

2026

PARKS, RECREATION, & TRAILS MASTER PLAN

Turning the Page on Parks & Recreation



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Turning the Page on Parks and Recreation 2026 Henderson Parks, Recreation, and Trails Master Plan

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE NEED FOR A PLAN

Henderson is a small city located in Henderson County, Kentucky near Evansville, Indiana. Henderson's overall population is expected to remain steady over the next several years; however, the population is aging with an increased percentage of residents 65 and over and a decreased percentage of residents under 18. The population is also becoming slightly more diverse with white residents making up a smaller percentage of the population.

Overall, approximately 41% of Henderson residents live within a 10-minute walk to a neighborhood or community park, and nearly all areas of the city are within a 10-minute drive to a community park. Based on the current service areas for parks, the northeast area of the city would benefit from a new neighborhood park.

Meant to instill focus, establish priorities, and inspire action, the plan was produced with guidance from an active steering committee appointed by city officials. The plan is supported by robust data collection, including hours of in-person engagement, and provides a foundation for continuous improvement of Henderson's parks and recreation offerings. This plan is important because it...

- Provides a vision for Henderson's Parks and Recreation Department for the next 10 years
- Helps define the identity of Henderson Parks and Recreation
- Prepares the department to align with changing community needs and recreation trends
- Advocates for the department to add the staff and make the organizational changes required to meet these needs
- Identifies gaps & inequities in services and offers solutions
- Avoids duplication of services available to city residents
- Describes future funding requirements and potential sources
- Strengthens fiscal responsibility, sustainability, and efficiency

VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES FOR PARKS AND RECREATION IN HENDERSON

Developed from all the input gathered during the Evaluate and Engage phases, this strategic plan articulates a freshly inspired vision, mission, and set of defining values. These strategic elements will help pilot implementation of actions identified in this Master Plan and thereby shape the future of parks and recreation in Henderson.

Vision

Deliver balanced, inclusive, and memorable experiences for the entire Henderson community

Mission

Create opportunities for fun, fitness, and education that fuel community pride

Values

Vision

We work towards a shared vision for parks and recreation in Henderson.

Innovation

We provide quality parks and unique, intentional programs that adapt to changing needs and trends.

Safety

We promote health and wellness opportunities in a clean, safe environment.

Inclusion

We emphasize accessibility and ensure everyone can participate.

Outreach

We connect the community and continuously address needs through collaboration and trust.

Nature

We promote sustainable development, conservation of resources and awareness of environmental impacts.

Turning the Page (Goals & Objectives)

Henderson is turning the **PAGE** on parks and recreation. This plan has four goals to make this concept into reality: **Protect, Adapt, Grow, and Enhance**. Significant improvements are planned for parks, recreation programs, and department operations over the next 10 years. The new PAGES are listed below with key strategies to make this plan a reality.



Page 1: Modern parks and facilities

1. Reimagine Atkinson Park/Hays Park improved circulation, expanded parking, and better access to the river
 - Develop a centrally located nature playground with a splash pad and picnic opportunities
 - Construct an event lawn with a covered stage at Hays Park and add a large picnic pavilion overlooking the river
 - Construct indoor event facility overlooking the Ohio River with capacity of at least 200 for weddings and other rental opportunities
 - Seek a partnership for an adventure park at Atkinson Park to help make the park a regional attraction
 - Add large pickleball complex
2. Develop the new Veterans Memorial Park with an amphitheater and memorial plaza
3. Redevelop Sunset Park with a destination playground, permanent dock, gathering spaces, and a plaza with skate elements
4. Revitalize Community Park with soccer pitches, dog park expansion, sand volleyball courts, new shelter/restroom building, and perimeter trails
5. Enhance Newman Park with multipurpose covered courts, upgraded diamond fields, and a perimeter trail
6. Collectively consider Anthony Brooks Park, JFK Center, and WC Handy Park to best serve the community
 - Expanded fitness and programming space at the JFK Center

- Enhance Anthony Brooks Park with a playground, splash pad, shelters, and restrooms
- Upgrade WC Handy Park basketball courts with permanent bleachers, restrooms, and ADA access
- Improve the crossing between Anthony Brooks Park and the JFK Center

Page 2: Improved trails and connectivity

1. Reconfigure the Riverwalk to form a multiuse trail from Atkinson Park to Doc Hosbach Tennis Center
2. Extend the Riverwalk from downtown to Newman Park and Canoe Creek Park
3. Develop the Audubon Connector to connect Atkinson Park to Audubon State Park
4. Connect downtown to the Merrill Trail and YMCA; extend the Merrill Trail to the Sports Complex
5. Connect JFK Center, WC Handy Park, and Anthony Brooks Park to Newman Park
6. Extend the Canoe Creek Greenway (follow Canoe Creek to the proposed Canoe Creek Park)
7. Add trail loops within parks
8. Create a 4th Street Art Walk (public art walk and connection from Main Street to Water Street)
9. Provide trail & trailhead amenities (parking, restrooms, lighting, shade, seating, signage hydration stations)

Page 3: Responsible nature and river access

1. Prepare a plan for development of Canoe Creek Park (Borax/Nature Conservancy properties) with trails, creek/river access, and more
2. Add canoe/kayak launches along Canoe Creek
3. Provide overlooks and wildlife viewing areas along the Riverwalk with interpretive signage
4. Prepare a park master plan to be included in the landfill transition plan for Wolf Hills with trails, a potential bike park, and connections to Audubon State Park

Page 4: Inclusive access and inviting amenities

1. Conduct an ADA accessibility assessment and prepare transition plan
2. Upgrade wayfinding and signage in all parks, including consistent signage at all park entrances
3. Build a downtown pavilion for multiple activities, such as a farmers market, ice skating, and other events

Page 5: Desirable programs and events

1. Consider "Try It" programs—short-term, low-cost, or free introductory offerings—to encourage community members to explore new activities
2. Seek partnerships to engage the community's older adults with fitness, wellness, and social programs tailored to adults and older adults
3. Utilize proposed stages for more live music and outdoor movies

- Expand program offerings at the JFK Center and other parks for residents of all ages

Page 6: Proactive maintenance and management

- Determine locations for new Parks and Recreation Department offices and new maintenance garage/shop
- Reenergize the Parks and Recreation Board and update by-laws
- Develop a playground improvement and replacement program
- Streamline and expand rentals and special events
- Updated department organizational chart to ensure high-quality services while remaining adaptable to future demands
- Bring management of city-owned sports fields under the Parks and Recreation Department and streamline use agreements for all youth sports groups

Page 7: Consistent engagement and promotion

- Develop a marketing strategy informed by customer feedback and preferred communication channels
- Strengthen department social media presence and website
- Continuously engage the community throughout implementation of this plan

Page 8: Sustainable funding strategies

- Develop an Alternative Funding Plan that includes non-traditional funding options, such as fees and charges, sponsorships, partnerships, naming rights, tribute programs, and donations
- Add more parks and facilities, shelters, amenities and athletic fields to the rental program
- Conduct a cost-of-service analysis to evaluate both direct and indirect expenses related to the operation and maintenance of parks, facilities, athletic fields, and sports courts.

Page 9: Constructive partnerships and collaboration

- Partner with the YMCA, Henderson County Schools, and others to develop a new indoor/outdoor aquatic center
- Cross-promote programs and events with local entities, such as the State Parks, YMCA, Chamber of Commerce, Henderson County, and the library
- Partner with downtown businesses to sponsor events/ programs in downtown parks

ACTION PLAN

The 2026 Henderson Parks, Recreation, and Trails Master Plan concludes with an action plan of strategies and recommendations to improve facilities, programs, and overall service. The specific action items outlined in Chapter 7 offer a path towards successful implementation of the Master Plan.

1 https://www.fastcompany.com/90624316/great-parks-dont-just-haverec-space-they-create-jobs?mc_cid=105f89bd93&mc_eid=6c9b6b28d4

THE PROCESS – WHY ARE THESE ACTIONS NEEDED

Existing Conditions of Parks and Recreation

A park system should be evaluated as a composite of recreation areas with each meeting a particular public need. The system should provide a combination of smaller neighborhood parks, larger community parks, special use parks, and indoor recreation facilities. For all residents, whatever their background, parks and recreation facilities help provide a variety of passive and active recreational opportunities. Proximity to these valuable resources invariably improves community health and wellness while creating more adaptable, robust local economies.¹

HENDERSON PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM

6 Neighborhood Parks

- Anthony Brooks Park
- WC Handy Park
- East End Park
- Kimmel Park
- Sunset Park
- Central Park

3 Community Park

- Atkinson Park
- Newman Park
- Community Park

1 Indoor Recreation Facility

- JFK Community Center

3 Trails

- Riverwalk
- Merrill Trail
- Canoe Creek Nature Trail

6 Special Use Parks

- Audubon Mill Park
- Doc Hosbach Tennis Complex
- Hays Park
- Henderson Sports Complex
- Red Banks Park
- The Bridges Golf Course

2 Cemeteries

- Fairmont Cemetery
- Fernwood Cemetery

613.4 Total acres

Demographic and Benchmarking Analysis

Henderson overall population has remained mostly consistent since 2000. However, city is becoming older and slightly more diverse. As these trends continue, they may create new demands for recreation programs and facilities.

Henderson outperforms the benchmark departments for the overall number of parks and key park features, including playgrounds, splash pads, tennis courts, pickleball, and athletic fields. The Parks and Recreation Department employs more staff than the benchmark departments, which is likely due to Henderson managing cemeteries, an indoor recreation center, and a swimming pool.

Service Area Analysis

Maps of service areas for various parks and facilities were used to identify service gaps or underserved areas within Henderson based on walking



and driving times. Henderson's overall level of service for recreation facilities is medium, with most parks and facilities concentrated in two areas: Downtown and the East End.

A composite service areas map shows the overall level of service for parks and facilities, ranked from high to low, in turn revealing areas of need and opportunity. Shades of green indicate high service levels, while red areas show those with the lowest level of service to parks and recreation facilities. Approximately 40% of Henderson residents live in areas with high or medium-high levels of service.

What Henderson Residents Said

Understanding the needs and wants of Henderson residents was essential to developing the Master Plan. Residents were engaged through a variety of methods, including a web-based survey, open house workshop, a booth at Tri Fest, the Sports Complex opening, Henderson County High School, and conversations with key stakeholder groups. These options for involvement gave park users and non-users a means to share their individual needs, perceptions, concerns, and desires for the park system.

Open House Workshop & Engagement Events

Approximately 305 people participated in the engagement events. Participants were asked to "spend" \$1,000 to indicate how they would support funding for parks and recreation facilities. "More programs and special events" received the most support with \$40,000 (18%) allocated. "New/upgraded courts" was next with \$29,400 (13%) allocated. Third most popular was "walking and biking trails and improved connectivity" with \$28,200 (12%) allocated.

Stakeholder Groups

More than 30 stakeholder groups interviewed during the planning process included sports groups/leagues, government officials/agencies, and community organizations. Findings include:

- **Permitting Confusion:** Event organizers struggle with occupational license taxes, blanket permits, and vendor requirements.
- **City Partnership Needs:** Desire for clearer agreements, more city involvement, and improved infrastructure.
- **Sports Facilities:** Leagues want better lighting, turf fields, restrooms, and clarity on scheduling and fees.
- **Aquatics Upgrade:** Strong support for a new aquatic center
- **Equity & Inclusion:** Growing Latino community needs bilingual signage and real soccer fields
- **Partnership Expansion:** Nonprofits, schools, and higher education seek stronger collaboration for programming, transportation, and shared facilities.
- **Park Improvements:** Need for shade, restrooms, lighting, updated playgrounds, and interconnected trails
- **Safety & Maintenance:** Concerns about cleanliness, lighting, and upkeep in older parks.

- **Recreation Trends:** Pickleball is booming; disc golf needs signage and amenities; biking and running require safer routes and better signage.

Surveys

The web-based and handout survey was completed by 664 respondents. This type of survey tends to be completed by residents that already have a connection to parks and recreation, either as users or stakeholders. The lists below highlight the top results for support for investment in facilities and programs.

Highest priority facilities for investment

1. Playgrounds (43%)
2. Trails (39%)
3. Natural areas/nature parks (39%)
4. Picnic shelters/picnic areas (38%)
5. Riverwalk (31%)

Highest priority programs for investment

1. Festivals, fairs, or community events (52%)
2. Concerts or performances (39%)
3. Adult fitness and wellness (28%)
4. Outdoor movies (27%)
5. Nature programs (25%)

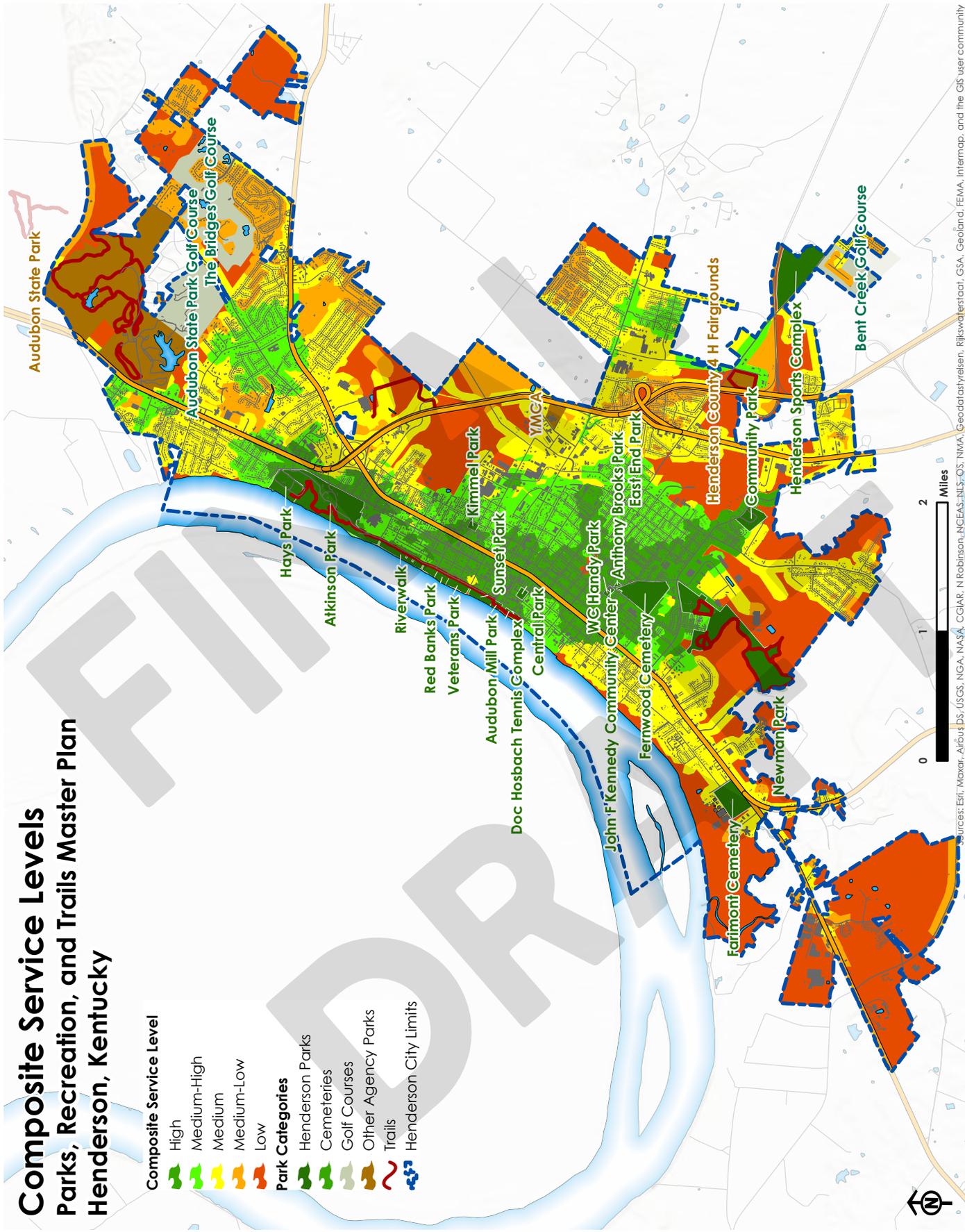
Continued public engagement will be necessary as Henderson implements the Master Plan. Public input is an important part of the design process for development of new park facilities and in evaluating programs for improvement. Engagement efforts should be flexible and creative, utilizing tools like on-site feedback and interactive online platforms.

Overall Engagement Findings (All Methods)

Participants expressed the strongest support for the following facilities:

-  Playgrounds
-  Trails – including the Riverwalk, hiking trails, and a connection to Audubon State Park
-  Natural areas and nature parks
-  Amphitheater
-  Swimming pool
-  Picnic shelters
-  Fitness center/weight room
-  Arts and crafts space
-  Rental spaces (meeting and party rooms)
-  Fishing lake/pond
-  Canoe and kayak launches

Composite Service Levels Parks, Recreation, and Trails Master Plan Henderson, Kentucky



- Composite Service Level**
- High
 - Medium-High
 - Medium
 - Medium-Low
 - Low
- Park Categories**
- Henderson Parks
 - Cemeteries
 - Golf Courses
 - Other Agency Parks
 - Trails
 - Henderson City Limits

Sources: Esri, Maxar, Airbus DS, USGS, NGA, NASA, CGIAR, N Robinson, NCEAS, NLS, OS, NMA, Geodatasysteisen, Rijkswaterstaat, GSA, Geoland, FEMA, Intermap, and the GIS user community

Participants expressed the strongest support for the following programs and activities:

-  Community events (festivals, fairs, and concerts)
-  Nature programs
-  Gardening
-  Movies (outdoor)
-  Fitness and wellness programs (adult)
-  Fishing
-  Age 50+ programs

Engagement also identified a need to improve marketing efforts to increase awareness of programs and facilities. While most survey respondents indicated they prefer to learn about parks and recreation activities through social media and the city's website, certain groups are less likely to be reached through those methods. More direct and targeted efforts may be required to reach those residents who are not currently engaged.

ONE PAGE SUMMARY

The final page of this executive summary provides a graphic representation of the overall findings of the 2026 Henderson Parks, Recreation, and Trails Master Plan. The image summarizes the whole document in a single page and can serve as an easy reference for those looking for the highlights of the plan.

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2026

PARKS, RECREATION, & TRAILS MASTER PLAN

Turning the Page on Parks & Recreation

VISION

Deliver balanced, inclusive, and memorable experiences for the entire Henderson community.

MISSION

Create opportunities for fun, fitness, and education that fuel community pride.

CORE VALUES

- Vision
- Innovation
- Safety
- Inclusion
- Outreach
- Nature



PAGES

1. Modern parks and facilities
2. Improved trails and connectivity
3. Responsible nature and river access
4. Inclusive access and inviting amenities
5. Desirable programs and events
6. Proactive maintenance and management
7. Consistent engagement and promotion
8. Sustainable funding strategies
9. Constructive partnerships and collaboration

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Atkinson Park

- Pickleball complex
- Nature playground & splash pad
- Riverfront events center
- Adventure park with zipline

Hays Park

- Stage & event lawn
- Large shelter/pavilion overlooking the river

Veteran Memorial Park **NEW!**

- Amphitheater
- Memorial plaza

Sunset Park

- Destination playground
- Permanent transient boat dock
- Plaza with skate elements

Anthony Brooks Park

- New playground, splash pad, restrooms, and shelter

Newman Park

- Athletic field improvements
- Multipurpose covered courts
- Canoe/kayak launch

Community Park

- New shelter and restrooms
- Soccer mini pitches
- Outdoor games
- Trails/connectivity
- Expanded dog park

Trails

- Riverwalk expansion
- Canoe Creek greenway
- Audubon Connector (Atkinson Park to Audubon State Park)

JFK Community Center

- JFK Community Center renovations and expansion
- ADA access
- Add restrooms and teen focused feature to W.C. Handy Park

New Parks

- Canoe Creek
- Wolf Hills
- Neighborhood park in Northeast Henderson

Downtown pavilion for community events

Partnership with the YMCA, Henderson County Schools, and other to develop an outdoor aquatic center

Playground improvement program

Better marketing and promotions

More community events

Expanded program offerings

Alternative funding plan

Increased opportunities and a simplified process for facility rentals



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INTRODUCTION

1

1.1 THE NEED FOR A PLAN

The purpose of this 2026 Henderson Parks, Recreation, and Trails Master Plan is to provide an ambitious yet feasible roadmap for the future that encompasses the needs and desires of Henderson residents and city staff. This plan is important because it...

- Will help Henderson Turn the Page on Parks and Recreation with a new vision for the department for the next 10 years
- Helps define the identity of Henderson Parks and Recreation
- Prepares the department to align with changing community needs and recreation trends
- Advocates for the department to add the staff and make the organizational changes required to meet these needs
- Identifies gaps & inequities in services and offers solutions
- Avoids duplication of services available to city residents
- Describes future funding requirements and potential sources
- Strengthens fiscal responsibility, sustainability, and efficiency

Parks and Recreation Facilities are Essential to Public Health

Through programs, facilities, open space, and other services, parks and recreation agencies are essential to improving health outcomes and enhancing quality of life. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) highlights a few of the primary benefits of utilizing parks and recreation facilities and programs:

- **Help reduce obesity and incidence of chronic disease by providing opportunities to increase rigorous physical activity in a variety of forms**

- **Provide a connection to nature which studies demonstrate relieves stress levels, tightens interpersonal relationships, and improves mental health**
- **Aid in reducing hunger in America and increasing access to nutritious food options**
- **Foster overall wellness and healthful habits, such as becoming tobacco-free and engaging in enrichment opportunities that add balance to life**

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) prepares the ParkScore every year to rank the park systems of the 100 most populous cities in the U.S. In 2023, TPL added data about the positive health outcomes of the top-scoring cities. A recent report, "The Power of Parks to Promote Health," breaks down the new data to show communities how to make parks a more formal part of their health programs, helping to ensure more are able to experience the physical and mental health benefits of public parks and green spaces.

TPL found that "people are on average 9% less likely to suffer from poor mental health and 21% less likely to be physically inactive" in the top 25 ranking cities, compared to the lower-ranked cities, even after controlling for race/ethnicity, income, age, and population density. The report offers examples of how public agencies, non-profit community organizations, and healthcare providers can leverage public park space to improve health outcomes.

Two key findings from the ParkScore data were that **close-to-home parks are associated with lower obesity rates and improved health in both young people and adults and that staffed programming, such as fitness classes, dramatically increased physical activity. Each additional supervised activity increased park use by 48% and moderate to vigorous physical activity time by 37%.** The report also highlights a program in Columbus, Ohio where doctors prescribe an 11-week fitness program offered free through the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department to patients struggling with obesity and high blood pressure.

Community Background

Henderson is located in Henderson County, Kentucky, in the Evansville, Indiana, metropolitan area. The city's overall population has remained consistent over the past 20 years, around 27,000. Since 2010, household size decreased slightly and the median age increased from 38.3 to 41.4. This trend is consistent with the percentage of residents over 65 increasing, while the percentage of residents under 18 decreased.

Henderson Parks and Recreation facilities serving city residents include:

- 6 neighborhood parks
- 3 community parks
- 1 indoor recreation center
- 6 special use parks
- 3 trails
- 2 cemeteries

1.2 THE MASTER PLANNING PROCESS

This Master Plan acts as a compass for the department and incorporates findings from the four-phase process including:

- Evaluating existing facilities and programs combined with analyzing current trends and benchmarking

- Engaging with a steering committee, community stakeholders, staff, and the public (open house and booth at Christmas Tree Lighting, web-based and handout survey, and stakeholder meetings)
- Visioning sessions
- Reviewing recommendations and strategy prioritization

1.3 HOW TO READ THE MASTER PLAN



The **EVALUATE** phase is summarized in Chapter 2 and provides a baseline understanding of the existing conditions of Henderson's recreation facilities and programs. The chapter includes an evaluation of the make-up of the population and the levels of service in the community. Additionally, Chapter 2 includes trends and benchmarking analysis which reveals how Henderson measures up to nearby communities of similar make up and to national recreation trends. Contents include:

- Parkland and facility inventory & analysis
- Program analysis
- Benchmark comparisons of similar agencies
- Geographic park and facility service area mapping
- Trends in parks and recreation





The **ENGAGE** phase is summarized in Chapter 3 and ultimately leads the discussions throughout the rest of the Master Plan. Identifying what the community desires is essential to determine and prioritize the future of the parks, recreation facilities, and special events/programming.

- Open house workshop and engagement events
- Web/handout surveys
- Stakeholder group meetings



The **ENVISION** phase is driven by the visioning sessions and meetings with the steering committee and can be found in Chapter 4. Findings from the evaluate and engage phase were reviewed and used to produce a new vision, mission, values, goals, and objectives for the department.

- Visioning sessions with the steering committee
- Needs, standards, & guidelines for parks and recreation
- Facility needs analysis & level of service standards



The **PLAN** phase combines all the information gathered throughout the first three phases of the planning process and formulates operational and capital – both systemwide and individual park related – recommendations to meet

the goals for the future. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 discuss these topics at length and help provide direction for the city for the next 5-10 years. Chapter 5 presents recommendations for programs, facilities, and operations. Chapter 6 outlines the trails plan, and Chapter 7 presents the action plan that can be used as a checklist for implementation.

- Systemwide recommendations
- Individual park recommendations
- Trail recommendations
- Capital improvements and estimated costs
- Operational and programming recommendations
- Action plan

1.4 HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

The action plan is a living document that will act as a guide over the next 10 years for Henderson and should be revisited annually to measure progress. The recommendations found in the latter half of the plan include capital and operational improvements that prioritize systemwide, departmental, and individual park enhancements. Upon acceptance of this plan, the action plan provided in Chapter 7 will begin to guide and bring to life the needs and desires of Henderson Parks and Recreation and the community.

Assign responsibility

Where to find more detail in the document

ACTION PLAN - TURNING THE PAGE ON PARKS AND RECREATION IN HENDERSON							
Legend of Abbreviations/Organizations							
Parks = Henderson Parks & Recreation				OP = Parks and Recreation Operating Budget			
City = City Commission, Other City Departments				CIP = Capital Improvement Budget			
Partners = Other Organizations (county/state, private agencies, schools, state/federal grants, etc.)				Revenue = Items that Generate Additional Revenue			
PAGES	Related Goals	Timeframe (Years)	Category	Agency	Funding Source	Section Reference	
		0-2 3-5 6-10					
Page 1: Modern parks and facilities							
Strategy 1.1:	Reference Table 5.1 for park-specific improvement recommendations and ensure that systemwide and non-location-specific improvements are reviewed before initiating new development or follow-up planning studies	AG	Ongoing	Capital	Parks	CIP	5.8
Strategy 1.2:	Assess all estimated costs in Table 5.1 [expressed in 2025 dollars] for potential escalation at the time of actual development	AG	Ongoing	Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.8
Strategy 1.3:	Complete redevelopment of Anthony Brooks Park, including a splash pad, playground, picnic shelter, and restroom building	GE	✓	Capital	Parks	CIP	5.4.2, 5.7.2
Strategy 1.4:	Build multipurpose covered courts at Newman Park for basketball and other program uses	GE	✓	Capital	Parks	CIP	5.4.3
Strategy 1.5:	Improve turf of the multipurpose/soccer fields in Newman Park	E	✓	Capital/Operations	Parks	CIP/OP	5.4.3
Strategy 1.6:	Install playground and perimeter trail at the Henderson Sports Complex	GE	✓	Capital	Parks	CIP	5.4.4
Strategy 1.7:	Develop Veterans Memorial Park with a memorial plaza and open space for events	AGE	✓	Capital	Parks	CIP/Partners	5.4.5, 5.7.2
Strategy 1.8:	Increase access to sports fields and courts for informal use (e.g., Newman Park, Red Banks Park, Hays Park)	A	✓	Capital/Policy	Parks	CIP/OP	5.3.5
Strategy 1.9:	Implement a playground improvement and replacement program to upgrade existing playgrounds and add new ones in underserved areas • Apply inclusive playground design principles for accessibility • Incorporate nature play elements in passive/natural settings • Engage neighborhoods in design process for new playgrounds • Consider community build programs for stronger resident connection	AGE	✓	Capital/Planning	Parks	CIP	5.3.4
Strategy 1.10:	Develop large amphitheater downtown at the future Veterans Memorial Park	GE	✓	Capital	Parks	CIP/Partners	5.3.8, 5.7.2

Identify action based on priority and timeframe

Goals addressed by each strategy

Locate funding type

1.5 RELATED PLANNING EFFORTS

This 2026 Parks, Recreation, and Trails Master Plan will be Henderson's first comprehensive parks plan, so background information and potential recommendations will be incorporated from related planning efforts completed by the city and partner agencies. These include the Henderson Vision Plan (2015), Henderson City-County Comprehensive Plan, Henderson Downtown Master Plan (2019), US41 Corridor Plan (2022), Greater Henderson Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (2014), Evansville Regional Trails Master Plan (2025), and Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP 2050). Summaries of these and other planning efforts are provided in Appendix D.

FINAL
DRAFT



COMMUNITY BACKGROUND & NEEDS ASSESSMENT

2

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The Community Background & Needs Assessment chapter reviews the existing conditions of parks and recreation in Henderson. This chapter includes detailed analysis of the following:

- Population demographics
- Inventory of existing parks, facilities, and programs
- Benchmarking against other agencies
- Service areas of parks and facilities
- Trends in parks and recreation

The data and information presented in this chapter provides the context needed to understand existing and potential future needs of the community. The data compiled in this chapter will assist in understanding and interpreting community preferences and recreation needs summarized in Chapter 3.

2.2 POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Needs and preferences vary between demographic groups and change over time. The percentage of the total population these demographic groups represent also changes over time. Exploring Henderson's demographic trends and characteristics helps identify current and potentially future demand for parks and recreation services in the community. The data for this demographic analysis was gathered from the US Census Bureau and Esri Forecasts. Tables with the underlying data are included in Appendix B.

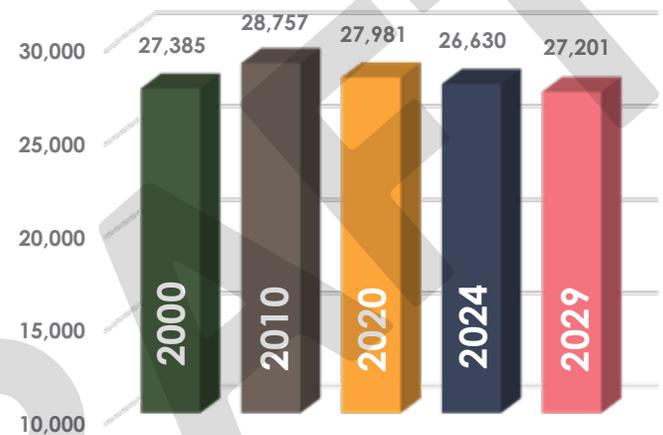
2.2.1 POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLDS

Figure 2.1 illustrates the forecasted population change in Henderson from 2000 to 2029.¹ The figure shows that

¹ U. S. Census Bureau, ESRI 2024 Forecasts

Henderson's population is expected to remain roughly the same but has decreased slightly since 2020 and is expected to continue to decline slowly in the future. Changes in the local economy and development patterns could reverse this trend.

Figure 2.1: Population Change in Henderson



Henderson had approximately 11,845 households in 2024 with an average household size 2.25, lower than the national, state, and county averages. Like the comparisons, Henderson's average household size has decreased slightly since 2020. Henderson's average household size may be heavily influenced by the types of new development and the character of any annexed areas. Although parks and recreation facilities and programs are used by all, smaller household sizes, combined with increasing ages, suggest a greater demand for social community activities.



Figure 2.2: Average Household Size

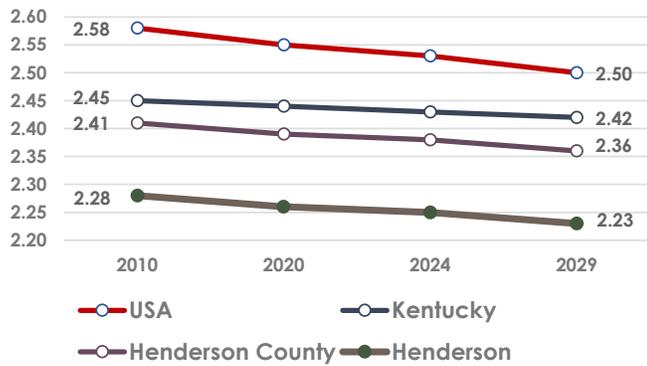
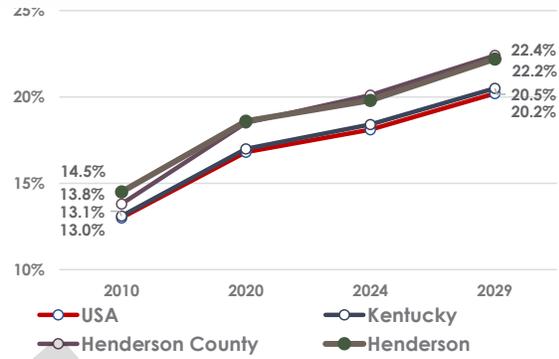


Figure 2.3: Population Age 65 and Older

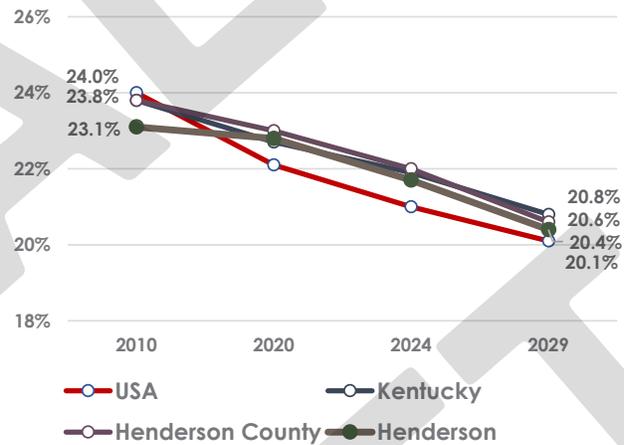


2.2.2 AGE

Because many facilities and programs are targeted to specific age groups, it is important to understand changes to Henderson's age composition. For example, the senior population will have different preferences than those under 18. Understanding how different age groups are growing or shrinking as a percentage of total population will be an important factor in decision making around investments in parks and recreation programs and facilities.

Like the state and the nation, **Henderson's median age has been increasing** and will reach 41.4 by 2029, compared to 38.3 in 2010. Similarly, the senior population (age 65+) is increasing in Henderson and all other geographic levels, while the youth population is decreasing. **Both the city and the county have more residents over 65 and fewer residents under 18 than the rest of the country.** These trends are expected to continue to grow in Henderson over the next 10 years, leading to increasing demands for senior services and potentially reduced demands for youth programming participation, including youth sports.

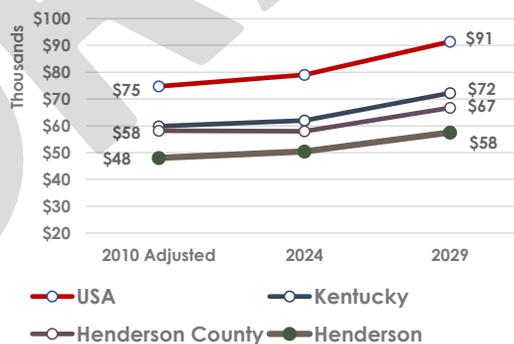
Figure 2.4: Population Under Age 18



2.2.3 INCOME AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The median household income values presented in Figure 2.5 show that **Henderson households earn considerably less than the rest of Henderson County, Kentucky, and the nation.** Henderson's median household income has increased slightly from 2010 to 2024, even after adjusting for inflation (2010 Adjusted vs. 2024). These income levels indicate that Henderson residents are more likely to rely on city services rather than private amenities.

Figure 2.5: Household Income

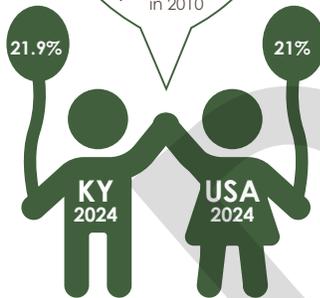


19.8%
Seniors
in 2024
Henderson



21.7%
Youth population
of Henderson in 2024

↓ Down from
23.1%
in 2010



Similar to than KY & USA

Figure 2.6 shows that the percentage of children living below the poverty line in Henderson increased slightly from

2010 to 2023, while all other geographies declined. The city was already considerably higher than in the county, state, and nation. These numbers show that it will continue to be important to keep programs affordable to Henderson residents, especially youth programming.

Figure 2.6: Child Poverty

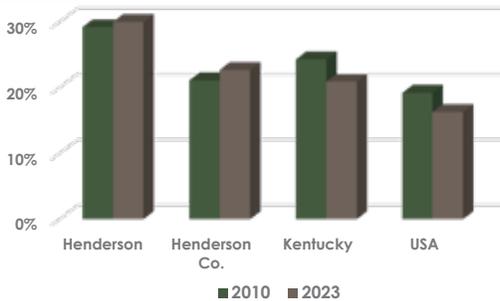
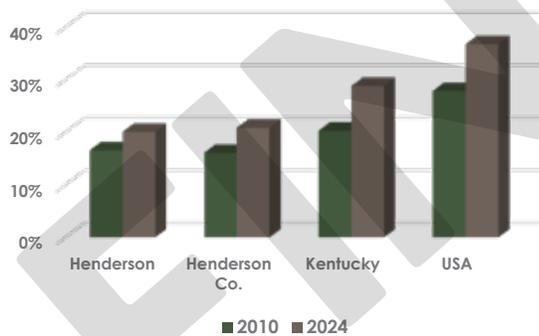


Figure 2.7 shows that educational attainment increased at all geographic levels between 2010 and 2024. The numbers also show that Henderson has much lower levels of educational attainment than the rest of Kentucky and the country.

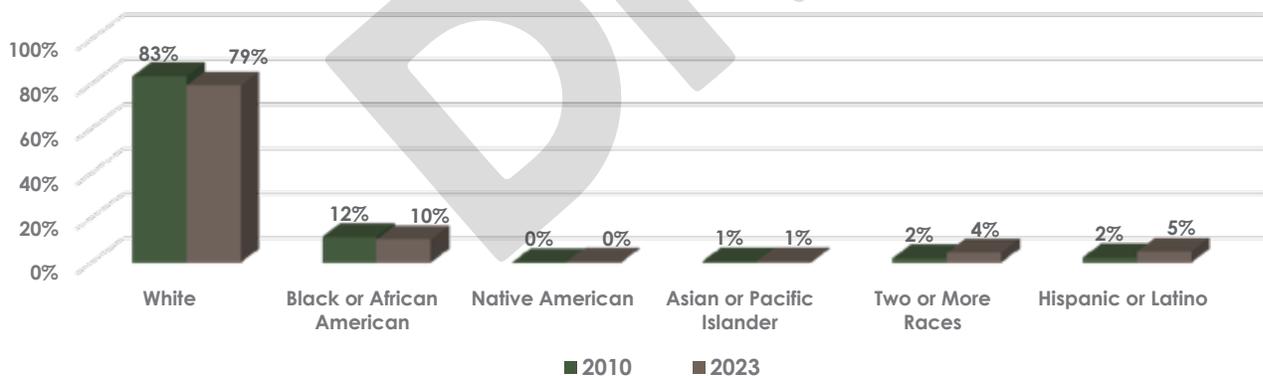
Figure 2.7: Bachelor's Degree or Higher (Age 25 and Over)



2.2.4 POPULATION DIVERSITY

The majority (79%) of Henderson's residents identify as white, which represents a small decrease from 2010 (Figure 2.8). Residents who identify as Black or African American make up the next largest demographic group (10%), down slightly from 2010. The city's Hispanic population increased from 2% to 5% from 2010 to 2023. As the city's population grows and its racial makeup changes, Parks and Recreation should monitor these trends and adjust programs accordingly.

Figure 2.8: Population Percentages by Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin



2.2.5 CONCLUSION

Henderson's population has been decreasing slowly; however, this trend could easily reverse with some economic development wins for the city and or the county. The population is becoming older with a higher percentage of residents over the age of 65. This trend is expected to continue. The Parks and Recreation Department should continue to monitor demographic trends and update program offerings as needed.

2.3 INVENTORY OF PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES IN HENDERSON

The facilities inventory in this chapter identifies each park by its classification and lists specific amenities it provides. Table 2.1 defines each park category by its typical size and service area, population served, typical facilities and number of features offered, and desirable characteristics. Categories and descriptions are adapted to meet the specific needs of the Henderson system from "Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines," by the National Recreation and Park Association.

2.3.1 PARK CLASSIFICATIONS

Classification of parks helps to evaluate the overall recreation opportunities available to the public. A park system should be evaluated as a composite of recreation areas and facilities that collectively meet public needs with a combination of smaller neighborhood parks, larger community parks, special use parks, and natural areas, dispersed throughout the community.

2.3.2 HENDERSON PARKS AND RECREATION INVENTORY

The Parks and Recreation Inventory (Table 2.3) provides a summary of all parks and recreation facilities offered by Henderson, with the classification for each property. The Henderson Parks and Trails map (Figure 2.9) shows the location of each of the parks and recreation areas offered by Henderson. The following text provides a summary of these facilities. In addition to the parks and facilities described here, the Parks and Recreation Department operates and maintains Fairmont Cemetery and Fernwood Cemetery. Photos with amenity lists and condition assessments for each park are presented in Appendix A.

Table 2.1: Park Classifications

Park Classification	Typical Size and Service Area	Typical Features/ Facilities	Desirable Characteristics
Local Space			
Mini Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Size: Less than 2 acres of developed parkland; less than 3 total acres 1/2-mile service area 10-minute walk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1-3 features Typical facilities may include playgrounds, small multi-use court area, and benches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often provided in association with school facilities. Some developed as part of residential developments. May also provide open space as needed to serve high density neighborhoods where households have limited yard space.
Neighborhood Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Size: 2-10 acres of developed parkland; 3-15 total acres 1-mile service area 10-minute walk To serve a population up to 5,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2-10 features Suited for intense development Typical facilities include athletic fields, game courts, playgrounds, drinking fountains, picnic areas/shelters, and walking paths. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easily accessible to neighborhood population (safe walking and bike distance). May be developed as park/school facility or in conjunction with service agency facility. May not be needed in areas served locally by larger parks.
Community Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10-30+ acres of developed parkland; 20 or more total acres 2-mile service radius 5-minute drive To serve several neighborhoods with populations up to 20,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11-20 features Typical facilities include all those listed for neighborhood parks, plus swimming pool, field or game court complex, dog park, recreation or community center, etc. May include natural areas for picnicking, walking, etc. May have an active or passive recreation focus or a balance of both. Parks with passive focus will have a higher percentage of undeveloped land. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capable of providing a range of intensive recreational activities or provides one or two activities that attract users from multi-neighborhood areas. May meet neighborhood park needs for users within a 10-minute walk.
Special Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serves community-wide area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area for specialized or single purpose recreational activities such as pocket parks, plazas, major pools, riverfront park areas, golf courses, athletic complexes, indoor facilities, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area should be located to meet the specific needs of the intended use.
Regional Space			
Natural Area/Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A Can be local or regional spaces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Areas of low or limited development. Includes undeveloped areas, urban greenspaces, and small designated natural areas. May include urban greenspaces (mowed and landscaped areas) of any size that are considered developed but have predominantly passive uses. Typical facilities include walking/hiking trails, picnic areas, gardens, and open grass areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes undeveloped properties that may be developed in the future. May also function as small nature parks. Educational opportunities desirable in developed or undeveloped areas.

Table 2.1: Park Classifications (Continued)

Park Classification	Typical Size and Service Area	Typical Features/ Facilities	Desirable Characteristics
Regional Space			
Nature Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Size as needed to protect the resource 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Majority of park to remain in its natural state (less than 20% developed) Facilities should focus on education by use of "nature activities" and should reinforce that philosophy by offering habitat enhancement, trails, nature centers, and interpretive signage. Should also include parking and restrooms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The park should be of sufficient size to protect the natural resource and provide a buffer from offsite conditions. Should include unique natural areas with ecological interest. Typical size should be over 50 acres for management efficiency and to promote ecosystem services.
State Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Size as needed to protect natural resources of State or regional significance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The majority of park to remain in its natural state. The park should be of sufficient size to protect the natural resource and provide a buffer from offsite conditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should include unique natural areas with ecological interest, lakes, or other features of state or regional interest. Serve state-wide area or beyond. Size will vary based on the area required to protect the resource.

2.3.3 PARKS BY OTHERS

Table 2.4 shows nearby parks and recreation areas that may be available to Henderson residents but are not owned or operated by the city. They are owned and maintained by Henderson County Schools, Henderson County, and other organizations. Each of these spaces contributes to the full spectrum of recreational opportunities available to Henderson residents. Their consideration helps to avoid potentially costly and inefficient duplication of services and amenities.

2.3.4 CONCLUSION

Overall, the existing parks are in fair to good condition, mostly in need of minor maintenance and upkeep due to use and age. Several of the city's playgrounds and/or their safety surface need to be replaced. In most parks ADA access is inadequate. In many cases the features themselves may be accessible, but they lack appropriate access or parking. Three of Henderson's largest and well-known parks, Atkinson, Hays, and Community, need significant repairs and upgrades, as well as new master plans and features to position them for the next 10 years and beyond.

Henderson currently does not offer any diamond or multipurpose fields that are available for open play. All fields are controlled by youth sports organizations or SFC (Sports Complex). All field rentals are at the discretion and benefit of the entities managing the fields, not the Parks and Recreation Department.

Specific facilities and features that need immediate attention include:

- Parks maintenance building in Atkinson Park
- Atkinson Park skatepark

- Baseball fields in Atkinson and Hays Parks (excluding the Flash field)
- Anthony Brooks Park playground
- Atkinson Pool

2.4 OPERATIONS & PROGRAMMING

The City of Henderson Parks and Recreation Department's current primary areas of focus include park and facility maintenance, offering and supporting seasonal events, and a limited level of recreational, educational, and instructional programming. The department primarily offers programs at its JFK Community Center. Structured instructional and year-round recreational and sports programs are often offered by other community organizations. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, appointed by the mayor, advises the Parks and Recreation Department on its operations, programs, and services.

However, in 2025, collected results from community surveys, focus groups, and input from organizational leadership, staff and the steering community consistently identified expansion of festivals, events, and recreation programs as the top priorities for the community. The top five programs include:

1. Festival, fairs, community events
2. Concerts and performances
3. Fitness and wellness programs for adults
4. Nature programs
5. Gardening

Other programs of interest also include arts and crafts, gaming, swimming lessons, leagues and team sports, and adaptive recreation.

City sponsored and/or hosted events are offered throughout the year, such as:

- Halloween Bash at Central Park
- Downtown Henderson Trick-or-Treat
- Dia de los Muertos Celebration
- Community Thanksgiving Dinner: Free meal and gathering for residents, often held at the JFK Community Center
- Veterans Day Recognition
- W.C. Handy Blues and Barbecue Festival
- SummerFest, PorchFest
- Sandy Lee Watkins Songwriters Festival
- Bluegrass in the Park Folklife Festival

The 2026 City of Henderson Budget document includes the following goals and objectives for the Parks and Recreation Department:

1. Renovate the Skatepark with new pad and reset concrete skatepark pieces
2. Institute online cemetery search and mapping
3. Maintain and renovate parks infrastructure and facilities
4. Repave park roads and parking lots
5. Renovate Denton Shelter
6. Add ADA pathways to playgrounds
7. Evaluate and renovate one or more of the public restrooms in our parks
8. Provide safe and enjoyable recreational opportunities for the public
9. Add additional days of operation to the Atkinson Pool Swim Season
10. Add additional recreational programming to the department
11. Replace trees lost following the 2025 Ice Storm

2.4.1 FACILITY-BASED PROGRAMS

The city has one recreation community center that provides limited programming to the community. The city owns several athletic fields and supporting amenities, such as concession facilities, lighting, parking lots, and restrooms. The city partners with various community-based youth sports organizations that program, manage, and maintain the athletic fields. Below is a list of city-operated facilities and other facilities where community organizations offer educational and recreational programs. More information is provided in Appendix B.

1. John F. Kennedy (JFK) Community Center
2. Youth Sports Athletic Fields
3. Deaconess Henderson SportsPlex
4. Henderson County Family YMCA
5. Cliff Hagen Boys and Girls Club of Henderson, Fidler Family Unit

6. The Gathering Place
7. Henderson County Parks and Recreation Department
8. John James Audubon State Park

2.4.2 PROGRAM, EVENT, AND FACILITY PARTICIPATION

Below are the participation rates and analysis from 2019-2024, provided by the City of Henderson Parks and Recreation. The result of the analysis focuses on participation trends, program diversity, and site-specific insights. Detailed breakdown of participation is shown in Appendix B.

Overall Participation Summary 2019 - 2024

Total Participants Across All Locations: 424,428

Top 3 Locations by Total Participation:

1. JFK Center 146,601
2. Audubon Mill Park 130,925
3. Downtown Henderson 93,600

2.4.3 BUDGET

The department manages and operates parks, recreation, and cemeteries. In addition, the city golf course is managed and operated by a third party with some funding provided to support the operations. Table 2.2 provides a breakdown of the 2023 – 2026 department budgets.

Table 2.2: Parks Recreation and Cemeteries Budget

Operating Unit	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Proposed
Total Expenses	\$2,177,821	\$2,392,661	\$2,815,490	\$3,471,000
Total Revenue	\$572,175	\$598,236	\$645,627	\$634,000

The SportsPlex is currently administered by the City Manager's Office. The budget supports youth sports services for the community. The facility will be fully operational in fiscal year 2026. Therefore, the operational, performance measurements and metrics will be reviewed and updated as the year progresses.

2.4.4 FEES AND CHARGES

According to city documents, the parks and recreation fees are established by city staff and approved by the Board of Commissioners through formal resolution. All cemetery interments and services are coordinated under the direction of the department, with rules outlined in Chapter 8 of the City Code.

The Parks and Recreation Department manages the city's public spaces and services, including pools, shelters, cemeteries, and recreational programming. Fees for facility rentals (e.g., Denton Shelter, Atkinson Clubhouse), pool use, and other amenities are established by the department based on operational costs, market comparisons, and community access goals. Currently, the department does not have formal and cost recovery policies or plans.

