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RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING ASSESSMENT

Jonesboro Parks and Recreation Master Plan
for the
City of Jonesboro, AR

Prepared by
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Purpose and Introduction

Access to public recreational services is an essential component to achieving positive health outcomes and higher quality of life - particularly for those residents for whom for-profit services are inaccessible. To best serve the residents of Jonesboro, recreational programs should be provided to align with defined public benefit levels and funded responsibly to best recover the costs of operation.

The City of Jonesboro is a primary recreational service provider for many city residents, but their regional draw extends throughout Craighead County and beyond. Since larger community and regional parks contain specialized amenities and can support both programs and events, City-sponsored activities can attract visitors from a much larger geographic area than Jonesboro alone.

RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING

The Jonesboro Parks and Recreation Department (the Department) currently operates 21 recreational programs. Most City-sponsored programs are related to athletics and include sports, like basketball, soccer, softball, and shooting sports. There are other recreational programs, like adult pickleball and Jets Aquatics, that are hosted at Jonesboro parks and recreation facilities, but are provided or sponsored by third-party vendors or non-profit organizations. The list of current (and recurring) programs offered by the City and third-party vendors is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Jonesboro Recreation Programs

Recreational Program Category ¹	Season	Location
City Operated		
3v3 Summer Soccer	Summer	Joe Mack Campbell Sports Complex/ Lacy Park
Adult Co-ed Volleyball	Winter	Earl Bell Community Center
Adult Softball	Spring / Fall	Southside Softball Complex
Arkansas Revolution (Soccer)	Summer	Joe Mack Campbell Sports Complex / Lacy Park
City Stars Basketball	Spring / Summer	Earl Bell Community Center / Parker Park Community Center / Allen Park Community Center
City Stars Soccer	Spring / Fall	Joe Mack Campbell Sports Complex/ Lacy Park
Jonesboro Trap League	Spring/ Summer	Jonesboro Shooting Sports Complex
Junior Disc Golf	Summer	Craighead Forest Park
Junior High Softball League	Spring	Southside Softball Complex
Junior Target Golf	Spring / Fall	Craighead Forest Park
Know Your Limits Rimfire Challenge	Year Round	Jonesboro Shooting Sports Complex/ Lacy Park
NEA Junior Chiefs Rugby Club	Spring / Fall	Miles / Parker Park
NEA Volleyball Academy	Fall	Earl Bell Community Center / Parker Park Community Center/ Allen Park Community Center

Recreational Program Category ¹	Season	Location
Swim Lessons	Summer	Jonesboro Pool Center
The Miracle League	Spring / Fall	Miracle League Park
Wolf Cub Cheerleading	Fall	Joe Mack Campbell Sports Complex/ Lacy Park
Wolf Cub Flag Football	Fall	Joe Mack Campbell Sports Complex/ Lacy Park
Wolf Cub Tackle Football	Fall	Joe Mack Campbell Sports Complex/ Lacy Park
Wonderland Skating Rink	Winter	Downtown Jonesboro
Youth Soccer League (Junior High)	Spring	Joe Mack Campbell Sports Complex/ Lacy Park
Youth Softball League	Spring / Fall	Southside Softball Complex
Third-Party Operated		
Adult Pickleball Play Days	Year Round	Allen Park Community Center
Adult Soccer League	Fall/Spring/Winter	Soccer Nation Indoor Arena
Blue Raider Football	Fall	Allen Park Community Center
Boxing Club	Year Round	Earl Bell Community Center
Jets Aquatics Club	Year Round	Jonesboro Pool Center
Jonesboro Cricket Club	Summer / Fall	Southside Softball Complex
Jonesboro Elementary School Basketball League	Winter	Earl Bell Community Center / Parker Park Community Center / Allen Park Community Center
MixedFit Dance Fitness	Year Round	Earl Bell Community Center
NEA Tennis	Summer	Allen / Landsbrook Park
Reach 4 the Stars (Basketball)	Year Round	Earl Bell Community Center / Parker Park Community Center
Shark Wave Aquatic Team	Year Round	Jonesboro Pool Center
Shine Dance Fitness	Year Round	Earl Bell Community Center
Soccer Academy	Year Round	Joe Mack Campbell Sports Complex/ Lacy Park

1. Data provided by City of Jonesboro.

SPECIAL EVENTS

The City also offers 11 recurring special events. These events range from large events, like the Red Wolf Classic Softball Tournament, to age-specific activities like the Mountain Dew Classic. When combined with other recurring special events held by outside organizations, there were 36 large-scale events that the Department participated in during 2022, serving over 70,000 guests. The list of recurring events in Jonesboro is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Jonesboro Special Events

