SECTION 5 RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Catawba County, City of Hickory Parks and Recreation, and Newton Parks and Recreation provide the majority of parks, recreation, and public open space in the County and surrounding communities. The degree of for park/open space need is directly influenced by the expectations of the residents of Catawba County and related strictly to the 'quality of life' to which they aspire. This Master Plan's first priority is to address the parks and recreation facility needs envisioned appropriate for all residents of Catawba County.

Section IV of this Master Plan inventories not only Catawba County's park facilities, but also recreation facilities within the Catawba County School System and local municipalities. This detailed inventory includes available facilities within each park, to better understand existing recreation opportunities within the County. Demographic and population trends found in Section II provide information needed to understand the growth of the County for the next 10 years, and also predicts anticipated growth in different areas within the County.

Many of the park and recreation needs are being met by local municipalities and privately operated facilities within the County. The local municipalities and non-profit groups provide a wealth of active recreation facilities such as athletic fields, athletic programs and recreation centers; however, these facilities do not provide an abundance of passive recreation. Catawba County Parks Division aspires to provide quality passive recreation opportunities that compliment the active opportunities currently provided by others.

The adopted Small Area Plans (SAPs) for Catawba County have established priorities promoting the enhancement of parks/recreational and open space amenities. This Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan will be used as a guide for improving recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

Community input and recreation standards were the primary methods used in determining the type and amount of park facilities needed for Catawba County to adequately provide for the recreation needs of its citizens and guests. This Master Plan compares standards developed by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), an independent, non-profit professional organization for park and recreation. In 1996, NRPA published a manual entitled, *Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Guidelines*, which is a widely accepted reference standard for park needs.

Standards are guidelines, not requirements, for communities to use in estimating the demand for recreation in their given geographic areas. NRPA's 1996 guidelines shifted its emphasis from the rigid park facility standards to more

flexible standards, that better accommodate unique circumstances and situations that exist in every community. To assure that Catawba County's Comprehensive Parks Master Plan contains distinctiveness, yet versatility, public input was sought from its integral components: Planning and Development, the Catawba County Board of Commissioners, County Staff, and citizen representatives.

5.2 PUBLIC INPUT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The methodology used in establishing a Comprehensive Parks Master Plan for the County should always include citizen input. In order to ensure a successful study, it is vital that the public users of park facilities share their issues, needs, and desires. The following methods were used to obtain community input for this Master Plan:

- Master Plan Focus Group;
- Community Meetings; and
- Community Survey.

Master Plan Focus Group

A Focus Group was established to act as representatives of the residents of Catawba County. Their mission was to glean the information received from community meetings, survey results, and comments from County residents - to assist in the development of the Master Plan recommendations. The Focus Group was comprised of County residents of diverse backgrounds that live in different areas of Catawba County and members of the Small Area Plan committees. County staff coordinated the selection of the Focus Group members through invitation. Meetings were conducted throughout the planning process to ensure that the Committee was involved and given opportunities for input.

Community Meetings

Two public workshops were conducted early in the Master Planning process. To encourage participation of residents throughout the County, the workshops were held on 2 separate dates and were publicized in the local newspapers. These workshops were held at Newton-Conover Middle School on the evenings of August 25th and August 30th , 2005, and offered County residents an opportunity to voice their opinions on the topic of park facilities and open space needs. The meetings were very successful and citizens presented numerous suggestions and ideas as recommendations for the Master Plan.

As part of the workshop Blair Rayfield, County Parks Manager, gave a presentation of the Catawba County Parks Division featuring the existing parks and the resources and facilities offered. Mike Norris, of McGill Associates, presented an overview of the master planning process detailing the mission of Catawba County Parks, the need for a parks master plan, and the different components of a master plan.

Following the presentation, participants were asked to divide into small groups with each group given a map of the entire County. The maps delineated the SAP's, existing schools, parks facilities and other points of interest. Each participant was asked to locate a proposed priority park, a secondary park, and cultural resources within the SAPs of the County. These locations were color-coded to delineate the different classifications. In addition, they were asked to propose locations for future greenway and blueway corridors with color-coded pens. (A greenway is a linear open space of land containing a bicycle and/or pedestrian trail. A blueway is an established trail route on a waterway, used for canoeing or kayaking.) The small groups also noted proposed amenities for existing and future parks as well as future programs.

Community Survey

The active participation of Catawba County residents was crucial in developing a master plan that reflects the true needs for the County. With this in mind, community input was solicited throughout the entire planning process. To gather further public input a formal written survey/questionnaire (See Appendix: Attachment 4 – Community Survey) was offered on the Catawba County's website. The survey was distributed to County residents by the Focus Group members and by Park Staff and information on obtaining a survey/questionnaire was included in newspaper press releases. (See Appendix: Attachment 1 – Press Release) Information obtained from respondents was factored into the final master plan recommendations. This Section summarizes the results of the survey.

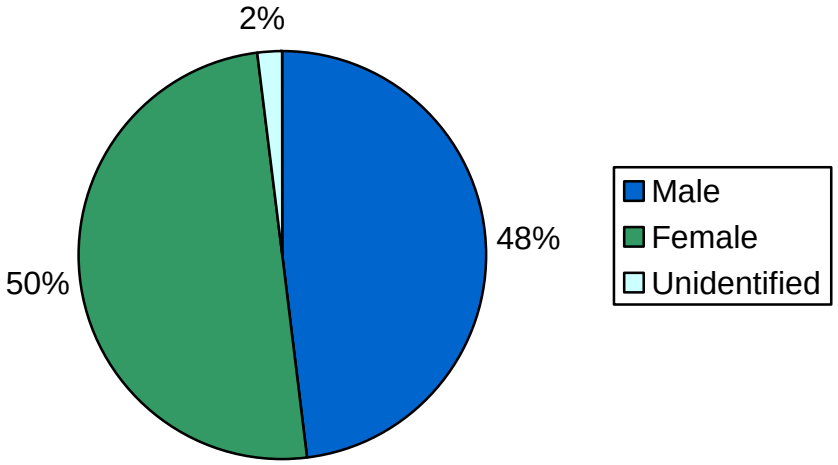
The survey responses comprised a representative cross section of the County's population and addressed the predominant needs and desires for County residents. The results of the survey are published below.

CATAWBA COUNTY PARKS
MASTER PLAN SURVEY

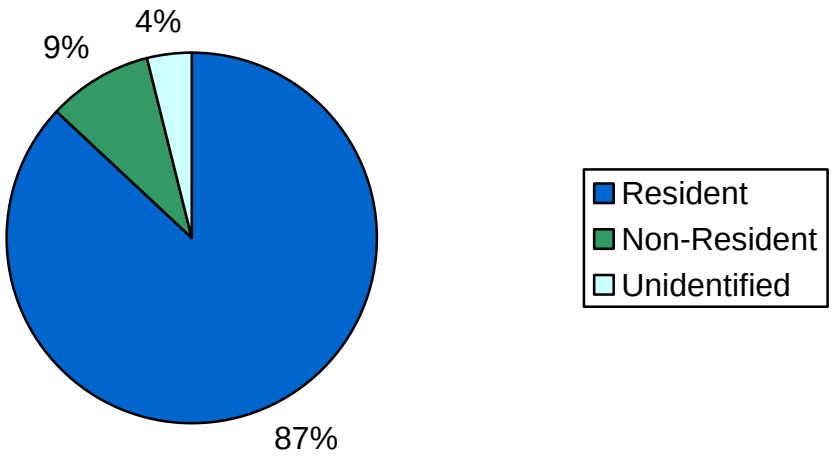
301 Completed Surveys- Representing 887 Persons

