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OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT

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

Prepared by
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Purpose and Introduction

The staffing, budget, and maintenance practices of a parks and recreation service provider serve as major determinants of the quality of a community's park spaces, facilities, and recreational programming. Through the review of the Jonesboro Parks and Recreation Department's (the Department) administrative and maintenance practices, this Parks and Recreation Master Plan (the Plan) provides recommendations to align the Department with national best practices that cater to the needs of the community.

This assessment should be used as a guide to Department employees and serve as general direction for future administrative and maintenance practices.

OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT

This assessment reviews three (3) key areas of the Department's administrative and maintenance practices: organizational structure, parks and recreation budget, and parks system maintenance.

- **Organizational Structure.** A review of the Department's current staffing levels and the administrative structure. The analysis is based on a comparison of the Department's level of full-time equivalent staff (a combination of full-time and part-time staff) with that of other parks and recreation service providers through the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) metrics. This assessment also evaluates the distribution of staff by function.
- **Parks and Recreation Budget.** A review of the Department's operational budget and capital improvement budget for 2023 and its relationship to the overall municipal budget. This section also examines the Department's budget growth over the past five (5) years and revenue by source.
- **Parks System Maintenance.** An examination the Department's expenditures and staffing dedicated to park and facility maintenance. The section goes on to cover the three maintenance modes and provides guidance on maintenance levels for parks in the system.

Findings from these assessments are summarized in the "key themes" section and inform the list of policy and investment strategies at the end of this report. (**Note:** An analysis of recreational programming practices has also been conducted as part of the planning process and is presented in the Recreational Programming Assessment).

BEST PRACTICES

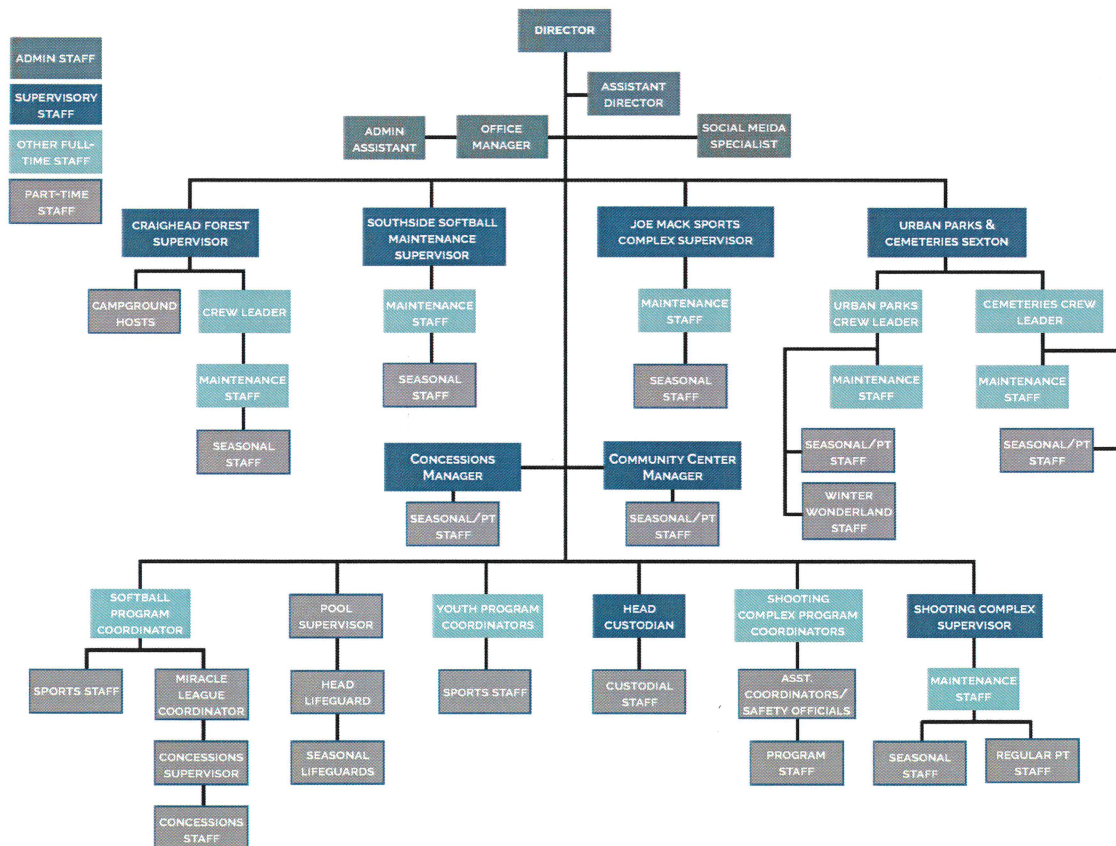
Jonesboro's staffing and budget levels of service are calculated and compared to national medians for similar sized communities, as recorded through the NRPA. This organization presents data and key insights from 1,000 park and recreation agencies from across the United States, providing critical metrics on budgets, staffing, facilities, and more. The comparisons are useful for gauging how Jonesboro compares to other communities, but should not be viewed as conclusive, as communities will vary by services, culture, geography, and demographics.

