



Town of Smyrna, Delaware

# MASTER PARKS PLAN



LARDNER/KLEIN  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS, PC

*December 2023*

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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Councilman William Pressley Sr., At-Large/Council Secretary  
Councilwoman Tabitha Gott, District 1  
Councilwoman Corrine Upshur, District 2  
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Councilman Gerald Brown, At-Large

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Mike Czelti, Smyrna Little League  
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Shawn Vascellaro, Smyrna Clayton Little Lass

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## INTRODUCTION

In February 2022, the Town of Smyrna initiated a Master Parks Plan in response to the need for a long-term development plan, identified by the staff of the Smyrna Parks and Recreation Committee and Town. The formulation of a long-range plan fits the goals of the Town and touches on the development of new and existing parks and recreational amenities, as well as exploring the potential for land acquisition to satisfy unmet needs.

The Master Parks Plan included the following:

- a.) A questionnaire of town residents to solicit input gauging the need and demand for various types of open spaces and recreational amenities.
- b.) Public visioning and design workshops to develop ideas for passive and active recreational amenities on existing vacant or under utilized public parks and properties.
- c.) Strategies and design alternatives to redevelop and add amenities where appropriate and practical to existing publicly-owned open spaces.
- d.) Cost estimates for development of recreational amenities and improvements within town-owned parks and open spaces.
- e.) Strategies and potential design alternatives to broaden and increase public access both within and to various public open spaces.

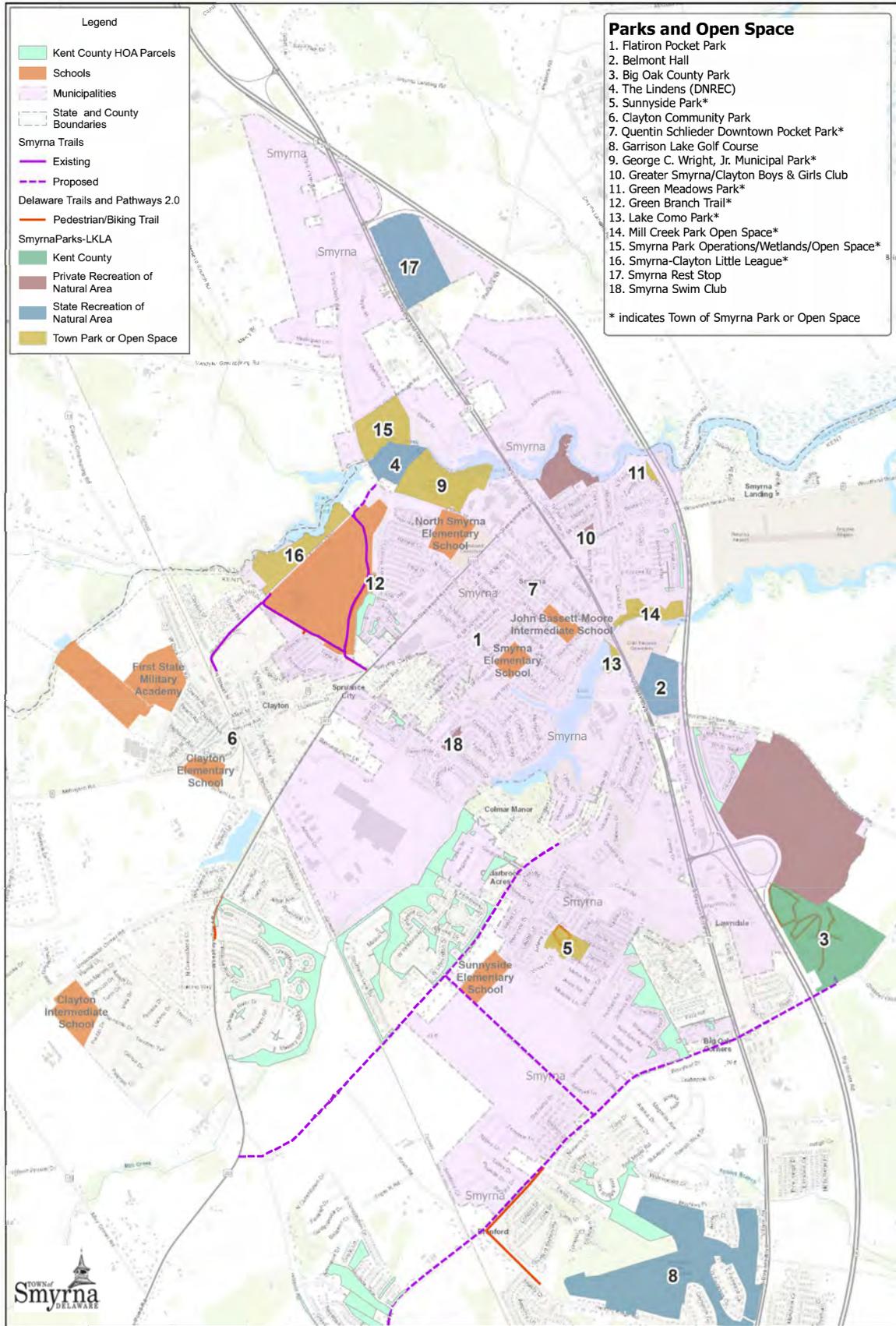
The Town formed a Master Parks Plan Steering Committee to:

- Assist the consultant team in the refinement of the Master Parks Plan Vision and Goals.
- Provide information to the consultant team regarding existing conditions and assessment of unmet current and future needs in the park system.
- Assist with prioritizing and valuating park improvements and their development, as well

- as potential future park acquisitions.
- Advise on implementation approaches, maintenance issues and priorities, and potential partnership opportunities.
- Advise and assist in public engagement and outreach to the community.

**Table 1 Plan Process and Schedule**

<b>a) Data Gathering and Community Questionnaire</b>	<b>Jan.-Feb. 2022</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Inventory existing parks</li> <li>2. Conduct community questionnaire</li> </ol>	
<b>b) Vision + Goals   Public Meeting #1</b>	<b>Mar. 12, 2022</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Build on the results of the questionnaire, identify issues/challenges, needs, and opportunities and facilitate brainstorming on how to address them</li> </ol>	
<b>c) Needs Assessment   Vision, Goals and Strategies</b>	<b>April-July 2022</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Based upon public input, develop conceptual diagrams illustrating program, needs and opportunities for each park or group of parks</li> </ol>	
<b>d) Preliminary Findings   Public Meeting #2</b>	<b>Aug. 22, 2022</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Review needs and concepts for each park or park group</li> </ol>	
<b>e) Safe Routes to Parks</b>	<b>Aug. 2022</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Review pedestrian and bicycle access and connectivity to parks from neighborhoods and other trip generators such as schools, churches, and commercial areas</li> </ol>	
<b>f) Draft and Final Plan</b>	<b>Jan.-Sept. 2023</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Review and revise draft and final plans and submit to Town for Council action</li> </ol>	



New Castle County, Delaware FirstMap, VITA, Esri, HERE, Garmin, GeoTechnologies, Inc., USGS, METI/NASA, EPA, USDA

Existing Parks & Open Space  
AUGUST 2022



Map 1 Smyrna's existing parks and open space

## EXISTING FACILITIES

### TOWN OF SMYRNA FACILITIES

The Town of Smyrna owns approximately 99.9 acres of parkland that is generally usable for park and recreation purposes, with an additional 33 acres of Town-owned land leased to other organizations for uses that include recreational activities (Boys and Girls Club) or restricted by deed for use by the Smyrna Clayton Little League and Smyrna Clayton Little Lass Softball. Big Oak County Park is just outside the Town Boundary but is used by Town residents.

For planning purposes, Table 2, Existing Town of Smyrna Park and Recreation Land, summarizes the current inventory of lands used or dedicated for park and recreation purposes.

**Table 2 Existing Town of Smyrna Park and Recreation Land**

Category	Acres
Total Town-Owned Parkland (usable for park and recreational purposes)	76.17
Planned State of Delaware Transfer (The Lindens) <sup>1</sup>	19.29
Recent addition: North Main Parcel at Duck Creek Parkway	4.53
<b>TOTAL ACRES (Town of Smyrna Usable Park Land)</b>	<b>99.99</b>
Other lands committed to current uses (Park Operations parcel) <sup>2</sup>	30.25
Other Town land leased for recreation or restricted by deed for limited use (Boys and Girls Club, Smyrna Clayton Little League, and Smyrna Clayton Little Lass Softball)	33.18
Additional Kent County Parkland (Big Oak) and Town of Clayton (Community Park)	88.87
<b>Total Planning Acreage</b>	<b>252.03</b>

The planning area does not include facilities owned and managed by the Smyrna School District because those facilities, while generally available to residents for recreational use, are not designated specifically for recreational purposes through formal agreements. The School District does, however, allow use of the facilities by organized sports leagues and for informal recreational opportunities for its students and secondarily for residents at the discretion of the District. The School District facilities help the Town of Smyrna meet many of its recreational needs and this is discussed on page 6.

<sup>1</sup> Land transfer is in process to include limitations on use to only include uses that are compatible with the historic significance of the site (e.g., trail, interpretation, picnicking, and other passive uses)

<sup>2</sup> The Town currently uses the parcel for park operations (such as a staging/storage area for mulch and other landscape materials) with the remainder comprised of wetlands and flood prone areas – any use of the parcel would be limited to trails, or a small trailhead or other passive uses compatible with the current operational uses

“Table 3 Existing and Nearby Parks”, provides a list of specific park and recreation facilities located in or adjacent to the Town, and identifies their ownership, location, and size. See Map 1 on page 2 for reference.

**Table 3 Existing and Nearby Parks**

Facility Name	Owner	Map #	Acres
Belmont Hall	State of Delaware (DNREC)	2	27.12
Big Oak County Park	Kent County	3	88.61
Sunnyside Park	Town Park	5	12.33
Clayton Community Park	Town of Clayton	6	0.26
Quentin Schlieder Downtown Pocket Park	Town Park	8	0.02
Garrison Lake Golf Course	State of Delaware (DNREC)	11	160.58
George C. Wright, Jr. Municipal Park	Town Park	12	44.49
Greater Smyrna/Clayton Boys & Girls Club	Town Owned/Leased to Club	13	2.93
Green Meadows Park	Town Park	14	1.39
Green Branch Trail	Town Park	15	1.25
Lake Como Park	Town Park	16	3.03
Mill Creek Park	Town Park	17	13.66
Smyrna Park Operations/Wetlands/Open Space	Town Park Public Works Use	18	30.25
Smyrna Clayton Little League	Town Owned / Use Dedicated to SCLL	19	30.25
Smyrna Rest Stop	State of Delaware (DelDOT)	20	60.9
Smyrna Swim Club	Private Recreation	21	3
The Lindens (DNREC)	Currently State owned with planned future conveyance to Town	23	19.29
Flatiron Pocket Park	State ROW	24	NA
			499.36

Table 4, Town of Smyrna Inventory of Park and Recreation Facilities on the following page provides an inventory of existing park and outdoor recreation facilities at each of the Town’s parks. The Town does not operate any indoor recreation facilities, but indoor recreation opportunities are found at Smyrna School District properties and at the Boys and Girls Club.

**Table 4 Town of Smyrna Inventory of Park and Recreation Facilities**

		Town of Smyrna										Smyrna School District Facilities							Clayton	Kent Co.		
		Quentin Schlieder Park	Downtown Pocket	George C. Wright, Jr. Municipal Park	Green Meadows Park	Green Branch Trail	Lake Como Park	Mill Creek Park Open Space	Smyrna Clayton LL	Sunnyside Park	The Lindens	Flattron Pocket Park	Clayton Elementary	Clayton Intermediate School	John Bassett Moore Intermediate School	North Smyrna Elementary School	Smyrna Elementary School	Smyrna High/Middle School	Sunnyside Elementary School	Town of Clayton Comm. Park	Big Oak Park (Kent County)	
Water Based Facilities	Swimming Pool																					
	Spray Park																					
	Fishing Area						✓															
	Piers						✓															
	Marinas																					
	Boat Ramps						✓															
Field Sport Facilities	Baseball/Softball Fields		✓					✓						✓	*			✓				✓
	Football Fields		✓											✓				✓				
	Lacrosse													✓				✓				
	Soccer Fields													✓				✓				
	Tracks																	✓				
	Field Hockey		✓															✓				
	Multipurpose Field Area		✓																			✓
Court Sport Facilities	Tennis Courts																					
	Basketball Courts			✓											**				✓			
	Volleyball Courts																		✓			
* poor condition ** not suitable area being renovated																						
Picnic & Playground Facilities	Playgrounds		✓	✓		✓			✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
	Tot Lots		✓	✓		✓																✓
	Swings		✓	✓					✓													✓
	Tot Swings									✓												
	Pavillion		✓			✓			✓													✓
	Picnic Area		✓	✓																		
Camping Facilities	RV & Tent Camping																					
	Youth Camping																					
	Primitive Camping																					
	Cabins																					
	Yurts																					
	Cottages																					
Other Facilities	Gardening																					
	Skate Parks		✓																			
	Disc Golf																					
	Golf																					
	Dog Areas																					
	Nature Centers																					✓
	Restrooms		✓																			✓
	Showers/Bath House						✓															
	Rock Climber Equipment																					✓
	Historic Site		✓																			
	Fitness Equipment																					✓
Informal Open Space	Grassy Area (mowed)	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Natural Area (woods)		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓												✓
	Natural Area (wetlands)		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓												✓
	Natural Surface Trail																					
	Paved Trail				✓																	
	Scenic Overlook																					
Parking		✓				✓	✓						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	

## **TOWN OF CLAYTON FACILITIES**

The Town of Clayton maintains a small community park area (the Stephen Robert Rebar Park, hereinafter "Clayton Community Park") with playground equipment and benches.

## **KENT COUNTY PARKS**

Kent County maintains and operates Big Oak Park, abutting the south end of the Town of Smyrna on the east side of US 13. Big Oak Park is approximately 89 acres and includes three adult softball fields and several large multi-use field areas. Forty acres are leased to the Delaware AeroSpace Education Foundation for Space and Earth Science education and recreation (DASEF).

## **SMYRNA SCHOOL DISTRICT FACILITIES**

The Smyrna School District provides access to both indoor and outdoor recreational facilities in accordance with the conditions noted below, as articulated by the District:

- Access to all indoor amenities requires users to complete a "Request for use of School Premises" form that is available on the District's website.
- Access to outdoor amenities requires users to complete a "Request for use of School Premises" form that is available on the District's website when
  - The outdoor amenity is a Football Stadium/turf fields; or
  - The outdoor amenity is used by organizations/groups for a formal event, competition, practice, etc.
- The use of outdoor spaces for personal/recreational purposes is permitted without restriction (except for the stadium/turf fields as indicated above).

The Smyrna School District is (as of March 2022) in the planning phase for the following proposed improvements:

- JBM
  - Tennis court upgrade
  - Potentially convert this space to basketball courts and a fitness area
- Smyrna Elementary
  - Playground equipment repair
  - Addition of inclusive playground
- Smyrna High/Middle campus
  - Track refurbish
  - Tennis court refurbish
  - Mini-turf stadium turf replacement
  - Addition of mini-turf lights (LED)
  - SHS stadium light upgrade to LED
  - Bermuda mini-field for practice
- Central office
  - Refurbish basketball courts

Table 4 on page 5, provides an inventory of existing park and outdoor recreation facilities in the Smyrna School District, Clayton Community Park, and Big Oak Park (Kent County).

## SMYRNA POPULATION

The US Census Bureau publishes information and estimates about populated places throughout the United States based upon the most recent updates to the American Community Survey and the 2020 US Census. Table 5, below, provides recent census data (2021)<sup>3</sup> for the Town of Smyrna:

**Table 5 TACS Population Estimates for the Town of Smyrna**

Population	
Population Estimates, July 1, 2021, (V2021)	13,149
Population estimates base, April 1, 2020, (V2021)	12,872
Population, percent change - April 1, 2020 (estimates base) to July 1, 2021, (V2021)	2.20%
Population, Census, April 1, 2020	12,883
Population, Census, April 1, 2010	10,023

## POPULATION PROJECTIONS

The Delaware Population Consortium (DPC) provides 40-year population and employment projections for the State, the counties, and for selected municipalities, including the Town of Smyrna.<sup>4</sup> These projections are based on information provided to or generated by DPC members and other agencies at the federal, state, and local level through 2019. These projections are provided below in Table 6.

**Table 6 DPC Population Projections for the Town of Smyrna**

Year	DPC projection
2010	10,171
2020	11,840
2030	12,452
2040	13,042
2050	14,151

As indicated above, the most recent census data indicates that the Town already has exceeded the 2030 DPC population projection and is estimated to have exceeded the 2040 projection. Therefore, a revised population projection is required. Using the most recent US Census Bureau data (ACS), the population is estimated to have grown at an annual rate of 2.2 % between 2020 and 2021. Projecting 2.2% annualized growth rate, the Town of Smyrna would reach 20,000 in population by 2040. This is consistent with the 2020 Comprehensive Plan Update which projected that if the current rate of building permits and average number of persons per dwelling (2.65) both continued at the same rate, then the available building lots would generate an expanded population of 6,700 by 2042.

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/smyrnatowndelaware/B7A210220> accessed 6/3/2022

<sup>4</sup> Delaware Population Consortium, Annual Population Projections, October 29, 2020, Version 2020.0

## PLANNED DEVELOPMENT

Two major development projects are likely to further increase Smyrna's population growth at a greater rate than projected by the State of Delaware:

- Simons Corner – a site plan was approved for 270 residential apartment dwellings as part of the overall Simons Corner Center property (entire parcel is currently listed for sale).
- Graceville – a total of 709 dwelling units are proposed (314 Single Family and 395 Townhomes) on land at the north end of town.

## NATIONAL RECREATION AND PARK ASSOCIATION (NRPA) METRICS

The NRPA collects self-reported metrics from member agencies across the US and Canada, which are then compiled in a database: the 2021 NRPA Agency Performance Review (the "Review"). The Review presents the data and key insights from 1,000 park and recreation agencies. Information on communities with populations comparable to the Town of Smyrna (between 10,000 and 20,000) can be accessed within the data sets for comparison to the Town of Smyrna. The data is self-reporting and does not directly identify the name of the community.

The data search resulted in the identification of two to three comparable park systems serving similar population to Smyrna's in the Eastern United States. While not a large sample, it does provide an indicator of how the Town stands with similarly sized communities.

The NRPA data set<sup>5</sup> provides a general metric, measuring the ratio of the overall population served by the park acreage, number, and type of facilities. It is strictly a measure of the number of people per facility, while not factoring in the quality of facilities at a particular park. As such, it does provide guidance and offers a baseline service comparison to similar-sized agencies from around the eastern United States. Other measures, such as the online survey or public meetings provide insight into specifically local interests that may not track consistently with the national metrics.

Table 7 provides information comparing the Town's park system with comparable communities using several metrics that measure the ratio of parkland to population.

**Table 7 Smyrna Park Acreage Per Population Compared with Comparable Communities**

Agency Summary Effectiveness Ratios	Similar Park Systems (Median)	Smyrna Parkland (planning purposes)	Total Park and Recreation Use
Acres		99.99	252.03
Total Parks		9	11
Acres of parks per 1,000 residents	25	7.60	19.17
Number of residents per park	941.2	1,461	1,195
Number of acres per park	25	11.11	22.91

As indicated in Table 7, Smyrna's acreage of parks per 1,000 residents and number of acres per park are both low compared with comparable communities. In addition, the number of parks per person is lower than in comparable communities.

Table 8 on page 9 provides additional comparisons using the NRPA metrics indicating the

5 See <https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/ParkMetrics/> accessed 6/2/2022

population served by the available facilities in that community comparable to the Town of Smyrna. Where no facilities are available in the Smyrna planning area for a specific type of recreational activity, the data for comparable communities is still included for reference.

**Table 8 Jurisdiction Population Per Outdoor Facility (NRPA, 2021)**

Jurisdiction population per outdoor facility	Median residents per facility for comparable communities	# Of Smyrna Facilities <sup>6</sup>	Residents per facility (based on US Census Est. Pop. 2021)
a. Playgrounds	3,143	8	1,643.6
b. Tot lots	12,935	1	13,149
c. Community gardens	14,896	0	
d. Basketball courts	3,004	4	3,287
e. Multi-use courts -basketball, volleyball	10,006		
f. Tennis courts (outdoor only)	4,685		
g. Diamond fields: baseball - youth	2,200	6	2,192
h. Diamond fields: baseball - adult	9,013	2	6,574.5
i. Diamond fields: softball fields - youth	18,026	3	4,383
j. Diamond fields: softball fields - adult	18,026	3	4,383
k. Skate Park	23,531	1	13,149
l. Dog park	23,531		
m. Ice rink (outdoor only)			
n. Rectangular fields: multi-purpose	9,013		
o. Rectangular fields: cricket field	18,026		
p. Rectangular fields: field hockey field			
q. Rectangular fields: football field	18,026	1	13,149.0
r. Rectangular fields: lacrosse field			
s. Rectangular fields: soccer field - adult	3,934		
t. Rectangular fields: soccer field - youth	6,187.3		
u. Overlay field	11,765.5		
v. Multipurpose synthetic field	5,882.8		

As indicated, the number of residents served by the Town's existing facilities (diamond fields of all types, football field, playgrounds, basketball courts, and the skate park) is comparable to, or more favorable than, that of similar communities. However, due to the absence of wider rectangular fields (Soccer, Lacrosse, Field Hockey, etc.), multi-use courts (including volleyball), and tennis courts, the Town is performing lower than comparable communities with respect to such facilities. Additionally, while the median number of residents served by a dog park is nearly double that of the Town's current population, its projected 2040 population would make it comparable in size to those communities currently served by a dog park.

