

# PLAY ZEBBULLON



# Parks & Recreation Master Plan

# PLAN ZEBULOC





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# ZEBULON

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NORTH CAROLINA





**TOWN OF ZEBULON**

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<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	<b>9</b>
Purpose of the Plan	9
Project Process	10
<b>Chapter 2: System Inventory &amp; Analysis</b>	<b>15</b>
Introduction	15
2.1 - Guiding Documents	16
2.2 - Demographics	24
2.3 - Parks & Recreation Facility Inventory & Analysis	30
2.4 - Program Inventory & Analysis	42
2.5 - Operations & Maintenance Assessment	52
2.6 - Comparative Analysis	58
2.7 - Level of Service Analysis	60
2.8 - System Inventory & Analysis Summary	74
<b>Chapter 3: Community Needs Assessment</b>	<b>80</b>
Introduction	84
3.1 - Steering Committee	86
3.2 - Stakeholder & Elected Officials Interviews	88
3.3 - Community Meetings	92
3.4 - Online Community Survey	94
3.5 - Statistically Valid Survey	104
3.6 - Community Needs Assessment Summary	108
<b>Chapter 4: Vision development</b>	<b>110</b>
Introduction	113
4.1 - Vision Workshop & Framework Development	114
4.2 - Vision Sub-Systems	120
<b>Chapter 5: Recommendations &amp; Implementation</b>	<b>168</b>
Introduction	171
5.1 - Implementation Workshop	173
5.2 - Cost Estimates	176
5.3 - Capital Improvement Recommendations	178
5.4 - Programming, Policy & Operations Recommendations	180
5.5 - Impact Fee Analysis	196
5.6 - Phasing & Financial Plan	198
5.7 - Priority Action Items	218







**INTRODUCTION**

**PLAY  
ZEBULON**

**Parks & Recreation Master Plan**







# INTRODUCTION

## PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Play Zebulon Parks and Recreation Master Plan is a long-range planning document that is meant to help shape the direction, development and delivery of the Town's parks and recreation facilities over the course of the next 10-15 years. Based on a comprehensive planning approach, this plan considers previous planning documents, department goals, existing conditions, and an assessment of needs to provide a framework for the department Vision, recommendations, and prioritization strategies.

Play Zebulon is the first Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan undertaken by the Parks and Recreation Department. While this plan is intended to establish a strategic Vision for parks and recreation in Zebulon, the plan also considers other strategic planning efforts undertaken by the Town, including the Greenway, Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, the 2030 Strategic Plan, and the ongoing Comprehensive Land Use and Transportation Plan.

Multiple elements of these plans relate to the Town's desire to improve the quality of life for Zebulon residents, while also addressing the rapid growth that is expected during the coming decade. The development of Play Zebulon is based on the acknowledgment that providing excellent parks and recreation facilities and program opportunities for a diverse, growing population will be a critical component of accomplishing the Town's overarching goals.

The purpose of this plan is to provide a fresh look at the mission and vision of the Parks and Recreation Department, in an effort to maintain a high quality parks system. The development of this Vision was initiated by establishing a community-defined set of priorities to maximize the effectiveness of the department and its resources. This Master Plan provides a focused direction for development and delivery of the Town's parks and recreation services for current and future residents, ensuring that Zebulon continues to be a community where people want to live, work and play.

**Play Zebulon is based on the acknowledgment that providing excellent parks and recreation facilities and program opportunities for a diverse, growing population will be a critical component of accomplishing the Town's overarching goals.**

# PLAY ZEBULON

## PROJECT PROCESS



This document is intended to serve as a comprehensive guide for the planning, acquisition, development and operations of parks, trails, park facilities and recreation programs throughout the Town. As such, this Master Plan will assist users in the formation of programming needs and priorities and long-range visioning for the provision of parks and recreation facilities and programs.

This document has been developed in a linear process, building upon previous work; beginning with an overview of the existing parks system, analysis of public needs and priorities, formation of a long-range vision, and lastly a strategic plan for implementation.

### CHAPTER 2: SYSTEM INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

#### 2.1 Guiding Documents

#### 2.2 Demographics

#### 2.3 Parks and Recreation Facility Inventory and Analysis

#### 2.4 Program Inventory & Analysis

#### 2.5 Operations & Maintenance Assessment

#### 2.6 Comparative Analysis

#### 2.7 Level of Service Analysis

#### 2.8 System Inventory & Analysis Summary

### CHAPTER 3: COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

#### 3.1 The Steering Committee

#### 3.2 Stakeholder Interviews & Public Groups

#### 3.3 Community Meetings

#### 3.4 Online Community Survey

#### 3.5 Statistically Valid Survey

#### 3.6 Community Needs Assessment Summary





## CHAPTER 4: VISION DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Vision Workshop

4.2 Vision Sub-systems

4.3 Vision Summary

## CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Implementation Workshop

5.2 Cost Estimates

5.3 Capital Improvement Recommendations

5.4 Programming, Policy & Operations Recommendations

5.5 Impact Fee Analysis

5.6 Phasing & Financial Plan

5.7 Priority Action Items

## Data Analysis Process

To gain an accurate understanding of the Town of Zebulon Parks and Recreation system, as well as residents' needs, the consultant team will utilize a mixed-methods, triangulated approach to data analysis. The following diagram identifies the techniques to be used:

### Multiple Techniques for a Triangulated, Comprehensive Approach



### Quantitative Techniques:

- Benchmarking
- Level of Service Analysis
- Recreation Trend Analysis

### Observational Techniques:

- Individual Park Evaluations
- Programming Analysis
- Operations and Maintenance Analysis
- Population and Demographic Overview

### Qualitative Techniques:

- Stakeholder Interviews + Focus Groups
- Community Workshops
- Special Events
- Social Media
- Websites
- Online Survey
- Community Interest Survey

# 2





# SYSTEM INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

# PLAY ZEBULON

Parks & Recreation Master Plan









# SYSTEM INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a broad understanding of the current conditions of the Town of Zebulon's parks, facilities, programs, services, department operations, planning context, and the demographics of the community being served. Currently, the Town manages seven named parks and the Zebulon Community Center. This chapter takes an in-depth look at the conditions, appearance and functionality of the existing parks and recreation system as a snapshot for analysis.

### Named Parks

- GILL STREET PARK
- LITTLE RIVER PARK
- WAKELON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PARK
- WHITLEY PARK
- ZEBULON COMMUNITY PARK
- ZEBULON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PARK
- THE ALLEY

## CHAPTER 2: SYSTEM INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

### 2.1 Guiding Documents

### 2.2 Demographics

### 2.3 Parks and Recreation Facility Inventory and Analysis

### 2.4 Program Inventory & Analysis

### 2.5 Operations & Maintenance Assessment

### 2.6 Comparative Analysis

### 2.7 Level of Service Analysis

### 2.8 System Inventory & Analysis Summary

# PLAY ZEBULON

## 2.1 - GUIDING DOCUMENTS

In order to create a continuing narrative of planning, studying and acting within Zebulon, prime importance has been placed upon review of previously adopted plans and studies. The incorporation of these previous local and regional documents ensures that diligent work completed in previous years influences the goals of this Master Plan. These documents may be classified into three broad categories: town and regional documents; area or facility-specific studies and plans; and previous recreation master plans. A listing, though not exhaustive, of significant influencing plans includes:

- ▶ Greenway, Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan (2015)
- ▶ 2030 Strategic Plan (2018)
- ▶ Comprehensive Land Use and Transportation Plan (Ongoing)
- ▶ Zebulon Unified Development Ordinance (2020)
- ▶ Wake County Parks Facility Master Plan (2017)
- ▶ Wake County Greenway System Plan (2017)
- ▶ Zebulon & Wendell Open Space & Greenway Plan (2002)
- ▶ Zebulon Comprehensive Plan (2008)
- ▶ Zebulon Multi-modal Transportation Plan (2014)
- ▶ Wendell Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2019)

- ▶ Little River Park Community Visioning (2013)
- ▶ Urban Forestry Plans: Zebulon Community Park & Little River Park (2019)
- ▶ What's Coming to Zebulon Interactive Development Map (Ongoing)

The following is a summary of select documents reviewed by the project team.

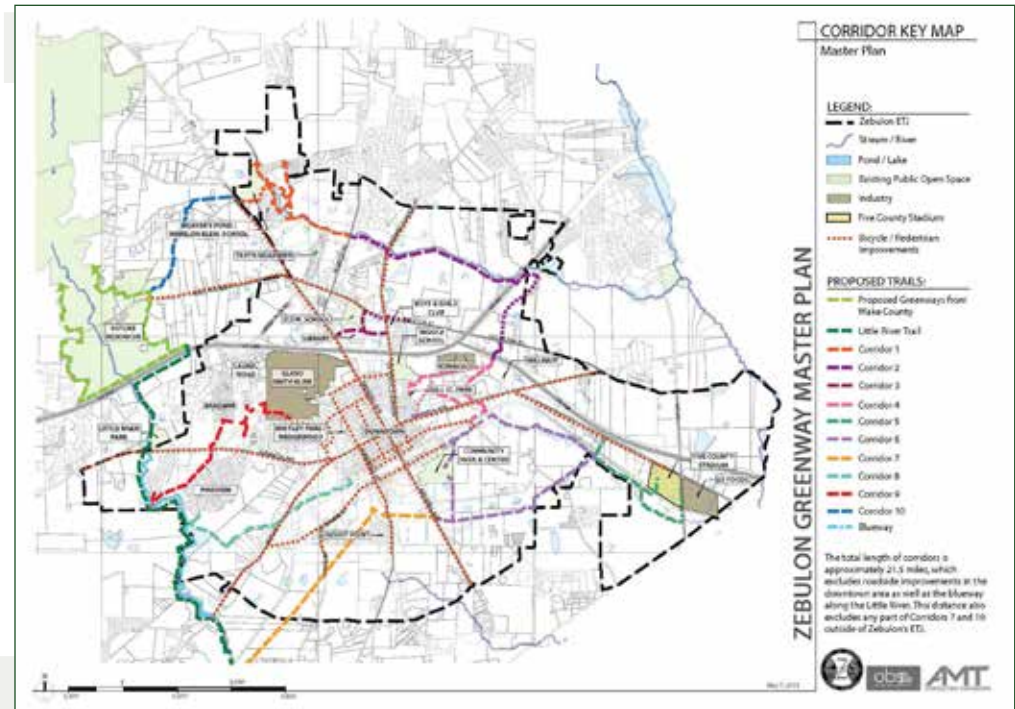




## GREENWAY, BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN MASTER PLAN (2015)

The Zebulon Greenway, Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan was funded by a John Rex Endowment Grant under the project name “Watering the Zebulon Food Desert” which was awarded in June of 2014. The purpose of the grant and subsequent plan was to identify opportunities to promote healthy food choices and identify transportation deficiencies, two factors which were bestowing Zebulon with the classification as a food desert by the USDA. Technical support from Active Living by Design (now Healthy Places by Design) was also provided in this grant, and the non-profit supplied interim feedback during the plan creation process.

The Town of Zebulon engaged its citizens in a multitude of ways in order to solicit as much feedback as possible. Initially, the Town hosted two community meetings on the same day early in the planning process. These meetings described existing conditions and plan goals. Later in the process, a third meeting was held where project staff provided early corridor recommendations for public comment. During this time, the Town partnered with local businesses to include informational flyers on serving trays and pizza boxes, as well as including flyers in utility bills. Additionally, a survey was created and hosted both in municipal facilities and on the Town’s website, as well as distributed during the Town’s Christmas Parade. Project staff also worked closely with several stakeholder groups that represented a broad cross-section of citizen demographics.



Zebulon Greenway Map

### Relevance to Master Plan

The Zebulon Greenway, Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan represents a recent inventory and analysis of greenway needs within the Town. The plan provides 10 detailed visions for future greenway connections throughout the town, going a step further to provide funding sources, design guidelines, and maintenance responsibilities. In fact, it is evident that Town staff still utilize this document to inform planning decisions within the Town. Phase 1 of the Beaverdam Creek Greenway (identified as Corridor 1 in The Zebulon Greenway Master Plan as a top priority project) went out to bid in the first quarter of 2020. Integration of this former document into the current planning effort will guide the strongly supported transportation and connectivity aspect of this plan.

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The Greenway, Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan Recommendations that emerged from both stakeholder outreach and professional analysis included:

- ▶ The identification and prioritization of 10 primary greenway corridors
- ▶ Adding more than 20 miles of trails throughout the ETJ
- ▶ Creating a “blueway” corridor
- ▶ A tiered system of bike/pedestrian improvements
- ▶ Prioritization and funding sources
- ▶ Design guidelines and maintenance details

## TOWN OF ZEBULON VISION 2030 STRATEGIC PLAN (2018)

The Vision 2030 Strategic Plan represents an ongoing effort to focus on intentional growth within the Town. The visioning began in 2017 and consisted of a citizen survey and two focus groups consisting of Town employees and residents. These efforts asked stakeholders to think about how they viewed the town at that time, as well as what the ideal Zebulon would be like in the future. Information collected during this time was summarized and provided to Town leadership during the 2018 Board retreat. Board members then conducted a series of visioning exercises and activities, ultimately developing an overarching vision for the Town of Zebulon.



**“Zebulon is a vibrant, growing community that maintains its small-town charm and heritage.”**

**-Vision 2030 Strategic Plan**



Three primary focus areas also emerged as part of this exercise: developing a vibrant downtown, preserving small-town life and smart growth. Goals associated with these elements describe how future tactical actions may appear:

### VIBRANT DOWNTOWN

- ▶ Revitalize the downtown area of Zebulon.
- ▶ Develop events, entertainment, and cultural attractions to draw people downtown.



**As a whole, these focus areas may be interpreted as maintaining small-town charm while being flexible enough to grow as needed.**

### GROWING SMART

- ▶ Plan for appropriate land use to meet transportation and housing needs.
- ▶ Pursue economic development opportunities with our community partners.
- ▶ Maintain appropriate staffing to support expected service levels for the growing community.

### SMALL-TOWN LIFE

- ▶ Promote more community events and festivals.
- ▶ Enhance and create more community gathering places.
- ▶ Increase the connectedness and walkability in the community.

## RELEVANCE TO MASTER PLAN

The Town of Zebulon Vision 2030 Strategic Plan represents what the community has determined as goals of Zebulon moving towards 2030. While the role of Town parks directly impacts the holistic success of the Town, community gathering places, walkability/connectivity, transportation needs and level of service are all specifically identified goals of the plan. Of course, these elements are directly tied to parks and greenway infrastructure, and elevate the importance of this document. Success with implementing this Master Plan will directly further the vision of the 2030 Strategic Plan.

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## TOWN OF ZEBULON COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE & TRANSPORTATION PLAN (ONGOING)

An aging Community Plan (the 2008 Zebulon Comprehensive Plan) and a series of voluntary annexations over the previous 10 years has resulted in a planning area exceeding the boundary of the existing planning document. The Zebulon Multi-Modal Transportation Plan was last updated in 2014, and joint plan development would help create an efficient, integrated planning opportunity for the Town. Initial public input indicated concerns involving traffic and connectivity issues. Additionally, there exists support for revitalizing downtown and capitalizing on the area around the five-county stadium.

To address these issues, the Town is currently undertaking an update to their Comprehensive Land Use and Transportation Plan. Completion and final adoption of the Plan is anticipated Summer 2021.

### RELEVANCE TO MASTER PLAN

The Comprehensive Land Use and Transportation Plan and the Parks and Recreation Master Plan should have an elegant, symbiotic relationship with one another. Comprehensive and master planning occurs on such a scale that holistic systems thinking is not only best practice, but integral in the success of a municipal plan. Proposed park locations should complement planned land uses and trails are a functional element of transportation planning. Already concerns of traffic, connectivity and interest in the five-county park indicate a plethora of opportunities for cooperation. As is the nature of this relationship, project staff will need to work closely with Town staff in order to ensure that all parties are aware of each other's goals, priorities and progress. The findings of this document will be incorporated into the Comprehensive Land Use and Transportation Master Plans.





## THE TOWN OF ZEBULON UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE (2020)

*Grow Zebulon*, the Town's newly effective Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), was unanimously approved by the Board of Commissioners on Nov. 4th, 2019. This document replaces Chapter 152 of the Town Code of Ordinances and represents regulatory guidelines for development standards. As with any other planning document, great care was taken in order to ensure that the document itself works to forward the goals of the Town. The Unified Development Ordinance outlines seven key ideals that it seeks to pursue and maintain:

- ▶ Keep Town residents and visitors safe
- ▶ Foster a convenient, compatible arrangement of land uses
- ▶ Protect the natural environment
- ▶ Ensure properly functioning infrastructure
- ▶ Establish a unique sense of place
- ▶ Promote a strong and diverse economy
- ▶ Provide adequate and desirable housing

### RELEVANCE TO MASTER PLAN

Grow Zebulon represents the regulatory framework in which development must occur within Zebulon. To this extent, recommendations made as part of this document must be in line with the procedures outlined in the ordinance. In general, this does not create restrictions on recommendations, it merely supplies a series of guidelines that must be followed for future parks and greenway facility development. Due to the ideals and purpose in which this new UDO was created, Grow Zebulon exemplifies robust standards that emphasize the need for future parkland and multi-modal transportation methods. Establishing a new Parks and Recreation Master Plan following the adoption of this UDO provides a solid framework for future project implementation. This plan will review UDO and items impacting parks & recreational facilities or elements to determine if recommended revisions are necessary.



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This document goes on to describe elements of each theme, with reference to multi-modal transportation, environmental protection and place-making. Specific goals called out in the document include:

- ▶ Sustainable development practices, like energy conservation and low-impact development.
- ▶ Alternative modes of transportation that do not contribute to the formation of greenhouse gases.
- ▶ Improvements to Town-wide and regional connectivity for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists through new extension and connection provisions for greenways, trails, bicycle lanes, sidewalks, and streets.
- ▶ Coordination of the development of streets with other public facilities so as to better manage and lessen traffic congestion as well as provisions to ensure the construction of necessary community service facilities.
- ▶ Promotion of the Town's unique "sense of place" in eastern Wake County by promoting revitalization of the downtown and surrounding areas, encouraging the establishment of new greenways, and establishing new requirements for open space set-asides.

In function, the UDO acts as a rulebook for future developments. However, being developed to promote the ideals listed above, the ordinance makes certain requirements which, in turn, serve the overarching goals of the Town. For example, residential subdivisions of 30 or more units in Zebulon shall dedicate 1,000 square feet of land per lot to the Town specifically for the purpose of developing public parkland.

## WAKE COUNTY PARK FACILITY MASTER PLAN UPDATE & WAKE COUNTY GREENWAY SYSTEM PLAN (2017)

The two (2) Wake County plans, the Park Facility Master Plan Update and the Greenway System Plan, represent a partnership of 12 municipal governments, the County, the State, and the US Army Corps of Engineers as well as several private and non-profit organizations. Both plans are the result of a multi-year process of data collection, planning and the collaboration of hundreds of stakeholders. It also follows a long line of previous plans completed for the County since 1980. For each plan a seven-step outreach program was utilized to engage the public during this process, ranging from stakeholder interviews to citizen surveys to focus group meetings. Of note, during this process, project staff met with municipal directors in order to discuss key issues that each city/town was facing and to identify goals for the overall plan.

### Eight key issues were identified during the outreach process:

- ▶ The unclear role of the County
- ▶ Rapid growth of the region
- ▶ Changing demographics and preferences
- ▶ Funding difficulties
- ▶ An incomplete trail and greenway system
- ▶ Improved marketing and promotion of Parks & Recreation
- ▶ Increasing Active vs. Passive recreation demands
- ▶ Acquiring additional land

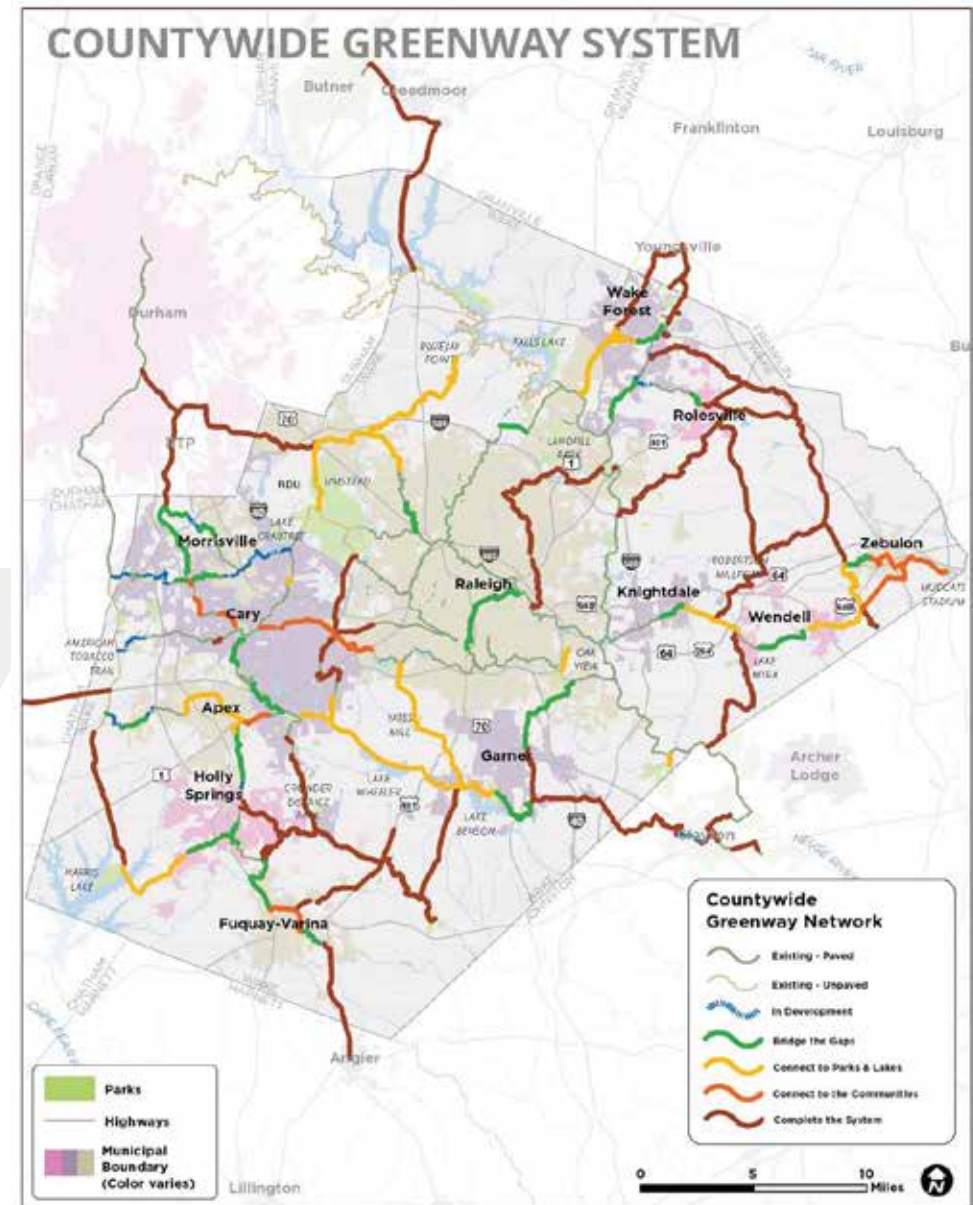


Through the process, seven goals were created in the Master Plan in order to tackle these key issues:

- ▶ Position the Division of Parks, Recreation and Open Space (the Division) as a valued partner in the vision of Wake County
- ▶ Maintain and enhance the core services of Wake County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space
- ▶ Be proactive with initiatives that result in long-term sustainability of the Division and the environment
- ▶ Market the benefits and services of the Division of Parks, Recreation and Open Space
- ▶ Continue to serve the citizens of Wake County in three core service areas and develop performance measures to track and report success
- ▶ Create a regional park land acquisition and development plan
- ▶ Participate in the planning and collaboration of municipal and regional trail and greenway plans

## RELEVANCE TO MASTER PLAN

The Wake County Parks & Recreation Master Plan establishes a vision for the unified region and sets forth a set of goals that includes many of the services and programs offered by the Parks and Recreation Department. The Master Plan outlines several key issues that Parks & Recreation planning is facing, not solely for the county, but for all municipalities in the region, and works to resolve them in a holistic context. The Plan includes a number of regional goals and actions that can be aligned with local facilities, services or programs that are currently offered or may be enhanced. A good example in Zebulon is Little River Park.



County-wide Greenway Map

# PLAY ZEBULON

## 2.2 - DEMOGRAPHICS

### Introduction

To better focus the needs that this Master Plan should address, we must first gain a better understanding of the demographic and population trends of the Town. The first step in analyzing the community's demographics and population is to identify trends in historic data as well as future projections. Although this data is static in nature, analysis will allow the Town to make more informed decisions based on trends that may impact the delivery of services over the next 10 years. The following population estimates are based on U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey Data, as well as projections for approved and planned housing developments in Zebulon.

Three decades ago, the Town of Zebulon had an approximate population of 3,173 citizens. Since then, the township has experienced a significant growth in population with the 2019 population being 5,646 citizens. Due to this growth, needs for parks and recreation have changed, and will continue to evolve as the population grows and diversifies. Three main categories have been analyzed: population growth; population characteristics; and housing characteristics. The following sections highlight significant findings.

### Population Growth

Between 1990 and 2019, the Town of Zebulon has witnessed an approximate 78% increase in population. Population change from 1990 to 2000 represented a 27.5% increase, then slowed to only 9.6% from 2000 to 2010 and boomed once more to 27.4% from 2010 to 2019. Nearly half of this growth has occurred during the last 3 years, with a 13.8% increase in population between 2017 and 2019. Regionally, Wake County has experienced a large amount of growth since 1990 as well. Since 1990, the county has grown approximately 162% to a population of 1,111,761 in 2019. Growth in Wake County has been relatively steady through the last 30 years, with a 48.3%

Population Growth				
Year	Zebulon		Wake County	
1990	3,173		426,311	
2000	4,046	+27.5%	632,219	+48.3%
2010	4,433	+9.6%	907,234	+43.5%
2019	5,646	+27.4%	1,111,761	+22.5%
2030 Low Estimate	9,296	64.6%	-	-
2030 Medium Estimate	12,946	129.3%	1,328,336	21.6%
2030 High Estimate	20,246	258.6%	-	-
2035 Low Estimate	11,121	19.6%	-	-
2035 Medium Estimate	16,596	28.2%	1,439,485	8.4%
2035 High Estimate	27,546	36.1%	-	-

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



increase from 1990 to 2000, 43.5% from 2000 to 2010 and 22.5% from 2010 to 2019.

What this represents is a historical trend of population growth within the County which has presumably influenced the growth of Zebulon. The Town experienced less growth sometime in the early 2000s which may have been due to the economic recessions around 2001 and 2008. Despite the setback, the Town has continued to grow and has even begun growing at a higher rate than Wake County. Furthermore, the Town has the potential to experience an increase of over 250% (estimated population: 20,246) in 2030, with the greater county growing only approximately 22%. This is also supported by projections from the Planning Department based on the approval of 3,966 lots for development that will be within the Town limits, resulting in the doubling of the population in the next 5 years. This explosive growth not only has direct implications for Parks and Recreation services within the Town, but much broader regional impacts that will affect all aspects of life.

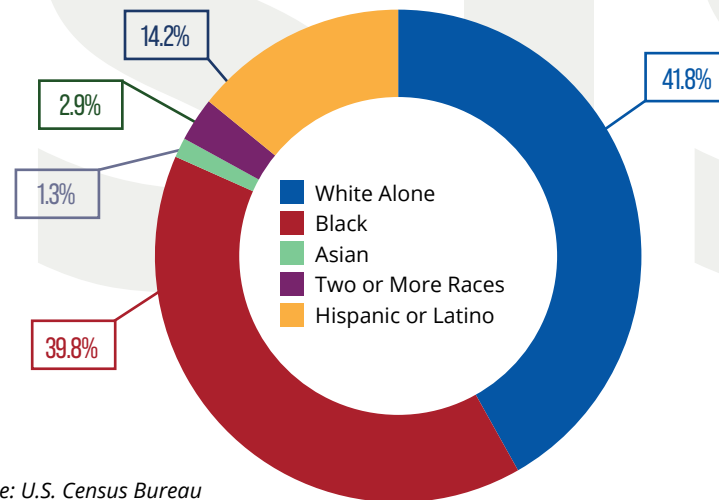
As population is projected to more than double over the next 5 years, it will be of the utmost importance to strategically plan for infill development in Zebulon. Parks and recreation facilities near large infill sites may need to be re-envisioned to meet the needs of a new or changing population nearby. If no existing parks are within access of infill sites, new locations may need to be identified but will typically enjoy the existing street network and utilities. The Town's transportation network will be strained with the growth, and the inclusion of multi-modal transportation will be absolutely necessary in order to maintain specific levels of service in the Town.

## Population Characteristics

While total population and growth can help to determine park and greenway trail level of service goals, population characteristics can help to define what type of facilities will serve the community best. The following population characteristics are based on American Community Survey datasets and present a snapshot of population trends. The data is pulled from 2010 and 2017, demonstrating a temporal and geographic context. This research, among other factors, will help determine needs for parks and facilities.

## Race/Ethnicity

Population race and ethnicity was assessed between 2010 and 2018 in order to determine what type of peoples have called Zebulon home.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

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The Town of Zebulon was historically a fairly homogeneous municipality. The White population accounted for 66.3% of the total population in 2010. This is notably down 24.5% to a population of 41.8% in 2018, but the cohort remains the prominent ethnic majority. African-Americans make up the second largest race representing 39.8% of the population, increasing 19.1% from 20.7% in 2010. Hispanic/Latino peoples represent the third largest ethnicity at 14.2% of the population. Of note, peoples categorized as “Other Race” have decreased from 4.5% of the population in 2010 to 0% of the population in 2018. Diversity is also echoed in the regional trends of Wake County. The County’s White population represents 60.3% of the total county population, down 27.8% since 2010. African-American populations grew 16.1% over the years to 19.8% of the County in 2018. Hispanic/Latino percentages are fairly similar between the Town and County with 10.1% being in the county in 2018.

## Age

Age was pulled from 2010 and 2018 datasets in order to identify trends in age cohorts. The median age in Zebulon was 32.0 in 2018. This demonstrates a downward age shift of over 10 years between 2010 and 2018, with the median population in 2010 being 42.4 years old. Furthermore, the median age in Wake County is 36 years old in 2018, representing a decrease in median age of a little over 5 years. Citizens under the age of 18 in Zebulon is 33.6% of the population. This represents a 10.3% increase from 23.3% in 2010, and depicts a large influx of younger citizens. At the county level, citizens under 18 only increase 1.0% to 24.4% in 2018.

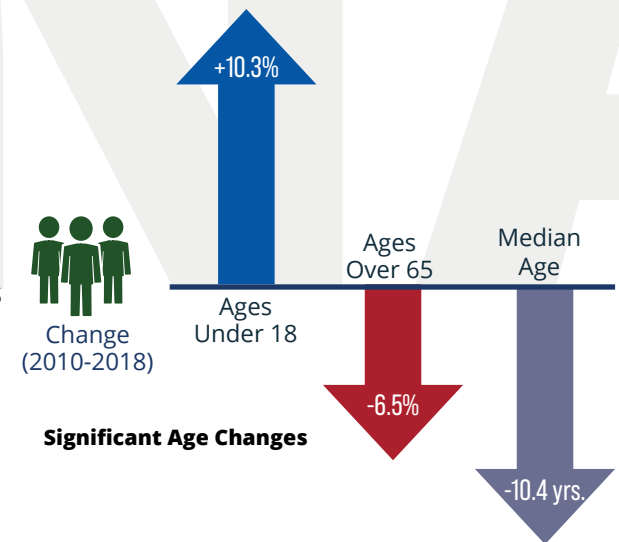
When ages 65 years and older are assessed, we see that Zebulon experienced a decrease in this age group from 2010 to 2018 with 15.1% of the population being 65+ in 2018. Similarly, this age group fell 5.7% in the county from 2010 to 2018.

Overall, these trends demonstrate a shift of the Town towards a younger population.

Age Groups in Zebulon			
Age Group	2010	2018	8-year Change
Under 18	23.3%	33.6%	10.3%
Over 65	21.6%	15.1%	-6.5%
Median Age	42.4	32	-10.4

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Within Zebulon, the total population of children aged 14 and below grew 10.3% between 2010 and 2018. Alternatively, Wake County experienced a 1.1% rise in this age group. Neither the Town nor the County demonstrated drastic age shifts between the two datasets, with the largest shift among





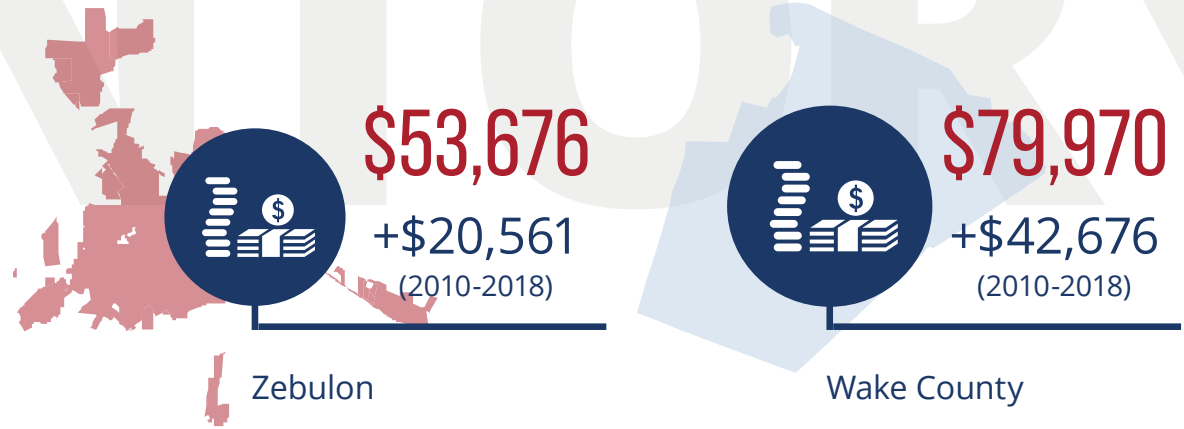
them occurring in the age 65-to 74-year-old group increasing 5.5% from 2010 to 2018 within Zebulon. The Town's largest age groups were 35 to 44, under 5, and 65 to 74 respectively.

### Gender

Typically, populations do not witness extreme changes in gender unless a major event occurs, such as the closing of a military base. In 2018, the American Community Survey indicated that 54.9% of Zebulon residents were women, an increase of 3.6% from 2010. In Wake County, the gender ratio shifted slightly in favor of women, with an increase of 0.2% for a total of 51.4%.

### Income

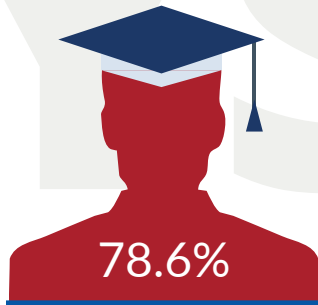
Zebulon residents experienced a significant increase in median income between 2010 and 2018. Median income in 2018 was \$53,676, illustrating a \$20,561 rise in income from \$33,115 in 2010 and representing a 62.1% overall increase in median income. The County experienced an explosive 114.4% increase in income with a \$42,676 increase to \$79,970 in 2018. In the frame of income brackets, \$35,000 to \$49,999 saw the highest increase of 8.3% from 2010 to 2018 in Zebulon. Surprisingly, "Under \$10,000" saw the second highest increase at 7.4%, which is important to note in contrast to the increasing medium income. County numbers changed more dramatically, with significant increases in the top four brackets. This data as a whole indicates that, taken as a whole, the Town and region at large have more disposable income. However, growth in lower income brackets may hint at an increasing wage gap between the Town's populations.



**Median Income in Zebulon and Wake County**

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau*

# PLAY ZEBULON



High School Degree or Higher

- 27.0% Associates Degree or Higher
- 20.4% Bachelor's Degree or Higher
- 7.8% Master's Degree or Higher
- 21.3% No High School Diploma

**Educational Attainment in Zebulon**

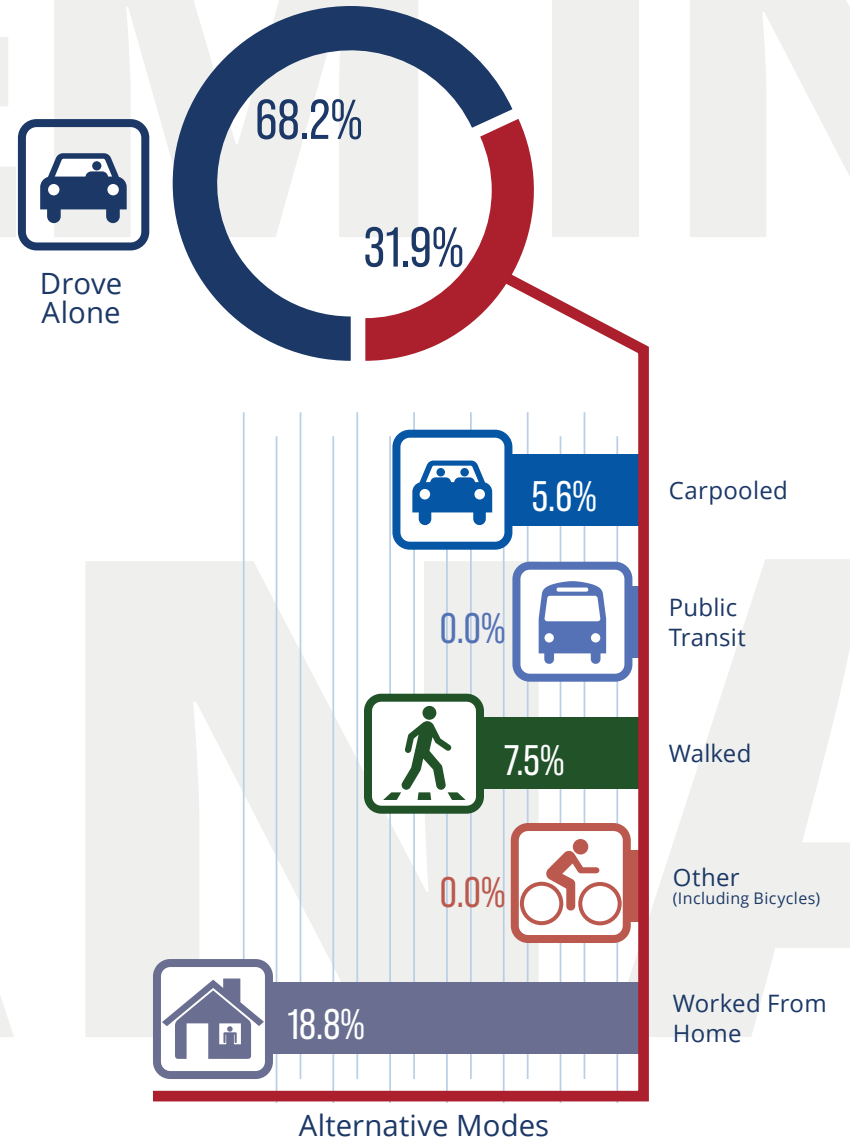
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

## Educational Attainment

Educational attainment levels shifted downward within Zebulon between 2010 and 2018, with 78.6% of the population graduating high school (a 12.9% decrease from 2010), and 27.0% earning an Associates degree or higher (a 28.4% decrease). In contrast Wake County high school graduates accounted for 92.8% of the population (a 20.8% increase) and 60.1% of the overall population attained an Associates degree or higher (a 38.2% increase). This demonstrates a level of educational attainment among Zebulon citizens that is declining in juxtaposition to the greater region.

## Mode of Commute

Between 2010 and 2018, the Town of Zebulon experienced two large shifts in the way its citizens work. The percentage of citizens that drove actually dropped 15.1% to 68.2% in 2018, with carpooling also dropping 1.1% to 5.6% of the total.



**Mode of Commute in Zebulon**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



Household Characteristics in Zebulon			
	2010	2018	8-year Change
Family Households	65.7%	66.7%	1.0%
Non-Family Households	34.3%	33.3%	-1.0%
Households with Children Under 18	35.2%	34.4%	-0.8%
Households with People over 60	22.2%	27.6%	5.4%
Average Family Size	2.55	2.62	0.07
Average Household Size	3.14	3.18	0.04

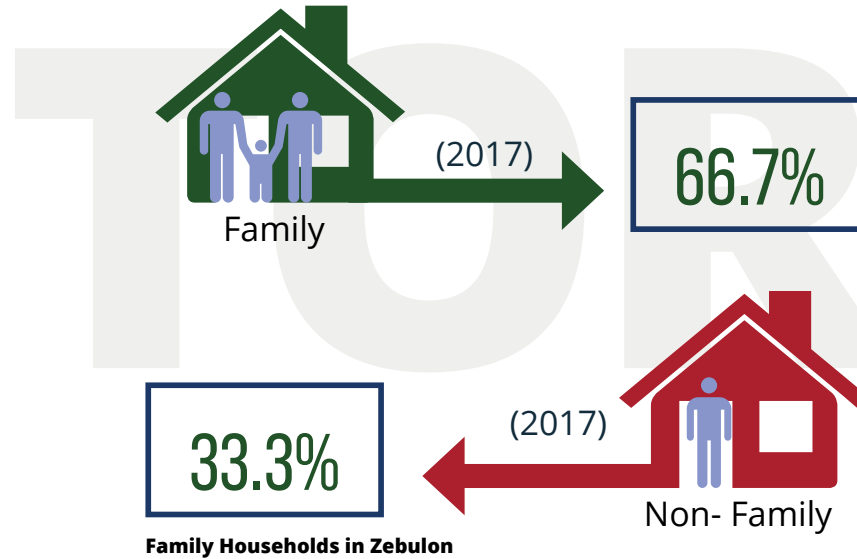
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Citizens that worked from home increased 11.6% to 18.8% in 2018, represent a large shift in work culture within the Town. Walking also increased 6.3% to 7.5% overall within the Town. Wake County also saw a small decrease in driving alone from 2010 to 2018 with a 5.1% decrease towards 82.0%. Carpooling in the county also dropped 2.5% to 8.5% in 2018. Like the town, the county saw an uptick in citizens that worked from home, with a 6.9% increase to 10.0% overall in 2018.

## Housing Characteristics

Town and County household characteristics can help illuminate how people are living together and their relationships. Housing characteristics were pulled between 2010 and 2017 in order to identify trends occurring both for the municipality and the greater region.

Family households were the most common type of household in the Town of Zebulon, which comprises 66.7% of all households.



Non-family households accounted for 33.3% of all households in Zebulon. This type of household is typically single-person, multi-person unmarried or student housing, and decreased 1.1% from 2010. Of family households, family households without children under the age of 18 represented 65.7% of family households and increasing 0.8% since 2010. Family households with children under the age of 18 comprised 34.4% of family households and decreased 1.0% since 2010. Total number of households with people under the age of 18 decreased by 0.7%. County households held the same trends as the Town, albeit with slightly larger decreases in family households with children under the age of 18 and a 0.2% uptick in non-family households.

Households with a person over the age of 60 increased by 5.4% to 27.6% in 2017, demonstrating a large population that is aging within the Town. The average household size in Zebulon rose by 0.07 to 2.62 people while the average household size in the county remained higher at 3.18 in 2017. Both the Town and county experienced very little change in both household and family size from 2010 to 2017.

## 2.3 - PARKS & RECREATION FACILITY INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

- ▶ 4 picnic shelters
- ▶ 5 restroom facilities
- ▶ 1 disc golf course

The parks in the Zebulon system, as well as other key facilities and planned greenways are shown in the Map 1.1 on the following page. An inventory of each facility is shown in the tables below.