Organizational Structure

STAFFING LEVELS

As of 2023, the Jonesboro Parks and Recreation Department employed a total of 33 full-time staff and 145 part-time/seasonal staff members. Oversight of the department falls to the Parks and Recreation Director and the Assistant Director, who oversee all administrative, operations, maintenance, and programming responsibilities of the Department. The Department's current organizational structure is shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Parks and Recreation Department Organizational Chart (2023) ¹



1. Based on data provided by the City of Jonesboro.

Figure 2 below reviews the total full time equivalent (FTE) staff in Jonesboro's Parks and Recreation Department. It is compared to national medians for communities of a similar size.

- **Staff Levels.** The 33 full-time staff and 145 part-time/seasonal staff combine to create a full time equivalent (FTE) staff of 95.5. When compared to communities of a similar size, Jonesboro exceeds the national median of 75.8 FTE, but is below the upper quartile median of 127.5 FTE.
- **Staff Compared To Residents.** The Department employs 12.3 staff members for every 10,000 residents, which aligns closely to the national median of 11.1 for communities of a similar size.¹
- **Staff Needs.** While the department has more FTE staff when compared to other parks service providers of a similar size, the current duties of the Department and greater amount of park acreage within Jonesboro (see Access Assessment, pg. 13) require a larger staff to maintain the existing parks system and administer the growing service needs. To meet these needs, additional full-time staff are proposed. (A proposed organizational chart for the Department can be viewed on Figure 4, pg. 5)

Figure 2. Parks and Recreation Department Staff (2023)

	Staffing, Jonesboro Parks and Recreation Dept. ¹	Staffing, Communities Between 50,000 – 99,999 (Median) ²	Staffing, Communities Between 50,000 – 99,999 (Upper Quartile) ²
Full-time Staff	33		
Part-time/Seasonal Staff	145		
Full-time Equivalent (FTE)	95.5	75.8	127.5
FTE per 10,000 Residents	12.3	11.1	18.1

1. Based on data provided by the City of Jonesboro.

2. NRPA Agency Performance Report (2023)

Figure 3 below shows the distribution of FTE staff by responsibility and compares Jonesboro's distribution to NRPA averages.

- **Operations and Maintenance Staff.** Most Jonesboro parks and recreation staff (68 percent) in the Department are performing operations and maintenance tasks, higher than the NRPA average of 46 percent. This can be attributed to the large amount of park acreage in Jonesboro when compared to other communities (see Access Assessment memorandum).
- **Program and Administration Staff.** With the higher level of operations and maintenance staff, the Department's staffing for "programming" and for "administration" falls to a percentage below the levels of other park service providers. This disparity causes concern regarding oversight, as there are fewer administrative and supervisory staff.
- **Part-time and Seasonal Staff.** The Department FTE is primarily comprised of part-time and seasonal staff (65 percent of FTE). By adding additional full-time staff, the department may reduce the need for part-time and seasonal help.

Figure 3. Parks and Recreation Department Staff by Function (2023)

City of Jonesboro (FY 2023) ¹				NRPA Park Metrics (2023) ²	
Full-Time Staff	Part-Time /Seasonal FTE	Total FTE Staff	Distribution of Department FTEs	Total FTE Staff ³ (Median / Upper Quartile)	Distribution of Agency FTEs
Operations & Maintenance					
22	43.2	65.2	68%	34.9 / 58.7	46%
Programming					
6	18.7	24.7	26%	22.7 / 38.3	30%
Administration					
5	0.6	5.6	6%	12.9 / 21.7	17%
Capital Development					
0	0	0	0%	2.3 / 3.8	3%
Other					
0	0	0	0%	3.0 / 5.1	4%