To be sure, the NRPA metrics are only an indicator of park and recreation activities provided by communities of comparable size (using self-reported data), and not necessarily an indicator of success

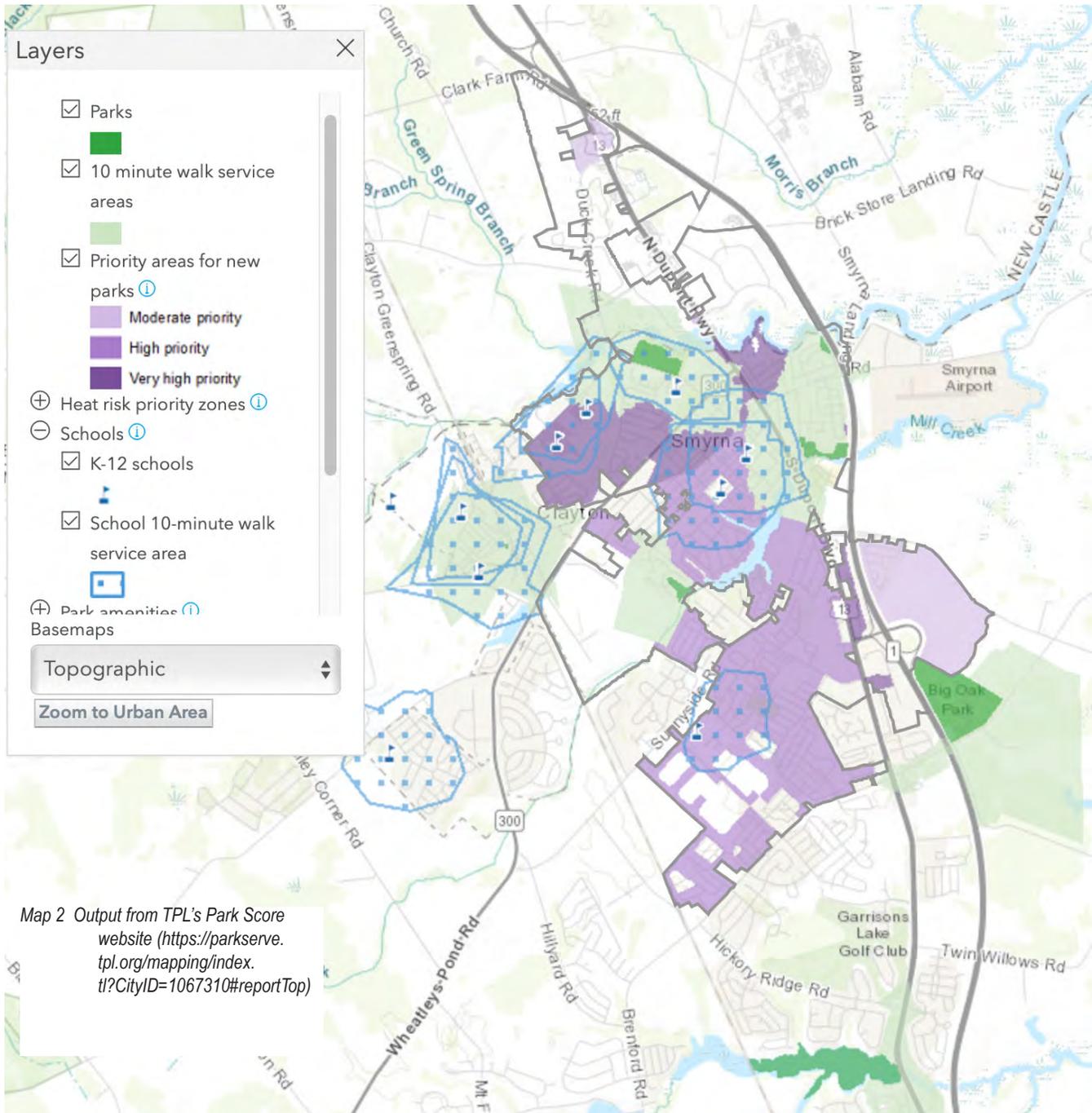
<sup>6</sup> The # of Smyrna facilities does not include usage of facilities provided by the Smyrna School District (see "Table 4 Town of Smyrna Inventory of Park and Recreation Facilities" on page 5 for a listing of Smyrna School District facilities offered informally for use to Town of Smyrna residents).

or failure of a park system. Nonetheless, the data does provide informal benchmarks that can and should be considered when setting priorities for future development.

### TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND'S PARKSCORE®

The Trust for Public Land's (TPL) ParkScore® awards points for park access based on the percentage of the population living within a ten-minute (half-mile) walk of a public park. In their calculation of the ten-minute walking distance, their analysis identifies physical barriers such as highways, train tracks, and rivers without bridges and chooses routes without barriers. According to the TPL review of the Town of Smyrna, only 36.1% of the population is within a ten-minute walk of a park, while 63.9% (approximately 8,500 residents) do not have sufficient park access.<sup>7</sup> Notably, the TPL analysis focuses only on proximity to park land, not to the

7 See <https://parkserve.tpl.org/mapping/index.html?CityID=1067310#reportTop> accessed 6/8/2022



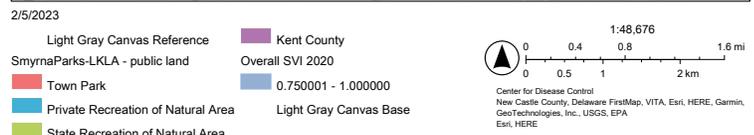
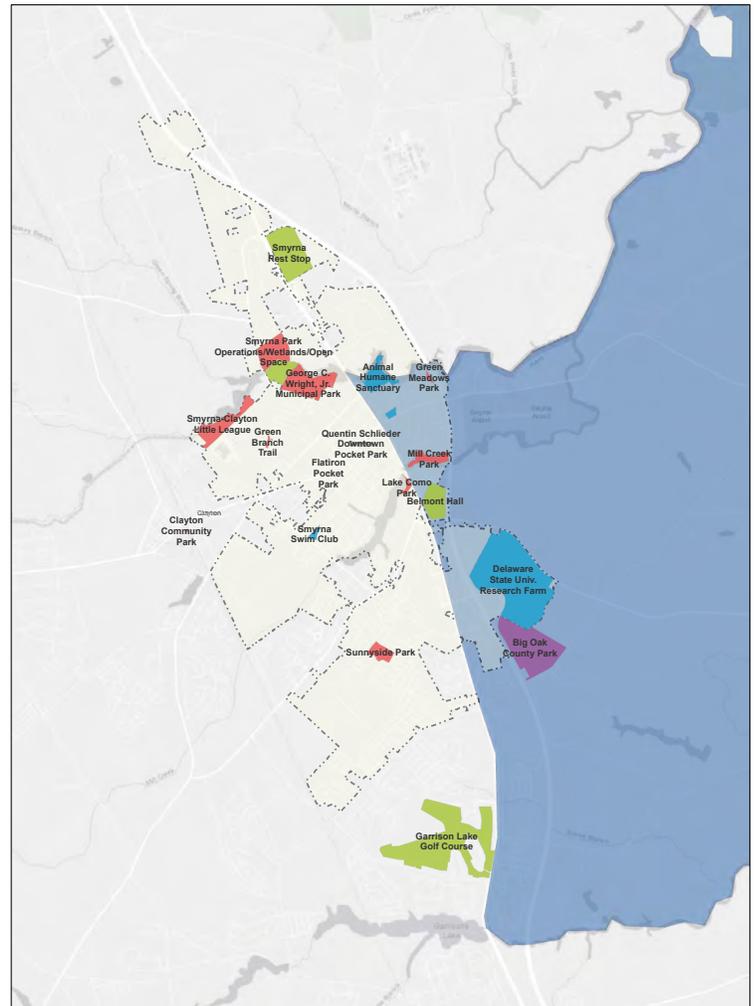
facilities within the park. For example, Mill Creek Park to the south is undeveloped with no recreational facilities, but still accounts for neighborhoods east of US 13 meeting criteria for parkland within a ten-minute walk.

## TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED AND SOCIAL VULNERABILITY

Several indicators are used to determine eligibility or priority for federal and state funds including those related to transportation and parks and recreation programs. 'Transportation Disadvantaged Census Tracts' are the most commonly used measuring tool in USDOT discretionary grant programs to determine disadvantaged community status. The tool allows the mapping of project areas to determine level of disadvantage according to DOT's Justice40 definition. Designation as an historically disadvantaged community requires four of the identified six factors. Most of the census tracts within the Town of Smyrna meet two of the criteria for historically disadvantaged communities. However the census tract east of US 13 meets three of the four criteria (transportation access, health and equity) as shown in Map 3 on page 11.

According to DNREC's website about its Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Trails Program (ORPT) funding: "Projects sponsored by municipalities and counties may receive up to fifty percent (50%) in ORPT assistance of an approved project's total costs; park districts, municipalities that have not received ORPT funds in the past, and projects located in or serving Census Tracts identified as highest vulnerability by the CDC Social Vulnerability Index (SVI score range 0.75 – 1.00) are eligible to receive up to seventy-five percent (75%) in ORPT assistance of an approved project's total costs. The CDC Social Vulnerability Index for Delaware can be found at <https://myhealthycommunity.dhss.delaware.gov/locations/state/topics/climate-change/svi>. The balance of funding of an approved project must be provided by the project Sponsor. The Sponsor may obtain its share through partnerships with other governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, and other non-traditional recreation providers. Partnerships with other agencies and organizations are encouraged however, only the municipalities and counties are eligible to apply for ORPT assistance."

Smyrna Parks Master Plan: Parks and Trails-demographics



Map 3 Output from Delaware Social Vulnerability Index indicating eligibility to receive up to seventy-five percent in ORPT assistance

## DELAWARE STATEWIDE COMPREHENSIVE OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN

The Delaware Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), *Building an Outdoor Legacy in Delaware*, published in 2018, provides recommendations in support of outdoor recreation and land conservation across the State of Delaware. Updated every five years, the plan builds on past volumes, an outdoor recreation survey, and recreation trends.

Through its statewide survey conducted in the Spring of 2018, the Delaware SCORP identifies outdoor recreation priorities by sampling potential participation in a list of 37 outdoor recreation activities by any member of a household over the next twelve months from the survey date. According to the Delaware SCORP, the “results approximate the demand for facilities in the future and indicates outdoor recreation needs statewide, regionally, and locally.” As part of the SCORP process, a statewide Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) identified those activities with a projected household participation rate of 50% or greater as the highest priorities, and rates of 20% to 49% as moderate priorities.

Smyrna is in the northern half of Region 3, which includes Kent County. The small portion of Smyrna that is physically located in Newcastle County is part of Region 4 (most of Newcastle County). Figure 1 illustrates the anticipated participation rates for the 37 enumerated outdoor activities.

Consistent with regions throughout the state, the most popular activities in Region 3 are individual or small group activities such as walking or jogging, bicycling, and dog walking – activities that can be done along trails, sidewalks, large parks, or connected parks along a greenway. Other top activities are nature based such as fishing and camping, while swimming at the beach or a pool and picnicking round out the high-priority activities. Additionally, hiking, using playgrounds, and gardening all came close to the 50% cutoff, and thus

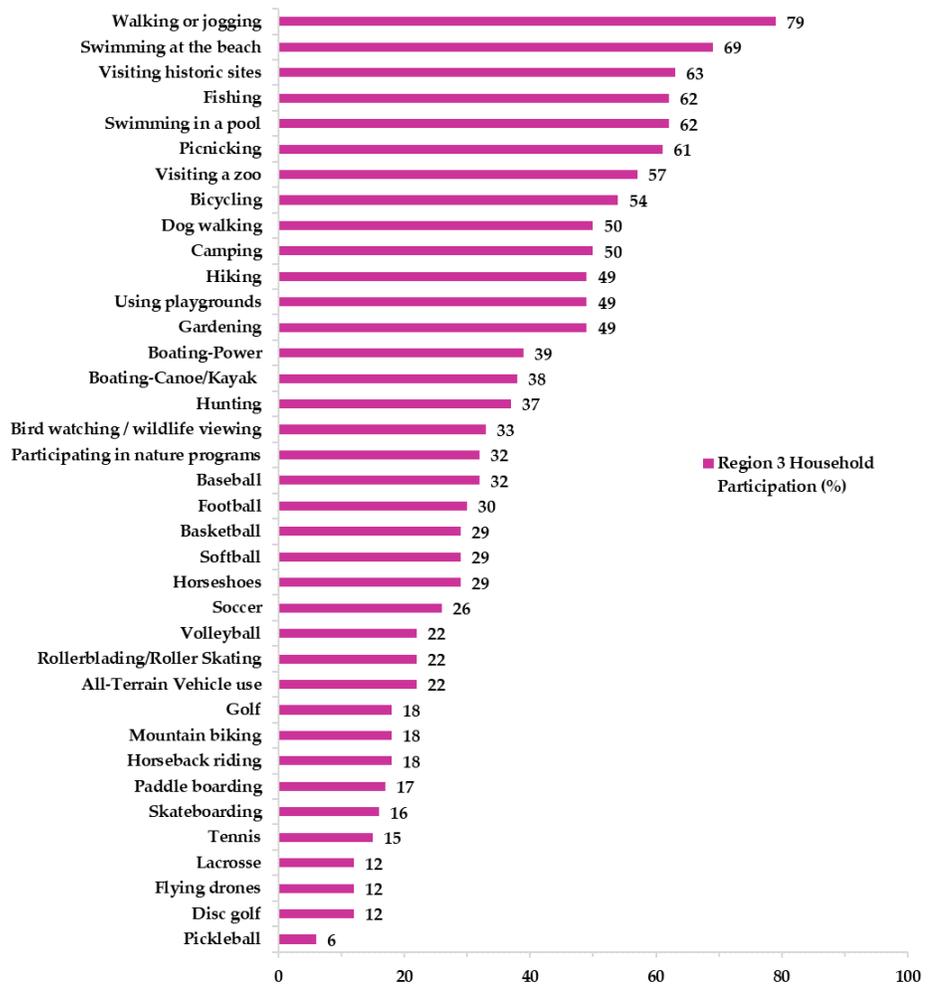


Figure 1 Excerpt from 2018 Delaware SCORP indicating high (50% or higher) and moderate priorities (20-49%) based on the results of a statewide survey question on anticipated participation rates

arguably could be considered top priorities as well. Most of the organized team sports fell into the moderate priority category along with some additional nature-based recreation activities.

Some trends worth noting in the 2018 study included marked increases in participation and planned participation rates for many of the nature-based activities including canoing/kayaking, hiking, camping, nature programs, fishing, and hunting. The top reasons for participating in outdoor recreation are consistent with the marked increases in participation: for physical fitness (55%), followed by fun/relaxation/mental well-being (41%), to enjoy the scenery/be close to nature (35%), and to be with family and friends (24%).

Another key finding from the SCORP survey is particularly germane to the Smyrna Master Parks Plan: statewide, about 41% of Delaware residents said that they would like to see a facility added to a park in their community. Top facilities on the list in the survey include restrooms, indoor recreation facilities, off-leash dog areas, hiking/walking trails, and playgrounds.

A final finding worth noting in relation to the Smyrna Master Parks Plan is that the automobile is the most common mode of transportation that people use to get to their most visited outdoor recreation area (79%), distantly followed by walking/jogging (15%), bicycling (4%), motorcycle (0.5%), and public transportation. This question also was asked in the online community questionnaire with similar results (see Table 11 on page 18). Statewide, 58% of respondents to the 2018 survey noted that they live within five miles of their most frequented recreation facility, while 49% of respondents indicated that they would be more likely to participate in outdoor recreation if it were closer to their home (with an equal number indicating having more time would increase likelihood of participation).

## **TOWN OF SMYRNA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, 2002 (UPDATED 2012, 2020)**

The Town of Smyrna's 2002 Comprehensive Plan was updated in 2012 and again in 2020.

Two planning policies that are part of the Community Facilities section of the Plan refer directly to parks:

- Locate new parks, school recreation areas, fire, and police facilities to be convenient to residents and to enhance economic development in the community.
- *Community and recreational facilities should be combined to maximize their use and minimize expenditures and protect otherwise sensitive areas.*

The 2020 update continues to reference the potential for additional parks and conserved open spaces along Duck Creek, Green Branch, and Mill Creek as part of its overall development pattern.

As part of its development review process, The Town of Smyrna maintains a Parks and Recreation Impact Fee per single-family (\$3,839) and multi-family (\$2,151) dwelling unit. These fees provide a source of funding to upgrade and potentially expand the Town's Park and Recreation facilities.

## KENT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS

Kent County does not have any plans to expand or modify recreational facilities at Big Oak Park. The only immediate plan for new facilities is a proposed splash pad to serve the northern sections of the County with funding designated in the Capital Improvement Program. The three 300-foot softball fields at Big Oak Park are underutilized (a fee is charged for their use). Ballfield lighting and a splash pad also are included in the Capital Improvement Program for Big Oak Park. More pavilion space was identified as a need in an interview with the Director of Community Services. The existing large pavilion is unfriendly and too big for small groups. The Director also noted the potential for the forty acres of Big Oak Park leased to the DASEF and its potential as a destination amenity. The park is also drone-approved. A citizen (noted as a resident of the Town of Smyrna) has also been advocating for a dog park.

On the west end of Smyrna, Kent County is looking to advance the idea of a rail trail using the rail banked Clayton to Easton line. The trail goes from the train station in Clayton to the train station in Easton, MD (as far as MaryDel at the state line). The trail is included in the March 2006 Delaware RTT/ RWT Facilities Master Plan (DeIDOT). Linking Smyrna trails to the Clayton Train Station could be accomplished along the wide ROW (partially owned by ConRail) along Smyrna Clayton Boulevard (DE Route 6).

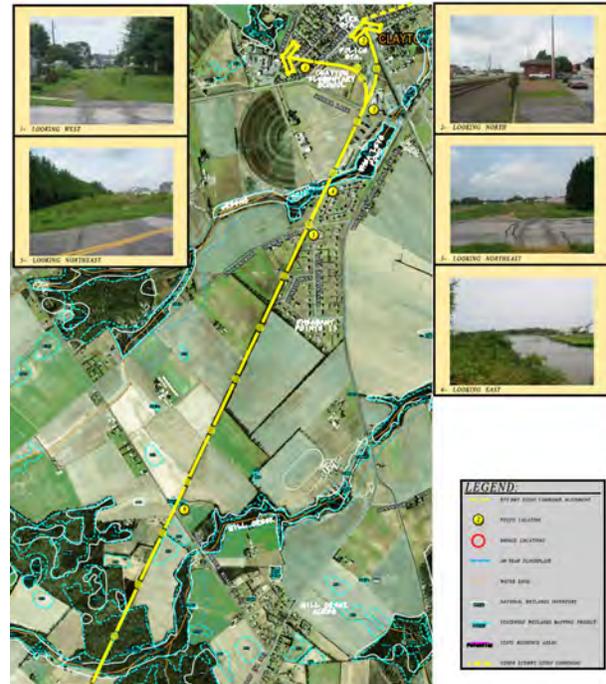


Figure 2 Excerpt from Clayton-Easton Rail Trail concept plan connecting to the train station in Delton (DeIDOT)

## TOWN OF SMYRNA MASTER PARKS PLAN ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

Between February 9, and April 30, 2022, the Town of Smyrna posted an online questionnaire to gain a more detailed understanding of current park usage patterns and future recreation needs. This questionnaire built upon an introductory questionnaire that was conducted by the Town in the summer of 2021. The feedback gained from the 2022 questionnaire is summarized on the pages that follow.

### SUMMARY OF RESULTS

A total of 607 responses were collected online with one additional hard copy response. Although not intended to be a statistical representation of the residents of Smyrna, responses to both choice and open-ended questions provide useful guidance on the existing facilities and desired facilities for Smyrna's parks. Survey questions focused on visitation patterns, activities, travel to parks, and expanded questions about program activities that were identified as desirable in the Summer 2021 questionnaire.

### Respondent Characteristics

Two optional questions were asked regarding age and ethnicity to gain insights as to whether the responses were representative of the age and ethnic diversity of Smyrna residents. Prior to the March 12, 2022 public meeting, a gap was identified in the age distribution when comparing those that

answered the age question (583 out of 607 respondents) and the population estimates available from the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. The age gap was closed by conducting two specific outreach events conducted by Town Staff and a City Council member (Table 9 showing final correlation).

**Table 9 Optional Question asked, "How old are you?"**

Age Group	Smyrna Population	Questionnaire
Under 18	26%	23%
18-24	7%	3%
25-44	34%	36%
45-64	21%	23%
65 and over	13%	15%



Figure 3: Master Parks Plan exercise conducted at Smyrna Middle School

Similarly, responses to the questionnaire regarding Race and Ethnicity received prior to the March 12, 2022, public meeting showed a large gap in African American responses which was partially closed after the public meeting. (Note that 519 out of 607 online responses completed the optional question on Race and Ethnicity).

**Table 10 Optional Question Asked to Identify Race/Ethnicity**

Race and Ethnicity	US Census ACS estimates	Questionnaire
White, not Hispanic or Latino	65.8%	74.4%
Black or African American	35.5%	17.7%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.4%	0.6%
Asian	2.1%	2.5%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.6%
Some other race	0.5%	
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	9.0%	4.2%

**Smyrna Middle School and High School**

Nearly 120 Town of Smyrna Middle School students worked in groups of 4 to 6 with Town representatives to envision new improvements and recreational amenities at three different sets of parks. Earlier in the week, students completed the 20-question parks survey as part of an in-class exercise.

Fifty-seven students (SGA and CTE ambassadors) at Smyrna High School organized into ten groups worked on the same public meeting exercise. All ten groups completed the exercise for George Wright Park with the option of working on either Sunnyside Park or Lake Como Park based upon the preferences of the group members. Most the students completed the questionnaire as well.

The input provided at both schools helped to shape the programmatic ideas and options for renovating and expanding park and recreation opportunities within the Town.

