



**KINGS MOUNTAIN**

**NORTH CAROLINA**

*Living. Elevated.*

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## **Comprehensive Recreation Master Plan 2024 – 2034**

Adopted On July 30, 2024

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# Acknowledgments

The City of Kings Mountain wishes to express its sincere appreciation to those entities and individuals, who, in any way, contributed to the creation of the Kings Mountain Comprehensive Recreation Master Plan — some of which are identified below. Without the knowledge and expertise of these people, in both individual and team settings, this document would not be possible.

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# 01 | Introduction

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This Comprehensive Plan represents the City’s first known Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Planning effort. This plan will help set a benchmark for the community’s efforts to serve the residents’ parks and recreation needs. In the past few years, the City has seen more developments, an increase in population, and a change in recreation trends. Based on US Census estimates, Kings Mountain has grown approximately 9.4% since 2014. As North Carolina continues to be one of the fastest-growing states, Kings Mountain will inevitably continue growing. The anticipated development of the casino and the continued population growth will create more demand for public services, like sewers, water, schools, roads, and recreation opportunities.

The City of Kings Mountain knows it is important to improve opportunities for all residents and visitors. To help make improvements, the City hired McGill to assist with creating a Ten-Year Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

This 2024–2034 Comprehensive Recreation Master Plan provides the framework for guiding the City’s Council and staff. The framework is based on an inventory of the existing park system, site observations, the needs identified by City staff, and public comments received through community engagement efforts. In addition, state and national

benchmarks were used as a guide to support the recommendations made for the recreation facilities. The assessment of the existing park system identifies immediate needs in the community and assists in predicting possible future needs.

The continued development of Kings Mountain and surrounding areas will require upgrades to and expansion of existing recreational facilities. Expansion requires acquiring City-owned property and grant funding. Grant opportunities include the North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF), Great Trails State Funding, Federal Land and Water Conservation Funds, and other leveraging resources, all of which will help mitigate expansion costs. Having a Master Plan will help the City be competitive in seeking funding assistance.

This Master Plan will also analyze and recommend the addition or renovation of parks, programs, and recreational facilities. It prioritizes certain projects, like recommended park upgrades or possible expansions, by considering the needs of the population, community input, and the evaluation of recreational standards. The action-oriented plan will provide Kings Mountain with a practical guide for enhancing facilities and programs while fostering community spirit, community growth, recreation-based economic development, and bonding between local citizens.



Lakeside in Kings Mountain



## 02 | Influencing Factors

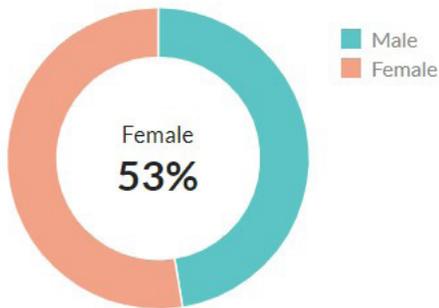


## Natural Features and Landscape

Kings Mountain was incorporated in 1874 and is named after the historical Revolutionary battle at what is now Kings Mountain National Military Park, which is just south of the City center. In the late 1800s, a Charlotte to Atlanta railway helped establish industry in the area. Interstate 85 runs just south of the City. In early 2023, the Shelby Star reported that “the long-awaited U.S. 74 bypass will be 18.5 miles of four-lane highway extending east of Mooresboro to the west of Stony Point Road in Kings Mountain.”

Kings Mountain is a growing economic hub that attracts outdoor enthusiasts. Moss Lake, named after former mayor John Henry Moss, is a regional attraction, and Kings Mountain has the launching point to Crowders Mountain State Park, which is one of the state’s most well-visited parks and a mecca for climbers. Further to the south is Kings Mountain National Military Park, which is a major anchor and terminus for the National Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail.

### Sex



### Race & Ethnicity



Information obtained from US Census Bureau

## Social and Economic Factors

Kings Mountain is already an attractive place to live, work, and play, but it is poised for significant growth. Area lithium resources will likely present major expanses in the mining industry, and the addition of the Catawba Two Kings Casino will bolster Kings Mountain’s attractiveness for new business and leisure activities. Many of the demographic trends listed below should be understood as a starting point for what is projected to be long-term sustained growth in population, economic expansion, and shifts in the area’s demographic profile.

### Demographics

A review of demographic information for the City of Kings Mountain has been evaluated to better understand the community’s characteristics and help identify future trends that may influence recreation and park planning.

Kings Mountain’s demographic is comparable to the rest of the region, with White residents making up the majority of the population, followed by the African American and Hispanic populations.

The minimum categories for data on race and ethnicity for federal statistics, program administrative reporting, and civil rights compliance reporting are defined below:

- **American Indian:** This includes a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.
- **Asian:** This includes a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent (for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam).
- **Black or African American:** This includes a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.
- **Hispanic or Latino:** This ethnic distinction is a subset of a race as defined by the federal government; this includes a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.
- **Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander:** This includes a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.
- **White:** This includes a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

When planning recreation, it is important to consider the impact of vacationers, visitors, and temporary residents visiting the community on a seasonal basis. With the addition of the planned casino, we expect tourism to the area will steadily increase. Since the casino is planned near the highway, there will likely be traffic surges along Interstate 85 and Highway 74 that will increase visitation numbers.

According to the North Carolina Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) 2020–2025, senior citizens are the fastest-growing age group. The senior population is expected to have significant impacts throughout society because of income levels, population, and unique needs. NC OSBM projects that by 2030, 1 in 5 North Carolinians will be 65 or older. While Kings Mountain’s population is only slightly higher than the state average, the 60–69 age group is currently the largest group.

One exceptional demographic trend to note for Kings Mountain is the birth rate, which is 12% and more than double the state rate, which suggests Kings Mountain will have a younger population of families with young children. This population trend is a critical factor in determining how to best serve the population in the years to come.

### Age

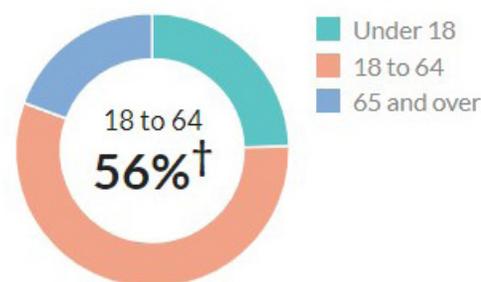
# 41.4

### Median age

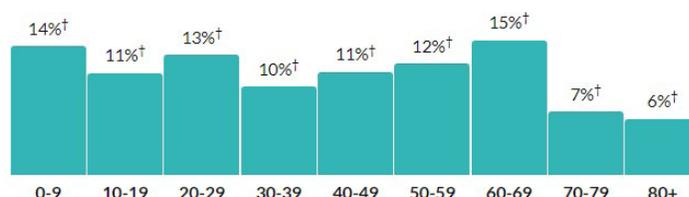
about the same as the figure in the Shelby, NC Micro Area: 41.6

a little higher than the figure in North Carolina: 39

### Population by age category



### Population by age range



This age group is a significant user of recreational programming and facilities. There will have to be more parks, recreation, and cultural programs and facilities to effectively serve this population of residents and visitors now and in the future. To do this, the City will have to continually evaluate its recreation and ancillary facilities and offer various recreational programs suitable for the population as it changes.

Currently, Kings Mountain’s per capita income is slightly lower than surrounding areas and the state. The same is true of the median household income. The growing industry will likely have a net positive income on these figures in the future. Median household income impacts the median of home values and the City’s current cost of housing is lower than surrounding areas and the state.

As North Carolina’s population continues to grow at a fast pace, affordable housing is expected to become an even bigger priority for residents and businesses who are looking to relocate. An affordable housing stock, complimented by great parks, is enticing for new residents. Kings Mountain is already attracting new residents at a faster pace than nearby municipal areas and the state. Half of the migration to the Kings Mountain area comes from outside the County and 3% comes from outside the state, which is significant.

**Fertility**

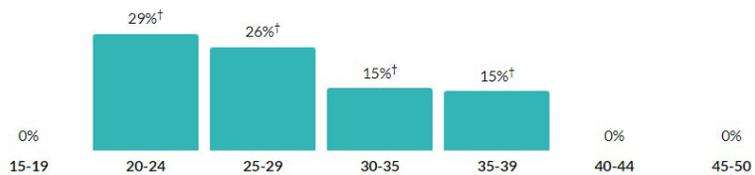
**12.6%**

Women 15-50 who gave birth during past year

nearly double the rate in the Shelby, NC Micro Area: 6.7% †

more than double the rate in North Carolina: 5.1%

Women who gave birth during past year, by age group



**Income**

**\$23,753**

Per capita income

a little less than the amount in the Shelby, NC Micro Area: \$24,505

about two-thirds of the amount in North Carolina: \$34,209

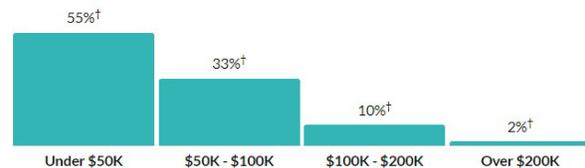
**\$42,336**

Median household income

about 90 percent of the amount in the Shelby, NC Micro Area: \$45,646

about two-thirds of the amount in North Carolina: \$60,516

Household income



New industries and business opportunities will likely impact the area’s median income, poverty rates, and current educational attainment. Kings Mountain’s average for high school attainment has dropped 5% over the past two years and is behind the state average for bachelor’s degrees.

Population growth and new industries could have an impact on these areas. There is typically a correlation between educational attainment and the percentage of people living below the poverty line, which, in Kings Mountain, is higher than in the state.

**Geographical mobility**

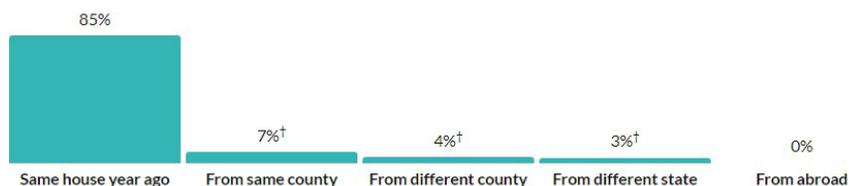
**14.6%**

Moved since previous year

about 1.4 times the rate in the Shelby, NC Micro Area: 10.7% †

a little higher than the rate in North Carolina: 14.1%

Population migration since previous year



**Poverty**

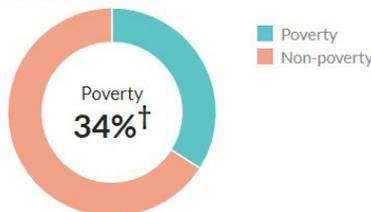
**20.7%**

Persons below poverty line

about 10 percent higher than the rate in the Shelby, NC Micro Area: 18.3% †

about 1.5 times the rate in North Carolina: 13.7%

Children (Under 18)



Seniors (65 and over)



**Educational attainment**

**84.5%**

High school grad or higher

about the same as the rate in the Shelby, NC Micro Area: 86.4%

a little less than the rate in North Carolina: 89%

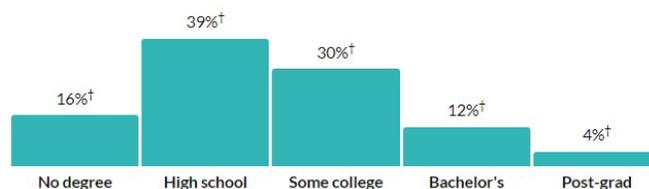
**16.3%**

Bachelor's degree or higher

about 90 percent of the rate in the Shelby, NC Micro Area: 18.9%

about half the rate in North Carolina: 33%

Population by highest level of education



## Economic Development

Studies have shown that promoting recreation, fostering active transportation, and investing in parks and recreation positively impact the economy. The number of people who feel comfortable walking or riding bicycles is a way to measure an area's quality of life.

## Parks

Research has determined a connection between economic growth and the existence of parks and open spaces in communities. This connection increases property values in residential, urban, and industrial communities and brings in more tourist revenue.

## Trail Development

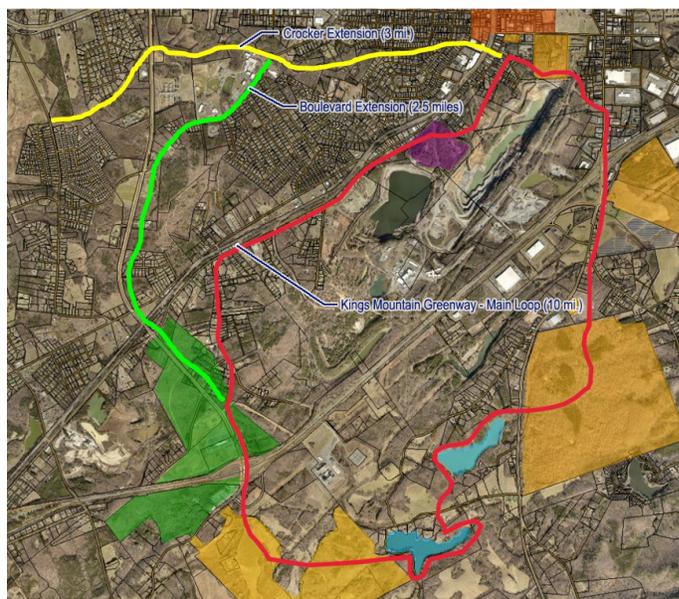
Multiuse trails are extremely popular amenities for residents and visitors, as people will likely return to communities that have safe places for walking and biking. Multiuse trails offer scenic recreation, which is suitable for a wide range of ages and abilities. Owners who put lodging near popular trails see an increase in occupancy. For residents, investments in trails and greenways can increase property values and improve the overall livability of a community while also attracting and retaining tourists.

The Carolina Thread Trail is a comprehensive network of pathways, trails, and waterways that spans 15 counties, crosses two states, and connects over 2.3 million people. With more than 220 miles of trails open to the public, it serves as a conduit, linking people to various places and points of interest. The Thread Trail safeguards natural spaces, offering a platform for exploring nature, culture, science, and history. This significant initiative benefits the public and communities at large, touching lives in every locality.

In Kings Mountain, North Carolina, the Carolina Thread Trail includes the Kings Mountain Gateway Trail, which provides approximately 7.5 miles of scenic off-road trail and 2.1 miles of street / sidewalk connections through downtown Kings Mountain. This trail is a beautiful piece of the more extensive Carolina Thread Trail network in Kings Mountain.

Recent plans include expanding the Kings Mountain Gateway Trail via the Carolina Thread Trail program funding. Other notable trail development efforts the City is participating in include relocating some existing Gateway Trail links affected by the planned expansion of the Albemarle Corporation Lithium mine. Planning efforts were ongoing as of the time of this plan.

The City of Kings Mountain wants to develop a network of trails linking various destinations. A 10-mile loop would provide access to downtown and residential, retail, and popular civic locations. Plans to route this kind of loop were ongoing during this recreation planning effort.



Other existing trail networks that are planned for ongoing development and expansion in the area include:

**Ridgeline Trail:** This is a natural surface hiking trail that connects Crowders Mountain State Park, Kings Mountain State Park, and Kings Mountain National Military Park. This segment is part of a 15-mile trail network that encompasses four trails within the parks with various access points.

King Mountain National Recreation Trail Loop winds through Kings Mountain National Military Park and South Carolina's Kings Mountain State Park. It follows the rivers and has relatively gentle climbs, but a few sustained climbs have moderate inclines.

**MTB Trail System:** The International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) and the Tarheel Trailblazers are working with State and National Parks to design a 16-mile North Carolina / South Carolina border trail system. This project is particularly noteworthy because it involves land on National Park land (Kings Mountain National Military Park) and within North Carolina and South Carolina State Parks.

Funds invested in multiuse trails typically yield substantial community-wide returns like increased property values, business attraction, recreation revenue, and reduced water treatment and flooding costs. Tourists are attracted to these areas, and so are business leaders. They are selecting sites for the relocation and expansion where there is a high quality of life and convenient fitness and recreation for their employees.

Additionally, when multiuse trails have vegetated buffers and are located by waterways, they can act as filters to clean water, trapping nonpoint source pollutants. Stormwater, including sediment, pesticides, fertilizers, oil, gas, and other chemicals, transports pollutants into streams, rivers, and lakes when rain or snow occurs.

## Top 9 Most Popular Outdoor Activities in North Carolina

- 1 Visiting a beach or lake
- 2 Walking for pleasure or exercise
- 3 Visiting parks or historical sites
- 4 Hiking, trails
- 5 Freshwater fishing from a bank or pier
- 6 Viewing scenery
- 7 Fishing from a boat
- 8 Nature viewing
- 9 Swimming, all types

Based on the North Carolina Outdoor Recreation Plan for 2020–2025 (SCORP) produced by the Division of Parks and Recreation.

Moss Lake / City Lakes offers and has the potential to offer all of these activities!

Other typical benefits of multiuse trails include:

1. **Physical / Psychological Health:** Multiuse trails provide a dedicated space for walking, running, cycling, and other recreational activities. They encourage physical fitness and outdoor exercise, contributing to residents' overall physical / mental well-being and may attract health-conscious tourists to Kings Mountain.
2. **Tourist Attraction:** Scenic multiuse trails can become significant attractions. Visitors are drawn to areas with beautiful and safe trails because they provide an enjoyable experience for vacationing cyclists and pedestrians.
3. **Economic Impact:** Lodging and businesses near popular trails often experience increased occupancy and customer traffic. The availability of recreational amenities can be a deciding factor for tourists when choosing a destination, contributing to the local economy.
4. **Property Values:** Proximity to well-maintained trails can enhance property values for residents. The appeal of living near recreation and green spaces is often reflected in real estate prices.
5. **Quality of Life:** Investments in trails and greenways contribute to a quality of life. Residents benefit from access to outdoor spaces for leisure, exercise, and social interactions, which can foster a sense of community.
6. **Community Livability:** Multiuse trails contribute to a community's overall attractiveness and livability. They provide safe and separated pathways, making it more pleasant for people of all ages and abilities to move around without the concern of busy roads.
7. **Environmental Benefits:** Trails often traverse green spaces and natural areas, providing opportunities for residents and visitors to connect with nature. This can contribute to environmental awareness and conservation efforts.
8. **Community Cohesion:** Trails can serve as community gathering spaces. Residents may use trails for group activities, events, or meeting places, creating community cohesion.
9. **Healthy Lifestyle Promotion:** Multiuse trails promote a healthy and active lifestyle. Communities prioritizing multi-use trails often see positive impacts on public health as residents engage in regular physical activity.

Overall, investing in multiuse trails will benefit residents and visitors to Kings Mountain, and the local economy should also benefit from the creation of an appealing environment for tourism.

### Benefits of Multi-use Trails:

- 1 **Physical/Psychological Health**
- 2 **Tourist Attraction**
- 3 **Economic Impact**
- 4 **Property Values**
- 5 **Quality of Life**
- 6 **Community Livability**
- 7 **Environmental Benefits**
- 8 **Community Cohesion**
- 9 **Healthy Lifestyle Promotion**

The ongoing construction of bicycle and pedestrian facilities is proving to be a wise economic investment for the communities through which they pass. According to research by the Rails to Trails Conservancy, many people are using rail trails, and the communities with the trails see economic benefits. Entrepreneurs who invest in restaurants, convenience stores, bicycle and other merchandise shops, campgrounds, and lodging near a trail give the trail credit for part of their success. Realtors and homebuyers are also recognizing the benefits of properties located near trails. Both locally and nationally, the construction of trails has proven to be a cost-effective use of public funds. Multi-use trails allow more visitors and residents to replace car trips with non-motorized trips, which supports public health objectives and offers more opportunities for exercise.

In Kings Mountain, biking is a popular form of transportation and exploration. The relative closeness of popular destination points makes biking an ideal method for exploring Kings Mountain. The National Over Mountain Victory Trail has 330 miles of designated trail, 87 of which are walkable paths, that run from Virginia to Kings Mountain National Military Park, just south of the City. The Kings Mountain Gateway Trail, near Crowders Mountain, provides regional trail offerings for residents.

## Revitalization of Businesses

In recent years, there has been a trend to revitalize inner-city and urban areas, which has resulted in more parks and recreational activities in cities. Most people desire to be in an environment where they can leave the congestion and take a stroll, play with their dogs, or just enjoy the outdoors. In several recent City revitalization studies, the top recommendations often include expanding parks and open spaces.



Mountain mural in Kings Mountain

## Tourism

A park can become a community's main attraction or support other local attractions. In both cases, parks can help support marketing efforts in attracting residents, tourists, conventions, and businesses. Parks often shape the identity of the area and serve as community gathering places.

Public parks can host art festivals, athletic events, food festivals, concerts, and plays, all of which bring substantial positive economic impacts to the community by filling hotel rooms, restaurants, and local businesses.

## Increased Property Value

The real estate market consistently demonstrates that residents throughout the country are more willing to invest in properties that are located close to parks and open space areas than they are for homes without these amenities. The higher values of these homes produce higher property taxes in the area. In some instances, additional property taxes are sufficient to recoup the annual debt charges on the bonds originally used to finance park acquisition and development.

Studies have shown that property values typically increase when parks or outdoor programs, such as outdoor festivals, movies, and restaurants, are local.

## User Experience and Social Determinants of Health

According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, social determinants of health (SDOH) are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that impact a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks. The National Recreation and Parks Association claims that “parks and green space improve air, water, and environmental conditions in communities. At the same time, parks and recreation promote access to physical activity opportunities for

people to move more and provide access to healthy foods through meal programs, farmers markets, and community gardens” (NRPA.org, Keeping It Real: A Different Approach to Discussing the Social Determinants of Health, 11.26.19—Colman).

A strategy for combating physical inactivity, obesity, and other health conditions begins with understanding how park spaces and human-nature relationships impact health and well-being. Auditing park facilities for physical environmental conditions allows us to examine the existing health and user environment experience. As part of the inventory phase of this planning study, both the physical and perceived user experiences were analyzed.



Biking is popular as a pastime and a way for community members to socially engage in physical activity



## 03 | Master Plan Process

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## Overview

The degree of need for parks, recreation, and open space is most directly influenced by the expectations of Kings Mountain residents and visitors. This plan addresses, as its priority, the parks and recreation operations and facility needs envisioned by the residents and visitors of the City.

As explained in the introduction, the 2024–2034 comprehensive recreation master plan for Kings Mountain relies on a comprehensive approach that involves taking inventory of the current park system, documenting site observations, engaging in discussions with City staff to identify needs, and evaluating public comments obtained through community input. The plan incorporates state and national standards as benchmarks, providing guidance and support for the recommendations put forth for the City’s recreational facilities.

## Methodology

With assistance from City staff and team site visits, this study documents Kings Mountain’s existing city-owned facilities, current programming arrangements, and growth projects. This study also provides a listing of the recreation opportunities available in local municipalities, Cleveland County, Cleveland County schools, state land, and other recreation facilities in the area.

Kings Mountain is a city for people who love outdoor recreation and want a lively but small-town feel. With industrial growth and a new casino being developed nearby, growth within the city is projected to be very strong. This plan will retain the heritage and culture that makes Kings Mountain great while also capturing new visitor attention, revenue, and possibly an interest in relocating. The proximity to Crowders Mountain, Kings Mountain National Military Park, downtown, and Interstate 85 are a few of the City’s many perks.

Kings Mountain currently lacks a fully developed Parks and Recreation Department. The city’s more dynamic programming has been facilitated through partnerships with non-profit recreational providers, like the YMCA, or through collaborations with private recreational providers that operate independent of tax dollar support. Current changes in demographics, state-wide and in Cleveland County, point to a need for change. Recreation trends may include expanded pedestrian amenities, more dog-friendly parks, fitness opportunities, educational opportunities, and the development of other more traditional amenities, like youth-oriented facilities, leisure programs, and classes.

The methodology for this comprehensive plan begins with establishing a consensus with City staff on the plan’s scope, purpose, and process. This is followed by a collaborative effort with the staff and the project steering committee to conduct a SWOT Analysis, identifying the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats facing the department and the delivery of recreation services to residents.

A critical component of our methodology is Community Input. We actively engage with the community to understand their needs, preferences, and ideas. This is complemented by analyzing current and projected demographic data, which helps us anticipate future needs.

We undertake a trends analysis study encompassing local, regional, and national trends in parks and recreation. This analysis extends to programming and staffing, where we evaluate the current state of parks and recreation facilities, programs, services, and staffing levels.

A Recreation Facilities Assessment is conducted to assess the condition and usage of existing recreation facilities. Based on the collected data and identified issues, we develop recommendations and best practices for resolution.

The next phase involves developing action plans, timing, and priorities. We formulate a strategic plan outlining actions, timelines, probable costs, and priorities. The implementation phase details the plan's steps, including potential funding sources.

The plan is designed to be dynamic, with a review and update process that ensures it is reviewed and updated regularly to reflect evolving community needs.

This comprehensive methodology includes a physical inventory, a public input survey open to all, an additional statistically valid public survey hosted by a third party (ETC Inc.), benchmarking, state, and national standards analysis, demographics, mapping, and trends. It is designed to guide the establishment of sustainable, prioritized recommendations for facility improvements, recreation programming, operations, and maintenance.

## Vision

### Mission Statement

Kings Mountain strives to provide the community with a range of quality facilities and programs that will promote health and wellness, protect the natural environment, and support the economy to improve the quality of life.

### Goals

We strive to ensure that there are adequate parks and recreation opportunities for the community and visitors by maintaining and renovating existing city-owned facilities, exploring possibilities for developing new facilities and programs, and seeking funding opportunities and partnerships.

## Process

### Discovery + Data Collection

Understanding the community requires looking at current demographics and identifying city-owned recreation facilities and the prospects for increasing city-led programs. Inventory and analysis of this information are used to improve the current parks and recreation system. Finding the appropriate improvements correlates to the population the city is serving.

### Assessment

The future of Kings Mountain's parks and recreation system is determined by listening to and understanding what has worked in the past and what can be improved upon for the future. After discovering who the community is and what facilities and programs exist, we consider the needs of city residents and staff. By analyzing open conversations with residents, public survey input, staff input, and looking at typical standards, a picture of how to move forward with improvements and future expansion of city recreation facilities and services develops.

