



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY







The Town of Apex embodies its slogan, ‘The Peak of Good Living’. Apex is a rapidly growing town, committed to its small-town charm, community connections, and civic pride. Its beautiful parks provide active recreation coupled with an immersive experience in nature. Visitors flock to Apex to enjoy unique amenities like the Rodgers Family Skate Plaza, Elevate Fitness Course, special events like PeakFest, and facilities like the Halle Cultural Arts Center. It is no surprise that the Town has consistently received accolades such as Best Place to Live, and Top Ten Best Towns. The Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department plays a major role in making the town the ideal place to live, work, and play.

The Town of Apex is a desirable place to put down roots—which has led to its rapid growth. As Apex has grown, the demographic make-up has changed, creating new interests and needs for recreation and cultural offerings beyond traditional programming. The Town is enthusiastic about expanding traditional recreation with more contemporary, forward-looking opportunities that serve all Apex residents, attract visitors, and create experiences that are uniquely Apex.



Figure ES.2 - Greenway Trail

## Envision the Future of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources

The Town of Apex completed the previous Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources (PRCR) Master Plan in 2013. In 2021, the Town embarked on the journey to update the previous plan and guide the vision for the Department over the next 10-year planning horizon.

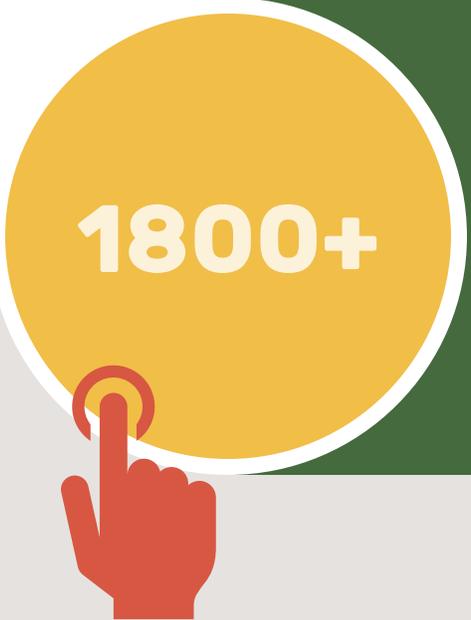
The updated master plan acknowledges the shifts in demographics, growth patterns, and recreation trends and contextualizes these trends for the Town of Apex. It proposes a visionary path to enhance current parks and recreation services, ways to invest in new initiatives, and identifies projects to transform the scene of recreation for Apex residents and visitors by 2031.

The 2023-2033 comprehensive master plan for parks, recreation, cultural resources, greenways, and open space identified eight (8) goals for the planning process.

### Goals



- › Replace the 2013 PRGOS Master Plan
- › Identify community values
- › Define the parks system's role in the future of the Town of Apex
- › Develop a resource for elected officials, other town departments, and the public to guide future actions
- › Provide a framework for the PRCR Department
- › Guide improvements to current parks system
- › Accommodate additional demand by new residents
- › Develop the action and implementation plan
- › Qualify to access certain state and national funding sources



