

Chapter Two

Section 2.6 | Existing Programs and Services Overview

2.6.0 Introduction

This overview includes a review of the City of Raleigh Parks and Recreation Department's current recreation program and service offerings. The overview offers a review of recreation programs and events and helps begin to identify the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for future program direction which will be outline in subsequential chapters of this report. It also assists in identifying core programs, program gaps within the community which will help in identifying future program offerings for residents based on community input and trends found in Chapter 3 - Needs and Priorities Assessment.

Program findings were based on a review of program information, program assessment worksheets completed by staff, and interviews and meetings with staff. In addition, marketing materials such as the Leisure Ledger and the department's website were reviewed.

The content of this section is organized as follows:

- Core Program Identification
- Program Mix
- Lifecycle Overview
- Age Segment Overview
- Marketing Approaches and Leisure Ledger Review

2.6.1 Core Program Identification

The ability to align program offerings according to community need is of vital importance to successfully delivering recreation services. At the same time, it is also important to deliver recreation programs with a consistent level of quality, which results in consistent customer experiences. Core programs are generally offered each year and form the foundation of recreation programs. In assessing the categorization of core programs, many criteria are considered. The criteria includes:

- The program has been provided for a long period of time
- Offered three to four sessions per year or two to three sessions for seasonal programs
- Wide demographic appeal
- Includes 5% or more of recreation budget
- Includes tiered level of skill development
- Requires full-time staff to manage the program area
- Has the ability to help solve a community issue (childhood obesity, crime, community engagement, etc.)
- High level of customer interface exists
- High partnering capability
- Facilities are designed to support the program
- Evolved as a trend and has resulted in a "must have" program area
- Dominant position in the market place
- Great brand and image of hte program, based on the Departments's experience of offering the program



Youth Learning to Swim Program

Core programs, by definition meet at least the majority of these criteria. The establishment of core programs helps to provide a focus for program offerings. This focus, in turn, creates a sense of discipline for quality control of these program areas and helps to reduce variation of service for the program participants. It must be noted that the designation of non-core programs does not suggest they

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are unimportant. Instead it means there may be less focus and fewer programs compared to core programs. Using a Core Program Assessment tool can help in determining core program areas.

During discussions with staff and reviewing the core programming criteria, the following programs were identified as core program areas:

- Active Adults
- Arts (Cultural)
- Athletics
- Aquatics
- Educational (ESL)
- Fitness
- Teens
- Historical
- Nature
- Adventure
- Special Recreation Services

* Pending results of the needs assessment survey, this categorization may change

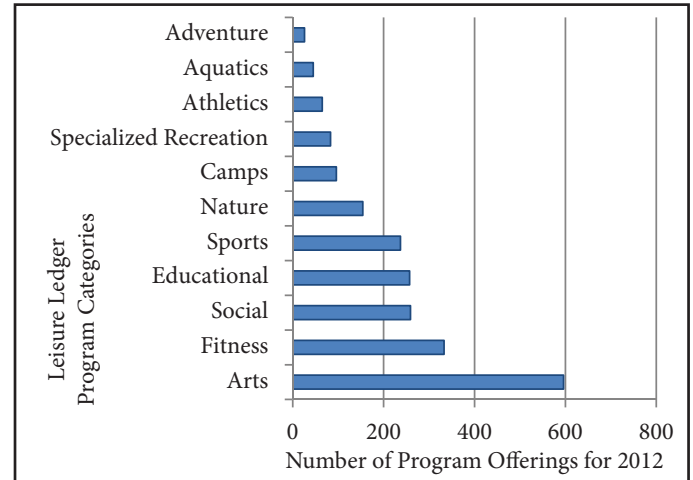
2.6.2 Program Mix

The program mix or the distribution of types of programs offered should represent the programming needs of the residents. Therefore, this should be evaluated annually through an assessment process. In addition, the program offerings should include emphasis on the delivery of core programs. In reviewing program offerings listed in the 2012 winter, summer, fall, and camps Leisure Ledger, the list and numbers of programs offered included:

- Adventure: 26
- Aquatics: 45
- Arts: 596
- Athletics: 65
- Educational: 257
- Fitness: 333
- Nature: 154
- Social: 259
- Specialized Recreation: 83
- Sports: 237
- Camps: 96