1. Data collected from the City of Jonesboro.

2. NRPA Agency Performance Report (2023)

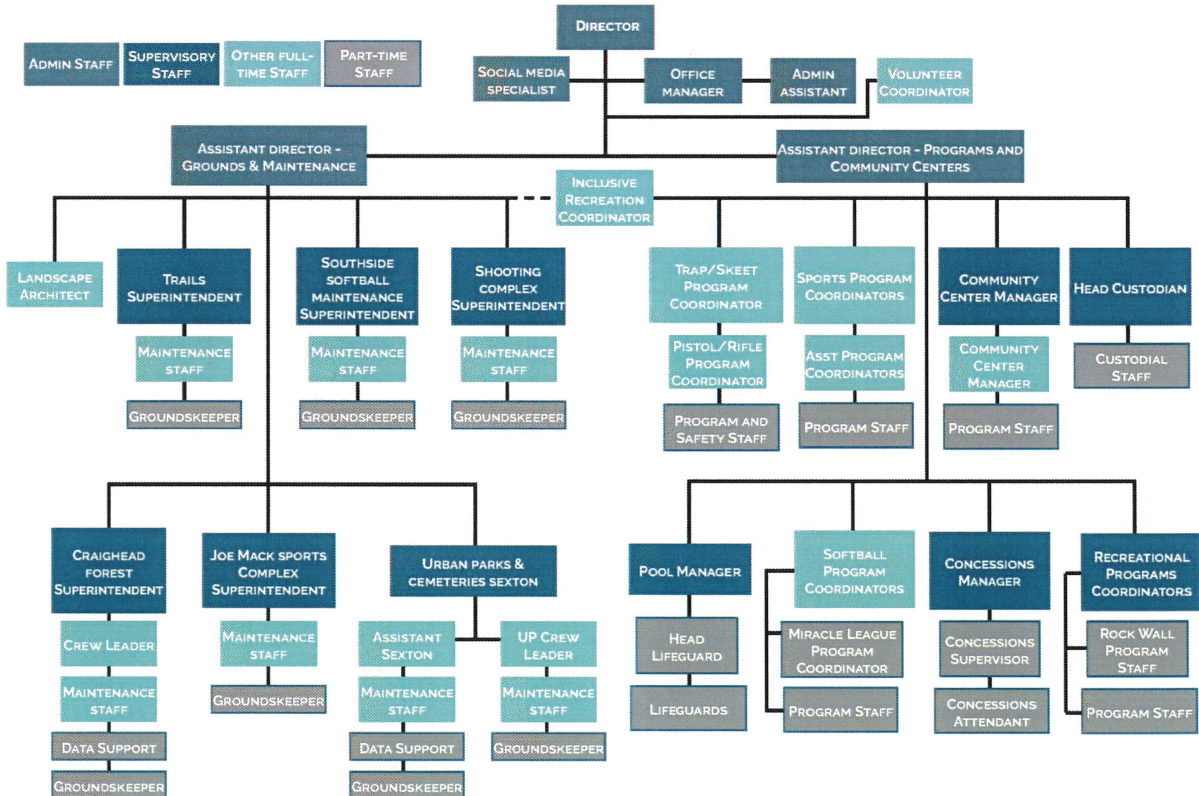
3. Estimates calculated using figures from the NRPA Performance Review (2023)

STAFF ORGANIZATION

As displayed in Figure 1 (pg. 2) the organizational structure of the Jonesboro Parks and Recreation Department has few tiers of hierarchy, causing a majority of supervisory staff and coordinators to directly report to the Department Director and/or Assistant Director. Considering the lower percentage of administrative staff compared to other communities (Figure 3, pg. 3), the current organizational structure may divert the Department leadership's attention away from long-term community recreation needs and strategies in favor of short-term needs, which could be managed at lower administrative levels. Further, the City Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Budget separates the Department into **12 subdivision** (titled "departments" in the budget), each with their own budget and associated staff. These subdivisions include "Administration," "Softball," "Cemetery Care," "Winter Wonderland," "Urban Parks," "Craighead Forest Park," "Joe Mack Campbell Park," "Miracle League," "Community Centers," "Shooting Sports Complex," "Jonesboro Pool Center," and "Sports Programs." This subdividing of the Department may lead to confusion and overlap in staff responsibilities. A restructuring and consolidation of these divisions should be considered.

In addition to consolidating the Department's internal divisions, the strategic addition of full-time staff may help reduce reliance on part-time and seasonal help. As detailed in the companion Recreational Programming Assessment memorandum and in the figure below, a new administrative structure could consolidate recreational programming staff under an Assistant Director of Programs and Community Centers. Similarly, a new administrative structure for operations and maintenance could consolidate maintenance staff across the Department under an additional full-time Assistant Director of Grounds and Maintenance.

Figure 4. Potential Parks and Recreation Organizational Chart



New staffing additions may extend beyond the current duties and responsibilities of the Department. Observed through the community survey, conducted as part of the planning process, **18 percent of residents who do not regularly visit City parks stated that the security of the parks is insufficient.** This concern was also shared during focus group meetings. While there are many factors that can play into these concerns, such as park maintenance, lights, visibility, and activity, the Department should explore adopting a park ranger program to add a targeted security presence to park spaces. Park rangers can provide an added level of security and comfort for families and individuals visiting parks, and pre-emptively identify developing maintenance issues prior to the general public.

Community outreach and focus group discussions also indicated that the Department could build on its community engagement initiatives. One survey participant stated, “*Jonesboro Parks & Rec needs to have a more visible and up to date online presence.*” In addition, a theme from focus group discussions indicated that the Department could do more to coordinate with outside agencies and provide information on program offerings and events. While the Department has already budgeted for a Social Media Specialist in the FY 2023 Budget, to further relieve these concerns there should also be a focus on building a community relations plan, a task that could fall to the Social Media Specialist.

STAFF RETENTION

For Jonesboro to attract and retain qualified staff, the Department must offer competitive compensation packages when compared to other service providers and local employers. While salary and benefits often vary based on service population, region, and other market factors, benchmarking salaries to national medians can provide a comparison of how competitive Jonesboro is to other agencies. Figure 5 displays how salaries for key Jonesboro staff compares to other agencies, as recorded in the 2023 NRPA Parks and Recreation Salary Survey. This comparison shows that **Jonesboro base salaries are, on average, 41 percent less than the national median for similar positions.** Even when accounting for regional differences, this is greater than the total variance in median salary between Jonesboro residents (\$29,779) and the rest of the United States (\$38,732) at 30 percent.¹

Figure 5. Parks and Recreation Department Base Salary Comparison (2023)