### System Overview

The Zebulon Parks and Recreation Department oversees a diverse and robust park system and a variety of recreation programs that have grown in size and scope during the last decade. The department now manages a robust system that includes:

- ▶ Over **150** acres of park land
- ▶ **4** Town parks
- ▶ **2** joint-use parks
- ▶ **1** co-owned undeveloped space with the Town of Wendell
- ▶ **1** alley activation project with the Zebulon Downtown Arts Council
- ▶ **3** playgrounds (2 play areas at Whitley Park)
- ▶ **4** basketball courts
- ▶ **7** athletic fields (3 soccer, 4 baseball)
- ▶ **1** community center
- ▶ **2** tennis courts

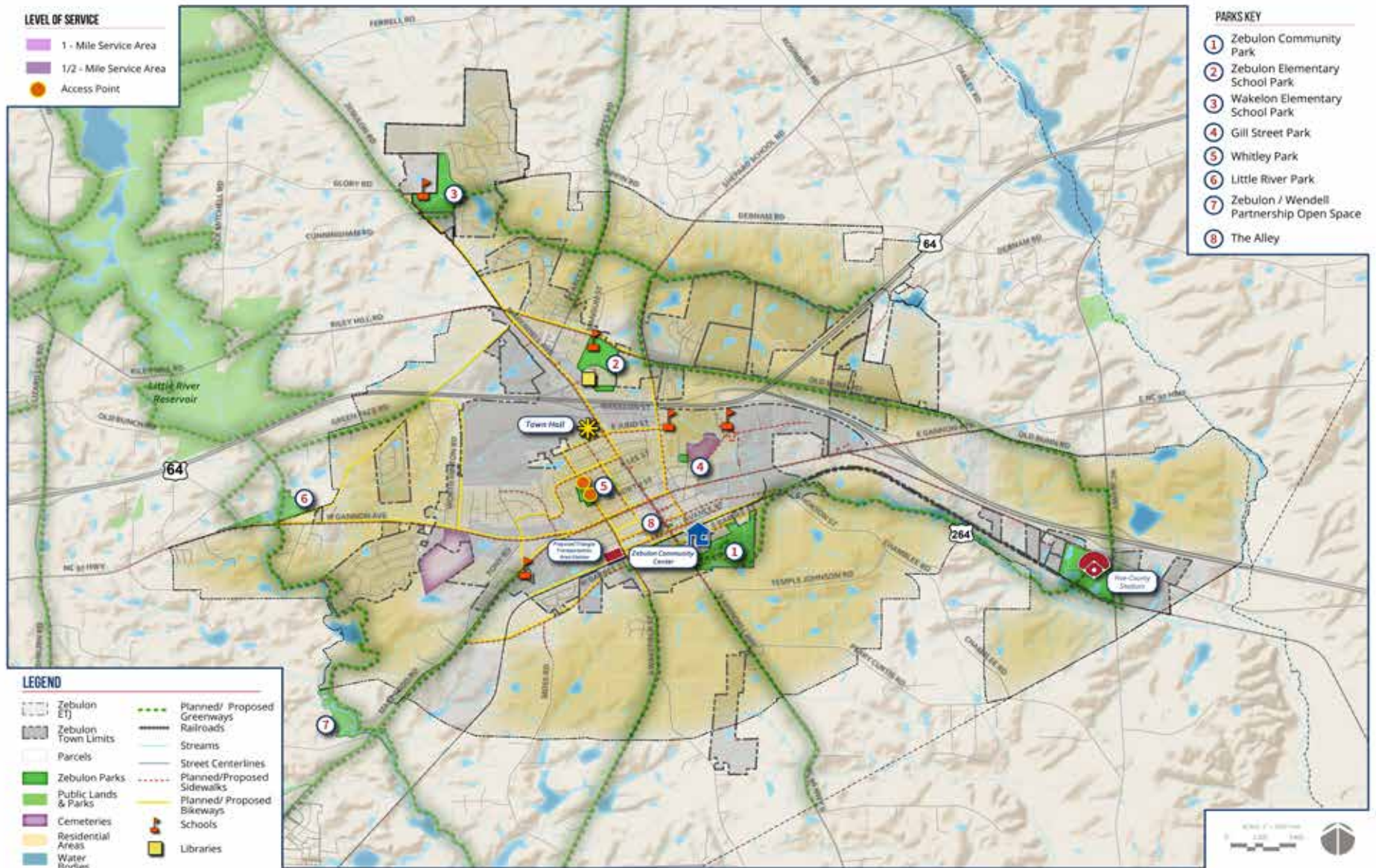
### Town Parks

Gill Street Park	
Acreage	1.6 acres
Amenities	Parking, playground, open space, benches, picnic table, basketball

Little River Park	
Acreage	23.4 acres
Amenities	Unpaved trail, benches, picnic tables, water access, parking (2), open space

Whitley Park	
Acreage	3.7 acres
Amenities	Sidewalks, open space, tennis courts (2), parking lots, picnic shelter (2), playgrounds (1), restrooms, event space, open space, benches, picnic tables





**Map 1.1 - Zebulon Parks & Recreation Facility Map**

# PLAY ZEBULON

Zebulon Community Park	
Acreage	46.6 acres
Amenities	Concessions, paved trails, disc golf, basketball courts (2), baseball/softball fields (2), parking lots (3), picnic shelter, playground, restrooms, open spaces

Zebulon Community Center	
Square Feet	14,000 SF
Amenities	Gymnasium, activity rooms (2), art room, fitness room, class room, warming kitchen, restrooms, administrative offices, parking

## Joint-Use Parks

Wakelon Elementary School Park	
Acreage	22.9 acres
Amenities	Soccer fields (2), parking (2), picnic shelter, benches, picnic tables, restrooms

Zebulon Elementary School Park	
Acreage	12.7 acres
Amenities	Basketball courts, baseball fields (2), soccer field, volleyball court, parking (2), picnic shelter, benches, picnic tables,

## Open Space (Town Partnership)

Zebulon / Wendell	
Acreage	26.3 acres
Amenities	Natural areas only / Undeveloped

The Alley	
Acreage	0.07 acres
Amenities	Bistro tables, downtown public space, art, festoon lighting



## Park Ratings Methodology

To observe system-wide successes and opportunities, representatives of the project team visited each of the parks and facilities operated by the Town and completed an observational form for each site. The following criteria was used and is based in part on guidelines developed by Project for Public Spaces (PPS), a non-profit organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build stronger communities.

### Design and Construction:

- ▶ Is the design and construction of this site appropriate for the needs of users served?
- ▶ Is the site readily accessible to the users being served? (walking, biking, all users)
- ▶ Have changes in context made site ineffective to users?
- ▶ Does the site include appropriate recreation amenities for intended users?
- ▶ Has the site been improved?
- ▶ Is there a clear indication that the site utilizes design standards for branding, materials, etc.?

### Effectiveness:

- ▶ Does the site have features/amenities that can be used by people of different ages?
- ▶ How many different types of activities are available?
- ▶ Are there choices in intensity of activities to do?

- ▶ Is there a balance of active recreation and passive or at-will opportunities?
- ▶ Does the site encourage good health and fitness?

### Comfort and Image:

- ▶ Does the site make a good first impression?
- ▶ How would you rate the site's maintenance? (grass cutting, litter)
- ▶ Are there enough places to sit and are they conveniently located?
- ▶ Is the site clean and free of litter?
- ▶ Does the site feel safe?
- ▶ Do vehicles dominate the site through access roads, parking and/or maintenance?
- ▶ Does the site need improvements? (1=Very Much; 5=No/none)

### Access and Linkages:

- ▶ Are there clear and open view lines into open spaces?
- ▶ Is there clear and useful wayfinding/signage within the site?
- ▶ Can people walk easily to the site from surrounding areas?
- ▶ Does the site function for people with special needs?
- ▶ Do paths and/or roads connect people to primary amenities?

# PLAY ZEBULON

## SUSTAINABILITY:

### Social

- ▶ Does the site provide places for people to gather?
- ▶ Does the site promote a healthy lifestyle and/or reduce daily stress?
- ▶ Is the site well-connected with clear and safe access point(s)?

### Environmental

- ▶ Does the site use energy, water and material resources efficiently?
- ▶ Does the site improve water quality?
- ▶ Does the site enhance, preserve, promote or contribute to biological diversity?
- ▶ Is the site a node within a larger ecological corridor or habitat?
- ▶ Does the site enhance environmental awareness or knowledge?

### Economic

- ▶ Does the site create public and/or private revenue-generating opportunities?
- ▶ Does the site help sustain or increase property values?
- ▶ Does the site contribute to nearby property development or redevelopment?
- ▶ Does the site provide permanent jobs?

Each park observed was assigned a score for each categorical question in the form based on the qualitative assessment of how the park met the aforementioned criteria at the time of observation. Once all scores were assigned, a matrix was created (see Table 2.1) that allowed trends to become visible across the entire system. It is important to note that there is no “one size fits all” set of criteria that can accurately evaluate every type of park. However, seeing each individual park’s score and system-wide scores allows for the identification of unique trends, and a general comparison of parks within the system.

## EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

Generally defined as parks with new or recently enhanced facilities or features, readily accessible through multiple modes of transportation, exhibit multiple features that enhance the comfort and experience of park users, and exhibit a maintenance quality that meets or exceeds the standards of the Town:

- ▶ The park is functioning as intended and is also exceptionally well-maintained, aesthetically pleasing, safe, and often demonstrates sustainable techniques.
- ▶ The park accommodates a wide variety of uses and maintains a consistently high level of activity while still remaining flexible.
- ▶ The park shows clear evidence of good design standards and embraces heritage resources (if applicable).
- ▶ There are many ways for users to access the park including via walking and biking.
- ▶ Multi-purpose fields or lawn surfaces are well-maintained and could be considered tournament/competition grade.



- ▶ Sports fields may contain premium amenities such as scoreboards, enclosed dugouts, bleachers and lighting.
- ▶ This type of park scores in the **75-100** range.

### MEETING EXPECTATIONS

Generally defined as parks with serviceable facilities or features providing functional recreational access for the public, accessed primarily by vehicle with some connections to adjacent neighborhoods, exhibit a few features that enhance the comfort and experience of park users beyond a minimal recreational access capacity, and exhibit a maintenance level sufficient for the uses in the park but would benefit from additional maintenance:

- ▶ From a programmatic level, the park functions as intended.
- ▶ This type of park is generally well-maintained, and may be aesthetically pleasing.
- ▶ The park can accommodate several different activities and has a moderate level of activity.
- ▶ This park may or may not have a transit stop nearby and has reasonable sidewalk connectivity.
- ▶ This park is generally compatible with the surrounding land uses and provides the user with a feeling of safety.
- ▶ Field surfaces are well-maintained and playable, but typically do not include the premium features that may be present in a park that “exceed expectations.”
- ▶ This type of park scores in the **50-74** range.

### NOT MEETING EXPECTATIONS

Generally defined as parks with facilities or features that have exceeded their functional lifespan and/or need enhancement or replacement to provide functional recreational access for the public, accessed primarily by vehicle and are disconnected from adjacent neighborhoods, exhibit few, if any, features that enhance the comfort and experience of park users, and that exhibit a maintenance level insufficient to continue to provide the desired uses and recreational access:

- ▶ The park is not currently performing as intended.
- ▶ Although the park can still be well-maintained and/or aesthetically pleasing, it typically is not.
- ▶ This types of park may have a consistently low level of activity, few accommodated uses, and may not be compatible with the surrounding land uses.
- ▶ The park may not be perceived as safe by its users.
- ▶ It is common for this type of park to be difficult to access either by public transit, bicycle, or on foot.
- ▶ Field surfaces are not typically well-maintained, or the fields are so over-programmed that adequate maintenance is impossible.
- ▶ This type of park scores in the **0-49** range.

All parks and facilities, with the exception of The Alley, were evaluated by the project team over a one-week period in early January of 2020. The following pages list the parks and facilities, with identifying scores for each category, weighted overall scores, and category scores. The Alley was under construction at the time of the evaluations and is not included in the evaluations.

# PLAY ZEBULON

**Table 2.1: Zebulon Park & Facility Evaluation Ratings**

**Legend:**

- Exceeding Expectations
- Meeting Expectations
- Not Meeting Expectations

- Design & Construction (Max: 30)**
  - Is the design and construction of this site meeting the needs of users served?
  - Is the site readily accessible to the users being served? (walking, biking, all users)
  - Have changes in context made site ineffective to users?
  - Does the site include appropriate recreation amenities for intended users?
  - Has the site been improved?
  - Is there a clear indication that the site utilizes design standards for branding, materials, etc.?
- Effectiveness (Max: 25)**
  - Does the site have features/amenities that can be used by people of different ages?
  - How many different types of activities are available?
  - Are there choices in intensity of activities to do?
  - Is there a balance of active recreation and passive or at-will opportunities?
  - Does the site encourage good health and fitness?
- Comfort and Image (Max: 35)**
  - Does the site make a good first impression? (grass cutting, litter)
  - Are there enough places to sit and are they conveniently located?
  - Is the site clean and free of litter?
  - Does the site feel safe?
  - Do vehicles dominate the site through access roads, parking and/or maintenance?
  - Does the site need improvements? (1=Very Much; 5=No/none)

Park Name	Design & Construction (Max: 30)							Effectiveness (Max: 25)							Comfort and Image (Max: 35)						
Gill Street	19	3	3	3	3	4	3	20	4	4	4	4	4	23	3	4	2	4	4	4	2
Little River Park	19	4	2	4	4	3	2	18	4	3	3	3	5	26	5	3	3	5	4	4	2
Wakelon Elementary	22	4	4	4	3	4	3	13	4	2	n/a	3	4	30	4	5	3	5	5	4	4
Whitley Park	27	5	4	5	5	5	3	25	5	5	5	5	5	32	5	4	5	5	5	4	4
Zebulon Community Park	29	5	5	5	5	5	4	25	5	5	5	5	5	33	5	5	5	5	5	4	4
Zebulon Elementary School	23	4	5	3	4	4	3	16	3	3	3	3	4	30	4	5	4	5	5	4	3
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>63</b>



**Whitley Park**



**Whitley Park**



**Wakelon Elementary**



**Zebulon Community Park**



# VENTORY

- Access and Linkages (Max: 30)**
  - Are there clear and open view lines into open spaces?
  - Is there clear and useful wayfinding/signage within the site?
  - Can people walk easily to the site from surrounding areas?
  - Does the site function for people with special needs?
  - Do paths and/or roads connect people with primary amenities?
- Sustainability (Max: 60)**
  - Sociability Sustainability**
    - Does the site provide places for people to gather?
    - Does the site promote healthy lifestyle and/or reduce daily stress?
    - Is the site well connected with clear and safe access point(s)?
  - Environmental Sustainability**
    - Does the site use energy, water and material resources efficiently?
    - Does the site improve water quality?
    - Does the site enhance, preserve, promote or contribute to biological diversity?
    - Is the site a node within a larger ecological corridor or habitat?
    - Does the site enhance environmental awareness or knowledge?
  - Economic Sustainability**
    - Does the site create public and/or private revenue-generating opportunities?
    - Does the site help sustain or increase property values?
    - Does the site contribute to nearby property development or redevelopment?
    - Does the site provide permanent jobs?
- Totals**

15	5	3	3	2	2	38	11	4	4	3	17	5	3	3	4	2	10	1	3	3	3	66
13	5	3	1	1	3	40	12	4	5	3	23	5	4	5	5	4	5	2	n/a	n/a	3	70
22	4	3	5	5	5	45	12	4	4	4	15	3	3	3	4	2	18	4	4	5	5	78
21	4	3	5	4	5	41	15	5	5	5	15	5	3	4	n/a	3	11	4	4	n/a	3	88
24	4	5	5	5	5	53	15	5	5	5	18	3	4	4	4	3	20	5	5	5	5	94
23	4	4	5	5	5	48	14	5	4	5	16	4	3	3	4	2	18	5	4	4	5	80
79	87	70	80	73	83	80	88	90	90	83	72	83	67	73	84	53	79	70	80	85	80	79



Zebulon Community Park



Whitley Park



Gill Street Park



Little River Park



Little River Park

# PLAY ZEBULON

Each park's observation provides a summary of all five criteria subjects along with site-specific observational notes. It should be noted that these are based on the team's observations during a limited time period and do not necessarily reflect the recommendations produced during the Needs and Priorities Assessment portion of this report that included public engagement.

## Park and Recreation Facility Ratings Summary

### Successes

The following are examples of successes of the parks documented during site visits. These are derived from a combination of high individual park ratings, as well as the specific categories where the overall park system is either meeting or exceeding expectations.

### Effectiveness, Comfort and Image

Many of the parks evaluated felt safe and comfortable, while appearing to be effective for the users served. A large majority of the park areas are clean and free of litter, and most offer a good first impression of both the overall site and the facilities and amenities present in the park. Most of the parks were also found to be in good condition, and appeared to reflect a good amount of satisfaction and pride from both users and Parks and Recreation Staff. Maintenance was found to be above average

in the parks and is indicated by the clean appearance of most gathering areas and walkways, as well as the presence of well-maintained lawns and planting areas.

### Design and Construction

The parks appeared to offer an appropriate amount of amenities and supported substantial use by a variety of users. Many of the parks were meeting the needs of the people using them, and there was a fair amount of activities for users to choose from. Some of the parks include identity, wayfinding and directional signage. A large majority of the parks and facilities provided opportunities for a diverse set of age groups.

### Social and Economic Sustainability

A majority of the parks visited received favorable scores in the Social Sustainability categories. Many parks appeared to be frequently used by the community, and serve as important features of neighborhoods and communities they serve. There was a fairly strong indication that these parks were places for people to meet family and friends, and the sites provided relief from the daily stresses of life. In addition to the social factors, many parks are assets to the surrounding community, and have a positive impact on nearby properties, especially in the core neighborhoods of Zebulon.



**Most of the parks were found to be in good condition, and appeared to reflect a good amount of satisfaction and pride FROM BOTH USERS AND PARKS AND RECREATION STAFF.**

### Opportunities

Like the successes, the opportunities identified are based on a combination of individual park ratings and the performance of the overall parks in the specific categories. These are areas where individual parks and the system as a whole are not exceeding expectations, and thus present opportunities for improvement.

### Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability metrics assess facilities, features, or other measures used to utilize energy, water, biological diversity, and other resources in a sustainable fashion. As noted in Table 2.1, average conditions within the assessed parks indicate a lack of opportunities for environmental education, as well as opportunities to improve water quality. While some of the parks function as important stormwater collection areas for the surrounding streets and also function as part of larger ecological corridors, educational signage highlighting these successes is a significant opportunity.



**Zebulon Community Park**



**Wakelon Elementary School Park**

# PLAY ZEBULON

## General Improvements to Access, Amenities and Conditions

Generally, the moderate to lower scores in some of the parks indicate a need for improvement to the condition and amenities that may be aging. While the ratings indicate an overall positive level for the condition of the parks and amenities, there remains an ongoing need to improve and update as their effective lifespan is maximized and surrounding community demographics evolve. Accessibility and linkage can also be improved by upgrading the existing infrastructure that provides access to parks, such as replacing aged sidewalks, repainting directional markers on walkways and bikeways, and upgrading signage to be more visible to users.







*Cattails Restaurant*



# PLAY ZEBULON

## 2.4 - PROGRAM INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

### Recreation Programs Assessment

The following section provides an assessment of the Town of Zebulon's Parks and Recreation Department's current recreation programs, events and services. Information in this section was gathered through a series of staff interviews, facility and park tours, and a review of information and documents supplied by the Department.

#### Summary

- ▶ Despite its relatively small population, the Town of Zebulon currently offers a full range of recreation programs, events and services for its residents.
- ▶ Zebulon offers programming for all age groups but focuses primarily on youth.
- ▶ The Town conducts a number of special events and operates a farmer's market (Farm Fresh Market).
- ▶ Programming supports not only the residents of Zebulon but also the areas surrounding the community. A significant number of program participants are non-residents.

- ▶ Recreation programs and services are generally planned and delivered through the community center, as well as the park areas and athletic field complexes that are present in the town.
- ▶ While Town staff plans and manages all recreation programs, the implementation of programs and services utilizes contracts with outside instructors with a relatively small number of staff responsible for the implementation.
- ▶ The Department has reasonably strong metrics regarding recreation programs and services.
- ▶ There are existing policies and procedures that guide cost recovery and fee setting for recreation programs and services. There are also specific procedures in place for how a new program will be planned and set up.
- ▶ In 2018 and 2019 there were nearly 30,000 participants in recreation programs and events. The cancellation rate for programs was very low during this time frame.

### **Program Area Definitions:**

These are general definitions of the program areas that are not specific to Zebulon Parks and Recreation but do represent the types of programs that could be included in these areas.

**Sports** – Team and individual sports including camps, clinics and tournaments. Includes adventure/non-traditional sports.

**Fitness** – Group fitness classes, personal training, health education and nutrition.

**Cultural Arts** – Performing arts classes, visual arts classes, music/video production and arts events.

**Aquatics** – Learn-to-swim classes, aqua exercise classes, competitive swimming, SCUBA, and other programs (synchro, water polo, etc.).

**Youth Programs** – Youth-based programming for before and after school programs, summer/school break camps, and preschool.

**Education** – Language programs, tutoring, science (STEM) classes, computer and financial planning.

**General Interest** – Personal development classes.

**Special Needs** – Programs for those with physical, intellectual, and developmental disabilities and inclusion within activities offered.

**Special Events** – Special events that focus on the local market.

**Outdoor Recreation** – Environmental education, hiking, camping, paddle sports and other activities.

**Seniors** – Programs and services that are dedicated to serving the needs of seniors. This can include all of the activity areas noted above plus social service functions and overnight trips.

**Teens** – Programs and services that are focused on serving the needs of teens. This can include all of the activity areas noted above (except seniors).

**Self-Directed** – This includes the opportunities for individuals to recreate on their own. This can include activities such as open gym, use of weight/cardio space, lap/recreational swimming, golf, and tennis. Although not an organized program, time and space must be allocated for this purpose in town facilities.

**Social Services** – This can include nutrition and feeding programs, job training, life skills training, and other activities such as job training.

**Programming Classifications:** The following categories below represent the major areas of focus for current Zebulon Parks and Recreation Department recreation programs and services by general categories commonly found in parks and recreation agencies nationally. Program lists are based on a review of program offerings for 2018-2019, that were provided by the Department. Programs are general listings only.

# PLAY ZEBULON

Area	Focus	Programs
Sports	Youth	Basketball, Golf, Tennis, Gymnastics, Flip Flop and Drop, Tumbling, Basketball Camps, Karate, Baseball/Softball, Soccer
	Adult	Softball, Karate
Fitness/ Wellness	Youth	Energize
	Adult	Yoga, Dance Fit, Barre/Pilates, Cardio Dance, Fit & Fun Aerobics, Zumba, Dance Xross Fitness, Prenatal Yoga
Cultural Arts	Youth	Crafty Science New Year Countdown, Preschool Dance, Preschool Art, Fall & Fun, Spooky Science & Creepy Crafts, Art Adventures, Schools Out Art+Science=Fun
	Adult	Ornament Making, Line Dancing, Hill Ridge Farms Trip, Wilson Day Trip, Nashville Trip, Adult Art, Adult Wreath Making, Color Pots, Flip Flop Art, Holiday Craft Market, Cookie Swap, Ornament Making
Aquatics	Youth	Swim Camp
	Adult	N/A
Youth		Summer Camps, Spring Break Camps, Preschool Play Days

Education	Youth	N/A
	Adult	N/A
General Interest	Youth	CPR, Kids in the Kitchen
	Adult	CPR
Special Needs		N/A
Special Events		Family Movie Nights, Hay Day Celebration, Trunk or Treat, Community Center Birthday Bash, Veterans Day, Superhero Day, Opening Day, May Day, Easter Egg Hunt, Easter Bunny Pictures, Santa Pictures, Celebrate the Arts, Downtown Tree Lighting Festival, Letters to Santa, Yoga at Little River Park, Christmas Parade, Pop-up Events
Outdoor Recreation	Youth	Nature Programs, Farm Fresh Market, Nature Play at Little River Park
	Adult	Nature Programs, Farm Fresh Market, Sylvan Bird Sanctuary Day Trip

Note: Not all actual Zebulon Parks & Recreation programs that were offered in 2018-2019 may be represented in this listing.



Recreation Programs and Services that are in High Demand: The staff of Zebulon Parks and Recreation have identified the following programs and services as being in high demand by the community.

- ▶ Special events including street festivals and outdoor events
- ▶ Youth sports, especially soccer, baseball and basketball
- ▶ Preschool and youth programs
- ▶ Fitness classes
- ▶ Art programs (growing interest)
- ▶ Nature programs (growing interest)
- ▶ Specialty summer camps
- ▶ Neighborhood specific “pop-up events”
- ▶ Day and Overnight trips for seniors
- ▶ Facility and field rentals

**Recreation Programs and Service Limitations: Recreation programs and services are limited in Zebulon due in part to the following:**

- ▶ *Limited Staff* – The Zebulon Parks and Recreation Department has a small full-time staff for the number of facilities that are operated and the level of programming that is offered.
- ▶ *Youth Focus* – The Department has a strong focus on youth sports and recreation. This limits the time that is available at key programming locations (Community Center, athletic fields and other spaces) for programs that could focus on adults and even seniors.

- ▶ *Lack of Facilities* – The Town does not have a public pool so there are virtually no aquatic programs. There are a minimum number of athletic fields so there are limited opportunities for youth sports team practices and almost no time for adult leagues. In addition, there is no tournament facility where a large number of fields are located. There is also minimal gym space so there is limited time particularly during basketball season for adult sports such as basketball or the expansion of youth sports into new program areas (wrestling). Performing arts are difficult to offer with the lack of a theater, auditorium or even a multi-purpose room that has a stage. The town also needs classroom & meeting space.
- ▶ Outdoors there are no pickleball courts or sand volleyball courts. There is also not a town-owned facility for larger special events or activities in the core area of the community and having a permanent location for the Farm Fresh Market would help.
- ▶ *Facility Design* – Even with the recreation facilities that are present, the design of some of these amenities limits programming opportunities. This is particularly true for the Community Center where the gym is too small to provide spectator seating for youth basketball and the ceiling is too low for volleyball. In addition, access to many of the spaces in the center requires the user to walk through the gym to get to them. There is minimal space for fitness and this limits programming in this area and there are no locker rooms for adult fitness or sports participants. Parking also restricts the overall use of the center at times.
- ▶ Some of the athletic fields that are in the community do not have lights (the rectangle fields that support soccer), so their use is limited, especially in the late fall or early spring. Baseball fields are illuminated, but soccer fields are not.

# PLAY ZEBULON

## Recreation Programming Partnerships:

Zebulon Parks and Recreation partners with a significant number of local organizations to bring enhanced programming to the community. Partnerships consist of the sharing of spaces, facilities, programs, and staff. The list on the right, while not exhaustive, exemplifies the emphasis of partnerships within the Department.



Partnering Organizations
<i>Government</i>
Knightdale Parks & Recreation
Wendell Parks & Recreation
Wake County
Wake County Public Schools
<i>Faith Based and Civic Groups</i>
Zebulon Baptist Church
Zebulon First Baptist Church
Zebulon United Methodist Church
Boy & Girl Scout Organizations
Lions Club
Steel Magnolias Garden Club
Zebulon Downtown Arts Council
<i>Other Partners</i>
Carolina Mudcats
Zebulon Country Club
East Wake FFA
Wake Medical Center
Zebulon Pottery

Many of these organizations assist with special events and other community activities. In addition to this list there are also a number of sponsors of activities as well.

Other Providers: Besides the recreation programs and services that are provided directly by the Zebulon Parks and Recreation Department, there are also a number of other organizations that provide services in the Town and the surrounding area.

These include:

**Wake County** – The County has a Parks and Recreation Department that operates a number of parks, trails and preserves in the County as well as a small amount of recreation programs (primarily youth camps). The County also operates the Zebulon Community Library and they have some recreation-based programming.

**Wake County School District** – Although not a large provider of actual recreation services, the school's facilities are locations for the Town and other community organizations to conduct their sports and recreation programs through joint-use agreements.

**Other Communities** – The other communities that are near Zebulon (Knightdale, Rolesville and Wendell) offer a variety of recreation programs and services that are available to residents of the community.

**Non-Profits** – The Boys & Girls Club has a center in Zebulon that features both indoor and outdoor recreation amenities. They focus their efforts on youth after-school programs.

**Youth Sports Organizations** – There was an organization in the Town that provided tackle football for youth in the community. They are currently reorganizing.

**Churches** – Some of the churches in the area have small recreation programs that are oriented toward their congregations.

**Private** – Like most areas in the United States, Zebulon has a number of private sports and fitness providers. This includes three private health clubs, and a martial arts studio. Zebulon Country Club has an outdoor pool and golf course that is used in part by the Town for some swim/golf programs.

**5 County Stadium** – The home of the Carolina MudCats professional baseball team, this facility is partially owned by the Town and the County and they are responsible for some of the maintenance. This facility is privately managed.

It is also important to note that several years ago, the private outdoor swimming pool located next to Whitley Park was closed, which resulted in the loss of a long time recreation amenity in the community. It is in poor condition.

With the presence of a number of other recreation, aquatics, sports, and fitness providers in the Zebulon area, their role in providing services both now and in the future must be recognized and considered when the Town establishes its program plan for the next 5-10 years.



# PLAY ZEBULON

**Current Program Assessment:** The following is an overall assessment of the current level of recreation programming that is offered by the Zebulon Parks and Recreation Department.

## Programs by Area

- ▶ *Youth Sports* – The Town is a major provider of youth sports programs with a focus on more traditional team sports. There are a few individual sports such as gymnastics, golf and tennis that are also offered. However, there are very few adventure or non-traditional sport options. Beyond the Town, there are a very limited number of youth sports organizations that provide youth team sports programs.
- ▶ *Adult Sports* – The Town provides an adult softball program but has little else available for this age group. This is partially due to the lack of field and gym space to allocate to adult sports.
- ▶ *Fitness/Wellness* – Despite the fact that the Town has limited fitness amenities, there is a reasonably large number of adult fitness classes available. However, there are opportunities to expand not only the fitness offerings but also wellness programming which is not currently addressed. There are also minimal youth fitness or wellness programs. Some are partnerships with Wake County.
- ▶ *Cultural Arts* – This is a program area that receives a great deal of emphasis by Parks and Recreation and there are strong program offerings for both youth and adults.
- ▶ *Aquatics* – Since the Town does not operate a public pool there are virtually no programs being offered in this area and those that are available are conducted through the use of the Zebulon Country Club pool.
- ▶ *Youth* – The Town has extensive youth programs that center on a wide variety of specialty summer camps. However, none of these are day-long camps that can also serve as a child-care alternative.
- ▶ *Education* – The Parks and Recreation Department has very little focus on science & nature educational programming for either adults or youth. Most specialized programming in this area is often provided by local school districts, education-based non-profits, or private providers.
- ▶ *General Interest* – This is generally a small program area for most parks and recreation agencies and the fact that there are very few programs in this area is not a major concern.
- ▶ *Special Needs* – There currently is no Special Needs programming offered by the Parks and Recreation Department. It is often difficult for recreation agencies to have a strong emphasis in this area due to cost and the need for specialized staff and equipment. This is especially true for smaller communities.
- ▶ *Special Events* – The Parks and Recreation Department conducts a considerable number of special events on a community-wide basis. The Town is very good at partnering with other community organizations and businesses to bring these events to the community. The Department has also been conducting a number of neighborhood specific “pop-up” events as well.

- ▶ *Outdoor Recreation* - There currently is limited emphasis given to this program area by the Department other than the Farm Fresh Market. There is programming available for both youth and adults, however.
- ▶ *Seniors* – The Parks and Recreation Department has a large number of programs and services that are focused on seniors. This includes a daily walking and trip program. However, most of these services are focused on more traditional senior services and the older, more sedentary, senior.
- ▶ *Teens* – There are very few teen-focused programs offered by the Department. It has often been difficult for parks and recreation agencies to sustain an effective teen program and often agencies leave this to other organizations in the community. The Town does have a Youth Council which should result in more programming in the future.
- ▶ *Self-Directed* – Even though these types of activities are not formal programs they do require that the Department provide the opportunities and time in facilities for this to occur. With a community center, tennis courts, athletic fields and other facilities, self-directed activities remain as a program area.
- ▶ *Social Services* – The Department does not currently provide any direct social service programs other than fall coat drive.

### Focus by Demographic Group

- ▶ *Youth* – The Department has a significant commitment to youth programs and activities ranging from youth sports, to camps and cultural arts. However, there are limited programs for the middle school age. Youth recreation is a primary area of focus for most parks and recreation agencies.
- ▶ *Teens* – There is a very limited number of programs offered for this age group.
- ▶ *Young Adults* – The Parks and Recreation Department does not have much programming focused on this age group. This is generally left for other providers.
- ▶ *Adults* – While the Department provides a number of programs in many of the interest areas, adults are generally not the primary focus. This is often the case with most parks and recreation agencies where the demand for youth programming has a priority over adults.
- ▶ *Seniors* – The Parks and Recreation Division has a significant number of programs and services that are focused on seniors.

# PLAY ZEBULON

**Program Strengths** – Programming strengths include the following:

- ▶ Youth sports team and individual sports
- ▶ Youth specialty summer camps
- ▶ Community-based special events
- ▶ Cultural arts programming in the visual arts area for youth and adults
- ▶ Traditional senior services
- ▶ Self-directed activities

**Programs that are Mid-Range** – Program areas where there is an average or mid-range of offerings are noted:

- ▶ Fitness programming for adults
- ▶ Outdoor recreation programs
- ▶ Adult team sports

**Program Weaknesses** – Programming weaknesses are noted below:

- ▶ There is a limited amount of non-traditional and adventure sports programming
- ▶ Teen-based programming is small and there are a few middle school activities
- ▶ There are hardly any aquatics programs since there is not a public pool
- ▶ Limited programming focused on the younger and more active senior
- ▶ There are no youth-based fitness programs
- ▶ Wellness programming is not present
- ▶ No special needs programs or services are being offered
- ▶ There are no real education programs offered although some of this is available through the specialty summer camps
- ▶ General interest is not a significant area of emphasis
- ▶ Social services are not an area of focus for the Department







# PLAY ZEBULON

## 2.5 - OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE ASSESSMENT

### Organization and Staffing Assessment

The following is an assessment of the organization and staffing of the Town of Zebulon Parks and Recreation Department. Information in this section was gathered through a series of staff interviews, facility and park tours, and a review of information and documents supplied by the Town.



Parks and Recreation has a number of unofficial divisions. These include:

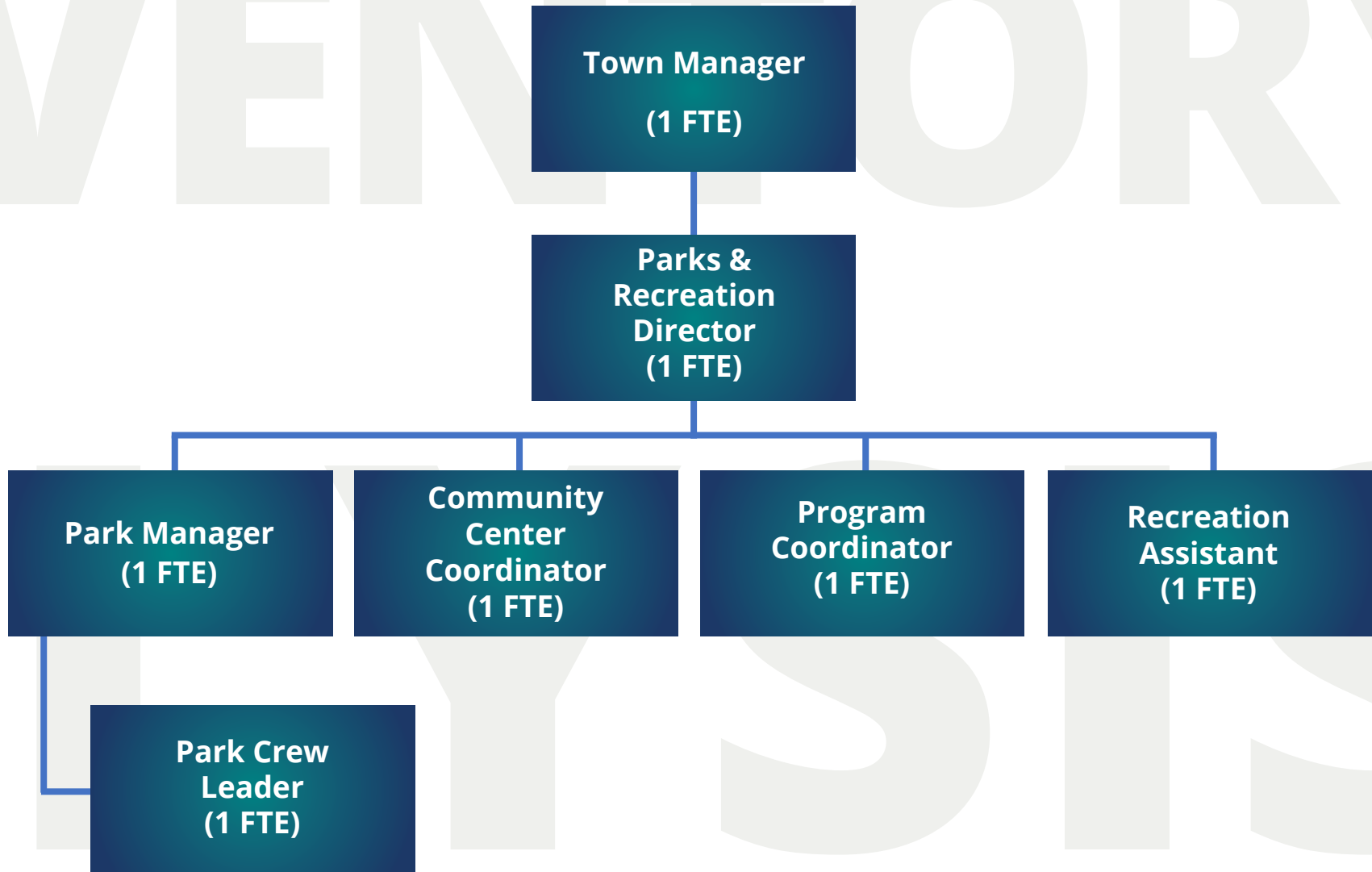
**Administration** – This area of the Department includes 1 full-time staff and is responsible for the overall management and operations of the Department.

**Recreation Programs & Facilities** – This division has 3 full-time staff and it is responsible for the development and management of the recreation programs and services that are offered by the Town. In addition, this division also manages the Community Center. After an initial evaluation by the project team, the Town implemented staffing recommendations including converting a part-time program staff position to full-time.

**Parks Maintenance** – The Department reorganized based on initial recommendations and the athletic position became the Parks Manager overseeing maintenance operations and staff. The division is responsible for the maintenance of five Town-owned parks, two joint use parks with the school district, the Glaxo Smith Kline Open Space, Town Municipal Complex as well as a number of athletic fields. There are 2 full-time staff members.

### Parks and Recreation Full-Time Staff Numbers

In addition to the full-time staff noted above there are a number of part-time staff hours in Recreation Programs & Facilities as well as Parks.



**Zebulon Parks and Recreation Department Organizational Chart (as of April 2021)**



# PLAY ZEBULON

## Parks and Recreation Part-Time Staff Numbers

The Department has nearly 6 full-time equivalent staff in part-time hours.

Division	Positions
<b>Administration</b>	
Director	1
Total	1
<b>Recreation Programs &amp; Facilities</b>	
Program Coordinator	1
Community Center Coordinator	1
Recreation Assistant	1
Total	3
<b>Parks</b>	
Park Crew Leader	1
Parks Manager/Athletic Coordinator	1
Total	2
Grand Total	6

### General Assessment: The following are general comments regarding the organization and staffing of the Parks and Recreation Department.

- ▶ The full-time staff of the Department is professional and hard-working. They generally do a great job with the resources that are available.

- ▶ There is a small full-time staff for the recreation programs, recreation facilities, and parks that are provided to the community. This is particularly true for parks maintenance. There are key half-time staff that are also an important aspect of the department's operation and they carry on important roles and functions.
- ▶ In contrast to many parks and recreation agencies, especially those in smaller communities, there is limited use of part-time or seasonal staff for facility operations and parks maintenance.

Division	Positions	FTE	Total FTE
<b>Administration</b>			
Total	0	0	0
<b>Recreation Programs &amp; Facilities</b>			
Athletics – Recreation Aide	1	.25	.25
Athletics – Site Supervisor	1	.25	.25
Community Ctr. – Recreation Aide	1	.50	.50
Community Ctr. – Recreation Aide	3	.25	.75
Farmers Market – Market Aide	4	.1	.4
Programs – Staff Assistant	1	.50	.50
Programs – Recreation Aide	1	.25	.25
Total	13	2.6	3.4
<b>Parks</b>			
Parks Maintenance Worker	4	.5	2
Parks Maintenance Worker (seasonal)	2	.25	.5
Total	6	.75	2.5
Grand Total	19	3.35	5.9

- ▶ With minimal staff, each full-time staff member fills many roles. Many of these are important but rather mundane tasks that are traditionally handled by line full-time staff or part-time staff. This includes community center front desk operations, building supervision, athletic field maintenance and day-to-day park maintenance.
- ▶ There are job descriptions for all full-time and part-time staff, but they should be reviewed and updated to adequately reflect the actual duties of each position.

The following is a more detailed assessment of the three major organizational areas of the Parks and Recreation Department.

### **Administration**

- ▶ The Director of Parks and Recreation is responsible for the administration of the Department including personnel matters, budgeting, operations and other functions. There is also a full-time Recreation Assistant providing support to the Director and program staff with increased marketing responsibility for the Department. The Director is housed in Town Hall along with the Recreation Assistant.
- ▶ There is only one formal budget for the Department, but the Director is in the process of establishing separate sub-budgets based on general areas of emphasis.
- ▶ There is very limited administrative staff for finance and performance measurements.

- ▶ There is no one individual who is responsible for marketing the Department's programs, rentals or other services.
- ▶ The Department has recently introduced a computerized registration system for programs (RecDesk). This system allows for online registration and provides much greater opportunities for tracking performance measures associated with recreation services.

### **Recreation & Facilities**

- ▶ Each of the 3 coordinators reports directly to the Director. They each have responsibility for certain aspects of recreation programs and facilities.
  - **Recreation Assistant** - supports the Director in administrative duties and efforts related to planning and implementation of programs and events.
  - **Community Center Coordinator** - manages and operates the center and has some program responsibilities for the facility as well.
  - **Program Coordinator** - handles the other program areas including special events.
- ▶ The Town can support athletics with additional part-time help for the Parks Manager/Athletic Coordinator, but in the coming years, as the Town and demand grows, another program coordinator will be needed.

# PLAY ZEBULON



- ▶ Much of the Community Center Coordinator's role is the daily management of the front desk operation. This is not an effective use of this staff person's time. There is one half-time position and three quarter-time positions that assist with front desk operations and building supervision.
- ▶ There is a level of uncertainty regarding programmatic responsibilities at the Community Center. As a result, the center does not always carry a full load of programs.
- ▶ The Program Coordinator handles cultural arts, special events, fitness and camp programs. This is a wide area of responsibility especially with the popularity of special events. The position also spends time managing the front desk at the Community Center. There is one quarter-time Recreation Aide that assists the Coordinator with the programming responsibilities.
- ▶ The full-time Recreation Assistant position (in addition to their administrative responsibilities) assists with special events and the operation of the Farmers Market. This position reports directly to the Director.
- ▶ Most of the programs that are offered are done by contract. Contract program providers typically receive 70-80% of revenue collected for the program. Camp revenue share percentages vary based on the type of camp and supplies required. Camp contractors typically receive 40% of collected revenues.



- ▶ Recreation will need to determine if there are more effective and efficient means to operate the Farmers Market. This includes considerations pertaining to contracted partnerships to offer like services and evaluating if this strategy maximizes town resources for recreation and meeting Town goals.

## **Parks**

- ▶ Parks maintenance (growing environment) is handled by the Parks Division within the Department. However, hardscapes and any structures (restrooms, pavilions, etc.) are the responsibility of the Public Works Department. Public Works also is responsible for the lighting systems and scoreboards at the athletic fields.
- ▶ Facility maintenance (custodial and maintenance of the Community Center) is handled by the Public Works Department. Custodial functions are contracted and managed by Public Works with a cleaning crew on site 4 days per week. Program staff is tasked with cleaning throughout the day as needed and on the days the contracted crew is not scheduled.
- ▶ The Parks Manager/Athletic Coordinator spends a considerable amount of their time maintaining athletic fields during the season, which takes away from time administering the youth and adult sports programs. There are also 2 quarter-time positions that serve as aides for the programs and as site supervisors. School district-owned parks and athletic fields are developed and maintained by the Parks staff. As the Town grows, it is anticipated that this will become 2 separate positions.
- ▶ The fact that there is only 1 full-time park maintenance worker in this Division is astounding considering the number of parks and athletic fields that need to be maintained. There are four half-time positions, but each averages 3-4 hours per day and must not exceed 1,000 hours per year. There is an acute need for more full-time parks maintenance staff as it is difficult to do more than just the day-to-day maintenance tasks.
- ▶ The four half-time staff as well as the Park Crew Leader rotate on Saturdays to provide some coverage during the weekends.
- ▶ There are a limited number of part-time/seasonal positions (2) in the Division and they are primarily utilized for athletic field maintenance.
- ▶ At the time of the initial operations assessment, Whitley Park was the only park under a landscape contract. Based on the initial operations assessment, the Department successfully requested funding to contract general landscaping of three additional parks (Little River Park, Community Park, and Gill Street Park). General landscaping does not include any athletic fields/courts, playgrounds, or nature areas. In addition, the parks department has taken on oversight of routine landscaping of the cemetery beside Gill Street Park through the same contract as park landscaping.
- ▶ Most maintenance tasks are handled in-house, but the following are contracted:
  - Tree trimming
  - Fire ant control
  - Irrigation maintenance

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- ▶ There is only one Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI) on staff (Park Crew Leader) and there should be at least two such positions for playground inspections.
- ▶ Parks & Recreation does not have a specialized crew to handle athletic field maintenance. In fact, most field maintenance is being done directly by the Park Crew Leader and the Athletics Coordinator. This is not an efficient or cost-effective use of these two positions' time.
- ▶ For Parks, vehicle maintenance is managed by the crew leader, as the Town does not have a fleet maintenance division in Public Works.
- ▶ Parks does have their own maintenance facility located behind the Community Center.





