

A large graphic element consisting of a dark blue horizontal bar. On the left side of the bar, there is a white circle containing the number '6' in a dark blue font. To the right of the circle, the text 'Survey Instrument' is written in a white, bold, sans-serif font.

6 Survey Instrument



Dear Albemarle Resident,

We want to hear from you. The City of Albemarle is conducting a survey to help determine parks and recreation priorities for the community. These items contribute significantly to our quality of life in Albemarle, and your opinions are very important to us.

This survey is part of the Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Planning process. We understand there are additional engagement and survey activities in the City at the moment. **This survey is important because you have been randomly selected to participate.**

Your response to this survey will remain confidential and will be reported in group form only. Please return your completed survey within the next two weeks using the enclosed postage-paid return-reply envelope addressed to ETC Institute, 725 W. Frontier Circle, Olathe, KS 66061. If you prefer to take the survey online, please visit [AlbemarleParksSurvey.org](https://www.albemarle.org/ParksSurvey).

We appreciate your time and realize this survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Each question is important. The time you invest in completing this survey will aid the City in taking a resident-driven approach to recreation planning to enhance our community and improve the quality of life for all residents.

If you have any questions, please contact ETC Institute's project manager Ryan Murray at ryan.murray@etcinstitute.com or at 913-254-4598.

Don't miss this opportunity to have your voice heard and help us meet the ever changing recreation needs of all community members.

Thank you!

2024 City of Albemarle Parks, Recreation Greenways and Open Space Survey

Your input will be used to assess community parks and recreation needs and priorities for the City of Albemarle. If you prefer, you may complete the survey on-line at AlbemarleParksSurvey.org.

1. Please CHECK ALL of the parks or facilities offered by the City of Albemarle you or members of your household have used during the past 12 months.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> (01) Albemarle Soccer Complex | <input type="checkbox"/> (07) Downtown Walking Routes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (02) City Lake Park | <input type="checkbox"/> (08) Jesse F. Niven Community Center |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (03) Hearne Park | <input type="checkbox"/> (09) EE Waddell Community Center |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (04) Don Montgomery/Optimist Park | <input type="checkbox"/> (10) Albemarle Neighborhood Theatre |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (05) Chuck Morehead Park | <input type="checkbox"/> (11) None [Skip to Q2.] |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (06) Rock Creek Park | |

1a. Which TWO of the parks listed in Question 1 do you and your household visit most often?
[Write in your answers below using the item numbers from the list in Question 1.]

1st: ____ 2nd: ____

1b. How would you rate the overall quality of all the parks or facilities offered by the City of Albemarle you or members of your household have used during the past 12 months?

- (4) Excellent (3) Good (2) Fair (1) Poor

1c. In the past 12 months, approximately how often have you or members of your household visited any City of Albemarle parks or facilities?

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Daily | <input type="checkbox"/> (3) Once a week | <input type="checkbox"/> (5) Once a month |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (2) 2-3 times a week | <input type="checkbox"/> (4) A few times a month | <input type="checkbox"/> (6) Every couple of months |

1d. What improvements or additions would you like to see made to the parks you and the members of your household visit most often?

2. How do you most often access Albemarle greenways/parks?

- (1) Drive (2) Bike (3) Walk (4) Other: _____

3. In the past 12 months, have you or any member of your household participated in any programs or special events offered by the City of Albemarle?

- (1) Yes [Answer Q3a.] (2) No [Skip to Q4.]

3a. How would you rate the overall quality of programs or special events that you and members of your household have participated in?

- (4) Excellent (3) Good (2) Fair (1) Poor

4. A variety of recreation facilities and amenities are listed below. Please indicate how well your needs for each facility or amenity are met on a scale of 4 to 1, where 4 means your needs are "Fully Met" and 1 means your needs are "Not Met" at all. If you do not have a need for one of the items listed, please circle "9" for "No Need."

Facilities and Amenities	Fully Met	Mostly Met	Partly Met	Not Met	No Need
01. Accessible/inclusive play spaces	4	3	2	1	9
02. Aquatics facility (indoor/outdoor)	4	3	2	1	9
03. Community garden	4	3	2	1	9
04. Multifunctional space	4	3	2	1	9
05. Environmental education center	4	3	2	1	9
06. Environmental conservation, restoration and enhancement	4	3	2	1	9
07. Fine arts studio	4	3	2	1	9
08. Greenway and trails with trailheads	4	3	2	1	9
09. Indoor multi-use gym	4	3	2	1	9
10. Indoor playground	4	3	2	1	9
11. Large amphitheater	4	3	2	1	9
12. Large auditorium (400+ seating)	4	3	2	1	9
13. Maker space studio	4	3	2	1	9
14. Miniature golf	4	3	2	1	9
15. Mountain biking trails	4	3	2	1	9
16. Nature play area	4	3	2	1	9
17. Open space/unprogrammed play fields	4	3	2	1	9
18. Outdoor athletic fields	4	3	2	1	9
19. Outdoor basketball court	4	3	2	1	9
20. Outdoor pickleball court	4	3	2	1	9
21. Outdoor programmable fitness equipment	4	3	2	1	9
22. Outdoor tennis	4	3	2	1	9
23. Outdoor water feature or splash pad	4	3	2	1	9
24. Picnic shelters	4	3	2	1	9
25. Pump track	4	3	2	1	9
26. Ropes course/climbing wall	4	3	2	1	9
27. Water sports access (canoe, kayaking, paddleboard)	4	3	2	1	9
28. Other (please specify): _____	4	3	2	1	9

5. Which FOUR of the facilities or amenities from the list in Question 4 are MOST IMPORTANT to your household? [Write in your answers below using the item numbers from the list in Question 4, or circle "NONE."]

1st: ____ 2nd: ____ 3rd: ____ 4th: ____ NONE

6. A variety of recreation programs and activities are listed below. Please indicate how well your needs for each program or activity are met on a scale of 4 to 1, where 4 means your needs are "Fully Met" and 1 means your needs are "Not Met" at all. If you do not have a need for one of the items listed, please circle "9" for "No Need."

