



2022 SOLON PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

December 19, 2022





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2022 Solon Parks and Recreation Master Plan Solon, Ohio

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE NEED FOR A PLAN

Situated at the southeastern edge of Cuyahoga County, Solon has experienced steady population growth in the last 20 years. While Solon has a quality existing park system and a myriad of agencies that provide a variety of space/programming, the quantity and quality of parks required to sustain the community has become evident.

This 2022 *Solon Parks and Recreation Master Plan* will be critical to the city's future as it clarifies the department's own responsibilities and needs, as well as what partnerships can be leveraged to best deliver parks, facilities, and recreational choices to the citizens. Meant to instill focus, establish priorities, and inspire action over the next 5 to 10 years, this Master Plan was produced with guidance from an active steering committee appointed by city leadership. It is supported by robust data collection, including hours of in-person engagement, and affirms the special potential that the Solon Recreation Department has to be the community's primary provider of recreation facilities and experiences.

Changing community needs, development goals, and operational feasibility are all reasons enough for producing a future-forward plan. As civic spaces, parks act as operational hubs for addressing chronic issues like physical inactivity and poor health. Having even a simple connection to nature can relieve stress, improve mental health, and provide opportunities for interpersonal interaction.¹ Parks are part of hyper-local civic infrastructure (so-called "third-spaces"²) needed now more than ever, where citizens

practice the "art of association" and do the work of knitting communities together.³

As the Covid 19 pandemic wanes, the increasing demand for outdoor and recreation spaces has remained high, adding stress to existing parks and outdoor infrastructure across the country. Agencies are adapting and finding creative funding solutions,⁴ boldly stepping into the critical work of bridging inequity, safeguarding physical and mental health, and ensuring access. This type of flexibility exemplifies the substance of the recommendations in this Master Plan. While it is impossible to decipher a single "correct" path into the post-pandemic future, this plan underscores the need for responsive action, elevated experiences, and reinforced civic infrastructure. This Master Plan maps the beginning of multi-dimensional recovery where parks and recreation are not only important but essential for building a stronger, more vibrant community in Solon.⁵

EXISTING CONDITIONS OF PARKS AND RECREATION IN SOLON

Due to the nature of the existing park system in Solon, it is necessary to classify the parks according to their functions. A park system should be evaluated as a composite of recreation areas with each meeting a particular public need; the system should provide a combination of smaller Neighborhood Parks, larger Community Parks, Special Use Parks, and Natural Areas. For all residents, whatever their

¹ National Recreation and Park Association, "Health and Wellness," <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/Three-Pillars/health-wellness/>, (March 30, 2022).

² Redefining Infrastructure & Public Space. Reimagining the Civic Commons. 2021. <https://medium.com/reimagining-the-civic-commons/redefining-infrastructure-and-public-space-2e311edfde68>

³ American Academy of Arts and Sciences, *Our Common Purpose: Reinventing American Democracy for the 21st Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2020)

⁴ McCormick, Kathleen. Room to Roam: The Pandemic Has Underscored the Need for More Urban Parks; So What Comes Next? Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. <https://www.lincolnst.edu/publications/articles/2020-10-room-roam-pandemic-urban-parks-what-comes-next>. (October 7, 2020). Accessed November 2020.

⁵ Marquis, Bridget. Infrastructure That Does More: Investing in Public Spaces for a Resilient America. Strong Towns. https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2020/11/23/infrastructure-that-does-more-investing-in-public-spaces-for-a-resilient-america?fbclid=IwAR2Aa80XGjUpGNv3ibIDHC-W40ic9L9QjnXvix_kgFS0CtEoi5vihqJ0bDg (November 24, 2020). Accessed December 4, 2020

background, parks help provide a variety of passive and active outdoor recreational opportunities. Proximity to these valuable resources invariably improves community health and wellness, not to mention create more adaptable, robust local economies.⁶

The City of Solon oversees over 721 acres of parkland and nine parks, including two Neighborhood Parks (Another is provided by Liberty Hill HOA), three Community Parks, four Special Use Parks, and six natural Open Spaces. Because this plan is concerned with community access overall and demand for parks and recreation in general, it is important to also consider Cleveland Metroparks and Solon City Schools offer land and amenities at several properties. Several private organizations and HOAs also offer open space and recreational facilities.

In recognizing the need for a future-focused plan, the City Council and Recreation Department staff decided a comprehensive planning process should be completed to best align services with community demand. The city appointed a steering committee to support and help guide the planning process. This *2022 Solon Parks and Recreation Master Plan* is the culmination of an engaged and informed planning process. Its 5- to 10-year scope will provide critical guidance for parks, recreation, culture, and community connection as Solon moves forward into the future.

Demographic and Benchmarking Analysis

A strong, proactive approach to department operations requires knowledge and understanding of community demographics. The findings of this Master Plan (Chapter 2) show 1) the population has increased by over 10% over the last 20 years and with continued growth planned; 2) the household size has reduced from 2.89 in 2000 to 2.74 in 2021; 3) the senior population (65+) as a percentage has increased from 10.7% in 2000 to 18.7% in 2021 and is expected to grow to 21.1% by 2026; the percentage of children in the household has decreased considerably; and 4) diversity of the population has greatly increased.

The analysis of existing conditions includes a benchmark comparison to 31 similar agencies using the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Park Metrics database. The benchmarking shows the city has a much higher amount of park land per 1,000 people, but much lower percent of that land is developed due to the large amount of undeveloped open space owned by the city. The benchmarking also shows that residents have much lower service ratios (facilities per 10,000 population) for several amenities including playgrounds, basketball courts, pickleball courts, diamond fields, rectangular fields, and skateparks.

These improvements will be especially critical as post-pandemic shifts in demand for parks and open space adds to stresses on existing resources.

Service Area Analysis (Gaps)

Maps of service areas for various parks and facilities were used to identify "Service Gaps" or underserved areas within Solon. Maps were also created to illustrate levels of access to various park categories and facilities. The analysis indicated that a very small percentage of Solon residents are within walking distance of a park, with the largest concentration of walking access near Community Park. The city also has an existing trail system and plans for the Norfolk Southern Rail Trail to connect Cleveland to Youngstown and beyond. However, gaps in trail linkages can be found throughout the city.

A CITIZEN DRIVEN PLAN

To make informed decisions moving forward, Solon needs meaningful public input in addition to robust statistical and performance analysis. Including resident participation in the planning process gives actual park users a means to share their individual needs, perceptions, concerns, and desires for the park system they themselves use. This Master Plan process used several methods to connect with the community.

As the city begins to implement this plan, sustained efforts will be necessary to continuously solicit public feedback about development projects; allowing direct participation whenever possible will ensure the community feels heard and has pride in their parks. Engagement efforts should be flexible and creative, utilizing tools like on-site feedback (e.g., semi-permanent chalk or bulletin boards) and interactive online platforms.

The summary below indicates the various ways the public was involved throughout this Master Plan process.

Engagement Summary

- Public workshop open house
 - Booth at Home Days
 - Stakeholder discussions
 - Web-based survey
1. A public workshop open house held on July 21, 2022 and a booth at Home Days on July 30 allowed attendees to learn more about the Master Plan and provide input on three general topics – "Parks and Facilities," "Trails and Natural Areas," and "Programs and Events."
 2. Meetings with stakeholder groups (July 2022) representing:
 - Solon Stampede (Boys Baseball)
 - Solon Elite (Girls Softball)
 - Community Group (community members who use Solon facilities)
 - Solon Lightning (Girls Soccer)
 - Solon Soccer Club (Boys Soccer)
 - Solon High School Soccer Parents

⁶ Berg, Nate. Great Parks Don't Just Have Rec. Space; They Create Jobs. 2021. Fast Company. https://www.fastcompany.com/90624316/great-parks-dont-just-have-rec-space-they-create-jobs?mc_cid=105f89bd93&mc_eid=6c9b6b28d4

- Solon City Council
- Solon Seniors
- Solon City Staff

3. A Web survey – available in Spring 2022 and powered by Survey Monkey – completed by 1,449 respondents (95% residents of Solon, 5% from another area)

WHAT SOLON RESIDENTS SAID

Information gathered from these public input methods was used to identify the needs of Solon residents. A brief summary of the findings is provided below.

Stakeholder Groups

Discussions spanned a diversity of issues:

- Upgraded fields & courts
 - Turf fields
 - Upgraded dugouts
 - Improved or additional lighting
 - Upgraded game courts
 - Improved restrooms
 - Improve grading at all athletic fields
 - Additional bleachers and seating
- Upgraded support amenities
 - ADA accessible features
 - Improved restrooms
 - Additional/improved picnic shelters (include lighting, electrical hook up)
 - Repaired sidewalks, trails, and parking areas
 - Wifi available at parks (modern technology)
- New facilities
 - Additional restrooms at athletic fields
 - Indoor sports facility
 - Splash pad
 - Disc golf courses
 - Skate parks/pump tracks
 - Soccer fields
 - Tournament level athletic fields
 - Amphitheater
- Improved operations
 - Better reservation system for athletic fields/programs
 - Partnerships with local organizations
 - Improved advertising
 - Better maintenance

- Additional programming
 - Camps hosted at fields
 - Additional community events (arts festivals, concerts, etc)

Survey Results

Visitation

According to the Web and Handout Survey, 98% of residents who completed the survey visited a park in Solon at some point in the past two years; 57% of these residents visited parks 20 or more times. Solon Community Park (84%) and Solon Community Center (81%) were the top two most visited facilities by households, with Metroparks (74%) coming in third (see Chapter 4).

Physical Condition

According to the Survey, 12% of households rated the facilities condition as excellent, 47% as good, with 29% rating them as fair.

Overall, 59% of households see the condition of Solon's facilities as either excellent or good, indicating a desire for improvement.

Existing Facilities Improvements Desired

Revitalization/Upgrades to Existing (Top 5)

1. Swimming Pools (indoor)
2. Swimming Pools/Aquatic Centers (outdoor)
3. Community/Recreation Centers
4. Fields – Baseball/Softball Diamonds
5. Large Community Parks

New Development of Facilities (Top 5)

1. Spraygrounds/Splash Pads
2. Stage or Amphitheater (outdoor)
3. Skate Parks
4. Disc Golf Courses
5. Trails – Mountain Biking

Both Upgrades to Existing and New Development (Top 5)

1. Trails – Multiuse (paved)
2. Trails – Walking/Hiking
3. Playgrounds
4. Natural Areas/Nature Parks
5. Basketball Courts (outdoor)

These preferences point first to the need for on-site amenities that improve comfort at the parks, as well as a popular desire for trails and walkable connectivity across the community and systemwide.

Most Important Facilities (Sum of Top 4 Choices)

1. Walking & hiking trails – 70%
2. Community Recreation Centers - 65%
3. Natural Areas/nature parks – 62%
4. Outdoor Pools and Aquatic Centers – 57%
5. Paved trails – 53%
6. Large Community Park - 53%

The results of the most important actions the city should take to improve parks and recreation include:

1. **Bike and pedestrian trails and connectivity**
2. **Improve existing facilities**
2. **Protect natural areas and resources**
3. **Maintain city sponsored programs and events**
4. **Develop splash pads**

And finally, respondents shared their level of support for a range of improvements and potential development covered in the survey. **Ninety-six percent (96%) of households indicated support for new trail development, and about 85% supported upgrades to existing facilities and acquisition of open space.**

Motivation to Use Parks and Facilities

Forty-nine percent (49%) of households said the top item that would encourage them to use facilities and programs more was improvement to existing facilities.

Engagement Key Findings

Results indicate that generally the Solon community desires:

- Connectivity and trails, including walking, hiking, and biking
- Upgrades to existing parks and facilities
- New park features (e.g., pickleball, disc golf, dog park, splash pad)
- Preservation of natural areas
- Additional programming (e.g., concerts/live performances, outdoor movies, fitness, adult athletics, nature)
- Upgraded playgrounds
- Support amenities (e.g., restrooms, wayfinding, shade, & seating)
- Strategic & collaborative marketing and promotion

VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES FOR PARKS AND RECREATION IN SOLON

Solon and the steering committee, with support from the planning team, worked to craft a strategic plan. This facet of the document solidifies the daily purpose of the agency, its guiding values, and the long-term view of success.

Vision

Solon's parks, programs, and facilities are an exceptional and interconnected system that engages the entire community and fosters a sense of pride

Mission

Build community and enrich life through parks, programs, and play

Values

Community – Connecting the community through play, nature, and shared experiences

Engagement – Continuous community consultation for the future of parks and recreation

Inclusivity – Creating accessible spaces and programs for all

Innovative – Encouraging exploration through diverse recreational opportunities

Excellence – Offering exceptional parks, facilities, and programs

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The following goals and objectives will guide the operations, improvements, and services in parks and recreation in Solon over the next 5-10 years.

Goal 1: Exceptional Parks

Create destination parks and facilities

Objective 1.1 – **Places**: Provide state of the art facilities that serve both the community and the region

Objective 1.2 – **Amenities**: Pursue innovative development and strategic replacement of structures and support features at all parks

Objective 1.3 – **Stewardship**: Employ sustainable practices to ensure continued community access to nature and high-quality facilities

Goal 2: Community Pride

Build physical and social connections throughout the entire community

Objective 2.1 – **Gathering**: Offer recurring accessible and inviting opportunities for community interaction

Objective 2.2 – **Connecting**: Improve physical connections to parks, schools, and popular destinations

Objective 2.3 – **Engaging**: Continuously gauge community needs and promote opportunities to engage with stakeholders

Goal 3: Diverse Experiences

Provide a wide array of recreational opportunities that inspire well-being for all

Objective 3.1 – **Events:** Collaborate to provide possibilities for interaction, fun, & learning

Objective 3.2 – **Wellness:** Encourage multi-generational exploration & growth through diverse physical activities and educational opportunities based on community input

Objective 3.3 – **Partnerships:** Accommodate local organizations to optimize services and programs

Goal 4: Responsible Operations

Employ strong leadership using efficient management, exceptional customer service, sustainable operations, and productive partnerships

Objective 4.1 – **Structure:** Encourage an engaged workforce of valued staff with a culture of innovation

Objective 4.2 – **Operations:** Implement clear performance standards and training practices for quality and flexibility

Objective 4.3 – **Funding:** Explore creative operational practices and funding strategies to improve effectiveness of investment

10. Identify staffing, maintenance, and training requirements for existing and future amenities
11. Re-engage the Solon Community Life Committee to provide guidance and recommendations to the City Council and the Recreation Department
12. Establish partnerships with vendors, contractors, and local organizations
13. Ensure consistency in branding and communication to the public and partnered agencies
14. Consider creating a Solon Parks Foundation (an independent organization or subsidiary of another) to raise funds, recruit and organize volunteers, and promote parks
15. Continue seeking grants and apply to foundations for project funding that enhances the park system
16. 16. Institute an easy-to-understand Cost Recovery and Pricing plan for all services offered

ACTION PLAN

The 2022 Solon Parks and Recreation Master Plan concludes with an Action Plan of **82 strategies** and recommendations. These action items, which can be found in Chapter 8, detail specific actions for Solon to take in implementing this long-range master plan.

SYSTEMWIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

Public input (Chapter 4) and a needs assessment (Chapter 5) together informed the recommendations for improvement outlined in Chapters 7 and 8. The following items are the top priorities determined by the Master Plan process along with regular consultation with the steering committee.

1. Redevelop Solon Community Park to become a community gathering space in which residents will take pride and provide for broader community use (See the Solon Community Park Concept Plan)
2. Add and expand upon existing support features throughout the park system such as restrooms, seating, picnic/shade structures, trees, and landscaping
3. Collaborate with other agencies to expand services and fill gaps within the city
4. Seek opportunities to add parks in underserved areas
5. Continue to add and connect trails throughout the city and connect to regional trails
6. Conduct ADA audit and improve ADA access to all existing and future facilities
7. Expand outdoor field and court capacity in response to community needs
8. Seek partnerships with school systems and health organizations to promote programming and healthy living practices
9. Ensure all decisions for new facilities and programs tie into the department's mission



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1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE NEED FOR A PLAN

The City of Solon's primary park where the community gathers and plays is at Community Park and the Community Center. In addition, Solon offers a few neighborhood parks, the Grantwood Golf Course, Solon Arts Center, natural areas, and trails. The city is also served by Cleveland Metroparks with additional park land, natural area, and trails that are primarily located in the northern area of the city. The proposed Norfolk Southern Rail Trail will provide a key linkage within Solon and extending to Cleveland, Youngstown, and beyond.

Primary reasons for this Plan are the facts that the current parks have aged, the population has changed, and the city desired a path of action that is based upon community engagement.

The population of Solon has grown by over 10 percent from 2000 through 2020 and is expected to continue over the next 10 years. This 2022 *Solon Parks and Recreation Master Plan*, set in motion by the city, is needed to guide future improvement in responses to growth and changes in the community.

As civic spaces, parks act as operational hubs for efforts to address chronic issues like physical inactivity, poor health, and access to nutrition. Just by living close to a park, an individual is more likely to have higher activity levels. Having even a simple connection to nature – like a small Neighborhood Park with healthy tree canopy – can relieve stress, improve mental health, and provide opportunities for interpersonal interaction.¹ Parks are part of hyper-local civic infrastructure, needed now more than ever, where citizens practice the “art of association” and do the work

of knitting communities together.² The Covid 19 Pandemic further emphasized the demand for public outdoor spaces as people used and discovered parks and facilities in record numbers.

To overview of the current system, the City of Solon oversees over 721 acres of parkland and nine parks, including two Neighborhood Parks (another is provided by Liberty Hill HOA), three Community Parks, four Special Use Parks, and six natural Green Spaces. Because this plan is concerned with community access overall and demand for parks and recreation in general, it is important to also consider Cleveland Metroparks and Solon City Schools offer land and amenities at several properties. Several private organizations and HOAs also offer open space and recreational facilities.

In recognizing the need for a future-focused plan, the Mayor, City Council, and Parks and Recreation Department staff decided a comprehensive planning process should be completed to best align services with community demand. The city appointed a steering committee to support and help guide the planning process. This 2022 Solon Parks and Recreation Master Plan is the culmination of an engaged and informed planning process. Its 5- to 10-year scope will provide critical guidance for parks, recreation, culture, and community connection as Solon moves forward into the future.

1.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF PARKS

Parks deliver numerous benefits and services to communities. Local agencies have the responsibility to provide parks and recreation resources that champion the health, safety, and welfare of the community. A Master Plan is an important tool that agencies can use to direct

¹ National Recreation and Park Association, “Health and Wellness,” <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/Three-Pillars/health-wellness/>, (December 10 2019).

² American Academy of Arts and Sciences, *Our Common Purpose: Reinventing American Democracy for the 21st Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2020)

the management and provision of their resources. For many residents, parks are the only place where they can access the natural environment or enjoy opportunities for social interaction. Parks have the potential to provide a variety of social, active, and outdoor recreational opportunities to everyone, all of which can improve quality of life and make viable, thriving communities. Equitable access to parks and facilities ensures the health and wellness benefits from these resources are felt by the entire community.

In terms of driving economic impact, parks and recreation offer incredible potential. A major study conducted on behalf of the Trust for Public Land by John L. Crompton, *The Economic Benefits of Land Conservation*, investigates the impact of parks and open space on property taxes. Findings indicate property values were higher for parcels located near quality parks and open spaces than for similar properties located elsewhere. Additionally, recent surveys of home buyers by the National Association of Home Builders indicate that trails, parks, and playgrounds were three of the top five amenities that home buyers desire when considering a new home purchase. Furthermore, the findings of a recent study, *The Economic Significance of Local and Regional Park Systems'* Spending on the United States Economy (conducted by the Center for Regional Analysis at George Mason University (GMU) for the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)) found that local and regional parks created \$140 billion in economic activity per year and supported nearly one million jobs in the United States.

In assessing overall quality of life, a community's parks and recreation system is considered a primary indicator; higher quality programming and spaces correspond to higher quality of life. To begin with, parks can play a critical role in a strategy for promoting health and tackling challenges like poor nutrition, hunger, obesity, and physical inactivity. Whether through programming or excellent amenities, park spaces can encourage physical and social activity. And proximity matters – even living near a small Neighborhood Park like Portage Park can encourage higher activity levels – because residents of all ages with access to a variety of recreation facilities are less likely to be overweight and more likely to be in better health. But beyond impacting physical health, studies also illuminate the powerful connection between nature and improved mental wellbeing. Spending time in passive parks and natural open spaces like Harper Ridge Metro Park can help relieve stress, nurture longtime respect for the environment, stimulate imagination, and restore mental balance. Parks can make tangible contributions to residents too – community gardens, for instance, often provided in partnership with or by parks agencies themselves, can afford residents direct access to fresh food.³

In addition to all of these incredible individual benefits, parks can make an invaluable contribution to collective wellbeing. As gathering places for the community and hubs of connection, parks are where multiple interests and passions can play out at once – on game courts and

fields, along trails and on playgrounds, and at shelters and picnic tables – helping to cultivate community ties. While less tangible, these collective benefits increase the livability and desirability of our communities and help begin to address the sociopolitical divisions that challenge every municipality.⁴

Residents in Solon clearly place a high value on parks and recreation. According to the Solon Community Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey, 96% of residents support maintaining Solon's city-sponsored programs and events while 94% support making upgrades to existing parks and facilities (see Chapter 4 for more information). Clearly, parks and recreation services are important to the people of Solon. By implementing this Master Plan and bringing its recommendations to life, Solon leadership will ensure all residents can enjoy quality gathering places, excellent recreation opportunities, and overall improved quality of life.

1.3 MASTER PLANNING PROCESS

The master planning process for this document consisted of four phases and ongoing dialogue between representatives from Solon and the consultant team. Solon appointed the plan Steering Committee – members of which included staff members, community leaders, and other stakeholders – to collaborate with and guide the consultant through the plan process. As each phase concluded, documentation was submitted along with a presentation of findings. The following sections provide a summary of each phase in the process: Evaluate → Engage → Envision → Plan.

1.4 EVALUATE

The planning process launched with evaluation. This phase included gathering of information on city demographics, a review of existing data, site visits and analysis, and the first Steering Committee meeting.

1.4.1 Demographic Analysis

Using information provided by the city and other sources, the consultant team analyzed demographic and population characteristics of Solon. Information included:

- Population trends and projections
- Demographic characteristics (quantity, ages, race, etc.)
- Household size and composition
- Median household income and educational attainment
- Population diversity

1.4.2 Benchmarking Analysis

Using information provided by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Park Metrics program, Solon parks

³ National Recreation and Park Association, "Health and Wellness," <http://www.nrpa.org/About-NRPA/Impacting-Communities/Health-and-Wellness/>, (December, 10 2019).

⁴ National Recreation and Park Association, "Social Equity," <http://www.nrpa.org/About-NRPA/Impacting-Communities/Social-Equity/>, (December, 10 2019).

and recreation offerings were compared to 31 agencies located in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin (serving populations between 10,000 and 30,000) who participated in the Park Metrics program. Comparisons between park systems covered several criteria such as parkland inventory, department functions, staffing, budgets, facilities offered, and more. (See Chapter 2)

1.4.3 Inventory of Parks, Facilities, and Programs

The purpose of the parks, facilities, and programs inventory (Chapter 2) is to obtain an accurate, comprehensive assessment of the system's current state. Comparing the findings of this inventory to the desires of Solon residents is a critical step in evaluating needs later in the process.

Park Classification

As a first step, parks and related sites in Solon were catalogued to better evaluate the overall recreation opportunities available to the public. In this updated inventory, sites were classified as Neighborhood Parks, Community Parks, Special Use Parks, or Natural Areas.

Parks, Open Space, and Facilities Inventory

The consultant team took stock of all existing parks and open space properties available in the Solon. Site visits enabled the team to identify existing conditions and assess opportunities for improvements. As part of this analysis each property was assigned an updated park classification. A comprehensive table provides a summary of the amenities offered at each park. Maps prepared using GIS software serve to highlight the location of all the city-owned parks, as well as those offered by other providers in the area.

1.4.4 Needs Assessment and Identification

Level of Service Guidelines

The consultant synthesized public input, benchmarking comparisons, and existing standards to develop new guidelines for level of service provided by the Solon Parks and Recreation Department. These level of service guidelines were defined for each park classification, different recreation facilities, and for total acreage of both parkland and open space.

Geographic Distribution – Service Gap Analysis

Identifying service gaps was a critical step in the process, determined by mapping locations and range of access for each of the system's existing facilities. The maps define service areas around specific facility types and park classifications, illuminating locations within Solon that lack sufficient quality access. In addition to two park service maps (Neighborhood Parks and Community Parks), nine other maps show service for specific recreation facilities.

1.4.5 Trends

Extending the scope of analysis further, national trends in parks and recreation services were reviewed for relevancy

and potential application in Solon. This exploration helped point to new possibilities, underscore existing performance, and compare at a wider scale. The analysis included changes in demand, new programming efforts, emerging technology, and user experience advancements.

1.5 ENGAGE

The public input process employed a variety of methods intended to reach not only current park users but also non-users (i.e., potential users) to determine community needs, desires, and views on the future of parks and recreation in Solon.

1.5.1 Public Workshop Open House

A public workshop was held at City Hall on July 21, 2022 to solicit input from citizens and users regarding their concerns and opinions about existing facilities and programs and to determine their desires for future facilities and programs. The meetings allowed participants to visit a series of stations in order to provide their input and learn more about the Master Plan.

1.5.2 Solon Community Parks and Recreation Survey

The planning consultant team prepared a survey in both handout and web-based formats. All residents and program users were invited to complete the survey. In all, 1,449 individuals participated in the survey, 95% of whom identified as residents of Solon. Results are presented and examined extensively in Chapter 4.

The survey was used to identify:

- Current satisfaction levels with programs and facilities
- Participation and satisfaction with current programs and events
- Parks currently used
- Needs for various facilities and programs
- Most needed facilities
- Primary actions that should be taken by Solon relating to parks, recreation, open space, and trails

1.5.3 Stakeholder Groups

Solon provided coordination support and collaboration to convene conversations with ten special interest groups, as well as meetings with various levels of Parks and Recreation staff. These discussions helped illuminate priorities from various perspectives.

1.6 ENVISION

Parks and Recreation Mission and Strategic Plan with Goals and Objectives

Following the phases outlined above – Evaluate and Engage – Steering Committee members and staff convened to discuss the public input and overall findings. The planning

consultant team facilitated focused envisioning sessions to help formulate a strategic plan.

Through this open discussion and visioning, an agreed-upon vision emerged for the future of parks and recreation services in Solon. This finalized Strategic Plan consists of core values, an updated mission statement, and a new vision statement, along with a series of goals and objectives for the system moving forward.

1.7 PLAN

In this final phase, a detailed action plan – informed by public and stakeholder input, data collected, service mapping, and Steering Committee guidance – was developed to direct the Solon Parks and Recreation Department in their efforts moving forward. Recommendations are separated into the following groupings.

1.7.1 Recommendations

Individual park improvements (Chapter 7) were provided to direct parks and recreation over the next 10 years and beyond. Priorities are provided for improvements that apply to the entire system and Solon as a whole. Long-term needs for park development and land acquisition were also included in these recommendations.

1.7.2 Action Plan

This portion of the process consisted of the creation of a detailed Action Plan with specific strategies for the implementation of this master plan. The Action Plan may be found in Chapter 8.

The Action Plan provided specific strategies for:

- Existing Park Improvements
- Outdoor Athletic Fields and Courts
- Trails and Connectivity
- New Park and Facility Development
- Natural Areas, Open Space, and Nature Education
- Programming
- Operations, Promotion, and Partnerships
- Budget and Funding

The strategies in this Action Plan were categorized under the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan developed during this planning process. The action steps for the implementation of the plan were categorized as short-term (0-2 years), mid-term (3-5 years), or long-term (6-10 years) strategies. Additionally, the plan identified the responsible party and potential funding source for each strategy.

Draft Master Plan

A draft of the *2022 Solon Parks and Recreation Master Plan* was presented to Solon City Council on December 19, 2022.



2

PLANNING CONTEXT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The Planning Context chapter provides a summary of factors and trends that may influence the delivery of parks and recreation services throughout the city of Solon. This chapter begins with a summary of population and demographic trends in Solon and concludes with a benchmarking analysis comparing parks and recreation in the city with other agencies around the region.

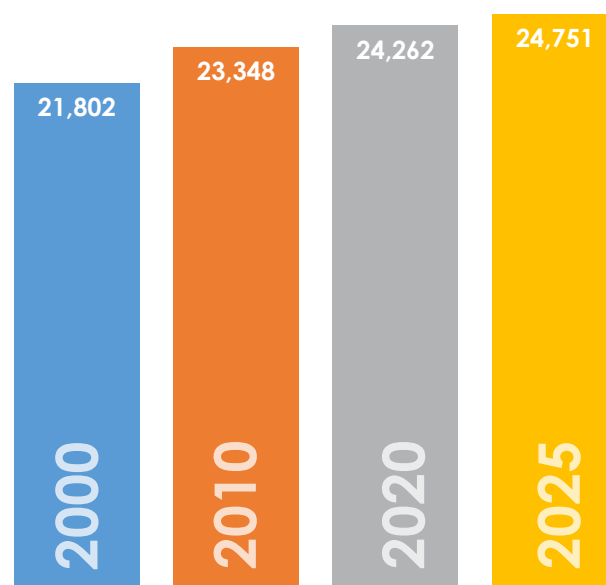
2.2 POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Needs vary between demographic groups, and these needs also invariably change over time. Each of the following demographic categories examines specific elements of the population. This exploration of general demographic trends in Solon helps define current conditions as well as identify potential future needs for parks and recreation service in the community.

2.2.1 Population Change

Figure 2.1 illustrates the population change in Solon from 2000 to 2025 (data collected from U.S. Census Bureau and Esri). The figure shows how Solon's population grew from 2000 to 2020 from 21,802 people to 24,262. Projections indicate that the population will continue to grow from 2020 to 2025.

Figure 2.1: Population Change in Solon



2.2.2 Household Size

Table 2.1 shows the number of households in 2021 along with the average household size from 2000 to 2026 for Solon, Cuyahoga County, Ohio, and the USA. As evident in the table, Solon's household size has decreased since 2000 from 2.89 to 2.74 but is still higher than the county, state and nation who's average household size hovers around 2.50.

Table 2.1: Household Size in Solon

	Households	Average Household Size			
	2021	2000	2010	2021	2026
USA	126,470,675	2.59	2.58	2.58	2.58
Ohio	4,761,855	2.49	2.44	2.42	2.42
Cuyahoga County	538,388	2.39	2.29	2.26	2.24
Solon	8,421	2.89	2.78	2.74	2.73

Source: US Census Bureau, Esri forecasts

2.2.3 Median Age

Table 2.2 shows the median age for Solon, Cuyahoga County, Ohio, and the USA between 2000 and 2021, including projections for 2026. The median age in Solon has increased since 2000 and is expected to reach 45.7 by 2026. As of 2021, Solon has a higher median age than all other geographies. That said, all geographies have already and will continue to experience aging.

Table 2.2: Median Age of Solon

	2000	2010	2021	2026
USA	35.3	37.1	38.8	39.5
Ohio	36.2	38.7	40.5	41.2
Cuyahoga County	37.3	40.2	42.3	43.0
Solon	39.4	43.0	45.4	45.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Esri forecasts

2.2.4 Senior Population

Table 2.3 displays the population age 65 and over between the years 2000 and 2026. Solon's 65+ population has grown in the last two decades, but the growth has been slightly more rapid compared to the changes of the other geographic levels. As of 2021, Solon has a comparable percentage of population of 65+ residents to Ohio, with Cuyahoga County having more (20.3% versus Solon's 18.7%) and the nation having less than both (17.2%). Growth of the 65+ community is expected to continue into 2026.