- ▶ A staff reorganization following the initial operations assessment assigned the athletics coordinator to the Parks Division as the Parks Manager giving the Parks Crew Leader and staff support in management, planning, and implementation.
- ▶ When the greenway currently under construction is complete (Summer 2021), management of all existing public greenway sections will transition to the Parks Division from Public Works.

### Organizational Strengths and Weaknesses

#### Organizational Strengths

- ▶ Strong, hard-working, professional staff.
- ▶ Staff focuses on the day-to-day operations of the department and serving the public.
- ▶ Recreation programs and services are well-organized and run.
- ▶ Parks and facilities are generally well-maintained.
- ▶ Parks has its own maintenance facility.

#### Organizational Weaknesses

- ▶ Parks Maintenance now has a Parks Manager and a crew leader, but the Parks Manager is also responsible for athletics.
- ▶ With limited staff it is difficult to have time for planning and administrative tasks.
- ▶ Full-time program staff are spending large segments of time on functions and tasks that should be done by other line staff.
- ▶ There is very little use of part-time and seasonal staff to complete key tasks.
- ▶ Parks and facilities maintenance are shared with Public Works.





# PLAY ZEBULON

## 2.6 - COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

### Comparison of Towns

An important part of the planning process is a comparative analysis with similar municipal parks and recreation departments as well as other established standards to benchmark recreational opportunities being offered by the Town. These comparisons are based primarily on population. While this is valuable, it is also recognized that Zebulon wants to be unique in its offerings of recreational opportunities and that recommendations should reflect that aspiration.

Municipalities identified for comparison included the following:

- ▶ Rolesville
- ▶ Wendell
- ▶ Knightdale
- ▶ Mt. Airy
- ▶ Clayton
- ▶ Pittsboro
- ▶ Wilson
- ▶ Oxford
- ▶ Holly Springs
- ▶ Kinston
- ▶ Snow Hill, Virginia
- ▶ Brentwood, Missouri

Considerations when comparing Zebulon to other communities include number of parks per capita, park facilities, open space, recreation/sports facilities, per capita spending, revenues and expenditures, overall budgets and staffing levels.

Another method of comparative analysis is comparison to national standards set by the NRPA.

Part of the process was to determine how existing facilities compared to national standards as defined by the National Recreation and Park Association. These baselines are based on community population.

As a 10-year master plan, we used these standards to determine current compliance and compliance in 2030. Regrading park land, the standards identify 12 acres of park land per 1,000 residents. Zebulon currently is not compliant with these standards. Currently Zebulon has 12.4 acres of park land and needs 72 to be compliant. Without more property acquisition, Zebulon will be more out of compliance in 2030. By 2030 the Town should have 108 acres of park land.

The number of parks required to meet the standard of 5 parks for every 1,300 residents is 4.6. Zebulon is currently compliant with 5 parks. This number does not include joint use facilities such as Wakelon Elementary School Park. Because the Town does not own these properties, the joint use agreement could be discontinued by the owner at any time and are not included.

Further measurement of facilities per NRPA standards includes playgrounds (1 per 2,523 residents), soccer fields (1 per 3,294 residents) and community centers 1 per 9,601 residents. Currently, Zebulon has 3 playgrounds which is compliant, but will need one more by 2030 to remain in compliance. Zebulon has no soccer fields and will need 3 to be compliant in 2030. One community center is all that is required by 2030 and Zebulon currently has one.







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## 2.7 - LEVEL OF SERVICE ANALYSIS

### Methodology

The purpose of an Existing Level of Service (LOS) analysis is to quantify how well the existing parks system is meeting the needs of residents. The National Recreation and Park Association's definition of LOS is "an allocation mechanism for the delivery of park land and basic recreation facilities throughout a community. By adoption of such a standard, a community recognizes and is committed to providing citizens with an equal opportunity to share in the basic menu of services implicit in the standard and accompanying spatial distribution and allocation of policies."

For Zebulon, the LOS analysis was measured based on three basic principles that will be continually refined based on public input in subsequent phases of this planning process.

- ▶ **Acreage** (Amount of Park Land)
- ▶ **Facilities** (Amount of Facilities)
- ▶ **Access** (Distance or Travel Time)

### Acreage LOS

The most common way to measure LOS for existing acreage is the number of public park acres per 1,000 residents in a community. Currently, there are 76.3 acres of public park lands directly managed by the Zebulon Parks Department for public use, as well as 61.9 acres of joint-use park land and another 16.4 acres of public space utilized by the department. The 2019 population of Zebulon is estimated by the U.S. Census Bureau to be 5,646 residents, which translates into a total Acreage LOS of 24.44 acres per 1,000 residents. Using estimates based on approved and planned housing development in Zebulon, the 2030 medium population estimate is approximately 12,946, and the 2035 medium population is estimated to reach 16,596. If no additional park land is acquired, the acreage LOS will drop to 11.94 acres per 1,000 residents in 2030, and 9.31 acres per 1,000 residents in 2035. Table 2.2 shows the LOS analysis for each park type and calculates the projected LOS for 2030 and 2035, as well as the acreage needed to maintain current acreage LOS figures as the population grows.

While it may appear that Zebulon is facing a significant deficit in park acreage as the population grows, it should be noted that the current LOS figures are relatively high for a municipality of this size.

While Acreage LOS helps ensure a commitment to park land as the Town develops, it has shortcomings. Comparison to other municipalities may be difficult as some cities operate golf courses, conservation areas, and other non-recreational facilities which are high in acreage but low in available capacity. Acreage LOS also does not consider amenities that are



**Table 2.2: Acreage Level of Service in Zebulon**

	Acreage	2019 LOS (acres/1000 pop)	2030 LOS (acres/1000 pop) Low Estimate	2030 LOS (acres/1000 pop) Medium Estimate	2030 LOS (acres/1000 pop) High Estimate	2030 Acreage Deficit Low Estimate	2030 Acreage Deficit Medium Estimate	2030 Acreage Deficit High Estimate	2035 LOS (acres/1000 pop) Low Estimate	2035 LOS (acres/1000 pop) Medium Estimate	2035 LOS (acres/1000 pop) High Estimate	2035 Acreage Deficit Low Estimate	2035 Acreage Deficit Medium Estimate	2035 Acreage Deficit High Estimate
<b>Town Parks</b> • Zebulon Community Park • Gill Street Park • Whitley Park • Little River Park	76.24	13.50	8.20	5.89	3.77	49.29	98.57	197.15	6.86	4.59	2.77	73.93	147.86	295.72
<b>Joint Use Parks</b> • Zebulon Elementary School Park • Wakelon Elementary School Park • Zebulon/Wendell Open	61.85	10.95	6.65	4.78	3.05	39.98	79.97	159.94	5.56	3.73	2.25	59.98	119.95	239.91
<b>Other Facilities</b> • GSK Open Space • Town Municipal Complex • The Alley	16.46	2.90	1.76	1.27	0.81	10.60	21.19	42.38	1.47	0.99	0.60	15.89	31.79	63.57
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>154.53</b>	<b>27.36</b>	<b>16.62</b>	<b>11.93</b>	<b>7.63</b>	<b>99.87</b>	<b>199.74</b>	<b>399.47</b>	<b>13.89</b>	<b>9.31</b>	<b>5.61</b>	<b>149.80</b>	<b>299.60</b>	<b>599.21</b>

accessible to residents but owned and operated by entities other than the Town or consolidated Town/County park systems. Examples include county or adjacent municipal parks located near the town border, and privately-operated programs such as YMCAs, church after-school programs, community meeting facilities, and non-profit senior programs. This analysis also does not take into consideration the public access to joint-use facilities or other facilities utilized by the department, which may have limited or no access at certain times.

# PLAY ZEBULON

For these reasons, this System Plan explores additional techniques such as Existing Facility LOS and Access LOS to better determine the extent to which parks, recreation and cultural resource facilities and programs are able to meet the needs of Town of Zebulon residents. This methodology assumes the following principles:

- ▶ **Facilities** (Amount of Facilities) – Every resident should have similar opportunities to use recreation facilities; and
- ▶ **Access** (Distance or Travel Time) – Every resident should be able to access specific park facilities within similar walking, bicycling, public transit and/or driving distances.

## Acreage LOS Findings

As stated in the previous section, Zebulon is currently enjoying an Acreage LOS that is relatively higher than towns of the same size and population. As the Town’s population experiences rapid growth in the next 10-15 years, the overall park system will need to add up to 150 acres of new park land in order to maintain current LOS levels, when considering the even low population estimates. Because Zebulon currently enjoys such a high level of service, providing additional and expanded facilities at the existing parks and Town-owned lands may be able to satisfy rising recreation demand. Establishing a baseline for acreage LOS standards may also help create more realistic expectations for acquisition as the Town continues to develop. As new development progresses, any new parkland acquired should be done in strategic locations in order to maximize the number of residents being served.

From an acreage distribution perspective, it may appear that the park system is currently providing adequate park acreage with some flexibility for future use and expansion. However, this evaluation does not take into consideration the context of the parks throughout the system or the access level of service that the system provides. The facilities and amenities found in each site will also provide a better understanding of how well each park site is meeting the needs of the users it serves.

## Facility LOS

Another way to measure existing parks and recreation LOS is by the number of facilities per population. Like acreage, there are no strict standards for the number of facilities that a community needs, however the NRPA does provide recommendations for select facilities. This section documents the evaluation and comparison of the number of facilities per population to these NRPA recommendations.

Table 2.3 shows the current facility LOS for Zebulon compared with the NRPA recommendations, as well as facility deficits or surpluses for the current population, and the populations estimates for 2030 and 2035. Facilities that are not quantified in the LOS calculations by NRPA are evaluated based on growth, with units needed to maintain current LOS figures provided. Facilities experiencing a surplus are shown in **(Green)**, while facilities experiencing a deficit are shown in **red**. It should be noted that these are only metrics, as may not reflect the needs and priorities of the community.

**Table 2.3: Facility Level of Service in Zebulon**

Facility	Number of Facilities	NRPA Rec. LOS (Facility/1000 pop)	2019 LOS (Facility/1000 pop)	2019 Facility Deficit/ (Surplus) Low Estimate	2030 LOS (facility/1000 pop) Low Estimate	2030 LOS (facility/1000 pop) Medium Estimate	2030 LOS (facility/1000 pop) High Estimate	2030 Facility Deficit/ (Surplus) Low Estimate	2030 Facility Deficit/ (Surplus) Medium Estimate	2030 Facility Deficit/ (Surplus) High Estimate	2035 LOS (facility/1000 pop) Low Estimate	2035 LOS (facility/1000 pop) Medium Estimate	2035 LOS (facility/1000 pop) High Estimate	2035 Facility Deficit/ (Surplus) Low Estimate	2035 Facility Deficit/ (Surplus) Medium Estimate	2035 Facility Deficit/ (Surplus) High Estimate
Baseball/softball Fields	4	0.31	0.71	(2.2)	0.43	0.31	0.20	(1.1)	0.0	2.3	0.36	0.24	0.15	(0.6)	1.1	4.5
Tennis Courts	2	0.1	0.35	(1.4)	0.22	0.15	0.10	(1.1)	(0.7)	0.0	0.18	0.12	0.07	(0.9)	(0.3)	0.8
Football	0	0.13	0.18	(0.3)	0.11	0.08	0.05	0.2	0.7	1.6	0.09	0.06	0.04	0.4	1.2	2.6
Soccer	3	0.14	0.89	(4.2)	0.54	0.39	0.25	(3.7)	(3.2)	(2.2)	0.45	0.30	0.18	(3.4)	(2.7)	(1.1)
Basketball	4	0.28	0.71	(2.4)	0.43	0.31	0.20	(1.4)	(0.4)	1.7	0.36	0.24	0.15	(0.9)	0.6	3.7
Volleyball	1	0.15	0.18	(0.2)	0.11	0.08	0.05	0.4	0.9	2.0	0.09	0.06	0.04	0.7	1.5	3.1
Playground	3	0.44	0.71	(1.5)	0.43	0.31	0.20	0.1	1.7	4.9	0.36	0.24	0.15	0.9	3.3	8.1
Community Center	1	0.09	0.18	(0.5)	0.11	0.08	0.05	(0.2)	0.2	0.8	0.09	0.06	0.04	0.0	0.5	1.5
Fitness Center	1	0.08	0.18	(0.5)	0.11	0.08	0.05	(0.3)	0.0	0.6	0.09	0.06	0.04	(0.1)	0.3	1.2
Indoor Program	6	-	1.06	-	0.65	0.46	0.30	3.9	7.8	15.5	0.54	0.36	0.22	5.8	11.6	23.3
Gymnasium	1	-	0.18	-	0.11	0.08	0.05	0.6	1.3	2.6	0.09	0.06	0.04	1.0	1.9	3.9
Picnic Shelter	4	-	0.71	-	0.43	0.31	0.20	2.6	5.2	10.3	0.36	0.24	0.15	3.9	7.8	15.5

**Facility LOS Findings**

When compared to the NRPA-Recommended figures the Town is currently experiencing a surplus of all facilities currently operated by the Parks and Recreation Department that NRPA provides metrics for. This indicates that for a small Town, Zebulon is currently exceeding the facility needs of the population it serves.

As the population grows towards 2030, the Town begins to experience a deficit in football fields, volleyball courts, and playgrounds, as well as community centers and fitness centers using the high estimates. Moving towards 2035, in addition to the 2030 deficits, the Town will begin to experience deficits in baseball/softball fields and basketball courts and tennis courts (high estimate only). Soccer fields maintain a surplus through all growth scenarios, however access and quality of these facilities will need to be evaluated as well as turf management practices to ensure playability.



# PLAY ZEBULON

The facilities that are not quantified in the NRPA LOS recommendations are evaluated based on the units that will be needed to maintain the current LOS figures. Using the medium estimates for population, Zebulon will need to nearly double the number of gymnasiums, indoor classrooms and picnic shelters by 2035 in order to maintain the current level of service provided by these facilities.

Though a Facility LOS analysis provides a snapshot condition of the outdoor recreation facility capacity, it does not address the facilities provided by other recreation providers such as private providers, or State and County Parks. The Facility LOS also does not capture whether facilities are accessible for all residents, and conflicts with input from public participation on municipal, community and neighborhood levels. For this analysis the System Plan team conducted an Access LOS analysis to identify gaps in accessibility to facilities.

## Access LOS

A third approach explored to better determine existing LOS is analyzing the level of access that residents have to park facilities. This is typically measured as a distance, either in miles or travel time. For the Town of Zebulon Parks, this analysis will include parameters of 1/2 mile, a comfortable walking distance; 1 mile, a long walk or short bike ride; and 2 miles, a bike ride or short drive. In addition to the parks themselves, access LOS will also be evaluated for select facilities, consistent with the park classification or park type each facility is typically found in. Facilities types analyzed are also consistent with facilities identified in the Facility LOS section of the chapter.



## Elements analyzed include:

### Park Synthesis LOS Analysis:

- ▶ **All Parks with Open Space** - 1/2 mile, 1 mile, 2 mile

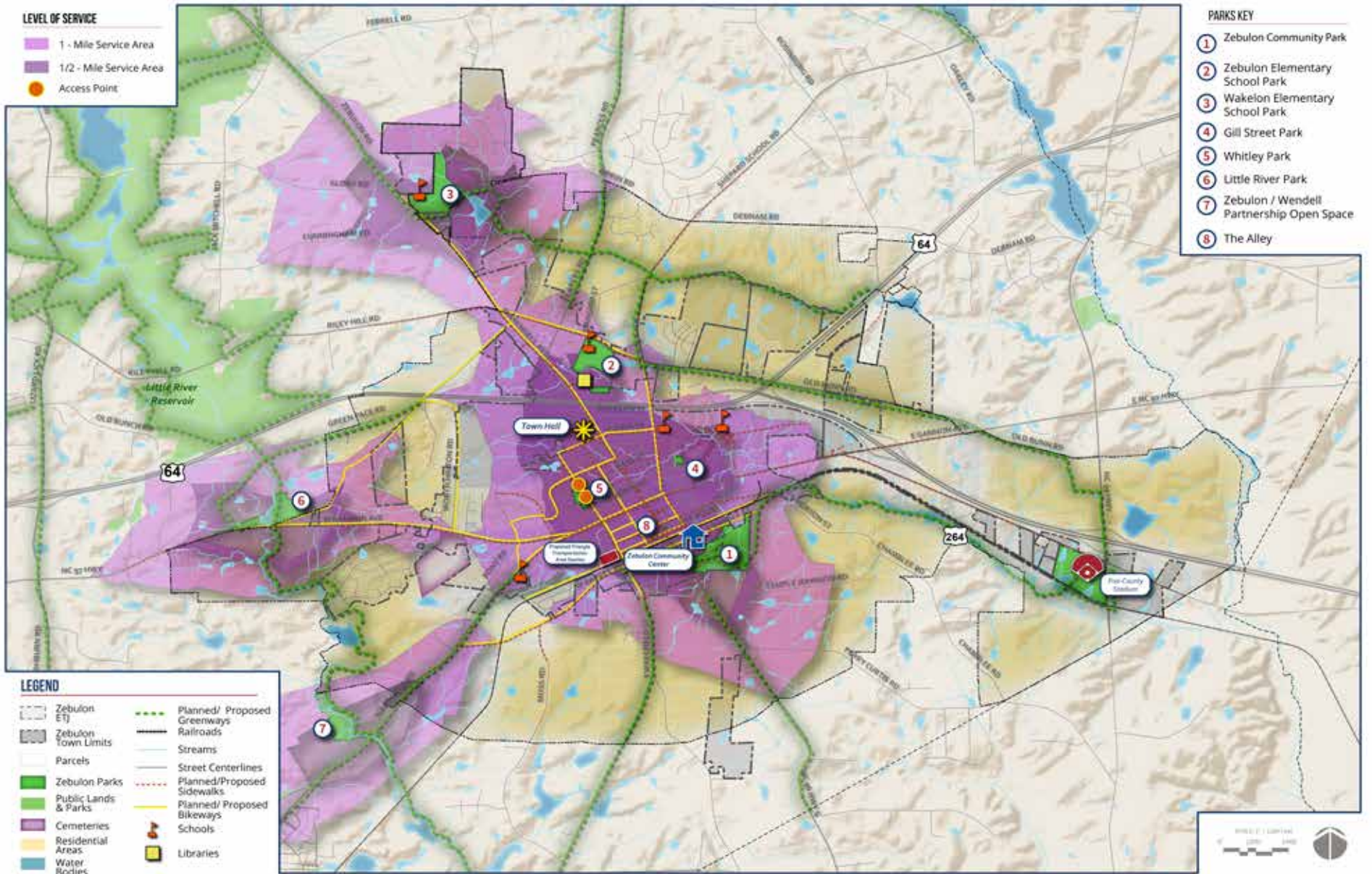
### Neighborhood-Serving Facilities

- ▶ **Basketball Courts** - 1/2 mile, 1 mile
- ▶ **Playgrounds** - 1/2 mile, 1 mile
- ▶ **Park Shelters** - 1/2 mile, 1 mile
- ▶ **Trail Access** - 1/2 mile, 1 mile

### Community-Serving Facilities:

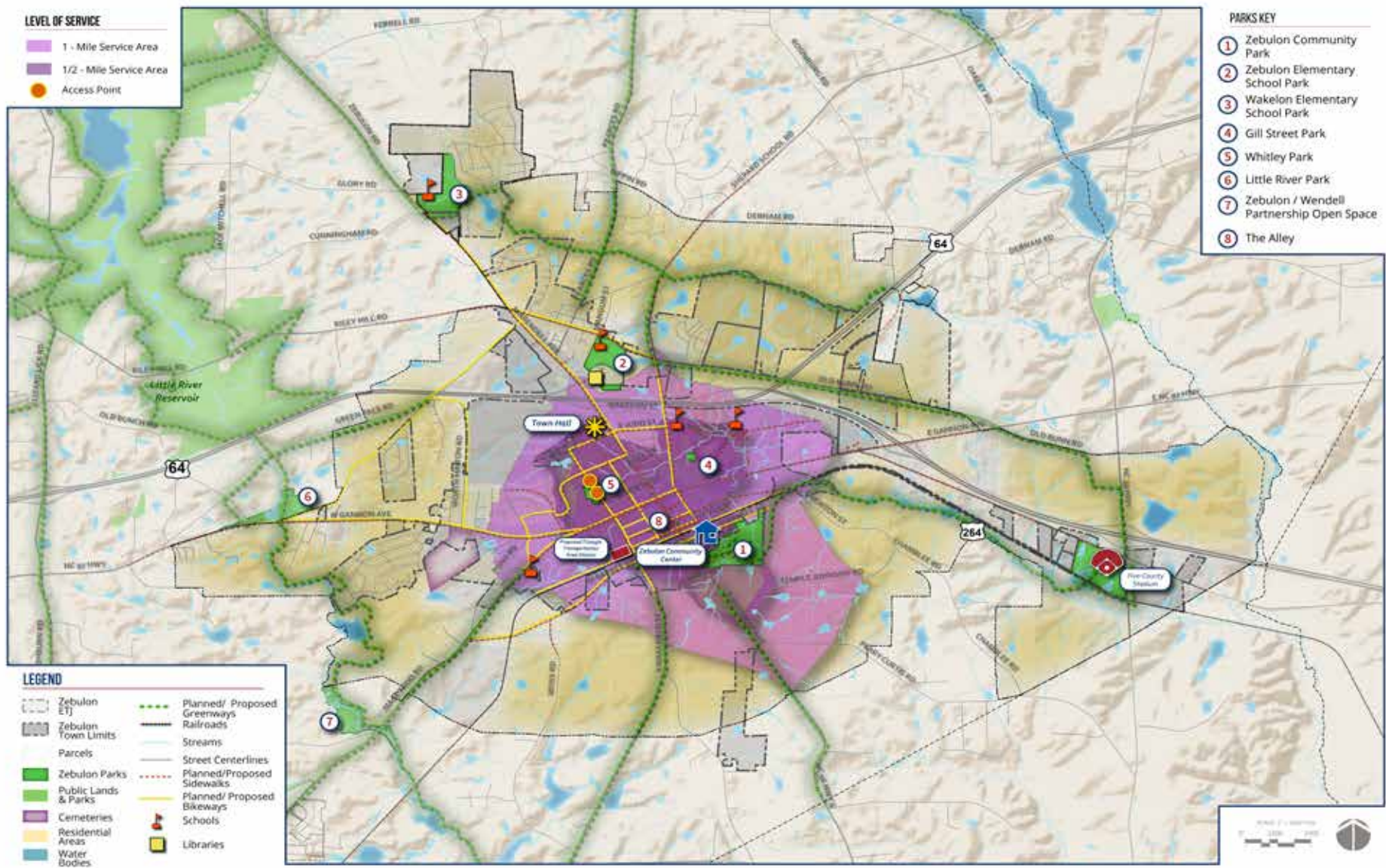
- ▶ **Soccer Fields** - 1 mile, 2 mile
- ▶ **Baseball/softball Fields** - 1 mile, 2 mile
- ▶ **Tennis Courts** - 1 mile, 2 mile

Maps 1.2-1.8 identify gaps in accessibility for the parks and each facility type.



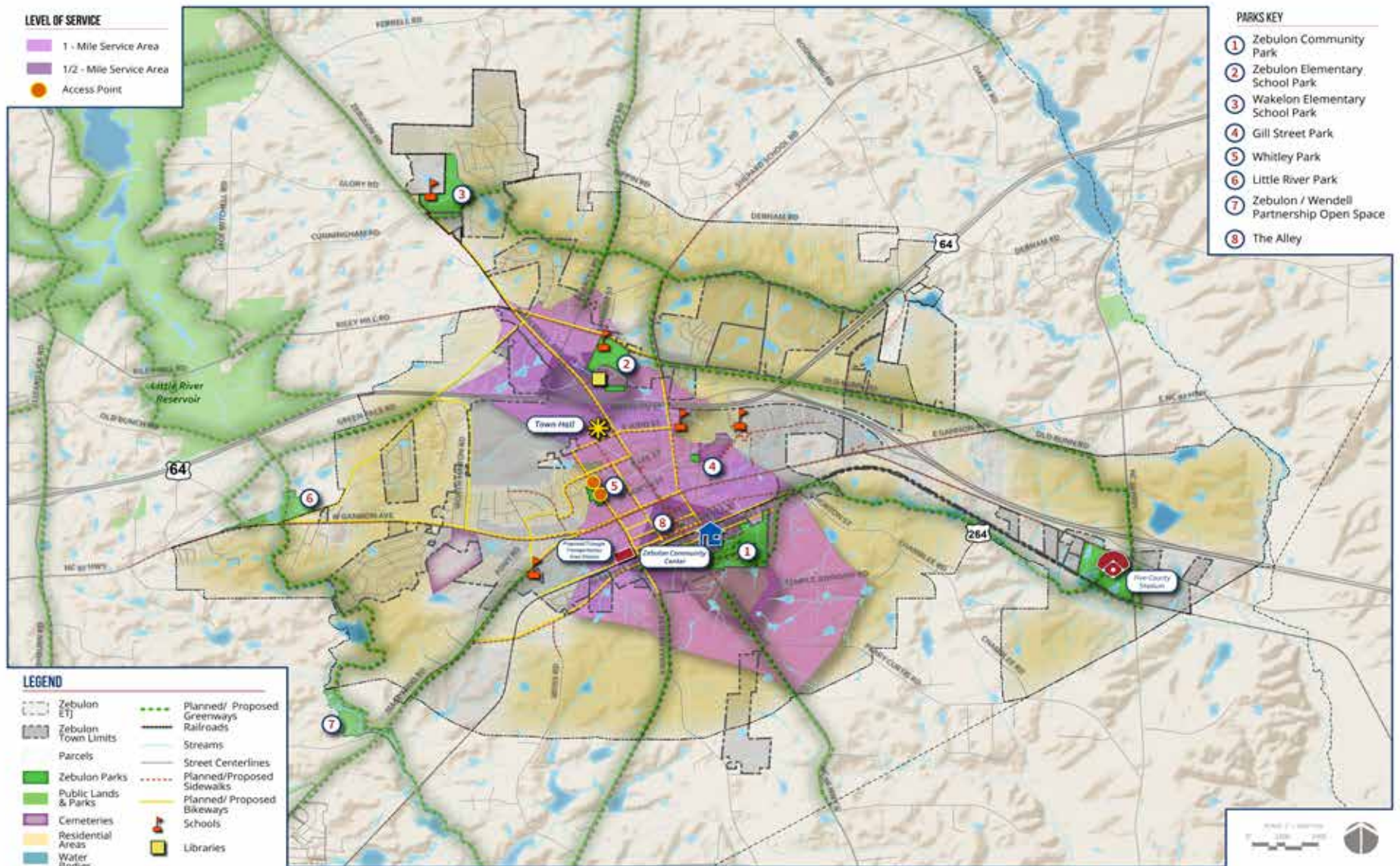
Map 1.2 - Level of Service - All Parks





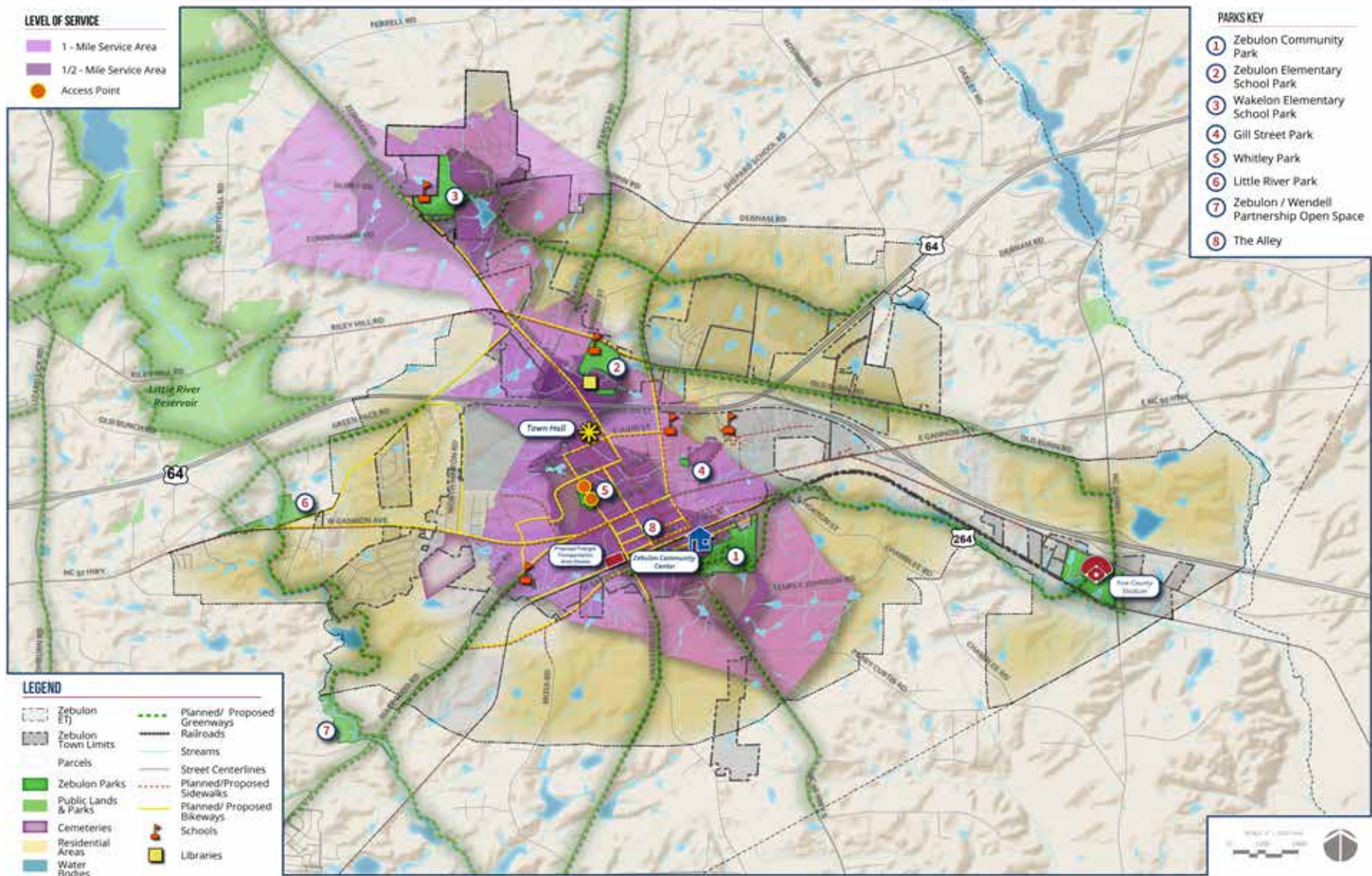
**Map 1.3 - Level of Service - Parks with Playgrounds**





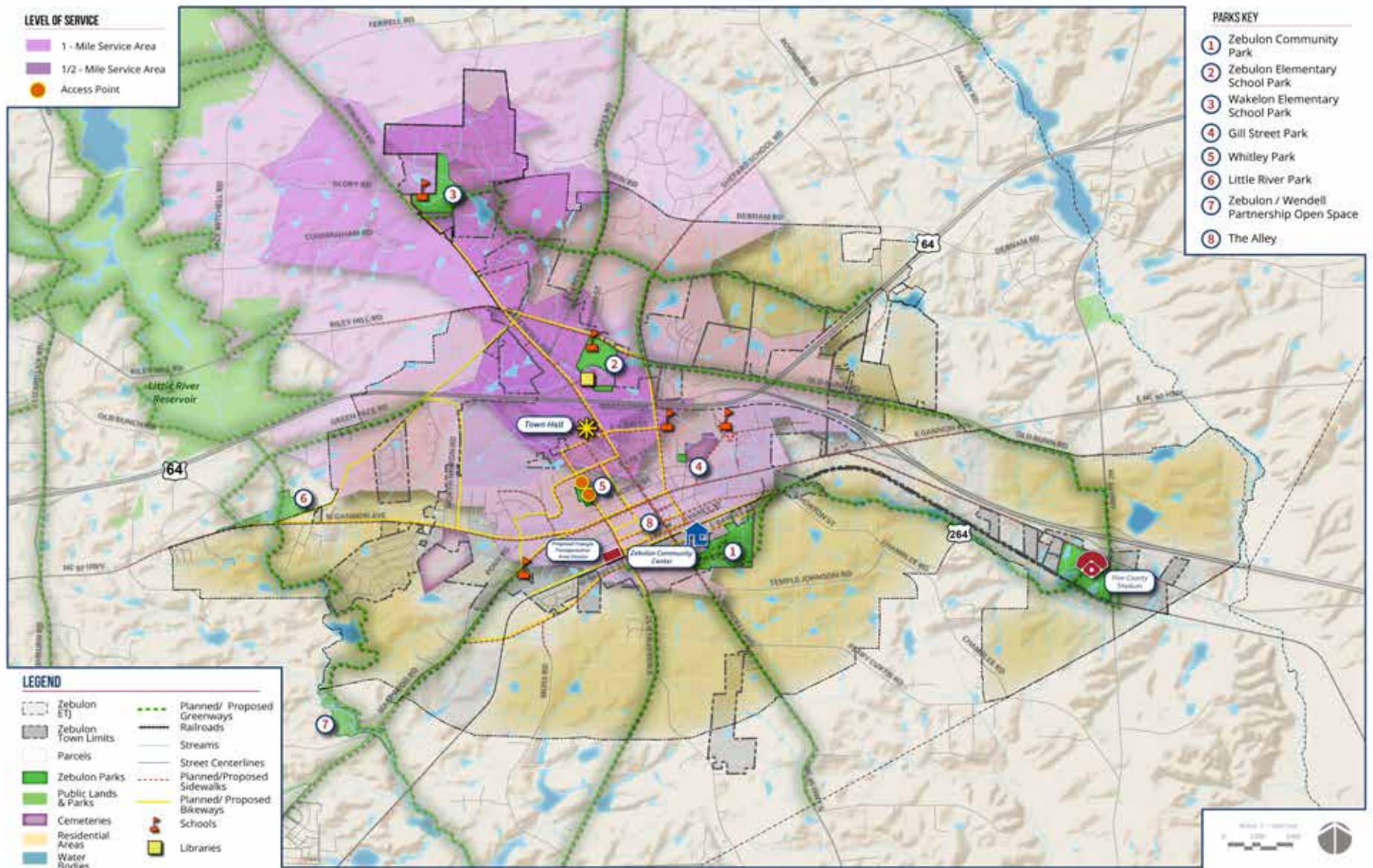
**Map 1.4 - Level of Service - Parks with Basketball Courts**





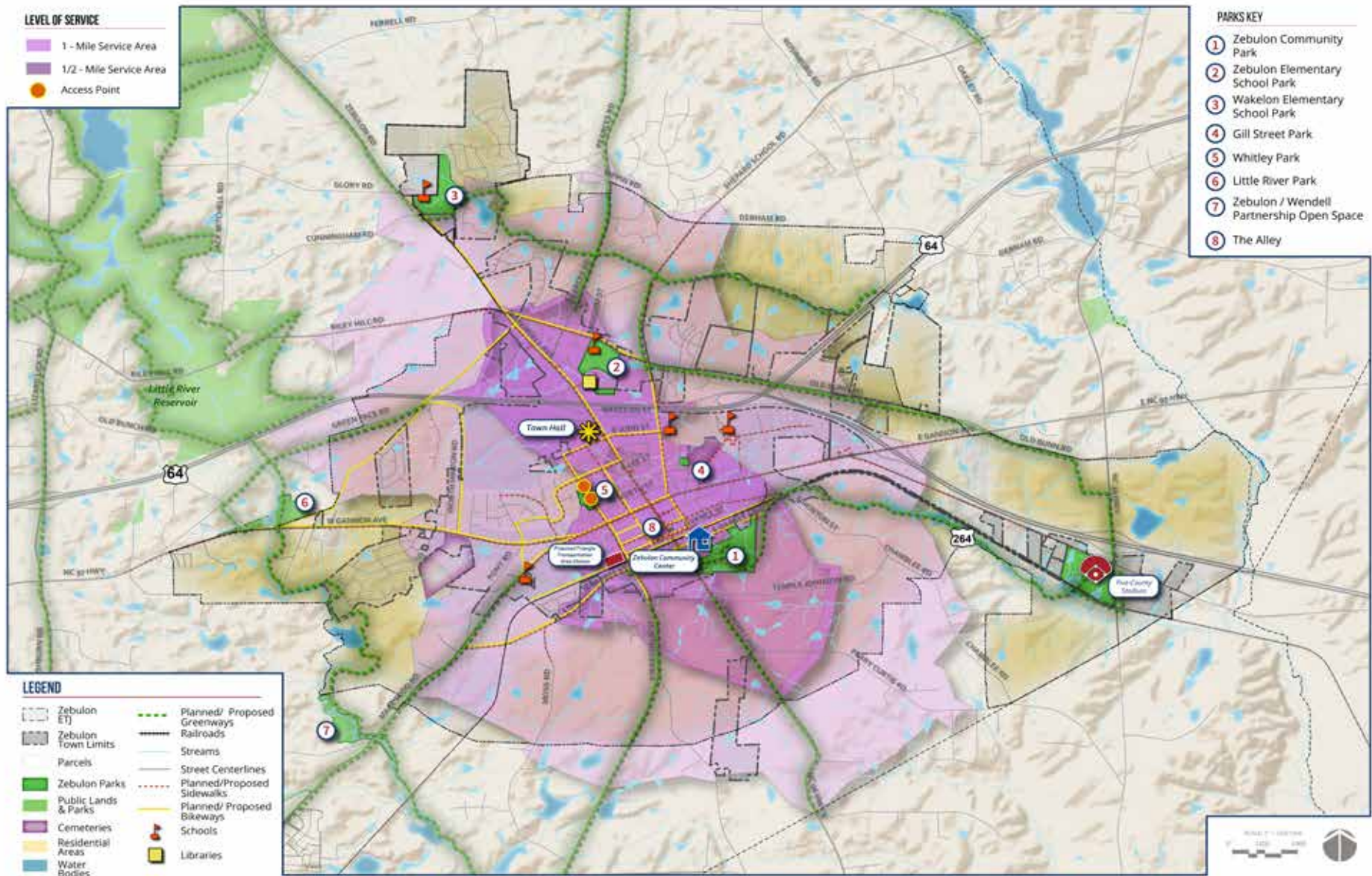
Map 1.5 - Level of Service - Parks with Park Shelters





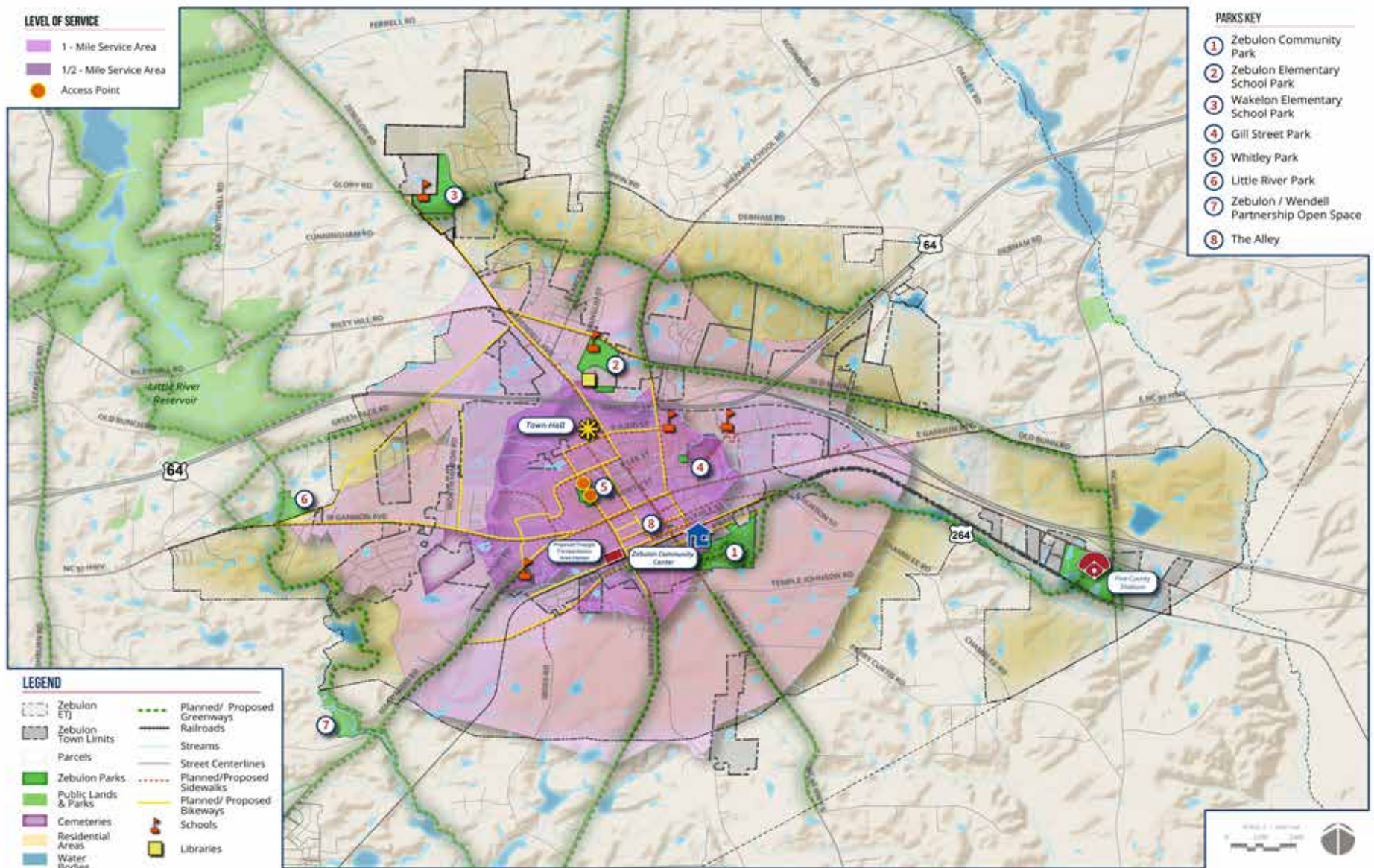
Map 1.6 - Level of Service - Parks with Soccer Fields





Map 1.7 - Level of Service - Parks with Baseball / Softball Fields





Map 1.8 - Level of Service - Parks with Tennis Courts

# PLAY ZEBULON

## Access LOS Findings

Overall, the Access LOS analysis indicates that park distribution in Zebulon is relatively centralized within the Town core and the elementary schools, while perimeter areas, particularly the southern part of the Town and the northeastern corner, are experiencing gaps in park access.

## Park Synthesis Analysis

By analyzing all the parks and facilities at a 1/2-mile service area, using points where users are most likely to access the parks, provides a better understanding of the walking and biking access LOS for the entire Park System. In terms of walkability, the central areas of the Town and the parks and facilities in close proximity to those neighborhoods provide limited walkable access, especially when considering gaps in sidewalks and barriers such as Arendell Avenue and Gannon Avenue. This is also true for the areas around the elementary schools. As the Town continues to expand and develop, providing walkable access to neighborhoods should be a priority, strategically targeting future park development in the areas with the greatest need, as well as improving infrastructure in areas with gaps and barriers to access.

Neighborhood-serving, walk-to facilities such as playgrounds, basketball courts and picnic shelters are analyzed at 1/2-mile radius and a 1-mile radius. Generally, playgrounds and basketball courts have adequate coverage in the central parts of town, however the perimeter is largely underserved. Access to park shelters will improve north of downtown with the inclusion of Zebulon Elementary; however there are perimeter conditions that are similar to the other neighborhood-serving facilities.



For community-serving facilities such as baseball/ softball and soccer fields, the service area is expanded to two miles, as these are typically facilities that people are more willing to drive to. Baseball/softball fields have good coverage throughout most of the town, except for the perimeter edges. Soccer fields provide service to the northern half of Zebulon, but there is a significant gap in service south of West Gannon Avenue. Tennis courts provide service to a good portion of central Zebulon, however gaps exist outside of the core areas.



## LOS Summary

By utilizing a three-level approach to analyze the existing level of service (LOS) for parks and recreation facilities, the consultant team identified a number of trends, which will be explored and refined further through the development of a Vision Plan and Implementation Plan. These preliminary findings included:

**Acreage LOS** - Zebulon is currently experiencing a large amount of park acreage per 1,000 residents when considering the park system as a whole. Continued growth and expansion of the Town will reduce the Acreage LOS over time, however current park acreage may provide sufficient space for additional facilities, though acquisition of future parkland should be evaluated based on the location of growth, and the changing needs and priorities of the community.