Position	City of Jonesboro ¹	National Median ²
Agency Director	\$69,600	\$114,000
Assistant Director / Operations Director	\$58,740	\$83,000
Recreation Director	NA	\$82,801
Facilities Manager	\$47,880	\$68,385
Program Coordinator	\$49,668	\$54,566
Administrative Assistant	\$32,285	\$47,672

1. Data collected from the City of Jonesboro.

2. NRPA Parks and Recreation Salary Survey (2023)

In addition to salary, professional development is a recommended method of recruiting, retaining, and building staff to meet the needs of the Department. Certification programs, such as Certified Park and Recreation Professional (CPRP) and Certified Park and Recreation Executive (CPRE), increase staff knowledge on industry issues and best practices, brings a higher level of confidence in the Department from community members, and can provide upward job mobility for staff. At the time of this report there were no staff members in the Department with a professional certification.

¹ US Census Bureau, Median earnings, population 16 years and over (5-year average, 2021)

Parks and Recreation Budget

Figure 6 illustrates the Jonesboro Parks and Recreation Department's budget for the 2023 fiscal year (FY). At \$4,713,952 dollars, the Department's FY 2023 budget comprised 7.8 percent of the total municipal operating budget (\$60,199,794). **According to the 2023 NRPA Park Metrics, Jonesboro is allocating 41 percent less to parks and recreation than communities of a similar size (\$8,005,757).** Likewise, the Department's operating expenditures for FY 2023 were **\$59.43 per capita**, significantly less than the median for similar communities (\$120.70), and equated to **\$3,649 dollars per acre**, substantially less than the median for similar sized communities (\$9,108 per acre).

The 2023 operating budget is divided into personnel accounts, operations accounts, and select operating capital costs from the Capital Improvements (parks) items. Personnel accounts include full-time and part-time salaries and associated benefits. The operations accounts consist of reoccurring department expenses, such as utilities, insurance and licenses, professional services, advertising and printing, building maintenance, maintenance equipment, and contracts. The operating capital costs comprise of regularly occurring maintenance of parks spaces, including fence repair, walkway repairs, and other similar expenses. **Personnel accounts comprise 65 percent of the department budget, higher than the national average of 55 percent.**

Figure 6. Parks and Recreation Department, Operating Expenditures (FY2023)

Operating Budget	FY 2023 (Amount) ¹
Parks and Recreation Department Operating Expenditures	\$4,713,952
Personnel Accounts	\$3,078,122
Operations Accounts	\$1,324,505
Operating Capital Costs ²	\$311,325

1. Based on the City of Jonesboro FY 2023 Budget.

2. Total identified from select 2023 Capital Improvements (Parks) items.

In addition to the operating budget, the Department's Capital Improvements Budget (Figure 7) identifies over \$5,654,347 dollars that are allocated for improvements to park properties and facilities. These funds are allocated outside of the standard operating budget. Many of the capital improvement projects meet the demands that were identified from the community during the planning process, including construction of a second swimming pool and improvements to the Jonesboro Pool Center; addition of soft surface trail, trail lighting, and an additional dog park. **The five-year total from 2019 to 2023 for Parks and Recreation capital improvement expenditures was \$15,467,901, eight percent less than the NRPA median for similarly sized communities (\$16,815,000).**

Figure 7. Parks and Recreation Department, FY23 Capital Improvements

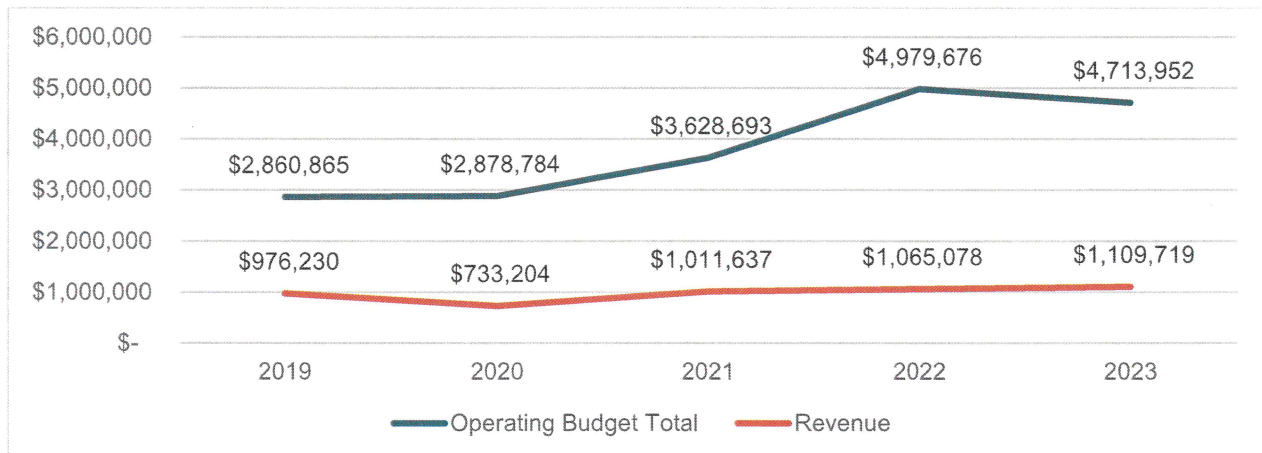
Capital Improvements Budget	FY 2023 (Amount) ¹
Parks Department Capital Improvements	\$5,654,347
Administration	\$1,000,000
Southside Softball Complex	\$255,000
Urban Parks	\$1,135,000
Craighead Forest Park	\$1,010,500

