

Jackson County

System-wide Parks and Recreation Status update

The Two Views of Recreation Offerings

Local governments generally fall somewhere along this spectrum

Parks and Recreation
as an

EXPENSE

Similar to a police
department or a fire
department.

Money goes in
Services come out

Nothing more, no
significant impact on
the bottom line

Parks
&
Recreation

Parks and Recreation
as an

INVESTMENT

You get the service,
but you also get the
economic dividends
of your investment

Money goes in
Services come out
+
Additional ROI comes
from the investment

This spectrum generally
gauges how leadership views
parks and recreation

Research Supports That Parks And Recreation Acts More Like An INVESTMENT

Property Values Increase:

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

8%-20%

Average property value increase ².

Economic Development:

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

87%

of Executives see quality of life as important when locating facilities

Visitor Spending:

Many local park and recreation agency amenities spur tourism to their respective locales, generating significant economic activity, including but not limited to increased sales, local restaurants/bars and hotels¹.

$$\left(\begin{array}{c} \text{Economic impact} \\ \text{of patron spending} \end{array} \right) = \left(\begin{array}{c} \text{Number} \\ \text{of Visits} \end{array} \right) \times \left(\begin{array}{c} \text{Average spending} \\ \text{per Visit} \end{array} \right) \times (\text{Multiplier})$$

Events are not a matter of IF you will have an impact, but how much of an impact it will have ³.

Sources:

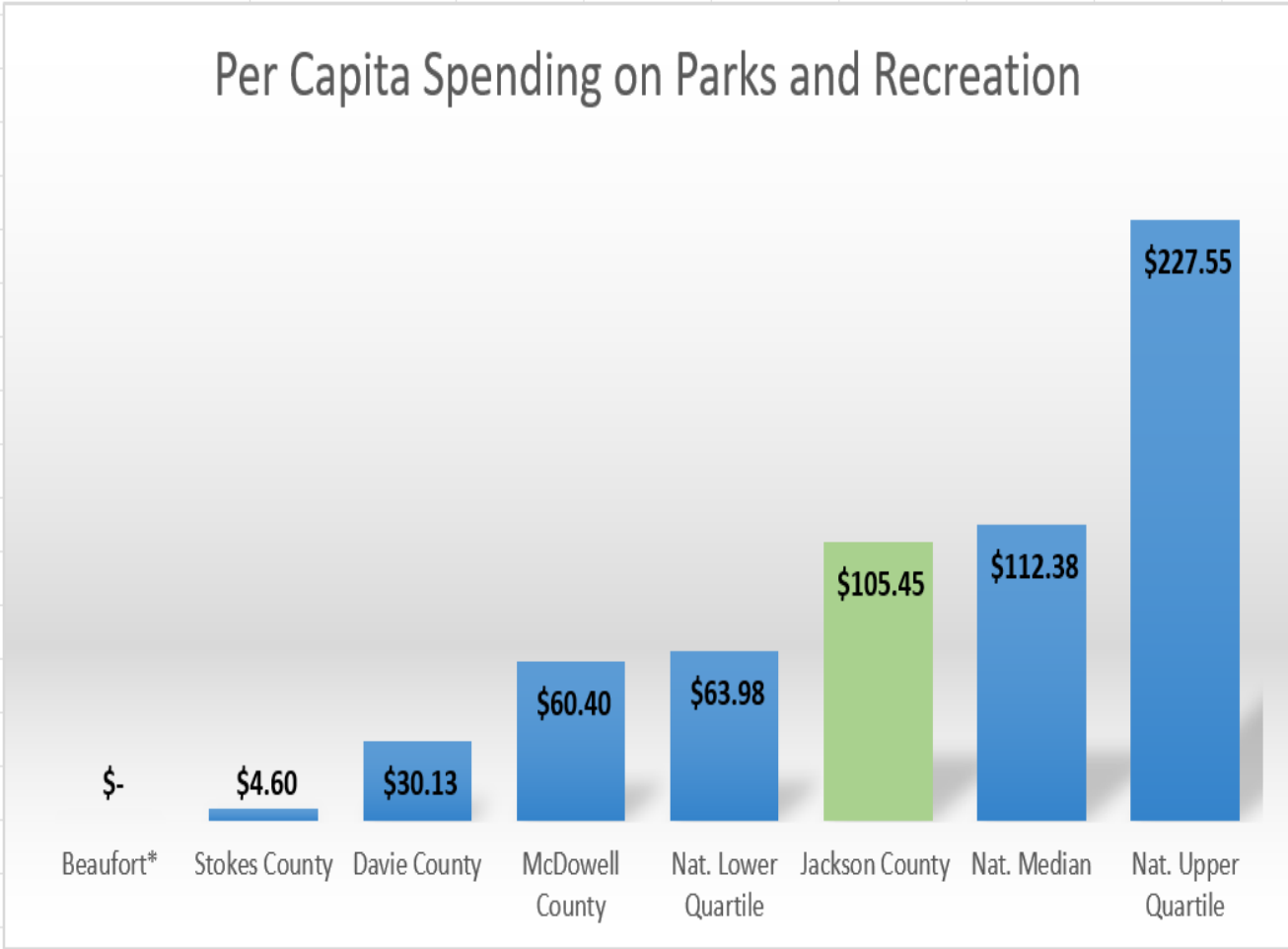
1. "The Economic Impacts of Parks: An Examination of the Fiscal Effects of Operations and Capital Spending by Local Park and Recreation Agencies on the US Economy.
2. Crompton, J.L. 2001. Parks and Economic Development. PAS Report No. 502. American Planning Association, Chicago, Illinois.
3. Center for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

