

PENDER COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN

2022-2032



TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....I

SECTION 1

GETTING TO KNOW PENDER COUNTY

History.....1
Community and Population.....1
Trends and Projections.....3

SECTION 2

PARKS AND RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Community and Stakeholder Input5
 Community Survey.....5
 Public Meetings.....18
 Focus Groups.....22
 Stakeholder Interviews.....24
State and National Findings.....27
Staffing Assessment and Recommendations.....28

SECTION 3

PARKS AND RECREATION INVENTORY AND ASSESSMENT

Types of Park and Recreation Facilities.....31
Public Recreation Inventory.....34
Private Recreation Inventory.....37
Facilities Inventory.....39
Facilities Assessment and Recommendations.....43
Future Facility Recommendations.....53
Amenity Inventory59
Amenity Assessment and Recommendations.....61
Program Inventory.....63
Program Assessment and Recommendations.....64

SECTION 4

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PLAN

Goals and Objectives.....65
Action and Implementation Plan.....73

APPENDICES

Appendix A	Maps.....	70
Appendix B	Park Type Descriptions.....	71
Appendix C	Public Meeting Results.....	72
Appendix D	Community Survey Results.....	73
Appendix E	Focus Groups and Stakeholder Interviews.....	74
Appendix F	Staffing Job Descriptions.....	75
Appendix G	Capital Improvement Plan.....	76
Appendix H	Hampstead Kiwanis Site Master Plan.....	77

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Pender County wishes to express sincere gratitude and appreciation for the many individuals that contributed to the Pender County Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan, some of whom are identified below.

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David Williams — Vice-Chairman
George Brown — Commissioner
Fred McCoy — Commissioner
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Millers Pond Park, Pender County

GETTING TO KNOW PENDER COUNTY

One of the last of 100 counties established in North Carolina, Pender County was formed 10 years after the end of the Civil War, in 1875, and was named for Confederate general William D. Pender, who died at the Battle of Gettysburg.

Located in southeastern North Carolina, Pender County is approximately 25 miles north of Wilmington, and 100 miles south of Raleigh. The County seat is Burgaw, and at 933 square miles, Pender County is the 5th largest county in the state. The 2020 United States Census found that Pender County is home to 60,203 permanent residents.

2020 US Census data for Pender County show that gender is evenly dispersed at 50.8% female and 49.2% male, the majority of the population, at 27%, is between ages 35 and 54, and though the majority of residents identify as white, about 25% of the population identify as another race/ethnicity.

The North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management (OSBM) projects that in 2030, the permanent population of Pender County will be 72,153 people. This is an increase of about 11,950 people or 19.8%.

*According to NC OSBM, in 2030,
the permanent population of Pender County
is projected to be 72,153 people,
an increase of about 11,950 people or 19.8%*

PARKS AND RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Community and Stakeholder Input

During the planning process, community and stakeholder input on the Parks and Recreation Master Plan was sought through the following 5 methods: a 12 member steering committee, a community survey, public meetings, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews. Additionally, the Plan was reviewed by the Parks Advisory Board, the Pender County Planning Board, and the Pender County Board of Commissioners. The Draft Plan was also available for comment to all County residents and interested parties during a thirty-day public comment period.

Community and Stakeholder Input Results

Input results represent a diverse cross-section of Pender County residents, including geographic, and population group diversity. Data collection methods were triangulated in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of community needs, including input from current partners, unserved groups, the general public, and traditionally underrepresented individuals.

Across all methods, a total of 866 individuals provided input for the Plan. When taken together, the four (4) data collection methods provide a robust and diverse sample with findings that should be considered when developing future facilities and programming. Though many valuable inferences can be made from an analysis of the community and stakeholder input collected, the following analysis will focus on identified needs for future parks facilities and programming in order to inform recommendations for this Plan. The top three most frequently mentioned needs from each data collection method are identified below.

Future Parks Facility Needs

- Survey:** Walking/jogging/hiking trails, playgrounds, and bike paths and splash pad (which were tied for third)
- Public Meetings:** Water access, walking/jogging/hiking trails, bike paths
- Focus Groups:** Walking and biking trails, water access and splash pad, soccer and basketball facilities
- Stakeholder Interviews:** Increased facility maintenance staff, increased safety initiatives such as cameras

Future Program Needs

- Survey:** youth enrichment programs (STEM, Field Trips, etc.), youth summer day camps, and concerts.
- Public Meetings:** Outdoor concerts, farmers market, open gym
- Focus Groups:** Increased programming, programming through partnerships to include Pender County Schools, local churches, the Senior Games, and the Arts Council, and programming for specific groups such as teens, older adults, and people with disabilities
- Stakeholder Interviews:** Increased programming staff

PARKS AND RECREATION INVENTORY AND ASSESSMENT

Inventory, Assessment, and Recommendations

Each of the seven (7) park facilities owned, operated, and/or maintained by Pender County was inventoried, assessed and recommendations for future improvements were provided, including recommendations for future park facilities. An inventory and assessment of amenities and programs was also performed with recommendations for future improvements provided. Recommendations were based on state and national standards as well as information gained through the public input process. The recommendations for future parks facilities are summarized below.

Future Facility Recommendations

2 New District Parks

Of the two (2) proposed district parks one will be on 60 acres of recently acquired land on US 117 north in the central north portion of Pender County, an area that has been identified as a high population growth area. This park will be located near Pender Memorial Park and will help meet demand in the area, as Pender Memorial Park is often at maximum capacity. Possible amenities include those similar to Pender Memorial and an offroad bike pump course, disc golf, pickleball courts, adventure play equipment, fitness parcourse, indoor recreation areas like a gym and classrooms. The second district park will be located in the southern portion of the County in Scotts Hill, in an area that has been identified as a high population growth area. Possible amenities include multipurpose fields, hiking/biking trails, picnic shelters and restrooms.

3 New Community Parks

All three (3) proposed community parks will be located in west Pender County, which lacks parks facilities, on land currently owned by the County. Possible amenities include loop trails, play equipment, shelter from sun and rain, open space, water play, fitness stations, court games, art and educational signage. Long Creek Community Park is proposed where structures were recently demolished on a County-owned parcel in northwest Pender. Malpass Corner Community Park will be located on property adjacent to a Pender County school, and Canetuck Community Park will be located on a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) buyout property on Heading Bluff Road in the southwestern portion of the County. This FEMA site offered sufficient dry open space for amenities as well as water access, which was found to be a priority by survey respondents and focus groups as well as a recommendation in the Pender 2.0 Comprehensive Plan.

1 New Neighborhood Park

One (1) new neighborhood park is proposed in the Maple Hill community of northeast Pender County. This area has been identified as underserved by the Pender 2.0 Comprehensive Plan. The proposed park should consider a partnership with existing community recreation efforts in Maple Hill. Possible amenities include open space, walking/hiking trails, picnic shelters, game courts, and possibly indoor recreation space.

These six (6) proposed park facilities will require site master plans that should include additional public input to ensure appropriate and desired amenities are provided. The development of future park facilities will require that additional resources be allocated by Pender County to ensure adequate facility maintenance and public safety.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PLAN

Goals and Objectives

After analyzing the findings from the planning process (including national best practices, community and stakeholder input, facility and program inventories, and existing conditions), goals, and objectives to have emerged to provide guidance for parks and recreation services and facilities in Pender County over the next ten (10) years. The following objectives describe ways to meet the goals of increasing organizational capacity and efficiency, increasing funding opportunities, and maintaining, improving and expanding facilities, amenities, programming and service delivery.

Goal 1: Increase Organizational Capacity and Efficiency

Objective 1.1: Ensure adequate staffing for administration, maintenance, and programming to meet demand and ensure service quality

Objective 1.2: Develop a department marketing plan to inform the public of County recreation facilities, programs, and seasonal events

Objective 1.3: Strengthen and build partnerships, including intergovernmental partnerships (such as Pender County Schools) that will aid in providing recreational facilities and programs for the community

Goal 2: Increase Funding Opportunities

Objective 2.1: Pursue Alternative Funding Strategies

Objective 2.2: Establish a Fee Review and Implementation Plan

Goal 3: Maintain and Improve Programming and Service Delivery

Objective 3.1: Provide the community with creative and inclusive recreation programs that are accessible and affordable to all citizens

Goal 4: Maintain, Improve, and Expand Facilities and Amenities

Objective 4.1: Increase investment in the maintenance of current facilities, equipment, and amenities

Objective 4.2: Provide appropriate facility and amenity improvements and expansions

Objective 4.3: Seek and acquire additional land for future park development

Objective 4.4: Develop additional park facilities and amenities

Objective 4.5: Continue to improve ADA accessibility of facilities and programs

Action and Implementation Plan

Action items, including ones that align with items assigned to the Parks and Recreation Department in Chapter 6 of the 2018 Pender 2.0 County Comprehensive Land Use Plan, identify concrete steps to accomplish objectives and meet Plan goals. The implementation timeline for action items falls into three phases: short-term (1-2 years), mid-term (3-5 years), and long-term (6-10 years). Action items that do not have an end-date are labeled, ongoing. Capital cost estimates as well as the impact on the Parks and Recreation Department's operational budget are also identified.

GETTING TO KNOW PENDER COUNTY



Grapevine, Pender County

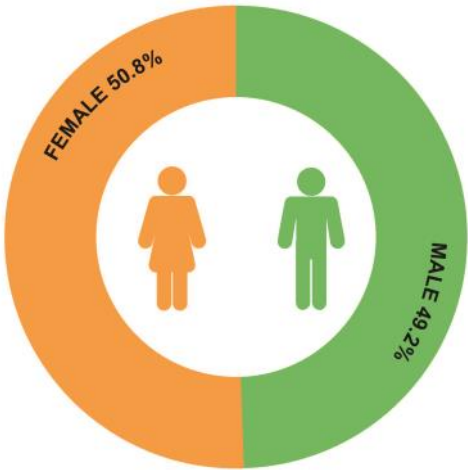
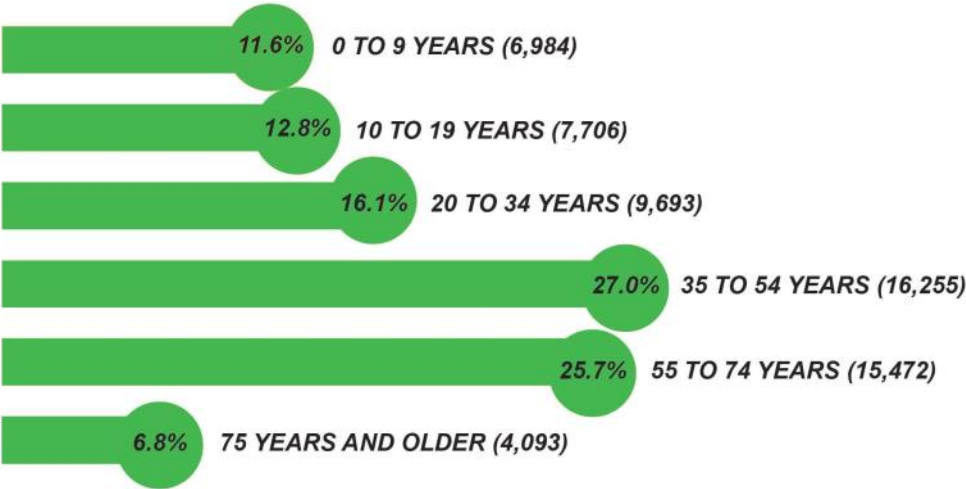
HISTORY

Pender County acknowledges that the land currently known as Pender County is the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Waccamaw and Lumbee Native Americans. European settlement of Pender County began in the late 1600s and early 1700s, with English, German, Welsh, and French settlers. From the late 1600s to the Civil War, Pender County contained many family farms, and large plantations. Plantations were worked by enslaved people from the West Indies, and Africa. The Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge, the first southern battle in the Revolutionary War, took place in what is now Pender County in 1776. Today the battlefield is a national historic site and park. Pender County, one of the last of 100 counties established in North Carolina, was formed 10 years after the end of the Civil War, in 1875, and was named for Confederate general William D. Pender, who died at the Battle of Gettysburg.

COMMUNITY AND POPULATION

Located in southeastern North Carolina, Pender County is approximately 25 miles north of Wilmington, and 100 miles south of Raleigh. The County seat is Burgaw, and at 933 square miles, Pender County is the 5th largest county in the state. The 2020 United States Census found that Pender County is home to 60,203 permanent residents, and in 2019, American Community Survey data estimated the total population at 63,060. Pender County includes five (5) incorporated towns and one (1) incorporated village. The two fastest growing areas in Pender County, over the last decade, have been the unincorporated areas of Hampstead and Rocky Point. Pender County's agricultural products include strawberries, blueberries, grapes, tobacco, sweet potatoes, soybeans, swine, and poultry, and manufactured commodities include apparel, crushed stone, and pressure sensitive labels. Pender County includes both urban and rural areas as well as a National Battlefield and State-owned Game Lands. With outdoor recreation opportunities provided by the natural environment, moderate climate, and coastal lifestyle, Pender County also has a large tourism industry.

An analysis of demographic information for Pender County helps to determine current parks and recreation needs, and identify future needs that will influence future parks and recreation planning. Summarized in the graphics and table below, 2020 US Census Bureau and 2020 ACCESS NC (North Carolina Department of Commerce) data for Pender County show that gender is evenly dispersed at 50.8% female and 49.2% male, the majority of the population, at 27%, is between ages 35 and 54, and though the majority of residents identify as white, about 25% of the population identifies as a race other than white.



RACE	POPULATION	PERCENT
White	45,305	75.3%
Black or African American	7,619	12.7%
American Indian	354	0.6%
Asian	342	0.6%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	31	0.1%
Other Race	2,834	4.7%
Two or More Races	3,718	6.2%
Hispanic or Latino	4,982	8.3%
Total:	60,203	100%

TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS

To continue to meet the needs of residents and visitors, the County's Parks and Recreation Department will have to continually evaluate its facilities and programs and adjust as those needs change. Population projections can vary widely due to intervening factors such as the strength of the economy, availability of jobs, and housing prices. Population trends and projections can identify potential challenges and needs that may confront the community in the future.

The North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management (OSBM) provides projections for County populations across North Carolina. According to the NC OSBM, in 2030, the permanent population of Pender County is projected to be 72,153 people. This is an increase of about 11,950 people or 19.8%. The estimates for Pender County indicate population increase will occur mostly from in migration, while natural growth from births will have a minor change in the county's population.

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While much of this growth is expected to occur near the coastal areas, other parts of the County, such as Burgaw, Penderlea, and Rocky Point, will also see growth. An increasing population will require the expansion of recreational services and programming.



Dancing on the lawn during an event on the Pender County Courthouse Square

One population group expected to increase over the next ten (10) years is people age 65 or older. According to the North Carolina Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (NCSCORP) 2020–2025, older adults comprise the fastest growing population group.

The NC OSBM projects that by the year 2030, 1 in 5 North Carolinians will be 65 years old or older. The parks and recreation department will have to increase the number and type of activities and facilities to effectively serve this population in the future.

*NC OSBM projects that by the year 2030,
1 in 5 North Carolinians will be 65 years old or older.*

Like other coastal area, Pender County also experiences seasonal population changes. Impacts from seasonal population changes can be difficult to predict due to the range of factors that must be considered. In addition, year round population figures established by the North Carolina State Demographer and the US Census Bureau do not account for seasonal populations.

While the permanent residents of Pender County are the key members to plan for, it is also important to understand that the seasonal population plays a big role in how the park facilities and programs are used and any necessary recommendations must account for this large group of people. Typically, the seasonal population has the greatest impact on services and resources from the end of May to the beginning of November.



Image Credit: Catherine McGuinness, Pender County 2021 photo contest

PARKS AND RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT



Basketball game at Penderlea Community Park

COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER INPUT

During the planning process, community and stakeholder input on the Parks and Recreation Master Plan was sought through the following 5 methods: a 12 member steering committee, a community survey, public meetings, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews. Each of these data collection methods is further discussed in the following sections. Additionally, the Plan was reviewed by the Parks Advisory Board, the Pender County Planning Board, and the Pender County Board of Commissioners. The Draft Plan was also available for comment to all County residents and interested parties during a thirty-day public comment period.

Steering Committee

The 12 member steering committee included representatives from the Pender County Board of Commissioners, subject matter experts, special interest groups, and Pender County residents. The steering committee met four (4) times during the plan development process to provide guidance on the plan development process and to review drafts of the Plan.

Community Survey

The community survey period was from April 23rd, 2021 to June 30th, 2021. The survey was promoted via the Pender County website, Parks and Recreation webpage, local newspapers, local news channels, and County social media pages. Hard copies of the survey were available at the Pender County Administration Building in Burgaw, the main Pender County Library in Burgaw, the Pender County Government Annex in Hampstead, the Hampstead Library Branch in Hampstead, at all Pender County Parks and Recreation programs and at all of public input meetings. The survey was designed to elicit answers on residents' needs and desires for recreation opportunities. It included a section where respondents rated their use of existing facilities both within the County limits and outside the County limits. The survey instructed respondents to rank the programs and facilities in order of importance to their household and to list the facilities they would like to see added to the park and recreation system.



Page one (1) of the Community Survey. The full survey is available in Appendix D.



Pender County Parks and Recreation Survey

Pender County is updating its Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan to determine which recreational facilities and programs are needed in the future. We are seeking input from your household to help us determine those needs. Please take this opportunity to talk with members of your household and take part in helping us identify parks and recreation needs in Pender County. At the end of the survey, you will be asked demographic questions. These questions are designed to collect data that will help Pender County Parks and Recreation pursue grant funding for parks and recreational facilities.

If you would like more information about Pender County Parks and Recreation facilities and programs, please call 910-259-1330, email parksandrec@pendercountync.gov, or visit our website at penderpr.recdesk.com

If you have questions concerning the survey, please call 910-259-1330.

1. Check which of the following you think is/are important for Pender’s public parks and recreation activities and services to provide for its citizens. (Check up to 5)

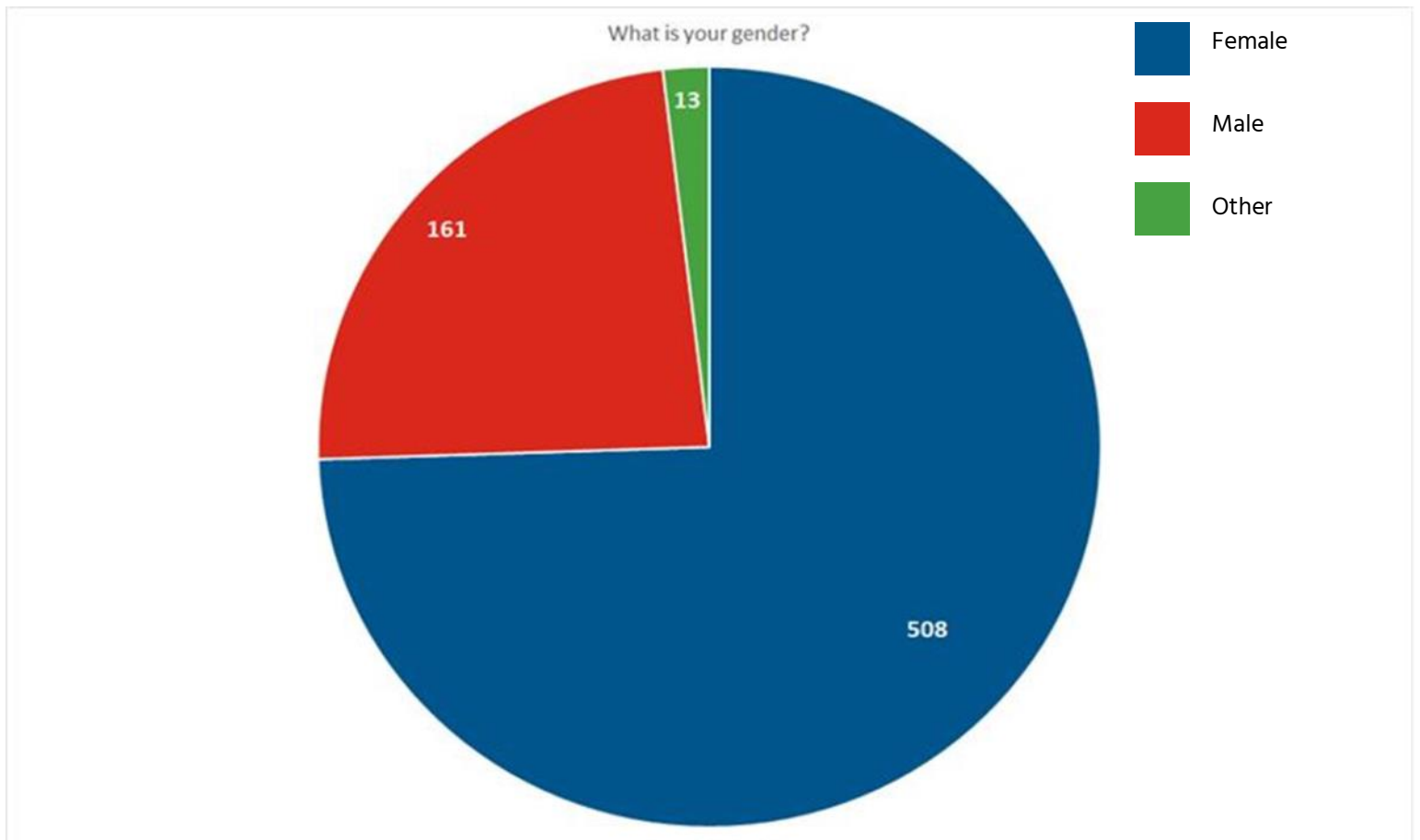
<input type="checkbox"/> Improved physical and mental health	<input type="checkbox"/> Fun for participants and observers
<input type="checkbox"/> Economic development opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/> Positive change in personal attitude
<input type="checkbox"/> Structure and supervision for children and youth	<input type="checkbox"/> Increase in community pride
<input type="checkbox"/> Improve quality of life	<input type="checkbox"/> Increase in tourism
<input type="checkbox"/> Accessible places to enjoy nature	<input type="checkbox"/> Cultural education
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive alternatives to unfavorable behavior	Other: _____

2. Where in Pender County is each of the following parks/facilities needed? (If none are needed, please leave the row blank.)

