

Attachment 5

Executive Summaries

Community Forum and Survey

2015 Parks Master Plan Update

Plan Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

Catawba County adopted the first Parks Master Plan in December 2007. Since this was the first master plan, and the Catawba County Parks system was flourishing and gaining patronage an update was anticipated in five to ten years.

MASTER PLAN DOCUMENT

The 2015 Master Plan (as in the original 2007 document) has seven sections:

- Section 1 Introduction – States Catawba County Parks mission and briefly outlines the goals of the Parks.
- Section 2 Population Trends and Projections – Looks at the County in its entirety, and breaks down these statistics by Small Area Plan.
- Section 3 Existing Plans and Documents – Ties existing documents to goals in the Parks Master Plan.
- Section 4 Existing Park Facilities – Identifies existing recreational facilities and programming opportunities countywide.
- Section 5 Recreation Needs Assessment – Contains results of the survey conducted during plan creation, and input from public forum participants.
- Section 6 Goals and Recommendations – Sites studies indicating the benefits of parks. Outlines steps that should be taken to provide Catawba County citizens with optimal park service.
- Section 7 Action Implementation Plan – Provides funding possibilities to realize plan goals.

PLAN CREATION PROCESS

The updated 2015 Plan used the same structure as the original 2007 Plan; however, all data and changes in park operations were updated. Updates include revised population and demographic data, additions of parkland, partnerships, sponsored activities, current needs assessment, and community expectations.

At the time of the 2007 Plan, needs assessments were heavily based on activity types compared to total population numbers. Currently, grant sources require needs assessments to be based on citizen desires and requests obtained from survey and in-person community input sessions.

Updating the 2015 Parks Master Plan involved several public drop-in sessions and a survey. The survey gathered in-depth data from both park users and non-park users. It was available at the public forum sessions, the parks, and on-line. A total of 655 completed surveys were received.

The drop-in session forums were advertised through area newspapers, County e-newsletters, website pages, social media, and e-mail blasts. Introductory phone calls were made to area non-profit groups, followed by e-mail “press releases”. Parks Advisory Committee members took several hard copies of advertising flyers and posted them at local businesses. They also forwarded electronic copies to their own membership organizations, contacts, friends, and family to invite and encourage attendance at the public forums.

Four community open house sessions were held to gather input, followed by one additional countywide forum to present the survey and input results and allow the public another opportunity for comment. The following table shows the dates, locations, and number of attendees at each open house.

| Date | Location | Attendance |
|-------------|---|-------------------|
| 2/18/14 | • Mountain View Southwest Library | 46 |
| 2/25/14 | • Catawba County Gov. Center, Newton | 41 |
| 2/27/14 | • Highland Recreation Center, Hickory | 27 |
| 3/5/14 | • Sherrills Ford-Terrell Fire & Rescue | 34 |
| 4/22/14 | • Catawba County Gov. Center, Newton – Review of results | 13 |
| | Total Attendees | 161 |

Large maps were displayed at each public forum showing:

- County Park Locations;
- Service Areas of Each Existing and Proposed Park;
- Carolina Thread Trail/Duke Relicensing/Agri-Tourism sites;
- Countywide Public Parks and Recreation Facilities with Amenities; and
- Churches.

In addition to the maps at the public forums were large “choice sheets”—one for each park—containing a list of amenities that were already in the park and others that were not in the park. The sheets were posted on the walls at the open houses, and each participant was given six dots which were to be placed on the amenities they felt were most important.

Section 5 Needs Assessment of the Plan details public forum and survey results. A summary can be seen below.

