

## TENNIS COURTS AND SKATE PARKS

Over the past 30 years the City’s tennis court inventory grew from only a handful to fifty-two hard surface courts. Then, many of these courts deteriorated due to lack of maintenance and resurfacing funds, and some will now require complete replacement. Observations of members of the Planning Committee was that tennis may not be as quite a popular sport as it once was and that we may be overbuilt in the number of courts.

In the meantime, other sports have grown in popularity while the City lacked facilities for these newer recreational activities. Two activities, in-line skating, skate boarding and “X-treme” versions of these sports have gained immense popularity, particularly with youth and young adults. Beach volleyball has also gained in popularity. It appeared to the Committee that excess, underutilized, and deteriorated tennis courts could be converted to such uses with considerably less expense than building such facilities anew.

Youth and parents had been advocating for a skate park locally for several years; however, liability issues prevented the City from installing one. Then, the North Carolina General Assembly passed a law that relieved the City of liability for unattended skate parks, largely eliminating the liability issue.

Lead by the City’s Youth Council, a pilot modular skateboard project was built on two unused tennis courts at Lineberger Park. Because city forces were used to install the modular stunt units, the cash outlay for this project was kept at \$24,000. In terms of popularity and use, the project was an instant success. In light of the project’s success, the Committee recommended that several similar modular skate parks be built at various existing recreation sites around the city, plus that there should be built a large regional permanent facility. Each modular facility was budgeted at \$25,000, assuming they can all be installed on converted tennis courts. The large regional permanent facility was budgeted at \$300,000.

In terms of reducing the number of tennis courts, converting some to other sports, and keeping those remaining well maintained, the following table shows the projected citywide coverage for tennis courts. (Note: the courts at Ashbrook and Hunter Huss High Schools are actually City of Gastonia facilities, built by the City on County Schools property, maintained by the City, and open to the public.)

Location	Current Number	Reduction	Remaining for Tennis
Ashbrook High School	8	0	8
Hunter Huss High School	6	0	6
Ferguson Park	8	0	8
Erwin Park	4	2	2
Phillips Center	4*	0	4
Bradley Center	8	0	8
Jeffers Center	8	4	4
Lineberger	4**	4	0
TOTAL	50	10	40

\*Does not count 2 already converted to other uses

\*\*Includes 2 already converted to modular skate park