Facilities	Scotts Hill	Hampstead	Burgaw/ St.Helena	Rocky Point/ Long Creek	Willard/ Watha/ Penderlea	Currie/ Atkinson	Surf City/ Topsail	Maple Hill
Amphitheater								
Baseball/Softball Fields								
Bike Paths								
BMX Track								
Disc Golf Course								
Dog Park								
Event/Festival Space								
Fitness Center								
Gymnasium/Community Center								
Lawn Game Area (horseshoes, bocce ball, etc.)								
Multi-purpose Fields (soccer, football, lacrosse)								
Nature Preserve								
Nature/Environmental Education Centers								
Outdoor Basketball Courts								
Pickleball Courts								
Picnic Shelters								
Playgrounds								
Public Water Access								
Sand Volleyball Courts								
Skateboard Park								
Splash Pad								
Swimming Pool								
Tennis Courts								
Walking/Jogging/Hiking Trails								
Other:								

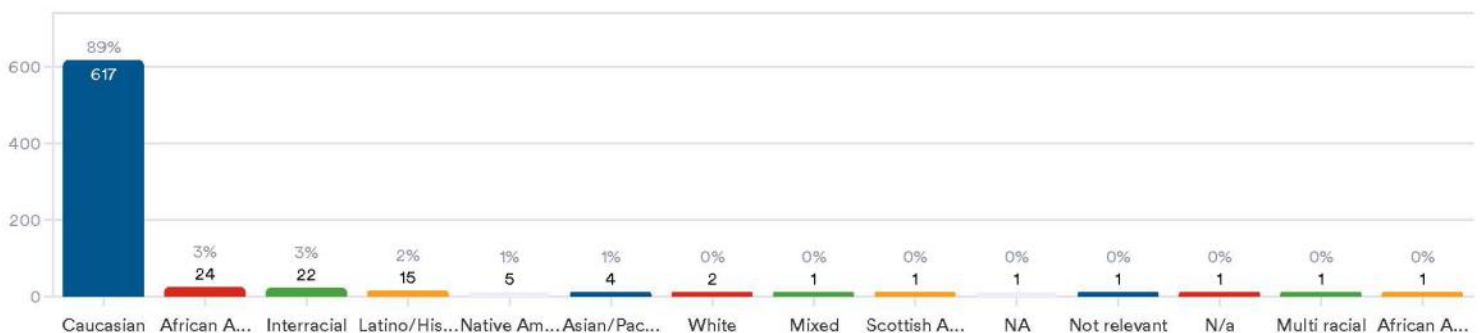
The County received a total of **720** completed surveys representing about **2,433** individuals. The total number of responses includes both online and print surveys. Results are summarized on the following pages with full survey results available in Appendix D.

Survey respondents were found to be mostly Caucasian, at 89%, female, at 75%, and residents of the Hampstead area, at 61%. Survey responses reflected the age demographics for Pender County as 37% identified as age 35-65, 26%, identified as age 6-14, 15%, identified as age 5 and under, and 10%, identified as age 21-34. As shown in the graphs below, survey results did not reflect Pender County demographics for gender, at 75% female, or racial/ethnic group. Of those that responded to the question about their household's race/ethnicity, 89% identified as Caucasian, 3% identified as African American, 3% identified as more than one race, 2% identified as Latino/Hispanic, 1% identified as Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1% identified as Native American.

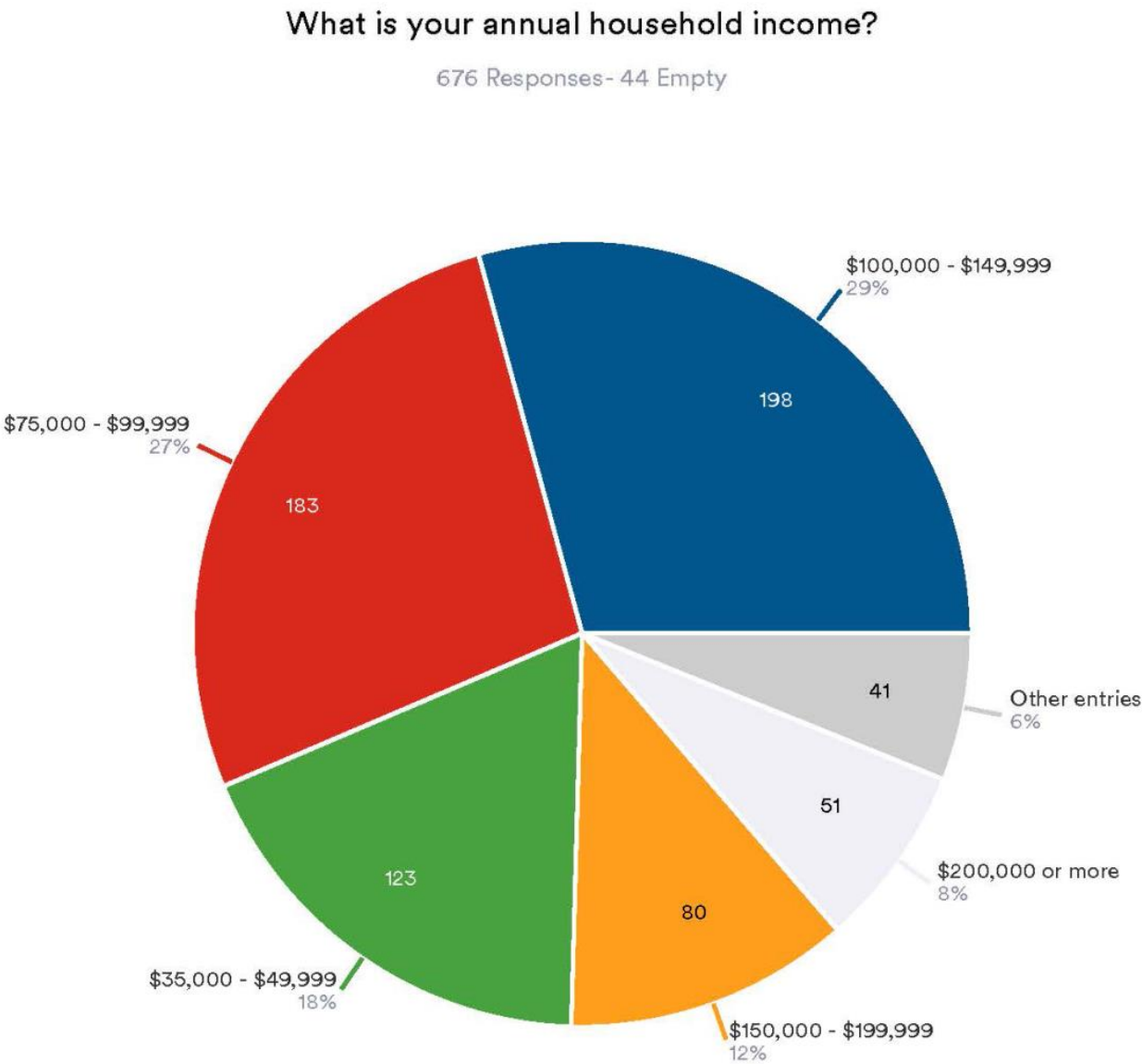


Check the racial/ethnic group that best describes your household.

696 Responses- 24 Empty



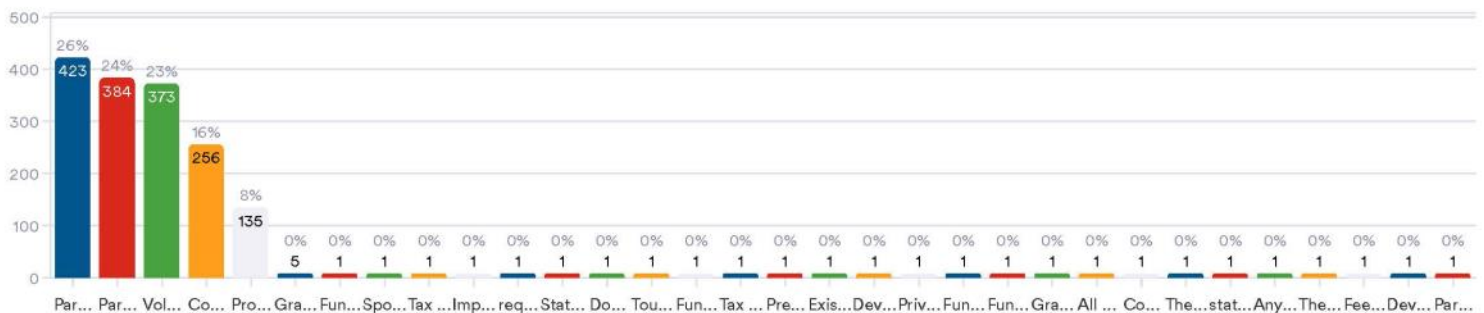
As shown in the graph below, when asked about their annual household income, 29% of respondents had an income of \$100,000 to \$149,999, 27% reported an income of \$75,000 to \$99,000, 18% had an income of \$35,000 to \$49,999, 12% had an income of \$150,000 to \$199,999, 8% had an income of \$200,000+, and 6% provided other income amounts.



As shown in the graph below, when asked how the County should finance new recreation facilities, 26% of respondents selected participation fees, 24% were in favor of a Parks and Recreation bond issue, 23% preferred voluntary development contributions, 16% selected a County-wide recreation tax, and 8% selected property tax as a means to finance new recreation facilities. These results indicate that survey respondents are willing to pay for new recreation facilities, either through participation fees or a Parks and Recreation Bond. Additionally, 23% of survey respondents selected voluntary development contributions as a means to finance new recreation facilities, indicating a possible market for donations or sponsorships. The County should consider residents' willingness to pay, and the possibility of cultivating sponsors/donors when investigating alternative funding for new recreation facilities.

How should the County finance new recreation facilities? (Check up to 3)

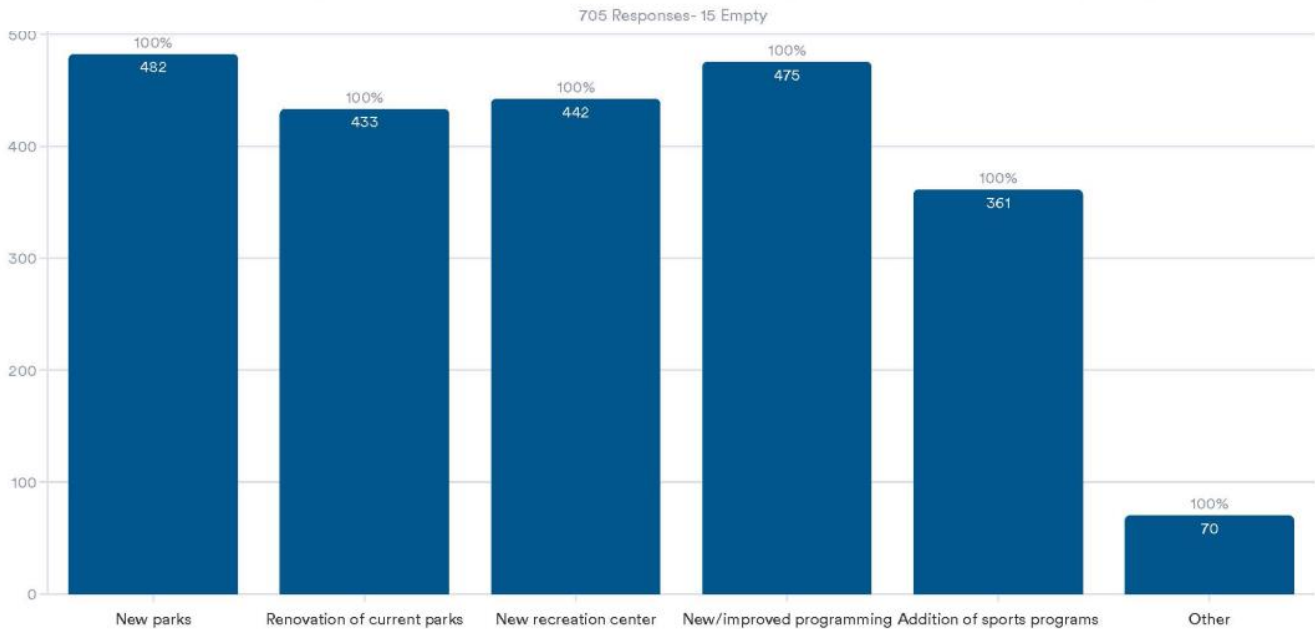
1602 Responses - 25 Empty



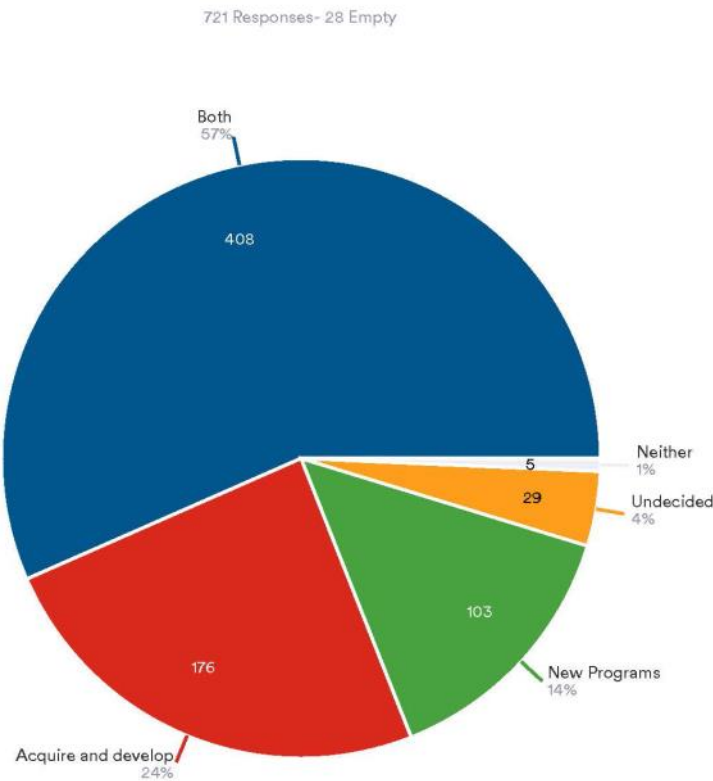
Data	Response	%
Participation fee	423	26%
Parks and recreation bond issue	384	24%
Voluntary development contributions	373	23%
County-wide Recreational Tax	256	16%
Property Tax	135	8%
Grants	5	0%
Fundraising, Donor Contributions, Grants	1	0%
Sponsor by local businesses	1	0%
Tax developers	1	0%
Impact taxes should be charged to those building new home development an...	1	0%
required development fees	1	0%
State Funds/New Developers	1	0%

As shown in the graphs below, when asked about how Parks and Recreation funds should be spent over the next ten (10) years, respondents indicated that their priority was for new parks with new/improved programming as a close second. When asked their funding preference if Parks and Recreation spending were increased, 57% of respondents answered that new parks and new programs were of equal importance.

Over the next 5-10 years, what do you think should be the department's top three priorities? Rank answer choices in order of importance where #1 is the top priority, #2 is the second most important priority, and #3 is the third most important priority.



If spending were increased for parks and recreation, would you prefer the money be spent on acquiring and developing new parks and facilities or developing new recreational programs and activities?

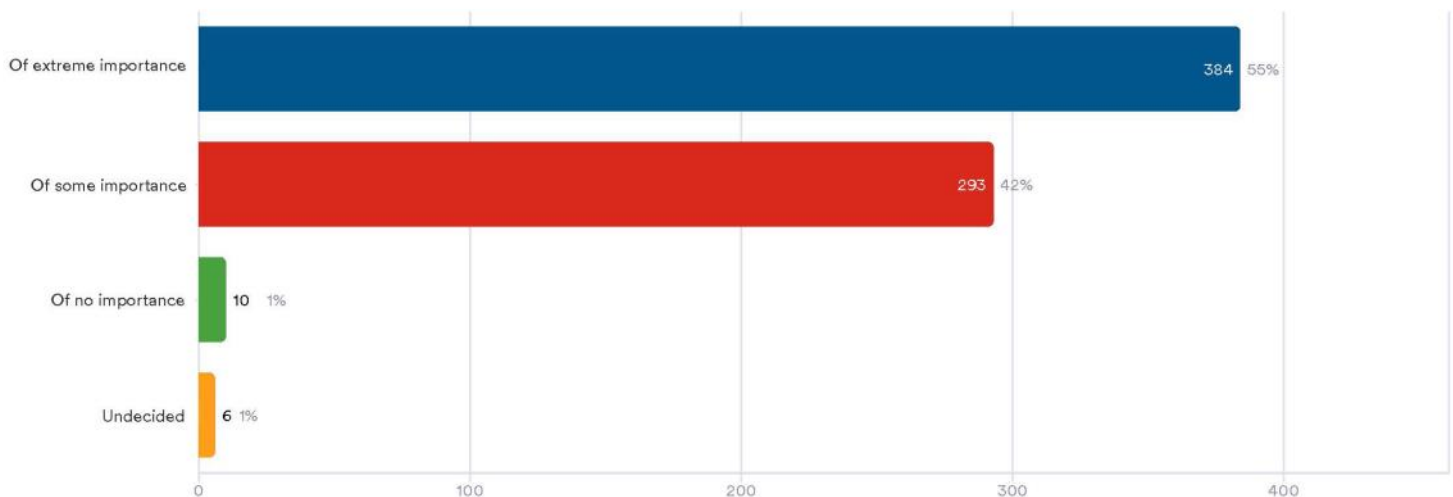


As shown in the first graph below, when asked about the need for new or improved facilities and programs in their area, 65% of respondents found the need of extreme importance, with 42% finding the need of some importance. Combined, 84% of respondents agree there is a need for new or improved facilities and programs in their area.

As shown in the second graph below, when asked which outcomes of services are most important to them, the results for the majority, at 28%, were inconclusive, with the remaining choices split more or less equally. This finding indicates the need for additional public input on this item. The County should collect additional input during the master planning or development phase of new facilities or programs to confirm future initiatives can provide desired community outcomes.

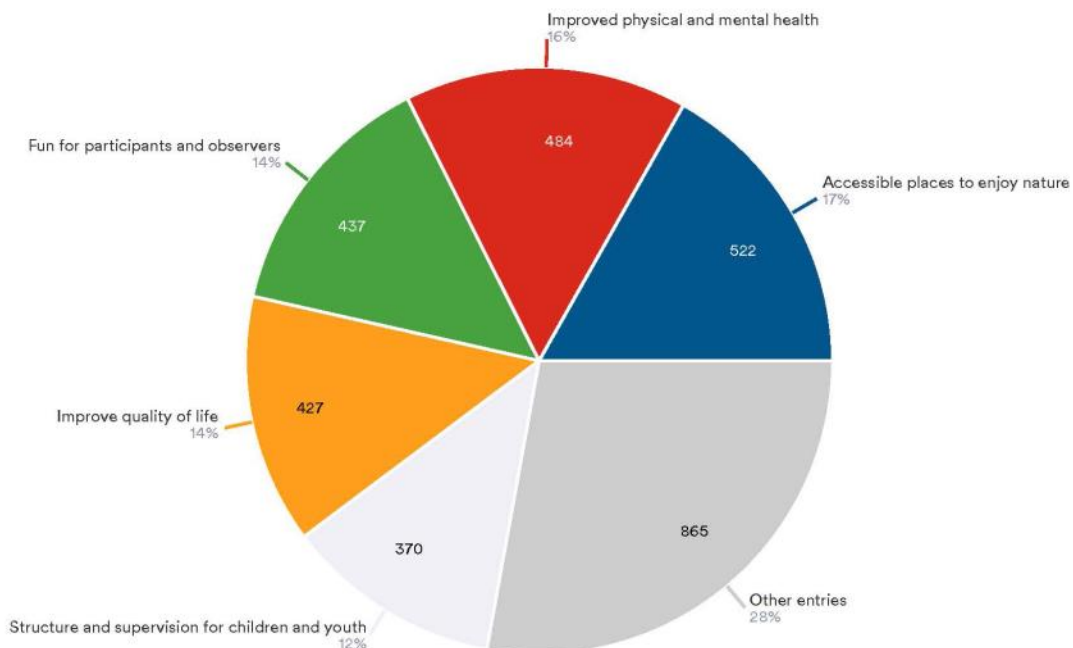
Check the line that describes how you perceive the need for new or improved recreational facilities and recreation programs for your ZIP code.

693 Responses- 27 Empty



Check which of the following you think is/are important for Pender's public parks and recreation services to provide for its citizens. (Check up to 5)

3105 Responses- 3 Empty





As shown in the graph below, when asked about the need for greenways that would interconnect parks and schools, 62% of respondents found the need of extreme importance, and 34% found the need of some importance. Combined, 95% of respondents agree that greenways are an important need.

As shown in the tables on the following two (2) pages, respondents were asked to identify where parks/ facilities and programs were needed in Pender County. These results indicate a preference or particular need for certain types of parks/facilities and programs per community, and identify the most popular parks/facilities and programs overall. The County should consider these preferences and needs per community when developing future parks/facilities and programs.

Facility Needs Per Community

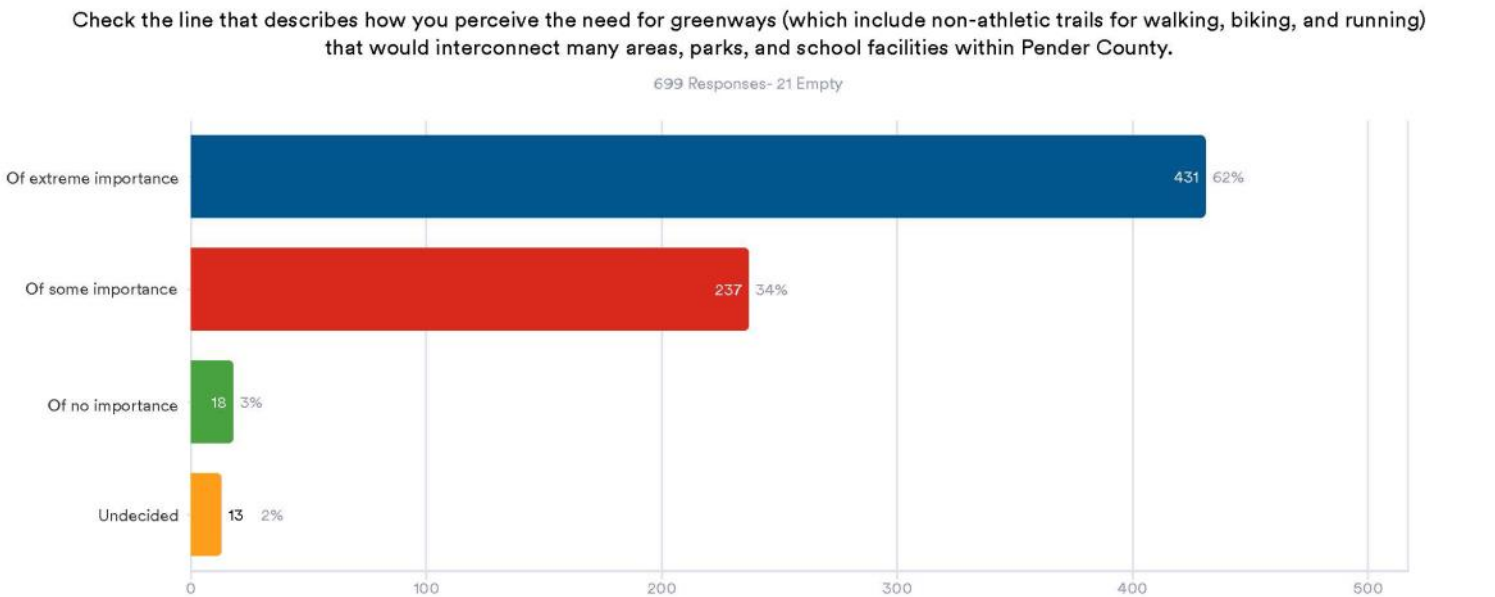
No two communities received exactly the same responses, however certain park/facility needs were most frequently selected. The top three (3) most selected facility needs per community were: walking/jogging/hiking trails, playgrounds, and bike paths and a splash pad which were tied for third most selected.

Six (6) of the eight (8) communities included walking/jogging/hiking trails in their top 3 facility needs. Four (4) of the eight (8) communities included playgrounds in their top 3 facility needs. Bike paths and a splash pad were tied for third most selected need per community with three (3) of the eight (8) communities including bike paths and a splash pad in their top three (3) facility needs.