**1800+**

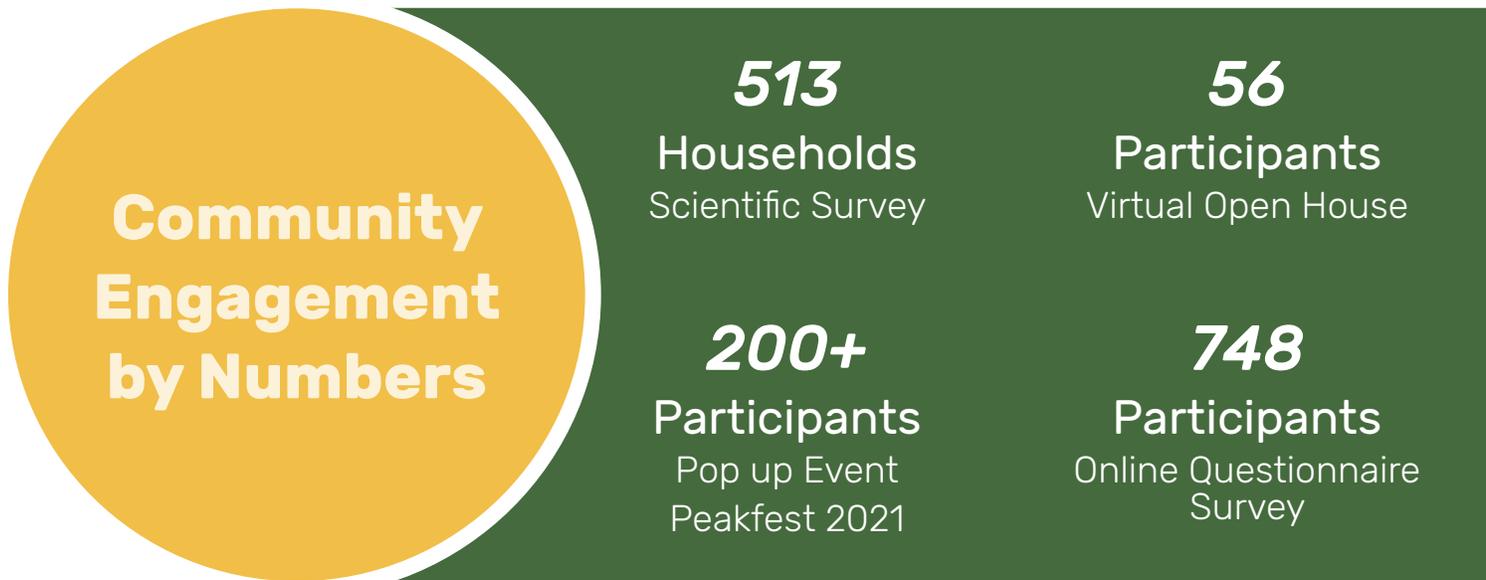
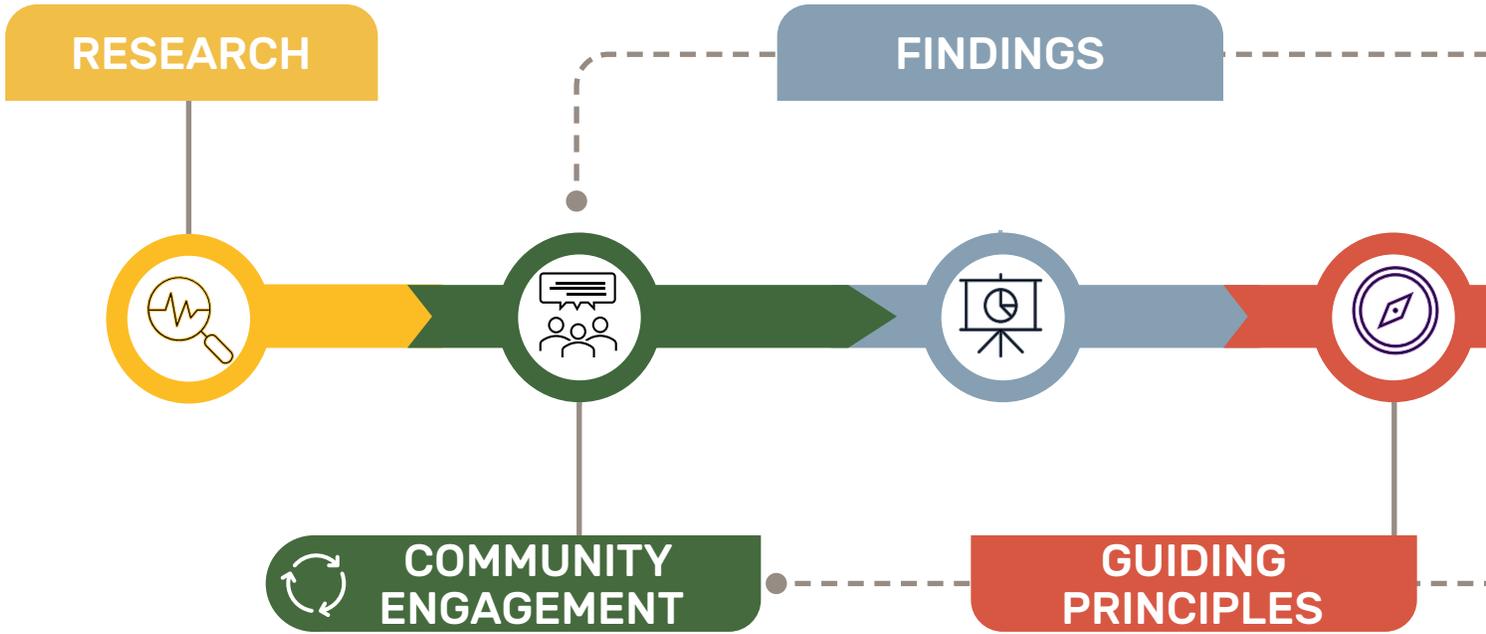
The planning process included more than 1,800 touch points with the community, advisory commission, Town staff, and Town Council combined.