Table 2.3: Parks and Recreation Inventory

Park Name	Park Type	Total		Athletic Fields			Game Courts			Outdoor Facilities					Trails & Passive Facilities					Indoor			Support					Feature Score ⁺	Special Feature/Notes						
		Developed*	Unlined	Small Diamond	Large Diamond	Large Rectangular	Basketball Courts	Tennis Courts	Pickleball Courts	Sand Volleyball Court	Playgrounds	Splash Pads	Swimming Pools	Skateparks	Disc Golf (Holes)	Golf (Holes)	Dog Parks	Paved/Hard Surface (Miles)	Unpaved (Miles)	Boat Launch/Ramp	Amphitheater	Large Shelters	Medium Shelters	Community Center	Recreation Center	Multipurpose Courts/Gym	Meeting Space			Fitness Center	Restroom Buildings	Concessions Buildings	Batting Cages	Gazebos/Small Shelters	Parking (Off-Street)
Henderson Parks and Recreation																																			
Neighborhood Parks																																			
Anthony Brooks Park	Mini	0.8	0.8							1																					1		1.5		
Central Park	Mini/Special Use	3.3	3.3							1																					1		1.5		
East End Park	Mini	0.4	0.4							1	1																1			1		3.0			
Kimmel Park	Neighborhood	2.9	2.9				1			1											1						1					20	3.5		
Sunset Park	Neighborhood	7.5	7.5							1	1							2									1					57	4.5		
WC Handy Park	Neighborhood	2.6	2.6				2			1											1	1	1	1	1	1					23	7.0	includes JFK Center		
Subtotal - Neighborhood Parks		17.4	17.4	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	6	2	0	0	0	0	0.0	0.0	2	0	0	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	0	0	3	100	21.0	
Community Parks																																			
Atkinson Park	Community	101.7	78.8						1	1		1	1	38							1					3		1			9		17.2	trail included in Riverwalk	
Community Park	Community	16.0	16.0	1			1		6	1					1						1						1			5	92	14.0			
Newman Park	Community	132.1	41.6	4		4				1						0.4	2.4				1						1					571	14.5		
Subtotal - Community Parks		249.9	136.5	5	0	4	1	0	6	1	3	0	1	38	0	1	0.4	2.4	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	3	0	3	0	0	14	663	45.7		
Special Use Parks																																			
Audubon Mill Park	Riverfront	3.1	3.1								1																						1.0		
Doc Hosbach Tennis Complex	Tennis Complex	1.7	1.7					12																			1	1		1	14	13.0			
Hays Park	Field Complex	24.5	24.5	1	2													1									1	1	1	1	160	5.5	adjacent to Atkinson Park		
Henderson Sports Complex	Field Complex	61.1	61.1	4		3																					2	2	6				11.0		
Red Banks Park	Riverfront	5.5	5.5												1																	12	1.0		
The Bridges Golf Course	Golf Course	164.7	164.7						4																1							180	7.0		
Subtotal - Special Use Parks		260.6	260.6	5	2	3	0	12	4	0	0	1	0	0	18	1	0.0	0.0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4	4	7	2	366	38.5		
Total - Parks and Recreation		527.9	414.5	10	2	7	4	12	10	1	9	3	1	38	18	2	0.4	2.4	3	0	2	3	1	1	1	5	1	10	4	7	19	1129	105.2		
Cemeteries/Other																																			
Farimont Cemetery	Cemetery	30.7	30.7																														0.0		
Fernwood Cemetery	Cemetery	38.9	38.9																															0.0	
Merril Trail	Shared-Use Path	N/A	N/A														1.1																	4.4	
Riverwalk	Walking Path	15.9	2.6														2.5																	9.9	
Subtotal - Special Use Parks		85.5	72.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3.6	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14.3	
Total - Parks and Other Properties		613.4	486.7	10	2	7	4	12	10	1	9	3	1	38	18	2	4.0	2.4	3	0	2	3	1	1	1	5	1	10	4	7	19	1,129	119.6		

*Developed acreage measured in ArcGIS, UL=Unlined, +Feature score is an adjusted count of features in the park

Figure 2.9: Existing Parks and Trails

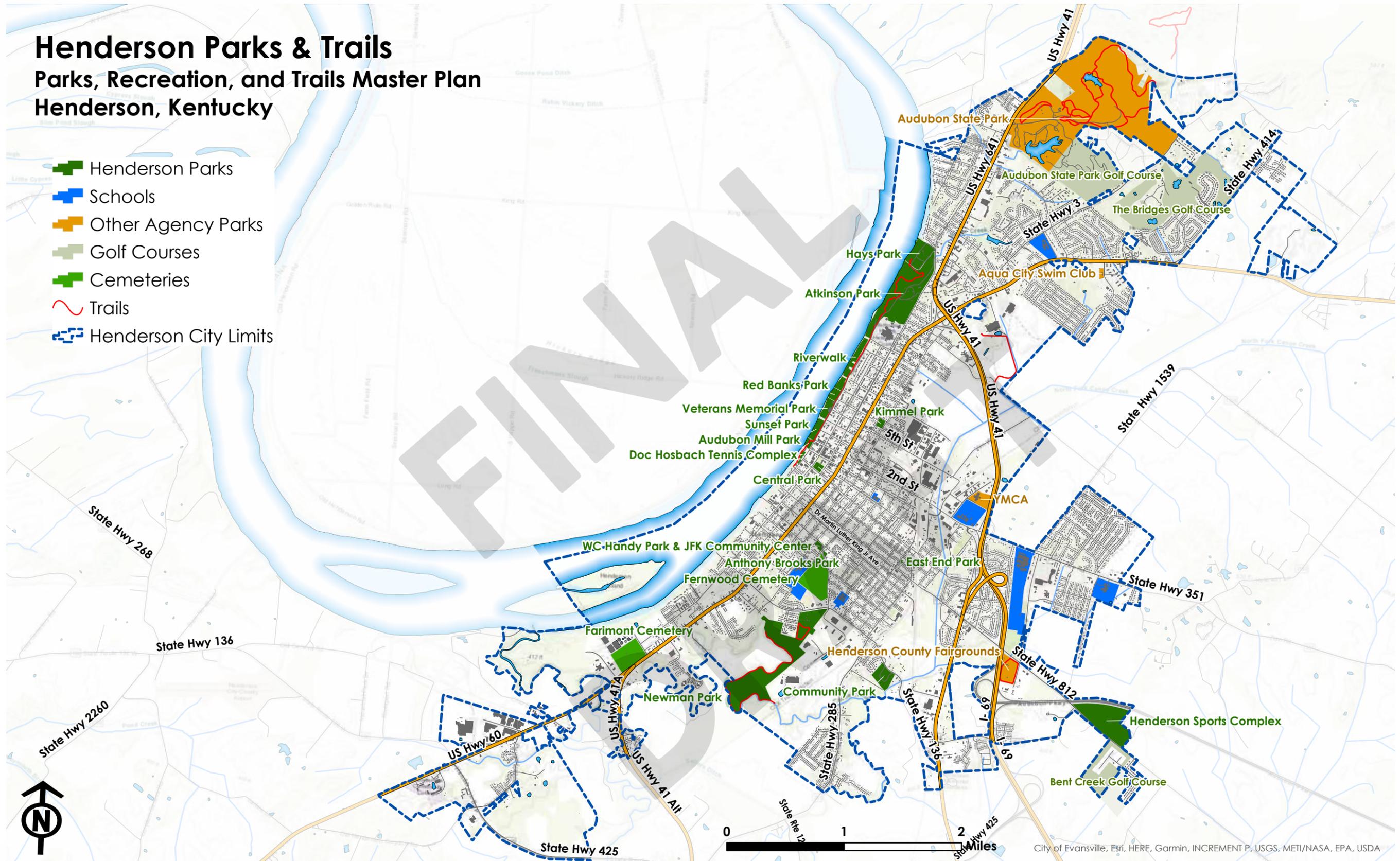


Table 2.4: Parks by Others

Facility Name	Agency	Athletic Fields			Game Courts			Outdoor Facilities			Trails & Passive Facilities						Indoor						Support						Special Feature/Notes
		Small Diamond	Small Rectangular	Large Rectangular	Basketball Courts	Tennis Courts	Pickleball Courts	Playgrounds	Swimming Pools	Golf (Holes)	Paved/Hard Surface (Miles)	Unpaved (Miles)	Boat Launch/Ramp	Large Shelters	Medium Shelters	Recreation Center	Aquatic Center	Multipurpose Courts/Gym	Meeting Space	Fitness Center	Restroom Buildings	Concessions Buildings	Batting Cages	Gazebos/Small Shelters	Parking (Off-Street)	Feature Score*			
School Parks																													
Jefferson Elementary School	Henderson County Schools						1																						
South Heights Elementary School	Henderson County Schools				2																								
East Heights Elementary School	Henderson County Schools				3																								
Bend Gate Elementary School	Henderson County Schools				0.5																								
South Middle School	Henderson County Schools		2																										
Central Academy	Henderson County Schools		1		1																								
North Middle School	Henderson County Schools		1		1																								
Henderson County High School	Henderson County Schools		4		12																								
Subtotal - School Parks																													
Parks by Others in Henderson																													
Henderson County Fairgrounds	Henderson County	2			1		1																						
Audubon State Park	Commonwealth of Kentucky				4		4		9	0.9	6.7	1	1	3															
Subtotal - Parks by Others in Henderson																													
Private/Non-Profit Parks and Facilities in Henderson																													
Bent Creek Golf Course	Bent Creek Golf Course								9																				
Henderson County Family YMCA	YMCA	1																											
Subtotal - Private/Non-Profit Parks and Facilities in Henderson																													
Parks by Others Near Henderson																													
Henderson Country Club	Henderson Country Club								2																				
Aqua City Swim Club	Aqua City Swim Club																												
Subtotal - Parks by Others Near Henderson																													
Total - Other Parks																													
		2	7	5	8	14	4	10	4	36	1.5	6.7	1	1	4	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	

The Parks and Recreation Board, a volunteer advisory group appointed by the mayor, also provides input and recommendations to staff. For certain facilities, such as the swimming pool, fees are explicitly governed by Section 17-3 of the City Code, which states that rates are “established from time to time by resolution of the Board of Commissioners.” This implies that any new or adjusted fees especially those with broader fiscal or policy implications, must be formally adopted by the City Commission via resolution. Current fees are provided in Appendix B.

2.4.5 ONLINE REGISTRATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE SYSTEM

The department currently does not utilize online registration or data management software programs. Any rentals, reservations or program registrations must be completed manually and in-person or via telephone.

2.4.6 CONCLUSION

The City of Henderson's Parks and Recreation Department demonstrates consistent growth in community engagement, program diversity, and fiscal stewardship. From 2019-2024 the department recorded approximately 425,000 visits/participation in programs, events, and facilities. Most city programs offered are based at the JFK Community Center. Community events are hosted or offered by the city at various locations in the city. The department is well-positioned to deliver high-quality, inclusive recreation services and maintain fiscal discipline while scaling operations and programs based on staffing capacity, community priorities, and funding.

2.5 BENCHMARKING COMPARISONS

One method for evaluating parks and recreation services offered in a community is to use benchmark comparisons to other communities. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Park Metrics program provides a variety of data for use in benchmarking. The following analysis uses data from 30 agencies located in Kentucky, Indiana, Ohio, and Tennessee (serving populations between 10,000 and 40,000) that participated in the Park Metrics program (see Appendix B for a list of agencies). Additionally, NRPA provides an annual report² which includes national performance benchmarks; these figures are also used in this evaluation process.

Totals for Henderson were calculated based on information provided by the city. Because the data for other park systems was limited to parks and facilities managed by those agencies, only parks and facilities managed by Henderson are included in this analysis (other agencies, schools, and private facilities were not included). The data used in this analysis for Henderson are actual numbers for fiscal year 2024. Table 2.5 presents the data specific to Henderson used in the analysis.

Table 2.5: Henderson Parks and Recreation Agency Data

Data	Henderson	Source/Notes
City Values		
Total SQMI	15.0	GIS
Total Acres	9,600	GIS
Population	27,630	Esri
Department Values		
# of Parks	15	Park Metrics
Total Park Acres	613.4	2025 Budget (CAS 2023)
Developed Acres	486.7	GIS
Trail Miles	6.4	Inventory
Parks & Rec OP Budget	\$2,455,212	2025 Budget (2024 Adj)
Parks & Rec Revenue	\$371,952	Department Records
Parks & Rec Capital Budget*	\$81,750	Department Records
Full Time Staff	19	Department Records
FTE Staff	23.3	Department Records
* 4-year average (2022-2025)		

2.5.1 AGENCY OPERATIONS AND BUDGET

Table 2.6 shows various measures of parks and recreation operations in Henderson.³ The table also shows the median values for the 30 benchmark agencies and the national benchmark provided by the 2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review.

Parkland

Henderson's 222.0 acres of parkland per 10,000 population is considerably more than the benchmark numbers (196.7 without cemeteries). Henderson also has slightly more parks per 10,000 population (5.4 compared to 4.6). How Henderson delineates parks, particularly along the river, may inflate the number of individual parks compared to the benchmarks.

As a percentage of total land in the city, Henderson is also above the benchmark, thanks to large parks such as Atkinson, Newman, and the Bridges Golf Course. Henderson has a similar percentage of developed parkland to the benchmark agencies.

Trails

Henderson maintains 6.4 miles of trails (4.0 paved and 2.4 unpaved), which is equal to 2.3 miles per 10,000 populations, similar to the benchmark median. The interest in trails expressed through the various engagement activities (Chapter 3) indicate that more are needed.

Operational Budget

The Henderson Parks and Recreation operating expenditures per capita are lower than the benchmark at \$89, compared to \$96. When cemeteries are excluded, they are much lower at \$68. **Operating expenditures per developed acre are considerably lower than the benchmarks and are only \$3,482 when cemeteries are excluded (compared to \$12,250).** Henderson's lower spending is likely because it provides fewer programs than benchmark agencies.

² National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), "2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review"

³ The benchmark data does not indicate whether park maintenance is included.

Table 2.6: Agency Operations and Budget

Benchmark	Henderson	Benchmark	National
Parkland Information			
Acreage of Parkland per 10,000 Pop.	222.0	95.3	106
Parks per 10,000 Pop.	5.4	4.6	N/A
Parkland as a % of Jurisdiction	6.4%	3.0%	N/A
Percent of Acreage Developed	79%	72%	N/A
Trails			
Trail Miles per Jurisdiction Sq. Mi.	0.4	0.4	N/A
Trail Miles per 10,000 Pop.	2.3	2.6	N/A
Operating Budget			
Cost Recovery	15%	16%	21%
Operating Expenditures per Capita	\$89	\$96	\$99
Operating Expenditures per Acre	\$4,003	\$8,153	\$8,620
Operating Exp. per Developed Acre	\$5,045	\$12,250	N/A
Earned Revenue per Capita	\$13	\$13	\$23
Operating Exp. as % of Juris. Budget	2.0%	7.3%	N/A
Staffing			
FTE per 10,000 Population	8.4	7.7	8.9
Acres of Parkland per FTE	26.3	14.5	N/A
Developed Acres of Parkland per FTE	20.9	6.5	N/A
Operating Expenditures per FTE	\$105,374	\$101,629	\$110,912
Capital Budget			
Capital Expenditures per Capita	\$3	\$12	N/A

1. See Table 2.4 for Henderson data sources

2. National medians obtained from NRPA 2024 Annual Report

The department's revenue per capita and cost recovery are similar to the benchmark but only because the cemeteries are included. Cemetery operations are not likely typical of the benchmark agencies and make up 81% of the department's revenue. **Without cemetery revenue, cost recovery is only 2%, compared to the benchmark of 16%.** The department's other revenues are quite small, because of the limited number of programs and rental facilities.

Another area where Henderson Parks and Recreation Department's operating expenses appear lower than the benchmark is as a percentage of the city's overall budget. Parks and Recreation only represents about 2.0% of the city budget, while the median for the benchmark agencies is 7.3%. This difference, like the others, is likely related to the minimal program offerings by the department and the financial agreements the city has with the youth sports organizations.

Staffing

On a per population basis, Henderson employs slightly more staff than the benchmarks with 8.4 FTEs per 10,000 population, compared to 7.7 for the benchmarks. The slightly higher level of staffing is due to the staff dedicated to the cemetery and the pool. Only 43% of the benchmark agencies operate a pool. Without the pools and cemeteries, Parks and Recreation employs only 5.6 FTEs per 10,000 population.

⁴ The new sports complex was developed outside of the Parks and Recreation capital budget and is currently not part of the Parks and Recreation Department. Capital expenses for that project are not included.

Capital Budget

At the time of this writing, Henderson's did not have a 5-year capital budget. Henderson Parks and Recreation has only spent an average of \$81,750 annually on capital expenses for the last four years or \$3 per capita. This expenditure was considerably less than the \$12 per capita median of benchmark agencies.⁴

2.5.2 PROGRAMS

As indicated in Table 2.7 Henderson Parks and Recreation does not offer many of the programs offered by other agencies. Several partner agencies offer programs in Henderson, such as team and individual sports, social recreational events, trips and tours, and senior programs.

Table 2.7: Programs Benchmarking

Programs	Henderson	Benchmark	National
Activities			
Themed special events	✓	89%	89%
Team sports	✓	86%	86%
Social recreation events	✓	86%	88%
Health and wellness education		79%	80%
Fitness enhancement classes	✓	61%	82%
Individual sports	✓	61%	76%
Safety training		54%	70%
Racquet sports	✓	54%	73%
Running/cycling races		50%	53%
Aquatics	✓	50%	68%
Cultural crafts		50%	63%
Natural and cultural history activities		50%	66%
Visual arts		46%	63%
Performing arts		43%	62%
Trips and tours	✓	43%	62%
Martial arts		36%	56%
Golf		29%	49%
eSports/eGaming		21%	26%
Out-of-School Time (OST) Activities			
Summer camp	✓	75%	82%
Specific senior programs	✓	64%	78%
Specific teen programs		54%	67%
Programs for people with disabilities		43%	66%
STEM Programs		36%	57%
After school programs	✓	18%	52%
Preschool		18%	34%
Before school programs		14%	19%
Full daycare		4%	7%

The table also shows the percentage of benchmark agencies that offer each type of program, separated into two groups: "activities," which cover programs intended for all users, and "out-of-school-time activities" (OST), which include programs for specific user groups (children, seniors, etc.).

Based on this table, Henderson should consider adding many types of programs including health and wellness, teen, and STEM programs and visual and performing arts. The department may want to evaluate some programs offered by partners to determine if they are meeting all of the community's needs.

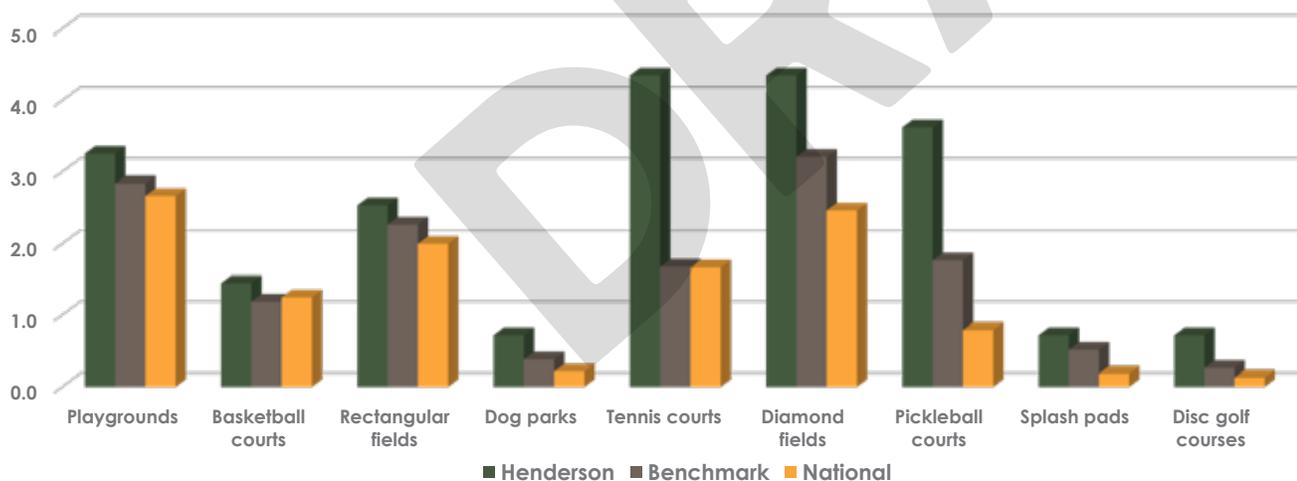
2.5.3 FACILITIES

Looking at population served per facility, as shown in Table 2.8, can help identify facilities that Henderson may want to add in the future or potentially see where the city may have a surplus. A lower population per facility value indicates a higher level of service. The table also shows the percentage of benchmark agencies that offer the facilities. Figure 2.10 displays the same information, but as facilities per 10,000 population. This version allows for a more direct visual comparison of each type of facility Henderson offers compared to the benchmark agencies.

Table 2.8: Population Per Facility

Facilities	Henderson		Benchmark		National	
	Offered	Pop. per	% Offered	Pop. Per	% Offered	Pop. per
Outdoor Activity Areas						
Playgrounds	✓	3,070	96%	3,521	93%	3,750
Basketball courts	✓	6,908	93%	8,409	84%	8,000
Tennis courts (outdoor only)	✓	2,303	61%	5,960	72%	6,003
Pickleball courts	✓	2,763	61%	5,667	42%	12,597
Dog parks	✓	13,815	54%	26,000	68%	46,917
Community gardens		N/A	46%	19,275	52%	34,105
Skate parks	✓	27,630	46%	29,000	46%	54,750
Swimming pools (outdoor only)	✓	27,630	43%	16,000	49%	45,519
Diamond fields (baseball/softball)	✓	2,303	36%	3,113	85%	4,063
Performance amphitheaters		N/A	36%	27,000	40%	69,604
Rectangular fields (multipurpose)	✓	3,947	29%	4,425	83%	5,000
Splash pads	✓	13,815	21%	19,240	23%	54,010
Disc golf courses	✓	13,815	11%	38,030	20%	76,780
Indoor Activity Areas						
Recreation centers	✓	27,630	39%	18,064	62%	32,786
Senior centers	✓	27,630	39%	24,240	40%	62,201
Indoor competitive swimming pool		N/A	14%	15,870	22%	66,880
Teen centers		N/A	7%	26,753	12%	58,712
Nature centers		N/A	4%	16,500	34%	133,773

Figure 2.10: Facilities Per 10,000 Population



Henderson offers considerably more tennis courts, pickleball courts, and diamond fields than the benchmarks. Additionally, there are several facilities that Henderson does not offer that are offered by many of the benchmarks, including community gardens and an amphitheater.

2.6 GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF PARKS AND RECREATION AREAS

The spatial distribution of parks throughout Henderson is important to consider because residents are better able and more likely to utilize facilities that are close to their homes. The methodology for this analysis (and the facility analysis) can be found in Appendix B. Of note, these service areas do not necessarily represent all users of the parks; after all, some users may be more willing to travel greater distances than those defined in the figures below. However, the most frequent users generally live within the areas indicated and usage rates tend to decline sharply in relation to travel times.

A 10-minute walking distance represents about a half mile range and is a commonly used measurement for the walkability of an area. Most residents can easily travel this distance without using a car. The Trust for Public Land, NRPA, and the Urban Land Institute have all joined forces to develop the “10-Minute Walk Campaign” which strives for healthy, walkable communities and easy access to greenspace for everyone in the country. As part of their multi-pronged campaign, cities all over the U.S. are committed to ensuring that by 2050 all residents will have access to a park within a 10-minute walk of their home.⁵

2.6.1 PARK SERVICE AREAS

Figure 2.11 shows areas in Henderson within 10-minute walking distance to a neighborhood or community park. Approximately **41% of Henderson residents live within a 10-minute walk to a neighborhood park, community park, or a school with a playground.** Figure 2.11 shows 5- and 10-minute drivetime areas to community parks. This figure demonstrates that most of the city is within a 5-minute drive and nearly all of the city if within a 10-minute drive to a larger park.

The service area analysis also examined the population within a 10-minute walk and 5-minute drive of each of Henderson’s parks (Table 2.9). For the 10-minute walk areas, the analysis also included the population under 15 and 55 and older. This analysis can help inform the types of features and programs the city may want to consider for these parks over the next 10 years.

East End Park is accessible by the largest number of residents within a 10-minute walk, while Central Park serves the most residents within a 5-minute drive (about 38% of the population). East End Park also serves the largest number of

residents under the age of 15, which validates the current park features, which appeal to younger children living nearby. No residents live within a 10-minute walk of the Sports Complex; however, this facility and its features support activities that residents would be more willing to travel farther to experience.

Table 2.9: Population Estimate and Characteristics Near Parks (2024)

Park Name	10-Minute Walk			5-Minute Drive
	Total	Under 15 Years	55+ Years	
Anthony Brooks Park	2,012	418	608	10,004
Atkinson Park	873	147	346	8,146
Audubon Mill Park	770	163	220	8,340
Central Park	1,622	337	475	10,484
Community Park	283	55	70	9,244
Doc Hosbach Tennis Center	764	158	228	8,756
East End Park	2,564	538	708	10,030
Hays Park	834	128	295	7,037
Kimmel Park	1,549	297	544	10,317
Newman Park	552	114	149	9,678
Red Banks Park	630	122	222	6,902
Riverwalk	661	121	297	7,619
Sunset Park	464	95	144	7,340
WC Handy Park (JFK Community Center)	2,318	482	707	10,402
Henderson Sports Complex	0	0	0	1,866
The Bridges Golf Course	277	53	90	2,919

Source: Esri forecasts for 2024

2.6.2 FACILITY SERVICE AREAS

This analysis evaluates the distribution of recreation facilities provided to Henderson residents, including some offered by others. Service areas for various key facilities are illustrated in Figures 2.11 through 2.17. As with the geographic distribution of parks, 10-minute walk times and 5- and 10-minute drivetimes are used for defining service areas.

Larger and unique facilities are intended to serve greater populations; residents are typically willing to travel longer distances to access these amenities. In contrast, smaller and more common facilities usually serve more localized (smaller) populations and are more often within walking distance. Appendix B describes the methodology and includes maps of additional facilities.

⁵ <https://10minutewalk.org/>

Figure 2.11: Neighborhood Park Service Areas

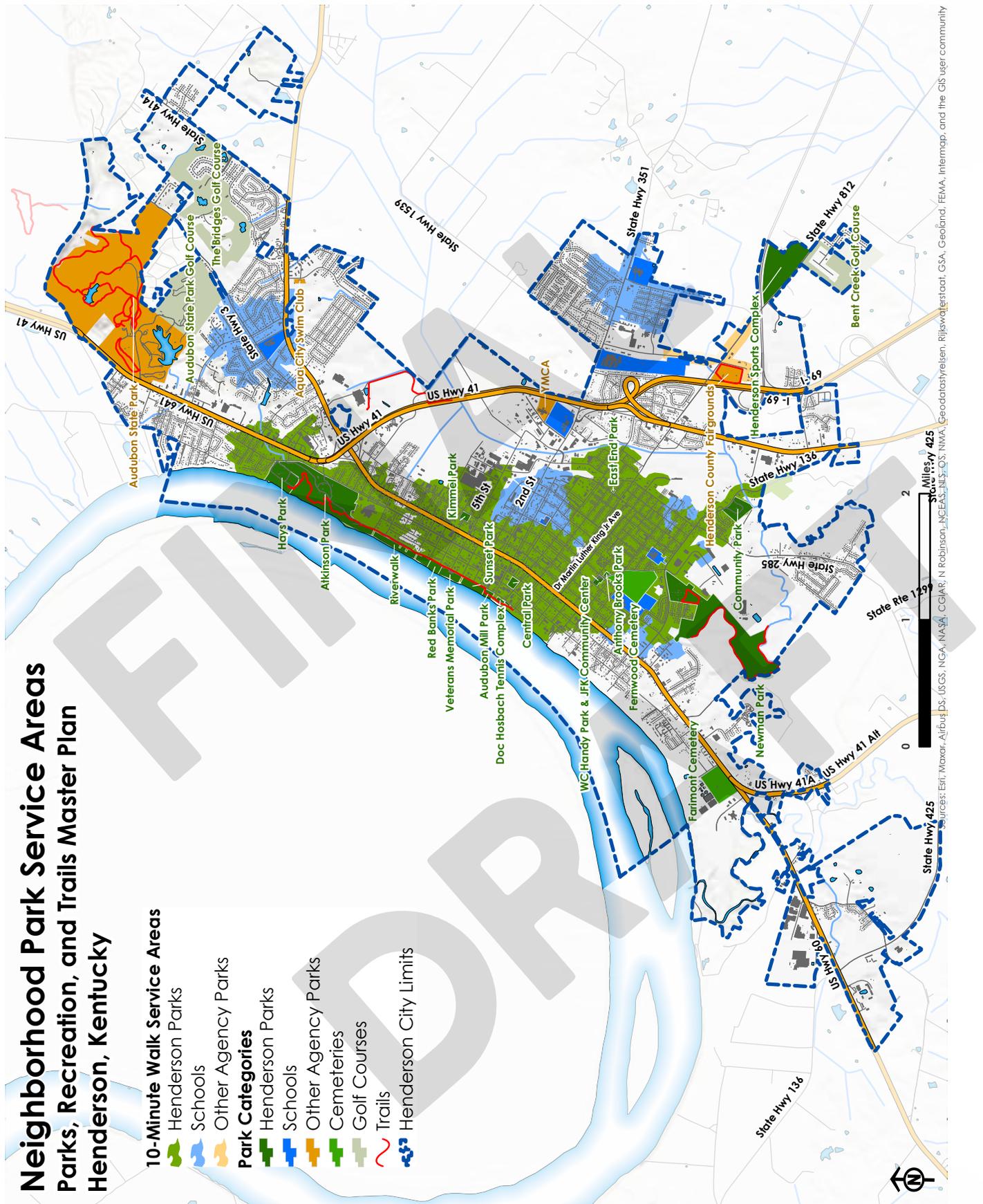


Figure 2.16: Trail Service Areas

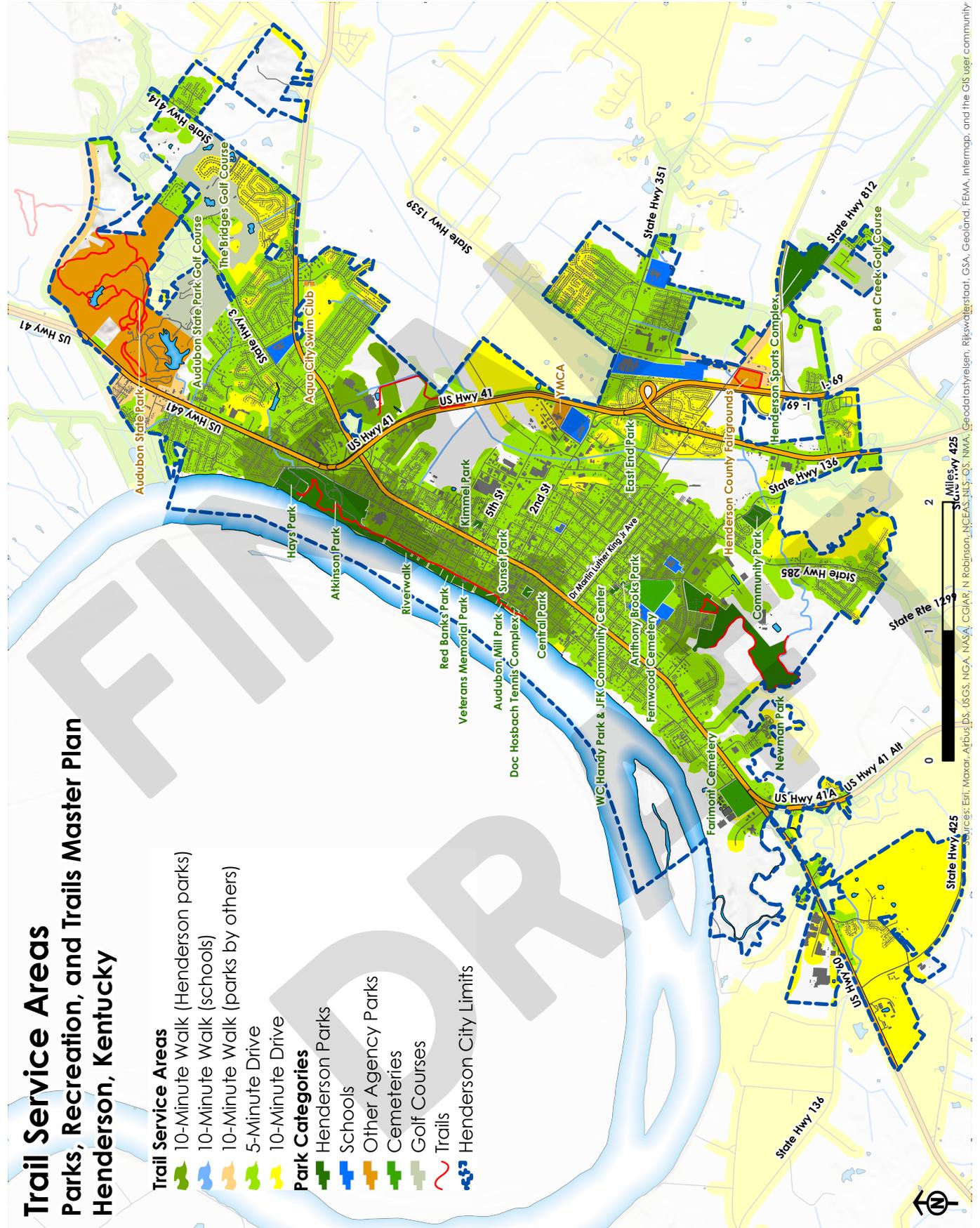
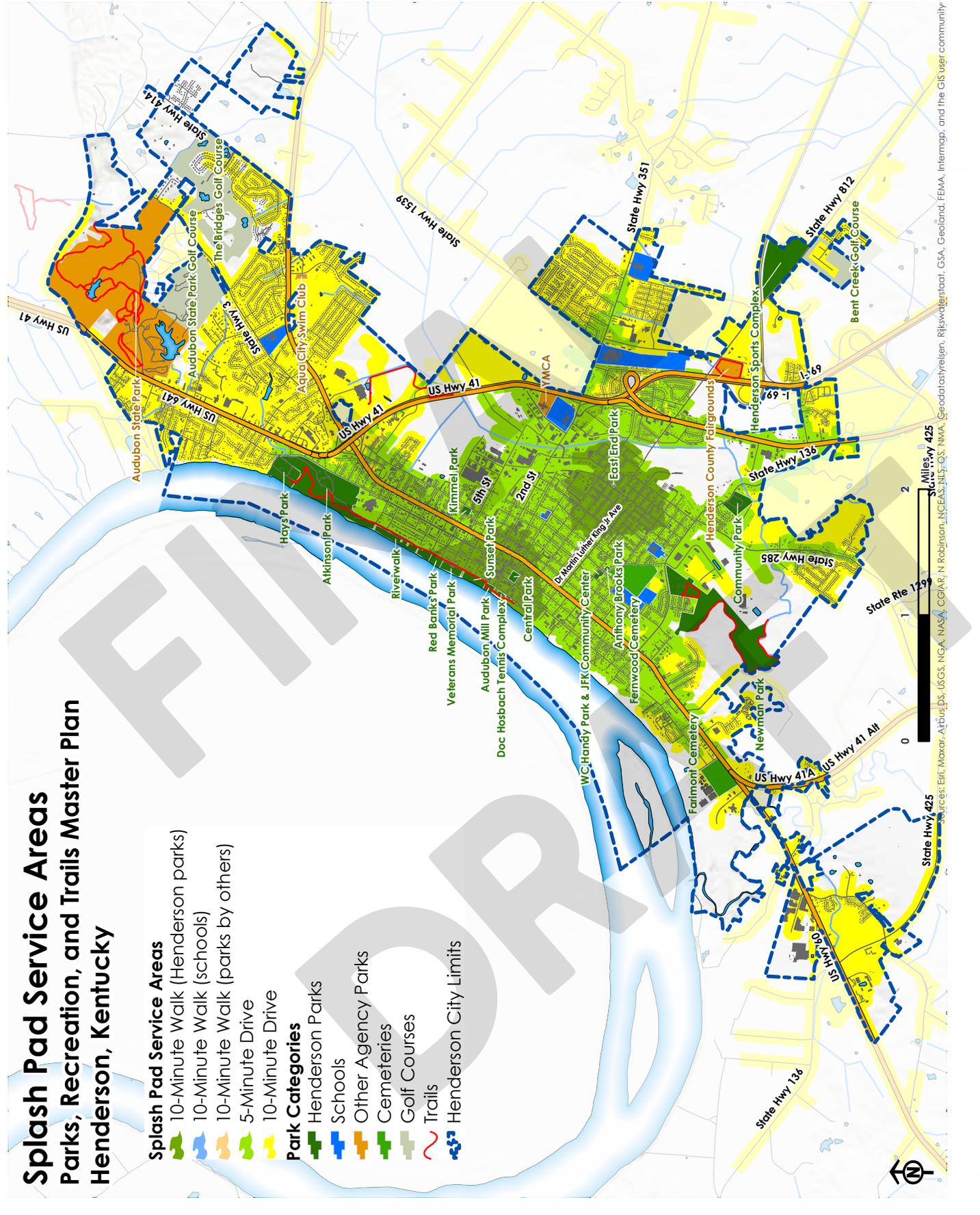


Figure 2.17: Splash Pad Service Areas



2.6.3 GEOGRAPHIC COMPOSITE PARK SERVICE AREAS

While the previous section outlined the level of access to individual parks and facilities, a composite analysis provides a more robust depiction of the overall level of service across the city. Service areas for Henderson's neighborhood parks, schools with playgrounds, and community parks, along with 19 facilities, were assigned scores based on travel distance (e.g., 10-minute walk vs. 5-minute drive).

Figure 2.18 shows the composite service areas for the city based on this analysis. Service levels are relative to other areas of Henderson and do not relate to benchmarks or other municipalities. Appendix B provides a more detailed description of the methodology.

In the figure, green indicates a higher level of service (the deeper the shade, the better), while red areas have the lowest level of service (similarly, the deeper the red, the lower the service level). For example, a resident living within one of the dark green areas would more likely be within a short walk to a park and many of the facilities previously described (e.g., playgrounds and basketball courts).

The map highlights that most of the existing parks and facilities are located close to the center of the city, providing a higher level of service in that area compared to more recently developed areas.

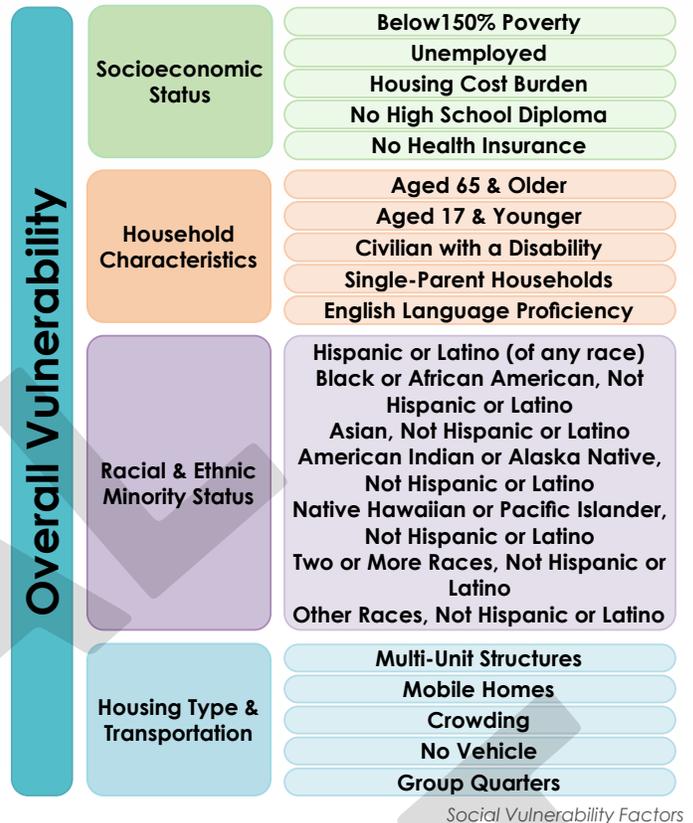


Table 2.10: Population by Composite Service Area

Service Level	Within Composite Service Level				Median Age	Children	Seniors
	Population ¹	Cumulative Population	Area	Cumulative Area			
High	17%	17%	11%	11%	38.3	1,129	867
Medium-High	23%	40%	14%	25%	39.8	1,429	1,221
Medium	32%	72%	30%	56%	42.5	1,695	1,976
Medium-Low	15%	87%	12%	68%	42.8	845	898
Low	13%	100%	32%	100%	41.1	753	745

1. % of total population within each area

Source: Esri forecasts for 2024

Table 2.10 shows some demographic characteristics within the service area levels. Only 17% of Henderson residents live in areas with overall high levels of service, but 40% have medium-high or better. Large areas of the city, particularly areas, further from the river and the East End neighborhood have low or medium-low levels of service (28% of the population).

2.6.4 SOCIAL VULNERABILITY

Analyzing demographic and socioeconomic characteristics is a critical step towards identifying which public programs, services, and facilities Henderson residents are most likely to need and utilize. The following descriptions help to indicate which portions of the city are most likely to benefit from community services, including Parks and Recreation.

Designed to identify communities most likely to need support before, during, or after a hazardous event, the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) uses 16 social factors to calculate a score (between 0 and 1) that compares all census tracts in the USA to each other – a score of 0 being the least vulnerable and 1 being the most. The 16 factors make up four categories as seen above. Each factor is scored individually, and they are combined to create the category scores. The category scores are combined to determine the overall SVI score.⁶ The SVI data for Henderson is presented in five categories in Figure 2.19, which shows areas with higher levels of social vulnerability in darker shades and areas with lower levels in lighter shades.

⁶ Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, "CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index," <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/place-health/php/svi/index.html>

Figure 2.18: Composite Park Service Areas

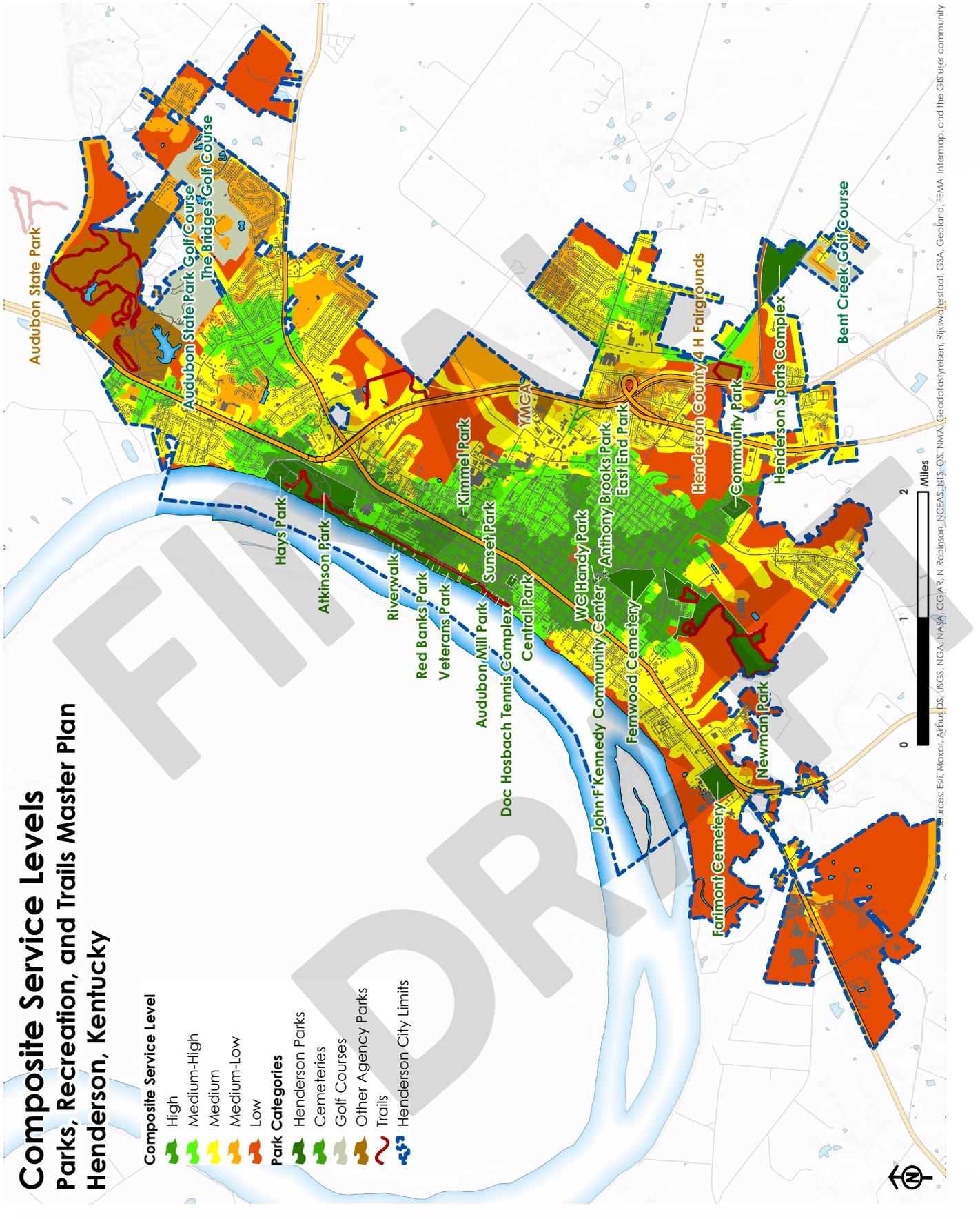
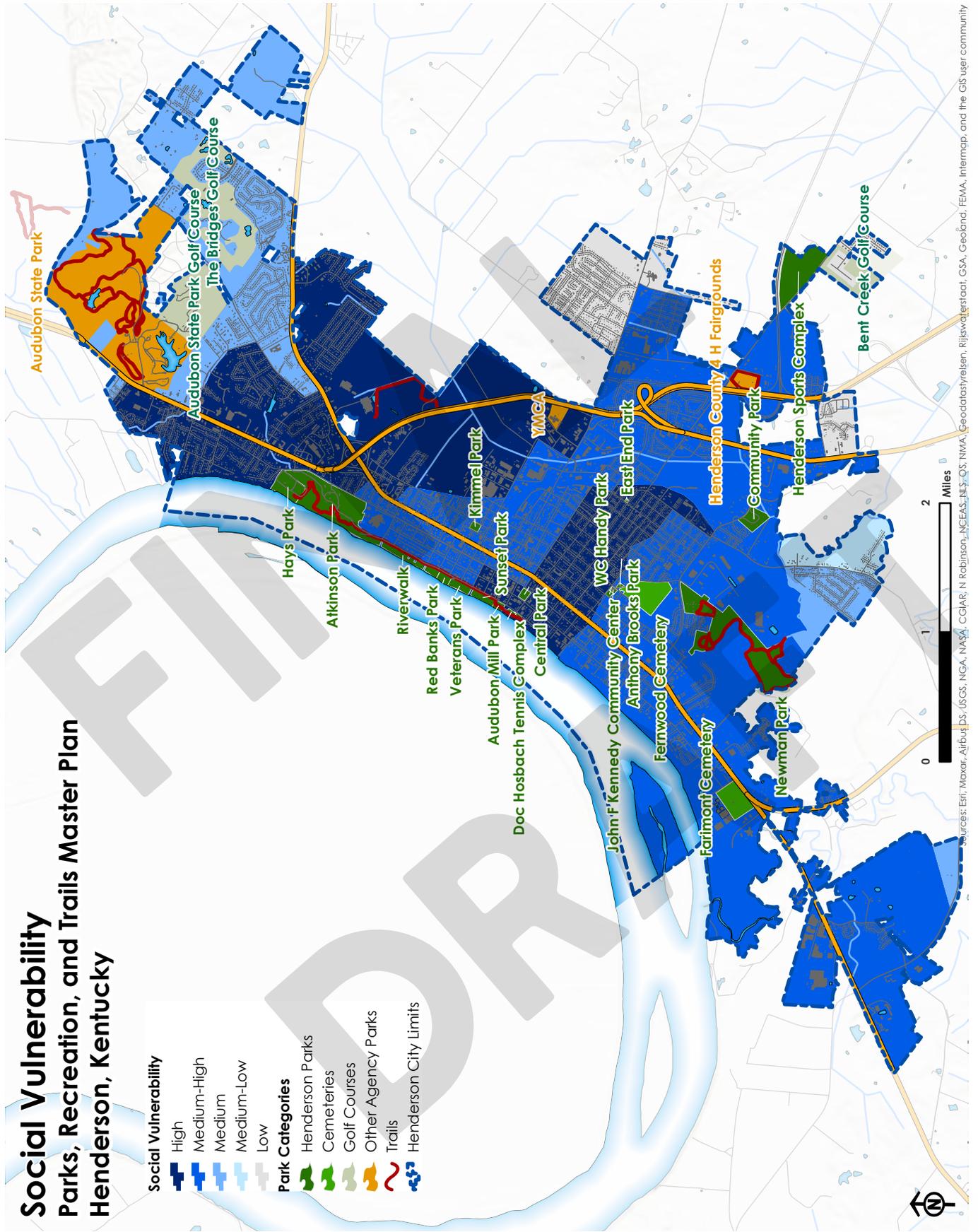


Figure 2.19: Social Vulnerability Index



2.6.5 PRIORITY INVESTMENT AREAS

While the composite service areas analysis (Figure 2.18) identifies portions of Henderson with lower levels of access to parks and recreation, the Social Vulnerability Index (Figure 2.19) aids in identifying locations with the greatest need for public services, including parks and recreation facilities. The combination of these two datasets shows areas within Henderson most in need of additional park investment (higher vulnerability and lower service levels).

The portions of the city indicated in this combined map (Figure 2.20) may need special consideration for park improvements, including additional features or potentially new parks. The “high” areas are those with a combination of low or medium-low service levels and high or medium-high social vulnerability. The “medium” category represents areas that are combination of low or medium-low service levels and medium levels of vulnerability or low or medium service levels and high or medium-high levels of vulnerability.

Overall, the map highlights the greatest need for new park investment in areas further from the riverfront and the East End neighborhood. This does not mean that parks in the downtown and East End areas do not need investment to repair and upgrade existing features. The priority investments areas should be used as a guide to prioritize new parks or additional features.

2.7 TRENDS IN PARKS AND RECREATION

The following text analyzes national trends in recreation, including types of activities and their associated facilities. First, a look at participation rates for various activities – using data from the Sport and Fitness Industry Association – then a deeper dive into the latest trends (relevant to Henderson) occurring in programming and facilities across the nation. Looking through a broader lens can provide insight into the origin and trajectory of more localized preferences. Understanding how trends in fitness, recreation, athletics, and cultural resources reflect in the parks and recreation industry illuminates present conditions and future possibilities for recreation and parks facilities and programs in Henderson. Equipped with industry context, the city can better sustain, expand, and realign its existing offerings.

2.7.1 TRENDS IN PARTICIPATION

The Sport and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) conducts an annual survey of individuals and households throughout the United States to determine participation in a variety of sports and fitness activities.⁷ The 2023 survey, based on 18,000 online interviews, produced results reflective of the total U.S. population age 6 and older.

Participation rates vary by generation, all share high participation rates in fitness sports (e.g., barre, weight-training, kettlebells, etc.) and participation does not drop

considerably with age. With growing percentages of residents in the older generations, demand for fitness and outdoor sports programming is likely to increase in the future. Team sports, on the other hand, are far more popular with the youngest generation.

Table 2.11 displays the 5-year participation rates for 28 sports and fitness activities from the 2023 SFIA survey (more in Appendix B) with shows the 5-year annual growth rate. The fastest growing sports are highlighted in blue. Pickleball continues to be the fastest growing activity with a 5-year average growth rate of 35.7% and a 3-year increase of 223.5%. Other growing activities include trail running (8.3%), skateboarding (7.3%), tennis (6.3%), birdwatching (6.1%), and recreational kayaking (6.1%) over the past 5 years. Walking for fitness (over 114 million participants) remains the most popular activity, with nearly twice the participants as the second most popular activity, day hiking (61 million).

