

FY 2026 Hospitality Tax Competitive Project Process

Funding Recommendations

Michael James, Assistant County Manager

February 9, 2026



Agenda

- **Competitive Process History and Context**
- **FY 2026 Process Overview**
- **Summary of Requests Received**
- **Panel Recommendations**
- **Next Steps**

Competitive Process History

- First process held in 2013, with subsequent processes in 2016, 2017, 2019*, and 2022
- Funding started as part of a “2-for-1” agreement with City of Raleigh, and dedicated small project funding was later added in the 20th Amendment
- Award decisions for competitive processes have historically been at the sole discretion of the commissioners

2013-2023

\$20.1 Million Awarded for
18 Projects located in
10 Municipalities

Supporting a variety of sports, arts, and cultural facilities projects

Funding Available

The 23rd Amendment to the ILA established funding for this process:

- Set total of **\$23.5 million**, and provided for process whereby:
 - **“Joint” \$15.5 million** awarded by **Commissioners AND City Council**
 - **“County” \$8 million** is awarded by vote of the **Commissioners only**

FY 2026 Process Timeline

September 8, 2025

Request For Proposals (RFP) Published

September 15, 2025

Virtual Pre-submittal Meeting To Review Process With
Applicants (Recorded And Distributed)

November 6, 2025

Proposals Due

November/December 2025

Evaluation Panel Reviewed Submittals

November 14 and 21, 2025

Applicant Presentations And Q&A With The Panel

December 2025

Evaluation Panel Scored Submittals

February 9, 2026

BOC Work Session – Receive Panel Recommendations

February 16, 2026

BOC Regular Mtg – Earliest Date For Vote On Panel
Recommendations (All \$23.5m)

February 17, 2026

City Council Vote – Earliest Date For Vote On Panel
Recommendations (\$15.5M Joint)

Minimum Project Requirements

- Fully located in Wake County
- Within permitted use (arts, convention, sports, or cultural)
- Capital in nature (min. value of at least \$100,000)
- Interlocal funds must be less than 50% of the total project cost
 - Applicants must demonstrate commitment of at least half of the non-interlocal funding at time of submittal
- Funds are distributed on a reimbursement basis
- No restrictions on organization type

Outreach and Promotion of Opportunity

- **RFP posting**
- **Direct emails to interested parties and stakeholder groups**
- **Presentations to municipal managers, elected boards**
- **Promotion through community groups**
 - Greater Raleigh Sports Alliance
 - Wake County Hospitality Alliance
 - United Arts of Wake County
 - Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau
 - Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce
- **News Release and Media Coverage**

Wake County, City of Raleigh seeking submissions for hospitality tax revenues



By [Michael Perchick](#) 
Friday, September 26, 2025



In the past dozen years, 18 projects have been funded, totaling \$21.12 million, including \$1 million to Ting Park in 2013.

Evaluation Criteria

- **Return on Investment:** Impact of the project on overnight room stays, food and beverage purchases, and overall tourism
- **Facility Demand:** Project's ability to address demonstrated demand, unmet need, inadequate facilities, or emerging needs
- **Project Feasibility:** Organization's capability and resources to execute the project
- **Project Viability:** Long-term planning to operate and market the facility for years to come
- **Project Readiness:** Project's readiness to enter the construction phase
- **Alignment with Stakeholder Principles:** Extent of project alignment with the Stakeholder Operating Principles

Evaluation Team

Wake County

- County Manager's Office
- Budget & Management Services
- Facilities, Design, & Construction

City of Raleigh

- City Manager's Office
- Finance
- Convention Center

Community

- Convention and Visitors Bureau
- United Arts of Wake County
- Municipal Representatives (2)
- Wake County Hospitality Alliance

Summary of FY2026 Requests

- **Received 22 Submittals (Record High)**
 - Requests totaled **\$75.7 million** for nearly \$300 million of total projects
 - Mix of 22 Projects Requested included:
 - 50/50 split of New Facilities vs. Existing Facility Improvements
 - 14 Sports vs. 8 Cultural or Arts

Recommended for Funding

New Facilities

Town of Zebulon

Score 88.8 | Requested: \$3,000,000 | Recommended: \$2,159,000

Zebulon Community Park Facilities Phase I:

- Construct 4 soccer (multipurpose) fields and associated improvements including:
 - Additional parking and second park entrance
 - Playground
 - Walking paths
- Positions the Town to host tournaments and serve with other venues in a cluster model
- Addresses rapid growth in youth sports programs, including many participants from neighboring counties
- 80% of non-interlocal funds committed



Town of Rolesville

Score 85.5 | Requested: \$3,800,000 | Recommended: \$3,800,000

The Farm Athletic Complex Phase I:

- Construct 5 soccer/multipurpose fields (2 lit) and associated amenities including:
 - Parking, restrooms, concessions, and pedestrian connectivity
- Town partnership with North Carolina Football Club (NCFC) Youth includes:
 - Planned NCFC contribution to construction costs
 - Long-term operating agreement whereby NCFC manages and maintains the fields
- 75% of non-interlocal funds committed, plus a pending commitment from NCFC



November 5, 2025

June Greene
Director, Town of Rolesville
PO Box 250
502 Southtown Circle
Rolesville, NC 27571

June,

On behalf of North Carolina FC Youth (NCFC Youth) it is my pleasure to submit this letter of support for the development of Frazier Farm Athletic Complex.

The facility would be a major sports and recreation asset to Rolesville, Wake County, and to NCFC Youth soccer programming. Youth soccer has grown in our area, with NCFC Youth soccer participation growing 30% in the past 5 years and now servicing more than 17,000 local players and families, many who reside in Rolesville and adjacent communities. Access to more fields near current players and prospective players will attract more kids to play, be active, and social, emotionally, and mentally benefit from participation.

This multi-field proposed complex in particular would be a huge asset to our tournaments hosted throughout the year that welcome more than 2,000 teams to our county and region. We are always looking for multi-field venues that can host multiple games at the same time and provide a great visitor experience to our teams, parents, coaches, and referees.

More importantly, as our tournaments have grown over the years, often teams are pulled outside of the county for tournament play – as far as east as Goldsboro and as far west as Mebane. Our goal is to keep as much game play and hotel stays inside the county that has supported us for the past 51 years. By having Frazier Farm Athletic Complex for our tournament use, we will undoubtedly create a better experience for visiting teams and bring more hotel room nights and visitor spending into Wake County (versus taking it outside the county to a satellite facility).

Through our preliminary discussions, our intent is to support the development of the soccer fields at Frazier Park with capital investment and labor support including final grading of the fields, springing, irrigation, and addition of lights to some of the fields. As the phases of the project continue, we look forward to discussing and finalizing our financial commitment to the project.

We are excited about the new complex being added to Wake County – undoubtedly, it will be a major hub of community engagement and economic impact.

Gary Buete
Chief Executive Officer
North Carolina FC Youth

NC Football Club Youth (NCFC Youth)

Score 84.1 | Requested: \$3,500,000 | Recommended: \$2,000,000

Administrative and Event HQ Facility at WRAL Soccer Park:

- 1st floor: Amenities for teams and guests (café, medical suite, and multi purpose rooms and event space)
- 2nd floor: NCFC Administrative HQ and event command center
- Helps NCFC maintain its competitive edge as the single largest annual generator of sports driven room nights
 - 37,250 room nights in FY2025
- 75% of Non-Interlocal Funds committed

