



Recreation & Parks

2021

Master Plan



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



Mayor

Lew Starling

City Council

Rev. Marcus Becton

Daniel Ruggles

Neil Strickland

Holden DuBose

Darue Bryant

City Manager

Tom Hart

City Clerk

Elaine Hunt

Recreation and Parks Director

Jonathan Allen

Advisory Board

Johnathon Barefoot - District 1

Jack Gunnells - District 2

Johnny Boykin - District 3

Josh Hill - District 4

Alice Tann - District 5

Troy Fardy - At Large

Greg Thornton - Chair

Consultant Team

WithersRavenel



CITY OF CLINTON

119 Leisure Lane

Clinton, NC 28328

<https://www.cityofclintonnc.com/>

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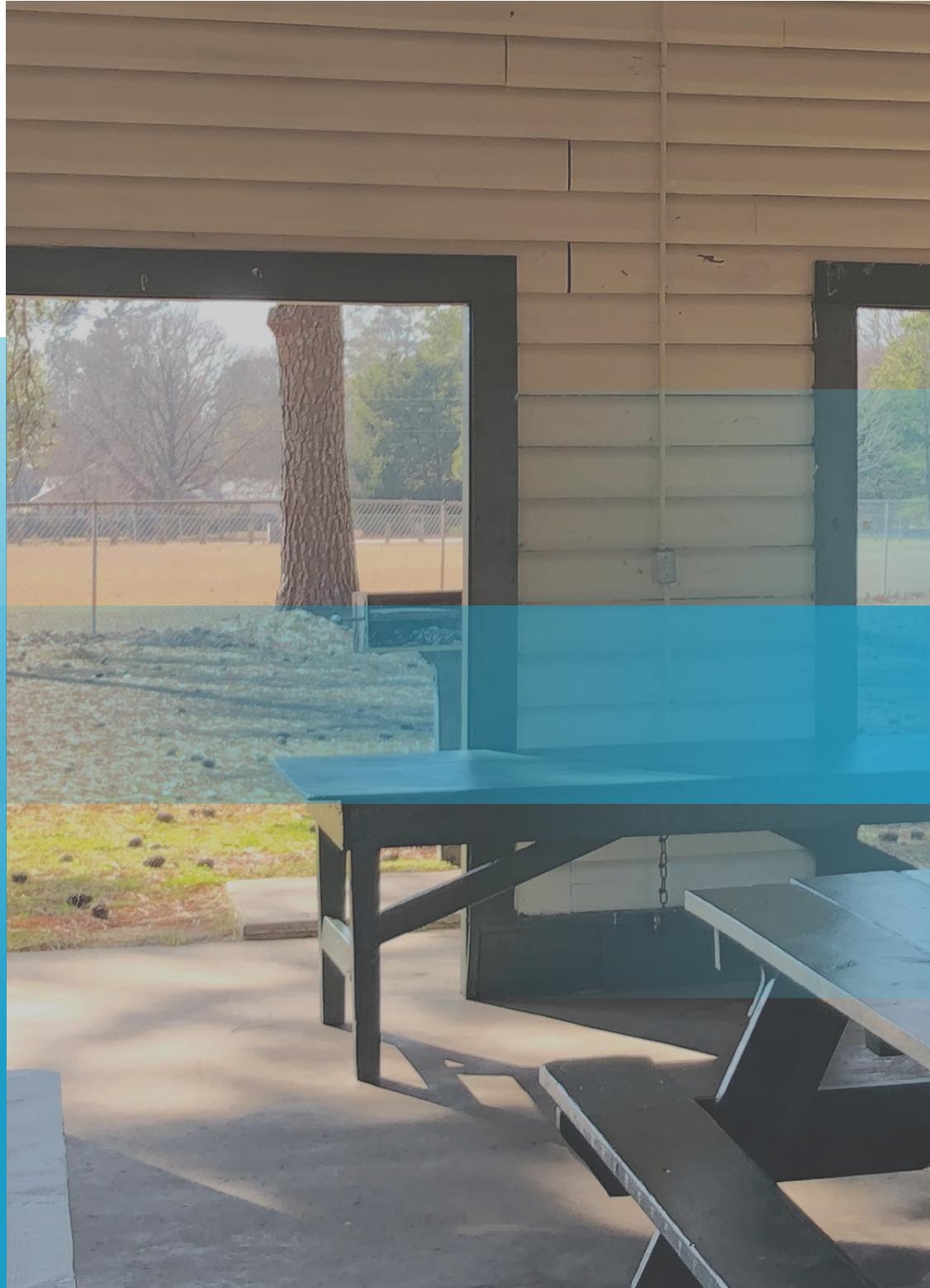


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1



A photograph of a wooden picnic shelter with picnic tables and a view of a fenced area through the windows. The shelter has a wooden roof and walls. Two large windows provide a view of an outdoor area with a white fence, trees, and a grassy field. In the foreground, there are several wooden picnic tables. A semi-transparent blue banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the word "INTRODUCTION" in white capital letters. The bottom of the image has a solid orange bar.

INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The City of Clinton Recreation and Parks Master Plan is a long-range planning document that is meant to help shape the direction and development of the City's parks and recreation facilities. This plan considers previous planning documents, department goals, existing conditions, and assessment of needs to develop a strategic vision for parks and recreation in Clinton. This vision will serve as a framework for proposed recommendations and prioritization strategies.

This plan is the first Comprehensive Plan undertaken by the Recreation and Parks Department. It is informed by earlier studies that include the 2035 Comprehensive Plan, the Economic Development Strategic 5-Year Plan, and the Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan.

These plans illustrate the City's desire to improve the quality of life for its residents, while maintaining the character that makes Clinton unique. These goals are central to developing excellent parks, recreation facilities and program opportunities for a diverse, growing population.

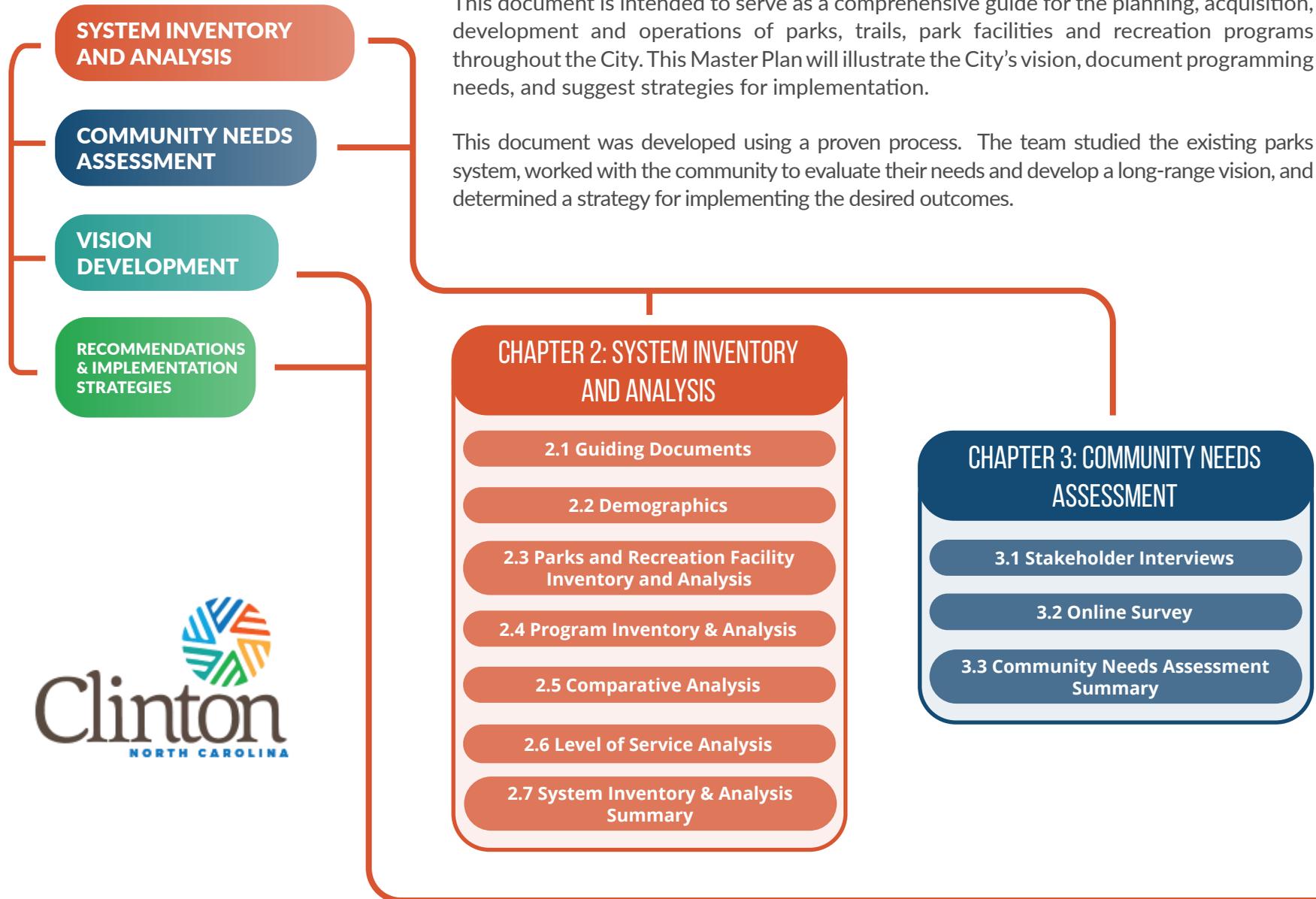
Establishing community-defined priorities will help direct the Recreation and Parks Department, maximizing its effectiveness. This Master Plan provides that framework, and ensures that Clinton continues to be a desirable community for people to live, work and play.



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 City. This Master Plan will illustrate the City's vision, document programming needs, and suggest strategies for implementation.

This document was developed using a proven process. The team studied the existing parks system, worked with the community to evaluate their needs and develop a long-range vision, and determined a strategy for implementing the desired outcomes.



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 Phasing & Financial Plan

5.6 Priority Action Items

Data Analysis Process

To gain an accurate understanding of the City of Clinton's Parks and Recreation system, the project team utilized a Triangulated Comprehensive Approach to data analysis. The following diagram identifies these techniques:

Multiple Techniques for a Triangulated, Comprehensive Approach



Quantitative Techniques:

- Benchmarking
- Level of Service Analysis
- Recreation Trend Analysis

Observational Techniques:

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

Qualitative Techniques:

- Stakeholder Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Community Workshops
- Online Survey



2





SYSTEM INVENTORY & ANALYSIS



SYSTEM INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an understanding of the City of Clinton's parks, facilities, programs, services, planning context, and the demographics of the community being served. In addition, the conditions, appearance and functionality of the existing parks and recreation system will be summarized. The City currently manages four parks and the Bentley & Sampson Community Centers.



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 Comparative Analysis

2.6 Level of Service Analysis

2.7 System Inventory & Analysis Summary

2.1 - GUIDING DOCUMENTS

In order to create a continuing narrative, the team prioritized the review of previously adopted plans and studies. The incorporation of these documents ensures that their diligent analysis and models live on and help shape the goals of this Master Plan. A listing of significant documents includes:

- › Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan (2012)
- › Land Development Ordinance (2010)
- › Economic Development Strategic Five-Year Plan (2019)
- › Royal Lane Park Master Plan (2014)
- › City of Clinton Comprehensive Bicycle Plan (2015)
- › 2035 Comprehensive Plan (2015)



Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan (2012)

The City of Clinton Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan was funded by a matching grant provided by the North Carolina Department of Transportation's Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation (DBPT). Envisioned as a roadmap, the plan was designed in order to improve opportunities for realistic safety improvements throughout the City.

A steering committee was formed by locating 17 community leaders and inviting them to join the City, NCDOT and the consultant. The group oversaw the planning process and helped the project team reach out to the Clinton community.

Two public meetings were held in order to share the team's progress and to elicit feedback from local stakeholders. A pedestrian plan survey was hosted online on the project website. This survey received 325 responses.

This process helped shape a community vision for the pedestrian plan:

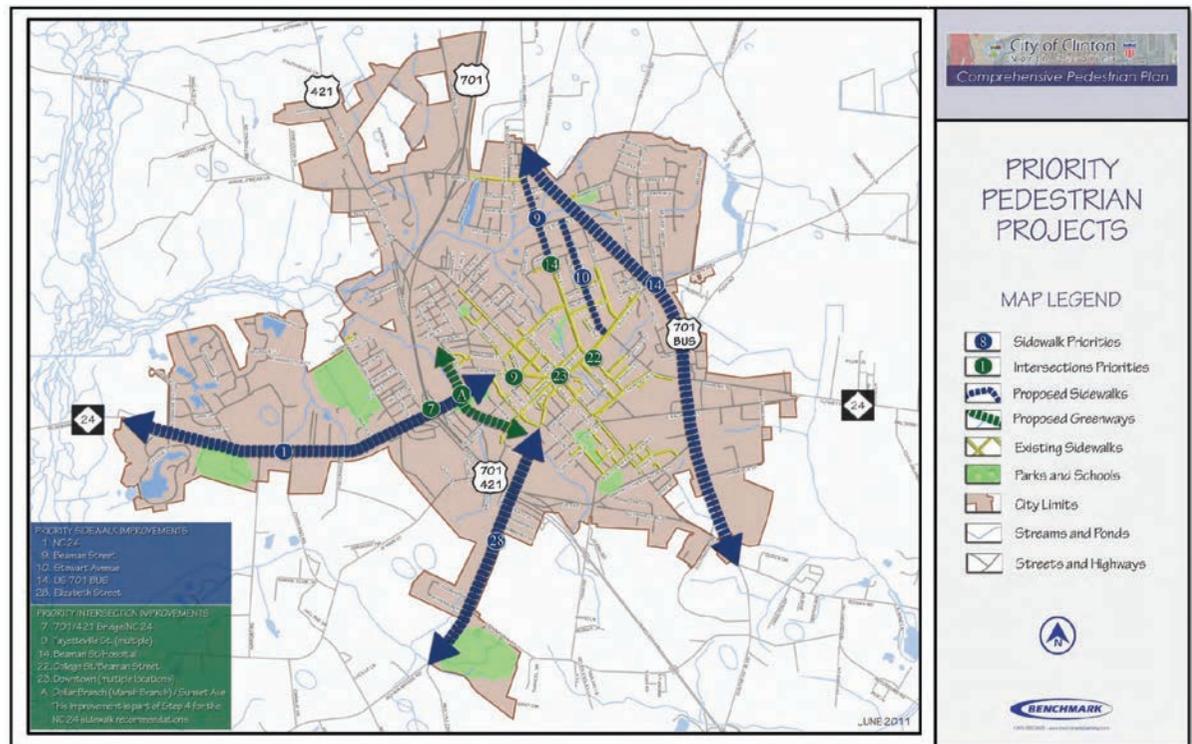
"The City of Clinton's vision is to improve its pedestrian transportation network and become a walkable community that has a complete system for safe pedestrian travel and provides realistic alternative modes of transportation for residents to move from work, to school, to shopping areas and back to home."

To ensure this vision's success, the project team created the following goals and objectives:

Goal 1: Improve pedestrian safety and awareness throughout the City.

- › Objective 1.1 Establish educational activities, programs and advertising campaigns focused on pedestrian safety.
- › Objective 1.2 Repair, install and construct specified pedestrian safety improvements to existing and future sidewalk and crosswalk facilities, warning devices and overall pedestrian environment.

Goal 2: Improve pedestrian connectivity throughout the City.



Priority Pedestrian Projects

- › Objective 2.1 Design and install the identified sidewalk improvements and intersection improvements in accordance with the priority ratings set forth in the plan.
- › Objective 2.2 Develop a system of greenway trails to provide additional connectivity and increase access to more isolated neighborhoods in the City.

Goal 3: Increase the utilization of pedestrian facilities as an alternative to motorized transportation.

- › Objective 3.1 Decrease the dependence on motorized transportation for conducting daily activities such as going to work, school or shopping.

A total of 75 pedestrian network improvements were identified in the plan, 36 concerning the improvement of sidewalk and greenway trails and 39 recommendations for intersections. Proposed improvements were prioritized for implementation as municipal and grant funding becomes available.

Land Development Ordinance (2010)

The Clinton Land Development Ordinance (LDO) was approved on Nov. 3, 2010. These regulatory guidelines and development standards were prepared to establish Clinton’s planning goals. The Land Development Ordinance outlines five objectives:

- › To promote the public health, safety, and general welfare
- › To secure safety from fire, panic, and other danger
- › To facilitate the adequate provisions of transportation, water supply, sewage, schools, parks, and other public requirements
- › To conserve the value of land and buildings
- › To establish procedures and standards for the orderly growth and development of the City

The LDO functions as a guidebook, ensuring that future development meets the needs of the City while promoting the objectives listed above. This is done through the regulation of building setbacks, streetscape elements, parking requirements, and the provision of open space, among other considerations.

Relevance to Master Plan

Despite its adoption in 2012, the City of Clinton Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan demonstrates encouraging public involvement. With 17 community leaders being on the project’s steering committee and 325 completed surveys, there is significant public interest in pedestrian accommodations in Clinton. Having a history of public involvement and buy-in is an extremely positive benefit for this process. Improvements prioritized in this document align with the Comprehensive Plan and further the vision of both documents.

Relevance to Master Plan

The Clinton Land Development Ordinance represents the framework in which development must occur. Recommendations made as part of this document must be in line with the procedures outlined in the ordinance. Establishing a new Parks and Recreation Master Plan within the context of this LDO provides consistency across Clinton, and aligns with the concepts previously developed.

Economic Development Strategic 5-Year Plan (2019)

The Economic Development Strategic Five-Year Plan began in the Spring of 2018. The City of Clinton worked with the North Carolina Department of Commerce, Rural Economic Development Division – NC Main Street and Rural Planning Center to develop a plan to guide economic health through 2023. City officials organized a steering committee made up of local residents and business owners to help guide the creation of the plan. Public input from the 2015 Comprehensive Plan was used to illustrate public opinion on Clinton's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Six overarching goals were established during the creation of this plan:

- › City of Beauty
- › City of Opportunity
- › Rich in Tradition

- › Clean, Safe Neighborhoods
- › Sound Infrastructure
- › Opportunities for Future Generations

The plan turns these goals into detailed action items within the context of nine strategy areas which holistically encompass life in Clinton. The strategy areas are as follows:

- › Organization
- › Promotion
- › Design
- › Business Development
- › Downtown
- › Land Use & Environment
- › Highway Corridor
- › Transportation
- › Community Resources



Vision/Mission Goal Statements

- City of beauty
- City of opportunity
- Rich in tradition
- Clean, safe neighborhoods
- Sound infrastructure
- Opportunities for future generations

Royal Lane Park Master Plan (2014)

Royal Lane Park Master Plan was developed in response to the City's most popular park showing aging infrastructure and failing to meet the needs of Clinton. Assistance through the North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) was sought in order to help make necessary upgrades. The development of the park master plan was very similar to the creation of this plan. The site's history and context was studied through previous planning documents. Public involvement was pursued through an online and paper survey, focus group workshops, the establishment of an advisory board and steering committee, and in public meetings.

Through this process, a vision for the park was established and refined. The final master plan was divided into four phases and an estimation of probable cost was developed in order to ground the plan in realistic costs and keep the plan as a whole more competitive for grant selection.

Relevance to Master Plan

The Economic Development Strategic 5-Year Plan provides multi-sector recommendations created through a partnership of local stakeholders, city leadership and multi-disciplinary state representatives. The plan makes recommendations that directly impact the success of this project, including an examination of greenway opportunities through the use of easements and payment-in-lieu mechanisms throughout the City. The success of these economic priorities ties directly to parks and recreation planning: the success of one will influence the success of the other.

City of Clinton Comprehensive Bicycle Plan (2015)

The City of Clinton Comprehensive Bicycle Plan was funded by a matching grant provided by the North Carolina Department of Transportation's Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation (DBPT).

Joining the City, NCDOT and the project consultant, 12 community leaders were identified to form a steering committee. The steering committee participated in four public and stakeholder meetings to solicit comments and feedback on plan development. Two additional workshops were held for the general public. The project website hosted a bicycle plan survey which concluded with approximately 40 completed resident surveys.

Relevance to Master Plan

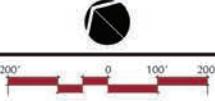
In 2016, Phase 1A of the Royal Lane Park Master Plan was awarded a matching grant of \$250,000 to begin construction. As one of the most popular city and regional parks, the improvement of Royal Lane Park will help anchor the City's identity as a hub of recreational opportunity. The Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan will build off of this momentum, identify opportunities to tie new recreational infrastructure into the park, and locate areas of funding to continue the phased improvements for the park.

SYSTEM INVENTORY & ANALYSIS



December 10, 2013
FINAL SHEMATIC MASTER PLAN

Clinton Royal Lane Park



Royal Lane Park Final Master Plan

This process developed a vision for the bicycle plan:

“The City of Clinton’s vision is to improve its bicycle transportation network, becoming a community that has a complete system for safe bicycle travel and realistic alternative modes of transportation for residents to move from work, to school, to shopping areas and back to home.”

In accordance with this vision, the project team created the following goals and objectives:

Goal 1: Improve bicycle safety and awareness throughout the City.

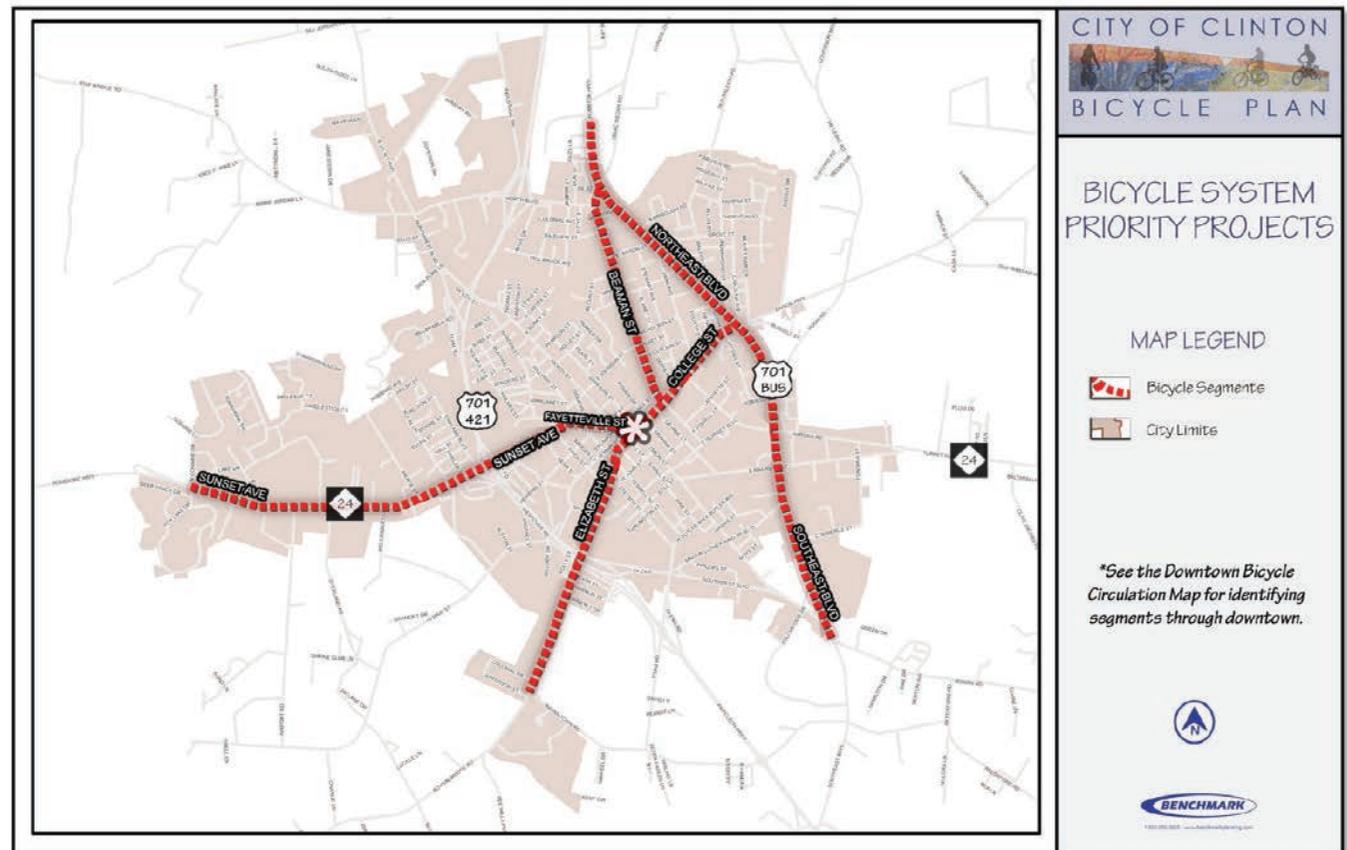
- › Objective 1.1 Establish educational activities, programs and advertising campaigns focused on bicycle safety.
- › Objective 1.2 Install and construct specified bicycle safety improvements to existing and future bicycle facilities, warning devices and enhance the overall bicycling environment.

Goal 2: Improve bicycle connectivity throughout the City.

- › Objective 2.1 Design and install the identified bicycle improvements in accordance with the priority ratings set forth in the plan.

Goal 3: Increase the utilization of bicycle facilities as an alternative to motorized transportation.

- › Objective 3.1 Decrease dependence on motorized transportation for conducting daily activities such as going to work, school or shopping.



Priority Bicycle Projects



- › Objective 3.2 Expand the ability of elderly residents, children, and others who may not have motorized transportation to access all areas of the City and participate fully in its civic and economic life.

The plan identified 21 bicycle route segments across Clinton. The projects were prioritized to receive municipal and grant resources as they become available. The plan also outlines several programs to promote a healthy bicycle culture within Clinton.

2035 Comprehensive Plan (2015)

The 2035 Comprehensive Plan presents a plan for Clinton spanning the 22 years between 2013 and 2035. Initiated in 2013, the project was led by a ten-member Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee, with members appointed by City Council.

The Plan was developed to guide City budgeting, provide a legal basis for land use regulations, and channel development to improve the business climate while maintaining Clinton's high quality of life.

The Committee developed comprehensive goals for all aspects of the city, using an open and responsive planning process. Prioritizing community inclusiveness and taking cues from the City's distinctive history, the Comprehensive Plan was designed in order to address the following 12 goals:

Goal 1. In all decisions/actions, Clinton will consider the impact on Clinton's future as a progressive, welcoming, and stable community.

