



# GASTONIA

## VISION FOR A HEALTHY COMMUNITY

**A PLAN FOR PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN  
SPACES, 2005-2020**

ADOPTED 11-15-05



**CITY OF GASTONIA, NORTH CAROLINA  
PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE  
LONG RANGE PLAN 2004-2020**

A Component of the City of Gastonia Comprehensive Plan  
*REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL  
FROM THE RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION AND  
LONG RANGE PARKS AND  
RECREATION PLANNING COMMITTEE  
MARCH 2005*



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**RESOLUTION ADOPTING A LONG RANGE PLAN FOR PARKS,  
RECREATION AND OPEN SPACES**

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Gastonia finds that public parks, recreation facilities and programs, and open spaces for public enjoyment promote a healthier community through active living and the enjoyment of the outdoors and natural areas, reduce crime and improve morals by providing wholesome activities and life skills for youth, promote economic development by providing valuable community amenities, increase human productivity through re-creative outlets, provide for enjoyable leisure and happiness for all ages, increase the value of private property throughout the community, improve community appearance and build a positive community image, and support a healthier natural environment by protecting natural areas within an urban setting; and

WHEREAS, since the 1920's the City of Gastonia has provided parks and recreation programs for its people as a necessary public endeavor; and

WHEREAS, the City of Gastonia established a Recreation Advisory Commission or RAC in May, of 1974; and

WHEREAS, in 2002, the City Council saw the need to develop a new long-range plan for parks, recreation and open spaces and thus appointed a Citizens Committee, which included all members of the RAC, plus forty-three additional citizens representing a cross-section of the community, to work with City staff in studying Gastonia's parks, recreation and open spaces needs and to recommend a plan for meeting those needs; and

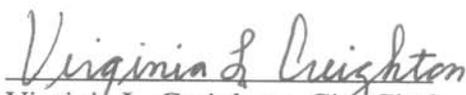
WHEREAS, the Citizens Committee, together with City staff, has prepared a plan entitled "*Gastonia: Vision for a Healthy Community – A Plan for Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces,*" and submitted the plan to City Council, for review; and

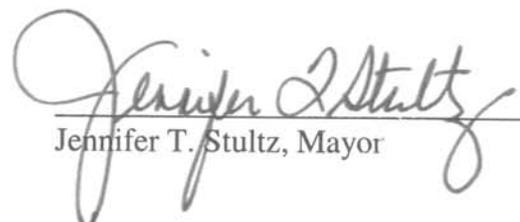
WHEREAS, the Plan sets forth a 15-year agenda for improving existing facilities, building new facilities, a Master Greenway Plan, and alternative policies and programs for promoting and protecting open spaces;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE City Council of the City of Gastonia that the report titled, *Gastonia: Vision for a Healthy Community – A Plan for Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces*, attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference, is hereby approved and adopted as a vision for the future improvement of our community.

Adopted, this 15<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2005.

ATTEST:

  
Virginia L. Creighton, City Clerk

  
Jennifer T. Stultz, Mayor

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## **DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS**

### **Development, Growth and Recreational Preference Trends**

Parks, Recreation and Open Space facilities and services are highly subject to demographic trends. As a city grows, newer areas may be delayed in getting new city parks. On the other hand, as older areas suffer from private disinvestments they may also suffer from public disinvestments when it comes to amenities. Often those left in the older areas of a community suffer from a lower degree of empowerment than those in newer, more affluent areas. Newer housing tends to be occupied by younger adults and children. As neighborhoods age, so do its residents. As people go through various life stages, their abilities and preferences for physical and leisure activities change. Leisure time availability also changes. Young adults, particularly professionals, look for solo or couple “just-in-time, grab-it-for-the-moment” exercise opportunities.

As the local economy focuses away from manufacturing, we can expect fewer participants in adult team sports. Studies show that we can expect those of the Baby Boom Generation to be much more active and physically able in their older adult years, than their predecessors. Young adult professionals in the of the growing creative/information economy show a preference for pedestrian and cycling trails; and, many like X-treme sports such as skateboarding, inline skating, BMX, whitewater sports, and mountain cycling. If we desire to attract this emerging “Creative Class” (termed by Carnegie-Mellon Professor Richard Florida) we need to offer the recreational venues they seek. This report provides some basic growth trends, population projections, and citywide distribution of population by several age cohorts, all of which may aid in deciding future facility needs.

### **Local Population Trends**

Gastonia and Gaston County both saw their respective populations increase from 1990 to 2000, although they did not keep pace with much of the burgeoning Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill Metropolitan Statistical Area during this time. Nevertheless, both Gastonia and Gaston County enjoyed respectable population growth, and at a more sustainable pace through which long-range planning can be more effectively implemented.

The following maps show the population of Gastonia and its surrounding planning area for the year 2000 by four different age groups: under age 18, age 18 through 34 inclusive, age 35 through 59 inclusive, and age 60 years and over. In addition, two maps show the population change for Gastonia and environs between 1990 and 2000. One map shows a net gain or loss of persons, while the other shows the gain or loss from 1990 to 2000 as a percentage of the population residing there in 1990.

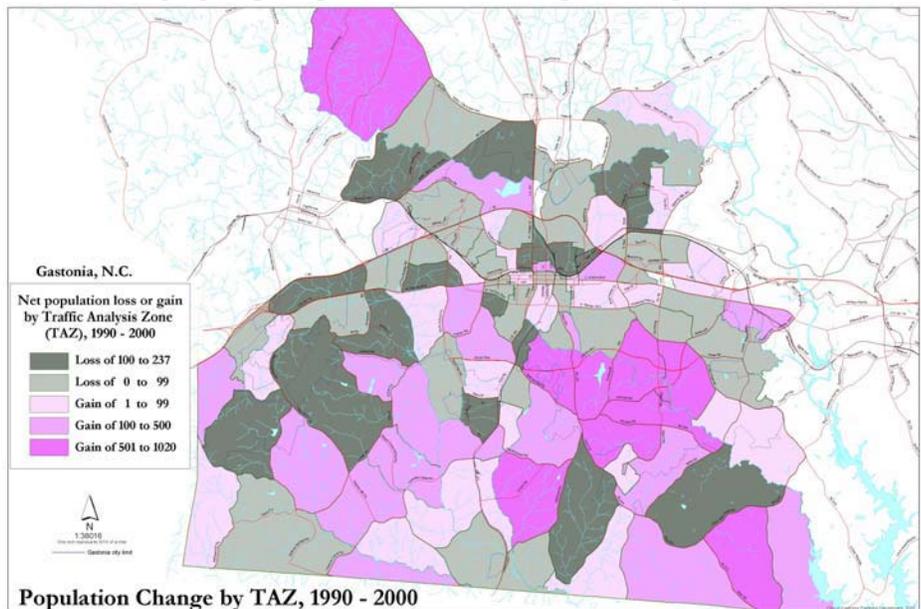
All of the maps use traffic analysis zones, or TAZs, as their geographic unit of analysis. According to the 2000 U.S. Census,

A traffic analysis zone (TAZ) is a statistical entity delineated by state and/or local transportation officials for tabulating traffic-related census data – especially journey-to-work and place-of-work statistics. A TAZ usually consists of one or more census blocks. . .

Appendix A, Census 2000 Geographic Terms and Concepts, p. A-21

The data were obtained for the four age group maps by assembling population numbers for each TAZ by Census blocks. Each subject age group was calculated as a percentage of each TAZ's total population. The age group maps show where the percentages of the specific age group are higher and lower, i.e., where more members of that age group are concentrated.

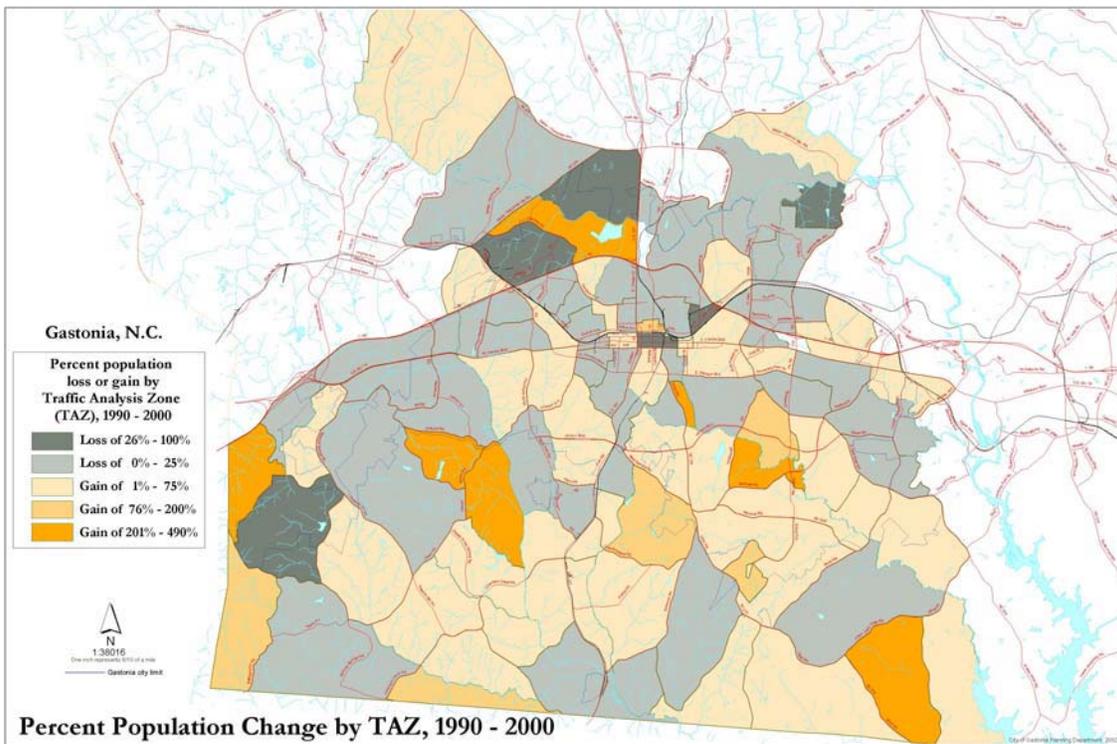
The data for two maps showing population gain or loss from 1990 to 2000 were assembled in roughly the same way. Both 1990 and 2000 population totals for census blocks were summed for each TAZ. Then the raw totals were compared for a net loss or gain by TAZ for one map, and the gain or loss was computed as a percentage of the 1990 totals for the other map.



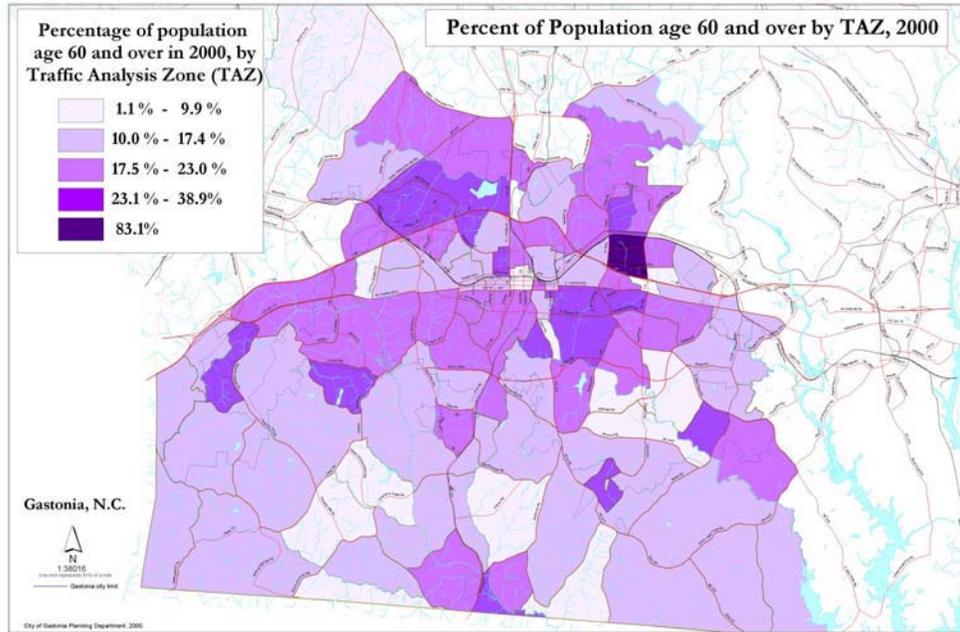
What do these maps show concerning total population change in the greater Gastonia planning area? What do the age group maps show about the distribution of different age group cohorts in the Gastonia planning area? Interestingly enough, the 2000 Census reveals that the median age (equal numbers of people older and younger) of Gastonia and Gaston County are both older than the median age in the United States. The median age in the U.S. is 35.3 years; those in Gastonia and Gaston County are 35.6 years and 36.2 years respectively.

First, overall trends suggest what many people have already suspected about Gastonia's growth patterns: that population growth is following a suburbanization model whereby most of the population gains are being realized several miles from the city's core, particularly in the southeastern part of Gastonia and other areas outside of Gastonia's southern city limits. Both net and percentage population losses have occurred in the older neighborhoods closer to the city's core. Many areas that show a loss are the textile mill neighborhoods that have lost jobs, thereby propelling the loss of people.

The age group maps show a more complicated but more intriguing picture. The map showing concentrations of the population under age 18 (concentrations are shown by darker colors representing higher percentages of the age group) reveals essentially a tale of two cities. First, many young people are clustered in the less socioeconomically privileged areas of Highland and West Gastonia. Another pronounced concentration of people under 18 is shown by the broad swath of color south of Gastonia. No doubt these young people are the offspring of young families moving into new, and often fairly affluent, residential subdivisions.

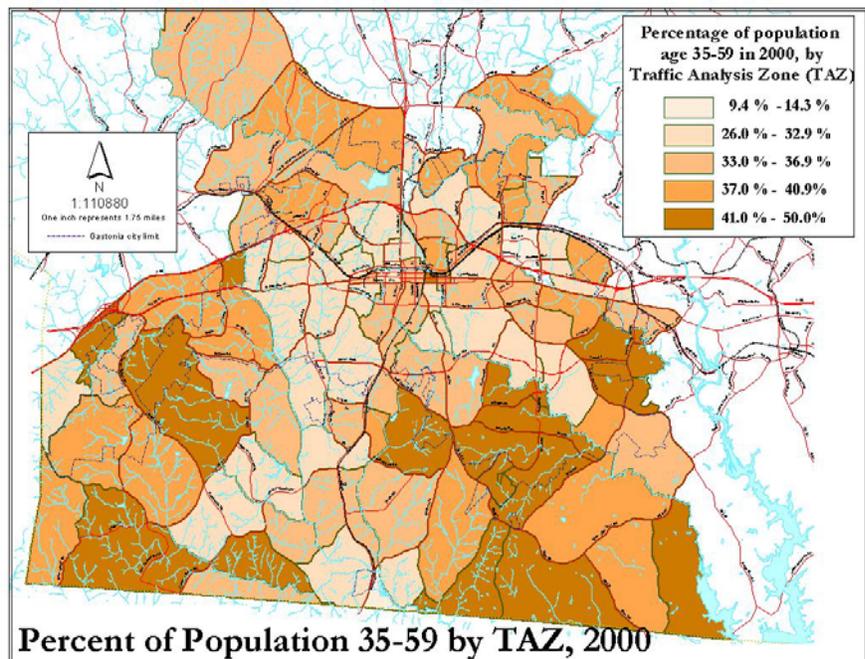


Another discernible pattern among the age cohorts is evinced by the map displaying population concentrations of those 60 years and older. They are clustered most often in TAZs near the hospital and in older traditional residential areas that could be considered the first wave of Gastonia's "inner suburbs." No doubt many of the TAZs showing high



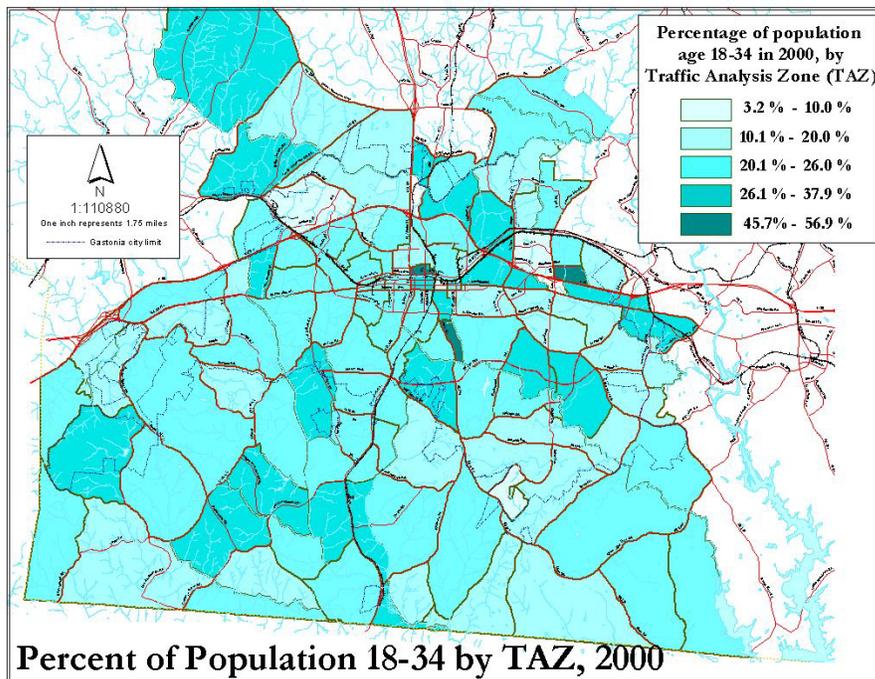
percentage s of older people are occupied by nursing homes, active senior communities, and apartment complexes occupied by seniors.

The maps showing the intermediate age groups (18 to 34 and 35 to 59) present a less clear picture than the very young and very old age cohorts. Perhaps it is no surprise, however, that greater percentages of people in their prime earning years, represented by the map of people 35 to 59, live in the most affluent sections of southeast Gastonia. This age group is notably absent in large parts West Gastonia. Overall, this age group appears to be LESS concentrated in the core, inner areas of Gastonia than any other age cohort.



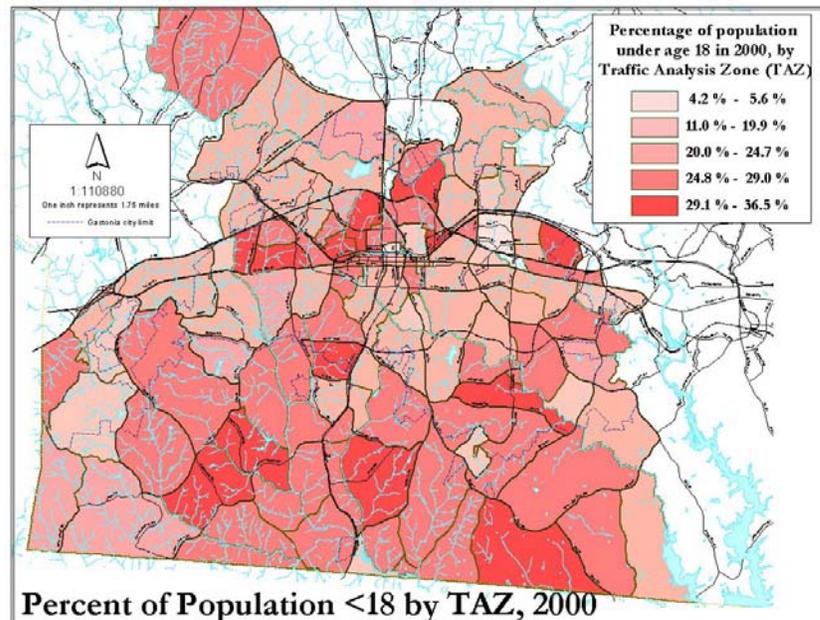
The population of those aged 18 to 34 seems to be the most evenly distributed of the age groups throughout the Gastonia planning area. However, this age group is relatively absent in the most affluent areas of southeast Gastonia, and seems to occupy (no doubt

with some offspring) the more modest residential areas of West Gastonia and near-northeast Gastonia.

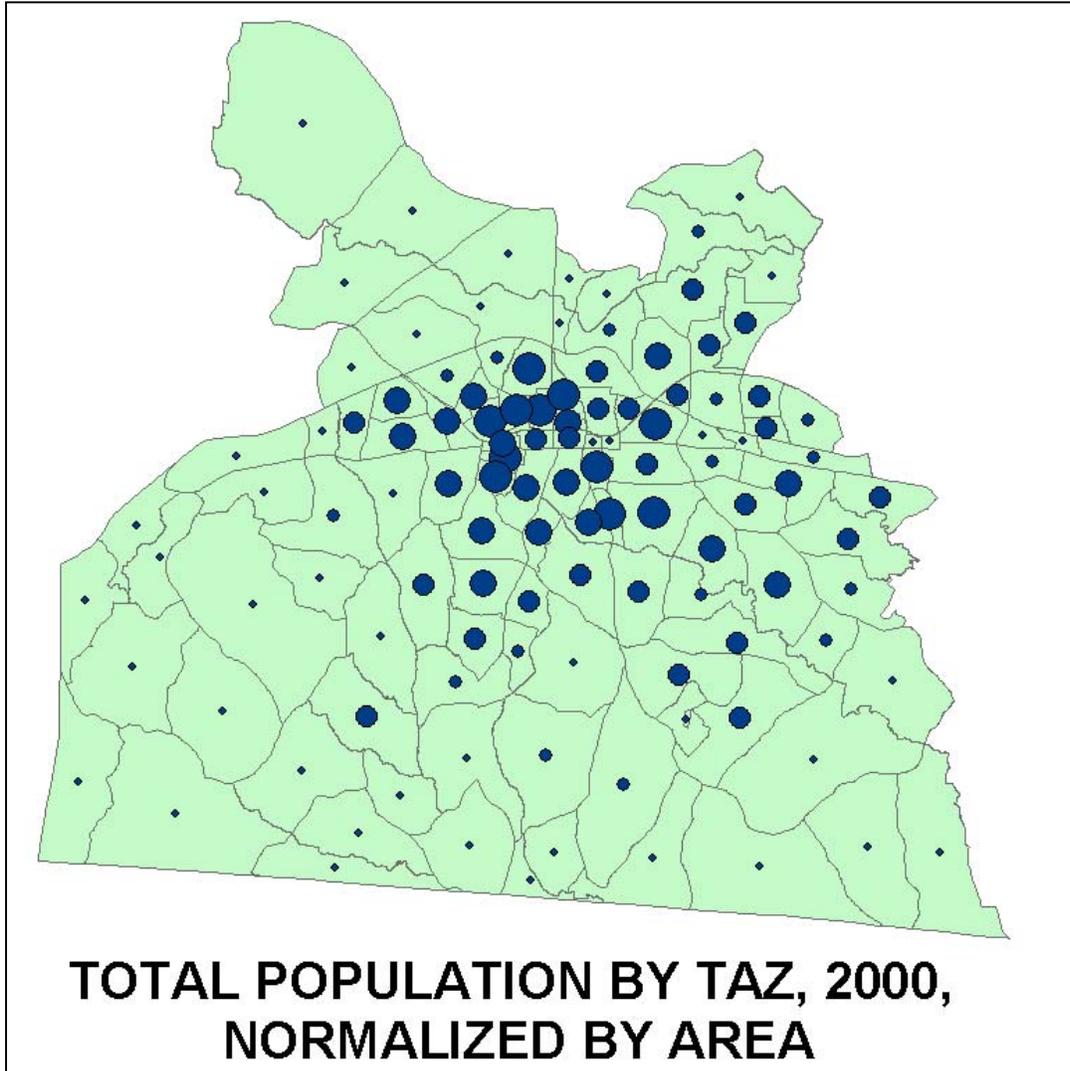


Although these maps show relative concentrations of different age groups as well as percent of population losses and gains, it is also important to understand their limitations. Statistically, what the maps show is correct. They show where one age group is a larger proportion of the total than elsewhere.

They show the TAZs, which had the largest percentage gains. However, the statistical percentages are derived from the total population numbers in a TAZ. For example, if one TAZ had a total population in 1990 of 100 people, and the population increased by 200 people to a population of 300 in the year 2000, then that TAZ had a gain in population of 200%. However, a TAZ that started with a population of 1800 people in 1990 and lost 180 people by the time of the 2000 Census would have registered a percentage decline of 10%. (That is why a map showing net population losses and gains per TAZ was also included.) It is crucial to



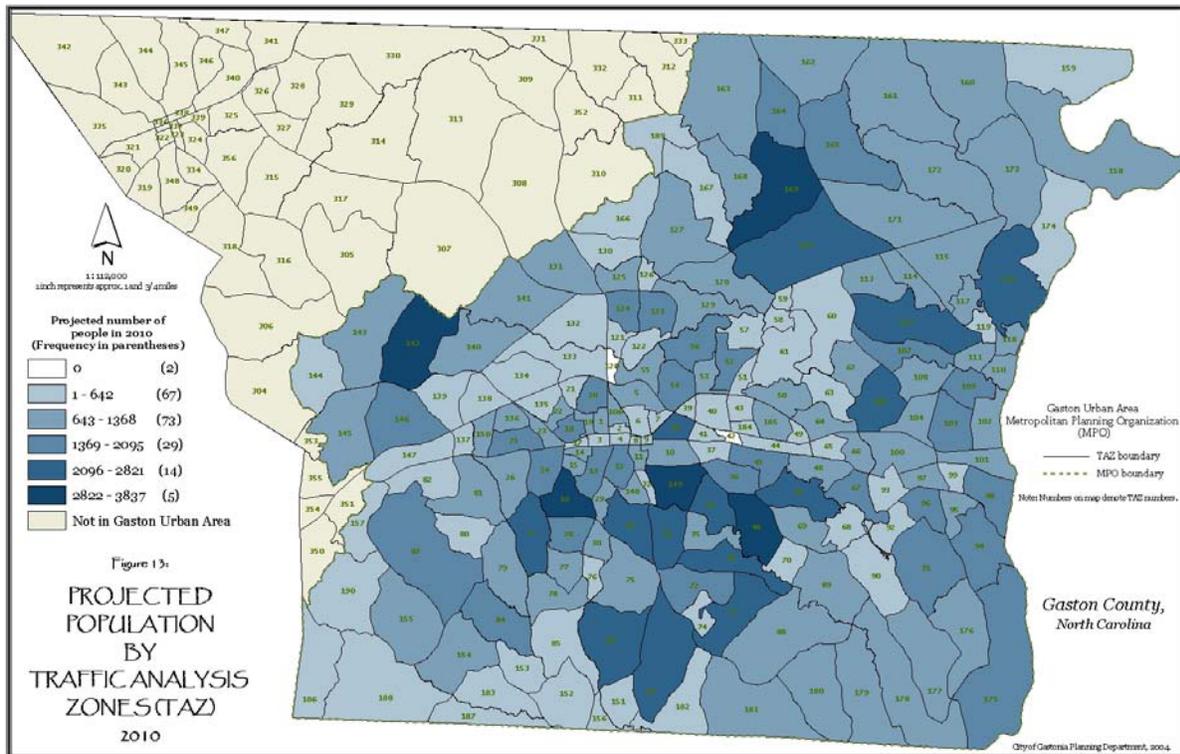
understand that the highest densities of population, where there are a larger number of people per square mile, still tend to be in the downtown and surrounding areas of Gastonia's urban core.