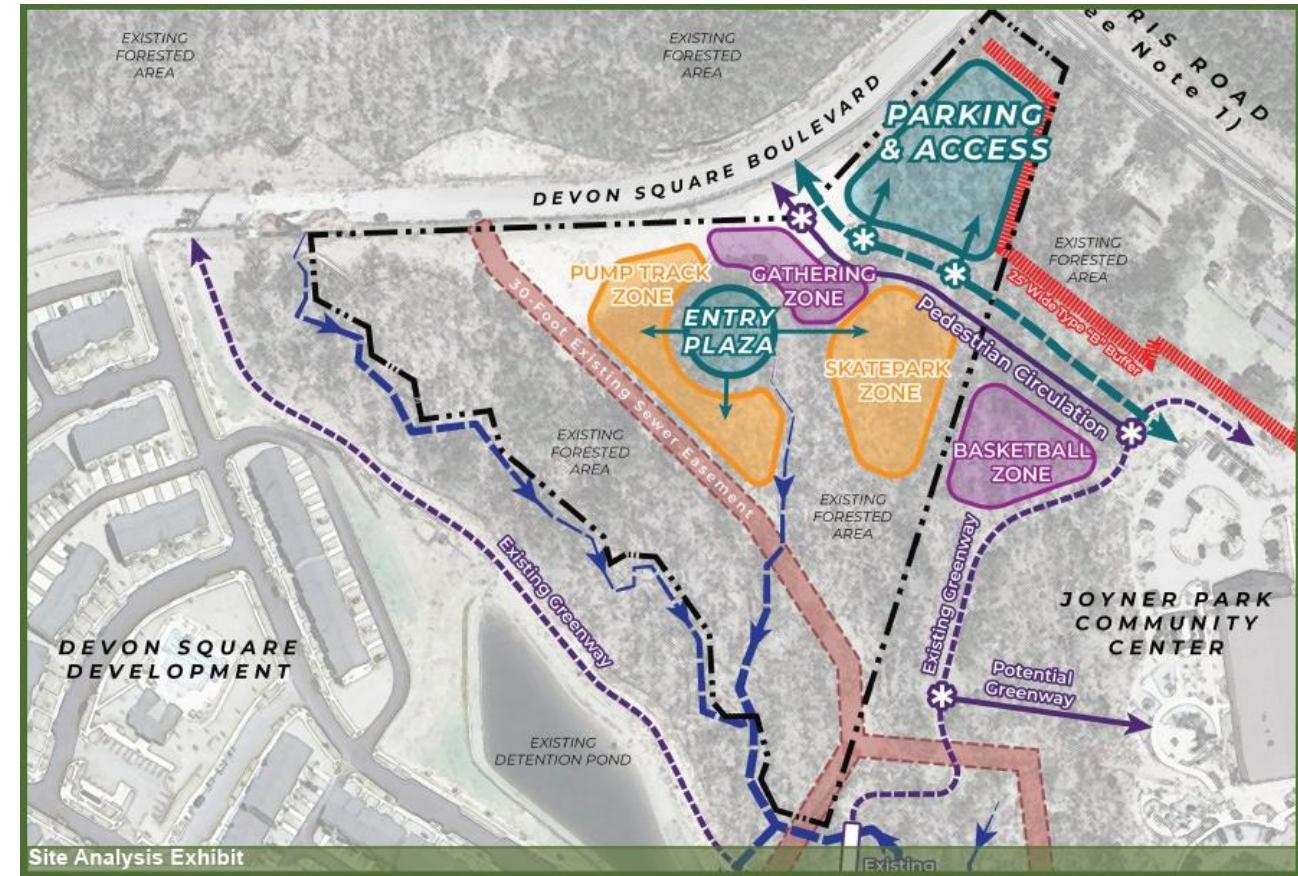


Town of Wake Forest

Score 80.6 | Requested: \$4,839,000 | Recommended: \$3,891,000

Skate Park and Pump Track

- Construct 25,000 sq. ft. Skate Park and 2,700 linear ft. Pump Track
 - Facility will also include outdoor basketball courts, food truck facilities, fitness equipment, a picnic shelter, restrooms, and parking
- Partnering with New Line Skatelparks, a specialized firm to design the skate park and track
 - Targeting multi-day events like USA BMX National and state events
- 84% of non-interlocal funds committed



Burlington BMX – Burlington, NC



George Poston Park – Gastonia, NC

Town of Apex

Score 79.6 | Requested: \$348,961 | Recommended: \$348,000

Town Campus Stage

- Construct performance stage on the Apex Town Campus to host concerts, performances, and support Town events.
- 1,700 capacity (1,100 lawn + ~600 seated)
- Exploring partnerships to serve as a satellite venue for performing arts organizations including the NC Opera
- 100% of non-interlocal funds committed

