



City of Raleigh

Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources



System Plan

your parks, your future

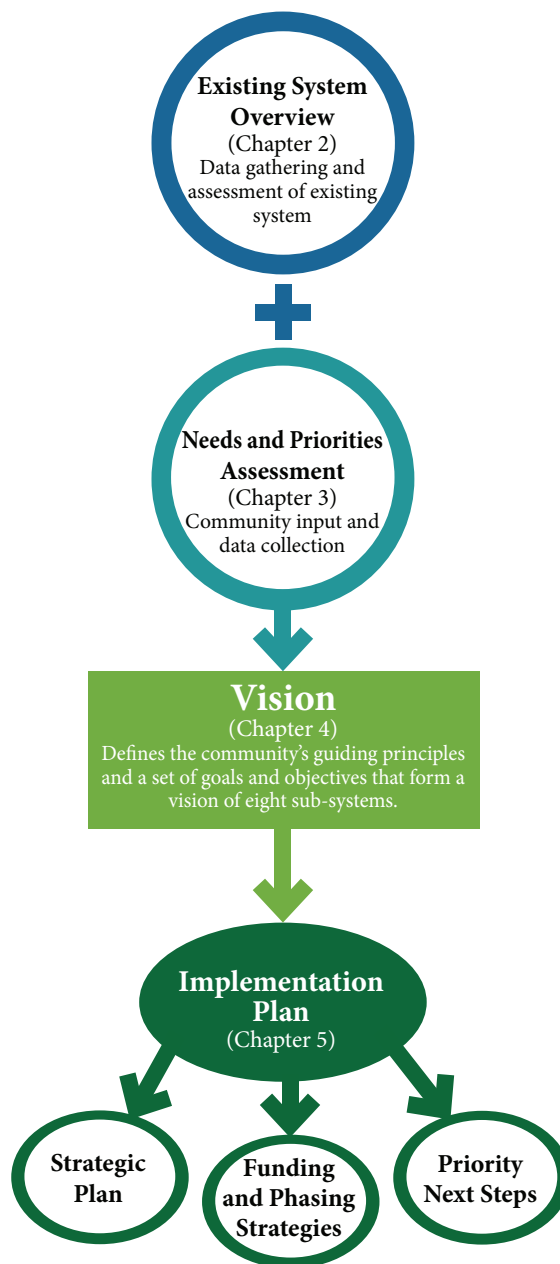




Purpose

Adopted in May, 2014, the City of Raleigh Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources System Plan (System Plan) is a supplement to the City of Raleigh 2030 Comprehensive Plan. Expanding upon the vision of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan, the System Plan is a long-range planning document that is meant to help shape the direction, development and delivery of the city's parks, recreation and cultural resource facilities and services over the next 20 years. The System Plan achieves this through a four-part process shown in the diagram to the right.

The planning process utilized extensive public engagement in the form of a City Council-appointed citizen Planning Committee, public engagement websites, social media, focus groups, a statistically valid survey and an online survey, community visioning workshops, community meetings and open houses, and outreach to boards and commissions including the Citizen Advisory Councils (CACs) to fully involve the community in each stage of the planning process.



System Plan Flow Chart



Existing System Overview

An overview of existing conditions was conducted in order to obtain an understanding of the physical, aesthetic and social characteristics of the existing City of Raleigh Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources System. Taken as a whole, the system has a number of successes and opportunities. Within the City of Raleigh there is a diverse system of over 128 parks, 47 staffed and non-staffed centers, 4 nature preserves, 9 public swimming pools, 82 open spaces, 2,150 programs, 104 miles of greenway trails, approximately 9,829 acres of parks and greenways, and 1.1 million square feet of park facilities with an average facility age of 38 years.



History of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources in Raleigh

The history of Raleigh parks can be organized into five periods: **The Formative Period** (1792-1941); **Consolidation and Refinement** (1942-1970); the **Expansion Era** (1971-1981); the **Open Space Era** (1982 – 2004); and the present **Collaborative Era** (2004 to present), which has been marked with further expansion of services and responsibilities for the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department.

