

HOLLY RIDGE

PARKS, TRAILS & OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN



OCTOBER 2021



Publish Date: October 2021

Town of Holly Ridge

212 N Dyson Street

Holly Ridge NC 28445

<https://hollyridgenc.org>

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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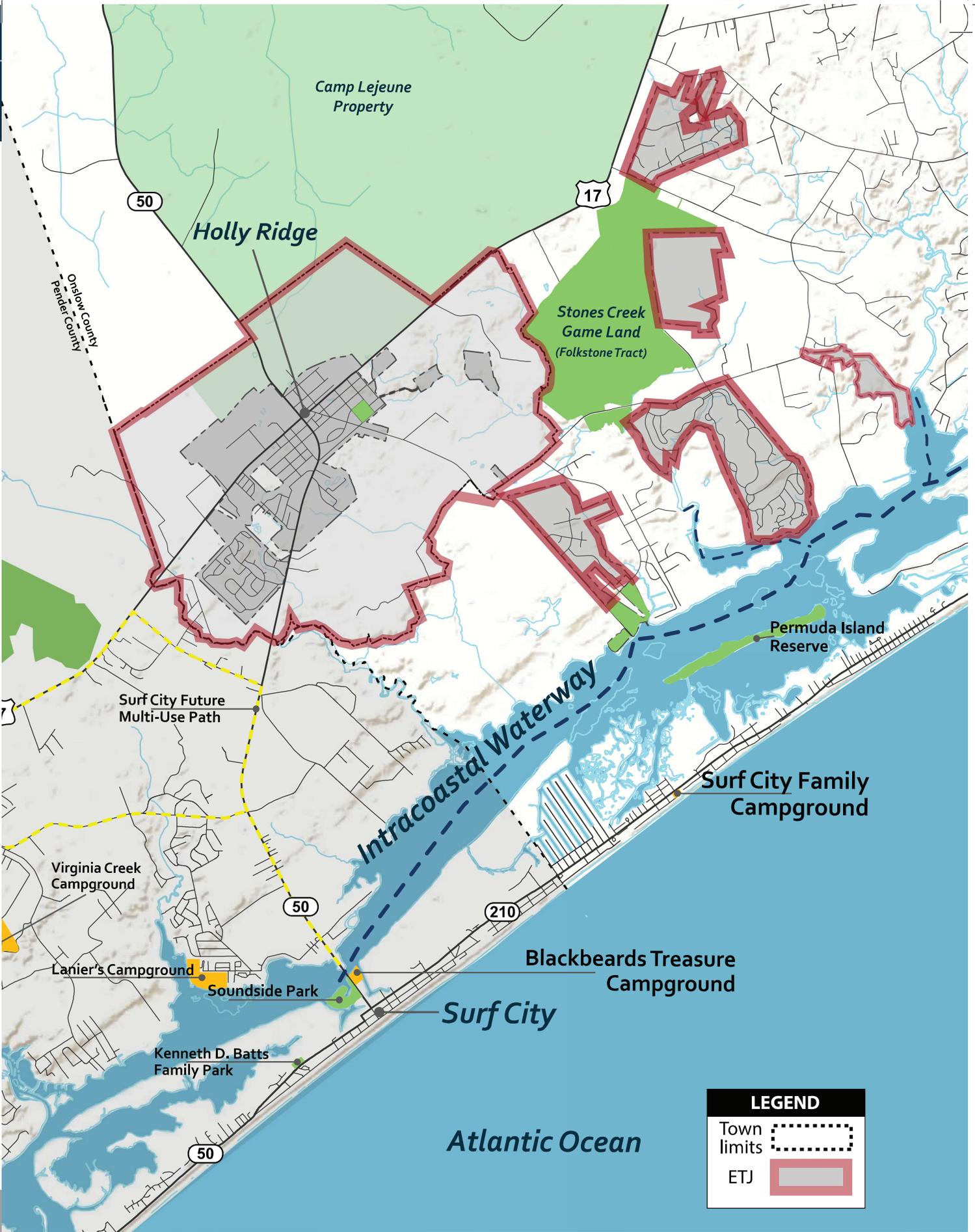
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PREPARED BY



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LEGEND

Town limits	
ETJ	



INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT & HISTORY

Holly Ridge is a community of approximately 2,400 to 4,200 residents located in Onslow County, NC. The land area is 4 square miles. Holly Ridge is termed the Gateway to Topsail Island, and is just 5 miles inland from Surf City, a community of 8,000 residents. Pender County lies just west of town, a few miles down Highway 17, and Sneads Ferry to the east on the New River. Camp Lejeune borders Holly Ridge directly to the north, and extends to the east, occupying 245 square miles.

The town was established around 1890 and served as a fuel stop for the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. Holly Ridge was a quiet community of 28 residents, two stores, seven houses and a train station until 1940, when the adjacent land was granted to establish Marine Corps Outlying Field (MCOFL) Camp Davis. Camp Davis was used for the Army's Barrage Balloon School, the Anti-Aircraft Artillery School, and the Officers Candidate School until it was closed in 1944. After a short closure, the base was reactivated to serve as a redistribution center, and in 1946 it played a large role in Operation Bumblebee,



helping the Navy develop anti-aircraft missiles. Camp Davis was closed in 1948 and dismantled for salvage. The Marine Corps took out a new lease in 1954, and the land is currently in use for Camp Lejeune helicopter units. Holly Ridge has maintained a population around 1,000 over the years, although the number has periodically crept higher and lower.

Holly Ridge is located on NC Highway 17 and NC Highway 50, with easy access to urban centers in Jacksonville and Wilmington. Corporate limits are centered on the intersection of these highways, and an additional group of independent areas to the east. These independent areas include the neighborhoods of Morris Landing, Summer House, Villages of Folkstone, and the Neighborhoods of Holly Ridge. The town's Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) borders Pender County to the west, Camp Lejeune to the north, Stones Creek Game Land and Holly Ridge Road to the east, and County Line Branch to the south.



The project study area includes all lands within one mile of the ETJ. Existing parks and open spaces that are owned and operated by the Town include the Municipal Park, Liberty Fountain Park, the Community Center, and Morris Landing / Pier at the end of Morris Landing Road. There are several parks in the vicinity, and include:

- ◆ **Soundside Park (Surf City)**
- ◆ **Kenneth D. Batts Family Park (Surf City)**
- ◆ **Surf City Bark Park (Surf City dog park)**
- ◆ **Stump Sound Park (Sneads Ferry / Onslow County)**
- ◆ **North Topsail Beach Town Park**
- ◆ **Folkstone Tract of Stones Creek Game Lands**

Surf City also provides a disc golf course and is planning an athletic complex with a splash pad.

There are no designated greenways within the town, although a multi-use trail planned by Surf City will be in close proximity to the town and offers potential connectivity.

This trail provides potential connections to schools and the beaches at Surf City.

Other natural and cultural features within the study area include Stones Creek Game Land, Permuda Island Reserve, and the beaches of Surf City and Topsail Island.

PROJECT PURPOSE

The purpose of the Holly Ridge Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan is to provide a vision and framework for improving and expanding recreational facilities and opportunities over the next ten years. This report assesses facility and program needs, both current and future, and provides a plan to guide improvements. Implementation strategies include information regarding the pursuit of future funding opportunities and an estimate of probable construction costs.

This comprehensive plan is the first undertaken by the Parks and Recreation Department, and is informed by the Holly Ridge Comprehensive Land Use Plan that was adopted in 2020. These plans illustrate the Town's desire to improve the quality of life for its residents while maintaining the character that makes Holly Ridge unique.

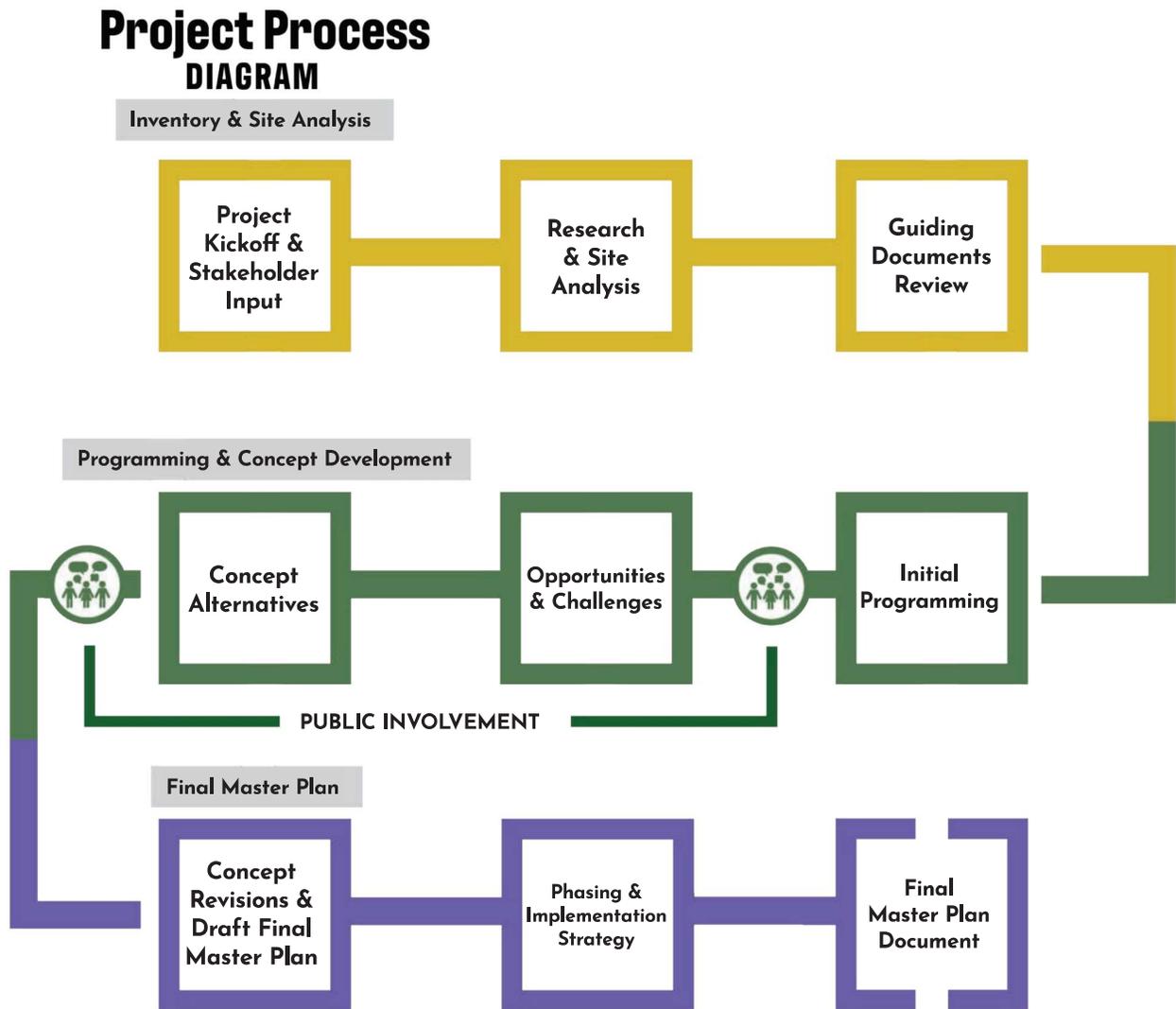


PROJECT PROCESS

This Master Plan is intended to serve as a comprehensive guide for the planning, acquisition, development and operations of parks, trails, park facilities, and recreation programs in Holly Ridge. It illustrates a vision based on Town staff and community input, documents programming needs, and suggests strategies for implementation.

The Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan vision was achieved through a systematic method of research, site inventory and analysis, idea generation and community engagement. The objective of establishing a shared vision was built on local knowledge, so the team sought valuable input from residents, stakeholders, town staff, council members, and representatives from adjacent communities.

Two community meetings were held in conjunction with the planning process and engagement opportunities were made available virtually through on-line surveys and exercises.



INTRODUCTION





SITE INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

DOCUMENT REVIEW

To create a continuing narrative, the team prioritized the review of previously adopted plans and studies. The incorporation of these documents ensures that their diligent analysis and models live on and help shape the goals of this Master Plan. The primary document for this review was the Holly Ridge 2019 Comprehensive Land Use Plan, adopted in 2020.

Described as a “blueprint for growth and development over the next 20 to 30 years”, the Comprehensive Land Use Plan provides a vision for development and growth in Holly Ridge. The plan followed guidelines established under the Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA) and administered under the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). These guidelines provide a regional approach to development and environmental protection in North Carolina’s coastal communities, while assisting the CAMA in identifying Areas of Environmental Concern (AEC).

The report notes that there are 9 types of wetlands in Holly Ridge, scattered over 2,426 acres. The majority (99%) of these are non-coastal wetlands, with the remaining coastal wetlands forming an AEC along the Intracoastal Waterway and the Summerhouse Community. This area also comprises the extents of the Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA) in Holly Ridge.