* The program mix will be compared to household need types from the household survey to identify gaps in program offerings

Table 14. Program Offerings



2.6.3 Lifecycle Analysis

The program assessment included a lifecycle analysis of the core programs selected for review. This assessment helps to determine if the City of Raleigh Parks and Recreation Department needs to develop newer and more innovative programs, reposition programs that have been declining, or continue the current mix of lifecycle stages. This assessment was based on staff members' perspectives and were categorized according to the following areas:

- **Introduction Stage** (Getting a program off the ground, heavy marketing)
- **Growth Stage** (Moderate and interested customer base, high demand, not as intense marketing)
- **Mature Stage** (Steady and reliable performer, but increased competition)
- **Decline Stage** (Decreased registration)

The percentage distribution of programs according to lifecycle categories includes:

- Introductory programs: 26%
- Growth programs: 31%
- Mature programs: 29%
- Decline programs: 14%

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The rule of thumb for percentage distribution (according to other agency benchmarks) is 60% of programs should be in introduction and growth stages, and 40% in the maturation and decline stages. For Raleigh, the percentage is 57% introduction/growth and 43% maturation/decline which are fairly consistent with the benchmark.



Aqua Group

Any program area in decline should be targeted for repositioning or deletion. Mature programs should be monitored closely in order to prevent decline in registrations. Some agencies, in order to develop accountability for an increased percentage of introductory programs, establish a performance measurement indicating new programs initiated by each staff member. The Parks and Recreation Department has a policy in place for new programs in which program managers are required to complete a new program business plan prior to offering a new program which will determine if it falls in line with the goals of the managers' area of responsibility.

2.6.4 Age Segment Analysis

Park and recreation systems should strive for an equitable balance of offerings for various age segments, including:

- Youth under age five
- Youth ages 6-12
- Youth ages 13-18
- Young adults 19-54

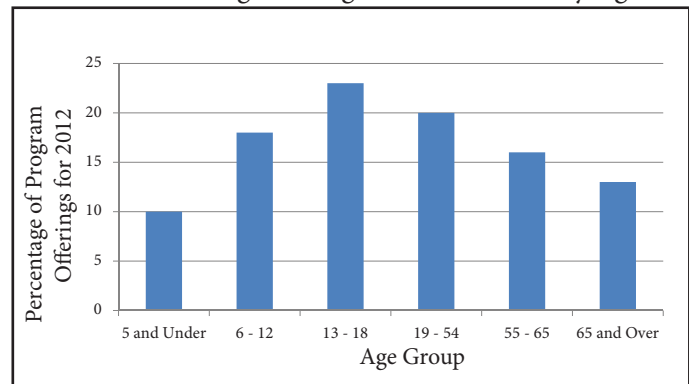
- Older active adults 55-64
- Seniors 65 and above

The percentage of program offerings in each age category closely matches community demographics.

The following table (see **Table 15**) shows the age segment percentages. This information was calculated by reviewing the 2012 winter, summer, fall, and camps program offerings listed in the Leisure Ledger and counting the number of programs offered for each segment. Programs and events offered for all ages, such as family special events, were not included in the list. The age distribution of programs is as follows:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| • Youth under age five: 433 | 10% |
| • Youth ages 6-12: 740 | 18% |
| • Youth ages 13-18: 956 | 23% |
| • Young adults 19-54: 850 | 20% |
| • Older active adults 55-64: 677 | 16% |
| • Seniors 65 and above: 523 | 13% |

Table 15. Percentage of Programs Breakdown by Age



2.6.5 Marketing Approaches and Program Guide

This section evaluates the City of Raleigh's Parks and Recreation Department marketing approaches. Included in this analysis is a review of the Leisure Ledger and other marketing approaches, branding and image, and Website. It is important to have an overall plan for marketing approaches that relates to the overall system of programs and services. In absence of a plan, marketing approaches become random and tactical.

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Program Guide

The program guide, Leisure Ledger, is distributed to households three times a year, with a separate Camps brochure, and is available online, which is helpful for customers. This publication is distributed to only those resident households who have participated in a program or service in the past year.

