

Valdosta-Lowndes County, GA Comprehensive Parks & Recreation Master Plan

July 2021



PRESENTATION OUTLINE

1. Project Overview
2. Recap: Conditions Analysis + Needs Assessment
3. Long-Range Vision and Implementation Strategy
4. Phasing Strategy
5. Questions, Discussion

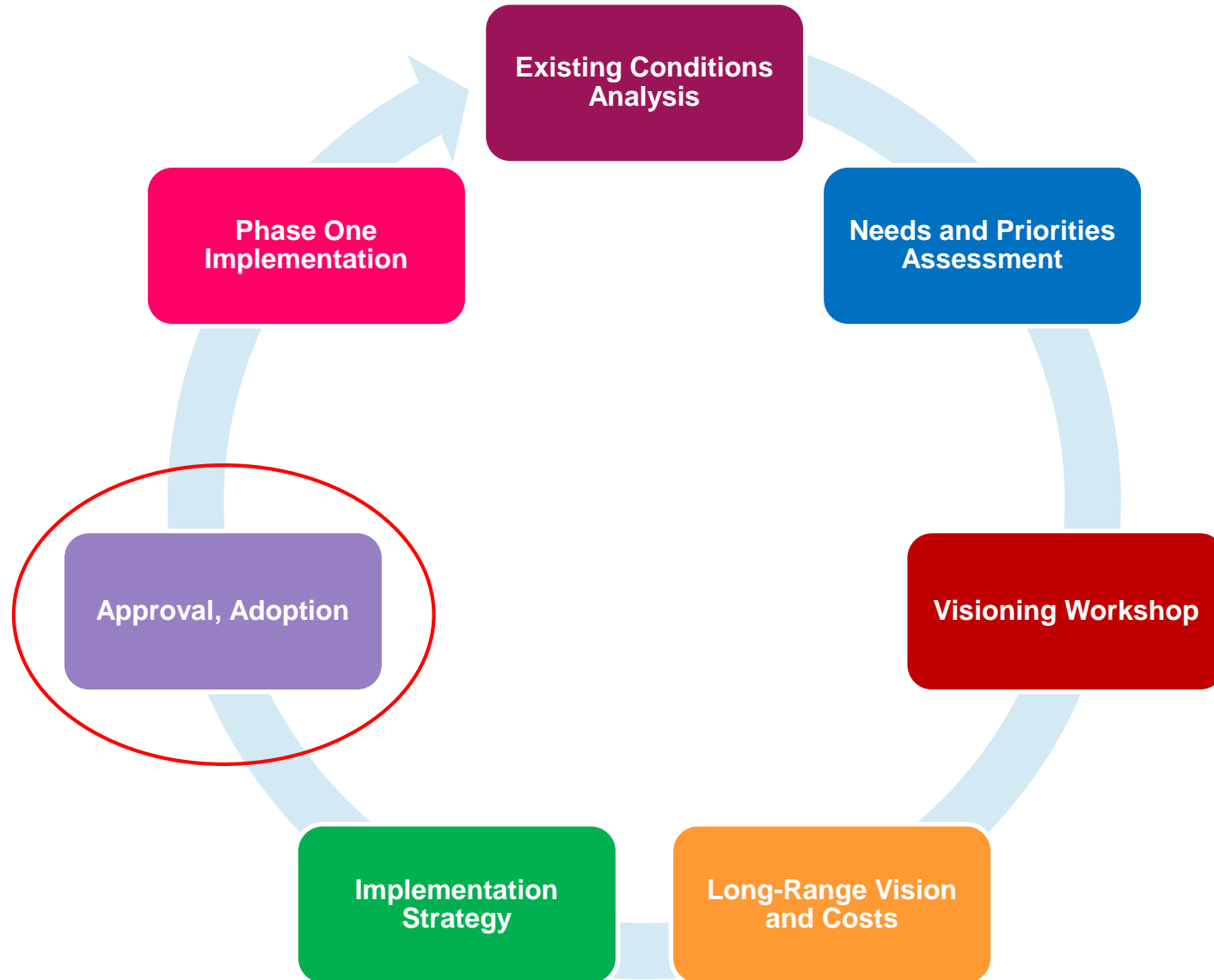


Project Objectives

- Long Range, 5-10 Year Comprehensive Master Plan
- Extensive Community Involvement
- Needs Assessment including Survey
- Capital Improvements: Renovations and New Facilities
- Natural Resource Management
- Staffing, Budget, and Revenue Assessment
- Opportunities for Sports Tourism
- Cost Analysis
- Prioritization of Projects for SPLOST, other Funding



Approach and Process



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NEEDS ASSESSMENT

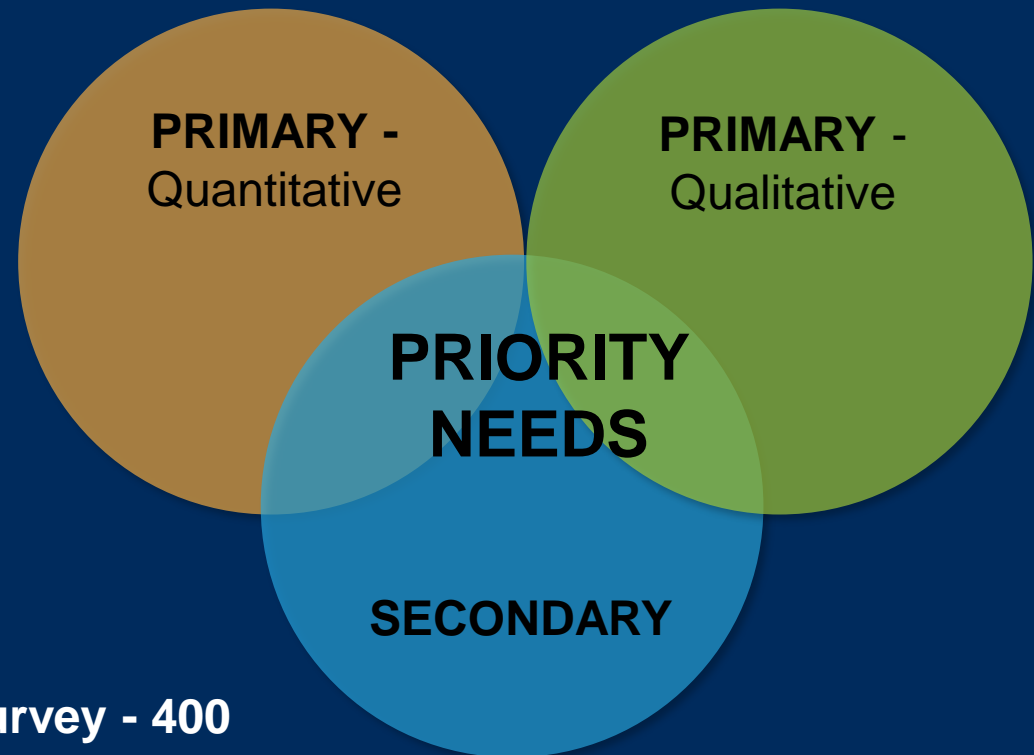
A Mixed-Methods, Triangulated Approach (+/- 1300 Participants)

