

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2003 Fayette County recreation needs assessment is intended to provide the Fayette County Recreation Department, Administration and Commission, with the information needed to direct its provision of leisure space and facilities through 2020. The assessment synthesizes data regarding future population and existing facilities with comments about recreation facility needs and desires gathered from the residents of Fayette County. Resulting are recommendations for the expansion and rehabilitation of existing parks and the acquisition and construction of new parks and facilities to fulfill currently unmet needs and projected needs during the near term (2005 – 2010) and long term (2011-2020) planning periods. A cost estimate for each budget year and project prioritization is also included to aid the County in preparing its annual budget. A detailed summary of possible funding sources is provided to present the County with additional options for financing recreation enhancements beyond the current funding provided by the County's General Fund.

Community Profile

Fayette County, Georgia, is one of the fastest growing counties in the metropolitan Atlanta region. The growth experienced by the County in the 1990's is expected to continue well into the first decades of the 21st Century with growth rates of 33% and 25% projected between 2000 – 2010 and 2010-2020 respectively. Despite the recent population growth, which has been concentrated in the northern area of the unincorporated county and the municipalities of Peachtree City and Fayetteville, the southern regions of the County and the towns of Brooks and Woolsey have remained rural in character. Fayette County prides itself in the fact that it has been able to provide a high quality of life for its residents in both urban and rural areas. Key components of the quality of life are the numerous parks and recreation facilities available for the enjoyment of the County's population. The County currently provides 12.84 acres of park lands for each 1,000 residents; this is well above the National Recreation and Parks Association's (NRPA) suggested standard of 10 acres/1,000.

Current County Parks and Greenspace Planning Efforts

The County's current Land Use Plan and Greenspace Program provide support for the maintenance of the high quality of life in the County through the preservation and expansion of parks and open space. The County's Land Use Plan designates a number of areas of the County that are to be preserved as open space and states that the county will endeavor to secure adequate future sites for recreation activities in areas having the best combinations of natural features and size. Fayette County's Greenspace Program explicitly states the County strives to protect a minimum of 20% of its land area as permanent greenspace and also identifies additional areas of the county, such as 100 acres of the Norfolk Southern rail line, which could be used for trails should it be abandoned.

Existing Recreation Facilities

The inventory of existing facilities conducted as part of the needs assessment shows that in total the County currently has 1,950 acres of park land. The calculations of total parks acreage and facilities include the 6 existing parks and facilities managed by the

Fayette County Recreation Department, the facilities provided by each of the County's municipalities, Fayette County School Board facilities, and private facilities such as those contained in private subdivisions. Due to the different levels of access county residents have to the variety of facilities included in the assessment, some, such as school and municipal facilities were discounted by 50% to 75% dependant upon their location and availability to county residents. A qualitative evaluation of the existing Fayette County Recreation Department facilities is also included to help identify needed facility improvements which should be undertaken in the near term.

Public Input

To help determine the recreation needs and desires of Fayette County's population, information from a number of public input sources was reviewed. These sources included public meetings, a survey posted on the County's web site, surveys mailed out with residents' water bills, and a random telephone survey. Across the entire County residents repeatedly expressed a want for more passive recreation opportunities such as trails, picnicking areas, and playgrounds.

Needs Assessment Methodology and Summary

The information gathered through public comments provided input into the process of determining appropriate standards for the provision of park acreage and facilities in Fayette County. In addition to public comments, Robert & Company used the suggested standards provided by NRPA to determine standards for needs assessment. The assessment was completed by comparing current inventories of facilities and parks with the current and projected 2010 and 2020 populations.

The municipalities of Tyrone and Peachtree City maintain their own recreation departments with a large number of recreation facilities and conduct their own parks planning processes. Due to this, the needs assessment focuses primarily on the recreation needs of the population served by the Fayette County Recreation Department. The service population for this department includes the residents of unincorporated Fayette County, the City of Fayetteville and the towns of Brooks and Woolsey.

Fayette County has distinct geographic regions: north Fayette County, the City of Fayetteville and its surrounding areas, the Town of Brooks and rural southern portion of the County, and the more intensely suburban region of Peachtree City and Tyrone. Recreational facilities in the county are designed to serve different sized populations and geographic areas. Therefore, Robert & Company divided the Fayette County Recreation Department's service area into three "county sub-areas" The recreational needs of each of these county sub-areas was assessed comparing the facilities currently available in each of the areas with the projected 2010 and 2020 populations for the area. An assessment was also produced for those unique facilities, such as indoor swimming pools and amphitheaters, which are considered to have "county-wide" service areas.

At the county-wide level, the needs assessment shows that Fayette County may have the population to support two additional indoor swimming pools by 2020. The county sub-area assessment shows that the northern portion of the County has the most immediate

needs for new facilities, many of which will be fulfilled through the development of the County-owned undeveloped tract of land owned near Kenwood. Based on the needs assessment and public comments specific to this area, passive facilities such as picnic areas and playgrounds, and active amenities like baseball fields and basketball courts would be appropriate for this new park.

In county sub-area 2, the assessment shows that an additional 66 acres of park land will be needed during the 2010-2020 planning period. Although this area is currently well-served by private recreation facilities included in private subdivisions, there is a need for volleyball courts and passive recreation areas such as picnicking facilities and playgrounds. Additionally, as 2020 approaches, this sub-area is projected to have the population to support additional active facilities such as a running track and multi-purpose field.

County sub-area 3 compared well to the level of service standards developed for Fayette County. The most pressing need in this area of the county is for passive recreation facilities such as picnic pavilions, playgrounds and tot lots. Near the end of the long term planning period (2020) additional park acreage will be needed as will a football field and running track.

Recreation Priorities and Conclusion

In total, the facilities needs of Fayette County are not immense. Past recreation planning efforts and a county-wide dedication to preserving a high-quality of life through recreation facility and parks provisions has caused the County to be well prepared to meet future demands. To facilitate future parks development and improvement, Robert and Company has prepared an order of magnitude cost estimate for the parks and facilities needs of the County. These estimates combined with information regarding the timing of facilities needs provided by the needs assessment, to provide suggestions for parks and recreation funding for each budget year through 2020. The priority of recreation projects is divided into three tiers. First, the renovations and expansions of existing facilities and the additional facilities and park acreage needed to meet current population needs. Tier two includes the facilities and park acreage needed to meet the needs of the projected 2010 populations. The final tier includes facilities and lands needed to meet the long term needs of the projected 2020 populations. A summary of available Federal, State, and local funding sources for recreation is included to identify additional options for funding recreation projects beyond the current sole funding mechanism of the County's General Fund.