The cover of the Leisure Ledger is currently enhanced by photographs and displays the Website address and phone number clearly at the bottom of the page. A Director's Message would be a good addition to the Leisure Ledger which would focus on the Department's recent park projects and program updates. A suggestion would be to highlight the benefits of the Parks and Recreation Department to the community as a whole by including any environmental initiatives, awards, partnerships, etc.



Youth Tennis Programs

The inside front cover includes a short summary description of the Department. The description is concise and has an appealing photograph below. The first page, Discover Your Parks and Recreation Department is effective as well as it is visually appealing, has very little text, and is instructional for learning about ways to register. Discover Your New Spaces and Places is also very useful and showcases new facilities.

Overall the Leisure Ledger has extensive information. However, much of this information may be hard to find and minimally marketed. A different method of organizing this information and visual marketing may go a long way in turning the current information brochure into a widespread marketing tool.

This process begins with defined program guide sections. These include sections such as: Dance, Gymnastics, Teens, Seniors, Active Adult, Athletics, Aquatics, etc. Some of the sections listed currently have descriptions of the activity, such as Adventure and Aquatics. Others do not have a description, such as Social Programs. Social Programs may be interpreted differently by customers and should include a brief definition.

After the sections are defined, the appropriate programs should be placed according to the targeted program's ages and demographics. An example of this is the Active Adult/Senior programs. This demographic may not want to spend time searching through program categories throughout the brochure. Instead, all programs catering to that age group should be located in one section of the brochure (i.e. Ballroom dance class for ages 55+ should be located in the Active Adult section and not the Dance section). Some agencies, such as Arlington, Texas provides a separate brochure targeted to older adults. This same concept also pertains to teens. Traditionally parents and adults under the age of 55 tend to look for specific program areas like dance, pre-school, athletics, etc.

Another alternative to organizing the programs within the Ledger would be to categorize them by facility. The City of Henderson, Nevada organizes their programs in this manner which can benefit the patron as well as the Department. This is useful in large systems in which location is the most important customer consideration

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for program choice. When listing programs based on location, it makes it easy for the reader to research programs located near their neighborhood. It also allows for better scheduling for the registrant as they will know right away if the programs they are registering for are in opposite locations. Additionally, the facilities benefit from having programs listed by location as it promotes each facility and creates a marketable identity.



Volunteer Gardening

The Web address is listed on the bottom of every page of the program guide. A recommendation would be to also list a phone number for the Department. Additionally a header should be developed for each page that can be used for highlighting areas such as Department Mission, Tag lines, photos, etc. The callout of “NEW” to program listings is a good technique to use, not only for potential customers to identify those programs that are new, but also for staff as a reminder to constantly innovate.

According to staff, there is currently no collaboration with the Visitor’s Bureau to reach out to new residents with the Leisure Ledger. This would be an opportunity that the Department could explore and develop a type of “Welcome Packet” to new community members on an annual basis as a method of marketing. Additionally this may be helpful, as a result of mailing the Leisure Ledger to only past year participants there may be lost opportunities to gain resident participants who have never participated or participated years ago.

Program guides typically are the most important marketing method used by park and recreation agencies. According to national information, 50% of residents in communities across the country find out about programs from their guide.

The program guide is available online in a PDF format on the City website. However, a “virtual” online program guide would be more visually appealing and easier to read. In addition, this type of guide can be downloaded on smart phones; whereas PDFs are not. As an example, the City of Virginia Beach has a virtual online program guide that is easy to read and also allows for links to registration while browsing programs in the brochure.

Customers generally look to the price of a program and then the program title as a means of determining whether or not they will register for a class. Therefore, creative program titles are important. WOW: The Wonders of Wetlands is a good example of a creative title. Many others simply state what the program is about. The goal should be to develop more creativity in the program titles.

After price and title, the third element of importance is the description. Descriptions should include features, attributes, and benefits. Some of the text included in program descriptions is informational, rather than promotional. Identify the unique value propositions for each program and identify the “hook” that will entice people to register. It is also suggested to try to keep the descriptions brief, no longer than six or seven lines, as readers lose interest in programs if they read too much. A good example is on page 56 of the Leisure Ledger. The program Bird Buddies uses a creative title while the description captures the interest of the reader as well as provides all basic information for participating in the program. Some other descriptions are lengthy and others are purely informational, without creating incentive for a person to be interested in registering.