September 15, 2005

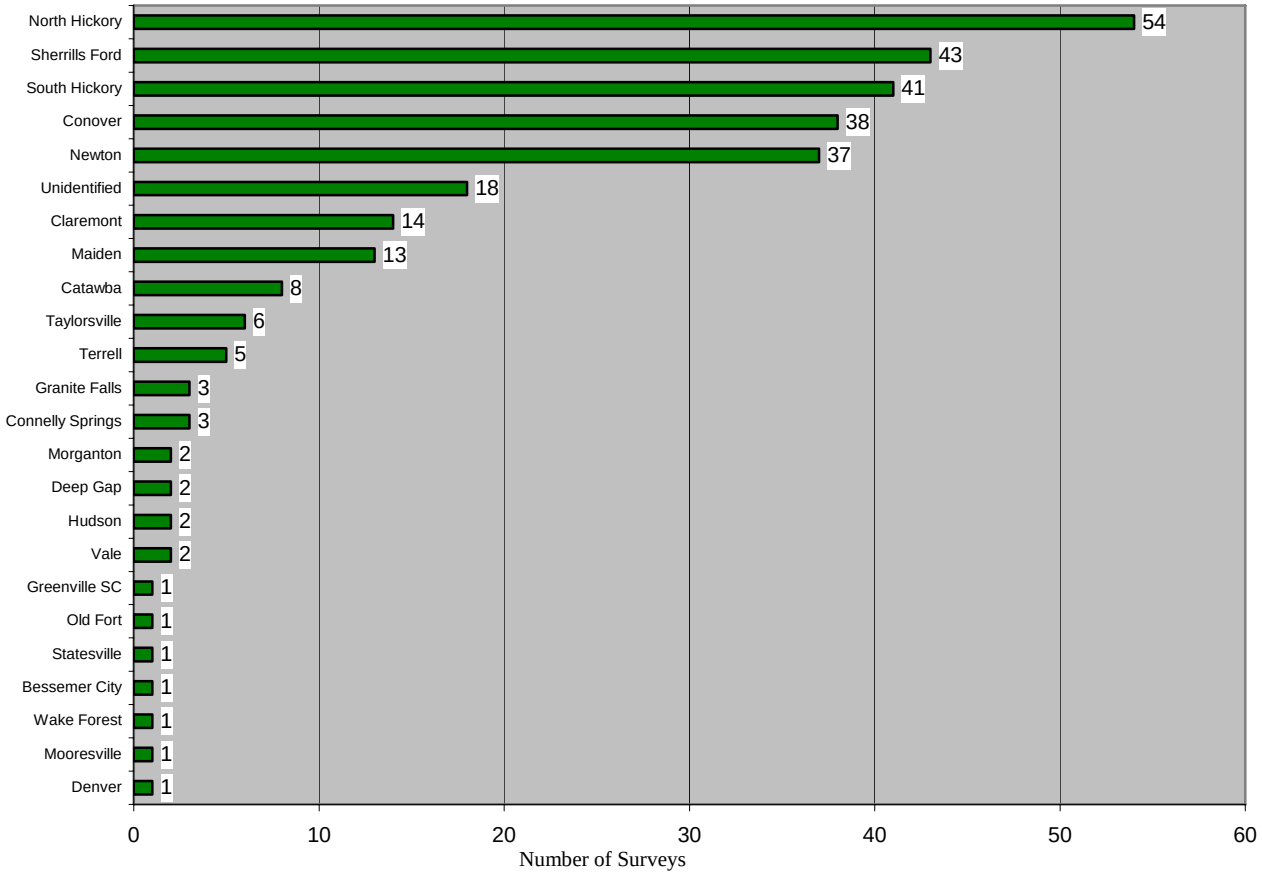
Gender:



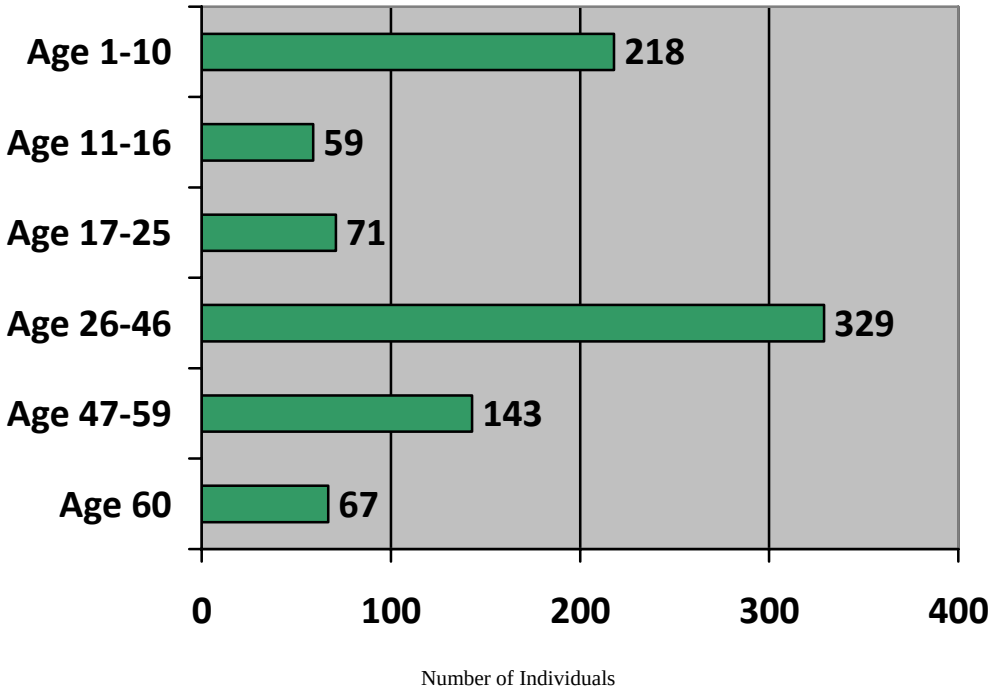
Resident of Catawba County:



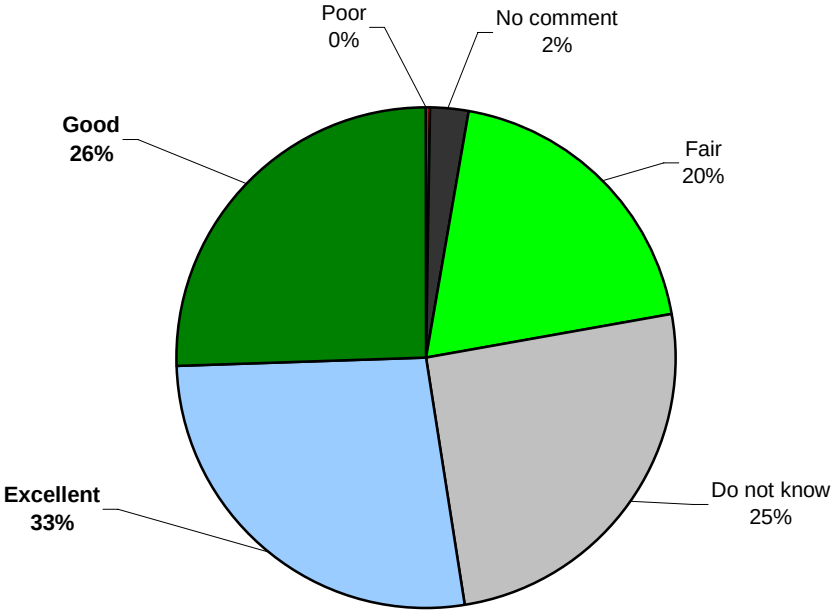
Zip Code Areas Represented:



List the number of persons in your household including yourself who are in the age brackets below:



Overall, how would you rate Bakers Mountain Park and Riverbend Park in Catawba County?



Specifically, how would you rate the amenities provided by both Parks?

[redacted]

Overall, how would you rate the security, maintenance and educational programs of the Parks?

[redacted]

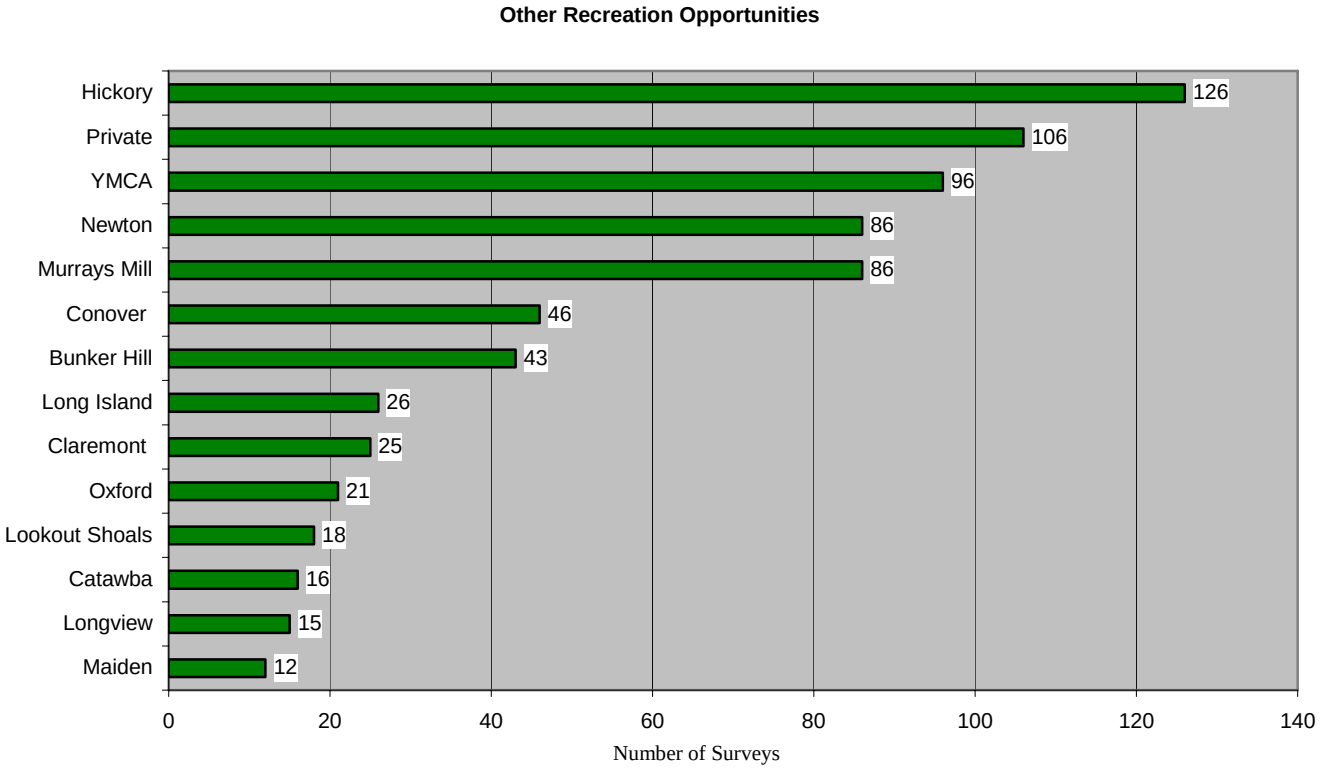
The County Parks are currently open to the public four days a week. Check below the number of days you would like the County Parks to operate.