Event ¹	Season	Location
City Operated		
AYSSP Youth Trap Tournament	Year Round	Jonesboro Shooting Sports Complex
Egg-cessible Miracle League Easter Egg Hunt	Winter	Miracle League Park
Halloween Bash Softball Tournament	Fall	Southside Softball Complex
Harvest Cup (Soccer Tournament)	Fall	Joe Mack Campbell Sports Complex/ Lacy Park
Icebreaker Volleyball Tournament	Winter	All Indoor Recreation Centers
Mountain Dew Classic	Summer	Southside Softball Complex
Movie at the Park	Fall	Various Parks
MYAC Spring Community Fair	Winter	Mayor's Youth Advancement Council
Pre-Holiday Basketball Tournament	Winter	All Indoor Recreation Centers
Red Wolf Classic Softball Tournament	Spring	Southside Softball Complex
We Care JO Volleyball Tournament	Winter	All Indoor Recreation Centers
Third-Party Operated		
4th Fest	Summer	Joe Mack Campbell Sports Complex/ Lacy Park
All Stars 4 Autism	Spring	Southside Softball Complex
ARPA Conference	Fall	Embassy Suites
Astate Softball Camp	Winter	Southside Softball Complex

Event¹	Season	Location
BBQ Fest	Fall	Downtown Jonesboro
Blazer Blast Softball Tournament	Spring	Southside Softball Complex
Crowley's Ridge Cruisers Car Show	Fall	Miracle League Park
Dingers for Dare	Winter	Southside Softball Complex
DJA Fall Fest	Fall	Downtown Jonesboro
DJA Spring Fest	Spring	Downtown Jonesboro
Easter in the Park	Winter	Craighead Forest Park
Freedom Fest	Summer	Southside Softball Complex
JETS Open Swim Meets	Spring, Summer, Fall	Jonesboro Pool Center
Jonesboro Christmas Parade	Winter	Downtown Jonesboro
Jonesboro Open Disc Golf	Spring	Beatrice Park
Joy Fest	Winter	Downtown Jonesboro
Juneteenth Celebration	Summer	Parker Park Community Center
3v3 Live Soccer Tournament	Summer	Joe Mack Campbell Sports Complex/ Lacy Park
Local Fest	Summer	Downtown Jonesboro
NEA Pride Fest	Spring	Downtown Jonesboro
NEA Tennis Love All Serve All	Spring	Allen / Landsbrook Park
OASIS Fest	Spring	Downtown Jonesboro
Pickin' in the Plaza	Spring, Summer, Fall	Rotary Club of Jonesboro Centennial Plaza
Play It Again Sports Classic	Winter	Joe Mack Campbell Sports Complex/ Lacy Park
Southwind Conference Meets	Spring and Summer	Jonesboro Pool Center

1. Data provided by City of Jonesboro.

Core Programs

Identifying core program areas helps staff, policy makers, and the public focus on recreational programming that is most important for the City. While the City and community as a whole offer more than just the core programs, the analysis will focus on these areas due to their level of participation and the resources dedicated to them. By analyzing these programs, the City can identify gaps in recreational offerings and highlight the things that they do well as an organization.

CORE PROGRAM APPROACH

When defining “core programs,” each program should exhibit several of the categories listed below.



Length Offered

Offered to the community for an extended period (over five years).



Variety of Programs

Tiered level of skill development available within the programs offered.



Budgeting

Utilizes a relatively large portion (five percent or more) of the providers' overall budget.



Staffing

Designated full-time staff responsible for the program area.



Scheduling

Programs and services provided to the community three to four seasons per year.



Facilities

Programs specifically designed and operated to leverage facility usage.



Demographics

Have a wide demographic appeal.



Public Programming

The public service provider accommodates a significant percentage (20 percent or more) of the local market.

IDENTIFIED CORE PROGRAMS

Utilizing the approach outline above, it was determined that the City of Jonesboro's 21 recreation programs can be classified within eight (8) core program areas. These identified core programs and associated explanations include:

Adult Athletics (Softball)

The Southside Softball Complex hosts adult softball play in Jonesboro. The complex is run by a full-time staff member and contains 10 playing fields, two (2) concession stands, and three (3) practice fields. Adult co-ed softball programs cater to adults of all ages and occur in both the Spring and Fall.

Community Events

The Department hosts, or assists in hosting, multiple annual community events in Jonesboro. Events range from athletic tournaments to movies in the park. These events utilize park spaces, indoor facilities, and downtown Jonesboro.

Shooting Sports

Jonesboro's shooting sports programming has expanded following completion of the Jonesboro Shooting Sports Complex in 2021. The complex hosts various shooting sports, such as archery, trap shooting, pistol and rifle shooting, and skeet shooting. The complex and programming are operated by four (4) full-time employees and continues to grow.

Youth Athletics (Basketball)

Youth basketball is offered by the Department throughout the Spring and Summer months. League play is held in the Allen Park, Parker Park, and Earl Bell Community Centers. Participation for youth basketball reached 1,200 persons during the 2022 season.

