

# South Park Heritage Walk and John P "Top" Greene Park Situation Assessment

OCTOBER 2023

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## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	2
Project Overview.....	2
Community Framework .....	6
5 Minute Drive Demographic.....	9
10 Minute Drive Demographic.....	11
Community Engagement .....	12
Level of Participation .....	12
Community Stakeholders.....	13
Community Advisory Group.....	13
Next Steps .....	16
Appendices.....	16

## Introduction

A **Situation Assessment** is an analysis of the local context around a project, to help Raleigh Parks staff determine the best way to effectively engagement the community in a collaborative process. The assessments are used as an opportunity to identify key stakeholders, issues, and opportunities important to the community affected by the planning process. Situation Assessments can be an opportunity to study the historical and cultural context of a particular project or community and to proactively identify and address any issues that may be contentious during the planning process.

The Situation Assessment also identifies the **Community Advisory Group (CAG)**, which is a membership-specific committee that provides oversight of the project planning process and ensures that decisions include a broad representation of the community and stakeholders impacted by the project. CAG members help facilitate information sharing between the community and planning staff.

## Project Overview

In 2012, as a result of the grant provided by the Raleigh City Council, SPERNA worked in collaboration with the Raleigh's Central Citizens Advisory Council, City of Raleigh Park and Recreation Department, Raleigh/Wake Chapter of NCCU Alumni Association, City of Raleigh Museum, Richard B. Harrison Library, Shaw University, as well as private stakeholders. NC State University's College of Design facilitated the documentation of the historic assets of the neighborhood which then led into the development of a vision plan process, connecting the issues raised by stakeholders with best practices in community design and sustainability.

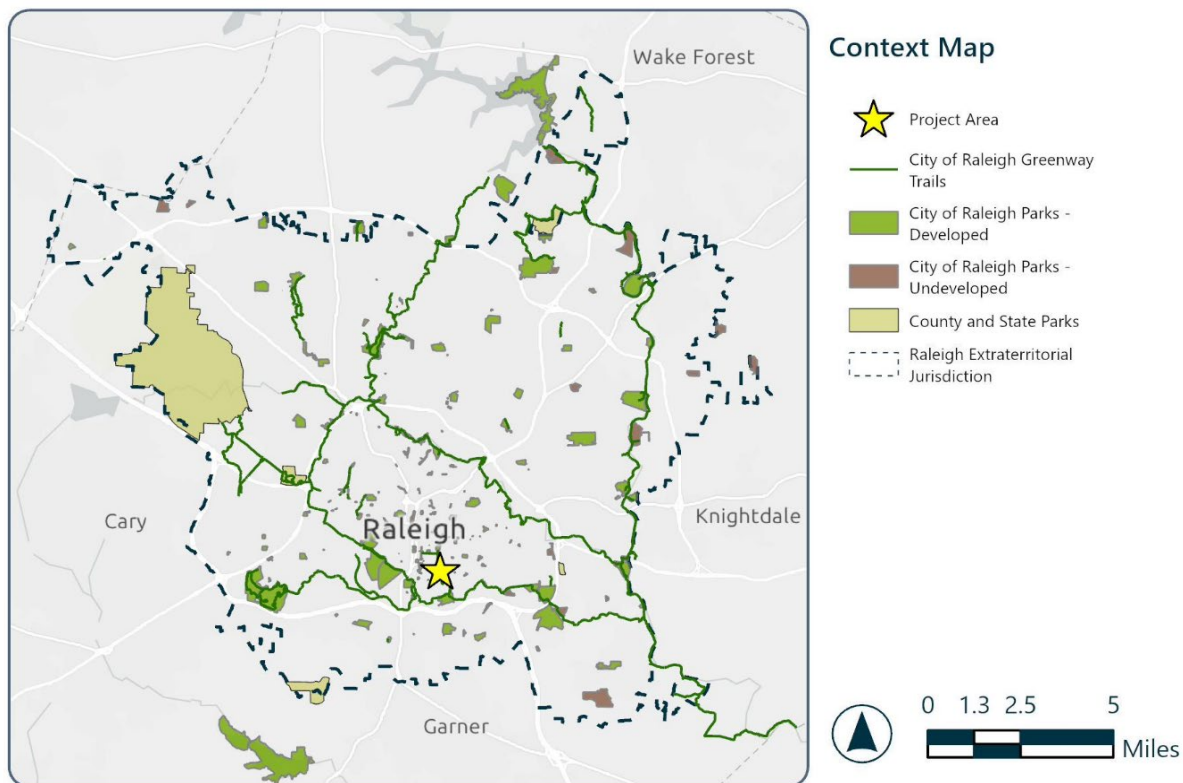
The South Park neighborhood has always been dedicated to enriching the life of its residents and families by fostering educational, cultural, and wellness activities. Community concerns with the conditions of housing in the area, especially on East Street, motivated groups to organize and think about how to stabilize and revitalize South Park East Raleigh. Additionally, the neighborhood has been suffering rapid decay due to its run-down and vacated buildings and open spaces over time. Increasing development pressures in downtown Raleigh have led SPERNA to craft a vision; rethink the future development opportunities in the area; and consider options that will sustain economic and educational viability, while preserving the natural and historic character of the neighborhood. The project was a community driven, participatory design and planning process that explored scenarios for the creation of a future "Heritage Walk Plan" located in the South Park neighborhood. Accordingly, the proposed vision plan also represents different ideas on how best to use and improve various sites that can catalyze and provide key services to the community. This collaborative effort focused mainly on restoring the neighborhood in a way as to benefit the community holistically that proposes guiding principles to improve the current conditions through applying sustainable design strategies, while preserving and promoting the unique history of the area.