**KEY QUESTIONNAIRE FINDINGS**

The questionnaire focused on gaining more information about visitation patterns, what activities were missing from Smyrna’s parks, travel patterns to Smyrna’s parks, and additional questions about certain activities that were previously identified as a need in an earlier questionnaire.

With regard to geographic distribution of respondents, the large majority of respondents (80%) were Town residents with others self-identified as frequent visitors. A broad distribution of neighborhoods was represented in the survey. No single neighborhood or subdivision had proportionally higher rates of return.

**Visitation Patterns**

The first set of questions addressed visitation patterns. About a third of respondents visited parks, open spaces, and trails around Smyrna seasonally, while slightly more than a quarter of respondents visited weekly (see Figure 3).

Figure 4 indicates that the most visited parks within the Town of Smyrna in the past year were George Wright Municipal Park (a little more than half of the respondents), Lake Como Park (a little more than one-third) and the Smyrna-Clayton Little League (nearly one-third).

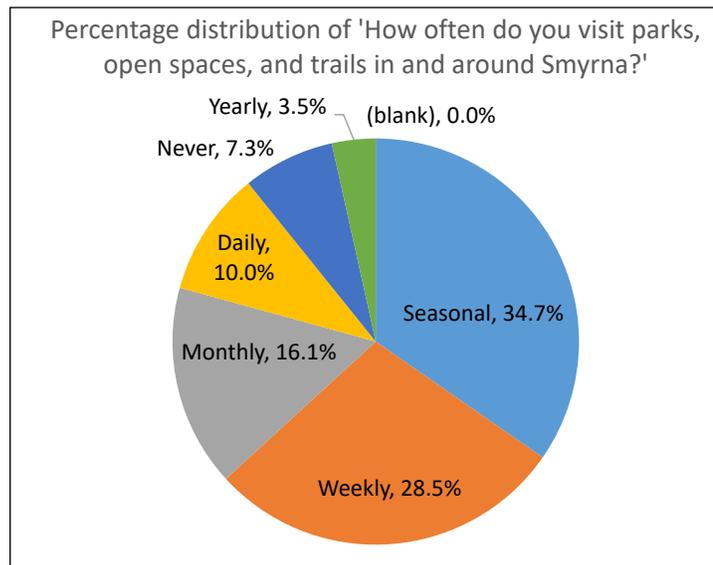


Figure 3 Q1: How often do respondents visit parks in Smyrna

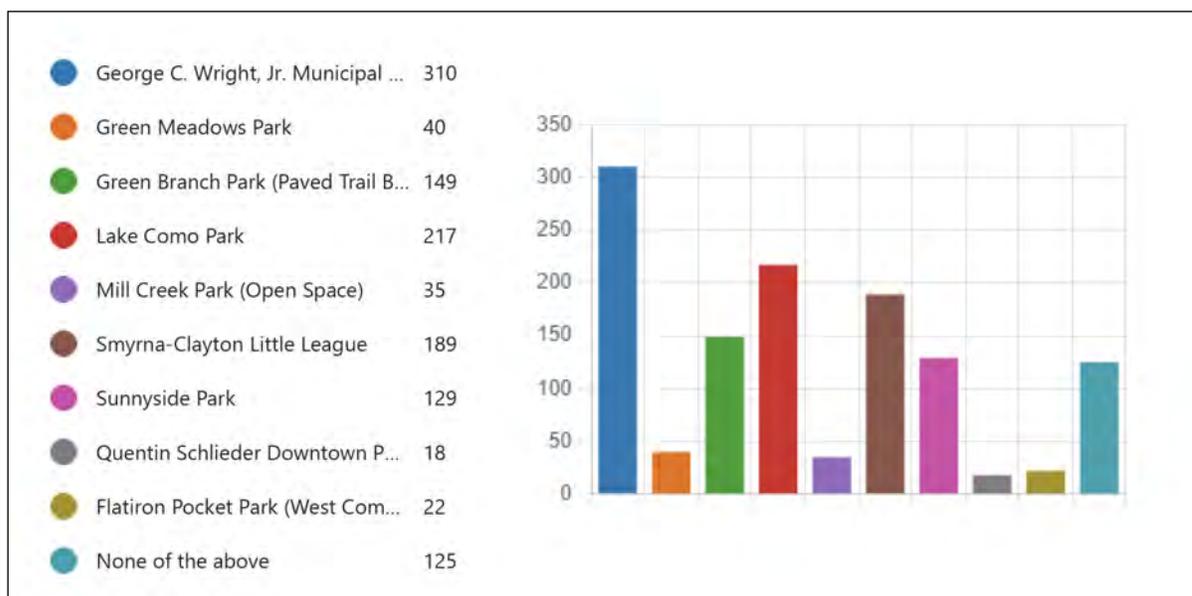


Figure 4 Q2: Which Town parks or open space were visited in the past year

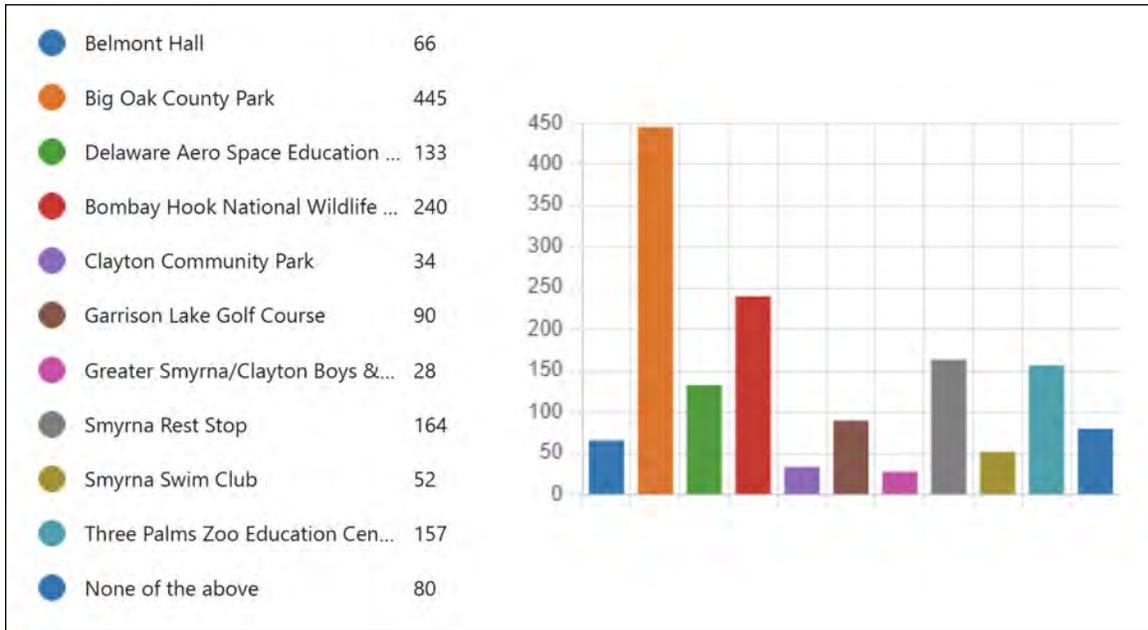


Figure 5 Q3: Which parks in the general area were visited in the past year

When expanding the list to County, State, or private park and recreation areas (Figure 5), nearly three-quarters of respondents visited Big Oak County Park, with Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge a distant second at just under 40% of respondents.

### Activities Not Available in Smyrna’s Parks

When asked about taking advantage of recreational activities on Smyrna School District properties outside of regular or extracurricular activities, 364 respondents out of 607 (just under 60%) indicated they participate in recreational activities at School District properties. The breakdown of those School District activities is depicted in Figure 6.

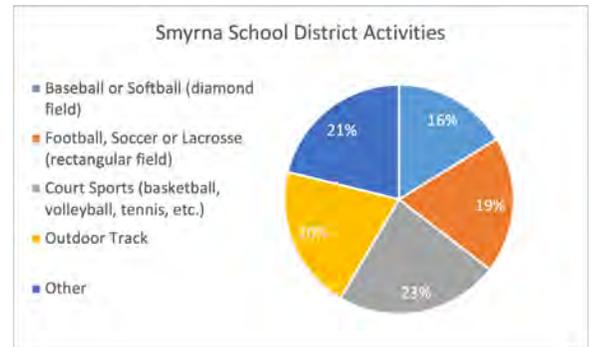


Figure 6 Smyrna School District recreational activity participation

The next set of questions addressed the issue of activities that were not available at a Town of Smyrna Park. Respondents, in an open-ended question, consistently noted themes related to trails, walking, state parks, etc., as the most frequently used words to describe activities they had to go elsewhere to find (Figure 7). The specific words “dog park” also were frequently mentioned when asked about having to go outside Smyrna for recreational activities.



Word	Count	Relevance
Dog park	45	1
Trail	35	0.69
Hiking	17	0.38
Swimming	16	0.36
Dover	12	0.29
Smyrna	12	0.29
Middletown	11	0.27

Figure 7 Word cloud representing those most frequently mentioned recreational activities that respondents must go elsewhere to do

### Getting to Smyrna’s Parks

In response to the question “Of the parks and trails that you have visited in the past year, how did you usually travel to get there?”, most park visitors (78%) indicated they traveled by automobile. The breakdown of modes of travel is depicted in Table 11.

**Table 11 Primary Mode for Traveling to Recently-visited Parks (Q6)**

Mode	Respondents	Percent
Automobile	457	78%
Bicycle	24	4%
Other	18	3%
Taxi or Ridesharing	3	1%
Walk	86	15%

A follow-up question asked, “Would you walk or ride a bicycle to a park if there were safe and convenient sidewalks and/or paved trails away from traffic? If ‘maybe’ please fill in the ‘other’ with your suggestions that would increase your chances of walking or riding a bike to a park.” Seventy-five per cent (75%) responded “yes” to this question. Additionally, suggestions for increasing walking or riding included better separation from traffic, general safety, lighting, crosswalks, and interconnected sidewalks. Barriers to walking or riding to a park included distance to the park, concerns about traveling with young children, accessibility, confidence, and how the person felt that day. The desirability of the destination also played into the decision-making about mode of travel.

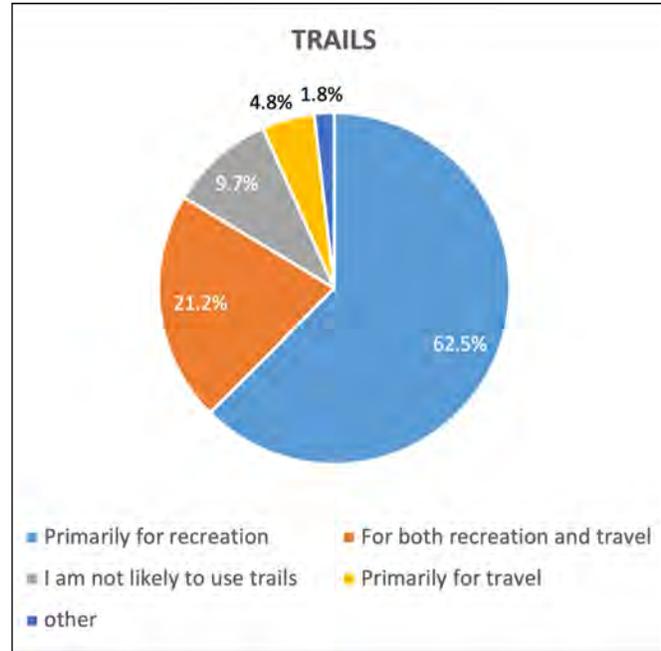


Figure 8 How would respondents use a trail facility - recreational or travel?

### Priorities from the 2021 Questionnaire

The next set of questions built upon the Summer 2021 questionnaire that resulted in the identification of four recreational activities as important needs for the Town of Smyrna: trails, small area activities (such as corn hole/horseshoe pits, a climbing wall, or volleyball), dog park, and splash pad.

For trails (walking, jogging, or bicycling), a clear majority (62%) of respondents would use such a trail for recreational purposes, while 21% would use such a trail for both recreation and travel.

For small area activities (such as corn hole/horseshoe pits, a climbing wall, or volleyball), slightly more than half (51%) the respondents preferred that these activities take place in a more central location if a greater variety of choices could be made available. About 28% of respondents preferred small area activities to take place closer to the home or neighborhood. The popularity of these types of activities remained strong whether close to home or at a larger more centralized park area.

If a splash pad was added to a Town Park, respondents preferred a larger splash pad in a more centralized location (47%), than a smaller one but closer to home (15%). Slightly more than one-third of the respondents indicated that their household would not use a splash pad.

Forty-eight percent (48%) of respondents said they would be somewhat or very likely to use a dog park built in a central location or at a new park. At the same time, forty-seven percent (47%) of



Figure 9 More than half of respondents preferred a larger variety of small area activities located in a larger central park area



Figure 10 A larger splash pad in a more centralized location was preferred over a smaller splash pad closer to home.

respondents were somewhat or very unlikely to use a dog park (including those that do not have a dog).

### New Uses for Parks

Respondents were asked to identify new uses for parks near their home (Figure 12) and a second question for a larger more centralized park (Figure 13).

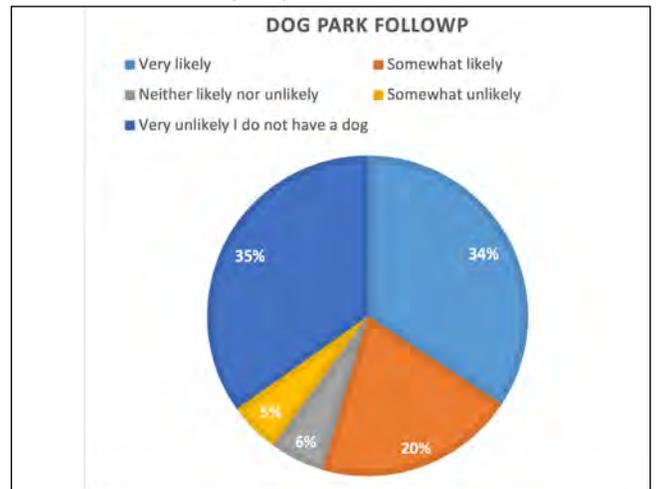


Figure 11 More than half of respondents were likely or somewhat likely to use a dog park, while more than a third of respondents did not have a dog



Figure 12 Word cloud showing the most frequently named needs for a park near the respondents home

## PUBLIC WORKSHOP

The Town of Smyrna sponsored a Master Parks Plan Workshop on March 12, 2022 to gather more detailed input about each of six major parks: George Wright Municipal Park, Green Meadows Park, Lake Como Park, Mill Creek Park, and Sunnyside Park.

Forty-one people signed into the workshop. Participants were randomly assigned to six tables to ensure a relatively broad distribution of geography and points of view at each table.

An overall introduction was provided to participants with background information about the setting and geography of Smyrna's parks and trails, its facilities, the role of other agencies and organizations in providing for recreation (Smyrna School District, Kent County Parks, DNREC and private recreation providers) and a brief snapshot of the questionnaire responses to date.

Introductory material was provided about the overall nature of Smyrna's Parks and Trails and their context relative to floodplains, wetlands, land use (including diagrams illustrating proximity of neighborhoods to park) and transportation characteristics.

Each table had a bag of puzzle pieces with the following program items:

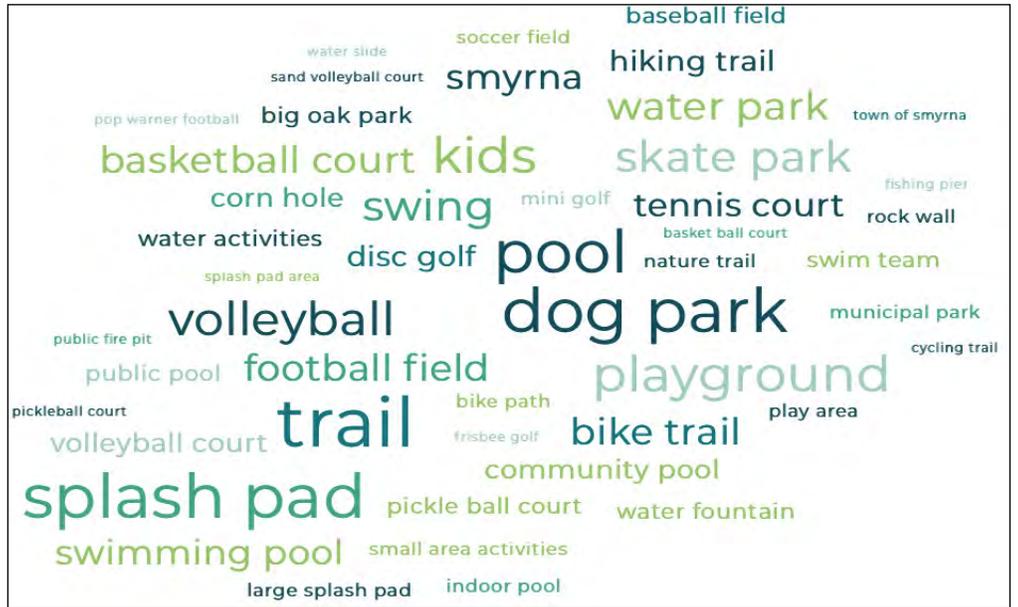


Figure 13 Word cloud showing the most frequently named needs for a larger more centralized park



Figure 14 Workshop participants worked in small groups to brainstorm ideas.



Figure 15 Public workshop participants develop ideas for recreational amenities



Figure 16 Middle school students develop ideas for George Wright Municipal Park



Figure 17 High school students moving around the puzzle pieces

- 1 large rectangular (soccer, etc.)
- 1 football field
- 2 splash pads
- 2 300' diamond
- 2 community garden plots
- 1 set of four batting cages
- 4 playgrounds
- 1 dog park/dog exercise area
- 1 skate park
- 4 skinny rectangles (bocce, horseshoes, etc.)
- 4 Pickleball Courts
- 4 Basketball Courts
- 2 200' diamond fields
- 4 tennis courts
- 2 Field Hockey
- 1 group picnic shelter (200-250 people)
- 1 restroom
- 8 picnic shelters

Examples of the program elements (puzzle pieces) were summarized in the presentation and displays prepared with photographic examples of each element organized into three specific types:

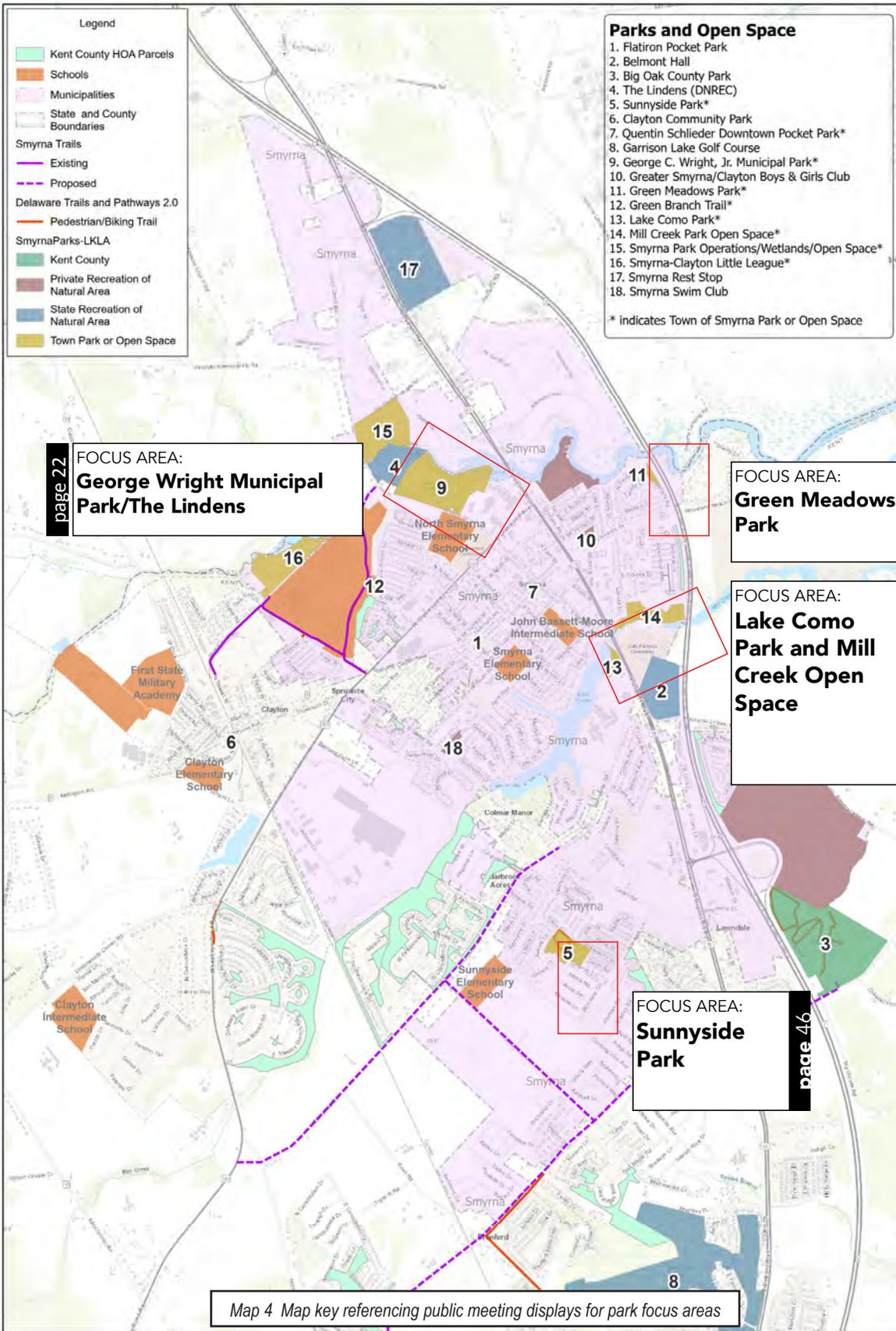
- Small-scale outdoor spaces (such as natural non-programmed spaces, picnic areas, or court sports like beach volleyball)
- Small scale projects with structures (such as splash pads or skate parks)
- Large scale field sports (including rectangular or diamond shaped fields scaled for both youth and adult)

Approximately thirty minutes was allocated for each of four park focus areas, starting with an introduction to each, and a set of questions designed to guide participant effort. These typically included:

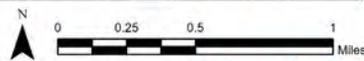
- What new activities over the next 10-20 years?
- If renovation is desired, place the puzzle piece on top of the existing facility
- Cross out the existing facility if it is in the wrong place
- If you want a trail or other linear park feature mark the location on the map or use yarn and tape it down



Figure 18 Puzzle pieces provided to each table



Existing Parks & Open Space  
AUGUST 2022



## IDEAS AND CONCEPTS

After reviewing the results of the Town’s March 2022 public meeting, workshops with middle and high school students, and the 600 responses to the questionnaire, the Town’s staff, consultants, and Steering Committee reviewed the full range and extent of ideas to identify common interests. Park planners made additional assessments of need in relationship to facilities typically provided by similarly sized towns. The result refined the range of feasible options for consideration and review as part of a second round of public meetings. The refined options include:

- Potential feasible locations for dog parks and splash pads – two of the most sought after park features not currently found in Smyrna or nearby
  - Ideas for safer walking and bicycle travel routes to Smyrna’s parks from schools and nearby neighborhoods
  - Ideas for a network of trails along Duck Creek and Mill Creek connecting parks to each other
  - Ideas for expanding or renovating park focus areas to make better use of available park land
- **George Wright Municipal Park and the Lindens** – ideas for renovating and/or relocating the skate park, diamond and rectangular fields, the playground, picnic areas and pavilions, and adding an amphitheater, while expanding parking, adding trails and boardwalks, and providing hand carry canoe and kayak access to Duck Creek
  - **Green Meadows Park** – ideas for renovating or relocating the playground for a broader range of ages and abilities; adding a picnic pavilion, pickleball courts, a community garden, and a perimeter trail designed for young persons
  - **Lake Como and Mill Creek Parks** – ideas for adding and organizing parking at Lake Como, adding a pavilion, splash pad, sand volleyball, and a grassy casual use area in the newly acquired parcel adjacent to Lake Como; and, ideas at Mill Creek Park for a dog park, linear activity spine (disk golf, exercise trail, mountain bike skills course, etc), and for neighborhood uses on the eastern end (picnic pavilions, court sports, playground and splash pad with parking)
  - **Sunnyside Park** – ideas for a perimeter pathway with benches, shade trees, flower and butterfly gardens, an open grassy area for lawn games, community gardens and orchards, a new picnic pavilion to serve family reunions and other small gatherings, and the addition of pickleball courts, bocce, shuffleboard and other small court activities

The following pages summarize the information provided at the second public workshop (August 22, 2022) and the resulting recommendations as informed by additional input provided at that public workshop and at a second workshop with 67 Smyrna High School Student Government Association members on November 2, 2022.

