

12-17-07  
ADOPTED

Comprehensive  
**parks  
master** Plan

**Catawba**  
County



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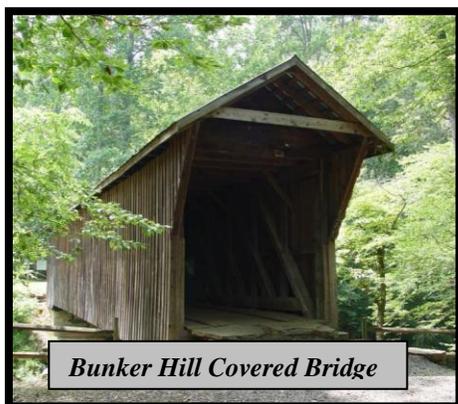
## SECTION 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

**It is the mission of Catawba County Parks to preserve Catawba County's unique and diverse natural heritage through education and conservation, while providing quality passive recreational opportunities, amenities, and services.**

Catawba County is located in the western portion of North Carolina in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Established in 1842, the County adjoins 1) Iredell County to the east, 2) Lincoln County to the south, 3) Burke County to the west, 4) Caldwell County to the northwest, and 5) Alexander County to the north. The total land area is approximately 405 square miles and the topography varies from rugged terrain to gentle rolling areas. The County's main water feature is the Catawba River, which feeds Lake Hickory, Lookout Shoals Lake, and Lake Norman, along with several tributaries throughout the County. Lake Norman is the largest manmade lake located solely in North Carolina. The municipalities in Catawba County are located throughout the County and include Hickory, Long View, Newton, Conover, Maiden, Claremont, Brookford, and Catawba.

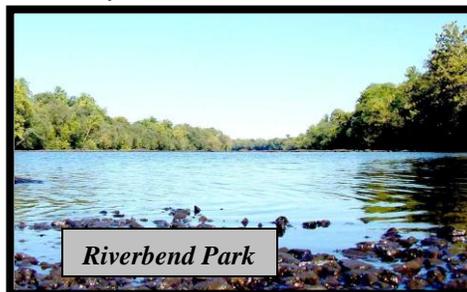


*Bunker Hill Covered Bridge*

Historically, agriculture and hydroelectricity, provided by the Catawba River, set Catawba County on a path to significant growth and development. Over the last century, transportation and vast natural resources helped maintain this progress. The natural environment has played a major role in the lives and heritage of the citizens and helped significantly enrich the visitor's experience to the area. With growth comes greater responsibility; and, like generations before, we

must protect Catawba County's valuable natural assets and meet the recreational needs of the area.

The Catawba County Parks Division was created in 1999 with the opening of Riverbend Park and the preservation of 450 acres for passive recreation. Bakers Mountain Park was opened in 2002, preserving 189 acres on Catawba County's most prominent point and the location of the County's largest mature forest. Both parks were created using matching fund grants from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF). The grants essentially provide recreation development using a 50% grant



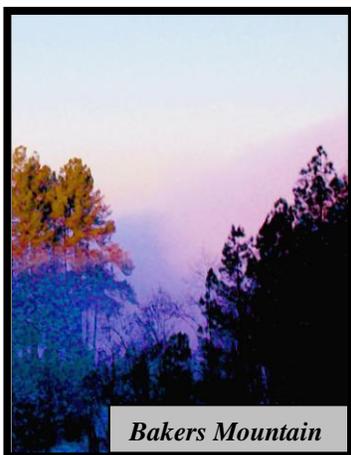
*Riverbend Park*



match; thus, reducing the financial burden to the local tax base. Currently, both parks are providing passive recreation opportunities to over 68,000 patrons a year with over 11,000 patrons participating in environmental, educational programs. With a visionary master plan, the next ten years should produce significant recreational development and enhanced programming that will reach an even greater segment of the County's growing population.

Prior to the formation of the Catawba County Parks Division, St. Stephens Recreational Corporation requested assistance from Catawba County to serve as a grant recipient for a Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant, which was awarded in 1979 in the amount of \$75,000. Upon approval of the grant, the 9.1 acre tract was deeded to Catawba County. A pool, bathhouse and picnic shelter were constructed and St. Stephens Recreational Corporation continued to operate and maintain the pool and park. At that time the County did not have a parks division nor did it operate active or passive parks. In 1985, St. Stephens Recreational Corporation was dissolved and the City of Hickory assumed responsibility for park operations until the summer of 2005. The swimming pool currently is in a state of disrepair, is functional obsolete and its replacement cost would be prohibitive. Since Catawba County Parks Division's goal is to provide passive recreation and natural preservation, the County is currently in the process of submitting conversion documents to the state - in order to declare the pool obsolete - and renovate and operate the park as a community passive park.

Also prior to the formation of the Catawba County Parks Division, the Mountain View Recreation Association requested assistance from Catawba County to serve as a grant recipient for a LWCF grant to obtain 5.05 acres of land, and to develop the site into an active recreation park. This 5.05 acre area is part of a larger complex which is owned and operated by the Mountain View Recreation Association, making a combined park area of approximately 15 acres. It is the intent of this plan that the County's portion of the park will continue to be operated by Mountain View Recreation Association, since Catawba County Parks Division's goal is to provide passive - as opposed to active - recreation.



However, to remain in compliance with the requirements of the LWCF grant, repairs are necessary to enable the County area of the park to meet the American Disabilities Act (ADA) standards.

Catawba County is a traditional foothills community, which holds strong to the traditions and values that have been developed over time. Significant cultural resources such as Murray's Mill and Bunker Hill Covered Bridge are recognized, not only within the state of North Carolina, but also attract visitors from across the United States. These resources - among others - have led Catawba County to become a



destination, not only for vacationers, but also as a place to reside. The County has acknowledged the increase of population and development within Catawba County by ensuring that growth is planned for in the future. The recent adoption of the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), adopted in early 2007, promotes higher development standards, encouraging smart growth and protecting the environment and natural aesthetic qualities of the area.

Catawba County, the central county of North Carolina's seventh largest Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), has recognized the need to diversify and balance its traditional manufacturing base with other types of businesses and services. With the recent shift to a global economy, the County and region have made a concentrated effort directed at identifying and recruiting new non-manufacturing and non-traditional businesses. The high quality of life in Catawba County, which includes recreation, is important to the citizens who have lived here for many years and is viewed as an asset in attracting new businesses and planned residential growth that is essential to a healthy local economy. Catawba County's economic diversity, ideal climate, and natural scenic beauty naturally create a favorable destination for relocation

## 1.2 PURPOSES AND GOALS

The Catawba County Board of Commissioners, County Staff, and the Parks Division have recognized the need to prepare a Comprehensive Parks Master Plan. (See Appendix: Attachment 1 – Press Release) McGill Associates, P.A., was selected by Catawba County to evaluate its existing park and passive facilities and to develop a Master Plan as a guideline for implementation of recommendations designed to meet the needs of the population for a span of ten years. There have been dramatic changes in recreation amenities and the accepted method of facility and program operation since Catawba County Parks was created in 1999. Typically, a master plan is written for a 20-year period of time. Because the Catawba County Parks Division is still in its infancy and in a stage of rapid growth and change, a 10-year plan, with an update in five years will be more practical and realistic.

Catawba County Parks Comprehensive Master Plan 2007-2017 provides the framework for guiding the Board of Commissioners and staff in both its current evaluation of, and long-range planning for the Catawba County Parks System. The framework for this Master Plan is based upon conducting an inventory of the existing park system and recording



*Kitty Barnes, Chairperson – Board of Commissioners*



the observations. This assessment of these facilities, or lack of, will assist in identifying the immediate facility needs in the given communities, as well as predicting the future needs of residents.

Another purpose of the Master Plan is to recommend the addition/renovation of parks and/or recreational facilities as needed. Not only does the Master Plan include recommendations, but it also prioritizes specific projects, such as recommended park upgrades, expansion and/or land acquisition, taking into consideration the identification of user population and the development of recreation standards. The Master Plan is intended to be action-oriented and designed to provide Catawba County with a practical guide for its enhancement of the Parks Division for the next ten years.

In preparing the Master Plan, McGill Associates, P.A., worked closely with Catawba County's Parks Division, Planning Staff, and the Focus Group (which was comprised of citizens from Catawba County representing each of the seven Small Area Plan vicinities).

A key objective in the development of the Master Plan was the solicitation of community input – thereby, identifying additional needs for Catawba County, such as renovation, construction, land purchase, development and/or operational policies. – both now and in the future. Community input, along with the comparison to state and national standards, served as a foundation providing a framework for the Master Plan process.

*State and National Parks and Recreation Standards* were used as a guide to support the recommendations made for the parks and recreational facilities for Catawba County. Also the Master Plan reflects the recommendations of the *Greater Hickory Recreation/Tourism Plan (2006)*. Using these standard guidelines and regional recommendations, McGill Associates, P.A., developed a plan, which applied specifically to the County's residents and non-resident users of the parks.



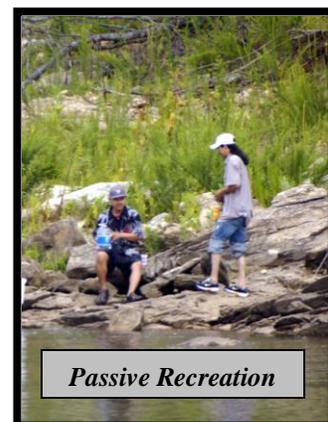


The Master Plan encourages “connectivity” of proposed projects to existing sites, such as other parks, schools, and government-owned properties. It is not designed to be exclusive, but rather to enhance recreational opportunities in the communities, the County, the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), and the entire region.

The Master Plan reflects the mission of Catawba County Parks, which includes these key elements:

- *To provide quality passive recreation;*
- *To preserve Catawba County’s unique and diverse natural and historical heritage;*
- *To provide educational environmental programming;*
- *To preserve the natural character and aesthetics of the County while realizing its importance as a tool for economic development and its ability to continue to uphold Catawba County’s high quality of life;*
- *To promote wellness by providing recreation options that encourage good physical and mental health; and*
- *To preserve/enhance air and water quality by protecting native vegetation and habitats while providing passive recreational opportunities that are conveniently accessible.*

Passive recreation is defined as the type of recreation that occurs in a natural setting, with minimal facilities and impacts on the natural integrity of the area. Examples of such facilities include greenways, bike trails, fishing areas, non-motorized canoe/kayak access, hiking, dog parks, environmental education and quality open space. The quality of the environment plays a tremendous role in passive recreation – providing refreshment of the mind and body. Most importantly, passive recreation can be enjoyed by all ages and promotes positive social interaction among communities, family and friends.



Of utmost intent, the Master Plan’s purpose is to maintain the type of venue in Catawba County that fosters community spirit, activism, and bonding between local citizens, while preserving the rural and natural character of the landscape that is synonymous with the high quality environmental reputation of the region.



Section I Introduction

The study of the demographic profile of County residents – population and ages, as related to areas of larger/smaller population – is a key factor in making specific recommendations and projecting levels of service.

Not only does the Catawba County Parks Master Plan make recommendations for a ten-year period of time (2007 - 2017), but it also suggests the means by which the identified objectives might be achieved. Opportunities for grants, partnerships, and outside funding are recommended as aids in the establishment of a Capital Improvement Plan and an operating budget. The need for and location of land acquisition(s) are explained in detail.

The Master Plan focuses on providing Catawba County with an accurate, usable guide for decision-making as the County begins to implement items, such as the following:

- *Park renovations, acquisitions, and developments;*
- *Facility renovations, acquisitions, and developments;*
- *Passive recreation programming strategies; and*
- *Implementation of improvements.*

The Master Plan is divided into seven major component sections, plus an appendix, which are listed below:

Section 1 – Introduction

Section 2 – Population Trends and Projections;

Section 3 – Existing Plans and Documents

Section 4 – Existing Park Facilities;

Section 5 – Recreation Needs Assessment;

Section 6 – Goals and Recommendations;

Section 7 – Action Implementation Plan: and

Appendix



## 1.3 SOCIETAL BENEFITS

Catawba County has traditionally relied upon an agricultural and manufacturing based economy. Within the past few years, the County has recognized the need to expand and diversify this economic base. Like many communities in America, Catawba County is at a crossroads, balancing the need of economic growth with the need to provide a good quality of life for its residents. Fortunately, the two do not have to be mutually exclusive. The same amenities that attract residents can benefit a wide variety of concerns, including economic growth.

### **Benefits of Parks, Greenways and Trails**

#### **Economic**

- **Tourism.** Hiking is one of the fastest growing recreation activities in America. Several studies have shown that trails attract a variety of retail businesses to their location, including restaurants, sporting equipment shops, lodging and guide services. It has been estimated that a visitor to a trail will spend from \$10 to \$75 per day at local businesses. TIA Travelscope and Global Insight, Inc. found that when visitors came to North Carolina, 35% of their expenditures were spent on food, 22% on accommodations, 17% on entertainment, 12% on retail, and 14% on transportation.

According to the 2006 Economic Impact of Travel on North Carolina Counties prepared for the North Carolina Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development by the Travel Industry Association of America, tourists spent \$207,790,000 in Catawba County last year. This was an 8.8% increase in spending over the previous year. Tourism accounted for \$40,800,000 in payroll and directly employed 2,370 people. Local tax receipts from tourism were \$4,710,000.

The Charlotte Regional Economic Development Partnership, of which Catawba County is a member, saw tourists spend over 4 billion dollars in 2006. A good system of parks, trails and greenways would be instrumental in attracting more of these visitors to Catawba County.

According to the National Center for Bicycling and Walking:

*“Trails and greenways are very popular among vacationing bicyclists and pedestrians. Visitors appreciate and often return to communities that provide places for bicycling and walking, safely removed from busy roads and streets. Trails offer scenic recreation opportunities suitable for a wide range of ages and abilities. Where popular trails exist,*



*lodging providers can encourage extended stays among their guests, thereby increasing occupancy. For residents, investments in trails and greenways can increase property values and improve the overall livability of a community.”*  
(National Center for Bicycling & Walking, 2003)

- **Increased property values.** Houses located near greenways and trails have been shown to sell for higher prices than houses further away. A developer in Apex, North Carolina, was able to sell houses adjacent to a regional greenway for \$5,000 more than for houses not adjacent to the greenway. The more expensive houses on the greenway also sold more quickly than the others. The National Park Service has noted that homes adjacent to trails and greenways sell from 5% to 32% higher than comparable homes located further away.

According to the Trust for Public Land:

*“Quality of life is a determining factor in real estate values and economic vitality. A real estate industry report calls livability “a litmus test” for determining the strength of the real estate investment market...If people want to live in a place, companies and jobs will follow.”* (The Trust for Public Land, 2003)

- **New residents and businesses.** Greenways, with their natural beauty and recreation opportunities make a community more attractive to those looking to relocate their families or their companies.

According to the National Parks Service:

*“Businesses which move to an area because of tax incentives tend to leave as soon as the incentives expired. However, businesses that move to the area because of its quality of life remain to become long term residents and tax payers.”* (Economic Impacts of Trails, 2005)

- **Job growth.** Trails and open spaces provide an immediate source of jobs through their construction and maintenance.

According to the Triangle Greenways Council:

*“Business leaders are selecting sites for the relocation and expansion of industries and corporations where the quality of life is high and recreation opportunities are abundant. Increasingly, corporations are recognizing the benefits to their employees of convenient fitness and recreation facilities*



*and are seeking greenway amenities in potential business sites.” (Triangle Greenways Council, 2005)*

According to the National Center for Bicycling and Walking:  
*“Studies show that where bicycle and pedestrian tourism is fostered and promoted, and where investments are made in bicycle and pedestrian facilities, the economic impact may be even greater than only impacting the tourism industry. A thriving tourist industry, in turn, can attract and revitalize businesses, create jobs and increase public revenue.”*  
(The National Center for Bicycling & Walking, 9/28/07)

Parks, trails, and greenways provide many more benefits to a community. Though listed under different headings, many of the benefits below also provide economic advantages to a community.

## Environmental

- **Protection of waterways.** Open spaces provide natural buffers that protect rivers, streams and lakes by filtering pollutants and eroded soil from run-off before it reaches the waterways. Clean waterways increase the quality of life for residents, attract new residents and businesses and provide increased opportunities for tourism. Paddle trails are a growing source of recreation and economic opportunity for the communities of North Carolina.
- **Wildlife habitat.** Increased open space provides habitats for a wide variety of species. Birding trails are a fast growing segment of eco-tourism and there is a statewide effort in North Carolina to develop and promote them. Increased wildlife habitats also allow for educational opportunities and are perceived as increasing the quality of life for residents.
- **Reduced pollution.** The majority of trips taken by Americans in their cars are of less than 5 miles. Trails provide alternate avenues for walking, skating and biking to neighborhood destinations, reducing both air pollution and water pollution (run-off from roads and parking lots). Less automobile traffic also results in smaller parking lots, reducing the heat island effect and increasing opportunities for ground water penetration.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service:  
*“Green space in urban areas provides substantial environmental benefits. The U.S. Forest service has calculated that over a 50-year lifetime, one tree generates \$31,250 worth of oxygen, provides \$62,000 worth of air*



*pollution control, recycles \$37,500 worth of water and controls \$31,250 worth of soil erosion.” (Economic Impacts of Trails, 2005)*

## Education

- **Preservation of historic, natural, and cultural sites.** Trails and greenways have been shown to draw people to adjacent historic and cultural sites, providing additional funds for preservation.
- **Educational opportunities.** Open spaces have been used successfully as outdoor classrooms through the use of interpretive signage and instructor led classes. Educational programming attracts both residents and tourists.
- **Increased accessibility.** Greenways and trails cannot only provide access to individual sites, but can serve to link several sites together. This linkage cannot only increase attendance but provide for the integration of educational programming between several linked sites.

## Health

- **Improved health.** Open spaces provide opportunities for exercise. Exercise has been shown to reduce stress, improve cardiovascular health, and promote weight loss - all of which help to prevent or reduce a variety of related health problems. Improved health of a community's residents helps to decrease health care costs.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

*“57% of all North Carolinians are either overweight or obese, up 82% from 1990 to 2002. Further, 26% of youth 12 – 18 and 20% of children 5 – 11 are overweight or obese. Interestingly, each of these NC statistics is significantly above the national average.*

*The numbers serve as a warning to all North Carolinians, because regardless of ones individual health status, ultimately we all suffer through increased healthcare costs and lost productivity in the workplace. In fact, based on research from a January 2004 study from the Research Triangle Institute, North Carolina taxpayers pay an estimated \$2.1 billion annually for obesity related medical expenses.”*  
(Fit Together, Retrieved 11/8/07)



## Society

- **Community.** Open spaces offer many opportunities for people to meet and interact, strengthening the sense of community. This is very attractive to many corporations as they seek new locations.
- **Family activities.** Open spaces provide for a variety of passive recreation activities that can be shared by all members of a family.
- **Community identity.** A well planned and executed system of open spaces can provide a community with an ‘identity’ that can be used to promote business growth and tourism.

A strong economy, a heightened sense of community, educational opportunities, better health and a healthy environment are all attributes of a well planned and executed system of parks, trails and greenways. These attributes contribute to the overall satisfaction of residents and the prosperity of Catawba County.

**-End of Section-**



## **SECTION 2 POPULATION TRENDS and PROJECTIONS**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

As part of the County's long-range Strategic Growth Plan, seven Small Area Plans (SAPs) were developed to evaluate and assess growth patterns, public facilities, utilities, and other factors and public needs that affect Catawba County. These plans include areas of the County that are outside the municipal districts, yet within Catawba County. The adopted Small Area Plans include Mountain View, Plateau, Startown, Balls Creek, Sherrills Ford, Catawba, and St. Stephens/Oxford. (See Appendix Map 1 – Catawba County Small Area Plans) The individual SAPs will be used as a guide for future growth as County development continues.

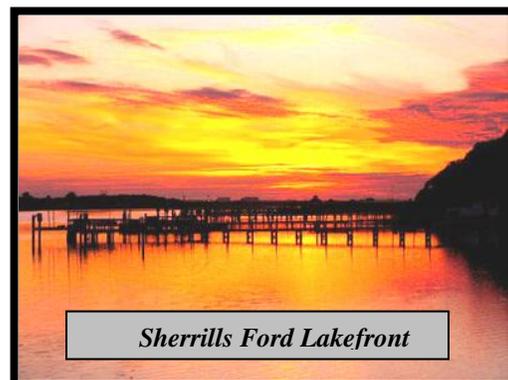


For the purposes of reviewing demographic information and projecting population trends, this section is divided into the seven different SAPs. These SAPs contain valuable demographic information, which will be used to evaluate the existing and future population trends. Demographic information is

reviewed to gain a better understanding of the characteristics of each community in Catawba County, to determine specific recreational needs and prioritize their development.

### **2.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**

In Catawba County, the population is somewhat evenly distributed, with 24.3% being 18 or under, 63.4% being between the age of 19 and 64, and 12.3% being 65 and older. The average Catawba County resident is 36 years old. The following table is separated into three different age groups for each SAP and also shows statistics for Catawba County as a whole, including the incorporated areas.





## Age of Population, 2000

**Table 2.2.1 – SAP Population Projections by Age**

AGE	Catawba County	Mountain View	Plateau	Startown	Balls Creek	* Sherrills Ford	Catawba	St. Stephens Oxford
18 & Under	34,392 (24.3%)	2,820 (27.5%)	1,212 (24.2%)	1,006 (24.7%)	2,665 (24.7%)	2,405 (22.9%)	701 (27.0%)	5,219 (26.6%)
19 to 64	89,868 (63.4%)	6,570 (64.1%)	3,205 (64.0%)	2,606 (63.9%)	6,820 (63.3%)	6,944 (66.0%)	1,579 (60.9%)	12,718 (64.8%)
65 and Older	17,425 (12.3%)	866 (8.4%)	591 (11.8%)	464 (11.4%)	1,293 (12.0%)	1,170 (11.1%)	313 (12.1%)	1,688 (8.6%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>141,685 (100%)</b>	<b>10,256 (100%)</b>	<b>15,264 (100%)</b>	<b>4,076 (100%)</b>	<b>10,778 (100%)</b>	<b>10,519 (100%) *</b>	<b>2,593 (100%)</b>	<b>19,625 (100%)</b>

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000; WPCOG Data Center, May 2002

\* A rezoning request was approved, which will add a total of 1,500 homes in the Key Harbor Subdivision, and 14 single-family, 70 multi-family, and 135 senior housing units in a mixed use village.

## 2.3 POPULATION PROJECTIONS



*Population statistics were used in SAP planning*

Statistics from the US Census Bureau and the Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) indicate that there will be substantial growth in Catawba County over the next ten years. The following table summarizes the population projections for each individual SAP and the County as a whole. The Sherrills Ford and St. Stephens/Oxford SAPs historically reflect greater population growth as compared, for instance, to the Mountain View district.



## Catawba County Population Projections

**Table 2.3.1 – SAP Projections**

YEAR	Catawba County	Mountain View	Plateau	Startown	Balls Creek	Sherrills Ford	Catawba	St. Stephens Oxford
2000	141,685	10,256	5,008	4,076	10,788	10,519	2,593	16,625
2005	149,090	10,934	5,611	4529	11,964	11,870	2,819	22,431
2010	158,132	11,577	6,164	4973	12,958	13,258	3,030	24,685
2015	167,303	12,089	6,739	5371	14,114	14,535	3,240	26,677
<b>Total Growth 2000 to 2015</b>	<b>25,618</b>	<b>1,833</b>	<b>1,731</b>	<b>1295</b>	<b>3,337</b>	<b>4,016</b>	<b>647</b>	<b>7,052</b>
<b>% Change</b>	<b>18.1%</b>	<b>16.8%</b>	<b>34.6%</b>	<b>31.8%</b>	<b>31.0%</b>	<b>38.2%</b>	<b>25.0%</b>	<b>35.9%</b>

Source: WPCOG Data Center, May 2002, North Carolina State Demographics, 2007

Statistics from North Carolina Demographics indicate there will be a 17.4% increase in the population of Catawba County from 2015 (167,303) to 2030 (196,477).

**Table 2.3.2 – Catawba County Projections**

Year	Catawba County Residents	Population Increase	Percent Growth
2015	167,303		
2020	177,080	9,777	5.8%
2025	186,510	9,430	5.3%
2030	196,477	9,967	5.3%

## 2.4 POPULATION TRENDS

The population trends for residents of Catawba County vary somewhat but are relatively similar in relationship to age groups. According to the North Carolina Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) for 2003-2008, children and senior citizens comprise two of the fastest growing groups, who are in need of more recreation opportunities.



In addition, the SCORP indicated that the number of children between the ages of 5 and 14 would continue to increase. This phenomenon is known as the “eco-boom” – meaning the parents of these children have delayed childbirth until a



later age – in favor of completing their education and starting their careers. The parents of the children in this age group acknowledge the importance of environmental and wellness issues. Due to busy lifestyles, easy accessibility to recreational opportunities with accommodating hours of operation is paramount.

The senior population is expected to increase due to in-migration of seniors from other states and additionally a longer life expectancy. The population increase of seniors will have significant impacts throughout society because of their socio-economic factors, their greater emphasis on wellness, flexible schedules, and unique recreation needs.

Developing trends are influencing the need for additional recreation services for County residents. Catawba County and the surrounding counties will continue to increase in popularity as vacation destinations. To attract and meet the needs of residents and visitors, the Parks Division will have to continually evaluate its recreation and ancillary facilities, as well as offer diverse types of recreation opportunities.



Approximately, 70,100 citizens, or 47.5%, of the population of Catawba County live outside the jurisdiction of a municipality. Municipalities and their recreation departments normally focus on active recreation. YMCA, Optimist, and the school systems in the County are also active recreation providers. The Catawba County Parks Division has focused on providing large-scale passive recreation and other unique recreational opportunities that are not offered by the municipalities. This results in more diverse recreational opportunities without redundancy. Attendance at Catawba County Parks is growing at about twice the rate of population growth for the County, near 10% annually.



*Dedication of Catawba County's first dog park*

**- End of Section -**



## **SECTION 3 EXISTING PLANS AND DOCUMENTS**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

As part of the planning process, a review of existing planning documents is essential to both better understand the previously proposed recommendations and to also coordinate these recommendations with the Comprehensive Master Plan. The following are brief summaries of existing plans that are relevant to the making of recommendations for the Comprehensive Parks Master Plan.

### **3.2 INVENTORY OF SIGNIFICANT NATURAL AREAS OF CATAWBA COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA 2002**

The objective of the document is to identify and describe the significant natural heritage areas of Catawba County. It is critical to inventory these areas in an effort to protect them. This plan needs to be updated every five years or whenever the outlined sites may be impacted by development encroachment. The following criteria are used to categorize inventoried areas:

- National Significance;
- State Significance;
- Regional Significance; and
- County Significance.

The Natural Heritage Areas in Catawba County are listed below with their corresponding significance as inventoried. (See Appendix: Attachment 2 – Significant Natural Heritage Areas in Catawba County, NC)

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| • Jacob Fork West Corridor                | National |
| • Bakers Mountain                         | State    |
| • Catawba River Corridor                  | Regional |
| • Jacob Fork Aquatic Habitat              | Regional |
| • Lyle Creek Corridor                     | Regional |
| • Murrays Mill Lake and Upper Balls Creek | Regional |
| • Henry Fork River Slopes                 | County   |
| • Jacob Fork East Corridor                | County   |
| • Lyle Creek Wetland                      | County   |
| • Terrapin Creek Corridor                 | County   |
| • Lake Norman Slopes and Shoreline        | County   |



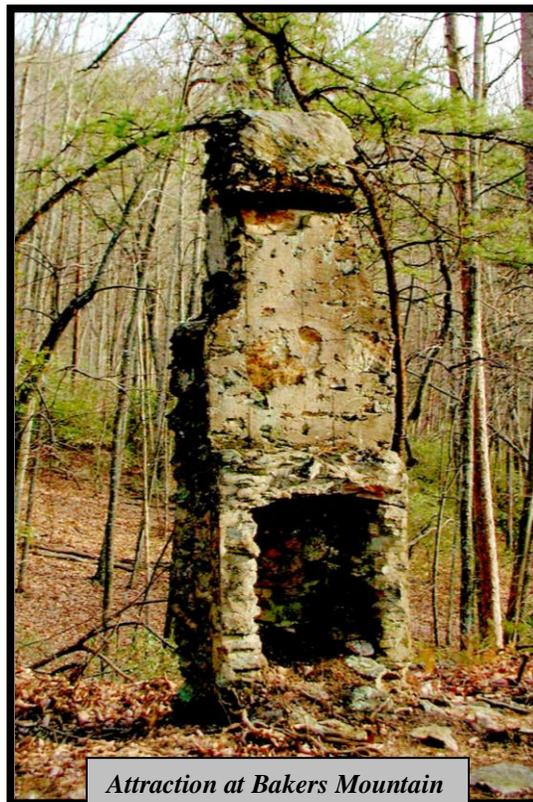
## **Protection Priorities and Recommendations**

The following are summarized recommendations from the Summary of Significant Natural Areas of Catawba County, North Carolina 2002, which are guiding factors in the Catawba County Comprehensive Parks Master Plan. Bakers Mountain, Catawba River Corridor, Jacob Fork West Corridor, and Lyle Creek Corridor are the highest priorities for protection. Future park development should focus on the findings of this inventory in order to preserve the natural heritage qualities of the County since preservation is a part of the primary mission of Catawba County Parks.

### **Bakers Mountain**

This site is the largest expanse of undisturbed forest in Catawba County. It contains a diversity of high quality natural communities, provides habitat for populations of all rare plant species in the County, and provides a unique breeding habitat for many flora and fauna species that are uncommon in the County and the Piedmont.

Management techniques should include trail maintenance to reduce erosion and motorized vehicles should be prohibited from the forests. Development of this site should be minimized and additional private property should be purchased or protected with conservation easements by the State or County. This site would make an excellent expanded County park. Efforts should be made to obtain easements to connect the Bakers Mountain site to the Jacob Fork River.



*Attraction at Bakers Mountain*

### **Catawba River Corridor**

This site in Catawba County is the most extensive riparian corridor along the Catawba River. It provides important habitat for many species of wildlife that are



uncommon in the County and the Piedmont. It also includes Riverbend Park, which contains a small pond and wetland, adding to the diversity of habitats along the river. Strategic, contiguous property to Riverbend Park should be purchased or protected with conservation easements by the State or County.



*Canoeing/Kayaking on Catawba River Corridor*

Management techniques should include the prohibition of livestock from entering the river and the restoration of the disturbed banks with their native vegetation. Adequate vegetation buffers should be established along agricultural fields and forests should be allowed to mature. The preservation of the riparian corridor with adjacent slopes and upland forests along the river is the highest priority.

### **Jacob Fork West Corridor**

This site is nationally significant because of the incorporation of the Catawba County Wildlife Club Heartleaf Site. The riparian corridor is probably the least disturbed in the County. The area contains a diversity of aquatic and terrestrial habitats.

Adequate vegetation buffers should be established along agricultural fields and forests should be allowed to mature. The preservation of the riparian corridor with adjacent slopes and upland forests along the river is the highest priority. Initially, protection should be in the form of conservation easements and private land donations to the County.

### **Jacob Fork East Corridor**

Adequate vegetation buffers should be established along agricultural fields and forests should be allowed to mature. The preservation of the riparian corridor with adjacent slopes and upland forests along the river is the highest priority. Initially, protection should be in the form of conservation easements and private land donations to the County.

### **Lyle Creek Corridor**

All forests adjacent to the creek should be protected from development and allowed to mature. Adequate vegetation buffers should be established along agricultural fields. The preservation of the riparian corridor with adjacent slopes



and upland forests along the creek is the highest priority. Preservation of the Lyle Creek Corridor would be enhanced by a passive park presence at strategic locations, such as the Bunker Hill Covered Bridge site and the confluence of the creek with the Catawba River.

## Lyle Creek Wetland

It is important to monitor water levels and limit human activity within wetland areas. The use of chemicals in maintaining power line right-of-ways should be discouraged. Initially, protection should be in the form of conservation easements and private land donations to the County.

## Murrays Mill

This site should establish adequate vegetation buffers. All forests adjacent to the creek should be protected from development and allowed to mature. The dredging and clearing of riparian vegetation on Balls Creek above the lake needs to be prohibited. The preservation of the riparian corridor with adjacent slopes and upland forests along the river is the highest priority. Initially, protection should be in the form of conservation easements and private land donations to the County. Currently, some areas are being preserved by the Catawba County Historical Association.

## Lake Norman Slopes and Shoreline

Where possible, all forests adjacent to the shoreline should be protected from development and allowed to mature. The gamelands, other large-acreage, and undisturbed sites with native vegetation should be preserved. Having realized increased development over the past 20 years, this area is attractive for residential development, thus limiting the opportunity for preservation and public recreation sites. Conservation easements or land donations should be sought from Duke Energy to protect shoreline and adjacent forests.





### **3.3 SIDEWALK, BIKEWAY, GREENWAY, AND TRAIL MASTER PLAN – CITY OF HICKORY**

The document includes a comprehensive plan for analyzing the existing facilities and future recommendations for the multi-modal trails. Although most of the recommendations proposed in this Master Plan relate more specifically within the Hickory City Limits, there are some proposed improvements that do need to be mentioned. The following is a list of recommendations from the Plan that relate specifically toward the Catawba County Parks Master Plan.

#### **Henry River Greenway**

Located along the southeastern limits of Hickory’s extra territorial jurisdiction (ETJ), the Master Plan proposes a linear greenway traveling adjacent to the Henry River originating near Sunrise Drive, traveling southwest and connecting to the City’s Henry River Wastewater Treatment Facility. This greenway would be approximately 11 miles in length.

#### **Clark Creek Greenway**

A linear greenway/trail originating at the westernmost extent of Amity Lane in Hickory, moving westward to junction with Clark Creek and continue southward to the southernmost boundary of the City’s planning jurisdiction and also continuing northward to US 70 to connect with the Ridgecrest Park Greenway.

### **3.4 GREATER HICKORY RECREATION/TOURISM PLAN 2006 – FOUR COUNTY AREA**

This recently completed plan was intended to develop a strategy to shift the region’s economy by utilizing the area’s natural, cultural, and recreational resources for sustainable economic growth and prosperity. The study area includes four counties consisting of Catawba, Caldwell, Burke, and Alexander. The document recommends regional efforts in order to achieve exceptional resources that will create additional tourism dollars to help supplement the local economy.

This study is a strategic document that is region-wide in scope and in many cases does not examine park-specific issues for Catawba County Parks. It gives direction to achieve the highest standards in providing opportunities for outdoor recreation activities and protection of the natural environment from a regional perspective. In creating the Catawba County Comprehensive Parks Master Plan,



this regional plan was studied and evaluated in developing proposals and recommendations. The Catawba County Comprehensive Parks Master Plan proposes park facilities and improvements that are not included in the regional master plan. It will be essential that further analysis and studies be conducted for the proposed recommendations in the regional master plan, which relate to Catawba County.

These proposals and recommendations for the regional plan list specific and regional recommendations that incorporate all the counties entailed. The following is a list of recommendations from the Recreation/Tourism Plan that relate specifically toward the Catawba County Parks Master Plan.

## **Recommended Regional Initiatives**

### **Recreation and Linkage Recommendations**

#### **Trails, Greenways, and Paddle Trail/Blueways**

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.

- **Catawba River Blueway** – The existing trail runs along the length of the Catawba River. The canoe and boating trail was dedicated in May of 2004 and runs approximately 82 miles, from McDowell County to Lake Norman. The trail currently has 24 designated access points and 4 portages around dams.
- **Lyle Creek Blueway** – The paddle trail is planned to begin where Rock Barn Road (SR 1709) crosses Lyle Creek then flows approximately 6 miles under the Historic Bunker Hill Bridge to the northern reach of Lake Norman.
- **Henry River Blueway** – The paddle trail is planned to begin where NC 18 crosses over the Henry River and flows nearly 20 miles to Newton's new Jacobs Fork Park.
- **Jacobs Fork Blueway** – Also beginning where NC 18 crosses over Jacobs Fork, this trail is planned to be almost 25 miles ending at the confluence with the Henry River at Newton's Jacobs Fork Park.
- **Lyle Creek Greenway** – Independent and combined greenway trail which is planned to tie into the Hickory Urban trail network then travel through Conover, traverse around Rock Barn Golf and Spa



along NC 16, St. John's Church Road, and to Rock Barn Road, where it joins the Lyle Creek Paddle Trail and follows Lyle Creek once again past the Bunker Hill Bridge and Hunsucker Park in the Town of Catawba to the Catawba River.

- **Newton Greenway/Maiden Link** – Independent greenway linking the Hickory Urban Trail network then following Clarks Creek through Newton past Jaycee and Southside Parks to Shady Branch in Maiden, then traveling upstream past Rosenwald Park and connecting to the Lincoln County Rails-to-Trails project.

### **Environmental Recommendations**

- **Establish a Conservation Easement for the Jacobs Fork West Corridor** – Coordinate with a land conservation organization and the NC Natural Heritage Program to establish a conservation easement for these lands along the Jacob Fork, as delineated by the NC Natural Heritage Program. This area includes riparian (land that is traversed or bounded by a natural watercourse) and upland areas and includes the nationally significant Catawba County Wildlife Club Heartleaf Site. This site is currently registered with the NC Natural Heritage Program as a Natural Heritage Area.
- **Establish a Conservation Easement for the Jacobs Fork East Corridor** – Coordinate with a land conservation organization and the NC Natural Heritage Program to establish a conservation easement for these lands along the Jacobs Fork, as delineated by the NC Natural Heritage Program. This area is approximately two miles further downstream from the Jacobs Fork West Corridor.
- **Establish a Conservation Easement for the Catawba River Corridor** – Coordinate with a land conservation organization and the NC Natural Heritage Program to establish a conservation easement for the riparian corridor of Catawba River, east of Riverbend Park in Catawba County. This area is delineated by the NC Natural Heritage Program. This riparian corridor is noted for containing a rich collection of avian fauna. Riverbend Park is known regionally as an outstanding area for birding. This plan recommends acquiring parcels to expand Riverbend Park. In addition to park expansion, a conservation easement for this area would significantly benefit ecological habitat and the outdoor recreation importance of Riverbend Park.
- **Establish a Conservation Easement for the Lyle Creek Corridor** – Coordinate with a land conservation organization and the NC Natural Heritage Program to establish a conservation easement for



the riparian corridor along Lyle Creek. The NC Natural Heritage Program has delineated a corridor extending from Rock Barn Road south to the Old Highway 70 overpass. This area includes the Bunker Hill Covered Bridge and Roadside Park, which is covered in the Land Acquisition recommendations. The corridor should extend to the confluence with the Catawba River to enhance ecological functioning of the corridor, water quality, and the experience for paddlers. The wetland at the confluence of Lyle Creek and Catawba River should be part of the conservation easement. This wetland has also been delineated by the NC Natural Heritage Program.

### **Resource Accessibility & Land Acquisition Recommendations**

- **Parcels at NC 127 Overpass at Jacobs Fork** – The NC 127 overpass at Jacobs Fork would provide access for canoe/kayak paddlers. The plan for access includes construction of a gravel parking lot that would accommodate approximately five motor vehicles, a canoe/kayak launch site, and a gate to provide some security to the site.
- **Acquire Land for a Mountain Creek Park** – Through Duke Energy’s relicensing agreement with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), the acquisition of a 600-acre tract for public recreation. The tract is located at the mouth of Mountain Creek on Lake Norman for a large passive recreation park to be part of the Catawba County Park System. Facility development is slated to include restrooms, canoe launch, trails, campgrounds, swimming area, and other water-based activities to be maintained by the County. This is the last remaining large acreage tract in the Mountain Creek/Lake Norman area. It is significant in protecting both water quality and wetland habitat, and in providing public access to the cove.
- **Acquire State Gamelands in Catawba County** – Originally a part of the FERC agreement (but not approved) are the state designated gamelands located on private property north of Hudson Chapel Road in eastern Catawba County. This backwater habitat for wildlife and waterfowl offers large acreage recreation potential and public access to upper Lake Norman. This is an important tract of land with water access and environmentally sensitive lands suitable for extensive conservation, trail development, and passive recreation.



- **Mid-Point Parcels on Lookout Shoals** – Public boating access is limited on Lake Lookout Shoals from Riverbend Park to the access area near Lookout Shoals Dam. Therefore non-motorized boats (primarily canoes and kayaks) must either travel the entire lake or stay within close proximity to those access points. A mid-point access area is designated in the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) relicensing, which includes approximately five acres downstream of “the bend” to be developed with a trailer access and boating area - including associated parking, restrooms, and primitive camping.
- **Lyle Creek/Bunker Hill Bridge** – Bunker Hill Covered Bridge is the last remaining “Haupt Improved Lattice Truss” bridge and one of the two remaining covered bridges in the state. Presently it is accessible by a path from US 70 and only a small amount of land at the bridge is available for public use. Acquisition of an approximate 280-acre parcel is important to develop a park featuring the Bunker Hill Covered Bridge and the Lyle Creek Greenway and Paddle Trail, which bisects the property and provides better access. This amount of acreage will also garner adequate space to incorporate additional facilities such as a canoe launch, picnic shelter, and potentially other recreational activities and hiking/biking trails.
- **Expand Riverbend Park** – As noted above, Riverbend Park is already known as a significant location for birders in the region. The park is contiguous with a segment of land along the Catawba River that has been identified by the NC Natural Heritage Program as an important riparian corridor due to the richness of avian fauna. Acquisition of additional parcels to expand Riverbend Park would significantly enhance outdoor recreation opportunities. Incorporating additional land into the park could provide more low-impact access to natural areas for residents and birders from throughout the region. An expanded park would coexist nicely with riparian lands under a conservation easement.
- **Murrays Mill** – This historic site is an important cultural asset and many steps have been taken to preserve the former mill and general store. Balls Creek traverses through three noteworthy tracts of land that should be acquired to continue to preserve the historical character of the site. The most significant is the 133-acre tract to the south of the mill, which allows for the expansion of the facilities at the site (including an amphitheatre and exhibits) along with a recreated historic home site and barn. These plans are in accordance with both the proposed overall site plan and recommendations of the Catawba County Historical Association.



### **3.5 CATAWBA COUNTY – UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE**

The Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) provides for a capital expenditure source for parks in Section 44-543. Major subdivisions are required to provide land for public or private parks, sidewalks, trails, greenway, recreation, and open space purposes. Specific requirements are based on the density and size of the overall subdivision. The developer, with the approval of the County, can either donate land, or pay a fee-in-lieu-of land dedication. The fee will be used for new parkland acquisition or capital improvements in the County’s existing or expanding parks.

### **3.6 SMALL AREA PLANS**

The concept of conducting Small Area Plans (SAPs) for Catawba County was one of sixteen growth strategies resulting from the County’s long-range Strategic Growth Plan in 1999. The Growth Plan stated that the SAPs would “explore general development patterns and trends and evaluate public service/facility deficiencies needing attention”. This section outlines the process by which the SAPs were accepted and examines each individual SAP as an additional guide in the formation of the Catawba County Comprehensive Parks Master Plan.

#### **Overview**

As part of the County’s long-range Strategic Growth Plan, seven Small Area Plans (SAPs) were identified for the evaluation and assessment of growth patterns, public facilities, utilities, and other factors that affect Catawba County. The SAPs, which are now adopted, include Balls Creek, Sherrills Ford, Catawba, St. Stephens/Oxford, Mountain View, Plateau, and Startown. (See Appendix Map 1 – Catawba County Small Area Plans)

Development of the SAPs began as local planning committees in each area assessed their quality and sustainability of life with respect to the following issues:

- Economic Development;
- Natural Resources;
- Cultural Resources;
- Community Facilities and Public Services;
- Housing;
- Land Use and Community Design; and
- Transportation.



As each committee discussed these issues, they developed goals and action statements. They completed their plans by including implementation strategies for their objectives – whether it be through ordinance or policy amendments, modified capital improvement plans, or coordination with other agencies to complete specific tasks.

After each committee's SAP was complete, their final documents were individually presented to the Catawba County Planning Board and the Catawba County Board of Commissioners for review and acceptance. Through a series of public work sessions and hearings with both boards, all of the final SAP documents were eventually accepted by the Catawba County Board of Commissioners.

The Guiding Principles in these plans are statements of what the Small Area Plans hope to accomplish in a broad context, based on the analysis of opportunities and constraints for future development of each area.

**The remainder of this section identifies the following criteria in each individual SAP and extracts those portions of the plan(s), which relate specifically to parks and recreation needs:**

- Study Area;
- Demographics/Projections;
- Key Issues;
- Guiding Principles;
- Specific Needs Assessment (as related to Parks & Recreation); and
- Recommendations

## **Balls Creek Small Area Plan (SAP)**

### **Study Area (*Balls Creek SAP*)**



*McKenzie's Grove Campground*



The Balls Creek Small Area Plan (BCSAP) study boundary follows the Maiden and Newton Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) boundaries to the west; NC Highway 10 on the north; Murrays Mill Road/Buffalo Shoals Road to the east; NC Highway 16 south of Buffalo Shoals Road to the Catawba/Lincoln County line on the east, and then follows the County line west to the Maiden ETJ boundary. The Balls Creek SAP study area encompasses 30,802 acres, including land in dedicated rights-of-way.

### Demographics/Projections (*Balls Creek SAP*)

The Balls Creek area experienced a significant population growth from 1990 to 2000. The number of people residing in the area grew at a rate of 26.5%. The population in 1990 for the area was 7,920 while the 2000 Census indicated a population of 10,778, an increase of 2,858 persons. The growth rate for the entire county was 19.7%, somewhat less than the growth rate of the study area. The study area’s net gain of 2,858 persons represented 12% of the total County population increase of 23,273.

If the long-term trend of increasing job demand continues in Catawba County, the population in the Balls Creek area is projected to continue increasing at a substantial rate. By 2015 the population of the Balls Creek area could exceed 14,000 persons. The trend of fewer people per household is expected to continue. This significant population growth for the Balls Creek area is predicated on growth rates that are more than 31% for the area.

**Table 3.6.1 - Balls Creek Small Area Plan: Study Area Growth 1990-2015**

ENTITY	1990	2000	Net Change 1990-2000	% Increase 1990-2000	2005	2010	2015	Net Change 2000-2015	% Increase 2000-2015
Persons	7,920	10,778	2,858	26.5	11,964	12,958	14,115	3,337	31.0
Households	2,913	4,103	1,190	40.9	4,577	5,003	5,492	1,389	33.9

### Key Issues (*Balls Creek SAP*)

Area residents of the Balls Creek SAP met in July of 2001 and identified their likes, dislikes, and future visions of the community. Their concerns follow:



Balls Creek’s community has a rural setting with most of the land in open space and farmland. Balls Creek is centrally located to cities and towns and traffic congestion is a concern of the community. Controlling residential growth/density and balancing growth with rural character is also a challenge.