Programs and System Analysis

Quartile	Acres per 1,000 residents	Applied to Jackson Count Population
Lower Quartile	3.9	171.6
Jackson County	5.1	224.4
Median Quartile	9.2	404.8
Upper Quartile	16.1	708.4

Populations and projections based on NCOSBM 2023 certified population estimate of 44,274.
Source of comparison: National Recreation and Parks Metrics data

**Your park system acreage is well below
the national median
&
your budget is slightly below average**



Benchmarking your facilities

Within benchmark ranges

Above benchmark ranges

Below benchmark ranges

The County is within range for a significant amount of your facilities

Amenity	2025 NRPA Metrics Jurisdictions between 20,000-49,999 Population	Metrics Based Need range Estimated Population 2025 (44,274)	Current City Owned Contribution to Service Level (Above range/In range/ Not in range)
Accessible playground	19,086	2-3	1
Aquatics center (indoor lane pool)	36,979	1-2	1
Aquatics center (indoor leisure pool)	32,258	1-2	1
Baseball/Softball Fields	3,408	12-13	10
Basketball Courts (dedicated)	8,000	5-6	1
Community center (no gym)	29,445	1-2	1
Community gardens	27,230	1-2	1*
Disc Golf	32,519	1-2	2
Dog Park	26,534	1-2	2
Golf Course	34,058	1-2	0

Metrics derived from 2025 NRPA Agency performance data.

Not all facilities owned managed by Jackson County are benchmarked by NRPA

*Owned by Jackson County, but not operated by the Department.

Benchmarking your facilities continued

Within benchmark ranges

Above benchmark ranges

Below benchmark ranges

It is atypical for a community to be in range for every facility type

Amenity	2025 NRPA Metrics Jurisdictions between 20,000-49,999 Population	Metrics Based Need range Estimated Population 2025 (44,274)	Current City Owned Contribution to Service Level (Above range/In range/ Not in range)
Fitness equipment	21,468	2-3	4
Multi-purpose fields (rectangular)	4,002	11-12	5
Multi-use courts	12,984	3-4	3
Nature center	34,960	1-2	0
Pickleball (dedicated)	7,333	6-7	0
Playground	3,320	13-14	9
Recreation center (with gym)	27,517	1-2	2
Sand volleyball	16,487	2-3	2
<u>Skateboard park</u>	35,000	1-2	0
Splash pad (outdoor)	29,804	1-2	2
Stadium	35,370	1-2	0
Swimming pool (outdoor)	26,900	1-2	1
Teen center	32,798	1-2	0
Tennis courts	6,284	7-8	6

Currently planned

Currently planned

Currently planned

Currently planned

Metrics derived from 2025 NRPA Agency performance data.

Not all facilities owned by Jackson County are benchmarked by NRPA

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Benchmarking your trails

Quartile	NRPA Miles of Trails Quartiles for Jurisdiction populations (20,000-49,999)
Jackson County	4
Lower Quartile	6
Median Quartile	10
Upper Quartile	20

Populations and projections based on NCOSBM 2023 certified population estimate of 44,274.
Source of comparison: National Recreation and Parks Metrics data

The County’s work to increase trails/greenways is needed as the County is below the national lower quartile



