# 2014-2024
# PARKS & RECREATION COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Town of Spencer

# Acknowledgments


## Mayor and Board of Aldermen

Mayor Jody Everhart
Mayor Pro-Tem Jim Gobbel
Alderman Scott Benfield
Alderman Mike Boone
Alderman Kevin Jones
Alderman Jeff Morris
Alderman Reid Walters

## Town Manager

Mr. Larry Smith

## Public Works Director

Mr. Joel Taylor

## Planning Consultant

Site Solutions
2320 West Morehead Street
Charlotte, NC 28208

# Table of Contents

**SECTION** **PAGE**

Executive Summary.....EX-1 - EX-9

Section One: Inventory.....1-1 - 1-7

Section Two: The People of Spencer.....2-1 - 2-8

Section Three: Recreation Standards & Needs Assessment.....3-1 - 3-9

Section Four: Proposals & Recommendations .....4-1 - 4-13

Section Five: Action Plan Implementation.....5-1 - 5-12

**APPENDICES**

Appendix A: National and State Studies on Outdoor Recreation Demand

Appendix B: National Sporting Goods Association Survey

Appendix C: Classifications for Parks, Open Space and Greenways

Appendix D: Rowan County Communities, Spencer, NC - Proposed Carolina Thread Trail Map

*NC Transportation Museum*

# Executive Summary

Spencer offers residents and visitors a wonderful combination of small town charm and southern hospitality. Located just off I-85 between the Charlotte Metro Area and the Triad, Spencer is perfectly positioned to prosper from growth of the two urban centers in the next ten years (and beyond). While the Town does not have a dedicated Parks and Recreation Department, parks and recreation facilities are an important aspect of the Town's desirable quality of life.

This Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan will help provide elected officials and citizen leaders with a road map to guide decision-making and actions as the community recovers from the recent economic downturn. It will provide a ten year vision (2014-2024) for the Town. This guide was carefully crafted by staff, the public, volunteers, and with the help of outside experts to ensure that future generations will have adequate parks, trails, and open space.

The Plan starts with a description of the Town's existing facilities. Section One is a detailed description of current park land and facilities. Section Two describes the service population. Section Three covers accepted recreation standards and park needs. Section Four describes proposed improvements to facilities and parks. Finally, the Plan makes recommendations about a way forward in hard economic times. The Plan is comprehensive, and our best thinking in 2014 about how to proceed over the next 10 years.

# GETTING STARTED: PUBLIC INPUT

Town staff retained Site Solutions to help collect and analyze data and craft a draft plan. The most important aspect of the planning study was identifying the public's desire for parks and recreation facilities and programs. The public was offered the opportunity to participate through:

- Public Workshop
- Written Survey
- One-on-one Interviews with Community Stakeholders
- Working closely with Town staff to understand needs already expressed

Findings from these public outreach efforts, as well as a summary of the methodology, can be found in Section Two: The People of Spencer.

# POPULATION

In addition to gathering public input, a critical step in developing this plan is understanding the demographic and population changes that are occurring in the community. The 2010 census data provides very good information on population and demographics for use in this planning study.

One of the first decisions in the park and recreation planning process is identifying the Town's service population. The service population for this planning study was defined as citizens living within the town limits. The Town's 2013 census population was ±3,285. For the purpose of this planning report, we have rounded this population figure up to 3,500.

See Section Two: The People of Spencer for additional information on the demographic characteristics of the Town's citizens.

Based on the population information from the Office of the State Budget and Management, the Town's population declined from 2010. Based on this uncertainty in future growth of the Town, this Master Plan is not projecting an increase in population over the next 10 years.

# PARK & RECREATION FACILITY NEEDS

As described in Section Three: Recreation Standards and Needs Assessment, a community's park system is typically comprised of eight park types. These park types include:

- Mini Parks
- Neighborhood Parks
- Community Parks
- Sport Complexes and District Parks
- Regional Parks
- Greenways
- School Parks
- Special Use Facilities

Each of these park types provide recreation opportunities that meet citizens' recreational needs. A number of public and private agencies/entities provide leisure services in the community. Municipal agencies typically focus on Mini Parks, Neighborhood Parks, Community Parks, Greenways, School Parks, and Special Use Facilities. County and state agencies often address larger park facilities (District and Regional Parks). Schools, universities, churches, and private entities usually provide additional recreation facilities. This comprehensive plan addresses all recreation providers in the community with particular emphasis on the Town's role.

# PARK NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The first step in the Needs Assessment is determining the types of parks needed to meet citizen's demand for recreational use and open space. We begin our discussion with the smaller park types.

## Mini Parks

Mini Parks, as the name implies are the smallest park type. Often these parks are smaller than an acre and provide very limited recreation facilities (playground, picnic shelter, benches, etc.). Jefferson Street Park serves as the Town's one example of a Mini Park. Unfortunately, the facilities at Jefferson Street Park are extremely limited.

## Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood Parks are another small park type. These parks are slightly larger than Mini Parks (typically 5-10 acres) and provide a wider range of recreation activities (open play areas, practice ball fields, walking trails, etc.). As the name implies, Neighborhood Parks are usually designed to serve a neighborhood or subdivision. Rowan Park is Spencer's one example of a Neighborhood Park. One of the recommendations of the Plan is to make improvements to Rowan Park.

*Rowan Park*

The development of Mini Parks and Neighborhood Parks is on the decline. Many North Carolina communities are moving away from the development of these smaller parks because of maintenance cost for smaller properties. When Mini Parks or Neighborhood Parks are developed, many communities are requiring new home builders to provide land and infrastructure as part of the subdivision process.

## Community Parks

Community Parks are an important component of most municipal park and recreation systems. These parks are usually large enough (30-50 acres) to provide both active and passive recreation activities.

Spencer's 8th Street Park serves as the Town's Community Park. It attracts people from all over the town and parts of Rowan County. Unfortunately, the site is extremely small by Community Park site standards and the types of facilities offered at the park are very limited.

While the ball fields at 8th Street Park are an important part of community life, expansion of the park and development of facilities beyond the sports fields would make this facility function as a true Community Park.

## District Parks

District Parks are another large park type often provided by county agencies or larger municipalities. These parks are typically in the 100 acre range, and provide a wide variety of recreational opportunities.

Rowan County provides an outstanding District Park in Dan Nicholas Park. This large District/Regional Park is within easy driving distance of Spencer and meets the Town's needs for a District Park.

*Carousel at Dan Nicholas Park*

## Regional Parks

Regional Parks are typically large, passive oriented parks that highlight, utilize and protect a unique feature. These parks, as the name implies, serve people from across a region; therefore, most people have to travel to enjoy these park types. As noted in Section Three, Regional Parks are typically offered by national, state, or county agencies.

The citizens of Spencer have several Regional Parks within relatively easy driving distance. Rowan County has several Regional Parks and the State of North Carolina has two State Parks that serve the citizens of Spencer. These Regional Parks provide adequate service to the citizens of Spencer. The Town should not focus efforts on the development of Regional Parks.

# FACILITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

We examined facilities within parks and special use facilities (such as ball fields and playgrounds) to determine if there are adequate recreation facilities to meet current and future demand. This assessment begins with establishing standards for facility development. These standards are discussed in Section Three: Recreation Standards & Needs Assessment, and listed in Table 3A-Facilities, Recreation Facilities Standards.

Minimum standards for recreational facilities (i.e., ballfields, courts, picnic shelters, etc.) proposed for the Town were developed from a review of standards used by other communities similar to Spencer, and from input gained during the public input process. These standards, identified in Table 3A-Facilities, Recreation Facilities Standards (page 3-6), and discussed in greater detail in Section Four: Proposals and Recommendations, are the minimum recreation facility standards for the Town.

Based on these standards, the number of public facilities needed in the park system are identified in Table 3B-Facilities, Recreation Facilities Needs Assessment (page 3-8), and summarized on the following table.

The "Existing Facilities" column indicates the number of existing recreation facilities the Town currently provides. The "Facility Need" column identifies the number of additional facilities needed.

| | Existing Facilities | Facility Need |
|---|---|---|
| Adult Baseball Fields | 0 | 0 |
| Youth Baseball Fields | 2 | 0* |
| Softball Fields | 0 | 0 |
| Football Fields | 0 | 0 |
| Soccer Fields | 0 | 1 |
| Basketball Courts | 0 | 0 |
| Tennis Courts | 0 | 1 |
| Volleyball Courts | 0 | 0 |
| Horseshoe | 0 | 0 |
| Shuffleboard Courts | 0 | 0 |
| Playground | 2 | 0 |
| Picnic Shelters | 3 | 0 |
| Hiking/Jogging Trails (miles) | 0 | 1.4 |
| Amphitheater | 0 | 1 |
| Community Garden | 0 | 1 |
| Swimming Pool | 0 | 0 |
| Rec. Center w/Gym | 0 | 0 |
| Rec. Center w/out Gym | 0 | 0 |
| Dog Park | 0 | 1 |
| Skate Park | 0 | 1 |
| Disc Golf | 0 | 0 |

*Development of a larger youth field at 8th Street Park could expand opportunities for a wider age group.

These facility needs can be met in the improvements to existing parks, the expansion of 8th Street Park, and development of several Greenway trails as identified in the Needs Assessment.

# SPECIAL USE FACILITIES

The list of facility needs identified in the previous section contains a wide range of facilities. Some of the recreational facility needs are relatively small and will require only limited space and/or capital investment. Picnic shelters, horseshoe courts, and playgrounds fall into this category of park improvements. The needs assessment also includes a number of facilities that would require a larger investment of the Town's resources. The development of these facilities will have a greater impact on the Town's recreation programming and delivery of services. These facilities include:

## Community Centers and Gymnasiums

While the development of an indoor recreation facility would provide much needed indoor program space for town use, it is highly unlikely the Town will develop an indoor recreation center in the foreseeable future. The cost of constructing and operating an indoor facility is significant. Instead, the Town may partner with a local agency or organization to joint use existing facilities in the community. Potential partners to consider include schools, churches, and the Transportation Museum. Ultimately joint use agreements may be developed with any of these organizations to allow public recreational use of their facilities. Under this scenario, the Town may be asked to provide rental fees, supervision and housekeeping.

## Swimming Pools

In the past, NRPA and NCDENR provided a standard for pool development of one pool for every 20,000 people. This standard was based on the concept of multi neighborhood or community pools. Today, with the high cost of operation and construction of swimming pools, very few agencies develop neighborhood/community pools to that old standard. Likewise, very few small towns provide swimming facilities. The development of a swimming pool is beyond the Town's current operational or capital budget capabilities

## Spraygrounds

Spraygrounds are growing in popularity across the country. In addition to offering a water-based play experience, the play structures, sprays, etc. afford children of all ages a total play environment and are much more economical to operate than a standard swimming pool. A properly designed, large water park sprayground can serve as a regional draw, provide revenue to offset operational cost, and provide a beneficial economic impact to the surrounding area.

*Interactive Fountain in Downtown Gastonia*

The development of a sprayground was discussed in the public workshop and stakeholder interviews. In the future the Town may decide to develop some type of water spray feature in one of its parks. One option would be the development of an interactive fountain in a civic park.

## Greenways

The Town does not currently have any Greenways, but there have been several planning studies conducted by adjacent agencies that include Spencer as a destination for regional trails.

Rowan communities, in conjunction with the Carolina Thread Trail, are working on a greenway study that is looking at opportunities to connect their greenway system to the Yadkin River and ultimately tie into the proposed Greenway in Davidson County. Likewise, Davidson County recently reached an agreement with NCDOT to take control of the Wil-Cox Bridge to provide a pedestrian link between Davidson County and Rowan County. Finally, the Land Trust for Central North Carolina has conservation easements and plans for nature trails along the Yadkin River.

*Wil-Cox Bridge*

With all of this trail activity in the immediate area, the Town should be open to opportunities to connect to these regional initiatives. The first priority will be exploring opportunities to connect the downtown area with the river at Wil-Cox Bridge. Additional opportunities can be found in future greenways developed along Grants Creek. This Greenway corridor has particular significance if the 8th Street Park is expanded or the Town works with the schools to develop a trail connection from the school campus to the natural area in this area.

Greenways should be developed in conjunction with other park and recreation programs in the area (Salisbury, East Spencer, Davidson County, Trust for Public Lands in North Carolina) to ensure they are coordinated with other planning efforts and that there is continuity between plans.

## RENOVATIONS TO EXISTING PARKS

As part of the ongoing planning and budgeting process, the Town staff annually establishes a list of capital improvement projects. This list of capital improvement needs is then used by the elected officials to establish yearly capital improvement budgets.

Important renovation projects which should be considered in future budgets include:

- Improvements to Rowan Park
- Expansion of 8th Street Park
- Expansion of walk/trail to Yadkin River

## DEVELOPING A PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Historically, the Town has been able to provide parks and recreation activities without having a designated parks and recreation director or department. Through the years, the Town has developed several parks and recreational facilities without a designated department. Likewise, the Town has worked with Spencer Little League to facilitate the youth athletic programs that occur at 8th Street Park. Special events at the Library Park and in the plaza have been programmed by Town staff without a designated recreation director.

While the development of a parks and recreation department with a full time director may be a long term goal of the Town, it is highly unlikely it will occur in the foreseeable future. Instead, the Town will continue to rely on the Public Works Department to maintain existing parks and various town staff to administer special events programming.

One option for future consideration would be hiring a part-time temporary program supervisor for summer events. The Town has chosen this option in the past as it provided day camp activities at 8th Street Park.

An interim step for the Town would be to continue using the citizen advisory committee formed in this study to provide input to Town staff and the Town Board on issues relevant to parks and recreation. Advisory boards are typically made up of citizen leaders who have interest in community parks and recreation programs. A well organized Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee can provide valuable input to staff and elected officials on community recreational needs. The State of North Carolina, through its Recreation Resources Services offers valuable information and guidance on establishing both advisory committees and parks and recreation departments.

## JOINT USE OPPORTUNITIES

The public is best served when government agencies work together. There are a number of public agencies operating in the Spencer area that have facilities and programs that potentially serve the public's need for parks and recreation. The Town should explore additional opportunities to work with neighboring. agencies. Historically, Spencer has worked well with several of these agencies.

The following agencies have missions that may be in alignment with the Town's recreation efforts:

- Rowan County Parks and Recreation
- Salisbury Parks and Recreation
- Rowan-Salisbury School System
- Rowan Regional Medical Center

One example of joint use opportunities is Spencer's ongoing collaboration with Davidson Tourism on the Wil-Cox/Yadkin River connection.

Section Four: Proposals and Recommendations provides greater detail on the roles of these agencies in the community and avenues for partnerships.

## CAPITAL NEEDS

The expansion of 8th Street Park, development of several Greenway trails, and other park renovations will require a financial commitment from the Town over the next 10-15 years. These new improvements, along with almost $1 million in park renovations, would require a capital improvement program of ±$3.5 million if fully implemented. See Table 5-1 for details of the anticipated capital cost.

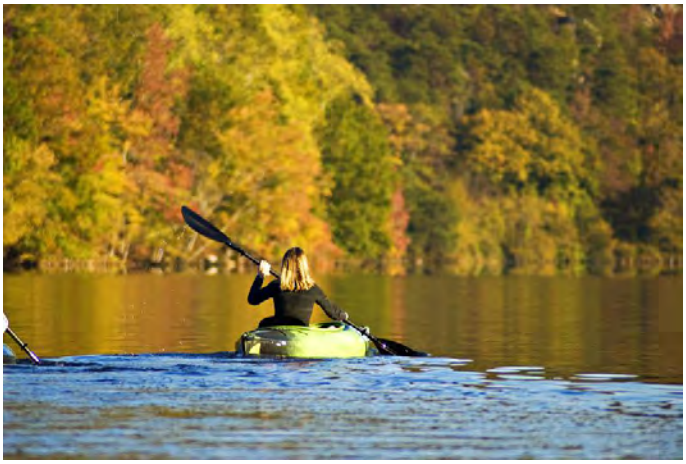
Section Four: Proposals and Recommendations and Section Five: Action Plan Implementation provide greater detail on improvements included in the capital improvements budget. Likewise, these sections provide strategies for funding the recommendations made as part of the comprehensive plan.

## 5-YEAR PRIORITY PLAN

This plan is developed as a ten year vision plan. As with any long range plan, the hardest part is identifying a way to get started and establishing a path for achieving the vision.

Based on public and staff input, the following tasks are recommended as plan priorities. Ultimately, elected officials will decide the order in which each project is undertaken and the schedule for completing each recommendation:

- Continue to develop the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee
- Expand 8th Street Park
- Develop a pedestrian connection to the Wil-Cox Bridge
- Develop a walking trail between 8th Street Park and Fred Stanback Educational Forest and Preserve



*Yadkin River*

# IMPACT OF CURRENT ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

In the past seven years, our country has experienced the greatest economic downturn since the Great Depression. Unemployment rates over the past several years have been higher than those experienced since the 1930s. The housing bubble burst, resulting in millions of foreclosures and falling home prices. The failing economy has resulted in significant reductions in government funds. Budget cuts in Washington and Raleigh have placed even greater stress on municipal and county agencies.

Spencer, like communities across the country, is faced with difficult decisions. Lower home values mean a smaller tax base, and a smaller tax base means making harder decisions about community services. Parks and recreation services are an important component of community life. Studies show that recreation resources add to the quality of life in communities that support parks. Even with this understanding, elected officials must carefully consider how to allocate funds for day to day operation and facility expansion.

The park and recreation needs identified in this planning document are significant for a small town, and it is understood that not all recommendations will be acted upon in the next ten years. Instead, it is the intent of this plan to identify a vision for the Town's park system and provide recommendations for reaching that vision. Town staff, working with community leaders and elected officials, will implement the recommendations as financial conditions allow.

**Table 5-1**

## Town of Spencer

## PARKS AND RECREATION COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN
## CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PLAN

| | Vision Plan | Priority Projects |
|---|---|---|
| **Existing Parks Renovation/Improvements** | | |
| Rowan Park Improvements | $150,000 | |
| ADA Improvements | | |
| Parking Improvements | | |
| Walking Trail | | |
| 8th Street Park Improvements | $750,000 | $750,000 |
| New Ball Field | | |
| Paved Walking Trail | | |
| Picnic Shelter | | |
| New Playground | | |
| Dog Park | | |
| Infrastructure Improvements | | |
| Planning & Design (10%) | $90,000 | $75,000 |
| **Renovation Total** | **$990,000** | **$825,000** |
| | | |
| **Land Acquisition** | | |
| 8th Street Park Expansion | $100,000 | $100,000 |
| 5 acres @ $20,000 | | |
| **Land Acquisition Total** | **$100,000** | **$100,000** |
| | | |
| **Park Development** | | |
| Downtown Civic Park | $250,000 | |
| Performance Area | | |
| Planning and Design (10%) | $25,000 | $0 |
| **Park Development Total** | **$275,000** | **$0** |
| | | |
| **Trail Development** | | |
| 8th Street Park/Stanback Forest Trail | $50,000 | $50,000 |
| Pedestrian Connection to Wil-Cox Bridge (±3 miles) | $1,500,000 | $1,500,000 |
| Planning and Design (10%) | $155,000 | $155,000 |
| **Greenway Development Total** | **$1,705,000** | **$1,705,000** |
| | | |
| **Special Use Facility** | | |
| Sprayground | $400,000 | |
| Planning & Design (10%) | $40,000 | |
| **Facility Development Total** | **$440,000** | **$0** |
| | | |
| **Total Capital Improvement Budget Cost** | **$3,510,000** | **$2,630,000** |

*Fred Stanback Educational Forest & Preserve*

# Section One
# Inventory

## INTRODUCTION

The first step in the master planning process is to inventory and assess the parks and facilities that are currently serving the citizens of Spencer  In this time of economic concerns and limited budgets, it is extremely important to utilize existing facilities to their fullest potential.  This section identifies the Town's existing parks, categorizes parks into classifications based on size/function, and inventories the existing facilities found in each of these parks.  In Section Three, this existing facilities information will be used to establish an assessment for future park and recreation needs.

For a small town, Spencer offers its citizens several very nice parks and recreational amenities. The Town has historically supported the youth baseball and softball association through its investment in 8th Street Park.  In addition to the active recreation opportunities found at 8th Street Park, the Town offers more passive recreation opportunities at Library Park, Rowan Park and Jefferson Street Park.  Most recently, the Town (working with the Central Carolina Land Trust of North Carolina) has acquired a wonderful nature preserve and environmental education forest (Fred Stanback Educational Forest and Preserve).

# COMMUNITY PARKS

## 8th Street Park 5.64 acres

8th Street Park has been the home of the Spencer Youth Baseball and Softball Association for many decades and several generations of Spencer families. The Youth Association provides an important role by operating youth athletic programs from this facility. This park and the Association serve the families of Spencer and northern Rowan County.

