

Minutes
York County Council Workshop
November 12, 2024
1070 Heckle Boulevard, Rock Hill, SC
Large Conference Room
6:00pm

The York County Council met on the above date for a York County Council Workshop at 6:00pm located at 1070 Heckle Boulevard, Large Conference Room, Rock Hill, South Carolina. The following Council members were present: Council member Tommy Adkins, Council member Allison Love, Chairwoman Christi Cox, Council member William “Bump” Roddey, Council member Debi Cloninger, and Council member Watts Huckabee. Also present were County Manager, Josh Edwards, Assistant County Manager, Kevin Madden, County Attorney, Michael Kendree, and Clerk to Council, Karen Brogdon.

Also present was Trish Startup, Director of Budget and Administrative Services, Patrick Hamilton, Assistant County Engineer and Katherine Jones, Director of Parks and Recreation.

Chairwoman Christi Cox called the meeting to order.

Council held a discussion regarding York County’s Strategic Plan Goal: Quality Infrastructure

County Manager, Josh Edwards explained to Council that staff is implementing a new format for the Council Workshops that will be dedicated to the strategic plan goals and tonight the discussion will be regarding Quality Infrastructure and Premier Parks – Presentation of the Parks Masterplan.

Patrick Hamilton presented the information regarding Quality Infrastructure.

The goal is to build and maintain quality, safe, and reliable infrastructure including: Transportation, Water/Sewer Utilities, Storm Water Utilities and Facilities.

Assess what we have – Build new quality infrastructure– Preserve & Maintain what we have – Plan for the future

Council Priorities:

- Assess
 - Inventory
 - Condition Assessment
- Build
 - Capital Improvement Plan
 - Enhance Standards
 - Funding
- Preserve/Maintain
 - Road Paving/Preservation
 - Hire/Train Quality Staff
 - Utility Department

- Plan
 - Economic Development
 - Transportation Collaboration
 - Facility Space Needs

Katherine Jones presented the information regarding Premier Parks.

The goal is to develop and offer premier parks and recreation opportunities that enhance resident's quality of life by providing a wide variety of safe, unique, and highly desired recreational experiences, while also protecting the County's natural assets and heritage.

Be a premier recreational destination – protect our natural resources – collaborate with stakeholders – expand facilities and services

Council Priorities:

- Promote
 - Create an inventory
 - Evaluate park experience
 - Invest in park improvements
- Protect
 - Land protection strategies
 - Educate opportunities
- Engage
 - Identify stakeholders
 - Explore partnerships
 - Communicate vision
- Grow
 - Prioritize needs
 - Develop funding strategies
 - Ensure sustainability

Council members present participated in an online survey regarding park priorities.

Dr. Bob Brookover from the Clemson University Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management presented the 2024 Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan.

Mr. Brookover explained the process that took place to complete the masterplan:

- Background research and facility tours/site visits
- Benchmarking department metrics with national and regional trends
- Placer .ai data analysis for current park visitation trends
- Meetings with county administration, council, and staff
- Focus groups and town hall with stakeholders and the general public
- Scientifically valid needs assessment survey
- Technical report, data analysis, and development of recommendations

Data Observations and Benchmarking

- York County's population has increased significantly since 2010 – this has implications for parks and recreation programs, facilities, and events.
- York County's department is relatively new having been formed 2 years ago.
- Parks and recreation staff are incredibly dedicated and hardworking. The county is lucky to have them as their performance is excellent.
- Defining York County parks as active or passive is not a simple distinction
- County is well above average on park acreage per resident, but well below average on the number of parks per resident metric.
- Funding and staffing are significantly below median/middle quartile national benchmarks.

Data Observations – Focus Group/Town Hall Priorities

- Trails
 - All focus groups mentioned trails, greenways, walkability/bike-ability as high priorities
- Role of parks in taking advantage of and protecting open space and providing access to natural resources
 - Continue to be proactive in acquiring land to be protected and developed as parks in the future
 - Finalize Catawba Bend Preserve
 - Begin working on providing access to Broad River and develop long term plan for Worth Mountain
 - Provide more park locations throughout the County (survey data points to need for smaller, neighborhood parks)
- Need for more diamond and rectangle fields and pickleball courts
 - Stakeholders, citizens, youth sport organizations, etc. all indicated that field space is at a premium
 - As is the case almost everywhere now, input participants discussed the need for more pickleball courts
- Staffing and Resource Allocation
 - Ensure parks are staffed and equipped to maintain high-quality standards
- Other
 - Splashpads and skatepark were mentioned on multiple occasions in focus groups and the town hall meeting.

