

OPERATIONS

CHAPTER FOUR

INTRODUCTION

The three previous chapters highlight many operational areas that should be considered as elements of the Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan are implemented. These areas are program areas of focus, park improvements, new parks, new trails, and mentions of policies and procedures that are needed to ensure a successful delivery of parks and recreation services in Woodstock. Newly developed and approved policies for the Recreation Division, including the Recreation Program Plan, and Parks and Trails Division, including the Maintenance Program Plan, as well as many procedures for maintaining playgrounds, trails, and planning have been developed and approved, and cover several operational needs and future considerations. There is no need to duplicate in this plan. What is true, is that new parks, facilities, and programs, require additional staff, additional funding, and additional support. Highlighted in Chapter Four: Operations are suggestions for consideration as Woodstock continues to grow and the parks and recreation system becomes more extensive. The snapshot below highlights the current parks and trails that are maintained by the Woodstock Parks and Recreation Department, as well as some undeveloped areas that will need to be taken into consideration when looking at future operations.

6.1 LIST OF PARKS AND TYPES

The parks and trails below are maintained by the Woodstock Parks and Recreation Department, there are other parks and maintained properties in Woodstock managed by HOA's, Cherokee County Recreation and Parks, Public Works, as well as private and club parks that maintain amenities available to the community.

Neighborhood Park	Community Park	Regional Park	Greenprints Trail
Downtown Playground, .61 acres Springfield Park, 2 acres	Dupree Park, 27.05 acres Community Garden, 2.45 acres Woodstock Park, 5.35 acres Park @ City Center, 3.77 acres	Olde Rope Mill, 267.5 acres	Noonday Creek, 1.48 mi Towne Lake Pass, 1.94 mi Rubes Creek, .7 mi Trestle Rock, .47 mi Serenade, .24 mi
2.61 acres	38.62 acres	267.5 acres	4.83 miles / 5.85 acres

Undeveloped Land	Biking & Hiking Trail	Recreation Facility	Other Property
Rubes Creek Extension, 22 acres Dupree Park Extension, 2 acres Little River Park, 99.43 acres Meritage Trailhead, .33 acres Johnston Property, 16 acres Noonday Creek Extension, 2.5 mi Trestle Rock Extension, 1.22 mi Dobbs Road, 2.99 acres	Taylor Randahl MTB, 12.08 mi <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avalanche, 5.05 mi Explorer, 2.57 mi The Mill, 4.46 mi Family Mountain Bike, .9 mi <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lions, .37 mi Tigers, .22 mi Bears, .16 mi Oh My, .15 mi Other Dupree Trails, .69 mi <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking Path, .35 mi Fitness Loop, .34 mi 	Senior Center Grounds Administration Grounds Maintenance Shop	Trail Corridor, 5-10 acres <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LOS Dependent Empty Lots, 2 acres
146.47 acres	13.67 miles / 4.97 acres	N/A	7-12 acres

Greenprints Trail = 10ft wide (concrete)

Biking & Hiking Trail – 3ft wide average (natural)

FUNDING SOURCE CONSIDERATIONS

Recognizing that a combination of implementation strategies and funding strategies will be used in order to construct projects recommended in this master plan and that funding requirements are continually changing, it is recommended that city representatives responsible for pursuing funding opportunities remain in regular contact with the state department officials to be advised of upcoming submission requirements.

STATE & FEDERAL LEVEL RESOURCES

Based on the program elements defined in the master plan and sources of capital funding traditionally used for park, recreation, and trail development in Georgia, the following options have been compiled for funding consideration.

GEORGIA OUTDOOR STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

The Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program is a grant program that provides funding to support parks and trails and provides stewardship and acquisition of critical conservation lands. Grant and loan funds are available for local governments, state agencies and non-governmental organizations with conservation missions. This program is administered through Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

GEORGIA WILDLIFE VIEWING GRANTS PROGRAM

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Wildlife Resources Division's Wildlife Viewing Grants Program provides small grants for wildlife viewing projects that increase awareness and appreciation of the state's nongame wildlife, rare native plants, and natural habitats, with an emphasis on species and habitats considered a high priority for conservation in the State Wildlife Action Plan. Grants are available for local governments, non-profit or not-for-profit organizations, and for-profit entities.