Relevance to Master Plan

The City of Clinton Comprehensive Bicycle Plan shows a significant level of participation when compared to the City of Clinton Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan. Although the two plans were assembled at a similar time, the Bicycle Plan received 285 fewer responses. This appears to suggest a difference in public perception or culture towards cycling than towards pedestrian travel. The design team considers this possibility, but also recognizes that any number of factors may have contributed to this disparity.

Much like the Pedestrian Plan, improvements prioritized in the Bicycle Plan align with this plan's goals and further the vision of both documents.

Goal 2. Clinton will emphasize involvement of its citizens in its decision-making processes.

Goal 3. Clinton will focus on improving recreation/entertainment opportunities with an emphasis on activities for youth and active living.

Goal 4. Clinton will emphasize preservation of the Downtown area through small business entrepreneurship including arts/cultural activities.

Goal 5. Clinton will continue efforts to diversify job opportunities with an emphasis on “high-technology” job opportunities.

Goal 6. Clinton will vigorously support continued development of its health services industry.

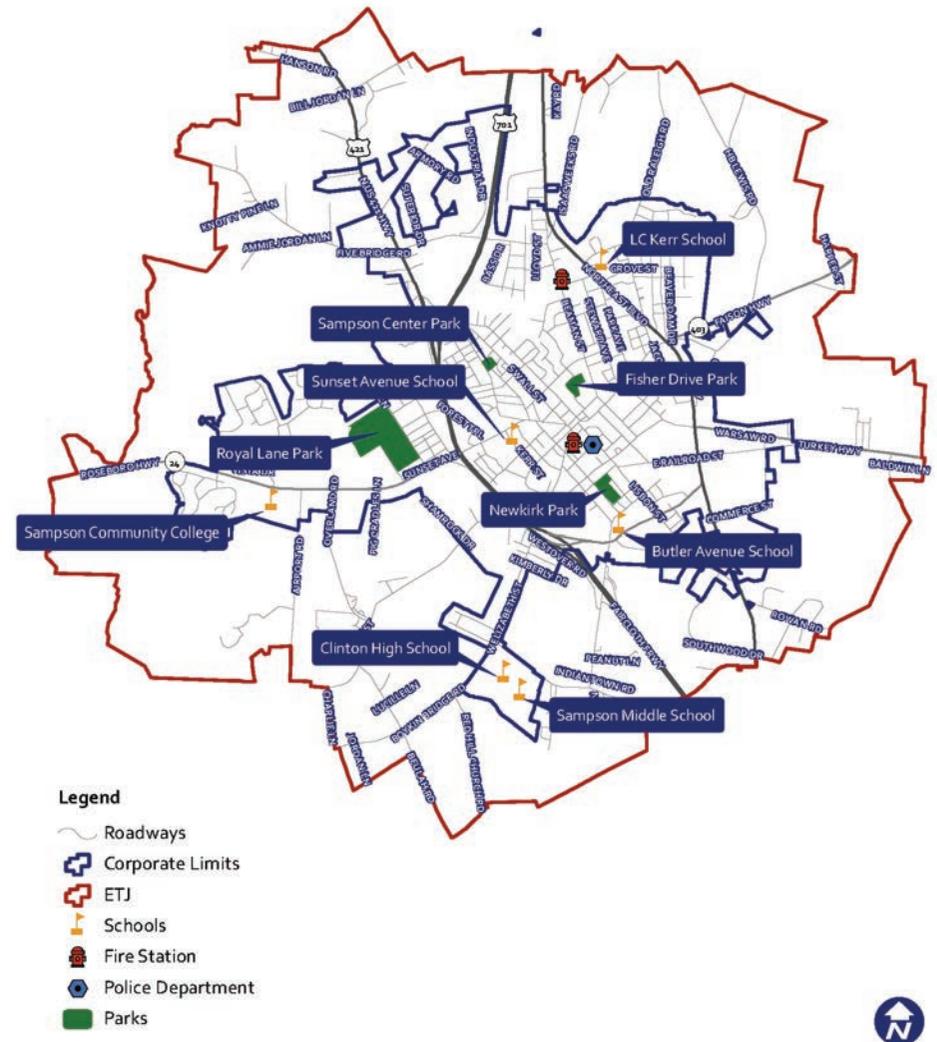
Goal 7. Clinton will, through its land development ordinance, provide an inventory of options for industrial/ business development.

Goal 8. Clinton will consider preservation of residential neighborhoods in its decision-making processes.

Goal 9. Clinton will support infill development as an action essential to the continued development of the city.

Goal 10. Clinton will continuously support improvement of the educational systems serving the City.

Goal 11. Clinton will support improvements to its infrastructure systems, including improvement of its regional access and access management.



Community Services and Public Facilities

Goal 12. Clinton will support the improvement of health disparate neighborhoods, including emphasis on active living and access to healthy food options.

The Comprehensive Plan encourages context-sensitive growth and promotes infill development within the City. The health and well-being of Clinton citizens is prioritized in the form of promoting neighborhood park opportunities, pedestrian infrastructure and neighborhood-based retail. Intended to be a living document, the plan emphasizes annual monitoring and review of its elements, goals and strategies.

It is important to note that this document was prepared five years after the adoption of the Land Development Ordinance (LDO). The ideas within the Comprehensive Plan are not fully represented in the LDO, which presents opportunities for revisiting the LDO statutes in cases where the two documents are not in alignment.

Relevance to Master Plan

Like many of the other documents reviewed, the 2035 Comprehensive Plan establishes a precedent of support for parks and recreational activity within Clinton. This document appears to broaden the context of which these facilities are supported, focusing on their transportation, environmental, health and economic benefits. This holistic understanding of parks infrastructure, and desire for infill and downtown development, helps set the tone for this Master Plan document, steering the City towards more walkable, enjoyable, healthy spaces.



2.2 - DEMOGRAPHICS

Introduction

A review of demographic and population trends is helpful to better understand the needs of the community. It is important to identify trends in historic data and see how they apply to future projections. This analysis will allow the city to make more informed decisions based on trends that may impact the delivery of services over the next 10 years.

Population Growth

According to data from the United States Census and the American Community Survey, the population in the City of Clinton increased by 325 people (4%) between 1990 and 2019. The growth was not even over this period, however. The population increased 4.8% between 1990 to 2000, slowed to 0.5% from 2000 to 2010, and decreased 1.3% from 2010 to 2019.

Regionally, Sampson County shows a larger amount of growth during the same time period. From 1990 to 2019 the county population grew approximately 34.3% to a total of 63,531. The county growth trajectory mirrors the City of Clinton, decreasing in recent years. Sampson County grew 27.2% from 1990 to 2000, 5.4% from 2000 to 2010 and 0.2% from 2010 to 2019.

Population Growth				
Year	Clinton		Sampson County	
1990	8,204		47,297	
2000	8,600	+4.8%	60,161	+27.2%
2010	8,639	+0.5%	61,161	+5.4%
2019	8,529	-1.3%	63,531	+0.2%
2030	9,268	+8.7%	65,308	+2.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, NCOSBM, Clinton 2035 Comprehensive Plan

This trend of population growth indicates that people are moving from the county seat. The reduction of population growth may reflect impacts from the economic recessions around 2001 and 2008. Continued reductions in the 2010's, however, do not have a readily identifiable root cause.

With the downward population trend, it is important for Clinton's future parks and recreation plans to include infill development. Parks and recreation facilities near large infill areas will need to meet the needs of a new or changing population. Infill areas that have limited access to parks facilities will need to be identified for future expansion.

Population Characteristics

Reviewing overall population growth helps to determine level of service goals for park and greenway systems. A more granular review of population characteristics helps to determine the types of amenities that will best serve the community. The following data references 2010 and 2018 datasets from the American Community Survey.

Age

The City and County datasets generally mirror one another. The median age in Clinton was 41.7 in 2010 and 42.3 in 2018. This demonstrates a slight upward age shift of 0.6 years. The County experienced a slightly greater shift of 2.6 years, increasing from 37.7 years in 2010 to 40.3 in 2018. Clinton citizens under the age of 18 increased from 21.1% to 22.2% of the population, a 1.1% increase. County data show a decrease in that age group to 24.6% of the population in 2018. For those aged 65-years and older, Clinton felt a 1.4% increase to 22.0% of the population. The Over 65 age group grew 3.4% to 17.1% in the county data. Children under 14 increased 1.7% in Clinton, while dropping 1.2% in the County.

Age Groups in Clinton			
Age Group	2010	2018	8-year Change
Under 18	21.1%	22.2%	+1.1%
Over 65	20.6%	22.0%	+1.4%
Median Age	41.7	42.3	0.6

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Race/Ethnicity

The City of Clinton exhibits a fairly diverse municipality. The White population accounted for 49.8% of the total population in 2010 and 47.2% in 2018. The percentage of African-Americans increased from 38.8% to represent 45.4% of the population in 2018, a moderate increase. The Hispanic/Latino group represented the third largest ethnicity at 10.1% of the population in 2010, increasing to 12.9% in 2018.

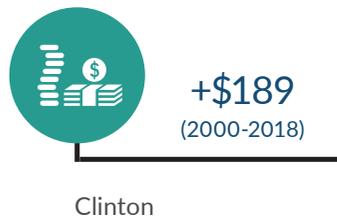
Sampson County represents a more homogenous trend. The County's 2018 White population represents 64.4% of the total, an increase of 7.8% since 2010. African-American populations decreased 2.4%, to account for 25.2% of the 2018 population. Hispanic/Latino peoples still accounted for the third largest ethnic population, but experienced a 3.8% increase to 19.3% in 2018, the second largest increase apart from the White populations. Of additional note, "Other Race" which was 11.3% in 2010 dropped 6.4% in 2018 within the county.

Income

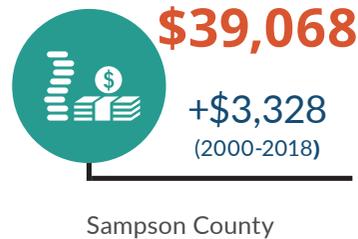
Clinton residents experienced a small increase in median monthly income between 2010 and 2018, rising from \$30,500 to \$30,689. This difference of \$189 represents a 0.6% overall increase. During this time, the County experienced a \$3,328 (9.3%) increase in income to \$39,068 in 2018. Among income brackets, \$15,000 to \$24,999 saw the highest increase of 3.9%, followed by the \$10,000 to \$14,999 group at 1.5%. The income bracket that saw the greatest decrease was "Less than \$10,000" which fell 4.8% in Clinton and 2.6% in the County. Other brackets changed little, with slight increases in the higher brackets. The data seems to indicate positive economic growth outside the City limits.

Educational Attainment

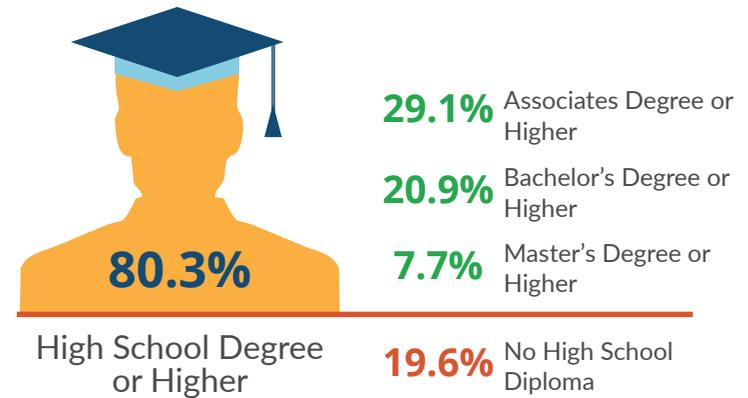
In Clinton, 80.3% of the population graduates high school, and 29.1% earns an Associate's Degree or higher. These figures are fairly consistent between the 2010 and 2018 datasets. In Sampson County, high school graduates account for 77.6% of the population (a 2.3% increase over 2010) and 22.7% attained an Associate's degree or higher (a 2.1% increase). Clinton demonstrates a higher level of educational attainment than the Sampson County region.



Median Income in Clinton and Sampson County



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

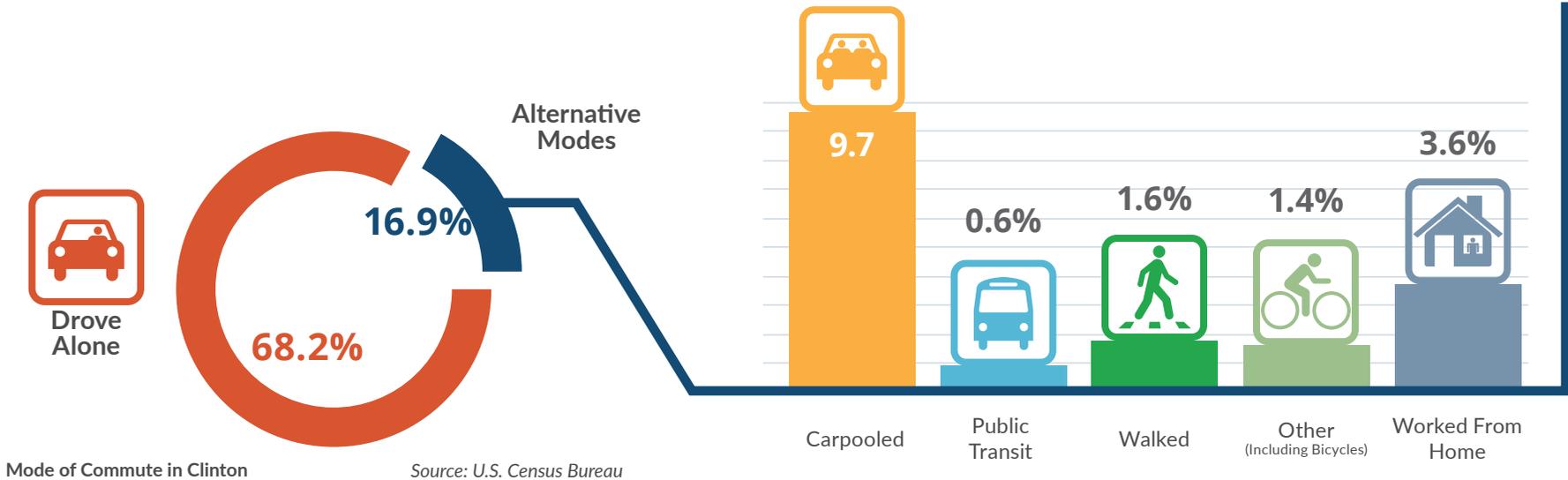


Educational Attainment in Clinton

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Mode of Commute

Between 2010 and 2018, Clinton experienced small changes in the way citizens commute to work. Of Clinton commuters, 85.1% drive to work (0.8% decrease) and 9.7% carpool. Sampson County drivers represent 84.3% of commuters (3.9% increase). Interestingly, carpooling in the county dropped 3.7% to 10.3% in 2018. Of note, both the municipality and the county saw an increase in citizens that worked at home and took some mode of public transit.



Housing Characteristics

An overview of a city's housing characteristics provides additional background. High levels of homeownership, for example, often signify stable communities. New residential units often mirror population growth and provide clues to how densely a community is growing.

The housing stock of Clinton declined by 494 units between 2010 and 2018, an 11.8% decrease. In comparison, Sampson County experienced a 2.0% increase. Occupancy within the City increased 2.4% to 91.9% in 2018, while the County decreased 2.7% to 85.2%.

Owner-occupied buildings accounted for 51.6% of occupied housing in 2010, then dropped to 47.9% in 2018, a 3.7% decline. Renter-occupied housing accounts for 52.1%. In contrast, Sampson County shifted very little in the occupancy balance with owner-occupancy holding steady just under 69%. County housing data indicates some stability, but the shift in city housing occupancy may indicate a higher rate of transient households.

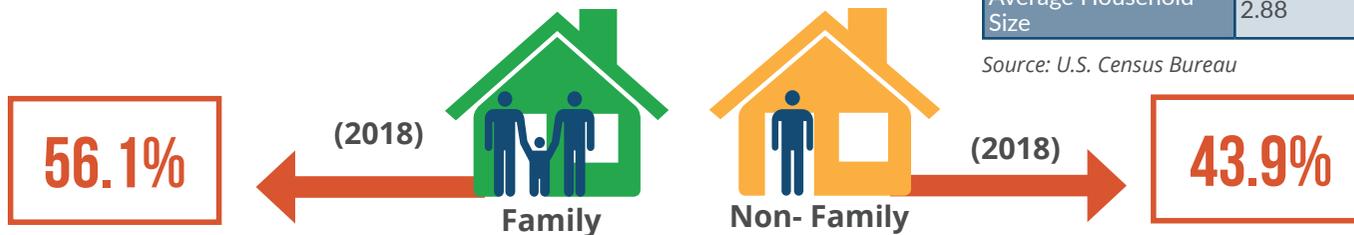
Family households (56.1%) were the most common type of household in the City of Clinton. Non-family households (typically single-person, multi-person unmarried, or student housing) accounted for 43.9% of Clinton households, an increase of 2.7%.

Family households without children under the age of 18 represented 58.8%, a 2.7% decline from 2010. Family households with children under the age of 18 comprised 43.6% of family households, an increase of 1.7%. County households had a higher number of families (66.5% of total households). Notably, family households with children under 18-years-old decreased 11.9% to 32.7% in 2018.

Households with a person over the age of 65 represents 19.9% of all households in 2018, indicating an aging population. The average household size in Clinton rose by 0.13 to 2.35 people while the average household size in the county remained 2.68 in 2018. Average family size increased dramatically, rising from 2.88 to 3.23 in Clinton and from 3.12 to 3.34 in the County.

Household Characteristics in Clinton			
	2010	2018	8-year Change
Family Households	58.8%	56.1%	-2.7%
Non-Family Households	41.2%	43.9%	+2.7%
Households with Children Under 18	28.9%	28.8%	-0.1%
Households with People over 65	19.8%	19.9%	+0.1%
Average Family Size	2.22	2.35	0.13
Average Household Size	2.88	3.23	0.35

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



Family Households in Clinton

SYSTEM INVENTORY & ANALYSIS



2.3 - PARKS & RECREATION FACILITY INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

System Overview

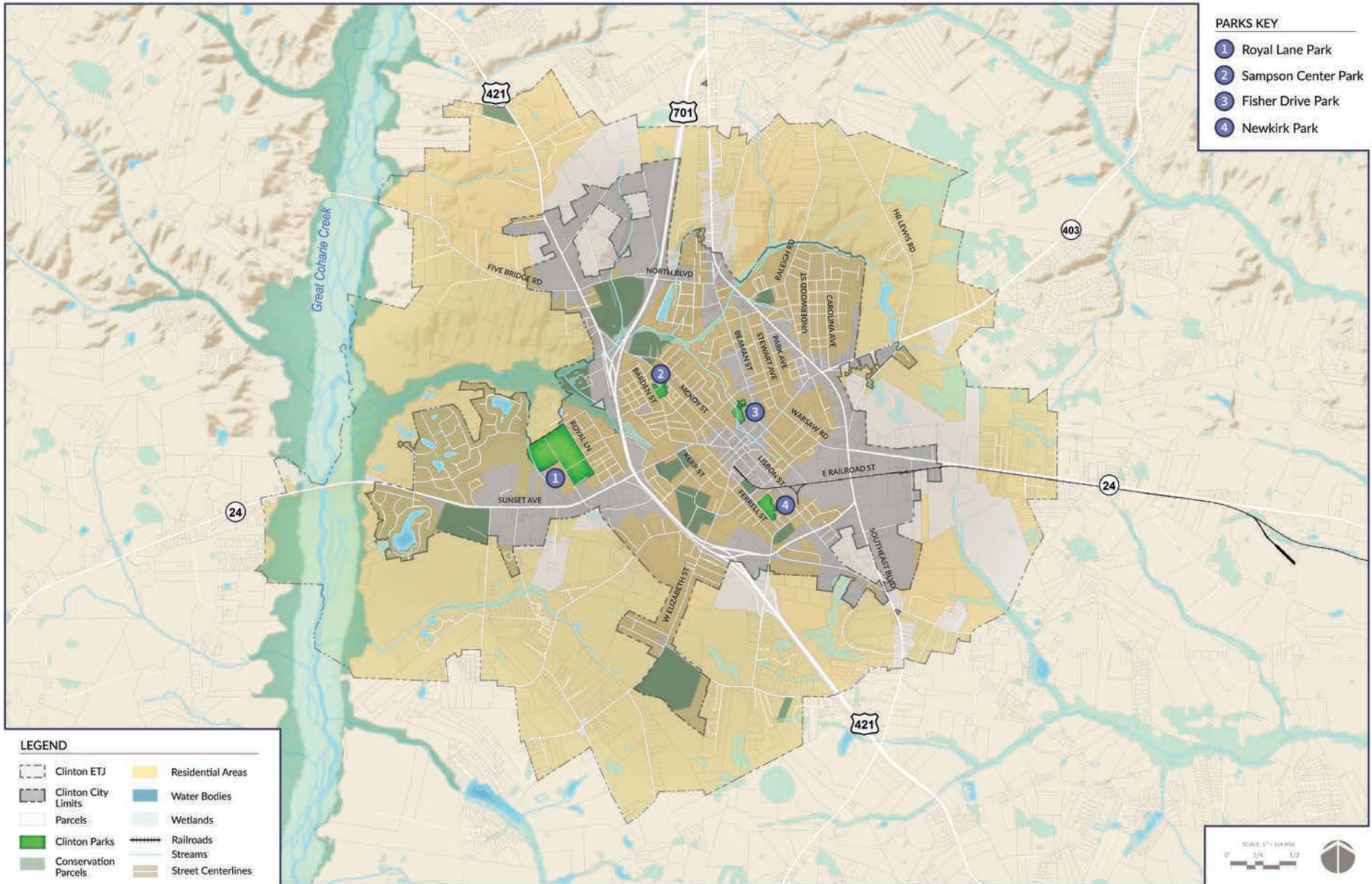
The Clinton Recreation and Parks Department oversees a diverse park system and a variety of recreation programs. The department currently manages a system that includes:

- › Over **95** acres of parkland
- › **4** city parks
- › **6** playgrounds
- › **2** outdoor basketball courts
- › **15** athletic fields
- › **2** community centers
- › **2** gymnasiums
- › **4** picnic shelters
- › **4** outdoor restroom facilities
- › **1** swimming pool
- › **1** dog park

The Clinton parks and facilities are shown in the map to the right, and an inventory of each facility is shown in the adjacent tables.

Royal Lane Park	
Acreage	76.8 acres
Amenities	Parking, playgrounds (2), baseball/softball fields (5), soccer fields (7), multipurpose fields(1), track, paved walkways, amphitheater, nature trail, Bellamy Center, outdoor restroom facilities (2), outdoor pool, tennis courts (8- unusable), outdoor basketball courts (1), picnic shelters (2), maintenance area, Recreation Department Office
Sampson Center Park	
Acreage	3.8 acres
Amenities	Parking, playground, baseball/softball field, paved walkways, Sampson Center Gymnasium, picnic shelter
Fisher Drive Park	
Acreage	6.2 acres
Amenities	Dog park (divided for big dogs & small dogs), playground, unpaved walking trail, recreation center (leased)
James L. Newkirk Park	
Acreage	8.5 acres
Amenities	Parking, playgrounds (2), open space, paved walkways, outdoor restroom facility, outdoor basketball court, picnic shelters

SYSTEM INVENTORY & ANALYSIS



Clinton Parks & Recreation Facility Map

Parks and Recreation Facilities Ratings

Methodology

Members of the project team visited each of the parks and facilities operated by the City to observe their current conditions and evaluate future opportunities. The team used the following criteria, based on guidelines developed by Project for Public Spaces (PPS), a non-profit organization dedicated to creating and sustaining public spaces that build stronger communities.

Design and Construction:

- › Are the design and construction appropriate for the needs of all users?
- › Does the site include appropriate recreation amenities?
- › Does the site respond to the surrounding area?
- › Have any changes to the surrounding area made the site ineffective to users?
- › Are there any hazards to users of the facilities?

Effectiveness:

- › Does the site have features and 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 opportunities?
- › Does the site encourage good health and fitness?

Comfort and Image:

- › Does the site make a good first impression?
- › Is the site well-maintained?
- › 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?

Access and Linkages:

- › Are there clear and open views into open spaces?
- › Is there clear wayfinding signage?
- › Can people easily walk to the site from surrounding areas?
- › Does the site provide opportunities for people with special needs?
- › Are the primary amenities connected to paths and/or roads?

Sustainability:

Social

- › 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)?

SYSTEM INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

Environmental

- › Does the site use energy, water and material resources efficiently?
- › Does the site maintain or improve water quality?
- › Does the site enhance, preserve, or promote 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 was observed and assigned a score for how it met the criteria for each category. **Table 2-1** on pages 38-39 illustrates the scores for each park and for each of the categories across the system. It is important to note that each park has its own merits, and that a “one size fits all” approach cannot be used to accurately evaluate every type of park. However, evaluating each park’s standing against system-wide scores can reveal unique trends.



Fisher Drive Park



Royal Lane Park

Facilities Exceeding Expectations

These facilities exhibit multiple features that enhance the comfort and experience of users, and encourage repeated visitation. The facilities are commonly new or recently enhanced, well-maintained, and readily accessible through multiple modes of transportation. Characteristics that commonly apply to these parks include:

- › Facilities that function as intended and feel safe
- › Facilities that are aesthetically pleasing and exhibit exceptional maintenance, often demonstrating sustainable techniques.
- › Accommodation of a variety of uses, maintaining a consistently high level of activity while remaining flexible.
- › Clear evidence of good design standards and embracing heritage resources where applicable
- › Multiple ways for users to access the park, including walking and biking.
- › Multi-purpose fields or lawn surfaces that are well maintained.
- › Sports fields that may contain premium amenities such as score boards, enclosed dugouts, bleachers and lighting.
- › This type of park scores in the **75-100** range

Facilities Meeting Expectations

These facilities are serviceable for the needs of the community and provide a reasonable experience for users. The facilities provide sufficient recreational opportunities, are fairly well-maintained, and reasonably accessible to the community with some effort. Characteristics that commonly apply to these parks include:

- › Programs that function as intended.
- › A general level of maintenance, and may be aesthetically pleasing.
- › Accommodation for several different activities and a moderate level of activity.
- › Reasonable sidewalk connectivity, and perhaps a transit stop nearby.
- › General compatibility with surrounding land uses and a feeling of safety for the users.
- › Well-maintained and playable field surfaces, but typically without premium features.
- › This type of park scores in the **50-74** range.