The ballfield complex is a wonderful facility for youth baseball. The main field has expansive spectator seating in a covered bleacher setting that makes it feel like a big league stadium. The secondary field, while not as large, also has covered seating.

The primary focus of the park is youth baseball. While there is a playground on the site, its location at the back of the property probably reduces the "non-baseball" use of this play area.

While the facilities at 8th Street Park have community significance and hold many wonderful memories for current and former players, the aging facility needs improvements. The Town generally maintains the grounds and buildings, while the Spencer Little League Association is responsible for game specific items, such as safety netting. A more formal lease agreement should be established to help define maintenance and financial responsibilities.

The following improvements should be considered in the next few years:

- Safety netting along the outfield fencing needs replacing
- Parking improvements
- Upgrades to the existing shelter at the rear of the property
- ADA audit and improvements

It should be noted that while 8th Street Park is being classified as a Community Park because it serves the entire community, Community Parks are typically much larger (20-30 acres) and usually provide a much wider variety of recreational activities. If it is to serve as a Community Park, the park should be expanded in size and facilities.

**Existing Facilities**
Youth Baseball Fields(2)
Playground
Picnic Shelters (2)
Restroom and Concession Building

*Covered seating at 8th Street Park Ballfield*

*Playground at 8th Street Park*

# NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

## Rowan Park 1 acre

Rowan Park is a typical Neighborhood Park that probably serves citizens from all of Spencer (and possibly beyond). The park site is on property which has considerable elevation change, so development of additional facilities will be limited. The park contains a group picnic shelter and three individual concrete picnic tables. The focal point of this park is a large play structure with a wide variety of play stations.

**Existing Facilities**
Playground
Picnic Shelter
Picnic Areas (4)

*Picnic Area and Shelter at Rowan Park*

*Rowan Park Playground*

Some improvements are needed at this park. These include:

- ADA audit and improvements
- Additional seating at play area
- Play equipment for younger children
- Repairs to concrete at shelter

# MINI/CIVIC PARKS

## Library Park 2 acres

The Library Complex is a wonderful civic place for the Town. The Library provides a community resource for books and other information as well as a place to read, relax and socialize. While a detailed study of the building is not a part of this park and recreation facility master plan, it is important to note that this library offers recreational programming opportunities. Community meetings, classes, and simple social interaction could all occur in this building. The Town sanctioned a group in 2005 to pursue options for this building and a Master Plan for a Library/Community Center was developed before the group ultimately disbanded. Using the Master Plan and establishing a partnership with a civic or nonprofit group to help fund and maintain the building in a greater capacity, remains a very viable option.

A very nice civic park surrounds the Library building. Library Park provides a very nice lawn space with trees and landscaping. Benches and the central gazebo provide opportunities for rest and relaxation. This area is used for special events and community gatherings, but could be programmed for additional uses.

*Library Complex*

*Gazebo at Library Park*

## Jefferson Street Park .25 acre

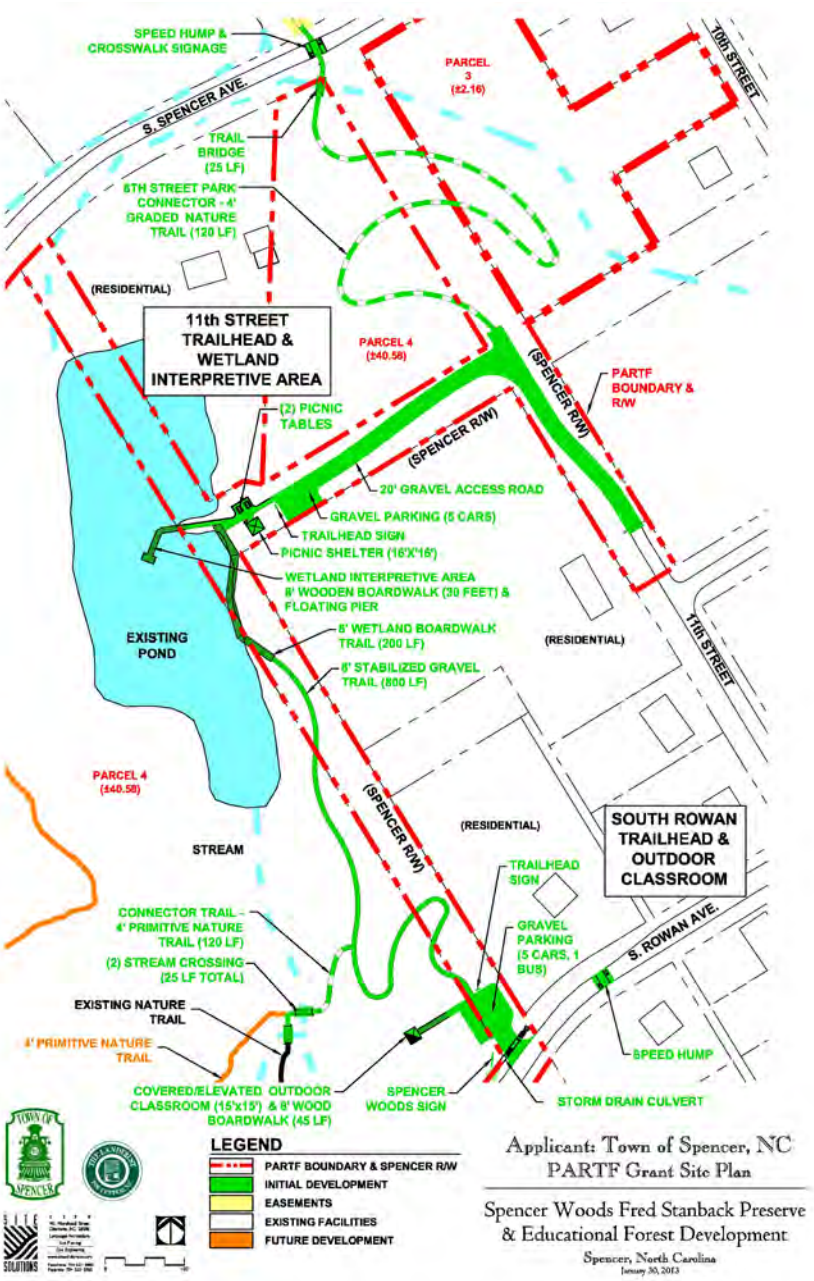
Jefferson Street Park is a small green space at the corner of Jefferson Street and Rowan Street. The only improvements in the park is a paved walk with several benches. While this park offers a nice green space, it provides no recreational opportunities. Its location on busy Jefferson Street, and its long, narrow shape restricts potential uses of this site.

*Jefferson Street Park*

## Fred Stanback Educational Forest & Preserve ±46 acres

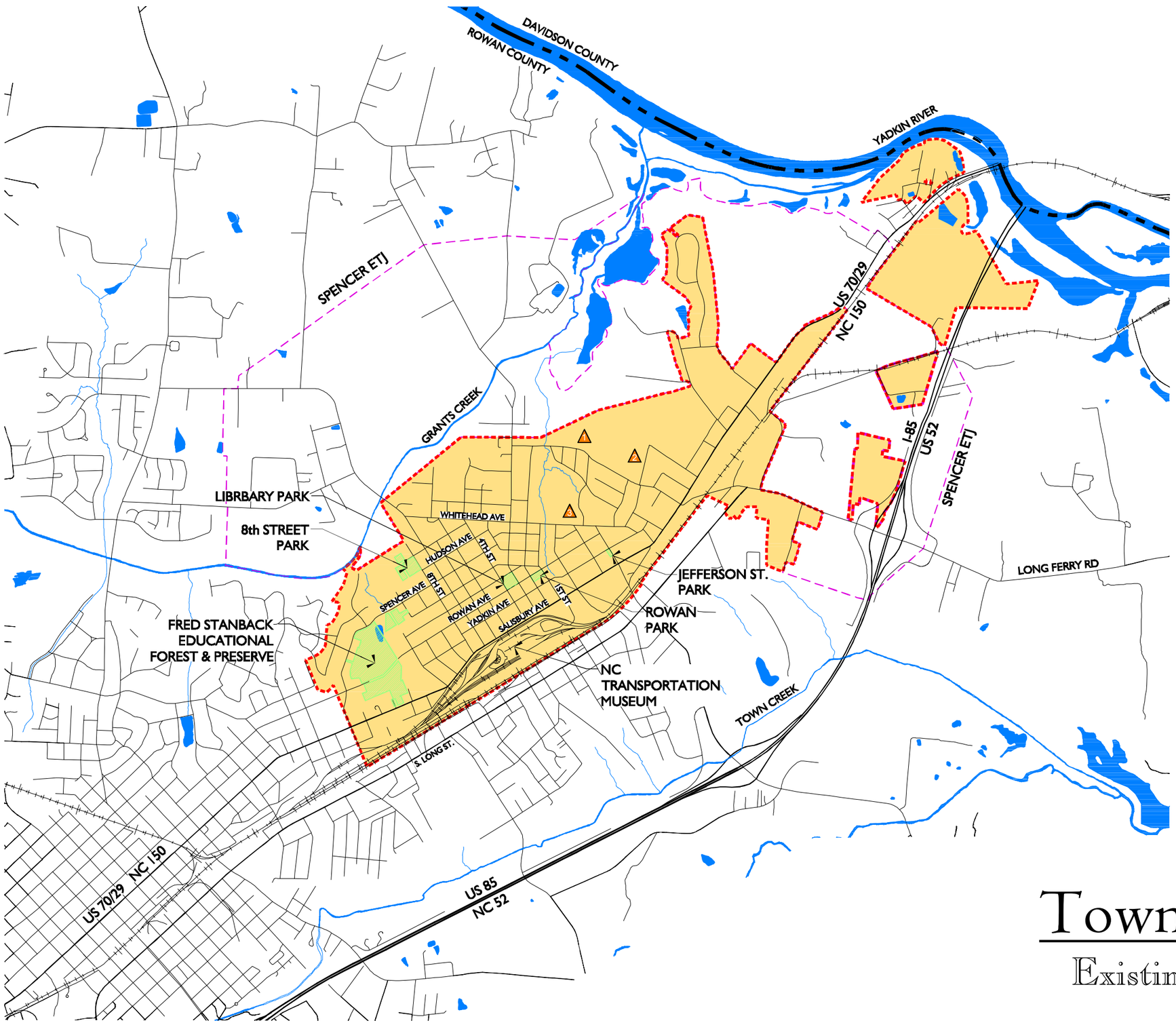
This wonderful property provides a unique opportunity for open space preservation, environmental education and passive recreation. The ±46 acres of wooded open space contains a small creek, pond/wetlands and a mature hardwood forest with a wide variety of native vegetation and wildlife. Through the vision of The Land Trust for Central North Carolina, the Town and a corp of dedicated friends of Fred Stanback, this site was saved from development and will now be preserved for future generations.

The master plan for this valuable site calls for limited development, but proposes nature trails, scenic overlooks, and ADA access. The Town, working with the Central Carolina Land Trust of North Carolina, recently received a Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) Grant that will improve public access to the site (gravel parking, gravel and nature trails, outdoor classroom area, and observation dock). These improvements will be constructed in the fall of 2015.



## Town of Spencer
## Inventory of Existing Facilities

| Type | Name | Acreage | Adult Baseball Fields | Youth Baseball Fields | Men's Softball Fields | Women's Softball Fields | Soccer Fields | Football Fields | Multi-purpose Fields | Basketball Courts (Outdoors) | Tennis Courts | Volleyball Courts | Shuffleboard Courts | Horseshoe Pits | Bocce Ball Courts | Playgrounds | Picnic Shelters | Trail/Greenway (Miles) | Mountain Bike Trail (Miles) | Water Access | Fitness Equipment | Community Garden | Camp Sites | Swimming Pool/Splash Pad | Dog Park | Skate Park | Grass Area/Open Space | Restroom/Concession Building | Picnic Area | Gardens/Passive Areas | Golf Course | Disc Golf Course | Gymnasium | Meeting/Community Rooms |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Community Parks | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 8th Street Park | 5.64 | | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | |
| | | 5.64 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Neighborhood Parks | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Rowan Park | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | 3 | | | | | |
| | | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mini Parks | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Jefferson Street Park | 0.27 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | |
| | | 0.27 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Civic Parks | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Library Park | 2.07 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| | | 2.07 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Nature Preserves | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Fred Stanback Educational Forest & Preserve | 46.72 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0.34 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | 46.72 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.34 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | **Totals** | **55.7** | **0** | **2** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **2** | **3** | **0.34** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **1** | **3** | **2** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **1** |




SITE SOLUTIONS
2320 W. Morehead Street
Charlotte, NC 28208
Landscape Architecture
Site Planning
Civil Engineering
www.sitesolutionspa.com
Telephone: 704-521-9880
Facsimile: 704-521-8955

0 1,000 2,000 4,000
1" = 1,000'

## Legend

- Town of Spencer Municipal Limits
- Municipal ETJ Limits
- Streets / Major Roads
- Rail Line
- Town of Spencer Parks

**TOWN OF SPENCER SCHOOLS**

1 - North Rowan Elementary School
2 - North Rowan Middle School
3 - North Rowan High School

# Town of Spencer

## Existing Features Plan

April 1, 2014

*"Day out with Thomas" at N.C. Transportation Museum*

# Section Two
# People of Spencer

## INTRODUCTION

An important step in understanding the park and recreational needs of Spencer is to develop an understanding of the people that make up the community. Section Two includes a review of the Town's population and demographics and looks at changes that are occurring in the community.

In addition to reviewing the Town's projected growth and demographic changes, the Needs Assessment included several exercises to engage the public to gather information on public demand/expectations for future parks. These initiatives included:

- Community Survey
- Stakeholder Interviews
- Public Workshop

Through these efforts, considerable insight was gained regarding the public's desire for parks and recreation programs and facilities. This section discusses the information gathered in preparation of this Comprehensive Master Plan.

# POPULATION & DEMOGRAPHICS

## History

Spencer (named for Samuel Spencer, first president of Southern Railway) began with the establishment of the railroad's mechanical shops in 1896. As the Spencer Shops were built, Southern Railway developed the Town of Spencer. Southern Railway divided the 85 acres adjacent to the shops into 500 lots and sold the lots to the workers and donated lots for religious institutions. The railroad also assisted in establishing the Town's YMCA.

The influx of new residents during the early 1900s saw many changes in Spencer. In 1905, Spencer was incorporated and issued the first bond for city improvements. These improvements included the erection of a water tower off South Rowan Avenue, a recorders court with the mayor as judge, a city hall, and a post office. In 1902 The Shops organized a semi-pro baseball team, which became state champions in 1906.

From the 1950s to 1970s, the former Spencer Shops were phased out and has now become the location for the North Carolina Transportation Museum. Founded in 1977, the Museum is the largest repository of railroad relics in North Carolina and attracts over 100,000 visitors annually. The 57 acre site features an authentic train depot, locomotives, rail cars, special events, exhibits, tours and educational programs.

The Town's attractive rolling piedmont landscape, strategic location (between the Charlotte Metro Area and the Triad regions), abundant water and sewer capacity, and excellent railroad and highway access allowed the Town to enjoy slow, steady growth from 1940-1980. During that period the Town's average growth rate was less than one percent. Since 2000, the population growth has reversed and the Town has lost population, but its close proximity to urban centers (Charlotte and the Triad) offer hope for future growth.

## The People of Spencer

The 2010 U.S. Census Report listed Spencer's population at 3,267 and estimated the 2013 population to be 3,285.

Based on the 2010 census, the majority of the Town's population is female (53%). The Town's female population is slightly more than the State's female population percentage (51.3%). The Town's population is also slightly older than North Carolina's general population. Persons over 65 represent 14.9% of the Town's population, while the State's senior population is almost 13%. Likewise, persons under 18 years old make up 28% of Spencer's population, while the State's younger population is only 23.9%. Similarly, the City's youngest population (those less than 5 years old) makeup 6.3% of the overall population while the State's youngest segment of the population comprise only 6.6% of the total population.

The Town's percentage of white population (58.2%) is significantly less than that of the remainder of North Carolina (68.5%). Likewise, the Town's percentage of black or African American is considerably more than the State's (32.8% in Spencer versus 21.5% for the State), as is the Hispanic population (9.2% versus State's 8.4%). Spencer has a significantly lower Asian (0.9% versus State's 2.2%) population than the rest of the state.

Almost 80% of the Town's population has a high school education or higher degree. About 11% of persons over 25 years of age in Spencer hold a bachelor degrees; significantly less than the State's general population (26.5%).

This lower level of education is reflected in a lower median household income. Spencer's median income in 2012 was ±$31,000; significantly less than North Carolina's median household income of $46,291. This median household income is reflected in the value of the median owner occupied housing. Spencer's median value of owner occupied housing from 2008-2012 was $102,000 significantly less than the State's median value. Spencer has a relatively high percentage of vacant housing units (16.6%). Likewise, almost half (46.8%) of the Town's housing units are renter occupied.

One third (30.5%) of Spencer's ±1,000 employed population over 16 listed their occupation as sales and office occupations. The next largest occupation listed (25.9%) was production, transportation, and material moving occupations, followed by management, business, science, and arts occupations (17.8), and service occupations (17.1%) .

Education, health care and social assistance is the largest industry in Spencer; employing 23.3% of the Town's working population. Other significant industries include manufacturing (21.5%), and retail trade (14.6%).

The review of population and demographic information from the 2010 census provides several factors that could impact the demand for parks and recreational facilities:

- Spencer has a relatively high percentage of seniors (those over 65 years of age).
- Spencer has a relatively high percentage of youth (those under 18 years of age).
- Spencer citizens have a relatively low income.
- Spencer has a relatively low median home value and high percentage of rental properties.

These demographic and economic indicators suggest a need for recreation opportunities for seniors and youth. The economic indicators suggest that user fees for recreational activities be kept low. The lower household values, and lack of business and commercial development in the Town, indicate a limited tax base to support major park improvements.

# PUBLIC INPUT

Perhaps the most important step in the planning process is gathering input from town residents with regard to their desires for public recreation. As part of the Master Plan process, the following initiatives were taken to gather public input:

- Community Survey
- Stakeholder Interviews
- Public Workshop
- Staff Meetings

The following is a summary of findings from each of the public input initiatives:

## Community Survey

In the spring of 2014, the Town sent a survey questionnaire to all households through its monthly newsletter. The survey questionnaire included several questions that asked town residents about their current park usage and their desire for various recreational activities.

Unfortunately, the return rate on the written survey was extremely limited. Less than 5% of the surveys were returned. In an effort to gather additional responses, the Town also made the questionnaire available at the town hall and at several town events.

Even with this additional effort, only 44 surveys were completed. While not the response rate desired, the survey does provide valuable information for the town.

Based on survey results, the parks of Spencer are well used. Over 80% (36 of 44 responses) of those responding indicated that they visited a town park. The two most used parks in town are 8th Street Park and Library Park. A majority of those responding to the survey said they also visited Rowan Park and the Fred Stanback Educational Forest and Preserve.

*8th Street Park*

Respondents felt both 8th Street Park and Library Park were quality facilities. The majority of those who used these two facilities felt the quality of the park was either very good or excellent. No one felt the quality of those parks was poor.

The town park that receive the least amount of attendance and received the lowest quality rating was Jefferson Park. The majority of those indicating that they had used Jefferson Park rated its quality as poor.

Those respondents that had not used a town park were asked why they had not visited a park. One of the responses most listed was lack of awareness of existing facilities.

Citizens were asked to identify facilities they (or members of the family) were interested in using. The facility most often listed was walking trails. Approximately 80% of those returning the survey indicated a desire for trails.

The second most popular answer was nature areas/wildlife habitat. Over two thirds (68%) of the respondents indicated an interest in natural areas. The third most popular facility listed was playgrounds. Over half (56%) indicated a desire for playgrounds.

Over half (52%) of respondents also indicated an interest in baseball and softball fields. Picnic areas and outdoor event/performance area tied for the fifth most popular activity. Half (50%) of those that responded indicated an interest in these facilities.

One of the final questions in the survey dealt with how the Town would fund any park and recreation improvements. Most people (88%) felt grants and donations should be used to fund improvements. Roughly half of the respondents supported local non-profit organizations as a funding source. One third felt user fees could be used, and roughly one fourth of the respondents supported municipal bonds. Less than 10% of the respondents felt taxes (property or sales) should be used to fund parks and recreation improvements.

## Stakeholder Interviews

One-on-one interviews were held with key community stakeholders to learn more about park needs.

Stakeholders included:
Meredith Williams, Assistant Principal North Rowan Middle School
Jeremy Bates, Spencer Little League
Willie Noles, Spencer Little League
Pastor Richard Gross, Oakdale Baptist Church
Scott Benfield, Town Alderman
Archie Jarrell, Community Advocate/Masonic Group
Joseph Cataldo, Community Advocate/Former Town Alderman

Interviews with community stakeholders were held Tuesday May 27th to discuss parks and recreation issues in the Town of Spencer. Those interviewed included stakeholders from the community with an interest or involvement in civic activities related to parks and recreation. Everyone interviewed was invited to provide input on issues they felt needed to be addressed in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The following is a list of the questions asked and a summary of comments made during the interviews.