PUBLIC INPUT SUMMARY

The public open house forums and surveys revealed the following data and comments:

- Most people come to the parks for the outdoor experience and exercise/wellness opportunities;
- Operate on a six-day week schedule, and be staffed during open hours to enhance both safety and park maintenance. Fewer days of access impedes visitor's daily health hiking routines, the ability of schools to use parks, and loses competitive points under the grant programs. Hikers and dog park patrons appreciate staff for safety reasons;
- Favorite amenities were trails, with canoeing/kayaking, educational events, and picnicking also important;
- Improve existing trails;
- Add more trails;
- Expand park acreage when beneficial to park activities and natural habitats;
- Expand picnic and sitting areas;
- Add primitive camping to one or more parks;
- Add a community meeting/education center at Bakers Mountain and other sites as appropriate;
- Develop an expanded consistent schedule of guided environmental education programs for individuals and families. Invite elementary schools to have a park visit on the curriculum and use parks as outdoor labs for science and history classes;
- Add events featuring music, astronomy, art, and physical fitness sessions in the parks;
- Add mileage markers and identify the difficulty of park trails as severe, moderate, or easy to help the user determine the route that best matches their objective;
- Increase interpretative signage to identify environmental, natural, or historical features;
- Continue to purpose and implement innovative concepts to help the park system provide health, educational, and economic benefits;
- Continue to enhance partnerships, and approach new potential partners to create mutually beneficial outcomes. Ex. CVCC, LR, Science Center, Elementary Schools;
- Bunker Hill was chosen more often as the higher priority in the development of future parks; and
- A park is needed in the southeast area of the County.

RECOMMENDATIONS – AS FUNDING BECOMES AVAILABLE

Section 6 Goals and Recommendations of the Plan includes a detailed listing of citizen and staff recommendations. Recommendations are categorized as General Recommendations, Recommendations for Existing Parks, Recommendations for Future Parks, and Existing Special Use Facility Parks. Recommendations in each category are listed in the order of priority to the extent practical; however, many of these

recommendations should be occurring simultaneously. A summary of recommendations can be seen below.

General Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Operating Hours and Staffing

- Catawba County Parks should be operated and staffed on a schedule that includes at least six days a week with seasonal hours and holidays.

Recommendation #2: Facility and Program Accessibility

- Assess all facilities to ensure compliance with current Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.

Recommendation #3: Design and Daily Maintenance

- Park facilities should be maintained and improved so they are inviting places which are desirable to visit.

Recommendation #4: Contiguous Property Acquisition

- When property that is contiguous to existing and future parks becomes available, efforts should be made to evaluate, and acquire the property if deemed beneficial.

Recommendation #5: Acceptance of Fee Simple Land Donation

- Land donations should be accepted for use as a park, or accepted and sold with funds going in the Parks Trust Fund for other park improvements or land purchase.

Recommendation #6: Educational Programming

- Expand the frequency of scheduled guided environmental education programs.

Recommendation #7: Stewardship/Volunteerism Programs

- Develop stewardship and community volunteer programs for the Parks.

Recommendation #8: Parks Advisory Committee

- Continue to gain insight from the Parks Advisory Committee to further expand ways that the Parks can help provide health, educational, and economic benefits to Catawba County citizens.

Recommendation #9: Signage

- Expand the signage system for parks and greenways.

Recommendation #10: Intergovernmental Cooperation

- Continue to meet periodically with the Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG), municipalities and school systems within Catawba

County to discuss development and recreation projects that are planned or are underway within the County.

Recommendation #11: Connectivity and Greenway Funding

- Connect greenways and public facilities through trails. Protect natural habitat corridors through connected preservation buffers.

Recommendation #12: Park Donations.

- Allow for monetary park donations which can be designated for specific purposes.

Recommendation #13: Walkable Communities

- Promote land uses and site designs that make walking/bicycling convenient and enjoyable.

Recommendation #14: Partnership Agreements

- County staff should meet with existing and potential partners to determine needs and explore opportunities.

Recommendation #15: Green Building

- It is recommended that the Parks implement green building components into existing and future park facilities to conserve energy and help educate the public on beneficial conservation techniques.

Recommendation #16: Update/Complete Beneficial Planning Documents.

- Update/complete the *Inventory of Significant Natural Areas of Catawba County*.

Recommendation #17: Recreation Marketing Plan and Communications

- Develop a countywide marketing plan for the parks.