- 3- Asset Mapping Sessions
- 2- Open Houses
- 2- Special Events
- 1- Online Questionnaire Survey
- 1- Scientific Survey
- 4- Focus Group Meetings
- 3- Visioning Workshops
- 3- Draft Recommendations Sessions
- 1- West Street Park Community Engagement

The Town of Apex initiated the planning process in 2021 to answer three critical questions:

- › Where are we currently as the PRCR Department?
- › Where do we want to go?
- › How do we get there?

Through this process, the Department identified gaps and uncharted opportunities, and set up aspirational goals to be achieved over the next ten-year planning horizon. The goals and recommendations are validated through a robust community engagement process and feedback from the Town Council, Advisory Commission, and PRCR Department Staff.



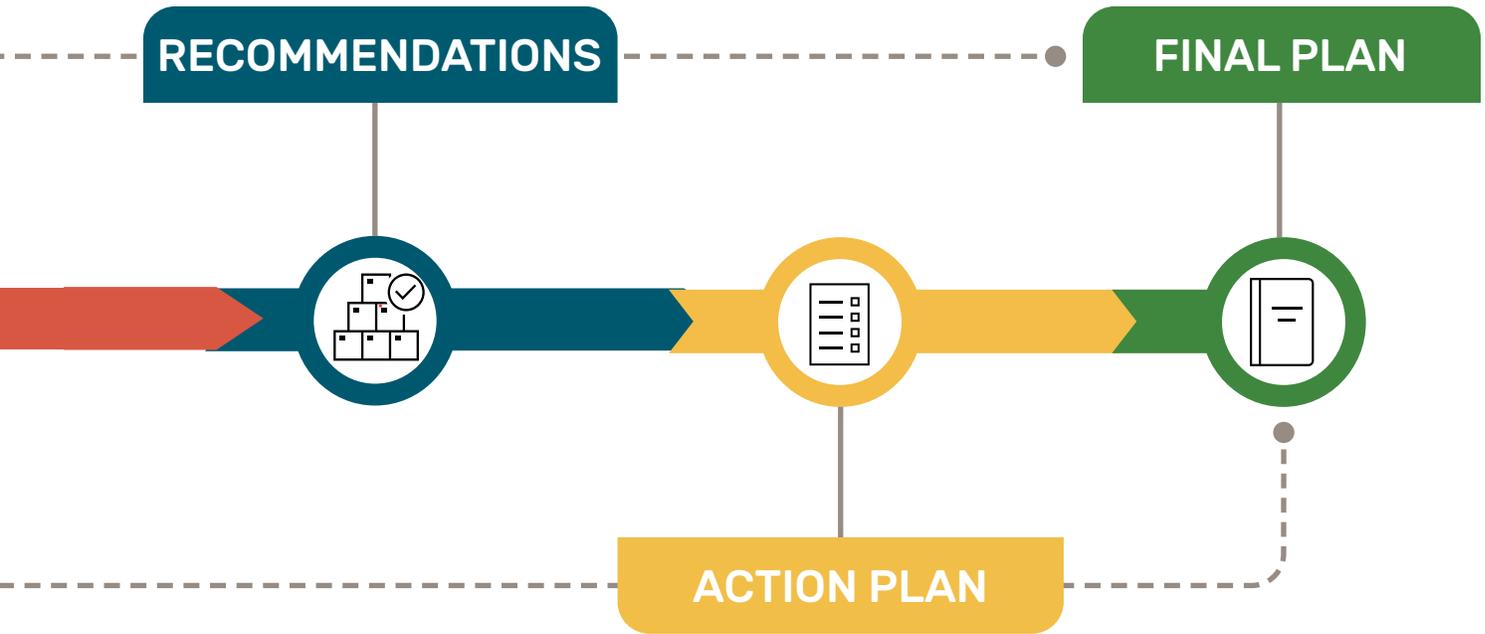


Figure ES.3 -Planning Process



Figure ES.4 Community Engagement by Numbers

## State of the System

### GREENWAYS ASSESSMENT

- › Evolving and expanding system
- › Town's and community's central focus on connectivity to destinations
- › Development-constructed greenways as new projects are built in Town
- › Challenges upkeeping older sections and managing new ones
- › Design standards are being implemented on new sections

### ACCESS TO FACILITIES



53% - Residents drive to access greenways and parks

### DESIRE FOR DESTINATIONS



68% - Other Greenways



65% - Natural areas + Open Space



64% - Parks + Playgrounds

### REASONS FOR NOT USING GREENWAYS



38% - Lack of safe connections



32% - Lack of information



32% - Lack of destinations

## What We Heard...



# State of the System

## PARKLAND ASSESSMENT

- › Equitable park distribution
- › Acquisitions in high growth areas
- › Well-maintained high-quality park amenities with diverse programming
- › Well loved, high demand, and aging facilities
- › High demand for rentals and organized activities



99% - Agree that parks add to the quality of life



91% - Agree that Apex parks are safe



91% - Are supportive of improving / upkeeping existing facilities

# What We Heard...

## PRIORITY INVESTMENT RATING FOR FACILITIES



## State of the System

### INDOOR RECREATION SPACE + PROGRAMMING ASSESSMENT

- › Town of Apex currently has 86, 294 sq. ft. of indoor recreation space concentrated in the town core and current level of service is 1.37 Sq.Ft/ capita.
- › These facilities include a community center, a senior center, and a historic cultural arts center.
- › The senior center was opened at Town campus in November 2021.
- › The community center is in great condition. As most senior programs shift to the senior center, there is an opportunity to expand programming at the community center.
- › The renovated Halle Cultural Arts Center is a unique destination in downtown Apex.