[redacted]

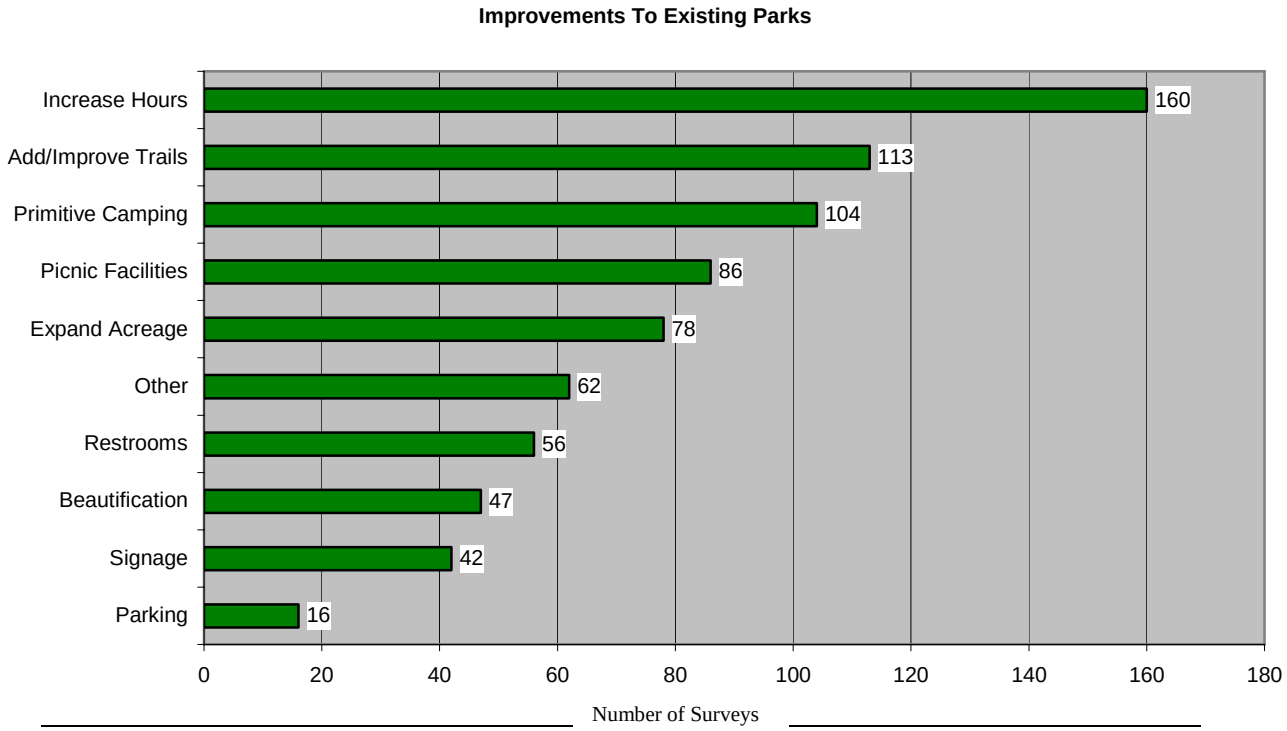
Check below how frequently you or others in your household have visited the following facilities.

[redacted]

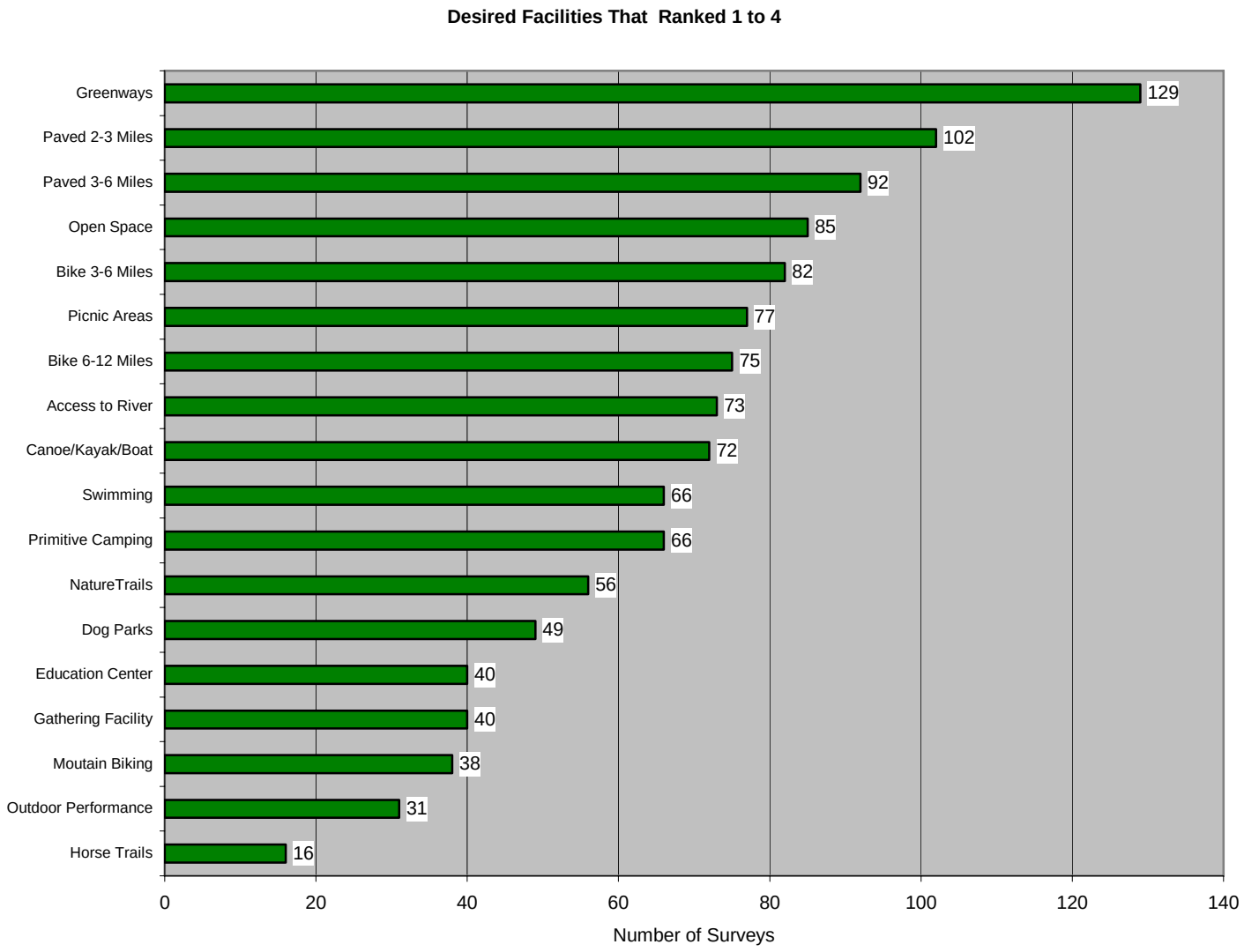
Check which of the following parks and recreation systems and cultural resources within Catawba County you or others in your household participate in regularly?



Check below improvements that could be made to EXISTING Catawba County parks facilities (Riverbend Park and Bakers Mountain Park)



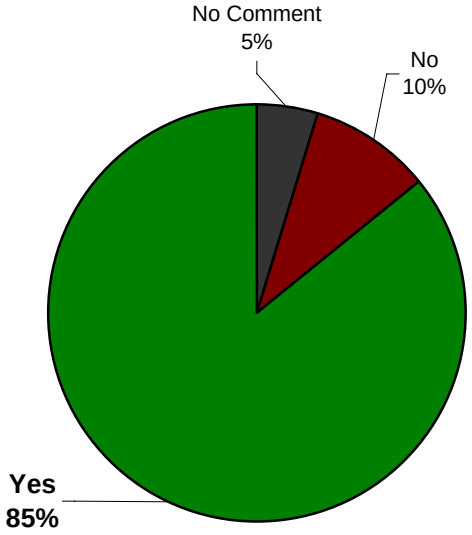
The County's mission for Parks is to provide passive recreation and educational opportunities for County Residents and visitors. Rank in order of importance the top ten facilities that could be developed in Catawba County. (One being the highest priority) Please consider other members of your household as well.



