulnerability Index (*See next page)
Staffing Resources

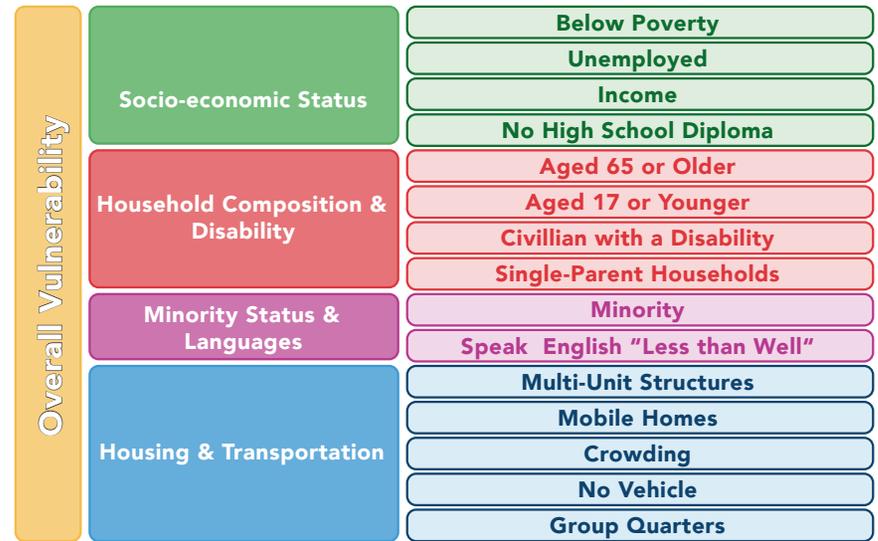
**\*Overall Vulnerability Index**

In collaboration with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) and the U.S. Census Bureau, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) developed a Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) for every census tract in the U.S.

The SVI is based on a total of 15 social factors that are combined into 4 related themes: Socioeconomic Status, Household Composition and Disability, Minority Status and Language, and Housing and Transportation. The figure to the right depicts the relationship between the social factors, key themes, and overall SVI.

The map on the following page identifies the areas in the City that have a low, medium-high, and high level of overall vulnerability. It is important to note the area in east/south Norcross that has the highest overall vulnerability and does not have access to developed parks but has undeveloped greenspaces owned by the City and the County. Developing these greenspaces into parks has the potential to improve the overall vulnerability of this area over time.

The tables on the subsequent pages identify these prioritization criteria -not listed in any particular order.