City-wide Integration

Integration of the System Plan with adopted or on-going plans, studies and policies is vital. There are two levels of influencing documents: city and regional plans and ordinances and area or facility specific plans or studies. A sampling of significant guiding plans or documents reviewed include:

- 2030 Comprehensive Plan (2009)
- Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) 2013
- Bicycle Transportation Plan (2009)
- CAT and Wake County Transit Plans
- Senior Center Feasibility Study
- Strategic Plan for Historic Cemeteries
- Aquatics Facilities Study
- Capital Area Greenway Master Plan Update (1989)

Population and Demographic Overview

The City of Raleigh is growing and diversifying. The city needs to catch up to its past population growth and ensure that it is meeting the parks, recreation and cultural resource needs of its current residents equitably. At the same time, it is imperative that the city plans for future growth by acquiring additional parkland in advance of growth, particularly in urbanizing areas.

Existing Parks and Facilities Overview

An observational review of a sampling of the City of Raleigh's existing parks and facilities found the following successes and opportunities:

| Successes | Opportunities |
|---|---|
| Making parks green through sustainability | Leading by example with stormwater management |
| Appearance factor of maintenance | Economics of program flexibility |
| Increased use by connectivity | Universal accessibility |
| Making parks last with high quality | Leading with wayfinding |

Existing Greenways System Overview

Observational reviews of the Capital Area Greenway Network found the following successes and opportunities:

| Successes | Opportunities |
|---------------------------|---|
| Diverse user experience | Wayfinding for health and economic vitality |
| Navigation and wayfinding | Closing gaps and identifying alternatives |
| Connectivity and access | Programming and economic contributions |

Existing Programs and Services Overview

A review of existing programs and services offered by the Department found the following highlights:

- Successful operation of 11 core programs areas;
- Emphasis on arts, fitness and social programming;
- A healthy mix of programs at various life cycle stages;
- An equitable mix of programs for various age groups;
- Currently extensive use of printed material (Leisure Ledger) and the department's website for marketing information; and
- Streamline the department's website and program sign-up.



Needs and Priorities Assessment

The System Plan's team utilized innovative techniques to conduct a comprehensive city-wide needs and priorities assessment. Techniques used are a combination of industry best practices that provide a system of cross checks to determine the top needs and priorities for parks, recreation and cultural resources in the City of Raleigh.

Public participation forms the foundation of the research and provides a snap shot of the views of residents, stakeholders and elected officials for the vision as well as the needs and priorities of the City of Raleigh's Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources System. Three types of research, however, were utilized in a mixed methods, triangulated approach as part of the needs assessment process: observational; qualitative; and quantitative. Together these three types of research provided 13 techniques to cross-check results and better determine an accurate understanding of the City of Raleigh's needs and priorities for parks, recreation and cultural resource facilities. With the interaction of over 5,300 citizens through face-to-face meetings and surveys and over 12,000 citizens through on-line participation, the System Plan team gained a better understanding of the community's needs.

Through the compilation of findings from various research techniques, a number of parks, recreation and cultural resource needs and priorities emerged. The table below is an overview of the findings from each analysis technique for the top ten facility and activity needs of the community.



Citizen Priorities:

- **Maintain and enhance existing** parks, greenways and athletic fields;
- **Equitable distribution** of small, neighborhood parks with connections to sidewalks and greenways within one-mile of each resident;
- Better **greenway connectivity** to neighborhoods with hierarchy of types and functions;
- Highest priority programs are **fitness and wellness**; history and museums; nature; aquatics; family, senior adult; performing arts; and lake-related activities;
- Focus on **improving and reinvigorating** existing facilities (athletic fields, tennis) and parks;
- Develop new **urban lifestyle-based parks** and greenway connection options for urbanizing areas with immediate and long-term solutions;
- Identify future **natural lands** for preservation and provide an equitable distribution of nature parks;
- Provide **better coordination with schools** for educational curriculum recreation programs and greenway connection options;