Balls Creek has many good schools for students to attend. One concern is that it will be difficult to maintain their high quality of education in the face of overcrowding.

Balls Creek has a strong cultural heritage. There is a concern about public policy and land use.

### **Guiding Principles (*Balls Creek SAP*)**

1. **Open Space Protection.** Preserve open space in new subdivisions.
2. **Preservation of Natural Features.** Where practical, the community’s natural terrain, pastures, scenic views, existing vegetation, natural drainage, and bodies of water should be protected and preserved.
3. **Pedestrian Oriented Development.** Ensure that all new development is designed to accommodate and encourage the pedestrian and bicyclist as equally as the automobile driver.
4. **Pedestrian/Bicycle.** An “alternative transportation” system of sidewalks and bikeways should be implemented over the course of several years as higher density development takes place.
5. **Park Space.** Provide adequate recreational opportunities for all segments of the population.
7. **Linear Park System.** Put into action the long-term construction of a linear park system (with bicycle and/or pedestrian facilities) linking together parks, recreation facilities, residential development, shopping areas, and employment centers.
8. **Schools in the community.** Balls Creek Elementary and Tuttle Middle School should continue their standing as “centers of the community.”
9. **Volunteerism.** The spirit of volunteerism in existing civic organizations should be encouraged as sources of community pride and as providers of recreation options for the community.



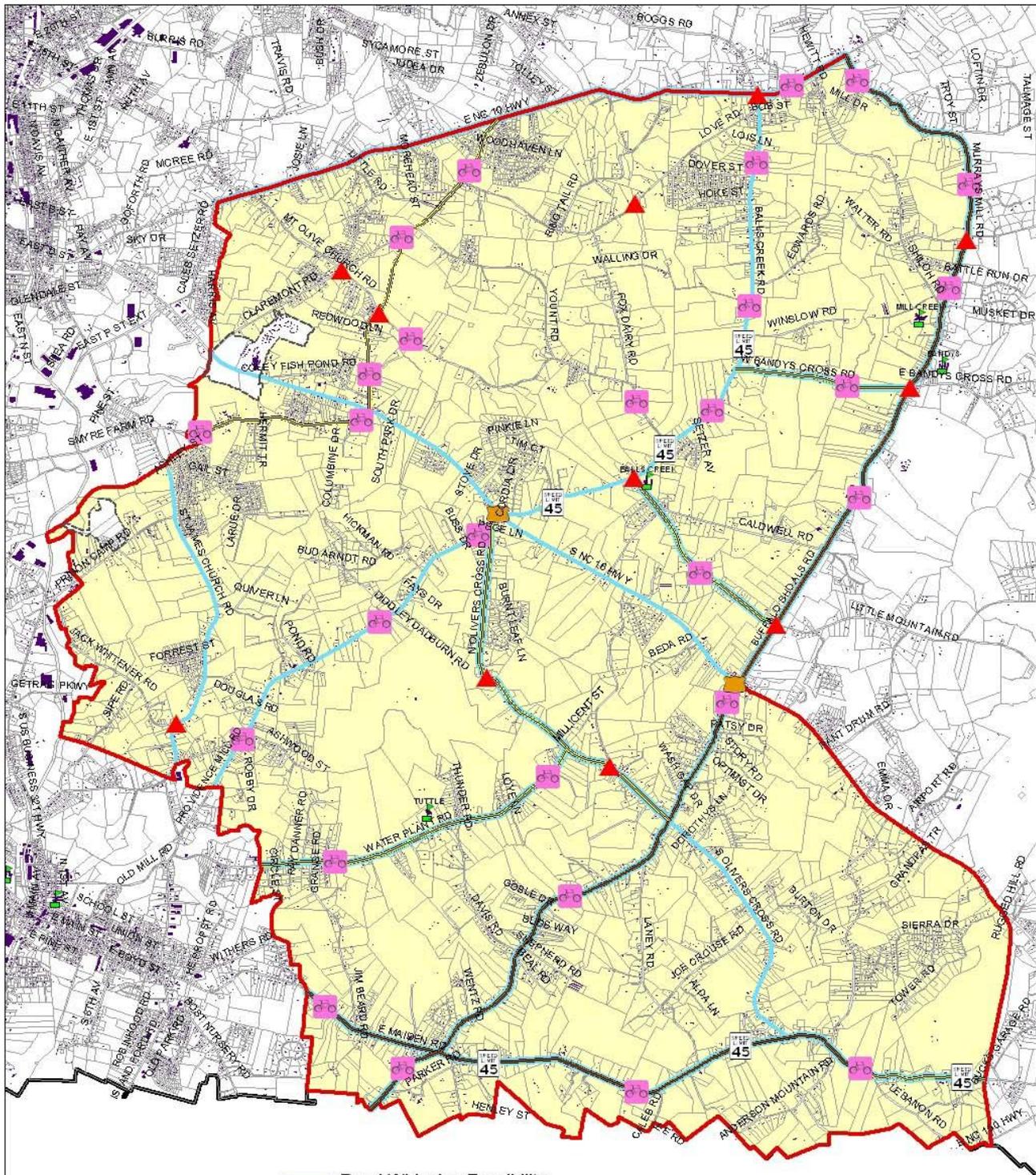
## **Specific Needs Assessments as related to Parks & Recreation (Balls Creek SAP)**

### **1. Pedestrian and Bicycle System**

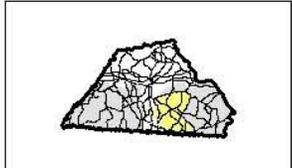
Balls Creek has virtually no bicycle or pedestrian routes. However, it is now policy of the MPO and NCDOT to evaluate any new road construction project for potential pedestrian needs (i.e. sidewalks and crossover) and bicycle accommodations. The plan calls for the creation of a walking trail from Bandys High School to Mill Creek Middle School.

There are many potential destinations in the Balls Creek district that would benefit from a bike/pedestrian system. Some possible roads where increasing the pavement width to the maximum extent feasible for bicycle routes are as follows:

- Mount Olive Church Road;
- Murrays Mill Road;
- Balls Creek Road;
- NC Highway 10 from the intersection of Murrays Mill Road east to Balls Creek Road;
- West Bandys Cross Road;
- Providence Mill Road;
- Smyre Farm Road;
- Bethany Church Road;
- Little Mountain Road;
- East Maiden Road;
- Water Plant Road; and
- Buffalo Shoals Road.



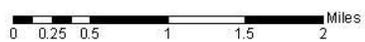
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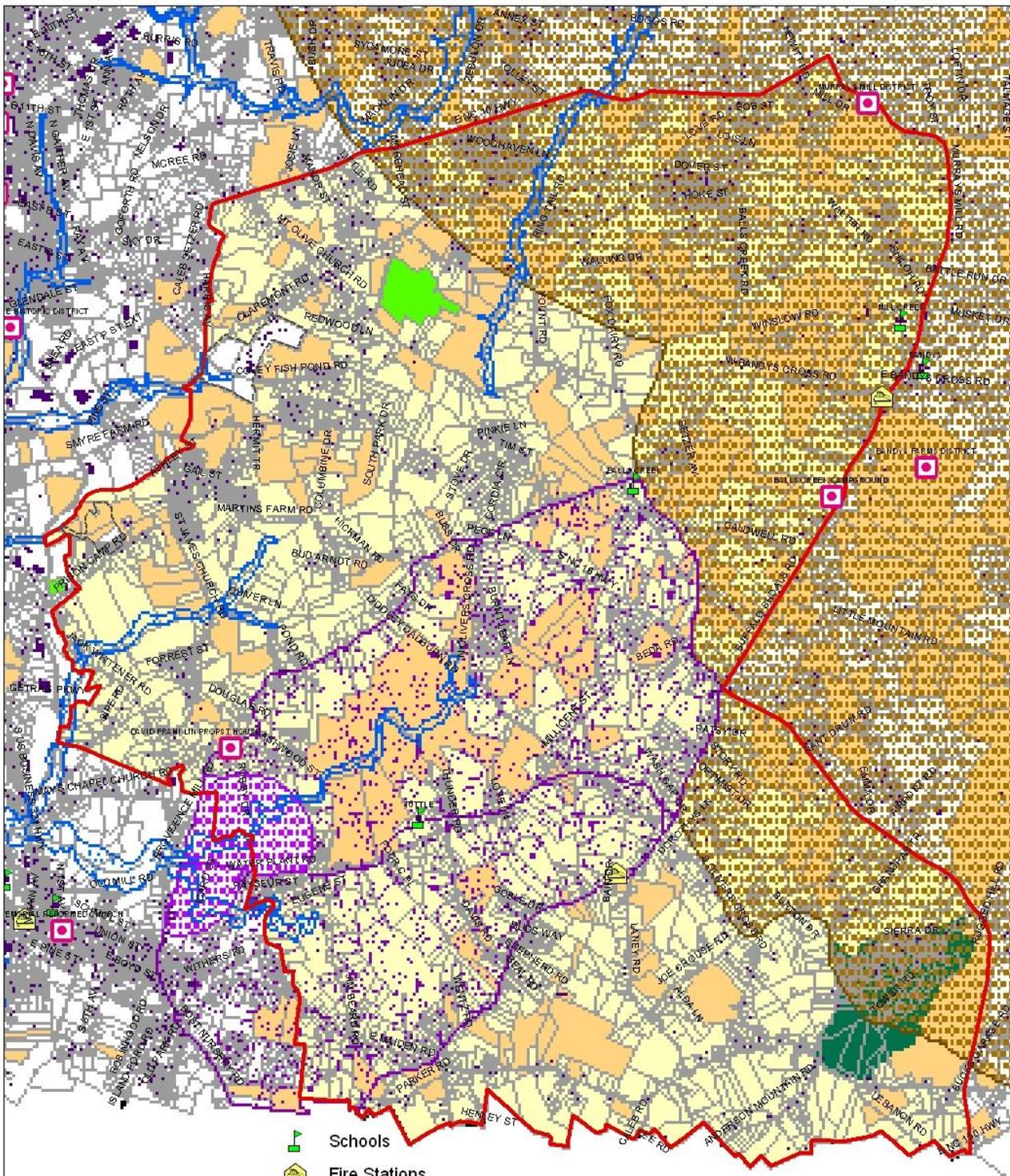
SOURCE: S:\PROJECTS\SMALL AREA\BALLS\_SCREENING\_TRANSPORT

- Road Widening Feasibility
- Scenic Highway
- Driveway Requirements
- Add Asphalt for Bike Trail
- Schools
- Intersection/Safety Improvements
- Gateway Improvements
- Reduce Speed Limit
- Balls Creek SAP Boundary
- Municipal Boundary
- Structures

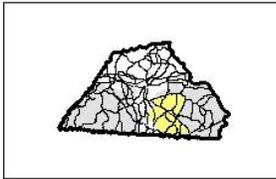
### MAP NO. 6 BALLS CREEK SMALL AREA PLAN FUTURE TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS



Revised April 25, 2013



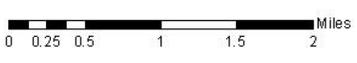
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SOURCE: PROJECTS/PLANS/ASAP/BALLS-CREEK/SM-AREA-CULTURAL.RXD

- Schools
  - Fire Stations
  - Historic Property
  - Mountain Protection District
  - Farm Lands (1999 Tax Records)
  - County Owned Property
  - Floodway
  - Balls Creek SAP Boundary
  - Municipal Boundary
- WATERSHEDS**
- WS-II Critical Area
  - WS-II Protected Area
  - WS-IV Protected Area

## MAP NO. 8 BALLS CREEK SMALL AREA PLAN NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES



Revised March 4, 2002



## 2. Parks and Greenways

At the present time, no parks or greenways are located within the Balls Creek Small Area. The County's largest park, Riverbend Park, is located at NC Highway 16 and the Catawba River, with over 450 acres of hiking, biking, and equestrian trails. Bakers Mountain Park contains nearly 200 acres and is located in the western portion of the County, south of Hickory and Interstate 40.

However, the elementary school, churches, and civic organizations, operate some passive and active recreation programs and facilities.

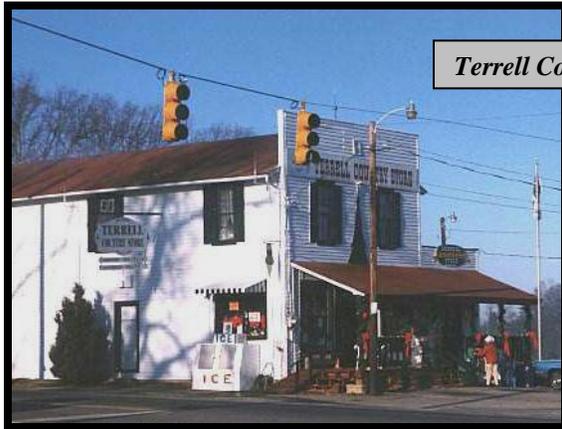
### Recommendations (*Balls Creek SAP*)

1. Assist property owners of rural farms in preserving those uses by providing information on conservation easements and tax credit measures.
2. Within high and medium residential density areas, new construction should implement the following:
  - Open space/cluster subdivision design
  - Minimum open space requirement
  - Density bonuses for providing additional open space beyond minimum requirements
3. When roads and highways are resurfaced, add additional pavement to accommodate the construction of bicycle lanes, when appropriate.
4. Begin to design and construct a pedestrian and bicycle system that links the currently segregated residential developments together.
5. Balls Creek Elementary School should continue to build on its role as an essential resource for the community. It should also be provided with adequate facilities and resources as population increases.
6. Encourage the Catawba County Historical Association (CCHA) to increase public educational efforts for those sites of County and state-wide significance in Balls Creek.



## **Sherrills Ford Small Area Plan (SAP)**

### **Study Area (*Sherrills Ford SAP*)**



*Terrell Country Store/Bait Shop*

The Sherrills Ford District encompasses an approximate 71 square mile area (45,412 acres) in southeastern Catawba County. The district is bounded by Lake Norman and the Catawba River on the east; the Catawba and Lincoln County lines to the south; NC Highway 16, Buffalo Shoals Road, and Murray's Mill Road on the west; and US Highway 10, the Town of Catawba's Extraterritorial Jurisdiction, and the Catawba River to the north.

### **Demographics/Projections (*Sherrills Ford SAP*)**

The Sherrills Ford area has experienced the highest growth rate of any area in Catawba County during the last decade. In the beginning of 1990, the population of this area was 7,600+ people. By the year 2000, over 10,500 persons were enumerated in the area. This represents a growth rate of over 37%. Most of the growth is attributed to large, single-family developments along Lake Norman.

It is projected that the Sherrills Ford area will remain a high growth area in the next 10 to 15 years. This projection is based on the demand for lake lots, the close proximity to the Charlotte urban area, and the relatively low property costs. The growth could be even more explosive should public utilities become available for serving multi-family housing regions.



**Table 3.6.2 - Sherrills Ford Small Area Plan: Study Area Growth 1990-2015**

ENTITY	1990	2000	Net Change 1990-2000	% Increase 1990-2000	2005	2010	2015	Net Change 2000-2015	% Increase 2000-2015
Persons	7,656	10,519	2,863	37.4	11,877	13,258	14,535	4,016	38.2
Households	2,961	4,221	1,260	42.6	4,806	5,411	5,981	1,760	41.7

### Key Issues (*Sherrills Ford SAP*)

In August of 2000, area residents of the Sherrills Ford SAP met and discussed their likes, dislikes, and their vision for the community. Their concerns are reflected in the following paragraphs.

Sherrills Ford/Lake Norman is the fastest growing of the small areas identified by Catawba County and it is also the largest (in acreage) of the seven. However, it is the least connected to the rest of Catawba County of any of the small areas. The *lack of connectivity* in this large, diversely populated, fast-growing tract makes this small area the one most likely to have growth-related issues within the next ten years.

The Sherrills Ford small area district also has the largest number of cultural resources of any small area district within the County. Of concern is that these resources are being threatened by the vast amount of new development in the area.

Trends for the area for the next 20 to 30 years will be somewhat contradictory in nature. More people will continue to want to locate here for its rural, open quality; yet the demand for more upscale development and proximity to services will increase, which will reduce availability of rural open space.

### Guiding Principles (*Sherrills Ford SAP*)

- 1. Open Space Protection.** Ensure that new development is sensitive to the preservation and protection of open spaces.
- 2. Preservation of Natural Features.** Where practical, the community's natural terrain, existing vegetation, natural drainage, and bodies of water should be protected and preserved.



3. **Pedestrian Oriented Development.** Ensure that all new development is designed to accommodate and encourage the pedestrian and bicyclist as equally as the automobile driver.
4. **“Main Street”.** Efforts should be made to promote the creation of a pedestrian oriented village center to serve as a focal point of the Sherrills Ford community in Terrell.
5. **Pedestrian/Bicycle.** An “alternative transportation” system of sidewalks and bikeways should be implemented over the course of several years as higher density development takes place.
6. **Park Space.** Increase the amount of parkland and recreation facilities to meet the needs of the changing Sherrills Ford population.
7. **Linear Park System.** Put into action the long-term construction of a linear park system (with bicycle and/or pedestrian facilities) linking together parks, recreation facilities, residential development, shopping areas, and employment centers.
8. **Joint Use Facilities.** Create an environment where public, private, and non-profit organizations work toward the common good through cooperative facility sharing.
9. **Environmental Recreation and Education.** Develop a broad range of recreational and educational opportunities within a park and open space system, which preserves and enhances the area’s landforms, natural features, wildlife habitats, and cultural and historic sites.

### **Specific Needs Assessments as related to Parks & Recreation (Sherrills Ford SAP)**

1. **Pedestrian and Bicycle System**  
Sherrills Ford has virtually no bicycle or pedestrian routes. Some scattered subdivisions do have sidewalks; but, they are primarily internal in nature and do not provide connectivity to, or serve, the surrounding areas.

There are many potential destinations in the Sherrills Ford district that would benefit from a bike/pedestrian system; however, the system would have to be quite substantial – due to the generally scattered nature of development. Some possible origins/destinations are as follows:



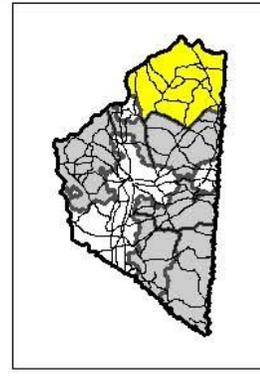
- Sherrills Ford Elementary School
- Mill Creek Middle School
- Bandys High School
- Sherrills Ford Library
- Molly's Backbone, Sandpits, and Corpening Public Game Lands
- Sherrills Ford Optimist Park
- Possible Park on Island Point Road
- Terrell Historic District
- Local Marinas
- Local Churches
- Balls Creek and Motts Grove Campgrounds

There are currently no plans for bicycle or pedestrian improvements in Sherrills Ford.

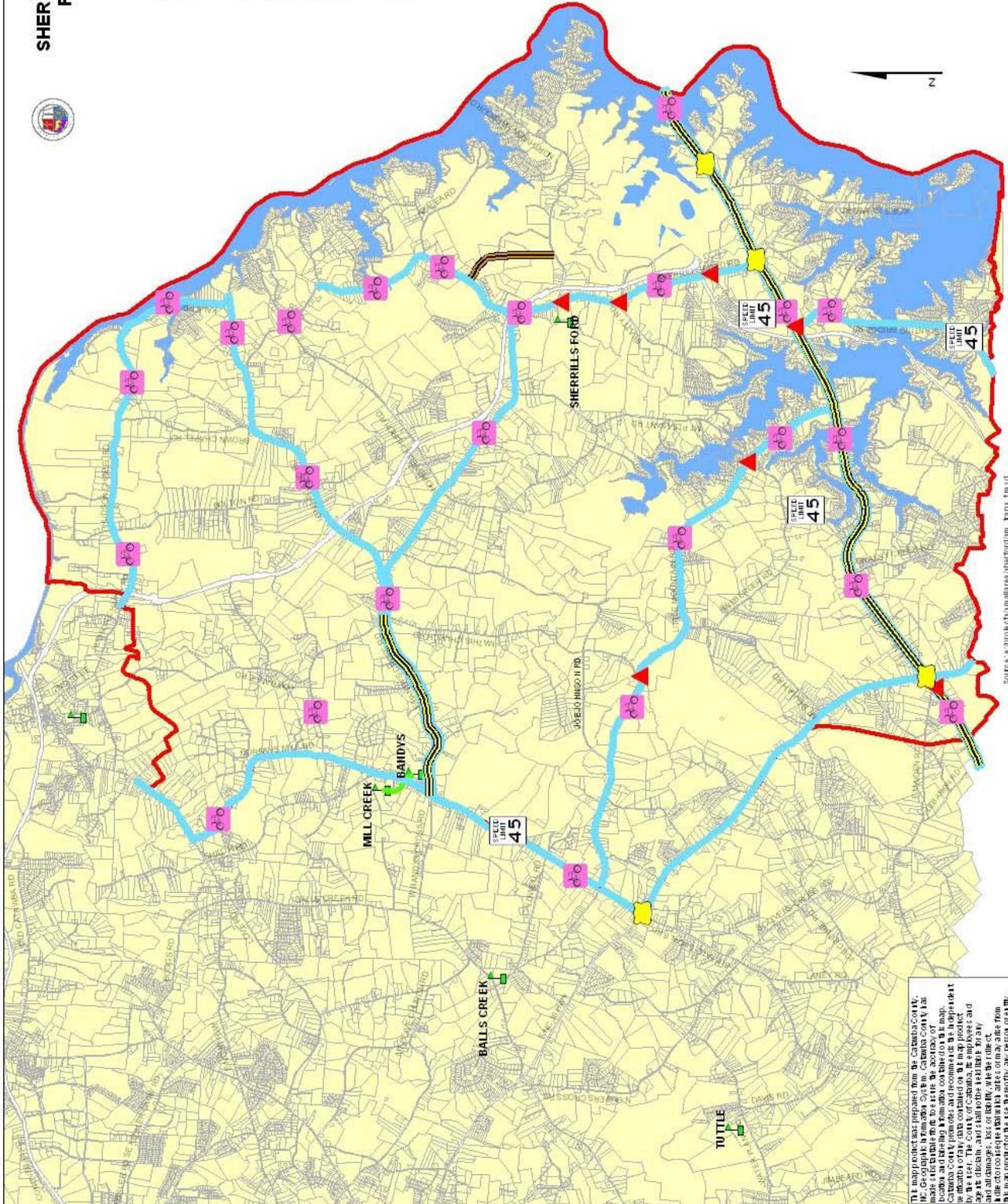
**MAP NO. 6**  
**SHERRILLS FORD SMALL AREA PLAN**  
**FUTURE TRANSPORTATION**  
**RECOMMENDATIONS**



- Sherrills Ford Small Area Boundary
- Lake
- Schools
- Pedestrian/Bike Trail
- Connector Road
- Driveway Requirements
- Road Widening Feasibility
- Add Asphalt for Bike Trail
- Road/Intersection Improvement
- Gateway Improvements
- Reduce Speed Limit



June 6, 2002



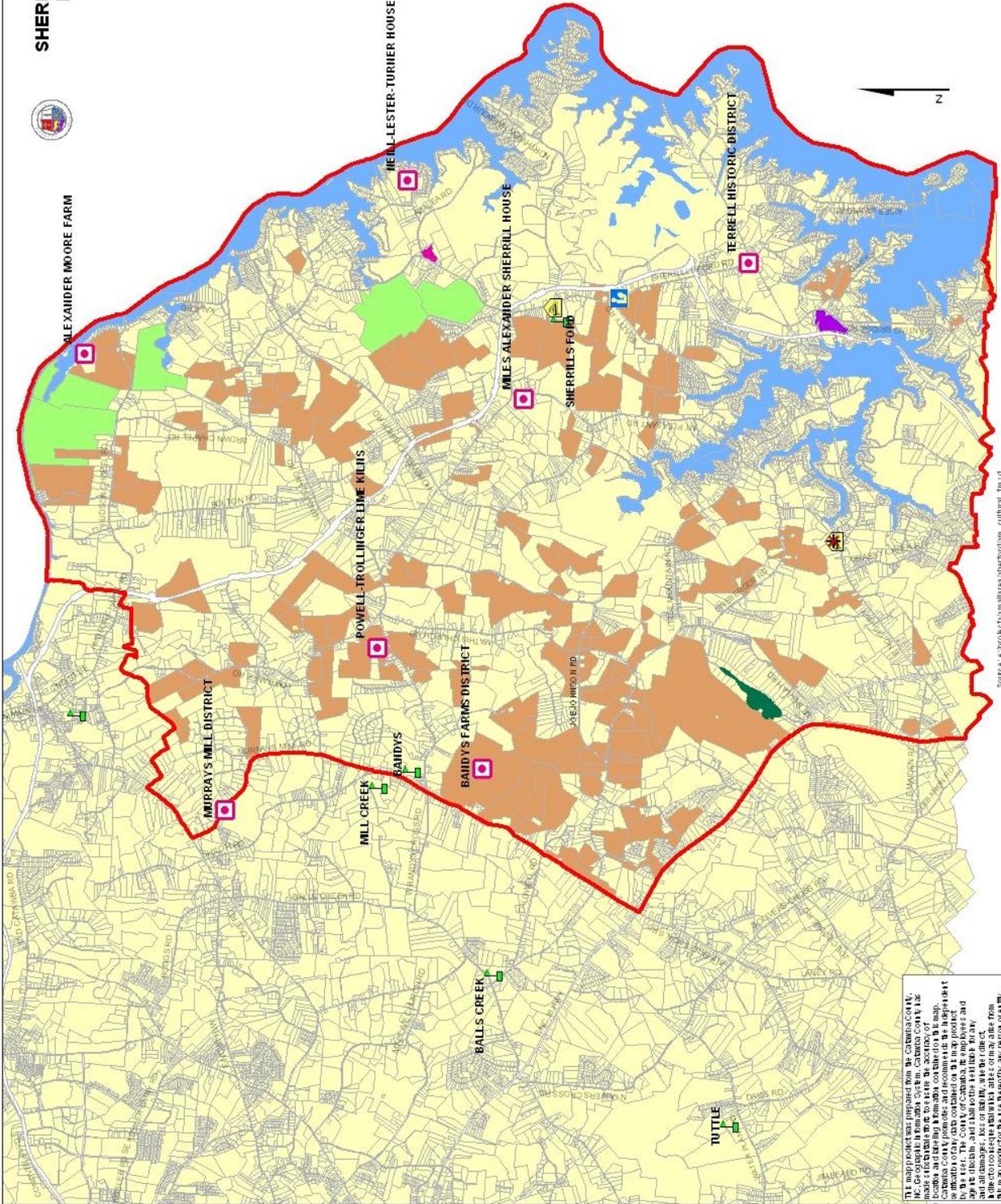
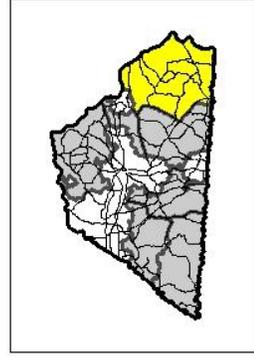
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# MAP NO. 7 SHERRILLS FORD SMALL AREA PLAN NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES



- \* EMS Bases
- Fire Stations
- Schools
- Libraries
- Historic Property
- Mountain Protection District
- Gameland
- Farmland
- County Owned Property
- Recreational Properties
- Lake
- Sherrills Ford Small Area Boundary



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## 2. Parks and Greenways

There are no public parks or greenways in the Sherrills Ford District. Without traveling out of the area, citizens rely primarily on open space, public game lands, the lake, and private facilities for most recreational pursuits.

Sherrills Ford Elementary School has some playground equipment and ball fields; however, these facilities are limited for use during school hours or functions. Most youth organized sports are held at the Sherrills Ford Optimist Park and indoor activities/sports are generally held in the school gymnasium.

Hunting and passive recreation are limited to three public game land tracts and private properties – all located on Molly's Backbone Road and Hudson Chapel Road.

### Recommendations (*Sherrills Ford SAP*)

1. Within *rural* residential density areas, new construction should implement the following:
  - Open space/cluster subdivision design
  - Minimum open space requirement
  - Density bonuses for providing additional open space beyond minimum requirements
  - Buffering along the road frontage
2. Within *medium* residential density areas, a minimum percentage of open space should be required for new developments in order to preserve the natural features and protect water quality.
3. Within *high* residential density areas, minimum open space should be required.
4. As new school facilities are constructed, locate them contiguous to one another in order to allow for shared facilities, such as ball fields, media centers, etc.
5. Explore with Duke Energy the possibility of making various game land areas and other holdings available for passive recreation use.
6. When roads and highways are resurfaced, add additional pavement to accommodate the construction of bicycle lanes, when appropriate.



7. Begin to design and construct a lake-oriented pedestrian and bicycle system that links the currently segregated lake-area neighborhoods together.
8. The County should evaluate funding options, such as the state's Wetlands Restoration Fund and the Parks & Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF).
9. Encourage partnerships between local organizations/corporations to increase recreation opportunities.

## **Catawba Small Area Plan**

### **Study Area (*Catawba SAP*)**

The Catawba study area encompasses an approximate 45,412 acres in the mid portion of eastern Catawba County. The district is bounded by Interstate 40 on the north; and the Town of Catawba and the Catawba River on the east; NC Highway 10 on the south; and the cities of Newton and Claremont on the west. A significant natural feature bordering the study area is the Catawba River.

### **Demographics/Projections (*Catawba SAP*)**

The Catawba SAP experienced a significant population growth from 1990 to 2000. The number of people residing in the area grew at a rate of 26.4%. The population in 1990 for the area was 2,052 and 2,593 people were enumerated in 2000 – an increase of 541 persons. The growth rate for the entire County was 19.7%, which is somewhat less than the growth rate of the study area.

The number of households grew significantly faster than the number of persons in the study area, resulting in a lower average of persons per household. This trend is consistent with county, state, and national trends – all indicating a lower number of persons per household.

If the long-term trend of increasing job demand continues in Catawba County, the population in the Catawba SAP is projected to continue increasing at a significant rate. By 2015, the population of the study area could exceed 3,200 persons. Future population growth within the study area will be largely affected by the availability of public water and sewer.



**Table 3.6.3 - Catawba Small Area Plan: Study Area Growth 1990-2015**

ENTITY	1990	2000	Net Change 1990-2000	% Increase 1990-2000	2005	2010	2015	Net Change 2000-2015	% Increase 2000-2015
Persons	2,052	2,593	541	26.4	2,819	3,030	3,240	647	25.0
Households	750	1,028	278	37.1	1,146	1,252	1,356	328	31.9

### **Key Issues (*Catawba SAP*)**

Area residents of the Catawba SAP met in May of 2003 and identified their likes, dislikes, and future visions of the community. As a result of their discussion, the following broad issues were identified:

- Traffic;
- Lack of water and sewer utilities;
- Need for community recreation;
- Loss of farmland and open space; and
- Over-development.

### **Guiding Principles (*Catawba SAP*)**

1. Reserve open space in new subdivisions.
2. Preserve open space, pastures, and scenic views.
3. Provide safe alternatives for pedestrians.
4. Provide safe options for bicyclists.
5. Provide adequate recreational activities for all segments of the population.
6. Provide adequate open space and recreational facilities on a neighborhood basis.



## **Specific Needs Assessments as related to Parks & Recreation (Catawba SAP)**

### **1. Pedestrian System**

Presently, Catawba County does not require sidewalk construction in new developments. In general, the Catawba SAP area lacks a pedestrian system with sidewalk connections between residential areas. However, it is now policy of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) – formed by Hickory, Newton, and Conover – and the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) to evaluate any new road construction project for potential pedestrian needs (i.e., sidewalks and crossovers) and bicycle accommodations.

### **2. Bicycle System**

The Catawba SAP study area does not currently have an integrated system of bicycle trails. NCDOT has funded a Bicycle Route Map and signing project that has been underway since the summer of 2001. In compliance with NCDOT's policy, future road widening projects should be evaluated for their potential to provide bicycle lanes.

### **3. Parks and Greenways**

Currently, there are no municipal or county-owned parks within the study area. However, the Catawba County Historical Association (CCHA) *does* own and operate Connor's Park, located in the study area along Highway 70. This park includes a creekside trail to the last original covered bridge in North Carolina. Recently, the County and the Historical Association were awarded a transportation grant to pave the parking area and make other improvements to the site. The City of Claremont operates Francis Sigmon Park – located on Highway 70 west of the study area. It contains ball fields, a walking trail, tennis courts, and picnic shelters. In addition, the Town of Catawba recently was awarded a grant to purchase property from the local Optimists to develop its first municipal park, adjacent to Lyle Creek. Since that time, Hunsucker Park has been completed.

Murrays Mill, the historic site of the grindstone, mill pond, and general store, is located just south of the Catawba planning area in the Balls Creek community.

Riverbend Park, located within the St. Stephens/Oxford Small Area along the Catawba River, offers a variety of passive recreational activities. This was the first county-owned and operated park. Riverbend Park includes over 450 acres of land with hiking, bicycle trails, a dog park, fishing, and



canoeing. Riverbend Park also provides picnic facilities and an observation deck on the Catawba River. In June 2002, the County opened a second park atop Baker's Mountain in the Mountain View SAP. Both parks are an easy drive from the Catawba study area.

**Map 7.**  
**Catawba Small Area Plan**  
**Transportation Recommendations**

**Thoroughfares**

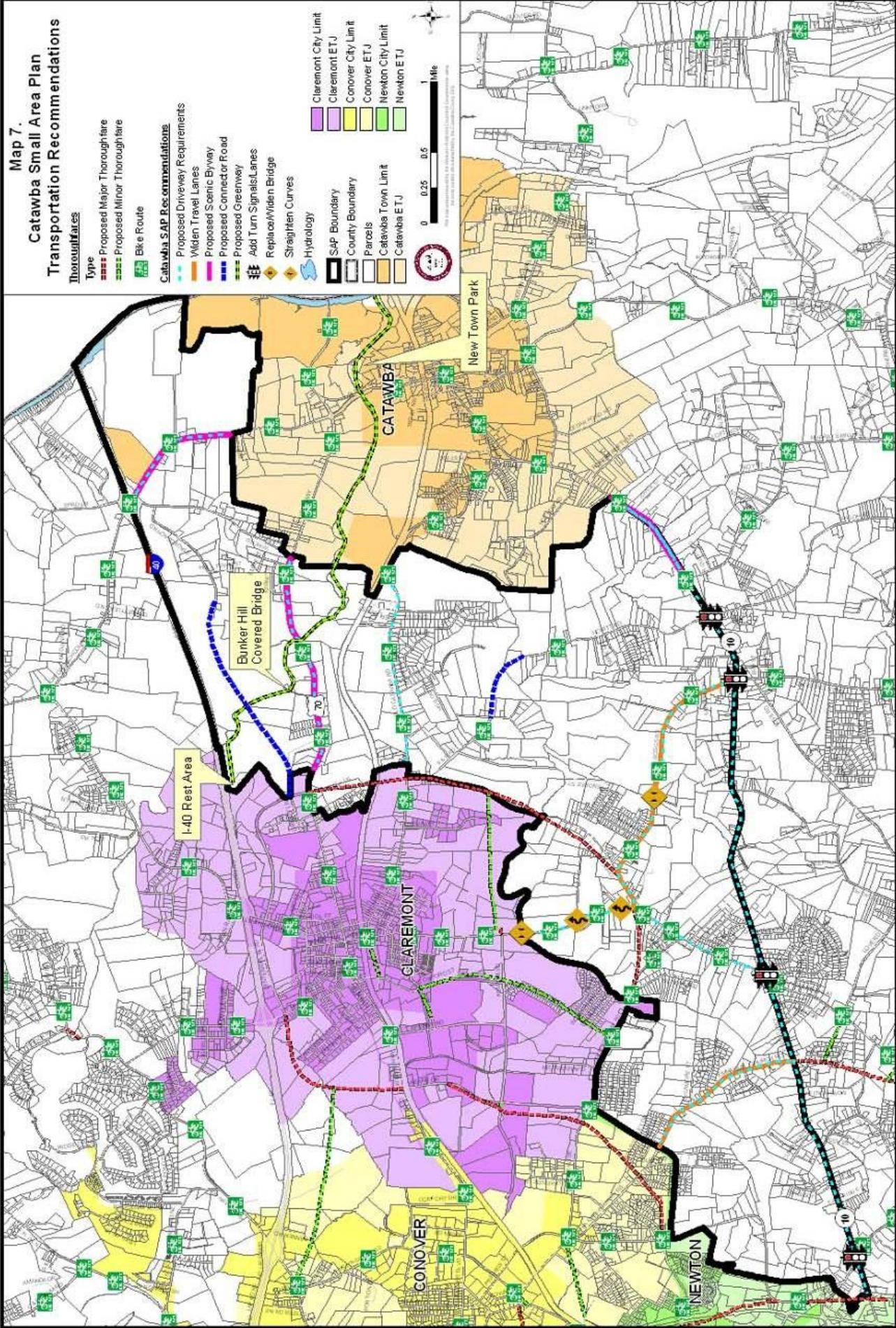
- Type**
- Proposed Major Thoroughfare
  - Proposed Minor Thoroughfare
  - Bike Route

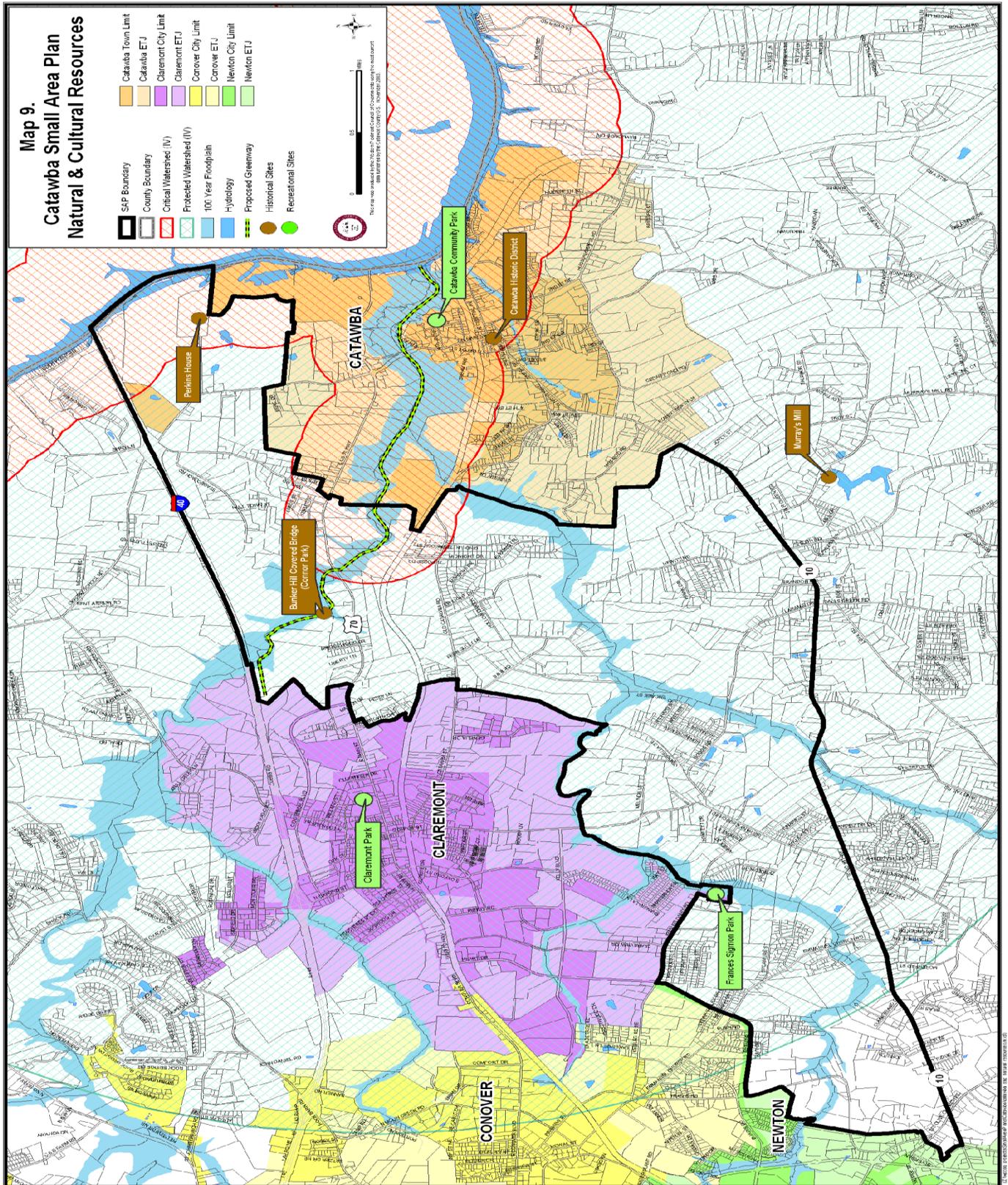
**Catawba SAP Recommendations**

- Proposed Driveaway Requirements
- Widen Travel Lanes
- Proposed Scenic Byway
- Proposed Connector Road
- Proposed Greenway
- Add Turn Signals/Lanes
- Replace/Widen Bridge
- Straighten Curves
- Hydrology

- Claremont City Limit
- Claremont ETJ
- Conover City Limit
- Conover ETJ
- Newton City Limit
- Newton ETJ

- SAP Boundary
- County Boundary
- Parcels
- Catawba Town Limit
- Catawba ETJ



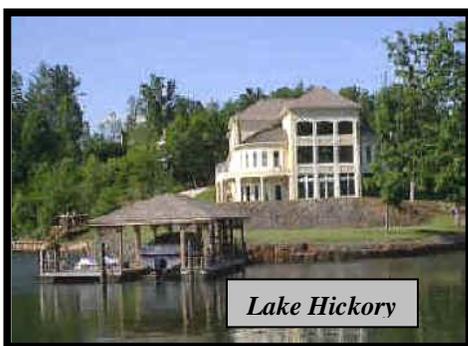




## Recommendations (*Catawba SAP*)

1. New residential subdivisions should incorporate the cluster design, which preserves open space and rural character.
2. All major subdivisions should provide open space that is easily accessible and is usable for recreation.
3. Determine the feasibility of a greenway from the Bunker Hill Covered Bridge to the rest area on Interstate 40.
4. Determine the feasibility of a greenway from the Bunker Hill Covered Bridge along Lyle Creek to the Town of Catawba Park, continuing through the Town of Catawba to the Catawba River.
5. The Catawba SAP supports the bicycle routes that have been submitted to NCDOT for approval. However, due to safety concerns, the bicycle route along Boggs Road should not be designated until the travel lanes are widened. The bicycle route for B & B Road/Hewitt Road would not be designated until the connector road is constructed.
6. Encourage and possibly create public-private partnerships to develop parks and recreation facilities that meet the needs of all population segments.

## St. Stephens/Oxford Small Area Plan



### Study Area (*St. Stephens SAP*)

The St. Stephens/Oxford Small Area Plan (SAP) study area boundary follows the Catawba River to the north and east; the municipal limits of Catawba, Claremont, and Conover to the south; and the municipal limits of Hickory to the west. The study area encompasses approximately 30,846 acres.

### Demographics/Projections (*St. Stephens SAP*)

The St. Stephens/Oxford area experienced a substantial population growth from 1990 to 2000. The number of people residing in the area grew at a rate of 33.8%. The population in 1990 for the area was 14,669 while the 2000 Census



indicated a population of 19,625, an increase of 4,956 persons. The growth rate for the entire county was 19.7%, considerably less than the growth rate of the study area. The study area’s net gain of 4,956 persons represented 21% of the total County population increase of 23,273. The population growth rate for the study area is among the highest in the Unifour.

If the long-term trend of increasing job demand continues in Catawba County, the population in the St. Stephens/Oxford area is projected to continue increasing at a substantial rate. By 2015 the population of the St. Stephens/Oxford area could approach 27,000 persons. The trend of fewer people per household is expected to continue. This significant population growth for the St. Stephens/Oxford area is predicated on growth rates that are more than 31% for the area.

**Table 3.6.4 - St. Stephens/Oxford Small Area Plan: Study Area Growth 1990-2015**

ENTITY	1990	2000	Net Change 1990-2000	% Increase 1990-2000	2005	2010	2015	Net Change 2000-2015	% Increase 2000-2015
Persons	14,669	19,625	4,956	33.8	22,431	24,685	26,677	7,052	35.9
Households	5,465	7,481	2,016	36.9	8,627	9,568	10,421	2,940	39.3

### **Key Issues (St. Stephens SAP)**

As a result of area residents meeting together in October of 2000, the following concerns were expressed with regard to the future of the St. Stephens community:

St. Stephens/Oxford’s community has a rural setting. Most of the land is open space and farmland. There is a concern that this farmland and open space will be lost, and the area will become congested.

There is a need for public water in the St. Stephens/Oxford area.

### **Guiding Principles (St. Stephens SAP)**

- 1. Open Space Protection.** Maintain a rural, un-congested setting.
- 2. Preservation of Natural Features.** Protect natural features (i.e. trees, lakes, fields) that contribute to the rural atmosphere.



3. **Farmland protection.** Encourage farmland preservation.
4. **Pedestrian Oriented Development.** Ensure that all new development is designed to accommodate and encourage the pedestrian and bicyclist as much as the automobile driver. Also, provide a safe environment for pedestrians en route to schools, churches, etc.
5. **Safer Roads.** Establish safer roads for drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Also, reduce traffic congestion.
6. **Pedestrian/Bicycle.** An “alternative transportation” system of sidewalks and bikeways should be implemented over the course of several years as higher density development takes place.
7. **Park Space.** Provide adequate recreational opportunities for all segments of the population.
8. **Environmental Recreation and Education.** Develop a broad range of recreational and educational opportunities within a park and open space system, which preserves and enhances the area’s landforms, natural features, and wildlife habitats.
9. **Rivers.** Protect water quality for future generations. Preserve the scenic quality of the river corridor. Utilize rivers for environmentally sound recreational activities.
10. **Cultural Resources.** Recognize and protect cultural resources.

### **Specific Needs Assessments as related to Parks & Recreation (St. Stephens SAP)**

#### **1. Pedestrian and Bicycle System**

In general, St. Stephens/Oxford lacks a pedestrian system offering options for connectivity between residential areas and commercial developments. However, it is now the policy of the MPO and NCDOT to evaluate any new road construction project for potential facilities (i.e. sidewalks and crossovers) and bicycle accommodations.