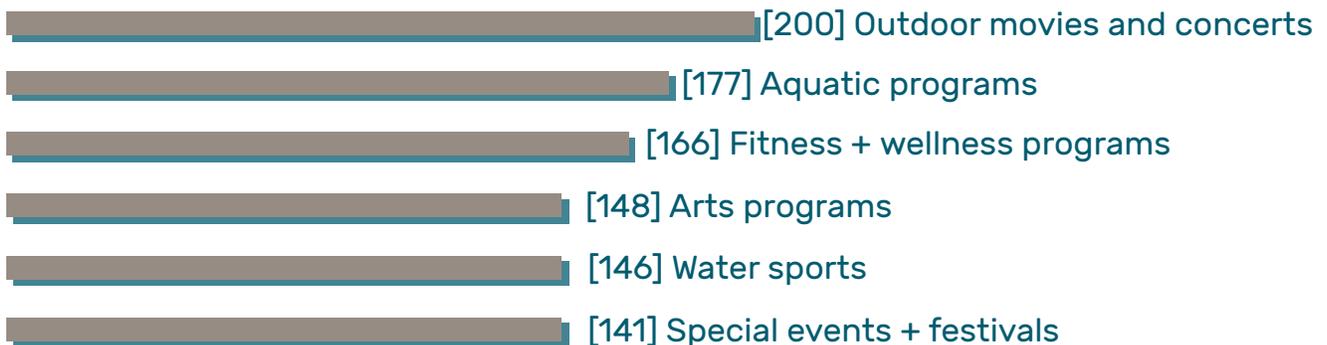
97% - Rate programs/ events high quality



55% - Prioritize developing sense of community through parks and recreation

## What We Heard...

### PRIORITY INVESTMENT RATING FOR PROGRAMMING





# Plan Framework

The Town of Apex community places high value on aspirational goals. This plan's recommendations and implementation strategies are based on the aspirations, expectations, and priorities shared by the community. The year-long planning process was established on the tiered framework of themes, guiding principles, recommendations, and action items, all rooted in the community values that Apex residents shared throughout the planning process.



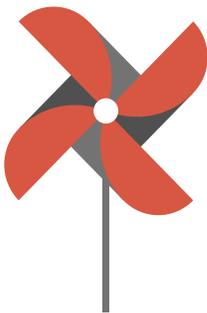
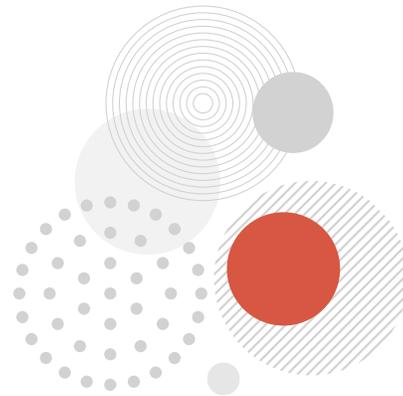


Three themes emerged from the robust community engagement:

- > Expand
- > Experience
- > Excel

# APEXpand

Apex residents would like to **Expand** the Town's offerings with additional parkland, recreational programming, and a more connected greenway system while developing environmental stewardship programs and opportunities to strengthen the culture of belonging.



# APEXperience

Residents want to **Experience** unique amenities and programs for all ages, abilities and interest that encourage a healthy lifestyle, explore cultural avenues and provide a strong sense of community.

# APEXcel

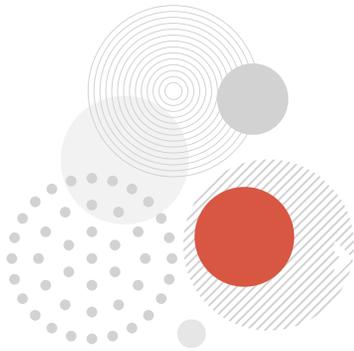
Residents want to see the PRCR Department **Excel** in operational efficiencies, outstanding customer service, and best-in-class programming and facilities.



## Guiding Principles

Each guiding principle is tied to a particular theme. These guiding principles were derived from the needs and desires of the residents shared during the community engagement process, along with the input received from the Advisory Commission, Town Council, and PRCR Department staff.

Nine guiding principles emerged through the robust community engagement process. The guiding principles provide the roadmap for the future of Apex Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources. Because the themes and guiding principles are rooted in the community values, they rarely change over the 10-year planning horizon set for the project. The project priorities may change, but the guiding principles are the foundational elements for decision-making.



## THEME - APEXpand



### CONNECTIVITY

**Prioritize interconnected public realm through greenways, bikeways, and transportation.**

Apex residents have expressed a strong desire for expanding the greenway system and connectivity to destinations including parks, natural areas, and open space.

