



02 | Influencing Factor

Social and Economic Factors

The City's roots date back to the mid-1800's. It was always the plan for Albemarle to become a city, thanks to a donation from the Hearne family, and it has always been a picturesque community. With the surroundings of rich farmland, forests, and waterways, recreation is deeply connected to the City's history.

With such rich natural land, it did not take long for Albemarle to become a significant economic center. Railroads helped expand the commercial landscape, which fueled the blossoming textile industry. The City is laid out in a grid and has a square-shaped downtown. Full of attractive architecture, the downtown is perfect for a historical, scenic walk.

The Depot is over 100 years old. While it used to be a train depot, it is now a popular venue for weddings, birthdays, reunions, and corporate events.

Recreation Context

Albemarle is perfect for people who love the outdoors and want to invest in a small town. With the population growth occurring in North Carolina, this master plan is an important way to help maintain the City's existing heritage and culture. This region of North Carolina is becoming an outdoor recreation destination and attracting many people for relocation.

Natural Features and Landscape

The City's backdrop is the idyllic Uwharrie Mountain Range, which is a defining feature of the Central Piedmont region. Home to Native American archaeological sites and gold mines, the range offers rolling hills and forested trails to visitors. The Pee Dee River feeds Lake Tillery and Badin Lake, which provide water-related recreation opportunities. There are also several creeks that feed into the City, including: Town Creek, Coley Branch (near Don Montgomery / Optimist Park), Long Creek (feeds City Lake), and Poplin Creek (near Rock Creek Park). Morrow Mountain State park is also nearby.

Outdoor Recreation is a Big Business

According to the latest data from the US Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account: "Outdoor recreation generated \$1.2 trillion in economic output (2.3% of GDP), comprises 3.1% of US employees, and accounted for 5 million jobs in 2023."

Park System

Albemarle’s park system serves more than just the City residents — since Stanly County does not have a parks and recreation department and Albemarle is the County seat, its park system serves as the defacto recreation department for many of the surrounding rural areas.

Critical!

Stanly County does not have a parks and recreation department, so the County relies on Albemarle’s facilities. The County does not regularly provide support to the municipal recreation offerings, which puts strain on the City’s programs, as they are wholly shouldered by municipal residents and non-resident program fees.



Albemarle community enjoying live music in a park

Albemarle's Vision and Goals

OUR VISION

"Albemarle will be a place where all people can develop their potential, bringing neighbors together to support a connected community rich in water, air, land, and opportunity."

OUR MISSION

The mission of the City of Albemarle is to provide our citizens with a vibrant quality of life based on sound management, transparency, and good stewardship of resources.

OUR VALUES

ETHICS:

We honor the public's trust by displaying the highest standards of honesty, integrity, & accountability.

LEADERSHIP:

We are servant leaders who prioritize the well-being of those in our community.

VISION:

Our planning and decisions reflect the thriving community we aspire to be.

OUR GOALS

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Invest in our workforce to enhance city operations and efficiency to better serve the community.

SAFETY & SECURITY

Enhance resources and improve practices to protect our residents and safeguard the city in order to improve quality of life.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Invest in infrastructure needed to ensure reliable and consistent service delivery.

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

Guide growth and facilitate economic opportunities in order to benefit all residents and businesses.

INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Enhance community amenities, programs, and services to engage residents of different backgrounds, lifestyles, and generations.



Demographics

A review of The City of Albemarle’s demographic information has been evaluated to understand the community’s characteristics better. It also serves as a tool to identify future trends and projections that may influence recreation and park planning. The gender makeup of the City is slightly higher at 52% females.

The minimum categories for data on race and ethnicity for federal statistics, program administrative reporting, and civil rights compliance reporting are defined below

American Indian

This includes a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.

Asian

This includes a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent (for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam).

Black / African American

This includes a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.

Hispanic / Latino

This ethnic distinction is a subset of a race as defined by the federal government; this includes a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.

Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander

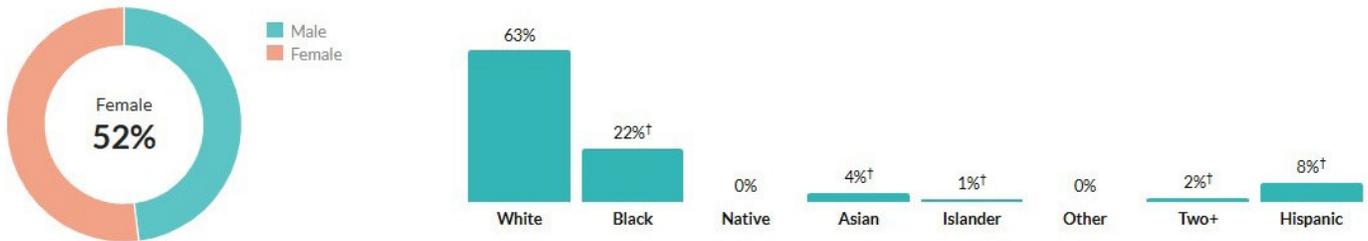
This includes a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