The visioning design process consisted of two main phases. The first phase was for the community and SPERNA to identify cultural, social, economic and physical attributes of the neighborhood valued from the past; document the present conditions; and describe a desired future. This was achieved through a series of public meetings, small focus-group meetings and individual interviews that were coordinated, assisted, and guided by students and faculty from NC State University's College of Design and Linguistics

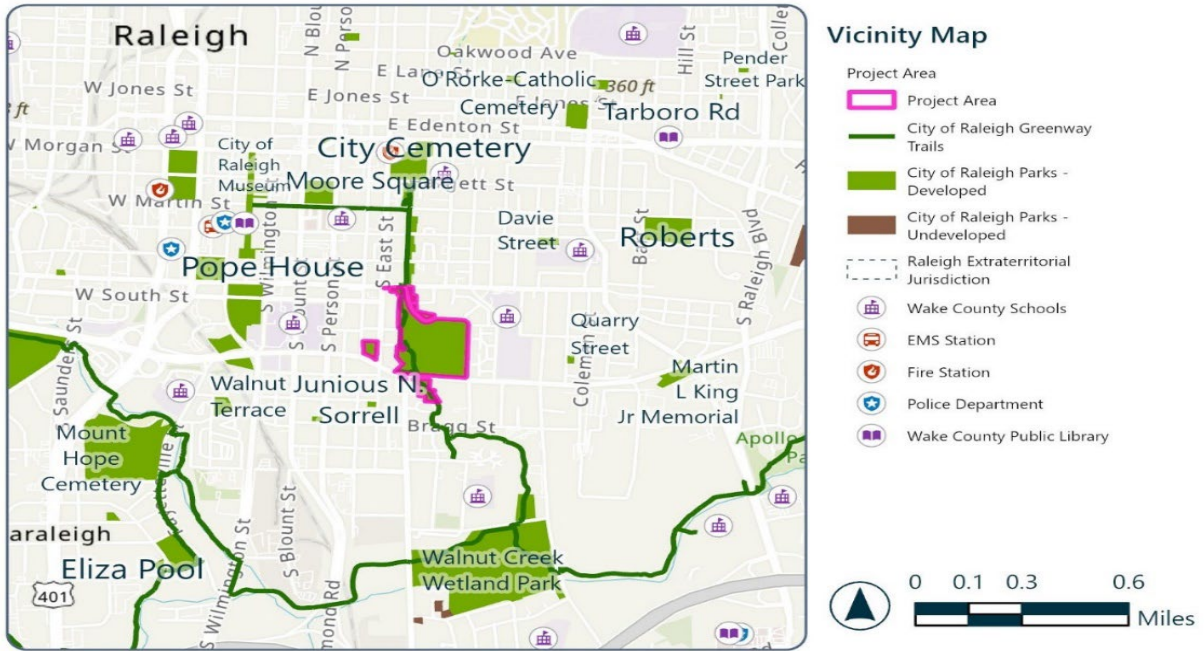
Program. The first phase helped create a vision that documented and reflected the legacy of the South Park neighborhood from the past at the same time crafted opportunities to be positioned in the neighborhood, which will be directly beneficial to the community.

The second phase included the development of a Heritage Walk plan through which the College of Design team took the communal vision and, utilizing the basic principles of sustainable design, turned it into conceptual guiding design ideas. It consisted of visual representations of the design ideas developed throughout the second phase. Students and faculty developed and coordinated specific plans, as well as alternatives to achieve the desired future. The developed ideas were reviewed by SPERNA, the public, and stakeholders. Based on the feedback received from all of the stakeholders the conceptual guiding design ideas were refined. This document overall presents those conceptual design ideas generated by the College of Design team in coordination with those groups who directly participated in the process. While preserving the South Park neighborhood's historic legacy, the project capitalizes on ideas that seamlessly weave together green concepts in landscaping, water treatment, and site development with an emphasis on using the built environment as a model and teaching tool for applied sustainability.

This project overall provided a learning experience for the College of Design students, who participated, and aided them in their transition into their profession. Second, the project aimed to help SPERNA members and the overall community members engaged in organized and proactive discussions about the future of the South Park neighborhood. The result of this process is hoped to provide a vision, which can also take advantage of available services and programs and help increase educational and cultural activities within the neighborhood and overall downtown area.