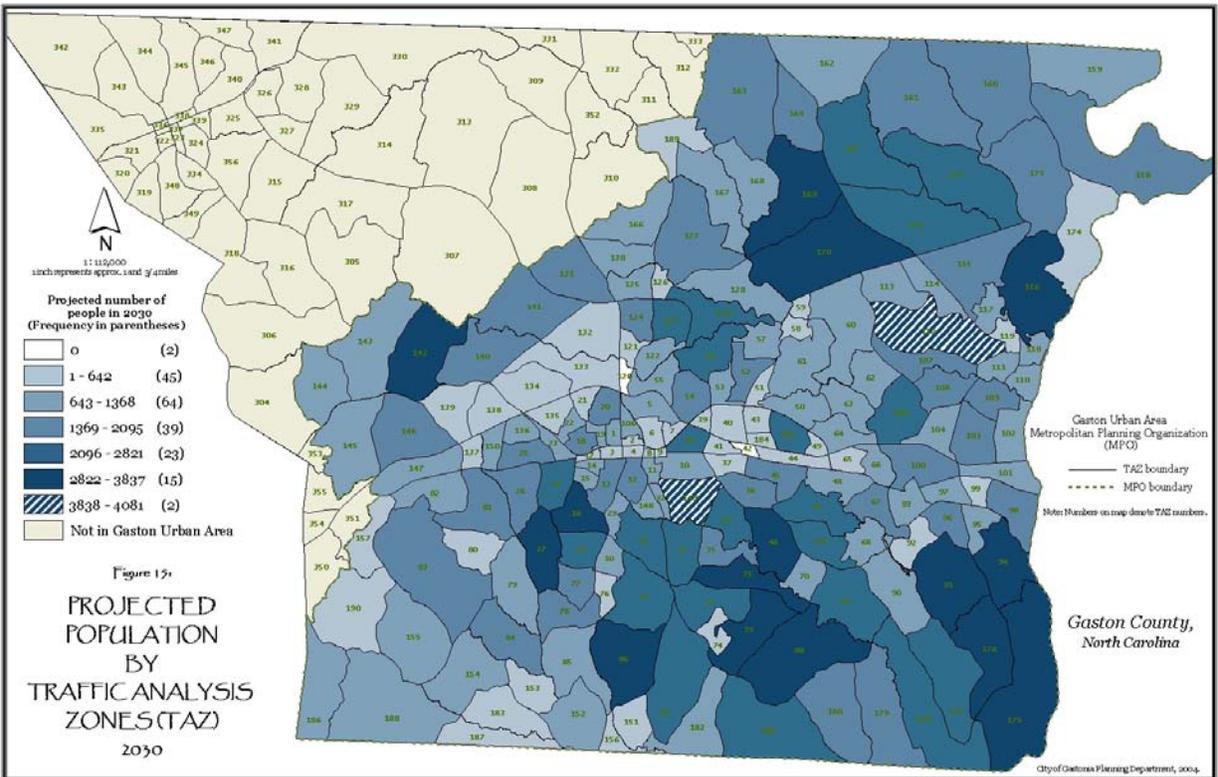
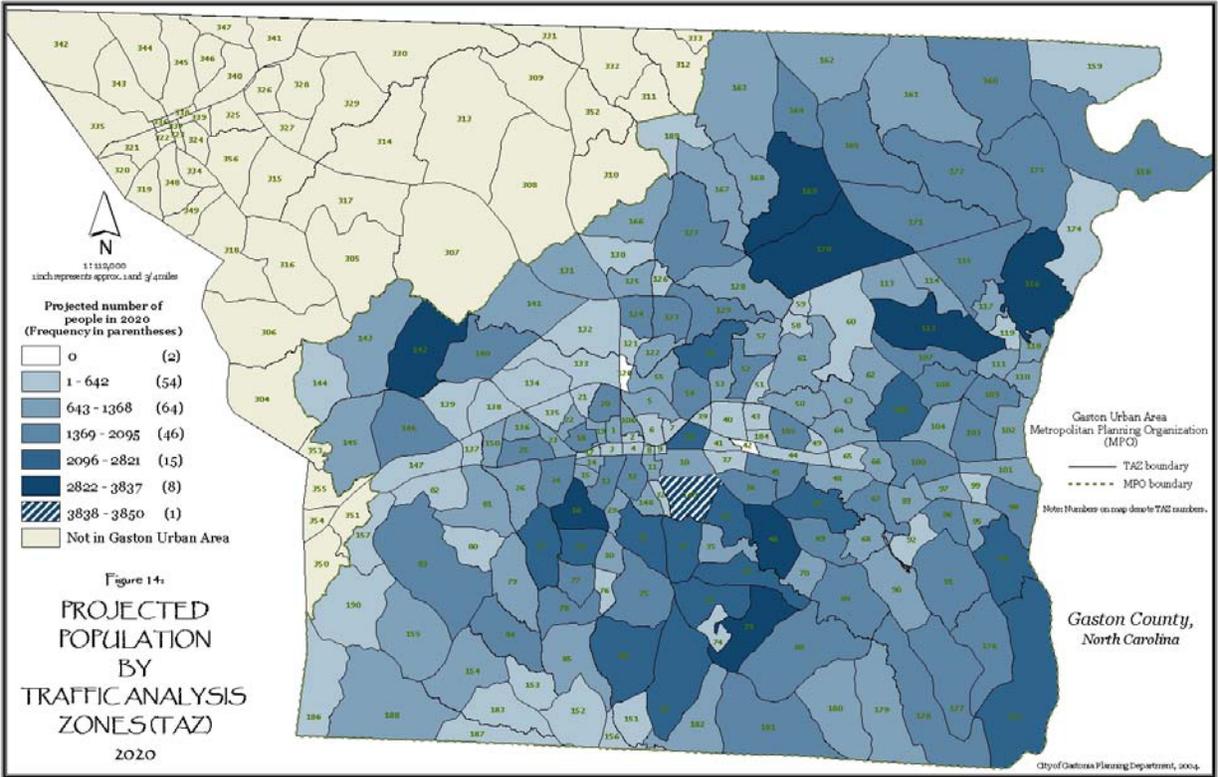
### **Growth Projections**

The three blue maps on the next two pages depict population growth projections for the Gastonia area for years 2010, 2020, and 2030. The City of Gastonia Planning Department in conjunction with a regional effort in transportation planning and air quality conformity prepared the projections. The projections are made for small geographic areas called "Traffic Analysis Zones" (TAZ's), also known as "Origination and Destination Zones. Their primary use (along with their companion employment projections by the same geography) is to project future traffic levels and flows (vehicle miles traveled) to determine both future transportation needs (roads, transit, etc.) and future air pollution from motor vehicles. Therefore, these projections will be subject to scrutiny by the environmental agencies and groups. But the projections are very useful for other planning efforts such as future land use, utilities, schools, and parks/recreation. The context of governmental and private scrutiny requires that considerable effort go into these projections. The Planning Organizations' methodology is a sort of "step-down/step up" method. The four Metropolitan (transportation) Planning Organizations (MPO's) jointly hired consultant demographers. The demographers used national and sub-national demographic and economic trends to

update and produce regional totals and (by “stepping down”) county totals. Simultaneously, each MPO generated new TAZ and (by “stepping up”) county totals based upon historic projections, trends, and current development/building permit experience, based upon their local knowledge. Each MPO brought in experts from the public and private sectors, such as real estate brokers, builders, developers, and local permitting offices. Availability of land and real estate trends were important considerations. Through careful examination, critique, and additional research, reconciliation was eventually reached between the MPO produced county totals and the consultant demographer produced county totals. The TAZ totals were adjusted accordingly to match the reconciled county total.



*What do these maps tell us?* First, it is clear that we can expect Gastonia’s greatest rate of growth will continue in a suburban manner in the southeastern part of the Gastonia area, as has been the case for the last 30 or more years. Although City efforts to shift some growth to other sectors of town will continue to be successful, it is doubtful that our inherent tendency to grow toward Charlotte will be reversed, barring the complete exhaustion of land and growth-supporting public facilities. Closer into the city, the area between Garrison and Hudson Boulevards will increase dramatically in population, then other areas fanning out in an arc between Union Road, Lowell-Bethesda Road, New Hope Road, Kendrick and Beaty/Union-New Hope Roads will continue to grow and fill-in. The area between Union Road and US 321 South will grow rapidly over the next ten years. Clearly, the most rapidly growing area of the city is without an adequate community center/park. This growth trend indicates that the current need for facilities in the southeast area will only become more critical over next 15 years. Assuming the regional community center/park continues to be a central focus of our parks/recreation services delivery we will need to add a minimum of one, and preferably two new community centers: One with a park and athletic facilities on a new site somewhere near west of New Hope Road and probably another on the grounds of Martha Rivers Park. Other parts of the Gastonia Area that will receive moderate rates of growth include: areas near Crowder’s Mountain, areas between Gastonia and Bessemer City and west of NC 275, and areas northeast of the city along Long Creek.



## Parks and Recreation Survey Results

All recreational facilities, including those provided by the public sector, are market based. Generally, their use is voluntary and public facilities compete for everyone's free time with private facilities and programs, as well as other leisure activities such as watching TV and home/garden activities. Therefore, to determine whether our public facilities are meeting the needs and desires of the public they serve, it seemed appropriate to survey the public or market in the service area. In January 2003, the Planning Department surveyed the community regarding its current leisure and recreation activities, its current facility usage and its future recreation facility wants and needs. Fifteen hundred names and addresses were randomly extracted from the list of residential-occupant utility users. In the end 1,428 surveys were mailed. Of these, 54 were returned undeliverable and 320 were returned completed, which equates to a response rate of 23%. This survey helped us identify where the focus should be. Some of the questions pertained to the entire household while others seek the needs and desires of each member of the household. For a mail-back survey, a 23% response rate is considered satisfactory, although well below the level of response needed for a scientific survey. Since the responses were fairly evenly distributed throughout the city and over age groups, staff and the plan committee both felt that, when supported by their own anecdotal (and in many cases expert) information, the survey results could be relied upon. In fact, the survey results generally provided no surprises to staffs (both Planning and Parks and Recreation) or the committee. ***Clearly, because of its unscientific status, the survey should be used purely as an informational tool rather than a true and accurate reflection of the opinions of the citizens of Gastonia. While we would have preferred a scientific survey, whereby a confidence level and margin of error could be statistically determined, that alternative was cost-prohibitive. The committee and staff also weighed the alternative of doing no survey for fear of an unscientific survey misleading us. It was determined that the lower cost alternative of an unscientific survey would be acceptable so long as we could get a reasonable response rate and we were pleased with the 23%. A copy of the survey instrument is found in the appendix.***

**The first section was completed as it pertained to the entire household.**

The average household contains 1.91 adults and 0.70 children (under age 18)

The age of persons completing the survey:

#	%	Age
0	0	17 and under
44	14	18-34
154	48	35-59
77	24	60 and over
44	14	No Response

This appeared to be a fairly representative distribution of respondents. The goal was to do a separate survey of high school students, using student volunteers; however, this was not accomplished. Therefore,

the survey should be viewed as a purely adult response. Youth were involved in the committee and provided meaningful and helpful input throughout the planning process. As members of the Mayor’s Youth Council, these youth interacted with a larger committee of youth, as well as other peers, to enhance their participation on the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Planning Committee.

Since the surveys were mailed to utility users it is not unusual that the rate of city residents is virtually 100%.

#	%	
316	99	The Gastonia City limits
0	0	Gaston County (incl. other Gaston cities)
0	0	Another county
4	1	No Response

If they checked “Gastonia City Limits” above, they were asked which zip code best describes their address.

#	%	
72	23	My zip code is 28056
20	6	My zip code is 28052, and I live north of Franklin Boulevard
60	19	My zip code is 28052, and I live south of Franklin Boulevard
55	17	My zip code is 28054, and I live north of Franklin Boulevard
99	31	My zip code is 28054, and I live south of Franklin Boulevard

**Current Activities**

Applicants were asked what activities their family participates in on a regular basis. For this survey, regular means an average of twice a month (weather permitting/in season). Since this question referred to the entire family they indicated how many family members participated in the various activities.

Activity	Total Number of Participants
Walking	362
Gardening	197
Swimming	191
Playground	164
Bicycling	151
Hiking	117
Running/Jogging	106
Weight Training	105
Arts & Crafts	104
Golf	103
Basketball	96
Aerobics	78
Soccer	62
Baseball/T-Ball	59

Activity	Total Number of Participants
Dance	52
Tennis	51
Shooting	41
Softball	36
Skateboarding	35
Volleyball	34
Football	29
Yoga	19
Martial Arts	18
Equestrian Recreation	15
Racquetball/Squash	5
BMX Bicycling	2

**Current City of Gastonia Facility Usage**

The survey asked which city facilities members of their family have used over the past 12 months

Facility	Number of Participants
Schiele Museum Nature Trails	138
Playgrounds	123
Greenway	111
Picnic Areas	108
Golf Course	76
Community Centers	44
Outdoor Team Sports	40
Adult Recreation Centers	35
Pools	33
Indoor Team Sports	23
Instructional Classes	23
Tennis Courts	21
Other1	7



**Greenways rated highest among respondents in terms of preference for new facilities, as did greenway associated recreational activities such as, walking, running, jogging, and cycling**

**New Facilities**

Each participant was asked to rate the top five (1 through 5) new facilities that they think Gastonia needs the most, with one (1) being the highest priority, two (2) second highest, etc. The columns labeled 1-5 in the following table contain the total number of people that ranked each facility one through five. Weights were assigned to each rank as follows those ranked one received five points; those ranked two received four points, etc. The “weighted sum” column is the sum of the weighted ranking.

New Facility	Ranking					Weighted Sum
	1	2	3	4	5	
Greenway Trail	38	19	28	19	19	407
Aquatics Center	31	22	16	16	16	339
Water Park	30	20	19	14	12	327
Indoor Track	28	23	13	15	14	315
Downtown Park	19	13	11	13	24	230
Indoor Gyms	17	13	13	14	7	211
Nature Center	7	17	15	22	16	208
Amphitheatre	10	12	16	18	22	204
Arts in Parks	7	12	19	20	17	197
*Extreme Sports Complex	20	6	14	9	10	194
Ice Skating Rink	6	16	16	10	21	183
Children's Splash/Sprayground	12	11	12	9	10	168
Southeast Community Center	16	11	3	8	8	157
Small Gathering Places	4	13	14	9	19	151
Off Leash Dog Park	12	7	8	10	12	144
Competition Sports Complex	9	11	9	5	5	131
Mountain Bike Trail	9	12	4	8	7	128
Girl's/Women's Sports Complex	9	9	7	9	7	127
Skate Parks	3	7	8	11	5	94
Garden Plots	3	9	5	5	8	84

\* Extreme sports complexes typically include skateboard park, BMX bike tracks and stunt area

Each applicant was asked how much he or she is willing to pay to use these new and improved recreational facilities. Sixty one percent indicated a willingness to pay something (\$10 to \$40 per year) but 39% were unwilling to pay anything (or the lowest choice of \$10). Their responses follow.

Amount	Total	%
\$10 per year	64	20
\$20 per year	80	25
\$40 per year	51	16
Nothing	125	39

Each applicant was asked which funding methods they would support to improve the quality of our recreational facilities? Twenty-three percent would support a bond issue, but user fees was the most preferred choice at 39%. Their responses follow.

Method	Total	%
Bond Issue	72	23%
Tax Increase	7	2%
User Fees	126	39%
Bond and Tax	17	5%
Bond and User	21	7%
Tax and User	4	1%
None	58	18%
No Response	15	5%

**The survey asked the following general questions.**

1. I feel safe at city park and recreation facilities.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Count	11	129	89	44	12
Percent	4	45	31	15	4

2. A major priority of Gastonia’s Park and Recreation plan should include a new aquatic center.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Count	53	87	89	38	19
Percent	19	30	31	13	7

3. Gastonia does not have enough indoor community recreation centers.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Count	42	119	93	23	10
Percent	15	41	32	8	3

4. Greenways and sidewalks should be used to interconnect neighborhoods to park and recreation facilities.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Count	77	140	50	15	6
Percent	27	49	17	5	2

5. Gastonia’s indoor recreational facilities are properly dispersed to meet the needs of the community.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Count	9	50	128	80	19
Percent	3	17	45	28	7

6. I am easily able to participate in my favorite recreation activity using Gastonia’s recreational facilities.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Count	8	106	100	58	14
Percent	3	37	35	20	5

7. Gastonia needs more undeveloped public natural areas similar to Crowder’s Mountain State Park, Broad River Greenway, McDowell Park and Kings Mountain State Park.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Count	67	113	69	31	6
Percent	23	40	24	11	2

8. New private developments should include common open space, greenways and natural areas.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Count	84	142	43	14	4
Percent	29	49	15	5	1

9. New housing developers should contribute land or money for added public recreational facilities.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Count	75	133	49	22	9
Percent	26	46	17	8	3

10. Upgrading and improving current facilities should be done before new facilities are constructed.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Count	46	146	71	21	4
Percent	16	51	25	7	1

11. Gastonia's current recreational programs include adequate activities for all ages, abilities and genders.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Count	20	53	114	89	10
Percent	7	19	40	31	3

12. Gastonia's sports programs meet the need of my family.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Count	9	93	138	41	5
Percent	3	33	48	14	2

13. Gastonia's recreation facilities keep up with current trends in public recreation and leisure activities.

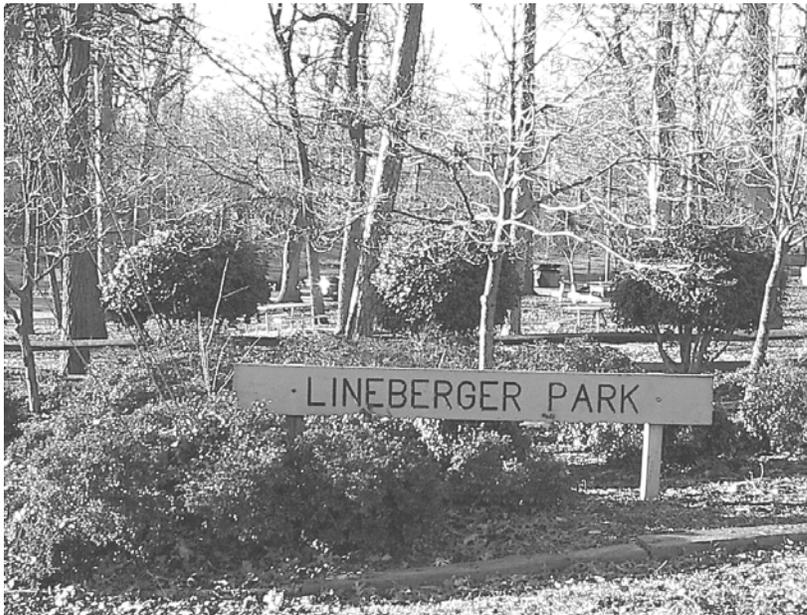
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Count	7	71	113	83	11
Percent	2	40	39	16	2

14. Gastonia's recreation facilities are well maintained.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Count	7	115	112	45	7
Percent	2	40	39	16	2

## LINEBERGER PARK 632 E. Garrison Boulevard

Lineberger Park may be one of the most beloved and appreciated spots of ground in



Gastonia. Located 7 blocks from downtown, this 18.5 acres is Gastonia's center city park. Gastonia's first park, it was begun in the late 1920' with a gift from the Lineberger family and matched by an equal property acquisition by the City. Improvements were made to the park by the depression-era Works Progress Administration. Lineberger Park is a favorite spot for family picnics and a place to

bring children to play. It is convenient to the entire city. Many Gastonians learned to swim in the Lineberger Park pool. After work hours and on weekends one can usually find a pick up game of basketball at the outdoor court while a few feet away dare-devil youth are practicing stunts on the new, all-the-rage skate park ramps. In the cool morning hours many cars are parked in the parking lot—evidence of the number of regular users of the Avon/Catawba Creek Greenway, which opened in December 2001 and uses the park as a trailhead. On school days buses bring kids from surrounding counties to eat lunch at the park in conjunction



**CHILDREN PLAYING IN  
THE PARK ON A WARM  
AUGUST AFTERNOON**

with their visit to the Schiele Museum. Many Gastonians of the Baby Boom generation fondly remember their childhood delight in riding the Kiwanis miniature Train the once ran through the park. And, a group of them in 2003 began an effort to bring the train back. Today, the park amenities include a playground, 1 large picnic shelter, 3 smaller picnic shelters, gazebo, outdoor swimming pool with bathhouse, 2 lighted asphalt tennis courts, 1 lighted ball field, 1 lighted outdoor basketball court, and access to Avon Creek and Catawba Creek Greenway. The following is a listing of the current facilities and condition:

### Lineberger Park Facilities Inventory

Facility	Condition	Comments
Pool	Good	Renovated in late 1980's, L-Shaped, 6450 SF of surface area, outdoor, open summers only when school is out
Bath House	Poor	Recent history of structural problems (temporarily solved); older interior w/ concrete floors, appearance issues interior and exterior; needs replacement if pool is to stay.
Parking Lot	Good	Insufficient for future park development needs
Picnic Shelters	Excellent to Fair	Smaller shelters are older; large shelter very good; more shelters needed
Picnic area	Fair	Lacks proper trash receptacles
Playground	Fair	Much of equipment is older; some newer apparatus added. Need to meet ADA; and safe surface needed
Grounds	Good	Heavily landscaped; many specimen trees although many large oaks lost from Hurricane Hugo; Stream restoration project for Avon Creek completed through the park in 2003.
Ball Field	Good	Lighted; will need to be replaced by other amenities if Master Plan implemented
Basketball Court	Good	Heavily used, popular with the many users
Skate Park	New	Modular ramps and benches, very popular and heavily used, on former tennis courts (2)
Tennis Courts	Poor	Those remaining are unplayable and warrant conversion for other sports
Greenway Trailhead	Fair	Converted culvert used to underpass Garrison Blvd. is often wet and containing silt, difficult to maintain. Added parking needed on city land across Garrison.
Gazebo/bandstand	Good	Often used for special events; too small to accommodate a large band; storage below deck
Other	NA	Park lacks public restrooms during colder months when pool restrooms are closed, and at all times in the lower area; community group wants to restore miniature train that formerly ran through the park.

There are several overriding issues that must be considered with respect to Lineberger Park and its future role in the city's park and recreation system

- Access and popularity: Affectionately called, "Gastonia's Central Park" it is not only easily accessible to much of the city, but also many of its users are attracted to its natural beauty. With the initiation of the greenway visitation has again increased.
- Use: Not a bad problem to have, but the park's high use necessitates a high level of maintenance to keep the site in a state that continues to attract visitors.

- The park has had somewhat of a problem with street people from time-to-time present at various times of the day. Some of these folks exhibit signs of substance problems and have been know to harass park users and vandalize property. Their presence generated complaints and caused some people to stay away. Only several people have been involved and the problem has diminished since the opening of the greenway and consequential increased visitation.
- Area: The park is popular, not only because it offers a natural respite for people escaping the harsher urban environment, but also its central location makes it a popular spot for recreational amenities. These factors combine to make it a challenge to meet these goals in such limited space. If only it had another 10 acres!
- Age: Many of the facilities are old and outdated and much of the grounds and facilities exhibit signs of wear and tear.