A system that's in very good shape

Your system is
being very well
maintained

The one
distressed part of
the system has
been planned for

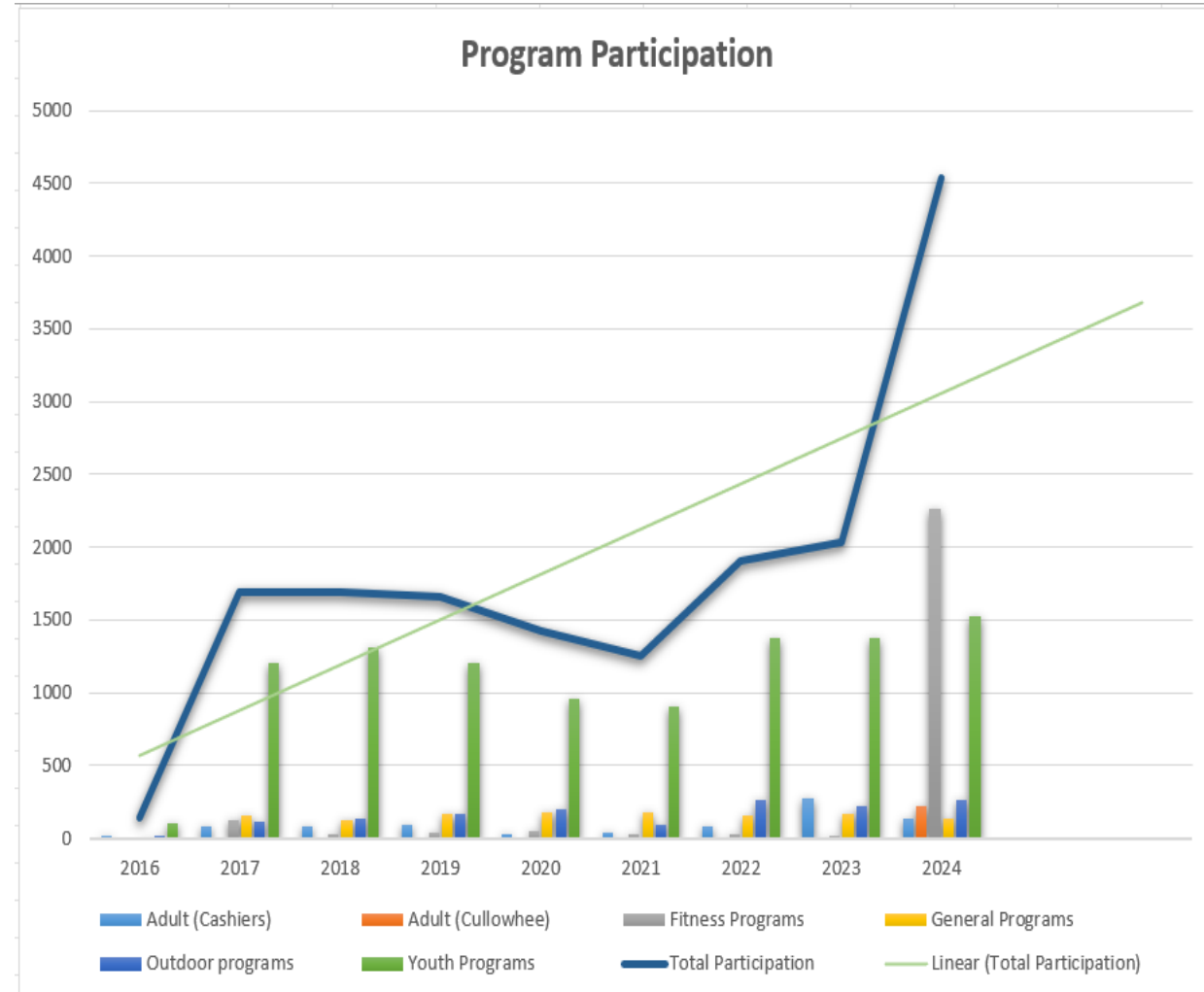
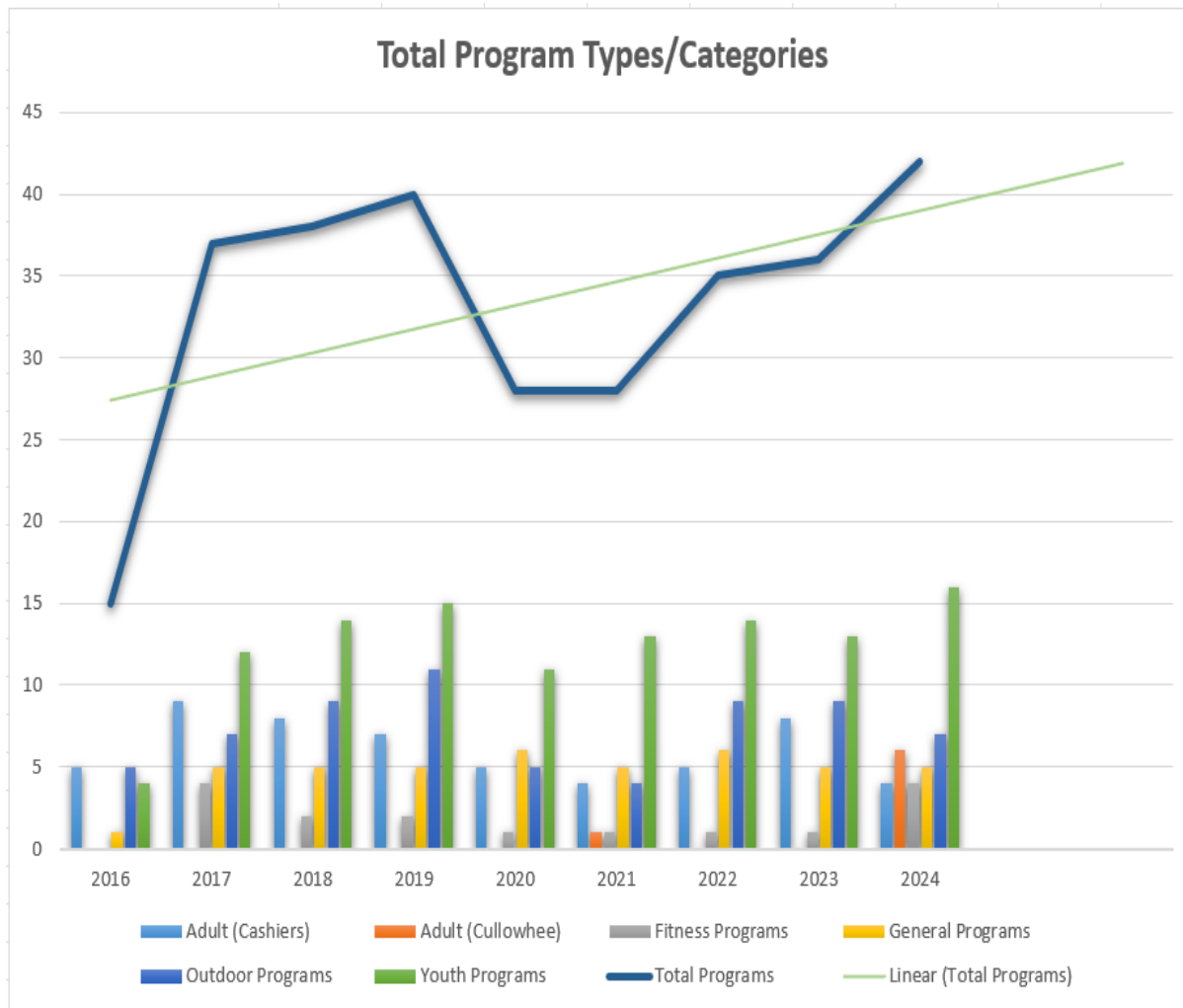
Park	Attractiveness	Lighting	Condition	Maintenance	Support Facilities	Accessibility
Balsam Community Center	Undergoing redevelopment					
Bicentennial Park	Good	Good	Good	Good	N/a	Good
Canada Community	Fair	Fair	Good	Good	N/A	Fair
Cashiers Community Park*	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor
Cashiers/Glenville Recreation Center Park	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
East-LaPort Park	Good	Fair	Good	Good	N/A	Fair
Fairview Youth Complex	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Jackson County Recreation Park	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Jadaculla Rock	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Mark Watson Park	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Qualla/Whittier Com. Pk (NEW)	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Ralph J. Andrews Campground	Fair	Good	Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Savannah Community Park	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Sylva Community Pool	Fair	Good	Good	Good	Fair	Good
Webster Community Park	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good