Qualitative Techniques:

- Site Evaluations
- Interviews, Focus Groups (20)
- Steering Committee (30)
- Public Workshops (50)

Quantitative Techniques:

- Statistically-Representative Survey - 400
- On-line Survey – 831 (Community, Seniors, Program Users)
- Level-of-Service Analysis, Benchmarking



Statistically-Representative Survey – Key Findings

Q 1: On a scale of 5 to 1 where 5 means “Very Satisfied” and 1 means “Very Dissatisfied”, please rate your overall satisfaction with the following types of parks and recreation facilities provided by the Valdosta-Lowndes County Parks and Recreation Authority. If you don’t use, please select “9” for “Don’t Use”. **Top 10.**

Rating Category	Avg.					
Baseball fields	4.1	36%	42%	17%		
Softball fields	4.1	40%	36%	19%		
Miracle Field Complex	4.0	41%	27%	24%	4%	
Tennis courts	4.0	39%	32%	18%	9%	
Adult softball fields	4.0	37%	35%	19%	5%	
Playgrounds	3.9	30%	38%	26%	4%	
Football fields	3.9	34%	33%	21%	8%	4%
Large community parks	3.8	30%	38%	21%	10%	
Soccer fields	3.7	31%	28%	27%	7%	6%
Picnic shelters	3.7	24%	35%	28%	9%	4%

*Categories are sorted in descending order by the average rating.

Statistically-Representative Survey – Key Findings

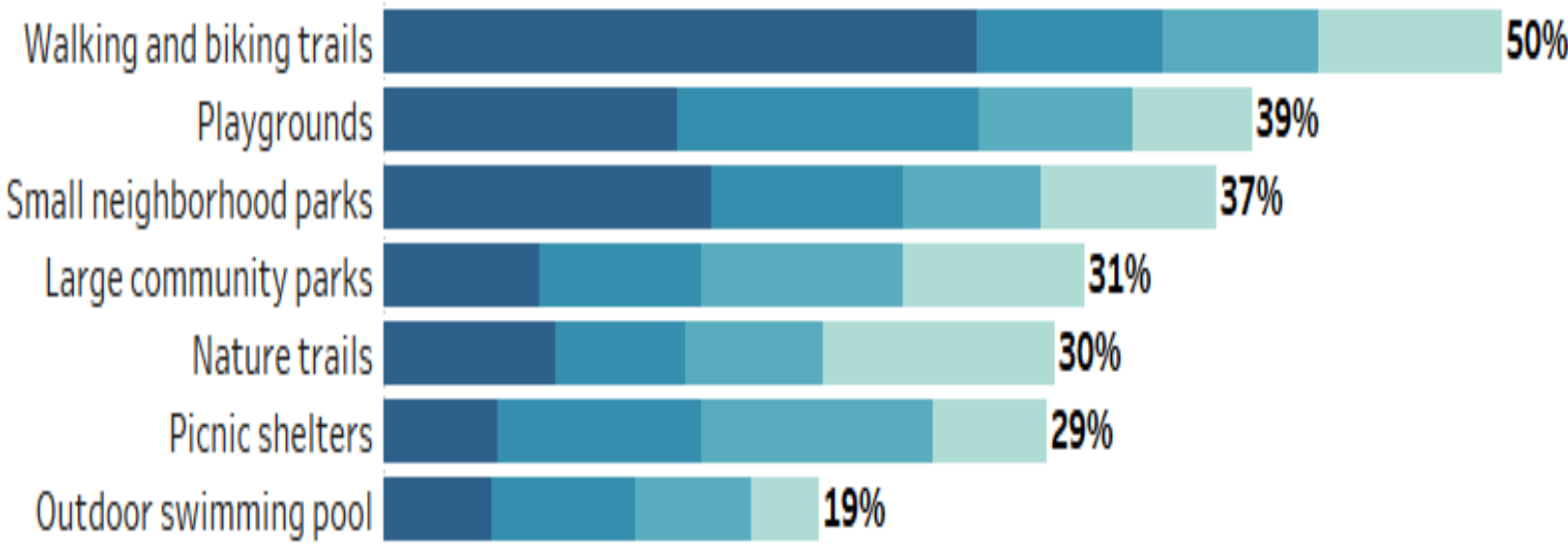
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Rating Category	Avg.					
Disc golf course	3.7	30%	30%	23%	11%	7%
Dog park	3.6	31%	27%	22%	14%	6%
Small neighborhood parks	3.6	22%	37%	23%	16%	
Walking and biking trails	3.5	30%	26%	19%	15%	10%
Wooded /nature viewing areas	3.4	21%	30%	28%	13%	8%
Nature trails	3.4	27%	24%	21%	15%	13%
Fishing piers and ponds	3.3	21%	25%	22%	21%	11%
Blueways and river access	3.2	18%	21%	34%	12%	15%
Rural/Off-road biking trails	3.1	20%	23%	24%	17%	16%
Outdoor swimming pool	3.1	20%	20%	26%	15%	19%
Indoor swimming pool	3.0	24%	14%	20%	18%	23%

*Categories are sorted in descending order by the average rating.

