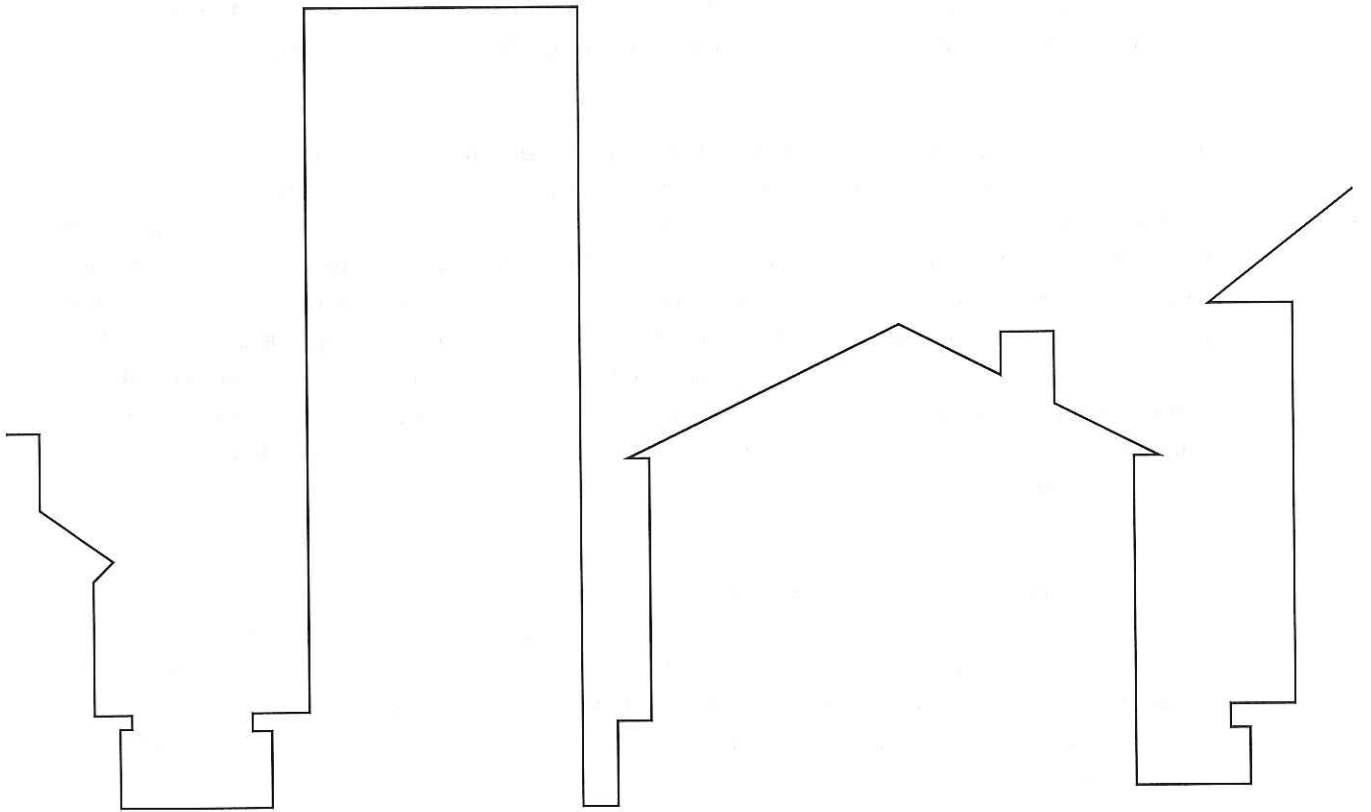


# 04 Staffing, Operations, and Budget



# 04 Staffing, Operations and Budget

The City of Brookhaven incorporated in December 2012, and at the time of this study, was in the process of obtaining ownership of the parks from DeKalb County. In December 2013, Brookhaven hired a full-time permanent Parks and Recreation Director to develop and manage the Department. Until the city's incorporation, DeKalb County was responsible for public parks and recreation facilities and programs in the Brookhaven community. It is clear from the public input received for this study that the citizens of Brookhaven are interested in improved and expanded parks and recreation opportunities.

As a newly formed department, operations and administrative structures, standards, plans, policies, and procedures are not yet in place, as compared to established Parks and Recreation Departments in other cities. The Director of Parks and Recreation has been on the job for less than 6 months, and the city is experiencing a time of transition. While this presents many challenges, it also creates the opportunity to establish a system based on best practices customized to meet the needs of the residents of Brookhaven.

This section assesses the Parks and Recreation Department's staffing, operations, and budget, and provides recommendations with an implementation plan. In its assessments and recommendations, the planning team drew on best practices in the field of Parks and Recreation, input received from elected officials, staff, public workshops, and the Community Survey, as well as the knowledge and experience of the planning team members. Other primary team resources included the Georgia Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) and the National Parks and Recreation Association (NRPA) Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA), which provides national up-to-date best practice standards for operating and managing Parks and Recreation agencies.

Benchmarking parks and recreation services is complex due to the variety and diversity of parks and recreation facilities and services provided by different public agencies across the country. Every community is unique and there are multiple approaches, or models, to the provision of parks and recreation programs and services. This is in contrast to benchmarking municipal services, such as police, where the programs and services across jurisdictions are more standardized.



Recognizing an absence of a national database for Parks and Recreation, the National Parks and Recreation Association (NRPA) initiated PRORAGIS five years ago. PRORAGIS is a national benchmarking database for both operating data and GIS Mapping for Parks and Recreation. The 2014 Parks and Recreation National Database Report profiles and analyzes 500 agencies. As more agencies input data, the database will increase in value as a benchmarking tool. PRORAGIS benchmarking data is included, where applicable for this study.

The selection of specific cities as comparisons for benchmarking is a standard practice in Parks and Recreation planning. For the study, the selected benchmark cities include the neighboring jurisdictions of Dunwoody, Alpharetta, Roswell and Decatur.

## Staffing

The Parks and Recreation Department is currently staffed with three permanent, full-time city employees: Director, Assistant Director and Executive Assistant. The 2014 budget includes \$428,500 in professional services for five additional contracted staff positions through Lowe Engineering. These positions are Grounds Coordinator, Athletic Coordinator, Program Coordinator, Special Events Coordinator and Senior Services Coordinator. At the time of the study, the contracted positions had not been filled. The job descriptions are included in Section 9, Appendix.

The department also includes private contractor management for the Brookhaven Tennis Center, the three swimming pools and parks maintenance activities. Partnership agreements have been executed with the three volunteer groups to run Murphey-Candler baseball, softball cheerleading and football programs and other non-profits are continuing recreation programs in the parks. The oversight of management contracts and the facilitation of community partners require staff resources.