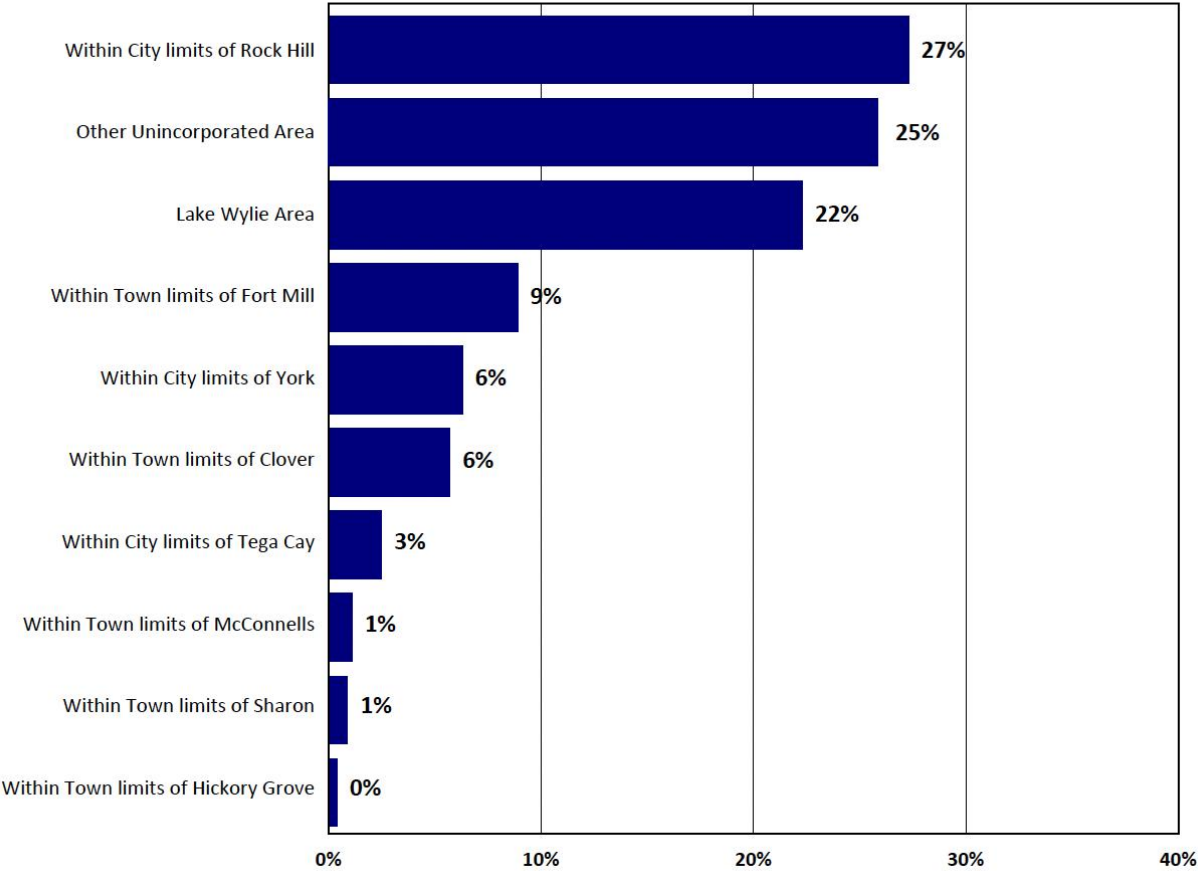
Data Observations – Survey

- Scientifically valid survey resulted in 528 responses and web-based survey resulted in 173 responses.
 - Small sample size in the web-based survey did not provide valid or reliable results
 - Results provided are based on scientifically valid survey only
- 74% of survey respondents had visited York County park in the past year with Field Day Park being the most commonly visited park among respondents
- %38% of respondents rated the quality of York County parks as excellent and 51% rated the quality of parks as good.