Table 2.3: Population Age 65 and Over

	2000	2010	2021	2026
USA	12.4%	13.0%	17.2%	19.2%
Ohio	13.4%	14.1%	18.6%	21.0%
Cuyahoga County	15.6%	15.5%	20.3%	22.8%
Solon	10.7%	12.5%	18.7%	21.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Esri forecasts

2.2.5 Children

Table 2.4 presents percentages of the population under age 18 between 2000 and 2021 with projections for 2026. As evident in the table, Solon has a comparable population of youth (22.9% compared to the nation's 21.7%). While all geographies children populations are shrinking with Solon following suit, Solon will still have slightly more children than all other geographies. Of note, is the decrease between the two decades in Solon compared to the other geographies. Solon's rate of children decrease is higher than all other geographies.

Table 2.4: Population Under Age 18

	2000	2010	2021	2026
USA	25.7%	24.0%	21.7%	21.5%
Ohio	25.4%	23.7%	20.9%	20.8%
Cuyahoga County	25.0%	22.7%	19.8%	19.4%
Solon	30.6%	27.8%	22.9%	21.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Esri forecasts

2.2.6 Poverty

Table 2.5 shows percentages of the population living below the poverty line at each of the geographic levels. As of 2019, Solon had 5% of its population living below the poverty line, significantly less than the levels seen at the county, and even state and national levels. Cuyahoga County had the largest amount of people living below the poverty line of all geographies (23.3%) and is more than three times higher than Solon's.

Table 2.6 describes poverty levels for children specifically. In 2010, Solon had nearly 8% of its children living in poverty. By 2019, that number had decreased by over 2%. Once again, looking at the comparison geographies, Solon had much lower rates of poverty among those under 18 years old. The nation and state had similar poverty levels in 2019, while Cuyahoga County remained the highest.

Table 2.5: Population Below Poverty Line

	2000	2010	2019
USA	12.4%	15.3%	13.4%
Ohio	10.6%	15.8%	13.1%
Cuyahoga County	10.9%	17.9%	16.1%
Solon	2.5%	3.6%	5.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS

Table 2.6: Children Below Poverty Line

	2000	2010	2019
USA	16.1%	21.2%	18.2%
Ohio	14.0%	23.3%	18.4%
Cuyahoga County	19.4%	28.4%	23.3%
Solon	3.0%	7.9%	5.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS

2.2.7 Income and Educational Attainment

As presented in Table 2.7, the median household income in Solon (\$104,366 as of 2021) has declined slightly since 2000 after adjusting for inflation. Cuyahoga County has also seen a similar decrease since 2000. Though the median household income is expected to increase into 2026, the growth remains less than the 2000 adjusted value. Despite this, Solon has the highest household income than the other geographies, nearly doubling that of the county and state.

Looking at per capita income, Solon still has the highest values across the years and into 2026. However, the difference between per capita income at the different geographic levels is somewhat less stark than the median household income. In 2021, Solon's per capita income is almost exactly what it was in 2000 (looking at the adjusted

2000 value, \$52,454). It is about \$17,000 more than the national per capita income, about \$19,000 more than Cuyahoga County and \$20,000 more than Ohio. The city has seen the largest amount of income growth in the past two decades across all comparison geographies.

Table 2.7: Household Income

	2000	2000 Adjusted	2021	2026
Median Household Income				
USA	\$41,994	\$64,178	\$64,730	\$72,932
Ohio	\$40,956	\$63,366	\$57,725	\$63,217
Cuyahoga County	\$39,168	\$60,600	\$53,123	\$57,933
Solon	\$78,903	\$122,077	\$104,366	\$115,463
Per Capita Income				
USA	\$21,587	\$32,991	\$35,106	\$39,378
Ohio	\$21,003	\$32,495	\$32,094	\$35,915
Cuyahoga County	\$22,272	\$34,459	\$32,949	\$37,178
Solon	\$35,394	\$54,761	\$52,454	\$59,813

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2019 ACS 5-year Estimates, Esri forecasts, BLS

Below, Table 2.8 shows Solon's rate of change in educational attainment between 2000 and 2021. Much like the comparison geographies, Solon has experienced an overall increase in higher educational attainment with about two thirds of the population having a bachelors degree or higher. Just over 69% of Solon's population in 2021 have some type of college degree. This is significantly higher than the county, state, and nation.

2.2.8 Growth of Population by Race

As shown in Table 2.9, Solon is experiencing a diversification trend. Multiracial populations have seen the greatest

percentage of growth compared to any other race since 2010, more than tripling in size. Some other race alone follows at a 79% increase. Asian and Hispanic or Latino populations have also seen significant increases since 2010. The only population to decrease since 2010 are white alone (-11.2%). Although the city is still majority white, the city's racial composition is clearly shifting. Minority populations in general will likely continue to grow (despite often being undercounted).

2.2.9 Conclusion

In general, the population in Solon is undergoing an aging trend. Faster than comparison geographies, this change will certainly impact the needs and preferences for parks and recreation services in the community. While parks and recreation can play a role in driving economic growth through athletic tourism and special events, the department will want to consider accessibility to all socio-economic backgrounds as it moves forward with programming and events, especially given the diversification trend. Accordingly, the city will need to consider multi-language outreach and cultural inclusion in order to ensure accessible opportunities for all populations in the community. Overall, Solon has seen a decrease in the percentage of residents over 25 without a high school diploma, while attainment of college degrees has increased. These factors point to a more highly educated community with potential shifts in demand and preferences.

These demographic trends indicate the population of Solon is growing more diverse, aging, and becoming more educated. These trends are already working to shape the future of Solon. The direction Solon chooses for its parks and recreation offerings will help enrich the overall quality of life in the community for years to come.

Table 2.8: Educational Attainment Age 25 and Over

Educational Attainment (Highest Level)	Solon		Cuyahoga County		Ohio		USA	
	2000	2021	2000	2021	2000	2021	2000	2021
No High School Diploma	5.4%	2.1%	18.4%	9.5%	17.1%	9.0%	19.6%	11.1%
High School/GED	19.9%	13.3%	30.0%	27.1%	36.1%	32.5%	28.6%	26.9%
Some College, No Degree	18.6%	14.6%	21.2%	21.2%	19.9%	20.0%	21.0%	19.8%
Associates Degree	5.6%	6.0%	5.3%	7.9%	5.9%	8.8%	6.3%	8.7%
Bachelors Degree	28.6%	31.3%	15.6%	20.1%	13.7%	18.5%	15.5%	20.6%
Graduate/Professional/ Doctorate Degree	21.9%	31.8%	9.6%	14.2%	7.4%	11.2%	8.9%	13.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Esri forecasts, ACS 5-year estimates

Table 2.9: Population Counts and Percentages by Race (2010-2021)

Year	Total Population	White Alone		Black Alone		Asian Alone		Other Race Alone		Two or More Races		Hispanic or Latino	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
2010	23,348	17,867	77.5%	2,441	10.6%	2,336	10.0%	63	0.5%	285	1.4%	357	1.5%
2020	24,262	15,865	65.4%	2,819	11.6%	4,001	16.5%	113	0.5%	871	3.6%	593	2.4%
# Change	914	-2,002		378		1,665		50		586		236	
% Change	3.9%	-11.2%		15.5%		71.3%		79.4%		205.6%		66.1%	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-year estimates, Esri

2.3 BENCHMARKING COMPARISONS

One method for evaluating parks and recreation services offered in a community is to use benchmark comparisons to other communities. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Park Metrics program provides a variety of data for use in benchmarking. The following analysis uses data from 31 agencies located in Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, and Kentucky (serving populations between 10,000 and 30,000) that participated in the Park Metrics program (Table 2.10). Additionally, NRPA provides an annual report¹ which includes national performance benchmarks; these figures are also used in this evaluation process.

Table 2.10: Benchmark Agencies

Agency	State	Year	Population	Budget
Baraboo Parks, Recreation and Forestry	WI	2022	12,556	N/A
Brownsburg Parks	IN	2022	28,973	\$3,054,941
Chicago Ridge Park District	IL	2021	15,000	\$3,320,000
City of Fort Atkinson	WI	2021	12,443	N/A
City of Two Rivers	WI	2021	11,200	N/A
Clinton County Regional Planning Commission	OH	2019	12,400	\$350,000
Collinsville (City of) Parks and Recreation Department	IL	2021	25,579	\$2,102,000
Green (City of) Division of Parks and Recreation	OH	2019	26,000	\$2,105,721
HeartLands Conservancy	IL	2021	17,180	N/A
Henderson Parks and Recreation	KY	2022	28,890	\$2,041,200
Highland Parks & Recreation	IN	2019	23,727	\$2,359,333
Lake in the Hills (Village of) Parks & Recreation	IL	2021	28,634	\$1,385,409
Oakland Township Parks	MI	2019	21,000	\$1,879,051
Palos Heights Parks and Recreation	IL	2021	12,480	\$1,596,890
Park District of La Grange	IL	2021	15,000	\$6,500,000
Park Forest (Village of) Recreation & Parks Department	IL	2021	22,200	\$4,689,030
Pataskala Parks and Recreation	OH	2019	16,500	N/A
Sussex Parks and Recreation	WI	2022	13,782	\$1,828,611
Tallmadge (City of) Parks & Recreation Department	OH	2019	17,537	\$2,000,000
Trenton Parks and Recreation	MI	2019	18,255	N/A
Village of Godfrey, IL	IL	2021	17,900	\$3,218,674
Washington Township Recreation Center	OH	2021	24,240	\$2,949,733

Solon is not a participant in the NRPA Park Metrics program; figures were calculated based on information provided by the city. Because the data for other park systems was limited to parks and facilities managed by those agencies, only parks and facilities managed by Solon Parks and Recreation are included in this analysis (other agencies, schools, and private facilities were not included). The figures used in this analysis for Solon were those budgeted for fiscal year 2022, and the figures for the comparison municipalities were those entered for 2019, 2021, and 2022.

The comparisons are organized into the following categories: parkland information, trail information, department functions, staffing, operating budget, capital budget, programs, and facilities. The following text details the findings of the benchmark analysis. The values presented in these comparisons are based on information reported to Park Metrics by the municipalities and may vary from actual budgets and measurements.

2.3.1 Parkland Information

Table 2.11 shows values for several aspects of parks for the city of Solon and benchmarks. For instance, the city provides 20.9 acres of parkland per thousand population, double the benchmark (10) and national medians (10.4). As a percentage of the entire jurisdiction, which controls

for the different land area of the comparison agencies, 3.9% of land in Solon is city-operated parkland, slightly more than the benchmark median (3%).

While the city of Solon has far more parkland than the benchmarks, a low percentage of that parkland is developed – 38% compared to the benchmark median of 72%. The population served per park (2,426) is significantly more the benchmark (1,795).

¹ National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), "2020 NRPA Agency Performance Review Park And Recreation Agency Performance Benchmarks," <https://www.nrpa.org/siteassets/nrpa-agency-performance-review.pdf> (accessed December 30, 2020).

Table 2.11: Parkland Information

PARKLAND INFORMATION	Solon	Benchmark	National
Acreage of Parkland			
Lower Quartile		160	
Median/Agency Value	507.1	255	N/A
Upper Quartile		351	
Acreage of Parkland per 1,000 Population			
Lower Quartile		8.0	5.1
Median/Agency Value	20.9	10.0	10.4
Upper Quartile		18.0	18.2
Population per Park			
Lower Quartile		1,233	1,301
Median/Agency Value	2,426	1,795	2,323
Upper Quartile		2,558	4,566
Parkland as a Percentage of Jurisdiction			
Lower Quartile		1.0%	
Median/Agency Value	3.9%	3.0%	N/A
Upper Quartile		5.0%	
Percent of Acreage Developed			
Lower Quartile		55%	
Median/Agency Value	38%	72%	N/A
Upper Quartile		100%	

Notes:

- Figures obtained from City of Solon (Fiscal Year 2022 adopted). Population estimates used from 2020 Census
- Based on Median Values (or averages) of 31 agencies with populations between 10,000 and 30,000. Median values were

2.3.2 Trail Information

The comparison of total miles of trails managed by the city of Solon (Table 2.12) shows 1.9 miles of trails, compared to the benchmark median of 5.5 miles. Total trail miles per

Table 2.13: Department Functions

AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES	Solon	Benchmark	National
The agency...			
Operate and maintain park sites	✓	81%	98%
Provide recreation programming and services	✓	81%	94%
Have budgetary responsibility for its administrative staff	✓	81%	87%
Operate, maintain, or contract indoor facilities	✓	77%	91%
Conduct major jurisdiction wide special events	✓	69%	81%
Operate, maintain, or contract outdoor swim facility/water parks	✓	65%	67%
Include in its operating budget funding for planning and development	✓	65%	71%
Operate, maintain, or manage trails, greenways, and/or blueways (TGB)	✓	62%	81%
Operate and maintain non-park sites	✓	62%	69%
Operate, maintain, or manage special purpose parks and open spaces	✓	50%	73%
Operate, maintain, or contract racquet sport activities/courts/facilities	✓	42%	63%
Administer or manage farmer's markets		19%	21%
Administer or manage tournament/event quality outdoor sports complexes	✓	15%	56%
Administer community gardens		12%	45%
Maintain, manage or lease indoor performing arts center	✓	12%	20%
Administer or manage tournament/event quality indoor sports complexes		12%	20%
Operate, maintain, or contract tourism attractions		8%	36%
Operate, maintain, or contract golf courses	✓	8%	36%
Manage large performance outdoor amphitheaters		8%	37%

jurisdiction square mile is a measurement that controls for differences in the physical size of comparative municipalities. Solon has 0.1 miles of trail per square mile of the city, a third of the benchmark median of 0.3 miles.

The trail miles per ten thousand population measurement, which controls for the population difference between the benchmark communities, shows a value of 0.8 for Solon, half the benchmark median (1.7).

Table 2.12: Trail Information

TRAILS	Solon	Benchmark	National
Total Trail Miles Managed or Maintained			
Lower Quartile		3.8	5.0
Median/Agency Value	1.9	5.5	14.0
Upper Quartile		10.0	39.0
Total Trail Miles per Jurisdiction Sq. Mi.			
Lower Quartile		0.0	
Median/Agency Value	0.1	0.2	N/A
Upper Quartile		0.8	
Total Trail Miles per 10,000 Population			
Lower Quartile		0.0	
Median/Agency Value	0.8	1.7	N/A
Upper Quartile		3.7	

With connectivity an ever-growing demand in communities all over the country, including Solon, the city and partners will need to continue to seek opportunities to improve connectivity across existing parks and regional systems.

2.3.3 Department Functions

The list of department functions in Table 2.13 shows two data points: 1) percentage of benchmark and national departments that conduct each service and 2) whether Solon currently conducts the service. The city of Solon

provides many of the services listed, including some that less than half of benchmarks provide in their own communities.

Most of the benchmark agencies functions mirror that of Solon's, with the majority of them operating, maintaining, or contracting jurisdiction wide special events, indoor facilities, outdoor aquatics facilities, and trails.

2.3.4 Staffing

Staffing metrics for Solon as compared to benchmark communities are outlined in Table 2.14. Solon employs 11 full-time employees, slightly less than the benchmark median (12). Additionally, Solon has about 13 full-time equivalent employees for every 10,000 residents, significantly more than the benchmark (5.9) and well above the upper quartile value. From a different perspective, acres of parkland per full-time employee, Solon has a higher ratio than the benchmark (16.1 acres per FTE vs. 13.3 per FTE). Taken together, the two metrics indicate that Solon has a larger staff overall and more park acres to maintain.

Table 2.14: Staffing

STAFFING	Solon	Benchmark	National
Full-Time Employees			
Lower Quartile		5.0	
Median/Agency Value	11	12	N/A
Upper Quartile		17.5	
Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Employees*			
Lower Quartile		11.0	17.3
Median/Agency Value	31.5	24.0	49.4
Upper Quartile		41.3	127.3
FTE per 10,000 Population			
Lower Quartile		3.3	4.7
Median/Agency Value	13.0	5.9	8.9
Upper Quartile		7.5	15.4
Acres of Parkland per FTE			
Lower Quartile		5.0	
Median/Agency Value	16.1	13.3	N/A
Upper Quartile		32.6	
Operating Expenditures per FTE			
Lower Quartile		\$64,890	\$75,933
Median/Agency Value	\$67,311	\$91,962	\$102,530
Upper Quartile		\$175,500	\$143,389

2.3.5 Operating Budget

Overall, the operating budget for Solon in 2021 is comparable to the benchmark communities. The total operating budget (Table 2.15) for parks and recreation in Solon is \$2.1 million, similar to the benchmark's however, the per capita operating expenditure for the city of Solon is \$87, Less than the \$114 median of benchmark communities. This is in large part due to the types of facilities that Solon staffs in comparison to the benchmarks (golf & recreation center).

The \$1 million in earned revenue is slightly lower than the benchmark median (\$1.1 million) and represents 50% of the Parks and Recreation budget, which is a considerably higher return in comparison to the median revenue brought in by benchmark communities (29%). Solon expects to generate \$43 per capita in non-tax revenue (2021), slightly

less than the benchmark (\$52) but more than the national (\$22) medians.

Table 2.15: Operating Budget

OPERATING BUDGET	Solon	Benchmark	National
Agency's TOTAL Operating Expenditures for the Fiscal Year			
Lower Quartile		\$1,853,831	\$1,969,110
Median/Agency Value	\$2,121,652	\$2,105,721	\$5,079,256
Upper Quartile		\$2,949,733	\$14,157,797
Agency's TOTAL Non-Tax Revenue for the Fiscal Year			
Lower Quartile		\$332,940	
Median/Agency Value	\$1,052,813	\$1,161,600	N/A
Upper Quartile		\$1,832,000	
Revenue as a Percentage of Total Operating Expenditures			
Lower Quartile		20%	11%
Median/Agency Value	50%	29%	24%
Upper Quartile		47%	43%
Operating Expenditures per Capita			
Lower Quartile		\$82	\$51
Median/Agency Value	\$87	\$114	\$93
Upper Quartile		\$133	\$171
Operating Expenditures per Acre of Land Maintained			
Lower Quartile		\$1,066	\$3,648
Median/Agency Value	\$4,184	\$4,523	\$7,823
Upper Quartile		\$7,760	\$18,379
Non-Tax Revenue per Capita			
Lower Quartile		\$15	\$6
Median/Agency Value	\$43	\$52	\$22
Upper Quartile		\$114	\$54

*Average values used

Table 2.16 shows a comparison of revenues for Parks and Recreation, the Community Center, and the Homedays Festival for 2019 and 2021. The revenues for 2020 were excluded due to the Covid pandemic shutdown of facilities and programs. Of note, the revenue in 2019 was nearly double that of 2021. In 2019, revenues totaled \$2,208,991 versus 2021's revenue of \$1 million. When reviewing an itemized list of budgets, the largest decreases are seen in the youth summer camp, annual pass sales, concession/vending sales, fitness receipts, banquet hall receipts, and programs receipts. The Homedays Festival revenue was also nearly cut in half. This pre- and post-Covid shutdown revenue shows that as the pandemic wanes by the end of 2022 revenues may either return to previous levels or increase based on current budget conditions.

Table 2.16: 2019 & 2021 Revenues

REVENUE DESCRIPTION	2019	2021	# Difference
PARKS AND RECREATION			
Recreation Dept Donations	\$235	\$135	-\$100
Recreation Dept Rental Receipts	\$22,682	\$10,833	-\$11,849
Recreation Dept Reimbursements	\$4	\$1,458	\$1,454
Pool Miscellaneous Receipts	\$0	\$6,943	N/A
Learn To Swim Receipts	\$38,272	\$21,842	-\$16,430
Pool Miscellaneous Prog Receipts	\$14,132	\$22,075	\$7,943
Youth Summer Camp Rec	\$422,842	\$144,597	-\$278,246
Blue Ribbon Prog Receipts	\$43,855	\$27,238	-\$16,617
Youth Clinic Receipts	\$68,917	\$81,847	\$12,930
Youth Sports Program Receipts	\$108,110	\$119,509	\$11,399
Adult Miscellaneous Prog Rec	\$4,915	\$0	N/A
Special Event/July 4 Receipts	\$11,456	\$10,451	-\$1,006

Table 2.16: 2019 & 2021 Revenues (Continued)

REVENUE DESCRIPTION	2019	2021	# Difference
Bicentennial Event Rev & Donations		\$0	\$0
Miscellaneous Revenue -		\$50	N/A
SUBTOTAL PARKS AND RECREATION	\$735,420	\$446,977	-\$288,442
COMMUNITY CENTER			\$0
Annual Pass Sales	\$694,811	\$378,374	-\$316,437
Daily Admissions	\$46,451	\$19,147	-\$27,304
Gift Certificates Sold	\$255	-\$2	-\$257
Gift Certificates Redeemed		\$0	\$0
Concession & Vending Sales	\$114,541	\$23,430	-\$91,111
After School Prgm Rcpts	\$159,514	\$136,048	-\$23,466
Gymnasium Receipts	\$10,695	\$3,401	-\$7,294
Fitness Receipts	\$99,659	\$21,164	-\$78,495
Banquet Hall Receipts	\$111,654	\$62,503	-\$49,151
Childcare Receipts	\$14,997	\$0	N/A
Donations	\$0	\$0	\$0
Programs Receipts	\$31,307	-\$38,230	-\$69,537
SUBTOTAL COMMUNITY CENTER	\$1,283,884	\$605,835	-\$678,049
HOME DAYS			\$0
Donations - Homedays Festival	\$18,000	\$13,000	-\$5,000
Rental Receipts - Homedays	\$4,295	\$4,050	-\$245
Miscellaneous Revenue - Homedays	\$22,549	\$20,355	-\$2,195
Transfers In From Gen Fund	\$50,000	\$15,000	-\$35,000
Total Homedays Festival	\$94,844	\$52,405	-\$42,439
SUBTOTAL HOME DAYS	\$189,688	\$104,809	-\$84,879
TOTAL RECREATION REVENUE	\$2,208,991	\$1,157,622	-\$1,051,370

Capital Budget

Table 2.17 shows capital budget comparisons for the benchmark communities. The total capital budget for this fiscal year is \$230,000, far below the benchmark median of \$886,300.

Because this Master Plan is intended to provide direction for capital improvements for Parks and Recreation specifically, the 5-year capital budget has not yet been determined.

The capital cost per capita for Solon is \$9, considerably less than the benchmark \$43.

Table 2.17: Capital Budget

CAPITAL BUDGET	Solon	Benchmark
Total Capital Park Budget for Next 5-Years		
Lower Quartile		\$1,891,378
Median/Agency Value	TBD	\$3,233,306
Upper Quartile		\$11,500,000
Total Capital Budget this Fiscal Year		
Lower Quartile		\$292,847
Median/Agency Value	\$230,000	\$886,300
Upper Quartile		\$2,250,000
Total Capital Expenditures per Capita this Fiscal Year		
Lower Quartile		\$13
Median/Agency Value	\$9	\$43
Upper Quartile		\$79

2.3.6 Programs

The list of program categories in Table 2.18 provides the percentage of benchmark agencies that offer each type of program and whether or not Solon Parks and Recreation offers them. The data in Table 2.18 is separated into two

types of programs: "Activities," which cover programs intended for all users, and "Out-of-School-Time Activities," which include programs for specific user groups (children, seniors, etc.).

Table 2.18: Programs

PROGRAMS	Solon	Benchmark	National
Activities			
Themed special events	✓	69%	90%
Fitness enhancement classes	✓	69%	82%
Social recreation events	✓	69%	88%
Team sports	✓	58%	87%
Health and wellness education	✓	58%	80%
Visual arts	✓	58%	63%
Individual sports	✓	54%	76%
Performing arts	✓	46%	64%
Racquet sports	✓	42%	71%
Aquatics	✓	38%	70%
Natural and cultural history activities	✓	38%	62%
Martial arts	✓	38%	59%
Trips and tours		35%	61%
Cultural crafts	✓	35%	62%
Safety training	✓	27%	72%
Golf	✓	8%	48%
Out-of-School Time (OST) Activities			
Summer camp	✓	73%	83%
Specific senior programs	✓	69%	79%
Specific teen programs	✓	50%	66%
Programs for people with disabilities		38%	62%
After school programs	✓	46%	55%
STEM Programs	✓	35%	58%
Preschool		27%	34%
Before school programs		27%	19%
Full daycare		0%	7%

The department offers programming in all but one of the top ranked activities, trips and tours which are offered at 35% of the benchmark facilities.

Of the OST activities, the department offers summer camps, senior and teen programs, after school and STEM programs. Of note, 38% of benchmark comparisons provide programming for people with disabilities. While the department does not currently have programs in this category, there may be community partners willing to collaborate to create such programs. When considering any new programs, the city of Solon should seek new and expanded collaborative partnerships to develop a fresh, effective recreation strategy.

2.3.7 Facilities

Table 2.19 continues the benchmark comparisons with an examination of how Solon's facility offerings compare to benchmark agencies. Types of facilities are differentiated between outdoor and indoor areas. Solon offers all outdoor facilities provided by 30% or more of the benchmark communities. Solon provides some outdoor facilities that are provided by fewer than 30% of benchmarks, most notably pickleball courts, an 18-hole golf course, driving range, senior center, and aquatic center. Having these facilities helps set Solon apart in its level of recreation service.

Of indoor facilities, Solon currently offers four of the facilities on the list, community centers, recreation centers, senior centers, and an aquatic center.

Table 2.19: Facilities

FACILITIES	Solon	Benchmark	National
Outdoor Activity Areas			
Playgrounds	✓	77%	95%
Basketball courts	✓	69%	86%
Diamond fields: baseball - youth	✓	69%	79%
Tennis courts (outdoor only)	✓	58%	78%
Diamond fields: softball fields - adult	✓	46%	62%
Rectangular fields: soccer field - adult	✓	46%	44%
Rectangular fields: multi-purpose	✓	42%	68%
Dog park	✓	42%	67%
Rectangular fields: soccer field - youth	✓	42%	50%
Diamond fields: softball fields - youth	✓	42%	62%
Diamond fields: baseball - adult	✓	35%	54%
Swimming pools (outdoor only)	✓	31%	53%
Pickleball courts	✓	27%	18%
Skate park		19%	39%
Community gardens		19%	51%
Ice rink (outdoor only)		19%	15%
Rectangular fields: football field		15%	35%
Multipurpose synthetic field		4%	22%
Golf Course (Regulation 18-Holes)	✓	4%	29%
Performance amphitheater		4%	36%
Driving Range	✓	0%	26%
Indoor Activity Areas			
Community centers	✓	38%	60%
Recreation centers	✓	35%	64%
Nature centers		15%	31%
Senior centers	✓	15%	41%
Aquatics centers	✓	15%	25%
Teen centers		12%	14%

While Table 2.19 highlights how well Solon compares to benchmark communities in terms of facilities provided, Tables 2.20 and 2.21 provide a comparison of population per facility to evaluate the existing supply. In other words, looking at population served per facility can help identify new facilities that the city may want to add in the future. These tables show the benchmark median values for a range of facilities – outdoor and indoor, respectively – plus upper and lower quartile values. A lower value indicates a higher level of service. Figure 2.2² shows active use/athletic facilities per 10,000 population (converted from the numbers in Table 2.19) for playgrounds, basketball courts (outdoor), ballfields (youth baseball, youth softball, and adult softball diamonds), and multipurpose rectangular fields.

In terms of benchmark comparisons, Solon's playgrounds, basketball courts, diamond fields, multi-purpose rectangular fields, and especially pickleball courts are serving higher populations than the benchmark's facilities indicating lower levels of service.

As for indoor facilities, Table 2.20 shows the population served by the existing indoor facilities. Most notable is the recreation center, which serves about double the benchmark's population but still lower than the nation. Figure 2.2 underscores some of the same findings in Table 2.19, showing how Solon compares in providing adequate facilities per population. Tennis courts serve the highest population of the other facilities and surpasses the benchmarks.

Table 2.20: Population Per Facility (Outdoor)

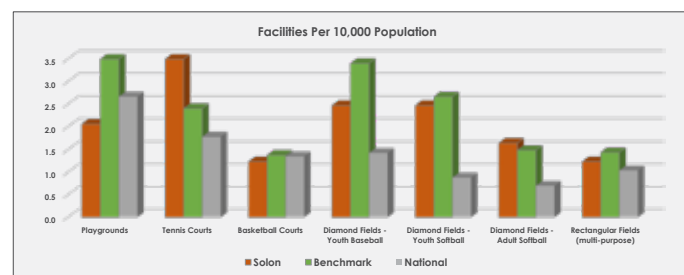
POPULATION PER FACILITY (OUTDOOR)	Solon	Benchmark	National
Playgrounds			
Lower Quartile		1,532	
Median/Agency Value	4,852	2,144	3,750
Upper Quartile		4,624	
Tennis Courts			
Lower Quartile		3,171	
Median/Agency Value	2,022	4,160	5,608
Upper Quartile		6,200	
Basketball Courts			
Lower Quartile		5,151	
Median/Agency Value	8,087	7,243	7,403
Upper Quartile		15,218	
Pickleball Courts			
Lower Quartile		4,127	
Median/Agency Value	12,131	4,829	14,714
Upper Quartile		15,000	
Diamond Fields - Youth Baseball			
Lower Quartile		2,220	
Median/Agency Value	4,044	2,936	7,000
Upper Quartile		6,914	
Diamond Fields - Youth Softball			
Lower Quartile		2,325	
Median/Agency Value	4,044	3,750	11,339
Upper Quartile		5,795	
Diamond Fields - Adult Softball			
Lower Quartile		4,210	
Median/Agency Value	6,066	6,716	14,302
Upper Quartile		24,921	
Rectangular Fields (multi-purpose)			
Lower Quartile		6,060	
Median/Agency Value	8,087	6,936	9,622
Upper Quartile		17,537	
Multipurpose Synthetic Field			
Lower Quartile		N/A	
Median/Agency Value	N/A	28,634	39,736
Upper Quartile		N/A	
Swimming Pools			
Lower Quartile		7,283	
Median/Agency Value	12,131	12,790	38,000
Upper Quartile		26,052	
Skate Parks			
Lower Quartile		10,259	
Median/Agency Value	N/A	14,445	53,708
Upper Quartile		19,086	
Dog Parks			
Lower Quartile		22,200	
Median/Agency Value	24,262	25,579	43,586
Upper Quartile		28,890	
Community Gardens			
Lower Quartile		1,295	
Median/Agency Value	N/A	12,400	30,140
Upper Quartile		24,576	

² The analysis was limited to these facilities due to availability of data for comparison departments.

Table 2.21: Population Per Facility (Indoor)

POPULATION PER FACILITY (INDOOR)	Solon	Benchmark	National
Recreation Centers			
Lower Quartile		7,196	
Median/Agency Value	24,262	12,590	31,239
Upper Quartile		22,200	
Community Centers			
Lower Quartile		16,903	
Median/Agency Value	24,262	22,964	29,036
Upper Quartile		26,407	
Senior Centers			
Lower Quartile		15,634	
Median/Agency Value	N/A	20,889	59,603
Upper Quartile		27,536	
Competitive Swimming Pools			
Lower Quartile		N/A	
Median/Agency Value	24,262	18,415	N/A
Upper Quartile		N/A	
Nature Centers			
Lower Quartile		12,409	
Median/Agency Value	N/A	21,600	114,696
Upper Quartile		22,200	

Figure 2.2: Facilities Per 10,000 Population





INVENTORY OF PARKS, FACILITIES, AND PROGRAMS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter of the Master Plan identifies existing conditions of parks and recreation facilities in Solon. It begins with a description of park classifications to provide an understanding of their functions. What follows is an inventory of Solon's parks and recreation facilities including park locations, facilities offered, and other observations. The chapter concludes with an inventory of programs offered by Solon Parks and Recreation.

