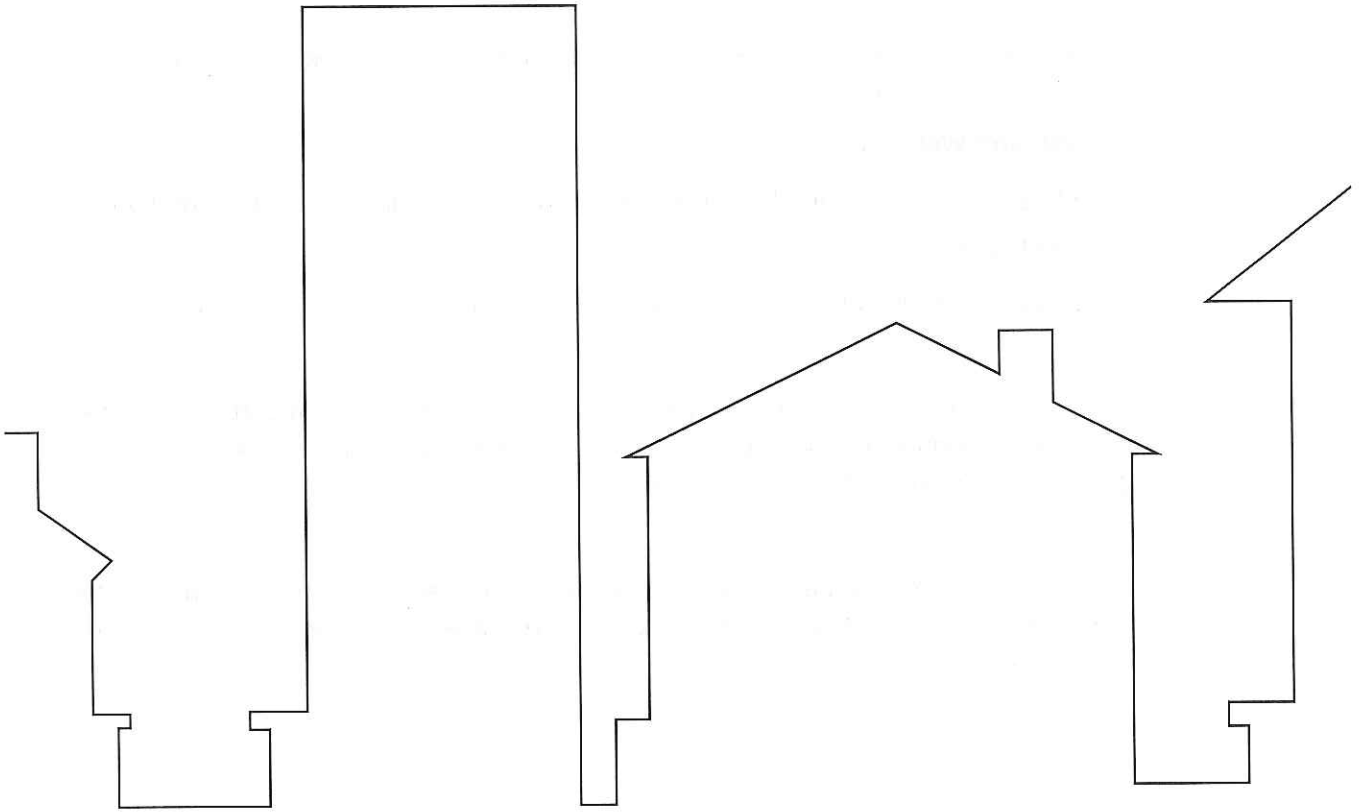


# 05

## Programming



# 05 Programming

Recreation programming activates parks and facilities with laughter, learning, competition, creativity, and fun. Successful parks and recreation departments deliver diverse and innovative programs across the demographic spectrum and geographic reaches of its community.

The *NRPA Synopsis of 2010 Research: The key to Benefits* identified physical health, mental health, social functioning, youth development, environment and economic impact as benefits of parks and recreation programming. Programs bring people together and build community, impacting the community's quality of life. The National Parks and Recreation Association (NRPA) created Three Pillars that define the critical role of parks and recreation in our communities. The Three Pillars are:

- 1. Conservation**

Protecting open space, connecting children to nature, and engaging communities in conservation practices.

- 2. Health and Wellness**

Leading the nation to improved health and wellness through parks and recreation.

- 3. Social Equity**

Ensuring all people have access to the benefits of local parks and recreation.

The Three Pillars are supported by a body of research that confirms the importance of parks and recreation in addressing societal issues, improving the wellbeing of individuals, and creating positive economic impacts for communities.

This section of the study documents and assesses existing recreation programming in the community, provides trend data and information, and makes recommendations for parks and recreation programming.