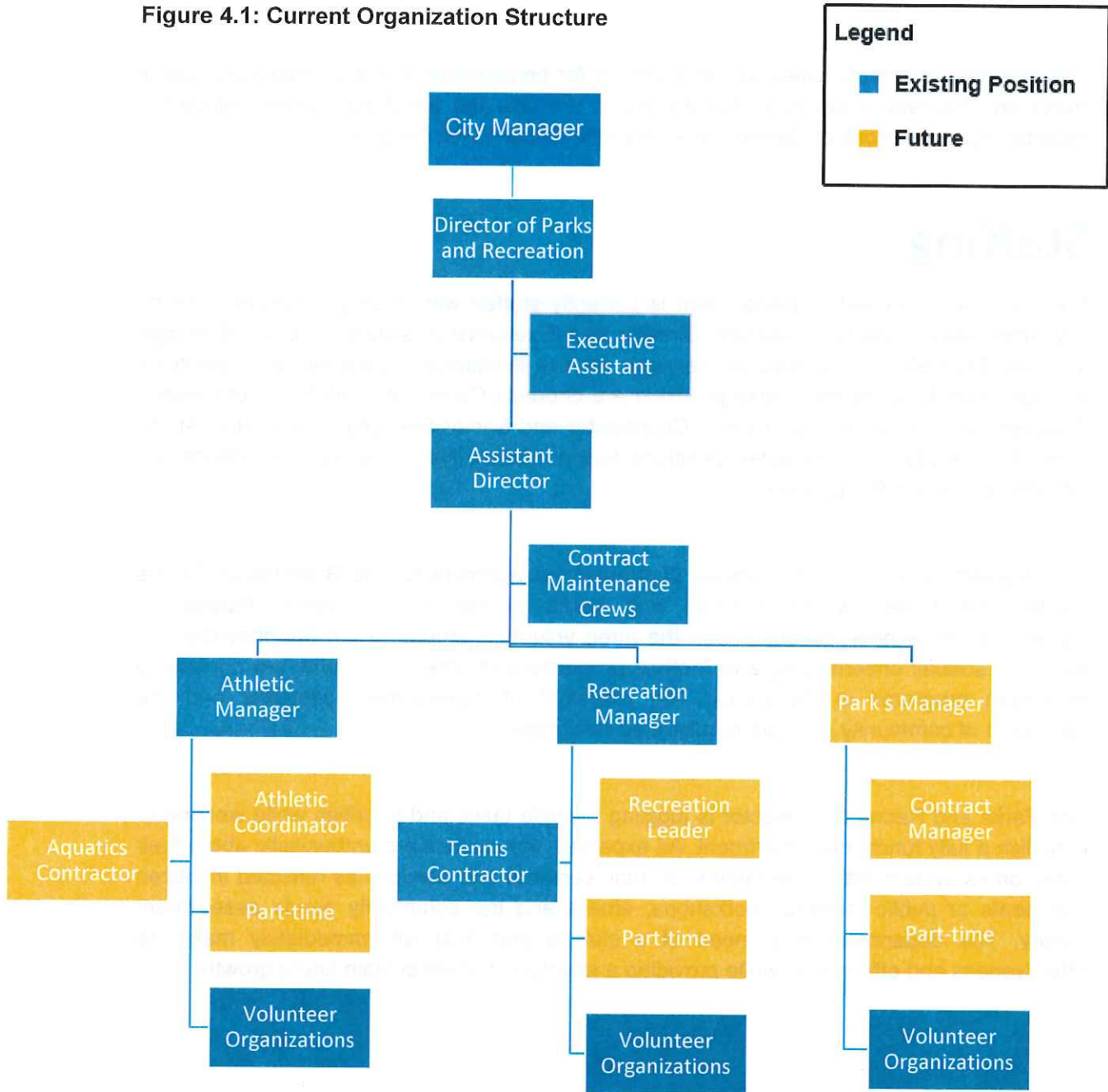
The Parks and Recreation Director is juggling multiple tasks and priorities while working to establish a fully functional department. As expected, the citizens are enthusiastic about their “new” parks system with expectations for improvements and services as reflected in citizen comments at public meeting, workshops, emails and the community needs assessment survey. The department is in need of a staffing plan that will immediately maximize effectiveness and efficiencies while providing a structure that will sustain future growth.



## Assessment

Department positions have been funded in the FY14 budget. While job descriptions are provided, lines of responsibility are being identified by the Director as preliminarily outlined in **Figure 4.1**.

**Figure 4.1: Current Organization Structure**



As **Figure 4.1** illustrates, this structure includes a number of direct reports to the Director. In addition to overall operations, the Director should focus on financial planning and implementation of the overall mission of the department. Based on the hires that have already been made, the allocation of budget funding and for consistency with other facility recommendations, the study team suggests a department organization chart for the near term, as shown in **Figure 4.2**.

This recommendation represents a change in both organization structure and positions from the approved positions in the 2014 budget. A review is provided below of each position, as recommended in **Figure 4.2**.

### **Parks and Recreation Director**

The Director was hired in December 2013, and reports to the City Manager. The study team recommends a Parks Manager, which is a new position, and Recreation Manager, as direct reports to the Director. These two positions will be responsible for overseeing the two core department areas of 1) parks maintenance, design, and construction; and 2) program development and management.

### **Assistant Director**

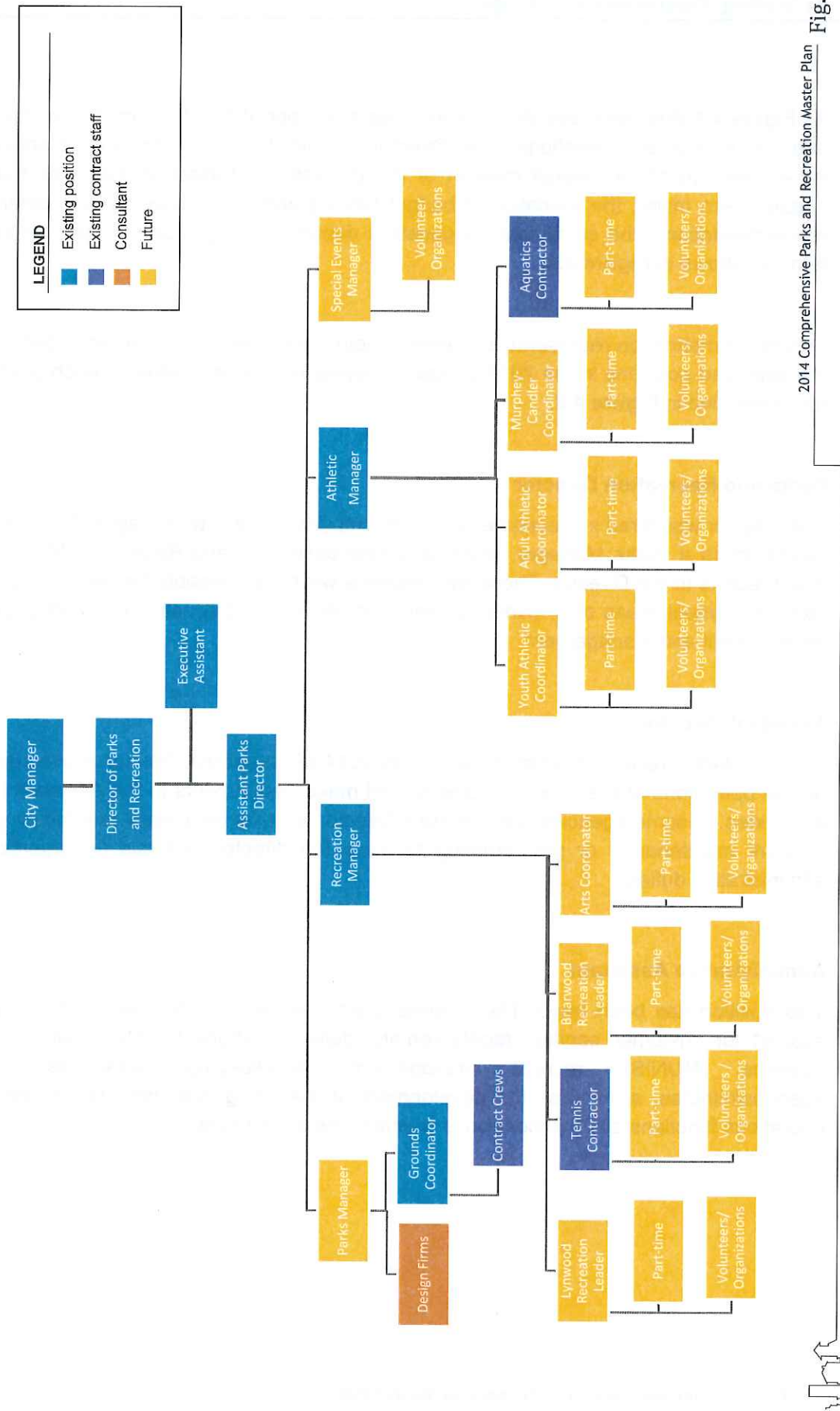
The Assistant Director's position, hired in May 2014 will assist the Director in overseeing the overall operations of the park. The Director will make assignments to the Assistant Director as needed. In some agencies, the Assistant Director will take on a major role focusing either on park maintenance or programming to allow the director to focus management and administrative duties