Sidewalks should be requested on state roads when they are widened. Sidewalks on the following roads could tie in with existing or planned sidewalks in Conover, Claremont, and Hickory:

- County Home Road
- Rock Barn Road
- C & B Farm Road
- Lee Cline Road
- St. Johns Church Road
- NC Highway 16
- Sipe Road

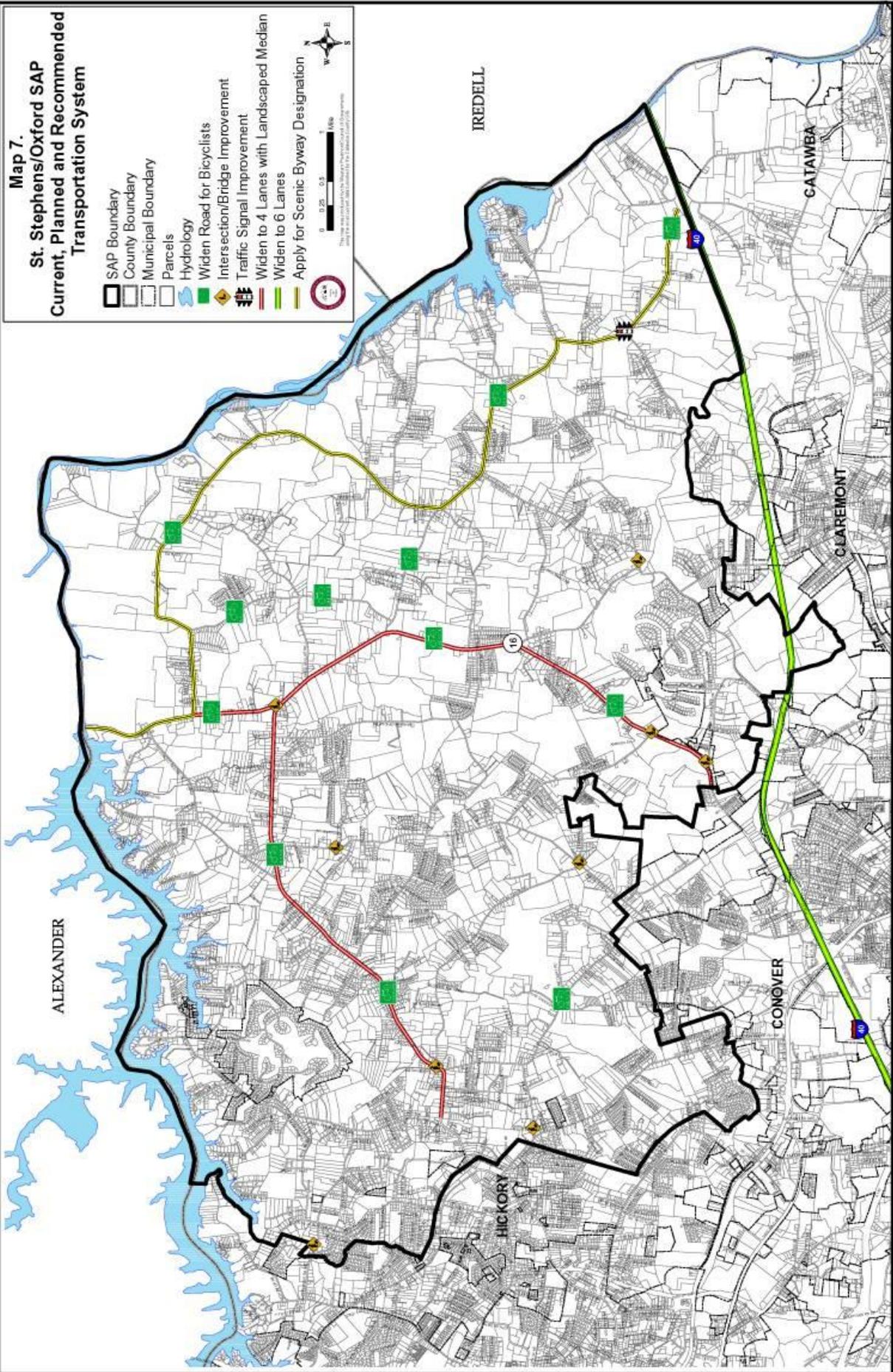
The St. Stephens/Oxford study area also does not currently have an integrated system of bicycle trails. Riverbend Park offers a system of off-road bicycle trails. In compliance with NCDOT's policy, the Springs Road and NC Highway 16 road widening projects should be evaluated for their potential to provide bicycle lanes connecting with Riverbend Park.

Increase the pavement width to the maximum extent feasible along the following roads for bicycle routes:

- Oxford School Road
- Riverbend Road
- Rest Home Road
- County Home Road

**Map 7.**  
**St. Stephens/Oxford SAP**  
**Current, Planned and Recommended**  
**Transportation System**

-  SAP Boundary
-  County Boundary
-  Municipal Boundary
-  Parcels
-  Hydrology
-  Widen Road for Bicyclists
-  Intersection/Bridge Improvement
-  Traffic Signal Improvement
-  Widen to 4 Lanes with Landscaped Median
-  Widen to 6 Lanes
-  Apply for Scenic Byway Designation



Map 7. St. Stephens/Oxford SAP Current, Planned and Recommended Transportation System. Prepared by the author for the St. Stephens/Oxford SAP. © 2018.

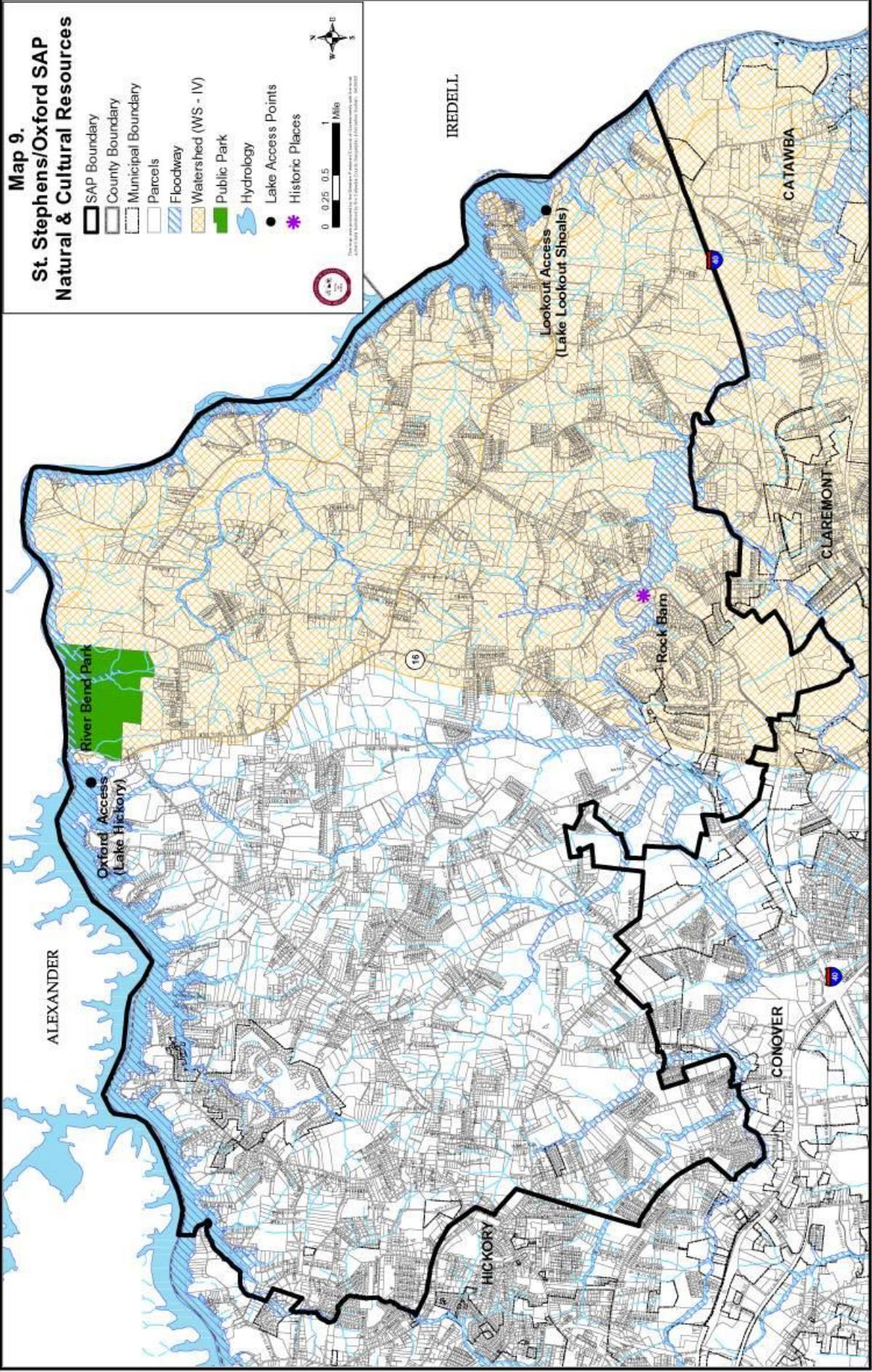
**Map 9.**  
**St. Stephens/Oxford SAP**  
**Natural & Cultural Resources**

-  SAP Boundary
-  County Boundary
-  Municipal Boundary
-  Parcels
-  Floodway
-  Watershed (WS - IV)
-  Public Park
-  Hydrology
-  Lake Access Points
-  Historic Places

0 0.25 0.5 1 Mile



Source: St. Stephens University and the University of Georgia. Digitized by the University of Georgia Libraries. Digitized by the University of Georgia Libraries.





## 2. Parks and Greenways

Riverbend Park is located within the study area along the Catawba River and offers a variety of passive recreational activities. This is the first County-owned and operated park with the second park on Bakers Mountain, which opened June 2002. Riverbend Park includes over 450 acres of land with hiking, bicycle trails, dog park, fishing, and canoeing. Riverbend Park also provides picnic facilities and an observation deck on the Catawba River. The schools, churches, and some private organizations operate other passive and active recreational facilities. Currently there are no greenways within the St. Stephens/Oxford study area.

### Recommendations (*St. Stephens SAP*)

1. Protect rural character and open space by requiring dedication of open space within subdivisions.
2. Evaluate where roads need to be widened and traffic signals placed.
3. Continue to use school facilities for public recreation activities.
4. When roads and highways are resurfaced, add additional pavement to accommodate the construction of bicycle lanes, when appropriate.
5. Begin to design and construct a pedestrian and bicycle system that links the currently segregated residential developments together.
6. A trail connection should be made from the Oxford access on Lake Hickory to Riverbend Park. The possibility of a midway access point, for canoeing, between Riverbend Park and the Lookout Access should also be examined.
7. Create scenic corridors by utilizing rivers, creeks, and floodways for open space planning. Create and implement design standards for recreational facilities located on the lakes and rivers to protect water quality and scenic beauty.



## **Mountain View Small Area Plan**

### **Study Area (*Mountain View SAP*)**



The Mountain View Small Area Plan study area boundary follows the Burke/Catawba County border to the west; the unincorporated area outside of Long View, Brookford, and Hickory to the north; Robinwood Road and Zion Church Road to the east; Sandy Ford Road between Robinwood and Zion Church Roads to the south; Highway 10 between Zion Church Road and Highway 127 to the south; and Greedy Highway between Highway 127 and the Burke/Catawba Count line to the south. The study area encompasses 20,035 acres.

### **Demographics/Projections (*Mountain View SAP*)**

The Mountain View area experienced steady growth in the decade of the 1990s. Beginning in 1990, the area had an estimated population of just over 8,000 persons. By the year 2000, the area grew to more than 10,000 persons, primarily driven by single-family subdivision growth. The 23.5% population growth rate during the 1990s is one of the highest for any area in Catawba County. Job growth in Hickory and elsewhere in Catawba County contributed to the rapid population increase in the 1990s. Though both population and the number of households increased, the number of people per household reflected a slight decline following the national trend.

In comparison with county growth during the 1990s, the Mountain View area growth rate of 23.5% was higher than the 19.7% rate recorded for the total County. Mountain View's net gain of 1,954 persons represented over 8% of the total County population increase of 23,273. Both Mountain View and Catawba



County experienced a decline in persons per household from 1990 to 2000 though the decline in Mountain View was more significant.

**Table 3.6.5 - Mountain View Small Area Plan: Study Area Growth 1990-2015**

ENTITY	1990	2000	Net Change 1990-2000	% Increase 1990-2000	2005	2010	2015	Net Change 2000-2015	% Increase 2000-2015
Persons	8,302	10,256	1,954	23.5	10,934	11,577	12,089	1,833	16.8
Households	3,020	3,945	925	30.6	4,238	4,522	4,759	814	19.2

### **Key Issues (*Mountain View SAP*)**

Area residents of the Mountain View SAP met in June of 2000 and discussed likes, dislikes, and their visions for the future of their community, as follows:

Rapid commercialization along NC Highway 127 is resulting in traffic congestion and unattractive development.

Housing developments are replacing farms with the consequent loss of open space, scenic topography, and rural character.

Schools are overcrowded.

Additional recreational opportunities are needed.

Encroaching development is threatening the scenic location of Bakers Mountain.

### **Guiding Principles**

1. Preserve rural character
2. Protect Bakers Mountain from undesired development
3. Preserve the remaining farms and/or explore opportunities for conversion to preserved open space
4. Protect scenic vistas



5. Provide greenways and trails that link with sidewalks
6. Promote road-sharing with bicyclists
7. Increase pavement width on designated roads to accommodate bicyclists
8. Offer off-road bicycling options
9. Provide additional recreation opportunities for all age groups
10. Promote cultural events and facilities
11. Combine passive recreation and open space preservation interests
12. Link recreational facilities with residential developments
13. Preserve the scenic quality of river corridors
14. Utilize river for environmentally sound recreation activities
15. Provide recreation opportunities
16. Preserve open space

### **Specific Needs Assessments as related to Parks & Recreation (Mountain View SAP)**

#### **1. Pedestrian System**

The City of Hickory requires sidewalks in all new developments. Hickory has jurisdiction over several parcels along Highway 127 in the Mountain View area. New developments within Hickory's jurisdiction are required to install sidewalks though they will not necessarily connect to other sidewalks at this time. Hickory also adopted a sidewalk plan that encourages linking sidewalks and greenways. In general, Mountain View lacks a pedestrian system offering options for connectivity between residential areas and commercial developments.

#### **2. Bicycle System**

Due to the rural nature of the outlying areas, Mountain View is a popular area for bicyclists. To date, the MPO has installed "Share the Road" signs on Robinson Road, Sandy Ford Road and Zion Church Road. The NCDOT has also funded a Bicycle Route Map and signing project that will



begin in late 2001 with expected completion in one year. A system of off-road bicycle trails does not exist in Mountain View.

### **3. Parks and Greenways**

School and church facilities as well as Huffman Park comprise the recreational facilities in the Mountain View study area. The Mountain View Recreation Association operates Huffman Park, located on Highway 127, and organizes leagues for team sports.

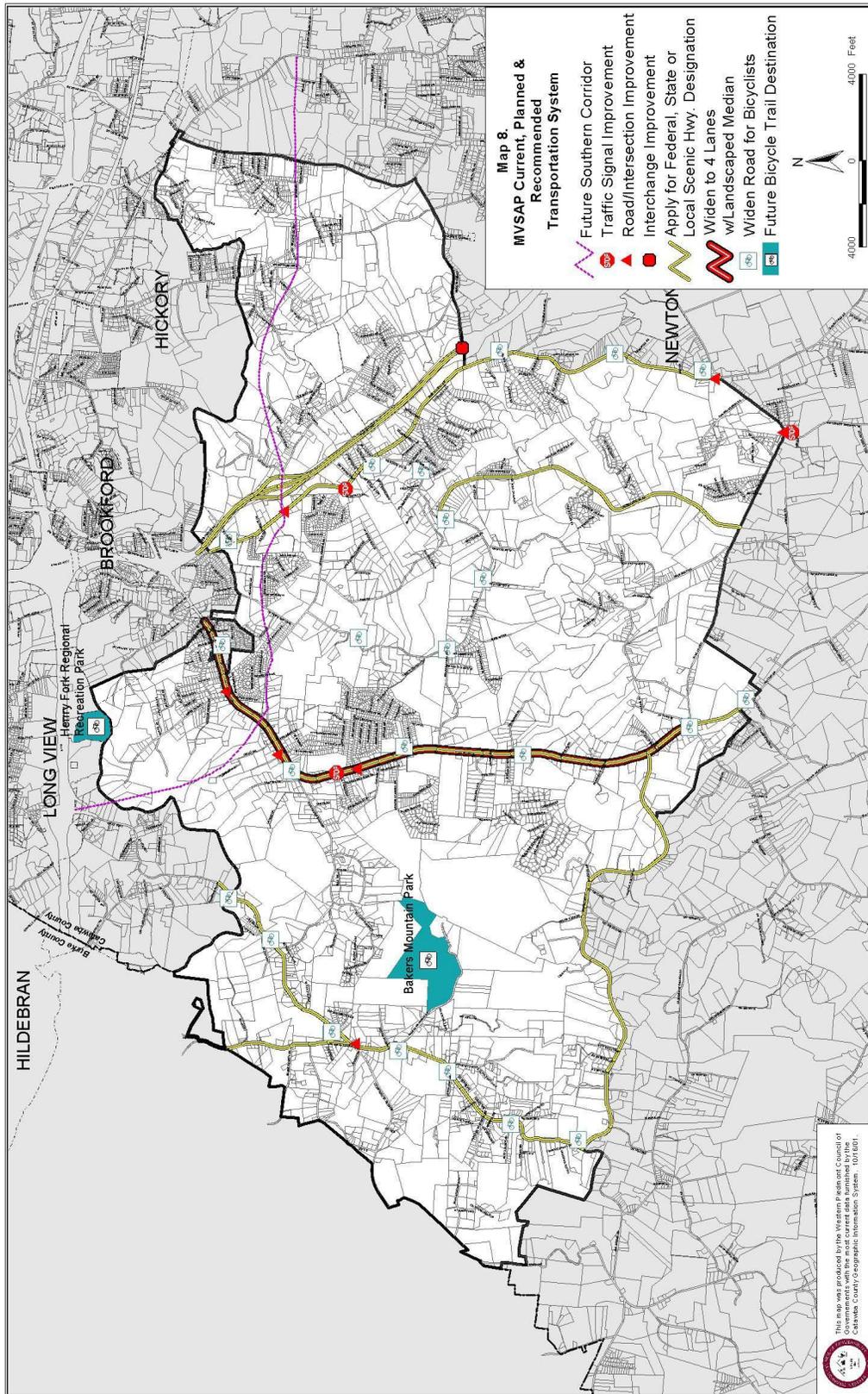
In June 2002, Catawba County opened a passive recreation park on Bakers Mountain. The Bakers Mountain Park includes 196 acres of passive recreation opportunities for residents of Catawba County and surrounding areas. Of the 196 acres, only 8.8 acres are disturbed to provide 25 parking spaces, picnic areas, and scrub growth removal from meadow areas. Six miles of trail with one-quarter mile paved handicap accessible trail are provided.

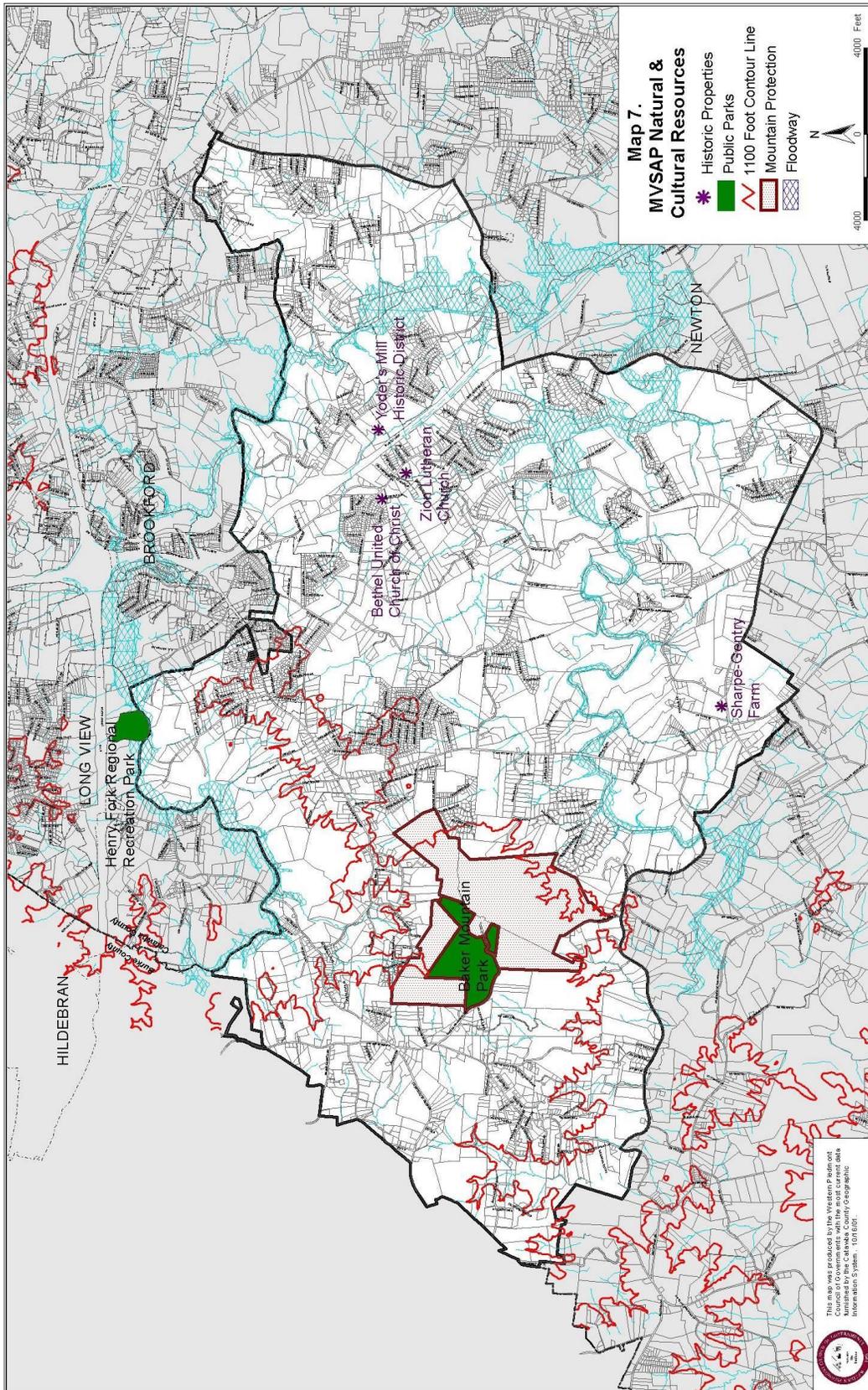
### **Recommendations (*Mountain View SAP*)**

1. Implement a sidewalk ordinance. Areas with the greatest need should be a priority, including urbanized areas, major roads, schools, and parks. The sidewalk ordinance should require new developments on major thoroughfares, which provide sidewalks and bicycle lanes on the thoroughfare frontage to connect with existing or proposed sidewalks and bicycle lanes.
2. Develop a plan to create a greenway for pedestrians and bicyclists. The preferred routes for the greenways would be along the Henry and Jacob Forks Duke Energy rights-of-way and Bakers Mountain.
3. Implement a greenway plan.
4. Create linkages between residential, commercial and industrial developments. Ideally, commercial and residential development would be connected to public institutions (i.e. Mountain View Elementary School) and recreation facilities.
5. New residential subdivisions should include, where appropriate, the dedication of land(s) for schools, parks and passive recreation uses needed to serve the development's new residents.
6. Preserve areas in floodplains and land around such known resources as the Jacobs Fork River, the Henry Fork River, Hop Creek and Bakers Mountain.



7. Educate property owners of rural farms on ways of preserving those uses by providing information on conservation easement and tax credit measures.
8. Continue to support the development of County park facilities on Bakers Mountain.
9. Acquire land or increase pavement on existing roads to construct bicycle lanes connecting Bakers Mountain Park and the Henry Fork Regional Recreation Park
10. Provide canoe and raft portage port on the Henry Fork and Jacobs Fork.
11. Create trails along the Henry and Jacobs Forks to accommodate the needs of hikers, bicyclists and equestrians.
12. Require new developments on major thoroughfares (i.e. NC Highway 127, Zion Church Road, Bethel Church Road, Wallace Dairy Road) to provide sidewalks and bicycle lanes on the thoroughfare frontage to connect with existing or proposed sidewalks and bicycle lanes.
13. A sidewalk ordinance should be implemented to require new developments on major thoroughfares to provide sidewalks and bicycle lanes on the thoroughfare frontage to connect with existing or proposed sidewalks and bicycle lanes.
14. Set as a priority the purchase of additional land on Bakers Mountain for future expansion of the park.
15. Design and implement a recreation/open space plan to link Bakers Mountain Park with Henry Fork Regional Recreation Park.







## **Plateau Small Area Plan**

### **Study Area (*Plateau SAP*)**

The Plateau study area encompasses an approximate 32,854 acres (including right-of-ways) in southwestern Catawba County, west of the Startown area and south of the Mountain View area. Bisected by NC Highway 10, which traverses the planning area from east to southwest, the Plateau area is bound by Burke County on the west; Greedy Highway to the north; the NC Highway 321 Bypass on the east; and Lincoln County to the south. The most significant natural feature in the area is the Jacobs Fork River, which joins with the Henry Fork River just east of the planning area to flow south into Lincoln County as the South Fork of the Catawba River.

### **Demographics/Projections (*Plateau SAP*)**

The Plateau study area experienced a significant population growth from 1990 to 2000. The number of people residing in the area grew at a rate of 20.8%. The population in 1990 for the area was 3,967, while the 2000 Census indicated a population of 5,008, an increase of 1,041 persons. This growth rate is nearly the same as for Catawba County, which grew 19.7% from 1990 to 2000. The study area's net gain of 1,041 persons represented 4.5% of the County's total population increase of 23,273.

The number of households grew significantly faster than the number of persons in the study area, resulting in a lower average number of persons per household. This trend is consistent with county, state, and national trends – all indicating a smaller number of persons per household.

If the long-term trend of increasing job demand continues in Catawba County, the population in the Plateau study area is projected to continue increasing at a significant rate. By 2015, the population study area could grow by 34.6% and exceed 6,700 persons. The trend of fewer people per household is expected to continue.

Future growth of the study area will be largely affected by the availability of public water and sewer. Residential, commercial, and industrial developments are most likely to occur where water and sewer lines exist or are extended. Since many large, vacant tracts still exist in the area, Plateau's growth also depends on the willingness of property owners to develop their land for more intensive uses.



**Table 3.6.6 - Plateau Small Area Plan: Study Area Growth 1990-2015**

ENTITY	1990	2000	Net Change 1990-2000	% Increase 1990-2000	2005	2010	2015	Net Change 2000-2015	% Increase 2000-2015
Persons	3,967	5,008	1,041	20.8	5,611	6,164	6,739	1,731	34.6
Households	1,546	2,043	497	32.1	2,348	2,645	2,956	913	44.7

### Key Issues (*Plateau SAP*)

Plateau is rural in nature, with vast amounts of open space and very little congestion. Traditionally a farming community, it remains very family-oriented, with good schools and protective services.

Area residents of the Plateau SAP met in August of 2004 and participated in small group discussions to identify their likes, dislikes, and future visions of the community. As a result of their interaction, the following broad, categorical issues emerged:

- Traffic, especially near NC Highway 10 and near all four schools
- Overcrowded schools
- Loss of farmland and open space to residential development
- Lack of recreation programs, especially for children
- Balancing the “pressure for growth” with the “existing rural quality of life”
- Lack of commercial development
- Inadequate code enforcement

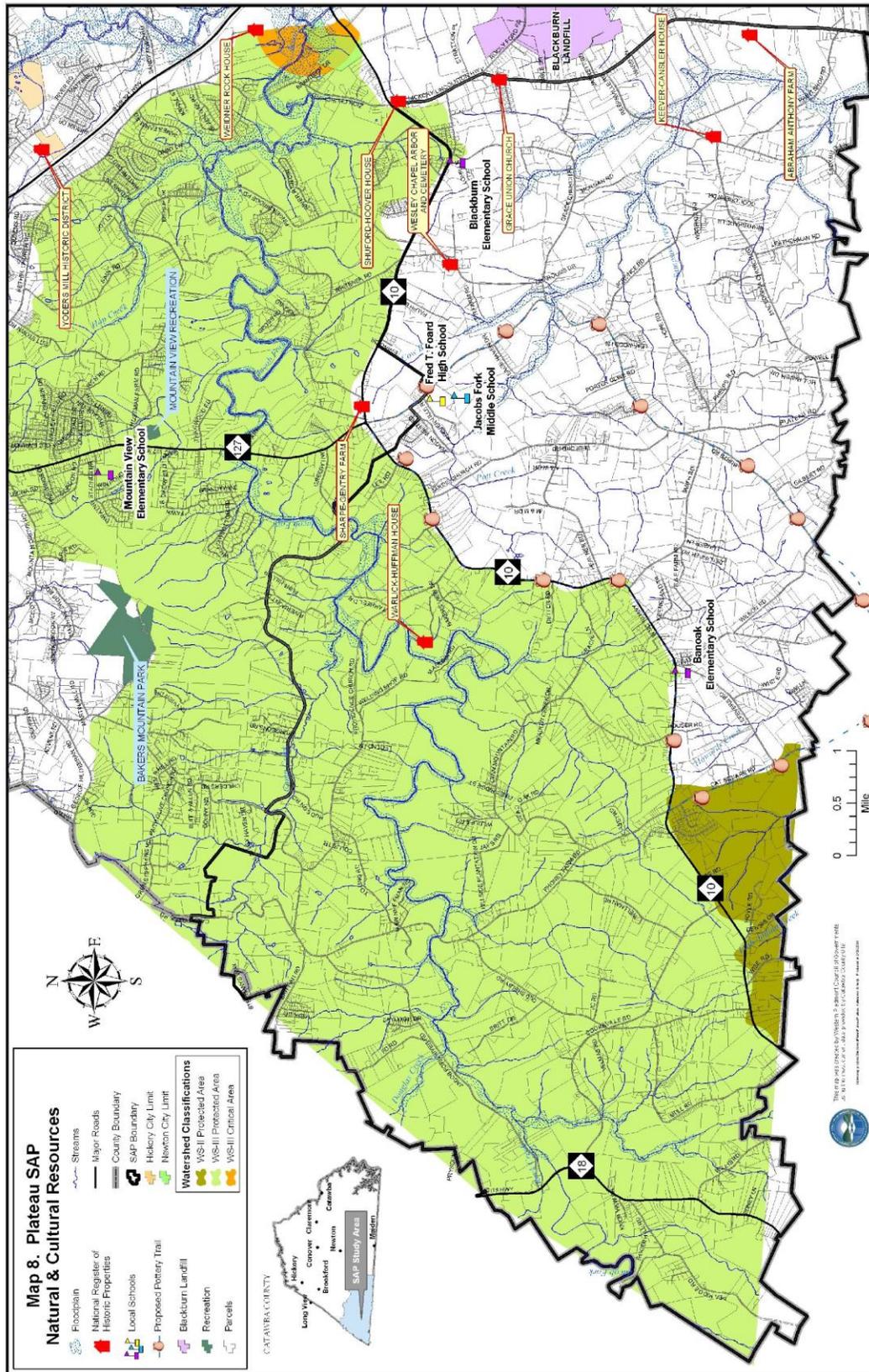
### Guiding Principles (*Plateau SAP*)

1. **Land Use and Community Design.** When planning development, balance growth with the community’s rural character. Encourage aesthetically pleasing designs, without negatively impacting air quality. Include pedestrian options such as sidewalks, walking trails, and bike paths. Limit commercial/industrial sites to appropriate, specific areas with the use of mixed-use development and buffers. Preserve open space, agriculture and natural resources, while developing passive recreation.



2. **Transportation.** Improve communication with NCDOT. Address safety, congestion, growth, policies, stormwater drainage, and connectivity. Increase pedestrian, bicycle, and transit opportunities.
3. **Community Facilities and Public Services.** Provide greater accommodation for school students in community-based areas – sharing facilities for recreation, etc. Maintain existing library and emergency services and plan for expansion. Create additional opportunities for passive recreation in parks and greenways, including conservation easements or greenways along the Jacobs Fork River. Take a cooperative, regional approach in planning future water and sewer infrastructure.
4. **Natural and Cultural Resources.** Preserve water quality, open space, wildlife habitat, and rural characteristics. Encourage conservation easements or greenways along the Jacobs Fork River. Create additional active/passive recreational opportunities with the use of school facilities. Maintain the existing cultural resources – local/national historic sites, pottery traditions, and craft shops.







## **Specific Needs Assessments as related to Parks & Recreation (Plateau SAP)**

### **1. Pedestrian System**

In general, the Plateau SAP area lacks a pedestrian system with sidewalk connections between residential areas. However, it is now policy of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) – formed by Hickory, Newton, and Conover – and the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) to evaluate any new road construction project for potential pedestrian needs (i.e., sidewalks and crossovers) and bicycle accommodations.

### **2. Bicycle System**

The Plateau SAP study area does not currently have an integrated system of bicycle trails. NCDOT has funded a Bicycle Route Map and signing project that has been underway for several years. In compliance with NCDOT's policy, future road widening projects should be evaluated for their potential to provide bicycle routes.

### **3. Parks and Greenways**

Organized recreational activities are very limited in the Plateau area at this time. A youth sports program is run locally at the Banoak Community Center, behind Banoak Elementary School. Other youth sports activities take place at the various schools in the area.

## **Recommendations**

1. Acreage in single-family subdivisions should be required to be dedicated as common open space. Existing vegetation should be allowed to serve as a buffer.
2. Preserve green space specifically for passive recreational uses, including hiking trails, primitive camping areas, canoe access, etc.
3. All cluster subdivisions should require a 30 (thirty)-foot buffer around the perimeter.
4. The Plateau SAP supports the bicycle routes that have been submitted to NCDOT for approval. Increase pavement width to the maximum extent feasible along the designated bicycle routes for increased safety.



5. Establish partnership opportunities between the schools and other community groups to enhance the use of local facilities, such as the Banoak Community Center, for community and recreational activities.
6. Work with landowners and local conservancies to establish recreational uses on the Jacobs Fork River. Explore the possibility of developing formal public canoe access, which would alleviate landowners' concerns about trespassing, boater safety, and parking access.
7. Explore the adaptive reuse of the southern portion of the Blackburn landfill site for recreational activities, such as a golf course or putt-putt course, hiking, biking and walking trails, picnic areas, a ropes course, and an educational forest.

## **Startown Small Area Plan**

### **Study Area (*Startown SAP*)**

The Startown study area encompasses an approximate 20,118 acres of land (including dedicated right-of-ways). It is located south of Hickory, west of Newton and north of Maiden – between US Highway 321-Business and Zion Church Road (and its continuation, called the Hickory-Lincolnton Highway). The US Highway 321-Bypass freeway bisects the SAP, providing easy access to Interstate 85 to the south, and the Blue Ridge Mountains to the north. Significant natural features in the area include the Henry Fork and Jacobs Fork Rivers, which join near the US Highway 321-Bypass at NC Highway 10 and flow south as the South Fork of the Catawba River into Lincoln County.

### **Demographics/Projections (*Startown SAP*)**

The Startown study area experienced moderate population growth from 1990 to 2000. The number of people residing in the area grew at a rate of 8.5%. The population in 1990 for the area was 3,755, while the 2000 Census indicated a population of 4,076, an increase of 321 persons. The growth rate for the entire County was 19.7% - more than double the rate for the Startown study area. The study area's net gain of 321 persons represented 1.37% of the County's total population increase.

The number of households grew significantly faster than the number of persons in the study area, resulting in a lower average number of persons per household.



This trend is consistent with county, state, and national trends – all indicating a smaller number of persons per household.

If job demand increases over the next ten to twenty years, as predicted in Catawba County, the population in the Startown area is projected to increase at a substantial rate. By 2015, the population of Startown could exceed 5,371 persons, which represents a 31.8% increase. The trend of fewer people per household is expected to continue here, as county-wide. Future population growth within the Startown planning area will be largely affected by the availability of public water and sewer.

**Table 3.6.7 - Startown Small Area Plan: Study Area Growth 1990-2015**

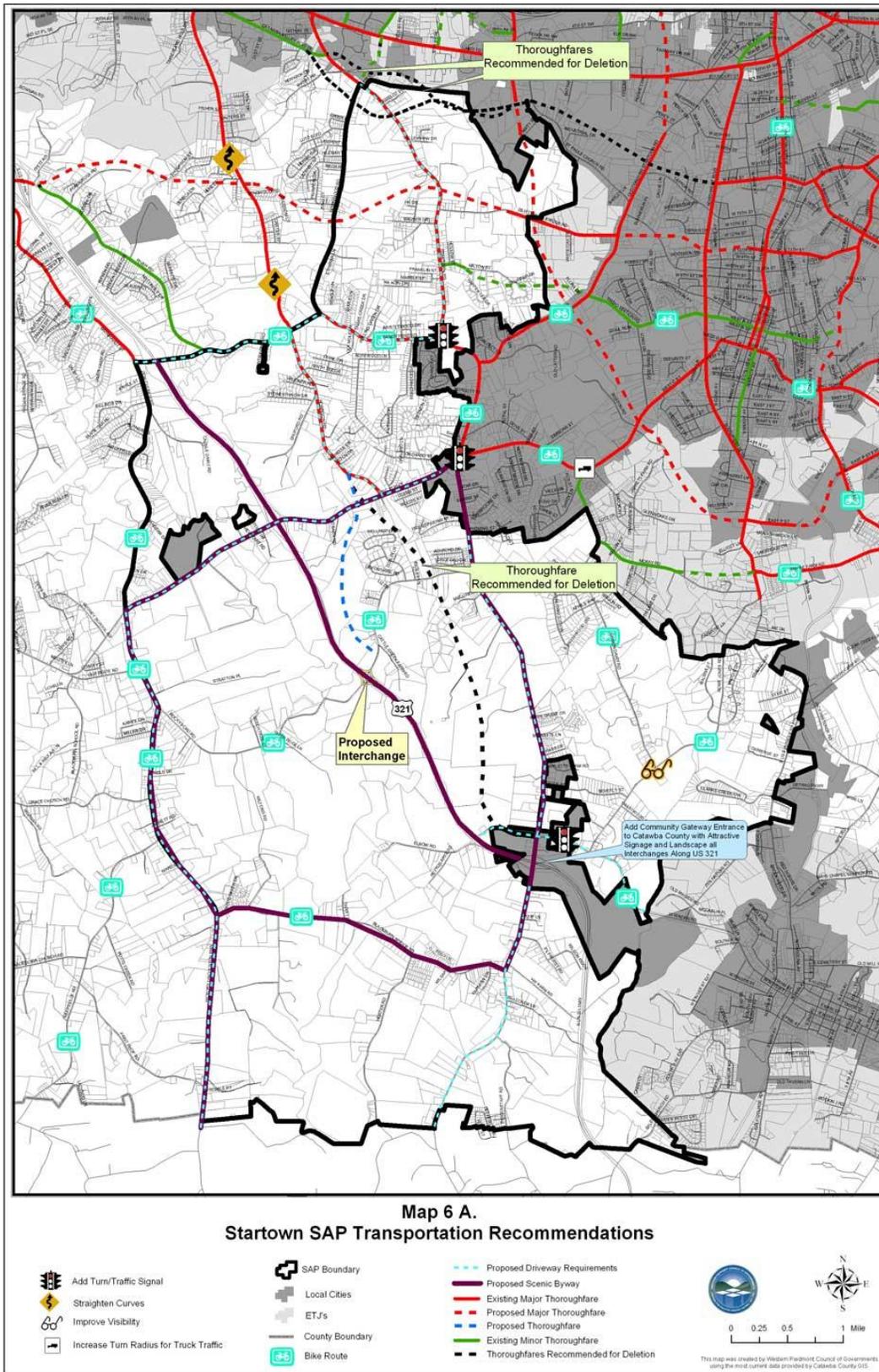
ENTITY	1990	2000	Net Change 1990-2000	% Increase 1990-2000	2005	2010	2015	Net Change 2000-2015	% Increase 2000-2015
Persons	3,775	4,076	321	8.5	4,529	4,973	5,371	1,295	31.8
Households	1,442	1,608	166	11.5	1,804	1,997	2,174	566	35.2

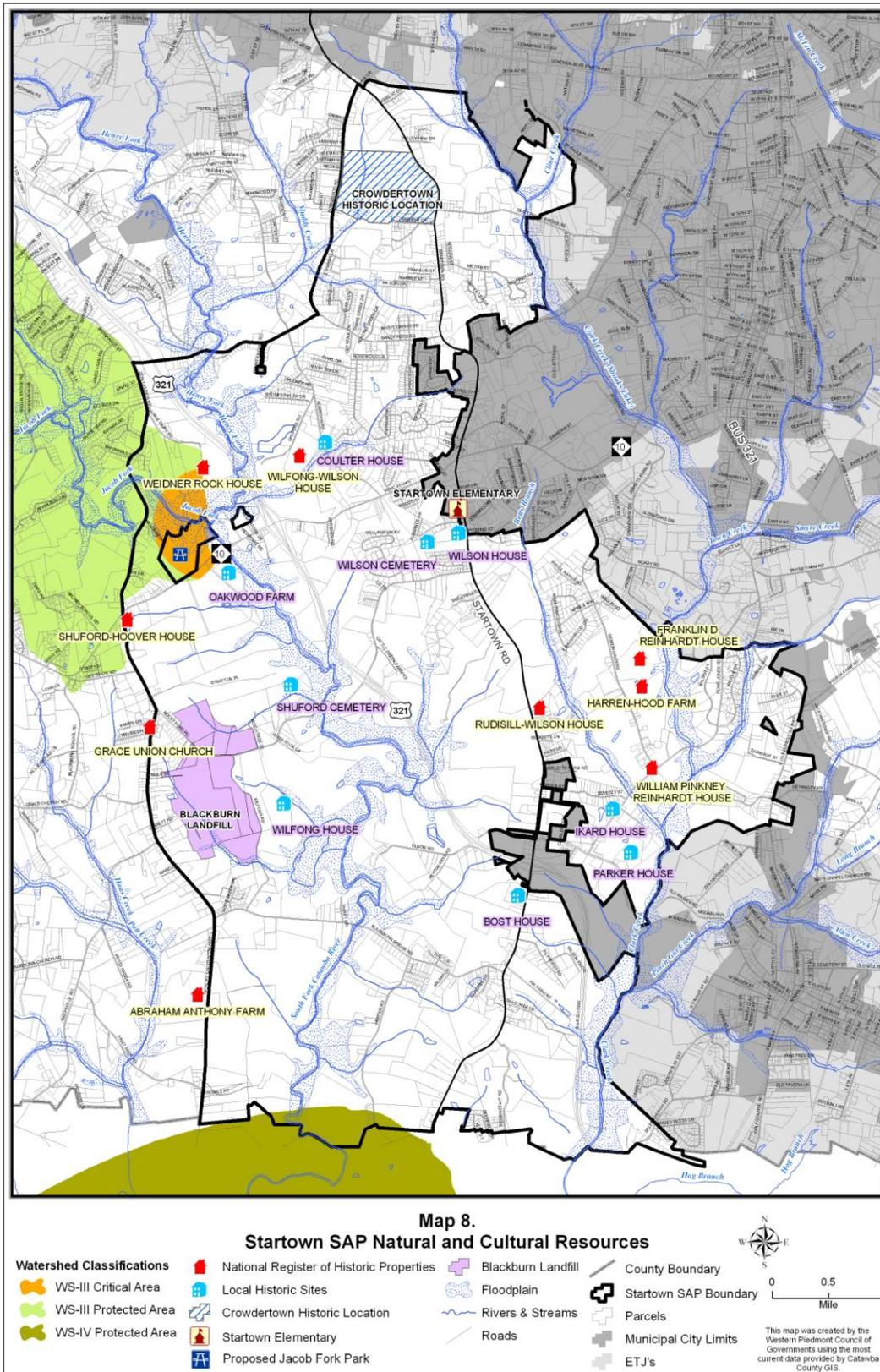
### Key Issues (*Startown SAP*)

Startown is rural in nature, with vast amounts of open space and very little congestion. It continues to reflect the largely agricultural heritage of the family/neighborhood-oriented community. Traditionally a farming community, it remains very family-oriented, with good schools and protective services. Startown residents enjoy good transportation routes and public services.

Area residents of the Startown SAP met in May of 2004 and participated in small group discussions to identify their likes, dislikes, and future visions of the community. As a result of their discussions, the following broad, categorical issues emerged and later comprised their guiding principles:

- Traffic, especially on Startown Road
- Fear of annexation
- Overcrowded schools
- Unnecessary expansion/extension of highways
- Loss of farmland and open space
- Balancing “growth” with rural qualities
- Commercial development







## Guiding Principles (*Startown SAP*)

- 1. Land Use and Community Design.** Realizing that some portions of the Startown study area may be annexed by surrounding municipalities, residential and commercial growth should be balanced with the rural character of the community – encouraging aesthetically pleasing, affordable housing with the preservation of air quality, sidewalks, trails, and bike paths. Open space, farmlands, and natural resources should be protected and more passive recreation should be developed.
- 2. Transportation.** Improve communication with NCDOT. Address safety, congestion, growth, policies, stormwater drainage, and connectivity. Increase pedestrian, bicycle, and transit opportunities and investigate a passenger rail connection.
- 3. Community Facilities and Public Services.** Provide greater accommodation for school students in community-based, neighborhood areas – sharing facilities for recreation, etc. Maintain existing library and emergency services and plan for expansion. Create additional opportunities for active and passive recreation for all population segments in parks and greenways, including conservation easements or greenways along the Henry and Jacobs Fork Rivers and South Fork of the Catawba River.
- 4. Natural and Cultural Resources.** Preserve water quality, open space, wildlife habitat, and rural characteristics. Encourage conservation easements or greenways along the Henry and Jacobs Fork Rivers and the South Fork of the Catawba River. Create additional passive recreational opportunities, supplemented by the use of school facilities. Preserve local and national historic properties.

## Specific Needs Assessments as related to Parks & Recreation (*Startown SAP*)

- 1. Pedestrian System**

Presently, Catawba County does not require sidewalk construction in new developments. In general, the Startown SAP area lacks a pedestrian system with sidewalk connections between residential areas. However, it is now the policy of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) – formed by Hickory, Newton, and Conover – and the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) to evaluate any new road construction project for potential pedestrian needs (i.e., sidewalks and crossovers) and bicycle accommodations.



## 2. Bicycle System

The Startown SAP study area does not currently have an integrated system of bicycle trails. NCDOT has funded a Bicycle Route Map and signing project that has been underway since the summer of 2001 and was expected to be completed in 2006.