Park analysis is based on consulting site visit and departmental input. Input should be utilized to understand general themes of opportunity and need, rather than an exhaustive analysis. Visitor impressions may vary from this analysis. Further, structural analysis, and specialized studies may be needed.

* Half of this park is in exceptionally good condition. The poor rating takes into account the entire park, including non-functional amenities and areas.

Program and System Analysis Cont.

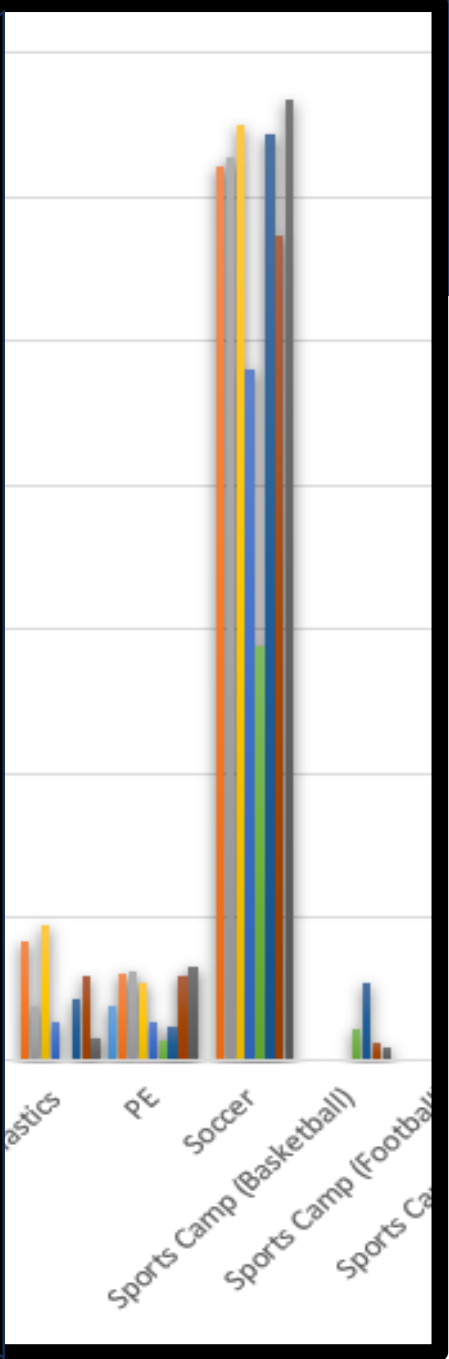
Your program offerings and participation are growing