**Facilities LOS** - This analysis identifies an adequate supply of all facilities when compared to NRPA recommendations using the current Town population. The surplus conditions will continue for some facilities as the town grows to 2030 population estimates, however deficits begin to develop for football fields, volleyball courts and playgrounds. These deficits continue as the population reaches 2035 estimates, with new deficits developing for baseball/softball fields, basketball courts, community centers and fitness centers.

**Access LOS** - Overall, the Access LOS technique confirmed many findings the consultant team received during public involvement phase of the project. In general, fast-growing residential areas on the perimeter of the Town have gaps in service areas for existing parks and recreation facilities.

Access to parks and facilities for areas with significant growth should be a priority moving forward, and development of new parks and recreation facilities should take current LOS figures into consideration, as well as the needs and priorities identified by the community.

**The northern, southern and western edges have been identified as the areas with the greatest amount of service area gaps for access to open spaces when analyzed at a 1/2-mile service area.**

# PLAY ZEBULON

## 2.8 - SYSTEM INVENTORY & ANALYSIS SUMMARY

Every step in the planning process yielded valuable information and provided the project team a solid understanding of Zebulon's current park system and offering of recreation programs. The steps in the inventory and analysis task included:

Site visits to each park and facility to evaluate the attributes and deficiencies including the park's physical conditions, accessibility, safety, program and recreation facilities, level of maintenance, safety and potential for expansion and/or additional recreation opportunities. Observational forms were used by the team when making site visits. These observational forms included various categories for evaluation. Those being:

- ▶ Design and Construction
- ▶ Effectiveness
- ▶ Comfort and Image
- ▶ Access and Linkages
- ▶ Sustainability
- ▶ Social
- ▶ Environmental
- ▶ Economic

Evaluations based on these categories result in a determination of the park and/or facility as to whether or not it is exceeding, meeting or falling below expectations. According to Table 2.1, all parks and facilities are meeting or exceeding expectations. However, there is always room for improvement.

### Successes in the Existing System:

Compared to other communities of similar size, the **acreage level of service is high**.

Within the core of the Town, **access to existing parks and recreation facilities is good**.

The Town offers a **large number of programs that have high participation rates** compared to similar-sized communities.

The Town's commitment to a higher quality of life through parks and recreation is demonstrated through their **continuing strategic planning** through completed and on-going plans.

### Opportunities for Improvement include the following:

With regard to **Design and Construction**, the results indicate that improvements could be made in employing design standards for branding.

With regard to **Effectiveness**, the results indicate that improvements could be made to provide opportunities at each park for all ages and promote good health and fitness.





With regard to **Comfort and Image**, the results indicate that there could be more places to sit at park facilities.

With regard to **Access and Linkages**, the results indicate that improvements to signage / wayfinding and opportunities for people with special needs are warranted.

With regard to **Social Sustainability**, the results indicate that parks and facilities are in good shape. With regard to **Environmental Sustainability**, the results indicate that improvements could be made to enhance water quality, biodiversity and educate visitors by providing educational opportunities for environmental awareness.

With regard to **Economic Sustainability**, the results indicate that opportunities to generate revenue could be enhanced.

### **Categorizing park facilities reflecting size, opportunities offered and according to state / national recommendations**

The Zebulon park system currently has 1 Mini Park – the downtown Pocket park developed in collaboration with the Zebulon Downtown Arts Council, known as the Alley. Gill Street Park and Whitley Park are categorized as a Neighborhood Parks

which range in size from approximately 2 -10 acres. Community parks are generally categorized as parks that range 15-50 acres and provide recreation opportunities that serve a community-wide service area. Zebulon Community Park, at 45 acres, and Little River Park, at 22+ acres are categorized as Community Parks; however Little River Park is primarily a resourced-based park with few programmed recreation opportunities. Wakelon and Zebulon Elementary School Parks are 35 and 24 acres respectively, however access to the facilities is limited due to their joint-use classification. While they contribute by offering recreational opportunities to the community those could be eliminated by building expansion or an alternative land use decision by the Wake County School Board. The 26+ acres on Mack Todd Road, jointly-owned under a partnership between Zebulon and neighboring Wendell, is undeveloped and currently categorized as open space. This site does not currently offer any recreational opportunities.

Standards, strategies and policies created and employed to meet the goals, objectives and vision identified for the Zebulon Parks and Recreation system should respond to those opportunities identified above in order to enhance existing facilities and maximize recreation opportunities.

# PLAY ZEBULON

The documentation of recreation programs offered by the Town that are provided through outside individuals or organizations. The community center accommodates most of the programs offered but some do utilize existing parks and athletic fields. There are numerous organizations that partner with the Town to deliver programs. These include Wake County, non-profit organizations and the school system. Private organizations also offer sports and fitness opportunities. These offerings need to be accounted for when the Town is developing priorities for new and/or improved facilities. Participants include not only town residents but also non-residents.

While programs offered are diverse and for all age groups, current programs are primarily focused on youth and seniors.

## Current weaknesses in programs offered include:

- ▶ Lack of non-traditional and adventure sports programs
- ▶ Teen-based programs are limited
- ▶ No programs for middle school-age children
- ▶ There are limited offerings for active seniors
- ▶ No special needs programs or services
- ▶ No youth-based fitness programs
- ▶ Wellness programs

## The department is strong in the provision of:

- ▶ Youth sports teams and individual sports
- ▶ Youth specialty summer camps

- ▶ Community-based special events
- ▶ Visual arts for youth and young adults
- ▶ Traditional senior services
- ▶ Self-directed activities

Limited programming is a function of limited staff and lack of certain facilities and the design of existing facilities. 82% of residents surveyed travel outside Zebulon for recreation opportunities due to lack or quality of Town facilities.

## An Evaluation of Department Operations

Operations currently reflect an unofficial structure and division of responsibilities into three separate areas of focus, Administration, Recreation Programs and Facilities and Parks Maintenance. Nineteen part-time positions support six full-time staff members.

Programs and day-to-day operations are well-organized and staff has received high marks from the community on the service they provide. Parks are generally well-maintained but could be better with more dedicated staff. Recently a landscape maintenance contract with a private company for four parks has been put in place. Current staff perform tasks that could be done by others more cost effectively.

Improved communications and advertising of programs would improve participation. Many residents don't feel they know what programs the town offers.

A comparative analysis of Zebulon's parks and recreation facilities and programs to other municipalities requires evaluation of many factors including an assessment of facilities and programs offered based on population primarily and the economic opportunities and realities including per capita spending, revenue and expenditures. Several similar municipalities were used for the comparison.

### **A Determination of Level of Service**

Level of Service is directly linked to current and future population figures and access to recreation opportunities within the Town of Zebulon. The LOS analysis conducted for this study was based on three basic principles, the amount of acreage dedicated to parks, facilities available for use and access or travel time. While the town is facing a deficit in park land if no additional property is purchased over the next 10 years it is noteworthy that current LOS figures are relatively high for a municipality of Zebulon's size. To maintain current acreage LOS as the population rapidly expands during the next five to ten years, the Town (or residential developers) will need to develop approximately 200-300 acres of park land. While the Town currently enjoys over 27 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, future targets may need to be adjusted to establish realistic goals for acreage LOS.

Zebulon is also currently experiencing a high level of service for recreation facilities, and when considering existing park property, the Town can accommodate additional facilities within their current Park Inventory. Like acreage LOS, future facility LOS targets may also need to be adjusted to maintain realistic and achievable goals. Because of the expected population growth, access LOS will become increasingly important during the next five to ten years. Recommendations in this Master Plan will help to establish goals for access LOS that will help continue to provide the desired level of access to existing and new residents in Zebulon.



# 3





A photograph of a modern playground with green and yellow equipment on a wood chip surface. The equipment includes a climbing structure with rings and a blue platform. The background shows trees and a building.

**COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

**PLAY  
ZEBULON**

**Parks & Recreation Master Plan**







# COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

## INTRODUCTION

Assessing the recreational needs of the community from their perspective is critical to understanding both needs and aspirations. Public involvement is the cornerstone of any successful planning process. Researching, understanding and accurately reflecting community needs is how successful master plans are built.

## Methodology

For the Town of Zebulon Recreation and Parks Master Plan, a multifaceted approach to community engagement was conducted in order to obtain as much input from the public as possible in a limited time frame. The primary goals of the engagement process were to understand the community's perspective, obtain input from residents on programs, facilities and concepts, raise awareness of the project and build support and a sense of ownership within the community. At various points throughout the process, the Town's Recreation and Parks Advisory Board and Board of Commissioners were updated with progress reports and results from community engagement activities and asked for their feedback.

This Master Plan effort had a robust public engagement plan that utilized a cross-section of techniques including one-on-one stakeholder interviews, focus groups, Town-led "meeting-in-a-box" presentations, community meetings, virtual engagement online surveys, and a community-wide mail survey. While the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic presented unforeseen challenges, the variety and flexibility of the public input techniques ensured that the community remained engaged throughout the process.

**CHAPTER 3:  
COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

- 3.1 Parks & Recreation Advisory Bd
- 3.2 Stakeholder Interviews & Public Groups
- 3.3 Community Meetings
- 3.4 Online Community Survey
- 3.5 Statistically Valid Survey
- 3.6 Community Needs Assessment Summary



# PLAY ZEBULON

## 3.1 - PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD

The Town of Zebulon's Parks and Recreation Advisory Board served as the project's steering committee throughout the planning process for the Master Plan along with a few others invited to participate. At the first Steering Committee meeting, held on January 11, 2020, members identified and discussed needs and priorities for the system. Topics included:

- ▶ Current and projected Town growth
- ▶ Need for an aquatics program, greenways and soccer fields
- ▶ Potential improvements to existing facilities
- ▶ Methods of community engagement
- ▶ Comparable communities

As part of a session later in the process, members of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board were asked to identify priorities for the future of the Parks and Recreation Department and system. Items listed to the right reflect their input regarding programs, facilities and potential funding sources.





## PROGRAMS

- ▶ Basketball
- ▶ Baseball
- ▶ 30 + (adult) athletics
- ▶ Football
- ▶ Tennis
- ▶ Play groups for toddlers, preschools, and younger
- ▶ Soccer
- ▶ Bike Club
- ▶ Aquatic
- ▶ Dance
- ▶ Gymnastics
- ▶ Tai Chi
- ▶ Running and Walking Clubs (youth and adult)
- ▶ Youth activities for themes around the seasons and holidays
- ▶ Over 50 group activities
- ▶ Gardening
- ▶ Woodworking
- ▶ Pot luck
- ▶ Home craft brewing
- ▶ Music/band
- ▶ Safety classes
- ▶ Financial group learning
- ▶ Adult nights like museums have
- ▶ Arts
- ▶ Book Club
- ▶ Karaoke Nights
- ▶ Co-working space/gathering

## FACILITIES

**The following facilities were identified. Several were identified by multiple members.**

- ▶ Outdoor Fitness
- ▶ Dog Park
- ▶ Swimming Pool
- ▶ Splash Pad
- ▶ Ropes Course
- ▶ Entertainment Venue
- ▶ Basketball Courts/Gym
- ▶ Canoes, Kayaks for rent, guided trips
- ▶ Little River Nature Trails and Stations
- ▶ Indoor Waterslide and Activity Center
- ▶ Skateboard Park
- ▶ Driving Range
- ▶ Playground
- ▶ Meeting Space for medium size groups

## FUNDING STREAMS

The Parks & Recreation Advisory Board indicated that they hoped funds were earmarked by the town to help with Parks renovation and growth already. In addition, they would like to see impact fees be charged to new developers. They thought people would pay for programs and facility use through user fees. They would like to seek grant funding and felt a Parks and Recreation Bond should be considered. They acknowledged that a mix of sources will be needed to accomplish the goal of providing enough quality opportunities for the community.

# PLAY ZEBULON

## 3.2 STAKEHOLDER & ELECTED OFFICIALS INTERVIEWS

A series of twenty-two (22) one-on-one telephone interviews were conducted with identified stakeholders and elected officials to further define recreation needs and opportunities for the Zebulon park system. Stakeholders included Zebulon Parks and Recreation staff, Wake County park staff, and representatives of the Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau, local business community and management from the Carolina Mudcats. These stakeholders were interviewed over the course of several days in July and August 2020. Elected officials, interviewed over the several days in October 2020, included members of Zebulon’s Board of Commissioners and a representative of the Wake County Commission.

In summary, the following perspectives were heard through these interviews:

### Vision for the Parks and Recreation System:

- ▶ The Town is getting ready to have a big population increase and there is a need to add parks, greenways and programming to meet the anticipated future need. The imminent population growth was referenced continually as a reason many feel the Parks System needs to expand and offer more amenities and programs.
- ▶ Although six parks in a small town with numerous programs is commendable, there is still current demand that is not being met, particularly in the realm of greenways, connectivity to downtown, additional ball fields, and nature-themed programs and spaces. Most felt that the existing parks are adequate, but already lacking in space and program offerings for the Town's current needs.
- ▶ There is a general feeling that the amenities and programs offered need to be diverse to meet the needs of new and existing residents with divergent interests.
- ▶ Implement greenways and trails system to create a connected system of walking and biking trails and greenways through the community and Downtown and blueway system at Little River.
- ▶ The system should be well-promoted to create an awareness of the Town’s diverse opportunities.



# CITY NEEDS

## Funding and Implementation:

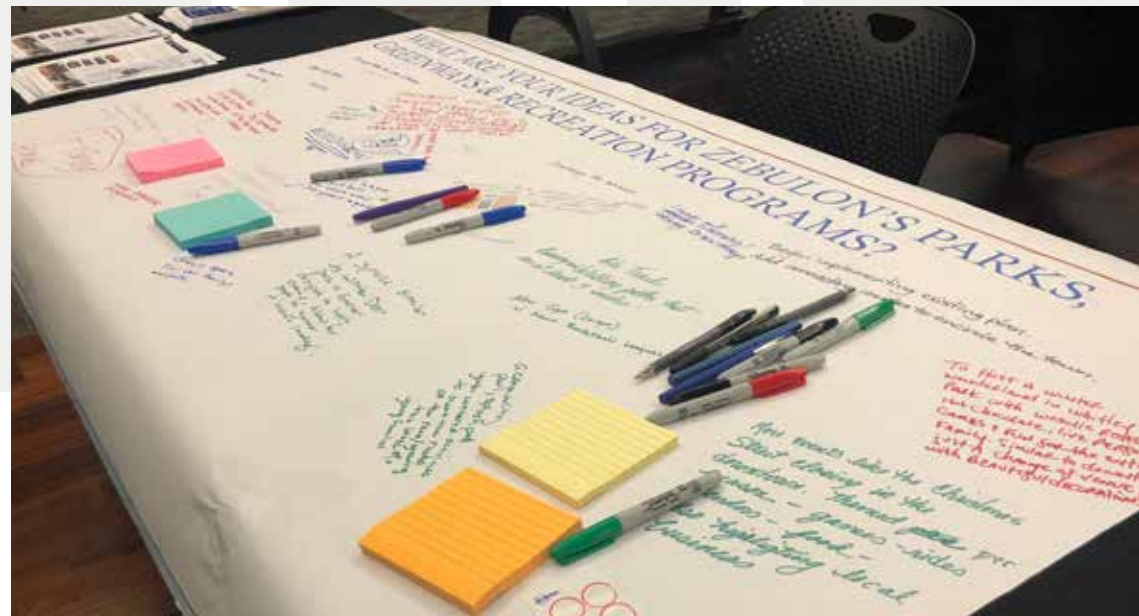
- ▶ Provide diversity in funding the park improvements through grants, a potential bond (if residents approve), impact fees, General Fund, and partnerships.

## Needs and Priorities:

- ▶ The existing community center is too small for existing programs and does not meet current needs.
- ▶ There is a community-voiced need for a swimming pool, aquatics facility or splashpad, maybe at Whitley Park.
- ▶ Develop a trail from the Community Park to Five County Stadium (“catwalk”) and make better use of the land and parking at the Stadium.
- ▶ Expansion of Zebulon Community Park.
- ▶ Develop an amphitheater and dog parks.

## Comparable Communities:

- ▶ Rolesville (similar in size)
- ▶ Wendell (similar in size)
- ▶ Mount Airy (great greenway system)
- ▶ Wake Forest (public art, trails)
- ▶ Kinston (public art, downtown events)
- ▶ Apex (public art, trails)
- ▶ West Jefferson (turned their focus to downtown)
- ▶ Goldsboro (turned their focus to downtown)
- ▶ Holly Springs (sports tourism)
- ▶ Wilson (sports tourism)



# PLAY ZEBULON

## 3.3 FOCUS GROUPS

Seven (7) focus group meetings covered a variety of topics including facilities and programs. The meetings were held on February 25th and 28th. Combined, the meetings were attended by more than 30 residents, staff and interested parties. Each meeting was 1 to 1.5 hours in length and started with a brief introduction of the Town’s Parks and Recreation system planning process, followed by in-depth discussion of needs and priorities, then capped by a discussion of the preliminary vision and big ideas for each topic and possible implementation strategies. The focus group topics were as follows (in meeting chronological order):

- ▶ Town Department Leaders
- ▶ Civic Groups
- ▶ Churches
- ▶ Educators
- ▶ Teen Council
- ▶ Athletics
- ▶ Hispanic Community

Comments and ideas from participants were recorded in meeting notes and reviewed to reflect consistent themes for preliminary findings. The themes are as follows for each group.



## Town Department Leaders

- ▶ Better understanding of needs and desires of the community
- ▶ Programs offered by the Town are very successful and often at or near capacity
- ▶ Parks are well-utilized and maintained
- ▶ Need to foster greater collaboration between potential partners (churches, schools, developers)
- ▶ Downtown needs additional small meeting areas
- ▶ Look at alternative funding opportunities such as bonds, user and impact fees, special assessment

## Civic Groups

- ▶ Due to the growth of the Town, summer camps and youth programs could be beneficial
- ▶ Develop a well-rounded Department within its means of capacity and financial resources
- ▶ Provide additional programs across the user spectrum: youth, teen, adult, seniors
- ▶ Develop a well rounded system of indoor and outdoor facilities and programs to engage youth and create a “life without a cell phone”

## Churches

- ▶ Give people things to do in the parks so that they stay in Zebulon for recreation
- ▶ Invest in Downtown Zebulon with a focus on growth yet maintain that “small-town feel” and create a sense of place
- ▶ Create places for groups to gather (church groups) and share their lives that are safe and comfortable
- ▶ Develop a large community center with meeting spaces and splash pads
- ▶ Give consideration to the growing senior population
- ▶ Need to make sure both sides of US 64 are addressed when considering new park land and facilities

# PLAY ZEBULON

## Educators

- ▶ Develop a greater variety of programs that attracts a lot of different people and are affordable and accessible
- ▶ Expand the Department to accommodate future growth in the Town
- ▶ Look beyond the normal elements of parks and recreation to include health and wellness
- ▶ Develop a pre-K program; develop and expand before-school and after-school programs
- ▶ Support the development of more passive parks

## Teen Council

- ▶ Create a place for teens to gather and hang out with a variety of things to do and different places to hang
- ▶ Create a series of events and spaces that will attract teens including open outdoor spaces, splash pads
- ▶ Develop communication protocols that reach the teen population; many feel they do not get the information they need to be involved with the Town

## Athletics

- ▶ The Town needs to accept and anticipate what comes with growth and provide additional and nicer facilities to accommodate everyone; mindsets need to change
- ▶ Provide additional sports fields and facilities to encourage additional youth participation and compete with other nearby towns. Some of the Town's youth are traveling to adjacent communities for youth sports
- ▶ Allow access to Mudcats Stadium
- ▶ Work with developers to have them provide park land or become corporate sponsors
- ▶ Change sports-focused summer camp to encourage new youth participation
- ▶ involved with the Town



## Hispanic Community

- ▶ Need greater, and better, Spanish-language communication to reach the Hispanic population in Town
- ▶ Need to provide additional fields with lights for soccer
- ▶ Develop special events that include the Hispanic population and their heritage

## Focus Group Themes

- ▶ Splash pad and water play area to be used during the summer and weekends
- ▶ Larger open space areas for special events and unstructured play
- ▶ Recreation Center with gymnasium, event and meeting space
- ▶ Increasing need for additional sports fields including artificial turf fields and lights for year-round use
- ▶ Greater connectivity to trails and sidewalks for park access
- ▶ Additional programs and activities for people of all ages including teens and seniors
- ▶ Consider the needs to the diverse community in Zebulon
- ▶ Provide fitness stations and other health and wellness opportunities in the parks
- ▶ Dog park
- ▶ Community gardens
- ▶ Concerns about user and impact fees discouraging use or limiting future development growth.

# PLAY ZEBULON

## 3.4 COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Three (3) community meetings were held during the process contributing to the assessment of community needs. During these meetings, more than 60 participants were asked about the parks they visited, recreation preferences and ideas for specific parks. The community meetings were held on March 5, Sept. 23 and Oct. 3, 2020. In addition to these meetings, feedback and survey questions were offered as individual worksheets to maximize feedback sought through the community meetings. This allowed the community engagement to be more individualized during the challenges of the coronavirus outbreak. More than 30 worksheets were collected from participants providing additional community perspectives.

**The top 5 recreation element needs identified at the meetings were:**

- ▶ Trails/ Greenways
- ▶ Dog parks
- ▶ Splash pad
- ▶ Special events
- ▶ Natural areas

Zebulon Community Center and Whitley Park were identified as the most visited city parks in the system. Little River Park was identified as the park needing the most improvements.







# PLAY ZEBULON

## 3.5 ONLINE COMMUNITY SURVEY

Responses to the online survey, available in both English and Spanish, resulted in 388 total responses, 333 of which were fully complete. With a population of approximately 6,000, 388 responses represent about 6.4% of town residents, which is above average for an online voluntary survey.

Results of the online survey and those provided by the statistically valid mail-in survey were similar regarding opportunities, services and needs. Full results from both surveys are provided in the Appendix. While most respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the opportunities provided by the town, several items stood out from the results. These included the following:

- ▶ Respondents felt access to parks was good. Access to greenways was not.
- ▶ Many respondents were not aware of amenities at Zebulon Elementary School Park, Wakelon Elementary School Park and Gill Street Park. Parks visited the most include Zebulon Community Park, Whitley Park and Zebulon Community Center.
- ▶ 82% of respondents indicated that they travel outside of Zebulon to participate in various recreational activities due to lack of facilities or better quality.
- ▶ Most respondents were very satisfied with level of customer service provided by parks staff.

- ▶ Respondents felt like facilities and programs were not meeting the needs of the community. Those that came close to meeting the needs included tennis / pickleball, athletic programs, athletic fields, basketball and parks / open space.
- ▶ Residents expressed that they would participate in numerous youth, adult and senior programs but do not due to lack of leagues, activities and facilities.
- ▶ Many would like to participate in events but do not due to lack of events. Events provided by the town that residents have participated in fully include disc golf, food trucks and the Farmer's Market.
- ▶ Additional amenities and programs are needed to meet community interest. Top priority needs included greenway trails, additional park land, additional preschool, teen and senior programs, outdoor fitness and community gardens.
- ▶ What prevents residents from participating in recreation programs and facilities are lack of awareness, lack of time, lack of amenities, and condition of parks. Improvements in communications by the town could be made.
- ▶ Majority of residents would prefer that grants fund improvements to facilities and programs.
- ▶ Just over 50% of respondents indicated they would support more than \$6 per month in additional funding for parks and recreation operations and maintenance.



# CITY NEEDS

Takeaways from the online survey included the identification of the following areas for improvement:

- ▶ Better advertising
- ▶ Better maintenance
- ▶ Additional facilities
- ▶ More programs / events

Not surprisingly, residents overwhelmingly preferred that future improvements be financed through grants rather than bonds, impact fees or taxes. However, there was indication that residents were willing to contribute to additional funding of parks and recreational facilities.

Many facilities and programs can be incorporated with more efficient use of existing facilities. However, meeting existing and projected needs will require purchase of more park land, easements, partnerships, flexibility, more efficient use, and additional recreation staff in future years.

The online survey asked for residents to express their priorities for future facilities. The following represent the top 10 responses.

1. Greenways / Trails
2. Playgrounds
3. Splash Pads / Water Play
4. Amphitheater
5. Community Gardens
6. Dog Parks
7. Nature Play
8. Natural Areas
9. Downtown Park
10. Park Shelters



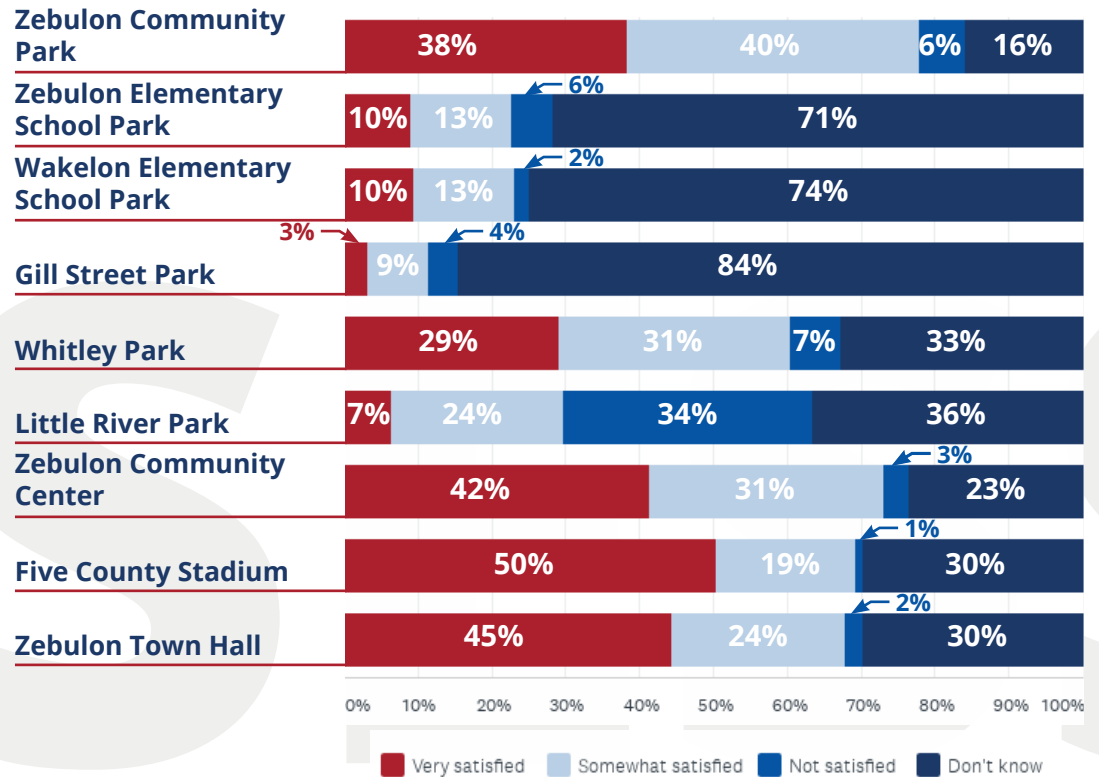


# PLAY ZEBULON

## FINDING #1

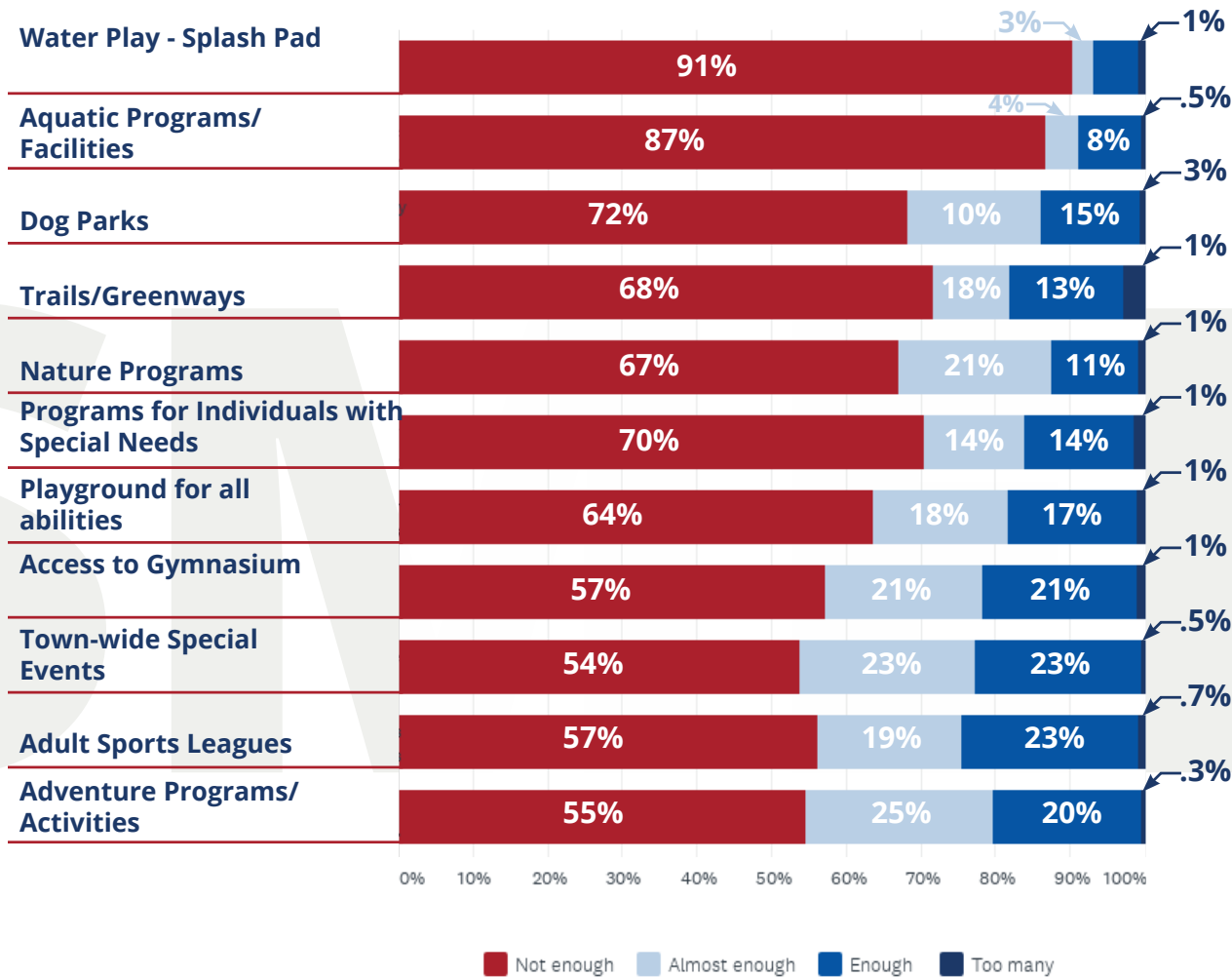
Q2. Question 2 asked for the levels of satisfaction with the existing park facilities. More than 50% of respondents were “satisfied” with the Zebulon Community Park, Zebulon Community Center, Zebulon Town Hall and Five County Stadium. Most Responders did not know about amenities in the other parks, and 34% of responders were “not satisfied” with

**Q2** For each of the parks facilities listed below, please indicate your level of satisfaction with the amenities. Provide additional comments to supplement your feedback.



# Q3

Do you think the following facilities, programs and activities provided in Zebulon are currently meeting the needs of the community? Please check the appropriate response.



## FINDING #2

Q3. In Question 3, aquatic programs/facilities and water play-splash pad were the amenities with the highest response for "not enough."

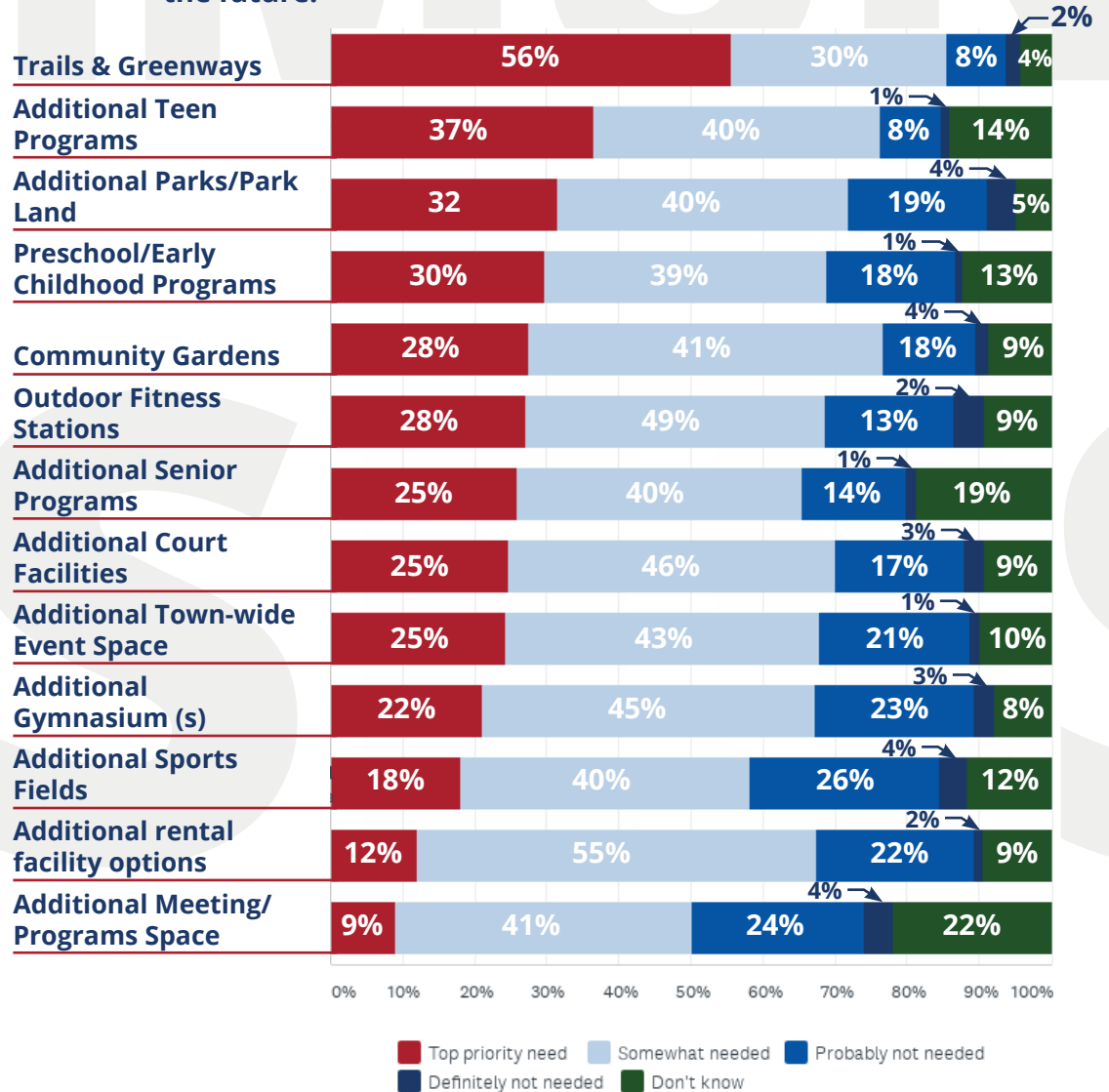
# PLAY ZEBULON

## FINDING #3

Q4. In Question 4, Trails and Greenways were ranked as "top priority needs."

## Q4

Please indicate what you feel is the level of need for each item listed below that the Town of Zebulon should consider adding in the future.

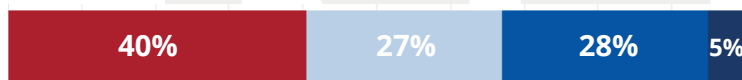




# CITY NEEDS

## Q5 Using the list below indicate how often you take part in the following activities, whether through the Town of Zebulon Parks and Recreation Department or not:

Individual and Family Activity such as walking, bicycling, picnicking, bird watching, visiting a playground



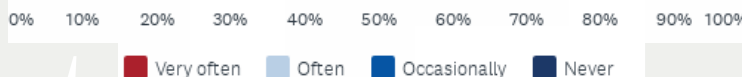
Organized Athletic Activity such as Basketball, Soccer, Baseball



Special Events such as holiday special events, Family Movie Night, Farm Fresh Market, May Day



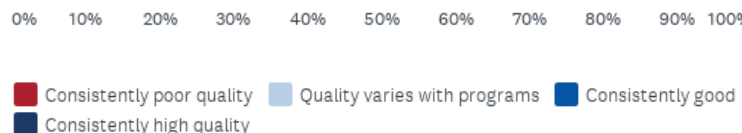
Classes or Programs such as Summer Camps, Fitness Programs like Yoga or Barre, Senior programs



### FINDING #4

Q5. In Question 5, responses showed that people participate in Individual and family activities most often.

## Q6 How would you rate the Town of Zebulon Parks and Recreation programs and activities?



### FINDING #5

For Question 6, around 43% of responders reported that the quality varies with programs, and around 42% of responders reported that the quality was consistently good for the Town of Zebulon's Parks and Recreation programs and

# PLAY ZEBULON

## Q12

Please indicate your level of agreement about the following statements:

The Zebulon Parks and Recreation Department maintains a good image in the community

Compared to other priorities (public safety, streets, utilities, schools), parks and recreation is important to a community

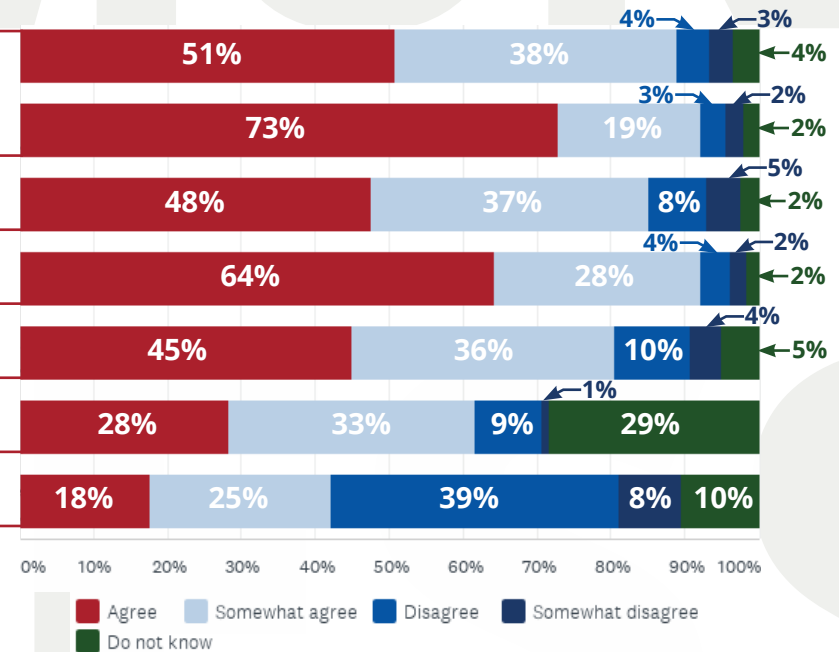
I feel safe when visiting a park or recreation facility

I feel that I have good access to a park

Parks are well distributed throughout the Town

I am willing to be a volunteer to improve our parks

I feel I have good access to greenways and trails

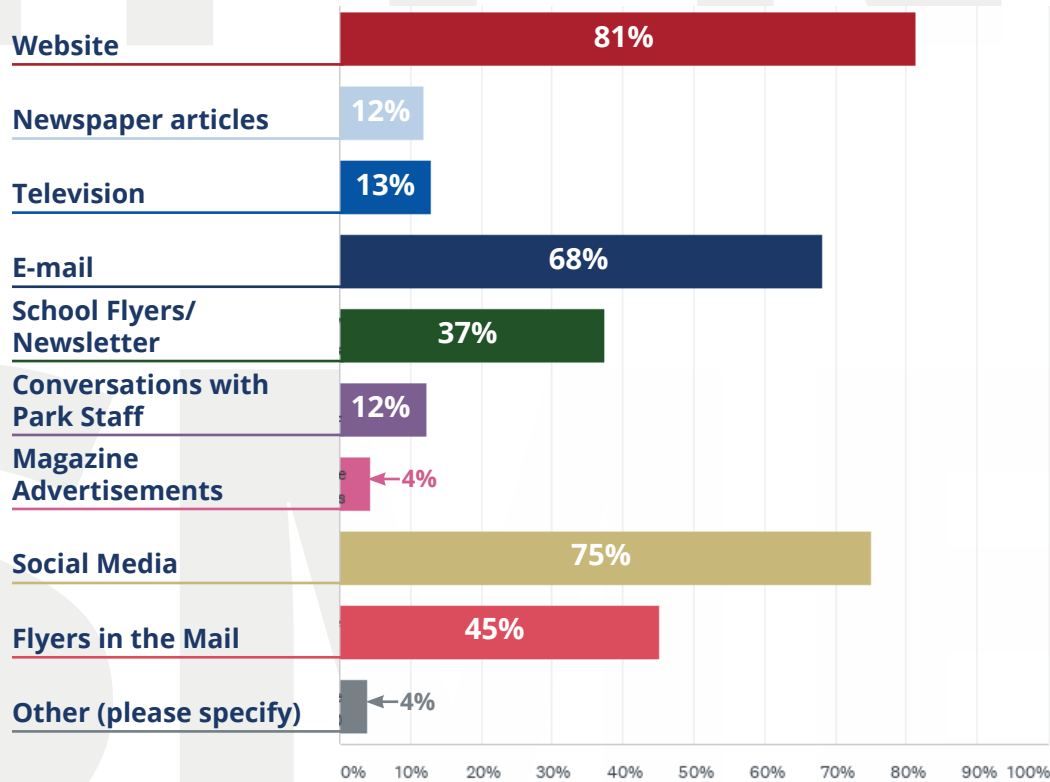


### FINDING #6

For Question 12, around 95% of respondents indicated that they "agreed" or "somewhat agreed" that compared to other priorities, parks and recreation are important and feel that they have good access to a park. Around 47% of respondents indicated that they did not have good access to greenways and trails.

# Q14

Which communication types would you prefer for the Town of Zebulon Parks and Recreation Department to use to inform residents of programs and Activities?



## FINDING #7

Q14. In Question 14, the most preferred methods of communication were social media, website and e-mail.



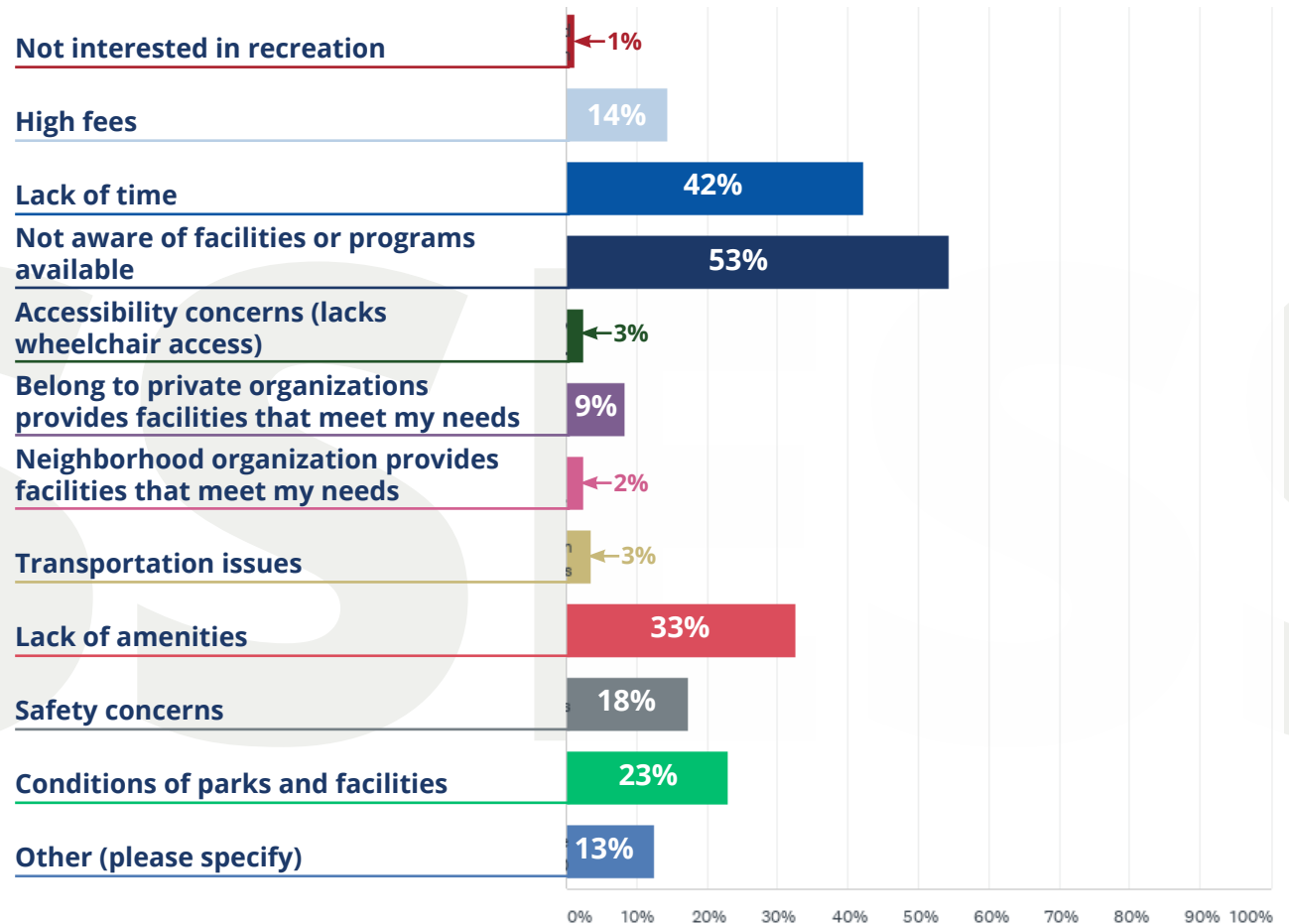
# PLAY ZEBULON

## Q15

Please indicate if any of the following prevents you and/or your family from using Zebulon's parks and facilities? Please check all that apply.