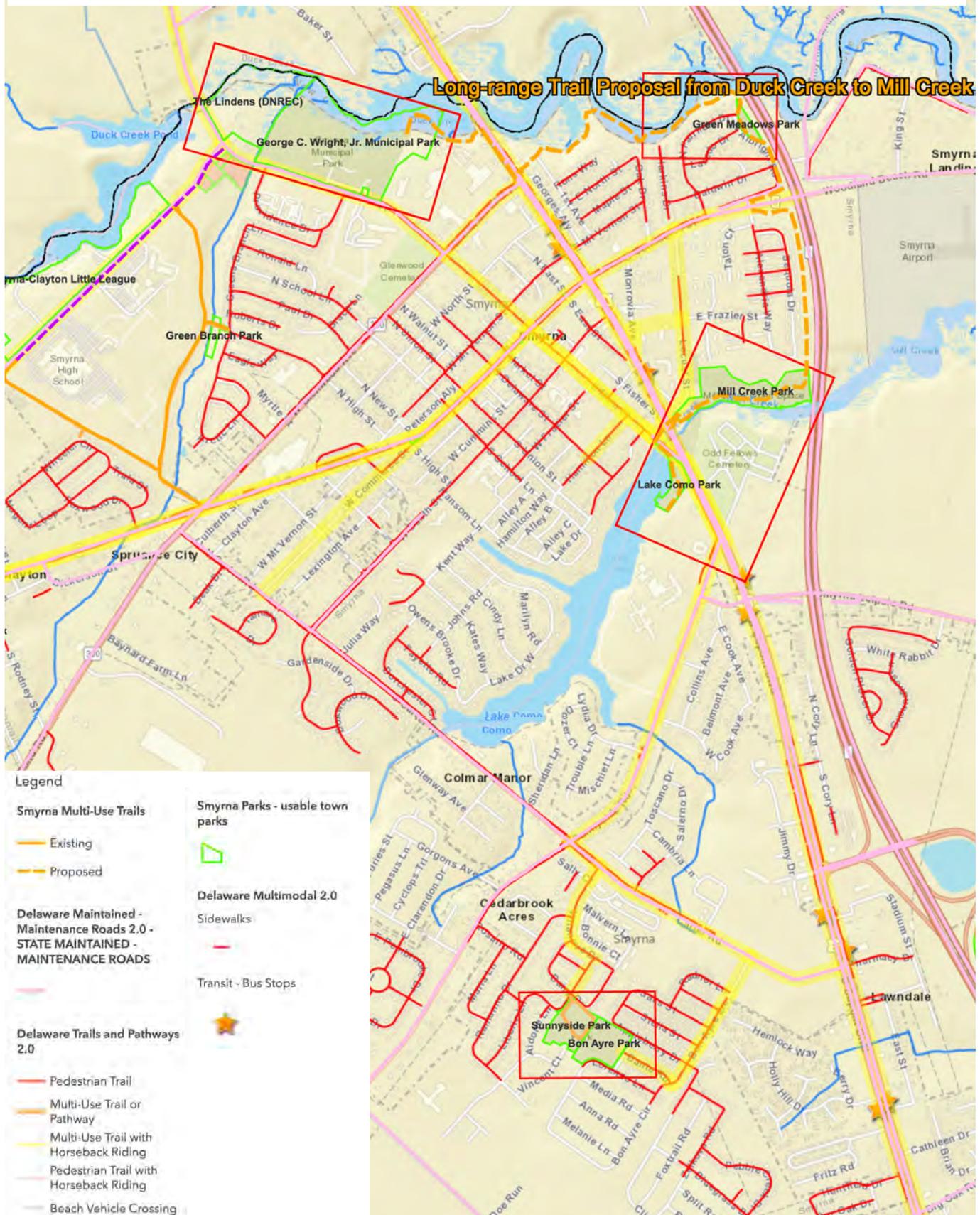


Figure 19 Concepts and ideas under review at August 2022 public meeting



Figure 20 Concepts and ideas reviewed at Smyrna High School in October 2022

# MASTER PARKS PLAN: SAFE ROUTES TO PARKS



Map 5 Safe Routes to Parks recommended Complete Streets to make it easier and safer to get to parks without a personal automobile (highlighted in yellow)

**GOAL: ESTABLISH SAFE ROUTES TO ALL PARKS**

*Provide safe and enjoyable pedestrian and bicycle access for all ages and abilities to Smyrna's Parks from each other and adjoining neighborhoods.*

**Work with DelDOT to Implement Complete Streets on State Maintained Roads**

Map 5 highlights the highest priority for connecting routes where complete street concepts should be applied to increase pedestrian and bicycle connectivity through the implementation of complete street concepts (yellow highlighted routes). The majority of the routes are the responsibility of the State of Delaware (DelDOT) while a few connecting streets within the Town of Smyrna are maintained by the Town.

For state maintained roadways, the Delaware Complete Street Policy (Executive Order Number 6, Proposed Complete Street Act of 2009, effective 1/6/2006) directs DelDOT to implement a complete street approach to its transportation system, applied as follows:

1. All projects in the state right-of-way that are considered road reconstruction, widens the pavement width, or allows for the inclusion of facilities for all users, shall consider all transportation modes and accommodate accordingly; facility type shall be based on the project location and the needs of the community.
2. System maintenance projects are designed to keep what the State already owns in a good state of repair and are usually maintenance/pavement rehabilitation projects and require limited design and no right-of-way acquisition. While it is not the specific intent of these projects to expand existing facilities, opportunities to provide and improve safety for other modes shall be explored during the project development stage.

The Delaware Complete Street Policy, defines the term "Complete Street" as a roadway that accommodates all travelers, particularly public transit users, bicyclists, pedestrians (including individuals of all ages and individuals with mobility, sensory, neurological, or hidden disabilities), and motorists, to enable all travelers to use the roadway safely and efficiently.

As modifications to state maintained roadways are considered over time including capital construction, land development review coordination, and system maintenance projects, the Town should request that DelDOT use any means possible to provide:

- Continuous sidewalks on both sides of the street.
- High visibility crosswalks with accessible curb ramps on all four legs of any signalized intersection coupled with pedestrian signals that provide leading pedestrian interval to allow pedestrians to cross in advance of the cross traffic signal change.
- Elimination of right turn on red and placement of "Stop" for pedestrians in crosswalk signs for turning traffic.
- Reduction of turning radius to a maximum of 25' and placement of left turn barriers to provide physical barriers that prevent turning traffic from accelerating through an intersection.
- The highest level of allocated space for bicycling that is possible within the existing right-of-way as shown in Figure 25 and including separated multi-use pathway if space allows.
- Where right-of-way is to be expanded, the Town should request that a separate multi-use pathway be installed on at least one side of the roadway.
- In developed areas, the Town should request that all posted speeds approaching and through the Town of Smyrna be reduced to a maximum of 35mph, and 25mph in front of both parks and schools.

### **Increase bicycle and pedestrian safety on local streets**

Where the identified safe route to parks utilize streets maintained by local government, the same general principles apply as for state roads. The best opportunity for increasing pedestrian or bicycle safety for routes that lead to parks are often during the repaving process through applying new marking to repaved routes. Turn radii, reallocating pavement surface for bicycle use through lane narrowing, crosswalk marking and inserting barriers using flex posts to reduce turning speeds all can be accomplished during the repaving process.

Segments that provide network connectivity can be provided through local capital improvement projects or through federal and state funding programs such as Transportation Alternatives, DelDOT's Bicycle and Pedestrian Program, Safe Routes to Schools, Recreational Trails, Community Transportation Fund, Municipal Street Aid and/or using these programs for matching funds to leverage federal grant programs.

### **Design and construct a separated multi-use pathway from Duck Creek to Mill Creek**

A preliminary corridor is identified as an orange dashed line on Map 5. One of the primary benefits of the alignment is to increase access to the neighborhoods east of US 13 to George C. Wright Municipal Park and planned park improvements for Mill Creek Park and Lake Como. The northern segment between Green Meadows Park and George C. Wright Municipal Park has fewer obstacles for implementing the plan.

### **Implement priority pedestrian and bicycle safety measures near George C. Wright Municipal Park**

Connecting the Municipal Park with the nearby Smyrna Elementary, Smyrna Middle and Smyrna High schools along with the adjoining Little Lass and Little League fields should be the highest priority for increasing pedestrian and bicycle safety and increasing access to parks. Questionnaire and planning workshop participants all noted that a student at the elementary school cannot safely walk to the park right across North Main. It is difficult and unsafe to cross for anyone to access the park as a pedestrian or ride to on a bicycle.

Figure 21 and Figure 22 illustrate the recommended pedestrian and bicycle safety projects needed to increase safety in the vicinity for the Municipal Park and school district properties:

- Sidewalk connectivity - extend existing sidewalks (solid red lines) with new sidewalks and/or multi-use trails on both sides of Duck Creek Parkway and North Main (purple dashed lines).
- Design and install Complete Street w/buffered bike lanes (see Figure 23, section A and Figure 24, section B), separated and parallel multi-use path in the Municipal Park (east of the existing parking lot entrances and lot), crosswalks, and maximum 25' turn radii at all intersections.
- Design and install Complete Street section w/ crosswalks needed at HS/Little League/Little Lass fields to include bike lanes, sidewalks and/or multi-use pathway.
- Install high visibility crosswalks with leading pedestrian interval walk signals, elimination of right turn on red and physical barriers to slow turning traffic speeds at three key intersections on US 13 to increase access:
  - US 13 at E. Glenwood (pedestrian refuge island, 25' turn radius needed to shorten crossing distance).
  - US 13 at E. Commerce (pedestrian refuge island, 25' turn radius needed to shorten crossing distance).
  - US 13 at Mill Street (pedestrian refuge island adapted for crosswalk, 25' turn radius and high visibility crosswalks needed all four sides).

Legend

- Buffer\_of\_Smyrna\_Parks\_usable\_town
- 0.25
  - 0.5

Smyrna Parks - usable town parks



schools



- Pedestrian Trail
- Multi-Use Trail or Pathway
- Multi-Use Trail with Horseback Riding
- Pedestrian Trail with Horseback Riding
- Beach Vehicle Crossing

Delaware and Regional FHWA National Highways 2.0 - FHWA National Highway

- SPEED LIMIT
- > 75
  - 60
  - 50
  - 40
  - < 25

Buffer\_of\_Smyrna\_Parks\_usable\_town

- 0.25
- 0.5

Smyrna Parks - usable town parks

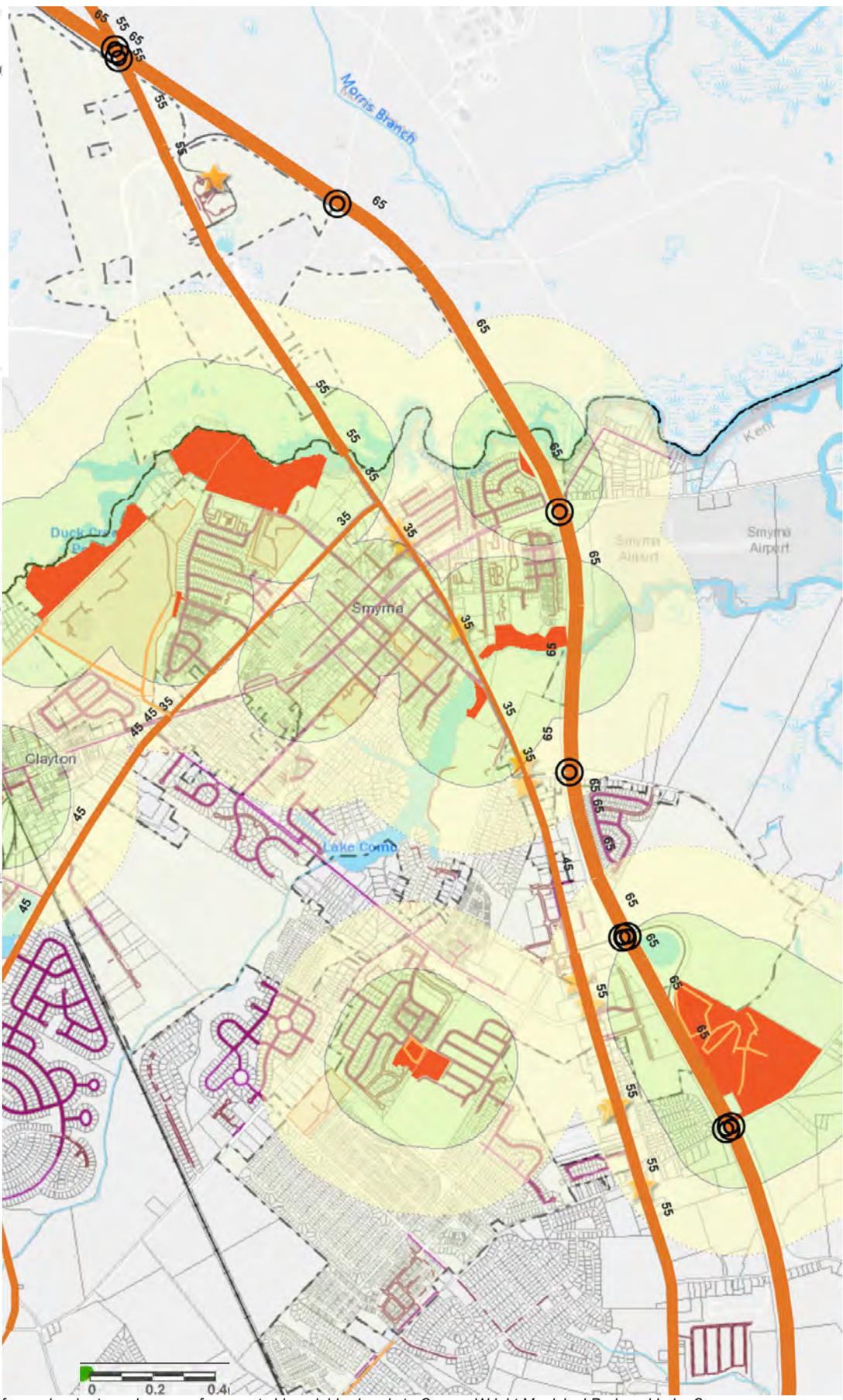


schools



Delaware Multimodal 2.0

- Railroad - Rail Lines
- Sidewalks



Map 6 Smyrna's arterial streets form a barrier to park access from east side neighborhoods to George Wright Municipal Park and Lake Como

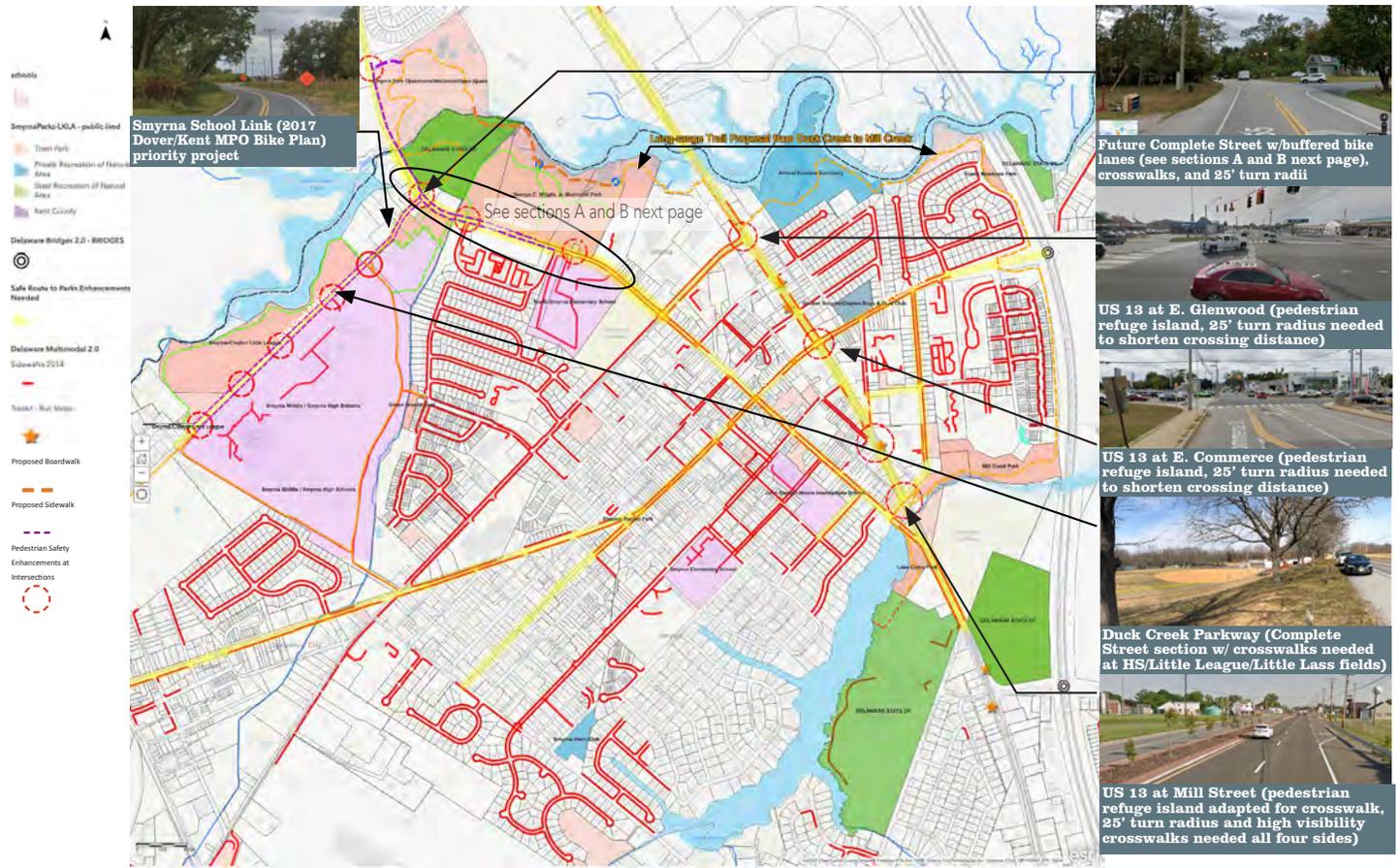


Figure 21 Red circles are intersections that need pedestrian safety measures to increase access to parks. The yellow highlighted areas are where a more complete street is needed with sidewalks, bike lanes and/or separated multi-use path where feasible. Orange dashed line shows a possible town wide greenway and path from and along Duck Creek and connecting to Mill Creek



Figure 22 Connectivity at Smyrna High School and Middle School, Little League and Little Lass Fields, George Wright Municipal Park, the Lindens, Smyrna Park Operations parcel