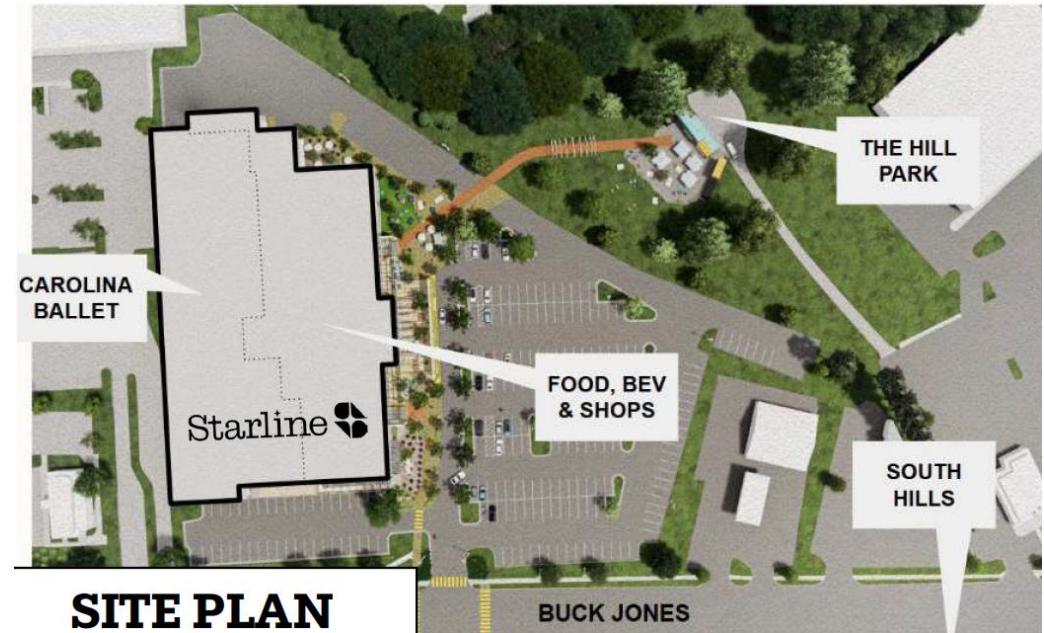


Carolina Ballet

Score 75.3 | Requested: \$5,500,000 | Recommended: \$1,500,000

Starline at South Hills

- Partnership between the Ballet and developer (LODEN) to convert a vacant building into mixed-use district including the ballet, food/beverage, and retail
- Ballet would include a black box theater, five studios, costume storage, offices, and a ballet school.
- New space + rent savings position the Ballet to expand offerings, and partner with existing venues to address their demand challenges
- 55% of Non-Interlocal Funds Committed



Ballet performed for nearly 66,000 in 2024, with ~42% from outside Wake County based on ticket sales data

Recommended for Funding

Improvements to Existing Facilities

Triangle Aquatic Center (TAC)

Score 91.8 | Requested: \$60,000 | Recommended: \$59,000

- Renovate hospitality suite to better accommodate larger, multi-day competitions and events and maintain edge in securing events
- NCHSAA State Championships among several major annual events driving out of town and overnight visitation
- In Jan. 2025 – Oct. 2025, TAC hosted:
 - >30 events with 300+ registered swimmer, including 4 with 1,000+ swimmers
- 98% of non-interlocal funds committed



Town of Morrisville

Score 86.1 | Requested: \$2,000,000 | Recommended: \$2,000,000

Church Street Park Cricket Field

Improvements including:

- Drainage system installation, two additional pitches, and lighting upgrades to meet international broadcasting requirements
- Town's 10-year agreement with American Cricket Enterprises supports hosting of Major and Minor League cricket matches
- Help to solidify the park as a premier venue for major matches
- 100% of non interlocal funds committed



Church Street Park at night

Town of Wake Forest

Score: 83.0 | Requested: \$1,738,000 | Recommended: \$750,000

JB Flaherty Park Improvements Phase II

- Improvements for three existing baseball and softball fields
 - Scoreboard replacement, additional batting cages, and bullpens, new dugouts and backstops, additional parking, and related improvements
- Supports tournament and event hosting capacity
- 64% of non-interlocal funds committed



Town of Fuquay-Varina

Score 81.1 | Requested: \$5,000,000 | Recommended: \$4,250,000

Fleming Loop Park Fields

- Convert 7 grass fields to artificial turf to maximize playability and attract more events and tournaments
- Already a host site for large annual soccer/NCFC, lacrosse, and ultimate frisbee events, this positions the Town partner as a host with other venues on larger events like the Cary Cup
- 80% of non-interlocal funds committed