Top Ten Community-wide Park and Recreation Facilities and Activities Needs

● = Indicates Need

| Needs Assessment Techniques | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------|------------------------|----------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Facilities | | Existing Conditions Observations | Community Meetings | Focus Groups | Stakeholder Interviews | Online Website | Online Public Opinion Survey | Citizen Opinion and Interest Survey | Peer Comparison | High Level Lifestyle Analysis | Recreation Programs and Services Assessment | Acreage Level of Service Analysis |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Facilities | Smaller Neighborhood Parks | | ● | ● | ● | | ● | ● | | ● | | ● |
| | Greenway Trails | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | ● |
| | Dog Parks | | ● | ● | | ● | | ● | ● | ● | | ● |
| | Outdoor Pools | | ● | ● | | | ● | | | ● | | ● |
| | Tennis Courts | | ● | ● | | ● | ● | | ● | | | ● |
| | Picnic Areas/ Shelters | | ● | | | ● | | | | | | ● |
| | Nature Preserves | | ● | ● | | | | ● | ● | | | ● |
| | Restrooms | ● | ● | ● | | | | ● | | | | ● |
| | Indoor Pools | | | | | | | ● | ● | ● | | ● |
| | Accessible Playgrounds | ● | | ● | | ● | | | | | | ● |
| Activities | Fitness and Wellness | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | |
| | Lake-Related | ● | | ● | | ● | ● | ● | | ● | | |
| | Senior Adults | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | ● | | |
| | Aquatics | ● | ● | ● | | | ● | | ● | | | |
| | Performing Arts | | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | ● | | |
| | Adult Sports | ● | ● | ● | | ● | ● | | | ● | | |
| | Nature | ● | ● | ● | | ● | | ● | ● | ● | | |
| | Social | | | ● | | ● | | | | ● | | |
| | Before/ After School | ● | ● | ● | | | | ● | | | | |
| | Volunteer Opportunities | | | | | | | ● | | ● | | |

Vision

Launched in May 2013, the visioning effort for the city's parks, recreation and cultural resources began with an extensive series of public sessions held during a week-long community workshop. Hundreds of residents attended a kick-off event, various workshop sessions, and a closing session that provided stations for each theme with recorded notes, highlights of findings and a presentation for review. The System Plan is based on the input of participants from this workshop and from the needs and priorities assessment. The visioning efforts balanced community input with strategic direction provided by guiding documents to develop a new vision. This vision strives to integrate the parks, recreation and cultural resources system into the city's infrastructure, while also addressing evolving trends and changing needs of the community. This vision can be summarized in the following vision statement:

The City of Raleigh's vision for its parks, recreation and cultural resources system is 'bringing people to parks and parks to people.' It is a system that addresses the needs of all and fosters a community of creativity, engagement, healthy lifestyles, and welcoming neighborhoods. In addition to providing traditional, high quality parks, recreation and cultural facilities and programs, the city uses innovative initiatives to reach all residents, workers and visitors.



The shared beliefs and qualities most valued by residents of Raleigh come together to form a set of **guiding principles** for the parks, recreation and cultural resources system. These seven principles shape the goals of the system's vision and the provision of parks, recreation and cultural facilities and services throughout the city:

- Connectivity and Accessibility
- Equitable Distribution
- Continuous Reinvestment
- Collaboration and Coordination
- Balanced Experience
- Innovation
- Communication and Engagement

Helping to guide the implementation of the vision, a series of 25 goals with corresponding objectives were developed in accordance with the guiding principles. These goals and objectives are organized into eight broadly defined areas or 'sub-systems' that reflect the unique qualities of the city's parks, recreation and cultural resources and include:

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| • Parks | • Programs and Services |
| • Natural Environments | • Arts |
| • Greenways | • Historic Resources |
| • Athletics | • Growth Centers |

Collectively these sub-systems form a rich, vibrant and dynamic system that contributes to a high quality of life for all residents and furthers the achievements of Raleigh's overall vision. Each sub-system's goals and objectives were developed through community input and an analysis of the existing system. The 25 goals express the broad intent of each sub-system, while accompanying objectives provide measurable indicators of progress consistent with the City's 2030 Comprehensive Plan's vision, themes and policies. The objectives are intended to evolve over time in response to changing trends, needs and community goals.





City of Raleigh

Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources

Vision - Subsystems



Parks

As a major contributor to the sense of community and quality of life, parks provide residents, workers and visitors an opportunity to refresh, explore and play. Parks also contribute significant economic and environmental benefits to the community. Meeting local needs through park-based facilities and programs is the foundation of 'bringing people to parks and parks to people.'