Youth Athletics (Soccer)

Jonesboro offer four (4) distinct soccer programs (3 v 3, junior high, youth, and competitive travel league) over Spring, Summer, and Fall. Joe Mack Campbell Sports Complex / Lacy Park provides 19 soccer fields for league play and the City has full-time and part-time staff to run the program. Participation reached 2,160 during the 2022 season.

Youth Athletics (Softball)

The Southside Softball Complex hosts youth softball practice and tournaments in Jonesboro. Softball programs are operated by the City, cater to a variety of ages, and occur in both the Spring and Fall.

Youth Athletics (Volleyball)

Jonesboro has several indoor recreation facilities that host volleyball tournaments and practices. The City offers a range of volleyball programs that serve new and experienced youth players and adults.

Youth Athletics (Miscellaneous)

In addition to the core programs mentioned above, the Department manages other youth athletic programs and events, such as tackle football and cheerleading, which on their own may not rise to the level of a "core program," but fulfill many community needs.

Recreational Programming Analysis

The identified “core programs” were evaluated to ensure the Department is providing the right mix of programming to meet the needs of Jonesboro residents. Jonesboro recreational programs were reviewed through four (4) assessments.

Demand Analysis

The demand analysis was developed through analyzing results of the community survey, conducted as part of the planning process. Results were collected to understand the community’s views of 38 recreational programs in terms of importance and perceived community performance in providing the programs. The results were analyzed and placed into one (1) of four (4) categories:

- Keep Up the Good Work (High importance and high performance)
- Needs Work (High importance and low performance)
- Possible Overkill (Low importance and high performance)
- Low Priority (Low importance and low performance)

Results from this analysis provide guidance for prioritizing recreational programming additions based on community demand.

Age Segment Analysis

The age segment analysis depicts each core program along with the age segments they serve as either primary targets (intended audience) and secondary (other non-primary users that participate in the program). By completing this analysis, staff can review what ages are primarily served and evaluate potential recreational programming to add.

Program and Service Lifecycle

This assessment reviews recreational programs to identify the overall health through program growth and decline. This analysis looks at the percentage of programs in the lifecycle stages of “introduction,” “take-off,” “growth,” “mature,” “saturated,” and “decline.” The results of this assessment may be used to evaluate which programs staff should prioritize with additional funding and/or staff and which programs may be ready to retire.

Program and Service Classification

This analysis identifies standard classifications for recreational programs and services to remain aligned with the community’s interests, while operating in a fiscally sustainable manner. When establishing service classifications, programs are evaluated on three (3) criteria:

- Benefit Level (Does the program primarily benefit individuals or the general public?)
- Program Classification (How is the program valued by the community?)
- Pricing Strategy (Who bears the primary cost of the program?)

Results from the program and service classification may be used as a guide for staff to follow when classifying programs, and how that program needs to be managed regarding cost recovery.

Demand Analysis

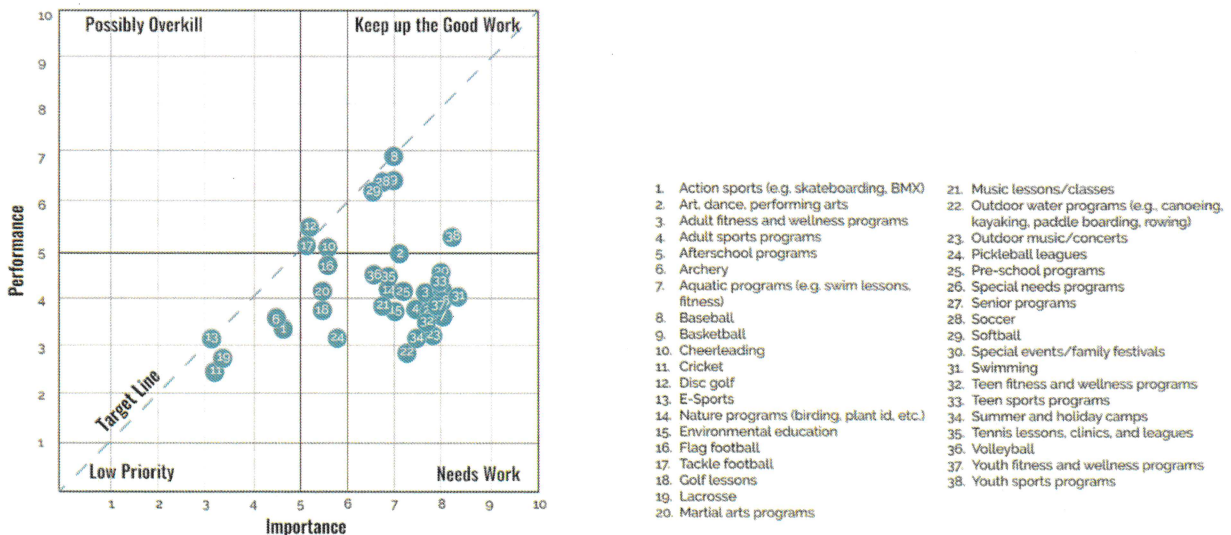
The community survey conducted as part of this planning process included two (2) related questions about the importance of specific recreational programs versus the perceived performance of the community in providing these programs. Figure 3 combines the results of both questions to illustrate participant opinions on how well the City is performing in providing preferred recreational programs.