# Program Inventory and Assessment

## Brookhaven Parks and Recreation Program

The newly formed Brookhaven Parks and Recreation Department offered its inaugural programs this summer (2014). Summer camps were scheduled for Lynwood Park Recreation Center and Men's and Coed softball league play was offered at Blackburn Park.

**Table 5.1 Brookhaven Parks and Recreation Department Programs - Summer 2014**

Program	Program Description	Facility
Summer Camp for 5-13 year olds	11 weeks 7am-6pm Fee: \$75 per week	Lynwood Park Recreation Center
Sports FUNdamentals Summer Camp for 3-4 year olds	3 day sessions June, July, August Fee: \$100 per session	Lynwood Park Recreation Center
Mens C Open Softball	Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday Leagues Mid-May - Mid-June Team Fee: \$600 (plus transaction fee)	Blackburn Park
Coed C Open Softball	Tuesday and Sunday Leagues Mid-May - Mid-June Team Fee: \$600 (plus transaction fee)	Blackburn Park

At the time of the study, no information was available regarding program participation for the programs listed in **Table 5.1**

The Parks and Recreation Department also offers tennis and swimming through private contractor management agreements. A summary of each is provided below.

### Tennis

The Blackburn Park Tennis Center includes 18 courts, plus a tennis center with a pro shop. Universal Tennis Management (UTM), under a contract management agreement with the



city, offers a broad spectrum of tennis programming at Blackburn Park Tennis Center. **Table 5.1** lists programs and estimated participants.

**Table 5.2 Blackburn Tennis Center Participation**

Tennis Program	Estimated Participant (6/1/13-6/1/14)
Adult Drills	1,245
Private Lessons	3,000
Friday Night Round Robin (Adult)	576
Senior Round Robin	175
Teams (Math play - Adult)	7,700
Teams (Practice- Adult)	4,500
Junior Drills	1,680
Public Reservations	8,600
High School Teams and Practices	5 total team practices or matches each week for 2.5 months - 6 courts
Wheelchair Tennis	No information provided
USTA Tournaments	No information provided

Source: Universal Tennis Management staff

The Community Survey conducted for this study found that while tennis ranked fifth in sports that ages 12 and under have participated, tennis was the top ranked sport in which ages 12 and under wanted to participate. The results were similar for the 13 - 18 age group where tennis was again the top ranked sport in which the group wanted to participate, but was the fourth ranked sport in which they have participated. For adults, tennis teams were the top ranked sport for participation, and tennis ranked fourth in "would like to participate."



The study results indicate that there is a market for all tennis, and especially for youth tennis. The addition of four 36' permanent courts would boost youth participation and increase revenues. These courts fit the footprint of one regulation size court. The USTA has developed numerous new programs for youth tennis and has facility assistance grants available for renovation and new facilities with youth court development a priority. The Parks and Recreation Department should help promote the tennis programs with links on the website and in future marketing materials.

### Aquatics

The city operates swimming pools at Briarwood Park, Lynwood Park and Murphey Candler Park through a management contract with USA Pools. The pools are open for the summer season daily from 12:00 PM to 6:00 PM through September 1. No participation numbers were available at the time of this report.

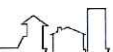
Opening the pools for the summer season was a high priority goal for the city staff, elected officials and the citizens, as evidenced in comments gathered in focus group meetings, interviews, and the public workshops. The city has received complaints regarding the limited pool hours, and the study team recommends extending the daily hours of operation to improve access for families during more convenient times.

Swimming consistently ranks high in participation levels and interest across all ages in studies nationwide. The Brookhaven Community Survey indicated a desire for swim teams by the 12 and under age group and the 13-18 group, with the 12 and under group indicating the higher level of interest. The planning team learned that in past years, swim teams competed at the pools. It is recommended that the Parks and Recreation Department work with volunteers to once again offer swim teams. The addition of learn-to-swim classes are also recommended to increase water safety and awareness as well as to boost participation and revenues.

## Alternate Providers of Programs in Parks

### Youth Sports at Murphey-Candler Park

The volunteer-run Murphey-Candler Sports Associations provide the majority of the youth sports programming in the city and the surrounding area. These organizations have a long tradition of operations at Murphey-Candler Park. Brookhaven entered into an agreement with the Murphey-Candler Sports Associations to continue operations and programming at Murphey-Candler Park.



## Girls Softball

The Murphey-Candler Softball Association offers both fall and spring seasons and three levels of play for girls - Rec, select, and travel teams. Ages served include 6-12 year olds with an estimated 400 participants.

## Baseball

Murphey Candler offers Little League Baseball for ages 4-12 with t-ball for 4 year olds and competitive qualifying teams for the oldest age group. They reported 1,000 participants with 10% of the participants special needs players.

## Football and Cheerleading

The Atlanta Colt Youth Association offers cheerleading, flag football and tackle football and serves participants ages 6-13.