Data Observations – Residence

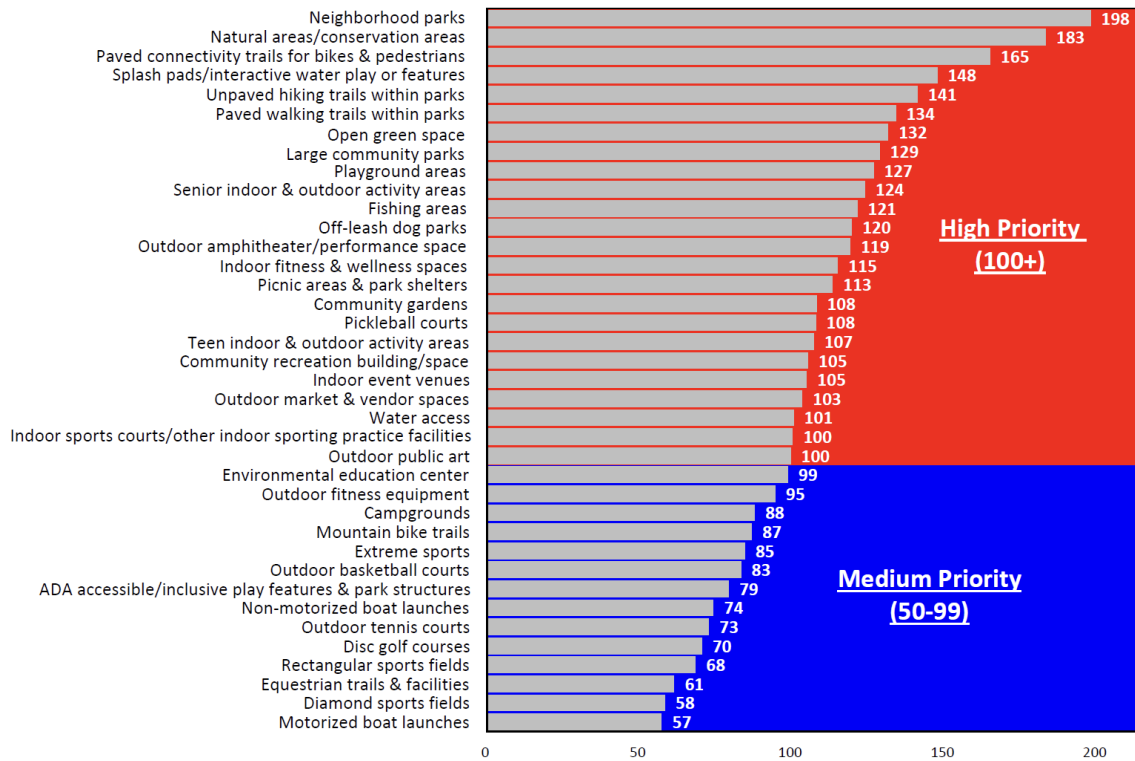
Q2. What area of the county best describes where you live?

by percentage of respondents (multiple selections could be made)