The results of the recreational programming demand assessment are categorized based on where a data point is in relation to four (4) quadrants:

- **Keep Up the Good Work.** Identifies recreational programs where the City's ability to support the activity closely matches a strong community desire.
- **Needs Work.** Shows where the City is under-performing in providing recreational programming compared to community demand.
- **Possible Overkill.** Contains recreational programs provided/supported by the City that exceed the community's desire for them.
- **Low Priority.** Contains programs where City provision is low, but so is community demand.

The survey results are plotted in relation to a diagonal target line that serves as a gauge for consistency between community demand for a recreational program and community satisfaction with provision of the program. Survey results that are closer to the target line suggest a more satisfactory level of service in relation to program demand.

Figure 3. Recreational Programming Demand Assessment ¹



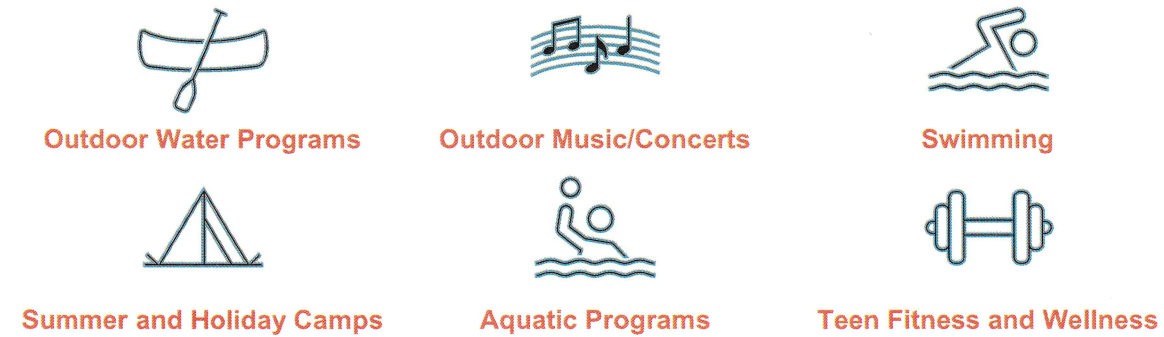
¹ The analysis is based on finding from the community survey distributed as part of the planning process.

FINDINGS

The recreational programs that fall under the “Needs Work” category are listed below. The six (6) programs with the largest discrepancy between importance and performance are indicated in Figure 4 and should be considered the highest priority for improvement.

- Adult fitness and wellness programs
- Adult sports programs
- Afterschool programs
- Aquatic programs (e.g., swim lessons, fitness)
- Nature programs (birding, plant id, etc.)
- Environmental education
- Flag football
- Golf lessons
- Martial arts programs
- Music lessons/classes
- Outdoor water programs (e.g., canoeing, kayaking, etc.)
- Outdoor music/concerts
- Pickleball leagues
- Pre-school programs
- Special needs programs
- Senior programs
- Special events/family festivals
- Swimming
- Teen fitness and wellness programs
- Teen sports programs
- Summer and holiday camps
- Tennis lessons, clinics, and leagues
- Volleyball
- Youth fitness and wellness programs

Figure 4. High Priority Recreational Programs



Age Segment Analysis

Combining the program data provided by the City of Jonesboro with information gathered through staff and community discussions, an “age segmentation analysis” of the eight (8) core programs areas was created. Figure 5 depicts each core program along with the age segments they serve. The **primary** age market is the group of residents the City caters to the most or who is most likely to be the user of its services. The **secondary** age market is the next market that has the potential to become a primary user of the services. Recognizing that many programs serve multiple age segments, primary and secondary markets were identified for each program area.

Figure 5. Recreation Programming Age Segment Analysis

Core Program	Age 12 and Under	Teen	Adult	Senior
Adult Athletics (Softball)		Secondary	Primary	
Community Events	Primary	Primary	Secondary	Secondary
Shooting Sports	Secondary	Primary	Primary	Secondary
Youth Athletics (Basketball)	Primary	Secondary		
Youth Athletics (Soccer)	Primary	Secondary		
Youth Athletics (Softball)	Primary	Secondary		
Youth Athletics (Volleyball)	Primary	Secondary		
Youth Athletics (Misc.)	Primary	Secondary		

Based on data provided by City of Jonesboro.

FINDINGS

Findings from the age segment analysis show that the Department excels at providing a variety of youth athletic programming. As observed from the community survey, conducted as part of this planning process, Jonesboro residents see youth programming as an important program type and recognize that the community is performing well in providing these program types.