LAND & WATER CONSERVATION FUND

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) administers the Land & Water Conservation Fund. Funds through this program can be appropriated for the acquisition, development, and renovation of outdoor recreation areas across the state.

OUTDOOR RECREATION LEGACY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

The Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program (ORLP) is a national competitive park grant program with a specific focus on urban areas. This program is funded through the Department of the Interior, National Park Service, and administered by Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

RECREATION TRAILS PROGRAM

Administered by the Recreation Trails Program Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) provides funding for trail construction, trail maintenance, and trail education to city and county governments, federal agencies, authorized commissions, as well as state agencies.

EPA CLEAN WATER ACT NONPOINT SOURCE GRANT (SECTION 319 GRANTS)

Congress amended the Clean Water Act in 1987 to establish EPA's Section 319 Nonpoint Source Management Program to provide greater federal leadership in focusing state and local nonpoint source efforts. Under Section 319, states, territories, and Indian tribes receive grant money to support a wide variety of activities, including: technical and financial assistance, education and training, technology transfer, demonstration projects, and monitoring to assess the success of projects implemented under the grant. This program is administered by Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD).

EPA CLEAN WATER STATE REVOLVING FUND (CWSRF)

Administered by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD), the CWSRF program is a federal state partnership that provides communities a permanent, independent source of low cost financing for a wide range of water quality infrastructure projects, including stormwater and green infrastructure.

LIVABLE CENTERS INITIATIVE (LCI)

The LCI program seeks applications for projects that advance creative placemaking, affordable housing, green infrastructure, and smart city technology. This program is administered by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC).

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (CDAP)

Administered by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), the CDAP program seeks applications for projects that focus on one or more of the following priority areas: lifelong communities, historic preservation, green infrastructure, access to healthy food, affordable housing, workforce development, smart communities, and creative placemaking. Applications for 2021 are encouraged to focus on social equity and community resiliency.

TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES (TA) PROGRAM

A major source of federal funding for trails is through the Transportation Alternatives program. Activities eligible for TA funds include pedestrian and bicycle facilities, safe routes for non-drivers, safe routes to school and conversion of abandoned railway corridors to trails. These projects typically require a 20% local funding match which can be accomplished through in kind materials and services. The TA Program is administered at the state level by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT).

CONGESTION MITIGATION AND AIR QUALITY PROGRAM (CMAQ)

Funded by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transportation Administration and administered on the state level by Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), CMAQ funds are allocated for projects that improve air quality. Traditionally, this funding source has been used for pedestrian and non-recreational bicycle transportation infrastructure projects that result in the reduction of single occupant vehicle usage.

LOCAL LEVEL RESOURCES

SPECIAL PURPOSE LOCAL OPTION SALES TAX (SPLOST)

One of the most commonly used funding sources for capital projects is the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST). A SPLOST is a 1% sales tax used to fund capital projects proposed by county governments and participating qualified governments. SPLOST referendums are placed on the ballot by county governments, and as such, the county controls when and if this type of funding will become available. As part of the process, projects which are to be funded by the tax dollars collected must be identified prior to the vote so voters know what is to be constructed.

GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS

Cherokee County, Cobb County, along with the City of Brookhaven, City of Marietta, and many others have implemented bond programs in order to construct a wide variety of park and trail projects throughout their communities. Considered to be a financing mechanism rather than a revenue source, a variety of methods exist for funding the repayment of a bond. Funding can be from a single source, such as raising a portion of existing revenues. It can also come from a special fee added to a utility rate, or other similar fees that residents of a community are charged. Similar to the SPLOST process, projects to be funded by the bond program must be identified prior to voters going to the polls to vote.