Please list below, any recreation, educational programs or special events that you would like to see offered in the Catawba County Parks:

- Primitive camping
- Environmental education programs
- Historical events, musical events
- Outdoor plays and performances
- Rail to trail from Newton to Maiden
- Concerts and cultural events
- Art in the park day, sports activities like cross country runs etc
- Educational programs hosted by the Science Center
- Astronomy events at Bakers Mountain
- Canoe take out 1-3 miles below Riverbend
- Amphitheater
- Pool or swimming
- Hiking, backpacking, and outdoor cooking classes
- More bird walks
- Boat launch on Island Point Road
- Ecology and land use classes for adults and children
- Musical performances
- Dog parks,
- Any park facility in SW Catawba County
- Volunteer group should be formed
- Connectivity to other parks and programs in the region
- Preservation of open space
- Greenways
- Canoe rental
- Preservation of open space
- Scouting programs and opportunities

Would you make use of a Greenway/Trail that would connect to destination areas within Catawba County?

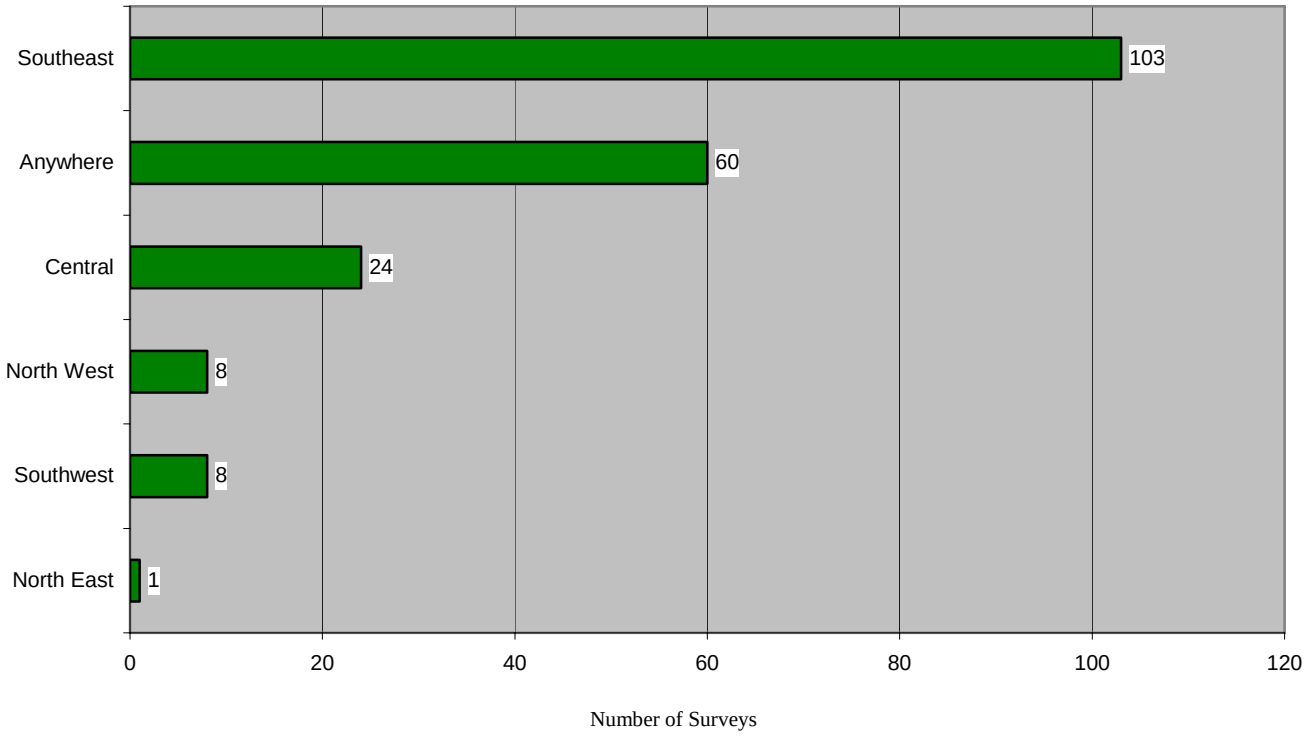


Do you feel there is a need for additional passive recreation parks at other locations in Catawba County, similar to Bakers Mountain and Riverbend Park?

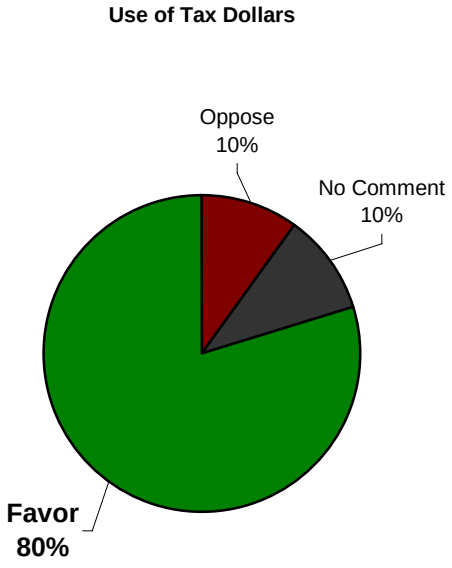
O Yes O No If Yes, what area of the County _____

[redacted]

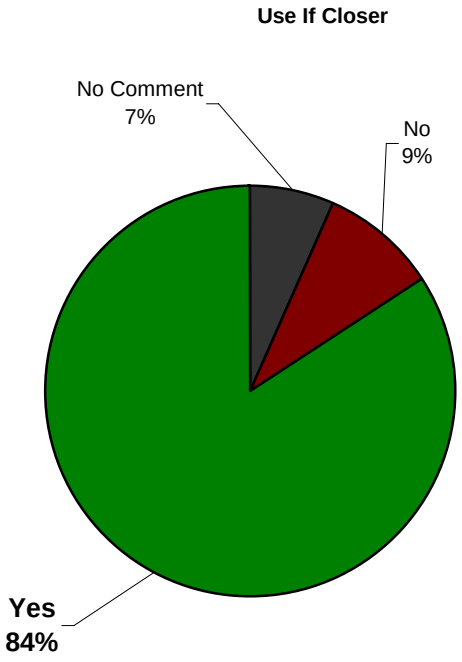
Areas Where Parks Are Needed



Would you be in favor or oppose a portion of your property tax to be dedicated for ongoing park development in Catawba County?



Would you use a park or recreation facility more if it were closer to your home or work?



Additional Comments (from meetings and questionnaires)

1. Should be planned so as to become part of a coordinated park system for the entire Hickory Metro area and heartily promoted as such to attract people to our area to visit and work here
2. Would like to see continued improvement of Bakers Mountain and Riverbend Park before considering adding other parks. I love NC; I have only lived here three years, originally from KS. NC is so beautiful
3. Catawba County should become more active in Passive recreation and preservation of open space.
4. I would suggest a system of volunteers to assist the park staff
5. Both of the current parks have excellent staff willing to assist visitors in any way possible.
6. I use the parks primarily for geocaching.
7. I enjoy geocaching in many Catawba County Parks. Generally, geocachers are very eco-friendly and make good use of local parks. I often use the parks for dog walking.
8. Acquire more land around Bakers Mtn park
9. I think that the county is on the right track with surveying the public about the use of the parks and recreation opportunities that we pay for through our taxes. I just hope that you will listen and work towards what the communities and people that support these parks want instead of what a select few special interest or political affiliates say what is right or wrong about our parks. My wife and I use the Riverbend park area regularly to ride our horses and are glad to pay the annual fee to support such a place close to our home to ride. I would like to see more of the trails opened to horses in the Riverbend Park and believe that this would draw more interest from the Equestrian community around the area to the park. Most of who would be happy to pay the usage fee if they see that the county is interested in supporting these activities. I have not been to the Bakers Mountain site and just recently discovered it by talking to the park rangers at Riverbend.
10. Riverbend and Bakers Mountain is a real asset to the county. I only wish your neighboring counties would follow your lead
11. We participate in Geocaching. The ranger at Bakers Mtn. has been especially helpful with our group. He has helped us tremendously in the past with events we have held there.
12. The two existing parks are very nice to have in close proximity. Keep up the good work. Please work to include canoeing, mountain biking, and camping in the county's park system.
13. Great job Catawba County, I am from Gaston but spend a lot of time up there.
14. We moved here last year. It took many months before we found out that these parks existed. We were pleasantly surprised to find such large hiking areas. They are an unusual kind of parks for a county; as opposed

to state to have so, we never looked for them. Perhaps better advertising is needed.

