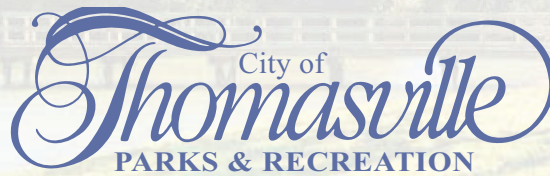


# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## THE NEED FOR A PLAN

As Georgia's Rose City, Thomasville is uniquely positioned to showcase remarkable natural landscapes, uphold a rich historic legacy, and champion local culture. The newly re-formed Parks and Recreation Department has a vital role to play in uplifting the city and already brings incredible resources to the community. Known regionally for signature sites like the Big Oak and the Rose Garden, the park system offers residents a wide range of recreation possibilities.

This *2023 Thomasville Parks and Recreation Master Plan* will be critical to the city's future as it clarifies the department's own responsibilities and needs, as well as what partnerships can be leveraged to best deliver parks, facilities, and recreational choices to the citizens of Thomasville.

This plan is important because it...

- Provides a vision for the future of parks and recreation in Thomasville
- Ensures department offerings are aligned with community needs
- Fosters civic engagement and creates a sense of community
- Develops clear priorities based on community needs and desires
- Identifies gaps & inequities in service delivery
- Strengthens fiscal responsibility, sustainability, and efficiency
- Identifies future funding requirements and potential sources
- Ensures no duplication of service, improves partnerships
- Encourages consideration of resources needed in the future

Meant to instill focus, establish priorities, and inspire action over the next 5 to 10 years, this Master Plan was produced with guidance from an active steering committee appointed by the city. It is supported by robust data collection, including hours of in-person engagement. Ultimately, this plan is a guide for the newly re-formed Parks and Recreation Department to begin to work toward the new vision identified through this planning process.

## VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES FOR PARKS AND RECREATION IN THOMASVILLE

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

### Vision

**Exceptional parks and memorable experiences are accessible for everyone**

### Mission

**Enrich the entire community through engaging experiences and diverse amenities**

### Values

**Sustainability**

**Accessibility**

**Fun**

**Excellence**

---

## GOALS & OBJECTIVES

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

### Goal 1: Beautiful Parks

Offer attractive parks and facilities that encourage fun and enjoyment for all

### Goal 2: Accessible Spaces

Build physical and social connections throughout the entire community

### Goal 3: Diverse Experiences

Provide a wide array of recreational opportunities that inspire community health and happiness

### Goal 4: Responsible Operations

Employ strong leadership to direct an engaged community using efficient management, exceptional customer service, sustainable operations, and productive partnerships

## A PATH FORWARD FOR THE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

This new vision cannot be accomplished with the resources that are currently allocated to Parks and Recreation, including both budget and staffing.

The city recently re-formed the Parks and Recreation Department which is essential to respond to the desires of the public identified in this Master Plan. An initial focus of this department should be new programming desired by residents and to prepare to offer services again.

### Where to Begin

A first step in the building of the department is the hiring of staff to manage programs, initially a single, dedicated staff member. This position (Enterprise Recreation Programmer) would begin to offer city-branded programs through contracts with vendors, which would help fund the employee's salary. Plans for operations and maintenance of the growing system will also be essential to protect the city's investment.

### Initial Needs of the New Department

#### Dedicated staff

- Dedicated full-time staff member to begin to offer programming through contracts and manage some of the duties below

### Operations & management plans

- Pricing philosophy, maintenance standards, marketing strategy, and key partners
- Expected life, maintenance and operational requirements (including BMPs), and replacement costs of development

### Engagement/promotion

- Continued engagement throughout implementation
- Department brand and awareness, especially as options grow
- Marketing through multiple methods, including social media

### Coordination with partners

- Maximize opportunities and avoid duplication of services
- Marketing, fundraising, and volunteer opportunities

### Measures of success

- Annual review process for business operations (programs, events rentals, etc.) with budgets
- Evaluation of the success of any program or event

## SYSTEMWIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations highlight what is needed to address the largest needs in the community. While this plan has a 10-year horizon, many of these items will require more time unless additional resources are found.

