



Effingham County Parks & Recreation Master Plan 2022



Effingham
County
Georgia

POND

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Purpose of the Plan Update

Purpose of the Plan Update:

In January of 2015, Effingham County adopted a 15-year Comprehensive Recreation and Parks Plan to “ensure that the County’s facilities continue to meet the residents needs over the next 15 years.”. In the intervening, nearly 8 years since that plan was adopted, the county has achieved a number of the recommendations, the most significant being the development of a “New Centralized Park”, that being the first phase of the Clarence E Morgan Recreational Complex and Gym. Additional improvements at the 119 Recreation Complex and Sand Hill were also achieved.

In the time since adoption of the 2015 plan, the County has seen rapid population growth, on par with what was forecasted in the plan. This growth has been concentrated in the southern portions of the county, adding pressure for more facilities to be implemented. The world also experienced the Covid19 pandemic that sent waves of change through organized recreation programs and how people view and use parks. The recreation programs participation levels have rebounded to near or better than pre-pandemic numbers, and demand remains high for quality parks, recreation facilities, and programs, to maintain Effingham County as an attractive place to live and work. Parks remain important to the overall health and wellbeing of the residents of Effingham County, and they are an important factor in the attractiveness of the County to potential new residents.

This purpose of this 2022 plan update is to provide new recommendations to continue the momentum of parks and recreation offerings in the County. The planning team looked at each existing park for ongoing maintenance and capital improvement needs, engaged the citizens of Effingham County to understand the needs and wants of the residents as it relates to parks, recreation facilities, and programs, and benchmarked the county against NRPA (National Recreation and Park Association) data for jurisdictions of similar size. Combined, this data informs the recommendations presented in this master plan update.

Parks are important to people. NRPA released their 2022 Engagement with Parks Report which provides useful insight on the perception of parks within the American public. Key findings of the report include:

- 275 million people in the United States visited a local park or recreation facility at least once during the past year, that’s better than 80% of the US population.
- Nearly three in four U.S. residents have at least one local park, playground, open space, or recreation center within walking distance of their homes; nearly 20% of the US population live in rural areas.
- 84 percent U.S. adults seek high-quality parks and recreation when choosing a place to live
- Nine in 10 people agree that parks and recreation is an important service provided by their local government.
- Nearly three in four people agree that equity should in an *extremely or very important* goal for their local park and recreation agency.

The report goes into depth and the data can be drilled down to a number of demographic qualifiers. There is a lot of consistency in the data across the different regions of the United States and across the various demographics. Readers of this Effingham County Parks and Recreation Master Plan update should also consider reading the NRPA 2022 Engagement with Parks Report for additional detail. The report can be found online:

<https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/research-papers/engagement/>

The intent of this plan is to be transparent and concise, so that the process leading to the recommendations is clear and the recommendations are logical and easily identified for implementation in the next 10 years.



Other Relevant Plans Summary

Other Relevant Plans Summary:

Planning is a constant process where other county or regional plans are developed and may have some relationship to one another. For this project the County's 2020-2040 Joint Comprehensive Plan, the County's 2021 Transportation Master Plan, the 2022–2026 Georgia Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, and the previous 2015 Parks and Recreation Master Plan were reviewed. The following summarizes items related to parks and recreation in each of the County non-parks and recreation plans and the SCORP. Generally, the plans are in concurrence with one another and supportive of similar concepts and goals.

2020-2040 Effingham County Joint Comprehensive Plan:

- Identified need to invest in infrastructure that improves quality of life for residents (sidewalks, street lighting, parks, etc.).
- Land use goals included: Support and expand the network of pedestrian and bicycle path connections to residential areas, public parks, natural features, surrounding communities and recreation facilities.
- General Recommendations included:
 - Expand and improve greenspace and parkland by providing requirements for areas to be set aside for active and passive recreation when new (private) development occurs.
 - Re-use the Atlas Sand property as a water resource and recreation area.
 - The Cities of Guyton, Springfield, and Rincon each have general recommendations and goals for expanding greenspace and parkland, and accommodating the community's recreational needs, including a recommendation for collaboration between Guyton and Springfield for a joint parks project.
 - Improve planning and communication efforts with adjacent communities and pursue opportunities for joint decision-making with regard to recreational services, public facilities, and other cultural amenities.
 - Work with Effingham County and the City of Springfield on developing a greenway and interconnecting bike and pedestrian paths. (This cross-references with recommendations in the 2021 Effingham County Transportation Master Plan.)