- › Implement the proposed greenway network plan to improve access to parks, nearby greenways, and other local and regional destinations.
- › Prioritize completion of greenway corridors that meet the highest levels of criteria established in the prioritization matrix.
- › Encourage and support greenway use through placemaking strategies.
- › Evaluate performance of the greenway network annually.



## RECREATION OFFERINGS

**Expand recreation offerings to attract new participants, retain current ones, and meet the needs of diverse demographics of Apex.**

Apex residents have expressed a strong desire for a variety of program offerings that inspire people to try something new and provide opportunities for varying interests.

- › Acquire 193 additional acres to continue to provide 10 ac/ 1000 pop. Level of Service standard.
- › Build 39,084 sq. ft. of additional indoor facility space by 2031.
- › Develop the existing vacant parkland to continue to provide recreation offerings for the growing population.
- › Continue to invest in existing parks and facilities to meet community priorities.
- › Continue to offer diverse recreation programs for growing and changing demographics of Apex.
- › Effectively manage and operate the core program areas.



## ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

**Expand efforts to protect the natural assets and collaborate on town-wide sustainability efforts.**

Apex residents value access to natural areas and understand the positive health outcomes it provides. A desire for environmentally sustainable operations and a need for environmental education programming was mentioned.

- › Acquire 65 acres of conservation lands by 2031.
- › Promote environmental stewardship through park and facilities design and focus on environmentally sustainable operating practices.
- › Continue to support town-wide initiatives for energy conservation through parks and recreation.
- › Focus on nature-based programming to generate environmental awareness.



## CULTURE OF BELONGING

Nurture the culture of belonging by prioritizing inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility.

Apex residents consider diverse parks and recreation offerings for all ages and ability levels as an asset to the community. Expanding cultural events to celebrate the diversity of demographics was indicated as a future need.

- › Achieve equitable access to parks, facilities, and programs for all Apex residents.
- › Support special events and programs that represent diverse cultures in Apex.
- › Continue to provide age targeted recreation programs that appeal to diverse interest groups.
- › Prioritize PLAY opportunities for all ages and abilities.
- › Prioritize placemaking strategies to create welcoming spaces that attract a wide range of participants.



## THEME - APEXperience



## HEALTH + WELLBEING

Support health and wellbeing of Apex residents through parks and recreation.

Apex residents ranked fitness and wellness programs as one of the top priorities for investment and there is a town-wide consensus that parks and recreation has a positive effect on the community's health and quality of life.

- › Encourage development of amenities and programs that provide physical, social, and mental health benefits.
- › Promote access to healthy lifestyle choices.



## SENSE OF COMMUNITY

**Provide a chance for people to socialize, form friendships, and discover common grounds.**

Apex residents indicated creating connections and developing a sense of community should be one of the most important considerations when prioritizing parks and recreation investments. Parks provide a chance for social cohesion where people get to know each other and feel inspired.

- ▶ Provide opportunities for residents to connect with each other and encourage social interaction.



## UNIQUE TO APEX

**Reflect on Apex's culture and history through the design of spaces that are unique, innovative, and imageable.**

Apex residents want to see innovative programs and amenities that attract out of town visitors to Apex as a way to generate economic impact.

- ▶ Continue to offer cultural arts programming to appeal to diverse interest groups and cultural backgrounds.
- ▶ Promote "unique to Apex" theme while designing new parks and amenities.





## THEME - **APEXcel**



### OPERATIONS EFFICIENCY

Achieve organizational excellence by implementing business practices that enhance efficiency, staff satisfaction, and economic vitality.

Apex residents recognize that as the town continues to grow, there is a need for additional staff, resources, and a desire to be competitive with other recreation providers in the area.