Goals

Goal 1: The City of Raleigh will develop high-quality parks available within walking distance of homes or places of employment.

Goal 2: The City of Raleigh will identify and address needs for high quality parks facilities and programs.



Natural Environments

The city owns and manages thousands of acres of parks, natural areas and greenways. These lands and their corridors provide wildlife habitat, improve water quality, reduce stormwater runoff, lower surrounding air temperatures, and provide outdoor recreation and educational opportunities throughout the city.

Goals

Goal 1: The City of Raleigh will continue to expand residents' awareness of the environmental, economic and social benefits of natural areas.

Goal 2: The City of Raleigh will continue to protect, enhance, and expand natural environment areas.

Goal 3: The City of Raleigh will balance the protection of natural environments while continuing to provide appropriate public access and use.

Goal 4: The City of Raleigh will provide access to outdoor recreation and adventure opportunities throughout the city.



Greenways

The city's greenway system, known as the Capital Area Greenway (CAG), is one of the city's most valued assets. Residents consistently rank the enhancement and expansion of the CAG as one of their top priorities. Balancing the protection of thousands of acres of natural areas while providing access to an interconnected network of greenway trails, this system is a framework for environmental protection, recreation opportunities and transportation infrastructure.

Goals

Goal 1: The City of Raleigh will protect and enhance vegetation, wildlife and wildlife habitat and the waterways along linear natural environment areas.

Goal 2: The City of Raleigh will improve connectivity and accessibility to greenway corridors and greenway trails throughout the city.

Goal 3: The City of Raleigh will enhance existing greenway trails to provide a high quality system consistent with trail user needs and priorities.



Athletics

Athletic programs and facilities in the City of Raleigh continue to provide opportunities for residents to enjoy a healthy and active lifestyle while promoting affordable family-friendly activities. Growth throughout the community has increased a need for additional athletic facilities with equitable distribution. Investments in athletic facilities and special venues can promote redevelopment and economic growth opportunities consistent with the city's overall vision.

Goals

Goal 1: The City of Raleigh will continue to provide athletic venues for every resident to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Goal 2: The City of Raleigh will continue to promote the community as a premier athletic venue destination where residents and visitors can compete, stay active and healthy, and enjoy amenities of the region.



City of Raleigh

Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources

Vision - Subsystems



Programs and Services

Programs and services offered by the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department meet a variety of needs and priorities to foster a creative, healthy and accessible community.

Goals

Goal 1: The City of Raleigh will provide opportunities for every resident to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Goal 2: The City of Raleigh will improve outreach and foster a welcoming multi-cultural environment.

Goal 3: The City of Raleigh will identify and eliminate barriers to participation in parks, recreation and cultural programs for preschool, youth and teens of all abilities throughout the city.

Goal 4: The City of Raleigh will provide inclusive and independent spaces, facilities and programs that are accessible to all residents regardless of ability and age.

Goal 5: The City of Raleigh will continue to promote the community as a premier retirement destination where residents can stay active and healthy; enjoy amenities of the Triangle area; have access to high quality health resources; and enrich the community through business, social, and volunteer activities.

Arts

In 2012, City Council stated a goal for Raleigh to be the 'The Southern Capital for Arts and Culture,' by integrating visual and performing arts throughout the city. While the city will continue to support and promote traditional venues such as museums, galleries and performance centers, it will also strive to make art more accessible to residents through non-traditional venues such as parks, squares, greenways and natural areas to enhance residents' quality of life.

Goals

Goal 1: The City of Raleigh will be a national leader in supporting the arts.

Goal 2: The City of Raleigh will make art more accessible to residents through traditional and non-traditional venues and partnerships.

Goal 3: The City of Raleigh will nurture the growth of Raleigh's creative community to promote entrepreneurship and innovation.



Historic Resources

The city's history is interpreted by the Department with the purpose of protecting and programming museum and historical resource facilities, programs, and other cultural assets. In addition, the city oversees three of Raleigh's oldest public cemeteries as well as several smaller, unmarked grave site properties throughout the city. Weaving together these historic assets can be used to develop a compelling and engaging city-wide narrative.

Goals

Goal 1: The City of Raleigh will continue to support historic resource preservation, protection and acquisition.