Realizing the importance of Lineberger Park and concerned with its future, the Recreation Advisory Commission obtained funding for the City to hire in 2003 a Charlotte consultant landscape architecture firm, Site Solutions, to assist the RAC in preparing a Master Plan for the renovation and makeover of the park. The plan was reported on August 27, 2003 and provided an ambitious agenda to rebuild the park in a way that would provide several more generations with recreational opportunities. This Citywide Parks, Recreation and Open Space Long-Rang Plan fully incorporates the Lineberger Park Master Plan, *but makes three additions or modifications*:

1. Incorporation of the recently constructed skate park on the easternmost section of the unplayable tennis courts where the Site Solutions plan calls for a new parking lot
2. Expansion of the park site as follows:
  - In 2002, a 1.2-acre tract acquired for a parking lot across Garrison to support the added greenway visitation. The lot remains undeveloped; however, the greenway trail would allow access to the park via a grade separation from the thoroughfare using the converted culvert. This design, completed by the city's Engineering Department, lot would provide about 34 spaces in a heavily landscaped configuration to support both the park and the greenway.
  - In the late 1980's and early 1990's about 8 acres of land along a branch of Avon Creek was acquired to upgrade Chestnut and Church Streets to form an new north-south thoroughfare to connect Garrison Boulevard to Long Avenue and Modena. At one time this

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**DEDICATION OF THE NEW  
GREENWAY AT  
LINEBERGER PARK ON  
DECEMBER 1, 2001**

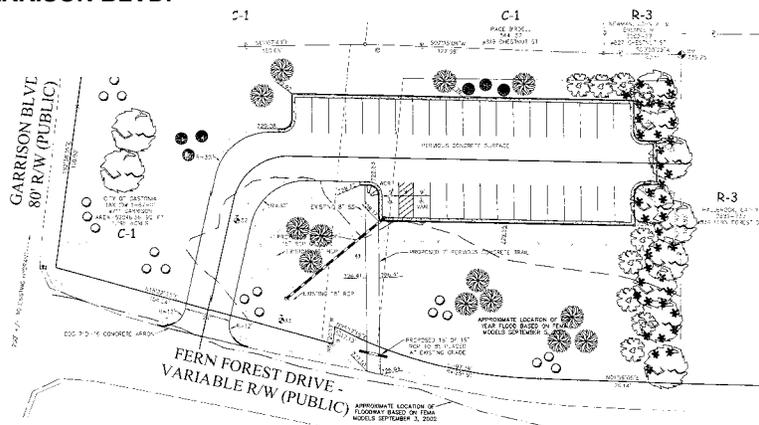


ew alignment was proposed to cut through Lineberger Park; however this proposal upset a number of park lovers and the road plan was changed to follow the current Chestnut alignment along the northern park boundary. Now, issues such as a railroad crossing conflict, lack of construction funding, and question of need, combined with changing community priorities may make the project no longer practicable to build. This land could be used for park purposes, particularly for parking and greenway expansion northward. There would also be land available for private development, such as town homes, that could coordinate well with the greenway extension. If the park Master Plan is implemented the popularity of the park will dramatically increase; therefore, added parking will be needed not only to accommodate many more visitors, but also to make up for parking in the master plan lost to accommodate the skate park. As the master plan calls for the addition of such popular features as the miniature train, carousel, and spray court we can fully anticipate very heavy traffic at peak park use times. *The more parking needs can be accommodated in the periphery of, and adjacent to the park, the more positive the impact on the park environment and natural aesthetics.*

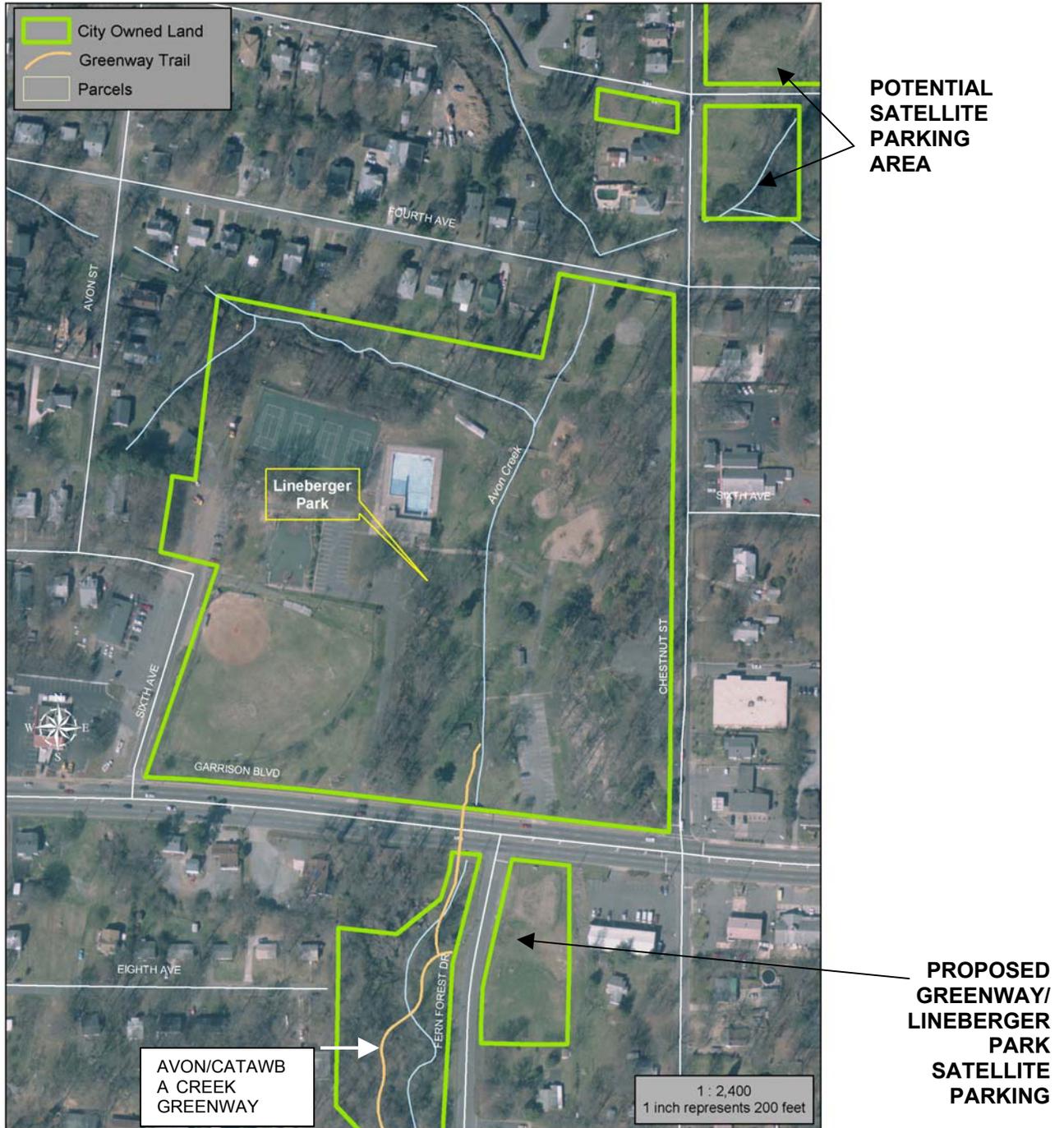
3. This plan proposes the reconstruction of the pool bathhouse. Since a separate consultant was studying the bathhouse issue, Site Solutions was not asked to deal with that issue. The building suffers from structural foundation problems and is difficult to maintain in good, clean appearance, both interior and exterior. The projected cost is \$300,000.

The makeover of Lineberger Park should become a high priority in the City's capital improvements program for Parks and Recreation, if for no other reasons than the park's popularity, and its citywide service and focus. The park has always been a much appreciated and valued asset to the community. Through the implementation of the Park Master Plan it will achieve its greatest potential on its precious 18.5 acres. Completed as planned, it could become an economic development showplace. What follows is the schedule of improvements and costs as provided by Site Solutions. We have added the additional amenities (bathhouse, parking, and Skate Park) as noted above. Actually, the skate park was recently installed at a cost of around \$30,000 and is therefore, not included on the schedule.

**CITY DESIGN OF  
PLANNED PARKING  
LOT ACROSS  
GARRISON BLVD.**



**AERIAL VIEW OF LINEBERGER PARK  
AND SURROUNDING AREA**



## Lineberger Park Master Plan Cost Estimate

Item No.	Item	Unit	Estimated Quantity	Unit Price	Sub-Total
1	Clearing and Demolition	1s	1	\$108,750.00	\$108,750.00
2	Grading and Erosion Control	1s	1	\$127,010.00	\$127,010.00
3	Storm Drainage	1s	1	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00
4	Roadway Paving and Concrete	1s	1	\$149,850.00	\$149,850.00
5	Walk and Trails	1s	1	\$83,596.00	\$83,596.00
6	Utilities and Lighting	1s	1	\$168,000.00	\$168,000.00
	<b>Amenities</b>				
7	Renovate existing shelter to add restroom	1s	1	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00
8	Renovate existing gazebo/picnic area	1s	1	\$20,000.00	\$20,000.00
9	Ticket Booth/Restroom (750 sf)	1s	1	\$75,000.00	\$75,000.00
10	Train Station Canopy	1s	1	\$20,000.00	\$20,000.00
11	Band Shell and Stage	1s	1	\$75,000.00	\$75,000.00
12	Playground equipment and installation (for ages 5-12 yrs/tots/swings)	1s	1	\$65,000.00	\$65,000.00
13	Playground (rubber) surface and sub	1s	1	\$65,000.00	\$65,000.00
14	Sprayground (1,800 sf) zero depth water	1s	1	\$150,000.00	\$150,000.00
15	Picnic Shelters (24")	Ea.	3	\$30,000.00	\$90,000.00
16	Picnic Tables/Trash receptacles/Benches	1s	1	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00
17	Miniature Train Tracks and Amenities (all private)	1s	1	.00	.00
18	Lighted Basketball Court	1s	1	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00
19	Carousel	1s	1	\$200,000.00	\$200,000.00
20	Landscaping	1s	1	\$35,000.00	\$35,000.00
21	Stream Access/Lockout Areas	Ea.	6	\$5,000.00	\$30,000.00
22	Signage	1s	1	\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00
*23	Rebuild Pool Bathhouse	1s	1	\$300,000.00	\$300,000.00
*24	Additional Parking	1s	1	\$125,000.00	\$125,000.00
				Probable Cost	\$2,087,206.00
	Contingency-10%				\$208,720.00
Park Project Total					\$ 2,295,926.00

**\*PROJECTS 23 & 24 ADDED AND ESTIMATED BY CITY STAFF AND OUTSIDE SOURCES**

**The pool at Lineberger Park offers a welcomed escape from summer heat; however, the bath-House will need replacement within 10 years due to structural problems that were recently temporarily fixed.**



MASTER PLAN PREPARED BY SITE SOLUTIONS. SKATE PARK AND PHOTOS FROM SUNSET PARK, ROCKY MOUNT, NC ADDED BY CITY STAFF

# MASTER PLAN



EXISTING BRIDGE TO RETAIN TRAIL SYSTEM (TYP.)

FULL COURT BASKETBALL

TICKET BOOTH / RESTROOMS TRAIN STATION

BASKETBALL COURT SHALL REMAIN SHORT TERM

SAND SHELL

FUTURE TRAIN TRACK EXTENSION

PARK ENTRY

TUNNEL / TRAIN STORAGE

BASEBALL FENCING SHALL REMAIN SHORT TERM

BRIDGE REMOVED PER CREEK RESTORATION PROJECT

CREEK INTERACTION POINT (TYP.)

BRIDGE REMOVED PER CREEK RESTORATION PROJECT

PARKING LOT

NEW PLAYGROUND

BUS / UNLOADING AREA

RENOVATE EXISTING SHELTER WITH RESTROOMS

PARK / BUS ENTRY

PARKING LOT

NEW 30 PERSON SHELTER (TYP.)

EXISTING GREENWAY TRAIL CONNECTION

PROPOSED GREENWAY PARKING AREA



Lineberger Park  
North Carolina

## ERWIN CENTER AND PARK

913 N. Pryor Street

Erwin Center opened in 1961 on 15 acres in the Highland neighborhood of northern Gastonia. The Center was named in honor of Dr. Herbert Erwin. Dr. Erwin was Gaston County's first African-American physician and was well known as an advocate for youth sports and activities. The early center housed a game room, meeting room, kitchen, lounge, and offices. The outdoor facilities included a football/baseball field and playground. A full size



**DEDICATION OF ERWIN CENTER**

gymnasium was added in 1967 along with an outdoor basketball court. In 1989-90 a Gaston County library branch library was added. This project was a joint venture between the City's Community Development Department and Gaston County Public Library. The park's outdoor facilities also



**ERWIN CENTER TODAY**

include a swimming pool, four lighted tennis courts, one large picnic shelter, and a walking track. Unlike Gastonia's other community center parks Erwin Center is located on several adjacent tracts of land spread over several blocks. This gives the facility more of an urban, even unplanned feel, although it is physically woven into the neighborhood. According to Parks and Recreation Department counts, usage rates for this facility for the past three years are 82,059, 77,567 and 87,293.

### Erwin Center Facilities Inventory

<b>Facility</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Gymnasium	Fair	Floor needs replacement- recommended hardwood
Game Room	Good	
Meeting Room/Kitchen	Good	
Lobby /TV area	Good	
Library	Excellent	Needs collection & equipment improvements (County)
Ball field	Poor	Drainage needs/Replace end field bleachers w/ side field
Walking Track	Good	Drainage needed with ball field
Picnic Area	Good	
Tennis Courts	Fair/ threatened	Resurfacing needed before further degradation

Playground	Fair	Separated/ part is adjacent to a home/old equipment
Outdoor Pool-50x75 & bathhouse	Pool Excellent/Bldg Poor	Pool recently completely renovated; bathhouse needs roof
Outdoor Basketball Court, Conc	Good	

**Recommended Improvements at Erwin**

<b>Facility Improvement</b>	<b>Cost Today</b>
Update/Upgrade Playground with new apparatus, safe surface and meet ADA standards	\$50,000
<u>Ball Field</u> : Move Bleachers to side field from end field in conjunction with a press box, restroom & storage building; add fencing, backstop & dugouts; drainage & turf renovation; irrigation build conc. walks to field; and, pave walking track.	\$55,000
Install several water fountains throughout park	\$8,000
<u>Community Center Bldg</u> : Replace worn vinyl tile gym floor with hardwood; build storage room addition; renovate gym lighting; replace scoreboard; miscellaneous repairs and replacements such as gym door panic bars, HVAC system, interior finishes, and furnishings	\$101,000
Pool: replace bathhouse roof	\$10,000
Various outdoor enhancements including, concrete walks between Community Center and outdoor facilities; decorative lighting in front of main building and along new walks; and, cosmetic improvements throughout park, incl. dumpster screen	\$93,500
Resurface 2 tennis courts convert two to other uses	\$50,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$392,500</b>



**ERWIN CENTER GAME ROOM**



**THE LIBRARY AT ERWIN CENTER**

# Aerial View of Erwin Center

 City Owned Land  
 Parcels



Rose Hill Cemetery

SYCAMORE AVE

MORRIS ST

NORMENT AVE

Erwin Center

DAVIDSON AVE

THORNTON ST

1 : 2,400  
1 inch represents 200 feet



**PHILLIPS CENTER AND PARK**  
**2031 Echo Lane**  
**(And nearby Davis Park tract)**

Phillips community center and park is located on 36 acres in the southwestern sector of the City. Erected in 1966, this Community Center was named for former Mayor Vic Phillips who was instrumental in promoting recreation for the citizens of Gastonia. The facility primarily serves the southwestern portion of the city, but it also hosts a number of citywide events. The building houses a full-size gymnasium, weight room, game room, lounge, kitchen, and staff offices. The gym is the largest of the City's community centers and can host two simultaneous basketball games on twin collegiate size courts. The gym has a vinyl tile floor. The outdoor amenities include a lighted multipurpose athletic field, three practice fields, four lighted tennis courts, an outdoor skate court, volley wall, two lighted sand volleyball courts, a large picnic shelter, horseshoe pits, a walking track and playground. The Parks and Recreation Department reported annual visits for this facility for the past three years at 73,504, 62,567, and 77,997.

**Phillips Center Facilities Inventory**

<b>Facility</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Gymnasium	Fair	Floor needs replacement- recommended hardwood
Weight Room	Fair	Equipment is old and worn, takes up space of community/activity room
Meeting Room	Good	
TV Room		
Game Room		
Showers		
Tennis Courts, 4 lighted	Fair	Some have been converted to other uses
Skate Court- 1 inline lighted	Good	Flat surface only- no stunt facilities
Sand Volleyball Courts	Excellent	Adaptive reuse of outdated tennis courts
Multi-purpose Fields (3-1 large, 2 small)	Very good	Accommodate soccer, T-Ball, baseball and softball, irrigated
Playground	Poor	Facilities outdated, worn and inadequate
Picnic Area	Good	Large shelter for group events
Walking track ¼ mile	Good	Lighted, well-used, pea/pit gravel
Horseshoe Courts	Good	None
Parking Area	Fair	Large area but unorganized & unsightly, needs resurfacing, landscaping and organization

**Recommended Improvements at Phillips**

<b>Facility Improvement</b>	<b>Cost Today</b>
Replace Gym Floor (Hardwood Recommended)	\$85,000
Replace/Update all interior lighting, including emergency lights	\$6,000
Lobby – Replace Doors and Furniture	\$2,000
Building Addition- Activity Room and storage	\$80,000
New weight and cardio equipment	\$40,000
Fence lower ball field	\$10,000
Install water fountains for exercise track	\$10,000
Resurface 4 tennis courts	\$48,000
Concrete walks to access all courts	\$20,000
Update/Upgrade/Expand playground facility	\$50,000
Construct outdoor basketball court	\$20,000
Press box/concession/restroom storage facility for ball field area	\$30,000
Construct an additional large picnic shelter (36 ft.)	\$35,000
Resurface entire parking lot; convert part at bldg entrance to expand playground; better organize and utilize space w/ islands & landscaping	\$175,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$595,000</b>



**EXISTING PLAYGROUND  
AT PHILLIPS CENTER**

**Phillips, All  
America and**

**EXISTING PARKING LOT  
AT PHILLIPS CENTER**

**Davis**

**Parks: Connection Opportunity**

By connecting Phillips Park All America Park (a.k.a. Linwood Park) and Davis Park, Gastonia would be taking advantage of a unique opportunity to create from on active community park and two little used natural areas, a major regional park and open space asset. All America Park is an 8.5-acre passive park area within the floodplain of Blackwood creek and was created in conjunction with residential development in the area in the 1950's and 1960's. It is located about 1,500 feet north of Phillips Park following Blackwood Creek.

Davis Park, located off Claudette Street near Davis Park Road, was once a very active park operated by a local civic organization. It had a swimming lake, but following a drowning, the park was closed, the lake drained, and the land dedicated to the City. It has since returned to a 25-acre tract in a natural (undeveloped) state. Davis Park is located only 1,600 feet south of Phillips Park along two branches of Blackwood Creek.

The interconnection would be accomplished with a greenway trail system running through and between the three major tracts along the floodplain of Blackwood Creek. This would be seen as a citywide asset. Because the City already owns most of the land for the trail system the costs for this project would be small compared to the enormous benefit: including, but not limited to: (a) providing a system of trails for pedestrian, runner and bicycle use, (b) providing access between developed recreational areas and undeveloped natural areas, (c) providing bicycle and pedestrian access between many neighborhoods and this significant recreation and open space system, and (d) the opportunity for a lake trail in the Davis Park section. This concept is illustrated on the map shown on page 41. This connection should be made a priority in any future greenway improvement program.

Returned to life, Davis Park could offer these amenities:

- A public fishing lake (Outside of Crowders Mountain one does not exist in Gastonia)
- ADA standard pedestrian trail around the lake
- Connecting greenway to points north along the creek to Phillips Center and Park and All America Park, and connections southward to points along Blackwood Creek
- Picnic facilities
- System of mountain bicycle trails (No public trails exist in the city for mountain bikes) -- An increasingly popular sport
- Parking for direct motor vehicle access

The estimated cost, including land acquisition is \$750,000.

Given the secluded nature of this site, regular patrols by Parks and Recreation Staff, a Park Ranger, or City Police will be necessary to reduce illicit activities or use of the trails by motorbikes and ATV's.



City Owned Land  
Parcels

HUDSON BLVD

TAYLOR DR

ECHO LN

S S ACRES

Rockwood Creek

Phillips Center

HARTFORD DR

R-CHIANG AVE

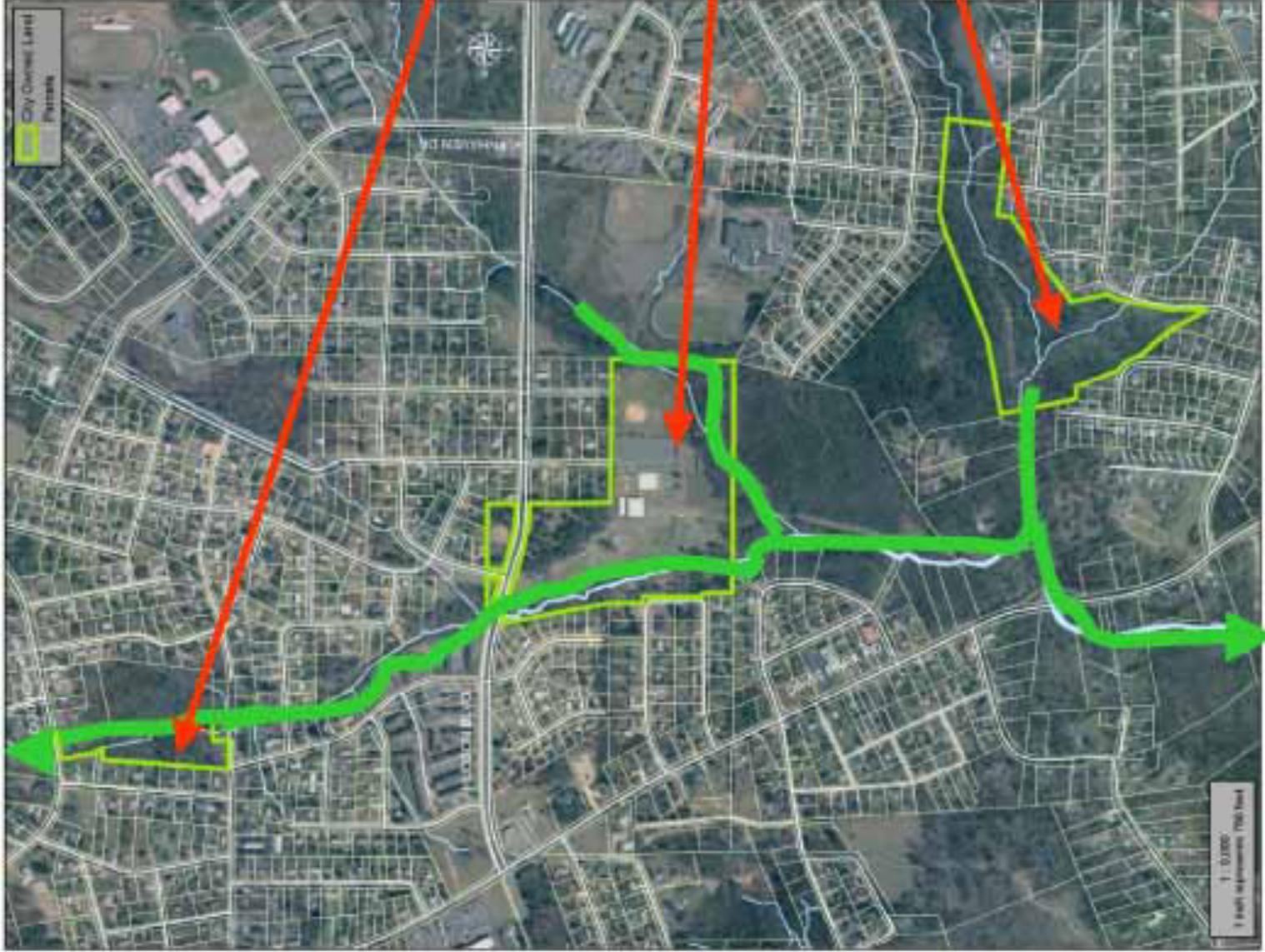
CEDAR CREEK

1 : 3,000  
1 inch represents 250 feet

Aerial View of Phillips Center

## Synergy of Greenways:

Connecting 3 Parks  
Along Blackwood Creek



All-America Park  
8.5 Acres

Phillips Park  
36 Acres

Davis Park  
25 Acres

Unused park land could have potential for fishing lake, greenway trails around lake, picnic area, and mountain bike system

**ROLAND E. BRADLEY CENTER AND PARK**  
**1200 North Modena Street**



Bradley Center was built in 1977 on a 46-acre tract of wooded and rolling land in the northeast sector of the City. The center was dedicated to the late Mayor Roland E. Bradley who was instrumental in making the project a reality. The City used Community Development Block Grant funds to buy the land, build the building and construct most of the outdoor facilities. The Community Center building, a twin of T. Jeffers Center, is 15,058 square feet and includes a

college size basketball court with six goals and seating capacity of 350. The building also contains dressing and shower rooms, arts and crafts area, game room, activity rooms for meeting and classes, lounge and kitchen area, and staff offices. Outdoor facilities include a lighted multi-purpose athletic field, eight lighted tennis courts, two concrete basketball courts, two large picnic shelters, playground, and one small practice field. Bradley Center primarily serves the northwest sector of Gastonia. Visits to this facility for the past three years are 100,217, 87,113 and 95,088 as reported by the Parks and Recreation Department.

**Bradley Center Facilities Inventory**

<b>Facility</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Gymnasium	Good	Vinyl tile gym floor, doors need panic bars.
Game room, meeting room, lounge, lobby, office showers, restrooms, kitchen	Good	Overall lack of storage for community center building. Storage needs are critical. Weight area poorly equipped.
Tennis Courts, 8 Lighted, Asphalt	Fair	In 2002 repaired recurring cracks and repainted the courts; however, resurfacing will be needed for long-range fix. Consider Bradley for a regional tennis competition center. If not, then convert some courts.
Ball fields, 1-300'; 1-150'	Good/Fair	Grading needed south of large ball field, construct press box/concession/restroom building at main ball field; small field behind gym lacks basic facilities
Picnic Shelters- 2	Good	Pine Ridge needs woods thinning and trail
Horseshoe Courts - 2	Good	
Playground 2 small areas	Good/Fair	Need new equipment and upgrade to ADA standards
Walking Trails	Poor	Few if any originally planned trails constructed
General outdoor	Good	Water fountain lines need replacement, access and walkway improvements needed, entrance drive recently repaved
Outdoor basketball courts- 2	Good	Concrete

## Recommended Improvements at Bradley Center

Facility Improvement	Cost Today
Build 2- 725 SF storage/activity room additions to south side of gym	\$110,000
Replace vinyl tile gym floor with hardwood	\$73,000
Miscellaneous minor building improvements including HVAC upgrades/repairs, replacement of windows with integral blind systems, install panic bars in gym, fixture replacements in restrooms and showers, cabinet improvements replace scoreboard, interior finishes, furnishings and fixtures.	\$47,000
Various outdoor improvements including, grade/landscape hillside at south edge of main ball field; sod front and side yards of community center; landscape around bldg. and entrance; replant/irrigate planters at tennis courts; replace water fountain lines throughout park, construct volley wall;	\$35,000
Rebuild 8 tennis courts	\$200,000
Picnic shelters-Install electric outlets, 2-H <sub>2</sub> O fountains, install walks and add landscaping, install volleyball court at Pine Ridge Shelter.	\$9,000
Build multi-purpose, small lighted ball field with fencing behind gym	\$40,000
Construct park trail system (some paved, some stone, dirt, mulch or gravel) Consider dirt bike trails. Julia Allen Creek corridor to be paved greenway trail, funded under greenway improvements budget.	\$125,000
Provide pedestrian access and beautification to Bridgewood Ln./Farewell Dr.; add a small parking area at N. Modena.	\$79,000
Construct press box, concession & restroom building for main ball field	\$30,000
Add 50 more bleacher seats to main ball field	\$5,000
Playground: more equipment, upgrade to ADA standards, safe surface	\$50,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$803,000</b>

**Bradley Center gym is a popular venue for free play basketball, pick up games and team competition**



# Aerial View of Bradley Center



- City Owned Land
- Parcels

1 : 3,300  
1 inch represents 275 feet

**T. JEFFERS CENTER**  
**2311 Whitener St.**



Built in 1979, this project was financed with federal Community Development Block Grant funds and with grant funds from the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation and City grant matching dollars. Located on 39 acres in the northwestern section of the City, this Community Center was modeled after its twin sister, Bradley Center, which was built two years earlier. The Center was named for former councilman and mayor, Thebaud Jeffers. Jeffers, the City's first African-American mayor, was also well known throughout the community as a youth mentor.