Applies in vicinity of existing Municipal Park parking lot with new memorials

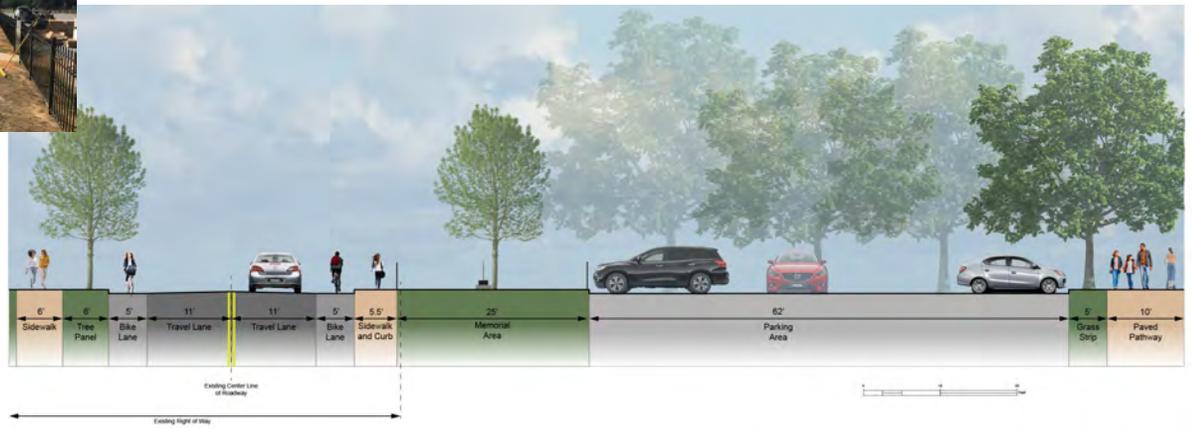


Figure 23 Section A - Complete Street w/ separated shared use pathway



Applies to the cross section north of the existing Municipal Park parking lot

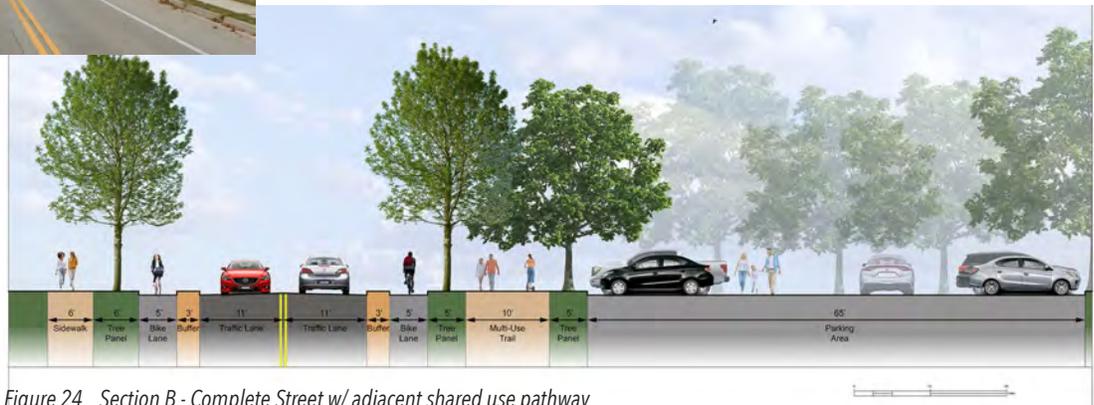


Figure 24 Section B - Complete Street w/ adjacent shared use pathway

### Shared Use Path Trail Types

10'-wide asphalt path with 2' shoulders



Heavy-duty boardwalk with timber decking on timber piles



### Complete Streets Examples

Designated and marked bike lanes



Buffered bicycle lanes



One- or two-way cycle track or sidepath



### Crosswalks and Intersections

Refuge Median



Shorten crossing distances

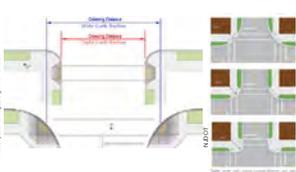
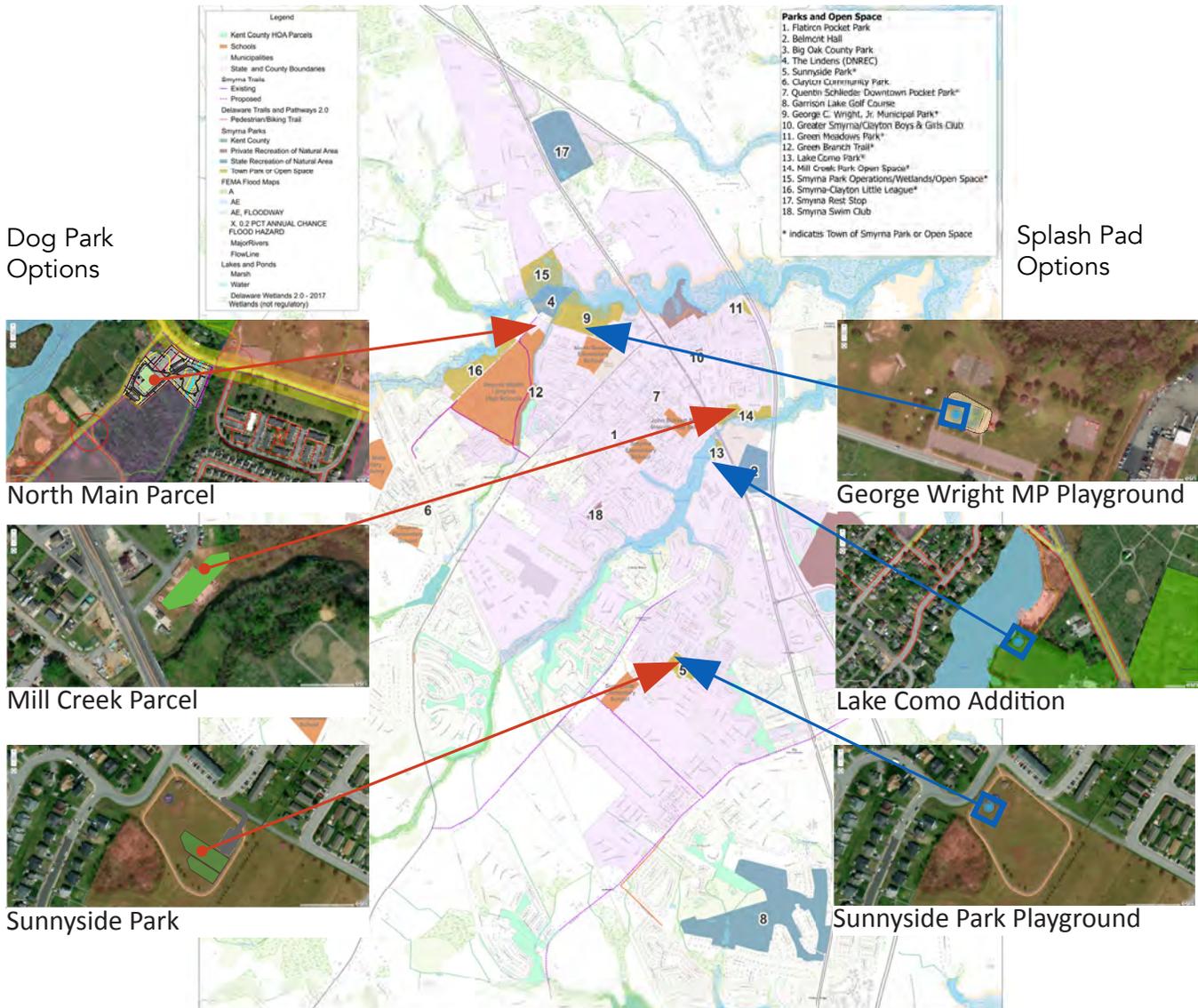


Figure 25 Safe routes to parks concepts

# MASTER PARKS PLAN: DOG PARK AND SPLASH PAD OPTIONS



### Dog Park Siting Criteria

- SIZE: ½ acre to 1 acre (varies by site)
- BUFFER: avoid near residential or busy roads
- PARKING: accessible and convenient
- SOILS: permeable soils (but not too much)
- SHADE: mix of sun and shade
- ENVIRONMENT: contain/manage runoff



Shirlington Dog Park (stone)



Lyon Village Spray-ground



Alibaster, AL (Beneful Funded)



High Bridge Park, NYC

### Splash Pad Siting Criteria

- Clustered with compatible activity areas (such as near a playground or pavilion)
- Away from active uses (fields/courts)
- Availability of water, power, and waste water lines (recirculating versus flow through)
- Nearby access from trail/sidewalks and adequate parking
- Restroom, benches and shade (add shade structure if no trees!)
- Building Codes and Health Department



Stone Dust



Rice Stone



Pea Gravel



Wood Chips



Artificial



Grass

Figure 26 Siting criteria considered for a splash pad and a dog park as priority capital projects

## GOAL: DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT HIGH PRIORITY CAPITAL PROJECTS

At each public outreach activity throughout the planning process, strong support was noted for two specific capital projects: a splash pad and a dog park. In addition the Town has funded the installation of a permanent year-round restroom at George C. Wright Municipal Park. These projects should continue to receive the highest priority for funding and implementation under the following guidance to ensure that the projects fit within the overall master park plan for the recommended locations:

### Design and install a new splash pad at George C. Wright Municipal Park

Based on the criteria (see Figure 26), a splash pad should be installed at George C. Wright Municipal Park in accordance with the siting recommendations. The site near the existing playground and restrooms at the Municipal Park meets all of the siting criteria and could be installed as part of a design-build project from one of the many vendors providing splash pads. Preferences leaned toward a splash pad similar to the Lyon Village example (abundant use of primary colors, simplicity and scale).

A splash pad should also be considered Mill Creek Park as part of neighborhood improvements to increase access to recreation facilities east of US 13. Both Mill Creek and Sunnyside would also provide access to summer cooling opportunities in the south end of town.

### Design and install a new dog park at George C. Wright Municipal Park

Support for a dog park is strong among those that care for a dog at their household. Based upon the criteria for siting a dog park (Figure 26), the North Main Parcel is the best of the three sites initially considered as being available for dog park use. However, recognizing the need to move the Pop Warner football field to a more suitable location, the field's drier parts were considered as an additional location, once the field is relocated (see Figure 31 on page 34).

The Municipal Park location provides ample space, is away from neighbors, has good parking, and can be located on the drier portions of the site. Shade and stormwater runoff management would need to be added. If sidewalk and pathway improvements are made connecting the Municipal Park with the nearby Smyrna Elementary, Smyrna Middle and Smyrna High schools along with the adjoining Little Lass and Little League fields, families can take their dogs while their children or siblings are at a baseball practice or game or using other park facilities. The Mill Creek site is directly adjacent to pump and transfer station, and therefore not desirable. The Sunnyside Park location does not have enough buffer from adjoining residential areas, would take away existing parkland for a parking lot, and was not well received for that use during public outreach.

A concept plan provided to the Town by Pennoni Associates (Figure 27) illustrates how a dog park would fit on the alternate site at the Town's North Main parcel.

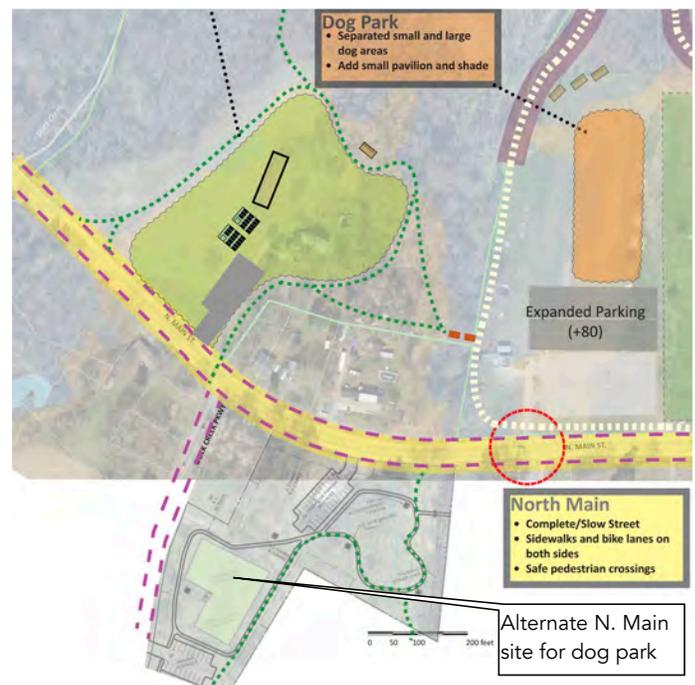


Figure 27 Recommended option for a dog park if the football field and related practice areas are relocated to Mill Creek Park (see Figure 49 on page 44) and the alternate North Main parcel (diagram provided to the Town of Smyrna courtesy of Pennoni Associates, Inc.)

# MASTER PARKS PLAN: GEORGE WRIGHT MUNICIPAL PARK



Figure 28 Option 2 (bottom), to reorganize and make better use of park land was preferred over Option 1

**GOAL: REORGANIZE AND EXPAND USES IN GEORGE WRIGHT MUNICIPAL PARK**

Over the years, various park elements have been added to George Wright Municipal Park in an ad hoc manner to the point that the best lands (higher and drier) are highly under-utilized. Moreover the football field is built on less than ideal base fill that saturates quickly into a muddy quagmire. The skate park location conflicts with opportunities for outdoor concerts and does not provide a suitable backdrop for the memorial. The large diamond fields are underutilized.

Two alternatives, shown in the previous page, were considered to address these problems: Option 1, renovate and expand existing uses generally in the same places, and Option 2, reorganize and expand existing uses

to make better use of the most suitable areas. Option 1 has the benefit of allowing renovations to take place with limited park closures (only for that activity). Option 2 removes one adult diamond field but adds back a relocated football field and a rectangular field overlay which would address the future demand for large rectangular field sports. Option 2 may require more temporary closures during construction for more of the park area, but results in a better park experience with less long-term field maintenance challenges.

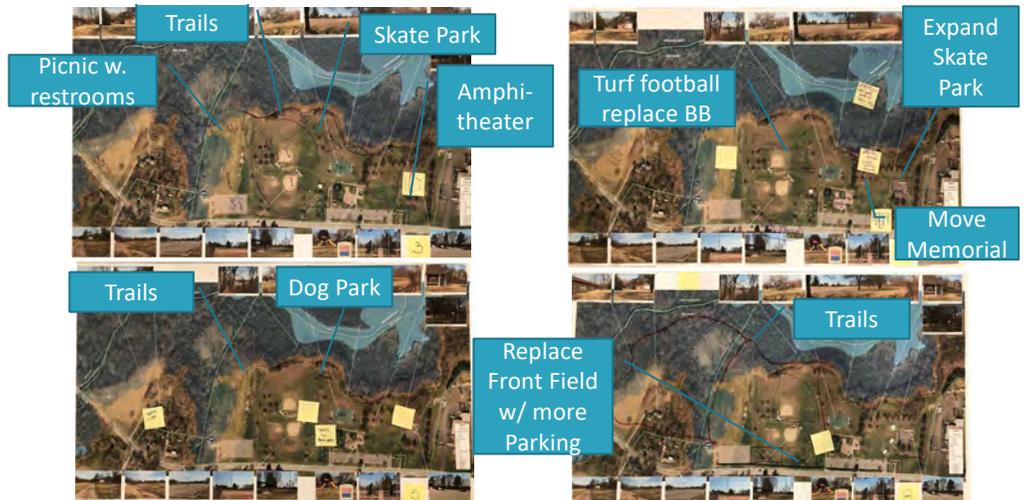


Figure 29 Public meeting ideas for George Wright Municipal Park

**Public Outreach/ Staff Review**

Public outreach leaned slightly toward Option 2. High school and middle school students were

much more interested in reorganizing the park to increase the range of activities available there. After staff review, the need to move the football field due to poor playing conditions was identified as a high priority. A site for the football field was identified at Mill Creek and after consultation with Smyrna Gardens, relocating the football field and practice areas to Mill Creek was determined by staff to be feasible (see on page 45). With the football field relocated, Option 1 can be modified to achieve many of the same benefits as Option 2, but at less overall cost and while keeping the park open and functioning during future construction activities.

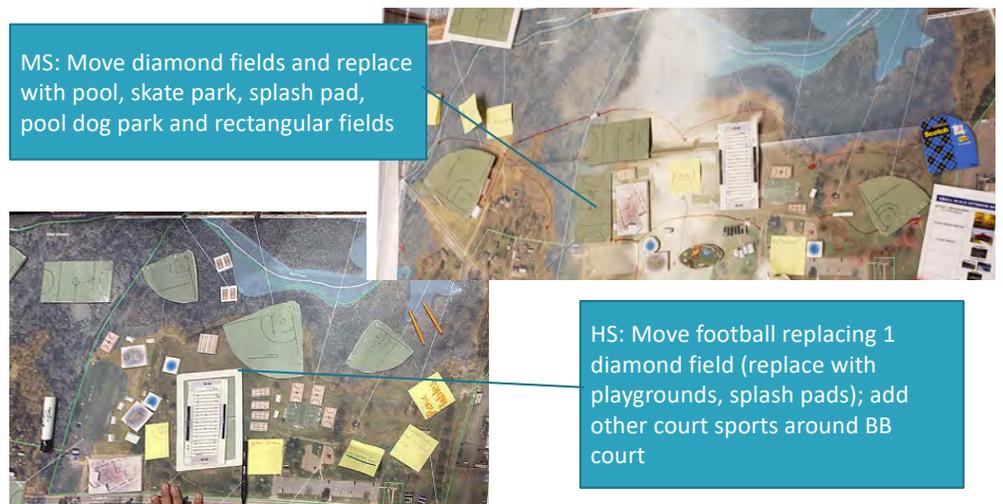


Figure 30 Smyrna Middle School and Smyrna High School ideas for reorganizing and expanding the types of uses at George Wright Municipal Park

### Recommended Program Elements

As shown in Figure 31, a modified version of Option 1, relocating the football field and practice areas to Mill Creek Park allows the diamond fields to remain and the skate park to be moved closer to the more active center of the park. The eastern end of the park can then be utilized for casual use and outdoor performances without user conflicts. The following program elements are recommended:

#### Casual Use/Events

- **Small & large picnic shelters (with restroom)**- combine the proposed year-round restroom with a large picnic pavilion including water and sewer connections for a cooking area in the pavilion. Relocate existing picnic shelters and tables so they are oriented towards the less active park area.
- **Amphitheater** - include weather protection and storage, upgrade electrical and lighting, provide ADA access and seating (to replace existing skate park upon relocation).
- **Lawn area** - for casual and non-organized play; add shade trees near picnic pavilions.

#### Active Linear Play and Exercise Trail

- **Wide paved trail** - provides a continuous loop trail around the developed portions of the park.
- **All age challenge course** - install exercise stations or an obstacle course inside of the paved trail.
- **Skate spots** - create challenge features for skateboards on the outside of the paved trail (purple tone).

#### Expanded Play Area

- **Renovated all ages and abilities playgrounds** - renovate the existing play equipment and swings with more stable and accessible surfacing (matting) and equipment for a wider range of ages and abilities
- **Splash pad** - would be located on the former restroom site (see page 31) for recommendations.
- **Shady area with benches** - shade trees are an important part of any play and picnic area. Existing trees should be preserved where feasible, and new trees planted to provide shade. A shade structure should be incorporated into the design of new and expanded play areas.

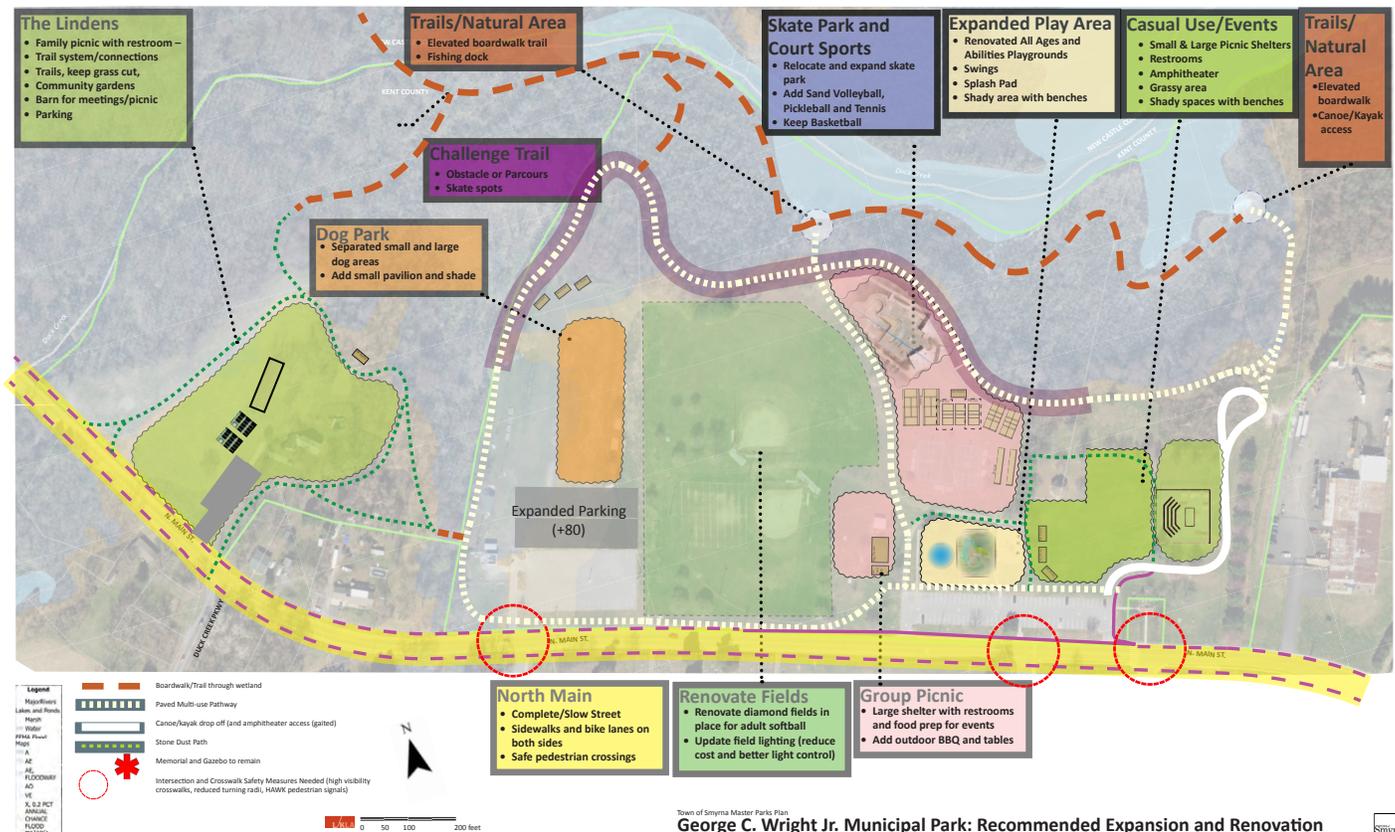


Figure 31 Concept Plan for George Wright Municipal Park  
December 2023



### *Reorganize Fields*

- **Relocate football field, practice area/cheer** - due to poor drainage, lack of sufficient parking, and poor space utilization, recommend relocating football field to Mill Creek park site (see Figure 49 on page 44).
- **Renovate diamond fields** - keep diamond fields and renovate in place to continue to accommodate adult softball.