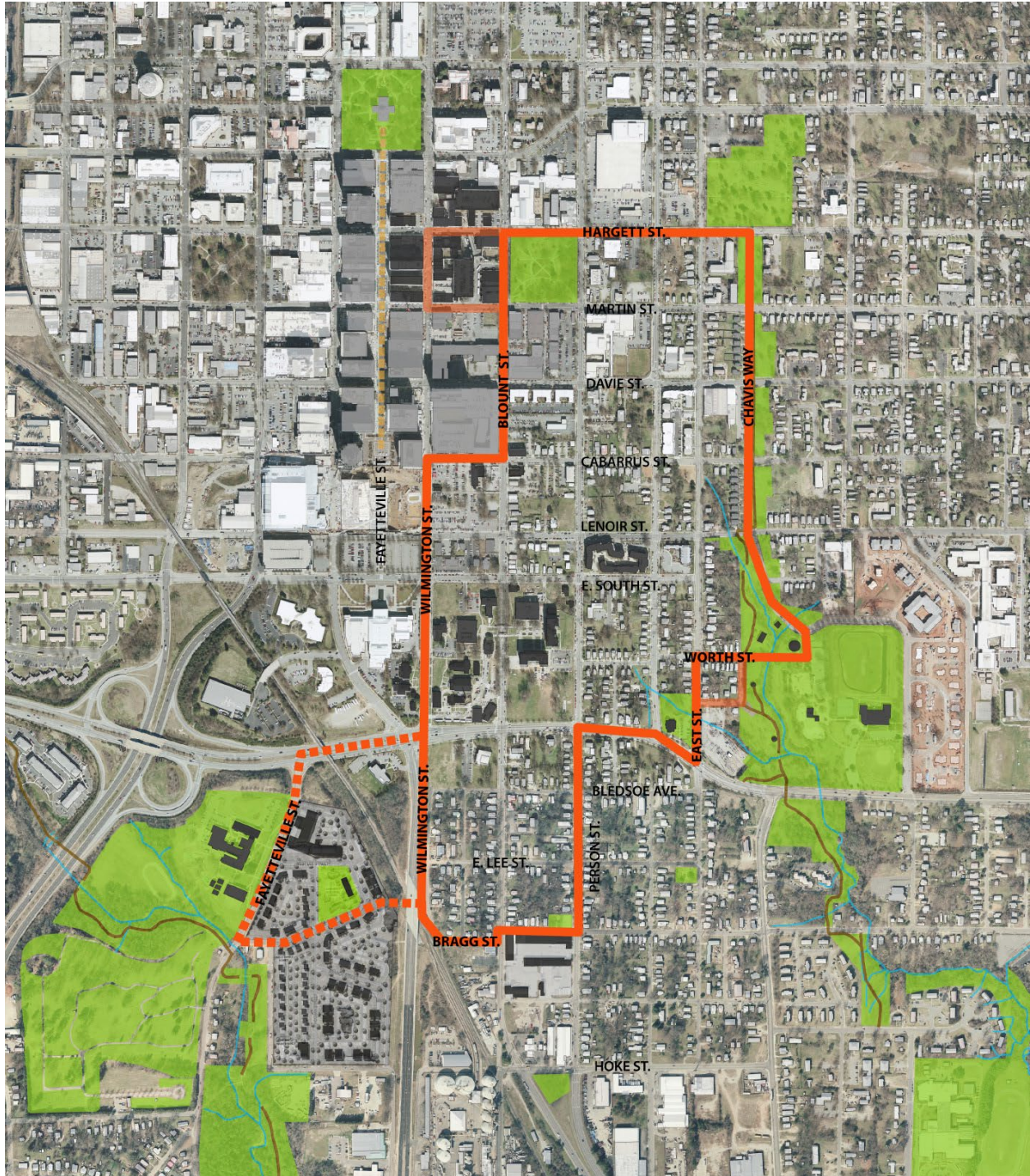


**Figure 1: Context Map**



**Figure 2: Vicinity Map**





**Figure 3: Conceptual South Park Heritage Walk Route**

The main proposed route in red is a 2.6-mile loop through parts of downtown Raleigh, the city greenway and park system, and a residential portion of the South Park neighborhood. The dotted portion indicates a potential expansion area in the future if and when infrastructural improvements to cross the tracks at Wilmington Street can be made.

**John P. “Top” Greene Community Center**



The vision plan proposes adaptive reuse of the Top Greene Community Center including architectural and landscape enhancements. Currently, the landscape focuses on moving people from adjacent streets and off-street parking to the front door of the facility. The vision plan proposes defining gathering, interpretive, and educational spaces within the existing landscape. This includes the introduction of a community porch; a transition area that encourages gathering and highlights the entry to the facility. Incorporation of historic artifacts including maps and markers can enhance the gathering area. The existing steep slopes on the facility's north side are recommended to serve as seating for educational activities as well as a storm-water management area.



**Figure 4: Top Greene Conceptual Site Plan**

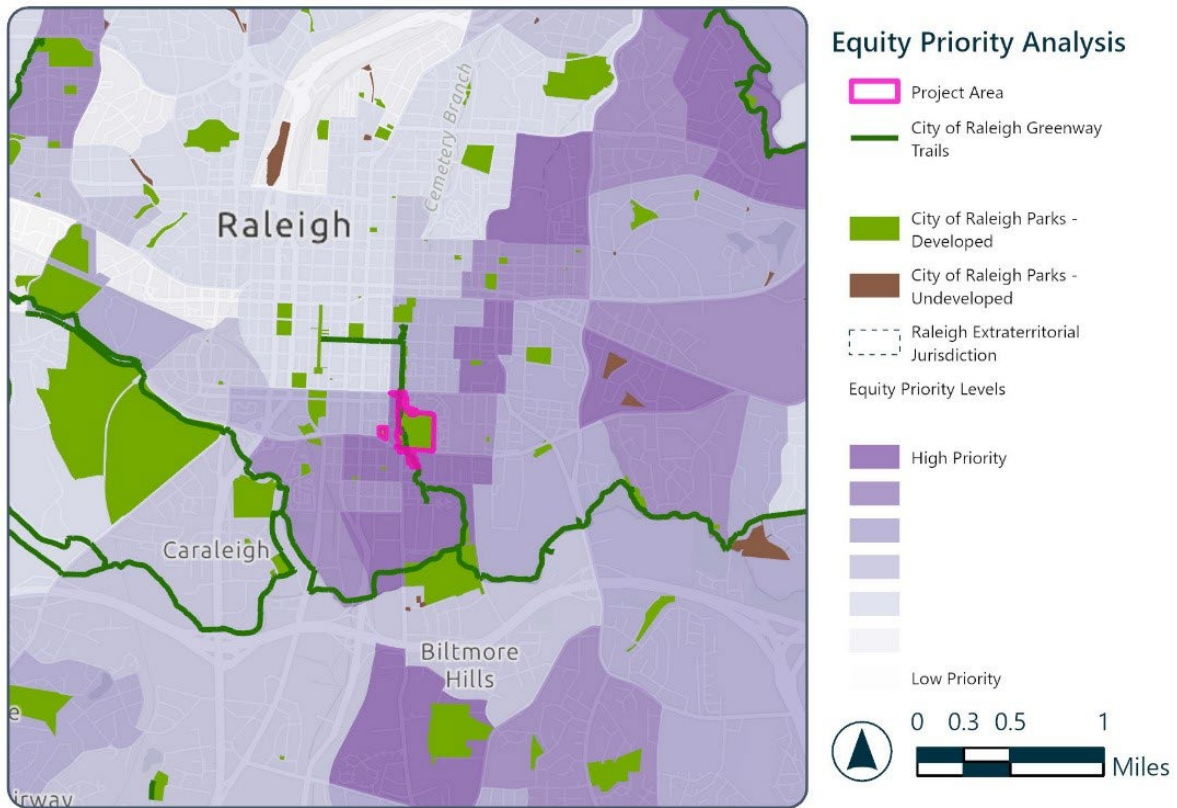
## **Community Framework**

Equity Prioritization can be determined by analyzing five key indicators of community health and well-being, as defined by Wake County Human Services' Community Vulnerability Index:

- Unemployment: Population age 16 and over who are unemployed in the civilian labor force
- Low Educational Attainment: Population over age 25 who have less than a high school diploma
- Age Dependency: Population under the age of 18 and over the age of 64 combined
- Housing Vacancy: The total number of vacant or unoccupied housing units in a block group
- Poverty Rate: The population living below the federal poverty threshold in Wake County

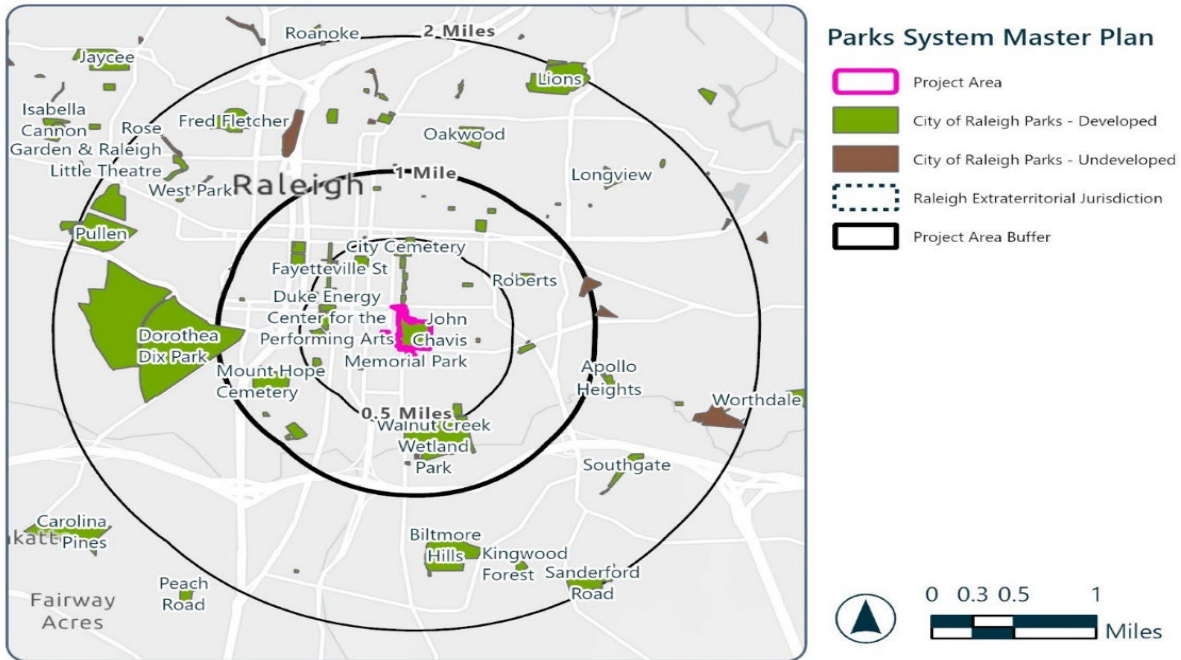
Communities exhibiting a high concentration of these five demographic and socioeconomic indicators are more likely to experience negative health outcomes such as heart disease, obesity, chronic stress, and depression—outcomes which can be mitigated with better access to high-quality open spaces, outdoor recreation, and safe places to play and exercise.

Prioritizing investments in these communities helps ensure that Raleigh Parks sites, facilities, and programs are more accessible to the communities that will benefit most from these public resources.