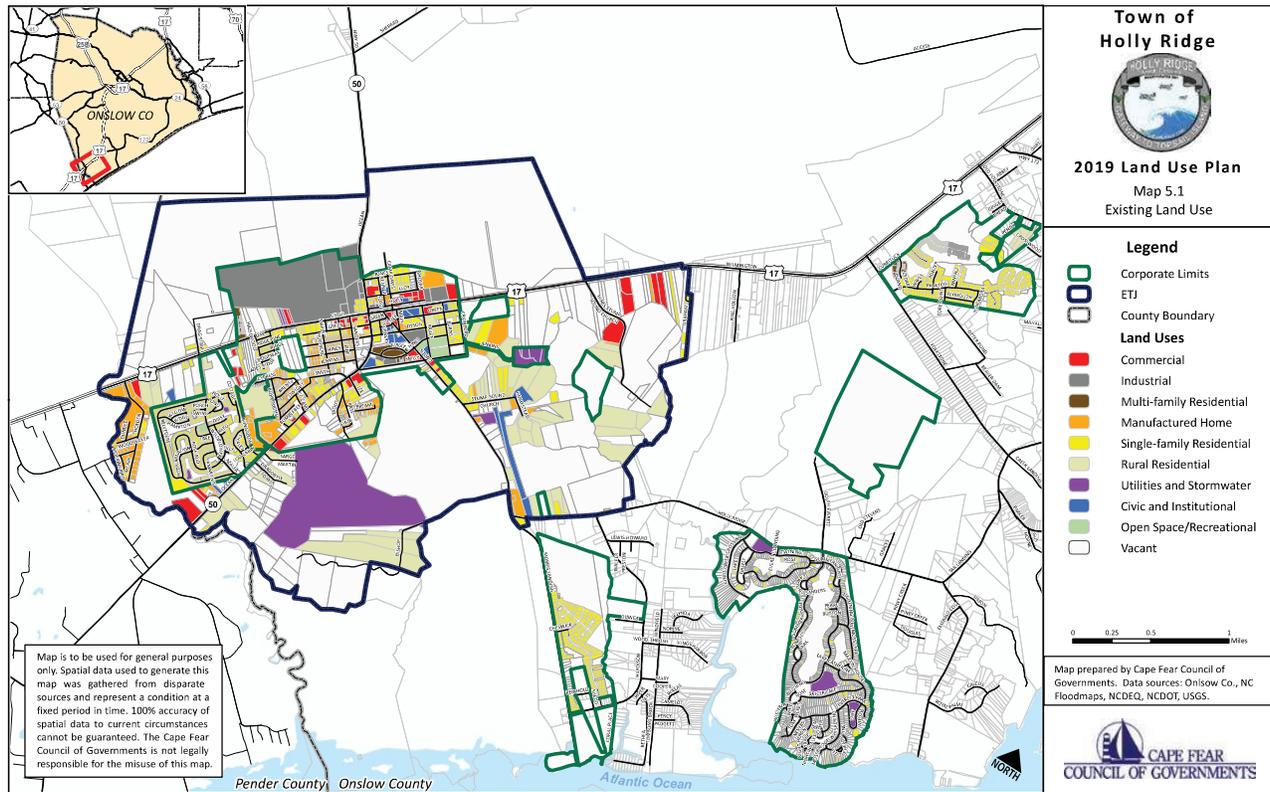
The desired direction of the Holly Ridge community is best captured in their vision statement:

“Holly Ridge welcomes residents and visitors to enjoy our small-town coastal community that values recreational opportunities and cultural amenities. We have strong military ties and are the home of historic Camp Davis. Our town is known for its peaceful, friendly environment to live, work, play, and visit.”



The visioning process, which included 208 responses to a community survey, identified several priorities and action items to pursue as Holly Ridge grows. Those that are applicable to this Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan include the following:

- ◇ Additional bicycle and pedestrian facilities, including sidewalks, bike lanes, and trails
- ◇ Additional parks and recreation facilities
- ◇ Improved access to public open spaces and recreational opportunities
- ◇ Additional seasonal events
- ◇ Improved stormwater management, flood protection, and water quality
- ◇ Adequate street lighting and safety



■ SITE INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS



DEMOGRAPHICS

A review of demographic and population trends is helpful to better understand the needs of the community. It is important to identify trends in historic data and see how they apply to future projections. This analysis will allow the town to make more informed decisions to better direct its delivery of services over the coming years. The following analysis is based upon data from the 2019 United States Census and the American Community Survey (ACS). [Note that at the time of printing an updated population estimate from the US Census Bureau (2020 Census PL94-171) was released and shows the population of Holly Ridge at 4,171. This update, while significant, does not alter the findings or recommendations of this report.]

Population Growth:

The population in the town of Holly Ridge increased significantly from 2010 to 2019, jumping 263% from 667 to 2,421 people. For regional context, the Onslow County population grew 15.3% to 195,069 residents over the same decade. Onslow County's population is trending up as a whole, but particularly focused in Holly Ridge. This growth is forecast to continue to the year 2030, with the population of Holly Ridge approaching 3,000 residents.

Age:

The median age in Holly Ridge is 30.9 years, which is a dramatic shift from the 43.3 years measured in 2010. While this shift is significant, the median age of Holly Ridge now aligns more closely with that of Onslow County, which held steady at 26.4 years (25.5 in 2010). A review



of citizen age groups highlights this trend, as the percentage of Holly Ridge's population under age 18 increased from 7.2% to 22.5%, while members over 65 decreased from 21.6% to 10.9% of the population.

Onslow County residents under 18 exhibited a similar increase, moving from 15.9% to 24.4%, while seniors over 65 made a more modest increase from 7.5% to 8.9%. These trends reflect a growing number of young families in the area.

Race / Ethnicity:

Onslow County is somewhat diverse, with the White population accounting for 74.7% of the total population. African Americans represent 14% of the population, and 11.3% includes those of Hispanic, Asian and other ethnicities. These figures remained steady over the prior decade. Holly Ridge exhibits a more homogeneous trend, with a White population of 86.9%. Interestingly, the African American population dropped to 4%, while the other ethnic groups increased to 9% of the total population.

Income:

Holly Ridge residents experienced a large increase in median income, rising from \$29,688 in 2010 to \$73,250 in 2019 (note that the 2010 figures were adjusted to 2019 values). Onslow County residents saw a more modest increase from \$43,561 to \$50,278 over the same time frame. This data seems to indicate positive economic growth inside Town limits.

Educational Attainment:

SITE INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS



The majority of Holly Ridge residents (95.3%) have completed High School or received a GED, and over half (55.7%) have achieved an Associates Degree or higher. Both figures show significant increases over the last 10 years, with High School graduates up 8.2% and 31.8% for Associates Degree holders. Onslow County residents show similar levels of achievement at the High School / GED level (91.4%, up 1.8% from 2010), though the Associates Degrees are more modest (34.4%, up 6.2% from 2010). This is consistent with Onslow County residents, who completed High School (91.4%) and Associates (34.4%) degrees.

Mode of Commute:

In Holly Ridge and Onslow County, drivers comprise the majority of the work force. In Holly Ridge 84.2% residents drive alone, 9.1% carpool, and 6% work from home. In 2010 there were few working from home, so the percentage of single drivers was 6% higher. No other mode of commute received significant representation in the data. In Onslow County 82.2% drive alone, 11.6% carpool, 3% work from home, and 2% take a taxi or bike to work. The only significant change from 2010 to 2019 shows a shift of 3% of the carpoolers to driving alone.

Housing Characteristics:

Housing characteristics provide additional background about the community. High vacancy rates, for example, may indicate a struggling local economy, while new housing units often mirror population growth.

The number of housing units in Holly Ridge doubled over the last decade, rising from 652 in 2010 to 1,322 in 2019.

Onslow County exhibited an increase of 20%, to 79,281 housing units. Holly Ridge occupancy made a similar jump, rising from 53.1% to 74.2%. County occupancy declined 4.7%, though the current figure is still a healthy 81.2%.

Owner-occupied buildings accounted for 65% of all occupied units in Holly Ridge, a reduction of 5.6% since 2010. Renter-occupied buildings accounted for the remaining 35%. The occupancy balance in Onslow County is split evenly, with 54.7% owner-occupied and 45.3% occupied by renters. These figures represent a 2% shift towards renting in the County over the prior decade. The higher home ownership in Holly Ridge indicates a growing stability in the population.

Family households (71.6%) are the most common type of household in Holly Ridge, and increase of 14.7% since 2010, a significant increase. This figure matches the 71% of family households in Onslow County. Family size in Holly Ridge increased from 2.5 to 2.86 members, while in Onslow County family size increased from 3.07 to 3.19.

More than half (52.6%) of the households in Holly Ridge include a minor under the age of 18, an increase of 18.1%. This reflects a similar increase, and matches the 53.5% of households in Onslow County, although the County figures showed little movement from 2010. Households with seniors over 65 account for 19% of the total households in Holly Ridge and Onslow County. In Holly Ridge this is a decrease of 14%, while in Onslow County it shows an increase of 3%. The average household size in Holly Ridge increased from 1.93 to 2.47 members. In Onslow County

FACILITIES INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

To better understand the existing community and context, the project team prepared base maps using information gathered from the municipal GIS (Geographic Information System) database. These maps included data for the corporate limits, Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ), parks, and open spaces.

Members of the project team visited the local parks and adjacent community to conduct a physical inventory of the existing conditions, document land uses, accessibility compliance, property information and infrastructure.

Holly Ridge Municipal Park

Holly Ridge Municipal Park is the town's primary park space, centrally located in the town's core district. It is bounded by Hines Street to the northwest, Burns Street to the northeast, Smith Street to the southeast, and Kraft Street to the southwest. There is a small, informal sand parking area off Kraft Street that can hold between 5 and 10 cars.

A baseball field anchors the south corner of the park, oriented with home plate to the south and the outfield to the north. The grass field and dirt infield appear to be in good condition. A chain link fence surrounds the field, with wood benches in the dugouts. Field lighting surrounds the perimeter of the field and appears to support night games. Four wooden picnic tables are anchored to concrete pads along Kraft Street, and appear to be the only permanent seating for visitors to watch baseball. A square concrete pad is located behind home plate, which appears to support temporary bleachers.

The field is serviced by a small maintenance building on the corner, and a concessions building by the parking area on Kraft Street. The parking area is unpaved, with no edging or striping. Two signs are posted to indicate accessible parking spaces. An area of worn turf suggests vehicular traffic from the driveway into the field for maintenance. A similar track leads from Smith Street behind the outfield fence.

The west corner of the park includes a playground, gaga ball pit, basketball court, and two picnic shelters sited among a stand of pine trees. The playground area includes several pieces of play equipment, and includes slides, climbers and swings. The picnic shelters provide restrooms and covered seating at picnic tables. Five benches offer additional seating in the shade next to the playground and basketball court. All of the amenities appear to be in good condition.

The east side of the park is more open, with lawn extending the full length of the park. A play field to the north is defined by goal posts that can be fitted for football or soccer use. The turf appears to be worn from heavy use, but otherwise in good condition. Two portable bleachers were on the side of the field, but it is not apparent if they are always available.

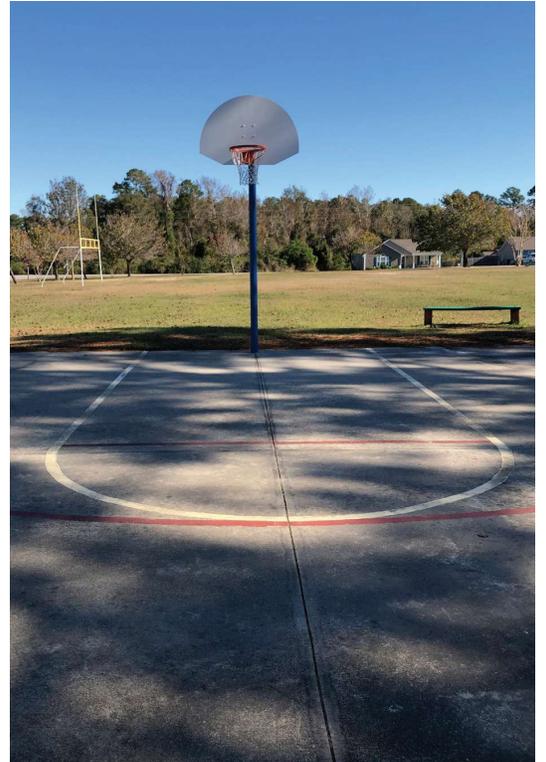
The park is relatively flat and does not appear to have any difficult slopes to navigate. A ditch that circles the perimeter of the park suggests a slight crown towards the center. There were no signs of ponding, although areas of wear could collect water after storms. Visitors with limited mobility may find it difficult to navigate without paved sidewalks.

The landscape is primarily lawn, with a cluster of pine trees to the west at the playground, 3 large pine trees to the south, and a row of mixed trees along the eastern park boundary.