Program Needs Per Community

No two communities received exactly the same responses, however certain program needs were more frequently selected. The top three (3) most selected program needs per community were: youth enrichment programs (STEM, Field Trips, etc.), youth summer day camps, and concerts.

Six (6) of the eight (8) communities included youth enrichment programs (STEM, Field Trips, etc.) in their top 3 program needs. Five (5) of the eight (8) communities included youth summer day camps in their top 3 program needs and four (4) of the eight (8) communities included concerts in their top three (3) program needs.



Where in Pender County is each of the following parks/facilities needed? (If none are needed, please leave the row blank.)

38 Responses- 6 Empty

Facilities	Scotts Hill	Facilities	Willard/Watha/ Penderlea
Walking/Jogging/Hiking Trails	118	Walking/Jogging/Hiking Trails	63
Bike Paths	91	Playgrounds	40
Playgrounds	82	Picnic Shelters	40
Public Water Access	75	Bike Paths	39
Nature Preserve	74	Nature Preserve	39
Facilities	Hampstead	Facilities	Currie/Atkinson
Walking/Jogging/Hiking Trails	337	Walking/Jogging/Hiking Trails	62
Splash Pad	332	Playgrounds	46
Bike Paths	331	Nature Preserve	43
Swimming Pool	298	Bike Paths	41
Event/Festival Space	248	Picnic Shelters	37
Facilities	Burgaw/ St Helena	Facilities	Surf City/ Topsail
Swimming Pool	99	Bike Paths	146
Walking/Jogging/Hiking Trails	93	Walking/Jogging/Hiking Trails	133
Splash Pad	91	Splash Pad	98
Bike Paths	74	Swimming Pool	94
Event/Festival Space	66	Nature Preserve	93
Facilities	Rocky Point / Long Creek	Facilities	Maple Hill
Walking/Jogging /Hiking Trails	81	Walking/Jogging/Hiking Trails	51
Bike Paths	63	Playgrounds	37
Playgrounds	62	Picnic Shelters	34
Nature Preserve	58	Bike Paths	30
Multipurpose Field	52	Nature Preserve	30

Where in Pender County are the following programs needed? (If none are needed, please leave the row blank.)

673 Responses- 47 Empty

Programs	Scotts Hill	Programs	Willard/Watha / Penderlea
Youth Enrichment Programs (STEM, Field Trips, etc.)	66	Youth Enrichment Programs (STEM, Field Trips, etc.)	40
Concerts	64	Youth Summer Day Camps	36
Youth Sports Clinics	61	Running/Walking Programs	32
Youth Summer Day Camps	58	Holiday Events	31
Holiday Events	57	Movie Nights	30
Programs	Hampstead	Programs	Currie/Atkinson
Concerts	291	Youth Enrichment Programs (STEM, Field Trips, etc.)	40
Movie Nights	261	Running/Walking Programs	35
Youth Enrichment Programs (STEM, Field Trips, etc.)	248	Youth Summer Day Camps	34
Youth Summer Day Camps	248	Holiday Events	32
Holiday Events	230	Youth Sports Clinics	31
Programs	Burgaw/ St Helena	Programs	Surf City/Topsail
Concerts	83	Concerts	123
Youth Enrichment Programs (STEM, Field Trips, etc.)	70	Movie Nights	85
Youth Summer Day Camps	69	Holiday Events	82
Movie Nights	68	Youth Enrichment Programs (STEM, Field Trips, etc.)	81
Holiday Events	68	Youth Summer Day Camps	75
Programs	Rocky Point / Long Creek	Programs	Maple Hill
Youth Enrichment Programs (STEM, Field Trips, etc.)	56	Youth Enrichment Programs (STEM, Field Trips, etc.)	37
Youth Summer Day Camps	48	Holiday Events	30
Holiday Events	46	Youth Summer Day Camps	30
Adult Exercise Class (Yoga, Zumba, Spinning)	46	Running/Walking Programs	29
Running/Walking Programs	44	Teen Only Events	29

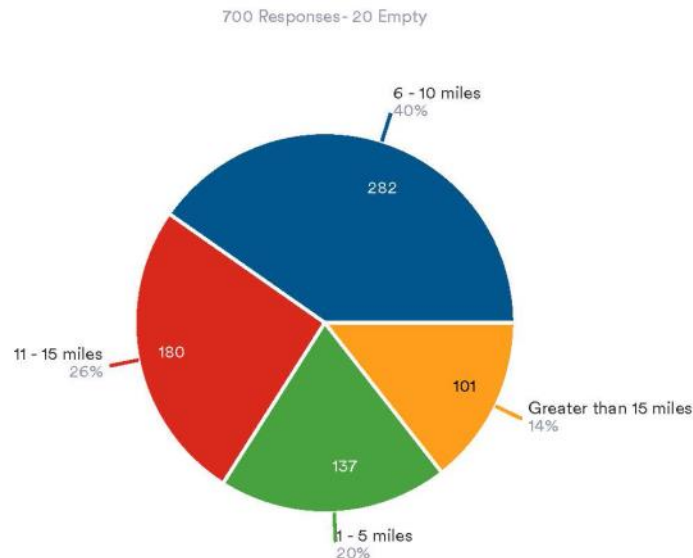
As shown below in the first graph, when asked about the means of transportation usually used to access a park or recreation facility, 72% of respondents replied that they used a personal vehicle. 15% of respondents indicated that they used a bicycle to access a park or recreation facility, and 13% of respondents said that they walk to access a park or recreation facility.

As shown below in the second graph, when asked how far from their home they would be willing to travel to access parks and recreation programs, 40% of respondents said they would travel 6-10 miles. 26% of respondents said they would be willing to travel 11-15 miles to access programs. 20% of respondent replied they would be willing to travel 1-5 miles to access programs and 14% of respondents said they would be willing to travel greater than 15 miles from their home to access parks and recreation programs.

These findings are useful for determining the service radius of locations where programming will be provided, as well as possible utilization of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements that would connect parks or recreation facilities to neighborhoods, or to existing bike routes/ pedestrian infrastructure.



How far would you be willing to travel from your home to participate in Pender County Parks and Recreation programs?





As shown in the graph below, when asked about the ways in which information regarding Pender County Parks and Recreation programming is received, 56% of respondents stated they currently receive information via social media, 54% indicated they currently receive information via the Pender County Website, 37% replied that they currently receive information by word of mouth, 21% receive information via email, 15% do not currently receive information, 8% receive information via the newspaper, 8% get information from brochures/ flyers, and 3% get information regarding Pender County Parks and Recreation programming over the phone.

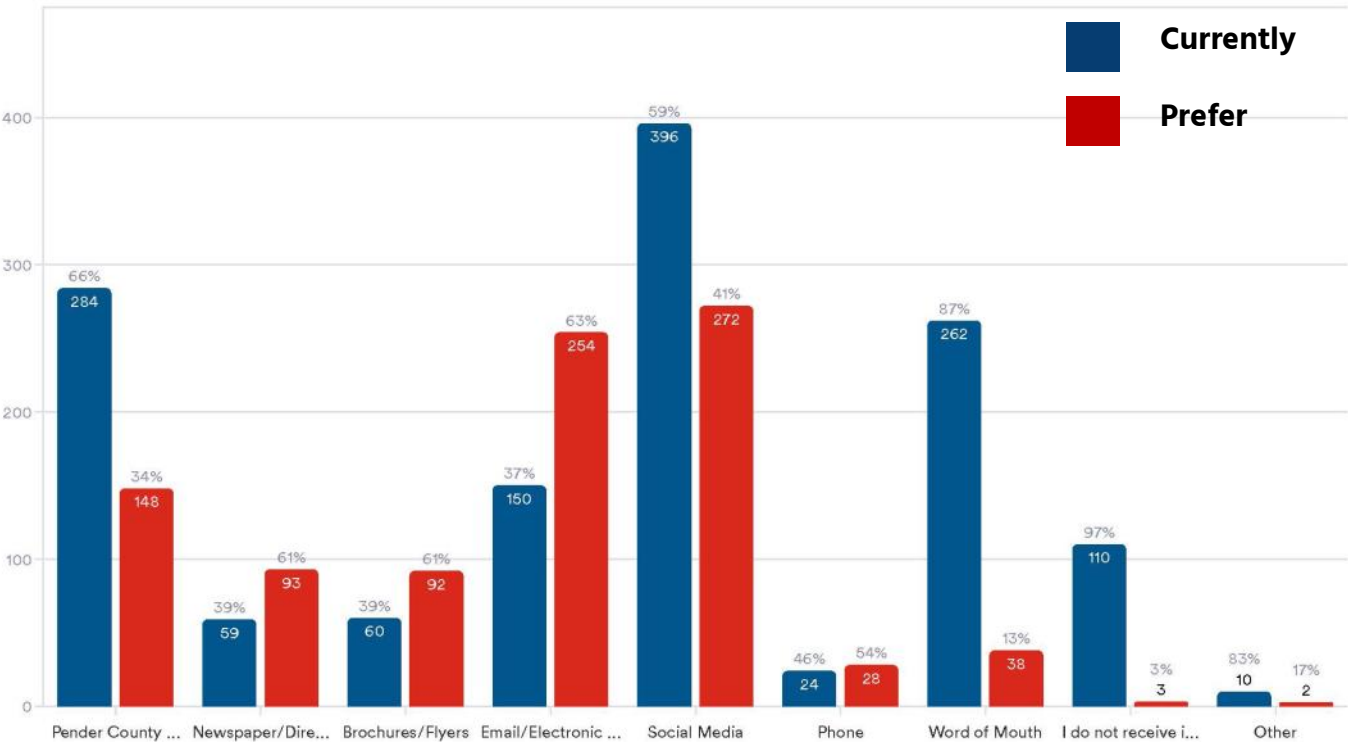
When respondents were asked by which communication method they would prefer to receive information regarding Pender County Parks and Recreation programming, 38% replied they would prefer to receive information via social media, 36% replied they would prefer to receive information by email, 21% said they prefer to get information via the Pender County website, 13% indicated they would prefer to consult the newspaper, 13% preferred to receive information via a brochure/flyer, 5% replied they preferred to get information by word of mouth, and 3% said they would prefer to receive information regarding Pender County Parks and Recreation programming over the phone.

The three (3) most preferred methods to receive information about Pender County Parks and Recreation programming were found to be, from most to least preferred, social media, email, and the Pender County website. The three (3) most used methods to receive information currently were found to be, from most to least utilized, social media, the Pender County website, and word of mouth.

Based on these findings, though currently effective for receiving information, respondents would prefer to decrease their reliance on the website and word of mouth, and increase communication through social media and email. The County should consider these preferences when designing marketing and communication plans for programming.

Please indicate which of the following ways you receive information about Pender County Parks and Recreation programs and also indicate which method you prefer to receive information.

701 Responses - 19 Empty



As summarized below, when asked again about their feelings on multiple topics regarding Parks and Recreation facilities and programming, respondents echo their previous responses, confirming the need for new programming and facilities, accessibility improvements, increased partnerships with Pender County Schools, and a willingness to pay for expanded Parks and Recreation facilities in Pender County.

For each statement, please check what describes your feelings.

693 Responses- 27 Empty

1. The existing **activities** for Pender County Parks and Recreation are adequate and meet the needs of my household.
 - a. 2% strongly agree, 14% agree, 26% are undecided, **46% disagree**, and 11% strongly disagree.
2. The existing **facilities** for Pender County Parks and Recreation are adequate and meet the needs of my household.
 - a. 2% strongly agree, 15% agree, 22% are undecided, **49% disagree**, and 12% strongly disagree.
3. Facilities and activities provided by Pender County Parks and Recreation are equally accessible to all citizens regardless of age, race, religion, gender, national origins, or physical ability.
 - a. 15% strongly agree, **34% agree**, 29% are undecided, 16% disagree, and 6% strongly disagree.
4. Pender County Parks and Recreation should partner with Pender County Schools to provide shared facilities for both schools and public use.
 - a. 29% strongly agree, **41% agree**, 19% are undecided, 8% disagree, and 3% strongly disagree
5. New recreation facilities should be developed at existing and new school sites for use by the public.
 - a. 26% strongly agree, **34% agree**, 26% are undecided, 12% disagree, and 3% strongly agree.
6. I would be in favor of new or expanded financial methods to fund expanded facilities of Pender County Parks and Recreation.
 - a. 26% strongly agree, **43% agree**, 25% are undecided, 5% disagree and 2% strongly disagree

Public Meetings

Eight (8) public meetings were held in April and May of 2021 in the following Pender County communities: Scotts Hill, Penderlea, Hampstead, Rocky Point, Burgaw, Currie, Surf City, and Maple Hill. Meetings were promoted via the Pender County website, Parks and Recreation webpage, local newspapers, local news channels, and County social media pages.

The meetings were floating meetings that lasted three hours each. Public meetings were held in accordance with the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and state recommendations for social distancing required to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Approximately eighty-nine (89) participants attended the public meetings. The public meetings provided County staff the opportunity to meet residents where they live to hear opinions and concerns.

Participants of the public meetings were asked to vote on preferred facilities and programs they desired for Pender County. Display boards with images of park facilities and programs were provided at each meeting and participants were asked to place stickers next to the facilities and programs they felt were most needed.

Paper copies of the survey were also available at all meetings. A public meeting promotional flyer and a summary of the results from public meetings are provided on the following pages. The full results are available in Appendix C.



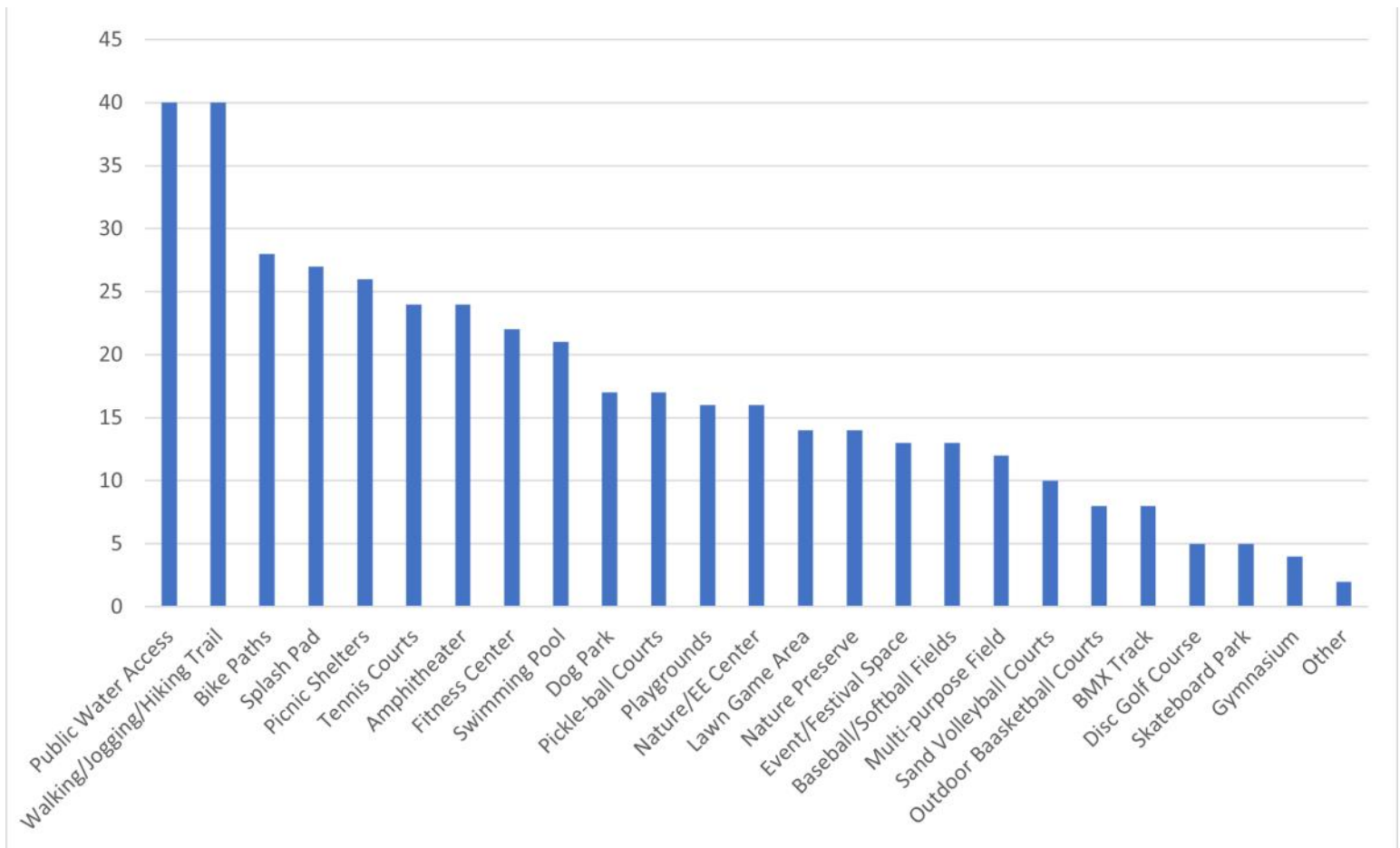
Public Input Meeting at Maple Hill Fire Department

As shown in the graph below, the top five facilities, which received the most votes during public input meeting were:

- 1) Public Water Access
- 2) Walking/Jogging/Hiking Trail
- 3) Bike Paths
- 4) Splash Pad
- 5) Picnic Shelters

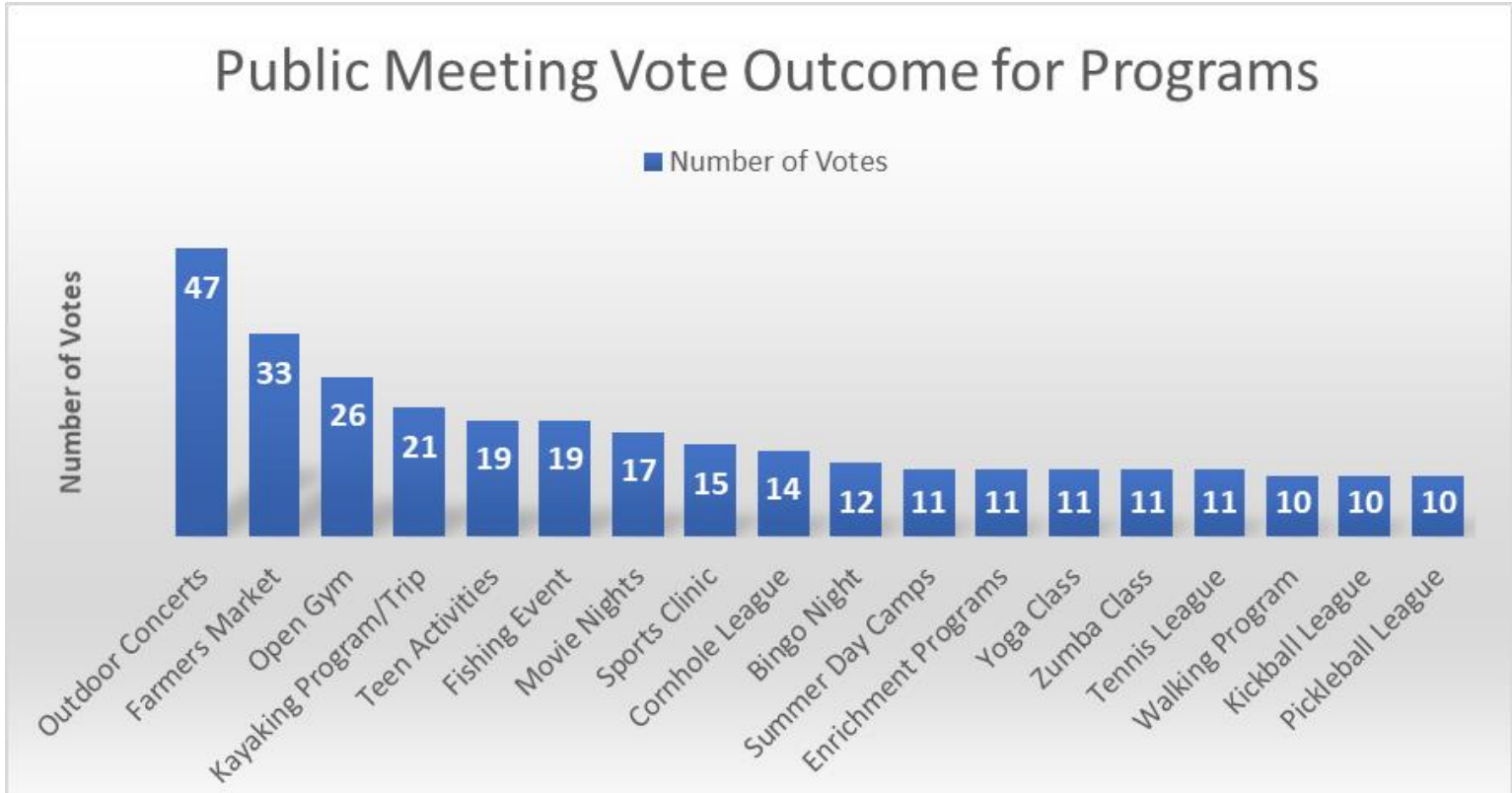


Public Meeting Vote Outcome for Facilities



As shown in the graph below, the top five programs, which received the most votes during public input meeting were:

- 1) Outdoor Concerts
- 2) Farmers Market
- 3) Open Gym
- 4) Kayaking Program/Trips
- 5) Teen Activities



Flyer Promoting Public Meetings



Pender County Parks and Recreation Master Plan Public Meetings

4/27 Poplar Grove Barn

10200 US-17, Wilmington, NC 28411

4/29 Penderlea Gym

231 W H Robbins Road, Willard, NC 28478

5/04 Hampstead Annex

15060 US HWY 17, Hampstead, NC 28443

5/06 Cape Fear Middle Gym

1886 NC-133, Rocky Point, NC 28457

5/18 CFCC Surf City Campus

621 NC-210 E, Hampstead, NC 28443

5/20 Moores Creek National Battlefield

40 Patriots Hall Dr. Currie, NC 28435

5/25 Maple Hill Volunteer Fire Department

115 Old Maple Hill Rd N, Maple Hill, NC 28454

5/27 Pender County Administrative Building

805 S. Walker Street Burgaw, NC 28425

Come share your
vision for Parks and
Recreation activities
and facilities in
Pender County.

**All meetings are from
4:30pm - 7:30pm**

These are floating
meetings, drop by
anytime between 4:30
pm - 7:30 pm to share
your thoughts.

Call 910-259-1330 or email ParksandRec@pendercountync.gov for more information.



Focus Groups

Five (5) focus group meetings were held with a total of twenty-five (25) participants. The focus group meetings occurred on October 18th, 19th, and 20th. Meetings lasted one hour each. The focus group topics were Wellness/Health/Access, Outdoor Adventure, Future Opportunities, Arts/Drama, and Youth. The groups were strategically developed in order to increase the diversity of input, and to expand the planning process to include individuals that may not have been adequately represented through other data collection methods. Each group discussed current and future parks and recreation desires and needs. A summary of each focus group meeting is provided below.