Capital Improvements Budget	FY 2023 (Amount) ¹
Joe Mack Campbell Park	\$1,243,847
Community Centers	\$115,000
Shooting Sports Complex	\$65,000
Jonesboro Pool Center	\$1,730,000

1. Information collected from the City of Jonesboro FY 2023 Budget.

Figure 8 displays that over the past five years, the Parks and Recreation Department operational budget (personnel, operations, and capital operating costs) has risen from \$2,860,865 in FY 2019 to \$4,713,952 in FY 2023, **representing a 65 percent increase**. Revenues have also been increasing over the past five years, though at a slower rate than the total budget. **In FY 2023 the Department projected a revenue of \$1,109,719, a 14 percent increase from FY 2019.**

Figure 8. Jonesboro Parks and Recreation Department Historic Budget and Revenue¹



1. Based on the City of Jonesboro FY 2019 - 2023 Budgets.

DEPARTMENT REVENUE

Revenue that is generated through parks programs and facilities can help offset a portion of the operating costs for the Parks and Recreation Department. Projected departmental revenue for FY 2023 was **\$1,109,719 dollars** (Figure 9), with an expected costs offset of **25 percent of the operating budget**, this is compared to 28 percent for communities of a similar size.¹ The largest expected revenue source is from sponsorships (26 percent) followed by sports entry fees (23 percent) and concessions sales (19 percent).

As identified in the companion Recreational Programming Assessment memorandum, conducted as part of the Master Plan process, a focus on “cost recovery” related to recreational programming can decrease the Department’s increasing reliance on the general fund. In addition to the cost recovery goals identified in the Recreational Programming Assessment, cost recovery and cost mitigation through partnership and sustainable maintenance practices may further help the Department’s offset costs.

¹ NRPA Agency Performance Review (2023)

Figure 9. Estimated Parks and Recreation Revenue by Source (FY2023)

Revenue Source	FY 2023 (Amount)
General Fund	Total: \$1,109,719
Burial Permits	\$42,720
Concessions Sales	\$210,264
E.B. Watson Center	\$9,778
Earl Bell Center Revenue	\$6,977
Craighead Forest Pavilion	\$25,000
Allen Park Community Center	\$13,763
Parker Park Community Center	\$8,593
Contract Instructor Fees	\$4,612
Joe Mack Campbell Park Revenue	\$36,133
Sponsorships	\$286,710
Sports Entry Fees	\$253,669
Admission Fees	\$65,197
Facility Rental	\$21,303

Based on the City of Jonesboro FY 2023 Budget.

COSTS MITIGATION

Community partners and volunteers are commonly utilized by parks and recreation service providers to aid in the maintenance and programming of parks and recreation spaces. While the City of Jonesboro has strong partnerships with local groups like Keep Jonesboro Beautiful and local school districts, Parks and Recreation Department staff are ultimately responsible with ensuring the parks are properly maintained and programmed. The Department currently works closely with other City departments to ensure parks are well maintained and connected to residents, but further collaboration with neighborhoods and community groups may help with recurring tasks.

Parks System Maintenance

Parks and recreational facilities that are well maintained are a critical element to delivering high quality programs and services. The quality of maintenance directly impacts user perception of safety, general park usage, and community pride in the parks system. As observed through the community survey¹, conducted as part of the planning process, **nearly 57 percent of respondents visit a City park on a daily or weekly basis**. To maintain and grow this level of activity, safety and comfort must be a priority. The residents of Jonesboro recognize the level of care that the Parks and Recreation Department (the Department) puts into park maintenance. Results of the community survey indicate that **nearly two-thirds of respondents (65.1 percent) believe the parks are in “good” or “excellent” condition** while less than 7 percent of respondents stated that the parks are in poor or very poor condition.

PARKS MAINTENANCE BUDGET

Figure 10 outlines the maintenance costs identified in the FY 2023 budget. Within the \$1.3 million dollar operations budget, \$280,000 dollars is allocated for regular maintenance of the grounds, \$67,500 to equipment maintenance, and \$2,500 dollars is dedicated to maintenance contracts. In addition to the operations budget, there are over \$310,000 dollars in maintenance items identified in the capital improvements budget, including items such as fence repairs and concrete walkway repairs. When combined, **the City allocated a total of \$661,325 dollars towards parks maintenance** in FY 2023, equating to approximately \$510 dollars per acre of parkland.

While the maintenance of most municipal park spaces is under the supervision of the Urban Parks and Cemeteries Supervisor, four (4) of Jonesboro's 22 parks are assigned a dedicated supervisor and maintenance staff. These include Craighead Forest Park, Joe Mack Campbell Sports Complex, Jonesboro Shooting Sports Complex, and Southside Softball Complex. Combined with part-time employees, there are an estimated 65.2 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff members responsible for the operations and maintenance of park grounds, or **19.8-acres per operations and maintenance staff member, approximately 17 percent more than the national median (16.4-acres per staff)**.