2.7.2 AGING COMMUNITIES

As noted in the demographics section, the median age of the Henderson population is increasing along with the number of residents 65 years and older. Senior centers are shifting from a focus on activities like card games to more active programming such as fitness and outdoor activities including hiking, biking, and nature programs.

While the aging population should inspire parks and recreation agencies to invest more in activities, programs, and facilities for older users such as walking trails, fishing areas, community gardens, and cultural and nature education programs, many of these more involved and nature-oriented activities are appealing to all generations.

2.7.3 UNIVERSAL ACCESS

Many park systems are developing unique facilities designed to go well beyond the minimum requirement for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Park system administrators are uniquely positioned to set the best example for inclusivity – by creating an environment that is totally accessible to persons of all ages and abilities, parks and recreation agencies are changing the landscape not just physically but also culturally and in terms of mental health. Many of Henderson’s parks and recreational facilities have limited accessibility, and significant improvements are needed to improve accessibility and to offer facilities and programs for all abilities.

Universal access extends beyond the physical to include interpretive signage, buildings, and all programs. **Providing barrier-free parks should become an essential part of the process for any park improvement.** Most equipment providers have available options for individual features, but it is necessary to take a holistic approach to the design process to guarantee fully inclusive experiences.

⁷ Topline Sport Participation Report, Sports & Fitness Industry Association, 2024

Figure 2.20: Priority Investment Areas

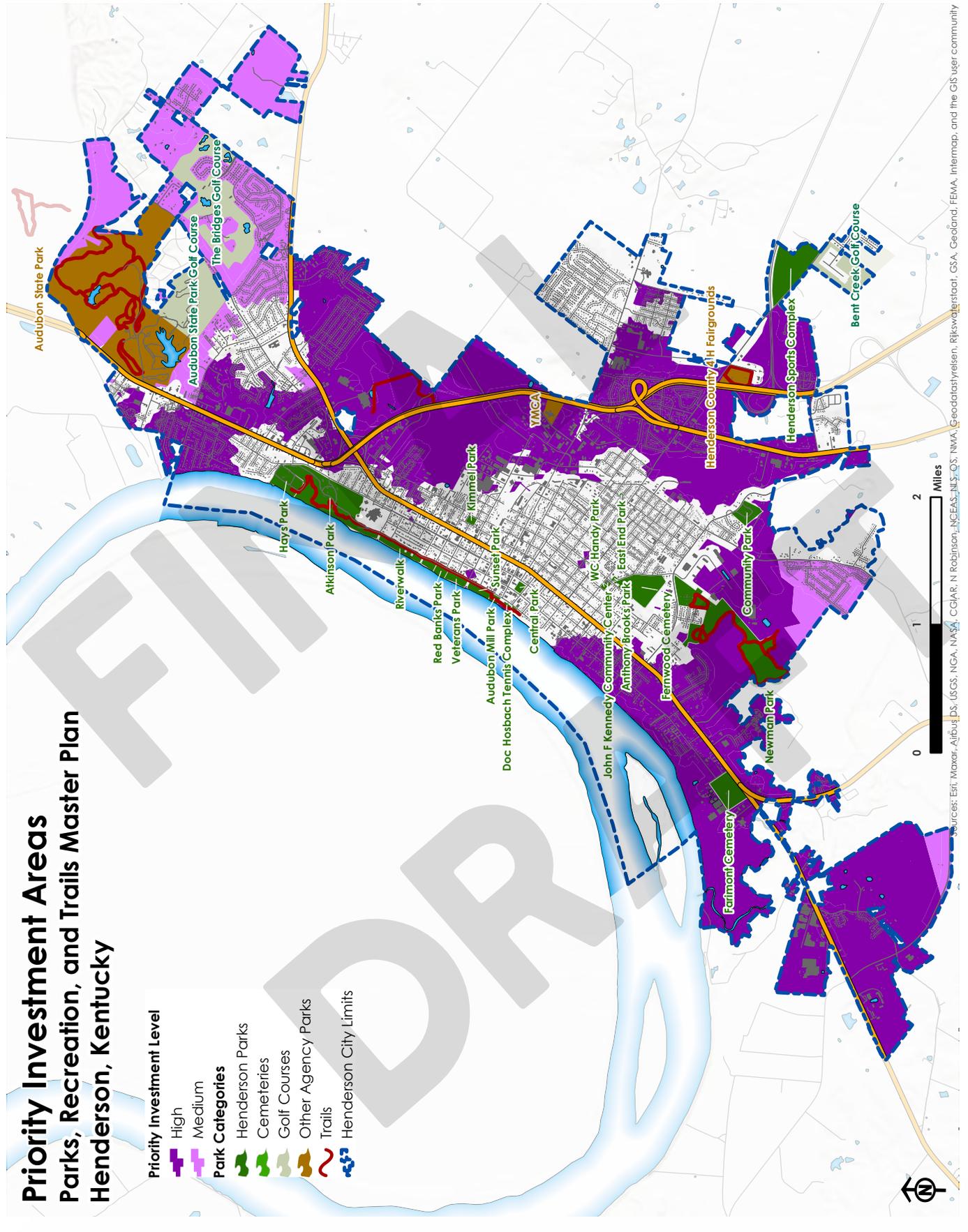


Table 2.11: Nationwide 5-Year History of Selected Sports Participation

Sport/Fitness Activity	Category	Participants (in Thousands)						5-Year Average Annual Growth
		2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
Aquatic Exercise	Aerobic Activities	10,518	11,189	10,954	10,400	10,676	11,307	1.6%
Baseball	Team Sports	15,877	15,804	15,731	15,587	15,478	16,655	1.0%
Basketball	Team Sports	24,225	24,917	27,753	27,135	28,149	29,725	4.3%
Bicycling (BMX)	Outdoor Sports	3,439	3,648	3,880	3,861	4,181	4,462	5.4%
Bicycling (Paved Surface)	Outdoor Sports	39,041	39,388	44,471	42,775	43,554	42,243	1.8%
Birdwatching (>¼ Mile from Home)	Outdoor Sports	12,344	12,817	15,228	14,815	15,818	16,423	6.1%
Fishing (Fly)	Outdoor Sports	6,939	7,014	7,753	7,458	7,631	8,077	3.2%
Fishing (Freshwater)	Outdoor Sports	38,998	39,185	42,556	40,853	41,821	42,605	1.9%
Football (Flag)	Team Sports	6,572	6,783	7,001	6,889	7,104	7,266	2.0%
Football (Tackle)	Team Sports	5,157	5,107	5,054	5,228	5,436	5,618	1.8%
Golf	Individual Sports	24,240	24,271	24,804	25,111	25,566	26,565	1.9%
Hiking (Day)	Outdoor Sports	47,860	49,697	57,808	58,697	59,578	61,444	5.3%
Ice Skating	Individual Sports	9,721	9,460	9,857	9,481	10,086	11,438	3.5%
Kayaking (Recreational)	Water Sports	11,017	11,382	13,002	13,351	13,561	14,726	6.1%
Lacrosse	Team Sports	2,098	2,115	1,884	1,892	1,875	1,979	-1.0%
Pickleball	Racquet Sports	3,301	3,460	4,199	4,819	8,949	13,582	35.7%
Running/Jogging	Aerobic Activities	49,459	50,052	50,652	48,977	47,816	48,305	-0.5%
Skateboarding	Individual Sports	6,500	6,610	8,872	8,747	9,019	8,923	7.3%
Soccer (Outdoor)	Team Sports	11,405	11,913	12,444	12,556	13,018	14,074	4.3%
Softball (Fast Pitch)	Team Sports	2,303	2,242	1,811	2,088	2,146	2,323	0.9%
Swimming for Fitness	Aerobic Activities	27,575	28,219	25,666	25,620	26,272	28,173	0.6%
Swimming on a Team	Team Sports	3,045	2,822	2,615	2,824	2,904	3,327	2.1%
Table Tennis	Racquet Sports	15,592	14,908	16,854	15,390	15,824	15,359	0.0%
Tennis	Racquet Sports	17,841	17,684	21,642	22,617	23,595	23,835	6.3%
Trail Running	Individual Sports	10,010	10,997	11,854	12,520	13,253	14,885	8.3%
Volleyball (Beach/Sand)	Team Sports	4,770	4,400	4,320	4,184	4,128	3,917	-3.8%
Walking for Fitness	Aerobic Activities	111,001	111,439	114,044	115,814	114,759	114,039	0.5%
Yoga	Conditioning	28,745	30,456	32,808	34,347	33,636	34,249	3.6%

Legend

- >3% Increase
- 1-3% Increase
- Minimal Change
- 1-3% Decrease
- >3% Decrease

Table 2.12: Universal Design to Inclusive Playground Design

Universal Design	Inclusive Playground Design
<p>Equitable Use The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.</p>	<p>Be Fair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address the needs of the whole child. • Encourage multigenerational play. • Program the space for inclusion.
<p>Flexibility in Use The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.</p>	<p>Be Included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer various types and forms of play. • Ensure variety and graduated levels of challenge. • Provide choices.
<p>Simple and Intuitive Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills or current concentration level.</p>	<p>Be Smart</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide behavioral cues. • Support intuitive play patterns. • Define play settings.
<p>Perceptible Information The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.</p>	<p>Be Independent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote diversity, acceptance, and mutual respect. • Provide accessible surfacing and routes of travel. • Offer sensory rich experiences. • Encourage independent play.
<p>Tolerance for Error The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.</p>	<p>Be Safe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply safety standards and address potential hazards. • Integrate emotional well-being. • Accommodate for comfortable supervision.
<p>Low Physical Effort The design can be used efficiently and comfortably, and with minimum fatigue.</p>	<p>Be Active</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodate children's diverse physical needs. • Integrate equitable alternatives. • Encourage cooperation and socialization.
<p>Size and Space for Approach and Use Appropriate size and space are provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use, regardless of the user's body size, posture, or mobility.</p>	<p>Be Comfortable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address approach and reach ranges. • Provide adequate space for movement and gathering. • Offer a balance of environmental conditions. • Plan for amenities.

Universal design is defined as the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.⁸ The Center for Persons with Disabilities at Utah State University, in collaboration with PlayCore, recently adapted the principles of universal design—originally intended to guide design of housing, public and commercial facilities—to form a set of guidelines for designing outdoor play environments for children (Table 2.12).⁹

These “7 Principles of Inclusive Playground Design” are intended to guide communities in creating “universally designed play environments that are usable by more people, to the greatest extent possible, and therefore better serve a diverse community through outdoor play destinations where everyone is welcomed as a valued participant.” The principles support inclusion of people with disabilities and chronic health conditions by providing opportunities for physical, sensory, communicative, social-emotional, and cognitive states of play.



Accessible playground in Central Park

Universal access also applies to programs. Adaptive and therapeutic recreation programs are designed to facilitate and support participation by people with illnesses or disabilities and help to improve physical, cognitive, emotional, and social functioning. These programs often require specialized training for staff as well as modified facilities, equipment, rules, and activity structure. Developing

⁸ The Principles of Universal Design. 1997. NC State University, The Center for Universal Design

⁹ 7 Principles of Inclusive Playground Design. 2016. PlayCore & Center for Persons with Disabilities, Utah State University

and implementing an ADA transition plan will address most barriers to facility access. Parks and recreation departments across the country are adding and expanding programs for these historically underserved groups. Programs may be modified versions of traditional sports and games or activities specifically designed to address certain illnesses or accommodate specific disabilities.

2.7.4 PICKLEBALL

Pickleball is a court sport played on a badminton-sized court with the net set to a height of 34 inches at the center. It is played with a perforated plastic ball and composite or wooden paddles about twice the size of ping-pong paddles. It can be played one on one or two on two. According to the 2023 Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) report (Table 2.11), pickleball participation grew by nearly 36% over the last five years.

While growth of the sport began with seniors, popularity is growing with all ages. The 65 and older age group still maintains the largest percentage of players at 32.7%. In general, casual players (play 1-7 times per year) tend to be younger (under 35) than core players.¹⁰

Henderson has begun to respond to this trend by providing pickleball courts in Community Park, at the Bridges Golf Course and in the gym in the JFK Community Center at scheduled times. The high level of use of these existing facilities emphasizes the need for additional courts.



Pickleball in Community Park

2.7.5 SPLASH PADS

Splash pads are a growing trend in aquatics. While often include as elements of an outdoor pool facility, they are also often built as standalone facilities. When compared to pools, splash pads have several benefits. Because they have no standing water, lifeguards are not required, reducing operating costs significantly. These facilities can provide a wide range of features, and when built conscientiously, splash pads achieve significant universal accessibility.

Henderson offers two splash pads, one in East End Park and one in Sunset Park, survey results and public engagement indicate additional demand. A new splash pad is planned for

Anthony Brooks Park, but other parks should be considered in the future to meet growing demand.



Splash Pad in Sunset Park

2.7.6 DOG PARKS

Dog parks are in ever-increasing demand throughout the country. These spaces help to improve the interaction skills of dogs, while also providing social opportunities for dog owners. A dog park should be at least three acres in size with three separate areas: large dogs, small dogs, and a rotating unused area to allow for regeneration of turf. Some dog parks include an additional area for agility and training.

Many dog parks are larger, reaching well over 10 acres in size. Typical quality amenities include shade, seating, water (for both humans and animals), and restrooms.



Red Banks Dog Park

Henderson offers two dog parks, one in Red Banks Park and another in Community Park. Both of these facilities have only two areas, one for small and one for large dogs. Due to heavy use, turf conditions have suffered, particularly in Red Banks Park. Expansion of the dog parks would help address these issues, but an alternate surface will likely be required at Red Banks Park.

2.7.7 TECHNOLOGY

The use of technology is becoming increasingly common in parks and recreation. Many park users want to remain connected while visiting parks and expect instant access to information about facilities and programs at those parks. They also want to be able to register for the events and programs they discover on their mobile device.

¹⁰ 2023 Pickleball Fact Sheet. USA Pickleball. Retrieved on March 29, 2024 from <https://www.usapickleball.org/docs/USA-Pickleball-Fact-Sheet-2023.pdf>

While there may sometimes be concerns about distraction, especially in nature-oriented spaces, technology – when applied intentionally – can be a tool to enhance park experience. It is also likely going to be an element necessary to keep people – especially youth – engaged. Potential applications of technology in parks:

- **Wi-Fi hotspots** – to record the number of connections or searches to create a picture of visitation trends¹¹
- **Beacon counters** – to detect cellphone signals to help determine the number of users in an area¹²
- **Device-charging areas**
- **QR codes** – to promote and inform
- **Trail counters** – to detect and record the number of users

Henderson Parks and Recreation currently only uses Facebook to promote parks and programs but using additional platforms would expand the reach of marketing efforts. Additionally, keeping posts relevant with varied content (e.g., video content, informational flyers, community polls, etc.) will be helpful for attracting followers and expanding reach. These posts would, in turn, provide the city with additional means of gathering information on park conditions, visitation levels, and more.

YouTube is the most popular social media platform with 83% of Americans reporting usage in 2023. Facebook is the second most popular (68%) followed by Instagram (47%). Age matters in social media preferences and in choosing which ones to use. While 78% of Americans 18-29 use Instagram, only 15% of those 65 and older use it.¹³

2.7.8 NATURE INTERACTION, EDUCATION, AND PROGRAMMING

Geocaching

Geocaching is a technology-based activity that has been growing in popularity since the early 2000s, when GPS technology improved significantly. Participants travel to local parks and open spaces to hunt for objects previously hidden by others using a set of coordinates and a digital GPS device (typically on a smart phone). Once found, participants sign a log and sometimes exchange the now-discovered item for a new item. The search can have varying levels of complexity – one cache leads to another, or a puzzle must be completed.¹⁴



Geocaching

Photo credit: South Carolina Forestry Commission

Parks are a popular location for geocaches throughout the country. Many geocaches are already present in Henderson, including at Newman Park, Atkinson Park and along the Riverwalk downtown. Other Henderson parks, such as the Nature Conservancy/Borax property in the southwest portion of the city, are good candidates for additional geocaches. A formal process for establishing caches will help the department to apply standards and prevent them from being destroyed by maintenance or park improvements.

Environmental Education

There is a need for expanded environmental education and parks and recreation agencies have a considerable role to play. Environmental education centers throughout the country are having great success as communities are seeking better access to engage with and learn from their natural environment. Potential subjects include natural processes, resource management, and wildlife habitats.

Environmental education programs instill a lasting connection to the natural world and present opportunities to promote and encourage greater use and appreciation of local parks in the community, while creating opportunities for collaboration between organizations, institutions, and advocacy groups such as Henderson County Schools, Kentucky State Parks, and the Kentucky Division of Forestry.

Wildlife Watching

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 146.5 million (56%) Americans participated in wildlife watching in 2022. Bird watching is the most popular form of wildlife watching in the United States. Approximately 96.3 million people participated in some form of bird watching in 2022, with 95% (91.1 million) of those observing birds within one mile of their home for an average of 67 days per year.¹⁵



Brown Headed Cowbirds

Photo credit: Kentucky State Parks

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service report also includes an analysis of the economic impact of wildlife watching activities. Wildlife watchers direct substantial amounts of dollars into the economy because of trip-related (\$42.1 billion) and equipment expenditures (\$118.6 billion).

Henderson is already a popular destination for bird watchers, thanks to Audubon State Park, the Henderson Sloughs Wildlife Management Area, and Green River State Forest. Additionally, **the engagement process showed a need for opportunities to connect and interact with nature.** Henderson has many spaces that could be used to help meet this

¹¹ National Recreation and Park Association, "Parks Using Technology to Engage and Inspire," <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2017/may/parks-using-technology-to-engage-and-inspire/>. (May 1, 2017)

¹² Dolesh, R. J. (2019, January). Top Trends in Parks and Recreation for 2019. Parks & Recreation.

¹³ Social Media Fact Sheet. Pew Research Center. Retrieved on March 29, 2024 from <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/social-media/>

¹⁴ National Recreation and Park Association, "How to Leverage Geocaching to Promote Park and Recreation Events," <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2017/october/how-to-leverage-geocaching-to-promote-park-and-recreation-events/>. (October 5, 2017)

¹⁵ 2022 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2023.

need and build on the popularity of area wildlife watching, including Atkinson Park, Newman Park, and Canoe Creek/Borax property in the southwest portion of the city. The city can also help residents connect with nature by providing better connectivity to natural areas in and around the city.

Environmental Best Management Practices (BMPs)

Many communities utilize parks as examples of best management practices (BMPs) to serve as models for minimizing environmental impacts and maximizing the sustainability of both park sites and operations. Parks and recreation departments are in great positions to lead in the implementation of these practices because they are typically among the largest landowners (if not the largest) in their jurisdictions. To assist in the implementation of these practices, some park departments establish manuals detailing the BMPs which are generally divided into categories.¹⁶ Some potential categories include (with examples):

1. Site Selection – which properties to acquire and protect
2. Design – strategies for management of stormwater, water quality, riparian/wetland buffers; use of vegetation; choice of building materials
3. Construction – controlling of pollutants, soil restoration, recycling of construction materials
4. Operation and Maintenance – practices for water conservation, use of organics, weed control, composting, energy use, etc.
5. Programs and Special Events – consider carrying capacity of facility, provide recycling receptacles

All improvements, even small elements such as rain and butterfly gardens, provide educational opportunities. Improvements to areas in Atkinson Park, Community Park, and Newman Park are feasible options for larger implementation.

Nature Play Areas

Many parks and recreation agencies are placing increased emphasis on the availability of nature play areas and programming for children. The Natural Learning Initiative (NLI) and the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) created a document titled Nature Play & Learning Places, which provides a series of national guidelines for the creation of places for children to interact with nature. The guidelines are meant to support communities in providing opportunities for children to learn about their natural environment and to develop healthy active habits. The guidelines also encourage incorporating natural materials like plants, stones, water, fallen trees, etc. to augment sensory experience and facilitate tactile play. According to the guidelines, a nature play or learning place is:

“A designated, managed area in an existing or modified outdoor environment where children of all ages and abilities play and learn by engaging with and manipulating diverse

natural elements, materials, organisms, and habitats, through sensory, fine motor and gross motor experiences.”¹⁷



Playcosystem natural play structure at Bernheim Forest

Any playground addition or replacement is an opportunity to incorporate natural features, and several of the city’s parks could be good candidates, especially Atkinson Park and Newman Park. The following are examples of nature play features:

- Natural Play Structures
- Multipurpose Lawns
- Meadows and Woodlands
- Vegetable Gardens
- Natural Aquatics
- Gathering and Performance Structures

2.7.9 TRAILS AND CONNECTIVITY

Demand for trails, trail linkages, and pathways that connect parks, open spaces, and other destination sites (like downtown districts) has been growing all over the U.S., including in Henderson. Communities with existing and extensive trail systems express pride and continued desire to build trails between neighborhoods and develop pathways to schools, shopping areas, other community attractions, and neighborhoods.



Henderson Riverwalk

¹⁶ Environmental Best Management Practices Manual. City of Fort Collins Parks and Recreation. 2011.

¹⁷ Moore, R. (2014). Nature Play & Learning Places. Creating and managing places where children engage with nature. Raleigh, NC: Natural Learning Initiative and Reston, VA: National Wildlife Federation. Version 1.6. (pages vii, 5, 7-8, 51, 65, 71-83).

Livable communities where residents report a high quality of life generally have robust trail systems and reliable connectivity that support active, engaged lifestyles. Henderson has a few trails, such as the Riverwalk, Merrill Trail, and Canoe Creek Nature Trail. However, there is strong demand for more, including better connectivity between the downtown area and Audubon State Park and Newman Park.

2.7.10 BIKE FACILITIES

During the early years of mountain biking, enthusiasts used single-track trails intended for hiking as bikes were not specifically forbidden from using these trails. However, as the sport gained popularity, bikes have been banned from most hiking trails, and single-track trails designed specifically for mountain bikes have been established.¹⁸ As shown earlier in Table 2.11, BMX biking is becoming more popular, with a 16% increase in participation over the past three years. A new trend in mountain biking is the flow trail, which is designed for smooth and continuous rides. They have banked turns and rollers which allow riders to flow, rather than have to pedal or manage obstacles.



Mount Trashmore Flow Trail, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Photo Credit: Backyard Trails LLC

Another trend in off-road bicycle facilities is the pump track. These tracks, which began to appear in the 2000s, are looping tracks that can be ridden continuously without the need to pedal. A user's speed is dependent on "pumping" the terrain transitions of the track. A pump track requires approximately 50' by 50' of space (minimum) and generally features a series of rollers and steeply bermed corners.¹⁹ Henderson should consider mountain bike trails, a pump track, and/or a flow trail. The former Wolf Hills landfill and Canoe Creek/Borax property offer potential locations for these types of facilities.²⁰

2.7.11 CREATIVE PLACEMAKING & ARTS PROGRAMMING

The Trust for Public Land – a nonprofit organization with a mission to bring high-quality parks within a 10-minute walk of every person in the U.S. – is a leading champion of creative placemaking as a strategy for affecting change. Creative

placemaking is a collaborative, community-based process that captures the power of art, vibrancy of local heritage, and potential of place to build memorable spaces rooted in culture and local identity. Parks and recreation agencies around the nation offer community connection in physical and social forms; creative-placemaking is just another tool for ensuring successful parks that equitably reflect the people who use them.²¹



Creative Placemaking in the Madisonville Neighborhood of Cincinnati (2015)

Creative-placemaking can take countless forms. It may look like an outdoor sculpture walk featuring local artists' work at the center of the neighborhood park. It might be an annual arts performance downtown that showcases immigrant and refugee cultures in the community. It can also be as low-profile as a pollinator garden, including interpretive signage about the plants chosen and why. Whatever it may look like, it is essential that the community be inclusively integrated into every phase: ideation, selection (of artist(s), piece(s), feature(s), etc.), installation, activation, and long-term care.

When parks and recreation agencies prioritize local traditions, cultural identities, and native resources, making sure these are reflected in program and facility offerings, users will be more likely to participate and do their part to sustain the system. A reciprocal relationship forms, where the community engages with parks and recreation to provide place-based resources. Creative placemaking would provide opportunities to make every park unique and to build and connect community around these parks. With clear expectations, fair compensation, and meaningful engagement, the arts community has the power to enliven parks and community spaces in Henderson. Kimmel Park is a great candidate for a placemaking event to reimagine the park and its features.

¹⁸ Singletracks, "Visiting the Birthplace of Mountain Biking: Marin County, California," <http://www.singletracks.com/blog/mtb-trails/visiting-the-birthplace-of-mountain-biking-marin-county-california/>, (April 8, 2019).

¹⁹ Adventure Sports Journal, "Pumpin': An Introduction to the World of Pump Tracks," <http://adventuresportsjournal.com/pumpin-an-introduction-to-the-world-of-pump-tracks/>, (April 8, 2019).

²⁰ Landfill to bike park conversion: Mount Trashmore, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, <https://www.solidwasteagency.org/mount-trashmore>

²¹ Trust for Public Land, Creative Placemaking, <https://www.tpl.org/our-work/creative-placemaking>

2.8 KEY FINDINGS FROM THE EVALUATE PHASE

The findings of the Evaluate Phase and the findings of the Engage Phase (Chapter 3) guide the Envision Phase (Chapter 4) to develop recommendations and the action plan. Highlights and key findings about Henderson and its parks and recreation offerings from the Evaluate Phase include:

- **While Henderson's population is not growing, its makeup is changing** which means new interests in parks and recreational programming and facilities.
- Henderson offers **limited recreational programming** with the potential to significantly expand offerings to better meet resident needs.
- Most of Henderson's parks have **significant deferred maintenance** and features such as playgrounds and restrooms in need of repair and replacement.
- Parks have **accessibility shortfalls**, indicating a need for an accessibility evaluation and a plan to address problem areas.
- Henderson lacks open **sports fields for pick-up or non-league play**.
- Henderson has **inconsistent and unfavorable agreements** with the youth sports organizations maintaining fields and operating leagues.
- Henderson needs **more and better bike and pedestrian connections** to parks, schools, and downtown Henderson.



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

3

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The public engagement process is essential for identifying the needs and preferences of Henderson residents. The findings of the public engagement process are, therefore, integral to the vision for the future and serve as the foundation for the recommendations of this Master Plan. This chapter describes the processes used and the public input gathered throughout the planning process and summarizes the following elements:

- Open House Workshop
- Community Events
- Stakeholder Conversations
- Survey

3.2 OPEN HOUSE WORKSHOP AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

Henderson held four engagement events to learn from residents what they want in the present and future from Parks and Recreation. A dedicated open house was held on April 24, 2025, at the Henderson Public Library, and input stations were set up at the Sports Complex opening on Friday, March 28, at Henderson County High School on April 24 and at Tri-Fest on April 25. Approximately 305 people participated in the four events – 173 at the High School.



3.2.1 PREFERENCE BOARDS (DOT VOTING)

Attendees at all four events were given three red dots to place on a board indicating their preferences for park features along with three blue dots to place on another board indicating their preferences for programs. The boards provided a list of park amenities and programs with pictures. Approximately 305 community members, including adults and children, participated in each of these activities. Results of the selections are presented in Figures 3.1 and 3.2.



On the features board (Figure 3.1), **pickleball courts received the largest number of dots (91 or 10%), followed by splash pads (79 or 9%), and trails (76 or 8%).**

What Features are Most Important to You?

Place up to **3 RED DOTS** to show where Henderson Parks & Recreation should add or improve features



Figure 3.1: Feature Preference Results

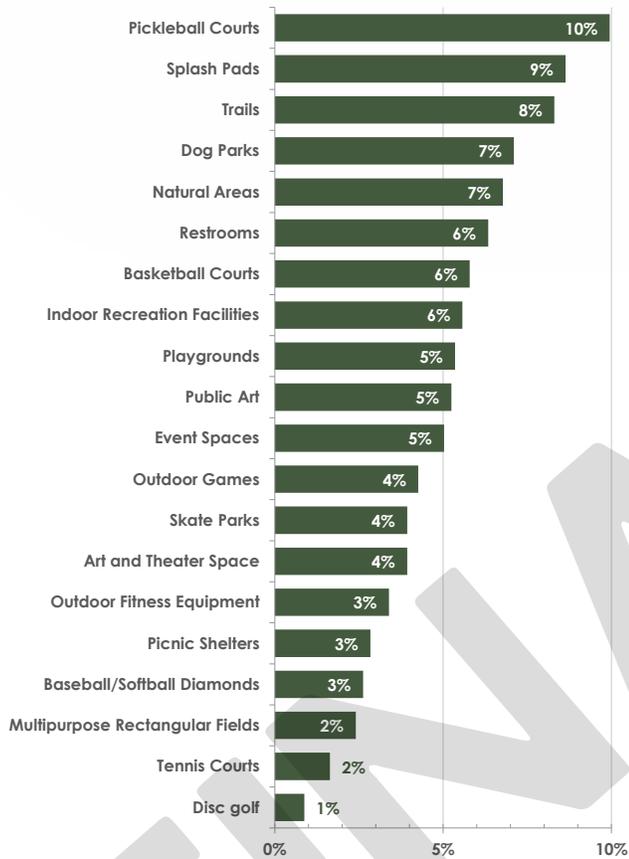
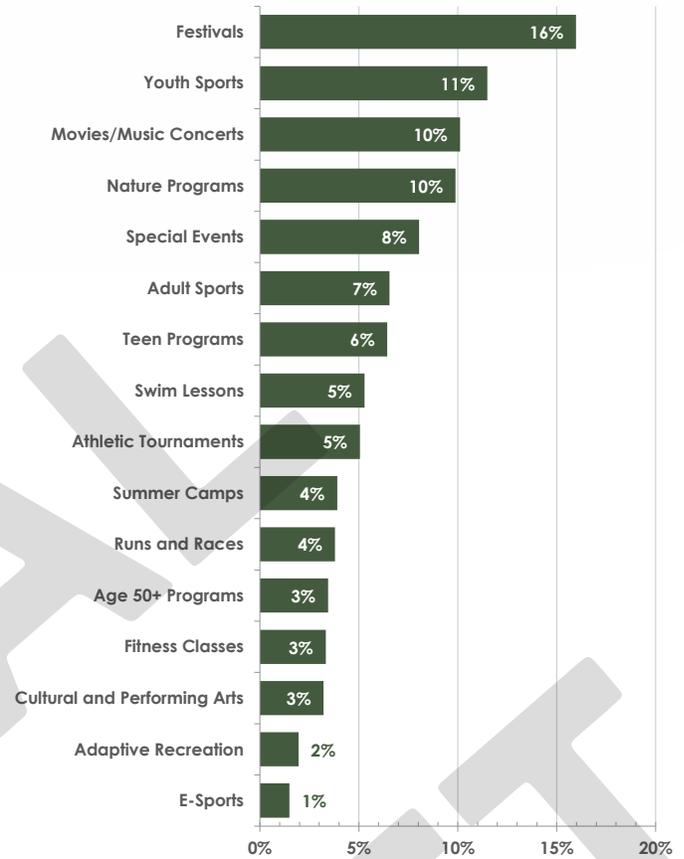


Figure 3.2: Program Preference Results



On the programs board (Figure 3.2), **festivals** received the largest number of dots (139 or 16%), followed by youth sports (100 or 11%), movies/music concerts (88 or 10%), and nature programs (86 or 10%). The options provided on the boards were intended to be general, so features and programs were combined into broader categories whenever possible.

What Programs are Most Important to You?

Place up to **3 BLUE DOTS** to show where Henderson Parks & Recreation should add or improve programs



3.2.2 DOLLAR VOTING

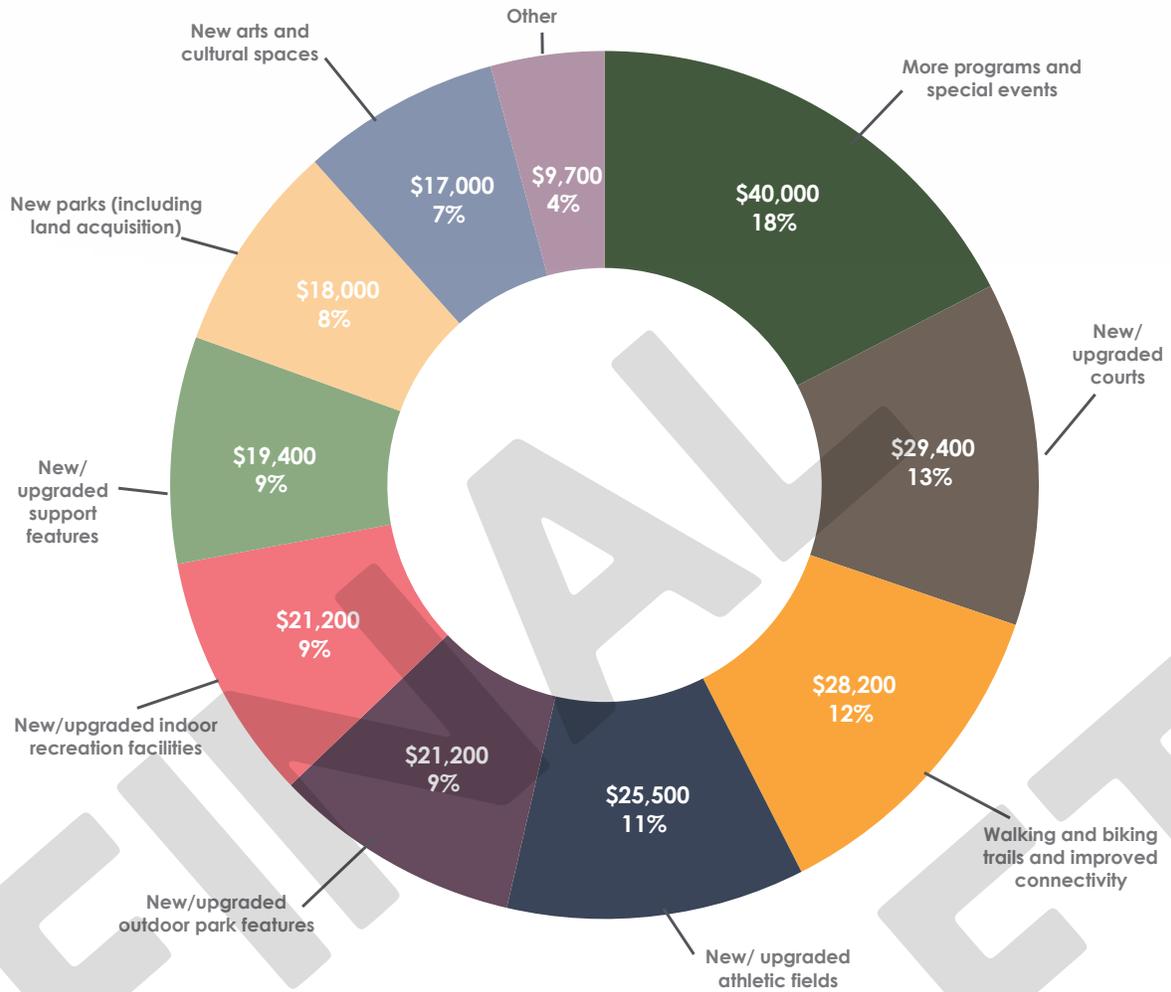
Participants at the open house, Tri-Fest, and Henderson County High School were given \$1,000 in play money to place into boxes to indicate how they would like Henderson to allocate funds for parks and recreation.



Figure 3.3 shows the total allocation for all 230 participants for each category (or box). Participants could also choose to place money into a box marked "other" to request specific amenities or improvements not included in one of the nine provided categories.

More programs and special events received the largest allocation with \$40,000 or 18% of total dollars. This result is notable because it is not a capital improvement, and Henderson currently offers a limited number of programs. New/upgraded courts were second with \$29,400 or 13%. Walking and biking trails and improved connectivity were third with \$28,200 or 12%, followed closely by new/upgraded athletic fields with \$25,500 or 11% of total dollars. All individual "other" comments and the results for each event are available in Appendix C.

Figure 3.3: Dollar Voting Allocation



3.2.3 INPUT STATIONS

Participants were invited to provide open-ended comments at three stations at the open house— Parks & Facilities, Programs & Special Events, and Trails & Natural Areas. Only one area for comments was provided at Tri-Fest due to space

limitations and only a map for trail ideas was offered at the high school. The summaries of comments in the ensuing text reflect the top noted items at all stations. The full text of comments is available in Appendix C.

Parks & Facilities

Tell us what you like and what could be improved or added

Playgrounds	Picnic Shelters	Athletic Fields	Dog Parks
Game Courts	Outdoor Fitness Equipment	Swimming Pools	Restrooms
Splash Pads	Bike/Skate Parks	Indoor Recreation	Permanent Outdoor Games
Event Spaces	Disc Golf	Adaptive/Inclusive Play Equipment	

Programs & Special Events

Tell us what you like and what could be improved or added

Youth Sports	Senior Programs	Adult Sports	Therapeutic Recreation
Basketball	Nature Programs	Tennis	Visual and Cultural Arts
Pickleball	Teen & Youth Camps	Volleyball	Community/Special Events
Soccer	Swimming Programs	Football	Movies & Concerts
Softball/Baseball	E-Sports	Lacrosse	

Trails & Natural Areas

Tell us what you like and what could be improved or added

Natural Areas	Conservation	Green Spaces	Preservation
Trails	Fishing Access	Canoe/Kayak	Riverwalk

What Participants Like about Existing Opportunities

- Riverwalk & Riverfront Features – Riverwalk, splash pad/water feature
- Parks & Nature Access – Numerous parks, nature programs, walking trails, wide streets
- Tennis & Pickleball Courts – Tennis courts, pickleball courts, JFK indoor pickleball
- Community Events & Programs – Concerts/special events, low-cost offerings

What Participants Want Improved or Added

- Trails & Connectivity – Connected bike/walk trails (multiple areas), mountain bike trails, sidewalks/bike lanes
- Nature & Water Access – Boat trips, docks/marina/fishing access, more greenspace, trees
- Facility & Amenity Upgrades – Better/more restrooms, shelters upgrades, skate park, security, lights, seating
- Event & Meeting Spaces – Meeting space, wedding venue, amphitheater
- Arts & Education – Art/music classes, theater, community choir, adult education
- Technology & Access – Internet in parks, improved online reservation systems

- Audubon State Park
- K&J Golf Course Management
- Audubon Kid Zone
- YMCA
- Rotary Club
- Henderson County Schools
- Henderson County Public Library
- Henderson Tourism
- Henderson County
- Housing Authority
- Holy Name Latino Ministry
- Veterans Memorial Foundation
- Pickleball Club
- WKSA
- The Gathering Place
- Bicycling & Running Advocates
- Henderson Community College
- Habitat for Humanity
- Henderson Economic Development
- Boys and Girls Club
- Henderson Flyers
- Henderson's Aquatic Vision for Everyone
- The Flash
- The Sports Facilities Companies (SFC)

3.3 STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

More than 30 stakeholder meetings took place in spring and summer 2025 to identify priorities for parks and recreation in Henderson. Interest groups shared their perspectives to shape this Master Plan. Stakeholders discussed strengths and future opportunities regarding Henderson's parks, facilities, and programs. Complete meeting summaries are included in Appendix C.

3.3.1 GROUPS ENGAGED

The following stakeholder groups were engaged as part of this Master Plan:

- Parks and Recreation Staff
- City Lions Club
- Planning Commission
- WC Handy Festival
- Bluegrass in the Park
- Chamber of Commerce
- Downtown Henderson Partnership
- Breakfast Lions Club
- HGSA
- Tennis Club
- PYS& HSC
- HRA, HYFL, & PCMA

3.3.2 STAKEHOLDER KEY THEMES AND IDENTIFIED NEEDS

Event & Festival Coordination

- Permitting & Fees – Many organizers (e.g., Tri-Fest, Bluegrass Festival, Handy Festival) expressed confusion over occupational license taxes, blanket permits, and vendor requirements.
- City Support – Stakeholders want clearer partnership agreements, more city involvement (not just permits), and better infrastructure (e.g., permanent electric, amphitheaters, parking).
- Popular Venues – Audubon Mill Park, Central Park, and Sunset Park are heavily used for festivals and events.

Youth & Adult Sports

- Facility Use & Maintenance – Leagues like HGSA, HSC, PCMA, and WKSA maintain their own fields but want clearer agreements, better lighting, turf fields, and more restrooms.
- Sports Complex – New facility is promising but lacks clarity on scheduling, fees, and access. Grass rectangular fields are not yet playable.

- Indoor Needs – Demand for indoor tennis, pickleball, and multi-use facilities.

Aquatics

- Pool Replacement – Strong support for a new aquatic center with therapy options, zero-entry, and play features.
- Access – YMCA pool is limited; city pool is seasonal and not ideal for lessons or therapy.

Equity & Inclusion

- Latino Community – Growing population needs bilingual signage, access to real soccer fields and places for large gatherings
- Adaptive Features – Requests for more inclusive playgrounds, ADA-accessible trails, and programming for all ages and abilities.

Partnerships & Collaboration

- Nonprofits & Schools – YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, AKZ, and the Library all want stronger partnerships with Parks & Rec for programming, transportation, and shared facilities.
- Higher Ed & Workforce – Henderson Community College and Economic Development emphasize parks as a recruitment and retention tool.

Infrastructure & Amenities

- Parks Upgrades – Need for more shade, restrooms, lighting, and updated playgrounds.
- Connectivity – Strong desire for interconnected trails, especially linking neighborhoods, downtown, and schools.
- Safety & Maintenance – Concerns about cleanliness, lighting, and upkeep, especially in older parks.

Recreation Trends

- Pickleball – Rapid growth, need for centralized courts, better surfaces, and lighting.
- Disc Golf – Two courses, need signage, restrooms, and parking improvements.
- Biking & Running – Desire for safer routes, better signage, and more events.

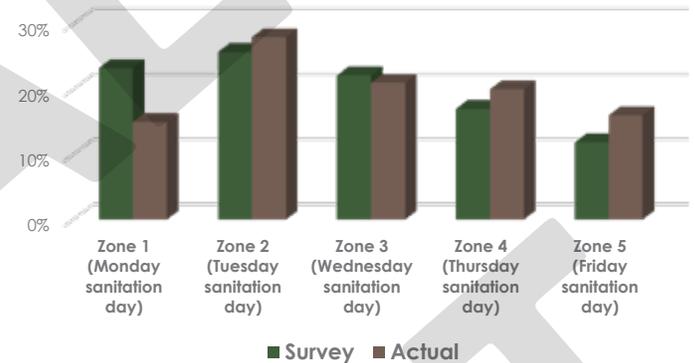
3.4 PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

The following pages summarize the survey findings. Because the survey was not a random sample, results likely reflect the views of respondents who are already engaged in some way with the city's parks and programs and are not necessarily representative of Henderson residents as a whole. Many of the following figures display only the top results, and unsure/don't know responses are excluded. Full results for all questions are available in Appendix F.

3.4.1 SURVEY OVERVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted during the spring and summer of 2025 using the SurveyMonkey platform. In total, 664 people responded to the survey to share the opinions of their households. About 68% of respondents indicated they live in Henderson with 22% indicating they live elsewhere in Henderson County and 7% living outside Henderson County. Sanitation days were used to create zones to compare survey participation across different parts of the city. In general, participation by the zones tracked closely with the actual population; however, the Monday sanitation zone in northern Henderson participated at a much higher rate (Figure 3.4).

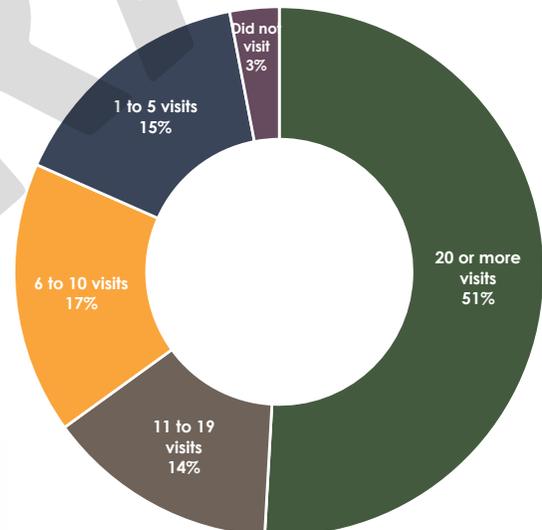
Figure 3.4: Zone Representation of Survey Respondents



3.4.2 FREQUENCY OF VISITS TO PARKS & RECREATION FACILITIES

Nearly 97% of survey respondents indicated they visited a Henderson park or recreation facility in the past year (Figure 3.5), and most survey respondents visited many times (51% visited 20 or more times, and 14% visited 11 to 19 times). This is an expected result as the survey was shared through existing city and Parks and Recreation Department networks, meaning those already engaged were more likely to know about and complete the survey.

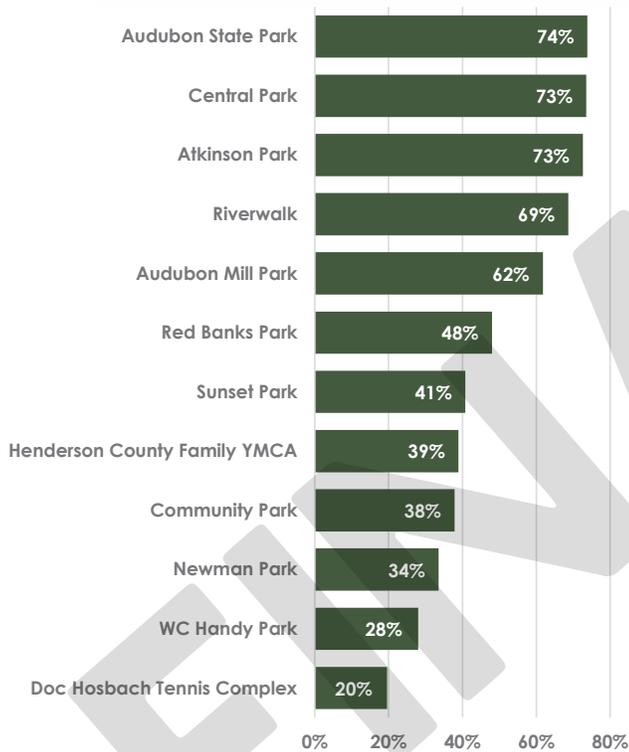
Figure 3.5: Frequency of Visitation



3.4.3 VISITATION AND CONDITION

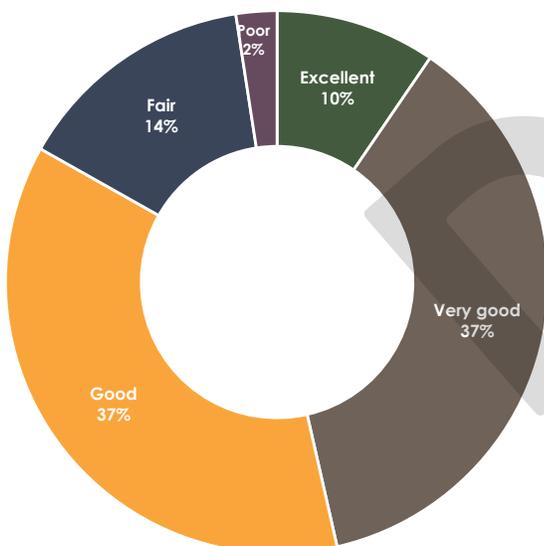
Figure 3.6 shows that Central Park and Atkinson Park (73%) were the most visited Henderson city parks. Other frequently visited facilities include the Riverwalk (69%) and Audubon Mill Park (62%). The most visited parks tend to be centrally located or offer a variety of features.

Figure 3.6: Parks Visited in the Past Year



When asked to rate the overall condition of parks and recreation facilities in Henderson, 83% of those that visited described the parks and facilities as good, very good, or excellent (Figure 3.7). Only 17% reported finding the parks and facilities in fair or poor condition.

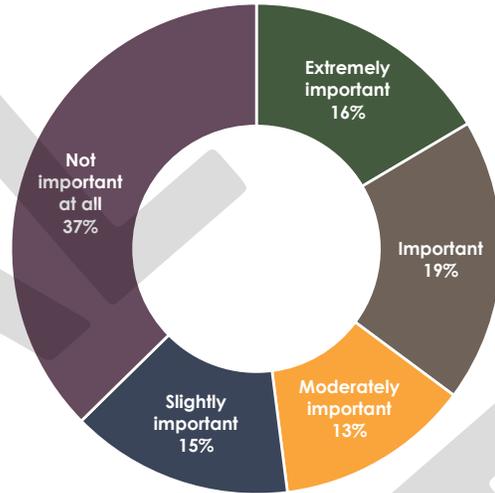
Figure 3.7: Condition of Parks



3.4.4 PARKS WITHIN A 10-MINUTE WALK

When asked how important it was to have parks within a 10-minute walk from their home, only 16% of respondents indicated it was extremely important, and an additional 19% indicated it was important (Figure 3.8). The largest single group indicated a 10-minute walk was not important at all (37%), but 48% indicated moderately or more important.

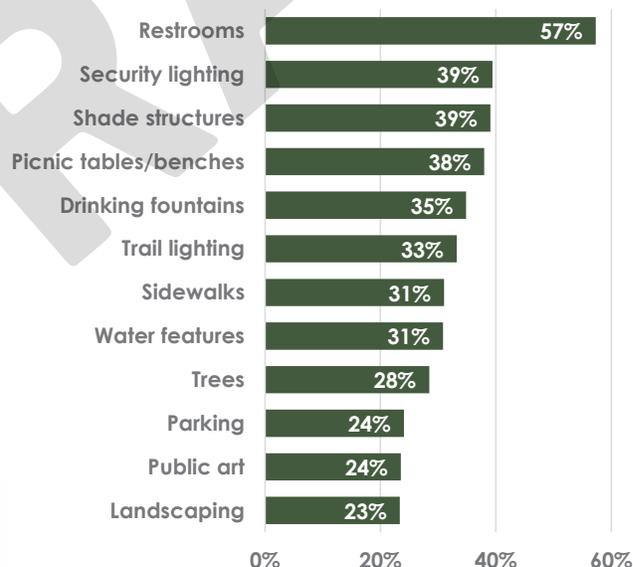
Figure 3.8: Parks within a 10-Minute Walk



3.4.5 SUPPORT AMENITIES

When asked which support amenities would improve or extend experiences at Henderson parks (Figure 3.9), **restrooms were the top amenity**, a result consistent with many communities. Henderson offers restrooms in most neighborhood parks and all community parks, but respondents want more and likely improvements to those that are already available. Respondents also want additional security lighting, shade (structures and trees), seating, and fountains.