Recreational trends were also evaluated. Surveys that were designed to determine the demand for outdoor recreation and facilities were conducted on both the federal and state levels by private, nonprofit, and governmental agencies. This information is important as it sets a precedent for what popular activities the typical park users expect.

### Recommendations

Resident and staff input identified through the discovery phase and needs assessment are evaluated and analyzed to identify actions that will benefit the city in the future. Recommendations for improvements are made based on community needs and desires, departmental experience, and consulting team experience. These recommendations are presented and prioritized based on immediate needs (0–5 years), short-term needs (5–10 years), and long-term future needs (10 years and beyond).

## Plan

### Recommendations + Action Implementation Plan + Staff Commitment



# 04 | Inventory Assessment

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Recreation is a necessary part of any community because it provides places to play, opportunities to improve health and wellness, and opportunities to conserve and protect natural resources. This section will look at the typical parks and recreation facilities that can be offered to a community. We also provide an inventory of the current facilities to fully understand the recreational opportunities that Kings Mountain has access to, including the following:

Examples of parks inventoried:

- Publicly owned local, state, and national parks; trails; and open space
- School parks with a joint-use agreement with the local government
- Privately owned parks that are managed for full public use

Examples of parks not inventoried:

- Parks in gated communities
- Private golf courses
- Private cemeteries
- School parks/playgrounds without active joint-use agreements
- Zoos, museums, professional sports stadiums

## Types of Parks and Recreation Facilities

A comprehensive park system is made up of a variety of park types ranging from small neighborhood playgrounds to larger parks with athletic fields, playgrounds, community centers, and open space. This type of park reflects how recreational preferences differ depending on user. Park models are used as guidelines for fulfilling the future recreational needs of communities. Not all these types of parks are the responsibility of the local government; several agencies (federal, state, county, and other local municipalities) play roles in providing recreational opportunities as well. To further understand the City's role in providing recreation services to its citizens, it is necessary to understand the elements of a comprehensive park system.

## Regional Parks

Regional parks are typically very large sites. Crowders Mountain State Park serves as a regional park with recreational open space and historical and educational opportunities to its patrons. On these sites, the unique qualities that exemplify the natural features found there, such as diverse land formations, vegetation, and wildlife, are preserved. Most regional park facilities contain environmental centers, campsites, nature trails, observation decks, and picnic areas. In addition, open fields for non-structured activities, such as frisbee throwing or kite flying, are generally found there.

Specific standards/criteria for developing regional parks are as follows:

### Service Area

10 acres per 1,000 persons

### Acreage / Population Ratio

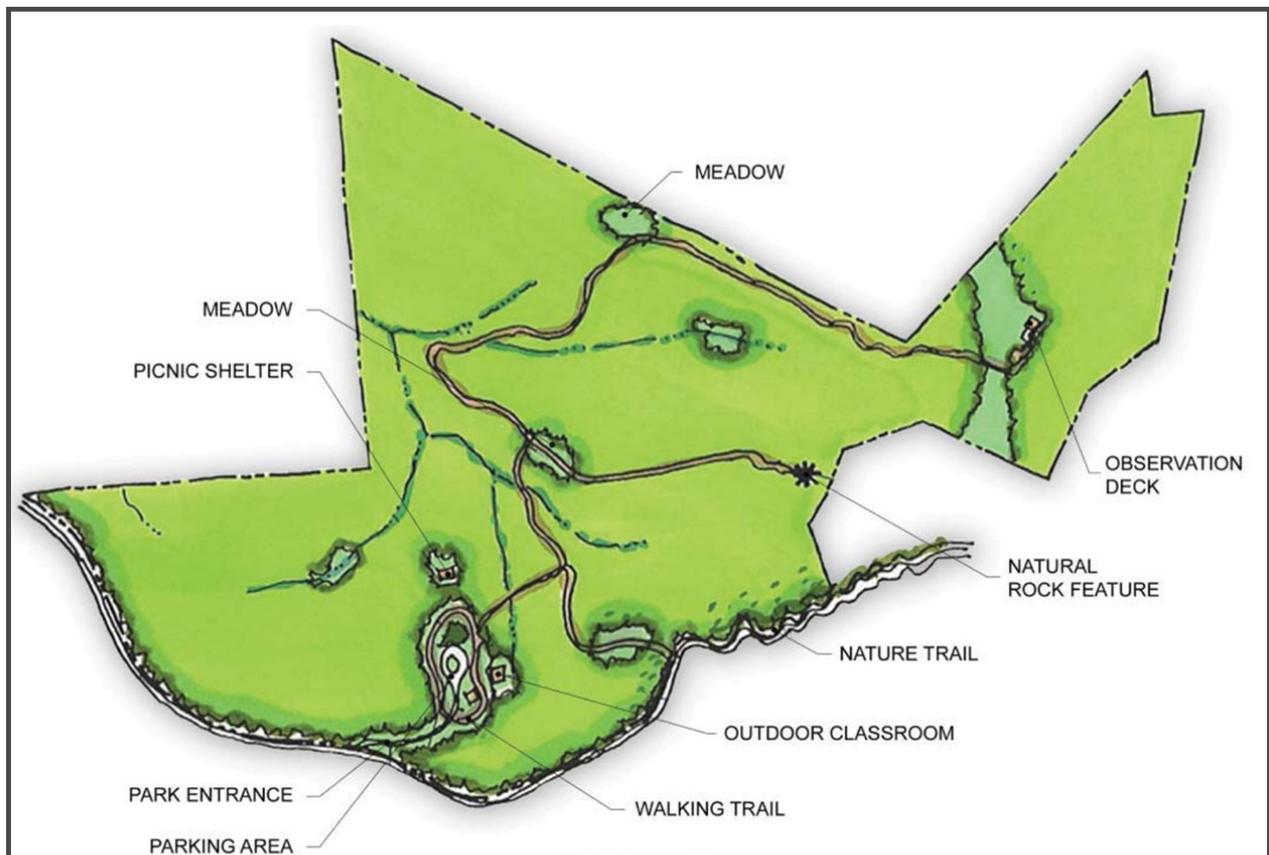
Region wide

### Minimum Size

150 – 1,000 acres minimum with sufficient area to encompass the resources to be preserved and managed (10% of the site may be developed with facilities found in community parks.)

### Typical Facilities

- Environmental center
- Caretaker's house
- Equestrian center
- Primitive camping
- Group camping
- Recreational vehicle camping
- Nature trails
- Observation deck
- Picnic shelters and grills
- Picnic tables with grills (not under shelter)
- Boating
- Parking
- Fishing piers / boat docks
- Restrooms / vending
- Swimming



**Typical Regional Park (150 – 1000 Acres)**

## District Parks

District parks function as the major source of active recreation for several neighborhoods within a community. District parks are intensely developed, offering a multitude of facilities to serve their intended geographic user area. Activities are balanced between active and passive recreation. District parks are typically developed to accommodate athletic league sporting events and tournament competitions. Passive recreation opportunities, such as walking for pleasure, wildlife observation, and picnicking, are found in undisturbed areas, preferably within surrounding buffers. District parks present great opportunities for non-traditional types of recreation.

Sites for district parks should be relatively level to alleviate excessive grading. When possible, there should be an equal balance of wooded and cleared areas. If a natural water feature is present, the adjoining land should be developed primarily as passive recreation. Accessibility to neighborhoods should be an important consideration when choosing sites. The development of district parks is typically the responsibility of county or municipal agencies.

Specific standards / criteria for developing district parks are as follows:

### Service Area

1 to 2 ½-mile radius

### Acreage / Population Ratio

5 acres per 1,000 persons

### Desirable Range

75 – 200 acres

### Desirable Size

+100 acres

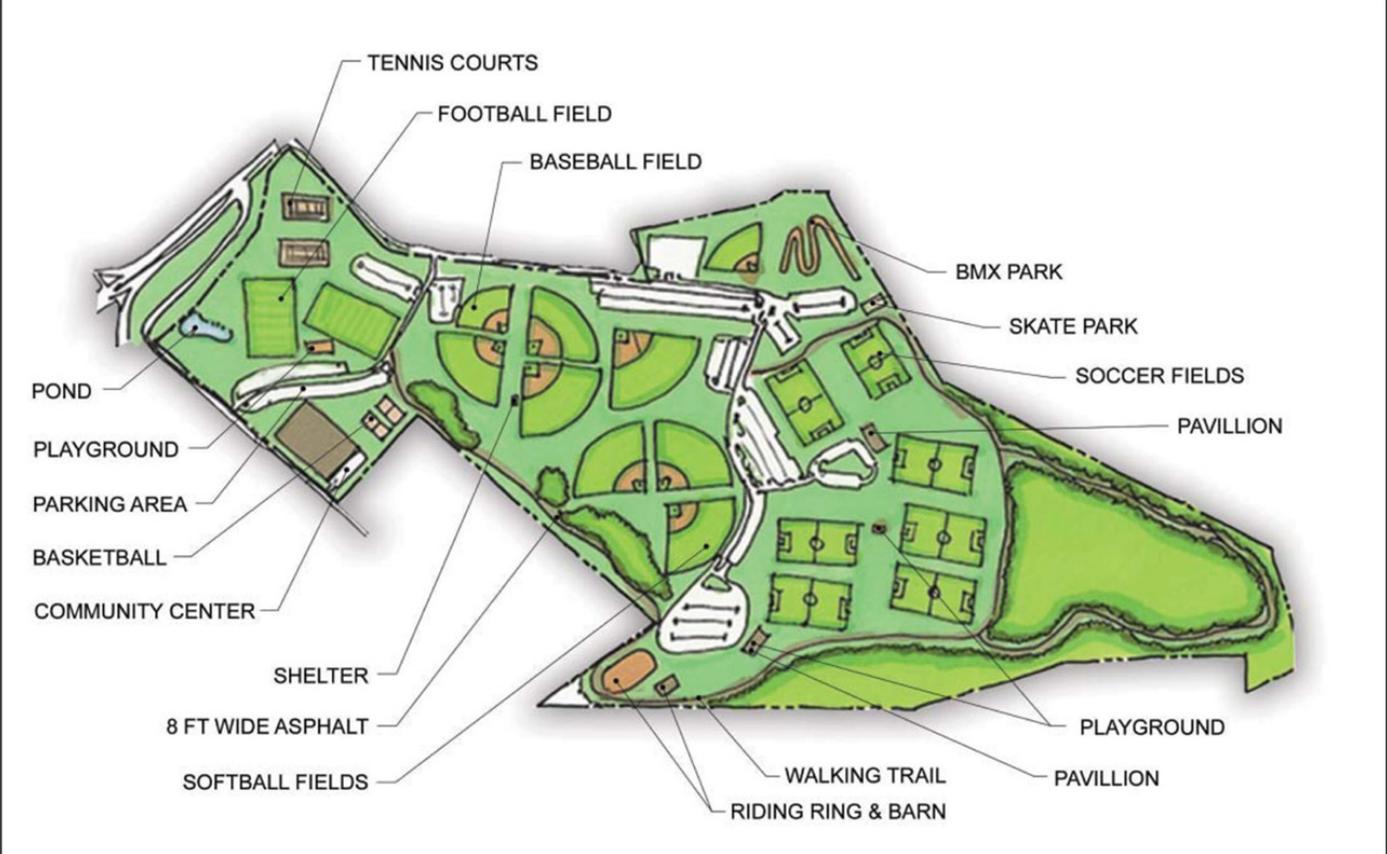
### Typical Facilities

- Playgrounds
- Full- or half-size basketball courts
- Volleyball courts
- Baseball / softball / multipurpose field
- Soccer / football field
- Soccer practice field (movable goals)
- Tennis courts (lighted)
- Nature trails
- Picnic tables with grill (with or without shelter)
- Restrooms / concessions
- Benches or bench swings
- Parking / service yard
- 50% of site remains undeveloped

### Alternate Facilities\*

- Tennis center
- Amphitheater
- Observation decks
- Fishing piers / boating / boat dock
- Recreation center

\* Alternate facilities may be added or substituted.



## Typical District Park



Moss Lake Park is an example of a district park.

## Community Parks

Community parks focus on meeting community-based recreational needs and preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. Compared to district parks, community parks have a smaller range of recreation facilities. They may host athletic league sports events and provide passive recreation. Fifty percent of the community park property should be developed for only passive recreation, with these relatively undisturbed areas serving as buffers around the park and / or acting as buffers between active facilities.

Community park sites should have varying topography and vegetation, and several different tree species should be present in forested areas. Community parks should contain cleared areas to locate active recreational facilities. At least one natural water feature (lake, river, or creek) is desirable in community parks. The land acquired for use as a community park should be contiguous in nature and strategically located to serve all users within the designated community. The development of community parks typically falls within the realm of municipal responsibilities.

Specific standards/criteria for developing community parks are as follows:

### Service Area:

1 to 2-mile radius

### Acreage / Population Ratio

2 – 5 acres per 1,000 persons

### Desirable Range

15 – 50 acres

### Desirable Size

25 acres

### Typical Facilities

- Playgrounds
- Full-size or half-size basketball courts
- Swimming pool
- Tennis / volleyball courts
- Soccer / multipurpose fields
- Baseball / softball fields
- Nature trails
- Restrooms / concessions
- Benches or bench swings
- Parking
- Picnic tables / shelter (with or without grills)
- 50% of site to remain undeveloped

### Alternate Facilities\*

- Recreation center
- Natural water features
- Disc golf
- Amphitheater
- Observation decks

\* Alternate facilities may be added or substituted.



**Typical Community Park (15 - 50 Acres)**



Example of a typical community park

## Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks offer the public a convenient recreation source and serve as the social focus point of neighborhoods. Usually located within walking distance of the service area, neighborhood parks provide both active and passive recreation opportunities for all age groups. The smaller size of neighborhood parks, as compared to those previously mentioned, requires intense development. 50% of each site should remain undisturbed to serve as a buffer between the park and adjacent property owners.

Specific standards / criteria for developing neighborhood parks are as follows:

### Service Area

$\frac{3}{4}$ - to 1-mile radius to serve walking

### Acreage / Population Ratio

2 acres per 1,000 persons

### Desirable Size

7 – 15 acres

### Typical Facilities

- Softball or baseball field
- Multipurpose field
- Half-size basketball courts
- Picnic shelter with grills
- Picnic tables with grills (not under shelter)
- Benches or bench swings
- Playground
- 50% of site to remain undeveloped

### Alternate Facilities\*

- Nature trails
- Tennis / pickleball courts

\* Alternate facilities may be added or substituted.



**Typical Neighborhood Park (7 - 15 Acres)**



Gazebo in Patriots Park

## Mini Parks

Mini parks are small places typically located in urban areas or associated with residential or institutional developments. These facilities can bring communities together with events, promote local history, or be a source of beauty. The mini park should provide very limited, isolated, or unique recreational needs. They are typically located within walking distance of the area served.

Specific standards/criteria for developing mini parks are as follows:

### Service Area

¼- to ½-mile radius to serve walking

### Acreage / Population Ratio

½ acre per 1,000 persons

### Desirable Size

±1 acre

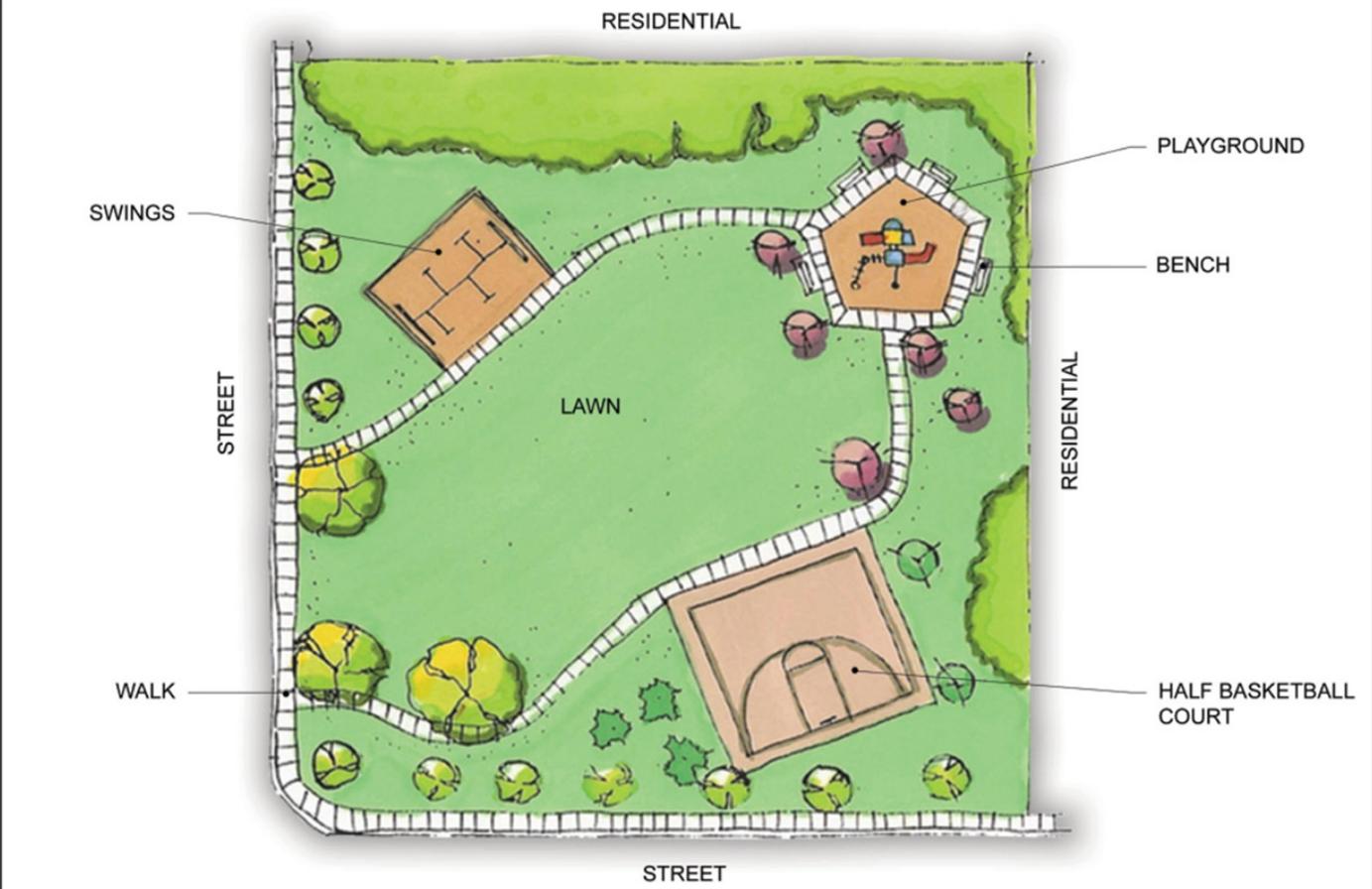
### Typical Facilities

- Half-size basketball courts
- Picnic tables with grills (not under shelter)
- Benches or bench swings
- Open play area playground

### Alternate Facilities\*

- Nature trails
- Tennis / pickleball courts

\*Alternate facilities may be added or substituted.



### Typical Mini Park



Example of a mini park in Harrisburg, North Carolina

## Linear Parks and Greenways

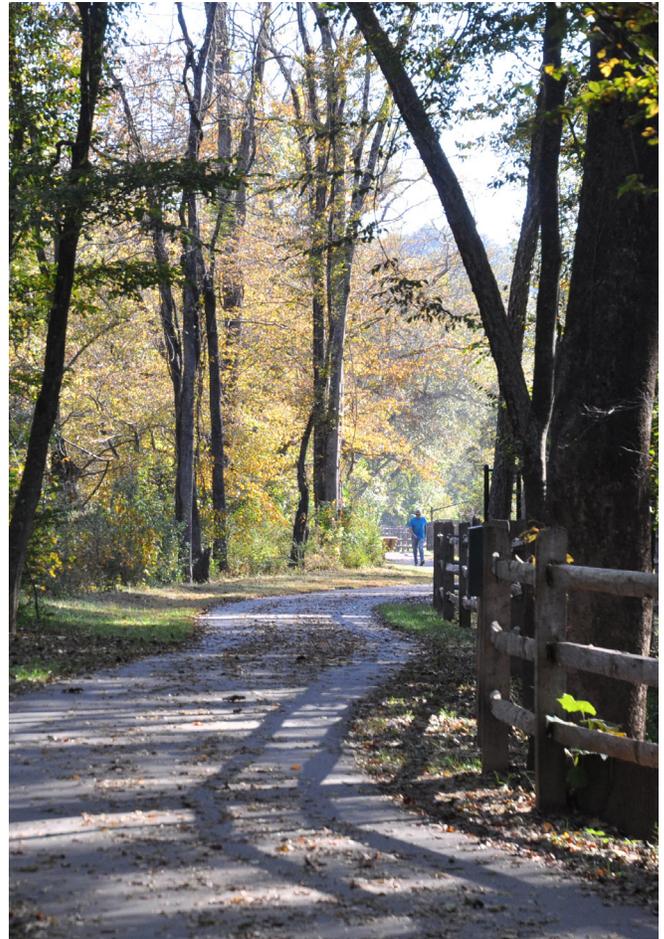
Linear Parks and Greenways are areas developed for a variety of modes of recreational travel, such as hiking, biking, and driving. Linear parks are developed for several reasons:

- To connect existing recreational facilities
- To facilitate public rights-of-way
- To connect destination points
- For scenic views and leisure touring

The length and size of linear parks vary considerably depending on their intended use, the terrain of the parkland, and the distance between entities to be connected, such as parks, schools, cultural / historical resources, residential areas, and businesses. Oftentimes these linear parks are developed within a large land area designated to protect and manage the natural environment. Recreation opportunities are often a secondary objective.

## Unique or Special-Use Facilities

Unique or special-use facilities are park types that exist for the sole purpose of enhancing or utilizing a special man-made or natural feature. They can include civic spaces, parkways, historical sites, sites of archaeological significance, swimming pools, conservation easements, floodplains, etc. Minimum standards of acreage and population have not been established by the park and recreation industry for this category of park. A size that is sufficient to protect and interpret the resource, while providing optimum use, is considered desirable. A special-use facility in Kings Mountain is the community pool.



Linear parks and greenways offer recreation and connectivity.



LG. Thombs Walking Track

## Public Open Space

While it is realistic and appropriate to adopt population-based standards for parkland and facilities, it is not realistic to establish open space standards. The more reasonable method of establishing appropriate standards for open space is to determine the criteria necessary for the protection of significant natural areas contained therein.

Public open space is defined as any land acquired to keep it in a primarily undeveloped state. The functions of open space include:

- Preservation of drainage areas for water supplies (watersheds)
- Protection of areas which are particularly well suited for growing crops (farmland preservation)

- Protection of communities to prevent urban sprawl (greenbelts)
- Protection of wildlife habitat (sanctuaries)
- Protection of approach and take-off areas near airports (clear zones)
- Protection of undeveloped land (landfills)
- Protection of areas aesthetically pleasing for a corridor (viewsheds)

While these areas are some of the more common open spaces, many others exist. Kings Mountain residents have access to state and municipal recreational areas that provide access to open space at Kings Mountain State Park, Crowder's Mountain State Park, and recreation in Gastonia and Shelby.



Morrow Mountain State Park courtesy of the NC Division of Parks and Recreation

# City-Owned Recreation Facility Inventory Assessment

## City Lake

Special Use | Approximately 87.7 acres

1146 York Road, Kings Mountain, NC 28086

- Water access via City Lake Road
- Shore fishing



City Lake

## Davidson Park (leased to YMCA)

Community Park | Approximately 15.3 acres

215 North Sims Street, Kings Mountain, NC 28086

- (3) 270' lighted soccer fields
- (4) 100' practice / U10 soccer fields
- Concessions / restroom building
- Outdoor basketball court



Basketball court at Davidson Park

## Deal Park Walking Track

Neighborhood Park | Approximately 9 acres

211 North Cleveland Avenue,  
Kings Mountain, NC 28086

- Rick Murphrey playground
- Picnic pavilion
- 0.41 mile paved walking path
- Small outdoor performance stage



Picnic pavilion and walking path at Deal Park

## Kings Mountain Recreation Center

Neighborhood Park | Approximately 15.4 acres

211 North Cleveland Avenue,  
Kings Mountain, NC 28086

- Property / community center leased to the YMCA
- 310' baseball / softball field
- (3) 210' baseball / softball fields
- 110' t-ball field
- (2) concessions / restroom buildings
- Outdoor pool and pool house



Kings Mountain recreation center

## LG Thombs Park and Walking Track

Special Use | Approximately 6.57 acres

220 North Waterson Street, Kings Mountain, NC, 28086

- 1/5 mile walking path (crushed granite fines)
- Non-programmed open space



Open space at LG Thombs park

## Moss Lake and Campground

Special Use | 57 miles of shoreline, 2,000 acres of land

2621 Oak Grove Road, Shelby, NC 28150

- Public boat ramp
- Picnic area with grill
- Boathouse
- Fenced RV park with hookups
- Gazebo with bench seating
- Swim beach
- Playground for campers
- Library book vending machine and drop off location



Moss Lake

## New Camp Creek Church Road Picnic Area at Moss Lake

Neighborhood Park | Approximately 10 acres

2621 Oak Grove Road, Shelby, NC 28150

- Public boat ramp (non-motorized only)
- Wildlife observation / fishing deck
- Cabin (currently not used)
- Restrooms (open March through October)
- Picnic shelter
- (2) horseshoe pits



Picnic shelter at New Camp Creek Church Road Picnic Area

## Patriot Park

Neighborhood Park | Approximately 2.45 acres

West King Street, Kings Mountain, NC 28086

- Memorial wall
- Approximately 0.31 acres of walking path
- Non-programmed lawn space
- Splashpad
- Gazebo
- Amphitheater
- Restrooms / drinking fountain
- Picnic tables
- Swings
- Professionally-landscaped entrance



Memorial at Patriot Park

### Police Club / Davidson Lake

Municipal Property | Approximately 78 acres

125 Police Club Drive, Kings Mountain, NC 28086

- Police training building
- Shooting range
- Non-programmed open lawn
- Screened-in, outdoor area



Police training building and open lawn at the Police Club

### Ramseur Park

Neighborhood Park | Approximately 2 acres

1007 Ramseur Street, Kings Mountain, NC 28086

- 0.15 mile paved walking path
- Approximately 1 acre of football practice field
- Approximately 1 acre of non-programmed open space
- (4) bench swings
- Basketball half court



Paved walking path at Ramseur Park

## Shu Carlton Stadium

Special Use | Approximately 5.6 acres

201 South Gaston Street, Kings Mountain, NC 28086

- Home to the Kings Mountain Optimists' Pop Warner football league
- Football field
- Bleachers
- Concessions / picnic area
- Restrooms



Shu Carlton Stadium



A bench swing to rest and enjoy the outdoors at Shu Stadium

## Other Public Recreation Facility Offerings

Public lands close to Kings Mountain play an active role in providing recreation opportunities to residents and visitors within the city. These public spaces are available through multiple public land managers, such as local municipalities, Cleveland and Gaston Counties, and the State of North Carolina. These public lands offered by other local municipalities, the State of North Carolina, and federal lands can provide recreational opportunities for residents and visitors to Kings Mountain.