While nationwide, the traditional youth sport team participation has shown decreases in participation, Murphey-Candler officials indicate that their participation has remained relatively flat over the last few years. In keeping with national trends, the Community Survey responses noted a drop-off in youth team participation for all sports for those in the 13-18 age group. However, baseball was the top ranked sport for participation in both the 12 and under and the 12-18 age groups. Interestingly, baseball ranked second and softball ranked fifth for sports in which the 13-18 year olds would like to participate. While Murphey-Candler offers programs through age 13, leagues for the older age group are provided in Dunwoody. Football did not appear as one of the top 5 sports for participation or "would like to participate" for either age group.

The study team recommends that the city continue to partner with the Murphey-Candler Associations rather than offering competing city leagues. Murphey-Candler officials indicate that 10% of their baseball participants are special needs kids and approximately 1%-3% of their participants receive relief of participant fees through their scholarship programs. Going forward, access to participation for all kids should be an important focus and performance criteria. As stated in Section 4, it would be more efficient for the city to contract with a single Murphey-Candler umbrella association than to administer three separate contracts.

## Soccer

There are many private and non-profit providers of soccer in the area, some of which use fields at Blackburn Park. The Concorde Fire Soccer Club has expressed interest in



partnering with the city to use fields in Blackburn Park. DeKalb soccer has contract for use of soccer fields in 2014.

The Community Survey showed soccer participation second only to baseball in the 6-12 age group and soccer ranked third behind baseball and swim team for the 13-18 age group. For both age groups, soccer ranked third for their interest in participating. Soccer participation, like other organized sports, is declining nationwide. However, the number of non-profit and private providers of soccer and the growing Hispanic population suggests that soccer will remain popular in Brookhaven. The study team recommends that the Parks and Recreation Department facilitate soccer in the community by providing facilities. Policies and procedures need to be developed to govern the access, use of the fields and protect them from overuse.

### Social Sports and Fitness Activities

The northern Atlanta area includes a number of organizations that utilize park facilities in multiple jurisdictions that offer sports activities and fitness primarily for young adults. While there may be additional groups, **Table 5.3** provides a list of the groups the study team has identified.

**Table 5.3: Other Organizations offering programs in parks**

Organization	Activity	Park	Population Served
GO Kickball	Kickball	Lynwood Park Blackburn Park	Young Adults
The American Boot Camp	Fitness	Blackburn Park	Adults
Meetup Group	Ultimate Frisbee	Brookhaven Park	Young Adults
The Tree Climbers International	Technical Tree Climbing for all ability levels	Blackburn Park	Families and all ages

**GO Kickball**, created in 2006 in Atlanta as “Atlanta’s Premier Social Experience,” has very rapidly grown into a national program with branches in metropolitan areas in over 20 states. While it provides sports competition, GO Kickball is a social organization that primarily attracts young adults offering a social outlet, social networking and a way to build friendships. It is co-ed play for all levels of ability and open to anyone 21 years and over. GO Kickball relies heavily on social media. The organization has expanded its brand to include



GO Cornhole, GO Bocceball, and GO Outings and Events that now operate under the parent company, GO Sports Unlimited.

**The American Boot Camp Company** began offering fitness workouts at Brookhaven Park in 2005 and has expanded to include a running training program. A company representative indicated that they have 60-80 participants with 85% being Brookhaven residents. Two to three trainers lead the fitness groups at Blackburn Park early in the morning to avoid conflicts with other groups. The company pays a fee for use of the park. They have expressed a need for restrooms at Blackburn Park. The American Boot Camp Company has expanded their operations with a fitness program at Chastain Park in Buckhead.

**Meetup**, as defined in Wikipedia, is “an online social networking portal that facilitates offline group meetings in various localities around the world. Meetup allows members to find and join groups unified by a common interest, such as politics, books, games, movies, health, pets, careers or hobbies.” Meetup allows people to self-organize and schedule their own activities. An Ultimate Frisbee Meetup group regularly meets at Brookhaven Park.

There has been a rapid growth of sports and fitness related profit, non-profit and self-organized groups offering activities in parks around the country. Similar to the Brookhaven groups, they primarily serve the younger adult population but may also include the more active Baby Boomer adults. Brookhaven’s location in the Atlanta Metro area and strong demographic profile in the target market makes it a perfect fit for these types of programs. As these programs do not fit into the traditional model of parks and recreation programming, new challenges have emerged for city officials in terms of impacts to park facilities, issues of conflicts with general park visitors, equity among current and potential user groups, appropriate fee rates and permitting requirements, and communication with the organizers.

It is obvious to the study team that these groups formed in Brookhaven and around the country to fill a programming gap are not offered by local parks and recreation departments or other established community recreation organizations. The parks and recreation department should develop fee and user policies and procedures that will equitably facilitate these types of programs while protecting park resources and considering the needs of other park users.