Programs and Activities	Fully Met	Mostly Met	Partly Met	Not Met	No Need
01. Action sports (BMX, mountain biking, skateboarding)	4	3	2	1	9
02. Adult athletics	4	3	2	1	9
03. Afterschool programs	4	3	2	1	9
04. Aquatics programs (swim lessons, fitness)	4	3	2	1	9
05. Art programs (dance, painting, pottery, and performing arts)	4	3	2	1	9
06. Baseball and softball	4	3	2	1	9
07. Basketball	4	3	2	1	9
08. Cricket	4	3	2	1	9
09. Disc golf	4	3	2	1	9
10. Dodgeball and kickball	4	3	2	1	9
11. Elevate Fitness Course	4	3	2	1	9
12. Environmental education	4	3	2	1	9
13. E-Sports and Cyber Sports	4	3	2	1	9
14. Fitness and wellness programs	4	3	2	1	9
15. Full day youth camps (year-round)	4	3	2	1	9
16. Lacrosse	4	3	2	1	9
17. Life skills programs (cooking, budgeting)	4	3	2	1	9
18. Music lessons and classes	4	3	2	1	9
19. Outdoor movies and concerts	4	3	2	1	9
20. Pickleball	4	3	2	1	9
21. Preschool programs	4	3	2	1	9
22. Senior programs and trips	4	3	2	1	9
23. Soccer	4	3	2	1	9
24. Special events and festivals	4	3	2	1	9
25. Specialized recreation programs	4	3	2	1	9
26. Spikeball	4	3	2	1	9
27. Teen programs	4	3	2	1	9
28. Tennis	4	3	2	1	9
29. Ultimate Frisbee	4	3	2	1	9
30. Volleyball	4	3	2	1	9
31. Water sports (paddleboard yoga, kayaking, sailing)	4	3	2	1	9
32. Other (please specify): _____	4	3	2	1	9

7. Which FOUR of the programs or activities listed in Question 6 do you think are MOST IMPORTANT to your household? [Write in your answers below using the item numbers from the list in Question 6, or circle "NONE."]

1st: _____ 2nd: _____ 3rd: _____ 4th: _____ NONE

8. From the following list, please CHECK ALL of the ways you learn about City of Albemarle parks, facilities, and special events.

- ____ (01) Banners in public places
- ____ (02) Bulletin boards
- ____ (03) Conversation with staff
- ____ (04) Direct email
- ____ (05) City of Albemarle website
- ____ (06) Program guide
- ____ (07) Seniors program guide
- ____ (08) Social media (Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram)
- ____ (09) Search engine (Google, Yahoo, Bing)
- ____ (10) Word of mouth
- ____ (11) Other: _____
- ____ (12) None of these

9. Which TWO of the sources of information listed in Question 8 on the previous page do you most prefer to use to learn about City of Albemarle parks, facilities, and special events? [Write in your answers below using the item numbers from the list in Question 8.]

1st: _____ 2nd: _____

10. Please CHECK ALL of the following reasons that may prevent you or other members of your household from using the parks and facilities offered by the City of Albemarle Recreation and Parks Department (or, if you currently use them, what prevents you from using them more often).

- ____(01) Cost of participation
- ____(02) Facilities are too far from home
- ____(03) Inconvenient hours of operation
- ____(04) Lack of transportation
- ____(05) Lack of cleanliness
- ____(06) Lack of access for people with disabilities
- ____(07) Lack of information/don't know what is offered
- ____(08) Lack of maintenance
- ____(09) Lack of parking
- ____(10) Information is only available in English
- ____(11) Not enough time/too busy
- ____(12) Not interested in what is provided
- ____(13) Overcrowding
- ____(14) Safety at facilities
- ____(15) Other: _____
- ____(16) Nothing; I am actively using the City's parks and facilities

11. Please CHECK ALL of the following organizations that provide the PARKS and FACILITIES that you and other members of your household use for recreation.

- ____(01) Adjacent municipality parks and facilities
- ____(02) Churches or other religious organizations
- ____(03) Neighborhood HOA
- ____(04) Non-profit organizations
- ____(05) Private fitness centers (Gold's Gym, Planet Fitness, Lifters Gym, CrossFit Albemarle)
- ____(06) Schools
- ____(07) State Parks (Morrow Mountain, Lake Norman, etc.)
- ____(08) Uwharrie National Forest
- ____(09) YMCA
- ____(10) Other: _____
- ____(11) None of these [Skip to Q12.]

11a. Of the organizations listed in Question 11, which ONE do you USE MOST for your household's recreation needs? [Write in your answer below using the numbers from the list in Question 11.]

Organization used most: _____

12. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements regarding the City of Albemarle Parks and Recreation system, where 5 is "Strongly Agree" and 1 is "Strongly Disagree."

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
01.	Recreation and parks are an essential service provided by the City	5	4	3	2	1	9
02.	Public parks add to the quality of life in the community	5	4	3	2	1	9
03.	I am aware of the parks, facilities, and events that are offered	5	4	3	2	1	9
04.	I am satisfied with recreation opportunities I receive for my tax dollars	5	4	3	2	1	9
05.	I am satisfied with the variety of parks, facilities, and events the City offers	5	4	3	2	1	9
06.	I am satisfied with the recreation opportunities for youth and teens in Albemarle	5	4	3	2	1	9
07.	I am satisfied with the recreation opportunities for seniors in Albemarle	5	4	3	2	1	9
08.	I am satisfied with the recreation opportunities for adults ages 18-55 in Albemarle	5	4	3	2	1	9
09.	I am satisfied with the specialized recreation opportunities (Adventure Recreation, Senior Games, etc.) in Albemarle	5	4	3	2	1	9
10.	I feel safe when visiting parks in Albemarle	5	4	3	2	1	9
11.	The City of Albemarle helps promote healthy and active lifestyles	5	4	3	2	1	9

13. Please indicate how supportive you would be of the City of Albemarle taking the following actions to improve the parks and recreation system in the City.

