

Suwanee's approach to **PARKS & RECREATION**

Suwanee's parks and recreation approach centers on improving quality of life and creating community identity through **passive parks** and **protected natural habitats**. Through its nine parks and nine miles of greenways/trails, Suwanee focuses on providing passive recreation opportunities, leaving active recreation to Gwinnett County.

PASSIVE VERSUS ACTIVE RECREATION

Passive recreation enhances the open space aspect of a park by providing a minimal intensity of development for unstructured play, such as walking, picnics, kite flying, bike riding, interactive fountains, disc golf courses, and exercise. **Active recreation** involves more intensive development, such as ballfields, skate parks, and aquatic centers, supplemented by programmed activities, such as athletic leagues and classes. Gwinnett County offers active recreation opportunities at George Pierce Park and other nearby county parks.

The decision to focus on passive recreation impacts the city's organizational structure, costs, and budgeting with respect to parks and recreation. The city does not operate a traditional parks and recreation department, Suwanee spreads park and recreation functions among existing departments with complementary functions. Public Works handles maintenance and special events support. Economic & Community Development plans activities that take place in the parks.

PAST AND RECENT EFFORTS

In 2001, the city owned 16 acres of open space/parkland. Residents relied on non-city facilities to meet their recreation needs – Gwinnett County's George Pierce Park, neighborhood recreation areas, and private facilities, such as Suwanee Sports Academy or fitness centers. This lack of park facilities led to the initiation of the **Recreation and Open Space Needs Assessment** in 2001, a community involved master planning effort aimed at identifying critical land for preservation and/or recreation and assessing recreation programs and activities available to residents. Following the city's adoption of this assessment, residents voted to support a **\$17.7 million open space bond initiative** to help fund the acquisition of land and development of parks and trails in pursuit of enacting the Open Space Plan. Of particular importance was the assessment finding that **active recreation opportunities are well provided by the county, allowing the city to focus on providing parks for passive recreation**.

The city completed the final project, funded by voter endorsed bond proceeds, the rehabilitation and enhancement of the **Suwanee Creek Greenway** in 2011. Recognizing the operating costs needed to maintain new parks, the city's short-term efforts are centered on maintaining and enhancing existing parks to ensure a quality standard. Examples of park enhancement projects include: **Big Splash Fountain** in Town Center Park; the **amphitheater/outdoor classroom** and an orchard in White Street Park; **shade structures** in Town Center Park and Sims Lake Park; **Brushy Creek Greenway** in Delay Nature Park; the **disc golf course** in Suwanee Creek Park; the **dock** at Sims Lake Park and most recently the completion of **Town Center on Main**. Much of the funding for completion of these projects comes from SPLOST programs.

DID YOU KNOW?

Suwanee residents express a preference of passive parks. Based on this direction, the city focuses efforts on acquiring land for and building passive parks, which has resulted in the following improvements to Suwanee's park system:

2225% INCREASE IN OPEN SPACE ACREAGE: from 16 acres in 2001 to a current total of 372 acres

CONSTRUCTION OF SEVEN NEW PARKS: Town Center Park, Suwanee Creek Greenway, PlayTown Suwanee, Sims Lake Park, Suwanee Creek Park, White Street Park, and the recently completed Town Center on Main & DeLay Nature Park

ACQUISITION OF LAND FOR FUTURE PARK SITES

For more information, please see the **Suwanee Recreation and Open Space Needs Assessment (2001), 2040 Comprehensive Plan. (2019), Capital Improvement Program, City Of Suwanee Annual Budget, and/or suwanee.com.**