OTHER RESOURCES

Additionally, options that have been used to fund the construction and maintenance of park and trail facilities include:

- Lodging, Car Rental and Liquor Excise Taxes
- Impact Fees
- Local Tax
- Public/Private Partnerships
- Crowd Sourcing
- Foundation and Non-Profit Grants
- User Fees, Non-Resident Fees and Park Access

Funding options and resources for park and trail projects is a changing and evolving environment. The sources listed above are traditionally resources that have been used to construct and maintain recreational facilities. It is highly recommended that city representatives remain in regular contact with state and county officials to be advised of upcoming funding opportunities and submission requirements.

OPERATIONS OVERVIEW & RECOMMENDATIONS

Currently the Woodstock Parks and Recreation Department manages seven (7) parks, 4.83 miles of paved trail, assists with 13.67 miles of biking and hiking trail, acres of undeveloped land, a senior center, administration office, and maintenance facility. The implementation of Little River Park and other potential projects discussed in this master plan will increase acreage, amenities, and provide for additional and varied programming and special events. Recognizing the City of Woodstock's recreational needs are changing and in preparation of the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA re-accreditation, the parks and recreation department undertook pro-active measures to establish a vision, along with guidelines that advanced existing maintenance procedures for maintaining park and trail facilities. The updated park and trail maintenance programs were adopted by Woodstock City Council on June 8, 2020 and addresses future maintenance needs for the department.

PARK & PROPERTY MAINTENANCE LEVELS

Taken from 7.0 PARK-01 Maintenance Program Plan

The purpose of this section is to set maintenance standards for all parks, trails, and other properties maintained by the Woodstock Parks and Recreation Department, with the goal of providing safe, functional, and aesthetically appealing parks and facilities. Properties are divided into service levels which take into consideration the level and type of park usage, location, type and size of landscapes, amenities, and facilities. Standards are considered optimal and assumes that all needed resources and manpower are available. Actual maintenance levels may be lower than listed and may fluctuate due to the availability of resources.

SERVICE LEVEL #1

Service Level #1 standards are high visibility parks that get a lot of usage. Some parks and trails have areas that are both Service Level #1 & #2 due to floodplain issues and/or are developed in an environmentally conscious area. Not all parks have all the amenities listed in the service level matrix below, but the standards are the same across the board for parks and trails that are in this category.

SERVICE LEVEL #2

Service Level #2 standards are more relaxed because of floodplain issues and/or other environmental concerns. These areas are highly visible but maintain a sense of nature and being outdoors, away from the city and is relaxing. Greenprints trails at minimum, follow Service Level #1 standards for mowing and upkeep for 3'-5' on either side of the trail system, and then extended or shorted as needed based on feedback from the parks and trail staff, city leadership, citizens, and/or the parks and recreation director's discretion. In reverse, 3'-5' from a streambank, fishing pond bank, streams, and creeks will follow Service Level #2 standards. These standards not only project the feeling of being in nature, but also help protect watersheds and control erosion. Native grasses and plantings over time, when funded, will be used in these areas to assist with the environmental efforts and beautify the areas.

SERVICE LEVEL #3

Service Level #3 standards apply to undeveloped areas that the Woodstock Parks and Recreation Department maintains. These areas are typically not accessible to the public. Maintenance is conducted as needed to maintain safety and accessibility of parks and trail staff, contractors, and consultants who are working on master planning for the areas. Consistent maintenance helps control wildlife, homeless camps, trespassing, and keeps an appearance that shows the properties are care for thoughtfully, though not as pristine as the other parks and trail areas. Mowing and upkeep is done monthly at minimum, or as needed and decided by staff to institute a comfort level of accessing the property.

All service level details are found in PARK-01 Maintenance Program Plan, in addition to a variety of park maintenance standards and operating procedures.

INSPECTIONS & UPKEEP

The parks and recreation staff utilize the City Reporter Inspection (CRI) cloud-based program for the management of work orders and inspections. CRI assists the department with streamlining work flow and communication. This program manages and documents regularly scheduled inspections and completed repairs.