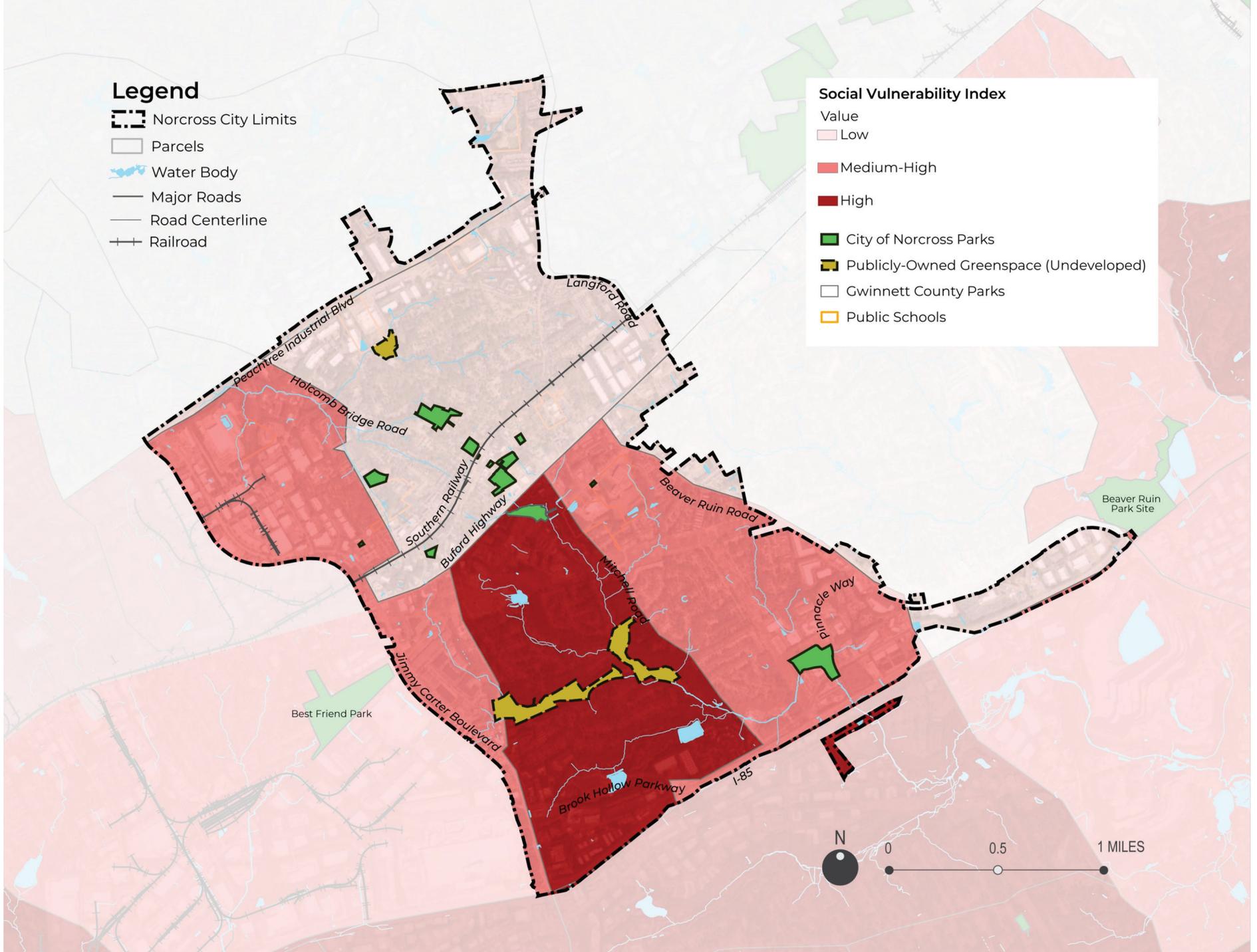


## Legend

-  Norcross City Limits
-  Parcels
-  Water Body
-  Major Roads
-  Road Centerline
-  Railroad

## Social Vulnerability Index

- Value
-  Low
-  Medium-High
-  High
-  City of Norcross Parks
-  Publicly-Owned Greenspace (Undeveloped)
-  Gwinnett County Parks
-  Public Schools



## PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA FOR PARK LAND ACQUISITION

Criteria	Criteria Description	Points	Metric
Priority Need	Does the land address a Priority Need identified by residents?	1,3,5	Low, Medium, High
Ecological Suitability	How does the land score based on Ecological Suitability analysis?	0,1,3,5	None, Low, Medium, High
Ecological Opportunities	Was the land identified for ecological opportunities?	1,3,5	1 project, 2 projects, 3+ projects
Social Vulnerability	Is the land located in an area that is currently socially vulnerable?	1,3,5	Low, Medium, High
Park Desert	Does the land address a park desert location or need?	0,3,5	No, Partial, Full
Partnerships	Does the proposed project/ concept/strategy present an opportunity for funding partnerships?	1,3,5	Low, Medium, High
Staffing and Financial Resources	What is the land's potential impact to staffing and funding resources?	1,3,5	High Impact, Medium, Minimal

## PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO EXISTING PARKS

Criteria	Criteria Description	Points	Metric
Facility Condition	How did the site score in the park site quality analysis?	1,3,5	High, Med, Low
Priority Need	Does the land address a Priority Need identified by residents?	1,3,5	Low, Medium, High
Ecological Suitability	How does the site score based on Ecological Suitability analysis and what is the impact of the project?	0,1,3,5	None, Low, Medium, High
Ecological Opportunities	Was the site identified for ecological opportunities and does the project present opportunities to implement?	1,3,5	1 project, 2 projects, 3+ projects
Social Vulnerability	Is the land located in an area that is currently socially vulnerable?	1,3,5	Low, Medium, High
Partnerships	Does the proposed project/concept/strategy present an opportunity for funding partnerships?	1,3,5	Low, Medium, High
Staffing and Financial Resources	What is the land's potential impact to staffing and funding resources?	1,3,5	High Impact, Medium, Minimal

## PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA FOR NEW PARK FACILITIES

Criteria	Criteria Description	Points	Metric
Priority Need	Does the land address a Priority Need identified by residents?	1,3,5	Low, Medium, High
Ecological Suitability	How does the site score based on Ecological Suitability analysis? And to what degree can the project be designed to provide ecological benefit to existing resources?	0,1,3,5	None, Low, Medium, High
Ecological Opportunities	Was the site identified for ecological opportunities and does the project present opportunities to implement?	1,3,5	1 project, 2 projects, 3+ projects
Social Vulnerability	Is the land located in an area that is currently socially vulnerable?	1,3,5	Low, Medium, High
Partnerships	Does the proposed project/concept/strategy present an opportunity for funding partnerships?	1,3,5	Low, Medium, High
Staffing and Financial Resources	What is the land's potential impact to staffing and funding resources?	1,3,5	High Impact, Medium, Minimal

## PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA FOR NEW TRAIL FACILITIES

Criteria	Criteria Description	Points	Metric
Priority Need	Does the land address a Priority Need identified by residents?	1,3,5	Low, Medium, High
Ecological Suitability	How does the site score based on Ecological Suitability analysis? And to what degree can the project be designed to provide ecological benefit to existing resources?	0,1,3,5	None, Low, Medium, High
Ecological Opportunities	Was the site identified for ecological opportunities and does the project present opportunities to implement?	1,3,5	1 project, 2 projects, 3+ projects
Social Vulnerability	Is the land located in an area that is currently socially vulnerable?	1,3,5	Low, Medium, High
Partnerships	Does the proposed project/ concept/ strategy present an opportunity for funding partnerships?	1,3,5	Low, Medium, High
Staffing and Financial Resources	What is the land's potential impact to staffing and funding resources?	1,3,5	High Impact, Medium, Minimal

Based on the prioritization criteria and metrics, the Consultant Team scored thirty nine (39) potential projects found in Chapter 3 - Create. The tables on the following pages documents the prioritized projects.

Each table contains a Project Rank, Project Name, Project Description, and Total Order of Magnitude Planning Level Costs for the project, and Total Score.



## Park Land Acquisition Projects

Project Rank	Project Name	Description	Order of Magnitude Planning Level Costs	Total Score
1	Gwinnett County Water Facility	Coordinate with Gwinnett County Water & Sewer authority to provide public access to this 10-acre parcel, with signage, and a walking trail loop around the pond.	Publicly-owned land	33
2	Piedmont Pathway Creek parcels	City should seek to acquire high ecological value properties along Beaver Ruin Creek, adjacent to existing publicly-owned parcels and in proposed alignment for Piedmont Pathway (in coordination with County).	Up to \$5M (based on avg. acre cost \$100k)	31
3	Crooked Creek watershed parcels	City should seek to acquire high ecological value properties in the Crooked Creek watershed.	Up to \$5M (based on avg. acre cost \$100k)	23
4	GA Power Transmission Corridor	Coordinate with GA Power to provide public access to this easement corridor for walking/biking.	Utility Easement	25
5	Norcross High School School Park	Explore a partnership with Norcross High School to develop School Property into a Park.	Publicly-owned land	17

## Park Land Acquisition Projects (Continued)

Project Rank	Project Name	Description	Order of Magnitude Planning Level Costs	Total Score
6	Buford Highway Master Plan greenspace parcels	City should seek to acquire properties proposed for stormwater and greenspace-related development per the Buford Highway Master Plan.	Up to \$5M (based on avg. acre cost \$250k)	19
7	Summerour School Park	Explore a partnership with Summerour School to develop School Property into a Park.	Publicly-owned land	19
8	Community Center Forest	Explore partnership with the DDA to develop park in properties surrounding the Cultural Arts Center along Britt Ave and Mitchell Road.	Publicly-owned land	17
<b>Totals</b>			<b>\$15,000,000</b>	

### Improvements to Existing Parks

Project Rank	Project Name	Description	Order of Magnitude Planning Level Costs	Total Scores
1	Pinnacle Park Hydrological Improvements	Retrofit pond to constructed wetlands, riparian restoration of stream.	\$3,000,000	25
2	Johnson-Dean Restoration	Riparian restoration, erosion control improvements	\$400,000	23
3	Summerour Park Improvements	Install shade trees and edible landscaping around playground and perimeter of soccer field, terraced seating on slopes around soccer field.	\$1,000,000	19
4	Heritage Park Landscape Improvements	Enhanced native landscaping and green infrastructure (in partnership with Norcross Garden Club)	\$375,000	19
5	Lion's Club Improvements	Provide standard entry signage, shade trees, pollinator garden, checkers/chess table, art/sculpture.	\$200,000	17
6	Water Tower Park	Develop into a Neighborhood Park with a small Dog Park, Picnic Area, and Walking Trail.	\$900,000	17
7	Betty Mauldin Redesign	Remove parking (as part of broader downtown parking strategy) to create pervious plaza with movable chairs and tables and space for (2) food trucks.	\$487,500	15

