

Chapter 2: Inventory

What do we have?

Southern Pines Park Inventory



Mini Parks are specialized facilities that serve a concentrated population area or a specific function or age group. Amenities found in mini parks might include playground/tot lot equipment, benches, picnic tables, gazebos, landscape features, etc. Southern Pines has 1 mini park:

- E. S. Douglass Community Center playground, 1185 W. Pennsylvania Ave.



Neighborhood Parks serve as the basic unit of a park system and provide a recreational and social focus for the surrounding neighborhood. Neighborhood parks generally provide informal active and passive recreation and might offer activities such as field games, court games, picnicking, and playground areas.

Southern Pines has 5 neighborhood parks:

- Blanchie Carter Park, 1250 W. New York Ave.
- Downtown Park, 145 SE Broad St.
- Elizabeth Rounds Park, 570 Pee Dee Rd.
- Nick's Creek Greenway, 7200 NC Hwy 22
- Sandhurst Park, 145 S. Bethesda Rd.



Community Parks usually serve multiple neighborhoods and have special amenities that serve all Southern Pines residents. The focus is on meeting community-wide recreation, athletics and open space needs. Southern Pines has 5 community parks:

- Campbell House Park, 450 E. New Hampshire Ave.
- Martin Dog Park, 350 Commerce Ave.
- Memorial Park, 210 Memorial Park Ct.
- Morganton Rd. Sports Complex & Armory Field, 640 W. Morganton Rd.
- Pool Park, 730 S. Henley St.



Regional Parks often serve an entire county or expanded geographic area. These parks either have expansive open spaces for passive recreation and/or provide tournament-quality facilities for athletics and active recreation.

Southern Pines has 1 regional park:

- Reservoir Park (including the Whitehall property), 300 Reservoir Park Rd.

The park inventory process was a crucial first step of developing a master plan for Whitehall. This process involved a comprehensive assessment and documentation of the Town's existing parks and recreation amenities, facilities, and natural features.

The primary goal of the inventory was to gather data and information that will inform decisions about Whitehall and potential future improvements at the Town's other parks.

Gap Identification: The inventory helps to identify any voids or gaps in the Town's parks and recreation amenities and facilities. These voids represent opportunities to consider at Whitehall and suggestions for potential enhancements or additions to other parks.

The inventory is summarized on the following pages. The full inventory is included in the appendix.



Benchmarks



Southern Pines



2023 Agency Review Population ≤ 20,000

Residents per park	1,509	Median = 1,225
Park acres/1,000 residents	16.6	Median = 13.0
	SOUTHERN PINES INVENTORY	PREVALENCE OF FACILITY
Community Garden	--	39%
Dog park	50-acre park	48%
Pickleball	6 courts	18%
Senior Center	1 center	22%
Swimming pool (outdoor)	1 pool	36%
Tennis courts (outdoor)	6 courts	67%
	SOUTHERN PINES POPULATION/FACILITY	POPULATION PER FACILITY
Baseball & softball - youth	2,766	3,114
Basketball courts	2,075	3,729
Lacrosse fields	--	9,786
Playgrounds	1,844	2,014
Pickleball	2,766	3,252
Rec Center/Gym	16,596	9,745
Skate Park	--	10,726
Soccer fields - youth	4,149	3,600
Tennis courts (outdoor)	2,766	2,805

The inventory data has been compared with the 2023 NRPA Agency Performance Review* that summarizes park metrics.

The NRPA Agency Performance Review does establish "standards," nor are the benchmarks intended as rigid criteria for the Town to measure itself.

