APPENDIX A.1
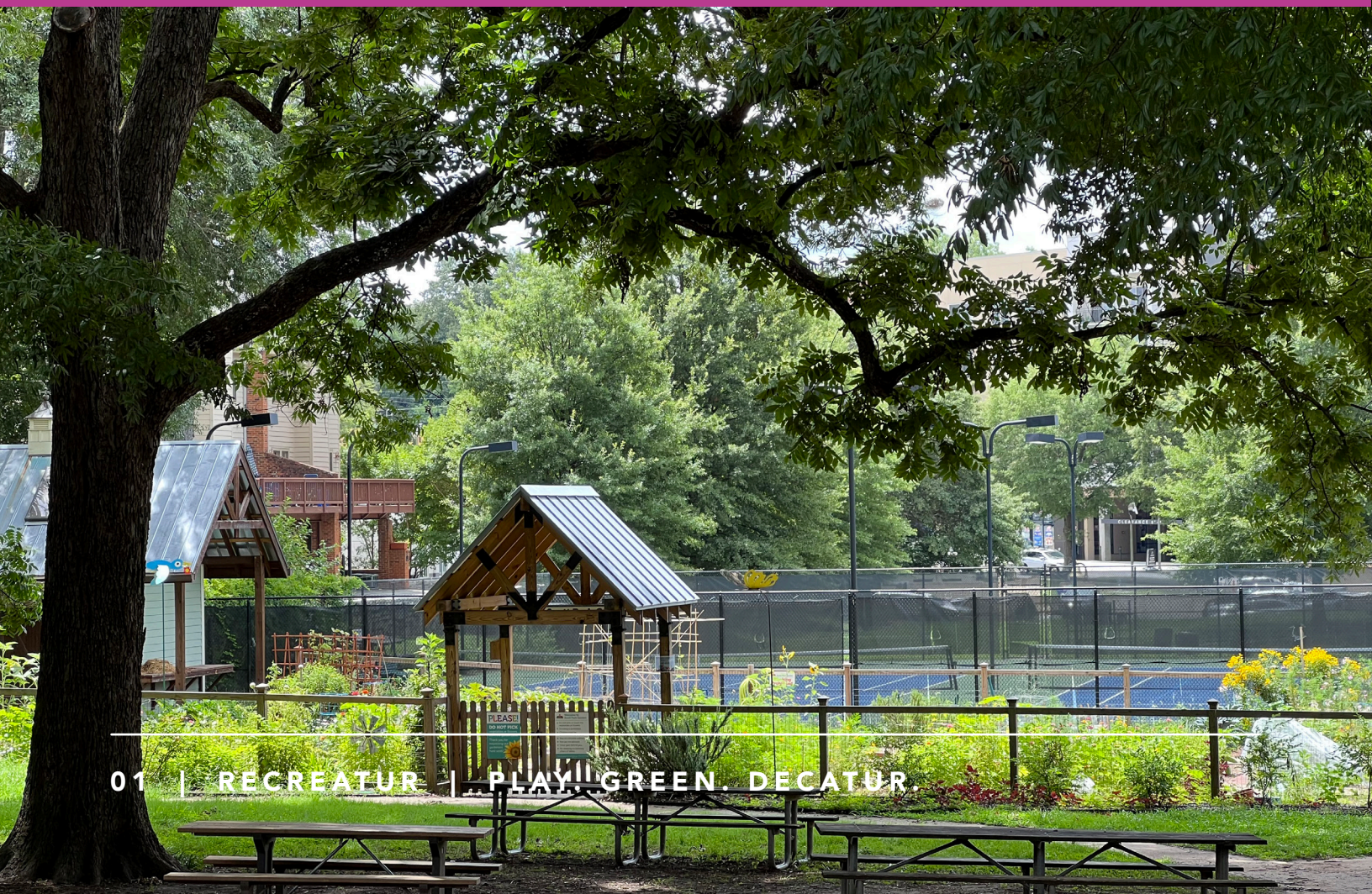
Benchmarking

Unlike other disciplines of city planning such as transportation or stormwater management, parks and recreation system planning does not rely on national standards. Rather, industry best practice encourages communities to benchmark their parks and recreation systems to other communities across the country with similar characteristics.

To that end, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) developed Park Metrics, a database that contains the largest collection of parks and recreation operating data in the United States. Communities can use this database to benchmark and evaluate their performance against similar agencies and aggregated data from across the country.

For Recreatur, the Planning Team identified communities within NRPA Park Metrics that have a similar population and population density as the City of Decatur. These two characteristics are important because they inform city development patterns, which inform lifestyles and how residents may enjoy parks and recreation services. For example, cities with smaller populations may have different capabilities, policies, and procedures than cities with larger populations. Cities with higher population densities have more residents living in a defined geographic area. This may create a larger demand on, and for, parks, recreation facilities, and programs.

Additionally, increased densities may suggest smaller lot sizes and the presence of multi-unit structures versus single-family homes. Residents living in multi-unit structures typically rely more on public parks to provide basic, close-to-home recreational opportunities such as playgrounds, lawns to play catch, community gardens, or open spaces to allow dogs to run around without a leash. These are some of the basic, every-day recreational activities that a family living in a single-family home may enjoy in their backyard.

Finally, the benchmark cities were also limited to park systems with a comparable number of parks (10-39), to further capture similar systems.

Following are the list of communities included in the Benchmark data used for Recreatur, with data reported in 2021:

Characteristics:
Jurisdiction Population: 20,000-49,999
Jurisdiction Population Density: 2,500-7,500 population per square mile
Number of parks maintained: 10-39

- Fairfax (City of) Parks and Recreation Department, VA
- East Lansing Department of Parks, Recreation & Arts, MI
- Lombard Park District, IL
- Cornelius Parks, Arts, Recreation & Culture (PARC) Department, NC
- Herndon (Town of) Parks and Recreation Dept, VA
- Brushy Creek Municipal Utility District, TX
- Burlington Parks, Recreation & Waterfront Department, VT
- Coppell (City of), TX
- Lynnwood Parks, Recreation & Cultural Arts, WA
- Mountlake Terrace (City of) Recreation and Parks, WA
- Park Forest (Village of) Recreation & Parks Department, IL
- Englewood (City of), CO
- Weatherford (City of) Parks and Recreation, TX
- Tukwila Park & Recreation Department, WA
- Mount Vernon Parks and Recreation, WA
- Acworth Parks & Recreation, GA
- Radnor Township Recreation & Community Programming, PA
- Hilliard Recreation & Parks Department, OH
- Shoreview (City of) Parks and Recreation, MN
- Lake in the Hills (Village of) Parks & Recreation, IL
- Imperial Beach (City of), CA
- Chamblee Parks and Recreation Department, GA
- City of Oviedo, FL