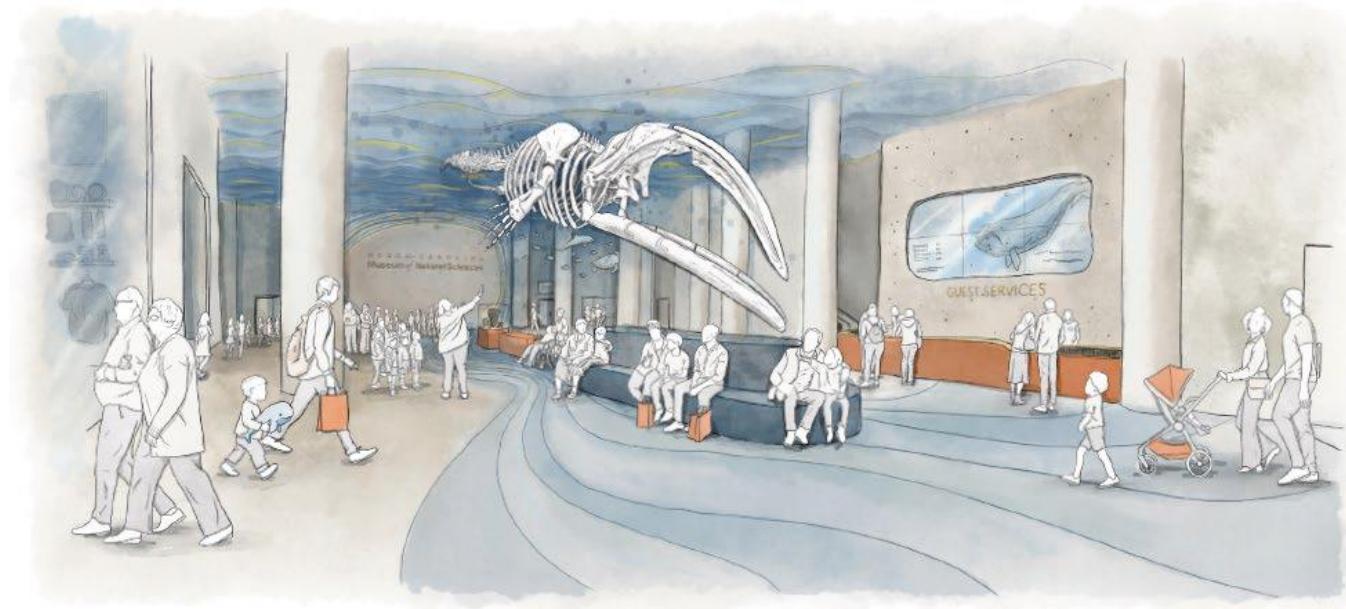


Friends of the NC Museum of Natural Sciences

Score 76.9 | Requested: \$1,125,000 | Recommended: \$954,000

Welcome Hall

- Improvements to the Nature Exploration Center visitor entrance and main hall (more than 25 years old), including:
 - Unified Guest Services Hub
 - Improved Visitor Flow and Orientation
 - “Wow” Factor
- Museum is approaching **1 million visits/year**. In 2024:
 - 930,000 visits (970,000 estimated in '25)
 - 52% came from outside Wake County
- 89% of non-interlocal funds committed



*Project would relocate “Stumpy”, the fully articulated 52-foot Whale to the Welcome Hall to anchor the space