**Figure 5: Equity Priority Analysis**



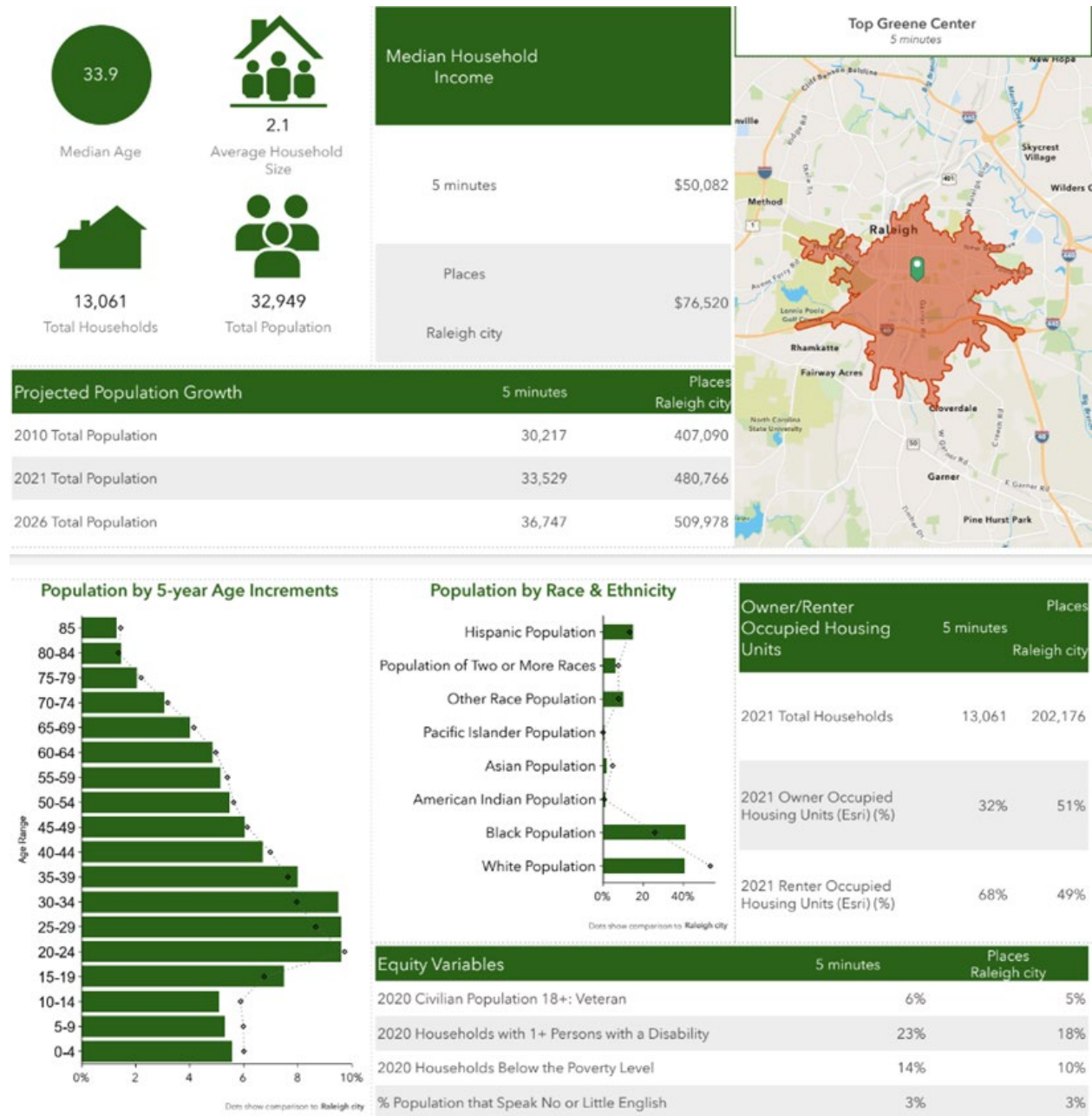


**Figure 6: Distances to Nearby City Parks**

Several existing, developed parks are located in close to South Park Heritage Walk/ Top Greene Center, including:

- Roberts Park
- John Chavis
- Tarboro Rd. Park
- Walnut Creek Wetland Park
- Dorothea Dix Park
- Southgate
- Worthdale Park
- Biltmore Hills Park
- Sanderford Rd. Park
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Park