Additional observations regarding the park include limited accessibility, limited parking, furnishings that are mismatched or inappropriately sized, and worn or faded signage.



SITE INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS



■ SITE INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

Community Center & Liberty Fountain Park

The Holly Ridge Community Center lies one block south of Holly Ridge Municipal Park, on the corner of Sound Road and Hines Street. The Community Center offers 7,200 square feet of space, and includes a large kitchen, stage, and gathering space for up to 299 people. Outside the building to the rear a large concrete pad suggests outdoor seating for larger groups. The Community Center is typically rented for weddings, showers and church services.

Liberty Fountain Park is an enclosed garden adjacent to the Community Center on North Hines Street. Dedicated on July 4th, 2016, the park honors veterans and active duty military personnel, and to provide a tranquil place where family and friends can gather to remember loved ones. The park features a 3-tiered fountain, brick and concrete paving, benches and flags dedicated to each of the military branches. The park is landscaped with lawns, evergreen shrubs and flowering trees.

Parking for the Community Center and Liberty Fountain Park is located on North Hines Street, adjacent to the Community Center. The 20 spaces are sufficient for daily activities, but additional parking is often required when the Community Center has been rented. Opportunities may be available at large lawn areas in front and to the side of the Community Center building, and adjacent to Liberty Fountain Park.



Morris Landing

The Morris Landing Clean Water Preserve is a 52-acre parcel owned by the Coastal Federation south of Holly Ridge proper. Extending 3,000 feet along Stump Sound, the Preserve contains coastal shrub scrub and forest habitat, salt marsh and tidal creek areas. The area is a productive shellfish growing area, and the Coastal Federation partners with local groups to stage oyster restoration and shellfish enhancement activities, including a living shoreline.

The Coastal Federation operates an oyster shell stockpile at the end of Morris Landing Road, complete with a heavy-duty pier for loading shells onto Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) barges for use in restoration projects. The shells are obtained from local restaurants and shucking houses, keeping them out of local landfills.

The Town of Holly Ridge maintains a gravel roundabout, a public marsh walkway & public fishing pier that extends into the Sound.



■ SITE INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

Stones Creek Game Land

The Stones Creek Game Land, owned by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission, occupies 4,120 acres on three tracts in Onslow County. The 981-acre Folkstone Tract lies between Folkstone Road and Holly Ridge Road, and abuts three annexed portions of Holly Ridge. There are no improved trails in the area, but the park is popular with hunters and hikers in the area.



RECREATION PROGRAMS ASSESSMENT

Introduction

The following is an assessment of the recreation programs, events and services offered by the Town of Holly Ridge. Information was gathered through a series of staff interviews, facility and park tours.

Summary

- ◇ The Town of Holly Ridge does not offer any programming for sports and activities
- ◇ The Town of Holly Ridge does not currently conduct special events programs, although past events have been held
- ◇ Recreation programs and services are generally delivered through partnerships with Surf City Parks and Recreation and other organizations including Onslow County & Coastal Community College
- ◇ At-will programming uses the park areas, playgrounds, and athletic fields in town and adjacent areas
- ◇ There appears to be some demand for programming, but respondents are mostly interested in passive recreation opportunities

Program Area Definitions

While the following program areas are not specific to Holly Ridge Parks and Recreation, they represent the types of programs that could be provided for the community.

Sports - Team and individual sports including camps, clinics, and tournaments. This includes adventure and non-traditional sports.

Fitness - Group fitness classes, personal training, health education and nutrition.

Cultural Arts - Performing arts classes, visual arts classes, music/video production and arts events.

Aquatics - Learn to swim classes, aqua exercise classes, competitive swimming, SCUBA, and other programs (synchro, water polo, etc.).

Youth Programs - Youth based programming for before and after school programs, summer school break camps, and preschool.

Education - Language programs, tutoring, science / technology / math (STEM) classes, computer classes, and financial planning.

General Interest - Personal development classes.

Special Needs - Programs for those with physical, intellectual, and developmental disabilities, and inclusion within activities offered.

Special Events - Special events that focus on the local market.



■ SITE INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS



Outdoor Recreation - Environmental education, hiking, camping, paddle sports and other activities.

Seniors Programs - Programs and services that are dedicated to serving the needs of seniors. This can include all of the activity areas noted above plus social service functions.

Teen Programs - Programs and services that are focused on serving the needs of teens. This can include all of the activity areas noted above (except seniors).

Self-Directed Activities - Opportunities for individuals to recreate on their own, including activities such as open gym, use of weight/cardio space, lap/recreational swimming, golf, and tennis. Although not an organized program, time and space must be allocated in town facilities.

Social Services - Can include nutrition and feeding programs, job training, life skills training, and other activities such as job training.

Available Programming

The town does not offer recreational programs without partnership with other communities and organizations. Partnerships with Surf City for summer camps was recently successful and other programs are provided by third parties including Coastal Community College and Onslow County.

Town facilities that are available for rent include the Community Center, picnic shelters, baseball field, football field, and concession stand. Facility rentals are fairly common, generating over \$10,000 in revenue per year, but according to town staff could be encouraged for additional use.

The Town of Holly Ridge currently does not offer special events due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Previous events included an Easter Egg Hunt, Memorial Day ceremony, July 4th fireworks display, Veteran's Day ceremony, Christmas Tree lighting, and Christmas Parade.

Recreation Programs in High Demand:

Town staff, stakeholders and online survey respondents have identified that the following programs and services are in high demand by the community:

- ◇ Family programs and activities
- ◇ Preschool programs and activities
- ◇ Teen programs and activities
- ◇ Trail programs, including hiking and biking
- ◇ Nature programs and access to trails
- ◇ Town events

Recreation Programming Partnerships:

The Town of Holly Ridge partners with local organizations and municipalities to bring programming to the community. Partnerships consist of the sharing of spaces, facilities, and staff.

Onslow County - The County has a Parks and Recreation Department that operates a healthy number of parks and programs. Some of these facilities are operated through local school facilities, but mainly occur via Big Branch Bike Park, Deppe Park, Hubert Bypass Park, New River Waterfront Park, Oakhurst Nature Park, Onslow Pines Park, Richlands / Steed Park and Stump Sound Park.

Surf City - Surf City has a Parks, Recreation & Tourism Department that operates programs and parks that include Soundside Park, the Surf City Bark Park, and the Surf City Community Center. Summer camps and athletics programs are offered that welcome Holly Ridge residents.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

It is helpful to undertake a comparative analysis with parks and recreation departments in other municipalities, and benchmarks provided by established standards. These comparisons are typically based primarily on population, though it is important to remember that every municipality, every park system, and every Recreation and Parks Department is unique. Holly Ridge has its own community and its own needs, so these comparisons are to be taken in that context.

Interviews with town staff included a question about neighboring towns that are appreciated for their parks, which Holly Ridge should consider for inspiration. These communities can be anywhere and be any size, including out of state. Municipalities mentioned in this context include:

- ◇ Swansboro, NC (population 3,200)
- ◇ Surf City, NC (population 3,450)
- ◇ Jacksonville, NC (population 73,000)
- ◇ Wilmington, NC (population 120,000)

The municipalities mentioned include a range of population sizes, from 3,200 to 120,000 people, though it should be noted that Wilmington was only mentioned specifically for Town Creek Park. Holly Ridge stakeholders understand their size and market, as evidenced by their selection of Swansboro and Surf City to emulate.

Inspiration from neighboring municipalities is helpful and highly recommended for gaining new ideas. It is difficult, however, to gain a true apples-to-apples comparison due to the number of variables that make each community unique. With this in mind, a better tool to develop an understanding of a town's park system comes from the National Recreation and Parks Association. A Level of Service (LOS) analysis measures a town's parks and recreation resources against its population, and the resulting averages can be benchmarked against data collected from park systems across the country. A Holly Ridge LOS Analysis follows.

LEVEL OF SERVICE (LOS) ANALYSIS

Methodology

A Level of Service (LOS) Analysis helps to quantify how well the existing parks system is meeting the needs of residents. The National Recreation and Park Association defines Level of Service as "an allocation mechanism for the delivery of park land and basic recreation facilities throughout a community. By adoption of such a standard, a community in essence says that all citizens ... will have an equal opportunity to share in the basic menu of services implicit in the standard and accompanying spatial distribution and allocation of policies."

While every municipal park system is different to serve their respective needs, there are three metrics that can be used to benchmark a city's parks by comparing them to data collected across the country by the NRPA. Each method offers a different approach to measuring a park system's level of service and combine to generate a complete picture. Acreage LOS reviews the system's general availability of park land and resources. Facilities LOS quantifies the number of park amenities that are available for each resident. Access LOS illustrates the availability of park facilities to all members of the community.

Acreage LOS

Acreage Level of Service (Acreage LOS) expresses the number of public park acres per 1,000 residents. This metric shows the total area of park land that is available to the city's residents, and serves as a holistic measurement of the entire park system.

Data provided by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) indicate that municipalities with fewer than 20,000 residents, such as Holly Ridge, provide an average of 12.0 acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents. The lower quartile provides 5.2 acres per 1,000 residents, and the upper quartile provides 20.8 acres per 1,000 residents.

■ SITE INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

The 2019 population of Holly Ridge (as estimated by the U.S. Census Bureau) is 2,421 residents. There are currently 11.01 acres of public park lands directly managed by the Town of Holly Ridge, which translates to an Acreage LOS of 4.55 acres per 1,000 residents. For comparison, the median acreage for a municipality this size is 29.05 acres, 18.04 acres above the current total in Holly Ridge.

The current Acreage LOS for Holly Ridge is in the lower quartile for a municipality of its size. Looking ahead using projections from the Holly Ridge Comprehensive Land Use Plan, the projected 2030 population is 2,971. If no additional park land is acquired during this time, the Acreage LOS will be 3.71 acres per 1,000 residents in 2030. These figures are illustrated in Table 2-1.

The current park acreage seems inadequate to serve the Holly Ridge population and the projected growth that is forecast, although there are additional factors to consider. The pier and boardwalk at Morris Landing is operated and maintained by the Town, but is on Coastal Federation property. This area, and the additional open space to the east comprises 52.2 acres of land. Similarly, the Folkstone Tract of the Stones Creek Game Land, owned by the State

of North Carolina, includes 981.66 acres. While these areas cannot be included in the LOS analysis, their use and availability must be considered.

Facility LOS

Facility Level of Service (Facility LOS) is a second method to measure a parks system. Facility LOS reviews the number of park and recreation facilities per resident. While there are no strict standards for the number of facilities that a municipality must provide, or that its community needs, the NRPA provides recommendations to establish a starting point.

Table 2-2 shows the current Holly Ridge Facility LOS and how they compare against the NRPA recommendations. Facilities experiencing a surplus are shown in **Green**, while facilities experiencing a deficit are shown in **Red**. Figures are shown for the current population and the projected 2030 population.

The Holly Ridge parks system shows a surplus of all facilities currently operated, except for tennis courts. These Facility LOS metrics indicate that Holly Ridge is exceeding the facility needs of its current and future population.

TABLE 2-2 - FACILITY LEVEL OF SERVICE

NUMBER/TYPE OF FACILITIES	NRPA RECOMMENDATION	HOLLY RIDGE LOS	HOLLY RIDGE LOS IN 2030
Baseball /Softball: 1	0.13	0.41	0.34
Football: 1	0.13	0.41	0.34
Soccer: 1	0.14	0.41	0.34
Basketball: 1	0.24	0.41	0.34
Tennis Courts: 0	0.34	0	0
Playground: 1	0.4	0.41	0.34
Community Center: 1	0.1	0.41	0.34

Access LOS

Access Level of Service (Access LOS) is a third approach to determining a park system's fit for its community. Access LOS reveals the level of access that residents have to their park facilities. This is typically measured by distance, either in miles or travel time, suggesting the level of effort that a person must spend to get to a park facility. A distance of 1/2 mile is considered a comfortable walking distance; 1 mile a long walk or short bike ride; and 2 miles a bike ride or short drive.

The Access LOS is shown in the map that follows, and indicates that park facilities are centralized within the town core. Annexed areas are more distant and require a longer drive to access them. Access to the park facilities with sidewalk and bike connections must remain a priority.