How supportive are you of:		Very Supportive	Supportive	Not Supportive
01.	Acquiring undeveloped land for future parkland locations	4	3	2
02.	Investing in improvement and upkeep of existing facilities	4	3	2
03.	Adding new pickleball facilities	4	3	2
04.	Constructing an outdoor amphitheater/theatre to accommodate larger audiences and bigger acts	4	3	2
05.	Constructing a Downtown multifunctional space (Recreation Plaza)	4	3	2
06.	Constructing a mountain bike/pump track facility	4	3	2
07.	Constructing an environmental education center	4	3	2
08.	Constructing an indoor/outdoor aquatics facility	4	3	2
09.	Developing an indoor multi-purpose recreation center with gymnasium	4	3	2
10.	Developing greenway trails to connect the City's existing greenway trail segments	4	3	2
11.	Hosting events to foster a sense of connected community	4	3	2
12.	Implementing sustainability measures to minimize the environmental impact of parks and recreation facilities	4	3	2
13.	Increasing parkland through public/private partnerships	4	3	2
14.	Designating park spaces with social district allowances (alcoholic beverage permissions)	4	3	2
15.	Outdoor recreation lodging (cabins/RV's sites/treehouses/yrurts)	4	3	2

14. Which THREE of the items in Question 13 would you be most willing to support with dollars? [Write in your answers below using the item numbers from the list in Question 13. Circle "NONE."]

1st: ____ 2nd: ____ 3rd: ____ NONE

15. Listed below are the potential funding mechanisms that could be used to pay for the actions indicated you most support in Question 14. Please rate your level of support for each of the following funding mechanisms.

Potential action		Very Supportive	Supportive	Not Supportive
1.	Bond issue approved by voters within existing tax structure	4	3	2
2.	Bond issue approved by voters with tax increase	4	3	2
3.	Enterprise operations (concession stands, gift shops, etc.)	4	3	2
4.	Existing budgetary process	4	3	2
5.	Friends Groups or Parks Conservancy	4	3	2
6.	Program user fees for recreational programs	4	3	2
7.	State and Federal Grants (typically require a local match)	4	3	2
8.	Other: _____	4	3	2

16. The planning process balances many priorities. Which THREE items listed below should be the MOST IMPORTANT considerations for the department when prioritizing recreation investments? [Write in your answers below using the item numbers from the list in Question 15. Circle "NONE."]

27. Would you be willing to participate in future surveys sponsored by the City of Albemarle?

____(1) Yes [Answer Q27a.] ____ (2) No

27a. Please provide your contact information.

Mobile Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

This concludes the survey. Thank you for your time!
Please return your completed survey in the enclosed postage-paid envelope addressed to
ETC Institute, 725 W. Frontier Circle, Olathe, KS 66061

Appendix B

Albemarle Business and Non-Profits Focus Group

December 11, 2024

Virtually 9-10 am

Summary

The discussion began with a focus on the importance of continuing partnerships, especially with Parks and Recreation, to improve library services that had been stagnant for about 15 years. The library has collaborated on programs like Stanley Staycations and community resource events, which have attracted families new to the area or unaware of local offerings. However, there is a noted gap in activities for kids on rainy days, as the library can only accommodate so many children at a time without disrupting other patrons.

The library has maximized its staff and calendar, so partnering with other organizations to host events has been beneficial. Effective marketing and communication are crucial to ensure the community is aware of available resources and programs. There is a long-term goal of establishing an interactive STEM children's museum, as the nearest ones are in Charlotte and Huntersville.

The conversation also touched on the library's partnerships with health organizations to offer programs on topics like Alzheimer's and dementia, though attendance has been low. Despite this, the library continues to think creatively to meet community needs. There is potential for further collaboration with Parks and Recreation to provide family-oriented services.

The discussion also highlighted successful partnerships for Senior Games, which provided volunteer opportunities. There is interest in organizing a pickleball tournament as a fundraiser. The excellent parks system in Albemarle was noted, along with the need for better marketing and wayfinding to help residents and visitors utilize these resources. The importance of clear signage and digital tools like QR codes to enhance accessibility and awareness of park amenities was emphasized.

The group discussed their marketing strategies for events, emphasizing the importance of cross-marketing, particularly on social media. They share each other's events, such as arts and crafts programs for kids, to reach a broader audience. One participant mentioned installing a TV in the library to display rotating announcements and community events, which has been effective in informing visitors.

The conversation highlighted the need for better wayfinding tools, like apps or QR codes, to help families and visitors locate parks and playgrounds. They shared experiences of discovering hidden gems while searching for playgrounds during trips. The idea of a county-wide app that lists parks and their amenities was suggested, like successful examples in other counties.

Participants discussed the need for updated and refreshed parks, noting that some parks, like New London Park, are well-maintained, while others, like Rock Creek Park, have issues with cleanliness and safety. The importance of having Wi-Fi in parks was also mentioned, as it would enable the library to offer pop-up classes and other activities in different areas.

The group acknowledged the lack of a county-wide Parks and Recreation Department and the need for more coordinated efforts. They discussed the potential for more activities and events to attract people to the parks, which could help improve their reputation and usage. The conversation concluded with a call for input on what parks or facilities are needed over the next ten years to better serve the community.

The group discussed the need for park cleanups and a strong marketing effort to encourage more people to visit and feel safe bringing their children. Safety concerns were highlighted, with examples of parks that required significant cleanup and police presence to become safe and welcoming again.

City Lake Park was praised for its successful events like Food Truck Fridays, and it was suggested that similar attention be given to other parks like Rock Creek and Chuck Morehead. The importance of partnerships, particularly with hospitals for health and wellness grants, was emphasized. The library and Parks and Recreation have collaborated on projects like the Story Walk at City Lake Park.

Accessibility was identified as a critical issue, with suggestions for playgrounds that accommodate children with special needs. The group noted the presence of a significant special needs community that would benefit from more accessible facilities. The discussion concluded with a focus on the importance of grants for maintaining and updating older park systems, ensuring they meet current accessibility standards.

The group discussed the potential for sharing pickleball and tennis courts, noting that kids' beginner tennis could be played on pickleball courts. They also mentioned the need for paved areas for biking, similar to the track at Norwood Park, though it's currently restricted to walking.

The conversation highlighted the upcoming Senior Center in Locust, which will be attached to the library and offer community space for all ages. This development could serve as a model for multipurpose programming and intergenerational activities.