## 5-Minute Drive Demographics

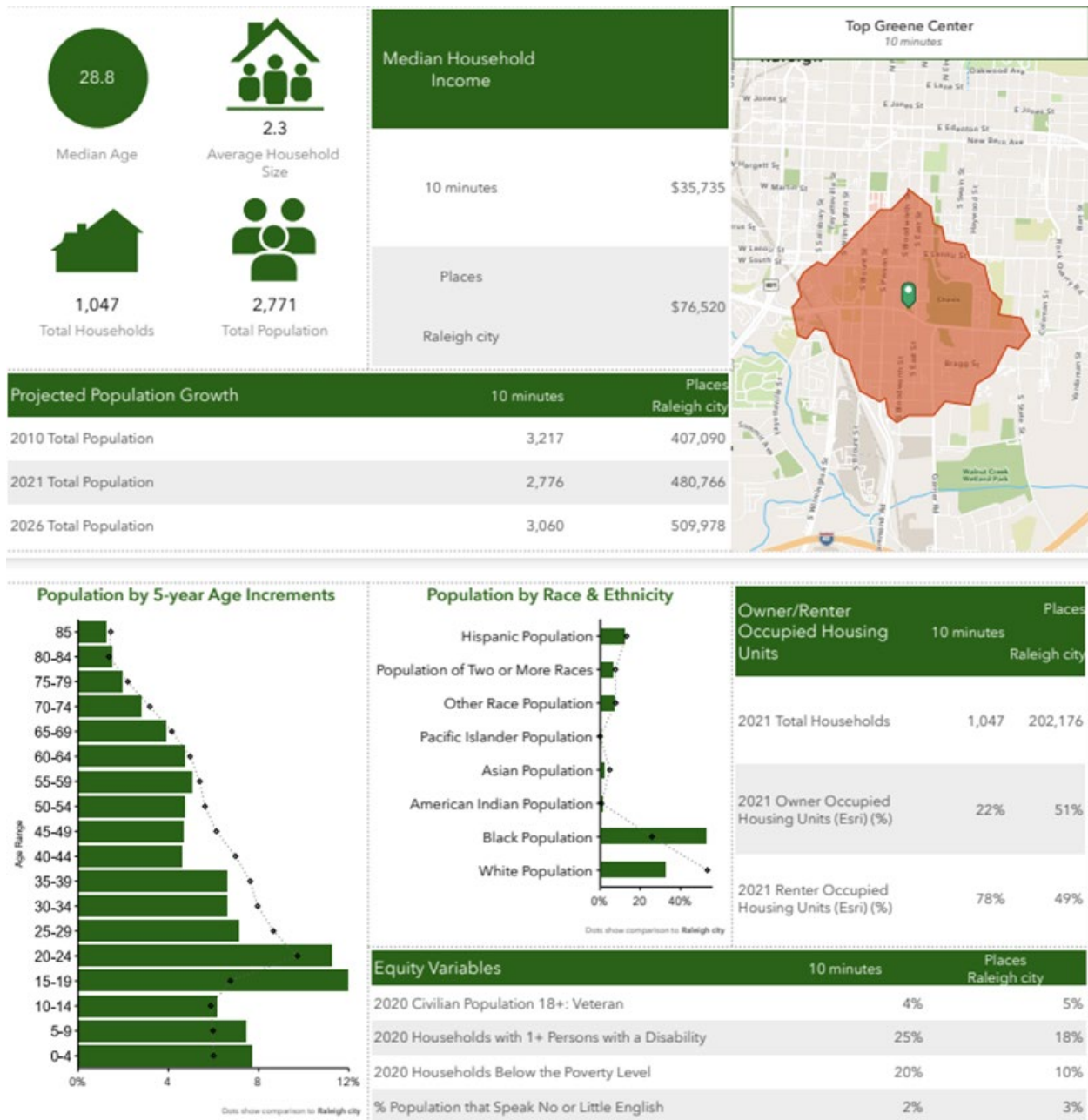


**Figure 7: 5-Minute Drive Demographics**

- There are 32,949 people (13,061 households) within a five-minute drive from John P “Top” Greene Center and SPHW Park, based on 2021 data.
  - By 2026, this population is expected to increase to 36,747, representing a 10% increase.
- This population has a median household income of \$50,082, less than the city-wide median of \$76,520.

- 14% of households are below the poverty line, as compared to 10% city-wide.
- The white population and Black population in this area is roughly equal. The Black population exceeds the City average, while the white population is lower than the City average.
- With regard to age distribution, there is a even spike in the over-20 and under-40 years age groups. There is a small decline in distribution of ages in both the over-40 and under 65-year adult population, with a fairly even distribution in the under-20 age groups.
  - Population starts to decrease within the over-65-year groups.
- There is a significantly higher level of renters (68%), compared to owner-occupied housing units (32%).
- 23% of households have at least one person with a disability, compared to 18% city-wide.
- 3% of the population speaks limited to no English, equal to the 3% city-wide average.

# 10-Minute Walk Demographics



**Figure 8: 10 Minute Drive Demographics**

- There are 2,771 people (1,047 households) within a ten-minute walk from John P “Top” Greene Center, based on 2021 data.
  - By 2026, this population is expected to increase to 3,060, representing an 8% increase.
- This population has a median household income of \$35,735, less than half of the city-wide median of \$76,520.



- 20% of households are below the poverty line (10% city-wide).
- Population by race/ ethnicity shows a slightly higher percentage of Black population than White population with lower percentages of Hispanic and other races/ethnicities.
- There is a fairly even distribution of ages in both the over 20-24 and under 40-year adult population. There is also a fairly even distribution in the over 40-year age group, whereas there is a large distribution of the under 20 age distribution.
  - Population does not start to significantly decrease until the over 60-year groups.
- There is a very high level of renters (78%), compared to owner-occupied housing units (22%).
- 25% of households have at least one person with a disability, compared to 18% city-wide.
- 2% of the population speaks limited to no English, compared to the 3% city-wide average.

## **Community Engagement**

Community engagement fulfills the City’s commitment to Raleigh residents by defining goals, identifying the needs of communities, and determining key audiences. It creates an opportunity for City staff to ensure that the decisions made reflect the needs of residents and provides a platform for residents to guide decisions.

Public participation can lead to well-informed decisions by allowing decision-makers have complete information – in the form of community knowledge, values, and perspectives, obtained from the public – that can be applied to the decision-making process. Decisions that incorporate the perspectives and expertise of all stakeholders are more achievable and sustainable because they consider the needs and interests of all participants, including vulnerable, marginalized, and/or underserved populations. In addition, public participation helps participants better understand project impacts to their community and creates opportunities for participants to become invested in the project outcomes.

Raleigh Parks uses the *Public Participation Policy for Park Planning (January 2021)* to guide the community engagement process. This policy describes the roles and responsibilities of citizens and Raleigh Parks in working together to plan, design, and develop parks, greenways, and recreation facilities. It describes the situations in which the advice, aspirations, and concerns of Citizens are reflected in planning and development decisions and specifies circumstances in which Raleigh Parks does not seek public input. It also describes a set of principles and minimum provisions for public notification and comment that govern public participation processes organized by Raleigh Parks. This policy document is associated with the *Public Participation Playbook (July 2020)*, which provides guidance on best practices, operating procedures, template documents for use during park planning projects, and further describes roles and responsibilities for specific process formats.

## **Level of Participation**

Planning for the public engagement process is a crucial step in ensuring that engagement efforts are effective. Defining the goals and objectives for the public engagement process provides clarity about the engagement process. It is necessary to identify the role of the public and the level of its participation in the decision-making process to determine what type of public engagement is needed to reach decisions.

The **International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum** was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public’s role and the public participation goal that will drive the engagement process. Each level of public participation and the accompanying goal on the spectrum suggests that a commitment is being made to the public, and that the agency promises to take the identified action that will achieve the goal of the level selected.



*Figure 9: IAP2 Spectrum*

**This project will be using the Collaborate level of participation.** This emphasizes the partnership between community members and the City of Raleigh, wherein a level of decision-making control is delegated to the community involved. The City will partner with community members in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.

A cross-departmental project team was assembled to explore appropriate level of participation and identify external stakeholder groups for outreach and engagement for the John Chavis Memorial Park, South Park Heritage Walk, and John P. “Top” Greene Center projects.

This Community Context Situation Assessment has been developed to help the project team understand the social context of project areas and identify the best ways to effectively engage the community in a collaborative process.