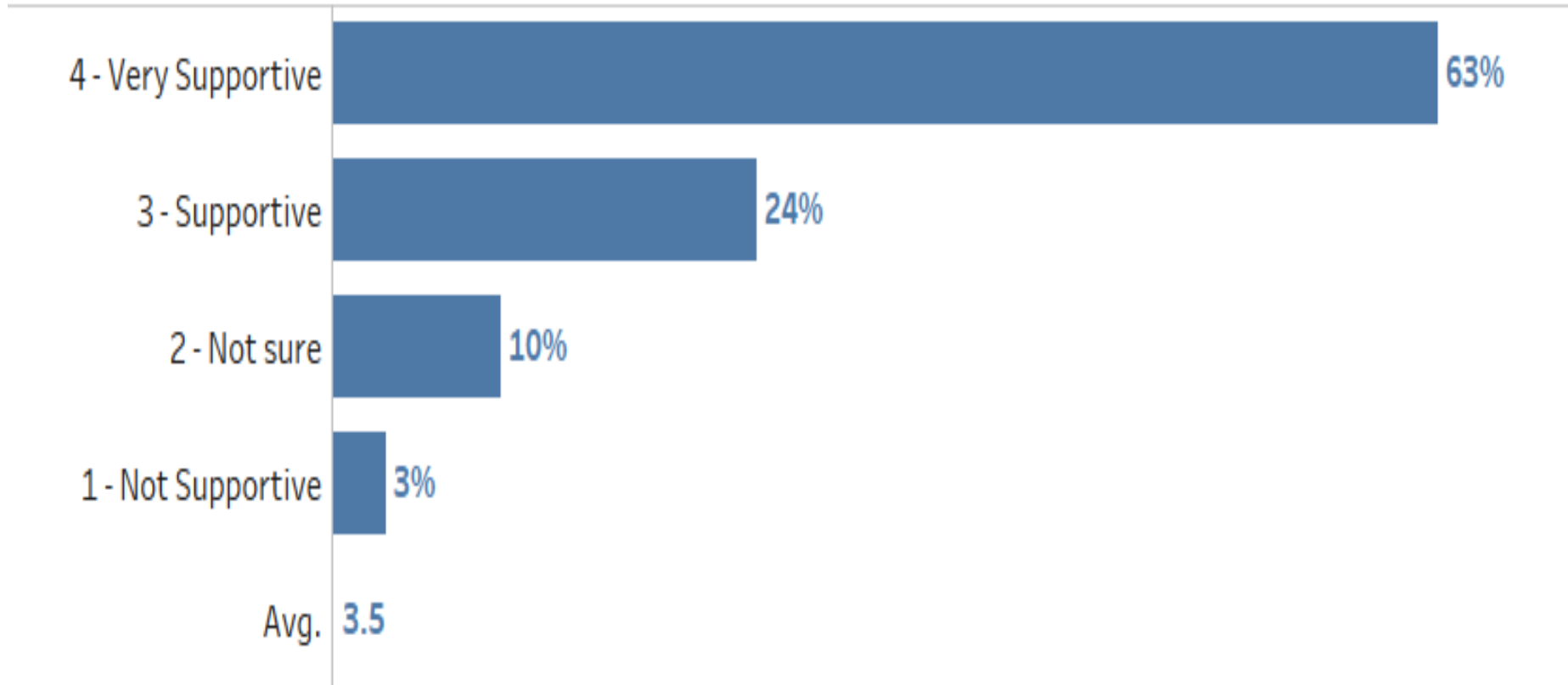
Statistically-Representative Survey – Key Findings

Q 2: For you and members of your household, which FOUR of the above parks and facilities should receive the most attention from the VLPRA over the next FIVE years?



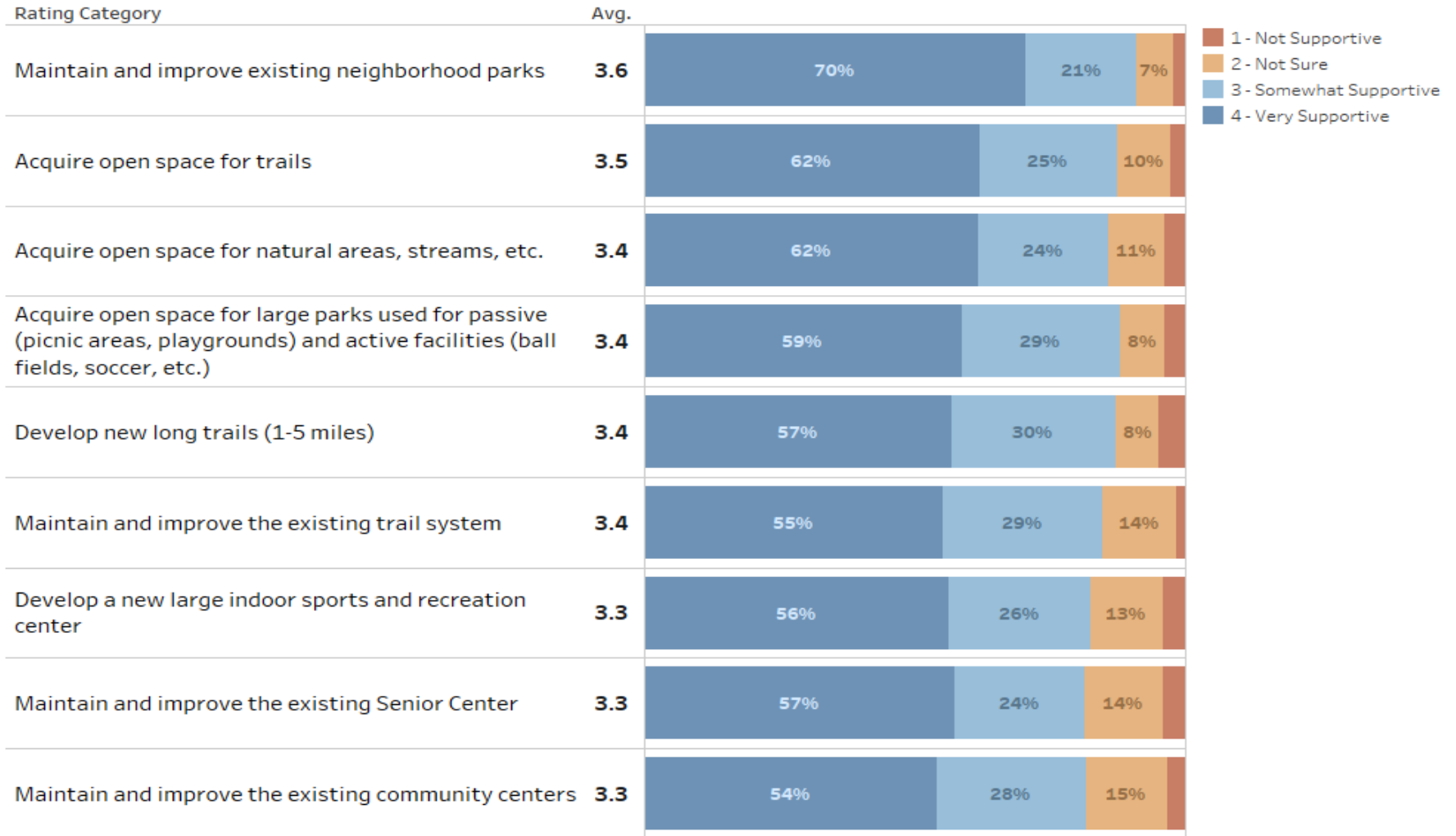
Statistically-Representative Survey – Key Findings

Q 11: How supportive would you be for the VLPRA developing a large indoor sports and recreation center that would serve residents of all ages in the City of Valdosta and Lowndes County?