Goal 2: The City of Raleigh will interpret the community's history through its historic properties, museums and programs in such a way as to attract more use and visitation while balancing stewardship and conservation of resources.

Goal 3: The City of Raleigh will continue to support, preserve and restore the city's historic cemeteries.

Goal 4: The City of Raleigh will support the interpretation of our historic public cemeteries in a manner that will ensure stewardship and conservation of these valuable resources.



Growth Centers

The City of Raleigh's demographics, development patterns, and lifestyles are changing as the city continues to urbanize. Residents are moving into downtown Raleigh and other growth centers to enjoy the benefits of an urban lifestyle, including decreased dependence on automobiles; enhanced walkability; reduced commute times; and easy access to shopping, restaurants, cultural venues and events. This trend is important to recognize as parks, recreation and cultural needs differ between urban and suburban areas. Household sizes are smaller and there is a higher demand for accessible open spaces in urban areas, while the high cost of urban land requires more compact and efficient solutions.

Goals

Goal 1: The City of Raleigh will provide adequate park and open spaces within urbanizing areas of the city.

Goal 2: The City of Raleigh will respond to urban lifestyle needs with attractive, flexible, high quality functional urban parks, plazas and open spaces.



Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan continues to work with the eight sub-systems defined during the visioning phase by propagated each with action items that work together and individually. Action items are defined by the department and are meant to be reviewed, revised and implemented on a regular basis. Each action item is a progression of a goal and measurable objective and may require the allocation of additional capital or operational funding. Many of the action items included in the strategic plan came out of ideas first heard through public meetings, surveys, and on-line comments. Additional action items have been developed to ensure that the needs and priorities identified in the assessment are met. In all cases, these action items are tied to a defined goal and objective.

Strategic Plan

At the center of the Implementation Plan is a 'living' Strategic Plan that concentrates on the implementation of the vision, goals and objectives, and guiding principles through four critical components: action items; establishment of timeframes for implementation; identification of partnerships; and projection of short-term capital costs. Individual action items are tied to public input gathered and documented throughout the needs and priorities assessment. Priority of individual action items are tied to public input gathered and documented throughout the needs and priorities assessment. Together, these four components will allow the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department to review and as needed, efficiently revise the strategic plan to reflect changing conditions, demographics or needs.

In addition to the eight sub-systems' action items, certain administrative responsibilities are required in order to fully implement each action. These administrative responsibilities focus on customer service and organizational excellence included in the following categories:

- Talent Acquisition
- Technology
- Public Outreach and Marketing
- Safety and Risk Management
- Business Services

The Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department has experienced an increased need to partner with other government agencies, non-profits and businesses to

provide innovative solutions to a growing list of needs. The Department will continue to work with existing partners and seek appropriate new partners to help fulfill needs.

Priority projects have been identified with public input that reflect citizens' needs, as well as, department staff capital improvements analysis of park sites, facilities, greenway and other infrastructure needs. Priority capital implementation projects have been grouped into four categories: Park and Facility Improvements; Cultural Resources; Greenways; and Land Acquisition and Development shown in the table below.

Proposed Capital Implementation Projects

| Park and Facility Implementation Projects | |
|--|----------------------|
| Project | Estimated Cost |
| Brentwood Neighborhood Center and Park | \$2,000,000 |
| Apollo Heights Neighborhood Center and Park | \$600,000 |
| Kiwanis Neighborhood Center and Park | \$700,000 |
| Eastgate Neighborhood Center and Park | \$600,000 |
| John Chavis Memorial Park | \$12,500,000 |
| Walnut Creek Athletic Complex Improvements | \$5,000,000 |
| Walnut Creek Wetland Park Improvements | \$1,000,000 |
| Moore Square Improvements | \$15,000,000 |
| System-wide ADA Improvements | \$2,000,000 |
| Aquatic Facilities Improvements | \$8,000,000 |
| Building System Upgrades | \$2,025,000 |
| Sport and Outdoor Site Lighting Upgrades | \$4,000,000 |
| Playground Upgrades and Replacement | \$2,500,000 |
| Shelley Lake Comfort Station | \$500,000 |
| Cultural Resources Projects | |
| Historic Site Improvements | \$1,500,000 |
| New Pullen Art Center | \$6,000,000 |
| Greenway Projects | |
| Miscellaneous Greenway Improvements | \$7,200,000 |
| Neighborhood and Community Connections | \$1,000,000 |
| Trenton Road Greenway Trail | \$1,000,000 |
| Lassiter Mill/ Allegheny Trail Improvements | \$2,000,000 |
| Crabtree Creek Connection to Umstead State Park | \$4,400,000 |
| Land Acquisition and Development | |
| Land Acquisition | \$10,000,000 |
| Bailewick Community Center (new) | \$12,000,000 |
| Lineberry Neighborhood Park | \$1,250,000 |
| Capital Blvd. (Devereux Meadows & North Blvd Park) | \$2,000,000 |
| Perry Creek (Joint with WCPSS) | \$2,000,000 |
| Total: | \$106,775,000 |