Recommendations for Existing Parks

Recommendation #18: Bakers Mountain Park

- Increase parking since often there are not enough spaces during weekend peak times or for educational events. Due to a lack of land area with suitable topography for parking, additional land would need to be purchased;
- Purchase additional land suitable for expanded parking. See Appendix *Map 6 - Bakers Mountain Park* for adjacent parcels that meet the requirements for the Parks Division;
- Renovate and improve existing trails;
- Design and build additional trails;
- Install additional park benches along trails;
- Construct an indoor meeting building;
- Expand educational programming; and
- Consider primitive camping.

Recommendation #19: Riverbend Park

- Renovate and improve existing trails;
- Design and build additional trails;
- Install additional park benches along trails;
- Add a natural or conventional playground designed to be compatible with the environment. There are no other playground facilities in the general area;
- Improve/enlarge water access; and
- Consider primitive camping. It is recommended that the County add approximately 20 camp sites at Riverbend Park. A 24-hour park staff presence would be needed when facilities are in use.

Recommendation #20: St. Stephens Community Park

- Expand the dog park to include a separate section for small dogs;
- Add more amenities to the dog parks;
- Renovate, improve and pave existing trails;
- Design and build additional trails;
- Install additional park benches along trails; and
- Obtain land and expand the park into the unused land behind Clyde Campbell Elementary School which abuts St. Stephens.

Recommendation #21: Mountain View Recreation Center

- Meet with the Recreation Resources Services (RRS) representative to review grant obligations and render an opinion on priorities, accessibility requirements, and possible functionally obsolete amenities; and
- Periodically review contractual agreement for maintenance and operations with Mountain View Recreation Association.

Recommendation #22: Birding Affiliations

- Continue to participate in the NC Birding Trail program.

Recommendations for Future Parks**Recommendation #23: Mountain Creek Park (Future)**

- Water amenities including swimming, boat, canoe and kayak access, and fishing areas;
- Trails: natural surface, mountain biking trails and paved trails;
- Park benches along trails;
- Picnic facilities;
- Multi-purpose building;
- Primitive camping; and
- Playground equipment: natural or conventional facilities which fit into the environment.

Recommendation #24: Trails: Greenways, Blueways, and Bike Paths

- Continue to implement the recommendations of the Carolina Thread Trail and the Western Piedmont Council of Government Bike Plan.

Existing Special Use Facility Parks

Recommendation #25: Bunker Hill Covered Bridge Park and Greenway (Future)

- Multi-use building providing educational and community meeting space for a minimum of 50 occupants, restrooms, and office facility;
- Paved trails meeting ADA requirements and natural surface walking trails designed to be compatible with topographical constraints;
- Additional park benches along trails;
- More picnic facilities; and
- An outdoor amphitheater.

Recommendation #26: Murray's Mill (Future)

- Facilities for educational and community meetings, restrooms, and office;
- Paved trails meeting ADA requirements and natural surface walking trails designed to be compatible with topographical constraints;
- Additional park benches along trails; and
- Picnic facilities.

Priorities for Development

- Maintenance/improvements to existing parks;
- Land acquisition for contiguous property as needed and land becomes available;
- Bunker Hill Covered Bridge development; and
- Mountain Creek Park development.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

A summary of Community Forum “choice sheet” responses can be found in *Section 5.3 Executive Summary – Community Meetings*. A detailed listing of responses can be seen in *Sec. 5.4 Community Meeting Data Collection*.

A summary of Survey responses can be found in *Sec. 5.5. Executive Summary—Community Survey*. Responses to each survey question can be found in *Section 5.6 Community Survey Data Collection*.

WORKSHOP/APPROVAL DATES

The Parks Advisory Committee (PAC) had several workshops to determine objectives for the Parks Master Plan, create a survey, determine open house formats, dates and locations, and develop “choice sheets” which were to be used at the forums to gather input. PAC workshops were held on 10/1/13, 11/5/13, 12/3/13, 2/4/14. A special meeting was held on 4/16/14 to view survey results prior to the final public forum. Another special meeting was held on 6/18/14 to discuss the draft Plan and make any

additional revisions. PAC members were involved throughout the process in distributing flyers and surveys and attending all public forums. On 10/8/14, the Parks Advisory Committee met to make final revisions and recommended the Plan to the Planning Board and Board of Commissioners for adoption. The Planning Board voted unanimously to recommend the plan to the Board of Commissioners on 10/27/14. The Board of Commissioners approved the Plan unanimously on 5/18/15.