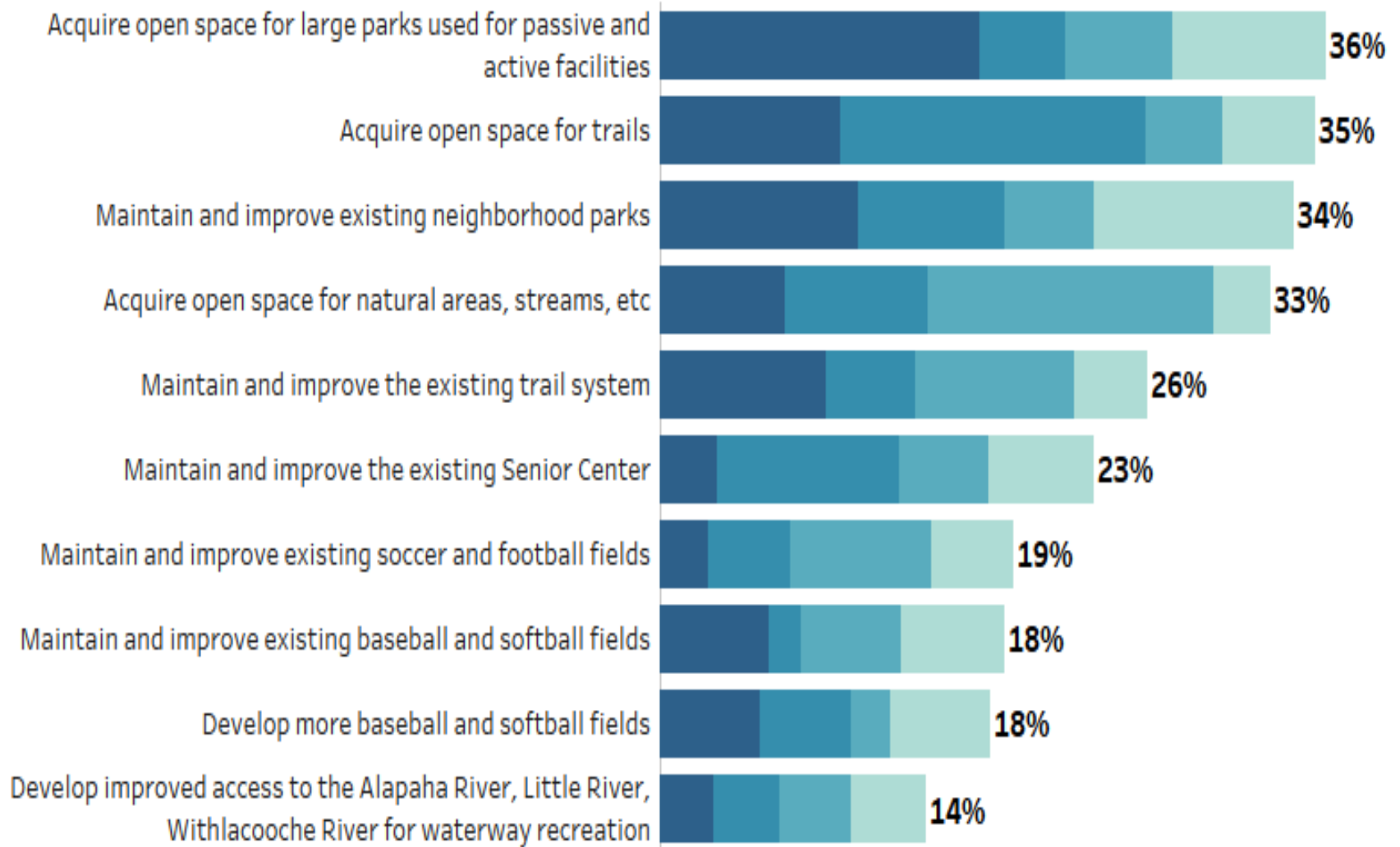
Statistically-Representative Survey – Key Findings

Q 13: The following are actions that the VLPRA could take to improve the parks and recreation system. Please indicate whether you would be very supportive, somewhat supportive, not sure, or not supportive of each action by circling the number next to the action.



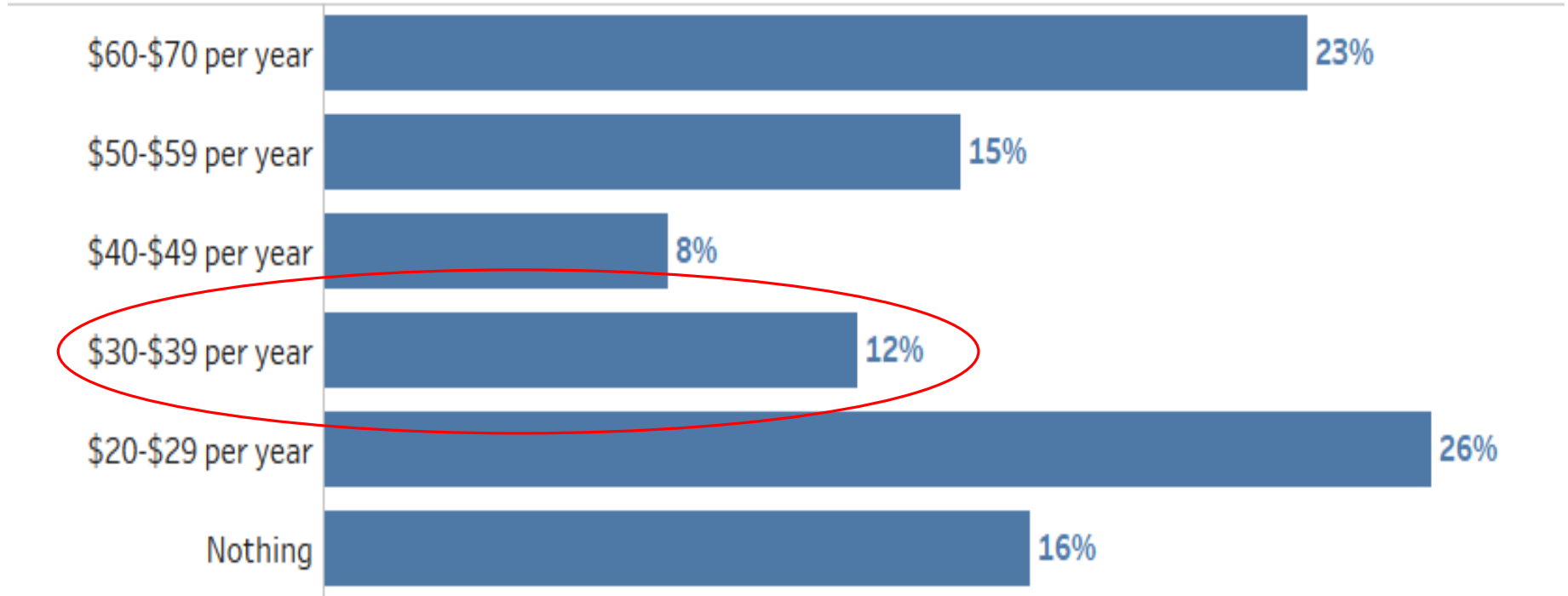
Statistically-Representative Survey – Key Findings

Q 14: Which FOUR of the actions from the list in Question #13 would you be most willing to fund with your tax dollars?