The Community Center is a 15,058 square foot

structure including a college size basketball court with two cross-court basketball floors, with seating for 350 spectators. The building contains dressing and shower rooms, arts and crafts facilities, game room, activity rooms for meetings/classes, lounge, kitchen and staff offices. Outdoor facilities include two concrete basketball courts, eight lighted tennis courts, lighted youth baseball field, playground and two large picnic shelters. The annual visits to this facility for the past three years are 87,246, 96,151 and 107,910, according to Parks and Recreation Department counts.

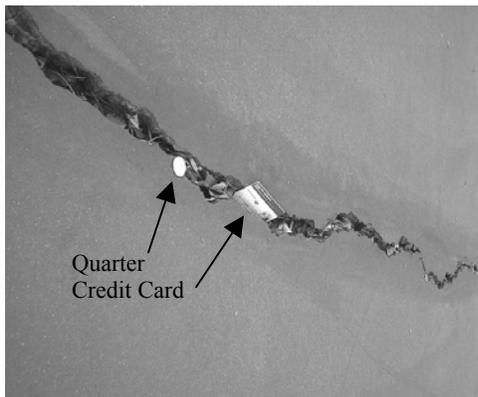
**Jeffers Center Facilities Inventory**

<b>Facility</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Gymnasium	Good	Vinyl tile gym floor, doors need panic bars.
Game room, meeting room, lounge, lobby, office showers, restrooms, kitchen	Good/Fair	Overall lack of storage for community center building. A number of repairs and systems upgrades needed for building.
Tennis Courts, 8 Lighted, Asphalt	Fair/Threatened	Resurfacing needed soon to prevent necessary total surface and base replacement. Recommend resurfacing four courts and converting four others for other sports.
Ball field, 1- non regulation- 185', lighted w/ press box	Good/Fair	Ball Field could not be constructed to regulation size due to underlying rock; field now backs up to Wal-Mart Supercenter
Picnic Shelters- 2	Fair/Poor	Access drives in poor shape, one closed off
Playground 1 small area	Good/Fair	Need new/added equipment and upgrade to ADA standards; backs up to Wal-Mart stormwater retention basin (basin now fenced)
Walking Trails	Poor	Few if any originally planned trails constructed; lake never built
General outdoor	Fair/Poor	Entrance drive and parking lot critically needs resurfacing to avoid reconstruction; recommend screening from Wal-Mart Supercenter; consider use of land in west section of park
Outdr Basketbl Cts	Good	Concrete

**Recommended Improvements at Jeffers Center**

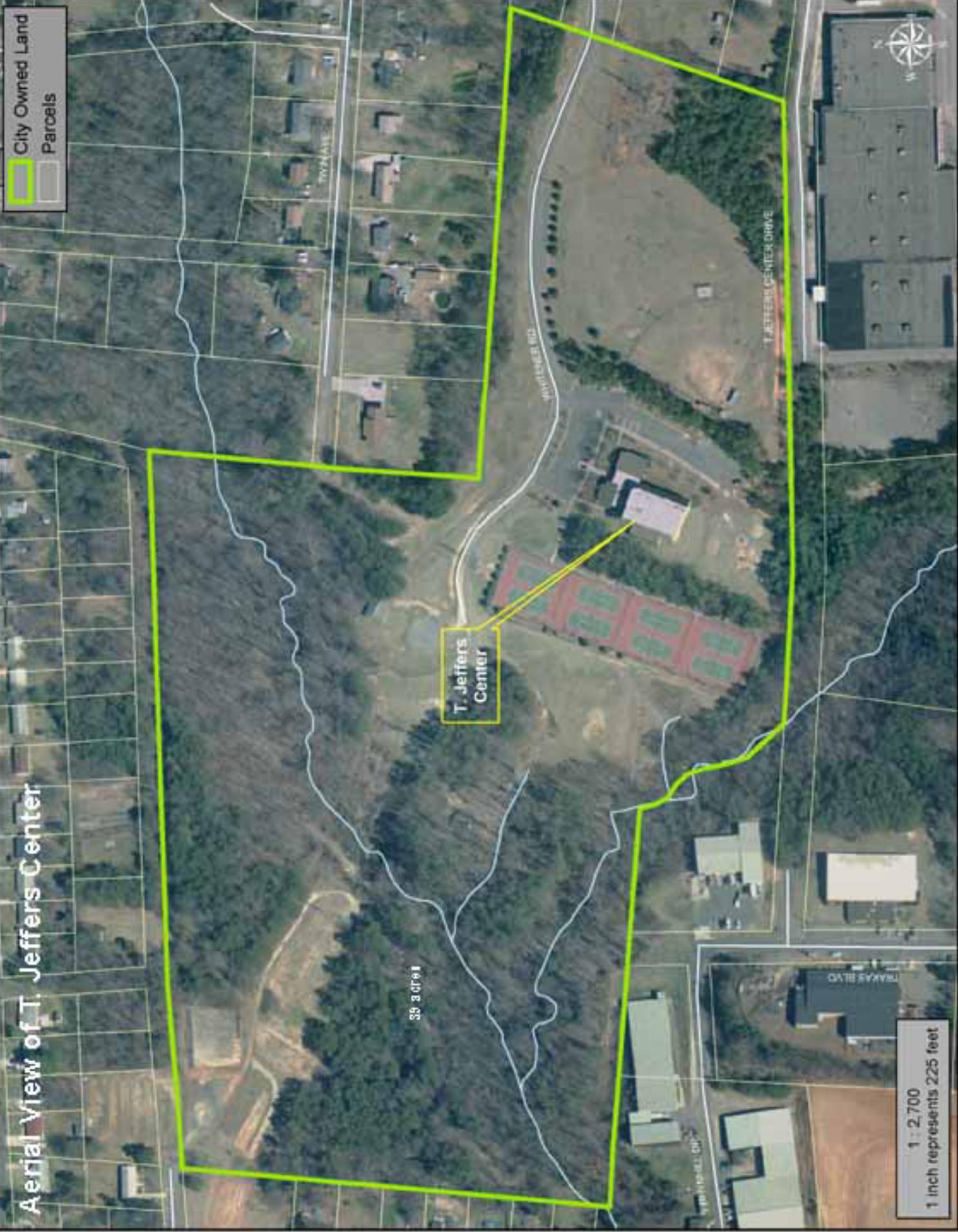
<b>Facility Improvement</b>	<b>Cost Today</b>
Build 2- 725 SF storage/activity room additions to west side of gym	\$113,000
Replace vinyl tile gym floor with hardwood	\$73,000
Miscellaneous minor building improvements including HVAC upgrades/repairs, replacement of windows with integral blind systems, install panic bars in gym, fixture replacements in restrooms and showers, cabinet improvements replace scoreboard, interior finishes, furnishings and fixtures; replace scoreboard.	\$72,000
Landscape around bldg. and entrance; add outdoor water fountains	\$15,000
Resurface 4 tennis courts; convert 4 others for other sports	\$125,000
Picnic shelters-Install electric outlets, install walks and add plants, improve drives to shelters; relocate shelter #2; replace tables as needed.	\$40,000
Resurface entrance drive and parking lots; build entrance walks	\$131,000
Construct paved trail system as envisioned in park master plan; improve walking track	\$125,000
Misc. outdoor enhancements- landscaping, lighting, walks, security.	\$24,000
Enlarge press box for storage; screen ball field from Wal-Mart	\$20,000
Playground- add/update equipment and meet ADA standards, install a safe surface	\$50,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$788,000</b>

**Picnic Shelters at Jeffers Center seem to have little use. This one lacks tables and the access drive is impassable—a clear indication of deferred maintenance due to budget constraints**



**Tennis courts throughout the park system are sorely in need of resurfacing. Although the pictured court at Bradley Center was resurfaced during plan development, it illustrates the court conditions, size of cracks and hindrance to acceptable play. Presently, many courts can still be resurfaced at a fraction of the cost of rebuilding them. Our current supply may exceed demand for use, although some of these courts are unplayable. Each of our many tennis courts should be evaluated for resurfacing, reconstruction, or conversion to other sports.**

# Aerial View of T. Jeffers Center



T. Jeffers Center

SS 3 QF 91

1 : 2,700  
1 inch represents 225 feet



City Owned Land  
Parcels

## **RANKIN LAKE PARK**

**1750 Rankin Lake Road**

Rankin Lake Park may be the most overlooked in potential of all of our city parks. The park was constructed on surplus land east of Rankin Lake. Rankin Lake was a man-made holding and settling basin for Gastonia's drinking water. The lake now exists as an emergency water supply. The park has many canopy and under story trees, paved drives and parking, and offers wonderful views of the lake and surrounding land. It is located on the northern edge of the city and can be easily connected to Gaston County Park at Dallas (a.k.a., Biggerstaff Park), Gaston College (both college and county park being about 0.75 mi. away as illustrated on the Greenway Map in that section) downtown Gastonia, and the Historic Downtown Square of Dallas This park contains approximately 25 acres of usable land. Once a popular leisure destination in Gastonia, it receives



**VIEW OF RANKIN LAKE FROM PARK**

few visitors today beyond day renters of the clubhouse. Currently this park has a clubhouse with kitchen, restrooms, tables and chairs for groups up to 350 people, one large picnic shelter, seven small picnic shelters, a boardwalk over a wetland area and a wooden/ plastic playground. The clubhouse is a popular, low cost, rental for social activities such as group parties, family reunions, employer - employee social events, anniversaries and weddings. From the date bookings begun for the upcoming year, the building is booked up within a few days.

Gastonia's first raw water stream supply was the adjacent Long Creek where water was pumped from the creek and reserved in Rankin Lake. Then, in the early 1950's the city constructed a raw water line from the South Fork River, a much more reliable source. Due to the poor quality and expense of treatment of South Fork Water, in 1995 the City constructed a new line to the Catawba River at Mountain Island Lake. Raw water from Mountain Island Lake is of good quality due to the settling process provided by huge Lake Norman just upstream from Mountain Island Lake. Raw water is now pumped directly from Mountain Island Lake to the downtown treatment plant while Rankin Lake serves as an emergency supply. In the mid 1970's, when the lake was the City's raw water supply, the Public Works Department erected a high chain link fence between the park area and bank of the lake. The concern was with activities such as car washing along the lake bank threatening the water supply. Rankin Lake is a shallow lake, which makes possible pollution or contamination a critical issue. However, the fence was erected only next to the park— less than one-fourth of the shoreline. Direct, unfenced public access to the lake remains from Bob and Pat Boyd Drive, which provides access to the City Skeet and Trap Range, pistol range, and police K-9 training ground along the lake bank. Further, the north end of the park is now used for city Public Works Department outdoor storage of materials such as piping.

Separation by fence of the lake from the park marked the beginning of the downward trend of park use. This action resulted in fewer visitors, reducing the self-policing factor, creating feelings of insecurity, resulting in even fewer visitors, and finally allowing the park to be victimized by illicit activities. Beefed up police patrol and greater presence by parks and recreation staff have helped to curtail some of this activity and at least make what remains more stealthy.

This plan proposes an ambitious facility construction project to restore Rankin Lake to its once held favor and attendance. But, the

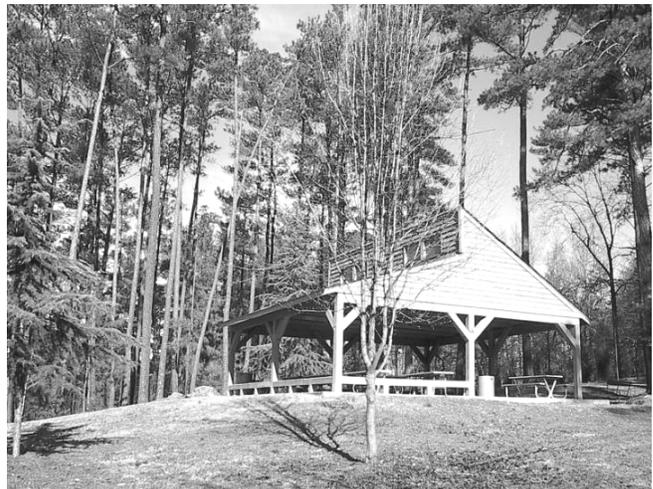


**INTERIOR OF THE CLUBHOUSE**

key to doing this, both physically and in terms of public acceptance, will be the removal of the fence. If the City wants to dramatically increase its park assets, Rankin Lake Park should be part of the answer. It would seem that the goals of water supply protection and recreation are not mutually exclusive and that a joint solution can be found here as there exists in other cities. But as with many solutions, this one probably will not come without cost. One solution may be to hire a park warden (with arrest powers) to be present at or near the lake at all times when the park is open or accessible. Such a position could also serve to vend concessions and rent paddleboats and canoes at the lake. The use of motor craft on the lake and swimming are out of the question. The presence of a lake warden would also reduce or eliminate illicit activities that still contribute the park's image problem. Two full-time positions, along with intermittent supplementation by the police department, will be required provide one officer during all daylight hours when the park is open. At other times the park should be securely fenced and gated from vehicular or other easy access. Finally, to complete the makeover of the park image, a name change should be considered. In addition, Rankin Lake Park, and particularly its future circumferential lake trail, should be made off-limits for pets in order reduce fecal pollutants.

In 1997 Woolpert consultants prepared two alternative conceptual plans for the makeover of Rankin Lake Park. The major difference between the two alternatives is that "Plan A" shown on page 52 featured a social pavilion extending over the water at the east end of the lake (where the existing park development is located), while Plan B" shown on page 53 featured an amphitheater with band shell near the same location. Plan A also featured a walking trail all the way around the lake, which could double as a cross-country track facility. It also featured a corporate picnic area at the southwestern area of the lake tract. ***Plan A is the preferred alternative*** and a close-up view of how it would change the existing park area east of the lake is shown on page 54. Both plans called for Rankin Lake Park to be linked to a future greenway system along Long Creek, which in turn would link to Downtown Gastonia, Gaston College, Gaston County Park-Dallas, and Historic Dallas. This concept is shown on the map on page 55.

**GROUP PICNIC SHELTER AT RANKIN LAKE PARK**



**PLAYGROUND AT RANKIN LAKE PARK**

## Rankin Lake Park Facilities Inventory

Facility	Condition	Comments
Clubhouse	Fair	Needs new roof structure and roof; needs exterior refinishing
Group picnic helter	Good	3 additional ones needed for demand + corporate shelter
Small picnic shelters	Fair	One is in floodplain
Playground	Fair	Needs upgrading, some new equipment, ADA standards, and safe surface
Drives & parking	Excellent	Recently resurfaced
Trails and fence	Fair	Need more- only ones are motor drives and boardwalk through constructed wetland; remove fence

## Rankin lake Park Master Plan Implementation

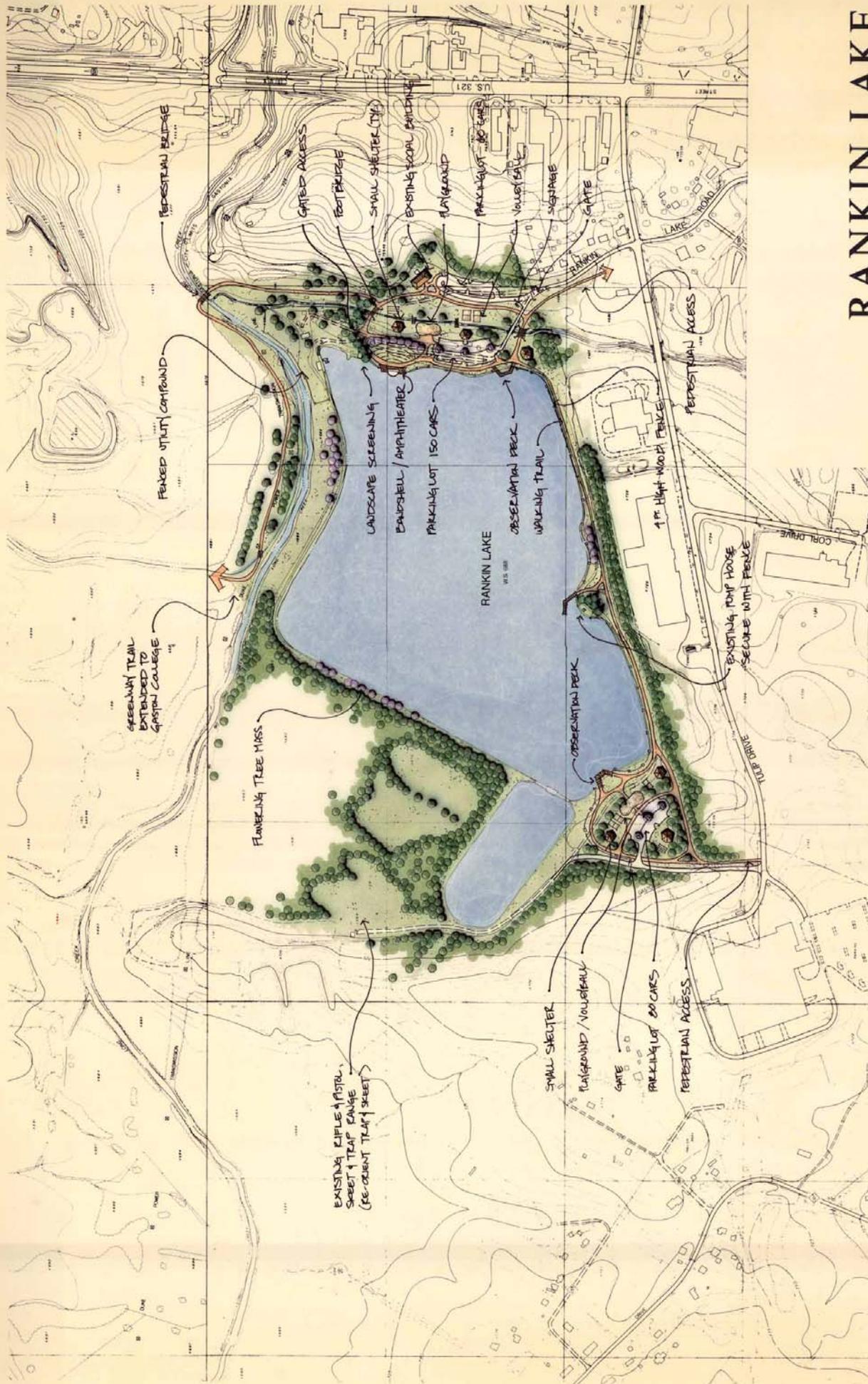
Facility/Description	Estimated Cost
New Roof and Roof Structure for Clubhouse	\$ 25,000
Refinish Exterior w/ Stone or Brick	\$ 35,000
Upgrade existing playground and add a second playground	\$ 35,000
General grounds, landscaping and drainage	\$ 20,000
Move shelter #4 from floodplain, upgrade/repair other small shelters	\$ 20,000
Water fountain & spigot system to interconnect picnic shelters	\$ 20,000
Return lake to clean public access- build attendant station for warden, boating/concessions	\$ 50,000
Remove city outdoor storage from north end of park	\$ 5,000
Piers, docks and decks	\$ 50,000
Lake Pavilion	\$275,000
Trail around lake (No Pets or Equestrian Allowed)	\$500,000
Corporate picnic pavilion- consider at southwest side of lake on hill near present pistol range location- relocate pistol range	\$150,000
Interconnecting trail with county park and Gaston college	Fund under Greenway allocation
Build 3 new large group picnic shelters- similar to existing one	\$ 90,000
Repair constructed wetland (fund under storm water program)	Other funding
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,275,000</b>

**RANKIN LAKE-  
LOOKING EAST  
TOWARD THE  
PARK**









# RANKIN LAKE

## CITY OF GASTONIA

Gastonia, North Carolina



8731 Red Oak Boulevard  
 Charlotte, North Carolina  
 28217-3928  
 704-532-6284  
 FAX: 704-532-8529





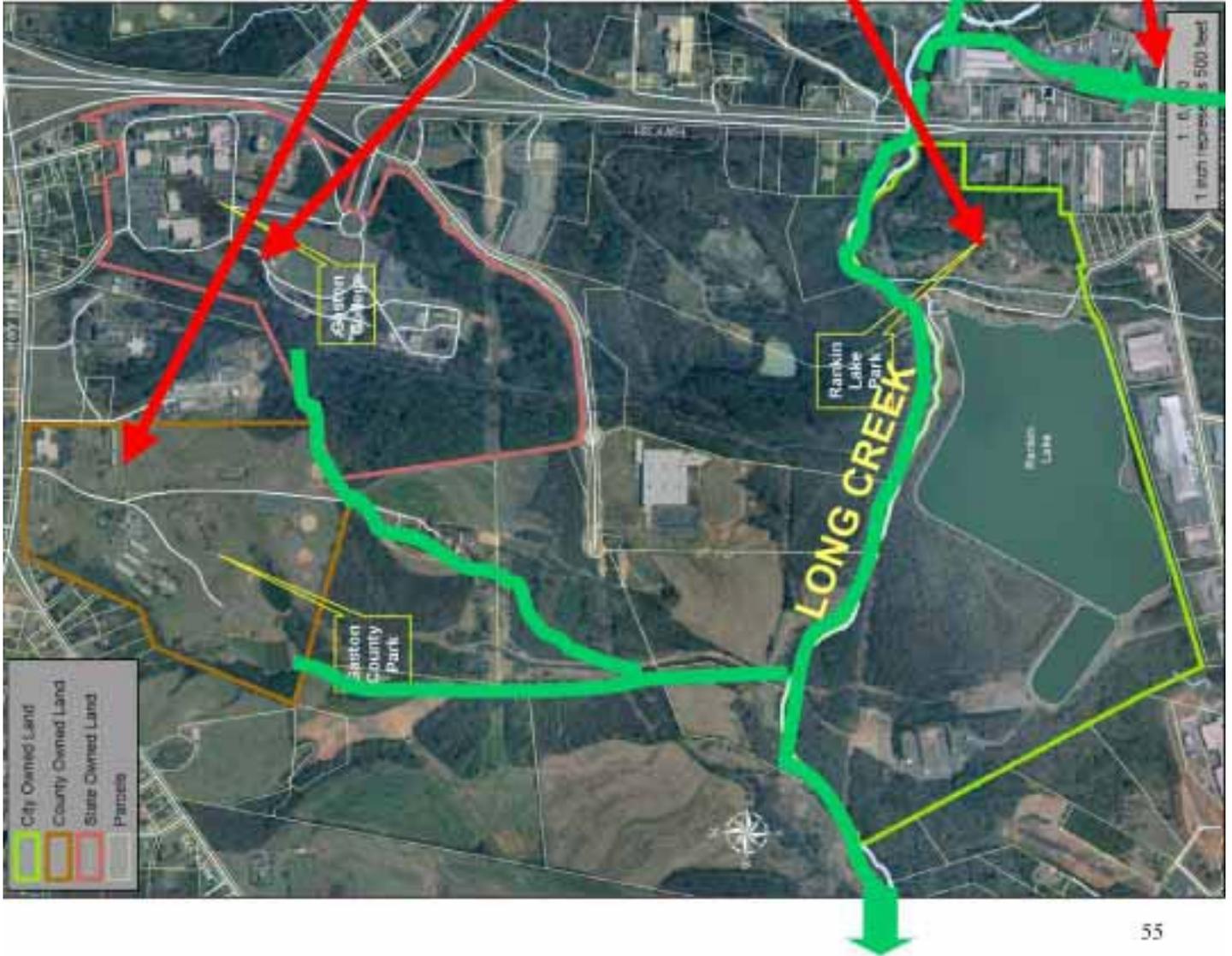
**HOW GREENWAYS AND  
RAILTRAILS CAN BE USED  
TO CONNECT RANKIN  
LAKE PARK, GASTON  
COUNTY PARK AT  
DALLAS, DOWNTOWN  
GASTONIA, AND HISTORIC  
DALLAS**

**GASTON COUNTY PARK  
AT DALLAS (BIGGERSTAFF)**

**GASTON COLLEGE**

**RANKIN LAKE PARK**

**CONNECTION TO  
DOWNTOWN GASTONIA**



## **SKEET AND TRAP RANGE**

### **Bob & Pat Boyd Drive**

The Gastonia Skeet and Trap Range is located on the Rankin Lake property at the end of a gravel road, named after Bob and Pat Boyd, who operated the facility for many years. It is accessed from Tulip Drive. Harrelson Yancey, Mayor 1951-1955, started the first range on the eastern hill of Rankin Lake Park. Later the range was moved to the west side of Rankin Lake, opposite side of the lake from the park. For a number of years the range was operated by the Gastonia Police Department. Several years ago, the Parks and Recreation Department took over operation. The facility has three range units: two combination trap and skeet ranges, and one skeet only range. It has been open seven days per week, 1 to 9 PM daily; however, staffing cutbacks reduced the schedule to 8 hours per day on 5 days per week. Normally, three part-time operators oversee the range. Ideally the department would like to employ one full-time range manager and two part-time seasonal employees providing enough staffing to return to the 8 hours per day operation, seven days per week.



SKEET AND TRAP RANGES

The facility has a small clubhouse building, which houses the range manager, provides for storage of supplies, and lounge space for patrons.

RANGE OPERATIONS AND "CLUBHOUSE" BUILDING

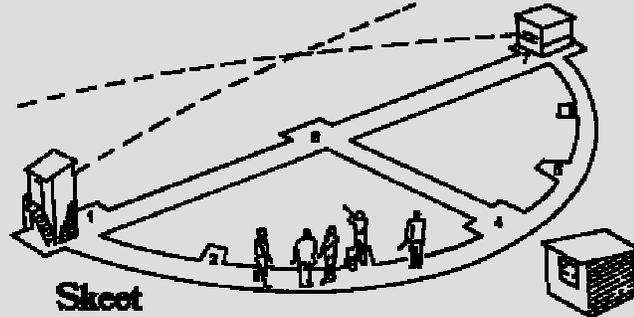


Gross annual revenues for the facility average about \$94,800 over the last three fiscal years. Expenses total to about 85,000 per year. From FY 94/95 through FY 01/02 dramatic increases were seen in revenues; however once reaching the 01/02 of \$95,000 they have leveled off and remained steady. City resident shooters are charged \$3.00 per 25 targets and non-residents are charged \$3.50. An average of 133 shooters visit the range per week or an average of 19 patrons per day. Saturday is the busiest day (with over three times the volume of Monday, the slowest day), followed by Sunday, Friday, Wednesday and Thursday.