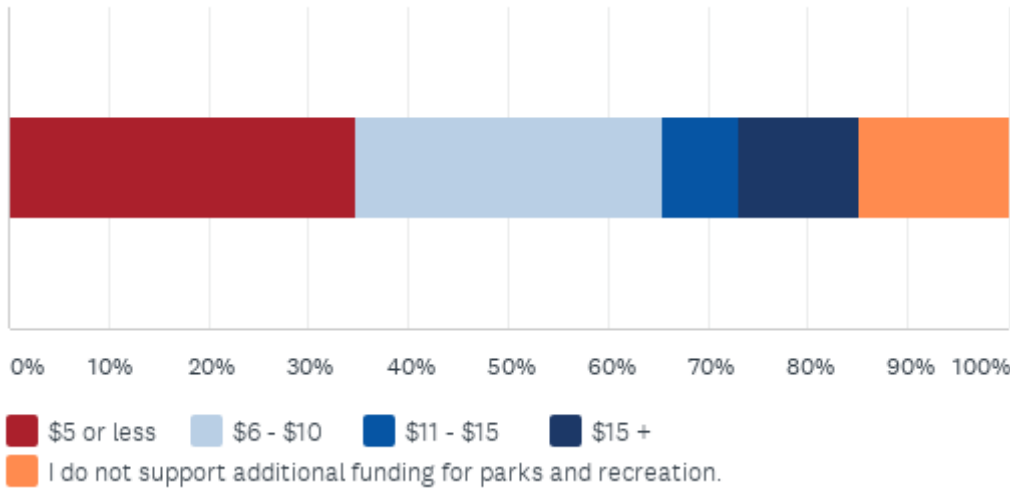
### FINDING #8

In Question 15, the top reasons for preventing parks and facility use were not aware of facilities or programs available and lack of time.



## Q20

(Operational Funding) Please indicate below the amount of additional funding you would support PER MONTH, if any, per household, to improve park maintenance and expand recreation



### FINDING #9

In Question 20, slightly more than half of respondents (50.3%) would support more than \$6.00 per month of additional funding for improving park maintenance and expanding

# PLAY ZEBULON

## 3.6 STATISTICALLY VALID SURVEY

This survey was conducted by mail to gain statistically valid citizen input regarding usage of parks, trails, indoor and outdoor facilities; satisfaction with facilities and programs; reasons for participating in programs and activities; barriers to participation in recreation opportunities; methods of reaching residents (i.e. online and printed Activity Guide, Facebook, etc.); priority needs and support for various methods of funding for improvements to parks, trails, recreation facilities and programs, etc.

Surveys were mailed to a random sampling of 2,100 residents, the week of Feb. 18th, 2020. Mailed surveys included a postage paid envelope to return the surveys. Those receiving a mailed survey were also given an opportunity to complete the survey online with a unique password for each recipient. Only households who received a mailed survey could, as an option, complete the survey online. This methodology ensured that only one (1) survey could be completed by any household. Approximately 3 weeks after the mailing, postcards were sent to the same 2,100 households who received mailed surveys.

Of the 2,100 mailed surveys, 115 surveys were completed by mail and 60 were completed on-line. 4 surveys were partially completed online. All told 179 surveys (+/- 7.2% margin of error) were completed by mail, on-line and phone.



In addition to information on recreation needs and preferences, the survey also included questions about the demographic characteristics of respondents.

The demographics of the overall sample was compared to U.S. Census and American Community Survey data for Zebulon. Based on comparisons, the samples skewed older than the population and the data was weighted based on known age distribution in the community. Weighting is a common procedure in survey data to correct for underrepresented groups in the sample. Thus, the process of weighting ensures that the data is as representative as possible of the actual population of Zebulon, while maintaining the statistical validity of the data.



*The following summary complements the findings presented in the previous section, 3.5 Online Community Survey:*

**Finding #2**

68% of households indicated walking and biking trails were one of the three parks, trails and recreation facilities they had used the most, followed by playgrounds (32%), swimming pool (20%), natural areas (20%) and walking loops (20%). Importantly, 46% of respondents indicated that walking and biking trails were the park, trail and recreation facility they used most often.

**Finding #5**

Over 80% of households were very or somewhat supportive of maintaining and improving Zebulon Community Park, maintaining and improving Little River Park, and acquiring land to expand Zebulon Community Park and add additional amenities.

**Finding #6**

Thirty-four percent of respondents indicated a new outdoor swimming pool as one of the four most important actions for their household and 35% indicated develop a new outdoor swimming pool for the future of the Town of Zebulon. Maintain and improve Little River Park, acquire parkland for trails and develop a new venue for special events were all potential actions that were important to their household and to the future for the Town of Zebulon.

**Finding #8**

Thirty-nine percent of household respondents who had participated in a program, class or activity were very satisfied with the program, class or activity and **42%** were satisfied. 15% were neutral, and 4% either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.



# PLAY ZEBULON

## Finding #10

Thirty-six percent of respondent households indicated special events, 30% indicated farmers market, and 23% indicated after-school programs were the most important programs to offer.

## Finding #11

The highest percent of households indicated to have fun (89%), with other highly-rated reasons being to improve health and fitness (83%), to do activities with my household (44%), fees are reasonable (37%) and to play with friends (36%) as the reason to participate in recreation programs.

## Finding #12

Fifty-four percent of households indicated that the reason they don't use parks and recreation facilities and programs is that they don't know what is being offered. Other highly-rated reasons being they don't know what facilities are available (35%), and program times are not convenient (30%).

## Finding #13

Seventy-four percent of households indicated online Activity Guide (website) is the best way to keep households informed about facilities and programs. Other means were the printed Activity Guide (67%), Facebook (59%), flyers (43%), and email blasts (37%).

## Finding #14

With regard to means that could be used to fund the types of parks, trails, recreation facilities and programs that are most important to you, 48% were either very supportive (21%) or somewhat supportive (27%) of a property tax rate dedicated to parks and recreation; 46% were very supportive (33%) or somewhat supportive (13%) of grants matched with Town revenues; 46% were very supportive (20%) or somewhat supportive (26%) of increased impact fees (20%); and 41% were very supportive; (21%) or somewhat supportive (20%) of bonds issued for capital projects.

## Finding #15

In terms of funding methods, 95% indicated grants matched with Town revenues as either their 1st choice (83%) or 2nd choice (12%); 48% indicated bonds issued for capital projects as either their 1st choice (3%) or 2nd choice (45%); 26% indicated increased impact fees on new development as their 1st choice (11%) or 2nd choice (15%); and 17% indicated a property tax rate dedicated to parks and recreation capital projects as their 1st choice (3%) or 2nd choice (14%).

## Finding #16

21% of households indicated that on a monthly basis they would pay \$15-\$20; 21% indicated \$5-\$9 per month; 20% indicated \$10-\$14; 20% indicated nothing and 18% indicated \$1-\$4 for facilities and programs important to their households.



# TV NEEDS





# PLAY ZEBULON

## 3.7 COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

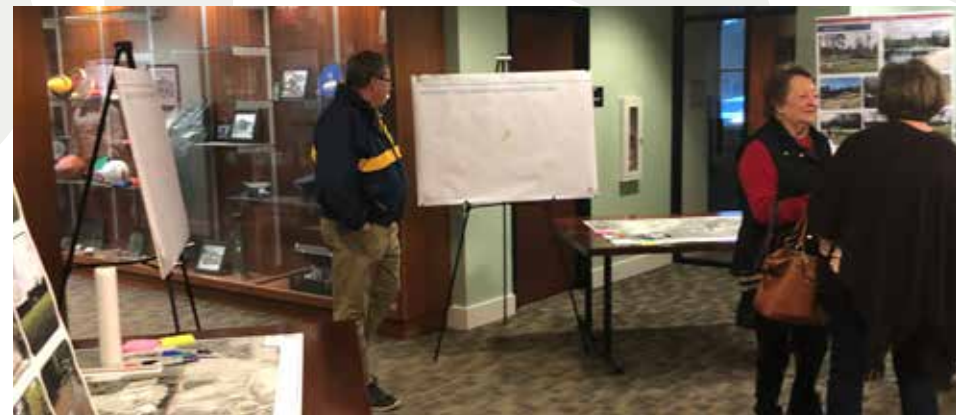
Examination of the results from the on-line survey, mail-in surveys and community meetings revealed numerous similarities and general consensus regarding recreational needs and priorities from the community's perspective. Results also shed light on why residents do not participate in programs and their level of support for various methods of financing improvements.

**The following are the top 10 preferences for facility improvements identified from these three sources of community input:**

- ▶ Greenways / Trails
- ▶ Playgrounds
- ▶ Splash pads
- ▶ Amphitheater
- ▶ Community gardens
- ▶ Dog parks
- ▶ Nature play
- ▶ Natural areas
- ▶ Downtown parks
- ▶ Park shelters

The primary reasons residents do not participate in recreational opportunities provided by the town are lack of time, other communities having more and better facilities and a general unawareness of the town's facilities and programs being offered.

It is also clear from the comments received that residents would support increases in the funding for parks and recreation even if that meant increased taxes or a municipal bond. They would of course like to see grants and other sources of funding utilized but understand that these funding sources will not support maintenance and operations.







# 4





The background image shows an outdoor community event. In the foreground, a woman in a light blue shirt and dark pants stands next to a sign that says "Come to Diabetes". To her left are two purple plastic chairs. In the background, a group of people is gathered near a brick building with string lights hanging from the roof. The scene is outdoors with trees and a clear sky.

**VISION DEVELOPMENT**

# **PLAY ZEBULON**

**Parks & Recreation Master Plan**



*Established*  
1907

*Welcome to*  
**Zebulon**

*"The Town of Friendly People"*

# VISION DEVELOPMENT

## INTRODUCTION

Highlighted by extensive stakeholder and public participation, the Town of Zebulon launched a multi-faceted workshop of visioning sessions to better understand the community's aspirations for its parks and recreation system. Combining the results from the workshop with previous steps allows the community to provide a comprehensive vision for the future. The following chapter describes these results.

## PURPOSE

The vision for the Play Zebulon Parks and Recreation Master Plan and programs is linked to the vision of the Town as a whole. The Town's system of parks, open spaces, recreation facilities, arts, and natural areas, all elements of the public realm, are woven into the fabric of what makes Zebulon a great place to live, work and play. This vision integrates components of previous and ongoing Town-wide efforts to achieve the overall vision for the Town defined in previous planning efforts (see Section 2.1).

### VISION DEVELOPMENT

#### 4.1 Vision Workshop

#### 4.2 Vision Sub-systems

#### 4.3 Vision Summary



# PLAY ZEBULON

## 4.1 VISION WORKSHOP & FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT

### APPROACH

The approach for developing the Play Zebulon vision is a three-part effort:

1. Through a multi-faceted community involvement process (Chapter 3), residents indicated their needs and priorities for parks and recreation facilities and programs.
2. Supplementing this community involvement, Town staff and the consultant team completed a technical review of the existing parks system that identified continued improvements needed in order to maintain a high level of service for existing and future residents.
3. Stakeholder and community input was gathered on several themes identified through the needs assessment phase during a multi-session workshop of visioning followed by virtual public engagement for comments on findings and ideas.

The Play Zebulon Vision is built upon a framework distilled from input and analysis conducted as part of this three-step effort.

### VISION WORKSHOP & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The Vision is intended to guide the parks and recreation system over the next 10 years. Goals and objectives have been developed to reflect the combined results of input and analysis completed in Chapter 2 (Existing System Overview) and Chapter 3 (Needs and Priorities Assessment) of this planning document. These goals and objectives are intended to be modified as needed to address changing priorities of the community, as well as the anticipated growth the Town will experience over the next 10 years. In the next chapter, action items are identified to implement this vision within the focus of community priorities, funding strategies and defined roles. These action items are intended to be updated on a regular basis by staff to reflect the changing trends, priorities and roles within the community.

Launched in March 2021, the visioning effort for the Town's parks and recreation system began with two Vision Workshops to develop goals, strategies, and potential projects or actions for the long-range Vision. The first workshop was held with Parks and Recreation staff and other Town department leaders, followed by the second workshop with the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. These workshops utilized an interactive format that allowed for active participation from attendees during a virtual meeting.

Welcome to the Play Zebulon Parks and Recreation Master Plan Virtual Vision Workshop! This Mural Page is designed to collect your ideas and provide the basis for our discussion. Below are four stations where you can place sticky notes or draw on the board. Use your mouse roller to scroll between the questions and zoom in. You can zoom in as far as you want. The sticky notes are customizable - size, color, and font. You can also draw on the boards or the map in Question 2, using the draw tool on the bottom of the panel on the left. If you want to undo something, use CTRL+Z or use the Undo button at the top. Share your ideas, and we will discuss them at the Vision Workshop!

### 1 Identify 3-5 Community Goals that Should be accomplished before 2030

🕒 15 Minutes

To place a sticky note, simply double click on one, type your text, adjust the size to your preference, and place! Copy and paste a blank sticky note to make more, or right click to create a brand new custom sticky.

### 3 Identify the TOP FIVE (5) projects or actions you feel are most important to complete.

🕒 10 Minutes

To place a sticky note, simply double click on one, type your text, adjust the size to your preference, and place! Copy and paste a blank sticky note to make more, or right click to create a brand new custom sticky.

### 2 Identify projects, connections, or additional actions for Zebulon Parks and Recreation.

🕒 20 Minutes

Feel free to post sticky notes or draw on the map. The draw tool can be found at the bottom of the panel on the left, and you can change your marker and color at the top of the screen after selecting the tool.

To place a sticky note, simply double click on one, type your text, adjust the size to your preference, and place! Copy and paste a blank sticky note to make more, or right click to create a brand new custom sticky.

### 4 Mission Vision & Goals

🕒 25 Minutes

To place a sticky note, simply double click on one, type your text, adjust the size to your preference, and place! Copy and paste a blank sticky note to make more, or right click to create a brand new custom sticky.

## Staff Vision Workshop Virtual Meeting Results

# PLAY ZEBULON

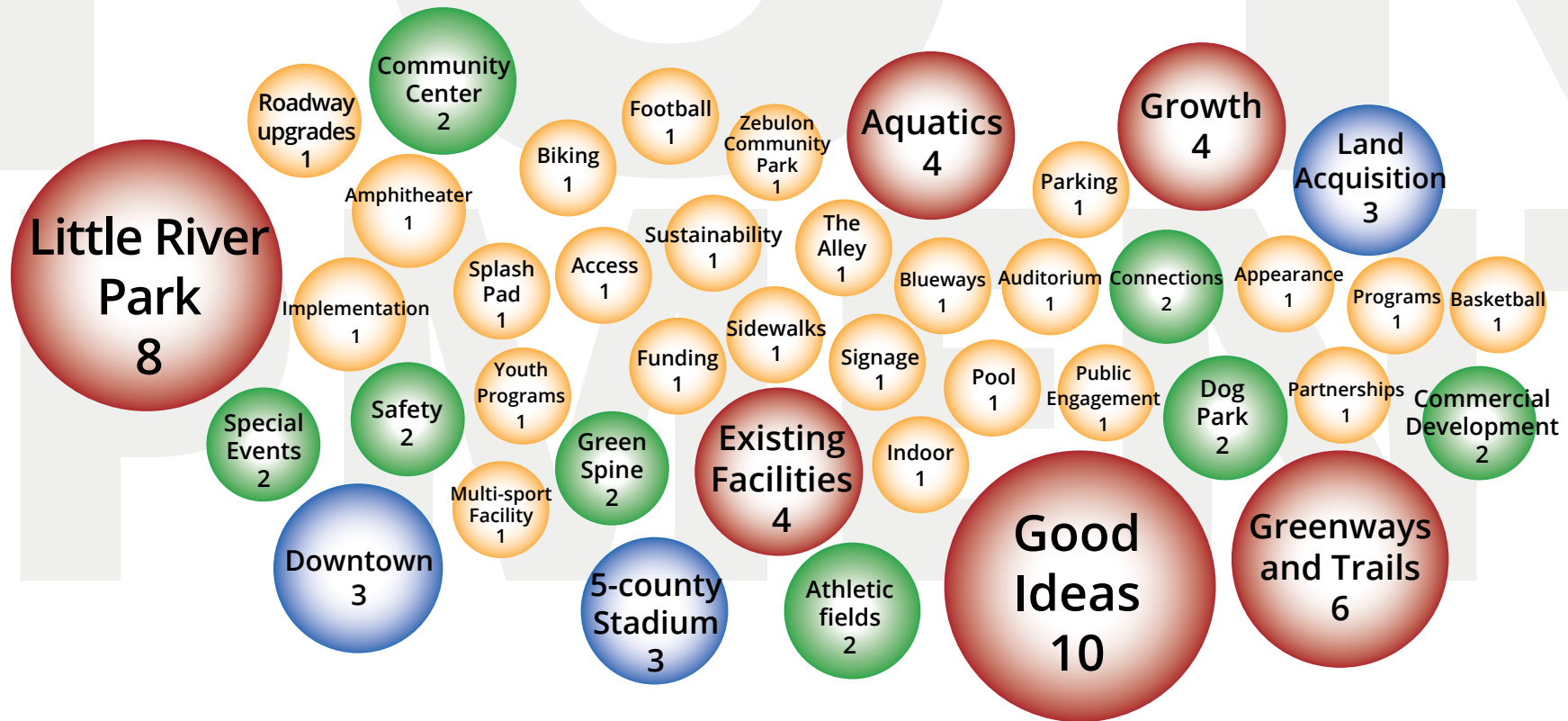
Following the Vision Workshops, results were posted online for public view and comment. Visitors to the virtual platform were able to view a 10-minute presentation on the progress to-date, community goals defined in the Vision Workshops, priority projects, the Vision Map, the Vision Framework, and the Vision Sub-systems. The engagement page was left open for approximately two weeks, during which the page received nearly 500 views and 60 participants left 47 comments and 584 prioritization responses. A summary of common themes from the comments can be found in the chart to the right.

Play Zebulon is based on input of participants from these workshops, the public comments, and from the needs and priorities assessment. The visioning efforts balanced community input with strategic direction provided by guiding documents and stakeholder engagement to develop a new vision. This Vision strives to integrate the parks and recreation system into the Town's infrastructure, while also addressing evolving trends and changing needs of the community.





## Common Themes from Public Vision Comments



# PLAY ZEBULON

## VISION FRAMEWORK

### Mission & Vision Statements

In addition to the identification of community goals and priority projects, the staff Vision Workshop included an exercise with Parks and Recreation Staff to develop a new Mission Statement and a Vision Statement. Participants provided insight into both the internal and external values that they felt embodied a successful department, and these were further refined into concise statements to guide the department in its delivery of high quality parks and recreation facilities, programs and services.

#### **MISSION STATEMENT:**

The Mission of the Zebulon Parks and Recreation Department is to connect all people and the community through quality parks, facilities and programs.

#### **VISION STATEMENT:**

To create recreational and cultural opportunities that enhance quality of life and connect our residents through positive impacts on health and wellness, social interaction, economic growth, and environmental stewardship.

## VISION GOALS

Based on the components of the Vision Statement, the following overarching goals have been identified for the Play Zebulon Vision. These goals serve as the guiding principles for the development of the vision sub-systems, their associated objectives, and the priority projects and actions items developed during implementation.

### **Vision Goals:**

- Offer comprehensive services through programs, events, facilities, marketing, partnerships, and community engagement.
- Utilize effective and innovative practices to operate parks, facilities, and programs.
- Engage community members in planning and implementation for our park system and programs.
- Provide quality, diverse parks, facilities, programs, and open space for people of all ages and backgrounds.
- Collaborate with Economic Development and Downtown partners as well as community developers to provide programs, parks and open spaces.
- Provide access to natural areas and integrate environmental education opportunities in our parks and programs.
- Ensure all residents have equitable access to parks, facilities, and recreation services.
- Provide everyone with exceptional service that comes across Zebulon Parks and Recreation, regardless of background or ability.



# PLAY ZEBULON

## 4.2 VISION SUB-SYSTEMS

### INTRODUCTION

As a result of the previously discussed efforts, the Play Zebulon Vision is built upon a framework distilled from broad public input and comprehensive analysis. A unique approach was taken for Zebulon, which established a set of five sub-systems that help guide the development of the parks and facilities, and the management of a diverse system. These subsystems, shown in the figure on the right, are:

- **Neighborhood Parks & Open Spaces**
- **Community Parks & Athletic Facilities**
- **Natural Areas and Sustainability**
- **Programs, Community Health, & Special Events**
- **Connectivity & Access**

Collectively these subsystems form a rich, vibrant and dynamic system that contributes to a high quality of life for all residents, and positions the department to continue to provide excellent facilities and services as the town grows. Each sub-system was developed through community input and an analysis of the existing physical system.

The objectives identified for each of these subsystems are intended to guide the parks and recreation system over the next 10 years. The objectives were developed to reflect the combined results of input and analysis completed in the System Inventory and Analysis, Community Needs Assessment, and the Vision Development. These objectives and the associated vision concepts are intended to be modified as needed to ensure achievement of the Sub-system Vision, and ensure its contribution to the overall vision of the Town of Zebulon. In the next chapter, a comprehensive implementation strategy for achieving this vision is presented within the focus on community priorities, funding strategies and defined roles. This implementation plan is intended to be updated on a regular basis by staff to reflect the changing trends, priorities and roles within the community.





# NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS & OPEN SPACES

The Town of Zebulon parks and open spaces serve as a major contributor to the sense of community and quality of life. They provide residents an opportunity to refresh, explore and play, and serve as important neighborhood resources. Using community input from the Needs Assessment and Visioning Workshops, the following guiding principles were developed for neighborhood parks and open spaces:

**Goal 1:** Continue to provide a high level of service for neighborhood-based parks and open spaces while responding to growth.

- ▶ Develop LOS standards for acreage, facilities, and access that fit with community needs and priorities, expected department capacity, and projected growth.
- ▶ Identify areas where access gaps exist, and high growth is expected for targeted land acquisition.
- ▶ Work with developers to ensure that new neighborhoods and communities have adequate access to high-quality parks and recreation facilities.
- ▶ Utilize existing town-owned or vacant properties for opportunistic acquisition and development.

**Goal 2:** Pursue the development of parks and open spaces in the Downtown Area.

- ▶ Continue to activate alleyways and vacant downtown properties through department development or partnerships.
- ▶ Promote characteristics and aesthetics for the Town core that create a unique destination experience in Zebulon and promotes economic development.

**Goal 3:** Ensure existing and future neighborhood parks provide appropriate and high-quality amenities for their users.

- ▶ Develop a replacement schedule for neighborhood-based amenities.
- ▶ Continue to engage the community to ensure new and replacement facilities and amenities are meeting the needs of the neighborhoods and communities served by each park.



## **Goal 1: Continue To Provide a High Level of Service for Neighborhood-Based Parks and Open Spaces While Responding to Growth**

Throughout the community engagement process, as well as the Visioning Workshops, addressing growth in Zebulon was a primary concern for many residents and stakeholders. The demographic analysis projected a substantial population increase for the years 2030 and beyond. As people continue to move to Zebulon, access to parks will continue to be a priority for both the existing and new residents.

### **► Develop Los Standards for Acreage, Facilities and Access**

Zebulon and the surrounding region are poised to remain a top destination for people from around the country. New residents to Wake County, Zebulon, and other municipalities in the area will value parks, open spaces, and greenways as desirable features of communities promoting a high quality of life as they choose their new home. Zebulon currently enjoys a very high level of service for both facilities and acreage, and provides a substantial amount of access to parks for residents within the Town Core. At 27.38 acres per 1,000 residents, Zebulon enjoys an acreage LOS well over the NRPA agency average of 10.1, and substantially higher than nearly all of the communities included in the Comparative Analysis. As stated in the Level of Service Analysis, the Town would need to add over 300 acres of parkland to the system to retain that LOS as the population grows towards 2030. Understanding that acquiring 300 acres in the current real estate climate may not be feasible, it is recommended that the target acreage LOS for 2030 be **15 acres per 1000 residents**. This would require approximately 100 acres of additional parkland be added to the system.

In addition to the target acreage LOS, the department should also consider adopting an access approach for both open space and park facilities. This access LOS should be based on desired experiences and activities identified through the community input obtained during this master plan process. The benefit of an experience-based

access model is the ability to remain flexible and provide facilities and services that meet the community needs. Experiences can be grouped into two categories: core-neighborhood experiences; and area-wide experiences. Additionally, area-wide experiences can be divided into two types: 'at-will' or programmed. Community input from town of Zebulon residents has identified an increased need for more 'at-will' activities that do not required an exact schedule or time frame, such as walking, biking, playing on a playground, or visiting a dog park.

Utilizing gaps identified during the access LOS analysis, the department should consider adopting the target of 1/2 mile to 1-mile service areas for core neighborhood activities, and varying service areas for area-wide activities. The table to the left provides examples of recommended experienced-based access level of service figures.



# PLAY ZEBULON

Experience or Activity	Service Area Radius	Mode of Transportation
<b>Core Neighborhood-based Activities and Experiences</b>		
Access to neighborhood parks and open spaces	1/2 to 1 mile	Walk, bike
Walking and biking trails	1/2 to 1 mile	Walk, bike
Access to playgrounds	1 mile	Walk, bike
<b>Area-wide, At-Will Activities and Experiences</b>		
Playing on an athletic field or court	1 mile to 2 miles	Walk, bike, drive, transit
Enjoying natural areas	1 mile to 2 miles	Walk, bike, drive, transit
Visiting a dog park	1 mile to 2 miles	Walk, bike, drive, transit
Playing on a splash pad	2 to 3 miles	Walk, bike, drive, transit
Water access	3 miles and up	Bike, drive transit
Enjoying art and cultural opportunities	3 miles and up	Bike, drive transit
<b>Area-wide, Programmed Activities and Experiences</b>		
Youth programs	1 mile to 2 miles	Walk, bike, drive, transit
Adult programs	1 mile to 2 miles	Walk, bike, drive, transit
Fitness and wellness	1 mile to 2 miles	Walk, bike, drive, transit
Special events	2 to 3 miles	Walk, bike, drive, transit
Nature programs	2 to 3 miles	Walk, bike, drive, transit
Athletic leagues	3 miles and up	Bike, drive transit
Aquatic programs	3 miles and up	Bike, drive transit

## ► Identify Areas with Access Gaps and Project High Growth

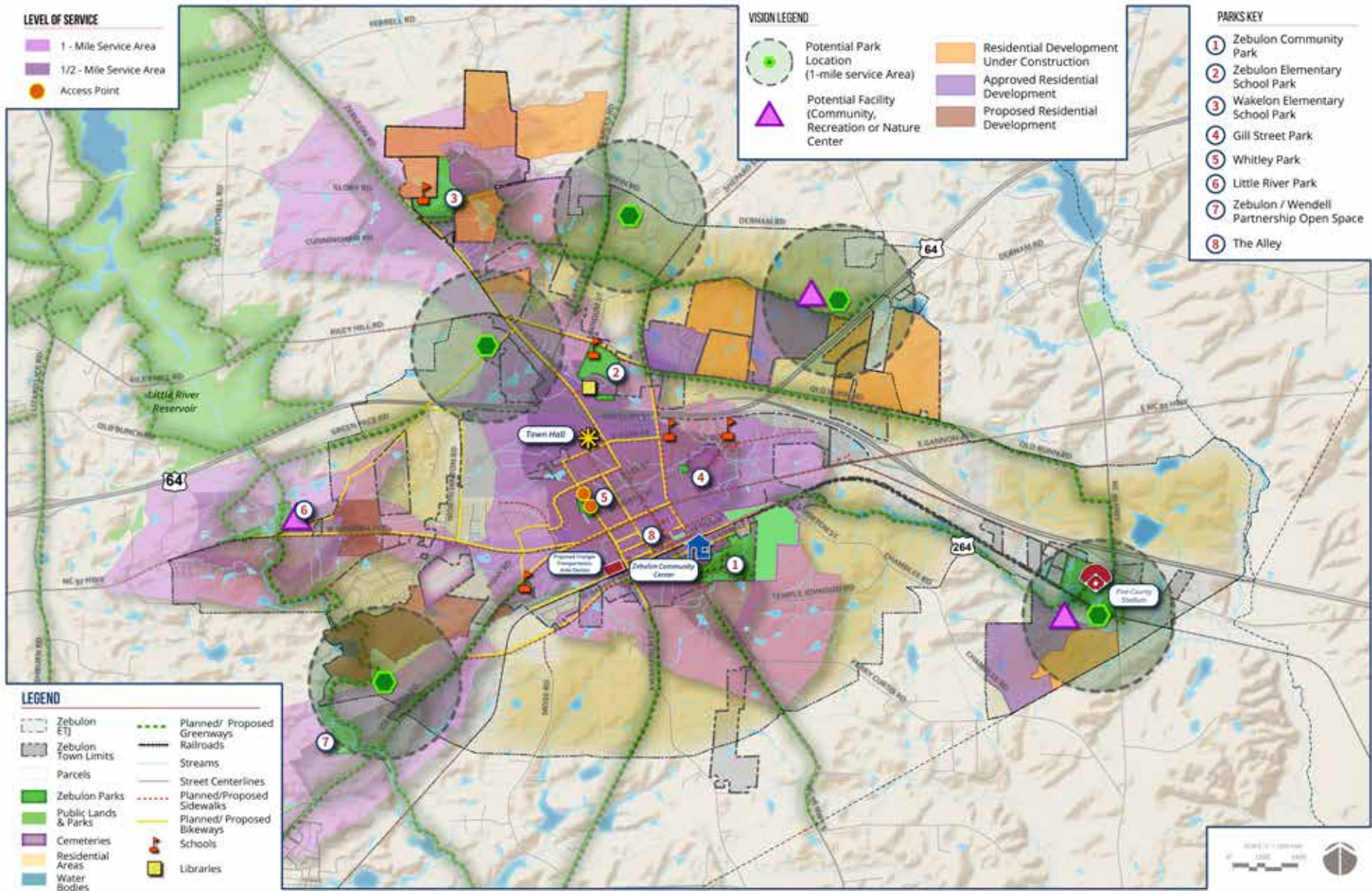
As the town continues to grow and expand, developing additional parks and facilities in strategic locations that provide access at a neighborhood level will allow Zebulon to enhance existing neighborhoods while continuing to attract new residents. Building on the core-based neighborhood activities and experiences access LOS standards, gaps in services should be identified for areas of Zebulon where access may be limited. This data should also be considered in conjunction with existing residential areas, as well as areas where future residential development will occur.

The map on the right shows the access LOS for all parks and open spaces using 1 mile and 1/2 mile services areas. The map also shows residential development that is currently under construction, approved and proposed. New neighborhood parks are shown in areas where service gaps overlap with this future development, along with a 1-mile service area radius to demonstrate improved level of service. Larger, area-wide facilities such as a potential new community/recreation center and nature center are shown at Five-County stadium and Little River Park, respectively.

## ► Work with Developers to Ensure Park Access for New Neighborhoods

While the development of new parks and recreation facilities should be focused on areas with future growth, the town should not bear all of the burden for providing access to recreation experiences. New residential development provides the opportunity to partner with developers to incorporate parks, open spaces, and recreation facilities into new neighborhoods.





Map 2.9 - Level of Service - All Parks + Potential New Parks



# PLAY ZEBULON

and communities. Engaging developers early in the process also presents opportunities for the incorporation of greenway trails that connect new neighborhoods to existing amenities. Trailheads for these new greenways can be great locations for recreation amenities such as small playgrounds, picnic areas, fitness equipment, and environmental education.

## ▶ Utilize Existing Town-Owned or Vacant Properties

Property acquisition is often the most difficult and cost-prohibitive stage of new park development. In many cases, municipalities may already own property that could be potential parkland, or there may be vacant lots that may be acquired and more easily developed. The department has identified several properties that could be strategic targets for repurposing or land acquisition. It is recommended that the department create a prioritized list of town-owned properties and potential acquisition properties and evaluate them on a set of criteria that includes:

- ▶ Established Vision Goals and community priorities
- ▶ Level of service improvement
- ▶ Cost of acquisition of development
- ▶ Environmental value and sustainability contributions
- ▶ Economic development impact

## **Goal 2: Pursue The Development of Parks and Open Spaces in the Downtown Area**

Throughout the Needs and Priorities Assessment, as well as the Vision Development, the need to activate Downtown Zebulon and spark economic development was a top priority for both residents and Town staff. Many stakeholders felt that utilizing the downtown core to develop activity areas would be critical to creating something that sets Zebulon apart from other municipalities in the region. Parks, open spaces and event venues present the opportunity to develop a communal framework upon which to build a truly unique downtown experience.

## ▶ Continue to Activate Alleyways and Vacant Properties

Since the inception of this master plan, the Town of Zebulon has added an additional open space to the park system in partnership with the Zebulon Downtown Arts Council (ZDAC). This space, called the Alley, is intended to be the first of many activated alleyways that connect the public realm throughout Downtown Zebulon. The Town should continue to either acquire the development rights to these alleys, or work in partnership with adjacent property owners to continue this network. The alley network not only has the ability to provide increased pedestrian connectivity, but could also serve as the anchor for additional development of open space and economic



Example of Unique Character and Aesthetics in Hendersonville, NC

development in the downtown core. The alley network, as well as potential open spaces in the downtown core are shown in the graphic on the following page.

In addition to the alley projects, there are also several town-owned or vacant properties that should be prioritized for potential park and open space development. Specifically Eastern Wake EMS has relocated and the town is in the process of acquiring that site located downtown beside the current fire station and along the alley. This downtown recreation hub could serve to provide increased access to programs and services in an urban setting, as well as provide a venue for special events downtown.

Another potential property is the current site for the Zebulon Public Works Department facility on E Horton Street. In its current state, this property could serve as a critical connection point for greenways - connecting Downtown to Zebulon Community Park, as well as future greenways planned along Little Creek. If public works were to ever relocate, the property could be enhanced as park space or a large trailhead for greenway access.

► **Promote Characteristics and Aesthetics to Create a Unique Destination**

A key component to establishing a unique downtown experience is developing a cohesive urban design that ties the town core together. This includes components such as hardscape materials, particularly in highly trafficked and transition areas, landscape and tree canopies, high quality amenities, and wayfinding. Elements such as these help establish a character that can be used to create sense of place, but also be carried through to other parts of the Zebulon Parks

System. The Town should develop a set of design guidelines for both the Downtown area and other key areas throughout Zebulon.

Particular attention should be paid to ensuring that each neighborhood and community retains characteristics that make them unique, while also incorporating elements that tie into the overall Town culture.

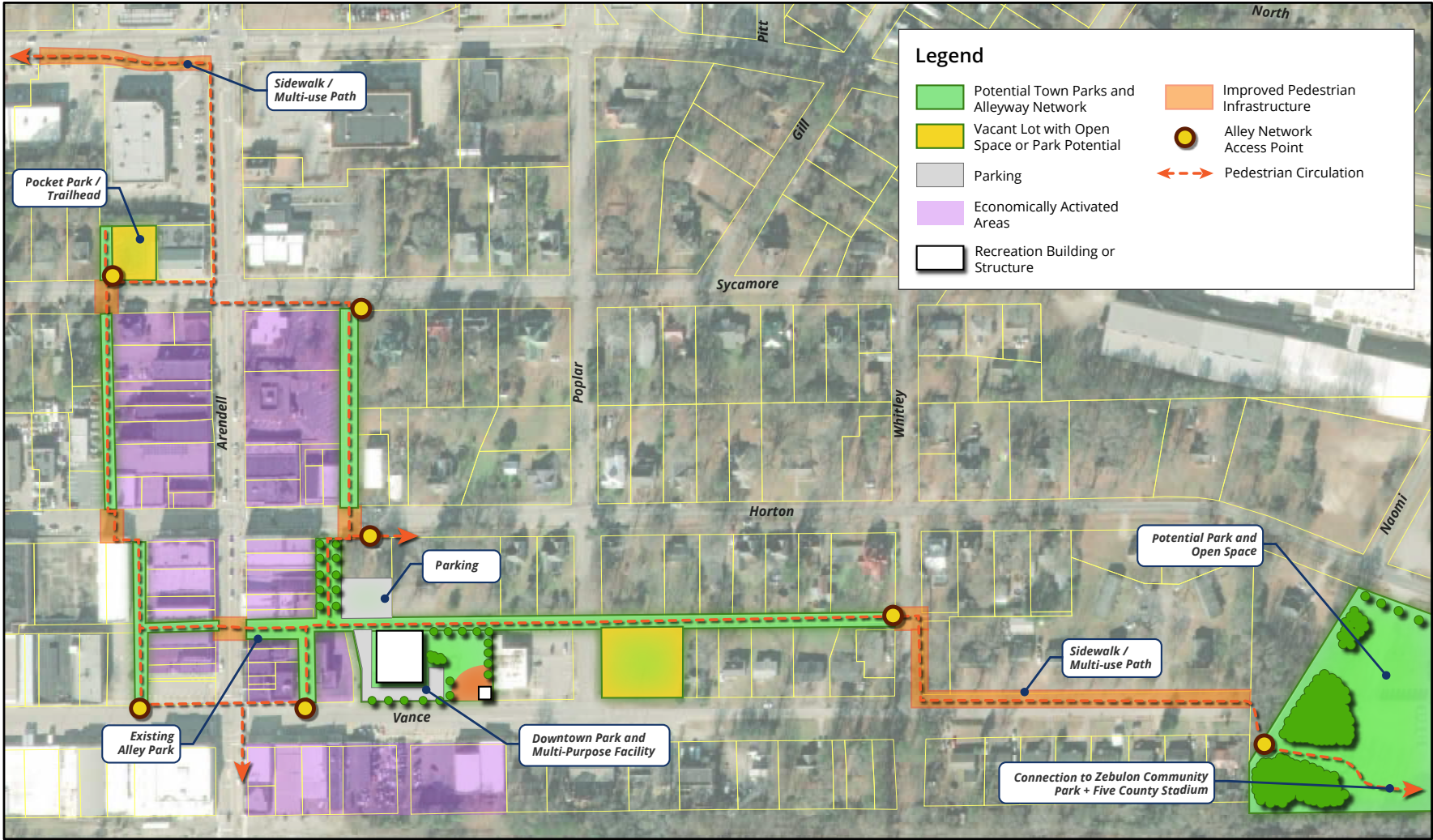
In addition to the design elements listed above, public art should be integrated into the park system, as well as the overall public realm, whenever possible. This is especially important in more urban areas with the potential to be destinations. Public art not only provides a unique aesthetic to the public realm, but also creates social value by demonstrating the unique cultural aspects of a community. As Zebulon continues to develop the alleyway network and Downtown parks, the addition of public art installations should be a priority.



**Potential Town-owned Properties**



**Connected Alleysways Concept**





### **Goal 3: Ensure Existing and Future Neighborhood Parks Provide Appropriate and High-Quality Amenities for their Users**

While much of the focus of this section has been on the development of new parks and facilities, ensuring that existing facilities continue to provide high-quality recreation facilities is equally important. Zebulon currently enjoys a wealth of park acreage and facilities, and one of the top priorities of the community during the public engagement phase was to enhance the existing recreation system.

#### **► Develop A Replacement Schedule for Neighborhood Amenities**

The Park Evaluations conducted during the System Inventory and Analysis revealed many successes, including a high level of availability and access to facilities and amenities within the Town's parks. However, as noted in the evaluation, some of these amenities may be nearing the end of their life span and will need to be replaced within the timeframe of this master plan's Vision. Continued growth and demand for resources will accelerate this time frame, as more residents use these facilities more frequently.

While the implementation chapter of this master plan identifies capital improvements to help maintain the quality and functionality of all parks in the system, the department will need to take this a step further, and develop a replacement

schedule for all amenities within their parks, particularly those that serve core neighborhood experiences. This schedule will allow the capital improvement schedule to be further refined, and adjusted when needed. The schedule will also allow the department to identify unique procurement opportunities, particularly when the schedule aligns similar amenities with multiple locations.

#### **► Continue to Engage the Community to Meet Neighborhood Needs**

While this Master Plan and its resulting recommendations are built on extensive community input, the Town must acknowledge that recreation preferences change over time, especially when populations experience the intense growth projected for Zebulon. What may be the needs and priorities of the community today may not be the same five or ten years from now. Because of this, it is important for the Town and the Parks and Recreation Department to continually engage the community for input, and incorporate their feedback into future capital improvement decisions. A successful Parks and Recreation Master Plan should be comprehensive and visionary, but should also be flexible - responding to the community's needs throughout the implementation of its Vision.

# COMMUNITY PARKS & ATHLETIC FACILITIES



Athletics, aquatics, and large community parks were also a common topic from stakeholders and residents during community engagement. Facility availability and expansion have emerged as a priority throughout multiple engagement techniques, and the following goals were developed to help guide the approach to addressing athletic and aquatic facility needs in the future.

## **Goal 1: Provide outdoor fields and athletic facilities that meet the needs of existing and future populations**

- ▶ Consolidate athletic fields at an expanded Zebulon Community Park.
- ▶ Promote the development of multi-purpose fields where applicable, to increase the availability of facilities for a variety of athletic interests.
- ▶ Develop a second Community-level park in the northern portion of Zebulon to serve the incoming residents of new development.

## **Goal 2: Develop a new indoor, multi-use facility to support the expanding needs and participation of a growing population**

- ▶ Engage Wake County to initiate a development strategy for a potential large, multi-use facility at the Five County Stadium Site.
- ▶ Develop a strategy for the use of Zebulon Community Center to provide more flexible, specialized programming, and also to work in conjunction with future recreation facilities.

## **Goal 3: Provide water-based recreation opportunities**

- ▶ Provide a splash pad at an existing park location or downtown to provide access to water play for Zebulon residents.
- ▶ Explore the feasibility of an indoor/outdoor aquatic facility to address the needs of current and future residents.

## **Goal 1: Provide Outdoor Fields and Athletic Facilities that Meet the Needs Of Existing and Future Populations**

Throughout the Community Needs Assessment process, a common theme for community parks was the need for flexible, expanded athletic facilities with increased availability. Town staff, key stakeholders, and the general public all expressed a desire for creative solutions for improvements to existing facilities, and also acknowledged the need for additional facilities as the population grows.

### **► Consolidate Athletic Fields at an Expanded Zebulon Community Park**

Zebulon Community Park has long served as an anchor for the park system, providing the greatest variety of recreation opportunities of any park in the system. While the park currently provides a large playground, walking trails, disc golf, basketball courts, and baseball fields, there is the opportunity for the addition of community-wide facilities to provide an even greater variety of recreation experiences. While the park system contains additional baseball fields at Zebulon Elementary School Park, there is a desire to add two additional fields at Zebulon Community Park to complete a four-field wheel. This would help consolidate baseball and softball into one location, and allow the field at Zebulon Elementary to be converted into a multi-purpose configuration for greater flexibility.

While Zebulon Community Park is already the largest park in the system, there could be an opportunity in the future to expand the park and incorporate adjacent parcels into the park boundary. The graphic on the following page depicts a concept of what Zebulon Community Park could look like with the expansion of the baseball facility, as well as the addition of

future parkland. The expansion of Zebulon Community Park would not only make expanding the baseball facility more feasible, it would also allow for additional facilities in the park, such as a second entrance, multi-purpose fields, an expanded disc golf course, walking trails, and extensive natural areas.