3.2 PARKLAND AND RECREATION AREA CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

A park classification system helps to evaluate the overall recreation opportunities that are available to the public. In some cases, communities may "meet the standard" in terms of acreage, but a single park may cover the provision in terms of acreage without providing for the entire community. A park system should be evaluated as a composite of recreation areas with each meeting a particular public need; the system should provide a combination of smaller Neighborhood Parks, larger Community Parks, and Special Use Parks.

The facilities inventory in this chapter identifies each park by its classification and lists the specific facilities it provides. Table 3.1 defines each park category by its typical size and service area, population served, typical features and facilities, and desirable characteristics. The categories and descriptions were adapted from "Recreation, Park and

Open Space Standards and Guidelines," published by the National Recreation and Park Association in 1987 and 1995.

3.3 INVENTORY OF SOLON PARKS AND RECREATION AREAS

Residents of Solon are offered a variety of parks, recreation facilities, and programs. The Park and Recreation Resources Inventory (Table 3.2) provides a summary of all the offerings in Solon as well as the classification for each property.

The table indicates the location of the property by park type category as defined in Chapter 2. The Existing Parks and Trails map (Figure 3.1) shows the location of each of the parks and recreation areas offered by the city of Solon. The following text provides a detailed narrative summary of these facilities. Aerial photos of each park can be found in Appendix B.

3.4 NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

A Neighborhood Park is a small but highly developed park located within a short (10-minute) walking or biking distance of residents with facilities such as game courts, playgrounds, picnic areas/shelters, athletic fields, and walking trails. A Mini Park is a small Neighborhood Park, typically located in more densely populated areas where availability of land is limited. Solon Parks and Recreation oversees three Neighborhood Parks, Portage Park, Woodall Park, and Liberty Hill Park (which is maintained by the HOA).

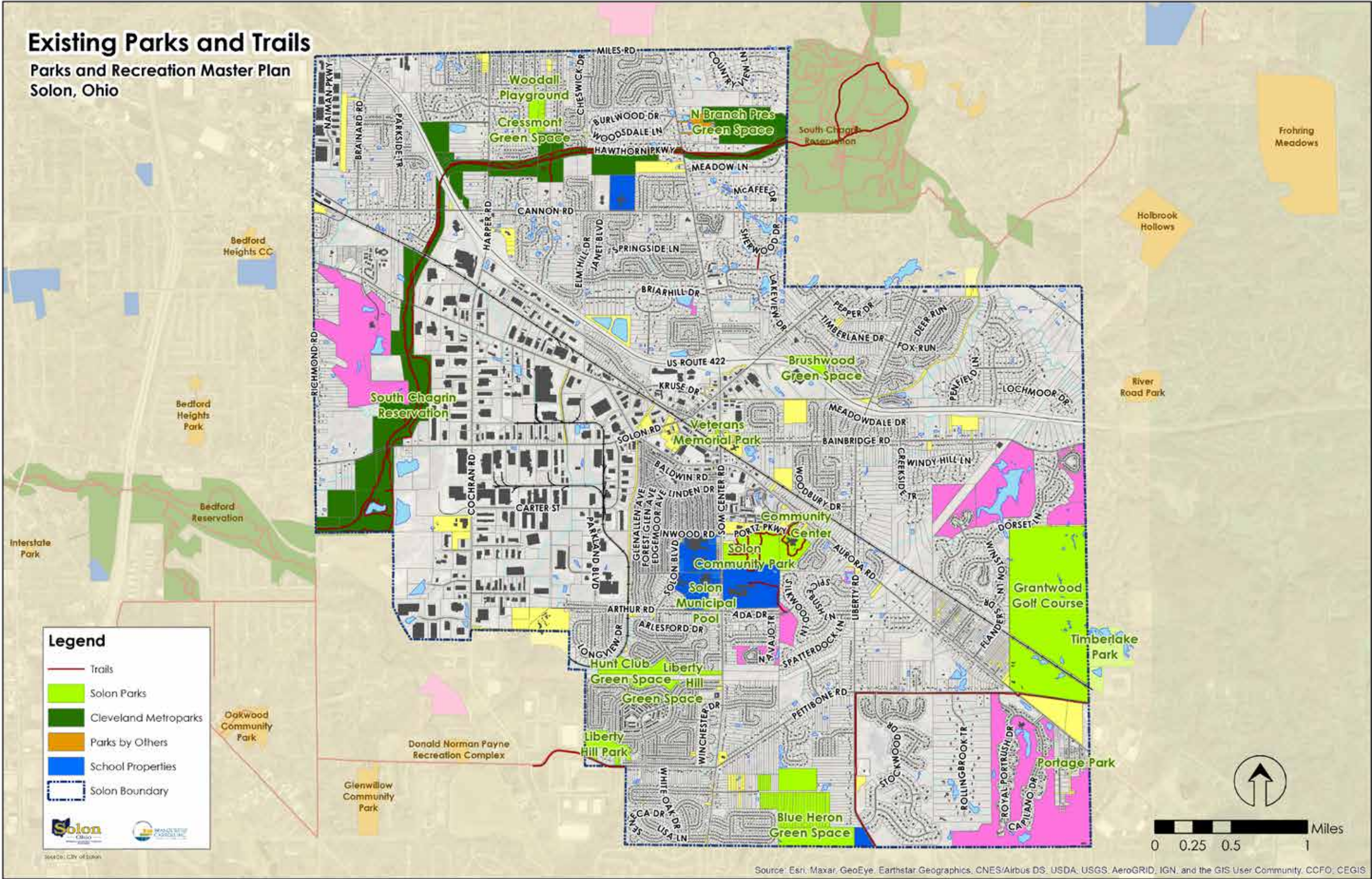
Table 3.1: Park Classifications

PARK CLASSIFICATION	TYPICAL SIZE and SERVICE AREA	DEVELOPED ACRES/1,000 POPULATION	TYPICAL FEATURES/ FACILITIES	DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTICS
Active Parks				
Mini Park (MP)	Size: Less than 2 acres of developed parkland; less than 3 total acres 1/2-mile service area 10-minute walk	Combined with Neighborhood Park	Typical facilities may include playgrounds, small multi-use court area, and benches.	Often provided in association with school facilities. Some developed as part of residential developments. May also provide open space as needed to serve high density neighborhoods where households have limited yard space.
Neighborhood Park (NP)	Size: 2-10 acres of developed parkland; 3-15 total acres 1-mile service area 10-minute walk To serve a population up to 5,000	1.2 Acre/1,000	Suited for intense development Typical facilities include athletic fields, game courts, playgrounds, drinking fountains, picnic areas/shelters, and walking paths.	Easily accessible to neighborhood population (safe walking and bike distance). May be developed as park/school facility or in conjunction with service agency facility. May not be needed in areas served locally by larger parks.
Community Park (CP)	10-30+ acres of developed parkland; 20 or more total acres 2-mile service radius 5-minute drive To serve several neighborhoods with populations up to 20,000	1.5 Acres/1,000	Typical facilities include all those listed for neighborhood parks, plus swimming pool, field or game court complex, dog park, recreation or community center, etc. May include natural areas or picnicking, walking, etc. May have an active or passive recreation focus or a balance of both. Parks with passive focus will have a higher percentage of undeveloped land	Capable of providing a range of intensive recreational activities or provides one or two activities that attract users from multi-neighborhood areas. May meet neighborhood park needs for users within a 10-minute walk.
Special Use Parks				
Natural Areas (OS)	N/A	N/A (but contributes to total open space requirement)	Areas of low or limited development. Includes undeveloped areas, urban greenspaces, and small designated natural areas. May include urban greenspaces (mowed and landscaped areas) of any size that are considered developed but have predominantly passive uses. Typical facilities include walking/hiking trails, water access, picnic areas, gardens, and open grass areas.	Includes undeveloped properties that may be developed in the future. May also function as small nature parks. Educational opportunities desirable in developed or undeveloped areas.
Special Use (SU)	Serves community-wide area	N/A (but may contribute to total open space requirement)	Area for specialized or single purpose recreational activities such as plazas, major pools, golf courses, athletic complexes, indoor facilities, etc.	Area should be located to meet the specific needs of the intended use.

Table 3.2: Parks and Recreation Resource Inventory

PARK NAME	PARK TYPE	Acreage		Athletic Fields					Game Courts				Outdoor Facilities			Natural Areas			Passive Recreation				Support		Indoor		Special Feature/Notes	
		Total	Developed	Small Diamond	Large Diamond	Batting Cages	Small Rectangular	Large Rectangular	Basketball Courts	Tennis Courts	Volleyball Courts	Pickleball Courts	Bocce Ball Courts	Playgrounds	Pool/Aquatic Centers	Golf (Holes)	Fishing Access	Lake/Pond/Stream	Natural/Wooded Area	Paved Trails	Large Shelters	Medium Shelters	Gazebos/Small Shelters	Restroom Buildings	Concessions Buildings	Recreation Center		Rental Facility
Solon Parks and Recreation																												
Neighborhood Parks																												
Liberty Hill Park (Operated by the HOA)	Neighborhood	24.8	9.3											1								1						
Portage Park	Neighborhood	1.4	1.4				1		1		1			1														
Woodall Park	Neighborhood	0.2	0.2						1					1														Half basketball court, 2 hoops
Subtotal - Neighborhood Parks		26.4	10.9	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	
Community Parks																												
Community Park	Community	47.6	32.5	5	4	1	1	1	1	12	2	2	2	1					1	1.3	2			1	1		1	Safety town
Solon Municipal Pool	Community	1.5	1.5												1													Outdoor 50 meter pool
Timberlake Park	Community	40.5	6.3											1			1			1		1						
Subtotal - Community Parks		89.5	40.3	5	4	1	1	1	1	12	2	2	2	2	1	0	1	0	1	1.3	3	0	1	1	1	0	1	
Special Use Parks/Facilities																												
Bicentennial Park	Special Use	0.8	0.8																									Historical Building
Community Center	Special Use	25.2	12.8												1					0.7						1		Indoor Pool, senior senter
Grantwood Golf Course	Golf Course	364.6	129.3													18												
Veterans Park	Plaza Space	0.5	0.5																			1						
Subtotal - Special Use Parks		391.2	143.4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	18	0	0	0	0.7	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	
Total - Solon Parks and Recreation		507.1	194.6	5	4	1	2	1	3	12	3	2	2	5	2	18	1	0	1	1.9	3	1	2	1	1	1	1	
Other City of Solon Properties																												
Blue Heron Green Space	Natural Area	126.1	0.0																									
Brushwood Drive Green Space	Natural Area	11.2	0.0																									
Cressmont Area Green Space	Natural Area	17.2	0.0																									
Hunt Club Green Space	Natural Area	29.5	0.0																									
Liberty Hill Green Space	Natural Area	9.8	0.0																									
North Branch Preserve Green Space	Natural Area	21.5	0.0																									
Subtotal - Other City of Solon Properties		215.4	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Total Open Space in Solon		722.5	194.6	5	4	1	2	1	3	12	3	2	2	5	2	18	1	0	1	1.9	3	1	2	1	1	1	1	

Figure 3.1: Existing Parks and Trails



3.4.1 Portage Park (1.5 acres) – Neighborhood Park

Park Location

Portage Park is located between Portage Street and Geauga Street and is most accessible to the neighborhood along Portage Street. It is somewhat secluded from the rest of the city. Portage Park is considered a neighborhood park because the majority of the property is developed. There is a small ball field, a basketball court, volleyball court, and playground on the property.



Existing Features & Amenities

- Small Diamond Field
- Playground with age 2-5 equipment
- Swings (2 belt)
- Volleyball court (grass)
- Full basketball court



Park Issues & Opportunities

- Lighting at the park that is sensitive to the surrounding neighborhood could be added
- Concrete at the basketball court is cracked in some locations and the striping and paint is faded

- Additional mulch safety surfacing is required in the playground area, especially under the swings and in the fall out area at the slides
- Edging around the playground would help to keep the mulch from spreading out any further than the play area
- The posts for the volleyball net are wood and may need replaced. There is opportunity to replace the post with a more durable material such as metal.
- Accessible walkways are needed to the facilities
- Need a sign to identify this as a city park

3.4.2 Woodall Park (0.2 acres) – Neighborhood Park

Park Location

Woodall Park is located off of Woodall Drive and is mostly accessible by residents living along this road. This park is considered a neighborhood park due to its size, location, and because it is completely developed. The park has a small basketball court and a playground with swings.



Existing Features & Amenities

- 1/2 Basketball court
- Playground with Age 2-5 equipment
- Swings (1 tot, 1 belt)
- Benches and picnic table

Park Issues & Opportunities

- The basketball court could benefit from striping
- The playground area needs mulch, especially at the base of the slide and swings
- Accessibility is limited as there are no sidewalks
- Need a sign indicating it is a city park
- A trail could be developed in the wooded area to the south and connect to the Metro Parks trails along Hawthorn Parkway

3.4.3 Liberty Hill Park (24 acres) – Neighborhood Park

Park Location

Liberty Hill Park is accessible via a path connecting Hollyhock Lane and South Roundhead Drive and is considered a neighborhood park. The park is primarily used by residents living in the Liberty Hill neighborhood and the park is maintained by the Liberty Hill HOA.



Existing Features & Amenities

- 2 playground areas
 - 1 Age 2-5 equipment, 1 Age 5-12 equipment
- 1 medium sized shelter



Park Issues & Opportunities

- Playground areas need additional mulch
- Swings need edging and additional mulch
- Sidewalk path is uneven in some areas
- Accessible walkways are needed to the shelter and playground
- This park is maintained by the HOA

3.5 COMMUNITY PARKS

Community Parks are larger parks that serve multiple neighborhoods and offer a wider variety of facilities. Community Parks should be conveniently located (within approximately five-minutes' drive) and easily accessible with facilities intended to occupy visitors for extended periods of time (field or game court complex, picnic shelters, etc.). Solon Parks and Recreation offers three Community Parks, Solon Community Park and Solon Community Center Park and Timberlake Park. The Community Center and Community Park are contiguous and function as a single park.

3.5.1 Solon Community Park (83.7 acres) – Community Park

Park Location

Solon Community Park is the second largest park in the system and is home to the most diverse set of offerings than any other city owned park in Solon. It is located between Orchard and Solon Middle Schools and Parkside Elementary School. This park is also home to the annual Solon Home Days Festival. This park is accessible from SOM Center Road and Portz Parkway.



Existing Features & Amenities

- Safety City
- 9 Diamond Fields
- 12 Tennis Courts
- 1 Basketball Court
- 3 Playgrounds
- Community Building
- 2 Shelters



Park Issues & Opportunities

- Many of the diamond fields have poor or inadequate grading, resulting in pooling of water in the infields



- Many of the diamond fields also have dugouts which could be improved through adding shelters, making them ADA accessible, and improving the benches
- Surfaces under the dugouts and around ball fields are experiencing a lot of wash out
- The Lodge building deck is failing in some locations and the building is mainly used for storage
- Park entrance and wayfinding signage exists, but do need some maintenance as the lettering is falling off in some areas
- The playground equipment located on the poured-in-place surface is in fair shape, but is outdated, however the surface is failing in multiple locations. The concrete surrounding the poured-in-place is also cracking and has some weed growth
- The parking areas located within this park are in fair to poor condition and some areas could use reorganization, resurfacing, and striping
- Seating near the basketball court is in fair condition and rusting out in some areas
- Paved trails and sidewalk connections between fields are in fair condition but do need resurfacing
- The restroom/concession/maintenance building is in poor condition
- Ballfield lighting is needed to be updated to LED fixtures
- The asphalt trail throughout the park is failing and needs to be replaced
- A former universal playground was located at the end of the Solon Middle School parking lot, near Ballfield #9. This is no longer useable
- Storage is provided in several locations – the Lodge building, restroom/concession/maintenance building, maintenance facility, and a garage west of Safety Town. Plus, the current maintenance facility is too small, requiring equipment to sit out in the weather.

3.5.2 Community Center – Community Park

Site Location and Character

Solon Community Center, Senior Center, and pool are located adjacent to Solon Community Park and is also home to the Parks and Recreation Department. The center has both an indoor and outdoor pool as well as a senior center.



Existing Features & Amenities

- Outdoor Pool
 - Play equipment
 - Slides
 - Shaded and non-shaded seating
- Indoor Pool
 - Lap lanes
 - Water slide
 - Play equipment
 - Spa
 - Vortex



- Senior Center
- 2 bocce courts

Facility Issues & Opportunities

- There is a desire to provide a cover over the bocce courts
- The trail is low in one area and puddles block the path



3.5.3 Timberlake Park

Site Location and Character

Timberlake Park consists of 40.5 acres and is located adjacent to Grantwood Golf Course and Parkside Church, with access from Root Road which is outside the city limits.

Existing Features & Amenities

- Relatively new dog park
- Gravel parking lot
- Large picnic shelter and small picnic shelter
- Playground
- Three ponds



Facility Issues & Opportunities

- There are no restroom facilities except for porta-lets
- Both shelters need repairs. The small shelter should be demolished

- Accessible paths are needed to the dog park, shelters, playground, and to provide access to and around the ponds
- The grills at the shelters are under the roof which is a fire hazard
- The playground mulch stays wet and the playground is outdated



3.6 SPECIAL USE PARKS & FACILITIES

Special Use Parks are areas designed for specialized or single purpose recreational activities, and can include places such as plazas, single use facilities, sports complexes, and indoor spaces.

3.6.1 Veterans Park (0.7 acres) – Special Use

Site Location and Character

Solon Veterans Park is located at the corner of Bainbridge Road and SOM Center Road and acts as a small greenspace in front of the Solon Fire Station. This park is a highly landscaped and developed park and serves the walkable population within downtown Solon.



Existing Features & Amenities

- Gazebo
- Benches
- Flag poles
- Landscaping
- Veterans memorial

Facility Issues & Opportunities

- The facilities are in good condition



3.6.2 Grantwood Golf Course (366 acres) – Special Use

Site Location and Character

Grantwood Golf Course is an 18-hole golf course for players of all skill levels which includes affordable play. Grantwood is located adjacent to Timberlake Park and Parkside Church off of Pettibone Road. The golf course is not included in the analysis for this Master Plan as it has a separate plan. There is approximately 193 acres of wooded and wet area located north of the golf course that is city-owned.

Existing Features & Amenities

- 18-hole course
- Large clubhouse
 - Snack bar
 - Pro-shop
 - Meeting rooms
 - Banquet facility (150 capacity)
 - Large shelter house (rentable)

3.6.3 Solon Municipal Pool

Site Location and Character

Solon Municipal Pool is located on Arthur Road and adjacent to the Arthur Road Elementary School. The pool was originally developed in 1971 and has more than served Solon for more than its expected useful life. The pool is 6-lane by 50-meters long and includes one-meter and a three-meter diving boards plus a wading pool.

Existing Features & Amenities

- 50-meter by 6-lane rectangular pool
- One-meter and three-meter diving boards
- Wading pool (approximately 20' x 20')
- Parking lot
- Pool Hose
- 43 car parking lot

Facility Issues & Opportunities

- The pumps need to be replaced
- The heater was replaced about ten years ago
- The parking lot has several cracks
- Although well maintained, the locker rooms and facilities are outdated
- The perimeter fence is on good condition



3.7 OTHER CITY OF SOLON PROPERTIES

In addition to the parks operated by the Parks and Recreation Department, the city offers five other parks and open spaces that are considered natural areas.

- Blue Heron Green Space consists of 126 acres and will be turned over to Ohio DNR to manage
- Liberty Hill Green Space
- Hunt Club Green Space
- Brushwood Drive Green Space
- North Branch Preserve Green Space

3.8 CITY FACILITIES SUMMARY

The table (Table 3.3) below provides a summary of the recreation facilities offered by the city of Solon, either by Parks and Recreation or other departments.

Table 3.3: Recreation Facility Summary

Athletic Fields	#	Trails (Miles)	#
Small Diamond	5	Paved	1.9
Large Diamond	4	Passive Recreation	#
Batting Cages	1	Large Shelters	2
Large Rectangular Fields	2	Medium Shelters	1
Small Rectangular Fields	2	Gazebos/Small Shelters	1
Game Courts	#	Support Facilities	#
Basketball	2	Restroom Buildings	1
Tennis Courts	12	Concessions Buildings	1
Volleyball Court	12	Indoor Facility	#
Pickleball Court	2	Solon Community Cabin	1
Bocce Ball Court	2	Senior Center	1
Outdoor Facilities	#	Solon Community Center	1
Playgrounds	4		
Aquatic Centers	2		

3.9 SOLON SCHOOL PROPERTIES

Also included in Table 3.2 are parks by others within Solon. These sites and facilities are managed by either Solon City Schools or St. Rita School. Almost all schools have publicly accessible playgrounds. Arthur Road Elementary, Solon High School, and Dorothy Lewis Elementary School have rectangular fields, primarily used for soccer. Roxbury Elementary, Solon High School, and St. Rita School have diamond fields available although, only St. Rita's is publicly available.

3.10 OTHER RECREATION PROPERTIES

Within and adjacent to Solon's boundaries is a part of the Cleveland Metroparks system, Bedford Chagrin Parkway. This parkway connects to a large park along the Chagrin River which has multiple hiking opportunities and extends down to Shadow Lake in the Hawthorn Ridge Picnic Area. The south entrance is only a 5-10-minute drive from downtown Solon.

3.11 PROGRAMS INVENTORY

Quality recreational programming is an important aspect of a vibrant and healthy community. Programs can be useful for meeting specific needs of different groups in the community – like active adults, young children, families, or teenagers – in a way that is more creatively tailored. In fact, programs can be an essential access-point for users; offerings such as fitness class, sports leagues, cultural crafts, and camps give residents unique ways to meaningfully interact with parks in their community. When properly managed and promoted, programs are an invaluable tool for strengthening social connectivity and enhancing the livability of a community.

3.11.1 Core Program Guidelines

The core program concept provides direction in the planning, scheduling, and coordination of community-based recreational activities. Involvement of community representatives, parents, participants, and advisory groups in the planning and development of program opportunities is critical for success.

The Core Program Guidelines include six components used as benchmarks for determining the quality of specific activities conducted at each program location. The level of Core Program offering may vary in activity type, intensity, and scope depending on such factors as size of the facility, equipment availability, and the number of staff required. The discussion below provides a description of the core program components as well as a summary of if and how well Solon Parks and Recreation is, as of 2020, targeting these components.

Appendix C provides an expanded description of each broad program category (component six). It includes possible program formats, identifies the primary values served by the activity, and lists specific program examples. The list can be a helpful resource for determining and developing programs in the City of Solon.

Core Program Components

The summary below uses the following abbreviations after each bullet point to describe whether Solon is meeting the core program components:

- Y = Yes offered by Solon Parks and Recreation
- L = Limited offerings by Solon Parks and Recreation
- O = Offered by partner organizations in Solon
- N = No, not offered in Solon

This analysis is based on the cumulative offerings and participation rates over the last five years.

1. Broad Appeal

Parks and community centers should have broad appeal by conducting activities and special events for people young and old and of varying needs and skill levels. Target groups for programs include:

- Preschool – (Y)
- Seniors – (Y)
- Elementary School Age – (Y)
- Intergenerational – (Y)
- Teens – (Y)
- Multiple Ages – (Y)
- Adults – (Y)
- Special Needs – (N)

2. Administrative Feasibility

Activities should be administratively feasible, and the following factors should be considered as part of any program development process:

- Facility and Equipment Requirements – (Y)
- Safety – (Y)
- Cost vs. Benefits – (N)
- Specialized Instruction Requirements – (Y)

Solon has not yet completed a detailed analysis of the costs of programs. This type of analysis can determine the cost of each program per participant in terms of dollars and staff time and compare those numbers to program outcomes and revenues. This type of an analysis can be especially useful for evaluating partnerships with partner organizations.

3. Coordination

Program and service offerings should be of a coordinated nature within the community, thus serving to complement rather than duplicate activities already provided elsewhere by other organizations or agencies.

Solon coordinates with partner organizations to expand recreational services; partner relationships range from regularly scheduled programming to one-time collaborations or providing space. Given input from extensive stakeholder discussions, there is considerable interest to grow and strengthen agency partnerships to build more recreation programs for the community. The following entities are either current or past partners with Parks and Recreation in providing programs and activities to the community (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Cleveland Clinic
- American Red Cross
- World Champion Taekwondo Solon School
- Chargin Valley Roller Rink
- Avant-Garde Art & Craft Show
- Solon Symphony
- Solon Center for the Arts
- Spotlight Youth Theater
- Solon Blue Ribbon Recreation
- And more...

4. Settings and Times

Activities should be conducted in a variety of settings and formats, formal and informal. Programs should also be offered at a variety of times to meet the competing schedules of residents. For example, working adults may not be able to participate in programs until the evening or on weekends. Additionally, parents with children may benefit from availability of childcare or children's programs running concurrent to their chosen activity.

Settings and formats include:

- Instructional Classes (Y)
- Progressive Skill Levels (Y)
- Drop-In (Y)
- Special Events (Y)
- Special Interest Clubs (N)
- Leagues and/or Tournaments (Y)
- Outings and Field Trips (N)
- After School Programs (Y)

- Camps (Y)
- Special Needs Programs (Y)

5. Constructive Nature

Programs should be constructive in nature and satisfy the creative, cultural, physical, and social desires of the participants.

6. Diverse Range of Activities

A diverse range of activities should be offered and should include a balanced mix of the following broad program categories:

- Athletics (Y)
- Community Events (Y)
- Creative Arts (Y)
- Education, Life Skills, and Fun (Y)
- Games (Y)
- Health, Fitness, and Wellness Activities (Y)
- Health and Wellness Education (Y)
- Heritage and History (N)
- Nature/Outdoor Programs (N)
- Performing Arts (Y)

Solon Parks and Recreation has a well-developed programs roster focusing on fitness, wellness, activities, youth programs, athletics, after school, summer camps and more. Current activity and event options cater to all age groups. Solon Parks and Recreation should continue to maintain partnerships with existing providers of recreation while also consistently engaging with the community to ensure needs are continuing to be met.



4

PUBLIC INPUT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the processes used and the public input gathered throughout the planning process and summarizes the following elements:

1. Public Meetings
2. Stakeholder Conversations
3. Web Survey
4. Online Engagement (powered by MindMixer)

The public engagement process is essential for identifying the needs and preferences of Solon residents. The findings of the public input process are, therefore, integral to the Needs Assessment and Identification (Chapter 5) and serve as the foundation of the recommendations of this Master Plan.

4.2 PUBLIC WORKSHOP

The city held an open house meeting (public workshop) on July 21, 2022 at the Solon Community Center to introduce the project to the public and to solicit feedback from the community regarding the present and future of parks and recreation in Solon.

Upon arrival, attendees were asked to sign in and were then given a dot to place on a map to indicate where they live. This map (Figure 4.1) shows the distribution of the meeting attendees. The map indicates that the attendees were generally well-distributed throughout Solon.

The meeting allowed participants to visit a series of stations in order to provide their input and learn more about the Master Plan. The primary input stations were arranged around the room and provided opportunities for input on three general topics and one specific topic. At each of these stations, participants were asked to share their responses to two questions: “What makes them great

now?” and “What would make them better?” Participants were also asked the same questions but specifically for Community Park.



The four input topics were as follows:

- Parks
- Trails
- Programs
- Community Park

A final station provided a few activities, including dollar allocation and dot voting (see Section 4.3). The summaries of comments in the ensuing text provide the number of times a topic was mentioned in parentheses after the item. The full text of comments can be found in Appendix C.

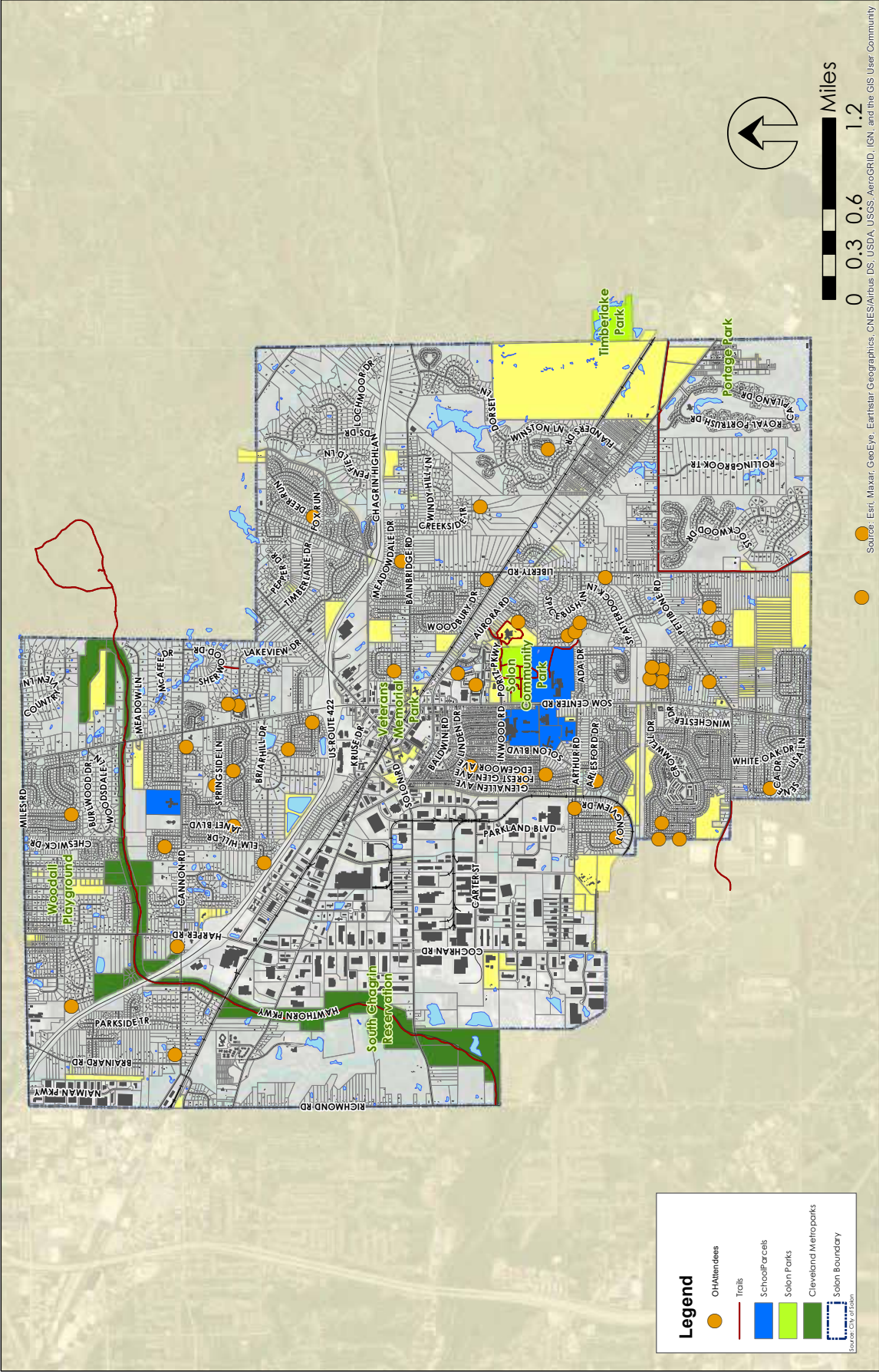
Parks

This topic represented built amenities and general recommendations for parks. Volleyball court upgrades, existing park upgrades, and diamond field improvements were the subject of the largest number of comments. Attendees also indicated needs for upgrades to playgrounds and Community Park.

What makes them great now?

- Good location
- Easy to reserve
- Volleyball and pickleball courts

Figure 4.1: Open House Attendee Distribution



What would make them better? – 94 comments and checkmarks/likes (# in parentheses). Sum of top 10 topics:

- Volleyball court upgrades (15)
- Existing park upgrades (13)
- Diamond field improvements (11)
- Playground Upgrades (10)
- Community Park upgrades (8)
- More fishing access (7)
- Splash pad (7)
- Improved maintenance (6)
- More shade (5)
- Improved Recreation Center (5)



Trails

This station encouraged discussion of trails. The largest number of comments were related to desire for more trails and better connectivity. Participants also indicated desire for more natural areas surrounding trails such as additional trees and meadows.