- ▶ Streamline recreation program management through best practices, tracking, and fees policy updates.
- ▶ Achieve operations efficiency through sound maintenance and management practices.
- ▶ Invest in staffing resources and staff satisfaction to achieve departmental operations efficiency.
- ▶ Seek strategic partnerships with third party providers to expand Department's capacity to provide competitive services.
- ▶ Implement capital improvements and operations through responsible funding sources.



### CUSTOMER SERVICE

Provide outstanding customer service through streamlined communication and marketing efforts.

Apex residents consider PRCR staff an asset to the community for excellent customer service. PRCR staff indicated the desire for streamlined marketing efforts, enhanced online presence, and staff empowerment to excel in customer service.

- ▶ Provide high quality customer service through enhanced communication and outreach.
- ▶ Establish a volunteer program to engage residents in parks and recreation services and develop a sense of ownership within the community.



## Implementation

This plan sets forth implementation guidelines for use as a decision-making tool for staff and elected officials. This approach informs and validates decisions through data and community values, leading to defensible and high performing projects implemented through consensus among stakeholders.

- › **Guiding Principles Compatibility**
- › **Community Needs**
- › **Parks System Advancement**
  - › Degree of Urgency
  - › Economic Impact
  - › Compatibility with Town policies and planning efforts including Advance Apex

## PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA

The Master Plan for Apex’s Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources, Greenways, and Open Space aims to expand the opportunities for parks and recreation amenities and programming for the Apex community. Through a reality-based planning approach, the plan balances the current needs and desires of the residents with visionary and aspirational goals.

As the Town continues to grow, it must proactively plan to ensure the needs of the community will be met. Strategic planning that involves appropriate staffing allocation, funding resources, and effective business decisions will be required to implement the recommendations and action items suggested in this plan. Secondly, it will require systematic and regular assessment of current recreation provision, asset management, and management practices to ensure Department’s sound operations. Thirdly, the Department will need to continue to collaborate with other Town departments, adjacent jurisdictions, Wake County, local businesses, special interests groups, and third-party recreation providers. Above all, the Department will require focus on its aspirational goals which will be achieved through visionary decisions, innovative actions, and measured risk-taking to support its motto ‘The Peak of Good Living.’

**APEX  
2033**

## SNEAK PEEK AT TOWN OF APEX'S FUTURE PARKS SYSTEM TRANSFORMATIVE PROJECTS

	GUIDING PRINCIPLE	TRANSFORMATIVE PROJECTS
EXPAND	<b>CONNECTIVITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Start Design Development on the three recommended prioritized corridors.</li> <li>▶ Complete Beaver Creek Corridor.</li> <li>▶ Continue partnership with Wake County and Town of Holly Springs to complete Middle Creek Greenway Corridor.</li> </ul>
	<b>RECREATION OFFERINGS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Complete master plans for two new parks in western Apex and start construction.</li> <li>▶ Complete plans for 2- recreation centers and the nature center and start construction on at least one.</li> <li>▶ Acquire parkland per Veridea Park Master Plan for a new park and a recreation center in SE Apex.</li> </ul>
	<b>CULTURE OF BELONGING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Update fees and charges policy for programs and include need-based component.</li> <li>▶ Update Kelly Road Park playground as inclusive play area.</li> </ul>
	<b>ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Establish Department goals for sustainability within the framework of Town-wide initiatives.</li> </ul>
EXPERIENCE	<b>HEALTH + WELL-BEING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Develop options for in-person and online health and fitness programs.</li> <li>▶ Promote park amenities that encourage active lifestyles.</li> </ul>
	<b>SENSE OF COMMUNITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Complete renovations of Depot Plaza as downtown social hub destination.</li> </ul>
	<b>UNIQUE TO APEX</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Complete renovations of historic Tunstall House.</li> <li>▶ Develop town-wide Public Art Plan.</li> </ul>
EXCEL	<b>OPERATIONS EFFICIENCY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Develop formal volunteer program for PRCR Department.</li> </ul>
	<b>CUSTOMER SERVICE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Develop Marketing Plan.</li> </ul>