Program and System Analysis Cont.

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Fitness equipment	21,468	2-3	4
Multi-purpose fields (rectangular)	4,002	11-12	5

Some facilities are artificially capping enrollment
Fields can only handle so much play



Program and System Analysis Cont.

Swim Class (All Ages) 2025



Aqua Fit 2025



Aqua Active 2025



Aqua Zumba



Keeping the county residents informed: project webpage



Jackson County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Project Overview

Jackson County is in the process of creating a parks and recreation master plan that will guide the County's next 10 years of growth. Throughout the planning process, there will be a couple of public meetings and surveys to allow the community to provide input on the future of Jackson County's parks and recreation.

Key Dates for Public Meetings

Attend any one of these public meetings to provide your input on the plan. Drop in anytime during the event.

Friday, June 27, 2025, from 6:00 – 8:30 PM

Concerts on the Creek – Bridge Park

76 Railroad Avenue, Sylva, NC 28779

Saturday, June 28, 2025, from 10:00 AM – Noon

Cashiers Farmer's Market

78 US-64, Cashiers, NC 28717

Saturday, June 28, 2025, from 3:00 – 5:00 PM

Aquatics Center

88 Cullowhee Mountain Road Cullowhee, NC 28723

Friday, July 11, 2025, from 10:00 AM – Noon

Cashiers Farmer's Market

78 US-64, Cashiers, NC 28717

Friday, July 11, 2025, from 6:00 – 8:30 PM

Concerts on the Creek – Bridge Park

76 Railroad Avenue, Sylva, NC 28779

Community Needs Survey

We heard from you! Thank you to everyone who took the time to share their thoughts and visions about the future of parks and recreation in



Timeline

Background Analysis

A review of the history and background of Jackson County to understand the existing facilities, conditions, and programs.

Public Input

An exploration of what the community wants to see developed in the County over the next 10 years.

Implementation

A list of recommendations to fuel the desired changes.

Review and Adoption

A presentation of the final plan to staff members to review and adopt for use.

Contact Us

Feel free to reach out with any questions or comments. Email us and we'll get back to you as soon as we can.

Email us

Public input meetings

5 public input meetings
held around the County
appx. 300 people provided input

Top 10 request

Rank	Resident	Visitors
1	<i>Adventure playground/ropes course</i>	<i>Pickleball courts</i>
2	<i>Greenways</i>	<i>Adventure playground/ropes course</i>
3	<i>Restrooms</i>	<i>Greenways</i>
4	<i>Pickleball courts</i>	Bike trails
5	<i>Dog park</i>	<i>Dog park</i>
6	Skateboard Park	<i>Amphitheater</i>
7	Bike pump track	<i>Blueway/paddle access</i>
8	Indoor aquatics center	Baseball/softball fields
9	<i>Amphitheater</i>	<i>Restrooms</i>
10	<i>Blueway/paddle access</i>	Playgrounds