Participants emphasized the importance of providing accessible parks within neighborhoods, particularly for families without access to cars. Parks like EE Waddell and Rock Creek were identified as crucial for serving these communities. The discussion also touched on the presence of families in crisis and the homeless population in Albemarle, noting that many use parks and the library as safe spaces during the day.

Safety concerns at Rock Creek Park were discussed, with suggestions for increased police presence and cleanup efforts to make it more welcoming. The group praised City

Lake Park for its successful events and suggested applying similar attention to other parks.

The potential for developing the Wiscasset Mill property into a park was mentioned, though it seems plans have stalled. The group agreed on the need to prioritize maintaining and refreshing existing parks before embarking on new projects.

Finally, the importance of accessibility in parks was highlighted, with suggestions for inclusive playground equipment and facilities to accommodate special needs. The group recognized the need for grants to support these improvements and ensure parks are safe and welcoming for all community members.

Key take aways:

1. The discussion emphasized the importance of continuing partnerships, particularly with Parks and Recreation, to enhance library services and community programs.
2. The library has collaborated on initiatives like Stanley Staycations and community resource events, attracting new families and addressing gaps in activities for kids on rainy days.
3. Effective marketing and communication are crucial, with a long-term goal of establishing an interactive STEM children's museum.
4. The library's partnerships with health organizations to offer programs on Alzheimer's and dementia have had low attendance, but efforts continue to meet community needs creatively.
5. There is potential for further collaboration with Parks and Recreation for family-oriented services.
6. Successful partnerships for Senior Games were highlighted, with interest in organizing a pickleball tournament as a fundraiser.
7. The need for better marketing and wayfinding, including clear signage and digital tools like QR codes, was emphasized to enhance park accessibility and awareness.
8. The group discussed the need for updated and refreshed parks, noting that some parks are well-maintained while others need improvements.
9. The importance of having Wi-Fi in parks was mentioned to support pop-up classes and other activities.
10. The lack of a county-wide Parks and Recreation Department was acknowledged, with a call for more coordinated efforts and input on future park needs.
11. Safety concerns at parks like Rock Creek were highlighted, with suggestions for increased police presence and cleanup efforts.

12. City Lake Park was praised for its successful events, and similar attention was suggested for other parks.
13. The potential for developing the Wiscasset Mill property into a park was mentioned, though plans have stalled.
14. The importance of accessibility in parks was stressed, with suggestions for inclusive playground equipment and facilities to accommodate special needs.
15. Grants were recognized as essential for maintaining and updating older park systems to ensure they are safe and welcoming for all community members.

Appendix C

Albemarle Focus Group Conservation and Environment Summary

December 10, 2024

Virtual meeting 10:30-11:30 am

Summary of the discussion

The focus group discussed the balance between developing recreational facilities and preserving wildlife habitats. Participants acknowledged the difficulty in weighing the value of sports fields against the benefits of quality wildlife habitats. They emphasized the importance of green spaces for mental health and relaxation, particularly in growing areas like Albemarle. Prioritizing conservation along water lines, such as streams and lake edges, was highlighted as essential for reducing pollution and supporting diverse wildlife.

The conversation also explored responsible interaction with conservation areas. Participants noted that clear-cutting, while not aesthetically pleasing, can create excellent wildlife habitats. However, preserving riparian buffers along aquatic spaces is crucial. Managing wildlife populations, such as deer, was discussed as a responsibility for large land areas, though hunting was deemed inappropriate for city parks. Instead, city parks should focus on education and passive recreation, such as bird watching and native plant identification.

The group considered partnerships and educational programs to foster appreciation for wildlife and conservation. They discussed the potential for collaboration with organizations like the Wild Turkey Federation and 4-H to provide educational opportunities for youth. Parks with preserved areas and ponds were seen as ideal locations for teaching about wildlife and environmental stewardship.

Participants suggested that the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission could assist in setting up educational trails and kiosks. They also mentioned the possibility of involving a biologist specializing in green growth to provide further expertise. The discussion emphasized the need for a balanced approach to conservation and recreation, with education playing a key role in fostering community appreciation for natural areas.

The focus group discussed the importance of balancing recreational development with wildlife conservation. Participants emphasized that while recreational facilities like ball fields are valuable, preserving quality wildlife habitats is crucial for mental health and environmental sustainability. They highlighted the need to prioritize conservation along water lines to reduce pollution and support diverse wildlife.

Managing wildlife populations, such as deer, was discussed, with hunting deemed inappropriate for city parks. Instead, city parks should focus on education and passive recreation, such as bird watching and native plant identification.

The group also considered regional examples of successful conservation and recreation integration, such as those in Mecklenburg County. They emphasized the importance of showcasing diverse habitats, including grasslands and upland hardwoods, to promote wildlife diversity. The discussion concluded with a recommendation to seek expert guidance for managing and developing park properties in a way that balances recreation and conservation.

The focus group emphasized the importance of maintaining diversity in the use of park properties to ensure broad public support and engagement. They discussed the need for a variety of recreational opportunities, from active sports facilities to passive natural areas, to cater to different demographics and interests. The conversation highlighted the challenge of balancing traditional uses of land, such as golf courses, with the need to preserve natural habitats and promote outdoor activities that benefit public health and well-being.

Participants agreed that a diverse range of amenities and elements across different parks would be most effective. This approach would ensure that each park offers something unique, whether it be for children, teens, adults, families, or seniors. They also discussed the importance of using multiple channels to disseminate information about recreational opportunities, including social media, websites, and collaboration with schools and community organizations.

The group acknowledged the need for expert guidance in managing and developing park properties. They suggested that recommendations for best management practices should include seeking input from wildlife biologists and other experts to ensure that parks are developed and maintained in a way that balances recreation and conservation. The discussion concluded with a commitment to continue exploring ideas and gathering input to create a comprehensive plan that meets the community's diverse needs.

Key take aways:

1. The focus group discussed the balance between developing recreational facilities and preserving wildlife habitats, acknowledging the difficulty in weighing the value of sports fields against the benefits of quality wildlife habitats.
2. Participants emphasized the importance of green spaces for mental health and relaxation, particularly in growing areas like Albemarle, and highlighted the need to prioritize conservation along water lines to reduce pollution and support diverse wildlife.
3. The conversation explored responsible interaction with conservation areas, noting that clear-cutting can create excellent wildlife habitats but should be balanced with preserving riparian buffers. Managing wildlife populations, such as deer, was discussed, with hunting deemed inappropriate for city parks. Instead,

city parks should focus on education and passive recreation, such as bird watching and native plant identification.