Wellness/Health/Access

The Wellness/Health/Access focus group included representatives from the older adult community, disability community, and healthcare community. Participants of this group discussed the need for County parks facilities and programs to be designed to accommodate a wide variety of users with varying degrees of ability including those with autism and other various characteristics. This group highlighted a number of adapted programs from athletics, to passive programs. There was a desire for improved transportation options for all residents to County facilities as well as increased fitness opportunities such as fitness stations, walking paths, swimming and biking. This group wanted to see improvements in security and maintenance at all facilities, the addition of bottle filling fountains in lieu of traditional water fountains, connectivity of Pender County destinations with schools, and places where people lived, and more access for dog owning residents to County parks.

Outdoor Adventure

The Outdoor Adventure focus group included representatives from local cycling groups, state and private recreation facilities, and a private recreation tour company. Participants of this group valued the natural resources of Pender County and desired additional opportunities to learn about and experience these features of their environment. There was consensus that pending population growth would add pressure to the need to preserve natural areas for trails, wildlife observation, and water access. Participants wanted to see more environmental education programs, organized trail hikes, canoe/kayak blue-way trips, and biking events offered in Pender County. Concerns about having enough staff to provide for needed recreation department improvements was mentioned. Various locations around the County were shared by participants as nature based destinations that residents either are currently using or would like to visit. The need for an interactive map showing public trails, water access locations, and recreation destinations as well as the development of a well developed wayfinding plan for all trails and blue-ways was desired.

Future Opportunities

The Future Opportunities focus group included representatives from communities such as Willard, and Maple Hill where no parks and recreation activities currently occur, as well as representatives of the Hispanic and foster parent communities. Participants of this group discussed how best to provide recreation services for the increasing population including the need to provide not only additional facilities but programs that involve traditionally underserved residents such as the Hispanic and disability communities. This group desired a splash pad, fitness stations, multi-purpose fields, more trails and passive recreation opportunities.

Arts/Drama

The Arts/Drama focus group included representatives from the local artists' community, art educators, as well as a private performance arts company. Some of the ideas from this meeting included the development of story-telling events, concerts, performing arts exhibits, craft classes, and summer camps as well as the idea of creating a barn quilt trail. This group wanted more opportunities for area partners to get involved with County special events and classes. County history was mentioned as a unifying theme for many of the ideas this group proposed.

Youth

The Youth focus group was comprised of teens who participate in local sports and other recreation activities such as skateboarding. This insightful meeting revealed how important County parks were to area youth, especially in the current pandemic atmosphere. Participants appreciated the public facilities available and desired additional programs and expanded facilities. Discussion included the need for life skills classes, arts and crafts, both organized sports and unprogrammed social events to help youth form relationships, share ideas and develop into well adjusted adults. There was a desire for better marketing of recreation events and programming, more indoor recreation space, and opportunities to partner with other groups in the county on social issues, volunteer opportunities, environmental improvements, and societal change. Youth participants understood the value of public recreation facilities and programs and wanted to see these resources improved and expanded in Pender County.

Focus Group Results

Focus group notes were analyzed to identify reoccurring needs. The top five (5) most frequently mentioned needs from the five (5) focus group meetings were all mentioned by four (4) of the five (5) focus groups. These were, in unranked order: increased communication, walking and biking trails, increased partnerships, water access and water play, and increased programming. Each identified need is further discussed below.

Four (4) out of five (5) focus groups mentioned the need for communication, specifically external communication, with two groups mentioning the need for a social media coordinator. Four (4) out of five (5) focus groups mentioned the need for additional walking and biking trails. Four (4) out of five (5) focus groups mentioned the need for increased partnerships, specifically with Pender County Schools, local churches, the Senior Games, and the Arts Council. Four (4) out of five (5) focus groups mentioned the need for water access such as kayak launches and access to the Intercoastal Waterway. Water play in the form of a splashpad was also mentioned as a need. Four (4) out of five (5) focus groups mentioned the need for increased programming including soccer, basketball, theater, adaptive athletics, and multigenerational programs.

Stakeholder Interviews

10 (10) stakeholder interviews were held with a total of thirty-two (32) participants. The goals of the stakeholder interviews were to connect with current partners, including intergovernmental partners, in order to assess current relationships and explore ways to better collaborate. The stakeholders interviewed were: Pender Co. Schools, Pender Co. Grounds Maintenance, Pender Co. Facilities Maintenance, Pender Co. Sheriff Dept, Pender Co. Health Dept, Pender Co. Emergency Mgmt., Pender Co. Planning Dept., Recreation Partners West, Recreation Partners East, and Special Events partners. Each group discussed current and future parks and recreation partnership desires and needs. A summary of each interview is provided below.

Pender County Schools

Both County Schools and Recreation staff saw their relationship as positive and healthy. Maintenance issues of both schools and parks were of concern and how best to improve communications with regard to use of fields and courts for programming and convenience of residents was discussed. The need to improve partnerships between the County and municipalities was also apparent as was the desire of County Schools to participate in future ventures with Parks and Recreation.

Pender County Grounds Maintenance

Maintenance was described as a critical part of keeping Pender County parks safe and operable for public use. Challenges described included a lack of good communication between departments and staff, limited staff numbers and a lack of adequate storage facilities for equipment and materials. Participants also shared a desire for park maintenance staff with specialized skills such as playground safety inspection, turf knowledge, etc. Other issues mentioned were the need for better coordination between scheduling of certain maintenance tasks such as field spraying with public use of fields, hours of operation, and travel time between facilities needing work.

Pender County Facility Maintenance Division

Existing staff was mentioned as being knowledgeable and resourceful with regard to adapting to limited resources and problem solving at County park facilities. Concerns about staff turnover from knowledgeable staff with new less experienced people was mentioned as a major hurdle to maintaining County parks at existing levels. A possible solution mentioned was to provide market pay rates and benefits to attract/retain adequately skilled employees. There was also worry that adding new facilities without also adding additional maintenance staff would be detrimental to providing the type of recreation facilities residents deserved. The addition of more regular facility inspections and assessment for needed repairs and preventative maintenance was suggested.

Pender County Sheriff Department

Participants discussed the success of County parks and acknowledged impending population growth. Various recreation programs/activities were seen as growing such as disc golf, pickleball, ball sports, shooting sports and trail use. There was concern that organized sports leagues were monopolizing the limited public facilities, limiting the open use by non-league residents. Better communication and scheduling of games/practices was seen as needed to mitigate the problem. Another topic discussed was how best to mitigate security issues at County parks. Possible solutions included having more staff at each location to monitor and report to law enforcement when needed, and additional visits by law enforcement either by officers, park rangers, etc. Other suggestions included more public education and ability of park patrons to communicate with County staff, and addition of surveillance cameras, call boxes, and facility perimeter fencing.

Pender County Health and Environmental Health Department

The desire for more partnership between the health/environmental health and parks and recreation departments was stressed during this meeting. Shared funding and event opportunities were suggested as ways to help both departments reach their service goals.

Emergency Management

This meeting emphasized how critical recreation facilities are as possible staging locations for emergency management during disaster responses. Suggestions included internet network connectivity/Wi-Fi at parks, men's and women's showers and sleeping quarters at parks to be used during flooding/hurricane events, hookups for generators, ample parking areas for trucks and trailers, and temporary tents for staging recovery efforts. Other desires included safe walking trails, a dog park, cycle paths, and better stormwater management at all park locations.

Pender County Planning and Community Development Department

The growth of subdivisions, ongoing efforts to expand utility service in the County and the need to continue to invest in recreation facilities was discussed. Participants were concerned about how best to provide recreation services to traditionally underserved areas of the County. Suggestions included more investment by the County into future facilities, improvements of existing facilities, partnerships with municipalities and other recreation providers. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) buyout properties were seen as potential locations for needed future parks, water access locations, and greenway/trail heads. Use of FEMA properties were seen as restrictive but in need of further investigation.

East Recreation Providers and West Recreation Providers

These two groups represented recreations partners from west and east Pender County. The two groups were interviewed separately, but both groups shared in their desire for additional fields and courts (indoor/outdoor) to deal with increased demand. Additional discussion items included: more space to schedule practices, games, and tournaments and the desire for more volunteers, a clear system to operate concessions during events, more parking at all locations, and better communication with County staff concerning reservation of fields/courts, and facility maintenance and security issues.

Special Events

This group discussed the significance of seasonal festivals and events, including but not limited to the Spot and Blueberry Festivals. Participants agreed that special events fostered positive benefits to the tourism economy and economic impacts of increased visitation to Pender County. The need for venues and marketing for existing and future events was stressed. The availability of both outdoor and indoor spaces were mentioned as crucial to the success of special events programming that the County was involved with. Other desired amenities to support special events included fair grounds, camp grounds, boat ramps, athletic fields and courts (indoor/outdoor), botanical gardens, visitor's centers for environmental tourism, etc. This group felt that County parks and recreation should develop a unique branding campaign.

Interview notes were analyzed to identify reoccurring themes. The top five (5) most frequently mentioned themes from the nine (9) stakeholder interviews, in order from most to least mentioned, were: expanded partnerships and information sharing, increased communication (both internal and external), the need for additional space, increased safety, and the need for additional Parks and Recreation staff. Each theme is further discussed below.

In six (6) of the nine (9) interviews, stakeholders mentioned the need for expanded partnerships to include resource and information sharing. For example, intergovernmental information sharing with the Pender County Planning and Community Development Department could help determine park locations based on Planning Dept. knowledge such as upcoming infrastructure improvements and development volumes. In five (5) of the nine (9) interviews, stakeholders mentioned the need for increased communication, both internally and externally. For example, the special events stakeholders suggested a multi-faceted approach to communication to include a social media coordinator. In five (5) of the nine (9) interviews, stakeholders mentioned the need for additional space for activities, to include field space, parking, storage, and events. 3 In three (3) of the nine (9) interviews, stakeholders mentioned the need for increased safety and security. Some areas of concern were the parking lots, unstaffed hours, and emergency notification. 3 of 9 mentioned the need for additional Parks and Recreation staff to coordinate programs and maintain facilities.

Community and Stakeholder Input Results

Results from a community survey, eight (8) public meetings, five (5) focus group meetings and nine (9) stakeholder interviews represent a diverse cross-section of Pender County residents, including geographic, and population group diversity. Data collection methods were triangulated in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of community needs, including input from current partners, unserved groups, the general public, and traditionally underrepresented individuals.

Across all methods, a total of 866 individuals provided input for the Plan. When taken together, the four (4) data collection methods provide a robust and diverse sample with findings that should be considered when developing future facilities and programming. The combined results are further discussed below.

Though many valuable inferences can be made from an analysis of the community and stakeholder input collected, the following analysis will focus on identified needs for future parks facilities and programming in order to inform recommendations for this Plan. The top three most frequently mentioned needs from each data collection method are identified below.

Future Parks Facility Needs

Survey: Walking/jogging/hiking trails, playgrounds, and bike paths and splash pad (which were tied for third)

Public Meetings: Water access, walking/jogging/hiking trails, bike paths

Focus Groups: Walking and biking trails, water access and splash pad, soccer and basketball facilities

Stakeholder Interviews: Increased facility maintenance staff, increased safety initiatives such as cameras

Future Program Needs

Survey: youth enrichment programs (STEM, Field Trips, etc.), youth summer day camps, and concerts.

Public Meetings: Outdoor concerts, farmers market, open gym

Focus Groups: Increased programming, programming through partnerships to include Pender County Schools, local churches, the Senior Games, and the Arts Council, and programming for specific groups such as teens, older adults, and people with disabilities

Stakeholder Interviews: Increased programming staff

STATE AND NATIONAL FINDINGS

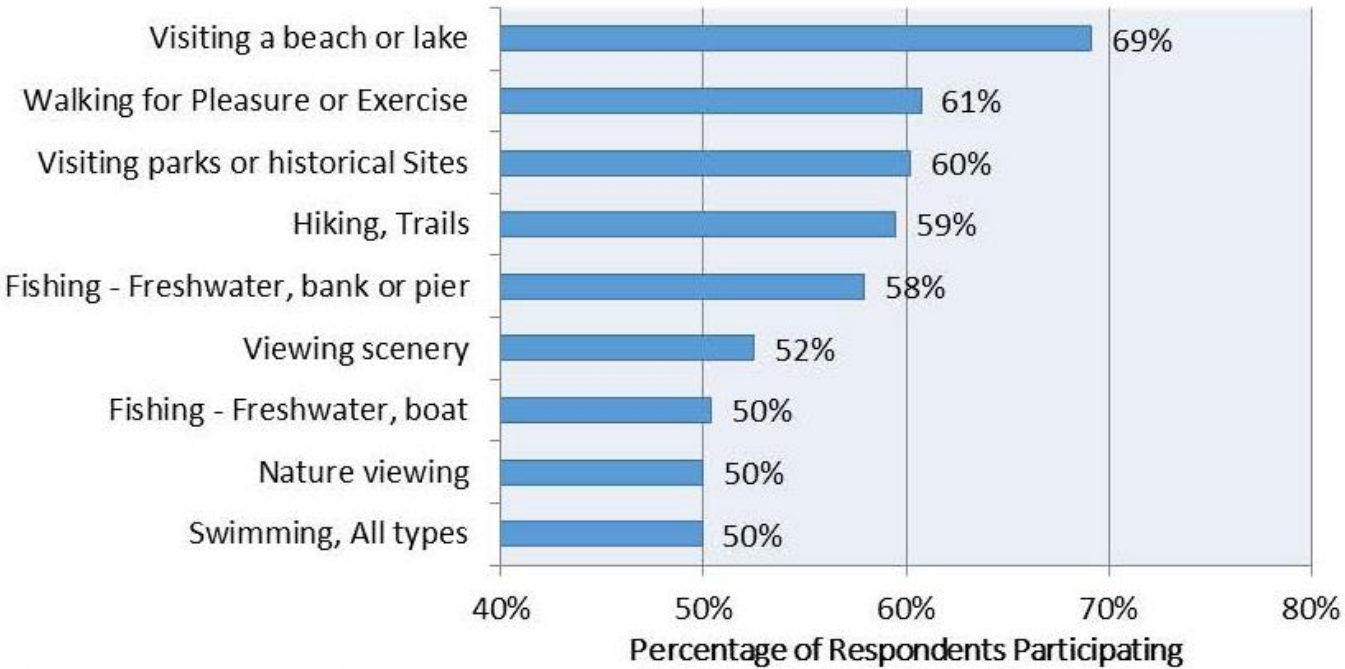
State and national trends in outdoor recreation are important as they can help predict what recreation activities may be expected or desired by park users in Pender County. Local governments (cities, towns, and counties) provide 39% of the public recreational opportunities in the United States.

As summarized in the excerpted table below, the 2021 Outdoor Participation Trends Report, generated by the Outdoor Foundation, showed that the top 5 most popular outdoor recreational activities nationwide in 2021 were: running, jogging, trail running, hiking freshwater, saltwater, and fly fishing, road biking, mountain biking, and BMX, car, backyard, backpacking, and RV camping.

MOST POPULAR OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES BY PARTICIPATION RATE

1 RUNNING, JOGGING AND TRAIL RUNNING	21.0% of Americans	63.8 million participants
2 HIKING	19.0% of Americans	57.8 million participants
3 FRESHWATER, SALTWATER AND FLY FISHING	18.0% of Americans	54.7 million participants
4 ROAD BIKING, MOUNTAIN BIKING AND BMX	17.3% of Americans	52.7 million participants
5 CAR, BACKYARD, BACKPACKING AND RV CAMPING	15.8% of Americans	47.9 million participants

The top 9 most popular outdoor activities in North Carolina reported by the North Carolina Outdoor Recreation Plan for 2020–2025 (NCORP) are: visiting a beach or lake, walking for pleasure or exercise, visiting parks or historical sites, hiking, trails, freshwater fishing from a bank or pier, viewing scenery, fishing from a boat, nature viewing, and swimming, all types. These findings are summarized in the excerpted table below.



STAFFING EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Pender County Parks and Recreation currently has four full-time employees that work to create the quality of life environment for users of the parks system. Pender County's estimated population is 60,203 and the current staffing levels are well below average of typical agencies serving similar population sizes. The existing grounds maintenance staff is currently housed under the Facility and Fleet Department and have responsibilities in other areas across the County which potentially creates a low level of service for the County's current parks and recreation facilities.

Based on the NRPA staffing guidelines, the minimum number of full-time staff necessary to support community recreation needs is equivalent to 5.1 per 10,000 residents. For Pender County's current population of 60,203, 30.7 Full Time Employee (FTE) are recommended. Pender County currently has 22 FTE for a deficit of 8.7 FTE staff members.

Another measure, the 2021 NRPA Agency Performance Review finds that the median full-time staff equivalent (FTE) for parks and recreation departments across the United States is 9 per 10,000 residents. Based on this measure the County should provide 54.2 FTE to match the median of agencies serving populations between 50,000 and 99,999. When Pender County staffing levels are compared with other Parks and Recreation Departments nationally, a deficit of 23.5 FTE is found. An inventory of current staff and recommendations for future staffing is included on the following page.

30.7 FTE

The minimum number of full-time staff equivalent is 5.1 per 10,000 residents based on the NRPA staffing guidelines for Pender County's current population of 60,203.

22 FTE

The current number of full-time staff equivalent staff provided by Pender County to support the recreational needs for the present population of 60,203.

-8.7 FTE

The current staffing deficit based NRPA staffing guidelines for Pender County's current population of 60,203.



Finding qualified maintenance staff is critical to providing quality services

Current Pender County Parks and Recreation Staffing

Parks and Recreation

Assistant County Manager/Parks and Recreation Director (1)
Parks and Recreation Supervisor (2)
Recreation Coordinator (1)
Part-time Recreation Coordinator (2) (2 currently vacant)
Part-time Facility Attendant (8) (5 currently vacant)

Seasonal

Summer Camp Staff (8)

Grounds and Park Maintenance (currently under Facility and Fleet Services Department)

Parks and Grounds Superintendent (1)
Groundworker (5)

Seasonal

Temporary Groundworker (2)

Shooting Range

Part-time Range Safety Officer (15)
Part-time Office Assistant (3)

Immediate Needs for Pender County Parks and Recreation Staffing (2022–2025)

Parks and Recreation

Recreation Assistant (1)
Special Events and Marketing Coordinator (1)
Athletics Coordinator (1)

Seasonal

Summer Camp Staff (16) *depending on program registration

Shooting Range

Chief Range Safety Officer (1)

Grounds and Park Maintenance (proposed transfers from Facilities and Fleet Services department)

Grounds and Parks Superintendent (1)
Groundworker (5)
Park Custodian (2)
Seasonal Temporary Groundworker (2)

Grounds and Park Maintenance (proposed new positions)

Maintenance Crew Leader (1)
Maintenance Technician (1)
Park Technician (1)
Part-time Maintenance Technician (2)

Seasonal

Future Needs for Pender County Parks and Recreation Staffing (2026 – 2032)

Parks and Recreation

Dedicated Parks and Recreation Director (1)
Wellness Coordinator (1)
Specialized Recreation Coordinator (1)
Environmental Education/Outdoor Adventure Coordinator (1)

Seasonal

Contractual Program Staff (as needed for new programming)

Grounds and Park Maintenance

Maintenance Technician (4) (Scotts Hill and US 117 north properties)
Park Technician (1)
Park Custodian (2)
Part-time Maintenance Technician (2)

Seasonal

Temporary Groundworker (1)

This master plan covers a planning period of ten years. The facilities to be implemented during that time as part of the recommendations will require some level of additional staffing and additional funding for facility operation and maintenance. Consideration of these budgetary impacts should be made prior to facility implementation.

Multiple factors influence what the future staffing needs of the Pender County Parks and Recreation Department will encompass. These can include population growth, available tax dollars, capital improvement plans, and development of tourism efforts. Staff compensation should be fair and based on market precedents. Maintaining adequate staffing for parks and recreation facilities and programs will be necessary to foster a good quality of life for County residents and prospective businesses that may seek to relocate to Pender County.

Pender County is currently extremely understaffed in both recreation and park maintenance staff. Pender County currently provides 36 facilities available for rent; however, only 6 maintenance staff are responsible for keeping these and all other County-owned facilities safe and useable. In addition to struggles concerning park maintenance, the six staff members responsible for maintaining the parks are currently under the Facility and Fleet Department and have responsibilities in other areas across the County which potentially creates a low level of service for the County's current park facilities.

Pender County should strive to provide a higher level of park maintenance service to meet the current and future demands anticipated at county operated recreation facilities. To help provide this park maintenance the County should reallocate the parks maintenance staff to be under the jurisdiction of the Parks and Recreation Department. These dedicated parks maintenance technicians will be better suited to provide the community with the desired level of facilities needed in the County.

The County recreation department also needs to add additional full-time and part-time employees for programming needs, preferably situated at each facility. The County's population is growing and parks and facilities will continue to see increasing use. Pender County should provide adequate programming and maintenance staff to continue providing safe and enjoyable recreation services to the community.



Image credit: Laurie Wierse, Pender County 2021 Photo Contest

PARKS AND RECREATION INVENTORY AND ASSESSMENT



Auditorium at Penderlea Community Park

TYPES OF PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES

A comprehensive park system is made up of a variety of park types ranging from small neighborhood playgrounds to larger parks with athletic fields, playgrounds, community centers, and open space. Park models are used as guidelines for fulfilling the future recreational needs of communities. Not all of these types of parks are the responsibility of the County government; other entities (federal, state, and local municipalities) play a role in providing recreational opportunities as well. To further understand the County's role in providing recreation services to its citizens, it is necessary to understand all the elements of a community's comprehensive park system. The following types of parks and recreation facilities may or may not be included in Pender County's park system.

Regional Parks

Typically very large sites, Regional Parks like Moores Creek National Battlefield in Pender County, provide recreational open space and historical and educational opportunities. On these sites, the unique qualities that exemplify the natural features found there, such as diverse land formation, vegetation, and wildlife, are preserved. Most Regional Park facilities contain environmental centers, campsites, nature trails, observation decks, and picnic areas. In addition, open fields for non-structured activities, such as frisbee throwing or kite flying, are also generally found there.

Neighborhood Parks

Offering the public a convenient source of recreation while serving as the social focus point of neighborhoods, Neighborhood Parks like Rotary Park in the Town of Burgaw provide both active and passive recreation opportunities and are usually located within walking distance of the area served.

District Parks

Major sources of active recreation for several neighborhoods, District Parks such as Hampstead Kiwanis Park and Pender Memorial Park, in Pender County, are intensely developed, offering a multitude of facilities in order to serve their intended geographic user area. Activities are balanced between active and passive recreation and typically accommodate athletic league sporting events, tournament competitions, passive recreation opportunities, such as walking for pleasure, wildlife observation, and picnicking. District parks present great opportunities for non-traditional types of recreation.

Community Parks

Focused on meeting community-based recreational needs as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces, Community Parks like Penderlea Community Park, in Pender County, provide a variety of recreational resources from active programming in a gymnasium to performing arts. Compared to district parks, community parks have a smaller range of recreation facilities.

Mini Parks

Small parks typically located in urban areas or associated with residential or institutional developments, mini parks can bring communities together with events, promote local history, or deliver beauty to both residents and visitors. Mini parks provide very limited, isolated, or unique recreational needs and are typically located within walking distance of the area served.

Linear Parks or Greenways

Developed for a variety of modes of recreational travel, such as hiking, biking, and driving, linear parks exist for several reasons: to connect existing recreational facilities, to facilitate public right-of-ways, to connect destination points, and for scenic views and leisure touring.