Figure 3.9: Desired Support Amenities

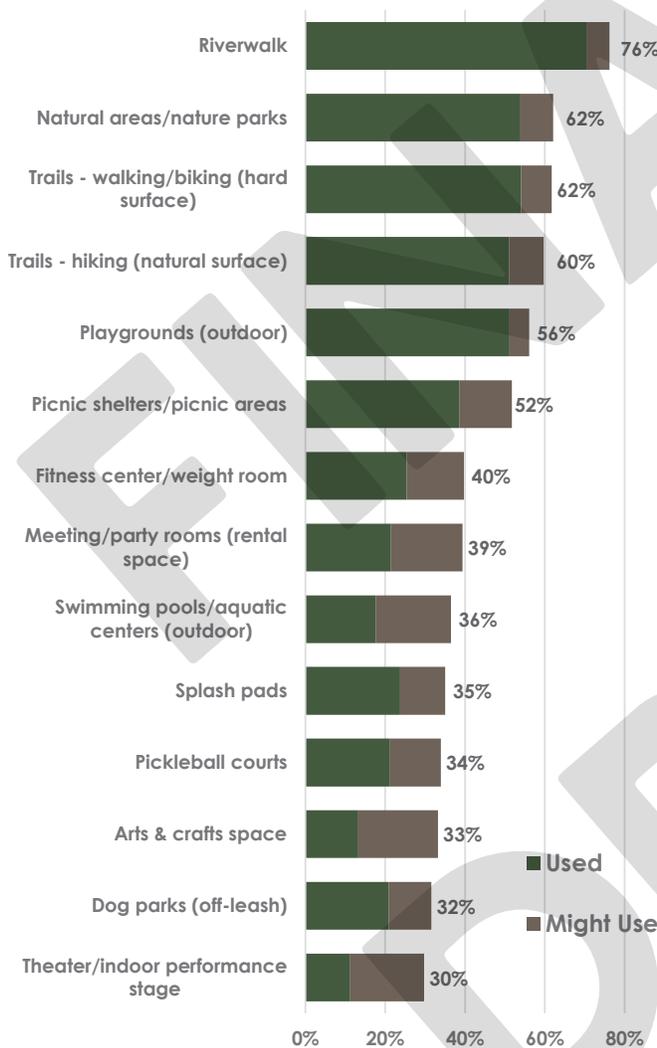


3.4.6 FACILITIES

The survey asked respondents what facilities they use or might use in the future. They were first asked about facilities currently available in Henderson and then about facilities not currently available in Henderson. As shown in Figure 3.10, **the Riverwalk was easily the most popular facility 76%), followed by natural areas/nature parks and hard surface trails (62%).** Natural surface trails (58%) and playgrounds (56%) were also popular facilities.

For facilities respondents had not used but might want to in the future, arts and crafts space was the most popular option (20%) followed by swimming pools (19%), theater/indoor performance space, and meeting/party rooms (18%).

Figure 3.10: Facilities Used or Might Use in the Future

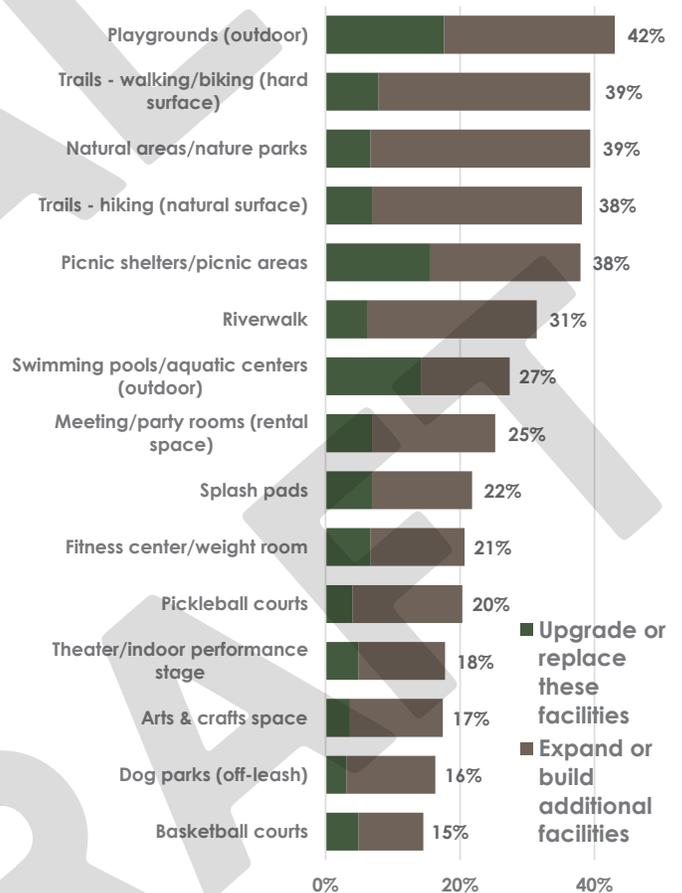


A follow-up question asked respondents to indicate which facilities are most important to their households, and the results were mostly the same as which facilities they use or might use in the future; however, differences emerged between the five zones used to divide up the city geographically. **Respondents in Zones 1 (North) and 4 (East**

End) were more likely to indicate outdoor sport courts are more important than respondents living in the other zones. Zone 4 respondents showed more interest in community gardens, fishing lakes/ponds, a nature center, playgrounds, and sensory/quiet space.

This section of the survey also asked respondents about their support for investment in each of the facility and features, including their preference for revitalization/upgrades to existing or new development. Figure 3.11 shows the percentage of households that desire investment in each type of facility, whether they chose revitalization/upgrades to existing, new development, or both.

Figure 3.11: Type of Investment in Facilities



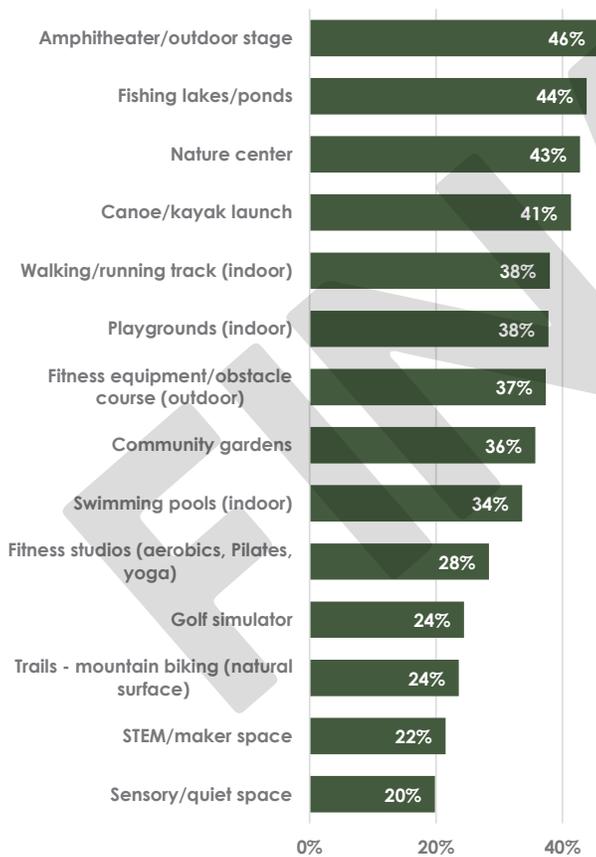
Playgrounds, trails, natural areas, and picnic areas received the most support for investment, followed by the Riverwalk and swimming pools. For all of these features and facilities, respondents strongly favor expanding or building new facilities, indicating more are needed.

Similarly, all respondents were asked if they would use common recreational features and facilities not offered in Henderson if they were available. **An amphitheater was the top choice with 46% of respondents indicating they would use the facility,** followed by fishing lakes/ponds, a nature center, and canoe/kayak launches (Figure 3.12). Respondents also showed strong support for an indoor walking track and indoor playgrounds.

Based on these findings, the **highest priority facilities for revitalization/upgrades to existing are:**

- Playgrounds
- Riverwalk and hard surface trails for walking and biking
- Natural areas/nature parks
- Natural surface trails for hiking
- Picnic shelters
- Fitness center/weight room

Figure 3.12: Facilities Not Available Henderson Would Like to Use in the Future



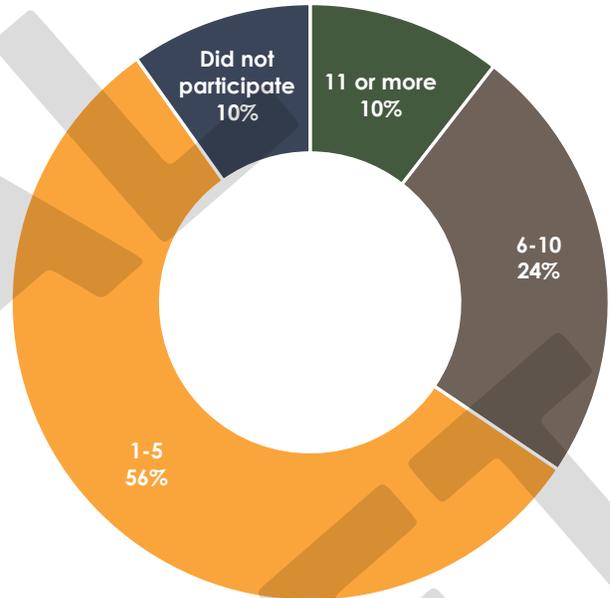
The highest priority facilities for new development are:

- Amphitheater
- Trails of all types
- Swimming pool
- Natural areas, nature parks, and a nature center
- Picnic shelters
- Arts and crafts space
- Indoor theater or performance space
- Rental spaces (meeting and party rooms)
- Fitness center/weight room
- Fishing lake/pond
- Canoe and kayak launches

3.4.7 ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS

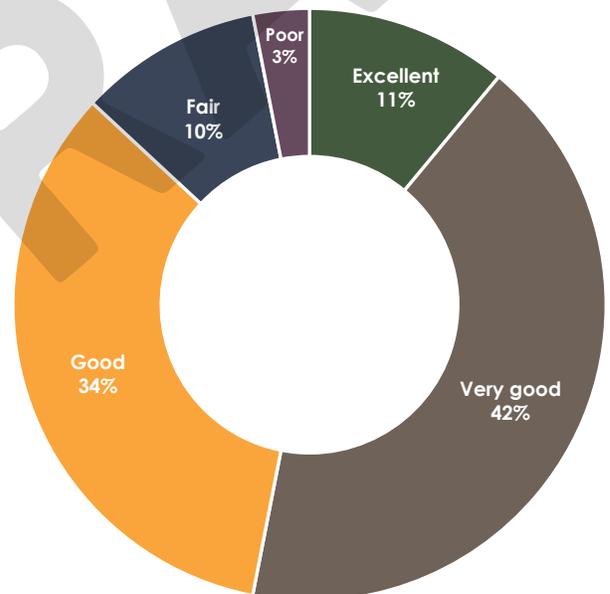
Over 90% of respondents attended programs or events by Henderson Parks and Recreation in the past year (Figure 3.13). This result is consistent with expectations because participants in parks and recreation programs were more likely to learn about the survey than those who did not. Over half (56%) participated in only 1-5 programs or events, while 10% participated in 11 or more, indicating that more use a small number of specific programs.

Figure 3.13: Frequency of Program Participation



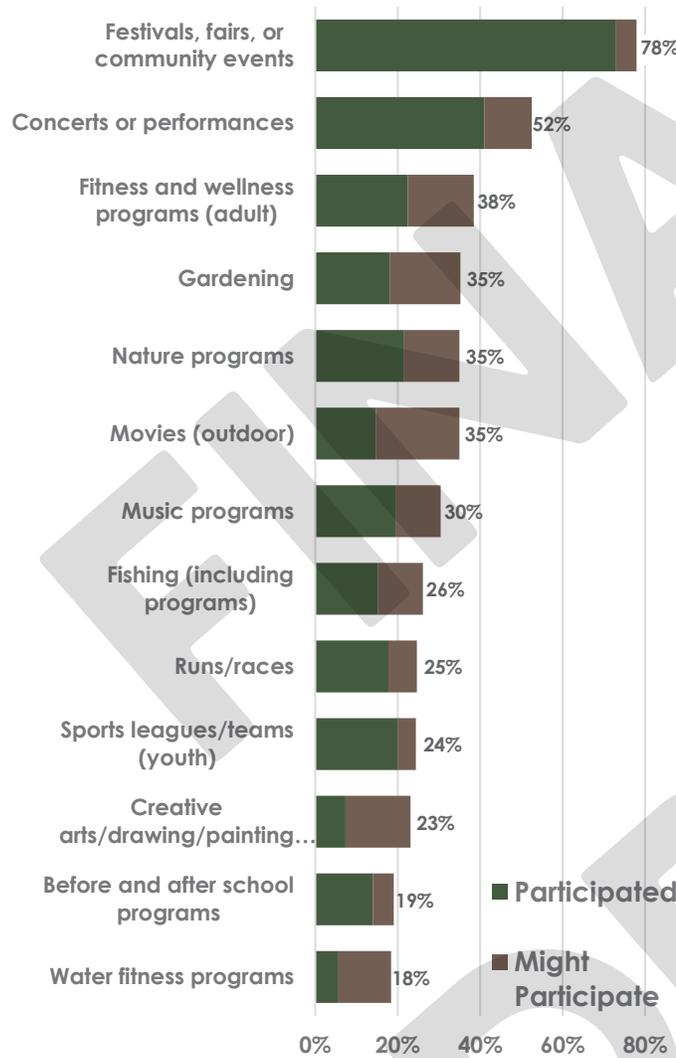
Respondents were also asked about the quality of programs (Figure 3.14). Nearly 87% of respondents indicated the quality of Henderson recreation programs was either good, very good, or excellent. Just over 13% indicated they felt the quality was fair or poor.

Figure 3.14: Quality of Programs and Events



Survey respondents were also asked what programs or activities they participated in over the past year or might participate in at some point in the future (Figure 3.15). Festivals, fairs, or **community events (78%) were easily the most desired programs**. Concerts and performances were second with 52% indicating they have or would like to attend. Other popular programs and activities were adult fitness and wellness, gardening, nature programs, and outdoor movies. A follow-up question asked households to choose the three most important activities to them, and results were similar, with festivals, fairs, or community events as the most important.

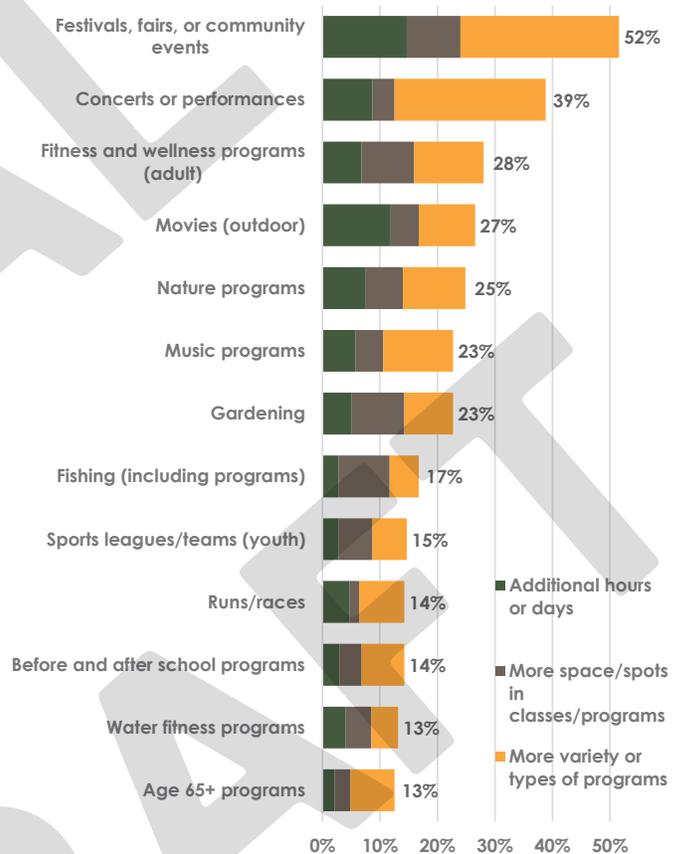
Figure 3.15: Programs Used or Would Like Use



Respondents were invited to indicate the type of investment they prefer for each type of activity or program (additional hours or days, more space/spots in classes/programs, more variety or types, or no change). The results (Figure 3.16) show the amount of support for each type of investment in the most popular activities. **Over 50% of respondents want some sort of investment in festivals, fairs, or community events with most wanting more variety**, again showing strong support for these programs. Similarly, nearly 39% want investment in concerts and performance with 26% wanting more variety.

As a follow-up, the survey asked respondents to indicate the three most important activities or programs to their household. The results were consistent with previous questions with festivals, fairs, or community events being most important to 33% of households, followed by concerts or performances, nature programs, and gardening. On this question, **respondents living in Zone 1 were more likely than those from other zones to indicate nature programs were most important**. Similarly, **Zone 5 respondents were more likely to indicate that age 65+ programs were most important**.

Figure 3.16: Priorities for Investment in Activities and Programs

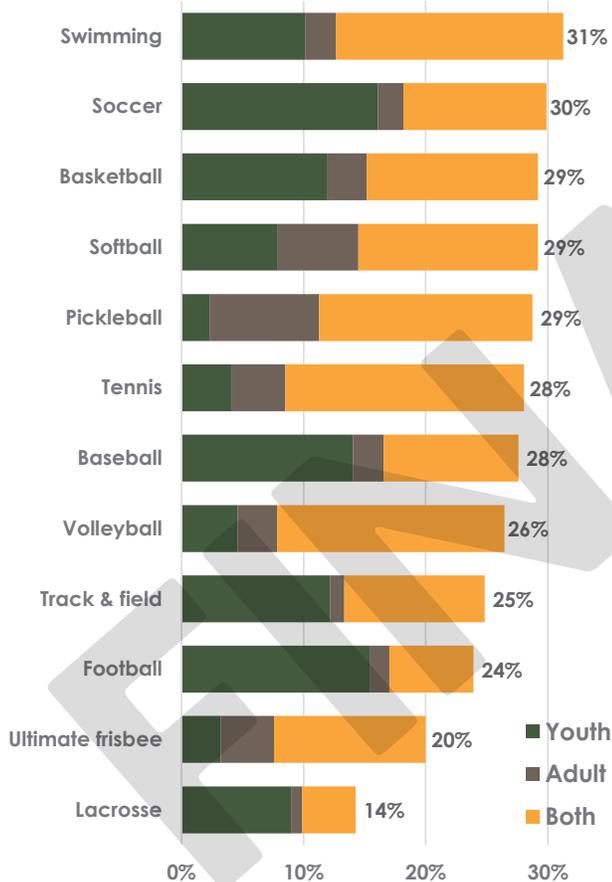


Finally, respondents were asked to indicate interest in sports leagues for youth, adults, or both. Swimming was the most popular sport with 31% respondents indicating they want some sort of swimming league or program, with 19% supporting both youth and adult programs (Figure 3.17). All sports received considerable support. The lowest ranking sport, lacrosse, was desired by 14% of survey respondents. For youth sports, swimming, soccer, basketball, and baseball were the most popular selections. For adult sports, pickleball, tennis, volleyball, softball, and swimming were the most popular selections. Only pickleball had more support for adult over youth leagues.

Based on these findings, the **highest priority activity and program categories** for investment, either expanding current offerings or adding new include:

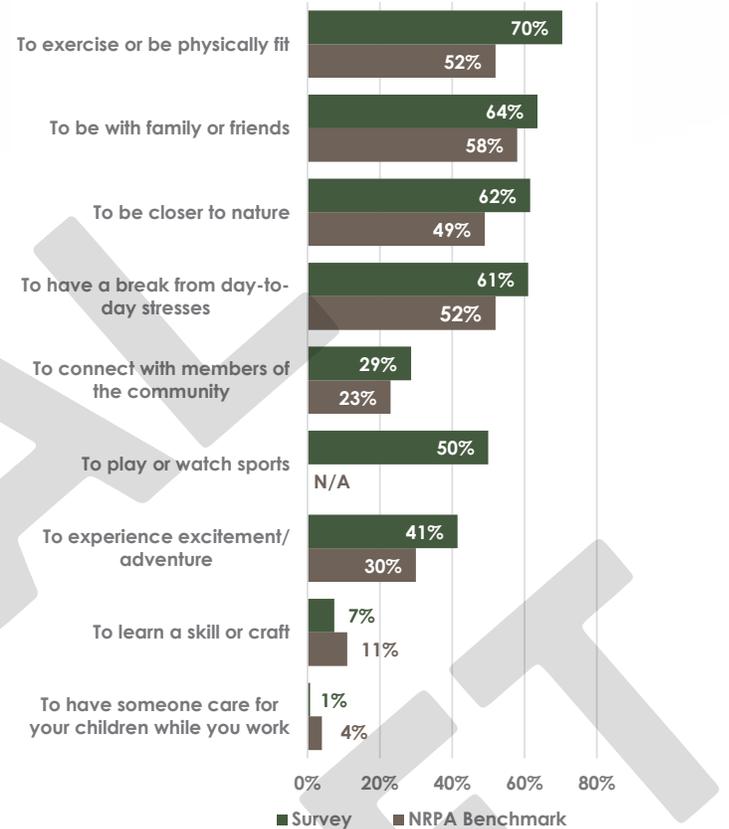
- Festivals, fairs, or community events
- Concerts or performances
- Nature programs
- Gardening
- Movies (outdoor)
- Fitness and wellness programs (adult)
- Fishing
- Music

Figure 3.17: Interest in Sports Leagues



beyond Henderson. **Henderson results track closely with the NRPA benchmarks for the top reasons for participation;** however, exercise is noticeably more important to Henderson respondents.

Figure 3.18: Reasons for Using Parks and Recreation



The survey indicated that the top changes that would encourage more participation (Figure 3.19) **were the addition of desired programs (39%), more/improved restrooms (36%), and development of needed facilities (35%).** Other popular selections were improvement of existing facilities, improved security, and new parks and facilities closer to home.

For respondents who selected addition of desired programs, their most important programs were movies (outdoor), creative arts/drawing/painting (adult), gardening, fitness and wellness (adult), and concerts or performances. For respondents who selected development of needed facilities, the most important facilities for them that are not currently offered were a nature center, fishing lakes/ponds, amphitheater, and outdoor fitness equipment. Finally, for respondents who selected improvement of existing facilities, the most common facilities they indicated they would use or like to use were trails, natural areas, playgrounds, picnic areas, and arts and crafts space.

3.4.8 OTHER PLACES RESIDENTS GO FOR RECREATION

The survey found that 57% of Henderson residents travel outside the city for recreation, mainly to Evansville, Newburgh, Owensboro, and Madisonville. Top destinations include Wesselman Woods (nature education), Burdette Park (aquatic center, trails, courts, BMX), and Smothers Park (riverfront playground). Popular activities are pickleball, mountain biking/BMX, sports leagues, walking/hiking, and playground use. Respondents often mentioned a need for larger, safer, more inclusive, and age-appropriate playground equipment.

3.4.9 REASONS FOR PARTICIPATION

The survey asked for reasons for participation in recreation programs and visiting parks. The most popular reasons (Figure 3.18) were to exercise or be physically fit (70%), to be with family and friends (64%), to be closer to nature (62%), and to have a break from day-to-day stresses (61%). The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) asked this question in their annual national survey, allowing for comparison

3.4.10 LEARNING ABOUT FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS

When asked how they prefer to learn about parks and recreation programs, activities, and events (Figure 3.20), respondents by far favor social media (74%) and the City of Henderson website (47%). These results are consistent with how the survey was promoted and indicate a need

to employ a variety of methods, including those that fewer survey respondents selected, to inform the community about opportunities.

Figure 3.19: What Would Encourage More Participation

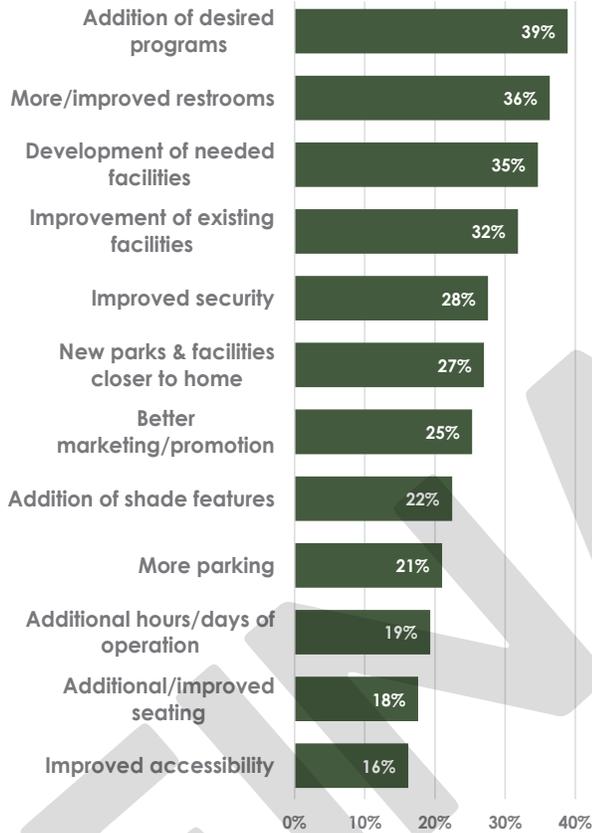
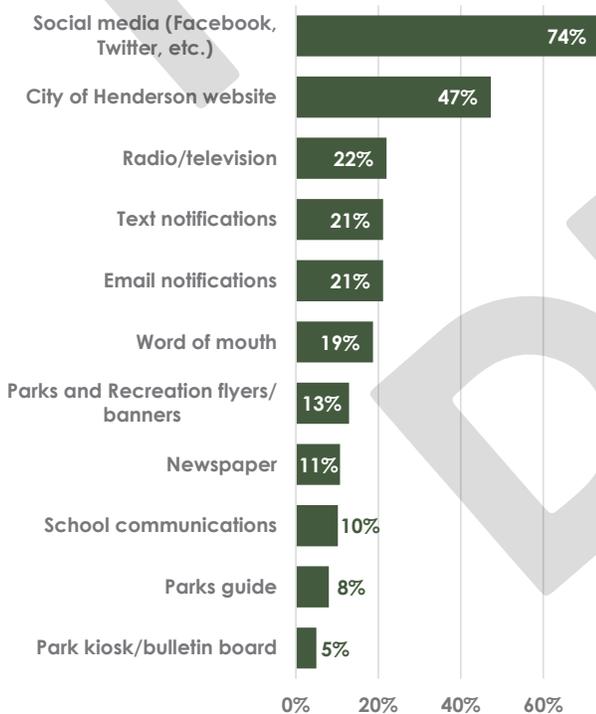


Figure 3.20: Preferred Way to Learn about Facilities, Programs, Activities, or Events



3.4.11 ALLOCATION OF FUNDS FOR PARKS AND RECREATION

Respondents were asked to allocate \$100 among nine different types of parks and recreation facilities plus an option for "other." This question mimics the dollar voting exercise participants completed at the open house, Tri-Fest, and the high school; however, the results in Figure 3.22 are different.

Walking and biking trails and improved connectivity received the most support with \$5,669 or 22%. This option was third in the in-person engagement. New/upgraded outdoor park features were second with \$3,777 or 14%, followed by new/upgraded support features, and new/upgraded courts. Athletic fields were at the bottom of the list after ranking fourth at the in-person engagement opportunities, highlighting the difference between the audiences of the different methods and possibly reflecting the sentiment that the new sports complex offers enough new fields at this time.

When separated by zone, respondents in **Zone 2 put more money towards new parks and trails than respondents from the other zones. Respondents from Zone 4 put more money towards more programs and special events** than respondents from the other zones.

3.4.12 SUPPORT FOR ACTIONS TO IMPROVE PARKS

Figure 3.22 shows that about 91% of respondents indicated they would support or strongly support adding or improving support features such as restrooms, seating, lighting, and shade. Upgrading and expanding playground equipment received support from 88% of respondents. Protecting the city's natural areas was third with support from 87% of respondents. All actions were supported by over 50% of respondents, reflective of the high level of park usage amongst those who chose to take the survey.

Similar to their responses to the question about funding, Zone 2 respondents were more likely than other zones to support acquiring property and building new parks. Zone 5 respondents were more likely than other zones to support upgrading and expanding playground equipment. Zone 1 and 4 respondents were more likely than other zones to support upgrading and adding outdoor sport courts.

Figure 3.21: Allocation of Funds to Improve Parks and Recreation

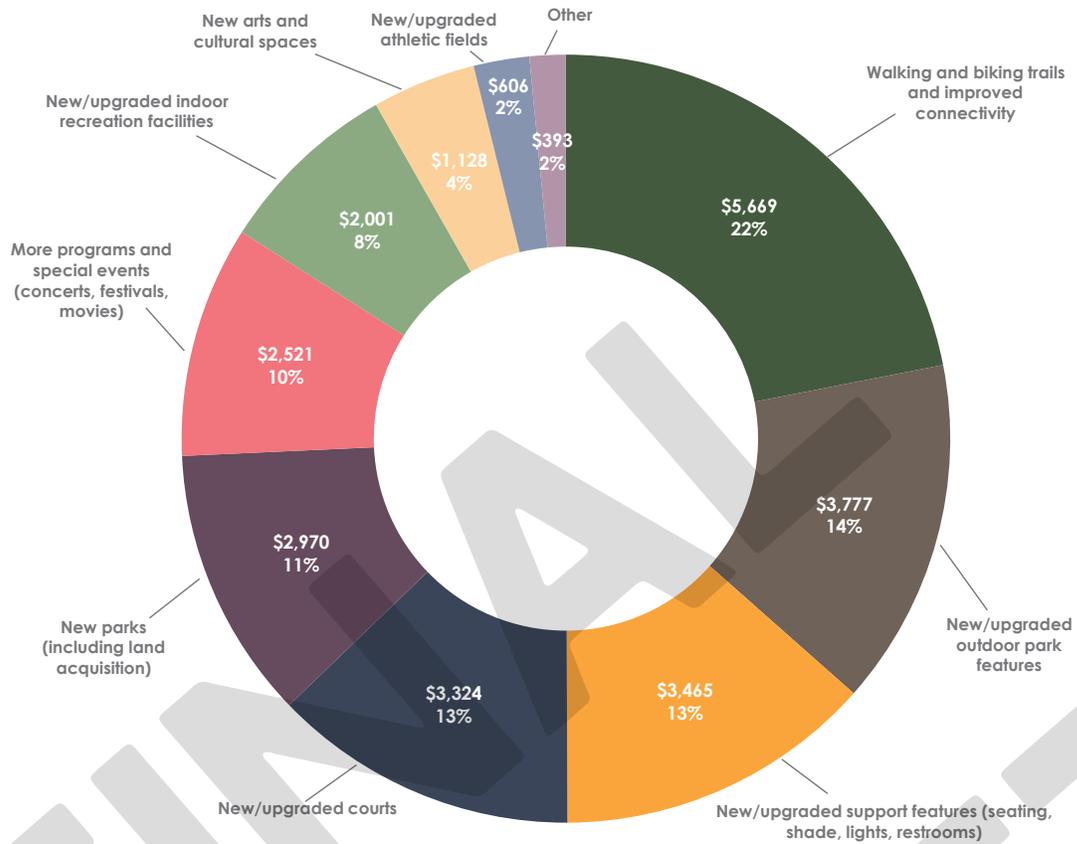
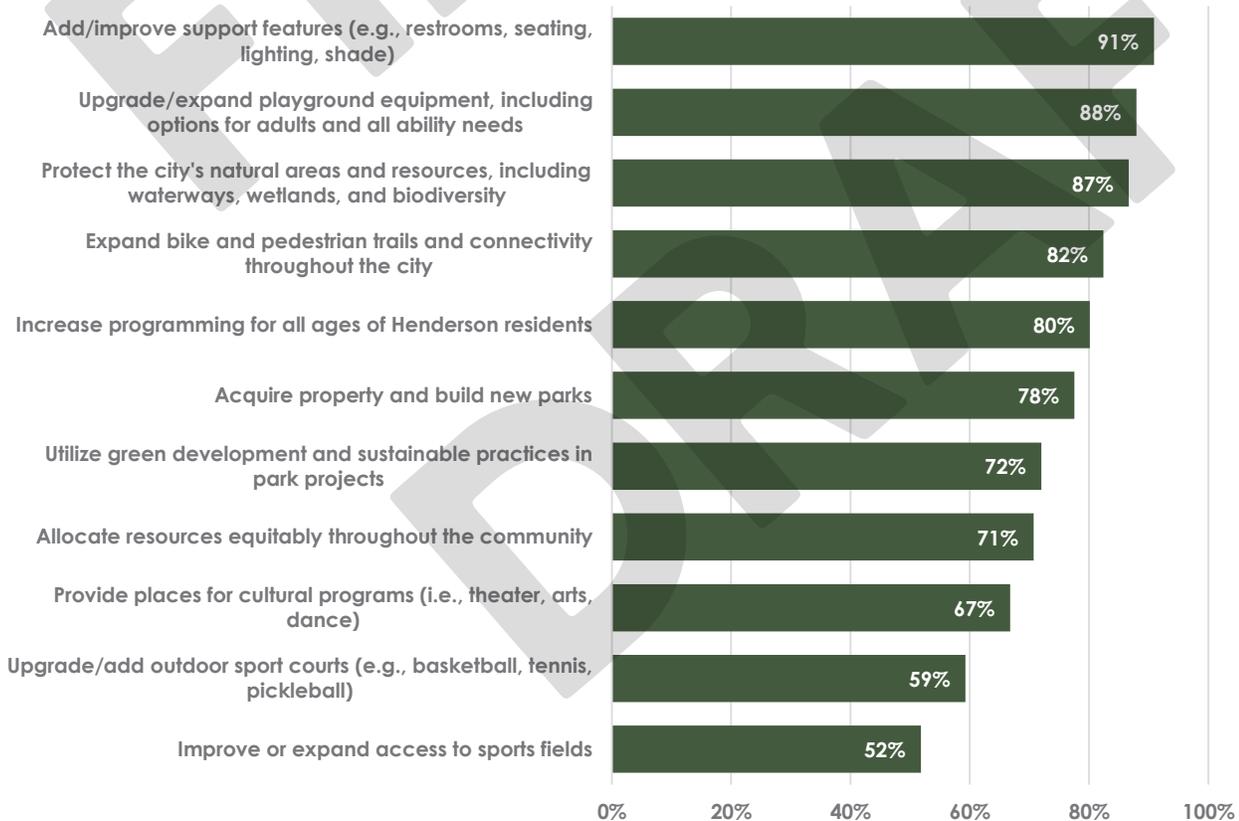


Figure 3.22: Support Actions to Improve Parks and Recreation



3.4.13 DEMOGRAPHICS OF SURVEY HOUSEHOLDS

Figure 3.23 compares the age ranges reported by survey respondents for members of their households to Henderson's population. The survey included underrepresentation of people over the age of 65 and overrepresentation of those under 15 and their parents, common for online surveys. Overrepresented groups suggest a higher level of engagement—at

least through the methods used—and more interest in participation, so programs and facilities that appeal to them should be considered a priority. The survey also asked respondents to identify their race/ethnicity (Figure 3.24). Overall, participation in the survey tracked somewhat closely with census data for race and ethnicity; however, white residents were overrepresented.

Figure 3.23: Age Comparison

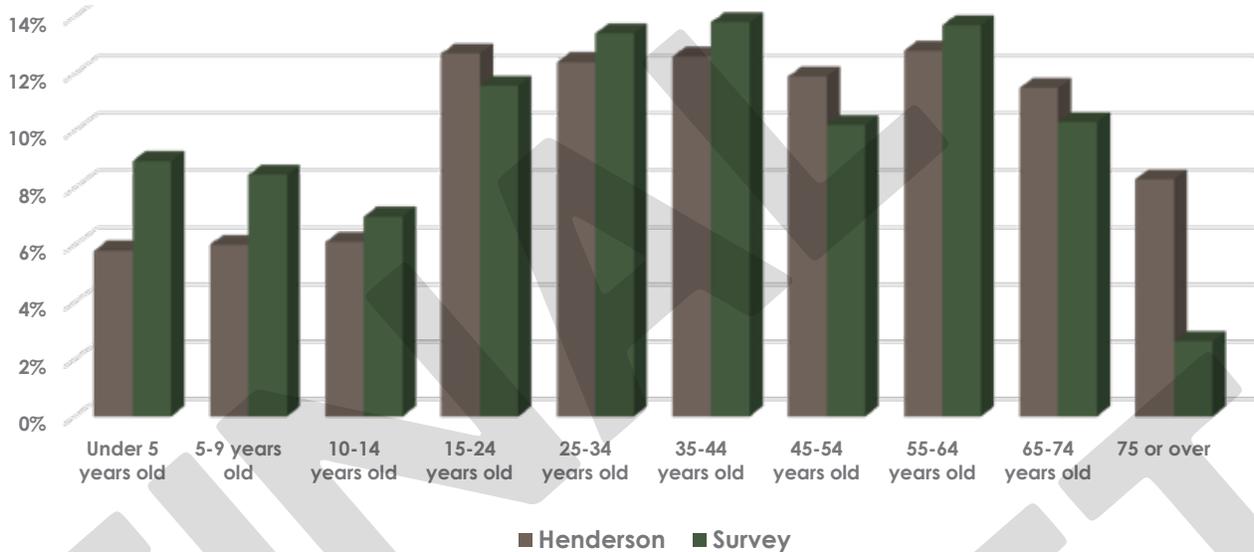


Figure 3.24: Race/Ethnicity Comparison

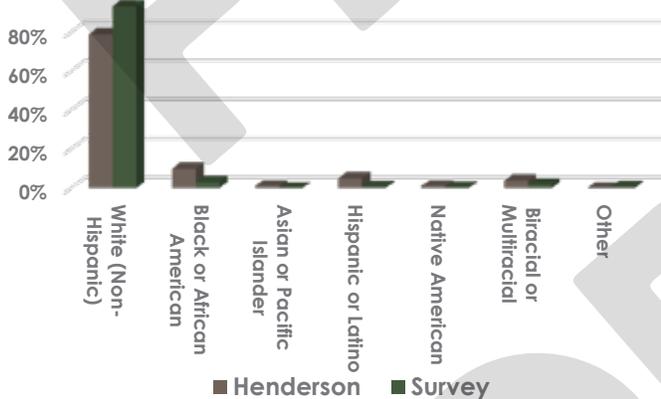
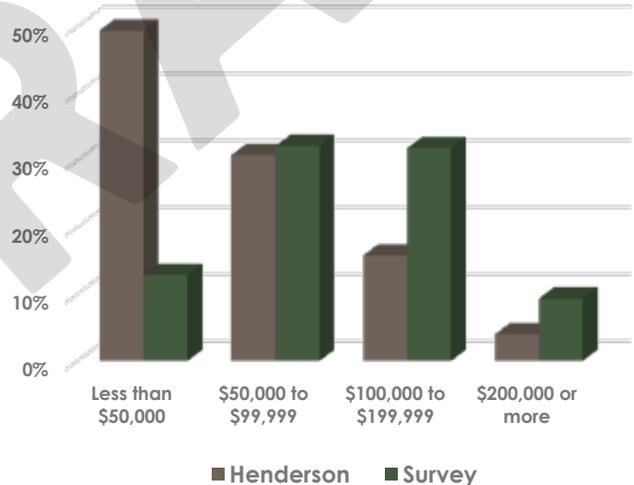


Figure 3.25 shows income levels of the households who responded to the survey compared to the city as a whole. The survey overrepresented households at the highest income levels and underrepresented the lowest income levels. This common result indicates a need to be intentional about outreach to lower income communities.

Figure 3.25: Income Comparison





VISION FOR THE FUTURE

4

4.1 TURNING THE PAGE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

The 2026 Henderson Parks, Recreation, and Trails Master Plan outlines the path to turn the page on parks and recreation in Henderson and move forward towards a common vision. The strategic plan focuses on the Parks and Recreation Department with a newly defined vision and the framework to achieve it. Drawing from input gathered during the engagement phase and approved by the steering committee, this strategic plan articulates a freshly inspired vision, mission, and core values. These strategic elements will guide implementation of actions identified in this Master Plan and thereby shape the future of parks and recreation in Henderson.

Finally, the chapter includes updated level of service (LoS) standards and guidelines that are consistent with the vision for the future of parks and recreation in Henderson. These targets help to quantify the future needs of the community and provide measurable outcomes for level of service throughout the city.

4.2 VISION

4.2.1 PURPOSE OF A VISION

A vision describes a unique horizon, an intended outcome. It defines a clear standard of accomplishment and in so doing, helps unify effort. A vision should:

1. Provide clear direction
2. Focus effort
3. Guide long-term action
4. Illustrate the department's purpose
5. Inspire and motivate
6. Visualize an ideal

4.2.2 NEW VISION FOR HENDERSON PARKS AND RECREATION

Fully informed by the values and visioning process generated by the steering committee and Parks and Recreation staff, the vision statement for Henderson Parks and Recreation is as follows:

Deliver balanced, inclusive, and memorable experiences for the entire Henderson community

4.3 MISSION

4.3.1 PURPOSE OF A MISSION

A mission defines the daily work and an enduring purpose and should define what the department does and how and why it does it. The mission is an action-oriented statement that informs day-to-day action. Like the vision statement, the mission should be easy to remember and share with others. It should be the foundation of all departmental decision-making.

4.3.2 NEW MISSION FOR HENDERSON PARKS AND RECREATION

Building from the foundational visioning exercise conducted with steering committee and Parks and Recreation staff, the following is the proposed mission statement for Henderson Parks and Recreation:

Create opportunities for fun, fitness, and education that fuel community pride

4.4 VALUES

4.4.1 PURPOSE OF VALUES

An organization's values serve as a "lighthouse" of guiding principles, informed by personal and organizational beliefs. Values are straightforward phrases or words that should:

1. Direct staff conduct
2. Express department ideals
3. Reflect department personality
4. Complement community's aspirations
5. Communicate what is important
6. Ensure quality staff experience
7. Instill positive focus system-wide

4.4.2 CORE VALUES

Core values should be unique to the department and indicative of the attitudes, ambitions, and focus shared by the department and the community. The following are offered as foundational values to guide the future work of the department:

Vision

We work towards a shared vision for parks and recreation in Henderson.

Innovation

We provide quality parks and unique, intentional programs that adapt to changing needs and trends.

Safety

We promote health and wellness opportunities in a clean, safe environment.

Inclusion

We emphasize accessibility and ensure everyone can participate.

Outreach

We connect the community and continuously address needs through collaboration and trust.

Nature

We promote sustainable development, conservation of resources and awareness of environmental impacts.

4.5 GOALS

Goals identify areas of strategic priority and provide broad, overarching organization for departmental actions. Goals describe elements of the vision, defining what is achievable through the daily execution of the mission. This plan has four goals to help turn the **PAGE** on Parks and Recreation in Henderson and achieve the department's new vision.

Protect

Adapt

Grow

Enhance

4.6 PAGES (OBJECTIVES)

Since the goals are to turn the **PAGE**, the objectives are the **pages**. The four goals, therefore, apply to all pages. As already mentioned, specific strategies are provided later in this report for each of the new pages listed below. The strategies or actions will be described in Chapter 5—organized by page—and Chapter 6 (Trails Plan). Each will be listed in the Action Plan (Chapter 7) with a timeframe, responsible party, and potential funding source. The pages are as follows:

Page 1: Modern parks and facilities

Page 2: Improved trails and connectivity

Page 3: Responsible nature and river access

Page 4: Inclusive access and inviting amenities

Page 5: Desirable programs and events

Page 6: Proactive maintenance and management

Page 7: Consistent engagement and promotion

Page 8: Sustainable funding strategies

Page 9: Constructive partnerships and collaboration

4.7 IMPROVEMENT PRIORITY RATINGS

Following the visioning process, the steering committee and parks and recreation staff reviewed a series of potential parks and recreation improvements in Henderson. These capital, programming, and operational recommendations were intended to begin to address the city's needs to help reach the new vision. The proposed recommendations were based on findings of the public engagement and other analysis in the planning process which was previously presented to the committee.

This process helped verify potential recommendations and determine priorities for the Action Plan. Committee members and staff rated each of the potential improvement projects using interactive engagement software (Mentimeter) on a scale of 0-5 between the highest priority (5) and not needed (0).

Figure 4.1 identifies the rating for capital improvements based on the average rating for each item. Figure 4.2 shows the same results for operational and programming improvements. These ratings are part of the process for determining priorities in Chapter 5.

Figure 4.1: Capital Improvement Priority Ratings

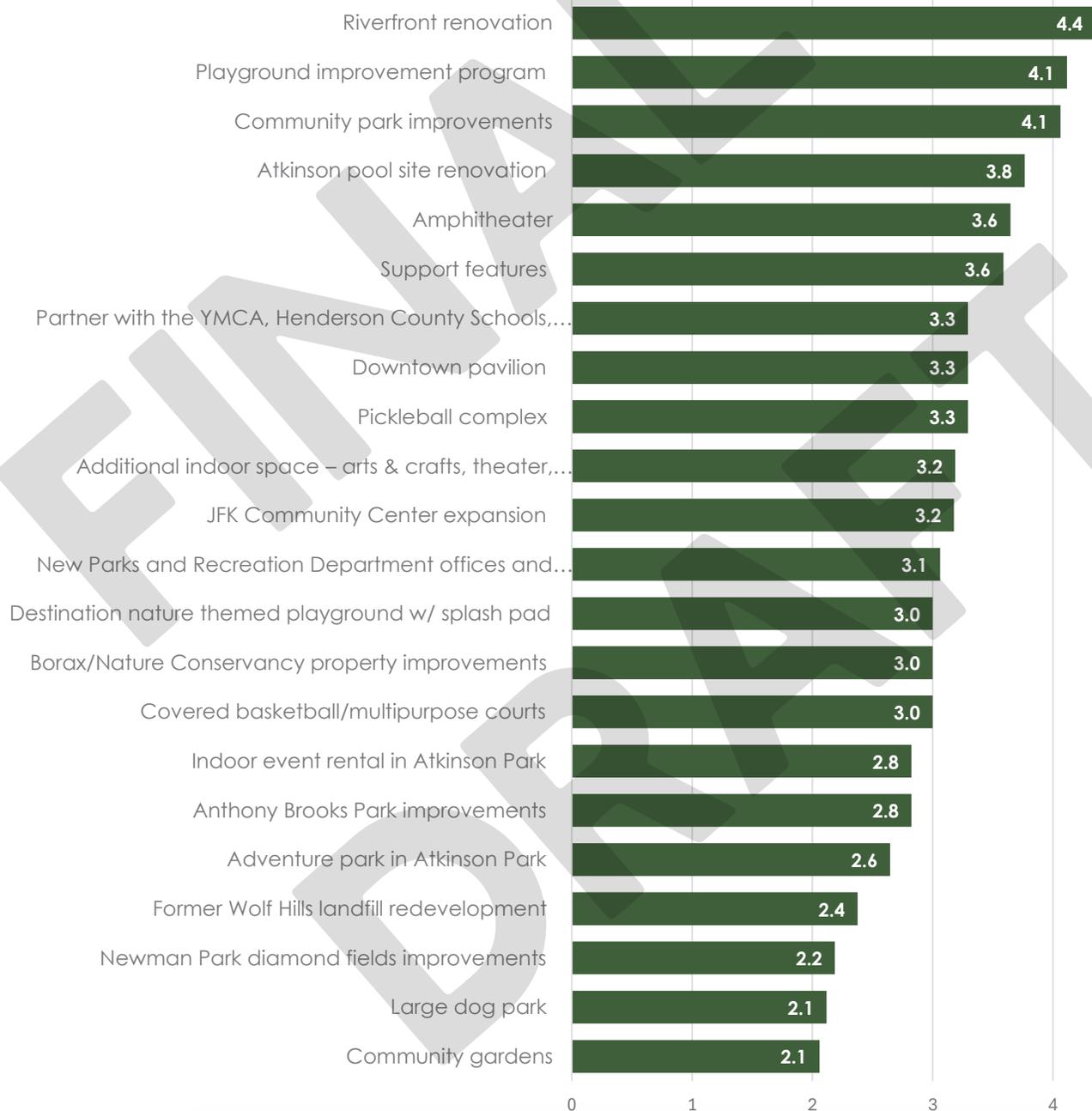
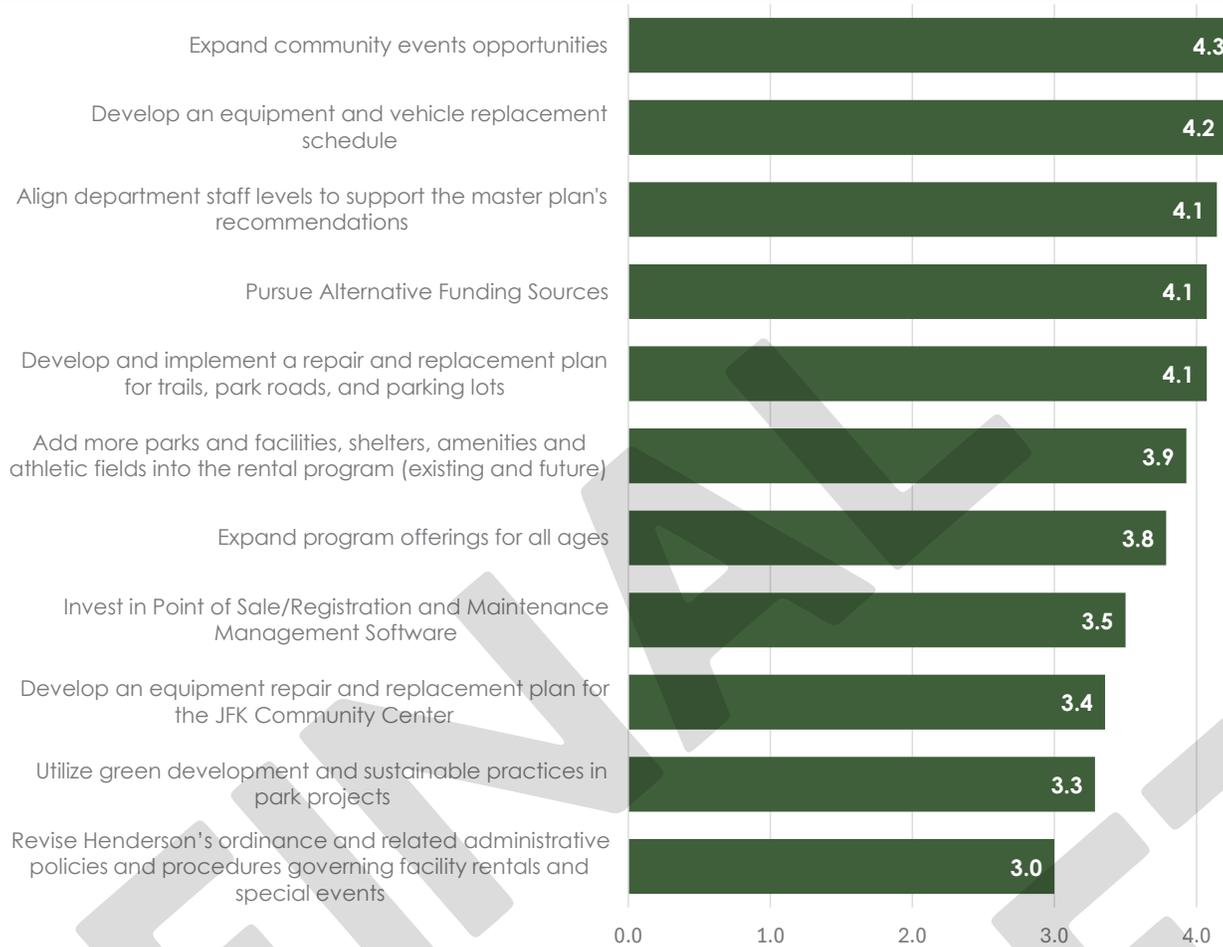


Figure 4.2: Operations & Programming Improvement Priority Ratings



4.8 NEEDS, STANDARDS, AND GUIDELINES FOR PARKLAND AND RECREATION AREAS IN HENDERSON

Analysis of the level of service for parks and recreation requires various perspectives to tell the complete story. For example, acreage standards (i.e., measurement based on the total number of acres) are useful for determining the level at which the city provides parkland. However, total acreage alone does not account for where parks and facilities are located and, therefore, which residents have access. Accordingly, the service area analysis in Chapter 2 is also important.