### **Technical Tree Climbing - Sport of Rope and Saddle Tree Climbing**

The Tree Climbers International, Inc.(TCI) provides a very unique activity at Blackburn Park for families and individuals of all ages. They utilize the trees located in the open spaces in front of the park to teach technical tree climbing. The group estimates that they have 1,000 to 1,500 participants in the tree climbing school, which also includes tree workers.





TCI offers a unique activity not typically found in other communities. They have expressed an interest in offering classes through the Parks and Recreation Department and the study team recommends that a partnership be explored. Concerns have been raised about issues related to soil compaction around tree roots due to overuse of the area by multiple groups. TCI may be a resource or partner to assist the city in developing a plan for protecting trees in the parks. TCI, along with other groups, have expressed the need for a restroom at Blackburn Park.

Source: <http://treeclimbing.com/>

## Alternate Community Recreation Providers

### Cowart Family/Ashford-DunwoodyYMCA

The YMCA focuses on youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. Brookhaven residents comprise 60% of their 13,000 membership. Facilities include an indoor swimming pool, gymnasium, racquetball courts, fitness area with exercise studio, fitness equipment area and children's activity areas. The YMCA serves all age groups in their program categories of swim, wellness, gymnastics and cheer, sports and recreation, kids and family, and camps. The YMCA rents the pavilion at Blackburn Park for camp programs, which serve 400 children.

The YMCA has a club for special needs kid and offers an adaptive swim program. The YMCA offers targeted programs for the Hispanic population for children with after school enrichment and an early learning program.

The YMCA provides quality facilities and programs for the community. Their club for special needs kids is an asset for the city in meeting the needs of an often underserved segment of the population. The YMCA has also expressed an interest in outreach programs in the Buford Highway area, also an underserved population. The YMCA is interested in partnering with the city to improve parks. The study team recommends that the Parks and Recreation Department partner with the YMCA to provide programming for the underserved. Additionally, discussions should be initiated with the YMCA regarding the potential for providing management for a future community center.

Source: <http://www.ymcaatlanta.org/cay/>



## Brookhaven Boys and Girls Club

The mission of the Brookhaven Boys and Girls Club is to offer “generation-changing programs” to young people. The program areas and activities include:

- Latino Outreach: Intramurals/Traveling teams for soccer, baseball/softball
- Dance - Latin, Hip Hop & Cheerleading
- Homework help and tutoring
- Tournaments/Traveling teams for billiard, table tennis and chess

The hours of operation are 2pm-8pm with summer and holiday hours 7:30am -6pm.

The Boys and Girls Club pick up children from designated schools.

The Boys and Girls Club provides important programs for youth, especially the Latino population. The Community Profile provided in Section 2 of this study indicates that the Hispanic population in Brookhaven is growing and that the highest majority of Hispanics live in the southeast area of the city, an area of multi-family housing. The Boys and Girls Club has operated consistently in Brookhaven since 1999. The Parks and Recreation Department should approach the Boys and Girls Club to explore the viability of a partnership to provide services targeted for the minority population in the southeast.

Source: <http://www.bgcma.org/club/brookhaven>

## Faith-based Recreation Providers

### *St. Martins-in-the Fields Episcopal Church*

The church facilities include a gymnasium and one small field. The church has six basketball teams and offers soccer. Their cross-country team competes with 20 other cross-country teams with meets held at Brookhaven Park and Blackburn Park. During meets, space is limited for other park visitors. Church representatives indicated their interest in gaining access to the city's gyms and soccer fields.

### *Brookhaven Baptist Church*

The church has a gymnasium and offers a Summer Science Camp and a Basketball and Cheerleading Summer Camp.



## Private Health Clubs

Table 5.4 Private Health Clubs located in Brookhaven

Private Health Clubs
Body Fit Atlanta
Brookhaven Body Works
Fitness Together
Liberty Fitness of Brookhaven
RJG Fitness - Personal Training
Workout Anytime 24 Hour Fitness Center

## Program -Based Analysis

### Athletics

The non-profit sector is the primary provider of athletics for both youth and adults in Brookhaven. The city provides tennis, outdoor seasonal aquatics and adult men’s and coed softball. The non-profit youth athletic programs have been existence for many years and have successful programs. There are limited youth sports opportunities for those over the age of 13, although Dunwoody does offer baseball for the over 13 age group. In most cases, the adult sports are geared toward social interaction. Due to the lack of city indoor facilities, there is a lack of adequate basketball, indoor volleyball, and other gymnasium-based sports. The YMCA and churches with gymnasiums provide some indoor sports. The recommended strategy for sports is to facilitate the non-profit groups with agreements and policies and procedures that provide equity of access, prevent overuse and damage to the sports fields, and encourage investment in the facilities. The Parks and Recreation Department should consider offering swim teams and develop a plan for programming gymnasiums based on the renovation of existing community centers and the development of new community centers.