White

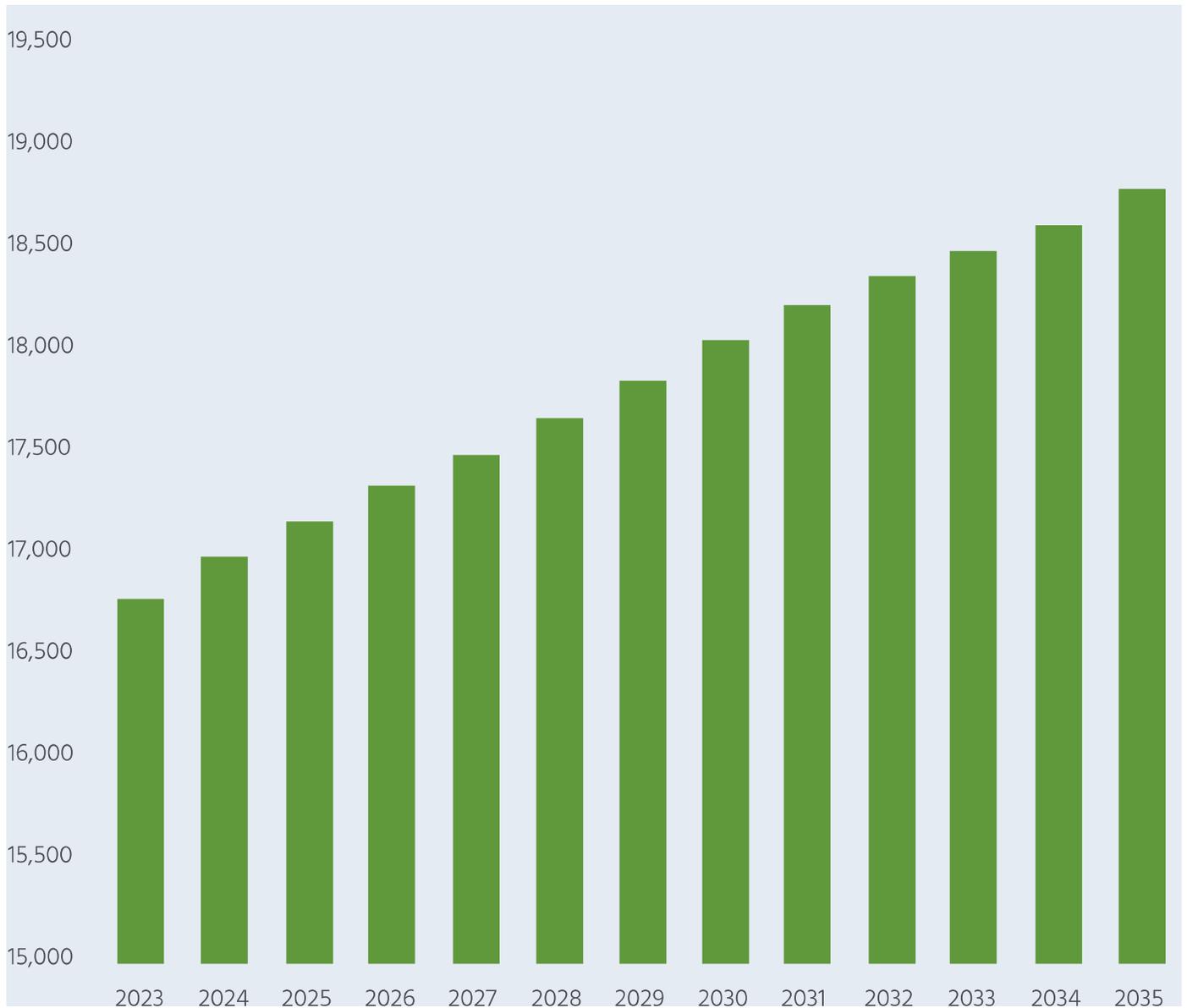
This includes a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

Race and Sex

Information below was obtained from Census Reporter, who uses sources; it is data from the US Census.



Albemarle Population Estimate



Information was obtained from Census Reporter, who uses sources; it is data from the US Census.

Municipal Planning Context

During this comprehensive planning process, the City was also working on its long-term plan, which is expected to be completed later in 2025. Below, we list Albemarle's strategic plan goals for the 2023-2026 period. Parks and recreation play a key role in each goal.

1

Organizational Capacity: Invest in our workforce to enhance city operations and efficiency to better serve the community.

2

Safety and Security: Enhance resources and improve practices to protect our residents and safeguard the city in order to improve quality of life.

3

Infrastructure: Invest in the infrastructure needed to ensure reliable and consistent service delivery..

4

Community and Economic Growth Opportunities: Guide growth and facilitate economic opportunities in order to benefit all residents and businesses.

5

Inclusive Community Engagement: Enhance community amenities, programs, and services to engage residents of different backgrounds, lifestyles, and generations.