Targets provided in this chapter are meant to be achievable (e.g., specific acreage totals and service goals) and realistically met over the 10-year implementation timeline of this plan. Guidelines for open space represent more general goals for acquisition. Tailored specifically for the department, standards and guidelines are intended to be obtainable but also ambitious enough to inspire Henderson Parks and Recreation to continue to improve the quality of life for residents.

4.8.1 LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARDS FOR DEVELOPED ACRES

Parkland can be either developed or undeveloped. Developed acres include features such as athletic fields and courts, picnic shelters, playgrounds, and any mowed areas, while undeveloped acres remain in their natural state – including woodlands, prairies, and wetlands – without developed features or routine maintenance. Both types of land usage can have a positive impact on the human population and the environment but meet different needs.

Chapter 2 defines the classifications for parks and recreational areas and provides an overview of facilities in Henderson. Several factors – parks inventory, an examination of existing conditions, a thorough analysis of public input, and most importantly, the vision for the future presented above – help determine the level of service standards (LoS), typically acres per thousand population, by park classification.

Table 4.1 offers a breakdown of the needs (or target acres) for each park classification. This table includes only properties offered by Henderson, but targets could potentially be reduced if met by other agencies. The numbers include developed acres only because these acres represent improved land with amenities and are, therefore, a better basis of comparison for improvement.

Henderson's population is expected to remain steady, around 27,500 over the next 10 years. Targets were set to maintain the current LoS and to reflect recommendations outlined in Chapter 5, which will require adding parkland and park features. To meet these targets, Henderson will need to add 5 developed acres in neighborhood parks, around 22 developed acres in nature parks, and 5 developed acres in special use parks.

Chapter 5 highlights potential areas to develop new neighborhood, nature, and special use parks (amphitheater) based on current service gaps and potential new development. Trail recommendations will be presented in Chapter 6.

Table 4.1: Service Level Standards for Developed Acreage by Park Classification

Park Classification ¹	Existing Developed Acres ³	Existing Developed Acres per 10,000 Population ²	Target Acres per 10,000 Population	Developed Acres Target	Surplus/Deficit
Neighborhood	17.4	6.3	8.0	22.1	-4.7
Community	136.5	49.4	50.0	138.2	-1.7
Nature	0.0	0.0	8.0	22.1	-22.1
Special Use	260.6	94.3	96.0	265.2	-4.7
Other	72.2	26.1	26.0	71.8	0.3
Total	486.7	176.1	188.0	519.4	-32.8

1. See Chapter 2 for classification definitions and park inventory, existing acreage numbers from Table 2.3
2. See Chapter 2 for population estimates
3. Does not include proposed parks, parks by others, or school properties

4.8.2 GUIDELINES FOR OPEN SPACE

Park systems provide invaluable benefits to public health,¹ economies,² local environment and ecology,³ community social fabric, and overall quality of life.⁴ Beyond the developed park acreage, a park system includes additional undeveloped open space and natural areas. These acres, while often overlooked, have tremendous potential to benefit the community. Undeveloped open space, or even acres that are lightly developed as parks, can positively impact an entire community through improvements to air and water quality, increased biodiversity, wildlife habitat protection, noise reduction, reduction of erosion, and protection of water resources.⁵

Setting acreage targets – aiming for a certain number of parkland acres overall – is one way of achieving a desired level of open space. Target acreage can be a useful way for evaluating the progress of open space acquisition, but effective conservation also requires more intentional acquisitions based on a specific resource and where it is found. In other words, looking at open space acquisitions through a conservation lens,

the amount of land preserved depends on aspects of that resource not just on the number of acres.⁶

Land preservation in general has many benefits, such as increased quality of life for residents and elevated property values. In order for these benefits to be shared equitably – benefits typically are higher the closer the proximity – open space should be looked at from a holistic perspective taking into additional consideration natural resources and distribution. What follows is an examination of the current state of open space in Henderson.

Methods of Measurement

Two common metrics for measuring the level of service of open space are acres per population and percentage of total area. Both are provided below to serve as guidelines for evaluating and measuring open space available in Henderson. Table 4.2 identifies total acres of parks and open space acreage, including developed and undeveloped.⁶

This table shows targets based on the existing acres per 10,000 population levels and increases based on recommendations for new parks and natural areas based on public input and priorities identified by the steering committee and staff. Most of the increase comes from the addition of Canoe Creek/Borax property and the Wolf Hills Landfill Property.

Acres per Population

Using the target of 300 acres per 10,000 population Henderson Parks and Recreation will have an open space deficit of about 215 acres by 2035, if land is not added to the system. Parks recommended in Chapter 5 will meet this target.

Percentage of Total County Area

The percentage of total area is not tied to population, which means it can potentially represent a more flexible objective that may be adjusted over time. The target of 8.5% of total area was selected based on identified needs and recommended parks. Henderson would need to add approximately 200 acres of parkland to achieve the 8.5% target.

Table 4.2: Open Space Guidelines

Measurement	Existing Acres ¹	Existing LoS	Target LoS	2035 Target Acres	2035 Surplus / Deficit
Acres per 10,000 pop. ²	613.4	222.0	300.0	828.9	-215.5
% of Jurisdiction		6.4%	8.5%	816.0	-202.6

1. Existing acreage numbers from Table 2.1 in Chapter 2
2. See Chapter 2 for population estimates

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Parks, Trails, and Health Resources. [cdc.gov/healthyplaces/healthtopics/parks_resources.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/healthtopics/parks_resources.htm)

² WeConservePA. (2012). The Economic Benefits of Land Conservation: A Guide. Pennsylvania Land Trust Association.

³ John L. Crompton (2008). Empirical Evidence of the Contributions of Park and Conservation Lands to Environmental Sustainability: The Key to repositioning the Parks Field. *World Leisure Journal*, 50(3), 154-172.

⁴ John L. Crompton (2008). Empirical Evidence of the Contributions of Leisure Services to Alleviating Social Problems: A Key to Repositioning the Leisure Services Field. *World Leisure Journal*, 50(4), 243-258.

⁵ F.D.B. (2007). The economic benefits of land conservation. San Francisco, CA: The Trust for Public Land.

⁶ These totals do include some structures, but these features represent a relatively small percentage of the total acreage.

4.9 FACILITIES NEEDS ANALYSIS AND LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARDS

Like the recommendations for parkland described previously, level of service standards for individual park facilities and features are useful for determining the quantity of recreation facilities needed in the community, both at present and in the future. These standards emerge through examination of the benchmarking (Chapter 2) and the public engagement findings (Chapter 3); common industry standards and guidelines are also taken into consideration. Table 4.3 details the facilities by type and compares the available supply with the amount needed to meet the targets identified in the table.

4.9.1 FACILITY LEVEL OF SERVICE RATIONALE

The following text provides the basis for the per population targets for each of the facilities in Table 4.3. Each section breaks down individual elements by describing how the per population target compares to the existing per population supply and makes justifications for any recommended change. As with previous elements in this chapter, the following analysis combines benchmarking data (Chapter 2) with public input (Chapter 3).

Outdoor Recreation Areas

- Playgrounds – Set at increase to 11 due to recommendations to add two playgrounds in underserved areas of the city
- Amphitheaters – Set at increase to one to meet benchmark, due to program demands, interest in a larger downtown amphitheater, and trends
- Dog parks – Set at current level of service due to popularity and increased demand to be met through expansion of existing features
- Swimming pools – Set at current level of service with understanding current pool will be replaced
- Community gardens – Set at increase to one to meet benchmark and due to desire for gardening expressed in community engagement
- Skateparks – Set at current level of service with understanding current skatepark will be replaced
- Splash pads – Set at increase to three due to demand, trends, and recommendation for new splash pads in Anthony Brooks and Atkinson parks

- Disc golf courses – Set at a potential increase for a new course at the Canoe Creek/Borax property but the current level of service is significantly higher than the benchmark
- Volleyball – Set at increase to two to meet benchmark and due to recommendation to remove the court in Atkinson Park and replace it with two courts in Community Park

Outdoor Fields & Courts

- Diamond fields (baseball/softball) – Set at increase to 15 to reflect five additional diamond fields planned at the Sports Complex and the recommendation to remove two of the three diamond fields in Hays Park, much higher than the benchmarks to support tournament use
- Basketball courts – Set at current level of service
- Tennis courts – Set at current level of service which is significantly higher than the benchmark
- Pickleball courts (dedicated) – Set at increase to 22 by 2035 based on current demand, trends, and recommendation for 12-court complex in Atkinson Park
- Multipurpose fields – Set at current level of service with understanding that Red Banks field and recommended event lawn in Hays Park will be remain open for free play

Indoor Areas

- Recreation centers – Set at increase to two due to popularity and demand for space in the JFK Center and the potential addition of a building at the Sports Complex
- Senior centers – Set at current level of service
- Nature centers – Set at increase to one to meet benchmark and due to demand and trends

4.9.2 LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARDS

The values in Table 4.3 illustrate potential needs for various facilities. The largest current facility deficits are for pickleball courts, playgrounds, and diamond fields. While values in Table 4.3 highlight what additional facilities are needed to adequately meet the demand, they do not indicate where in Henderson these new facilities should be located. The recommendations in Chapter 5 consider this information collectively with the service area analysis in Chapter 2.

Table 4.3: Facility Level of Service Standards

Facility	Population Per Target	Existing Population per Facility ¹	Existing Total Supply	2035 Target	2035 Surplus/Deficit	Benchmark Median
Outdoor Activity Areas						
Playgrounds	2,500	3,070	9	11	-2	3,500
Amphitheaters	27,000	N/A	0	1	-1	27,000
Dog parks	15,000	13,815	2	2	0	26,000
Swimming pools	27,000	27,630	1	1	0	16,000
Community gardens	27,000	N/A	0	1	-1	19,300
Skateparks	27,000	27,630	1	1	0	29,000
Splash pads	7,000	13,815	2	4	-2	19,200
Disc golf courses	10,000	13,815	2	3	-1	38,000
Volleyball	13,500	27,630	1	2	-1	14,500
Outdoor Fields & Courts						
Diamond fields (baseball/softball)	1,800	2,303	12	15	-3	3,100
Basketball courts	6,900	6,908	4	4	0	8,400
Tennis courts	2,300	2,303	12	12	0	6,000
Pickleball courts (dedicated)	1,250	2,763	10	22	-12	5,700
Multipurpose fields	3,947	3,947	7	7	0	4,400
Artificial turf multipurpose fields	27,600	27,630	1	1	0	N/A
Indoor Areas						
Recreation centers	13,500	27,630	1	2	-1	18,100
Senior centers	27,000	27,630	1	1	0	24,200
Nature centers	27,000	N/A	0	1	-1	16,500

1. See Chapter 2 for population estimates and benchmarking

FINAL
DRAFT



RECOMMENDATIONS

5

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Findings from the Engage and Evaluate Phases identified various features, programs, and activities needed in the city and areas where additional parks and recreation amenities would improve access and overall level of service. **This plan will guide the department in turning the page on parks and recreation in Henderson by revitalizing existing parks and facilities while supporting new development and expanding program offerings.** Turning the page also means significant changes the how the department operates and secures funding for projects, programs, and events. Continued partnerships between the city and others in the community will be critical to the success of this plan as the department cannot accomplish everything in this Master Plan alone.

This chapter presents recommendations based on observations and findings gained through the first three phases of the master planning process – Evaluate, Engage, and Envision. These recommendations are grouped into the following categories (trail recommendations are presented in Chapter 6):

- Systemwide Recommendations
- Individual Parks
- Operations and Programming
- Revenue and Funding
- Capital Improvements and Cost Estimates

5.2 RECOMMENDATION HIGHLIGHTS

Page 1: Modern parks and facilities

1. Reimagine Atkinson Park/Hays Park improved circulation, expanded parking, and better access to the river
 - Develop a centrally located nature playground with a splash pad and picnic opportunities
 - Construct an event lawn with a covered stage at Hays Park and add a large picnic pavilion overlooking the river

- Construct indoor event facility overlooking the Ohio River with capacity of at least 200 for weddings and other rental opportunities
 - Seek a partnership for an adventure park at Atkinson Park to help make the park a regional attraction
 - Add large pickleball complex
2. Develop the new Veterans Memorial Park with an amphitheater and memorial plaza
 3. Redevelop Sunset Park with a destination playground, permanent dock, gathering spaces, and a plaza with skate elements
 4. Revitalize Community Park with soccer pitches, dog park expansion, sand volleyball courts, new shelter/restroom building, and perimeter trails
 5. Enhance Newman Park with multipurpose covered courts, upgraded diamond fields, and a perimeter trail
 6. Collectively consider Anthony Brooks Park, JFK Center, and WC Handy Park to best serve the community
 - Expand expanded fitness and programming space at the JFK Center
 - Enhance Anthony Brooks Park with a playground, splash pad, shelters, and restrooms
 - Upgrade WC Handy Park basketball courts with permanent bleachers, restrooms, and ADA access
 - Improve the crossing between Anthony Brooks Park and the JFK Center

Page 2: Improved trails and connectivity

1. Reconfigure the Riverwalk to form a multiuse trail from Atkinson Park to Doc Hosbach Tennis Center
2. Extend the Riverwalk from downtown to Newman Park and Canoe Creek Park
3. Develop the Audubon Connector to connect Atkinson Park to Audubon State Park

4. Connect downtown to the Merrill Trail and YMCA; extend the Merrill Trail to the Sports Complex
5. Connect JFK Center, WC Handy Park, and Anthony Brooks Park to Newman Park
6. Extend the Canoe Creek Greenway (follow Canoe Creek to the proposed Canoe Creek Park)
7. Add trail loops within parks
8. Create a 4th Street Art Walk (public art walk and connection from Main Street to Water Street)
9. Provide trail & trailhead amenities (parking, restrooms, lighting, shade, seating, signage hydration stations)

Page 3: Responsible nature and river access

1. Prepare a plan for development of Canoe Creek Park (Borax/Nature Conservancy properties) with trails, creek/river access, and more
2. Add canoe/ kayak launches along Canoe Creek
3. Provide overlooks and wildlife viewing areas along the Riverwalk with interpretive signage
4. Prepare a park master plan to be included in the landfill transition plan for Wolf Hills with a trails, a potential bike parks, and connections to Audubon State Park

Page 4: Inclusive access and inviting amenities

1. Conduct an ADA accessibility assessment and prepare transition plan
2. Upgrade wayfinding and signage in all parks, including consistent signage at all park entrances
3. Build a downtown pavilion for multiple activities, such as a farmers market, ice skating, and other events

Page 5: Desirable programs and events

1. Consider "Try It" programs—short-term, low-cost, or free introductory offerings—to encourage community members to explore new activities
2. Seek partnerships to engage the community's older adults with fitness, wellness, and social programs tailored to adults and older adults
3. Utilize proposed stages for more live music and outdoor movies
4. Expand program offerings at the JFK Center and other parks for residents of all ages

Page 6: Proactive maintenance and management

1. Determine locations for new Parks and Recreation Department offices and new maintenance garage/shop
2. Reenergize the Parks and Recreation Board and update by-laws
3. Develop a playground improvement and replacement program
4. Streamline and expand rentals and special events
5. Updated department organizational chart to ensure high-quality services while remaining adaptable to future demands
6. Bring management of city-owned sports fields under the

Parks and Recreation Department and streamline use agreements for all youth sports groups

Page 7: Consistent engagement and promotion

1. Develop a marketing strategy informed by customer feedback and preferred communication channels
2. Strengthen department social media presence and website
3. Continuously engage the community throughout implementation of this plan

Page 8: Sustainable funding strategies

1. Develop an Alternative Funding Plan that includes non-traditional funding options, such as fees and charges, sponsorships, partnerships, naming rights, tribute programs, and donations
2. Add more parks and facilities, shelters, amenities and athletic fields to the rental program
3. Conduct a cost-of-service analysis to evaluate both direct and indirect expenses related to the operation and maintenance of parks, facilities, athletic fields, and sports courts.

Page 9: Constructive partnerships and collaboration

1. Partner with the YMCA, Henderson County Schools, and others to develop a new outdoor aquatic center
2. Cross-promote programs and events with local entities, such as the State Parks, YMCA, Chamber of Commerce, Henderson County, and the library
3. Partner with downtown businesses to sponsor events/ programs in downtown parks

5.3 SYSTEMWIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

5.3.1 OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

The Henderson community desires improvements, upgrades, and expansion of many facilities throughout the park system. The community also would like more recreational programming and community events. Analysis also highlighted needed ADA accessibility improvements and expanded access to sports fields and courts. Nearly 40% of survey respondents indicated that they would participate more with the addition of programs they desire, and 32% indicated improvements to existing facilities would increase their participation, while 32% would participate if new facilities are developed.

5.3.2 SUPPORT FEATURES

Through the public engagement process, residents voiced a strong desire for features that would improve their experiences when visiting the parks. Restroom improvements were frequently requested through the public engagement with just under 57% of respondents requesting them in the survey. In addition to restrooms, many residents wanted more security lighting and shade (about 40% each). Others would like more benches and drinking fountains. Tree planting and

landscaping would also provide more inviting places, and the city should prioritize native, non-invasive species in all plantings.

Picnic shelters can address both shade and seating needs, while also providing gathering spaces and opportunities to generate revenue. Henderson offers many picnic shelters, but most are not reservable or rentable. Future shelters can provide shade, gathering spaces, and revenue opportunities. In addition to ADA accessibility to the shelter, new and upgraded shelters should include accessible grills and picnic tables. When possible, shelters should have lighting and electrical outlets.

The city could also better utilize technology, such as user counters, park related apps, and mobile device charging stations. Many of these technological improvements could utilize existing or new Wi-Fi hotspots in Henderson parks, which would help the success of any future app and would also allow the city to collect data about park usage. WiFi and charging stations are also features that will encourage teens to spend more time in parks.

Wayfinding and directional signage also need improvement in Henderson parks. Atkinson Park and Hays Park specifically are difficult to navigate. Signage improvement will provide better user experiences and reduced confusion. New wayfinding and signage should meet ADA standards, such as through touch, clear visuals, and redundancy.

Public art was supported by 24% of survey respondents. Parks are excellent locations for public art installations. Adding public art not only improves the experience of park users, but it also attracts more people to parks. All of Henderson's parks are candidates for carefully chosen and location appropriate public art, especially the downtown parks.

5.3.3 ADA ACCESSIBILITY

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires parks and recreation departments to make reasonable accommodations to facilities and programs to serve those with disabilities. The 2010 revision specifically mentions additional parks and recreation amenities, now including sports facilities, boating facilities, exercise equipment, fishing piers, play areas, and swimming pools as requiring accommodation.

The ADA requires agencies to develop a transition plan outlining strategies to eliminate barriers to accessibility. Henderson, like many agencies, has not yet prepared such a plan. An accessibility audit, also required as of 1993, should identify barriers and set a timeline to remove them.

As noted through the site assessments and the public input, many of the parks in Henderson need accessibility improvements. Many playgrounds, seating areas, and fields lack accessible paths. Dugouts and spectator seating areas, for example, need to be accessible by wheelchair or other mobility device.

The department should conduct an ADA accessibility audit, in conjunction with a transition plan, to function as a guide

for their efforts to improve access throughout the system. The plan will show a "good faith" effort to bring the system into compliance.¹ The ADA states that agencies (local government) must:

1. Designate an ADA Coordinator
2. Provide notice to the public about ADA requirements
3. Establish and publish a grievance procedure
4. Develop a Transition Plan
5. Develop a schedule and budget to implement the Transition Plan
6. Create supplemental policies such as:
 - Service animals
 - Wheelchairs and other power-driven mobility devices
 - Communicating with individuals who have speech, hearing, or visual disabilities
 - Reasonable modifications to Policies and Procedures to ensure that people with disabilities have an equal opportunity to participate²

5.3.4 PLAYGROUNDS

Although Henderson offers nine playgrounds, they were also a high-ranking facility for investment in the survey, and parts of the city lack easy access to a playground, especially areas away from the center of town without neighborhood parks. All new or upgraded playgrounds should consider the seven principles of inclusive playground design to ensure accessibility for all children (Chapter 2). The department should ensure variation (e.g., themes and features) to provide unique experiences and reasons for families to visit different parks.

The city should also incorporate nature play elements into playgrounds, especially in more passive and natural settings. These features are also consistent with the desire for greater access to nature as indicated by the survey results. For all new playgrounds, whether replacements of existing or new playgrounds at future parks, the city should invite neighborhood residents to participate in the design process. They should be included in selecting the playground's theme and the types of play elements included. An even stronger connection to the playground could be accomplished through a community build program where residents help with constructing the playground.

5.3.5 ATHLETIC FIELDS AND COURTS

Multipurpose Rectangular Fields

Henderson currently has a sufficient quantity of rectangular fields; however, residents desire more access, particularly for pick-up games and informal use. The city should explore ways to provide fields for open play. This could be accomplished by opening some existing fields in Newman Park or by upgrading field areas in Red Banks Park and Hays

¹ National Recreation and Park Association, "Recreation and the Americans with Disabilities Act," <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2016/august/recreation-and-the-americans-with-disabilities-act/>

² The ADA does not require agencies to take any action that would fundamentally alter the nature of its programs or services or impose an undue financial or administrative burden.

Park to be safe for sports play. The proposed soccer pitches in Community Park (see Figure 5.5) will also help address this need.

Baseball/Softball Fields

Like the multipurpose rectangular fields, Henderson's diamond fields are all closed outside of league play. The two fields at Hays Park managed by HRA are unsafe for use. However, the fields at the Sports Complex and Newman Park provide enough diamond fields to meet current demand. Future phases of development at the Sports Complex should be able to meet any additional demand by Henderson residents, while allowing for tournaments.

Another challenge with Henderson's fields is that the fields at the Sports Complex are sized for softball and younger baseball age groups, while the fields at Newman Park are sized for baseball, but have a second set of fences to shorten them for youth softball. The city should consider moving softball to the sports complex and upgrading the fields and Newman Park to accommodate larger baseball field sizes. Artificial turf infields would further reduce the need for additional fields by reducing rainouts, while also promoting tournament use.

Courts

As noted in Chapter 2, pickleball continues to be the country's fastest growing sport, and Henderson is no different. Pickleball courts were consistently the top ranked sports facility throughout the engagement results. The city's 12 tennis courts and 10 pickleball courts both exceed the benchmarks; however, most cities are still behind in meeting demand for pickleball courts. The city can meet this demand with a new 10-12 court pickleball complex.

Henderson's four basketball courts are in line with the benchmarks; however, two of those courts are in WC Handy Park. Basketball courts should be considered in new neighborhood parks if they are desired by nearby residents. Atkinson Park has the city's only sand volleyball court. This court is in poor condition and in need of replacement. Community Park would be a better location and has space for at least two courts. Thoughtfully designed, well-maintained, and programmed sand volleyball courts are popular park features, even in Kentucky.



Juniper Hill Park Volleyball Courts, Frankfort, Kentucky

5.3.6 OUTDOOR AQUATICS

The City of Henderson has an outdoor pool in Atkinson Park. This pool has already reached the end of its useful life and should be replaced as soon as possible. The city has a potential opportunity to partner with the YMCA to build a new outdoor pool. While the Henderson should consider this option, the city should insist that Henderson residents be allowed to use the pool at discounted rates and allowed to buy single day passes, rather than limiting use to members. Use of the pool should also not be tied to YMCA membership.

The city operates two splash pads with plans for a third in Anthony Brooks Park. One additional splash pad should be considered in the norther part of the city, preferably in Atkinson Park (see Figure 5.3).

The concept in Figure 5.1 shows a potential layout of a new outdoor, family-friendly pool in Henderson. The facility should have a variety of features for all ages, including a tot area, an activity area with play features, waterslides, and more. The cost of the project will likely be between \$8 million and \$9 million.

5.3.7 INDOOR RECREATION CENTERS

The JFK Community Center is Henderson's only indoor recreation center with one basketball gym, a weight room, and an activity room. The gym also has a stage on one side. Building assessments and public engagement results indicate a need to expand the JFK Center. This expansion would be constrained by the size of the property and the adjacent WC Handy Park. Upgrades to the JFK Center should include an expanded fitness center and additional activity room. Additional features such as a walking track and additional meeting space should be considered as well.

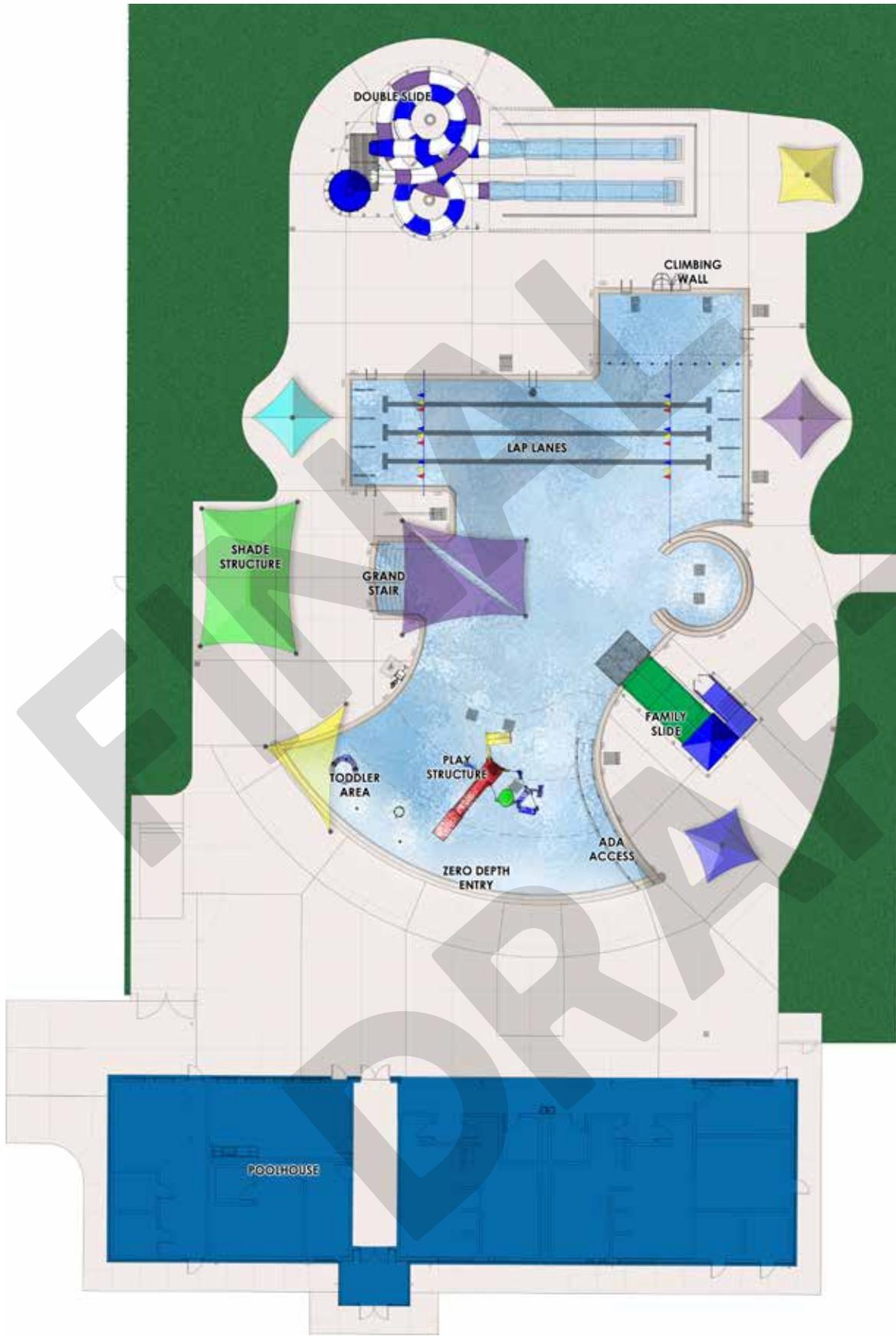
The city should also look for other options for additional indoor court space, because the JFK Center likely cannot be expanded enough to allow a second basketball gym. One potential location is the former Jefferson Elementary School building. The city could also partner with the school system to use school gyms when school is not in session. Use of these gyms would be for programming only and would be open and staffed only at scheduled times.

5.3.8 OUTDOOR FACILITIES

Skatepark

Henderson currently offers one skatepark in Atkinson Park, but this facility is in disrepair. Survey results indicate some demand for a skatepark, despite the poor condition and sub-optimal location of the current park. If the city supports investing in a new skatepark, it should be downtown in a highly visible location with features different from those in Evansville's new skatepark. Skate plazas are growing in

Figure 5.1: New Outdoor Pool Concept



popularity nationwide and would be a good option in downtown Henderson. These facilities look like and function like an urban plaza but are designed for skating (see the Riverfront Concept in Figure 5.6).



Skate Plaza in Kettering, Ohio

Downtown Event Pavilion

A desire for a downtown pavilion that can be used for many types of events, including a farmer's market and ice skating, emerged through the public engagement. Although a location has not been identified, the structure should be centrally located downtown for easy access.



Farmer's Market at Berea's Chestnut Street Pavilion

Outdoor Stages/Amphitheaters

Henderson offers a series of popular music events and residents want more. Additionally, event organizers expressed a need for a permanent stage in Audubon Mill Park and place for a second stage. City leaders also indicated a desire for a large amphitheater, preferably downtown, that can accommodate events with 6,000 or more people. The property immediately north of the train bridge on Water Street (future Veterans Memorial Park) would be a good location for an amphitheater (see the Downtown Riverfront Park Concept in Figure 5.6).

Dog Parks

Henderson offers two dog parks, one in Red Banks Park and another in Community Park. The Red Banks dog park is very popular, likely due to being downtown on the river, but is severely undersized. The dog park could be expanded by adding the areas between the current fenced areas and the

parking lot. Ultimately, the turf may need to be replaced with another surface due to the high level of use and small space.

The dog park in Community Park is also small, but there is space to expand it to include three areas, which would allow the city to rest one area at a time and so the grass can recover. Both dog parks need ADA accessibility improvements and shaded seating areas.

Disc Golf

While disc golf did not emerge as a top priority in the engagement results, it is a growing sport and Henderson already offers 38 holes on two challenging courses in Atkinson Park. Disc golf should continue to be supported; however, changes to some holes will be necessary to accommodate improvement proposed in Atkinson Park. Canoe Creek Park is also a potential location for an additional disc golf course. As changes are made or new courses are developed, a 9-hole beginner course should be included, so new participants can learn the sport.

Boat Ramps

Henderson operates three boat ramps, two of which are downtown in Sunset Park with the third in Hayes Park. The downtown boat ramps create a void and physical barrier in the public space along the riverfront in downtown Henderson. Relocating one or both of these ramps would open up incredible opportunities for improvements to the public realm that would boost economic and real estate development efforts in downtown Henderson. Figure 5.6 shows potential reuse of some of this space for community space.

5.3.9 NATURE ACCESS

Throughout the Engage Phase natural areas and nature parks consistently emerged as highly desired features by Henderson residents. More than 62% of survey respondents indicated they use or might use natural areas/nature parks, and most would like to see additional spaces. Protecting the city's natural areas and resources, including waterways, wetlands, and biodiversity was supported by 87% of survey respondents. In addition to the proposed Canoe Creek Park discussed later, the city can offer nature access through features in existing parks and trails (Chapter 6).

Community Gardens

The survey results indicated a potential need for community gardens in Henderson where residents can grow their own food or learn about gardening. According to the survey, 35% of respondents indicated an interest in gardening programs. Even residents with access to yards that could be used for private gardens often prefer community gardens for socialization, education, and assistance in plot preparation. Community gardens could be offered in the proposed Canoe Creek Park.

Canoe/Kayak Launches

While Henderson has three boat ramps, the city does not offer formal canoe/kayak launches. Residents expressed clear demand with 41% of survey respondents indicating

they would like to use dedicated canoe/kayak launches. Possible locations for launches include Hays Park, Sunset Park, Newman Park, and the proposed Canoe Creek Park.

Fishing/River Access

Despite being on the Ohio River, Henderson does not offer formal fishing access. An ADA accessible pier designed for fishing should be considered in the proposed Canoe Creek Park. The Riverwalk and parks along the river present opportunities for wildlife viewing. Several overlooks should be developed to provide water views and wildlife watching opportunities on the Ohio River and Canoe Creek.

5.4 INDIVIDUAL PARKS

5.4.1 BACKGROUND

All parks (new or existing) undergoing significant development should have development plans with community engagement finalized prior to construction. These plans will help ensure facilities are accessible, complementary features are located appropriately, and, most importantly, desired features fit on the site. Planning is a critical tool for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of maintenance, making it easier to be proactive, instead of reactive, in the face of challenges and changing circumstances.

5.4.2 NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Henderson should have a standard list of elements to include in each neighborhood park. These standards should then be applied to parks when it is time to upgrade (or build new) and should function as a starting point for engagement with the community but should ensure that all new parks provide a variety of amenities for all users. Adjustments to both types of parks can be made to accommodate specific site conditions or environmental limitations.

Neighborhood Park Standards

As described in Chapter 2, a neighborhood park should be between 3 and 15 acres with a minimum of 2 acres that can be fully developed to accommodate the features listed below. These guidelines should also apply to future parks. The city should also develop incentives or requirements for future residential developments to include parks or parkland that would be suitable for these elements.

Specific needs should continue to be addressed during the improvement process by inviting residents to determine specific elements based on their interests and needs. The inclusion of these elements helps to promote the neighborhood identity and encourages a sense of ownership. They also can provide opportunities for placemaking in parks, as described in Chapter 2.

Typical neighborhood park elements include:

1. Playground
2. ½ basketball court (may be swapped for another feature if desired by the community)
3. Circulation – walkways/ADA access
4. Landscaping & trees
5. Picnic shelter or other seating and/also with picnic tables
6. Open grass area/practice athletic field
7. Unique neighborhood determined feature(s) based on local interest:
 - Game courts (e.g., basketball, pickleball, tennis, volleyball, bocce, futsal)
 - Public art
 - Nature area or garden
 - Fitness equipment
 - Disc golf
 - Permanent outdoor games (ping pong/corn hole)

Neighborhood Park Improvements

Henderson offers six neighborhood and mini parks, and residents indicated desire for continued improvement to these parks. Specific improvements for each park are described below. The recommendations follow the standards outlined above. Recommendations for Sunset Park would upgrade the park to a community park and regional attraction and are included under "Community Park Improvements."

Anthony Brooks Park, JFK Center, and WC Handy Park

These three parks are contiguous and should be considered collectively. The city is currently in the process of redeveloping Anthony Brooks Park with a splash pad, playground, picnic shelter, and restroom building. The street crossing to the JFK center and parking lots should be improved soon for better access and safety.



WC Handy courts need resurfacing, drainage improvements and permanent bleachers.

At WC Handy Park, the playground should be replaced with a park feature for teens, such as an obstacle or "ninja" course. As noted above, the JFK Center needs expansion of fitness program areas for additional community and program use. The basketball courts need improvement to improve

cracking and drainage, and the community desires permanent bleachers in the hillside. The picnic shelter should be upgraded to include restrooms, and ADA access is needed from the JFK Center to the basketball courts.



Photo Credit: Landscape Structures

An obstacle course or "ninja" playground could be a fun feature for teens in WC Handy Park.

Other Neighborhood Park Improvements

Central Park needs to enhance both safety and enjoyment for its visitors, including playground safety surface, turf enhancements in the east and south sides of the park, and Landscaping around the gazebo. At East End Park, new shade structures should be installed near the splash pad.

Kimmel Park also needs significant changes. The restrooms and playground at Kimmel Park should be replaced, and shade structures should be added. Additionally, a unique feature determined by the neighborhood should be incorporated, ensuring that the park reflects the interests and needs of the local community.

5.4.3 COMMUNITY PARKS

Like neighborhood parks, community parks should have standard list of elements to include in each park. These standards should then be applied to parks when it is time to upgrade (or build new) and should function as a starting point for engagement with the community but should ensure that all new parks provide a variety of amenities for all users. Adjustments can be made to accommodate specific site conditions or environmental limitations.

Community Park Standards

A community park should be at least 20 acres in size and developed with consideration for a higher volume and extended duration of visitation. The following features are typical of community parks, and, like any development undertaken by Henderson Parks and Recreation should, also include an engagement campaign to solicit direct public input from across the city.

Typical community park elements include:

- Large inclusive playground
- Basketball court or another preferred feature
- Tennis and/or pickleball courts (multiple)
- Central gathering area/nucleus with seating

- Walking and/or biking trail
- Outdoor fitness equipment
- Good circulation – walkways/ADA access
- Picnic shelters and gathering space
- Trees and landscaping
- Shade at gathering areas, seating areas, playgrounds, etc.
- Security cameras/lighting
- Restrooms
- Athletic fields – game fields (type depending on needs)
- Unique elements (splash pads, dog parks, etc.)
- Parking lot(s)

Community Park Improvements

Henderson offers three community parks. They each have a different focus, allowing them to meet a wider variety of needs and interests; however, all three require significant improvements. Additionally, the recommendations along the riverfront would upgrade Sunset Park to a community park. The recommendations follow the standards outlined above.

Atkinson Park & Hays Park

Atkinson Park has a natural feel that should be embraced and enhanced. Atkinson is a large park in need of significant repairs, refreshed features, and some reimagined areas. Hays Park is also included here, because the two parks function together as one large park. Because the park is so large, the recommendations are divided into the separate concepts described below. Upgrades to the Riverwalk are included in the trails plan in Chapter 6. Road and circulation improvements will convert existing routes to two-way traffic, streamlining access and reducing confusion. Parking expansion is proposed throughout to accommodate increased activity, especially near the event lawn, outdoor game area, indoor event facility, adventure park, and pickleball complex.

Figure 5.2 shows the proposed improvements for the north portion of Atkinson Park, including Hays Park. Water-based recreation will be enhanced through the addition of a



Photo Credit: Earthscape

Taylor Farm Park nature-themed playground in New Albany, Ohio

Figure 5.2: Atkinson Park North/Hays Park Concept



Figure 5.4: Atkinson Park South Concept



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dedicated canoe and kayak launch and a fishing pier, inviting more residents and visitors to engage with the river. A new event lawn, combined with a covered stage, would transform this area into a vibrant hub for community events and performances. Finally, a large picnic pavilion with a picturesque river overlook is proposed near the Riverwalk trailhead.

The proposed improvements for central portion of Atkinson Park in Figure 5.3. Upgrades include a new, large, nature-themed destination playground with shelters for rentals and shade. The area would also include a splash pad and a new trail, connecting to the Riverwalk to create a 0.65-mile loop. Additional enhancements consist of river overlooks along the Riverwalk with cleared undergrowth to improve views.

Following relocation of the outdoor pool, the pool house should be renovated into a rental facility adjacent to a proposed outdoor games area. This area—featuring pickleball, bocce, and fitness equipment—would be connected to the Gathering Place for daytime use by seniors. The Denton Shelter should also be modernized to improve ADA accessibility.

The recommendations for the southern part of Atkinson Park (Figure 5.3) include an indoor event facility for weddings, community events, and private functions. This facility could be managed by a qualified third-party operator under a formal agreement, with all rental revenues dedicated to fully covering the venue's operational and maintenance costs. The adjacent adventure park will introduce exciting elements such as a zip line, catering to thrill-seekers and families alike.



Photo Credit: Kansas City Parks and Recreation

Go Ape Adventure Park at Swope Park, Kansas City, Missouri

Finally, proposed upgrades include a 12-court pickleball complex (6 covered to shade). Improvements to the Atkinson Clubhouse would better support rentals and tournament organization, expanding the facility's utility for community events.³



Covered pickleball courts in Weatherford, Texas

Newman Park

Newman Park combines a sports complex with a nature park, creating a community park with potential to offer something for everyone. Recommendations for this park enhance both the sports related features and the natural areas. To enhance recreational opportunities and visitor amenities at Newman Park, a series of targeted improvements are proposed to better serve the community.

The vision for this park includes a multipurpose covered court complex with two basketball courts, which would also be usable for other activities, providing all-weather access. To accommodate increased usage, parking facilities should be expanded near the covered courts, and a new restroom building is needed.



Photo Credit: Hello Woodlands

Covered basketball courts like these in Bear Branch Park in Woodlands, Texas, are proposed for Newman Park.

Upgrades to the diamond fields include extending the outfield fences expanded use, including older age baseball leagues. Temporary fencing would allow for flexibility and artificial turf infields would reduce rainouts. Turf improvements at the multipurpose and soccer fields will ensure better playability.



Photo Credit: The Motz Group

Diamond fields with turf infields offer cost savings over full turf fields, while still significantly reducing rainouts.

For passive use and nature access, improved access to Canoe Creek for water recreation and fishing will be provided through the construction of a canoe and kayak launch with a fishing platform. Finally, extension of the perimeter trail will promote connectivity throughout the park, while providing connections to Woodland Drive, Kingsway Court, and Larkspur Court.

³ Refer to the Facility Venue Analysis in Appendix E for feasibility, projected revenue, and operational benchmarks.

Community Park

Community Park is underutilized and needs a major refresh with new and additional features. Fortunately, the park has space for new features that will make the park a popular destination. The proposed improvements for the park, shown in Figure 5.5, would significantly enhance recreational opportunities, accessibility, and overall visitor experiences.

The concept proposes enhancement to the park's connectivity by developing both outer and inner perimeter trails that link all major features. The central activity area includes replacement of the restroom/shelter building, an expanded playground with ADA access, an enlarged outdoor games area (cornhole, table tennis, etc.), and a relocated full-sized basketball court.

The outer area features soccer mini pitches. Two are proposed initially, but two more could be added to meet growing demand. To accommodate pet owners and their dogs, two new areas will be added to the dog park. Additionally, two sand volleyball courts would replace the court currently offered at Atkinson Park.

Visitors will also be able to enjoy a scenic overlook at Canoe Creek, providing water views and a relaxing space to connect with nature. Finally, parking expansions are proposed at key locations, including the dog park, pickleball/soccer pitches, and volleyball courts, ensuring easy access for all park visitors.



Soccer mini pitched have become popular features for informal play and programming.

Downtown Riverfront Park (Sunset Park and Veterans Memorial Park)

Funding and developing the recommendations for Sunset Park must be shared by the city, county, Downtown Henderson Partnership, Chamber of Commerce, Henderson Tourism, Henderson Economic Development, and others. Figure 5.6 demonstrates the new concept for the downtown riverfront, including Sunset Park.

The proposed enhancements for the Henderson riverfront include a river-themed destination playground that will be visible from Main Street, creating a welcoming and engaging environment for families. The concept also proposes a

permanent dock to accommodate both river cruises and recreational boats. To support comfort and relaxation, new seating, tables, and swinging benches should be installed throughout the area with views of the river. An ADA accessible sidewalk will connect street level to the boat dock, ensuring inclusivity and ease of access for all visitors. Additionally, the design includes a plaza featuring skate elements (described above), further expanding recreational opportunities for the community. The concept shows connectivity with the proposed Veterans Memorial Park (described in section 5.4.5 New Parks).



Sturgeon inspired play structures at the Pier 26 Science Playground



A permanent transient boat dock like Paducah's would bring more visitors downtown via the river.

Figure 5.6: Downtown Riverfront Park Concept



5.4.4 OTHER PARKS

Downtown Riverfront Parks

In addition to the major redevelopment of the downtown riverfront at Sunset and Veterans Memorial parks, smaller improvements are needed at the other parks along the river. First, Audubon Mill Park is very popular for community events, music festivals, and concerts and would benefit from a permanent stage.

The Red Banks Park dog park is a popular destination, but its small size leads to poor condition of the grass. To help remedy this, the fenced areas should be expanded to include the areas between the current fence and the parking lot. Alternate surfacing, such as artificial turf, should also be considered due to the small size of the dog park if conditions do not improve after expansion. Improvements to the field would allow the park to fulfill the need for areas for informal sports and pickup games. A reservable and rentable picnic shelter would also be a popular addition to the park. Finally, the Doc Hosbach Tennis Complex is in good overall condition and only in need of standard maintenance, including lighting improvements and court resurfacing.

Henderson Sports Complex

The first phase of the Henderson Sports Complex was recently completed. The playground is the most immediate need, followed by the perimeter trail. Future phases, including additional fields and indoor program space should be prioritized behind recommendations for Newman Park and the JFK Community Center.

Additional diamond fields should be added after the Newman Park fields are upgraded and returned to a baseball configuration and if demand for additional diamond fields increases. The proposed indoor recreation facility at the sports complex should be re-evaluated after upgrades and expansion to the JFK Community Center. At that time, demand for indoor spaces should be re-evaluated to determine what types of indoor spaces are most needed by Henderson residents. The city should take steps to fund future developments at the sports complex with minimal reliance on city taxpayers, especially if the intended users are non-residents.

5.4.5 NEW PARKS

Henderson has already identified a few properties where new parks may be developed and one, Veterans Memorial, already has preliminary planning and partnerships to help with funding and managing the park. The other proposed parks should be considered long-term projects developed as funding allows.

Veterans Memorial Park

Henderson's veteran organizations presented a plan to develop the vacant property north of the trail bridge on Water Street into a Veteran's Memorial Park. Their stated intent is to develop a park that is used by the entire community while honoring the city's veterans. The initial park master plan includes a memorial plaza, relocated memorials

from Central Park, and an open space for their annual cross installation for Memorial Day.

This site is also an ideal location for the amphitheater desired by many on the community. Minor modifications to their plan would allow the property to also include a permanent stage and event lawn with a capacity of more than 5,000 people. The property is included in the Downtown Riverfront concept (Figure 5.6).

The concept also shows potential locations for the monuments if the decision is made to relocate them from Central Park. In addition to the cost of moving the monuments, the space used by these monuments will reduce the capacity for events. The city should consult with an arborist to verify the species and locations of trees.

Northeast Neighborhood Park

Service area analysis and community engagement highlighted the need for a neighborhood park in northeast Henderson. The recommendation is for the city to secure a property for the park and complete a master plan. Park development should follow the neighborhood park standards described in subsection 5.4.2 and include at a minimum a playground and a neighborhood determined feature.

Canoe Creek Park

The Borax property and adjacent property acquired from the Nature Conservancy present the city with a great opportunity to develop a large, passive nature park. This park would require minimal development to give residents highly demanded access to nature, the river, and Canoe Creek. The primary recommendation is for the city to complete a dedicated plan for development of the park. Potential features include a canoe/kayak launch and fishing pier, disc golf course, hiking/biking trails, community gardens, an outdoor nature education center, shelter, a nature play area, and a boat ramp if needed to replace a downtown ramp.

Wolf Hills Park

The city will be closing the Wolf Hills Landfill by 2030. When the landfill closes, the city may repurpose the site, but future uses are limited due to the site's history as a landfill. The property could be converted to a park with limited development and has the potential to provide features such as hiking trails and mountain biking features. The property is adjacent to Audubon State Park, presenting the possibility to connect to trails in the main park and in the wetlands section. Like Canoe Creek Park, the primary recommendation is to conduct a plan for potential development of the property as a park as part of the required landfill transition plan at closing.

5.5 OPERATIONS AND PROGRAMMING

The following recommendations are aligned with the City of Henderson's mission, core values, and identified community priorities. They are designed to serve as a guiding framework for delivering high-quality programs, events, and operational practices that reflect the city's commitment to excellence and public service.

5.5.1 PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

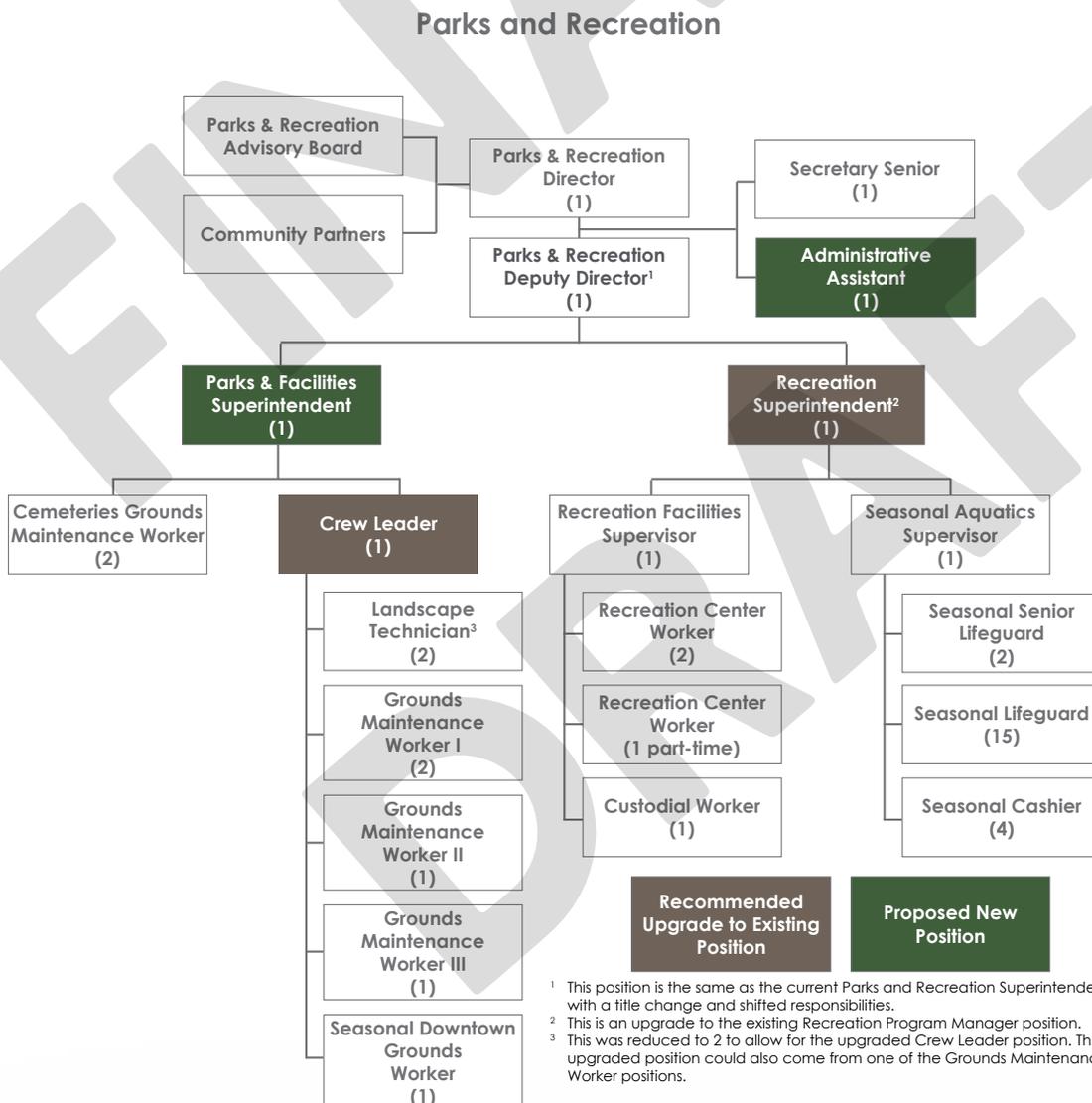
Community, staff, and steering committee input consistently identified the expansion of programs and events as a top priority for the Parks and Recreation Department. The city supports community organizations to host and offer several festivals and events, such as W.C. Handy Blues and Barbecue Festival, SummerFest, PorchFest, Sandy Lee Watkins Songwriters Festival, and Bluegrass in the Park Folklife Festival. JFK Center staff currently offer fitness and recreational programs that serve as the core of the department's offerings. However, outside of the JFK, the department's broader recreation programming remains limited in scope and variety. Engagement results underscore the need to diversify and expand program offerings across the city to better meet community demand and enhance equitable access. The top five programs include:

1. Festival, fairs, community events
2. Concerts and performances

3. Fitness and wellness programs for adults
4. Nature programs
5. Gardening

Additional programs of interest include arts and crafts, gaming, swimming lessons, leagues and team sports, and adaptive recreation. The department can partner with other agencies, such as John James Audubon State Park, YMCA, Henderson Chamber of Commerce, Cliff Hagen Boys and Girls Club, Henderson Community College, and Henderson County and is library to cross-promote programs and events for all ages. In addition, this leverages each agency's resources and strengths and can help minimize duplication of programs and services. In addition to the programs described below, staff should also work with the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board to continue to review public input and participation annually, which will help guide program and event prioritization, and determine staff capacity, cost-of-service, and cost recovery.