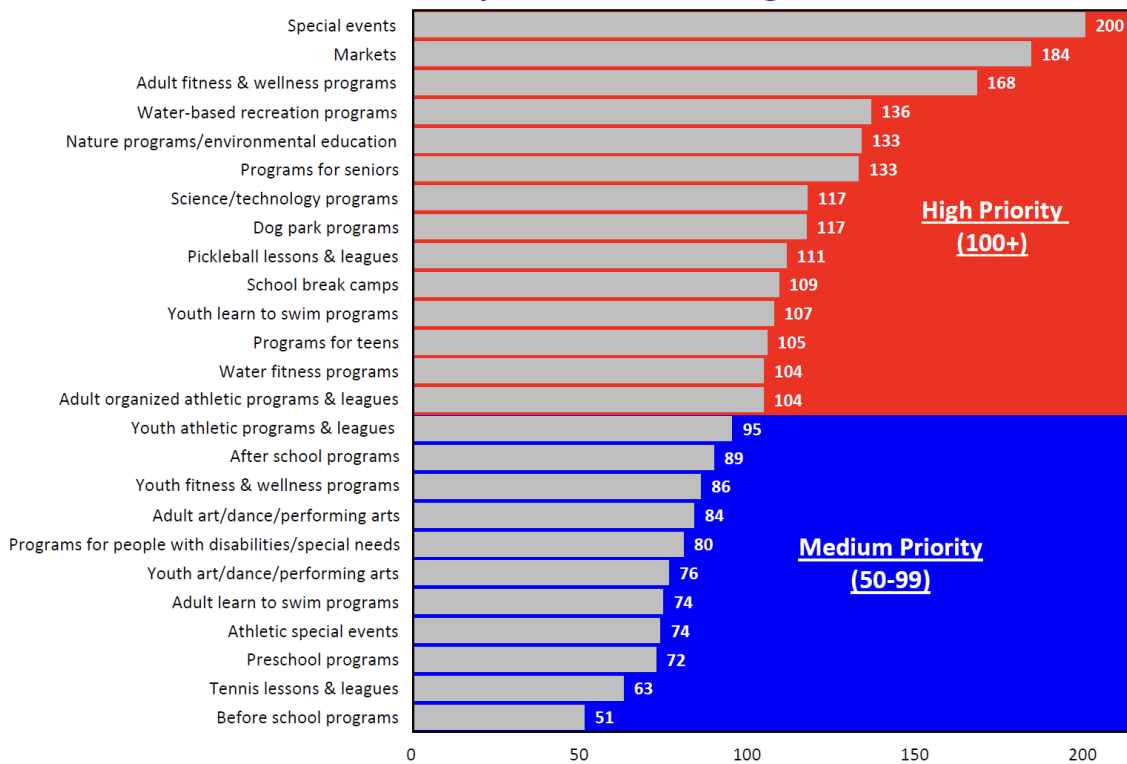
Data Observations – PIR Facilities (facilities/amenities)

Top Priorities for Investment for Facilities/Amenities Based on Priority Investment Rating



Data Observations – PIR Programs (Programs/Activities)

Top Priorities for Investment for Programs/Activities Based on Priority Investment Rating