**1. What do you like most about living in Spencer?**

Most all of the stakeholders interviewed are longtime residents of Spencer. Several are lifelong residents of the area. The most common answer to this question was the people of Spencer. Most everyone spoke of the friendly people living in Town and the small town feel. Several mentioned the ease of access to

larger cities (Charlotte and Greensboro) without the problem of living in a big city. One stakeholder mentioned the connectivity of sidewalks as a plus.

**2. What do you like least?**

There was more diversity in the answers to this question. Two stakeholders felt there was a problem with rental property in town and the Town should enact and/or enforce regulations that require landlords to keep properties in good condition. Others felt regulations are not the mechanism to resolve issues with rental property. Someone also mentioned there are many opportunities for improvement to the downtown area.

Several stakeholders felt the Town's lack of growth was a negative. It does not feel like a "vibrant" community.

**3. What role do parks and recreation facilities play in the quality of life of Spencer?**

**4. What role should they be playing?**

Everyone felt that parks and recreation facilities have the potential to improve the quality of life in a community. Most stakeholders felt there were some positive things about Spencer's existing parks. The 8th Street Park and the little league activities were mentioned by several stakeholders. Likewise, several people mentioned the Library Park and future use of the Fred Stanback Forest.

Several stakeholders said they are currently using the parks in Salisbury because they are relatively close and Salisbury's parks are nice.

Everyone interviewed felt that improved parks and recreation facilities and programs could play an important role in making Spencer a desirable place to live. By improving the community, parks will help attract new people to Spencer and in turn provide a positive economic outcome.

**5. What parks and recreation facilities do you think are serving the community well?**

Most all stakeholders listed the 8th Street Park as an important community treasure, with a long history of sports, family, fun, and community pride. Several people also mentioned Library Park and the community events that are held at the park.

The Transportation Museum, while not a town park, is an important part of Spencer and provides great opportunity for education, special events, and tourism.

Stanback Forest will provide the Town with an outstanding natural area and educational opportunity that will attract people from across the region.

**6. What parks and recreation facilities could be improved upon?**

**7. What new parks and recreation facilities should the Town consider?**

Several people mentioned making improvements to Rowan Park. Ideas for Rowan Park improvements included utilizing the "bowl" for a skateboard park. It was noted by several people that the Town has a number of youth skateboarders and currently they have to go out of town or ride on the streets. It was also noted that the play equipment has few opportunities for small children. Several stakeholders felt that lack of parking is a problem.

Several people suggested developing a dog park in one of the Town's parks.

One stakeholder suggested making improvements to town streets to provide bike lanes.

Several people mentioned acquiring land adjacent to 8th Street Park to expand ballfields and other park facilities like walking trails, picnic shelter improvements, and possibly primitive camping.

Several stakeholders also thought at some point in the future the Town should consider hiring someone to program and promote park activities.

**8. What role should Schools play in providing facilities that offer opportunities for recreational activities?**

Spencer is unique in that it has an elementary school, middle school and high school all located in close proximity to each other. There is already a spirit of community partnership between the schools and the Town. Community activities already occur at the schools and the schools are considered an important part of community life. School fields are currently used for some youth sports. Likewise, the Town has historically been helpful when unusual needs arise at any of the schools.

Everyone felt this cooperation between the Town and school is beneficial and should be built upon if the Town is going to expand/improve its park and recreation offerings.

**9. What role should the County play in providing parks and recreation facilities?**

Most stakeholders felt the County could be a resource for support, information and guidance as it develops/improves its parks. Several people noted the support and assistance the County provided in developing plans and the grant application for the Stanback Forest, as an example.

The County is also an important provider of parks to town residents through its existing parks; especially Dan Nicholas Park.

Salisbury is another partner that the Town should consider as it looks to improve its parks. Many town residents are currently using Salisbury parks for their recreational needs. City Lake Park was mentioned as a park that is regularly used by town residents. Likewise, most stakeholders mentioned Salisbury's parks as an example of the quality of parks Spencer should try to develop. While it is recognized that the City of Salisbury will not become a park and recreation provider in Spencer; just a source of information and guidance. An example of this guidance was the assistance they provided in the development of plans and grants for the Stanback Forest. In addition, because of the close proximity of their parks, any plan for parks in Spencer should be developed with knowledge and understanding of Salisbury's existing and proposed parks; especially in the areas immediately adjacent to the Town's western ETJ.

**10. Are there other thoughts or comments you would like to share with regard to this plan?**

- Library Park should be programmed with more activities. Develop a summer series of concerts or movies in the park.
- The Town owns a number of vacant lots around town. These lots could be used to develop community gardens. The schools, 4-H club, Cooperative Extension Agency and others could be organized to assist in this program.
- The Town should explore the expansion of 8th Street Park. The land behind the fields is undeveloped and could be purchased for expansion of a new field and new park amenities. Additional land would allow the Town to develop a broader range of recreation activities; providing opportunities for town residents beyond youth athletics.
- Several people mentioned the old finishing plant property on the river and expressed a desire to see this property, if developed by a private entity, have some public access to the river.
- Several people mentioned Davidson County's decision to maintain the Wil-Cox Bridge as a pedestrian access across the river as important. The Town should develop a pedestrian connection between the bridge and the downtown area.
- The faith based community should be considered as the Town plans for parks and programs. The Town has several active, vibrant churches that provide activities for youth, seniors, and families. The Town's churches work together in a cooperative spirit. They could be useful as the Town tries to program parks and recreation facilities. Several people mentioned the Circus Train Puppet Show that was held in Library Park as an example. Several churches have gymnasiums and provide a variety of programs for youth and seniors.
- Walkable communities are desirable. Wide sidewalks, park trails, and Greenways should be part of the plan.
- There is a community pool (Forestdale Pool) in

Spencer. There is not a need for the Town to build a swimming pool.

- The pond at the Stanback Forest has potential for recreation. The pond should be cleaned up and stocked with fish. Construct a trail around the pond.
- The Town should continue to work with the Transportation Museum to develop programs and connections that would encourage visitors to the Museum to visit the Town's downtown area and parks. A pedestrian overpass to the Museum was once considered.
- Programs are needed for middle aged adults, as well as youth and seniors.
- A parks and recreation director could be helpful in expanding youth activities.
- A larger field at 8th Street Park would greatly expand youth athletics.

## Public Workshop

A public workshop was held to allow citizens to discuss community park needs and review preliminary recommendations. Approximately 10 citizens attended this workshop and provided valuable input on recreational needs.

Park Planner, Derek Williams began the meeting by thanking those in attendance for participating. The presentation began with a description of the planning process that will be utilized to develop the Master Plan. It was explained the planning process would include the following:

- Inventory
- Public Participation
- Development of Park/Recreation Standards
- Needs Assessment
- Plan of Action

Following a discussion of the planning process, attendees were asked to participate in a survey. As a group, participants were asked the following questions regarding current park use, desires for new/expanded parks and facilities and expectations on agency responsibilities for parks:

1. **What parks and recreational facilities are you currently using?**

- Dan Nicholas Park
- City Lake Park
- YMCA - swim camps
- Catawba College - nature trails
- Ruftys Senior Center - exercise/water aerobics
- Elementary School playground
- WWLTC - Life Center - 6th Street
- Lake Norman
- Library Park - sometimes

2. **Do you feel the existing parks and recreation facilities in Spencer are meeting your needs?**

   Everyone responded "No".
   Several comments were made:

- Dog Park needed
- Skateboard Park -possibly in Rowan Park
- Need youth facilities - baseball

3. **Are additional parks and recreational facilities needed?**

   Everyone responded "Yes".

   **If so, what facilities are needed?**

- Picnic shelter
- Fitness stations on walking trails
- Soccer field
- Aquatic facility - splash pad
- Disc golf
- Mountain bike trails

4. **What public agency or agencies should be responsible for providing additional facilities and programs?**

- Spencer Moose Lodge
- Civitan
- Jaycees
- Transportation Museum
- Churches
- Rowan County
- Salisbury
- Rowan Hospital
- Duke Power
- ALCOA

- Railroad Norfolk/Southern
- Center for Environment at Catawba College

**5. Would you say there is great need, some need or no need for additional park and recreation facilities in Spencer?**

| | |
|---|---|
| Great Need | 6 |
| Some Need | 4 |
| No Need | 0 |

**6. Is there anything else you would like to share with us as we begin writing this plan?**

- Programs are important; not just facilities.
- The Town's summer program, run by part-time intern, is an excellent example.
- A Dog Park would be a good facility that would serve many in the community.
- Community gardens on vacant lots.
- Movies at Library Park.

**Participants were then invited to identify recreation facilities they would like to see in the Town's parks. Participants were given green dots to vote on the list of facilities. The following are the results:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Walking or biking trails | 8 |
| Community garden | 7 |
| Dog Park | 6 |
| Playgrounds | 6 |
| Picnic shelters | 5 |
| Skateboard Park | 5 |
| Outdoor event/performance area | 4 |
| Swimming facility | 4 |
| Basketball courts | 3 |
| Nature study/observation areas | 3 |
| Tennis courts | 2 |
| Splash pad | 2 |
| Baseball fields | 1 |
| Football fields | 1 |
| Horseshoe pits | 1 |
| Open space or natural areas | 1 |
| Soccer | 1 |
| Bocce courts | - |
| Disc golf course | - |
| Equestrian trails | - |
| Fishing areas | - |
| Lacrosse fields | - |
| Recreation center/gymnasium | - |
| Softball fields | - |
| Volleyball courts | - |

## Staff Meeting

The Planning Consultant met with Town staff to discuss facilities, programming and operation needs. The following comments were made:

- There seems to be interest in the community for park improvements and possibly additional programs. This interest in parks and recreation must be tempered with the financial limitations of the Town budget.
- The Town would like to work with community partners to provide improved facilities and programs.
- The Town's Public Works Department is responsible for maintaining all of the Town's facilities; including parks. Any park improvements must be developed with an eye on long-term maintenance and operation cost.
- Town staff are working at full capacity with existing facilities and programs. Major expansion of parks and recreation facilities or programs may result in the need for additional staff.

*Play Spencer Little League at 8th Street Park*

# Section Three
# Recreation Standards & Needs Assessment

## INTRODUCTION

This section contains the analysis and assessment on which the recommendations of this Recreation and Parks Comprehensive Master Plan is based. It begins with a brief review of previous community planning efforts relevant to the town's parks. Next, we review how other communities are working to provide park and recreation facilities to their constituents, and national and state trends in park and recreation preferences (Appendices A and B). This review of previous planning studies and similar agencies is followed by a description of the park types that typically make up a park system (Appendix C). Using these park types as a backdrop, we developed standards for park and recreation facilities specifically for Spencer. These standards are then used as a basis for establishing a park and recreation facility needs assessment for the Town.

It should be noted that the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), in its 1995 report "Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines", determined there are no "national standards" for park development. Instead, the latest NRPA study recommends that each community is unique, and that standards reflecting the local "uniqueness" should be established.

This study looks at two types of development standards. The first analysis looks at total acreage of parkland within the system and how this acreage is broken into park types. From this study it is possible to see how Spencer's existing parks compare with other communities, both in overall park acreage and park types within this overall acreage.

The second analysis looks at recreation activities and the facilities required to program these activities. By establishing a population-based standard for various recreation activities, this study establishes the type and quantity of facilities the Town should develop in the future.

The design standards used in this study were derived from citizen input and input from the Town. The development of these standards is perhaps the most important step in this planning process.

*Mural at 8th Street Park*

# PREVIOUS PLANNING EFFORTS

## 2025 Land Use Plan

The Town of Spencer has not completed a comprehensive plan for recreation and parks previously, but the 2025 Land Use Plan called for improvements to the public perception of the Town. This initiative specifically identified improvements to the Town's quality of life as a means of improving the Town's image. Parks and recreation opportunities are widely perceived as a "quality of life" feature for a community.

While not specifically identified in the Town's Land Use Plan, staff and elected officials believe that park and recreation improvements have economic benefits by making the Town more attractive to potential new residents and businesses.

## Master Plan of the Carolina Thread Trail for Rowan County Communities

The Carolina Thread Trail (CTT) is a regional trail system made up of trails, greenways and blueways. The CTT covers a 15 county region of North and South Carolina and offers opportunities for biking, hiking, paddling and exploration of history and nature.

Rowan County residents recently participated in a master planning process that identified a long-term view for the development and implementation of trails and greenways within and between its communities. As a community located along the Yadkin River, the Town of Spencer is an important part of the CTT future. Corridors/connections to the CTT located in Spencer include a connection to Davidson County across the Wil-Cox Pedestrian Bridge, a connector to East Spencer, and a connector to Salisbury. All of these connectors could be tied via trail and sidewalk to the Town's downtown area, 8th Street Park, and Fred Stanback Educational Forest and Preserve.

Recommendations from the Rowan County Master Plan for the CTT should be considered as the Town considers improvements to its parks and trails.

## Business and Market Development Report Downtown Spencer

The Town worked with the North Carolina Small Town Main Street staff through the office of Urban Development to develop a report exploring economic factors impacting the Town's downtown area and makes recommendations for redevelopment. One of the factors considered in the report was Physical Environment and Amenities. Under this factor, streetscape/public spaces/connectivity opportunities were discussed. An important aspect of this factor was the availability and quality of public space in the downtown area. The study noted that very little public space is available in the Spencer downtown area. The large asphalt parking area in front of the Spencer Plaza was mentioned as potential green space and public amenity.

The report also identifies Spencer Woods (Fred Stanback Educational Forest and Preserve) as a potential public space that could be connected to the downtown area through the Town's sidewalk system. Likewise, the report references the proposed Stanback Loop Walking Trail that connects the Town's business district with residential neighborhoods.

## N.C. Transportation Museum Strategic Plan

In response to operational challenges created by the State's reduction in funding for the N.C. Transportation Museum, the Department of Cultural Resources developed a five year comprehensive business plan for the museum. The strategic report identified a desire to improve its draw for families and school groups. It specifically identified mothers as key decisions makers in visiting the museum. The report suggested that more on-site activities for children and families should be considered. While not mentioned in the report, one option to increase activities could be to increase opportunities within Spencer's downtown area or the Fred Stanback Educational Forest and Preserve. The development of a downtown park (with amenities) and/or promotion of the educational opportunities at the Fred Stanback Educational Forest and Preserve could promote attendance at the museum and provide activity in the downtown area.

## Completion & Connection A 10-Year Master Plan Growing the Visitor Economy In Salisbury-Rowan County, North Carolina

In 2012 the Rowan County Tourism Development Authority (RCTDA) and the Salisbury Tourism and Cultural Development Commission (STCD) worked together on a plan to expand the economic impact of tourism in Rowan County. The Plan was a ten year plan for tourism and includes a strategy and list of initiatives to expand regional tourism. Parks and recreation and the Transportation Museum were identified as two of the most significant aspects of the county.

With regard to parks and recreation, the report paid specific attention to hiking and biking opportunities. The report further discussed the importance of safe bike routes on roads and development of bike friendly trails. It also stressed the importance of multi-use trails. As the Carolina Thread Trail is developed connecting Rowan County to the Yadkin River and Wil-Cox Bridge, the Town of Spencer stands to become an attraction along the proposed trail corridor. The Town should continue to facilitate and pursue development of the trail in this area.

## National and State Studies on Outdoor Recreation Demand

Surveys designed to determine the demand for outdoor recreation have been conducted on the Federal level by the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors, the State of North Carolina, and various other organizations and associations.

Findings from these studies can be found in Appendices A and B: National and State Studies on Outdoor Recreation Demand and National Sporting Goods Association Survey.

## Classifications for Parks, Open Spaces & Greenways

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) establishes guidelines for parks, recreation, open space and greenways. These guidelines provide

information on the various park types that make up a community park system. This general classification of parks is used in developing recommendations for Spencer's park system. These guidelines are provided in Appendix C.

# STANDARDS FOR DEVELOPMENT

The first step in developing a recreation and park Needs Assessment is to establish standards for park and facility development. Tables 3A-Park Acreage on page 3-6, and 3A-Facilities on page 3-7, provide an overview of standards used for both park acreage and facilities. Each of these tables provide standards used by other North Carolina municipalities in establishing park and recreation needs. The final column on each of these tables indicates the standard of development recommended specifically for Spencer. These recommended standards are based on input received from the survey, public workshop and stakeholder interviews.

It should be noted that the standards for development established for Spencer are (in most cases) similar to other communities in North Carolina. Likewise, the needs that are identified in the plan will lead the Town to develop parks and facilities comparable to many other communities of similar size.

# PARK NEEDS

## Mini Parks

A standard of .1 acre for every 1,000 people in the service population has been established for Mini Parks. This standard of development is consistent with the standard used by many North Carolina communities. Based on this standard, the Town will need .35 acres of Mini Parks in the next ten years. Jefferson Street Park is the Town's only public Mini Park. In addition to this public park, there may be residential communities that offer private facilities similar to a Mini Park.

Many communities are placing lower priority on Mini Parks, because their small size limits the recreational opportunities offered.

Additional Mini Parks are not needed in Spencer at this time.

## Neighborhood Parks

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) proposes that communities develop Neighborhood Parks on a range of 1 - 2.5 acres of park land per 1,000 people. Utilizing the lower end of this range (1 acre/1,000), there will be a need for over 3.5 acres of Neighborhood Parks in Spencer.

Spencer has one Neighborhood Park, Rowan Park. Based on a standard of 1 acre of park land per 1,000, there is not a need for additional Neighborhood Parks.

## Community Parks

Based on a park land/population ratio of 5.0 acres per 1,000 population, citizens of Spencer have a current need for approximately 17.5 acres of Community Park. Since Community Parks are typically in the 30-50 acre range, that would imply one Community Park meets citizen's current needs for this park type. 8th Street Park currently serves as the Town's Community Park. This park is extremely small by Community Park standards. Expanding the park would allow it to meet Community Park standards.

## District Parks

Rowan County currently provides several larger parks in the general vicinity of Spencer. These county parks meet Spencer's need for a District Park.

Utilizing a standard of 5 acres per 1,000 for District Park development (a standard utilized by most communities) there is not a need for additional District Parks to serve the citizens of Spencer.

## Regional Parks

Two State Parks (Lake Norman State Park and Morrow Mountain State Park) are within relatively easy driving distance of Spencer. These two State Parks meet Spencer's needs for a Regional Park.

*Morrow Mountain State Park*

# FACILITY NEEDS

Minimum standards for recreational facilities (i.e., ballfields, courts, picnic shelters, etc.) proposed for the Town were developed from a review of standards used by other communities similar to Spencer, and from input gained during the public input process. These standards, identified in Table 3A-Facilities, Recreation Facilities Standards (page 3-6), and discussed in greater detail in Section Four: Proposals and Recommendations, are the minimum recreation facility standards for the Town.

Based on these standards, the number of public facilities needed in the park system are identified in Table 3B-Facilities, Recreation Facilities Needs Assessment (page 3-9), and summarized on the following table.

The "Existing Facilities" column indicates the number of existing recreation facilities the Town currently provides. The "Facility Need" column identifies the total number of additional facilities needed.

| | Existing Facilities | Facility Need |
|---|---|---|
| Adult Baseball Fields | 0 | 0 |
| Youth Baseball Fields | 2 | 0* |
| Softball Fields | 0 | 0 |
| Football Fields | 0 | 0 |
| Soccer Fields | 0 | 1 |
| Basketball Courts | 0 | 0 |
| Tennis Courts | 0 | 1 |
| Volleyball Courts | 0 | 0 |
| Horseshoe | 0 | 0 |
| Shuffleboard Courts | 0 | 0 |
| Playground | 2 | 0 |
| Picnic Shelters | 3 | 0 |
| Hiking/Jogging Trails (miles) | 0 | 1.4 |
| Amphitheater | 0 | 1 |
| Community Garden | 0 | 1 |
| Swimming Pool | 0 | 0 |
| Rec. Center w/Gym | 0 | 0 |
| Rec. Center w/out Gym | 0 | 0 |
| Dog Park | 0 | 1 |
| Skate Park | 0 | 1 |
| Disc Golf | 0 | 0 |

*Development of a larger youth field at 8th Street Park could expand opportunities for a wider age group.