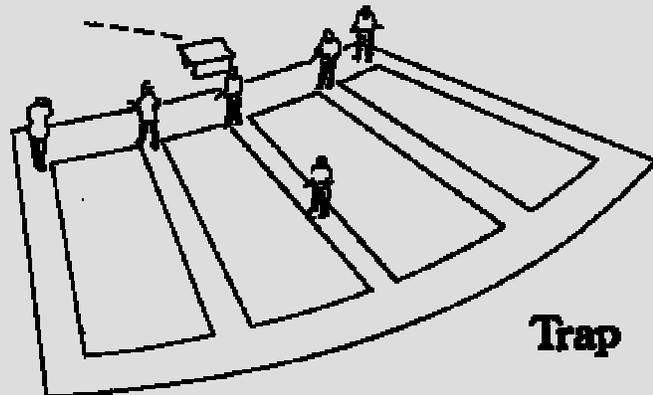
The Parks and Recreation staff has recommended certain capital and staffing enhancements to the facility to improve operation and service.

## SKEET, TRAP, WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

1. The existing clubhouse (or range manager's building) needs remodeling and an addition of 2 restrooms. In addition, storage facilities need to be added. **Estimated cost: \$ 75,000.**
2. Build a 30' x 30' picnic shelter to serve as a social facility. **Estimated Cost \$25,000.**
3. In lieu of the current staffing arrangement of entirely part-time personnel, the Parks and Recreation staff has recommended the range be staffed with a full-time range manager (a recommended Range 7 position) and two part-time seasonal employees at about \$10.40 per hour. This would increase personal services expense by about \$10,000 per year, plus another \$5,000 per year in fringe benefits.



With Skeet the targets always cross in front of the shooter and follow the same path, one high from the left and one low from the right. The field has two separate target throwing houses, one high, with opening about 10 feet up, and a low throwing house, with the target being ejected at about 3 feet above the ground. There is no variation in the target path. The shooting field has eight positions (or stations) arranged in a semi-circle. Up to five shooters may participate in a "round," with each shooter taking their turn at station one and then all of the squad proceeding together to each of the other firing points. A full round of skeet includes 25 targets, allowing for one shot at each target. While formal competition is based on shotgun gauge, various bores are used in skeet. Shell load sizes are typically limited to 9 shot.



In Trap, there is one target-throwing machine located at the middle front of the range and the targets fly away from the shooters. The machine oscillates, which may result in targets being ejected at a 45-degree angle left or right of the target house, or anywhere in between. Shooters man five field stations over a straight line behind the machine. Each member of the five-person "squad" takes a turn with each sequential shot, one shooter followed by another shooter sequentially across the field. After five cycles (each shooter having shot 5 times), each shooter rotates to the next station, and the process begins over again. The targets are typically 30-40 yards downrange when hit. Most often 12-gauge shotguns are used with shells of 7.5 or 8 shot



City Owned Land  
Parcels

Skoot and  
Trap Range

Police  
Pistol Range

Police K-9  
Training Grounds

Rankin  
Lake

1 : 4,800  
1 inch represents 400 feet



GREEN HEDDYN CT

CLEAR WOOD LN

## **FERGUSON PARK**

### **1401 Golf Course Drive**

Ferguson Park about 80 acres, is part of a larger tract it shares with Gastonia Municipal Golf Course. The park amenities include eight lighted asphalt tennis courts, which after Ashbrook High School are the best in the city, four lighted softball fields, a small playground, concession and restroom building, and future access to Catawba Creek Greenway. The park is also home to the Parks and Recreation Department maintenance facilities. The Landscape Division of the Public Works Department also houses some maintenance facilities and horticultural materials at this location.



**FERGUSON PARK BALLFIELD**

The city needs to move the men's softball complex at Ferguson Park to another location. This is provided for at several locations in the Highland/North Chester area in the section on Sims Park/Softball Complex. The four-field complex at

Ferguson Park was constructed in 1977 for softball games, practice and tournaments. Since that time, player skills and equipment have evolved to the

point where these fields are not deep enough for recommended standards. The Ferguson fields can easily be converted to a women's and girls complex (as well as youth baseball) and that is the recommendation of this plan.



**FERGUSON PARK TENNIS COURTS**



**FERGUSON PARK BALL FIELD BLEACHERS**

### Schedule of Improvements- Ferguson Park

Facility/Improvement	Est. Cost	Comments
Softball fields: Replace fence fabric, extend backstops for youth baseball, add safety nets, update restrooms, & other work to convert to women's fields	\$100,000	
Construct a warm-up area inside fence	\$ 5,000	
Resurface tennis courts	\$ 80,000	Triple if reconstruction needed
Pave parking areas	\$ 160,000	Incls. water detention
Extend greenway trail through park	N/A	Covered under greenway construction program
Landscaping and walks	\$ 25,000	
Improve playground	\$ 15,000	Add apparatus, meet ADA, provide a safe surface
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 385,000</b>	





## **GASTONIA MUNICIPAL GOLF COURSE**

### **530 Niblick Drive**

Gastonia Municipal Golf Course is located on a 200-acre tract just west of Union Road, which it shares with Ferguson Park. The golf course was opened in 1931 with nine holes and a clubhouse located on Golf Course Drive along the northern boundary of the tract. It was expended to a full 18 hole Par 71 course in the early 1960's and now occupies its third clubhouse (built in 1989). About one-third of the golf course land remains wooded and undeveloped, and while too steep for golf course or ball field development, could be use for walking or cross-country trails and inter-connected with future greenway trail development along Catawba Creek.



Gastonia Municipal offers plush bentgrass greens, well groomed fairways, three tees per hole, a friendly, courteous staff, a P.G.A. "Class A" Professional on-site, and playing conditions ensured by a competent maintenance staff. Popular among Gastonia's residents (particularly retirees, youth and younger adults), the course offers high-quality play at affordable rates. City residents pay \$13 for a round on weekdays and \$21 for weekends and holidays. Non-city residents pay \$17 and \$23, respectively. City students can play for \$10. A cart for two players rents for \$16 or \$20 per round, depending on residency. The course is open every day except Christmas. In addition to a clubhouse, other improvements include a cart garage and maintenance facility.



THE CURRENT CLUBHOUSE WAS  
COMPLETED IN 1989

Although most golf course employees are not full time, when converted to full time equivalents, the current employment equals four fulltime equivalent positions in maintenance and three full time equivalent positions in administration. This includes the Director of Golf Operations, who spends some of his time overseeing the Gastonia Municipal Airport. Normally, Gastonia Municipal employs twelve full time equivalent positions; however, several positions have been frozen due to budget constraints. There is a snack bar in the clubhouse; however, it is operated by a private entity on a leased basis.

It is the *goal* of the City of Gastonia to operate Gastonia Municipal Golf Course on a break-even basis; i.e., there should be enough revenues from user fees to cover all of the costs of the course—administration, maintenance, and capital improvements. The course fees now cover administration, maintenance, major repairs and some minor improvements, if inter-fund transfers (for support by other city operations) are not counted.

There are five public golf courses in Gaston County, not including Gastonia Municipal, and one of those five is being developed for another use. Gastonia Municipal offers greens conditions that could be matched with any public or private facility in the immediate area, while its fairway conditions and general course aesthetics may be no better than average. Its five-year average of use is about 40,000 rounds per year. An eighteen-hole course has a capacity of 42,000 to 43,000 per year. The facility is competitive, successful and is operating at about 94% of capacity; therefore the assumption can be made that to increase course revenues to meet or exceed financial operation goals, few alternatives remained but to increase fees. The new fees, as quoted on the previous page went into effect in July 2004. As other golfing facilities in the immediate area increase fees, it should be expected for Gastonia Municipal to follow suite. However, it is expected that such fee increases would cover only operational costs. If fees were raised to cover major capital improvements the course would become unaffordable to many (particularly retirees) who find Gastonia Municipal the only affordable golf venue in the area. Gastonia Municipal is the only public recreational facility where a significant per capita fee is charged on a use-by-use basis. Such fees are expected and customary for golf play; however, viewing the course as a public recreational facility can justify some degree of public financial support, particularly for major capital expenses that cannot be covered by user fee revenues. Certainly, not all public play golf or use the course if they do, but neither do all public play tennis, softball, basketball, walk on greenway trails, or swim in a public pool. Gastonia Municipal Golf Course is and should be viewed as a community amenity, part of the city's arsenal of recreational venues offering an pleasurable activity that a significant number, albeit not all, of the public will derive recreational benefit.

There are a number of improvements that need to be made to Gastonia Municipal Golf Course within the time horizon of this plan. First, the course lacks irrigation in the rough areas. Only the tees, greens and fairway cut areas are irrigated. Irrigation outside the fairway cuts would improve the quality and



**DRAINAGE IS A MAJOR PROBLEM ON THE COURSE FAIRWAYS AND CART PATHS**



**BADLY NEEDED BRIDGE REPLACEMENTS ARE CURRENTLY UNDERWAY. THIS BRIDGE WAS REPLACED IN 2004 USING CITY FORCES**

playability of the whole golf course. Second, all of the tee complexes will need rebuilding. After extended periods, tees become worn and uneven, necessitating complete resurfacing—regrading and re-turfing. Third, all 20 sand traps need rebuilding. Existing sand traps lack proper drainage facilities, necessitating a constant high level of

maintenance. Fourth, two pairs of restrooms need to be built on the course in locations most distant from the clubhouse. Course staff receives many player requests for distant restrooms. And finally, the course needs a driving range. There is only one public driving range in the Gastonia area. Staff 's vision is for the range to be located approximately between #10 and #13 fairways with the 20 tee stations just east of the clubhouse. Balls would be driven approximately northward. This addition would require changes to hole #10--the relocation of the tee complex and part of the fairway, creating an angle and reducing the hole's strokes from Par 5 to Par 4. It is expected that the \$200,000 cost of the driving range would have a three-year payback period.

**Recommended Improvements- Gastonia Municipal Golf course**

<b>Improvement</b>	<b>Projected Cost</b>
Irrigation Upgrades	\$400,000
Rebuild All Tee Complexes	\$100,000
Build Driving Range Facility/Relocate front half of Hole #10	\$200,000
Rebuild Sand Traps	\$ 60,000
Install Two Distant Restrooms (Modular Buildings)	\$ 30,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$790,000</b>



LACKING DRAINAGE, EXISTING SAND TRAPS REQUIRE CONSTANT MAINTENANCE



NEW DRAINAGE FACILITY CONSTRUCTED BY CITY FORCES



GASTONIA MUNICIPAL IS NOT ONLY A POPULAR RECREATIONAL VENUE BUT ALSO A POPULAR SOCIAL VENUE FOR MANY RETIREES

## **SIMS LEGION PARK**

### **And the need for a new Men's and Youth Softball Complex**

This section evaluates Sims Legion Park, recommends needed improvements, and proposes a solution to meet the need for a softball complex to provide for tournament needs. Sims Park located at 1001 North Marietta Street is a venerable Gastonia park, built on land donated by Brown Wilson in memory of Lt. Albert H. Sims, a World War II veteran. Sims Park was given originally to the American Legion Post 123, and it has been the home of American Legion, scholastic, little league and minor league professional baseball, as well as other sports and activities.



**SIMS PARK STADIUM**

The primary feature of Sims Park is a semi-professional ballpark, which has been the home of several minor league clubs in the past, a women's professional fastpitch softball team, and now hosts the college players' summer team, the Gastonia Grizzlies. In addition to the lighted field with fencing and outfield wall, the ballpark includes a partially covered stadium, foul line bleachers, concessions, offices and restrooms. There are two lighted softball fields at the north

end of the park. These fields are heavily deteriorated and basically unplayable. They were built on the site of a former garbage dump—a refuse disposal facility before the days of engineered sanitary landfills. Consequently, there is lack of sufficient soil coverage and compaction of the refuse. These fields have experienced dramatic settling giving them an uneven surface. The park also features a large paved, but heavily deteriorated, parking lot. The north half of the parking lot suffers from the same malady as the softball fields. The City Engineering Department should further study the cost of major remedial action, to determine whether such action would be cost-prohibitive, or feasible at all, as opposed

**THE UNEVEN AND DETERIORATED CONDITION OF THE SIMS PARKING LOT CLEARLY SHOWS THE PROBLEM OF THE OLD GARBAGE DUMP BENEATH IT**



to establishing a softball complex at another site. There is also a privately funded/constructed and operated BMX bicycle track at the southwest area of the park.

The city has a need for a men's and male youth softball complex, suitable for hosting tournaments. The four-field complex at Ferguson Park was constructed in 1977 for this purpose. Since that time, player skills and equipment have evolved to where these fields are not deep enough for recommended standards. In the section on Ferguson Park it is recommended that these fields be converted to a women's and girls softball complex.

## Men's Softball Complex

It is necessary that the several fields in a new Men's Softball Complex are located in close proximity of each other; however, it is not necessary that they be located side-by-side on the same tract as they are at Ferguson Park. *The City should explore the feasibility of creating a joint-use softball complex at multiple nearby sites in the North Chester/Highland area.* These sites include:

- Possibly, up to four fields at the Sims Park site. These include the (a) present ballpark when and if it is not used for baseball, (b) possible land remedial action where the two ball fields are over the old dump and (c) a potential site at the southwest corner of the park for a new lighted field (if this results in displacement of the BMX track, then an alternative site for it will need to be found).
- Use the reconstructed lighted ball field at Erwin Community Center.

### Sims Park and Creation of Softball Complex Schedule of Improvements

Facility/Improvement	Estimated Cost
Stadium- Renovate press box and restrooms	\$ 15,000
Field- Backup Scoreboard, Replace lighting & poles, replace backstop netting, repair outfield wall	\$200,000
Repave, landscape and mark parking lot of main ball park	\$130,000
Build a 325' lighted softball field at southwest corner (BMX site) of park with aluminum bleachers. Relocate BMX track.	\$200,000
Build two 325' lighted fields at present location of deteriorated fields with soil remediation over dump, including aluminum bleachers and pressbox/restroom/dugout building on piles	\$700,000*
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$1,245,000</b>

\*This figure could vary greatly, depending on cost of soil remediation, which is budgeted at \$300,000 within this figure.



# Aerial View of Sims Park

 City Owned Land  
 Parcels



Sims Park

33 acres

I-85

HWY 321

BRARWOOD LN

MARIETTA ST

SYCAMORE AVE



1 : 3,300  
1 inch represents 275 feet

**GREENWAYS:  
A CONTINUED PROGRAM FOR GASTONIA AND THE REGION**

Gastonia opened its first greenway, the 2.5 miles Avon/Catawba Creek Greenway on December 1, 2001. The City has sought to continually improve this greenway by the addition of another access bridge and is currently constructing an extension across Union Road to Stevens Street. The greenway was spearheaded jointly by a private nonprofit group, Connect Gaston (a metamorphosis of the Mayors Committee on Greenways, Sidewalks and Bikeways) and the City Planning Department. In addition to City of Gastonia funding, this greenway was financed by grants from the Clean Water Management Trust fund, NCDOT T-21 Enhancements Program, the NC Recreational Trails Program, The Community Foundation of Gaston County and the local Glenn Foundation, as well as a host of other private contributions. The project has been a popular success since its opening with weekly visits totaling around 2000 in good weather. The trail is currently used as more of an exercise and recreation facility as opposed to alternative transportation although it does connect some destination points. It certainly served one of its pilot objectives of making greenways more acceptable and highly supportive by the public. This greenway should be viewed as an ever-expanding “work in progress.”



**GASTONIA'S AVON/CATAWBA  
CREEK GREENWAY—A NEW  
SOURCE OF COMMUNITY PRIDE !**

In our burgeoning Charlotte-Gastonia urban region, it is becoming necessary to focus planning efforts toward preservation of more open space. Open space (often termed “green space”) helps capture the significance and beauty of our outdoors through efforts such as planting trees and establishing neighborhood parks. In short, open space preservation consists of protecting “pockets” of undeveloped, natural land from the construction of buildings, parking lots, etc. Otherwise these green spaces would be swallowed up in the process of urban and suburban development. Therefore, as our urban area continues to expand, open space preservation will help retain some of the region’s rural and natural character.

Open space has become essential in our community's overall quality of life. History, as well as our own experiences, has demonstrated that most people possess some connection to the outdoors. We have become accustomed to walks in the park, taking peaceful drives to the countryside, exercising on an outdoor track, or just connecting with "green" in our own neighborhoods. Thus, in recognizing these activities, it is important that connectors be established in order to "link" these protected "pockets" with one another.

Fortunately, the City of Gastonia has recognized this need and has consequently taken the initiative by organizing the Gastonia Committee for Greenways, Sidewalks, and Bikeways. In July 1996, Mayor Jick Garland appointed seven citizens to a panel that would focus solely on identifying places in and around the city for people "to walk, jog and ride bikes

### **What Are Greenways?**

The concept of greenways embodies green space and connection. Greenways are defined by their own unique features and by the people who work to protect and interpret those features. Although greenways can differ in design, size, and usage, they do share some basic similarities. *Greenways are protected strips of undeveloped land often found along either natural corridors, such as streams, floodplains, and ridgelines, or manmade overland features, such as utility rights-of-way and abandoned railroad corridors.* While greenways typically include some type of *trail* for public or private use, they can also remain totally natural. Greenways also help to protect important community scenic and historic sites and not only connect these places to each other but to parks, neighborhoods, and schools as well. Below are some common sites for connections between greenways:

- parks
- schools & school playgrounds
- neighborhoods
- retail centers
- greenways connecting with each other
- special features, such as mountains and lakes
- communities
- community recreation centers
- historic sites
- miscellaneous points of interest and visitation
- major tracts of open space

Some frequent locations of greenways include:

- streams and floodplains
- shorelines or urban waterfronts
- ridgelines
- abandoned streets

- abandoned railroad beds: A nonprofit agency, National Rails to Trails Conservancy, has built at least 4,000 miles of greenway trails across the nation; however, they also note that nearly 4,000 miles of railway rights-of-way is abandoned each year.
- utility rights-of-way, such as power lines, sewer lines, communication cable lines, gas pipelines, etc.

In sum, greenways can offer new generations of Gastonia and Gaston County an opportunity to enjoy and learn from the resources their forefathers experienced—the streams and rivers, the woodlands of Crowder’s Mountain, and the open meadows of the rural landscape.

### Are Greenways New?

The Greenway movement in America dates back as far as the 1870s with the founder of American landscape architecture, Frederick Law Olmstead, who designed Boston’s Emerald Necklace and also coined the term, “parkway”. The term “greenway” originated in 1960s via a combination of terms “greenbelt” and “parkway”. However, the movement really gained popularity during the 1980s under the leadership of President Reagan’s Commission on America’s Outdoors. Other probable reasons for its growth are attributed to the shortage of available park land and green space in cities, popularity of walking, running, and cycling exercises, and an abundance of advantages and benefits (see section “Benefits of Greenways”).

As part of the national movement to plan and preserve more open space, many cities now have implemented some kind of greenway program—and Gastonia has now joined this club of community pride with its first greenway!

### Benefits of Greenways

*“The smallest patch of green to arrest the monotony of asphalt and concrete is as important to the value of real estate as streets, sewers, and convenient shopping.”*

----James Felt  
New York City Planning Committee

Greenways can benefit our community in a number of ways. Though it is difficult to list all of these benefits to municipalities, considering that the benefits are determined by those patrons that most often utilize the greenway, there are three primary areas of benefit: environmentally, economically, and socially.

Greenways benefit the **environment** in the following ways:

#### **Pollution**

Greenways help to reduce air pollution by lessening the demand for more vehicular commuters on our municipal roads.

### **Zones of tranquility and clean air**

It is a recognized fact that open space and clean air are essential to our urban livability. Greenways therefore help to preserve this “outdoors” feeling, therein assisting also in the enhancement of the overall quality of life of our community.

### **Community Image and Beautification**

Because greenways preserve our natural features, they in turn add aesthetic value to the overall image and quality of life of our community.

### **Wildlife protection**

Greenways aid in the conservation of wildlife by providing habitat, shelter, and linear movement for the wildlife.

### **Stream buffers**

Greenways assist with the cleaning of urban surface water runoff of pollutants.



**AS NEW THOROUGHFARES ARE BUILT IT IS IMPORTANT TO ALLOW FOR GRADE SEPARATED CROSSINGS FOR BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN TRAILS. THIS PHOTO ILLUSTRATES HOW THE GREENWAY GOES UNDER HUDSON BOULEVARD. CROSSING HIGH SPEED THOROUGHFARES IS DIFFICULT AND DANGEROUS FOR PEDESTRIANS**

Greenways benefit the **economy** in the following ways.

### **Commercial uses**

The establishment of greenways can often lead to business opportunities related to the location and resources of existing commercial activity.

### **Real property value**

Studies have indicated an increase in property value for properties adjacent and/or in proximity of parks, greenways and trails.

### **Tourism**

Greenways contribute to the overall attractiveness of a community to prospective residents and/or tourists. It is well-documented that the presence of recreational trails will not only attract tourists to an area, but also entice them to stay a day or two longer.

### **Corporate relocation**

Economic development studies have demonstrated that a community's quality of life is a key ingredient in marketing the municipality to outside corporations.

### **Public cost reduction**

By protection of rivers and streams, greenways can significantly reduce local government costs related to maintaining water quality and protection from flooding and other natural hazards.

Greenways benefit **people** in the following ways.

### **Recreation & Leisure**

Greenways promote recreational and leisure activities for citizens (i.e. walkers, joggers, and bicyclists). Furthermore, depending upon the size and design of the greenway, a greenway can be used by a plethora of user and interest groups, such as children, adults, senior citizens, and the physically challenged.

### **Health**

It is a medical fact that exercise helps to reduce the incidence of disease and prolong a healthy, active state of life. The lack of exercise can cause cardio-vascular disease overall degeneration of the body and physical abilities, and obesity, which in turn can contribute to the likelihood of cancers and diabetes. Greenways provide a convenient and enjoyable means for many types of exercise for people of most ability levels.

### **Transportation**

Greenways serve as an alternative mode of transportation, thus lessening the number of vehicular commuters. As a result, the presence of greenways can help offset the demand for more new roads and road lanes. Studies have demonstrated that only a small percentage of people across the nation (4.3 million) walk or ride a bicycle to work.

### **Better Neighborhoods**

Greenways contribute to the framework of coordinated growth. Incorporating greenways now in future neighborhood plans will help lay the foundation for successful community growth policies. Moreover, greenways help to enhance both neighborhood quality of life and neighborhood vitality. Greenways have proven to be viable amenities for planned neighborhoods; therefore, their presence in new communities will help to create and improve innovative patterns for overall community development.

### **Education**

Greenways create opportunities for people, particularly children, to have a close-up, live classroom setting of how nature relates to the environment.

## **Land Assembly for Greenways**

The following are several proven ways to assemble land for greenways.

### **Purchase or donation to a specific piece of the property**

This is Possibly the easiest form of land assembly. Whether purchasing or donating land, the landowner and greenway organization reach compromise regarding the importance of the greenway.

### **Incentives for donating land**

There exist already a number of programs to assist landowners in the donation of land for greenway purposes. One notable program is the North Carolina Conservation Tax Credit Program, which renders a 25% tax credit for donating property or land conservation easements to a state or local government entity or to a qualified non-profit organization.

### **Easements**

This is a mutual binding contract between a landowner and organization, which has requested special interest or rights to land.

### **Permit/License**

This is a long-term lease, generally running for an extended period of time, say 50 years.

### **Lease**

Provides greenway agency with some autonomy as to the management and/or land-use practices on the greenway.

### **Management agreement**

Contract between landowner and greenway entity specifying who will maintain the property during course of the agreement.

*The Greenway Plan Map included in this section should be viewed as multiple opportunities/alternatives map. The goal of the plan is to interconnect the entire city someday and make joining connections to county and regional trails. The plan should be implemented strategically. Not all alternatives will be implemented. Different alternatives will present themselves to the city as corridors are made available. The city will strategically take advantage of corridors that make themselves available, typically through the private development process and subsequently make connections through acquisition of “missing pieces.” Corridors no longer needed by the selection of a strategic alternative will then be removed form the plan.*

\

## **Greenway Priorities**

There are several major priorities that the city should pursue with respect to the short-term development of a greenway system:

1. Expand the Avon/Catawba Greenway system with connection to and through Ferguson Park to Marietta Street. Study feasibility of extended connection to the Historic Loray Mill Neighborhood. Expand the Greenway southward to connect to and through the city property at former Catawba Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant site. Part of this is now being constructed as part of a shopping center development.
2. Interconnect Phillips Park with All America Park to the north and Davis Park to the south. This is described in further detail in the Phillips Park section.



**THIS ACCESS POINT BRIDGE ON THE EXISTING GREENWAY WAS FUNDED BY THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF GASTON COUNTY**

3. Interconnect Rankin Lake Park with Gaston County Park at Dallas and Gaston College. Consider connection down Long Creek to the proposed abandoned C&NW Line and consider joint action with the Town of Dallas and Gaston County to build a rail-trail along this line to connect downtown Gastonia to the Historic Dallas Square.

4. Other strategic opportunities for greenway development as they present themselves to the city in the near term.

**This plan recommends two capital phases for greenway construction through 2020:**

- Phase I – 8-12 miles **\$3,500,000**
- Phase II-7-10 miles **\$3,500,000**

***The city should strategically seek to leverage its own public resources with funding from public grant agencies, private foundations, and private donations. Greenways are today, a popular funding target for several public and some private funding programs. In other words, greenways are hot items when it comes to grants!***

## Greenway Design

*“Greenways are many things to many people...and that’s one of their virtues.”*

**--Chris Brown**  
National Park Service

As stated earlier, greenways are not trails but may consist of a trail. Trails are the most common **features** of greenways.