## Other Local Municipal Recreation Facilities

Shelby and Gastonia are nearby, and both offer access to several recreation amenities such as trail systems, local parks, picnic areas, and camping. Some of the popular facilities are listed below.

### City of Shelby

#### *Holly Oak Park*

809 Holly Oak Road, Shelby, NC 28152

- 5 acres
- Gymnasium
- Event stage
- Softball field
- (2) fishing ponds
- Large picnic pavilion
- Outdoor volleyball court
- Horseshoe pit
- Playground
- Nature trails

#### *Shelby City Park*

850 West Sumter Street, Shelby, NC 28150

- 150 acres
- Community center / gymnasium
- Administrative offices
- Stage
- Veteran's memorial
- Aerobics room
- Gymnastics room
- Ball fields
- Picnic area
- Aquatics center
- Nine-hole golf course
- Tennis courts
- Outdoor volleyball
- Croquet court
- Horseshoe pit
- Aesthetic garden
- Playground
- Train and carousel
- Cleveland County Sports Hall of Fame

#### *Hanna Park*

1655 McGrayer-Springs Road, Shelby, NC 28150

- (5) regulation soccer fields
- (7) picnic shelters
- Playground
- 1.3 mile nature trail

#### *Royster Memorial Golf Course*

850 West Sumter Street, Shelby, NC 28150

- 18-hole golf course

## City of Gastonia

### *Lineberger Park*

632 East Garrison Boulevard, Gastonia, NC 28054

- 18.5 acres
- Large picnic shelter and (2) small shelters
- Splash pad
- Playground
- Gazebo
- Miniature train
- Basketball court
- Outdoor pool with lazy river
- Walking trails

### *Erwin Center and Park*

913 North Pryor Street, Gastonia, NC 28052

- 15 acres
- Community center
- Outdoor pool
- Splash pad
- Grass volleyball court
- Horseshoe pit
- Playground with tot lot
- Large picnic shelter
- Walking track

### *Phillips Center*

2031 Echo Lane, Gastonia, NC 28052

- 36 acres
- Community center / gymnasium
- Game room
- Kitchen
- Lighted multipurpose field
- (3) practice fields
- Walking track

- (4) lighted tennis courts
- (2) lighted volleyball courts
- (2) bocce courts
- Playground
- Picnic shelter

### *Bradley Center*

1200 Modena Street, Gastonia, NC 28054

- 46 acres
- Community center / gymnasium
- Activity rooms
- Kitchen
- Lighted athletic fields
- (2) picnic shelters
- Playground
- 18-hole disc golf course
- (8) lighted tennis courts
- (2) basketball courts

### *Jeffers Center*

121 Hartman Street, Gastonia, NC 28052

- 39 acres
- Community center / gymnasium
- Activity rooms
- Kitchen
- Lighted baseball field
- Playground
- Large picnic area

*Ferguson Park*

632 East Garrison Boulevard, Gastonia, NC 28054

- 80 acres
- (4) softball fields
- Concession stand
- Playground
- (4) lighted tennis courts
- Trailed connector to Avon–Catawba Creek Greenway
- Kitchen
- 18–hole disc golf course
- (2) horseshoe pits
- Outdoor classroom
- Trailhead and connector trail to Highland Rail Trail
- 80–acre lake
- (2) fishing piers and boat rental
- 1.6–mile walking path

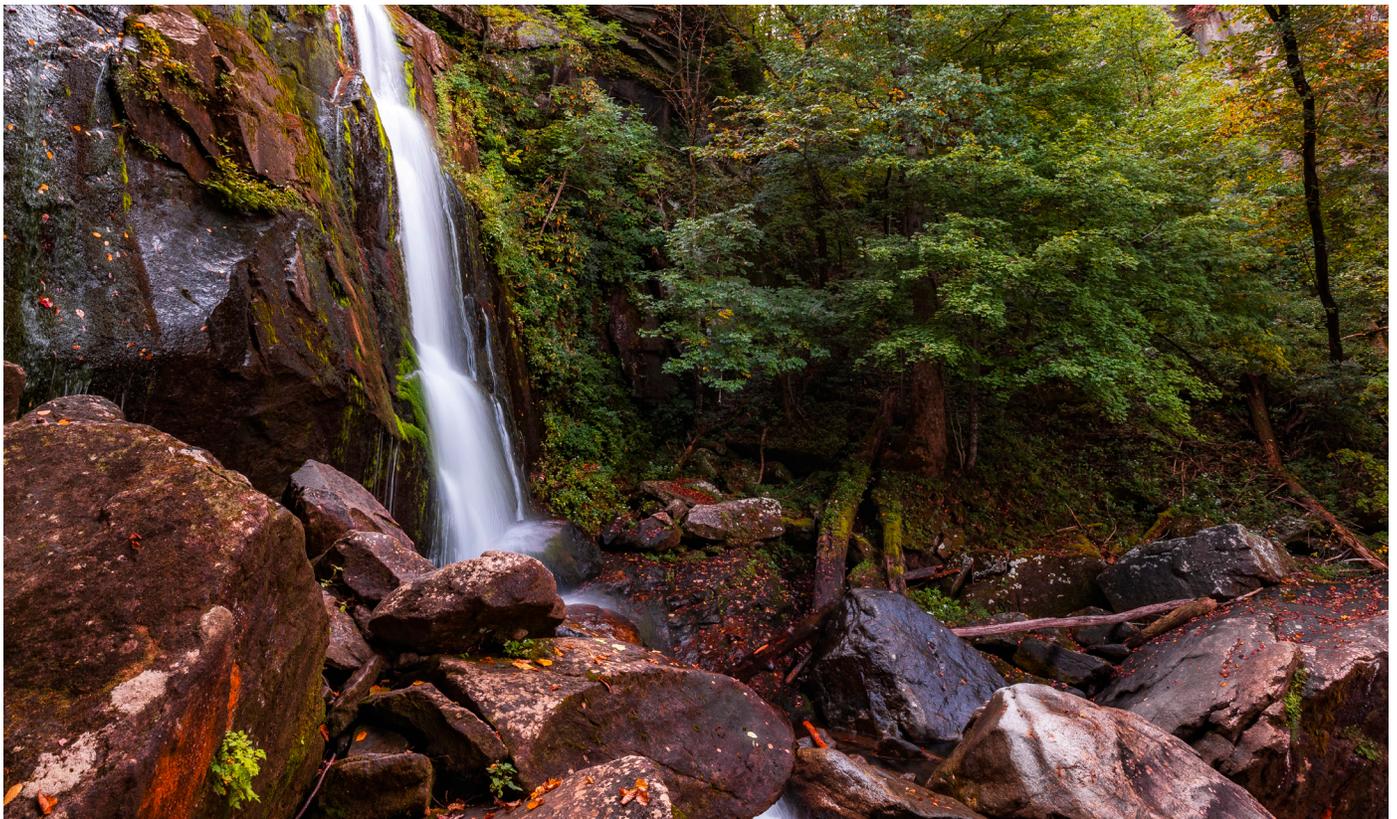
**Cleveland County Facilities**

*Kings Mountain Gateway Trailhead and Trails  
(Cleveland County Partnership with  
Gateway Trail Organization)*

Special Use / Greenway

807 South Battleground Avenue, Kings Mountain, NC 28086

- Parking area
- Restrooms
- Picnic shelter



High Shoals Falls courtesy of the NC Division of Parks and Recreation

## State and Federal Recreation Opportunities

The State of North Carolina manages Kings Mountain and Crowders Mountain State Parks, which are within proximity of the City of Kings Mountain. Federal public land is available for recreation at Kings Mountain National Military Park in nearby Blacksburg, South Carolina.

The State of North Carolina manages more than 250,000 acres of recreational land throughout the state and through a variety of state agencies. This public land is made available for recreational opportunities and to protect and conserve the natural heritage of North Carolina. These sites also provide the public with a variety of historical and educational opportunities that offer a wealth of knowledge.

The City of Kings Mountain is at the epicenter of some of the best recreation opportunities North Carolina has to offer. From parks and trails, some of the more popular destinations available to residents are listed below:

- Kings Mountain State Park
- Crowders Mountain State Park
- Kings Mountain National Military Park (Blacksburg, SC)
- Kings Mountain Greenway Trail
- South Mountains State Park (Connelly Springs, NC)



Crowders Mountain State Park courtesy of the NC Division of Parks and Recreation

## National and State Parks and Wildlife Areas

### Kings Mountain National Military Park

*National Military Park | 3,495 acres*

2625 Park Road, Blacksburg, SC 29702

- Visitor center
- Museum / store
- Restrooms
- Picnic area
- Hiking trails
- Horse trails
- Fishing opportunities
- 19th-century living history farm

### Crowders Mountain State Park

*State Park | 5,217 acres*

522 Park Office Lane, Kings Mountain, NC 28086

- Visitor center and exhibits
- Approximately 30 miles of hiking trails
- Picnic shelters
- The Pinnacle (destination)
- Amphitheater
- Auditorium and classroom
- Rock climbing
- Camping

## Private Recreation Facility Offerings

Private recreation providers, nonprofit organizations, and developers provide limited, alternate resources and opportunities that supplement the City's recreation opportunities. While it is not feasible to provide an exhaustive list of the private recreation facilities throughout the City of Kings Mountain, it is important to understand the types of recreational facilities that are offered. These facilities can be offered for many reasons, including health and wellness, group classes, social gatherings, and children and youth programming. The types of organizations and businesses that provide these opportunities can include private fitness facilities, athletic clubs, recreational guide companies, recreational equipment rental businesses, neighborhood associations, and local nonprofit organizations. Some of the facilities available are as follows:

- Kings Mountain Family YMCA
- Area fitness gyms
- Kings Mountain Optimist
- Kings Mountain Country Club
- Kings Mountain Touchdown Club



## 05 | Needs Analysis

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## Recreation Needs Assessment

The Comprehensive Master Plan prioritizes the parks and recreation facilities envisioned by Kings Mountain residents and visitors. Their aspirations for a good quality of life directly influence the need for these spaces.

Ensuring equitable geographic access to parks for all Kings Mountain residents is crucial. Analyzing recreation service areas can guide land acquisition for present and future needs. Enhancing the area's recreation requires offering desired facilities in accessible locations. Potential gaps in service in existing service areas are depicted in Map 5.1.

To better understand what recreation resources a community has and how accessible those facilities and programs may be to the general population, this study looked at typical service areas. Map 5.1 illustrates what portions of the community lie within or near the typical recreation service areas for identified City-owned recreation facilities. The outcome of this exercise reveals that most of the community does not live near a City-owned facility that they can easily access (walkable). Populations typically affected by inaccessibility include seniors, who may no longer drive, and children. Both user groups generally have greater leisure time and can directly benefit from access to parks and recreation facilities.

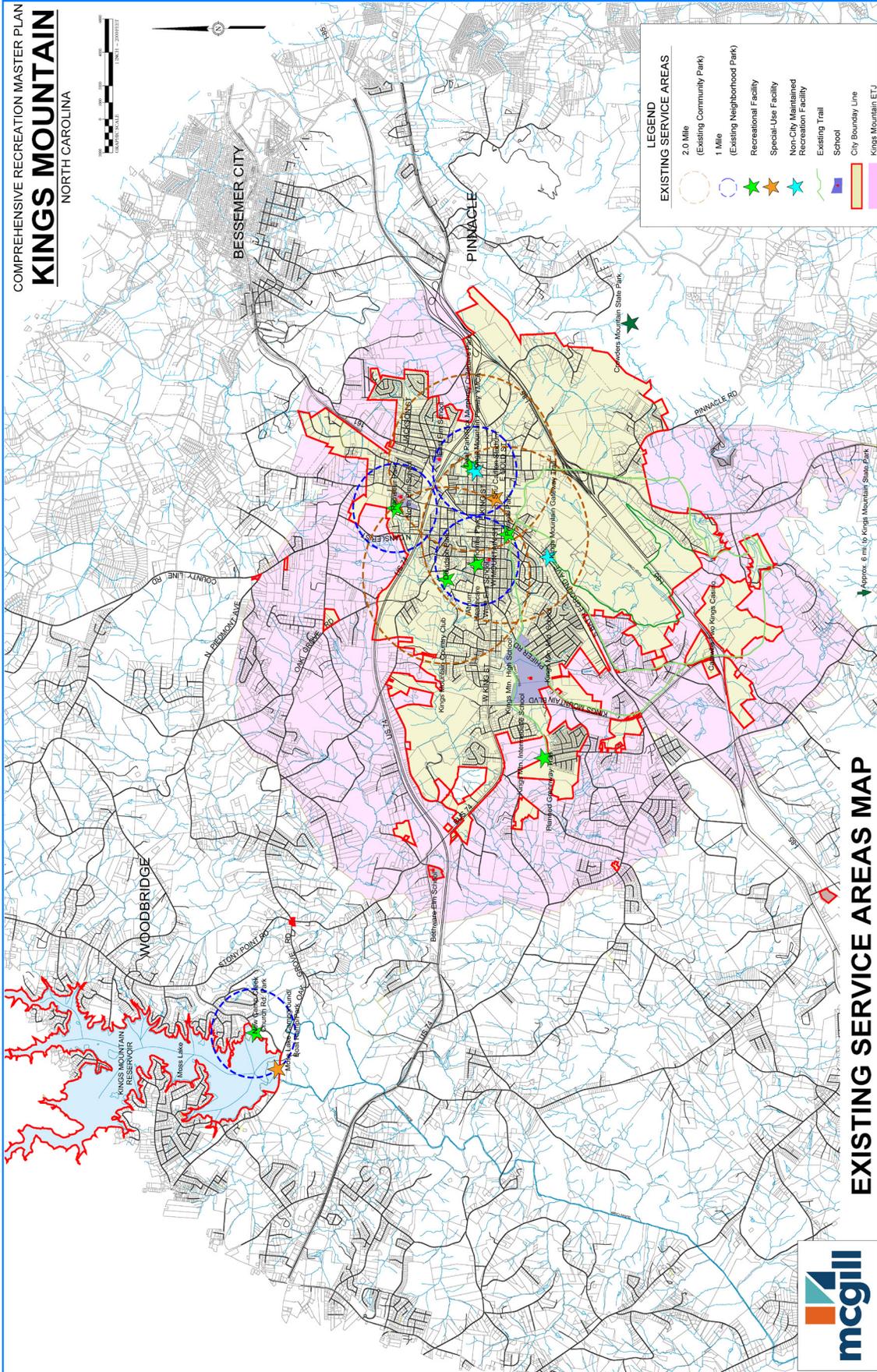
Solutions to improving recreation in the City of Kings Mountain include providing facilities and amenities that residents desire and need. It also considers where such facilities and amenities should be located. The existing recreation service areas illustrated indicate that the areas outside of the core municipalities have the least access to parks. Planning for future parks and recreation system expansion should consider developing facilities outside of the City's core. As new residential and large commercial developments are planned,

The City's park service level directly impacts what type of community Kings Mountain will become over time.

the City should take an active role in working with developers on what types of recreational amenities should be provided per the City's planning department requirements.

The assessment and evaluation of the Level of Service (LOS) standard serves as a critical metric in identifying the surplus or deficit of parkland and amenities within a park system, relative to the population of the jurisdiction. This analytical process commences with a comprehensive inventory of existing facilities, a review of national standards, and an evaluation of staff input. Subsequently, a customized LOS standard is established and designed to reflect the anticipated increase in parks and recreational needs over a ten-year planning horizon. The culmination of this analysis is a table that delineates the projected LOS for 2024 and 2034 and highlights the surpluses and deficits in various park types and amenities, which are predicated on population projections for the ensuing decade.

There are three levels of service parameters. First, the level of service is the foundation for recommendations and improvements Kings Mountain can implement. Any improvements considered must be under the City's jurisdiction. Second, other performance metrics, such as staffing, budgets, and maintenance, are related to the level of service acreage. For this reason, it is important only to include acreage for which the City is responsible. Finally, when utilizing best practices or national standards as benchmarks, reported data is limited to what an agency owns and operates. The level of service figure maintains this same parameter so that a direct comparison may be made.



Map of existing service areas

Standards based on the level of service are guidelines, not requirements, for communities to use when benchmarking the demand for recreation in their given geographic areas. To ensure that the City of Kings Mountain’s comprehensive parks and recreation master plan is distinct and versatile, input was sought from its integral components: City staff, City council, and citizen representatives.

## Level of Service for Parkland

The level of service guidelines for parkland currently owned and operated by Kings Mountain for the current and future population estimates and projections are provided in Tables 5.1 and 5.2. Population figures in this analysis are based on the demographics obtained from the United States Census Bureau data. The acreage standard is based on the population ratio method pre-established for each park classification.

Based on park acreage standards, the City of Kings Mountain’s recreational facilities appear to exceed typical standards for community and neighborhood park types. Kings Mountain currently provides three community parks, four neighborhood parks, three special-use facilities, and one City-owned property that is not officially a public recreational facility but has the potential to offer public recreation if switched from largely City-use to public use. The publicly accessible City-owned Moss Lake is not factored into typical park acreage calculations. Moss Lake is a public recreation resource, but it generally operates independently of other parks and recreation facilities. 14.6 acres of day-use area was included but not the 1,660 acres of water that is the City’s freshwater reservoir. It should be noted that Kings Mountain National Military Park and Crowders Mountain State Park are within proximity of the City, as noted in the inventory.

Linear parks, special-use facilities, and open spaces are not designated under the parkland level of service evaluation. Due to the variability and nature of each of these facilities, determining a pre-established population ratio is very difficult. Table 5.3 denotes the amenities levels of service for Kings Mountain, which is the standard used in this analysis.

KINGS MOUNTAIN EXISTING PARKS	
Police Club/ City Lake #2/Davidson Lake (Municipal Property)	29.2 acres*
Davidson Park (Community Park)	12 acres
Patriot Park (Community Park)	2.4 acres
Deal Park & Walking Track (Community Park)	9 acres
King Mountain Recreation Center (YMCA-Neighborhood Park)	15.4 acres
LG Thoms Park and Walking Track (Neighborhood Park)	6.6 acres
New Camp Creek Church Road Park (Neighborhood Park)	11.02 acres
Ramseur Park (Neighborhood Park)	2 acres
Moss Lake Recreational Area and Campground (Special Use Fac.)	14.6 acres**
Shu Carlton Stadium (Special Use Facility)	5.6 acres
City Lake #1 (Special Use Facility)	43.5 acres*
<b>Kings Mountain PARK ACREAGE*</b>	<b>151.32 acres</b>
*Lake area subtracted from total parcel acreage **Acreage minus lake and non-recreation areas	

Table 5.1: Existing park acreage

TYPE OF PARK	Existing Town Acreage	Recommended for 2024 Population 12,302*	Recommended for 2034 Population 16,634*	Surplus / Deficit for 2034 Population
DISTRICT PARK 200 acres or 5 acres / 1,500 persons	0 acres	41	55.6	55.6-acre deficit
COMMUNITY PARK 2.5 acres / 4,000 persons	23.4 acres	7.7 acres	10.4 acres	13 acres surplus
NEIGHBORHOOD PARK 2 acres / 4,000 persons	35.02 acres	6.1 acres	8.3 acres	26.72 acres surplus
MINI PARK 0.5 acres / 4,000 persons	0 acres	1.5 acres	2.1 acres	2.1 acres deficit

\*Population estimate based on NCOSBM population and growth rates.

Table 5.2: Park acreage recommendations per existing and anticipated population

## Level of Service for Amenities

Amenities are the elements within a park and recreation facility. They are the key features that attract people to outdoor spaces. Amenities may include fields and courts specific to sports, places dedicated to play, locations for gathering, trail systems, and special-use accommodations. Level of service standards were established based on information gathered from NRPA and historical evidence from past projects. A level of service assessment of the existing amenities is shown in Table 5.3.

Based on the information contained in Table 5.3, the City does not meet many of the recommended Kings Mountain level of service standards for typical City-owned recreational facilities for their permanent population. This information does not consider the non-City-owned amenities provided by other entities, such as Cleveland and Gaston Counties, area neighborhoods, school facilities, and other nearby municipalities. As recreation trends and public needs vary over time, the recommended amenities may not need to be immediately implemented. The recommendations are intended to meet the anticipated level of service needs over ten years, but implementation of specific projects may depend on available funding, land acquisition, and periodic re-evaluation of recreation needs.

Amenity	Level of Service Standards	Existing Amenity	2024 Suggested per Population	Needed for 2024	2034 Suggested per Population	Needed for 2034
Town of Kings Mountain Amenities			Population: 12,302*		Projected Population: 16,694*	
Trails	0.25 mi./1,000	1.07 mi.	3.07 mi.	2 mi.	4.17 mi.	2.47 mi.
Playground	1/2,500	2	5	3	6	4
Tennis Court	1/2,500	0	5	5	6	6
Volleyball Court	1/2,500	0	5	5	6	6
Pickleball Court*	1/2,500	0	5	5	6	6
Lawn Games	1/2,500	2	5	3	6	4
Picnic Shelter	1/3,000	2	4	2	5	3
Splash Pad	1/3,500	1	3	2	4	3
Basketball Court	1/5,000	1.5	2	.5	3	1.5
Multipurpose Field	1/5,000	1	2	1	3	2
Youth Baseball /Softball Field	1/5,000	4	2	0	3	0
Dog Park	1/5,000	0	2	2	3	3
Picnic Station	1/7,500	1	1	0	2	1
Public Fishing	1/8,000	2	1	0	2	0
Soccer / Football	1/8,000	9	1	0	2	0
Water Access Location	1/10,000	3	1	0	1	0
Community Center	1/10,000	0	1	1	1	1
Adult Baseball /Softball	1/10,000	1	1	0	1	0
Outdoor Stage	1/10,000	1	1	0	1	0
Skate Park	1/10,000	0	1	1	1	1
Disc Golf	1/10,000	0	1	1	1	1

\*Population estimate based on NCOSBM population and growth rates.

Table 5.3: Existing and projected amenities

## Comparative Analysis

An important part of the planning process is performing a comparative analysis with municipalities that have similar populations to Kings Mountain. Other established standards create a benchmark for recreational opportunities offered by the City. Considerations for comparative analysis include parks provided, amenities offered per capita, per capita spending, and staffing levels.

The latest reliable recreation expense has been used for a comparative analysis of known recreation department expenditures. The data comparison illustrated was collected in the spring of 2024 and compares municipalities of similar population size.

This master plan also compares metrics developed by the NRPA. In 2022, NRPA issued a performance review that provided insights and benchmarks from parks and recreation departments across the country. Information that was used for a comparative analysis for Kings Mountain included residents per park, acres of parkland, outdoor park and recreation amenities providing the median number of residents per amenity, and recreation department operating expenditures per capita. This data is one more way to see how Kings Mountain is meeting the needs of the community.

Table 5.4 shows data collected for communities of similar resident populations to Kings Mountain and the reported recreation and cultural expenditures. While this information is a useful snapshot of how one community compares to others, the circumstances of each community may vary far more than the population number. The differences between tax bases, seasonal tourism, geographic and environmental resources, etc. are rarely similar enough to rely solely on this information as a fair comparison. However, it does show how recreation expenditures can vary among these communities despite population size. While tourism is currently a consideration of Kings Mountain, tourism is expected to dramatically increase as the Catawba Two Kings Casino develops.

Some communities account for facility maintenance costs in this data while others do so partially or not at all. Comparative analysis intends to show the scope of recreation services typically provided by other municipal recreation providers. Knowing where Kings Mountain falls within this may yield insight for staff and community leaders.

The information provided in the following table was compiled by the NRPA for use in their 2024 Agency Performance Review. This is one of the sources of data this study used to help develop levels of service standards (see Table 5.3).