## Table 3A - Park Acreage
## Spencer

# Standards for Acreage by Park Classification
# Comparison of Standards

| Park Types | Aberdeen | Landis | Belmont | Mebane | NRPA | Spencer |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mini Parks** | 1-2 Acres/Park (.5 Acres/1,000) | 1-3 Acres/Park (.5 Acres/1,000) | 1-2 Acres/Park (.25 Acres/1,000) | 1-2 Acres/Park (.25 Acres/1,000) | .25-1 Acres/Park (.25-.5 Acres/1,000) | 1-2 Acres/Park (.1 Acres/1,000) |
| **Neighborhood Parks** | 7-15 Acres/Park (2 Acres/1,000) | 7-15 Acres/Park (2 Acres/1,000) | 10-15 Acres/Park (2 Acres/1,000) | 5-10 Acres/Park (2.5 Acres/1,000) | 5-10 Acres/Park (1-2 Acres/1,000) | 5-10 Acres/Park (1 Acres/1,000) |
| **Community Parks** | 20-30 Acres/Park (2.5 Acres/1,000) | 40-100 Acres/Park (8 Acres/1,000) | 20-30 Acres/Park (2.5 Acres/1,000) | 40-80 Acres/Park (5 Acres/1,000) | 30-50 Acres/Park (5-8 Acres/1,000) | 30-50 Acres/Park (5 Acres/1,000) |
| **District Parks** | 200 Acres/Park (5 Acres/1,000) | NA | 200 Acres/Park (5 Acres/1,000) | ±100 Acres/Park (5 Acres/1,000) | +75 Acres/Park (5-10 Acres/1,000) | 100-200 Acres/Park (5 Acres/1,000) |
| **Regional Parks** | 1,000 Acres/Park (10 Acres/1,000) | NA | 1,000 Acres/Park (10 Acres/1,000) | ±200 Acres/Park (10 Acres/1,000) | NA | ±200 Acres/Park (10 Acres/1,000) |

## Table 3A - Facilities
## Spencer

# Recreation Facilities Standards
# Comparison of Standards

| | NRPA Guidelines | State Standard | Aberdeen | Landis | Belmont | Mebane | Spencer |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Fields** | | | | | | | |
| Adult Baseball | 1/20,000 | 1/15,000 | 1/12,000 | 1/15,000 | 1/10,000 | 1/20,000 | 1/10,000 |
| Youth Baseball | N/A | N/A | 1/2,500 | 1/10,000 | 1/2,000 | 1/3,000 | 1/2,500 |
| Softball | N/A | N/A | 1/7,500 | 1/5,000 | 1/5,000 | 1/6,000 | 1/5,000 |
| Football | 1/5,000 | 1/5,000 | 1/5,000 | 1/20,000 | 1/5,000 | 1/10,000 | 1/5,000 |
| Soccer | 1/5,000 | 1/5,000 | 1/3,000 | 1/10,000 | 1/5,000 | 1/2,000 | 1/3,000 |
| **Courts** | | | | | | | |
| Basketball | 1/5,000 | 1/5,000 | 1/5,000 | 1/5,000 | 1/5,000 | 1/5,000 | 1/5,000 |
| Tennis | 1/2,000 | 1/2,000 | 1/2,000 | 1/2,000 | 1/ 2,000 | 1/2,000 | 1/2,000 |
| Volleyball | 1/5,000 | 1/5,000 | 1/5,000 | 1/10,000 | 1/5,000 | 1/5,000 | 1/5,000 |
| Shuffleboard | 1/2,000 | N/A | 1/5,000 | 1/10,000 | 1/5,000 | 1/10,000 | 1/5,000 |
| Horseshoe | 1/5,000 | N/A | 1/2,000 | 1/10,000 | 1/5,000 | 1/10,000 | 1/5,000 |
| **Outdoor Areas** | | | | | | | |
| Picnic Shelter | 1/ 2,000 | N/A | 1/2,000 | 1/3,000 | 1/3,000 | 1/1,500 | 1/1,500 |
| Playground Activities | N/A | 1/1,000 | 1/1,000 | 1/1,000 | 1/1,000 | 1/1,500 | 1/1,500 |
| **Trails** | | | | | | | |
| Hiking/Fitness/Jogging | 1/region | .4 mile/1,000 | .4 mile/1,000 | .4 mile/1,000 | .4 mile/1,000 | .4 mile/1,000 | .4 mile/1,000 |
| Bicycling/Urban | 1 mile/2,000 | 1 mile/1,000 | | 1 mile/1,000 | 1 mile/1,000 | 1 mile/2,000 | 1 mile/1,000 |
| **Specialized** | | | | | | | |
| Rec. Center w/Gym | 1/ 25,000 | N/A | 1/10,000 | 1/20,000 | N/A | 1/15,000 | 1/20,000 |
| Rec. Center w/out Gym | 1/10,000 | N/A | 1/10,000 | | 1/20,000 | 1/15,000 | 1/20,000 |
| Outdoor Pool | 1/20,000 | 1/20,000 | 1/20,000 | 1/20,000 | 1/20,000 | 1/20,000 | 1/20,000 |
| Golf Course | 1/25,000 | 1/25,000 | 1/50,000 | N/A | 1/25,000 | 1/25,000 | 1/50,000 |
| Disc Golf | N/A | N/A | | | | 1/20,000 | 1/10,000 |
| Skateboard Park | N/A | N/A | | | | 1/20,000 | 1/5,000 |
| Dog Park | N/A | N/A | | | | 1/20,000 | 1/3,000 |
| Amphitheatre | 1/20,000 | N/A | | | | 1/10,000 | 1/3,000 |
| Community Garden | N/A | N/A | | | | 1/15,000 | 1/3,000 |

## Table 3B - Park Acreage
## Spencer

# Park Sites and Acreage Needs Assessment
# Current Needs

| Park Types | 2014 Existing Facilities | Standard for Development | Current Demand 3,500 | Current Need 12,500 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mini Parks** | 1 Park<br>.27 acres | 1-2 Acres/Park<br>(.1 Acres/1,000) | 1 Parks<br>.35 Acres | Needs Met |
| **Neighborhood Parks** | 1 Park<br>1 Acres | 5-10 Acres/Park<br>(1.0 Acres/1,000) | 1 Parks<br>3.5 Acres | Needs Met |
| **Community Parks** | 1 Park<br>±6 Acres | 30-50 Acres/Park<br>(5 Acres/1,000) | 1 Park<br>17.5 Acres | Needs Met* |
| **District Parks** | County Parks | 100-200 Acres/Park<br>(5 Acres/1,000) | 1 Park<br>17.5 Acres | Needs Met by County |
| **Regional Parks** | State Parks | ±200 Acres/Park<br>(10 Acres/1,000) | 1 Park<br>35 Acres | Needs Met by State |

Existing parks
Mini Park: Jefferson Street Park
Neighborhood Park: Rowan Park
Community Park: 8th Street Park
District Park: Dan Nicholas Park (Rowan County Park)
Regional Park: State Park

* 8th Street Park can meet the need for a Community Park if land and facilities are expanded.

## Table 3B - Facilities
## Spencer

# Recreation Facilities Needs Assessment
# Current Needs

| | 2014 Standard | Existing Facilities | Current Demand (3,500) | Current Need |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Fields** | | | | |
| Adult Baseball | 1/10,000 | 0 | 0 | - |
| Youth Baseball | 1/2,500 | 2 | 2 | - |
| Softball | 1/5,000 | 0 | 0 | - |
| Football | 1/5,000 | 0 | 0 | - |
| Soccer | 1/3,000 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| **Courts** | | | | |
| Basketball (outdoor) | 1/5,000 | 0 | 0 | - |
| Tennis | 1/2,000 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Volleyball | 1/5,000 | 0 | 0 | - |
| Horseshoes | 1/5,000 | 0 | 0 | - |
| Shuffleboard | 1/5,000 | 0 | 0 | - |
| **Outdoor Areas** | | | | |
| Playgrounds | 1/1,500 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| Picnic Shelter | 1/1,500 | 3 | 2 | - |
| **Trails** | | | | |
| Hiking/Fitness/Jogging | .4 miles/1,000 | 0 miles | 1.4 miles | 1.4 miles |
| **Specialized** | | | | |
| Recreation Center w/ Gym | 1/20,000 | 0 | 0 | - |
| Recreation Center w/o Gym | 1/20,000 | 0 | 0 | - |
| Swimming Pool | 1/20,000 | 0 | 0 | - |
| Disc Golf | 1/10,000 | 0 | 1 | - |
| Skate Park | 1/3,000 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Dog Park | 1/3,000 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Amphitheater | 1/3,000 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Community Garden | 1/3,000 | 0 | 1 | 1 |

*Train Depot at North Carolina Transportation Museum*

# Section Four
# Proposals & Recommendations

## INTRODUCTION

The Town of Spencer has been engaged in providing parks and recreational activities for its citizens for many generations. The ballfields at 8th Street Park and the playground on Rowan Street have long been centers for community activity and good wholesome family fun. Likewise, the civic lawn and comfortable benches at Library Park provide a great opportunity for passive recreation and community events.

The Town's recent commitment to manage and operate the Fred Stanback Educational Forest and Preserve greatly expands the Town's park property and provides a new type of low impact recreation and environmental education.

Elected officials recognize the importance parks and recreation activities play in the quality of life and have decided to identify current and future parks needs. By developing a vision for community park needs, elected officials will be able to identify steps to take to ensure park and recreational needs are met. Identification of these recreational needs/opportunities come at a time when Spencer (like most communities in North Carolina) is attempting to grow out of the nation's worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. Finding the revenue to improve its parks must be balanced with the reality of the current economic conditions; therefore, it will require a balanced Plan of Action (discussed in Section Five) that seeks partnerships with other community agencies.

# COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Spencer is not alone in its mission to provide parks and recreational facilities to its citizens. There are a number of public and private agencies and organizations in the community that share in that role.

Rowan-Salisbury Schools have three excellent schools located in Spencer. North Rowan Elementary, Middle and High Schools offer their students a wide range of athletic facilities. Some of those facilities are currently being used by the Town for non-school recreational purposes. The exploration and expansion of joint use opportunities at these schools would benefit taxpayers.

Rowan County offers programs and facilities through their Parks Department. Several county parks are relatively close to the citizens of Spencer, and provide recreation opportunities typically found in larger parks. Utilization of county parks meets the demand for several park needs.

Another player with the mission of improving community health and quality of life is Rowan Regional Hospital. The Town should look for opportunities to partner with the hospital in the promotion of healthy lifestyles.

Finally, the private sector plays an important role in providing recreational opportunities in the community. Fitness clubs, neighborhood swim clubs, churches, and other private or quasi-private organizations provide valuable recreation opportunities to the citizens of Spencer. The facilities and programs these private sector organizations provide should be considered as Spencer plans development of future facilities.

To determine specific park and recreation recommendations for Spencer, it is essential to clearly understand how the Town will interface with the other recreational providers in the community. This cooperative effort will eliminate duplication of facilities and services. The proposals in this Master Plan are based on the assumption that community partners will work together to meet the parks and recreational needs of Spencer residents.

## State of North Carolina

Two State Parks (Lake Norman State Park and Morrow Mountain State Park) are within a relatively short drive of Spencer. It is anticipated that the State of North Carolina will continue to maintain and operate all State Parks within the region. Spencer, along with other nearby government agencies, should express their interest to see these parks enhanced to their utmost potential. This may include the expansion of facilities and recreational opportunities. The State should continue to offer a variety of recreational facilities and programs on a regional basis. In addition, the State should be the provider of regional State Parks that include opportunities for camping, fishing, biking, and special facilities of regional and statewide interest.

*Lake Norman State Park*

## Surrounding Park and Recreation Agencies

Rowan County provides parks and recreation services to all county residents through its parks and recreation department. As noted in other sections of this document, several county parks, or natural areas, are within easy driving distance of Spencer. These parks and services play an important role in providing parks to the citizens of Spencer and eliminate the need for development of large parks by the Town.

Town staff should meet annually with park and recreation agencies operating within the region to communicate with each other in an effort to minimize duplication and maximize cooperative planning.

## Rowan-Salisbury School System

The Town has historically collaborated with other community agencies and organizations in community events. While the Town has not partnered with the schools to develop facilities that serve the needs of both students and citizens, there has been a collaborate spirit with the local schools on some programs and use of facilities.

At this time, the relationship between the Town and schools seems to be positive. In the future cooperative efforts could be explored that might include recreational use of school facilities beyond normal school day activities.

## Rowan Regional Medical Center

Citizens of Spencer have access to an outstanding medical facility in Rowan Regional Medical Center. Located in Salisbury, this facility provides residents of Spencer and the surrounding area with excellent health care. Recent studies on obesity and healthy lifestyles have made it apparent that a community's health is linked to regular physical activity. Many of these activities could be provided in conjunction with the Town.

The Hospital and Town should explore opportunities to work together to assist citizens in achieving a more active lifestyle.

*Rowan Regional Medical Center*

# SPENCER PROPOSALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The Town, while not providing a Recreation and Parks Department, currently offers its citizens a variety of recreation opportunities through its parks and recreational facilities. These parks provide opportunities for both active and passive recreation.

The City's park system is primarily oriented toward smaller parks (Neighborhood and Mini Parks), but expansion of 8th Street Park could expand the Town's park offerings.

The Town's existing parks provide a solid foundation of recreation facilities and green space, however, there are a number of areas where expansion and improvements are needed.

The Town should work with other agencies in the community to provide the park land and facilities that will be required. This collaborative effort should include working with the local schools, the county, and adjacent municipal departments to minimize duplication of facilities by developing and maintaining joint use agreements wherever possible.

Through the planning and public involvement process, standards for park acreage and recreation facilities have been developed. These standards were defined in Section Three: Standards and Needs Assessment, and identified in Table 3A- Park Acreage, and Table 3A- Facilities.

Utilizing the standards for development and applying them to the Town's current and projected population, a Needs Assessment for both parks and recreation facilities was developed. The summary of this Needs Assessment is found in the tables at the end of Section Three.

While the tables provide "the numbers" of the Needs Assessment, this section will define the reasoning behind the numbers and provide a description of how the numbers are used to provide recommendations that will ultimately guide the department in the coming decade.

We begin with an overview of the different park types found in the Town's service area and how these parks will be developed in the future.

*Kerr Mill at Sloan Park*

## Regional Parks

Typically, small towns do not provide Regional Park facilities. Instead, county or state agencies are usually the provider of this park type.

Rowan County offers county residents five Regional and District Parks located throughout the county. Two of these larger natural areas are within relatively easy driving distance of Spencer. Eagle Point Nature Preserve is a 100 acre preserve located along the Yadkin River. It provides nature trails for hiking and mountain biking. Dunn's Mountain Park is another natural area, made possible through the Land Trust for Central North Carolina. Both of these natural areas provide valuable low impact and passive recreation opportunities for Town residents.

In addition to Rowan County parks, there are several State Parks within relatively easy driving distance of Spencer. Morrow Mountain State Park in Albemarle and Lake Norman State Park provide a wide variety of active and passive recreation opportunities, as well as access to unique natural areas.

With these large Regional Parks in relatively easy access to Spencer residents, the Town should not focus its attention on the development of additional Regional Parks.

## District Parks

District Parks are another large park type often provided by county agencies or larger municipalities. These parks are typically in the 100 acre range, and provide a wide variety of recreational opportunities.

Rowan County has a very good parks department and (as noted above) provides several parks and nature preserves for county residents. Rowan County has an outstanding District Park in Dan Nicholas Park. This large park is within a few minutes of downtown Spencer. It offers a wide variety of active and passive recreation opportunities.

As with Regional Parks, the Town of Spencer's residents are having their needs for District Parks met by facilities operated by Rowan County.

## Community Parks

Community Parks are an important component in most municipal park systems. These parks are usually large enough (30-50 acres) to provide both valuable active recreation opportunities and preservation of undeveloped open space and passive recreation areas.

The Town of Spencer does not have a true Community Park, but 8th Street Park provides a center of activity for youth sports that attracts people from throughout the community. In some ways, it serves as the Town's Community Park.

Several community stakeholders and several participants in the public workshop (see Section Two: People of Spencer) suggested improvements should be made to the 8th Street Park. Likewise, several people suggested purchasing adjacent property to allow for expansion of facilities. The acquisition of additional property at the 8th Street Park could allow the park to grow in size and in variety of recreational opportunities.

*8th Street Park*

Currently, the entire facility is focused on youth athletics or providing support facilities (playground, picnic shelter, etc.) for spectators and players. The expansion of the property would allow expansion of the ballfields, and could also provide opportunities for new activities (trails, court games, nature study, primitive camping, etc.).

The Town should consider expansion opportunities of this park by looking at adjacent property, evaluating its park development potential, and discussing acquisition opportunities. Expanding the park 5-10 acres would allow the ballfields to become the Town's Community Park. A Master Plan should be developed for this park to fully explore expansion opportunities.

## Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood Parks play an important role in providing both active and passive recreation in most municipal park systems. These parks, usually in the 5-10 acre range, are large enough to include both active and passive recreation opportunities. Most Community Parks also serve as a Neighborhood Park to those citizens living within a mile radius.

Spencer has one Neighborhood Park, Rowan Park. Rowan Park is small by Neighborhood Park standards, but the activities provided are similar to those found in a Neighborhood Park. As noted in the comments from the stakeholder interviews and public workshop, this park is relatively popular, but most people feel there are improvements needed. Expansion of facilities at Rowan Park must be carefully considered because of the rolling topography of the site.

Based on the importance of the park and need for additional recreational activities, a Master Plan should be developed for the park, which will identify park improvements.

One component that should be addressed as the Master Plan is developed is ADA access. Currently there are ADA access issues that will need to be corrected as part of any future park development.

## Mini Parks

Mini Parks are the smallest of the park types. These parks typically are less than an acre and provide a limited range of activities (playground, picnic shelter, benches, etc.).

Mini Parks, like Neighborhood Parks, provide relatively limited recreation facilities, but are located in close proximity to the service population they serve. Spencer has one Mini Park; Jefferson Street Park. Unfortunately, the park offers no facilities other than a walkway and bench. The narrow property configuration and adjacent busy street make this an unlikely location for recreational activities.

## Civic Parks

Civic Parks are community spaces that often provide a sense of place for a town or city. The size and form of Civic Parks may vary considerably. Likewise, how the spaces are used and programed vary. Civic Parks may include urban plazas, community green spaces and lawns, memorials, etc.

The Town has an excellent Civic Park in the Library Park. This town green space provides a wonderful place to sit, relax and enjoy a good book. Located immediately adjacent to the Town's library, there is a constant flow of people and great program opportunities with library events.

*Library Park*

Library Park is also a great location for special events and community gatherings. Several people during the public input process mentioned the possibility of holding more events in this park. Library Park provides a great location for Friday (or Saturday) night movies, local concerts, etc.

Another potential location for a Civic Park is in the downtown area adjacent to the Transportation Museum. Several stakeholders suggested the Town develop a small Civic Park in the downtown area to provide a place of civic pride and possibly attract visitors from the Transportation Museum. Several locations for this park have been discussed in the past. Further study is needed to determine the best location. This future park could be a good location for an interactive fountain or small sprayground.

## Open Space/Educational Forest

## Fred Stanback Educational Forest & Preserve

The Town of Spencer has the unique opportunity to have a ±46 acre nature preserve located in the very heart of the community. Private donors, working through the guidance of the Land Trust of Central North Carolina, were able to acquire the property for conservation and educational purposes. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) Grants allowed the purchase of the property and development of infrastructure to allow access to the site.

This property will provide a valuable open space/natural area for the Town. It will also provide opportunity for environmental education and research. The Town will be responsible for maintenance and operation of the site.

While there will be limited capital development cost needed for this property, the Town will be responsible for trash pick up, policing and on going maintenance of parking areas, trails, etc. In addition, this property offers opportunities for programming educational events; possibly in conjunction with the many school groups that visit the Transportation Museum.

Future plans for the Fred Stanback Educational Forest and Preserve include the development of trails to connect the forest with 8th Street Park. The property Master Plan also calls for a future environmental education center on the southern end of the property adjacent to Salisbury Avenue. Both of these recommendations should be explored further in the future.

*Fred Stanback Educational Forest and Preserve*

## Greenways

The most popular form of outdoor recreation in the nation is walking. This popularity was reflected in the survey that was conducted as part of this planning study and in comments made during the public meetings. Greenway trails are typically off-road trails that meander through neighborhoods and natural areas providing transportation corridors and recreational opportunities for walkers, joggers, roller bladers, and cyclists. The trail surface can either be natural or paved. Paved trails are normally eight to ten feet in width. Natural surface trail widths can vary based on conditions.

In addition to providing environmental protection and recreation opportunities, Greenways can produce economic development. The North Carolina Department of Transportation Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation recently conducted a study on a bicycle trail constructed along the northern Outer Banks region. This study determined that a $6.7 million investment in off-road bike paths and shoulder improvements produced an estimated $60 million annually in economic benefit. In addition, the study found that:

- Bicycle facilities in the area are an important factor to many tourists visiting the region.
- Investments in the bicycle facilities improved the safety of the area's transportation system.
- Bicycle activities include the benefits of health, fitness, quality of life, and the environment.