Figure 10. Jonesboro Parks And Recreation System Maintenance Budget (FY 2023)

Maintenance Category	Metric ¹
Maintenance for Buildings and Grounds	\$280,000
Maintenance Contracts	\$2,500
Equipment Maintenance	\$67,500
Operating Capital Costs ²	\$311,325
Total Maintenance Budget	\$661,325
Total Park Acreage	1,292.5 acres
Total Maintenance Budget Per Acre	\$511.66
Jonesboro - Acres Per Operations & Maintenance Staff (FTE) ³	19.8
National - Acres Per Operations & Maintenance Staff (FTE) ⁴	16.4 ⁴

1. Based on data from the City of Jonesboro

2. Total identified from select 2023 Capital Improvements (Parks) items.

3. 65.2 FTE, see Figure 3, page 3.

4. Estimate calculated using figures from the NRPA Performance Review (2023)

¹ See the Demand Assessment for the full Community Survey results.

MAINTENANCE STANDARDS

Jonesboro's parks and recreation system includes 1,292.5 acres of programmed and unprogrammed parkland, five (5) indoor recreation centers, one (1) existing outdoor pool (with another under construction), the Winter Wonderland building, and various amenities within each space. It is the Parks and Recreation Department's responsibility to ensure all properties are properly maintained, whether through direct maintenance by Department staff, by volunteers, or through agreements with community groups or contractors. Coordination of these volunteers and contracts currently falls to the Director and Assistant Director but could be managed by an additional full-time position.

To track and manage the various maintenance responsibilities, many recreation providers will establish a maintenance plan that details a maintenance schedules by park, amenity, or facility type. At the time of this report, the Jonesboro Parks and Recreation Department did not utilize a working maintenance plan or standardized maintenance schedule.

A common approach to improving and enhancing maintenance of park ground is through implementing "maintenance modes." Maintenance modes establish a baseline level of service for parkland which may vary by park classification, amenities, (on-site) space programming, and visibility. Maintenance modes are often divided into three levels from which communities may create additional customized categories:

Maintenance Mode/Level 1

Maintenance Mode Level 1 applies to park areas that require the **greatest level** of recurring maintenance in the system. These parks or areas are often revenue producing facilities, such as the Joe Mack Campbell Sports Complex or the Jonesboro Shooting Sports Complex, where the quality and level of maintenance has a direct impact on the facility's ability to maximize revenue generation.

Maintenance Mode/Level 2

Maintenance Mode Level 2 applies to parks or sites that require a **moderate level** of ongoing maintenance. These include parks with amenities that are heavily used but don't necessarily require a high level of customized care, such as Craighead Forest Park and most community, neighborhood, and special-use parks found in the Jonesboro parks system.

Maintenance Mode/Level 3

Maintenance Mode Level 3 applies to parks or sites that require a **nominal level** of maintenance. These generally include unprogrammed and natural parks, or other areas with minimal amenities, such as Beatrice Park.

It is important to note that multiple maintenance mode levels may be applied to each individual park property – in recognition that various spaces within the property may be alternatively programmed for natural, social, or highly specialized active recreational uses. For example, the programmed areas of Joe Mack Sports Complex / Lacy Park will require a higher level of maintenance than the newly acquired and unprogrammed sections of land (until they become programmed).

In lieu of a formal city maintenance plan or maintenance schedule, Figure 11 (pg. 12) was generated to demonstrate potential maintenance modes by municipal park. The figure accounts for park type, user group, and location. While the figure provides an example of how Jonesboro may prioritize park maintenance, a further study of maintenance standards should be conducted through a separate maintenance plan. A maintenance plan would establish and standardize levels of service by park property and apply those appropriately to parkland within the system. The plan would also aid with institutional efficiencies, determining the level of staffing needed to properly maintain new and existing City assets.

Figure 11. Suggested Maintenance Modes by Park (Example Only)

Park Name	Total Park Acres	Maintenance Mode Level(s)
Miracle League Park	8.8	1
Union Park	0.2	1
Rotary Club of Jonesboro Centennial Plaza	0.2	1
Jonesboro Shooting Sports Complex	209	1, 2
Southside Softball Complex	53.6	1, 2
Joe Mack Campbell Sports Complex / Lacy Park	177.9	1, 3
Allen / Landsbrook Park	23.5	2
Julian James Memorial Park	6.5	2
Nettleton Community Center/Optimist Park	6.2	2
City Water and Light (CWL) Park	2.5	2
Fairview Park	2.5	2
L.M. Stotts Park	0.9	2
Ralph "Pop" Stricklin Park	0.4	2
Reverend Lewellen Park	0.6	2
Stallings Park (Big)	2.3	2
Stallings Park (Small)	0.6	2
William Evans Memorial Park	1.6	2
Phillip Evans Community Park	0.2	2
Craighead Forest Park	707	2, 3
Miles/Parker Park	12.7	2, 3
Northside/Crews Park	51.5	2, 3
Beatrice Park	23.8	3

Summary of Key Themes

The key themes and findings discussed within preceding review and analysis may be summarized as follows:

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

- **Staffing Levels.** While the Department has more than the national median of FTE staff, there is a lack of administrative staff to oversee and coordinate department functions. New full time staff positions should be added to alleviate these concerns and reduce reliance on part-time and seasonal workers.
- **Department Structure.** The Department is split between 12 divisions (titled “department” in the FY 2023 Budget), segmenting the operations, maintenance, and programming between different parks and programs. Consolidation of these divisions under a new structure may help simplify administrative functions.
- **Staff Retention.** The Department should continue to invest in employee retention growth, education through salary increases and professional development opportunities.