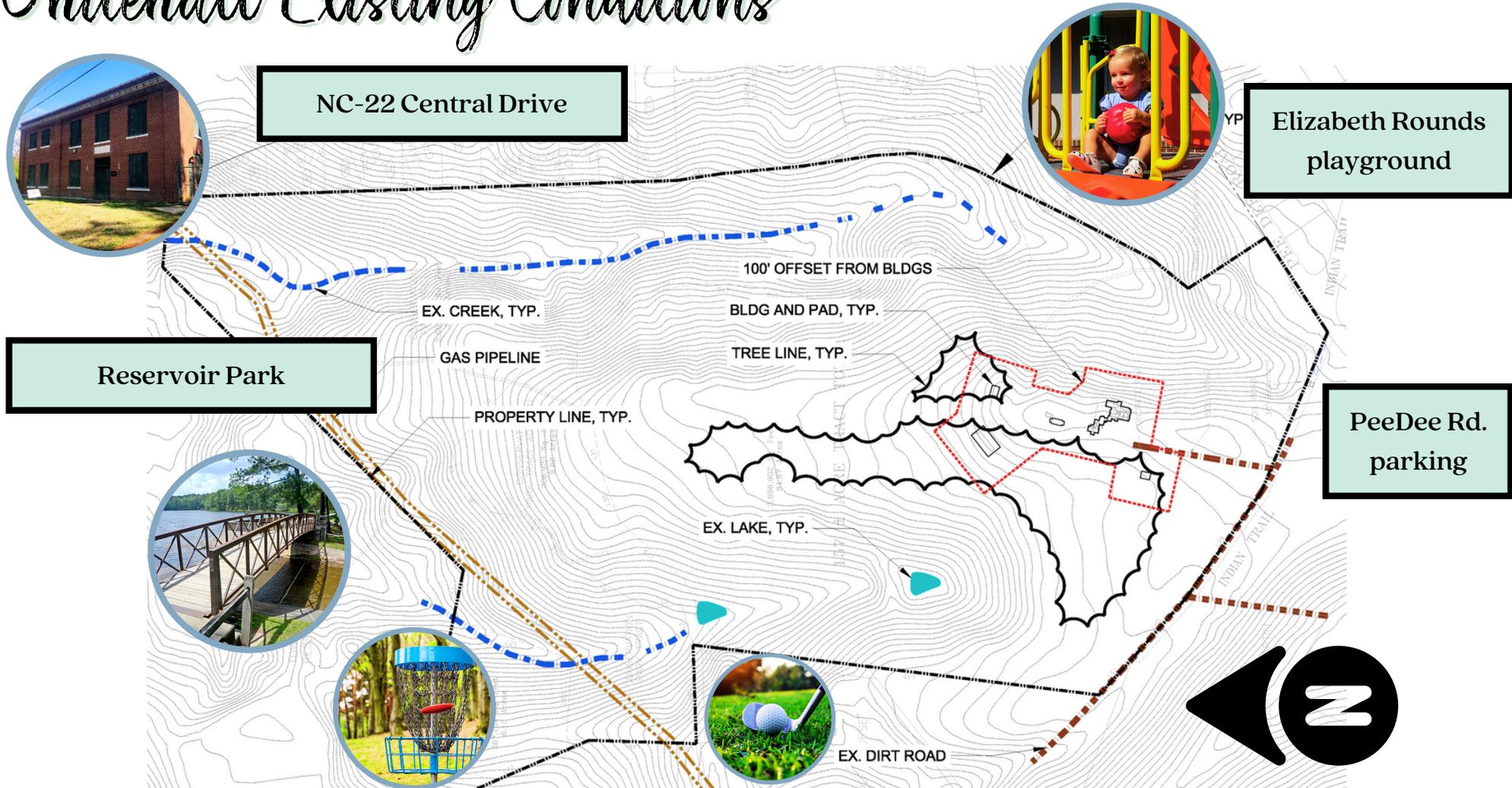
"Prevalence of facility" means the percentage of communities with a population under 20,000 that have the described facility.

To calculate "population per facility," 16,596 was used for Southern Pines, which is the 2022 population estimate from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Rather, the inventory data, along with community input, helps to prioritize the needs that Whitehall Park can potentially fulfill.

*The NRPA (National Recreation & Parks Association) Agency Performance Review can be found at www.NRPA.org/APR