The Two Views of Recreation Offerings

Local governments generally fall somewhere along this spectrum

This spectrum generally gauges how leadership views parks and recreation



Expense

- Similar to police and fire department
- Money goes in and services come out
- Nothing more, no significant impact on bottom line

Parks and Recreation



Investment



- You get the service, but you also get the economic dividends of your investment
- Money goes in and services come out
- Additional ROI comes from this investment

Research Shows that Parks and Recreation are an Investment



Property Values Increase

Economic research has demonstrated consistently that homes and properties located near parklands have higher values than those located farther away. Higher home values not only benefit the owners of these properties but also add to the tax base of local governments.¹

8-20% Average property value increase²

Economic Development

Parks and recreation improves the quality of life in communities and benefits the local economic development of a region. Eighty-seven percent of corporate executives responding to a 2023 Area Development survey rated quality of life features as an important factor for a headquarters, factory, or other company facility.¹

87% Average % of executives who seek quality of life when locating facilities

Visitor Spending

Many local park and recreation agency amenities spur tourism to their respective locales, generating significant economic activity, including but not limited to increased sales for local restaurants, bars, and hotels.¹

Economic impact of patron spending = # of visits X Average spending per visit X Multiplier

Special events such as cultural, educational/history or even sporting events have an impact. It is not a matter of IF an event will have an impact, but how much of an impact it will have.³

The multiplier is determined on a case-by-case basis using proprietary software. Impacts vary and the rate changes. A typical tool for calculating a multiplier is IMPLAN. For more information, check out the website: www.IMPLAN.com.

Sources:

1. "The Economic Impacts of Parks: An Examination of the Fiscal Effects of Operations and Capital Spending by Local Park and Recreation Agencies on the US Economy.
2. Crompton, J.L. 2001. Parks and Economic Development. PAS Report No. 502. American Planning Association, Chicago, Illinois.
3. Center for Economic Studies: Michigan State University: 2007 Quantifying the Economic Impacts of Community Events

Trail Development

Even though Albemarle is only approximately seven miles from Morrow Mountain State Park and is within the Carolina Thread Trail development area, the City does not have a trails and greenways master plan. If developed, trails and greenways could become a vital part of the City's identity given its proximity to attractive destination areas. If the City uses trails to connect its established parks, rather than only having trails inside the parks, they would be more accessible to park users and pedestrians.

Increased Property Value

The real estate market consistently demonstrates that residents throughout the country are willing to invest larger amounts of money in properties that are located close to parks and open space areas. The higher values of these homes produce higher property taxes in the affected area. In some instances, additional property taxes are sufficient to recoup the annual debt charges on bonds initially used to finance park acquisition and development.

Property values typically increase when parks or outdoor programs, such as outdoor festivals, movies, and restaurants, are in the immediate locale. Studies indicate that properties can charge more for rent if there are parks and trails nearby.

Attracting New Businesses

Research shows that quality of life is a significant factor for businesses when deciding where they want to relocate. Adding parks and recreation activities in urban, small-town, and rural areas may be the deciding factor for businesses that are contemplating settling in the City of Albemarle. Albemarle's Don Montgomery Park is a perfect example of this because visitors can enjoy a nice meal downtown before walking to a Wampus game.

People want to live in a place where they can go for a stroll, walk the dog, and enjoy the outdoors. In studies of town revitalizations, the top recommendations include the dramatic expansion of parks and open spaces. The City's charming parks, walks through downtown side streets, and easy access to nature create a place where all people can find something to do. Continued improvements to the City's parks is an investment in visitor attraction and economic development.

Tourism

A park often becomes a community's signature attraction and is used as a marketing tool to attract residents, tourists, conventions, and businesses. Parks usually shape the area's identity and give residents a sense of pride.

Organized events held in public parks, such as art festivals, athletic events, food festivals, concerts, and plays, often bring substantial positive economic impacts to their communities by filling hotel rooms, restaurants, and local businesses.



Don Montgomery Park in Albemarle

Growing Visitor Impacts

While this is not a tourism destination management plan, it is important to note that having a strong parks and recreation system makes a city, town, or county more attractive to visitors.

Visit NC recognizes that recreation plays a foundational role in visitor spending. Recreation attracts visitors and benefits other industries like lodging, food, beverage, retail, and transportation. This comprehensive master plan compares Stanly County to those that are similar in size. Stanly County's Convention and Visitor Bureau recognizes the importance that Albemarle plays in the County's tourism numbers. Some key facts include:

- All hotels in Stanly County are located in Albemarle
- It is estimated that Albemarle receives over 80% of the occupancy tax that the County collects
- Stanly County started remitting AirBnB taxes from properties in Albemarle

Source: www.visitnc.com

Communities to Learn From

Albemarle is approaching a critical decision point regarding its potential expansion into a recreation destination. Investing in recreation will play a critical role in visitor spending levels for decades to come.

- Rutherford and Haywood County have comparable population levels but have higher visitor tax revenue since they are established outdoor recreation tourism destinations
- Like Stanly County, Montgomery County does not have a parks and recreation department. The Uwharries are a key attraction point and should be leveraged to appeal to residents, visitors, and businesses