Facilities Not Meeting Expectations

These facilities exhibit conditions that indicate that they have exceeded their functional life span or utility. Repair, enhancement or replacement is necessary to provide functional recreational access to the community. Existing features are not sufficient for the comfort or needs of the users, and maintenance is often perceived to be below standards. Characteristics that commonly apply to these parks include:

- › Facilities are not currently performing as intended.
- › Appearance and / or maintenance is below standards.
- › A consistently low level of activity
- › Limited accommodations or incompatibility with surrounding land uses.
- › A perception that the facility is unsafe or unwelcome.
- › Limited or difficult access by public transit, bicycle, or walking.
- › Field surfaces that are maintained below standards, or unable to be maintained due to over-programming.
- › This type of park scores in the **0-49** range.

The project team evaluated the parks and facilities in January of 2020 and February of 2021. The following pages list the parks and facilities, with identifying scores for each category, weighted overall scores, and category scores. Note that these observations reflect a limited time period and the initial reactions of the design team - these scores may differ from the comments elicited at the public engagement phase of the project.



Table 2-1: Clinton Park & Facility Evaluation Ratings

Legend:

- Exceeding Expectations (75-100)
- Meeting Expectations (50-74)
- Not Meeting Expectations (0-49)

- 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 to 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 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)								
Fisher Drive Park	18	3	1	5	4	3	2	8	2	2	1	1	2	25	3	4	3	3	4	5	3
Newkirk Park	26	4	5	4	4	5	4	24	5	4	5	5	5	31	4	5	5	5	4	5	3
Royal Lane Park	24	3	4	4	5	4	4	25	5	5	5	5	5	28	4	5	4	5	4	3	3
Sampson Center Park	20	3	5	2	4	3	3	21	4	4	4	4	5	27	4	4	4	4	5	4	2
Weighted Total (Max 100):	73	65	75	75	85	75	65	78	80	75	75	75	85	79	75	90	80	85	85	85	55



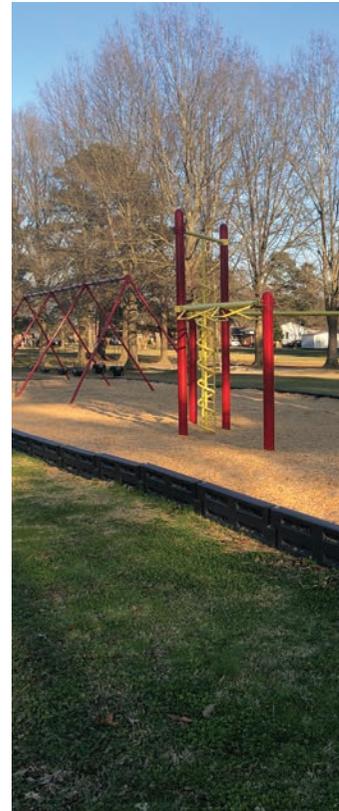
Bellamy Center



Fisher Drive Park



Royal Lane Park



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- **Access and Linkages (Max: 25)**
 - 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?
- **Sustainability (Max: 60)**
 - **Sociable 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?
- **Weighted Total (Max 100)**

11	4	3	1	1	2	33	6	2	2	2	15	4	3	3	3	2	12	3	3	3	3	54
20	5	4	5	3	3	43	14	4	5	5	15	4	3	3	3	2	14	3	4	3	4	82
19	5	4	4	2	4	45	14	5	5	4	15	4	3	3	3	2	16	5	3	3	5	81
23	5	4	5	4	5	42	14	5	4	5	15	4	3	3	3	2	13	4	3	3	4	77
73	95	75	75	50	70	70	80	80	80	80	60	80	60	60	60	40	70	75	65	60	80	73



Newkirk Park



Fisher Drive Park



Sampson Center Park



Royal Lane Park

Facility Ratings

Successes:

There are several examples of success in Clinton's current Parks and Recreation facilities. These include high individual park ratings and categories where the park system as a whole is exceeding expectations.

Effectiveness, Comfort and Image

- › Many of the parks demonstrate comfort, safety, effectiveness and a good general appearance. The majority of the parks are clean, free of litter, in good condition, and offer a good first impression. Many elicit a high degree of satisfaction and pride from users and staff in the Parks and Recreation department. Maintenance is above average in the parks, indicated by clean gathering areas and walkways, and well-maintained lawns and planting areas.

Design and Construction

- › The parks offer an appropriate amount of amenities and support substantial use by a variety of users. Many of the parks meet the needs of the people using them, and there are a number of activities to choose from. A majority of parks and facilities provide opportunities for a diverse set of age groups.

Social Sustainability

- › Most of the parks received favorable scores in the Social Sustainability categories. Many parks appear to be frequently used by the community, and serve as important features of neighborhoods. There are strong indicators that the parks are places to meet family and friends, and that they provide relief from the daily stresses of life.

Opportunities:

Like the successes, the opportunities identified are based on a combination of individual park ratings and the performance of the parks system in the specific categories. These are areas where the parks system may not be fully meeting expectations, and present opportunities for improvement.

Environmental Sustainability

- › There appear to be opportunities to provide features or measures to utilize energy, water, biological diversity, and other resources in a sustainable fashion. As noted in **Table 2-x**, there are a lack of opportunities for environmental education and improving water quality. Some of the parks are located in important storm water collection areas and ecological corridors, offering significant opportunities for educational programs and signage to highlight them.

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Access and Linkages

- › Lower scores for some of the parks indicate that they are inaccessible, difficult to reach, and not readily visible. Fisher Drive Park in particular is difficult to access, lacks clear signage, and has walking trails that are inaccessible to people with disabilities. Linkages can be improved to all parks by upgrading the adjacent infrastructure, such as aged sidewalks, faded directional markers on walkways and bikeways, and signage in low visibility areas.

Design & Construction

- › A few lower scores indicate amenities that are lacking, or that have aged and need upgrades. Fisher Drive Park fits the former description, lacking amenities for active recreation, stable paths for walking, and wayfinding signage. Sampson Center Park has aging infrastructure that serves the public well but needs upgrades to maintain its high level of service. The ratings indicate a relatively high overall level for the condition of the parks and amenities, but ongoing improvements increase their effective lifespan.



Sampson Center Park



Newkirk Park

2.4 - PROGRAM INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

Introduction

The following is an assessment of the Clinton Recreation and Parks Department's recreation programs, events, and services. Information was gathered through a series of staff interviews, facility and park tours, and a review of information and documents supplied by the Department.

Summary

- › The City of Clinton focuses its programming on youth sports and activities for seniors.
- › The City conducts special events programs at major holidays.
- › Recreation programs and services are generally delivered through Royal Lane Park and Sampson Center Park.
- › At-will programming uses the park areas, playgrounds, and athletic fields that are present in the four city parks.
- › There are several programming areas that are in high demand, including adult sports leagues, aquatics programs, programming for teens, arts and culture, and wellness programs.

Program Area Definitions

While the following program areas are not specific to Clinton Recreation and Parks, they represent the types of programs that could be provided for the community.

- › *Sports* – Team and individual sports including camps, clinics, and tournaments. This includes adventure and 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 / technology / math (STEM) classes, computer classes, 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* – 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.

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- › *Teen Programs* - 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 Activities* - Opportunities for individuals to recreate on their own, including 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 in City facilities.
- › *Social Services* - Can include nutrition and feeding programs, job training, life skills training, and other activities such as job training.

Programming Classifications

The following programs are currently provided by the Clinton Recreation and Parks Department. This overview is based on generally available information for the 2020-2021 year, as well as listings provided by the Department. Note that these are general listings only.

Area	Focus	Programs
Sports	Youth	Basketball, Baseball, Softball, T-Ball, Football, Flag Football, Soccer (Spring Club and Fall), Volleyball
	Adult	Basketball League
Fitness/ Wellness	Youth	N/A
	Adult	N/A
Cultural Arts	Youth	N/A
	Adult	N/A
Aquatics	Youth	Public Swim, Swim Lessons
	Adult	Public Swim, Swim Lessons
Youth		Wee Wednesdays
Education	Youth	N/A
	Adult	N/A
General Interest	Youth	N/A
	Adult	N/A
Special Needs		N/A

Recreation Programs in High Demand:

Clinton staff and stakeholders have identified that the following programs and services are in high demand by the community:

- › Adult sports leagues, specifically softball, basketball, and volleyball
- › Adult programs, such as cards, movies, games
- › Educational programs for kids and teens, such as soft skills, auto repair, home economics
- › Youth programs, such as after school and tutoring
- › Special needs programs
- › Summer camps
- › Arts and cultural programs
- › Nature programs and access to trails
- › Facility and field rentals

Recreation Service Limitations:

Recreation programs and services are limited in Clinton due in part to the following:

- › *Limited Staff* – The Clinton Recreation and Parks Department has a limited 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, which limits the time available at key programming locations (Community Center, athletic fields, and other spaces) for programs that could focus on adults and seniors.
- › *Lack of Facilities* – The athletic fields are heavily used, limiting opportunities for youth sports team practices and little time for adult leagues. There is no tournament facility where a large number of fields are located. Performing arts are best offered in a space that includes a theater, auditorium or multi-purpose room that has a stage. Additional needs include classroom & meeting spaces.
- › *Lighting* – Many of the athletic fields and courts do not have lights, limiting their use, especially in the late fall or early spring.

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Recreation Programming Partnerships:

Clinton Recreation and Parks partners with local organizations to bring enhanced programming to the community. Partnerships consist of the sharing of spaces, facilities, and staff.

- › *Sampson County* – The County has a Parks and Recreation Department that operates a number of parks and programs in its five districts. Many of these facilities are operated through local school facilities, but also include Clement Ball Park, Weeks Park, and Western District Park.
- › *Private* – Like most areas in the United States, Clinton has a number of private sports and fitness providers. This includes five private health clubs, a gymnastics facility and a martial arts studio.



With the presence of other recreation, aquatics, sports, and fitness providers in the Clinton area, their role in providing services must be considered when the City establishes its program plan for the next 5-10 years.

Current Programming Assessment:

The following is an overall assessment of the current level of recreation programming that is offered by the Clinton Recreation and Parks Department.

Programs by Area:

- › *Youth Sports* – Clinton is a major provider of youth sports programs with a focus on more traditional team sports. There are no adventure or non-traditional sport options.
- › *Adult Sports* – Clinton provides an adult basketball league but little else for this age group. This is partially due to the lack of field and gym space to allocate to adult sports.
- › *Fitness/Wellness* – There are opportunities to expand the fitness and wellness offerings which are not currently addressed.
- › *Cultural Arts* – This program area is not currently offered.
- › *Aquatics* – Clinton offers swim lessons at the Royal Lane Park swimming pool. Additional programming opportunities can be pursued.
- › *Youth* – Clinton does not have youth programs or summer camps.
- › *Education* – The Recreation and Parks Department does not have science & nature educational programming for youth or adults.
- › *Special Needs* – There currently is no Special Needs programming offered by the 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 Recreation and Parks Department conducts a few special events on a community-wide basis to celebrate national holidays.
- › *Outdoor Recreation* - There currently is limited emphasis given to this program area by the Department.
- › *Seniors* – There are a number of programs and services geared for seniors. This includes a walking program, Pinochle, and Golden Age Fun Club.
- › *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.
- › *Self-Directed* – Although 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. Clinton has gymnasium, courts, athletic fields, and other facilities where self-directed activities are possible.

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Programs by Demographic Group:

- › *Youth* – The Department has a significant commitment to youth programs and activities, primarily in youth sports. However, there are limited programs for older kids. Youth recreation is a primary area of focus for most parks and recreation agencies.
- › *Teens* – There are 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.
- › *Adults* – While the Department provides a basketball league, adults are not the primary focus. This is often the case with most parks and recreation agencies where the demand for youth programming has priority.
- › *Seniors* – The Parks and Recreation Division has a number of programs and services that are focused on seniors.



Program Strengths:

- › Youth sports
- › Traditional senior services
- › Self-directed activities

Programs at Mid-Range:

- › Adult team sports
- › Community-based special events

Program Weaknesses:

- › A limited number of non-traditional and adventure sports programming
- › No programming for middle school or teenage children
- › Limited aquatics programs
- › No fitness programming
- › No outdoor recreation programs
- › No summer camps
- › No health and wellness programming, or cultural arts
- › No special needs programs or services
- › No education programs
- › No significant general interest programming
- › Social services are not an area of focus

2.5 - COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Comparison of Towns:

It is helpful to undertake a comparative analysis with parks and recreation departments in other municipalities, and benchmarks provided by established standards. These comparisons are typically based primarily on population, though it is important to remember that every municipality, every park system, and every Recreation and Parks Department is unique. Clinton has its own community and its own needs, so these comparisons are to be taken in that context.

Interviews with Clinton staff included a discussion about neighboring towns that are appreciated for their parks and park systems, and that Clinton should consider for inspiration. These communities can be anywhere and be any size, including out of state. Municipalities mentioned in this context include:

- Clayton (population 21,681)
- Dunn (population 9,664)
- Duplin County (population 58,967)
- Fayetteville (specifically Clark Park) (population 210,432)
- Goldsboro (population 34,647)
- Greenville (North Carolina) (population 91,921)
- Hope Mills (population 15,769)
- Kenansville (population 943)
- Newton Grove (population 557)
- Orange County (population 148,476)
- Raleigh (specifically Pullen Park) (population 464,485)
- Rocky Mount (population 54,548)
- Wilmington (population 120,194)
- Wilson (population 49,272)

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The municipalities mentioned include a range of population sizes, as low as 557 people in Newton Grove to 464,485 people in Raleigh. It is interesting to note that Clinton's population of 8,529 is lower than all but two of these municipalities, signaling a recognition of the Clinton staff that their city is growing and that it should look to larger cities for guidance.

Inspiration from neighboring municipalities is helpful and highly recommended for gaining new ideas. It is difficult, however, to gain a true apples-to-apples comparison due to the number of variables that make each city unique. With this in mind, it is possible to develop an understanding of a city's park system using a tool developed by the National Recreation and Parks Association. A Level of Service (LOS) analysis measures a city's parks and recreation resources against its population, and the resulting averages can be benchmarked against data collected from park systems across the country. A Clinton LOS Analysis is provided on the following pages below.



2.6 - LEVEL OF SERVICE ANALYSIS

Methodology

A Level of Service (LOS) Analysis helps to quantify how well the existing parks system is meeting the needs of residents. The National Recreation and Park Association defines Level of Service as “an allocation mechanism for the delivery of park land and basic recreation facilities throughout a community. By adoption of such a standard, a community in essence says that all citizens ... will have an equal opportunity to share in the basic menu of services implicit in the standard and accompanying spatial distribution and allocation of policies.”

While every municipal park system is different to serve their respective needs, there are three metrics that can be used to benchmark a city’s parks by comparing them to data collected across the country by the NRPA. These methods are:

- › **Acreage** (Total Amount of Park Land)
- › **Facilities** (Number of Facilities)
- › **Access** (Distance or Travel Time)

Each method offers a different approach to measuring a park system’s level of service. Acreage LOS reviews the system’s general availability of park land and resources. Facilities LOS quantifies the number of park amenities that are available for each resident. Access LOS illustrates the availability of park facilities to all members of the community.

It is possible to score highly on one or more of these metrics but also low on the third. For example, facilities such as golf courses and conservation areas occupy a large footprint but may be inaccessible to some or not providing the proper recreation opportunities to others. Similarly, facilities may be offered by clubs or groups outside the city’s Recreation and Parks Department, such as Boys and Girls Clubs, church after-school programs, community meeting facilities, and non-profit senior programs.

Therefore, it is important to review all three of these metrics together to get a complete picture of a park system’s health.

Acreage LOS

Acreage Level of Service (Acreage LOS) expresses the number of public park acres per 1,000 residents. This metric shows the total area of park land that is available to the city’s residents, and serves as a holistic measurement of the entire park system.

Data provided by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) indicate that municipalities with fewer than 20,000 residents, such as Clinton, provide an average of 12.0 acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents. The lower quartile provides 5.2 acres per 1,000 residents, and the upper quartile provides 20.8 acres per 1,000 residents.

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Table 2-2: Acreage Level of Service in Clinton

	Acreage	2019 LOS (acres / 1000 pop)	2030 LOS (acres/1000 pop) Estimate	2035 LOS (acres/1000 pop) Estimate
City Parks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fisher Drive Park (6.2 acres) • James L. Newkirk Park (8.5 acres) • Sampson Center Park (3.8 acres) • Royal Lane Park (76.8 acres) 	95.3	11.17	10.28	10.08

The 2019 population of Clinton (as estimated by the U.S. Census Bureau) is 8,529 residents. There are currently 95.3 acres of public park lands directly managed by the Clinton Recreation and Parks Department, which translates to an Acreage LOS of **11.17** acres per 1,000 residents. For comparison, the median acreage for a municipality this size is 102.35 acres, 7.1 acres above the current total in Clinton.

Clinton’s current Acreage LOS is within the median quartiles for a municipality of its size. Looking ahead using projections from the City of Clinton 2035 Comprehensive Plan, the projected 2030 population is 9,268, and 9,453 in 2035. If no additional park land is acquired during this time, the Acreage LOS will be 10.28 acres per 1,000 residents in 2030 and 10.08 acres per 1,000 residents in 2035. These figures are illustrated in **Table 2-2**.

The current park acreage seems adequate to serve the Clinton population and the projected growth that is forecast, although slightly below the median for municipalities its size.

To reach the median figures as the population grows, the City of Clinton may consider adding another 18.1 acres of park lands, either as a single community-sized park or through smaller neighborhood or pocket parks spread throughout the city. A review of the Facilities LOS and Access LOS metrics will help provide a more strategic plan for acquiring these lands to maximize the number of residents being served.

Facility LOS

Facility Level of Service (Facility LOS) is a second method to measure a parks system. Facility LOS reviews the number of park and recreation facilities per resident. While there are no strict standards for the number of facilities that a municipality must provide, or that its community needs, the NRPA provides recommendations to establish a starting point.

Table 2-3 shows the current Clinton Facility LOS for several park facilities and how they compare against the NRPA recommendations. Facilities experiencing a surplus are shown in **(Green)**, while facilities experiencing a deficit are shown in **red**. Figures are shown for the current population and those projected for 2030 and 2035.

Note that two facilities, Gymnasium and Picnic Shelter, are not facilities that are quantified in the NRPA Facility LOS figures (although Recreation Center is provided it may not be an equal comparison). These rows are evaluated based on growth, and express the number of units needed to maintain current Facility LOS.

The Clinton parks system shows a surplus of all facilities currently operated, except for tennis courts and football fields. It should be noted that Royal Lane Park has 8 tennis courts that are currently closed, representing a significant upgrade if they were to be renovated and reopened. The deficit in football fields is only minimal, and may serve the needs of the community due to football fields located at local schools. As a whole, the Facility LOS metrics indicate that Clinton is exceeding the facility needs of its population. Further, as population grows the figures remain stable.

The Gymnasium & Picnic Shelter facilities also appear to remain fairly stable over time. Assuming that these facilities meet the needs of the community, an additional picnic shelter may be welcome in the future.

Access LOS

Access Level of Service (Access LOS) is a third approach to determining a park system's fit for its community. Access LOS reveals the level of access that residents have to their park facilities. This is typically measured by distance, either in miles or travel time, suggesting the level of effort that a person must spend to get to a park facility.

For the included parameters, a distance of 1/2 mile is considered a comfortable walking distance; 1 mile a long walk or short bike ride; and 2 miles a bike ride or short drive.

Access LOS is provided for parks and for select facilities. The facilities categories in this section mirror those identified above in the Facility LOS section. The elements include:

Park LOS:

- › All Parks with Open Space - 1/2 mile, 1 mile, 2 mile

Neighborhood Serving Facilities

- › Outdoor Basketball Courts - 1/2 mile, 1 mile
- › Playgrounds - 1/2 mile, 1 mile
- › Park Shelters - 1/2 mile, 1 mile

Community-Serving Facilities:

- › Soccer Fields - 1 mile, 2 mile
- › Baseball/softball Fields - 1 mile, 2 mile
- › Gymnasium - 1 mile, 2 mile

SYSTEM INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

Table 2-3: Facility Level of Service in Clinton

Facility	Number of Facilities	NRPA Facility LOS (Facility/ 1000 pop)	2019 Clinton LOS (Facility/ 1000 pop)	2019 Facility Deficit (Surplus) Estimate	2030 LOS (facility/ 1000 pop) Estimate	2030 Facility Deficit (Surplus) Estimate
Baseball/softball Fields	6	0.31	0.70	(3.4)	0.65	(3.1)
Tennis Courts	0	0.34	0.00	2.9	0.00	3.2
Football	1	0.13	0.12	0.1	0.11	0.2
Soccer	9	0.14	1.06	(7.8)	0.97	(7.7)
Basketball	2	0.24	0.23	(0.0)	0.22	(0.2)
Playground	6	0.4	0.70	(2.6)	0.65	(2.3)
Community Center	2	0.1	0.12	(1.1)	0.22	(1.1)
Gymnasium	2	-	0.23	-	0.22	0.2
Picnic Shelter	4	-	0.47	-	0.43	0.3

Clinton’s Access LOS indicates that park distribution is relatively centralized within the City core, as described below and shown in the maps that follow.

Park LOS Analysis

The parks and facilities are measured at a 1/2-mile service area, using points where users are most likely to access the parks. The map appears to show a balance of parks access, but walkability into the parks and facilities

in the central areas of the City is limited due to gaps in sidewalks and barriers such as major roads and the railroad line. In the neighborhoods north of Northeast Boulevard and the Coharie neighborhood there are also gaps in walkability.

As the City continues to grow, 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 Facility Analysis

Neighborhood-serving facilities, such as playgrounds, basketball courts and picnic shelters, are analyzed at 1/2-mile radius and a 1-mile radius. With playgrounds present in every park, access to these facilities mirrors overall access to the parks. Basketball courts and park shelters are accessible to the central parts of the City, while the northern and western areas are largely underserved.

Community-serving Facility Analysis

For Community-serving facilities such as baseball/softball and soccer fields, the service area is expanded to 2 miles, as these are typically facilities that people are more willing to drive to. Baseball/softball fields and gymnasiums have good coverage through most of the City, except for the perimeter edges. Soccer fields provide service to the western half of Clinton, but there is a significant gap in service on the eastern half of the City.

LEVEL OF SERVICE SUMMARY

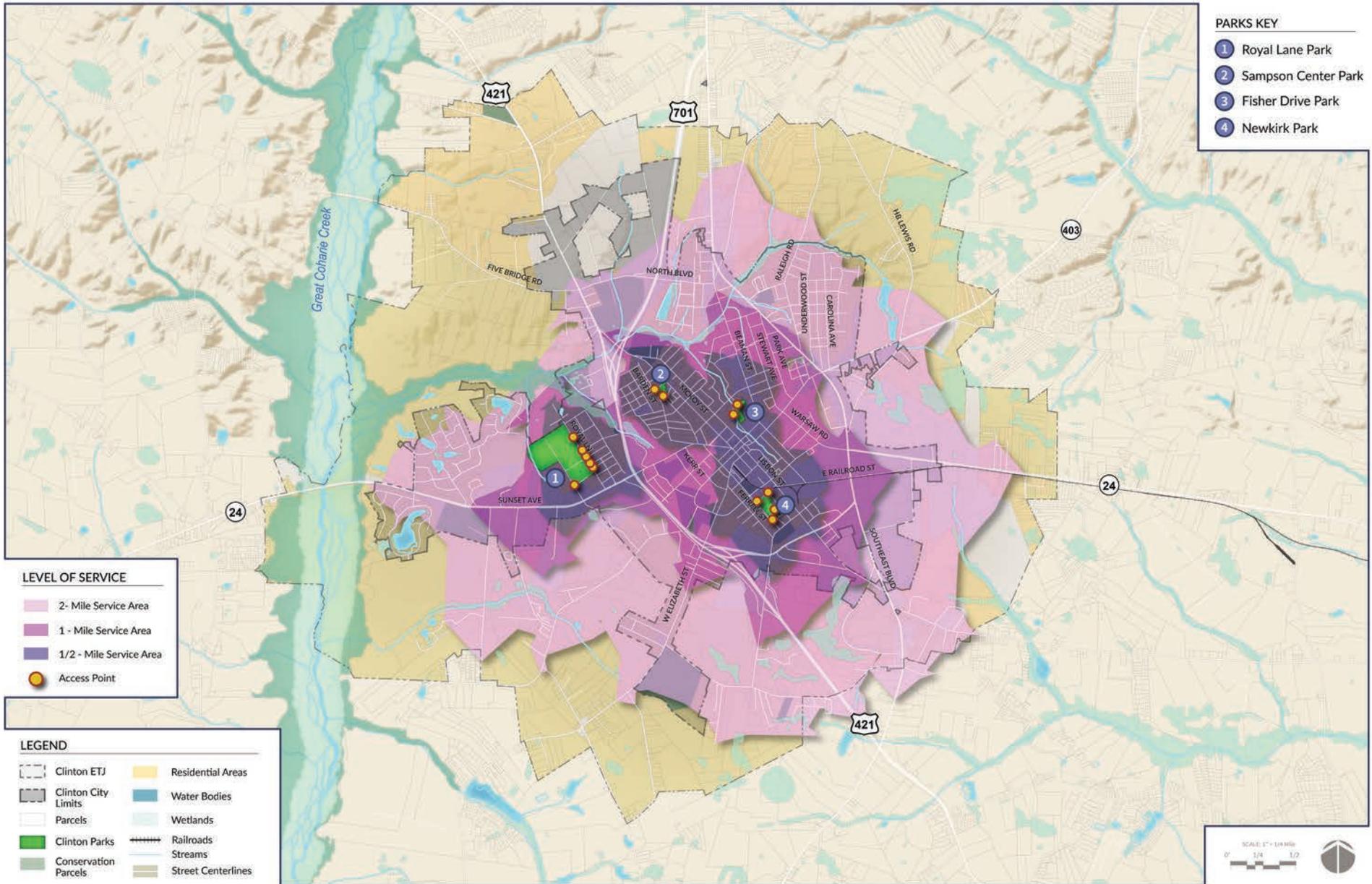
Using this three-level approach to review the Clinton Recreation and Parks system, a number of trends were identified. These preliminary findings include:

Acreage LOS - Clinton's current Acreage LOS compares to NRPA averages for cities of a similar size. Future growth and expansion of the City will slightly reduce the Acreage LOS over time. Current park acreage may be sufficient for additional facilities, but acquisition of future park lands should be evaluated based on the location of growth and the changing needs and priorities of the community.