DEPARTMENT BUDGET

- **Budget Percentage.** The Department's portion of the City budget falls below the national average for communities of a similar size. The Department should continue to demonstrate the overall economic impact of the parks and recreation system and advocate for additional funding.
- **Revenue.** Direct revenue offsets 25 percent of the City's parks and recreation operating budget (FY2023), just short of the national average. In addition to growing revenue, the Department should explore new cost recovery and cost mitigation techniques.

PARKS MAINTENANCE

- **Maintenance Budget.** The Department currently allocates 14 percent of its overall operating budget (FY2023) to maintenance. While this is less than national average (38 percent), residents of Jonesboro have an overall positive view of the current maintenance level of City parks.
- **Maintenance Plan.** The Department should establish a maintenance plan and accompanying schedule to adopt maintenance standards for all parkland. This should include new staff to help oversee plan development and implementation.
- **Partnerships.** To reduce costs and staffing needs, the Department should work with local organizations and residents to aid in maintenance of park spaces.

Policies and Investments

This plan recommends 14 strategies to improve the long-term success and sustainability of the City of Jonesboro's parks and recreation operational practices. The strategies below have been selected to address the key findings of this assessment and align with community needs, preferences, and values.

(Note: The 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 in this list.)

ORGANIZATIONAL STAFFING

Strategy 1.1. Department Restructuring

Reorganize the various parks and recreation departments under a consolidated organizational structure.

Within the City's FY 2023 Budget, all parks and recreation services are currently split between 12 different divisions (titled "departments" in the budget). They include "Administration," "Softball," "Cemetery Care," "Winter Wonderland," "Urban Parks," "Craighead Forest Park," "Joe Mack Campbell Park," "Miracle League," "Community Centers," "Shooting Sports Complex," "Jonesboro Pool Center," and "Sports Programs." Each division has a separate budget and staff associated with the duties. To better administer all parks and recreation functions, a new organizational structure should be built to consolidate all existing programs and staff under three key divisions: "Administration," "Operations and Maintenance," and "Recreational Programming." Under this new structure, the Department should consider the addition of a new Assistant Director position (for a total of two), with one Assistant Director to oversee the "Operations and Maintenance" division and the other to oversee the "Recreational Programming" division. Further staff changes may be needed to accommodate the new structure.

Strategy 1.2. Salary Adjustment

Adjust Parks and Recreation staff base salaries to better align with national medians.

As identified in Figure 5 (pg. 6), Parks and Recreation Department staff receive a base salary at a lower level than national medians, even when accounting for regional differences. Department and City leadership should further benchmark salary and benefit packages of peer communities and selectively adjust Department staff salaries accordingly (via adjustments to job classifications).

Strategy 1.3. Professional Development

Promote professional development opportunities that strengthen staff skills.

The Department should identify and select accreditation and certification for staff members, as determined by City administration. Professional accreditation opportunities illustrate a connection between the City's goals and its commitment to providing its employees with the tools to achieve those goals. In assessing the appropriate level of annual funding for parks and recreation professional development opportunities, Jonesboro should consider all employees, not just management-level employees, to help promote buy-in to the organization's overarching mission statements and goals and to assist in retaining and recruiting employees.

Strategy 1.4. Park Ranger Program

Improve park security by investing in staff resources and refined park access policies.

Conversations with Jonesboro residents and results of the community survey suggest that there are members of the community that perceive some City park spaces to be unsafe. This perception may be based less on actual violent crime and more on loitering and the physical condition of some parks that suggests a problem with vandalism.

However, the accreditation of park rangers, either as law enforcement officers (much like school resource officers) or as individuals who can monitor the parks, could provide greater direct security oversight of park property and could help monitor security at public events.

Public safety at municipal park property and at public events should remain under the purview of the Jonesboro Police Department, but the park ranger program can provide early reporting and assistance for sworn officer

Strategy 1.5. CAPRA Accreditation

Pursue CAPRA (Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies) accreditation from the National Recreation and Parks Association.

CAPRA accreditation affirms that a parks and recreation agency provides its community with the highest level of service. By extension, CAPRA accreditation means that the governing authority has elected to provide its staff with the necessary resources to operate and maintain its parks and recreation system in an efficient manner. Attainment of CAPRA accreditation will require funding for associated training and for periodically hosting CAPRA volunteers for an on-site visit during the application process.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND PARTNERSHIPS

Strategy 2.1. Volunteer Program Coordinator

Add a new staff position to coordinate and manage all volunteers, partnerships, and vendor contracts for the Department.