### Improvements to Existing Parks (Continued)

Project Rank	Project Name	Description	Order of Magnitude Planning Level Costs	Total Scores
8	Lillian Webb" Great Lawn" Improvements	Additional shade trees, signage for games area, relocation of performance amphitheater from Thrasher Park to NE corner of lawn	\$1,000,000	15
9	Thrasher Park Improvements	New tree planting and enhanced native landscaping, relocate performance amphitheater, and expand playground with natural features.	\$1,125,000	15
10	Veterans Memorial	Install street trees in the planting strip on park perimeter, and enhanced native landscaping/drainage improvements.	\$500,000	15
11	Discovery Garden Park - Phase 2 Improvements	Complete Phase 2 improvements to DGP, including development of buildings.	\$2,250,000	11
12	Rossie Brundage Court Improvements	Replace basketball court with tennis court.	\$352,500	11
<b>Totals</b>			<b>\$11,102,500</b>	

## New Park Projects

Project Rank	Project Name	Description	Order of Magnitude Planning Level Costs	Total Scores
1	Piedmont Pathway West Entry Park	Develop a park entry space & natural play playground on site's western edge along N Norcross Tucker Road. Implement streambed improvements for water quality and flood control.	\$6,000,000	27
2	Piedmont Pathway East Entry Park	Develop a park entry space into playground, multi-purpose open space, outdoor exercise equipment eastern edge along Mitchell Road. Implement streambed improvements for water quality.	\$4,000,000	27
3	Piedmont Pathway North Entry Park	Develop a park entry space, playground, dog run, and multi-purpose open space on property owned by the City of Norcross located at 65 Lawrenceville Street. Implement streambed improvements for water quality.	\$12,000,000	27
4	Gwinnett County Water Facility	Coordinate with Gwinnett County Water & Sewer authority to provide public access to this 10-acre parcel, with signage, and a walking trail loop around the pond.	\$500,000	25
5	Fickling Parcel	Create Master Plan for the site with community input and develop. Recommend signage, trails, and forest restoration.	\$900,000	23
6	Summerour Campus Fields	Partner with Gwinnett County Schools to improve existing fields at Summerour Middle/Baldwin ES and facilitate access.	\$350,000	21

### New Park Projects (Continued)

Project Rank	Project Name	Description	Order of Magnitude Planning Level Costs	Total Scores
7	Transmission Corridor Grassland Improvements	Coordinate with Georgia Power to provide public access to the transmission corridor. Create community-guided master plan and develop. Recommend signage, soft surface walking/biking trails, and native grassland enhancements.	\$2,500,000	21
8	Summerour Campus Playground	Partner with Gwinnett County Schools to improve existing playground at Summerour Middle/Baldwin ES and facilitate access.	\$750,000	19
9	Summerour Campus Basketball Court	Partner with Gwinnett County Schools to develop basketball court at Summerour MS and facilitate access.	\$75,000	17
<b>Totals</b>			<b>\$27,075,000</b>	

## New Trail Projects

Project Rank	Project Name	Description	Order of Magnitude Planning Level Costs	Total Scores
1	Piedmont Pathway North	Develop Piedmont Pathway (boardwalk) with streambank and forest restoration from property owned by the City of Norcross located at 65 Lawrenceville Street to Piedmont Pathway West Entry Park/ Trail.	\$12,000,000	31
1	Piedmont Pathway West	Coordinate with County to develop Piedmont Pathway (boardwalk) with streambank and forest restoration from N Norcross Tucker Road to Anamanda Close.	\$5,000,000	31
2	Piedmont Pathway - East	Coordinate with County to develop Piedmont Pathway (boardwalk) from Anamanda Close to Mitchell Road/GDOT Norcross Greenway. Project with streambank and forest restoration.	\$7,300,000	29
3	Hunter-Walker Trail Extension	Paved trail from Hunter Street into Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church/BIA Charter School property and north on sewer easement to Holcomb Bridge Road	\$4,000,000	27
4	Paul Duke-Sunset Connector	Paved and/or Soft Surface trails to connect Paul Duke STEM High School to Sunset Drive and Longview Drive on city-owned property and sewer easements	\$2,000,000	21
4	Baldwin Elementary/ Summerour Middle Connector	Paved path network to provide improved access throughout Baldwin/ Summerour campus and to Reeves Street/ Everglades Trail	\$3,000,000	21