Level of Service Summary

Using this three-level approach to review the Holly Ridge Parks and Recreation system, a number of trends were identified. These preliminary findings include:

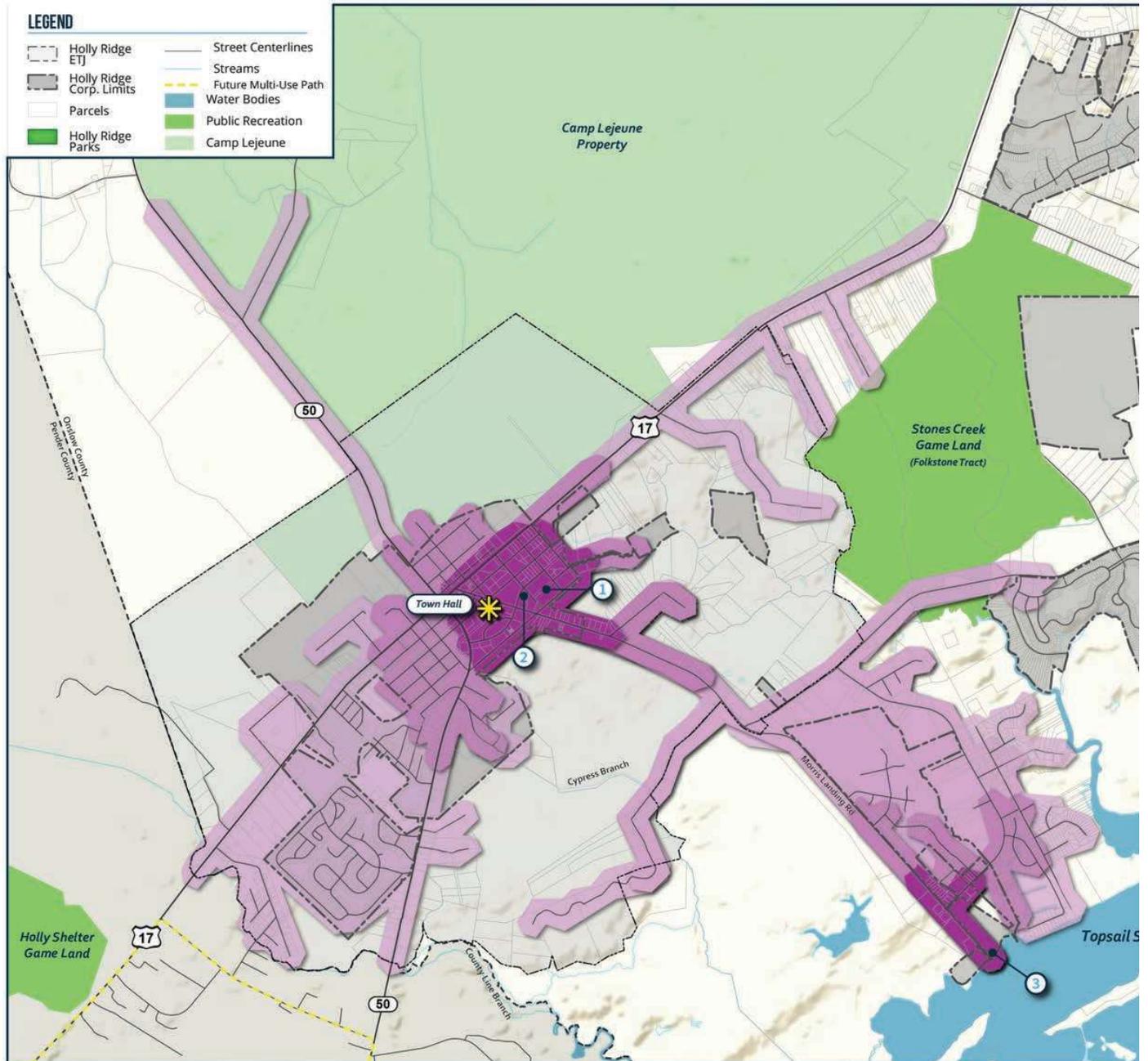
Acreage LOS - The current Acreage LOS for Holly Ridge seems to be low when compared to NRPA averages for cities of a similar size, and the figure will trend downward with future growth of the town. This number does not represent the full availability of parks facilities, however, with the Morris Landing and Stone's Creek Game Lands offering amenities outside the Town's control.

Facilities LOS - The Facilities LOS indicates an adequate supply of recreation facilities according to NRPA recommendations. Tennis courts represent the only deficit, but demand should be reviewed for justifying their addition.

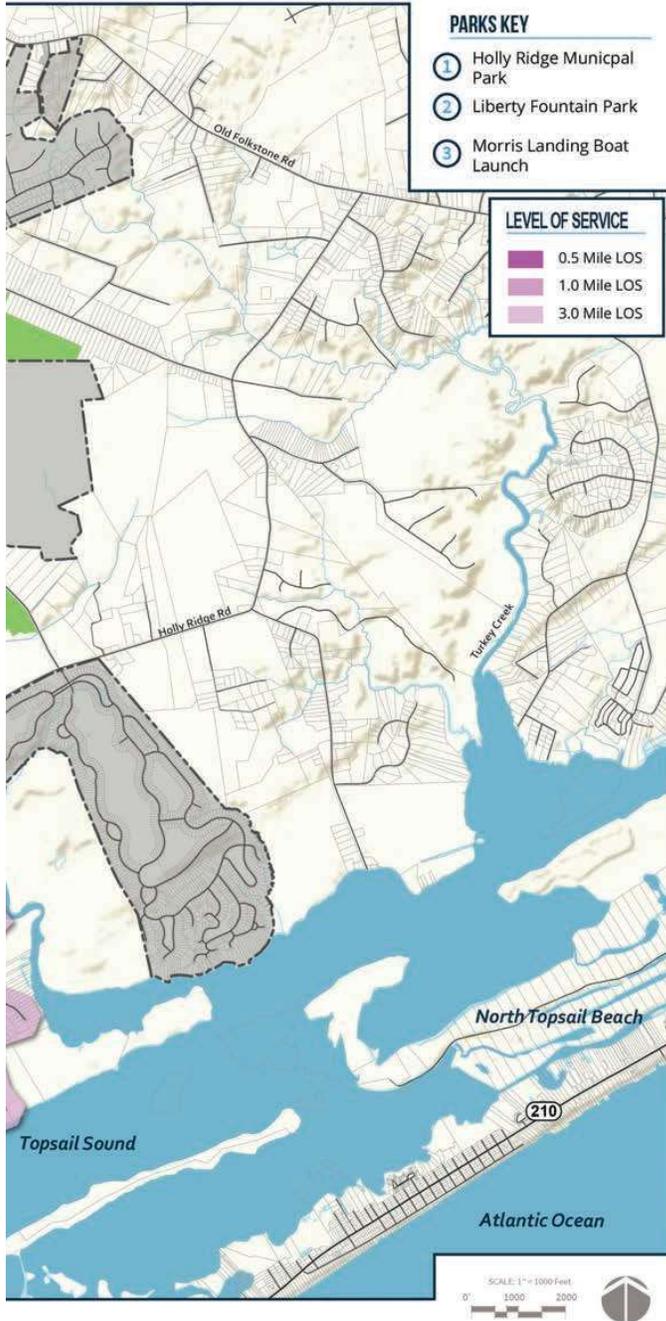
Access LOS - Access LOS maps reveal a solid availability of park facilities to the central core of Holly Ridge. Service gaps exist along the periphery and in the annexed areas, and providing access to parks and facilities for these areas should be considered.



■ SITE INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS



SYSTEM INVENTORY & ANALYSIS SUMMARY



The Holly Ridge Parks and Recreation System was reviewed against community demographics, previous initiatives, and suggested metrics provided by the National Recreation and Parks Association. This comprehensive review established a snapshot of the current facilities and programs, and will guide the vision for future improvements to the system.

Holly Ridge has 11 acres of parkland, 2 city parks, a playground, 2 athletic fields, a gymnasium, 2 picnic shelters, and a public pier at Morris Landing. These facilities serve 2,421 residents and visitors. According to the NRPA, these facilities are in the lower quartile when compared to their typical municipal park system metrics and should be supplemented to meet the needs of the community. These metrics are buffered, however, by available facilities owned by the state of North Carolina and the Coastal Federation, and partnerships with adjacent towns.

The facilities are concentrated in central Holly Ridge, where they can be accessed by most residents, although there are some accessibility gaps to the annexed portions of Holly Ridge further from the town center. These gaps are balanced by their access to Morris Landing and the Stones Creek Game Land.

Holly Ridge Municipal Park demonstrates a high degree of comfort, safety, effectiveness and offered a good first impression. It offers amenities to a variety of users and features a friendly place to gather. Liberty Fountain Park offers a place to relax, reflect and honor loved ones. These facilities are in good shape, although some of the older amenities are showing signs of needing replacement. Some of the facilities are not easily usable by all members of the community.

Programs offered through partnerships with Surf City and other local groups seem to be in alignment with the community's current needs, but opportunities are available for additional family and nature programming.

These findings quantify the parks and recreation amenities that are currently available. Chapter 3 offers a look through the eyes of the community to see where the current facilities are working, and where they can be enhanced.

03

COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

An assessment of community needs is built upon information gathered from a variety of sources, including community meetings, online community surveys, and interviews with local stakeholders and council members. These voices from the community, city staff, and elected officials provide valuable local insight into the needs of the community. Coupled with these local insights are comparisons to data provided by the National Recreation and Parks Association and other regional communities.

Public engagement is vital to assembling an accurate representation of the parks system and the needs of the community. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the ability of the design team to meet in person, reducing attendance at community meetings and causing much of this aspect to go online. The team was able to hold interviews with stakeholders and host an online community survey.



The project team also reached out to Town staff and elected officials. Their responses offered an insightful look at the needs of the community, summarized below.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Stakeholders included town staff and members of Town Council. Interviews were conducted with town staff and elected officials to further define recreation needs and opportunities for the Holly Ridge park system. The following perspectives were heard through these interviews:

- ◇ Existing parks facilities seem to be sufficient for current users, but their age and condition are showing signs of wear and needed upgrades
- ◇ Holly Ridge Municipal Park is the town's signature park and receives the most use
- ◇ Playground and athletic fields are frequently used
- ◇ Concessions, picnic shelters, restrooms, and field fencing need updates
- ◇ Needs a drinking fountain
- ◇ The Community Center has a lot to offer but is underutilized
- ◇ Morris Landing offers water access through a partnership with the Coastal Federation



- ◇ Town maintains a fishing pier, a small parking area, and has a grant to build restrooms
- ◇ Town anticipates more users due to Topsail charging for beach access
- ◇ Stones Creek Game Land is used for hunting and hiking, but it is not well known
- ◇ Opportunity for trails, but there are concerns about wildlife
- ◇ Additional parking is needed at all facilities
- ◇ Additional trails and sidewalks are desired to connect neighborhoods, provide access to parks, and to reach the beach
- ◇ Blue Ways (water trails) are desirable to town staff
- ◇ Access points are possible through future waterfront parks and neighborhood docks
- ◇ Partnerships with Surf City, Onslow County, Coastal Community College, and local groups are used to provide programming to the community. Additional staffing would be required to provide local programs
- ◇ There is a general feeling that additional amenities and programs are desirable to meet the needs of existing and future residents:
- ◇ Trails & greenways are desired
- ◇ Kayak launches are desired
- ◇ Splash pads are desired
- ◇ Dog park is desired
- ◇ Senior programs are desired
- ◇ Summer House neighborhood provides important housing but the gated community feels disconnected from the rest of Holly Ridge
- ◇ Residents use private facilities
- ◇ Residents travel to Sneads Ferry rather than downtown Holly Ridge
- ◇ There is a desire for funding the park improvements through grants and partnerships with local groups to maintain the town's debt-free status

COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

ONLINE COMMUNITY SURVEY

Holly Ridge community members participated in an online survey to express their level of satisfaction with the existing parks, facilities, and programs. The survey was open for several months and received 99 responses, representing 3.5% of the Holly Ridge population.

The online responses revealed some interesting trends that are summarized below and illustrated in the graphics that follow. It should be noted that some of the survey responses did not contain answers to voluntary demographic data questions.