What makes them great now?

- Many great trails
- Signage

What would make them better? – 29 comments and checkmarks/likes (# in parentheses)

- Bike trails – more (11)
- Pretty spaces: Meadows (1)
- A safe way to get to the metro parks from solon south of 422 (6)
- More walking trails (1)
- More trees (native) maybe people can sponsor? (4)

Programs

This topic provided a location for comments about programs, including athletics and events. Overall, attendees indicated desire for partnerships with Metroparks for programming, additional winter time activities, more community events and gathering spaces, and additional youth camps.

What makes them great now?

- Senior Center

- Youth programs and camps
- After school programs
- Annual and monthly events

What would make them better? – 58 comments and checkmarks/likes (# in parentheses). Sum of top 10 topics:

- Partnerships with Metroparks for programming (8)
- Youth Camps (7)
- Events (7)
- Community Gathering Space (7)
- Winter activities (7)
- Indoor Facilities (5)
- Adult classes/programs (5)
- Teen/youth programming (5)
- Senior Programming (3)
- Increased swim lesson offerings (2)

Community Park

This topic provided a location for comments specific to Community Park. Overall,

What makes them great now?

- Variety of courts and fields
- Gathering spaces
- Good location
- Community events

What would make them better? – 125 comments and checkmarks/likes (# in parentheses). Sum of top 10 topics:

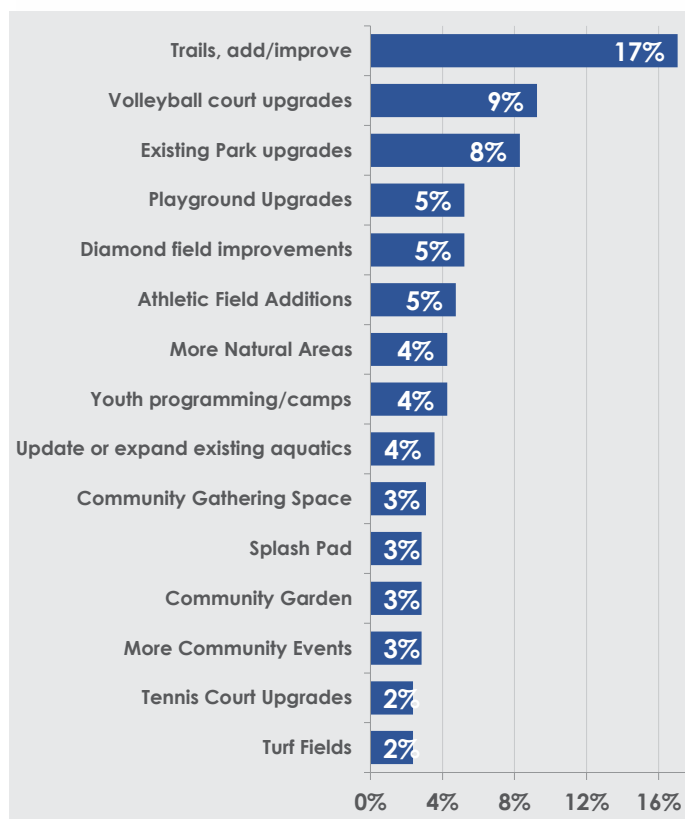
- Volleyball court upgrades (24)
- Trails, add/improve (15)
- Update or expand existing aquatics (13)
- Community Garden (11)
- Athletic Field Improvements (10)
- Playground Upgrades (9)
- Additional Athletic Fields (7)
- Diamond field improvements (7)
- Splash Pad (5)
- More Trees (5)

Overall Open House Comment Summary

The chart below (Figure 4.2) provides a summary of the comments to the question, "What would make them better?" at all stations. Each of the over 422 comments (and checkmarks/likes) were placed into one or more categories to show what improvements attendees of the meeting desired to see in the future. The list includes both general and specific items, so many comments qualified for multiple categories. Additionally, some comments discussed more than one topic and were categorized accordingly. The chart presents the results as a percentage

of overall comments. The results indicate that attendees want indoor facilities and more/improved athletic fields. Additionally, many want more trails and connectivity and more program opportunities.

Figure 4.2: Distribution of Open House Comments



4.3 DOLLAR VOTING AND PREFERENCES

4.3.1 Preference Boards

Attendees of the Open House meeting were given three red dots to place on a board indicating their preferences for park features. The board provided a list of 16 park amenities (represented by pictures). Attendees of the Open House were also given three green dots for a second board. This board provided a list of 16 program categories (also represented by pictures). These activities requested that participants choose the features and programs most important to them and their households. Children were also invited to participate. At the open house, 53 community members participated in the activities for both features and programs. Counts of the selections are presented in Tables 4.1 and 4.2.

On the features board (Table 4.1), athletic fields received the largest number of dots (35), followed by playgrounds (23). The provided features were intended to be general, so features were combined into categories whenever possible. On the programs board (Table 4.2), youth sports received the largest number of dots (32), followed by nature programs (24) and festivals at 19 votes.

Table 4.1: Feature Preference Results

Park Features	Event	%
	Open House 7/21/2022	
Outdoor Fitness Equipment	0	0%
Picnic Shelters	0	0%
Skatepark	0	0%
Dog Parks	4	2%
Outdoor Games	6	3%
Game Courts	7	4%
Disc Golf	8	4%
Pickleball Courts	10	5%
Event Spaces	11	6%
Public Art	12	6%
Restrooms	16	8%
Natural Areas	17	9%
Aquatics	20	11%
Trails	21	11%
Playgrounds	23	12%
Athletic Fields	35	18%
Total	190	
Participants	63	

Table 4.2: Program Preference Results

Programs	Event	%
	Open House 7/21/2022	
E-Sports	1	1%
Runs and Races	2	1%
Special Events	6	4%
Before & After School Programs	6	4%
Active Adult Programs	7	4%
Swim Lessons	7	4%
Fitness Classes	8	5%
Adaptive Recreation	10	6%
Summer Camps	10	6%
Movies/Music Concerts	11	7%
Adult Sports	13	8%
Cultural and Performing Arts	17	11%
Athletic Tournaments	18	11%
Festivals	19	12%
Nature Programs	24	15%
Youth Sports	32	20%
Total	159	
Participants	53	

4.3.2 Dollar Voting

Participants at the public workshop and at a booth at Home Days were given \$1,000 in play money to place into boxes to indicate how they would like Solon to allocate funds for parks and recreation. Table 4.3 shows the total allocations for each of nine categories (or boxes). Participants could also place money into an "other" box to request specific amenities or improvements not included in one of the seven provided categories. The combined results for the 171 participants at the events are presented below with the allocation for each park improvement category and

the percentage of the total allocation.

Of the provided options *add to or improve existing trails* received the largest allocation at about \$33,000 or 19% or total dollars. *Develop new or improve existing athletic fields* was second with 18% of the total allocation and *developing splash pads* was third with 15%. For “Other” improvements, participants wrote their chosen improvements with the allocation on a card and placed it and the money into the “Other” box. This box received the smallest allocation with only shade at the dog park requested by more than one participant. The individual comments can be found in Appendix C.

Table 4.3: Dollar Voting Allocation

Action (Box Title)	Open House 7/21/2022	Solon Home Days 7/30/2022	Total
Existing Facilities/Maintenance	\$8,500 15%	\$8,700 20%	\$17,200 10%
New Recreation Facilities	\$8,500 15%	\$8,600 20%	\$17,100 10%
Trails	\$11,200 20%	\$22,000 51%	\$33,200 19%
New Neighborhood Parks	\$3,300 6%	\$830 2%	\$4,130 2%
Athletic Fields	\$11,300 20%	\$19,000 44%	\$30,300 18%
Community Gathering Spaces	\$4,300 7%	\$4,900 11%	\$9,200 5%
Splash Pads	\$6,100 11%	\$19,200 44%	\$25,300 15%
Pickleball	\$2,800 5%	\$7,400 17%	\$10,200 6%
Skate Park	\$900 2%	\$11,100 26%	\$12,000 7%
Other	\$500 1%	\$11,900 28%	\$12,400 7%
Total	\$57,400	\$43,200	\$171,030

4.4 STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

In July 2022, the consultant met with a series of stakeholders to establish their priorities for Parks and Recreation in Solon. Ten stakeholder groups participated in these discussions, contributing their respective visions to this Master Plan. At these meetings, stakeholders were asked a series of questions about Solon parks, recreation facilities, and programs, beginning first with a discussion of strengths before moving on to a discussion of needed improvements and visions for the future. Summaries of the meetings with complete comments can be found in Appendix C.

4.4.1 Groups Engaged

The following stakeholder group meetings were held as part of this Master Plan:

- Solon Stampede (Boys Baseball)
- Solon Elite (Girls Softball)

- Community Group (community members who use Solon facilities)
- Solon Lightning (Girls Soccer)
- Solon Soccer Club (Boys Soccer)
- Solon High School Soccer Parents
- Solon City Council
- Solon Seniors
- Solon City Staff
- Solon Community Life Committee

4.4.2. Stakeholder Broad Recommendations

- Upgraded fields & courts
 - Turf fields
 - Upgraded dugouts
 - Improved or additional lighting
 - Upgraded game courts
 - Improved restrooms
 - Improve grading at all athletic fields
 - Additional bleachers and seating
- Upgraded support amenities
 - ADA accessible features
 - Improved restrooms
 - Additional/improved picnic shelters (include lighting, electrical hook up)
 - Repaired sidewalks, trails, and parking areas
 - Wi-Fi available at parks (modern technology)
- New facilities
 - Additional restrooms at athletic fields
 - Indoor sports facility
 - Splash pad
 - Disc golf courses
 - Skate parks/pump tracks
 - Soccer fields
 - Tournament level athletic fields
 - Amphitheater
- Improved operations
 - Better reservation system for athletic fields/programs
 - Partnerships with local organizations
 - Improved advertising
 - Better maintenance
- Additional programming
 - Camps hosted at fields
 - Additional community events (arts festivals, concerts, etc)

4.5 PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

The following pages summarize the findings of the online (web) survey. The Web Survey results reflect the views of the respondents, not necessarily Solon residents as a whole; Web Survey respondents are often already engaged in some way with the city's parks and programs. The figures in this section display the results from the web survey. Of the figures that follow, some show only the top results for a survey question; however, full results can be found in Appendix E.

4.5.1 Web Survey – Overview and Methodology

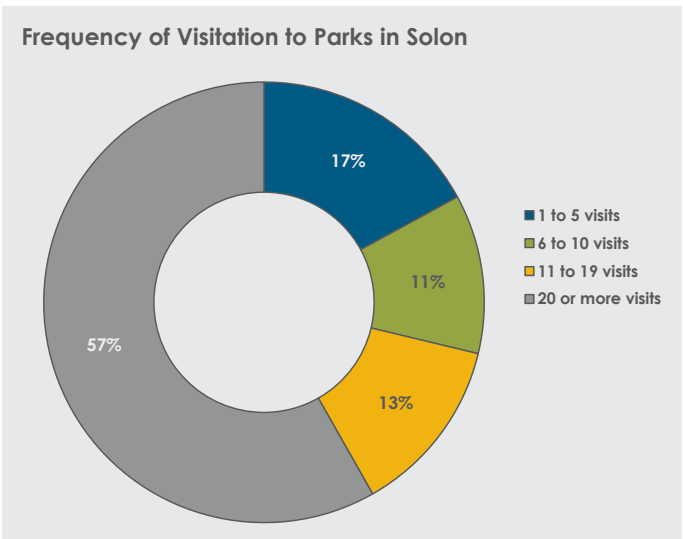
The Web Survey was conducted in the spring of 2022 and was powered by Survey Monkey with a total of 1,449 surveys completed. Ninety Five percent (95%) of those who responded said they live within the City of Solon and 5% live outside of the city. The full survey report can be found in Appendix E.

4.5.2 Results – Frequency of Visits to Parks & Recreation Facilities in Solon

Respondent households that visited Solon Parks and Recreation facilities during the last year were asked how often they have visited those facilities over that time. The results are presented in Figure 4.3.

According to the survey, households who visited the city's parks and recreation facilities in the last year likely visited many times. **Fifty-seven percent (57%) reported visiting 20 or more times.** Other results were: 17% visited 1-5 times, 11% visited 6-10 times, and 13% visited 11-19 times. Looking at the responses cumulatively, 70% of households visited parks 11 or more times, and 81% visited parks six or more times. It is worth noting the high rate of visitation to Solon parks and facilities.

Figure 4.3: Frequency of Visitation

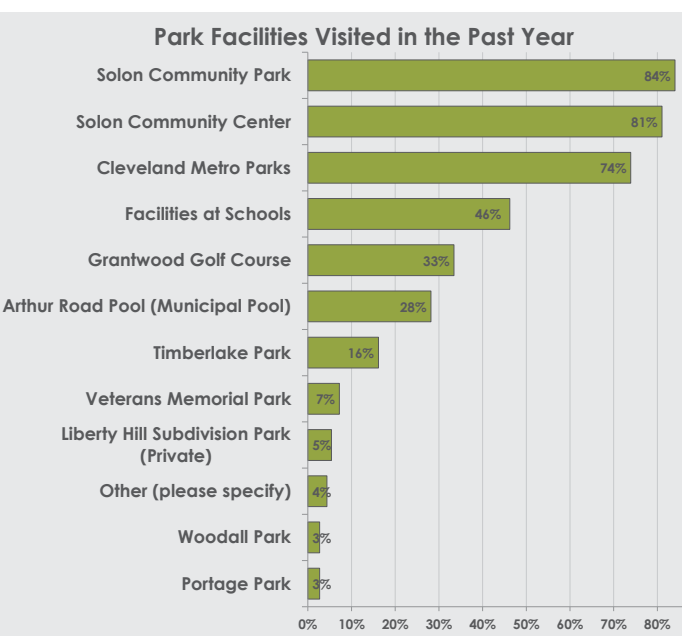


4.5.3 Results – Parks and Recreation Facilities Visited Over the Past Year

Survey respondents were asked to indicate which of the parks offered by Solon their household visited over the past year. Figure 4.4 shows what percentage of respondents have used each park or facility in the past year.

According to the survey, Solon Community Park, Solon Community Center, and Cleveland Metroparks were the most visited parks in the past year. Facilities at these parks include trails, a pool, playgrounds, fishing opportunities and ball fields. Facilities at schools, the Grantwood Golf Course, and Arthur Road Pool round out the top six visited parks.

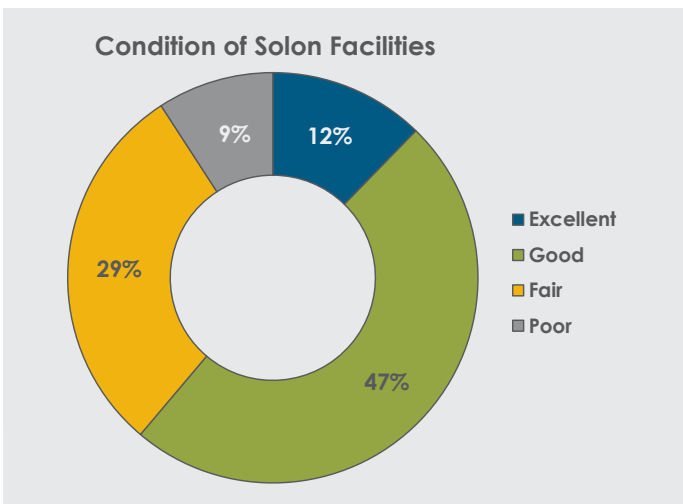
Figure 4.4: Parks Visited



4.5.4 Results – Physical Condition of Facilities Offered by Solon

Respondents were asked to rate the physical condition of facilities they visited. Figure 4.5 shows respondents' ratings of the condition of facilities in Solon.

Figure 4.5: Condition of Facilities



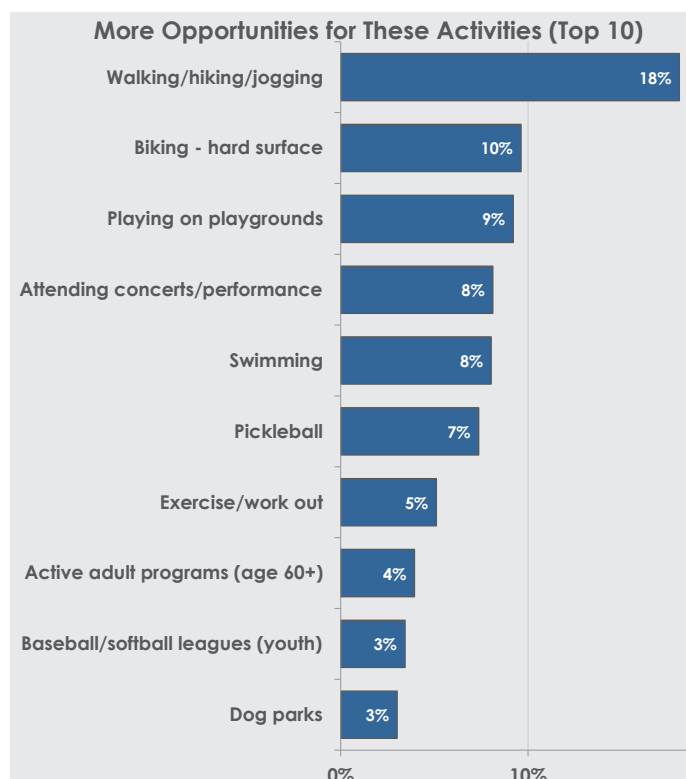
47% of households who visited these facilities over the past year rated the condition of those facilities as good, **12% rated the condition of the facilities as excellent** with 29% rating the condition as *fair* and 9% as *poor*. Taken altogether, **59% of respondents see the condition of Solon's facilities as either excellent or good**, according to the survey.

4.5.5 Results – Activities Typically Enjoyed at Parks or Facilities

Households were asked to report the typical activities enjoyed in a year at Solon parks and facilities. **Almost three quarters (71%) of respondents indicated enjoying walking/jogging/hiking at parks in Solon, as the most enjoyed activity.** A number of respondents also enjoyed exercising/working out and swimming at Solon Parks as well. Almost half of respondents enjoyed attending concerts and performances and playing on playgrounds.

The follow up question on the survey asked what activity they would like to do more of in the future. Unsurprisingly, the results correlate with existing activities chosen with walking/hiking/jogging, biking, and playing on playgrounds being the top three choices. Other items of note are the desire for more events such as concerts or performances and swimming opportunities as indicated from these results in Figure 4.6 below.

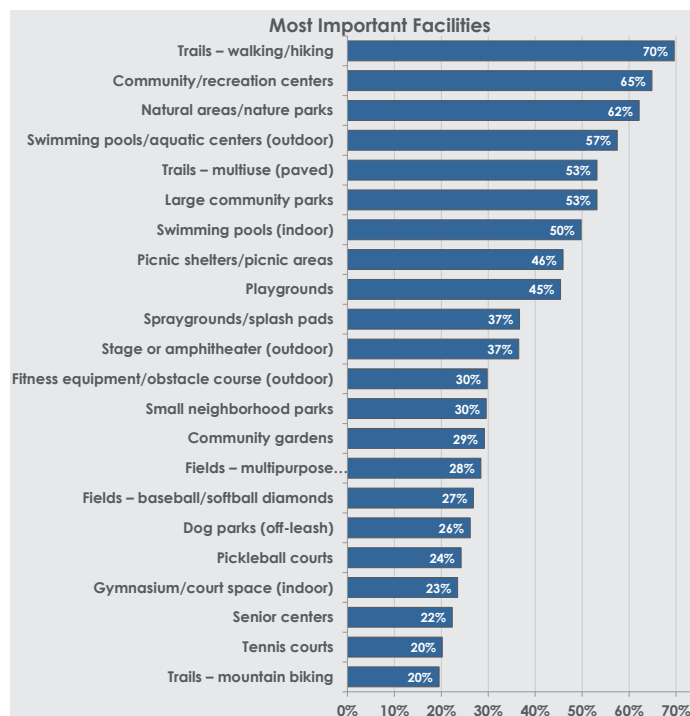
Figure 4.6: Activities Respondents Would Like More Opportunities to Do



4.5.6 Results – Facility Needs (Current Use or Desired Use) in Solon

Respondents were asked what facilities members of their household currently use or would like to use if available. Figure 4.7 shows those results. Respondents report the highest level of need for walking and hiking trails, community/recreation centers, natural areas/nature parks, and outdoor swimming pools. Multi-use paved trails, large community parks, and indoor swimming pools are also at 50% or above among the preferred facilities.

Figure 4.7: Most Important Facilities



4.5.7 Results – Types of investment Desired

Another question on the survey asked respondents to choose a preferred action for each type of facility they use or would like to use – revitalization/upgrades to existing (Figure 4.8), new development (Figure 4.9), both (Figure 4.10), or no investment needed, limited to those who indicated a desire for each facility.

Revitalization/Upgrades to Existing (Top 5)

1. Swimming Pools (indoor)
2. Swimming Pools/Aquatic Centers (outdoor)
3. Community/Recreation Centers
4. Fields – Baseball/Softball Diamonds
5. Large Community Parks

New Development of Facilities (Top 5)

1. Spraygrounds/Splash Pads
2. Stage or Amphitheater (outdoor)
3. Skate Parks

4. Disc Golf Courses
5. Trails – Mountain Biking

Both Upgrades to Existing and New Development (Top 5)

1. Trails – Multiuse (paved)
2. Trails – Walking/Hiking
3. Playgrounds
4. Natural Areas/Nature Parks
5. Basketball Courts (outdoor)

The other category had a write in option in which respondents mentioned upgrades to the existing golf course, the addition of indoor fitness facilities, and the upgrade to turf fields. Other comments concern winter activities such as ice skating and cross country skiing, as well as improved maintenance, astronomy programs, among others.

Figure 4.8: Revitalization/Upgrades to Existing Facilities

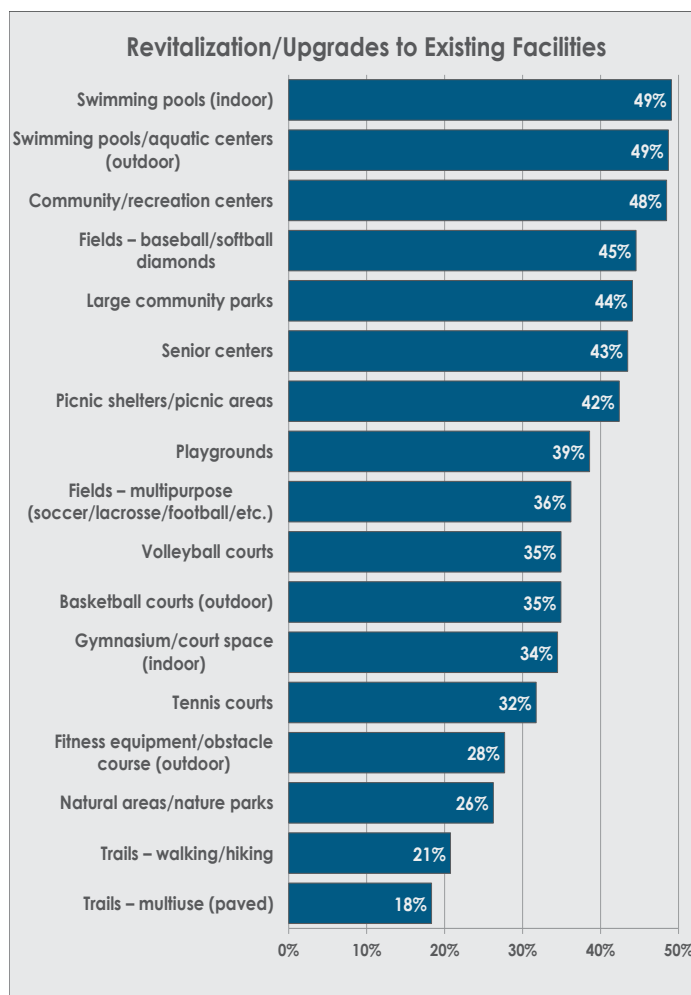


Figure 4.9: New Development of Facilities

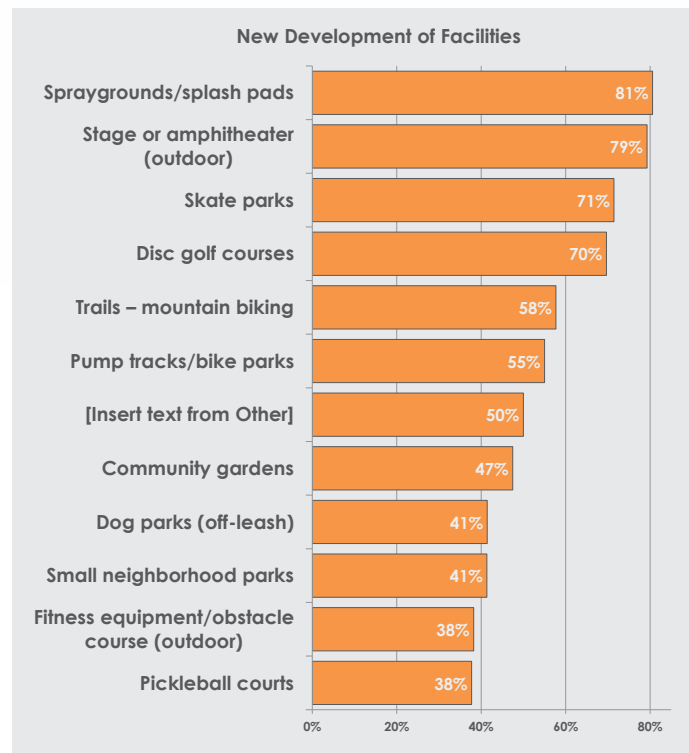
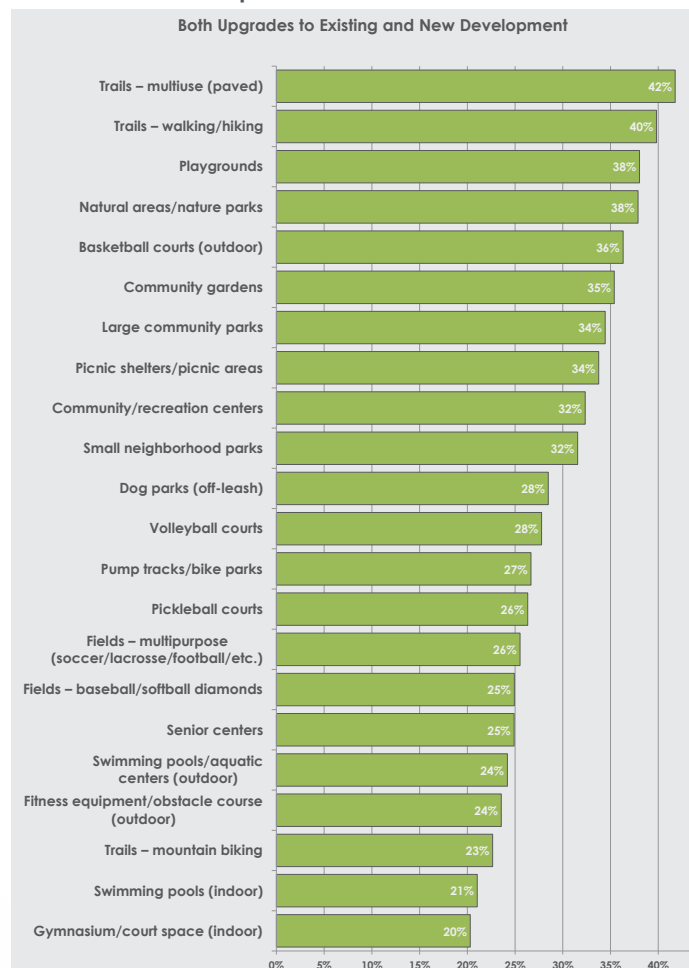


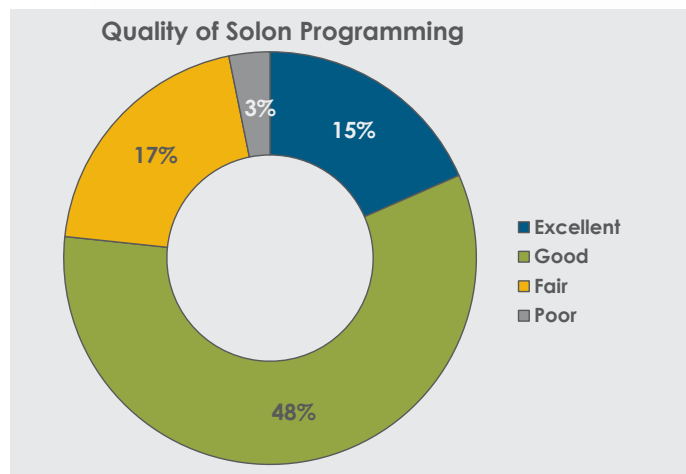
Figure 4.10: Both Upgrades to Existing and New Development



4.5.8 Results – Quality of Programs

Respondents were asked to rate the quality of programs offered by Solon. Results are shown in Figure 4.11 below. Almost half of respondents rated the programs as good (48%), while fifteen percent (15%) rated them as excellent. 17% rated them as fair and only 3% rated them as poor.

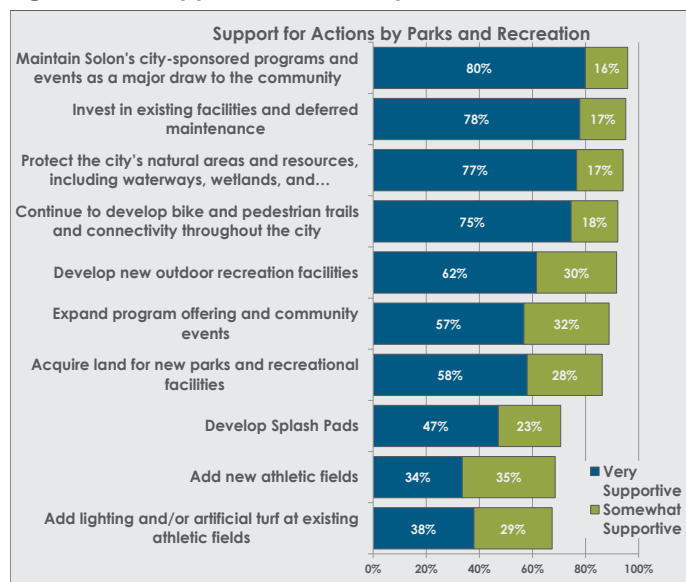
Figure 4.11: Quality of Programs



4.5.9 Results – Support for Actions Needed by Solon

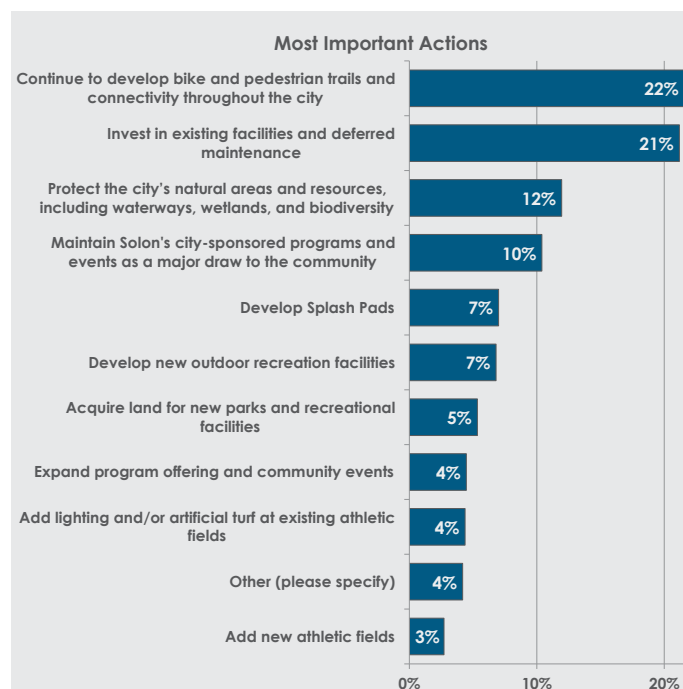
The survey provided a list of action items the city could take for future revitalization and development of the park system (Figure 4.12). Overall, respondents were supportive of all actions provided, as the sum of “very supportive” and “somewhat supportive” is over 50% for every option. The results below show that **maintaining city-sponsored programs and events** and **investing in existing facilities and deferred maintenance** are the top priorities. Over three quarters of respondents (77%) strongly supported protecting the city’s natural areas and resources. Notably, the least support was given to adding lighting and/or artificial turf at existing athletic fields but still supported by 67%.