### **Administrative Assistant**

This position has been hired. The Administrative Assistant job description includes direct support for customer service, facility rentals, daily operations for Municipal Information Systems (MUNIS), records management, bookkeeping, schedules, meeting agendas/minutes, as well as the development of marketing materials. These are priority operations functions and this position is critical to the department.



Figure 4.2: Proposed Organization Structure



**Recreation Manager (filled)**

There is an immediate need for a program position to implement city recreation programs and manage the existing private and non-profit program providers operating in the parks, including tennis and aquatics. The Recreation Manager should focus on developing and implementing a program plan to address the community needs with a mix of service delivery options including contracted staff, private provider agreements, community partners and volunteers. This represents a higher-level position than that of “Program Coordinator,” as budgeted. It establishes a division of responsibilities and reporting structure that will work effectively as the department grows. The Recreation Manager position can be hired by re-prioritizing budgeted funds for staffing. It is recommended that this position be hired as a full-time, permanent employee.

**Special Events Coordinator**

The addition of a Special Events Coordinator is recommended as the second priority programming position. This position is already included for funding in the 2014 budget. This position would have the responsibility of facilitating and enhancing existing events and recruiting and developing new events. Special events bring neighbors together and build community identity. Work should be coordinated with the Tourism Office and business community to maximize tourism dollars and promote local businesses. Sponsorships should be obtained to limit city funding. A mix of free and fee-based events with community wide appeal and for targeted populations are appropriate. The position should work closely with community partners and volunteers to develop a robust mix of special events. In traditional parks and recreation departments, this position is considered a permanent city employee. The 2014 budget funding for the position is included in the professional services account as contracted staff.

**Park Manager**

A staff position that is needed is the position of Park Manager. The Park Manager would be responsible for all maintenance operations for the department. They would direct both in-house maintenance staff and coordinate with contract maintenance staff.

**Grounds Coordinator**

Improving parks maintenance is the highest priority. The Parks Manager’s focus will shift away from day-to-day operations to the implementation of capital projects as new projects are funded. The Grounds Coordinator position will be needed to oversee the parks maintenance contract under the direction of the Parks Manager. This position is included in the 2014 budget as a contracted employee. It is recommended that this position be a direct hire.



### **Athletic Manager (filled)**

This contract position was approved in the 2014 budget. The study team does not recommend the hiring of an Athletic Manager position in the near term since the athletic programs are operated by strong volunteer organizations that need minimal support or are being operated through contracts with private companies. This position should be added as new programs and facilities increase and a more effective distribution of supervisory responsibilities and workload are needed. This position will report to the Recreation Manager and will oversee the non-profit partner sports groups, tennis and aquatics and develop new sports programs based on assessed needs.

### **Murphey-Candler Center Coordinator**

The Candler Caretakers House is recommended to be converted to a Nature/Arts Programming Center. This would require staff to operate the building and manage the programs and services. The study team recommends that a Murphey-Candler Center Coordinator be hired as a direct report to the Recreation Manager. This position will be responsible for managing all operations and programs at Murphey-Candler Park, excluding the sports complex and the swimming pool. A Nature Program Coordinator and Arts Coordinator are recommended as part-time contracted staff to work with volunteer organizations to provide customer service and implement programs.

### **Community Center Staff**

The facility recommendations include, at a minimum, repairing and reopening the Briarwood Community Center. This will require a position for a Recreational Leader to manage the building and provide programming with the support of volunteers, partner groups and part-time contracted staff for customer service and program implementation. This study recommends the city undertake a Community Center Redevelopment Plan. Staffing and operations plans will be developed as part of the study. Partnership with the YMCA, health care providers, fitness clubs and other related industries are viable options to be explored for managing and funding new inter-generational community centers. This center is located in an area with high population densities and should offer programs that are consistent with the needs of the nearby residents.

The Coordinator positions, as funded in the FY14 budget, are professional service contracted employees rather than permanent city employees. The existing positions of Director, Assistant Director, and Administrative Assistant are direct city hires. While the use of contract employees is common for program leaders, class instructors and managers for special facilities, similar to staffing for the Blackburn Tennis Center and aquatics, it is not common place for staff programmers or coordinators who develop community-wide events and programs. Community needs assessments will determine the need for future coordinator positions targeting seniors, special needs, outdoor programming and other





areas common place for parks and recreation. The planning team would recommend the city shift to more traditional staffing practices where core staff members are city employees.

Staffing costs, whether direct hires or contracted, represent a high percentage of a department's operating budget. **Table 4.3** includes staffing and staffing costs as a percentage of the total city operating budgets for the benchmark cities.

**Table 4.3: Benchmarking: Staffing**

| Location   | 2014 Budget Staffing | Staffing as a % of 2014 Operating Budget |
|------------|----------------------|--|
| Brookhaven | 6                    | 59%                                      |
| Dunwoody   | 1FT                  | 11.5%                                    |
| Alpharetta | 51 FTEs              | 55.8%                                    |
| Roswell    | 106 FTE              | 55.8%                                    |
| Decatur    | 7 FT; 49 PT          | 62.1%                                    |

Source: Base data obtained from on-line 2014 budget documents

As the table indicates, Brookhaven's 2014 approved budget for staff funding, including both direct hires (1) and professional services contracted employees (5), represents 59% of the operating budget. At 59%, the funding for staffing is very consistent with other agencies in the area that are operating a traditional recreation department. It is important to note that Dunwoody provides parks maintenance and capital parks development, but does not operate facilities or offer programs like the majority of the benchmark agencies. Rather, the city facilitates recreation services provided by community partners. At the current funding level, Brookhaven should quickly begin to expand park programming as staff positions are filled.

## Key Observations and Summary Recommendations

The staffing plan, as provided in the FY14 budget, does not address supervisory responsibilities with an effective chain of command. The planning team recommends that an alternate plan include two Manager level positions - Parks Manager and Recreation Manager- as direct reports to the Director with the Coordinator positions reporting to the Managers. Parks Manager to be added in the future.



The near term staffing plan should focus resources on high priority areas that will have the most immediate impact for delivering services to the residents of Brookhaven. The recommended highest priority positions, in hiring order include:

- Recreation Manager
- Part-time Employees
- Recreation Leaders

Brookhaven has a strong tradition of volunteerism with organized partner groups. The facilitation of the partner groups should be a primary job function for all staff throughout the organization.