The Department should provide a balanced approach to programming by targeting each age segment as a primary market served by three (3) or more core program areas. Given the lack of programming for seniors and the growing demand for services in this age bracket, as identified in the demand assessment (pg. 8 and 9), it is recommended that the Department further grow the programming options for this age group, whether through existing programs or new programming.

Age segment analyses should ideally be done for every program offered by the Department. Program coordinators/managers should include this information when creating or updating program plans for individual programs. This age segment analysis should be updated every year to note changes or to refine age segment categories.

Program and Service Lifecycle

A lifecycle analysis involves reviewing the preceding five (5) years of a public service provider's program data to understand trends of growth or decline in participation across all of the providers program offerings.² Programs are reviewed and sorted into six (6) categories:



Introduction

A new program with modest participation



Take-Off

Participation is rapidly increasing



Growth

There is a moderate, but consistent increase in participation



Mature

There is a slow increase in participation



Saturated

There is little to no increase in participation



Decline

Participation is declining

The majority of the community's recreational programs should be in the "introduction," "take-off," and "growth" stages. These stages represent programs that have high levels of resident interest and typically receive a large return on investment. Programs in these stages should be monitored to ensure growth is consistent and the program continues to be desired by residents.

The "mature" stage represents programs that have become more established and are still steadily growing in participation. A common target for communities is to have 40 percent of recreational programming be in the "mature" stage. Programs in this stage provide stability to the overall program portfolio but should continuously be monitored to ensure they do not enter the "saturated or "decline" stages.

The City should have few (less than 10 percent) of their recreational programs in the "saturated" and "decline" stages. As programs enter these stages, they must be closely reviewed and evaluated for modification or elimination. When this occurs, it is recommended to modify these programs to begin a new lifecycle with the introductory stage or to add new programs based upon community needs and trends.

² For the Jonesboro PRMP planning process, consideration is given to the decline in participation during the 2020 and 2021 years due to COVID-19.

Figure 6. Recreational Programming Lifecycle Analysis

Stage	Number of Programs ¹	Jonesboro Distribution
Introduction	4	55%
Take-off	1	
Growth	6	
Mature	5	25%
Saturated	1	20%
Decline	3	

1. Based on data provided by City of Jonesboro.
Participation numbers for Winter Wonderland not provided.

FINDINGS

As indicated in Figure 6, the lifecycle analysis results reveal the distribution of programs are relatively balanced, with the need to reevaluate a few programs in the “saturated” and “decline” stages. The City has a healthy level of “introduction,” “take-off,” and “growth” programs, led by increased participation in youth soccer and shooting sports programs. The percentage of “mature” programs operated by the City of Jonesboro is slightly lower than commonly used targets but is still outpacing those programs where participation has peaked or is in decline. Increasing the number of “mature” programs will help provide stable and reliable programming in the City. Programs such as junior target golf and tackle football are two (2) examples of programs that are declining in participation and could be reviewed for modification or be replaced with alternative programming. It is recommended to keep as few programs as possible in these lower two (2) stages, but it is understood that programs are always in flux.

Programs and Service Classification

Classifying recreational program standards and services is essential to ensure that a public recreation service provider offers organized activities that remain aligned with the community’s interests, while operating in a fiscally sustainable manner. When establishing service classifications, programs should be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- **Step 1:** Identify the benefit level (Does the program benefit individuals or the general public?)
- **Step 2:** Identify the program classification (How is the program valued by the community?)
- **Step 3:** Establish the pricing strategy (Who bears the primary cost of the program?)
- **Step 4:** Set a target for cost recovery (What percentage of the programming costs should the City seek to recoup?)

BENEFIT LEVEL

Each recreational program was reviewed to understand whether it benefits the individual or the community at large. Programs that focus on specific or niche interests may only benefit the individual, whereas programs that capture broad public interest and serve a diverse audience are deemed to offer community-wide benefits. The identified benefit level in Figure 7 (pg. 14) help determine the service classification and costs recovery goal.

PROGRAM CLASSIFICATION

The program classification was determined through reviewing the benefit and impact it has on the community. The classification is broken into three (3) distinct program types:

Essential Service. These services have broad public appeal and directly benefit members of the community. These services are expected in a community of this size and are often tax supported through the general fund.

Important Service. These services have narrower community appeal and may indirectly benefit members of the community. These services are expected in a community of this size but may have the need met or supported through third-party vendors. “Important” services may be funded through a mix of taxes and user fees.

Value-Added Service. These services target a specific user group and do not benefit the community at large. These services should be priced to fully recover associated direct costs and funded exclusively through user fees.

PRICING STRATEGY

To ensure the Department’s programming is reaching the residents most in need of services, a pricing strategy should be established. The pricing strategy is directly tied to the program classification and determines who should bear the primary costs of program operation and administration. The two (2) primary pricing strategies include:

General Fund

Programs that are funded through tax dollars or grant funding that is taken from the City’s general fund. This is primarily used for “essential” and “important” services (as defined by your program classification).