Data Observations – Importance/Satisfaction

2024 Importance-Satisfaction Rating

York County, South Carolina

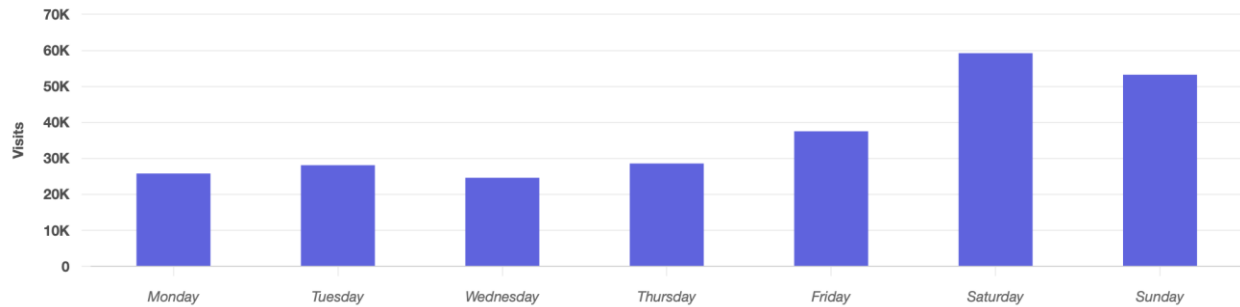
Aspects of Parks

Category of Service	Most Important %	Most Important Rank	Satisfaction %	Satisfaction Rank	Importance-Satisfaction Rating	I-S Rating Rank
Very High Priority (IS>0.20)						
Variety of different types of parks in County	36%	1	33%	11	0.24	1
High Priority (IS .10-.20)						
Number of parks in County	28%	3	34%	8	0.18	2
Availability of information about parks	24%	5	31%	12	0.17	3
Quality of programs for families with children	22%	7	34%	9	0.15	4
Overall value your household receives for taxes paid	24%	4	48%	5	0.13	5
Variety of programs offered by County	17%	9	28%	13	0.12	6
Security in County parks	23%	6	48%	4	0.12	7
Quality of programs for adults	16%	10	25%	14	0.12	8
Security on County trails	15%	11	33%	10	0.10	9
Medium Priority (IS <.10)						
How close parks are located to your home	18%	8	50%	3	0.09	10
Maintenance of parks	30%	2	73%	1	0.08	11
Maintenance of trails	12%	12	62%	2	0.05	12
User friendliness of County website	6%	13	43%	6	0.04	13
Ease of renting/reserving a County facility	4%	14	42%	7	0.02	14