Greenways also offer a valuable alternative to automotive transportation. A Greenway trail often provides a linkage between communities, schools, churches, businesses, and parks.

The Town does not currently have any Greenways, but there have been several planning studies conducted by adjacent agencies that include Spencer as a destination for regional trails.

The Town is working with The Carolina Thread Trail (CTT) on a planning study of opportunities to connect their Greenway system to the Yadkin River, and ultimately, tie into the proposed Greenway in Davidson County. Likewise, Davidson County recently reached an agreement with NCDOT to take control of the Wil-Cox Bridge to provide a pedestrian link between Davidson County and Rowan County. Finally, the Land Trust for Central North Carolina has conservation easements and plans for nature trails along the Yadkin River.

With all of this trail activity in the immediate area, the Town should continue to facilitate and pursue these opportunities to connect to these regional initiatives. The first priority will be exploring opportunities to connect the downtown area with the river at Wil-Cox Bridge. Additional opportunities can be found in future Greenways developed along Grants Creek. This Greenway corridor has particular significance if the 8th Street Park is expanded or the Town works with the schools to develop a trail connection from the school campus to the natural area in this area.

Greenways should be developed in conjunction with other park and recreation programs in the area (Salisbury, Davidson County, CTT, Trust for Public Lands in North Carolina) to ensure they are coordinated with other planning efforts and that there is continuity between plans.

## Bikeways

The need for bikeable roads and the development of Greenways for biking was mentioned in many of the interviews and in the public meeting. With the focus on healthy lifestyles, the environment, and alternative transportation, there is a great need to develop and implement a bike plan.

*A Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan will provide valuable direction on making the Town more bikeable and walkable*

The Town recently applied for and was awarded a Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Grant through the North Carolina Department of Transportation, and is currently in the beginning stages of developing a Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. Findings from this plan (probably complete in 2015) should make recommendations that will improve bike routes throughout the Town.

The Town should encourage the State to include bike lanes whenever roadway improvements are made or new roads constructed. The Town should also address their subdivision process to ensure developers provide bicycle (and pedestrian) routes in the roadway improvements they construct as part of the development process.

The Town should consider applying for federal SAFETEA program non-vehicular transportation funds that encourage alternative means of transportation. These funds have been used to construct bike lanes and Greenway trails in communities throughout North Carolina. This funding source may be particularly applicable to the development of a trail connecting the downtown area to the Yadkin River.

# RENOVATION & EXPANSION OF EXISTING PARKS

As part of the ongoing planning and budgeting process, the Town staff annually establishes a list of capital improvement projects. This list of capital improvement needs is then used by the elected officials to establish yearly capital improvement budgets.

Important renovation projects which should be considered include:

- Improvements to Rowan Park
- Expansion of 8th Street Park
- Expansion of walk/trail to Yadkin River

# FACILITY PROPOSALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This report recommends the Town make several improvements to its existing parks by the year 2024. The improvements that will be made as part of these renovations and expansions will add new facilities to the Town's parks. The Town should consider the list of facility needs established in Section Three and described in greater detail as follows:

## Adult Baseball

Over the past five to ten years, the popularity of adult baseball has waned, both locally and across the nation. Based on this trend, a standard of one field per 10,000 people for the development of adult baseball fields is recommended. Utilizing this standard of field development, the Town does not have a pressing need for an adult baseball field, but may need one in the future.

## Youth Baseball

Youth baseball is a very popular sport in North Carolina and that popularity is evident in Spencer. The Town has two youth baseball fields, which are meeting current needs. There may be a need for additional fields in the future.

The need for a larger field at 8th Street Park was expressed by several people. The development of a larger field at the park would provide opportunities for a wider range of youth participants.

## Softball

Men's adult softball has traditionally been a popular sport in North Carolina. NRPA and NCDENR standards (one field per 5,000 people) reflect that popularity. While the sport is still popular in some areas, there has been a shift in demand of men's adult softball in many communities. This plan recommends a standard of development of one field per 5,000 people (comparable to other North Carolina communities). Based on this standard, the Town does not currently have a need for additional softball fields.

It should also be noted that changes in demand have now placed additional emphasis on women's softball. In the future, softball fields should be designed to accommodate this new area of play to allow for women's play.

## Football

Football's popularity as a community based youth sport has been reduced by the emergence of soccer and lacrosse. With this understanding, the standard for development of football fields is one field for every 5,000 people within the service community. This standard indicates that the development of a football field is not a priority.

## Soccer

Soccer is one of the fastest growing sports in America. That popularity is not evident in Spencer. This Master Plan reflects this demand by establishing a standard of one field for every 3,000 people within the service population. Utilizing this standard for development, the Town may need one field in the future.

An additional note on soccer, the demand for multi-purpose fields will be made more intense by the new interest in lacrosse. Played on a field very similar to a soccer field (they are slightly larger than soccer fields), lacrosse will likely increase in popularity and should be considered as the Town reviews its soccer field needs. This new sport should be taken into consideration since play for both sports can be programmed on similar fields. One method to accommodate the variety of field games (soccer, lacrosse, rugby, football) is to develop larger multi-use fields that can be used for a variety of field games.

## Basketball (Outdoor)

Basketball remains an extremely popular sport in the United States. Played by a variety of ages, and increasingly by females, this sport can be played either indoors or out. Currently the Town does not provide any outdoor courts. Based on national and state standards of development of one outdoor basketball court per 5,000 people, the Town currently does not have a need for outdoor courts.

## Tennis

Currently, there are no public tennis courts in Spencer. Based on standards used by NRPA and other similar sized towns (1 court/2,000 people) there is a need for a tennis court.

## Volleyball

The Town does not have any volleyball courts, but there does not appear to be a strong demand for the sport. Courts could be constructed in the future if demand is expressed. Volleyball courts are relatively small and can easily be added to existing parks.

## Shuffleboard

There has been no expressed demand for outdoor shuffleboard courts from citizens of Spencer; therefore, the Town does not have any courts. This activity provides a recreational outlet and opportunities for social interaction, particularly for older citizens.

The Town may consider building shuffleboard courts in parks if there is a demand for this activity in the future. Like volleyball courts, shuffleboard courts are relatively small and can easily be added to existing parks.

## Horseshoes

There has been limited demand for horseshoe pits in the community; therefore, the Town has no horseshoe pits in its parks. This activity provides a recreation outlet for social interaction, particularly for older citizens. The Town may consider building horseshoe pits if there is additional demand for this activity in the future. Like shuffleboard courts, horseshoe pits are relatively small and can easily be added to existing parks.

## Picnic Shelters

Picnicking was one of the most popular recreational activities listed by respondents at the public workshop. Spencer currently has one shelter at Rowan Park and two shelters at 8th Street Park. Based on a standard of one shelter per 1,500 people, there is not a need for additional shelters at this time. Improvements are needed at the picnic shelter behind the ballfields at 8th Street Park.

## Playgrounds

The Town has two playgrounds in its parks. In addition, there are playgrounds at the schools. These playgrounds are meeting overall playground needs, but improvements to existing playgrounds are needed. Safety inspections and ADA accessibility audits should be conducted at all existing playgrounds.

As new playgrounds are completed and existing playgrounds renovated, the department should replace wood fiber and sand surfaces with poured in place (PIP) safety surfacing. PIP surfaces provide wheelchair accessibility and reduces maintenance and lifecycle costs of the playgrounds.

## Pedestrian Trails

Walking is the number one outdoor recreational activity in the United States. Walking or biking trail use scored high in the public workshop comments and stakeholders identified the need for good trails, sidewalks, etc.

With this level of public demand, the development of walking trails should be a priority for future park development. A priority should be placed on walking trail development in all existing and future parks. A paved walking trail is an important component of all park types, and should be provided in all Neighborhood and Community Parks.

In the future, the Town should consider developing a citywide trail system. The concept of connecting parks and other points of interest with walking trails utilizing underdeveloped property along the Town's creeks was discussed in the public workshop and in one-on-one interviews.

The Town is currently involved in the Greenway planning initiative to gain trail access to the Yadkin River. This plan will provide valuable information about community connectivity and can serve as a beginning step in developing a Greenway Master Plan.

## Biking Trails

The Town is currently underway with administering a Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Grant it was awarded in July 2014. This plan will provide valuable recommendations on improving bike routes within the Town.

Biking is a rapidly growing outdoor recreational activity. The Town should expand opportunities for biking through the development of a Greenway trail system, including paths suitable for biking in existing and future parks, and through encouraging NCDOT to develop roads with bike lanes or wider shoulders to accommodate bikers. The Town should work with other stakeholders to help promote and facilitate new bikeways throughout the Town.

### Amphitheaters and Neighborhood Performing Areas

Currently, the Town does not have an amphitheater or outdoor performance area. Several stakeholders identified the desire for creating economic impact through festivals and community events. The development of an outdoor performing arts area could support this recommendation.

## SPECIAL USE FACILITIES

### Community Centers and Gymnasiums

While the development of an indoor recreation facility would provide much needed indoor program space for town use, it is highly unlikely the Town will develop an indoor recreation center in the foreseeable future. The cost of constructing and operating an indoor facility is significant. Instead, the Town may partner with a local agency or organization to joint use existing facilities in the community. Potential partners to consider include schools, churches, and the Transportation Museum. Ultimately joint use agreements may be developed with any of these organizations to allow public recreational use of their facilities. Under this scenario, the Town may be asked to provide rental fees, supervision and housekeeping.

### Swimming Pools

In the past, NRPA and NCDENR provided a standard for pool development of one pool for every 20,000 people. This standard was based on the concept of multi neighborhood or community pools. Today, with the high cost of operation and construction of swimming pools, very few agencies develop neighborhood/community pools to that old standard. Likewise, very few small towns provide swimming facilities.

### Spraygrounds

Spraygrounds are growing in popularity across the country. In addition to offering a water-based play experience, the play structures, sprays, etc. afford children of all ages a total play environment and are much more economical to operate than a standard swimming pool. A properly designed, large water park sprayground can serve as a regional draw, provide revenue to offset operational cost, and provide a beneficial economic impact to the surrounding area.

The development of a sprayground was discussed in the public workshop and stakeholder interviews. In the future, the Town may decide to develop some type of water spray feature in one of its parks. One option would be the development of an interactive fountain in a Civic Park.

# DEVELOPING A PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Historically the Town has been able to provide parks and recreation activities without having a designated parks and recreation director or department. Through the years, the Town has developed several parks and recreational facilities without a designated department. Likewise, the Town has worked with Spencer Little League to facilitate the youth athletic programs that occur at 8th Street Park. Special events at Library Park and in the plaza have been programmed by Town staff without a designated recreation director.

While the development of a parks and recreation department with a full time director may be a long term goal of the Town, it is highly unlikely it will occur in the foreseeable future. Instead, the Town will continue to rely on the Public Works Director to maintain existing parks and various Town staff to administer special events programming.

One option for future consideration would be hiring a part-time temporary program supervisor for summer events. The Town has chosen this option in the past as it provided day camp activities at 8th Street Park.

An interim step for the Town would be to continue using the Citizen Advisory Committee formed in this study to provide input to Town staff and the Town Board on issues relevant to parks and recreation. Advisory boards are typically made up of citizen leaders who have interest in community parks and recreation programs. A well organized Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee can provide valuable input to staff and elected officials on community recreational needs. The State of North Carolina, through its Recreation Resources Services, offers valuable information and guidance on establishing both advisory committees and parks and recreation departments.

# TRENDS IN PARK & RECREATION FACILITIES

The list of recreational activities developed for this Comprehensive Plan is based on national and state standards that have been used in park planning for decades. As noted earlier in this section, these standards are used as a point of reference, with the understanding that each community should develop standards that are unique to their specific needs.

One of the downsides of the national and state guidelines is that they are not updated often and fail to incorporate newer trends and activities. In the past decade, several new activities have been growing in popularity and should be considered in future park development. These activities include:

## Skateboard Parks and Extreme Sports

Skateboarding has been popular for several decades. In the past decade, many communities have recognized its popularity and have tried to provide a safe and vandal resistant setting for this creative sport. There was some interest in a Skateboard Park expressed in the stakeholder interview and public workshop. While not an immediate priority, a Skateboard Park may be considered as a future amenity.

## Disc Golf

Disc golf did not receive significant demand in the public workshop, but nationally the popularity of the sport continues to grow. The Town does not currently have a disc golf course. Disc golf courses are inexpensive and have minimal impact on the land. The Town may consider development of a disc golf course in the future if 8th Street Park is expanded.

## Off-leash Dog Areas

Off-leash dog areas are one of the newest trends in park development. The popularity of these facilities (also known as Dog Parks), is a response to the nation's love of pets. Communities throughout North Carolina are now constructing Dog Parks. Several people spoke in favor of a Dog Park at the public workshop.

Dog Parks take many forms, but are primarily a place within a park where park users can bring their dogs to run, walk, and recreate. They usually include a fenced open area where dogs, accompanied by their owner, are allowed to run free. Often the off-leash dog area is divided into sections for large and small dogs.

The Town may consider development of a Dog Park in one of its parks in the future.

## Community Gardens

Community gardens provide a wide variety of community enhancements. They offer health benefits by providing local gardeners with fresh vegetables and increased exercise as they tend the gardens. They also provide environmental benefits by reducing transportation cost for food production and providing more plant cover, which reduces urbanization impacts on climate change. In addition, community gardens provide a venue for social interaction that reduces isolation and supports community involvement.

With the many benefits provided by community gardens, many parks and recreation agencies are implementing community garden programs.

*8th Street Park Ballfield*

# Section Five
# Action Plan Implementation

## INTRODUCTION

This Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan is based upon an assessment of the community's character and growth, an analysis of the existing parks, the development of recreation standards, the identification of user needs, and the creation of proposals and recommendations to meet those needs. The plan is designed to provide recommendations that will guide Town staff and elected officials as it enhances the parks and recreation system.

Instrumental to the implementation of the Master Plan is the identification of adequate funding for facility development and improvements. Finding adequate funding is particularly difficult in this time of lower tax base and budget concerns. Limited budgets place even greater importance on careful planning to meet projected needs. In addition to capital cost, the Master Plan must also consider operational and management issues. This section reviews some of these issues.

While much of the focus of previous sections has been on capital needs and facility improvements, physical improvements are only part of the needs for the Town. As staff plans for the future, they should also consider a number of operational and management issues that will position them to meet community needs. One of those options would be to continue using the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee and hiring either a part-time or full-time person for Parks and Recreation. This section reviews some of those issues.

This section looks at a Capital Improvements Plan for recommendations found in Section Four and provides a strategy for raising funds to construct the proposed improvements and new facilities.

Implementing the recommendations made in this Master Plan will result in meeting the future needs for parks and recreation services, as well as preserving open space in the area. The Town should establish annual budgets for projected capital improvements, staffing, operations and maintenance costs that not only meet current needs, but also allow acquisition and development for future needs. This Action Plan is designed to give the Town a realistic approach to financing the proposals and recommendations of this Master Plan.

# REVENUE PLAN

Upon adoption of the Master Plan, the Town should consider the establishment of a Revenue Plan specifically for parks and recreation. A Revenue Plan incorporates all available funding resources in a community, prioritizes them, and puts each option into a funding strategy. In a Revenue Plan, the following funding alternatives are evaluated for their appropriate use in funding capital improvements and programs:

## Key Funding/Revenue Sources

There seems to be public support for parks and recreation services, but even so, innovative measures will be required to meet the needs identified in this plan. The proposed additional facilities and expanded operations will require dollars from a variety of sources. The following funding sources are provided to help the Town evaluate funding options:

## General Tax Revenues (operational and capital)

General tax revenues traditionally provide the principle source of funds for general operations and maintenance of municipal and county recreation and parks systems. Recreation, as a public service, is scheduled along with health, public safety, schools, etc. in annual budgets established by the governing authority. Assessed valuation of real and personal property provides the framework for this major portion of the tax base. This tax base is then used to fund the majority of municipal services. If the Town wishes to offer a park and recreation system that provides quality of life and healthy lifestyle opportunities for the community, funding for parks and recreation must be maintained or increased.

## Park Foundation (operational and capital)

A park foundation can be instrumental in assisting the Town in acquiring land, developing facilities, sponsoring programs, and buying equipment for the department. Park foundations typically create funding strategies for generating funds to support park projects. These include foundation membership fees, individual gifts, grants from other recognized and national foundations, long term endowments, and a land trust for future acquisitions.

The Town has very strong support from a core of long time park and recreation community boosters, but does not have an organized park foundation. Development of a citizen group to support, promote and fund park programs and facilities would be an excellent way to mobilize those in the community who would like to see improved parks.

## General Foundations (operational and capital)

Another source of revenue is the direct contribution of money from state and national General Foundations. Foundation funds should be sought for both development and construction of facilities as well as providing programs. They should include

general-purpose foundations that have relatively few restrictions, special program foundations for specific activities, and corporate foundations with local connections. The Trust for Public Land and NC Rails-Trail have been instrumental in providing financial and technical assistance for open space conservation and development of Greenways in North Carolina.

Another source of local assistance may be large corporations with foundations established to provide grants for public projects. Companies such as Bank of America, BlueCross BlueShield, and Duke Energy may have available funding through existing grant programs, or they may be interested in creating a program or partnership for specific projects.

The Town should actively pursue grants from foundation and trust sources on a regional and national level. Information on trusts and foundations can be found through the Foundation Center, 79 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10003-3076 (http://foundationcenter.org/) and the Non-Profit Gateway to Federal Government agencies (http://www.usa.gov/index.shtml).

## General Obligation Bonds (capital)

General tax revenue for parks and recreation are usually devoted to current operations and maintenance of existing facilities. General obligation bonds are often used to finance capital improvements in parks. The State of North Carolina gives municipal and county governments the authority to accomplish this borrowing of funds for parks and recreation through the issuance of bonds not to exceed the total cost of improvements (including land acquisition). For purposes of paying the debt service on the sale of these bonds, cities are often required to increase property taxes. Total bonding capacities for local government is limited to a maximum percentage of assessed property valuation.

An added value of a governing agency's bonding authority and capacity is its ability to use those funds to leverage other funding opportunities. Bonding enables government agencies to utilize funds to match federal grant-in-aid monies or state funds. General obligation bonds are still the greatest source utilized to fund park projects in North Carolina. Through a well thought out and publicly presented bond campaign, voters would be given the opportunity to choose to support park improvements through the sale of bonds.

While many communities use bonds to fund park improvements, it seems unlikely the Town would use this funding source for park improvements, but it could be an option.

## Revenue Bonds (capital)

Revenue bonds are used for financing high use specialty facilities like golf courses, aquatic centers, tennis centers, and complexes for softball and soccer. The users, and other revenue sources, pay for operations and sometimes repay the bonds. This revenue source would only be of use to the Town if they choose to change their tax subsidy policy for using this type of funding. The Town most likely would not seek out this option.

The legal requirements for utilizing these funding mechanisms are extremely complicated and can actually require approval from the state legislature. Use of revenue bonds seem to be unlikely at this time.

## Limited Option or Special Use Tax (capital)

Limited option or special use taxes can be established in various ways. A municipality or county can establish the tax by determining the source, such as property valuation, real estate transfer taxes, or sales tax. This option requires legislative approval. Typically, special use taxes are structured on sales tax or transfer taxes and are earmarked for a specific project. A governing body can approve a tax that is identified or earmarked on property valuation; however, other sources may require state approval. The idea behind a special option or limited option tax is that the tax is identified or limited for a special purpose or projects and the duration can also be limited to accomplishing the projects.

## Federal and State Assistance (capital)

Federal funding sources are available to assist financing capital improvement recommendations

found in this plan. One of the oldest park funding sources has been available from the U.S. Park Service's Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Several of the Town's existing parks were funded with monies from this funding source. Unfortunately, funding through this program has been sporadic over the past few years. Other potential federal funding sources are the National Foundation of Arts and Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).

The North Carolina General Assembly passed a bill in 1994 creating a consistent source of funds for parks and recreation in the state. The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) provides money for capital improvements, repairs, renovations, and land acquisition in state and local parks. Revenues from the state's portion of the real estate deed transfer tax support the fund. Revenues vary from year to year. Since 2007, funds from real estate taxes have been significantly lower.

Of the funds allocated, 65% go to the State Parks system, 30% provide matching grants to local governments, and the remaining 5% go to the Coastal and Estuarine Water Beach Access Program. The maximum matching grant is limited to $500,000 for a single project. The PARTF system allows an agency to apply for a 50/50 cost-sharing grant to develop or acquire park land and facilities.

The Town, working with the Land Trust, has obtained funding from a PARTF Grant for acquisition and development of the Fred Stanback Educational Forest and Preserve. In the future, the Town may consider applying for funds through this program for other park projects.