15. By far, my biggest priority here would be more and more-accessible jogging and walking paths. These could definitely be in the form of trails through greenways or doubling as bicycle paths, of course. I moved here from Chapel Hill 6 months ago, and used their parks, trails, and greenways extensively (much more than I would have expected) because they were so plentiful and easy to access. In fact, their park system encouraged me to take up running, but I have a hard time finding places I feel safe to run here.
16. More canoe/kayak access throughout county. We have very good water on the Jacob and Henry Fork Rivers. Parking/access at road-river intersections would make it much easier to use.
17. The more property saved from housing/commercial developers the better. We are in danger of having non-stop pavement from one end of the county to the other, taking wildlife habitat and natural places.
18. More bike trails would be great. We love Riverbend Park and go there all the time.
19. Riverbend is too small to allow horse use on the trails
20. Think this idea of a survey is great.
21. I have used the greenway in Burke County several times around the river and really like it. Something like that around the Catawba River in Hickory area would be wonderful.
22. Canoe rentals or paddleboat rentals
23. Please find a few places for a dog park!
24. We have heard nothing but positive comments about the parks in Catawba County. Whatever you are doing, keep it up! Good job
25. I would take more advantage of the two parks now; however, when you have to make a point of driving to the parks it always seems to be put on the back burner. Greenways, etc connecting other destinations (especially to residential areas) to the parks would be wonderful!
26. We are new here so we have not done much in the parks. We would like a place to swim in the river
27. I live near Riverbend Park and have enjoyed it very much. A camping area would be great!
28. This county is in dire need of preservation of natural habitat. We have extirpated at least one species (C. horridus- Timber Rattlesnake) in the past 10 years and several other species are in trouble. I would like to see more open land available along with more educational opportunities for our youth so that they will appreciate the native wildlife and understand why it is so important to protect it.
29. Love going to a park for lunch--great for downtime, fun to watch the people coming and going
30. I feel that the Sherrills Ford-Terrell area o the County is a fast growting area and needs some type of park for both the adults and children.

31. The Optimists have a ballpark in Sherrill's Ford. However, there is not a playground or a community center for classes or meetings. Presently we have to drive over 20 miles to the nearest Library to take a computer class, or attend enrichment classes. Sherrills Ford residents pay taxes and should be able to take classes whether it be computer or art without having to drive so far. Our small kids also need a park in which to play.
32. Thanks you for this opportunity.
33. I like Bakers Mtn. better than the River bend only because the area in Bakers Mtn. seems more nature friendly.
34. Make the parks more for family orientated events for family outings and playing for children instead of area like Riverbend and Bakers Mountain Parks. Children need more facilities than just bike riding and trails.
35. I live in Caldwell County, though visit Catawba often
36. Anything that encourages people to get out of their houses and be active away form the TV will be positive. It also usually allows for families to spend time with each other versus doing their own thing at home watching TV or playing video games and eating leading to obesity which lead to many health problems.
37. I would like to see a park like the one in Newton in the Anderson Mountain area, where we can walk and picnic.
38. I enjoy the parks in the county. They are very well done. I would like to see more area in the county designated as parks and recreation areas with many more hiking and biking trails, picnic, and camping areas.
39. Purchase the lake owned by the Town of Maiden and make it a recreation area.
40. A paved bicycle trail along the Catawba River at Riverbend and upper Lookout Shoals would be a major tourism attractor
41. Our green space is rapidly disappearing. I am glad that the County is trying to preserve some natural areas for future generations.
42. Coordination of park activities with annual events already occurring, such as Old Soldiers Reunion (maybe a comparison of the land when the parade was first held with its composition and distribution now, or the Murray's Mill Bike Ride; activities that are friendly" to older people who might be bussed from a nutrition site to the park for an outing. "
43. Use my tax money for parks only if it means a decrease in county administration salary, not if it means a tax hike for me.
44. I think that staff does an excellent job at our two parks, but we need more park land and recreational facilities.
45. There are no recreational opportunities in the Sherrills Ford/Terrell area. It seems that the county is so interested in economic development in this area that they have completely overlooked the recreational needs of the people already living here. Bakers Mountain and Riverbend Parks are too far for people living in this community to frequent and currently there are no opportunities for hiking or camping in this area. Most of us end up having to use the facilities at Lake Norman State Park which is still too far

away and is in Iredell County. It seems to me that with all the available unspoiled wilderness land in the triangle area created by Highway 150, Slanting Bridge Rd. and Sherrills Ford Rd. that the county is passing up a prime opportunity to create an outstanding recreation area for the Sherrills Ford/Terrell community.

46. Baker Mountain picnic area, parking and facilities are nice. The trails are for well maintained. Numbered markers along trail could be helpful in an emergency for location.
47. The best improvement I believe we can make is extending park hours and days of operation. We enjoy going to the parks, but find with our work and family schedules versus the park, we are limited on when we can go.
48. I have talked with many families in the area and all agree they would use the parks if it had playground equipment for kids and more picnic areas. Also, a dog exercise area with trails that dogs are allowed on. More people have dogs rather than horses. The main problem is the lack of equipment for small children (i.e. playground equipment).
49. I cannot begin to tell you how thankful I am that facilities like Bakers Mountain and Riverbend exist. I feel especially blessed that Bakers Mountain is within 5 miles of my home. I only hope the county will continue to have the resolve and commitment to maintain and improve these unique resources.
50. We are new to the county and have not found an area to let our dog run and socialize with other dogs safely.
51. Obviously private development of water front areas in the county was allowed many years ago. The foresight of county officials at that time must not have been geared toward recreational use. We have a wonderful asset in the river and lakes bordering our county, which is all but unavailable to the general public, which is a terrible loss. The county should make all efforts to acquire and develop properties on these waterways for public use. This would not only be beneficial for county residence in the area of recreation but would no doubt increase revenues to local businesses from visitors. I move to Catawba County five years ago for employment reasons. Over these five years, I have often though if I did not live in the county there is nothing here which would attract me to visit. My family makes many trips a year to seek out door activities and due to the lack of opportunity in our county; we spend our tourist dollars in other areas.
52. Charge park use fee instead of taxes
53. Thanks for the great parks – we love nature
54. Appreciate that the County is offering this survey and pursuing interest in this area.
55. We need something (parks, recreation, camping, sports, trails, etc) in Sherrills Ford. And don't let Crescent sell off any more land-specifically the remaining game lands
56. Must have more playground equipment for children

57. There is NOTHING close to where I live in Sherrills Ford in the way of county parks. If it were not for the Optimist Park, there would be no area for family recreation (and the Optimist site is currently limited to team sports for children). I also think there should be access in this area to Lake Norman for people who do not live on the lake (we do, but I know many who do not.) Some residents (kids, mostly) resort to jumping off the bridge on Mt. Pleasant Road for their access to the Lake. This is a very dangerous situation, for the kids doing it and others traveling by car or boat in the area
58. Just requiring new housing developments to include sidewalks and adding sidewalks when repaving roads would make the whole county a more outdoor recreation friendly place to live. I live in Sherrills Ford and you can only walk on very few roads. Children are not allowed to bike anywhere because the roads are too narrow and no place to ride without fear of being hit. We have an optimist park that people should be able to walk to and can't. Everyone wonders why we are an overweight society. But when you have to trailer your bicycle to somewhere that you can ride, it makes it less feasible.
59. I think this would be a much-needed asset to our community. With our economy and gas prices the way they are, we need something close to home where we can do things with our children that aren't so expensive and don't require us to have to go to other counties in this area with these facilities. The traffic is so bad to try to go any direction for family fun" it is hard to enjoy it anymore.
60. We have a great sports park for our children, but it is always in need of additional space and I would love to see my area get a public park with swimming, walking trails, just a place to take the kids and play.
61. I work in the Sherrills Ford community. There needs to be more park/recreation facilities to accommodate the enormous growth of the area.
62. It would be beneficial for the county to work with some of the local Optimist groups (i.e. Sherrills Ford, Balls Creek, etc) and provide some dollars to those groups to expand their park areas.
63. Eastern Catawba County needs services representative of taxation for this area.
64. The reason I said no to additional parks is to avoid diluting support for the existing two parks.
65. PLEASE give us some park/recreation in the southeast part of the county near Sherrills Ford
66. Parks should not be the priority in the Eastern part of Catawba County. Schools such as Sherrills Ford Elementary should be priority and additional residential development should be limited with enforcement of 2-acre lots until overcapacity of schools is controlled.

67. This area is seriously lacking in community athletic space and recreational areas. This area is seriously lacking in community athletic space and recreational areas.
68. Love Bakers & Riverbend but are quite a drive from my home. The more parks/trails the better anywhere natural not paved. Can't ride a bike on roads around home-even back roads have too many mean dogs attacking you. This is a BIG PROBLEM.
69. Riverbend is close to me- would use it more if open more days. I like 6-7 days access
70. Good job so far on Bakers Mtn
71. There are currently no public parks in the southeast part of Catawba....specifically Sherrills Ford area. It would be nice to have something with on / near the water in this area.
72. Sherrills Ford is growing rapidly. Now is the time to buy the land and designate park area before it's too late.
73. I enjoy Bakers Mountain Park
74. A swing or two would be great.