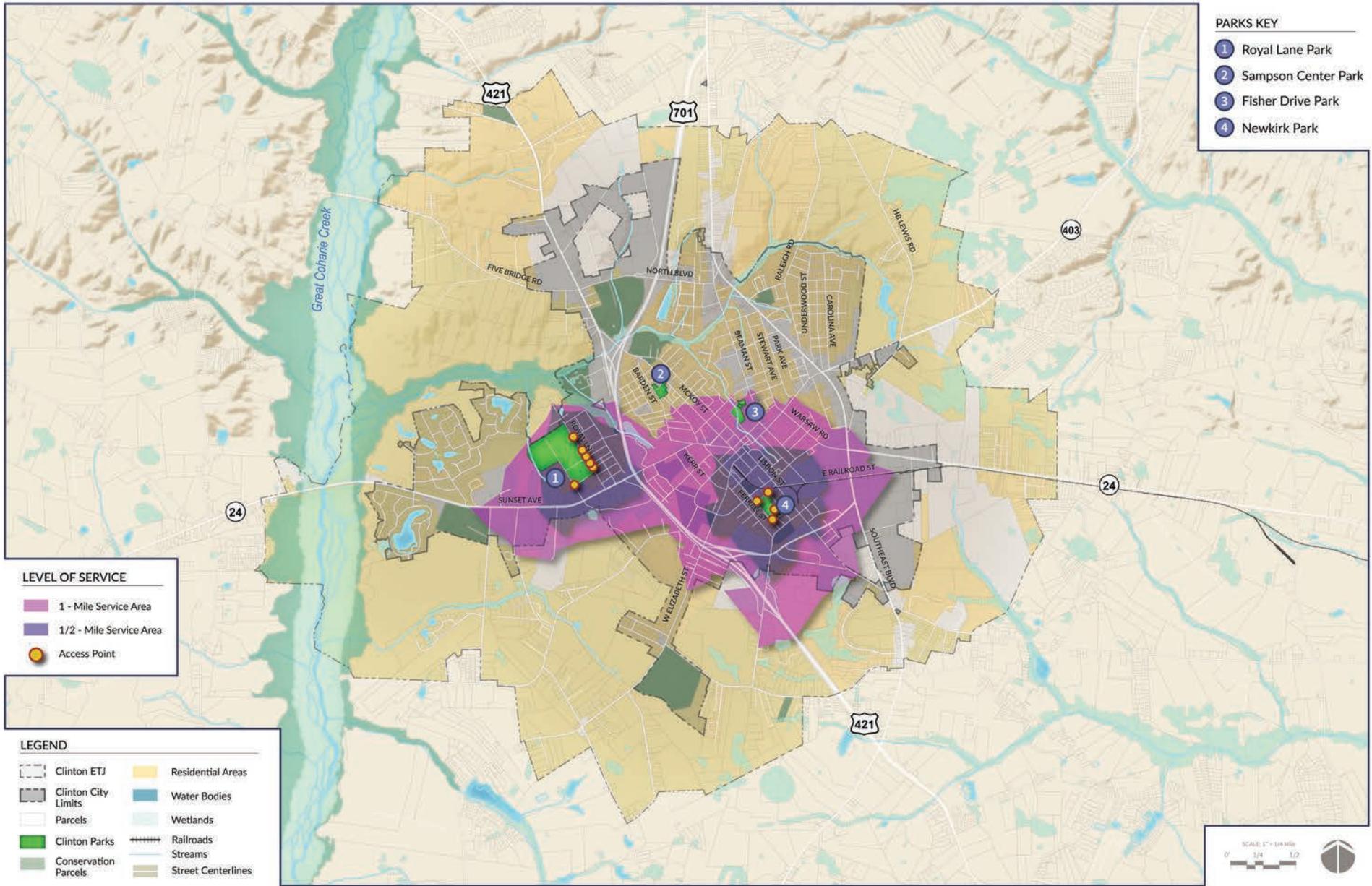
Facilities LOS - Similarly, the city's Facilities LOS indicates an adequate supply of most facilities according to NRPA recommendations. Representing the most significant deficit, tennis courts could provide a surplus if renovated at Royal Lane Park.

Access LOS - The Access LOS maps reveal gaps in the availability of park facilities and services to residential areas on the perimeter of the City. The northern and western edges are areas with the greatest amount of service gaps. Providing access to parks and facilities for areas near residential neighborhoods should be a priority moving forward, as well as the development of new facilities in areas shown to be underserved.

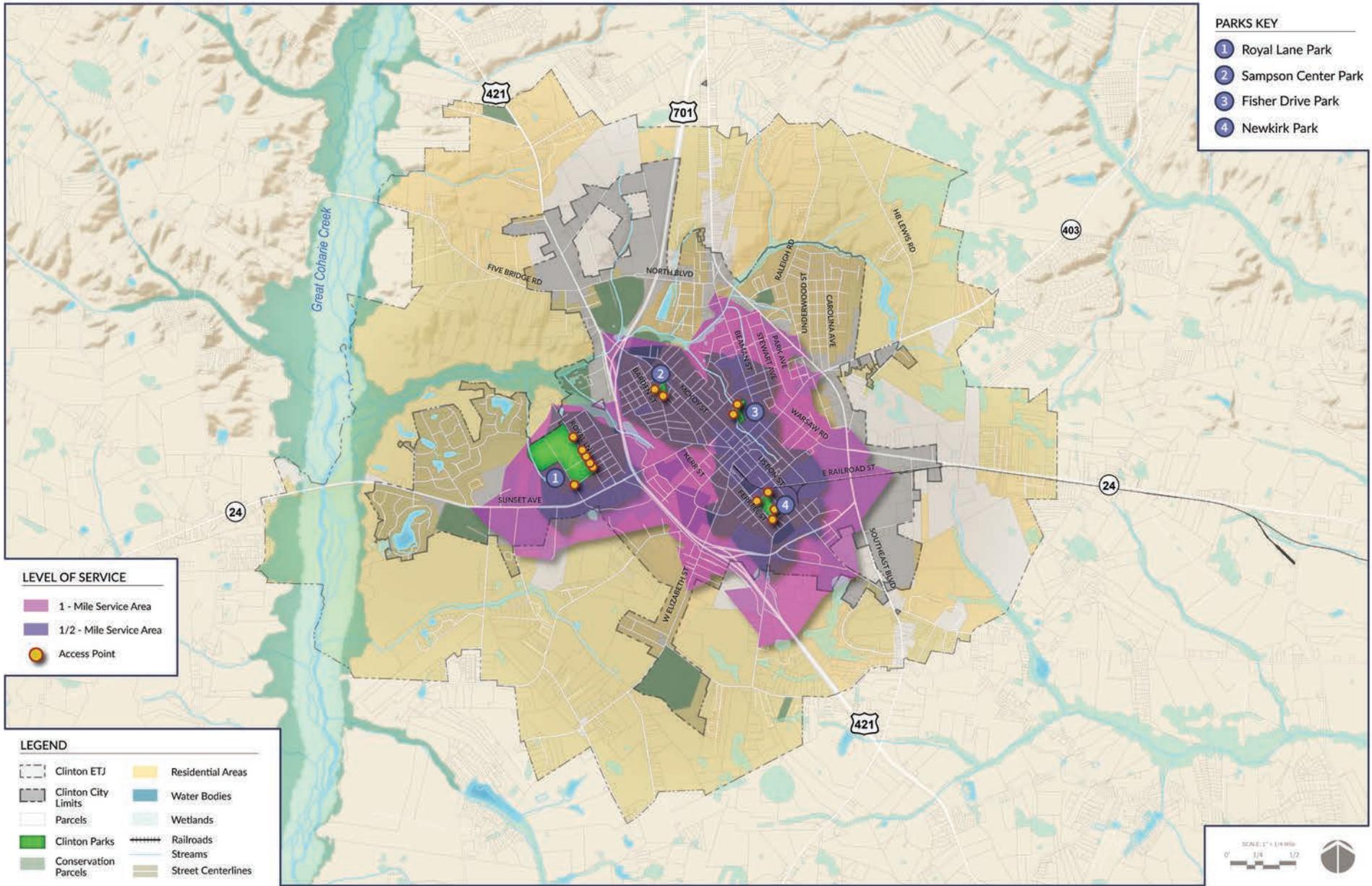
SYSTEM INVENTORY & ANALYSIS



All Parks in Clinton - Access LOS



All Parks with Outdoor Basketball Courts - Access LOS



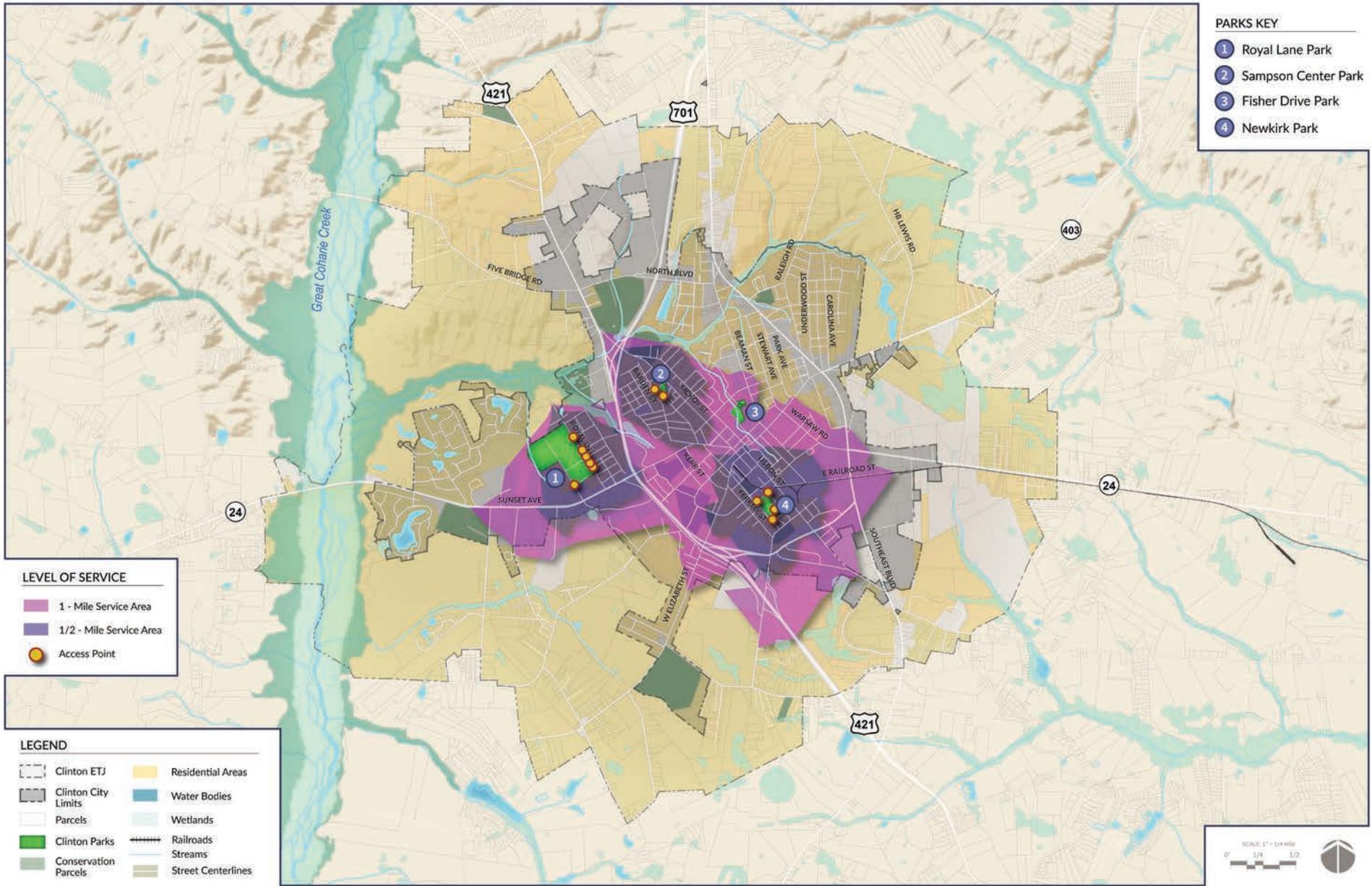
- PARKS KEY**
- 1 Royal Lane Park
 - 2 Sampson Center Park
 - 3 Fisher Drive Park
 - 4 Newkirk Park

- LEVEL OF SERVICE**
- 1 - Mile Service Area
 - 1/2 - Mile Service Area
 - Access Point

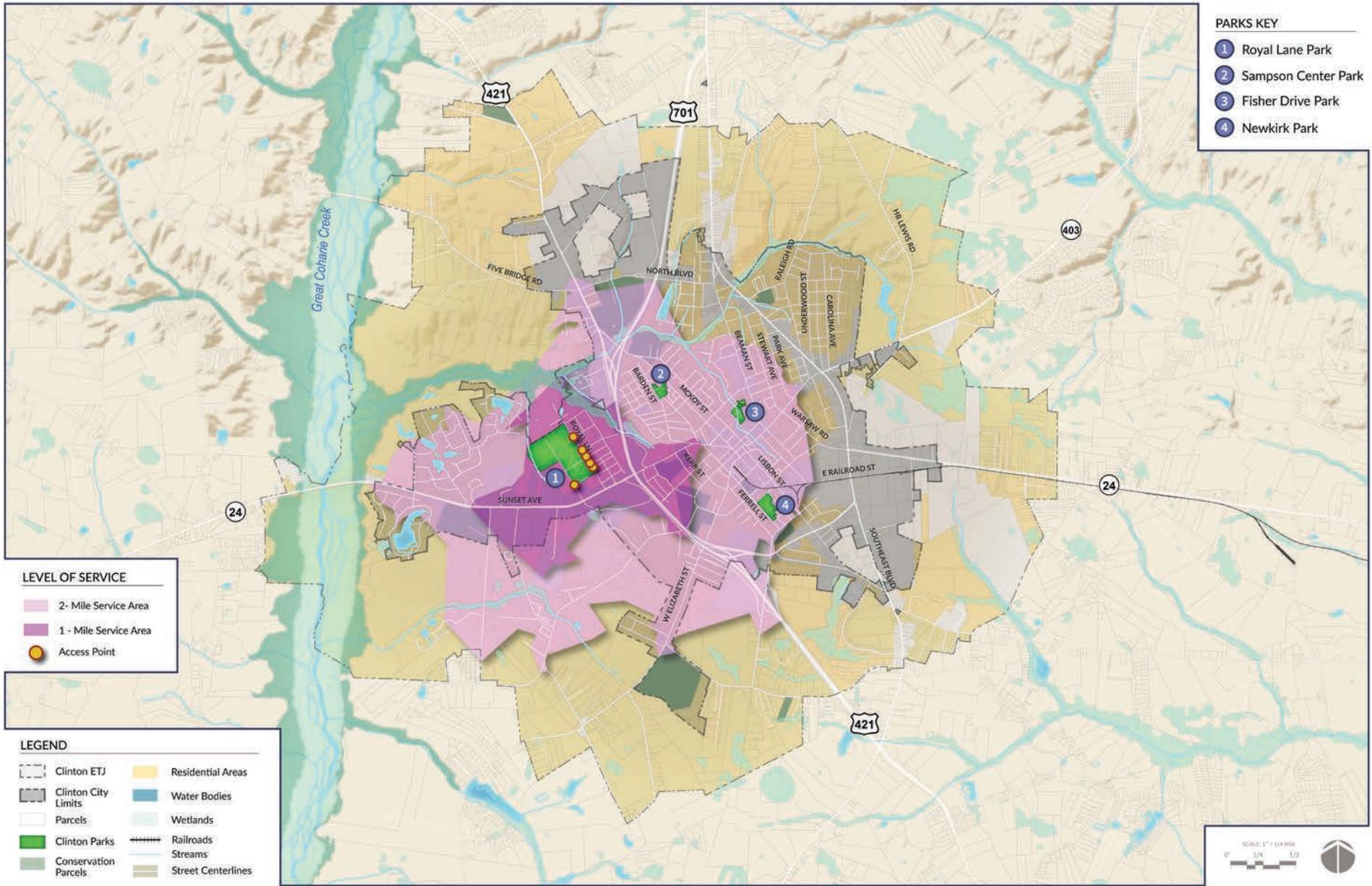
- LEGEND**
- Clinton ETJ
 - Clinton City Limits
 - Parcels
 - Clinton Parks
 - Conservation Parcels
 - Residential Areas
 - Water Bodies
 - Wetlands
 - Railroads
 - Streams
 - Street Centerlines



All Parks with Playgrounds - Access LOS



All Parks with Park Shelters - Access LOS



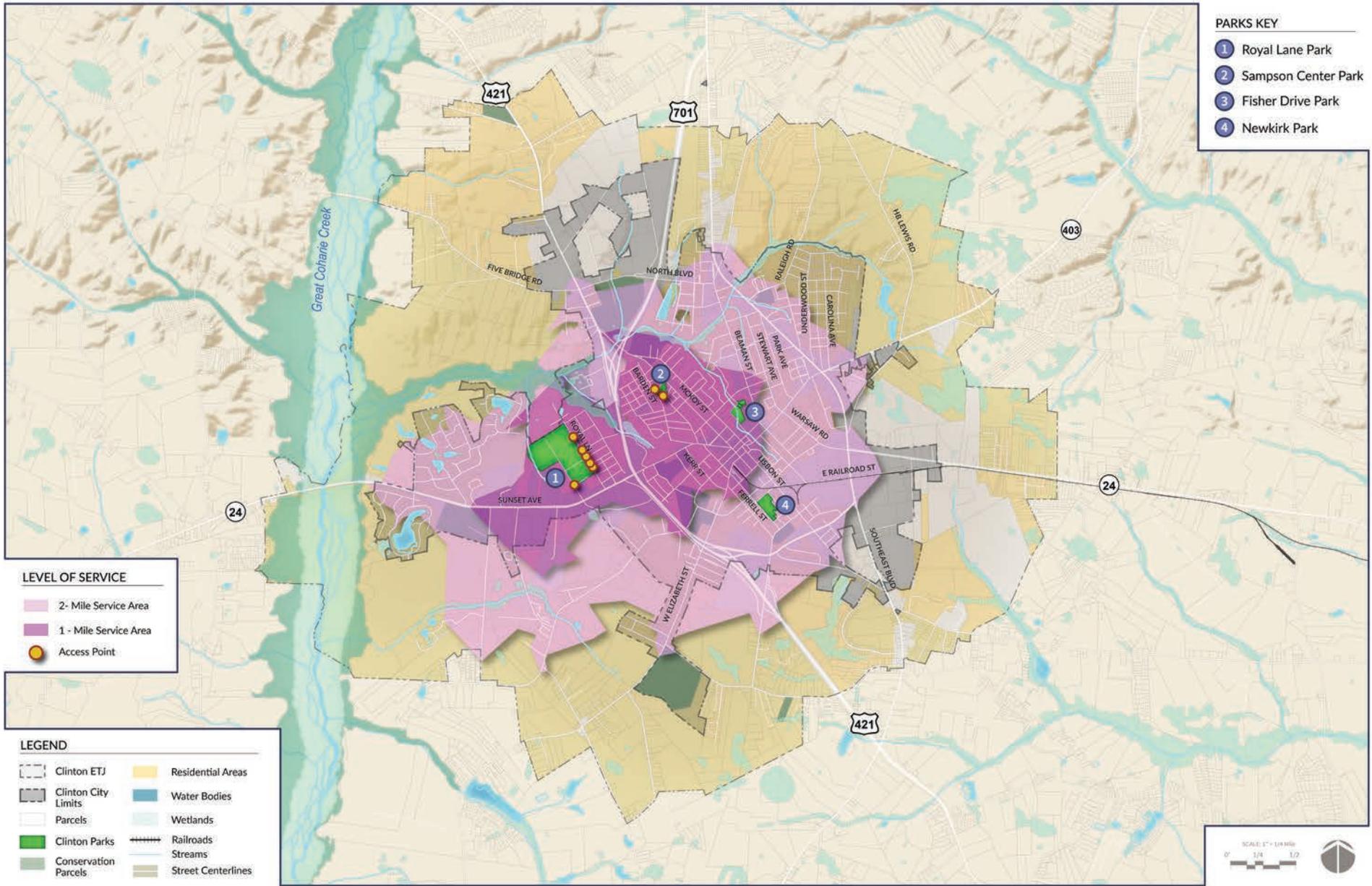
- PARKS KEY**
- 1 Royal Lane Park
 - 2 Sampson Center Park
 - 3 Fisher Drive Park
 - 4 Newkirk Park

- LEVEL OF SERVICE**
- 2- Mile Service Area
 - 1 - Mile Service Area
 - Access Point

- LEGEND**
- Clinton ETJ
 - Clinton City Limits
 - Parcels
 - Clinton Parks
 - Conservation Parcels
 - Residential Areas
 - Water Bodies
 - Wetlands
 - Railroads
 - Streams
 - Street Centerlines



All Parks with Soccer Fields - Access LOS



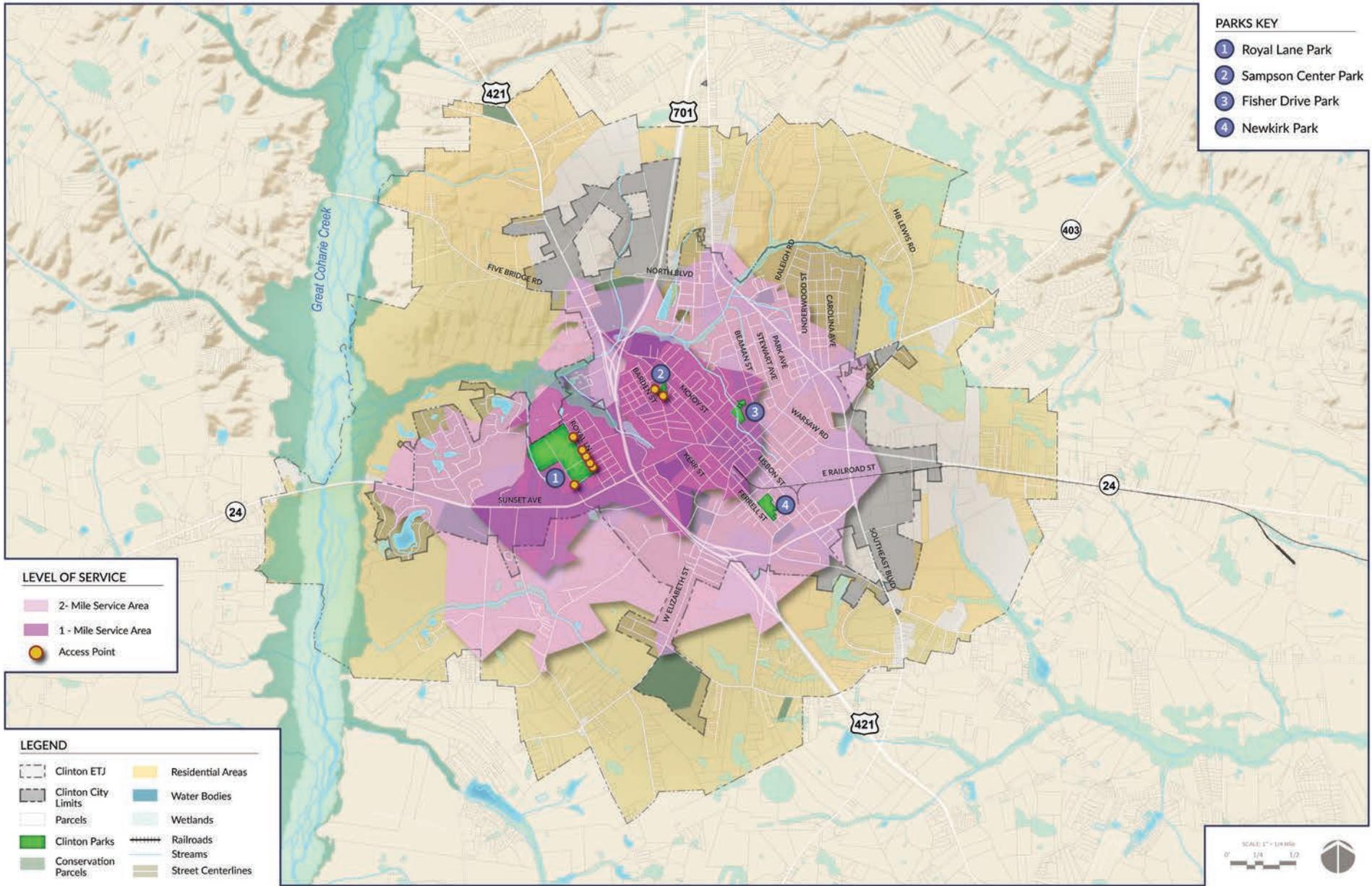
- PARKS KEY**
- 1 Royal Lane Park
 - 2 Sampson Center Park
 - 3 Fisher Drive Park
 - 4 Newkirk Park

- LEVEL OF SERVICE**
- 2- Mile Service Area
 - 1- Mile Service Area
 - Access Point

- LEGEND**
- Clinton ETJ
 - Clinton City Limits
 - Parcels
 - Clinton Parks
 - Conservation Parcels
 - Residential Areas
 - Water Bodies
 - Wetlands
 - Railroads
 - Streams
 - Street Centerlines



All Parks with Baseball/Softball Fields - Access LOS



- PARKS KEY**
- 1 Royal Lane Park
 - 2 Sampson Center Park
 - 3 Fisher Drive Park
 - 4 Newkirk Park

- LEVEL OF SERVICE**
- 2- Mile Service Area
 - 1- Mile Service Area
 - Access Point

- LEGEND**
- Clinton ETJ
 - Clinton City Limits
 - Parcels
 - Clinton Parks
 - Conservation Parcels
 - Residential Areas
 - Water Bodies
 - Wetlands
 - Railroads
 - Streams
 - Street Centerlines



All Parks with Indoor Gymnasiums - Access LOS

2.7 - SYSTEM INVENTORY & ANALYSIS SUMMARY

The Clinton Parks and Recreation System was reviewed against community demographics, previous initiatives, and suggested metrics provided by the National Recreation and Parks Association. This comprehensive review established a snapshot of the current facilities and programs, and will guide the vision for future improvements to the system.

Clinton has over 95 acres of parkland, 4 city parks, 6 playgrounds, 15 athletic fields, 2 gymnasiums, multiple parks, picnic shelters, walking paths, a pool and a dog park. These facilities serve 8,529 residents and visitors. According to the NRPA, these facilities are comparable to the median municipal park system and should meet the needs of the community. One caveat is that most of the facilities are concentrated in central Clinton, particularly athletic courts and fields, and leave some accessibility gaps to the outer edges of town.