Municipality	Effective Municipal Tax Rate*	Population	Staff	Number of Parks	2023-2024 Op. Budget	2023-2024 Parks capital budget	Annual Allotment to YMCA
Belmont	.3399	14,842	8FT + 6 Maintenance	9	\$990k	\$2M shared with Public works	\$0
Kings Mountain	.2953 (Gaston) .3224 (Clev.)	11,246	3FT*	11	\$0	\$98K	\$469k
Lincolnton	.4223	11,225	6 FT	5	\$1.3M	\$300k	\$0
Smithfield	.4605	11,527	12 FT	7 parks + greenways	\$2.5M	\$350k	\$0

**Table 5.4: Chart of comparable communities**

\* these staff are housed in other city departments

Population and tax rate information is from OSBM, budget data is via interviews with respective town

### 2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review Key Findings

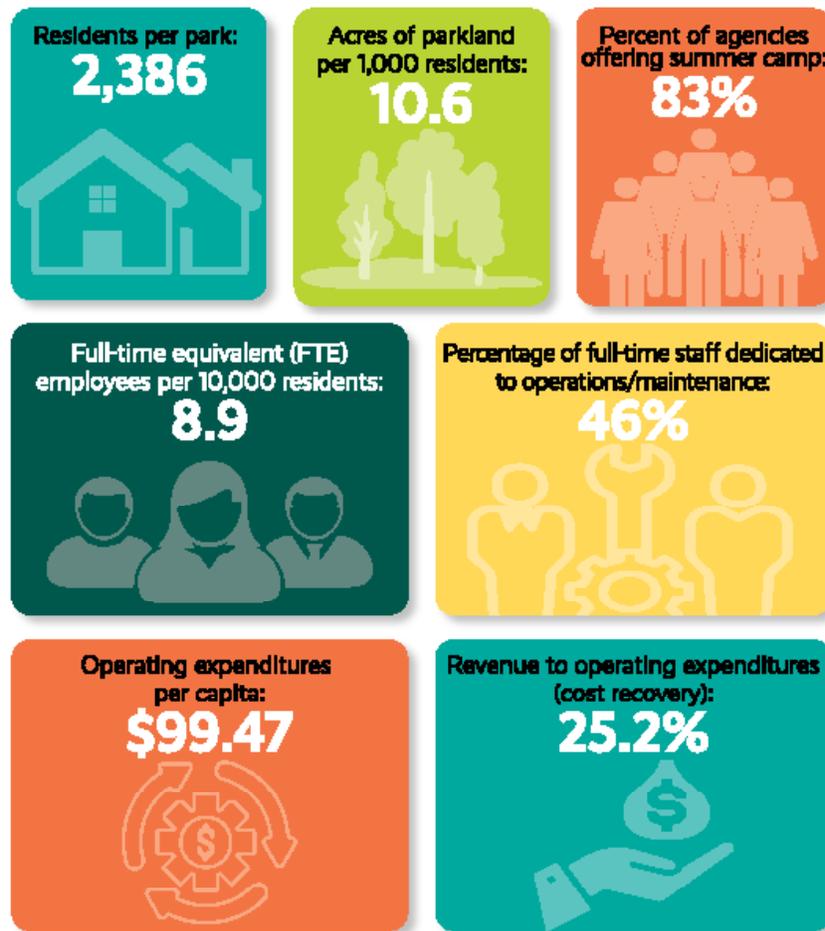
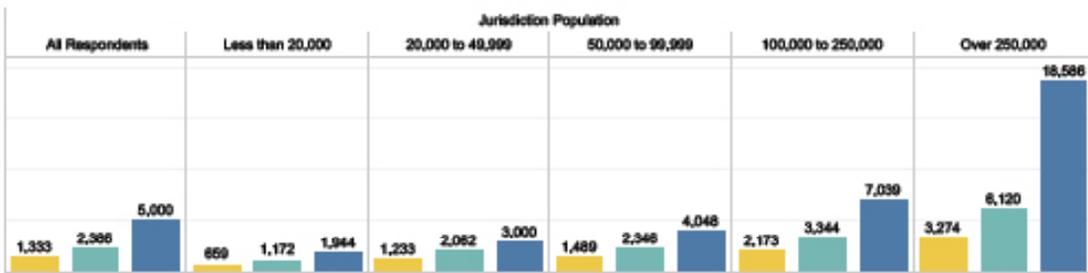
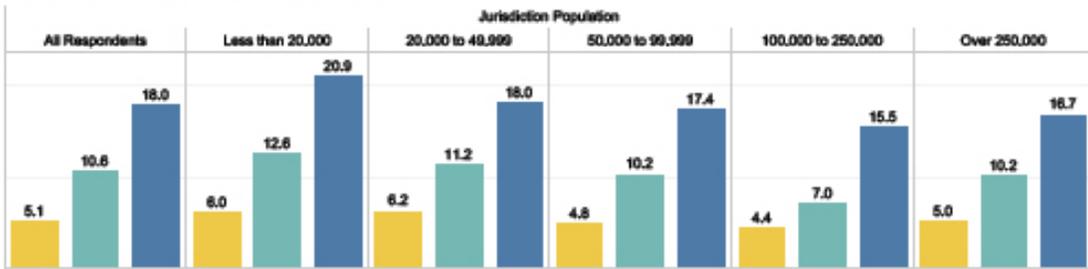


Table 5.5: NRPA Agency Performance Review

### Residents per Park



### Acres of Parkland per 1,000 Residents



■ Lower Quartile  
■ Median  
■ Upper Quartile

[www.NRPA.org/APR](http://www.NRPA.org/APR)



Chart to show number of residents per park and acres of parkland per 1,000 residents

Based on OSBM Population and NRPA Data Kings Mountain should offer between 6.0 and 20.9 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. It currently offers 151+/- acres of to a population of 12,302

# Walkability

## 10-Minute Walk Initiative

The 10-Minute Walk initiative is another benchmark to assess the needs of the community and the ability to walk to parks and green spaces. The NRPA, the Trust for Public Land, and the Urban Land Institute have joined together for a nationwide movement to transform communities and help people have greater access to parks and green spaces. They have set a goal to provide safe, equitable access to 100% of people in cities throughout the United States by 2050.

The Trust for Public Land has created an online tool called ParkServe®. ParkServe® uses GIS databases and demographics to analyze the percentage of residents within a community who have access to parks and green space. Reports are generated for local communities to gain insight into how they are doing. The report provides insight into how a City

is servicing residents and is another tool to show where there are gaps within a recreation system.

ParkServe® did not have a report for Kings Mountain’s park data. However, ParkServe® did have some relevant data indicating areas within a 10-minute walk from each major City-owned park. This information provides some guidance as to what areas were lacking this standard of service and where future parks may be needed to meet growing demand.

While some residents of Kings Mountain are fortunate to have recreation resources within walking distance of where they live, other areas in the northwest and southeast quadrants must drive to City-owned parks. I-40 is the major barrier for most residents in the southeast. Generally, adding an expanded trail / sidewalk / trail system to link all City-owned facilities with downtown and major residential communities would help to support greater walkability for residents.

Population	Within a 10-minute walk
Total Population	1,159

Age	Within a 10-minute walk
Children (less than age 20)	261
Adults (age 20 to age 64)	638
Seniors (age 65 and up)	260

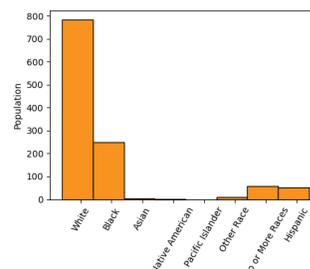
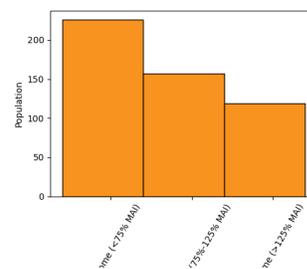
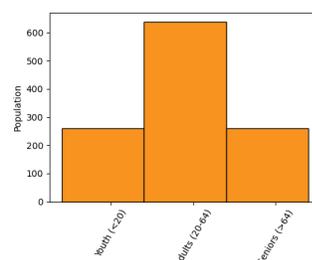
  

Households by Income	Within a 10-minute walk
Low income	226
Middle income	157
High income	119

(Generated from urban area median income)

Race/Ethnicity	Within a 10-minute walk
White*	784
Black*	250
Asian*	5
Native American*	2
Pacific Islander*	0
Other Race*	10
Two or More Races*	57
Hispanic	51

\* Excludes those that report Hispanic origin (which is captured separately from race by the U.S. Census)



This report was created on June 5, 2024 using the ParkServe® interactive mapping site. It is for informational purposes only. The providers of this report disclaim any and all warranties, express or implied, including fitness for a particular purpose or merchantability, and make no representation that the report is complete, accurate, or error free. Use and reliance on this report is at the sole risk of the party using same.  
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## Evaluation of Staffing Needs

The people who make up the parks and recreation department are what make up a successful agency. Everyone, from the parks and recreation director to athletic specialists to maintenance staff, works together to provide quality offerings to the community and visitors to the area. The key maintenance responsibilities of a parks and recreation department include, but are not limited to, operating and maintaining parks and recreation facilities, providing recreational programs and services, maintaining budgetary responsibilities that match the needs of the City, and planning, managing, and hosting special events.

Parks and recreation departments continue to face a multitude of growing market demands, including providing a superior participant experience, addressing the needs of residents, managing capital development projects, keeping up with changing industry regulatory requirements, and attracting and retaining the best possible employees. Challenges, such as cost recovery, participant retention, expenditure reduction, brand awareness, consistency, and technology applications, can present an opportunity to improve efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery. As the only municipal department where patrons may choose to spend their disposable income, parks and recreation departments must develop a service industry business approach to delivering services for maximum efficiency.

The City of Kings Mountain recently named a new recreation department director (Director of Cultural Enrichment), but this new department lacks dedicated support staff. Existing City-owned recreation facilities are typically cared for by public works and the Moss Lake Water Authority staff. Kings Mountain manages the existing recreation facilities, but activity programming is not yet being provided by the City. With projected growth, additional recreation department staff

will be required to offer residents their desired programming and upkeep at public recreation facilities. Staff deficits may be dealt with by contractual or part-time positions until demands require full-time staff to be added.

Kings Mountain's estimated population is 12,302. The current staffing levels are not sufficient for existing levels of service and are lower than typical agencies serving similar population sizes.

## NRPA Staffing Guidelines Analysis

### Existing Staff:

- (1) Director of Cultural Enrichment

### NRPA Recommended Staffing Levels:

#### 7.5 full-time employees (lower quartile)

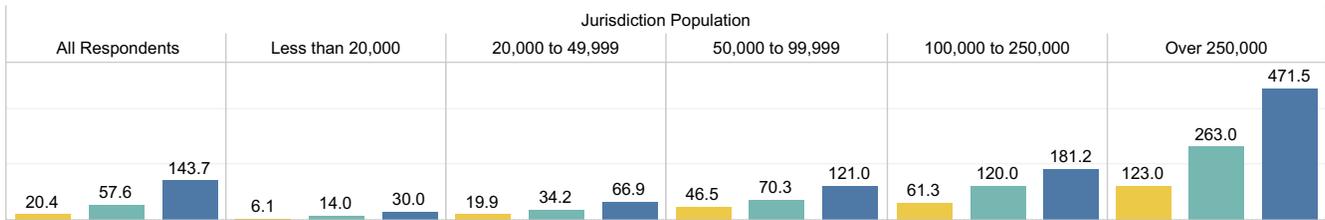
Considering the 2024 National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) staffing guidelines for agencies with fewer than 20,000 residents, and per the lower quartile Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) number of 6.1 per 10,000 residents (lower quartile), Kings Mountain, with its current population of 12,302, is projected to have a staffing level of 7.5 FTE.

#### 17 full-time employees (median quartile)

The current number of FTEs recommended for Kings Mountain to support the recreational needs of the present population of 12,302. (Median of NRPA recommended FTEs for communities with less than 20,000 residents).

#### 37 full-time employees (upper quartile)

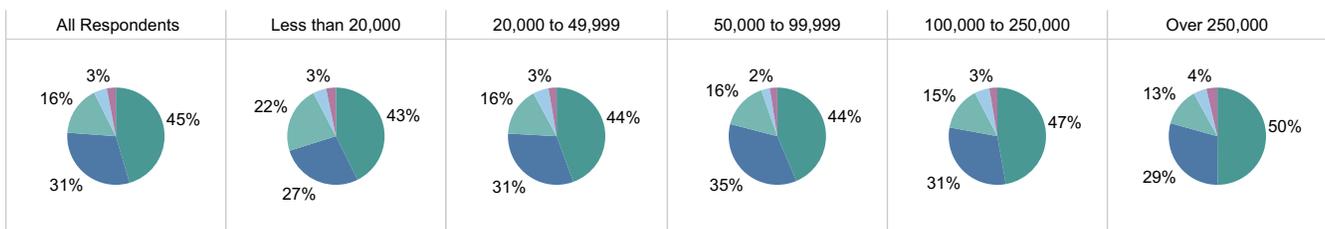
Based on a median number of FTE of 30 per 10,000 residents. 37 FTE based on the 2024 NRPA staffing guidelines for Kings Mountain's current population of 12,302 would be a maximum (upper quartile) recommendation.



Park and Recreation FTEs per 10,000 Residents



Responsibilities of Park and Recreation Workers



- Operations/Maintenance
- Programmers
- Administration
- Other
- Capital Development

[www.NRPA.org/APR](http://www.NRPA.org/APR)



## NRPA Agency FTEs

Based on the City’s population, Kings Mountain should expect to have between 6.1 and 30.0 Parks and Recreation FTE’s. Nearly half of the focus should be on maintenance and operations, while the remaining staff should be administrators and programing staff.

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# 06 | Community Engagement

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## Community Engagement

Community input is one of the most important aspects of the planning process. It is hard to gain the support of the community without seeking their help in planning, and so planning without community input often fails. When community members can voice their opinions, ask questions, and share their wishes for the park, they feel a sense of ownership and see that local government members and planners want to know their needs and desires. As the planning process moves forward and community members see elements that they requested come to fruition, they are more apt to support the expansion through participation, funding, and care for the facilities.

The process was intended to be equitable and inclusive. It provides a variety of input opportunities and methods for community members and visitors so that they can comfortably express their needs and desires. Insight from local leaders and City staff, public meetings, a community survey, and focus group interviews were used to gather ideas, share thoughts, stimulate conversations, and answer

questions. Public meetings and a community survey were advertised on the Kings Mountain website, social media pages, and fliers at parks and other popular destinations. The contributions and materials received from community participants were essential for producing a plan that will benefit the community for generations to come.

## Local Leaders and Staff

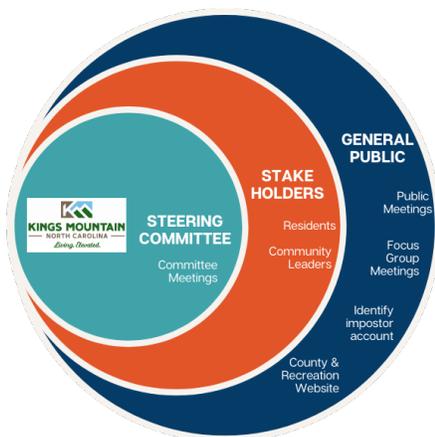
McGill team members and Kings Mountain staff communicated frequently. Overall, the staff has heard the community say that the City must explore new ways to meet resident and visitor needs. They also understand the need to prepare for population growth and expectations of service offerings over the next ten years by reengaging in parks and recreation programs and facility development. The staff have heard the need for provide pedestrian with more wants to provide pedestrians with more opportunities to walk and ride their bicycles, and they want to provide more space for seasonal events. Kayak and boat access were tempered with concerns of how to deal with the anticipated influx of vehicular traffic and needs for parking.



Public meeting in Kings Mountain

## Public Meetings

To facilitate human interaction and open conversation during the community engagement process, four public meetings were conducted during the planning process. Two 2.5-hour drop-in events were held on January 15th, from noon to 2:30 PM, and 4 PM to 6:30 PM at the City Library. This location was selected because it is central to the City and familiar to many residents. An additional drop-in meeting was held at Big Red's Café on January 19th from 9 AM to noon. A fourth public meeting was held from 3 PM to 6 PM at the Imperial Mercantile on February 9th, 2024. These meetings provided the opportunity for a variety of information to be collected from different types of people. Approximately 110 participants attended the meetings and provided much-needed feedback. Getting information from a variety of people in different locations provides invaluable insight into the needs of users in different stages of life.



The community meetings included a visual preference exercise, open dialogue, and question / answer opportunities. The meetings encouraged attendees to discuss their experiences with the Kings Mountain recreation system in an open setting that promoted opportunities to share comments, see amenity examples, ask questions, and identify where recreation facilities are needed. These meetings are a crucial step to ensure that all who want to can be heard, voice their concerns, and

receive clarification. The visual preference survey of various park amenities allowed participants to identify what they felt would be good additions to the park system. Participants were also encouraged to write any of their ideas down on a large notepad for everyone to see and discuss. The visual preference exercise provided participants with stickers to place on their 3 preferred amenities of the 36 provided. (See Appendix B for 11"x17").

### Top 5 Most Desired New Recreation Amenities

*(in order of most desired)*

- 1 **Davidson Community Center (write-in option) – 45 votes**  
\*offers space for events, gatherings, classes, and programs
- 2 **Amphitheater – 35 votes**
- 3 **Dog park – 30 votes**
- 4 **Tie: Paved multi-use trails and baseball / softball fields – 20 votes**
- 5 **Multi-purpose fields – 16 votes**

Above are the findings of the visual preference exercise. Meeting participants mentioned the refurbishment of all existing parks, the need for more indoor and four-season recreation programming, and better access to recreation programs for all residents despite the income and geographic disparities between them. Many residents wanted a new community center in the Davidson neighborhood, more sidewalks and paved trails in the City, and equitable relationships between the various non-profit organizations that provide recreational programming in Kings Mountain. Participants allow expressed desire for a dog park, farmer's market, and City-owned and operated (small) community centers or meeting rooms within City parks.

The active participation of residents in Kings Mountain was crucial in developing a master plan that reflects the true needs of the City. This planning effort involved two community surveys to gather community input. The initial survey was an open-to-everyone survey and the second was conducted by ETC Institute (ETC) as an impartial third party.

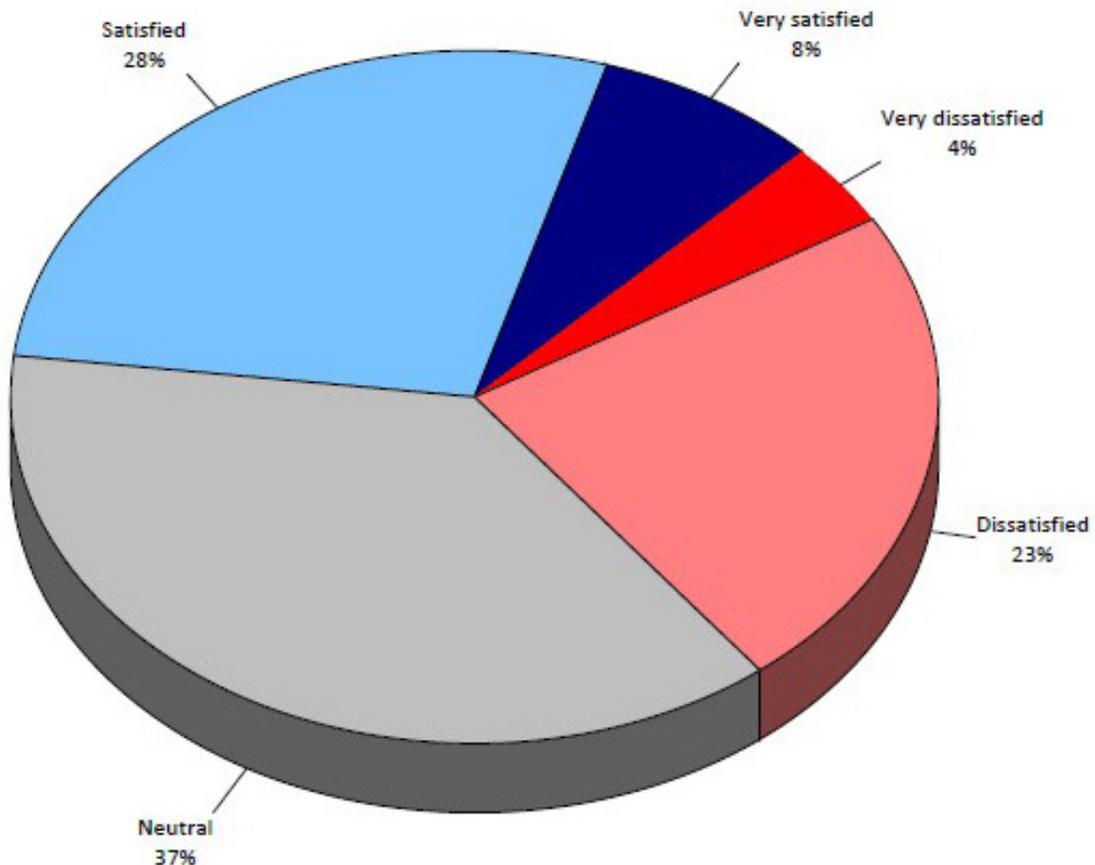
ETC’s Statistically valid survey: One survey was conducted using a methodology that enabled the survey to be considered a statistically valid input method. Survey takers were randomly sampled to ensure all demographic areas were proportionally collected in line with the current City makeup area. It was also critical that the number of surveys collected (305) allowed for a 95% confidence interval met. These processes are in line with academic-level research standards, which seek to be representative of the community with strict measures in place to reduce survey bias.

## Results of the Statistically Valid Survey

First, it is critical to understand the community’s satisfaction with the current recreation services.

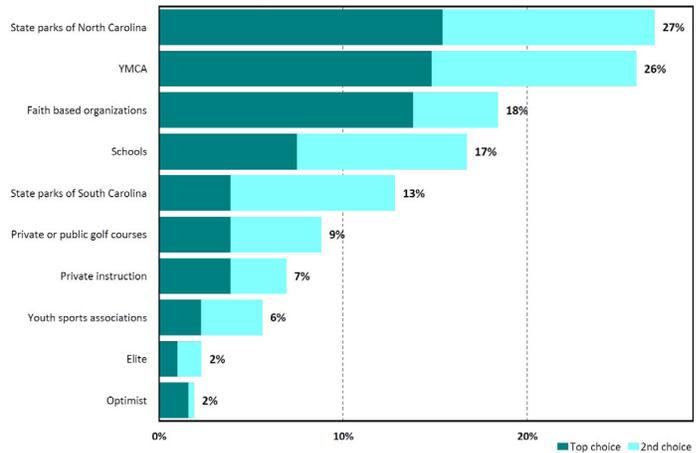
From this response, we can see that most people are neutral. Slightly more respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the service than those who were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. As local governments generally strive to offer the best level of service possible for residents, the levels of satisfaction are good benchmarks to use in gauging steps toward continual improvement.

**36% of survey takers were satisfied or very satisfied with the value of the City’s recreation services.**



Overall level of satisfaction in Kings Mountain (by percentage)

Since the City generally does not have a parks and recreation department, it is important to see which organizations have been meeting the recreational needs of the area. The City’s proximity to Crowders Mountain State Park provides a logical reason for its highest selection, and the City’s partnership with the YMCA explains why the YMCA would also be high-ranking. There is a steep decline after these two organizations for use patterns.

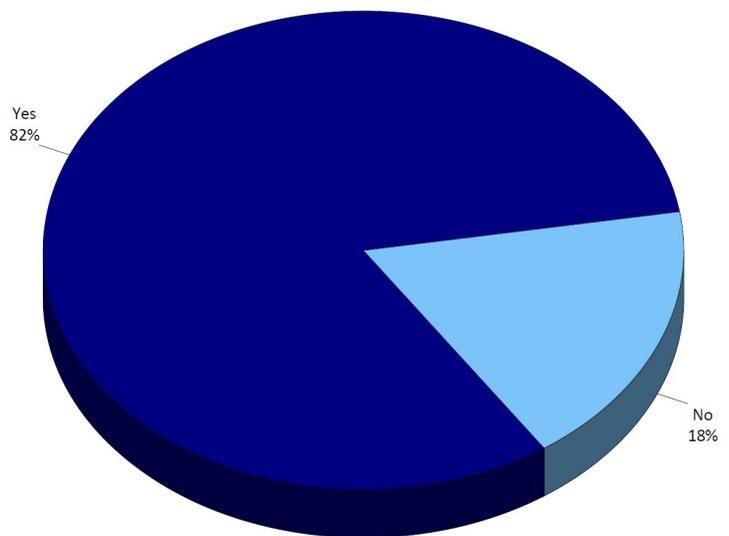


Graph showing the most used organizations per household (by percentage)

For approximately a quarter of a century, a significant portion of the parks and recreation services have been provided through a service agreement with the local YMCA. This arrangement is a crucial and warrants a deeper understanding. According to a recent survey, 82% of respondents expressed that parks and recreation programs should be administered by the City’s Recreation Department. The survey results reveal a diverse range of recreation organizations that participants frequently use. The most popular choice is the state parks in North Carolina, with 27% of respondents selecting this option. Interestingly, despite the significant funding it receives from the City of Kings Mountain, only 26% of participants chose the YMCA. This figure is surprisingly low given the organization’s prominent role and substantial resources.

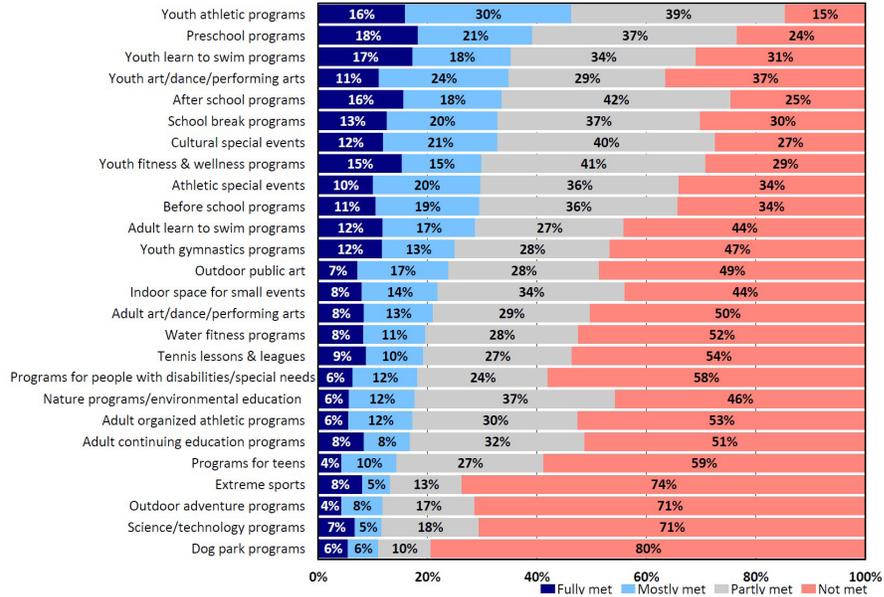
18% selected faith-based organizations and 17% selected schools, which indicates a considerable level of recreational engagement with these institutions. State parks in South Carolina were chosen by 13% of participants, while private or public golf courses were favored by 9%. 7% of

respondents selected private instruction, and 6% selected youth sport associations, which presents a smaller but still significant interest in these types of recreational activities. Lastly, KM Elite and Optimist were each chosen by 2% of participants. These results highlight the need for a comprehensive review of the allocation of recreational resources in Kings Mountain. Despite the YMCA’s outsized funding, its usage rate is comparable to other organizations with presumably less financial support.