### Fitness and Wellness

The private and non-profit sectors provide fitness programs in the parks and in their facilities. These include the YMCA and fitness clubs and businesses. The city does not have adequate indoor space to offer fitness programs until existing facilities are renovated. The recommended strategy for Parks and Recreation Department is to facilitate private



fitness activities in the parks with written agreements and policies and procedures that provide equity of access, prevents over use, provides funding to maintain areas of use, and respects other park users. The Parks and Recreation Department should explore ways to incorporate healthy living education into city programming.

## Camps

The Parks and Recreation Department and the non-profit organizations, including sports groups and churches, offer camps for children. PRORAGIS indicates that over 80% of the departments profiled in the national database offer camps. Themed camps have become very popular ranging from sports related camps to Clown Camp, Space Camp, Technology Camp and healthy lifestyle camps. City camp programs are limited by the inadequacy of the current community centers. It is recommended that the Parks and Recreation Department evaluate the existing camps and develop a plan based on assessed needs for future camp programs.

## Cultural Arts Programming

There are very limited opportunities for parks and recreation arts programming in Brookhaven due to inadequate indoor space in recreation centers. Citizens expressed interest in the parks and recreation department offering arts programming during the public workshops, interviews, and focus groups conducted for this study. The Spruill Arts Center in Dunwoody is the largest provider of arts programming in the area and serves Brookhaven residents. As the parks and recreation department improves the recreation centers and add new facilities, arts programming should be an important component of the programs offered. The Spruill Arts Center staff may have an interest in partnering with Parks and Recreation to offer outreach arts programs in Brookhaven. This study recommends that the Caretakers house at Murphey-Candler Park be renovated as a programming center for arts and nature programming. It is recommended that in the near term, arts programming be incorporated in special events. A strategy going forward should include the cultivation of the existing arts community so there is a market established to support and provide programming once facilities are improved and available for use. The Parks and Recreation Department should explore the potential for partnership opportunities with Oglethorpe University's Georgia Shakespeare, a premier and award winning performance group.

## Nature Programming

Nature programming is also limited in Brookhaven, but, as with arts programming, the primary provider for nature programming is found in Dunwoody. The Friends groups have also provided some nature related activities in the parks, including park improvements such as plantings and community garden installations. As previously stated, this study recommends that the Caretaker's House at Murphey-Candler Park be renovated to a



community center with a nature and art programming focus. Interest in nature programming was expressed in the public input workshops, focus groups and interviews. The Community Survey showed that ages 55 and over ranked nature programs as the fifth ranked activity that they have participated in, and nature programs ranked 5<sup>th</sup>, as well, for programs that they “would like to participate in.” Gardening was the top rated program that they would like to participate in. For adults, kayaking/canoeing was the second highest rated sport that they were interested in participating. The Murphey-Candler Conservancy has expressed interest in facility improvements and nature programming at Murphey-Candler Park. The study team recommends that the Parks and Recreation Department engage the Conservancy in offering nature programming and cultivate interest prior to the building renovation.

### Special Events

There are a number of special events held in Brookhaven each year including:

- The Food Truck Roundup
- Holiday Tree Lighting
- Ashford Park Elementary Fall Festival
- Brookhaven Bolt
- Soccer Fest
- Brookhaven Chili Cook-off
- Brookhaven Beer Fest
- The Brookhaven Arts and Crafts Festival, organized by the Brookhaven Arts Alliance (2013 marked the two day event’s 10th anniversary, but the organizers have announced that it will not be held in 2014.)

Brookhaven offers movies, music and other special events on a regular basis. Modern shopping centers include specifically designed event space to activate the center. Special events bring neighbors together and build community identity. The study team recommends that the city develop a mix of free and fee-based events with community wide appeal, along with other events for targeted populations. Community partners and volunteers should be recruited to plan and conduct the events and with business sponsors to offset a portion of city expenses.

The implementation of special event programming provides a means for the Parks and Recreation Department to quickly expand services since indoor space is not required. Events can increase awareness about the Parks and Recreation Department and celebrate the city’s “new” parks system. Holiday celebrations are popular, including such events as Haunted trails at Halloween, 4th of July children’s bicycle parade, and Easter egg hunts in



parcs. Dog events are also popular with Bark in the Park runs and festivals featuring dog baths, frisbee competitions, and costume contests. Cultural festivals educate and help to break down barriers in communities. Another idea is to augment existing events or activities. For example, add crafts vendors, art for kids, or music at the Farmer's Market. The ideas for special events are endless and can make an immediate, positive impact for the Parks and Recreation Department. The city should determine if there is a way to assist the Brookhaven Arts Alliance for the continuation of the successful Brookhaven Arts and Crafts Festival.