4. The group considered partnerships and educational programs to foster appreciation for wildlife and conservation, discussing potential collaborations with organizations like the Wild Turkey Federation and 4-H to provide educational opportunities for youth. Parks with preserved areas and ponds were seen as ideal locations for teaching about wildlife and environmental stewardship.
5. Participants suggested that the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission could assist in setting up educational trails and kiosks, and mentioned involving a biologist specializing in green growth to provide further expertise. The discussion emphasized the need for a balanced approach to conservation and recreation, with education playing a key role in fostering community appreciation for natural areas.
6. The focus group emphasized the importance of maintaining diversity in the use of park properties to ensure broad public support and engagement. They discussed the need for a variety of recreational opportunities, from active sports facilities to passive natural areas, to cater to different demographics and interests.
7. The conversation highlighted the challenge of balancing traditional uses of land, such as golf courses, with the need to preserve natural habitats and promote outdoor activities that benefit public health and well-being.
8. Participants agreed that a diverse range of amenities and elements across different parks would be most effective, ensuring that each park offers something unique for children, teens, adults, families, or seniors.
9. They also discussed the importance of using multiple channels to disseminate information about recreational opportunities, including social media, websites, and collaboration with schools and community organizations.
10. The group acknowledged the need for expert guidance in managing and developing park properties, suggesting that recommendations for best management practices should include seeking input from wildlife biologists and other experts to ensure that parks are developed and maintained in a way that balances recreation and conservation. The discussion concluded with a commitment to continue exploring ideas and gathering input to create a comprehensive plan that meets the community's diverse needs.

Appendix D

Albemarle Seniors Focus Group

December 11, 2024

Virtually 1-2 pm

Summary

The focus group began by discussing the popularity of pickleball in Albemarle. They noted that there are 10 dedicated outdoor courts, which are frequently used. It was mentioned that free beginner clinics are offered on Monday evenings. While there are designated times for clinics, most of the time the courts are open for play. The group estimated that there are around 459 pickleball players in the area, with some coming from neighboring counties to play. The courts were converted from three old tennis courts, which were rarely used, and now see constant activity.

The conversation then shifted to other activities for seniors in Albemarle. There was a wish for bicycling to become as popular as pickleball but noted that it has been challenging to get people involved. The local Senior Center, run by Stanley County, offers a variety of classes, activities, trips, and services for seniors, including health and wellness classes, yoga, tax assistance, card games, ping pong, and bingo. The Senior Center is located on North 3rd Street in Albemarle.

The group also discussed the Senior Games, which have been a staple in the spring. However, they are currently in between coordinators, which has made it challenging to increase participation. The Senior Games are sponsored by Parks and Recreation along with senior services from Stanley County and Montgomery County. The Senior Games program has been running for about 25 years. Despite efforts to hold activities and competitions in both counties, participation has been higher in Stanley County, likely due to its larger population. The group acknowledged the need to find ways to increase involvement in the Senior Games.

However, they are currently in between coordinators, which has made it challenging to increase participation. The planning committee is actively working on this issue. The group brainstormed about senior activities and potential partnerships between parks and recreation and schools. It was mentioned that schools share gymnasiums and fields with youth sports, but facilities are reaching their limits due to year-round sports activities.

The conversation highlighted the need for more facilities that the county could utilize, specifically multipurpose buildings that could serve both older and younger residents. It was suggested to repurpose older buildings, such as the old Collins and Aikman building or the Roman Knit building in Norwood, for sports activities. An example from Boone was cited, where a shipping warehouse was converted into a facility for pickleball tournaments and leagues.

The group also discussed the current facilities in Albemarle, noting that there are 1.5 indoor resource buildings: the EE Waddell Center and the Niven Center. These facilities are used for basketball, pickleball, and volleyball. There was a consensus on the need for a larger multipurpose community center with more rooms and amenities.

The discussion then shifted to funding and support for parks and recreation. The group considered the idea of establishing a "Friends of Albemarle Parks and Rec" nonprofit organization to raise awareness and funds. They discussed successful examples from other counties and the potential benefits of having a dedicated group to advocate for parks and recreation needs. The group also mentioned the importance of leveraging grants and finding ways to make parks and recreation a priority for local government and the community.

The focus group discussed the Wiscasset Mill property, which the city purchased with the initial plan to sell for economic development. However, a study identified that the best use for the property would be as a park. The group considered the potential for developing a multiple-field athletic complex on the site, which would require public-private partnerships to bring to fruition. The property is adjacent to downtown and offers a flat layout, making it suitable for various recreational developments. The group noted that the property sits in a floodplain, but it does not frequently flood, making it a viable option for outdoor facilities. It was explained that the property is around 9-10 acres and includes a small building that could be renovated for park headquarters, multipurpose areas, storage, concessions, and restrooms. However, the estimated renovation cost is \$1 million, which poses a challenge.

The conversation then shifted to senior programming beyond athletics. It was mentioned that Parks and Recreation used to offer more travel programs for seniors, but the local Senior Center has since taken the lead on these activities. It was noted that they are starting to reintroduce travel programs, such as a trip to see murals in Uptown Charlotte. The group discussed the need for more programming outside of athletics, such as arts and crafts, and intergenerational programs that bring together seniors and younger people for activities like gardening and cooking.

The group also highlighted the importance of Wi-Fi in parks to support various programs, including pop-up camps for seniors to learn computer literacy skills. They discussed the potential for intergenerational programs where seniors and younger people could learn from each other, such as household maintenance skills. It was suggested that crafts and DIY projects could be popular, as many people enjoy creating things themselves. The group agreed that these types of programs could provide valuable learning opportunities and foster community connections.

The focus group discussed the potential for intergenerational programs and the importance of volunteer involvement. They highlighted the value of programs where seniors and younger people can learn from each other, such as basic home maintenance skills, gardening, and small engine repair. It was suggested that volunteers

with specific skills, like retired electricians or plumbers, could teach these programs. The group acknowledged the challenge of recruiting volunteers but emphasized the importance of finding passionate individuals.