- ◇ Respondents feel that the Holly Ridge Parks and Recreation system is aesthetically pleasing and feels safe. There is good access to parks, but they are not distributed evenly through town
- ◇ Respondents who are aware of Holly Ridge Municipal Park are mostly satisfied
- ◇ Visitors to Holly Ridge Municipal Park primarily used the playground and picnic shelter. The sports facilities were not used as often
- ◇ Awareness of the town's parks and recreation facilities is not prevalent among users
- ◇ Most respondents are not aware of facilities at Liberty Fountain Park
- ◇ 17-20% of respondents were unaware of the sports courts and fields at Holly Ridge Municipal Park
- ◇ Respondents are interested in passive recreation facilities and activities
- ◇ Respondents support land acquisition for Greenways, Trails, Open Space and Passive Uses
- ◇ 92% of respondents travel outside of Holly Ridge to participate in recreational activities, primarily for facilities that are better in quality or not available in Holly Ridge
- ◇ Barriers to participating in parks and recreation programs include awareness, lack of time, safety, and condition of amenities



COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Areas for Improvement:

- ◇ Better advertising / promotion / awareness of parks
- ◇ Promotion of active lifestyle
- ◇ Accessibility for all users
- ◇ Additional facilities and programs

Priorities for Additional Programs / Activities:

- ◇ Family, Teen, Preschool Programs
- ◇ Nature and Trail Programs (hiking, biking)
- ◇ Town Events

Priorities for Additional Facilities:

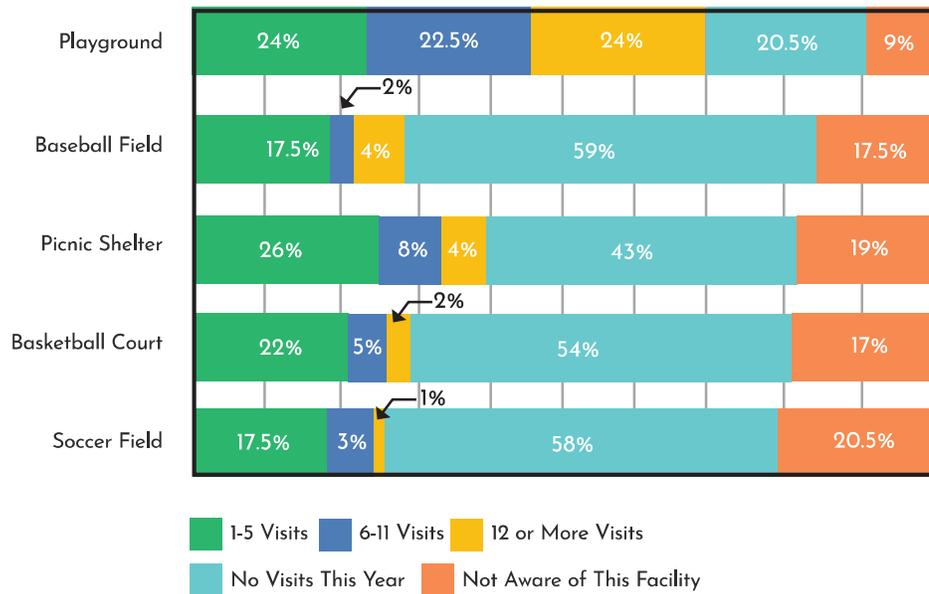
- ◇ Aquatics (Pools, Splash Pads)
- ◇ Sidewalks, Greenways & Trails
- ◇ Parks / Park Land
- ◇ Playgrounds

A selection of online survey questions follows, offering a closer look at the desires of the community.



COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

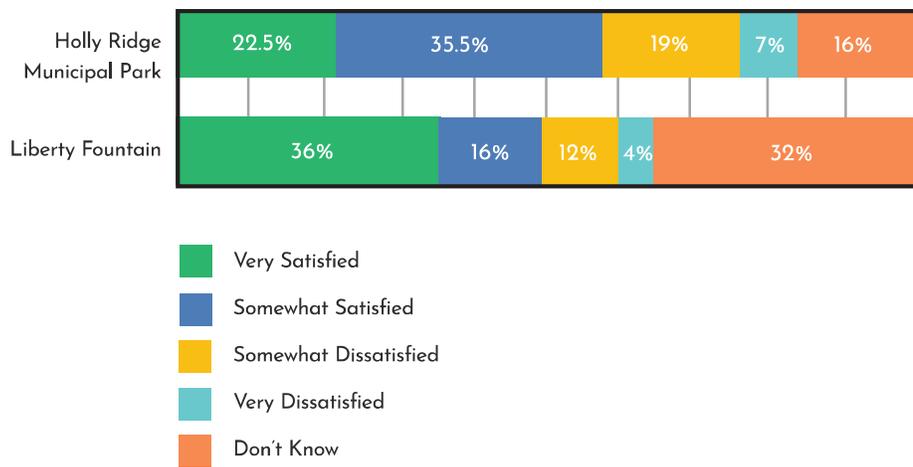
Q1: "Indicate how often you or your family has used or visited the following park facilities at Holly Ridge Municipal Park in the past year."



Response: 70% of respondents used the playground at least once in the past year, with 46% using it at least six times. The picnic shelters were used by 38% of respondents at least once, and the athletic facilities by 22 - 29% of respondents. A significant number of respondents (17-21%) were not aware of the picnic shelters, baseball field, soccer field or basketball court.

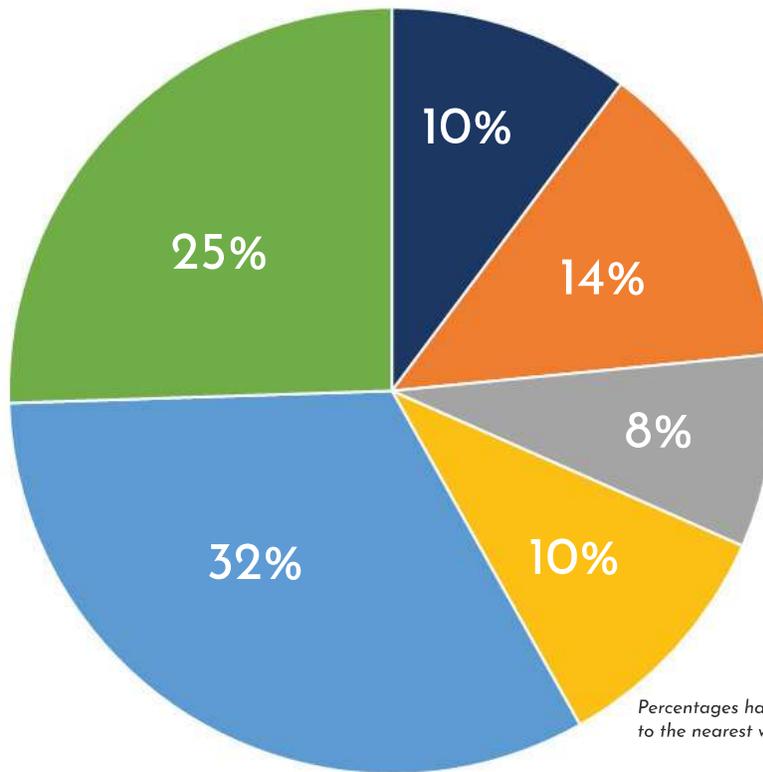
Q2: "Please indicate your level of satisfaction regarding the amenities for each park."

Response: 58% of respondents expressed an acceptable level of satisfaction with Holly Ridge Municipal Park, against 26% of respondents who were dissatisfied. Liberty Fountain Park received only 25 responses, indicating a lack of awareness of the facility. Of the 17 respondents who were aware of the facility, 52% expressed a general level of satisfaction.



Q3: “How often do you utilize any section of sidewalks, trails and greenways within Holly Ridge?”

Response: 42% of respondents use the sidewalks, trails and greenways, with an even distribution over their frequency of use. A significant number of respondents do not use them (32%) or do not know of any trails or sidewalks (25%). In the comments several respondents indicated a desire for a connection to Surf City beach.

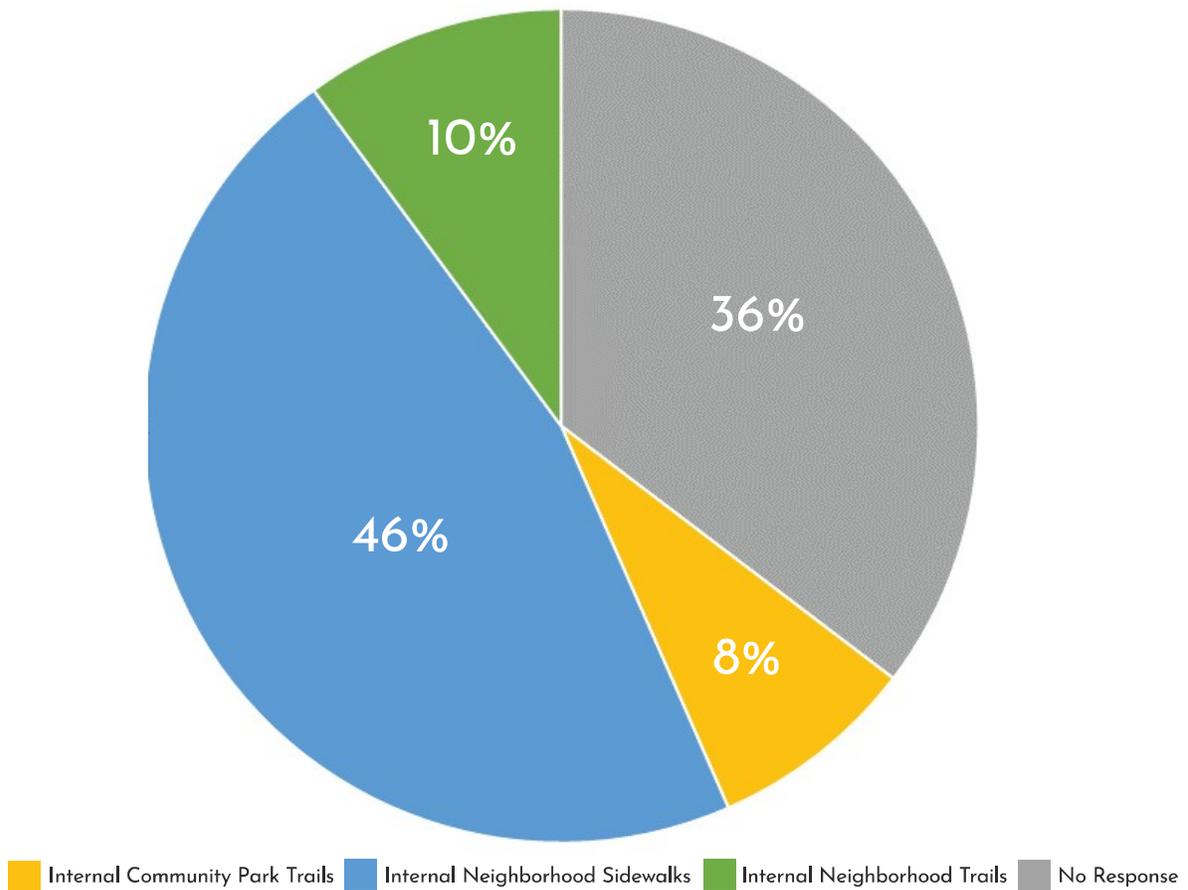


Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Couple Times a Year
- Never Used Holly Ridge Sidewalks, Trails or Greenways
- Additional Comments

Q4: "Specify which sidewalk, trail, or greenway segment you visit most frequently."

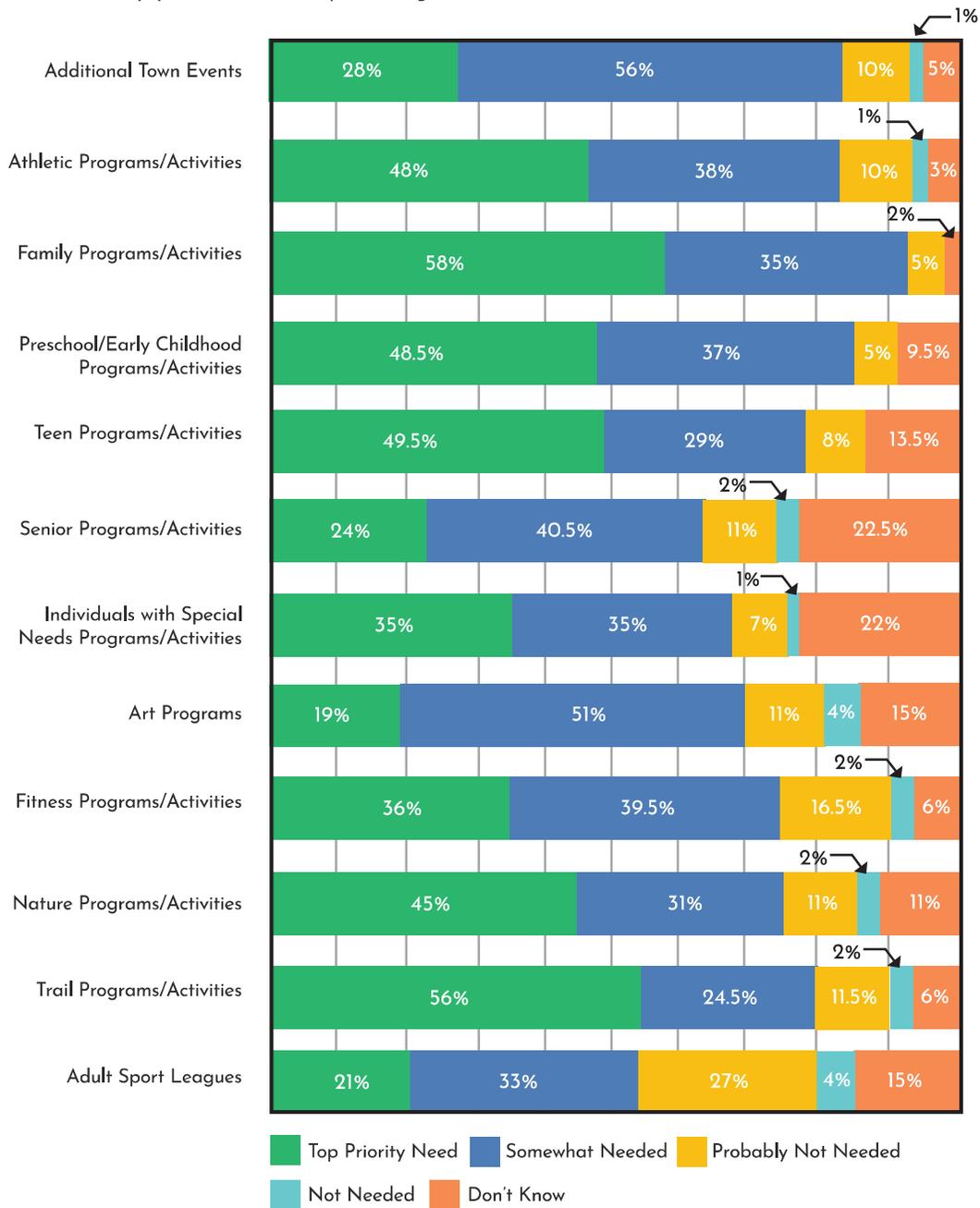
Response: Of the 67 responses to this question, the majority (64) utilize internal neighborhood facilities.



COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Q5: "What level of programs and activities should Holly Ridge plan for within the next 10 years?"

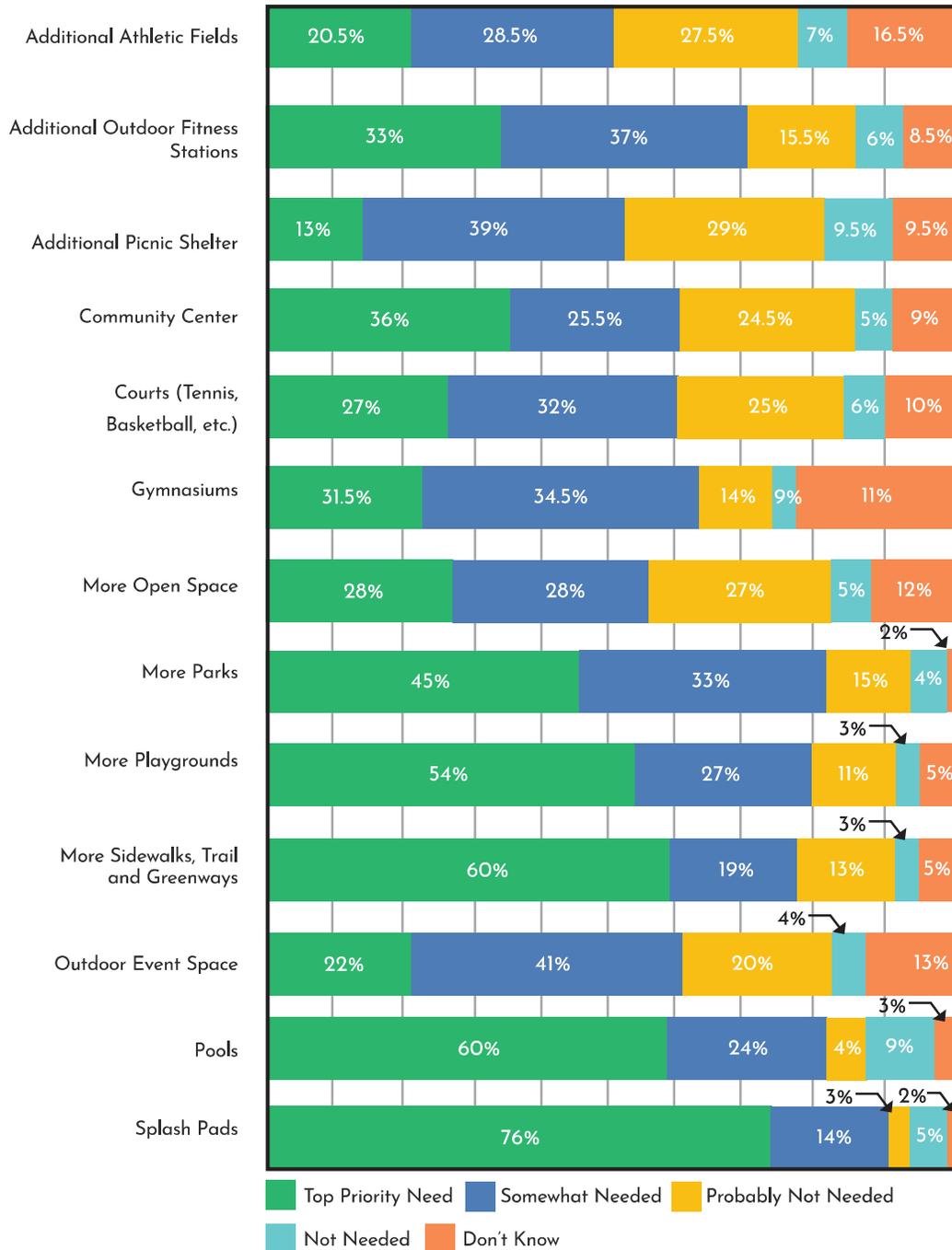
Response: Family programs (93%), athletic programs (86%), preschool activities (86%), trail programs (81%), town events (74%), teen programs (79%), and nature programs (76%) scored highly as items of need, with family programs and trail programs listed as top priorities. Adult sports leagues were not viewed as an area of need.



COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Q6: "What amenities & facilities should Holly Ridge plan for within the next 10 years?"

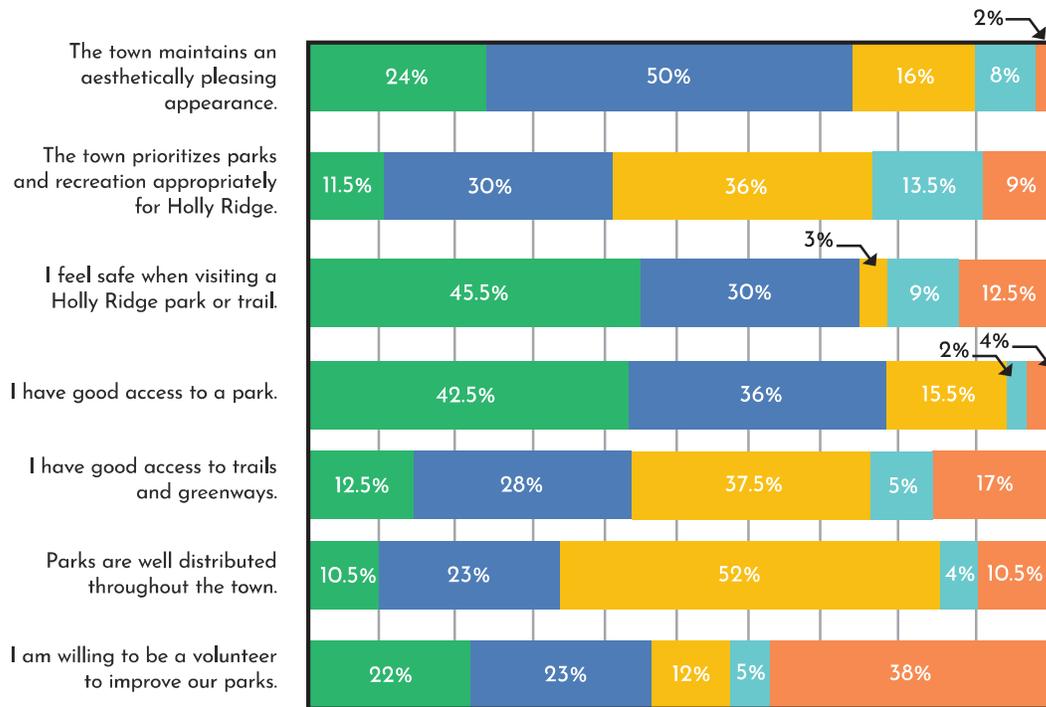
Response: Splash pads (90%), pools (84%), sidewalks, trails & greenways (79%), playgrounds (81%), and parks (78%) scored highly as items of need, with the top 3 listed as items of priority. Athletic fields and picnic shelters were not viewed as items of need.



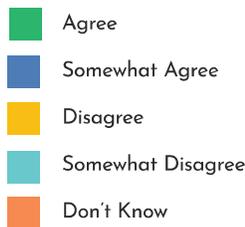
COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Q12: "Indicate your level of agreement about the following statements."

Response: Respondents feel that the Holly Ridge parks, trails and open space present an aesthetically pleasing appearance (74%), feel safe (76%), and are easily accessible (79%). Conversely, respondents did not agree that the parks are prioritized, or well distributed throughout town. Greenways and trails are also not easily accessed.

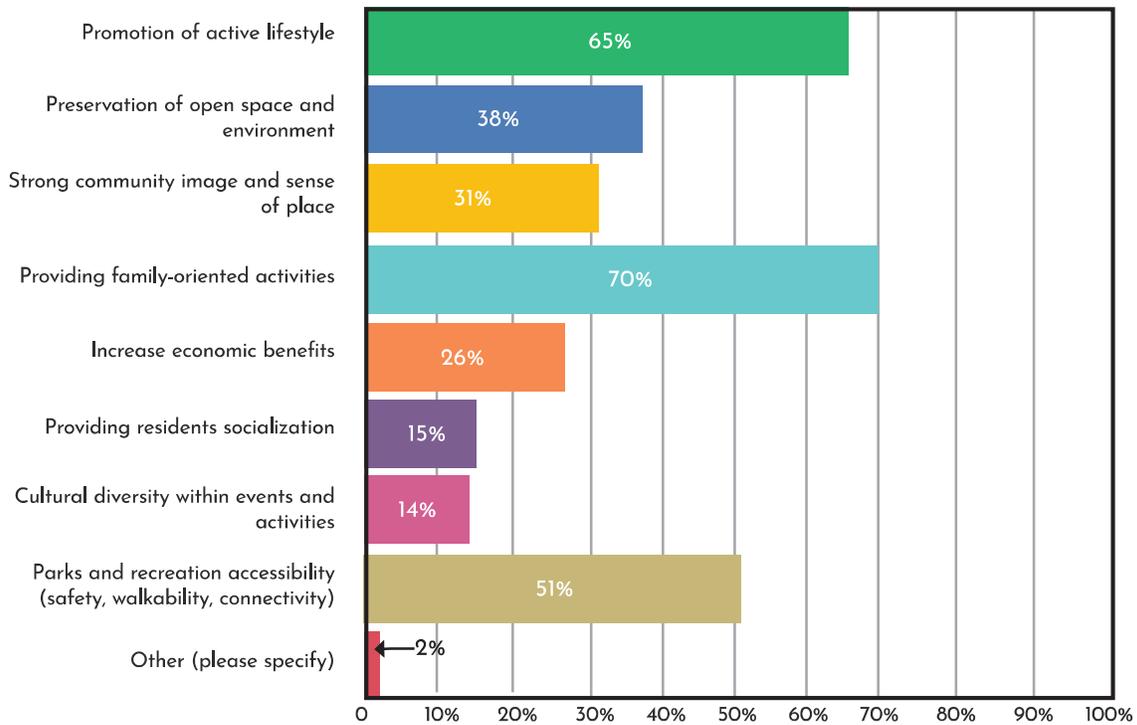


Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.



Q13: “Indicate the 3 components you feel are most valuable to you and your family.”

Response: The components scoring the highest in value were providing family-oriented activities (70%), promotion of active lifestyle (65%), and parks and recreation accessibility (51%). Respondents felt least value in cultural diversity within events (14%) and providing socialization (15%).