The Department should hire a new volunteer coordinator position to help the Department meet cost recover goals. The Volunteer Program Coordinator will recruit, train, evaluate, maintain, and recognize volunteers through a volunteer program and should include outreach to individuals and partner organizations. The position may also manage vendor contracts for the Department, ensuring there is a single point of contact for all outside groups.

Strategy 2.2. Marketing – Tourism

Work with the Jonesboro Advertising and Promotion Commission and the Jonesboro Chamber of Commerce to promote municipal parks and recreational programs aimed at tourists and new residents.

The Department should expand its relationships with the Jonesboro Advertising and Promotion Commission and the Jonesboro Chamber of Commerce to include joint economic impact studies of revenue producing activities at municipal parks. Although most near-term investments recommended in this Plan are not mainly targeted for the creation of regional tournaments or events, collaboration with local economic development organizations can help the City pay for the maintenance of important facilities through targeted advertising campaigns.

Decisions on event-diversification - predominantly those that could be hosted at larger or specialized locations such as the Jonesboro Shooting Complex, Joe Mack Campbell Sports Complex, or Craighead Forest Park - should be driven as much by potential direct and indirect revenue by visitors to the community as by stated resident interests.

PARKS MAINTENANCE

Strategy 3.1. Maintenance Plan

Develop and implement a department-wide annual maintenance plan.

Prepare and adopt a maintenance management plan and accompanying schedule that clearly outlines different maintenance modes for each municipal park space (pgs. 7 - 8) depending on anticipated usage, complexity of amenities/facilities, and revenue generation potential. Each park may contain areas with varying maintenance mode levels, depending on use of a specific area. The plan and schedule should define routine maintenance tasks and frequency of implementation through a work order management system. The Plan should be done in coordination with the Asset Management Plan detailed in the Conditions Assessment Memorandum, conducted as part of this Master Plan.

A formalized maintenance management plan includes not only maintenance modes and standards for each park, but also tracks the performance of the work against a set of defined outcomes and the costs expended to achieve each outcome.

Strategy 3.2. Dedicated Landscape Professional

Hire a dedicated landscape professional to aid the Parks and Recreation Department in setting maintenance standards, designing park spaces, and selecting recreational facilities.

As the City pursues park additions (outlined in the Access-based Assessment) and the maintenance recommendations described in this assessment (pgs. 8 through 10), the Department should consider hiring a full-time landscape architect/professional. This position will aid the City in enacting these recommendations and provide critical expertise on plant material and facility design, as well as ensure the Department is following best practices in park development.

Strategy 3.3. Maintenance Costs Mitigation

Develop strategic partnerships and programs to mitigate the direct costs for park system maintenance through indirect revenue sources and in-kind contributions.

Maintenance operations are usually spent in divisions that do not have direct revenue sources that can offset expenditures. There are opportunities however, to decrease expenditures through the following strategies:

- **Adopt-a-Trail Programs.** These are usually small-grant programs that fund new construction, repair or renovation, maps, trail brochures, and facilities (bike racks, picnic areas, birding equipment, etc.), as well as provide maintenance support. These programs are like the common “adopt-a-mile” highway programs most states utilize and can also accept cash donations.
- **Adopt-a-Park Programs.** These are small-grant programs that fund new construction and offer maintenance support. Adopt-A-Park programs can also accept cash donations.
- **Operational Partnerships.** Partnerships are operational funding sources formed from two distinct agencies, such as two government entities, a non-profit and a public agency, or a private business and a public agency.

Strategy 3.4. Technology Integration

Improve field staff’s access to handheld GPS and web-based equipment for field maintenance and inventory.

The Department’s inventory and mapping skills can be significantly improved by offering field maintenance employees with improved handheld GPS and web-based equipment that can be used for inventory projects and maintenance scheduling and activities. Data mobility will allow employees to

efficiently update, inventory and catalog maintenance needs while in the field, and to access inventories to determine if an immediate solution can be provided to a proper or facility-related deficiency.

Strategy 3.5. Institutional Partners

Continue to foster the partnership with schools, health care institutions, and human service providers to co-locate or administer publicly accessible recreation facilities and programs.

Work with institutional partners to increase recreational programming and facility offerings in a way that expands community-wide access. Examples could consist of a decrease in neighborhood park deficits through enhancements and access to school district grounds. Partner with health care organizations to locate vendors for senior classes or programs that could be conducted in converted community center space or at non-municipal locations.

Strategy 3.6. Identify No Mow Zones

Identify locations in neighborhood, community, regional, and special use parks that could go unmowed.

Through identifying and designating “No Mow Zones,” the Department will allow native plants and wildflower to grow undisturbed, promoting water retention and reducing the amount of acreage that needs maintained in the parks system. These areas should include signage that describes the benefits of undisturbed areas for local pollinators and other wildlife.

Strategy 3.7. Native Plants and Landscaping

Give preference to drought-tolerant and native plants with all new and updated landscaping.

The Department should establish a standard to planting drought-tolerant, native plants to reduce costs of watering, maintenance, and ensure the longevity of plantings. Native plants may also create ecosystems for the surrounding wildlife and allow for educational opportunities surrounding Jonesboro’s unique ecosystem.