### Recommendations (*Startown SAP*)

1. Provide common open space in residential subdivisions that is easily accessible and usable for recreation.
2. Preserve green space specifically for passive recreational uses, including hiking trails, primitive camping areas, canoe access, etc.
3. Work with landowners and local conservancies to establish passive recreational uses and/or boating options on the South Fork River.
4. The Startown SAP supports the bicycle routes recommended by the Catawba County Bicycle Mapping Committee, which has been submitted to NCDOT for approval. Increase pavement width to the maximum extent feasible along bicycle routes.
5. Establish partnership opportunities between the schools and other community groups to enhance the use of local facilities for community and recreational activities.
6. Explore the adaptive reuse of the southern portion of the Blackburn landfill site for recreational activities, such as a golf course or putt-putt course, hiking, biking and walking trails, picnic areas, a ropes course, and an educational forest.

### 3.7 LAKE NORMAN BIKE ROUTE (LNBR)

The Lake Norman Bike route is a regional bicycle system encompassing Lake Norman in the Southern Piedmont area of North Carolina. In addition to providing a continuous spine around Lake Norman, the LNBR also comprises a network of bicycling excursion routes throughout the Lake area. The four-county Lake Norman Bike Route is similar to other regional routes already designated by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation. These regional and cross-state routes generally parallel the major highways, but offer a safer, less traveled alternative than the busy, major roads. The Unifour Planning Organization, of which Catawba



County is a member, endorsed the LNBR in September 2006. (See Appendix: Attachment 3 – Lake Norman RPO Bike Map)

### **3.8 DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT FOR KEY HARBOR AND CRESCENT RESOURCES PROJECTS**

As part of a development agreement executed in April 2007 between Catawba County, Key Harbor, LLC and Crescent Resources, LLC for the rezoning of properties in the Sherrills Ford community, specific recreational amenities were negotiated. Following is a listing of the recreation opportunities being made available through the development agreement:

- A paved bicycle path will be constructed along the northern side of Island Point Road extending from the intersection of Island Point Road and Sherrill's Ford Road to the Key Harbor development
- A 22-acre site is being acquired by the developer of Key Harbor and will be conveyed to the Sherrills Ford Optimist Club to expand their existing park facility
- Conveyance of approximately 600 acres to the County for the development of a passive park at Mountain Creek on Lake Norman, subject to successfully obtaining a Clean Water Management Trust Fund grant. If this grant or other grants are not secured, a minimum of 300 acres will be conveyed to the County for a future park site.
- Public sidewalks will be constructed in the Key Harbor development on at least one side of the streets and will connect to the Island Point Road bicycle path.
- A pedestrian and bicycle network will be constructed in the Crescent village project with linkages to connect the buildings and various uses. An emphasis will be placed upon pedestrian accommodations to maximize the utilization of the lakefront by including such amenities as public art display, water features and public assembly. Bicycle parking is to be provided at the business locations, library and public service facilities.
- Public open space areas will be provided in the Crescent village project with a combination of active and passive recreation areas, trails, pathways, and other amenities. Trails are to be constructed behind the



proposed school site to connect to the residential development and provide connection from the waterfront area to the retail on the north side of Hwy. 150.

### **3.9 DUKE ENERGY COMPREHENSIVE RELICENSING AGREEMENT**

Catawba County participated in Duke Energy's stakeholder process for the FERC relicensing of its hydropower dam facilities on the Catawba River. As part of this process, a comprehensive relicensing agreement was negotiated which included recreational amenities for water-related access and activities. Following is a list of the public amenities included in the relicensing agreement:

- Swim areas on Lake Hickory
- Canoe/kayak access with picnic sites and trails at a new access site on Lake Hickory
- Picnic facilities, bank fishing and trails at the existing Oxford access site
- Public fishing area at the Oxford tailrace
- Mid-point canoe/kayak access point on Lookout Shoals Lake
- Financial support for a 1.5 mile walking/hiking trail along the Catawba River extending eastward from Riverbend Park
- Public fishing area at Lookout Shoals tailrace
- Trails along Lyle Creek from Hunsucker Park to Lake Norman
- Financial support for the acquisition of the Mountain Creek tract for a new passive recreation park
- Picnic facilities, bank fishing and trails at a new access site on Lake Norman

See Appendix: Map 13 – Duke Energy Comprehensive Relicensing Agreement Recreation Offerings



### **3.10 CATAWBA COUNTY PARKS ENERGY AND RESOURCE CONSERVATION GUIDELINES**

Catawba County Parks Division will begin implementing an Energy and Resource Conservation Plan to coincide with the County's efforts to become more environmentally friendly and responsible. Their efforts will include goals and actions that promote saving energy, preserving natural resources, and reducing pollution and waste. The purpose and goals of this plan will be to reduce waste output, conserve natural resources, and reduce or eliminate pollutants from the environment either directly or indirectly, by utilizing sound conservation and recycling practices and proactive land and habitat management. Preservation of Catawba County's natural heritage through education and conservation while providing quality passive recreation is the primary mission of Catawba County Parks.

#### **Plan Recommendations**

1. Eliminate the use of compressed sodium floodlights in our parking areas. Currently six floodlights illuminate the upper parking area at Riverbend Park. They come on at dusk and shut off at dawn. Because the park is closed during the time that the lights are on, they are of no beneficial use to patrons or park staff. In addition, because they are compressed sodium lights, they adversely affect the photoperiodic life cycles of all plant life in the areas. Security lighting should be replaced with motion sensing lights located on all structures and building entranceways for security purposes.  
*Implementation* – Disconnect existing lights under contract with Duke Energy and replace with motion sensing floodlights on all park building entrances. Replacement of these fixtures and lighting will save energy and maintain security.
2. Utilize indoor fluorescent lighting whenever possible to save energy.  
*Implementation* – The parks have already converted all existing indoor lighting to fluorescent and will continue to do so in the future facilities. Series of lighting fixtures have been separated so that only fixtures that are needed can be used rather than operating all fixtures automatically. Ambient light has been utilized in most all work areas by the use of strategically placed windows and blinds. Restrooms utilize architectural glass block for ambient light sources.
3. Utilize solar powered spotlighting to enhance roadside signage for patrons. The use of solar powered lights would eliminate the need to run electrical power lines to the site and increase awareness of the park's entrance.



- Implementation* – Have Catawba County Maintenance install solar lighting fixtures at all facility entrance signs.
4. Utilize motion-censored lighting and exhaust fan controls in restroom facilities.  
*Implementation* - Utilize motion-sensored lighting and exhaust fan controls in restrooms. Catawba County Maintenance would install motion-censored lighting in all current and future restroom facilities. This would eliminate having to depend on patrons to make sure that the lights and exhaust fans are turned off as they exit the restrooms.
  5. Utilize programmable thermostats in all buildings. Programmable thermostats would enable park staff to maintain a comfortable and energy efficient air temperature during operational hours. This would also maximize energy efficiency while the structures are not in use.  
*Implementation* - Catawba County Maintenance would install programmable thermostats in all current and future facilities.
  6. Request a mobile Recycling Center to be available at each park for the community to have a depository for cardboard, magazines, newspapers, glass, plastic, and aluminum. This will allow the parks to become a model for the community to raise awareness of the importance of recycling and to have convenient access to participate in the process. Most patrons of our parks are very environmentally conscious and this will be a convenience for them. This will greatly improve our existing efforts. Educational kiosks will be placed in this area and will enhance our educational programming.  
*Implementation* - Catawba County Parks Manager has contacted Amanda Kain with the Utilities and Engineering Department about having a mobile unit placed at each facility. Amanda has stated that grants are available and she will seek these opportunities out.
  7. Utilize recycled paper products in our restrooms and for cleaning purposes. Toilet paper is the most used commodity in our facilities and it would be a great benefit to the environment to use paper products made exclusively from recycled materials.  
*Implementation:* The parks already use 100% recycled paper products in our facilities. Efforts will be made to evaluate all bulk materials that we use for post consumer recycled material content.
  8. Utilize picnic tables and benches made of recycled materials instead of wood. These products last longer and are not as susceptible to vandalism as their wooden counterparts. It also helps patrons to have tangible evidence of the benefits of recycling. These benches and tables are made by the NC Department of Corrections and are now the standard by the NC



Park System. Products manufactured by Corrections Enterprises are available to local government agencies with out sales tax or freight charges. Products also include office furniture and miscellaneous supplies.

*Implementation:* Utilize picnic tables and benches made of recycled material instead of wood at all future facilities. The parks currently have 14 picnic tables, 8 benches, 5 dog waste stations, and 15 trash can frames made from recycled plastic materials and all future benches and tables will be made of recycled materials and existing wooden items will be replaced as needed. We will also use recycled plastic material for trail marker posts instead of wooden posts in future facilities.

9. Limit use of asphalt parking areas when feasible and define parking spaces with recycled plastic bumper stops. Asphalt parking areas are huge islands of non-porous earth that increase erosion and pollution in the immediate areas; by limiting its use, the parks can limit runoff and better control drainage. Using bumper stops would define spaces where patrons would park avoiding confusion and allowing for maximum use of space.

*Implementation:* Limit use of asphalt when feasible and define parking spaces with recycled plastic bumper stops, prefabricated speed bumps, and bollards. All future park facilities will be evaluated as to the feasibility of using gravel-parking areas instead of asphalt. Gravel parking surfaces can be easily utilized in overflow and bus parking areas. Grade and compaction must continue to meet ADA standards. Concrete and asphalt will be used in turn out traffic patterns and areas subject to erosion. Gravel surface parking is utilized at Riverbend Park for overflow parking and areas that are prone to surface runoff near the river with over 65 spaces in use.

10. Provide recycling bins beside our regular trash bins throughout the parks major picnic areas to encourage the recycling of cans and plastic bottles.

*Implementation:* The parks will purchase individual recycling containers for each of the parks picnic shelters and heavily used picnic areas.

11. Recover rainwater to irrigate educational gardens, hanging baskets and landscaping around the primary park structures. By using gutter collection barrels to catch the rain and installing 2 to 3 acre ponds and lakes, we can decrease our dependence on using water from our wells and treated water sources. It will also be used as an educational model for patrons to utilize at their own homes.

*Implementation:* The parks will purchase and install the rainwater recovery systems at each park. Educational kiosks will also be installed at each site.



12. Plant deciduous trees on the south side of buildings. This allows the building to have cool shade in summer and warming sunlight in winter. The Parks already employ this practice and will continue to do so in future facilities.
13. Minimize the clearing of trees for new construction. The fewer trees that are removed, the less impact the building will have on the surrounding environment and its wildlife habitats. Trees and native vegetation also improve water quality and minimize the effects of erosion. The Parks already employ this practice and will continue to do so in future facilities. When habitats have been impacted, efforts will be made to improve the remaining habitat areas.
14. Utilize steel framework and metal roofing in future construction and remodeling. Using steel eliminates dependence on wood and provides for a much stronger structure. Metal roofing replaces asphalt shingles that are petroleum based and wind up in our landfills when removed. Metal construction products can be recycled as scrap metal. Properly installed metal roofing has a very long effective life and when properly installed can offer much higher insulation value with heat reflective properties.  
*Implementation:* Future facilities will be constructed in this manner as well as other accepted LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified practices.
15. Create our own compost and educational composting facility. Currently, we use grass clippings, shredded leaves, shredded paper, and fruit/vegetable scraps to fertilize landscaping plants, reducing the need to use chemical fertilizers that can harm the environment. Shredded office documents that have been printed utilizing vegetable oil inks are easily and beneficially added to compost mixtures. Traditional organic yard waste should be composted on site and this practice encouraged throughout the community to help minimize the handling and transportation of these materials. Transportation to recycling or composting facilities consumes fuel and creates air pollution and in some cases when improperly disposed, it can occupy valuable landfill space.  
*Implementation:* Create educational composting facilities at each park to demonstrate the recycling of yard waste and other compostable organic products. Educational kiosk and material will be available at each site.
16. Plant gardens to reduce soil erosion and reduce air pollution. Native and non-invasive exotic flower gardens not only attract birds and butterflies, their root systems act as a stronghold on slopes to prevent the soil from being washed away in heavy rain. The parks already employ this practice on hillsides and will do so in future facilities. Sustainable landscaping



- practices are utilized to eliminate the need for synthetic fertilizers and pesticides.
17. Limit use and existence of invasive plants. By not planting invasive plants, the parks allow the native flora and fauna to flourish. Existing invasive species should either be controlled or removed if possible.  
*Implementation:* Currently we partner with CVCC, and Lenoir-Rhyne’s biology programs to provide educational experiences that involve projects that help us to remove invasive species from our managed habitat areas. Invasive plant species are able to out compete native vegetation and destroy native natural habitats and communities. At Riverbend Park, we are removing the non-native monoculture stands of Loblolly Pine. There are a total of 200 acres in pine plantation. Every five years approximately 40 acres will be timbered leaving all native trees and vegetation in place. Two years ago, the first 40 acres were timbered and this generated over \$125,000 of revenue for future park development and preservation efforts.
  18. Provide water, seed, and housing for birds. Attracting more insect consuming birds to the parks, decreases the need for pesticide use, which is a major pollutant to the water and soil. These amenities are educational tools and provide patrons with an opportunity for positive environmental interaction. These practices are in place.
  19. Hold semi-annual Litter-sweeps to keep parks and adjoining lands and waterways clean. Currently we have over 40 volunteers in each event and collaborate with Duke Energy and CVCC. Catawba County Parks currently participates in these events and will continue to participate in the future. Over 70 bags of trash and 15 bags of recyclables are recovered at each event on adjoining properties and along the Catawba River.
  20. Offer events to increase community participation, education, and awareness about nature, recycling, sustainability, and energy conservation. By holding educational events, the parks staff increases the patron’s awareness of our natural heritage and the importance of doing everything we can to protect it.
  21. Study the feasibility and implement all practical LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification practices on existing park facilities and all new construction. LEED design or “Green Construction” is a logical and practical approach to site design and construction. Many elements are obvious and include materials and design focusing on energy efficiency. Other elements are more complex and address details such as drainage, runoff and open space. *Implementation:* We will acquire LEED certification and design manuals for evaluation. From these manuals, we will create a practical plan to implement all practical and



reasonable practices for renovation of existing facilities and new construction.

The Catawba County Parks Energy and Resource Conservation Plan will be used and reviewed on a regular basis. The Parks Division has been utilizing a number of these practices for years and manages all property with accepted conservation and preservation practices. With additional staffing and resources, our methods will become more effective. Through educational opportunities for our patrons and leading by example, we will encourage citizens to become more proactive in positive environmental practices. Catawba County Parks is an effective and appropriate platform for this initiative.

**- End of Section -**





Section 4 Existing Park Facilities

offering canoeing, fishing, and hiking trails adjacent to the river. Predominantly passive in nature, Riverbend Park’s recreational opportunities also include hiking trails, picnic areas, mountain bike trails, and a recently completed dog park. The trail system forms a network which travels throughout the entire park allowing visitors to explore natural resources such as woodlands, flora and fauna. The park office, with restrooms and ADA accessible amenities, is located at the entrance to the park. A maintenance/storage facility is adjacent to the office.

**Recreation Amenities**

- Fishing
- Canoe/Kayak access
- Picnic areas/grills
- Meeting/Educational facility
- Educational programming
- Picnic shelter
- Wildlife habitat viewing areas
- Dog Park
- ADA Accessible observation platform
- Hiking/Walking trails (12 miles)
- Mountain biking trails (7.8 miles)



**Bakers Mountain Park**

Bakers Mountain Park is a regional park, located off Old Shelby Road and developed in 2001. Situated in the southwest portion of the County, Bakers Mountain has the highest elevation in Catawba County (1780 feet). The 189-acre preserve offers recreational opportunities similar to Riverbend Park within a different setting. The vegetation and terrain is very similar to that of the nearby Blue Ridge Mountains, with diverse vegetation and pristine streams. This park



and the surrounding acreage is the largest mature forest remaining in the County. The trail system offers a wide range of difficulty with a one-quarter mile long ADA trail that offers visitors a paved surface for a casual walk and other trails that are more strenuous. Nearly six miles of trail traverse throughout the park, allowing visitors to observe the natural beauty of the forest. An observation platform and gazebo



are located near the peak of Bakers Mountain, offering tremendous views of the Catawba Valley.

Park amenities include office and restroom facilities, two picnic shelters and an educational classroom. There are also several picnic areas throughout the park, which offer opportunities for small families or large groups.



### **Recreation Amenities**

- Hiking trails (6 miles)
- ADA trail (¼ mile)
- Observation platform
- Gazebo
- Picnic areas & grills
- Two picnic shelters
- Educational programming
- Meeting/Educational facility
- Park office and restroom facilities

## **St. Stephens Community Park**

St. Stephens Community Park is an active recreation park, created through land donation and a Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant obtained by Catawba County at the request of the St. Stephens Recreational Corporation. It is owned by Catawba County and was operated by the City of Hickory until the park was closed in 2005 when the swimming pool fell into disrepair. The swimming pool currently is functional obsolete and its replacement cost would be prohibitive. Due to declining usage and the existence of parks in close proximity, the City no longer desires to operate the park. Since Catawba County Parks Division's goal is to provide passive recreation and natural preservation, the County is currently in the process of submitting conversion documents to the state, in order to declare the pool obsolete and renovate and operate the park as a community passive park.

### **Recreation Amenities**

- Swimming pool (non operational)
- Concrete deck
- Bath house
- Picnic shelter
- Parking lot



## **County-Owned, Privately Operated Parks and Facilities**

### **Mountain View Recreation Center**

Also prior to the formation of the Catawba County Parks Division, the Mountain View Recreation Association requested the County to obtain 5.05 acres of land through a LWCF grant in order to develop the Mountain View Recreation Association site into an active recreation park. This 5.05 acre area is part of a larger complex that is owned and operated by the Mountain View Recreation Association, making a combined center of approximately 15 acres. To remain in compliance with the requirements of the LWCF grant, repairs are necessary to enable the County's area of the facility to meet American Disabilities Act (ADA) standards.

It is the intent of this plan that the County's portion of the facility will continue to be operated by Mountain View Recreation Association, since Catawba County Parks Division's goal is to provide passive, as opposed to active recreation.

#### **Recreation Amenities**

Ball field  
Grandstand with restrooms  
Large picnic shelter  
Small picnic shelter  
Tennis court  
Parking



*Tennis court at Mountain View Recreation Center*

## **Municipal – Owned and Operated Parks and Facilities**

### **Town of Brookford Facilities**

Brookford Park

### **Town of Catawba Facilities**

Hunsucker Park

### **Town of Claremont Facilities**

Claremont Park

Francis R. Sigman Recreation Park

### **City of Conover Facilities**

Downtown Park

Gateway Park

Hines Park

Hunsucker Park

Majestic Park

Southwest Park

Travis Park



### **City of Hickory Facilities**

Civitan Park  
Cliff Teague Park  
Fairbrook Park  
Glenn Hilton Memorial Park  
Henry Fork River Regional Rec. Park  
Hickory City Park  
Hickory Optimist Park  
Highland Recreation Center  
Jaycee Park  
John 'Bud' Geitner - Rotary Park  
Kiwanis Park  
Neill Clark, Jr. Park  
Southside Heights Park  
Stanford Park  
Taft Broome Park  
Westmont Center  
Winkler Park  
West Hickory Park

### **Town of Long View Facilities**

Longview Recreation Center

### **Town of Maiden Facilities**

Municipal Park  
Rosenwald Park  
Union Street Park

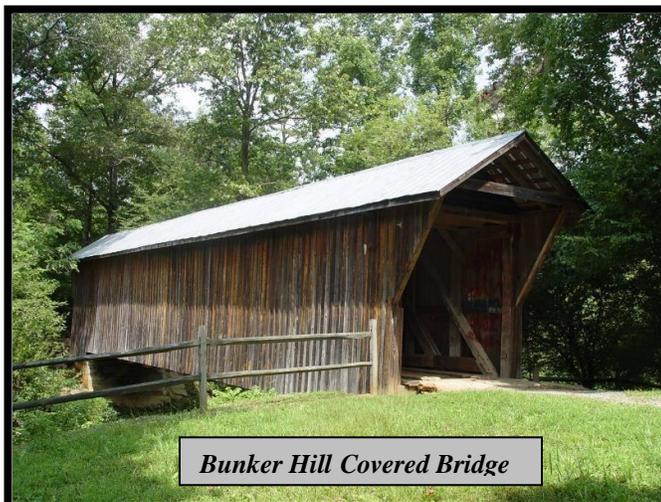
### **City of Newton Facilities**

East Park  
Jacob Fork Park  
Little Brook Park  
Northside Park  
Southside Park  
Westside/Jaycee Park

## **Other Privately Owned and Operated Special Facilities**

### **Bunker Hill Covered Bridge**

The Bunker Hill Covered Bridge is an important cultural resource for not only Catawba County and the State of North Carolina, but also for its significance as a national presence. Designated as a National Civil Engineering Landmark in 2001, the Bunker Hill Covered Bridge is the only remaining example of a wooden Improved Lattice Truss patented by Civil War General Herman Haupt. It joins the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse, the Blue Ridge Parkway, and Dorton Arena in representing North Carolina on this prestigious list.



*Bunker Hill Covered Bridge*

One of only two original remaining covered bridges in North Carolina, Bunker Hill Covered Bridge was built in 1895 by Andy L. Ramsour.



The bridge, owned by the Catawba County Historical Association, has significant associations not only with the Civil War through Haupt, but also with the American Revolution. Prior to the construction of the bridge, the site was used as a ford crossing Lyle Creek during the Revolutionary War.

This amenity offers a special resource opportunity for the County to provide educational programming for people of all ages and is a main landmark for the County and surrounding region. In addition to educational programming, the site offers opportunities for picnicking and a walking trail to the bridge.

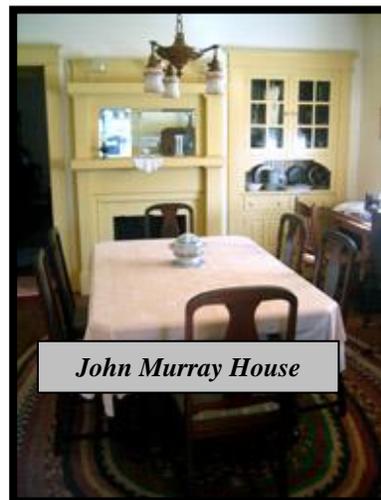
Although the bridge has been recently restored, several areas of the site need improvement. An existing footbridge is in need of continual maintenance and is not ADA compliant. In addition, a small bridge leading to the Bunker Hill Bridge is unstable and in need of major restoration. The stream bank adjacent to the walking trail has continually eroded over the years creating unstable conditions for walking.

The County has recently received a limited grant from North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) for a portion of the improvements that are essential to keep the facility operational. The scope of this project includes a new parking area, restroom facility and a pedestrian bridge.

## **Murray's Mill Historic District**

The Murray's Mill Historic District is located in eastern Catawba County along Balls Creek. Preserved intact are the 1913 mill itself; the 1890s Murray & Minges General Store; the 1880s Wheathouse, used as an exhibit gallery; the 1913 John Murray House, furnished to the period; and numerous outbuildings. The structures and surrounding land form the last milling complex in the County, meticulously preserved, owned and interpreted by the Catawba County Historical Association since 1980 when restorations began.

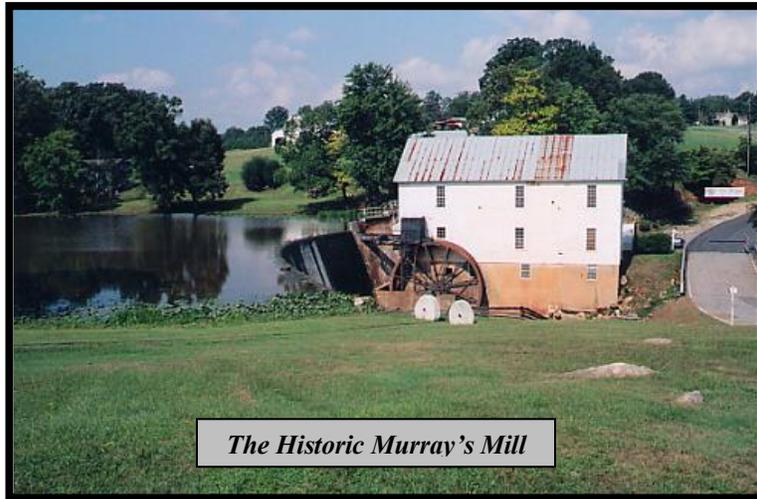
The Mill offers two major annual events during the year. The Catawba County Storytelling Festival, scheduled in the spring, offers the entertaining art of storytelling. In addition, the Murray's Mill Harvest Folk Festival celebrates Catawba County's agricultural heritage with tractors, farm machinery, traditional food preparation and other exhibits. Music is also an important part of this popular festival offering Bluegrass, Country, and Gospel music for the visitors.





## Murrays Mill

The centerpiece of the historic district is Murray's Mill, built by John Murray, whose father, William, had operated a mill on the site since 1883. In 1913, John replaced his father's mill with the current two-story structure, adding a 22 (twenty two) foot overshot waterwheel, in lieu of the former turbine. Making room for the mill's expansion, the Murrays



moved the general store at that time to its present location. In 1938, John's son, Lloyd, raised the dam six feet and installed the 28 (twenty eight) foot waterwheel.



## The Murray and Minges General Store

Inside the General Store visitors can enjoy the historic structure which serves as a gift shop and an exhibit gallery. The store is stocked with wooden toys, old-fashioned candy and clothing, which allows patrons to experience the general store as it would have functioned more than a century ago.

## School Facilities

A recreational facilities inventory was performed for Catawba County Schools. This inventory was conducted to identify amenities within the school system that may offer potential opportunities for recreation programming. Most of the facilities are used primarily during school hours and may offer opportunities for local community athletic groups to use school facilities for athletic programming. In addition, many of the schools have playgrounds, which offer recreation opportunities.



## Catawba County Board of Education Schools

Arndt Middle  
Balls Creek Elementary  
Bandys High  
Banoak Elementary  
Blackburn Elementary  
Bunker Hill High  
Catawba Elementary  
Challenger High

Claremont Elementary  
Clyde Campbell Elementary  
Fred T. Foard High  
Jacobs Fork Middle  
Lyle Creek Elementary  
Maiden Elementary  
Maiden High  
Mill Creek Middle  
Mountain View Elementary  
Oxford Elementary  
River Bend Middle  
Sherrills Ford Elementary  
St. Stephens Elementary  
St. Stephens High  
Startown Elementary  
Sweetwater Elementary  
Tuttle Elementary  
Webb A. Murray Elementary



*River Bend Middle School*

## Hickory City Board of Education Schools

Catawba Valley High  
Grandview Middle  
Hickory High  
Jenkins Elementary  
Longview Elementary  
Northview Middle  
Oakwood Elementary  
Southwest Elementary  
Viewmont Elementary



*Oakwood Elementary School*



## Newton-Conover City Board of Education Schools



*Newton-Conover High School graduation*

Newton-Conover High  
Newton-Conover Middle  
Shuford Elementary  
South Newton Elementary  
Thorton Elementary  
Conover School – serves moderately to severely disabled students countywide

## State Schools

Catawba Valley Community College  
Hickory Metro Higher Education Center



*CVCC Multi-Purpose Complex*

## Private Educational Institutions

Chesterbrook Academy  
Christian Family Academy



*Lenoir-Rhyne College*

Concordia Christian Day  
Hickory Christian Academy  
Hickory Day School  
Lenoir-Rhyne College  
Montessori Children's House of Newton  
St. Stephens Lutheran  
Tabernacle Christian School  
Tri-City Christian School  
Visions Charter School  
WH Johnston Elementary

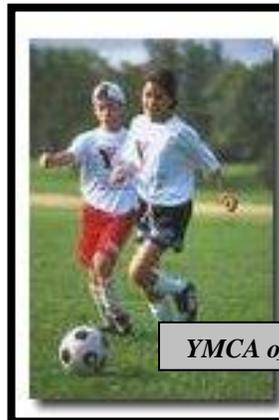


## **Privately-Owned and Operated Recreation Facilities**

The following are private or semi-private recreation facilities that have been included in the inventory of recreation facilities and amenities offered in Catawba County.

### **Athletic Recreation Park/Facilities**

Balls Creek Optimist  
Bunker Hill Optimist  
Mountain View Recreation, Inc.  
Ritchie Field  
Sherrills Ford Optimist  
Startown Optimist  
St. Stephens Optimist  
YMCA - Adrian L. Shuford, Jr.  
YMCA - Hickory Foundation  
YMCA - Valley Connection



*YMCA of Catawba Valley*

### **Country Clubs and/or Golf Courses**



*River Crest Golf Club*

Catawba Country Club – Private, 18-holes  
Glen Oaks Golf Club – Semi-private, 18-holes  
Hampton Heights Golf Club – Public, 18-holes and miniature golf  
Lake Hickory Country Club and Catawba Springs Course – Private, 27-holes  
Lake Hickory Country Club and Town Course – Private, 9-holes  
River Crest Golf Club – Semi-private, 18-holes  
Rock Bark Golf & Spa – Semi-private, 36-holes

## **4.3 Existing Programs and Special Events**

The Parks Division offers a wealth of programs and special events throughout the year. The activities and programs are very popular, not only with County residents, but also with tourists and with non-residents who live in the surrounding area.

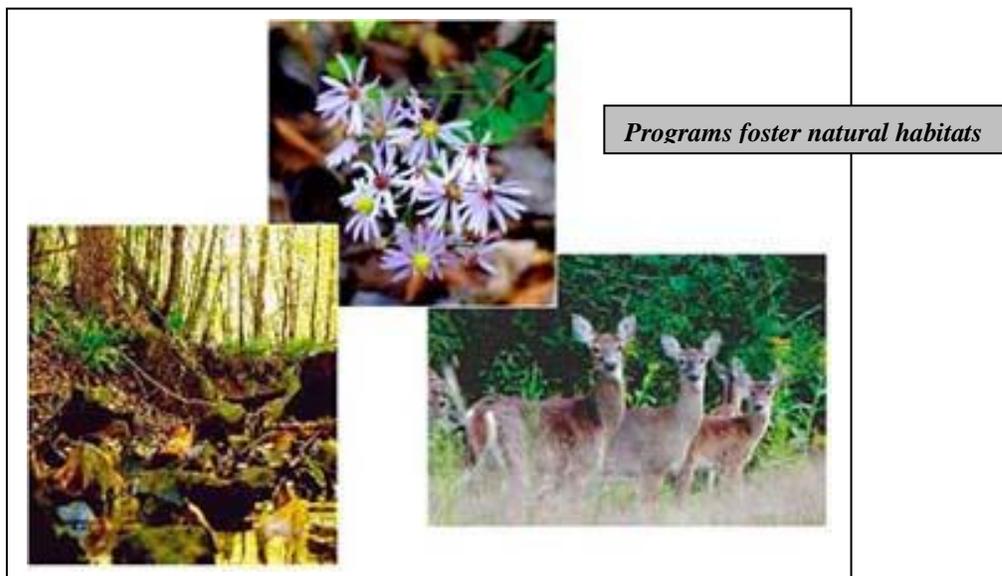
The programs offered allow educational and recreational opportunities for people of all ages throughout the year. Included in the activities and events are



recreation programs, special community events, education programs and other related activities. Programs continue to increase in attendance each year.

**Parks Division Program Activities:**

Bird banding demonstrations – seasonal;  
Collegiate environmental research opportunities;  
Conservation programs;  
Cross-country track meets;  
Educational volunteer opportunities;  
Emergency response training courses;  
Environmental educational sessions (onsite/offsite);  
Geocaching activities;  
Guided bird walks – monthly;  
Guided wild flower walks – seasonal;  
Internship opportunities;  
North Carolina State Birding Trail;  
Responsible pet ownership/rabies clinics; and  
Scout and civic projects.



**- End of Section-**



## **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 25<sup>th</sup> and August 30<sup>th</sup>, 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**

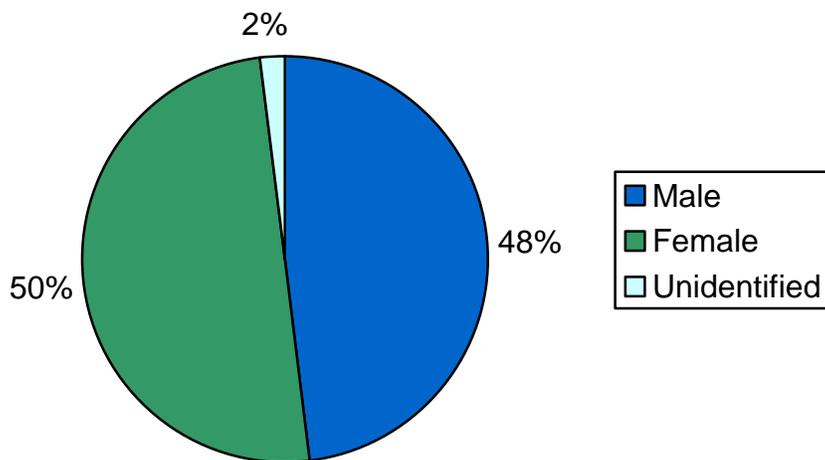
The active participation of Catawba County residents was crucial in developing a master plan that reflects the true needs for the County. With this in mind, community input was solicited throughout the entire planning process. To gather further public input a formal written survey/questionnaire (See 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.



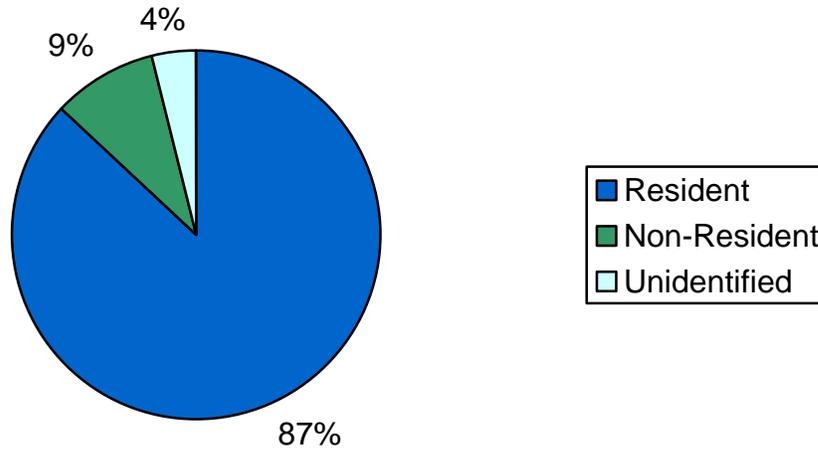
**CATAWBA COUNTY PARKS  
MASTER PLAN SURVEY  
301 Completed Surveys- Representing 887 Persons  
September 15, 2005**

**Gender:**

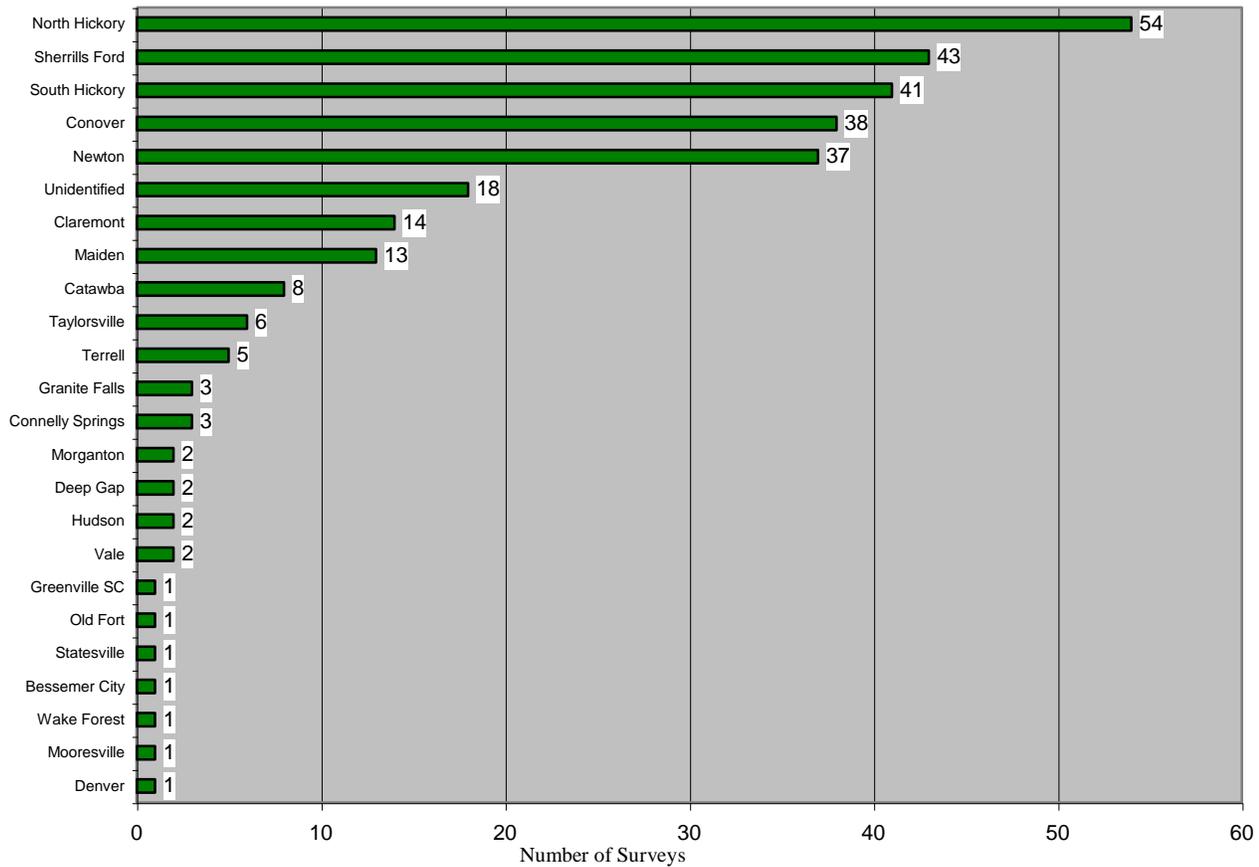




**Resident of Catawba County:**

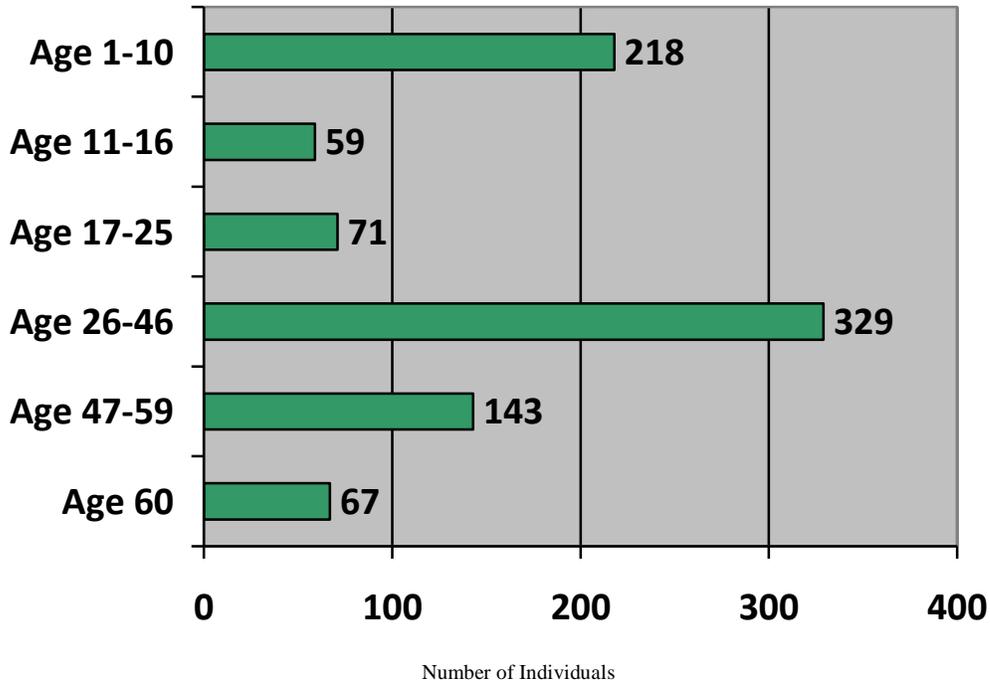


**Zip Code Areas Represented:**

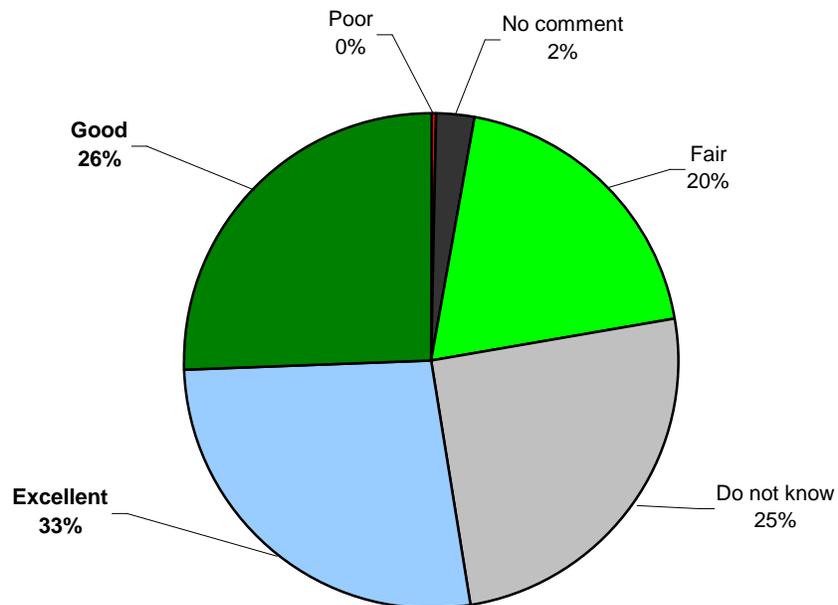




List the number of persons in your household including yourself who are in the age brackets below:

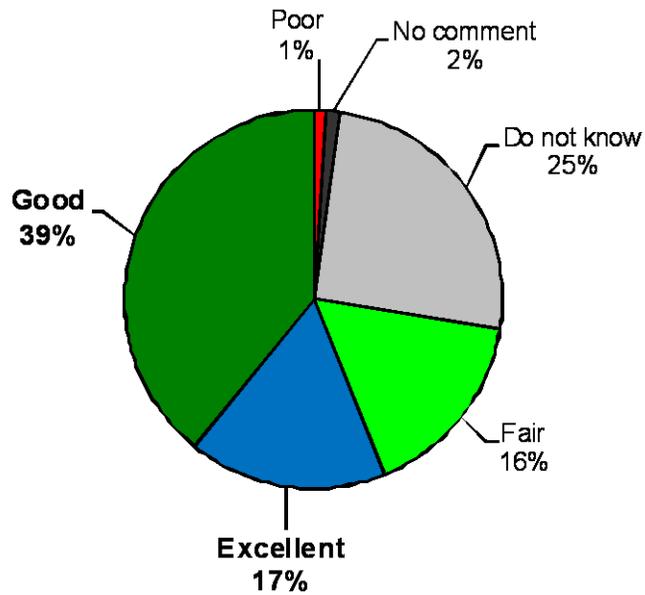


Overall, how would you rate Bakers Mountain Park and Riverbend Park in Catawba County?

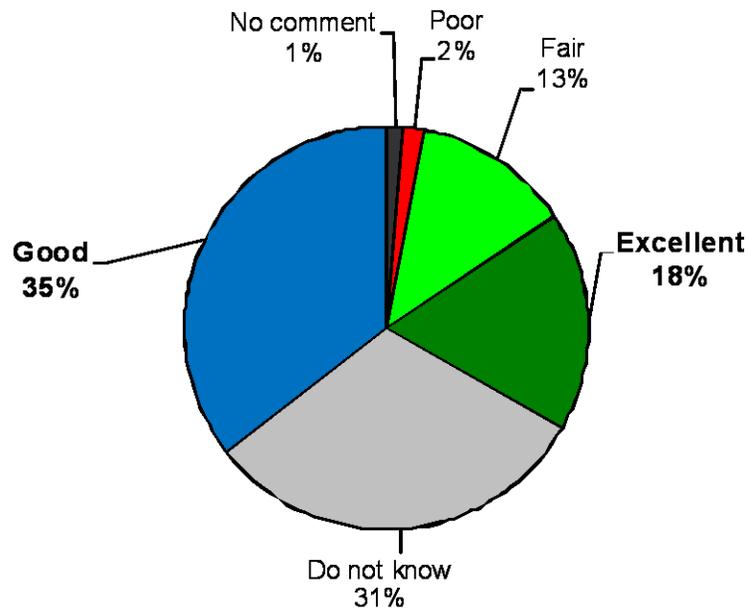




Specifically, how would you rate the amenities provided by both Parks?

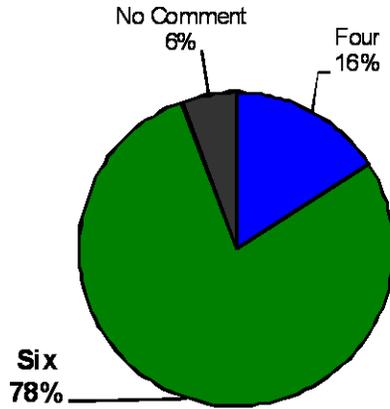


Overall, how would you rate the security, maintenance and educational programs of the Parks?

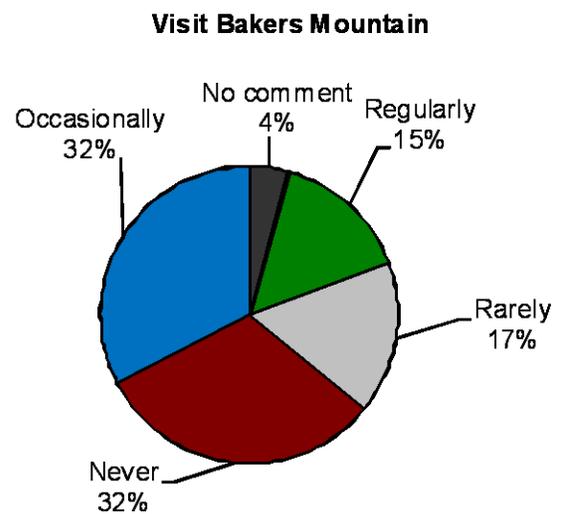
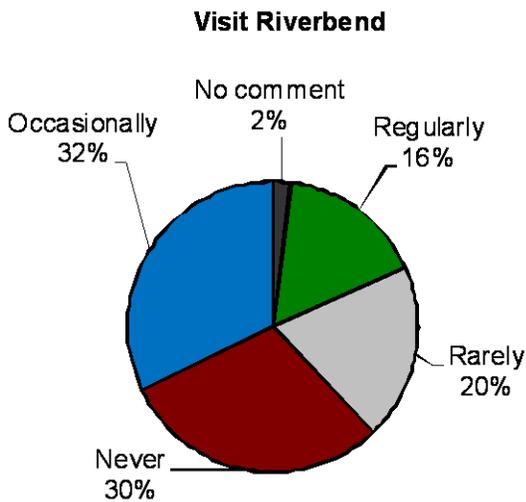




The County Parks are currently open to the public four days a week. Check below the number of days you would like the County Parks to operate.