1. Upgrade and improve existing parks and facilities
2. Continue to build and establish a brand for the Parks and Recreation Department
3. Add programming to meet unmet community needs through vendor contracts (initially), managed by a dedicated staff position (Enterprise Recreation Programmer)
4. Ensure the new department has the staff and resources needed to operate the department as offerings grow
5. Improve marketing of Parks and Recreation opportunities using multiple methods and utilizing new department branding
6. Improve and add support features throughout the park system (e.g., restrooms, seating, shade, drinking fountains, and landscaping)
7. Invest in overlooked/underinvested parks, addressing equity and access, using existing parkland

8. Continuously engage Thomasville resident throughout the implementation of this plan
9. Ensure all contracts and MOUs benefit Thomasville and its residents with requirements that contractors show how and where city funds were spent
10. Identify alternative funding streams to implement this plan and improve the park system (e.g., parks foundation, grants, tax revenue)
11. Add, upgrade, and replace playground equipment throughout the park system
12. Evaluate opportunities to add trails at parks and identify potential trail linkages throughout the community
13. Ensure ADA accessibility throughout the park system
14. Include technological updates with the renovation and addition of new facilities such as Wi-Fi, charging stations, and lighting
15. Strategically and consistently place signage (entrance, wayfinding, etc.) throughout the park system
16. Address issues identified in the *Golf Course Renovation Master Plan* at Country Oaks Golf Course

## THE PROCESS – WHY ARE THESE ACTION NEEDED?

### Existing Conditions of Parks and Recreation in Thomasville

A park system should be evaluated as a composite of recreation areas with each meeting a particular public need; and should provide a combination of large and small parks. For all residents, whatever their background, parks help provide a variety of passive and active outdoor recreational opportunities. Proximity to these valuable resources invariably improves community health and wellness, not to mention create more adaptable, robust local economies.<sup>1</sup>

#### Thomasville Maintains...

**465** Acres of parkland (approx.)

**10 Parks** - 5 neighborhood, 4 community, 1 natural area

+ a golf course and several small plazas

#### Other recreation spaces managed by others:

Thomasville City Schools  
YMCA

### Demographic and Benchmarking Analysis

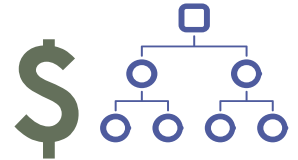


- Population has remained largely the same (1980 - 2026)
- 65+ population growing and nearly as large as the under 18 population

### Compared to 36 similar agencies Thomasville has:

(From NRPA Park Metrics database)

- Fewer staff
- Sizeable parkland (due largely to the golf course)
- Differences disappear with county residents included
- Golf course only source of revenue



### Service Area Analysis (Gaps)

Maps of service areas for various parks and facilities were used to identify service gaps or underserved areas within Thomasville. Maps were also created to illustrate levels of access to various park categories and facilities. The analysis indicated that about half (50%) of Thomasville residents are within walking distance to a park. Opportunities for connections and bridging the gaps between recreation areas could increase this level of service.



Lastly, a composite service areas map shows the overall level of service for parks and facilities, ranked from high to low, in turn revealing spaces of need and opportunity. Shades of blue indicate high service levels, while red areas show the areas with the lowest level of service to parks and facilities. Forty six percent (46%) of Thomasville's residents live in the highest two categories, with just over a quarter in the medium-low category and very few in the lowest.

Overall, Thomasville has a medium level of service for some type of park access whether that be a Thomasville property or another type of recreation area. Areas with the highest levels of service are those near Remington Park as this park offers a wide variety of amenities.