An evaluation of Clinton's parks revealed some additional insights. Several parks demonstrated a high degree of comfort, safety, effectiveness and offered a good first impression. They are designed well, offer amenities to a variety of users, and feature places to gather in their neighborhoods. Many facilities are experiencing heavy use, however, and are showing signs of disrepair. Some of the facilities are not easily found or usable by all members of the community. Additional opportunities are presented in meeting environmental sensibility goals.

Programs offered by the Clinton Recreation and Parks Department are aligned with the facilities available. There are numerous youth sports programs and senior activities, but opportunities are available for additional programming for adults, teens, arts, culture, and wellness.

These findings show the parks and recreation amenities that are available. Chapter 3 offers a look through the eyes of the community to see where the current facilities are working, and where they can be enhanced.



SYSTEM INVENTORY & ANALYSIS





3





COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT





COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

An assessment of community needs is built upon information gathered from a variety of sources, including community meetings, online community surveys, and interviews with local stakeholders. These voices from the community, city staff, elected officials, and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (Steering Committee) provide valuable local insight into the needs of the community. Coupled with these local insights are comparisons to data provided by the National Recreation and Parks Association and other regional communities.

Public engagement is vital to assembling an accurate representation of the parks system and the needs of the community. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the ability of the design team to meet in person, reducing attendance at community meetings and causing much of this aspect to go virtual. However, the team was able to hold in-person interviews with City staff. Other interviews with stakeholders were held virtually and an online community survey provided valuable input.

Attendance fell short of expectations at the initial community meeting, held on Feb. 18, 2020, possibly due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the pandemic continued, other planned meetings and project work were postponed or canceled. After an 8-month hiatus, the project was restarted on Oct. 14th, 2020.

The project team reached out to the Steering Committee, the Director of the Recreation & Parks Department, city staff, and elected officials. The responses offered an insightful look at the needs of the community, summarized below.

CHAPTER 3: COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

3.1 Stakeholder Interviews

3.2 Online Survey

3.3 Community Needs Assessment Summary

3.1 - STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Interviews were conducted with identified stakeholders and elected officials to further define recreation needs and opportunities for the Clinton park system. Stakeholders included Clinton park staff, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board / Steering Committee, and members of City Council. The following perspectives were heard through these interviews:

- › Parks staff is doing the best they can with what they have, but additional facilities and staff are needed to meet current and future demands.
- › Existing facilities are in high demand, leading to issues with access, scheduling, and maintenance.
- › Many community members lack awareness of existing parks.
- › Existing facilities need repairs, upgrades and additional maintenance.
- › There is a general feeling that additional amenities and programs are needed to meet the needs of existing and future residents with diverse interests:
 - Multi-purpose fields
 - Basketball, pickleball, tennis and volleyball courts
 - Playgrounds
 - Trails & greenways
 - Lounge and gaming spaces in the community centers
 - Splash pads and aquatic facilities
 - Adult programs and sports leagues
 - Youth programs
 - Education programs
 - Senior programs
 - Special needs programs
 - Arts and cultural programs
 - Health and wellness programs
 - City-wide special events
- › Partnerships with local groups may help increase awareness, participation, and safety.
- › Barriers to park use and participation include a lack of awareness, rental costs, program fees, and cumbersome paperwork.
- › Some of the park facilities may not feel welcoming, safe, or well-maintained.
- › There is a desire for diversity in funding the park improvements through bonds (if the funding is specific and explained well), grants, and partnerships with local groups.

3.2 ONLINE COMMUNITY SURVEY

Clinton community members participated in an online survey to express their level of satisfaction with the existing parks, facilities, and programs. The survey was open for several months and received 124 responses, representing 1.5% of the Clinton population.

The online responses revealed some trends, summarized below and illustrated in the graphics that follow.

- › Many respondents are not aware of amenities at Sampson Center Park, Fisher Drive Park or Newkirk Park.
- › Royal Lane Park was most visited, including multiple visits from most of the respondents. Sampson Center Park, Fisher Drive Park and Newkirk Park received far less visitation.
- › 60% of respondents travel outside of Clinton to participate in recreational activities, primarily for facilities that are better in quality or not available in Clinton.
- › Most respondents were very satisfied with the level of customer service provided by parks staff.
- › Respondents felt facilities and programs were not meeting the needs of the community.
- › Respondents are interested in participating in activities and programs if they become available.
- › A variety of additional amenities and programs are needed to meet community interest. Top priorities include trails & greenways, aquatic programs, teen programs, sports facilities, and parks.
- › Barriers to participating in parks and recreation programs include awareness, lack of time, safety, fees, and condition of amenities.
- › Respondents would volunteer to help the parks and support additional funding.

Areas for Improvement:

- › Better advertising / promotion of parks
- › Better maintenance of facilities
- › Additional facilities and programs

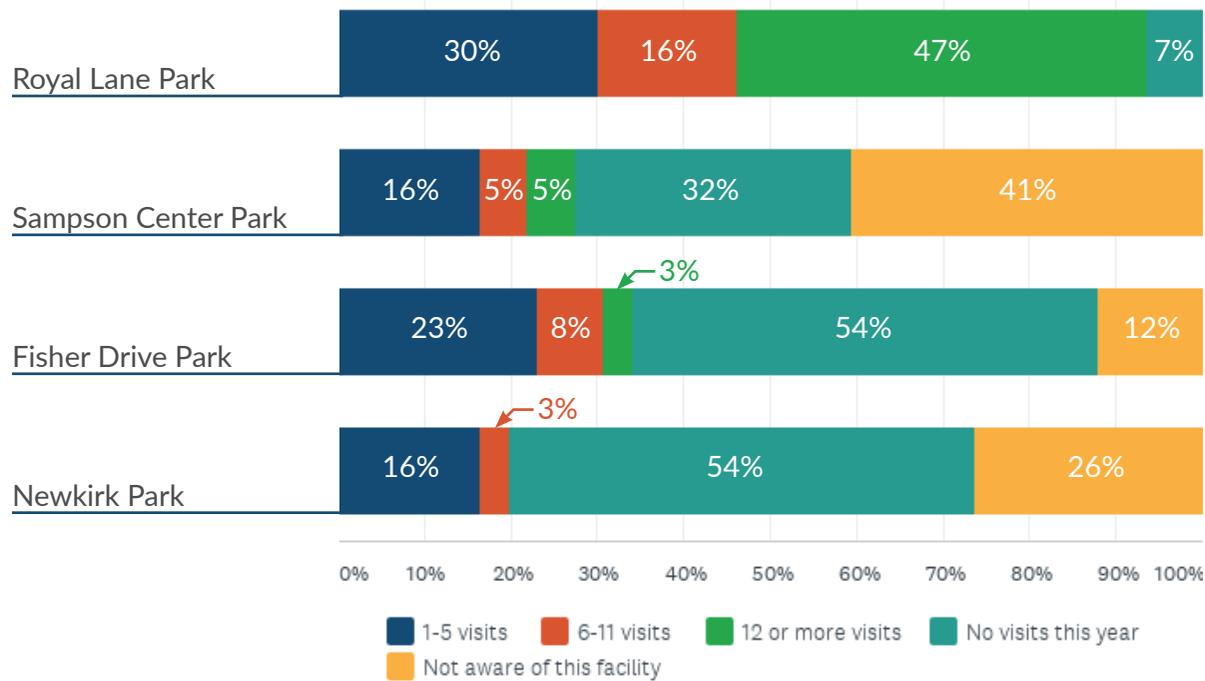
Priorities for Additional Facilities:

- › Greenways & Trails
- › Water Play / Splash Pad
- › Parks / Park Land
- › Gymnasiums
- › Sports Fields
- › Tennis / Pickleball Courts
- › Volleyball Courts
- › Basketball Courts
- › Playgrounds
- › Outdoor Fitness Facilities

A selection of online survey questions follows, offering a closer look at the desires of the community.

Q1 For each of the facilities listed below, please indicate how often you and / or your family have visited in the past year.

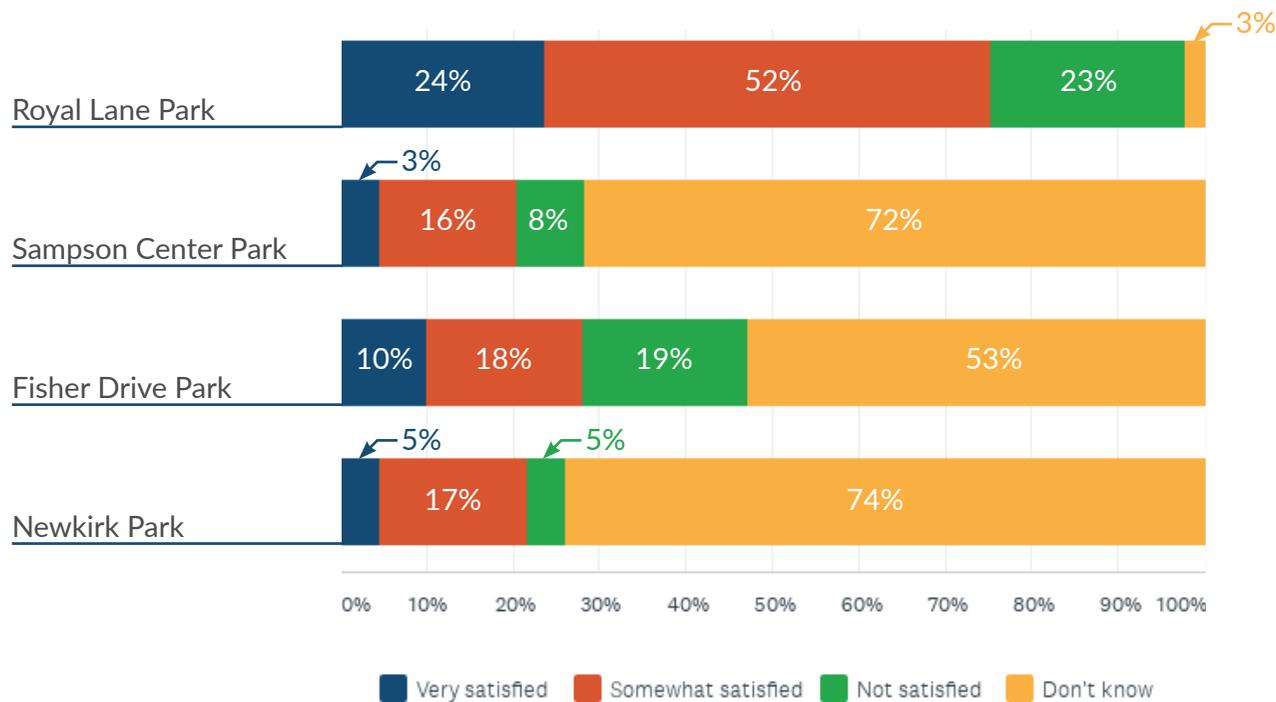
Q1. The most commonly visited park was **Royal Lane Park** with 47% of the respondents visiting 12 or more times, and 93% visiting at least once. The other three parks had visitation rates under 40%, with fewer repeat visits.



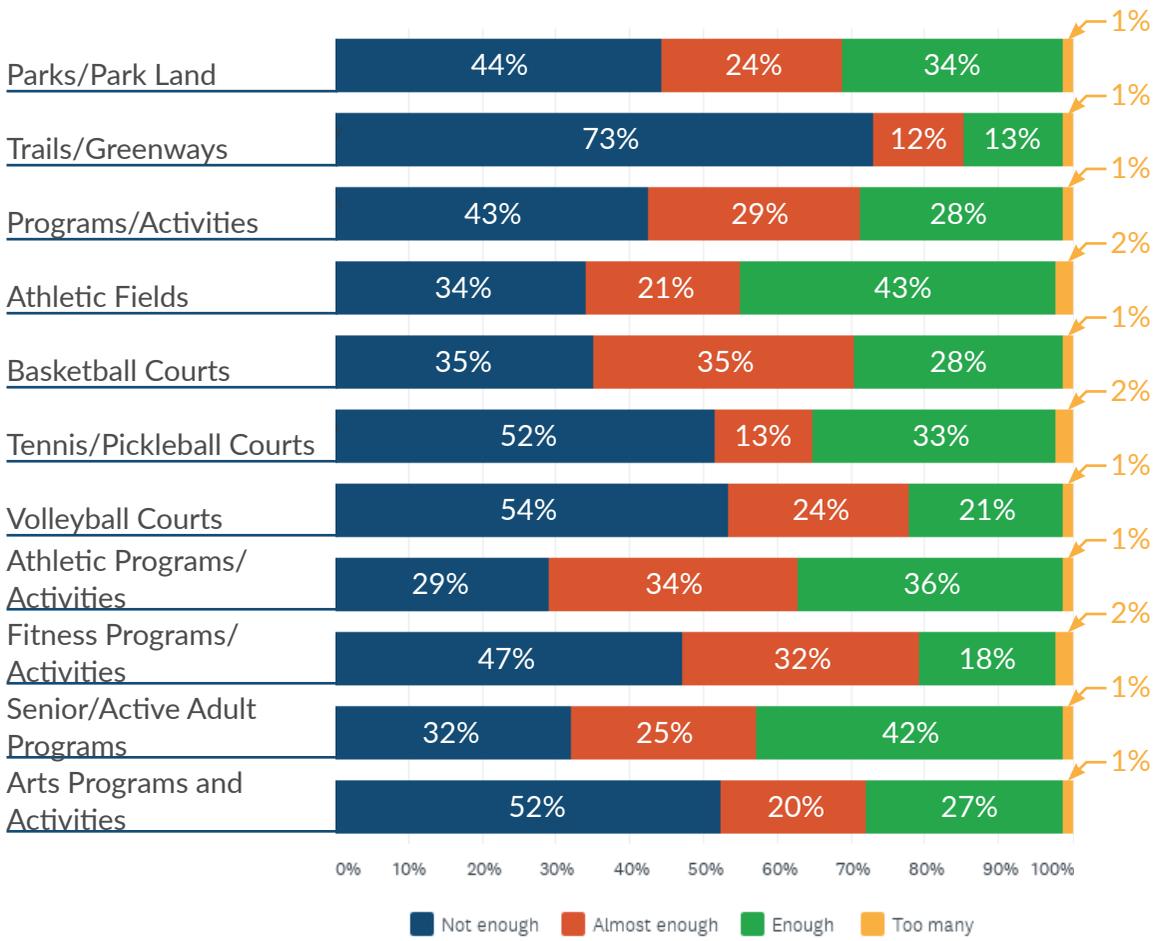
COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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.

Q2 **Royal Lane Park** demonstrated a high level of satisfaction from respondents, with more than 50% satisfied. The majority (over 50%) responded “Don’t know” for the other three parks. Only Fisher Drive Park demonstrated a modest level of dissatisfaction..

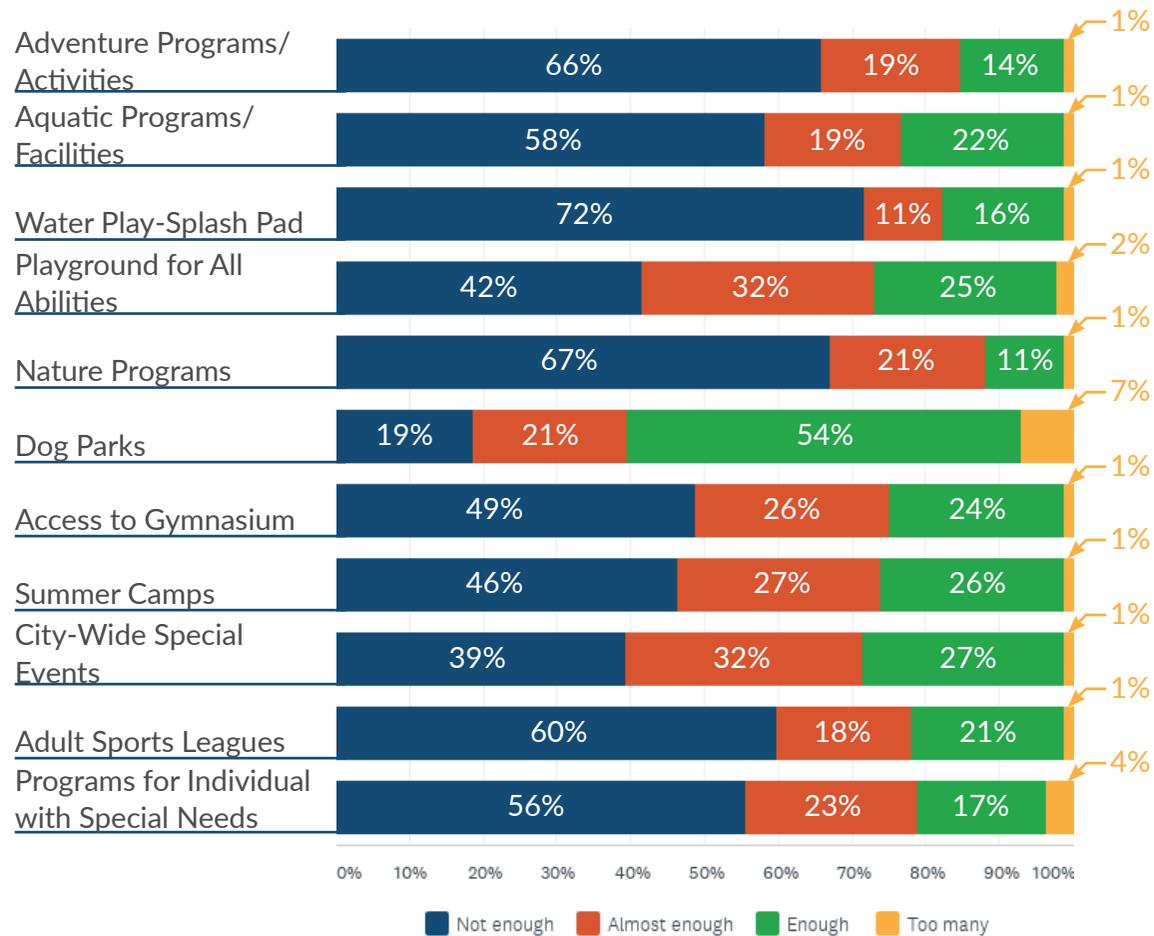


Q3 Do you think the following facilities, programs and activities provided in Clinton are currently meeting the needs of the community?

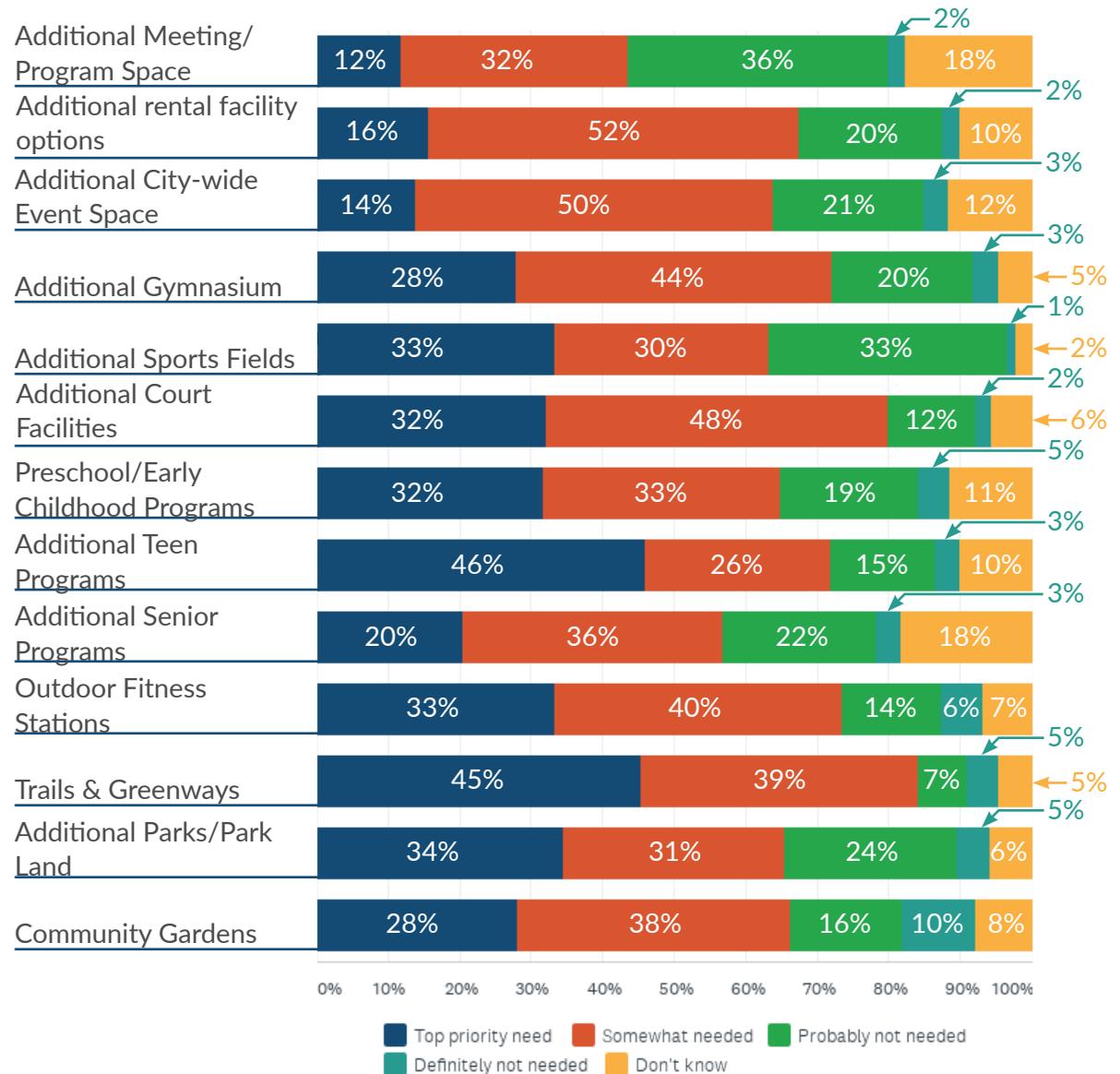


COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Q3 Trails/greenways and water play-splash pad were the amenities with the highest response for “not enough.” Dog parks, athletic programs/activities, and senior/active adult programs had the highest response for “almost enough” or “enough.”



Q4 Please indicate what you feel is the level of need for each item listed below that the City of Clinton should consider adding in the future.

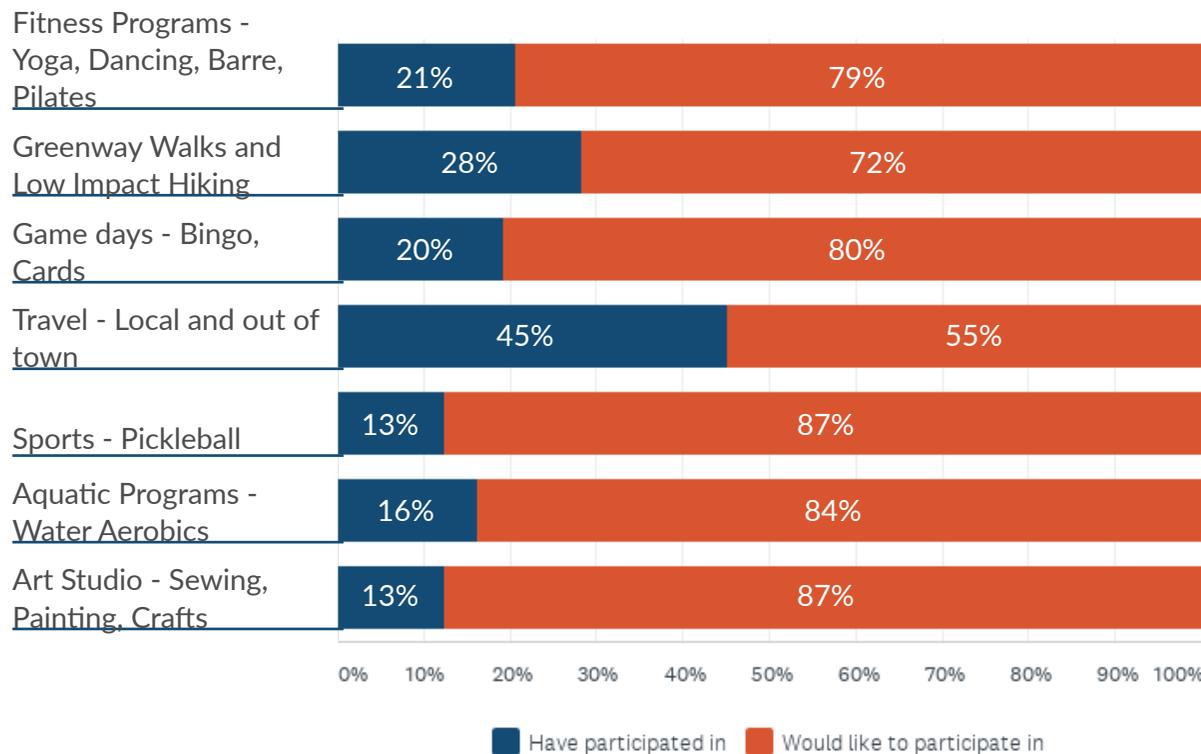


Q4 Top priority needs are additional teen programs and trails and greenways.

COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Q9 Please place a check next to the Active Adults/Seniors activities that you OR your family have and/or would like to participate in. (Note: blank answers will be counted as no participation and/or no interest).

Q9 Active adults/senior activities receiving the most responses for “would like to participate in” were pickleball, water aerobics and art classes.



Q12 Please indicate your level of agreement about the following statements:

Q12 94-95% of respondents “agreed” or “somewhat agreed” that parks and recreation are important, and that they have good access to a park. In contrast, 58% indicated that they do not have good access to greenways and trails.