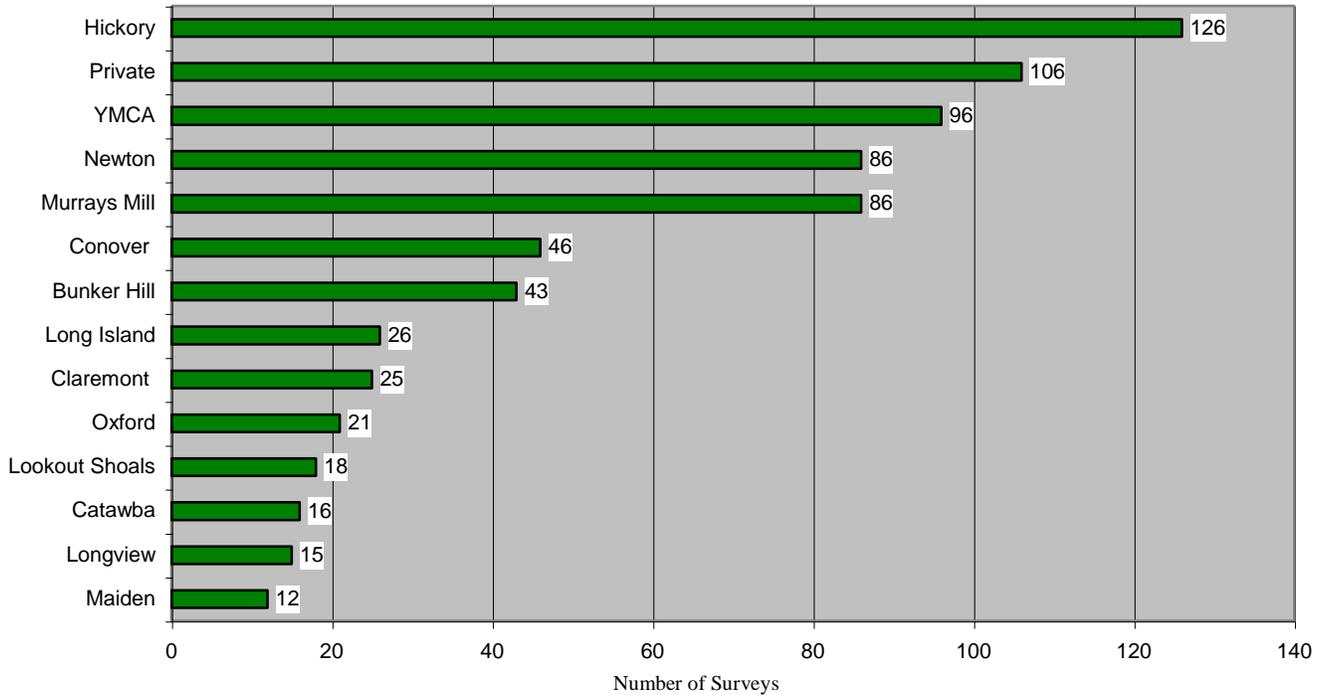
Check below how frequently you or others in your household have visited the following facilities.





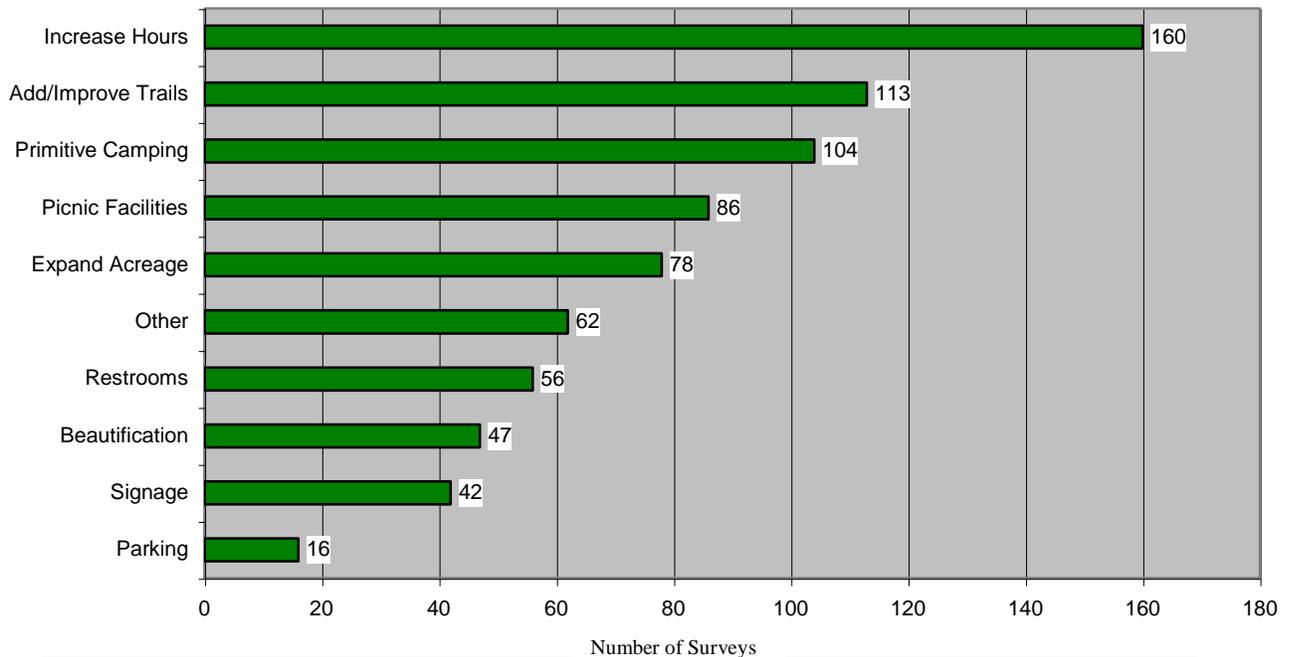
Check which of the following parks and recreation systems and cultural resources within Catawba County you or others in your household participate in regularly?

Other Recreation Opportunities



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

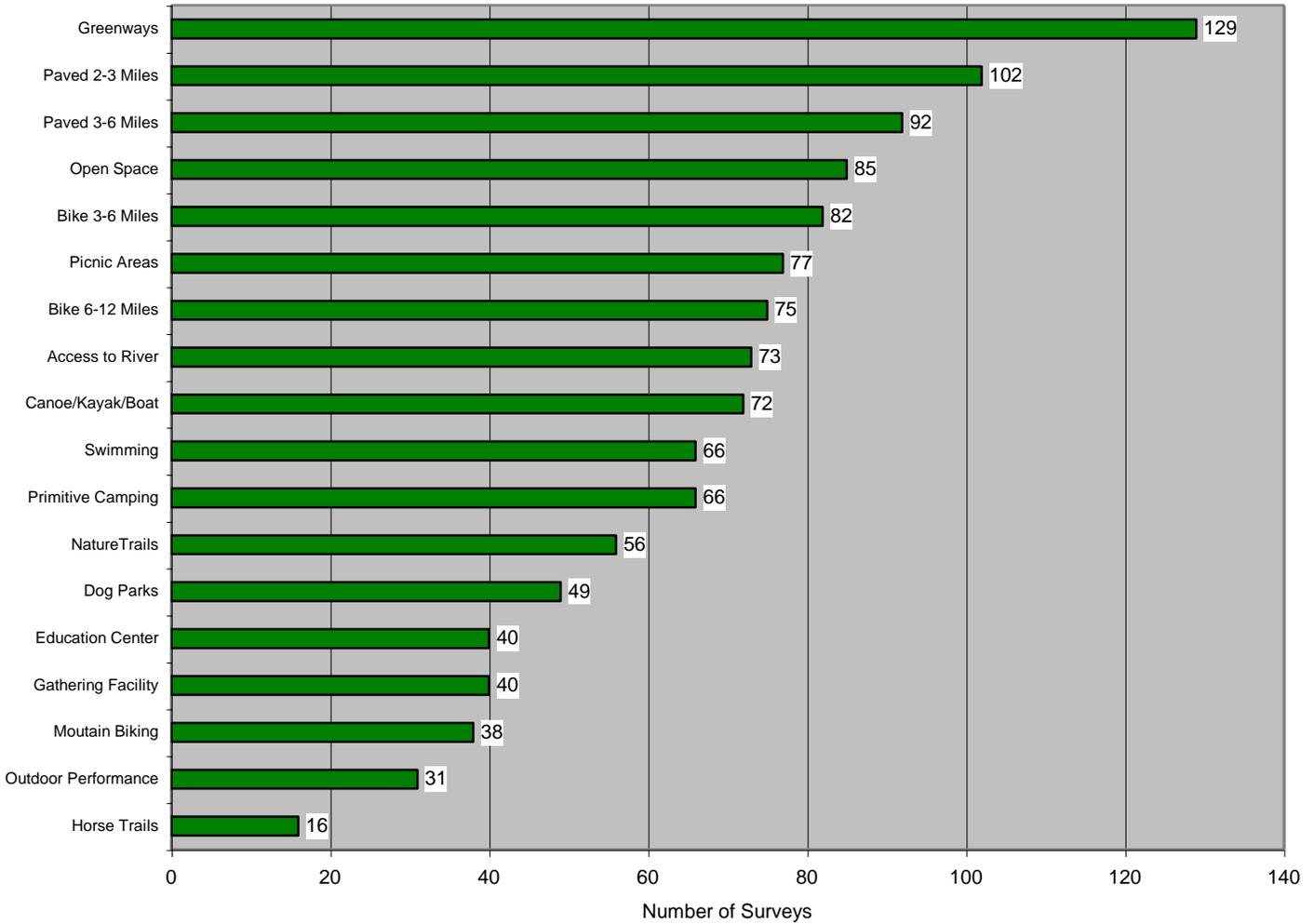
Improvements To Existing Parks





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.

Desired Facilities That Ranked 1 to 4



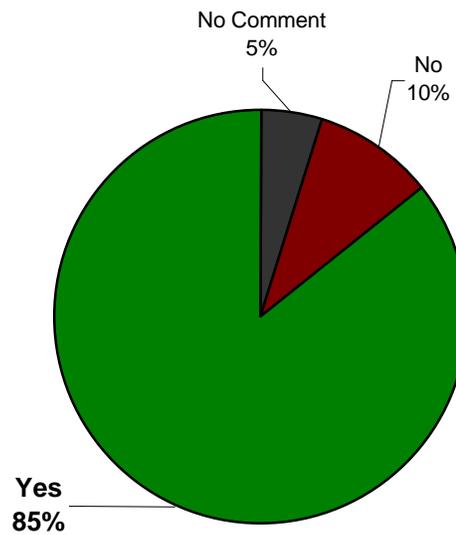


Section V Recreation Needs Assessment

**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?**

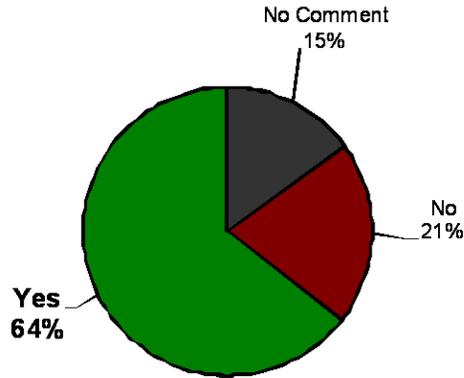




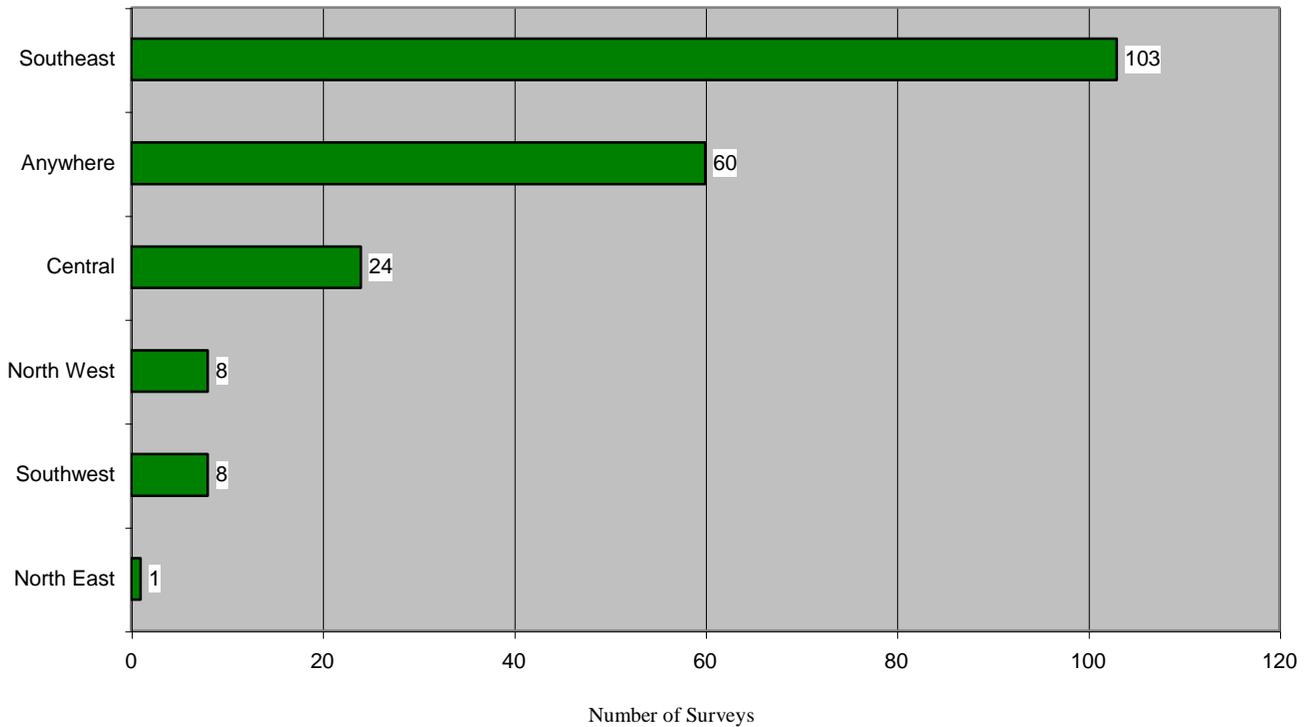
**Do you feel there is a need for additional passive recreation parks at other locations in Catawba County, similar to Bakers Mountain and Riverbend Park?**

Yes  No If Yes, what area of the County \_\_\_\_\_

**Need More Passive Parks**



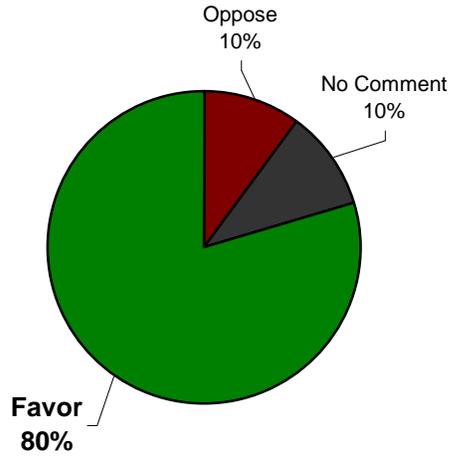
**Areas Where Parks Are Needed**





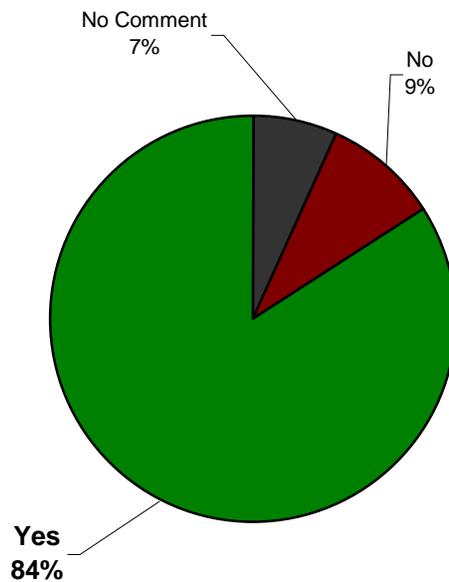
**Would you be in favor or oppose a portion of your property tax to be dedicated for ongoing park development in Catawba County?**

**Use of Tax Dollars**



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

**Use If Closer**





### **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 growing 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 thought 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:**

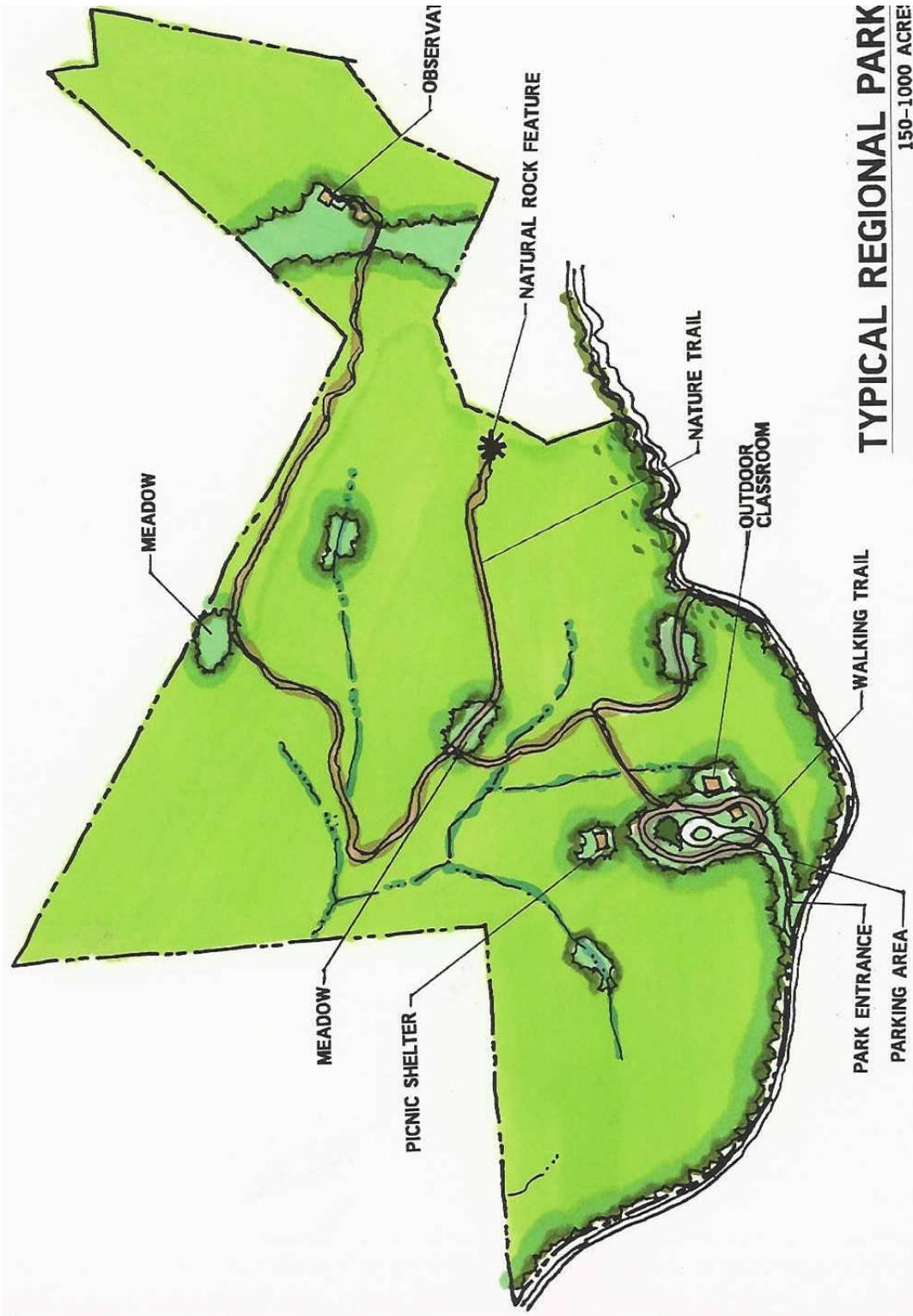
<u>Service area:</u>	Region-wide
<u>Acreage/Population Ratio:</u>	10 acres per 1,000 persons
<u>Minimum Size:</u>	150-1,000 acres minimum with sufficient area to encompass the resources to be preserved



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





## **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.





## **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:**

<u>Service Area:</u>	1 to 2 mile radius
<u>Acreage/Population Ratio:</u>	2-5 acres per 1,000 persons
<u>Desirable Range:</u>	15-50 acres
<u>Desirable Size:</u>	25 acres
<u>Typical Facilities:</u>	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.



**TYPICAL COMMUNITY PARK**  
15-50 Acres



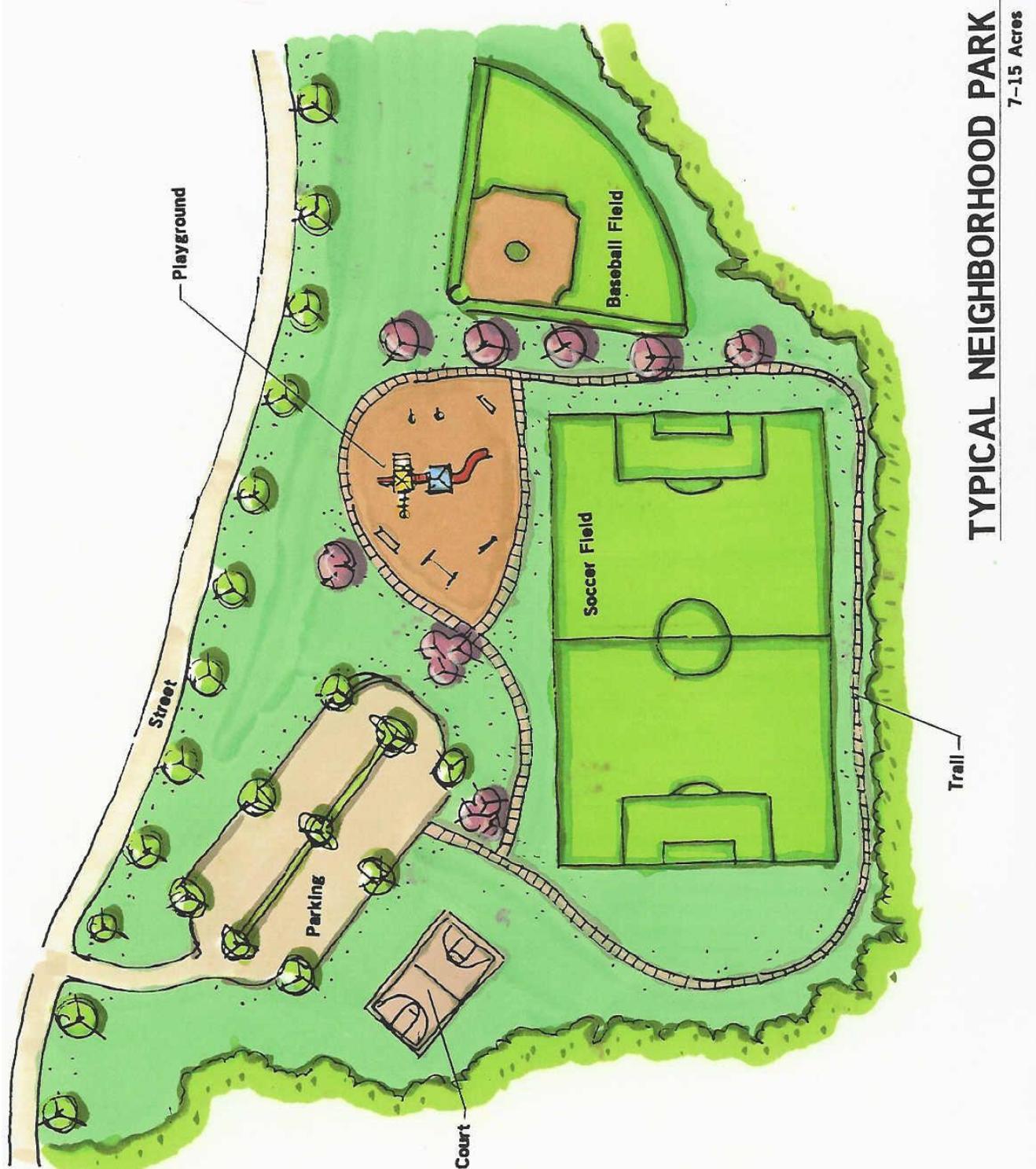
## **Neighborhood Parks**

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:**

<u>Service Area:</u>	¾ to 1 mile radius to serve walk-in
<u>Acreage/Population Ratio:</u>	2 acres per 1,000 persons
<u>Desirable Size:</u>	7-15 acres
<u>Typical Facilities:</u>	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
<u>*Alternate Facilities:</u>	Tennis courts Nature trails

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



**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:**

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



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.





## **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.

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

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

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



## **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)
<b>Fields</b>			
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
<b>Courts</b>			
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
<b>Outdoor Areas</b>			
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
<b>Activities</b>			
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
<b>Specialized</b>			
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
<b>Canoeing/Boating</b>			
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)
<b>Fields</b>				
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
<b>Courts</b>				
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*
<b>Outdoor Areas</b>				
Picnic Shelter	1/3,000	4	49*	56*
Playground Activities	1/3,000	0	49*	56*
Amphitheater	1/20,000	0	7*	8*
<b>Activities</b>				
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
<b>Specialized</b>				
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
<b>Canoeing/Kayaking</b>				
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 -**



## **SECTION 6 GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

As identified in the inventory portion of this plan (Section IV: Existing Park Facilities), there are two separate, existing recreational facilities owned and operated by Catawba County, Riverbend Park, and Bakers Mountain Park - with St. Stephens Community Park to be renovated and County-operated in the near future. Each of these parks is unique and offers many opportunities for park users. The County has foreseen the need for a plan to guide the direction of the Parks System for the future. This Comprehensive Parks Master Plan serves as a map for the future of recreation facilities for the Catawba County Parks Division, incorporating recommendations to accomplish the objectives set forth in the Master Plan. These recommendations are divided into the following categories:

- Roles of the Catawba County Providers
- Roles of other Recreation Providers
- Park Proposals and Recommendations
- Facility Proposals and Recommendations
- Priorities for Development

### **6.2 ROLES OF CATAWBA COUNTY PROVIDERS**

Catawba County offers a wide variety of passive and special-facility recreation. It is the mission of Catawba County Parks to preserve Catawba County's unique and diverse natural heritage through education and conservation while providing quality passive recreation opportunities.

Meeting the recreational needs of all users requires a joint effort between various agencies and the private sector. No one group can, from a practical standpoint, provide all the proposed improvements/facilities for the future. As mentioned in Section V, Recreation Needs Assessment, the local municipalities and private sector provide a wealth of active recreation such as athletic programming, and facilities within the County. Therefore, Catawba County Parks should continue to focus on providing passive recreation through education and conservation opportunities.

Catawba County Parks Division should continue to maintain existing relationships with the Catawba County Historical Association, Catawba Valley Heritage Alliance, area educational institutions and other public/private sectors; as well as create new partnerships - in order to achieve its objectives for the future. Communication with these organizations is extremely important and will improve planning activities while avoiding duplication. The local municipalities,



school institutions, and the County may share many of these programs and/or facilities. In addition to partnering with other agencies, Catawba County should continue to search for additional organizations that have common interests in recreational programs and facilities.

The Parks Division should also continue to develop pedestrian corridors to connect existing park facilities, public schools, and other destination points where feasible. In addition to being important to the success of the County's Parks program, these corridors foster safety and preservation of the environment while improving the quality of life for all participants.



As mentioned in the recommendations, the Planning and Recreation Departments of the Catawba County and its municipalities should meet periodically to update their existing and planned projects.

## 6.3 ROLES OF OTHER RECREATION PROVIDERS

### Municipalities

Municipalities have a strong investment in active recreation and athletic programming while Catawba County Parks Division is the primary provider of passive recreation and educational programming for this area. Catawba County Parks Division and the municipalities have been coordinating with each other and developing partnerships; and they should continue to work together to provide recreational opportunities. Each agency can, and should, play a role in the all-inclusive arrangement of services that make up the park system. The key to an ongoing relationship between the municipalities and Catawba County is to maintain honest communication among both staff and elected officials – thus assuring that the common goals are achieved.

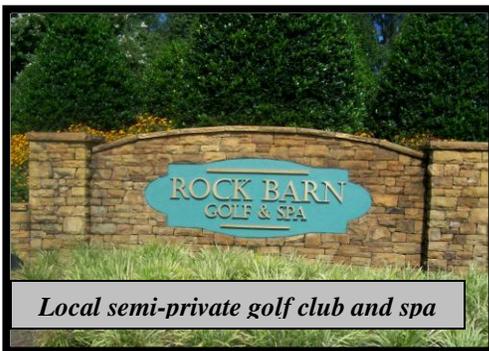
### School System and Educational Institutions

The School Systems within Catawba County already provide recreation facilities within the County. However, there are no joint-use agreements established with the County Parks Division or other active recreation providers. Due to the uniqueness of what the County Parks Division provides, utilizing recreation facilities and amenities is not a necessity for the Parks Division. However, the school system has recognized the educational opportunities County Parks offer



to the system. School field trips to the County parks have been very beneficial by providing enrichment classes offering environmental education through a hands-on learning experience. The partnership between the school systems and County Parks Division should continue to develop through diverse education opportunities. Increasing the operational hours will help accommodate school field trip schedules. This will result in the least possible expenditure(s) of public funds by providing hands-on educational opportunities within the County as opposed to having to commute outside the County. Lenoir Rhyne College and Catawba Valley Community College are currently partnering with Catawba County Parks to provide advanced environmental interpretative education. More detail is provided below.

### **Private Sector**



The private sector provides recreational amenities and programs such as golf courses, tennis clubs, and outdoor adventure companies. The Parks Division should develop partnerships and be active in generating more opportunities to share recreational activities. Potential partnership opportunities could be developed in the future with local medical and health providers, and other private organizations.

### **Private Residential Developers**

The private sector is an important component for the Parks Division in providing resources and opportunities for the parks. Developers can assist Catawba County by the dedication, construction, and/or reservation of future park sites, open space and/or greenway corridors during the overall development process. The recently adopted Unified Development Ordinance provides a mechanism for Developers to fund land for parks, sidewalks, trails, greenways, recreational, and open space purposes. All major residential conventional subdivisions must either provide on-site open space for use of the property owners within the development or pay a fee in-lieu of land for on-site open space. By establishing





this regulation, the County can apply subject monies from the fee in-lieu for the dedication or reservation of future park sites and/or open space, which contributes more to a community rather than a development.

The Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) should be amended to include a public parkland dedication requirement in order to produce potential park sites that meet the goals and objectives of the Parks Division while granting credit for open space dedications. For example, a development adjoining a future greenway would dedicate a public easement for a greenway corridor as the private property is developed. The general locations of park facilities proposed by this master plan provide adequate guidance for the County to determine where the public dedications would be considered.



Currently, the Catawba County Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) requires any subdivision of 25 lots or more - which are ½ acre or less in size - to construct sidewalks on one side of the street. Also conventional subdivisions providing onsite open space must install trails in preserved areas of a subdivision development.

Although the County should be flexible with development opportunities, it must require the developer to provide right-of-ways or easements for pedestrian facilities. All development approved by the County should include the accommodation of pedestrians by the developer(s). The Catawba County Comprehensive Parks Master Plan delineates future greenway corridors along significant tributaries in the County. As development occurs along these future greenway corridors, it is recommended that the County require the Developer/Property Owner to dedicate a public easement for the greenway facility along the subject property.

## **Partnership Opportunities**

A good partnership results in greater productivity, better services and reaches a much larger audience than would benefit without the partnership. Partnerships also foster efficiency while reducing redundancy in services. The result is more quality services available and reduced costs. Catawba County Parks has a tremendous opportunity to engage in mutually beneficial partnerships with a vast number of civic and public organizations in the area that share a similar mission.



*Dog park opening*

Groups such as the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts continue to assist the County parks in developing new amenities and improvements at the parks as well as allowing these organizations opportunities for youth programming. The Parks Division should continue to develop these partnerships and actively generate more opportunities to share recreational activities. Potential partnership opportunities could be developed in the future with local nonprofits, and other private organizations such as outdoor clubs, garden clubs and environmental preservation groups such as the Catawba Valley Heritage Alliance, Foothills Land Conservancy, Catawba Valley Paddle Trails Association, and others.

The following is a list of prospective and existing partners along with a brief description of Catawba County's current relationship and future opportunities for partnership growth.

## Catawba County Schools

### Currently:

The Catawba County Parks Division offers environmental and interpretive educational programs by appointment. This allows the Parks Division to create presentations that are directly related to each individual's course of study. Several staff members also volunteer their time to visit schools as guest speakers. School systems in the County also use County parks for Cross Country training.

### Future Opportunities:

Once adequate staffing has been achieved, staff will be able to conduct more environmental and interpretive educational programs at the schools and parks. Staff could also be trained to provide onsite educational historical interpretation the County assists in the operation of Murray's Mill and Bunker Hill Covered Bridge. Focus on educating



*County school*

students about the natural and historic heritage of Catawba County should be a priority and geared toward the general course of study. Cross-country events could be hosted by the parks. Future school sites should be planned in order to maximize opportunities for both passive and active recreation activities in partnership with non-profit organizations such as the Optimists and YMCA.



## YMCA of Catawba Valley



**Currently:** The branches of the YMCA of Catawba Valley (YMCA) use park facilities for summer camp programs.

**Future Opportunities:** The YMCA and Catawba County parks should engage in joint marketing since each share a common theme of providing supervised family oriented recreation opportunities. Catawba County Parks offers passive recreation opportunities that the YMCA does not provide, while the YMCA offers active recreation which the County does not provide. The YMCA and County Parks Divisions can work together to make patrons aware of the opportunities offered by each organization.

## Duke Energy, Crescent Resources and Other Developers

**Currently:** Catawba County recently participated in the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) relicensing process for Duke Energy, where Duke Energy agreed to develop several sites for recreational use on the lakes. In addition, Duke Energy currently owns several boat access points on the Catawba River.

**Future Opportunities:** At such time that the license is renewed and any offers are submitted by Duke Energy, the County will study the feasibility of a partnership in operating a passive, environmentally friendly park(s). The County will contact Duke Energy to coordinate any amenities associated with its FERC relicensing, with recommendations associated with the plan. This could include the gameland properties or connectivity facilities.

The County will participate with Crescent Resources and other developers on any future initiative(s) and secure easements on the Catawba River as part of the Carolina Thread Trail (a regional greenway network), which involves the free-flowing segment of the Catawba River below Lookout Shoals Dam to the east of the Town of Catawba.



## Optimist/Recreation Organizations

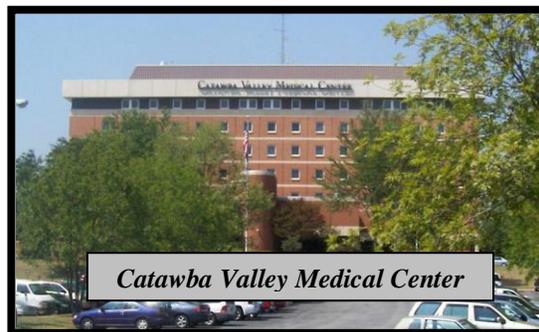
**Currently:** There is no current partnership.

**Future Opportunities:** When future park sites are identified or land has been donated to the County it should be surveyed first for the natural heritage, preservation, and passive park aspects of the site. If a site is deemed impracticable for preservation and/or use as a County park, possible active recreation use by the Optimists or other active recreation providers should be explored. When there is a need and the site can support the activities, partnership opportunities should be explored.

## Healthcare – Catawba Valley Medical Center, Frye Regional

**Currently:** There is no current partnership.

**Future Opportunities:** Efforts should be made to make healthcare providers aware of the recreational opportunities provided by Catawba County Parks. Certain patients may benefit from the therapeutic and physical attributes provided by natural settings.



## Lenoir- Rhyne College and Reese Institute

**Currently:** Lenoir-Rhyne’s Biology and Science Department have both used Riverbend Park and Bakers Mountain Park for educational purposes. Classes, labs, internships and research projects have been conducted at Catawba County Parks.

**Future Opportunities:** Due to the natural heritage and environmental significance of Catawba County Parks, these sites should be fully utilized as outdoor laboratories and classrooms that are conveniently located and available for educational enrichment of the students. Efforts should be made to partner with Lenoir-Rhyne and the Reese Institute to determine how to create the most accessible and beneficial partnership. Park/Planning and college staff should meet and prepare a proposed plan of action.



## Catawba Valley Community College (CVCC)

**Currently:** CVCC's Biology Department conducts classes and labs at Catawba County Parks. They also engage in civic and environmental projects such as the statewide Litter Sweep. Over 60 students participated in the last Litter Sweep at Riverbend Park and Oxford Dam.



**Future Opportunities:** Efforts should be made to partner with CVCC to determine how to create the most accessible and beneficial partnership. Park/Planning and college staff should meet and prepare a proposed plan of action.

## Catawba County Science Center

**Currently:** There is no current partnership.

**Future Opportunities:** The Science Center is located in Hickory's SALT (Sciences, Art, Literature - Together) Block in the Arts & Science Center of Catawba Valley and offers exhibits and educational opportunities that relate to nature and the environment. Efforts should be made to partner with Catawba County Science Center to determine how to create the most accessible and beneficial partnership. Park and Science Center staff should meet and prepare a proposed plan of action.



## Local Municipalities

**Currently:** Catawba County and the municipalities within the County participated in the Unifour Recreation and Open Space Task Force as facilitated by the Western Piedmont Council of Governments and created the Greater Hickory Recreation/Tourism Plan.



**Future Opportunities:** The planning and recreation departments of the municipalities within the County should meet periodically to discuss development and recreation projects that are planned or underway within the County. In addition, the County will work with other local municipalities to develop detailed plans which connect the recreational opportunities shown in the Greater Hickory Recreation/Tourism Plan. Thirdly, the purpose of these meetings will be to discuss upcoming project opportunities and development, trends in demographics and growth, newly identified citizen needs in recreation and open space and recreation master plan updates. This will help insure that redundancy in services is prevented and that all opportunities for partnerships and connectivity are being utilized.



## North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT)

**Currently:** Catawba County has a NCDOT grant for the improvement of the Bunker Hill Covered Bridge Site.

**Future Opportunities:** A partnership should be created with NCDOT for additional development of the Interstate 40 rest areas. Aspects of this partnership will include the development of informational kiosks that highlight the high quality of life in Catawba County. Information would include recreation opportunities, history, and tourism elements. Potentially the Interstate 40 rest areas would be incorporated into a proposed greenway that links to the Bunker Hill Covered Bridge Historical Site. There would be enormous potential for marketing and economic benefits from promoting Catawba County at the rest areas since over 700,000 visitors stop at these sites annually. The County should communicate with NCDOT to coordinate SAP bicycle lane requests to be included in the budgeting process – prior to road resurfacing.

## Catawba Valley Visitors Bureau

**Currently:** Catawba County Parks has worked with the Visitors Bureau by providing them with photographs of natural heritage and historical site subjects. Brochures about the parks have been distributed to them as well.

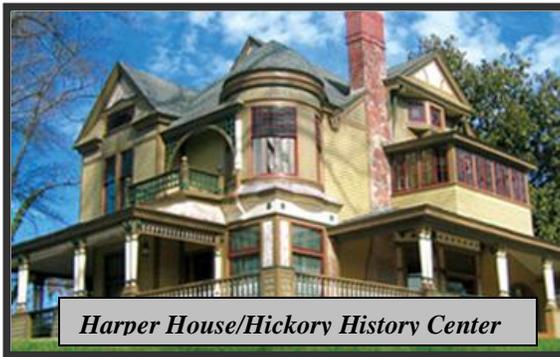


**Future Opportunities:** Work with the Visitors Bureau's staff to develop a marketing strategy that highlights recreation opportunities and quality of life attributes that relate to the natural heritage of Catawba County. Partnering with the Visitors Bureau will be essential in developing a diverse presence at the Interstate 40 rest areas.

## Catawba County Historical Association

**Currently:** Catawba County Parks is partnering with the Catawba County Historical Association on grant opportunities and the ensuing site improvements. Staff is also engaged with the Historical Association to explore further partnering opportunities.

**Future Opportunities:** Bunker Hill Covered Bridge and Murrays Mill historical sites offer natural opportunities for passive recreation. Since both sites contain significant natural heritage areas, and education and preservation are key components of the missions of the Catawba County Historical Association and Catawba County Parks Division, partnering is natural. Both of these sites are



*Harper House/Hickory History Center*

located in areas that have very limited recreation opportunities. By adding passive recreation components and staffing to these sites, the public will have access to a far greater venue. Security, education, and preservation efforts both naturally and historically can be facilitated by a strong partnership.

## Civic Non-Profits

**Currently:** Catawba County Parks works with Civic Non-Profits in a variety of ways that include providing educational and volunteerism opportunities.

**Future Opportunities:** Efforts should be made to meet with the following Civic Non-Profits and others to discuss how these groups may be better served and explore potential partnerships.



- Boy Scouts of America and Girl Scouts of America
- Hickory Metro Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Chamber of Commerce Visitor's Center
- Foothills Bird Club
- Catawba Valley Heritage Alliance
- Catawba Valley Outing Club
- NC Garden Club, Local Affiliates
- Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina
- Catawba Valley Paddle Trails Association
- NC Birding Trail, Inc.
- Unifour Recreation and Open Space Task Force
- Catawba Land Conservancy

## 6.4 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

### Bicycle and Pedestrian-Based Tourism

Studies have shown that economies are impacted *very positively* where bicycle and pedestrian tourism is fostered and promoted and where investments are made in bicycle and pedestrian facilities. (See Section 1.3 for a more detailed listing of the economic impacts.) The number of people who feel comfortable walking or riding bicycles is a measure of the quality of life in that area.

### Trails and Greenways

Trails and greenways are extremely popular amenities for vacationing bicyclists and pedestrians. Tourists and visitors to the area often return to communities that provide places (which are safely removed from busy roads) for walking and bicycling. Trails offer scenic recreation, which is suitable for a wide range of ages and abilities. Many times, lodging is in close proximity to popular trails, thereby increasing occupancy for the owner. For residents in these locales, investments in trails and greenways can increase property values and improve the overall livability of a community, as well as attracting, retaining, and expanding tourism and the associated revenues.



Investing dollars in greenways yields substantial community-wide returns. These returns are in the form of increased property values, attraction of new businesses, recreation revenue and reduced water treatment and flooding costs. Not only are tourists attracted to these areas, but business leaders are selecting sites for the relocation and expansion of industries and corporations where the



quality of life is high and recreation opportunities are abundant. Increasingly, corporations are recognizing the benefits of convenient fitness and recreation for their employees and are seeking these greenway amenities for potential locations.

Greenways, as vegetated buffers located adjacent to waterways, act as “filters” to clean the water, trapping nonpoint source pollutants. These pollutants, which include sediment, pesticides, fertilizers, oil, gas, and other chemicals, are transported into streams, rivers, and/or lakes by stormwater when rain or snow events occur. Greenways can reduce the need for expensive pre-treatment of the water supply by cleaning it before it reaches municipal water sources.

## On-Road Bicycling



Bicycle tourism often occurs with little or no investment in facilities or the infrastructure which is normally required to sustain motor vehicle-based tourism. In areas where networks of lightly traveled back roads and accommodations are prevalent, on-road bicycle routes can provide both visitors and residents an ecologically sound alternative to vehicular travel for sightseeing and recreational travel. When bicycle tourists are attracted to such regions, they become potential customers for bed & breakfasts, restaurants and other service providers in the community.

## Trail Development

The ongoing construction of bicycle and pedestrian facilities is proving to be a very wise economic investment for the communities through which they pass. Trails and pathways have a positive effect on nearby property values with homebuyers and business owners realizing the effect that such facilities bring to a community. According to research by the *Rails to Trails Conservancy*, there are vast amounts of people, who are using ‘rail’ trails. It is easy to understand how communities can profit economically by meeting the needs of trail users – restaurants, convenience stores, bicycle and other merchandise shops, campgrounds, and alternate lodging. All of these types of entrepreneurs attribute the location of a nearby trail to at least a portion of their success. Realtors and homebuyers alike are recognizing the benefits of properties located near trails. Both locally and nationally, the construction of trails have proven to be a cost effective use of public funds. In particular, multi-use trails allow more visitors and residents to replace automobile trips with non-motorized trips, thereby moving the citizenry closer to achieving public health objectives, including increased opportunities for physical exercise.



## Parks

Research has substantiated the direct proportion between economic growth and the existence of parks and open space in communities and municipalities around the country. This growth includes increased property values in residential, urban and industrial communities, and increased revenue from tourists.

### **Increased Property Value**

The real estate market consistently demonstrates that residents throughout the country are willing to invest larger amounts of money in properties that are located close to parks and open space areas than they would for homes that do not offer these types of amenities. The higher values of these homes produce higher property taxes in the affected area. In some instances, additional property taxes are sufficient to recoup the annual debt charges on bonds, which were originally used to finance park acquisition and development.



Studies have also concluded that the positive relationship between park proximity and property value also holds true in low-income urban areas. In dense, urban neighborhoods, the value effect of nearby green space can be stronger than the resident's lot value, increasing the lot value and yielding higher property taxes that could help to fund the cost of the park.

As farmland and forests are consumed at the edges of fast-growing municipalities, developers have come to realize that preserving open or natural space within new communities can increase the value of home lots. Thus developers advocate designing around and preserving natural and rustic features such as meadows, orchards, fields, pastures, stream valley habitat and woodlands.

The values of commercial properties also increase when parks or outdoor facilities (outdoor festivals, movies, restaurants, etc.) are in the immediate locale. Studies indicate that "commercial asking rents" near park property exceed rents in surrounding submarkets.



### **Revitalization of Businesses and Residents**

In recent years, there has been a trend to revitalize inner-city and urban areas to improve their quality of life. The success of this revitalization has included the addition of parks and recreational activity in downtown areas. Generally speaking, people do not want to live or work in an environment where they have no refuge from downtown city buildings, without having any place to go out for a stroll, walk the dog, or just enjoy some sunshine. In studies of downtown revitalizations, the top recommendations include “the dramatic expansion of parks and open spaces”.



### **Tourism**

A park often becomes the signature attraction for a community or municipality. It is often used as a marketing tool to attract residents, tourists, conventions, and businesses. Parks often shape the identity of the area and give residents a sense of pride. For example, Virginia’s Creeper Trail – a 34-mile rail trail – was named for the train that climbed Iron Mountain, with a native plant (bearing the same name) growing alongside the route; likewise, the Outer Banks of North Carolina lures cyclists from all areas, due to its reputation for expansive bicycle trails as well as wide, paved shoulders along its roads.