### *Trails/Natural Area*

- **Elevated boardwalk trail** - providing better access to Duck Creek requires construction of an elevated boardwalk. The boardwalk should be designed to provide an immersive experience along the shorelines to provide bird watching opportunities as well as increase the length and variety of walking routes. The boardwalk should be designed with top down construction to minimize impact to wetland areas.
- **Canoe/Kayak access** - direct access to a drop off can be provided with an access route coming out of the parking area to within 500' of the shoreline. Further study with the adjoining property owner would be needed to determine if the hand carry access route could be extended beyond the loop shown.
- **Fishing dock** - the hand carry drop off and a second location are noted where fishing access to Duck Creek is possible from a boardwalk and/or hand carry landing area.

### *Court Sports Area*

- **Consolidated courts** - volleyball (sand) courts, tennis and pickleball courts should be configured to provide best alignments for sun angles and maximum flexibility for configuring courts to meet changes in demand, while retaining existing basketball courts.

### *Dog Park*

- Establishment of a dog park on drier portions of the football field could be accomplished once these areas are relocated to Mill Creek Park. The dog park would include separated fenced areas for large and small dogs. Shade trees and shade structures would need to be incorporated. Water supply can be extended from the concession building. Stormwater management will be needed to manage runoff prior to entering the Duck Creek tributary that parallels the existing football field.

### *North Main/Expand Parking*

- **Complete/slow street** - see page 25 for recommendations to increase pedestrian and bicycle safety near George C. Wright Municipal Park.
- **Expand parking** - eighty parking spaces can be added at the south end of the football field upon relocation to serve the dog park, expanded court sports, picnic pavilion, and new trail system.
- **Shared use path** - part of the paved path loop around the park, the path would be placed on the park side of the existing parking lot to reduce conflicts of in and out traffic and with the newly installed Memorial Trees (see Section A, page 29).

### *The Lindens*

- **Extend trail system** to connect with George Wright Municipal Park including interpretive elements that help tell the story of the founding of the Town of Smyrna.
- **Adaptively reuse the barn** (or reconstruct on the footprint) to support small group and classroom gatherings for outdoor education, meeting spaces for civic organizations, and potentially to rent out for small events (such as weddings, family reunions, business meetings, etc.) Using reinforced grass (geogrid or turf block) for parking as needed to retain infiltration and aesthetic qualities.
- **Provide space for community gardens** and community supported agriculture (see discussion on page 49).

### George Wright Municipal Park Phasing

Five distinct phases are recommended (A-E) with the Lindens (F) not being dependent on other earlier actions, so it can be constructed at any time, funding permitting.

- Phase A1: Install restroom coupled with large picnic pavilion; install splash pad.
- Phase A2: Secure funding and conduct preliminary engineering for field relocation and dog park design to confirm final feasibility and cost of relocating football field and practice areas.
- Phase A3: Complete N. Main Pedestrian Safety Measures (requires coordination with DeIDOT).
- Phase B: Upon completion of safety measures on N. Main and relocation of football field, design and construct a dog park and the parking lot expansion and connecting pathways to upper park.
- Phase C: Design and install a relocated skate park and expand the court sport area; restore former skate park as amphitheater and design and install related casual use and lawn areas.
- Phase D: Design and build out trail system including the paved linear activity trail; natural surface trails and boardwalk along Duck Creek; install hand a carry boat landing with access route along the eastern side of the park and fishing pier.
- Phase E: Renovate diamond fields and play structure.
- Phase F: The Lindens can be implemented independently. Note that the natural surface trails should be installed before or at the same time as the boardwalk to maintain trail continuity.

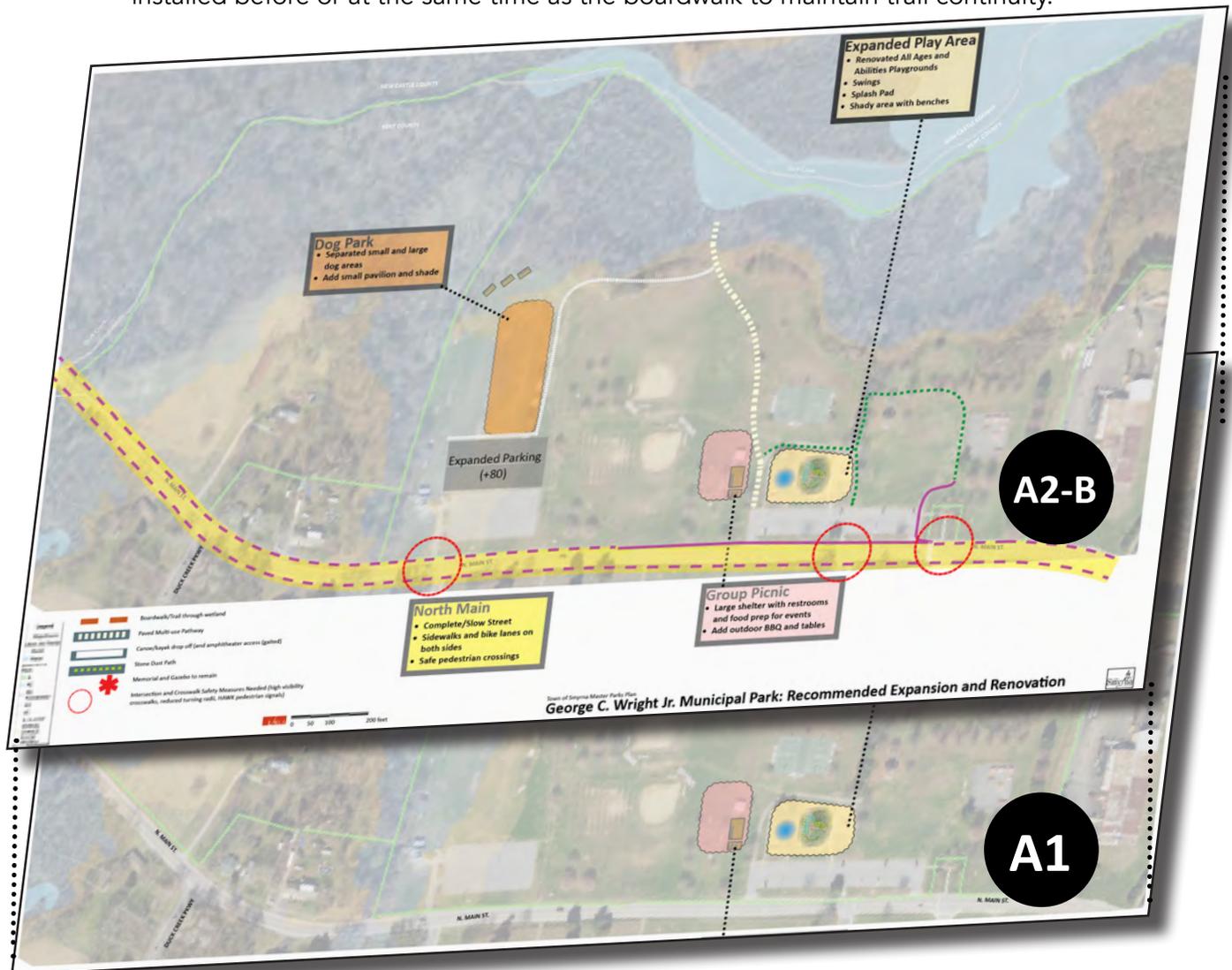


Figure 32 Initial phases for George Wright Municipal Park include the restroom and spray pad (A1) coupled with the preliminary, final engineering and construction of a complete street on North Main. A dog park can be established once the football field is relocated to Mill Creek Park.

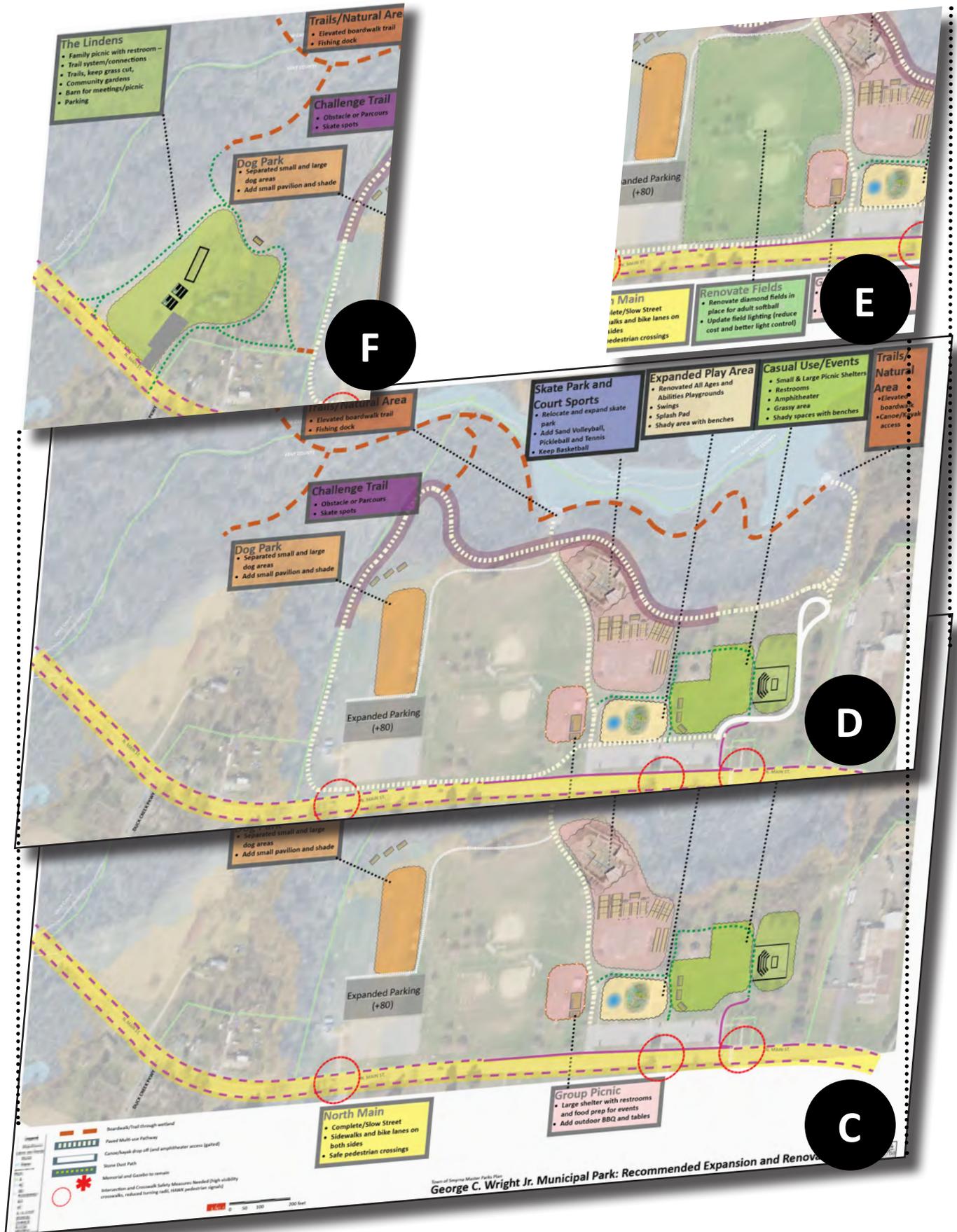


Figure 33 Mid- to long-range phases for George Wright Municipal Park. Preliminary Engineering for Phase C should start in the near term.

# MASTER PARKS PLAN: GREEN MEADOWS PARK

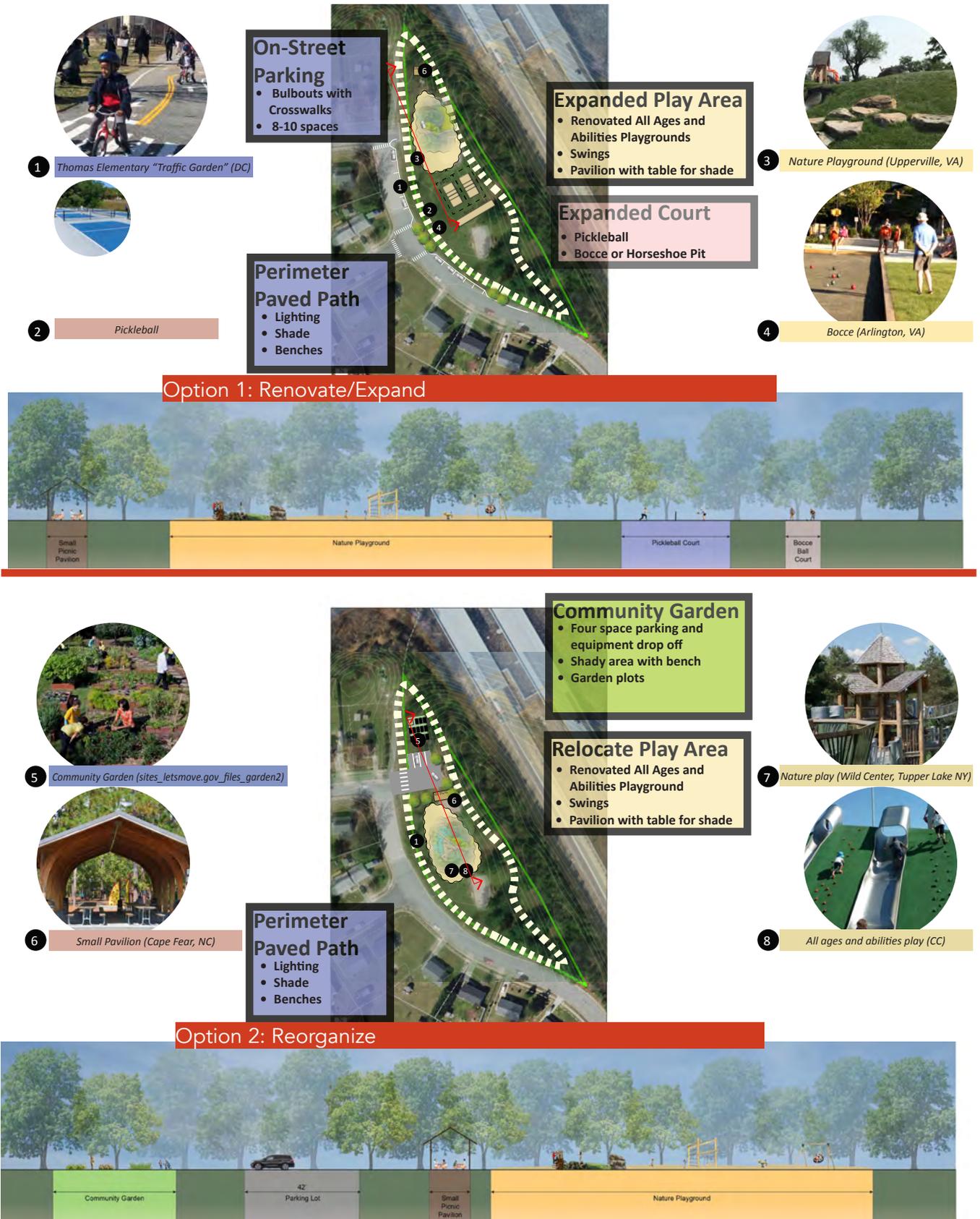


Figure 34 Option 2 (bottom), to reorganize and make better use of park land was preferred over Option 1 (with the on-street parking option from Option 1)

**GOAL: RENOVATE AND EXPAND NEIGHBORHOOD RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES**

As a neighborhood park, Green Meadows provides activities that cannot easily be placed in one’s backyard including a playground and basketball courts. The range of suggestions shown in Figure 35 are reflective of the need to expand neighborhood recreation opportunities.



Figure 35 Ideas from the March 2022 park planning workshop

Green Meadows Park is a small park that cannot accommodate all the ideas, but when presented with options, participants favored keeping the basketball courts and a community garden over pickleball or other lawn sports such as bocce and shuffleboard.

As equipment ages and needs replacement at Green Meadows Park, new features should be added that:

- Expands age ranges for play with taller more challenging equipment.
- Provides spaces for activities that cannot be accomplished at nearby homes including a place for young people to learn to ride bicycles (traffic garden).
- Adding a picnic pavilion and additional picnic tables for gatherings of family and friends that are too big for the backyard.
- Installing community gardens to provide opportunities to learn more about growing a wider range of fruits and vegetables and for expanding knowledge about gardening.
- The basketball courts should be kept in place and the court resurfaced as needed over time.



Figure 36 Recommended concept plan for Green Meadows Park

## Traffic Garden

At the first public meeting, an issue was raised that there is no place for kids to learn to ride a bike free of cars.

Traffic gardens are both an educational tool and a fun place for a kid to learn to ride a bike. Traffic gardens offer an immersive play experience that also teaches young riders the rules of the road. When integrated into the design of a neighborhood park, a traffic garden teaches children about design and engineering and how riding a bike or walking fits into the patterns that they experience every day on the way to school, to the park, or venturing out with family.

The concept is simple. Lay out a path with its intersections and crosswalks emulating the same pavement markings and signage as streets – but at reduced scale – the scale of a young person.

Elements can be incorporated into the design that can also double as a place to sit, provide shade, or work for regular walkers and strollers. Seating, lighting and shade trees should be an integral part of the traffic garden. A 2600 linear foot path is shown on Figure 36 on page 39

Funding sources for traffic gardens are also broader than typical park funding to include programs like “Safe Routes to Schools” (<https://deldot.gov/Programs/srts/>) or private funding organizations like the Outride Fund (<https://outridebike.org/outridefund-2>).

## Green Meadows Community Garden

A neighborhood scaled community garden provides opportunities for gardeners to grow fruits and vegetables that they may not be able to grow at home. In addition to vegetables, this could include fruits and berries or other crops incorporated into the overall park design. A community garden also provides an opportunity for sharing knowledge, experience, and friendship, providing accessible garden opportunities for all ages and abilities.

Starting a community garden requires a core group of dedicated volunteers with gardening knowledge, and an interested neighborhood of potential gardeners.

A Delaware Cooperative Extension’s Master Gardeners Demonstration Garden is located in Smyrna at the 192-acre Outreach and Research Center, maintained



Figure 37 Traffic garden in Utrecht, the Netherlands (courtesy of Streetfilms.)



Figure 38 New pint-sized roadway at Thomas Elementary School in Northeast D.C. (courtesy of Jordan Pascale / WAMU)



Figure 39 Drone view of Lewes Community Garden (courtesy of <https://www.lewescommunitygarden.org/>)



Figure 40 Community neighborhood orchards are another option (courtesy [bloomingtoncommunityorchard.org](https://www.bloomingtoncommunityorchard.org/))



Figure 41 Parking with bumpouts on reconfigured street



Figure 42 Existing play equipment has a narrow age range of interest



Figure 43 Spider-Pyramid climber increases the age range of equipment (courtesy of Schoolsapes)

by Delaware State University, including a one-acre Master Gardeners gardening area. Kent County’s Master Gardeners would be an excellent source of startup information and assistance in creating the garden.

Smyrna High School and Middle School both have Future Farmers of America (FFA) organizations at their school and the High School FFA expressed interest in developing community garden projects.

In addition to the Green Meadows site, a second site was identified at Sunnyside Park (see page 46). Community gardens should not be started until a sponsor with knowledge and experience in creating and maintaining community gardens can be vetted and confirmed.

**Parking/Slow Street Concept**

An element from Option 1 has been included in the recommended concept as an alternative to the four-space lot and access point to the community garden space. This concept would narrow the travel lanes and provide street parking spaces in combination with bulbouts at the intersections to decrease crossing distances (Figure 41). The narrower travel lanes and bulbouts will serve to slow vehicular operating speeds and increase pedestrian safety at the park.