The FY14 staffing plan provides that staff responsible for core programming areas are hired as contracted employees. The planning team recommends these positions, in keeping with traditional parks and recreation department staffing, be hired as permanent city employees. At the very minimum, the Parks Manager and Recreation Manager should be direct city hires.

Staffing plans for new facilities and program areas should be developed as needs are identified and services expand. The city should continue to utilize the services of private contractors and non-profit partner organizations as viable options for meeting community needs.

## Operations

While the city does not yet have administrative policies and procedures in place, the city has inherited existing operations and service contracts and agreements from DeKalb County. In some cases, the city has signed new contracts to avoid lapses in services. These include the following:

### **Parks Maintenance Services Contract**

Prior to Brookhaven's incorporation, DeKalb county contracted the parks maintenance activities to a private company. The city recently approved a parks maintenance services contract to continue parks maintenance activities. An Assistant Parks and Recreation Director has been hired to manage the contract and oversee the contractor. At the time of the study report, the planning team did not have a copy of the parks maintenance contract for review.



**Tennis Center Management: Contract with Universal Tennis Management (UTM) to operate and manage the Blackburn Tennis Center at Blackburn Park.**

Universal Tennis Management entered into an agreement with DeKalb County to manage the Blackburn Tennis Center, beginning in March 2011. UTM staff provides full service tennis programming that would be expected at comparable public tennis facilities with 18 courts. The staff is responsible for scheduling courts and providing a full array of tennis programming including instruction, league play, individual reservation play, wheelchair tennis, USTA tournaments and other activities. UTM outsourced the pro shop to Your Serve, a tennis merchandise retailer.

The facility hours of operation are Monday - Thursday, 9am - 10pm; Friday - Saturday, 9am - 6pm; and Sunday 10am-6pm. Court fees are \$2.50 per hour before 6pm and \$3 per hour after 6pm. Private lessons are \$60 for an hour and \$30 per one-half hour lesson. There are additional fees established for other programs. UTM reported revenues of \$672,866 for the 2013 calendar year, a 21% increase from the 2012 calendar year. The reported expenses, exclusive of staff, were \$162,910 for 2012 and \$155,150 for 2013. Tennis facility staff indicated that UTM has invested \$50,000 in facility improvements. The tennis courts are overdue for resurfacing or reconstruction and the clubhouse is in dire need of repair or replacement. At the time of the study, the planning team did not have a copy of the city's contract with UTM for review.

**Aquatics Management: Contract with USA Pools to open and operate the swimming pools for the summer**

The city met their goal of opening the three public swimming pools for the summer. The pools are located at Lynwood Park, Briarwood Park, and Murphey-Candler Park. USA Pools won a competitive bid process and entered into a contract with Brookhaven to operate the pools for the summer. The contract stipulates the city pay USA Pools \$99,800, which includes all staffing, chemicals and supplies for the swim year. The entrance fees are \$3 for adults, \$2 for 17 years and younger, and children under 2 are free. Seasonal passes are available for \$50 per person or \$200 per family. The hours of operation are 9am - 6pm daily and the pools are closed on September 1. Citizens have complained about the limited pool hours. The contract stipulates that with 7 days notice, the city may extend pool hours at a charge of \$25 per hour. The city reimbursed USA Pools for repair costs and permitting required to prepare the pools for opening.

- Pool management to be re-bid in 2015

**Youth Sports Agreements: Contracts with the 3 non-profit youth sports organizations to continue their operations and programs at Murphey-Candler Park.**

These volunteer-run organizations have a long history of providing youth baseball, softball, football and cheerleading in Brookhaven and for the surrounding communities. Over the



years, they have partnered with DeKalb County to invest in park improvements. The city now maintains the property “outside the fences” at Murphey-Candler Park, and the association(s) maintains the athletic facilities “inside the fence” and is responsible for daily clean-up. While the associations do not have exclusive use of the facilities, there is limited alternate access. The groups operate the programs, according to youth sports best practices, including policies for background checks, scholarship opportunities and discipline policies. The groups charge participation fees to cover the costs to operate the program and retain all revenues. Scholarships are available for low income families. The sports field complex is the best maintained public park facility in the city. The Murphey-Candler Associations also serve as the primary youth sports provider for the neighboring City of Dunwoody. As Murphey-Candler Park was developed as a county park, it was intended to serve the North Georgia area prior to the incorporation of the area cities.

- Best practices include policies for background checks, scholarship opportunities and discipline policies

### Community Partnerships

Brookhaven prides itself on community partnerships and is interested in leveraging these partnerships to facilitate programs and funding for park improvements. Brookhaven citizens’ passion for parks is exemplified by the numerous Friends organizations that provide direct volunteer labor and funding for park improvement projects. The planning team learned that these groups organized in response to the lack of parks maintenance and improvements provided by DeKalb County. These volunteer groups have been the driving force for most of the recent facility improvements, such as ornamental plantings at entry signs, community garden construction, painting, Little Free Library installation and general park clean-up. Below is a list of the park groups:

- Park Pride
- Briarwood Park Conservancy
- Friends of Blackburn Park
- Murphey Candler Park Conservancy
- Friends of Georgian Hills Park

Other Community Partner organizations listed on the city website include the following:

- DeKalb County Fire & Rescue
- DeKalb County Public Schools
  - Cross Keys High School



- Woodward Elementary School
- Montgomery Elementary School
- Ashford park Elementary School
- Montclair Elementary School
- Neighborhood Associations
  - Historic Brookhaven Neighborhood Association
  - Brookhaven-Peachtree Community Alliance
  - Hillsdale Neighborhood Association
  - Ashford Park Civic Association
  - Drew Valley Civic Association
  - Brookhaven Heights Community Association
  - Nancy Creek Heights Neighborhood Network
  - Pine Hills Neighborhood Association
- Brookhaven Chamber of Commerce
- Additional Nonprofit Groups
  - The Latin American Association
  - Friends of Brookhaven
  - Ashford Park PTA
  - Cross Keys Foundation

There are no written agreements between the city and the partner organizations listed. Collaborative partnerships with these organizations can extend the reach of the Parks and Recreation Department, leverage funding, provide volunteerism and develop support and advocacy for parks and recreation. Partnership development requires staff resources.



## Assessment

### Maintenance

According to the Governor's Commission 2012 City of Brookhaven Parks and Recreation Committee Report, the majority of the park facilities are rated in fair to poor condition. There are immediate repair and improvement needs to meet basic safety and maintenance standards. The 2014 budget includes \$18,000 per month, or \$216,000 for a professional services contractor to perform parks and recreation maintenance activities, \$10,000 for maintenance and repairs, and a Grounds Coordinator contracted position. The Capital Budget includes \$2,000,000 for Parks and Recreation.

The International City County Managers Association (ICMA) data indicates a ratio of 1 FTE per 18-20 acres of maintained parkland as a general standard for parks maintenance with the best practice as a 12 to 1 ratio. PRORAGIS data reveals a wide range of park acres maintained per FTE with an overall median ratio of 9 to 1. Alpharetta's ratio, as reported in the 2014 budget, is 15 to 1. Applying an 18 acre per FTE standard for Brookhaven's 270.2 acres of parks indicates a need for 15 parks maintenance workers.