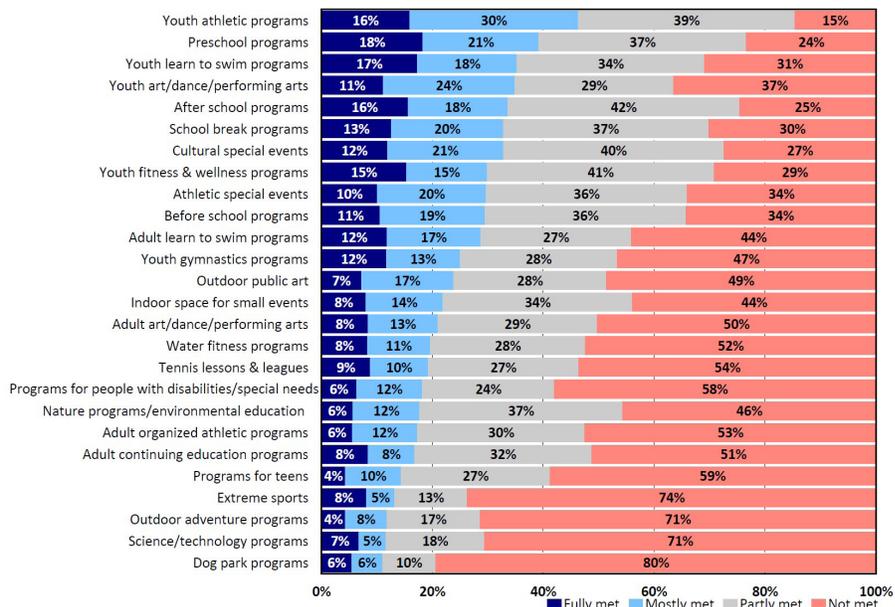
Graph showing community response to if the City should have a recreation department, besides the YMCA, that provide programming.

It is important to understand what needs are being met and what is not being met, both for programs and facilities. The current system has a significant level of unmet needs with some areas nearly completely unmet. From this information, we can see that trails, golfing, and athletic facilities received the highest marks. Non-traditional sports and adventure facilities are two areas that have some of the largest unmet needs, which will take significant effort to address.



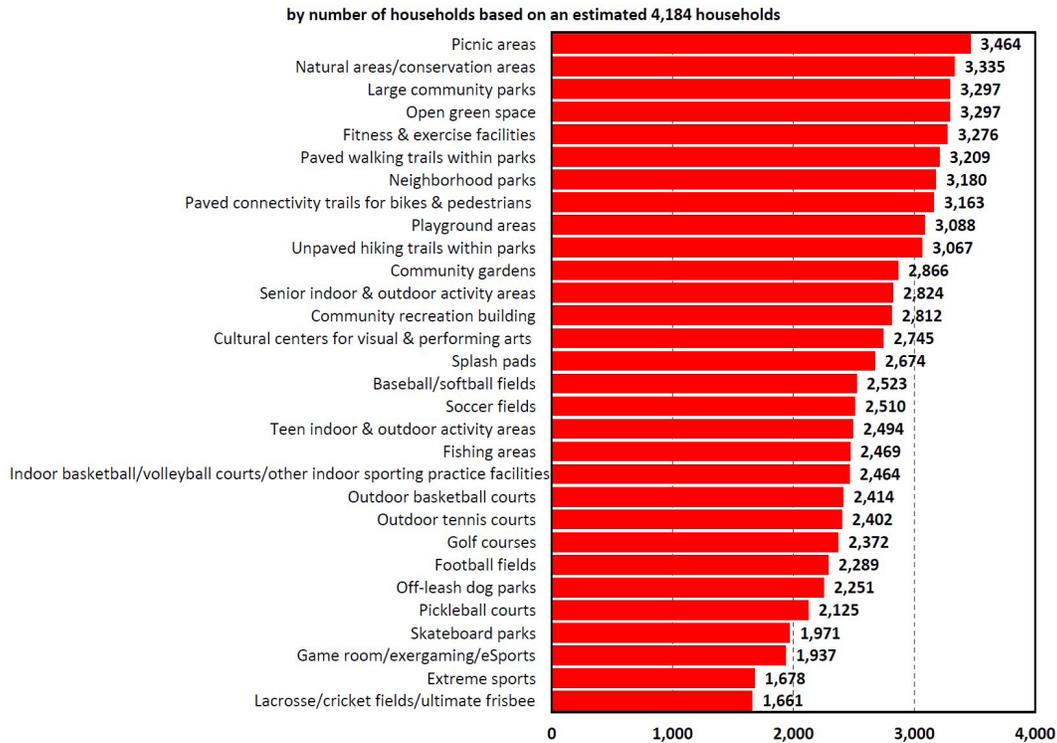
Graph showing how well residents feel their facilities needs are met (by percentage)

There were similar responses for programming. Youth athletics, swim lessons, and school-related programs had the most met needs. This is understandable because these areas generally align with YMCA-offered programs and services. However, teen programs, adult programs, non-youth athletic programs, and special events have significant proportions of unmet or partially unmet needs.

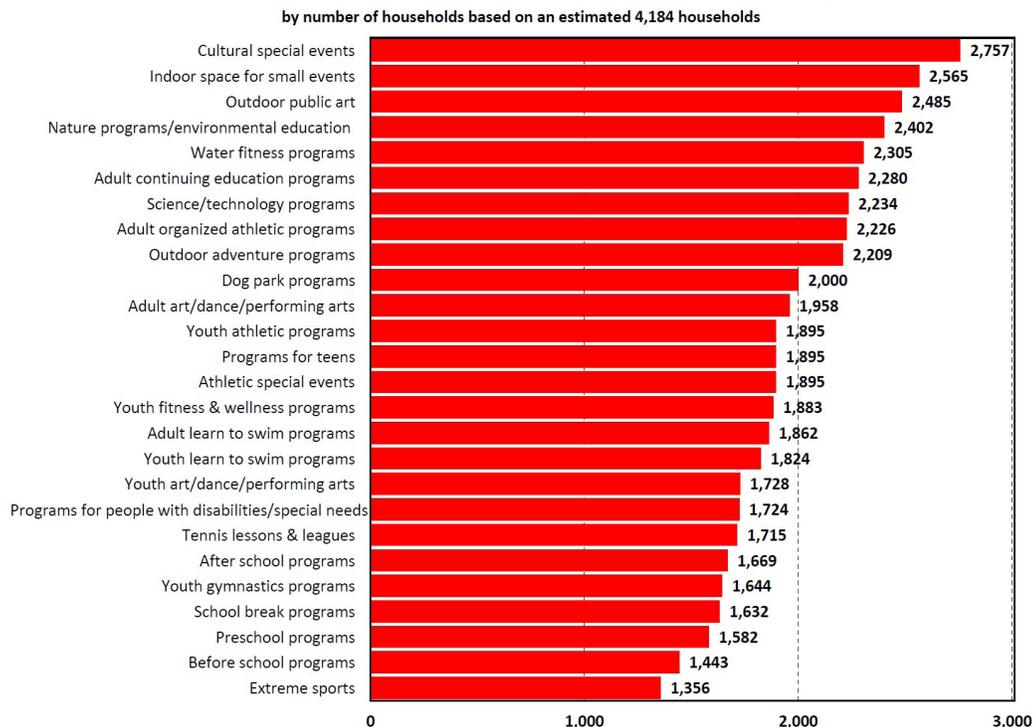


Graph showing how well residents feel their programming needs are met (by percentage)

Using these statistically valid surveys, interest expressions and needs results can be used to estimate how many of Kings Mountain’s 4,184 households have unmet program and facility needs. In nearly all program or facility needs expressions, at least a quarter of the community’s needs are going unmet and, in some cases, well over half of all households in the City.



Graph showing the number of households in Kings Mountain that need facilities



Graph showing the number of households in Kings Mountain that need programs

## The “Open to Everyone” Survey:

The City also recognized that many within the community who would like to voice their opinion on the future of the park system would likely not have the chance to participate in the statistically valid survey process. Recognizing this, a second survey was developed and offered to the community through the department’s marketing efforts and with marketing cards at the input meetings.

Help Improve Recreation in Kings Mountain!

# Community Survey

Please visit the link or use the QR code below:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/KingsMtnRecSurvey>

This effort will help inform the City of Kings Mountain's planning efforts for Parks and Recreation in the community. Thanks for your participation!





Kings Mountain marketing card

## Summary of Survey Findings

The City had solid participation in this survey with 354 responses, representing 761 individuals, (approximately, 6.5% of the City population) for the recreation master planning data collection effort.

### “Open to Everyone” survey results

These results included paper survey handouts and online survey results. The survey was a demonstrative cross-section of the City in terms of age, household size, and geographic distribution. This survey also allowed for some valuable open-response data to be collected about the City. The complete summary report of survey responses can be found in the appendix.

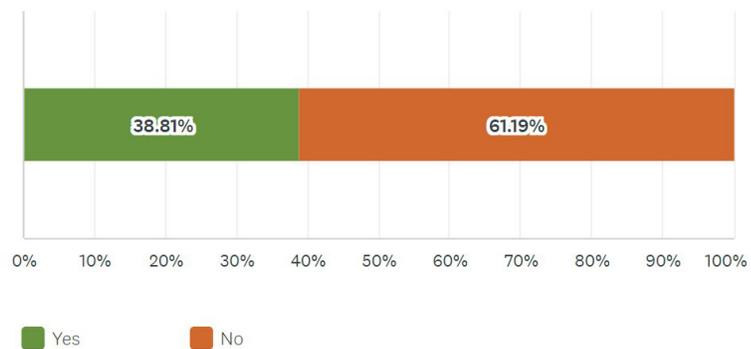
## Some key findings from this survey:

### Generalities

On the broadest level, some generalities can be drawn from the survey data about Kings Mountain's current parks and recreation offerings. More than half of the residents do not live within ½ a mile of a park in the City, which is typically the highest response on barriers to utilizing recreation. The offered facility or programs was the second reason for not regularly using recreation facilities in Kings Mountain.

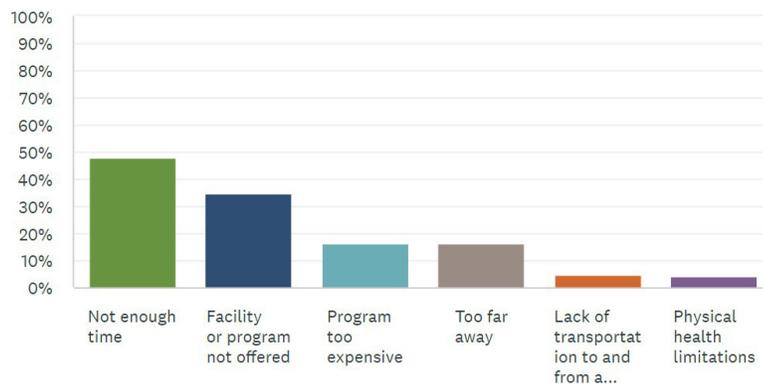
The survey data also shows that approximately 35% of survey respondents traveled outside of the City to use a recreation facility or program. Further exploration is needed to determine if this is due to visitation, tourism, or a lack of facilities and programs.

Answered: 353 Skipped: 1



Showing how many people live within a half mile of a public park or recreational facility

Answered: 291 Skipped: 63

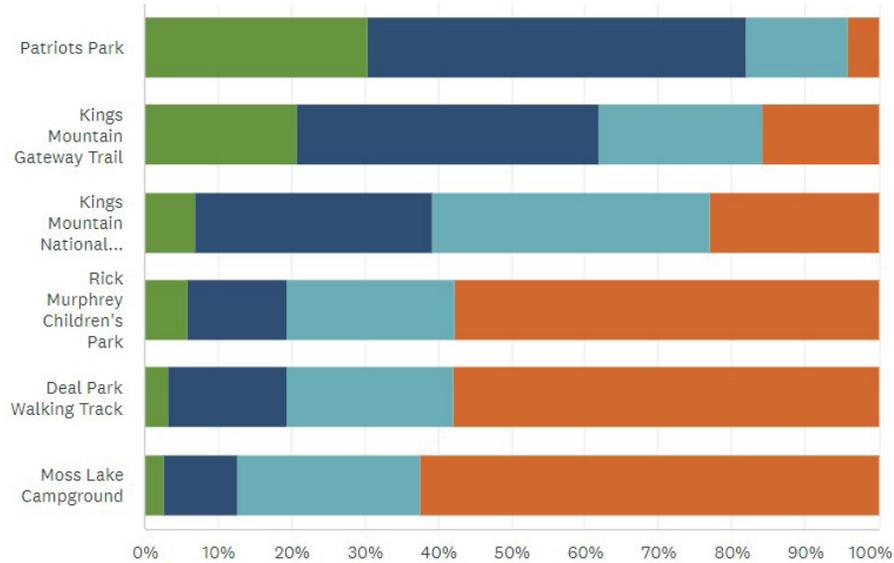


Showing the greatest household barrier to more regular use of recreational facilities

## Facilities

Diving a little deeper, we find that only three of the parks in the system are substantially serving the residents' needs and of that, Patriots Park and the Kings Mountain Gateway Trail are used most regularly. Low usage can come from several different factors that are important to better understand. From the survey data, we see that the quality of the recreation facilities may not be optimally drawing in visitors.

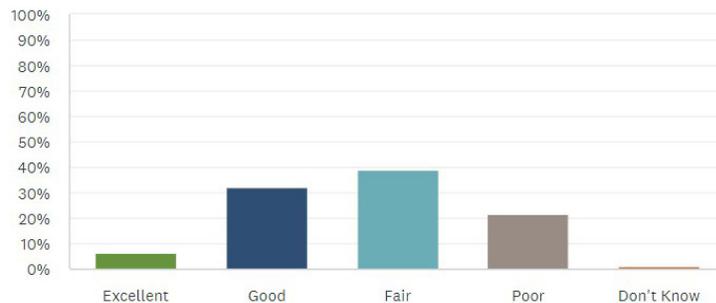
Answered: 351 Skipped: 3



Graph showing how frequently households have visited the listed facilities

The strongest survey response was that the facilities are in fair shape.

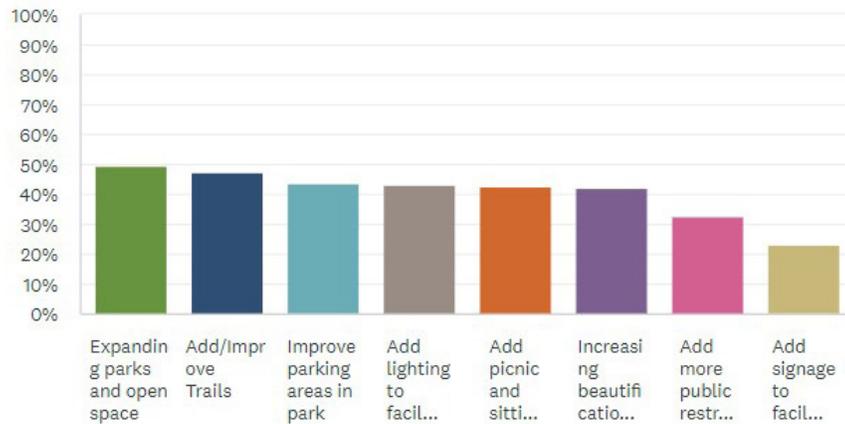
Answered: 350 Skipped: 4



Graph showing how community members rate the existing recreational facilities in Kings Mountain

When we round out this second-level analysis and explore what general improvements survey takers want to see, things come into better focus. From this data, we can see that most people want more parks and recreation opportunities. They also want additional and improved trails. These items all generally point to a park system that is not meeting the needs of the citizens to the level and quality that they expect, due to under-investment and the quality of existing facilities.

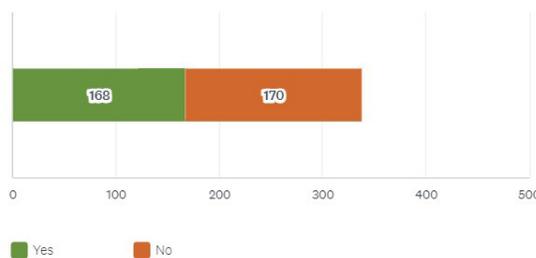
Answered: 301 Skipped: 53



Graph showing what improvements could be made to existing parks and facilities

Public facilities are only part of the parks and recreation service equation. Next, we will further explore the role of the private side of area offerings. Next, it is critical to understand how local non-profits, like the local Kings Mountain YMCA and Kings Mountain Elite, have played a role in offering recreation to the community for several years; it is essential to understand the public's use and perception of these services. The survey speaks to this directly. From this, we can see that only half of the survey takers utilize these non-City offerings. This survey response garnered many additional comments. These additional comments have been illustrated below with a key word illustration where the YMCA, KM Elite, and schools are some of the most prevalent mentions.

Answered: 337 Skipped: 17

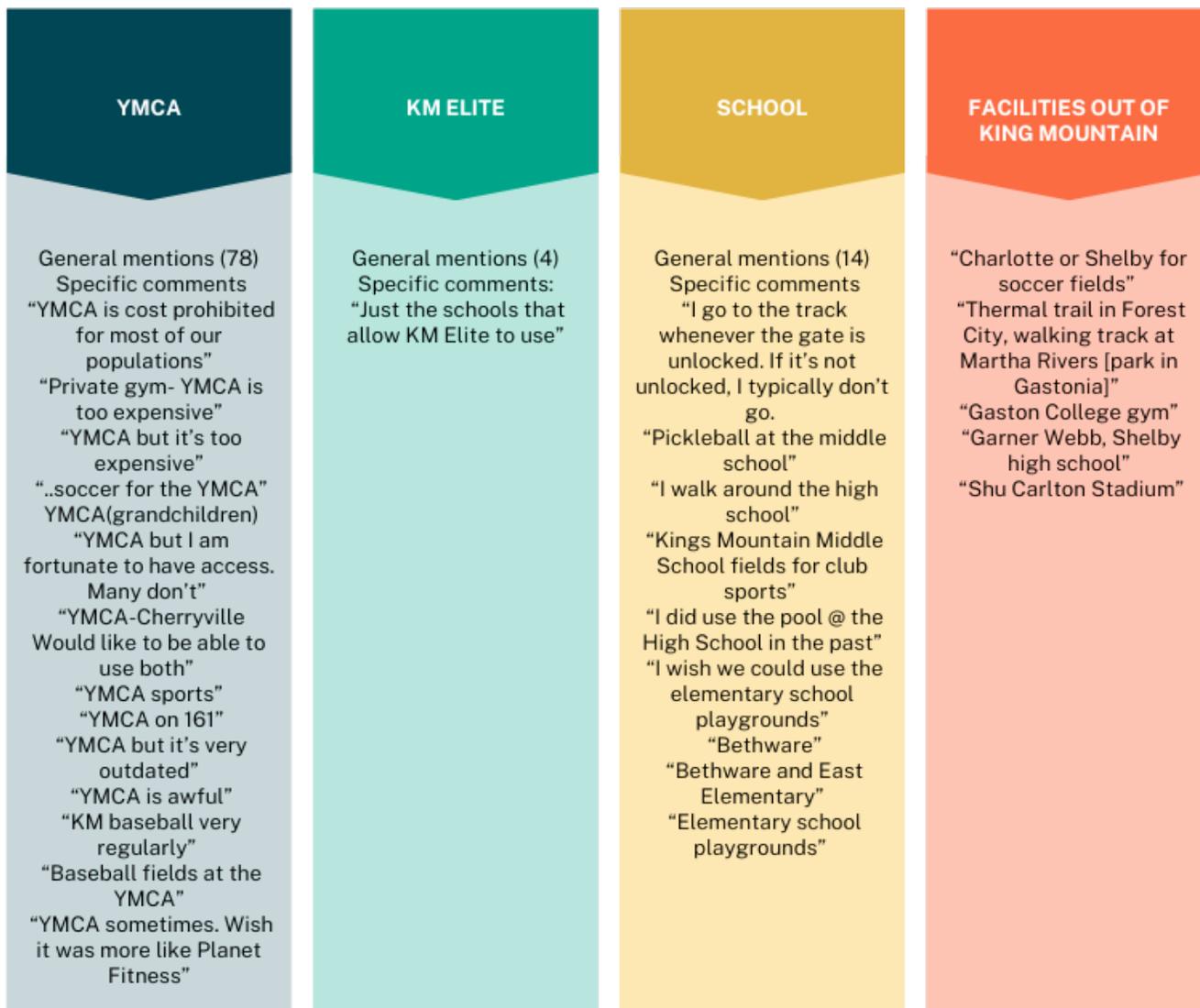


Graph showing how many community members use school or private facilities (YMCA, UNC Charlotte) for recreation



## Programs

First, and like the facility side of the analysis, we see that the quality of the programming offered a very similar but slightly more negative response. A deeper dive into these four categories is provided below.



For a full list of comments, please see the [Appendix](#).

From this several general themes come out. Most of those using private, school, or non-profit facilities, at least among the survey takers, were utilizing the YMCA, followed by the school system, and then KM Elite. Finally, a small but significant portion of the population was utilizing facilities outside of Kings Mountain. Other key themes that came out of these comments were that the YMCA’s costs and access are barriers to some. Access to school facilities is also a barrier for some.



## Focus Group / Stakeholder Interview Summaries

Public focus groups and stakeholder interviews are essential in parks and recreation master planning. They provide community input, ensure inclusive planning, identify opportunities and challenges, build public support, and promote transparency. These methods help create a plan that is responsive, inclusive, and well-supported by the community. Below are summaries from each of the five focus group discussions.

### Citizen Focus Group:

#### February 21, 9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

During the Citizen Focus Group discussion, several key points were raised:

Participant 1, with a strong background in athletics, has been working to expand soccer in the area, which now boasts 700 players. However, growth is hindered by the quality and accessibility of facilities in Kings Mountain, and the lack of local programs has forced some to look eastward. The YMCA agreement was also discussed, with concerns about its alignment with community needs.

Participants felt the City of Gastonia is in the process of revamping facilities to better serve its residents and looked forward to improved recreation for the region as a whole in the coming years.

Participant 2, from the Kings Mountain Tourism Development Authority, expressed a desire to attract sports tourism groups for economic development. They are working with Visit NC and focusing on outdoor trails and local attractions, including a winery, casino, distillery, and sporting events.

Participants also felt that current tournament venues in Kings Mountain, primarily schools and the YMCA, were inadequate. The closest tournament-

ready venue is Hanna Park in Shelby, a 35-minute drive away. The maintenance level of YMCA-run facilities was criticized.

It was mentioned that the hotel properties in and near Kings Mountain were unattractive, but several new hotels and a 30+ story casino are expected to improve the situation.

When participants were asked how they would spend their money if they were given \$20 million and a magic wand, the responses focused on land acquisition for passive recreation at Moss Lake and developing existing City-owned spaces. Participants desired an economic center for sports, including a sportsplex with nearby hotels, eight turf multi-purpose fields, and two indoor facilities.

The discussion concluded with the group opinion that the definition of 'local' needs to be redefined to attract people to the area, with youth sports as the primary attractor and that the YMCA's control over parks and recreation was seen as a restriction on community needs, leading to a local demand for better offerings.

### Trails Focus Group:

#### February 21, 10:30 AM – 11:30 AM

During the Trails Focus Group discussion held on February 21, 2024, several key points were raised:

Two group participants with trail development experience both expressed interest in leveraging trails for economic development and tourism. They noted that trails attract visitors from various areas, particularly older individuals, and are popular for activities like forest bathing.

Concerns were raised about the lack of promotion for the trails by Kings Mountain and the Tourism Development Authority (TDA). It was mentioned that efforts were underway to improve this, with a new individual recently tasked with trying to promote trails in the area.

When asked how the group would spend 20 million dollars, responses centered on connecting all City green spaces, parks (including dog parks), and multi-use field facilities, to a thriving trail and greenway system. The group also agreed that the City should prioritize biking, invest heavily in advertising, and appoint someone to manage special events in Kings Mountain.

Communication issues between the City, residents, and nearby municipalities were highlighted as an area participants would like to see improvement. There was a sense that Kings Mountain was being left out of county-wide initiatives due to competition with Shelby.

Participants praised the local YMCA and theater but noted issues with youth recreation. The YMCA was seen as not fully meeting community needs, with cost barriers and accessibility concerns. The Kings Mountain Elite program was mentioned as helping to address these needs.

Looking ahead, both participants agreed on the need for a tax-funded recreation department responsible for disseminating information to residents and beyond. They also expressed the need for the City to maintain its independence from the county and other municipalities.

The group discussed the allocation of occupancy tax funds to the County TDA and the need for more information on how this process works.

There was a consensus that parks and recreation should be seen as an investment rather than a cost, with the need for accountability and a champion to move plans forward.

The group discussed the challenges of different City groups sharing dissimilar information on social media about the same events or facilities. The group felt someone in parks and recreation should be responsible for controlling public announcements on recreation programs and special events.

## Schools and Parks Focus Group:

### February 21, 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

During the schools & parks focus group discussion, several key points were raised:

Participant 2, a resident for 15 years, and Participants 5 and 6, residents since 1978, discussed the underutilized potential of the area's parks and recreation facilities. They noted that many facilities and fields, including those near the YMCA, are largely unused and in need of upgrades.

The group expressed concern about the outdated state of the local YMCA, which has not changed since 1978 despite being the only profitable YMCA in the area. They suggested that a new YMCA building should be constructed near the bypass.

The group agreed that the City's parks and recreation facilities are underutilized, with the historic approach being that the YMCA handles parks and recreation. However, they noted that not everyone in the community is served by the YMCA.

If given \$20 million, Participant 5 would build a new YMCA and additional walking tracks, while Participant 2 would work on a trail tie-in to state and national parks and add a facility similar to Martha Rivers Park in Gastonia.

The group discussed the perception that a dysfunctional private-public partnership between the City and the YMCA suggests that something needed to change. Participants noted that the YMCA receives a \$33K monthly stipend from City residents but does not want to expand due to fear of upsetting the City.

The group concluded by questioning whether parks are seen as an expenditure versus an investment and emphasized the importance of parks and recreation, trails, and green spaces to the community.

## Non-profits / Athletic Organizations Focus Group:

**February 21, 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM**

Participants of this group represented volunteers, parents, and staff from local athletic non-profit organizations. This group emphasized the positive impact organized sports, and other civic groups like the Girl Scouts, have had on residents' lives. This group felt access to recreation and life skills programming was critical to the quality of life of young residents and the City as a whole. They felt that there was a great need for additional resources to grow recreation programs.