## A CITIZEN DRIVEN PLAN

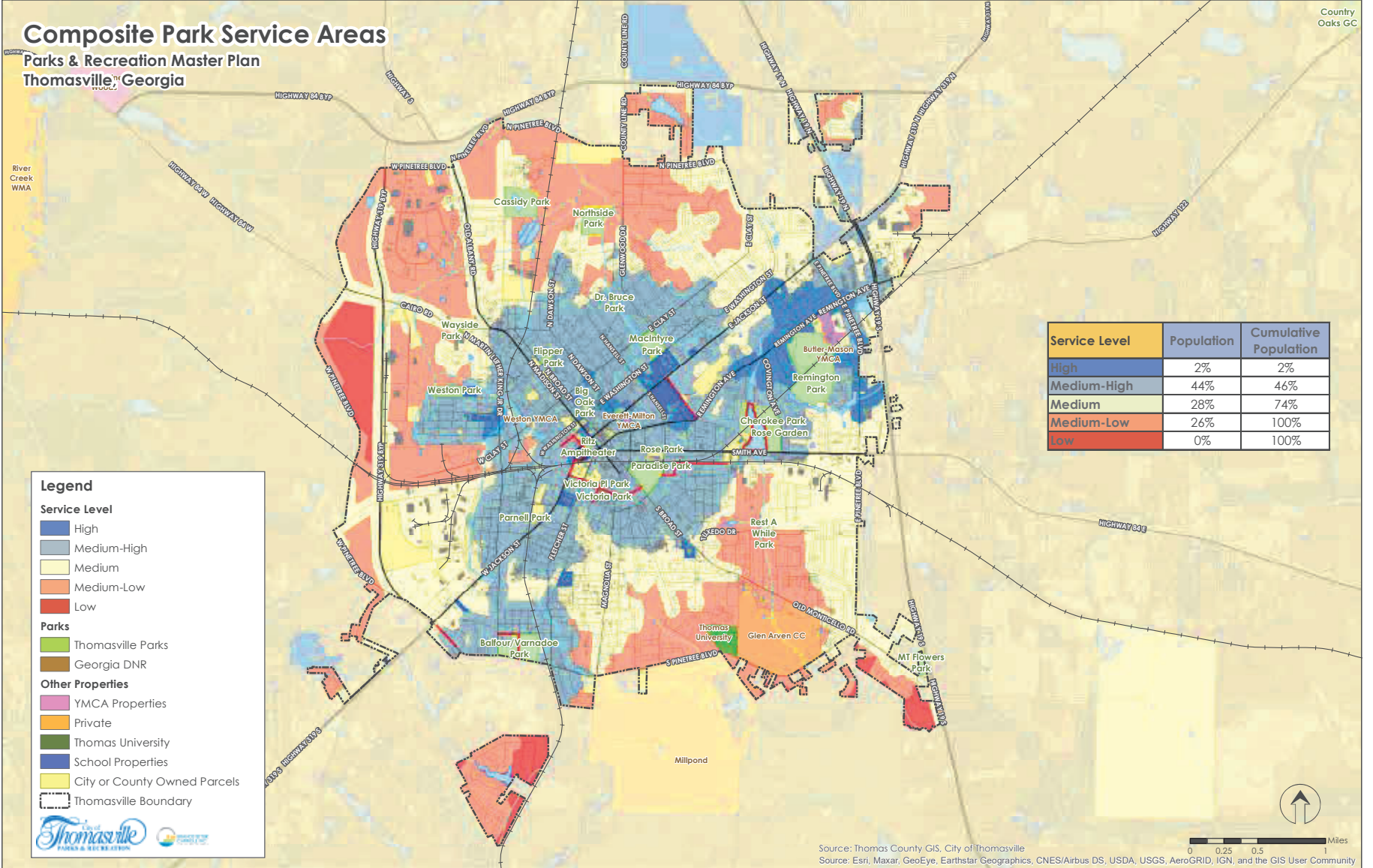
To make informed decisions moving forward, Thomasville Parks and Recreation needs meaningful public input in addition to robust statistical and performance analysis. Including resident participation in the planning process gives actual park users a means to share their individual needs, perceptions,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

<sup>1</sup> Berg, Nate. Great Parks Don't Just Have Rec. Space: They Create Jobs. 2021. Fast Company. [https://www.fastcompany.com/90624316/great-parks-dont-just-have-rec-space-they-create-jobs?mc\\_cid=105f89bd93&mc\\_eid=6c9b6b28d4](https://www.fastcompany.com/90624316/great-parks-dont-just-have-rec-space-they-create-jobs?mc_cid=105f89bd93&mc_eid=6c9b6b28d4)

# Composite Park Service Areas

Parks & Recreation Master Plan  
Thomasville, Georgia

Country  
Oaks GC



### Legend

#### Service Level

- High
- Medium-High
- Medium
- Medium-Low
- Low

#### Parks

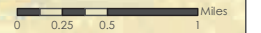
- Thomasville Parks
- Georgia DNR

#### Other Properties

- YMCA Properties
- Private
- Thomas University
- School Properties
- City or County Owned Parcels
- Thomasville Boundary



Source: Thomas County GIS, City of Thomasville  
Source: Esri, Maxar, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community



methods to connect with the community. As the department begins to implement this plan, sustained efforts will be necessary to continuously solicit public feedback about development projects; allowing direct participation whenever possible will ensure the community feels heard and has pride in their parks. The following summary indicates the various ways the public was involved throughout this Master Plan process.