## Outreach Programming for the Underserved

The NRPA Commission for the Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) defines parks and recreation department's responsibility to the underserved as follows:

*"To encourage participation in parks and recreation programs, agencies shall identify and address barriers that may limit access including physical, social, and mental abilities and financial geographic and cultural barriers."*

The 2008 Women's Sports Foundation study found that "about 9 out of every 100 U.S. families have a child who has a disability that can interfere with sports and exercise." The study further shows that kids with disabilities are interested in sports and exercise. The Community Profile found that the southeast area of Brookhaven represented the most concentrated population of the underserved in terms of minority and lower income households.

In terms of existing community efforts in outreach programming, Murphey-Candler Sports Association indicates that special needs children comprise approximately 10% of their baseball participants. The YMCA and the Boys and Girls Club offer programming targeting underserved populations. Brookhaven has put aside \$150,000 in the capital budget for a special needs baseball field. The YMCA has expressed interest in working with the parks and recreation department to offer programs in the southeast area of the city.

While additional study and planning will be ongoing, the study team recommends that the city initiate outreach programming in the southeast in a collaborative partnership between the Parks and Recreation Department, Police Department, the YMCA and The Boys and Girls Club. The facilitation of services for the underserved will remain an important role for the Parks and Recreation Department.



## Age-Based Program Analysis

### Teens

The YMCA and Boys and Girls Club offer programs target for teen development. Youth or teen activities are provided by most area churches. Many parks and recreation departments offer program designed for teens to promote leadership, civic responsibility, socialization, preventive substance abuse education, and volunteerism. The traditional teen centers of the past have been replaced with the integration of multi-generational facilities that serve all age groups. Police departments team with parks and recreation to provide programs targeted for at risk teens. The study team recommends that the Parks and Recreation Department consider the viability of developing a Teen Council program with the Brookhaven Police Department as a program partner.

### Seniors

PRORAGIS benchmarking data indicates that almost 80% of the Parks and Recreation Departments profiled offer senior programming. There is limited programming specifically designed for seniors in Brookhaven. Within the last two years, DeKalb County opened a senior center in Chamblee that provides a lunch program. Brookhaven’s population is gradually aging in line with the national trend. The 55 years of age and older compiled responses to the Community Survey were as follows:

**Table 5.5 Community Survey Results for Ages 55 and Over**

Top 5 Active Programs that they have Participated	Top 5 Active Programs that they would like to Participate in
Aerobic Classes	Gardening
Health/Fitness Classes	Health/Fitness
Gardening	Aerobic Classes
Cooking Classes	Cooking Classes
Nature Programs	Nature Programs

It is likely that younger Baby Boom seniors are participating in fitness activities offered in the community. The study team recommends that the Parks and Recreation Department target a percentage of future programming for seniors. The staff should build on the study results and further assess senior needs and interests. Seniors are also a great resource for volunteerism for offering community based programming based on their particular areas of expertise and experience.



## TRENDS

### Emphasis on Health and Wellness

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that in 2012, one out of three children is either overweight or obese with a rate of 40% for African American and Hispanic children. Childhood obesity has doubled in children and quadrupled in adolescents in the last 30 years. Children that are obese are more likely to be obese as adults. According to the CDC, almost 35% of U.S. adults are obese. The 2012 data revealed Georgia as the 20th most obese state with 29% of adults considered to be obese.

Parks and recreation is in the forefront of the battle against the national epidemic of obesity. The CDC Childhood Obesity Demonstration project identified “efforts in local park and recreation centers to increase children’s active participation in parks programs” as an important intervention strategy. NRPA has partnered with the National Wildlife Federation’s 10 Million Kids Outdoor Campaign and First Lady Michelle Obama’s Let’s Move! Initiative. The 10 Million Kids Outdoor Campaign cites that, while a generation ago, 75% of kids played outside, that percentage has dropped to 25% for this generation of kids. The Let’s Move! Initiative’s goal is to reverse the unhealthy trends for the next generation by increasing physical activity and healthy food choices for children.

Across the country, cities have adopted community health and wellness goals with policies that emphasize interconnected bicycle and pedestrian plans to get people out of their cars, parks located close to where people live, and access to parks and recreation programs that connect kids to nature and get people active. Parks and recreation departments have responded by increasing fitness programming options. PRORAGIS, NRPA’s benchmarking database, reports that during 2013 “the number of agencies offering organized team sports, fitness, health and wellness, and environmental programs remains strong, indicating the importance of these values to communities and their park and recreation departments for keeping area residents healthy and teaching about local environmental health.” More parks and recreations agencies are creating community gardens and offering farmers markets and creating innovative programs to teach kids about healthy eating and nutrition.