The Leisure Ledger includes a staff highlight section, which is a nice feature. This could be supplemented with information about a couple of key instructional staff in each issue, which brings a personal and approachable touch to the programs they teach/instruct. Along with pictures, a contact person, number, and/or e-mail should also be included in this section. Currently there is a list

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of Executive Staff at the front of the program guide. A recommendation would be to include phone numbers and/or e-mail addresses for the Executive Staff as well as contact information for program managers. It is also helpful to have customer testimonials, as word of mouth is an important form of marketing.

The Department currently has a small Special Events section located at the beginning of the program guide. It would be beneficial to make this section larger and list core events with pictures to increase potential interest in these programs. Additionally, this would be an opportunity to promote or market sponsors/partners that are supporting those events.

The Unique Facilities section includes facilities that are available for rental opportunities. However, these facilities are mixed in with facilities that are not available as rental opportunities. A recommendation would be to either create a separate program guide section for Facility Rentals or to use an icon that would distinguish rentable facilities from others. Additionally, rental fees are not included in the facility descriptions. Including such fees would be a good addition to the program guide. A good example for Facility listings is in The Town of Cary program guide. The Town of Cary lists their rentable facilities in their program guide with a description of facilities and a table of fees for each facility. By doing this, it is easy for the reader to determine what facilities are available for rent and what the associated fees are for those facilities.



Youth Art Program at Sertoma Art Center at Shelley Lake Park

Website Review

Parks and Recreation Websites are becoming increasingly important as a marketing tool, an identification of brand and image, and an avenue to provide government transparency. The City of Raleigh's Parks and Recreation Department does not have its own separate Website but is instead a Department category within the City's Website under Arts & Parks.

There is a concern among staff over the lack of brand and image for the Parks and Recreation Department. One suggestion would be to create a Department brand by developing a logo and a clear Webpage on the City's Website. A recommendation would be to change the tab from Arts & Parks and replace with a more obvious title such as Parks, Recreation, and Arts.

On the Department's home page, there are categories of information, listed as Parks and Recreation News, Parks and Facilities, Greenways and Trails, Raleigh Arts, Park Planning and Development, Programs, Classes and Events, RecLink, Leisure Ledger and Publications, and Corporate Services. These categories are organized well, and make it easy for the customer to find needed information. The photographs on the home page add good visual appeal. However, the Website does not have a compelling call to action. Content is informational rather than promotional. Although the basic information is presented and available on the main page, there are several opportunities for improvement for this important marketing and informational tool. Websites are fluid and have the ability to promote programs, events, and amenities visually. Similar to "a picture is worth 1000 words" written program descriptions can be minimized with the addition of descriptive photos.

The majority of patrons using the Web do not want to read a large amount of text. However, the insertion of pictures or even videos of users can have a much quicker "sell." An example of this would be when a user chooses to view the "Halloween and Fall Events." The use of a picture or video from last year's Pumpkinfest would be very beneficial. Other recommendations include:

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- Develop an About tab on the Department page that would include a Staff Directory, Mission Statement, Governing Information, and Frequently Asked Questions. The City of Henderson, Nevada has a clear and easy to read Parks and Recreation page that makes it easy to find content while being visually appealing
- Consider creating a link to Google Maps for the Park listings page
- Create a Volunteer Section where all volunteer opportunities are listed. This gives the Department another opportunity to brand their volunteer program and highlight awards, recognition, and opportunities
- Redesign the main page for the Recreation Department in a way that is more visually appealing. This can be done in a variety of ways such as a photo slider of upcoming programs or events, a video from the Director or Leadership staff, or testimonials from community members
- Reinforce the Department's commitment to sustainable practices. Provide information about maintenance and design practices being used to promote sustainability

A process should be put into place to constantly assess the Website, at least on an annual basis, as this is the first introduction of the Department to many potential customers. An assessment should include a review of the following items:

- Content
- Maintainability
- Accessibility
- Customer Usage
- Internal Support

The assessment should include external customer feedback through focus groups. In addition, it is helpful to have recreation program staff and contractual instructors review the site and provide suggestions in areas of improvement, based on their use of the site and suggestions they hear from customers.