The maintenance, upkeep, and thoughtful planning of the parks system will directly affect the park and trail users experience. The parks and recreation staff has taken proactive actions to develop and implement guidelines, standards, and process to:

1. Provide each employee, volunteer, or contractor with a learning tool which will guide them in doing an effective and efficient job in the maintenance of the city's parks and trail system.
2. Provide all personnel with a guide for interpreting policies and procedures related to the delivery of services within parks and facilities managed by the Woodstock Parks and Recreation Department.

The guidelines, standards, and processes that have been established are considered to be a living plan that will be reviewed and updated annually to ensure that citizen's park and trail needs are being met and that users being provided with a safe and enjoyable experience.

COST RECOVERY & RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Revenues generated for parks and recreation services are expressed as a percentage of the operating costs and reported as the Cost Recovery Rate. The implementation of financial sustainability practices in the form of revenue and pricing policies, has risen in importance with parks and recreation agencies across the country. Best practice agencies establish a philosophical basis for revenue recovery rates that vary by program type, service level tier, and population serviced with fees based on the cost of service. Revenues collected by communities for parks and recreation services can be used to offset the cost of operating the parks and recreation agency. The following suggests the national average of revenue generating programs across the country. The information shows the source of revenue and the percentage of direct revenue that source generates. Together, all sources are approximately 100%.

1. Programs & Class Fees, 62.5%
2. Facility Entry Fees & Memberships, 14.6%
3. Facility Rentals, 11.8%
4. Concession & Resale, 10.6%
5. Facility and Property Leases, 2%
6. Other, 0.4%
7. Sale of Property, 0%

Programs drive revenue in parks and recreation. The City of Woodstock has offered special events and senior center programs for many years, and in 2020 began offering more recreational programming and managing registrations, revenue, and participation in all activities. The department offers a wide variety of programs and recreational opportunities but after careful analysis, data shows the lack of facilities and staffing levels are preventing growth and preventing the parks and recreation department from fully meeting the resident's needs. As the city continues to grow, the need for additional programming space and staff will be critical to maintaining current revenue generation levels.

Revenue generation at park facilities is highest at indoor facilities that operate on a year round basis. Woodstock should balance the development of indoor facilities to offset the cost of operating facilities such as greenways and playgrounds that have little to no revenue generating potential. New recreation centers should include spaces that can be programmed and rented for revenue generation. Sponsorships, naming rights, and grants are also important sources that should not be excluded in the Cost Recovery Rate Calculation.

The amended 2020-2021 general fund operating budget for parks and recreation was established taking into consideration programs trips at the William G. Long Senior Center that was not budgeted before, the addition of new contract instructors, and new recreation programs nor offered in years prior. The percentages are as budgeted but due to Covid-19 will not be realized, but proper planning in FY 2021-2022 and for many years thereafter should result in desirable results.

FY 2020-2021 Amended and Budgeted Revenue (General Fund)	\$288,340.17
FY 2020 – 2021 Amended and Budgeted Expense (General Fund)	\$1,833,966.71
FY 2020 – 2021 Budgeted Cost Recovery (General Fund)	15.7%

1. Sponsorships, 29%
2. Senior Center Programs, 33%
3. Concessions, 5%
4. Recreation & Special Events, 15%
5. Naming Rights, 10%
6. Rentals, 5%
7. Re-Sale, 0.2%

The national benchmark for parks and recreation agencies is 40-60% a Cost Recovery Rate, but the national average may be approximately 25% for most agencies. Cherokee County Recreation and Parks and the time of their 2019 – 2028 master plan, they achieved a 51% Cost Recovery Rate. With the addition of new parks, trails, recreational facilities, rentals of the Northside Hospital-Cherokee Amphitheater, accurate accounting, and management of the William G. Long Senior Center, and with the addition of new recreation programming, the Cost Recovery Rate will increase and help offset operational costs. Specific goals shall be established to increase Cost Recovery in all programming, concessions, and rentals.