Town of Holly Springs

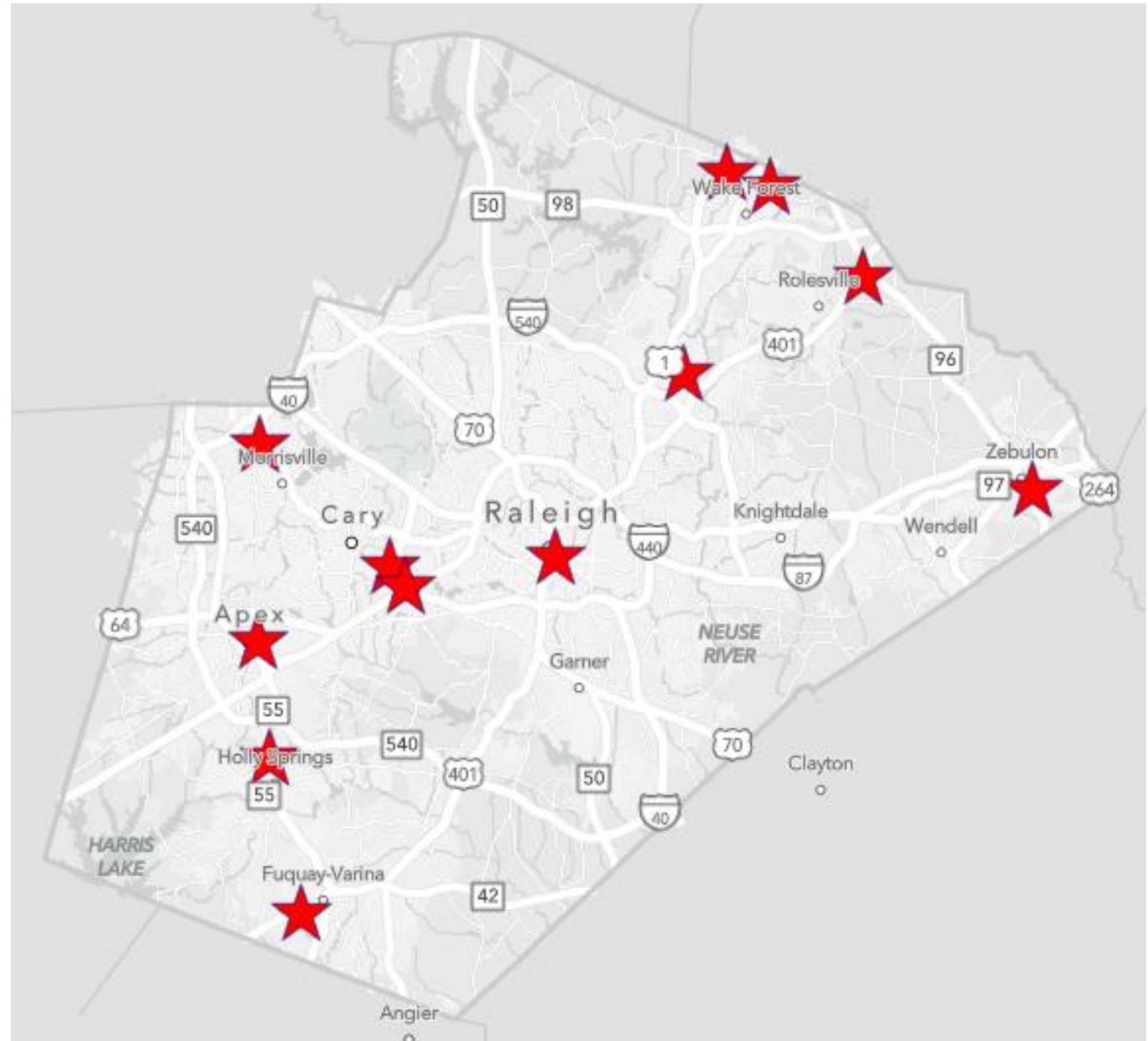
Score 76.4 | Requested: \$5,500,000 | Recommended: \$1,789,000