They also discussed the need for better communication and outreach to attract volunteers, noting that social media platforms like Facebook could be useful. A personal experience with Facebook and the difficulties faced after being hacked was shared, highlighting the importance of reliable communication channels.

The group also discussed the importance of not competing with existing private offerings for senior activities, such as those provided by the YMCA and senior services. They emphasized the need to complement these services and explore additional programming opportunities, such as arts and crafts, theater, and visual arts. The discussion concluded with a focus on leveraging grants and exploring partnerships to support the development and enhancement of recreational facilities and programs.

The focus group discussed the prevalence of family life centers in Baptist churches. They highlighted the shared use of these centers, particularly for youth activities like volleyball and upward basketball. The conversation then shifted to the lack of a public bowling center in Albemarle, with the nearest options being in Concord and Salisbury. They mentioned the town of Valdez as an exception, where the recreation department runs a bowling alley in an old industrial building. The group also discussed the rarity of drive-in theaters, noting that Albemarle still has one, which operates seasonally and performs well in the summer. They briefly touched on the idea of competing with the drive-in by hosting movies in the park, but past attempts during COVID were not successful. The library occasionally hosts indoor movies. The meeting concluded with a reminder to share any additional thoughts via email.

Key take aways:

1. The focus group discussed the popularity of pickleball in Albemarle, noting the presence of 10 dedicated outdoor courts that are frequently used. Free beginner clinics are offered on Monday evenings. The group estimated that there are around 459 pickleball players, including some from neighboring counties. The courts, converted from old tennis courts, now see constant activity.
2. The conversation then shifted to senior activities. There was a desire for bicycling to gain popularity, while the local Senior Center offers various classes and services. The Senior Games, a long-standing program, faces challenges due to a coordinator gap, and the group discussed ways to increase participation.
3. The need for more multipurpose facilities was highlighted, with suggestions to repurpose old buildings for sports activities. Current facilities include the EE Waddell Center and the Nevin Center, which are used for basketball, pickleball, and volleyball. There was a consensus on the need for a larger community center.

4. The group considered the idea of establishing a "Friends of Albemarle Parks and Recreation" nonprofit organization to raise awareness and funds. They emphasized the importance of leveraging grants and making parks and recreation a priority.
5. The Wiscasset Mill property was discussed as a potential site for a multiple-field athletic complex, which would require public-private partnerships. The property, adjacent to downtown, is suitable for various recreational developments despite being in a floodplain.
6. Senior programming beyond athletics was also considered, with a focus on reintroducing travel programs, arts and crafts, and intergenerational activities. The importance of Wi-Fi in parks to support various programs was highlighted.
7. The group discussed the value of intergenerational programs and the importance of volunteer involvement. They acknowledged the challenge of recruiting volunteers and emphasized the need for better communication and outreach.
8. The importance of not competing with existing private offerings for senior activities was emphasized. The group explored additional programming opportunities, such as arts and crafts, theater, and visual arts.
9. The prevalence of family life centers in Baptist churches was noted, with other denominations like Methodists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians typically not having such facilities. These centers are often used for youth activities like volleyball and upward basketball.
10. The lack of a public bowling center in Albemarle was discussed, with the nearest options being in Concord and Salisbury. The town of Valdez was mentioned as an exception, where the recreation department runs a bowling alley in an old industrial building.
11. The rarity of drive-in theaters was highlighted, noting that Albemarle still has one that operates seasonally and performs well in the summer. Past attempts to host movies in the park were not successful, but the library occasionally hosts indoor movies.

Appendix E

Albemarle Focus Group Economic Development

December 10, 2024

Virtually 9-10 am

Summary

The focus group discussed integrating recreation and economic development in Albemarle. One participant highlighted the challenge of providing services for the county residents, as well as other municipalities, and there is potential for expanding partnerships. Another emphasized successful collaboration with Parks and Recreation in supporting downtown events. Another noted the importance of recreation in attracting visitors and boosting the local economy. A newcomer to the area offered a fresh perspective on potential improvements. The group agreed on the need for innovative ideas, such as a tournament complex or enhanced waterfront areas, to enhance community engagement and economic growth.

The focus group discussed the importance of recreation and economic development in Albemarle. Participants highlighted the need for accessible information about local assets to attract and retain companies. They emphasized the value of partnerships between Parks and Recreation and other organizations in supporting community events. The group also noted the potential for innovative ideas, such as a tournament complex or an outdoor recreation festival, to enhance community engagement and economic growth. Additionally, they discussed the challenge of staffing for events and the potential of involving senior centers as a source of volunteers. The Wiscasset Mill property was identified as a high-priority area for development, with a need for clear direction and public-private partnerships to move forward.

The focus group discussed the importance of community input to identify local trends and interests in recreation. They emphasized the potential for adventure and alternative recreation, such as camping, and the need for spaces to accommodate these activities. The group highlighted the value of comprehensive planning to inform decisions on property development for both recreation and economic development.

Participants suggested downtown as a prime location for events, catering to different demographics, and proposed seasonal events to attract various audiences. They discussed the Wiscasset Mill property and the Albemarle Business Center as potential sites for green spaces and recreational facilities, noting the importance of leveraging grants for development.

The group also stressed the significance of connectivity through trails and greenways, citing successful examples from other regions. They recognized the need for improved signage and possibly an app to enhance user experience in parks. Overall, the

discussion focused on maximizing local assets to boost community engagement and economic growth.

The focus group discussed the allocation of tourism dollars and the need for clearer budgeting and tracking. They emphasized the importance of community input to identify local trends and interests in recreation. Participants highlighted the potential for adventure and alternative recreation, such as camping, and the need for spaces to accommodate these activities. They also suggested downtown as a prime location for events and proposed seasonal events to attract various audiences.

Additionally, they discussed the potential for temporary ice rinks and other seasonal attractions to draw visitors. The importance of public participation in surveys to inform planning and secure grants was highlighted. Overall, the discussion focused on maximizing local assets to boost community engagement and economic growth.