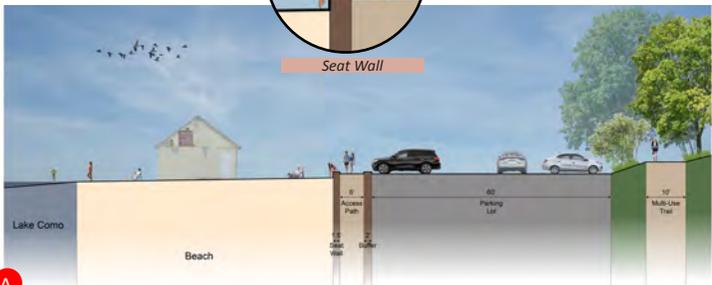
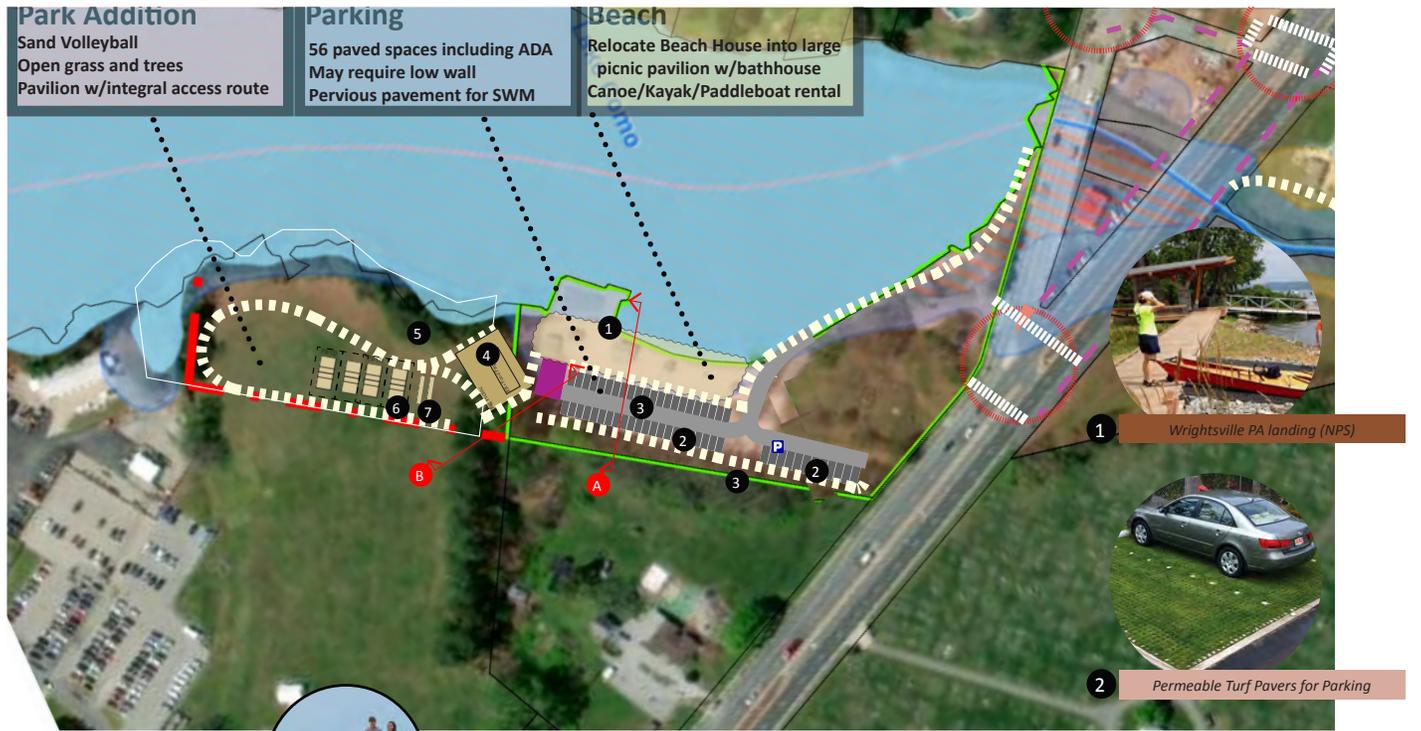
**Renovate Play Area**

Increasing the age range of play equipment will better serve the needs of the neighborhood. With the larger footprint shown, swinging and climbing equipment for all ages and abilities can be designed to fit into a single space and include other design options such as more natural materials and nature themes integrated into the play equipment.



Figure 44 Play structures can be designed for multiple age ranges

# MASTER PARKS PLAN: LAKE COMO PARK CONCEPTS



## Phase 1: Parking and Pathway



## Phase 2: New Pavilion and ADA Access

- 1 Wrightsville PA landing (NPS)
- 2 Permeable Turf Pavers for Parking
- 3 Permeable Pavers for Walkway
- 4 Pavilion w/restrooms (Alabama State Parks)
- 5 Splash Pad (Teardrop Park, NYC)
- 6 Sand volleyball (Courtesy of Arlington Parks)
- 7 Bocce (Arlington, VA)

Figure 45 Recommended concept plan for Lake Como Park

**GOAL: RENOVATE AND EXPAND LAKEFRONT RELATED USES**

Lake Como has a beach area with swimming, fishing, playground equipment, picnic tables, and pavilions. The Lake also has a boat ramp. There is a restriction of wake speed for motorboats. Three pavilions can be reserved through the Town for special events. Water quality issues in the past have closed the beach until such time as the water quality improves. Playground equipment is relatively new located at the west end of the existing park.

The Town of Smyrna acquired an additional parcel of lake frontage from the adjoining parcel owned by the State of Delaware. The addition provides space to reorganize and expand the lakefront uses for the park. The new parcel frees up some of the beach space, and allows for new beach related recreational opportunities.

**Beach Area**

The existing beach will remain as is with the exception of removing the shed and relocating the bath house into a new structure (location 4, Figure 45 on page 42 as a combined large picnic pavilion w/bathhouse and storage below. Space is provided to return a canoe/kayak/paddleboat rental concession. Additional seating is needed for the beach and the existing playground.

**Parking**

Delineating and expanding the parking area will result in a total of 56 spaces including any required ADA accessible parking spaces. The surface should be engineered as a permeable paving surface to filter stormwater runoff prior to entering the lake. Curb stops are recommended for delineating spaces. A low seat wall (seat height, as shown in section A, Figure 45 on page 42), will separate the parking area from the beach. A sidewalk is needed connecting to the beach.

**Park Addition**

In addition to a new beach pavilion, the open grassy area would accommodate beach volleyball courts, bocce courts, and an open casual use area (not for organized sports).



Figure 46 Ideas from the March 2022 park planning workshop (top) and Smyrna High School input (bottom)

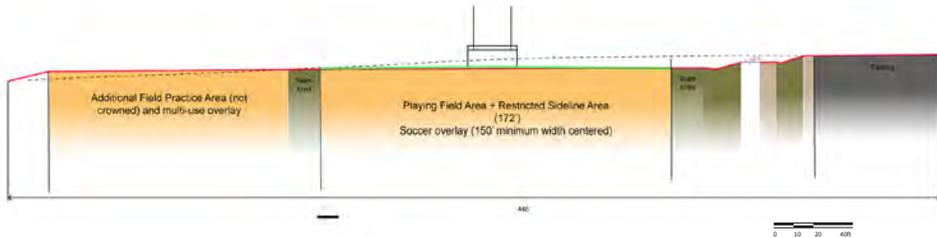


Figure 47 Existing playground



Figure 48 Parcel addition sits above the beach area. Proposed beach pavilion would be built into slope with an accessible path integrated into the design (section B, Figure 45 on page 42). The playground could remain and the shed would be removed with storage in the lower level of the pavilion.

# MASTER PARKS PLAN: MILL CREEK PARK CONCEPTS



Existing play equipment (Gardens) to be replaced

**A** Section of proposed football field and overlay

Figure 49 Recommended concept plan for Mill Creek Park

## **GOAL: EXPAND PARKLAND AND USES TO MEET TOWN AND NEIGHBORHOOD NEEDS**

The undeveloped Mill Creek Park parcel is a critical link to the recommended Duck Creek to Mill Creek Greenway. Its varied terrain and proximity to Mill Creek make it an ideal setting for linear recreation activities that benefit from its natural setting including natural surface or paved trails, mountain bicycling, disc golf, exercise trails, challenge courses, and hand carry water access. In addition to trails, the development of Mill Creek Park can provide under served neighborhoods on the east side of US Route 13 with better access to park and recreation activities. Expansion of the park boundary toward the adjoining residential area would provide an opportunity for more active uses, including examining the potential for relocating the football field and practices areas from the low lying and poorly drained section of George Wright Municipal Park.

### **Park Access**

On the west side of the park, access could be provided from Locust Street through the Town owned property. The property has a stormwater outfall crossing at an angle from the Locust Street inlets. Driveway access could be constructed and terraced along the contour to serve a parking area with space for 70 cars. Emergency and neighborhood access could be provided from Lawn Drive in Smyrna Gardens including turn around space.

### **Trails**

In general, low impact trails would be designed to retain the existing vegetation on the slopes descending to Mill Creek (green tint) on Figure 49 on page 44 and along the floodplain (blue tint).

- **Linear Activity Trail** - A paved upper trail could be designed for multi-use with small pods located along the level spots to support a challenge course (#1) or skate park pods (page 32, photo #6). Low impact, natural surface trails could support a bike skills course (#2), or disk golf (#3) while preserving vegetation.
- **Duck Creek to Mill Creek Trail** - the Mill Creek Park portion of this important Townwide initiative (page 26) can also support destination activities including creek front access on a boardwalk (#4), a fishing pier integrated into the boardwalk (#5), canoe and kayak access (#6), and a high quality natural surface trail along Mill Creek.

### **Youth Football and Practice Field**

Town acquisition of the Smyrna Gardens open space could accommodate the relocation of the Pop Warner field from George Wright Municipal Park along with a smaller practice area (#7). The ground is fallow with some low growing woody vegetation and slopes toward Mill Creek. The fields could be terraced down the slope. The layout provides for a multi-use overlay (soccer shown) centered on the goal posts (see Section A, Figure 49 on page 44).

### **Neighborhood Park Elements**

Developing the currently undeveloped Mill Creek Park will help to meet the demand for usable parkland on the east side of US 13. Woodland Manor, Smyrna Gardens and other nearby subdivisions and homes have limited options for park access within a 10 minute walk of their home. The following park elements should be added to the east side of the park to address this need:

- Picnic pavilion and tables with restroom, requires water and sewer hookup(#8)
- A playground for all ages and abilities (#9) and a neighborhood scale splash pad (requiring water and sewer hookups) could complement the existing Smyrna Gardens play structure and/or be renovated as part of the expanded play area. An alternate site is shown south of the end zone should Smyrna Gardens wish to relocate the playground as part of the field use agreement.
- Multi-use courts (tennis shown) but could be pickleball or volleyball (#10).

# MASTER PARKS PLAN: SUNNYSIDE PARK

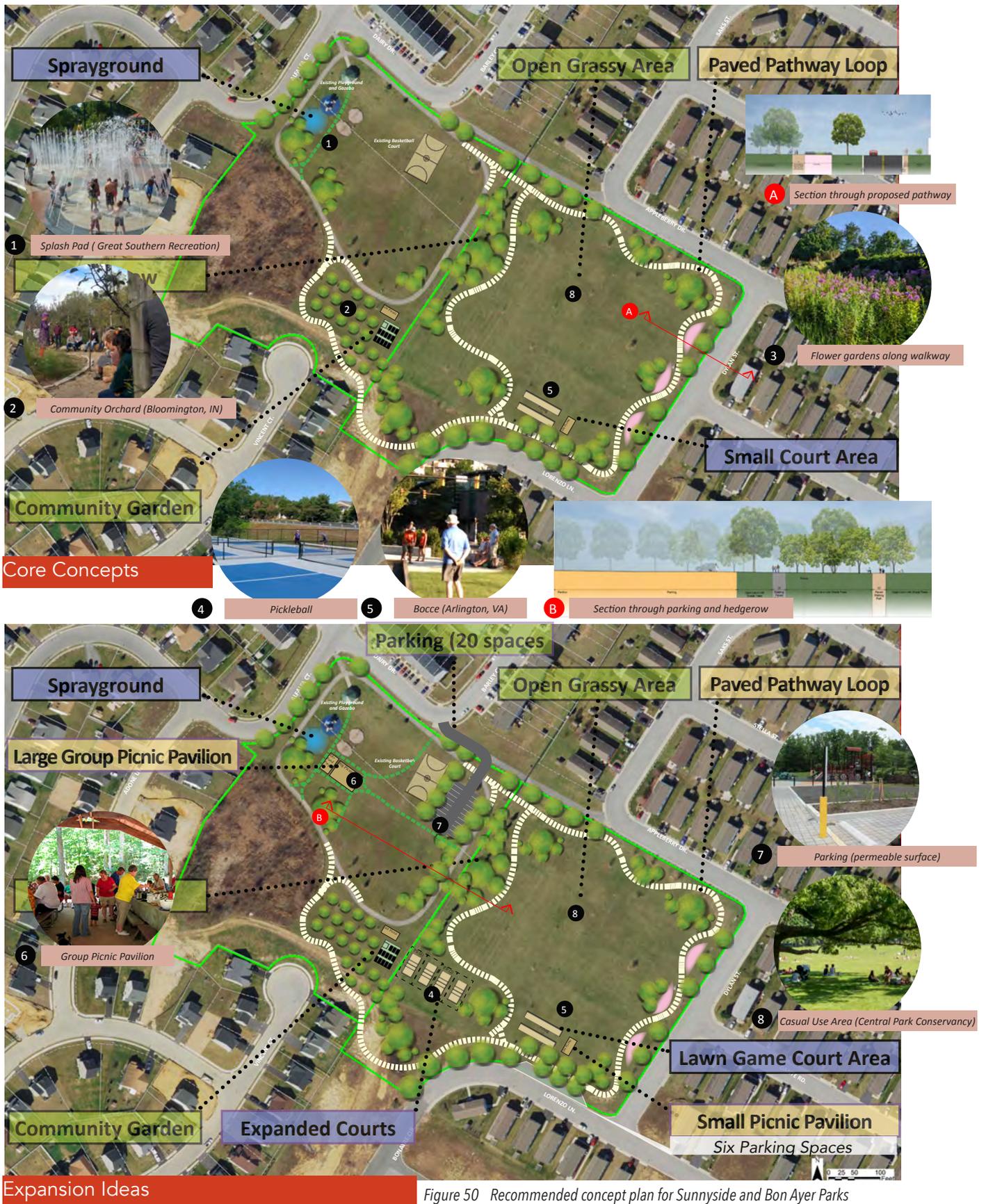


Figure 50 Recommended concept plan for Sunnyside and Bon Ayer Parks

## **GOAL: MEET PARK AND RECREATION NEEDS OF SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOODS WHILE MAINTAINING THE QUIET SIDE OF PARK**

Sunnyside Park has two completely different sets of users, each with their own priorities.

- Bon Ayre is a manufactured home community established under the guidelines of the Housing for Older Persons Act of 1995 (HOPA). Under this federal law, at least 80% of the residents must be 55 years of age or older. Bon Ayre does not allow permanent residents under the age of 18.
- Sunnyside Village and neighboring Hickory Hollow include a mix of single family and town homes with a population that skews younger.

In reviewing the questionnaire's list of suggested uses and activities for Sunnyside Park, as filtered by respondents that identified as Bon Ayre residents (see sidebar), a walking path was identified by more than half the respondents. Many of the responses identified supporting elements such as benches, shade, lighting, and flower beds. This point of view was reinforced at the August public meeting. Many attending the public meeting emphasized the fact that Bon Ayre was an over-55 community and the Bon Ayre side should stay like it is or add a perimeter path with benches and shade trees.

At the same time, the of uses and activities listed by Sunnyside residents in the questionnaire (see sidebar, page 48) were more expansive in their interests, reflecting the need for other neighborhood park uses. Smyrna Middle Schools students saw the opportunities for field sports and court sports.

A general consensus was reached about the need to respect the sensitivity of Bon Ayre residents and limit the uses on the south side of the park to a perimeter trail with benches and flower gardens, shade trees, lighting, small lawn court games, and a small pavilion for shade. At the same time, many Sunnyside residents wanted to be able to use the perimeter walkway as well as replace the fence barrier with a more unifying element that still provided the desired separation between the two sections of the park area.

The concepts illustrated on page 46 show a two phased approach with a set of core concepts indicating what can be done in the near term (next five- to ten-years) and then a set of long-term improvements

## **QUESTIONNAIRE: Bon Ayre Respondents Suggested New Uses and Activities**

- Basketball
- Benches
- Benches for just sitting and admiring the scenery.
- Benches where we as Senior Citizens could sit and relax and enjoy the quietness of the day and the warmth of the sun, the trees the birds etc.
- Benches with backs, three trash cans (Lorenzo, Dylan and Appleberry) and a free exchange
- Benches, walking paths, flowers, more trees
- Bicycle lane
- Community library box. Monitored security camera via SPD. The community trusts and respects SPD and Chief James.
- Established illuminated, walking trails, Picnic areas, Benches, pickle-ball court
- I like it just the way it is
- Walking trail around the park in the neighborhood, benches, trees, a bike path/walking path in our neighborhood that is safe, dog park, pickleball court - a beautiful water fountain and flowers
- Walking trail, benches and more trees
- Walking trail, some benches and more trees, a gardening area. That's all for our side of the fence in Sunnyside Park. We are old folks and have a community center for our activities. We are concerned about crime so don't want a gazebo or pavilion that could become a hangout late at night
- More walking paths
- None. We old folks enjoy the quiet park in our community
- Our whole community is a trail
- Park benches and walking path
- Senior park. Silver Sneakers walking path that crosses center with a gazebo/building/pavilion of sorts
- Trail around the perimeter of our park; various species of trees around the park; community garden; flower garden; water feature; water fountain; in the corner a nice gazebo; benches; an area to put picnic tables ; relaxing things appropriate for older citizens since Bon Ayre is 55+ it would be appreciated
- Walking path
- Walking path
- Walking path for seniors and dog park
- Walking path for seniors only.
- Walking path, some benches to sit on. Place for seniors who live in Bon Ayre to sit and relax.
- Walking path/ jogging track, benches, garbage cans
- Walking paths and benches for senior residents in Bon Ayre
- Walking trail and park benches on the Bon Ayre side. The fence should stay up since the Sunnyside side has much younger folks with different interests from the 55+ Bon Ayre side.
- Walking trails, benches with backs, trees for shade, book return, trash cans and lights. I would like to see them in Bon Ayre
- Walking trails, fishing
- We could use a bench or two

**QUESTIONNAIRE: Sunnyside**  
**Respondents Suggested New Uses and**  
**Activities for Neighborhood Parks**

- A whole flurry of different swings, such as but not included to Regular Swings, Tire Swings, Plank swings, and others.
- RC park
- Bocce Court
- Corn hole horseshoe pits volleyball
- Dog parks
- Dog parks, trails
- Exercise, dog walking away from traffic, biking, roller skating
- Fields for sports
- Cameras to be installed for safety reason. Safety is my biggest concern in Sunnyside Village
- RC car tracks, and roller rinks.
- Improved skate park
- More bike trails
- More equipment for the children to play on
- More playground equipment.
- More seating throughout park
- More walking paths and more swimming pools
- More walking trails/bike paths. Available Community pool.
- No kids using drugs or alcohol.
- Skate park
- Dog park
- Trails through the wetlands or any woods would be cool but I doubt that's possible?
- Maybe add another awning at Sunnyside park or a gazebo. It's wide open to the sun right now
- Make access to the 3rd retainment pond in Sunnyside (near the new development, across from the biggest one) more permanent. There is one area where people cut back the trees where the water flows under the road between the two ponds, but that is the only access point, and it's just done by people. Same with the one on Sunnyside Road, always blocked by cattails. This access would be for fishing purposes.-Splash pad or pool would be great (pool would be amazing of course)
- More trees anywhere is always good
- Sunnyside should connect with Bon Ayre instead of there being a locked gate between them. That would increase walking opportunities for everyone and get people to where they need to go much faster
- Volleyball and a splash pad for kids



Figure 51 Common themes from the 3/12/22 workshop for Sunnyside Park



Figure 52 Common themes from an in-class workshop similar to the public workshop for Smyrna Middle Schools students (Spring 2022)

that, over time, would meet the recreational needs of all surrounding neighborhoods as well as anticipated needs of future residents. The following elements are included:

**Paved Pathway Loops**

The pathway system should connect with existing pathways and form a set of two loops. A lighted perimeter pathway with opportunities for creating flower beds, and shaded seating areas would expand walking opportunities for all park users. The walkways could also be landscaped with pollinator plantings to support bees, butterflies and native species needing pollinators to survive.

**Open Grassy Area**

Casual uses of the open grassy areas in the middle of both sides of the park should be kept open for informal use (throwing a Frisbee, flying a kite, etc.), while, at the same time using planting and other methods to keep those open areas small enough so they are not ideal for use by organized teams for practice areas and other more intense activities.

### Court Sports, Lawn Game Area and Shade (Small Picnic Pavilion)

Some interest was expressed in the questionnaire and during the March public workshop for pickleball or lawn sports such as bocce or lawn bowling coupled with a small picnic area or shade pavilion. These can be accommodated away from neighboring homes on the far side of the park area after the highly preferred walking path is built. Pickleball is noted on the longer-term phase as “expanded courts” on the illustrative plan concept on page 46 . The small picnic pavilion should be sized for 4-6 picnic tables (approximately 16’x 24’) with no water. Portable restrooms could be used if needed.

### Sunnyside Community Garden

Dedicating space to community gardening on the far (western) side of the park would be a highly compatible use with the casual and quiet side activities for a broad range of potential gardeners. The benefits and potential resources for starting such a neighborhood scaled garden are described in the section titled “Green Meadows Community Garden” on page 40, as recommended for Green Meadows Neighborhood Park. There is more room for a “community orchard” at Sunnyside should interest develop around the concept as a way to produce small fruits and berries as part of the garden.

### Spray-ground

As one of the high priority capital projects identified early on in the master parks plan process, a spray-ground (combination of playground and spray/splash pad) could be installed at Sunnyside Park on the far northwestern side of the park, adjacent to the existing playground. See page 30 for discussion of splash pad siting criteria and recommendations.

### Hedgerow

With strong interest expressed for additional trees and shade, and the continued desire to maintain a quiet side of the park to the south, the illustrative plan concept on page 46 denotes a hedgerow that could be planted to replace the rusting woven wire mesh fence with a “living” fence. The hedgerow can be designed to attract birds and butterflies and serve as a pollinator garden.