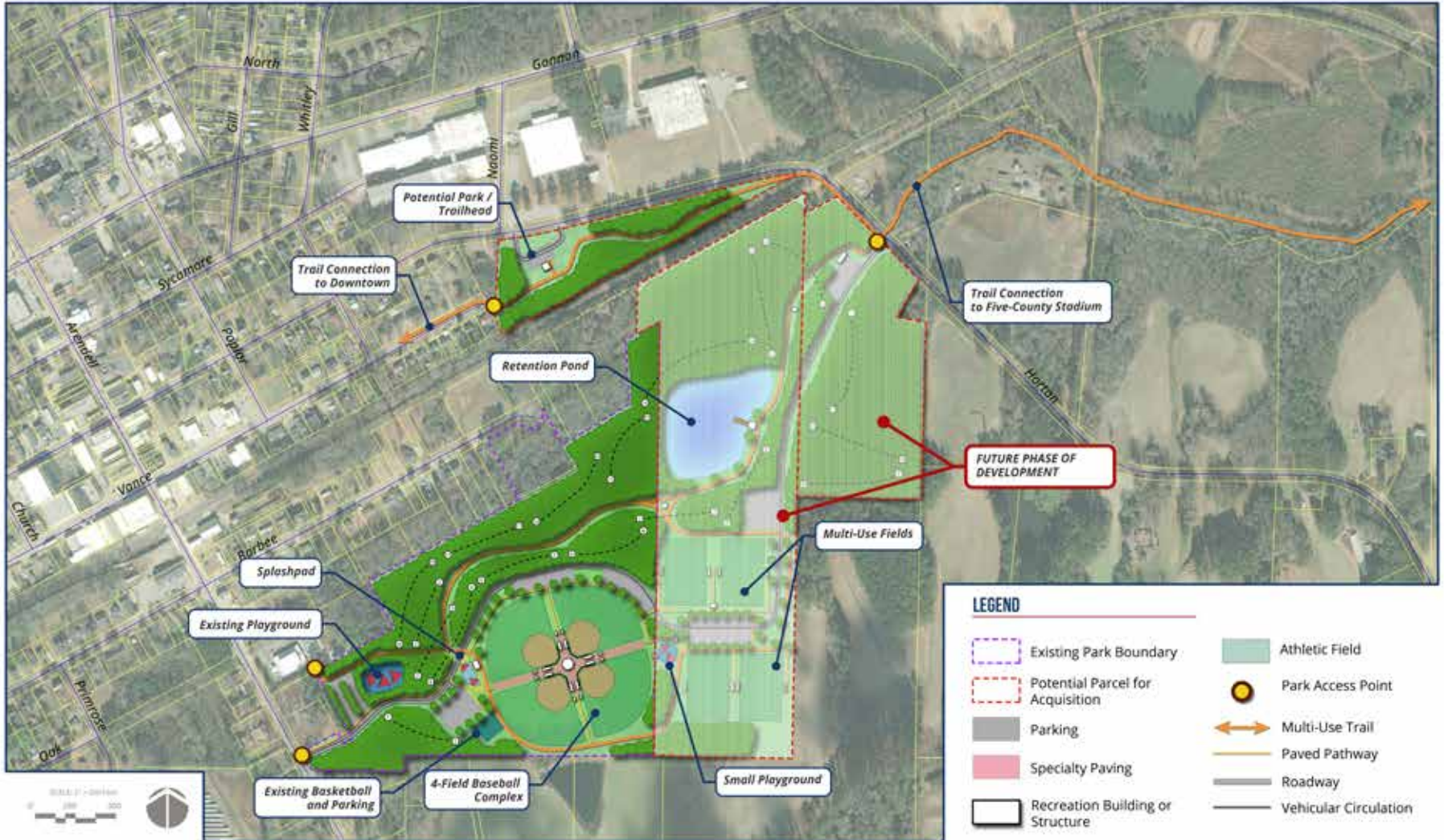
Due to its centralized location within the Town, Zebulon Community Park also has the potential to serve as a primary connection hub for the planned greenway / multi-use trail network. By utilizing the Public Works property discussed in the previous section, as well as the potential expansion of the Zebulon Community Park property, the Town has the opportunity to provide a pedestrian and bicycle connection that links Downtown, Zebulon Community Park, Little Creek trail, and ultimately Five County Stadium.





# PLAY ZEBULON

Conceptual Plan for Zebulon Community Park



### ► **Promote the Development of Multi-Purpose Fields**

Availability and flexibility of athletic fields was a concern voiced by stakeholders and community members during the engagement process. Changing user needs and an increase in population will only continue to drive demand for diverse recreation opportunities. In addition to adding fields and athletic facilities to the park system, it will be important to ensure that these facilities also provide for a diverse set of uses. Fields should be designed to accommodate a range of athletic and special-use activities. Examples of this include utilizing athletic fields for both baseball / softball and rectangle sports, or enabling athletic fields to have multiple configurations to support use by different age groups.

In addition to field design and configuration, utilizing artificial turf when feasible will also increase flexibility and availability. Artificial or synthetic turf surfaces require more up-front costs, but much less maintenance over time. They are also less likely to be compromised by severe weather events, and have a faster turn-around time for playability. Artificial surfaces are also easier to convert into multiple configurations, and are less likely to be impacted by increased use.



**Example of Synthetic Fields with Multiple Configurations**



# PLAY ZEBULON

## ▶ **Develop A Second Community Park in the Northern Area of Zebulon**

Zebulon Community Park has the capacity to provide adequate access to athletic and community-based park facilities, especially with future development and land acquisition. However, as Zebulon continues to grow, a majority of the Town's new neighborhoods will be north of U.S. 64. The distance to Zebulon Community Park, as well as barriers to pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, may create the need for access to community-serving and athletic facilities in the northern area of Zebulon.

Level of service recommendations in the previous section included the development of new parks in areas of high growth where gaps already exist. It is also recommended that one of these parks be a larger, community-serving park that provides access to multi-purpose athletic facilities. Facilities and amenities at this park could include multi-purpose fields, tennis courts, a splash pad, dog park, and a greenway trailhead.

## **Goal 2: Develop A New Indoor, Multi-Use Facility to Support the Expanding Needs and Participation of a Growing Population**

One of the largest challenges currently facing the Parks and Recreation Department is the size limitation of the Zebulon Community Center. While the center is currently meeting the programming needs of the community, it is already beginning to experience some strain on space and resources. Part of the programming and operations recommendations in the coming Implementation Chapter focus on taking programming into the parks in order to increase capacity and variety of offerings.

While this may offer a short-term solution, the Department recognizes that future growth will require the development of a new facility that can meet demand for programs and services.

## ▶ **Initiate a Development Strategy for a Multi-Use Facility at the Five County Stadium Site**

Developing a large, multi-use community and recreation center is a challenge for any municipality - beginning with site selection and land acquisition. Fortunately for Zebulon, there is already a site within the Town that could potentially serve as the ideal location for such a facility. The Five County Stadium site has long been a target for additional development by a variety of stakeholders in Zebulon, including a community park with a regional recreation facility. The site currently serves as the home stadium for the Carolina Mudcats, however, there is a considerable amount of property surrounding the stadium that could potentially be redeveloped. Because of the regional nature of this facility, this also presents an opportunity to partner with Wake County to serve the eastern communities adjacent to Zebulon.

At the time of this Master Plan's completion, the Town of Zebulon Planning Department is also nearing the completion of their Grow Zebulon Comprehensive Land Use Plan, which has been conducted concurrently with Play Zebulon. This plan's Economic Development Component focuses considerable attention on potential development strategies for the Five County Stadium site. The proposal includes mixed-use development, additional parking, urban design features, a community park with event space, and a regional recreation facility.



Conceptual Plan for Five County Stadium Park



# PLAY ZEBULON



Statesville Recreation and Aquatics Center



Clayton Community Center

The graphic on the previous page shows the Play Zebulon concept for the Five County Stadium Park, which incorporates concepts introduced in the Land Use Plan, but focuses more on the park spaces and amenities. Major features of the concept include: a regional recreation center with aquatic facilities; several flexible, multi-use open spaces, a large amphitheater for events, a large, “main-street” entry plaza; a destination playground, improved pedestrian connectivity; greenway trail connections; additional parking; and, space for commercial or mixed-use development.

The regional recreation facility that could be located at the Five County Stadium Property would be intended to provide a wide range of indoor recreation activities, programs and services. It is recommended that this building be designed to be flexible, with multi-purpose spaces that can be converted for a variety of uses. This facility could also contain or be adjacent to an aquatics facility that would serve as a regional attraction for eastern Wake County. Examples of these types of facilities are included on this page.

## ► Develop a Strategy for the use of the Zebulon Community Center

If and when the larger recreation or community center is completed in the Zebulon Parks System, the Department will still have the existing Zebulon Community Center for additional programming. While the new facility would likely become the primary hub for recreation programming, having a secondary facility, especially one so close to Downtown, will provide much needed flexibility for expanding the programs and services offered. The existing Community Center could serve as a hub for arts and cultural programs, senior programs, or programs for people with special needs - all of which will continue to grow in importance into the future.

As the Department moves more programming out of the Zebulon Community Center, and looks toward meeting the demand of a 2030 population, a clear strategy for the future of this facility needs to be developed as plans for other facilities and programming offerings progress.



### **Goal 3: Provide Water-Based Recreation Opportunities**

Throughout the Community Needs Assessment, water-based activities emerged as one of the top priorities for residents. While some residents expressed a desire for a pool or aquatic facility, more of the input for water-based recreation was directed towards the development of a splash pad at an existing park.

#### **► Provide a Splash Pad at an Existing Park**

Splash pads provide many benefits for water-based, outdoor recreation in a community setting. Splash pads have a fraction of the development and operating costs that a pool facility would have, and they carry far less liability. Many residents also value splash pads, as they are more readily available, and can be easily enjoyed by children of all ages.

Zebulon Community Park could be an ideal location for a splash pad. This is due to its central location, developable areas, and complimentary amenities. The proximity to the existing playground, as well as Zebulon Community Center, ensures that there will be an existing user base that will likely benefit from having all three facilities at the same location. Existing infrastructure, utilities and parking will also aid in the development, and the maintenance facility adjacent to the park will allow for easy access for upkeep.

#### **► Explore the Feasibility of an Aquatic Facility**

While the development of a splash pad was the most popular water-based activity identified throughout the engagement process, there was also a desire for a pool or aquatic facility in the future. It is recognized that an aquatics facility is a substantial capital and operating project; and is not anticipated to be funded in the short term. This may

become more of a priority as the population continues to grow, and demand for a public aquatic facility increases. The regional recreation facility discussed in this section could be an opportunity to incorporate a more elaborate aquatic facility that provides competition-level facilities, as well as a destination for families across eastern Wake County. As plans for a regional facility begin to take shape, an Aquatic Feasibility Study should be conducted. This will help the Town and any partnering agencies determine if the inclusion of this type of facility is appropriate and desired by the community.



**Kiwanis Family Park, Sanford, NC**





# NATURAL AREAS & SUSTAINABILITY



The Town’s parks system offers a diverse range of user experiences and opportunities to engage the natural environment in various ways. A key part of the experience is due to the promotion of natural system function, biodiversity and conservation of resources. While the Town and the greater region have been successful in developing initiatives that address sustainability and resilience, there are opportunities within the park system to incorporate additional environmental stewardship and awareness. The following guiding principles provide a framework for strategies that should be utilized in future park development and improvement:

**Goal 1: Provide access to natural areas and environmental education through Zebulon Parks.**

- ▶ Develop Little River Park as a nature based-park with interactive education, water access, and trail connections
- ▶ Utilize the Zebulon/Wendell park property as trail head for the Little River Corridor and connect to Little River Park.
- ▶ Continue to work with Wake County to activate the Little River Reservoir.
- ▶ Evaluate the potential for a nature center or outdoor environmental exhibit at Little River Park.

**Goal 2: Utilize sustainable design principles in new and existing parks.**

- ▶ Integrate innovative stormwater management design strategies in existing parks, downtown areas, and greenway corridors.
- ▶ Promote the integration of streetscapes and urban tree canopies in the Town core and other developed areas.



## **Goal 1: Provide Access To Natural Areas and Environmental Education Through Zebulon Parks**

Access to natural areas through the park system was consistently one of the top priorities from all groups of stakeholders and community members throughout the Master Plan process. Whether through parks, greenways, or water-base recreation areas, Zebulon residents value their natural areas and have a strong desire for additional nature-based recreation opportunities.

### **► Develop Little River Park as a Nature-Based Park**

Little River Park was perhaps the most discussed individual park throughout the engagement process. Many community members felt that the park was an important community asset with unique historic and environmental value. Much of the input was strongly in favor of directing resources to develop this park - enhancing the existing natural features while providing additional amenities.

A previous study and community engagement period led to the decision by the Board of Commissioners not to repair the dam, but rather pursue alternative recreation development at the park site. There was strong desire from community engagement to address aesthetic concerns from the broken dam and to pursue development of the park that will increase safety, restore the riverbed, and prevent further damage or impacts down-river.

As part of the Master Plan Process, the project team developed a concept diagram to show potential improvements at Little River Park. Shown on the following page, this concept demonstrates the potential for nature-based opportunities, outdoor recreation and education that can be incorporated into the park site. The River remains the central focus with a majority of the dam removed and the riverbed restored to its natural state. This will allow for easier water access for park users, and create a safer environment for water-based recreation such as simply playing in or floating on the

river. A historic education exhibit has been added on the west bank, which could likely feature remains of the dam that honor its history. The area on the west side of the river has largely been kept passive in nature - with additional amenities and walking paths added throughout the area.

The east side of the site features improved parking as well as an extension of the access road into the park. This access road leads to a nature play area and outdoor classroom utilized for environmental education opportunities. There is also a wildflower planting field adjacent to the recreation center, and the park would contain walking trails throughout. This area could also house a more formal water play area such as an interactive fountains or exhibits.

The long-term intent is to have this park connect on both the north and south sides to a regional recreation trail that links this area with the rest of Eastern Wake County. By keeping access to natural areas and education as the focal points of Little River Park, the Town can ensure that residents have an invaluable resource for years to come.





# PLAY ZEBULON

## ► Utilize the Zebulon/Wendell Park Property as a Trailhead

The only undeveloped park in the Zebulon Parks and Recreation System is the 26.3 acres property co-owned with the Town of Wendell. This property is located approximate 1.5 miles south of Little Rive Park, at the intersection of Mack Todd Road and Old Zebulon Road. This property also contains Little River, and much of the land is low-lying and may not be suitable for significant park development.

While the Zebulon / Wendell open space is likely to never house a park with significant facilities or amenities, it could serve as a trailhead and access point for a greenway corridor connecting to Little River Park. This corridor would serve as the southern extension of the multi-use trail connecting Little River Park to a county-wide greenway network - eventually connecting Zebulon with Wendell.







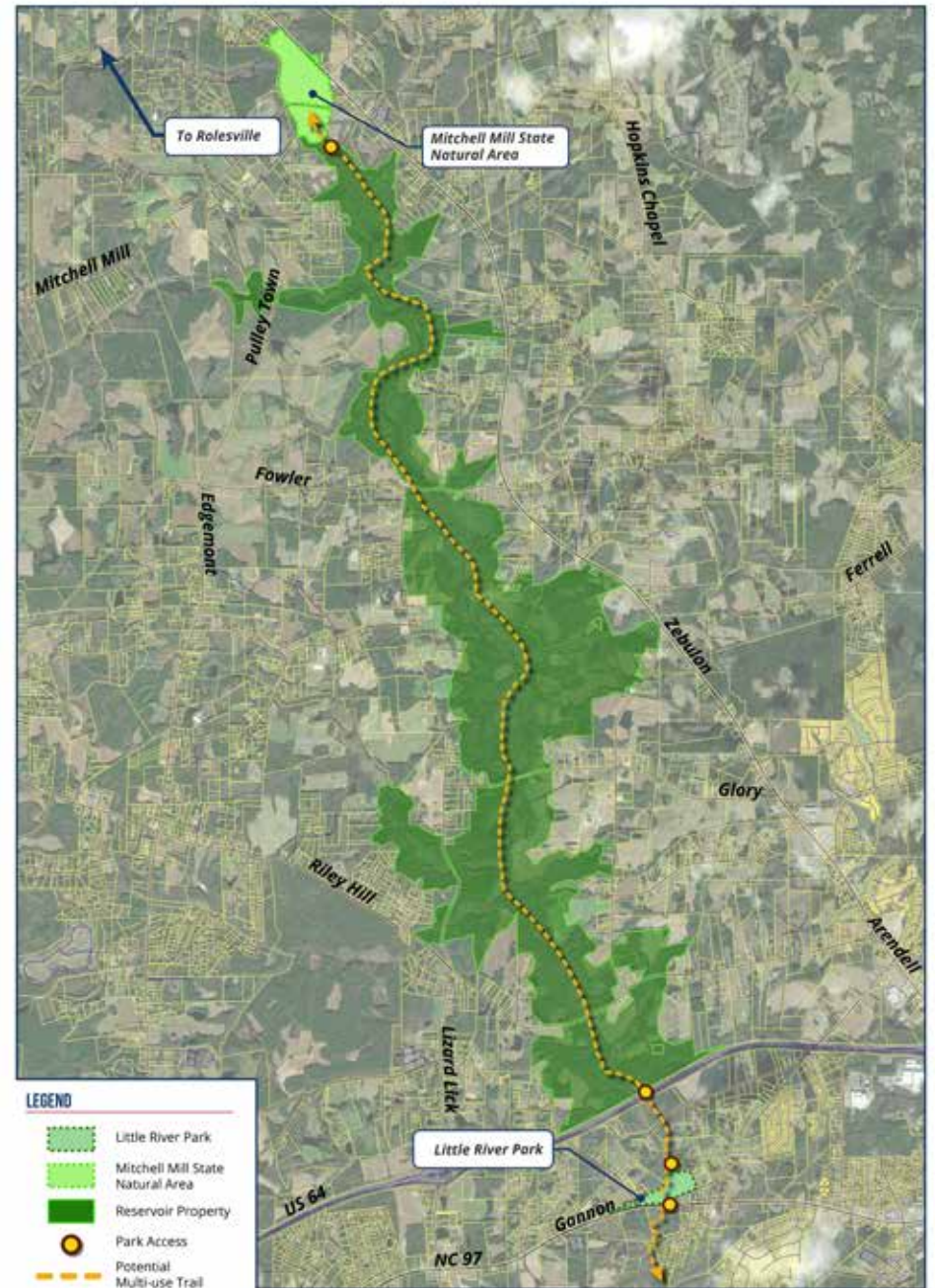


# PLAY ZEBULON

- ▶ **Continue to work with Wake County to activate the Little River Reservoir**

In addition to serving as the northern anchor for the corridor connecting to the Zebulon/Wendell open space, Little River Park also has the potential to serve as a major trailhead in a regional greenway system. Wake County currently more than 2,000 acres of land along the Little River that currently serves as the future Little River Reservoir. The large size and linear nature of this property presents the opportunity for a significant amount of greenway trails that provide connections to northeastern Wake County, and potentially on to Rolesville and eventually Wake Forest. This addition would be a major step in the expansion of the regional greenway system in the eastern part of the County, providing the foundation for further expansion and connection to existing trails and greenways. Activating this area with activities such as walking and mountain bike trails will also touch 100+ acres of the Mitchell Mill State Natural Area near Rolesville.

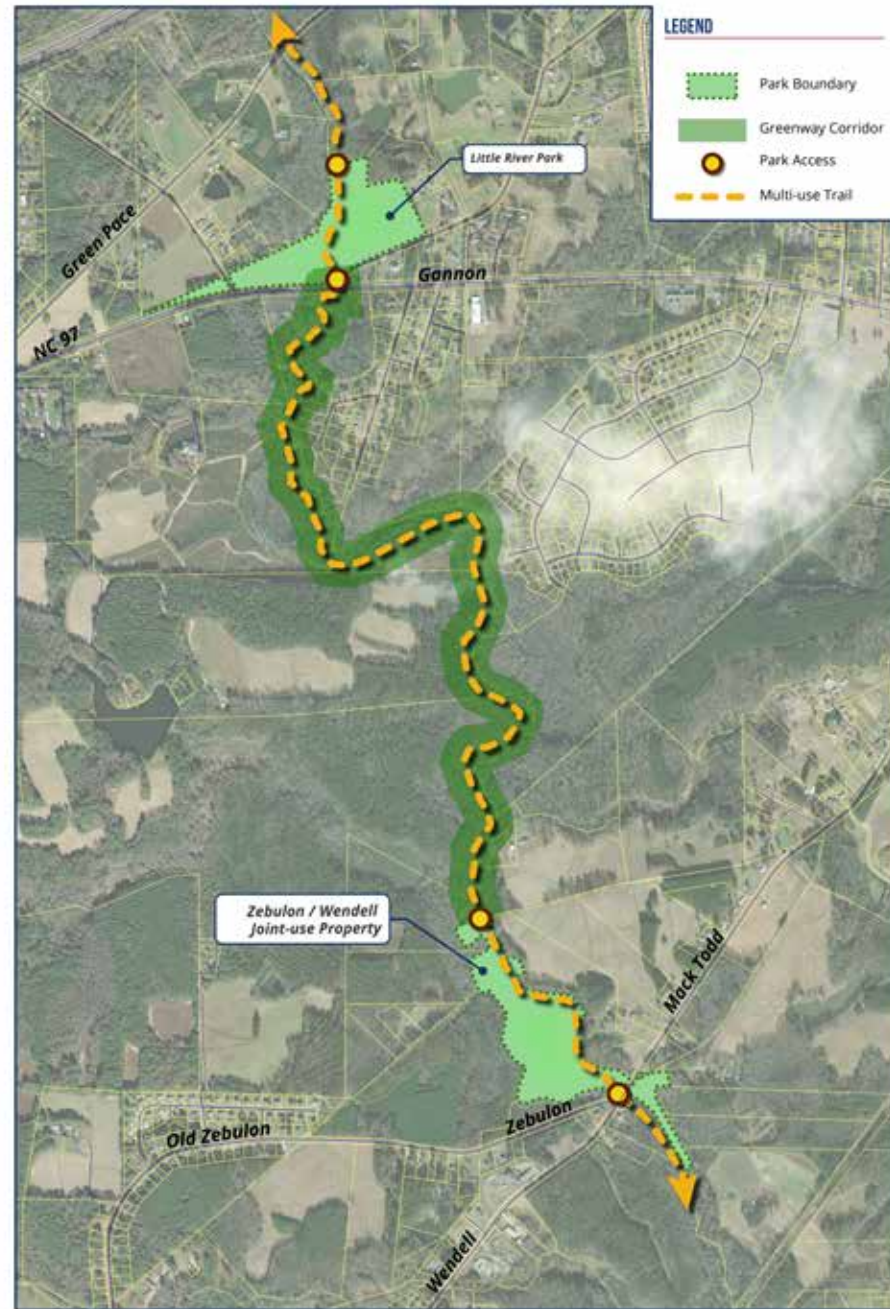
As Zebulon continues to develop Little River Park, the Town should actively engage Wake County and encourage a strategic approach to incorporate connections to the Little River Reservoir. This partnership, as well as the potential for additional connections that connect the broader system, could provide the incentive for Wake County to pursue the activation of the property and the development of greenways and multi-use trails that will benefit the residents of Zebulon.



► **Evaluate the Potential for a Nature Center at Little River Park**

As stated in the previous section discussing the concept at Little River Park, one of the main new facilities at this park would be an outdoor classroom and nature play area. The Town currently holds nature-based programs at Little River Park, and this facility would allow for a more structured setting and the opportunity for outdoor exhibits.

The outdoor classroom concept and nature play area are intended to be nature-based amenities that provide interactive play and environmental education opportunities without introducing a formal building. However, as the town grows, the surrounding greenway work expands, and the park is more heavily used, there may be an opportunity to incorporate a nature center facility. This would allow for expanded programming opportunities as well as a rental space for meetings and events. A nature center facility would also enhance the destination appeal of Little River Park, and establish this park as a truly unique environmental education experience.





# PLAY ZEBULON



White Deer Park Nature Center, Garner, NC

## Goal 2: Utilize Sustainable Design Principles in New and Existing Parks

Little River Park and the Zebulon / Wendell Open Space provide unique opportunities for nature-based recreation, environmental education, and sustainable design. However, these elements can be incorporated throughout all of the Town parks and open spaces.

### ▶ Integrate Innovative Stormwater Design and Sustainable Practices

#### *A Sustainable Park System*

A sustainable park system begins with best practices and strategies for each individual park. Incorporation of these strategies establishes a culture in which every park contributes to the success of the system and the natural environment throughout the Town. Utilizing best practices such as LED lighting, sustainable materials, solar panels on buildings, innovative stormwater mitigation, and abundant shade trees can enhance the overall environmental quality of the park and the system as a whole. These scalable features can be incorporated into parks throughout the Town in situations where they are applicable, and will provide ecological benefits and educational opportunities.

In addition to the amenities and physical attributes of the park that contribute to sustainability, the following maintenance strategies can also be implemented in order to achieve long-term sustainability over the life of a park:

- ▶ *Energy Management Plan* - controls energy costs at facilities and promotes conservation and alternative energy
- ▶ *Native Plants* - reduces water consumption through irrigation, as well as the amount of resources to maintain landscapes
- ▶ *Life Cycle Analysis* - promotes efficient use of resources throughout the life of a park or facility
- ▶ *Variable Maintenance Standard Levels* - enables the efficient use of maintenance resources for a diverse system and promotes natural areas and habitats

## A Resilient Park System

As Zebulon continues to grow in population and in density, the sustainability and resilience of its natural systems will become more critical. Increasing development alongside natural corridors will provide the setting for environmental challenges that require both system-wide planning strategies and interventions at the park level. The parks system's integration into the natural environment presents a unique opportunity to implement strategies that can help communities respond to these challenges and continue to have access to a quality recreation system.

Storm events have historically impacted the region through intense rainfall and flooding of stream and river corridors. Because of their proximity to these natural areas, parks and greenway corridors can serve as the first line of defense for such events. One unique strategy that can be implemented in larger parks is to use recreation fields and open spaces as detention basins for severe storm events. Parks in close proximity to creeks and streams are especially applicable for this strategy, as they can be early receptors of the flood water before it reaches surrounding neighborhoods. A large multi-use field can serve in this capacity. Diverting drainage towards these fields by sinking them below the surrounding grade can result in a substantial amount of water being detained by each field - water that would otherwise make its way towards neighborhoods or commercial properties. While there are benefits to this strategy, specific interventions at a park level should be evaluated to determine the feasibility based on level of use, rate of drainage, and frequency of events. High-use fields in areas that tend to hold water for extended periods of time may need to be located at higher elevations, while other areas of the park facilitate improved drainage that still has a positive impact to the neighborhood.



Examples of Sustainable Design Practices



# PLAY ZEBULON

The most severe storm events can also impact areas that are not immediately adjacent to water bodies, especially if the stormwater system is overwhelmed by unexpected volumes of water. Smaller parks within neighborhoods can serve as drainage areas for neighborhood stormwater and can be designed to manage large amounts of surface runoff. Continuing to ensure both large and smaller neighborhood parks are integrated into a comprehensive stormwater system will help protect neighborhoods, commercial areas, and the Town as a whole from potentially harmful flood events.

## ► **Promote The Integration Of Streetscapes and Urban Tree Canopies**

In a truly resilient park system, stormwater management strategies and sustainable best practices extend beyond the parks and open space. The same can be said for placemaking and connectivity - as the parks and recreation system should encompass the public realm and serve as the framework for a livable community.

Integrating the same elements and practices discussed in the park system into the urban streetscape can help achieve the system-wide goals sought through many of the interventions of this section. Creative drainage strategies such as bioswales and green infrastructure should be implemented where feasible, and tie into a larger system to increase resilience to sudden shocks such as large storm events.



**Example of a Streetscape Bioswale**





Urban tree canopies are also an important factor when considering enhancements to the public realm. A robust urban tree canopy will reduce the heat in urban environments and provide a pleasant experience for pedestrians. Integrating street trees into the drainage system, through underground cells or other methods, improves the quality of the canopy while also providing an infrastructure benefit.

The graphic above shows the cross section of a “complete street” concept. Incorporated into this street design are Urban street trees, bioswales, LED light fixtures, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and seating areas for public transit.



# PROGRAMS, COMMUNITY HEALTH & SPECIAL EVENTS

Community health is a critical concern for residents of Zebulon. Top priority facilities such as walking and biking trails, nature trails and indoor fitness facilities, and programs such as adult fitness and wellness and senior programs indicate residents' desire for a recreation system that encourages a healthy lifestyle for people of all ages. Recreation programs and special events are also critical components of the park system that provide positive benefits for public health. These programs and events help promote an active, cohesive community that provides a high quality of life for its residents. The following guiding principles will help guide the vision for Programs, Community Health & Special Events:

## **Goal 1:** Continue to provide a high quality of life for residents by promoting a healthy lifestyle through parks and recreation services

- ▶ Recognize and promote the benefits of parks for a healthy community.
- ▶ Prioritize safety and security in existing and new park facilities.
- ▶ Develop a branding / marketing strategy for department parks and programming, highlighting the availability of existing programs and their benefits for a high quality of life.

## **Goal 2:** Provide greater availability and variety of programs for a growing population

- ▶ Continue to provide and expand diverse programs for youth, adults, and seniors.
- ▶ Utilize partnerships, and other innovative strategies to address short-term needs.
- ▶ Continue to engage the community when planning and implementing new programs, services and facilities, ensuring offerings are meeting needs and priorities.

## **Goal 3:** Continue to provide and coordinate Town-wide special events to bring the community together and connect residents to parks and public spaces

- ▶ Continue to organize and promote special events as a way to bring Zebulon residents together – both new and old.
- ▶ Activate existing facilities as host venues for special events, including Downtown, Zebulon Community Park, and Five County Stadium.

## **Goal 1: Continue To Provide a High Quality of Life for Residents by Promoting a Healthy Lifestyle Through Parks and Recreation Services**

Public park and recreation agencies create healthy communities and play a fundamental role in enhancing the physical environments in which we live. Through facilities, outdoor settings, and services provided, they support good health for people of all abilities, ages, and backgrounds.

### **► Promote the Benefits of Parks**

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) has performed extensive research on the benefits of parks and how parks contribute to the health of communities. Physical activity is necessary to maintain good health and increases strength, flexibility, and endurance; relieves symptoms of depression and anxiety; improves mood; and enhances psychological well-being.

Despite the importance of parks and other recreational open spaces to health, many residents do not have adequate access to parks and open space. This is particularly true in areas, where park access is often inequitably distributed or there are significant barriers to access - putting certain populations at risk for health problems associated with inactivity. Zebulon in particular faces challenges stemming from incomplete sidewalk networks, walkability gaps in neighborhood park access, and general lack of awareness of what is available to residents.

Incorporating natural areas into a parks system can help improve psychological and social health. Exposure to nature can aid in medical applications, improve therapeutic treatment for mental health, and provide a setting for children who suffer from Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) to improve concentration and focus. Parks provide children with opportunities for outdoor play, which is a critical

component in the development of muscle strength and coordination, language, and cognitive abilities.

Parks also build healthy communities by creating stable neighborhoods and strengthening community development. Parks achieve this by providing opportunities for people to work together, build trust, and foster companionship. Neighborhood parks provide residents with a sense of place, and allow them to take ownership of these special assets in their communities.

Providing access to parks, open spaces and programs are the first step in promoting the benefits of parks. It is also recommended that the Department continue to highlight these benefits, and actively encourage residents to engage in both the physical parks and the programming offered within them. Raising awareness for the benefits of parks not only helps increase quality of life, but also garners support for funding necessary to improve the park system.





# PLAY ZEBULON

## ► Prioritize Safety and Security

During the engagement phase, many participants indicated a need for improved safety and security in both existing parks, and any new parks that are developed in the future. Design improvements can have a significant impact on the safety and security of a park and its surrounding area. Commonly referred to as “eyes on parks”, clear site lines and open views into parks are features that should be incorporated into the context and perimeter of the park, in order to create a safer environment that is more integrated into the surrounding neighborhood. Enhancing the borders of the park to include more efficient

street connections, improved lighting, on-street parking, and minimal barriers can help minimize the potential for security issues. Strengthening pedestrian connections and improving park frontages will create safer access for park users and create a more inviting site, especially with the incorporation of gateway signage and wayfinding. These types of upgrades to the existing facilities will also promote increased usage, activating the park space and reducing the potential for safety and security issues.

## ► Develop a Branding/Marketing Strategy for the Department

The Parks and Recreation Department is often the first public agency that new residents encounter when they move to a new community. This gives the Department the opportunity to develop a welcoming, inclusive environment that helps foster a sense of belonging for both new and existing community members. In order to maximize this opportunity, the Department should develop a comprehensive branding and marketing strategy to reach existing and potential system users.

A successful marketing strategy can help foster an environment that promotes social diversity within the community, leading to positive social and economic impacts for the Town as a whole. By identifying means to communicate with partners, park users and department staff, the strategy can lead to better wellness and healthy habits of citizens and growth in participation for recreation programming throughout the Town. Marketing methods have grown more complex in recent years, however the ability to provide creative, customized communications and engage interactively with community members has never been more readily available.



The strategy for Zebulon Parks and Recreation should utilize a three-pronged approach based on:

- 1) educating the public and other stakeholders of events, programs and other parks and recreations related benefits.
- 2) creating public awareness and communicating park planning and design efforts to target audiences.
- 3) increasing attendance and awareness for events, attracting positive media coverage and exposure, and building goodwill within the community.

## **Goal 2: Provide Greater Availability and Variety Of Programs for a Growing Population**

The community engagement results and the Vision Workshop discussions revealed a need to diversify existing programs. The diversification could include adapting facilities and programs to better address current and changing demographics specifically to serve the needs of seniors, young adults, teens, and special populations.

### **► Continue to Provide Diverse Programs and Activities**

Recommendations in this chapter have highlighted opportunities for the improvement of access to open space, natural areas, and community recreation space, and further sections will expand on connectivity improvements that encourage alternative transportation for pedestrians and cyclists. In addition to access to facilities, the community also expressed a strong desire for increased access and availability of programming, and health and wellness opportunities.

Input from the community involvement phase of the Master Plan has indicated that there is a desire for a wide range of programming and opportunities for people of all ages. This is particularly true for youth and teens, seniors, users with special needs, and young adults with families - essentially providing something for everyone. As the Town continues to grow and more families move to new neighborhoods, the demand for this wide range of offerings will only continue.





# PLAY ZEBULON

In addition to a general increase in the number of programs, the location of these programs will also be a factor for the Department. Nearly all of the programs currently run by the department are operated out of the Zebulon Community Center - with the exception of select programs and events held at Town Hall, Downtown and Little River Park. As demand for programming increases, the Community Center will continue to be limited in the quantity and availability of programs it can support. Continuing to bring programs out of the Community Center and into other parks and the public realm will be essential. This could include a variety of initiatives, including: nature programs at Little River Park; art festivals utilizing the Alley and Downtown; special events at Zebulon Community Park and Five County Stadium; and, health and wellness programs with partnering organizations. Taking programs out of the Community Center and increasing availability will not only provide flexibility in the short-term, but also create the long-term demand for a larger facility to support an even greater set of program offerings.

## ► Utilize Partnerships and Other Innovative Strategies

While expanding the variety and availability of programming within the Department's inventory is recommended, there will need to be a recognition that the Town cannot be the provider of all the recreation service needs of the community and they will need to determine what their core programs will be and allow other providers to fill appropriate needs. This will become especially true as programs begin to be offered outside of the Community Center, and additional venues are needed. This will require the Department to continue to develop strong partnerships with other public, non-profit, and private providers of recreation programs to provide a comprehensive level of services to the community.

To help facilitate this process, a program delivery strategy should be developed that outlines the resources needed for recreation program and service delivery. This plan should outline general areas of focus, how services will be delivered, the budget and staff resource requirements as well as required marketing efforts.

To help facilitate the process, this plan should:

- Outline general areas of focus
- Identify staff resource requirements
- Identify budget and other resource requirements
- Identify marketing strategy
- Analyze viability of utilizing a partnership





► **Continue to Engage the Community when Planning and Implementing Programs and Developing New Facilities**

The public engagement conducted during this master plan has helped to establish a baseline for the communities needs and priorities for programs and services. Many of the recommendations in this plan are a direct result of the input received, and seek to implement improvements based on responses. While this baseline is essential in setting short-term priorities, the public will need to be continuously engaged as new programs are implemented. The anticipated growth in Zebulon will bring changes in demographics, as well as recreation preferences. What is meeting the needs of the community today may not be true in the next five-to-ten years.

While previous sections have discussed the potential for new recreation facilities that will allow expanded programming and service delivery, it is important that these facilities are developed in response to the programming needs and priorities of the community. Because of the significant resources required for these facilities, the demand for such investment must be demonstrated through programming metrics, as well as substantial public input. The community should be engaged throughout the planning, design and construction of such facilities. Flexibility of programming, and adaptive uses should also be a key consideration in development, ensuring these facilities function for the greatest range of users.

► **Continue to Provide and Coordinate Town-Wide Special Events to Bring the Community Together and Connect Residents to Parks and Public Spaces**

The Town of Zebulon has a successful record of planning, promoting, and implementing Town-wide special events. Community gatherings such as the Downtown Tree Lighting have been immensely popular, and drawn people from across Zebulon and beyond to congregate and interact with each other. Events such as these should be expanded to include a wider variety of events, and utilize locations throughout the Parks and Recreation System.



# PLAY ZEBULON

## **Goal 3: Continue to Organize and Promote Special Events for Zebulon Residents**

Special events were one of the top needs and priorities across all methods of engagement during the Needs and Priorities Assessment, as well as a point of discussion during both the Vision and Implementation Workshops. Events such as these are a great way to engage residents of all ages, especially families, and create a sense of community and civic pride. This will become increasingly important as the Town continues to grow, as these special events could serve as community gateways for new residents moving to the area. Town-wide events are not only great places to meet new people, but they help ensure that Zebulon's character is preserved even as it grows.

With the success of events such as the Farmer's Market, May Days, and youth-oriented events, the Department has established a foundation on which more of these types of events can be developed. However, much like programming and services, the Town cannot be expected to do everything when holding these events. Partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and regional agencies will become essential as event offerings expand. These events will also be prime opportunities for public outreach and engagement to promote Department programs, services, and improvements. As the Vision of this Master Plan progresses, the Town should take every opportunity to engage the community with upcoming projects, new program offerings, and additional special events.

### ▶ **Activate Existing Facilities for Special Events**

The Town has done a good job distributing events across multiple locations, however there is still potential for further activation at existing and future facilities. Historically, the department has used Town Hall, Zebulon Community Center, and Whitley Park for special events. This variety is a good precedent upon which to build - as providing events in varying geographic locations promotes increased participation from neighborhoods in close proximity to these locations.

As the Town seeks to provide more special events and gathering opportunities, there are several other locations that could be utilized. Zebulon Community Park's large size and proximity to Downtown provides an ideal setting for large events or festivals. The Town also has an underutilized asset in Five County Stadium, which has the potential to host a significant number of people. This location also presents a unique partnership opportunity between the department and the Mudcats, particularly for events catering to youth and families.

Additionally, the Town's investment in Downtown parks and open spaces will yield a unique setting for community-wide gatherings and events. The ongoing development of the Alley network and the plans for the acquisition of park space will help enhance the character of the Downtown area, provide new places for residents to gather, and spark additional economic development and investment in the Town core.







# CONNECTIVITY & ACCESS

The need for greenways and trails, and access between parks and communities were some of the most prevalent topics during the community engagement process. Access as a concept can be applied to the entire park system’s overall vision. The guiding principles for access are supported by other Town and County initiatives that seek to improve multi-modal transportation, overall quality of life for residents, and stimulate economic growth throughout the Town. The goals for access established through the Visioning workshop are:

## **Goal 1: Continue to develop greenways, trails, in and around Zebulon**

- ▶ Identify priority connections to promote access to key parks, economic centers, schools, and neighborhoods
- ▶ Develop a central east-west connection from Little River Park, through Downtown to Community Park, and on to Five County Stadium
- ▶ Continue to work with partners to develop regional trail connections
- ▶ Work with developers to build greenways and trailheads in new communities, provide appropriate amenities, and connections to other greenways and trails

## **Goal 2: Identify walkability gaps and access barriers, and opportunities to improve connections between parks, residents, and other areas of interest**

- ▶ Prioritize the development of sidewalk connections that increase walkability to parks
- ▶ Continue to improve ADA access at existing parks and public facilities
- ▶ Utilize partnerships to help ensure that residents in new neighborhoods and communities are connected to the Town Core

## **Goal 3: Develop Signage, Wayfinding and Trailheads**

- ▶ Develop a unified signage and wayfinding package that can be utilized throughout the Town to identify parks, facilities, greenways, and destinations
- ▶ Develop design guidelines for greenway trail heads in parks and facilities within the Zebulon greenway system

## **Goal 1: Continue to Develop Greenways, Trails in and Around Zebulon**

Throughout conversations with community members, Town staff, and Town leaders, the theme of better connectivity and access to parks and recreation was consistent. The community expressed a strong desire to see more connectivity options and methods developed across the parks system.

### **► Identify Priority Connections to Promote Access to Key Assets**

Key components of creating better connections is both prioritizing goals for the entire system comprehensively and identifying the most critical projects that need to be developed first. By defining a hierarchy of projects, Town staff will be able to focus their energy on making those projects successful. Planning these improvements and securing the needed funding is a complex process. So, a defined list of priority projects will help channel and connect vital staff efforts.

The Master Plan Vision has identified approximately 10 miles of planned greenways and trails and that should be the priority for implementation in the next ten years. These connections include: the “Green Spine” discussed in the next section, the completion of Beaverdam Creek from Wakelon Elementary School to US 64, a Downtown connector serving the northern part of Town; and the Little River Corridor from Little River Park to the Zebulon/Wendell Open Space. These priority connections can be viewed on the map on the following page.

Elements that should be considered to identify additional priority projects include:

- Developing connectivity amenities at key transit hubs and intersections
- Connecting early with developers to make sure access and connectivity planning is integrated into new development projects
- Reaching out to partners in the community to strategically develop a strong community vision and support around the significance of regional trails, access, and development.

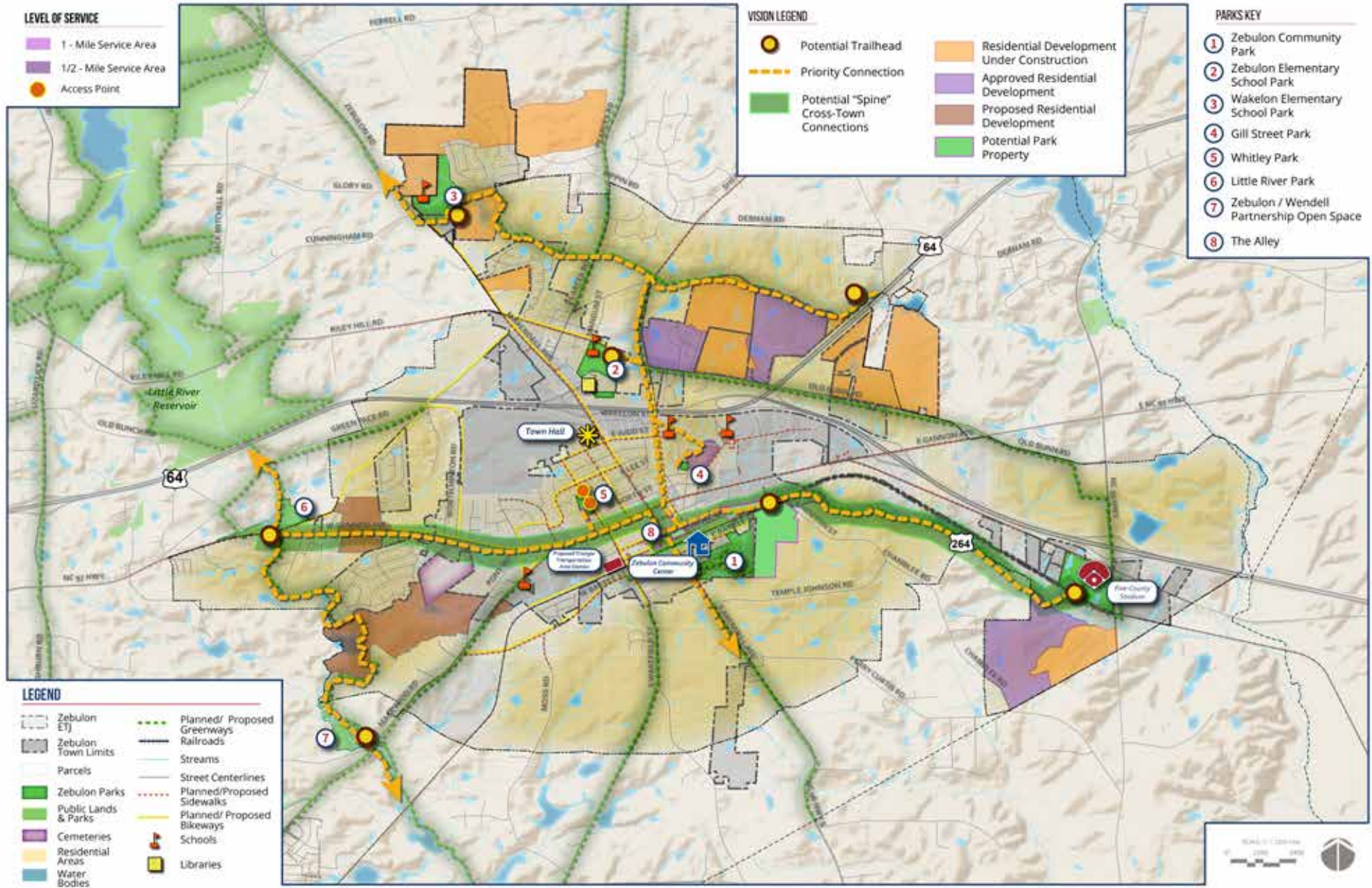
It is also important to continue to reference trails in the Greenway, Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, in order to maintain continuity with other Town efforts. Simultaneously, these methods will open doors for additional development.