Figure 5.7: Proposed Organizational Chart



Family and Inter-Generational Programs

One option for introducing new programs is to offer “Try It” programs, such as fishing, kayaking, water aerobics, and other instructional activities, which are short-term, low-cost, or free introductory offerings designed to encourage community members of all ages to explore new recreational activities without long-term commitment. These programs can serve as a gateway to broader participation, helping residents overcome barriers such as cost, intimidation, or lack of exposure.

Gardening ranked among the top-rated program interests. In response, the department should consider working with the Henderson County 4-H Extension Office and The Gathering Place to provide expertise and engage the community’s older adults to offer and participate in an instructional gardening program. The program focus is a hands-on, seasonal initiative that teaches practical gardening skills to community members of all ages, promotes environmental stewardship and sustainable practices, encourages healthy living through outdoor activity and fresh food cultivation, and promotes intergenerational engagement by bringing together participants across age groups. This program blends education with experiential learning in a welcoming, outdoor setting, creating an opportunity for community connection and growth.

Adult and Senior Programs

Programs for older adults, particularly fitness and wellness, emerged as priorities in community engagement. The department can collaborate with organizations like the Gathering Place, AARP, Henderson Community College, and regional healthcare providers to create fitness, wellness, and social programs tailored to adults and older adults. Heart healthy and mindfulness trails often have markers or signs encouraging moderate-intensity exercise and ways to improve physical and mental health. They might also include features like distance measurements, exercise tips, or scenic views to make staying active enjoyable and motivating. These trails can also be programmed. Trails in Atkinson Park and Newman Park could be candidates for mindfulness or Healthy Heart trails.

Aquatic fitness and swim lesson programs in the existing aquatic facility can help attract new users and revenue. Partnerships with community organizations, such as the YMCA, community college and the local hospital can provide expertise and instruction for water fitness for adults and active older adults.

Adults and seniors also want to play organized sports. When the outdoor game area is developed in Atkinson Park the department and The Gathering Place can program the space with organized games and leagues. Also, adults in Henderson desire leagues in sports such as softball, pickleball, volleyball, and even ultimate frisbee. The department can add adult-focused sports programs and partner with SFC to offer sport activities that can produce additional revenue and provide adults and older adults with the opportunity to utilize the new facilities.

As the city’s parks become more accessible, the department can highlight and market park features that meet ADA accessibility standards that may appeal to adults and seniors such as trails, dog parks, and outdoor games.

Community Events

Festivals, concerts, and community events were easily the most popular activities and programs throughout community engagement for this Master Plan. Henderson residents have also shown through participation that they will support community events. In addition to supporting events managed by partner organization, the department should consider offering its own events. The department should consider collaborating with downtown businesses to sponsor events and in return they could advertise their business (within the city’s sponsorship policy guidelines). Another form of community event could be tournaments or learn to play events for sports such as tennis, pickleball, basketball, disc golf, golf, or fitness walks/runs. These events can be offered through partnerships with local sports organizations and increase utilization of city facilities.

5.5.2 OPERATIONS

Based on the parks and recreation department’s new mission, vision, and core values. The following recommendations have been developed to strengthen core service delivery, optimize staffing and facility use, and align departmental operations with community expectations and CAPRA standards.

Staffing

Based on the analysis of the current staffing structure and operational capacity of Henderson Parks and Recreation, the following recommendations are designed to optimize service delivery, expand community impact, and align with identified priorities for equitable access and organizational excellence.

Staffing changes are recommended to meet current and future departmental needs. Recommended staffing changes should be phased in based on department and city priorities and available funding. First, the Parks & Recreation Superintendent should be retitled to Parks & Recreation Deputy Director to reflect current job responsibilities. Second, the Recreation Manager position should be upgraded and retitled to Recreation Superintendent. This position will oversee the expansion of programming and events and work with staff to design, implement, and evaluate recreational, educational, and instructional programs for all age groups.

With the retitled Deputy Director position, the department needs a Parks and Facilities Superintendent position and a Crew Leader position in the maintenance division. The Parks and Facilities Superintendent will provide oversight and administration of parks, facilities, and cemetery maintenance and management. The Crew Leader will assign tasks, monitor progress, and ensure safe, efficient operations across parks, cemeteries, and recreation facilities, and lead crews on grounds and facility maintenance in the maintenance division. Major job responsibilities for the Parks and Recreation

Department leadership team can be found in Appendix E.

A proposed organizational chart has been developed in response to identified operational and programming needs. It is structured to ensure the department is equipped to deliver high-quality services while remaining adaptable to future demands. It reflects recommended functional areas of responsibility and staffing levels to support both current operations and anticipated growth. Figure 5.7 presents the recommended organizational chart for the Parks and Recreation Department. As additional programming and events are developed in the future, the department should consider adding a recreation programmer position under the Recreation Superintendent.

Following the changes described above, the department should review and evaluate staffing levels across all functional areas to ensure adequate support for community priorities and service delivery. This can be accomplished by completing a task analysis for each department position to identify and understand current staff responsibilities, expertise, and knowledge and to meet current and plan for future needs. Following this analysis, all department job descriptions should be reviewed and updated to reflect the department's new vision, mission, core values, and goals so that all positions are working to accomplish the plan's priorities and recommendations.

Staff Training and Professional Development

Another page that must be turned for Henderson Parks and Recreation relates to staff development. The department must invest in training and professional development for staff at all levels. Training and development opportunities can focus on turf management, park maintenance, event planning, leadership and supervisory training, aquatic instruction and management, revenue strategies, software applications, and other relevant disciplines.

Departmental Communication and Recognition

The Henderson Parks and Recreation Department has suffered from lack of communication and minimal recognition of staff contributions. This has resulted in frustration and low morale among all levels of department employees. To turn this page, city and departmental leadership must ensure that parks and recreation staff at all organizational levels are consistently informed about key initiatives, policies, and performance goals. They should also be actively engaged in decision-making, implementation, and continuous improvement efforts. Suggested examples to support communication effort include:

- Monthly staff briefings that summarize strategic priorities, upcoming projects, and policy updates.
- Cross-level working groups (e.g., maintenance + programming + admin) to co-develop seasonal schedules or event logistics.
- Staff surveys with benchmarking overlays to gather input on equipment needs, training gaps, or morale.
- Recognition programs that highlight staff contributions to strategic goals (e.g., cost recovery wins, community engagement).

- Onboarding modules that include CAPRA standards, local benchmarks, and department goals.
- Quarterly internal workshops on topics like programming, customer service, or data-informed decision-making.
- Job shadowing and mentorship pairings between staff and new hires to build institutional knowledge and engagement.

5.5.3 SPORTS FACILITY USE

Henderson has a history of entering into agreements with external groups, primarily sports organizations, for use of athletic fields and other park facilities that have negative financial and reputational impacts on the city. In the spirit of turning the page, the department must re-evaluate all policies related to external use of facilities and agreements with all organizations using parks and recreation facilities, including Hays Park fields, Atkinson Park disc golf, Newman Park fields, the Sports Complex, and the JFK Center.

The long-term goal should be to transition management and maintenance of city-owned facilities and concessions from the sports organizations to the Parks and Recreation Department. If the department lacks the capacity to manage and maintain certain facilities, a third-party operator (separate from the sports organizations) could be contracted to manage the facilities, similar to the current model at the Sports Complex.

New agreements with sports organizations should clarify responsibilities and ensure equitable benefits. One important aspect of equitable benefits is the capacity of sports fields compared to usage. To inform the details of these agreements, the department should conduct a utilization and capacity analysis of rentable and reservable spaces. This analysis should incorporate the cost-of-service analysis described above to determine the capacity of each sports facility to meet the time demands for scheduled programs, drop-in use, rentals, and maintenance (see Appendix E for examples of a space utilization analysis). New use agreements with sports organizations should reflect the capacity of the facilities they use.

Funding agreements will also need to be re-evaluated. Currently the city gives the sports organizations money to compensate for their investments in field maintenance. When responsibility for the fields transitions to the parks and recreation department, the sports organization should pay some form of a rental fee to the city to cover maintenance and staff time associated with their use. This fee could be hourly or based on the number of players. Use agreements should only cover league play for Henderson residents. Tournaments with outside teams should be managed as a rental with the newly established rental fees.

5.5.4 MAINTENANCE

To meet community expectations and care for the parks and recreation features, infrastructure, and facilities, development and monitoring of maintenance standards are crucial to maintaining consistent, high-quality amenities. Park and facility maintenance standards (service) levels are

often categorized into classifications that align with the park and/or facility's intended usage, resources available, and community expectations. These classifications help prioritize efforts and allocate budgets effectively.

Below are examples of common classifications. The department should customize classifications and service levels to meet and exceed the community's expectations. Full descriptions of the standards and an implementation guide can be found in Appendix E.

1. **Premium Service Level** – The Premium Service Level is intended for highly visible or flagship parks, such as city center parks, memorial parks, and major recreational facilities. This level emphasizes maintaining pristine conditions and enhanced landscaping to ensure these spaces are event-ready and visually appealing.
2. **Standard Service Level** – The Standard Service Level is applied to neighborhood parks and community spaces. The focus here is on moderate upkeep, maintained through regular maintenance schedules to ensure the spaces remain functional and welcoming.
3. **Basic Service Level** – The Basic Service Level is suitable for undeveloped or low-use parks and facilities. The primary goal is to maintain a natural aesthetic, with minimal intervention and occasional maintenance.
4. **Specialized Service Levels** – Specialized Service Levels are tailored for unique facilities or features such as sports complexes, trails, or historical sites. Maintenance tasks and standards are customized to meet the specific demands of each type of facility.
5. **Emergency or Reactive Service Levels** – This category is reserved for addressing urgent needs and safety hazards as they arise. Maintenance is performed on an as-needed basis, rather than following a set schedule.

Crime Prevention Principles Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

CPTED is a proactive design framework that enhances safety, visibility, and community ownership in public spaces. The department should work with local law enforcement and planners to apply CPTED principles to parks, recreation facilities, and cemeteries. This can help deter crime, reduce vandalism, and foster a sense of belonging. Examples of strategies are listed below:

1. **Natural Surveillance** – Design open sightlines across trails, playgrounds, and gathering areas. Use low shrubs and transparent fencing to eliminate hiding spots.
2. **Property Awareness** – Use signage, landscaping, and design cues to signal public vs. private space. Encourage community ownership through adopt-a-park programs and murals.
3. **Access Control** – Define entry points with gates, bollards, or pathways. Limit access to sensitive areas (e.g., maintenance yards, cemetery records) with secure barriers.
4. **Maintenance & Management** – Implement routine inspections and rapid response to graffiti, litter, and

damage. Well-maintained spaces signal active oversight and discourage misuse.

5. **Activity Support** – Program regular events and recreation activities to increase legitimate use and passive surveillance. Activate underused areas with pop-up programming or seasonal installations.

Maintenance Management Software

Maintenance software, such as OpenGo, Maintrac or other similar software are maintenance management tools designed specifically for parks and recreation departments. They help track and schedule all work performed across assets (fields, facilities, equipment) and can generate custom reports for budgeting, and cost recovery. The software implementation process should be integrated into staff training to maximize system benefits.

5.5.5 MARKETING

The Parks and Recreation Department does not have formal marketing activities to inform residents about programs, events, and facilities. The department website has minimal information and is not updated regularly. The department needs a new marketing plan and policies and procedures related to marketing, advertising, and social media. The Henderson Tourist Commission and Chamber of Commerce are potential partners for cross-marketing efforts with a focus on economic development. As a start, the department should develop a marketing plan and assign a staff member to make weekly (or more frequent) website updates and social media posts.

5.5.6 GOVERNANCE

The Parks and Recreation Board has been mostly inactive. With the adoption of this master plan, there is no better time to re-establish and engaged and empowered board. The board's by-laws should be updated at this time, as well.

Once the board is in place and engaged, they should guide the department through the free self-assessment offered by the National Recreation and Park Association's Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA). This process evaluates operational management systems against industry best practices. While optional, the agency may consider pursuing national accreditation upon completion. Even if accreditation is not a current goal, the assessment will identify additional areas for improvement for the department.

5.6 FINANCIAL AND BUDGET MANAGEMENT

To provide opportunities to manage existing budget resources and to leverage existing and potentially new sources of funding, it is important to develop systems and processes to ensure the department is maximizing its resources. Potential funding sources for trails are presented in Chapter 6.

5.6.1 ALTERNATIVE FUNDING SOURCES

Many parks and recreation departments fund programs, operations, and capital projects from sources beyond the general fund. These alternative funding sources can add up to significant amounts. They can support programs, services, amenities (e.g., shade structures, sports courts, benches, swings, trees), and capital investments not covered by general fund dollars. The department should develop an alternative funding plan to supplement operations, programming, and capital projects.

An Alternative Funding plan includes non-traditional funding options—such as fees and charges, sponsorships, partnerships, naming rights, tribute programs, and donations—to support programs, services, amenities (e.g., shade structures, sports courts, benches, swings, trees), and capital investments not covered by general fund dollars. Examples of non-traditional or alternative funding sources can include:

- Sponsorships and partnerships
- Naming rights (fields, scoreboards, courts, playgrounds)
- Tribute programs (trees, benches, swings, gardens)
- Donations
- Tournament fees – if an outside vendor makes money, the city should as well
- Parking fees at events
- Advertising and banner sales
- Wi-Fi revenue through sponsorship, if a vendor provides the Wi-Fi
- Cell tower leases
- Privatization of various park and recreation programs and services
- Sports booster clubs
- Entry fees for special events or tournaments

5.6.2 COST RECOVERY

Most parks and recreation departments generate revenue from their own programs and park/facility rentals. This is commonly referred to as cost recovery. Henderson Parks and Recreation does not currently have a cost recovery framework or a goal for how much revenue to generate each year. The first step in developing a cost recovery framework is to identify the costs associated with maintaining parks, facilities, athletic fields, and sports courts, as well as the direct and indirect costs associated with programs, events, rentals, and permits.

With an understanding of the cost-of-service, the department can then set cost recovery goals and establish a framework for recovering those costs. A template for a cost recovery framework is provided in Appendix E. Finally, the department can set charges and fees to meet the cost recovery goals. The fees and charges should support program lifecycle planning, including forecasting based on costs, revenues, participation rates and trends.

5.6.3 RENTALS AND PERMITS

Fees for rentals (not permits or programs) are currently required by ordinance to be set by the City Commission. The ordinance needs to be updated to meet current realities.

The new ordinance should include the following changes:

- Update definitions and clarify the difference between facility rentals and community event permits (typically rentals are not open to the public)
- Establish policies for alcohol permits for both private rentals and community events
- Designate spaces that may not be rented and specify areas that may not be rented for private events, but may be available via permit for community events
- Add language that allows department or city management staff to allow rentals or permits the ordinance does not specifically address
- Set categories for rental and permit fees and allow department to add facilities to the inventory within those categories without the Commission passing a new ordinance
- Allow annual updates to fees and charges approved by the Commission without passing a new ordinance

5.6.4 POINT OF SALE AND REGISTRATION SOFTWARE

Many departments utilize software specifically designed for parks and recreation to manage rentals, permits, program registrations, and other point of sale functions. These programs enhance operational efficiency, data tracking, and strategic planning. Henderson should invest in a point-of-sale program and integrate staff training into the software implementation process to maximize system benefits. Key benefits include:

- Trend analysis – track participation and sales to inform programming and pricing
- Self-service registration – allow residents to register and reserve facilities independently
- Facility utilization tracking – assess capacity, demand, underuse/overuse, maintenance needs, service gaps, and scheduling conflicts

5.6.5 REPAIR AND REPLACEMENT PLANS

The department needs long-term plans to guide and prioritize capital improvements, repairs, and equipment replacement. The first step in developing these plans is to complete an asset inventory of parks and recreation amenities. The inventory and facility assessments presented in Chapter 2 and Appendix A will help with identifying many of the department's assets. Other items, such as park benches, trash receptacles, maintenance and fitness equipment, and furniture will need to be added to the asset inventory. The department should explore partnering with Henderson Community College, local volunteer organizations, or a consultant to conduct a complete asset inventory of parks

and recreation amenities and equipment. The inventory should include:

- Park and Facility Location
- Type of Asset (equipment, amenities, and structures)
- Estimated Lifecycle of Asset
- Estimated Replacement Cost of Asset
- Maintenance Cost

When complete, the department can use the inventory to inform annual operational and capital budget requests.

5.6.6 VOLUNTEERS

The department can also address the need for additional resources through volunteer recruitment and organization. Adopt-A-Trail or Adopt-A-Spot programs are an additional, more formalized way for volunteers to assist with park maintenance. These programs encourage interested residents and groups to become involved in keeping parks clean for their community. These programs give new possibilities for involvement to those residents who have an interest but need a structured opportunity.

5.6.7 GRANTS

Devoting staff time to researching and applying for grants from foundations and corporations is important to help fund special programs, such as having a goal to teach all children to swim, which saves kids from drowning – or applying for funds to add youth STEM programs. Grants also can fund trails and specific features, such as playgrounds. Henderson should designate a staff person in the City Manager's office or in the Parks and Recreation Department to research and apply for grants to support programs and new facilities.

There are several federal grant programs that are administered through individual state agencies, and two of these include Land and Water Conservation (LWCF) and the Recreational Trails Program, both administered through the Department for Local Government (DLG). The Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention (CDC) uses grants to fund public health programs that advance the agency's public health mission to keep Americans safe and healthy where they work, live and play. These funds could be used to develop wellness programs.

AARP Community Challenge grants help improve public spaces, transportation, and civic engagement with an emphasis on the needs of people ages 50 or older. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's People, Parks, and Power Initiative strives to increase park equity through local policy and systems change. The geographic focus of this initiative is in small and mid-sized cities. Together Outdoor Grants fund outdoor recreation-related programming, events, and leadership development initiatives that benefit communities of color, underserved regions, people with disabilities, and minority groups.

Many additional grants sources are available for park, recreation, and wellness programs through national and state corporations such as Home Depot Building Healthy

Communities grants, American Express (playgrounds), LL Bean Charitable Giving, REI Activity Fund, Coca-Cola Foundation, AETNA, CVS, Rite-Aid, State Farm, and All State.

Potential grant sources for parks and recreation facilities and programs include:

- Resilient Communities Program (NFWF)
- Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)
- Community Forest and Open Space Program (Federal) – land acquisition
- Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) Grants (FEMA)
- Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Grants (USDA)
- Land and Water Conservation Fund (Federal)
- Multipurpose, Assessment, RLF, and Cleanup (MARC) Grants (EPA)
- National Park Service Rivers Historic Preservation Fund
- America the Beautiful (National Wildlife Federation) – ecosystem restoration
- AARP Community Challenge
- The Skatepark Project (formerly the Tony Hawk Foundation)
- Private foundations and charities

5.7 CONTINUITY WITH OTHER PLANNING EFFORTS

5.7.1 BACKGROUND

As Henderson Parks and Recreation moves forward on improvements and development that can make a difference in the lives of the community, they will benefit from aligning efforts with other plans wherever possible. In the future, Henderson County, Evansville Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), Downtown Henderson Partnership, and others will lead planning efforts that may help Henderson advance parks, recreation, and trails related projects. The city should participate in those planning processes and look for partners who can help fund and implement projects. Appendix D includes a summary of existing plans considered especially relevant to the work of the agency.

5.7.2 PRIMARILY RELEVANT PLAN DOCUMENTS

The Henderson Vision Plan (2015) was created by residents, local business owners, and community leaders who engaged in a visioning process to define where Henderson should be headed in the future. The Henderson City-County Comprehensive Plan defines the strategies and action steps needed to implement this vision plan. One important theme from the Vision Plan that relates to the parks master plan was the idea of "connecting the community and downtown to the Ohio River through the placement of public spaces, private development, and recreational areas along the riverfront." Key recommendations from the Vision Plan that

support recommendations presented earlier in this chapter include:

- Amphitheater upgrade/outdoor performance space
- Promenade/boardwalk development
- Riverfront gateway/landmark feature
- Downtown events, festivals & programming
- Events center
- Riverwalk Trail extension
- Environmental programming & education for all ages (agriculture preservation, outdoor learning, eco-tourism, etc.)
- Park facilities expansion & improvement
- Connect trail/greenway to Audubon State Park
- Transient docks/marina

The Henderson City-County Comprehensive Plan provides guidance for future growth and development in response to many local, regional, and national factors. The plan outlines a series of goals and objectives to guide development in Henderson County. Key goals and objectives from the Comprehensive Plan that support recommendations presented earlier in this chapter and the strategic plan presented in Chapter 4 include:

- Encourage new recreational facilities that support the needs of the community's youth and create economic development opportunities
- Strive for connected walkable and bike-friendly neighborhoods
- Promote walkways & bikeways as part of all neighborhood design
- Foster a sense of place by including elements that contribute to community pride
- Encourage community involvement in establishing priorities and programs that will serve our recreational and leisure needs and desires
- Preserve significant natural features and enhance existing green areas
- Promote health and wellness with strategies and programming for healthy lifestyle activities and options that are available to all residents
- Promote the creation of significant gateways at major entrances into downtown to communicate the identity of the Central Business District and the significance of downtown
- Promote waterfront development to enhance recreation and tourism
- Support downtown and riverfront development that focuses on entertainment, dining and living options, to create a livable and vibrant destination for residents and visitors
- Encourage tourism and public events which showcase the riverfront and downtown

The Henderson Downtown Master Plan (2019) was created by community leaders who engaged in a visioning process to define where the downtown should be headed in the future. The plan highlights several catalyst projects, three of which relate directly to this master plan:

- Events Center
- Arts District with Downtown Theatre
- Murals & Alley Way Cleanup

The US 41 Corridor Plan (2022) is part of Henderson City-County efforts to guide improvements to US 41 through the identification of potential projects and policies that enhance the public realm and encourage appropriate private development while providing a safe, functional, and attractive corridor for residents and visitors. The plan recommends right-sizing the road with a new configuration that includes with a 10-foot wide "urban trail" on both sides of the road (See 6.6.3). This trail could easily connect to Atkinson Park and Audubon State Park.

The Greater Henderson Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (2014) was created by the Evansville Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to make the Henderson area more bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly. The plan includes a recommendation for a separated trail system along Canoe Creek between US60 and KY 285. A similar version of this trail is proposed as the Canoe Creek Greenway in Chapter 6.

The Evansville Regional Trails Master Plan (2025) focuses mainly on Evansville; however, it includes one recommendation for Henderson and Henderson County. The plan includes a proposed trail along US41 that would connect from the south side of Evansville all the way to Atkinson Park.

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP 2050) for the Evansville, Indiana/Henderson, Kentucky Urbanized Area is a guide for the implementation of multimodal transportation improvements, policies, and programs in the Metropolitan Planning Area through 2050. The MTP 2050 does not currently include any trail-related projects. When the plan is updated, the city of Henderson should advocate for inclusion of the trail projects outlined in Chapter 6 so they may become eligible for federal transportation funding.

In 2015, the city purchased a 72-acre property from The Nature Conservancy where Canoe Creek meets the Ohio River. That same year, the city purchased 125 adjacent acres from the Dannlin corporation with the intent to develop an industrial park on former farmland. The two properties, plus parts of other adjacent properties, present an incredible opportunity to develop a large nature park. Whatever the city decides to do with the larger parcels, the 72-acre property purchased from The Nature Conservancy came with a conservation easement with the following restrictions:

- No subdivision
- May lease, but covenants still apply
- May construct a bridge in utility easement (could be for bike/ped and authorized maintenance vehicles)

- Trails and Trailheads to accommodate canoe/kayak launches and hiking are allowed and must be permeable. Only non-motorized vehicles and a maximum of 6' wide
- Fencing is allowed, but may not impede wildlife movement
- May only remove dead, diseased, or non-native/invasive trees and those obstructing flow of canoe creek

- Canoe Creek Park development on Borax/Nature Conservancy properties (trails, disc golf, boat ramp, canoe/kayak/fishing access, shelters/programs space)
- Downtown pavilion (farmers market, ice skating, & more)
- Partnership with the YMCA, Henderson County Schools, and others to develop a new outdoor aquatic center
- Environmental programming & education for all ages

5.7.3 KEY RECOMMENDATION FROM PREVIOUS PLANS

- Sunset Park improvements – Riverfront renovation (destination playground, permanent dock, plaza)
- New Veterans Memorial Park (amphitheater, restrooms, memorial plaza)
- Atkinson Park Improvements (adventure park, pickleball complex, nature playground, splash pad, outdoor games, new shelters, river overlooks)
- New riverfront event facility designed to attract a diverse range of rental opportunities—including community events, private gatherings, and business functions (200 guests)
- JFK Community Center expansion (fitness area and programming space)
- Anthony Brooks Park improvements (playground, splash pad, shelter, restrooms street crossing)
- WC Handy Park improvements (feature for teens, bleachers, shade, shelter, restrooms)
- Kimmel Park improvements (restrooms, playground, shade, neighborhood determined feature)
- Audubon Mill Park improvements (permanent stage/pavilion)
- Riverwalk (widen and straighten existing path, develop parallel trail closer to river)
- 4th Street Art Walk (public art walk and connection from Main Street to Water Street)
- Audubon Connector (connect Atkinson/Hayes to Audubon State Park)

5.7.4 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS AND ESTIMATED COSTS

This section provides recommendations for individual park improvements including proposed new facilities and upgrades to existing parks. These recommendations are presented as a starting point for future discussions with users, neighbors, partners, elected officials, and the community at large. Before pursuing development, each park site will need a deeper investigation into capacity and precise details like placement, materials used, and maintenance considerations. With each new or upgraded facility, the department will need to estimate the additional operating costs and secure funding to cover those costs.

The improvements by park are presented in Table 5.1. Improvements that apply to the whole system and those without a specific location are listed at the top of the table. These improvements should be reevaluated prior to new development and after any follow-up planning studies. All costs in the table are estimated in 2026 dollars and will need to be evaluated for potential escalation at the time of development. The master planning process completed before large-scale improvements should include a detailed estimate of the costs for the improvements at each park.

Grant opportunities exist and should be explored for many of these improvements, particularly trail system development, helping to reduce the contributions required by the City of Henderson. Additionally, partnerships, including fundraising efforts, should be considered as part of any improvement, particularly those with substantial capital costs.

Table 5.1: Capital Improvements by Park

Park Name	Term	0-2 Years	3-5 Years	6-10 Years	Total
Systemwide					
1 ADA accessibility assessment and transition plan	Short	\$62,000	\$0	\$0	\$62,000
2 Wayfinding plan & signage for all parks	Short	\$62,000	\$0	\$0	\$62,000
3 Outdoor multifeature/modern swimming pool	Medium	\$0	\$7,400,000	\$0	\$7,400,000
4 Downtown pavilion for events/farmers market/ice rink	Medium	\$0	\$740,000	\$0	\$740,000
5 New maintenance complex for the Parks Maintenance Division	Medium	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
6 New neighborhood park (northeast Henderson)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$900,000	\$900,000
7 New offices for the Parks and Recreation Department	Medium	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
8 Consistent signage at all park entrances	Ongoing	\$12,000	\$18,000	\$31,000	\$61,000
9 Drinking fountains/bottle fillers throughout system	Ongoing	\$37,000	\$55,000	\$92,000	\$184,000
10 Public art (coordinate w/ partners)	Ongoing	Partner	Partner	Partner	Partner
11 Tree planting and landscaping throughout system	Ongoing	\$90,000	\$140,000	\$230,000	\$460,000
Systemwide Total		\$263,000	\$8,353,000	\$1,253,000	\$9,869,000
Neighborhood Parks					
Anthony Brooks Park					
1 Picnic shelter (20' x 30')	Short	\$123,000	\$0	\$0	\$123,000
2 Playground with structures for ages 2-5 and 5-12 w/ shade	Short	\$185,000	\$0	\$0	\$185,000
3 Restroom building	Short	\$100,000	\$0	\$0	\$100,000
4 Sidewalks	Short	\$55,000	\$0	\$0	\$55,000
5 Splash pad	Short	\$123,000	\$0	\$0	\$123,000
6 Street crossing improvements to the JFK center and parking	Medium	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Project Total		\$586,000	\$0	\$0	\$586,000
Central Park					
1 Landscaping and drainage around gazebo	Short	\$20,000	\$0	\$0	\$20,000
2 Turf improvements on east and south sides of the park	Short	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
3 Fountain and surrounding hardscape repairs	Medium	\$0	\$81,000	\$0	\$81,000
4 Playground and safety surface improvements (including swings)	Medium	\$0	\$32,000	\$0	\$32,000
Project Total		\$20,000	\$113,000	\$0	\$133,000
East End Park					
1 Shade structures	Short	\$40,000	\$0	\$0	\$40,000
Project Total		\$40,000	\$0	\$0	\$40,000
Kimmel Park					
1 Restroom building replacement	Short	\$300,000	\$0	\$0	\$300,000
2 Playground replacement	Short	\$250,000	\$0	\$0	\$250,000
3 Shade structures	Short	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$50,000
4 Neighborhood determined feature	Medium	\$0	\$123,000	\$0	\$123,000
Project Total		\$600,000	\$123,000	\$0	\$723,000
Sunset Park					
1 Permanent dock (river cruises and recreational boats)	In Progress	In Progress	In Progress	In Progress	In Progress
2 Boat ramp modifications/improvements	Long	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
3 Granite sculptures/seating (reuse)	Long	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
4 Playground (large destination visible from Main Street)	Long	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
5 Seating/tables	Long	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
6 Sidewalk/trail (accessible - street level to river)	Long	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
7 Site grading	Long	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
8 Plaza w/ skate elements	Long	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
9 Swinging benches	Long	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Project Total		TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
JFK Center/WC Handy Park					
1 Park feature for teens	Short	\$120,000	\$0	\$0	\$120,000
2 Permanent bleachers w/ shade structures	Short	\$120,000	\$0	\$0	\$120,000
3 Sidewalk (ADA) from JFK Center to basketball courts	Short	\$68,000	\$0	\$0	\$68,000

Table 5.1: Capital Improvements by Park (Continued)

Park Name	Term	0-2 Years	3-5 Years	6-10 Years	Total
4 Basketball court improvements (surface replacement and subsurface improvements)	Medium	\$0	\$250,000	\$0	\$250,000
5 Drainage improvements at JFK Center parking lot	Medium	\$0	\$50,000	\$0	\$50,000
6 JFK Center expansion (fitness areas, program areas)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$1,700,000	\$1,700,000
7 JFK Center renovation (existing spaces)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$2,400,000	\$2,400,000
8 Picnic shelter replacement w/ restrooms	Long	\$0	\$0	\$500,000	\$500,000
Project Total		\$308,000	\$300,000	\$4,600,000	\$5,208,000
Community Parks					
Atkinson/Hays Park (see concepts)					
North/Hays Park					
1 Sidewalks	Medium/Long	\$0	\$40,000	\$50,000	\$90,000
2 Boat ramp improvements	Medium	\$0	\$250,000	\$0	\$250,000
3 Canoe/kayak launch/fishing pier	Medium	\$0	\$60,000	\$0	\$60,000
4 Riverwalk improvements (see trail recommendations)	Medium	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
5 Road/circulation improvements (2-way)	Medium	\$0	\$300,000	\$0	\$300,000
6 Shelter and parking improvements along entrance road	Medium	\$0	\$70,000	\$0	\$70,000
7 Event lawn w/ covered stage/shelter on SE (after removal of 2 baseball fields - includes demolition)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$370,000	\$370,000
8 Parking expansion (at event lawn)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$280,000	\$280,000
9 Parking expansion (stage & shelter)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$60,000	\$60,000
10 Picnic shelter/pavilion (large) w/ river overlook (40'x50')	Long	\$0	\$0	\$370,000	\$370,000
11 Restroom building renovation/replacement	Long	\$0	\$0	\$500,000	\$500,000
12 Shelter on south end of event lawn w/ parking (20'x30')	Long	\$0	\$0	\$120,000	\$120,000
Central					
1 Delivery access improvements at The Gathering Place (remove skatepark)	Short	\$100,000	\$0	\$50,000	\$150,000
2 Parking lot improvements (main parking/BBQ pits)	Short/Medium	\$210,000	\$210,000	\$430,000	\$850,000
3 Denton Shelter improvements	Medium	\$0	\$740,000	\$0	\$740,000
4 Disc golf relocation	Medium	\$0	\$10,000	\$0	\$10,000
5 Landscaping & trees	Medium	\$0	\$185,000	\$0	\$185,000
6 Picnic shelters (3) at new playground (20' x 30')	Medium	\$0	\$300,000	\$0	\$300,000
7 Playground - large nature themed	Medium	\$0	\$740,000	\$0	\$740,000
8 Restroom renovation	Medium	\$0	\$185,000	\$0	\$185,000
9 River overlooks (2) along the Riverwalk	Medium	\$0	\$37,000	\$0	\$37,000
10 Riverwalk improvements (see trail recommendations)	Medium	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
11 Road/circulation improvements (2-way)	Medium	\$0	\$320,000	\$0	\$320,000
12 Splash pad at new playground	Medium	\$0	\$500,000	\$0	\$500,000
13 Trail loop around central section with playgrounds and BBQ pits (complete loop using Riverwalk)	Medium	\$0	\$214,000	\$0	\$214,000
14 Sidewalks	Medium/Long	\$0	\$160,000	\$180,000	\$340,000
15 Outdoor game area w/ patio at former pool house (pickleball, bocce, fitness equipment, etc.)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$300,000	\$300,000
16 Parking lot at outdoor games/poolhouse shelter	Long	\$0	\$0	\$100,000	\$100,000
17 Picnic shelter at end of parking/trail loop (40'x30')	Long	\$0	\$0	\$180,000	\$180,000
18 Playground at end of parking/trail loop	Long	\$0	\$0	\$120,000	\$120,000
19 Pool house renovation to rental facility	Long	\$0	\$0	\$1,400,000	\$1,400,000
South					
1 Disc golf relocation	Medium	\$0	\$7,000	\$7,000	\$14,000
2 Parking lot expansion (clubhouse/pickleball)	Medium	\$0	\$270,000	\$0	\$270,000
3 Riverwalk improvements (see trail recommendations)	Medium	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
4 Pickleball complex (12 courts/6 covered)	Medium	\$0	\$1,230,000	\$0	\$1,230,000
5 River overlooks (2) along the Riverwalk	Medium	\$0	\$40,000	\$0	\$40,000
6 Shelter/restroom building at pickleball complex	Medium	\$0	\$310,000	\$0	\$310,000
7 Sidewalks	Medium/Long	\$0	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$140,000
8 Adventure park w/ zip line	Long	Partner	Partner	Partner	Partner

Table 5.1: Capital Improvements by Park (Continued)

Park Name	Term	0-2 Years	3-5 Years	6-10 Years	Total
9 Atkinson Clubhouse improvements	Long	\$0	\$0	\$700,000	\$700,000
10 Indoor event facility w/ 200+ capacity overlooking river (i.e., weddings)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$2,600,000	\$2,600,000
11 Parking lot (event facility)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$200,000	\$200,000
12 Parking lot expansion (event facility/adventure park)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$300,000	\$300,000
13 Trail improvements (included under Riverwalk)	Long	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Project Total		\$310,000	\$6,248,000	\$8,387,000	\$14,945,000
Community Park (see concept)					
1 Playground expansion and improved ADA access	Short	\$250,000	\$0	\$0	\$250,000
2 Soccer mini-pitches (2)	Short	\$310,000	\$0	\$0	\$310,000
3 Trail (inner) - perimeter, connect features within park	Short	\$160,000	\$0	\$0	\$160,000
4 Sidewalks	Ongoing	\$130,000	\$120,000	\$70,000	\$320,000
5 Basketball court relocation (full-sized) w/ lights	Medium	\$0	\$120,000	\$0	\$120,000
6 Dog park expansion (2 new areas)	Medium	\$0	\$185,000	\$0	\$185,000
7 Outdoor games area expansion (table tennis, cornhole, etc.)	Medium	\$0	\$100,000	\$0	\$100,000
8 Overlook at Canoe Creek	Medium	\$0	\$30,000	\$0	\$30,000
9 Parking expansion (dog park)	Medium	\$0	\$160,000	\$0	\$160,000
10 Picnic shelters (2) at soccer pitches (20' x 30')	Medium	\$0	\$250,000	\$0	\$250,000
11 Shelter/restroom building replacement	Medium	\$0	\$500,000	\$0	\$500,000
12 Trail (outer) - perimeter, connect features within park	Medium	\$0	\$325,000	\$0	\$325,000
13 Parking expansion (pickleball/soccer pitches)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$110,000	\$110,000
14 Parking expansion (volleyball)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$70,000	\$70,000
15 Picnic shelter at pickleball (20' x 30')	Long	\$0	\$0	\$120,000	\$120,000
16 Picnic shelter near volleyball (40'x50')	Long	\$0	\$0	\$310,000	\$310,000
17 Sand volleyball courts (2)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$60,000	\$60,000
18 Soccer mini-pitches expansion (2)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$310,000	\$310,000
Project Total		\$850,000	\$1,790,000	\$1,050,000	\$3,690,000
Newman Park					
1 Multipurpose covered court complex (2 basketball courts)	Short	\$700,000	\$0	\$0	\$700,000
2 Parking lot (near covered courts)	Short	\$120,000	\$0	\$0	\$120,000
3 Restroom building near multipurpose courts	Short	\$310,000	\$0	\$0	\$310,000
4 Sidewalks	Short	\$90,000	\$200,000	\$0	\$290,000
5 Canoe/kayak launch and fishing platform on Canoe Creek	Medium	\$0	\$30,000	\$0	\$30,000
6 Diamond fields upgrades (dugouts/cages/bleachers/extension of fences/temporary fences)	Medium	\$0	\$1,500,000	\$0	\$1,500,000
7 Field lighting (diamonds) upgrade/replacement	Medium	\$0	\$740,000	\$0	\$740,000
8 Turf/grading improvements at multipurpose/soccer fields	Medium	\$0	\$550,000	\$0	\$550,000
9 Playground improvement (replace older structure)	Medium	\$0	\$180,000	\$0	\$180,000
10 Restroom renovation	Long	\$0	\$0	\$260,000	\$260,000
11 Diamond field artificial turf infields	Long	\$0	\$0	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000
12 Field lighting (multipurpose) upgrade/replacement	Long	\$0	\$0	\$300,000	\$300,000
13 Trail (10' wide) - perimeter extension around diamonds w/ connections to Woodland Dr, Kingsway Ct, & Larkspur Ct	Long	\$0	\$0	\$250,000	\$250,000
Project Total		\$1,220,000	\$3,200,000	\$2,010,000	\$6,430,000
Nature Parks/Special Use					
Audubon Mill Park					
1 Permanent stage/pavilion on south end	Medium	\$0	\$0	\$180,000	\$180,000
Project Total		\$0	\$0	\$180,000	\$180,000
Red Banks Park					
1 Dog park expansion	Medium	\$0	\$37,000	\$0	\$37,000
2 Turf replacement (gravel or artificial turf)	Medium	\$0	\$340,000	\$0	\$340,000
3 Picnic shelter (20'x20')	Long	\$0	\$0	\$60,000	\$60,000
Project Total		\$0	\$377,000	\$60,000	\$437,000

Table 5.1: Capital Improvements by Park (Continued)

Park Name	Term	0-2 Years	3-5 Years	6-10 Years	Total
Henderson Sports Complex					
1 Playground	Short	\$220,000	\$0	\$0	\$220,000
2 Phase 2 (4 diamond fields)	Long	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
3 Trail (8' wide) - perimeter around fields	Medium	\$140,000	\$0	\$0	\$140,000
4 Indoor sports/program building (Reevaluate after JFK Center improvements)	Long	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
5 Phase 3 (full-size diamond field if needed)	Long	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Project Total		\$360,000	\$0	\$0	\$360,000
Doc Hosbach Tennis Complex					
1 Court lighting improvements (upgrade to LEDs)	Medium	\$0	\$590,000	\$0	\$590,000
2 Restroom improvements	Medium	\$0	\$120,000	\$0	\$120,000
3 Court resurfacing	Long	\$0	\$0	\$300,000	\$300,000
Project Total		\$0	\$710,000	\$300,000	\$1,010,000
The Bridges Golf Course					
1 Coordinate w/ operator		TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
New Parks (Proposed and In Progress)					
Canoe Creek/Borax Park					
1 Plan for development as a nature park	Short	\$100,000	\$0	\$0	\$100,000
2 Disc golf course (18-holes)	Medium	\$0	\$44,000	\$0	\$44,000
3 Hiking/biking trails	Medium	\$0	\$600,000	\$0	\$600,000
4 Boat ramp (if needed to replace downtown ramp)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000
5 Canoe/kayak launch/fishing pier	Long	\$0	\$0	\$60,000	\$60,000
6 Community gardens	Long	Partner	Partner	Partner	Partner
7 Nature education center (outdoor)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$200,000	\$200,000
8 Nature play area	Long	\$0	\$0	\$100,000	\$100,000
9 Trail - perimeter, connect features within park (1-mile)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$400,000	\$400,000
Project Total		\$100,000	\$644,000	\$1,960,000	\$2,704,000
Veterans Memorial Park (Water Plant Field)					
1 Veterans memorial project	In Progress	In Progress	In Progress	In Progress	In Progress
2 Permanent amphitheater with green room	Short	\$500,000	\$0	\$0	\$500,000
3 Restroom/concessions building	Medium	\$0	\$620,000	\$0	\$620,000
4 Streetscape improvements w/ wider sidewalk and street trees	Medium	\$0	\$185,000	\$0	\$185,000
Project Total		\$500,000	\$805,000	\$0	\$1,305,000
Wolf Hills Landfill Property					
1 Plan for park development as part of landfill closure plan (hiking and mountain biking trails)	Short	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$50,000
Project Total		\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$50,000
TOTAL PARKS		\$5,207,000	\$22,663,000	\$19,800,000	\$47,670,000

*Values include 10% contingency and 12% for design, engineering, bidding, construction administration, etc. (except non-construction items)

FINAL
DRAFT



TRAILS PLAN



6.1 INTRODUCTION - WHY TRAILS

Trails consistently rank as one of the most important recreational amenities desired by Americans and are major contributors to a community's overall quality of life. Surveys consistently show strong support for funding and developing new trails. For this Master Plan, 72% of respondents indicated trails are important or extremely important to their household. In the "2024 NRPA Engagement with Parks" survey of households nationwide, 53% reported visiting parks to use a hiking/biking/walking trail.¹ Trails are also important components of transportation infrastructure providing safer spaces for pedestrians and cyclists going to school, work, the library, shopping, dining, or a multitude of other destinations.

Trails offer many health and economic benefits, as well. When properly designed and maintained, trails encourage active lifestyles and support physical health, including reducing stress and providing opportunities for social connections. A National Association of Realtors study found that proximity to trails and greenways raises home values by an average of 3-5% and sometimes as much as 15%.² Trails also create jobs beyond those associated with construction and maintenance. Tourism related to trails can be an economic driver. Different types of trail users including hikers, cyclists, mountain bikers, and wildlife watchers travel for trails, spending money in local restaurants, hotels, and other businesses.³

This chapter provides a framework for how Henderson can effectively expand its trail network to meet the needs of current and future residents and visitors, while improving quality of life, community health, and the local economy. The sections that follow will examine the city's current trail offerings and related amenities, summarize community engagement results related to trails, and outline a set of recommendations to improve trails and enhance the trail user experience.

6.2 TRAIL TYPOLOGIES AND DESIGN GUIDELINES

Recognition of the various types of trails can help identify which types are best suited in different locations and to accomplish different goals. In certain locations, trails will be more difficult to develop, and creative solutions may be required to maintain the desired typology along the entire trail. Some common challenges that may need to be addressed include limited ROW, required easements or acquisitions, bridges, drainage, and vegetation (particularly trees). Most of these challenges can be addressed in the design phase and when securing funding. The trail typologies described in this section represent general categories that include specific variations, several of which are good options in Henderson.

6.2.1 TRAIL CLASSES AND DESIGNED USES

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) offers a set of design guidelines for side paths and shared-use paths in the Guide for Development of Bicycle Facilities.⁴ To qualify for federal funding to develop these types of trails, they should conform to these standards. The AASHTO guidelines represent the basis of the standards described in this text unless otherwise indicated, and these guidelines should be consulted in the design process of proposed routes.

Additionally, the U.S. Forest Service Trail Fundamentals and Trail Management Objectives categorize trails into five classes based on the level of development, which vary significantly on various attributes, including tread (surface), obstacles, constructed features, signage, and environment. Table 6.1 summarizes the trail class matrix from the Forest Service guidelines (with modifications to better meet the needs of Henderson) and provides a good description of

¹ <https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/park-pulse/mixed-age-recreation/>

² <https://www.nar.realtor/trails-and-greenways>

³ <https://www.railstotrails.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Economic-Benefits-of-Trails-and-Greenways.pdf>

⁴ AASHTO. Guide for Development of Bicycle Facilities, Fourth Edition. American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, Washington, DC, 2024.

what users should expect on each class of trail. This plan does not recommend any Class 1 (Minimally Developed) trails.

According to Forest Service guidelines, trails should be designed for a single use which determines the design parameters. While a trail may be managed for several uses, its designed use is the activity with the strictest design requirements, such as width or vertical clearance. Trails developed in Henderson should be designed for pedestrians (walking or hiking, including all accessibility), bicycling (on- or off-road), or shared-use. Design guidelines are provided in Table 6.2 for each of these uses with references to the appropriate trail classes. These guidelines are adapted from Forest Service standards and simplified for Henderson's needs.

Efforts should be made to make all trails accessible, unless those modifications would detract from the intended use (mountain bike trails or more rugged hiking trails). Trailheads should note accessibility of all trails. Accessible trails with tread widths less than five feet require passing spaces every 1,000 feet. Rest areas are also required after any segment over a 5% grade.

Primary walkways between park amenities must meet more stringent ADA guidelines for sidewalks. For example, an accessible recreational trail may have segments of up to 200 feet with a grade between 5% and 8.33%, segments up to 30 feet with a grade up to 10%, or segments up to 10 feet with a grade up to 12%. A sidewalk or walkway, in contrast, may not exceed a grade of 5% (or 8.33% with a railing).

Table 6.1: Trail Class Matrix

Trail Class/ Attributes	Trail Class 2 Moderately Developed	Trail Class 3 Developed	Trail Class 4 Highly Developed	Trail Class 5 Fully Developed
Tread & Traffic Flow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tread continuous and discernible, but narrow and rough Single lane with minor allowances constructed for passing Typically native materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tread continuous and obvious Single lane, with allowances constructed for passing where required by traffic volumes in areas with no reasonable passing opportunities available Native or imported materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tread wide and relatively smooth with few irregularities Double lane where traffic volumes are high and passing is frequent Native or imported materials May be hardened 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tread wide, firm, stable, and generally uniform Double lane where traffic volumes are moderate to high Commonly hardened with concrete or other imported material
Obstacles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obstacles may be common, substantial, and intended to provide increased challenge Blockages cleared to define route and protect resources Vegetation may encroach into trailway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obstacles may be common, but not substantial or intended to provide challenge Vegetation cleared outside of trailway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obstacles infrequent and insubstantial Vegetation cleared outside of trailway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obstacles not present Grades typically < 8%
Constructed Features & Trail Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structures of limited size, scale, and quantity; typically constructed of native materials Structures adequate to protect trail infrastructure and resources Natural fords Bridges as needed for resource protection and appropriate access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structures may be common and substantial; constructed of imported or native materials Natural or constructed fords Bridges and boardwalks as needed for resource protection and appropriate access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structures frequent and substantial; typically constructed of imported materials Constructed or natural fords Bridges and boardwalks as needed for resource protection and user convenience Trailside amenities may be present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structures frequent or continuous; typically constructed of imported materials May include bridges, boardwalks, curbs, handrails, trailside amenities, and similar features
Signs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Route identification signing limited to junctions Route markers present when trail location is not evident Regulatory and resource protection signing infrequent Destination signing typically infrequent Information and interpretive signing not common 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Route identification signing at junctions and as needed for user reassurance Route markers as needed for user reassurance Regulatory and resource protection signing may be common Destination signing likely Information and interpretive signs may be present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Route identification signing at junctions and as needed for user reassurance Route markers as needed for user reassurance Regulatory and resource protection signing common Destination signing common Information and interpretive signs may be common Accessibility information likely displayed at trailhead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Route identification signing at junctions and for user reassurance Route markers as needed for user reassurance Regulatory and resource protection signing common Destination signing common Information and interpretive signs common Accessibility information likely displayed at trailhead
Recreation Environments & Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural, essentially unmodified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural, primarily unmodified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be modified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be highly modified Commonly associated with visitor centers or high-use recreation sites

Source: U.S. Forest Service Trail Fundamentals and Trail Management Objective

Table 6.2: Trail Design Guidelines by Designed Use

Designed Use/ Parameter	Walking	Hiking / Mountain Biking	Multi-Use
Trail Classes	4, 5	2, 3	5
Surface	Concrete, Crushed Limestone	Natural	Concrete
Tread Width	6' - 8'	1' - 5'	≥10'
Cleared width	10' - 12'	4' - 8'	≥16'
Protrusions	None	≤6"	None
Target Grade	2% - 5%	3% - 12%	2% - 5%
Short Pitch Max	5% - 10%	15% - 25% 35% on downhill	10% (or same as road)
Max Pitch Density	0% - 20% of trail	10% - 30% of trail	N/A
Target Cross Slope	1% - 2%	3% - 8%	1% - 2%
Maximum Cross Slope	2% paved 5% unpaved	10%	2% paved
Vertical Clearance	8' - 10'	6' - 8' (8' minimum for MTB)	≥10'
Possible Additional Managed Uses	Mobility Devices	N/A	Any
Pedestrian/Wheelchair ADA Accessible²	Yes	Some	Yes

1. Guidelines derived from *U.S. Forest Service Trail Fundamentals and Trail Management Objectives*
2. Trails should be accessible for their design use whenever possible.

6.2.2 SIDEPATHS AND SHARED-USE PATHS

Sidepaths (Class 4 or 5) are located within the roadway right-of-way (ROW) and serve pedestrians, cyclists, and people using mobility devices. These bi-directional pathways can replace a traditional sidewalk with adequate widths. Sidepaths typically have a buffer between the path and the roadway, which can also include protective features such as bollards, planters, and trees. This type of trail is ideal in areas with high traffic volumes and speeds. AASHTO does not allow sidepaths to be used to replace on-road facilities, including bike lanes or paved shoulders. The Indianapolis Cultural Trail is an example of a sidepath in an urban setting.