A focus on improving the safety, access and aesthetics of the parks system should be the highest priority for the Parks and Recreation Department. The planning team recommends that the city develop parks maintenance standards to serve as the basis of the parks maintenance contract. Going forward, future maintenance proposals should be evaluated against the contractor's proven experience and ability to meet the standards, including the appropriate staffing ratio of acreage maintained per employee and certifications for staff to perform the necessary work. At least one employee should hold a Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI) Certification. In addition to routine maintenance, the contractor should implement a preventive maintenance plan and a regular inspections program. A digital inspections and work order system would assist in scheduling work, tracking costs and prioritizing the repair of unsafe conditions. Performance measures should be developed to track workload indicators and performance.

The Assistant Parks and Recreation Director is responsible for managing the contract. As previously indicated, this position is recommended to be retitled to Parks Manager. As the capital improvement plan is initiated, the Parks Manager's duties will be refocused to capital projects and the addition of a Grounds Coordinator will be needed to oversee the maintenance services contract.



## Contract Management

Parks and Recreation Departments often extend their ability to offer programs or enhance services through private sector contracts. Brookhaven currently contracts tennis center management and seasonal swimming pool operations. Major reasons that cities contract with private providers include:

- The job, or service, requires a specialized skill that staff does not have, but is readily available in the private sector;
- The city would have to purchase specialty and costly equipment to perform a task, but private contractors have the equipment in inventory;
- The function is intended to be operated with a business model vs public sector model;
- The city wants to offer a service but wants to share, or reduce, its level of risk;
- A cost savings is realized.

Contract management is most effective when it is seamless, operating as an extension of staff. Its success is dependent on 1) the detail and clarity of the contract document and 2) regular staff oversight and evaluation of the contractor's performance. It is a common misconception that contract management eliminates the need for staff.

### **Public-Private Management Agreement Review: Blackburn Tennis Center**

Based on information received from all sources, Universal Tennis Management is doing an excellent job managing the Blackburn Park Tennis Center. According to the UTM staff, following a formal bid process, UTM took over a fledging program in March 2011 and has grown it to over 2,000 participants. Programs range from adult leagues to instruction for most all ages, wheelchair tennis and walk-up play. UTM also hosts USTA tournaments at the facility. Tennis represents a bright spot for quality recreation programming in the community. Strategically, the city should support, to the extent possible, existing successful programs so they can continue to thrive. The planning team recommends the following:

- Invest in the tennis center facilities
- Provide a high level of routine maintenance and repair
- Fund capital projects for court and clubhouse improvements
- Develop a financial pro forma for the tennis center



- Develop, in collaboration with UTM, goals and performance measures for the facility and track performance on a regular basis
- Require program evaluations to track customer service and program quality
- Schedule regular meetings to communicate and build relationships with the staff
- Require scholarship opportunities for low income families
- Require city approval of fees
- Provide an annual report to the elected officials
- Consider a multi-year contract with Universal Tennis Management

### **Public-Private Agreement Review: Aquatics**

USA Pools are currently operating the three swimming pools for the summer season. At the end of the season, a thorough evaluation focused on financial analyses, operations review, participation numbers and user feedback should be conducted. Staff should prepare a report of the findings and present to the Council with recommendations for the 2015 season. Additionally, the planning team recommends the following:

- Develop an aquatics master plan that includes a financial pro forma for all three pools
- Expand the swimming pool hours to increase use in times that are more convenient for families
- Consider offering programs (swim lessons/movie nights, etc.) to increase revenues
- Require city approval of fees and leverage revenues to reduce contract costs
- Require fee relief to low income families
- Schedule weekly reviews with the pool staff during the season
- Market the swimming pool hours and programs on the website, flyers, and other methods

The public-private partnership model for the management of special facilities is functioning well for Brookhaven. Clearly defined goals, performance standards, tracking, and evaluation systems will strengthen future contracts. Revenues, in addition to expenses, should be considered in contract negotiations. The city should move toward self-sustaining operations through enhanced revenue opportunities and contractor capital investments in facilities.





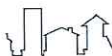
### **Public-Nonprofit Agreement Review: Murphey-Candler Sports Associations**

The city's contractual relationship with the Murphey-Candler Sports Associations differs from that of the public-private facility management contracts for tennis and swimming. The three associations each have separate, but similar contracts to operate their youth sports leagues at Murphey-Candler Park. The organizations provide quality programming and contribute funding for park improvements. Although there are three different organizations, it appears to the planning team that several of the organization members, or leaders, sit on multiple boards. It would be more efficient for the city to contract with one umbrella Murphey-Candler association, rather than managing three separate contracts. This would remove the city from internal issues between the organizations and streamline contract management. The planning team recommends continuing the current operations at the park with the partnership of Murphey-Candler as a non-profit partner. Additionally, the planning team recommends increasing funding to maintain the sports facilities. Since the sports complex also serves as the primary youth sports option for the citizens of Dunwoody, the planning team recommends that the city engage in discussions with Dunwoody regarding the development of a joint agreement for equitable access and funding for facility usage across jurisdictions.

### **Community Partnerships**

City officials have expressed an interest in developing community partnerships as a strategy to improve services while containing city costs. Brookhaven enjoys a tradition of strong non-profit participation in parks and recreation including the park Friends groups, youth sports associations and others. Members of the non-profit organizations participated in public workshops held specifically to receive their input. They expressed interest in partnering with parks and recreation.

The city's nonprofit partnership goals can best be progressed by creating a framework and process that facilitates non-profit volunteerism and cost sharing for park improvements. A policy needs to be developed that establishes the rules, conditions and priorities for matching contributions for park improvements. The Friends groups relationship with the Parks and Recreation Department should be formalized with policies, procedures and written agreements. The Parks Manager, as recommended in the staffing section of this report, should have the responsibility for managing the non-profit partnership program.



## Other Potential Partnerships

### Public- Public Partnerships

Partnerships with other public agencies provide additional opportunities for Brookhaven to efficiently provide expanded parks and recreation services for its residents. Citizens generally view cooperative public-public partnerships as a wise use of tax dollars.

The schools provide facilities that are also needed for community parks and recreation. Joint use agreements with schools are common practice for parks and recreation departments. With a shortage of park acreage and public green space, the city's investment in improving school facilities to new city standards in exchange for joint use should be an important strategy. It is important that the joint use agreement protects the city's investment on school property by providing an acceptable level of community use during reasonable hours. Often, the city also pays for the ongoing maintenance of the school joint use areas. School security issues are a threat to school use agreements. For success, the elected officials and staff from both agencies must have a clear understanding of the goals, the terms of the agreement must be specific, an exit strategy should be included and regular communication should be prescribed for key staff in the implementation of the agreement.

Brookhaven's neighboring jurisdictions of Dunwoody, Chamblee and Sandy Springs also offer parks and recreation services. Regional partnerships not only provide efficiencies in services, but also improve the opportunity for state and federal grants. Granting agencies' criteria for funding prioritize a regional approach to planning. For example, the best greenway systems do not stop at city or county lines but continue across jurisdictions to create interconnected transportation corridors and access to important destinations. The greenway systems require joint planning. There are many areas where joint planning and efficient use of existing facilities provide improved recreation opportunities without increasing costs. For example, Brookhaven's Murphey-Candler Park serves the families of Dunwoody for youth sports activities. Dunwoody's Spruill Arts Center provides services for Brookhaven residents. In these instances, a duplication of services would not be a wise investment. Rather, a joint agreement would assure access and funds that would have been needed to provide a similar, or duplicate need, is freed for an alternate priority. A joint venture to develop a regional recreation facility that would serve the citizens of multiple jurisdictions could be an efficient use of tax dollars. The planning team recommends that Brookhaven consider a regional approach to providing and sharing recreation facilities to eliminate unnecessary duplication of facilities and stretch tax dollars. Discussions should be initiated with other elected bodies.