### An Aging Population

The Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Aging (AoA) predicts that by 2030 the senior population, defined as 65 years or older, will be doubled from that of 2000. In 2009, seniors represented one out of every eight Americans, or approximately 12% of the population, and that number is expected to rise to 19% of the population in 2030.





US Census Bureau data shows that Georgia's senior population, at 11.5%, tracks closely to that of the national statistic. Brookhaven's Community Profile, as presented in Section 2 of this report, indicates that the 55 years and older age group comprised 16.5% of the 2013 estimated population with a forecast for steady growth in the percentage of older adults.

Baby Boomers, as defined by the US Census Bureau, were born between 1946 and 1964. The oldest Boomers are approaching 60 years of age and the youngest Boomers are turning 50. This generation has changed the profile of the traditional senior citizen recreation program. The Boomers do not view themselves as senior citizens and are not likely to participate in a program located at a "senior" center or a program for "golden agers." They are active and intend to remain active, especially running/jogging, walking, and hiking. They swim for fitness. This generation is knowledgeable about fitness and is interested in educational classes and social activities.

Parks and recreation departments' traditional approach to senior programming will be extended to meet the more active needs of the new generation of Baby Boomer seniors. At the same time, the role of social responsibility, in terms of improving the lives of the elderly, will remain an important emphasis for parks and recreation, especially as the population continues to age. In the December 2013 issue of *Parks & Recreation Magazine*, Dr. John Crompton, noted Texas A&M professor in Leisure Studies research, concluded that "focusing on this senior demographic will impact the viability of park and recreation agencies in the near future, and forward-thinking agencies are already adjusting operations to better serve seniors."

## Participation in Sports, Physical Activities and Recreation Programs

Research consistently shows that walking is the most popular sports activity in America. Swimming, running/jogging, biking, and exercising with equipment are the next most popular activities, and vary in place order from study to study. The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation reported that 50% of people participated in outdoor recreation in 2012. A Sports and Fitness Industry study asked non-participants in what activity they would find like, or "aspire" to participate and the top choice among all age groups was swimming.

National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA) provides data annually related to the participation in activities and sports. Over the past 10 years, the trend for organized sports has overall declined. The 2013 data revealed that participation in sports and physical activities was up over the past year and that increased participation by females drove the increased levels of participation. Participation in basketball, baseball, and ice hockey and



soccer was down compared to the previous year with football seeing the largest drop in participation. Increases in participation were reported for softball, volleyball, and lacrosse.

A 2008 nationwide Women's Foundation study of boys and girls in 3rd - 12th grade identified the most frequent sports and activities that kids participated in by gender.

**Table 5.6: Most Frequent Sports and Activities for Kids by Gender**

Girls	Boys
Dancing	Basketball
Swimming/diving	Football
Basketball	Soccer
Jogging/running	Jogging/running
Volleyball	Swimming/diving
Bowling	Baseball/softball
Soccer	Bowling
Baseball/softball	Weight training
In-line skating	Cycling/mountain biking
Camping/hiking	Skateboarding

Source: 2008 Women's Sports Foundation Study



## 05 Programming

---

**Table 5.7** shows the top ten programs offered by parks and recreation as provided in the National League of Cities 2010 Report.

**Table 5.7: Top Ten Parks and Recreation Programs**

Holidays and special events	75.1%
Youth sports teams	66.9%
Day camps and summer camps	65.6%
Adult sports teams	62%
Arts & crafts	62%
Education	60%
Sport-specific training	55%
Swimming	54.3%
Active older adults	54.3%
Sports Tournaments or races	54.2%

*Source: National League of Cities 2010 Report*



**Table 5.8** lists the top 10 programs that parks and recreation programs were planning to add, as reported in the National League of Cities 2010 Report.

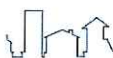
**Table 5.8: Top Ten Programs Parks and Recreation Plan to Add**

Environmental education
Day camps and summer camps
Education
Holidays and special events
Teen programs
Mind-body balance
Fitness
Adult sports teams
Arts & crafts
Active older adults

*Source: National League of Cities 2010 Report*

New trends in facility development impacts recreation programming. It is estimated that 25% of parks and recreation departments have dog parks. Skateparks are a relatively new facility that is now in the mainstream for the public sector. The smaller multi-purpose neighborhood community centers are being replaced by larger multi-generational centers with fitness and aquatics. Community gardens and farmers markets have become popular as more people are interested in healthier lifestyles.

The tourism industry has recognized parks and recreation as an important partner. Parks and Recreation serves as hosts to large special events and sports tournaments that attract visitation and bring dollars to the local economy. Communities bid competitively for events and design facilities that not only meet community needs, but also have added features for attracting events. The economic impact of these events boosts support for parks and recreations.



Participation and program trends assist parks and recreation departments in program planning to meet changing community interests and efficiently allocate resources. It is important that regular needs assessments be conducted by communities to determine the specific interests and needs of their citizens.