## WHAT THOMASVILLE RESIDENTS SAID

Information gathered from these public input methods were used to identify the needs of Thomasville residents. And was the primary driver of recommended actions.

### Stakeholder Groups

Discussions spanned a diversity of issues:

-  Connectivity & Wayfinding
-  Expanded Programming
-  Prioritize Overlooked Parks
-  Strengthen Connections to Downtown
-  Effective Partnerships for Programming
-  Wi-Fi Availability at Parks
-  Park Maintenance
-  Accessible Spaces & Features
-  Aquatic Opportunities
-  Passive Site Amenities
-  Public Art



### Survey Results

#### Visitation



**93%**  
Visited a Thomasville park  
in the past year

Visited 20+ times  
**39%**

### Most visited parks:

1. Cherokee Park & Thomasville Rose Garden
2. Remington Park
3. The Ritz Amphitheater
4. Macintyre Park
5. Paradise Park

### Physical Condition

**75%** rated the Condition of parks as good or excellent

### Improvements to Existing Parks

- 62%** Restrooms
- 50%** Trails
- 44%** Drinking fountains/bottle Fillers
- 43%** Security
- 43%** Seating



### Desired Facilities (Top 4)

- 56%** Walking & hiking trails
- 26%** Bike trails
- 23%** Splash pads
- 21%** Natural areas



### Desired Programs

Overall, there is a desire for:

- Community gatherings, including concerts and movies
- Access to nature education and outdoor activities
- Improved fitness, especially 50+
- Farmers markets

### Reasons for Not Using Parks

- Lack of restrooms (37%)
- Security concerns (31%)
- Unaware of offerings (31%)

## Engagement Key Findings

Results indicate that generally the Thomasville community desires:

Systemwide	Facilities	Programs
 <p>Upgrades to existing parkland</p>	 <p>Upgraded playgrounds with unique equipment</p>	 <p>Fitness &amp; wellness classes</p>
 <p>Increased maintenance at existing parks</p>	 <p>Restrooms &amp; support features (lighting, drinking fountains, etc.)</p>	 <p>Outdoor movies</p>
 <p>Connectivity &amp; trails added to and through parks</p>	 <p>Outdoor aquatic facilities</p>	 <p>Active adult (50+) programs</p>
 <p>Access to natural areas &amp; activities (picnics, fishing, etc.)</p>	 <p>More &amp; upgraded picnic areas/ shelters</p>	 <p>Strategic &amp; collaborative marketing</p>
 <p>Increased ADA accessibility</p>	 <p>Wayfinding &amp; entrance signage</p>	 <p>Partnerships with local organizations</p>
 <p>Golf Course Master Plan implementation</p>		 <p>Concerts, festivals, &amp; live performances</p>

## Engagement Summary

1. **4 open house workshops** in the spring of 2022
  - 80 attendees
2. **Meetings with stakeholder groups** (March 2022) representing more than 10 organizations
  - Mayor & City Council
  - TISK/TASK
  - Thomas County NAACP
  - Chamber of Commerce
  - YMCA
  - Archbold Medical Center
  - Thomasville County Family Connection
  - Thomasville Community Resource Center
  - Local Businesses (Thomasville National Bank, ABAC, Hubs & Hops)
3. **A handout and web survey** – available on the city webpage and shared on social media platforms
  - 1,155 surveys completed



- 60% Thomasville residents
- 32% Thomas County residents
- 7% Outside the county

## ACTION PLAN

The 2023 Thomasville Parks and Recreation Master Plan concludes with an Action Plan of 121 strategies and recommendations. These action items, which can be found in Chapter 9, detail specific actions for Thomasville Parks and Recreation and the city itself to take in implementing this long-range master plan.

## ONE PAGE SUMMARIES

The final two pages of this executive summary consist of graphic representations of the overall findings of the plan. The first graphic highlights the highest priority improvements at each of the city's major parks with the first projects in bold. The second figure summarizes the whole Master Plan in a single page. These figures can serve as reference materials for anyone looking for a quick summary of the plan.