User Fees

Programs that are primarily funded by participants of the program through user fees. This is used primarily with “important” and “value-added” services.

COST RECOVERY

Measuring the cost-efficient delivery of the programs that are offered by the Department to residents and visitors will require a re-evaluation of how direct expenses for each program are allocated. Such an evaluation of expenses compared to revenues serves as the basis for the cost recovery goals recommended by this Plan and serve as a guide to decrease the department’s long-term reliance on general funds. Recommended targets are based on program classification and pricing strategy. Generally, “essential” programs require lower cost recovery targets, as these programs are more important to community well-being. “Important” or “value-added” programs should be subject to a higher cost recovery target, as these programs benefit fewer residents or a specific target audience. Recommended cost recovery goals by a percentage of direct costs for the Department to provide the program are presented below based on program classification:

- **Essential: 0 – 35 percent**
- **Important: 35 – 75 percent**
- **Value-added: 75 – 100 percent**

RECREATIONAL PROGRAM SERVICE CLASSIFICATION

The program service analysis provides information that can be used to price programs based upon an accurate understanding of direct costs related to program delivery. As displayed in Figure 7, the City provides many recreational programs that are under the “community” benefit level. In addition to these community-wide benefits, a majority of the programs are classified as “essential” or “important,” showing that the City is placing resources in programs that benefit a large cross-section of users.

Figure 7. Recreational Program Service Classification

Core Program	Benefit Level ¹	Classification ²	Pricing Strategy ²	Recommended Cost Recovery Goal ²
Adult Athletics (Softball)	Individual	Important	User Fees	35 - 75%
Community Events	Community	Essential	General Fund	0 - 35%
Shooting Sports	Individual	Value Added	User Fees	75 - 100%
Youth Athletics (Basketball)	Community	Essential	General Fund	0 - 35%
Youth Athletics (Soccer)	Community	Essential	General Fund	0 - 35%
Youth Athletics (Softball)	Community	Essential	General Fund	0 - 35%
Youth Athletics (Volleyball)	Community	Essential	General Fund	0 - 35%
Youth Athletics (Misc.)	Community	Important	Mix of General Fund and User Fees	35% - 75%

1. See page 12 for description

2. See page 13 for description

Based on data provided by City of Jonesboro

FINDINGS

As presented in Figure 7, the City of Jonesboro provides a good balance of recreational programs that benefit the whole community as well as individuals. The core program areas are heavily focused on the community and essential programs, ensuring city funding is being spent on the greatest need in the community. The pricing strategy and recommended cost recovery goals are based on the benefit level and classification of the core program area.

Pricing based on established operating budget recovery goals will provide flexibility to maximize all pricing strategies to the fullest. Allowing the staff to work within a pricing range tied to cost recovery goals will permit them to set prices based on classification and demand to maximize user participation and encourage additional group rate pricing where applicable. To gain and provide consistency, staff should begin tracking total costs associated with all recreational programs and adopt a refined pricing policy for the Department to operate effectively and efficiently to meet the program cost recovery goals identified above.

It is recommended that the Department adopt the recommended cost recovery goals as presented in Figure 7. To do this, the Departments should focus on:

- Consistently delivering high quality programs and services
- Strategically price programs and services
- Solicit sponsorships and donations to develop a sustainable earned income stream
- Expand marketing to increase the volume of participation in programs and services



“Essential” community programs, like youth soccer, typically generate the highest rates of participation in Jonesboro and represent a recreational programming area that is an expected service of a community the size of Jonesboro.

Event Participation

Figure 8 (pg. 16) identifies the 11 recurring events sponsored by the City and the percent change in participation over past five (5) years (or earliest year data is available). The AYSSP Youth Trap Tournament was in its first year (in 2022) but is expected to continue on an annual basis. Five (5) of the events experienced increased participation and five (5) of the events experienced a decrease in participation. The decline in participation may be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic and the programming restrictions that were in place. This lack of community programming and social distancing requirement during 2020 and 2021 may have continued to effect participation leading into 2022 and was considered when evaluating participation.

Figure 8. Event Participation

Event Name	Estimated Attendance ¹					Percent Change (2018-2022)
	2018	2019	2020 ²	2021 ²	2022	
AYSSP Youth Trap Tournament	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	500	N/A
Egg-cessible Miracle League Easter Egg Hunt	200	200	N/A	300	300	+ 50%
Halloween Bash Softball Tournament	N/A	N/A	N/A	650	500	- 23%
Harvest Cup Soccer Tournament	1,300	1,100	N/A	1,000	850	- 34%
Icebreaker Volleyball Tournament	2,700	2,800	N/A	2,500	3,000	+ 11%
Mountain Dew Classic	2,200	2,000	N/A	1,240	1,140	- 48%
Movie at the Park	300	350	400	N/A	200	- 33%
MYAC Spring Community Fair	N/A	N/A	N/A	150	200	+ 33%
Pre-Holiday Basketball Tournament	900	800	N/A	1,300	1,200	+ 33%
Red Wolf Classic Softball Tournament	1,000	1,500	N/A	600	500	- 50%
We Care JO Volleyball Tournament	1,500	1,200	N/A	2,000	1,800	+ 20%

1. Attendance estimates provided by City of Jonesboro.
 2. COVID-19 pandemic may affect participation in community events.