### Oglethorpe University

Oglethorpe University is a valued asset for Brookhaven. Cities with universities and colleges often work cooperatively for mutual benefit. Facility sharing may provide the opportunity for attracting events that boost tourism as well as provide an economic benefit. Students



provide a desired labor force for part-time parks and recreation employee needs. Professors may be interested in serving as instructors for related recreation classes. Student projects can assist the parks and recreation department in marketing, evaluation, business plan development and other areas where there is a related course of study. The city should explore cooperative ventures with the university to leverage resources.

### YMCA

Through the public input gathered as part of the planning effort, numerous comments were made with respect to the quality of the YMCA programs. Many communities partner with their local YMCA to offer programs and activities. The city has an underutilized asset in the Briarwood Recreation Center, and the YMCA has expressed an interest in better serving the residents on the south end of the city. The city should enter discussions with the YMCA regarding joint redevelopment and operations of the Briarwood Recreation Center.

## Policies, Procedures, Standards, and Plans

The Commission for Accreditation for Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) has established standards for the Management of Parks and Recreation. As a “start-up” parks and recreation department, Brookhaven does not have standards, policies and procedures in place for operating the department. CAPRA provides the most comprehensive guide for standards, plans, policies and procedures needed for properly functioning departments.

While Brookhaven is several years away from positioning itself for accreditation consideration, and may not even choose to seek accreditation, it is recommended that the city use the standards as a framework for developing policies, procedures, standards and plans. CAPRA specifically identifies standards that should be fundamental to parks and recreation agencies, along with other desired best practices. The planning team recommends that the staff prioritize policies, procedures, standards and plans based on CAPRA fundamental standards specific to parks and recreation and other immediate policy needs specific to Brookhaven, based on the study findings. The critical list includes:

- Strategic Plan with Mission, Vision, and Goals
- Administrative policies and procedures
- Maintenance and Operations Management and Standards
- Background Investigations
- Comprehensive Revenue Policy



- Recreation Programming Plan
- Public Information Policy and Procedure
- General Security Plan
- Risk Management Plan and Procedures
- Systematic Evaluation Processes
- Policy for Partner Cost Sharing for Investment in Parks
- Sponsorship Policy

The strategic plan should build on the city's current Visioning Project. The Recreation Programs Plan and Systematic Evaluation Processes will be discussed in more detail in Section 5, Programming. Examples of a Fees and Charges Policy and Sponsorship Policy are found in Section 9, Appendix. The development of these documents will take time to draft, debate and gain approval. It will be incumbent upon the Parks and Recreation Director to work with the City Manager to prioritize and develop realistic target dates in order to establish this work over the next 24 months.

## Marketing and Customer Service

Marketing and customer service are basic functions of parks and recreation departments. The Administrative Assistant's position is responsible for marketing and customer service in addition to the other administrative responsibilities.

The public input findings revealed that additional marketing is needed to inform the citizens of programs and parks. The planning team recommends that additional funds be allocated in the budget for contracted marketing services through a private vendor for newsletter development and distribution. Social media has moved into the mainstream as a way for parks and recreation departments to connect with citizens. The demographic profile for Brookhaven suggests that social media, including Facebook and Twitter, would be successful tools for improving communications and promoting the parks and recreation programs.

Web links to local volunteer groups that operate in the parks are also important to marketing recreation opportunities throughout the city. During interviews with many of the existing organization that use the parks, many indicated they have web sites. Since they do much of the programming for youth sports, linking to their web sites will make it easier for new



residents to find out who to contact for various sports and registration periods. All contract vendors who operate in the parks should also have web links posted.

Booth space should be obtained at special events for staff, volunteers and engage citizens and build awareness about the parks in order promote programs. Flyers should be outsourced for distribution. A speaker's volunteer group could be trained to deliver a presentation specifically designed for civic organizations and other community groups.

On-line program registration provides easy access for citizens to sign-up for programs. The ease of registration drives program participation and revenue. Registration software interfaces with financial systems for improved fiscal control. Valuable data for tracking and reporting program participation and facility use is easily accessed for goal setting and performance measurement. The planning team recommends that the Director work with the IT department to evaluate and make budget recommendations to implement an on-line system.

Another important part of the marketing effort is the ease at which citizens can interact with the staff. The current park offices do not reflect well on the city or the department. In addition, the current offices are hard to reach due to the location and street configuration required to reach Lynwood Park. It is recommended that the parks offices be housed at a location that is large enough to house the entire department in an easily accessible location. The office should have at least one large conference room for staff meetings, a workroom for assembling documents and sufficient office space to house the staff. Signage should be provided to clearly identify the buildings as the parks administrative headquarters. In the lobby, there should be racks for program guides and fliers, and at least two work stations for on-line registration for those who need assistance or do not have a home computer.

## Citizen Advisory Board

The function of a Citizen Advisory Board is considered a parks and recreation best practice. While Board structure, responsibilities and activities vary from community to community, they play important roles by enhancing public involvement, providing input and guidance to staff and elected officials on important decisions, engaging the public, and advocating for parks and recreation. Citizen Advisory Board membership should represent broad interests in parks facilities and recreation programs and opportunities.

Boards are established by the elected officials in the code of ordinances stipulating the purpose, membership qualifications and numbers, appointment procedures, length of appointment and method for removal or replacement. By-laws and meeting schedules are often set by policy for ease in making future modifications. Members are appointed by the



elected body, and the Parks and Recreation Director provides staff support for Board meetings and activities.

While a Steering Committee for the Master Plan process was established, the city has not established a Citizen Advisory Board for Parks and Recreation. It is clear from the level of participation in the public input process that many citizens would be interested in serving on a Parks and Recreation Citizen Advisory Board. A Board would provide valuable input and public engagement as the city moves forward with completing and implementing the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

For Reference, the following example documents are found in Section 9, Appendix.

- Ordinance Establishing Parks & Recreation Advisory Board
- Board Appointment Process

### Key Observations and Summary Recommendations

- Improved parks maintenance and repairs is the most immediate high priority need. Standards and performance measures should be developed, implemented and tracked as a part of the parks maintenance contract.
- Private provider contracts will continue to be a desired means to deliver parks and recreation services in Brookhaven. The contracts should be based on measurable performance standards and include best practices. A financial pro forma should be developed for the tennis and aquatics facilities.
- There is an immediate need for key policies, procedures, standards and plans. A plan should be developed to complete a prioritized list of documents and obtain approvals with a 24-month schedule for completion.
- The citizens are very enthusiastic, engaged and interested in parks and recreation. Programs and processes should be established to encourage input, leverage volunteerism and funding, and foster advocacy for parks and recreation. The city should establish structure to the Friends program through policy and written agreements. A Citizens Advisory Board should be established.
- The Murphey-Candler sports associations represent the largest provider of youth sports programs in the area. Brookhaven officials should encourage an umbrella Murphey-Candler organization to increase staff efficiencies.
- The city needs to develop plans and implement improvements in communication, marketing and customer service. The production of marketing materials should be outsourced. An on-line registration system should be implemented within the next two years.