Figure 4.12: Support for Actions by Parks and Recreation



When asked to choose a single most important action (Figure 4.13), the top five items were similar to the responses to the previous questions in the survey. The value placed on walking/jogging and biking trails is evident as that was the top action chosen. Investing in existing facilities, protecting the city’s natural areas, and maintaining Solon’s programs and events, are aligned with the support for actions response in the previous question. The other category consisted of comments regarding the addition of pickleball courts, diamond field repairs, general maintenance, community events, adult and teen programming, and community events.

Figure 4.13: Most Important Actions

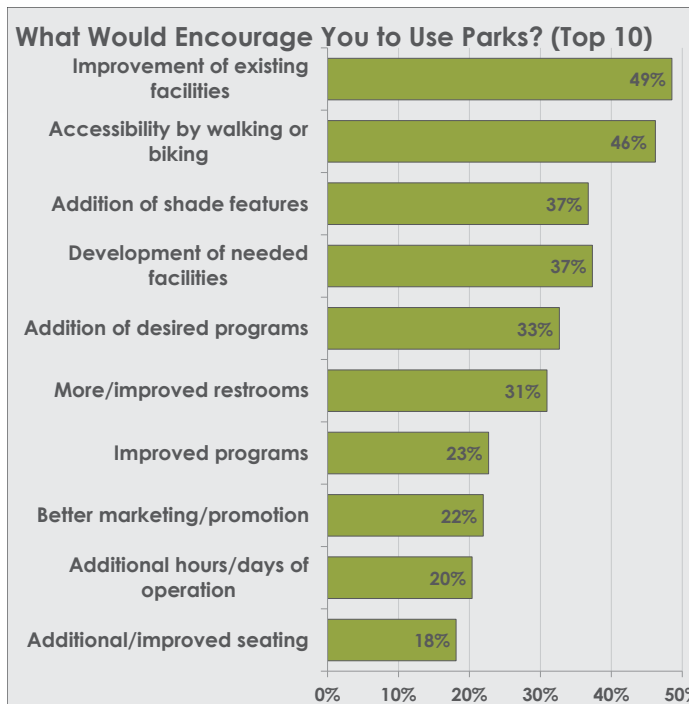


4.5.10 Results - Motivation to Utilize Facilities and Programs

Figure 4.14 shows what would motivate respondents to utilize existing facility and program offerings more often. The top option chosen was to improve existing facilities. Residents would also like to see an increase in walking and biking accessibility at these facilities. Shade features and development of needed facilities received equal value (37%) and round out the top 4 choices.

These results indicate respondents are currently unhappy with the condition of the existing facilities and the lack of pedestrian accessibility to the parks but would utilize these facilities more if improvements were made. The lack of shade features at playgrounds specifically discourage use during the summer months but if shade were added, usage would increase. In many of the write in sections of the survey, many respondents noted the need for pickleball courts, disc golf courses, trails, and skateparks which correlate with the desire for development of needed facilities.

Figure 4.14: Motivation to Utilize Offerings More Often



4.5.11 Results - Demographics

Figure 4.15 shows Solon's population by age range for Solon as a whole and of the households who responded to the survey. The largest cohort responding to the survey were those between 35-44 years old, likely with children between 5 and 19 years old. Compared to the overall population of Solon, these groups were overrepresented in the survey. Groups underrepresented include those within the ages of 45 and 74 years. 75 years and over were also overrepresented.

Figure 4.16 compares the respondents to the household income of the city of Solon as a whole. Household incomes over \$100,000 represented about 55% of respondents, compared to 57% of Solon households. Those making \$75,000-\$99,000 were slightly over-represented while all other income levels were underrepresented, especially those under \$25,000.

Figure 4.15: Age Demographics Comparison

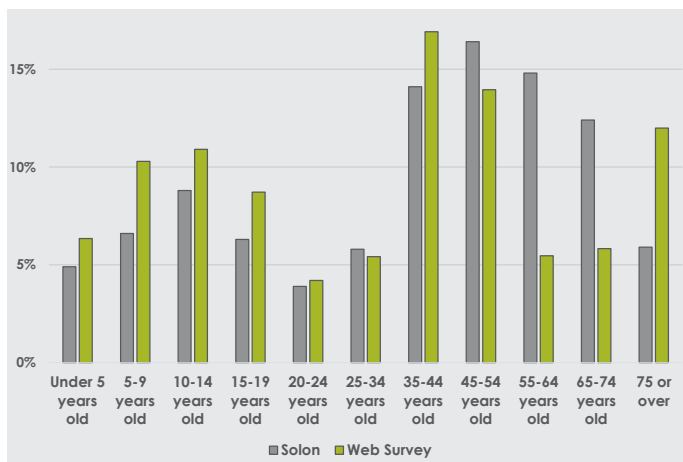
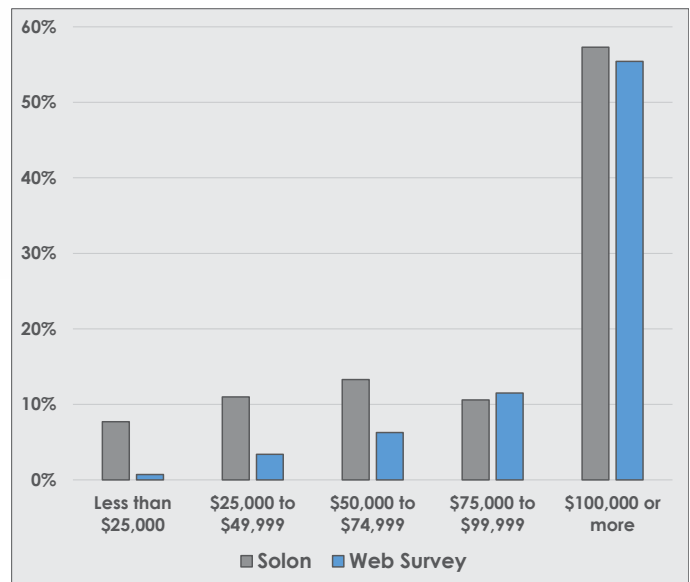


Figure 4.16: Income Comparison



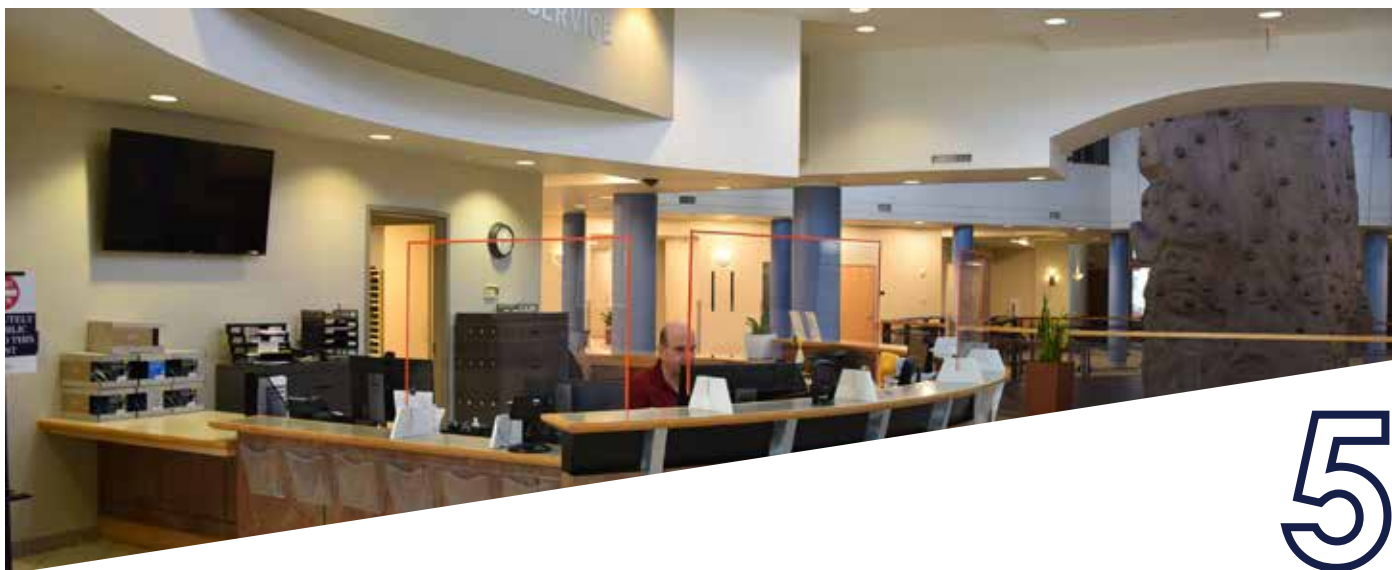
4.6 CONCLUSION

On the whole, the public engagement process provided an abundance of information about the needs and desires of Solon residents. While a variety of methods were used to collect data, some trends do emerge with residents desiring:

- Upgrades and improvements to existing parks and facilities
 - Accessible spaces & features, including playgrounds
 - Baseball/softball diamonds (grading, lighting, shade)
 - Playground upgrades and shade
 - Outdoor swimming pool
 - Picnic shelters
 - Game Courts
- Preservation of and access to natural areas
 - Additional natural areas/nature parks
 - Accessible natural areas
- Connectivity and trails
 - New trails
 - Additional mountain bike trails
 - Improvements to sidewalks that connect to facilities
 - Signage and wayfinding
 - Accessibility across the system
- New facilities
 - Indoor Recreation space & Gymnasiums
 - Skate Parks
 - Pickleball courts
 - Disc golf

- The word cloud image below (Figure 4.17) uses font size to show how frequently a word appears in the survey results. While value is not applied to any one word – for example, whether or not residents spoke positively about facilities – the graphic is valuable because it illustrates the elements of parks and recreation in Solon that are most important, for better or worse, to the community. This image is provided in conclusion to reinforce the myriad comments, suggestions, and requests heard during the multifaceted public engagement phase.

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5

NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND IDENTIFICATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter of the Master Plan identifies and presents an assessment of needs for parks and recreation in Solon. It consists of the following elements:

1. Needs analysis, plus level of service standards and guidelines for parkland and recreation areas
2. Needs analysis, plus level of service standards for facilities
3. Geographic analysis of the distribution of parks and recreation facilities
4. Examination of recent – and relevant – trends in parks and recreation

An analysis of the level of service for parks and recreation in Solon requires various perspectives in order to tell a complete story. By one method of measurement, a particular service level might be described as adequate, but by a different method it is deficient. For example, acreage standards (i.e., measurement based on the total number of acres) are useful for determining the level at which the city is providing parkland. However, total acreage alone does not account for where park acres are located, and, therefore, who actually has access. Accordingly, it is critical to consider the location of the city's parkland in determining the level of service.

The following information, together with the public input collected (Chapter 4), make up the foundation for recommendations in this plan (Chapter 7). Additionally, analysis throughout this chapter makes significant use of the demographic and benchmarking data from Chapter 2.

5.2 GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF PARKS AND RECREATION AREAS

The spatial distribution of parks throughout Solon is important to consider; residents are better able and more willing to utilize facilities that are close to their homes. Figures 5.1 and 5.2 show Solon's existing parks with service areas described for different park classifications. The methodology for this analysis (and the facility analysis in Section 5.5) can be found in Appendix A. Of note, these service areas are not necessarily representative of all users of the city's parks; after all, some users may be more willing to travel greater distances than those defined in the figures below. However, the most frequent users generally do live within the areas indicated and usage rates do tend to decline sharply in relation to travel times.

A 10-minute walking distance represents about a half mile range and is a commonly used measurement for the walkability of an area; most residents can easily travel this distance without using a car. The Trust for Public Land, National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), and the Urban Land Institute have all joined forces to develop the "10-minute Walk Campaign" which strives for healthy, walkable communities and easy access to greenspace for everyone in the country. As part of their multi-pronged campaign, cities all over the U.S. are committed to ensuring that by 2050 all residents will have access to a park within a 10-minute walk of their home. Mayors throughout the country have already taken the pledge, and more continue to do so.

Figure 5.1 shows the areas in Solon where residents are within a 10-minute walk to a neighborhood park, school park, and parks by others. This map illustrates the locations of walkable access distributed across the city. Walking access to Solon's parks is concentrated around Community Park, Liberty Park, Woodall Playground, Portage Park, and the school parks. Some walkable access exists outside the city near Timberlake Park and Portage Park.

Figure 5.2 shows how much more accessible parks are across Solon by vehicle. Drive-time (5-minutes) Community Park (bright green) plus Metroparks (yellow) are indicated along with community parks by others (orange). Gaps in service are apparent on the eastern side of the city.

5.3 GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF FACILITIES

This portion of the needs analysis focuses on the distribution of facilities provided by Solon for use by residents. Service areas for these key facilities within Solon are illustrated in Figures 5.3 through 5.11. As with the geographic distribution of parks, both drive and walk times are used for defining service areas

Larger and unique facilities are intended to serve greater populations; typically, residents are willing to travel longer distances to access these amenities. In contrast, smaller and more common facilities usually serve more localized (smaller) populations and are more often within walking distance. The following sections outline the overall need for facilities in Solon; though portions of the city are highlighted that are located outside of facility service areas, a new facility is not necessarily recommended for these areas.

Since the vast majority of the park amenities are located at Solon Community Park, many of these service areas are essentially the same. These facilities are most accessible from those centrally located within the city with a few exceptions for other amenities that are dispersed throughout the city such as trails.

5.3.1 Playgrounds

Figure 5.3 shows the service areas (10-minute walk and 5-minute drive to city parks) for playgrounds in Solon. The city offers five playgrounds at two community parks and three neighborhood parks. Most of the city is within driving distance to a playground while only small pockets of neighborhoods are within walking distance. Playgrounds are also available at local schools, Thornbury HOA, and other public parks near Solon.



5.3.2 Basketball Courts (Outdoor)

Figure 5.4 displays service areas for outdoor basketball courts calculated by the same access measures as playgrounds (10-minute walk and 5-minute drive). Solon offers two basketball courts in two different parks; there are three other courts offered by elementary schools in Solon's city limits (1 half court, 2 full courts). The map shows existing areas of access to basketball courts are similar to the playground access in Figure 5.3.



5.3.3 Diamond Fields

Solon's diamond ballfield service areas are illustrated in Figure 5.5 with distances defined by 10-minute walk and 5-minute drive. Once again, the majority of the access is located centrally around Community Park.



5.3.4 Multipurpose Fields

Figure 5.6 displays the service areas for multipurpose rectangular fields in Solon. There are four rectangular fields in the city park system and another four located at Arthur Road and Dorothy Lewis Elementary. Considering 10-minute drive access alone, service areas are comparable to those for playgrounds, with almost the entire community being less than a 10-minute car ride away.



Figure 5.1: Neighborhood Park Service Areas

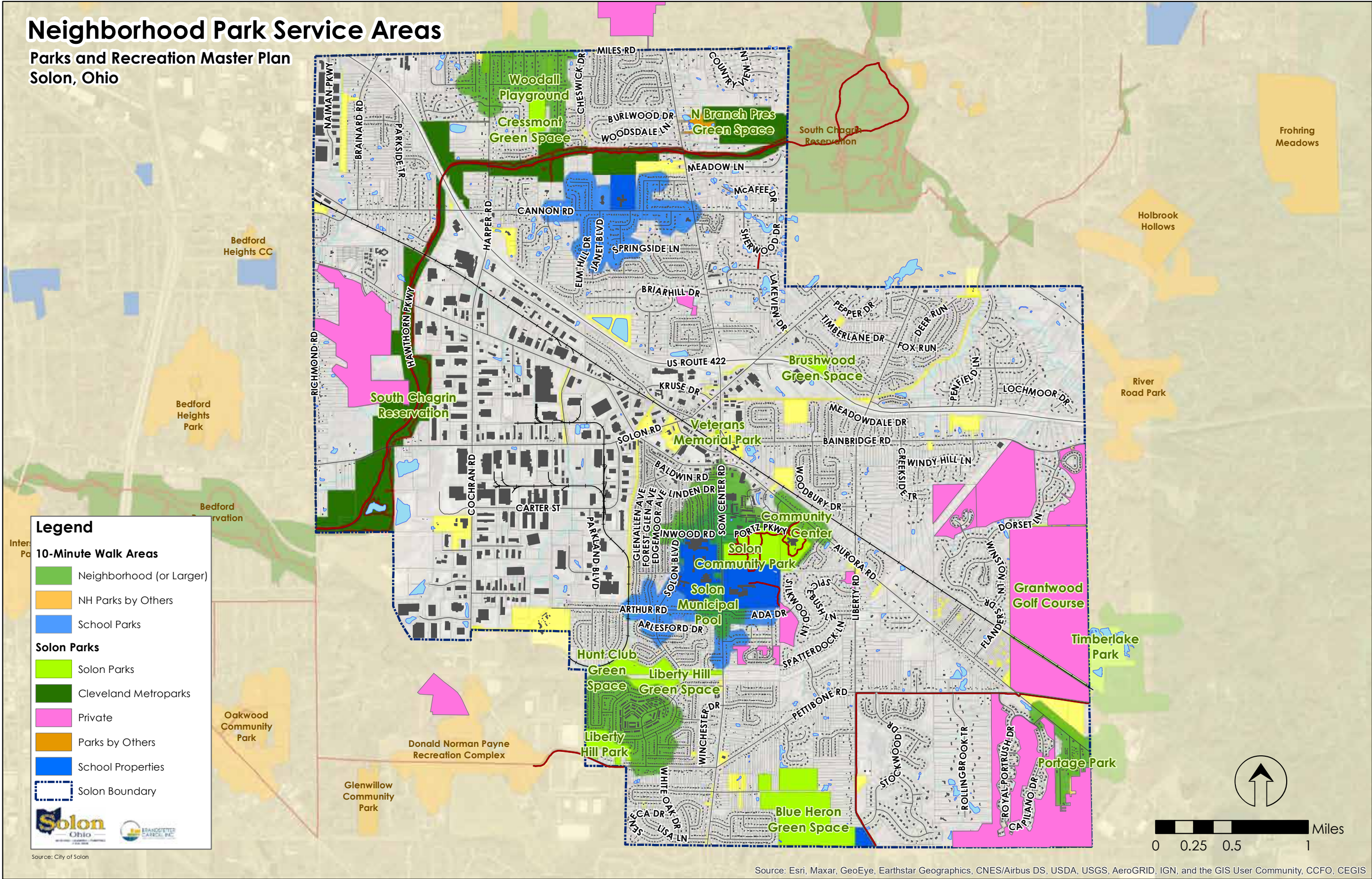


Figure 5.2: Community and Regional Park Service Areas

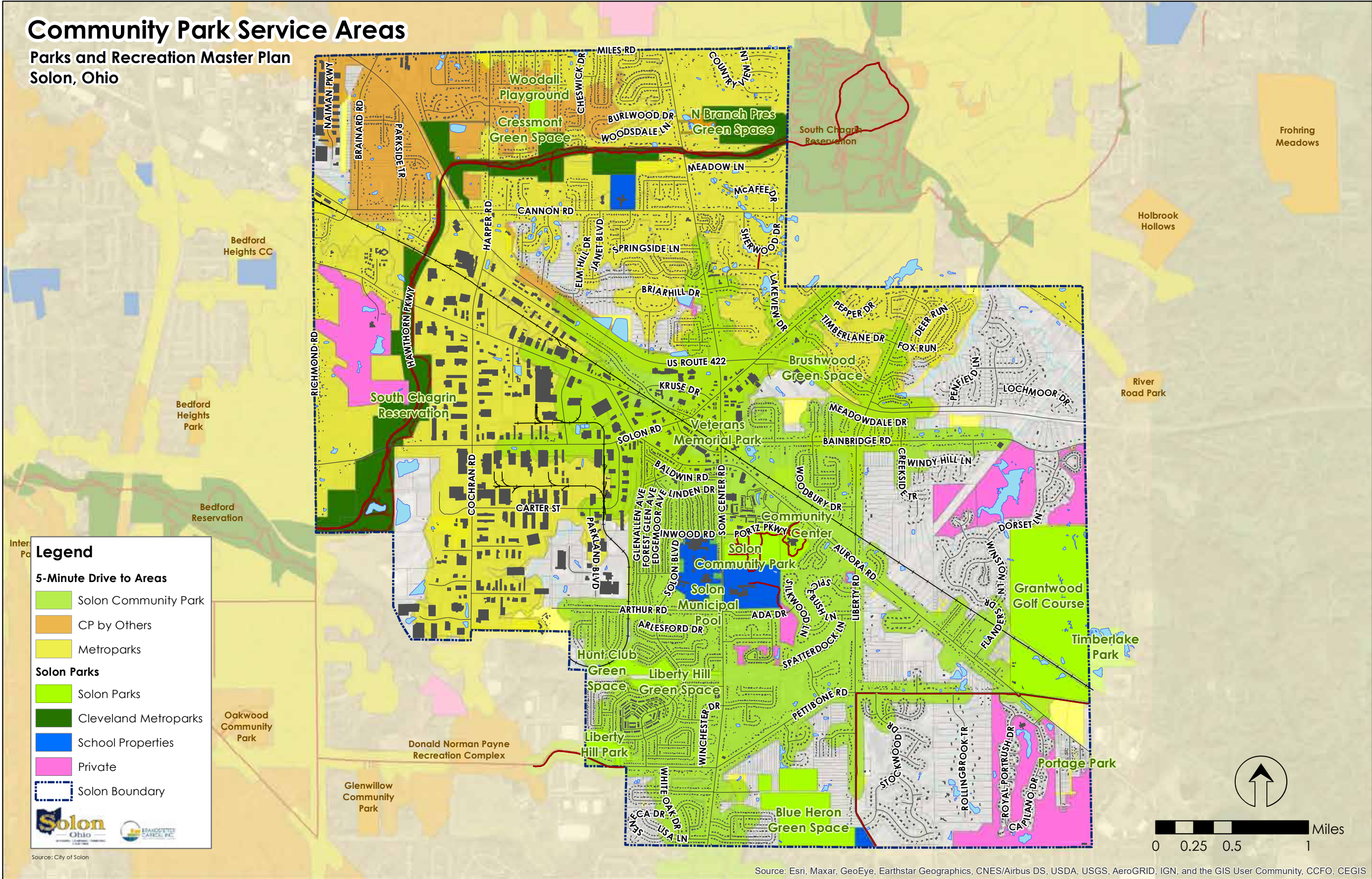
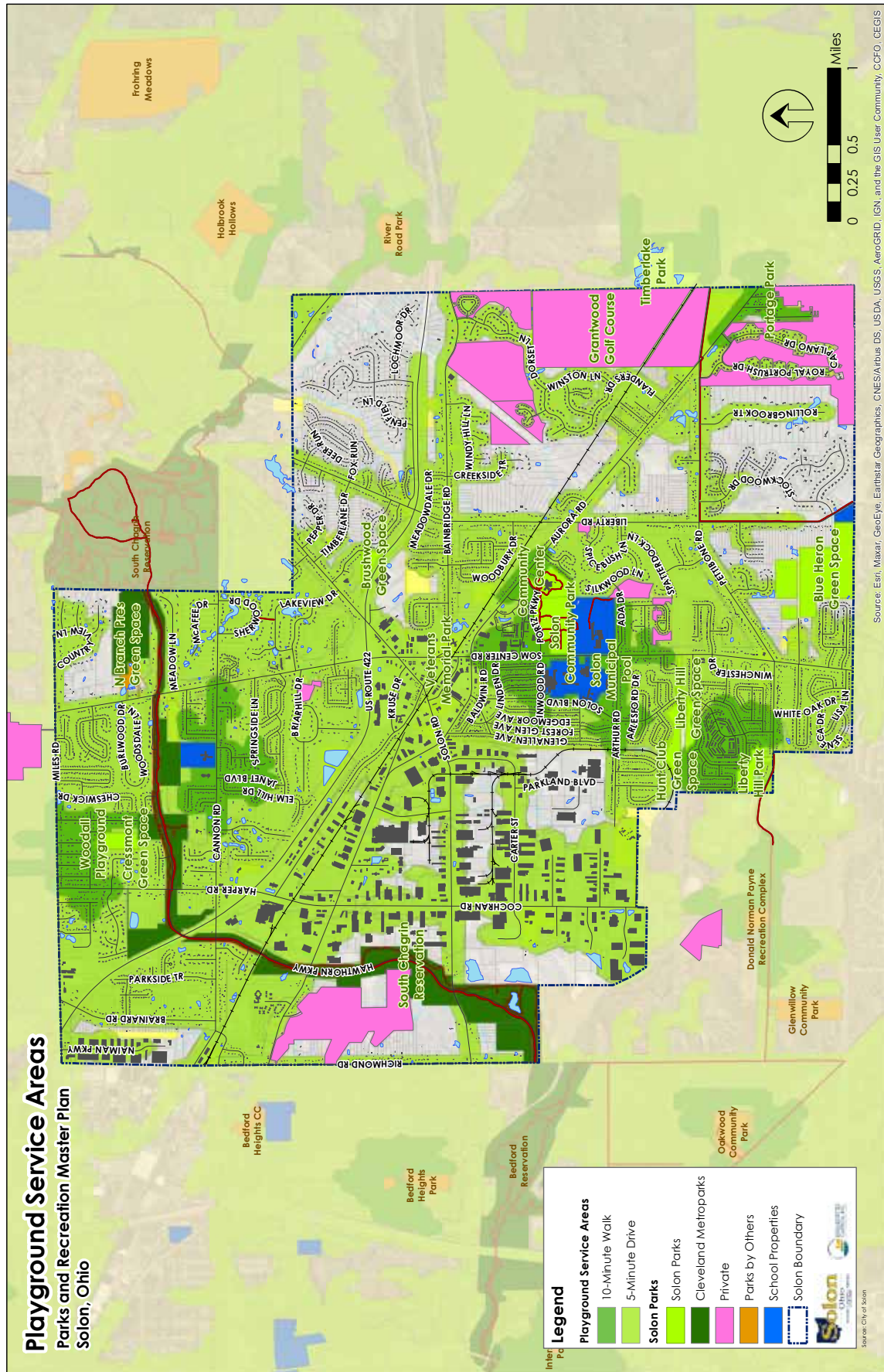


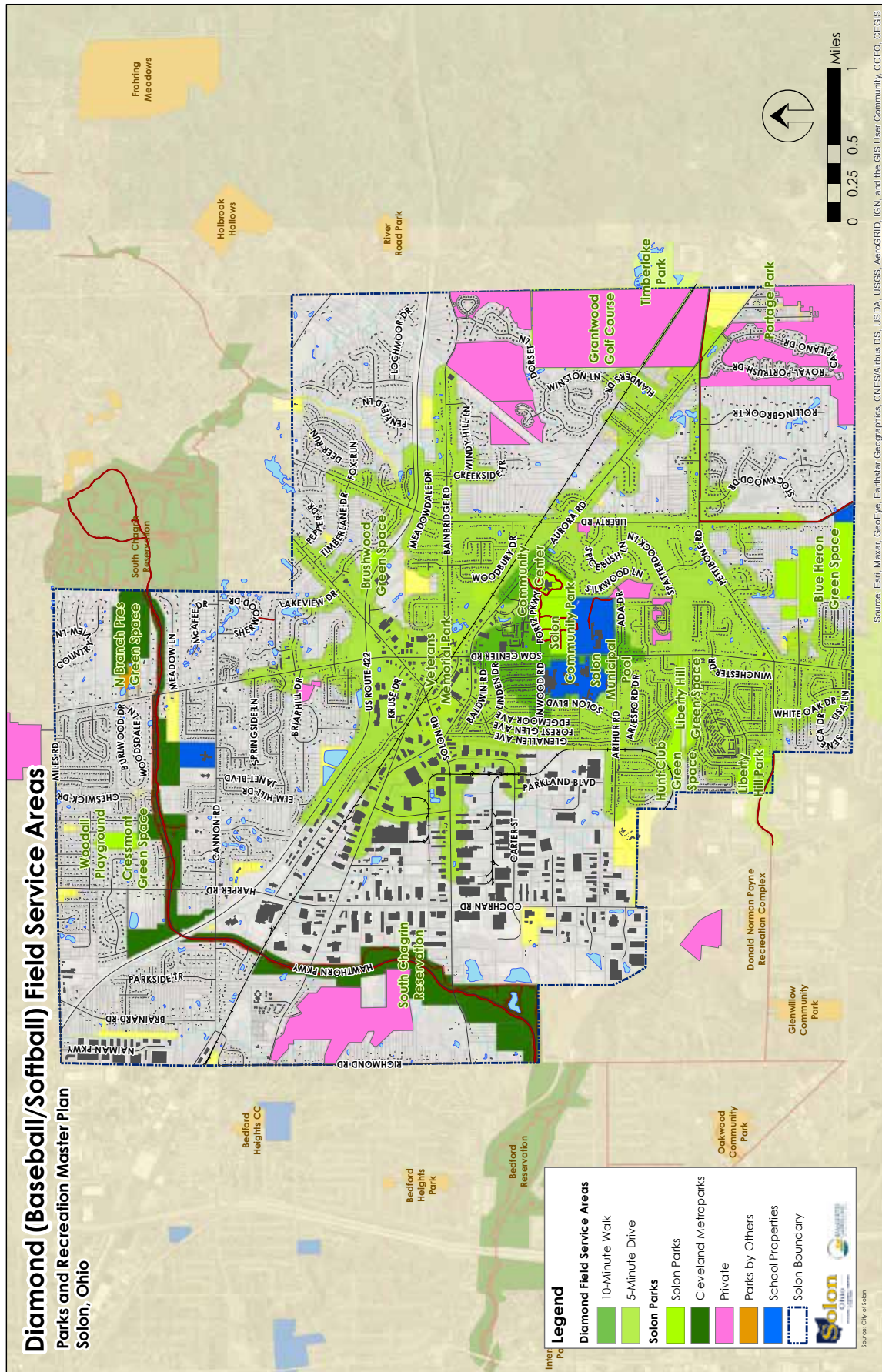
Figure 5.3: Playground Service Areas



44



Figure 5.5: Diamond Field Service Areas



46



5.3.5 Aquatic Facilities

Figure 5.7 shows the service area for the city's two pools, located at Solon Municipal Pool and the Community Center. Due to the location of these facilities, the service areas mirror that of the diamond fields with those who are within the central most part of the city having the most access.



5.3.6 Recreation Center

Recreation Center service areas shown in Figure 5.8 are essentially the same as the Diamond Field service area with walking/drive times being centrally located.



5.3.7 Tennis

Figure 5.9 shows the service areas for the tennis courts provided in the city. The central part of the city along with the northern portion of the city have the most access. Only a small pocket of walkable area exists near Solon Community Park. 16 tennis courts are also offered at other public and private parks/clubs near Solon.



5.3.8 Picnic Shelters

Picnic shelter access is a bit more comprehensive than the other amenities because shelters are offered at 4 of the 10 parks offered by the city. Figure 5.10 shows the majority of the city with the exception of those residing at Stockwood Drive, Penfield Lane, and Lochmoor Drive are within a 5 minute drive or 10-minute walk of a shelter.