2015 parks Master Plan Update

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – COMMUNITY MEETINGS

The Parks Advisory Committee (PAC) had several workshops to determine objectives for the Parks Master Plan, create a survey, determine open house formats, dates and locations, and develop “choice sheets” which were to be used at the forums to gather input. PAC workshops were held on 10/1/13, 11/5/13, 12/3/13, 2/4/14. A special meeting was held on 4/16/14 to view survey results prior to the final public forum. Another special meeting was held on 6/18/14 to discuss the draft Plan and make any additional revisions. PAC members were involved throughout the process in distributing flyers and surveys and attending all public forums. On 10/8/14, the Parks Advisory Committee met to make final revisions and recommended the Plan to the Planning Board and Board of Commissioners for adoption. The Planning Board voted unanimously to recommend the plan to the Board of Commissioners on 10/27/14. The Board of Commissioners approved the Plan unanimously on 5/18/15.

The forums were advertised through area newspapers, County e-newsletters, the County, Planning, and Parks website pages, social media, and e-mail “press releases” to non-profit groups including: Lions Club, Garden Club, Friends of the Library, Rotary Club, and Optimist Club.

Flyers advertising the public forums were distributed by Parks Advisory Committee members to local neighborhoods, churches, workplaces, libraries, civic organizations, local businesses and personal contacts. Four community open house sessions were held to gather input, with one additional forum to present the survey and input session results and give the public another opportunity for comment. A total of 161 people attended.

Large maps were displayed featuring a variety of issues. Attendees were encouraged to mark up these maps and add any information they felt pertinent. They were also asked to indicate which churches had recreational amenities.

In addition to the maps were large “choice sheets”—one for each park—containing a list of amenities that were already in the park and others that were not in the park. Participants were asked to indicate their favorite current amenities and others they would like added to each park. As expected, people generally chose amenities in the park closest to where they lived. Some participants placed all their dots on a single amenity.

Choice Sheet Analysis

An analysis was done from the “choice sheets” for the park system overall, and also for each individual park. Generally throughout the park system, participants wanted the parks to operate on a six-day per week schedule and requested more trails, both natural

and paved, and additional trail maintenance. Water access and picnic facilities were highly desired. Primitive camping was requested in several parks as there is currently no place where groups could camp in Catawba County.

People wanted the facilities necessary to conduct both environmental and historical programming along with proper interpretive signage. Catawba County's mission is to provide passive recreation to augment, and not duplicate active amenities already provided by the municipalities and non-profits. As such, the County's needs analysis looks at passive and educational options that enhance citizen's quality of life. Examination of the amenities chosen revealed the following more in-depth data:

Catawba County Park System – Overall Public Input Summary

The public open house forums and surveys revealed the following data and comments:

- Most people come to the parks for the outdoor experience and exercise/wellness opportunities;
- Operate on a six-day week schedule, and be staffed during open hours to enhance both safety and park maintenance. Fewer days of access impedes visitor's daily health hiking routines, the ability of schools to use parks, and loses competitive points under the grant programs. Hikers and dog park patrons appreciate staff for safety reasons;
- Favorite amenities were trails, with canoeing/kayaking, educational events, and picnicking also important;
- Improve existing trails;
- Add more trails;
- Expand park acreage when beneficial to park activities and natural habitats;
- Expand picnic and sitting areas;
- Add primitive camping to one or more parks;
- Add a community meeting/education center at Bakers Mountain and other sites as appropriate;
- Develop an expanded consistent schedule of guided environmental education programs for individuals and families. Invite elementary schools to have a park visit on the curriculum and use parks as outdoor labs for science and history classes;
- Add events featuring music, astronomy, art, and physical fitness sessions in the parks;
- Add mileage markers and identify the difficulty of park trails as severe, moderate, or easy to help the user determine the route that best matches their objective;
- Increase interpretative signage to identify environmental, natural, or historical features;
- Continue to purpose and implement innovative concepts to help the park system provide health, educational, and economic benefits;
- Continue to enhance partnerships, and approach new potential partners to create mutually beneficial outcomes. Ex. CVCC, LR, Science Center, Elementary Schools;
- Bunker Hill was chosen more often as the higher priority in the development of future parks; and