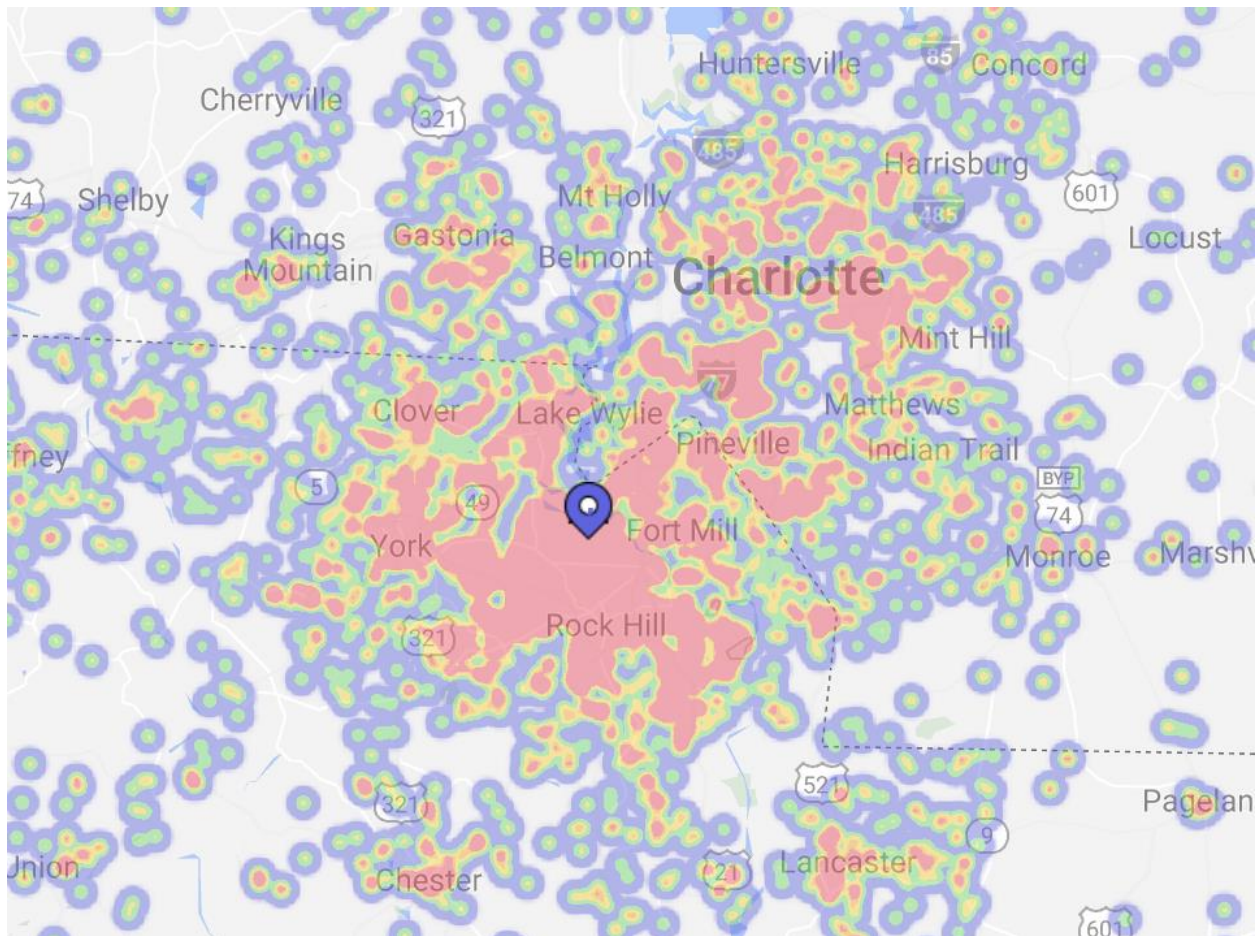
Data Observations – Placer.ai

Ebenezer Park: September 2022-August 2023

Ebenezer Park closed for renovations in September of 2023. From September 2022-August 2023, the park had 101,000 unique visitors who averaged 2.55 visits for a total of approximately 257,100 visits. The average dwell time per visit is 287 minutes. About 66% of unique visitors live more than 10 miles from the park while slightly under 66% of total visits to the park are made by people living outside of 10 miles.



Data Observations – Place.ai: Trade Area



Recommendations – Administrative/Operational

- Rethink budget model and consider dissolving and absorbing the recreation districts into county operations

- Grow operational budget to a total of \$8.75 million for parks and recreation
- Grow generated revenue to maintain a 30-35% or \$2.625 – 3.062 million cost recovery rates
- Consider dedicated millage or a bond referendum for parks and recreation capital projects
- Do not allocate the current rec tax distribution to cities and towns and consider creating a scholarship fund for qualified youth if towns and cities charge a differential fee
- Consider zoning and other policy tools like impact fees for parks, land set-asides, etc. to help secure and preserve land and fund future park development

Personnel Plan

- Add administrative assistant, deputy director, park planner/project administrator, marketing coordinator, trails coordinator, and a programming/events coordinator to the director's office (6 new positions)
- Allison Creek (1 new ranger and 1 visitor center associate), Ebenezer (2 new rangers), and Catawba Bend (3 new maintenance techs, 4 rangers, 1 gatehouse attendant, and 1 visitor center associate); Field Day is fully staffed for current needs
- BLW facilities - Thistle, Woodend, and Goat Farm needs are currently met but will need to be re-evaluated when those properties are developed
- As projects are completed and parks and programs are added, positions will need to be added
- PT employees are needed in addition to full-time employees listed above
- Consider in-sourcing maintenance for Allison Creek and Ebenezer

Marketing, Promotions, Branding, and Positioning

- Improving communication was identified as a need – dedicated position listed above will help
- Add “York County” to name of all parks and create a coherent and standard brand
- Consider adding “Tourism” to department name
- Adding a marketing/promotions coordinator position dedicated to parks and recreation who works with county level public information director but is a direct report to parks and recreation director
- Consider creating a parks and recreation commission/committee and a parks foundation

Recommendations – Parks and Facilities

- Future annexation situation drives decisions
- Focus on developing Catawba Bend
- Develop, and support the development of trails – trail coordinator position to work with nonprofits, municipalities, etc. on projects and funding; working with volunteer groups
- Plan to provide basic amenities and access to Thistle and Woodend; note – current facilities on Thistle and Woodend will cost significantly more to renovate than building new facilities
- Identify land to purchase and protect for open/green space and future park development
- Add smaller scale community/neighborhood parks in strategic locations throughout the county as development occurs

Recommendations – Park and Facilities

- **Top-5 Desired Facilities/PIR**
 - Neighborhood parks
 - Natural areas/conservation areas
 - Paved connectivity trails for bikes and pedestrians

- Splash pads/interactive water play features
- Unpaved hiking trails within parks
- **Unique opportunities**
 - Develop Ag facility; market, tourism; needs creative financing plan
 - Study feasibility of developing shooting sports complex in partnership with Clemson Extension

Recommendations – Programs

- **Top 5 Program Investment Areas:**
 - Special Events
 - Markets
 - Adult fitness/wellness
 - Water-based recreation
 - Nature/environmental education

Council would like staff to proceed with items that they are prepared to make a recommendation on by presenting to the full Council for consideration. Any additional items that need further discussion should be referred to the Health and Environmental Protection Committee for further consideration.

There being no further discussion a motion was made by Council member Allison Love and seconded by Council member Debi Cloninger to adjourn the meeting. Motion Carried.