5.3.9 Trails

Figure 5.11 shows the service areas for all trails within the city that are greater than a half mile. This service area is most like the previous, with only a few pockets of residential areas that are outside of the 5-minute drive time. The key difference is the accessibility of trail heads within the city along the South Chagrin Reservation Trails. Multiple other entities also provide 50+ miles of multi-use trails surrounding Solon. Creating greater connectivity within Solon's parks while also creating connections to the regional trail system will be necessary and based on survey results, supported as Solon's Parks and Recreation looks to the future.

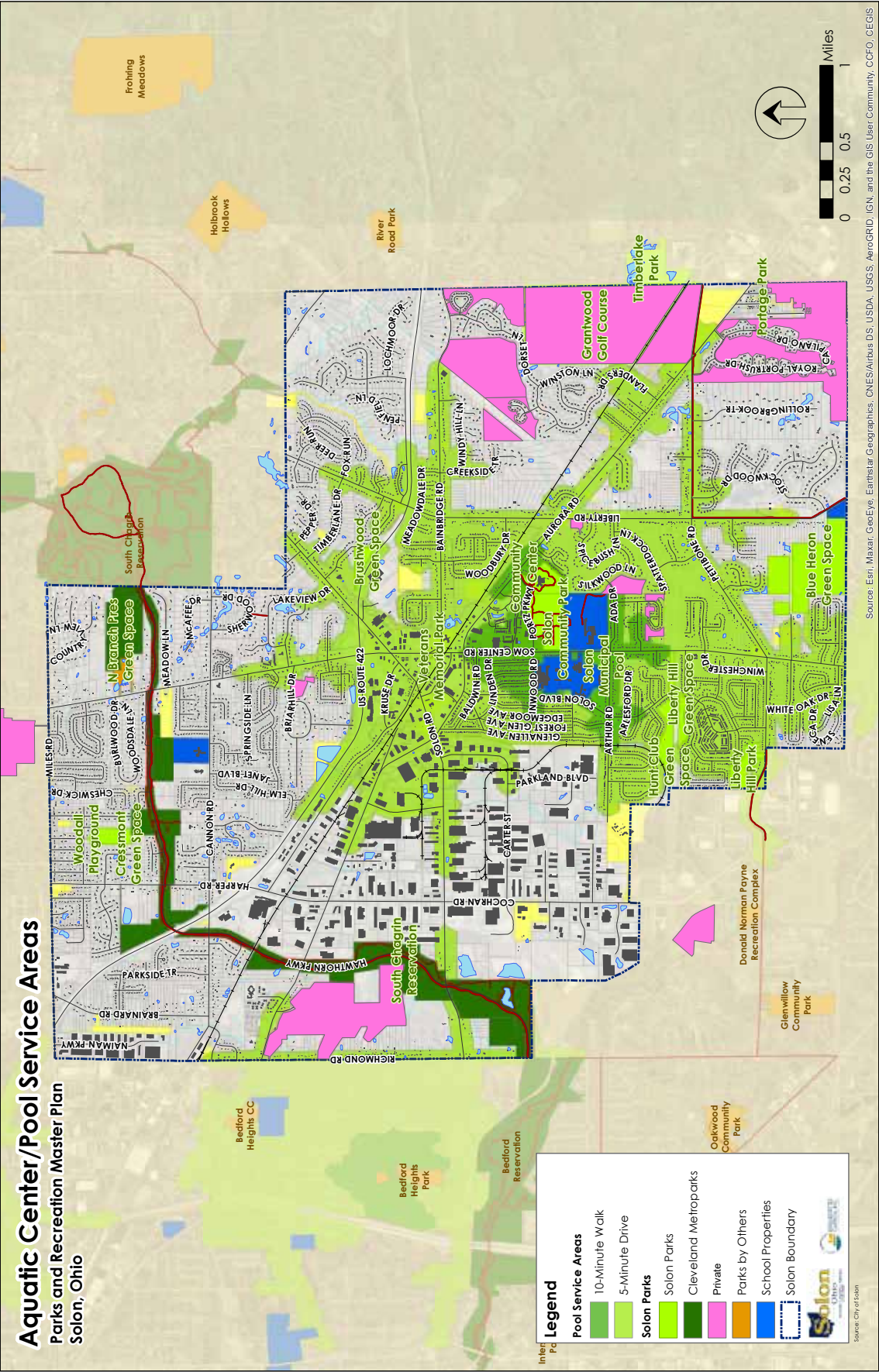


5.3.10 Dog Park

The only dog park is located at Timberlake Park which is only conveniently accessible to residents in the southeast portion of the city.



Figure 5.7: Aquatic Facility Service Area



NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND IDENTIFICATION



Figure 5.9: Tennis Service Area

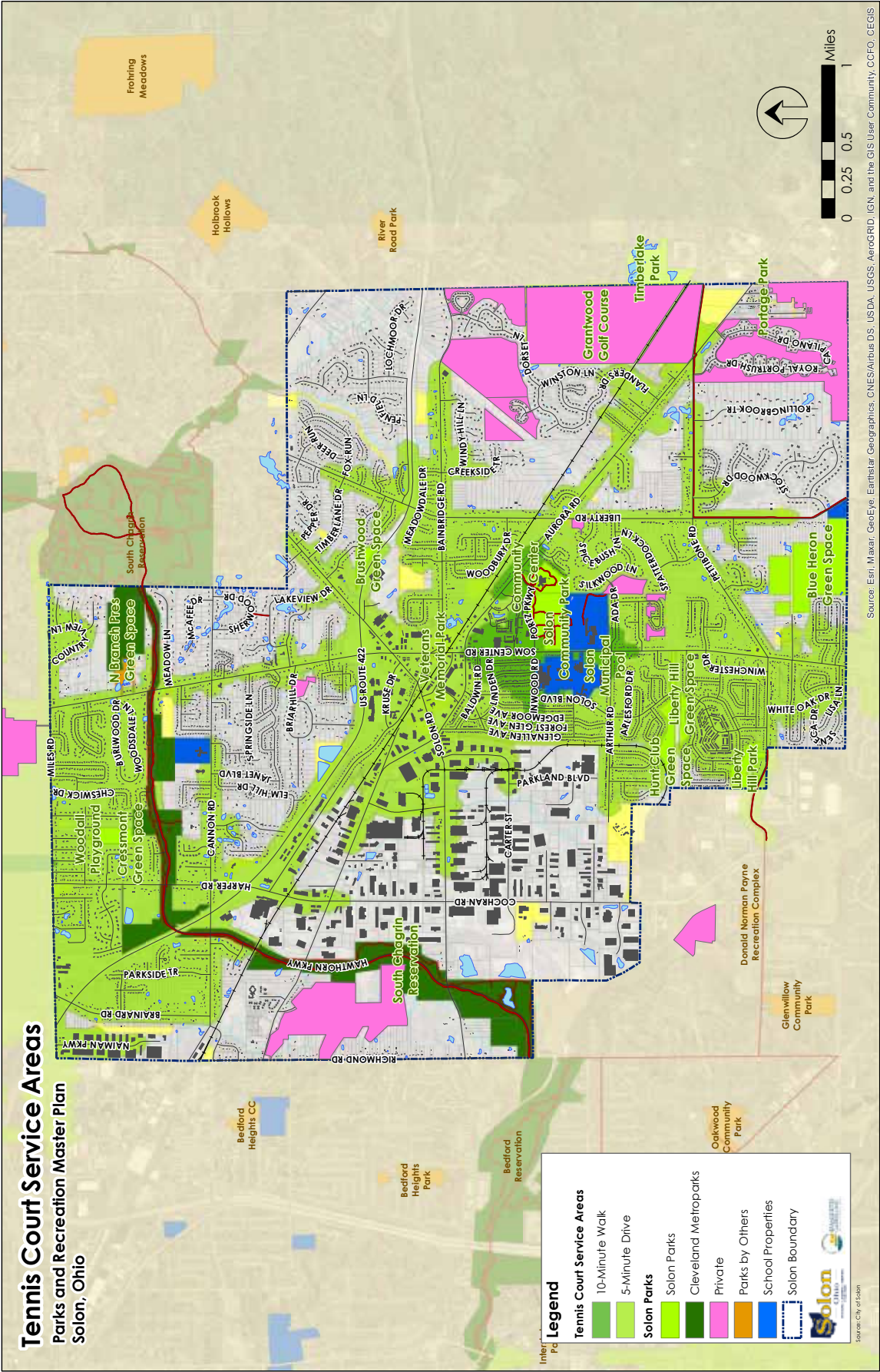


Figure 5.10: Picnic Shelter Service Areas

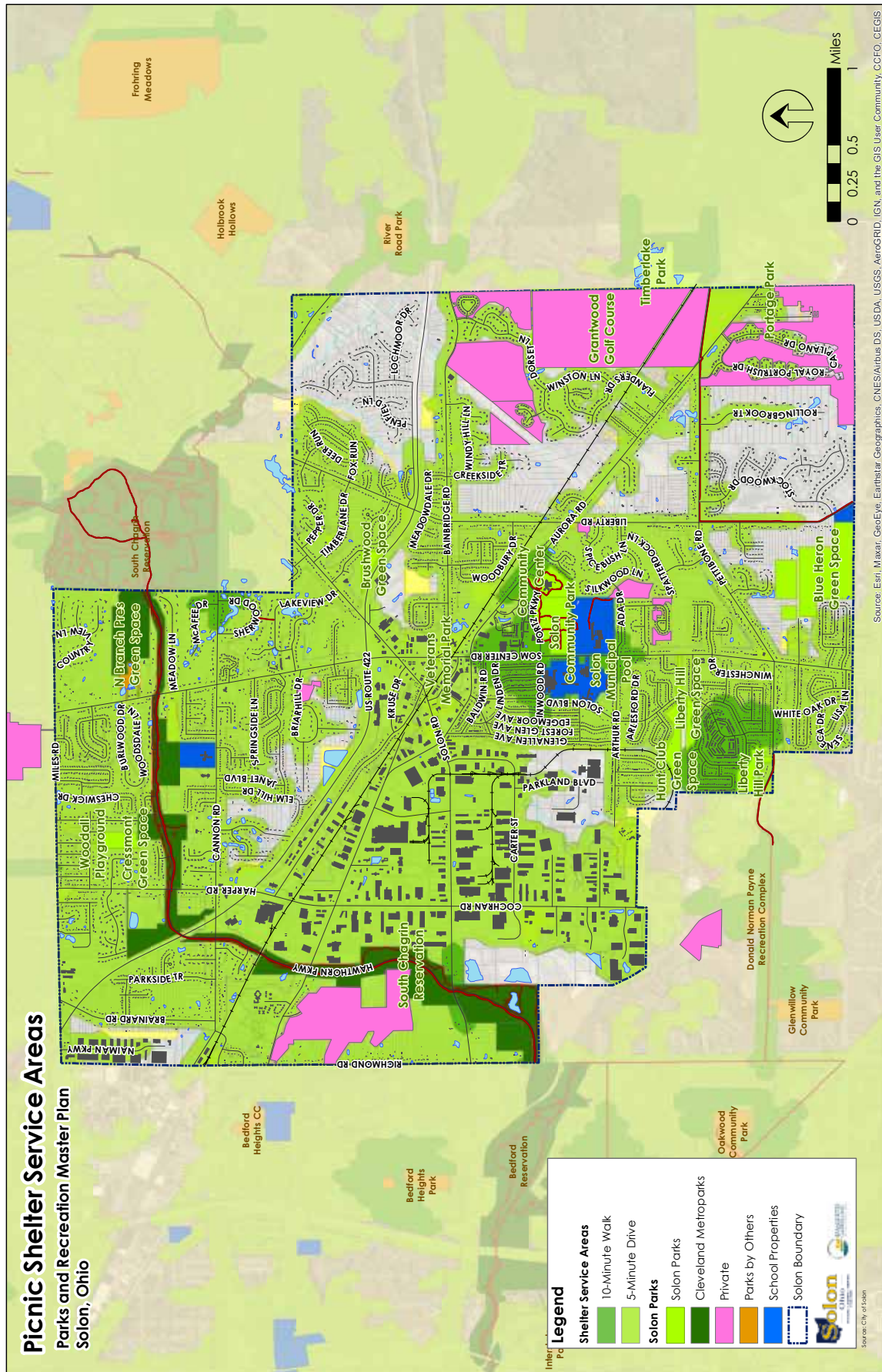
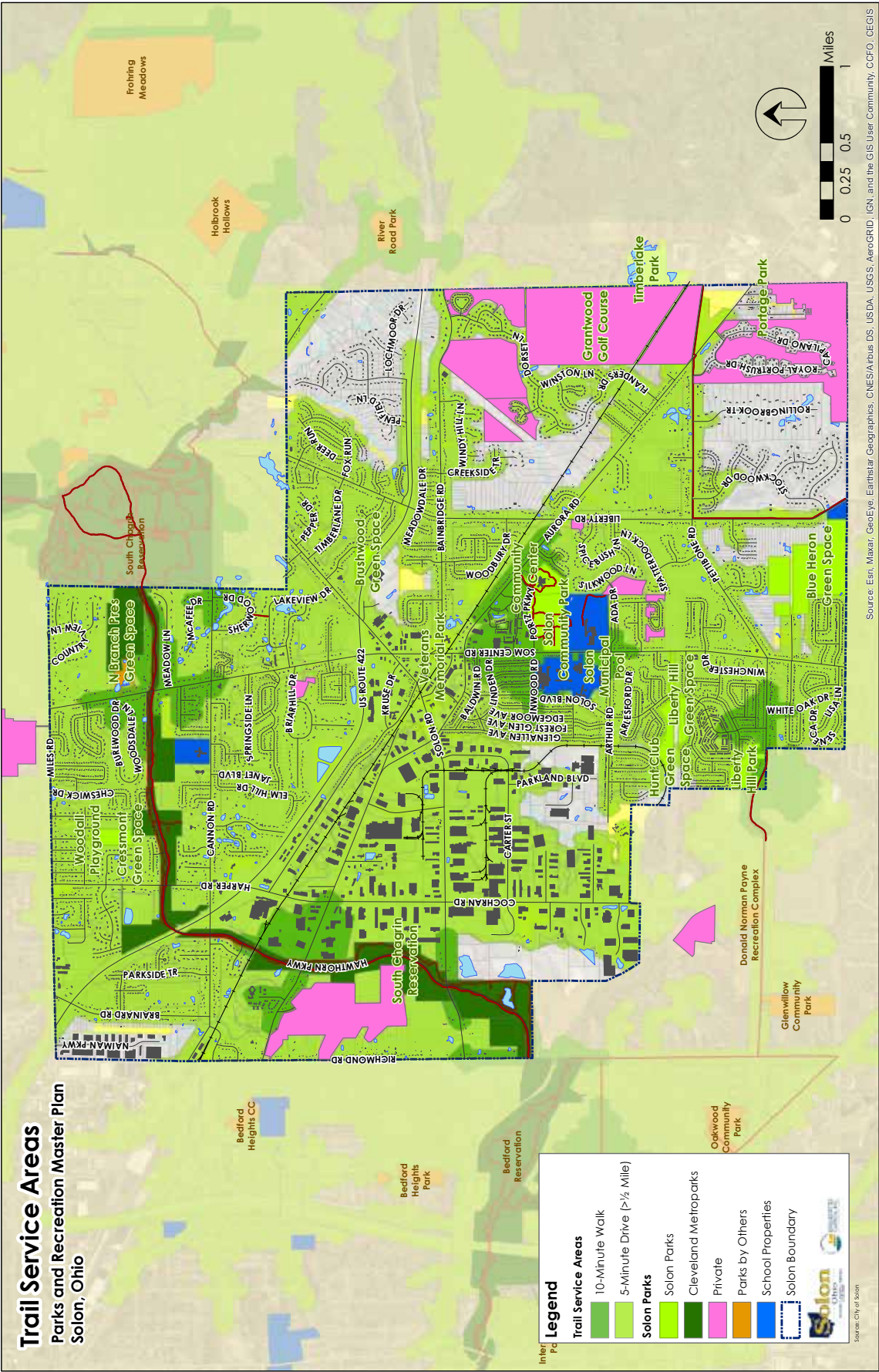


Figure 5.11: Trail Service Areas



5.4 TRENDS IN PARKS AND RECREATION

The following text analyzes national trends in recreation, including types of activities and their associated facilities. First, a look at participation rates for various activities – using data from the Sport and Fitness Industry Association – then a deeper dive into the latest trends (relevant to Solon) occurring in programming and facilities across the nation.

There will be different emphasis and considerations particular to Solon, but also an exploration of overall patterns. Looking through a broader lens can provide insight into the origin and trajectory of more localized preferences. Understanding how trends in fitness, recreation, athletics, and cultural resources reflect in the parks and recreation industry illuminates present conditions and future possibilities in Solon. Equipped with industry context, the Solon Parks and Recreation can better sustain, expand, and realign its existing offerings.

5.4.1 Trends in Recreation Participation

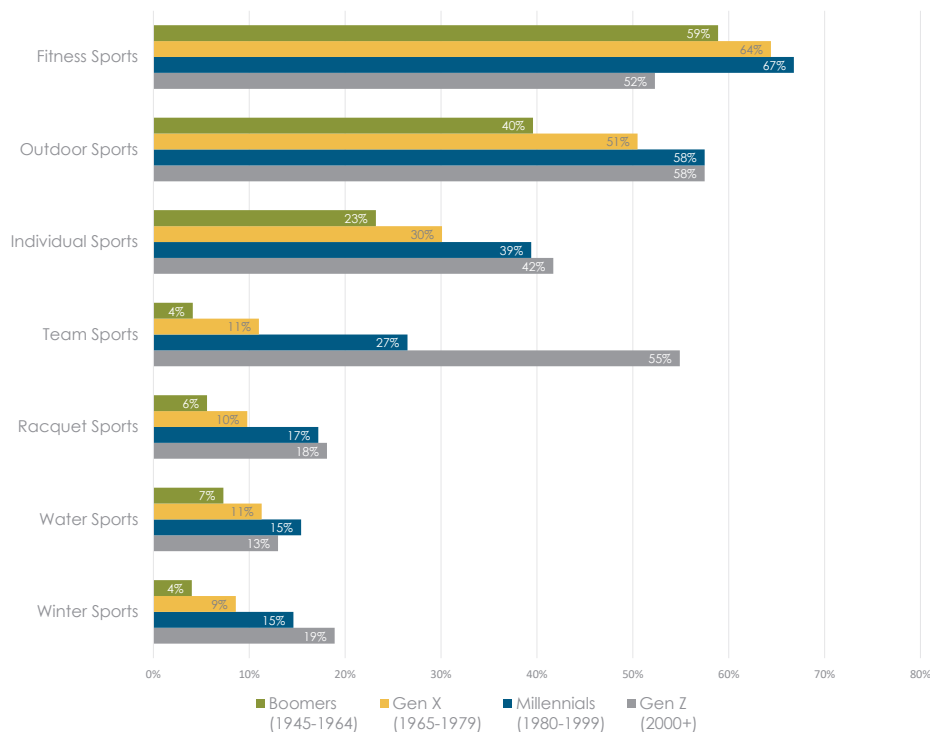
On an annual basis, the Sport and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) conducts a survey¹ of individuals and households throughout the United States to determine participation in a variety of sports and fitness activities. By using a weighting technique, the survey produces results reflective of the total U.S. population age 6 and older; the 2018 sample consisted of 20,069 online interviews of households. The following text examines the findings of this SFIA report and connects relevant data to generate insights about Solon.

Figure 5.12 shows the difference in participation rates between generations for seven types of sports. The youngest generation (Gen Z) had the highest participation rates for Individual Sports (e.g., archery, skateboarding, golfing, etc.), Team Sports (e.g., baseball, ultimate frisbee, soccer, etc.), and Outdoor Sports (e.g., hiking, trail running, bicycling, etc.). With each generation, participation rates dropped as age increased. While the other three generational groups had the highest participation rates in Fitness Sports (e.g., barre, weight-training, kettlebells, etc.) Gen Z had the lowest participation. The remaining three types of sports (Racquet, Winter, and Water Sports) have similar trends, Millennials and Gen Z representing the highest levels of participation.

With high percentages of Solon residents in the older two generations – and these numbers only increasing – demand for fitness sports programming is likely to simultaneously increase into the future. Even though participation diminishes with age, outdoor sports remain popular with all age groups (40% of Boomers take advantage of outdoor fitness activities). Team sports are far more popular with the youngest generation (55% Gen Z and only 4% Boomers).

Table 5.5 displays the 5-year participation rates for 55 different sports and fitness activities. This table also shows the 5-year annual growth rate and highlights which activities show either significant growth or decline in participation rates. The fastest growing sports are highlighted in blue; stand up paddling, cardio tennis, bicycling (BMX), pickleball, and trail running show the fastest rate of growth over the 5-year period.

Figure 5.12: Participation Rates by Generation



¹ He, S., Lee, J., Langworthy, B., Xin, J., James, P., Yang, Y., & Wang, M. (2021, November 22). Delay in the effect of restricting community mobility on the spread of covid-19 during the first wave in the United States. OUP Academic. Retrieved April 5, 2022, from <https://doi.org/10.1093/ofid/ofab586>

Walking for fitness, treadmill, free weights (hand weights), running/jogging, hiking (day-hikes) have the largest number of participants. Walking for fitness has by far the greatest number of participants (over 100 million participants nationally) and hiking is growing nearly 7% annually even

with already high participation (nearly 50 million). Three of the top five activities are oriented around trails (bicycling too, ranked six). It is no surprise these facilities are in such high demand; Solon residents are not unusual in expressing their strong interest in trail-based activities.

Table 5.1: Nationwide 5-Year History of Selected Sports Participation (2013-2018)

Sport/Fitness Activity	Category	Participants (in Thousands)						5-Year Average Annual Growth
		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
Adventure Racing	Individual Sports	2,864	2,999	2,529	2,215	2,143	1,966	-7.0%
Aquatic Exercise	Aerobic Activities	8,226	10,575	10,459	10,518	11,189	10,954	-3.7%
Archery	Individual Sports	8,378	7,903	7,769	7,654	7,449	7,249	-2.8%
Badminton	Racquet Sports	7,198	7,354	6,430	6,337	6,095	5,862	-3.9%
Baseball	Team Sports	13,711	14,760	15,642	15,877	15,804	15,731	2.8%
Basketball	Team Sports	23,410	22,343	23,401	24,225	24,917	27,753	3.6%
Bicycling (BMX)	Outdoor Activities	2,690	3,104	3,413	3,439	3,648	3,880	7.7%
Bicycling (Mountain/Non-Paved Surface)	Outdoor Activities	8,316	8,615	8,609	8,690	8,622	8,998	1.6%
Bicycling (Road/Paved Surface)	Outdoor Activities	38,280	38,365	38,866	39,041	39,388	44,471	3.2%
Birdwatching (>¼ Mile from Home)	Outdoor Activities	13,093	11,589	12,296	12,344	12,817	15,228	3.5%
Cardio Tennis	Racquet Sports	1,821	2,125	2,223	2,499	2,501	2,503	6.8%
Cheerleading	Team Sports	3,608	4,029	3,816	3,841	3,752	3,308	-1.4%
Elliptical Motion Trainer	Aerobic Activities	32,321	32,218	32,283	33,238	33,056	27,920	-2.6%
Fishing (Fly)	Outdoor Activities	6,089	6,456	6,791	6,939	7,014	7,753	5.0%
Fishing (Freshwater)	Outdoor Activities	37,682	38,121	38,346	38,998	39,185	42,556	2.5%
Football (Flag)	Team Sports	5,829	6,173	6,551	6,572	6,783	7,001	3.8%
Football (Tackle)	Team Sports	6,222	5,481	5,224	5,157	5,107	5,054	-4.0%
Free Weights (Hand Weights)	Strength	54,716	51,513	5,217	51,291	51,450	53,256	-0.5%
Golf	Individual Sports	24,120	23,815	23,829	24,240	24,271	24,804	0.6%
Gymnastics	Team Sports	4,679	5,381	4,805	4,770	4,699	3,848	-3.2%
High Impact/Intensity & Training	Aerobic Activities	20,464	21,390	21,476	21,611	22,044	22,487	1.9%
Hiking (Day)	Outdoor Activities	37,232	42,128	44,900	47,860	49,697	57,808	9.3%
Ice Hockey	Team Sports	2,546	2,697	2,544	2,447	2,357	2,270	-2.2%
Ice Skating	Individual Sports	10,485	10,315	9,998	9,721	9,460	9,857	-1.2%
Kayaking (Recreational)	Water Sports	9,499	10,017	10,533	11,017	11,382	13,002	6.5%
Kayaking (White Water)	Water Sports	2,518	2,552	2,500	2,562	2,583	2,605	0.7%
Lacrosse	Team Sports	2,094	2,090	2,171	2,098	2,115	1,884	-2.0%
Martial Arts	Individual Sports	5,507	5,745	5,838	5,821	6,068	6,064	2.0%
Mixed Martial Arts for Fitness	Individual Sports	2,612	2,446	2,376	2,365	2,405	2,445	-1.3%
Pickleball	Racquet Sports	2,506	2,815	3,132	3,301	3,460	4,199	11.0%
Pilates Training	Conditioning	8,594	8,893	9,047	9,084	9,243	9,905	2.9%
Racquetball	Racquet Sports	3,883	3,579	3,526	3,480	3,453	3,426	-2.4%
Roller Hockey	Team Sports	1,907	1,929	1,834	1,734	1,616	1,500	-4.6%
Rugby	Team Sports	1,349	1,550	1,621	1,560	1,392	1,242	-1.2%
Running/Jogging	Aerobic Activities	48,496	47,384	50,770	49,459	50,052	50,652	0.9%
Scuba Diving	Water Sports	3,274	3,111	2,874	2,849	2,715	2,588	-4.6%
Skateboarding	Individual Sports	6,436	6,442	6,382	6,500	6,610	8,872	7.4%
Soccer (Outdoor)	Team Sports	12,646	11,932	11,924	11,405	11,913	12,444	-0.2%
Softball (Fast Pitch)	Team Sports	2,460	2,467	2,309	2,303	2,242	1,811	-5.6%
Softball (Slow-Pitch)	Team Sports	7,114	7,690	7,283	7,386	7,071	6,349	-2.1%
Stand Up Paddling	Water Sports	3,020	3,220	3,325	3,453	3,562	3,675	4.0%
Stationary Cycling	Aerobic Activities	35,553	36,118	36,035	36,668	9,930	6,054	-5.0%
Swimming for Fitness	Aerobic Activities	26,319	26,601	27,135	27,575	28,219	25,666	-0.4%
Swimming on a Team	Team Sports	2,892	3,369	3,007	3,045	2,822	2,615	-1.5%
Table Tennis	Racquet Sports	16,565	16,568	16,041	15,592	14,908	16,854	0.5%
Tai Chi	Conditioning	3,651	3,706	3,787	3,761	3,793	3,300	-1.8%
Tennis	Racquet Sports	17,963	18,079	17,683	17,841	17,684	21,642	4.2%
Trail Running	Individual Sports	8,139	8,582	9,149	10,010	10,997	11,854	7.8%
Treadmill	Aerobic Activities	50,398	51,872	52,966	53,737	56,823	49,832	0.0%
Track and Field	Team Sports	4,222	4,116	3,126	2,710	2,290	2,325	-1.0%
Triathlon (Traditional/Road)	Individual Sports	2,498	2,374	2,162	2,168	2,001	1,846	-5.8%
Ultimate Frisbee	Team Sports	4,409	3,673	3,126	2,710	2,290	2,325	-11.8%
Volleyball (Beach/Sand)	Team Sports	4,785	5,489	4,947	4,770	4,400	4,320	-1.7%
Volleyball (Court)	Team Sports	6,423	6,216	6,317	6,317	6,487	5,410	-3.1%
Walking for Fitness	Aerobic Activities	109,829	107,895	110,805	111,001	111,439	114,044	0.8%
Weight/Resistance Machines	Strength	35,310	35,768	36,291	36,372	36,181	30,651	-2.6%
Yoga	Conditioning	25,289	26,268	27,354	28,745	30,456	32,808	5.4%

Legend

	>3% Increase
	1-3% Increase
	Minimal Change
	1-3% Decrease
	>3% Decrease

5.4.2 Aging Communities

Throughout the United States and in Solon, the median age of the population is increasing (currently 45.4 in Solon and 38.8 in the USA). The number of persons in the age group 65 and over is growing rapidly. Census data indicates that the percentage of the Solon population age 65 and older was 10.7% in 2000 but is expected to increase to reach over 20% by 2026 (see Chapter 2).



Active Seniors in Parks

The relative health of these individuals is better than ever before, and they desire more active recreation than their predecessors. Senior centers are shifting from a focus on activities like card games to more active programming such as fitness activities and outdoor activities such as hiking, biking, and nature programs.

While the aging population should inspire parks and recreation agencies to invest more in activities, programs, and facilities for older users such as walking trails, fishing areas, community gardens, and cultural and nature education programs, many of these more involved and nature-oriented activities are appealing to all generations.

The big picture data is certainly mirrored at the local level in Solon. The surveys and other forms of public engagement (see Chapter 4) show strong community support for expanding programs and facilities to accommodate residents age 50+ and older.

5.4.3 Universal Access

Many park systems are developing unique facilities that are designed to go well beyond the minimum requirement for the Americans with Disabilities Act. Park system administrators are uniquely positioned to set the best example for inclusivity - by creating an environment that is totally accessible to persons of all ages and abilities, parks and recreation agencies are changing the landscape not just physically but also culturally and in terms of mental health.

Some simple examples of physical treatments that go beyond the basic ADA requirements: textured edging on trails help to make the facilities more accessible for the visually impaired; fragrant plants and sensory gardens, as

well as interactive displays provide a more hands-on approach to education and engagement; including therapeutic textures, ground-level features, and mobility-enhancing elements like ramps or bridges in playground equipment ensures all children – including those who are differently-abled – have space to play.



Ann Arbor's Universal Access Park

Universal access extends beyond the physical to include interpretive signage, buildings, and all programs. Providing barrier-free parks is an essential part of the process for any park improvement. A number of equipment providers are available for exploring options; grant funding is potentially available.²

Some existing playgrounds in the city are in need of improvement and replacement; the city has a real opportunity to prioritize accessibility and universal access for the benefit of the community. In some cases, existing play equipment and sidewalks leading to the amenities are not at the universal access standard need for a fully engaging and participatory experience.

5.4.4 Fitness and Wellness

Both state and federal level agencies have placed strong emphasis on improving the health and fitness of individuals throughout the United States. Many local-level parks and recreation departments are building on this message.



Wellness Station

² For example: <https://www.playandpark.com/funding/grant-opportunities> via PlayCore

Fitness facilities no longer have to be confined to indoor spaces; modern equipment exists that can be installed outdoors. Including outdoor fitness equipment in Neighborhood and Community Parks can serve as an alternative with added benefits of being outdoors. Solon could add outdoor fitness equipment at Community Park that more closely resemble what would be found at an indoor fitness center. This easy-to-use equipment could be installed at parks throughout the city at a fairly modest cost.

Additionally, partnerships are key; many agencies collaborate with community health providers to offer fitness facilities and programs. The health benefits that can be provided by parks extend to mental health benefits as studies indicate that a connection to nature can relieve stress, improve interpersonal relationships, and improves mental health.³

5.4.5 Technology

The use of technology is becoming increasingly common in parks and recreation. Many park users want to remain connected while visiting parks and expect instant access to information about facilities and programs at those parks. They also want to be able to register for the events and programs they discover on their mobile device. While there may sometimes be concerns about distraction, especially in nature-oriented spaces, technology – when applied intentionally – can be a tool to enhance park experience. Considering the extent to which technology is part of many user experiences across sectors, it is likely going to be an element necessary to keep people – especially youth – engaged. Currently, the department does provide for online registration via the website.