- The planning team has identified opportunities for partnerships with schools, adjacent communities and Oglethorpe University. A dialogue should be initiated and partnership opportunities explored.
- The city should explore joint redevelopment and operation of the Briarwood Recreation Center with the YMCA.

## Budget

Brookhaven approved the city's initial start-up budget in March 2013 with a total operating budget of \$18,366,690 including \$708,134 for the newly established Parks and Recreation Department.

**Table 4.4** compares the FY13 and FY14 operating budgets. The FY2014 operating budget included \$939,950 for Parks and Recreation. Funding was provided for staffing to hire a Department Director and Professional Services for contract employees (\$547,450). Parks Maintenance activities were budgeted at \$18,000 per month, or \$216,000. Operating budget revenues included \$25,000 for recreation program fees and \$25,000 for pavilion rentals. The 2014 Capital budget included \$2,000,000 for Parks and Recreation and \$150,000 for a special needs field.

**Table 4.4: Brookhaven Parks and Recreation FY2013 and FY2014 Operating Budgets**

|                                     | FY13             | FY14             |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Staffing                            | 0                | \$547,450        |
| Official/Admin Services             | \$80,000         | 0                |
| Professional and Technical Services | \$500,000        | \$356,000        |
| Repairs and Maintenance             | \$108,417        | \$10,000         |
| Rentals                             | \$1,000          | 0                |
| Travel, Dues, and Fees              | \$400            | \$1,500          |
| Supplies                            | \$6,817          | \$10,000         |
| Utilities                           | \$11,500         | \$15,000         |
| <b>Total</b>                        | <b>\$708,134</b> | <b>\$939,950</b> |

Source: Courtesy of the Finance Department



## Assessment

### Per Capita Expenditure

The per capita expense for parks and recreation is a standard benchmark statistic for comparing and analyzing the level of a community's investment in parks and recreation. In the Community Survey, 77% of the respondents indicated that they would be willing to provide some type of financial support for improved park maintenance and recreation services with only 23% unwilling to provide any support.

**Table 4.5** compares Brookhaven's per capita spending for parks and recreation to the selected benchmark communities in Georgia, as well as the median per capita expenditure as reported in PRORAGIS. The operating costs, rather than operating plus capital costs, are used as a comparison. Capital costs often vary widely from year to year based on the funding of construction and acquisition projects, whereas operations costs typically remain relatively constant from year to year.

**Table 4.5: Benchmark City populations and Per Capita Operating Expenses for Parks and Recreation for 2014**

| Location   | Population | Parks and Recreation<br>Per Capita Expenditures<br>(2014 Operating) |
|------------|------------|---|
| Brookhaven | 55,418     | \$17  |
| Dunwoody   | 48,081     | \$22  |
| Alpharetta | 60,659     | \$113   |
| Roswell    | 94,105     | \$109   |
| Decatur    | 20,178     | \$75  |

Source: Base data from online Budget Documents

In its most recent publication, PRORAGIS reported a median operation expense per capita of \$77 for the 500 agencies profiled. A 2006 study conducted by the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) of 125 cities indicated a per capita operations expense of \$45.96 for cities under 100,000 population.





Brookhaven has the lowest per capita spending level (\$17) for parks and recreation for the selected cities. Dunwoody, incorporated in 2008, is not far ahead of Brookhaven with a per capita spending of \$22. This is in contrast with Alpharetta and Roswell with per capita spending that is well ahead of the PRORAGIS median expense of \$77 per capita. Decatur falls in the middle and just under the PRORAGIS median with a per capita spending of \$75.

It is important to note that Dunwoody develops and maintains parks and facilities and facilitates program delivery by non-profit community groups. The other benchmark cities offer more traditional “full service” parks and recreation departments with both facility management and program service delivery.

### Percentage of Total City Operating Costs

The percentage of the city’s operating expenses allocated for Parks and Recreation also serves as a measure of commitment to Parks and Recreation. Budgets establish city priorities. In the Community Survey, notably, 94% (756 respondents) feel that a good parks and recreation system is just as important as schools, fire and police protection. **Table 4.6** below, includes a comparison to the Benchmark cities.

**Table 4.6: Percentage of City Operations Budgets for Parks and Recreation**

| Location   | Parks and Recreation Operating Budget as a % of Total Operating Budget |
|------------|--|
| Brookhaven | 5.1%   |
| Dunwoody   | 6.4%   |
| Alpharetta | 13.1%  |
| Roswell    | 16.9%  |
| Decatur    | 8.6%   |

Source: Base data online Budget Documents

Brookhaven also lags behind the benchmark communities for the percentage of the city operating budgets funded for Parks and Recreation operations. Comparison data was unavailable from PRORAGIS. Again, the more recently incorporated City of Dunwoody is only slightly ahead of Brookhaven, whereas both Alpharetta and Roswell dedicate significantly higher percentages of operating costs to Parks and Recreation.



## Staffing

Staffing represents the largest commitment of funding for public parks and recreation departments across the country. (Note: Dunwoody model as an exception below.) Brookhaven's 2014 budget includes a total of \$547,450 in Personal Services and Professional service accounts for staffing. **Table 4.7** shows staffing costs as a total of the benchmark cities total operating parks and recreation budgets.

**Table 4.7: Staffing as a Percentage of Operating Budget**

| Location   | Personnel Services as a % of Operating Budget |
|------------|---|
| Brookhaven | 59.2%   |
| Dunwoody   | 11.5%   |
| Alpharetta | 55.8%   |
| Roswell    | 55.8%   |
| Decatur    | 62.1%   |

Source: Base data from online Budget Documents

Brookhaven's 2014 staffing budget for parks and recreation is consistent with the benchmark cities that offer "full service" parks and recreation departments. At the current funding levels, the city should be able to begin to implement programming as staff positions are hired.

## Maintenance

As previously stated, Brookhaven's parks need significant repairs and improvements and parks maintenance is a high priority. The 2014 budget includes \$18,000 per month, or \$216,000 for a professional services contractor to perform parks and recreation maintenance activities, \$10,000 for maintenance and repairs, and a Grounds Coordinator contracted position. The Capital Budget includes \$2,000,000 for Parks and Recreation.

International City County Managers Association (ICMA) data indicates a ratio of 1 FTE per 18-20 acres of maintained parkland as a general standard with the best practice as a 12 to 1 ratio. PRORAGIS data reveals a wide range of park acres maintained per FTE with an overall median ratio of 9 to 1. Alpharetta has a 15 to 1 FTE ratio for parks. Applying the 18



acre per FTE standard for Brookhaven's 270.2 acres of parks indicates a need for 15 FTEs for parks maintenance.

The maintenance and improvement of parks is the most important parks and recreation priority for Brookhaven. Based on the budgeted funding and the standards for parks maintenance employees, the planning team assesses that parks maintenance is drastically underfunded. The capital funds (\$2,000,000) should be allocated to address major park repair projects.

### Revenue Recovery Rate

Revenues generated for Parks and Recreation services are expressed as a percentage of the operating costs and reported as the Revenue Recovery Rate. The implementation of financial sustainability practices, in the form of revenue and pricing policies, has risen in importance with parks and recreation agencies across the country. Best practice agencies establish a philosophical basis for revenue recovery rates that vary by program type, service level tier and population served with fees based on the cost of service. The draft 2014 -2016 Georgia SCORP identifies "help recreation providers generate revenue and ensure financial sustainability" as one the top three priorities.