It is projected that within the next five years, there will be an equal number of users who may access Websites through smart phones (I-phones, Androids, Blackberries, etc.) and Tablets (I-Pad, Samsung Galaxy, HP Slate, etc.).

In order to maximize outreach to its target market, the Department should evaluate developing applications and a WAP (wireless application protocol) enabled Website which can be easily viewed by potential users on smart phones or tablets and also allow them to make online reservations. A great example of a mobile Recreation site is the Parks and Recreation Department of Arlington, Texas. The City has created an Application for their Recreation Department and easy to access applications for Leagues, Registration, Special Events, and their program guide.

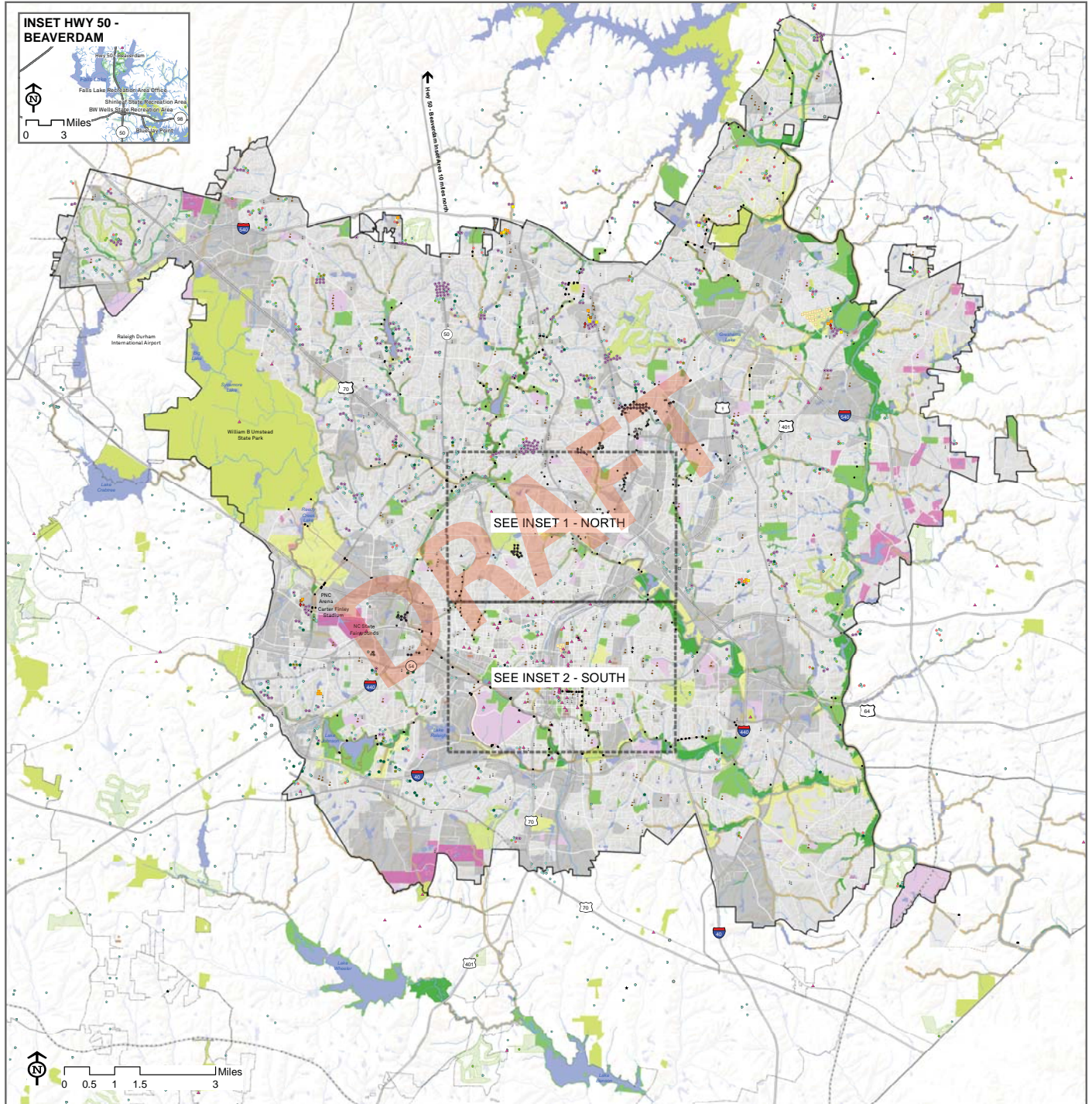


Canoeing Program

The Department has also adapted to the world of Social Media and offers applications on their website for Facebook, Twitter, You Tube, Flickr, and Beehive. All of these allow community members more opportunity to be informed and connected to the City. Currently these tools are being used for basic City information such as public hearings and public input