Smart Trail Signage, Denison, IA

The use of technology in parks has many advantages. Wi-Fi access in parks enables users to stay connected via social media or other online activities, register for programming, and even interact more directly with staff (e.g., reporting maintenance issue or asking a question about scheduling). Installing device-charging benches gives people a place to keep those devices powered-up. Developing park-specific apps can inform visitors of opportunities at individual sites or system-wide. QR codes are yet another technological tool

that visitors can use for quick access to information (e.g., tree and other plant identification, trail maps, park history and cultural context, park hours, etc.).

Employing technology in parks can supply helpful information for internal agency operations as well. For example, Wi-Fi hotspots record the number of connections or searches to create a picture of visitation trends.⁴ Or, beacon counters can detect cellphone signals to help determine the number of users in an area.⁵ Sensors along paths can distinguish between walkers, runners, and cyclists, as well as numbers for visitation frequency. Collectively, this type of data can describe information about popular visitation times, success of new features, and other descriptors.

Finally, social media is a means for interaction between parks users, parks staff, and the park itself. When visitors post to social web platforms, they assist with park promotion and help to encourage future use. Park agencies and staff have employed social media as a "crowd-sourced, data-gathering tool" for things like monitoring wildlife or vegetation, reporting invasive species, and identifying condition of trails.

The department currently maintains an active Facebook presence. Keeping this social media platform relevant with varied posts (e.g., video content, informational flyers, community polls, etc.) will be helpful for attracting followers and expanding impact. These posts would, in turn, provide the department with additional means of gathering information on park condition, plant health, visitation levels, and more. Additionally, the city could extend its effort to provide public Wi-Fi into at least some of the parks.

5.4.6 Geocaching

Geocaching is a technology-based activity that has been growing in popularity since the early 2000s, when GPS technology improved significantly. Participants travel to local parks and open spaces to hunt for objects previously hidden by others using a set of coordinates and a digital



Geocaching

³ National Recreation and Park Association, "Health and Wellness," <http://www.nrpa.org/About-NRPA/Impacting-Communities/Health-and-Wellness/>, (April 8, 2019)

⁴ National Recreation and Park Association, "Parks Using Technology to Engage and Inspire," <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2017/may/parks-using-technology-to-engage-and-inspire/>, (May 1, 2017)

⁵ Dolesh, R. J. (2019, January). Top Trends in Parks and Recreation for 2019. Parks & Recreation.

GPS device (typically on a smart phone). Once found, participants generally exchange the now-discovered item for a new item, guaranteeing future use of the same geocache. The search can have varying levels of complexity - one cache leads to another, or a puzzle must be completed.⁶

Geocaches are already present at various locations in Solon, including in some of the surrounding parks. Opportunities may exist for the department to promote and encourage this activity by creating their own caches or organizing community geocaching events through collaboration with the enthusiastic groups.

5.4.7 Environmental Education

There is a need for expanded environmental education and parks and recreation agencies have a considerable role to play. Environmental education centers throughout the country are having great success as communities are seeking out better access to engage with and learn from their natural environment. Potential subjects include natural processes, resource management, and wildlife habitats.



Environmental Education Center at Lord Stirling Park, Basking Ridge, NJ

Environmental education cultivates understanding of the benefits of natural habitats and open spaces (including those in Solon). Many park departments develop outreach strategies to bring environmental curriculum into schools. Not only does this outreach promote and encourage greater use and appreciation of local parks in the community, but it also creates opportunity for collaboration between organizations, institutions, and advocacy groups and it helps instill a lasting connection to the natural world.

Nature education is something that engages all ages and abilities; nature-oriented programs are an effective way to create space for intergenerational encounters. Creating environmental education opportunities that appeal to the community involves considering formats like guided hikes, camps, community events, field trips, or special-interest classes and topics such as habitat restoration, wildlife identification, or invasive species removal.

⁶ National Recreation and Park Association, "How to Leverage Geocaching to Promote Park and Recreation Events," <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2017/october/how-to-leverage-geocaching-to-promote-park-and-recreation-events/>. (October 5, 2017)

⁷ Birding in the United States: A Demographic and Economic Analysis, Addendum to the 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2013.

Solon could potentially partner with local private groups, Metroparks, and schools to offer and promote additional nature education programs at the various natural areas within the city.



Environmental Education at Mammoth Cave, KY

5.4.8 Birdwatching (or Birding)

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service nearly 50 million Americans participate in birdwatching (as of 2011) or about 20% of the population. The most common form of birding is watching birds near one's home; however, 38% of birders, or 18 million people, participate in birding away from the home. Participants in birdwatching tend to be older and more highly educated than the general population.



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service report also includes an analysis of the economic impact of birdwatching activities. Birdwatchers direct substantial amounts of dollars into the economy because of trip-related (\$15 million) and equipment expenditures (\$26 million). The report finds that the birding industry, including indirect effects resulting from the multiplier effect, generates over \$100 billion annually throughout the United States and supports 666,000 jobs. These expenditures lead to an additional \$6 million in state tax revenues and \$7 million in federal tax revenues.⁷

Solon Community Park has already been identified as a birding hotspot especially in the wetlands area. Partnering with the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland to provide guided birding opportunities for the residents of Solon could be a viable program.

5.4.9 Environmental Best Management Practices (BMPs)

Many communities utilize parks as examples of best management practices (BMPs) to serve as models for minimizing environmental impacts and maximizing the sustainability of both park sites and operations. Parks and recreation departments are in great positions to lead in the implementation of these practices because they are typically among the largest landowners (if not the largest) in their jurisdictions. To assist in the implementation of these practices, some park departments establish manuals detailing the BMPs which are generally divided into categories.⁸ Some potential categories include (with examples):

- Site Selection (which properties to acquire and protect)
- Design (strategies for management of stormwater, water quality, riparian/wetland buffers; use of vegetation; choice of building materials)
- Construction (controlling of pollutants, soil restoration, recycling of construction materials)
- Operation and Maintenance (practices for water conservation, use of organics, weed control, composting, energy use, etc.)
- Programs and Special Events (consider carrying capacity of facility, provide recycling receptacles)

While Solon Parks and Recreation does not necessarily own or operate a true nature park, the department does have the opportunity to encourage best management practices within existing parks and future park developments where natural areas are present. Solon will be partnering with ODNR to manage the Blue Heron Nature Area along the southern border of Solon.

5.4.10 Trails and Connectivity

Demand for trails, trail linkages, and pathways that connect parks, open spaces, and other destination sites (like downtown districts) has been growing all over the U.S., including in Solon. Where surveys have been conducted there is a high level of demand for connectivity. Communities with existing and extensive trail systems express pride and continued desire to build trails between neighborhoods and develop pathways to schools, shopping areas, other community attractions, and neighborhoods. Livable communities where residents report a high quality of life generally have robust trail systems and reliable connectivity that support active, engaged lifestyles.

The expressed need for trails – both for recreational use and for transportation – was conveyed clearly through the public input process. Solon already has a variety of paved and unpaved trails throughout the city, as well as considerable support for trail connectivity. The proposed Norfolk Southern Rail-Trail will provide a great start of a spine to feed off of to connect the community. This trail will eventually connect Cleveland to Youngstown and beyond.



Photo credit: Jeff Carson, Dandy Horseman Magazine

Don Valley Bike Trails

5.4.11 Nature Play Areas

Many parks and recreation agencies are placing increased emphasis on the availability of nature play areas and programming for children. The Natural Learning Initiative (NLI) and the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) recently released a document titled Nature Play & Learning Places, which provides a series of national guidelines for the creation of places for children to interact with nature. The guidelines are meant to support communities in providing opportunities for children to learn about their natural environment and to develop healthy active habits. The guidelines also encourage incorporating natural materials like plants, stones, water, fallen trees, etc. to augment sensory experience and facilitate tactile play. According to the guidelines, a nature play or learning place is:



Photo credit: OPRD/NWF

Nature Play Structure (Silver Falls State Park – Oregon)

“A designated, managed area in an existing or modified outdoor environment where children of all ages and abilities play and learn by engaging with and manipulating diverse

⁸ Birding in the United States: A Demographic and Economic Analysis, Addendum to the 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2013.

natural elements, materials, organisms, and habitats, through sensory, fine motor and gross motor experiences.”⁹

The following are examples of nature play features.

Natural Play Structures

Permanent play structures can be constructed from natural materials such as logs and rocks. The guidelines recommend engaging local children to generate ideas. It is best to use indigenous (native) materials in the design to ensure longevity.

Multipurpose Lawns

Multipurpose lawns, depending on size, can support a wide variety of activities and events. These lawns can be utilized for programmed and unprogrammed play for both large and small groups.

Meadows and Woodlands

Meadows or fields of native grasses, flowers, and non-woody plants provide ecosystems where children – and even their caretakers – can explore and observe wildlife, especially insects and birds. These landscapes stimulate curiosity and offer dynamic learning moments in ways that a carefully managed lawn cannot.

Woodlands also offer diverse ecosystems similarly prime for creating quality educational and play experiences. Visitors can witness natural processes like seasonal change, photosynthesis, and animal behavior.

Vegetable Gardens

Hands-on garden beds give visitors opportunities to participate in the growth of vegetables, herbs, and other edible plants, not to mention the benefit of tasting fresh produce. Children can discover different kinds of fresh food, learn more about what it takes to grow from seed, and better understand the source of the food they eat.



Vegetable Gardens

Aquatics

Existing natural streams, ponds, wetlands, and marshes give children and others a chance to witness the dynamic cycles of water, weather, and the geology of a place. If not present naturally, these elements can be constructed to replicate these phenomena. Children can have multi-sensory interactions and even encounter new types of living creatures.

Gathering and Performance Structures

It is a vital role of parks to give community space to gather. These structures – decks, patios, or gazebos – encourage social interaction and can be utilized for programming. To accommodate performances, these spaces can include things like stages, campfire circles, and amphitheater seating. These settings are also useful for team-building and group presentations.¹⁰



Missouri State Parks, Hawk State Park Amphitheater

Opportunities in Solon

Solon has many natural areas but has not invested much in these types of amenities, but these features can be incorporated into playground development or added at some of the natural areas that currently exist but could be developed.

5.4.12 Mountain Bike and BMX Facilities

Off-road bicycling activities are growing in popularity, although they still represent a relatively small percentage of all bicycling activities. Modern mountain biking (MTB) originated in the 1970s in California with a group of enthusiasts who modified existing bikes for off-road use. These cyclists organized first downhill races which they called “Repack.” This name referred to the need to “repack” the brakes with fresh grease after each race due to the excessive heat from braking during the descent.¹¹

During the early years of mountain biking, enthusiasts used single-track trails intended for hiking as bikes were not specifically forbidden from using these trails. However, as the sport gained in popularity, bikes have been banned

⁹ Moore, R. (2014). *Nature Play & Learning Places. Creating and managing places where children engage with nature.* Raleigh, NC: Natural Learning Initiative and Reston, VA: National Wildlife Federation. Version 1.6. (pages vii, 5, 7-8, 51, 65, 71-83).

¹⁰ Moore, R. (2014). *Nature Play & Learning Places. Creating and managing places where children engage with nature.* Raleigh, NC: Natural Learning Initiative and Reston, VA: National Wildlife Federation. Version 1.6. (pages vii, 5, 7-8, 51, 65, 71-83).

¹¹ Marin Museum of Bicycling, “Mountain Biking History,” <http://mmbhof.org/mtn-bike-hall-of-fame/history/>, (April 8, 2019).

from most hiking trails, and single-track trails designed specifically for mountain bikes have been established.¹² More recently, a new style of trail called a “flow trail” has appeared which provides more predictable surfaces, banked turns, and a lack of obstacles. These trails require little peddling and minimal braking that appeal to a wider variety of users, including families. These trails can be designed to allow beginners to bypass any more technical trails.¹³



Silver Creek Bike Park

Another trend in off-road bicycle facilities is the pump track. These tracks, which began to appear in the 2000s, are looping tracks that can be ridden continuously without the need to pedal. A user’s speed is dependent on “pumping” the terrain transitions of the track. A pump track requires approximately 50’ by 50’ of space (minimum) and generally feature a series of rollers and steeply bermed corners.¹⁴ Unlike many of the other off-road facilities, pump tracks are usable by both mountain bike and BMX riders. Some interest was expressed during the engage phase in both the surveys and public open houses for new development of these kinds of facilities as well as skate parks. Often times these facilities can be incorporated with one another.



Pump Track

5.4.13 Dog Parks

Dog parks are in ever-increasing demand throughout the country. These spaces help to improve the interaction skills

of dogs, while also providing social opportunities for dog owners. Quality dog parks require careful planning and a fairly extensive operating budget to ensure adequate maintenance and upkeep.

Optimally, a dog park is a minimum of three acres in size and includes three separate areas: for large dogs, for small dogs, and a rotating unused area to allow for regeneration of turf. Some dog parks include an additional area for agility and training. Many dog parks are larger, reaching well over 10 acres in size. Typical quality amenities include shade, seating, water (for both human and animal), and restrooms.



Photo: Northbrook Dog Park, Northbrook, IL

Solon currently offers one dog park at Timberlake Park. This site has the potential to be improved by lining the fence line with some sort of gravel to prevent the existing mud build up at the gates, along with additional seating, shade, and most importantly, water fountains for both the dogs and humans. The dog park also has the potential to be expanded if usage increases. There has also been discussion to move this dog park to a more central location in the city.

5.4.14 Creative Placemaking

The Trust for Public Land – a nonprofit organization with a mission to bring high-quality parks within a 10-minute walk of every person in the U.S. – is a leading champion of creative placemaking as a strategy for affecting change. Creative placemaking is a collaborative, community-based process that captures the power of art, vibrancy of local heritage, and potential of place to build memorable spaces rooted in culture and local identity. Parks and recreation agencies around the nation offer community connection in physical and social forms; creative-placemaking is just another tool for ensuring successful parks that equitably reflect the people who use them.¹⁵ Many agencies partner with local entities (like other government departments, nonprofits, schools, places of worship, art institutions, and other groups) to put in place opportunities for resident-led installations, programs, and events.

Creative-placemaking can take countless forms. It may look like an outdoor sculpture walk at the center of the neighborhood park featuring resident and local artists’

¹² Singletracks, “Visiting the Birthplace of Mountain Biking: Marin County, California,” <http://www.singletracks.com/blog/mtb-trails/visiting-the-birthplace-of-mountain-biking-marin-county-california/>, (April 8, 2019).

¹³ IMBA, “Flow Trails,” <https://www.imba.com/model-trails/flow-trails>, (April 15, 2016).

¹⁴ Adventure Sports Journal, “Pumpin’: An Introduction to the World of Pump Tracks,” <http://adventuresportsjournal.com/pumpin-an-introduction-to-the-world-of-pump-tracks/>, (April 8, 2019).

¹⁵ Trust for Public Land, Creative Placemaking, <https://www.tpl.org/our-work/creative-placemaking>

work. It might be an annual arts performance downtown that showcases immigrant and refugee cultures in the community. It can also be as low-profile as a pollinator garden including interpretive signage about the plants chosen and why. Whatever it may look like, it is essential that the community be inclusively integrated into every phase: ideation, selection (of artist(s), piece(s), feature(s), etc.), installation, activation, and long-term care.



Photo: Madisonville-Creative Placemaking Blitter Studio



Photo: Madisonville-Creative Placemaking Blitter Studio

Creative Placemaking in the Madisonville Neighborhood of Cincinnati (2015)

When parks and recreation agencies prioritize local traditions, cultural identities, and native resources, making sure these are reflected in program and facility offerings, users will be more likely to participate and do their part to sustain the system. A reciprocal relationship forms, where community engages with parks and recreation to the extent that parks and recreation seeks to provide place-based resources.

Solon could include creative placemaking into any future park improvement by incorporating it into the planning process. It provides an opportunity to make every park unique and to build and connect community around these parks. The arts community in Solon and the surrounding area is vibrant and growing. With clear expectations, fair compensation, and meaningful engagement, the arts community in Solon has the power to enliven the city's parks and community spaces.

5.4.15 Drones

Since the late 2000s, the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) has increased tremendously. Used for both military and civilian purposes, these devices are having a

considerable impact on parks and recreation agencies nationwide. A contentious activity, tensions exist around safety, privacy, and environmental impact, as well as applications (professional and recreational) like habitat and wildlife monitoring, photography, and map-making.

Popularity of drones is only growing, but regulations at the federal, state, and local levels have been slow to prevent, mitigate, or manage negative impacts. Many cities have enacted no-fly zones and other restrictions which means UAV-users – licensed or not – have limited available spaces. This then has led drone pilots to look to parks and public open space for flying opportunities.



Photo: NRPA 2018

Requiring permits (day or seasonal) and designating fly areas with set times for flying are tactics agencies are using. These measures help legitimize UAV use and maintain safe park spaces; permitting is also a potential revenue opportunity. Since drone use is only increasing, the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) offers useful insight into the future of drone-use in parks:

"[P]ark agencies will face increasing public pressure to look at allowing hobbyist flights and commercial-use drones in parks... By creating stronger guidelines and policies about how to fly drones in parks instead of adopting blanket restrictions, parks can give people an outlet and place to fly recreationally. New programming and events can be planned around drones, bringing in visitors and related businesses that benefit the parks...[K]eep it focused on safety and respect for all parties. [A]cceptance will protect the public and park resources and enable an exciting new form of recreation to take place."¹⁶

Solon does not have a designated location for launching drones and lacks an official policy for flying them in the parks. As their popularity continues to increase, the city will likely need to designate such an area, as well as formulate and post a policy for (or against) use of drones within the park system.

¹⁶ Wootton, Courtney; Bradley, Michael J.; Ray Neal NRPA. Drones in Parks: It's All About Perspective. <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2018/december/drones-in-parks-its-all-about-perspective/>

5.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter provides an assessment of needs for parks and recreation services in Solon. The analysis indicates a variety of parks and facilities are located throughout Solon; however, most amenities are offered at Solon Community Park. This creates great centrally located access for most amenities however, the far-reaching areas of the city tend to have lower service levels.

The level of service standards outlined at the start of this chapter – and developed with input from residents of Solon – provide a foundational guideline for the number of parks, open space, and recreation facilities needed in Solon. Overall, there is demand for improved diamond and multipurpose fields, additional trails (paved and natural), upgraded amenities, additional programming, and more community events.

The geographic analysis of service areas identifies specific areas to target for investment in additional parks and recreation facilities. The mapping analysis shows higher levels of service in the center of the city, anchored around Solon Community Park, with lower service on the surrounding outskirts of the community. **The findings described above, combined with public input requesting additional services and improved spaces, underscore the need for improvements to existing facilities, especially at periphery parks to meet unmet facility needs. These pursuits should be the highest priorities for the department moving forward.**



6

STRATEGIC PLAN

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The Solon Parks and Recreation Master Plan represents a collective imagination of the future. While the action plan component (Chapter 9) is a detailed account of all the recommendations developed – both operational and capital – to guide investment priorities, the strategic plan component in this chapter is intended to provide the department with a clearly defined purpose and underlying motivation for tackling those action items.

Developed out of all the input gathered during the engage phase, and with full support of the steering committee, this strategic plan articulates a freshly inspired vision, mission, and set of defining values. These strategic elements will help pilot implementation of actions identified in this Master Plan, and thereby shape the future of parks and recreation in Thomasville. Also included at the end of this chapter are goals and objectives. These are incorporated later in the master plan to categorize and better define the wide range of recommendations in the action plan.

These strategic plan elements – vision, mission, goals, and subsequent objectives – will be instrumental for bringing the department's new vision and mission to life.

6.2 VISION

6.2.1 Purpose of a Vision

A vision describes a unique horizon, an intended outcome. It defines a clear standard of accomplishment and in so doing, helps unify effort. A vision should:

1. Provide clear direction
2. Focus effort
3. Guide long-term action
4. Illustrate the department's purpose

5. Inspire and motivate
6. Visualize an ideal

6.2.2 Proposed Vision for Solon Parks and Recreation

Fully informed by the values and visioning input generated by the steering committee, and with their support and approval, the following vision statement was crafted for Solon Parks and Recreation:

Solon's parks, programs, and facilities are an exceptional and interconnected system that engages the entire community and fosters a sense of pride

6.3 MISSION

6.3.1 Purpose of a Mission

A mission defines the daily work and an enduring purpose. More specifically, a mission should answer questions like what the department does, how, and why it does this. The mission is an action-oriented statement that informs day-to-day action.

Like the vision statement, the mission should be easy to remember and to share with others. It should be the foundation of all departmental decision-making.

6.3.2 Proposed Mission for Solon Parks and Recreation

Building from the foundational visioning exercise conducted with the Master Plan Steering Committee – and in consideration of the factors described above – the following is the proposed mission statement for Solon Parks and Recreation moving forward:

Build community and enrich life through parks, programs, and play

6.4 VALUES FOR SOLON PARKS AND RECREATION

6.4.1 Purpose of Values

An organization's values serve as a "lighthouse" of guiding principles, informed by personal and organizational beliefs. Values are straightforward phrases or words that should:

1. Direct staff conduct
2. Express department ideals
3. Reflect department personality
4. Complement community's aspirations
5. Communicate what is important
6. Ensure quality staff experience
7. Instill positive focus system-wide

6.4.2 Core Values

Core values should be unique to the department and indicative of the attitudes, ambitions, and focus shared by the department and the community. Using insights from the steering committee discussions, and feedback generated through public engagement, the following are offered as foundational values for guiding the future work of the department:

Community – Connecting the community through play, nature, and shared experiences

Engagement – Continuous community consultation for the future of parks and recreation

Inclusivity – Creating accessible spaces and programs for all

Innovative – Encouraging exploration through diverse recreational opportunities

Excellence – Offering exceptional parks, facilities, and programs

6.5 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

6.5.1 Function of Goals and Objectives

Goals and objectives identify areas of strategic priority and provide broad, overarching organization for departmental actions. Together, goals and objectives:

1. Provide focus for actions and aspirations
2. Shape a designated timeframe for improvements
3. Create direction for investments of time, skills, and resources
4. Clarify what the department will and will not do

Generally, goals describe elements of the vision, defining what is achievable through the daily execution of the

mission. Objectives – and therefore specific strategies or recommendations – fit within the scope of each goal.

Goals:

1. Overarching areas of strategic priority
2. Broad descriptions of intent
3. Rooted in outcome, rather than specific activity
4. Longest timeframe (i.e., as long as it takes to accomplish the vision)

Objectives:

1. Frame individual actions
2. More detailed description of what needs to be done
3. Measurable metrics (e.g., "increase," "reduce," "consolidate," "improve," "distribute," etc.)
4. Variable timeframes (0-2, 3-5, 5-10 years)

6.5.2 Proposed Goals and Objectives for Solon Parks and Recreation

The following goals and objectives are intended to help guide improvements, operations, and services in parks and recreation in Solon over the next 10 years.

Goal 1: Exceptional Parks

Create destination parks and facilities

Objective 1.1 – Places: Provide state of the art facilities that serve both the community and the region

Objective 1.2 – Amenities: Pursue innovative development and strategic replacement of structures and support features at all parks

Objective 1.3 – Stewardship: Employ sustainable practices to ensure continued community access to nature and high-quality facilities

Goal 2: Community Pride

Build physical and social connections throughout the entire community

Objective 2.1 – Gathering: Offer recurring accessible and inviting opportunities for community interaction

Objective 2.2 – Connecting: Improve physical connections to parks, schools, and popular destinations

Objective 2.3 – Engaging: Continuously gauge community needs and promote opportunities to engage with stakeholders

Goal 3: Diverse Experiences

Provide a wide array of recreational opportunities that inspire well-being for all

Objective 3.1 – Events: Collaborate to provide possibilities for interaction, fun, & learning

Objective 3.2 – Wellness: Encourage multi-generational exploration & growth through diverse physical activities and educational opportunities based on community input

Objective 3.3 – Partnerships: Accommodate local organizations to optimize services and programs

Goal 4: Responsible Operations

Employ strong leadership using efficient management, exceptional customer service, sustainable operations, and productive partnerships

Objective 4.1 – Structure: Encourage an engaged workforce of valued staff with a culture of innovation

Objective 4.2 – Operations: Implement clear performance standards and training practices for quality and flexibility

Objective 4.3 – Funding: Explore creative operational practices and funding strategies to improve effectiveness of investment

6.6 STRATEGIES

As already mentioned, specific strategies are provided for each of the objectives listed above later in this report. These strategies will be discussed in Chapter 7 (organized by category, like “programming” and “facility improvements”) as well as listed in the Action Plan (Chapter 8), which also identifies a timeframe, responsible party, and potential funding source.



7

PARK RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes recommendations for individual park improvements including proposed new facilities and upgrades to existing parks. Each section reviews the findings from the park inventory (Chapter 3) and offers steps forward. These recommendations are presented as a starting point for future discussions with users, neighbors, partners, and the community at large. Before pursuing development, a deeper investigation into the capacity and potential of each of these parks will be needed to determine precise details like placement, materials used, and maintenance considerations.

This chapter also includes a suggested level of priority for each improvement recommendation; priority is based on public engagement, steering committee input, and the condition of facilities. Priorities should always be confirmed before implementation through community engagement. Parks are listed according to the park classification following the proposed improvements.

7.2 COMMUNITY PARKS

7.2.1 Solon Community Park

Background

Solon Community Park is centrally located in the city and, along with the Community and Senior Center, are the main hub of recreational and community activity. Many of the facilities are several decades old and the public engagement clearly indicated the community would like to see this park updated. City Council also clearly indicated they would like to see Community Park 2.0 with a complete overhaul.

The following park issues and opportunities were identified through site assessments and public input:

- The ballfields are extremely old and need updated. Drainage is an issue.
- The playground is outdated.
- Handicapped accessibility is lacking.
- Cisar Field needs new bleachers, pressbox, dugouts, and lighting.
- The parking lots are in poor condition.
- Park Improvement Recommendations
- The walking trails are failing.
- The restrooms are in poor condition.
- The maintenance area needs expanded and more covered storage.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are shown on Figure 7.1 – Solon Community Park Concept Plan.

1. Develop a Park Master Plan with community engagement to ensure the site is developed with consideration to long-term needs



Example Band Shell

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2. Redevelop the central core of the park with new restrooms, all-access playground, band stand, picnic shelters, plaza areas, and upgrades to the sand volleyball courts (including lighting), and a food truck court at the end of the parking lot.



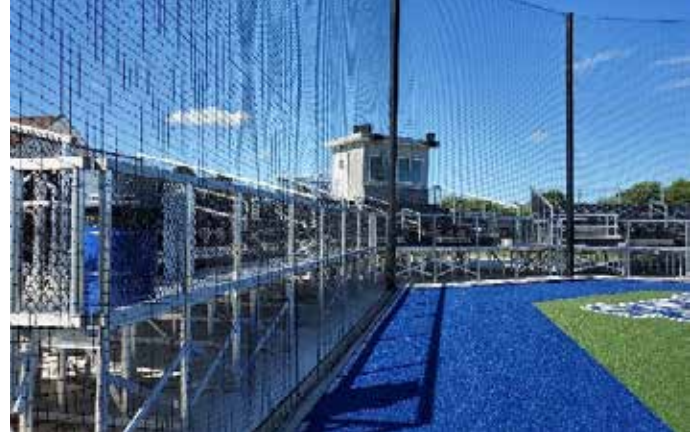
Large All-Access Playground

3. Redevelop the parking lot with new paving, curbs, and lighting. Install landscape islands between rows of parking. Install new lighting.
4. Move the bocce courts from the Community Center site to this park with at least 4 courts that include sitting areas and shade.
5. Redevelop ballfields #4 and #5 to artificial turf surfaces. Install new LED lights. These fields were chosen because they will vastly improve playability and not interfere with Home Days and other events.
6. Move the fences and backstops on field #1 to provide more space between the baseball fields. Upgrade field #1 and #2 with new outfield turf and irrigation. Install artificial turf infields. Upgrade the lights to LED. Utilize portable pitching mounds to accommodate varying age groups for multiple use.
7. Upgrade to new bleachers, press box, dugouts, and LED lighting on Cisar Field.
8. Add a basketball court in the southwest corner of the park.



Artificial Turf Multi-Purpose Fields

9. Improve Fields #6 through #9 with paved walks, new dugouts, and addition of a restroom between Fields #6 and #7.
10. Convert Field #10 to 8 pickleball courts with room for expansion for more in the future. Provide sitting and shade areas between the banks of 4 courts.
11. Upgrade all walkways throughout the park.
12. Expand the maintenance area with a new Maintenance Building that has room for storage, office space, break room, workspace, and equipment storage.
13. Develop a community garden at the end of the Middle School parking lot, where the former universal playground was located.



Example Bleachers and Press Box for Cisar Field

14. Expand the trails to extend to the southeast, around the conservation easement area and to the Community Center. Some of this trail may need to be boardwalk due to the potential wetlands.
15. Long-term – Acquire the property on the northwest corner and develop this area as a park entrance feature and other facilities.

7.2.2 Community Center Park

Recommendations

The Community and Senior Center site are newer than the rest of Community Park. Only minor changes are needed in this area.

1. Develop a new 8-lane by 50-meter swimming pool to replace the Municipal Pool on Arthur Road. The Arthur Road facility needs many upgrades to meet modern standards and improved user experiences. The development of this new pool will require a new pump/filter building and pool house.
2. The bocce courts will be relocated and expanded in Community Park.
3. Develop a trail from Community Park to the south side of the conservation easement and to the trail around the Community Center. Portions may need to be boardwalk due to wetlands. This will provide educational opportunities.

7.2.3 Timberlake Park

Background

Timberlake Park is located in the southeast corner of Solon with access requiring leaving the city. The park is adjacent to Grantwood Golf Course with access from Root Road.

Facility Issues and Opportunities

- There are no restroom facilities except for portables
- Both shelters need repairs. The small shelter should be demolished
- Accessible paths are needed to the dog park, shelters, playground, and to provide access to and around the ponds
- The grills at the shelters are under the roof which is a fire hazard
- The playground mulch stays wet and the playground is outdated

Recommendations

1. Develop a park master plan with community input from stakeholder groups.



Nature Play Area

2. Reduce the size of the parking lot and pave. Keep the east side of the lot.
3. Remove the west side of the parking lot and develop as a rectangular/soccer field.



Example Fishing Dock

4. Develop a small restroom. It may require a vault type of restroom if sanitary sewer is not available.
5. Replace the playground with a nature themed play area.
6. Replace the small shelter.
7. Repair the large shelter and clear some of the vegetation from around the edge. Place the grills outside of the shelter.
8. Install a paved walking trail from the parking lot to the playground, small and large shelters, and around the central pond.
9. Install a fishing pier on the center pond.
10. Provide security lighting.

7.3 NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

7.3.1 Portage Park

Portage Park serves the southeast corner of Solon as a Neighborhood Park. The following improvements are recommended:

1. Provide ADA accessible walkways to all existing and future park features (e.g., playground, game courts, and to the street for access)
2. Upgrade the basketball court with new goals, improved paving and striping.
3. Replace the playground.
4. Install a sign to identify it as a city park.
5. Install a perimeter walking path.
6. Add a small picnic shelter for neighborhood use.

7.3.2 Woodall Park

Woodall Park is a very small mini-park that serves the surrounding neighborhoods. Access is limited with no sidewalks in the area. Recommendations include:

1. Replace the small playground.
2. Develop a paved trail connection through the wooded area to the south to connect to the Buckeye Trail on Hawthorn Parkway.
3. Install a park identification sign.

7.3.3 Liberty Hill Park

This park is maintained by the Liberty Hill HOA and any improvements will be provided by the HOA.