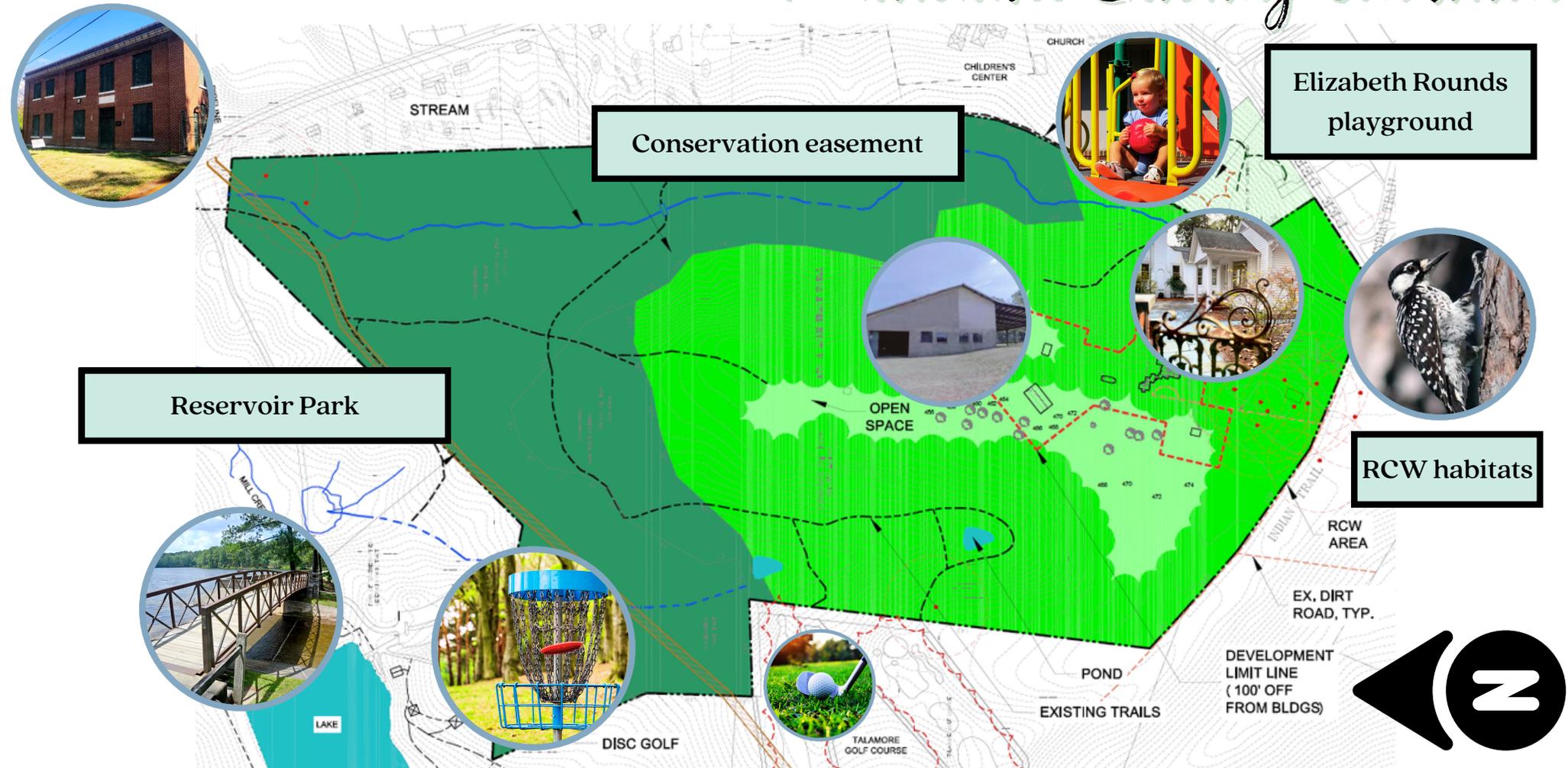
Whitehall Existing Conditions



The Whitehall property is 157 acres and adjoins Reservoir Park to the north. Part of the Reservoir Park disc golf course already extends on to the Whitehall property. Most people who visit Whitehall now typically park at the unimproved parking area along Pee Dee Road and enter the property along its southern property boundary, either using the existing driveway or trails that run behind the house.

The Town's Elizabeth Rounds playground adjoins Whitehall to the east. Existing homes and institutional uses also adjoin Whitehall to the east/northeast, all accessed from Pee Dee Road. or Central Drive. Talamore golf course is located directly west/southwest of the Whitehall property.

Whitehall Existing Conditions



The Three Rivers Land Trust holds a conservation easement on 66.39 of the total 157 acres, about 40% of the property. This is shown in dark green along the northeastern part of the property, where it adjoins Reservoir Park and properties along Central Dr. and Pee Dee Rd.