### Program Implementation

NRPA CAPRA standards provide the best resource for identifying standards and best practices for recreation programming. A Recreation Programming Plan is a fundamental standard for parks and recreation departments. This section provides key administrative and organizational best practices for developing and implementing successful parks and recreation programs.

### Community Assessment

Programs should be based on the assessed needs of the community. The Public Input section of this study provides the beginning point for assessing the recreation programming needs for Brookhaven. The study team recommends that Brookhaven conduct a program needs assessment in two years and on a five year interval moving forward.

### Partnerships

The increased importance of partnerships is a growing trend in Parks and Recreation. The recession's impact on local government budgets required creative solutions for continuing recreation programming. Partnerships extend the reach of parks and recreation, provide alternative programs and program delivery models, but they also build advocacy for parks and recreation. The National League of Cities 2010 report illustrated the importance of partnering.



**Table 5.9: Parks and Recreation Partnerships**

Partner Organization	Percentage of Departments
Schools	75%
Other Local Governments	69%
NonProfits	60%
State Government	43%
Businesses	38.5%

*Source: National League of Cities 2010 Report*

As previously discussed in this study, partnerships are important to Brookhaven. Assuming that Brookhaven implements the study recommendations, Brookhaven's Parks and Recreation partnership profile should fit in line with the study results in **Table 5.9**. During the next two years, Parks and Recreation should develop written agreements for moving forward with partner organizations and explore opportunities for new partnerships. Joint use school agreements should be developed to expand alternative programming space for parks and recreation. Joint agreements should be developed with adjacent municipalities to assure access and provide more recreation opportunities for residents. These measures are also an efficient use of tax dollars, as sponsorship policy is needed to facilitate private sector investment in programs and facilities.

## Volunteerism

Parks and recreation departments would not function without volunteerism. Volunteers provide the foundation of parks and recreation service delivery. Brookhaven residents organized as Park Friends groups and invested labor and investment in the parks system as it was neglected by DeKalb County. The Parks and Recreation Department should embrace the community volunteers and establish a Volunteer Program based on best practices tailored for Brookhaven's needs. The plan should, at a minimum, include background checks, evaluation processes, and a plan for volunteer recognition. Written agreements should be developed with the Park Friends groups and policies and procedures developed to provide city support of the Parks Friends and encourage investment in the parks system.

## Marketing and Customer Service

Programming is dependent on an executed plan for marketing and customer service. A detailed analysis of marketing and customer service with best practices and strategies



recommended for Brookhaven is include in Section 4, Operations Assessment, of this report. This should be a focus area for the Program Manager when hired.

### Systematic Evaluation Process

A systematic approach to recreation program evaluation is a CAPRA fundamental standard for parks and recreation. Goals and standards should be established for all programs and the programs should be measured against the goals and standards. The evaluation results are used to determine if programs should be continued, eliminated or modified. At a minimum, the Parks and Recreation Department should develop a user survey to receive feedback from participants in the current programs offered by the department. Going forward, the Program Manager should develop and implement a systematic evaluation process.

## Recommendations

### Tier 1: 0-24 months

- Develop a Systematic Evaluation Process for evaluating programs. Establish goals and standards as new programs are developed.
- Evaluate the summer camp programs and the men's and coed softball leagues and make plans for additional programming for the community.
- Extend the facility management contract model for delivering tennis and aquatics programs.
  - Encourage the expansion of youth tennis
  - Initiate swim teams and aquatic safety programs at the swimming pools
  - Require contractors to conduct user evaluations
  - Establish standards and track progress
- Continue the partnership with the Murphey-Candler Sports Associations as the provider of baseball, softball, football, and cheerleading.
  - Require Associations to conduct user evaluations
  - Require participation reports
  - Monitor to assure accessibility for all youth
- Develop facility use policies and procedures to approve, regulate and facilitate the use of parks facilities by park user groups. The policy should provide equitable access and protect the parks from over use.



- Develop a Volunteer Program that encourages, evaluates and recognizes volunteerism.
- Obtain approval of a background check policy .
- Initiate programs in parks by partnering with the Park Friends groups.
- Initiate Special Events programming.
- Develop a partnership with the YMCA, the Boys and Girls Club, and the Police Department to develop and implement a plan to provide outreach programming in the southeast area of the city.
- Partner with the Murphey-Candler Conservancy to begin offering nature programs at Murphey-Candler Park.
- Initiate discussions with the arts community to develop opportunities for arts programming.

## Tier 2: 2 5 - 60 months

- Conduct a Community Programming Needs Assessment.
- Evaluate the potential for joint use agreements with the schools.
- Study the potential for establishing a Teen Council program.
- Implement arts programming and programs targeted for Seniors in the newly renovated community center(s).
- Create innovative camp alternatives for children in the renovated center(s).





This page left intentionally blank.