The size of linear parks vary considerably, depending on their intended use, terrain and the distance between entities to be connected, such as parks, schools, cultural/historical resources, residential areas, and businesses. Often linear parks are developed within a large land area designated for protection and management of the natural environment, with recreation opportunities as a secondary objective.



Moore's Creek National Battlefield, a Regional Park in Pender County

Special Use Facilities

Facilities that exist for the sole purpose of enhancing or utilizing a special man-made or natural feature, Special Use Facilities can include beaches, parkways, historical sites, sites of archeological significance, swimming pools, conservation easements, and flood plains. Minimum standards relating to acreage or population have not been established by the park and recreation industry for this category of park. A size that is sufficient to protect and interpret the resource, while providing optimum use, is considered desirable. The Holly Shelter Shooting Range an example of a Special Use Facility.

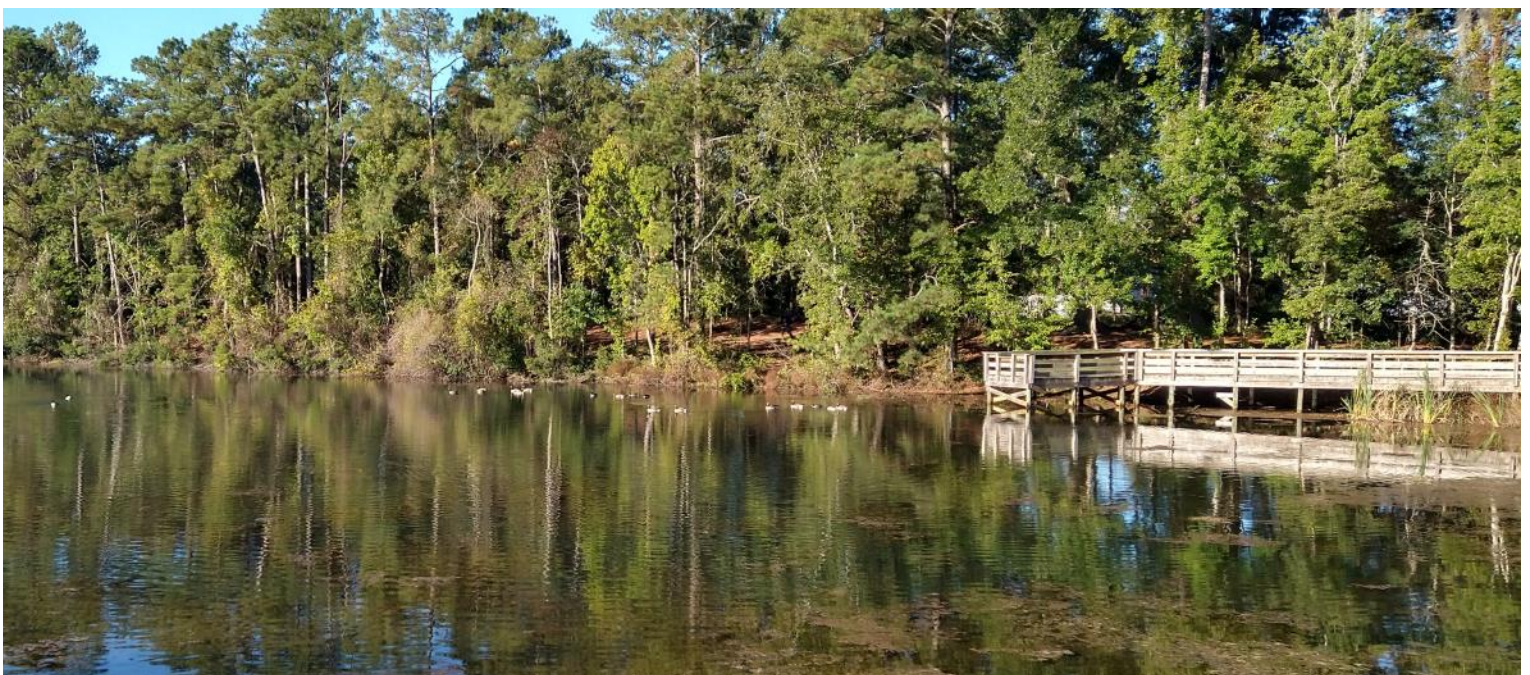
Public Open Space

Defined as any land acquired for the purpose of keeping it in a primarily undeveloped state, Public Open Space can provide the following functions:

- Preservation of drainage areas for water supplies (watersheds)
- Protection of areas which are particularly well suited for growing crops (farmland preservation)
- Protection of communities to prevent urban sprawl (greenbelts)
- Protection of wildlife habitat (sanctuaries)
- Protection of approach and take-off areas near airports (clear zones)
- Protection of undevelopable land (landfills)
- Protection of areas aesthetically pleasing for a corridor (viewshed)

While these areas are some of the more common open spaces, many others exist. The Pender County park system currently offers natural open space at Millers Pond Park. Millers Pond Park is predominantly an open space facility featuring a pond, trails, and minimal day-use amenities, such as a picnic shelter and playground. This facility allows visitors to enjoy beautiful views of the surrounding flora and fauna, while providing a mix of other amenities, such as educational signage, fishing, and a canoe/kayak launch.

A more detailed definition of typical park types can be found in Appendix B.



The viewing platform at Millers Pond Park



PUBLIC RECREATION INVENTORY

Public lands located within Pender County play an active role in providing recreation opportunities to residents and visitor within the County. These public spaces are made available through multiple public land managers, such as local municipalities, the State of North Carolina, and National Land Management Agencies.

Pender County Public School System

Public school recreation facilities are made available for use by the community. The Pender County Public School System operates nineteen public schools that have recreational facilities typical of most schools: playgrounds, baseball/softball fields, gymnasiums, etc. This includes eight elementary schools, five middle schools, and three high schools. The County School system also offers three non-traditional type schools with a K-8 school, one early college, and one innovative learning academy.

The North Carolina Community Schools Act (G.S. 115C Art. 13) was passed to allow “greater community use of public-school facilities.” Since school facilities represent an investment of the citizenry for the education of students and for the general benefit of the community and its citizens, their proper use and enjoyment shall be encouraged and permitted when such does not interfere with school activities.

Local Municipalities

Town of Atkinson

Hoggard Park

- Picnic shelter/tables
- Playground
- Open Space

Town of Atkinson Gym

- Indoor Basketball Court

Town of Burgaw

Hankins and Harrell Memorial Parks (separate but adjacent parks)

- Picnic shelter/tables
- Playground
- Restrooms
- Tennis courts

Town of Surf City

Soundside Park

- 11.35 acres
- Amphitheater
- Boat dock/public water access
- Fishing areas
- Playground
- Shelter/pavilion

Batts Family Park

- 0.77 acres
- Basketball court
- Playground
- Restrooms

Public Beach Access

- 39 Beach access sites (35 are in Pender County)

Ashe Street Park and Johnson Park

- Open space
- Osgood Canal Greenway and Urban Trail

Wilmington Street Park

- Walking trail
- Open space

Neva Albury Recreation Area

- 0.70 acres
- Pavilion
- Playground
- restrooms

Pecan Park

- 0.25 acres
- Open space

Rotary Park

- Open space
- Restrooms/shelter
- Walking trail
- Playground
- Picnic tables

Surf City Community Center

- 22.7 acres
- Baseball/softball fields
- Basketball court
- Community building
- Fitness center
- Multipurpose field
- Playground
- Restrooms
- Tennis courts

Town of Topsail Beach

Bush Marina

- Fee-based boat ramp
- Fee-based wet slips
- Sound access

Public Beach Access

- 31 Beach/Sound access sites

Topsail Beach Town Center

- 2 Pickleball Courts
- 1 Half Basketball Court
- Open Space
- Restrooms
- 2 Picnic Shelters
- Playground

Federal Recreation Facilities

Moore's Creek National Battlefield

- Open space
- Historical elements
- Educational opportunities



Moore's Creek National Battlefield, located in Pender County, provides visitors recreational open space, historical monuments, and educational opportunities

State Public Land

The State of North Carolina manages more than 250,000 acres through its state parks system. This public land is made available to provide recreational opportunities as well as protect and conserve the natural heritage of North Carolina. The North Carolina State Park system manages over 8,000 acres of parkland in Pender County.

Another state public lands provider in Pender County is North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC). This state public land manager manages and protects close to 81,000 acres of land in the County. NCWRC goal is to “conserve and sustain the state’s fish and wildlife resources.” With this land set aside for conservation and research, the NCWRC also provides recreational amenities.

North Carolina State
Recreation

Lea-Huttaff Island
Natural Area

- 5,641 acres
- Hiking
- Nature observation

Sandy Run Savanna
State Natural Area

- 2,500 acres
- Hiking
- Paddling
- Fishing
- Picnicking
- Swimming
- Camping
- Nature observation

North Carolina Wildlife
Resources Commission

Holly Shelter
Game Land

- 48,795 acres
- 3D archery course
- Shooting range (rifle and pistol)
- Camping (near Shaw Highway)

Holly Shelter Boating
Access

- Boat Ramp
- Canoe/Kayak Access
- Parking

Sawpit Landing

- Boat Ramp
- Canoe/Kayak Access
- Parking

Surf City Boat Ramp

- Boat Ramp
- Canoe/Kayak Access
- Playground
- Fishing Pier
- Restrooms
- Parking

Angola Bay Game Land

- 24,483 acres
- Hunting
- Bird watching
- Nature photography

Cape Fear River Wetlands
Game Land

- 7,260 acres
- Hunting
- Fishing
- Boat access

Shelter Creek Boat Ramp

- Boat Ramp
- Canoe/Kayak Access
- Parking

Hampstead Boating
Access Area

- Boat Ramp
- Canoe/Kayak Access
- Parking

PRIVATE RECREATION INVENTORY

Private recreation providers, non-profit organizations, and developers are an important component for the County by providing resources and opportunities for the County’s recreation system. Private developers can assist Pender County by the dedication, construction, and/or preservation of future park sites, open space, and/or greenway corridors during the overall development process. This is not an exclusive list and other private recreation providers do exist.

Private Community Centers—*Examples provided not endorsed by Pender County.*

- Canetuck Community Center (Pender Recreation Partner) — indoor space and basketball court
- Edgecombe Community Center (Pender County Recreation Partner) — indoor space, basketball court, softball field, playground, and picnicking
- Joint Community Development Center (Pender County Recreation Partner) — indoor space, basketball court, and multipurpose ballfield
- Maple Hill Resource Center (Pender County Recreation Partner) — indoor space, basketball court, softball field, and playground (recent flood damage)
- Willard Outreach Center — indoor space, basketball court, softball field, walking trails, playground, picnicking, and martial arts class

Nature Preserves

- Abbey Nature Preserve — educational programs, bird watching, hiking, nature observation, leashed dogs allowed

Fishing Piers

- Jolly Roger Fishing Pier— 803 Ocean Blvd, Topsail Beach, NC 28445, Saltwater pier fishing, tackle shop, bird watching, nature observation, walking
- Surf City Ocean Fishing Pier — 112 S Shore Dr, Surf City, NC 28445, Saltwater pier fishing, tackle shop, bird watching, nature observation, walking

Golf Courses

Castle Bay Golf Course
2368 Country Club Drive
Hampstead, NC 28443

Ironclad Golf
107 Links Court
Hampstead, NC 28443

Olde Point Country Club
513 Country Club Drive
Hampstead, NC 28443





Private Campgrounds

- Blackbeard’s Campground — 610 Roland Avenue
- Laniers Campground — 1161 Spot Lane
- Virginia Creek Campground — 440 Crooked Creek Road
- Rocky Point Campground—14565 Ashton Road



According to the 2020 National Park Service Campground Industry Analysis Report, “RV and Park Model shipments are increasing at double digit growth rates and indicates a market preference for this type of accommodation as part of a diverse camping experience.”(www.chmogov.com)

FACILITIES INVENTORY

Pender County currently owns, operates, and maintains seven park facilities. Each facility provides both active and passive recreational opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy. Map 2.1 shows the locations of these seven (7) parks. Each park facility will be further discussed in the following section.



1: HAMPSTEAD ANNEX

The historic 1924 Old Topsail School was restored to serve a variety of County functions including hosting events in its auditorium and pick-up ball games at the Rouse ball field. The prominent centralized location offers good community access and opportunities for parks and recreation programming.



2: HAMPSTEAD KIWANIS PARK

This park is a partnership between Pender County and the Kiwanis Club of Hampstead which promotes both active and passive recreation for the community of Hampstead and the County. It is a great park for families of all ages to visit and play. With athletic fields, playgrounds, open space, and trails, Hampstead Kiwanis Park has something for everyone.



3: HOLLY SHELTER SHOOTING RANGE

This special use facility is made possible through a partnership with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) and Pender County. The facility provides a safe, controlled environment for shooters of all skills to come and hone their firearm skills. The shooting range provides access to a rifle range, pistol range, archery range, and 3D target course.



4: MILLERS POND PARK

This park is a natural jewel with a seven acre pond and is on the Northeast Cape Fear River. This passive park is a beautiful space for visitors to observe nature and as a preserve for local flora and fauna.



5: PENDER COUNTY COURTHOUSE SQUARE

Pender County Courthouse is a historic courthouse located in the County seat of Burgaw with a large green square surrounding the building. This valuable asset to the County is used for a variety of festivals and special events that are well loved by the community and an economic boom for Pender County.



6: PENDER MEMORIAL PARK

Pender Memorial Park is a hub of active recreation. Located in the County seat of Burgaw, this park provides visitors access to organized sporting events with open space and playgrounds.

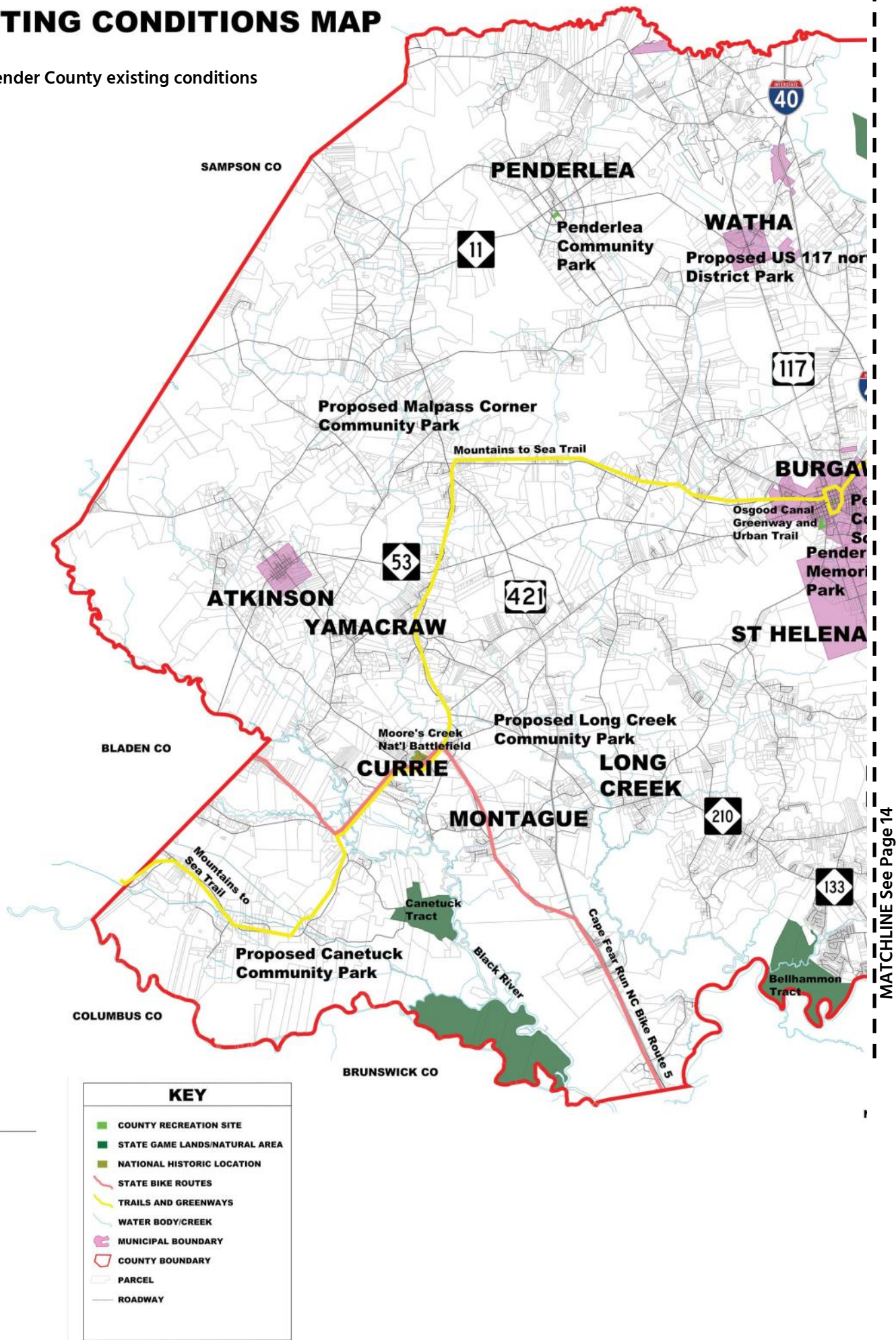


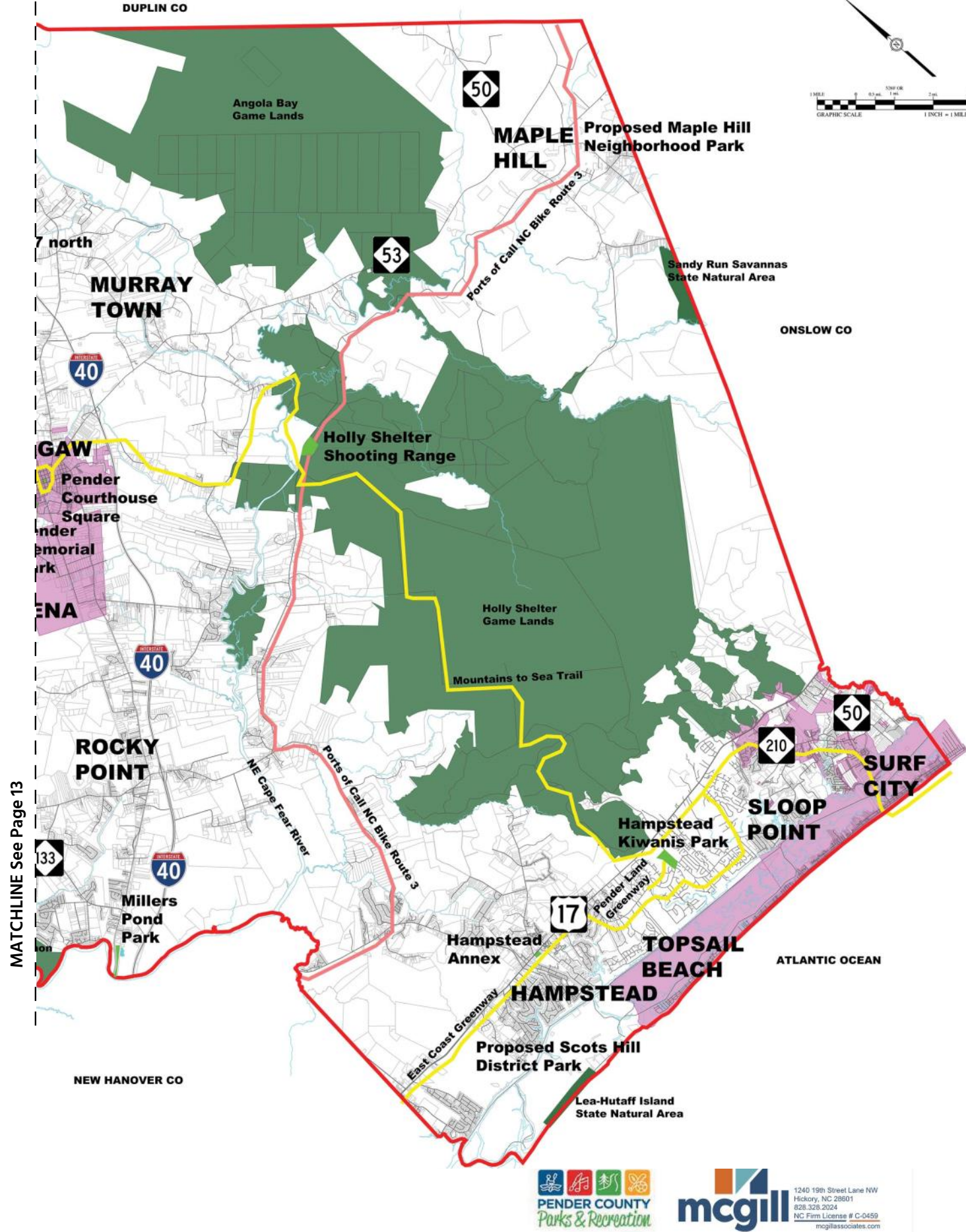
7: PENDERLEA COMMUNITY PARK

Penderlea Community Park was once the location of the historic Penderlea School. The historic buildings provide users with athletic, cultural, and educational opportunities through use of the indoor gym, a 782 seat auditorium, and classroom space. The surrounding open space provides opportunities for other forms of recreation.

EXISTING CONDITIONS MAP

Map 2.1 Pender County existing conditions





MATCHLINE See Page 13



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FACILITIES ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS



Auditorium, Hampstead Annex

Hampstead Annex

The Hampstead Annex is a neighborhood park located at 15060 US Hwy 17 and was built in the 1920s to serve as a school. In 2014, the building underwent a complete renovation and now serves as a County office and active hub of community activity. The Hampstead Annex houses the Pender County Departments of Health and Human Services, Planning, Community Development, Permitting and Inspections, Veteran's Services, Parks and Recreation, and the Sheriff's Department. It also includes an auditorium where County board meetings take place and which can be rented for community events as well as an outdoor multi-use field for sporting and community events. The parking area is available for community rental (yard sales, fund raisers, etc.). At the time of writing this plan, there was a possibility that the County library may expand in the space at the existing ball field.

Amenities include:

- (1) open space field with backstop
- (1) Conference room

- (1) Auditorium with seating for 244

Facility Assessment:

- Interior activities compete with County business day-use for space and parking
- No permanent sound system/projector equipment in auditorium

Recommendations

- Partner with area schools, drama clubs, musicians, etc. to develop performing arts programs for this facility
- Install sound system/projector equipment in auditorium

Hampstead Kiwanis Park

In 2002, over 54.4 acres of property along Sloop Point Loop Road in Hampstead were donated by the Tommie Little and Bill Clark Families for the creation of a park to serve the greater Hampstead community. Since then, Pender County has worked with the Hampstead Kiwanis Park board to develop and maintain the park, leveraging grant money, donations, and appropriations from the general fund to create a well-used and appreciated recreation facility in eastern Pender County.

This district park is a partnership with the Kiwanis Club of Hampstead which promotes active and passive recreation for the community of Hampstead and the County. It is a great park for families of all ages to visit and play. With athletic fields, playgrounds, open space, and trails, Hampstead Kiwanis Park has something for everyone. A master plan was developed and can be found in Appendix H.