Suggestions included working with county schools and athletic programs more to coordinate league participation with school programs to prevent the duplication of services and ease scheduling of shared amenities such as school gymnasiums and playing fields.

Non-profit organizations, like KM Elite and the YMCA, were touted as having a huge part in working with Kings Mountain and the budding recreation department to assess and manage scarce City funds to assist in delivering desirable programs and activities for residents, no matter their financial situation.

A dog park is a desirable amenity that residents have wanted for a long time. Participants felt that dog-friendly policies needed to be considered by City officials, paving the way for residents to safely accompany their pets at City parks.

## Intergovernmental Focus Group:

**February 22, 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM**

This discussion began with personal exchanges among the participants. The cultural director at Kings Mountain, who oversees libraries, senior services, and recreation, welcomed participants from area counties (Gaston and Cleveland).

A county planning office director mentioned being a liaison to several recreation initiatives, including the Gateway Trail in Kings Mountain. The participant was favorable of potential future partnerships between Cleveland County and Kings Mountain for trail expansion and pedestrian trail network integration between the two entities.

The Planning Director for the City of Kings Mountain mentioned the completion of a new Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) and a comprehensive plan in 2021, which emphasized the need for recreation improvements in the City.

The group discussed the importance of the recreation master plan and the process of asking residents what they liked and did not like about recreation in Kings Mountain. Recreational programs were talked about as being less available for poorer residents, but organizations in the community, including KMElite and the YMCA, among other recreation providers, were aware of the service discrepancies and were working to remedy these issues.

## City Staff Interviews:

**January 25, 10:00 AM – 12:00 AM & Guided site visits on January 29, 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM; February 26, 3:15 PM – 4:15 PM**

Meetings were held with Kings Mountain staff which included the City Manager, Director of Cultural Enrichment, City Engineer, Senior Planner, and other staff via both a virtual interview to discuss the past and future of recreation in the City and on-site visits and in-person interviews. These were open-ended discussions and question / answer sessions to coordinate the public input process, schedule to receive relevant planning data, and talk about facilities, needs, issues, and funding.

Important points included the need to seek community input from a wide cross-section of residents, including both retirees and families with children. Existing recreational services were also discussed, as well as what recreation programs had been made available

to residents traditionally and what staff had heard regarding resident needs and desires. Staff also requested that the team consider updates to existing facilities and note where recreation service gaps in the City could be filled to connect existing parks with existing and planned greenways, popular destinations, and where folks lived. It was noted that City staff desire a closer working relationship with other recreation providers such as neighboring municipalities, Cleveland and Gaston Counties, private companies, and non-profit providers such as KM Elite and the YMCA.

## YMCA Interview:

### February 16, 9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

The director of the Kings Mountain YMCA and an additional leader within the organization were interviewed at the Y's building at 211 Cleveland Avenue. Participants expressed a genuine love of service and the community members they served.

The group desired increased communication with City representatives and wished to be able to provide greater service via an expanded recreation center and new amenities. Plans about what kind of future amenities and programs would be needed to meet residents' needs were discussed.

The YMCA is well-positioned to serve the growing needs of Kings Mountain, and they understand the financial challenges ahead regarding the anticipated growth of the regional population and meeting their growing needs and desires

## Director of Public Infrastructure Interview:

### March 4, 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Discussed the Moss Lake recreation amenities and maintenance needs of all the City-owned parks. Public Infrastructure Department support staff were also present at this virtual meeting.

The needs expressed included funding for all City-owned park updates and improvements to Moss Lake's campground and public recreation facility. It was mentioned that the facilities at Moss Lake, including the campground, could benefit from modernization and upgrades, including renovation of restrooms, improving the condition of the main administration building, and updating the shelters, swim beach, and playground equipment in the campground.

Participants acknowledged the need for increased accessibility for people of all abilities. This could include adding wheelchair-accessible amenities, a paved trail, etc.

Participants also desired expanded recreational activities such as more support for water sports, outdoor fitness classes, bird-watching activities, and other typical day-use elements at Moss Lake. Participants also want park concessions so they have a place to get something to eat or drink.

Ramseur Park was one facility the group felt needed improvements, which include grading and drainage, parking, and new amenities.

## Interview with Councilwoman Miller:

### April 11, 9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

The interview conducted with the council member proved to be insightful, shedding light on the history of the City and its existing recreational facilities. The discussion highlighted the aging infrastructure of the City-owned recreational amenities and underscored the pressing need for refurbishment. The council member acknowledged the community's demand for accessible and safe playgrounds and green spaces, substantiating this need with personal experiences and citizen feedback.

The council member discussed the YMCA's significant role in the City's athletic and fitness programming over the past 25 years. A proposal was

mentioned, suggesting that the YMCA demolish and rebuild the City building they currently occupy. This would require a comprehensive site redesign, displacing existing elements such as the playground, walking track, and ball fields. However, this proposal presents an opportunity to modernize outdated amenities and introduce more contemporary and trending elements to residents and YMCA members.

The council member underscored two distinct options that the City should contemplate:

1. Permit the YMCA to continue using the City building and surrounding park elements, and provide funding, thereby making it the best-funded YMCA in the state.
2. Approach the YMCA as other communities do with traditional non-profits, recognizing that the City needs to broaden its system to cater to the escalating needs of its residents, a responsibility that the YMCA cannot bear entirely. These options present a strategic decision for the City's future recreational services.

The participant emphasizes that any decision made will change the face of recreation in Kings Mountain, and it is up to the council to decide the direction.

## Analysis and Conclusions

When taken together, the three data collection methods (public meetings, survey, and focus group interviews) provide a robust and diverse sample of concerns and ideas that should be considered when developing future facilities and programming. The main findings indicated the need for better maintenance at all City-owned facilities, more trails for walking, running, hiking, and biking; the need for better indoor recreation options; and better-developed partnerships with other community recreation providers to ensure the most diverse and desired recreation programs were available for residents.

Survey findings from both the open-to-everyone survey, and the statistically valid effort reflected similar input provided by participants of the drop-in public meetings and focus group meetings. These survey findings support the idea of updating existing City-owned parks, expanding the existing Kings Mountain recreation system programs, and developing more pedestrian trails and connections between frequently visited destinations.



## 07 | Parks and Recreation Recommendations

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## Parks and Recreation Recommendations

To make recommendations for the existing park system and expansion possibilities, it is essential to understand the needs and desires of the City and the community members. The community workshops, City staff discussions, and the recreation survey were integral in helping to identify residents' primary interests and concerns.

This master plan serves as a guide for the future development of existing recreation facilities for Kings Mountain and establishes basic objectives to help Kings Mountain achieve their recreation goals. The plan incorporates recommendations to accomplish the objectives set forth by the City council, City staff, and community members

## General Recommendations

General recommendations are based on professional experience and a review of national and state recreational best practices. Recommendations are intended to guide the operations, administration, and growth of the City of Kings Mountain parks and recreation system and advise on elements ranging from policy, safety, maintenance, and other general issues. These general recommendations are intended to inform decision-making for future decisions. Many of these recommendations depend upon collaboration between City departments and other recreation partners. They are not specific to any single facility or program initiative, but they are intended to guide the entire parks and recreation system for both existing facilities and future development.

## Recommendations

- 1 Re-establish parks and recreation department
- 2 National Recreation & Parks Association Agency Accreditation
- 3 Existing facility improvements and maintenance
- 4 New facility improvements and maintenance
- 5 Add walkable communities and greenways / multi-use trails
- 6 Expand programs and classes
- 7 Partnership granting and evaluation process
- 8 Update partnership agreements
- 9 Incorporate City marketing into the parks department efforts
- 10 Improve intergovernmental cooperation

## Defining the Top 10 Recommendations

### Re-establish the Parks and Recreation Department Within the City

Kings Mountain has traditionally partnered with non-profits for its parks and recreation services. While beneficial, these partnerships can have limitations. It is advised that the City re-establish its parks and recreation department as the primary recreational provider for City residents. The City should continue collaborating with other recreation partners through detailed joint-use agreements, requiring regular coordination meetings between City staff, non-profits, and schools, but only when it allows for program and service offerings beyond the offerings by the parks and recreation department. These agreements should be reviewed annually to ensure all parties fulfill their roles. Facilities on school grounds or provided by non-profits should have clear expectations for mutual benefit. The City's recreation department should have dedicated staff, programs, and facilities while maintaining beneficial partnerships with other recreational entities.

### NRPA Agency Accreditation

Kings Mountain has had some operational uniqueness with the long-term outsourcing of programs and services. Kings Mountain would greatly benefit from pursuing parks and recreation agency accreditation as a tool that would help examine the current practices and compare them with nationally held best practices to make policy adjustments when appropriate.

NRPA notes that the "Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) delivers quality assurance and improvement to accredited park and recreation departments throughout the United States. This operational management system improves their infrastructures; increases efficiency in all activities; and demonstrates accountability within

their communities. Implementation of this system strengthens teamwork among department staff, embeds all aspects of CAPRA into their department's internal culture, and establishes a continuous improvement mindset for all department activities."

### Existing Facility Improvements and Maintenance

The Kings Mountain parks and recreation department should consider the following recommendations to expand its parks-specific maintenance capacity:

**Staffing:** Hire additional maintenance staff with specialized skills in park management and upkeep. This could include arborists for tree care, horticulturists for plant selection and care, and technicians for playground and equipment maintenance. Regular training should be provided to keep staff up to date with the latest best practices. Ideally, these staff would be dedicated to the developing parks and recreation department.

**Policies:** Develop comprehensive maintenance policies that outline the standards for park cleanliness, safety, and aesthetics. These policies should cover all aspects of park maintenance, including landscaping, equipment repair, waste management, and graffiti removal.

**Schedules:** Implement regular maintenance schedules to ensure all parks and facilities are well-maintained. This could include daily tasks (like litter collection), weekly tasks (like lawn mowing), and seasonal tasks (like tree pruning). Emergency procedures should also be in place for unexpected issues like storm damage.

**Equipment:** Invest in high-quality maintenance equipment to improve efficiency and effectiveness. This could include commercial-grade lawnmowers, power washers, and safety inspection tools.

**Sustainability:** Incorporate sustainable practices into maintenance procedures to minimize environmental impact. This could include using eco-friendly cleaning products, implementing water-saving irrigation systems, and recycling green waste into mulch.

**Community Involvement:** Engage the local community in park maintenance through volunteer programs. This can foster a sense of ownership and pride in local parks and supplement the work of maintenance staff. By implementing these recommendations, the Kings Mountain parks and recreation Department can enhance the quality and enjoyment of its parks and facilities for all residents and visitors.

### **New Facility Planning and Development**

The City of Kings Mountain, North Carolina, is at a pivotal juncture in its growth and development. With the City's population projected to increase between 2024 and 2034, there is an evident need to plan for and develop new recreation facilities.

The importance of this initiative cannot be overstated. Recreation facilities are not just places for leisure and entertainment; they are vital components of a community's infrastructure that contribute to the quality of life, health, and well-being of its residents. They provide spaces for physical activity, social interaction, and community engagement, all of which are essential for a thriving and vibrant City.

Recent public recreation survey data has underscored this need. The survey results indicate a strong demand for more diverse recreational options. This feedback from the community is a valuable guide for the City's planning efforts. It highlights the types of facilities that are most desired and the amenities that are currently lacking.

Planning for new recreation facilities is a complex process that requires careful consideration of various

factors. These include the City's demographic trends, available land, environmental impact, accessibility, and budget constraints. It is also important to ensure that the facilities are inclusive and cater to the needs of all residents, regardless of their age, ability, or background.

Developing these new facilities is an investment in the City's future. It is an opportunity to enhance the City's appeal, promote active lifestyles, foster community spirit, and improve the overall quality of life. As Kings Mountain continues to grow and evolve, these new recreation facilities will play a crucial role in shaping the City's identity and ensuring its long-term sustainability.

In conclusion, the planning and development of new recreation facilities in Kings Mountain is a timely and necessary initiative. It is a proactive response to the City's anticipated growth and the evolving needs of its residents. With careful planning and community involvement, Kings Mountain can look forward to a future where its recreation facilities are a source of pride and enjoyment for all.

### **Walkable Communities / Multi-use Trails**

Kings Mountain should continue to promote land use and site designs that make walking and bicycling convenient and enjoyable. As described in the Kings Mountain 2040 Comprehensive Plan, trail planning should be evaluated annually by City staff and the recreation department to determine what trail projects to implement and how to fund those efforts. They should continue to encourage the inclusion of public greenways or trails in private developments and connectivity to current and future public schools, parks, and other public destinations.

#### *10-Minute Walk Movement*

The NRPA, the Trust for Public Land (TPL), and the Urban Land Institute (ULI) have partnered to promote safe, equitable park access for United States citizens. The goal is to provide 100% of people access to a

quality park or green space within a 10-minute walk of their homes by 2050. The City of Kings Mountain should pledge its support to the 10-minute walk mission.

Based on state and national studies, walking and biking are highly desired activities that keep growing more desirable. North Carolina's 2020–2025 SCORP found that 67% of survey participants reported that linear parks are the most needed facility within their park systems. The SCORP also found that 61% of respondents viewed walking for pleasure to be a common outdoor recreational activity.

Kings Mountain should continue to encourage the coordination and planning for future utility easements and road rights-of-way with greenway facilities. The easements should be established to allow for the inclusion of recreation facilities, where possible. Where new development occurs, the City should continue to work with developers to provide rights-of-way or easements for proposed and future greenway facilities.

The City should make a strategic effort to connect to key regional attractions such as Kings Mountain National Military Park, The Overmountain Victory Trail, Crowders Mountain State Park, the Carolina Thread Trail, and other similar opportunities.

### **Expansion of Recreation Programming and Classes**

To expand recreation programming, the City should become the baseline provider of parks and recreation services to the community. However, it is best practice for the parks and recreation department to expand recreation classes and programming using private-public partnerships and concessionaire agreements. Expansion into non-traditional sports and non-athletic programs is a typical way in which this is offered. The City should assess the need to contract future programming offers out to concessionaires. This could extend the programs offered by nonprofits and private

recreation providers into future City-owned facilities, which may be more accessible to residents who are not currently served. It also would strive to increase programming options by starting new contract programs and activities in the following service areas: health and fitness, swim safety classes, environmental education, nature-based outdoor recreation, non-sports interest classes, and fine/cultural arts programs.

### **Partnership Granting and Evaluation Process**

If the City chooses to partner with non-profits to expand recreation offerings, there should be annual granting and evaluation of the non-profit that wants to apply for City funds that would provide public recreation services to residents with the support of tax-payer funds. This evaluation should be open to any eligible non-profit organization that seeks to grow the mission of the parks and recreation department. This annual granting process should have public forums review the funds requested and the goals of the funds, and the process should have an opportunity for the public to provide feedback on the applications received. There should be an annual review of the grants awarded and a review that ensures that the program met its intended need and is doing so within the provisions of the law. There should be metrics-based progress documented. (I.e. A \$10,000 grant to expand competitive soccer in the area resulted in 5 new tournaments, an estimated 1,500 non-resident visitors and an estimated 300 nights of hotel stays in the Kings Mountain vicinity). Annual reports should be made fully accessible to the public, and the public should be encouraged to provide feedback on each report. These progress reports should be a factor of consideration for future grant funding. All awardees, funding votes, public comments, and annual reports should be open to public record.

### Update the Partnership Agreement

It is recommended that the City staff meet with existing and potential partners, such as local hospitals, not-for-profit organizations, local churches, area schools, athletic associations, economic development-related entities, and others to determine needs and possible partnership needs. The City should begin this process by developing an approach to each potential partner to establish an understanding of each entity's needs and ultimately result in a partnership agreement. The process will require periodic progress meetings with each partner to facilitate the partnership goals and objectives. This may entail presentations to the partner's board or committee. Partnership benefits tend to be, but are not limited to, things like joint use agreements, joint marketing campaigns, strategic planning, and special event coordination.

### Incorporate City Marketing into the Parks Department

Parks and recreation facilities are an invaluable asset to any community. The need to provide public awareness of recreation opportunities is just as important as providing the necessary facilities. Kings Mountain should launch a marketing campaign to improve awareness of City-owned facilities and programs. The City should consider options to raise awareness through social media, special events at lesser-known facilities, and signage directing visitors to the parks. As growth continues to occur throughout the region, the City should partner with local chambers of commerce and real estate groups to provide pamphlets to people who relocate. A strong marketing presence is also a valuable tool because the City's parks and recreation assets can promote travel and tourism, improving the economic impact of parks and recreation on the local economy.

### Improve Intergovernmental Cooperation

The City of Kings Mountain should continue coordinating planning efforts with the City schools, other local municipalities, the City planning department, the county, and other recreation stakeholders in the area. Representatives of the City and these agencies should meet periodically to discuss development and recreation projects that are planned or are underway within the area. The purpose of these meetings is to discuss upcoming project opportunities and development trends in demographics and growth, newly identified citizen needs in recreation and open space, and recreation master plan updates for local municipalities and adjacent counties. This will also ensure that redundancy in services is prevented and that all opportunities for partnership and connectivity are utilized.

## Expanding Recreation Offerings to Underserved Communities

Understanding public needs is critical to serving all population groups. At times, underserved population groups can emerge due to staffing, facilities, and other local government service strategies. An in-depth plan for strategies and best practices to specifically address underserved populations can be found in the appendix.

By implementing these best practices and staffing suggestions, the parks and recreation department can effectively expand its services to underserved communities through strategic partnerships and concessionaire agreements. These collaborations can support economic growth by sharing resources, expertise, and funding to provide high-quality programs and services that meet the diverse needs of the community. By fostering inclusive and equitable partnerships, the department can help address disparities in access to recreational opportunities and promote social and economic well-being for all residents.

By executing these staffing recommendations in a phased manner, Kings Mountain can successfully develop a robust and sustainable parks and recreation department that addresses the needs of the community and aligns with the objectives outlined in the comprehensive parks and recreation master plan.

### Best Practices for Expanding Recreation through Partnerships

1. Develop a Department Neighborhood Recreational Service Plan Assessment of Unmet Needs
2. Build equity into programming investments by establishing an investment policy & strategy
3. Develop a criteria-based system for funding partnerships
4. Consider various types of partnerships when developing partnership strategies for equity programming
5. Educate the public on the value of partnerships and key considerations
6. Engage underserved communities in the planning and implementation process can foster a sense of ownership and pride in the park system
7. Explore partnerships with community organizations that contribute to economic growth and equity
8. Prioritize organizations with strong ties to the target communities
9. Navigate political sensitivities and build support for partnerships
10. Negotiate concessionaire agreements for specific programs or services
11. Foster ongoing communication and collaboration with partners
12. Track the proportionality of investment in partnerships, services, and programming

## Best Practices

- Recreation advisory board
- Facility security
- Technology access
- Facility and program accessibility
- Bicycle facilities
- Mitigation of asset obsolescence
- Greenway / trail
- Contiguous property acquisition
- Acceptance of fee simple land donation
- Entrance and wayfinding signage
- Interpretive signage
- Educational and stewardship programming
- Green building
- Prioritize investment into City-owned infrastructure
- Natural and cultural heritage inventory

## Best Practices

### Recreation Advisory Board

Parks and recreation advisory boards serve a pivotal role in comprehending the urgent needs and opportunities within the community. They can also function as a platform for policy deliberations, benefit identification, and advocacy for parks and recreation necessities while providing additional avenues for operational feedback.

Optimal functionality of these boards is often achieved with a membership of five to seven individuals, excluding local elected officials. To prevent a bias toward a limited range of recreational interests, it is imperative that the board's composition reflects a diverse demographic and encompasses a variety of recreational interests.

These boards are most effective when they operate in a non-dictatorial manner and abstain from circumventing the leadership of parks and recreation in their advocacy endeavors. This approach ensures a balanced representation of interests and promotes a harmonious operational environment.

### Facility Security

Where feasible, add fencing to facility perimeters. Also, the addition of surveillance cameras and site attendant patrols will mitigate security issues and provide a safer public environment for park patrons.

### Technology Access

As the culture continues to move toward information accessibility, providing access to Wi-Fi connectivity within the parks can elevate the experience. Kings Mountain should identify the locations within its park facilities to install the necessary equipment that will provide users with the ability to access Wi-Fi connectivity.

### Facility and Program Accessibility

Every park and recreation facility Kings Mountain operates should respect and provide for the needs of the disabled population through design and programming. All new facilities should be designed to meet current Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. Currently, the City complies with these regulations at all the existing facilities. As new facilities are acquired or developed, priority should be given to the continual upgrading of existing facilities that, perhaps, become non-compliant. The City should develop ADA transition plans for each of its parks to ensure maximum accessibility is planned and accounted for.

## Bicycle Facilities

Given the high cost of fuel for driving, air quality concerns, and the need to increase the health and fitness of the population, a planned network of bike trails, bike lanes, and shared roadways should be developed to support active transportation to recreation facilities and travel within Kings Mountain. Future roadway construction should include provisions to accommodate pedestrians and bicycle travel. This network should connect both existing and future park facilities and greenways. In addition, the City should require bike racks (sheltered at schools and other potential high-use areas) to be installed at all publicly owned facilities. The City should work with the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) to ensure that bicycle and pedestrian facilities are provided as much as possible to promote alternative modes of transportation.

## Mitigation of Asset Obsolescence

Kings Mountain can mitigate asset obsolescence at its recreation facilities by implementing an asset management and renewal policy. This policy would involve maintaining an up-to-date asset inventory, conducting regular inspections and maintenance, tracking asset lifespan, allocating a budget for asset renewal, considering technology upgrades, engaging with the community for their needs, considering sustainability in asset replacements, and having a clear policy for asset disposal. The goal is to ensure proactive planning, regular maintenance, and staying informed about new technologies to maintain the relevance and usefulness of the City's recreation investments.

## Greenway / Trail

Kings Mountain should consistently strive to incorporate provisions within Development Agreements and Negotiations. These provisions should mandate that developers designate and manage permanent easements or Rights of Way (R.O.W.) for multi-use greenways, trails, and/or linear

parks. These amenities should traverse and connect developments, enhancing the overall community experience. This approach ensures a commitment to sustainable and community-focused development.

## Contiguous Property Acquisition

When property that is contiguous to existing parks becomes available, all reasonable efforts should be made to acquire the property. Large acreage parks offer recreation amenities that can only be achieved on large sites. The acquisition of property next to City parks should be of high priority to Kings Mountain. Efforts should be made immediately to seek the first option for all contiguous properties. At the time these options are sought, other possibilities should be presented to the property owner as well. Some property owners may be receptive to conservation easements while retaining the title to the property. Conservation easements give the City the opportunity to use properties for recreation while providing the immediate benefits of preservation. Numerous grant sources can be used for land acquisition. Extreme care should be exercised in choosing the correct processes and timing for acquisition to meet the full potential afforded by grants.

## Acceptance of Fee Simple Land Donation

If the land is offered to Kings Mountain as a donation by fee, it should be a simple title with no restrictions. The property should be surveyed for natural heritage significance and its relationship to existing plans and parks. If the land contains no environmental hazards, restrictive covenants, or restrictive easements, it can be beneficial for the City to assume ownership. Not all donated land has to be developed into a park to be useful. Any land donation serves a great public need even if it is banked for the future because the development and public needs of the distant future (over 50 years) are unknown. If donated property is properly managed, the revenue and future significance of the property would far

exceed its current contribution to the tax base. If the City chooses not to accept land donations for a particular property, efforts should be made to assist the property owner with contacting an agency that accepts land donations or conservation easements. Land donations (which the City has no interest in owning) could be donated to the local parks' foundation.

### **Entrance and Wayfinding Signage**

To provide uniformity throughout the park system, Kings Mountain should consider providing signage. Entrance signage is the face of parks and, therefore, the face of the City's parks and recreation. To provide visitors with ease of navigation throughout the park system, wayfinding signage should also be installed to elevate the parks and provide consistency throughout the park system.

### **Interpretive Signage**

Kings Mountain should consider placing signage that would identify any historic and natural landmarks along pedestrian corridors. This type of signage would enhance the pedestrian experience and provide educational and cultural information to greenway users.

### **Educational and Stewardship Programming**

Kings Mountain should develop a consistent environmental education program and interpretative facilities at park locations and along future greenway corridors as opportunities arise for future park development. These programs should include stewardship and community volunteer programs for managing natural areas and wildlife habitats.

### **Green Building**

The City should implement green building components into the existing and future park facilities, when cost-effective. Green building techniques consist of building materials and

construction practices that reduce environmental impacts (greenhouse gases, water pollution, and air pollution) and promote energy-efficient building materials and methods.

### **Prioritize Investing in City-owned Infrastructure**

The utilization of non-profit facilities / programs and the school system facilities should be seen as an added leveraging opportunity and not the base level of service. This is most critical because utilizing school facilities offers a cost-effective way to expand recreation to a community. However, if it is the primary means of accessing recreation facilities, it creates a "waiting to recreate" or an exclusionary model whereby residents must shift their recreation habits to cater to non-school hours. There are no school functions and / or policies permit or obtain membership to receive the full benefit of parks and recreation services. Another possible scenario is that people either find other park systems that meet their needs or do not recreate them.

Investing in the citizen base does at times make sense via partnerships with non-profits and private service providers. However, unlike government parks and recreation agencies, school systems, non-profits, and for-profit recreation service providers serve a mission, and though many try, they are not legally bound to serve the entire population base equitably.

### **National and Cultural Heritage Inventory**

The City of Kings Mountain should refer to the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program's Natural Heritage Program 2019 Biennial Report (North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources) for relevant information on features found in Kings Mountain. This study identifies areas deemed to be significant natural resources, which should be evaluated for consideration of preservation and future use as recreational resources.

## Existing Park Facility Recommendations

### City Lake 1 and 2

City Lake #1 and City Lake #2, located in the City of Kings Mountain, North Carolina, are substantial reservoirs that contribute significantly to the area’s natural beauty. Nestled near the quaint hamlets of Dixon and Midpine, these lakes are situated approximately 837 feet above sea level.

As City-owned properties, these lakes provide expansive open spaces amidst a serene, wooded environment. They support a variety of passive recreational activities that allow visitors to engage with nature and enjoy the outdoors. These activities include, but are not limited to, fishing, boating, and wildlife observation. These lakes, therefore, play a crucial role in enhancing the quality of life for residents and visitors alike, offering opportunities for relaxation, exploration, and appreciation of the natural world.