meetings. Another effective use of these media outlets is for promotional marketing of programs, events, and current projects. When using it for this purpose, the Department can post photos of events or testimonials from past participants as a way to promote itself.

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Map E. City of Raleigh Private and Other Recreation Providers, 2012



LEGEND

Private Recreation Facilities

- Football Stadium
- Basketball Court
- Track
- Baseball Field
- Volleyball Court
- Playground
- Softball Field
- Tennis Court
- Pool
- Soccer Field
- Indoor Tennis Facility
- Clubhouse
- Multipurpose Field

- Nonprofit
- National Register Historic Place
- School
- Church
- Ice Skating Rink
- Golf Course
- Wake County Pools
- Residential
- Non-Residential

- Greenway Trailhead
- College
- City of Raleigh Park
- County/Other City Park
- Greenway
- Other Park
- COR CAG Corridors

- Golf Course Property
- Wake County Building
- Wake County Site
- Wake County Historic Property
- CIP Project
- Lake/Pond/Reservoir

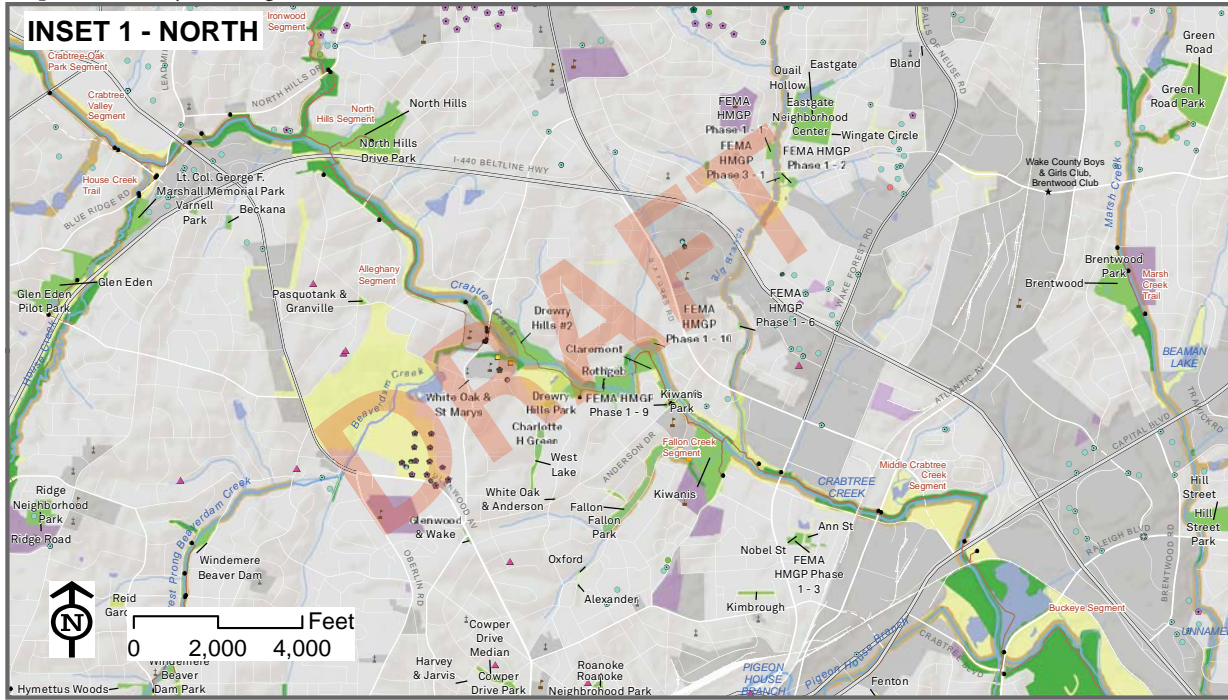
- Existing Greenway Trail
- Future Greenway Trail
- Rivers and Streams
- Major Road
- Proposed Major Road
- Street
- Proposed Street