The red cockaded woodpecker habitats are primarily located in the southeastern corner of the property, where visitors enter from the Pee Dee Rd. parking area. The three primary structures - the existing home, carriage house, and barn - are somewhat centrally located. They are most easily accessed from the southeastern corner of the property.

Longleaf Pines



Whitehall and Reservoir Park include 5 longleaf pine stands, which are all documented in the Southeast Longleaf Ecosystem Occurrences Geodatabase (LEO). The comprehensive database tracks longleaf pine forest locations and habitat conditions across the southeast.

The goal of LEO is to contribute to the successful management, restoration, and conservation of the longleaf pine ecosystem in North Carolina and throughout the southeast.

The five stands were last surveyed in October 2021, by The Nature Conservancy & U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The 5 stands total approximately 152 acres, portions of which extend onto neighboring properties to both the north and south.

Four of the stands were in "good" ecological condition in 2021 and one in "low" condition (stand #4, where Whitehall adjoins Reservoir Park, at the park's Central Drive entrance. No stands were rated "excellent."

As the Town implements the Whitehall master plan, efforts should include a land management plan and frequent controlled burns to maintain and improve the condition of the longleaf pine ecosystem.

We take great pride in the natural beauty and public spaces in Southern Pines. We want everyone to be able to access and enjoy these wonderful assets safely. It's

the Southern Pines Way

Fire is a natural and essential part of the longleaf ecosystem and many of the plants, animals, and processes rely on regular fire cycles for their survival and well-being. Longleaf adaptations include thick, fire-resistant bark and high canopy height to survive low-intensity surface fires. Conservation efforts and prescribed burning programs have been established to ensure the health and diversity of this unique habitat.

- **Seed Germination:** Fire removes accumulated leaf litter and creates bare mineral soil, allowing the longleaf seeds to come into direct contact with the soil. The heat from the fire also helps to crack open the seed's hard shell, promoting germination.
- **Reduced Competition:** Fire clears the forest floor of understory plants and hardwood trees, which allows young longleaf pines to receive more sunlight and grow more vigorously.
- **Biodiversity:** The longleaf pine ecosystem is one of the most biodiverse in North America. Many of its species are fire-dependent, regenerating quickly after a fire to restore the ecosystem. This helps to maintain a diverse range of plant communities and wildlife habitats.
- **Disease and Pest Control:** Fire can reduce the prevalence of certain diseases, pathogens, pests, and invasive species. Regular fires maintain the overall health and resilience of the longleaf ecosystem, contributing to its long-term sustainability.

EXCELLENT

Evidence of frequent fire. Both mature longleaf pines and saplings dominate the ecosystem and saplings. Mid-story trees are less than 20% of the tree canopy and shrubs cover less than 30% of the forest floor. Native herbaceous plants are extensive and there is minimal, if any, invasive or non-native species.

GOOD

Some evidence of fire. Mid-story trees and shrubs are starting to encroach into the tree canopy and forest floor. Evidence of native herbaceous plants and minimal, if any, invasive or non-native species. Controlled burn would improve the conditions.



FAIR

Infrequent fires have occurred. Mid-story trees and shrubs are starting to encroach into the tree canopy and forest floor. Some evidence of herbaceous plants and potentially invasive or non-native species. Controlled burn would improve the conditions; some mechanical clearing may be necessary.

LOW

No evidence of recent fire. Mid-story trees and shrubs are dominating the tree canopy. Shrubs are taking over the forest floor, eliminating native herbaceous plants. Invasive or non-native species may be present. Mechanical clearing likely needed before controlled burn can occur.



Whitehall Conservation Easement

Before the Town acquired Whitehall, the previous owners placed a conservation easement on the property.

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a qualified conservation organization or government entity that limits the future development or use of the land in order to protect its natural, cultural, or historical values. The landowner voluntarily agrees to permanently restrict certain activities or development, while still retaining ownership of the land.

Conservation easements typically protect important natural resources, wildlife habitats, scenic landscapes, historical sites, and open spaces. It is not uncommon to find them on farmland, forests, wetlands, wildlife corridors, and other ecologically or culturally significant areas.