5.3 STATE AND NATIONAL ASSESSMENT

Surveys, which are designed to determine the demand for outdoor recreation and facilities, have been conducted on both the federal and state levels – by the President's Commission on Americas Outdoor and the North Carolina Outdoor Recreation Survey, respectively. Significant facts that have evolved from these surveys are:

- The top ten most popular outdoor recreational activities (nationwide)
    1. Picnicking
    2. Driving for pleasure
    3. Swimming
    4. Sightseeing
    5. Walking for pleasure
    6. Playing sports
    7. Fishing
    8. Attending sports events
    9. Boating
    10. Bicycling

- The most rapidly growing outdoor activities (nationwide)
    1. Canoeing
    2. Bicycling

3. Attending sports events
4. Camping (all types)
5. Sailing
6. Hiking/Backpacking
7. Walking for pleasure
8. Water skiing

- The top ten most popular outdoor recreational activities (North Carolina)
  1. Walking for pleasure
  2. Driving for pleasure
  3. Viewing scenery
  4. Beach activities
  5. Visiting historical sites
  6. Swimming (in lakes, rivers, and oceans)
  7. Visiting natural areas
  8. Picnicking
  9. Attending sports events
  10. Visiting zoos

- Local governments (cities and counties) provide 39% of the public recreational opportunities in the United States.

5.4 TYPES OF PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

A comprehensive park system is made up of a variety of park types – ranging from small neighborhood playgrounds to larger parks with athletic fields, playgrounds, a community center and open space. They reflect the differing recreational needs and preferences of diverse users. Park models are used as guidelines for fulfilling the future recreation needs of communities. Not all of these types of parks are the responsibility of the municipal agency; rather, several agencies (federal, state, counties, cities, and/or towns,) play roles in providing recreation opportunities. To further understand the County's role in providing recreation opportunities to its citizens, it is necessary to understand the elements of a comprehensive park system. These types of parks and recreation facilities may or may not be included in comprehensive park systems and are delineated in this section:

- Regional Parks:

- District Parks:

- Community Parks:

- Neighborhood Parks:

- Mini Parks:
- Linear Parks/Greenways:
- Special Use Facilities: and
- Open Space.

Regional Parks

Covered picnic area at Riverbend

Regional parks are typically very large sites. On these sites, the unique qualities such as diverse land formations, vegetation and wildlife that exemplify the natural features found are preserved. Parks containing environmental centers, campsites, nature trails, observation decks, and picnic areas are examples of the types of facilities that are usually provided in regional parks. In addition, open fields for non-structured activities, such as Frisbee-throwing or kite-flying, are also generally found in these parks.
When land is acquired for the development of regional parks (or the expansion of existing sites), it should be comprised of the previously-mentioned characteristics – accompanied by natural water features such as lakes, rivers, and/or creeks. The majority of the site should be reserved for passive recreation, with the remaining acreage used for active recreation.

The acquisition and development of regional parks are typically undertaken by governing agencies other than local municipalities. Catawba County's Riverbend Park is an excellent example of a regional park.

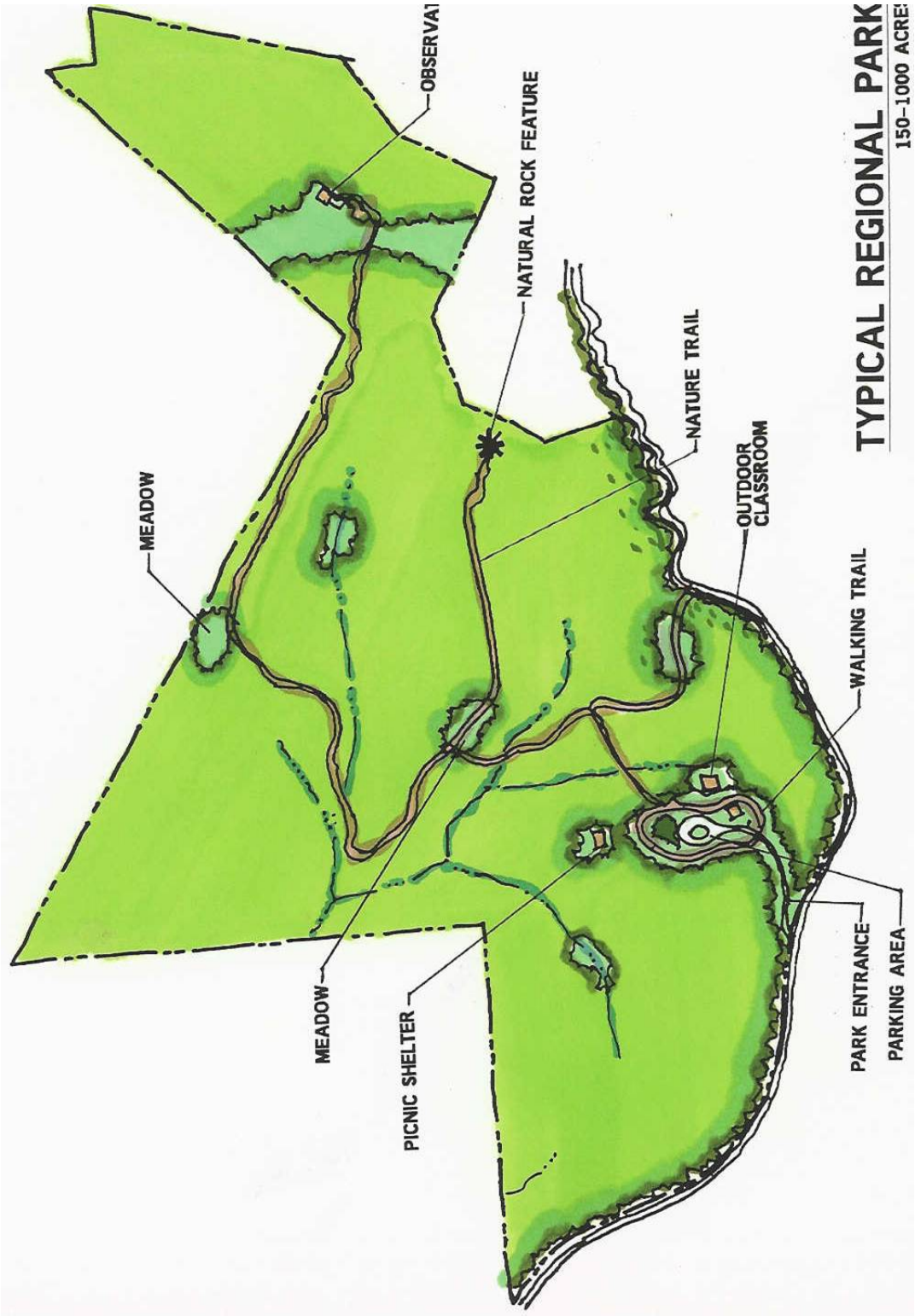
Specific standards/criteria for developing regional parks are as follows:

Service area:	Region-wide
Acreage/Population Ratio:	10 acres per 1,000 persons
Minimum Size:	150-1,000 acres minimum with sufficient area to encompass the resources to be preserved

and managed (10% of the site may be developed with facilities found in Community Parks.)

Typical Facilities:

Equestrian center
Nature trails
Primitive camping
Group camping
Recreational vehicle camping
Observation deck
Picnic shelters and grills
Picnic tables with grills (not under shelter)
Beach
Swimming
Boating
Fishing piers/Boat docks
Parking
Environmental center
Restrooms/Vending
Caretaker's house


TYPICAL REGIONAL PARK
150–1000 ACRES
OBSERVAT
NATURAL ROCK FEATURE
NATURE TRAIL
OUTDOOR CLASSROOM
WALKING TRAIL
PARK ENTRANCE
PARKING AREA
MEADOW
MEADOW
PICNIC SHELTER

District Parks

A district park functions as the major source of active recreation for several neighborhoods within a community. District parks are intensely developed – offering a multitude of facilities in order to serve its intended geographic user area. Activities are balanced between active and passive recreation. District parks are typically developed to accommodate athletic league sporting events, as well as tournament competition. Passive recreation opportunities are found in the undisturbed areas, preferably within surrounding buffers. District parks present great opportunities for non-traditional types of recreation.

Sites for district parks should be relatively flat to alleviate excessive grading for active facilities. Where possible, there should be an equal balance of wooded and cleared areas. If a natural water feature is present, the adjoining land should be developed primarily as passive recreation. Accessibility to neighborhoods should be a consideration when choosing sites.

The development of district parks is typically the responsibility of county or municipal agencies. The City of Hickory's Henry Fork River Regional Recreation Park is an example of a district park.

Specific standards/criteria for developing district parks are as follows:

Service Area:	1 to 2 ½ mile radius
Acreage/Population Ratio:	5 acres per 1,000 persons
Desirable Range:	75-200 acres
Desirable Size:	+100 acres

Typical Facilities:

Playgrounds	Full or Half Size Basketball Courts
Tennis Courts (lighted)	Baseball/Softball/Multi-Purpose Field
Volleyball Courts	Soccer/Football Fields
Picnic Shelter with Grill	Nature Trail
(with/without shelter)	Benches or Bench Swings
Restrooms/Concessions	Parking/Service Yard

50% of Site Remains Undeveloped

*Alternate Facilities:

Recreation Center	Amphitheatre
Observation Decks	Fishing Piers/Boating/Boat Dock

*Alternate facilities, which adhere to the criteria for district parks, may be added.