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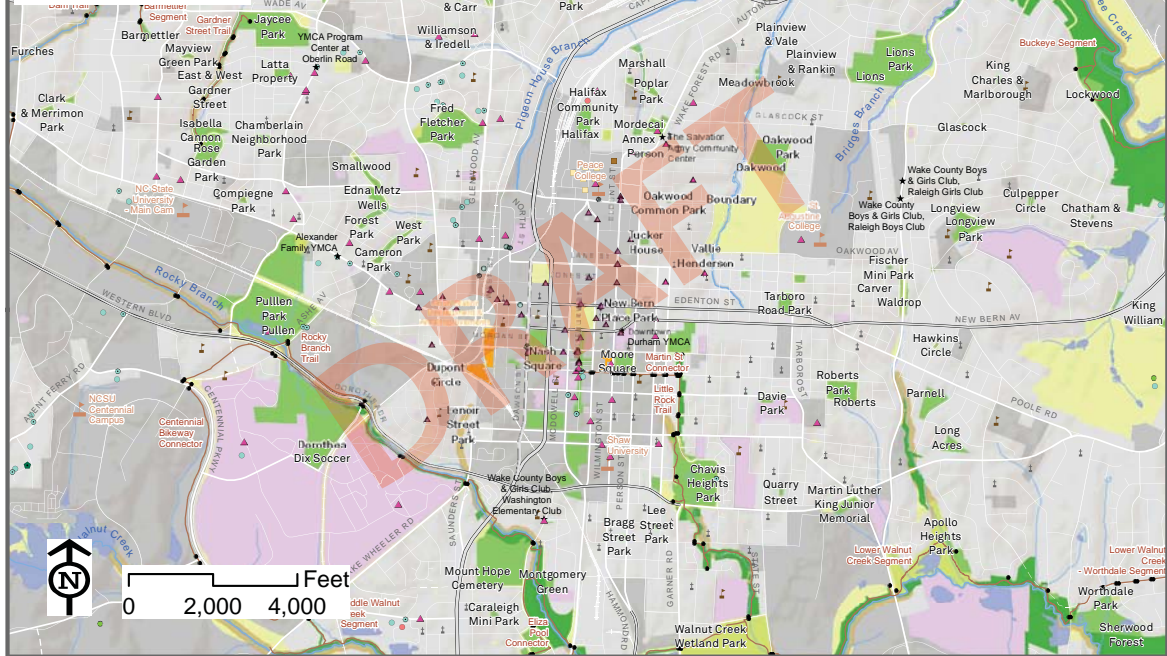


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Map E Insets. City of Raleigh Private and Other Recreation Providers, 2012



INSET 2 - SOUTH



LEGEND

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|--|---|--|---|---|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Football Stadium • Baseball Field • Softball Field • Soccer Field • Multipurpose Field | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basketball Court • Volleyball Court • Tennis Court • Indoor Tennis Facility • Clubhouse | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track • Playground • Pool • Ice Skating Rink • Wake County Pools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonprofit • National Register Historic Place • Golf Course • Wake County Pools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenway Trailhead • College • School • Church • Residential • Non-Residential | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Raleigh Park • County/Other City Park • Greenway • Other Park • COR CAG Corridors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Golf Course Property • Wake County Building • Wake County Site • Wake County Historic Property • CIP Project • Lake/Pond/Reservoir | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Existing Greenway Trail --- Future Greenway Trail — Rivers and Streams — Major Road --- Proposed Major Road — Street --- Proposed Street |
|--|---|--|---|---|---|---|--|

existing system overview