Trails can be on land or follow a watercourse, serving a variety of functions, such as passive and active recreation, alternative transportation, etc. **Therefore, the design of a greenway is mainly predicated by its usage.**

Some common user groups of greenways that may exist in our region include, but are not limited to:

:

- walkers
- joggers
- hikers
- bicyclists
- bird-watchers
- nature lovers
- educators
- canoeists/boaters/kayakers
- roller bladers and roller skaters
- equestrians\*
- wheelchair recreationalists
- picnickers

\*Note: Trails consisting of equestrian activity are often not well-suited for use by other user groups. Generally, equestrian trails are designed solely for “pack and saddle animal” trail usage (i.e. horse-back riding). Therefore, the width and composition of an equestrian trail’s surface will differ from a multi-use urban type trail.



**ONE OF THE FINEST ASPECTS OF GREENWAYS IS THAT THEY CAN BE USED BY PEOPLE OF VERTUALITY ALL ABILITIES. HERE IS A SENIOR USER ON THE GASTONIA GREENWAY ON A MOBILITY SCOOTER. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT GREENWAYS BE FULLY ADA ACCESSABLE AT AS MANY POINTS AS FEASIBLE.**

Studies on greenways have indicated that the majority of uses on greenways are associated with recreation-related activities, such as walking and jogging. In fact, pedestrian foot traffic has been a popular scene occurring on many greenways. Following suit, depending upon location, are other activities, such as cycling, cross-country skiing and rollerblading/skating. However, **in almost all circumstances the use of motored vehicles is prohibited on greenways.**

According to *Greenways* authors Charles Flink & Robert Searns, there are typically six primary issues that need to be addressed in the design of a greenway:

1. the types of users
2. the type of trail: land or water-based, single- or multiple-user oriented
3. how the trail will fit into the existing natural landscape
4. the type and width of the trail tread
5. the type of tread surface
6. the safety of the trail user.

Furthermore, some possible designs and/or positioning of the greenway trail should:

- Blend with natural contours of the land.
- Accommodate all designated users without straining the carrying capacity of the landscape. If the trail cannot accommodate all projected users, you will need to downscale development or schedule activities so that the resource is not downgraded.
- Provide safe access and passage for the users. Safety includes preventing conflict among trail user groups as well as surmounting hazardous physical conditions.
- Stimulate all of the human senses and heighten awareness of the environment.
- Be built and maintained in a cost-effective and timely manner. Remember, funding for proper initial development is more easily secured than for long-term maintenance and repair of poorly developed trails.

In our region, it is common for different users to share the same trail. Therefore, specifications of the width and length of the trail are important.

Trails in our area generally accommodate both bicycle and pedestrian traffic. The use of either asphalt, dirt, or pea gravel will depend upon the greenway location and its primary users.

Although it is preferred that trails exhibit as much “green” as possible, for safety sake, typical pilot greenway trails are planned for a minimum of 10 feet in width and a minimum of 1.5 - 2 miles in length.

Recommended trail widths for common users in our region:

<b>User</b>	<b>Width</b>
Bicyclist	10 ft (two-way travel)
Hiker/walker/jogger/runner	4 ft rural; 5 ft urban
Equestrian	4 ft tread; 8-ft cleared width

Courtesy of the State of Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

**Common Patron & Landowner Concerns**

*“Greenways can only be an asset to a community, if they are well-planned, well-implemented, and well-maintained.”*

----**Tommy Fonville**

President of Community Properties, Inc. (Raleigh, NC)

**Safety**

Studies have proven that patrons using greenways are just as safe, if not safer than, pedestrians traveling along community streets.

**Property values**

According to greenway experts, greenways adjoining homes serve as a positive feature and in most circumstances raises its value. Studies have also indicated that at minimum property owners should expect slight increases to properties either adjacent to or in proximity of greenways.

**Private property rights**

Possibly the biggest concern amongst property owners. However, as demonstrated with past municipal greenway projects, private property cases involving local government and landowners have generally ended with mutual benefits and satisfaction in regard for the presence of the greenway. Moreover, there are a number of state and federal agencies established to provide expertise and incentives for land donation for greenway planning.

**Privacy**

Greenways can be designed to maintain landowner privacy. This concern can be addressed with the location of the greenway in respect to adjacent property owners and/or establishment of buffers and barriers to alleviate concerns.

**Maintenance**

There must be a maintenance plan and arrangement for a greenway. This can be done by a public or private entity or combination thereof.

**Crime & Vandalism**

The incidence of crime is very low on greenways—much lower than most public urban venues. Keeping plenty of visitors provides for “self patrol.” Regular police bike and foot help as well. In addition, police can advise users in following rules such as yielding to pedestrians, dog etiquette, and bike safety helmets. Vandalism can and does occur on greenways occasionally as it does in other public parks and places.

**AVON & CATAWBA CREEKS GREENWAY SYSTEM**



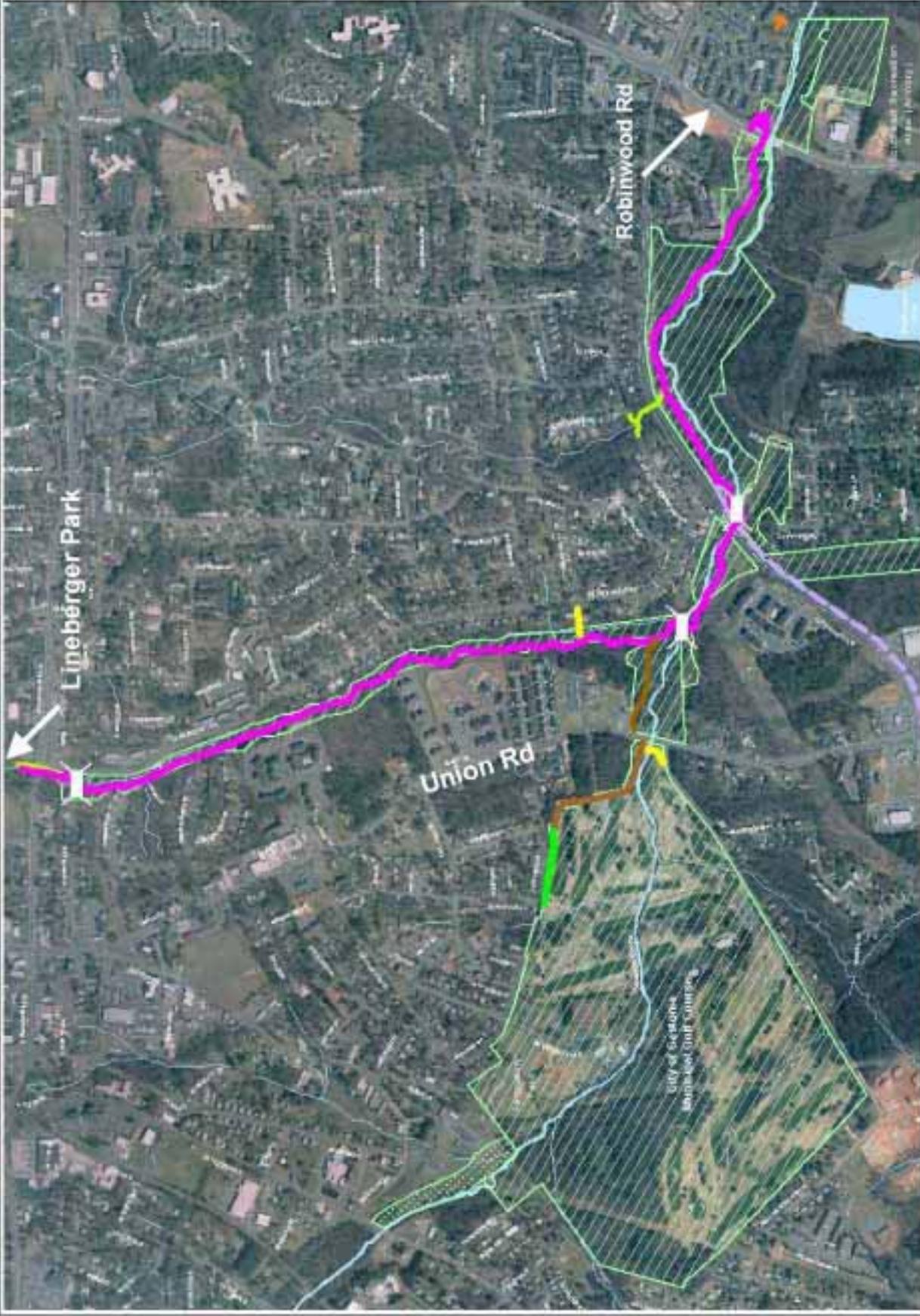
Submittal for Consideration:  
 NC DOT TEA-21 2002  
 Enhancement Funding  
 by City of Gastonia  
 June 20, 2007

- Map Overlay Type
- Project 1: Main Greenway
- Project 2: Access Points
- Project 3: Access Points
- Project 4: Access Points
- Project 5: Access Points
- Project 6: Access Points
- Project 7: Access Points
- Project 8: Access Points
- Project 9: Access Points
- Project 10: Access Points

Map Produced by:  
 City of Gastonia  
 Planning Department  
 100 N. Main Street  
 Gastonia, NC 28053  
 704.792.1400



Scale: 1" = 100 Feet  
 North Arrow



**AVON & CATAWBA CREEKS GREENWAYS**

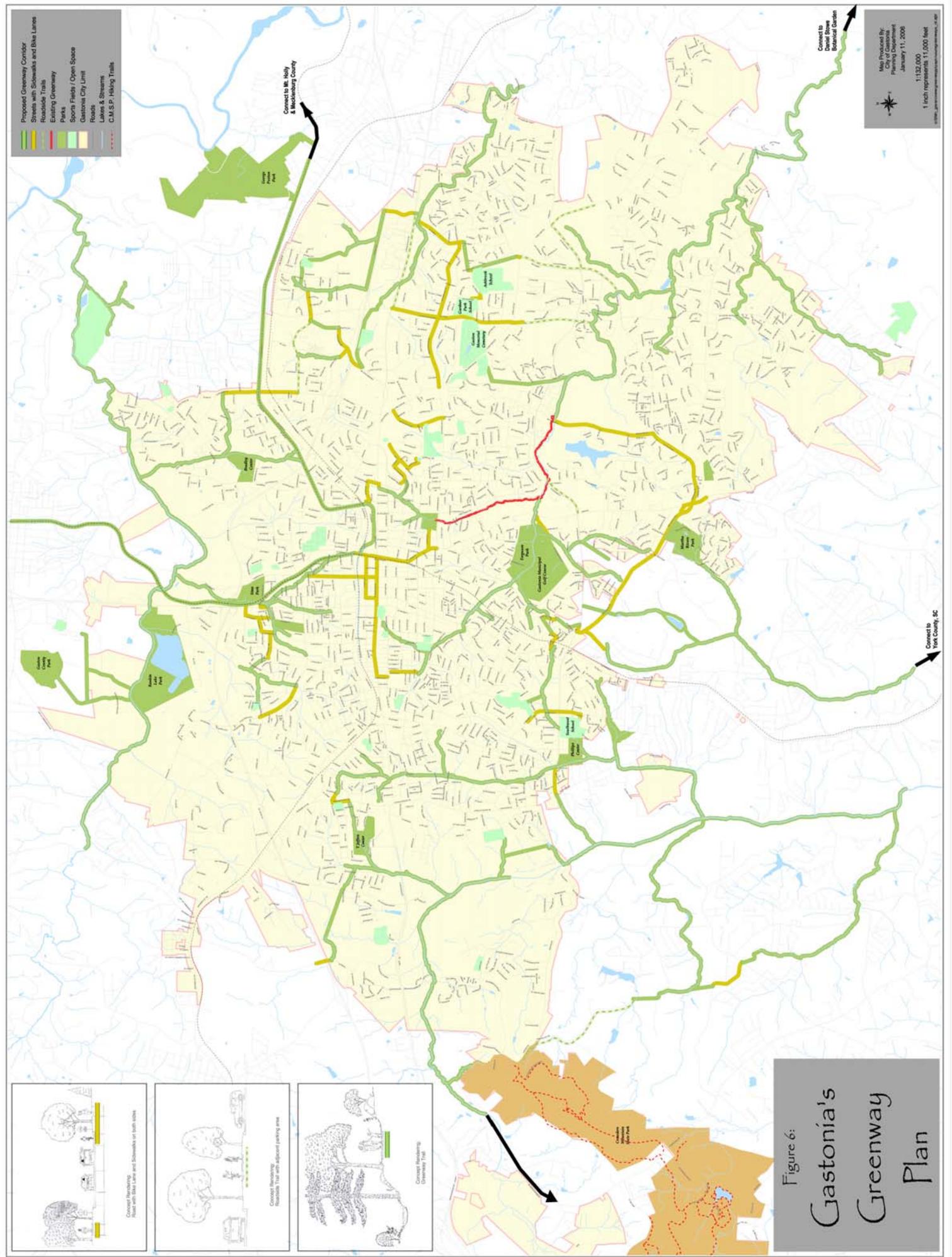
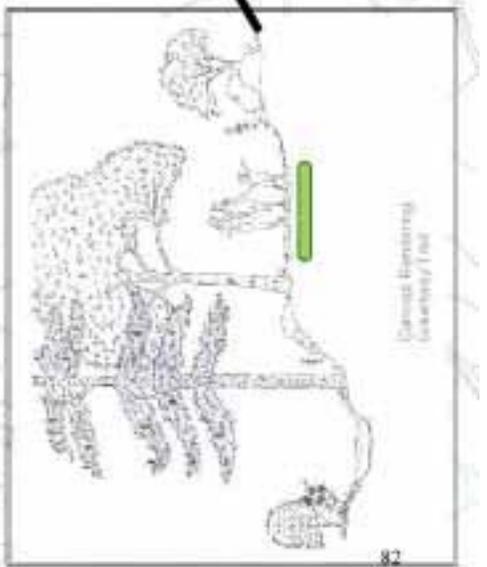
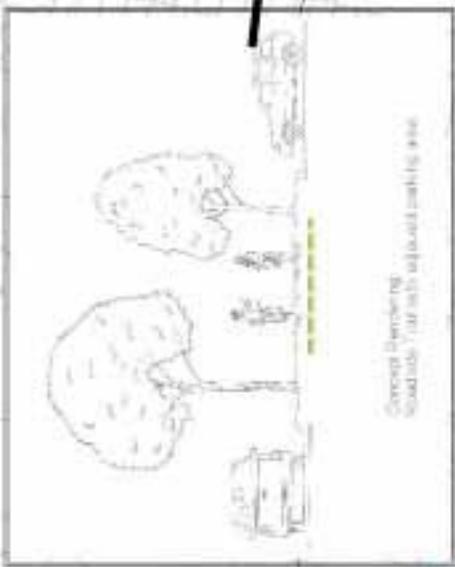
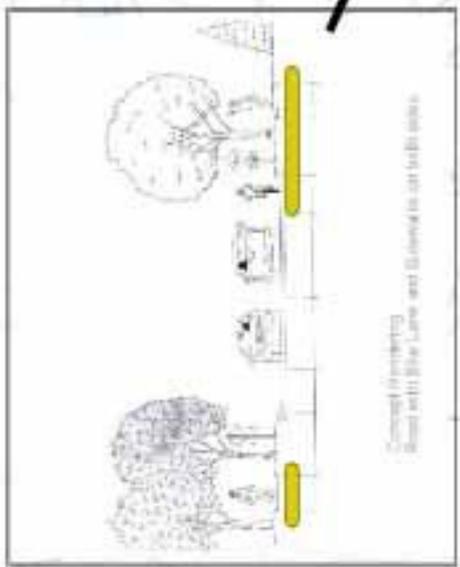
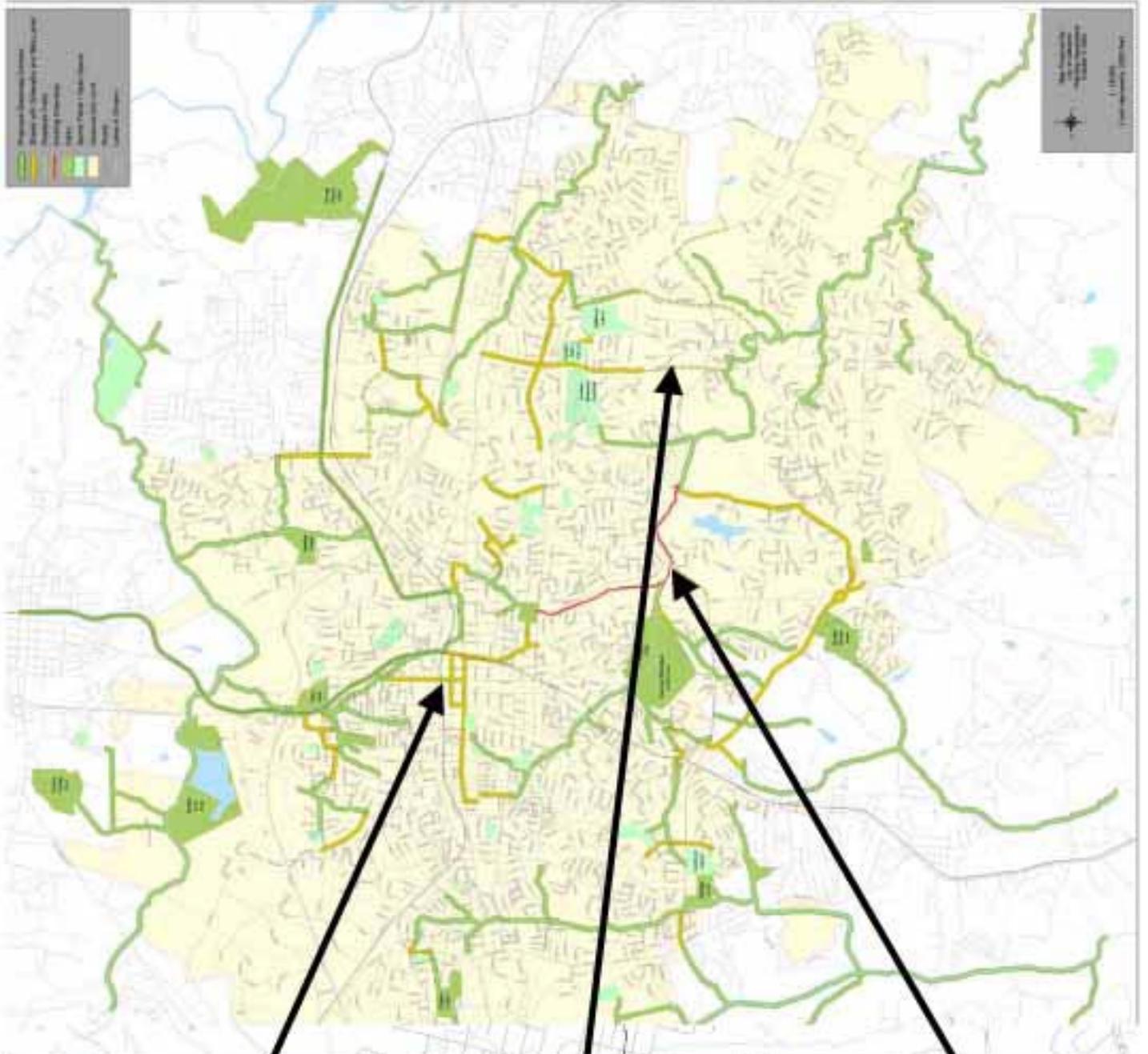


Figure 6:  
 Gastonia's  
 Greenway  
 Plan



**THE NATURE TRAIL AT  
THE SCHIELE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY  
1500 East Garrison Boulevard**

Although primarily intended as an educational facility the museum's nature trail serves a clear recreational purpose and is a delightful asset to Gastonia. From the time of its completion, the trail has served as a regular recreational exercise venue and natural getaway for many citizens of our community. Located on 12 acres of wooded, stream-traversed hillside land, the trail offers the user a variety of natural and cultural experiences over nearly one mile of wide pea gravel trails.

Designed in 1967 by Dr. Arthur Stupka, Chief Naturalist of the Smokey Mountains National Park, the trail introduces visitors to the natural history of the Piedmont region and a story of man's relationship with this environment.

Plants growing here prior to European settlement are used in landscaping along the trail, including *Monarda* and *Rudbeckia* in a wildflower test area at the entrance to the trail. Similar areas are planted to attract hummingbirds and butterflies.<sup>1</sup>

The trail features a backcountry farm with log cabin, farm buildings and live animals; a creek including a pond with live waterfowl; a working gristmill; a log educational building; a recreated Catawba Indian/Native-American village; a small amphitheater and several other structures for the education and enjoyment of trail patrons. These facilities are used to offer programs on regular and occasional bases.



The museum plans to upgrade the trail soon to make it more usable to people of limited abilities, improve its features and flora, and to provide connections to the adjoining neighborhood to the rear and to Burtonwood Drive. The cost of this improvement is expected to be \$125,000. The museum expects to fund this improvement primarily with outside public grants, foundations and private donations. The plan for the renovated and expanded trail is shown on the following page

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<sup>1</sup> This information and photo taken from the Museum's website



## Martha Rivers Park Neil Hawkins Road

Martha Rivers Park, Gastonia’s newest recreational facility, is a model park for youth sports. Opening phase one in October 1999, it was the culmination of a 1989 Recreation Advisory Commission proposal to build a youth sports complex in South Gastonia. An existing 20-acre passive park, 34 adjoining acres originally earmarked for a future school site, and an additional



adjoining 3 acres brought the total park acreage to 57.95. Designed by park planners and architects, Woolpert, LLP and built by Randolph and Son Builders, Inc., the nearly \$4 million award-winning project includes 4 ball fields, 4 soccer fields, an almost 1 acre playground, restrooms, 2 large picnic shelters, approximately 3 miles of asphalt walkways, beach volleyball court, horseshoe pits, and other park amenities. The cost of the park construction also included draining and filling a large rock quarry on site.

In 2000, a group of dedicated citizens organized hundreds of community volunteers and using thousands of private fund donations, created what could be described as an ideal childrens’ playground. This largely wooden structure of multiple levels includes such features as a fort, a ship, a race car, swings, slides, a sand pit in which to dig “dinosaur” bones dig, a talking fish, places to hide, things to climb, places to explore, and much, much more all interconnected by a series of ramps and catwalks above a safe, rubberized surface. It is the dream of children, designed by children. The playground, and particularly the massive community effort it took to build it became a great source of community pride!



### Inventory of Facilities- Martha Rivers Park

Facility	Condition	Comments
Little League Baseball Fields, Four Lighted	Excellent	Constructed in a pinwheel fashion, all are served by a four-sided common press box, concession, dressing/restroom and storage structure.
Multi-purpose soccer type fields, Four Lighted	Excellent	Located at the south end of the park
Group Picnic Shelters (2)	Excellent	Capacity- 75 to 100 people each
Walking Trails	Excellent	Three-mile network through the park, benches, lighted at night
Open picnic areas	Good	Located at the playground and in the natural area at the east edge of the park
Beach volleyball court	Good	

Horseshoe pits	Good	
Maintenance	Good	A supplemental park maintenance facility for on and off-site maintenance. Screening needed
Playground	Excellent	Size, materials, features and popularity of this playground makes it the most costly in the city system to maintain

**Proposed Improvements- Martha Rivers Park**

<b>Improvement</b>	<b>Estimated Cost</b>
New corporate picnic pavilion (250-300 capacity, high roof, restrooms, storage, fireplace/BBQ & sound system)	\$150,000
New small picnic shelters (1-2 tables) (4)	\$ 12,000
Miscellaneous Landscaping, Walks, and Irrigation	\$ 30,000
Additional Bleachers	\$ 20,000
Public Art	\$ 10,000
Additional Parking	\$100,000
<b>SUBTOTAL (Park Outdoor Improvements)</b>	<b>\$322,000</b>

Add a Community Center to Site	\$3,900,000
<b>TOTAL OUTDOOR IMPROVEMENTS + COMMUNITY CENTER</b>	<b>\$4,222,000</b>
<u>Add</u> this amount to above figure to add aquatics center feature to community center at time of initial construction	\$6,000,000

**New Community Center at Martha Rivers Park**

It was originally envisioned that there would be 5 or 6 community recreation centers distributed throughout the city. Erwin Center in the north-central area was first; then it was followed by Phillips Center in the southwest. Community Development Block Grant funds enabled the city to build two more community centers in the late 1970's—Bradley Center in the northeast, and Jeffers Center in the northwest. The Southeast remained without a center comparable in facility, hours and staffing to the other four. When the North Carolina Army National Guard (NCARNG) wanted to relocate from the old armory building an opportunity was seen for a dual use facility in the southeast. It was thought that if the city added \$250,000 to the building to raise the roof for basketball, a community center could be established at the armory building. Over the years this arrangement has presented several issues that do not make this facility equal to other Gastonia community centers:

- The gym is not air conditioned, making it usable only 6 months out of the year
- Seasonal use does not warrant full time staffing, thus making staffing limited to one seasonal representative.
- The building provides only a gym, lacking amenities such as game room and activity rooms of the other centers. There does not appear to be a feasible way to add these additional spaces without seriously disrupting NCARNG operations
- The site lacks any outdoor amenities resulting in less exposure and consequently less use than other centers
- The gym is not of regulation size dimensions for basketball
- The primary use of the facility is for the NCARNG. It is owned by the NCARNG. City use for recreational purposes is secondary to, and consistent with NCARNG.
- Aesthetically, the site takes on more of its dominant intended purpose and that is military, as opposed to public recreation. These characteristics make it less inviting and marketable for recreational use. Few people in the southeast may see the armory as a recreation center.