The conservation easement remains attached to the land indefinitely, even if the property changes ownership in the future. This ensures that the conservation values of the land are protected across generations.

Conservation easements have become a popular tool to help private landowners play a crucial role in protecting valuable resources for future generations.



The Three Rivers Land Trust holds a conservation easement on 66.39 of the 157 acres at Whitehall, about 40% of the property.



The easement permanently protects Whitehall's conservation values so that future generations can enjoy it. The area protected under the conservation easement is primarily located in the longleaf preserves and the red cockaded woodpecker habitats.



The terms of the conservation easement permit the Town to open the property to the public with environmentally sensitive enhancements. The master plan was designed with the conservation easement in mind and included feedback from the Three Rivers Land Trust.

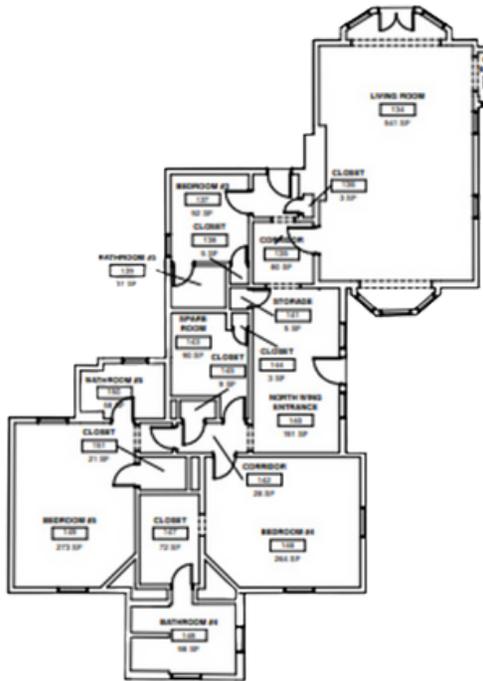
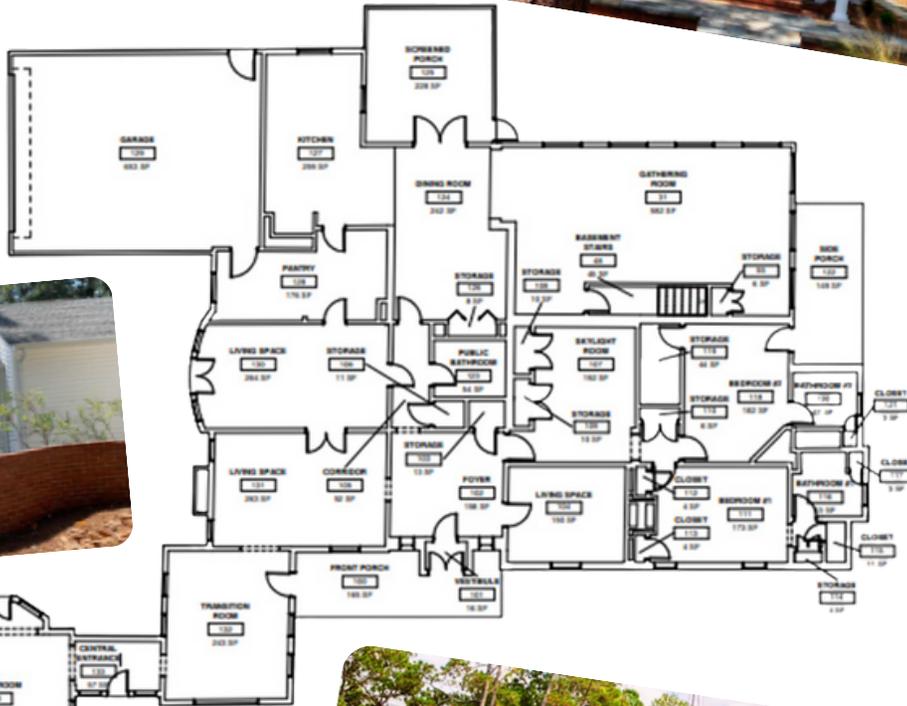


The Land Trust supports the master plan and planned construction techniques and plans to partner with the Town in implementing the plan. Some of the planned design and construction techniques include:

- All trails will be designed around the trees and natural features to minimize mass grading or clearing. Trees & underbrush will only be removed if they are dead, dying, diseased, or hazardous or to support land management
- Trails that go through the easement will be constructed using pervious paving, wooden boardwalk, or soft surfaces.
- The "hard surface" pervious trails will be ADA-accessible AND stroller-friendly, while still protecting the trees and natural features.
- The existing dirt trail & road help to form the new trails in order to minimize future disturbance.
- The trails will serve a dual purpose by providing recreation and fire breaks for controlled burns. The ability to safely introduce fire to the lognleaf pines is critical to their survival and ability to thrive.