The Clinton Parks and Recreation Depart maintains a good image in the community

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

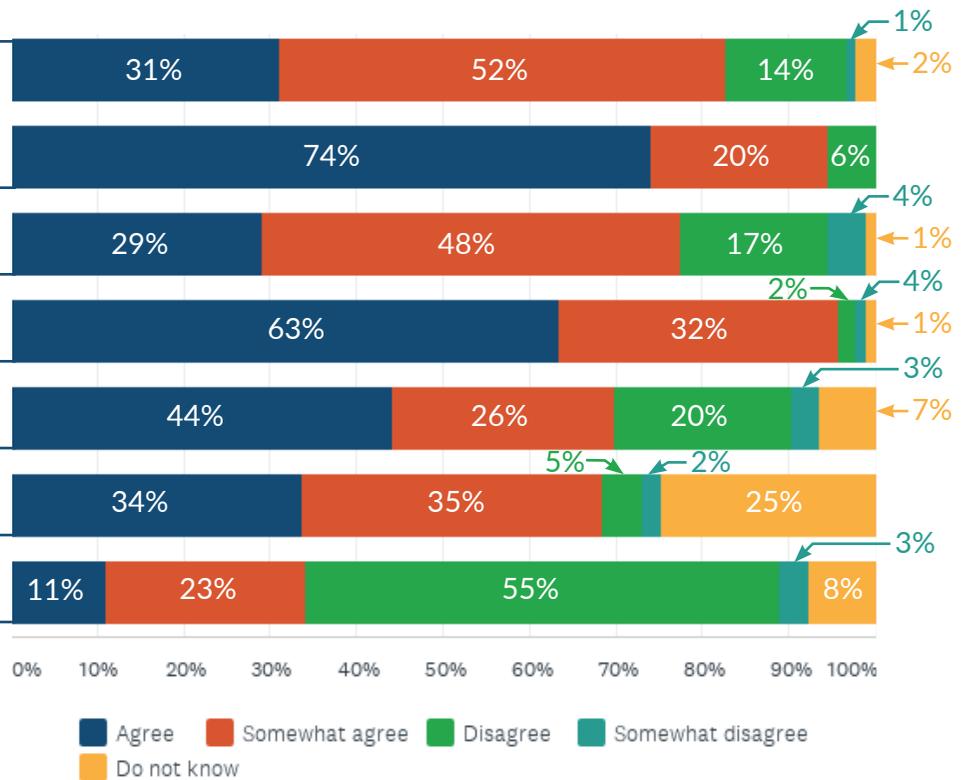
I feel safe when visiting a park or recreation facility.

I feel that I have good access to a park.

Parks are well-distributed throughout the City.

I am willing to be a volunteer to improve our parks.

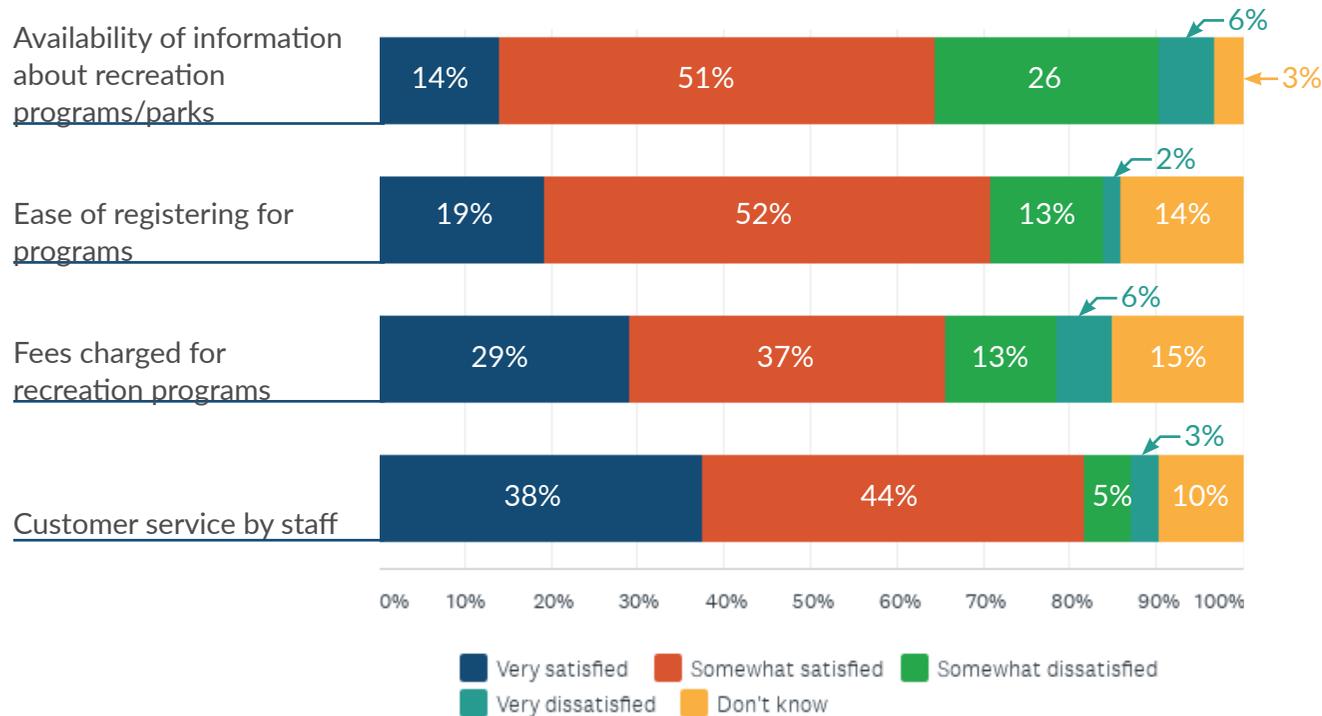
I feel I have good access to greenways.



COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

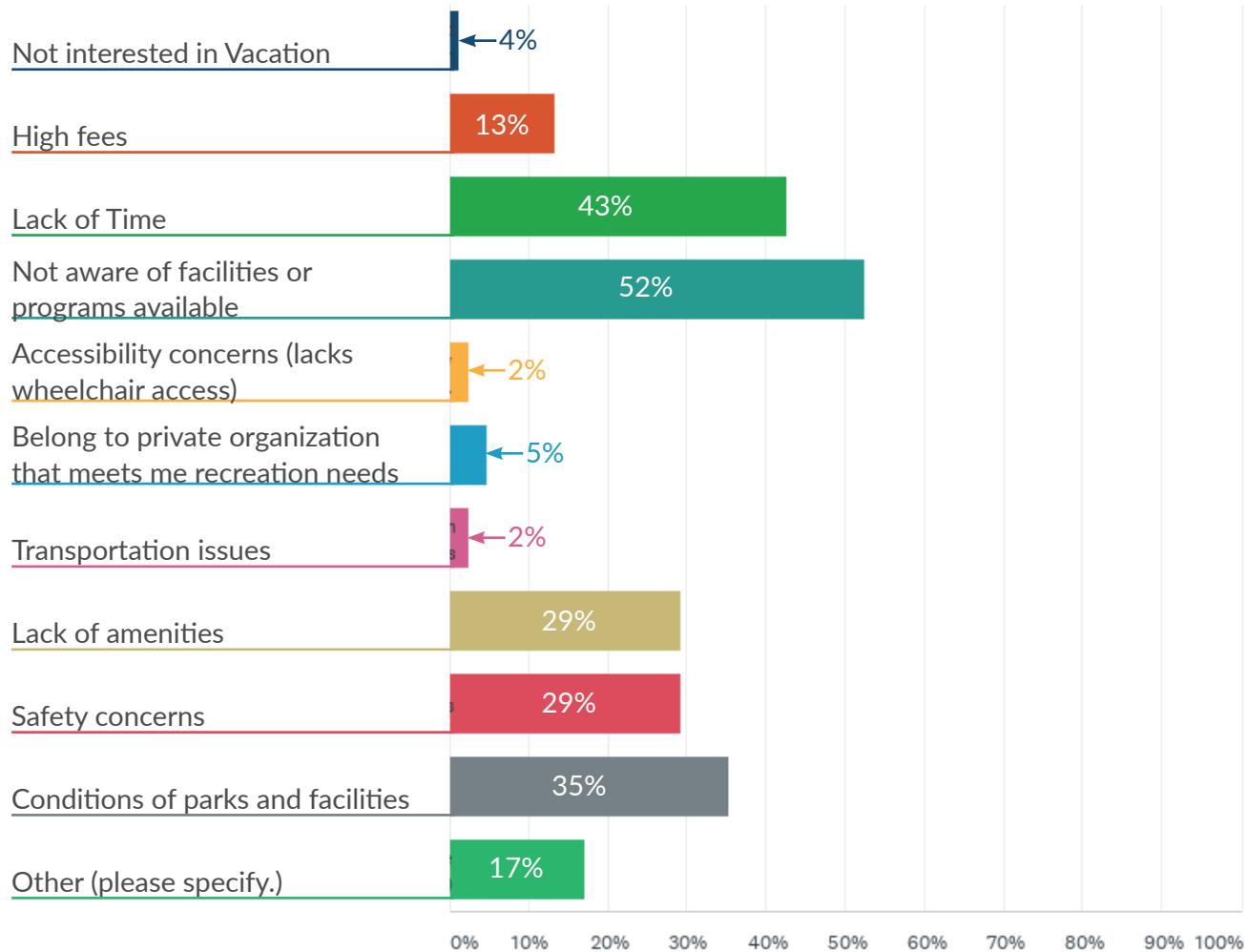
Q13 Please rate your satisfaction with the following parks and recreation services provided by City of Clinton Recreation & Parks.

Q13 37% of respondents indicated that they were “very satisfied” with customer service by staff, and 26% of respondents indicated that they were “somewhat dissatisfied” with the availability of information about recreation programs/parks.



Q15 Please indicate if any of the following prevents you and/or your family from using Clinton's parks and facilities? Please check all that apply.

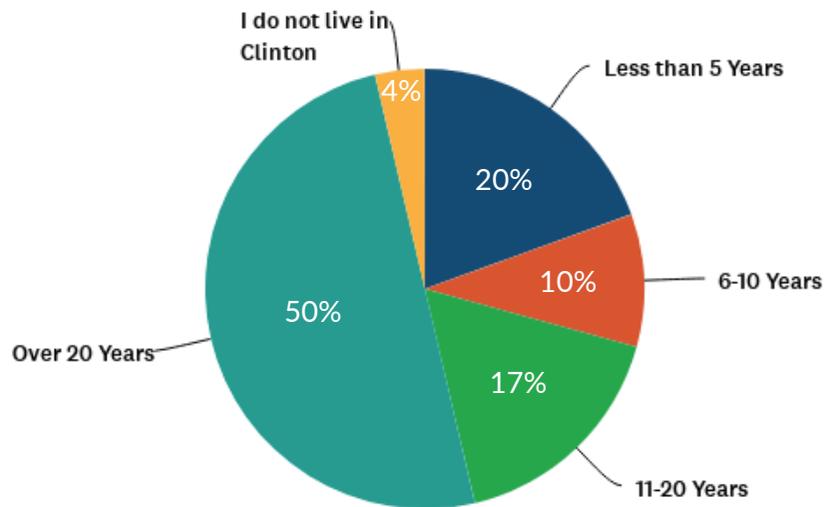
Q15 The top issues that prevent parks and facility use were a lack of awareness and a lack of time. Facilities conditions and safety were also significant contributors.



COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

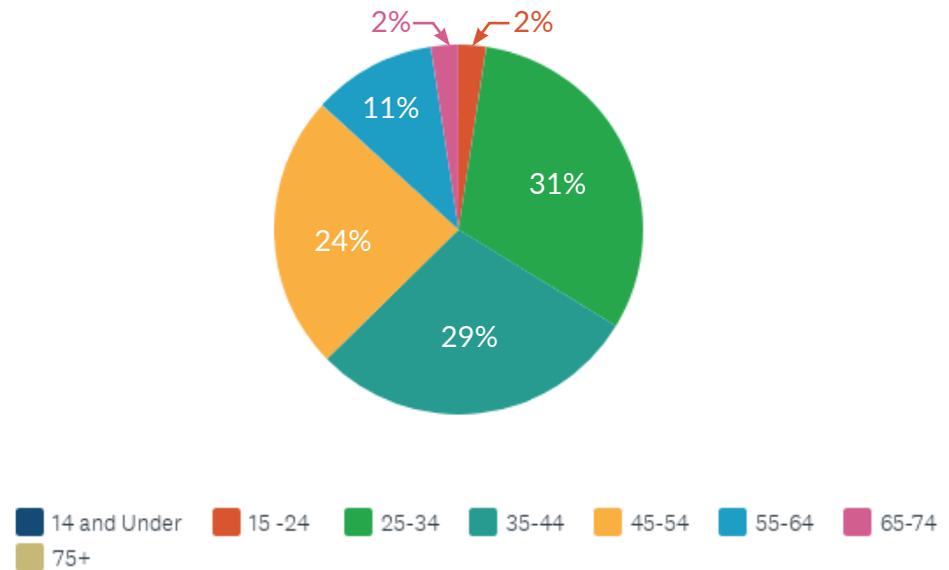
Q23 How long have you lived in Clinton?

Q23 The majority of respondents (77%) have lived in Clinton for more than 6 years, with half of them over 20 years.



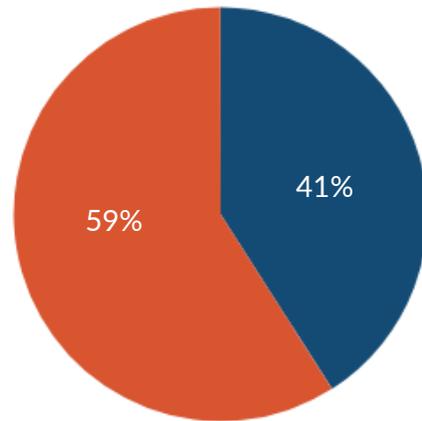
Q24 Please indicate your age.

Q24 The respondents represent a fairly equal balance of ages between 25 and 54 (84% of the total).



Q25 Please indicate your gender.

Q25 59% of respondents are female.

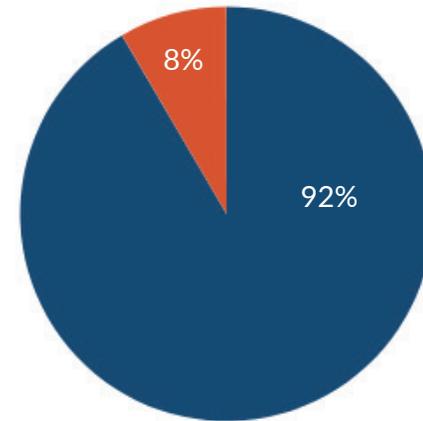


■ Male ■ Female

Q28 Please check your housing status.

Q28 92% of respondents indicated that they are homeowners.

Question 28



■ Home Owner ■ Renter

3.3 COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

The project team reached out to the Clinton community to understand their current experiences, activities they participate in, facilities they use, and areas where they see opportunities for improvement. Input was received from city staff, elected officials, the Steering Committee, and online survey participants, providing valuable local insight into the needs of the community.

The Clinton Recreation and Parks department offers a number of programs and a high level of service to the community. The current facilities are being stressed by the number of users, resulting in some frustration with making reservations, access, and maintenance. Additional facilities and programs are needed to meet the current demand and the varied interests of the community.

Respondents also indicated a lack of comfort or awareness of portions of the park system. Tending to and promoting these facilities could help increase participation and balance demand across the system.

The Clinton community has expressed their willingness to volunteer to help their parks, and to support additional funding for making improvements.

The top 10 preferences for facility and program improvements that were identified include:

- Greenways & Trails
- Splash Pads and Aquatic Facilities
- Parks and Park Lands
- Sports fields
- Sports courts
- Adult Sports Leagues
- Teen & Youth Programs
- Senior Programs
- Educational Programs
- Arts and Cultural Programs



4



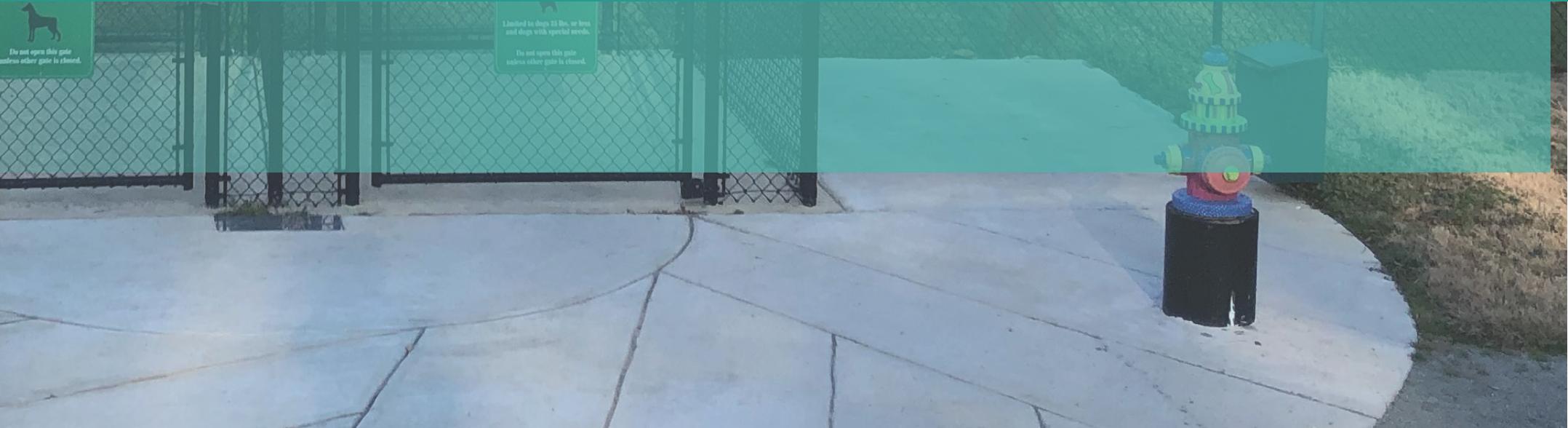


VISION DEVELOPMENT

Large Dog Area



Limited to dogs 25 lbs. or less and dogs with special needs.
Do not open this gate unless other gate is closed.





VISION DEVELOPMENT

OVERALL VISION

The overall vision for the future of Clinton's Parks and Recreation system reflects input from several valuable resources. National Recreation and Parks Association standards were referenced against local population and demographic trends to evaluate the existing parks against national averages. Most importantly, the Clinton community, stakeholders, leadership, and staff had a loud voice in this conversation.

Clinton residents and stakeholders indicate that they are proud of their community, and generally feel satisfied with the park system. However, they recognize that some of the current facilities are being stressed by the number of users, or have simply aged, and could benefit from upgrades or supplemental amenities. The parks are not well-connected to the community, and others are underused due to a lack of awareness. The community desires a more cohesive, connected system with amenities for everyone.

Recommendations for Clinton's Parks & Recreation system begin with improving existing park facilities and connecting them safely to all parts of the city. New facilities, programs, improvements to existing facilities, and staffing will build community experiences and involvement across all of Clinton's parks. Additional opportunities to expand the park system are explored as budgets and potential parcels or easements become available.



Goals

Master Plan goals inform future decisions on improvements. These goals set the stage for decision-making and will help inform priorities for implementation. The vision recommended by this plan is based on these goals. The intent is to develop the system and provide residents with equitable access to high-quality recreational opportunities.



Identified Goals and Objectives:

1. Repair and maintain existing park facilities.
2. Enhance, expand, and upgrade amenities at existing parks.
3. Create better connectivity between parks and neighborhoods.
4. Provide additional programming to engage more of the community and utilize existing resources.
5. Look for opportunities to acquire land and / or easements for new park facilities and connections.
6. Identify and pursue public / private partnerships for facilities and programming.



Recommendations

The recommendations of this master plan identify opportunities to strengthen existing facilities and set priorities for new amenities to improve the community experience. It is understood that some of the improvements are more immediate in nature, while others can be projected into the future.



While some of the recommendations are specific to adding facilities or amenities, others reflect improvements that apply to the entire park system and can be implemented on an ongoing basis. These include efforts to strengthen neighborhood connections, increasing awareness of park amenities, and identifying land and easements that are strategic to providing equity and access to parks.

The following recommendations are organized into improvements to existing parks and facilities, a review of planned parks and facilities, vision maps for future parks amenities, programming, and a prioritization concept for these elements.

Improvements to Existing Parks

Improvements to existing parks are opportunities for enhancing recreational offerings to residents without the burden and cost of purchasing land and incurring other associated development costs. There are improvements that are site-specific, and others that can be applied across the entire Clinton parks system.

General Recommendations:

Improvements identified as appropriate across the entire parks system include:

- › Removal of superfluous wood bollards, concrete, and site elements.
- › Enhanced palette of site furnishings that coordinate across all parks.
- › Enhanced signage, wayfinding, and branding program.
- › Enhanced pedestrian and bicycle connections to neighborhoods and downtown.
- › Enhanced landscaping at park entrances and gathering spaces.
- › Maintenance program with attention to environmental stewardship.
- › Programs for environmental awareness, sustainability, and resource conservation.
- › Encouragement of community involvement and participation.

Royal Lane Park:

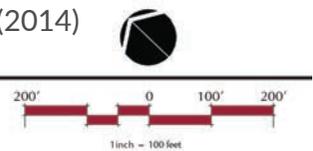
Improvements were identified in the Royal Lane Park Master Plan, adopted in 2014. These improvements remain appropriate and compatible with existing facilities, and include:

- › Relocation of maintenance yard.
- › Consolidation of sports fields and associated parking.
- › Enhanced baseball / softball complex & concessions.
- › Enhanced soccer plaza and facilities.
- › Disc golf facilities.
- › Expanded walking and fitness trails.
- › Repairs, updates, and additional staffing for gymnasium facilities.
- › Connections to Sunset Avenue, Western Loop, and Dollar Branch Greenway.





ROYAL LANE PARK MASTER PLAN (2014)

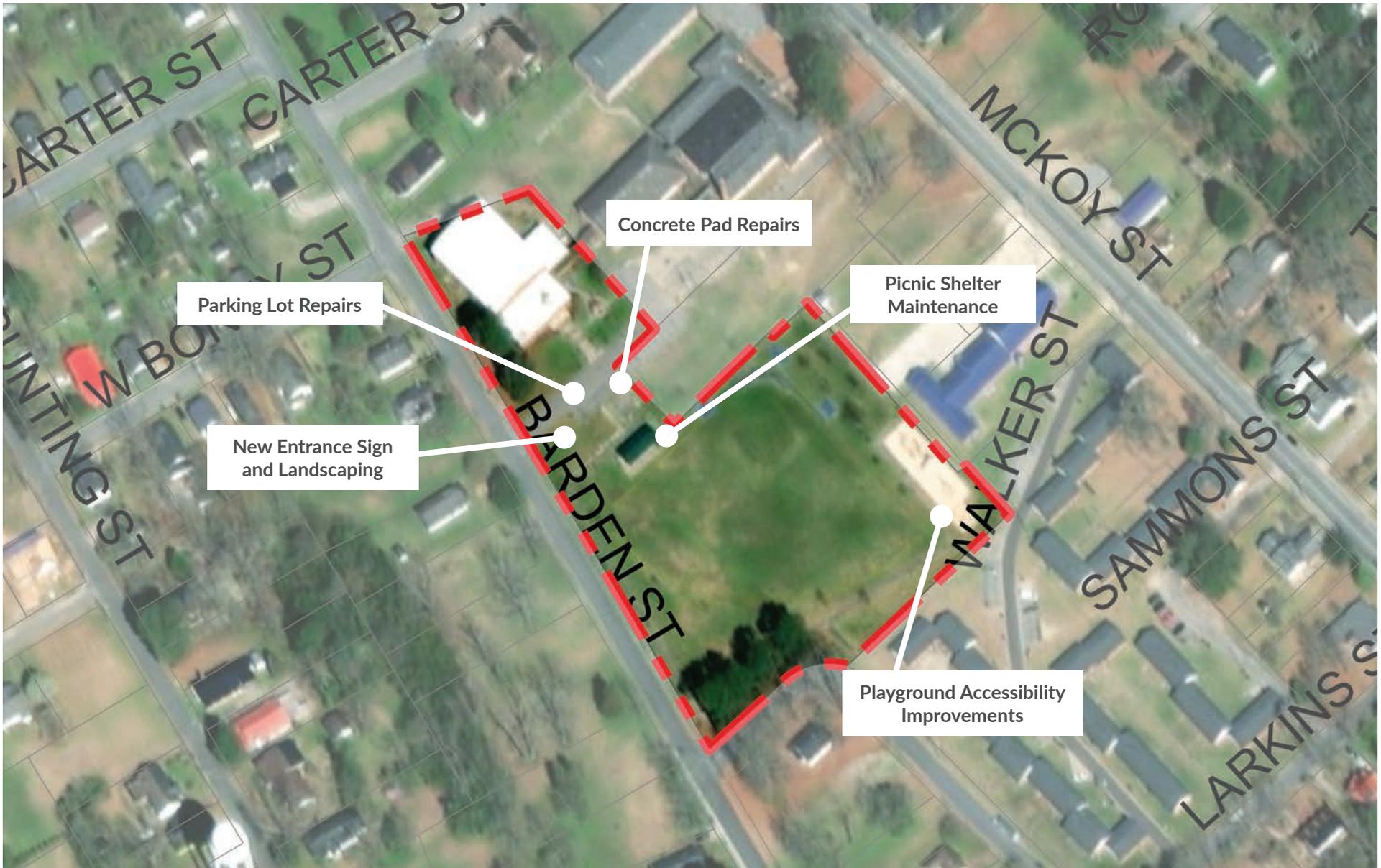


Sampson Center Park:

Improvements identified as appropriate and compatible with facilities include:

- › Repairs to parking lot paving and concrete four square pad.
- › Maintenance and repairs to picnic shelter.
- › Accessible surface for playground equipment.
- › New signage and enhanced landscaping at park entrance.
- › Repairs, updates, and additional staffing for gymnasium facilities.
- › Connections to future Williams Old Mill Greenway and downtown via McKoy Street & Boney Street.