Amenities include:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| (1) 355-foot lighted baseball field | (1) Restroom only facility |
| (1) 215-foot lighted baseball/softball field | (4) Batting cages |
| (2) 200-foot lighted baseball/softball fields | 1-3/4-mile paved walking trail |
| (3) Lighted multipurpose fields | (2) Sand volleyball courts |
| (1) Practice field/open space | (2) playgrounds |
| (2) Picnic shelters | (2) Gaga ball pits |
| (5) Fitness station areas | (1) Performance stage |
| (3) Concession/restroom facility | |
| (1) Lawn game area | |

Facility Assessment:

- Field drainage issues after heavy rain which often cause extended closures
- Damaged playground equipment due to age, heavy usage, and its proximity to salt air
- No maintenance building and fenced in yard for securing equipment instead of transporting daily
- Need additional athletic fields to meet demands of existing programs and accommodate new programs
- Limited use of performance stage due to exposure to the elements
- No large dedicated open space area for special events
- No public community center for programs, offices, rentals, etc.
- No splash pad, pickleball courts, tennis courts, basketball courts to serve a boarder population
- No fenced in area for dogs
- Security cameras need to be upgraded
- Need fiber for internet access for security and possibly public use
- Lack of shade at sports fields and playgrounds
- Parking areas need better signage to direct overflow to available spaces on south end of property
- Main marquee sign and park rules signage need to be updated and replaced
- No park staff on site during park operating hours as point of contact for public and to aid in security, safety, and maintenance
- Better control of unauthorized vehicles accesses park property outside of parking lots
- Have excessive maintenance issues with plumbing in restrooms
- Lack of storage space for program supplies

Recommendations:

- Address drainage on all athletic fields
- Install fiber for internet access for security cameras, etc.
- Upgrade security cameras for safety and reduce vandalism
- Assess and repair/replace playground equipment
- Assess and repair/replace plumbing in restrooms
- Begin due diligence and planning for the development of adjacent land owned by Hampstead Kiwanis Park, Inc. to accommodate additional multipurpose fields and possibly other needed/requested recreational facilities; splash pad, pickleball courts, tennis courts, basketball courts, and community center
- Install shade structures over bleachers at fields and benches at playgrounds
- Add prominent wayfinding and parking signage
- Update and replace park rules and main marquee signs
- Construct a roof/shelter over performance stage
- Construct a maintenance building with fenced in yard on south end of park
- Have at least two staff members in park during operating hours as a point of contact for public and to aid in security, safety, and maintenance



Example of shade structure over bleachers



Adding a splashpad will provide a welcome respite for visitors



Playground structure at Hampstead Kiwanis Park

Holly Shelter Shooting Range

This special use facility is made possible through a partnership with North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. The facility provides a safe, controlled environment for shooters of all skills to hone their firearm skills. The shooting range provides access to a rifle range, pistol range, archery range, and 3D target course. This facility is located within the Holly Shelter Game Lands and while not owned by the County is operated by Pender County Parks and Recreation.

Amenities include:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 12 lane, 200 yard rifle range | 12 lane, 50 yard pistol range |
| 2 lane archery range | 20 station 3D archery course |
| Classroom | |

Facility Assessment:

- Staff consists of only part time county employees
- Lacks a full-time facility manager
- Need dedicated, newer maintenance equipment
- Need maintenance facility for equipment
- Need shotgun range facility
- Need increased facility promotion/marketing

Recommendations

- Hire a full-time facility manager to manage maintenance and serve as a responsible point of contact during operating hours
- Update power equipment for maintaining grounds
- Construct a maintenance shed for storage of dedicated equipment and materials typically needed to efficiently operate this facility
- Work with NCWRC to construct a shotgun range
- Develop a marketing plan that includes web presence and Pender County Parks and Recreation brand identity to support the public’s awareness of this facility



Ample space helps to make shooting range popular



Holly Shelter Shooting Range 3D archery target

Millers Pond Park

Millers Pond Park is situated between US Highway 117, the railbanked rail corridor, and the Northeast Cape Fear River. The 30.8-acre site was used by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) as a source of fill dirt for a transportation improvement project, and the mining of fill resulted in the seven-acre freshwater pond that now adorns the property. NCDOT eventually sold the property to Pender County. This passive park is a beautiful space for visitors to observe nature and as a preserve for local flora and fauna.

Amenities include:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1/2-mile nature trail (approximately) | (1) Playground |
| (1) Picnic shelter/restroom facility | (1) Canoe/kayak launch |
| (1) Wildlife observation deck | (1) Fishing deck |

Assessment:

- Need fiber for internet access for security and possibly public use
- No security cameras
- Improve trail signage
- Some trees near walking trails and gathering areas have dead and/or hazardous limbs
- No swing set on playground
- No benches by playground
- Entry sign is difficult to see from road which could hinder new park visitors
- Need of picnicking areas

Recommendations

- Install fiber for internet access for security cameras, etc.
- Install security cameras for safety and reduce vandalism
- Assess trees near trails and gathering areas for safety and dangerous limbs and remove, where necessary
- Add educational signage and mileage walked signage around pond
- Assess and repair/replace playground equipment
- Add swing set to playground
- Add benches/sitting areas around the pond
- Work with North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission to determine if additional fish stockings are need-



Nature trail at Millers Pond Park

Pender County Courthouse Square

In 1876, the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad Company deeded a plot of land to the Pender County Board of Commissioners for the establishment of the town of Burgaw and for the construction of the new courthouse. The historic courthouse is surrounded by a large green square that is shaded by mature oak trees. The square serves as a neighborhood park and is a valuable asset to the County that is used for festivals and special events that are well loved by the community and are economic boon for Pender County.

Amenities include:

- (1) Open/event space
 - (1) Gazebo
- 1/4-mile sidewalk

Assessment:

- Gazebo condition is deteriorating and is too small to accommodate bands for special events
- Sidewalk lacks mileage-walked signage
- No public restrooms
- No security cameras
- Needs landscape maintenance plan

Recommendations:

- Add walking signage for sidewalk surrounding the courthouse square
- Install a new gazebo that can be used for special events
- Install security cameras for safety and to reduce vandalism
- Meet with Burgaw and County landscape maintenance staff to assess existing landscaping and update, where necessary, to improve health, aesthetics, security, and to discourage driving on grounds
- Relocate power outlets near street for better access
- Add additional power outlets near street for festival access



Pender County Courthouse building



Courthouse Square hosts Classic Cornhole Tournament

Pender Memorial Park

Located along South Smith and West Hayes Streets in the Town of Burgaw, Pender Memorial Park was first developed for use as the fairgrounds for the area, and later as the site of the athletic fields for the former Burgaw High School (now Burgaw Middle School). In the 1970s, Burgaw Dixie Youth leased the land from the County and developed an athletic complex to support their baseball games.

Pender Memorial Park is 27.33 acres and consists of three baseball/softball fields, two batting cages, a concession/restroom building, parking areas, a picnic shelter, and ingress/egress drives. Pender Memorial Park is a hub of active recreation. This district park provides visitors access to organized sporting events with open space and playgrounds. It is an asset to the County by providing the opportunity for athletic tournaments for the surrounding region.

Amenities include:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| (2) 200-foot lighted baseball/softball fields | (2) Practice field/open space |
| (1) 350-foot baseball/softball lighted softball field | (1) Picnic shelter |
| (1) Lighted multipurpose field | (1) Playground |
| (2) Batting cages | |
| (1) Half-acre non-programmed open space | |
| (2) Concession/restroom buildings | |

Assessment:

- Field drainage issues which cause fields to be closed often and for extended periods of time after heavy rain
- Lack of ADA access to baseball/softball fields
- Existing security cameras are outdated and difficult to access
- Need additional multipurpose/athletic fields to meet demands of existing programs and accommodate new programs
- Lack of shade at sports fields and playgrounds
- No park staff on site during park operating hours as point of contact for public and to aid in security, safety, and maintenance
- Need additional picnic shelter by playground for rentals
- Lack of adjacent land for expansion of park

Recommendations:

- Address drainage on all the ball fields
- Update and replace security cameras for safety and reduce vandalism
- Assess and repair/replace playground equipment
- Construct picnic shelter adjacent to playground
- Have at least two staff members in park during operating hours as a point of contact for public and to aid in security, safety, and maintenance
- Identify additional property in the vicinity of Pender Memorial Park to meet demand

Penderlea Community Park

Penderlea Community Park is located along W. H. Robbins Road and C.R. Dillard Road in Willard. The park offers an auditorium, gymnasium, classrooms, and green space. The buildings were formerly part of the historic Penderlea agricultural community. The “Farm City” was established in 1934 by the United States Department of the Interior and was the first of 152 subsistence resettlement projects under Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal. The community was laid out in a horseshoe fashion around a central community center that included an auditorium and gymnasium, presently known as the Penderlea Community Park. Radiating from the community center were small, 20-acre farms that were believed to be sufficient enough to provide homesteaders subsistence and cash income to then purchase the homesteads under a lend/lease agreement by the government. Each homestead featured a two or three bedroom house with running water, barn, poultry house, hog house, and washhouse.

Today citizens use Penderlea Community Park for athletic programs and special events. The surrounding open space provides opportunities for other forms of recreation.

Amenities include:

- Indoor gymnasium with multi-purpose court
- (3) Classrooms
- (1) Lawn game area (cornhole boards)
- (1) Unprogrammed open space

- Auditorium with seating for 782
- Storage rooms

Assessment:

- Limited day use amenities currently
- No dedicated walking trails
- No park staff on site during park operating hours as point of contact for public and to aid in security, safety, and maintenance
- Damaged wood floor in classroom three behind auditorium.
- No picnic shelter
- No outside restroom facility
- No permanent sound system/projector equipment in auditorium

Recommendations:

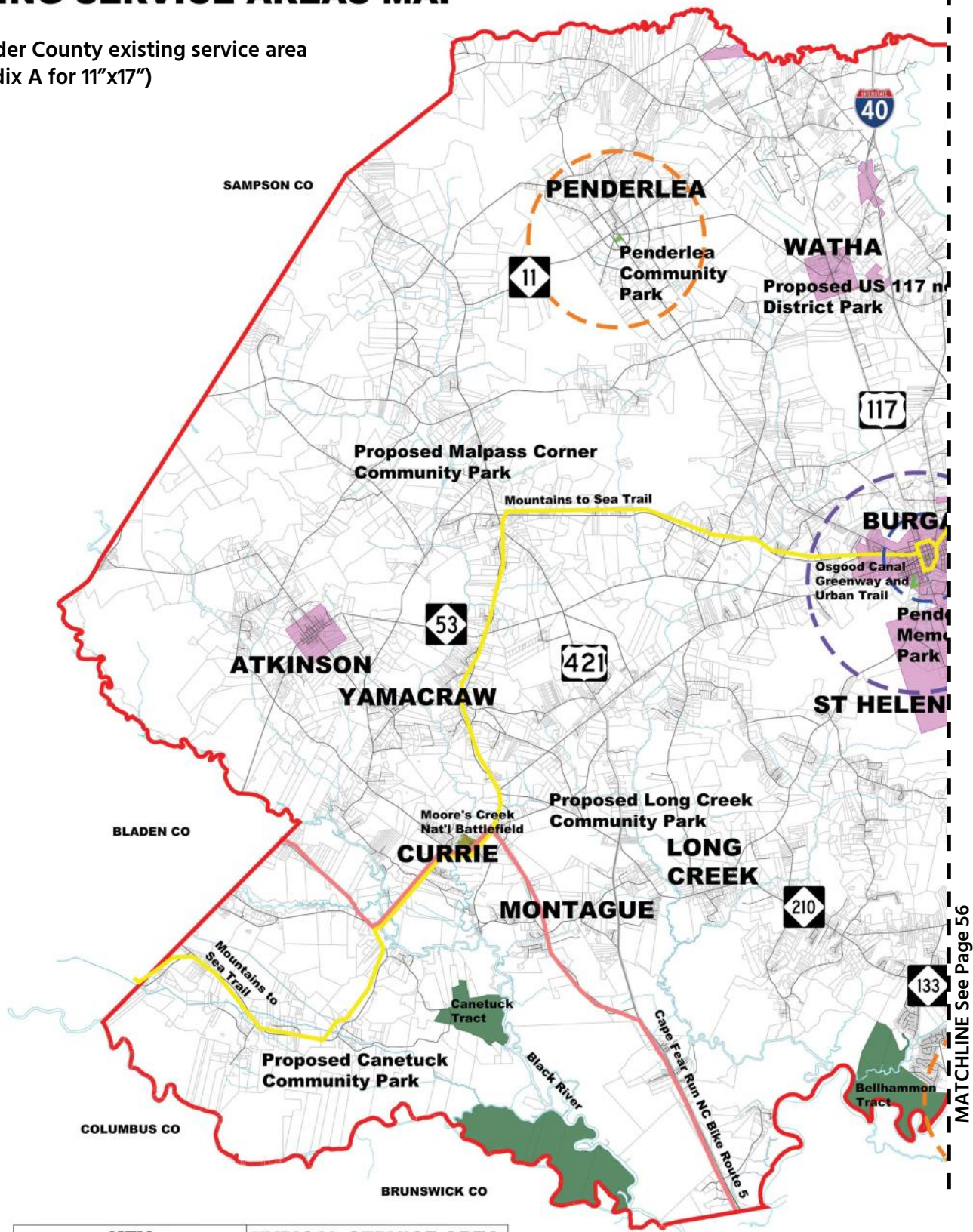
- Add walking path that is at least ¼-mile long
- Install security cameras for safety and



Indoor gymnasium with multi-purpose court at Penderlea Community Park

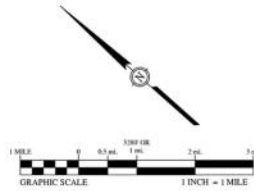
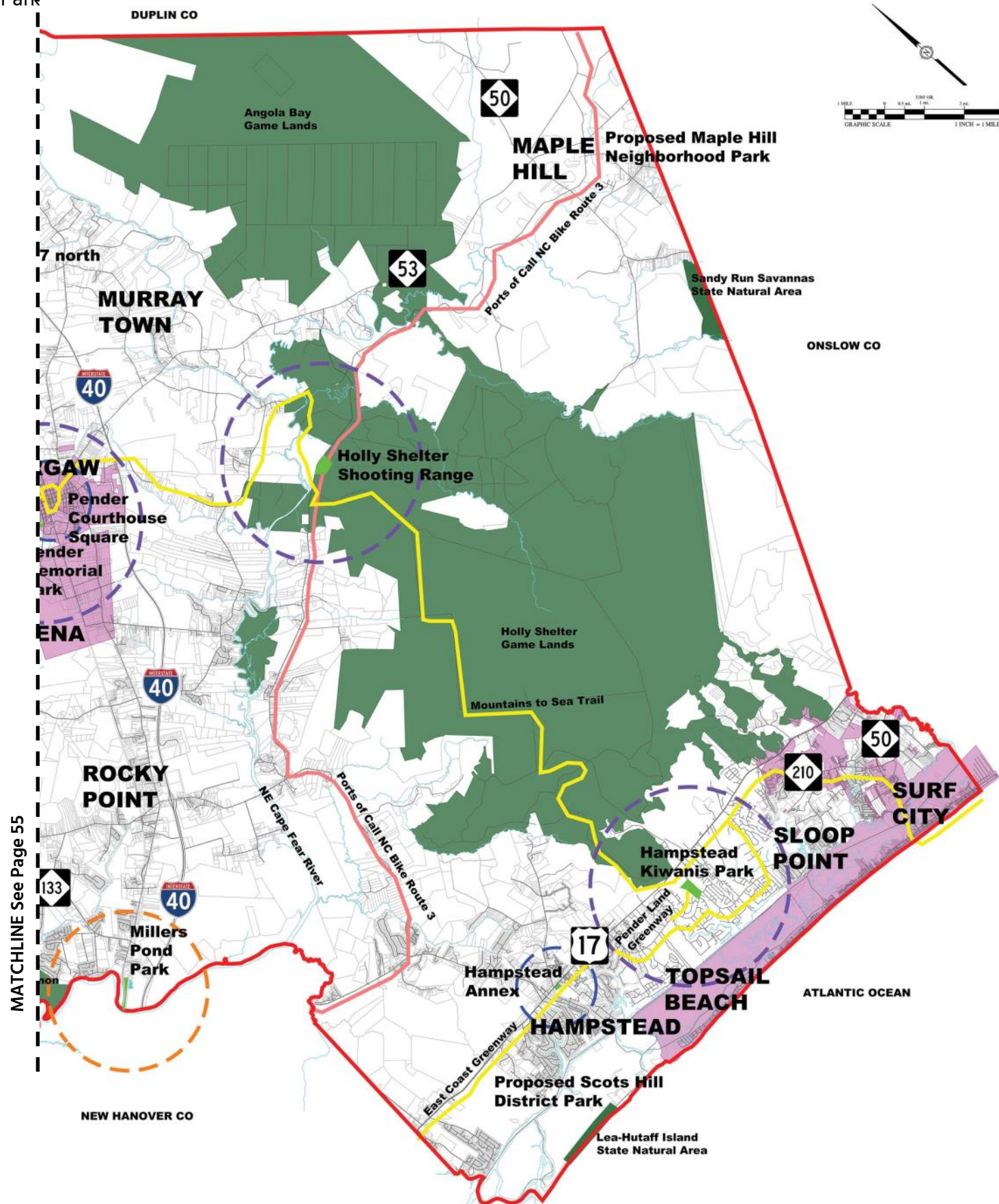
EXISTING SERVICE AREAS MAP

Map 3.1 Pender County existing service area
(See Appendix A for 11"x17")



KEY	TYPICAL SERVICE AREA
COUNTY RECREATION SITE	2.5 Mile (Existing District Park)
STATE GAME LANDS/NATURAL AREA	2.0 Mile (Existing Community Park)
NATIONAL HISTORIC LOCATION	1 Mile (Existing Neighborhood Park)
STATE BIKE ROUTES	
TRAILS AND GREENWAYS	
WATER BODY/CREEK	
MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY	
COUNTY BOUNDARY	
PARCEL	
ROADWAY	

MATCHLINE See Page 56



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FUTURE FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS

NRPA guidelines found Pender County deficient in 93.25 acres of district parks, 3.3 acres of community parks, 16.5 acres of neighborhood parks, and 7.5 acres of mini parks. Another measure, the 2015–2020 North Carolina NCORP ranked Pender County 78th out of the 100 North Carolina counties in residents per park acre. These deficiencies are further reflected in the Regional Growth Management Plan prepared by North Carolina’s Eastern Region Military Growth Task Force, which indicates that an additional 8–10 acres of neighborhood parks, 13 acres of community parks, and 25–27 acres of district parks are needed to address projected military-induced growth in Pender County. However, it should be noted that recreational opportunities such as access to the Holly Shelter game lands and the beach/sound are not included in the state or military analysis. These comparisons are further discussed on the following pages.

Geographic equity of park access is also an important consideration in order to ensure access for all Pender County residents. An analysis of recreation service areas can be used to make land acquisition recommendations for both current and future needs. Solutions to improving recreation in Pender County include providing facilities and amenities that residents desire and need, and locating them where residents have easy access. The existing recreation service areas shown in Map 3.1 identify service gaps and that the areas outside of the core of municipalities have the least access to parks. The service area radius for specific park types are based on guidelines found in the park descriptions in Appendix B. Future park site acquisitions should be balanced and proportional to service populations in all areas of the County.

To better understand what recreation resources a community has and how accessible those facilities and programs may be to the general population, this study looked at typical service areas. Map 3.1 illustrates what portions of the community lie within or near the typical recreation service areas. The outcome of this exercise reveals that portions of the community live far enough from recreational facilities that they cannot easily access them. Populations typically affected include children and older adults that do not drive. Both user groups generally have greater leisure time and can directly benefit from access to parks and recreation facilities.



Athletic field at Hampstead Kiwanis Park

When comparing a park system to national standards, one method is to examine the total acreage of the park system. The NRPA Park land guidelines (in acres) for the total service population of Pender County are provided in Tables 3.1 and 3.2. Population figures in this analysis, estimated at 60,203, include the estimated population of residents in the County as of 2021. The acreage requirement is based on the population ratio method (acres of park land per population of 1,000) pre-established for each classification of park.

2021 NRPA Agency Performance Review Key Findings



The 2021 NRPA Agency Performance Review provides benchmarks from recreation departments across the country

Based on the NRPA Park land guidelines contained in Tables 3.1, and 3.2 below, with the exception of community parks, Pender County does not meet the national standard guidelines for park acreage needs.

Table 3.1 Pender County existing park acreage and recommendations

TYPE OF PARK	Existing Pender County Acreage	Recommended for 2022 Population 60,203	Recommended for 2032 Population 72,153	(Surplus)/ Deficit for 2022 Population
REGIONAL PARK (NPS & NC) 1,000 acres or 10 acres/1,000 persons	NA	NA	NA	NA
DISTRICT PARK 200 acres or 5 acres/1,500 persons	107.7 acres	201 acres	241 acres	-93.25 acres
COMMUNITY PARK 2.5 acres/4,000 persons	41.3 acres	38 acres	45 acres	3.3 acres
NEIGHBORHOOD PARK 2 acres/4,000 persons	13.5 acres	30 acres	36 acres	-16.5 acres
MINI PARK 0.5 acres/4,000 persons	0 Acre	7.5 acres	9 acres	-7.5 acres

Table 3.2 Pender County existing park acreage

PENDER COUNTY EXISTING PARKS	
Hampstead Kiwanis Park (District)	54.4 acres
Pender Memorial Park (District)	27.3 acres
Millers Pond Park (Community)	30.8 acres
Penderlea Community Park (Community)	10.5 acres
Hampstead Annex (Neighborhood)	9.5 acres
Pender County Courthouse Square (Neighborhood)	4 acres
PENDER COUNTY PARK ACREAGE	136.5 acres

Map 4.1, on the following page, shows the following proposed future park facilities: two (2) district parks, three (3) community parks, and one (1) neighborhood park. Proposed parks are further discussed below.

2 New District Parks

Of the two (2) proposed district parks one will be on 60 acres of recently acquired land on US 117 north in the central north portion of Pender County, an area that has been identified as a high population growth area. The park is expected to be named Central Pender Park. Proposed amenities include an offroad bike pump course, disc golf, pickleball courts, adventure play equipment, fitness parcourse, indoor recreation areas like a gym and classrooms. The second district park will be located in the southern portion of the County in Scotts Hill, in an area that has been identified as a high population growth area. Proposed amenities include multipurpose fields, hiking/biking trails, picnic shelters and restrooms.

3 New Community Parks

All three (3) proposed community parks will be located in west Pender County, which lacks parks facilities, on land currently owned by the County. Proposed amenities include loop trails, play equipment, shelter from sun and rain, open space, water play, fitness stations, court games, art and educational signage. Long Creek Community Park is proposed where structures were recently demolished on a County-owned parcel in northwest Pender. Malpass Corner Community Park will be located on property adjacent to a Pender County school, and Canetuck Community Park will be located on a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) buyout property on Heading Bluff Road in the southwestern portion of the County. This FEMA site offered sufficient dry open space for amenities as well as water access, which was found to be a priority by survey respondents and focus groups as well as a recommendation in the Pender 2.0 Comprehensive Plan.