Shared interest in italics

Focus group findings

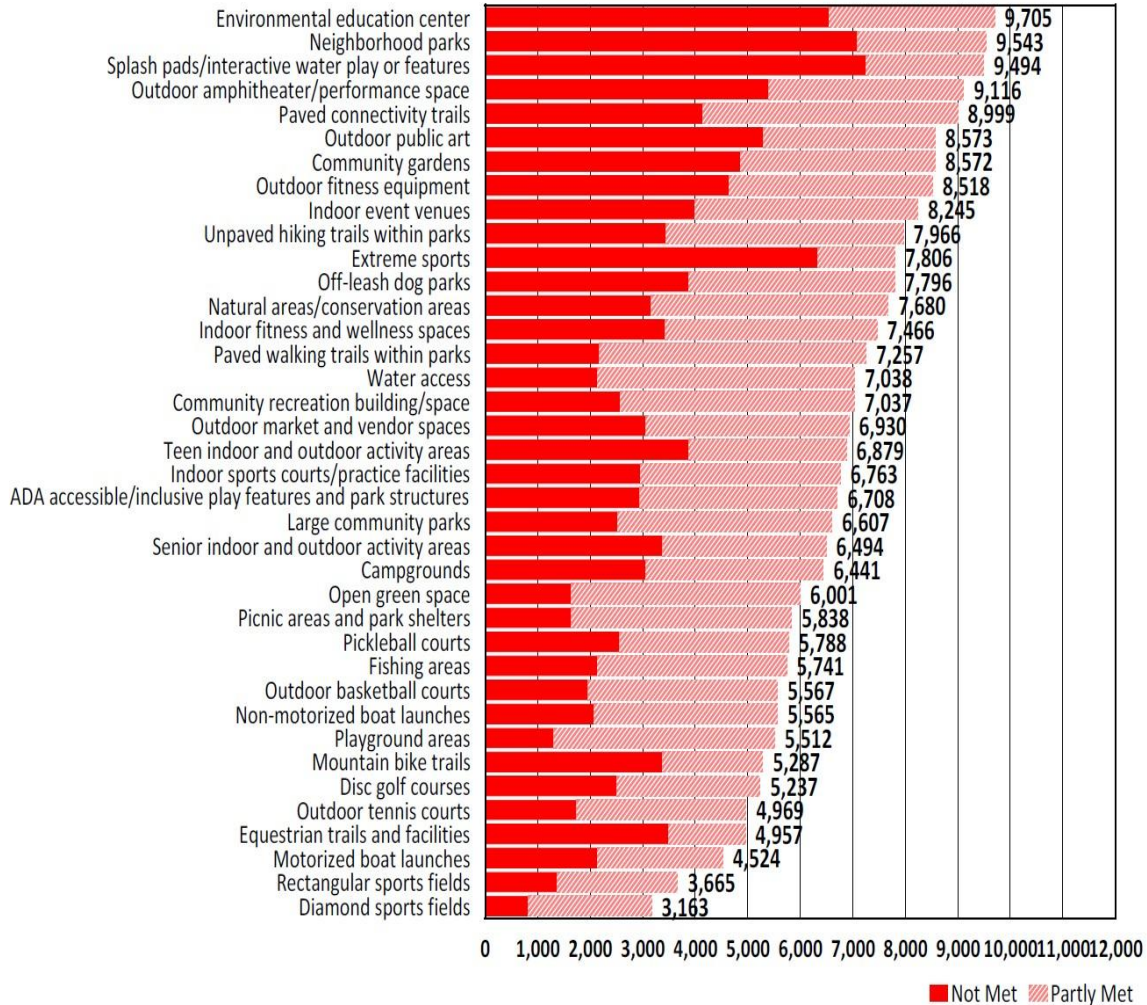
4 focus group meetings



Statistically valid survey

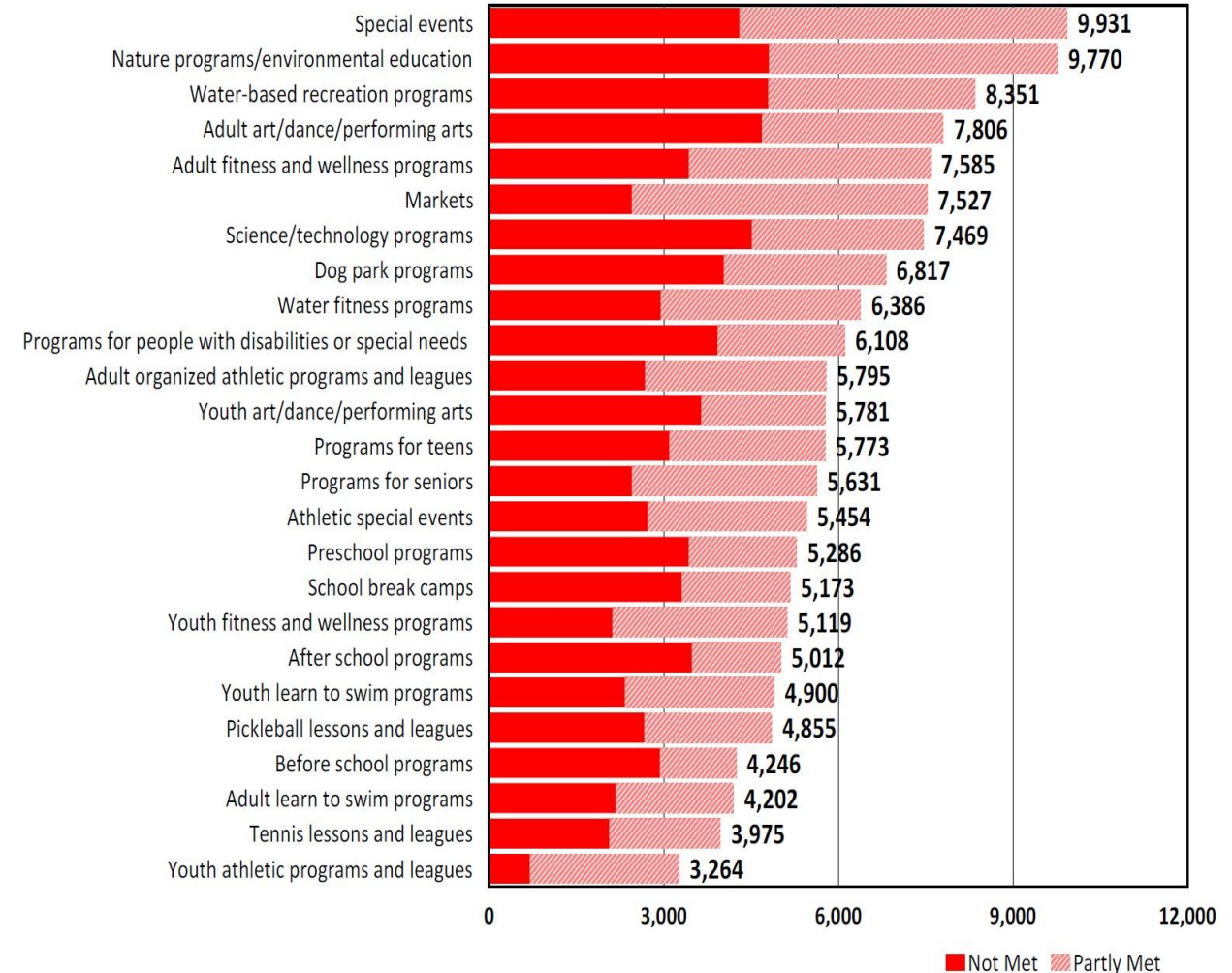
Q9d. Estimated number of households whose facility and amenity needs are only "partly met" or "not met"