TYPICAL DISTRICT PARK
75–200 ACRES
BMX PARK
SKATE PARK
SOCCER FIELDS
PAVILLION
PLAYGROUND
PAVILLION
RIDING RING & BARN
BASEBALL FIELD
SOFTBALL FIELDS
WALKING TRAIL
8 FT WIDE ASPHALT
SHELTER
COMMUNITY CENTER
BASKETBALL
PARKING AREA
PLAYGROUND
POND
FOOTBALL FIELD
TENNIS COURTS

Community Parks

Community Parks focus on meeting community-based recreation needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. Compared to district parks, community parks have a smaller range of recreation facilities. They may host athletic league sports events and provide passive recreation. Fifty percent of the community parks should be developed for passive recreation only, 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. A variety of tree species should be present in forested areas. Community parks should contain cleared areas for the purpose of locating active recreation facilities. At least one natural water feature (lake, river, and/or creek) is desirable in community parks. The land acquired for use as a community park should be contiguous in nature and strategically located in order to access all users within the community that it serves.

The development of community parks typically falls within the realm of the municipal responsibilities. Though smaller than the typical community park, St. Stephens Community Park is a good example of a community park.

Specific standards/criteria for developing community parks are as follows:

Service Area:	1 to 2 mile radius
Acreage/Population Ratio:	2-5 acres per 1,000 persons
Desirable Range:	15-50 acres
Desirable Size:	25 acres
Typical Facilities:	50% of site to remain undeveloped Nature trails Playgrounds Swimming pool Benches or bench swings Picnic tables/Shelter with/without grills Full size or half size basketball courts Tennis/Volleyball courts Soccer/Multi-purpose fields Restrooms/Concessions/Parking

*Alternate Facilities:	Recreation center Amphitheatre Observation decks Natural water features Disc golf

*Alternate facilities, which adhere to the criteria for community parks, may be added.

Pond
Walking Trail
Soccer Fields
Existing Woodland
Restrooms
Picnic Shelter
Baseball Fields
Tennis Courts
Street
Street
TYPICAL COMMUNITY PARK
15-50 Acres

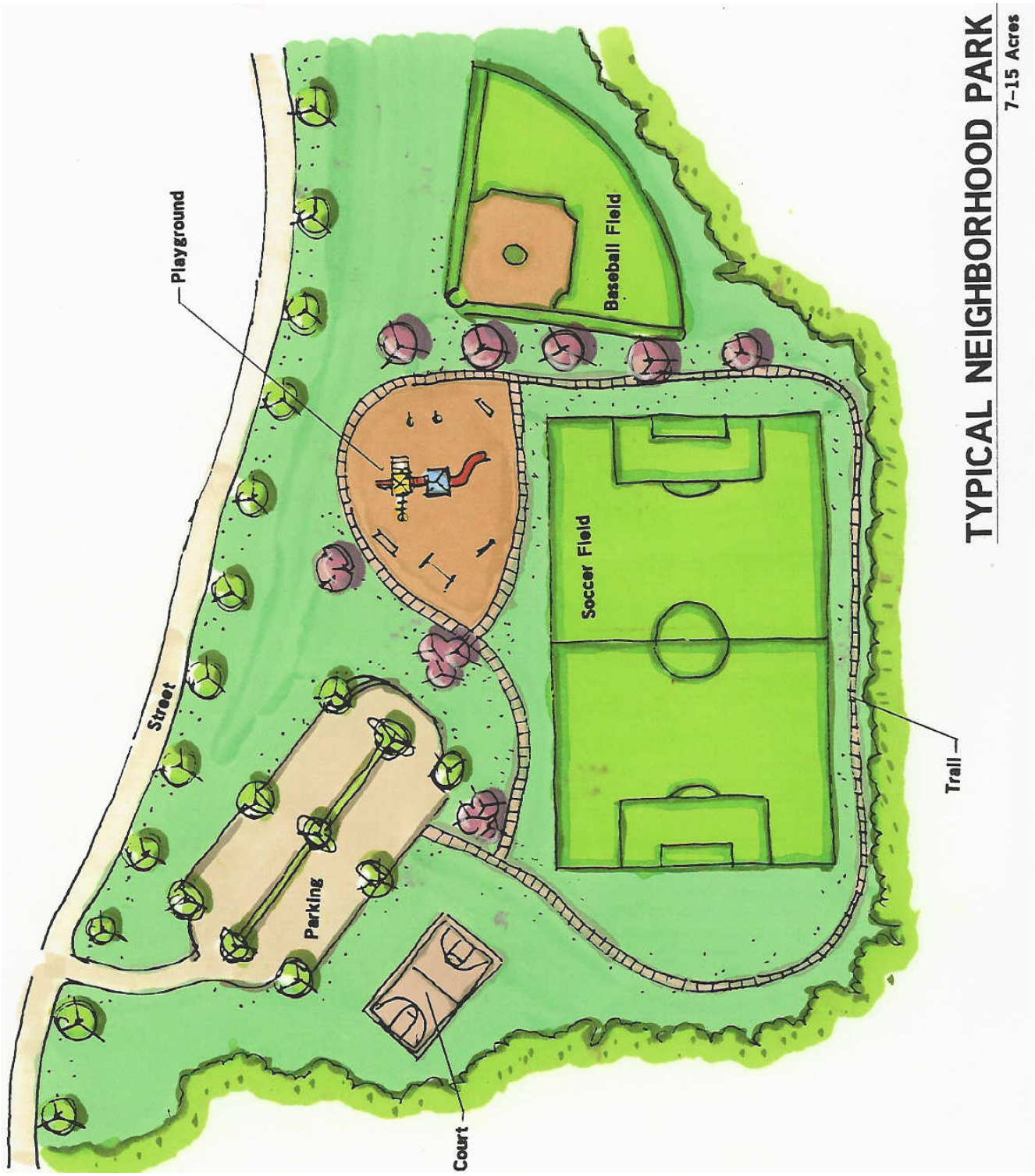
Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks offer the public a convenient source of recreation while serving as the recreational and social focus of neighborhoods. Usually located within walking distance of the area serviced, neighborhood parks provide both active and passive recreation, which is of interest to all age groups. The smaller size of neighborhood parks, as compared to those previously mentioned, requires intense development with fifty percent of each site remaining undisturbed and thereby serving as a buffer between the park and adjacent property owners.

Specific standards/criteria for neighborhood parks are as follows:

Service Area:	¾ to 1 mile radius to serve walk-in
Acreage/Population Ratio:	2 acres per 1,000 persons
Desirable Size:	7-15 acres
Typical Facilities:	50% of site to remain undeveloped Playground Benches or bench swings Softball or baseball field Multi-purpose field Half basketball courts Picnic tables with grills (not under shelter) Picnic shelter with grill
*Alternate Facilities:	Tennis courts Nature trails

*Alternate facilities, which adhere to the criteria for neighborhood parks, may be added.


Playground
Street
Parking
Court
Soccer Field
Baseball Field
Trail
TYPICAL NEIGHBORHOOD PARK
7–15 Acres

Mini Parks

The function of a mini park is to provide very limited, isolated, and/or unique recreation needs. Mini parks are the smallest park classification that exists. They are often served by school and church playgrounds. These parks are located within walking distance of the area served, and they provide limited recreation activities. Their very small size requires intense development; and, there is little (or no) buffer between mini parks and adjacent property owners.

At this time, there are no mini parks within the park system.

Specific standards/criteria for mini parks are as follows:

Service Area:	¼ to ½ mile radius to serve walk-in recreation needs of surrounding populations
Acreage/Population Ratio:	0.5 acres per 1,000 persons
Desirable Size:	±1 acre
Typical Facilities:	Playground Benches or bench swings Open play area Half basketball courts Picnic tables with grills (not under shelter)
*Alternate Facilities:	Tennis courts Nature trails

*Alternate facilities, which adhere to the criteria for mini parks, may be added.

TYPICAL MINI PARK

Linear Parks/Greenways

A linear park is an area developed for one or more varying modes of recreational travel, such as hiking biking, etc. Linear parks are developed for several reasons, including:

1) to "connect" existing recreational facilities;

2) to facilitate public right-of-ways; and/or

3) to meet public demand.

Linear parks feature connecting trails

As such, the length and size of linear parks vary considerably, depending on the terrain of the park land and the distance between entities to be "connected", such as parks, schools, homes, businesses, and cultural/historical resources. In some cases, a linear park is developed within a large land area designated for protection and management of the natural environment, with recreation opportunities being a secondary objective. The proposed trail improvements at Historic Bunker Hill Covered Bridge are an excellent example and offer a great resource for the County.

Unique or Special Use Facilities

Unique or special use facilities are park types that exist for the sole purpose of enhancing or utilizing a special man-made or natural feature. They can include beaches, parkways, historical sites, sites of archeological significance, swimming pools, conservation easements, flood plains, etc. Minimum standards relating to acreage or population have not been established by the park and recreation industry for this category of park. A size that is sufficient to protect and interpret the resource, while providing optimum use, is considered desirable. Bunker Hill Covered Bridge and Murrays Mill are Historic Landmarks in the County that are examples of special use facilities.