Key take aways:

1. Challenges and Partnerships: Providing services for municipalities and expanding partnerships.
2. Successful Collaborations: Parks and Recreation's support for downtown events.
3. Economic Impact: Recreation's role in attracting visitors and boosting the local economy.
4. Fresh Perspectives: Newcomers offering insights on potential improvements.
5. Innovative Ideas: Proposals for a tournament complex, enhanced waterfront areas, and an outdoor recreation festival.
6. Staffing and Volunteers: Addressing event staffing challenges and involving senior centers as volunteers.
7. High-Priority Developments: Focus on the Wiscasset Mill property and Albemarle Business Center for green spaces and recreational facilities.
8. Connectivity and Signage: Importance of trails, greenways, improved signage, and possibly an app for better user experience.
9. Tourism Dollars: Need for clearer budgeting and tracking of tourism funds.
10. Community Input: Emphasizing the importance of public participation in surveys to inform planning and secure grants.

Overall, the discussion focused on maximizing local assets to boost community engagement and economic growth.

Appendix F

Facilitated SWOT analysis with Council and Albemarle Staff (department head level)

March 4th 6pm-7pm

EE. Waddell Center

Elected and executive leadership

Strengths

- Park usage
 - Senior activities
 - Number of park users
 - Diverse age of usage
 - City and non-city resident usage
- Our number of parks (2 people mentioned)
- Enough parks for a city of our size
- Morrow Mountain (2 people mentioned)
- Adequate number of activities
- Doing a good job with youth programs (4 people mentioned)
- Events and concerts (3 people mentioned)
- Economic Impacts
- Increase in visitation at parks
- Community support for parks and recreation (2 people mentioned)
- Our facilities
 - Auditorium, meeting space, indoor gym.
- Parks are well maintained
- Potential at Wicasset
- City has strong commitment to provide best we can
- Room for Growth
- Tennis Courts
- Staff (4 people mentioned)
- Participation rates
- Budget
 - Annual funding commitment
 - Funding
- Commitment by council
- Pickleball (2 people mentioned)
- Lakes
- Aquatics

Weaknesses

- Aging infrastructure
- More greenways
- County lacks parks program
- Aquatics
 - No splash pad
 - Too many pools
 - Sufficient number (2 people mentioned)
- Facility improvements
- Funding
 - for new services
 - funding is going to support non-resident users
 - funding for Wiscasset Park
- Serving non-municipal population
- Number of sports facilities
 - Baseball fields (2 people mentioned)
 - basketball courts
 - need more soccer fields
- golf course lack of support for Wiscasset facility by community
- Corporate donors
- Volunteers
- Downtown activities
- Cultural fine arts programs (3 people mentioned)
- Need to provide plans for updates to park facilities
- Pickleball courts
- Campground

Opportunities

- Downtown
 - Downtown foot traffic
 - More well-planned opportunities downtown
 - Downtown multi-purpose facility
 - Downtown housing
- Develop Wiscasset Park (4 people mentioned)
 - Ballfields at Wiscasset Park (2 people mentioned)
- Multi-field ballpark
- Indoor sports complex
- Neighborhood parks
- Additional maintenance staff

- Economic benefits of parks (2 people mentioned)
- Greenways
- Ballfields
- Splash pad
- Funding

Threats

- County not supportive of City's plans for Parks and Recreation
- Fewer visitors to parks
- People leave the city (3 people mentioned)
 - Loss of youth
- Loss of revenue
- High cost of deferred maintenance
- Surrounding communities capitalize on our missed opportunities
- Locust will act like the County seat
- Not enough staff
- Get voted out (2 people mentioned)

Summary: Elected and Executive Leaders

Strengths

- **Park Usage:** High usage across diverse age groups, including seniors and non-city residents.
- **Number of Parks:** Adequate for the city's size, with notable mentions of Morrow Mountain as a nearby asset.
- **Activities:** Sufficient variety, strong youth programs, and popular events/concerts.
- **Economic Impact:** Increased visitation and community support.
- **Facilities:** Well-maintained parks, auditorium, meeting space, indoor gym.
- **Staff:** Highly regarded by the community.
- **Budget:** Average annual funding commitment and council support.
- **Recreational:** High levels of tennis courts, pickleball, lakes, aquatics.

Weaknesses

- **Aging Infrastructure:** Need for more greenways and facility updates.
- **Aquatics:** Issues with no splash pad and but 2 pools.
- **Funding:** Challenges in securing funds for new services and non-resident users.
- **Sports Facilities:** Insufficient baseball fields, basketball courts, and soccer fields.
- **Community Support:** Corporate donors, and volunteers.
- **Cultural Programs:** Need for more downtown activities and fine arts programs.

Opportunities

- **Downtown Development:** Increased foot traffic, multi-purpose facilities, and housing.
- **Wicasset Park:** Support for development, including ballfields and a multi-field ballpark.
- **New Facilities:** Splash pad.

- **Economic Benefits:** Parks help with economic growth

Threats

- **County Support:** Lack of financial support for non-resident users.
- **Risk of Residents leaving:** Risk of population retraction and youth leaving the city.
- **Revenue:** Loss of revenue if users decline
- **Competition:** Surrounding communities capitalizing on missed opportunities.
- **Staffing:** Insufficient staff and potential political challenges.

Albemarle Staff Input

Strengths

- Parks attract non-residents
 - Serving outside of Albemarle zip code
 - Ability to pull in residents outside to parks and recreation events
- Historic parks = nostalgia
- Great trees and picnic areas
- Location to lakes (2 people mentioned)
- Potential for active development of Wicasset property
- Potential greenways (2 people mentioned)
 - A lot of sewer easements
 - Old railroad right of ways
- Staff
 - Internal staff that care about parks and programs
 - Strength of good leadership and staff (2 people mentioned)
 - Abundance of pickleball (2 people mentioned)
 - Abundance of tennis
- A lot of land available to expand (3 people mentioned)
- Facilities
 - Abundance of pools
 - Parks in various places around the City (3 people mentioned)
 - Number of parks (2 people mentioned)
 - Lots of facilities
 - Variety of locations to fit community needs.
- A lot of services with relatively low budget
- Good funding
- A lot of parkland (3 people mentioned)
- A well engaged community
 - Statistically significant engaged community
 - Cell phone data collection (2 people mentioned)
- Economic impact as current parks are drawing people in