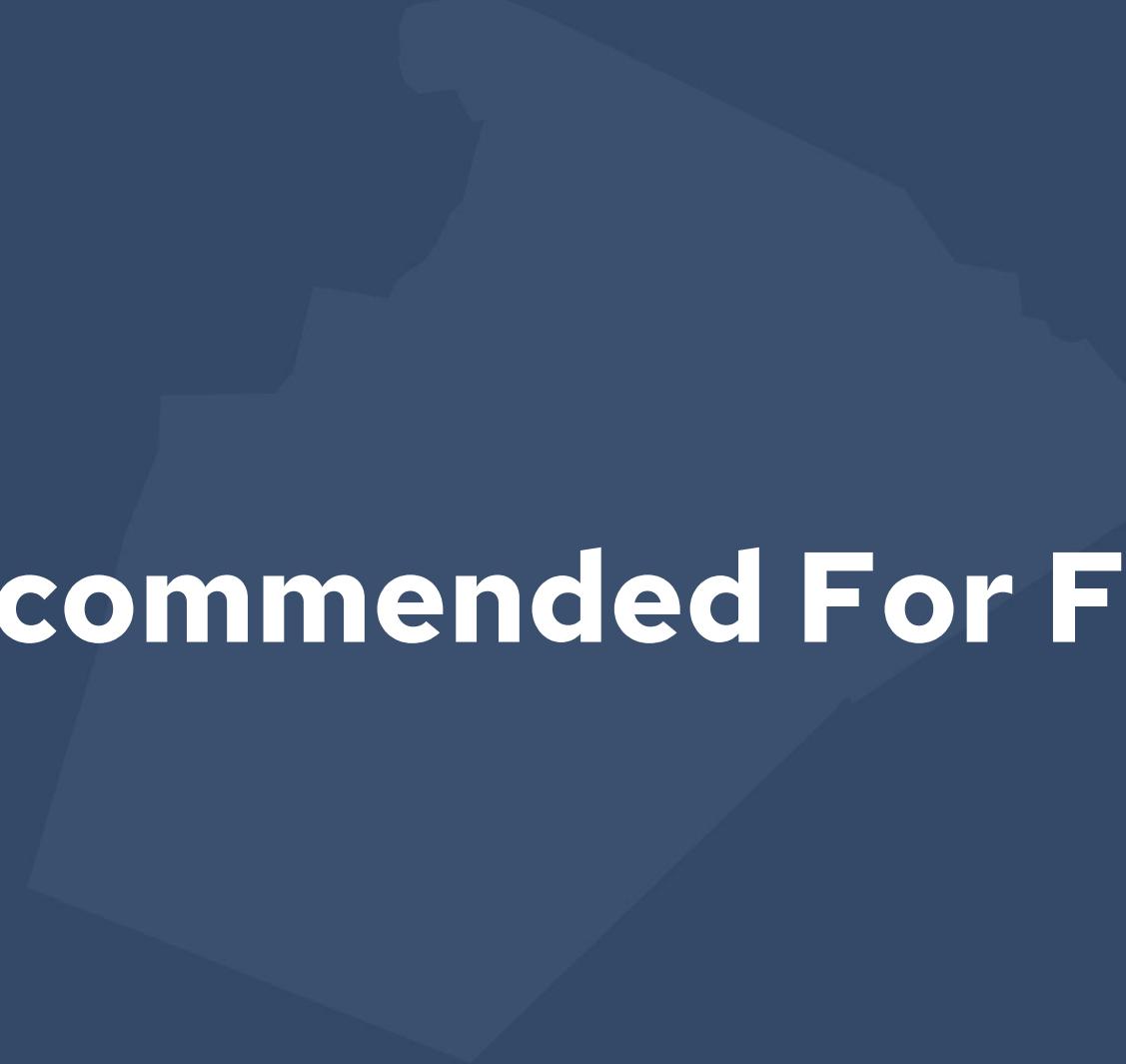
Ting Park Improvements

- Replace the baseball field turf and videoboard, make mechanical system updates, and other improvements to the existing parking and stormwater drainage systems
- Town's larger vision includes a mixed-use development w/ new infrastructure
- Park had 750,000 event visitors in 2024
 - 50,000 for ticketed events (Salamanders, concerts, performances, etc.)
 - 700,000 for non-ticketed events (youth tournament, leagues, etc.)
- 100% of Non-Interlocal Funds Committed



Recommendations
Include **\$23.5 Million** for
12 Projects located in **9 municipalities** across
the County





Not Recommended For Funding

Not Recommended for Funding

Organization	Request	Score	Location	Project Description
Dix Park Conservancy	\$ 4,500,000	N/A*	Raleigh	Convert Brown Building adjacent to the Gipson Play Plaza at Dix Park to a restaurant and concession facility.
NC Museum of Art Foundation, Inc.	\$ 2,000,000	75.0	Raleigh	East Building renovation and improved connectivity to the Museum Park, covered pavilion for events, grand lawn for festivals/gatherings, accessibility upgrades, and a center for Art Conservation and Preservation.
Town of Garner	\$ 2,000,000	70.4	Garner	Phase I of Meadowbrook Park including 18-hole disc golf course, a cultural history trail with public art, trails for hiking and biking, and associated infrastructure.
NC Museum of History Foundation	\$ 5,500,000	68.4	Raleigh	Raise \$50 million for exhibits planned as part of the major renovation currently under construction.
Ammons Building Corporation	\$ 5,500,000	61.1	Raleigh	Dorton Arena renovations to increase event including HVAC and acoustical improvements, ADA compliance, modernization of arena floor for multi-use purposes, upgraded seating and lighting, and other improvements.