Parks utilize natural features

Open Space

While it is realistic and appropriate to adopt population- based standards for park land and facilities, it is not realistic to establish open space standards. The more reasonable method of establishing appropriate standards for open space is to determine the criteria necessary for the protection of significant natural areas.

Public open space is defined as: any land acquired for the purpose of keeping it in a (primarily) undeveloped state. The functions of open space include the

1) preservation of drainage areas for water supplies (watersheds),

2) protection of areas which are particularly well suited for growing crops (farmland preservation),

3) protection of communities to prevent urban sprawl (greenbelts),

4) protection of wildlife habitat (sanctuaries),

5) protection of approach and take-off areas near airports (clear zones),

6) protection of undevelopable land (landfills), and

7) protection of areas aesthetically pleasing for a corridor (viewshed). While these areas are some of the more common open space functions, many others exist. Catawba County's open space is primarily limited to privately-owned agricultural land and watershed land. Bakers Mountain Park and Riverbend Park also provide a great wealth of open space and provide many different functions.

5.5 EVALUATION OF PARK LAND NEEDS

When comparing a park system to national standards, one method is to determine total acreage. The National Recreation and Park Association park land guidelines (in acres) for the total service population of Catawba County are provided in the table on page V-35. Population figures in this analysis – estimated at 149,090 – include the effective population comprised of County residents. The acreage requirement is based on the population ratio method (acres of park land per population of 1,000) pre-established for each classification of parks.

Existing Acreage

Following a summation of park acreage, it has been determined that Catawba County does not meet the national and state acreage guidelines for comprehensive park systems. (See total existing acreage, Table 5.5.1 as compared to total recommended acreage, Table 5.5.2.) Note that the Mountain View Recreation Center is listed in this chart; however, the County does not operate the park, but contracts with the Mountain View Recreation Association to operate the facility. The park classification that most closely matches Catawba County Parks Division is the Regional Park category. (St. Stephens Community Park does not fit into this category, but historically, has not been managed by the County.) This complements the municipal parks which are smaller and offer a different type of recreation. The County is the sole provider of regional parks for Catawba County residents. In evaluating the park providers within the County, it has been determined that many of the park classifications are not necessary for the Catawba County Parks Division. Specifically, district parks, community parks and neighborhood parks are predominantly provided by the local municipalities within Catawba County and are commonly focused toward active recreation such as athletic programming.

Table 5.5.1 - EXISTING PARK ACREAGE	
Riverbend Park	**450 acres**
Bakers Mountain Park	**189 acres**
St. Stephens Community Park	**9.1 acres**
Mountain View Recreation Center	**5.05 acres**
Total County Owned:	**653.15 acres**

Table 5.5.2 - COUNTY PARK ACREAGE BY CLASSIFICATION (Based on NRPA Guidelines)

TYPE OF PARK	Existing Acreage	Recommended for 2007 Population 149,090	Recommended for 2017 Population 167,303
REGIONAL PARK (NPS) 1,000 acres or 10 acres/1,000 persons	**639 acres**	**1,491 acres (852 acre deficit)**	**1,673 acres (1,034 acre deficit)**
DISTRICT PARK 200 acres or 5 acres/1,000 persons	**0 acres**	**0 acres**	**0 acres**
COMMUNITY PARK 20-30 acres or 2.5 acres/1,000 persons	**9.1 acres**	**0 acres**	**0 acres**
NEIGHBORHOOD PARK 7-15 acres or 2 acres/1,000 persons	**0 acres**	**0 acres**	**0 acres**
MINI PARK 1-2 acres or 0.5 acres/1,000 persons	**0 acres**	**0 acres**	**0 acres**

Evaluation of Facility Needs

The results of local standards established by the National Recreation & Parks Association (NRPA), the North Carolina Department of Environment & Natural Resources, and (foremost) Catawba County have been compiled (Table 5.5.3) in order to assess the current and future facility needs (Table 5.5.4), as follows:

Table 5.5.3 - STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC FACILITIES

Facility	NRPA Standards	NCDENR Standards	Catawba County Standards (Recommended)
Fields			
Adult Baseball	1/12,000	1/5,000	N/A
Youth Baseball	N/A	N/A	N/A
Softball	1/5,000	1/5,000	N/A
Football	1/10,000	1/20,000	N/A
Soccer	1/10,000	1/20,000	N/A
Courts			
Basketball	1/5,000	1/5,000	N/A
Tennis	1/2,000	1/2,000	N/A
Volleyball	1/5,000	1/5,000	N/A
Shuffleboard	N/A	N/A	N/A
Horseshoe	1/12,000	N/A	1/12,000
Outdoor Areas			
Picnic Shelter	N/A	1/3,000	1/3,000
Playground	N/A	1/3,000	1/3,000
Amphitheater	1/20,000	1/20,000	1/20,000
Activities			
Walking/Hiking	1/region	0.5 mile/1,000	0.5 mile/1,000
Equestrian	N/A	0.5 mile/1,000	N/A
Primitive Camping	N/A	2.5 sites/1,000	2.5 sites/1,000
Archery Area	1/50,000	1/50,000	N/A
Specialized			
Community Center	1/20,000	1/20,000	N/A
Swimming Pool	1/20,000	1/20,000	N/A
Golf Course	1/25,000	1/20,000	1/20,000
Bicycling (Urban)	N/A	1/25,000	1/25,000
Auditorium	1/20,000	N/A	N/A
Education/Meeting Facility	N/A	N/A	1/regional park
Canoeing/Boating			
Streams/Lakes	N/A	.2 mile/1,000	.2 mile/1,000
Stream/Lake Access	N/A	1/10 miles	1/10 miles

(Also see Appendix Map 3 – Community Needs Assessment)

Table 5.5.4 - EXISTING AND RECOMMENDED PUBLIC FACILITIES

Facility	Catawba County Standard (Recommended)	Existing Facilities	Current Demand (149,090 estimate)	10-Year Demand (167,303 estimate)
Fields				
Adult Baseball	1/5,000	N/A	N/A	N/A
Youth Baseball	1/8,000	N/A	N/A	N/A
Softball	1/8,000	N/A	N/A	N/A
Football	1/10,000	N/A	N/A	N/A
Soccer	1/5,000	N/A	N/A	N/A
Courts				
Basketball	1/5,000	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tennis	1/2,000	N/A	N/A	N/A
Volleyball	1/5,000	N/A	N/A	N/A
Shuffleboard	1/5,000	N/A	N/A	N/A
Horseshoe	1/2,000	0	75*	84*
Outdoor Areas				
Picnic Shelter	1/3,000	4	49*	56*
Playground Activities	1/3,000	0	49*	56*
Amphitheater	1/20,000	0	7*	8*
Activities				
Walking/Hiking	0.5 mile/1,000	18	75*	84*
Equestrian	0.5 mile/1,000	x	x	x
Primitive Camping	2.5 sites/1,000	0	373	418
Archery Area	1/50,000	x	x	x
Dog Park	N/A	1	1/regional park	* as developed
Specialized				
Community Center	1/20,000	N/A	N/A	N/A
Swimming Pool	1/20,000	**	N/A	N/A
Golf Course	1/25,000	x	x	x
Bicycling (Urban)	N/A	x	x	x
Auditorium	1/20,000	N/A	N/A	N/A
Education/Meeting Facility	N/A	2	1/regional park	* as developed
Canoeing/Kayaking				
Streams/Lakes	0.2/1000	0	29.8	37.5
Stream/ Lake Access	1/10	1	3	4

*** Local municipalities or private entities within the County provide a portion of these facilities.**
N/A: Not applicable
X: Potential future activities, not proposed at this time.
**** Non-operational**

From this exercise, we have concluded that Catawba County Parks Division may not meet all of the state and national standard guidelines for recreational facilities. Many of the facilities above that are indicated as non-applicable (N/A) are focused on active recreation and are adequately provided by other entities within the County. As discussed in previous sections, the goal of Catawba County Parks Division is to provide passive recreation on large acreage parks. Municipalities and non-profits have difficulty providing or simply cannot provide

large scale recreation sites because of existing land development. In addition, other facilities shown as deficient in the table above are also provided by the local municipalities or private entities. Therefore, the number of the recommended facilities listed above should consider such existing facilities. The community workshops and the recreation survey will be used as primary guides in prescribing the specific needs for Catawba County Parks Division – now and in the future.

The deficiencies in recreational facilities are in the categories of horseshoe, picnic areas, amphitheatre, walking trails, primitive camping and dog parks.

Results of Facility Needs Study

To summarize, listed below are the results of the recreational facility needs assessment, both current and in the future, based on NRPA, NCDENR standards. Community input, which was the primary guide for the development of the master plan was not used in this set of calculations.

Immediate Needs

10	Horseshoe pits
3	Picnic shelters
0	Amphitheatres
10	Miles of walking/hiking trails
373	Primitive camping sites
1	Dog park

Additional Future Needs (2017)

20	Horseshoe pits
10	Picnic shelters
0	Amphitheatres
15	Miles of walking/hiking trails
418	Primitive camping sites
2	Dog parks

- End of Section -