Additionally, the State can fund projects such as bikeways and pedestrian walks through the federally funded SAFTEA [formerly known as the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA)]. The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) administers the funds and the local government agency can use these funds for developing portions of any proposed Greenway system. Local communities can also apply for assistance with pedestrian, bikeway, and Greenway projects by applying for "NCDOT Enhancement Funds." This source of funding may be applicable to the pedestrian connection to the Yadkin River.

Another source of state administered funding is through the Clean Water Management Trust Fund (CWMTF). These funds are set aside for the acquisition of riparian properties, financing of innovative wastewater management initiatives, stormwater mitigation and stream bank restoration projects, support for Greenways, and some planning programs. The acquired or purchased property can be used for recreation while protecting valuable water resources from the affects of urban encroachment. Money from this grant is particularly applicable to the preservation of open space, Greenway development, and water access.

Unfortunately, since the economic downturn that started in 2008, all of these funding sources have been greatly reduced.

## User Fees (operational)

User fees are often charged by park and recreation departments to offset operational cost and (occasionally) provide funding for the construction of facilities. Every agency must establish its philosophy with regard to cost recovery through the use of fees.

Ultimately the Town may consider charging user fees that will help offset the cost of some activities. Based on elected officials' direction, the revenue generated by increased fees could then be used to reduce the general fund and possibly increase capital

improvement funding to help make park improvements and expansion.

Most of the Town's facilities are outdoors (playgrounds, open space, athletic facilities, etc.) and offer only limited opportunity for cost recovery. There may be some areas where greater cost recovery could be achieved. Examples may include rental fees for shelters, fields, etc. or for requiring permits for Dog Parks, disc golf, etc.

## Revenue Opportunities

User fees are not the only means of generating revenue. The Town should be constantly exploring additional opportunities for generating income. Some of these opportunities include:

- Sponsorships from local private businesses. Sponsorships typically come in the form of products, events, programs, cause-related, and in-kind. Sponsorships can also take the form of naming rights for a facility or program. The Town is currently using this revenue tool on the athletic fields. Sponsorship or naming agreements should include very specific details related to sponsorship cost, duration, use of promotional materials, etc.
- Grant applications from local foundations, state and federal agencies, or individuals are typically created by staff. Most grants take time to prepare and require coordination effort with other agencies or departments from within the community to create a quality submittal. Grants also require extensive tracking of expenditures and outcomes for attaining future funding.
- Partnerships are a relatively new method of sharing funding resources to provide services. These partnerships can be formed with a wide variety of other public or private agencies. Many times the partners are two or more government agencies. Through these partnerships, the Town receives direct benefit in either facility use, programming assistance, or volunteer man hours. All of these benefits add value to the department and help offset cost; thus creating earned income for the department. This earned income requires both agencies to have common visions, values, and goals for the partnership to be successful. Examples of partnerships include:
    - Church facilities or recreation services.
    - Youth sports associations already help the Town provide the services to the community for the sports that they represent.
    - Trail sponsors that adopt sections of trails for maintenance and cleanup. This may be particularly applicable for the Fred Stanback Educational Forest and Preserve.
    - Adopt-a-park partners that help maintain park lands. These sponsors are typically in the form of neighborhood associations and businesses that are in proximity to parks.
    - School partnerships where both partners invest in the development of facilities and programs based on shared use of facilities and staff. This investment may be financial, or may include other means of support.
    - Special event partners that assist with the development of community-wide events.
    - Program partners who assist in providing services to the community. One potential partnership could be with local churches to co-sponsor family events.
    - Advertising and licensing in programs, facilities, and events sponsored by the Town. The Town could leverage highly exposed advertising space to businesses willing to pay a fee for the right to advertise. They are already using this method of revenue generation by selling naming rights to the athletic fields at the athletic complex at 8th Street Park.
- Volunteer development programs can reduce staff costs. Volunteers can create advocacy and bring down the cost of programs and services.
- Privatizing the development of facilities or services is an opportunity that is used by communities when they are unable to control the cost of labor and are unable to find the needed capital to develop a recreational facility or a concession operation. This gives the government agency a management tool to create an asset or improve a service without tapping into their own resources. Facilities that are typically considered for privatization may include golf courses, marinas, camping and RV facilities, boat rentals, bike rentals, equipment rentals, and other forms of concessions.
- Marketing strategies are an important component

in developing untapped revenue opportunities. Promotional activities improve awareness of the activities provided by the Town and assist in bringing more revenue to the system by filling programs and facilities.

# METHODS FOR LAND ACQUISITION & DEDICATION

With several parks and special use facilities the Town has the foundation for a good park system. In the future, there will be the need for land acquisition in the development of some of the facility needs listed in Section Four (expansion of 8th Street Park, pedestrian connection to Yadkin River, etc.). There are a number of ways to acquire needed land. Methods available for acquiring the land recommended in this Master Plan include the following:

## Fee Simple Purchase

Outright purchase is perhaps the most widely used method of obtaining park land. Fee simple purchase has the advantage of being relatively simple to administer and to explain to the general public to justify a particular public expenditure. Unfortunately, fee simple purchase often is the most expensive means of obtaining and utilizing a property.

## Fee Simple Purchase with Lease-Back or Resale

This technique of land acquisition enables the Town to purchase land to lease or sell to a prospective user with deed restrictions that would protect the land from abuse or development. This method is used by governments who impose development restrictions severe enough that the owner considers himself to have lost the major portion of the property's value and it is more economical for him to sell with a lease-back option.

## Long-Term Option

A long-term option is frequently used when a property is considered to have potential future value though it is not desired or affordable to the Town at the time. Under the terms of a long-term option, the Town agrees with the landowner on a selling price for the property and a time period over which the Town has the right to exercise its option. The first benefit of this protective method is that the option may stabilize escalating land cost and establishes land use for the property. Secondly, the Town does not have to expend large sums of money until the land is purchased. Thirdly, the purchase price of the land is established. The disadvantage of this method is that a price must be paid for every right given by the property owner. In this case, the cost of land use stabilization and a price commitment comes in the form of the cost of securing the option.

## First Right of Purchase

This approach to acquiring park land eliminates the need for fixing the selling price of a parcel of land, yet alerts the Town of any impending purchase which might disrupt the park land acquisition goals. The Town would be notified that a purchase is pending and would have the right to purchase the property before it is sold to the party requesting the purchase.

## Land Trust

The role and responsibility of a Land Trust is to acquire park land and open space while maintaining a well-balanced system of park resources representing outstanding ecological, scenic, recreational, and historical features. A Land Trust is a 501 (c) (3) not-for-profit corporation made up of key knowledgeable leaders in the area who represent a cross section of interest and experience in recreation, historic properties, conservation, preservation, land development, and environmental issues. Their goals and responsibilities are to work with landowners to acquire park land for current and future generations. The individuals appointed to the Land Trust must have knowledge of land acquisition methods and tools used to entice land owners to sell, donate, provide easements, life estates, irrevocable trusts, or a combination of all. This includes seeking out a knowledgeable land acquisition attorney who is trained in these areas to provide the most efficient and effective processes to achieve the balance of types of land to meet the goals of this Master Plan.

The Town does not have to go through the time and expense of setting up a land trust to utilize this

vehicle for land donation or conservation. The Land Trust of Central North Carolina is an established land trust in the area. The Town has already partnered with them to provide protection of valuable open space. They should seek other opportunities to work together.

## Donations

A significant, and yet often untapped, source for funding acquisition and development of local park projects is through a well-organized local gifts program. Donations of land, money, or labor can have a meaningful impact on the development of the Town's park system.

The most frequently used type of gift involves the giving of land to be used for a park. The timing of such a donation can correspond with a PARTF Grant application, thereby providing all or a significant portion of the local matching requirement associated with this fund. A similar use of gifts involves donated labor or materials, which become part of an improvement project and help to reduce project costs. The value of the services or materials can, in some cases, also be used to match non-local grant funds.

Some agencies have developed a gift catalog as a tool for promoting a gifts program. Such a publication should explain the role and importance of the gifts program, describe its advantages, define the tax advantages that may occur to the donor, and identify various gifts (land, labor, play equipment, materials, trees, etc.) that are needed to meet local program needs. The gifts catalog should be prepared in a format that can be distributed effectively and inexpensively and should provide a clear statement of needs, typical costs associated with various gifts, and be made readily available to the public.

To aid this type of gift program, a strategy for contacting potential donors (individuals, businesses, foundations, service clubs, etc.) should be developed. An important part of this strategy should include contacting the local Bar Association, trust departments of lending institutions, and the Probate Court. Communicating with these groups regularly will make them aware of the potential for individuals to include a gift to the Parks and Recreation Department as part of their tax and estate planning.

## Life Estate

A life estate is a deferred gift. Under this plan, a donor retains use of his land during his lifetime and relinquishes title to such land upon his death. In return for this gift, the owner is usually relieved of the property tax burden on the donated land.

## Easement

The most common type of less-than-fee interest in land is an easement. Property ownership may be viewed as a combination of rights. With this understanding, it is possible to purchase any one or several of these rights. An easement seeks either to compensate the landholder for the right to use his land in some manner or to compensate him for the loss of one of his privileges to use the land. One advantage of this less-than-fee interest in the land is the private citizen continues to use the land while the land remains on the tax records continuing as a source of revenue for the Town. Perhaps the greatest benefit lies in the fact that the community purchases only those rights that it specifically needs to execute its park land objectives. By purchasing only rights that are needed, the Town is making more selective and efficient use of its limited financial resources.

## Zoning/Subdivision Regulations

Many communities in North Carolina have zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations that require a developer to donate a portion of the property they are developing to the government agency to be used for public park land. Through these regulations, zoning ordinances, subdivision regulation, and mandatory dedications may be utilized to create new park land at no cost to the community. Regulations can require that land is dedicated and/or compensation made to the Town for the development of park land.

The Town's current subdivision regulation does not require dedication of land for recreational use. In the future, the Town may consider adopting a subdivision ordinance that will require developers to make provisions for parks and recreational areas; either through land dedication or payment in lieu.

## PARK FACILITIES AS ECONOMIC DEVELOPERS

John L. Crompton, in his publication "Parks and Economic Development", determined there are four economic development benefits that a community may derive from park and recreation services. These benefits include:

- Attracting Tourists: The features and programs that attract tourism to a community include parks, beaches, historic sites, museums, special events and festivals, and athletic tournaments. The majority of these features are provided by public agencies (national, state, local park agencies, etc.).
- Enhancing Real Estate Values: Research shows people will pay more to live close to natural park areas. These higher property values result in owners paying higher property taxes, which in turn offsets some of the cost for the development of parks and preservation of open space.
- Attracting Business: Quality of life issues influence where businesses locate. Parks, recreation, and open space are an important component of the quality of life equation. Good parks help cities attract and retain businesses.
- Attracting Retirees: A new growth industry for American communities is the retirement population. The decision to relocate by this segment of our population is primarily governed by climate and recreation opportunities. This segment of the population is extremely attractive to local governments because retirees are unlikely to have children enrolled in the local school system and, therefore, are less of a burden on the community's tax base.

The Town of Spencer has traditionally placed a value on parks and recreation programs and facilities that provide quality of life improvement. Development of this Master Plan is further evidence that the Town recognizes the importance parks play in the quality of life.

Through investing in parks over the years, local officials can ensure that Spencer provides the quality of life that helps attract new businesses, enhances real estate values, and provides an attractive option to the retirement community.

Two very real opportunities for attracting visitors to the Town's business district are related to parks and recreation. The first opportunity is linking the downtown area with the North Carolina Transportation Museum. This Master Plan includes a recommendation for developing a downtown Civic Park to provide an attraction to visitors of the museum.

A second visitor attraction exists with the Wil-Cox Bridge. Developing a pedestrian link between the bridge, river and future Davidson County Greenway could provide a way of attracting visitors to the downtown area.

*NC Transportation Museum averages 80,000 visitors annually*

## OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to looking at future facility needs of the Town, this Master Plan must also address some of the operational issues that will face the Town in the coming decade. These issues relate to the manpower and organizational changes that will be required as the Town adds new parks/facilities. Likewise, these recommendations address some of the critical operational issues the Town needs to identify as it works to become not only bigger, but better.

## Staff Needs

With the expansion of park facilities over the next decade, there will be a need for additional staff to develop, operate, and maintain these new facilities. Expansion of existing parks, a potential new Civic Park, the new Fred Stanback Educational Forest and Preserve, and several miles of new trail will require new grounds maintenance personnel. At some point in the future, the Town may decide to go beyond facility development and maintenance and hire a person to develop recreation programs and special events.

While the development of a true operation and maintenance program for these future facilities is beyond the scope of this Master Plan study, it is important that the Town plan and budget for adequate staff positions for any new facilities that are constructed. Likewise, as these new facilities come on line, the Town should actively seek the highest level of programming staff with strong educational experience in the various areas of park and recreation administration.

## Operational Costs

As noted above, the development of new recreation facilities may require additional staff. These new staff positions will add to the annual operational budget in both staff and equipment costs. The recommended facility improvements included in this Plan will increase the Town's park facilities. This expansion will have implications to the operational budget. The Town's management staff and elected officials must carefully consider the financial impact of each major capital improvement project as projects are considered. No capital improvement project should be undertaken without the commitment of support for adequate ongoing operational funding. Likewise, consideration should be given to the positive economic impacts that some facilities may have on Spencer's economy, and if applicable, their potential for revenue generation.

## Greener Operation

As the world's population expands and environmental concerns over global warming, conservation of resources, and preservation of our fragile natural systems become more apparent, greater environmental responsibility by public and private agencies has become critical. As a government agency, particularly one that is involved with the management of public open space and the improvement of the public's health, the Town should make a concerted effort to minimize its environmental impact.

*Promoting recycling is one initiative to reduce waste*

With this understanding, the Town should evaluate its maintenance and operational procedures with an intent to minimize waste and environmental impact. Where economically feasible, the Town should look to implement operational procedures that emphasize conservation, recycling, and sustainability. Likewise, as the Town looks to build new facilities, it should consider constructing facilities that minimize environmental impacts, conserve energy, and reuse building materials where possible.

As a starting point for this conversion to a "greener" operation, the Town should establish a committee of operation, maintenance, and construction stakeholders to study the options available and develop a plan for becoming "greener".

# CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Capital Improvement Plan for the acquisition, renovation, and development of parks for the planning period was prepared with input from Town staff and public involvement. All of the proposed costs are shown in current dollar values. The capital improvement costs include funds for land acquisition, site preparation, site utilities, and facility development as well as estimated planning and design fees.

The Capital Improvement Plan can be summarized into the following components:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Park Renovations | $ | 990,000 |
| Land Acquisition | | 100,000 |
| Park Development | | 275,000 |
| Trail Development | | 1,705,000 |
| Special Use Facility | | 440,000 |
| Total Capital Improvement Budget | $ | 3,510,000 |

Table 5-1 "Capital Improvements Plan" shows the costs associated with the capital improvement program (ten-year planning period). The table reflects the proposals and recommendations as outlined in Section Four of this Master Plan.

# MASTER PLAN FUNDING STRATEGY

Over the planning period (2014 - 2024), the Town will not be able to support the growth in operational cost and the proposed capital improvement (±$3,500,000) with the current level of capital appropriations. The Town will need to use a combination of revenue sources to accomplish the recommendations of the Master Plan. There are numerous combinations of funding strategies that can be explored and implemented. Upon careful analysis of past budget documents, current practices, available resources, and national trends, an example of a funding strategy is presented as one possible strategy.

## General Funds

Allocations from the General Fund will need to increase to pay for operation of future facilities. This additional per capita funding, along with the increase in population, could fund the majority of future operational costs, but will not provide the funding required for capital improvements.

In addition to this increased operational spending, the Town should begin budgeting for capital improvements projects on an annual basis. Annual allocations of $50,000 - $100,000 to capital improvements over the next ten years could provide over half a million in funds for capital projects.

## Revenues and User Charges

A crucial strategy to accomplish the goals of this plan is to price services based on the value and benefits received by the participants beyond those of all taxpayers. Increasing the number of participants using the facilities and programs will increase revenue opportunities. A good time to price services to their value and benefits is after new facilities are constructed or when facilities have been renovated to enhance a participant's recreational experience. A proposed user charge revenue strategy designed to recoup a larger percentage of program costs should be considered. This will create more revenue and capital opportunities for the program needs of the Town.

Currently, revenues and user charges account for a relatively small percentage of the operating budget. The Town should develop a fee structure that will allow greater net revenue to be realized. Assuming the level of funding can increase, it could generate $20,000 to $25,000 annually, providing as much as several hundred thousand dollars in increased income over the next ten years that can be used for operating new facilities developed as recommended in this plan.

## Partnerships and Gifts

The Town should work to develop a park foundation to explore ways to raise sponsorships and gifts. This non-profit organization can engage private citizens and corporations to donate money and in-kind

services for parks and recreation. Through active involvement with a park foundation the Town may be able to raise $10,000 - $20,000 in funds annually. This could result in donations of as much as a quarter of a million over the ten year planning period. This level of funding would require the park foundation to become an active organization within the community.

## Sponsorships and Naming Rights

Another excellent source of development capital is through project sponsorship/underwriting by corporations throughout the community. Quality facilities, properly marketed, provide an excellent venue for raising development funds. Naming rights for athletic fields, swimming facilities, playgrounds, etc., can be used to raise tens of thousands of dollars.

## Grants

The Town, working with the Land Trust, has been successful in finding and procuring funds from state and local grants. The Town will need to continue these efforts to explore grants such as LWCF, PARTF, SAFTEA, clean water grants, etc. Active pursuit of this funding could provide over a million dollars in funds for capital improvements over the next ten years.

## Overview

Together, these funding options could be used to raise millions of dollars of development capital over the next decade. It may be unrealistic to assume the Town can fund ±$3.5 million of park improvements in the next ten years, especially during these challenging economic times. Actively pursuing the options that are available should provide funding for many of the needs listed in this Master Plan. Through the continued use of this document, Town staff and elected officials can identify and prioritize community needs and actively seek funds to meet those needs over the next ten (or more) years.

## Five Year Priority Projects

Recognizing that this is a ten year vision plan for park development, Town staff and elected officials must prioritize the recommendations in this document based on the public's input and staff review. The following park improvements should be undertaken in the next five years:

- Continue to develop the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee
- Expand 8th Street Park
- Develop a pedestrian connection to the Wil-Cox Bridge
- Develop a walking trail between 8th Street Park and Fred Stanback Educational Forest and Preserve

**Table 5-1**

**Town of Spencer**

**PARKS AND RECREATION COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN**

**CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PLAN**

| | Vision Plan | Priority Projects |
|---|---|---|
| **Existing Parks Renovation/Improvements** | | |
| Rowan Park Improvements | $150,000 | |
| ADA Improvements | | |
| Parking Improvements | | |
| Walking Trail | | |
| 8th Street Park Improvements | $750,000 | $750,000 |
| New Ball Field | | |
| Paved Walking Trail | | |
| Picnic Shelter | | |
| New Playground | | |
| Dog Park | | |
| Infrastructure Improvements | | |
| Planning & Design (10%) | $90,000 | $75,000 |
| **Renovation Total** | **$990,000** | **$825,000** |
| | | |
| **Land Acquisition** | | |
| 8th Street Park Expansion | $100,000 | $100,000 |
| 5 acres @ $20,000 | | |
| **Land Acquisition Total** | **$100,000** | **$100,000** |
| | | |
| **Park Development** | | |
| Downtown Civic Park | $250,000 | |
| Performance Area | | |
| Planning and Design (10%) | $25,000 | $0 |
| **Park Development Total** | **$275,000** | **$0** |
| | | |
| **Trail Development** | | |
| 8th Street Park/Stanback Forest Trail | $50,000 | $50,000 |
| Pedestrian Connection to Wil-Cox Bridge (±3 miles) | $1,500,000 | $1,500,000 |
| Planning and Design (10%) | $155,000 | $155,000 |
| **Greenway Development Total** | **$1,705,000** | **$1,705,000** |
| | | |
| **Special Use Facility** | | |
| Sprayground | $400,000 | |
| Planning & Design (10%) | $40,000 | |
| **Facility Development Total** | **$440,000** | **$0** |
| | | |
| **Total Capital Improvement Budget Cost** | **$3,510,000** | **$2,630,000** |

# Appendices

# National and State Studies on Outdoor Recreation Demand

## President's Commission

The President's Commission Report indicated the following significant facts:

The top ten most popular outdoor recreation activities nationwide are:

| | |
|---|---|
| Picnicking | Playing sports |
| Driving for pleasure | Fishing |
| Swimming | Attending sporting events |
| Sightseeing | Boating |
| Bicycling | Walking for pleasure |

Activities rapidly growing in popularity are:

| | |
|---|---|
| Canoeing | Sailing |
| Bicycling | Hiking/backpacking |
| Attending outdoor sports | Walking for pleasure |
| Camping, all types | Water skiing |

The President's Commission report also noted that municipal agencies are providing 39% of the public recreation opportunities.