**Zebulon Greenway Master Plan**



# PLAY ZEBULON



Priority Connections and "Green Spine"



### ▶ Green Spine

A strong method for developing comprehensive connections in a park system is to provide a spine into which other projects can connect. An east-west route through town should be included on the list of critical projects. Coined the “Green Spine” in the Vision Workshops, this connection will stretch from Little River Park to Five County Stadium - connecting Downtown and Zebulon Community Park along the way. This connection may take a variety of forms along the route, including: a multi-use sidewalk on W Gannon Avenue; sidewalks and alleys Downtown; and, multi-use greenway trails through Zebulon Community Park, Little Creek, and Five County Stadium.

Highlighted in the map on the right, the Green Spine connection will provide residents access to Downtown and increase their options for arriving for shopping, dining, recreation and entertainment events. People from both sides of town can choose to meet downtown, young people can bike to the heart of Town and families can choose to walk there safely with their children.

This connection is vital because it will serve as a tie-in point for additional trails and paths that will further connect Zebulon residents. It will welcome people to explore ways of getting outdoors and being more active, and spend more time in the heart of Zebulon.

### ▶ Continue to Work with Partners to Develop Regional Trails

Zebulon is situated in a region of the Carolinas that strongly supports development of trails for recreation and travel. Environmental, county, state and federal organizations have reemphasized regional outdoor connections following the boom that parks of every size experienced during COVID-19. Communities demonstrated that with the increase in flexibility of personal time-management, the desire to get outdoors skyrocketed. This trend, combined with the passing of new measures like the Great American Outdoors Act and the revamping of the American Scenic Byways program is signaling a coming increase in funding and connections project opportunities for proactive municipalities in the next few years.



**Capital Area Greenway Trial Bridge**

# PLAY ZEBULON

Combining efforts with local partners, Wake County, and adjacent municipalities to increase the scope, range and positive impacts of these types of projects will help develop strong proposals for funding and support. Additionally, by collaborating with other organizations, the trails system can be directed through significant cultural destinations, shopping and dining hubs, and nature and conservation areas, all of which boost local economics and increases the connectivity and access for residents and visitors to diverse attractions in Zebulon.

## ► Work with Developers to Provide Greenway Trailheads and Connections

New development locations are some of the most vital components of establishing strong connections to the greenway system. Developers are motivated to provide elements of attraction for the community in their work. Areas of new development also tend to form destinations whether they are business developments, neighborhoods or recreation sites.

Developers are strong partners due to the funding and support backing their projects, and they often have their finger on the pulse of community desire and needs. Their projects will become reality and will likely have cutting-edge elements that make them attractive to residents and visitors. These factors indicate developers are important partners for parks and trails projects.

Connections to activity nodes in a community are in the interest of developers, as they emphasize a more livable neighborhood for future residents. High-quality greenway trailheads can be integrated into new neighborhood designs that connect to other parks, schools, and other essential services. Rather than being integrated wherever they fit later in the future, Town parks and recreation staff can work with developers on these new projects so that they are designed to strengthen the overall system design, allowing for strategic access and connectivity integration of amenities.



Greenway Trailhead in Charlotte, NC



## **Goal 2: Identify Walkability Gaps and Access Barriers, and Opportunities to Improve Connections Between Parks, Residents, and Other Areas of Interest**

To provide an equitable, comprehensive parks system, all community members should have easy access to parks and services. In park systems across the country, there have been consistent lessons learned over time with regard to barriers to park access. These barriers often prevent entire neighborhoods and sections of the community from utilizing the parks system.

Gaps in sidewalk connectivity and trails, as well as large infrastructure installations, can create situations that are notably unsafe for pedestrians to travel to parks. These challenges cannot be addressed unless they are intentionally identified as part of Town planning efforts. Additionally, because of their rural locations, high traffic, narrow roads, or limited set-backs these types of areas can also be challenging spots to add in the needed services like crosswalks, sidewalks, or bike lanes. This makes the projects both complex and more expensive, and thus historically they were often overlooked as financially unjustifiable.

Community planners are starting to recognize that these constant hurdles are creating hot spots of inequity in our communities. The collective mindset is shifting from identifying these spaces as too expensive to fix, to being some of the most urgent priorities. These types of gaps in access for walking, biking and other alternative transit need to be identified as part of creating the most urgent projects priority list. A lot of work will be needed in these locations to bring them current with other areas of Town but will also be invaluable to equitably connecting all residents to parks, areas of interest, and recreation services as the town grows.

### **► Prioritize the Development of Sidewalk Connections**

Community feedback not only in Zebulon but across the country is revealing that there is a very strong desire for walkable, active living. This has become increasingly important in recent years, as it recognized that lack of access is the key hindrance to healthy active communities.

Creating better connectivity should start by prioritizing the development of sidewalk connections. Sidewalks need to be integrated across the park system along both main and



**Example of a High-Visibility, Signalized Crosswalk**



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secondary roads to achieve successful access. Sidewalks should also be designed with pedestrian safety in mind. Adult joggers and walkers may find a route safe that parents could not utilize with small children. The needs of all residents should be at the forefront of designing pedestrian amenities.

Safe, highly-visible crosswalks that prioritize pedestrians and make it easy for drivers to see them should be the design standard throughout Town. Protection from busy traffic by using setbacks, trees, and vegetation creates safe routes adjacent, but safely separated, from key, busy vehicular zones.

## ▶ **Continue to Improve ADA Access at Existing Parks and Public Facilities**

In striving for great connections and high-quality access to parks and recreation services for all community members, the Town should prioritize ADA access and improvements for existing and future parks and public facilities.

With any redevelopment projects, this should be a priority on the improvements list. Accessible parking, quality ADA ramps and access to as many parks and facility amenities as possible should be the goal.

All new parks and trails provide excellent design opportunities to strategically invite all community members to take full advantage of welcoming and inclusive outdoor recreation settings. If parks are designed with critical ADA principles, it also creates ideal environments for hosting programs for individuals with special needs - which was a priority emerging from community engagement.

## ▶ **Utilize Partnerships to Connect New Residents to the Town Core**

Over many years, Zebulon leaders, residents, and businesses have crafted a rich, cultural foundation for the town and its identity. Local businesses and longstanding organizations have the potential to be both invigorated by and overwhelmed by rapid growth. Organizational missions and structures may need to revamp to prepare to meet expanding community needs. The town can be an important facilitator in supporting the local culture and their local partners. By continuing to utilize and maintain long-term partnerships with existing businesses and organizations, the Park system can be an invaluable asset for welcoming new residents to the Town and plugging them into the community.

As Zebulon experiences rapid growth, the culture and environment that draws people there could be transformed quickly, and Town management can also be overwhelmed by the expanding needs. Partnerships with community groups can also help alleviate some of the growing challenges that face Town staff. Partners may be able to provide new Zebulon community members with services and activities, as well as integrate new residents with the existing Town culture.

Maintaining these types of relationships will encourage new and existing cultural traditions to unite and continue a rich and developing culture built and valued by all residents and organizations old and new.

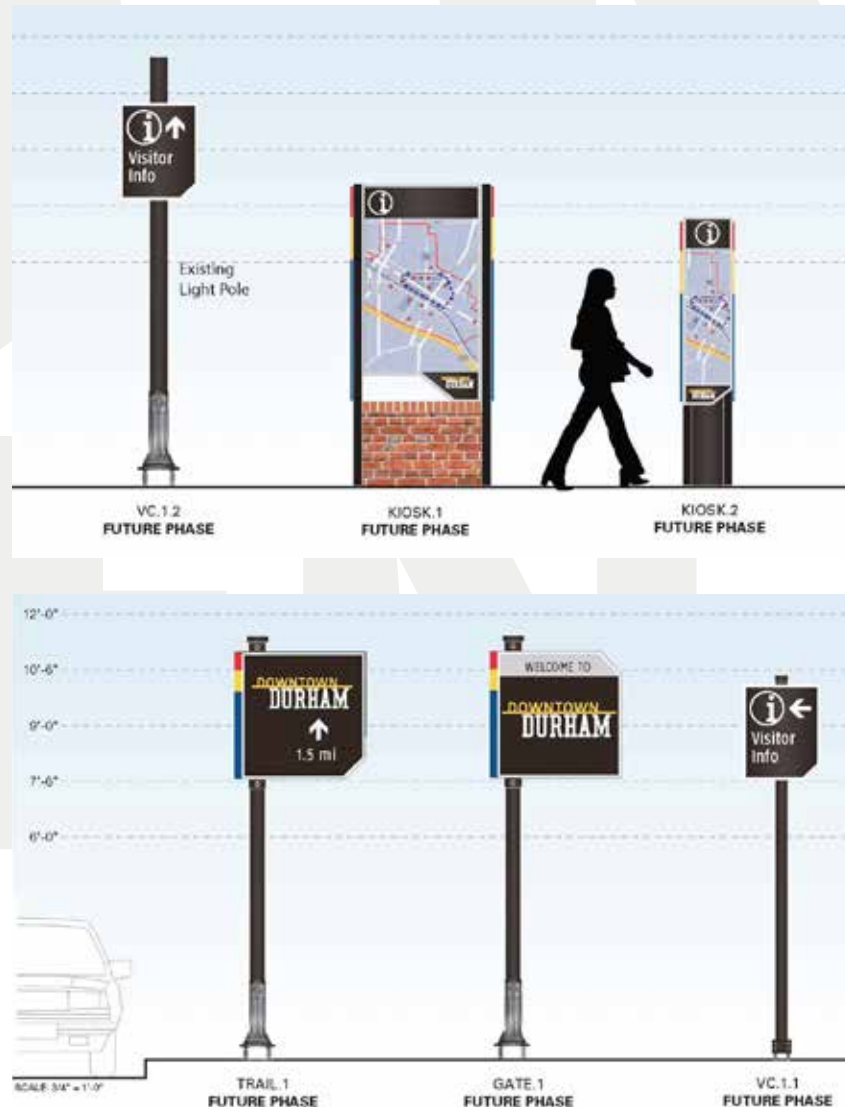
### Goal 3: Develop Signage , Wayfinding and Trailheads

Community feedback reveals that another consistent hurdle to people utilizing parks and recreation services is simply being unaware of what is available in the community already. Signage and wayfinding can be a very effective remedy. Smaller installations can be made quickly, even while a more substantial branding and signage program is developed. Consistency and integration across the system begins to develop a visual language that people then associate with parks and recreation destinations, events and services.

These types of signs directing people to parks as well as noticeable, engaging trailhead entries help inform the community about the connections they already have to recreation spaces and can increase usage over time as people become aware of the resources. Public art should also be integrated into wayfinding whenever possible. While a unified Town-wide signage package is a great way to tie the communities together, unique characteristics in each can be expressed through subtle variations, as well as public art installations.

#### ► Develop a Unified Signage and Wayfinding Package

A fully unified signage and wayfinding package should be created by the town to integrate a consistent branded, visual language across the parks system. This package can include signage, fliers, email templates, social media, websites, and department transportation branding.



Wayfinding Package Example, Durham, NC

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Signage and wayfinding makes park locations readily recognizable and communicates to the community about recreation services in a consistent manner that they can quickly relate to. It helps people discover parks and services and can help communicate information about events and new parks and recreation locations.

Branding and signage can also help bring awareness to residents about the department and its ongoing work in the community. This type of networking and relationship-building can positively impact the mission of the parks department and the staff that actively work around community members in the parks and facilities. This can help build a culture of supporting relationships and community for residents and town staff.

## ► Develop Design Guidelines for Greenway Trailheads

In addition to developing signage and wayfinding standards for the parks system, the Town should also continue to promote standards for greenway design - including trailheads. The Town of Zebulon recently adopted a set of greenway design standards that address trails, trailheads, boardwalks and bridges, as well as provide a series of standard construction details. This document

is a great first step in developing the consistency that will help make a visual connection for residents for trail entrances and awareness for access and connections to services and locations in their neighborhoods.

The continued development of these standards, as well as the standard details for greenways and trailhead projects, can help streamline the design and construction process. The greenway and trailhead design standards and construction details should be routinely reviewed, updated and implemented into future projects. This will help ensure that all elements in the greenway system are safe, accessible, properly connected, and help promote sustainability and resilience throughout the network.

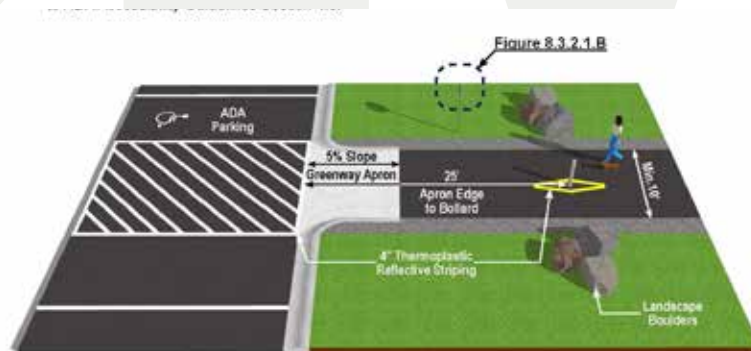


Figure 8.3.2.1.A

Design Standard Examples from the Zebulon Greenway Design Standards

Figure 8.3.2.1.B



Figure 8.3.3.A







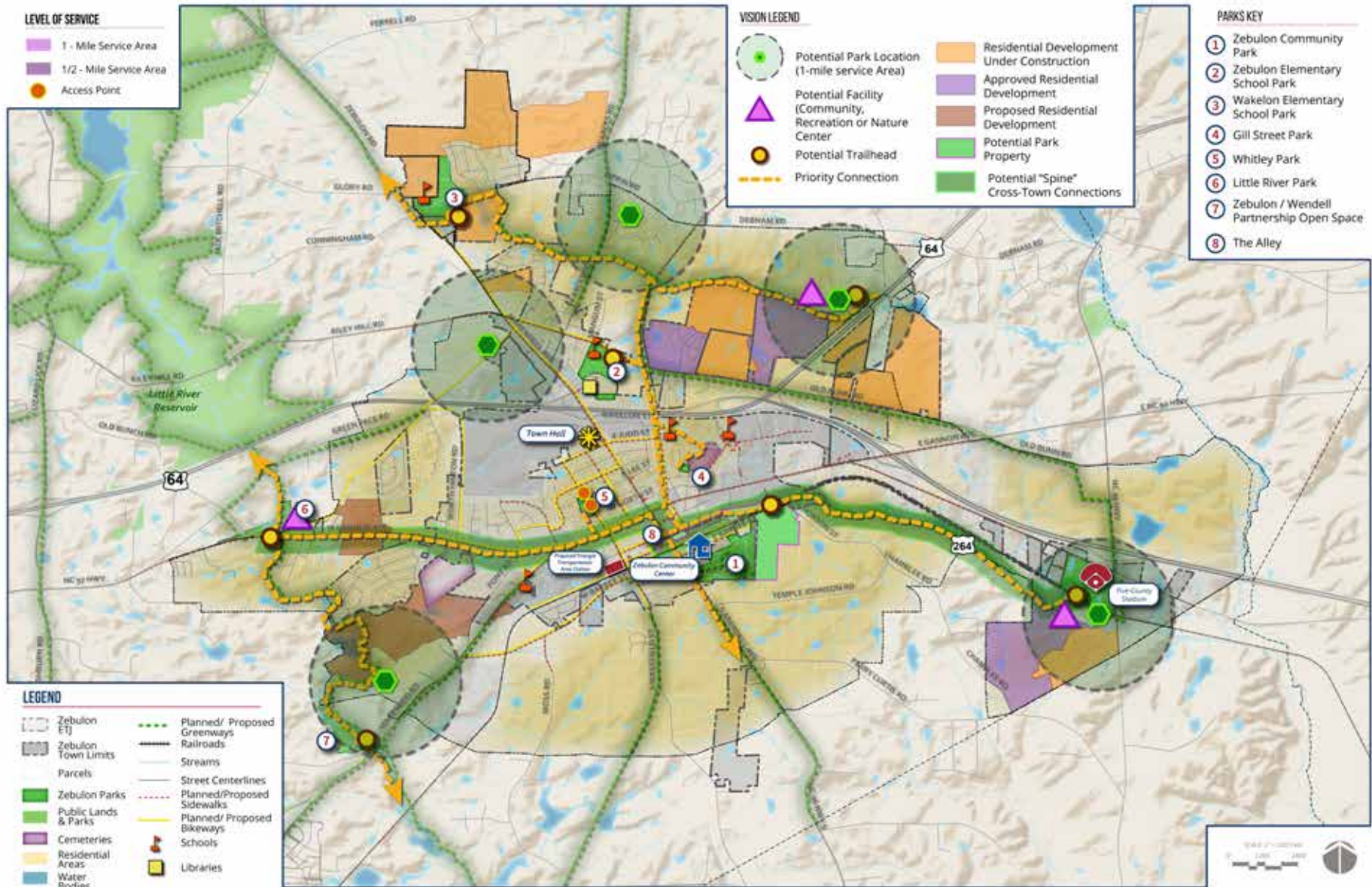
# PLAY ZEBULON

## THE COMPREHENSIVE VISION

Each of the Vision Sub-systems discussed in this chapter collectively form the foundation for the synthesis of the Comprehensive Vision for the Town of Zebulon Parks and Recreation System. The Comprehensive Vision was created as a cumulative representation of the ideas and thoughts shared by the community and stakeholders throughout the Master Plan Process, represented through the goals and objectives of the sub-systems. Illustrated in the map on the right, this Comprehensive Vision Plan will enable the Town to graphically represent the future of its parks and recreation system as a communication tool for residents and stakeholders. As noted throughout the Master Plan, the parks and recreation system will play a key role in the continued development of Zebulon and its communities. This vision outlines a continuation of investment in these contributing community assets and is consistent with the needs and priorities expressed through extensive engagement efforts.

Implementation of the goals for each sub-system will enable the Town of Zebulon to develop a robust park and recreation system that will not only enrich the lives of the people in its communities but would also form a prime attraction for future residents and visitors. With ongoing improvements and additions to existing parks; enhancing access to natural areas; incorporating sustainable and resilient strategies into park development and improvement; promoting cultural assets as an integral part of the park system fabric; establishing strong connections and access throughout the system; and, developing facilities that meet the programming needs of the users, the Zebulon Parks and Recreation Department serve as the foundation for a livable community.







# 5





**IMPLEMENTATION**



**PLAY  
ZEBULON**

**Parks & Recreation Master Plan**









# IMPLEMENTATION

## RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLEMENTATION

### INTRODUCTION

In order to advance the parks and recreation vision established by the residents of Zebulon, implementation strategies must be defined and priorities established. As the final chapter of this Master Plan, Recommendations and Implementation includes: estimation of probable cost of the vision established in Chapter 4; capital improvement recommendations; programming, policy and operations recommendations; an impact fee analysis; evaluation of funding sources; phasing recommendations; and priority action items.

The implementation plan for the Town of Zebulon Parks and Recreation Master Plan focuses on the implementation of the vision and guiding principles through two critical components: funding and phasing, and priority action items. Priority of individual action items is tied to public input gathered and documented throughout the Community Needs Assessment. Together, these three components will allow the Parks and Recreation Department to review and as needed, efficiently revise this strategic plan in the future to reflect changing conditions, demographics or priorities.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLEMENTATION

##### 5.1 Implementation Workshop

##### 5.2 Cost Estimates

##### 5.3 Capital Improvement Recommendations

##### 5.4 Programming, Policy & Operations Recommendations

##### 5.5 Impact Fee Analysis

##### 5.6 Phasing & Financial Plan

##### 5.7 Priority Action Items

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The Vision (Chapter 4) of the Master Plan formed five subsystems each defined through a series of goals and objectives. Defining these goals allowed the project team to better understand how to address the needs and priorities that were identified throughout the planning process, as well as the individual park needs that resulted from the System Inventory and Analysis (Chapter 2). Utilizing the park evaluations completed for each park and facility in the system, recommendations intended to satisfy system-wide vision objectives were developed at an individual park level. These recommendations formed a portion of the probable cost estimate that will be discussed in this section.

In addition to costs associated with the vision recommendations, the cost estimate also incorporates projects that have been previously identified by the Town and the Department, projects identified in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), and projects identified during the facility evaluation process.

The Phasing and Financial Plan focuses on the Implementation of the Vision and objectives by identifying existing funding available for priority projects, as well as alternative funding the Town may consider. These may include leveraging or 'stacking' potential grants, partnerships with public, private or non-profit agencies, and bond sales for parks and recreation improvements. Analyzing available existing and potential funding sources lays the foundation for the phasing recommendations for funding the probable cost estimates.

For the phasing recommendations, three categories of time have been identified:

- Short-term represents CIP recommendations to be completed in the next 2-3 years
- Medium-term, which represents CIP recommendations to be completed in a 4- to 6-year time-frame
- Long-term, to be completed in a 7-10 year time frame.





# 5.1 IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHOP

## OVERVIEW

The Recommendations and Implementation is intended to provide achievable steps for the realization of the Vision established through community engagement and the Town Staff and Advisory Board Vision Workshops. In order to maintain continuity with this process, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board was again engaged through an Implementation Workshop to discuss recommendations and priorities.

Held on April 29, 2021, the Implementation Workshop began with an overview of the project findings today, including the Vision framework and sub-systems established in the Vision Workshop. Participants were then asked to identify priority projects, policy changes, program needs, and top priority projects for short-term completion. When discussing these projects and changes, participants were also asked to consider time-frames and potential partners. The following tables provide the responses from project participants. These responses help shape the phasing plan and priority action items discussed later in this chapter.

Priority Projects		
Projects	Time-Frame	Partners
Existing Parks	Short	Community Stakeholders
Greenway Connection - spine	On-going , segment should be priority	Developers, Wake County, CAMPO
Little River Park Corridor District	Short - Medium	COR, Wake County
Fixing/Improving Existing Parks	Short	Community Stakeholders
Park Branding / Signage	Short	Community Stakeholders, Town Departments
Zebulon Community Park expansion	Medium-Long	Economic Development, Developers
Downtown Park	Short	Economic Development, Community Stakeholders
Alleys	Short	Economic Development, Community Stakeholders
Greenway access in neighborhoods	Medium	Community Stakeholders, Developers

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Policy Changes & Program Needs		
Projects	Time-Frame	Partners
Branding / Messaging / Marketing	On-going	Community Stakeholders
Increase participation	On-going	Community Stakeholders, Private Providers
Park Branding / Landscaping	On-going	Community Stakeholders
Acreage LOS - 15/1000	Short-Term	Town Departments
Access LOS - 1 miler	Short-Term	New Developments
Alley/Special Events	Short, Medium	Downtown Partners, Economic Development
Maintain Small Town Feel / Stand Out	On-going	Community Stakeholders
Land Acquisition	Short-Medium	Town Departments, Economic Development, Developers, Wake County
Community-based / Park-Based Programs	Short Term	Community Stakeholders, Private Providers
New Community Member Outreach	On-going	Community Stakeholders, Economic Development
Nature-Base Education	Short-Term	Community Stakeholders, Private Providers, Wake County
Activate Parks with Programs	Short-Term	Community Stakeholders, Private Providers

Policy Changes & Program Needs		
Projects	Time-Frame	Partners
Engaging Young Adults and Families	On-going	Community Stakeholders, Private Providers
Young Adults	On-going	Community Stakeholders, Private Providers
Adult Sports (softball / soccer)	On-going	Community Stakeholders, Private Providers
Adult Fitness	On-going	Community Stakeholders, Private Providers
Tournament Events	On-going	Community Stakeholders, Private Providers
Pop-up Tournament	On-going	Community Stakeholders, Private Providers
Scholarship Opportunities/ Understanding the Community	On-going	Community Stakeholders, Private Providers





# PLAY ZEBULON

## 5.2 COST ESTIMATES

Based on cost estimates derived from the Town of Zebulon Parks and Recreation facility assessments, projects identified in the CIP, and recommendations associated with the Master Plan Vision, the estimated probable capital improvement cost is approximately **\$59,362,992** in 2021 dollars for complete implementation of all aspects of the Vision. The Vision includes system improvements anticipated to occur to establish and



maintain parks delivery within the next ten years consistent with the growth anticipated in the Town. The following provides a more detailed description of the vision probable cost estimate:

The figures provided in this chapter are order-of-magnitude costs that are intended for planning purposes only. Acquisition costs for new facilities on land that is not currently owned by the Town shall be evaluated on a project-specific basis once individual parcels have been identified.

The proposed vision may be modified over time in response to actual population growth, future resident desires, and available funding sources. Additionally, it is recommended that each proposed project should undergo a detailed feasibility and cost analysis prior to physical implementation. Final actual costs could vary significantly depending on many factors including but not limited to:

- Time-frame of implementation
- Individual project scale
- Changing land acquisition costs
- Property market values rise/decline
- Raw products and materials costs

<b>Vision Subsystem</b>	
Vision - Order of Magnitude Estimate of Probable Capital Improvement Costs (2021)	
<b>Neighborhood Parks &amp; Open Space:</b> Projects include the redevelopment of existing neighborhood parks and development of new parks.	\$9,108,400
<b>Community Parks &amp; Athletic Facilities:</b> Projects include the development of athletic fields, courts, and community-serving parks.	\$16,580,000
<b>Connectivity &amp; Access:</b> Improvements and/or enhancements to provide better and safer connections in parks and on routes to and from park facilities.	\$1,095,000
<b>Natural Areas and Sustainability:</b> Projects in existing and new facilities that contribute to system-wide sustainability and resilience.	\$1,716,200
Programs, Community Health & Special Events	\$16,093,000
Greenways	\$10,129,560
<i>Planning Design &amp; Permitting + Contingency for Existing Improvements</i>	<i>\$4,640,832</i>
<b>Park System Total \$59,362,992</b>	

# PLAY ZEBULON

## 5.3 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Vision Cost estimate is intended to inform the Parks and Recreation Department's 10-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) by providing an order of magnitude cost estimate for capital projects throughout the park system that are based on community input. This is especially critical during this Master Plan process, as this is the first year that the Parks and Recreation Department will have their own dedicated CIP.

The Phasing Plan ultimately will serve as the 10-year recommendations for the CIP, providing a list of projects and estimated costs per year. These recommendations are informed by the summary of improvement at each park, as well as proposed facilities, and the results of prioritization efforts during the Implementation Workshops and with Town Staff. Included on the following page is a summary of the cost estimates as it relates to park and facility type - redevelopment of existing facilities and cost estimate for proposed facilities.

In addition to the breakdown by park, the cost estimate is also broken up into improvement type, to provide a better understanding of the specific improvements as they relate to the Vision Cost Estimate. These improvement types are shown along with the percentage of the total improvements each category represents.

Existing Parks, Open Spaces and Facilities	
Town Parks and Facilities	
Zebulon Community Park	\$5,575,000
Gill Street Park	\$508,000
Whitley Park	\$445,000
Little River Park	\$1,161,200
Zebulon Community Center	\$73,000
School Park and Facilities	
Zebulon Elementary School Park	\$110,000
Wakelon Elementary School Park	\$430,000
Joint-Use Parks and Facilities	
Zebulon/Wendell Partnership Open Space	\$60,000
The Alley	\$25,000
<i>Planning Design &amp; Permitting + Contingency for Existing Improvements</i>	<i>\$4,460,832</i>
<b>Existing Parks, Open Spaces and Facilities Total</b>	<b>\$12,928,032</b>



Facility Type - Proposed	
Town Identified Park Development Projects	
Downtown Parks	\$1,225,000
Alley Development	\$250,000
Proposed Parks to Improve LOS	
Land Acquisition for New Parks	\$300,000
Neighborhood Park Level Additions/Improvements	\$4,940,000
Community Recreation Facilities	
Five-County Stadium Park	\$1,500,000
Multi-use Recreation Facility	\$9,375,000
Aquatic Facility	\$5,625,000
Trails and Greenways	
Green Spine	\$2,688,000
Beaverdam Creek	\$1,579,800
Downtown Connector	\$2,283,200
<i>Planning, Design, Permitting + Contingency for Proposed Improvements</i>	<i>\$16,668,960</i>
<b>Proposed Park and Open Space Facilities Total</b>	<b>\$46,434,960</b>

Improvement Type		
Sidewalk and Pathways	\$688,000	1.3%
Park Access	\$120,000	0.2%
Park Amenities	\$2,556,200	4.7%
Landscape and Green Space	\$365,000	0.7%
Stormwater & Water Quality	\$825,000	1.5%
Signage	\$175,000	0.3%
Multi-use Community Facilities	\$15,573,000	28.5%
Play Equipment	\$2,700,000	4.9%
Environmental Education	\$150,000	0.3%
Public Art	\$220,000	0.4%
Athletic Facilities	\$1,370,000	2.5%
New Parkland Development	\$16,000,400	29.2%
Land Acquisition	\$3,850,000	7.0%
Trails and Greenways	\$10,129,560	18.5%
<i>Planning Design &amp; Permitting + Contingency for Existing Improvements</i>	<i>\$4,640,832</i>	
<b>Park Improvement Total</b>	<b>\$59,362,992</b>	

# PLAY ZEBULON

## 5.4 PROGRAMMING, POLICY & OPERATIONS RECOMMENDATIONS

### Recreational Programs Recommendations

This section examines the future recommendations for recreation programs and services in the Town of Zebulon. The future direction of recreation programming is based on the assessment of existing services and public input that was gathered as part of the master plan process.

### Vision Goals:

The future direction of recreation programs and services needs to respond to the vision goals and sub system objectives that have been developed for the master plan. Key programming goals included:

### *Overarching Vision Goals (Guiding Principles)*

- Offer comprehensive services through programs, events, facilities, marketing, partnerships, and community engagement.
- Utilize effective and innovative practices to operate parks, facilities, and programs.
- Engage community members in planning and implementation for our park system and programs.
- Provide quality, diverse parks, facilities, programs, and open space for people of all ages and backgrounds.
- Collaborate with Economic Development and Downtown partners as well as community developers to provide programs, parks, and open spaces.

- Provide access to natural areas and environmental education opportunities into our parks and programs.
- Ensure all residents have equitable access to parks, facilities, and recreation services.
- Serve everyone with exceptional service that comes across Zebulon Parks and Recreation, regardless of background or ability.

### Overarching Vision Goals (Guiding Principles)

The following objectives are directly related to recreation programs and objectives.

### Programs, Community Health, & Special Events:

- Continue to provide a high quality of life for residents by promoting a healthy lifestyle through parks and recreation services.
  - *Continue to provide diverse health and wellness programs for youth, adults, and seniors*
  - *Recognize and promote the benefits of parks for a healthy community*
  - *Prioritize safety and security in existing and new park facilities*

# IMPLEMENTATION

- *Develop a branding/marketing strategy for department parks and programming, highlighting the availability of existing programs and their benefits for a high quality of life*
- Expand and provide a variety of programs beyond the community center into neighborhoods and other areas of town for a growing population.
  - *Utilize partnerships, and other innovative strategies to address short term needs*
  - *Prioritize programming needs when expanding or developing parks and recreation facilities*
  - *Continue to engage the community planning and implementing new programs and services, ensuring offerings are meeting needs and priorities*
- Continue to provide and coordinate Town-wide special events to bring the community together and connect residents to parks and public spaces.
  - *Continue to organize and promote special events*
  - *Activate existing facilities as host venues for special events*

## Public Input Findings:

There were a number of public input mechanisms that were utilized to gain input from the community regarding recreation programming needs and expectations. This included:

- Parks & Recreation Advisory Board
- Stakeholder Interviews and Focus Groups

- Community Meetings
- Online Community Survey
- Statistically Valid Survey

The following is a summary of the information derived from these sources.

- *Continue to grow programs in the following areas*
  - *Youth sports*
  - *Special events*
  - *Fitness/wellness*
  - *Outdoor Education/Environmental*
  - *Seniors*
  - *Cultural Arts*
  - *Youth camps/after school*





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- *Develop additional programs in the following areas*
  - *Adult Sports*
  - *Aquatics*
  - *Special Needs*
  - *Environmental education*
  - *Teens*

## Future Recreation Programming Directions:

The Town of Zebulon should strongly consider the future direction for recreation programs and services as outlined below to meet the needs and expectations of the community.

## General Programming Recommendations

- Recreation programs and services need to respond to the demographics of the community that indicate a growing population, a younger median age with strong growth in the youth age group, a large number of families, and the general ability to pay for services.
- Build off the strong base of existing recreation programs offered by the Town.
- Strive to serve all age groups more equitably. This means an increase in programs for
  - *Preschool*
  - *Teens*
  - *Young Adults*
  - *Adults*

- *Seniors*
- *Families*
- *Intergenerational/Multi-generational*

- Grow programs outside of the Community Center to include parks and other areas.
- Develop mobile recreation opportunities including pop-up events.
- Increasing community-based events and identifying opportunities to support and encourage private organizations and partners to offer events.
- Provide activities and events that can generate an economic impact for the Town. This could include sports tournaments and special events.

## Specific Programming Recommendations

- Continue to grow programs in the following areas:
  - *Youth sports - including newer and non-traditional team sports, individual, and adventure sports*
  - *Special events - especially culturally based activities*
  - *Fitness/wellness - with a strong emphasis on wellness*
  - *Farmer's market - evaluate goals and consider rebranding and alternatives*
  - *Seniors - with a focus on the younger more active seniors*
  - *Cultural arts - especially the performing arts*

- *Youth camps/after school - expand the variety of specialty camps and provide additional after school programs*
- *Self-Directed - the ability for the community to recreate on their own will always be important and the demand will only continue to grow*
- Develop new programs in the following areas
  - *Environmental education - this is one of the top demands for new programming especially nature-based programs*
  - *Adult sports - including traditional team sports, individual sports and adventure sports*
  - *Aquatics - a variety of aquatic activities from learn to swim, youth swim team, and aqua exercise*
  - *Special needs - establishing basic programming to serve this population*
  - *Teens - focus on a broader range of teen programs*
- Program areas where this is not anticipated to be a significant change in programming:
  - *Education - programming will continue to be provided by other organizations*
  - *General interest - is not a strong area of interest*
  - *Social services - will be the primary role of their agencies and providers.*



### **Zebulon Programming Strategies:**

To ensure that recreation programming reaches its full potential the following strategies should be undertaken.

- Determine the level of financial commitment that the Town is willing to make to provide recreation programs and services. Growing programming will require additional staff and an increase in the operating budget.
- Continue re-organization of staff to realign staff focus.
- A recognition of the challenges in the delivery of recreation services in a cost-effective and efficient manner with the ever-expanding level of programming that is being asked for by the community.

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- There will need to be a determination of the areas of focus for the programming efforts based on demographics and program type. It is nearly impossible to meet all the programming needs in a community without partnerships with other providers.
- The need to have parks and other facilities that support recreation programs and services. This likely includes the addition of the following facilities:
  - *Community Center - expanding indoor-based recreation programming will require additional indoor space beyond the existing community center. A new center should have a large gym with multiple courts, fitness amenities, community rooms and a location for performing arts. A new larger center was identified as a priority by the community.*



- *Special Events Venue - create an outdoor space (potentially downtown) that is designed to host special events including concerts, festivals and other community-wide events.*
- *Athletic Fields - additional fields will provide a variety of sports and tournament play opportunities to serve a growing youth population and increase opportunities for adult sporting events to occur.*
- *Aquatic Center - If the Town is going to provide enhanced aquatic services, then expand partnerships to offer water play experiences are needed until the town can build and maintain an aquatic center.*
- Identify partners who can assist in expanding recreation opportunities.
- Enhanced recreation programs and services need to be supported by established marketing efforts.

## Establish a Programming Philosophy

The Parks and Recreation Department should develop an overall programming philosophy with the following objectives:

- Provide recreation program and service opportunities to all ages, incomes, abilities, gender, and ethnic groups in an equitable and inclusive manner
- Provide recreation program and service opportunities in areas of interest that are identified as a need in the community.



- Partner with other providers to bring a full spectrum of recreation programs and services to the community.
- Recreation program and service offerings will be delivered on a community-wide basis and a neighborhood level where appropriate. Recreation and program service offerings will respond to identified community needs in a cost-effective and efficient manner.

### Develop a Program Plan

Developing a program plan for the Department that includes the general direction of recreation programming for the next 5-plus years should be undertaken. This would include the following areas of programming focus:

- Identify priorities for increasing programming to include:
  - *Environmental Education*
  - *Fitness/Wellness*
  - *Youth Sports*
  - *Youth Programs*
  - *Seniors*
  - *Special Events*
  - *Cultural Arts*
- Establish an implementation plan:
  - *Start with an incremental development of new programs for the first couple of years with a limited number of programs being directly offered by Town*



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- *Start with growing programs that can be offered in existing facilities or parks and do not require extensive capital investment.*
- *Enhance key performance measures to gauge program success.*
- Programming should include virtual options in addition to traditional in-person offerings.
- Determine the role of other organizations and recreation providers in the area. Establish key partnerships with other providers to expand program offerings.
- Clearly identify areas of programmatic responsibility to ensure that there is not overlap in resource allocation.
- Establish clear staffing and operational budget requirements to support the program plan.

## Establish a Program Classification System

*A key aspect of developing a program plan is determining the long-term role of the Town in the delivery of recreation programs and services based on three classifications. The placement of programs into these three classifications does not indicate the overall importance of these activities in the community but rather the role of the Department in providing these programs*

- **Core Programs** – are the program categories that are a primary responsibility of the Parks and Recreation Department to provide as Town-based activities.

- **Secondary Programs** – are the program categories that are a lower priority to be provided directly by the Department but may be offered by other individuals or partner organizations through direct contract with the Town.

### Possible FUTURE Recreation Programs Classifications (next 5-10 years)

<b>Core Programs</b>	Youth Sports, Special Events, Senior Programs, Cultural Arts
<b>Secondary Programs</b>	Adult Sports, Teen Programs
<b>Special Needs Programs</b>	Support Programs, General Interest

- *Support Programs* – are the program categories that are not a priority for the Department to be provided directly to the community but where the Town may provide support through facilities and promotion of activities for other organizations.

### Role of Other Providers

*A key aspect of developing a program plan is determining the long-term role of the Town in the delivery of recreation programs and services based on three classifications. The placement of programs into these three classifications does not indicate the overall importance of these activities in the community but rather the role of the Department in providing these programs*

- The Parks and Recreation Department will need to be a “clearinghouse” for recreation programs and services provided by others. This should involve promotion of their activities, coordinating of some programs, and permitting of facilities that are consistent with department mission, visions and goals. However, this process needs to be closely managed to be successful.
- The Department will always need to be a provider of many of the facilities (especially community centers, parks, and athletic fields) for other organizations to use.
- Partnerships with other organizations and entities will be necessary to develop and expand recreation programs. All partnerships should be backed up by a memorandum of understanding or contract to formalize the relationship. This should clearly identify specific roles and expectations

as well as limits to facility scheduling, fees, and operations. Partnerships with organizations should reflect the needs and culture of the specific markets they will be providing the services for.

For partnerships to be effective the following must occur:

- *Must actively pursue and sell the benefits of the partnership*
- *Weigh the benefits vs. the cost of the partnership*
- *Do not compromise on the original vision and mission of the Parks & Recreation Department*
- *Establish a shared partnership vision*
- *Expect compromises to meet different needs and expectations*
- *Clearly define development and operations requirements*

Before determining which programs, and services to contract or have provided by others, an assessment of the specific pros and cons of such a move needs to be completed. A major aspect of this analysis should be to determine the financial impacts and quality of the services that will be provided. Key questions to be asked include:

- *How does this fit with the program plan that has been developed?*
- *Will this be the most cost-effective method to obtain the program, service, or function?*
- *Does the Department have the resources and equipment to provide the program, service, or function?*



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- *Will the quality of the program, service or function suffer if it is contracted to other organizations?*
- *Are there other more qualified organizations that should provide the program, service, or function?*
- *Is the service, program, or function only available from a contract provider?*
- *Are the safety and liability risks too high to provide the program or service in house?*

## Other Supportive Issues

*To implement the program plan, the following will need to be considered.*

- Programming efforts must be viewed through a diversity, equity and inclusion lens that ensures recreation program and service access to all ages, incomes, abilities, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnic groups in an equitable and inclusive manner.
- Track program trends on a regional and national basis to ensure that program offerings are current and reflect the opportunities that are available.
- Continue the tracking of performance measures by analyzing and summarizing all the following on an annual basis.
  - *Rates of fill for programs.*
  - *Participation numbers by major program area and comparisons to past years/seasons.*
  - *Rate of program cancellations.*

- *Financial performance including cost per participant.*
- *Evaluations from participant*
- Develop a comprehensive marketing plan for recreation programs and services.
  - *Establish a specific yearly plan*
    - *Outline areas of focus*
    - *Demographic markets and ethnic groups to serve*
    - *Specific marketing tools and tasks*
    - *The responsible staff member for implementation*
    - *Financial resources that are required*
    - *A thorough evaluation process*
  - *Check in with the community on a regular basis to determine satisfaction with the current programs and services and provide directions for the future. This could include:*
    - *Online surveys*
    - *Social media*
    - *Focus groups*
    - *User group interviews*
- Develop a comprehensive fee policy that outlines how fees are established for facility use, programs and services, as well as facility rentals. Tier programs/services by cost recovery categories and benchmark fees with other agencies. This should include the establishment of a fee assistance program for those that do not have the financial means to take programs or use facilities.

- Establish a formal sponsorship program for programs and special events that will provide a basic level of support and funding for key activities.
- Critical to growing recreation programs and services, is the assurance that a participant's safety and security is being addressed on an ongoing basis. This requires not only equipment such as cameras but also specific policies to be in place as well as a comprehensive emergency action plan.

### Organization and Staffing Recommendations

In order for the Town of Zebulon Parks and Recreation Department to support the mission of the organization and the vision that has been outlined as part of this master plan, there will need to be a dynamic organizational structure that can meet the needs of the community in an effective and efficient manner. Despite its relatively small population, the Town of Zebulon currently offers a full range of recreation programs, events and services for its residents.

#### Organizational Structure Goals:

- *The organizational structure must have the ability to grow with the Department.*
- *Provide strong administration of the Department through resource allocation, performance tracking and community interface.*



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- Support an increase in the number of recreation programs and services that are offered, with a focus on the following program areas:
  - Environmental Education
  - Fitness/Wellness
  - Youth Sports
  - Youth Programs
  - Seniors
  - Special Events
  - Cultural Arts



- Adequately maintain the existing parks and athletic fields and support the addition of new parks and recreation facilities including:
  - Park improvements to Zebulon Community Park, Whitely Park, Little River Park, Gill Street Park, and Joint Use Parks/Facilities.
  - New parks including Downtown Park & Event Space, Five County Stadium Community Park, and four neighborhood parks.
  - New trails and greenways
  - New community center and aquatic center

## Organizational Changes

The following are recommended changes to the organizational structure.

## Administrative Functions

- Establish three formal divisions within the Department
  - Administration
  - Recreation & Facilities – sub areas under this division could include:
    - Community Centers
    - Aquatic Center
    - Athletics
    - Youth Programs/Camps
    - Cultural Arts
    - Fitness/Wellness



# IMPLEMENTATION

- *Environmental Education*
- *Special Events*
- Parks & Facility Maintenance – sub areas under this division could include:
  - *Parks*
  - *Athletic Fields*
  - *Greenways/Trails*
  - *Cemetery*
  - *Facilities*
- *Develop formal Town budgets for each of these divisions as independent cost centers and track any associated revenues.*
- *Develop a 5-year Department-wide CIP budget with breakdowns for major park and facility areas*
- Determine appropriate part-time positions for each division and augment core full-time staff with year-round part-time and/or seasonal positions.
- Establish a system for determining which services should be contracted to a third party and which should be conducted in house. This is for recreation program delivery, parks maintenance, and facility maintenance.
- *Increase the number of budget performance measures and develop five-year budget comparisons.*
- Complete an annual report for all aspects of the Department's operation. There should be an annual report that succinctly summarizes yearly financial statistics and utilization rates and compares them with previous years.