Shared-use paths (Class 4 or 5) are designed for multiple types of users including pedestrians, cyclists, and people using mobility devices, skateboards, skates, and scooters. These bi-directional paths are located away from roadways, in parks, and in utility ROWs. These paths are often called greenways when they cover longer distances or connect different destinations. This type of path is hard-surface, typically paved asphalt or concrete but may also be with crushed stone or fine gravel.



Indianapolis Cultural Trail



Paducah Greenway

WIDTH

AASHTO guidelines require sidepaths and shared-use paths with travel in both directions to have a minimum surface width of 10 feet, typically ranging between 10 and 14 feet (sometimes up to 20 feet). A wider trail is recommended in areas with high use or with a wide variety of user groups. A width of 11 feet is required for a bicyclist to pass another trail user (traveling in the same direction) while another user is headed in the other direction.

A wider trail is also recommended if the trail will experience significant use by inline skaters, children, or adults with trailers as well as at curves or in portions of trails characterized by steep grades. In rare circumstances, including low peak bicycle traffic and minimal pedestrian use, a width of eight feet may be allowed. Signage should be used to remind cyclists to pass on the left and to use audible warnings before doing so. Centerline striping can also be used to indicate when cyclists can safely pass other path users (dotted when safe, solid when unsafe).

CLEARANCE

A minimum of two feet (3' to 5' preferred) of graded area with a maximum cross-slope of one vertical foot for every six feet of horizontal distance should be provided on both sides of the path. A minimum of five feet should be provided adjacent to a body of water or steep slope. Railings should be used to provide separation from steep slopes, bodies of water, or in some cases vehicle traffic. Railings on shared-use paths (see image) should be at least 42 inches high to prevent bicycle riders from flipping over the top of the rail. Protrusions should be avoided and a rub rail should be used at handlebar height.

Shared-use paths and sidepaths should maintain three feet of horizontal clearance and 10 feet of vertical clearance from all projections, including poles, trees, fences, hydrants, or other obstructions. A minimum of five feet of separation is preferred between the shared-use path and the edge of the paved roadway surface (including bike lanes), and a railing or other physical barrier should be used when conditions do not allow for this minimum separation. When developing a sidepath, on-road bicycle facilities (a bike lane or paved shoulder) may still be required if federal funding is requested. A wider separation is recommended adjacent to roads (and possibly a railing or other physical barrier).

GRADE

The maximum grade on a shared-use path should be 5% in order to comply with Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG)⁵ standards under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) that address access to sidewalks and streets (including shared use paths), crosswalks, curb ramps, pedestrian signals, on-street parking, and other components of public right-of-way. If physical constraints require a steeper grade a sidepath may exceed 5% if the adjacent road exceeds that grade.

According to the U.S. Forest Service Outdoor Recreation Accessibility Guidelines (FORSAG)⁶ an accessible recreational trail (not primary access) allows for a maximum of 8.33% slope for up to 50 feet or a 10% slope for up to 30 feet. Change in grade should also be gradual as to accommodate all types of users, and the grade should transition to less than 5% at the top and bottom of the segment of steep grade. In addition, these portions of the shared-use path should have increased width, and rest intervals are required along any such segment.

The cross slope and drainage of a path must also be considered. For asphalt and concrete surfaces, a maximum cross slope of 2% is required to meet ADA requirements (and AASHTO guidelines), and minimum cross slope of 1% is recommended to ensure proper drainage.

SURFACE

The AASHTO guidelines require the surface of a sidepath or shared-use path to be either asphalt or concrete. Concrete offers a longer lifespan and is a better choice for some locations in Henderson due to the local climate and high likelihood of flooding in some areas where shared-use paths are recommended. An unpaved surface (crushed stone or fine gravel) may be preferred in some areas due to cost considerations or the natural environment. Unpaved surfaces can meet ADA guidelines if they are "firm and stable" and meet other accessibility requirements.

MINIMIZING CONFLICT

Designating sidewalks as signed bikeways is not recommended. In residential areas, riding bikes on the sidewalk by young children is common. With lower bicycle speed and lower cross street auto speeds, potential conflicts are somewhat lessened but still exist. The widening of sidewalks into sidepath recommended in this plan is intended to allow for bicycle use along these paths while reducing conflict.

Accessible pathways should lead to any sidepath or shared-use path, and all access points along the path should be accessible to people with disabilities. Furthermore, any facilities located adjacent to the path should be designed for accessibility. Shared-use paths and sidepaths attract a variety of user groups who often have conflicting needs. Pedestrians are affected by sudden changes in the environment and by other trail users, including bicyclists who travel at high speeds. However, the conflict on shared-use paths is especially significant for users, such as people with mobility impairments, who cannot react quickly to hazards. To improve the shared-use path experience for all users, including those with disabilities, designers and planners should be aware of potential conflicts and employ innovative solutions whenever possible.

Identify and address conflicts on shared-use paths, prioritizing the needs of users with mobility impairments who may be unable to respond quickly to hazards. Proactively assess the path environment for potential conflicts and implement

⁵ <https://www.access-board.gov/prowag/>

⁶ <https://www.fs.usda.gov/recreation/programs/accessibility/>

innovative design and operational solutions to enhance safety and accessibility for all users, including those with disabilities.

Basic conflict can be avoided through the following methods:

- Providing information, including signage, in multiple formats that clearly indicate specific users and rules of conduct
- Ensuring that the paths provide sufficient width and appropriate surfaces for everyone, or providing alternatives for different type of users
- Providing sufficient separation for users traveling at different speeds
- Providing the necessary amenities for all users, for example, bicyclists require bike racks or locker

6.2.3 NATURAL SURFACE TRAILS

Natural surface trails (Class 2 or 3) typically have dirt, grass, or mulch surfaces but may also be hard surface with crushed stone or fine gravel. These trails are generally used for hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding. They are also designed to take people away from developed areas into more natural settings. The Canoe Creek Nature Trail system in Newman Park is a local example of a natural surface trail. Recommendations for these trails are also included in Chapter 5.

Mountain biking trails (typically also allowing hiking) should be designed to Class 2 or Class 3 levels based on anticipated usage levels and site characteristics. They should have a tread width range of one to four feet (4' to 7' cleared width). The target grade (3% to 12%) and cross slope (3% to 8%) are lower than a hiking specific trail for improved stability. The proposed Canoe Creek and Wolf Hills parks provide potential locations for new mountain biking trails. These trails should be between one and five feet wide (4' to 8' cleared width) and should have a minimum eight- to ten-foot vertical clearing height.

6.3 COMMON FEATURES AND AMENITIES

Good trails have a variety of features and amenities that make the trail easier and more enjoyable to use. This section defines several key features that should be considered when designing and updating trails.

Trailheads are perhaps the most important trail feature other than the trail itself. The trailhead is the gateway or access point to the trail and welcomes visitors to begin their journey. Common amenities at trailheads include **parking, bike racks, trash receptacles,** and **information kiosks** with maps and information about wildlife and flora in the area, trail rules, and topics relevant to the trail. Other amenities often included at trailheads include restrooms, repair stations, hydration stations (drinking fountains and bottle fillers), and public art.

Trailheads are recommended at access points for shared-use paths and natural surface trails but may also be appropriate for some sidepaths.

Wayfinding begins at the trailhead and continues along the trail. Common elements of wayfinding include maps, directional signs, and warning signs such as slow down, yield, and stop. Wayfinding may also direct users to amenities like restrooms, parking, and scenic views.

Interpretive signage promotes education about the area the trail travels through. The signage may tell the stories of the people who live or have lived in the area or about the wildlife, trees, and flowers users might encounter along the trail. These signs can be scattered along the trail or placed at specific locations to inform visitors about important natural features or historical events.

Parking gives more people access to trails. Trailheads are a common place for parking; however, parking may be necessary at other access points along the trail. Handicap accessible parking and transitions should be provided for hard surface and crushed stone trails.

Seating is an important amenity for users to stop and take a break or enjoy a scenic view. Seating should be placed every 1,000 feet for mostly flat trails and more frequently for more challenging trails. Seating should be accompanied by **shade** and trash receptacles whenever possible.

Lighting enhances the user experience by creating a comfortable ambiance and by promoting safety. Trail lighting should be downward facing and comply with International Dark Sky Association guidelines to avoid light spilling into natural areas and onto nearby residences.⁷

6.4 EXISTING CONDITIONS

Henderson has a few popular trails, most notably the Riverwalk and Canoe Creek Nature Trail. This section provides a brief overview of Henderson's existing trails and their conditions. In addition to the City of Henderson managed trails described here, there are trails within parks and included within the parks inventory.

6.4.1 RIVERWALK

Henderson's Riverwalk is a 2.5-mile walking trail along the Ohio River. The path begins in Hays Park on the north side of Henderson with a small plaza commemorating those who contributed to its development. The trail meanders through Hays Park and Atkinson Park before running parallel to the river until it reaches the north end of Red Banks Park. From that point south, the Riverwalk becomes a standard sidewalk along Water Street until it reaches Audubon Mill Park. In Audubon Mill, the path returns to the top of the riverbank and ends behind the Doc Hosbach Tennis Center.

⁷ <https://darksky.org/resources/guides-and-how-tos/lighting-principles/>



The Riverwalk in Atkinson Park



The Riverwalk narrows to a simple sidewalk where it ends behind the Doc Hosbach Tennis Center.



The Riverwalk commemorative plaza in Hays Park recognizes the individuals, corporations, and others that helped to fund the project.

The Riverwalk's surface is paved asphalt from the plaza until it reaches Red Banks Park. In this section, the path is an average of 8 feet wide. From Red Banks south, the path is an average of 5-6 feet wide and has a concrete surface. The surface is in mostly good condition, but there are sections in Atkinson Park and Hays Park in need of resurfacing. The path has several sharp turns and steep grades, which combined with its narrow width makes it suitable only for pedestrians and people using mobility devices.

The path has dedicated lighting in the section between Atkinson Park and Red Banks Park. Seating is available at various locations along the path, several of which offer scenic views of the river. Parking is available at the entry plaza in Hays Park, multiple locations in Atkinson Park, on Merritt Drive below the Riverwalk Gazebo, in Red Banks Park, and on the street along Water Street downtown.



The Riverwalk is currently a sidewalk on Water Street in downtown

6.4.2 MERRILL TRAIL

The Merrill Trail, sometimes called the Kimsey Lane Trail, is a 1.1-mile shared-use path in the northeast part of the city. The trail begins behind Wal-Mart on Barret Boulevard and currently ends on the former US 41 near Kimsey Lane. The trail is to be extended to Van Wyk Road as part of the Interstate 69 project. The trail's surface is asphalt and is on average 10 feet wide. The trail does not have dedicated parking or any amenities. The trail's surface is in generally good condition; however, there is significant erosion around the tunnel that takes the trail under the new US 41.



The Merrill Trail near Barrett Boulevard



Significant erosion around the tunnel under US 41



The trail currently extends to what was the old US 41 near Kimsey Lane

6.4.3 CANOE CREEK NATURE TRAIL

The Canoe Creek Nature Trail is a 2.4 mile mostly natural surface hiking trail in Newman Park. The trail includes a short, paved section near the parking area that is accessible, but there are no accessible parking spaces in that part of the parking lot. The trail makes a loop from the parking area in the back of Newman Park, partially along Canoe Creek. The trail has interpretive signage with information about the wetlands, trees, and other natural features visitors will see in the area. The trail has a few benches; however, they are in poor condition. The trail itself is in fair condition, in need of significant maintenance.



Canoe Creek Nature Trail trailhead in Newman Park



Typical bridge along the Canoe Creek Nature Trail



Some parts of the trail have poor drainage, making it difficult to pass through.



Interpretive signage along the Canoe Creek Nature Trail

6.5 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The survey for the Master Plan included a short section dedicated to trails with questions related to the importance of trails, why respondents use trails, the destinations they desire, and the amenities that would make their trail experience better. This section summarizes the results of the trail specific questions.

The first question simply asked respondents how important trails are to their household. More than two-thirds (68%) indicated trails are important or extremely important, and only 4% indicated they are not important (Figure 6.2). Next, the survey asked reasons for trail use. Most (85%) indicated they would walk or hike, and over half (54%) would use trails to experience nature (Figure 6.3). Smaller percentages indicated they would walk their pet (28%), ride their bike (24%), or go jogging/running (21%). When asked about their most likely destinations while using trails (Figure 6.4), 76% would like to be able to access downtown, 73% would like to be able to access parks or sports fields, and 68% would go shopping, eat, or enjoy some other form of entertainment.

Figure 6.2: Importance of Trails

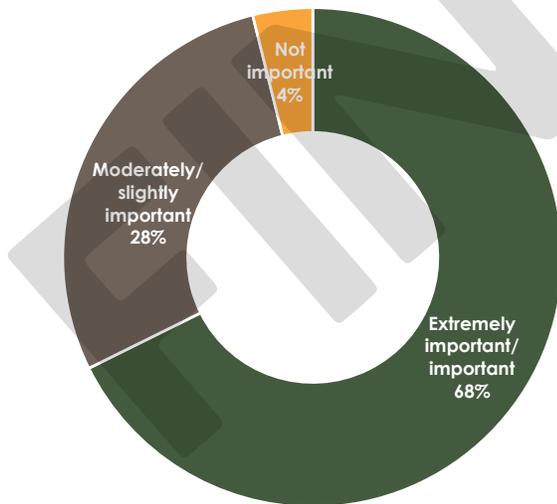


Figure 6.3: Trail Activities

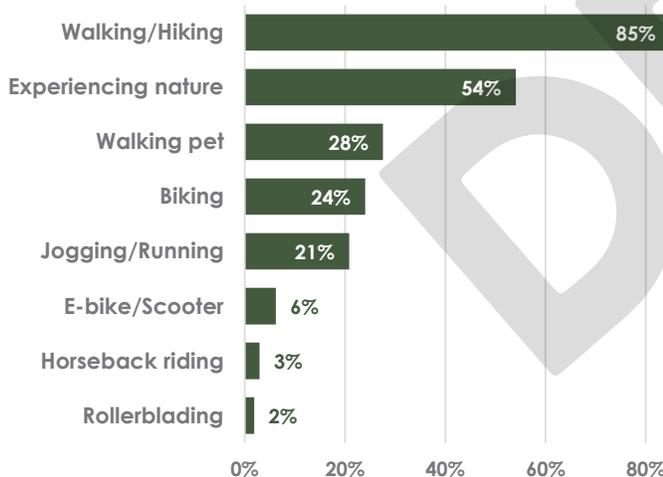
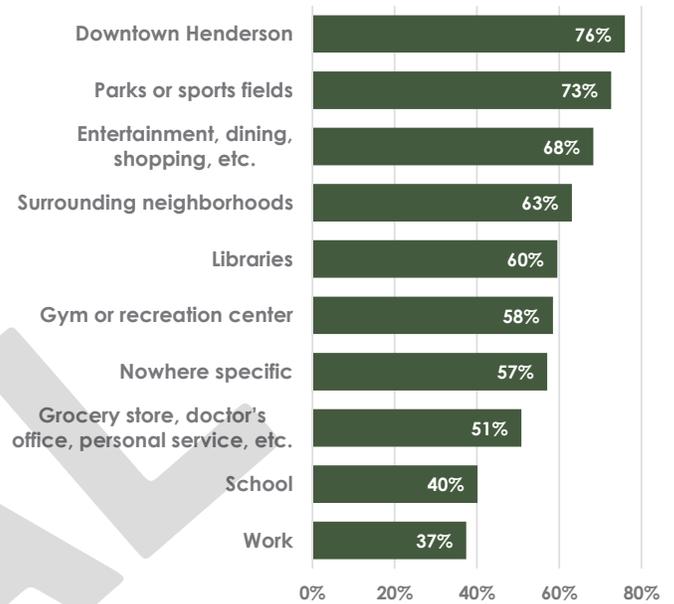


Figure 6.4: Most Likely Trail Destinations



When asked to indicate the importance of trail characteristics, 94% indicated safety was either important or extremely important (Figure 6.5), while 82% want trails in scenic areas and 81% desire convenient parking or access. All options were important to over 60% of respondents.

For trail amenities that would increase their use of trails, restrooms were by far the top option at 55%, followed by lighting (31%), shaded seating (30%), and hydration stations (27%) (Figure 6.6). Finally, the survey asked what would be the ideal trail length for the reasons they use trails (Figure 6.7). Fifty-seven percent selected 1 to 3 miles, followed by 4 to 5 miles (19%), and 5+ miles (13%).

Figure 6.5: Most Important Trail Characteristics

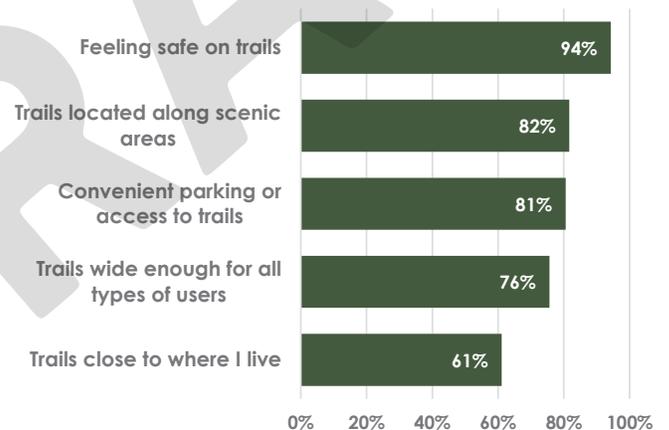


Figure 6.6: Important Trail Amenities

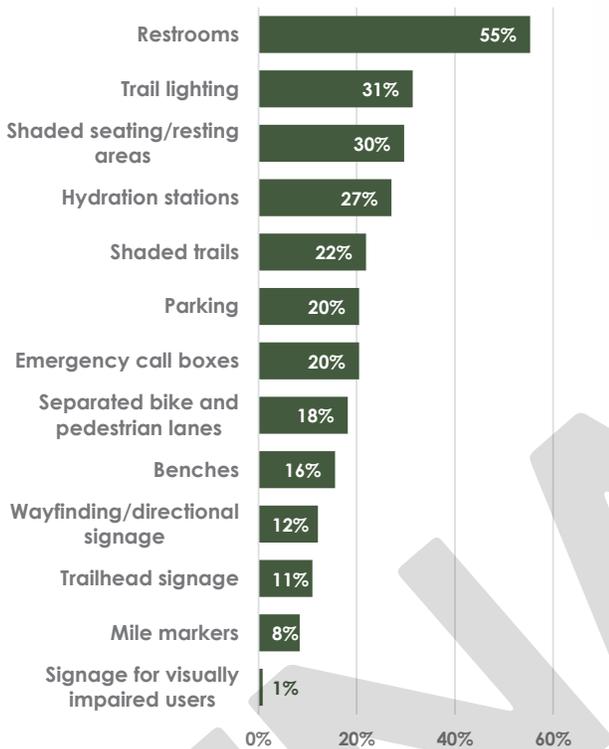
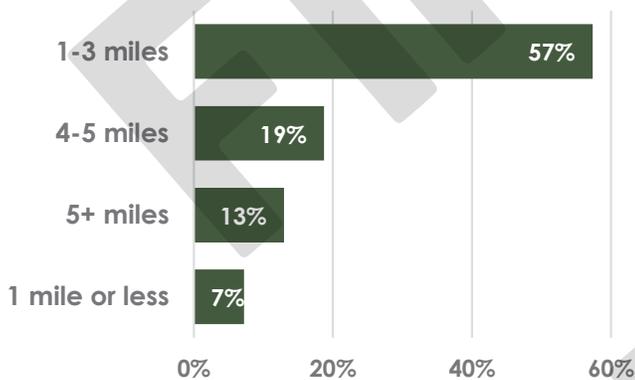


Figure 6.7: Ideal Trail Length



The survey results show that Henderson residents want new trails and will use them. Important goals for trail development should be to connect residents to downtown, parks, and commercial areas from their neighborhoods and to make the trails long enough to support recreational use, including exercise, enjoying nature, and pet walking. Trails should also offer parking, restrooms, and shaded seating when possible.

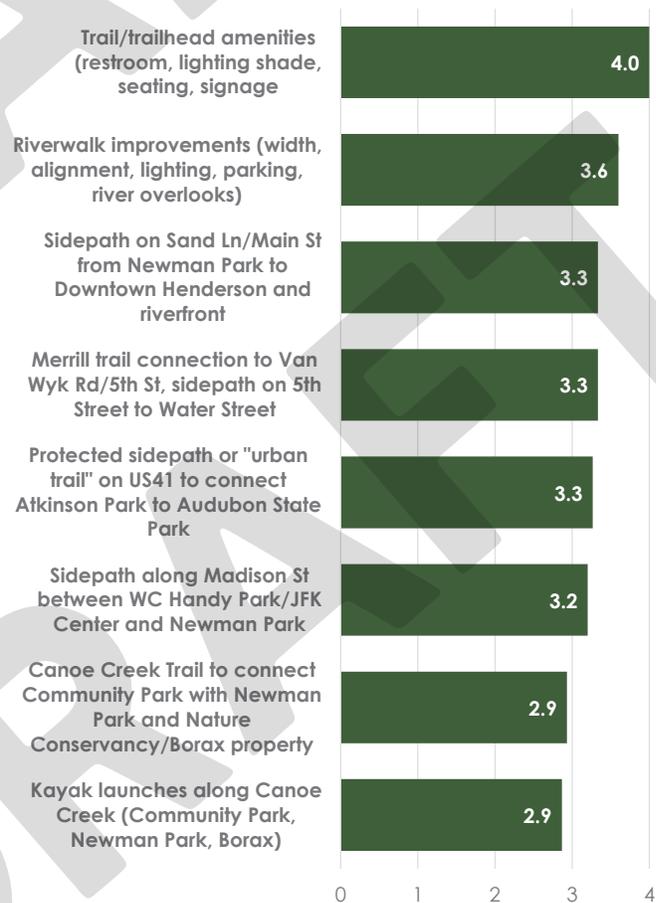
6.6 TRAIL SYSTEM GOALS

Following community engagement efforts and facility assessments, the steering committee and staff rated the importance of several trail-related improvements. Trailheads and trail amenities were the most supported improvements, followed by Riverwalk enhancements, a sidepath connecting Newman Park to downtown, extending the

Merrill Trail with a connection to downtown, and developing a trail connection to Audubon State Park (Figure 6.8). Based on community engagement, evaluation of Henderson's current trail system, and the priorities ranked above, the following goals should guide development of future trails in Henderson:

1. Trails will be inclusive and support a variety of activities.
2. Trails will provide connectivity from the city's neighborhoods to Downtown Henderson, parks, and commercial areas.
3. Trails will support trips of any length, including less than 0.5 miles and greater than 5 miles.
4. New trails will be developed following established design principles based on the type of trail. Design principles should address trail width, length, surface, buffers, amenities, and features.

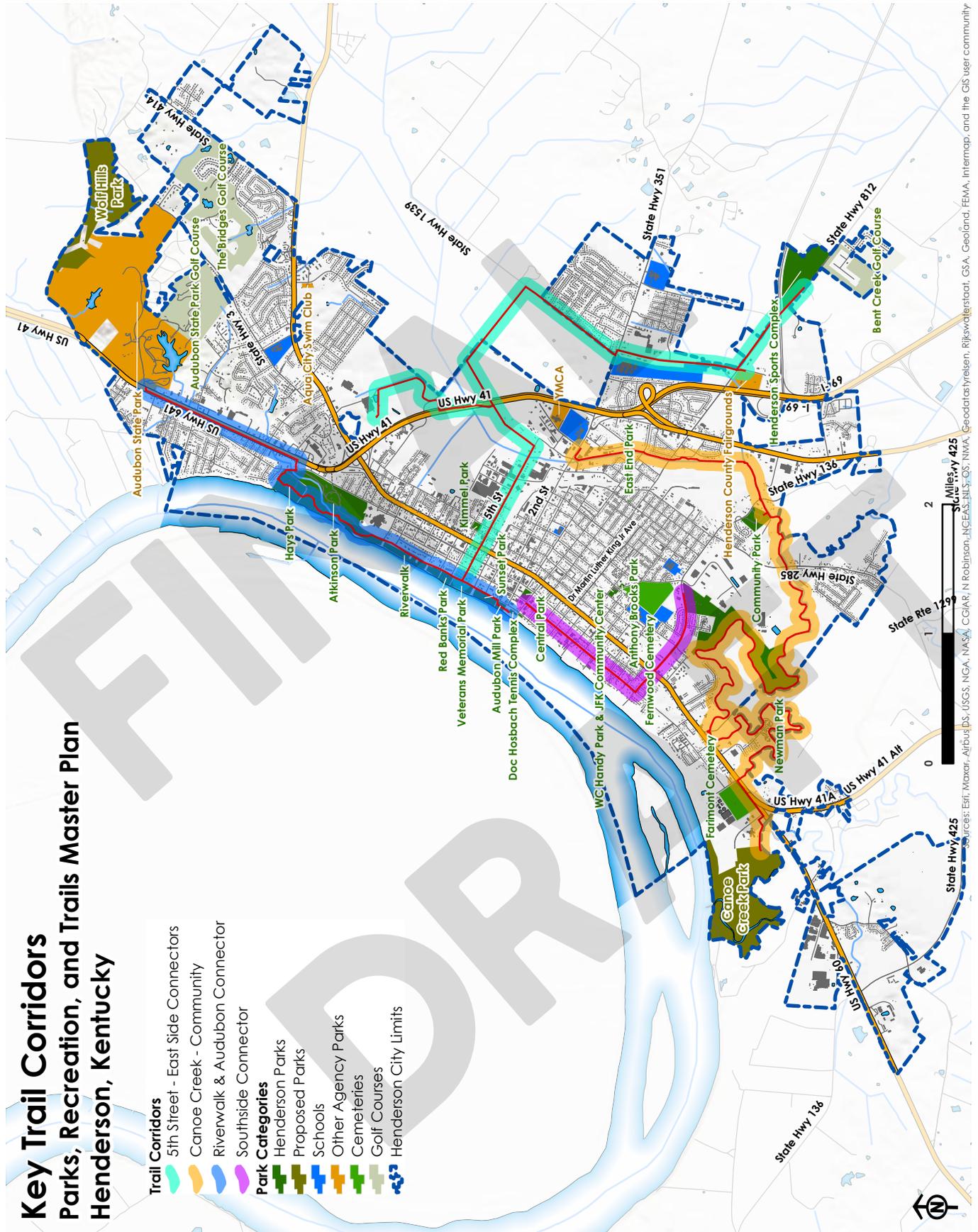
Figure 6.8: Trail Improvements Priorities



6.7 RIVERWALK & TRAIL CORRIDORS

To allow trails to provide better connectivity, four key corridors were identified that will enable users to reach key destinations around Henderson (Figure 6.9). Portions of these corridors are already developed, and some need new segments to finish connections. Development of new segments will be phased and could take up to 20 years to complete.

Figure 6.9: Key Trail Corridors



6.7.1 5TH STREET – EAST SIDE CONNECTORS

This corridor, when complete, will provide a connection from downtown to Wal-Mart and to the Sports Complex. Other destinations this corridor will serve include Henderson County High School, Henderson County Fairgrounds, and Kimmel Park. The Merrill Trail—beginning behind Wal-Mart on Barret Boulevard—is complete to Kimsey Lane and will soon extend to Van Wyk Road. To reach downtown, the corridor follows Van Wyk Road to 5th Street and then west to downtown. To reach the high school and Sports Complex the corridor follows Van Wyk Road to Kimsey Lane and then turns south on Larue Road. The paths in this corridor can be funded and developed as part of roadway improvement projects.

6.7.2 RIVERWALK AND AUDUBON CONNECTOR

This corridor will provide a safe route for pedestrians and cyclists to travel between downtown and Audubon State Park. The paths in this corridor should be a combination of paved shared-use paths and sidepaths. The corridor should include sidepaths in the US 41 ROW and along South Parkway Street to connect the US 41 section to Atkinson Park. The sidepaths in this corridor can be funded and developed as part of roadway improvement projects.

6.7.3 CANOE CREEK GREENWAY

This corridor provides a connection from the YMCA and North Middle School to Community Park, Newman Park, and the proposed Canoe Creek Park where the creek empties into the Ohio River. The paths in this corridor should run parallel to Canoe Creek wherever possible. This greenway will be a shared-use path and can be a hard surface with either crushed stone or fine gravel. The greenway should be a minimum of 10 feet wide and should include wayfinding and interpretive signage. Shaded seating should also be provided where feasible. Trailheads with parking should be developed on the north end and in Community Park, Newman Park, and Canoe Creek Park.

6.7.4 SOUTHSIDE CONNECTOR

This corridor provides a safe route from Newman Park to downtown along Sand Lane and South Main Street. The paths in this corridor should be paved sidepaths at least 10 feet in width to allow for bi-directional travel and to safely accommodate pedestrians and cyclists. The paths in this corridor can be funded and developed as part of roadway improvement projects.

6.8 PROPOSED TRAILS BY CLASS AND DESIGNED USE

To support a variety of activities with the possibility of short trips of less than 0.5 miles and longer trips greater than 5 miles, several different types of trails are recommended to improve Henderson's Trail system (Figure 6.10). This section describes specific trail recommendations based on the type of trails outlined in section 6.2. Numbering throughout this section links to corresponding numbers in Figure 6.10. Recommended trailhead locations are also provided on the map.

6.8.1 SIDEPATHS

The trails described in this section should follow the guidelines provided above for sidepaths and should be at least 10 feet wide. Because of the limitations of the ROWs the trail will occupy, there will be limited opportunities for trail amenities, including trailheads. The city should, however, look for opportunities to add seating and other amenities where appropriate.

1. Audubon Connector (1.5 miles)

This separated and protected sidepath along US 41 and South Parkway Street will provide a connection from Audubon State Park to Atkinson Park (segment 1a) and would preferably be 12 feet wide or more to allow for bi-directional travel and to safely accommodate pedestrians and cyclists. The path should also have protective barriers between the path and US 41.

An alternate route (segment 1b) for this path could go behind the commercial properties along US 41. This route would avoid many of the safety concerns associated with US 41 and provide a more enjoyable experience; however, this route would require several easements and acquisitions from property owners who may be unwilling to participate.

Development of a sidepath on US 41 will require an access management plan to increase safety by reducing crossings and curb cuts. A similar sidepath, or "Urban Trail" was previously proposed in the US 41 Corridor Plan, completed in 2024 (Figure 6.11). A variation of this proposal that would provide a wider path could have a 6-foot-wide sidewalk on one side and a 14-foot wide sidepath on the other side. This trail should be included in roadway improvements to US41 following completion of the I-69 project, with funding coming from state and federal highway programs.

2. 5th Street and Van Wyk Road (1.8 miles)

This sidepath will connect downtown to the Merrill Trail and the YMCA. These two trails combined will give downtown and neighborhoods along 5th Street easy access to the shopping area around Wal-Mart and the Owensboro Health Henderson Healthplex as well as the YMCA and North Middle School. Similarly, neighborhoods along the Merrill Trail and 5th street will have easy access to downtown and the Riverfont. Additionally, when this trail is developed, a short connection along North Adams Street to Kimmel Park should be included. This trail will require a railroad crossing on Priest Street to reach the YMCA and Middle School. Figure 6.12 illustrates a cross-section of a typical Henderson city street with a 10-foot wide sidepath.

3. South Main Street (2 miles)

This sidepath along South Main Street will serve as an extension of the Riverwalk and will be part of a set of trails connecting downtown to Newman Park and the proposed Canoe Creek Park. This path should connect from Main Street to the Riverwalk on Powell Street. The path Figure 6.13 illustrates a cross-section for most of Main Street (North and South) made possible by the streets generous ROW.

Figure 6.10: Proposed Trails

Proposed Trails

Parks, Recreation, and Trails Master Plan

Henderson, Kentucky

Proposed Trails

-  Trailheads
-  Shared-use path
-  Sidepath
-  Natural surface

Existing Trails

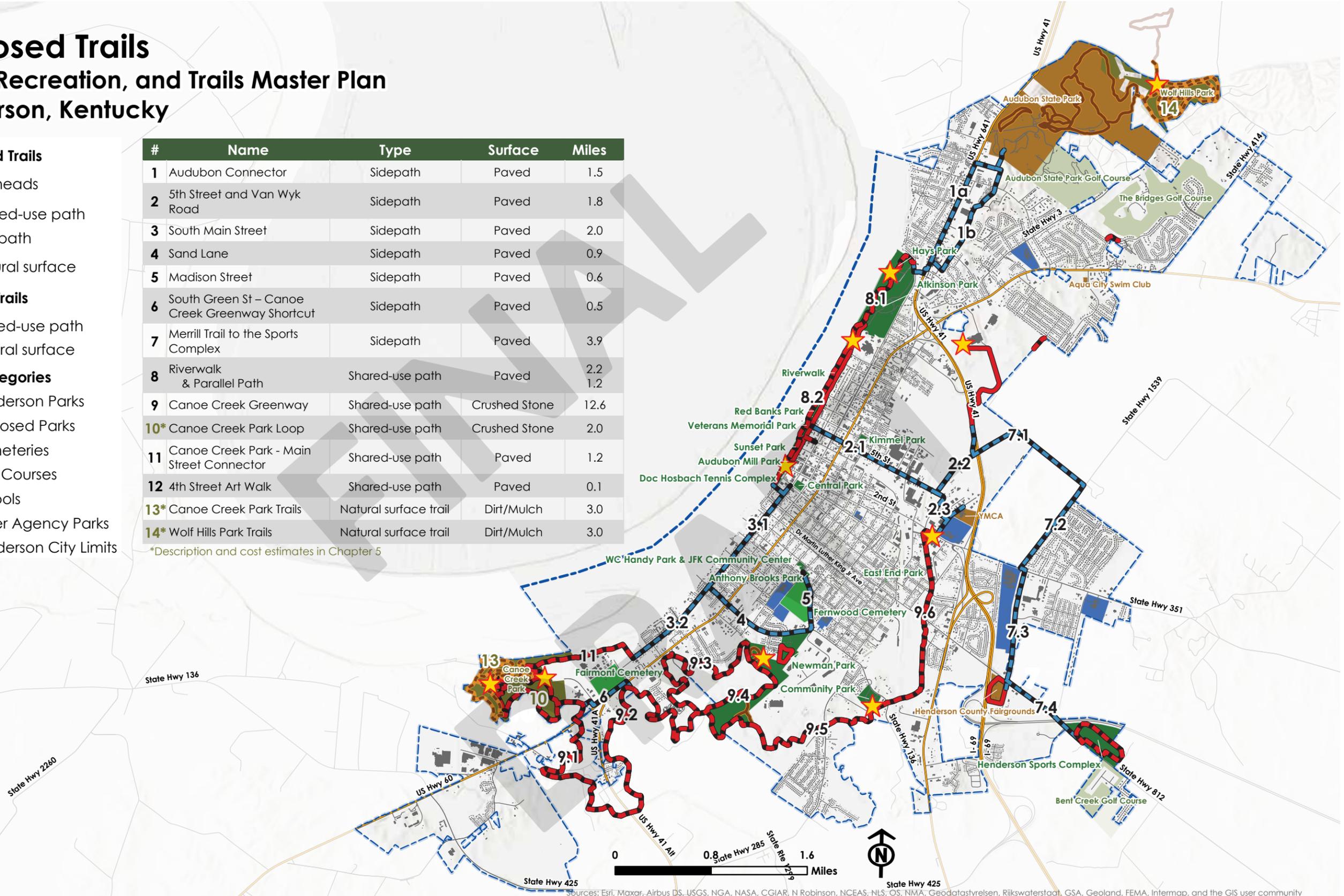
-  Shared-use path
-  Natural surface

Park Categories

-  Henderson Parks
-  Proposed Parks
-  Cemeteries
-  Golf Courses
-  Schools
-  Other Agency Parks
-  Henderson City Limits

#	Name	Type	Surface	Miles
1	Audubon Connector	Sidepath	Paved	1.5
2	5th Street and Van Wyk Road	Sidepath	Paved	1.8
3	South Main Street	Sidepath	Paved	2.0
4	Sand Lane	Sidepath	Paved	0.9
5	Madison Street	Sidepath	Paved	0.6
6	South Green St – Canoe Creek Greenway Shortcut	Sidepath	Paved	0.5
7	Merrill Trail to the Sports Complex	Sidepath	Paved	3.9
8	Riverwalk & Parallel Path	Shared-use path	Paved	2.2 1.2
9	Canoe Creek Greenway	Shared-use path	Crushed Stone	12.6
10*	Canoe Creek Park Loop	Shared-use path	Crushed Stone	2.0
11	Canoe Creek Park - Main Street Connector	Shared-use path	Paved	1.2
12	4th Street Art Walk	Shared-use path	Paved	0.1
13*	Canoe Creek Park Trails	Natural surface trail	Dirt/Mulch	3.0
14*	Wolf Hills Park Trails	Natural surface trail	Dirt/Mulch	3.0

*Description and cost estimates in Chapter 5



Sources: Esri, Maxar, Airbus DS, USGS, NGA, NASA, CGIAR, N Robinson, NCEAS, NLS, OS, NMA, Geodastyrelsen, Rijkswaterstaat, GSA, Geoland, FEMA, Intermap, and the GIS user community

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Figure 6.13: Possible Main Street Sidepath Configuration



4. Sand Lane (0.9 miles)

This sidepath will complete the connection between Newman Park and downtown by following Sand Lane from South Main Street to the park (see Figure 6.12).

5. Madison Street (0.6 miles)

This short sidepath will provide a safe connection along Madison Street from the JFK Community Center to Newman Park (see Figure 6.12).



Madison Street from the JFK Community Center

6. South Green St – Canoe Creek Greenway Shortcut (0.5 miles)

This sidepath will provide a shortcut from the Canoe Creek Greenway, discussed later, to the proposed Canoe Creek Park. Development of this trail could be an alternative to the final section of the Canoe Creek or be a permanent shortcut for those wishing to go directly to the park. This trail will follow South Green Street along Fairmount Cemetery and connect

to Canoe Creek at Borax Drive between the Detention Center and South Green Street. The trail will require a crossing on South Green Street at Drury Lane.

7. Merrill Trail to the Sports Complex (3.9 miles)

This sidepath will connect the Merrill Trail to the Sports Complex following Van Wyk Road East to Kimsey Lane and then to Larue Road south to Zion Road. This first section (segments 7.1-7.2.) provides a safe connection from Henderson County High School to the Wal-Mart shopping area or to downtown on 5th Street. From Zion Road, the trail will follow Garden Mile Road and then turn east on Airline Road to connect to the Sports Complex (segments 7.3-7.4). While a long route (almost 5.5 miles) this trail would connect downtown neighborhoods to the High School, Fairgrounds, and Sports Complex. This trail would require a railroad crossing and a bridge over the Audubon Parkway along Airline Road. A shorter route from downtown is possible using Airline Road and Clay Street, but much of Clay Street is a narrow neighborhood street not appropriate for a 10-foot-wide sidepath and would require a bridge over I-69.

6.8.2 SHARED-USE PATHS

The trails described in this section should follow the guidelines provided above for shared-use paths and should be at least 10 feet wide unless noted otherwise. Each of these trails should have one or more trailheads with the associated amenities.

8. Riverwalk (2.2 miles + 1.2 miles for parallel portion)

The current Riverwalk is too narrow and has a few sharp turns that make it a pedestrian only rather than a share-use path. To safely accommodate pedestrians, cyclists, and people

using mobility devices, a 12-foot-wide trail is recommended. By adding width and straightening some curves, the existing trail in Atkinson Park should become bi-directional and multiuse.

Additionally, a 12-wide parallel trail (segment 8.2) should be developed closer to the river, beginning at the current parking area behind the hospital and ending at the tennis complex. The new concepts for Atkinson Park presented in Chapter 5 show new alignment and trail through the park (segment 8.1). The concept presented for the downtown riverfront also includes recommendations for the improved Riverwalk. Other recommended improvements to the Riverwalk include:

- Trailheads with informational kiosks, parking, and hydration stations in Hays Park, below the Riverwalk Gazebo behind the hospital, and at The Depot
- Additional lighting, particularly in Atkinson Park
- Additional river overlooks with shade and seating (see concept in Chapter 5)

9. Canoe Creek Greenway (12.6 miles)

When complete, this exciting shared-use path will follow Canoe Creek and connect North Middle School to Community Park, Newman Park, and the proposed Canoe Creek Park. The path is recommended to be developed initially as crushed stone or fine gravel due to the length and cost. Long term, concrete is preferred. Although a 10-foot trail is preferred, some low traffic portions of this trail could be developed at 8-foot wide to reduce costs. The greenway should be developed in phases in the following priority order:



Canoe Creek Greenway location in Newman Park

- Newman Park to Community Park with upgrades to the existing Canoe Creek Nature Trail (segments 9.4-9.5). This segment requires one railroad crossing.
- Newman Park to South Green Street at Drury Lane, across from Fairmont Cemetery
- Community Park to 2nd Street (segment 9.6). This segment also requires a railroad crossing.
- Borax Drive to proposed Canoe Creek Park (segment 9.1)
- End of segment 9.3, near Drury Lane to proposed Canoe Creek Park (segment 9.2)

Other recommended features and amenities include:

- Trailheads with informational kiosks, parking, and hydration stations in the proposed Canoe Creek Park, Newman Park, Community Park and at the northern end near 2nd Street

- Wayfinding and directional signage
- Shaded seating areas with creek overlooks
- Fishing docks where appropriate
- Interpretive signage with information about the creek's hydrology and wildlife

10. Canoe Creek Park Loop (2+ miles)

When Canoe Creek Park is developed, one important feature will be a hard surface (crushed stone/fine gravel) shared-use loop. Other recommended features and amenities include:

- Trailhead shared with the Canoe Creek Greenway with informational kiosks, parking, and hydration stations.
- Restrooms (in park)
- Shaded seating with creek and river overlooks where possible
- Wayfinding and directional signage
- Interpretive signage with information about the park's wildlife and environmental features
- Fishing docks where appropriate

11. Canoe Creek Park to Main Street Connector (1.2 miles)

When Canoe Creek Park is developed, this shared-use path can connect the Canoe Creek Park Loop to the Main Street sidepath to serve as the final section of the Riverwalk. This trail should be paved and be 10 feet wide to allow for bi-directional travel and to safely accommodate pedestrians and cyclists. Other recommended features and amenities include:

- Wayfinding and directional signage
- Shaded seating with river overlooks where possible
- Interpretive signage with information about the park's wildlife and environmental features

12. 4th Street Art Walk

4th Street currently does not connect from Main Street to Water Street; however, a ROW exists on the north side of the railroad tracks wide enough for a shared-use path. Adding a path in this location will improve connectivity downtown and presents an opportunity for the city to create a space for public art.



The Garden Walk, with a well-maintained landscape and public art provides a peaceful pathway in downtown Conway, South Carolina.

The walk should be a minimum of 10 feet wide with well-maintained landscaping and space reserved for the installation of public art. Potential partners that could help develop the Art Walk include the Henderson Area Arts Alliance, Ohio Valley Art League, and Henderson Community College.

6.8.3 NATURAL SURFACE TRAILS

13. Canoe Creek Park Trails (3+ miles)

In 2015, the City of Henderson purchased 71.9 acres of land from the Nature Conservancy on the southeast edge of the city where Canoe Creek reaches the Ohio River, adjacent to the 100-acre “Borax” property. That purchase came with a permanent conservation easement that limits disturbances to the property purchased from the Nature Conservancy. The easement allows the city to construct and maintain trails and trailheads necessary to accommodate canoe or kayak launches and hiking.

According to deed restrictions, all trails must be of a permeable material, no more than 6 feet wide, and restricted to non-motorized use. When Canoe Creek Park is developed on the two properties, natural surface hiking and mountain biking trails should be constructed in the areas with the conservation easement. The area should support 3+ miles of trails. Recommended features and amenities include a trailhead and various amenities described in Chapter 5.



Area in proposed Canoe Creek Park for natural surface trails.

14. Wolf Hills Park Trails (3+ miles)

The city expects to close the Wolf Hills landfill in 2030. When the landfill closes, the city has an opportunity to convert it into a park. The landfill and adjacent vacant city-owned properties border the northeast corner of Audubon State Park. Chapter 5 recommends a plan for park development as part of a landfill closure plan. The city could develop trails here that connect to the state park’s wetlands trail and the hiking trails in the main park. The property also presents an opportunity to construct a mountain bike and BMX park using the site’s elevation change for downhill flow trails and other beginner friendly elements. The area could support three or more miles of hiking and biking trails and other elements.

Recommended features and amenities for the trail include a trailhead with a kiosk containing trail maps and rules and other features to support new parks development.



Photo Credit: McGill Trail Fabrication

Mount Trashmore Bike Trails, Cedar Rapids, Iowa⁸

6.8.4 OTHER TRAILS

IN-PARK TRAILS

In addition to the trails described above, parks typically have internal trails for pedestrians, those using mobility devices, and sometimes bikes, skateboards, skates, and scooters. These trails (more information in Chapter 5) are important features that can complement other trails as well as provide many of the same benefits. Like the trail in Newman Park, the following parks offer opportunities for additional trails:

- Sports Complex (planned)
- Atkinson Park (proposed improvements in Chapter 5)
- Community Park (proposed improvements in Chapter 5)

OTHER RECOMMENDED CONNECTIONS

To complement the system of trails outlined above, short paths can connect neighborhood streets to adjacent parks or neighborhoods, which could then provide access to longer paths and the destinations they serve.

Examples of short connections that can improve access include:

- Kingsway Court to Newman Park
- Birkhall Way to South Bently Drive and the Merrill Trail
- Costanza Drive to Gaslight Drive (Wolf Hills neighborhood to Bend Gate Elementary)

6.9 MAINTENANCE CONSIDERATIONS

All trail types require regular maintenance, which can improve safety, longevity of the trail, and the user experience. All trails, whether the responsibility of Parks and Recreation Department, Public Works, other city department, or a partner agency, need a person designated to oversee their maintenance. These individuals should have easy access to equipment and supplies necessary to maintain the

⁸ <https://mcgilltrails.com/projects/mount-trashmore/>

trail and make minor repairs. Additionally, all staff assigned to trails should be supported in completing training related to trail construction and maintenance. American Trails,⁹ the Rails to Trails Conservancy,¹⁰ the US Forest Service,¹¹ and other organizations offer free and paid training both online and in person. They also have online libraries containing free guides and how-to manuals.

The annual maintenance of trails varies greatly by trail type and location. Trails in the floodplain, in particular cost more to maintain due to erosion and debris after each flood. The city should establish a trail maintenance budget for all departments responsible for trails. As a starting point, the following costs can serve as a guide for annual budgeting.¹²

- Sidepaths – \$1,500 per mile
- Shared-use paths paved – \$2,000-3,000 per mile (Riverwalk could be higher)
- Shared-use paths crushed stone – \$1,500 per mile
- Natural surface trails – \$800 per mile

6.10 FUNDING AND COSTS

6.10.1 PARTNERSHIPS AND GRANTS

Multiple funding sources and partnerships may be available to help fund trail development. The sources and potential partners highlighted here represent the most common; however, funding could come from other sources either not available at this time or that are unique funding opportunities that cannot be predicted. The status of federal funding programs is constantly changing, and the most up-to-date information about federal grants can be found at <https://grants.gov/>.

LOCAL SOURCES

- City of Henderson General Fund
- Bond Funds
- Dedicated Parks levy¹³
- Utilities (for use of utility ROWs)
- Business Improvement and Tax Increment Finance Districts¹⁴
- Local Foundations
- Evansville Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Green River Area Development District
- Naming rights and sponsorships

⁹ <https://www.americantrails.org/>

¹⁰ <https://www.railstotrails.org/>

¹¹ <https://www.railstotrails.org/>

¹² <https://www.railstotrails.org/resource-library/resources/yearly-routine-rail-trail-maintenance-costs-per-mile/>

¹³ <https://www.lexingtonky.gov/playing/parks-administration/parks-recreation-projects/park-fund-information>

¹⁴ https://newkentuckyhome.ky.gov/Locating_Expanding/TIF

¹⁵ <https://dlg.ky.gov/grants/federal/rtp/Pages/default.aspx>

¹⁶ <https://dlg.ky.gov/grants/state/KORRRRA/Pages/default.aspx>

¹⁷ <https://dlg.ky.gov/grants/federal/lwcf/Pages/default.aspx>

¹⁸ <https://dlg.ky.gov/grants/federal/cdbg/Pages/default.aspx>

¹⁹ <https://www.transportation.gov/BUILDgrants>

²⁰ <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/specialfunding/stp/>

²¹ <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/rtca/index.htm>

STATE SOURCES

- Department for Local Government
 - Recreational Trails Program¹⁵
 - Kentucky Ohio River Regional Recreation Authority (KORRA)¹⁶
 - Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)¹⁷
 - Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)¹⁸

NATIONAL SOURCES

- Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program¹⁹
- Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG)²⁰
- Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (NPS-RTCA)²¹

6.10.2 ESTIMATED CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT COSTS

The estimated development costs for each trail are presented Table 6.3 with numbering to match the proposed trails in Figure 6.10. Property acquisition is not included. These estimates are general and will need to be reevaluated based on conditions prior to development after more detailed review of each segment. All costs in the table are estimated in 2026 dollars and will need to be adjusted for potential escalation at the time of development. Sidepath projects will frequently be included as part of road improvement, so costs are likely to change. Additionally, outside funding opportunities exist for many of these and other projects, as noted in the previous section. As discussed in section 6.9, trails require maintenance. The department or city will need to estimate maintenance costs for new trails and secure funding to cover those costs.