2014 Cost Estimates

Funding and Phasing Strategies

Historically, the Department has relied on a combination of funding from the city's General Fund, Park Facility Fee (a type of impact fee) and Park Bond proceeds to fund the majority of capital improvement projects undertaken. With the largest portion, the bond proceeds, nearing completion, the Department will need to seek additional funding sources and support in order to keep up with growth and address unmet needs of the existing system.

Implementation of the action items will require on-going detailed planning of three primary factors: priority level; available funding; and responsible party(ies). All three factors must be monitored and continuously evaluated. In addition to new capital improvement projects, it is recommended that the Department quantify deferred maintenance costs and prioritize needs.

Three categories have been established for the completion of individual action items; short-term (1-5 year priority actions); medium-term (up to 10 years); and long-term (over 10 years before completion). Priority projects have been identified with public input that reflect citizens' needs, as well as, department staff capital improvements analysis of park sites, facilities, greenway and other infrastructure needs. Each priority project advances a Strategic Plan action items with a short-term timeframe.

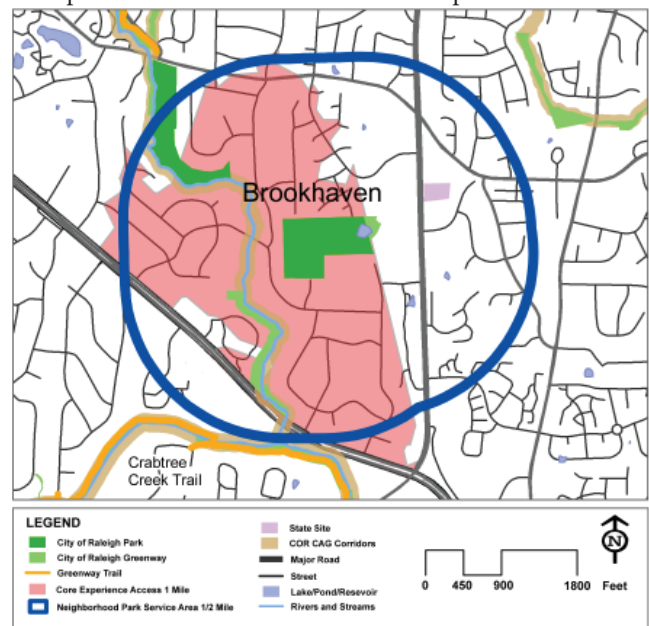


Priority Next Steps

As direct actions requested through public input, a number of short-term Action Items are currently in progress by the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department. These projects include the development of additional criteria and planning initiatives that will have system-wide impacts such as the example below of new computer-based access evaluations that respond to the community's development patterns. Many help in the implementation of other short-term action items as well. More importantly, these next steps will advance the citizens' vision for the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources system.

Many next step items are planning-oriented; however, in order to enhance existing and develop new facilities that meet citizens' changing needs, innovative solutions are required. The most important next step is the movement by the Department to an on-going evaluation of providing experiences inherent to parks, recreation and cultural resources rather than a static snapshot of the number of facilities and acreage provided. These critical projects increase the department's knowledge of the overall system while ensuring citizens' needs and priorities are met and the City of Raleigh remains one of the most livable, family-friendly in the nation.

Computer-based Access Evaluation Example





Additional Information

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System Plan
your parks, your future

AECOM