### Recommendations

- Pave access drives and include designated parking spaces
- Install wayfinding signage and safety signage to match the City brand standards
- Install ADA Canoe/Kayak launches
- Install “natural” picnic areas

### Facility Assessment

- Access is via unimproved driveways that lacks clear and easy-to-read wayfinding signage.
- Parking is limited due to a lack of designated parking spaces.
- The environment is aesthetically pleasing.



## Davidson Park (aka Sims Park)

This is a historically significant hub for community gatherings for the residents of the Sims Street area. Davidson Park offers several gated soccer fields, an outdoor basketball court, and a restroom / concession stand.

### Recommendations

- Implement a site-specific master plan to re-envision how this facility serves the public
- Refurbish the existing restroom / concession building
- Pave a perimeter walking path and include distance signage
- Construct playing courts (pickleball and basketball)
- Install a playground and splash pad

- Bolster the multi-generational aspect of the park by including fitness stations
- Build a large picnic shelter/stage for gatherings and events
- Construct a small 50'x60' community building for indoor recreational programs

### Facility Assessment

- The restroom / concession building is dated and in need of maintenance
- Soccer fields were in good condition but being gated seemed unwelcoming
- Existing basketball court is worn and needs refurbishment
- Field lighting was recent and in good condition
- The field irrigation system appeared inoperable



## Deal Park Walking Track

This approximately 2,400 linear feet long, 10-foot wide, asphalt paved walking track is home to a memorial with seating, a flagpole, and a small stage structure. The open, grassed lawn space often hosts pick-up games of frisbee or catch. This facility has the potential to host medium to large gatherings. Being adjacent to the Rick Murphrey Children’s Park and Kings Mountain Family YMCA, this facility serves as a significant, centrally located public park for Kings Mountain residents.

### Recommendations

- Consider removing or replacing the existing small stage with a picnic shelter
- Construct a small restroom building
- Consider expanding available parking via a designated overflow parking area for events

### Facility Assessment

- The existing stage is small and dated in appearance
- Parking is limited for most large events
- The actual path was in fair to good condition
- A utility easement for overhead power lines cuts across the site
- The existing restroom building was shuttered and in need of replacement



## Kings Mountain Recreation Center (run by the YMCA ) at Deal Park

The Kings Mountain Recreation Center is a community-based organization at 211 Cleveland Avenue, Kings Mountain, North Carolina. This facility is part of the Cleveland County YMCA and offers a variety of programs and amenities for individuals and families.

The YMCA in Kings Mountain is equipped with an array of facilities to cater to the diverse needs of its members. It houses an aerobics center, a child watch area, a fitness center, a multi-purpose room, a gym, an outdoor field, and an outdoor running track. These facilities support a range of activities from fitness training to recreational sports.

The center provides various programs including Aquatics, Arts and Humanities, Camping and Outdoor Enrichment, Before School, After School, Early Learning, Health and Well-being, and Sports and Recreation. These programs are designed to promote healthy living and social responsibility among its members.

The Kings Mountain YMCA also offers services such as adult programs, summer camps, childcare services, and fitness classes. It operates from Monday to Sunday with specific operating hours each day.

In summary, the Kings Mountain Family YMCA serves as a significant hub for community engagement, personal development, and healthy living for many residents in Kings Mountain, North Carolina.

### Recommendations

- Replace playground
- Improve ADA accessibility for the entire park including the pool and community center
- Consider the feasibility of replacing the existing community center
- Partnership for a site-specific master plan for this facility

### Facility Assessment

- The building facility appears to be in fair condition but likely needs to be renovated
- City-owned amenities on site were in good condition (ballfields, pool, walking track, etc.)
- The Rick Murphrey Children's Park (wooden playground) needs replacement
- Overall, this is a well-loved, and oft-used park that requires maintenance and improvement to continue to provide contemporary, safe recreation services

## LG Thombs Park and Walking Track

The LG Thombs Walking Track Park, located on North Watterson Street in Kings Mountain, North Carolina, is a popular outdoor facility for both locals and visitors. This facility has excellent visibility from West Kings Street and offers an opportunity to highlight Kings Mountain Recreation via well-designed and placed signage.

The park features a natural outdoor track that is approximately one mile long when completed in five laps. This makes it an ideal location for individuals who enjoy walking, jogging, or running in the fresh air. Unfortunately, the park does not have lighting facilities, which means it is primarily usable from dawn to dusk. Additionally, there are no public bathrooms available at the park. Despite these limitations, the LG Thombs Walking Track Park provides a serene and peaceful environment for outdoor activities and is an asset to the Kings Mountain community.

### Recommendations

- Pave parking area, access path to track, and walking track
- Install fitness stations along the walking path to add activity and fitness opportunities
- Add new, welcome and wayfinding signage in a prominent location
- Add story-walk components along the path
- Utilize a portion of the park as a fenced dog park (ideally the fenced area would include a partition to separate small dogs from larger dogs)
- Add picnic stations (4)

### Facility Assessment

- Parking area in need of updates (City was in the planning stages of repaving the lot at the time of this study)
- Accessibility was lacking due to unimproved parking areas and lack of accessible paths to the walking track.
- The park lacked clear, easy-to-find, City-branded wayfinding signage, mileage walking signs, etc.
- Walking track was naturally surfaced (granite fines)



## Moss Lake and Campground

Moss Lake Recreation Area and Campground, owned by the City of Kings Mountain, is a prominent outdoor recreational facility in Cleveland County, North Carolina.

The park spans over 2,000 acres with a vast 1,660-acre water body. The lake, which averages 50 feet deep, is encircled by a 57-mile shoreline. The park is equipped with 10 public boat ramps for easy access to the water.

Moss Lake serves as an active recreational destination for various activities. It is particularly popular among boaters, fishermen, and water sports enthusiasts. The lake is stocked with bass and crappies, making it a favorite spot for fishing. Numerous fishing tournaments are held at Moss Lake each year, attracting participants from various regions.

The Moss Lake Campground is a well-maintained facility that offers camping opportunities throughout the year. It features 28 sites with 12 full hookups, an electric supply, tables, water, toilets, showers, and a dump station. The campground also has a staffed office for assistance.

In addition to water-based activities, the park's expansive green spaces provide an ideal setting for picnics and other outdoor activities. The park's location and amenities make it a family-friendly destination.

In summary, Moss Lake Recreation Park and Campground is a significant outdoor recreational facility in Cleveland County, offering a range of activities from boating and fishing to camping and picnicking.

## Recommendations

- Restore the swim beach and add an accessible path from the parking area to the amenity
- Add a picnic pavilion to enhance the day use of the park
- Add ¼ mile of accessible walking path
- Add accessible canoe / kayak launch
- Construct concessions / restroom building to make food / drink options available to patrons of boat ramp, RV campground, and day trippers.
- Replace existing playground with one that everyone can use (not just on the campground). This could potentially be on the park side
- Update welcome and wayfinding signage
- Consider the acquisition of adjacent, undeveloped land for future park expansion

## Facility Assessment

- Well-run public boat ramp and site office
- Campground in good condition
- Existing playground in need of replacement
- Existing (former) swim beach in need of restoration
- No accessible canoe / kayak launch available
- Entrance well signed but in need of new sign matching City branding standards
- Lack of concessions available to park patrons
- Lacked sufficient picnicking elements

## New Camp Creek Church Road Picnic Area

This small neighborhood park located at 863 New Camp Creek Church Road, offers visitors water access for launching small, non-motorized boats, canoes, and kayaks. This park also provides a wildlife observation/fishing dock, and picnic shelter with two horseshoe pits.

### Recommendations

- Replace existing fishing dock
- Refurbish cabin as a leasable, public meeting space for social / community groups or as a concessions / rental space for seasonal use
- Replace dated horseshoe pits with concrete cornhole boards
- Add a small, waterless restroom facility
- Add a walking path to the park
- Consider the acquisition of adjacent, undeveloped land for future park expansion

### Facility Assessment

- The park has a cabin that was closed for use
- Horseshoe pits in need of maintenance
- Picnic shelter in good condition but dated
- Fishing dock in need of safety improvements and maintenance
- Boat ramp, lacked sufficient accessibility elements (ADA)



## Patriot Park

Patriot Park, located in the heart of Downtown Kings Mountain, North Carolina, is a significant recreational facility that serves the residents of the City with day-use-type recreation amenities, seasonal events, and opportunities for community gatherings.

The park consists of approximately 4.88 acres and features an amphitheater, a gazebo, a splash pad, bathrooms, picnic areas, and a walkable sidewalk. It also offers benches, picnic tables, a walking track, and a sprayground for children. These amenities make it ideal for individuals and families to enjoy outdoor activities and social gatherings in an urban setting.

### Recommendations

- Repair or replace portions of the amphitheater seat walls
- Correct grading / drainage issues around the amphitheater
- Upgrade existing spray ground / splash pad
- Expand parking along S. Railroad Avenue

### Facility Assessment

- The seat walls of the amphitheater require maintenance
- Grading and drainage improvements are needed around the amphitheater
- Parking is limited
- The spray-ground is undersized for the number of users that frequent this park



## Police Club / Davidson Lake

This City–owned facility on Davidson Lake (112 Police Club Drive) is typically used by the police department, for retreats and shooting certifications. This facility is gated and not typically used for public recreation programming. However, it is a picturesque property with great potential to add natural open space and public access for water–based recreation.

### Recommendations

- Refurbish the existing building as a leasable, public meeting space
- Add welcome and wayfinding signage matching the City’s brand standards
- Consider a site–specific master plan to guide future development and improvement efforts

### Facility Assessment

- The entry is gated and locked
- The driveway is in fair to good condition
- The existing building is dated but in fair condition
- The existing picnic shelter (screened–in) should be replaced
- No formal parking area is constructed
- No formal boat ramp exists



## Ramseur Park

This neighborhood park offers mainly day-use activities such as a football field, swings, ½ court basketball court, a slide made from large, corrugated plastic pipe, and a natural surface walking path.

### Recommendations

- Assess and repair grading and drainage issues
- Perform a site-specific master plan process to inform an update of this recreation facility
- Consider seeking adjacent, undeveloped land for future park expansion

### Facility Assessment

- The parking area is gravel
- Walking paths are not ADA accessible
- Play features were in fair condition
- Grading and drainage improvements needed at various locations within the park
- A creek flows through the site, adding opportunities for nature play
- No park welcome or wayfinding signage
- No restrooms were present



## Shu Carlton Stadium

Shu Carlton Stadium, located at 123 S. Gaston Street in Kings Mountain, North Carolina, is a historically notable recreational facility. The stadium has undergone several upgrades, including the addition of a press box, making the stadium handicap accessible with ramps and handrails, and adding gates and a fence between the field and the stands. The City also graded, painted, and added a concrete terrace to the stadium. The stadium is home to the Kings Mountain Optimists' Pop Warner football league.

The City's recent expansion has necessitated an increased demand for communal spaces within the heart of the downtown area. The parcel of land currently occupied by the stadium presents a multitude of potential applications, including but not limited to, an urban mini-park or a mixed-use development. The City should consider redevelopment of this City-owned recreation facility to meet the needs of contemporary residents.

## Recommendations

- Currently, this site is only used for seasonal football games. Consider polling the community on the significance of this facility and its impact on residents' quality of life and historical significance concerning Kings Mountain culture
- Consider a feasibility study to evaluate other potential uses for the site and its value in meeting City-wide recreation goals vs. other important development goals for downtown

## Facility Assessment

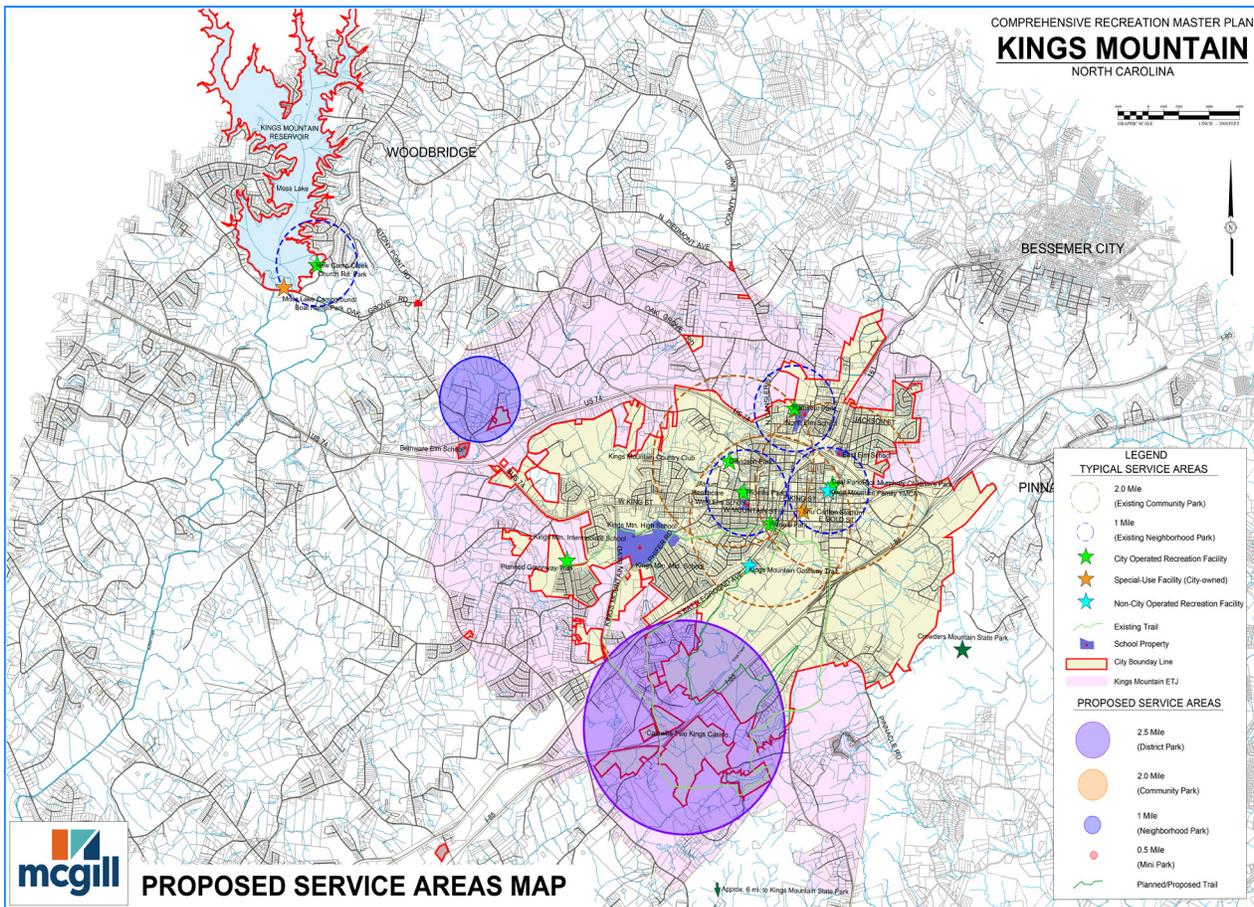
- The stadium is well-loved and shows its age
- Parking is limited for large events
- Field turf was in good condition
- Despite ongoing efforts to improve accessibility, the site is not completely ADA accessible
- This site is underutilized



# Future Facility Recommendations

As Kings Mountain continues to grow, it is necessary to consider developing additional parks and facilities in strategic locations that provide recreational access for residents and tourists. Map 7.1 shows possible recreation improvements aimed at meeting future recreation demands. See the larger map in Appendix A.

This plan proposes continued maintenance and improvements to existing City-owned parks and careful planning and development of future recreation facilities. The City should seek to develop pedestrian paths / trails and bicycle lanes and accommodation, where feasible. City culture is closely related to social events, crafts, and culture of the western North Carolina foothills. Future projects should consider the importance of and increasing desire for performing arts, music, and cultural events within Kings Mountain.



Proposed Service Areas Map

## I-85 Exit 5 Area Multi-sports Complex

To help meet the demands of anticipated population growth and the desire for a public facility to host large sports tournaments within Kings Mountain, the development of a multi-sports complex and park is recommended. Such a facility can benefit from the expected development occurring near the Exit 5 area off I-85. The City should begin to seek appropriate property somewhere within the 2.5-mile diameter service area denoted on the proposed service areas map. Existing and planned development within this area will necessitate expanded recreation services that may be provided via a City-owned, community, or district park facility. A multi-sports complex can bring numerous benefits to Kings Mountain, both from a recreational and an economic development perspective.

### Recreational Benefits

**Health and Wellness:** Recreational sports complexes provide resources for individuals to exercise, promoting health and wellness. They offer a controlled environment for practicing sports, regardless of weather conditions, and may alleviate scheduling problems based on not having enough playing fields for tournaments or practices of well-attended sports programs.

One expected benefit of sports facilities is that they can foster social cohesion and a sense of community. They bring large groups of people together, promoting inclusion and a sense of identity. A multi-sport complex can offer a variety of sports and activities, creating a welcoming environment for all. It can also be used for non-sporting events like music concerts or fundraisers.

### Economic Development Benefits

**Job Creation:** The construction and operation of a new sports complex can create jobs in various sectors, including security, cleaning, food service, and management.

**Tourism:** Sports complexes can attract tourists, bringing new customers to local businesses. They can also host large events, leading to increased local spending.

**Urban Revitalization:** Strategically located sports complexes can stimulate economic growth and contribute to the overall well-being of the community.

**Property Value:** Recreation centers can increase property values in the surrounding area.

#### Recommendations

- Undertake a site-specific master plan to determine a proposed park program
- Acquire sufficient land acreage to support anticipated park program and amenities
- Consider the construction of a centerpiece field with bleacher seating, concessions area, etc. to replace the dated, Shu Carlton Stadium downtown

### New Neighborhood Park

To prepare to meet the needs of a growing population, this plan recommends the development of a new neighborhood park in the northwest quadrant of the City, near the Bethware Elementary School. Constructing a new neighborhood park for the growing population of Kings Mountain, North Carolina, could bring numerous benefits, both from a recreational and an economic development perspective:

## Recreational Benefits

**Health and Wellness:** Parks provide spaces for individuals to exercise, promoting health and wellness.

**Community Building:** Parks can foster social cohesion and a sense of community. They bring people together, promoting inclusion and a sense of identity.

**Versatility:** A neighborhood park can offer a variety of recreational activities, creating a welcoming environment for all.

## Economic Development Benefits

**Increased Property Value:** Parks can increase property values in the surrounding area. This can lead to increased wealth for homeowners and additional property tax revenue for the City.

**Attractiveness to New Residents:** A well-maintained park can make the neighborhood more appealing to potential residents, contributing to population growth.

**Tourism:** Parks can attract tourists, bringing new customers to local businesses.

**Job Creation:** The construction and maintenance of a new park can create jobs.

Such a park development may be appropriate as part of the planned Mauney Village development. The City should partner with the developer to share planning resources and input related to what park amenities would be best suited for resident's need for parks and recreation amenities and programming.

## Future Farmers Market

The development of a farmer's market near downtown was mentioned by several public meeting participants and it is recommended that the City consider it. A farmer's market in the downtown area can complement and enhance the mission and activities of a new parks and recreation department. It is a synergy that can benefit the entire community.

Parks and recreation departments often manage public spaces where a farmer's market could be located and as such, this type of facility / event would ideally be managed via the parks and recreation department.

Constructing a new farmer's market in Downtown Kings Mountain could bring several benefits to the community, but it also would require careful planning and consideration. Here are some potential benefits and considerations.

### Benefits

**Support Local Economy:** A farmer's market can stimulate the local economy by providing a platform for local farmers, artisans, and vendors to sell their products directly to consumers.

**Fresh and Healthy Food:** It can provide residents with access to fresh, locally grown produce, which is often healthier and tastier than store-bought alternatives.

**Community Engagement:** A farmer's market can serve as a gathering place, fostering a sense of community and providing opportunities for social interaction.

**Environmental Sustainability:** By promoting locally grown produce, a farmer's market can help reduce the carbon footprint associated with transporting food over long distances.

## Considerations

**Location:** The market should be easily accessible to both vendors and customers. Consideration should be given to parking availability, public transportation access, and pedestrian safety.

**Infrastructure:** Adequate infrastructure, such as stalls, restrooms, and waste disposal facilities, should be planned.

**Marketing and Promotion:** A strategy for marketing and promoting the market to attract customers and vendors should be developed and maintained by a dedicated parks and recreation staff member.

**Community Engagement:** Farmer's markets and parks and recreation departments aim to foster community engagement and improve the quality of life for residents. They both serve as gathering places that can strengthen community bonds.

**Programming and Events:** Parks and recreation departments could collaborate with the farmer's market to host special events or programs, such as cooking demonstrations, gardening workshops, or farm-to-table events.

**Economic Development:** Both can contribute to local economic development. Parks and recreation facilities can increase property values and attract tourists, while farmer's markets support local farmers and artisans and can draw visitors to the downtown area.

In conclusion, while a farmer's market can bring numerous benefits to downtown Kings Mountain, careful planning and consideration are crucial to its success. We recommend engaging with local stakeholders, including potential vendors, customers, and City officials, during the planning process to ensure the market meets the community's needs and expectations.

## Proposed Trails

This plan aligns with the ongoing planning initiatives of the City of Kings Mountain, Cleveland County, and the Kings Mountain Gateway Trails Inc. Public feedback, gathered through community meetings and recreational surveys, underscores a pronounced interest in the development of walking, running, and biking trails within the City.

The continuous efforts to expand the Gateway Trail, establish connections to the Carolina Thread Trail, and develop other recreational trails within the City should involve regular consultations among all affected parties. This includes residents, City government staff, non-profit organizations, and private landowners.

Existing trails can accommodate minor amenities that contribute to the community's health, such as fitness stations and educational or historical signage. Future trails should incorporate easily comprehensible wayfinding signs.

As new recreational properties are developed, the emphasis should remain on connected trails to key local destinations, including schools, parks, healthcare facilities, and popular gathering spots. Identifying and addressing gaps in the bike and pedestrian network should be considered a priority.

The trail network in Kings Mountain should be subject to ongoing review and updates, with input solicited from all relevant stakeholders. This approach ensures that the evolving needs of the community are met, enhancing the quality of life for all residents.

It is recommended to develop a minimum of three (3) miles of paved trail within the City to satisfy the huge desire for and need for places to walk, run, or bike.

## Amenity Proposals and Recommendations

Based on the information in Table 7.1 on the following page, Kings Mountain meets the standards expected for typical City-owned recreation service standards for many amenities. As Kings Mountain continues to grow, it should seek to develop additional recreational facilities to meet its population's needs as well as partner with other providers to help serve the overall community recreation needs. This study's community meeting data and data from the recreation survey should be considered as the primary guides when making improvement and / or expansion plans for Kings Mountain parks and recreation program development, both now and for the next ten years.

New amenities desired by the community and recommended by this plan include additional trails for biking / walking, athletic courts and fields, an indoor recreation community center, etc. Other supporting features, such as restrooms, fitness stations, picnic shelters, benches / swings, and parking, should be assessed per recreation location. These recommended amenities are not an exclusive list and implementation should occur as funding is sourced. Community desires for recreation amenities should be planned, and options should be investigated before the design and construction of any new facility and before major improvements to existing facilities.

## Staffing Recommendations

A Phased Approach to Hiring and Expansion:

Over the next decade, Kings Mountain should implement the following staffing recommendations to effectively grow and enhance its developing parks and recreation department:

### Phase 1 (years 1–2)

- Hire a Program Coordinator to develop partnerships with community organizations, negotiate agreements, and identify collaboration opportunities. Salary range: \$40–45K
- Hire 2 Program Coordinators to design and implement new recreation programs, especially for underserved communities, and outdoor recreation programs. Collaborate with partners on joint programming. Salary range: \$40–45K each
- Conduct community needs assessments and establish 2–3 key partnerships
- Pilot 2–3 new recreation programs with community partners
- Add part-time and seasonal positions like Recreation Leaders and Park Maintenance Workers as needed to support expanded programs and facilities

### Phase 2 (years 3–4)

- Hire a parks and recreation manager to assist in overseeing the re-establishment of the department, develop partnerships, and secure funding. Salary range: \$60–80K
- Hire 2 Park Maintenance Supervisors to manage upkeep of facilities, maintenance schedules, and seasonal staff. Salary range: \$35–50K each
- Hire an Administrative Assistant to provide support and manage customer service and registrations. Salary range: \$30–40K

- Expand to 4–5 additional community partnerships. Develop and implement 5–7 new recreation programs based on community feedback. Refine partnerships and offerings
- Add part-time and seasonal positions as needed to support expanded programs and facilities

### Phase 3 (years 5–10)

- Hire 2 additional Recreation Program Coordinators to further expand programs, coordinate with partners, and manage part-time /seasonal staff. Salary range: \$40–55K each
- Hire a Recreation Facilities Manager to oversee operations of indoor / outdoor facilities, rentals, and maintenance. Salary range: \$45–60K
- Hire a Marketing and Communications Specialist to promote offerings, manage website / social media, and create materials. Salary range: \$40–55K
- Add part-time and seasonal positions like Recreation Leaders and Maintenance Workers as needed to support expanded programs and facilities

These staffing recommendations are based on the projected growth and development of the Kings Mountain parks and recreation department over the next ten years. The City should prioritize filling the most essential positions first and gradually introduce future roles as the department expands and new facilities become available. Salaries should be adjusted according to the City's budget and local market conditions. The department should also employ part-time and seasonal staff to support programs and maintenance during busy times and special events.

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# 08 | Action Plan Implementation

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## Action Implementation Plan

An action implementation plan describes how the City of Kings Mountain can implement a safe, convenient, and usable park and recreation system through the execution of its established goals in the master plan. The strategy for achieving goals involves the recommended park and recreation facilities and programs. This section discusses priorities for development, recommended staffing, methods for developing the facilities, and possible funding routes.

The results of the Kings Mountain comprehensive parks and recreation master plan are based on the following discovery methods:

1. A review of the study area that is within the Kings Mountain limits
2. An analysis of the level of service provided by existing parks and amenities
3. Community engagement
4. Recreation standards that provide benchmarks for the parks and recreation system

This master plan is designed to be action-oriented and serve as a tool in the improvement and enhancement of the park system for Kings Mountain.