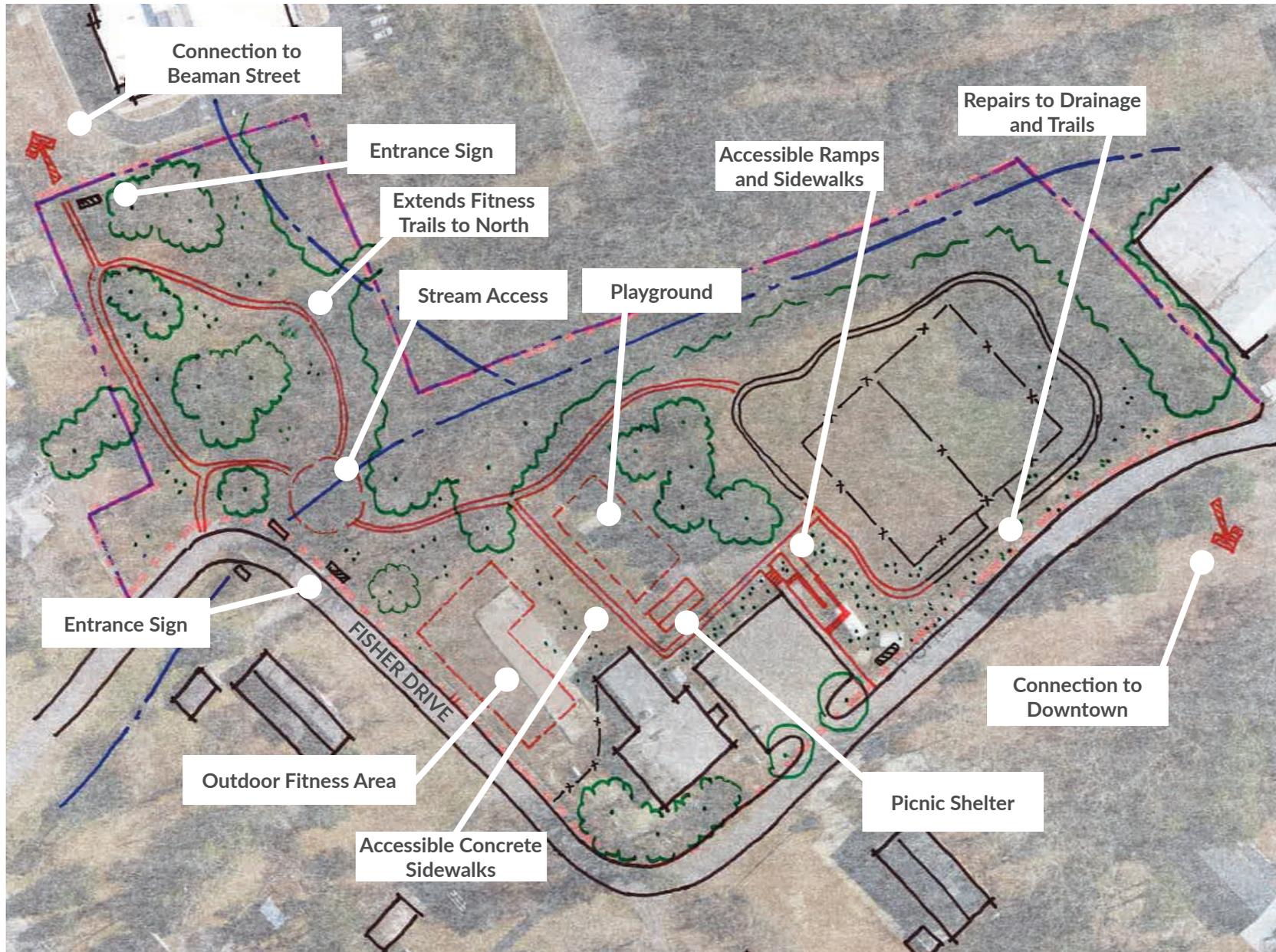
Proposed improvements for Samson Center Park.

Fisher Drive Park:

Improvements identified as appropriate and compatible with facilities include:

- › Repairs to drainage and stormwater infrastructure.
- › Removal of concrete pads, metal equipment and wooden bollards.
- › Removal of overgrown vegetation and invasive species in stream channel.
- › Repairs to sidewalks to meet ADA accessibility requirements.
- › Accessible surfaces for walking trails and playground equipment.
- › New picnic shelter.
- › New outdoor fitness facilities.
- › New signage and enhanced landscaping at park entrances.
- › Expand walking trails to north side of park and provide creek access.
- › Connections to downtown via Sampson Street and to the north via the future Cat Tail Branch Greenway.





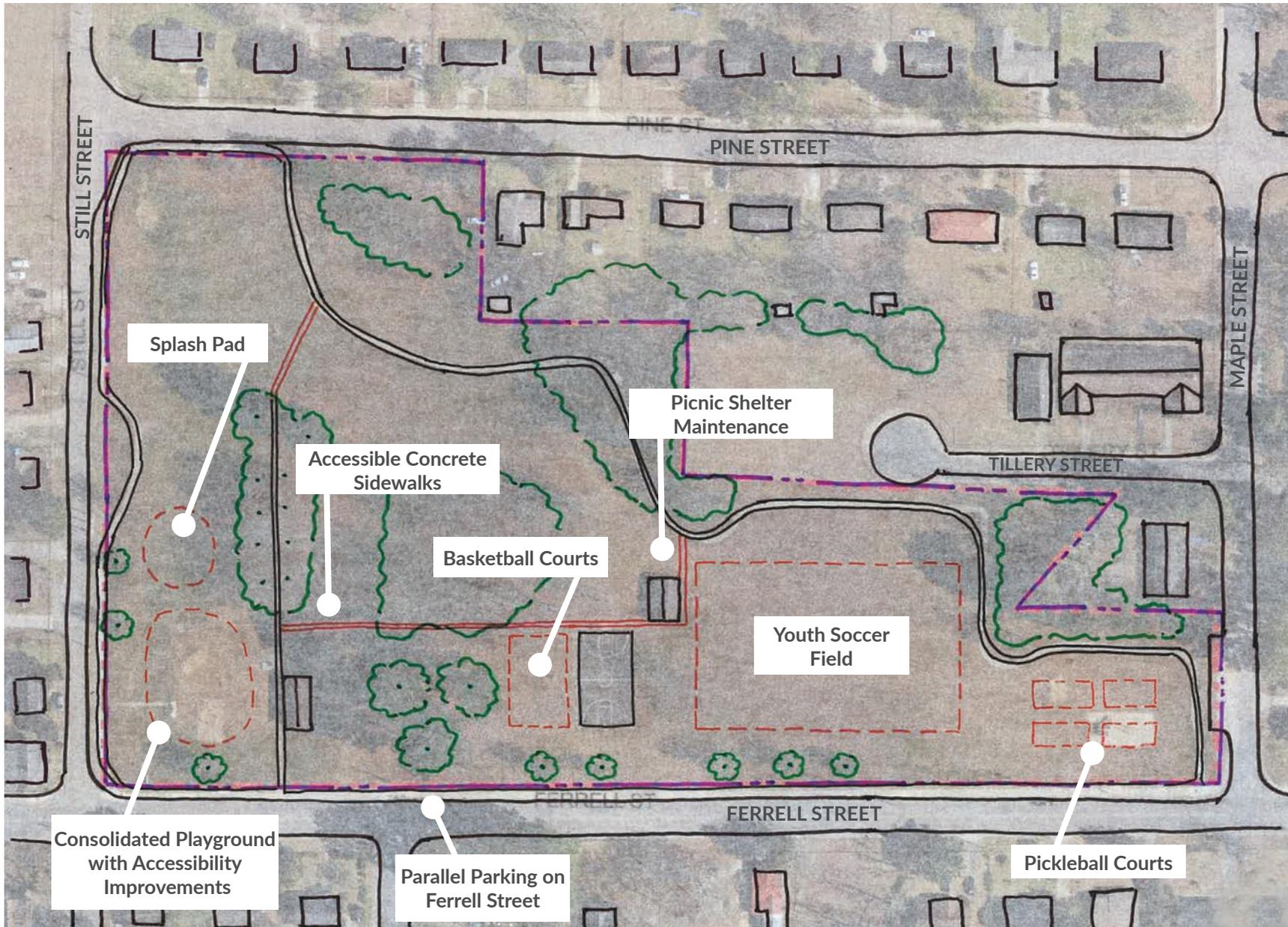
Proposed improvements for Fisher Drive Park.

Newkirk Park:

Improvements identified as appropriate and compatible with facilities include:

- › Repairs to picnic shelters, restrooms, and grills.
- › Accessible entry and surfacing for playground equipment.
- › Upgrading and expanding field areas for sports practices and free play.
- › Accessible sidewalks to connect park amenities.
- › Additional court facilities for basketball and pickleball.
- › Enhanced landscaping at park entrances and gathering areas.
- › New splash pad.
- › Enhanced and consolidated playground equipment.
- › Connections to Clinton Cemetery open space via Morisey Boulevard and future Dollar Branch Greenway.
- › Connections to downtown via Wall Street and railroad.





Proposed improvements for Newkirk Park.

Planned Greenways and Connections

Planned Greenway Trails

The Clinton Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan (adopted in March 2012) identifies seven greenway trails to connect Clinton's parks, neighborhoods, and surrounding areas. Primarily following stream channels and open spaces, these greenways provide radial connections to downtown (Dollar Branch Greenway and Cat Tail Branch Greenway) as well as tangent connections (Western Loop Greenway, Southwestern Greenway, Williams Old Mill Branch Greenway, Northern Greenway, and Northeastern Greenway) around the outside neighborhoods.

Three of these greenways offer immediate connection improvements to Clinton's existing parks. The Western Loop provides a low-stress, off-street connection between Royal Lane Park and Sampson Community College. Dollar Branch Greenway provides safe crossings at Highway 24 (Sunset Avenue) and Elizabeth Street, while passing within a few blocks of Royal Lane Park, Sunset Avenue School and Park, Newkirk Park, and Butler Avenue School. Cat Tail Branch Greenway parallels Sampson Street and connects Fisher Drive Park to the north and to downtown. The four remaining greenways offer extended routes for pedestrians and cyclists to travel within and outside of Clinton to the North.

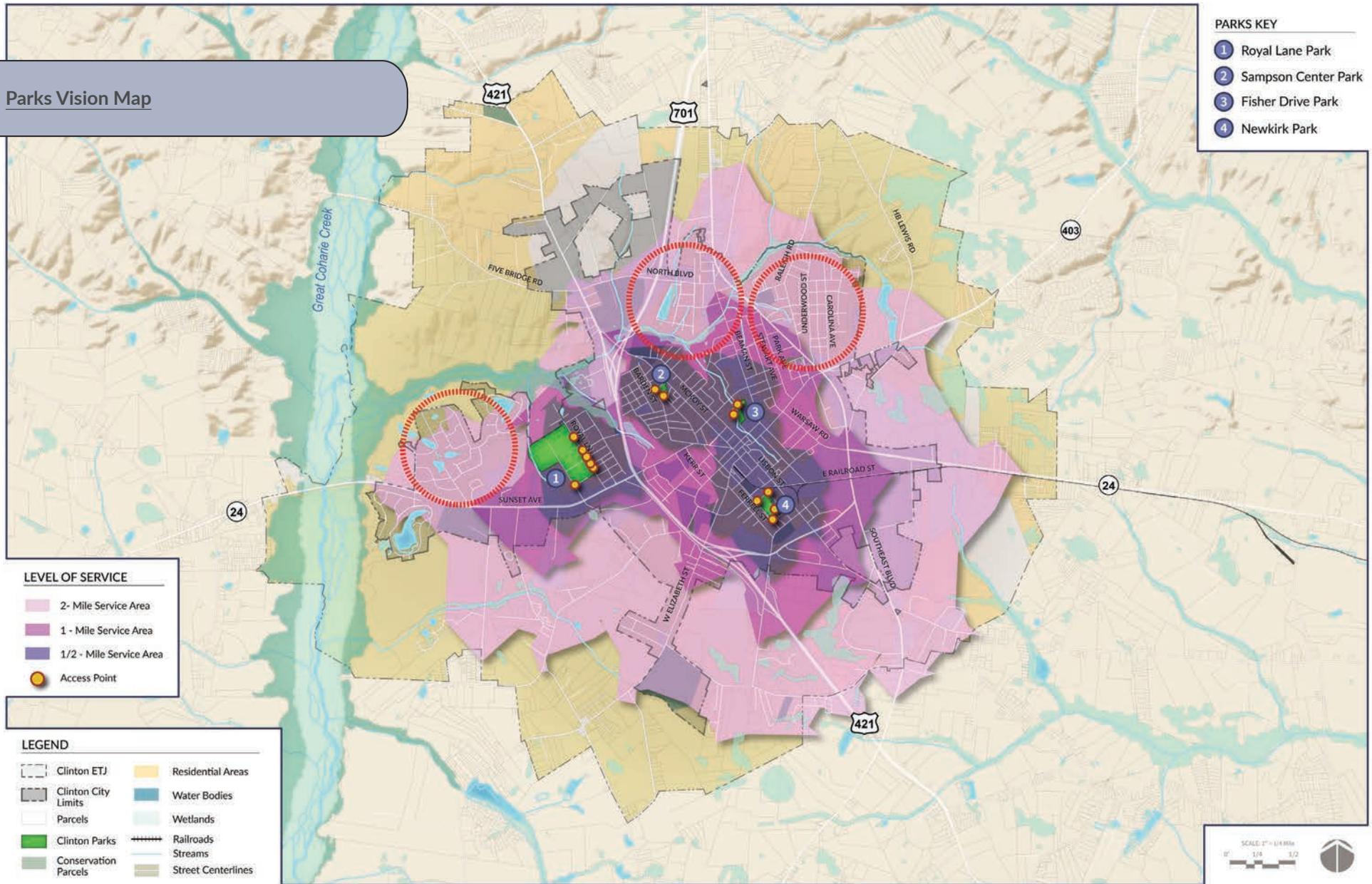
Other Planned Connections

Additional parks connections are planned via sidewalk and bicycle projects as illustrated in the Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan and the Comprehensive Bicycle Plan. Priority projects include sidewalk improvements and bicycle lanes on NC 24 / Sunset Avenue, a complete street on US Highway 701 Business, and a multi-use sidepath on Elizabeth Street. Sidewalk improvements are also proposed for the Royal Lane Park area, Williams Street, McKoy Street, Railroad Street, Morisey Boulevard, and several streets connecting Newkirk Park to the neighborhood. Bicycle improvements are planned with shared traffic lanes throughout downtown.

Recommended Future Parks, Facilities and Connections

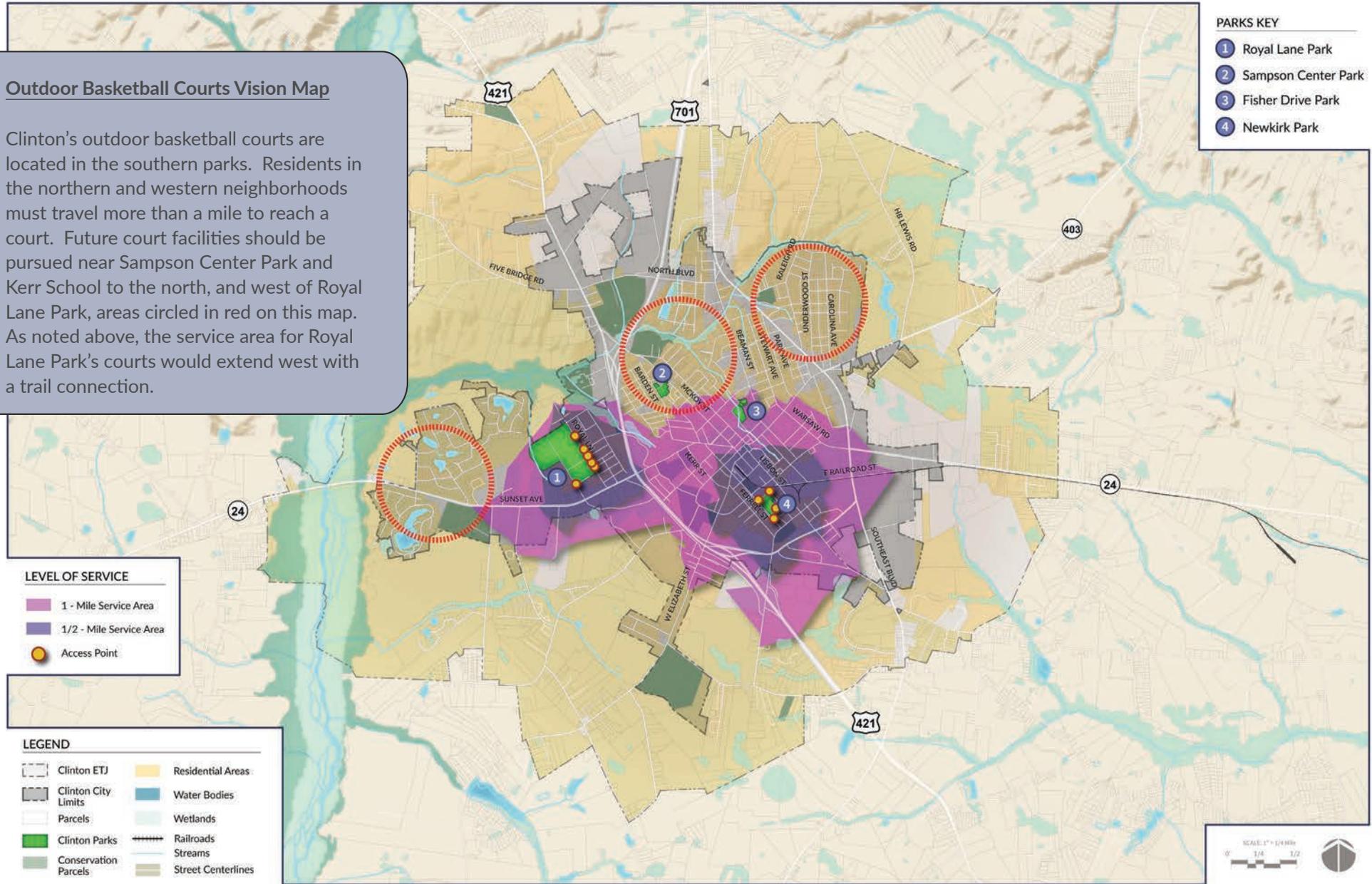
Clinton's four parks are well-distributed across the city and offer most residents reasonable access to recreational opportunities. Gaps in the current level of service exist primarily around the city limits, where residents must travel more than a mile to reach a park. Future park opportunities should be pursued on the north side of town, to the northeast near Kerr School, and west of Royal Lane Park. These are represented in the Parks Vision Map (see image pg. 93). Note that the proposed Western Loop Greenway would provide direct access to the west side of Royal Lane Park, effectively extending its range of service to that neighborhood.

Parks Vision Map



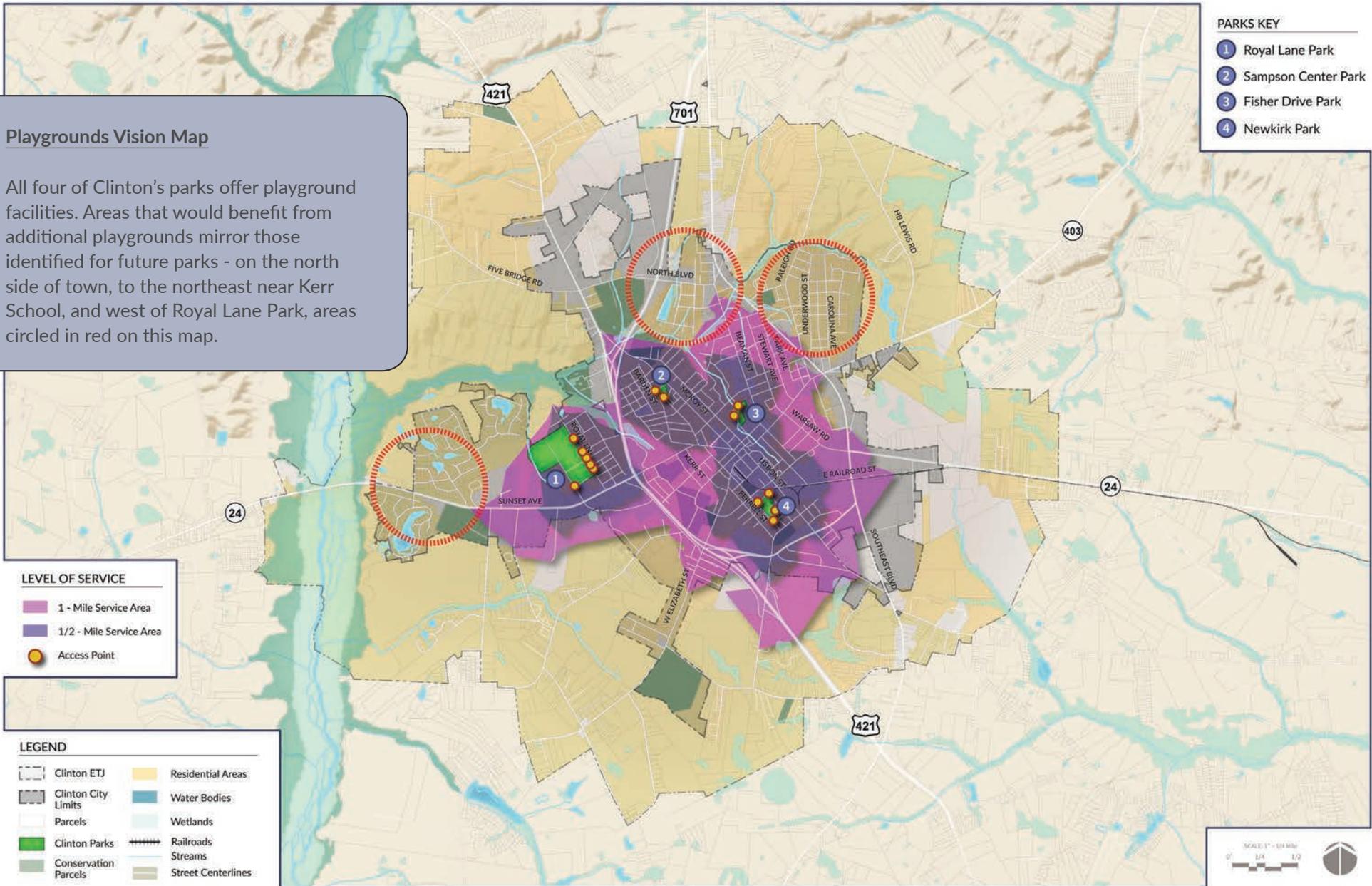
Outdoor Basketball Courts Vision Map

Clinton's outdoor basketball courts are located in the southern parks. Residents in the northern and western neighborhoods must travel more than a mile to reach a court. Future court facilities should be pursued near Sampson Center Park and Kerr School to the north, and west of Royal Lane Park, areas circled in red on this map. As noted above, the service area for Royal Lane Park's courts would extend west with a trail connection.



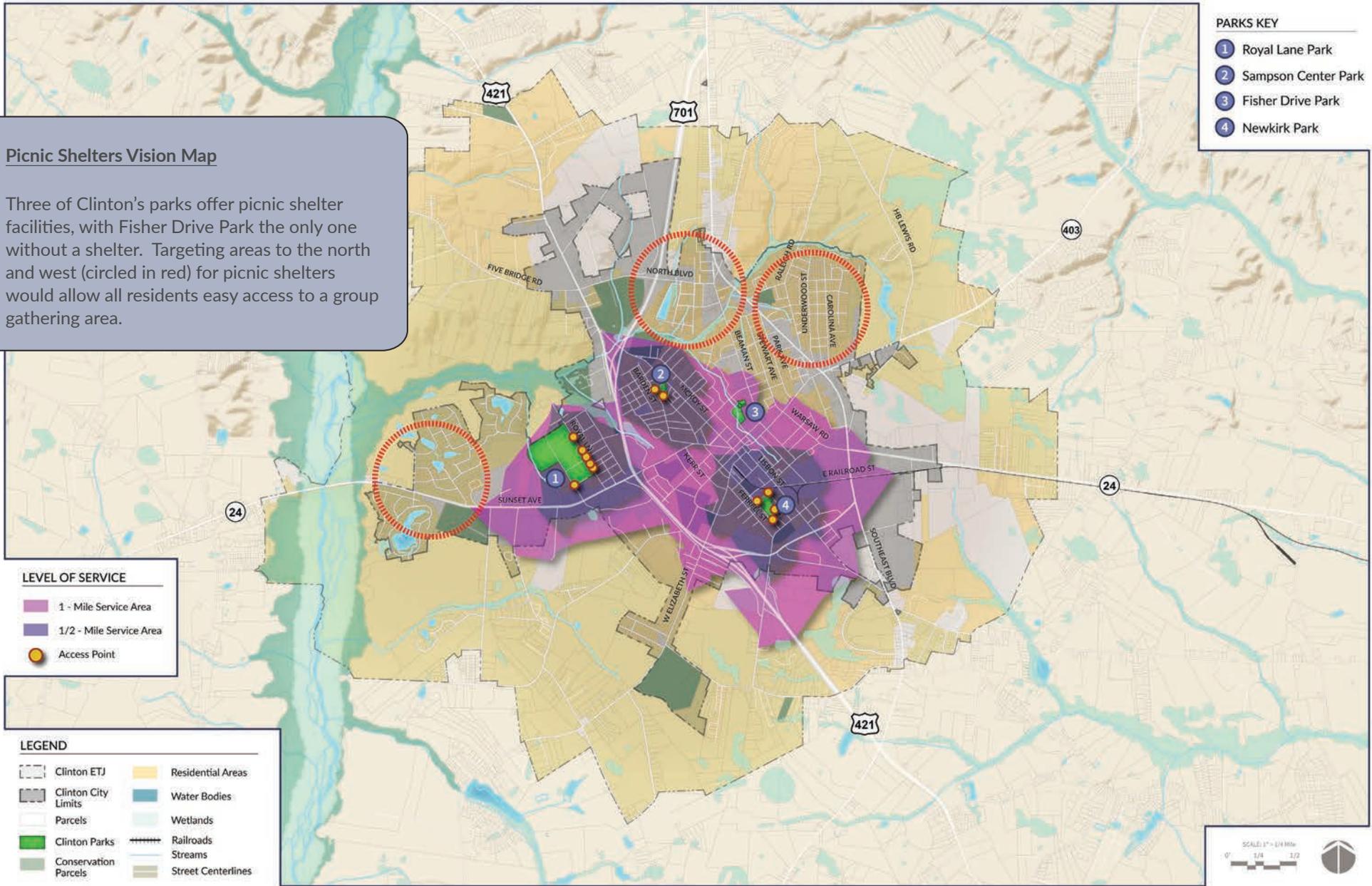
Playgrounds Vision Map

All four of Clinton's parks offer playground facilities. Areas that would benefit from additional playgrounds mirror those identified for future parks - on the north side of town, to the northeast near Kerr School, and west of Royal Lane Park, areas circled in red on this map.



Picnic Shelters Vision Map

Three of Clinton's parks offer picnic shelter facilities, with Fisher Drive Park the only one without a shelter. Targeting areas to the north and west (circled in red) for picnic shelters would allow all residents easy access to a group gathering area.