Statistically-Representative Survey – Key Findings

Q 15: What is the maximum amount you would willing to pay per year in additional tax revenues from the mill levy?



Needs Assessment Summary

FACILITY PRIORITIES

- **Maintain and improve existing neighborhood parks (70% very supportive)**
- **Acquire open space for trails (62%)**
- **Acquire open space for natural areas, streams (62%)**
- **Acquire open space used for passive and active usages (59%)**
- **Develop new long trails (57%)**
- **Develop a new large indoor sports and recreation center (56%), including walking and jogging tracks, aerobics and fitness space, space for meetings and parties**
- **Develop improved river recreation access (56%)**
- **Maintain and improve the existing trail system (55%)**
- **Maintain and improve the existing community centers (54%)**
- **Maintain and improve the existing outdoor swimming pool (50%)**

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

- **Movies and concerts in the park**
- **Fitness and wellness classes**

STAFFING PRIORITIES

- **Additional management staff**

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

- **Natural Resource Management Plans**
- **Natural Resource Management**

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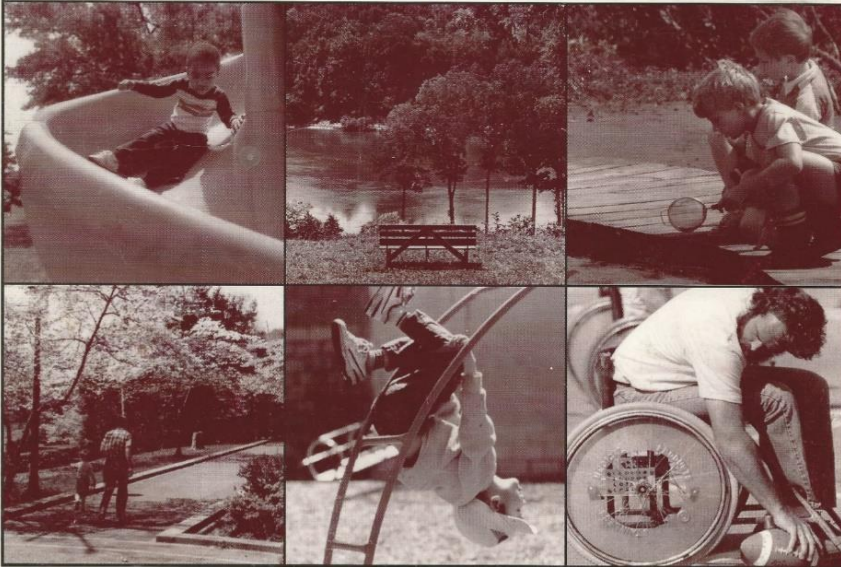
No Standards



A Project of the
National Recreation and Park Association
and the American Academy for
Park and Recreation Administration

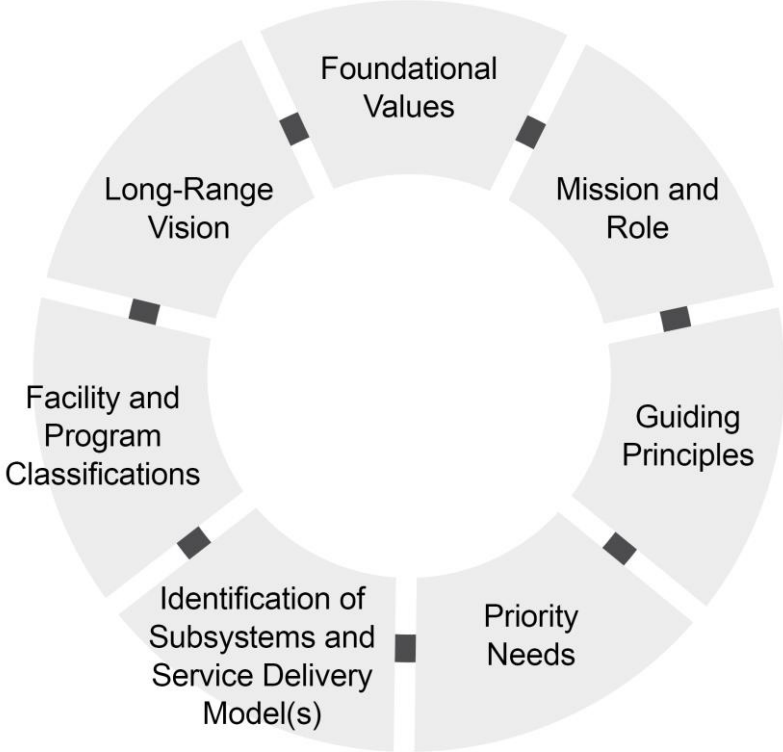
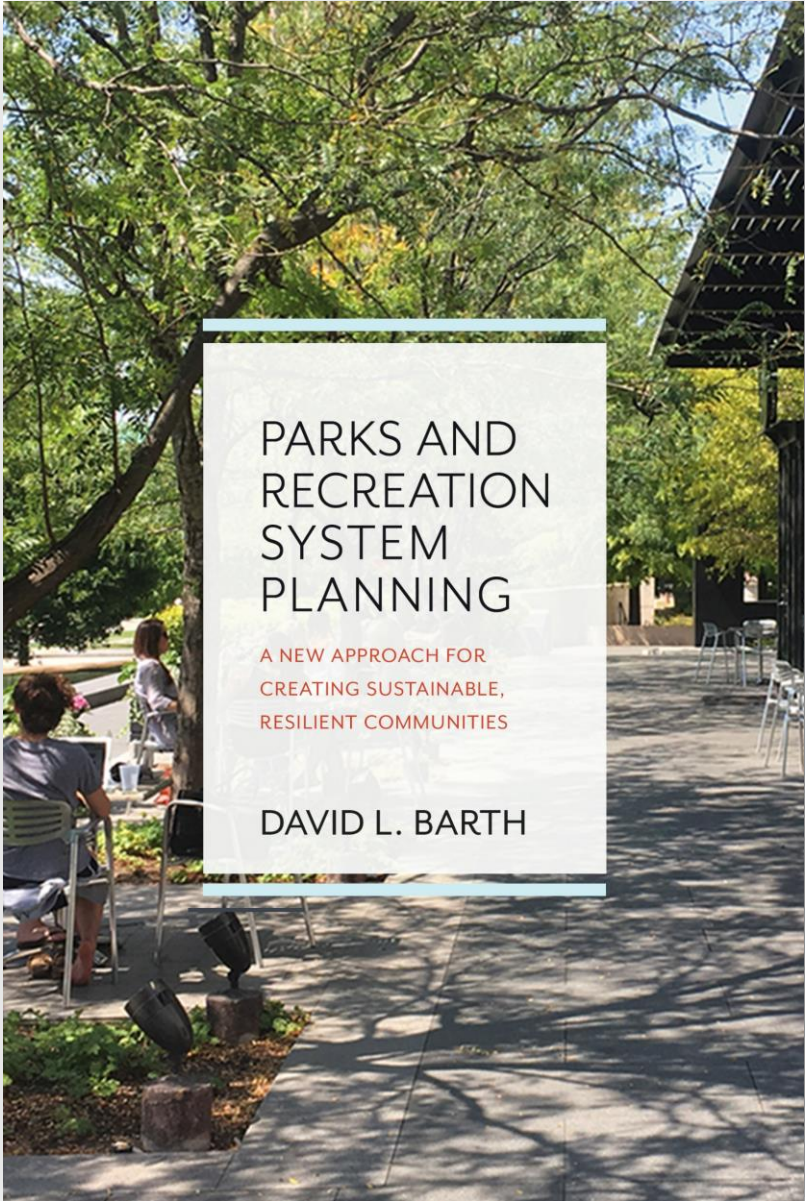
Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines

James D. Mertes, Ph.D., CLP and James R. Hall, CLP



“A standard for parks and recreation cannot be universal, nor can one city be compared with another even though they are similar in many respects.”

Decision-Making Framework



Visioning Workshops

Tuesday, March 2nd

- Maintain & Improve Existing Parks, Trails, Community Center, & Pool
- Acquire Open Space for Trails, Natural Areas & Streams, & Passive & Active Parks
- Develop New Trails

Wednesday, March 3rd:

- Develop New Large Indoor Sports & Recreation Center
- Programming
- Funding

Thursday, March 4th:

- Sports Recruitment
- Develop Improved River Recreation Access
- Natural Resource Management



Kid's Kitchen Camp

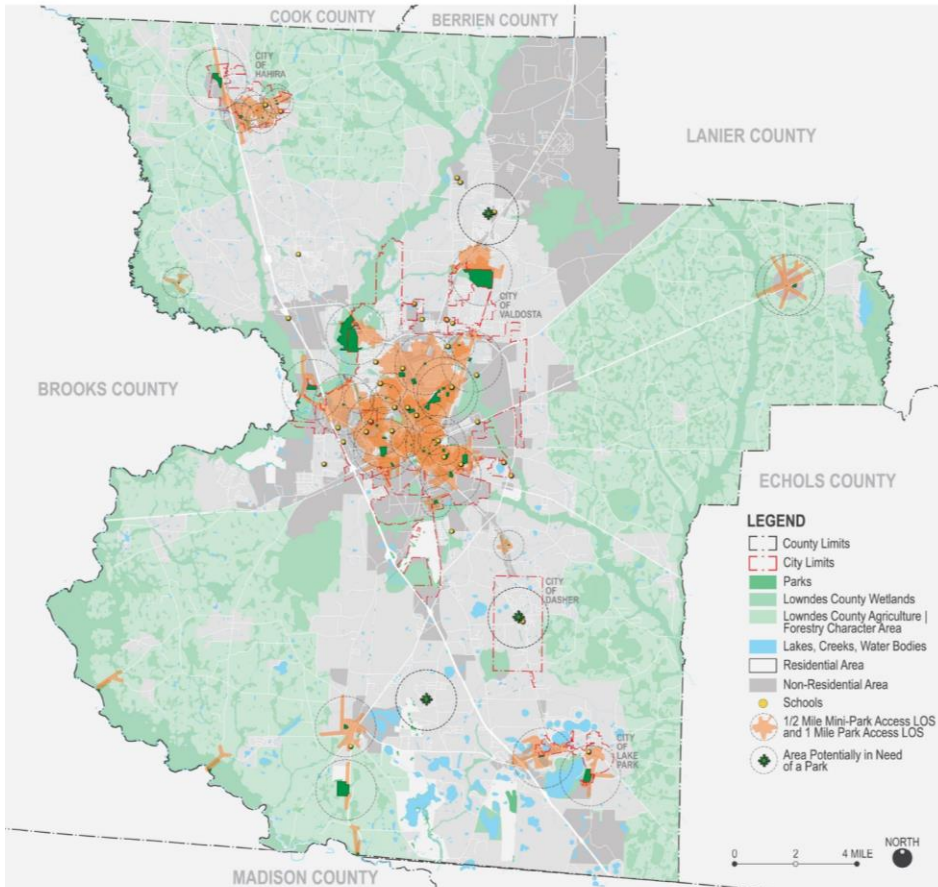
Source: <https://vlpra.com/258/Kids-Kitchen>

Strategy 1: Master Plan, Expand, and Upgrade Existing Parks

- Develop conceptual plans and cost estimates
- Prepare a phased, 12-year Parks Improvement Plan to improve the evaluation scores from 2.4 to 4+
- Base PIP on recommendations from 2013 Master Plan; Guiding Principles; Typical Amenity Package
- Prioritize improvements based on the Master Plan Needs Assessment and subsequent public input typical amenity package,



Strategy 2: Acquire and Develop New Parks



- Prioritize and acquire proposed park sites
- Conduct public engagement to determine priority facilities and amenities
- Prepare conceptual plans and cost estimates for each park
- Prepare design and construction documents
- Develop new parks