## Community Stakeholders

The identified external and internal stakeholders for the Chavis/SPHW/Top Green projects are as follows (but not limited to):

### External:

- Area businesses
- Area renters and homeowners
- Faith-based community groups
- Former Central Citizen Advisory Council
- Former Public Leadership Group for John Chavis Memorial Park Master Plan
- K-12 Schools and day cares
- Park patrons and program registrants
- Raleigh Youth Council
- Shaw University
- South Park East Raleigh Neighborhood Association

- The Friends of Chavis

**Internal:**

- Planning & Development – Urban Projects Group
- Engineering Services – RDC
- Raleigh Parks – Arts and Historic Resources

**Key Collaborations:**

- Dix Strollway
- Bus Rapid Transit
- Stormwater Green Infrastructure
- Public Art

**Southeast Raleigh Outreach Methods for Chavis/SPHW/Top Green are as follows:**

- Online survey (Public Input)
- Mailer notifications
- Website
- Emails, newsletter, and/or social media
- Information table at neighborhood events
- Public Meetings and Education Programs
- Community Connectors program
- Paid media
- Participatory Decision-Making

## **Community Advisory Group**

The purpose of the Joint CAG is to represent community interests and validate and report design recommendations to the Parks, Recreation and Greenway Advisory Board (PRGAB) for review. The proposed designs will be presented to City Council for approval, along with the Board's recommendation.

The key responsibilities of the CAG members are to:

- Represent and consider the interests of the community
- Assist with public outreach and communication
- Review, analyze, prioritize and incorporate public input
- Provide constructive comments and shape agreements to advance design process
- Balance interests, resolve conflicts and collaborate in the development of schematic designs
- Expectations for the CAG members include:
- Attending and fully participating in CAG and public meetings
- Working as team players

- Respecting and seeking to comprehend the perspectives of others
- Encouraging free-thinking and focusing on problem solving
- Communicating with represented community groups and keeping group members informed of project progress
- Providing at least one means of contact for timely communication, such as email or phone number

The estimated public engagement duration for the Chavis/SPHW/Top Green projects are anticipated for a duration of 20-24 months and will include the following Public Touchpoints:

- 8 meeting with the Joint CAG
- 3 interactive public input events
- 2 informative public events

In addition to community representation for the CAG, the following Boards and Commission will have representatives on the Joint CAG:

- Arts Commission (CORAC)
- Historic Resources and Museum Advisory Board (HRBAB)
- Parks, Recreation and Greenway Advisory Board (PRGAB)

### **Joint Community Advisory Group – Potential Members**

14 Joint CAG applications were received by the September 28, 2023, deadline. The *Public Participation Playbook* recommends choosing 5 – 12 residents, depending on project scope, who are of different races, incomes, and educational backgrounds. Other criteria include residency in the service area of the park; a willingness to commit the time to attend meetings; having an interest in the park and its uses; and embody diverse demographics and interests.

A selection panel, composed of PRGAB members and City board members shortlisted a recommended list of CAG applicants in early October 2023. Raleigh Parks will present the potential member list to the Parks, Recreation and Greenway Advisory Board (PRGAB) on October 19, 2023. There, the PRGAB Board Members will approve the recommended applicants to City Staff and City Staff will present the PRGAB Board recommendation to City Council for final approval on November 7, 2023.

In addition to community members, the CAG membership will include two member representatives from PRGAB and three members from other City Boards.

### **Recommended Joint CAG Membership – Public Members**

Angela Carter

Andrew Dames

Megan Kaufmann

Will Kiley

Dr. Candace Laughinghouse

Carol Love

Alicia McGill



Keyunda Miller – McCollum  
Patsy Smith Morgan  
Ashley Moser  
Frances Lonnette Williams  
Rob Wylie  
Cecilia Zuvic

### **PRGAB Representatives**

Jeff Havener  
Kara Strang

### **Other City Board Representatives**

Celise Bravo – Taylor – Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC)  
Wanda Cox – Bailey – Historic Resources Museums Advisory Board (HRMAB)  
Derek Ham – Public Arts D Board (PADB)

### **Next Steps**

Raleigh Parks will be presenting the Situation Assessment and CAG member recommendations to the Parks, Recreation and Greenway Advisory Board in October 2023.

Following the Board’s approval and the finalization of the City’s contract with the design consultant team, the community engagement and schematic design process will officially kick off in Fall 2023. This process will involve gathering the community’s feedback during subsequent public meetings and online surveys, in an effort to produce a design both the community and City can embrace.

### **Project Timeline:**

- RFP Ad and community engagement facilitator selection – May 2023-August 2023
- RFQ Ad and Designer Consultant Selection – June-July 2023
- Draft Consultant Scope and Fee Negotiation – August-September 2023
- Consultant Contract Execution – October 2023
- Situation Assessment presentation and CAG Approval – October 2023
- Community Engagement – Fall 2023 – Fall 2024
- Schematic Design - Fall 2023 – Fall 2025
- Design Development, Construction Documents, and Permitting –Fall 2024-2025
- Construction Bidding – Fall 2025
- Construction – 2026-2028

### **Appendices**

**CAG Questionnaire**

## *Raleigh Parks is seeking members for a joint Community Advisory Group!*

*Due to the physical proximity and shared interests of three Raleigh Parks Bond projects - John Chavis Memorial Park - Phase 2, South Park Heritage Walk, and John P. "Top" Greene Community Center - one joint CAG will be created to represent community interests.*

### **Background and Project Description**

The voter-approved 2022 Parks Bond includes the following projects in the Southeast Raleigh community:

- John Chavis Memorial Park Phase 2 Development
  - New aquatic center development
  - Heritage Plaza improvement
- John "Top" Greene Center Improvements
  - Building renovation and expansion
  - Site enhancement
- South Park Heritage Walk Implementation
  - Approximately 2.6 miles of pedestrian circulation
  - Interpretive and public art amenities
  - Streetscape enhancement

In order to conduct an efficient and productive community engagement process for these three significant projects with overlapping service areas, the City of Raleigh Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources (PRCR) Department proposes to establish a joint Community Advisory Group (CAG) which collaborates with city staff and professional consultants to ensure the proposed program and elements best meet the needs of the Southeast Raleigh community.

### **Purpose and Authority of the CAG**

The purpose of the Chavis-Top Greene-SPHW joint CAG is to represent community interests, validate and report design recommendations to Parks, Recreation and Greenway Advisory Board, Historic Resources and Museum Advisory Board and Arts Commission for review. The proposed schematic design of the three projects will be presented to City Council for approval along with the Boards' and Commission's recommendations.