## North Carolina Outdoor Recreation Survey

The North Carolina Outdoor Recreation Survey provided a list of the most popular outdoor recreation activities in the state. The most popular outdoor recreation activities in North Carolina are:

1. Walking for pleasure
2. Driving for pleasure
3. Viewing scenery
4. Beach activities
5. Visiting historical sites
6. Swimming
7. Visiting natural areas
8. Picnicking
9. Attending sporting events
10. Visiting zoos

## National Sporting Goods Association Survey

The National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA) conducts an annual study of sports participation. The survey lists the following top activities per million participants. A participant is defined as someone seven years of age or older who participates in a sport more than once within a year for all sports except aerobic exercising, bicycle riding, exercise walking, exercising with equipment, running/jogging, step aerobics, weight lifting, and swimming. For these seven fitness sports, participation is defined as six times or more during the year. The following information reviews the findings for the past ten years.

| Sport | 2010 | 2008 | 2006 | 2004 | 2002 | 2000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aerobic Exercising | 38.5 | 36.2 | na | 29.5 | 29.0 | 26.7 |
| Archery (target) | 6.5 | na | na | 5.3 | 4.2 | 4.5 |
| Backpack/Wilderness Camp | 11.1 | 13.0 | 13.3 | 17.3 | 14.8 | 15.4 |
| Baseball | 12.5 | 15.2 | 14.6 | 15.9 | 15.6 | 15.6 |
| Basketball | 26.9 | 29.7 | 26.7 | 27.8 | 28.9 | 27.1 |
| Bicycle Riding | 39.8 | 44.7 | 35.6 | 40.3 | 39.7 | 43.1 |
| Billiards/Pool | 24.0 | 31.7 | 31.8 | 34.2 | 33.1 | 32.5 |
| Boating, Motor/Power | 20.0 | 27.8 | 29.3 | 22.8 | 26.6 | 24.2 |
| Bowling | 39 | 49.5 | 44.8 | 43.8 | 42.4 | 43.1 |
| Camping (vacation/overnite) | 44.7 | 49.4 | 48.6 | 55.3 | 55.4 | 49.9 |
| Canoeing | na | 10.3 | 7.1 | 7.5 | 7.6 | 6.2 |
| Cheerleading | na | 2.9 | 3.8 | 3.8 | na | na |
| Exercise Walking | 95.8 | 96.6 | 87.5 | 84.7 | 82.2 | 81.3 |
| Exercising with Equipment | 55.3 | 63.0 | 52.4 | 52.2 | 46.8 | 44.8 |
| Fishing | 33.8 | 42.2 | 40.6 | 41.2 | 44.2 | 47.2 |
| Football (tackle) | 9.3 | 10.5 | 10.1 | 8.2 | 7.8 | 8.0 |
| Golf | 21.9 | 25.6 | 24.4 | 24.5 | 27.1 | 26.4 |
| Hiking | 37.7 | 38.0 | 31.0 | 28.3 | 27.2 | 24.3 |
| Hunting with Firearms | 16.3 | 18.8 | 19.9 | 17.7 | 19.5 | 19.1 |
| Hunting w/Bow & Arrow | 5.5 | 6.2 | 5.9 | 5.8 | 4.6 | 4.7 |
| In-line Roller Skating | 7.5 | 9.3 | 10.5 | 11.7 | 18.8 | 21.8 |
| Kayaking/Rafting | 5.6 | na | na | na | na | 3.1 |
| Mountain Biking (off road) | 7.2 | 10.2 | 8.5 | 8.0 | 7.8 | 7.1 |
| Paintball Games | 6.1 | 6.7 | 8.0 | 9.4 | 6.9 | 5.3 |
| Running/Jogging | 35.5 | 35.9 | 28.8 | 24.7 | 24.7 | 22.8 |
| Skateboarding | 7.7 | 9.8 | 9.7 | 10.3 | 9.7 | 9.1 |
| Skiing (alpine) | 7.4 | 6.5 | 6.4 | 5.9 | 7.4 | 7.4 |
| Skiing (cross country) | 2.0 | 1.6 | 2.6 | 2.4 | 2.2 | 2.3 |
| Snowboarding | 6.1 | 5.9 | 5.2 | 6.6 | 5.6 | 4.3 |
| Soccer | 13.5 | 15.5 | 14.0 | 13.3 | 13.7 | 12.9 |
| Softball | 10.8 | 12.8 | 12.4 | 12.5 | 13.6 | 14.0 |
| Swimming | 51.9 | 63.5 | 56.5 | 53.4 | 53.1 | 58.8 |
| Yoga | 20.2 | 16.0 | na | na | na | na |
| Target Shooting | 19.8 | 20.3 | 19.1 | 19.2 | 18.9 | 16.9 |
| Tennis | 12.3 | 12.6 | 10.4 | 9.6 | 11.0 | 10.0 |
| Volleyball | 10.6 | 12.2 | 11.1 | 10.8 | 11.5 | 12.3 |
| Water Skiing | 5.2 | 5.6 | 6.3 | 4.7 | 6.9 | 5.9 |
| Weight Lifting | 31.5 | 37.5 | 32.9 | 26.2 | 25.1 | 22.8 |
| Workout at Club | 36.3 | 39.3 | 34.9 | 31.8 | 28.9 | 24.1 |

SOURCE: National Sporting Goods Association, Mt Prospect, IL 60056

*Fred Stanback Educational Forest and Preserve*

# CLASSIFICATIONS FOR PARKS, OPEN SPACE & GREENWAYS

A well balanced park system is made up of several park types that range from very large Regional Parks (often encompassing hundreds of acres) to very small Mini Parks (sometimes less than one acre). The descriptions on the following pages define the parks that typically comprise a community's park system. Numerous agencies (federal, state, county, and municipal) play a role in providing this system. Looking at the entire system helps identify the roles of the various agencies.

The following park descriptions are based on park classifications outlined in the 1995 National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) publication "Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines". They are not intended to serve as park standards, but instead are used as a framework for describing the components found in a park system. Communities should structure their park types based on individual community needs. Table 3A-Park Acreage and Table 3B-Park Acreage reflect the standards for development that are recommended for the Town of Spencer. The recommended standards vary slightly from NRPA guidelines listed on the following pages.

## Regional Parks

Regional Parks are typically very large sites, encompassing unique qualities that exemplify the natural features, diverse land formations, and the variety of vegetation and wildlife found in the region. Examples of the types of facilities provided in a Regional Park include environmental centers, camping, nature trails, observation decks, and picnic areas. Open fields for non-structured activities, such as frisbee throwing or kite flying, are also generally found in these parks.

Land chosen for future preserves or the expansion of existing sites should contain the previously mentioned characteristics accompanied with natural water features such as beach areas, rivers, and creeks. The majority of the site should be reserved for passive recreation, with the remaining acreage used for active recreation.

NRPA's guidelines for developing Regional Parks are as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Service Area: | Typically serve the entire county |
| Acreage/Population Ratio: | 10 acres per 1,000 persons |
| Typical Size: | Sufficient area to encompass the resources to be preserved and managed. Typically a minimum of 200 acres; up to 1,000 acres. |

Typical Facilities:

| | |
|---|---|
| Environmental Center | Picnic Tables with Grills (not under shelter) |
| Equestrian Center | Restrooms/Vending |
| Primitive Camping | Beach |
| Group Camping | Swimming |
| Recreational Vehicles Camping | Boating |
| Nature Trails | Fishing Piers/Boat Docks |
| Observation Deck | Parking |
| Picnic Shelters with Grills | Caretaker's House |

Development of **Regional Parks** typically falls within the responsibility of federal, state and/or county agencies.

Typical Regional Park 200 + Acres

## District Parks

A District Park provides more diverse recreational opportunities than the Regional Park. The District Park emphasizes passive recreational opportunities that are similar to the Regional Park in addition to including limited active recreational facilities. It is easily accessible by the population (typically 40,000) it serves and maintains a 2.5-5 mile service radius. The park contains a minimum of 5 acres per 1,000 population and should be a minimum of 100 acres in size.

An indoor recreation building/community center may be included in a District Park. These facilities typically reflect the character of the park with a historic, natural, or urban theme. Active recreational facilities located in a District Park include play areas, limited ball fields, hard surface courts, multi-purpose play fields, picnicking locations, and various types of trails.

Listed below are NRPA's guidelines for developing District Parks:

| | |
|---|---|
| Service Area: | Typically serve the entire community |
| Acreage/Population Ratio: | 5.0 acres per 1,000 persons |
| Typical Size: | 40 acres minimum, 80-150 acres optimal |

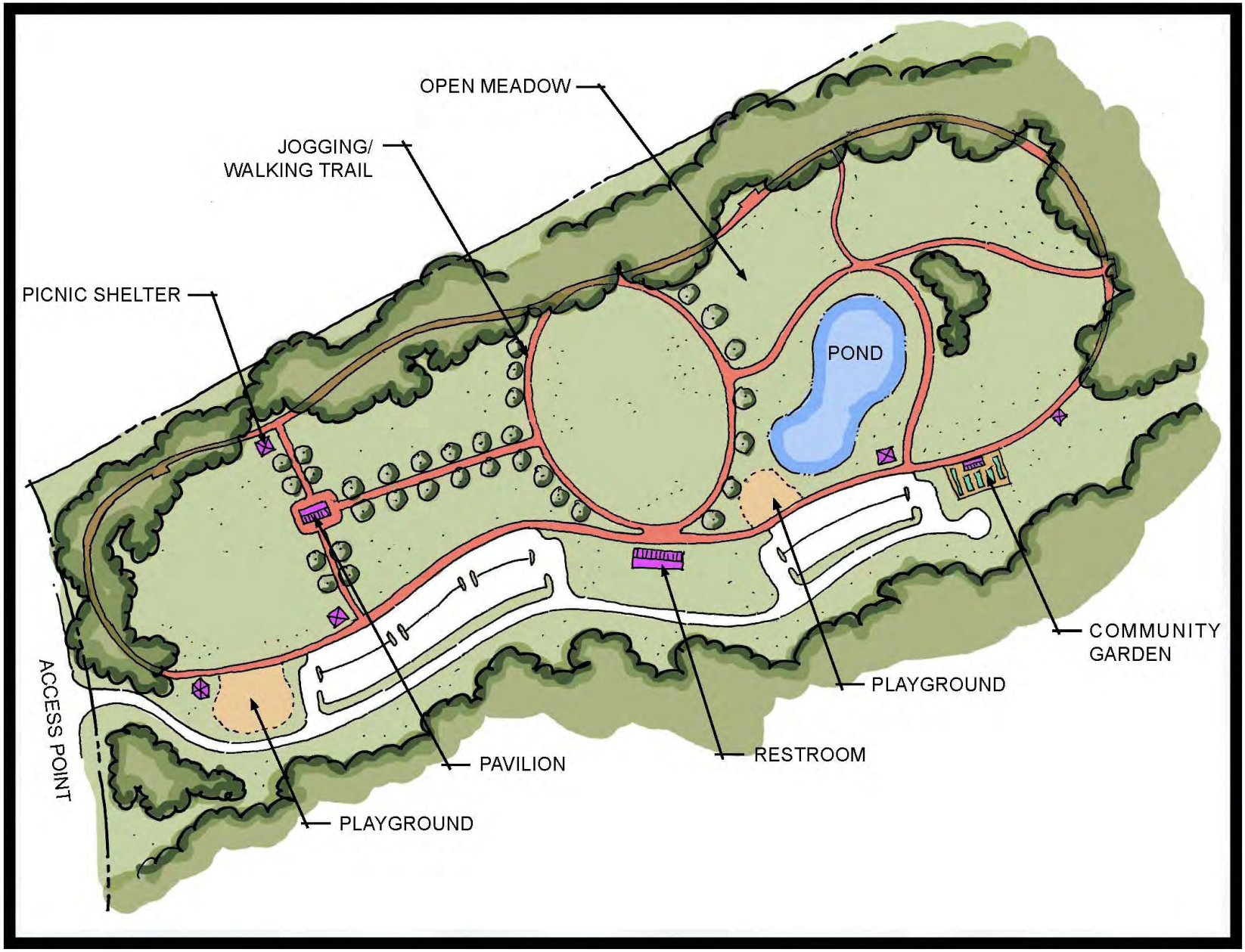
Typical Facilities:

| | |
|---|---|
| Playground | Picnic Shelter with Grills |
| Basketball Courts | Picnic Tables with Grills (not under shelter) |
| Tennis Courts (lighted) | Nature Trail |
| Tournament Level Tennis Facilities | Benches or Bench Swings |
| Volleyball Courts | Restroom/Concessions |
| Multi-purpose Fields | Parking |
| Tournament Level Soccer Fields | Service Yard |
| Tournament Level Baseball/Softball Fields | |

Alternate Facilities:

| | |
|---|---|
| Recreation Center | Amphitheater |
| Tennis Center | Observation Decks |
| Running Track | |

Development of **District Parks** typically falls within the responsibility of county or municipal agencies.




# Typical District Park 80-150 Acres

## Community Parks

Community Parks provide for the recreation needs of several neighborhoods or large sections of the community. A range of facilities is typically provided and may support tournament competition for athletic and league sports or passive recreation. These parks also present opportunities for nontraditional types of recreation. Fifty percent of Community Park sites should be developed for passive recreation. These relatively undisturbed areas may serve as buffers around the park and/or act as buffers between active facilities.

Community Park sites should have varying topography and vegetation. Forested areas should have a variety of tree species. Cleared areas should be present for siting active recreational facilities. One or more natural water feature(s), such as a lake, river, or creek, are desirable. Park land should be contiguous and strategically located in order to be accessible to all users within the neighborhoods it serves.

Listed below are NRPA's guidelines for developing Community Parks:

| | |
|---|---|
| Service Area: | .5 - 3 mile radius |
| Acreage/Population Ratio: | 5.0 acres per 1,000 persons |
| Typical Size: | 30-50 acres |

Typical Facilities:

| | |
|---|---|
| Recreation Center | Picnic Tables with Grills |
| Basketball Courts | Benches or Bench Swings |
| Tennis Court (lighted) | Nature Trails |
| Baseball/Softball Fields (lighted) | Restroom/Concessions |
| Multipurpose Fields | Parking |
| Soccer Fields (lighted) | Playgrounds |
| Swimming Pool | Volleyball Courts |
| Amphitheater | Disc Golf |
| Observations Decks | Lakes |
| Picnic Shelters | Paddle Boat/Canoe Harbor |
| Picnic Shelters with Grills | Fishing Piers/Boat Docks |

Specialty facilities may be added to or substituted for other facilities depending on community need or special site characteristics.

Development of **Community Parks** may fall within the responsibility of municipality or county agencies.

# Typical Community Park 30 - 50 Acres

## Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood Parks provide the basic unit of most park systems. These parks are usually located within walking distance of the area serviced and provide a variety of activities of interest to all age groups. While their small size requires intense development, fifty percent of each site should remain undisturbed, if possible, to serve as a buffer between the park and adjacent land users.

The NRPA guidelines for Neighborhood Park development are as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Service Area: | .25 to .75 mile radius to serve walk-in recreation needs of surrounding populations |
| Acreage/Population Ratio: | 2.5 acres per 1,000 persons |
| Typical Size: | 5-10 acres |

Typical Facilities:

| | |
|---|---|
| Playground | Picnic Shelters with Grills |
| Court Games | Picnic Tables with Grills (not under shelter) |
| Informal Play Field | Benches or Bench Swings |
| Volleyball | 50% of Site to Remain Undeveloped |
| Trails/Walkways | Parking (7-10 spaces) |

**Neighborhood Parks** are typically developed by municipalities.

# Typical Neighborhood Park 5 - 10 Acres

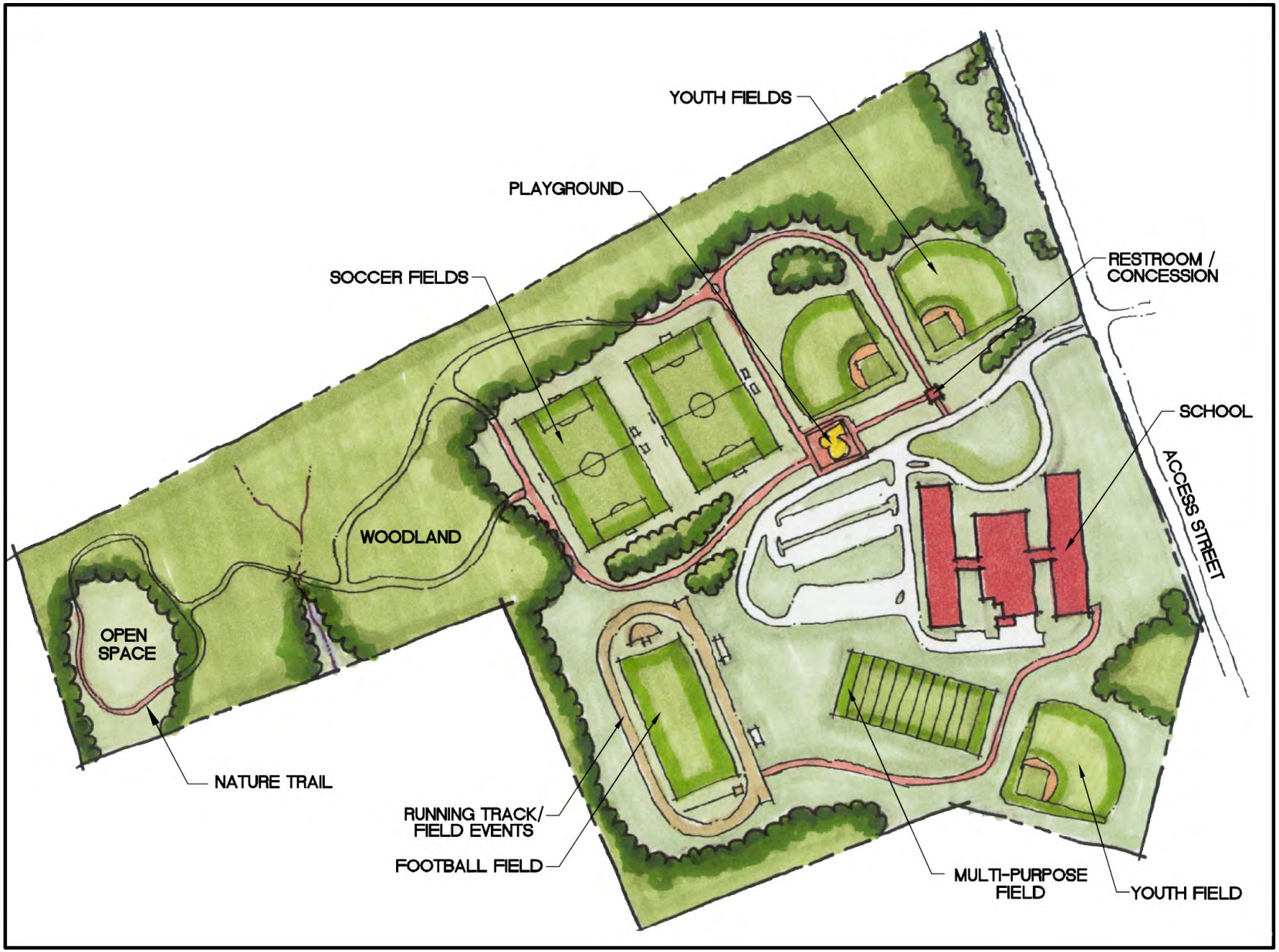
## School Parks

Joint use is a mechanism that public agencies use to maximize resources. Through joint use, both the school system and the parks and recreation department benefit from shared use of facilities and valuable land resources. School Park facilities typically go beyond the simple joint use of school facilities. The parks and recreation agency will become a partner in the development of a school site and fund recreational facilities beyond those typically built with a stand-alone school. These facilities may be indoor spaces (gymnasiums, classrooms, meeting rooms, etc.) or outdoor recreation facilities (ballfields, playgrounds, picnic shelters, etc.). The cost of developing and operating these additional facilities is minimized when constructing them in partnership with school development. Savings are also found in shared infrastructure (parking, restrooms, etc.) and shared maintenance and operational cost.

The School Park concept maximizes the joint use objective and provides a planned facility that maximizes public funds. The School Park concept typically varies depending on the school. Elementary and middle schools provide the ideal setting for a Neighborhood Park, while middle and high schools follow the function of a Community Park or Sports Complex. Access to school sports facilities at high schools and middle schools can be difficult based on team sports needs. This concept only works if there is a mutually agreed upon joint use agreement to define roles, responsibilities, and use of facilities.

| | |
|---|---|
| Service Area: | Varies depending on school type and park type |
| Desirable Size: | Varies depending on school type and park type |
| Typical Facilities: | Varies depending on school type and park type |

Development of **School Parks** usually fall within the responsibility of municipalities, county agencies, or school districts.