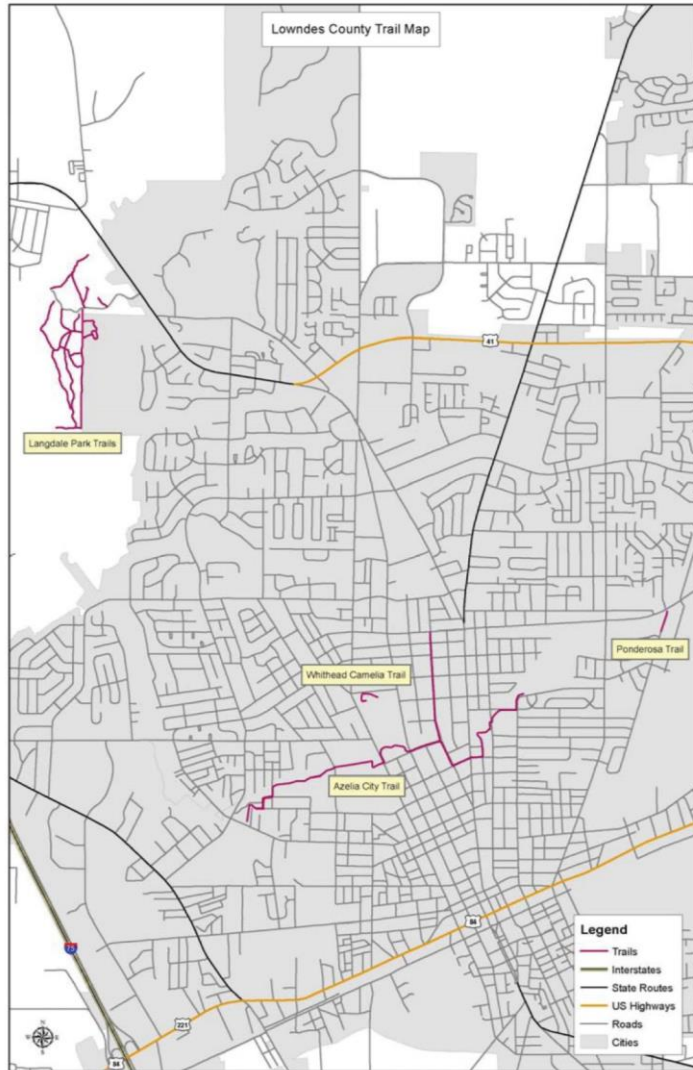
Strategy 3: Expand Indoor Recreation Space

- Evaluate opportunities to expand existing centers
- Conduct a comprehensive feasibility study to build the new, large indoor recreation center proposed at the Bray property
- Prepare a phased, 12-year Recreation Center Improvement Plan to achieve the goal of 1.5 - 2 s.f. per capita (currently +/- .8 s.f.)



Strategy 4: Initiate a County-wide Trails Program

FIGURE 4.22 - LOWNDES COUNTY TRAILS (SOURCE: SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PLAN)



- Hire a full-time Trails Coordinator to lead the program, and collaborate with other partners
- Develop a County-wide Trails Master Plan, including both paved and unpaved trails
- Prepare a Phase One, 12-Year Trails Development Plan consistent with the TSPLOST funding cycle
- Apply for TSPLOST funds, grants, and other funding for top priority corridors

FIGURE 4.20 - ON-ROAD TRAILS: TRAIL ALONG ROAD (LEFT) & ON-ROAD CYCLE TRACK (RIGHT)



FIGURE 4.19 - TRAIL WITHIN PARK

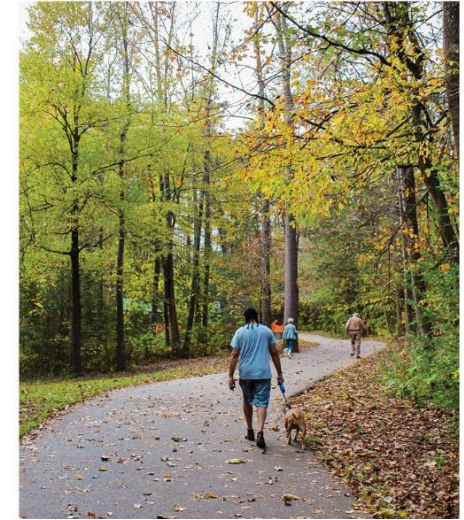
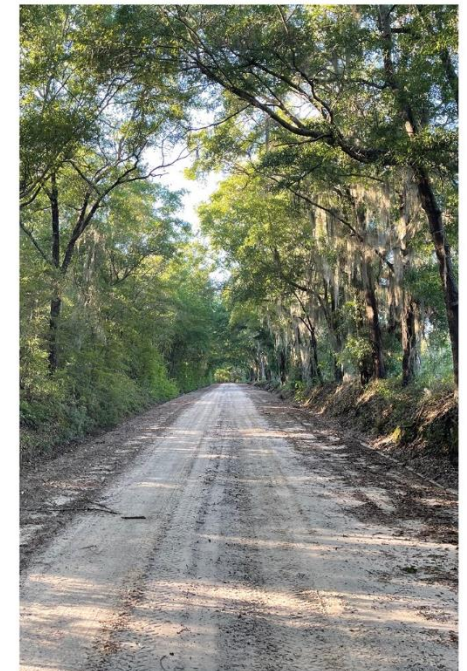


FIGURE 4.21 - PROTOTYPICAL COMPLETE STREET



Wells Road, near the Brooks County line

Strategy 6: Improve Access to the County's Rivers, Provide Additional Amenities

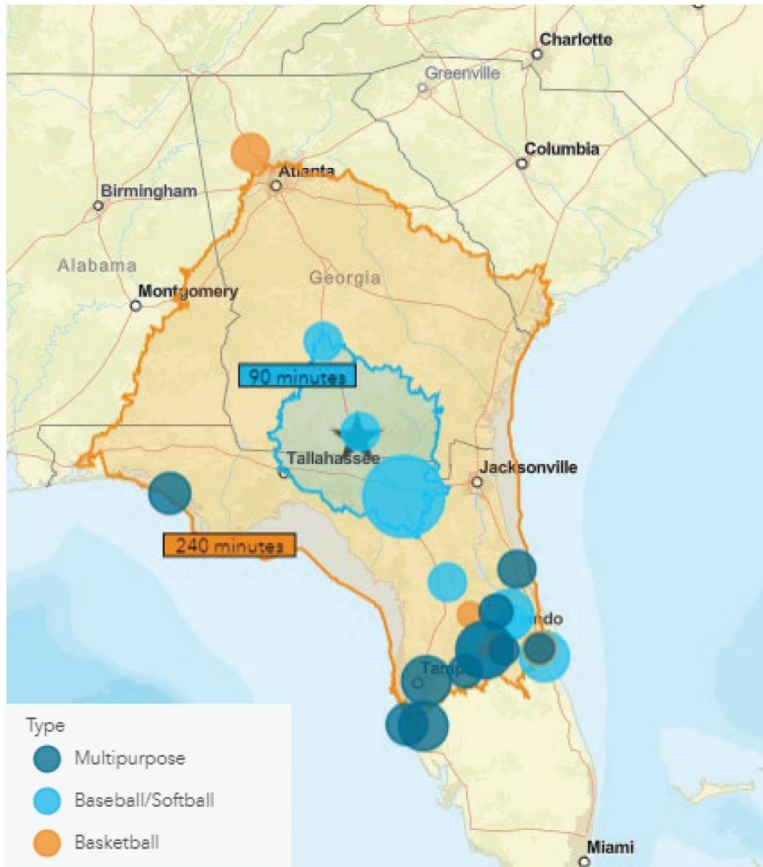
- Trails Coordinator to continue to work with the county to construct a network of launches, ramps, river camps (similar to amenities along the SRWT)
- Prepare a phased, 12-year River Access Improvement Plan to improve water quality, access, safety, and enjoyment