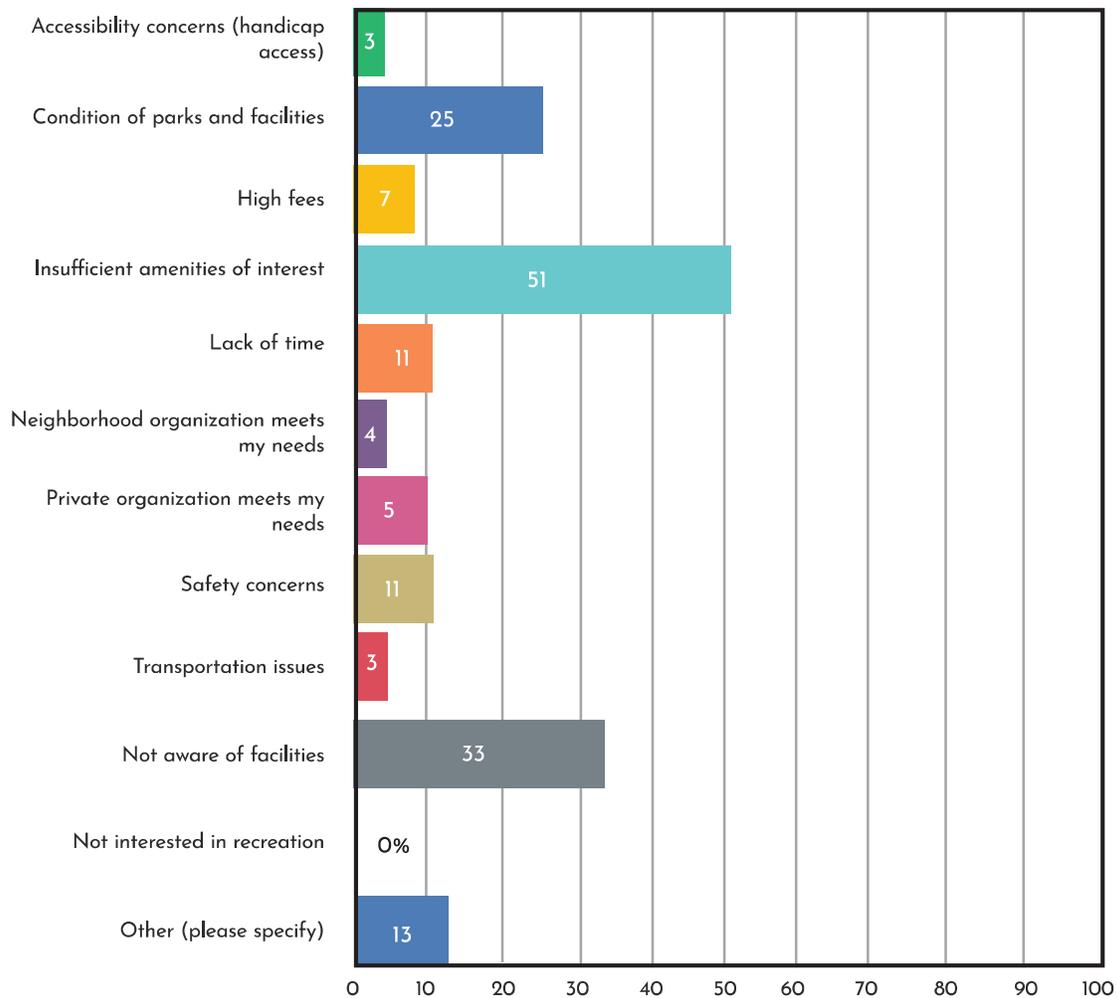


Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Q14: "Indicate if any of the following prevents you or your family from using Holly Ridge's parks and facilities."

Response: The top three responses were insufficient amenities (51 responses), lack of awareness of facilities (33 responses), and the condition of parks and recreation facilities (25 responses). COVID-19 received a number of responses in the "other" category, along with lack of access and a need to drive. Twelve respondents skipped this question.



COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

The project team reached out to the Holly Ridge community to understand their current experiences, activities they participate in, facilities they use, and areas where they see opportunities for improvement. Input was received from city staff, elected officials, and online survey participants, providing valuable local insight into the needs of the community.

Holly Ridge offers a reasonable number of facilities and programs to the community through its partnerships. The current facilities are being stressed by age and the number of users, resulting in some needs for maintenance and upgrades. Trail and sidewalk facilities are desired to provide connections and room to run.

The top identified preferences for facility and program improvements include:

- ◇ Greenways & Trails
- ◇ Playgrounds
- ◇ Splash Pad
- ◇ Parks and Park Lands
- ◇ Family Programs
- ◇ Senior Programs
- ◇ Teen & Youth Programs





04

VISION

OVERALL VISION

The vision for the future of Holly Ridge’s parks, trails & open space system reflects input from several valuable sources. National Recreation and Parks Association standards were referenced against local population and demographic trends to evaluate the existing parks against national averages. Most importantly, the Holly Ridge community, stakeholders, leadership, and staff had a loud voice in this conversation.

There is a sense of pride among Town staff and council members that the Town of Holly Ridge is free of debt, and a preference to keep the Parks and Recreation Department efficient and effective. They support upgrades and maintenance, but also desire to keep the parks, trails and open space system streamlined to maintain the Town’s capital expenditure budgets.

Holly Ridge residents and stakeholders indicated that they are proud of their community and generally feel satisfied with the park system. However, they recognize that their neighborhoods and community spaces are not well connected, and could benefit from additional sidewalks, trails, and greenways. They also express a strong desire to preserve open space and to keep the current “sense of place”.

Recommendations for the Town’s parks, trails & open space system begin with improving existing park facilities, making them accessible and safe for all users. A sidewalks and trails system is recommended to facilitate circulation within the parks and to connect them to neighborhoods, community and civic centers, and commercial destinations.

Additional staffing and programs build community experiences and engagement across Holly Ridge. Finally, opportunities to expand the park system are explored as budgets and potential parcels or easements become available in areas further from the Town center.

GOALS

Master Plan goals inform future decisions on improvements. These goals set the stage for decision making and will help inform priorities for their implementation. The vision recommended by this plan is based on these goals. The intent is to develop the system and provide residents with equitable access to high-quality recreational opportunities.

Identified Goals:

1. Upgrade and enhance amenities at existing parks.
2. Create better connectivity within Holly Ridge and to adjacent destinations.
3. Improve parking at existing parks and community centers.
4. Look for opportunities to acquire land and / or easements for new open spaces and greenways.
5. Continue to leverage relationships with Surf City, the Coastal Federation, and the State of North Carolina for programming and regional connections.
6. Identify and pursue public / private partnerships.
7. Identify and pursue grants and other funding sources to support future parks and recreation development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of this master plan identify opportunities to strengthen existing facilities and set priorities for new amenities to improve the community experience. It is understood that some of the improvements are more immediate in nature, while others can be projected into the future.

While some of the recommendations are specific to adding facilities or amenities, others reflect improvements that apply to the entire parks, trails, and open space system and can be implemented on an ongoing basis. These include efforts to strengthen neighborhood connections, increase awareness of park amenities, and identifying land and easements that are strategic to providing equity and access to parks.

The following recommendations are organized into general recommendations for improvements to existing parks, trails and open spaces; vision maps for future trails and neighborhood connections; programming; and a prioritization of these elements is provided.

Improvements to Existing Parks, Trails and Open Spaces

Improvements to existing facilities are opportunities for enhancing recreational offerings to residents without the burden and cost of purchasing land and incurring other associated development costs. There are recommendations that are site-specific, and others that can be applied across the entire system.

General Recommendations:

Improvements identified as appropriate across the entire parks, trails and open space system include:

- ◆ Enhanced pedestrian and bicycle connections
- ◆ Enhanced, system-wide signage and wayfinding program
- ◆ Enhanced, system-wide palette of site furnishings
- ◆ Enhanced landscaping at park entrances and gathering spaces
- ◆ Maintenance program that includes a focus on water quality
- ◆ Programs for community recreation, involvement, and education



VISION

Community Center & Liberty Fountain Memorial Park

Improvements identified as appropriate and compatible with facilities include:

- ◇ Enhanced parking facilities
- ◇ Sidewalks to connect to Holly Ridge Municipal Park
- ◇ Enhanced landscaping and shade trees

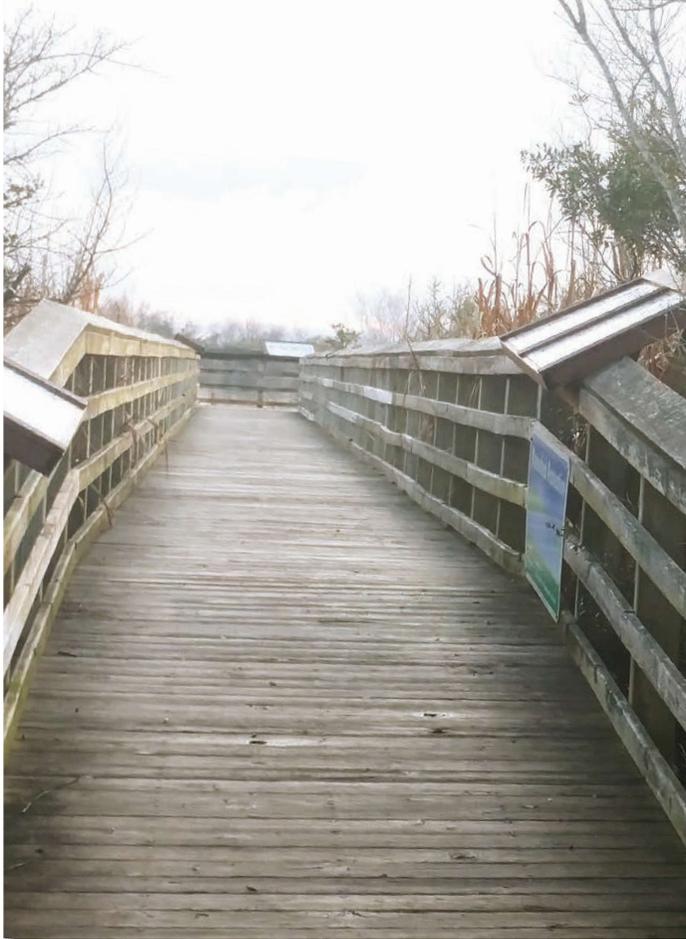


Holly Ridge Municipal Park

Improvements identified as appropriate and compatible with facilities include:

- ◇ Repairs, updates and consolidation of picnic shelters, concessions, and maintenance building
- ◇ Repairs to field surfaces, fences, and facilities
- ◇ Accessible surface and edging for playground equipment
- ◇ Accessible sidewalks and walking trails to connect park amenities
- ◇ Enhanced parking facilities
- ◇ New recreation center building
- ◇ New dog park
- ◇ Enhanced drainage and stormwater management

VISION



Morris Landing

Improvements identified as appropriate and compatible with facilities include:

- ◇ Enhanced roundabout area with clear vehicular limits
- ◇ Enhanced parking facilities for automobiles and trailers
- ◇ Non-motorized boat launch and water access
- ◇ Accessible pedestrian connections to fishing pier and restrooms
- ◇ Enhanced signage for wayfinding and education
- ◇ Expand walking trails and boardwalk into wetland area
- ◇ Enhanced drainage and stormwater management
- ◇ Site-sensitive landscaping and screening





VISION

Recommendations for Future Parks, Trails and Open Space

Holly Ridge Municipal Park, Liberty Fountain Park, and the Holly Ridge Community Center are centered in the original core of town, with Morris Landing providing water access on Coastal Federation property. These parks facilities offer reasonable access to recreational opportunities for most of the Holly Ridge community. Gaps in the current level of service exist primarily in the eastern annexed areas. It is in this area where future park opportunities should be pursued. A logical starting point is in the area near the new elementary school on Folkstone Road, highlighted on the Holly Ridge Parks Vision Map.

As indicated in the Site Inventory and Analysis, there are not many open space holdings within Holly Ridge proper. This is offset by the vast open spaces in the surrounding Holly Shelter Game Land, Stones Creek Game Land, Morris Landing, Permuda Island Reserve, and Camp Lejeune. It is advisable to seek opportunities for future open spaces, but not requisite at this time.

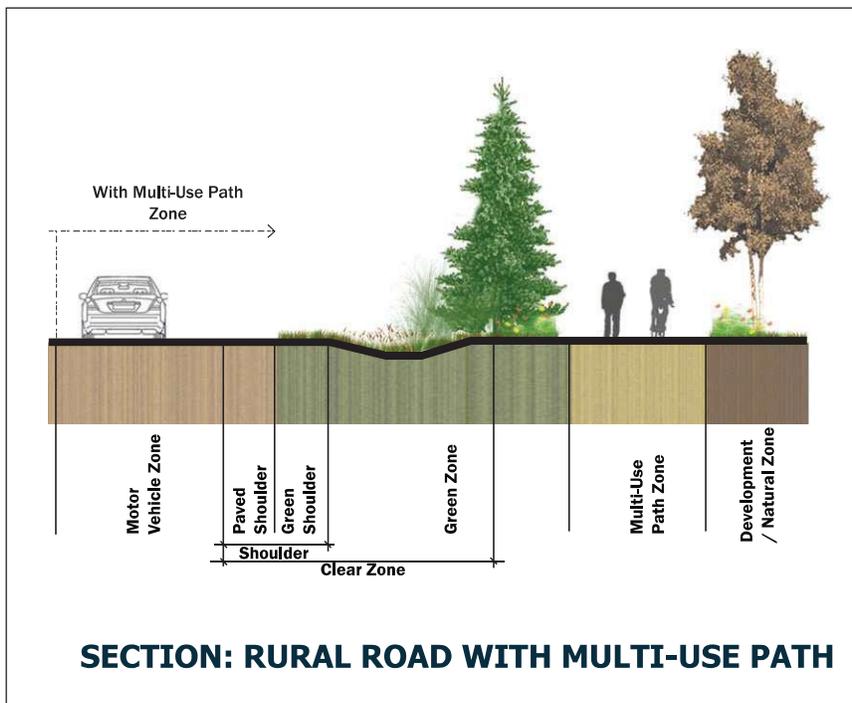
Trail systems include greenways, trails, paths, and sidewalks; these trails move people through different areas of terrain and weave together to create a network. This network includes regional trails, such as the Mountains-to-Sea Trail, that connect more distant points of interest and provide opportunities for extended travel. Local trails and sidewalks provide quick access to commercial areas, municipal parks, and neighborhoods.