- Good mixture of programs and events (2 people mentioned)
 - Strong special events (2 people mentioned)
 - Current programs are well received
 - Summer programs
 - Lots of athletic programs
 - Willingness to offer programs to different demographics
 - Youth programs (2 people mentioned)
 - Pools

Weaknesses

- Need more places for baseball and softball
- Funding
 - Maintenance money (2 people mentioned)
 - Funding (2 people mentioned)
 - Not enough funding for what we have
 - Average level of investment
 - No County funding assistance (2 people mentioned)
 - Limited funding for major projects
 - Funding does not align with priorities
- Large number of parks for upkeep
- Increasing expenses
 - Maintenance of existing facilities
 - Programs
- A demanding user base which does not all pay into City parks
- Community doesn't utilize parks enough
- Lack of cooperation for the railroad for greenways
- Constraints on development of potential sites.
- Lack of specific facilities
- Too big parks, not enough neighborhood parks
- Limited fields for baseball/softball fields (4 people mentioned)
- Cross community collaboration
- Over allocation of some resources
 - Pools
 - Pickleball
 - Tennis
- Aging facilities (5 people mentioned)
- Need local investment for better grants to happen
- Staffing capacity/levels (5 people mentioned)
- Volunteer support
- Dog park bad location at the back of park needs to be moved

Opportunities

- New parks and new development (3 people mentioned)
- Existing lots throughout the park
- Wicasset Area (6 people mentioned)
 - District park at site
 - Athletic park at site
- Grants and partnerships for funding
- Actively engage Stanly County for opportunities
- Eminent domain
- More staff
- A well-developed plan
- Greenways/walkability (4 people mentioned)
 - Greenways/ Right of ways
 - Expand greenways to connect parks and school or existing segments
 - Railroads and sewer easements for greenways (3 people mentioned)
- Marketing
- Campground
- Fix outfield at Don Montgomery it's not level
- Special events (3 people mentioned)
- Splashpad
 - Change a pool to a splashpad

Threats

- Lower quality of life
- D.O.G.E
- Government funding continues to decrease
- Less sales tax
- We don't get grant if we don't also invest
- Revenue loss
- Decrease in funding if parks aren't used.
- Revenue from no use not available for other projects
- Decreased interest in parks and recreation (3 people mentioned)
- Residents could go elsewhere for programs or activities
- Loss of economic development opportunities (2 people mention)
 - Businesses not visited
- No outside traffic to parks
- We have a competitive disadvantage compared to other cities (2 people mentioned)
- Unhappy citizens (2 people mentioned)
- Increased complaints
- Lawsuits and claims
- Close facilities
- Deteriorating facilities

- Increased cost of delayed maintenance “pay more later”
- Children will have limited outdoor recreation
- Less healthy population (2 people mentioned)
- Bored youth gets into trouble
- Other communities could pass us by
- Poor quality of life
- Fewer visitors to the city

City Staff (Includes multiple departments)

Strengths

- **Attraction of Non-Residents:** Parks draw visitors from outside Albemarle, enhancing community engagement.
- **Historic Park areas:** Nostalgic value with great trees and picnic areas.
- **Location:** Proximity to lakes. (Badin, Tillery, High Rock)
- **Development Potential:** Opportunities for Wicasset property and greenways.
- **Staff:** Dedicated internal staff, strong leadership, and abundance of pickleball and tennis facilities.
- **Expansion:** Ample land available for future development.
- **Budget:** Efficient use of a relatively low budget with average funding.
- **Community Engagement:** High level of community involvement and economic impact from park usage.
- **Programs and Events:** Diverse and well-received programs, including youth and athletic programs, summer activities, and special events.
- **Diverse Park offerings:** Parks and facilities are offered around the City

Weaknesses

- **Sports Facilities:** Need for more baseball and softball fields.
- **Funding:** Insufficient funding for maintenance, major projects, and alignment with priorities. No Stanley County funding assistance.
- **Maintenance:** High upkeep costs for numerous parks and aging facilities.
- **Community Utilization:** Parks are underutilized by the community.
- **Development Constraints:** Challenges with cooperation for greenways and development of potential sites.
- **Resource Allocation:** Overallocation of resources to pools, pickleball, and tennis.
- **Staffing:** Insufficient staffing levels and volunteer support.

Opportunities

- **New Development:** Potential for new parks and development, especially in at the Wicasset property and a splash pad.
- **Funding:** Opportunities for grants and partnerships.
- **Greenways:** Expansion of greenways to connect parks and schools.

- **Marketing:** Increased marketing efforts.
- **Special Events:** Enhancement of special events

Threats

- **Funding:** Decreasing government funding and sales tax revenue.
- **Park Usage:** Decline in park use could lead to revenue loss and decreased interest.
- **Economic Development:** Loss of economic opportunities and competitive disadvantages to other local governments.
- **Community Dissatisfaction:** Potential for increased complaints, lawsuits, and facility closures.
- **Health and Recreation:** Limited outdoor recreation for the population could lead to a less healthy population and bored youth getting into trouble.

City of Albemarle Planning Retreat: Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan Update and SWOT analysis.

March 4th, EE Waddell Center, 6pm-7pm

Attendees

- Mayor Ronnie Michael
- Councilmember Dr. Chris Bramlett
- Councilmember David Hunt
- Councilmember Dexter Townsend
- Councilmember Bill Aldridge
- Councilmember Benton Dry
- Richie Hearne - citizen
- Christina Brown - City Clerk
- Jay Voyles - Public Utilities Director
- Dana Chaney - Human Resources Director
- Lindsey Almond - Economic Development Director
- Ross Holshouser - Public Works Director
- Danielle Dobbs-Jackson - Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation
- Ryan Manley - Chief of Police
- Kenny Kendall - Fire Chief
- Kevin Robinson - Planning Director
- Owen Squires - Information Systems Director
- Jacob Weavil - Finance Director
- Britt Burch - City Attorney
- David Fath - Communications Director
- Darren Rhodes - Assistant City Manager
- Todd Clark - City Manager
- Lisa Kiser - Parks and Recreation Director