### **CAG Communication**

Open communication is encouraged among the CAG members and between the members and the public. City staff project managers, assisted by a third-party facilitation consultant, serve as the primary point of contact for the CAG with regards to project communication such as feedback gathering, meeting logistics, minutes documentation and dissemination. City staff project managers are responsible for submitting proposed schematic designs for Boards, Commission and Council reviews and deliberation. CAG members may participate in or assist with presentations at Boards, Commission and Council meetings which are open to all CAG members and general public.

### **CAG Representation, Appointment, Withdrawal and Replacement**

The CAG membership is intended to be diverse and inclusive. It is comprised of a number of community members representing varying affected groups or individuals with interest in the proposed projects, reflective of the current demographics of the project area including age, race, gender, education background, professional and/or personal experience, interest, expertise and other relevant qualifications that may be related to the characteristic of the proposed projects.

Interested residents are encouraged to respond to the “CAG Interest Questionnaire” which is distributed through in-person and multi-media communication methods in the Southeast Raleigh neighborhoods as well as city-wide. A cross-departmental project team compiles and reviews volunteer information and presents its recommendation of membership selection to City Council for approval and appointment.

If a CAG member is no longer able to participate during the project process, he/she may withdraw from the CAG. The CAG determines whether the withdrawn member’s interests can be represented by the remaining members. If not, the CAG may recommend a replacement from the initial CAG interest questionnaire with the same interest group, organization or neighborhood.

### **CAG Responsibilities**

The key responsibilities of the CAG members are to:

- Represent and consider the interests of the community
- Assist with public outreach and communication
- Review, analyze, prioritize and incorporate public input
- Provide constructive comments and shape agreements to advance design process
- Balance interests, resolve conflicts and collaborate in the development of schematic designs

Expectations for the CAG members include:

- Attending and fully participating in CAG and public meetings
- Working as team players; Respecting and seeking to comprehend the perspectives of others.
- Encouraging free thinking and focus on problem solving
- Communicating with represented community groups and keep group members informed of project progress
- Providing at least one means of contact for timely communication such as email, phone number

### **Schedule and Duration**

The planning process is anticipated from spring 2023 through end of 2024. A series of CAG meetings will take place throughout the planning process along with general public engagement events. All members are expected to attend and fully participate in each CAG meeting, which is critical to void project delay or backtracking. Meeting time, location and format will be discussed with CAG members at the initial meeting. At least 50% of the meetings are expected to be held in person in order to encourage full engagement.

All CAG meetings will be open to observation by the public and is open to receive public comments. The CAG can also receive public comments in writing or via email.

**2022 Parks Bond  
Chavis-Top Greene-SPHW Joint Community Advisory Group (CAG)**

**CAG Interest Questionnaire**

The City of Raleigh Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department is soliciting volunteers to serve on a joint Community Advisory Group (CAG) for the following 2022 Parks Bond projects in Southeast Raleigh community.

- John Chavis Memorial Park Phase 2 Development
- John “Top” Greene Center Improvements
- South Park Heritage Walk Implementation

The CAG will be appointed by the Raleigh City Council as early as May 2023. The following information will assist in forming a diverse CAG that represents the potential users of these amenities. If you are interested in serving on this CAG, please complete the following questionnaire and return it via:

- Online form: <https://publicinput.com/chavisphase2>
- Email: [ParkPlan@raleighnc.gov](mailto:ParkPlan@raleighnc.gov)
- Mail: Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources, P.O. Box 590, Raleigh, NC 27602
- Drop off: 222 West Hargett Street, Suite 608, Raleigh, NC 27601
- Fill out the form in-person at:
  - John Chavis Memorial Park Communication Center, 505 Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard
  - John P “Top” Greene Community Center, 401 Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard
  - Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department, 222 West Hargett Street, Suite 608

**APPLICATIONS ARE DUE SEPTEMBER 28, 2023**

>>>>>>>>> **THANK YOU!** <<<<<<<<<<

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization/Neighborhood Represented: \_\_\_\_\_

Home address: \_\_\_\_\_

What is the best method to contact you?

- Telephone (personal):
- Telephone (work):
- Email address:
- Other:



1. Why do you want to serve on the CAG?
2. If you represent an organization or a civic group, what is the role of your organization or the group in the community?
3. If you represent a neighborhood, how would you describe the residents in your neighborhood? To what extent do you see that changing in the future?
4. Do you have special knowledge or experience in park planning or recreation programming, or special skills, interests or background that you feel would help the CAG? If so, please describe.
5. Please suggest other key individuals or organizations we should reach out to for potential CAG membership for these three projects.
6. Please share any other comments or ideas about the CAG and general community engagement for these three projects.

7. Are you a City of Raleigh resident?
- Yes
  - No
8. How long have you lived at your current address?
- Less than a year
  - 1 – 4 years
  - 5 – 9 years
  - 10+ years
9. Which age group describes you?
- Under 23
  - 24-54
  - Over 55
  - Prefer not to disclose
10. Which of the following describes your gender?
- Female
  - Male
  - Non-Binary
  - Prefer to Self-Describe: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Prefer not to disclose
11. Which of the following is the highest level of education you have completed?
- Less than high school graduate
  - High school diploma or equivalent (GED)
  - Special/Technical training (not college)
  - Some college (no degree)
  - Associate degree
  - Bachelor's degree
  - Graduate/Professional degree (Master's, PhD, Juris Doctor, etc.)
  - I prefer not to answer

12. Which of the following best describes your race?

- Asian
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- White
- Multi-racial
- Other
- Choose not to identify

13. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish ethnicity?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to disclose

14. What is the primary language you speak?

- English
- Spanish
- Other
- Choose not to identify

**SPHW Report**

[18 Top Greene-SPHW report.pdf](#)