# Typical School Park ± 50 Acres

## Mini Parks

Mini Parks are the smallest park classification. These parks are located within walking distance of the area serviced, and they provide limited recreational needs. The small amount of land associated with Mini Parks usually results in intense development with little to no buffer between the park and adjacent properties.

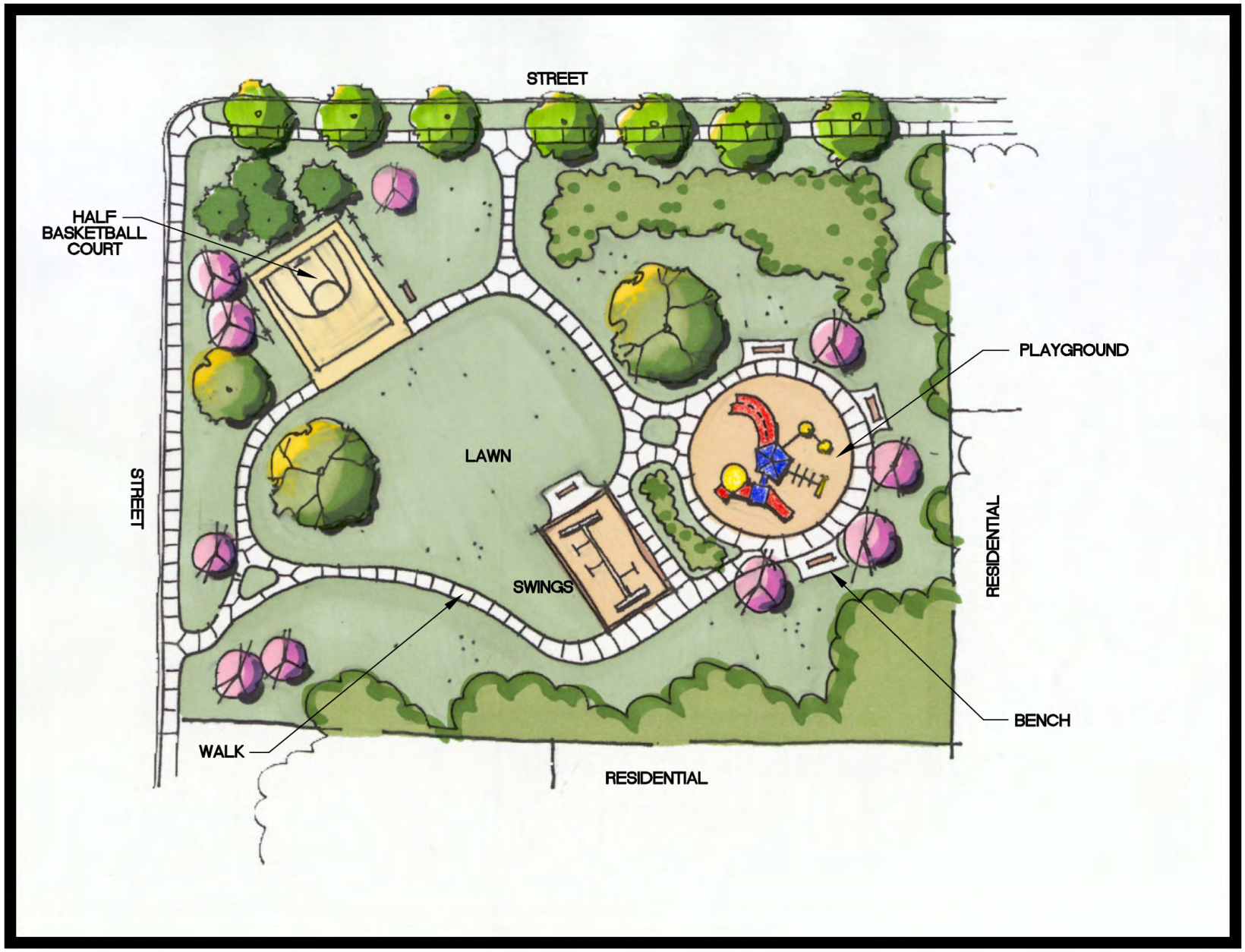
NRPA's guidelines for Mini Park development are as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Service Area: | .25 mile radius to serve walk-in recreation needs of surrounding populations |
| Acreage/Population Ratio: | .25 acres per 1,000 persons |
| Typical Size: | .25 - 1 acres |

Typical Facilities:

| | |
|---|---|
| Playground | Picnic Tables with Grills (not under shelter) |
| ½ Basketball Courts | Benches or Bench Swings |
| Open Play Area | Landscaped Public Use Area |

**Mini Parks** are typically developed by municipalities.




# Typical Mini Park .25 - 1 Acres

## Greenway Trails

Greenways provide an important component of the overall park system. They:

- Serve as alternative non-motorized transportation facilities.
- Provide links between parks, schools, neighborhoods, and commercial areas.
- Emphasize harmony with the natural environment.
- Provide safe pedestrian movement.
- Provide resource based outdoor recreational opportunities.
- Enhance adjacent property values.
- Provide linear parks and open spaces.

Greenways are very similar to natural resource sites; the primary difference is the emphasis on pedestrian trails found in the Greenway system.

Desirable Size: Greenways form corridors that vary considerably in length and width. A 50' width is generally considered a minimum.

# Rowan County Communities
# Spencer, NC
## Draft 8/21/14

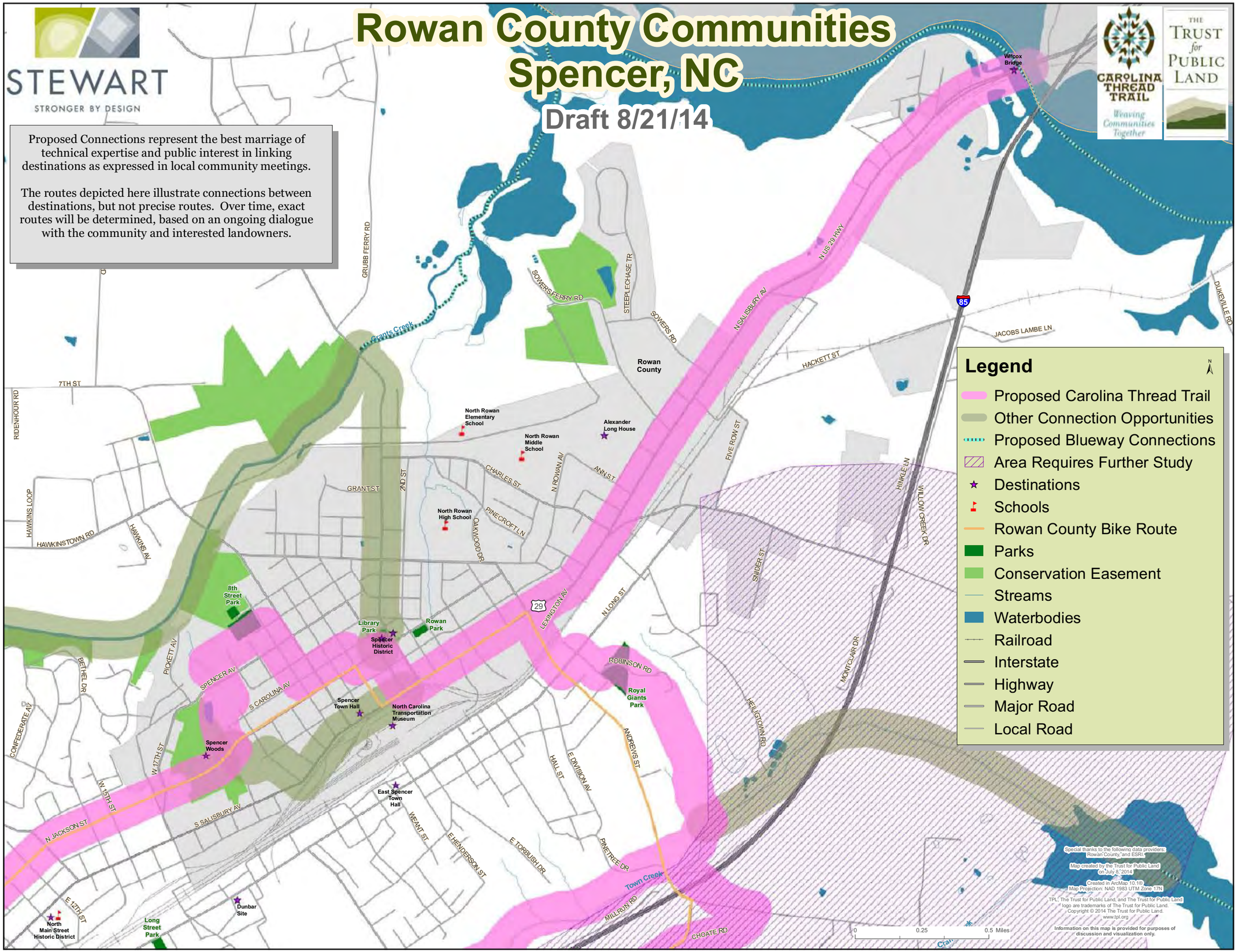
STEWART
STRONGER BY DESIGN

CAROLINA THREAD TRAIL
Weaving Communities Together

THE TRUST for PUBLIC LAND

Proposed Connections represent the best marriage of technical expertise and public interest in linking destinations as expressed in local community meetings.

The routes depicted here illustrate connections between destinations, but not precise routes. Over time, exact routes will be determined, based on an ongoing dialogue with the community and interested landowners.



# List of Recreational Facilities at North Rowan Schools

## North Rowan High School

Football / Soccer Field

Baseball Field

Track

Tennis Courts

Gymnasium

## North Rowan Middle School

Football / Soccer Field

Baseball Field

Tennis Courts

Gymnasium

## North Rowan Elementary School

Walking Track

Recreation Field

Playground

## Rowan County Level of Service Standards

| PARKS: | 2016 Inventory - Developed Facilities | | | | | | | | | | 2016 Facility Standards | | | 2021 Facility Standards | | | 2026 Facility Standards | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Park Type | Rowan County | Municipality Facilities | YMCA | Total Inventory | Current Service Level based upon population | | | Recommended Service Levels; Revised for Local Service Area | | | Meet Standard/ Need Exists | Additional Facilities/ Amenities Needed | | Meet Standard/ Need Exists | Additional Facilities/ Amenities Needed | | Meet Standard/ Need Exists | Additional Facilities/ Amenities Needed | |
| District Parks | 126.00 | 660.83 | | 786.83 | 5.55 | acres per | 1,000 | 5.50 | acres per | 1,000 | Meets Standard | - | Acre(s) | Need Exists | 5 | Acre(s) | Need Exists | 19 | Acre(s) |
| Regional Parks | 707.00 | | | 707.00 | 4.99 | acres per | 1,000 | 5.50 | acres per | 1,000 | Need Exists | 72 | Acre(s) | Need Exists | 85 | Acre(s) | Need Exists | 99 | Acre(s) |
| Special Use Park | | | | - | - | acres per | 1,000 | 0.25 | acres per | 1,000 | Need Exists | 35 | Acre(s) | Need Exists | 36 | Acre(s) | Need Exists | 37 | Acre(s) |
| Recreation Centers | | | 206.29 | 206.29 | 1.46 | acres per | 1,000 | 1.75 | acres per | 1,000 | Need Exists | 42 | Acre(s) | Need Exists | 46 | Acre(s) | Need Exists | 50 | Acre(s) |
| **Total Park Acres** | **833.00** | **660.83** | **206.29** | **1,700.12** | **12.00** | **acres per** | **1,000** | **13.00** | **acres per** | **1,000** | **Need Exists** | **142** | **Acre(s)** | **Need Exists** | **171** | **Acre(s)** | **Need Exists** | **205** | **Acre(s)** |
| OUTDOOR AMENITIES: | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Reservable Shelters | 27.00 | | | 27.00 | 1.00 | site per | 5,249 | 1.00 | site per | 5,000 | Need Exists | 1 | Sites(s) | Need Exists | 2 | Sites(s) | Need Exists | 2 | Sites(s) |
| Multi-Purpose Fields (Soccer, Football, Cricket, Lacrosse) | 4.00 | 7.00 | | 11.00 | 1.00 | field per | 12,884 | 1.00 | field per | 10,000 | Need Exists | 3 | Field(s) | Need Exists | 3 | Field(s) | Need Exists | 4 | Field(s) |
| Adult Ball Fields | 2.00 | 6.00 | | 8.00 | 1.00 | field per | 17,715 | 1.00 | field per | 15,000 | Need Exists | 1 | Field(s) | Need Exists | 2 | Field(s) | Need Exists | 2 | Field(s) |
| Youth Ball Fields | 1.00 | 12.00 | | 13.00 | 1.00 | field per | 10,902 | 1.00 | field per | 10,000 | Need Exists | 1 | Field(s) | Need Exists | 1 | Field(s) | Need Exists | 2 | Field(s) |
| Basketball Courts | 2.00 | 15.00 | | 17.00 | 1.00 | court per | 8,337 | 1.00 | court per | 7,500 | Need Exists | 2 | Court(s) | Need Exists | 2 | Court(s) | Need Exists | 3 | Court(s) |
| Tennis Courts | 6.00 | 17.00 | | 23.00 | 1.00 | court per | 6,162 | 1.00 | court per | 7,000 | Meets Standard | - | Court(s) | Meets Standard | - | Court(s) | Meets Standard | - | Court(s) |
| Playgrounds | 2.00 | 24.00 | | 26.00 | 1.00 | site per | 5,451 | 1.00 | site per | 4,500 | Need Exists | 5 | Site(s) | Need Exists | 6 | Site(s) | Need Exists | 7 | Site(s) |
| Dog Parks | | 1.00 | | 1.00 | 1.00 | site per | 141,723 | 1.00 | site per | 50,000 | Need Exists | 2 | Site(s) | Need Exists | 2 | Site(s) | Need Exists | 2 | Site(s) |
| Skate Park | | | | - | 1.00 | site per | #DIV/0! | 1.00 | site per | 70,000 | Need Exists | 2 | Site(s) | Need Exists | 2 | Site(s) | Need Exists | 2 | Site(s) |
| Trails (miles) | 10.45 | | | 10.45 | 0.07 | miles per | 1,000 | 0.20 | miles per | 1,000 | Need Exists | 18 | Mile(s) | Need Exists | 18 | Mile(s) | Need Exists | 19 | Mile(s) |
| Outdoor Pools | | 2.00 | | 2.00 | 1.00 | site per | 70,862 | 1.00 | site per | 50,000 | Need Exists | 1 | Site(s) | Need Exists | 1 | Site(s) | Need Exists | 1 | Site(s) |
| INDOOR AMENITIES: | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Recreation/Gymnasium/Aquatic Centers (Square Feet) | 2,000.00 | | 167,500.00 | 169,500.00 | 1.20 | SF per | person | 1.50 | SF per | person | Need Exists | 43,085 | Square Feet | Need Exists | 46,425 | Square Feet | Need Exists | 50,355 | Square Feet |

*Table 11*

| | |
|---|---|
| 2016 Estimated Population | 141,723 |
| 2021 Estimated Population | 143,950 |
| 2026 Estimated Population | 146,570 |

**Notes:**

Municipality Facilities column include Cleveland, Cooleemee, China Grove, East Spencer, Granite Quarry, Gold Hill, Kannapolis, Landis, Salisbury, and Spencer.

YMCA column include JF Hurley YMCA, J. Fred Corriher Jr. YMCA, and Saleeby-Fisher YMCA.

Rowan County's recreation center square footage includes Rowan County Senior Center.

There are also multiple schools, colleges, and private facilities that help meet some of the unmet needs of Rowan County residents.

# Fred and Alice Stanback Educational Forest
# Phase II Completed

The first major development stage of the Fred and Alice Stanback Educational Forest was completed January 31, 2017. The Town of Spencer utilized a PARTF grant, matched by private donations and Town funds, to complete this phase of the project.

A parking area at the end of 11th Street was established as the main entry to the park. Numerous recreational elements were added including; ADA trails, two shelters, three bridges, and floating pier. This build out phase added additional connectivity to 8th Street park, through a primitive connector trail, with additional connectivity to the established primitive trail system known as the Stanback Loop. In total the park now encompasses 54.7 acres and has 2.3 miles of trails.

CROSSWALK & SIGNAGE
S. SPENCER AVE.
TRAIL BRIDGE
8TH STREET PARK CONNECTOR - 6' GRADED NATURE TRAIL
PARCEL 3 (±2.16)
10th STREET
(RESIDENTIAL)
PARCEL 4 (±40.58)
(SPENCER R/W)
(SPENCER R/W)
PARTF BOUNDARY & R/W
TRAILHEAD SIGN
GRAVEL PARKING (5 CARS)
SERVICE GATE
WETLAND INTERPRETIVE AREA FLOATING PIER
PICNIC SHELTER (24'X36' WITH (6) PICNIC TABLES)
EXISTING POND
8' STABILIZED GRAVEL TRAIL
(RESIDENTIAL)
11th STREET
PARCEL 8 (±2.06)
PARCEL 4 (±40.58)
(RESIDENTIAL)
(SPENCER R/W)
STREAM
CONNECTOR TRAIL - 4' PRIMITIVE NATURE TRAIL
TRAIL BRIDGE
TRAILHEAD SIGN
S. ROWAN AVE.
EXISTING NATURE TRAIL
4' PRIMITIVE NATURE TRAIL
COVERED OUTDOOR CLASSROOM (20'x20') WITH (2) PICNIC TABLES

**LEGEND**

- PARK BOUNDARY & SPENCER R/W
- EXISTING PARTF FUNDED FACILITIES
- FUTURE FACILITIES
- EASEMENTS

**TOTAL PARTF ACREAGE: 46.76 ACRES**

benesch

Alfred Benesch & Company
2320 West Morehead Street
Charlotte, NC 28208
www.benesch.com
704.521.9880

0 100

# Applicant: Town of Spencer, NC
## PARTF As-Built Site Plan

# Spencer Woods Fred Stanback Preserve & Educational Forest Development

Spencer, North Carolina
January 9, 2017

PARCEL 1 (±0.92)
S. BALDWIN AVE.
8TH STREET PARK TRAILHEAD
8TH STREET PARK
S. HUDSON AVE.
PARTF BOUNDARY & R/W
8TH ST.
8TH STREET PARK CONNECTOR TRAIL - 4' GRADED NATURE TRAIL
PARCEL 2 (±4.74)
SPENCER R/W
ACCESS EASEMENT (FOLLOW EXISTING SEWER EASEMENT)
10TH ST.
S. SPENCER AVE.
9TH ST.
PARCEL 3 (±2.16)
CROSSWALK & SIGNAGE
8TH STREET PARK CONNECTOR TRAIL - 6' GRADED NATURE TRAIL
S. IREDELL AVE
BRIDGE
PICKETT AVE.
4' PRIMITIVE NATURE TRAIL
PARCEL 4 (±40.58)
S. CAROLINA AVE.
11th STREET TRAILHEAD
PARCEL 4 (±40.58)
SERVICE GATE
POND
PICNIC SHELTER
S. ROWAN AVE.
WETLAND INTERPRETIVE AREA
PARCEL 8 (±2.06)
S. SPENCER AVE.
PLAN ENLARGEMENT
11TH ST.
SOUTH ROWAN TRAILHEAD
S. YADKIN AVE.
OUTDOOR CLASSROOM
PARALLEL PARKING (6 CARS OR 2 BUSES)
PARCEL 4 (±40.58)
FUTURE CROSSWALK & SIGNAGE
EXISTING NATURE TRAIL
S. ROWAN IMPROVEMENTS
FUTURE CONNECTOR TRAIL - 4' PRIMITIVE TRAIL
FUTURE CROSSWALK & SIGNAGE
PARCEL 6 (±1.09)
S. ROWAN AVE.
E. SPRING HILL AVE.
PARCEL 4 (±40.58)
FUTURE PARALLEL PARKING (6 CARS OR 2 BUSES)
PARCEL 5 (±2.64)
S. SALISBURY AVE.
MAGNOLIA GARDENS TRAILHEAD
W. 17TH ST.
4' PRIMITIVE NATURE TRAIL
STREAM
FUTURE GRAVEL PARKING (6 CARS)
PARCEL7 (±0.29)
SPENCER R/W

## LEGEND

- PARK BOUNDARY & SPENCER R/W
- EXISTING PARTF FUNDED FACILITIES
- FUTURE FACILITIES
- EASEMENTS

TOTAL PARTF ACREAGE: 46.76 ACRES

# Applicant: Town of Spencer, NC
# PARTF As-Built Site Plan

## Spencer Woods Fred Stanback Preserve & Educational Forest Development

Spencer, North Carolina
January 9, 2017

benesch
Alfred Benesch & Company
2320 West Morehead Street
Charlotte, NC 28208
www.benesch.com
P 704.521.9880

0 300

SITE

SOLUTIONS