FINDINGS

Overall participation in community events does not have consistent growth or decline over the past five (5) years. As many of these events were likely impacted by COVID-19, the review of event participation should be continued into 2023 and beyond to evaluate if the decline in participation was an anomaly or is indicative of a change in community preferences.

Participation is consistently highest for sporting events and tournaments. While these events have the greatest level of involvement, the City should consider adding new family friendly events and outdoor music events, as identified in Figure 3 (pg. 8).

Summary of Key Themes

The summary of key themes outlines the findings from the preceding review and analysis.

RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING REVIEW

- **Age Segment.** The City has a strong focus on programming for youth but lacks a balanced level of programming for adults and seniors.
- **Lifecycle.** Jonesboro has introduced new programs and has a healthy amount of “introduction,” “take-off,” and “growth” programming, but also has too many programs in the “saturated” and “decline” stages. City resources going to these programs in the “saturated” and “decline” stages may be better spent going to new programming desired by residents (as identified in Figures 3 and 4 on pages 8 and 9).
- **Service Classification.** The City offers a balanced set of programs that provide essential and community-based programming along with programs that benefit the community on an individual level. Every program provided by the City should be reviewed to best recover costs, as associated with their importance to the community.

PROGRAM AND EVENT ADDITIONS

- **Aquatics.** Residents in Jonesboro desire more aquatics programming. Upon completion of renovations to the Jonesboro Pool at Nettleton Community Center and the new facilities at Parker Park and the Race Street Sports Complex, programming should be added to activate these spaces.
- **Community Events.** Residents are interested in more community events, specifically more outdoor concerts. The amphitheater space at Craighead Forest Park and new parks proposed in a companion access-based assessment conducted as part of the master planning process should be built to accommodate these events.
- **Water-based Recreation.** There are many recreational facilities that residents believe need more investment. Water-based activities like water access (canoe/kayaking) and swimming at Craighead Forest Lake could be good additions to the park, depending on the City’s ability to take measures to improve water quality in the lake.
- **Event Participation.** Participation is currently highest for sporting events and tournaments but the City should consider adding new family friendly festivals and outdoor music events.
- **Community Survey.** To ensure residents needs are being met, the Department should conduct user surveys at events and following the completion of each program/class to better gauge participants’ preferences for future activities.

Policies and Investments

This plan recommends 14 strategies to improve the long-term success and sustainability of the City of Jonesboro's recreational programs and events. The strategies below have been selected to address the finding of this assessment and align with community needs, preferences, and values.

The categories and strategies below are not listed according to priority and should not deter City leaders and other community champions from considering future actions or initiatives not included on this list.

RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING REVIEW

Strategy 1.1. Recreational Service Areas

Maintain an adjustable ledger of recreational programs to facilitate ongoing modifications to the City's programming portfolio.

Maintain and expand upon the age segment analysis and lifecycle analysis conducted as part of the planning process to adjust the Department's recreational programming portfolio to best meet the needs of the community. These analysis should be done for each recreational program and results should be used to inform future strategic decisions about the City's overall recreation program portfolio. Refine recreation program offerings based on enrollment trends to replace low enrollment or canceled programs with programs that allow the City and its partners to provide a balanced programming portfolio.

Strategy 1.2. Recreational Programming Administration

Hire administrative staff responsible for the efficient delivery of recreational programming services.

Consolidate recreational programming staff from the various parks and indoor recreation centers under a new administrative structure. New recreational programming administration should be led by a division director and include a new staff member for administration and data analysis and a manager for all indoor recreation facilities. This new structure will help promote consistent practices across the Department and consolidate the recreational programming budget into a unified division.

Strategy 1.3. Special Events Participation

Track community event rates of participation to ensure that the City event portfolio adjusts to meet changing needs and preferences of residents.

Expand and maintain the event participation analysis for community events to decide the stage of growth or decline of each event. Use this analysis to monitor event participation and strategically replace events with new events desired by the community, as identified in Figure 3 (pg. 8).

Strategy 1.4. Special Event Cost Recovery

Measure staff hours and general City expenditures related to preparation, management, and post-event activities to determine full costs related to event support.

Evaluate the costs and direct expenses related to special events hosted by the Department. A cost-assessment of the City's annual special events should consider participating staff from all City departments and should be incorporated in the annual budget review. Use the identified expenses to secure enough partners and sponsorships to offset costs related to the event.