Table 6.3: Capital Improvements by Trail

Trail	Term	0-5 Years	6-10 Years	11-20 Years	Total
1 Audubon Connector					
1a Sidepath (12'-wide)	Medium	\$0	\$2,000,000	\$0	\$2,000,000
1b Sidepath (10'-wide)	Medium	\$0	\$1,500,000	\$0	\$1,500,000
Project Total		\$0	\$3,500,000	\$0	\$3,500,000
2 5th Street and Van Wyk Road					
2.1 Sidepath (10'-wide)	Medium	\$0	\$970,000	\$0	\$970,000
2.2 Sidepath (10'-wide)	Medium	\$0	\$535,000	\$0	\$535,000
2.3 Sidepath (10'-wide)	Medium	\$0	\$520,000	\$0	\$520,000
Railroad crossing	Medium	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Project Total		\$0	\$2,025,000	\$0	\$2,025,000
3 South Main Street					
3.1 Sidepath (10'-wide)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$900,000	\$900,000
3.2 Sidepath (10'-wide)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$700,000	\$700,000
Project Total		\$0	\$0	\$1,600,000	\$1,600,000
4 Sand Lane					
4 Sidepath (10'-wide)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$700,000	\$700,000
Project Total		\$0	\$0	\$700,000	\$700,000
5 Madison Street					
5 Sidepath (10'-wide)	Medium	\$0	\$460,000	\$0	\$460,000
Project Total		\$0	\$460,000	\$0	\$460,000
6 South Green St (Canoe Creek Greenway Shortcut)					
6 Sidepath (10'-wide)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$580,000	\$580,000
Project Total		\$0	\$0	\$580,000	\$580,000
7 Merrill Trail					
Construction damaged repair near I-69 tunnel	In Progress	In Progress	In Progress	In Progress	In Progress
7.1 Sidepath (10'-wide)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$880,000	\$880,000
Railroad crossing	Long	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
7.2 Sidepath (10'-wide)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$720,000	\$720,000
7.3 Sidepath (10'-wide)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$780,000	\$780,000
7.4 Sidepath (10'-wide)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$640,000	\$640,000
Bridge over Audubon Parkway	Long	\$0	\$0	\$620,000	\$620,000
Trailhead (2)		\$0	\$0	\$25,000	\$25,000
Project Total		\$0	\$0	\$3,665,000	\$3,665,000
8 Riverwalk					
8.1 Atkinson trail improvements - widen to 12' and straighten for pedestrians and cyclists	Short	\$1,700,000	\$0	\$0	\$1,700,000
8.2 Trail (12' wide/concrete) - parallel shared-use path along river from south end of Atkinson Park to Tennis Complex	Medium	\$0	\$1,300,000	\$0	\$1,300,000
Trailheads (2)	Short	\$25,000	\$0	\$0	\$25,000
Wayfinding & interpretive signage	Short	\$6,000	\$0	\$0	\$6,000
Lighting improvements	Short	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Project Total		\$1,731,000	\$1,300,000	\$0	\$3,031,000
9 Canoe Creek Greenway					
9.1 Shared Use Path (10'-wide crushed stone)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$850,000	\$850,000
9.2 Shared Use Path (10'-wide crushed stone)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$610,000	\$610,000
9.3 Shared Use Path (10'-wide crushed stone)	Medium	\$0	\$1,400,000	\$0	\$1,400,000
9.4 Shared Use Path (10'-wide crushed stone)	Short	\$460,000	\$0	\$0	\$460,000
9.5 Shared Use Path (10'-wide crushed stone)	Short	\$560,000	\$0	\$0	\$560,000
Railroad crossing	Short	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
9.6 Shared Use Path (10'-wide crushed stone)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$730,000	\$730,000
Bridge over Canoe Creek	Long	\$0	\$0	\$105,000	\$105,000

Table 6.3: Capital Improvements by Trail (Continued)

Trail	Term	0-5 Years	6-10 Years	11-20 Years	Total
Railroad crossing	Long	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Wayfinding & interpretive signage	Short	\$12,000	\$0	\$0	\$12,000
Trailheads (3)	Medium	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$36,000
Project Total		\$1,044,000	\$1,412,000	\$2,307,000	\$4,763,000
10 Canoe Creek Park Loop					
10 See park recommendations (Ch.5)	Medium	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Project Total		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
11 Canoe Creek Park to Main Street Connector					
11 Sidepath (10'-wide)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$900,000	\$900,000
Wayfinding & interpretive signage	Long	\$0	\$0	\$12,000	\$12,000
Project Total		\$0	\$0	\$912,000	\$912,000
12 4th Street Art Walk					
12 Sidepath (10'-wide)	Short	\$90,000	\$0	\$0	\$90,000
Art installations	Short	Partner	Partner	Partner	Partner
Project Total		\$90,000	\$0	\$0	\$90,000
13 Canoe Creek Park Nature Trails					
13 See park recommendations (Ch.5)	Medium	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
14 Wolf Hills Park Bike & Hike Trails					
14 See park recommendations (Ch.5)	Long	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
TOTAL TRAILS		\$2,865,000	\$8,697,000	\$9,764,000	\$21,326,000

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ACTION PLAN

7

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The Action Plan table on the following pages (Table 7.1) provides a detailed list of recommendations for the 2026 Henderson Parks, Recreation, and Trails Master Plan. These strategies represent specific actions for the Parks and Recreation Department and the City of Henderson to complete in implementing this plan and turn the page on parks and recreation.

7.2 ACTION PLAN STRATEGIES

These strategies are listed under the 9 pages presented in Chapter 4 with the new vision, mission, and core values. The legend at the top of the table identifies the abbreviations used throughout the table. The column to the right of each strategy indicates which of the four goals apply to the action: Protect, Adapt, Grow, & Enhance and **help turn the PAGE**. Checkmarks indicate the timeframe for the completion of each strategy within the time periods of 0-2 years, 3-5 years, or 6-10 years. Some strategies are indicated as "ongoing," because they apply to all timeframes or represent more general actions that should always be considered. A total count of strategies by timeframe is located at the end of the table in the corresponding columns.

The other columns provide information regarding the implementation of each strategy. "Category" describes the type of action within the following four options: capital (capital improvements); policy (guidelines for the city or the Parks and Recreation Department, possibly including legislation); planning (long-term parks outlook, which includes conducting studies); or operations. The column for "Agency" indicates who is expected to implement the strategy, usually Henderson Parks and Recreation or city officials. "Funding Source" indicates how the strategy should be funded, or the type of funds used (operating or capital funds). "Section Reference" indicates where in the Master Plan document to find narratives that further describe the recommendations.

Table 7.1: Action Plan

ACTION PLAN - TURNING THE PAGE ON PARKS AND RECREATION IN HENDERSON									
Legend of Abbreviations/Organizations									
OP = Parks and Recreation Operating Budget									
Parks = Henderson Parks & Recreation									
City = City Commission, Other City Departments									
Partners = Other Organizations (county/state, private agencies, schools, state/federal grants, etc.)									
CIP = Capital Improvement Budget									
Revenue = Items that Generate Additional Revenue									
PAGES	Related Goals	Timeframe (Years)			Category	Agency	Funding Source	Section Reference	
		0-2	3-5	6-10					
Page 1: Modern parks and facilities									
Strategy 1.1:	Reference Table 5.1 for park-specific improvement recommendations and ensure that systemwide and non-location-specific improvements are reviewed before initiating new development or follow-up planning studies	AG	Ongoing		Capital	Parks	CIP	5.8	
Strategy 1.2:	Assess all estimated costs in Table 5.1 (expressed in 2025 dollars) for potential escalation at the time of actual development	AG	Ongoing		Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.8	
Strategy 1.3:	Complete redevelopment of Anthony Brooks Park, including a splash pad, playground, picnic shelter, and restroom building	GE	✓		Capital	Parks	CIP	5.4.2, 5.7.2	
Strategy 1.4:	Build multipurpose covered courts at Newman Park for basketball and other program uses	GE	✓		Capital	Parks	CIP	5.4.3	
Strategy 1.5:	Improve turf at the multipurpose/soccer fields in Newman Park	E	✓		Capital/Operations	Parks	CIP/OP	5.4.3	
Strategy 1.6:	Install playground and perimeter trail at the Henderson Sports Complex	GE	✓		Capital	Parks	CIP	5.4.4	
Strategy 1.7:	Develop Veterans Memorial Park with a memorial plaza and open space for events	AGE	✓		Capital	Parks	CIP/Partners	5.4.5, 5.7.2	
Strategy 1.8:	Increase access to sports fields and courts for informal use (e.g., Newman Park, Red Banks Park, Hays Park)	A	✓		Capital/Policy	Parks	CIP/OP	5.3.5	
Strategy 1.9:	Implement a playground improvement and replacement program to upgrade existing playgrounds and add new ones in underserved areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply inclusive playground design principles for accessibility Incorporate nature play elements in passive/natural settings Engage neighborhoods in design process for new playgrounds Consider community build programs for stronger resident connection 	AGE	✓		Capital/Planning	Parks	CIP	5.3.4	
Strategy 1.10:	Develop large amphitheater downtown at the future Veterans Memorial Park	GE	✓		Capital	Parks	CIP/Partners	5.3.8, 5.7.2	
Strategy 1.11:	Enhance WC Handy Park by adding a teen-oriented feature, bleachers, shade structures, shelter, restrooms, and ADA access from the JFK Center	AE	✓	✓	Capital	Parks	CIP	5.3.5, 5.4.2, 5.7.2	
Strategy 1.12:	Enhance Kimmel Park with new restrooms, playground, shade structures, and a neighborhood-determined feature	AE	✓	✓	Capital	Parks	CIP	5.4.2, 5.7.2	
Strategy 1.13:	Revitalize Community Park with a new restroom/shelter building, expanded playground with ADA access, larger outdoor games area, and connecting perimeter trail loop	AGE	✓	✓	Capital	Parks	CIP	5.4.3	
Strategy 1.14:	Reimagine Atkinson Park & Hays Park with improved circulation, expanded parking, and better access to the river	PAGE	✓	✓	Capital	Parks	CIP/Partners	5.4.3, 5.7.2	
Strategy 1.15:	Build reservable picnic shelters to provide shade, seating, and revenue opportunities	GE		Ongoing	Capital	Parks	CIP	5.3.2	
Strategy 1.16:	Relocate one or both downtown boat ramps to free up riverfront space for community uses	AE		Ongoing	Capital/Policy	City	CIP/Partners	5.3.8	
Strategy 1.17:	Adopt a standard list of elements for neighborhood parks and consider during upgrades or new construction	GE		Ongoing	Planning	Parks	CIP	5.4.2	
Strategy 1.18:	Apply standard elements for community parks and include engagement campaigns for public input when making improvements	AE		Ongoing	Planning	Parks	CIP	5.4.3	
Strategy 1.19:	Develop soccer mini-pitches in Community Park for open use	GE	✓	✓	Capital	Parks	CIP	5.3.5, 5.4.3	
Strategy 1.20:	Relocate disc golf holes as necessary as improvements are made at Atkinson Park to maintain the existing course	A	✓	✓	Capital	Parks	CIP	5.3.8	
Strategy 1.21:	Expand and upgrade the dog parks at Red Banks Park and Community Park	AG	✓	✓	Capital	Parks	CIP	5.3.8, 5.4.3	
Strategy 1.22:	Enhance rental and event opportunities at Atkinson Park by converting the pool house into a dedicated rental facility, modernizing the Denton Shelter to ensure ADA accessibility, and upgrading the Atkinson Clubhouse to better accommodate rentals and tournaments	AE	✓	✓	Capital/Operations	Parks	CIP/Partners	5.4.3, 5.7.2	

Table 7.1 Action Plan (Continued)

PAGES	Related Goals	Timeframe (Years)			Category	Agency	Funding Source	Section Reference
		0-2	3-5	6-10				
Strategy 1.23:	A		✓		Capital/Policy	Parks	CIP	5.3.5, 5.4.4
Strategy 1.24:	AG		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP	5.3.6
Strategy 1.25:	AGE		✓		Capital/Planning	Parks/City	CIP/Partners	5.3.6, 5.7.2
Strategy 1.26:	AG		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP	5.3.8
Strategy 1.27:	AE		✓		Capital/Planning	Parks	CIP	5.3.8, 5.4.3
Strategy 1.28:	AGE		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP/Partners	5.3.8, 5.7.2
Strategy 1.29:	AGE		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP	5.4.3, 5.7.2
Strategy 1.30:	GE		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP	5.4.3, 5.7.2
Strategy 1.31:	PAGE			✓	Capital/Policy	City	CIP/Partners	5.4.3, 5.7.2
Strategy 1.32:	AGE		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP	5.3.7, 5.4.2, 5.7.2
Strategy 1.33:	GE		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP	5.4.5
Strategy 1.34:	GE		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP/Partners	5.3.8, 5.4.4, 5.7.2
Strategy 1.35:	AE		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP	5.3.5, 5.4.3
Strategy 1.36:	AGE		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP	5.4.3, 5.4.5
Strategy 1.37:	GE		✓		Capital	Parks/City	CIP/Partners	5.4.3, 5.7.2
Strategy 1.38:	GE		✓		Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.4.4
Page 2: Improved trails and connectivity								
Strategy 2.1:	PAGE	✓			Planning	Parks/City	CIP	5.4.5
Strategy 2.2:	GE		✓		Capital	Parks/City	CIP	5.7.2, 6.8.2
Strategy 2.3:	G		Ongoing		Capital/Policy	Parks/City	CIP	6.2.1
Strategy 2.4:	E		Ongoing		Capital	Parks/City	CIP	6.3
Strategy 2.5:	E		Ongoing		Capital	Parks/City	CIP	6.3
Strategy 2.6:	PG		Ongoing		Policy	City	CIP	6.2.2
Strategy 2.7:	PAE		Ongoing		Planning	City	CIP	6.2.2
Strategy 2.8:	AGE		Ongoing		Capital/Planning	City	CIP	6.8.4
Strategy 2.9:	GE		✓		Capital	City	CIP	6.8.2
Strategy 2.10:	GE		✓		Capital	Parks/City	CIP	6.8.2
Strategy 2.11:	GE		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP	5.4.3, 6.8.2
Strategy 2.12:	E		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP	5.4.3
Strategy 2.13:	GE		✓		Capital	City	CIP/Partners	5.7.2, 6.7.2

Table 7.1 Action Plan (Continued)

PAGES	Related Goals	Timeframe (Years)			Category	Agency	Funding Source	Section Reference
		0-2	3-5	6-10				
Strategy 2.14:	GE		✓		Capital	City	CIP/ Partners	6.8.1
<p>Create the South Main Street sidepath to connect Main Street, the Riverwalk, Newman Park, and the future Canoe Creek Park</p> <p>Strategy 2.15: Develop the 5th Street and Van Wyk Road sidepath to link downtown, the Merrill Trail, and the YMCA, ensuring connections to key neighborhoods, shopping areas, and Kimmel Park</p> <p>Strategy 2.16: Construct a sidepath along Sand Lane to link South Main Street with Newman Park</p> <p>Strategy 2.17: Construct a sidepath along Madison Street to prove a safe connection between the JFK Community Center and Newman Park</p> <p>Strategy 2.18: Construct a sidepath along Van Wyk Road East, Kimsey Lane, and Larue Road south linking the Merrill Trail to the Sports Complex</p> <p>Strategy 2.19: Consider developing a South Green Street sidepath as a direct shortcut from the Canoe Creek Greenway to the proposed Canoe Creek Park</p>	GE		✓		Capital	City	CIP/ Partners	6.8.1
Strategy 2.16:	GE		✓		Capital	City	CIP/ Partners	6.8.1
Strategy 2.17:	GE		✓		Capital	City	CIP/ Partners	6.8.1
Strategy 2.18:	GE		✓		Capital	City	CIP/ Partners	6.8.1
Strategy 2.19:	GE		✓		Capital	City	CIP	6.8.1
Page 3: Responsible nature and river access								
Strategy 3.1:	P	Ongoing			Policy	Parks/City	CIP	5.3.9
<p>Protect natural areas and resources (wetlands, waterways, biodiversity)</p> <p>Strategy 3.2: Prepare and implement a plan to develop Canoe Creek Park as a passive nature park with features such as canoe/kayak launch, fishing pier, trails, gardens, education center, shelter, and nature play area</p> <p>Strategy 3.3: Install canoe/kayak launches with fishing access at Hays Park, Sunset Park, Newman Park, and Canoe Creek Park</p> <p>Strategy 3.4: Create river overlooks for wildlife viewing along the Riverwalk</p> <p>Strategy 3.5: Add community gardens, potentially in Canoe Creek Park</p>	PGE	✓		Planning/ Capital	Parks	CIP	5.4.5, 5.7.2	
Strategy 3.2:	GE		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP	5.3.9, 5.4.3
Strategy 3.4:	PE		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP	5.3.9
Strategy 3.5:	GE		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP/ Partners	5.3.9
Page 4: Inclusive access and inviting amenities								
Strategy 4.1:	E	Ongoing			Capital	Parks	CIP	5.3.2
<p>Upgrade support features, including security lighting, shade structures, seating, and drinking fountains/bottle fillers, in response to strong community demand</p> <p>Strategy 4.2: Add and upgrade restrooms throughout the park system</p> <p>Strategy 4.3: Plant native, non-invasive trees and landscaping for inviting spaces</p> <p>Strategy 4.4: Improve wayfinding and directional signage, especially at Atkinson Park and Hays Park</p> <p>Strategy 4.5: Conduct an ADA accessibility assessment and develop a transition plan</p> <p>Strategy 4.6: Improve ADA accessibility across all parks and facilities</p> <p>Strategy 4.7: Improve Central Park with better playground safety surface, turf, and landscaping</p> <p>Strategy 4.8: Install shade structures near splash pad at East End Park</p> <p>Strategy 4.9: Improve street crossing between Anthony Brooks Park and the JFK Center</p> <p>Strategy 4.10: Expand parking as facilities are developed</p>	E			Capital	Parks	CIP	5.3.2	
Strategy 4.1:	E	Ongoing			Capital	Parks	CIP	5.3.2
Strategy 4.2:	E		✓		Capital/ Planning	Parks	CIP	5.3.3
Strategy 4.3:	PE	Ongoing			Capital	Parks	CIP/OP	5.3.2
Strategy 4.4:	E	Ongoing			Capital	Parks	CIP	5.3.2
Strategy 4.5:	E		✓		Capital/ Planning	Parks	CIP	5.3.3
Strategy 4.6:	E	Ongoing			Capital	Parks	CIP	5.3.3
Strategy 4.7:	E		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP	5.4.2
Strategy 4.8:	E		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP	5.4.2
Strategy 4.9:	PAE	✓			Capital	Parks/City	CIP/ Partners	5.4.2, 5.7.2
Strategy 4.10:	E	Ongoing			Capital	Parks	CIP	5.4.3
Page 5: Desirable programs and events								
Strategy 5.1:	A	Ongoing			Operations	Parks	OP	5.5.1
<p>Review public input and participation to prioritize programs and events; determine staff capacity, and set cost of service and recovery goals</p> <p>Strategy 5.2: Invest in a point of sale program to register and track participation, inform pricing, and track utilization</p> <p>Strategy 5.3: Expand program offerings at the JFK Center and other parks to serve residents of all ages and interests</p> <p>Strategy 5.4: Share resources, facilities, and staff expertise to expand youth and teen programming across all city parks and recreation sites</p> <p>Strategy 5.5: Offer "Tidy It" programs—short-term, low-cost, or free introductory activities such as fishing, kayaking, and water aerobics—to encourage people to experience new recreational opportunities without long-term commitment</p>	E	✓		Operations	Parks	OP	5.6.4	
Strategy 5.2:	GE		✓		Operations	Parks	OP	5.5.1, 5.7.2
Strategy 5.3:	GE		✓		Operations	Parks	OP	5.5.1
Strategy 5.4:	A	Ongoing			Operations	Parks	OP/ Partners	5.5.1
Strategy 5.5:	AGE	Ongoing			Operations	Parks	OP	5.5.1

Table 7.1 Action Plan (Continued)

PAGES	Related Goals	Timeframe (Years)				Category	Agency	Funding Source	Section Reference
		0-2	3-5	6-10					
Strategy 5.6:	Collaborate with organizations such as the Gathering Place, AARP, Henderson Community College, the 4-H Extension Office, and regional healthcare providers to design and implement fitness, wellness, gardening, and social programs tailored to adults and seniors	GE	Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP/ Partners	5.5.1	
Strategy 5.7:	Develop and promote environmental programming and education initiatives for all age groups	PGE	Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP	5.5.1, 5.7.2	
Strategy 5.8:	Continue to support concerts, festivals, and community events hosted by partner organizations and seek opportunities to launch new events with downtown businesses as event sponsors	GE	Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP/ Partners	5.5.1	
Strategy 5.9:	Organize live music and outdoor movie events at Sunset Park and/or Atkinson Park to enhance community engagement and entertainment offerings	GE	✓	✓	Operations	Parks	OP	5.5.1	
Strategy 5.10:	Utilize programming and signage to designate certain trails, such as the walking paths at Atkinson and Community Parks and the nature trail at Newman Park, as "Healthy Heart" or Mindfulness trails	AGE	Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP	5.5.1	
Strategy 5.11:	Implement and promote adult sports leagues to increase recreation opportunities for adults	GE	✓		Operations	Parks	OP	5.5.1	
Page 6: Proactive maintenance and management									
Strategy 6.1:	Update the department's organizational chart to align staffing with the delivery of high-quality services and future adaptability	AE	✓		Operations	Parks/City	OP	5.5.2	
Strategy 6.2:	Review and evaluate staffing levels across all functional areas to provide adequate support for community priorities and effective service delivery	AE	✓		Operations	Parks/City	OP	5.5.2	
Strategy 6.3:	Establish a trail maintenance budget for all departments responsible for trails	PE	✓		Operations	City	OP	6.7	
Strategy 6.4:	Designate staff members to oversee trail maintenance and provide training in trail construction and upkeep	PE	✓		Operations	City	OP	6.7	
Strategy 6.5:	Select, implement, and utilize maintenance management software to track, schedule, and document all maintenance activities across fields, facilities, and equipment	AE	✓		Operations	Parks	OP	5.5.4	
Strategy 6.6:	Transition management and maintenance of city-owned sports fields and concessions to the Parks and Recreation Department	AGE	✓	✓	Operations	Parks	OP	5.5.3	
Strategy 6.7:	Develop a prioritized maintenance plan for all parks, recreation facilities, and cemeteries based on defined service levels and CPED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) framework	PGE	✓	✓	Operations	Parks/City	OP	5.5.4	
Strategy 6.8:	Conduct a tasks analysis for each park and recreation department position to identify current staff responsibilities, expertise, and knowledge, ensuring the department meets current and future needs	AE	✓		Operations	Parks	OP	5.5.2	
Strategy 6.9:	Implement policies and procedures that enhance communication and recognize staff achievements	GE	✓		Policy	Parks	OP	5.5.2	
Strategy 6.10:	Invest in training and professional development opportunities for staff at all levels	GE	Ongoing		Policy	Parks	OP	5.5.2	
Strategy 6.11:	Develop long-term plans to guide and prioritize capital improvements, repairs, and equipment replacement	GE	Ongoing		Planning	Parks	OP	5.6.5	
Strategy 6.12:	Integrate maintenance management software training into staff development programs to ensure effective use of the system and maximize its benefits, including report generation for budgeting and cost recovery	AE	✓		Operations	Parks	OP	5.5.4	
Strategy 6.13:	Perform standard maintenance (lighting, resurfacing) at the Doc Hosbach Tennis Complex for continued operations	PE		✓	Capital	Parks	CIP	5.4.4	
Strategy 6.14:	Consider pursuing national accreditation through CAPRA to further enhance departmental standards and operations (after completion of the self-assessment)	G		✓	Policy	Parks	OP	5.5.6	
Page 7: Consistent engagement and promotion									
Strategy 7.1:	Establish and regularly update policies and procedures for marketing, advertising, social media, sponsorships, naming rights, and partnerships to enhance outreach and community engagement	AGE	Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP/ Revenue	5.5.5	
Strategy 7.2:	Develop a marketing plan and assign a staff member to make weekly (or more frequent) website updates and social media posts	AE	✓		Operations	Parks	OP	5.5.5	
Strategy 7.3:	Reenergize the Parks and Recreation Board and update its bylaws to reflect current needs and best practices	AE	✓		Operations	Parks	OP	5.5.6	
Strategy 7.4:	Designate a staff person in the City Manager's office or Parks and Recreation Department to research and apply for grants to support programs and new facilities	AGE	✓		Operations	Parks/City	OP	5.6.7	
Strategy 7.5:	Finalize development plans with community engagement before construction for all new or significantly redeveloped parks	GE	Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP	5.4.2	
Strategy 7.6:	Include neighborhood-specific features at all neighborhood parks based on local interest	GE	Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP	5.4.2	

Table 7.1 Action Plan (Continued)

PAGES	Related Goals	Timeframe (Years)			Category	Agency	Funding Source	Section Reference
		0-2	3-5	6-10				
Strategy 7.7:	Initiate collaborative cross-marketing campaigns with the Henderson County Tourism Commission and the Chamber of Commerce of Henderson, prioritizing strategies that support economic development	AGE	Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP/ Partners	5.5.5
Strategy 7.8:	Actively promote accessibility enhancements to park amenities, including ADA-accessible paths, playgrounds, and other features	E	Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP	5.5.5
Strategy 7.9:	Implement technology enhancements, such as user counters, Park-related apps, Mobile device charging stations, and Wi-Fi hotspots	AE	Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP	5.3.2
Strategy 7.10:	Engage the board to lead the department through the free self-assessment provided by the National Recreation and Park Association's Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA)	E	✓		Operations	Parks	OP	5.5.6
Strategy 7.11:	Recruit and organize formal volunteer programs such as Adopt-A-Trail and Adopt-A-Spot to assist with park maintenance and encourage participation with clear information about involvement options	E	✓		Operations	Parks	OP	5.6.6
Page 8: Sustainable funding strategies								
Strategy 8.1:	Re-evaluate existing funding agreements with sports organizations and discontinue direct financial compensation for field maintenance once responsibility transitions to the Parks and Recreation Department	A	✓	✓	Operations	Parks	OP	5.5.3
Strategy 8.2:	Conduct a space utilization and capacity analysis for all reservable sports facilities to determine their ability to accommodate scheduled programs, drop-in use, rentals, and associated maintenance requirements	AE	✓		Operations	Parks	OP	5.5.3
Strategy 8.3:	Develop an alternative funding plan to supplement operations, programming, and capital projects	AGE	✓		Operations	Parks	OP/ Revenue	5.6.1
Strategy 8.4:	Establish policies for alcohol permits for both private rentals and community events	A	✓		Operations	Parks	OP/ Revenue	5.6.2
Strategy 8.5:	Conduct a cost-of-service analysis to evaluate both direct and indirect costs associated with operating and maintaining parks, facilities, athletic fields, and sports courts	A	✓		Operations	Parks	OP	5.6.2
Strategy 8.6:	Revise ordinances and related administrative policies and procedures governing facility rentals and special event permits	AE	✓		Operations	Parks	OP	5.6.3
Strategy 8.7:	Set cost recovery goals based on an established framework to support program lifecycle planning, including forecasting based on costs, revenues, participation rates, and trends	AG	Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP	5.6.2
Strategy 8.8:	Continue to seek grants and other funding opportunities for implementation of the trails plan	GE	Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP/ Revenue	6.10.1
Strategy 8.9:	Expand the rental program to include more parks, facilities, shelters, amenities, and athletic fields, both existing and future	AG	✓	✓	Operations	Parks	OP/ Revenue	5.6.2
Strategy 8.10:	Establish a rental fee structure for sports organizations using city fields, with fees based on hourly use or the number of players, to cover maintenance and staff costs.	AG	✓		Operations	Parks	OP/ Revenue	5.5.3
Strategy 8.11:	Limit use agreements to league play for Henderson residents and manage tournaments with outside teams as rentals, applying the new rental fee structure	A	✓		Operations	Parks	OP/ Revenue	5.5.3
Page 9: Constructive partnerships and collaboration								
Strategy 9.1:	Develop clear and consistent agreements with all partner organizations to clearly define responsibilities and ensure equitable benefits for all parties involved	AE	✓		Operations	Parks	OP	5.5.3
Strategy 9.2:	Explore partnerships and fundraising initiatives, especially for projects with significant capital requirements, to supplement city contributions	GE	Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP	5.8
Strategy 9.3:	Seek partnerships to incorporate public art installations in parks, prioritizing downtown locations	GE	Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP/ Partners	5.3.2
Strategy 9.4:	Explore options for additional indoor court space at the former Jefferson Elementary School building and other school gymnasiums	AE	✓		Operations	Parks	OP	5.3.7
Strategy 9.5:	Consider incentives or requirements for residential developments to include parks or parkland	AE	Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP	5.4.2
Strategy 9.6:	Coordinate a funding plan with city, county, local organizations, and businesses for riverfront park development	PAGE	✓		Operations	Parks	OP/ Partners	5.4.3
Strategy 9.7:	Invite partnerships with outside vendors to create an adventure park at Atkinson Park, featuring a zip line and various outdoor activities, with the goal of making the park a regional attraction	AGE	✓		Operations	Parks	OP/ Partners	5.4.3, 5.7.2
Strategy 9.8:	Establish partnerships with community organizations, including the YMCA, community college, and the local hospital, to provide professional instruction for water fitness classes for adults and active older adults	E	Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP/ Partners	5.5.1
Strategy 9.9:	Develop the 4th Street Art Walk along the north side of the railroad tracks between Main Street and Water Street to enhance downtown connectivity and promote public art	GE		✓	Capital	City	CIP/ Partners	6.8.2, 5.7.2
Totals by Timeframe			44	32				
Total Number of Strategies = 128			Ongoing = 40					

APPENDIX A - PHOTO CONDITIONS INVENTORY

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

ANTHONY BROOKS SR. PARK	A-2
CENTRAL PARK.....	A-3
KIMMEL PARK	A-5
SUNSET PARK	A-6
WC HANDY PARK.....	A-7

COMMUNITY PARKS

ATKINSON PARK	A-9
COMMUNITY PARK	A-11
NEWMAN PARK	A-12

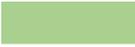
SPECIAL USE PARKS

AUDUBON MILL PARK.....	A-14
DOC HOSBACH TENNIS COMPLEX.....	A-15
HAYS PARK	A-16
RED BANKS PARK	A-17
HENDERSON SPORTS COMPLEX.....	A-18
THE BRIDGES GOLF COURSE.....	A-19

TRAILS

MERRILL TRAIL	A-20
RIVERWALK.....	A-21

Legend for Conditions

	Excellent - New/Well Maintained Condition, No Improvements Needed
	Good - Minor Wear, Minimal Improvements Needed
	Fair - Significant Wear/Damage, Needs Repair
	Poor - Needs Replacement



ANTHONY BROOKS SR. PARK

817 Madison St.

Park Size:

0.8 Acres

Park Classification:

Mini

Anthony Brooks Park is located in the East End neighborhood across the street from the JFK Community Center. The park currently includes a playground and small picnic shelter. The parks in overall poor condition; however, it is scheduled to be renovated in 2026 with a new playground, splash pad, picnic shelter(s), and improved ADA access and connectivity to the JFK Community Center.

Park Amenities	Quantity	Condition
Developed Acreage	0.8	
Outdoor Facilities		
Playground	1	
Support		
Small Shelter	1	



CENTRAL PARK

10 S. Main St.

Park Size:

3.3 Acres

Park Classification:

Mini/Special Use

Central Park is a mature park in downtown Henderson that serves as a focal point and gathering place for community events. The park is home to several veterans' and war memorials, a small playground, gazebo, and an historical fountain. The park is in overall good condition; however, portions of the playground need an upgraded safety surface.



Park Amenities	Quantity	Condition
Developed Acreage	3.3	
Outdoor Facilities		
Playground	1	
Support		
Gazebo/Small Shelter	1	





EAST END PARK

214 Letcher St

Park Size:

0.4 Acres

Park Classification:

Mini

East End Park is a mini-park located in the East End neighborhood. The park is in overall good condition with a splash pad, playground, restroom building, and a small shelter. The city received a grant in 2025 to replace the playground safety surface.

Park Amenities	Quantity	Condition
Developed Acreage	0.4	
Outdoor Facilities		
Playground	1	
Splash Pad	1	
Support		
Restroom Building	1	
Small Shelter	1	





KIMMEL PARK

551 N. Adams St.

Park Size:

2.9 Acres

Park Classification:

Neighborhood

Kimmel Park is a large neighborhood park located in the central part of the city. Features include a playground, basketball court, picnic shelter, and restroom building. The park is in overall good condition, however the restroom building is in fair to poor condition. The playground elements are in good condition, however the safety surface needs to be replaced, additional elements should be added, and ADA accessibility needs to be improved.

Park Amenities	Quantity	Condition
Developed Acreage	2.9	
Game Courts		
Basketball Court	1	
Outdoor Facilities		
Playground	1	
Trails and Passive Facilities		
Medium Shelter	1	
Support		
Restroom Building	1	
Parking Spaces (Off-Street)	20	





SUNSET PARK
 325 N. Water St.
Park Size:
 7.5 Acres
Park Classification:
 Neighborhood

Sunset Park is located in downtown Henderson on the riverfront. The park includes neighborhood park features such as a playground and splash pad. The park also includes a restroom building, amphitheater, and two large boat ramps with trailer parking. The park is in overall good condition, however the amphitheater and playground safety surface should be replaced.

Park Amenities	Quantity	Condition
Developed Acreage	7.5	
Outdoor Facilities		
Playground	1	
Splash pad	1	
Trails and Passive Facilities		
Boat Ramps	2	
Support		
Restroom Building	1	
Parking Spaces (Off-Street)	57	



WC HANDY PARK

500 S. Alves St.

Park Size:

2.6 Acres

Park Classification:

Neighborhood

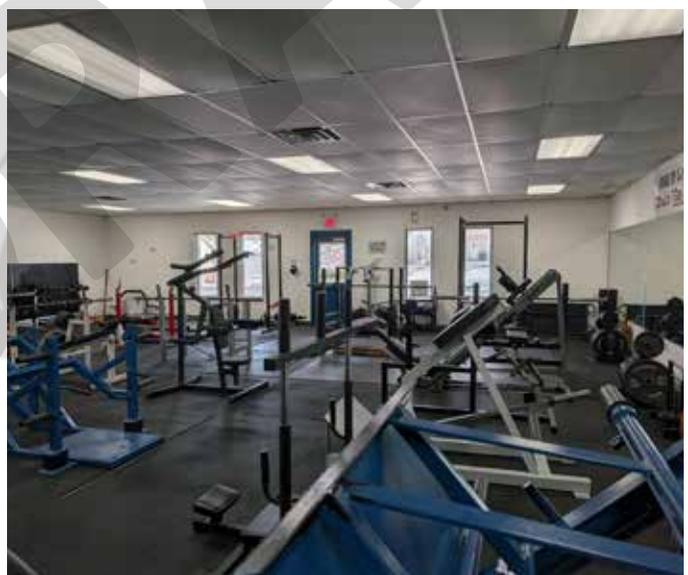
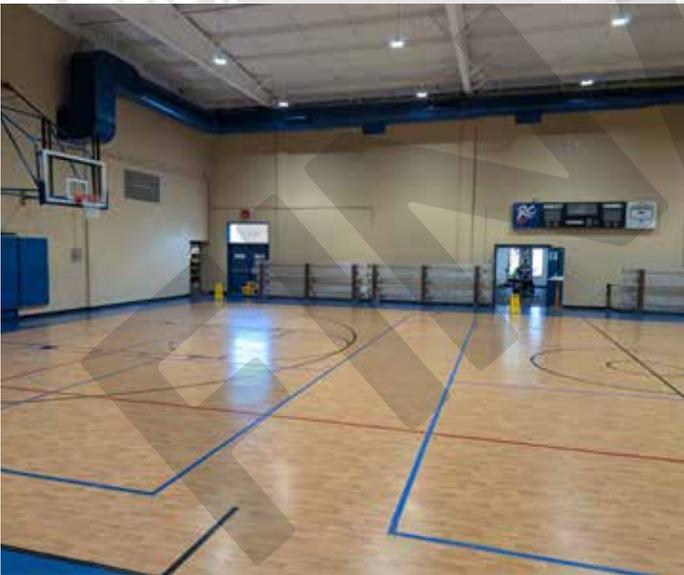
WC Handy Park is located in the East End neighborhood and is home to the JFK Community Center. The park also includes 2 basketball courts, playground, and picnic shelter. The park is in fair to good condition. The basketball courts are a popular feature; however they have ongoing drainage and settling issues that need to be addressed. The playground is in poor condition and should be removed and replaced with another type of feature.



Park Amenities	Quantity	Condition
Developed Acreage	2.6	
Game Courts		
Basketball Courts	2	
Outdoor Facilities		
Playground	1	
Trails and Passive Facilities		
Medium Shelter	1	
JFK Community Center		
Multipurpose Court/Gym	1	
Meeting Space	1	
Fitness Center	1	
Support		
Parking Spaces (Off-Street)	20	



WC HANDY PARK (CONTINUED)



ATKINSON PARK

1813 N. Elm St.

Park Size:

101.7 Acres

Park Classification:

Community

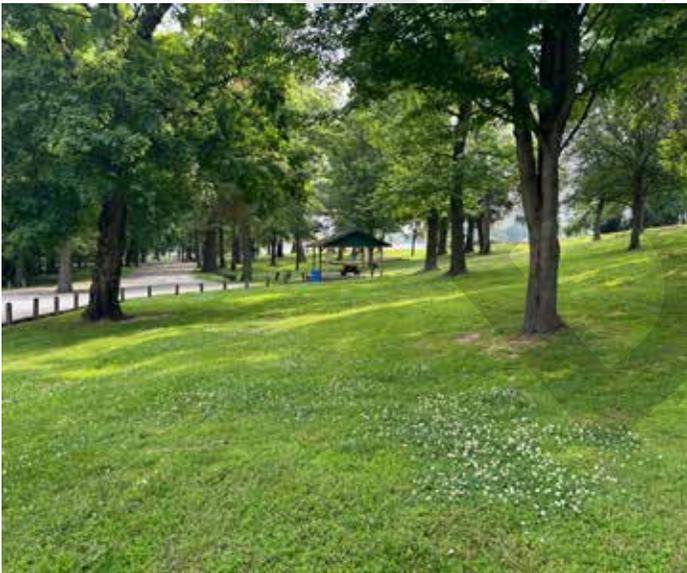
Atkinson Park is a large community park on the north side of Henderson along the Ohio River. The park is home to many popular features including the Denton Shelter, Atkinson Pool, two disc golf courses, many picnic shelters, and barbecue pits. The park also includes a few small playgrounds, skate park, sand volleyball court, and open space. Atkinson Park is also home to the Gathering Place, Henderson's senior center, and the Parks and Recreation Department's maintenance building. Conditions in the park vary greatly, ranging from poor to good. The areas of greatest concern are the Atkinson Pool, which should be replaced, playgrounds, skatepark, and picnic shelters. The pool house building is an historic structure that should remain if the pool is removed and possibly converted into a rental facility.



Park Amenities	Quantity	Condition
Developed Acreage	78.8	
Game Courts		
Sand Volleyball Court	1	
Outdoor Facilities		
Playgrounds	2	
Swimming Pool	1	
Skatepark	1	
Disc Golf (Holes)	38	
Trails and Passive Facilities		
Large Shelter	1	
Indoor Facilities		
Meeting Spaces	3	
Support		
Restroom Building	1	
Gazebos/Small Shelters	9	
Parking Spaces (Off-Street)		



ATKINSON PARK (CONTINUED)





COMMUNITY PARK

1776 Madison St

Park Size:

16.0 Acres

Park Classification:

Community

Community Park is located on the south eastern edge of the city, not far from Newman Park. Key features include six pickleball courts, playground, dog park, basketball court, and a large picnic shelter with restrooms. The park also contains a small diamond field and several small picnic shelters. Conditions vary in the park. The pickleball courts and small shelters are in good condition. One playground structure is new and in excellent condition; however, even though the structure itself is ADA accessible, the area around the structure is not accessible. The other playground structure is in poor condition and should be removed. The large picnic shelter is also in fair condition. The dog park is located in the floodway and experiences regular drainage problems. Overall, community park is in need of a refresh with several new and different features.

Park Amenities	Quantity	Condition
Developed Acreage	16.0	Yellow
Athletic Fields		
Small Diamond	1	Red
Game Courts		
Basketball Court	1	Yellow
Pickleball Courts	6	Green
Outdoor Facilities		
Playgrounds	2	Blue, Red
Dog Park	1	Yellow
Support		
Restroom Building/Shelter	1	Yellow
Small Shelters	5	Green
Parking Spaces (Off-Street)	92	Yellow

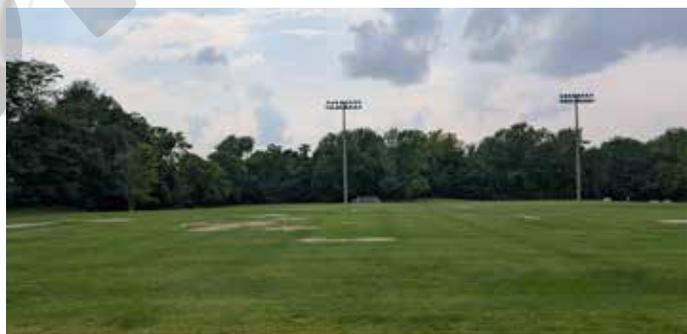




NEWMAN PARK
 Sand Lane
Park Size:
 132.1 Acres
Park Classification:
 Community

Newman Park is a large community park located on the south central edge of the city not far from Anthony Brooks Park and Community Park. The park includes four baseball/softball fields, four large multipurpose rectangular, playground, picnic shelter, gaga ball pit, paved walking path, and nearly 2.5 miles of hiking trails. Overall, Newman Park and its features are in good condition; however, the multipurpose field turf is in poor condition. One playground structure is new and has a high quality safety surface, while the other is in fair condition with a mulch surface that should be replaced.

Park Amenities	Quantity	Condition
Developed Acreage	41.6	
Athletic Fields		
Small Diamonds	4	
Large Rectangular	4	
Outdoor Facilities		
Playground	1	
Trails and Passive Facilities		
Paved Trails (Miles)	0.4	
Unpaved Trails (Miles)	2.4	
Medium Shelter	1	
Support		
Restroom Buildings	2	
Parking Spaces (Off-Street)	571	







AUDUBON MILL PARK

123 N. Water St.

Park Size:

3.1 Acres

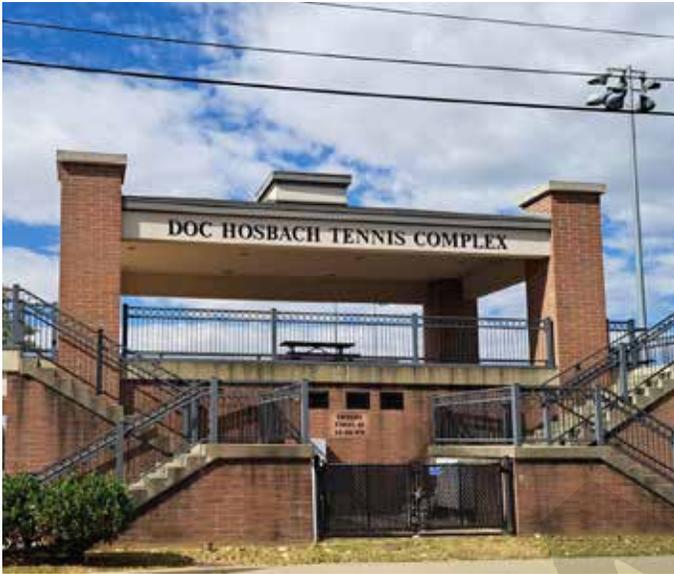
Park Classification:

Riverfront

Audubon Mill Park is located downtown on the riverfront and is a favorite for concerts and community events including the WC Handy Blues and Barbecue Festival and the Bluegrass in the Park Folklife Festival. The park contains several mature trees providing a comfortable and shaded environment for all types of activities. Audubon Mill Park is in overall good condition; however, the park does not offer ADA accessibility to the many picnic tables scattered around the park.

Park Amenities	Quantity	Condition
Developed Acreage	3.1	





DOC HOSBACH TENNIS COMPLEX

17 S. Water St.

Park Size:

1.7 Acres

Park Classification:

Tennis Complex

The Doc Hosbach Tennis Complex is located in downtown Henderson on the riverfront and includes 12 dedicated tennis courts and a building with restrooms and a concession stand. The tennis center is a regional draw and popular for tournaments. The center is in overall good condition, though the courts have minor cracking and wear that should be monitored.

Park Amenities	Quantity	Condition
Developed Acreage	1.7	
Game Courts		
Tennis Courts	12	
Support		
Restroom/Shelter/Concessions Building	1	
Parking Spaces (Off-Street)	14	





HAYS PARK

2011 N. Elm St.

Park Size:

24.5 Acres

Park Classification:

Field Complex

Hays Park is located adjacent to Atkinson Park in the northern part of the city on the riverfront. Features in the park include a boat ramp with trailer parking, the Riverwalk trailhead, and three baseball fields. One of the baseball fields is primarily used by the Henderson Flash, a team for college students during the summer that utilizes wooden bats. The field used by the Flash is in good to excellent condition and is maintained by Flash management staff. The other fields are in poor condition and in need of major repairs and upgrades if they are to remain in use. The buildings behind the backstops are not safe for use.

Park Amenities	Quantity	Condition
Developed Acreage	24.5	
Athletic Fields		
Small Diamond	1	
Large Diamond	2	
Trails and Passive Facilities		
Boat Ramp	1	
Support		
Restroom Building	1	
Restroom/Concessions Building	1	
Batting Cage	1	
Parking Spaces (Off-Street)	160	



RED BANKS PARK

611 Merritt Dr.

Park Size:

5.5 Acres

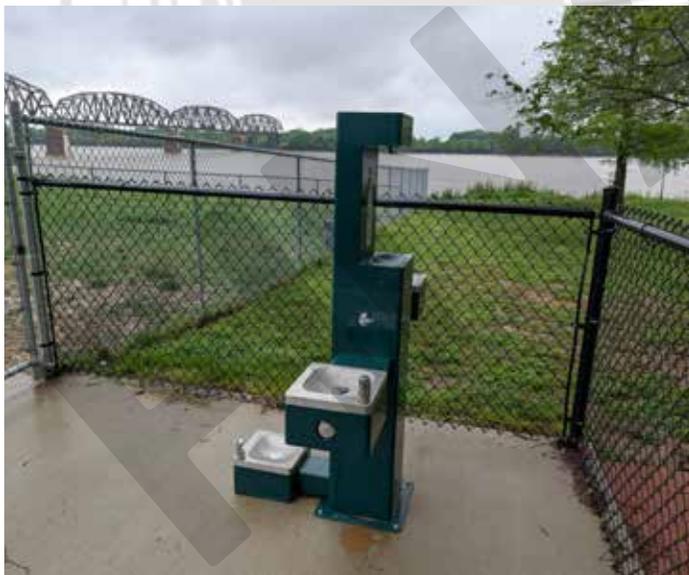
Park Classification:

Riverfront

Red Banks Park is located on the riverfront just north of downtown Henderson. The park includes a large open space, a short walking path with benches, and a dog park. The park is in overall good condition; however, the turf in the dog park is in poor to fair condition due to some drainage issues that need to be addressed.



Park Amenities	Quantity	Condition
Developed Acreage	5.5	
Outdoor Facilities		
Dog Park	1	
Lawn	1	
Support		
Parking Spaces (Off-Street)	12	





HENDERSON SPORTS COMPLEX

5845 Airline Rd

Park Size:

61.1 Acres

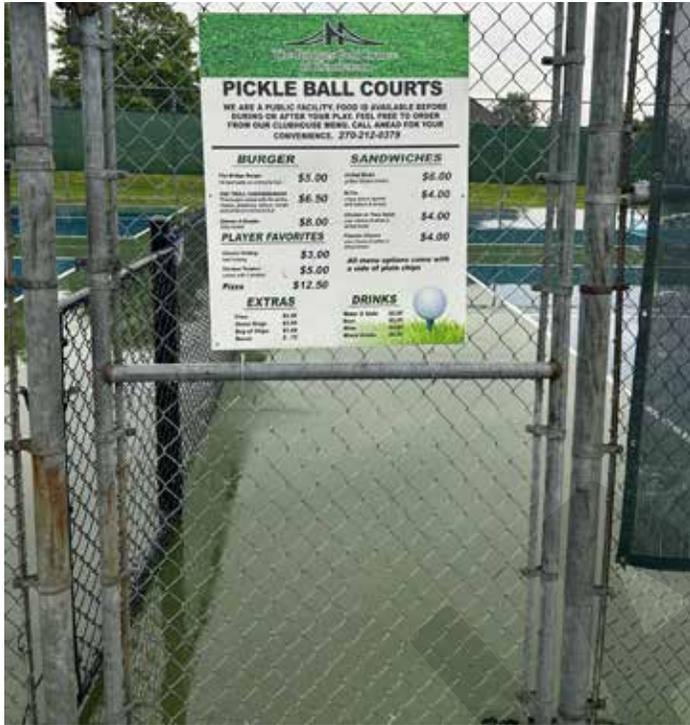
Park Classification:

Sports Complex

The Henderson Sports Complex opened in the spring of 2025 with four artificial turf diamond fields, one artificial turf multipurpose rectangle field, and two grass multipurpose fields. Future phases of construction will add five additional artificial turf diamond fields and a walking path. The city has a contract with The Sports Facilities Companies (SFC) to operate and maintain the complex.

Park Amenities	Quantity	Condition
Developed Acreage	61.1	
Athletic Fields		
Small Diamonds	4	
Large Rectangular	3	
Support		
Restroom/Concessions Buildings	2	
Batting Cage	6	
Parking Spaces (Off-Street)		





THE BRIDGES GOLF COURSE

800 Wolf Hills Blvd.

Park Size:

164.7 Acres

Park Classification:

Golf Course

The City of Henderson purchased the Bridges Golf Course in 2018 and has a contract with K&J golf Course Management to operate and maintain the course and clubhouse. The city also offers four dedicated pickleball courts at the Bridges that are open and may be used at no cost.

Park Amenities	Quantity	Condition
Developed Acreage	164.7	
Game Courts		
Pickleball Courts	4	
Outdoor Facilities		
Golf (Holes)	18	
Indoor Facilities		
Meeting Space	1	N/A
Support		
Parking Spaces (Off-Street)	180	





MERRILL TRAIL

1020 Sand Lane

Park Size:

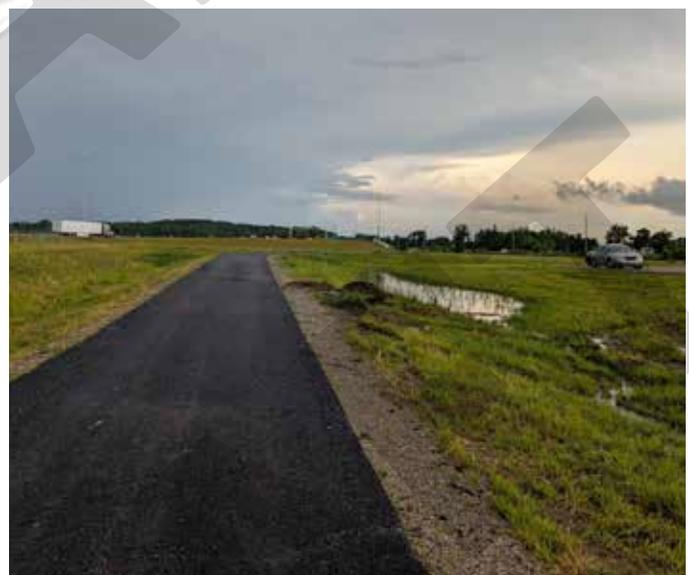
N/A Acres

Park Classification:

Multi-Use Path

The Merrill Trail (Kimsey Trail) is a 1.1 paved mixed-use path on the eastern edge of the city near Wal-Mart. The path is being expanded as part of the I-69 project to extend from Barret Boulevard to Van Wyk Road. The city also has plans to extend the trail along Van Wyk Road to 5th Street. The trail is in overall good condition; however, there are serious drainage problems where the trail crosses under I-69 that are compromising the trail in that location.

Park Amenities	Quantity	Condition
Developed Acreage	N/A	
Trails and Passive Facilities		
Paved (Miles)	1.1	





RIVERWALK
 2011 N Elm St
Park Size:
 15.9 Acres
Park Classification:
 Multi-Use Path

Henderson's Riverwalk is a 2.5 mile paved path along the Ohio River that runs from Hays Park to the Doc Hosbach Tennis Center. Most of the Riverwalk is a dedicated trail of 6 feet to 8 feet in width; however, the section from Red Banks Park to the tennis center is a city sidewalk. The trailhead in Hays Park includes an overlook with benches and swings as well as a small dedication plaza that recognizes the people and entities that contributed to the construction of the path. The Riverwalk is in good overall condition but would benefit from some widening and straightening to allow bicycle usage and adding sections that separate the path from the sidewalk in the downtown area.

Park Amenities	Quantity	Condition
Developed Acreage	2.6	
Trails and Passive Facilities		
Paved (Miles)	2.5	
Support		