## Priorities for Development

The park system for the City of Kings Mountain should continue to grow and respond to changes in demographics. Future planned facilities should be implemented incrementally to provide for these changes. The following factors guided the prioritization of individual segments of the plan and were derived from input and desires specified by the residents of the City:

- Needed improvements to existing Kings Mountain-owned facilities
- Development of planned facilities to meet the current needs of recreation for City residents
- Development of planned facilities to meet the future needs of recreation for City residents

The park facility prioritization table is an essential tool that provides the Kings Mountain parks and recreation department and elected officials with a breakdown of the priority actions for each recommended capital improvement. Given the magnitude of the budgets for improvements to existing and new parks and greenway / trail facilities, prioritization of these needs is important. It should be noted that while this table provides a starting point for investing in recreation facilities, the prioritization may change over time due to the availability of funding, unforeseen events, etc. Please see the park facility prioritization table in the appendix.

Below are general actions to consider over the 10 years starting from plan adoption:

### 2024–2027

- Develop and fund a new recreation department
- Institute a recreation advisory board and appoint members with term limits
- Implement recommended improvements at existing recreation facilities as funding becomes available (see section 7 and table of prioritized recommended facility projects)
- Regularly inspect and perform needed ADA accessibility improvements at all City-owned recreational facilities
- Consider adding public Wi-Fi at City-owned recreational facilities (where feasible)
- Develop and implement consistent signage and wayfinding for City-owned recreation facilities

### 2028–2031

- Implement recommended improvements at existing recreation facilities as funding becomes available
- Regularly inspect and perform needed ADA accessibility improvements at all City–owned recreational facilities
- Consider adding public Wi-Fi at City–owned recreational facilities (where feasible)
- Develop and implement consistent signage and wayfinding for City–owned recreation facilities
- Update the City recreation web page with a map showing appropriate recreation facilities, rules, and programming information (sign-ups, calendar of events, etc.)

### 2032–2034

- Regularly inspect and perform needed ADA accessibility improvements at all City–owned recreational facilities

## Future Recommendations (beyond the 10 year scope of this plan)

### YMCA Community Center (at Deal Park)

- The existing building currently used by the YMCA will require assessment and either replacement or refurbishment in the future
- The existing Deal Park elements (including the pool and playground) may need to be updated/replaced depending on the master plan for any development new YMCA community center on the Deal Park parcel
- To plan anticipated updates requested by the YMCA to Deal Park, the City should seek public input via a site–specific master plan.

## Proposed Neighborhood Park

- Acquire new property suitable for the development of a neighborhood park
- Develop a site–specific master plan study with additional community input
- Seek available funding for site development
- Implement the site–specific master plan

## Trails

- Develop a new City–wide trails and greenways master plan to plan for and create a robust public trail network for the City.
- Work with potential willing partners (Albemarle Lithium Corporation, Atrium Health, Kings Mountain Forward, Martin–Marietta, Inc., Kings Mountain Gateway Trails Inc., NC State Parks, Cleveland, and Gaston Counties, etc.) to acquire easements and funding for trail expansion and the creation of City–wide trail network
- Prepare wayfinding and safety signage, rules for trail use, and create a maintenance schedule for new trail
- Regularly inspect and perform needed ADA accessibility improvements at all City–owned recreational facilities (parks, trails, trailheads, etc.)

Category / Improvement	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Cost	Future
	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030	2030-2031	2031-2032	2032-2033	2033-2034		
<b>Existing Parks Renovations / Improvements</b>												
<b>City Lake #1 and #2</b>												
Ingress/Egress improvements (driveway upgrades, access gate)									\$100,000		\$100,000	
Install (2) ADA canoe/kayak launches (one at each lake)				\$60,000							\$60,000	
Site-specific master plan									\$60,000		\$60,000	
Sub-total											\$220,000	
<b>Davidson Park (leased to YMCA)</b>												
Site-specific master plan	\$55,000										\$55,000	
Update existing restrooms/concession building		\$225,000									\$225,000	
(2) small picnic shelters		\$120,000									\$120,000	
Basketball court		\$80,000									\$80,000	
Pickleball Court		\$75,000									\$75,000	
Playground		\$130,000									\$130,000	
Splash pad		\$600,000									\$600,000	
(3) fitness stations		\$20,000									\$20,000	
8' paved walking path (3,550 LF)		\$355,000									\$355,000	
Large picnic pavilion/stage		\$110,000									\$110,000	
Site lighting updates		\$75,000									\$75,000	
Supporting elements (furnishings, trash receptacles, etc.)		\$60,000									\$60,000	
Sub-total											\$1,905,000	
<b>Deal Park / Walking Track</b>												
Site specific master plan				\$55,000							\$55,000	
Removed outdated stage structure			\$10,000								\$10,000	
Sub-total											\$65,000	

Category / Improvement	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Cost	Future	
	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030	2030-2031	2031-2032	2032-2033	2033-2034			
<b>Existing Parks Renovations / Improvements (continued)</b>													
<b>Kings Mountain YMCA Recreation Center at Deal Park</b>													
Demolish existing outdated playground (per YMCA's pending updates)		\$8,000										\$8,000	
Demolish the existing pool (per YMCA's pending updates)													\$60,000
Sub-total												\$8,000	
<b>LG Thombs Park and Walking Track</b>													
Entrance/wayfinding signage		\$8,000										\$8,000	
Pave parking area (1,500 SY)		\$100,000										\$100,000	
Pave walking track (1,320 LF)		\$132,000										\$132,000	
Install dog park		\$50,000										\$50,000	
Install fitness parcourse (5-7 piece of equipment on a concrete pad)		\$120,000										\$120,000	
Install individual picnic stations (4)		\$50,000										\$50,000	
Install story-walk signs (20)		\$15,000										\$15,000	
Sub-total												\$475,000	
<b>Moss Lake and Campground</b>													
Swim beach restoration	\$200,000											\$200,000	
Picnic pavilion	\$350,000											\$350,000	
1/4 mile walking path (1,320 SY)	\$132,000											\$132,000	
Canoe/kayak launch	\$50,000											\$50,000	
Concessions/restroom building (800 SF)	\$450,000											\$450,000	
Playground	\$150,000											\$150,000	
Sub-total												\$1,332,000	

Category / Improvement	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Cost	Future
	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030	2030-2031	2031-2032	2032-2033	2033-2034		
<b>Existing Parks Renovations / Improvements (continued)</b>												
<b>New Camp Creek Church Road Picnic Area at Moss Lake</b>												
Refurbish cabin as leasable meeting space										\$50,000	\$50,000	
Dock/pier replacement							\$60,000				\$60,000	
Install concrete cornhold boards (2)							\$6,000				\$6,000	
Sub-total											\$116,000	
<b>Patriot Park</b>												
ADA improvements allowance						\$20,000					\$20,000	
Expand parking along South Railroad Avenue (393 SY)						\$70,000					\$70,000	
Splash pad area improvements (surfacing and expansion)						\$40,000					\$40,000	
Grading and drainage improvements						\$30,000					\$30,000	
Sub-total											\$160,000	
<b>Police Club / Davidson Lake</b>												
Site-specific master plan				\$55,000							\$55,000	
Ingress/egress improvements						\$60,000					\$60,000	
Community meeting building (30x50)						\$350,000					\$350,000	
Sub-total											\$465,000	
<b>Ramseur Park</b>												
Site-specific master plan	\$55,000										\$55,000	
Grading and drainage improvements			\$160,000								\$160,000	
Sub-total											\$215,000	

New Facility Development										
<b>I-85 Exit 5 Area Multi-Sports Complex</b>										
Land acquisition allowance										\$5,000,000
Site-specific master plan									\$65,000	\$65,000
Park construction allowance								\$10,000,000		\$10,000,000
Sub-total										\$25,065,000
<b>Neighborhood Park</b>										
Land acquisition allowance									\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
Site-specific master plan									\$80,000	\$80,000
Park construction allowance								\$2,500,000		\$2,500,000
Sub-total										\$25,065,000
<b>Downtown Farmer's Market</b>										
Develop a market location										\$1,000,000
<b>Trails</b>										
City-wide trails/greenway master plan								\$50,000		\$50,000
3 miles of new paved trail (10' wide)										\$3,000,000
Sub-total										\$55,000
<b>New Facility Development Total</b>										<b>\$25,120,000</b>
<b>Total Anticipated Projects Budget Cost</b>										<b>\$30,281,000</b>
										<b>\$4,060,000</b>

Reflected costs are in current dollars and do not account for inflation or other unknown adjustments that will occur in the future. The capital improvement costs represent allowances toward recommended improvements and are not based on existing design or construction documentation. Therefore, the costs presented are intended only for budget planning purposes. All projects will require updated cost estimates once additional planning and design have occurred.

## Anticipated Recreational Project Costs

The City of Kings Mountain comprehensive parks and recreation master plan is designed to incorporate a recreation capital improvement program for the development of park facilities, spanning a minimum of ten years. To aid the City in identifying its needs, this study furnishes a list of prospective recreation projects (refer to the park facility prioritization table) based on the recommendations of the plan.

The proposed list of recreational projects offers cost estimates, considering recent (2023–2024) material and labor costs. The accompanying table provides an opinion of those probable costs, considering anticipated general expenditures such as site preparation, construction of structures, access, site utilities, parking, and specific recreational enhancements. Additionally, the list includes estimates for planning or design fees.

The proposed anticipated future recreational project list would cover ten years and would serve to set recreation expenses for each fiscal year for the implementation of specific projects. The opinions on cost are preliminary and are for planning purposes only. As the time approaches to consider the recommended improvements, it will be necessary to receive up-to-date opinions on cost.

This total anticipated future recreational project cost of \$34,341,000 represents the proposed cumulative figure to be spent for park and recreation development, improvements, and renovations by the year 2034. The total figure does not consider an inflation rate over the ten years. To see a breakdown of the anticipated future recreational project costs see Appendix D.

To meet the existing and future needs of the City, the goals and objectives that are identified in the master plan must be seriously considered for implementation. The City will need to update its annual budget for the parks and recreation department based on projected capital improvement costs, staffing needs, and operations and maintenance costs.

## Funding Opportunities

Implementing the recommendations of this comprehensive master plan will require a combination of funding sources that include local, state, federal, and private money. Enabling sufficient funding is a crucial element required to implement the master plan. The NC SCORP is a guide to help identify funding sources for park and recreation facilities. Funding for future projects will be a key issue that will need to be addressed in the upcoming years if governments continue to provide basic minimum services.

This section provides a listing of the most used funds for park and greenway facility projects in North Carolina. Fortunately, the benefits of protected greenways and parks are many and varied. This allows programs in Kings Mountain to access money earmarked for a variety of purposes, including water quality, hazard mitigation, recreation, air quality, alternative transportation, wildlife protection, community health, and economic development. Competition is always stiff for state and federal funds. It becomes imperative that local governments work together to create multi-jurisdictional partnerships and to develop their local sources of funding. These sources can then be used to leverage outside assistance. The long-term success of this plan will almost certainly depend on the dedication of a local revenue stream for park and greenway projects.

It is important that the City fully evaluate its available options and develop a funding strategy that can meet community needs, maximize local resources, improve quality of life, and leverage outside funding. Financing will be needed to administer the continued planning and implementation process, acquire parcels or easements, and manage and maintain facilities. Further research into these programs is recommended to determine the requirements for specific grants. McGill advises the City of Kings Mountain to pursue a variety of funding options.

## Dedicated Source of Local Funding

To leverage and provide matching funds for many of the programs listed, Kings Mountain should evaluate the existing departmental budget and funding for capital improvements.

### Property / Sales Tax Revenues

General tax revenues traditionally provide sources for general operations and maintenance of park systems for local governments. Parks and recreation development is scheduled along with health, public safety, utilities, etc. in regular budgets established by the City. The assessed valuation of real and personal property tax and sales tax provides the framework for the major portion of the tax base for the City.

Traditionally ad valorem tax revenue has been the primary source of funding for the park and recreation enhancement of properties/facilities owned by local governments. Recreational opportunities are considered a public service and often are a standard line item on general fund budgets. Creative financial opportunities are possible; however, ad valorem taxes will continue to be the major revenue source to support the system. As such, communities often vote to raise their local tax rate temporarily in support of their park and recreation systems.

## General Obligation Bonds

Many communities issue bonds, which are typically approved by the shareholders, to finance site development and land acquisition costs. The State of North Carolina grants local governments the authority to borrow funds for parks and recreation through the issuance of bonds. The amount is not to exceed the cost of the acquisition or improvement of park and recreation facilities. Total bond capacities for local governments are limited for parks and recreation to a maximum percentage of assessed property valuation. Since the issuance of bonds relies on the support of the voting population, the implementation of awareness programs is essential before a referendum vote.

General obligation bonds are the preferred financing approach of the North Carolina local government commission and the general securities market because these instruments are backed by the full faith and credit of the issuer. That simply means that the bonds represent an encumbrance against the property tax base of the issuing jurisdiction and therefore offer the best available security to the bondholder. The State of North Carolina gives the issuance of bonds not to exceed the total cost of improvements (including land acquisition). Given the recommended capital improvements suggested in this plan, Kings Mountain may consider continuing to use general obligation bonds to develop new facilities. Total bonding capacities for local government are limited for parks and recreation to a maximum percentage of assessed property valuation. The following are key factors to consider before using this financing instrument:

- In North Carolina, the issuance of general obligation bonds requires a referendum of the voters within the issuing jurisdiction.
- The term of the debt may be extended to 20 to 30 years.
- The debt is publicly sold, so there are costs associated with the sale. These costs generally total 3% to 5% of the total bond principal. The issuance costs offset the lower interest rate and, therefore, this instrument becomes more attractive as the size of the issuance increases and the issuance costs are spread over the larger debt. It has been found that this financing option becomes financially superior as the debt principal exceeds \$10 to \$12 million.

Generally, prepayment of the debt cannot be accomplished until reaching a call date. This is usually around 75% of debt retirement. Failure of the general obligation bond to be ratified by referendum could mean that Kings Mountain could not go forward with an alternative approach to financing without substantially changing the scope of the project.

### Fee In-Lieu of Contributions

The City of Kings Mountain should consider providing developers with an option to pay a fee in lieu rather than dedicate land for open space or recreation within conventional subdivisions. This program has proven to be successful for many local governments in providing a dedicated source of revenue earmarked for park development.

### User Fees / Registration Fees

Communities throughout the nation employ a wide variety of user fees for public recreational programs and services within their recreation departments. The amount of the fee is usually determined by a portion of the recreation costs needed for improvements and operations. These user fees are typically levied for special facilities, such as water

park and golf courses; however, they can also be charged for the use of trails and ball fields. Kings Mountain should continue to generate revenue by charging user fees for the use of facilities, such as picnic shelters to cover operation and administrative costs. In addition, the City should continue to have a separate fee rate structure for residents and non-residents. As the park system continues to develop, the City should examine its fee structure to identify opportunities and additional revenue. The current user fees appear to be fair and reasonable for most of the residents and non-residents. Elected officials should determine the fees and changes based on departmental input; the fees should not be so high that people of modest income would ultimately be denied the use of park facilities.

### Grants

State and federal agencies offer numerous grants to assist municipalities in the financing of their parks and recreation projects. This source of funding should be investigated and pursued by the City for present and future park and recreation improvements.

#### *Parks and Recreation Trust Fund*

The parks and recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) was established for local governments and the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation in 1994 as a funding source for the development or improvement of parks and recreation facilities and land acquisition. A state-funded program, PARTF matches monies spent by municipalities on parks and recreation, with each sharing 50% of the cost. The maximum matching fund amount provided by PARTF is \$500,000.

#### *Recreation Trails Program*

The Recreation Trails Program (RTP) is a \$1.5-million federal grant program designed to help states provide and maintain recreational trails for both motorized and non-motorized recreational trail use.

The program is administered by the United States Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration.

RTP is a reimbursement grant program. Funds must be spent and then reimbursed upon completion of deliverables. Eligible applicants must be a state, federal, or local government agency or qualified nonprofit organization. All applications are reviewed by the North Carolina Trails Committee and recommendations are made to the secretary of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. The secretary makes the final determination on grant awards.

#### *Federal Aid Construction Funds*

Federal Aid Construction Funds are included in the National Highway System (NHS), Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG), and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ). The funds provide for the construction of pedestrian and bicycle transportation facilities. The primary source of funding for bicycle and pedestrian projects is STBG Enhancement Funding.

#### *Land and Water Conservation Fund*

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is a federally funded program that was established for local and state governments in 1965 as a funding source for outdoor recreational development and land acquisition. LWCF monies are derived from the sale or lease of nonrenewable resources, primarily offshore oil and gas leases, and surplus federal land sales. Acquisition and development grants may be used for a wide variety of outdoor projects, such as City parks, tennis courts, bike trails, outdoor swimming pools, and support facilities (roads, water supply, et cetera). Facility design must be basic and remain accessible to the public. No more than 50% of the project cost may be federally funded by LWCF, although all or part of the project sponsor's matching share may be obtained from certain other federal assistance programs.

#### *Environmental Enhancement Grant Program*

The Environmental Enhancement Grant Program (EEG) is used to fund projects that address the environmental needs of North Carolina, specifically to protect water quality and conserve natural areas. To be eligible, applicants must be nonprofit organizations or government entities for projects in North Carolina, with preference for programs focused on the eastern part of the state. The types of grants included are land acquisitions and easements, construction, remediation, restoration, and research, planning, education. The maximum award available is \$500,000, and the project must be completed in 3 years from the date of the fully executed memorandum of understanding.

#### *The United States Department of Agriculture*

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) assists state and local governments in their operation and maintenance of watersheds whose areas are less than 250,000 square acres. The NRCS provides both financial and technical assistance to eligible projects for the improvement of watershed protection, flood prevention, sedimentation control, public water-based fish and wildlife enhancements, and recreation planning. The NRCS requires a 50% local match for public recreation and fish/wildlife projects.

#### *State Construction Funds*

State construction funds (not including the Highway Trust Fund for urban loops and interchanges) may be used for the construction of sidewalks and bicycle accommodations that are part of roadway improvement projects.

### *Contributions*

The solicitation of contributions is an acceptable method of fundraising for recreation departments. These donations, typically in the form of land, cash, labor, and materials, could be solicited to assist the City of Kings Mountain with its enhancement program. Corporations, civic organizations, individuals, and other groups generally donate to a specific park project; however, donations may also be solicited for multiple project improvements or additions. NRPA recommends the use of private, not-for-profit, tax-exempt foundations as a means of accepting and administering private gifts to a public park system.

### *Park Foundations*

Foundations are another source of financing by making direct contributions within communities, states, or the nation. These types of funds are usually described as special program foundations, general purpose foundations, or corporate foundations. Foundations can provide the needed resources to support park projects. Foundations generally have very few restrictions and/or limitations and are typically received from local entities. A list of appropriate foundations can be found at: <http://foundationcenter.org>.

### *Friends of the Parks*

Establishing a 501c3 friends of parks organization to support local parks and recreation development efforts can be a significant benefit for local public recreation. Often, these non-profits can help solicit private donations that are used to offer tax benefits to donors, serve as match for state and federal grants, and raise awareness for needing great public recreation spaces. Local governments should consult their local government attorney when beginning to establish these complimentary organizations. While establishing a non-profit organization of this kind takes work, the benefits outweigh the costs.

### *Partnerships*

To implement the recommendations in the comprehensive master plan, Kings Mountain should expand its partnership agreements with other public agencies and private sector organizations. Below are some examples. :

- Programming partnerships to co-sponsor events and facilities or to allow qualified outside agencies to conduct activities on properties that are City-owned
- Create a plan to solicit local businesses for sponsorship opportunities related to specific facilities, amenities, programs, and special events
- Operational partnerships to share the responsibility for providing public access and use of facilities
- Development partnerships to purchase land and/or build facilities
- Management partnerships to maintain properties and/or facilities

Kings Mountain should evaluate and update its current recreation partnerships to ensure they are providing the best opportunities. The City should also evaluate forming additional partnerships that address the need for a comprehensive park system. Direct requests should be made to meet potential partners, inviting them to evaluate the possible benefits of partnering. This step should be made to generate interest and agreement before solidifying any responsibilities for each participating party.

Private-sector partnerships can be beneficial. Developers can use private funds to develop facilities on municipal property and lease it to the City for a long time. Over some time, the developer returns a portion of the revenue to the City and at the end of the lease, the facility is turned over to public ownership. This type of arrangement would typically be a large capital investment for a special-use facility.

## Land Acquisition and Development

The solicitation of contributions is an acceptable method of fundraising for recreation departments. These donations, typically in the form of land, cash, labor, and materials, could be solicited to assist Kings Mountain with its enhancement program. Corporations, civic organizations, individuals, and other groups generally donate to a specific park project; however, donations may also be solicited for multiple project improvements or additions. The NRPA recommends the use of private, not-for-profit, tax-exempt foundations as a means of accepting and administering private gifts to a park system.

### Life Estates

A life estate is a gift whereby a donor retains the land during his / her lifetime and relinquishes the title of the property after his / her death. In return, the owner (or family) is relieved of property tax for the given land.

### Local Gifts

Donations of land, money, labor, and construction can have a significant impact on the acquisition and development of park property. The solicitation of local gifts is highly recommended and should be organized thoroughly, with the utilization of very specific strategic methods. This often-untapped source of obtaining funds requires the contact of potential donors, such as individuals, institutions, foundations, and service clubs.

### Long Term Options

Long-term options allow municipalities to purchase property over a long period. This method is particularly useful because it enables the City to consider a particular piece of land that may have future value though it is not currently desired or affordable. The advantages to this method of

property acquisition are that the City can protect the future of the land without purchasing it upfront, the purchase price of the land will not increase, and the City will have the right to exercise its option. The disadvantage to the City is that all privileges relinquished by the landowner require compensation in the form of securing the option.

### Easement

An easement is the most common type of less-than-fee interest in land. An easement seeks to compensate the property owner for the right to use his / her land in some way or to compensate for the loss of his / her privileges to use the land. Generally, the landowner may still use the land and continues to generate property tax revenue for the City.

### Fee Simple Purchase

Fee simple purchase is the most common method used to acquire municipal property for park facilities. Although it has the advantage of simplifying justification to the public, fee simple purchase is the most difficult method to pursue due to limited monetary resources.

### Fee Simple with Lease Back or Resale

This method allows local governments to acquire land by fee simple purchase yet allows them to either sell or lease the property to prospective users with restrictions that will preserve the land from future development. The fee simple with lease-back or resale method commonly results from situations in which landowners, who have lost considerable monetary amounts in property value, determine that it is more economical to sell the land to the City (with a lease-back option) than to keep it.

## Plan Adoption

The first step in the implementation of the City of Kings Mountain comprehensive parks and recreation master plan is for the City to adopt the plan. By adopting the master plan, the community can help shape larger regional decisions so that they fit within the goals of the plan. The City also gives itself greater authority in shaping local land use decisions so that it achieves the goals and vision of this plan. In addition, the adoption of this master plan is essential to maximize available grant opportunities.

Among the opportunities available to promote this plan's recommendations is the ability to build upon an already committed and active base of residents, visitors, and enthusiasts in the area. Through their organizations, institutions, publications, and networks, Kings Mountain can promote both the improved and new parks and greenway facilities and programs.

Second among the opportunities is the availability of the existing park facilities, such as amenities, programs, and existing trails. Though some changes are being suggested in the short term and an expanded network is suggested for the long term, the presence of an existing network provides a strong foundation from which to build. Many residents are already accustomed to using the existing park facilities and should become used to seeing new park amenities, programs, signage, and other improvements. Building on their existing awareness of what is available is much easier than building on no awareness.

## Action Steps

Upon adoption of this plan, implementation of specific recommendations can begin. Many of these will occur simultaneously and include policy and facility improvement changes. The key steps are:

1. Secure a dedicated source of revenue to address the ten-year and beyond anticipated future recreational project list and address the goals of the master plan
2. Provide staffing necessary to support and oversee the implementation of this plan and the proper maintenance and operation of the facilities that are proposed
3. Develop and implement educational and awareness programs, such as public events and promotion of parks awareness by civic and environmental advocacy groups; these programs can be used to announce new park facilities and upcoming projects
4. Begin working on the recommendations that are listed in the ten-year and beyond anticipated future recreational project list; from these opportunities come the framework for an initial implementation strategy

These recommendations include:

- Aggressively begin to establish potential funding mechanisms for future park expansions; this high-priority goal is essential for realizing the proposed recommendations for the future growth and development of Kings Mountain's parks and recreation facilities
- Use the nucleus of park patrons to expand the awareness of the amenities and programming of the Kings Mountain parks and recreation system
- Expand and modify the existing park system into a comprehensive, multiuser system, distributed so that it better meets the needs of the community, provides opportunities to all, and enhances the current park system
- Continue making the critical pedestrian and bicycle connections between destination points that will allow for the preservation of open space and offer an alternative mode of transportation

These steps represent the core of the implementation strategy. As the individual policy recommendations and physical recommendations are addressed, they should each fit within one of these four primary strategies.

The City needs to ensure that facility planning is integrated with other regional planning efforts at the state and local levels and with long-range and current land use, economic development, parks, environmental, and community planning. The following are mechanisms to achieve this action step:

1. Expand local capital improvements program for yearly appropriation for greenway and park development
2. Set aside money for future land acquisition, construction, and maintenance of parks and recreation facilities
3. Pursue and request pedestrian/bicycle projects to be added to NCDOT TIP if they are not already scheduled
4. Pursue developing and expanding existing and new partnerships with area non-profits, and seek an equitable process to assist in funding worthy initiatives
5. Apply for PARTF grants and other related recreation grants for future parks and recreation projects
6. Seek other sources of revenue funding for parks and greenway improvements, such as including local assessment districts and developer exactions
7. Pursue funding from other sources listed in this section

To continue to fulfill this mission, Kings Mountain has pursued plans to improve the parks and recreation system throughout the community. This comprehensive parks and recreation master plan has laid out a set of strategies for expanding and developing a safe, convenient, and usable park system. The plan has assessed the study area, analyzed the existing facilities, received, and analyzed community input, reviewed recreation standards, developed recommendations, and provided strategies for implementing the plan. The City of Kings Mountain comprehensive parks and recreation master plan is a comprehensive guide to be used in the improvement and enhancement of the park system in the future.

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