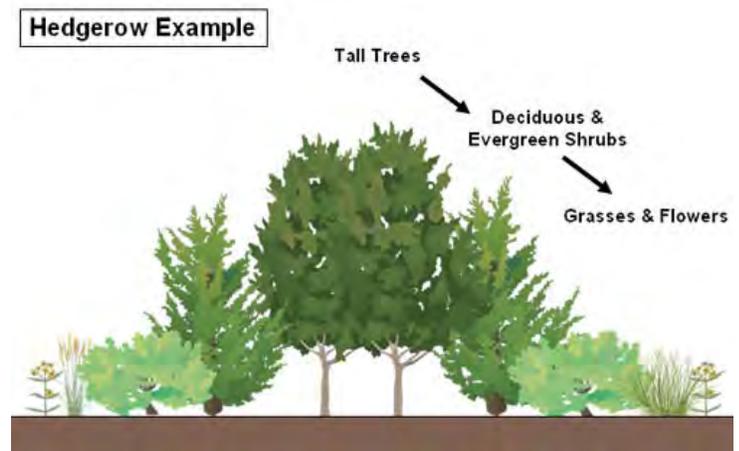


Figure 53 Hedgerow concept (Maryland DNR)

### Group Picnic Pavilion

Identified as a need in the March 2022 Workshop, a larger pavilion with lighting, electric, outdoor kitchen and restrooms would be appropriate for hosting neighborhood gatherings, family reunions, or just friends gathering outdoors. Shade is also noted as an important need. The large group picnic pavilion would be sized for 60-80 people (36’x72’, with restroom and kitchen) and preferably with an open gable roof plan and long spans for an open floor plate to allow for efficient use of space.

### Parking

A 20-30 car space lot can be added to provide support for those that cannot walk to the park, those having a small group picnic, or just for convenience. Currently there is only on-street parking and the addition of a small lot may reduce conflicts between neighbors and park users. The lots should be timed for a three-hour limit with no overnight parking allowed. Six parallel parking spaces can be added along Lorenzo Lane on park property to serve the small pavilion and vicinity.

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## IMPLEMENTATION

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### FUNDING SOURCES

Although the list of desired updates and improvements to the Town's parks is long and comprehensive, financial resources are limited, and the Town of Smyrna has many competing demands for these funds. The following potential funding and implementation sources should be considered for the Master Parks Plan.

#### Town of Smyrna Impact Fees

Collected from the Parks and Recreation Impact Fee, the 2022 rate was \$3,839 per single family unit and \$2,151 per residential multi-family unit. Although no information is currently available regarding income generated in 2022, projections could be made by averaging out past years new residential construction. However, due to COVID-19, the recent averages may be unreliable. According to the Town's Comprehensive Plan (2021) and discussion with the Town planner, in the years following the Great Recession 2009-2015, the yearly average of residential new construction increased to 163 in 2018 and 2019. Recent years has seen both an abnormally low and abnormally high number of new residential units. Based on the past decade performance, the plan recommends using an average of 100 new dwellings (60% single family and 40% multi-family) for estimating future revenue. The impact fees could support approximately \$300,000 to \$325,000 per year to provide park and recreational facilities in support of future growth.

#### Town of Smyrna Line Item Budgeting

The 2022 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) included funding for the George C. Wright Jr. Municipal Park bathroom upgrade (\$250,000) which was contingent on 50% (\$125,000) matching DNREC ORPT grant award. The CIP program also funded the Master Parks Plan (\$50-80,000). With the anticipated availability of Impact Fees to fund capital improvements, the Town could focus their budgeting efforts on creating a dedicated maintenance fund or dedicated FTE staffing for parks and trails.

Some specific small project activities can be accomplished through ongoing maintenance activities, especially the clean up of the Mill Street staging area so it can be reused as a park, and other items such as tree planting, constructing a natural surface trail such as those recommended for the Lindens, and the installation of picnic tables, bocce courts, or other small scale projects. In some cases, labor spent on behalf of a project can be used for matching funds.

#### Congressionally Directed Spending Requests

Each Federal legislator has the ability to submit a certain number of funding requests. The requests are typically due every February/March and are awarded in the late fall. Targeting funding requests toward increasing access to parks for under-served residents east of US Route 13 would likely increase the competitiveness of the funding request.

#### Bond Bill

The 2023 State of Delaware Bond Bill included funding in support of small Towns through the Community Transportation fund including up to \$20,000 for the new fence and installation at the George C. Wright Jr. Municipal Park. Other municipal projects were funded this way for small towns in a similar range such as \$18,000 for park improvements in the Town of Clayton. It may be possible in future bond obligations to look at larger projects that have regional benefit, such as a new dog park serving both the Town and Kent or New Castle County.

## Agency Grants

The DNREC Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Trails Program (ORPT), formerly known as the Delaware Land and Water Conservation Trust Fund (DTF), is a matching grant program assisting with public park land acquisition and outdoor recreation facility development in Delaware. As noted on page 51, funding for restroom improvements at George C. Wright Park were requested through this fund. The most recent posted (2022) guidance for this fund indicated a priority for socially vulnerable communities of which the census tract to the east of US Route 13 is noted as having the highest social vulnerability index (see Map 3 on page 11). For the next round of applications, the application should focus on facilities that serve the east side of US 13 (Mill Creek Park or Green Meadows Park).

## State and Federal Trails and Transportation Funding Programs

Trails and connectivity were consistently identified as a top priority for park improvements. The Duck Creek to Mill Creek Greenway, and North Main Complete Street recommendations can both be funded by DelDOT and DNREC trail and transportation programs. DNREC funds trails through the ORPT program noted above. DelDOT funds the transportation alternatives program (TAP) which could be used for the North Main Street complete street improvements requested.

However, these funds are often difficult to both secure and administer. Consideration should be given to using Community Transportation funds to develop a preliminary design concept with a construction budget that would provide the necessary information to gain the TAP funding.

## Proposed or Planned Transportation Improvements

The Dover/Kent MPO is responsible for formulating a Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) every four years to guide transportation funding throughout Kent County. For the part of Smyrna located in New Castle County, WILMAPCO serves as the MPO. Several projects are already identified in the 'Vision 2045' MTP that was formally adopted by the Dover/Kent MPO on January 6, 2021. Of these, ten (10) roadway projects, four (4) bicycle/pedestrian/transit projects, and five (5) studies are at least partially within the municipal boundaries of Smyrna.

North Main improvements are already listed in the MPO document and are considered as a high priority for creating safe routes to parks as well.

North Main Street: Glenwood Ave to Duck Creek Road	Design ROW improvements and bike/pedestrian facilities (near term)
North Main Street: Glenwood Ave to Duck Creek Road	Provide continuous shoulders and bike/pedestrian facilities (mid-term)

In September 2017, the Dover/Kent MPO completed and adopted the 2017 Regional Bike Plan which identified and prioritizes recommended projects, and makes recommendations for policies, ordinances, and other actions that should be taken at either the State, County, or Municipal level to improved bicycle safety. Of these projects (listed on page 83, of the Comprehensive Plan), the Smyrna School Link along Duck Creek Parkway from N. Main Street to Smyrna High School is identified for installing 1,000 ft bicycle trail connecting the eastern terminus of existing trails to N. Main Street.

## Delmarva Power's Sustainable Communities Program

Launched in 2020, the program funds environmental and open space projects and community resiliency efforts across its Delaware and Maryland service area. The program provides \$50,000 in grants of up to \$10,000 each to municipalities, recreational authorities and nonprofits for projects

focusing on open space preservation, improvements to parks and recreation resources, and environmental conservation. Projects include the development of recreation trails, the purchase of open space, planting of trees and other vegetation. Funding from this source could provide seed money for use as matching funds for larger grants, or used in combination with other funding sources.

### **USDA Urban Agriculture Grants**

There was a strong interest in community gardens and community supported agriculture, especially among Smyrna High School students participating in the park planning workshops and in response to the questionnaire. The Town of Smyrna is fortunate to be the home of Delaware State University Outreach & Research Center as well as an active student led Future Farmers of America organization. Opportunities for establishing community gardens are recommended for Sunnyside and Green Meadows Neighborhood Parks. Linking up the FFA group with Delaware State would make for a competitive grant<sup>1</sup> to implement community gardens with a demonstration aspect (such as a neighborhood orchard, or the use of appropriate technologies for gardening (for irrigation, composting, etc.) or for food distribution.

### **BUDGET AND PRIORITIES**

The recommended priority actions address long-term maintenance concerns; the interest in refreshing existing facilities and adding new; the need to be sensitive to budget constraints; and a recognition that alternative means beyond direct Town funding are needed to achieve these recommendations. Fortunately, the Town can utilize the Parks and Recreation Impact Fee as a strong foundation for capital programs. Recommended priorities provided in this plan should be reviewed on an on-going basis by Town Council and staff in parallel with a review of available funding.

A “rough order of magnitude” (ROM) budget is provided based upon the cost of comparable projects in other communities. The level of detail is for Concept Screening Level Class 5 estimates as defined by AACE-1 with an expected accuracy range of -50% to +100%) used when project design is between 0% and 2% complete. All costs are in 2023 dollars and reflect a 29% increase in construction costs over the past three years as documented by Turner Construction’s cost index, which has measured costs in the non-residential building construction market in the United States since 1967.

Actual costs will vary depending upon site and subsurface conditions, any utility work required, variances in finish and installation costs for programmatic elements, and permitting requirements. Preliminary design (10%), final design (15%), permitting (5%) and construction phase services (5%) are included in the ROM budget at the percentages shown.

Some of the recommended actions are more costly than the Town’s annual budget as generated by impact fees can support. Successful implementation of this Plan will depend on the Town’s ability to generate a ‘nest egg,’ accruing multiple year allocations of capital funds for higher cost investments.

The following budget and priority table reflects four groupings of project work.

- Group 1: Priority projects from CIP, 2021 survey, or completion required in advance of later phases
- Group 2: Projects size is anticipated to be less than one year’s worth of impact fees collected. This may include design work for later phases.
- Group 3: Mid-term projects that require outside funding support
- Group 4: Require multi-level agency coordination and funding outside park impact fees, but benefit park access
- Group 5: Long term projects (implementation TBD or dependent upon outside funding)

<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2023/01/26/usda-announces-grants-urban-agriculture-and-innovative-production>

**Table 12 Implementation Priorities**

<b>Park</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Additional Notes</b>	<b>ROM budget (\$000)</b>	
<b>Group1:</b>		<b>High priority projects requiring outside funding</b>	<b>\$3,105<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>0-10 years</b>
George Wright Municipal	Restroom renovation	Design build + permitting. Previous grant application 50-50 match local to state	\$250	CIP
George Wright Municipal	Destination Splash Pad	Design build + permitting. Splash pad was a top priority in Summer 2021 survey and follow-up questionnaires	\$105	2021 survey
Mill Creek	Relocate youth football field and practice fields	Design+ permitting	\$675	Advance of other projects
Mill Creek	Relocate Youth Football and Practice fields	1300 LF entry drive 70 parking spaces Football field and practice area + grading and drainage premium cost Field lighting (+300k) Entry Road lighting (+100k)	\$2,700	Advance of other projects
George Wright Municipal	Dog Park	Dog Park was a top priority in Summer 2021 survey and follow-up questionnaires; includes design services and permitting (constructed after youth football field relocated)	\$150	2021 survey
Mill Creek	Neighborhood Park Facilities (playground splash pad, parking)	Both design and construction services in Phase 1. Serves neighborhoods on the east side of US 13 in economically disadvantaged census tracts		Increase park access for east of US 13
		Multi-age Playground (5000 sf)	\$370	
		Neighborhood Splash Pad	\$105	

<sup>2</sup> Total of project budgets in 2023 dollars. Outside funding or financing will be needed for relocating the football field and expanding the multi-age playground at Mill Creek

<b>Group 2:</b>		<b>Projects within the anticipated annual income generated by impact fees</b>	<b>\$878<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>0-10 years</b>
Lake Como Park	Install beach volleyball and lawn area on expansion parcel	Install temporary ramp and trail to access expansion parcel	\$50	Access to new parcel
Sunnyside Park	Design process for paved perimeter path with shade trees and benches	Need to initiate a design process in Phase 1 prior to construction to work out details and gain consensus, if possible	\$150	Consensus design needed
Sunnyside Park	Hedgerow Planting and fence removal		\$35	Replace worn out fencing
Green Meadows Park	Relocation and restoration of playground, add parking, add pavilion, community garden infrastructure	Design and construction services. Serves neighborhoods on the east side of US 13 in economically disadvantaged census tracts		Serve east side of US 13
	Neighborhood playground - all ages and abilities	Assume 5000 sf playground with wider range of equipment for all ages	\$370	
	Community garden	Includes site prep, paths, fencing, water supply <sup>4</sup>	\$41	
	Small pavilion	16 x 24 + site preparation, pad, and shade trees	\$72	
The Lindens	Natural surface trail development	Volunteer potential for 4' wide sustainable trail	\$160	Provide access to new property
<b>Large Projects (Group 3)</b>	<b>Projects that require outside funding support or multi-year accumulation of impact fees</b>		<b>\$2,689</b>	<b>Priority TBD</b>
Green Meadows Park	Complete street with parking (street spaces)	Includes curb reconstruction with bumpouts, crosswalks, curb ramps, street trees	\$525	Equity opportunity

3 Total of project budgets in 2023 dollars. At 300,000-325,000 per year of impact fee collection, these projects could be built out in 8-9 years (assuming impact fees escalate at the same rate as construction costs)

4 Water supply to include accommodations for future "spray-ground"

Lake Como Park	Expand and renovate parking, build walkway, incorporate stormwater management in parking design	Design and construction phases. Link to water quality improvements for Lake Como	\$1,110	Link to Lake Como water quality
Sunnyside Park	Construct paved perimeter path with shade trees and benches	Based upon Phase 1 design process	\$735	Health and fitness for seniors
Mill Creek	Group Picnic Pavilion -	1000sf (incl. sitework water supply, electric - no sewage)	\$319	Equity opportunity
<b>Coordinated Work (Group 4)</b>	<b>Require multi-level agency coordination and funding outside park impact fees, but benefit park access</b>			<b>Priority TBD</b>
North Main Complete Street (Glenwood to Duck Creek Parkway) - design phase	Provide pedestrian and bicycle facilities as part of a complete street solution for North Main	Coordination with DelDOT, MPO, State Assembly members, School District to develop coordinated plan and preliminary engineering to determine a budget. Could be funded through Community Transportation Fund (page 52)	\$100	Preliminary work needed to secure outside funding
Safe Routes to Parks - North Main (page 24)	North Main Street Complete Street improvements link schools, parks, trails	Design and Construction Phases are both included in the Dover-Kent MPO Metropolitan Transportation Plan	\$1,000	DelDOT ROW
Mill Creek Park and vicinity (page 26)	Duck Creek to Mill Creek Greenway trail development	6000 lf, 10' wide asphalt trail from George Wright to Green Meadow (not including limited land acquisition)	\$1,100	Rec. Trail Grant potential
Mill Creek Park	Clean up and restore Mill Street Parcel as trail head		\$30	Town prep work
George Wright to Green Meadows	Duck Creek to Mill Creek Greenway - trail development and safe routes to parks	6000 lf, 10' wide asphalt trail from George Wright to Mill Creek Park (not including limited land acquisition)	\$1,100	Rec. Trail Grant opportunity
Sunnyside Park	Community Gardens/ Pollinator Gardens/ Flower Gardens	Includes site work, water supply, electric, pavilion, fencing	\$150	Potential Delaware State Partnership

<b>Group 5: Long Term</b>	<b>Require outside funding support or multi-year accumulation of impact fees</b>		<b>\$10,926</b>	<b>Priority TBD</b>
George Wright	Convert existing playground to multi-age destination playground	Design phase needed to work with community to design facility	\$900	as equipment wears out
Lindens	Reconstruction of Barn as indoor gathering space (3875 SF)	Reconstruct pole barn with interior meeting acoustic finish, sliding glass doors, kitchen and bathroom facilities	\$1900	requires grant funding
George Wright	Boardwalk and Duck Creek Access	10' wide boardwalk with overlooks, soft landing	\$3,600	increase access to natural areas
Mill Creek	Linear activity trail (upper paved trail)	10' wide paved trail + five activity pods	\$375	State recreation grant opportunity
Sunnyside Park	Neighborhood park expansion			
	Spray-ground, Picnic pavilion	Neighborhood scale Group picnic with water/ electric, site prep	\$105	
	Off-street parking	20 space plus access drive; permeable pavement surface to address SWM	\$537	
	Court Sports	Court sports, includes design and permitting, SWM, fencing, wind protection, landscape, seating area and shade structure	\$339	
George Wright	Relocate skatepark and install linear activity trail (Area D)	Includes 2700 LF of core activity trail with 9 pods + parallel stone dust trail, central promenade trail to Duck Creek overlook	\$750	replace and relocate worn out equipment
George Wright	Install Amphitheater (Area E)	Amphitheater structure + support area and central lawn area	\$2,420	
George Wright	Renovate diamond fields	Dependent upon future usage/demand (could convert to rectangular field overlay)	TBD	

## NEXT STEPS

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The master parks plan is intended to be a working document. Enlarged versions of the concept plans included in the Master Parks Plan are provided to the Town for use in further planning and design activities. These plans can be utilized to confirm capital improvements included in future budgeting and to apply for outside funding.

## PHASING AND COORDINATION

The concept plans allow the Town to build out pieces of the park system in an orderly fashion and avoid constraining future projects by respecting the space allocated for each program element and designing utilities and infrastructure for future expansion.

The order in which park elements are built is particularly important for George Wright Municipal Park (see “George Wright Municipal Park Phasing” on page 36). The puzzle pieces need to be constructed in a particular order to make best use of available space and for efficiency in construction. For example, when the restroom at George Wright Municipal Park is constructed, it should be located in such a way that a future picnic pavilion can be built in close proximity and that plumbing can be shared with a kitchen as part of the large group pavilion and with the future spray pad. A spray pad would then take the place of the the demolished restroom footprint. The design of the sewer, water and electrical in support of the restroom should be designed for future expansion so that all anticipated uses can be accommodated over time. The construction of a dog park at George Wright, first requires the relocation of the football field to Mill Creek Park or another site. This relocation would likely take from 3-5 years including design, permitting and construction. Similarly, prior to building an amphitheater, the skate park needs to be relocated.

At Lake Como, the recently acquired parkland transferred from the State of Delaware can be made accessible earlier through temporary access. The expanded park area sits above the beach area and the only access is from the existing parking lot. The concept plan recommends moving the beach pavilion and designing it in such a way that it has ADA accessible ramps built into the design. The cost of the relocated beach pavilion however, will likely require outside funding or a multi-year savings from accumulated park impact fees. Access to the expanded park area can be provided sooner by building a paved and graded path at less than 5% slope (thereby meeting ADA requirements) to provide access from beach area up to the lawn area where beach volleyball or other lawn activities can be installed at relatively lower costs. The temporary path needs to be designed adjacent to the footprint for the future beach pavilion.

## PARK INFRASTRUCTURE AND PARK POLICY

Roadway lighting, field lighting, EV charging and other park infrastructure issues will require additional consideration as projects move from the Master Parks Plan into the design and engineering phases and will require additional consideration for overall park policies.

- **Field Lighting** - Existing lighting at George Wright Park for the diamond fields and the potential need for football field lighting on the relocated Pop Warner fields at Mill Creek Park can be considered during the design phase for each project. The benefits of additional playing time and better field utilization need to be weighed against capital and ongoing maintenance costs. For existing field lighting, installation of LED lighting will likely save money over time to more than offset the capital cost. Extended playing time on fields adds to the maintenance costs.
- **Mill Creek Entry Road Lighting** - the addition of roadway lighting would imply that parks are open for greater hours than “dawn to dusk” and therefore additional consideration will need to be given regarding whether or not to light the entry road and extend hours for park visitors.

- **EV Charging** - while adding EV charging equipment can potentially pay for itself and provide convenience for residents that are at the park for a couple of hours or more, the challenge lies in whether or not non-residents would use the stations, and thereby alter the parking demand equation for park facilities. EV Charging should be considered during the design and engineering phases where parking lots are being added over time to the larger town-wide park facilities (George Wright Municipal Park, Mill Creek, and Lake Como), but not at the neighborhood scale parks at Sunnyside and Green Meadows.

### REVISITING PRIORITIES

The priorities listed in this chapter will need to be continuously revisited to take advantage of outside funding opportunities, new or expanded partnerships, and changing demographics as the Town of Smyrna continues to grow. This should be done on an annualized basis through the Capital Improvement budgeting process but using the master parks plan as a guide for maintaining a logical and efficient order of implementation.

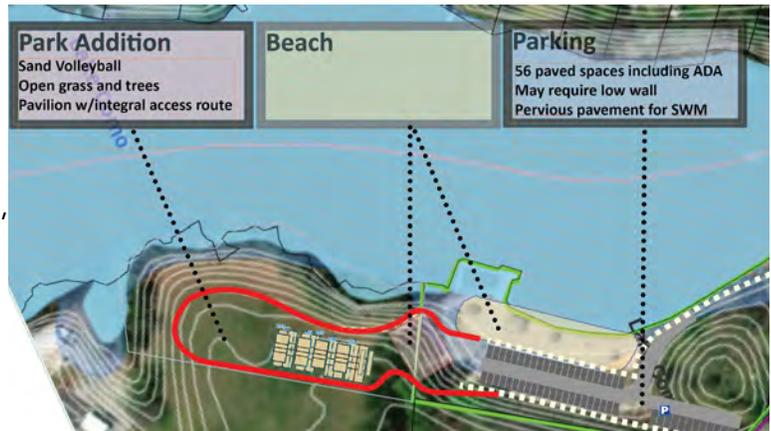


Figure 54 Initial phase of Lake Como should include parking and graded and paved pathways to provide access to the recently acquired parcel (red lines) leaving room for relocating the beach pavilion and restrooms as the follow up phase.

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