7.4 SPECIAL USE PARKS

7.4.1 Grantwood Golf Course

The Grantwood Golf Course operates as a separate enterprise. Any improvements to the course would come from these funds. The golf course has its own plan and recommendations are not included in this Master Plan.

7.4.2 Bicentennial Park

Bicentennial Park is located in the heart of Solon and across the road from City Hall and the Center for the Arts. Plans are being developed for this property which will include the relocation of Bainbridge Road to go around the south side of the plaza, thus opening up the area between the plaza and City Hall and the Center for the Arts for inclusion in the park. Once completed, the Master Plan and cost estimates for Bicentennial Park should be added to this Master Plan.

7.4.3 Veterans Park

Veterans Park is a highly visible public space along the city's main thoroughfare. As such, it is maintained to a high quality. The park has been renovated in the recent past and does not need any improvements at this time.

7.4.4 Municipal Pool

The Municipal Pool on Arthur Road is recommended to be demolished and a new 50-meter pool be developed adjacent to the Community Center outdoor pool.

7.5 OPEN SPACE / NATURAL AREAS

7.5.1 Blue Heron Green Space

This 126-acre natural area is located on the southern boundary of Solon. Current plans are to turn the site over to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to develop and manage.

7.5.2 Other Open Spaces

The following open spaces will be maintained as undeveloped open space. Identification signs should be installed to identify these as city-owned properties.

- Liberty Hill Green Space
- Hunt Club Green Space
- Brushwood Drive Green Space
- North Branch Preserve Green Space

7.6 OTHER PARK RECOMMENDATIONS

7.6.1 New Neighborhood Parks

Optimally, Neighborhood Parks should be a minimum of 8 to 10 acres in size. With the recommendation to develop up to two new Neighborhood Parks over the next 10 years, Solon should have a standard list of elements to include in each park. These standards should function as a starting point for engagement with the community but should ensure that all new parks provide a variety of amenities for all users. Partners that develop Neighborhood Parks should be encouraged to follow these standards.

Typical Neighborhood Park Elements include:

1. Playground
2. ½ basketball court (may be swapped for another feature if desired by the community)
3. Gathering area/picnic shelter

4. Walking trail
5. Good circulation – walkways/ADA access
6. Restrooms (small)
7. Landscaping/trees for shade
8. Open grass area/athletic field – practice or pick-up use (if adequate space exists)
9. Unique neighborhood determined feature(s) based on local interest – could be related to sports, environment, arts, etc.
10. Parking (if space allows)

The Service Gaps Analysis in Chapter 5 illustrated that there are several areas of Solon that do not have easy access to a park within a 10-minute walk. As new development takes place, land should be set aside for the development of Neighborhood Parks.

7.6.2 Other Park Facilities

There are a variety of park facilities and activities that are needed in Solon, but appropriate places are not currently available, or areas need to be studied further to assess their feasibility. Solon Community Park is already packed with facilities which are recommended to be updated and expanded, therefore there is no room for these items in that park. Those items include:

1. **Dog Park** - A more central location for a dog park. Timberlake is remote to much of the community and a new, more central location is desirable.
2. **Disc Golf** - There is a desire for a disc golf course. Possibilities are the land north of Grantwood Golf Course, in one of the city-owned open spaces, or a partnership with Cleveland Metroparks. These areas need more study to determine the feasibility.
3. **Mountain Bike Trails** - These trails need considerable land. One possibility is the land north of Grantwood Golf Course. The city should partner with the local mountain bike association to study this possibility.
4. **More Soccer/Rectangular Fields** – Land for soccer and other rectangular sports, such as lacrosse, is at a premium with no dedicated fields. These sports are growing and need additional fields. At this time no city-owned properties are appropriate for this use. The city should seek land for this type of development.
5. **Indoor Sports Fieldhouse** - Several stakeholder groups requested an indoor practice and game facility. No current city-owned land is appropriate for this use. This type of facility could be developed and operated by a partner or a private entity if it is determined to be financially feasible.
6. **Splash Pad** – The public engagement identified strong support for a splash pad. In discussions with the Master Plan Steering Committee, it was determined that a water-play element should be included in the design for Community Park along with the all-access playground, but not a full splash pad due to the expense, maintenance requirement, and space needed.

7.7 PARK IMPROVEMENT LIST

The improvements by park are presented in Table 7.1. These improvements should be reevaluated prior to new development and after any follow-up planning studies. The master planning process completed before large-scale improvements should include a detailed estimate of the costs for the improvements at each park.

Grant opportunities exist and should be explored for many of these improvements, particularly trail system development, helping to reduce the required contributions by Solon. Additionally, partnerships, including for fundraising efforts, should be considered as part of any improvement, particularly those with substantial capital costs.

Table 7.2: Capital Improvement Projects

Park Name		0-2 Years*	3-5 Years*	6-10 Years*	Total
Community Parks					
Solon Community Park					
1	Park Master Plan	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$50,000
2	Wetlands Delineation	\$6,000	\$0	\$0	\$6,000
3	Detailed Topographic Survey	\$31,000	\$0	\$0	\$31,000
4	Demolition - Cabin, Concession/Restroom, Playgrounds	\$31,000	\$0	\$0	\$31,000
	Walks and Trails				
5	Concrete Walkways - 8' Wide	\$38,000	\$0	\$0	\$38,000
6	Upgraded Trails - Asphalt - 8'-10' Wide	\$293,000	\$0	\$0	\$293,000
7	New Trails - Asphalt - 8'-10' Wide	\$113,000	\$0	\$0	\$113,000
	Upgrade Parking				
8	Replace Pavement (includes milling)	\$1,183,000	\$0	\$0	\$1,183,000
9	Parking Lot Curb/Islands	\$161,000	\$0	\$0	\$161,000
10	Planting Soil and Seeding	\$25,000	\$0	\$0	\$25,000
11	Trees and Landscaping	\$15,000	\$0	\$0	\$15,000
12	Parking Lot Lighting	\$133,000	\$0	\$0	\$133,000
	Central Park Area				
13	Large All-Access Playground with Water Play	\$1,232,000	\$0	\$0	\$1,232,000
14	Playground Perimeter Fence in Concrete Curb	\$62,000	\$0	\$0	\$62,000
15	New Large Central Restroom	\$493,000	\$0	\$0	\$493,000
16	Band Shell and Associated Paving	\$370,000	\$0	\$0	\$370,000
17	New Large Pavilion	\$185,000	\$0	\$0	\$185,000
18	Renovate Existing Shelter	\$123,000	\$0	\$0	\$123,000
19	Small Shelter/Sound Board Area	\$62,000	\$0	\$0	\$62,000
20	Plaza Space	\$148,000	\$0	\$0	\$148,000
21	Shade Sails	\$118,000	\$0	\$0	\$118,000
22	Food Truck Court with Power Outlets	\$123,000	\$0	\$0	\$123,000
23	Restroom/Concession near Ballfields	\$431,000	\$0	\$0	\$431,000
24	Site Furniture (Tables, Benches, Trash Receptacles)	\$62,000	\$0	\$0	\$62,000

Table 712: Capital Improvement Projects (Continued)

Park Name		0-2 Years*	3-5 Years*	6-10 Years*	Total
25	Concrete Walks	\$82,000	\$0	\$0	\$82,000
26	Lighting	\$49,000	\$0	\$0	\$49,000
27	Wi-Fi and Security Cameras	\$31,000	\$0	\$0	\$31,000
	Cisar Field Improvements				
28	New LED Lights	\$400,000	\$0	\$0	\$400,000
29	New Seats and Pressbox	\$290,000	\$0	\$0	\$290,000
30	Concrete Pavement Under Seats and Pressbox	\$42,000	\$0	\$0	\$42,000
31	New Dugouts with Storage Area	\$86,000	\$0	\$0	\$86,000
32	New Backstop	\$31,000	\$0	\$0	\$31,000
33	Bull Pens and Batting Cages	\$37,000	\$0	\$0	\$37,000
34	New Maintenance/Storage Complex	\$0	\$493,000	\$0	\$493,000
35	Bocce Courts with Shade	\$0	\$123,000	\$0	\$123,000
36	New Backstops and Dugouts - Fields 1, 2, 4, 5	\$0	\$296,000	\$0	\$296,000
	Fields 1 & 2				
37	Fields 1 & 2 Artificial Turf Infield	\$0	\$801,000	\$0	\$801,000
38	Fields 1 & 2 Natural Turf Renovation	\$0	\$110,000	\$0	\$110,000
39	Fields 1 & 2 Irrigation Upgrade	\$0	\$49,000	\$0	\$49,000
40	Fields 1 & 2 Side Fence	\$0	\$51,000	\$0	\$51,000
41	New Bleachers and Concrete Pads	\$0	\$123,000	\$0	\$123,000
42	Bottle Filler/Drinking Fountain with Pad	\$0	\$15,000	\$0	\$15,000
	Diamond Fields 4-5				
43	Artificial Turf Fields 4-5 (with under-drainage system)	\$0	\$2,720,000	\$0	\$2,720,000
44	Fencing around Fields 4 & 5	\$0	\$67,000	\$0	\$67,000
45	New Lighting - Fields 4 & 5	\$0	\$739,000	\$0	\$739,000
46	Bottle Filler/Drinking Fountain	\$0	\$15,000	\$0	\$15,000
47	New Bleachers and Concrete Pads	\$0	\$123,000	\$0	\$123,000
48	Scoreboards	\$0	\$30,000	\$0	\$30,000
	Court Area				
49	Pickleball Courts	\$394,000	\$0	\$0	\$394,000
50	Pickleball Lights	\$123,000	\$0	\$0	\$123,000
51	Walkways at Pickleball Courts	\$28,000	\$0	\$0	\$28,000
52	New Small Restroom at Court Area with Utilities	\$246,000	\$0	\$0	\$246,000
53	Bottle Filler/Drinking Fountain with Pad	\$15,000	\$0	\$0	\$15,000

Table 712: Capital Improvement Projects (Continued)

Park Name		0-2 Years*	3-5 Years*	6-10 Years*	Total
Small Diamond Area (Fields 6-9)					
54	New Basketball Court	\$0	\$0	\$62,000	\$62,000
55	New Restroom at Fields 6-7	\$0	\$246,000	\$0	\$246,000
56	Redevelop Field #6 - Field, Backstop	\$0	\$25,000	\$0	\$25,000
57	Small Field Dugouts	\$0	\$0	\$148,000	\$148,000
58	Concrete Walks at Backstops	\$0	\$0	\$99,000	\$99,000
Community Garden					
59	Community Garden - Fences	\$0	\$12,000	\$0	\$12,000
60	Community Garden- Water Supply/Hydrant	\$0	\$6,000	\$0	\$6,000
Community Park Project Total		\$7,342,000	\$6,044,000	\$309,000	\$13,695,000
Solon Community Center					
1	New 50 Meter 8 Lane Pool	\$0	\$0	\$4,528,000	\$4,528,000
2	New Pool House and Pump/Filter Building	\$0	\$0	\$1,848,000	\$1,848,000
3	Pump Station Relocation		\$0		\$0
Project Total		\$0	\$0	\$6,376,000	\$6,376,000
Timberlake Park					
1	Park Master Plan	\$0	\$30,000	\$0	\$30,000
2	Reconfigure and Pave Parking Lot	\$0	\$237,000	\$0	\$237,000
3	Repave Road	\$0	\$169,000	\$0	\$169,000
4	Remove Gravel for Soccer Field	\$0	\$31,000	\$0	\$31,000
5	Develop Soccer Field (65 x 100 Yards)	\$0	\$37,000	\$0	\$37,000
6	New Small Restroom with Utilities	\$0	\$308,000	\$0	\$308,000
7	Replace Playground (Nature Themed)	\$0	\$185,000	\$0	\$185,000
8	Replace Small Shelter	\$0	\$74,000	\$0	\$74,000
9	Rehabilitate Existing Large Shelter (2,100 SF)	\$0	\$99,000	\$0	\$99,000
10	Paved Walking Trail Around Lake	\$0	\$131,000	\$0	\$131,000
11	Wayfinding Signage	\$0	\$4,000	\$0	\$4,000
12	Bottle Filler/Drinking Fountain	\$0	\$15,000	\$0	\$15,000
13	Fishing Pier	\$0	\$31,000	\$0	\$31,000
14	Lighting - Site/Security	\$0	\$25,000	\$0	\$25,000
15	Trees and Landscaping	\$0	\$31,000	\$0	\$31,000
Project Total		\$0	\$1,407,000	\$0	\$1,407,000

Table 712: Capital Improvement Projects (Continued)

Park Name		0-2 Years*	3-5 Years*	6-10 Years*	Total
Neighborhood Parks					
Liberty Hill Park					
1	Improvements by others				
	Project Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Portage Park					
1	Resurface Basketball Court	\$0	\$55,000	\$0	\$55,000
2	New Basketball Goals	\$0	\$4,000	\$0	\$4,000
3	Replace Playground - Small	\$0	\$123,000	\$0	\$123,000
4	Perimeter Walking Path (950' long x 6' wide)	\$0	\$51,000	\$0	\$51,000
5	Site Sidewalks to Features	\$0	\$12,000	\$0	\$12,000
6	Signage - Entrance (Primary)	\$0	\$5,000	\$0	\$5,000
7	Picnic Shelter - Small	\$0	\$74,000	\$0	\$74,000
	Project Total	\$0	\$324,000	\$0	\$324,000
Woodall Park					
1	Replace Playground - Small	\$0	\$99,000	\$0	\$99,000
2	Entry Signage	\$0	\$3,000	\$0	\$3,000
3	Paved Trail Connection to Metro Park Trail at Hawthorn Parkway (3,100')	\$0	\$166,000	\$0	\$166,000
	Project Total	\$0	\$268,000	\$0	\$268,000
Special Use Parks					
Bicentennial Park					
1	Master Plan and Costs by Others				
Nature Parks & Open Spaces					
1	Park Identification Signs	\$31,000	\$0	\$0	\$31,000
	Project Total	\$31,000	\$0	\$0	\$31,000
Systemwide					
1	ADA Accessibility Assessment	\$25,000	\$0	\$0	\$25,000
	Systemwide Total	\$25,000	\$0	\$0	\$25,000
TOTAL PARKS		\$7,398,000	\$8,043,000	\$6,685,000	\$22,126,000

*Values include 10% contingency and 12% for design, engineering, bidding, construction administration, etc. (except non-construction



8.1 INTRODUCTION

The Action Plan table on the following pages (Table 8.1) provides a detailed list of recommendations for the 2022 *Solon Parks and Recreation Master Plan*. These strategies represent specific actions for parks and recreation facilities in Solon to implement this plan. In addition, strategies are provided to support the events, programs, staffing, marketing, maintenance, and operations of the park and recreation system.

8.2 ACTION PLAN STRATEGIES

These strategies are listed under the four goals and 12 objectives from the Strategic Plan (Chapter 6). The legend at the top of the table identifies the abbreviations used throughout the table. Checkmarks indicate the timeframe for the completion of each strategy within the time periods of 0-2 years, 3-5 years, or 6-10 years. Some strategies are

indicated as “Ongoing” as they apply to all timeframes or represent more general actions that should always be considered. A total count of strategies by timeframe is located at the end of the table in the corresponding columns.

The other columns provide information regarding the implementation of each strategy. “Category” describes the type of action within the following four options: capital (capital improvements); policy (guidelines for the Solon Parks & Recreation Department, possibly including legislation); planning (long-term parks outlook, which includes conduction of studies); or operations. The column for “Agency” indicates who is expected to implement the strategy, usually the Solon Parks and Recreation Department or another city department. “Funding Source” indicates how the strategy should be funded or the type of funds used (operating or capital funds).

Table 8.3: Action Plan

ACTION PLAN - 2022 Solon Parks and Recreation Master Plan							
Legend of Abbreviations/Organizations							
Parks = Solon Park & Recreation Department		OP = Park Operating Budget					
City - City of Solon - Other Departments		CIP = Capital Improvement Budget					
Partners = Other Organizations (Metroparks, ODNR, private agencies, HOAs, schools, state/federal grants, etc.)		Revenue = Items that Generate Additional Revenue					
Goals, Objectives, and Strategies		Timeframe (Years)			Category	Agency	Funding Source
		0-2	3-5	6-10			
Goal 1: Exceptional Parks							
Create destination parks and facilities							
Objective 1.1 – Places: Provide state-of-the-art facilities that serve both the community and the region							
Strategy 1.1.1:	Redevelop Solon Community Park starting with a detailed Master Plan to include the components identified on the Solon Community Park Concept Plan (Figure 7.1)	✓	✓		Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 1.1.2:	Prepare a Wetland Delineation study and Topographic Survey for Community Park and Community Center Park to facilitate the redevelopment of these areas	✓			Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 1.1.3:	Develop a 50-meter lap pool and support facilities adjacent to the Community Center outdoor pool. Proximity to the existing Center will assist in management efficiency. Demolish the Arthur Road Pool		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 1.1.4:	Upgrade facilities at Timberlake Park with a reduced and paved parking lot, restrooms, soccer field, upgraded large shelter, new small shelter and playground, trails around the ponds, and fishing access pier		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 1.1.5:	Upgrade the facilities at Woodall and Portage Parks to modern standards		✓		Capital	Parks/Partners	CIP
Strategy 1.1.6:	Investigate the potential to utilize the acreage north of Grantwood Golf Course for recreational activity		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 1.1.7:	Add Wi-Fi access to parks; promote park hotspots once available to ensure awareness	✓			Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 1.1.8:	Add trail lighting to the trail in Community Park to enable extended use during fall and winter months		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP
Objective 1.2 – Amenities: Pursue innovative development and strategic replacement of structures and support features at all parks							
Strategy 1.2.1:	Use this Master Plan and the list of capital improvements (Table 7.1 of Chapter 7) as a guide for park development over the next 10 years		Ongoing		Capital/Planning	Parks/City	CIP
Strategy 1.2.2:	Add support features throughout the park system such as restrooms, seating/benches, shade structures, drinking fountains, trees & landscaping		Ongoing		Capital/Planning	Parks	CIP
Strategy 1.2.3:	Replace the playgrounds and site furniture at Portage, Woodall, and Timberlake Parks		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 1.2.4:	Expand capacity of existing fields in Solon through adding support features such as artificial turf and lighting	✓	✓		Capital	Parks/Partners	CIP/Partners
Strategy 1.2.5:	Include bottle fillers at all new drinking fountains and whenever existing features are replaced		Ongoing		Capital	Parks/Partners	CIP/Partners
Objective 1.3 – Stewardship: Employ sustainable practices to ensure continued community access to nature and high-quality facilities							
Strategy 1.3.1:	Implement conservation policies and sustainable practice guidelines for future development and management of park properties		Ongoing		Operations/Policy	Parks/ City	OP/CIP
Strategy 1.3.2:	Acquire land contiguous to existing parks, if it becomes available, to allow for additional features and increase the total amount of parkland available to residents with minimal impact to system maintenance and operations		Ongoing		Capital	Parks/City	CIP
Strategy 1.3.3:	Prepare an Operations Plan which defines Maintenance Standards	✓			Operations	Parks	OP
Strategy 1.3.4:	Develop a new maintenance facility in Community Park to consolidate storage, provide more covered equipment storage, park office, break room, and work area		✓		Capital/Operations	Parks	OP

Table 8.1: Action Plan (Continued)

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies	Timeframe (Years)			Category	Agency	Funding Source
	0-2	3-5	6-10			
Strategy 1.3.5: Determine maintenance standards that include how many employees are required to maintain one acre of parkland; consider these standards when adding parkland to the system	✓	✓		Operations	Parks	OP
Strategy 1.3.6: Add interpretive/educational signage at ponds, future wildflower meadows, and other natural features within the parks		Ongoing		Capital	Parks/Partners	CIP/Partners
Strategy 1.3.7: Consider adding pollinator gardens and/or wildflower meadows in underutilized portions of parks to provide educational opportunities, beautification, and to reduce the amount of mowing needed		Ongoing		Capital/Operations	Parks/Partners	CIP/Partners
Strategy 1.3.8: Incorporate nature play elements as part of playground development and replacement, especially in more passive park areas		Ongoing		Capital/Policy	Parks	CIP
Strategy 1.3.9: Explore opportunities for restoring natural areas within parks in ways that improve access to nature and reduce maintenance requirements		Ongoing		Operations	Parks/Partners	OP
Strategy 1.3.10: Elevate parks by setting examples for Best Management Practices (BMP) like stormwater detention, recycling, reduced waste generation, etc.		Ongoing		Operations	Parks/ City	OP/CIP
Goal 2: Community Pride						
Build physical and social connections throughout the entire community						
Objective 2.1 – Gathering: Offer recurring accessible and inviting opportunities for community interaction						
Strategy 2.1.1: Develop the proposed Bicentennial Park to provide community placemaking and gathering space	✓	✓		Capital	Parks/City	CIP
Strategy 2.1.2: Develop an amphitheater (or outdoor stage), potentially at Community Park, to host all types of concerts and events that were repeatedly requested by the community	✓			Capital	Parks	OP/Revenue
Strategy 2.1.3: Develop a food truck plaza at Community Park to provide increased opportunities for community gathering	✓			Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 2.1.4: Add picnic shelters throughout the park system to increase overall access to these facilities, as well as make them more inviting, and to facilitate opportunities for outdoor community gatherings and programs		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 2.1.5: Make full use of new facilities – amphitheaters, outdoor fitness equipment, picnic shelters, etc. – by programming and offering activities anchored around these sites		Ongoing		Operations	Parks/Partners	OP/Revenue
Strategy 2.1.6: Evaluate the potential demand for outdoor games, such as corn hole, to amplify Community Park and Bicentennial Park as gathering spaces for the community	✓	✓		Capital	Parks/Partners	CIP
Objective 2.2 – Connecting: Improve physical connections to parks, schools, and popular destinations						
Strategy 2.2.1: Continue to periodically update the Solon Bike and Trail Master Plan to ensure that the trail network continues to connect and grow, especially as new residential and commercial areas are planned and developed		Ongoing		Planning	Parks/City/Partners	CIP/Partners
Strategy 2.2.2: Continue to expand the trail network through new trails and connections between existing segments, especially the Buckeye Trail and the Norfolk Southern Rail Trail		Ongoing		Capital/Planning	Parks/City/Partners	CIP/Partners
Strategy 2.2.3: Improve connectivity on a regional level by adding regional trail connections where possible		Ongoing		Capital/Planning	Parks/City/Partners	CIP/Partners
Strategy 2.2.4: Add and upgrade signage – entrance, wayfinding, interpretive, and informative – throughout the park system	✓			Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 2.2.5: Improve connectivity between parks and adjacent neighborhoods by adding connecting paths where possible		Ongoing		Capital/Planning	Parks/City/Partners	CIP
Strategy 2.2.6: Add paved trail loops within existing parks that lack but can accommodate this feature (e.g., Portage Park and Woodall Park trail to the Buckeye Trail); include paved trail loops in future parks		Ongoing		Capital	Parks/City	CIP
Strategy 2.2.7: Organize events and community-engaged activities around trails and bike paths		Ongoing		Operations	Parks/Partners	OP/Revenue
Strategy 2.2.8: Pursue, improve, and implement an ADA accessibility audit of all facilities, programs, and communications	✓			Capital/Planning	Parks	CIP

Table 8.1: Action Plan (Continued)

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies							Timeframe (Years)			Category	Agency	Funding Source
0-2	3-5	6-10										
Objective 2.3 – Engaging: Continuously gauge community needs and promote opportunities to engage with stakeholders												
Strategy 2.3.1:	Engage neighborhood residents during park improvement processes using bulletin boards, monitored social media posts, digital signage, and other methods						Ongoing	Operations	Parks/ Partners	OP/Partners		
Strategy 2.3.2:	Re-engage the Community Life Committee to provide guidance to City Council and the Recreation Department						Ongoing	Operations	Parks/ City	OP		
Strategy 2.3.3:	Track population trends and know the demographics of the citizens served.						✓		Parks/City	OP		
Strategy 2.3.4:	Utilize the guidelines in this plan as a starting point for engagement with the community to ensure that all new parks provide a variety of amenities for all users						Ongoing	Capital/ Planning	Parks/ Partners	CIP/Partners		
Strategy 2.3.5:	Continuously monitor customer satisfaction of events and programs						Ongoing	Operations	Parks	CIP		
Strategy 2.3.6:	Expand marketing of programs and facilities through existing and future collaborative relationships to increase community awareness and participation						Ongoing	Operations	Parks/ Partners	OP/Partners		
Strategy 2.3.7:	Maintain existing social media presence, but improve access on department webpage						Ongoing	Operations	Parks/City	OP		
Strategy 2.3.8:	Develop an online program calendar, including the ability to sync directly to personal calendars						✓	✓	Operations	Parks/ Partners	OP/Partners	
Strategy 2.3.9:	Explore development of a searchable mobile app to communicate site locations, services, schedules, and special events to the public						✓	✓	Operations	Parks/ Partners	OP/Partners	
Strategy 2.3.10:	Determine standard formatting for all marketing and promotional materials based on the medium (e.g., social media, newspaper, etc.)						✓		Operations	Parks	OP	
Strategy 2.3.11:	Evaluate progress toward implementation of this Master Plan annually with an update in 5 years and new Master Plan in 10 years						✓	✓	Operations	Parks	OP	
Goal 3: Diverse Experiences												
Provide a wide array of recreational opportunities that inspire well-being for all												
Objective 3.1 – Events: Collaborate to provide possibilities for interaction, fun, & learning												
Strategy 3.1.1:	Explore expanding partnerships with Cleveland Metroparks and Ohio State Parks/ODNR to meet community needs and better market nature programming opportunities						Ongoing	Operations	Parks/ Partners	OP/ Partners		
Strategy 3.1.2:	Include offerings by other agencies in the city Newsletter to improve awareness of these opportunities						Ongoing	Operations	Parks/City/ Partners	OP		
Strategy 3.1.3:	Continue to improve on the existing events offered in Solon - Monitor and evaluate issues and successes to continuously improve						Ongoing	Operations	Parks/ Partners	OP/Partners		
Strategy 3.1.4:	Consider infrastructure to support events and event implementation in the redesign of Community Park						✓		Operations	Parks	OP	
Strategy 3.1.5:	Consider a partnership to host a community Art Fair						✓	✓	Operations	Parks / Partner	OP/Partners	
Objective 3.2 – Wellness: Encourage multi-generational exploration & growth through diverse physical activities and educational opportunities based on community input												
Strategy 3.2.1:	Add outdoor fitness equipment and/or obstacle courses at select parks to expand opportunities for improved community health to appeal to more age groups						✓	✓	Capital	Parks	CIP	
Strategy 3.2.2:	Continue and expand collaboration with local health organizations to ensure programming efforts reach the widest audience and align with overall promotion of healthy living in the city						Ongoing	Operations	Parks/ Partners	OP/Partners		
Strategy 3.2.3:	Implement a campaign to promote healthy activities using parks, the Community Center, and Senior Center						Ongoing	Operations	Parks/ Partners	OP/Partners		
Objective 3.3 – Partnerships: Accommodate local organizations to optimize services and programs												
Strategy 3.3.1:	Seek partnerships with local businesses and organizations to sponsor new programs, events, and facilities						✓	✓	Operations	Parks/ Partners	CIP/Partners	

Table 8.1: Action Plan (Continued)

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies	Timeframe (Years)			Category	Agency	Funding Source
	0-2	3-5	6-10			
Strategy 3.3.2: Continue cooperation with Solon City Schools to maximize community use of school lands and facilities for recreational use		Ongoing		Operations	Parks/ Partners	OP/Partners
Strategy 3.3.3: Seek partnerships with HOAs throughout Solon to upgrade existing land to Neighborhood Parks and better serve all residents of the city (Example: Liberty Hill Park)	✓	✓	✓	Capital	Parks/ Partners	CIP/Partners
Strategy 3.3.4: Develop working agreements with all partners (all outside groups using Solon facilities) including measurable outcomes; review every two years, at minimum		Ongoing		Operations	Parks/ Partners	OP/Partners
Strategy 3.3.5: Explore the development of a disc golf course in Solon through a partnership with Metroparks and/or the local disc golf association		Ongoing		Capital	Parks/ Partners	CIP/Partners
Strategy 3.3.6: Continue to partner with the Center for the Arts for programming opportunities		Ongoing		Operations	Parks/ Partners	OP/Partners
Goal 4: Responsible Operations						
Employ strong leadership using efficient management, exceptional customer service, sustainable operations, and productive partnerships						
Objective 4.1 – Structure: Encourage an engaged workforce of valued staff with a culture of innovation						
Strategy 4.1.1: Create and implement professional and career development strategies for management and supervisory staff		Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP
Strategy 4.1.2: Identify and allocate funding for critical staff development opportunities (including conferences, training, memberships, etc.) with consideration to licensure and certification requirements		Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP
Strategy 4.1.3: Encourage continued staff training for leadership and continued growth within respective fields		Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP
Strategy 4.1.4: Fill the current 5 positions that are open	✓			Operations	Parks	OP
Strategy 4.1.5: Incentivize management level staff to attend professional development programs offered by state, regional, and national training organizations		Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP
Strategy 4.1.6: Incentivize and support staff members to pursue Certified Park & Recreation Professional (CPRP), Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI) and Aquatic Facility Operator (AFO) certifications		Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP
Objective 4.2 – Operations: Implement clear performance standards and training practices for quality and flexibility						
Strategy 4.2.1: Adopt this Master Plan at the level of City Council; ensure commitment of legislative officials and city leaders	✓			Operations	Parks/City	N/A
Strategy 4.2.2: Set priorities annually through a Management Retreat to articulate tasks and measure progress		Ongoing		Operations	Parks	N/A
Strategy 4.2.3: Develop and produce Solon-branded community events and programs using contractors support programming opportunities	✓			Operations	Parks	Revenue
Strategy 4.2.4: Ensure easy program registration – and increased participation – by maintaining an easy-to-use online portal for sign-ups and information		Ongoing		Operations	Parks	Revenue
Objective 4.3 – Funding: Explore creative operational practices and funding strategies to improve effectiveness of investment						
Strategy 4.3.1: Know the true costs to deliver services (direct and indirect costs); establish and adjust fees for programs according to these costs		Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP
Strategy 4.3.2: Establish consistent permit process for field use to ensure equitable access and to protect against damage	✓			Operations	Parks	OP
Strategy 4.3.3: Understand all agency costs, both indirect and direct, before entering into agreements; understand how much investment a partner will commit to collaboration		Ongoing		Operations	Parks/ Partners	OP/Partners
Strategy 4.3.4: Never permit private or not-for-profit groups to benefit financially from Solon facilities without the city receiving a share of gross revenue		Ongoing		Operations	Parks/ Partners	OP/Partners
Strategy 4.3.5: Create a Scholarship Fund, potentially by requesting an optional additional charge during registration	✓			Operations	Parks/ Partners	OP/Partners
Strategy 4.3.6: Continue seeking grants and apply to foundations for project funding that enhances the park system	✓			Operations	Parks/ Partners	N/A

Table 8.1: Action Plan (Continued)

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies	Timeframe (Years)			Category	Agency	Funding Source
	0-2	3-5	6-10			
Strategy 4.3.7: Ensure grant requirements are consistent with the mission of the Solon Parks & Recreation Department while also considering associated costs to the city		Ongoing		Operations	Parks/Partners	Revenue
Strategy 4.3.8: Consider creating a Solon Parks Foundation to raise funds, recruit and organize volunteers, and promote the parks	✓			Operations	Parks/City	OP/Revenue
Strategy 4.3.9: Find dedicated funding sources for parks that can be depended upon annually	✓			Operations	Parks/Partners	OP/Revenue
Strategy 4.3.10: Institute an easy-to-understand Cost Recovery and Pricing Plan for everything that is offered	✓			Operations	Parks/Partners	OP/Partners
Totals by Timeframe	31	19	5			
Ongoing = 43						

Total Number of Strategies = 82