Strategy 1.5. Recreational Program Pricing Policies

Adopt a recreational program pricing strategy that establishes clear cost recovery goals.

Evaluate how the direct expense for each recreational program is allocated by the department and adopt a pricing policy to decrease the Department’s long-term reliance on general funds. This policy should allow staff to work within a pricing range tied to the cost recovery goals in this Plan (Figure 7, pg. 14) and set prices based on market factors and “differential pricing” (i.e. primetime/non-primetime, season/off-season rates) to maximize user participation and also encourage additional group rate pricing where applicable.

RECREATIONAL PROGRAM AND EVENT ADDITIONS

Strategy 2.1. Program and Event Participant Survey

Conduct annual surveys to participants of City operated recreational programs and community events to better understand user preferences and identify areas for improvement.

The Department should survey participants (or parents of participants) of city operated recreational programs and attendees of community events. Surveys should be written to gather information on user experience, positive aspects of the program/event, new event preferences, and areas for improvement. Results should be compiled and reviewed each year to evaluate needed changes in programming.

Strategy 2.2. Event Diversification

Expand the City’s event offerings to provide more arts, culture, and nature-based community events.

Prioritize efforts to increase the amount and distribution of annual community events held at City parks and other public areas during the calendar year. Share the responsibility of event creation and management among the Department and other municipal departments to allow parks and recreation staff to balance event administration responsibilities with recreational programming modifications and monitoring.

Substantial expansion of community event offerings should only occur in combination with the completion of cost assessment for the City’s ongoing special events, enhancements to recreation program reporting, and the creation of a designated position to oversee and market programs. These activities are important to ensure that staff resources are adequate to support expanded event calendars.

Strategy 2.3. Aquatics Programming

Leverage new aquatics facilities by introducing a suite of new aquatics-based recreational programs.

As the City begins adding indoor and outdoor pools at City parks and community centers, there should be an addition of new aquatics programming to leverage the new facilities. Results from the community survey, focus group discussions, and advisory committee meetings have shown a high demand for more aquatics programming. Programs that can be added or expanded include swim lessons, adult and senior fitness classes, competitive swim leagues, and competitive tournaments. The City should continue working with third-party operators, such as the Jets Aquatics Club and Shark Wave Aquatics Team, to supplement aquatics programs in the community.

Strategy 2.4. Activate Craighead Forest Lake

Add water-based programming and amenities to Craighead Forest Lake.

Further analysis and planning of the Craighead Forest Lake should be done to better understand potential programming types and the City’s ability to improve the water quality of the lake. Community survey and focus group discussions have shown a high demand for more water-based programming and events.

Craighead Forest Lake has the potential to offer kayak and canoe rentals, swimming areas, and other water programming.

Strategy 2.5. Senior Programming

Add City recreational programming to serve older adults.

Continued efforts must be made to create programs that will interest older adults. The Department should lead polling efforts in coordination with senior centers to expand on results discovered in the community survey conducted during this planning process.

The City should consider adding senior programming during events as well as multi-day courses and programs. Examples could consist of art, pickleball leagues, aquatics programs, fitness and wellness courses, and more. It is important to remember that the success of a senior program is just as reliant on the location of the event as it is on the specific activity.

Strategy 2.6. Special Needs Programming

Add additional inclusive recreational programs for residents with special needs.

Maximize use of existing and planned inclusive recreation facilities, identified in the Social Determinants of Health Plan, by adding new recreational programs designed for residents with special needs. The Department should work with local service organizations to affirm the perceived degree of need for programming catering to individuals with disabilities (identified in Figure 3, pg. 8). Applicable local service and sports organizations can collectively assist the City when compiling a curriculum and identifying instructors/coaches for special needs programs.

Strategy 2.7. Nature and Environmental Programming

Add new nature and outdoor adventure programming.

Create and administer new nature and environmental programming to meet the community demand observed in the Figure 3 (pg. 8). These programs should make use of existing park space, such as Craighead Forest Park, and work with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission to highlight the natural and unique features of the Crowley's Ridge area.

Strategy 2.8. Tennis and Pickleball Programming

Add City operated pickleball and tennis programming.

Add new tennis and pickleball programming (e.g., coaching, lessons, leagues, etc.) to maximize use of new and updated courts around the community. Programming should allow for all ages to participate, engaging younger and older adults. The City should also consider adding new indoor pickleball and tennis courts to renovated or and/or new community centers to allow year-round play.

Strategy 2.9. Recreational Program Portfolio

Diversify the city's recreational program portfolio to maximize the utilization of recreational amenities and to maintain appropriate program lifecycle balances.

Create and administer - or proactively work with partners to facilitate the creation of - new recreational programs and services in the areas of greatest demand as illustrated Figure 3 and Figure 4 (pgs. 8 and 9). Monitor participation trends of programming and services in Jonesboro offered by the City and third-party vendors to focus their efforts on increased programming in the areas of greatest documented unmet need.