The SWOT analysis for the 2020-2040 Joint Comp Plan identified the following as relates to parks and recreation:

Effingham County:

- Strength: Active recreation facilities and programs
- Weakness: Direct access to nature and passive recreation
- Opportunities: Market recreational facilities (park complex)
- Atlas water reservoir

Guyton:

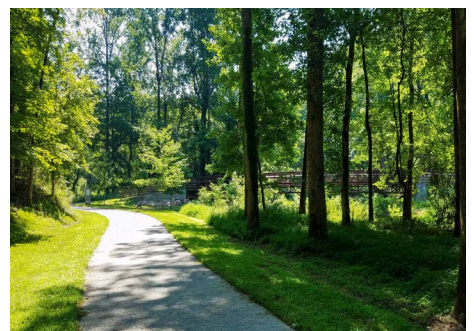
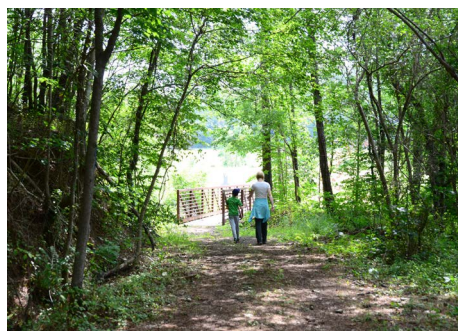
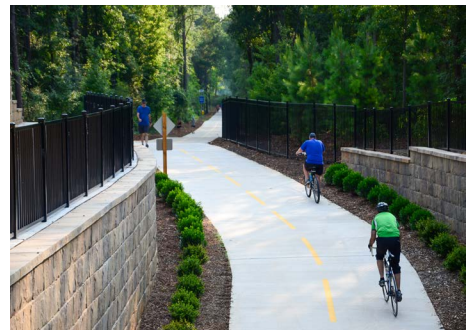
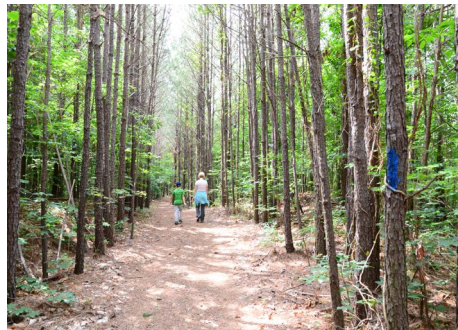
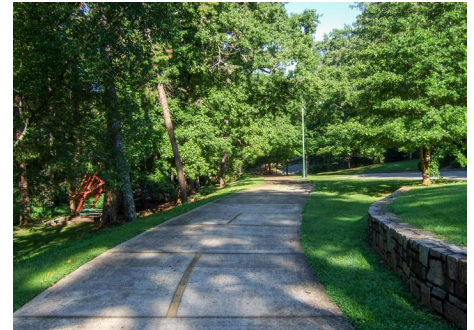
- Strength: Walking Trails; proximity to natural resources
- Weakness: Lack of recreation/sports
- Opportunities: Trail from Guyton to Springfield; Greenway and US Bike Route 1



Springfield:

- Strength: Greenspace/Streetscape; Recreation Complex
- Weakness: Connectivity / pedestrian connections
- Opportunities: Ebenezer Trail Development

Rincon: no parks and recreation specific SWOTs were noted



Active Recreation Facilities and Programs

Access to Nature and Passive Recreation

Multi-use Trails



The following is the proposed work program from the 2020-2040 Joint Comp Plan, for Recreation in Effingham County 2020-2024:

Brief Description	Timeframe	Responsible Party	Estimated Cost	Funding Source	Status
Construct new gym at CEM Recreation Complex on HWY 21, phase I	2020-2024	County	\$4.2 million	SPLOST	COMPLETE
Construct CEM Recreation Complex on HWY 21, phase II & III	2020-2024	County	\$10 million	SPLOST	IN PROGRESS
Remodel gym at Central Learning	2020	County	\$65,000	SPLOST	COMPLETE
Construct Sand Hill playground	2020	County	\$37,000	SPLOST	???
Construct Sand Hill batting cages	2020	County	\$25,000	SPLOST	COMPLETE
Purchase soccer goals for Sand Hill	2020	County	\$7,000	SPLOST	COMPLETE
Purchase pitching machines (6) for Sand Hill	2020	County	\$10,000	SPLOST	COMPLETE
Construct McCall Rd batting cages	2020	County	\$25,000	SPLOST	PARK COMPLETELY RENOVATED
Evaluate Atlas Mine site for reservoir; Planning	2020	County	\$500,000	SPLOST	COMPLETE
Atlas Mine site reclamation; additional land purchase as needed	2020-2024	County	TBD	SPLOST	COMPLETE
Review/revise ordinances as necessary to ensure recreation areas accommodate community needs, e.g. dog park	2020-2024	County	TBD	General Fund	???