**It is recommended that once a new full recreation use community center is built in the southeast, that the city cease its secondary use of the armory for a community center.**



### **Characteristics Of A New Community Center**

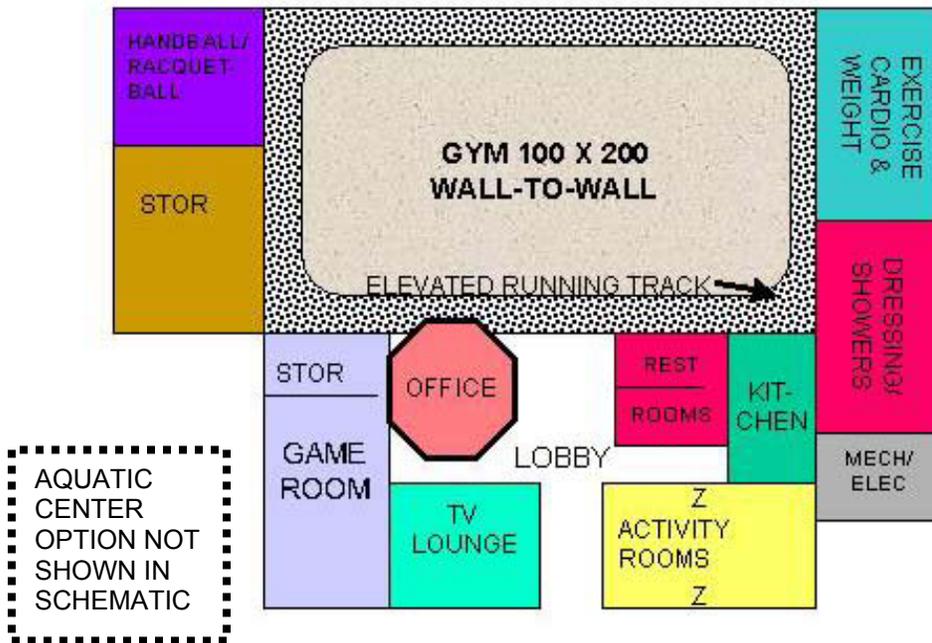
Over forty years of operating community centers have given the city much experience in what works well and what does not. We also have knowledge of public recreational desires that are inadequately met, particularly with new leisure and exercise trends. The following schematic represents features that the two new centers recommended in this plan should incorporate. The schematic is not a plan. The building will, without doubt, be configured differently and proportions of spaces will change once architectural concept planning begins. In a later section this center is repeated again in the southeast area.

There has also been much discussion of the need for an aquatics center for Gastonia and Gaston County. Aquatics enthusiasts and parents of aquatic athletes have advocated this for a number of years. In 2002 the City, in conjunction with a citizens committee, hired Water Technology, Inc with Ballard\*King & Associates to work with the committee in

undertaking a feasibility study and concept plan for a local aquatics center. The report was issued on December 14, 2002. This Long Range Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan incorporates some of the critical elements of that report and the Executive Summary is reprinted in the appendix. It is important to note that the aquatics study recommended not only aquatics facilities, but also health and fitness facilities together with amenities similar to that of a community recreation center. The report proposed this facility be both tax/tax paid bond as well as membership dues supported.

At the same time the Gaston County YMCA was proposing to build a new facility in southeast Gastonia. The YMCA decided that if a 50-meter pool (essential to the aquatic center concept as maintained by its advocates and the report) were to be built and operated, that public support would be necessary. Otherwise, it would build another 25-yard pool. Early in 2004, the Gastonia City Council voted affirmatively to work with the YMCA in locating this new facility at Martha Rivers Park; however, for various reasons this potential concept, involving a land donation to the YMCA has not proceeded further. The YMCA fitness center and pools are dues supported facilities. If the City decides to place the YMCA, a membership/dues facility, at Martha Rivers Park, it should not be done as a substitute for a free-access public recreation center. One or two community recreation centers will still be needed in the southeast. One attractive alternative could be for the Aquatics center development be done as a joint venture between an aquatics center private non-profit, the YMCA and the Gaston County Schools (for schools athletic purposes). It may be difficult to expect voter bond referendum support for a facility that is operated on a membership/dues basis. In the cost figures above a six million dollar option is listed as the cost to add a public aquatics center to either of two proposed new community centers.

SCHEMATIC REPRESENTATION OF DESIRED SPACES  
IN FUTURE COMMUNITY RECREATION CENTER BUILDINGS



# Aerial View of Martha Rivers Park

 City Owned Land  
 Parcels



1 : 3,900  
1 inch represents 325 feet

**ADULT RECREATION CENTER**  
**519 W. Franklin Blvd**

In 1980, this former National Guard Armory was renovated to create the Adult Recreation Center, designed to meet the needs of Gastonia’s senior adult population. The building contains a 4000 square foot social/event hall with a stage, meeting rooms, lounge, ceramics room, poolroom, kitchen and staff offices. The usage rates for this facility for the past three years are 21,913, 22,033 and 20,340.



There has been considerable discussion about the construction of the countywide senior center, which would allow the consolidation of city and county recreational services to the senior population. For a number of reasons, there is a considerable need for a comprehensive senior center for Gaston County. In 2004 the county was granted a \$1 million appropriation from the General Assembly. Currently a county committee is

researching the feasibility and possible sites for a new senior center. The first draft of this report recommended that if a comprehensive senior center is established by the county, then the ARC could be converted to a teen center. This idea was rejected by the committee for several reasons: (1) Some uncertainty as to whether such a facility would be accepted by teens; (2) There is a considerable population that is regularly served by the ARC, some of which are not seniors; and (A degree of uncertainty of what, if anything the County will establish soon (given budget constraints) together with the feeling that the two facilities would likely not duplicate each other. Whatever the population is served in building’s future, certain interior improvement will be necessary. To repair and update the building as a continued adult center, the capital program should budget about \$142,000.

ITEM*	COST	COMMENTS
Upgrade lighting incl. Emergency lights	\$ 5,000	
Remodel Restrooms	\$ 6,000	
Replace vinyl floor	\$ 20,000	
Replace stage curtains	\$ 4,000	
Miscellaneous interior finishes	\$ 20,000	
Dance sound and light system	\$ 10,000	
New Interior furnishings	\$ 12,000	
New adult amenities such as a reading room, big movie TV, coffee shop, game tables, computers with internet access	\$ 40,000	
Exterior work	\$ 25,000	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$142,000</b>	



The main hall of the Adult Recreation Center is a great location for dances; however, as indicated by the inset detail of the floor, it is in need of recovering.

**Club meeting at the ARC**



**Craft programs at the ARC**

 City Owned Land  
 Parcels



Adult  
Recreation  
Center

1.86 acres

Oakwood  
Cemetery



SECOND AVE

FRANKLIN BLVD

CLAY ST

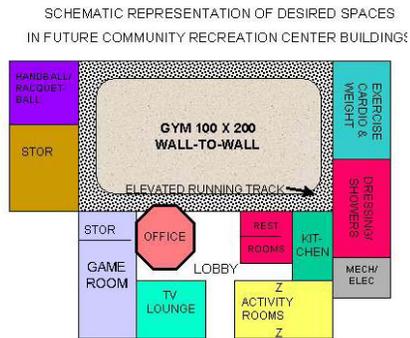
**Aerial View of Adult Recreation Center**

1 : 1,200  
1 inch represents 100 feet

## SOUTHEAST RECREATION CENTER And Second Youth Sports Complex Location to be Determined

In addition to a new recreation center at Martha Rivers Park, this plan recommends a sixth community recreation center in the southeast area of the city. There are several reasons for this:

1. This plan has a 2020 horizon. While the additional center is justified today, its need will be even more so critical in the years to come
2. The map on the foregoing page shows the distribution of recreation centers throughout the city. If we do not count the Armory facility (and we should not), then it is apparent that the fast-growing southeast area of the city is without a center. The map defines a preliminary search area for a site.
3. While a new center at Martha Rivers Park will serve the area approximately between US 321 South and Robinwood Road, it does not effectively serve the area east of Robinwood Road and south of Hoffman Road.
4. A number of issues (some of which are virtually uncorrectable) preclude the use the Armory for a year-round comparable community recreation center for the southeast. These issues are discussed in detail in the section on Martha Rivers Park.
5. Despite the opening of Martha Rivers Youth Sports Complex in 1999, the demand for youth (boys & girls) practice and game fields continues to exceed the amount of space available. Therefore, a large tract of land must be acquired for this purpose. Enough land can be purchased to also support this community center. Also, it makes operational sense to have staff present for the sports complex as would be provided with a community center.



### BUDGET- NEW SOUTHEAST PARK AND RECREATION CENTER

FACILITY	EST.COST	COMMENTS
Land	\$ 920,000	40 acres @ 23K/acre
Community Center Building	\$3,900,000	See schematic, p.
Outdoor facilities	\$4,200,000	4 ball field cluster, 4 soccer fields, picnic facilities, trails, restrooms, playground
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$9,020,000</b>	Does not include aquatics
Aquatics Center Option	\$6,000,000	
<b>TOTAL WITH AQUATICS CENTER</b>	<b>\$15,020,000</b>	Includes Land



## **FUTURE AQUATICS CENTER**

### **Location yet to be Determined**

A group of citizens has been active in the pursuit of a public or public/private indoor aquatics center for Gastonia and Gaston County for quite a few years. Gastonia lacks an indoor standard competitive sports aquatics facility, which several communities in the region possess. Advocates of an aquatics center maintain that such a facility would give us an Olympic class 50 meter by 25 yard athletic pool with diving facilities providing a much needed venue for competitive water sports; a leisure pool providing adult and senior recreation as well as slides and other play features for families and children; and, would provide a significant boost to local tourism by attracting regional meets and other activities. There are 25-yard pools at both the Gastonia Main Family YMCA center and the Belmont/Stowe YMCA. There is a small athletic pool at Belmont Abby College. With the exception of Webb Street School, none of the public schools have pools. High School swim teams must use these private pools for practice and limited competition, as do community teams such as the Gaston Gators. The Gastonia Y also has a second, shallow warmer therapy/recreational pool.



SOURCE:  
Water  
Technology,  
Inc with  
Ballard\*King &  
Associates  
←→



Recognizing the aquatics need, the City Council agreed to provide, in FY 2002, \$10,000 to match with a greater amount of privately raised funds to undertake a feasibility study. Water Technology, Inc with Ballard\*King & Associates was hired to work with a citizens committee in undertaking a feasibility study and concept plan for a local aquatics center.

The report was issued on December 14, 2002. The Executive Summary of the report is reprinted in the appendix herein. What follows in this section are some of the critical elements of the report from Water Technology, Inc with Ballard\*King & Associates. It is important to note that the aquatics study recommended not just aquatics facilities, but also health and fitness facilities together with amenities similar to that of a community recreation center, plus a typical YMCA facility. In undertaking the aquatics study, the consultant evaluated other recreational needs of the city (e.g., community recreation center(s) in the southeast, more athletic fields, etc.). The additional facilities were also part of the market analysis supporting the facility and are thus, important for the market success of any envisioned major aquatics center. Therefore, the recommended facility, at \$13,000,000 (+ land) provides for some of the same facilities recommended in this plan. It is estimated that about \$7,000,000 of the aquatics center is involved with these additional facilities. The report proposed this facility be both tax/tax paid bond as well as membership dues supported.

**NEEDS** (Source: Gastonia Feasibility Report, Water Technology, Inc with Ballard\*King & Associates)

- United States Swimming swim teams need 50-meter swimming pool length for Long Course competition from April through August. The teams require 25-yard swimming pool length for Short Course competition from September through March.
- High School swim teams require 25-yard swimming pool length and one meter diving from September through May.
- Diving teams require one meter and three-meter springboards and 10, 7.5, 5, 3 and 1-meter platforms to attract national meets. A water depth of 16'-5" minimum (usually constructed 17'-0") is required for 10 meter platform diving.
- Support spaces of locker rooms; weight training room and coaches offices will also be needed. A complete space program follows this summary.
- While the swim teams need deep water for competitive swimming and diving, they also need shallow water for instruction. This may be best provided in two separate pools; however, it is possible to utilize a movable floor within the main pool to vary the depth from zero to 7 feet deep.
- Spectator seating for 1,000 people or more should be provided in order to provide adequate seating for regional meets. Many existing pools in the region that Gastonia would be competing against have seating capacities in the 800 to 1,500 range. For local meets seating for 500 to 800 would be adequate.
- The swim team needs the water temperature to be around 81 to 82 degrees for practice and 79 to 80 degrees for meets. Instruction and recreational swimming needs water temperature in the range of 84 to 88 degrees. Therapy pool water temperature is usually 88 to 93°. Two separate pools can only provide this. The ideal water temperature for diving is 86 degrees.
- Most communities are building deep-water competition pools and shallow water instructional/recreational pools. The warm, shallow pools provide for family recreation, water walking for seniors, aquatic aerobics, swim instruction, and a warm up/warm down area for competitive swimming. The deep-water competition pool and the shallow water recreation pools are complementary.
- Other important recreational needs in the City include additional baseball and soccer fields, gymnasium, jogging track, fitness center, community meeting rooms and aerobics rooms.

**FACTS** (Source: Gastonia Feasibility Report, Water Technology, Inc with Ballard\*King & Associates)

- Existing indoor pools in Gastonia are limited to one 25-yard pool. The indoor swimming pool market demand is under served by public and private facilities. The high school swim teams are allowed to swim at Stowe YMCA in Mt. Holly and the Gastonia Central YMCA. The Gaston Gators are allowed to swim at the Gastonia Central YMCA only.

- There is one USA Swimming team of about 90 swimmers total. Team membership has been as high as 104. Some members have been lost to neighboring towns where better swimming facilities exist.
- The City of Gastonia has a population of about 69,000 with over 190,000 in the County.
- There are three public high schools and one private high school in the City of Gastonia: Highland Tech, Ashbrook, Hunter Huss and Gaston Day School. There are six other high schools in the County: Forestview (50% of students live in City), Cherryville, Bessemer City, East Gaston, North Gaston and South Point in Belmont. Seven of the high schools have swim teams with a total of 250 swimmers.
- Water depths of 0 to 3 ½ feet are ideal for recreation programs. Floor based exercise programs use water depths of 3 ½ feet to 4 ½ feet. Competitive swimming needs a minimum of 6 feet of water for racing starts and 13 feet for springboard diving. Deep-water exercise requires 6 to 7 feet water depth. Platform diving requires a minimum depth of 16' -5".
- Eight potential sites for the aquatic center were identified, visited and photographed for this study.
- There are two country club pools at Cramer Mountain Country Club and Gaston Country Club that have outdoor pools and summer league swim teams. There is an existing City outdoor Pool at Lineberger Park. Other pools exist at Gardner Park, Robinwood Swim Club, Erwin Center, Wesley Acres and Southampton Swim Club.
- About 50% of projects like this being developed around the country have some sort of partnership involvement. Potential partners for aquatic centers include municipalities, YMCA's, counties, universities, school districts, hospitals and orthopedic medical practices. Partners may participate in initial construction, as users or as operators.
- There are six recreation centers in the City. Two of the recreation centers have gyms only. Four of the centers have gyms, adult activities and playing fields. No modern indoor municipal recreation center with gyms, pool, fitness center, aerobics, meeting rooms and other activities exists in Gaston County, although the Gastonia Central YMCA and Stowe YMCA in Belmont- Mt. Holly fulfill some of the needs.

**CONCEPTS** (Source: Gastonia Feasibility Report, Water Technology, Inc with Ballard\*King & Associates)

- Primary emphasis in this study was to use a building program that would achieve maximum cost recovery for the City. It will take more initial construction dollars to build a **recreation center** instead of an aquatic center; however, we concur with the committee's conclusion that it makes more sense to build a recreation center that would come close to complete cost recovery than to build an aquatic center that would require additional subsidy. A major allocation of building area has been dedicated to a 5,040 SF weight/cardiovascular fitness center and 12,480 SF gymnasium. The inclusion of this space is critical to meeting the dry land

training needs of competitive swimmers as well as providing a broader recreational appeal to the general public. It should be recognized that the fitness space in a center would generate more revenue dollars per square foot than any other amenity.

- **The concept presented in drawing form at the back of the (aquatics) report** provides an indoor 50-meter by 25 yard pool that would have two movable bulkheads. There would also be gallery level seating for 1,100 spectators. A leisure pool of 7,500 SF is also included. A fitness center, gymnasium, jogging track and an aerobics room would also be available. Support spaces would include locker rooms, concession area, meeting/party room/classroom areas, babysitting and an administration area. **Building size – 81,744 SF first floor footprint with 9,668 SF in a second floor mezzanine, total area.**
- Additional **outdoor recreation spaces** were included: four soccer fields and four baseball fields. These were included in the project because of the critical need in the City for these additional recreational facilities. It is beneficial to locate indoor and outdoor recreational facilities together for the convenience of families who may have members participating in different activities at one location rather than spread through the City. This kind of community recreation center builds on its synergy to allow parents to participate in fitness activities while children attend sports practice.

At the same time the Gaston County YMCA was proposing to build a new facility in southeast Gastonia. The YMCA decided that if a 50-meter pool (essential to the aquatic center concept as maintained by its advocates and the report) were to be built and operated, that public support would be necessary. Otherwise, it would build another 25-yard pool. Early in 2004, the Gastonia City Council voted affirmatively to work with the YMCA in locating this new facility at Martha Rivers Park; however, for various reasons this potential concept, involving a land donation to the YMCA has not proceeded further. The YMCA fitness center and pools are dues supported facilities. If the City decides to place the YMCA, a membership/dues facility, at Martha Rivers Park, it should not be done as a substitute for a free-access public recreation center. One or two recreation centers will still be needed in the southeast. One attractive alternative could be for the Aquatics center development be done as a joint venture between an aquatics center private non-profit, the YMCA and the Gaston County Schools (for schools athletic purposes). It may be difficult to expect voter bond referendum support for a facility that is operated on a membership/dues basis. In the cost figures above a six million dollar option is listed as the cost to add a public aquatics center to either of two proposed new community centers.

Source: Gastonia Feasibility Report,  
Water Technology, Inc with  
Ballard\*King & Associates

### **SECTION III - CONSTRUCTION COST**

The following are estimates of construction cost. Project Development, or “Soft Costs” have been added to these raw construction costs, or “hard costs”. Project Development Costs usually add 15 to 20% to the construction cost.

<b>OPINION OF PROBABLE CONSTRUCTION COST</b>	
Building, Type II Precast Concrete, 64,390 SF x \$60/SF =	\$ 3,863,400
Second Floor Mezzanine Space, 9,668 SF x \$45/SF=	435,060
Building, Type III Structures Unlimited, 17,354 SF x \$175/SF=	3,036,950
50 M by 25 YD Pool, 12,934 SF x \$90/SF =	1,164,060
Leisure Pool, = 7,500 SF x \$130/SF=\$975,000 + \$300,000 waterslide and water features	1,275,000
Bulkheads, 2 x 75 ft. x \$1200/LF =	180,000
Timing System and Scoreboard	56,000
Soccer Fields, 4 each x \$100,000=	400,000
Baseball Fields, 4 each x \$100,000=	400,000
Parking Lot/Drives/Curbs, 500 cars x 400 SF x \$1.25/SF =	250,000
Paving/Sidewalk 1500 SF @ \$4.00/SF =	6,000
Lawn and Landscaping	60,000
Utilities	100,000
CONSTRUCTION COST TOTAL – (\$109.51/SF plus outdoor fields, parking, landscaping, walks and utilities.)	\$ 11,226,470

<b>TOTAL DEVELOPMENT COSTS</b>	
Architect/Engineer Fees, \$ 11,226,470 @ 8.0% =	\$898,000
A/E Reimbursables	30,000
Bidding Contingency, \$ 11,226,470 @ 5% =	561,000
Survey, Geotechnical Investigation, Testing	50,000
Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment (non-pool items)	100,000
Telephone, computer cabling	18,000
Bid Advertising & Reproduction of Bidding Documents	15,000
DEVELOPMENT COST	\$ 1,672,000
CONSTRUCTION COST	\$ 11,226,470
TOTAL DEVELOPMENT COST	\$ 12,898,470

## 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

## COST SUMMARY TABLE

### Improvements/Repairs/Upgrades at Existing Facilities

*(NOT INCLUDING MAJOR REMODELING OF LINEBERGER  
AND RANKIN LAKE PARKS)*

A. Phillips Center	\$ 595,000.00
B. Erwin Center	\$ 368,000.00
C. Roland Bradley Center and Park	\$ 803,000.00
D. T Jeffers Center	\$ 788,000.00
E. Adult Recreation Center	\$ 142,000.00
F. Gastonia Municipal Golf Course	\$ 790,000.00
G. Ferguson Park	\$ 385,000.00
H. Skeet & Trap Range	\$ 100,000.00
I. Sims Legion Park & Men's Softball Complex	\$ 1,245,000.00
J. Martha River's Park (outdoor improvements only)	\$ 322,000.00
K. School Facilities Joint Use (City improvements on school sites)	\$ 311,000.00
L. Schiele Museum Nature Trail Renovation	\$ 125,000.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 5,974,000.00</b>

**NEW FACILITIES AND MAJOR RENNOVATIONS/MAKEOVERS/CONVERSIONS  
OF EXISTING FACILITIES**

<b>FACILITY</b>	<b>EST. COST TODAY</b>
Lineberger Park Renovation (does not include train rolling stock)	\$2,296,000
Rankin Lake Park Renovation (including circumferential trail)	\$1,275,000
Community Center Building at Martha Rivers Park	\$3,900,000
Major (regional) Skate Park, on existing city-owned land	\$ 300,000
SE Community Center with youth sports complex w/ indoor aquatics option	\$13,000,000 (package all at once price) or \$15,020,000 as separate costs- see rows below)
<i>Per Item Costs If Built/Funded Separately:</i>	
Land	\$ 920,000
Community Center Building	\$3,900,000
Sports Complex + picnic, trails and playground	\$4,200,000
Cost Increment to add recommended aquatics facilities	\$6,000,000
Land Acquisition Program for future Development	\$2,000,000
Greenway Development, Phase I (8-10 Miles)	\$3,500,000
Greenway Development, Phase II (7-9 Miles)	\$3,500,000
Men's Sports Complex (See Sims Park under existing facilities)	
Development of Davis Park + Greenway Interconnection w/ Phillips + Linwood	\$ 750,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$30,521,000*</b>

*\*Total includes \$13 million indoor aquatics center, community center and outdoor youth sports complex as a package*

## FUNDING AND PRIORITY PROJECTS

Obviously, funding will be the greatest challenge in implementing this plan. Over the past 28 years the City has relied heavily upon outside resources to fund capital improvements in parks and recreation. The City should expect state and federal resources to continue to diminish as they have for the past 20 years. Some potential sources yet remaining include the North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Program; and, for Greenways there is the federal T-21 Enhancements Program (administered by NCDOT), the North Carolina Trails Program, and the NC Clean Water Management Trust Fund. There are also local foundations philanthropists interested in funding parks, recreation, and open space enhancements.

The City of Gastonia has been the recipient of all of these sources at one or more times in the past. In fall of 2004 there was a countywide referendum for a ½ cent sales tax for economic development related projects. The City of Gastonia allocated a portion of its projected share of the proceeds for recreational project development. The referendum failed. Top funding priorities listed below reflect approximately the same direction of funding as proposed for the ½ cent tax. However, some additional projects have been added. These listed projects appear to generate the greatest benefit for economic development, which is the top priority of the City, given its recent economic history.

### *Funding Priorities:*

○ Renovation of Lineberger Park (not incl. Bathhouse)	\$2,133,428
○ Renovation of Rankin Lake Park incl. trails + lake pavilion	\$1,166,000
○ Phase I Greenway Development (8-10 miles)	\$3,500,000
○ Land Banking	\$2,000,000
○ Community Center Building	\$3,900,000
○ Youth Sports Complex	\$4,200,000
○ Development of Davis Park + Phillips interconnecting trails	\$ 750,000
○ One Regional Skate Parks + 2 more modular setups	\$ 350,000
○ Improvements to Adult Recreation Center	<u>\$ 117,000</u>
 TOTAL	 \$18,116,428

Another way to fund capital parks, recreation and open space improvements is through a general obligation bond referendum. Because the full faith and credit of the City as a

taxing authority is pledged, authority for a G.O. bond issuance must be granted by the electorate. The table below illustrates the amount of funds that can be generated through various size bond referendums. Each \$400,000 dollars in debt service (amortization costs) requires the equivalent of one cent per \$100 valuation on the property tax rate.

**ANNUAL AMORTIZATION COSTS OF GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS**  
 @ 4.5% Rate in \$1,000's

Year	\$6 Million	\$8 Million	\$10 Million	\$12 Million	\$14 Million
1	563	751	939	1,126	1,313
5	509	679	849	1,018	1,187
10	442	589	736	884	1,032
15	375	499	624	749	874
20	307	409	511	613	715

## TOOLS FOR LAND ACQUISITION AND PRESERVATION

### Introduction

This chapter takes the view that lands for parks, recreational and open space purposes are capital investments to secure a sustainable and economically viable future for our community. Not counting Crowder's Mountain State Park, a state facility, Gastonia lags far behind national standards in parks and open space land. These lands are vital for a well-rounded community attractive to both new residents and businesses. The establishment of parks and open spaces should be considered an ongoing process as the city expands.

During the past 35 years (since 1970) the Gastonia has grown by over 50% in both population and land area, while very little public resources have been spent acquiring parklands. The three major new parks (Bradley, Jeffers, and Martha Rivers totaling 143 acres) established during this period were provided land primarily through outside sources. Bradley and Jeffers lands were acquired with Federal Community Development Block Grant Funds, while Martha Rivers was largely a private donation through Gaston County. The only significant exception was land acquisition for the Mountain Island Watershed. But this tract is over 15 miles from Gastonia and will exist in a virtually natural state for the primary purpose of protecting our water supply.

Some jurisdictions in the region pursued visionary policies and programs during this period to provide parklands and open space. The three most important points to make about a comprehensive open space program are: (1) parks and open spaces exist to make our community not only more livable but also more competitive; (2) they are time sensitive opportunities and for greatest enjoyment they should be distributed over space; and (3) once an area is "built-out" opportunities for open space/parkland preservation are forever lost.

***"Land...they aren't making any more of it."***  
**Will Rogers**

### Land Donations

Private citizens may contribute any land that a municipality is willing to accept. The land donor can claim the value of the land donated to a charitable organization as an income tax deduction equal to the land's current fair market value. Land donation will also remove its value from an estate, reducing future estate taxes. Land donations result in an actual transfer of ownership unlike a conservation easement as discussed below. This will relieve the owner of the management and care of the land. Furthermore, North Carolina provides a 25% of value ***state income tax credit*** (distributable over 5 years), for land and easements donated for public recreational and conservation purposes.