by number of households with need based on an estimated 18,164 households



Q11d. Estimated number of households whose program/activity needs are only "partly met" or "not met"

by number of households with need based on an estimated 18,164 households



Open survey: Able to see geographic differences in need

District 1 (Top 5)

- Nature trails
- Jogging/walking trails (paved)
- Fitness facility
- Open space
- Farmers market

District 2 (Top 5)

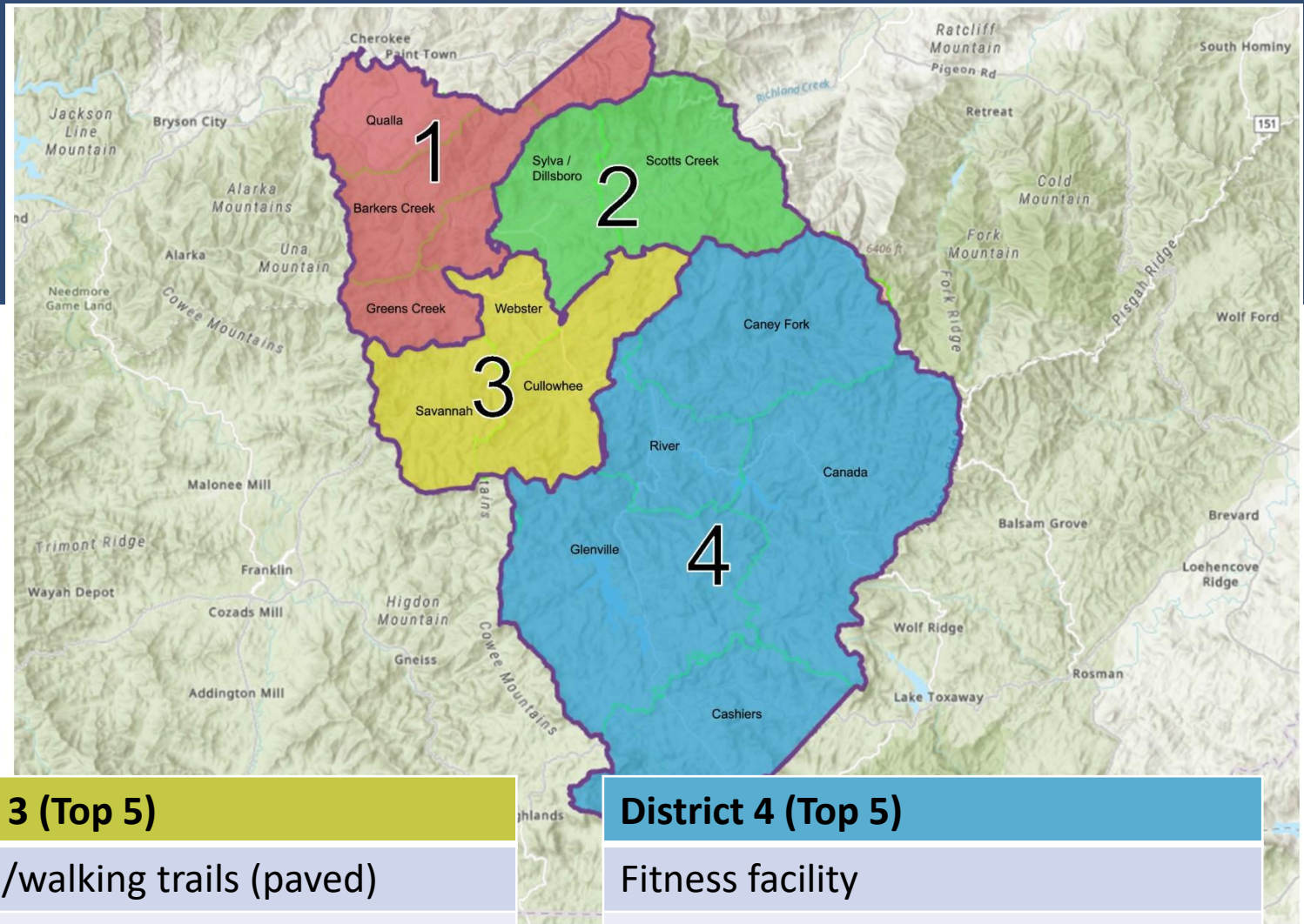
- Jogging/walking trails (paved)
- Nature trails
- Open space
- Farmers market
- Bicycle trails