Holly Ridge has opportunities to use these different trail types to become better connected. Shown on the System Vision Map, these trails utilize existing road corridors, utility easements and waterways to provide access and connectivity.

Proposed roadside multi-use paths take advantage of vehicular routes that connect distant points of interest - Surf City, Morris Landing, Stones Creek Game Land, Summerhouse, The Landings, and the Coastal Elementary School. Constructed in the right-of-way with a planted buffer between vehicular and non-vehicular travel, these regional trails provide safe travel for all users. The design

intent for the roadside multi-use path as shown below, and provided by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Complete Streets Planning and Design Guidelines (2012).

It should be noted that Surf City has plans for roadside trails in Pender County, as indicated on the Holly Ridge Parks Vision Map. The Holly Ridge Planning Department indicated that it would coordinate its roadside trail with Surf City to provide a continuous connection to Topsail Island across the Onslow / Pender County Line.



VISION

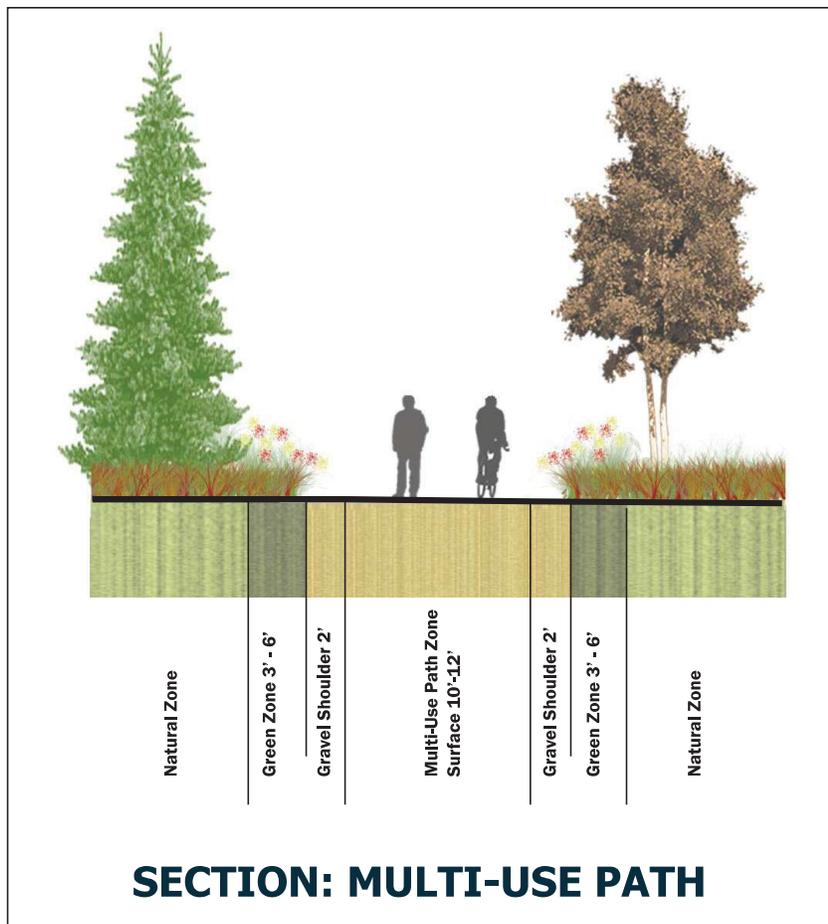
The Holly Ridge Parks Vision Map also shows potential trails and boardwalks, supplementing the trail network with more localized recreation opportunities. The first of these trails would connect The Landings Neighborhood to central Holly Ridge by following an existing utility easement through the Stones Creek Game Land. A branch of this trail would pass through the middle of the Game Land to an existing parking access on Holly Ridge Road, creating a loop with the multi-use trail that uses that corridor. A potential trail design indicated below, also provided by the NCDOT Complete Streets Planning and Design Guidelines (2012).

Additional trails are proposed along County Line Branch to Morris Landing, and from Tar Landing Road to a

future waterfront park planned on the Hobbs Tract. These trails would provide access to coastal areas and wetland landscapes that may otherwise be difficult to visit. Construction of these trails would require coordination with the North Carolina Coastal Federation and local landowners to ensure minimal disturbance to natural resources.

Additional connections can be made by using the waterways that flow throughout Holly Ridge and Stump Sound. Potential blueways, or water trails, would connect beaches and non-motorized boat launches at Soundside Park (Surf City), Morris Landing, Spicer Bay, Turkey Creek, and North Topsail Island. Recreation and education opportunities are available at the Morris Landing oyster beds, Permuda Island Reserve, and multiple campgrounds in Surf City.

Sidewalks provide the final layer to the Holly Ridge trails system. Providing accessible surfacing in parks, open spaces, and along local streets will allow residents to safely exercise or travel short distances. Individual sidewalks are not suggested as part of this Master Plan, but Holly Ridge should look for any opportunity to expand its sidewalk system.



PROGRAMS

The Town of Holly Ridge manages and maintains its park facilities, but they do not administer athletic or recreation programs. Sports leagues, summer camps, educational and entertainment programs, and classes are offered in partnership with local groups, Surf City and Onslow County. The Town has managed several popular holiday events over the years, but these are currently on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The community has expressed satisfaction with the current arrangement, but also some programming gaps that leave them wanting more. Additional programs and services desired by the Holly Ridge community include:

- ◇ Family programs and activities
- ◇ Athletic programs
- ◇ Preschool programs
- ◇ Teen activities
- ◇ Nature programs and access to trails
- ◇ Additional Town events

Many of these programs can be accommodated with additional staffing at existing park facilities and enhancing local partnerships. The Community Center, for example, is underused and offers a large open room for classes and activities. Nature programs and volunteer opportunities at Morris Landing will provide community engagement, foster local pride, and help with the maintenance of the facility.

Passive recreation is another priority among residents and stakeholders. The community wants access to parks, trails, and open space for activities such as walking, jogging, bicycling, kayaking and free play. These activities do not require formal programming, but ample facilities should be provided and maintained.

PRIORITIES

The recommended improvement projects are prioritized into groups that can be implemented in short-term, long-term and future time horizons. In the short term, projects should focus on repairs and maintenance to safety, drainage, and accessibility issues. Parking improvements can also be included. Long-term projects include enhancements to trails and connections across Holly Ridge and its annexes. Future projects include beautification and more significant park investments. These projects are reviewed in detail in the following chapter.



05

IMPLEMENTATION

INTRODUCTION

As described in the Community Needs Assessment and Visioning Chapters, the Holly Ridge Parks, Trails and Open Space System is in good condition overall. The existing parks provide residents with a variety of recreation opportunities. Most of the issues identified originate from accessibility and connections, rather than a shortage of facilities.

The bulk of the recommendations target improving existing facilities and programs. Maintenance, repairs, upgrades and staffing will strengthen the Holly Ridge Parks, Trails & Open Space system without the need to acquire additional parcels. These improvements are prioritized accordingly, and can be accommodated quickly as budgets, schedules and opportunities become available. While they do not pose an immediate priority, Holly Ridge should plan and budget for future opportunities to add facilities as land or properties become available in target areas.

PHASING STRATEGIES

The recommendations of this master plan are organized into the following implementation categories, based on the priorities developed by the Holly Ridge community vision. The projects with the highest priority and ease of implementation are identified for short-term completion, with a suggested time frame of 1 to 2 years. Long-term projects are identified for implementation in 3 to 5 years. Future projects are considered for 6 to 10 years and beyond. Each phase includes a budget for funding property and easement acquisition for future projects. Additional opportunities for ongoing, continuous improvements are noted separately for incorporation as municipal resources allow.



Phase 1: Short-Term Projects (1-2 Years)

Phase 1 improvements for the Holly Ridge Parks, Trails & Open Space system include maintenance and repairs to safety, drainage, parking, and accessibility issues. Landscape maintenance is recommended for all facilities, and includes removal of damaged site elements, invasive or overgrown plantings, and inspections of park amenities and furnishings. Additional projects include:

- ◇ Improvements to playground accessibility and replacement of play surfacing (Holly Ridge Municipal Park)
- ◇ Stormwater inspections, repairs, and improvements (Holly Ridge Municipal Park)
- ◇ Repairs to field surfaces and fences (Holly Ridge Municipal Park)
- ◇ Repairs or upgrades to picnic shelters, concessions, and support buildings (Holly Ridge Municipal Park)
- ◇ Enhanced parking facilities (Community Center, Holly Ridge Municipal Park, Morris Landing)
- ◇ Accessible sidewalk connections to parking and restrooms (Community Center, Holly Ridge Municipal Park, Morris Landing)
- ◇ Improvements to vehicular turnaround and water access (Morris Landing)
- ◇ Improvements to accessibility at fishing pier (Morris Landing)
- ◇ Budget allotment for future parks and recreation amenities

Phase 2: Long-Term Projects (3-5 Years)

Phase 2 improvements include trail connections between the Holly Ridge Municipal Park, Community Center, Morris Landing, and the eastern annexes of Holly Ridge. New amenities for Holly Ridge Municipal Park and Morris Landing expand available recreational opportunities at these parks.

- ◇ New splash pad (Holly Ridge Municipal Park)
- ◇ New dog park (Holly Ridge Municipal Park)
- ◇ New boat launch (Morris Landing)
- ◇ Enhanced signage and education kiosk (Morris Landing)
- ◇ New roadside multi-use path at Highway 50
- ◇ New roadside multi-use path at Holly Ridge Road
- ◇ New roadside multi-use path at Morris Landing Road
- ◇ New greenway trail in utility easement
- ◇ New hiking trails in Stones Creek Game Land and to Hobbs Tract
- ◇ Budget allotment for future parks and recreation amenities

IMPLEMENTATION

Phase 3: Future Projects (6-10 Years)

Phase 3 improvements include further enhancements to the Holly Ridge parks and trails. These projects are more significant investments and complete the Holly Ridge Parks, Trails & Open Space system. Projects in Phase 3 include:

- ◇ Entrance signage and landscaping (all parks)
- ◇ New recreation center (Holly Ridge Municipal Park)
- ◇ Expanded sidewalks and walking trails (Holly Ridge Municipal Park)
- ◇ New hiking trail / boardwalk along County Line Branch
- ◇ Enhanced site furnishings, including benches, bike racks, trash receptacles and picnic tables (all parks)
- ◇ Budget allotment for future parks and recreation amenities

Ongoing Projects

Opportunities for incremental or continuous improvements to the Holly Ridge Parks, Trails & Open Space system include the following:

- ◇ Expansion of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, including sidewalks and bike lanes
- ◇ Encouraging community involvement and engagement
- ◇ Introducing new activities and programs, particularly for families and teens
- ◇ Hosting special events for the community
- ◇ Staffing adjustments commensurate with improvements to parks, additional programs, and to make existing facilities more available to the public
- ◇ Review and refinement of maintenance program to maximize environmental stewardship
- ◇ Awareness of opportunities to acquire properties and easements for expanding trail connections and preserving open space
- ◇ Expansion of partnership opportunities to provide programs and available facilities



FUNDING / CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

Community stakeholders and online survey respondents indicated a preference for funding improvements using Parks and Recreation matching grants, capital improvement bonds, and increasing development fees. Creation of a park foundation / endowment and raising property taxes are less popular options, but still up for consideration.

Operational funding for parks maintenance is acceptable to most respondents, with 40% agreeing to pay up to \$40 per year, and another 27% of respondents willing to pay over \$40 per year.

Pursuing and securing capital improvement funding to build new amenities should take a multi-pronged approach and include grants, partnerships or sponsorships with private entities, bonds, and annual establishment of line items for capital improvements in the Town budget. Additional facilities, amenities, programs, and parks require broader maintenance responsibilities.

Grant opportunities for parks amenities, playgrounds, greenway trails, and other amenities include (but are not limited to) the following:

- ◇ NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) State Funds
- ◇ Recreational Trails Program (RTP) / Federal Funds
- ◇ Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) / Federal Funds
- ◇ Connect North Carolina Bond grant program (CNCB) / State Funds

- ◇ DOT Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) / State Funds
- ◇ Blue Cross Blue Shield, Health and Wellness Grants
- ◇ Safe Routes to Schools funding / State Funds through NCDOT

MAINTENANCE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Town does an excellent job maintaining its existing parks. As the parks and recreation system grows, additional maintenance staffing and equipment will be required. It is advised that Holly Ridge increases its maintenance budget accordingly to cover these costs.

CONCLUSION

The recommended improvements to the Holly Ridge Parks, Trails & Open Space system are inspired by the desires of the community, the current condition of the Town's parks and facilities, available Town resources, and opportunities for future expansion. Decisions made for implementation of these recommendations, including funding and phasing, should maintain these strategies.

Holly Ridge has excellent relationships with Surf City, the Coastal Federation, and other private groups. Leveraging these relationships offers a strong opportunity to provide Holly Ridge a local and regional system of Parks, Trails and Open Space.



HOLLY RIDGE

PARKS, TRAILS
& OPEN SPACE
MASTER PLAN