# Park Improvement Highlights

## Systemwide Improvements



ADA accessibility assessment



Trees & landscaping



Wayfinding & entrance signage



Support features (drinking fountains, bottle fillers)



Splash pads

### First Priority

#### Paradise Park



Gazebo restoration & concert plaza

Restrooms

Carriageway enhancement

Walking Trail

Parking Improvements



### Second Priority

#### Cherokee Park



Parking improvements

Dog park relocation



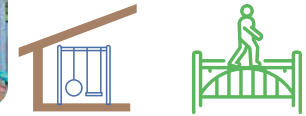
### Third Priority

#### MacIntyre Park



Shade at playground

Trail - 8' wide paved w/ bridges



**Bold - First Phase, Unbold - Later Phases**

#### Cassidy Park



Upgrade to a community park

Picnic shelters (add/improve)

Disc golf course

Walking Trail

Parking Improvements

Add Restrooms

Nature play area

Fitness area



#### Northside Park



New playground

Basketball court replacement

Picnic shelter

Parking lot w/ ADA spaces and paved road

Perimeter path



#### Weston Park



Walking path extension

Ballfield improvements - bleachers, fencing, infield



#### Balfour/Varnadoe



Playground w/ shade

Tennis/pickleball improvements

Basketball Court Improvements

Parking & road upgrades

Picnic shelters (2)

Restroom improvements

Fitness area replacement

Trail - perimeter



#### Flipper Park



Playground replacement

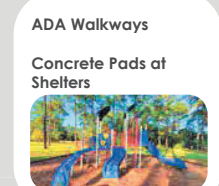
Basketball court improvements

Perimeter path



### Specialty Parks with Regional Impact

#### Remington Park



ADA Walkways

Concrete Pads at Shelters

#### Country Oaks Golf Course



Implement Golf Course Renovation Master Plan



# 2023 Parks & Recreation Master Plan



## Introduction

This Master Plan is critical to the city's future as it clarifies the department's responsibilities, the community's desires, and the importance of partnerships.

With the Parks and Recreation Department, the city has great potential to begin offering additional programs and beautiful parks to the Thomasville community.

## The Thomasville community desires:

- Improved maintenance**
- Expanded marketing**
- Upgrades & improvements to existing parks/facilities**
  - ADA access
  - Improved parking
  - Technological updates
- Connectivity & trails**
  - Added sidewalks and walking paths
  - Paved bike/walk paths
  - Citywide trails
- Natural Areas**
  - Open space preservation
  - More fishing opportunities
- New spaces & facilities**
  - New playgrounds
  - Splash pads
- Expanded programming & events**
  - Concerts & live performances
  - Farmers markets
  - Nature education classes
  - Fitness programs
  - Active adult (50+) programs
- Support amenities**
  - Restrooms & drinking fountains
  - Shade & seating
  - Improved wayfinding
  - Site security

## A Path Forward:

- Building a Parks & Recreation Department Requires:**
- Dedicated staff**
- Operations & management plans**
- Engagement/promotion**
- Coordination with partners**
- Measures of success**

### MISSION

Enrich the entire community through engaging experiences and diverse amenities

### VISION

Exceptional parks and memorable experiences are accessible for everyone

### VALUES

Sustainability  
Accessibility  
Fun  
Excellence

## Goals

- Beautiful Parks**
- Accessible Spaces**
- Diverse Experiences**
- Responsible Operations**

## Objectives

- Places Amenities Stewardship**
- Events Wellness Partnerships**
- Gathering Connecting Engaging**
- Structure Operations Funding**

## Actions

- Upgrade + Improve existing parks/facilities
- Establish a brand for the department
- Add programming that meets community demand
- Add a dedicated staff member to begin offering programs
- Improve marketing of offerings utilizing branding
- Improve/add support features throughout parks
- Invest in overlooked parks addressing equity
- Continuous community engagement
- Ensure contracts and MOU's are beneficial to the city and residents
- Identify alternative funding streams for park improvements
- Add, upgrade, replace playground equipment
- Evaluate opportunities to add trails & linkages to parks
- Ensure ADA accessibility throughout the system
- Add technological updates during renovations
- Strategically add signage throughout the park system
- Implement the Golf Course Renovation Master Plan