Organized events held in public parks – arts festivals, athletic events, food festivals, concerts, plays, etc. – often bring substantial positive economic impacts to their communities by filling hotel rooms and restaurants, and bringing customers to other local business enterprises.

## **6.5 PARK PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

As previously stated, Catawba County Parks Division should focus on developing and operating regional parks, linear parks and special facilities as needed. *Section V - Recreation Needs Assessment*, indicates recommendations for providing parks which offer passive recreational opportunities for County residents. The two major County Park facilities have continued to be enhanced over the years by adding facilities and amenities in recent years. There are still facilities in the park system that need enhancements.



In addition, the Parks Division should focus on developing and operating the existing parks and special use facilities, along with pedestrian corridors. *Section IV - Existing Park Facilities* identified the additional acreage and park facilities needed in the County. The park proposals described below have been formulated to address the existing and future park needs for Catawba County through the year 2017.

## **General Recommendations**

### **Recommendation #1: Facility and Program Accessibility**

*Every park and recreation facility the Catawba County Parks Division operates should respect and provide the needs of the disabled through design and programming. All new facilities should be designed to meet current Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. Currently the Parks Division is in compliance with these regulations at existing facilities; however, as new facilities are acquired or developed, priority should be given to the necessary upgrading of any existing facilities that are non-compliant.*

### **Recommendation #2: Design and Daily Maintenance**

*The facilities owned and operated by the Catawba County Parks Division should be inviting places for residents of the County and visitors to the area. Priority should be given to improving the design of facilities so that they are architecturally and functionally progressive and environmentally-friendly designed and operated utilizing green initiatives where practical. Daily maintenance practices should be continued to maintain the current level of cleanliness and longevity of all facilities. Master planning should always be completed for park improvements or new facilities prior to final budgeting and design, making the phasing/development more transitional and of higher quality.*

### **Recommendation #3: Greenways**

*Based on state and national studies, walking and biking are highly desired activities. The community surveys also indicated the local demand for these facilities, with a majority of the respondents favoring the development of greenways. Although this Comprehensive Parks Master Plan includes specific recommendations regarding portions of a greenway system, a comprehensive greenways master plan needs to be developed for Catawba County in conjunction with local municipalities that identifies a phased approach for the development of a connected greenway system across the County. For the*



*purposes of this study, existing and recommended greenway routes developed by the municipalities were used as connection points for the County greenway plan. The proposed greenway proposals are shown further on in Section VI – Goals and Recommendations.*

#### **Recommendation #4: Bike Lanes**

*Given the high cost of fuel for vehicular transportation, air quality concerns, and the need to increase the health and fitness of the population, a planned network of bike trails, bike lanes, and shared roadways should be developed to support alternative transportation to recreation facilities and travel within Catawba County. Future roadway construction within the County should include provisions to accommodate pedestrian and bicycle travel as delineated on the Catawba County Small Area Plans. This network should connect both existing, and future park facilities and greenways. In addition, bike racks (sheltered at schools and other potential high-use areas) should be installed at all publicly owned facilities across the County.*

#### **Recommendation #5: Greenway Corridor**

*Partnership with CWMTF, conservancies and other private entities to establish a greenway corridor with trail and stream buffer zone for Jacobs Fork, Henry Fork and Lyle Creek Streams.*

#### **Recommendation #6: Greenway Land Donation**

*Link the park system with greenways and tie them into the major floodplain/open space system where applicable through fee simple donation or conservation easements where possible.*

#### **Recommendation #7: Signage**

*Develop a uniform system of signage for parks and greenways.*

#### **Recommendation #8: Parks Advisory Committee**

*Encourage the formation of a Parks Advisory Committee comprised of representatives from each of the Small Areas of the County and County staff, which would meet periodically to discuss and advise regarding planning, plan*



*updates, implementation, grants, user needs, and other issues involving the Catawba County Parks Division.*

### **Recommendation #9: Endowment Fund**

*Consider creating an Endowment Fund through the North Carolina Community Foundation to allow for the County Parks Division to receive various donations that will be used for future park development, land acquisition and other park improvements.*

### **Recommendation #10: Intergovernmental Cooperation**

*Coordinate planning efforts with the Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG), municipalities and school systems within Catawba County to provide greenway and park facilities. The planning and recreation departments of the municipalities within the county should meet periodically to discuss development and recreation projects that are planned or are underway within the County. The purpose of these meetings will be to discuss upcoming project opportunities and development, trends in demographics and growth, newly identified citizen needs in recreation and open space and recreation master plan updates of the municipalities and the County. This will also insure that redundancy in services is prevented and that all opportunities for partnerships and connectivity are being used. In addition, the County will work with other local municipalities to encourage economic development and create detailed greenway plans, which connect the recreational opportunities shown in the Greater Hickory Recreation/Tourism Plan, which was prepared by the Unifour (Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba Counties and municipalities).*

### **Recommendation #11: Connectivity**

*Strongly encourage or require developers to provide connectivity between public facilities such as parks, schools and other pedestrian/bicycle facilities. Also work with non-profit groups, such as the Carolina Thread Trail initiative, to develop regional trail connectivity.*

### **Recommendation #12: Greenway Funding**

*Consider using the subdivision fee in-lieu and grants to fund greenway construction where the need for pedestrian connections cannot rely on the timing of private property development.*



### **Recommendation #13: Educational Programming**

*Develop a consistent environmental education program and interpretative facilities for the parks and along greenway corridors.*

### **Recommendation #14: Stewardship Programs**

*Develop stewardship programs and a community volunteer program for the Catawba County Parks Division.*

### **Recommendation #15: Interpretative Signage**

*Consider placing signage to identify historic and natural landmarks along greenway corridors to enliven the pedestrian experience.*

### **Recommendation #16: Walkable Communities**

*Promote land uses and site designs that make walking/bicycling convenient and enjoyable. Encourage the inclusion of public greenways or trails in private developments.*

### **Recommendation #17: Partnership Agreement**

*It is recommended that the County staff meet with existing and potential partners to determine needs and potential partnership opportunities. The County should begin this process by developing an approach to potential partners in order to establish an understanding of each entities needs and ultimately resulting in a partnership agreement. The process will require periodic progress meetings with each partner to facilitate the partnerships goals and objectives. This may entail presentations to the partner's board or committee.*

### **Recommendation #18: Recreation Easements**

*Encourage the coordination and planning for future utility easements with greenway facilities. The easements should be established to allow for the inclusion of recreation facilities.*



## **Recommendation #19: Green Building**

*It is recommended that the Parks Division implement green building components into existing and future park facilities. These efforts will strengthen the Catawba County Parks Division's mission of education and preservation of the environment of Catawba County. Green building techniques consist of building materials and construction practices that reduce environmental impacts, such as green house gases, water pollution, air pollution, and inefficient energy use.*

## **Recommendation #20: Land Dedication of Public Access**

*Consider having developers provide right-of-ways or easements for proposed and future greenway facilities or preservation of riparian buffers (land that is traversed or bounded by a natural watercourse).*

## **Recommendation #21: Operating Hours**

*Catawba County Parks should be operated on a schedule that includes at least 6 days a week of staffed operation with the current seasonal hours and holidays. This would be more in line with the State parks schedule and consistent with the State's guidelines for park systems funded through its grants. Currently, Catawba County Parks operates only 4 days a week. Based on research, the Catawba County Parks Division appears to be the only park system in the state that operates on such a limited schedule. By operating on a limited schedule, schools have difficulty utilizing the sites and programs, marketing the parks as a tourism destination cannot be achieved, and the public is being underserved in passive recreation opportunities. The 4 day a week operating schedule was adopted in fiscal year 2001/2002 in response to the State's budget crisis and a normal operating schedule has not been restored. Attendance has increased over 10% a year since 2002 and the percentage increases annually. The demand for additional open days is apparent based on the increased attendance and public input. Operation of the parks on a 6 day a week schedule will require additional staffing. Staffing is an essential aspect of being open for additional days. The public hearings prior to the opening of Riverbend and Bakers Mountain Parks emphasized the facilities being staffed as the top priority of the public, for reasons of security, public safety, and programming. Since the Catawba County Parks Division began operation in 1999, there has not been a single reported incidence of vice-related or violent crime.*



## **Recommendation #22: Update/Complete Beneficial Planning Documents.**

*To be aware of our resources, help with community planning and market our area, the County, in conjunction with the Historical Association, needs to update and/or complete the following documents:*

- *An Inventory of Significant Natural Areas of Catawba County, North Carolina, including the significant geological sites, and how all these sites relate in location to greenways and blueways; (A blueway is an established trail route on a waterway, used for canoeing or kayaking.);*
- *A survey of historical sites within the County; and*
- *A survey of cemeteries within the County.*

*The Parks Division could use these documents to determine the specific location of parks, trails and greenways. If a recreation facility is planned in close proximity, these documents will help to determine the feasibility of connectivity. A comprehensive listing of County sites would also help in the marketing of Catawba County as a destination (place) for visitors, aid in economic development through the adaptive reuse of historic buildings or increase the possibility of obtaining grants from educational sources.*

## **Recommendation #23: Recreation Marketing Plan and Brochure**

*Both the community survey and meetings indicated a general “lack of knowledge” by the residents of Catawba County as to the availability of facilities and programs across the County. The Hickory Metro Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Chamber of Commerce Visitor’s Center should develop, in association with the County, a county-wide marketing plan and brochure that contains maps, tables, and descriptions of the available park facilities and programs in the County. Marketing partnerships should also be explored within the Unifour region (Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba Counties, along with their municipalities). Funding should be appropriated for brochures, marketing and program costs.*

*A comprehensive PowerPoint presentation, advertising Catawba County recreation areas, should be created and presented to civic groups, such as, Rotary Clubs, Lions Clubs, Optimist Club, Garden Clubs, Pilot Club, etc., to increase park awareness. Educational and awareness presentations should be continued and increased in the school systems.*

## **Recommendation #24: Contiguous Property Acquisition**

*When property that is contiguous to existing and future parks becomes available, all reasonable efforts should be made to acquire the property. Large acreage*



*parcs such as Riverbend and Bakers Mountain are unique and beneficial because of the large acreage. Large acreage habitats are more beneficial to wildlife and preservation efforts. Contiguous property enlarges existing habitat and provides additional buffering from development. Large acreage parks offer recreation amenities that can only be achieved on sites of over 100 acres. Due to the rapid growth and development of the County over the past twenty years the need for preservation of large acreage sites is apparent. Any contiguous property next to Riverbend Park or Bakers Mountain Park that can be acquired should be the highest priority. Efforts need to be made immediately to seek first option on all contiguous properties. At the time these options are sought, other possibilities should be presented to the property owner as well; conservation easements and tax advantages may appeal to some owners who wish to retain their property. Some property owners may be receptive to conservation easements while retaining title to the property. A conservation easement will allow the County the opportunity to use the land for recreation while reaping the immediate benefits of preservation. Numerous grant sources can be used for land acquisition. Care should be taken to choose the correct process and timing for acquisition to meet the full potential of some grants.*

## **Recommendation #25: Acceptance of Fee Simple Land Donation**

*If land is offered to the County as donation by fee simple title with no restrictions, the property should be surveyed for natural heritage significance and relationship to existing plans and parks. If the land contains no environmental hazards, restrictive covenants or restrictive easements it can be useful and beneficial for the County to assume ownership. Not all donated land has to be developed into a park in order to be useful. Retired agricultural land and property that has no natural heritage significance does offer beneficial open space and environmental protection of watershed and viewshed. Some property may have the potential of generating revenue for future park expansion and development by the passive presence of forestry management and timber production. Any land donation to the County serves a great public need even if it is banked for the future, because the development and public needs of the distant future (over 50 years) is unknown. If donated property were properly managed, the revenue and future significance of the property would far exceed its current contribution to the tax base. If the County chooses not to accept land donation of a particular property, efforts should be made to assist the property owner with contacting an agency that accepts land donations or conservation easements. Land donations in which the County has no interest in owning could be donated to the proposed Catawba County Parks Endowment Fund through the NC Community Foundation.*



## **Recommendations for Existing Parks**

### **Recommendation #26: Bakers Mountain Park**

It is recommended that the County acquire land contiguous to Bakers Mountain Park whenever the opportunity arises. (See Appendix Map 5 - Bakers Mountain Park Map) for adjacent parcels that meet the requirements for the Parks Division.

### **Recommendation #27: Riverbend Park**

It is recommended that the County acquire land contiguous to Riverbend Park when the opportunity arises. In addition, the public input indicated a need for primitive camping as a desirable amenity. Currently there are no public primitive camping areas located in the County. It is recommended that the County add approximately 20 camp sites at Riverbend Park. (See Appendix Map 6 – Riverbend Park and Catawba River Greenway)

### **Recommendation #28: St. Stephens Community Park**

This existing 9.1 acre park facility has traditionally been operated by the City of Hickory as an active recreation facility. Due to the age of the facility and the resulting wear and tear, this County-owned park is scheduled to undergo renovations and improvements to convert it for use as a passive park. The improvements will include the “filling in” of the existing swimming pool, the conversion of the bath house into a park office with public restrooms and a meeting room and the renovation of the existing picnic shelter. New additions to the park will include a dog park approximately 2 acres in size, horseshoe pits, an ADA compliant walking trail of about ½ mile in length and a natural surface, interpretive trail. The interpretive trail will focus upon landscaped gardens and urban forestry as a part of the educational programming at the park. Due to contractual agreements, the renovations and improvements of St. Stephens Community Park have a high priority designation.

In keeping with the existing operations and public input, it will be necessary to provide security staffing, maintenance staffing and program staffing for the park.

### **Recommendation #29: Mountain View Recreation Center**

5.05 acres of the Mountain View Recreation Center are owned by Catawba County, but the daily operation of the park is handled by the Mountain View Recreation Association. The County is required to bring the facility into ADA



compliance. This will necessitate adding ADA compliant parking, restrooms and making the pathways and structures accessible under ADA guidelines. The County will also be addressing maintenance-related safety concerns with the infra-structure of the facility within the next 5 years.

It is recommended that the County periodically review the contractual agreement for maintenance and operations with Mountain View Recreation Association.

### **Recommendation #30: Birding Affiliations**

Riverbend Park is listed as one of the top 40 birding destinations in North Carolina. Park staff contributes valuable research data by actively banding hummingbirds and passerines (songbirds). Monthly bird walks and other environmental education programs are hosted by the Catawba County Parks Division.

The Western NC Birding Trail is a guide which links existing bird watching sites across the state into a cohesive and marketable unit, while connecting birding with local communities, business, communities and other local attractions. The group is currently in the process of identifying and nominating sites in the western area of the state. Bakers Mountain and Riverbend Parks are being considered as two of these sites. The first meeting for the Mountain region was recently held at Riverbend to explain the benefits of the NC Birding Trail, and review the application process to be included on the trail. Mountain communities will see trail development in 2008, which will include portions of the State west of Interstate 77. Catawba County Parks Division plans to fully participate in the NC Birding Trail program in order to promote nature based tourism and increase education conservation opportunities for residents and visitors.

### **Recommendations for Future Parks**

#### **Recommendation #31: Regional Parks / Mountain Creek Park**

There are two regional parks within Catawba County. These regional parks are components of the Catawba County Parks Division and include Bakers Mountain Park and Riverbend Park. Currently there are no County Parks in the southeastern portion of the County. (See Appendix Map 4 - Proposals and Recommendations Map). *Section IV – Existing Park Facilities*, reflected a need for a regional park facility to be located in this area. This need was not only determined by the park service areas from the State and National Standards, but more importantly, this need was reflected by the responses to the community survey and community workshops.



Understanding this need, the County has recently negotiated with Duke Energy to obtain park property through the FERC relicensing process and through the Key Harbor Crescent Agreement. These negotiations have resulted in identifying a parcel of land located adjacent to Lake Norman which could be used by the County for this purpose. The County anticipates having access to a minimum of 300 acres and a maximum of 600 acres to develop a park facility. (See Appendix Map 9 - Mountain Creek Park Comprehensive Master Plan Map)

This parcel has the potential to be a tremendous natural resource and amenity for Catawba County residents. Although no natural resource inventory has been conducted, there are numerous habitats and natural features that are deemed significant for preservation. One of the main features of the site is the lake shore frontage which allows multiple opportunities for park users.

To the extent possible, water access sites should be linked with other preserved open spaces. Water-based recreation facilities should be developed to provide appropriate public use and enjoyment of carefully selected portions of the shoreline. Water-based recreation improvements may generally include beach areas, waterfront overlooks, fishing piers, docks and canoe/kayak launch sites.

Where appropriate, water access sites should also be improved with a variety of outdoor facilities including picnic facilities, dog parks, trails, interpretive signage and open lawn areas. Supporting services should also be developed including parking lots, restrooms and utilities. Where provided, these facilities should create a balance between the need for public access and the protection of shoreline environments. A boat house should also be considered for boat storage by boating organizations and to provide a facility for boat rentals, lessons, and/or tours for canoes, kayaks, and other small hand-carry boats.

As a recommendation for all park facilities, a meeting/educational facility is also proposed for this park. It would offer multiple opportunities for schools, environmental groups, and other organizations. Restrooms and the park office need to be strategically located to allow for smooth operation of the park. These facilities should be situated so as to minimize and preserve the existing resources.

Primitive camping was listed as need by community survey respondents. It is recommended that 20 primitive camping sites be included in the proposed park.

### **Recommendations for Greenways/Hiking Trails**

Walking and biking are two highly sought after activities based on the community input in addition to the state and national standards. The community survey ranked greenway and walking facilities of the highest importance in regards to



facilities that could be developed in the County. The hiking trails should be designed to primarily serve walkers and joggers and in many cases bicyclists. The trail surface can be either natural or paved and normally is 10 feet in width.

Greenways serve a number of important functions: linking parks together to make for a cohesive park system, allowing for safe pedestrian/bike access within a community, emphasizing how nature can interact with the built environment, and enhancing property values. In many respects protected open space or natural resource areas have much in common with greenways. They preserve natural resources, provide corridors for wildlife habitats and provide buffers against developed areas. The primary difference between a greenway and a natural area is that greenways emphasize use and are generally linear in nature. The location of a greenway within a particular urban area could easily make it a light traffic corridor. Important aspects of developing greenway corridors are to link parks, neighborhoods, schools, downtowns and other destinations areas together. These corridors provide access to natural areas and to a safe, affordable alternative mode of transportation. The Catawba County Parks Division currently has no greenways established in the County. This Master Plan recommends five greenway corridors in Catawba County: Lyle Creek, Jacob's Fork, Henry Fork, Riverbend/Lookout Shoals, and a portion of the Carolina Thread Trail. (See Appendix Map 4 - Proposals and Recommendations Map) As part of the FERC relicensing, Duke Energy has committed funds in their financial report for a 1.5 mile greenway extending east from Riverbend Park, along the Catawba River. Additional funding will be needed to construct the trail. It will be important for Catawba County to obtain easements and/or acquire property as viable opportunities become available. (See Appendix Map 7 - Henry Fork and Jacob Fork Greenway/Blueway Map.)

Catawba County will work with the Town of Catawba and the Catawba Land Conservancy to acquire easements as viable options become available from Lookout Shoals to the gamelands and Hudson Chapel Road.

Currently, Catawba County Parks Division has walking and hiking trails at Bakers Mountain Park and Riverbend Park. There are a total of 18 miles of walking/hiking trails within the park system. Currently Catawba County has a deficient amount of walking and hiking trails. The Recreation Standards recommend 57 miles of trails in addition to the existing 18 miles in place. The Recreation standards recommend that by the year 2017, an additional 66 miles of trails should be added to serve the community, based on the standard of 0.5 miles per 1,000 residents. A portion of the 66 miles should include the walking/hiking trails within various municipalities that adjoin the County trail system.



### **Recommendation #32: Lyle Creek Greenway**

It is recommended that the County work with the Town of Catawba and City of Conover to jointly develop this greenway, capitalizing on the availability of the floodplain areas of Lyle Creek. The proposed greenway is approximately 12 miles long which will most likely be developed in multiple phases and implemented as funding is allocated. The greenway primarily will travel along Lyle Creek and will provide a vital link from the Town of Catawba to a potential park site for the City of Conover. In addition, the proposed corridor will also connect with the Historic Bunker Hill Covered Bridge Park, Interstate 40 Rest Area, Lyle Creek Elementary School and nearby residential neighborhoods. The proposed costs, addressed in *Section VII – Action Implementation Plan*, for implementing the proposed 12 miles of greenway is considerable and will offer the potential for partnering with the Town of Catawba and the City of Conover. As stated in the General Recommendations, the municipalities and the County should jointly fund the development of a countywide greenway master plan which will provide a more defined document addressing greenway placement, easement acquisition, and construction cost estimates. (See Appendix Map 10 - Lyle Creek Greenway Map)

### **Recommendation #33: Henry Fork River Greenway**

Henry Fork Greenway is proposed to be located primarily along the Henry Fork River but also proposes connecting to Bakers Mountain Park. (See Appendix Map 7 - Henry Fork and Jacob Fork Greenway/Blueway Map) Located in the southwest portion of Catawba County, the greenway will offer local residents and visitors a passive amenity for biking and walking that currently is not being provided. In addition, the greenway will connect to the City of Hickory's regional Henry Fork Recreation Complex, which allows an alternate mode of transportation for local residents to travel to the park. The proposed 14 mile linear park has been established as a long term project that may not be developed within the next 10 years and will likely require multiple phases to develop. However, the greenway is also proposed by the City of Hickory as a potential greenway. It will be important for the County and the City of Hickory to partner in this initiative.

### **Recommendation #34: Jacobs Fork River Greenway**

Jacobs Fork River Greenway, like the Henry Fork Greenway, has also been established as a long term project that may not be developed within the next 10 years. This 11-mile greenway also proposes connecting to Bakers Mountain Park and to the Henry Fork Greenway where the tributaries meet. This will create a regional linear park once completed. It will be important for the County to obtain easements and/or acquire property as viable opportunities become available. (See Appendix Map 7 - Henry Fork and Jacob Fork Greenway/Blueway Map.)



## **Recommendations for Blueways and River Access**

An ever-increasing form of passive recreation is river trails, often called blueways. Blueways are linear paddling trails for canoe and kayaking. These linear trails allow for water-based passive recreation along rivers and lakes which provide adequate water depth for such activities. Catawba County has a number of tributaries and rivers which allow for this activity. As the popularity continues to grow, it will be important for the Catawba County Parks Division to promote these blueways so residents of Catawba County and visitors can be more aware of the opportunities available for this type of recreation.

### **Recommendation #35: Catawba River Blueway**

Catawba County is fortunate to have the Catawba River as a vital component of the regional blueway system. The Catawba River Trail, which borders the northern and eastern portions of Catawba County, has multiple points for access along the river and offers users multiple areas for paddling in Catawba County. The total length of the river trail along the Catawba River is approximately 42 miles. There are various river access points along the Catawba River and portages along the dams, which are primarily provided by Duke Power. (See Appendix Map 13 - Duke Energy AIP Recreation Offerings Map)

### **Recommendation #36: Jacobs Fork and Henry Fork Blueway**

Two of the primary tributaries of the Catawba River are the Jacobs Fork and Henry Fork Rivers. These rivers are located in the southwest portion of Catawba County - flowing from Burke County through Catawba County and into Lincoln County. (See Appendix Map7 - Henry Fork and Jacobs Fork Greenway/Blueway Map) The two rivers connect to create the South Fork River (near the intersection of Highway 321 and Highway 10) and flow due south. These two tributaries allow for canoeing and kayaking, thereby creating a viable blueway for local residents and visitors. The designated blueways will allow users river access and an opportunity to travel along the future greenways adjacent to the rivers. The areas should also provide trailheads for the future greenways. Fortunately, blueways do not require development other than a portage area with parking access. The total length of the Henry Fork Blueway is approximately 14 miles; and the Jacobs Fork Blueway, approximately 25 miles. The length of river, from where these tributaries meet, flow south to Lincoln County and become the South Fork River, is approximately 8.6 miles. The connected segments of individual blueways provide ample opportunity



for long or short paddle trips. The County will pursue a partnership with the National Whitewater Center to form connectivity from the South Fork River to the water park.

Catawba County Parks Division will work with the Catawba Valley Paddle Trails Association to create a plan for the development of a Jacobs Fork/Henry Fork and South Fork blueway. This plan should include a survey of all potential portage and access sites, determine the owners of these sites, and create a site plan for each location. The plan should include cost estimates, identify grant sources, and establish a long range maintenance and promotion program.

The Catawba Valley Paddle Trails Association reports the following current, planned, and/or desired access points to the existing blueways, as follows:

**Table 6.5.1**

<b>BLUEWAY</b>	<b>CURRENT ACCESS</b>	<b>PLANNED ACCESS</b>	<b>DESIRED ACCESS</b>
Jacob Fork	Newton's Jacob Fork Park		1) Finger Bridge 2) Highway 127 3) Old Shelby Rd.
Henry Fork	Henry Fork Soccer Park	Sandy Ford Rd	1) Henry River Village 2) Portage around Shuford Mills in Brookford
South Fork	Newton's Jacob Fork Park		1) Rocky Ford Rd. on the Hmong property

### **Recommendations for Existing Special Use Facilities**

Catawba County Parks Division has developed a strong partnership with the Catawba County Historical Association (CCHA) over the past several years. The two entities share similar goals in the preservation and educational aspects of resources within the County. Murrays Mill and Bunker Hill Covered Bridge are two valuable resources within the County that the Parks Division and CCHA are looking to work together to enhance and manage these special facilities and meet the goals for each agency. The following recommendations are for the existing sites and a description of proposed recommendations.



### **Recommendation #37: Bunker Hill Covered Bridge Park and Greenway to Interstate 40 Rest Area**

Catawba County Parks Division will partner with the Catawba County Historical Association to continue developing and improving a passive park presence at the Bunker Hill Covered Bridge Park. The County and Historical Society have established a partnership for this park by promoting and enhancing the historic bridge, through the provision of improved access and the development of facilities for the park. The County received a grant from NCDOT to develop a parking area, pedestrian bridge and restroom facility. Since receiving the grant, the County has re-evaluated the future potential for the facility in regards to environmental education, park amenities and the promotion of the historic site.

This evaluation consisted of creating a master plan for the existing property and adjacent properties, allowing for a unique facility. As part of the master plan, the addition of two parcels to the north and one parcel east of the existing property will be pursued. Proposed park facilities consist of a dog park, improved picnic area, picnic shelter, outdoor classroom, environmental education area, open meadow and a trail system. In addition, the master plan proposes a one-mile, multi-use trail from the park to connect to the Interstate 40 rest area along Lyle Creek. This connection would allow visitors from across the nation (who stop at the rest area) the opportunity of visiting one of North Carolina's significant historical attractions. Support facilities consist of an access road, parking areas, pedestrian bridges, and a multi-use building for restrooms, an office, and a meeting room. (See Appendix Map 8 - Bunker Hill Covered Bridge Area and I-40 Rest Area Map)

To develop this vision, a committed partnership of the Catawba County Parks Division and the Catawba County Historical Association will be necessary. In addition to potential funding possibilities, this partnership allows for the Parks Division to assist with the maintenance and development of park amenities and facilities, therefore allowing the historical society to dedicate their efforts in educational programming and maintaining the historical structures. (See Appendix Map 8 - Bunker Hill Covered Bridge Area and I-40 Rest Area Map)

### **Recommendation #38: Murrays Mill**

Catawba County Parks Division will partner with the Catawba County Historical Association to continue developing a passive park presence for the Murrays Mill Historic District. Improvements will vary but potential amenities will include trail development, picnicking, interpretative elements, picnic shelters and environmental education. (See Appendix Map 11 - Murray's Mill Historic District Proposed Overall Site Plan) This partnership allows the Catawba County Parks Division to assist with the maintenance and development of park amenities and program staffing,



therefore allowing the association to dedicate its efforts in the educational programming and preservation of the historical structures. (See Appendix 11 - Murrays Mill Historic District Proposed Overall Site Plan)

### **Recommendation #39: Blackburn Landfill Future Development**

Blackburn Landfill is located within the Startown Small Area Plan. The facility serves as the primary landfill for Catawba County. There have been discussions of developing park amenities as areas of the landfill reach capacity. Selected areas of the landfill have the potential for multiple park amenities to serve the County residents. (See Appendix Map 12 - Conceptual Site Development Plan – Blackburn MSW Landfill) Any potential park improvements developed will be long range and will not occur within the next 10 years. As future planning occurs, Catawba County should carefully evaluate the site to determine if there is the potential for developing a County park at this location.

### **Recommendation #40: Former Central and Northwest (C & NW) Railway Corridor between Maiden to Newton**

The former C & NW railway corridor between Maiden and Newton should be preserved for future public use. In other areas of the State, abandoned rail lines are used for greenways, trail systems excursion rail lines and utility corridors.

### **Recommendations for Priority Methodology**

The Park System for Catawba County Parks Division will be an expansive network of facilities that will likely be implemented incrementally. Development will occur piece by piece, in a coordinated effort between Catawba County, surrounding communities and other local and state government bodies. This section describes how the recommended facilities in the County Park Division are prioritized.

The following factors guided the prioritization of individual segments of the County Park Division and were derived from input and desires specified by the residents of Catawba County and the focus group:

- Preservation of significant natural areas contiguous to existing County parkland;
- Improvement to existing Catawba County Park Facilities and partner facilities;



- Access to natural areas through parks and greenways; and
- Regional connections to surrounding communities and destination areas.

Land acquisition should always be a high priority for the Catawba County Parks Division. As land prices escalate and large area parcels are developed, it will become more difficult to acquire these properties; it is recommended that the County obtain such properties as the opportunity becomes available. Many of the recommendations require some land acquisition to implement the proposed facilities; it will be necessary for the County to develop a strategy for land acquisition. Lower priority projects were established primarily due to the funding necessary to implement the capital improvements. It should be noted that if an opportunity arises (through Land Development Requirements, or Municipal/NCDOT participation, etc.) for the implementation of an identified facility improvement, that opportunity should be taken regardless of its rank in the priority list.

### **Priorities for Development**

The park facility prioritization is an essential tool that provides the Catawba County Parks Division with a breakdown of the priority for each capital improvement. Given the magnitude of the budgets for improvements to existing parks and for new park and greenway facilities, prioritization of these needs is clearly important. The following is a list of priorities, not necessarily in order, based upon the needs assessment process.

#### **Top Priority Projects**

- Land Acquisition for Contiguous Park Property
- St. Stephens Community Park Renovations
- Mountain View Recreation Center ADA Compliance Upgrades
- Bunker Hill Covered Bridge Development
- Lyle Creek Greenway
- Bunker Hill Bridge connection to Interstate 40 Rest Area
- Bunker Hill Bridge connection to Town of Catawba
- Mountain Creek Park Development
- Murrays Mill Improvements
- Riverbend Park Enhancement

**- End of Section -**



## **SECTION 7 ACTION IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

This Section describes how the Catawba County Parks Division can implement a safe, convenient, and usable park system through the execution of its established goals in the Comprehensive Parks Master Plan. The strategy for achieving goals involves the recommended park and greenway facilities discussed in Section VI. This section deals with strategies and opportunities, key implementation steps (implementation policies), necessary staffing, and methods for developing facilities. Together, these sections fit together to form the implementation program.

The results of the Catawba County Comprehensive Parks Master Plan are based on the following discovery methods: 1) a review of the study area, which is within the County limits, 2) an analysis of the existing parks and facilities; 3) community input; and 4) recreation standards, which have been generically developed for municipalities and county governments. The Comprehensive Parks Master Plan is designed to be action-oriented and serve as a tool in the improvement and enhancement of the park system for Catawba County Park Division.

*Identification of sufficient funding* is a crucial element that is required to implement the Master Plan – considering, in particular, the County’s budget constraints. The North Carolina Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan is a guide by which inadequate funding for park and recreation facilities may be identified. *Insufficient funding* will be a key issue that will need to be addressed in the upcoming years if government continues to provide basic minimum services. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, North Carolina and its local governments are 33% below the national average in the funding of parks and recreation services.

### **Data from the N.C. Recreation Resources Service (RSS) Executive Summary**

#### **Per Capita Expenditures by Population**

The population estimates used in the RSS report were certified county estimates in July, 2005. The estimates were calculated by the State Demographer, Office of State Budget and Management, and North Carolina Office of the Governor. They were provided online at <http://demog.state.nc.us>. The following agencies represent Population Class A, which are the departments serving populations greater than 100,000.



The chart is not a complete county listing, but only includes those counties which replied to the RSS survey. Of the 12 counties that responded to the survey, the 4 listed on table 7.1 below provide passive recreation only. The other 8 provide both passive and active recreation.

<b>Table 7.1 COUNTIES (serving populations of over 100,000)</b>	<b>POPULATION ESTIMATE - 2005</b>	<b>PER CAPITA EXPENDITURE</b>
<b>Rowan County Parks &amp; Recreation</b>	<b>133,339</b>	<b>\$ 31.49</b>
<b>Wake County Parks &amp; Recreation</b>	<b>750,865</b>	<b>\$ 6.32</b>
<b>Cabarrus County Parks &amp; Recreation</b>	<b>150,434</b>	<b>\$ 5.96</b>
<b>Catawba County Parks Division</b>	<b>149,032</b>	<b>\$ 1.89</b>

**Per Capita Expenditures by Region**

The RSS Executive Summary provides information on geographic regions as well as departments with similar populations. Leisure needs and desired services vary in different areas across the state; therefore, the geographic regions representing five distinct areas in North Carolina are the Northeast, Piedmont, Southeast, West-Central, and Western. The Catawba County Parks Division is located in the West-Central region and includes the counties of Alexander, Alleghany, Anson, Ashe, Cabarrus, Catawba, Davidson, Davie, Forsyth, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Stanly, Stokes, Surry, Union, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yadkin

To meet the existing and future needs of Catawba County Parks Division, the goals and objectives, which are identified in the Master Plan, must be seriously considered for implementation. The County should continue to establish annual budgets for the Parks Division based on projected capital improvement costs, staffing needs, and operations/maintenance costs. The following Operating Budget (depicted on Table 7.2.1) and Capital Improvements (depicted on Table 7.2.2) are for the first 10 years and beyond, of the Comprehensive Parks Master Plan.

**7.2 PROPOSED OPERATING BUDGET**

The proposed operating budget includes cost for staff, operations, and general maintenance requirements similar to those currently being performed by the Parks Division.



## **Recommended Personnel for Full-Time Operation**

Adequate staffing of each park during operational hours is essential to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Staffed facilities experience less vandalism and virtually no incidence of crime. During the public hearings prior to and during the creation of Riverbend and Bakers Mountain Park, the public deemed **adequate park patrol and staffing** as their most important issues of concern.

In accordance with Recommendation #21 in Section VI, the following personnel are recommended for 6-day operation. Currently, Catawba County Parks Division operates Riverbend and Bakers Mountain Parks 4 days a week, with one full-time park ranger and one part-time attendant per park. This schedule does not fulfill the requirements of “recommended and accessible hours open to the public” per State PARTF grant policy. (See Table 7.2.1 - 10-year and beyond Operating Budget)

### **Division Staffing**

#### **Parks Division Manager**

- *Manage budget and finances for the Parks Division*
- *Manage personnel supervision, timesheets and employee reviews*
- *Manage grant applications and documentation*
- *Project management and supervision*
- *Master plan implementation and review*
- *Community liaison*
- *Fill in during the absence of a Supervising Park Ranger during, holidays, peak hours, etc.*
- *Emergency on call status*
- *Develop and manage operational policy and procedure*

#### **Volunteer and Programming Coordinator (Proposed new position)**

- *Organize regular volunteer projects, scheduling and supply acquisition*
- *Create and prioritize volunteer projects and opportunities*
- *Schedule and organize regular and special events*
- *Marketing and website management*



## **Park Staff (Per park for full-time operation, 6-day week)**

### **Supervising Park Ranger (1 person per park)**

- *Basic daily supervision of other park employees and daily operations*
- *Conducts on site educational programs*
- *Emergency on call status*
- *Supervise basic park maintenance*
- *Execute specialized park maintenance and storm cleanup*
- *Initial supervision of volunteers*
- *Presents interpretive and educational programs off site*
- *On duty during special events, holidays, and peak hours*
- *Coordinate all first aid and safety training.*
- *Patrol park and identifies safety issues*
- *Scheduling of park personnel*
- *Insures policy and procedure are followed during daily operation by park staff*
- *Assists Park Manager in development and execution of parks goals and operations*
- *Assures all fees are collected and daily balance is correct*

### **Park Ranger (1 person per park)**

- *Executes park maintenance and daily operations*
- *Assists in supervision of volunteers*
- *Executes ongoing park projects*
- *Patrol park and greets patrons*
- *Works with Park Attendants to achieve daily goals as directed by Supervising Park Ranger*
- *Assists Supervising Park Ranger in development and execution of parks goals and operations*
- *Assures all fees are collected and daily balance is correct*

### **Park Attendant (1 full time and 2 part-time persons per park)**

- *Greets public and provides park information*
- *Collects fees and issue permits*
- *Data entry of statistics, permits, and daily log information*
- *Basic janitorial duties*
- *Confirms reservations*
- *Assists Park Ranger in assigned projects*



- Works with part time
- Assists Park Ranger in development and execution of parks goals and operations

**Table 7.2.1 - CATAWBA COUNTY - COMPREHENSIVE PARKS  
 MASTER PLAN, 2007-2017  
 OPERATING BUDGET**

CATEGORY	Current- 4 day	YEAR 1 - 6 day
Number of Parks in Operation	2	2
Number of Days Open	4	6
Number of Employees	3 FT, 2 PT	5 FT, 2 PT
<b>Total Annual Operating Budget</b>	<b>\$243,020.00</b>	<b>\$382,441.76</b>
<b>OPERATING BUDGET PER PARK</b>	<b>\$121,510.00</b>	<b>\$191,220.88</b>

### 7.3 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Capital Improvement Program for the acquisition and development of park facilities is designed to encompass the first ten-year period of the Comprehensive Parks Master Plan. All of the proposed costs are based on 2007 materials/labor costs, with no economic changes factored into the yearly increments. Capital improvement costs include *general* expenditures, such as site preparation, access, site utilities, and parking - along with *specific* recreation improvements. The capital improvement plan does not include estimates for planning/design fees.

The capital improvement program can be summarized into the following components:

• Renovation/Improvement Program	\$400,000
• Land Acquisition Program	\$1,200,000
• Park Development Program	\$3,641,500
• <u>Greenway Acquisition and Development</u>	<u>\$600,000</u>
<b>Total Capital Improvement Cost</b>	<b>\$5,841,500</b>

The total figure represents capital spending over a 10-year period and beyond. This \$5,841,500 can be supplemented through grants as shown on Table 7.3.1 - 10-year and Beyond Capital Improvements Program. Numerous grant



opportunities are available as described in Sections 7.4 and 7.5. The Total Capital Improvement Cost represents the estimated cost projections to be needed in association with parks facility development, improvements, renovations, and reflects the goals and recommendations outlined in *Section 6 Goals and Recommendations* of the Comprehensive Parks Master Plan.

The proposed Capital Improvement Program for the Catawba County Parks Division is depicted on the following table:



Table 7.2.2







## 7.4 OPPORTUNITIES AND STRATEGIES

The goals and objectives called for in this Master Plan under the current funding levels cannot be realized.

In order to meet the proposed recommendations, substantial increases in operating and capital funding will be required. Over the 10-year and beyond period, the County will not be able to support the proposed capital improvement and operations solely through the current level of funding from County appropriations. The Catawba County Parks Division will need to use a combination of revenue sources from various means to accomplish the recommendations of the Master Plan. Fortunately, there are numerous funding strategies and opportunities that will need to be explored and implemented by the County.

### Operating Budget

The General Fund for the Parks Division Operating Budget for the fiscal year 2006/07 is \$243,020. It is recommended that the Operating Budget be increased to \$382,442 for the fiscal year 2007/08 in order to operate Riverbend and Bakers Mountain Parks on a 6-day schedule as reflected on Table 7.2.1. As the County brings new high priority parks online, such as Mountain Creek and Bunker Hill, a significant increase in staff and operating funds will be needed.

### Capital Improvement Budget

In addition to the general operation funding for parks, it is recommended that the County allocate a budget for capital improvements of parks. This funding will provide ongoing improvements to existing facilities, land acquisition, and will allow development for new facilities. To generate the funding necessary to develop the recommended improvements (an estimated \$5,841,500, as depicted on Table 7.3.1), the County will need to pursue an aggressive funding program utilizing a variety of revenue sources. If the County is successful in obtaining other funding sources, such as grants, the financial impact on the County's general fund could be substantially reduced. An annual allocation of capital improvement funding by the County, supplemented with grants and other funding sources, will allow renovation of existing facilities, land acquisition and construction of new facilities on a more consistent basis.

## 7.5 FUNDING/ACQUISITION SOURCES

Implementing the recommendations of this Comprehensive Parks Master Plan will require a combination of funding sources that include local, state, federal, and private money. This Section provides a listing of the most commonly used



funds for park and greenway facility projects in North Carolina. Fortunately, the benefits of protected greenways and parks are many and varied. This allows programs in Catawba County to access money earmarked for a variety of purposes including water quality, hazard mitigation, recreation, air quality, alternative transportation, wildlife protection, community health, and economic development. Competition is almost always stiff for state and federal funds. It becomes imperative that local governments work together to create multi-jurisdictional partnerships and to develop their own local sources of funding. These sources can then be used to leverage outside assistance. The long term success of this plan will almost certainly depend on the dedication of local revenue stream for park and greenway projects.

It is important that Catawba County fully evaluate its available options and develop a funding strategy that can meet community needs, maximize local resources, improve quality of life, and leverage outside funding. Financing will be needed to administer the continued planning and implementation process, acquire parcels or easements, and manage and maintain facilities. Further research into these programs is recommended to determine requirements for specific grants.

McGill Associates advises Catawba County to pursue a variety of funding options. Below is a list of park and greenway funding opportunities that have typically been pursued by other communities. Creative planning and consistent monitoring of funding options will likely turn up new opportunities not listed here.

## Grants

State and federal agencies offer numerous grants to assist municipalities in the financing of their parks and recreation projects. This source of funding should definitely be investigated and pursued by the Catawba County for present and future park/recreation improvements.

### **North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF):**

PARTF was established for local governments and the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation in 1994 as a funding source for the development and/or improvement of parks and recreation facilities, as well as for the purpose of land acquisition. A state-funded program, PARTF matches monies spent by municipalities (on parks and recreation) – with each sharing 50% of the cost. In 2004, the fund request was elevated from a maximum of \$500,000 to \$1,000,000. The Recreational Resources Service should be contact for additional information at (919) 515-7118.



### **Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF):**

A federally-funded program, LWCF was established for local and state governments in 1965 as a funding source for outdoor recreational development and land acquisition. LWCF monies are derived from the sale or lease of nonrenewable resources – primarily, offshore oil/gas leases and surplus federal land sales. Acquisition and development grants may be used for a wide variety of outdoor projects such as city parks, tennis courts, bike trails, outdoor swimming pools, and support facilities (roads, water supply, etc.). Facility design must be rather basic in nature – rather than elaborate – and must remain accessible to the general public. No more than 50% of the project cost may be federally funded by LWCF, although all or part of the project sponsor's matching share may be obtained from certain other federal assistance programs. The federal government has proposed no funding for this program for fiscal year 2006.

### **North Carolina Natural Heritage Trust Fund**

The North Carolina Natural Heritage Trust Fund (NHTF) fund provides supplemental funding to select state agencies for the acquisition and protection of important natural areas, to preserve the state's ecological diversity and cultural heritage, and to inventory the natural heritage resources of the state. Eligible agencies include the Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources, the Wildlife Resources Commission, the Dept. of Cultural Resources, and the Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Although Catawba County cannot be the applicant, there are state agencies, which could acquire properties, institute programs, etc., in the County for preservation and/or education purposes. Grants are awarded for the following:

- The purchase of lands that represent the state's ecological diversity to ensure their preservation and conservation for recreational, scientific, educational, cultural, and aesthetic purposes.
- The purchase of additions to state parks, state trails, aesthetic forests, wild and/or scenic rivers, and fish/wildlife management areas
- The development of a balanced state program of historic properties
- The inventory and conservation planning of natural areas by the Natural Heritage program



### **Federal Aid Construction Funds**

These funds are included in the National Highway System (NHS) Surface Transportation Program (STP), and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAW). The funds provide for the construction of pedestrian and bicycle transportation facilities. The primary source of funding for bicycle and pedestrian projects is STP Enhancement Funding.

### **Safe Routes to School Program (SRTS)**

The Safe Routes to Schools Program is a Federal-Aid program of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The Program was created by Section 1404 of the *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users Act* (SAFETEA-LU). The SRTS Program is funded at \$612 million over five Federal fiscal years (FY 2005-2009) and is to be administered by State Departments of Transportation (DOT's).

The Program provides funds to the States to substantially improve the ability of primary and middle school students to walk and bicycle to school safely. The purposes of the program are:

1. To enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school
2. To make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age
3. To facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity (approximately 2 miles) of primary and middle schools (Grades K-8).

### **North Carolina Ecosystem Enhancement Program**

The N.C. Ecosystem Enhancement Program (EEP) combines a wetlands-restoration initiative by the N.C. Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources with ongoing environmental efforts by the Dept. of Transportation to restore, enhance, and protect its wetlands and waterways. EEP provides:

- High-quality, cost-effective projects for watershed improvement and protection



- Compensation for unavoidable environmental impacts associated with transportation, infrastructure, and economic development
- Detailed watershed-planning and project-implementation efforts within North Carolina's threatened or degraded watersheds

### **The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act of 2004 (SAFETEA).**

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act of 2004 (SAFETEA), approved by the federal government in 2004, is a primary source for financing bicycle, pedestrian, and greenway projects throughout the country – both at local and state levels. Providing as much as 80% for development and construction costs, this grant is earmarked for facilities such as sidewalks, rail-trails, bike-lanes and greenways. The Enhancement Program (a section of SAFETEA) is used primarily by municipalities – since this section focuses on bicycle and pedestrian corridors, environmental mitigation, historic preservation, and scenic byways. 20% matching funds is required by the applying entity and applicants must meet several other criteria as well. Prior to applying for this grant, a thorough engineering assessment should be performed to determine construction costs.

### **Recreation Trails Program**

The Recreation Trails Program (RTP) is an assistance program of the Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). RTP makes recreation funds available for state allocation to develop and maintain recreation trails and trail-related facilities for both non-motorized and motorized recreation trail users. RTP funds are distributed to states by a legislative formula: half of the funds are distributed equally among all states and half are distributed in proportion to the estimated amount of non-highway recreational fuel used in each state. (Non-highway recreational fuel is the type, which is typically used by snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles, off-road motorcycles, and off-road light trucks.)