1 New Neighborhood Park

One (1) new neighborhood park is proposed in the Maple Hill community of northeast Pender County. This area has been identified as underserved by the Pender 2.0 Comprehensive Plan. The proposed park should consider a partnership with existing community recreation efforts in Maple Hill. Proposed amenities include open space, walking/hiking trails, picnic shelters, game courts, and possibly indoor recreation space.

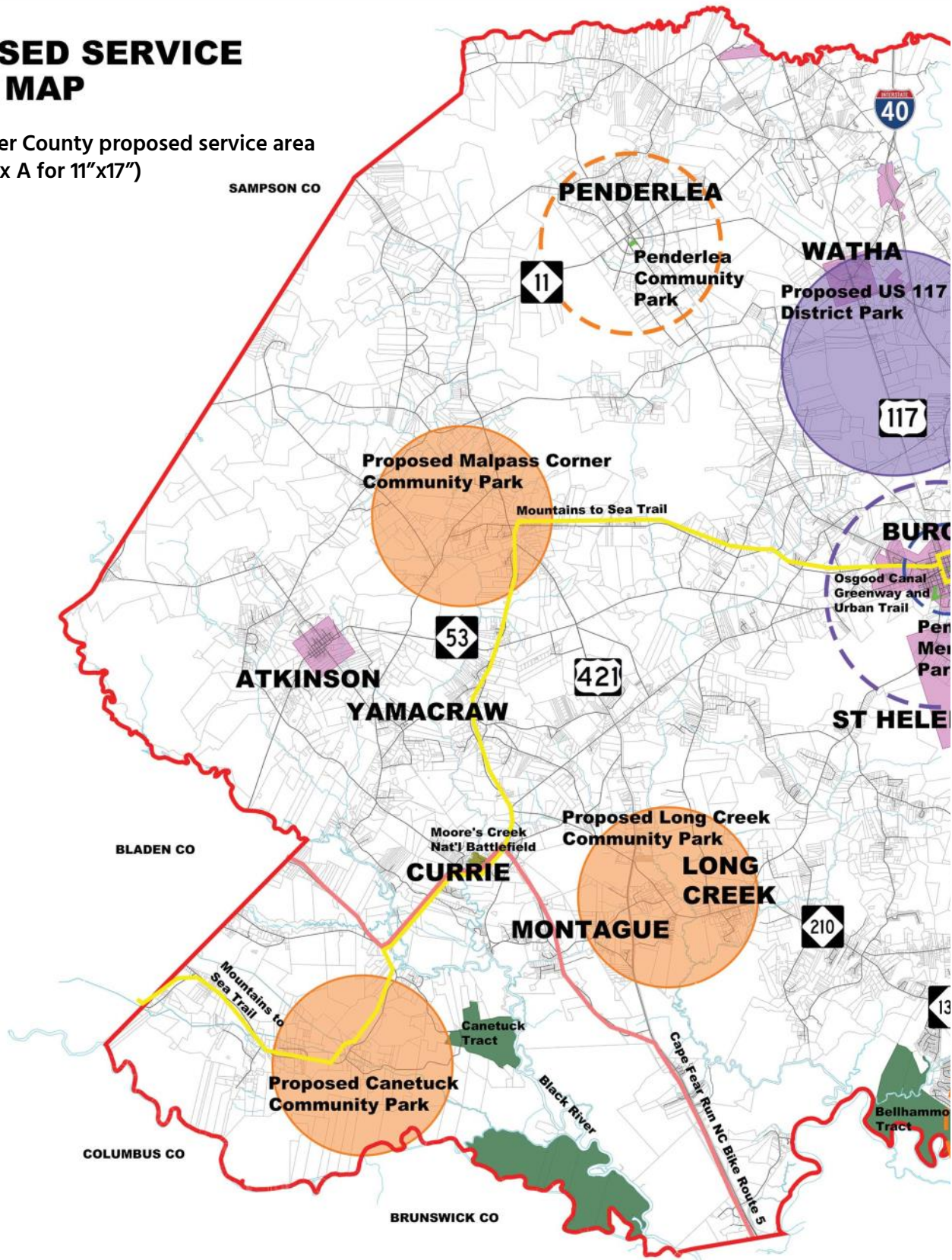
These six (6) proposed park facilities will require site master plans that should include additional public input to ensure appropriate and desired amenities are provided. The development of future park facilities will require that additional resources be allocated by Pender County to ensure adequate facility maintenance and public safety.









Image Credit: Sara Dodgens, Pender County 2021 photo contest

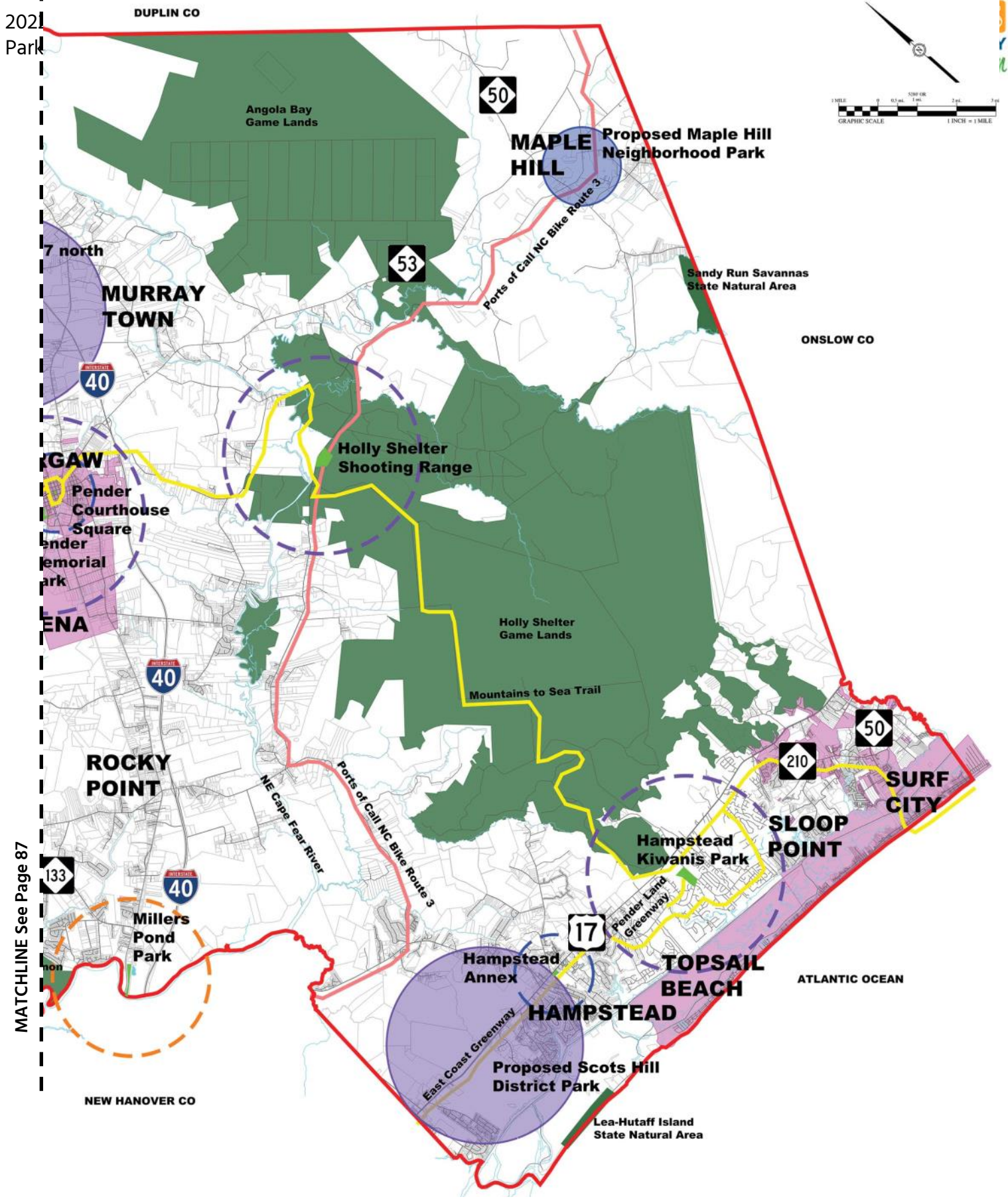
PROPOSED SERVICE AREAS MAP

Map 4.1 Pender County proposed service area
(See Appendix A for 11"x17")



MATCHLINE See Page 88

KEY	TYPICAL SERVICE AREA	
■ COUNTY RECREATION SITE	 2.5 Mile (Existing District Park)	 2.5 Mile (Proposed District Park)
■ STATE GAME LANDS/NATURAL AREA	 2.0 Mile (Existing Community Park)	 2.0 Mile (Proposed Community Park)
■ NATIONAL HISTORIC LOCATION	 1 Mile (Existing Neighborhood Park)	 1 Mile (Proposed Neighborhood Park)
— STATE BIKE ROUTES		
— TRAILS AND GREENWAYS		
— WATER BODY/CREEK		
— MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY		
— COUNTY BOUNDARY		
— PARCEL		
— ROADWAY		



MATCHLINE See Page 87

AMENITY INVENTORY

Parks and recreation amenities include items such as picnic tables and covered picnic areas, as well as athletic fields, performance stages, and playground structures.

Table 3.3 on the following page shows the County’s existing amenity inventory and compares the current inventory to McGill Associate standards. Standards were established based upon information gathered from the National Recreation and Parks association (NRPA) and historical evidence from past projects.

Each standard included in table 3.3 indicates how many people an amenity can serve. For example, the McGill Associates standards state that one (1) basketball court can serve 10,000 people. Pender County currently has one (1) basketball court for a population of 60,203. According to the McGill standards, five (5) more basketball courts are needed to serve the current population.

Another measure, the 2015–2020 North Carolina Outdoor Recreation Plan (NCORP) rankings for North Carolina, indicate that Pender County ranks 99th in playgrounds, 100th in athletic fields, 100th in athletic courts, 94th in picnic shelters, and 89th in residents per trail mile.

Though useful tools, standards alone cannot identify the unique parks and recreation needs of a community. In fact, NRPA stated in the 2021 NRPA Agency Performance Review, that “There is no single set of standards for parks and recreation because different agencies serve communities that have unique needs, desires, and challenges.”

Additionally, when reviewing the amenity inventory, it is important to note that recreational amenities are also being provided by local municipalities, state public lands, and other private recreational facilities as well as through shared use agreements with County schools.



Playground structures at Hampstead Kiwanis Park

Table 3.3 Pender County Existing Amenities, Standards, and Recommendations

Amenity	McGill Standards	Existing Amenity	2022 Recommended per Population	Needed for 2022	2032 Recommended per Population	Needed for 2032
Pender County Amenities			Population: 60,203		Projected Population: 72,153	
Adult Baseball Field	1/22,000	2	3	1	3	0
Adult Softball Field	1/15,000	0	4	4	5	1
Youth Baseball Field	1/7,500	7	8	1	10	2
Youth Softball Field	1/12,000	0	5	5	6	1
Multipurpose Athletic Field	1/10,000	4	6	2	7	1
Basketball Court	1/10,000	1	6	5	7	1
Tennis Court	1/15,000	0	4	4	5	1
Pickleball Court	1/10,000	0	6	6	7	1
Volleyball Court	1/20,000	2	3	1	4	1
Cornhole	1/20,000	3	3	0	4	1
Picnic Shelter	1/7,500	4	8	4	10	2
Picnic Station (unsheltered)	1/7,500	0	8	8	10	2
Playground	1/7,500	4	8	4	10	2
Walking/Running Trails	1/4 mi./1,000	2.3 mi.	15 mi.	12.7 mi.	18 mi.	3 mi.
Dog Park	1/15,000	0	4	4	5	1
Community Center	1/30,000	0	2	2	2	0
Indoor Performance Stage	1/65,000	2	1	0	1	0
Outdoor Amphitheater	1/65,000	0	1	1	1	0
Swimming Pool	1/65,000	0	1	1	1	0
Splash Pad	1/40,000	0	1	1	2	1
Disc Golf Course	1/40,000	0	1	1	2	1
Water Access	1/40,000	1	1	0	2	1

AMENITY ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The current inventory of amenities was assessed using McGill Associates standards found in Table 3.3. The inventory was also compared to the 2021 NRPA Agency Performance Review findings for Parks and Recreation Agencies in the United States. The excerpted table shown below provides information on how other agencies align amenity quantity with population numbers. The orange rectangle highlights the population range of 50,000 to 99,999 which would include Pender County at a total population of 60,203. A comparison with other agencies can be a helpful tool when considering future amenities.

2021 NRPA Agency Performance Review Results for Outdoor Amenities

**FIGURE 3: OUTDOOR PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES – POPULATION PER FACILITY
(BY PREVALENCE AND POPULATION PER FACILITY)**

Type of Facilities		Median Number of Residents per Facility					
		Population of Jurisdiction					
	Percent of Agencies	All Agencies	Less than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 250,000	More than 250,000
Playgrounds	94.4%	3,607	2,132	2,961	3,672	4,804	8,271
Basketball courts	87.4	7,187	4,051	7,000	8,790	8,477	11,632
Tennis courts (outdoor only)	81.4	5,089	2,748	4,819	5,726	5,818	9,997
Diamond fields: baseball — youth	78.0	6,763	3,000	5,099	7,560	12,914	23,619
Rectangular fields: multipurpose	66.4	8,750	3,895	7,400	11,212	10,792	22,538
Diamond fields: softball — adult	65.5	13,510	5,663	11,184	16,250	28,081	35,875
Dog parks	64.9	46,000	11,148	27,528	58,926	76,610	129,506
Diamond fields: softball — youth	59.3	11,287	5,447	9,891	11,884	26,073	43,670
Swimming pools (outdoor only)	51.5	37,569	8,591	25,402	43,100	67,004	93,534
Diamond fields: baseball — adult	51.3	20,159	7,989	20,522	22,366	38,899	48,657
Rectangular fields: soccer — youth	48.9	7,192	3,433	5,833	8,291	12,646	32,649
Community gardens	48.3	31,175	9,001	25,480	51,197	72,238	96,322
Tot lots	45.1	11,000	6,194	8,974	13,701	19,122	22,163
Multiuse courts: basketball, volleyball	44.6	20,000	6,200	18,850	24,644	36,979	70,287
Rectangular fields: soccer — adult	43.6	12,943	7,541	11,161	12,800	20,000	30,092
Skate parks	39.3	49,750	11,000	31,248	66,672	109,798	247,664
Rectangular fields: football	36.5	25,977	7,917	16,584	31,972	51,719	78,656
Multipurpose synthetic fields	21.0	38,328	13,200	22,041	40,305	53,550	112,707
Ice rinks (outdoor only)	17.9	16,664	10,000	13,049	29,386	112,000	472,688
Rectangular fields: cricket	12.1	128,393	ISD*	29,404	62,958	110,936	370,119
Rectangular fields: lacrosse	11.2	29,000	7,051	13,333	33,437	63,250	174,861
Overlay fields	8.7	15,385	4,385	8,935	10,724	42,139	87,438
Rectangular fields: field hockey	3.5	23,270	ISD*	15,007	ISD*	110,558	ISD*

*ISD = Insufficient Data

Based on the assessment by McGill Associate standards shown in Table 3.3, the County does not meet most of the recommended recreation service standards for the current population but does meet the standards for cornhole, indoor performance stages, and water access. However, when determining the implementation of future amenities, it is important to consider the ongoing staff time and funding needed to maintain, repair and replace amenities. Organizational capacity along with community needs and desires are important factors to consider, along with standards, in order to make the most appropriate choices for the unique needs of Pender County.

For example, the standards show that the County has met recommendations for water access at 1 amenity per 40,000 people, however the Pender 2.0 Comprehensive Plan directs the Parks and Recreation Department to expand water access opportunities, and water access amenities were found to be a top priority for public meeting attendees and emerged as a key finding in focus groups. In a coastal county such as Pender, a higher quantity of water access amenities has been found to be more appropriate than the general standard.

Thus, the recommended amenities below in Table 3.4 require some further consideration before implementation. The recommendations are intended to meet current and anticipated needs but implementation of projects may depend on factors such as available funding, land acquisition, staff capacity, community demand, and periodic reevaluation of amenity needs. The recommendations below are ordered from most to least deficient based on the standards.

Table 3.4 2022 and 2032 Amenity Recommendation Based on Standards

Amenity	Quantity Needed for 2022	Quantity Needed for 2032
Picnic Station	8	2
Youth Baseball/Softball Fields	6	3
Adult Baseball/Softball Fields	6	3
Pickleball Court	6	1
Basketball Court	5	1
Trail Miles	12.7	3
Tennis Court	4	1
Playground	4	2
Picnic Shelter	4	2
Dog Park	4	1
Multipurpose Field	2	1
Community Center	2	0
Volleyball Court	1	1
Disc Golf Course	1	1
Splash Pad	1	0
Swimming Pool	1	0
Amphitheater	1	0

PROGRAM INVENTORY

Recreational programming is an integral part of a parks and recreation system. Programs can be athletics, classes, summer camps, and special events that celebrate holidays or important community celebrations. Each of these elements can create a feeling of unity and pride within a community. An inventory of the programs offered by Pender County in 2021 is shown below in Table 3.5. Programs/Events co-sponsored with another agency are in italics.

Table 3.5 Pender County Programs 2021

Pender County Programs 2021			
Program Name	Location	Month	Category
Adult Cornhole League	Penderlea Community Park	January - February	Sport
Cupid's Bingo	Pender Memorial Park & Hampstead Kiwanis Park	February	Holiday
Open Play (Youth and Adult)	Hampstead Kiwanis Park	February - June	Sport
<i>Adult Cornhole League</i>	<i>Atkinson Gym</i>	<i>March</i>	<i>Sport</i>
Tree Seedling Giveaway	Rocky Point & Hampstead Kiwanis Park	March	Special
Family Fishing Event	Millers Pond Park	April	Education
Adult Cornhole League	Hampstead Kiwanis Park	April	Sport
Adult Co-ed Sand Volleyball	Hampstead Kiwanis Park	April	Sport
<i>National Fishing and Boating Day</i>	<i>Millers Pond Park</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>Education</i>
Summer Camp	Topsail (9 weeks)	June-August	Camp
Summer Camp	Rocky Point (9 weeks)	June-August	Camp
<i>Summer Mini Camps</i>	<i>Burgaw/Rocky Point</i>	<i>June-July</i>	<i>Camp</i>
<i>Summer Concert (Topsail Sounds)</i>	<i>Topsail (3 events)</i>	<i>May-August</i>	<i>Special</i>
<i>Summer Concert (Summer on the Square)</i>	<i>Burgaw (3 events)</i>	<i>May-August</i>	<i>Special</i>
Summer Concert (Alive After Five)	Hampstead (4 events)	May-August	Special
Blueberry Classic Cornhole Tournament	Courthouse Square	June	Sport
Nature Explorers	Millers Pond Park (2 events) & Hampstead Kiwanis Park (2 events)	September-October	Education
Adult Co-ed Sand Volleyball (Mini Season)	Hampstead Kiwanis Park	September-October	Sport
Cosmic Bingo	Penderlea Community Park	October	Special
Kickball Tournament/Food Truck Rodeo	Hampstead Kiwanis Park	October	Special
Women on Target Clinic	Holly Shelter Shooting Range	October	Education
Open Gym (Youth and Adult)	Penderlea Community Park	November - December	Sport
Family Camping	Hampstead Kiwanis Park	November	Education
Turkey Bingo	Pender Memorial Park & Hampstead Kiwanis Park	November	Holiday
Hampstead Christmas Tree Lighting	Hampstead Kiwanis Park	December	Holiday
<i>New Year's Eve Blueberry Drop</i>	<i>Courthouse Square</i>	<i>December</i>	<i>Special</i>

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As shown on the previous page in Table 3.5, in 2021 a total of twenty-six (26) programs and special events were held. Six (6), or 23% of programs and special events were co-sponsored with another agency. Currently, reoccurring programming is based on the desire, needs, and demand of the community. New programming is often offered as a pilot to determine demand before offering it on an ongoing basis. Additionally, some programming is offered seasonally, such as youth summer camps.

The current method of program development should continue and should consider the public input findings included in this Plan when identifying new programming to pilot. The combined public input findings for programs are provided below.

Future Program Needs

Survey: youth enrichment programs (STEM, Field Trips, etc.), youth summer day camps, and concerts.

Public Meetings: Outdoor concerts, farmers market, open gym

Focus Groups: Increased programming, programming through partnerships to include Pender County Schools, local churches, the Senior Games, and the Arts Council, and programming for specific groups such as teens, older adults, and people with disabilities

Stakeholder Interviews: Increased programming staff



Fishing and Boating Event at Millers Pond Park

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PLAN



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

After analyzing the findings from the planning process (including national best practices, community and stakeholder input, facility and program inventories, and existing conditions), goals, and objectives to meet those goals, have emerged to provide guidance for parks and recreation services and facilities in Pender County over the next ten (10) years.

The following objectives describe ways to meet the goals of increasing organizational capacity and efficiency, increasing funding opportunities, and maintaining, improving and expanding facilities, amenities, programming and service delivery.

Goal 1: Increase Organizational Capacity and Efficiency

Objective 1.1: Ensure adequate staffing for administration, maintenance, and programming to meet demand and ensure service quality

Based on the NRPA staffing guidelines, the minimum number of full-time staff necessary to support community recreation needs is equivalent to 5.1 per 10,000 residents. For Pender County's current population of 60,203, 30.7 Full Time Employee (FTE) are recommended. Pender County currently has 22 FTE for a deficit of 8.7 FTE staff members. Another measure, the 2021 NRPA Agency Performance Review finds that the median full-time staff equivalent (FTE) for parks and recreation departments across the United States is 9 per 10,000 residents. Based on this measure the County should provide 54.2 FTE to match the median of agencies serving populations between 50,000 and 99,999. When Pender County staffing levels are compared with other Parks and Recreation Departments nationally, a deficit of 23.5 FTE is found. By either measure, a staffing deficit is shown that will need to be addressed prior to any expansion of facilities or programming.

Objective 1.2: Develop a department marketing plan to inform the public of County recreation facilities, programs, and seasonal events

Marketing and promotion are key to ensuring program attendance. Proper marketing can also increase community access to facilities and programming, through information. Additionally, increased communication through social media and marketing were found to be priorities by the survey and focus groups.

Objective 1.3: Strengthen and build partnerships, including intergovernmental partnerships (such as Pender County Schools) that will aid in providing recreational facilities and programs for the community

Pender County is currently participating in ongoing partnerships with Burgaw Dixie Youth, Pender Youth Basketball Association, Pender Youth Soccer Association, Topsail Junior Pirates, Pender Youth Football and Cheer Association, Eastern Pender Pop Warner Association, Port City Soccer Club, Topsail Ball Club, Topsail Basketball Association, Topsail Girls Softball Organization, Topsail Youth Lacrosse Association, Canetuck Community Center, Edgecombe Community Center, Joint Community Development Center, Maple Hill Resource Center, and Willard Outreach Organization. The County also partners with other agencies, including intergovernmental partnerships, on a less frequent basis to provide programming and special events.

Many local governments throughout the nation utilize partnerships with public and private sector interests to accomplish community goals. Private sector partnerships can be beneficial, particularly for large capital investments such as a special-use facility. Developers can use private funds to develop facilities on municipal property and lease it to the County long term. Over a period of time, the developer returns a portion of the revenue to the County and at the end of the lease the facility is turned over to public ownership.