District 3 (Top 5)

- Jogging/walking trails (paved)
- Nature trails
- Open space
- Fitness facility
- Indoor swimming pool

District 4 (Top 5)

- Fitness facility
- Jogging/walking trails (paved)
- Indoor swimming pool
- Nature trails
- Outdoor swimming pool



Perceptions of investment levels

Residents like the investments that have been made and want continued growth

Currently investment level is
a little low



I feel Jackson County's park investment level CURRENTLY IS:

Answered: 424 Skipped: 18

2.3★
average rating



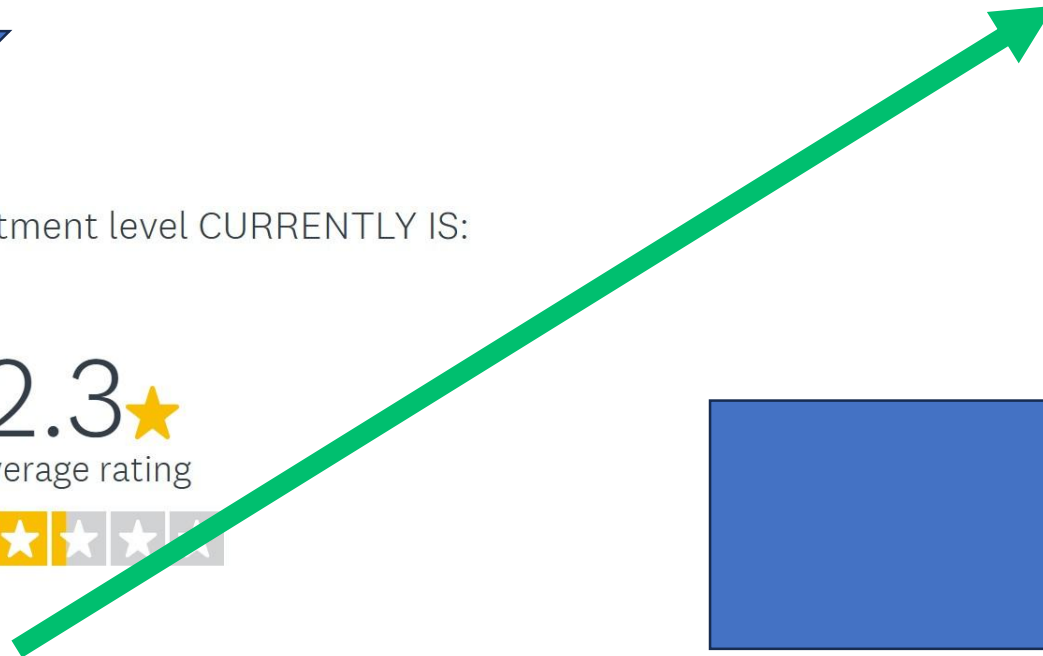
I feel Jackson County's park investment level SHOULD BE:

Answered: 430 Skipped: 12

3.5★
average rating



There is interest
steady growth





Emerging themes

- Residents desire more trails and greenways
- More event space and environmental education is desired
- Some desired facilities are below benchmark levels
- Part-time staff are impacting some program/facility offerings
- Your system is in good shape
- Flat land constraints are impacting your program offerings
- There is strong desire for continued system development

Questions?