FIGURE 1.12 - SCENIC VIEWS OF THE WITHLACOOCHEE RIVER AT THE KNIGHTS FERRY BOAT RAMP



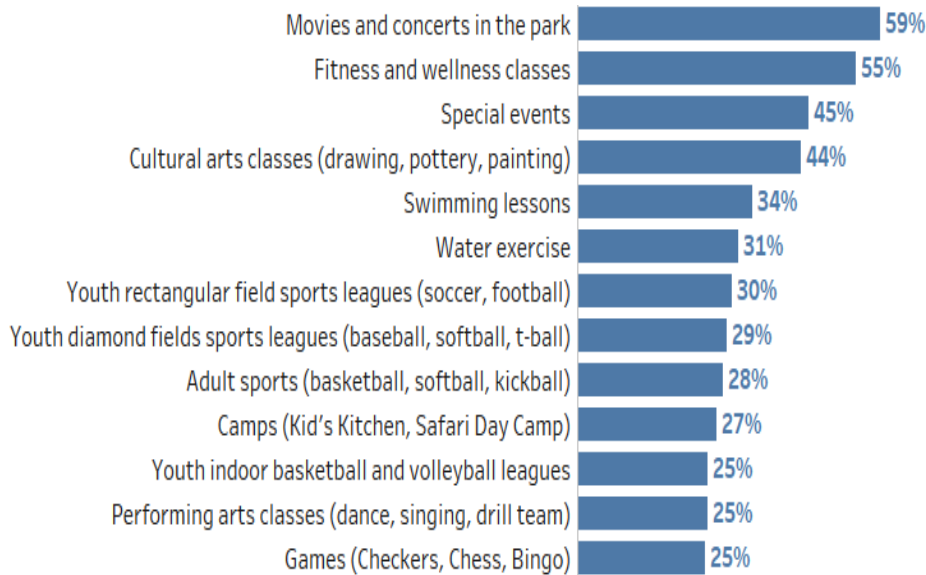
Strategy 7: Develop the Bray Property as a Regional Sports Complex

FIGURE 4.26 - LOCATION OF SPORTS TOURISM FACILITIES



- Commission a Market and Financial Feasibility Study, including:
 - Estimated Capital, Operations and Maintenance Costs
 - Competitive Market Analysis and Niche Program Identification
 - Revenue Projections
 - Financing, Operations, and Fiscal Impacts

Strategy 8: Expand Programming and Operations



- Create a programming committee
- Expand program “menu” to include lifelong learning, skill building and enrichment
- Align new programs with VLPRA’s mission to “grow a healthy, safe, and environmentally responsible community”
- Respond to findings from Needs Assessment

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Phasing Strategy

- Vision estimated to cost +\$100MM, nic trails and environmental lands
- VLPRA already implementing over \$20 MM of planned SPLOST projects, which will be completed within next 4 years
- Next two SPLOST cycles will be in FY 2024 and FY 2030
- Add'l funding sources may include park bond, increased share of hotel tax, grants, energy savings, and increase in millage
- Estimate that a combined total of \$36-\$62MM may be available over the next 12 year period from 2024 – 2036

FACILITY PRIORITIES

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- **Maintain and improve the existing outdoor swimming pool (50%)**

PHASE 1: FY 2021-2024 (Existing SPLOST Funds)

STRATEGY (from Section 5.1)	RECOMMENDATIONS (from Section 5.1)	*PROPOSED BUDGET
1. Master Plan, Expand & Upgrade Existing Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N.L Soccer/Baseball, Trail and Renovations @\$13,275,000 • Senior Center @\$2,500,000 • Clyattville Community Center @\$300,000 • City Parks Renovations @\$2,500,000 • New City Park District 5 @\$1,000,000 • New Pickleball Courts (6 minimum) @\$500,000 	\$ 20.075M
2. Expand Indoor Recreation Centers	Conduct a comprehensive feasibility study and proforma for the large new “hub” center at Bray property	\$50k
<i>Subtotal Proposed “Phase One” Budget, FY 2021 - FY 2024</i>		\$20.125M

PHASE 2: FY 2025-2030 (Proposed SPLOST + Additional Funds)

STRATEGY (from Section 5.1)	RECOMMENDATIONS (from Section 5.1)	*PROPOSED BUDGET
1. Master Plan, Expand & Upgrade Existing Parks	Develop conceptual master plans and cost estimates for 4 facilities/parks @ \$50k each	\$ 200k
	Update and improve parks	\$4M
	New restrooms/concession stand for existing baseball fields for South Lowndes Recreation Complex	\$500k
2. Acquire & develop New Parks	Acquire land for three 10-acre neighborhood parks @ \$50k/acre (Figure 4.15)	\$1.5M
3. Expand Indoor Recreation Centers	Design the large new “hub” center at Bray property	\$2.5M
	Construct the North Lowndes Indoor Sports Facility	\$14M
	Renovate South Lowndes Indoor Facility	\$1.5M

<p>4. Initiate a County-wide Trails System</p>	<p>Hire a full-time trails planner and coordinator; prepare a County-wide Trails Master Plan; and apply for TSPLOST funds, grants, and other funding sources</p>	<p>\$200k</p>
<p>5. Initiate a County-wide Natural Lands Protection Program</p>	<p>Hire a full-time conservation and environmental lands planner; develop a County-wide Conservation and Environmental Lands Master Plan; and begin implementing other recommendations in this Master Plan</p>	<p>\$150k</p>
<p>6. Improve Access to & Amenities for the County's Rivers</p>	<p>Prepare a phased River Access Improvement Plan, and construct proposed improvements</p>	<p>\$1M</p>
<p>7. Expand Programming & Operations</p>	<p>Implement recommendations 8.1 – 8.6, and determine any cost implications</p>	<p>TBD</p>
<p><i>Subtotal Proposed "Phase Two" Budget, FY 2025 - FY 2030</i></p>		<p>\$25.55M <i>(plus continuing Staffing, O&M costs)</i></p>

PHASE 3: FY 2031-2036 (Proposed SPLOST + Additional Funds)

STRATEGY (from Section 5.1)	RECOMMENDATIONS (from Section 5.1)	*PROPOSED BUDGET
1. Master Plan, Expand & Upgrade Existing Parks	Update and improve parks	\$ 4M
2. Develop the Bray Property as a Regional Indoor Recreation Center & Sports Complex	New Multi-Generation Center at Bray Property (incl Freedom Trail connecting to Freedom Park and new high school)	\$31M
3. Improve Access To & Amenities for the County's Rivers	Prepare a phased River Access Improvement Plan, and construct proposed improvements	\$250k
<p align="center">Subtotal Proposed "Phase Three" Budget, FY 2021 - FY 2024</p>		<p align="center">\$35.25M (plus continuing Staffing, O&M costs)</p>

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