Not Recommended for Funding

Organization	Request	Score	Location	Project Description
Wolfpack Elite, Inc.	\$ 624,500	59.1	Raleigh	Replace the Lake Johnson Pool with a heated, year-round pool and make related improvements.
TPG Ventures, LLC.	\$ 5,500,000	57.3	Holly Springs	Construct combination indoor and outdoor soccer complex with supporting amenities.
Town of Fuquay-Varina	\$ 1,182,126	54.2	Fuquay-Varina	Construct armed services memorial, play space, rock climbing wall, and supporting facilities at Library Park.
Swing Sports, Inc.	\$ 10,000,000	53.7	Raleigh	Construct "Picklebowl" including combination of 25 indoor and outdoor courts, food and beverage facilities, restrooms, and shade structures as part of a larger, 44-acre racquet sports complex
BBTA, LLC.	\$ 2,500,000	33.1	Cary	Upfit existing space to create an Indoor Pickleball Sports Facility in West Cary with 8 courts and supporting amenities.

Joint Funding Recommendations

(Require Commissioner and City Council Approval)

Organization	Project	Recommended
Triangle Aquatic Center	Hospitality Suite Renovations	\$ 59,000
Town of Morrisville	Church St. Park Improvements	\$ 2,000,000
Town of Rolesville	Farm Athletic Park Fields	\$ 3,800,000
NCFC Youth HQ	New Facility at WRAL Soccer Park	\$ 2,000,000
Town of Wake Forest	Skate Park and Pump Track	\$ 3,891,000
Town of Wake Forest	JB Flaherty Park Improvements	\$ 750,000
Friends of NC Museum of Natural Sciences	Welcome Hall	\$ 954,000
Town of Holly Springs*	Ting Park Improvements	\$ 546,000
Carolina Ballet	Starline at South Hills	\$ 1,500,000
9 Projects Recommended for Funding		\$ 15,500,000

*Recommendation is split between joint and county funds. Total recommendation = **\$1,789,000**

County Only Recommendations

(Commissioner Approval Only)

Organization	Project	Recommended
Town of Zebulon	Zebulon Community Park Fields	\$2,159,000
Town of Fuquay-Varina	Fleming Loop Park Fields - Turf Conversion	\$4,250,000
Town of Apex	Performance and Event Stage	\$348,000
Town of Holly Springs*	Ting Park Improvements	\$1,243,000
4 Projects Recommended for Funding		\$8,000,000

*Recommendation is split between joint and county funds. Total recommendation = **\$1,789,000**

Next Steps

- **February 16:** Board of Commissioners Vote on award on \$23.5M
- **February 17:** Raleigh City Council Vote on award of Joint \$15.5M
- **Summer 2026:** County enters into funding agreements with awardees detailing award conditions, payment details, and reporting requirements



APPENDIX

Stakeholder Operating Principles

- Prioritize use of funds for projects that drive measurable, regular overnight visitation or positive return on investment (ROI)
- Support and promote the on-going capital expenditure program and expansion of existing investments in major facilities to keep them current, relevant and competitive in market
- Comply with all requirements of the existing enabling legislation
- Ensure project investments are secured by solid long-term plans, both operational and financial, that demonstrate viability and sustainability
- Utilize high standards of fiscal accountability in planning and managing the use of tax revenues:
 - Fulfill existing obligations before entering into significant new financial commitments
 - Maintain long-term, conservative financial forecasting
- Support investments that complement equitable economic development efforts and enhance quality of life experiences for visitors, newcomers and long-time residents

Stakeholder Operating Principles

- Create sports, arts and cultural opportunities, through leveraging community investments and partnerships, that benefit residents and enhance tourism offerings
- Support a project investment mix that considers location, contribution to quality of place, and equitable, sustainable and types of uses (sports, cultural, arts, convention, etc.)
- Engage stakeholders representing varying entities, jurisdictions and uses
- Ensure that investments support a welcoming and inclusive long-term vision of Wake County and its cities and towns as a tourism destination
- Provide a regular funding source for eligible projects that require a smaller scale investment
- Support investments that consider emerging arts, sports and cultural experiences and unmet needs



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