REVENUE POLICY & PRICING STRATEGY

The City of Woodstock does not have a set revenue policy to guide the pricing of recreation programs, though the department does consider cost recovery with new recreation programs and with new management of the William G. Long Senior Center. The senior center is membership based so the Recreation Coordinator offsets many of the programs, either 50% or 100% using membership revenue as a reference. Trips and larger programs not considered a membership benefit recover 100% of costs, while contract instructor programs give the city 20% of revenues with 80% being paid to the instructor each month. In general, for recreation programs, coordinators program to recover at minimum 40% for revenue generating programs. It is recommended the parks and recreation department establish a revenue policy and set an expectation for cost recovery where necessary and offset more costs.

Revenue policies define tiered service levels such as basic services, supplemental services, and special facilities with fees set to recover a specified percentage of the cost to deliver the service. Tiered service levels address both the populations served, and the level of exclusivity of the use. For example, the Cost Recovery Rate for an exercise class as a part of a senior program may be less than the Cost Recovery Rate for an adult exercise class. Field Usage policies for different group types is another strategy, and another example, a pavilion rental by a private company would be considered an exclusive use and would be expected to cover all costs, at a minimum.

RECREATION OVERVIEW & RECOMMENDATIONS

Recreation programs are an essential component of any recreation agency. With a good balance of offerings, programming greatly benefits the people of the community by enhancing their overall health and quality of life. However, there has to be a strong commitment to providing diverse recreation programs to function effectively as a modern park and recreation agency. Unlike most other governmental agencies, recreation and park staff engage and interact with the people of the community daily and on a more personal level. Programming encourages people to interact with one another. A variety of recreation opportunities exist, both passive and active, and Woodstock Parks and Recreation encourages all residents and visitors to play in the parks, attend a special event, and participate in a wide variety of recreation programs for all ages.

The parks and recreation staff pro-actively developed a comprehensive REC-01 Recreation Program Plan to guide the staff in planning programs and will not be repeated in this master plan. As with the Parks & Trails Division, the Recreation Division is planning to grow and preparing to offer a wide ranging catalog of programs and events for the City of Woodstock Residents. The programs are separated into 4 overall categories and coordinators develop sub-categories and then organize programs, so they are easily found online and for easy reporting for parks and recreation administration staff. The categories are Community Resources, Recreation Programs, Special Events, and William G. Long Senior Center. These categories were created in response to surveys and in preparation for the development of this Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan and is part of the first phase of the accompanying 2021-2025 Strategic Plan.

Community Resources	Recreation Programs	Special Events	WGLSC Senior Center
Commemorative Items	Discovering Recreation	Hosted Events & Races	Activities & Clubs
Life South Blood Drives	AMPED in the Park	Special Events	Health/Wellness/Fitness
	Brown Bag Concerts	Summer Concert Series	Lessons & Instruction
	Clubs & Meetup Groups		Luncheons & Lunch Bunch
	Essential Gardening		Trips
	Lessons & Instruction		
	Nature		
	Storytime Live!		
	TrailStory		
	Youth Sports		

Starting in January 2021 during the Covid-19 Pandemic and only partially operating, the parks and recreation department offered well over one hundred programs and at the completion of this master plan all programs, events, and facilities will be open without many restrictions so that number is expected to climb higher and quickly. Proper planning and control is important to offer quality programs and grow as needed based on need and available resources. Programming tends to get out of control quickly if not managed effectively so that is the challenge for Recreation Programs and the possibilities are endless and exciting.