## New Trail Projects (Continued)

Project Rank	Project Name	Description	Order of Magnitude Planning Level Costs	Total Scores
4	Johnson Dean Nature Trail Extension	Soft surface trail to connect existing walking paths in Johnson-Dean park to Holcomb Bridge Road along sewer easements	\$50,000	21
5	S Peachtree-Lawrenceville Connector	Paved Sidepath from Veterans Park along S Peachtree Street to Holcomb Bridge Road, turning onto Skin Alley and Lawrenceville Street to Rakestraw Street.	\$3,500,000	16
6	Hunter Street Connector	Paved Sidepath or In-Street Facility connecting Hunter Street to Rowan Street and crossing the railroad track to Veterans Park	\$2,500,000	15
6	Spalding Drive Connector	Sidepath on south side of Spalding Drive to connect existing trails on Technology Parkway and Medlock Bridge Road to Norcross High School.	\$3,000,000	15
6	Mitchell Road Extension	Paved sidepath from Lawrenceville Street to Price Place to connect to ongoing Norcross Greenway Project (GDOT), with spur trail through DDA-owned property to Britt Avenue/Lillian Webb Park.	\$2,500,000	15
<b>Totals</b>			<b>\$44,850,000</b>	

# Phase 1 Implementation Strategy

## Projects

Based on the project scores, the table and map on the right identify the highest priority projects that fulfill all the guiding principles and provide significant benefits, including:

- 25+ acres of new developed park land east/ south of Buford Highway, with the majority protected and enhanced as “nature preserve.”
- Connection to the Norcross Greenway project
- A variety of new facilities to support programs and park activation

Project Name	Order of Magnitude Planning Level Costs
1. Gwinnett County Water Pond	Public Owned
2. Beaver Ruin Greenway R.O.W.	\$600,000
3. Pinnacle Park Hydrological Improvements	\$3,000,000
4. Johnson-Dean Restoration	\$400,000
5. Piedmont Pathway Green Infrastructure Park - East Entry	\$4,000,000
6. Piedmont Pathway Green Infrastructure Park - West Entry	\$6,000,000
7. Piedmont Pathway - North	\$12,000,000
8. Piedmont Pathway - East	\$7,300,000
9. Piedmont Pathway - West	\$5,000,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$38,300,000</b>

Project Location Map



Project Type Legend

- Park Land Acquisition Project
- Existing Park Improvement Project
- New Park Facility Project
- New Trail Project

## Funding Allocation Steps

The ability to implement proposed projects is directly linked to the amount of funding that will be available over the next 5 years and beyond.

As noted earlier, the City of Norcross currently has \$3.6 Million to spend on parks, greenspace, trails, and green infrastructure capital projects over the next 5 years.

There is an opportunity for the City to balance the use of these focused funds to both advance projects and leverage grant funding by using some of the City's funding as match amounts. The figure below proposes a strategy for the use of the City's funds. Specifically, it suggests using \$1.6 Million of the City's funds as a grants match to obtain an additional \$6.4 Million dollars. This would increase the City's availability of funds to \$10 Million.

Funding Allocation of \$3.6M
\$2M to advance Projects
\$1.6M for Grant Matching (20% Match of \$8M)
\$6.4M from obtained Grants
<b>\$10M</b>

The figure below illustrates the steps for how these funds could be allocated over the next 5 years. After the next 5 years, the City can see how much funding they would receive from the 2030 SPLOST, explore what additional funding sources could be obtained, and re-evaluate the prioritization of projects to continue implementing projects.

As new park and trail projects are implemented, it will be important for the City to ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to the proper maintenance and upkeep of these spaces. Establishing a volunteer program that organizes park and trail clean-up days is a strategy that many municipalities use to help with the maintenance of parks and trails. The City of Norcross should consider establishing a Volunteer Program for the City's parks, greenspaces, trails, and green infrastructure system.

Timeline	Per Year Amount	Project Description
2024	\$600K	Pursue Acquisition of Remaining Piedmont Pathway Parcels
2025 to 2026	\$900K	Design and Engineering for East and West Piedmont Pathway Green Infrastructure Parks
	\$300K	Design and Engineering of Pinnacle Park Hydrological Improvements
	\$175K	Johnson-Dean Restoration
	\$25k+	Other Improvements
2027 to 2029	\$8M	Depending on grants obtained, pursue the implementation of Piedmont Pathway Entry Parks, Pinnacle Park Hydrological Improvements, and Design and Engineering of Piedmont Pathway.
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$10M</b>	
2030+	?	Re-evaluate Prioritization of Projects and Continue Implementation with 2030 SPLOST

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**PARKS, GREENSPACE, TRAILS &  
GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE MASTER PLAN**