Whitehall House



There is a large, historic home on the Whitehall property. It is estimated that the original structure was built in 1920, although there is evidence of various additions over time. Records indicate the home was renovated around 2000.

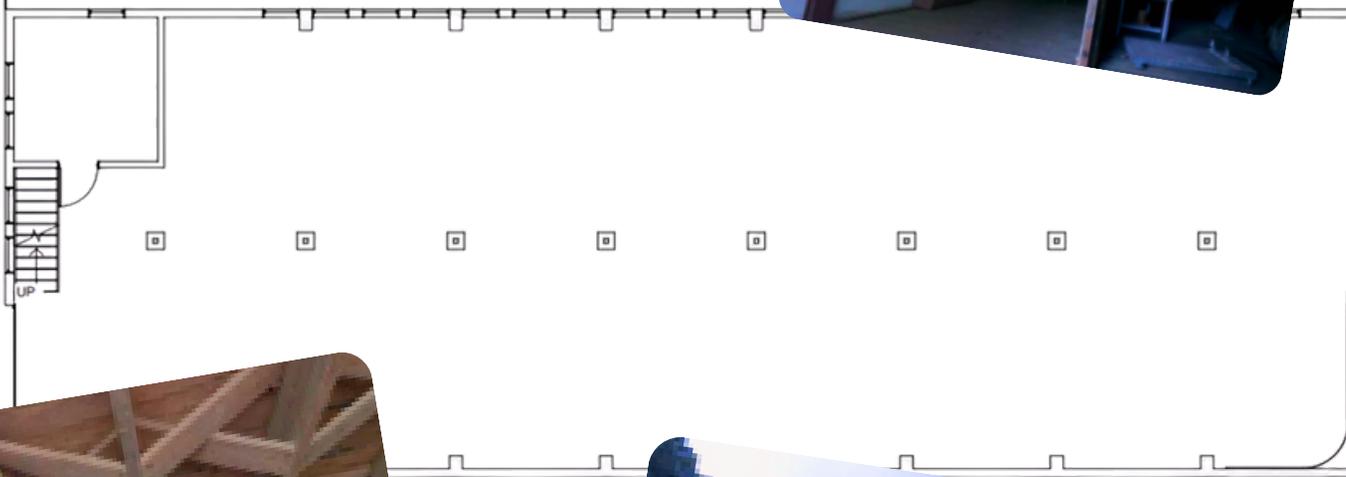
The main floor is approximately 6,600 square feet and the basement includes another 2,000 square feet, partially finished.

The architectural detailing and adjacent outdoor gathering spaces suggest the house should be preserved and put on display to the public.

The organization of the interior spaces allows for programming several different functions. Several exterior entrances provide separate entry points to help reinforce the idea of multi-use programming.

Accessibility and building systems upgrades remain the biggest hurdle when considering options for reuse and public use, but the craftsmanship and detailing beauty far outweigh the complications and costs of renovation.

Whitehall Barn



The property includes a 3,600-square foot barn was originally a chicken house. The barn was constructed around 1960 and needs some major upgrades to support any public functions.

The interior consists of mostly unfinished space. The partially finished areas are not worth keeping and should be removed. The ground floor has a partial concrete slab and the remainder is dirt.

The open floor plan and adjacent covered space make it appealing for a variety of activities. The large open interior space can serve as parks and recreation storage with little renovation.

A more intensive renovation could yield a wonderful gathering or reception space to facilitate different activities and functions. Bathrooms can be added to serve both barn users and park visitors. An outdoor patio can be added near the Pecan Grove as an overflow space for events and base of operations for activities on the grounds.