- PARKS KEY**
- 1 Royal Lane Park
 - 2 Sampson Center Park
 - 3 Fisher Drive Park
 - 4 Newkirk Park

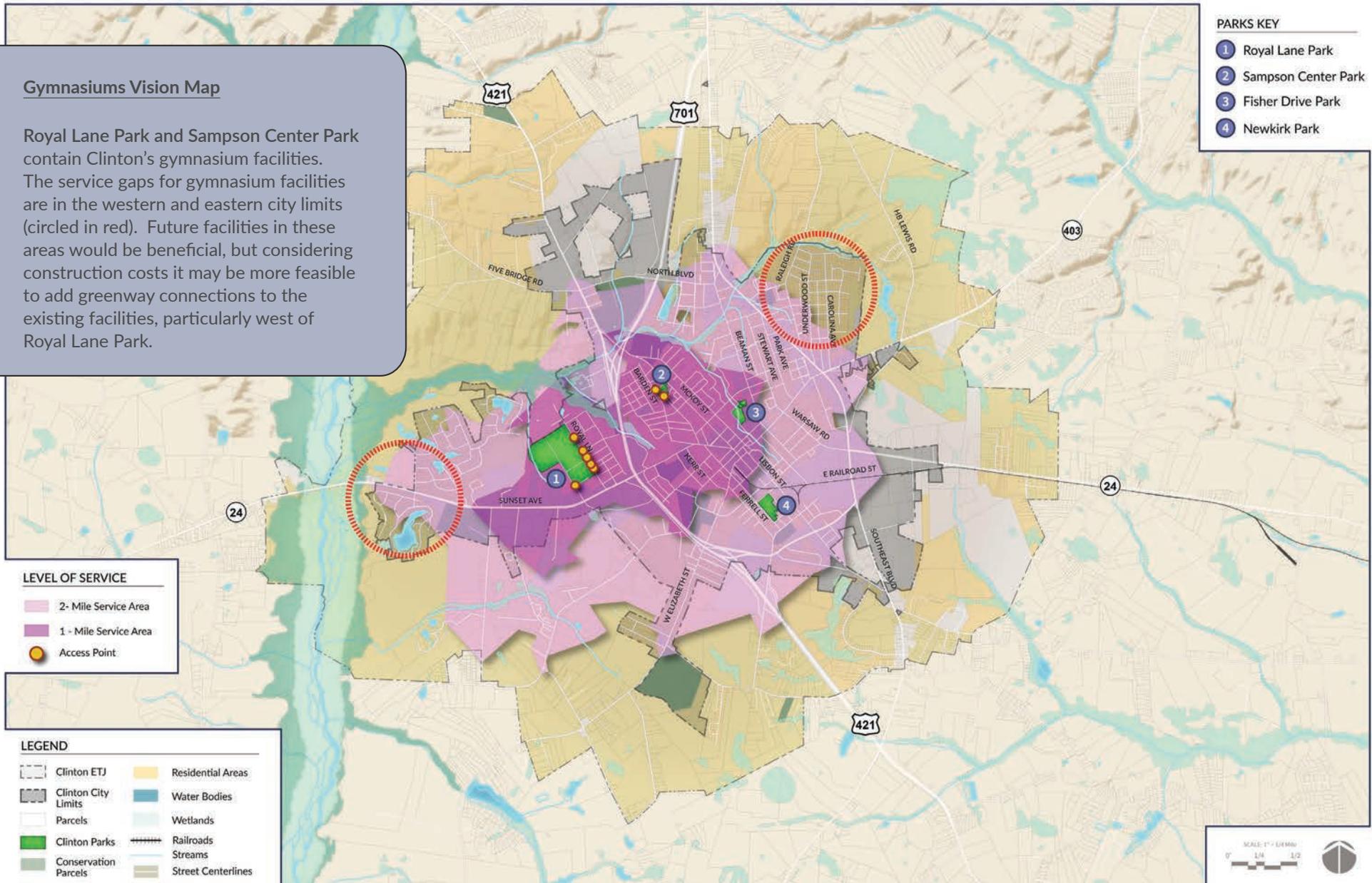
- LEVEL OF SERVICE**
- 1 - Mile Service Area
 - 1/2 - Mile Service Area
 - Access Point

- LEGEND**
- Clinton ETJ
 - Clinton City Limits
 - Parcels
 - Clinton Parks
 - Conservation Parcels
 - Residential Areas
 - Water Bodies
 - Wetlands
 - Railroads
 - Streams
 - Street Centerlines



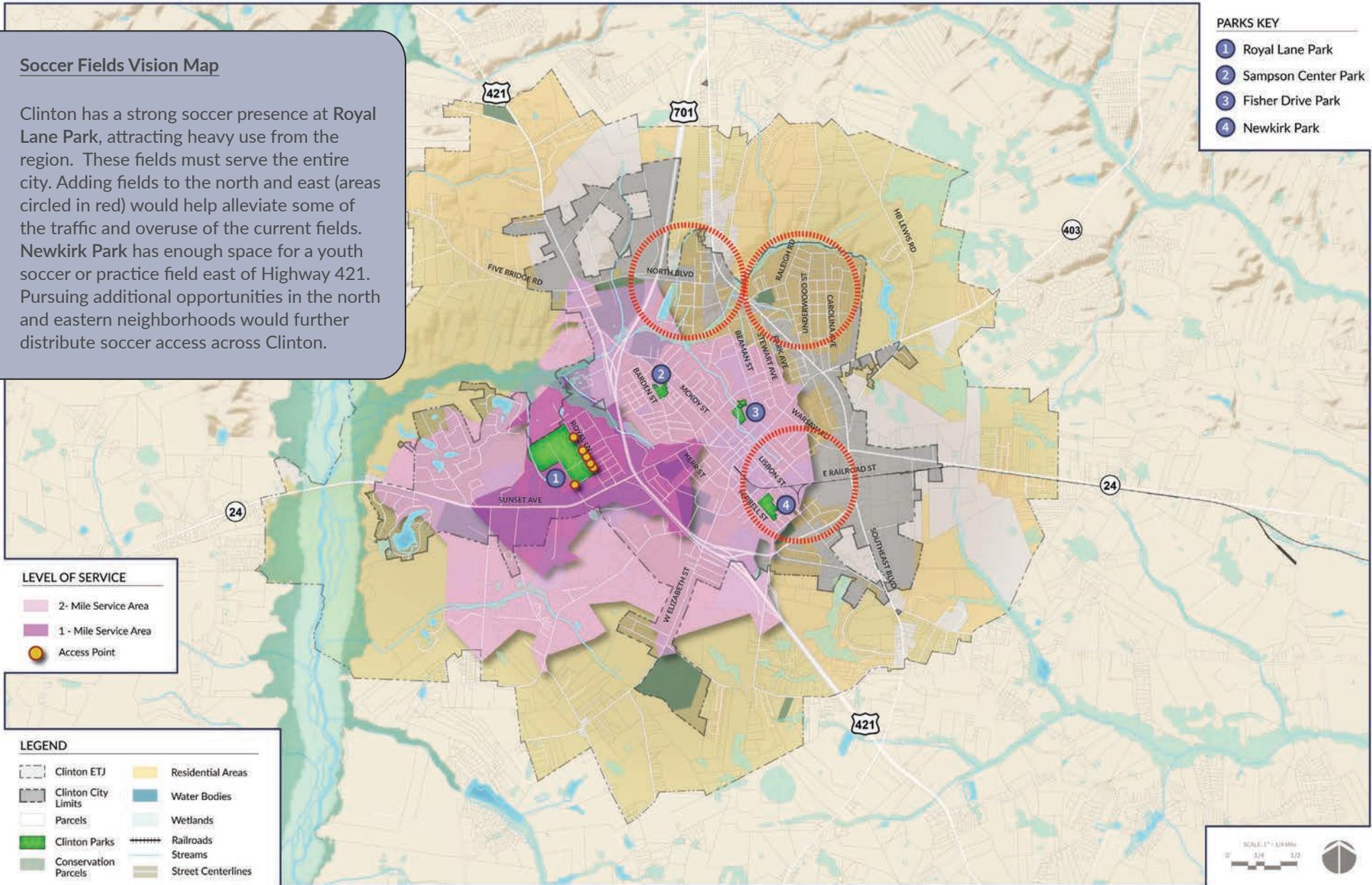
Gymnasiums Vision Map

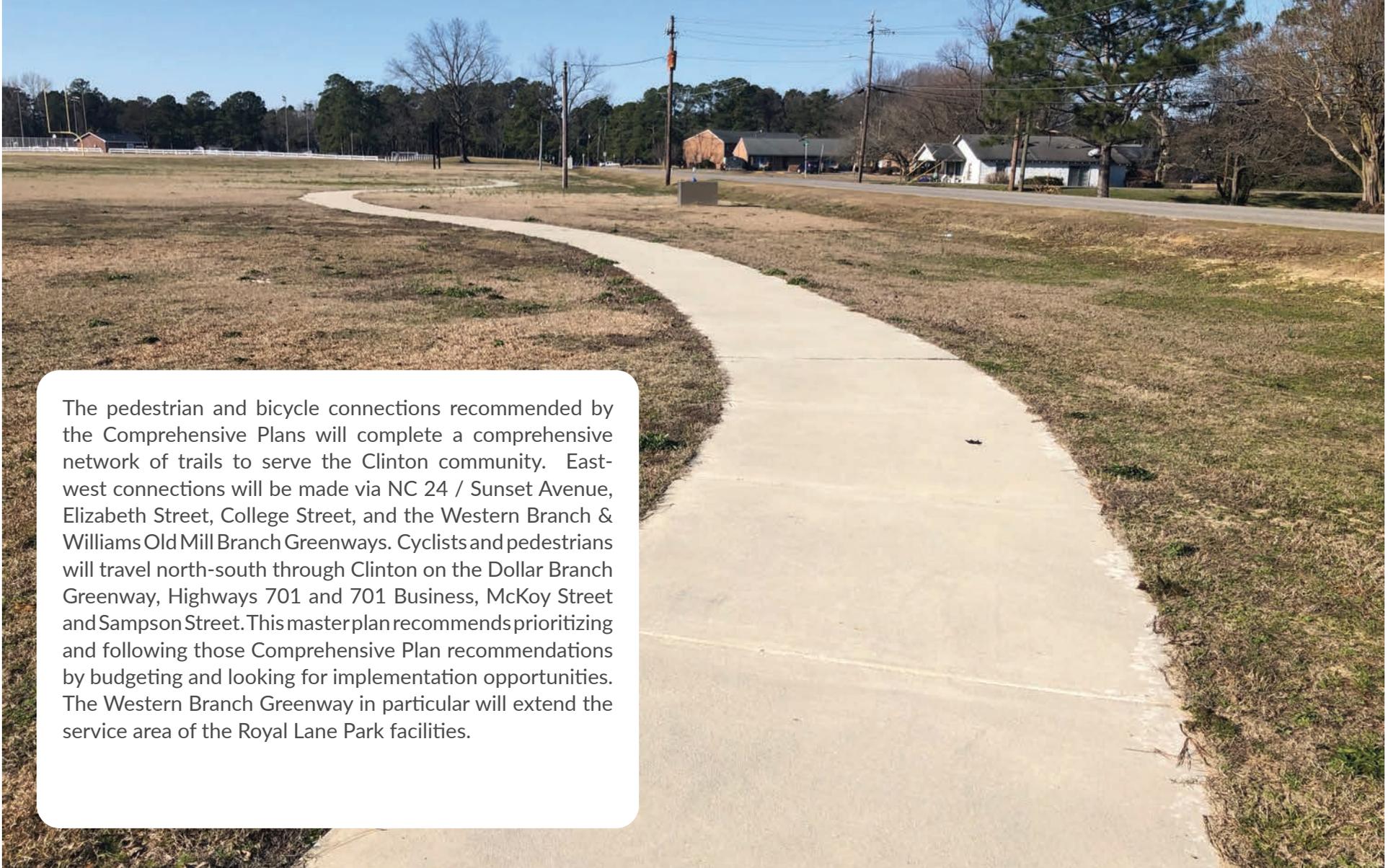
Royal Lane Park and Sampson Center Park contain Clinton's gymnasium facilities. The service gaps for gymnasium facilities are in the western and eastern city limits (circled in red). Future facilities in these areas would be beneficial, but considering construction costs it may be more feasible to add greenway connections to the existing facilities, particularly west of Royal Lane Park.



Soccer Fields Vision Map

Clinton has a strong soccer presence at Royal Lane Park, attracting heavy use from the region. These fields must serve the entire city. Adding fields to the north and east (areas circled in red) would help alleviate some of the traffic and overuse of the current fields. Newkirk Park has enough space for a youth soccer or practice field east of Highway 421. Pursuing additional opportunities in the north and eastern neighborhoods would further distribute soccer access across Clinton.





The pedestrian and bicycle connections recommended by the Comprehensive Plans will complete a comprehensive network of trails to serve the Clinton community. East-west connections will be made via NC 24 / Sunset Avenue, Elizabeth Street, College Street, and the Western Branch & Williams Old Mill Branch Greenways. Cyclists and pedestrians will travel north-south through Clinton on the Dollar Branch Greenway, Highways 701 and 701 Business, McKoy Street and Sampson Street. This master plan recommends prioritizing and following those Comprehensive Plan recommendations by budgeting and looking for implementation opportunities. The Western Branch Greenway in particular will extend the service area of the Royal Lane Park facilities.



Programs

Clinton has a strong foundation of programming for its residents. The Recreation and Parks Department provides multiple youth sports programs, senior programs, self-directed park activities, and community events at major holidays. These popular programs are primarily hosted at Royal Lane Park, where they put a strain on the fields, parking, and staff.

The community has noted the success of these activities, but also some programming gaps that leave them wanting more. Additional programs and services desired by the Clinton community include the following, listed in order of priority:

- › Adult softball, basketball, and volleyball leagues
- › Programming for teens and younger children
- › Programming for adults
- › Educational, arts and cultural programs
- › After school and tutoring programs
- › Summer camps
- › Nature programs
- › Aquatics programs
- › Fitness, health, and wellness programs

Many of these programs can be accommodated with additional staffing at existing park facilities. The gymnasiums in particular have been requested for greater availability and longer hours. Activities and classes can be scheduled at the Bellamy Center and the community center at Sampson Center Park. Programs at Fisher Drive Park and Newkirk Park will have the additional benefit of increasing community awareness of these facilities and take some of the strain off Royal Lane Park.

Priorities

The recommended improvement projects are prioritized into groups that can be implemented in short-term, long-term, and future time horizons. In the short term, projects should focus on repairs and maintenance to safety, drainage, connectivity, and accessibility issues. Long-term projects include enhancements and additional facilities within the existing parks to improve the community experience. Future projects include beautification, further enhancement, and more significant park investments. These projects are reviewed in detail in the following chapter.





5



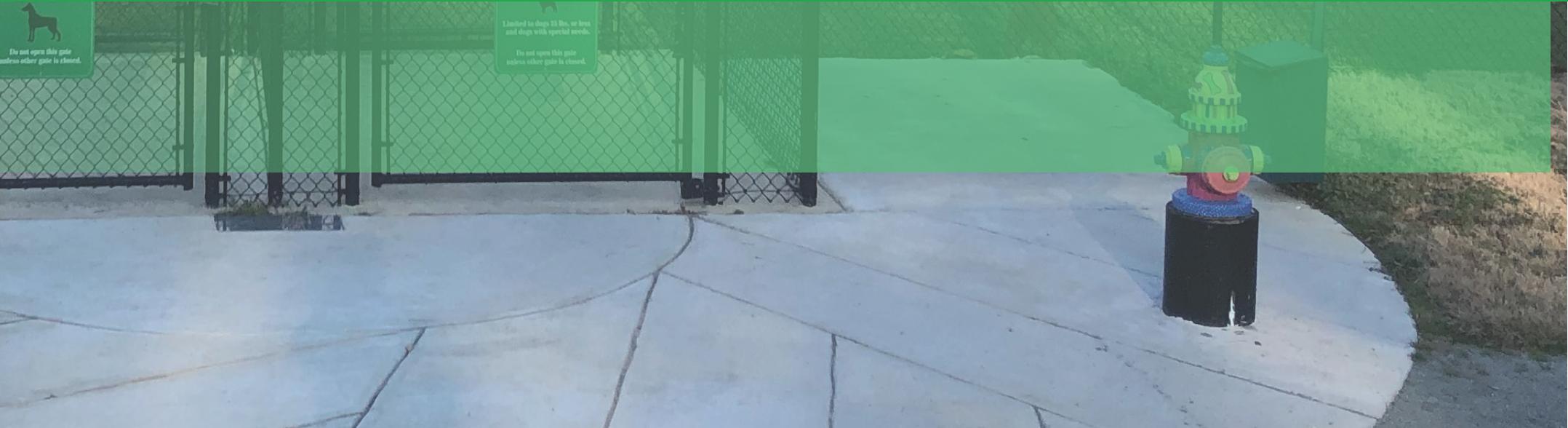


RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLEMENTATION

Large Dog Area



Limited to dogs 25 lbs. or less and dogs with special needs.
Do not open this gate unless other gate is closed.





RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLEMENTATION

INTRODUCTION

As described in the Community Needs Assessment and Visioning chapters, the Clinton Parks and Recreation system is in good condition overall. The existing parks are well-situated throughout the City and provide residents with a variety of recreation opportunities. Most of the issues identified originate from heavy use in certain areas, rather than a single glaring weakness.

The bulk of the recommendations target improving existing facilities and programs. Maintenance, repairs, upgrades, and staffing will strengthen Clinton's Parks and Recreation system without the need to acquire additional easements or parcels. These improvements are prioritized accordingly, and can be accommodated quickly as budgets, schedules and opportunities become available. While they do not pose an immediate priority, Clinton should plan and budget for future opportunities to add facilities as land or properties become available in target areas.

Phasing Strategies

The recommendations of this master plan are organized into the following implementation categories, based on the priorities developed by the Clinton community vision. The projects with the highest priority are identified for short-term completion, with a suggested time frame of 1 to 2 years. Long-term projects are identified for implementation in 3 to 5 years. Future projects are considered for 6 to 10 years and beyond. Each phase includes a budget for funding property and easement acquisition for future greenway and trails projects (with priority on the Western Loop, Cat Tail Loop, and Dollar Branch Greenways). Additional opportunities for ongoing, continuous improvements are noted separately for incorporation as department resources allow.



Phase 1: Short-Term Projects

Phase 1 improvements for the Clinton Parks and Recreation system include maintenance and repairs to safety, drainage, connectivity, and accessibility issues. Landscape maintenance is recommended for all parks, and includes removal of unnecessary or damaged site elements, removal of invasive or overgrown plantings, and inspections of picnic shelters, park amenities, and furnishings. Additional projects include:

- › Improvements to playground accessibility and replacement of play surfacing (Sampson Center Park, Fisher Drive Park, and Newkirk Park).
- › Repairs to parking lot and four-square paving (Sampson Center Park).
- › Stormwater repairs and improvements (Fisher Drive Park).
- › Accessible sidewalks (Fisher Drive Park and Newkirk Park).
- › Repairs to gravel paths or upgrades to concrete (Fisher Drive Park).
- › New picnic shelter (Fisher Drive Park).
- › New soccer field (Newkirk Park).
- › Striping on adjacent streets for existing parallel parking (Newkirk Park).
- › Budget allotment for construction of greenway trails.

Phase 2: Long-Term Projects

Phase 2 improvements include upgrades to facilities at Royal Lane Park, and adding desired amenities in spaces that are currently available in Sampson Center Park, Fisher Drive Park, and Newkirk Park. These improvements will spread park facilities and programs across Clinton, and ease some of the overuse at Royal Lane Park. Signage and landscaping at the park entrances help create a welcoming experience. Projects include:

- › Relocation of maintenance yard (Royal Lane Park)
- › Consolidation of sports fields, parking areas and circulation routes (Royal Lane Park)
- › New baseball, softball, and soccer facilities (Royal Lane Park)
- › Entrance signage and landscaping (Sampson Center Park, Fisher Drive Park, and Newkirk Park).
- › Basketball courts (Newkirk Park).
- › Outdoor fitness area (Fisher Drive Park).
- › Splash pad (Newkirk Park).
- › Budget allotment for construction of greenway trails.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION

Phase 3: Future Projects

Phase 3 projects include the completion of the Royal Lane Park Master Plan and further enhancements to Sampson Center Park, Fisher Drive Park, and Newkirk Park. These projects are more significant investments and complete Clinton's parks system. Projects in Phase 3 include:

- › Splash Pad (Royal Lane Park)
- › Enhanced site furnishings, including benches, bike racks, trash receptacles and picnic tables (all parks).
- › Enhancement of playground equipment, with accessible surface and edging (Fisher Drive Park and Newkirk Park).
- › Expansion of gravel fitness trails (Fisher Drive Park and Royal Lane Park).
- › Pickleball courts (Newkirk Park).
- › Budget allotment for construction of greenway trails.

Ongoing Projects:

Opportunities for incremental or continuous improvements to the Clinton Parks and Recreation system include the following:

- › Expansion of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, including sidewalks and bike lanes.
- › Encouragement of community involvement and engagement.
- › New activities and programs for adults, teens, and kids.
- › Programs for environmental awareness, sustainability, and resource conservation.
- › Hosting activities and programs at all of Clinton's parks and facilities.

- › Staffing adjustments commensurate with improvements to parks, additional programs, and to make existing facilities more available to the public.
- › Review and refinement of maintenance program to maximize environmental stewardship.
- › Awareness of opportunities to acquire properties and easements to increase park acreage, improve connectivity, and distribute facilities throughout Clinton.
- › Expansion of partnership opportunities to enhance programming and available facilities.
- › Assessment of gymnasium facilities for maintenance, repairs and upgrades as required.



Funding / Capital Improvement Strategies

Community stakeholders and online survey respondents indicated a preference for funding improvements using Parks and Recreation matching grants and capital improvement bonds. Increasing impact fees for development and raising property taxes are less popular options, but still worthy of for consideration.

Operational funding for parks maintenance is acceptable to most respondents, with 33% agreeing to pay up to \$5 per month, and another 22% of respondents willing to pay up to \$10 per month.

Pursuing and securing capital improvement funding to build new amenities should take a multi-pronged approach and include grants, partnerships or sponsorships with private entities, bonds, and annual establishment of line items for capital improvements to parks in the Town budget. Additional facilities, amenities, programs, and parks require improved maintenance capabilities.

Grant opportunities for parks amenities, playgrounds, greenway trails, and land acquisition include the following:

- › NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) State Funds
- › Recreational Trails Program (RTP) / Federal Funds
- › Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) / Federal Funds
- › Connect North Carolina Bond grant program (CNCB) / State Funds
- › DOT Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) / State Funds
- › Blue Cross Blue Shield, Health and Wellness Grants
- › Safe Routes to Schools funding / State Funds through NCDOT

Additional sources of funding are also available, which could reduce the burden on Clinton's budget.

Maintenance Recommendations

The City does an excellent job maintaining its existing parks. As the parks and recreation system grows, additional maintenance staffing and equipment will be required. It is advised that Clinton increases its maintenance budget accordingly to cover these costs.

Budget Cost Estimates

Estimates of probable construction cost offer a helpful tool for budgeting the implementation of the master plan projects. These budget-level figures offer a reference point for planning and prioritizing construction over the short term, long term, and future. Estimates are included for each of the phases described above.

It should be noted that these figures are intended to provide a planning-level guideline only, and that actual costs may vary based on factors that include material costs, local labor rates, and site conditions.



CLINTON PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN

Order of Magnitude Estimate of Probable Capital Improvement Costs

A. Phase 1 Projects		Subtotal	Description
1	Landscape Maintenance (all parks)	\$50,000	Remove wood bollards, concrete slabs, metal pipe, Fisher Drive Park ramps and retaining walls; remove overgrown and invasive plants in streams; inspect & repair picnic shelters and park amenities; general landscape maintenance
2	Stormwater Repairs & Improvements (Fisher Drive)	\$200,000	Site grading (1.5 acre) to improve surface drainage; stormwater infrastructure upgrades; groundcover plantings
3	Paving Repairs (Fisher Drive & Sampson Center)	\$60,000	Mill & resurface asphalt parking & repour concrete pad (Sampson Center); Repair gravel paths or replace with concrete (Fisher Drive)
4	Accessible Sidewalks (Fisher Drive, Newkirk)	\$75,000	Concrete sidewalks (both parks); concrete ramps & steps, retaining walls, handrails (Fisher Drive)
5	Playground Accessibility Improvements (Sampson Center, Fisher Drive, Newkirk)	\$60,000	Remove sand surface; replace with accessible surface material; provide accessible entry points (bridge or break in edging)
6	Striping for Parallel Parking (Newkirk)	\$2,500	Striping in adjacent roadway (NCDOT coordination required)
7	Soccer Field (Newkirk)	\$10,000	Prepare field for soccer practices and games, new portable soccer goals
8	Large Picnic Shelter (Fisher Drive)	\$50,000	Prefabricated metal structure with metal roof, concrete pad
9	Budget for Property and Easement Acquisition	\$100,000	Property and Easement acquisitions for parks and trails
		Subtotal: \$607,500	
B. Phase 2 Projects			
1	Sports Field and Facility Improvements (Royal Lane)	\$1,000,000	Relocate maintenance yard; consolidate sports fields, parking & circulation; new baseball, softball & soccer facilities
2	Entrance Signage and Landscaping (all parks)	\$100,000	Entrance signs (Fisher Drive & Sampson Center); entrance landscaping (all parks)
3	Basketball Court (Newkirk)	\$40,000	Concrete court surface, poles, backboards, striping
4	Splash Pad (Newkirk)	\$40,000	Spray nozzles, concrete paving, pump, reservoir, water service
5	Outdoor Fitness Area (Fisher Drive)	\$100,000	Concrete court surface, poles, backboards, striping
6	Budget for Property and Easement Acquisition	\$100,000	Property and Easement acquisitions for parks and trails
		Subtotal: \$1,380,000	
C. Phase 3 Projects			
1	Enhanced Site Furnishings (all parks)	\$120,000	Replace and supplement benches, trash cans, picnic tables, bike racks
2	Enhanced Playground Equipment & Surfacing (Fisher Drive, Sampson Center, Newkirk)	\$750,000	New play equipment, poured safety surface
3	Expand Fitness Trails (Fisher Drive, Royal Lane)	\$100,000	Gravel or concrete surface; flush edging (if gravel)
4	Pickleball Courts (Newkirk)	\$40,000	Concrete court surface, embedded net poles, nets, striping
5	Splash Pad (Royal Lane)	\$40,000	Spray nozzles, concrete paving, pump, reservoir, water service
6	Disc Golf (Royal Lane)	\$10,000	Metal baskets; tee markers; site preparation
7	Budget for Property and Easement Acquisition	\$100,000	Property and Easement acquisitions for parks and trails
		Subtotal: \$1,160,000	
Clinton Parks & Recreation Master Plan Subtotal		\$3,147,500	
Contingency (20%)		\$629,500	
		TOTAL: \$3,777,000	