PROGRAMMING FOCUS

RECREATION PROGRAMS

Recreation programs offer the community opportunities based on surveys, feedback, avoiding too much duplication, and has a goal to create programs that are authentically Woodstock and unique to the community. Outdoor Recreation is a large draw for the community and with miles of mountain bike trails, rivers, disc golf courses, miles of greenway trail, and a lack of youth programming in the city, there are many opportunities, and they need to continue being developed in partnership with local organizations and like-minded individuals. Discovering Recreation was established to introduce the community to activities available for them to participate in the parks. The department should use that audience to expand programming into more instructional, social, and ongoing programs. Continue seeking out special population and underserved groups and creatively program ways to promote interaction and a sense of community and togetherness. Since the process of developing the Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan began, programming has taken off and is successful. As the offerings grow, staff need to keep quality, authenticity, and community in mind when planning and realize that this profession is not about the number of programs offered or competition with surrounding communities. Keep it original and the sky is the limit for the Woodstock Community and for the Woodstock Parks and Recreation Department.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Special Events have been a long tradition and important function of the City of Woodstock. Many of the Special Events existed even before the creation of the parks and recreation department. The focus for Special Events is to not get tied down to one way of executing events and to utilize the opportunity that exists during large gatherings to introduce new ideas and promote everything the parks and recreation department does. History remains but demographics and communities change quickly, as do interests. Like Recreation Programs, Special Events need to continue to evolve and focus on authenticity and celebrating the today's community and plan for the community of tomorrow.

WILLIAM G. LONG SENIOR CENTER

The Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Aging (AoA) predicts that, by 2030, the senior population, defined as 65 years or older, will be doubled from that of 2000. Seniors are one of the fastest demographics in Woodstock and this will have a direct impact on the need for expanded programs. Baby Boomers are approaching 70 years of age with the youngest Boomers in their fifties. The active adult generation has changed the profile of the traditional senior citizen recreation program. Most Baby Boomers do not consider themselves seniors and will not participate in "Senior Programs". The traditional approach of old will adapt and extend to meet the needs of a more Active Older Adult Generation, while providing social interaction and traditional senior programming. In planning and moving forward, there is a need for increased staff and additional indoor recreation space, as well as outdoor amenities in the parks. The staff should balance fee-based programs that cover all costs, revenue generating programs, and non-fee based activities that are considered benefits of membership.

CHAPTER FOUR CONCLUSION

FROM THE PARKS AND RECREATION DIRECTOR

The conclusion of the Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan will end with the same message used to conclude all the departments policies, procedures, and processes that were developed over the past year and is fitting as the City of Woodstock moves forward in creating a great place to live, work, and play.

Recreation is an aspect of American Life rooted in the Declaration of Independence. As we work to protect life and liberty, we cannot neglect the third right which is just as important a part of our heritage – the pursuit of happiness.

Recreation programming is an important municipal service. It is not fun and games; it is serious business. Recreation programming provides the balance people need in their lives. Many people do not get satisfaction enrichment from work. They seek identity, self-esteem, personal growth, and fulfillment in their leisure hours. Recreation experiences are essential for the healthy development of our children. Neighbors meet neighbors at recreation programs. Recreation programs get citizens involved in community life. It gets people off the couch, helping them be more physically active and healthy. It can be the catalyst that brings residents out to visit your parks for the first time. It positively impacts your community by improving your local economy, encouraging preservation and conservation of the environment, and building community pride.

Recreation is a necessity, not a luxury. It should be supported by public funds in order that all citizens may participate in quality recreation experiences regardless of income or ability.

Good recreation programming does not just happen through hard work. The planning process begins months before the first participant ever arrives. Strong leadership is necessary during the activity itself and then, careful evaluation makes the program better the next time it is offered.

Your recreation department will be the most effective when it stays closely in touch with all the recreation providers in your community. Recreation is a field in which a municipal recreation department should not operate independently. Municipal recreation programs will be more successful when the programs of all community agencies and groups that deal with the recreation interests of your citizens are interwoven with those of your public recreation department in a unified way.

Recreation programming is the most people-oriented service your municipality provides. Public support and program success are highest when citizens are involved in the planning and decision-making process. Find out what recreation programs your citizens would like you to offer. Then, in the words of the old Nike ad, just do it. Go for it and let your program successes energize you to do more. Do not be afraid to take risks. Be creative and innovative. Make your programs dynamic. You will be helping your residents make special memories that will last a lifetime.