## Conservation Easements

A conservation easement is a legally binding agreement between a property owner and a governmental body or land trust that restricts the type and amount of development that may take place on the property. A conservation easement ensures a landowner that his land will be protected for future generations. Its primary purpose is to protect significant open space, recreational, natural, agricultural, or historic resources. Entering into a conservation easement usually provides a reduced state and federal tax responsibility. The agreed upon use is normally much less intense and therefore less valuable therefore the tax burden it generates is lower. The ownership of the land does not change hands and does not imply free ingress or egress by the general public. For the City, conservation easements are a better financial alternative than land donations because the land remains in private ownership and on the tax rolls, unlike publicly owned land. The municipality is also responsible for the maintenance of donated land and not easements.

## Land donations through development process

- In many instances, the development process has led to the donation of land for greenways or other open spaces. For instance, when reviewing a rezoning application for a new shopping village, city staff noticed the project area included land identified as a potential extension of the Catawba Creek Greenway. The developers agreed to donate the land and actually build that portion of the greenway! In a residential development further north, the developer was able to locate the walking trail so that it could provide residents a connection to the greenway.
- ***In some cases policies may be in place, but are not being applied. The City should proceed to implement section 18-37 of the City of Gastonia subdivision code pursuant to G.S. 160A-372.***

### **Sec.8-37. Areas for schools, parks, playgrounds (Gastonia Code)**

Planning Commission may consider the allocation of suitable areas for schools, parks, and playgrounds. In the interest of the public welfare, a minimum amount of land in the ratio of three acres per 100 families, exclusive of streets, should be set aside for recreational or park purposes. Where a tract contains less than 40 acres, such reservation for open space should be combined, whenever possible, with similar reservations in adjoining tracts. Such parks or playgrounds may be dedicated for public use or reserved for the common use of all property owners within the proposed subdivision by covenant in instruments conveying lands in such subdivision.

*Note: G.S. 160A-372 also provides that developers may provide money in lieu of land for the purpose of purchase for parks and recreation, or combination of land dedication and money payment.*

### Transfer of Development Rights

This program enables landowners to transfer the development rights on one parcel of land to another parcel of land, such as from an agricultural zone to designated higher-density development areas. TDR programs may be designed for multiple purposes, such as to conserve environmentally sensitive areas or preserve historic landmarks. As of 2000, Montgomery County in Maryland had more than 40,000 acres, which accounted for 60 percent of the national total, enrolled in TDR program.

### Excess purchase by municipality

Utilizing the proximate principle, the municipality can purchase an excess amount of land for a park project. After developing the park, which increases the value of the surrounding land, the municipality can sell the remaining land at a higher market value. The increased property tax revenue pays for the original investment.

### Grants

Grants are available at both the state and local level to purchase land for protection purposes. The city received significant financial resources from the Clean Water Management Trust Fund to purchase land for the Avon and Catawba Creek Greenway. Together with the Trust for Public Land, the City used Clean Water Management Trust Fund dollars to purchase land for conservation along the shore of Mountain Island Lake where the City draws raw water for potable treatment.



**CROWDERS MOUNTAIN STATE PARK IS PROBABLY THE SINGLE BEST AND MOST BENEFICIAL LAND CONSERVATION IN GASTONIA**

### General Revenue

Local general tax revenues and voter approved tax levies to support the purchase of property for open space protection. On page \_\_\_\_ this plan proposes spending \$2,000,000 over the next 15 years to buy land for parks, recreation, and open space purposes. This amount could be significantly enhanced through the implementation of existing city code on recreational lands or payment in lieu of pursuant to GS160A-372.

### Development Code Mandates

Some jurisdictions require a certain amount of land in residential developments to be set aside as open space. The Town of Davidson adopted an aggressive policy of a 50% set aside. Gastonia requires a 20% set aside in “planned residential developments (PRD).” For this, the developer may develop in greater density/intensity on the remaining 80% and he is freed of lot dimensional and setback most requirements. But, this provision only applies to those who elect to take their application through the PRD process. Furthermore, installing sidewalks to a superior standard can satisfy part of the 20%.

One important principal in land conservation through the development process is that the land preserved be more than just the land that is not developable. Sometimes, such land is inaccessible and may have little use for recreational purposes.

**Crowders Mountain State Park, Gastonia, NC**



## STAFFING AND OPERATIONAL ISSUES

This section of the report deals with improvements needed in the operations of the Parks and Recreation Department, particularly staffing. The existing situation is examined as well as staffing needs to program, operate, and maintain expanded recreation facilities as recommended in this plan. New personnel for projected new facilities will not be needed until such facilities are built and operational.

**Existing Situation** : Like other city departments, the parks and recreation department is not abundantly staffed, particularly so in the current time of severe budget constraints and frozen positions. But also like other city departments it too has met these financial challenges gracefully by keeping facilities open, acceptably programmed, and adequately maintained. The department, in staff's view, has been short of maintenance staff for a number of years. When Martha Rivers Park was added, there was no ability to maintain this fine facility with the existing staff. Therefore, a separate new maintenance staff was added, which is devoted exclusively to the new park. This leaves one other crew to maintain all other facilities, with the exception that each community center has a custodian who does some outdoor work. The Avon/Catawba Creek Greenway is maintained (grass cutting, leaf blowing, and trash pickup) by a private contractor who is supervised by the code enforcement office. Outdoor facilities other than Martha Rivers Park are maintained in an "average to below average" condition according to staff. The maintenance people stay busy and work hard—it's just that they have so much to keep up with. In order to maintain other facilities at the same level as Martha Rivers Park, the following additional outdoor crew people will be needed:

- 1 General Supervisor
- 2 to 3 Crew Chiefs\*
- 6 to 8 Landscape Technicians\*
- One Turf Specialist
- One Horticulturalist
- \*Depends on whether staffing for added youth sports complex and new men's softball complex is counted

The estimated cost of these additions is **\$485,000 per year** including staff, fringe benefits, and other operational costs; however, if the athletic facilities recommended by this plan the figure goes up to **\$609,000 per year**.

**Lineberger Park Renovation**. In order operate the additional facilities at the renovated Lineberger Park. The following additional staff will be needed:

- Ticket and Concession Salesperson-SPT (Seasonal/Part-Time)
- Train Operator- SPT, 6 mos.
- Carousel Operator- SPT- 6 mos.
- Splash Park Operator-SPT- 3-4 mos.
- Full Time Park Manager
- One Park Ranger or added enforcement by GPD

The estimated cost of these added staff is **\$111,000 per year** including fringe, plus an **additional \$30,000 in annual operational costs** for the facility enhancements.

**Rankin Lake Park.** In order to operate the renovated Rankin Lake Park the addition of a uniformed Park Ranger/Lake Warden staff would be needed. Public access to the lake will not be allowed by the State of North Carolina without such on-site enforcement capability. Such personnel would also handle park concessions and facility rentals. This staffing can be directed by either the Recreation Department or the Police Department. In order to keep the park open from 10:00 AM until 7:00 PM weekdays and 9:00 AM to 7:00 PM on weekends, seven days per week, three full-time personnel will be needed. Additional help may be needed to oversee late night rentals of social facilities. The added cost for three full-time officers is **\$114,000, including fringe**. Add another **\$20,000 per year** other in operational costs for facility enhancements. About one-half full time equivalent in part-time patrol help can be obtained for about **\$19,000 per year**. There will also be an initial capital outlay for equipment such as vehicles and radios.

**Community Centers.** The report recommends the addition of a community center at Martha Rivers Park and another one in the growing southeast sector of the city. *Each* community center added will require a full-time Center Director, full-time Assistant Director, part-time program specialist, and full-time custodian. Each community center added will require about **\$130,000 in staffing costs, including fringe, plus another \$63,000 in non-personnel operational costs**. **If two additional centers are added we should expect a total annual operational cost of \$386,000 for the two.**

**Greenways.** This plan recommends a program of greenway development. While greenway trails are relatively low maintenance (as compared to most other recreational facilities), they are not maintenance free. Most maintenance includes seasonal grass cutting, leaf and tree debris blowing, trash can emptying, repairs to furnishings, maintenance of drainage facilities, and maintenance of culverts that are used for pedestrian tunnels. The City should count on an **annual routine maintenance cost of \$10,000 to \$15,000 per mile of trail** during the first ten years of trail life, more in later years as major replacements become due.

**Aquatics Center.** The Aquatics Center study performed by Water Technology, Inc + Ballard\*King and Associates recommended staffing levels for the proposed facility. Since this facility would also have facilities of, and serve as, a community center, the staffing of a second community center as noted above would not be needed in addition to all the programmed staff of the aquatics center. The staffing cost of the Aquatics Center was taken into consideration in the facility's financial pro forma. The staffing projected by Ballard\*King Associates with Water Technology will cost about \$1,325,000 per year. If the aquatics center provides one of the two needed recreation centers, then the staffing cost of the second recreation center can be deducted from that total, bringing the figure for the aquatics center down to \$1,132,000, assuming the staffing cost of the second new recreation center is devoted to the aquatics center. It should also be considered that the aquatics center would have its own significant revenue stream, unlike other recreational facilities—nearly \$2 million per year. On the other hand, non-staff related operational

costs total to about \$780,000 per year. This will result in average operational deficits in the neighborhood of \$200,000 per year, not including debt service, if any.

## **APPENDIX MATERIALS**

## **Section I – Executive Summary**

This Design Program is the result of a series of meetings between representatives of the City of Gastonia, area aquatics groups, Water Technology, Inc., an aquatics consultant, and Ballard\*King and Associates, a recreation planning and financial feasibility consultant.

On May 14, 2002 the first meeting was held to discuss the needs for a new aquatic center for the City of Gastonia. Water Technology, Inc. (WTI) was represented by Richard Scott and Ballard\*King by Ken Ballard. People invited to the meetings included:

- Ms. Margaret Pearson, Project Manager, City of Gastonia
- Ms. Debby Key, Engineering, City of Gastonia
- Mr. Drew Pearson, Zoning Enforcement Officer, City of Gastonia
- Mr. Keifer Gaddis, Director Parks & Recreation, City of Gastonia
- Mr. Chuck Dellinger, Athletic Director, P&R, City of Gastonia
- Mr. Wayne Holland, Recreation Advisory Committee
- Ms. Peggy Heili, Recreation Advisory Committee
- Mr. Lee Taylor, Pres., Gaston Gators Swim Team
- Mr. Michael Dickson, Gaston Gators Swim Team
- Mr. Greg Armstrong, Gaston Gators Swim Team

In the evening a public hearing was held for citizen input. Most of the committee attended, as did about 25 interested citizens and City Councilman Dave Kirlin.

On September 19, 2002 a second meeting was held with the Aquatic Center Committee to review the options suggested by the Consultant, to discuss the relative merits of the site and to visit a potential eighth site at the existing Public Service Company location. The following people attended this meeting:

- Ms. Debby Key, Engineering, City of Gastonia
- Mr. Drew Pearson, Zoning Enforcement Officer, City of Gastonia
- Mr. Lee Taylor, Pres., Gaston Gators Swim Team
- Mr. Michael Dickson, Gaston Gators Swim Team

On November 14, 2002 a third meeting was held with the Aquatic Center Committee to continue to review the options suggested by the Consultant and the Draft Report. The final report reflects the decisions made at that meeting to increase the cost recovery of the project by including all of the usual elements of a community recreation center. This need was established in the draft report portions written by Ken Ballard. The decisions including locating the leisure pool indoors, fixing the competition pool size as a 50 meter by 25 yard pool, adding four soccer and four baseball fields and other refinements. The following people attended this meeting:

- Ms. Debby Key, Engineering, City of Gastonia
- Mr. Chuck Dellinger, Athletic Director, Parks & Rec. Dept., City of Gastonia
- Mr. Lee Taylor, Pres., Gaston Gators Swim Team
- Mr. Michael Dickson, Gaston Gators Swim Team

## **BUILDING TYPE**

There are various levels of quality, durability and aesthetics in buildings. When we think of municipal buildings, we usually think in terms of designing buildings of moderate to high quality that will last 50 to 100 years with low maintenance. This type of building sets an image of local government and helps to define the city. Low quality buildings do not serve the city well in life cycle costs nor in engendering pride in the community.

When swimming pools are built indoors, there are a number of issues that increase the cost of the building:

- High bay construction
- Long span construction
- High performance vapor barriers
- Durable finishes for corrosion resistance (Tnemec high build epoxy coatings)
- Non-slip finishes for floors
- Light fixtures of stainless steel or aluminum with vapor resistance
- Bronze or stainless steel door hardware for corrosion resistance
- Custom trusses for paint performance (no back-to-back angles)
- Fire protection sprinklers for assembly occupancy
- Acoustical treatment to lower reverberation time
- Plumbing deck drains versus standard floors with no drains
- High plumbing costs for locker rooms
- Cost of pools is high compared to cost of flooring in most buildings
- Dehumidification and greater air changes for HVAC systems.
- Galvanizing on hollow metal door frames for corrosion protection

The chart below lists several possible levels of building construction for the swimming pool enclosure. For the purpose of estimating the cost of construction of this proposed project, the committee selected Type II Precast Concrete Construction for all of the building except the leisure pool enclosure. For the leisure pool, more daylighting and views to the exterior were considered important. The Type III Structures Unlimited building type will provide these features plus areas of the roof that open during mild weather.

The figures of the chart below are considerably higher than the raw construction costs of empty shells of buildings. So if the reader is used to seeing metal buildings quoted at \$35/SF or precast concrete buildings at \$45/SF, the difference in our figures is due to the inclusion of the swimming pools and other higher cost elements listed above to protect the building. All of the spaces in the building do not need the higher cost elements, so the costs are averaged.

TYPE	DESCRIPTION	DURABILITY	AESTHETICS/ IMAGE	COST PER SQ. FT.
I	Metal Building	Low 10-20 yrs.	Low	\$70-85/SF
II	Precast Concrete	High 40-80 yrs.	Moderate	\$85-95/SF
III	Structures Unlimited	High 40-80 yrs.	High	\$165-185/SF
IV	Traditional Masonry	High 40-80 yrs.	High	\$180-200/SF
V	Ideal Masonry	High 50-100 yrs.	High	\$220-240/SF

### Type I – Metal Building

The lowest cost building, Type I, would be a metal building with low cost finishes for walls, flooring and other materials. This building type would cost \$70 to \$85/SF. Generally we believe this type of construction is unsuitable for natatorium construction due to its short life. We have proposed this type of building only because of the successful project at Huntersville, NC. If you select this type of construction, expect higher maintenance costs in the natatorium. The other portions of the building (outside of the wet areas) should perform reasonably well, but not up to the level of concrete or masonry buildings. Condensation will occur on the interior of the metal panels. This contains a weak hydrochloric acid, which will eventually destroy the paint and rust the panels. The vinyl covered insulation system will be an ineffective vapor barrier and will not avoid this problem.



## Type II – Precast Concrete Construction

This type of construction has been in widespread use for low cost industrial buildings for the last 35 years. A few pools, such as the twenty year old Wichita, KS 50 meter pool, have been enclosed in this building type. In colder climates precast construction is less than ideal for swimming pools due to poorer thermal performance that results in frequent condensation in the natatorium. We do not believe this would be a frequent problem in Gastonia. **The estimates on pages 21-23 of this report are mostly based on this building type with the concurrence of the committee. Type III has been used for the leisure pool enclosure.**

In recent years modern public recreation centers, such as the Lakeview REC-PLEX in the Village of Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin, have been built with this building type. The REC-PLEX is a 160,000 SF building that cost \$78/SF. While costs for this building type are only slightly higher than for metal buildings, the durability is much greater. When designed by an architect experienced in precast concrete, the result can be very attractive as well as highly durable. The roof structure from Type IV below was used for the long spans instead of precast concrete roof structures



## Type III – Structures Unlimited Inc.

This building type has a structural frame for the natatorium of aluminum box beams with translucent Kalwall panels for the roof. The Kalwall panels are fiberglass panels with aluminum spacers. A portion of the roof panels can open for ventilation during temperate weather. The exterior of the building can be traditional masonry construction. This type of construction offers the advantage of excellent corrosion resistance in the chlorine environment with slightly lower cost than traditional construction. The daylighting of the rooftop



panels and summer ventilation are additional benefits. The attached photo is of the Midtown Aquatic Center in Newport News, VA (50 meter by 25 yard pool). Other projects with competition and leisure pools include the Bogan Park Community Center in Gwinnett County, Georgia.

#### Type IV – Traditional Masonry

This type of construction is the most common for natatoria around the country: double wythe masonry walls which are insulated, open web steel joists and galvanized steel roof deck. With Tnemec high build epoxy coating on the steel and a good quality HVAC system with plenty of outside air, this can be a durable, high quality building for a pool enclosure. With the options of brick, stone or concrete masonry units for veneer on the exterior, the building can express the public architecture of the community. The attached photograph is of the University of Northern Iowa Student Recreation Center.



#### Type V – Ideal

This type of construction is common for better municipal, high school and university facilities. It is similar to Traditional Masonry construction with its double wythe masonry walls and galvanized steel roof deck, but it has the longer life of custom tubular steel roof trusses. These trusses differ from Type IV open web steel joists in that there are no back-to-back angles that are difficult to prepare and paint. All of the steel shapes used in the trusses have rounded edges that will not cut the coating system when it cures. Other aspects of this building type emphasize low maintenance and high quality finishes.

In addition to the custom tubular roof trusses, note the higher level of lighting, daylighting from clerestory windows, and higher level of finishes associated with this building type. This project is the Student Recreation Center at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. Many municipal facilities are also constructed with this building type, such as the REC-PLEX in St. Peters, Missouri.



**What should Gastonia's long range parks, recreation, and open space plan cover?**

From 11.12.02 Long Range Recreation Plan Committee Meeting

Inter-connecting the community/alternative transportation	Passive Recreation	Enhancing Existing Facilities	New Facilities	Policy and Program Recommendations	Utilizing Natural Resources	Mission Statement	Implementation
Greenway expansion	Garden Plots	Rankin Lake improvement	Extreme Sports	Public Access to Rankin Lake	Development of canoe route along South Fork River	Activities for all ages	Creative financing through partnerships and collaboration
Rails to trails	Small Parks	Train	Southeast community center	Advertise what we have to offer	Nature center	Year-round activities	Methods of financing, bonds, etc
Sidewalks	Community Gathering Place (Belmont Stowe Park)	Enhance trap and skeet range	Girls' and Women's sports complex	American Disability Act	Emphasize nature	Life-long activities	Schedule for action
Connecting Parks to neighborhoods	Open area downtown	Renovate adult recreation center	Water Park	Improve safety	Non-motorized boating	Quality of Life	Who's Responsible for what
Bike lanes	Dog Park	Special activities center for classes/programs	Indoor gyms	Security	Mountain bike trails		
Interconnecting alternative transportation: sidewalks, greenways, bike trails, equestrian trails	Arts in Parks	Specialized facilities/parks (activities, accessibility) for physically challenged	Indoor track	Coordinate with other counties (Cleveland, Macklenburg, Lincoln)	Fishing areas		
Hiking/walking trails, greenways	Amphitheatre	Upgrades to existing facilities (Simms, Lineberger Park, other ballparks)	Tournament/Competition Sports Complex	Facilities should be cost-effective and manageable	Coordinating our natural resources with park opportunities (South Fork River, Crowders Mountain)		
	Passive Parks	Refurbishing existing parks/equipment/ facilities	Archery	Disability friendly playground			
			Aquatics center	Plan for passive land acquisition			
			Ice skating	Change City ordinances to require developers to have greenways, open spaces...			
			Skate parks	Linking open space development			
			Identify trends of recreation and demographical trends for new parks				



# Parks and Recreation Survey



The City of Gastonia is developing a long range Parks and Recreation Plan. A first step in the planning process is to evaluate the wants and needs of our community. We hope this survey will help us identify where our focus should be. Some

questions pertain to the entire household while others seek the needs and desires of each member of your household. The City appreciates you taking a few minutes to complete this survey. Be assured that this survey is anonymous and your answers will not be used for anything other than developing the long range plan.

Please complete this section as it pertains to your entire household.

My household contains \_\_\_\_\_ (#) adults and \_\_\_\_\_ (#) children (under age 18)

I live in:

- The Gastonia City limits
- Gaston County (incl. other Gaston cities)
- Another county

If you checked "Gastonia City Limits" above, check which best describes your address:

- My zip code is 28056
- My zip code is 28052, and I live north of Franklin Boulevard
- My zip code is 28052, and I live south of Franklin Boulevard
- My zip code is 28054, and I live north of Franklin Boulevard
- My zip code is 28054, and I live south of Franklin Boulevard

**Current Activities:** Which of the following activities do one or more members of your family participate in on a regular basis? For this survey, regular means an average of twice a month (weather permitting/in season). Place a check mark in front of each activity representing the participation of each member of your family. For instance, if three members of your family bicycle your response would be ✓✓✓ Bicycle.

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aerobics              | <input type="checkbox"/> Golf               | <input type="checkbox"/> Swimming              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arts & Crafts         | <input type="checkbox"/> Hiking             | <input type="checkbox"/> Tennis                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Baseball/T-Ball       | <input type="checkbox"/> Martial Arts       | <input type="checkbox"/> Volleyball            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Basketball            | <input type="checkbox"/> Playground         | <input type="checkbox"/> Walking               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bicycling             | <input type="checkbox"/> Racquetball/Squash | <input type="checkbox"/> Weight Training       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BMX Bicycling         | <input type="checkbox"/> Running/Jogging    | <input type="checkbox"/> Yoga                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dance                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Shooting           | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Equestrian Recreation | <input type="checkbox"/> Skateboarding      | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Football              | <input type="checkbox"/> Soccer             | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gardening             | <input type="checkbox"/> Softball           | _____  |

**Current City Facility Usage:** Which of the following city facilities have members of your family used over the past 12 months.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> City of Gastonia Municipal Golf Course | <input type="checkbox"/> Pools                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avon and Catawba Creek Greenway        | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Centers           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Recreation Centers               | <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor Team Sports         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Instructional Classes                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Tennis Courts               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Playgrounds                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Schiele Museum Nature Trail |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Indoor Team Sports                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Picnic Areas                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____       |

**New Facilities:** From this list, please rate the top five (1 through 5) new facilities that you think Gastonia needs the most, with one (1) being the highest priority, two (2) second highest, etc.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme Sports Complex*       | <input type="checkbox"/> Off Leash Dog Park                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water Park                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Place for people to have garden plots |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Southeast Community Center    | <input type="checkbox"/> Small Gathering Places                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Indoor Gyms                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Ice Skating Rink                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Indoor Track                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Downtown Park                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Competition Sports Complex    | <input type="checkbox"/> Nature Center                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aquatics Center               | <input type="checkbox"/> Mountain Bike Trail                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Skate Parks                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Children's Splash/Sprayground         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Girl's/Women's Sports Complex | <input type="checkbox"/> Greenway Trails (new/extensions)      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arts in Parks                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Amphitheatre                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____                 |

\* Extreme sports complex typically includes skateboard park, BMX bike tracks and stunt area

How much more are you willing to pay to use these new and improved recreational facilities?

- \$10 a year       \$20 a year       \$40 a year       Nothing

Which of the following funding methods would you support to improve the quality of our recreational facilities?  
(check all that apply)

- Bond Issue       Tax Increase       User Fees       None of these

**For the following questions, please circle the response that best describes your sentiments.**

1. I feel safe at city park and recreation facilities.  
Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree
2. A major priority of Gastonia's Park and Recreation plan should include a new aquatic center.  
Strongly agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree
3. Gastonia does not have enough indoor community recreation centers.  
Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree
4. Greenways and sidewalks should be used to interconnect neighborhoods to park and recreation facilities.  
Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree
5. Gastonia's indoor recreational facilities are properly dispersed to meet the needs of the community.  
Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree
6. I am easily able to participate in my favorite recreation activity using Gastonia's recreational facilities.  
Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree
7. Gastonia needs more undeveloped public natural areas similar to Crowder's Mountain State Park, Broad River Greenway, McDowell Park and Kings Mountain State Park.  
Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree
8. New private developments should include common open space, greenways and natural areas.  
Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree
9. New housing developers should contribute land or money for added public recreational facilities.  
Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree
10. Upgrading and improving current facilities should be done before new facilities are constructed.  
Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree
11. Gastonia's current recreational programs include adequate activities for all ages, abilities and genders.  
Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree
12. Gastonia's sports programs meet the need of my family.  
Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree
13. Gastonia's recreation facilities keep up with current trends in public recreation and leisure activities.  
Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree
14. Gastonia's recreation facilities are well maintained.  
Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree
15. My favorite recreation activity is \_\_\_\_\_ and I find it at \_\_\_\_\_
16. How can we improve existing facilities, both physically and operationally?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



(MPO's) in the Charlotte Region and NC/SC DOT's jointly hired outside demographers. The demographers used national and sub-national demographic and economic trends to update and produce regional totals and (by "stepping down") county totals. Simultaneously, each MPO generated new TAZ and (by "stepping up") county totals based upon historic projections, trends, and current development/building permit experience, based upon their local knowledge. Each MPO brought in experts from the public and private sectors, such as real estate brokers, builders, developers, and local permitting offices. Availability of land and real estate trends were important considerations. Through careful examination, critique, and additional research, reconciliation was eventually reached between the MPO produced county totals and the consultant demographer produced county totals. The TAZ totals were adjusted accordingly to match the reconciled county total.

*What do these maps tell us?* First, it is clear that we can expect Gastonia's greatest rate of growth will continue in a suburban manner in the southeastern part of the Gastonia area, as has been the case for the last 30 or more years. Although City efforts to shift some growth to other sectors of town will continue to be successful, it is doubtful that our inherent tendency to grow toward Charlotte will be reversed, barring the complete exhaustion of land and growth-supporting public facilities. Closer into the city, the area between Garrison and Hudson Boulevards will increase dramatically in population, then other areas fanning out in an arc between Union Road, Lowell-Bethesda Road, New Hope Road, Kendrick and Beaty/Union-New Hope Roads will continue to grow and fill-in. The area between Union Road and US 321 South will grow rapidly over the next ten years. Clearly, the most rapidly growing area of the city is without an adequate community center/park. This growth trend indicates that the current need for facilities in the southeast area will only become more critical over next 15 years. Assuming the regional community center/park continues to be a central focus of our parks/recreation services delivery we will need to add a minimum of one, and preferably two new community centers: One with a park and athletic facilities on a new site somewhere near west of New Hope Road and probably another on the grounds of Martha Rivers Park. Other parts of the Gastonia Area that will receive moderate rates of growth include: areas near Crowder's Mountain, areas between Gastonia and Bessemer City and west of NC 275, and areas northeast of the city along Long Creek.