While revenues collected by cities for parks and recreation services are not typically applied directly to the parks and recreation budget, they are viewed as an offset to the cost of operating the parks and recreation department. **Table 4.8** shows the sources and percentages of direct revenue generated as profiled and compiled in PRORAGIS.



**Table 4.8 Parks and Recreation Direct Sources of Revenue**

| Sources of Direct Revenue           | % of Total |
|-------------------------------------|------------|
| Programs and class fees and charges | 44.49%     |
| Facility entry fees/memberships     | 22.59%     |
| Facility rentals                    | 16.15%     |
| Other                               | 9.9%       |
| Concessions, resale items           | 4.83%      |
| Facility or property leases         | 1.97%      |
| Sale of real property               | 0.06%      |

Source: NRPA PRORAGIS 2014 National Database Report, Page 9

Although not included in the PRORAGIS database, sponsorships for teams, programs and facilities (naming rights) and grants are also important revenue sources that should not be excluded in the Revenue Recovery Rate calculation.

As a “start-up” operation, Brookhaven is in the process of developing revenue fees and charges policy. The 2014 budgeted revenues include pavilion rentals (\$25,000) and program fees (\$25,000). The benchmarking revenue recovery rate data is shown below, in Table 4.9.

**Table 4.9: Recovery Rates for Cities Based on 2014 Budgeted Expenses and Revenues**

| Location   | Revenue Recovery Rate as a % of Operations |
|------------|--|
| Brookhaven | 5.3%                                       |
| Dunwoody   | 0.9%                                       |
| Alpharetta | 25.5%                                      |
| Roswell    | 44.9%                                      |
| Decatur    | 40.3%                                      |

Source: Base Data from online Budget Documents



The 2014 PRORAGIS report indicates a median revenue recovery rate of 26.9%. Dr. John Crompton, a noted Texas A&M professor in the study of benefits and impacts of Leisure Studies, has estimated the national average revenue recovery rate at 34%.

Programs drive revenue in parks and recreation as evidenced, in **Table 4.9**. Dunwoody does not provide programs, but facilitates the use of facilities for programs offered by community non-profit organizations. Dunwoody's sole direct operations revenue source as reported in the 2014 budget is pavilion rentals. Of course, the calculation does not take into account in-kind services provided by volunteer groups. Roswell has the most aggressive revenue policies.

A revenue policy would enable Brookhaven to structure a sustainable system that is supported by both taxes and user fees. **Table 4.10** below, illustrates the impact that fees and charges have on the per capita costs by comparing the net (expenditures - revenue) operating per capita costs for the benchmark cities.

**Table 4.10: Based on 2014 Budgeted Expenses and Revenues**

| Location   | Parks and Recreation<br>Per Capita Expenditures<br>(2014 Operating) | Parks and Recreation<br>Per Capita NET Expenditures<br>(2014 Operating ) |
|------------|---|--|
| Brookhaven | \$17  | \$16   |
| Dunwoody   | \$22  | \$22   |
| Alpharetta | \$113   | \$84   |
| Roswell    | \$109   | \$60   |
| Decatur    | \$75  | \$45   |

Source: Base Data from online Budget Documents

Income levels are an indicator of the ability to pay. The average household income levels as documented in the study's Community Profile and included in **Table 4.11**, compares Brookhaven to the benchmark cities and demonstrates that Brookhaven is well above the state and national averages. Additionally, the citizens of Brookhaven are accustomed to the "paying as you play" philosophy, such as the Murphey-Candler cost recovery fee model and YMCA membership fee structure.



**Table 4.11: Average Household Income**

| Location       | Average Household Income |
|----------------|--------------------------|
| Brookhaven, GA | \$97,731                 |
| Dunwoody, GA   | \$112,224                |
| Alpharetta, GA | \$117,249                |
| Roswell, GA    | \$111,396                |
| Decatur, GA    | \$89,914                 |
| DeKalb County  | \$73,419                 |
| Georgia        | \$68,741                 |
| United States  | \$74,349                 |

Source: Community Profile, Section 2

Revenue policies define tiered service levels such as basic services, supplemental services, and special facilities with fees set to recover a specified percentage of the cost to deliver the service. Tiered service levels address both populations served and the level of exclusivity of the use. For example, the cost recovery rate for an exercise class as a part of a senior program may be less than the cost recovery rate for an adult program exercise class. As another example, a pavilion rental by a private company would be considered an exclusive use and would be expected to cover costs, at a minimum.

The City should design new facilities with a strategic focus on revenue generation. For example, incorporate food and beverage and retail sales. As another example, consider designing dog parks with electronic membership pass card entry to provide revenues to offset costs.

The implementation of revenue policies requires staff training to understand the cost of service in order to calculate fees. Scholarship opportunities should be made available as a component of the policy. An example policy is included in Section 9, Appendix.

### Capital Development Funding

Funding the study’s capital development recommendations will require careful planning with multiple funding sources. A complete list of alternative funding sources for capital projects are found in Section 8, Funding Recommendations.



The city needs to develop a 10-year Parks and Recreation Capital Improvement Plan based on the study recommendations. The recommendations for the plan can be found in Section 7.

### Key Observations and Summary Recommendations

- Develop a Revenue Policy based on the cost of service with a three tiered service level system and a phased approach to move toward a more self-sustaining system. Track revenues as a percentage of department operating costs.  
  
Increased funding is necessary to initiate and expand operations of the Parks and Recreation Department. Target funding for parks and recreation operations at \$45 per capita in the short term.
- The FY14 budget does not provide adequate funding for parks maintenance. Develop parks maintenance performance standards and budget funding to provide a parks maintenance worker to park acreage ratio of 1:18.
- Develop a 10-year capital improvement plan to fund the parks and recreation projects.

## Recommendations with Implementation Plan

### Tier 1: 0 to 24 months

#### Staffing

- Hire a Parks Manager
- Hire a Grounds Coordinator
- Hire Recreation Leader – Lynwood and Briarwood
- Implement an operations plan for the renovated Briarwood Community Center by either hiring staff or developing a partnership to manage the center and provide programming

#### Operations

- Implement Administrative Policies and Procedures to manage existing facilities
- Create a Strategic Plan
- Establish a Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
- Implement a Background Investigations Policy



## 04 Staffing, Operations and Budget

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- Outsource marketing services
- Develop Parks Maintenance standards
- Develop a Risk Management Plan
- Develop a Public Information Policy
- Develop a General Security Plan
- Develop a financial pro forma for the tennis center
- Develop aquatics master plan and pro forma

### **Budget**

- Develop a Comprehensive Revenue Policy
- Fund parks maintenance to provide a parks maintenance worker to park acreage ratio of 1:18
- Budget funds for Parks and Recreation Department operations at \$45.00 per capita
- Create a 10-year Parks and Recreation Capital Improvement Plan

## **Tier 2: 25 to 60 months**

### **Staffing**

- Hire staff for the Murphey-Candler Community Center
- Hire an Athletics Coordinator

### **Operations**

- Implement a structured Friends Program with Policies and written agreements
- Implement an on-line registration system
- Complete a Community Center Redevelopment Plan
- Parks and Recreation administrative offices locate at Lynwood Park
- Develop a Sponsorship Policy

### **Budget**

- Implement the Capital Improvement Budget
- Update the Capital Improvement Budget each year maintaining a five year projection