- The Department needs to make a commitment to updating the basic policies and procedures of the organization including staff/supervisor policies, financial transactions, customer service, safety and security, and emergency action plans.
- There should be a comprehensive, staff and operations manual for the Department based on general operations requirements of the Town in general.
- Critical to the long-term success of a professional staff is a commitment to staff training and certification. Developing a formal annual training program is essential.

## Divisional Organizational Changes

### Administrative

- Add a full-time Parks Planner to be responsible for downtown development and economic development efforts along with site plan reviews for incoming subdivisions and developments.
- Hire a full-time Performance Analyst to handle budgeting, performance tracking and operational policies and procedures.

### Recreation & Facilities

- Establish a long-term organizational plan for the division that ultimately has each program/facility coordinator reporting to the Recreation Manager.

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- Contract recreation program providers should be on no less than a 70% / 30% split of gross revenues from registration.
- Plan for significant growth in recreation programming over the next five years. This will likely require additional Program Coordinators for Athletics, Youth, and General Programs. In addition, there will need to be a Facilities Coordinator to handle community centers, aquatic center, and fitness/wellness programming.

## *Parks*

- Establish an organizational plan for the division with full-time Crew Leaders (2 new) reporting to the Parks Manager. The Crew Leaders and Maintenance Workers (4) would have responsibility for parks maintenance and trails/greenway/cemetery maintenance.
- Establish an Athletic Field Maintenance Crew that is headed up by a Crew Leader and one other Maintenance Worker. This should be augmented by part-time seasonal staff. They would also assist with other parks maintenance functions when available.
- Move the responsibility for facility maintenance from Public Works to Parks with the necessary resources in staff and budget moving to Parks and Recreation to support this action.
- Athletic programming moves back to Recreation.

- Parks needs to develop a comprehensive maintenance management plan for parks and facilities as a whole. This needs to include specific maintenance functions that need to occur, their frequency, method(s) for delivery, required resources, and tracking of work and budget. This plan should also have a specific focus on preventative maintenance and should include not only the growing environment but also buildings and structures as well. Ideally each major park, greenway, trail, streetscape or recreation facility should have its own maintenance plan that is specific to that location.
- Develop an asset inventory within all Town parks and recreation facilities with provisions for a yearly update.
- Consider the establishment of lifecycle cost estimates for all major capital assets in the Division.
- Formal park/facility inspections should be completed on a weekly basis.
- Establish better maintenance coverage of parks and facilities on the weekends by staggering days off for full-time staff and utilizing part-time staff on these days.
- Staff schedules, maintenance plans, tracking of inventories, facility inspections and actual maintenance time and materials records need to be fully automated with the ability to make entries from the field on tablets or other hand-held devices.

## Specific Staffing Changes for the Next 10 Plus Years:

It is recognized that these organizational changes will require a greater commitment of Town resources toward parks and recreation, and it will have an impact on the Town's operational budget as well.

### Short-Term – (Next 1-3 Years)

#### *Administrative*

- No additional full-time staff is anticipated during this period.

#### *Recreation & Facilities*

- Hire an ***Athletic Coordinator*** that reports to the Recreation Manager. Athletic field maintenance remains with parks and the two part-time staff.
- A half-time ***Recreation Aide*** is added to help with the growth of programming.

#### *Parks*

- Hire an additional ***Crew Leader*** and ***Maintenance Worker*** for maintenance of park improvements and the addition of other parks, greenways, trails, and the cemetery.
- Continue to contract for the day-to-day maintenance of the Town's four parks and add additional contracts for expanded park areas as well as some greenway maintenance.
- For greenways in trails developed in partnership with new

developments, seek ongoing partnerships with HOAs to share maintenance responsibilities of trails and greenways.

- Athletic field maintenance is the responsibility of Parks.

### Medium-Term – (4-6 Years)

#### *Administrative*

- Hire a ***Parks Planner*** that is responsible for development and site plan reviews for incoming subdivisions and developments.

#### *Recreation & Facilities*

- Hire a ***Youth Program Coordinator*** and ***General Program Coordinator*** to grow recreation programming in a number of areas.
- A half-time ***Recreation Aide*** is added to help with the growth in programming.

#### *Parks*

- Hire ***Athletic Fields Crew Leader*** and ***Maintenance Worker*** for maintenance of athletic fields and other parks. This should also free up other existing maintenance staff to handle park improvements and the addition of a neighborhood park, greenways, and trails.
- Expand contract maintenance of the Town's new park areas and greenways.



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## LONG-TERM – (7-10+ years)

### *Administrative*

- Hire a Performance Analyst that is responsible for budgeting, performance tracking and operations policies and procedures.

### *Recreation & Facilities*

- Evaluate efficiency of contracting pool management and operations.
- Hire a *Facilities Coordinator* to manage the existing and new community centers as well as the eventual aquatic center.
- Three half-time *Recreational Aides* will need to be hired to operate the new community center (2) and aquatic center (1).

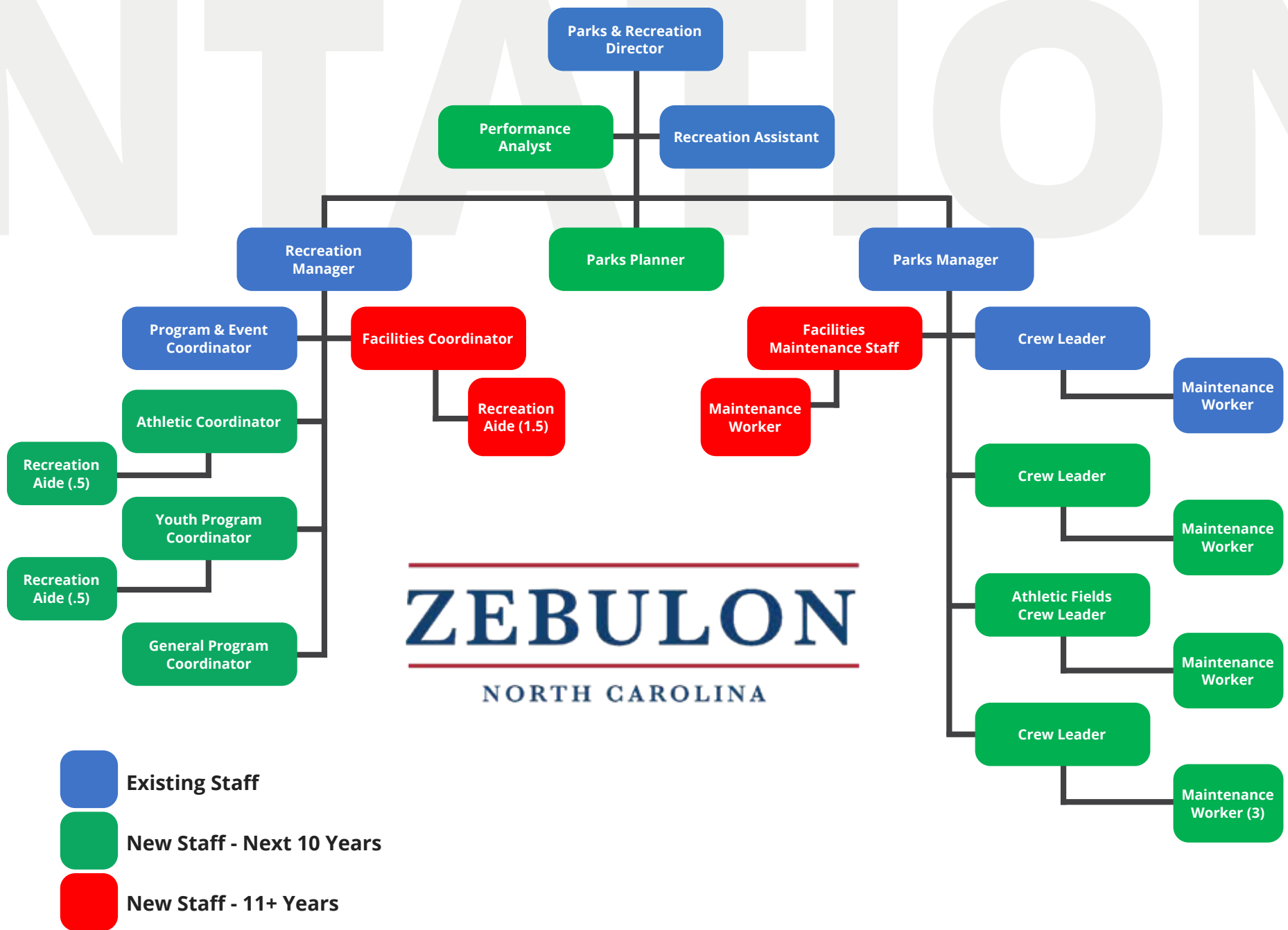
*Note: These Recreation & Facilities positions would only be added when the new community and aquatic center are built which could be beyond the 10-year time frame.*

### *Parks & Facility Maintenance*

- Hire an additional *Crew Leader* and **3 Maintenance Workers**. The primary responsibility would be for maintenance of park improvements and the addition of 3 neighborhood parks, and the Five County Stadium Park.
- Expand contract maintenance of the Town's new park areas and greenways.
- With the new community center and aquatic center, facilities maintenance moves to Parks from Public Works. Facilities budget and staff are allocated to Parks. An additional Facilities Maintenance Worker is hired.

The organizational chart on the right shows the additional positions that should be added to the department at the achievement of the full Vision and build out of all proposed parks and facilities.

# NORTH CAROLINA



# PLAY ZEBULON

## 5.5 IMPACT FEE ANALYSIS

As part of this Master Plan Process, the Town of Zebulon has undertaken an Impact Fee Study to assist with the funding of improvements to the Parks System. Impact fees are collected from new residential development and used to construct system improvements needed to accommodate increased demand for parks and recreation facilities. An impact fee represents future development's proportionate share of capital facility needs.

Impact fees do have limitations and should not be regarded as the total solution for infrastructure funding. Rather, they are one component of a comprehensive funding strategy to ensure provision of adequate public facilities. Impact fees may only be used for capital improvements or debt service for growth-related infrastructure. In contrast to general taxes, impact fees may not be used for operations, maintenance, replacement of infrastructure, or correcting existing deficiencies.

In contrast to project-level improvements, impact fees fund growth-related infrastructure that will benefit multiple development projects, or the entire service area (usually referred to as system improvements). The first step is to determine an appropriate demand indicator for the particular type of infrastructure. The demand indicator measures the number of service units for each unit of development. For example, an appropriate indicator of the demand for parks is population growth and the increase in population can be estimated from the average number of persons per housing unit. The second step in the impact fee formula is to determine

infrastructure improvement units per service unit, typically called level-of-service (LOS) standards. In keeping with the park example, a common LOS standard is improved park acres per thousand people. The third step in the impact fee formula is the cost of various infrastructure units. To complete the park example, this part of the formula would establish a cost per acre for land acquisition and/or park improvements.

Fees shown on the following page represent the maximum allowable fees. The Town of Zebulon may adopt fees that are less than the amounts shown; however, a reduction in impact fee revenue will necessitate an increase in other funding, a decrease in planned capital improvements and/or a decrease in the Town's level-of-service standards. All costs are in current dollars with no assumed inflation rate over time. If cost estimates change significantly over time, impact fees should be recalibrated.

The Town's currently adopted fee-in-lieu is \$2,500 per single family unit and \$2,500 per multifamily unit. This analysis reports a maximum allowable fee of \$5,194 per single family unit and \$4,576 per multifamily unit. The proposed parks and recreation impact fees are shown in the table below, by type of housing unit. Based on the availability of other avenues of funding, as well as the phased implementation of capital improvements, it is recommended that the Town adopt a fee in the range of \$3,000-\$3,500 for single family, and a fee of \$2,500-\$3,000 for multi-family units. These fees are recommended based on current impact fees for comparable communities within the



region, and are based on the assumption that fees may be increased over time, as growth continues and demand increases. The final impact fee will be based on a thorough review of the Impact Fee Study by Town Leadership and elected officials, however it is recommended that the fee be implemented within the next fiscal year. The full Impact Fee Study can be found in the Appendix.

Demand for Growth-Related Improvements Over 10 Years (Maximum funding target)			
Park Land Acquisition & Development	Park Improvements	Recreation Building Space	Total
\$10,700,927	\$3,314,826	\$9,120,558	\$23,136,311

Proposed Cost Per Person (Based on an increase of 10,000+ people)				
Park Land Acquisition	Park Land Development	Park Improvements	Recreation Building Space	Total
\$596.21	\$460.09	\$327.21	\$900.30	\$2,283.81

Proposed Impact Fee			
Development Type	Persons per Housing Unit	Proposed Fee Range at Impact Fee Initiation	Maximum Fee
Single Family	2.69	\$3,000 - \$3,500	\$5,194
Multi-Family	2.37	\$2,500 - \$3,000	\$4,576

# PLAY ZEBULON

## 5.6 PHASING & FINANCIAL PLAN

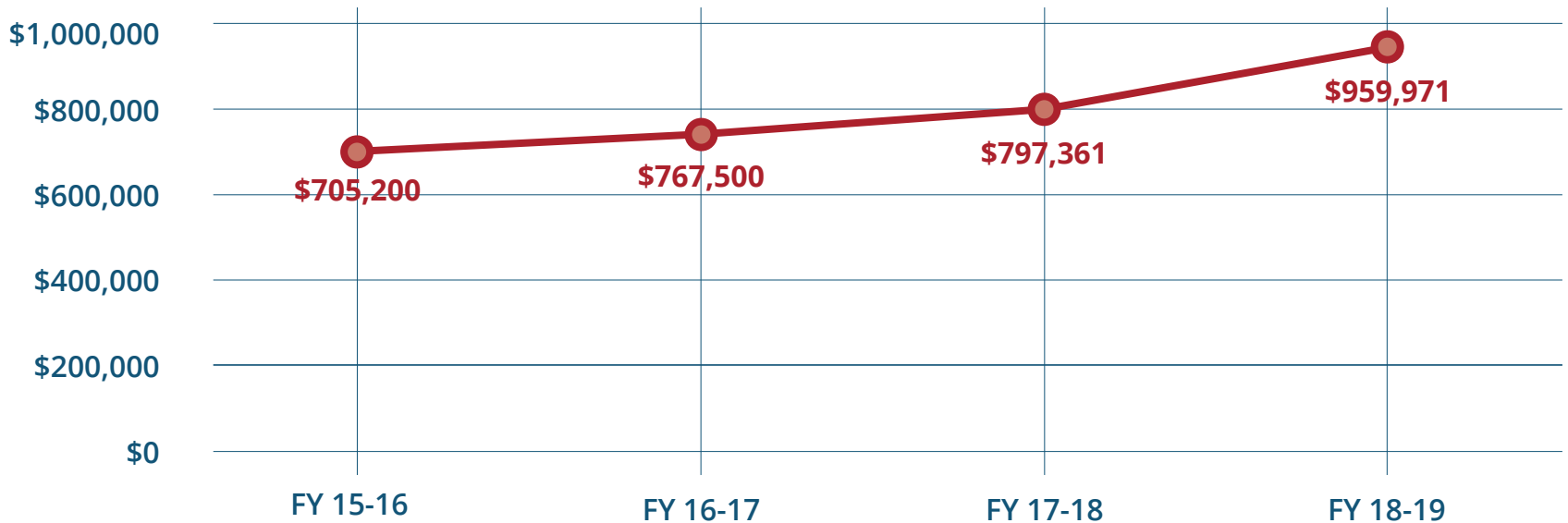
### Historic Funding

Over the last four years, the Parks and Recreation Department budget has seen General Fund appropriations steadily rise, with an average general fund appropriation of \$807,508 per year. The 2020-2021 appropriations saw their highest increase yet, with the operating budget rising to \$959,971. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts to economic conditions, department appropriations are not expected to be significantly impacted. In addition, Fiscal Year 2022 will be the first year the department receives a dedicated CIP budget for improvement projects, which is estimated to be \$100,000 per year at its inception.

### Grants

Several grants have been identified for projects proposed in the vision, with a potential total (not including any leveraging) of approximately \$2MM-\$3MM, with many providing options to apply annually.

Individual grants may apply to multiple projects, therefore, the projected funding totals for each project may include the use of overlapping grants for a different project. The following tables include summarized descriptions of project-based potential funding sources.



Historic Department Operating Budget

## Grant Funding Opportunities

The following tables list the details of potential grants available for Parks and Recreation improvement projects.

The integration of stormwater, emergency management, public health, and educational functions into projects such as a recreation center or recreation trail can significantly increase the funding opportunities available to the Town. Examples of design features that would facilitate additional funding opportunities would include: the construction of parking areas to act as drainage and/or treatment basins for severe weather events; stormwater retention ponds that alleviate localized flooding as part of park or trail project; and the hardening of an indoor facility such as a recreation center to act as a shelter and/or public outreach center before and after a disaster.

Land and Water Conservation Fund	
Level of Funding	State
Management Agency	NC Division of Parks and Recreation
Website	<a href="https://www.ncparks.gov/more-about-us/grants/lwcf-grants">https://www.ncparks.gov/more-about-us/grants/lwcf-grants</a>
Description	The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) provides matching grants to local governments to assist with public park and recreation projects.
Project Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acquire land for a public park</li><li>• Renovate/replace outdoor recreational or support facilities at existing park sites.</li></ul>
Grant Amount	\$500,000
Match	At least 50% of the total cost of the project
Application Deadline	October 1, 2021



# PLAY ZEBULON

NC Land and Water Fund	
Level of Funding	State
Management Agency	NC Land and Water Fund
Website	<a href="https://nclwf.nc.gov/">https://nclwf.nc.gov/</a>
Description	The North Carolina Land and Water Fund improves water quality, sustains ecological diversity, and protects historic sites and military installations by funding projects to acquire lands, restore the habitat for fish, wildlife, and other species, and enhance the filtering of stormwater runoff to reduce pollutants from entering water supplies.
Project Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land Acquisition</li> <li>• Restoration projects to enhance or restore degraded waters and to protect downstream natural resources such as drinking water supplies, fisheries and recreation opportunities</li> <li>• Stream Restoration</li> <li>• Innovative Stormwater</li> <li>• Planning efforts that develop potential projects with one or more of the following goals:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Enhance or restore degraded waters,</i></li> <li>• <i>Protect unpolluted waters,</i></li> <li>• <i>Contribute toward a network of riparian buffers and greenways for environmental, educational, and recreational benefits,</i></li> <li>• <i>Provide buffers around military bases to protect the military mission,</i></li> <li>• <i>Acquire land that represents the ecological diversity of North Carolina,</i></li> <li>• <i>Acquire land that contributes to the development of a balanced State program of historic properties, or</i></li> <li>• <i>Facilitate innovative efforts to improve stormwater treatment.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Grant Amount	No set funding range
Match	No match requirement. However, the percentage of match and the type of match are factored in the Application Rating System
Application Deadline	Annually, February

## Clean Water State Revolving Fund

Level of Funding	Federal
Management Agency	NCDEQ - Division of Water Infrastructure
Website	<a href="https://deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/water-infrastructure">https://deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/water-infrastructure</a>
Description	The Clean Water State Revolving Fund provides funds for wastewater treatment facilities and projects associated with estuary and nonpoint source programs.
Project Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wastewater treatment</li> <li>• Wastewater collection</li> <li>• Reclaimed water</li> <li>• Stormwater BMPs</li> <li>• Stream restoration</li> <li>• Energy efficiency at treatment works or collection systems</li> </ul>
Grant Amount	\$30,000,000, 0% loan, 20-year term
Match	n/a
Application Deadline	Spring and Fall Application Funding Cycles

# PLAY ZEBULON

Water Resources Development Grant Program	
Level of Funding	State
Management Agency	NCDEQ - Division of Water Infrastructure
Website	<a href="https://deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/water-resources/water-resources-grants/financial-assistance">https://deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/water-resources/water-resources-grants/financial-assistance</a>
Description	The purpose of this program is to provide cost-share grants and technical assistance to local governments throughout the state for the seven eligible project types listed below.
Project Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General navigation</li> <li>• Recreational navigation</li> <li>• Water management</li> <li>• Stream restoration</li> <li>• Water-based recreation</li> <li>• Natural Resources Conservation Service Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)</li> <li>• Stream restoration projects</li> <li>• Feasibility/engineering studies</li> </ul>
Grant Amount	\$200,000, however larger awards may be granted
Match	50%
Application Deadline	Spring 2021 Application Cycle ends June 30, 2021 / Fall 2021 application cycle will begin on January 1, 2022



### Build it with KaBOOM!

Level of Funding	National
Management Agency	KaBOOM!
Website	<a href="https://kaboom.org/grants/build-it-with-kaboom">https://kaboom.org/grants/build-it-with-kaboom</a>
Description	KaBOOM! amplifies the power of communities to build inspiring play spaces that spark unlimited opportunities for every kid, everywhere.
Project Examples	Playground equipment, safety surfacing, installation, and shipping
Grant Amount	No amount. The grant will provide playground equipment, safety surfacing, installation, and shipping
Match	\$8,500
Application Deadline	Accepted on a rolling basis throughout the year

### Build it Yourself - Community-Built Playgrounds

Level of Funding	National
Management Agency	KaBOOM!
Website	<a href="https://kaboom.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/kaboom-grant-application-guide-community-built-grants-july-2017.pdf">https://kaboom.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/kaboom-grant-application-guide-community-built-grants-july-2017.pdf</a>
Description	KaBOOM! amplifies the power of communities to build inspiring play spaces that spark unlimited opportunities for every kid, everywhere.
Project Examples	Playground equipment
Grant Amount	\$15,000
Match	\$9,000 - \$35,000 to have a maximum project cost of \$50,000
Application Deadline	Accepted on a rolling basis throughout the year

# PLAY ZEBULON

Bark for Your Park	
Level of Funding	National
Management Agency	PetSafe
Website	<a href="https://barkforyourpark.petsafe.com/">https://barkforyourpark.petsafe.com/</a>
Description	The PetSafe Bark for your Park program provides funding to create new dog parks to maintain/improve existing dog parks
Project Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creation of a New Dog Park</li><li>• Dog Park Improvements and Maintenance</li></ul>
Grant Amount	\$25,000 to create a new dog park / \$5,000 for dog park improvements and maintenance
Match	None
Application Deadline	June30, 2021

## Baseball of Tomorrow Fund Youth Development Foundation

Level of Funding	National
Management Agency	MLB-MLBPA Youth Development Foundation
Website	<a href="https://www.mlbplayers.com/ydf">https://www.mlbplayers.com/ydf</a>
Description	MLB-MLBPA Youth Development Foundation is a joint initiative between Major League Baseball and the Major League Baseball Players Association. It was created to increase participation in and expand access to youth baseball and softball. The Foundation makes grants to organizations in the United States and internationally.
Project Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capital projects include: building and renovating fields and practice facilities and installing lighting. Field and lighting capital projects that have a majority of the funding secured will be prioritized.</li> <li>• Baseball/Softball programs include: in-school/after-school baseball/softball programming, equipment and uniforms, umpire fees, player registration fees and practice facility rental fees.</li> <li>• Education initiatives include: programs, exhibits and other learning opportunities that use baseball and softball as its primary focus to promote interest and engagement in the game.</li> </ul>
Grant Amount	No set funding range
Match	No match, however field and lighting capital projects that have a majority of the funding secured will be prioritized.
Application Deadline	Accepted on a rolling basis throughout the year, funding decisions are made quarterly



# PLAY ZEBULON

Community Improvement Grants	
Level of Funding	National
Management Agency	Keep America Beautiful
Website	<a href="https://kab.org/grants/">https://kab.org/grants/</a>
Description	Grant recipients are selected by Keep America Beautiful based on their potential to collect cans and bottles as well as creating new or expanded access to recycling opportunities in a community. Keep America Beautiful selects recipients based on the merits of their proposal, then works with its vendors to arrange delivery of the bins at no cost to the grant recipients.
Project Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing recycling access to greater numbers of people</li> <li>• Providing access in environmentally sensitive areas, e.g. along waterways</li> <li>• Potential to increase overall recycling participation in a community</li> </ul>
Grant Amount	Recipients are granted recycling bins requested.
Match	None
Application Deadline	Annually, March

## Triangle Community Foundation – GSK Impact Awards

Level of Funding	Local
Management Agency	Triangle Community Foundation
Website	<a href="https://trianglecf.org/nonprofits/grants/">https://trianglecf.org/nonprofits/grants/</a>
Description	Triangle Community Foundation is made up of over 800 philanthropic funds which are used in a variety of ways to provide support for nonprofit organizations. Grants from the Foundation are made in two ways: from the discretionary grant programs and through donor-advised grants.
Project Examples	Programs that support: Healthy eating, exercise, sports, outdoor activity, etc. to help members of the community achieve or maintain a healthy weight.
Grant Amount	\$50,000
Match	n/a
Application Deadline	Annually, March

# PLAY ZEBULON

Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program	
Level of Funding	Federal
Management Agency	USDA
Website	<a href="https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program">https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program</a>
Description	This program provides affordable funding to develop essential community facilities in rural areas. An essential community facility is defined as a facility that provides an essential service to the local community for the orderly development of the community in a primarily rural area, and does not include private, commercial or business undertakings.
Project Examples	<p>Funds can be used to purchase, construct, and/or improve essential community facilities, purchase equipment and pay related project expenses.</p> <p>Examples of essential community facilities include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health care facilities such as hospitals, medical clinics, dental clinics, nursing homes or assisted living facilities</li> <li>• Public facilities such as town halls, courthouses, airport hangars or street improvements</li> <li>• Community support services such as child care centers, community centers, fairgrounds or transitional housing</li> <li>• Public safety services such as fire departments, police stations, prisons, police vehicles, fire trucks, public works vehicles or equipment</li> <li>• Educational services such as museums, libraries or private schools</li> <li>• Utility services such as telemedicine or distance learning equipment</li> </ul>
Grant Amount	No set funding range
Match	n/a
Application Deadline	Accepted on a rolling basis throughout the year



## PeopleForBikes

Level of Funding	National
Management Agency	People For Bikes
Website	<a href="https://www.peopleforbikes.org/grant-guidelines">https://www.peopleforbikes.org/grant-guidelines</a>
Description	The PeopleForBikes Community Grant Program supports bicycle infrastructure projects and targeted advocacy initiatives that make it easier and safer for people of all ages and abilities to ride.
Project Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bike paths, lanes, trails and bridges</li> <li>• Mountain bike facilities</li> <li>• Bike parks and pump tracks</li> <li>• BMX facilities</li> <li>• End-of-trip facilities such as bike racks, bike parking, bike repair stations and bike storage</li> </ul>
Grant Amount	\$10,000
Match	No specific match is required but will not consider grant request in which funding would amount to 50% or more of the total project cost
Application Deadline	2 cycles per year, April and October 2021 (letters of interest are due before deadline)

# PLAY ZEBULON

## Grant Stacking

Utilizing multiple funding sources has become the most effective way of maximizing the amount of funding a community can obtain. “Grant Stacking” allows a project 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 the reciprocal as well. This process can address acquisition and development in phases to best meet a project’s intent and time schedule. The example on the following page provides an example of how this process can be successfully completed.

## General Notes:

- Funding is based on the Town’s eligibility to apply for the listed grant opportunities. Prior awards or current projects may affect the ability of the Town to obtain listed grants.
- Grant amounts are based on maximum award possible. The cost of elements will ultimately determine the maximum amount to be obtained.
- Other funding opportunities may be available; however, those listed are stable grant programs that normally occur every year. This list does not include line item appropriations from any local, state or federal government.

## Potential Funding

The Funding Analysis highlights the 10-year schedule of projected funding that may be utilized to advance capital projects. Though the overall shared-community Vision created during the master plan process is estimated at approximately **\$59,362,992** in 2021 dollars. The Town of Zebulon has several funding sources available that can be utilized for implementation, many of which can be phased or even enhanced for additional funding opportunities to help address economic fluctuations and changing Town priorities over time. Through the analysis of existing sources, projections of future funding options and recommendations are as follows:

- **General Fund Revenues –**

As stated previously, the Department is expected to initiate its first dedicated CIP this year, which is estimated to provide approximately **\$100,000** per year in funding for CIP projects. With the anticipated population growth projected for the Town, this figure will likely increase each year, especially in the long-term implementation phase of this vision.

- **Grants –**

Through the identification of over **\$2-3MM** in grant opportunities annually, the department has the potential to increase funds available for capital improvements over the next ten years. The department also have potential access for stream restoration at Little River Park, as well approximately **\$350,000** available in the short-term for greenway projects.

- **Park System Improvements with Impact Fees**

Impact fees assign growth-related capital costs to those new residents responsible for such costs. The Town of Zebulon has recognized this capital funding strategy as an appropriate method for funding the increased capital requirements resulting from growth. Growth trends are expected to continue for the next ten years, and impact fees should continued to be utilized for park system improvements. Based on the Impact Fee Study completed as part of this Master Plan, it is estimated that the Town could bring approximately \$12,000,000 or more over the next ten years. As stated in the previous section, the Impact Fee will need to be evaluated over time for adjustments.

- **Tax Revenue -**

The department currently has access to funds generated from a 1/2-cent tax for walkability improvements, which could included access improvements, sidewalks, signage, and greenways. This has the potential to generate approximately \$40-60,000 annually.

- **Borrowing -**

As a funding source, general obligation bonds have historically received support from municipalities in Wake County. While Zebulon has made it a practice to fund most capital outlay from current operating budgets rather than through long-term financing, debt financing may prove to be the most cost-effective means of future funding for infrastructure improvements. A potential option to consider is utilizing projected funding through CIP, grants, taxes and impact fees to fund a majority of improvements to existing parks, while utilizing a bond to fund the proposed improvements that fall within the medium and

long-term time frames. A parks and recreation bond of **\$30-35MM** would provide substantial funding to complete the proposed improvements like greenways, new parks a new community center, and an aquatic facility, while also providing incentive for potential partners such as Wake County or private developers to contribute additional funds. It is recommended that the Town explore the feasibility of a bond through additional public engagement and financial analysis.

- Though there are additional funding sources available to the Town, the funding options listed above are traditionally the most utilized and supported. As a result, the Town has the potential to secure funding to implement a significant portion of the Vision. With further evaluation of the feasibility of a parks and recreation bond, the Town could realistically achieve **\$50MM** or more in funding over the next 10 years.

<b>Potential Funding (10-year Period)</b>	
General Fund CIP*	\$1,600,000
Grants**	\$1,800,000
Walkability Tax	\$400,000
Impact Fees	\$12,000,000
Park and Recreation Bond	\$35,000,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$50,800,000</b>

\* Assumes a minimum 10% increase each year as general fund revenues increase with growth

\*\* Includes grants already available to the Department



# PLAY ZEBULON

## Phasing Recommendations

The Phasing Plan for capital improvement projects is comprised of three different phases based on community needs and priorities. These phases, summarized to the right and in the tables on the following page, provide a framework for the implementation of **\$59,362,992** in capital improvement projects.

In addition to the three capital project phases, ongoing efforts should be conducted concurrently across the ten-year period. These projects help advance longer-term projects including multimodal connectivity projects and new park development. Considering Phases 1-3 in the ten-year time-frame, as well as the ongoing projects, the phasing achieves a total of **\$49,854,445** from the overall Vision. This 10-year phased approach aligns with the projected funding discussed in the previous section, leaving approximately **\$9.5MM** in improvements to be implemented beyond the 10-year time period, or as additional funding opportunities become available.

In order to determine recommendations for phasing of projects, the project team assigned a category to each project in the cost estimate. These categories are:

- Existing Parks, Open Spaces and Facilities
- Proposed Parks, Open Spaces and Facilities
- Priority Greenways and Connections
- Ongoing Projects

These categories help provide a clear picture of where parks and recreation funding should be allocated over the next 10+ years.

### Capital Improvement Projects: 1-3 Year Total

Year 1	\$815,800
Year 2	\$1,792,672
Year 3	\$3,967,437
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,575,909</b>

### Capital Improvement Projects: 4-6 Year Total

Year 4	\$2,013,600
Year 5	\$2,891,880
Year 6	\$3,306,480
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$8,211,960</b>

### Capital Improvement Projects: 7-10 Year Total

Year 7	\$2,926,560
Year 8	\$3,441,360
Year 9	\$12,754,560
Year 10	\$15,944,096
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$35,066,576</b>

# IMPLEMENTATION

## **Phase 1: Short-term Capital Projects (1-3 Years) - \$6,575,909**

Phase 1 focused on immediate needs and the highest priorities of the community; reinvestment and additions to existing parks. These immediate actions will help increase the capacity of the park system by adding more facilities, amenities, and open space at existing parks.



## **Phase 2: Medium-term Capital Projects (4-6 Years) - \$8,211,960**

Phase 2 further advances improvements to existing parks and continues addressing aged amenity / equipment replacement. This phase also includes the continuation of projects that add more parks, open spaces and special-use facilities, while also positioning the department for further land acquisition and new park development.



## **Phase 3: Long-term Capital Projects (7-10 Years) - \$35,066,576**

Phase 3 is focused on continuing to improve and replace aging facilities in existing parks, as well as develop large community parks that increase the level of service of the park system, and provide high quality recreation opportunities for the Town of Zebulon residents.

# PLAY ZEBULON

Project Category	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
<b>Existing Parks, Open Spaces and Facilities</b>	Zebulon Community Park (Spectator Seating, Landscape Improvements) Facilities, Gill Street Park (Basketball Court, Seating, Signage), Zebulon Elementary Track, Little River Park Kudzu Removal	Whitley Park (Signage, Pickleball Court), Little River Park (Stream Restoration, Park Amenities), Alley Shade Structures, Zebulon Community Park Signage	Zebulon Community Park Stormwater Improvements, Little River Park (Walking Trail, Wildflower Field), Whitley Park Dog Park, Zebulon Elementary Lower Ballfield Improvements, Wakelon signage	-
<i>Project Cost Estimates</i>	<b>\$305,000</b>	<b>\$681,200</b>	<b>\$395,000</b>	<b>\$1,381,200</b>
<b>Proposed Parks, Open Spaces and Facilities</b>	-	Downtown Park Land Acquisition, Alley Development	Downtown Park (open space, public art, wayfinding)	-
<i>Project Cost Estimates</i>	-	<b>\$250,000</b>	<b>\$425,000</b>	<b>\$675,000</b>
<b>Priority Greenways + Connections</b>	-	-	Green Spine Planning/Design + Permitting	-
<i>Project Cost Estimates</i>	-	-	-	<b>\$1,505,280</b>
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$305,000</b>	<b>\$931,200</b>	<b>\$2,325,280</b>	<b>\$3,561,480</b>
<b>Ongoing</b>				
<b>Priority Greenways + Connections</b>	Allowance for priority connection segments	Allowance for priority connection segments	Allowance for priority connection segments	-
<i>Project Cost Estimates</i>	<b>\$250,000</b>	<b>\$250,000</b>	<b>\$250,000</b>	<b>\$750,000</b>
<i>Planning, Design Permitting + Contingency</i>	<b>\$260,800</b>	<b>\$611,472</b>	<b>\$1,392,157</b>	<b>\$1,347,552</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$815,800</b>	<b>\$1,792,672</b>	<b>\$3,967,437</b>	<b>\$6,575,909</b>



Project Category	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total
<b>Existing Parks, Open Spaces and Facilities</b>	Zebulon Community Park Splash Pad, Whitley Park Playground	Little River Park (Outdoor Classroom, Nature Play), Zebulon Elementary (Basketball and Volleyball Court), Community Center Renovations	Gill Street Park Walking Path, Whitley Park (Stormwater, Landscape Parking Lot), Wakelon (Parking, Walking Trail, Soccer field)	-
<i>Project Cost Estimates</i>	<b>\$500,000</b>	<b>\$498,000</b>	<b>\$698,000</b>	<b>\$1,696,000</b>
<b>Proposed Parks, Open Spaces and Facilities</b>	Downtown Park Parking	Downtown Park (open space, public art, way-finding)	Downtown Amphitheater	-
<i>Project Cost Estimates</i>	<b>\$300,000</b>	<b>\$425,000</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>	<b>\$1,225,000</b>
<b>Priority Greenways + Connections</b>	Green Spine Phase 1	Green Spine Phase 2	Green Spine Phase 3	-
<i>Project Cost Estimates</i>	<b>\$672,000</b>	<b>\$672,000</b>	<b>\$1,344,000</b>	<b>\$2,688,000</b>
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$1,472,000</b>	<b>\$1,595,000</b>	<b>\$2,542,000</b>	<b>\$5,609,000</b>
<b>Ongoing</b>				
<b>New Park Development</b>	Neighborhood Park Land Acquisition 1	Neighborhood Park Development 1	Neighborhood Park Land Acquisition 2	-
<i>Project Cost Estimates</i>	<b>\$60,000</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>	<b>\$60,000</b>	<b>\$620,000</b>
<i>Planning, Design Permitting + Contingency</i>	<b>\$481,600</b>	<b>\$796,880</b>	<b>\$704,480</b>	<b>\$1,982,960</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,013,600</b>	<b>\$2,891,880</b>	<b>\$3,306,480</b>	<b>\$8,211,960</b>

# PLAY ZEBULON

Project Category	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Total
<b>Existing Parks, Open Spaces and Facilities</b>	Gill Street Play-ground	Zebulon Community Park Baseball Fields, Zebulon/Wendell Trailhead	Zebulon Community Park Land Acquisition Phase 1	Zebulon Community Park, Land Acquisition Phase 2 and Site Development	-
<i>Project Cost Estimates</i>	<b>\$350,000</b>	<b>\$1,060,000</b>	<b>\$1,650,000</b>	<b>\$2,150,000</b>	<b>\$5,210,000</b>
<b>Proposed Parks, Open Spaces and Facilities</b>	Five-County Stadium Park Phase 1	Five-County Stadium Park Phase 2	Five-County Stadium Park Phase 3, Multi-use Community Center Phase 1	Multi-use Community Center Phase 2	-
<i>Project Cost Estimates</i>	<b>\$500,000</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>	<b>\$5,500,000</b>	<b>\$5,000,000</b>	<b>\$11,500,000</b>
<b>Priority Greenways + Connections</b>	Beaverdam Creek	Beaverdam Creek	Beaverdam Creek	Downtown Connector	-
<i>Project Cost Estimates</i>	<b>\$526,000</b>	<b>\$526,000</b>	<b>\$526,000</b>	<b>\$570,800</b>	<b>\$2,148,800</b>
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$1,376,000</b>	<b>\$2,086,000</b>	<b>\$7,676,000</b>	<b>\$7,720,800</b>	<b>\$18,858,800</b>
<b>Ongoing</b>					
<b>New Park Development</b>	Neighborhood Park Development 2	Neighborhood Park Land Acquisition 3 & 4	Neighborhood Park Development 3	Neighborhood Park Development 4	-
<i>Project Cost Estimates</i>	<b>\$500,000</b>	<b>\$120,000</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>	<b>\$1,620,000</b>
Planning, Design Permitting + Contingency	<b>\$1,050,560</b>	<b>\$1,235,360</b>	<b>\$4,578,560</b>	<b>\$7,723,296</b>	<b>\$6,467,776</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,926,560</b>	<b>\$3,441,360</b>	<b>\$12,754,560</b>	<b>\$15,944,096</b>	<b>\$35,066,576</b>

<b>10-Year Total</b>	<b>\$49,854,445</b>
<b>11-Year+</b>	
<b>Proposed Parks, Open Spaces and Facilities</b>	Completion of Downtown Connector, Additions and Enhancements to New neighborhood Parks, Multi-use Recreation Center and Aquatic Complex Completion, Associated Planning, Design, Permitting & Contingency
<i>Project Cost Estimates</i>	<b>\$9,508,547</b>





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## 5.7 PRIORITY ACTION ITEMS

### Overview

The funding analysis, phasing plan, and operations and maintenance sections outline an approach to implementing various park, facility and operations improvements needed to address the shared-community Vision for the Town of Zebulon Parks and Recreation. In addition to the components found in the Long-range Vision, the strategic plan incorporates elements from the System Inventory and Analysis and the findings from the Community Needs Assessment.

The following pages and tables identify action items for the Vision that can help implement priority projects identified in the previous section. Each action item advances the objectives of the vision, as well as the priorities identified by parks and recreation staff. Three categories of time have been identified: “priority” represents priority action items to be completed in the next five years; “continued emphasis” represents action items that may take up to ten years to complete; and “aspirational,” represents action items that may take more than ten years to fully complete.



Priority Action Items (Completion in 3 Years)	
Item	Capital
<b>C-1</b>	Continue to refine the department CIP after its initiation-continuing to update each year based on available funding, project opportunities, and community input.
<b>C-2</b>	Expand on the dedicated funding sources for the CIP to respond to Town growth and the resulting strain on the system, deferred maintenance, and the need to develop new facilities.
<b>C-3</b>	Implement a focused approach for capital improvements and reinvestments in existing parks to promote safety, user experience, and community aesthetics.
<b>C-4</b>	Secure additional grants by leveraging dedicated funding sources for targeted capital improvements or need-based grants from State, Federal, or non-profit sources.
<b>C-5</b>	Utilize existing greenway and walkability funding, while seeking partnerships with Wake County and developers.
<b>C-6</b>	Implement the proposed parks and recreation impact fee - use these funds to expand capacity at existing parks, and acquire and develop new parkland to meet growth needs.
<b>C-7</b>	Prioritize the adoption of conceptual master plans for Zebulon Community Park and Little River Park, and make preparations to move into additional planning and/or design at each park.
Item	Acquisitions
<b>A-1</b>	Develop a strategic land acquisition program to target, prioritize and secure land acquisition opportunities - focus on vacant properties, opportunities for existing park expansion, and properties that exist in Access Level of Service Gaps.
<b>A-2</b>	Continue to explore town-owned properties that can be utilized as park space in partnership with other departments, or properties that will become available as other departments relocate.

# PLAY ZEBULON

Item	Policy
PO-1	Integrate Park System Master Plan recommendations into other Town plans and initiatives, including the Comprehensive Land use Plan
PO-2	Update Level of Service (LOS) standards to reflect the findings this master plan, as well as the expectations of the parks department's ability to meet growth. Targeted recommended acreage LOS should be 15 acres per 1000 residents, and Access LOS standards focusing on the Core Neighborhood Experience model should be adopted.
PO-3	Work in conjunction with other Town departments to develop a parks-oriented approach to access and linkages, sustainability, and resilience.
PO-4	Update the department's policies and procedures to emphasize safety in design practices such as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), as well as procedures to respond to public health issues.
Item	Initiatives
I-1	Begin a strategic education, outreach and input effort to determine community support and the feasibility of a Parks and Recreation General Obligation Bond.
I-2	Develop a new community member outreach program for incoming residents.
I-3	Increase marketing and communication efforts through a variety of outlets to enhance community-wide knowledge of parks, facilities programs, natural resources and special events.
I-4	Engage adults and families with unique opportunities including unconventional programming, creative outreach, and pop-up events.
I-5	Develop park and facility design guidelines and standards for use internally and by consultants to maintain a consistent design pattern and language that visually brands the Town's parks, and also enhances individual neighborhoods.
I-6	Develop a system-wide branding and wayfinding strategy that is cohesive throughout the Town, yet unique to individual neighborhoods and communities, integrating historic landmarks and public art.



Item	Programming
PR-1	Begin to move programs outside of Zebulon Community Center - providing programming opportunities in parks, partnership facilities, and other Town-owned spaces.
PR-2	Continue to grow programs for Youth Sports, Special Events, Health and Wellness, Young Adults, and Teens.
PR-3	Develop additional programming opportunities for seniors, young adults, pop-up athletics, special needs, nature-based programs, and adventure activities.
PR-4	Initiate the development of a long-range program plan.
PR-5	Continue to establish partnerships with other providers.
PR-6	Continue to track program metrics and refine prioritization based on community input.

Continued Emphasis (Medium to Long-Term)	
CE-1	Continue to coordinate with community partners, Wake County, and adjacent municipalities to improve access, linkages and regional connectivity through parks and greenways.
CE-2	Work in collaboration with local agencies and community partners to create a system for conducting community safety and public health audits in parks, document changes in trends, and plan for the integration of parks into emergency management.
CE-3	Consider implementing a dedicated funding source for public art.
CE-4	Promote the maintenance and improvement of the Downtown tree canopy through the implementation of complete streets and green streets.
CE-5	Continue to promote system-wide sustainable efforts with small-scale interventions at each park.
CE-6	Develop education programs in coordination with local schools and other community partners to encourage nature-based activities, health and wellness, and environmental education.

# PLAY ZEBULON

<b>CE-7</b>	Enhance staff and volunteer training to include safety, community health, and emergency management courses and perceived safety assessment techniques.
<b>CE-8</b>	Continue to promote the economic value of parks, programs and events, in order to build further support for improvements.
<b>CE-9</b>	Conduct a feasibility study for the implementation of a multi-use recreation center, as well as an aquatic facility.
<b>CE-10</b>	Conduct a feasibility study for the implementation of a Nature Center at Little River Park.
<b>CE-11</b>	Evaluate the Parks and Recreation Impact fee on a periodic basis, adjusting based on growth trends and demand for parks and recreation facilities.











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