Listed below are other partnerships examples that the County should consider in its efforts for the improvement and addition of parks and recreational facilities:

- Programming partnerships to co-sponsor events and facilities or to allow qualified outside agencies to conduct activities on properties which are County owned
- Create a plan to solicit local businesses for sponsorship opportunities related to specific facilities, amenities, programs, and special events
- Operational partnerships to share the responsibility for providing public access and use of facilities
- Development partnerships to purchase land and/or build facilities
- Management partnerships to maintain properties and/or facilities

Goal 2: Increase Funding Opportunities

Objective 2.1: Pursue Alternative Funding Strategies

Identification of sufficient funding is a crucial element that is required to implement the master plan. Funding for future initiatives will be a key issue that will need to be addressed in the upcoming years to continue to provide basic minimum services.

To meet the existing and future needs of Pender County, the County will need to update their annual budget for the parks and recreation department based on projected capital improvement costs, and staffing needs, and operations and maintenance costs. Budget comparison with similar agencies can also be helpful. As shown in the graph below, the NRPA 2021 Agency Performance Review, reports that recreation department operating expenditures per capita for populations from 50,000 to 99,999 were between \$58.77 and \$166.17 with a median of \$101.65 per capita across the nation. Per capita expenditures of comparable agencies are shown in the Table below.

Counties with Populations Similar to Pender County	Population Estimate 2020	Per Capita Expenditures 2019
Columbus County	50,623	\$65.67
Hoke County	52,082	\$34.98
Watauga County	54,086	\$46.43
Lenoir County	55,122	\$9.59
Granville County	60,992	\$17.53
Lee County	63,285	\$16.13
Rutherford County	64,444	\$121.55

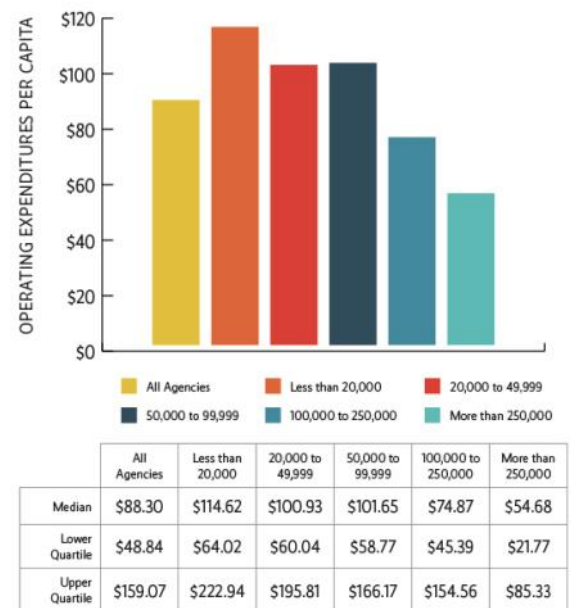
Some suggestions for alternative funding are provided below and on the following pages.

Donations

The solicitation of contributions is an acceptable method of fundraising for recreation departments. These donations, typically in the form of land, cash, labor, and materials, could be solicited to assist Pender County with its enhancement program. Corporations, civic organizations, individuals, and other groups generally donate to a specific park project; however, donations may also be solicited for multiple project improvements or additions. NRPA recommends the use of private, not-for-profit, tax-exempt foundations as a means of accepting and administering private gifts to a public park system.

It should be noted that the Parks Foundation of Pender County, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and considered a public charity under IRC Section 509(a)(2). EIN - 83-2319738. The Parks Foundation of Pender County's mission is to care for and improve Pender County's Parks to improve more than the County's beauty but also it's health, the community and economic strength. Donations can be accepted through the Parks foundation, and the Foundation can raise funds for County Parks and Recreation initiatives.

FIGURE 14: OPERATING EXPENDITURES PER CAPITA (BY JURISDICTION POPULATION)



State and federal agencies offer numerous grants to fund parks and recreation projects. Grants, such as the opportunities listed below, should be investigated and pursued by Pender County for current and future park and recreation initiatives.

The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF): A \$500,000 state-funded program, PARTF was established for local governments and the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation to fund at a 50% match the development and/or improvement of parks and recreation facilities and land acquisition.

The Recreation Trails Program (RTP): A \$1.5-million federal program, administered by the United States Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration, RTP is designed to help state, federal, or local government agencies provide and maintain recreational trails.

Federal Aid Construction Funds: National Highway System (NHS), Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG), and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds support construction of pedestrian and bicycle transportation facilities.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF): A federal program established for local and state governments to fund outdoor recreational development and land acquisition at a 50% match.

The Safe Routes to Schools Program: A federal program of the United States Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for projects that improve the ability of primary and middle school students to walk and bicycle to school safely funded at an 80/20 match.

The Environmental Enhancement Grant Program (EEG): Funding for projects that address environmental needs of North Carolina, specifically to protect water quality as well as conserve natural areas, this program supports land acquisitions and easements, construction, remediation, restoration, and research, planning, education. The maximum award is \$500,000.

The North Carolina Land and Water Fund (NCLWF): Funding to help finance projects that address water pollution issues, NCLWF will fund projects that contribute toward a network of riparian buffers and greenways for environmental, educational, and recreational benefits.

The USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS): Funding at a 50% match for the operation and maintenance of watersheds whose areas are less than 250,000 square acres. The NRCS provides financial and technical assistance for the improvement of watershed protection, flood prevention, sedimentation control, public water-based fish and wildlife enhancements, and recreation planning.

State Construction Funds: Funds used for the construction of sidewalks and bicycle accommodations that are a part of roadway improvement projects.

The Division of Coastal Management (DCM): Grant funding for local governments in the 20-county coastal area for Public Beach and Waterfront Access projects through the Coastal Management Beach and Waterfront Access Program (CAMA). The DCM awards about \$1 million a year in matching grants to local governments for projects to improve pedestrian access to the state's beaches and waterways. Local governments may use access grants to construct low-cost public access facilities, including parking areas, restrooms, dune crossovers and piers.

Implementing the recommendations of this comprehensive master plan will require a combination of funding sources that include local, state, federal, and private money. This section provides a listing of the most commonly used funds for park and greenway projects in North Carolina.

Dedicated Source of Local Funding: In order to leverage and provide matching funds for many of the programs listed Pender County should evaluate the existing departmental budget and funding for capital improvements.

Property/Sales Tax Revenues: General tax revenues traditionally provide sources for general operations and maintenance of park systems for local governments. Traditionally, ad valorem tax revenue has been the primary source of funding for the park and recreation enhancement of properties/facilities owned by local governments. Recreational opportunities are considered a public service and often are a standard line item on general fund budgets. Creative financial opportunities are possible; however, ad valorem taxes will continue to be the major revenue source to support the system. As such, communities often vote to raise their local tax rate temporarily in support of their park and recreation systems.

General Obligation Bonds: Many communities issue bonds, that are typically approved by the shareholders, to finance site development and land acquisition costs. The State of North Carolina grants local governments the authority to borrow funds for parks and recreation through the issuance of bonds. The amount is not to exceed the cost of acquisition or improvement of park and recreation facilities. Total bond capacities for local governments are limited for parks and recreation to a maximum percentage of assessed property valuation. Since the issuance of bonds relies on the support of the voting population, the implementation of awareness programs is absolutely essential prior to a referendum vote.

Fee Simple Purchase: Fee simple purchase is the most common method used to acquire municipal property for park facilities. Although it has the advantage of simplifying justification to the general public, fee simple purchase is the most difficult method to pursue due to limited monetary resources.

Fee Simple with Lease-Back or Resale: This method allows local governments to acquire land by fee simple purchase yet allows them to either sell or lease the property to prospective users with restrictions that will preserve the land from future development. The fee simple with lease-back or resale method of development commonly results from situations in which landowners, who have lost considerable monetary amounts in property value, determine that it is more economical to sell the land to the County (with a lease-back option) than to keep it.

Life Estate: A life estate is a gift whereby a donor retains the land during his/her lifetime and relinquishes title of the property after his/her death. In return, the owner (or family) is relieved of property tax for the given land.

Local Gifts: Donations of land, money, labor and construction can have significant impact on the acquisition and development of park property. The solicitation of local gifts is highly recommended and should be organized thoroughly, with the utilization of very specific strategic methods. This often untapped source of obtaining funds requires contacting potential donors, such as individuals, institutions, foundations, and service clubs.

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Local Gifts: Donations of land, money, labor and construction can have significant impact on the acquisition and development of park property. The solicitation of local gifts is highly recommended and should be organized thoroughly, with the utilization of very specific strategic methods. This often untapped source of obtaining funds requires contacting potential donors, such as individuals, institutions, foundations, and service clubs.

Long-Term Option: Long-term options allow municipalities to purchase property over a long period of time. This method is particularly useful because it enables the County to consider a particular piece of land that may have future value though it is not currently desired or affordable. Advantages to this method of property acquisition are that the County can protect the future of the land without purchasing it upfront, the purchase price of the land will not increase, and the County will have the right to exercise its option. The disadvantage to the County is that all privileges relinquished by the landowner require compensation in the form of securing the option.

Easement: An easement is the most common type of less-than-fee interest in land. An easement seeks to compensate the property owner for the right to use his/her land in some way or to compensate for the loss of his/her privileges to use the land. Generally, the landowner may still use the land and, therefore, continues to generate property tax revenue for the County.

Objective 2.2: Establish a Fee Review and Implementation Plan

Communities throughout the nation employ a wide variety of user fees for public recreational programs and services within their recreation departments. The amount of the fee is usually determined by a portion of the recreation costs needed for improvements and operations. These user fees are typically levied for special facilities such as water parks and golf courses; however, they can also be charged for the use of trails and ball fields. Pender County should continue to generate revenue by charging user fees for use of facilities, such as picnic shelters in order to cover operation and administrative costs. In addition, the County should continue to have a separate fee rate structure for residents and non-residents. As the park system continues to develop, the County should examine their fee structure to identify opportunities and additional revenue. The current user fees appear to be fair and reasonable for a majority of the County residents and non-residents. Elected officials should determine the fees and changes based on departmental input; the fees should not be so high that persons of modest income would ultimately be denied the use of park facilities.

Goal 3: Maintain and Improve Programming and Service Delivery

Objective 3.1: Provide the community with creative and inclusive recreation programs that are accessible and affordable to all citizens

The County provided 26 successful recreation programs and events in 2021. Recreational programming is an integral part of a parks and recreation system. Programs can be athletics, classes, summer camps, and special events that celebrate holidays or important community celebrations. Each of these elements can create a feeling of unity and pride within a community. The current level of service should be maintained and expansion or improvement should consider the public input findings on program need included in this Plan.

Goal 4: Maintain, Improve, and Expand Facilities and Amenities

Objective 4.1: Increase investment in the maintenance of current facilities, equipment, and amenities

In order to maximize the life of current assets, tools such as an Asset Management Plan are suggested. Maintenance should be improved to reduce reactive actions and increase preventive measures. Additionally, the need for increased maintenance of current facilities and amenities was found to be a priority in stakeholder interviews.

Objective 4.2: Provide appropriate facility and amenity improvements and expansions

A Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) has been developed to include facility and amenity improvements and expansion, and is available in Appendix G. The CIP is designed to encompass, at a minimum, a ten-year period and includes a list of anticipated recreation projects based on the recommendations in this Plan. The proposed recreational project list provides costs based on recent (2020–2021) material/labor costs. The provided opinion of probable costs includes assumed general expenditures such as site preparation, building structures, access, site utilities, parking, and specific recreation improvements. The list provided also includes estimates for planning or design fees. The opinions of cost are preliminary in nature and are for planning purposes only. As the time approaches to consider the recommended improvements it will be necessary to receive up to date opinions of cost.

Objective 4.3: Seek and acquire additional land for future park development

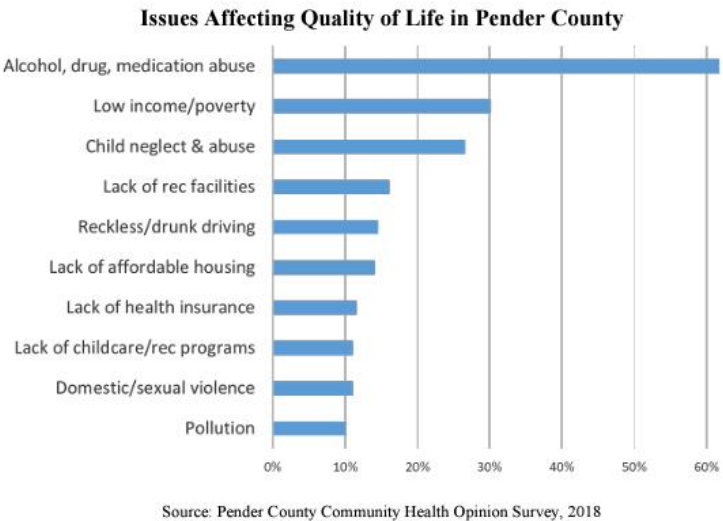
As the County's population grows so too will demand for parks facilities, which requires park land. Based on the NRPA Park land guidelines with the exception of community parks, Pender County does not meet the national standard guidelines for park acreage needs, necessitating addition land acquisition. Land acquisition can take multiple forms. The solicitation of contributions is one acceptable method for recreation departments. These donations, typically in the form of land, cash, labor, and materials, could be solicited to assist Pender County with land acquisition. Corporations, civic organizations, individuals, and other groups generally donate to a specific park project; however, donations may also be solicited for multiple project improvements or additions. NRPA recommends the use of private, not-for-profit, tax-exempt foundations as a means of accepting and administering private gifts to a public park system.

The County should also consider providing developers with an option to pay a fee in-lieu of open space rather than to dedicate land for open space or recreation within conventional subdivisions. This method has proven to be successful for many local governments in providing a dedicated source of revenue earmarked for park development.

Objective 4.4: Develop additional park facilities and amenities

The North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management (OSBM) projects that in 2030, the permanent population of Pender County will increase by 11,950 people or 19.8% for a total population of 72,153. Additionally, it is projected that population increase will occur mostly from in migration, while natural growth from births will have a minor change in the county’s population. As shown ion the graph below, the 2018 Pender County Community Health Opinion Survey reported that among issues affecting the quality of life in Pender County the lack of recreation facilities was in the top five (5). If Pender County does not meet the facility and amenity needs of the current population, the need will be compounded as growth occurs.

To that end, a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) has been developed and is included at Appendix G. The CIP is designed to encompass, at a minimum, a ten-year period and includes a list of anticipated recreation projects based on the recommendations in this Plan. The proposed recreational project list provides costs based on recent (2020–2021) material/labor costs. The provided opinion of probable costs includes assumed general expenditures such as site preparation, building structures, access, site utilities, parking, and specific recreation improvements. The list provided also includes estimates for planning or design fees. The opinions of cost are preliminary in nature and are for planning purposes only. As the time approaches to consider the recommended improvements it will be necessary to receive up to date opinions of cost.



This total anticipated future recreational project cost of \$29,167,500 represents the proposed, cumulative figure to be spent for park and recreation development, improvements, and renovations by the year 2032. The total figure does not consider an inflation rate over the 10-year period through the year 2032 (see Appendix G for the Capital Improvement Plan).

Objective 4.5: Continue to improve ADA accessibility of facilities and programs

As the County’s overall population grows so too will the population of people with disabilities. The County should continue to make accessibility improvement in facilities, programs, and communication as well as prepare for future demands. Some suggestions provided by the Health/Wellness/Access focus groups were: adaptive recreation programs for adults, more athletic programs for kids with developmental and physically disabilities, and the consideration of program transportation for populations that do not drive, such as older adults and people with disabilities.

ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Action item tables on the following pages identify concrete ways to meet the goals of increasing organizational capacity and efficiency, increasing funding opportunities, and maintaining, improving and expanding facilities, amenities, programming and service delivery. The implementation timeline for action items falls into three phases, short-term, mid-term, and long-term. As summarized in the table below, completion of short-term items is expected in the next 1-2 years, mid-term items are expected to be completed in 3-5 years and long-term items are expected to be completed in 6-10 years. Additionally, action items that do not have an end-date are labeled, ongoing.

Implementation Timeline	Expected Completion
Short-Term	1-2 years
Mid-Term	3-5 years
Long-Term	6-10 years
Ongoing	No end date

Capital cost estimates as well as the impact on the Parks and Recreation Department’s operational budget are also identified in the tables on the following pages. A full Capital Improvement Plan is available in Appendix G. Action items shown in blue align with the action items assigned to the Parks and Recreation Department in Chapter 6 of the 2018 Pender 2.0 County Comprehensive Land Use Plan.



Tree Seedling Giveaway at Hampstead Kiwanis Park

Goal 1: Increase Organizational Capacity and Efficiency			
Objective 1.1			
<i>Ensure adequate staffing for administration, maintenance, and programming to meet demand and ensure service quality</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operation Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
1.1.a Hire and train staff for current and future administration, maintenance, and programming needs	\$0	TBD	Ongoing
Objective 1.2			
<i>Improve and expand internal and external communication of facility and program offerings</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operation Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
1.2.a Develop and implement a department marketing plan to inform the public of County recreation facilities, programs, and seasonal events	\$0	Staff Time	Short-Term
1.2.b Update Marketing Plan annually. Develop a new Marketing Plan every five (5) years	\$0	Staff Time	Ongoing
Objective 1.3			
<i>Strengthen and build partnerships, including intergovernmental partnerships (such as Pender County Schools) that will aid in providing recreational facilities and programs for the community</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operation Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
1.3.a Seek out new partnership opportunities and identify areas of possible growth for current partnerships	\$0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Time • TBD • Potential Increased Revenue or Decreased Expenditures 	Ongoing
1.3.b Continue to ensure all existing and future partnerships are formalized through a signed agreement such as an MOU	\$0	Staff Time	Short-Term

Goal 2: Increase Funding Opportunities

Objective 2.1

Pursue Alternative Funding Strategies

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operation Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
2.1.a Continue to seek out and apply for grants including grants for recreation facilities, and programs	\$0	Staff Time	Ongoing
2.1.b Seek out partners for grant submission in areas such as transportation and healthcare	\$0	Staff Time	Ongoing
2.1.c Expand the utilization of the Parks Foundation to fund Parks and Recreation Department initiatives	\$0	Staff Time	Mid-Term
2.1.d Consider contracting with or creating a position to perform resource development	Potential Matching Funds TBA	\$40,00-\$50,000 Annually	Short-Term Mid-Term
2.1.e Consider increasing spending to bring per capita figures closer to those of the counties in the region and communities of similar populations.	TBD	TBD	Mid-Term

Objective 2.2

Establish a Fee Review and Implementation Plan

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operation Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
2.2.a Create a fee structure methodology that is aligned with community values while generating adequate revenues to support Parks and Recreation initiatives	\$0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff Time TDB Potential Increased Revenue 	Short-Term
2.2.b Review the fee structure annually and adjust pricing, if needed	\$0	Staff Time	Ongoing

Goal 3: Maintain and Improve Programming and Service Delivery

Objective 3.1

Provide the community with creative and inclusive recreation programs that are accessible and affordable to all citizens

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operation Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
3.1.a Assess the opportunity to contract out future programming offerings	\$0	TBD	Mid-Term
3.1.c Expand and develop program offerings based on demand	\$0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff Time TBD 	Mid-Term Ongoing
3.1.d <i>Seek to make programming available in underserved areas of the County, such as the Maple Hill Community</i>	\$0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff Time TBD 	Mid-Term Ongoing

Goal 4: Maintain, Improve, and Expand Facilities and Amenities

Objective 4.1

Increase investment in the maintenance of current facilities, equipment and amenities

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operation Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
4.1.a <i>Develop and implement a Maintenance Operations Plan and policy to include all facilities and amenities</i>	\$0	Staff Time	Short-Term Ongoing
4.1.b Develop and implement an Asset Management Plan to include annual evaluation of amenity and equipment assets to ensure they meet appropriate standards of service	\$0	Staff Time	Ongoing
4.1.c Assess field drainage issues at all facilities to develop and implement a Drainage Improvement Plan	\$TBD	Staff Time	Short-Term Ongoing

Objective 4.2

Provide appropriate facility and amenity improvements and expansions

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operation Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
4.2.a Develop and implement a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to include the replacement and improvement of current facility and amenities assets	\$0	Staff Time	Short-Term

4.2.b Where feasible, add fencing to facility perimeters and add surveillance cameras and site attendant patrols to mitigate security issues and provide a safer public environment for park patrons	TBD	Regular Maintenance Ongoing Expenditure	Ongoing
4.2.c Where feasible, provide access to Wi-Fi connectivity within parks	TBD	Ongoing Expenditure	Mid-Term
4.2.d Consider providing entrance signage that is uniform and consistent to promote parks and recreation facilities, as well as wayfinding signage throughout the parks system	TBD	Regular Maintenance	Mid-Term Ongoing
4.2.e Consider placing signage in parks that would identify historic and natural landmarks, or other educational content	TBD	Regular Maintenance	Mid-Term Ongoing
Objective 4.3 <i>Seek and acquire additional land for future park development</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operation Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
4.3.a As feasible, seek to acquire property in high growth areas and contiguous to existing County parks or other county owned property	TBD	\$0	Ongoing
4.3.b As feasible, accept fee simple land donation for park development	\$0	\$0	Ongoing
4.3.c Consider adding language allowing developers to pay into a fee-in-lieu of open space requirement to fund land acquisition for parks	Potential Increased Revenue	\$0	Mid-Term
4.3.d Identify opportunities to acquire land with water access suitable for public boat ramps	TBD	Staff Time	Ongoing
4.3.e Promote land uses and site designs that include public bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and that establish connectivity to current and future public schools, parks, and other public destinations	\$0	Staff Time	Ongoing
4.3.f Consult the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program's Natural Area Inventory of Pender County, North Carolina to identify land deemed to be significant natural resources, and evaluate for preservation and future parks	\$0	Staff Time	Short-Term

Objective 4.4

Develop additional park facilities and amenities

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operation Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
4.4.a Develop and implement a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to include future facilities and amenities. Ensure that future capital improvement projects include a balance between revenue and nonrevenue generating facilities.	\$0	Staff Time	Short-Term
4.4.b Engage in master planning for new facilities prior to final budgeting and/or design; thereby, making the phasing/development more transitional and of higher quality	TBD	Staff Time	Short-Term Mid-Term
4.4.c Where economically feasible, implement green building for existing and future parks facilities. Green building techniques consist of building materials and construction practices which reduce environmental impacts and promote energy efficiency	TBD	TBD	Ongoing
4.4.d Explore opportunities to develop park facilities with water access and public boat ramps	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff Time Regular Maintenance 	Mid-Term Long-Term
4.4.e Explore opportunities to develop FEMA properties owned by the county	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff Time Regular Maintenance 	Mid-Term Long-Term
4.4.f Consider options to develop a Countywide Greenway Plan to outline priority locations for greenway facilities, funding mechanisms tied to future development, and continued maintenance	\$0 In-House TBD Vendor	Staff Time	Mid-Term

Objective 4.5

Continue to improve ADA accessibility of facilities and programs

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operation Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
4.5.a Develop and implement an ADA Transition Plan	\$0 In-House TBD Vendor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff Time Monitoring, Reporting 	Short-Term
4.5.b Update the ADA Transition Plan every five (5) years	\$0 In-House TBD Vendor	Staff Time	Ongoing