### **Clean Water Management Trust Fund (CWMTF)**

Created in 1996 by the North Carolina General Assembly, the Clean Water Management Trust Fund (CWMTF), grants monies to local governments, state agencies, and not-profit conservation groups to help finance projects that specifically address water pollution issues, CWMTF will fund projects that contribute toward a network of riparian buffers (land that is traversed or bounded by a natural watercourse) and greenways for



environmental, educational, and recreational benefits. There is no match required by local municipalities, however, the “suggestion” of a match is highly recommended.

### **Watershed Protection and Flood Protection**

The USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) assist state and local governments in their operation and maintenance of watersheds, whose areas are less that 250,000 square acres. The NRCS provides both financial and technical assistance to eligible projects to the improvement of watershed protection, flood prevention, sedimentation control, public water-based fish and wildlife enhancements, and recreation planning. The NRCS requires a 50% local match for public recreation and fish/wildlife projects.

### **State Construction Funds**

These funds (not including the Highway Trust Fund for Urban Loops and Interchanges) may be used for the construction of sidewalks and bicycle accommodations that are a part of roadway improvement projects.

### **The North Carolina Conservation Tax Credit**

This program provides an incentive (in the form of an income tax credit) for landowners that donate interests in real property for conservation purposes. Property donations can be fee simple or in the form of conservation easements or bargain sale. The goal of this program is to manage stormwater, protect water supply watersheds, preserve working farms and forests, and set-aside greenways for ecological communities, public trails, and wildlife corridors. (Go to <http://ncctc.enr.state.nc.us/> for additional information,)

### **Farmland Protection Trust Fund**

Ranging from only a couple hundred thousand dollars to millions of dollars over the last several years, this program is funded through an allocation by the NC General Assembly to the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. It is a voluntary program designed to protect farmland from development by either acquiring property outright or acquiring conservation easements on the property. The program is administered by the Conservation Trust Fund for North Carolina (CTNC). Questions about available funding should be directed to CTNC ( Life Estate



## Contributions

The solicitation of contributions is an acceptable method of fund-raising for recreation departments. These donations, typical in the form of land, cash, labor, and/or materials, could be solicited to assist Catawba County with its enhancement program. Corporation, civic organization, individuals and other groups generally donate to a “specific” park project; however, donations may also be solicited for multiple project improvements and/or additions. The National Recreation and Park Association recommend the use of private, nonprofit, tax-exempt foundations as a means of accepting and administering private gifts to a public park system.

## Park Foundations

Foundations are another source of financing by making direct contributions within communities, states, or the nation. These types of funds are usually described as special program foundations, general-purpose foundation, or corporate foundations. Foundations generally have very few restrictions and/or limitations, and are typically received from local entities. A listing of appropriate foundation can be found in the text entitled Grant Seeking in North Carolina, made available through the North Carolina Center of Public Policy Research, Post Office Box 430, Raleigh, North Carolina, 27602.

## Partnerships

To implement the recommendations contained in the comprehensive master plan, Catawba County will most certainly have to expand their partnership agreements with other public agencies and private-sector organizations. There are many different types of partnerships that can be formed to achieve the goals established by the County. In fact, many local governments throughout the nation are utilizing partnerships with public and private-sector interest to accomplish community goals.

Listed below are the various types of partnerships that the County should consider in its efforts for the improvement/addition of parks and recreational facilities:

- Programming partnerships to co-sponsor events and facilities or to allow qualified outside agencies to conduct activities on properties, which are municipally owned.
- Operational partnerships to share the responsibility for providing public access and use of facilities.



- Development partnerships to purchase land and/or build facilities.
- Management partnerships to maintain properties and/or facilities.

Catawba County is currently participating with partnerships in other related endeavors/functions; and, should evaluate forming additional partnerships, which address the needs of a comprehensive park system. The County's existing partnership with the Catawba County Historical Society is an excellent example. Direct requests should be made to potential partners, asking them to meet and evaluate the possible benefits of "partnering". This step should be made to generate interest and agreement prior to solidifying any responsibilities for each participating party.

Private-sector partnerships can be beneficial to counties as well. Developers can use private funds to develop facilities on municipal property and lease it to the County over a long term. Over a period of time, the developer returns a portion of the revenue to the County and at the end of the lease; the facility is turned over to public ownership. This type of arrangement would typically be large capital investment for a special use facility.

## **Land Acquisition and Development**

There are many different types of land acquisition available to Catawba County for park system expansion and/or future development. Due to the land costs, as well as land availability, it is recommended that the County prioritize the property to be acquired for park facilities. Listed below are several methods for acquiring and developing parks:

### **Life Estate**

A life estate is a gift – whereby a donor retains the land during his/her lifetime and relinquishes title of the property after his/her death. In return, the owner (or family) is relieved of property tax for the given land.

### **Local Gifts**

Donations of land, money, labor, and/or construction can have significant impact(s) on the acquisition and development of park property. The solicitation of local gifts is highly recommended and should be organized thoroughly, with the utilization of very specific strategic methods. This often (untapped) source of obtaining funds requires the contacting of potential donors – such as individuals, institutions, foundations, service clubs, etc.

### **Easement**

An easement is the most common type of "less-than-fee" interest in land. An easement seeks to compensate the property owner for the right to use



his/her land in some way or to compensate for the loss of his/her privileges to use the land. Generally, the land owner may still use the land and therefore continues to generate property tax revenue for the County.

### **Fee Simple Purchase**

Fee simple purchase is the most common method used to acquire municipal property for park facilities. Although it has the advantage of simplifying justification to the general public, fee simple purchase is the most difficult method to pursue – due to limited monetary resources.

### **Fee Simple with Lease-Back or Resale**

This method allows local governments to acquire land by fee simple purchase: yet allows them to either sell or lease the property to prospective user(s) with restrictions that will preserve the land form future development. The fee simple with lease-back or resale method of development commonly results form situation(s) in which land owner(s), who have lost considerable monetary amounts in property value, determine that it is more economical to sell the land to the County (with a lease-back option) than to keep it.

### **Long-Term Option**

Long-term options allow counties to purchase property over a long period of time. This method is particularly useful because it enables the County to consider particular piece(s) of land that may have future value, though it is not currently desired or affordable at the time. There are several advantages to this method of property acquisition: the County can protect the future of the land without purchasing it upfront and meanwhile, the purchase price of the land will not increase, with the County having the right to exercise its option. The disadvantage to the County is that all privileges relinquished by the land owner require compensation in the form of securing the option.

## **Dedicated Source of Local Funding**

In order to leverage and provide matching funds for many of the programs listed above, Catawba County should enhance its existing Parks Trust Fund by providing a dedicated source of revenue which could come from any number of the following sources:

- Property/sales tax
- Bonds
- Fee in-lieu of contributions
- User fees/registration fees



### **Property/Sales Tax Revenues**

General tax revenues traditionally provide sources for general operations and maintenance park systems for local governments. The Parks Division is scheduled along with health, public safety, utilities, etc. in regular budgets established by the county. Assessed valuation of real and personal property tax and sales tax provides the framework for the major portion of the tax base for the County.

Traditionally, ad valorem tax revenue has been the primary source of funding for the park and recreation enhancement of properties/facilities owned by local governments, “Recreational opportunities” are considered a public service and often are standard line item on general fund budgets. Creative financial opportunities are possible; however ad valorem taxes will continue to be the major revenue source to support the system. As such, communities often vote to raise their local tax rate temporarily in support of their Park and Recreation Systems.

### **General Obligation Bonds**

Many communities issue bonds, which are typically approved by the shareholders, to finance site development and land acquisition costs. The State of North Carolina grants local governments the authority to borrow funds (for parks and recreation) through the issuance of bonds, the amount of which are not to exceed the cost of acquisition or the cost for improvement of a park/recreation facilities. Total bond capacities for local government are limited (for parks and recreation) to a maximum percentage of assessed property valuation. Since the issuance of bonds relies on the support of the voting population, the implementation of awareness programs is absolutely essential prior to a referendum vote.

General Obligation bonds are the preferred financing approach by the North Carolina Local Government Commission and the general securities market, because these instruments are backed by the full faith and credit of the issuer. That simply means that the bonds represent an encumbrance against the property tax base of the issuing jurisdiction and therefore offer the best available security to the bond holder. The State of North Carolina gives the issuance of bonds not to exceed the total cost of improvements (including land acquisition). In view of the recommended capital improvements suggested in this plan, borrowing of funds to acquire new lands and develop facilities may be necessary. Total bonding capacities for local government is limited for parks and recreation to a maximum percentage of assessed property valuation.



The following are key factors to consider related to the use of this financing instrument:

- In North Carolina, the issuance of General Obligation bonds requires a referendum of the voters within the issuing jurisdiction.
- The term of the dept may be extended to 20-30 years.
- The dept is publicly sold, therefore there are costs associated with the sale that generally total 3% to 5% of the total bond principal. The issuance costs offset the lower interest rate and therefore, this instrument becomes more attractive as the size of the issuance increases and the issuance costs are spread over the larger dept. It has been found that this financing option becomes financially superior as the dept principal exceeds \$10-\$12 Million.
- Prepayment of the dept can generally not be accomplished until reaching a call date, which is generally around 75% of dept retirement.
- Failure of the General Obligation Bond to be ratified by referendum could mean that the County could not go forward with an alternative approach to financing without substantially changing the scope of the project.

### **Fee in-lieu of contributions**

Under the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), developers have an option to pay a fee in-lieu of rather than dedicate open space, within conventional subdivisions. To date, this program has proven to be successful as a dedicated source of revenue that can be earmarked for park development. The County may choose to revisit this source of revenue to study the feasibility of enhancing the fee in-lieu formula.

### **User fees/registration fees**

Communities throughout the nation employ a wide variety of user fees for public use of recreational programs and services within their recreation departments. The “amount” of the fee is usually determined by a portion of the recreation costs needed for improvements and/or operation. These user fees are typically levied for such special facilities as water parks and golf courses: however, they can also be charged of the use of trails and ball fields. Catawba County should continue to generate revenue by charging user fees for use of facilities such as picnic shelters and dog parks in order to cover operation and administrative costs. As the park system continues develop, the County should examine their fees structure



to identify opportunities for additional revenue. The current user fees appear to be fair and reasonable for a majority of the County Residents. Elected officials should determine the fees and charges; however, the fees should not be so high that persons of modest income would ultimately be denied the use of park facilities.

## 7.6 PLAN ADOPTION

The first step in implementation of the Comprehensive Parks Master Plan is adoption of the plan by Catawba County. By adopting the Comprehensive Parks Master Plan, the community is able to shape larger regional decisions so that they fit within the goals of the plan. The County also gives itself greater authority in shaping local land use decisions so that they achieve the goals and vision of this plan. In addition, the adoption of this Master Plan is essential in order to maximize available grant opportunities.

Among the opportunities to promote the Plan recommendations available to the Catawba County Parks Division is the opportunity to build upon an already committed and active base of residents, visitors, and enthusiasts in the area. Through their organizations, institutions, publications, and networks, Catawba County can promote the improved or new parks and greenway facilities and programs.

Second among the opportunities is the availability of the existing park facilities (amenities, programs, existing trails, etc.). Though some changes are being suggested in the short-term and a much expanded network is suggested for the long-term, the presence of an existing network provides a strong foundation from which to build. Many County residents are already accustomed to using the existing park facilities and should become used to seeing new park amenities, programs, signage, and other improvements. Building on their existing awareness is much easier than building on no awareness.

### Action Steps

Upon adoption of this plan, implementation of specific recommendations can begin. Many of these will occur simultaneously and include policy and facility improvement changes. The key steps are:

- Secure dedicated source of revenue to address the 10-year and beyond Capital Improvement Program and address the goals of the Master Plan.
- Appoint a Parks Advisory Committee comprised of County staff and nine representatives located throughout the County which meet periodically to



discuss and advise park planning goals and objectives, user needs and other issues associated with the Catawba County Parks Division.

- Provide staffing necessary to support and oversee the implementation of this plan and the proper maintenance and operation of the facilities that are proposed; for example, the County may designate or hire an employee to oversee this task.
- Create the Catawba County Parks Endowment fund through the NC Community Foundation.
- Develop and implement educational and awareness programs such as public events and promotion of parks awareness by civic/environmental advocacy groups, which can be used to announce new park facilities and some of the upcoming projects.
- Begin working on the proposed facilities that are listed in the 10-year and beyond Capital Improvement Program. From these opportunities comes the framework for an initial implementation strategy:
  - 1) Acquiring land for future park/expansion and greenway corridors should be a high priority. It will be essential to acquire land as opportunities become available.
  - 2) Use the base of park users to expand the awareness of the benefits and operating hours of the Catawba County Park System.
  - 3) Expand and modify the existing park system to a comprehensive, multi-use system, distributed so that it better meets the needs of the community, provides opportunities to all, and enhances the current park system.
  - 4) Begin making the critical greenway connections between destination points that will allow for preservation of open space and offer an alternative mode of transportation.

These four steps represent the core of the implementation strategy. As the individual policy recommendations and physical recommendations are addressed, they should each fit with one of these four primary strategies.

- Ensure that park and greenway planning is integrated with other regional planning efforts at the state and local levels, as well as with long-range and current land use, economic development, parks, environmental, and



community planning. The following are mechanisms to achieve this action step:

1. *Expand local capital improvements program for yearly appropriation for greenway and park development.*
2. *Set aside money for land acquisition, construction and maintenance of parks and greenway facilities in the annual operating budget.*
3. *Pursue and request pedestrian/bicycle projects to be added to NCDOT TIP.*
4. *Pursue developing and expanding existing and new partnerships*
5. *Apply for PARTF Grants and other related recreation grants for park projects and improvements.*
6. *Seek other sources of revenue funding for parks and greenway improvements, such as including local assessment districts, developer exactions, etc.*
7. *Pursue funding from other sources listed in this section.*
8. *Evaluate the enhancement of the existing fee-in-lieu funding formula in the Catawba County Unified Development Ordinance.*

## 7.7 CONCLUSION

This Comprehensive Parks Master Plan has laid out a set of strategies for expanding/developing a safe, convenient and usable park system as reflected in the following:

- Full-time park system;
- Expansion and enhancement of existing facilities; and
- Creation of new facilities in areas of demand, including Mountain Creek and Bunker Hill Parks.

The plan has assessed the study area, analyzed the existing facilities, received community input, reviewed recreation standards, developed recommendations and provided strategies for implementing the plan. The Comprehensive Parks Master Plan is a comprehensive guide to be used in the improvement and enhancement of the park system for Catawba County Park Division.



**- End of Section -**

**Table 7.2.2 - 10 Year Capital Improvements Program**

<b>CATEGORY / IMPROVEMENT</b>	<b>TOTAL 10 YEAR COST</b>	<b>County Match</b>	<b>Grant Match</b>	<b>Grant/Fund</b>		
<b>General Park Improvements</b>						
Park Renovations	\$400,000					
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$400,000</b>					
<b>Land Acquitision</b>						
Land Acquitision	\$1,200,000					
Jacobs Fork Greenway 40 Acres @ \$5,000/Ac.						
Henry Fork Greenway 50 Acres @ \$5,000/Ac.						
Lyle Creek Greenway 40 Acres @ \$5,000/Ac.						
Land Acquitision for Park Expansion						
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,200,000</b>					
<b>Riverbend Park</b>						
Primitive Camping (20 Sites)	\$40,000					
Rangers Residence	\$40,000					
Land Acquisition included in Land Acquisiton	\$0					
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$80,000</b>					
<b>Bakers Mountain Park</b>						
Land Acquisition included in Land Acquisiton	\$0					
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$0</b>					
<b>Bunker Hill Bridge Park</b>						
Information kiosk	\$5,000					
I-40 Rest Area Greenway	\$330,000					
Multi-Use Building	\$260,000					
Restroom Building	\$30,000					
Access Road and Parking Areas	\$300,000					
Trail System	\$80,000					
6' Wide Bridge Crossing	\$15,000					
Dog Park	\$37,000					
Outdoor Classroom	\$10,000					

**Table 7.2.2 - 10 Year Capital Improvements Program**

<b>CATEGORY / IMPROVEMENT</b>	<b>TOTAL 10 YEAR COST</b>	<b>County Match</b>	<b>Grant Match</b>	<b>Grant/Fund</b>		
10' Pedestrian Bridge	\$80,000					
Stream Bank Restoration	\$10,000					
Picnic Shelter	\$40,000					
Picnic Shelter	\$25,000					
Utilities	\$60,000					
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,282,000</b>	<b>\$782,000</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>	<b>PARTF</b>		
<b>Mountain View Recreation Association</b>						
Restroom Renovation	\$15,000					
Parking Renovation	\$15,000					
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$30,000</b>					
<b>St. Stephens Park</b>						
Pool Removal	\$8,500					
Restroom Renovation	\$20,000					
Dog Park	\$37,000					
Picnic Shelter and Table Renovation	\$34,000					
Horseshoe Pits	\$8,000					
Landscaped Nature Trail	\$4,000					
1.2 mile ADA Trail	\$60,000					
Additional Landscaping	\$15,000					
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$186,500</b>	<b>\$33,300</b>	<b>\$133,200</b>	<b>LWCF</b>		
<b>Jacobs Fork Greenway</b>						
11 Mile Greenway (\$300,000/Mile)	\$0					
Assuming 3.6 Acres/mile						
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>						
<b>Henry Fork Greenway</b>						
14 Mile Greenway	\$0					
Assuming 3.6 Acres/mile						
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$0</b>					
<b>Lyle Creek Greenway</b>						
11 Mile Greenway (Phase 1 - 2 Miles)	\$600,000					
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$600,000</b>	<b>\$120,000</b>	<b>\$480,000</b>	<b>NCDOT</b>		

**Table 7.2.2 - 10 Year Capital Improvements Program**

<b>CATEGORY / IMPROVEMENT</b>	<b>TOTAL 10 YEAR COST</b>	<b>County Match</b>	<b>Grant Match</b>	<b>Grant/Fund</b>		
<b>Mountain Creek Park Improvements(Phase 1)</b>						
Access Road and Parking Areas	\$600,000					
Rangers Residence	\$40,000					
Multi-Use Building	\$250,000					
Trail System	\$200,000					
Primitive Camping (20 Sites)	\$40,000					
Open Meadow	\$25,000					
Picnic Shelter (4)	\$130,000					
Fishing Pier	\$12,000					
Canoe Portage	\$6,000					
10' Pedestrian Bridge	\$70,000					
Utilities	\$100,000					
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,473,000</b>	<b>\$973,000</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>	<b>PARTF</b>		
<b>Murrays Mill Park Improvements</b>						
Trail Development	\$100,000					
Environmental Education Center	\$250,000					
Picnic Shelter (Large)	\$70,000					
Amphitheater	\$100,000					
Picnic Shelter (Large)	\$70,000					
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$590,000</b>	<b>\$272,500</b>	<b>\$272,500</b>	<b>PARTF</b>		
<b>TOTAL CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS:</b>	<b>\$5,841,500</b>					
Potential PARTF Grant Projects allow a dollar for dollar match up to \$1,000,000 for Land Acquisition, Park Develop and Improvements. Potential NCDOT Grant Projects allow a 20(governing agency)/80(NCDOT) match for Multi Use Trail Projects, and Support Facilities Potential LWCF Grant Projects allow a 20(governing agency)/80(LWCF) match for outdoor park facilities						

## **APPENDIX TABLE OF CONTENTS**

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- Attachment 2 – Significant Natural Heritage Areas in Catawba County, NC
- Attachment 3 – Lake Norman RPO Bike Map
- Attachment 4 – Community Survey
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- Map 3 – Community Needs Assessment
- Attachment 5 – Community Needs Assessment Summary
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- Map 7 – Henry Fork and Jacobs Fork Greenway/Blueway
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- Map 9 – Mountain Creek Park Comprehensive Master Plan
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- Map 12 – Conceptual Site Development Plan – Blackburn MSW Landfill
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# Catawba County planners seek input on parks

By Mary Katherine Creel  
LAKE NORMAN TIMES

Bakers Mountain and Riverbend Park in Catawba County collectively served 50,000 patrons in 2004. Both parks provide passive recreation opportunities like hiking and bird watching, but officials with the county's parks and planning departments want to know, is it enough?

Parks and planning representatives recently kicked-off the first in a series of focus group meetings with park patrons and members of small area planning districts to prepare a Parks Master Plan. That plan will be guided by community input and Catawba County's continuing goal to preserve its natural heritage and open space sites.

A survey has been posted on Catawba County's Web site to receive public input on current park facilities and need for

recreation in the county.

"With Bakers Mountain and Riverbend, there is a passive park presence in the northern and western portions of the county," said Blair Rayfield, Catawba County Parks Division Manager. "That presence is lacking in the southeastern part of the county, for instance, and we want to know, if there's a need for more recreational opportunities and specifically, in what areas."

Rayfield said the survey will serve as an important tool, giving people a chance to voice their opinion directly to parks and planning staff regarding current parks facilities and their individual recreational priorities, whether it is a need for more walking and hiking trails, or access on the Catawba River and Lake Norman. Data from the survey will also be used to structure future priorities and a

means for using funds. The data will also be helpful in the county's ability to acquire grants and other funding in the future.

The Catawba County Board of Commissioners began planning for parks in 1997 when it set aside funds to leverage grants for the development of future parks, Blair said. Those funds were matched with state grants to develop Riverbend Park in 1999 and Bakers Mountain Park in 2002. The Parks Master Plan will provide parks and planning staff with guidance for future expansion of those parks, as well as insight when considering potential sites in the future.

Catawba County reported spending \$2.46 per capita on recreation expenditures in 2004. According to a N.C. Recreation Resources Service report on expenditures from agencies statewide, Catawba

County ranked lowest on the list, in stark contrast to nearby parks and recreation agencies in Cornelius, Davidson and Huntersville, which collectively reported \$230 in per capita expenditures on parks and recreation.

After just one week, the parks and planning staff have already received nearly 50 completed surveys. One of the key issues expressed so far, Rayfield said, was expanding current hours of operation at Bakers Mountain and Riverbend from four days a week to six.

"Many people have said they were not even aware of these facilities," Rayfield said.

If Catawba County continues to grow as it has in the past 20 years, Rayfield worries that the opportunity to preserve large tracts of land for open space and passive recreation will

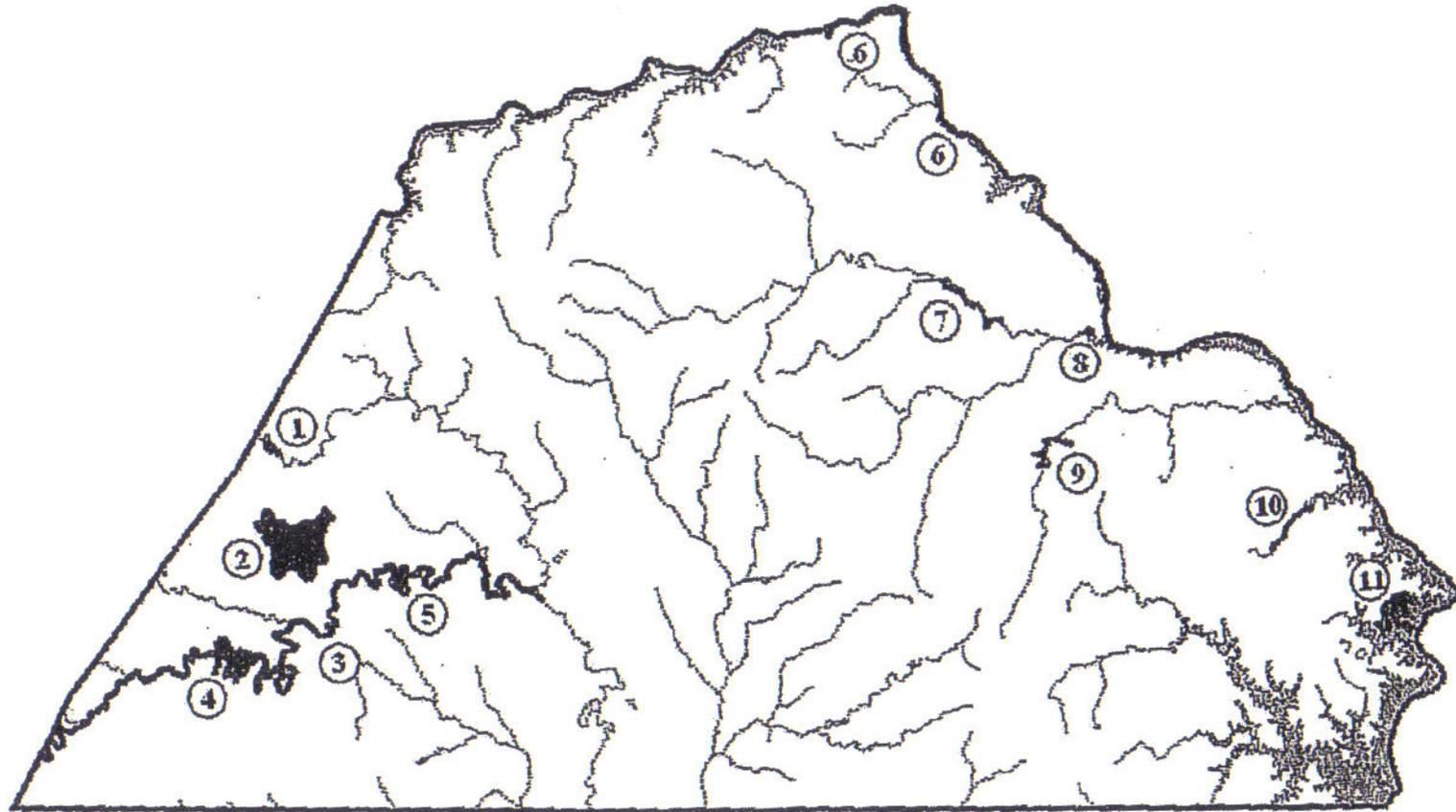
diminish, if not disappear.

"If you look at Catawba County now, and then look at things 20 years ago," Rayfield said, "just based on that growth, the opportunity for preservation of large acreage and naturally significant sites simply won't be there. That's why this Parks Master Plan is so important. We need to evaluate the community's needs and look at what needs to be preserved now."

The deadline to submit a survey, either online, or by mail is Sept. 15. The survey can be accessed, downloaded and printed at [www.catawbacountync.gov](http://www.catawbacountync.gov).

*To gain further input from the public, two community meetings have been set for Aug. 25 and Aug. 30 at the Newton-Conover Middle School cafeteria from 7 to 8:30 p.m.*

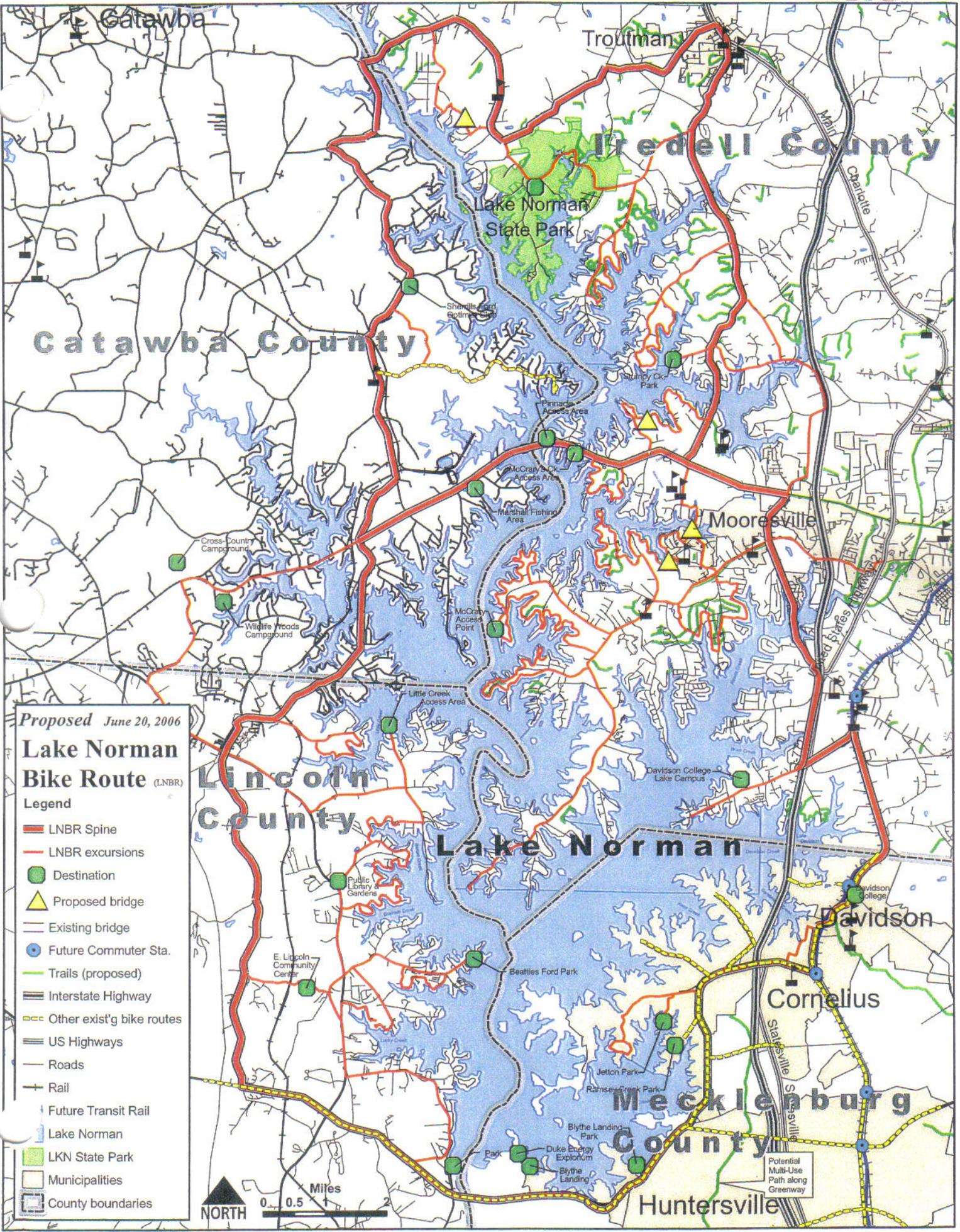
# Significant Natural Heritage Areas in Catawba County, NC



- 1) Henry Fork River Slopes
- 2) Baker Mountain
- 3) Jacob Fork Aquatic Habitat
- 4) Jacob Fork West Corridor

- 5) Jacob Fork East Corridor
- 6) Catawba River Corridor
- 7) Lyle Creek Corridor
- 8) Lyle Creek Wetland

- 9) Murray's Mill Lake and Upper Balls
- 10) Terrapin Creek Corridor
- 11) Lake Norman Slopes and Shoreline





## CATAWBA COUNTY PARKS MASTER PLAN SURVEY

The Catawba County Department of Planning and Community Development is in the process of creating a Parks Master Plan for Catawba County and would like your input. Please take a moment to complete the following survey. The information that you provide will help determine parks and passive recreation priorities in our community. If you need additional copies for your household, they can be found on our web page at [www.co.catawba.nc.us](http://www.co.catawba.nc.us) or by calling (828) 465-8380. Thank you for your time and your interest in continuing to improve Catawba County Parks.

**Gender:**  Male  Female **Resident of Catawba County:**  Yes  No **Zip Code:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

1-10\_\_\_      11-16\_\_\_      17-25\_\_\_      26-46\_\_\_      47-59\_\_\_      60+\_\_\_

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

Excellent  Good  Fair  Poor  Don't know

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

Excellent  Good  Fair  Poor  Don't know

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

Excellent  Good  Fair  Poor  Don't know

**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.**

Four days a week (Current)  Six days a week

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

Riverbend Park  Regularly  Occasionally  Rarely  Never

Bakers Mountain Park  Regularly  Occasionally  Rarely  Never

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

**Please check all that apply.**

City of Hickory

City of Newton

City of Conover

Town of Maiden

Town of Longview

Town of Claremont

Town of Catawba

Lookout Shoals Boat Access

Oxford Boat Access

Long Island Boat Access

Murray's Mill

Bunker Hill Covered Bridge

YMCA

Private Recreation Facility or Private Recreation Provider.(Gym, Golf Course, Optimist)

**OVER...**

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

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Improve parking areas in parks      | <input type="checkbox"/> Increasing beautification in parks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Add/Improve trails                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Increase days and hours open       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Add signage to facilities           | <input type="checkbox"/> Add more public restrooms          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Expand parks and open space acreage | <input type="checkbox"/> Add picnic and sitting areas       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Primitive camping sites             |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                        |   |

**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.**

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| _____ Bicycle Trails (3-6 Miles)     | _____ Jogging/Walking Trails (2-3 Miles) Paved                            |
| _____ Bicycle Trails (6-12 Miles)    | _____ Jogging/Walking Trails (3-6 Miles) Paved                            |
| _____ Equestrian Trails              | _____ Interpretive/Educational Nature Trails (Natural Surface)            |
| _____ Dog Parks                      | _____ Greenways, ( trails or paths connecting to other recreation areas ) |
| _____ Picnic Areas                   | _____ Outdoor Swimming Area /Pool with special recreation features        |
| _____ Open Space/Natural Areas       | _____ Community Meeting/Gathering Facility                                |
| _____ Outdoor Performance Area       | _____ Primitive Camping   |
| _____ Environmental Education Center | _____ Mountain Biking   |
| _____ Boat, Canoe, Kayak Access      | _____ Public Access to Catawba River                                      |

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

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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

Yes  No

**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?**

Yes  No If Yes, what area of the County \_\_\_\_\_

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

Favor  Oppose

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

Yes  No

**Additional Comments:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Please return survey by mail by September 15, 2005 to:**

**by Mail: Catawba County, Planning and Community Development, PO Box 389, Newton, NC 28658,**

**by fax at : (828) 465-8484**

**hand deliver to: Planning and Community Development, Catawba County Government Center and Riverbend or Bakers Mountain Park**

**e-mail to: Blair@catawbacountync.gov**

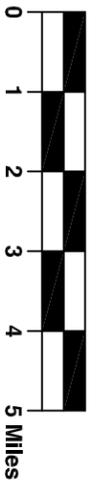
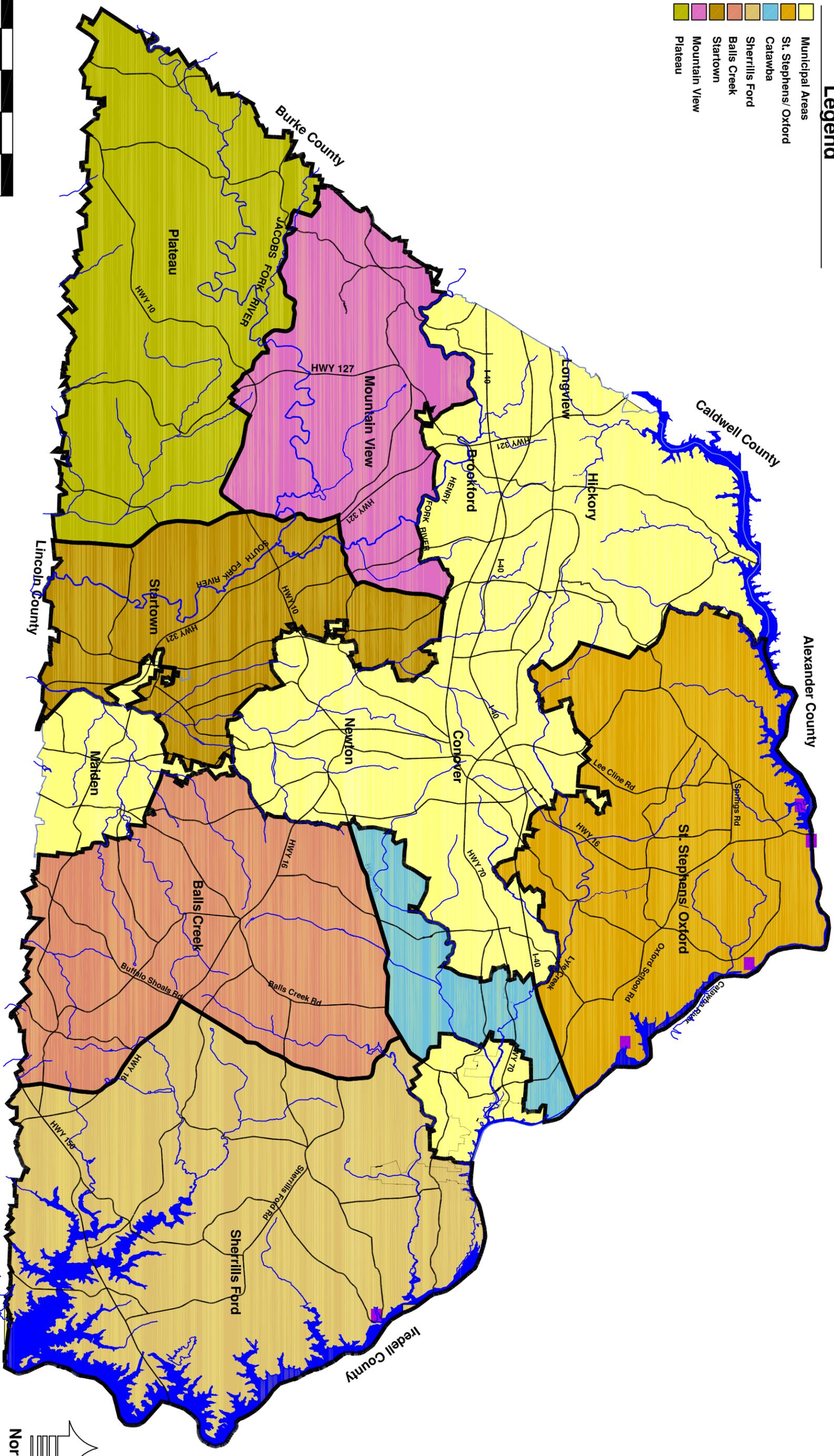
**Optional**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

# Legend

- Municipal Areas
- St. Stephens/ Oxford
- Catawba
- Sherrills Ford
- Balls Creek
- Startown
- Mountain View
- Plateau



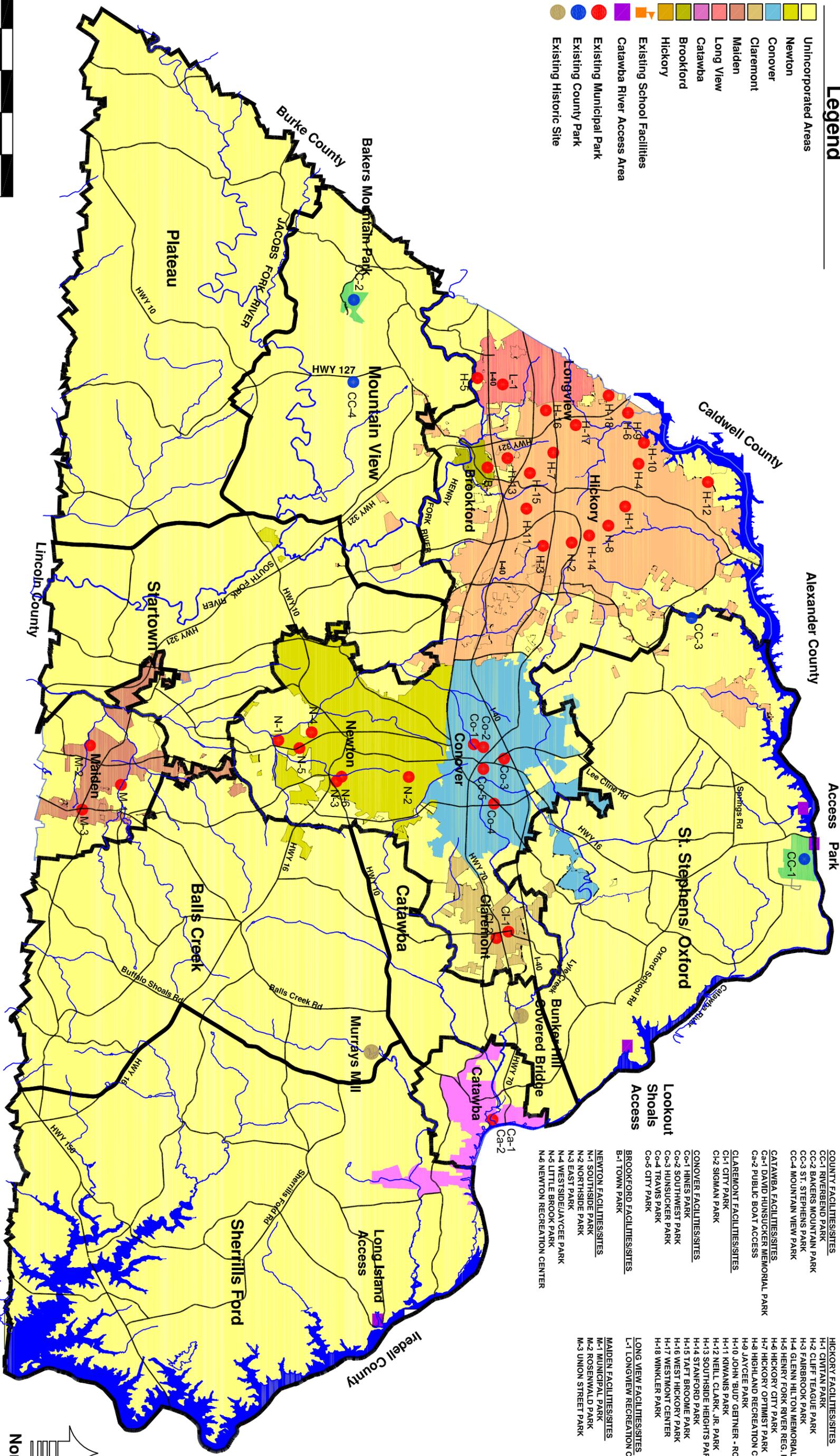
## COMPREHENSIVE PARKS MASTER PLAN

## Catawba County North Carolina

## Small Area Plans

# Legend

- Unincorporated Areas
- Newton
- Conover
- Claremont
- Maiden
- Long View
- Catawba
- Brookford
- Hickory
- Existing School Facilities
- Catawba River Access Area
- Existing Municipal Park
- Existing County Park
- Existing Historic Site



## Recreation Facilities in Catawba County

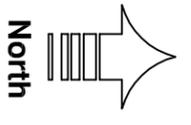
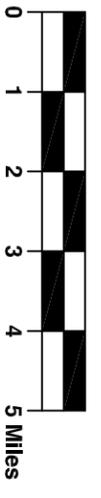
- |                                    |                                      |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>COUNTY FACILITIES/SITES</b>     | <b>HICKORY FACILITIES/SITES</b>      |
| CC-1 RIVERBEND PARK                | H-1 CIVITAN PARK                     |
| CC-2 BAKERS MOUNTAIN PARK          | H-2 CLIFF TEAGUE PARK                |
| CC-3 ST. STEPHENS PARK             | H-3 FAIRBROOK PARK                   |
| CC-4 MOUNTAIN VIEW PARK            | H-4 GLENN HILTON MEMORIAL PARK       |
| <b>CATAWBA FACILITIES/SITES</b>    | H-5 HENRY FORK RIVER REG. PARK       |
| Ca-1 DAVID HUNSUCKER MEMORIAL PARK | H-6 HICKORY CITY PARK                |
| Ca-2 PUBLIC BOAT ACCESS            | H-7 HICKORY OPTIMIST PARK            |
| <b>CLAREMONT FACILITIES/SITES</b>  | H-8 HIGHLAND RECREATION CENTER       |
| Cl-1 CITY PARK                     | H-9 JAYCEE PARK                      |
| Cl-2 SIGMAN PARK                   | H-10 JOHN 'BUD' GETNER - ROTARY PARK |
| <b>CONOVER FACILITIES/SITES</b>    | H-11 KIWANIS PARK                    |
| Co-1 HINES PARK                    | H-12 NEIL CLARK, JR. PARK            |
| Co-2 SOUTHWEST PARK                | H-13 SOUTHSIDE HEIGHTS PARK          |
| Co-3 HUNSUCKER PARK                | H-14 STANFORD PARK                   |
| Co-4 TRAVIS PARK                   | H-15 TAIT BROOME PARK                |
| Co-5 CITY PARK                     | H-16 WEST HICKORY PARK               |
| <b>BROOKFORD FACILITIES/SITES</b>  | H-17 WESTMONT CENTER                 |
| B-1 TOWN PARK                      | H-18 WINKLER PARK                    |
| <b>NEWTON FACILITIES/SITES</b>     | <b>LONG VIEW FACILITIES/SITES</b>    |
| N-1 SOUTHSIDE PARK                 | L-1 LONGVIEW RECREATION CENTER       |
| N-2 NORTHSIDE PARK                 | <b>MAIDEN FACILITIES/SITES</b>       |
| N-3 EAST PARK                      | M-1 MUNICIPAL PARK                   |
| N-4 WESTSIDE/JAYCEE PARK           | M-2 ROSEWALD PARK                    |
| N-5 LITTLE BROOK PARK              | M-3 UNION STREET PARK                |
| N-6 NEWTON RECREATION CENTER       |                                      |



# COMPREHENSIVE PARKS MASTER PLAN

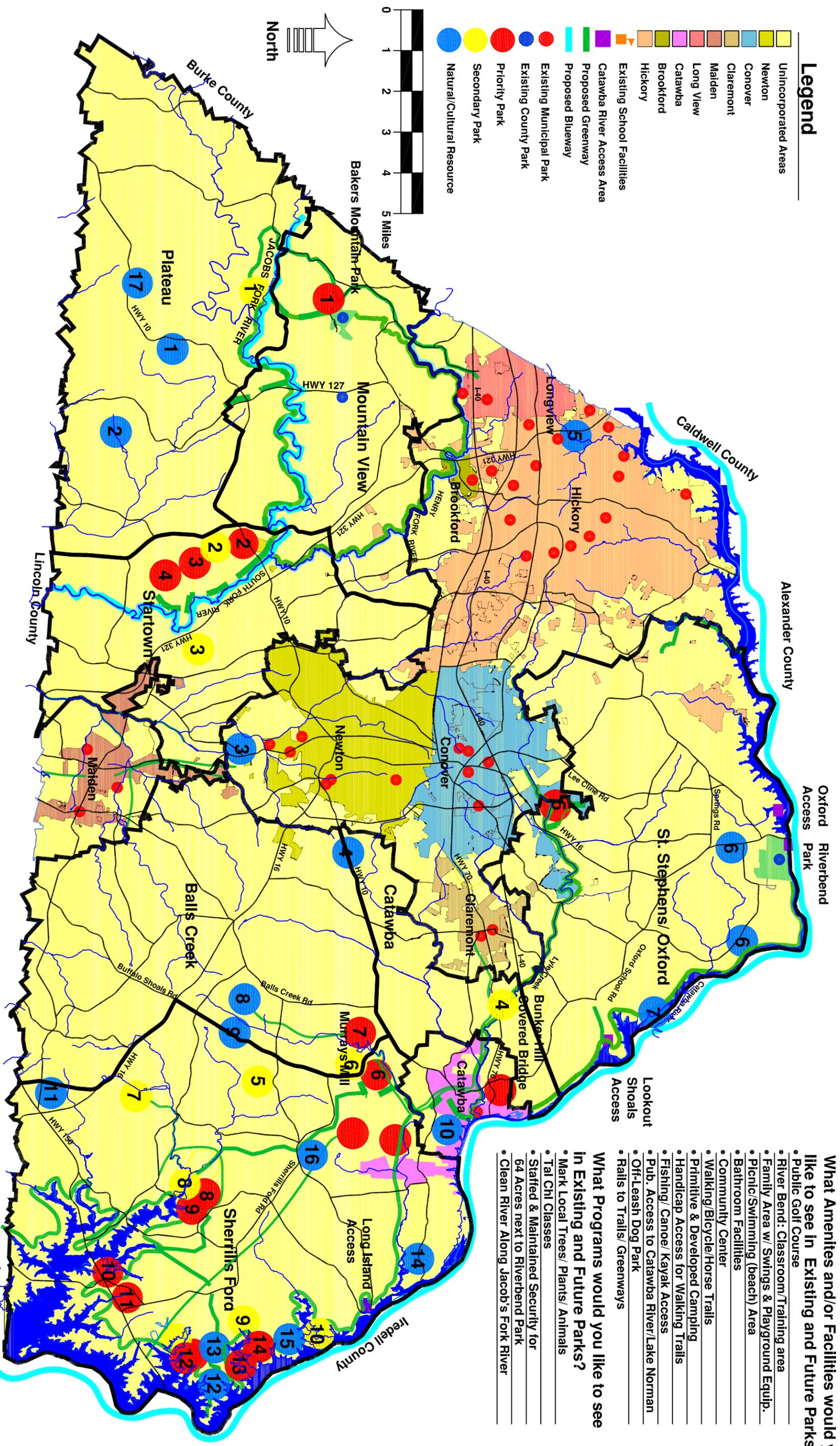
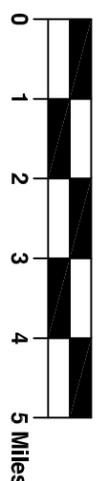
# Catawba County North Carolina

# Existing Public Parks and Recreation Facilities Map 2



### Legend

- Unincorporated Areas
- Newton
- Conover
- Claremont
- Maiden
- Long View
- Catawba
- Brookford
- Hickory
- Existing School Facilities
- Catawba River Access Area
- Proposed Greenway
- Proposed Blueway
- Existing Municipal Park
- Existing County Park
- Priority Park
- Secondary Park
- Natural/Cultural Resource



### What Amenities and/or Facilities would you like to see in Existing and Future Parks?

- Public Golf Course
- River Bend: Classroom/Training area
- Family Area w/ Swings & Playground Equip.
- Picnic/Swimming (beach) Area
- Bathroom Facilities
- Community Center
- Walking/Bicycle/Horse Trails
- Primitive & Developed Camping
- Handicap Access for Walking Trails
- Fishing/Canoe/Kayak Access
- Pub. Access to Catawba River/Lake Norman
- Off-Leash Dog Park
- Rails to Trails/ Greenways

### What Programs would you like to see in Existing and Future Parks?

- Mark Local Trees/ Plants/ Animals
- Tai Chi Classes
- Staffed & Maintained Security for 64 Acres next to Riverbend Park
- Clean River Along Jacob's Fork River

## Attachment 5 - Community Needs Assessment Summary

As part of the Community Meetings, participants were asked to place color coded dots for potential park priorities on a map of the entire County. The dots determine location as well as a possible description. The dots shown on Map 3 - Community Needs Assessment were placed on the map by participants in the Community Meetings and may not necessarily reflect the actual location. In addition, some dots were placed with no reference describing the desired intent other than a proposed park location. A red dot symbolizes a primary park/amenity; yellow symbolizes a secondary park/amenity; and blue symbolizes a natural/cultural resource. The dots were combined from all the Community Meetings to generate a Composite Community Needs Assessment Map. The following are descriptions that were noted with the corresponding dots as shown on the Community Needs Assessment Map; (\*#) indicates number of dots placed on map for the specific need.

### Red Dots

1. Additional Acreage at Bakers Mountain Park
2. Camping and Canoe Boat Launch
3. Park at Landfill
4. County Golf Course
5. Large Passive Park in floodplain (Conover)
6. Murrays Mill
7. Park and Greenway
8. Mountain Creek Park (\*2)
9. Primitive Camping and Swim Beach
10. Park near Village with water access
11. Park with lake access / beach / picnicking
12. Park on Lake Norman
13. Campground
14. Raccoon Track – Island Point Area

### Secondary Parks – Yellow Dots

1. Jacobs Fork River
2. Mountain Bike Park
3. Camping
4. Bunker Hill Covered Bridge Bike Trails
5. Bandy's Crossing Road – South Side
6. Murrays Mill (\*2)
7. Anderson Mountain
8. Mountain Creek Park (\*3)
9. Park by Raccoon Track
10. Park with canoe access

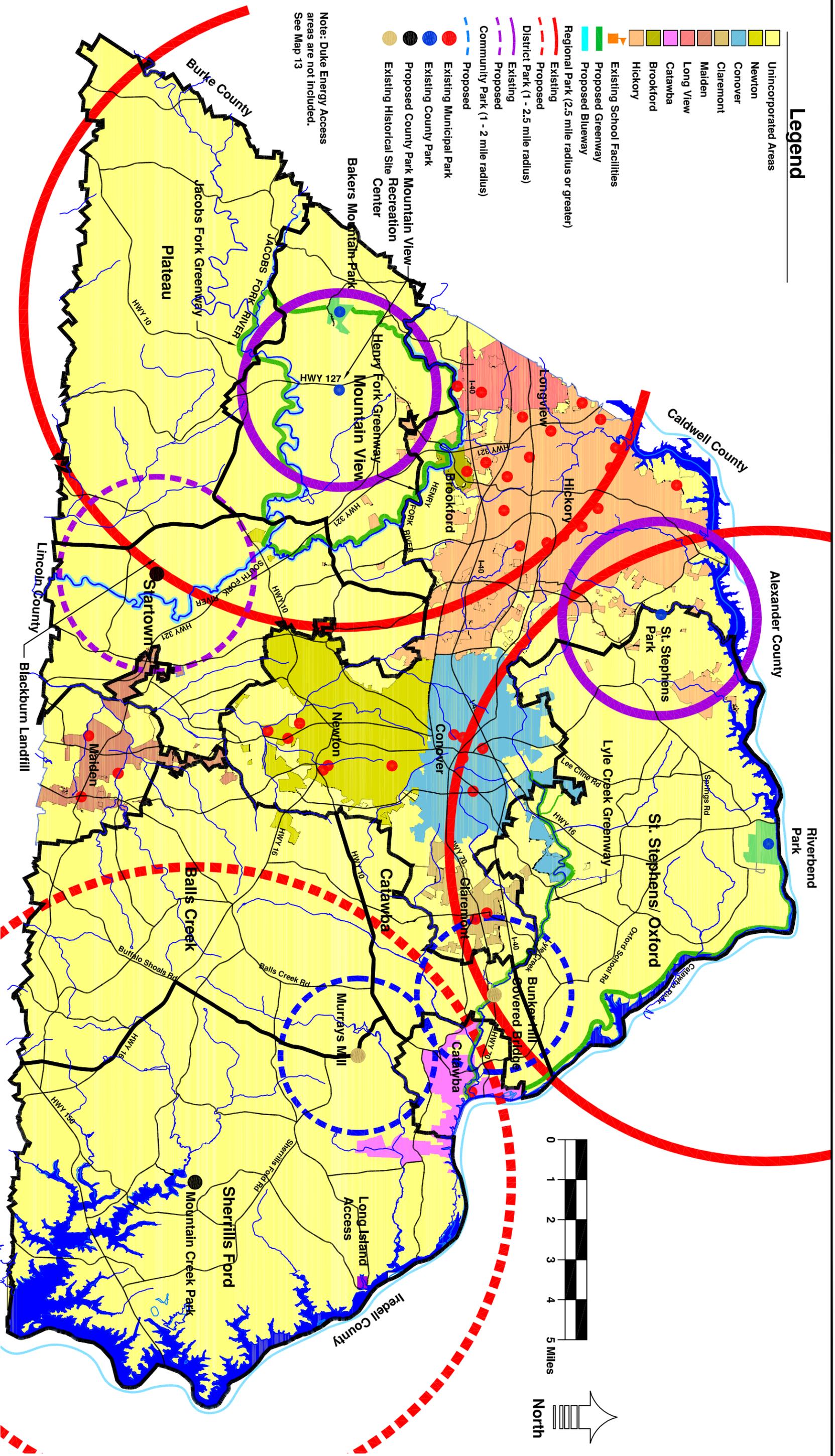
### Natural / Cultural Resource – Blue Dots

1. Jug Town
2. Harts Square
3. Maiden / Newton Rail Excursion
4. Scenic Byway
5. Railroad Excursion
6. Natural Resource
7. Canoe Trail
8. Campground
9. Balls Creek Campground
10. Catawba Historical District
11. Little Mountain Park
12. Sherrills Ford Crossing
13. Senior Center
14. Park in game lands that compliments sporting activities
15. Lake Norman State Park – Sherrills Ford/Adams Sherrills Crossing
16. Connect Hot Hole to Murrays Mill
17. Cat Square Pottery

# Legend

- Unincorporated Areas
- Newton
- Conover
- Claremont
- Maiden
- Long View
- Catawba
- Brookford
- Hickory
- Existing School Facilities
- Proposed Greenway
- Proposed Blueway
- Regional Park (2.5 mile radius or greater)
- Existing
- Proposed
- District Park (1 - 2.5 mile radius)
- Existing
- Proposed
- Community Park (1 - 2 mile radius)
- Existing
- Proposed
- Existing Municipal Park
- Existing County Park
- Proposed County Park Mountain View
- Existing Historical Site
- Recreation Center

Note: Duke Energy Access areas are not included. See Map 13



## COMPREHENSIVE PARKS MASTER PLAN

## Catawba County North Carolina

## Service Area Proposals and Recommendations Map 4

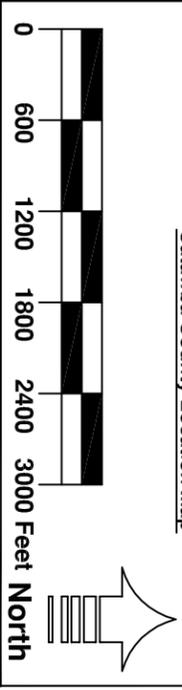
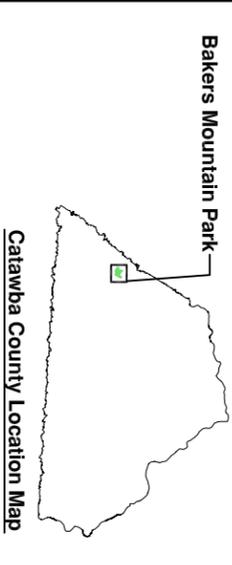
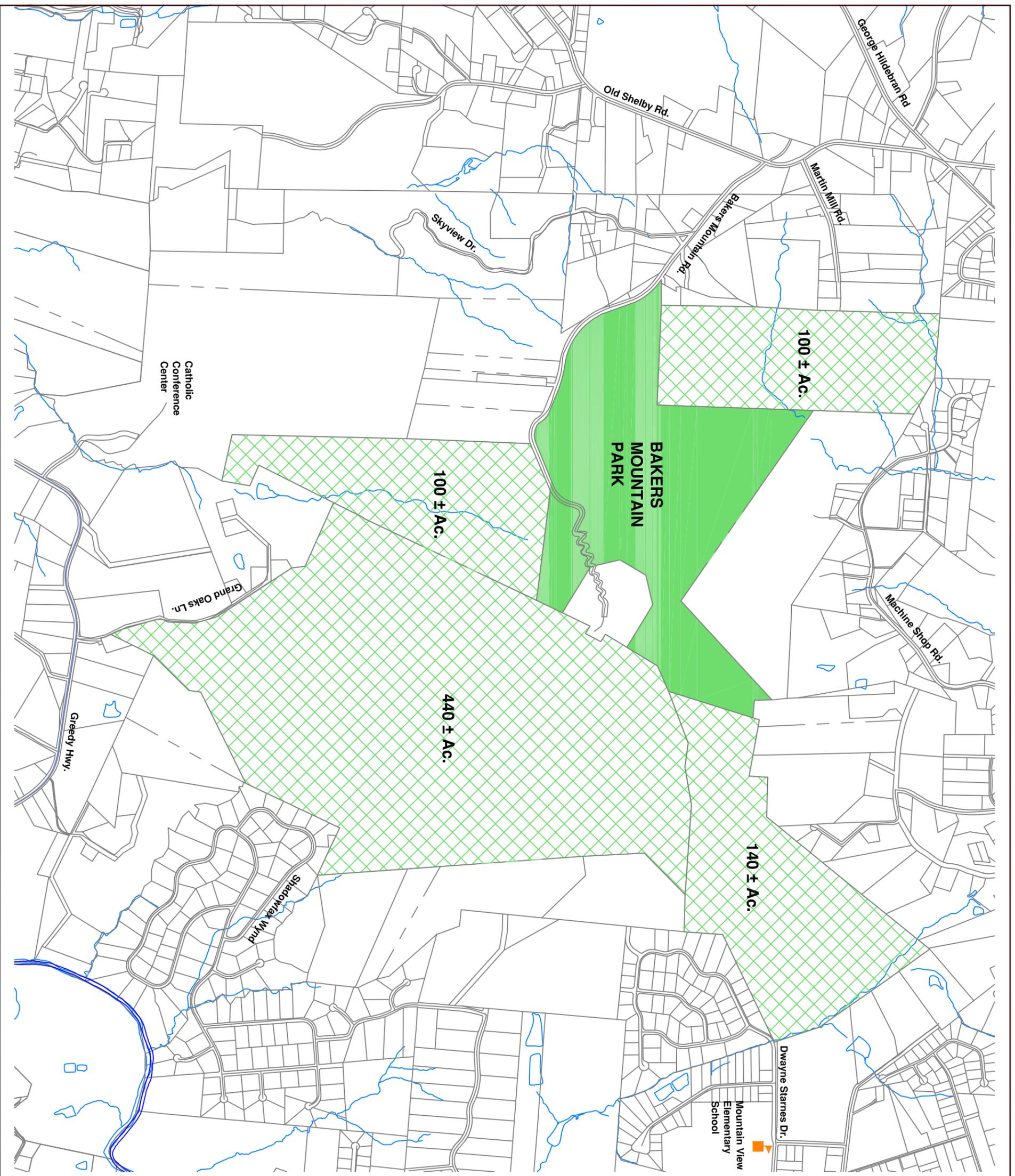
# Catawba County North Carolina COMPREHENSIVE PARKS MASTER PLAN

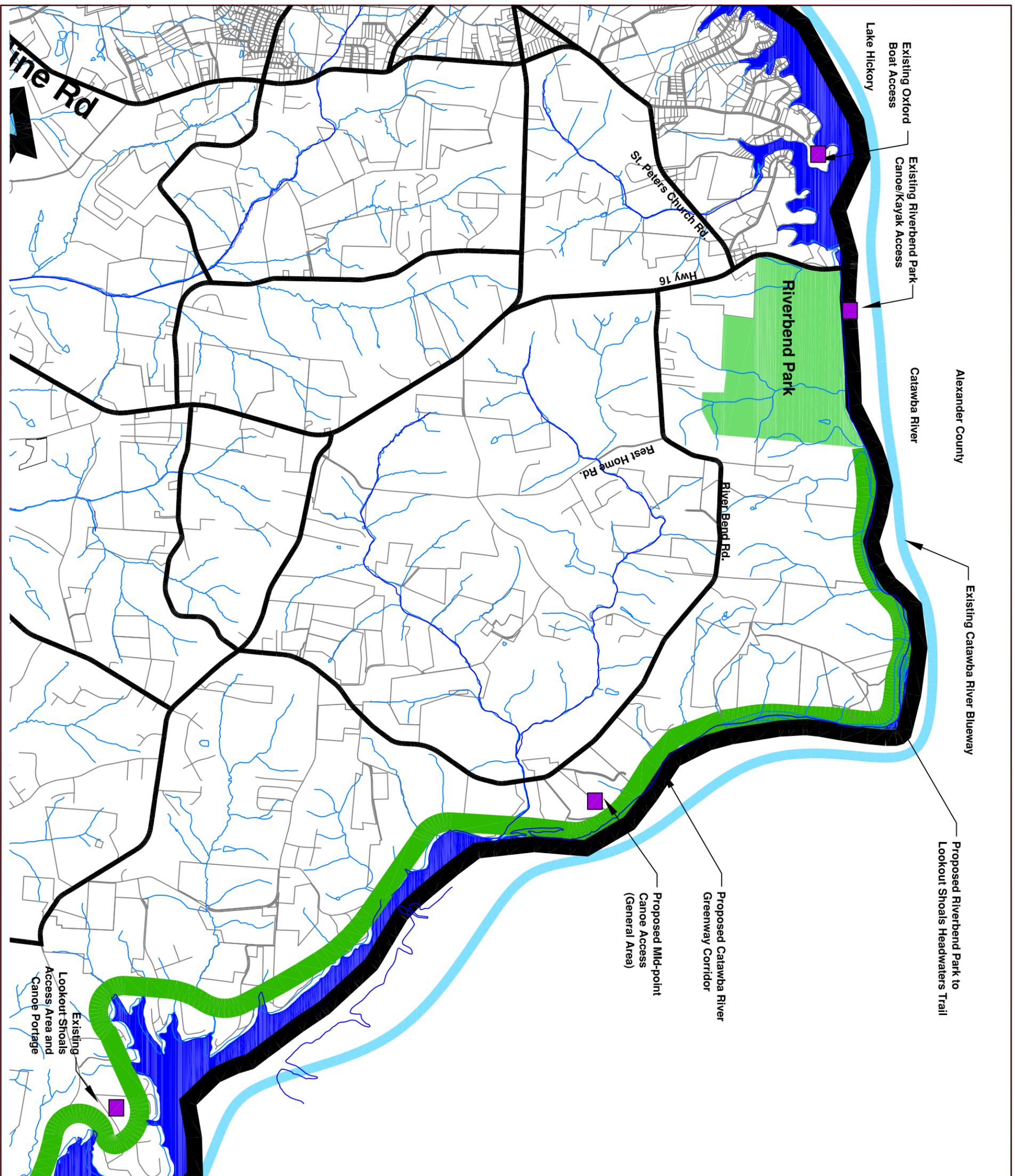
## Bakers Mountain Park

### Map 5

#### Legend

-  Existing Park
-  Naturally Significant Contiguous Large Acreage Parcel
-  Existing School Facilities

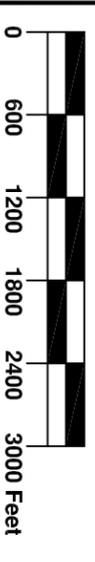
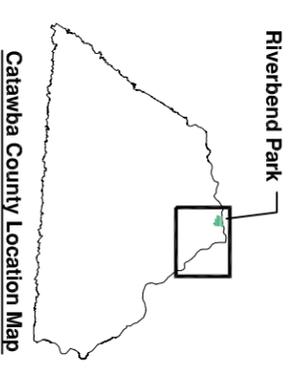




# Catawba County North Carolina COMPREHENSIVE PARKS MASTER PLAN

## Riverbend Park and Catawba River Greenway Map 6

- Legend**
- Existing Park
  - Boat Access
  - Blueway Corridor
  - Proposed Greenway Corridor



# Catawba County North Carolina

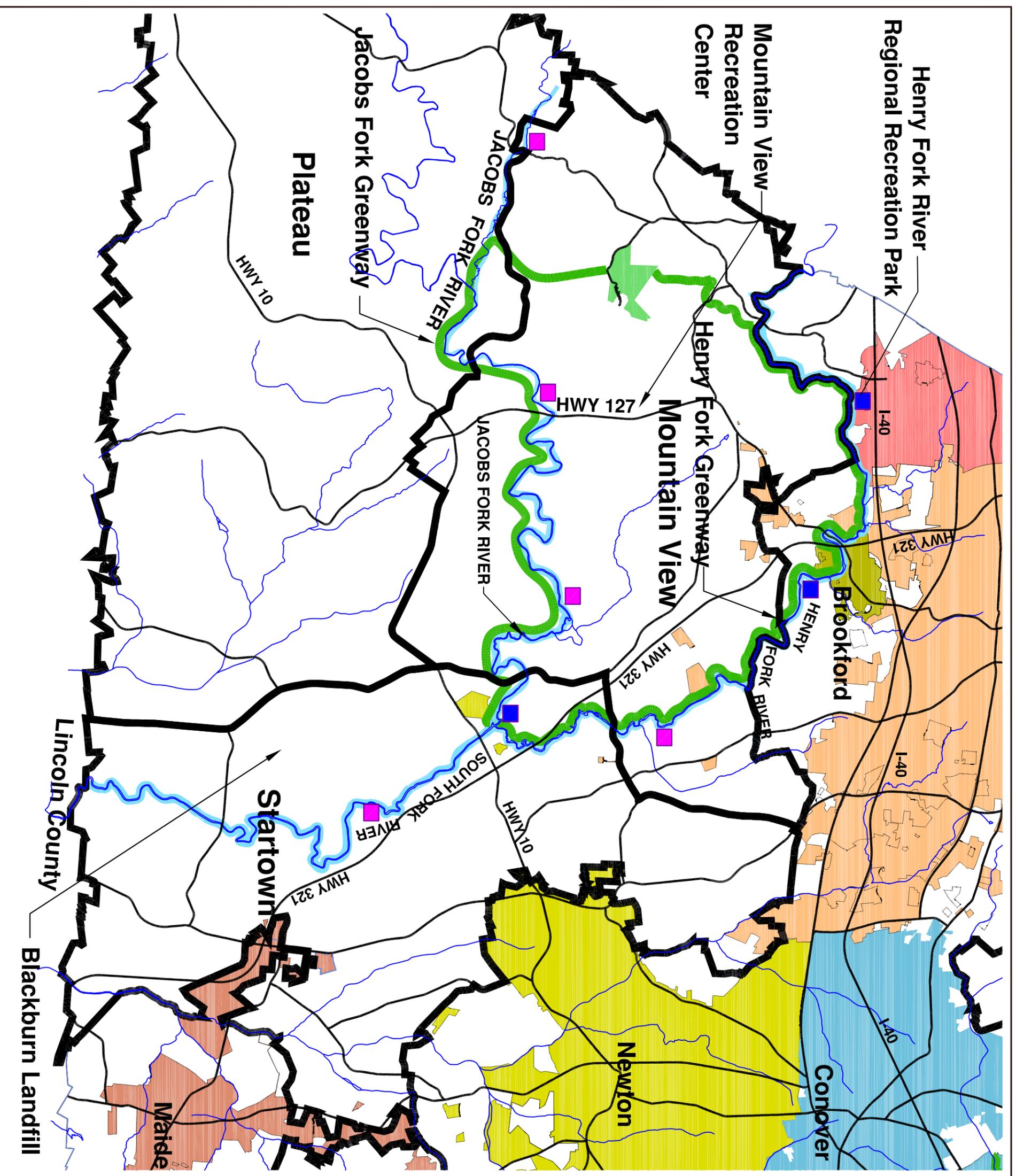
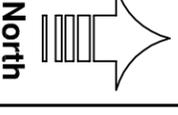
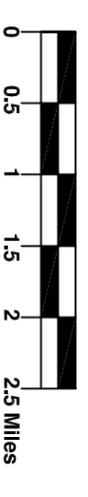
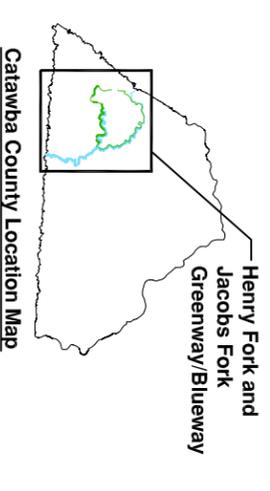
## COMPREHENSIVE PARKS MASTER PLAN

### Proposed Henry Fork and Jacob Fork Greenway/Blueway

Map 7

#### Legend

- Newton
- Conover
- Maiden
- Long View
- Brookford
- Hickory
- Existing River Access
- Proposed River Access
- Proposed River Access
- Proposed Blueway Corridor
- Proposed Greenway Corridor

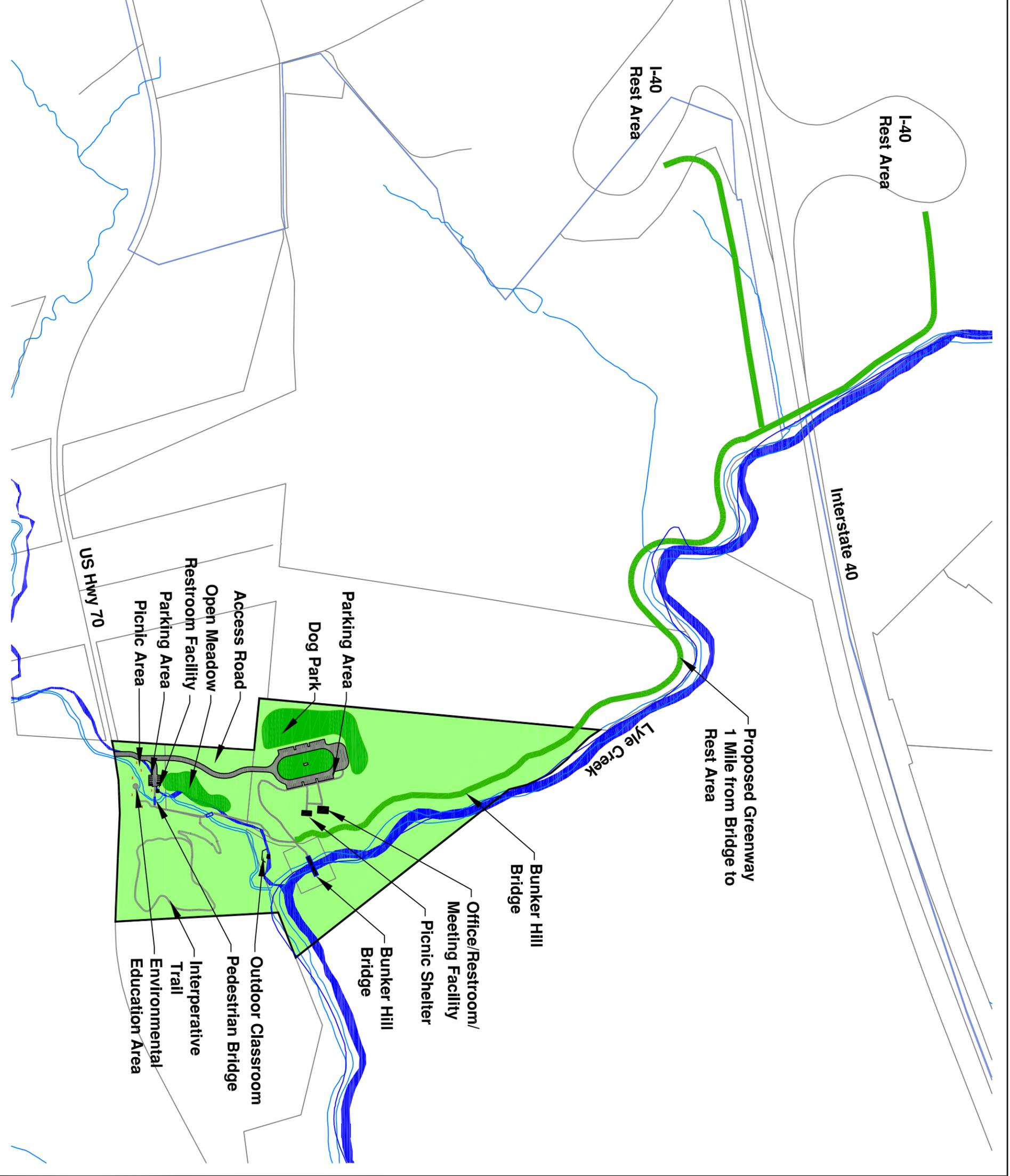


# Catawba County North Carolina

## COMPREHENSIVE PARKS MASTER PLAN

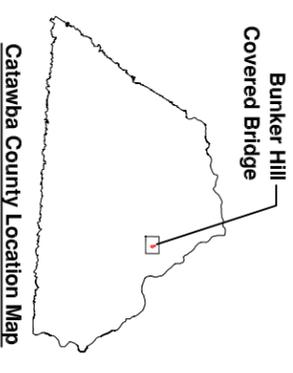
### Proposed Conceptual Plan for Bunker Hill Covered Bridge Area and I-40 Rest Area

Map 8



**Legend**

Proposed Greenway



# Catawba County North Carolina COMPREHENSIVE PARKS MASTER PLAN

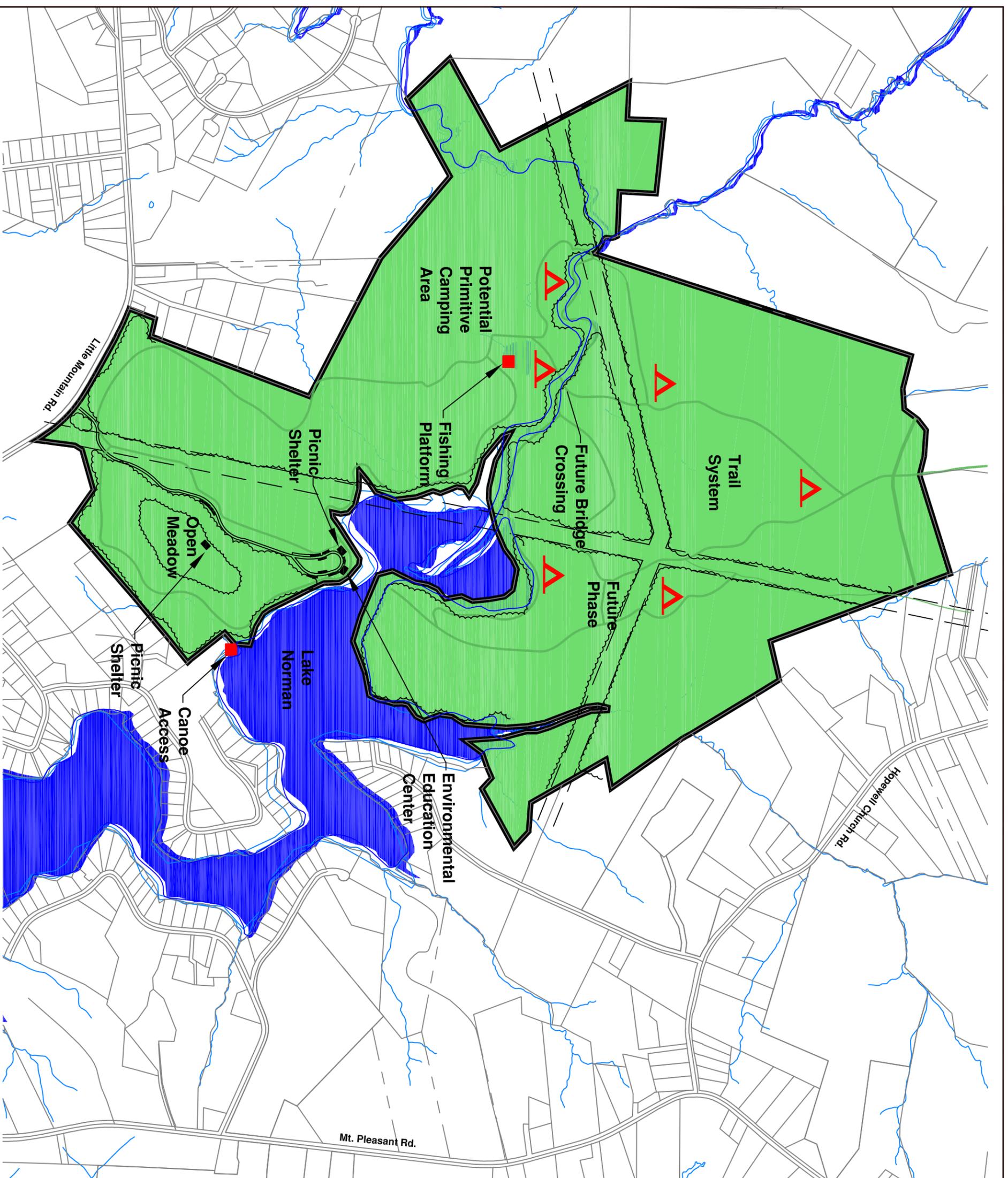
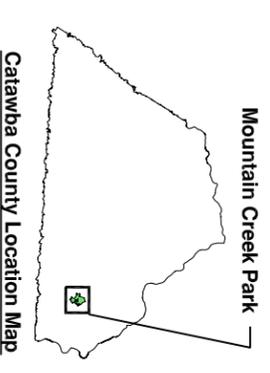
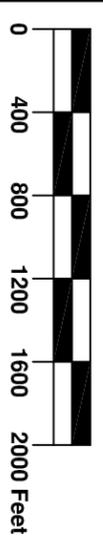
## Proposed Conceptual Mountain Creek Park

Map 9

### Legend

Approximate Acreage = 600

-  Primitive Campsite
-  Hiking Trail



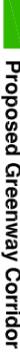
# Catawba County North Carolina

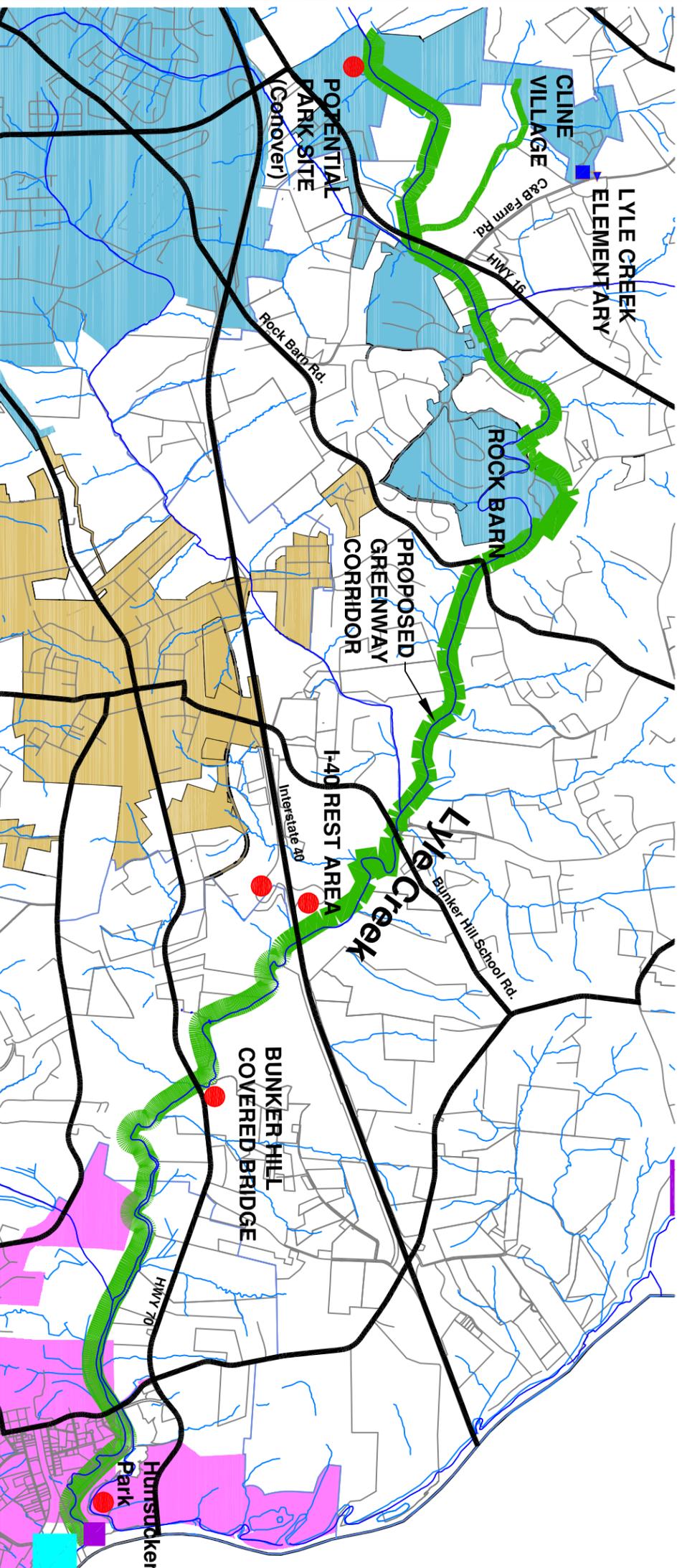
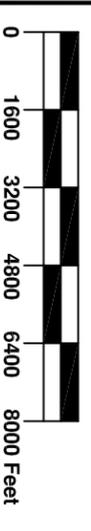
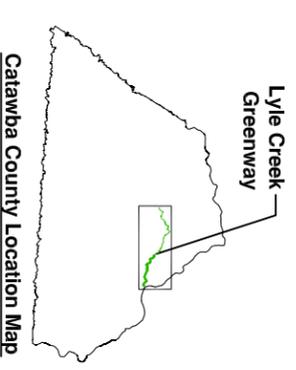
## COMPREHENSIVE PARKS MASTER PLAN

### Proposed Lyle Creek Greenway

Map 10

#### Legend

-  City of Conover
-  Town of Catawba
-  Town of Claremont
-  Existing School Facilities
-  River Access Area
-  Destination Site
-  Proposed Greenway Corridor



SCALE: 1" = 70'  
 DRAWING NO.: PROPOSED70  
 SHEET NO.: 2

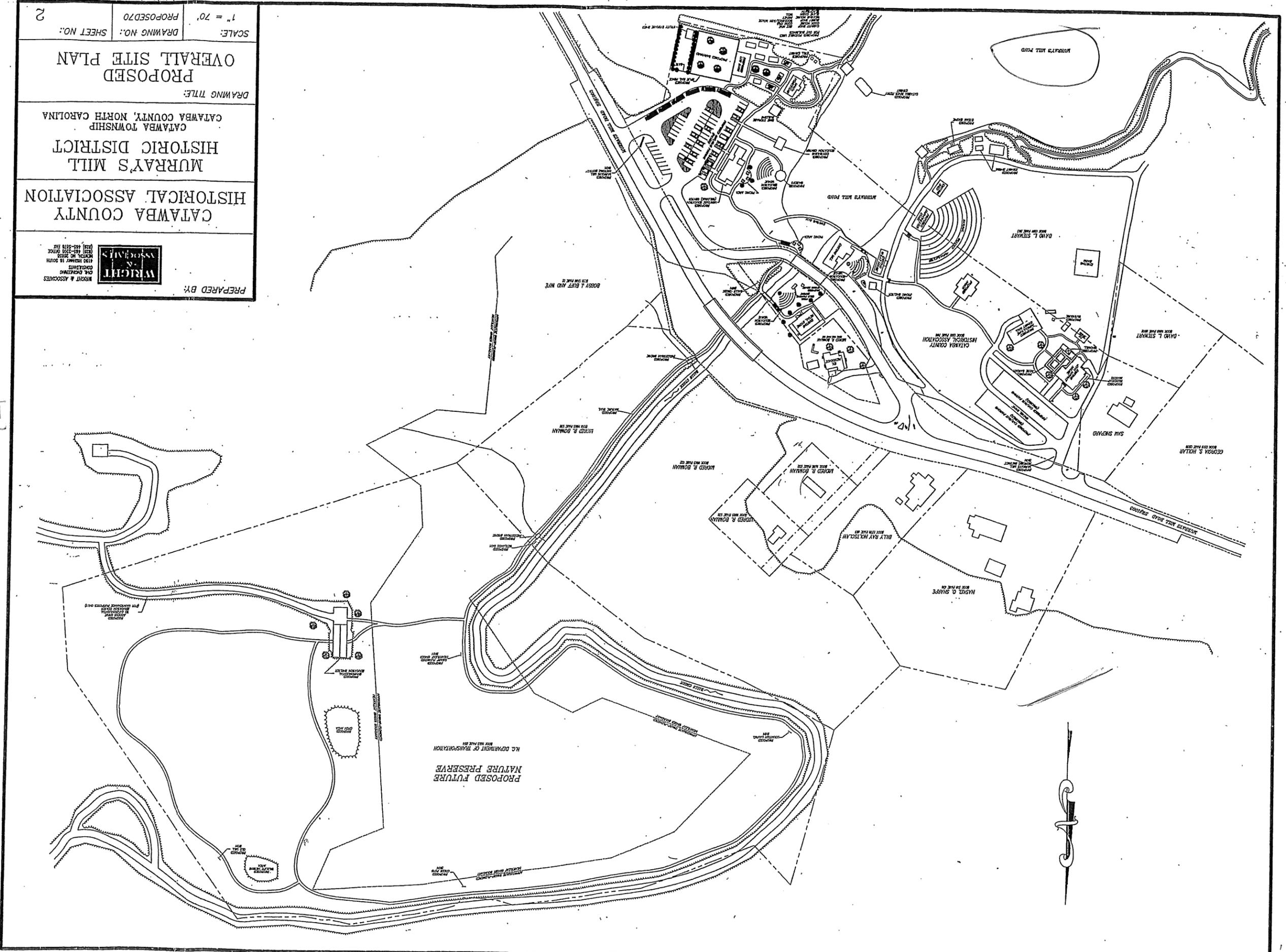
DRAWING TITLE:  
**PROPOSED OVERALL SITE PLAN**

**CATAWBA COUNTY HISTORIC DISTRICT**  
 CATAWBA TOWNSHIP  
 CATAWBA COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

**CATAWBA COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION**  
**MURRAY'S MILL HISTORIC DISTRICT**

PREPARED BY:  
  
 WRIGHT & ASSOCIATES  
 CONSULTANTS  
 4150 HICKORY TR. SOUTH  
 RENOIR, NC 28650  
 (828) 442-5978 FAX

*Don't want to show level to county*





PARKING AREA  
 GOLF CLUBHOUSE  
 PROPOSED 18 HOLE GOLF COURSE

POWER GENERATING FACILITY

RECREATIONAL FIELDS

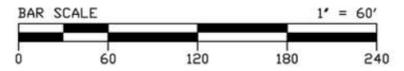
RECREATIONAL FIELDS

SOLID WASTE AREA

INDUSTRIAL PARK

**CONCEPTUAL SITE DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

**BLACKBURN MSW LANDFILL**  
 FOR  
 CATAWBA COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA  
 DATE: JULY 24, 2007

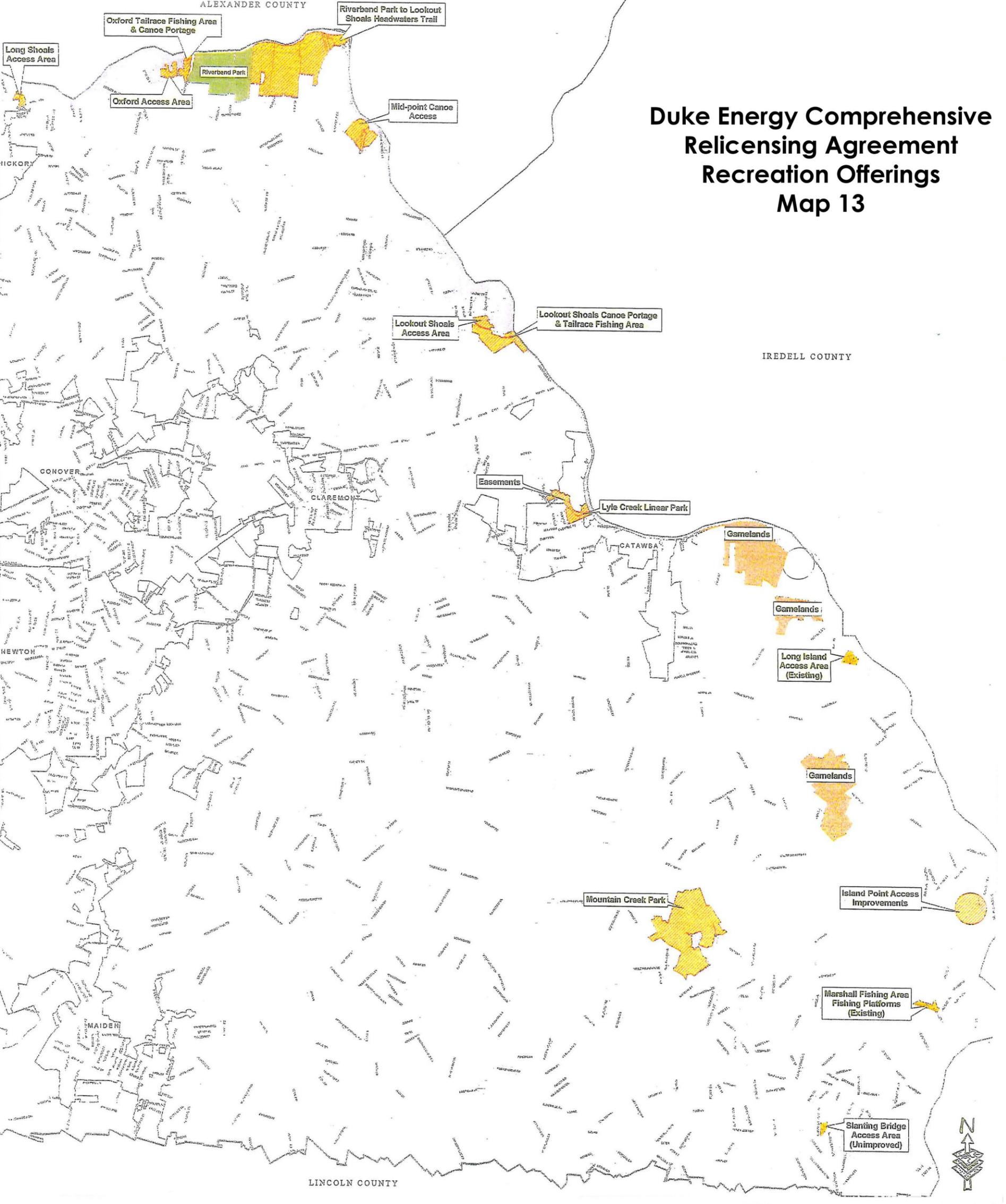


# Duke Energy Comprehensive Relicensing Agreement Recreation Offerings Map 13

ALEXANDER COUNTY

IREDELL COUNTY

LINCOLN COUNTY



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