- A park is needed in the southeast area of the County.

The following breakdowns for each park details the citizen input data gathered and also a joint staff/Parks Advisory Committee (PAC) summary recommendation derived from citizen input and issues brought forth by staff and PAC members.

Riverbend Park

Staff/PAC Recommendation Summary

- Renovate existing facilities and infrastructure to include the river overlook deck; parking/asphalt repair; entrance sign maintenance; informational sign replacement for consistency; painting, floor covering, fixtures, and roof replacement for office and restroom building; pressure washing building exteriors; pressure washing and resealing picnic shelters; and table/chair replacement in the educational building;
- Renovate and improve existing trails;
- Design and build additional trails;
- Install additional park benches along trails;
- Add a natural or conventional playground designed to be compatible with the environment. There are no other playground facilities in the general area;
- Water access should be improved/enlarged; and
- Primitive camping should be considered. It is recommended that the County add approximately 20 camp sites at Riverbend Park. A 24-hour park staff presence would be needed when facilities are in use.

Citizen Input

- The three most popular amenities were trail related, with 35 choosing natural surface trails, 19 choosing paved trails, and 18 choosing natural surface mountain bike trails;
- Boat, canoe, kayak access was the next most popular at 17 picks; and
- Horseback trails, playgrounds, splash pads, and primitive camping, and dog parks also ranked very high.

Riverbend has approximately 12 miles of natural hiking trails, but does not have any paved trails. The mountain bike trail system is in the process of being expanded. Horseback riding was permitted in the past, but was discontinued due to a lack of people using the amenity, and high maintenance associated with this use. Primitive camping is desired, particularly by scouting groups, as this amenity is currently not offered in Catawba County.

Bakers Mountain Park

Staff/PAC Recommendation Summary

- Renovate existing facilities and infrastructure to include painting, floor covering, welcome sign renovation, building sign replacement, map stand replacement, border fence replacement, and pressure washing/resealing shelters.

- Parking should be added since often there are not enough spaces during weekend peak times or for educational events. Due to a lack of space with suitable topography for parking, additional land would need to be purchased.
- Purchase additional land suitable for expanded parking. (See Appendix *Map 6 - Bakers Mountain Park*) for adjacent parcels that meet the requirements for the Parks Division;
- Renovate and improve existing trails;
- Design and build additional trails;
- Install additional park benches along trails;
- An indoor meeting space should be constructed;
- Educational programming should be expanded; and
- Primitive camping should be considered.

Citizen Input

- Trail related requests ranked as the top three choices, with 33 choosing paved greenways, 22 requesting improvement of existing trails, and 29 choosing natural surface trails;
- Primitive Camping ranked as the next most popular at 22 picks; and
- Splash pad, native mature forest, community meeting/education center, playgrounds and educational programming also ranked very high.

Bakers Mountain has approximately six miles of natural surface hiking trails, and a ¼ mile pedestrian paved trail. Additional parking is needed to provide space for weekend or educational visitors. Primitive camping is desired, particularly by scouting groups, as this amenity is currently not offered in Catawba County. A community meeting room is wanted so school programs can be offered that include an indoor presentation followed by an outdoor nature walk.

St Stephens Park

Staff/PAC Recommendation Summary

- Expand the dog park to include a separate section for small dogs;
- Add amenities to the dog parks;
- Renovate, improve and pave existing trails;
- Design and build additional trails;
- Install additional park benches along trails; and
- Obtain land and expand the park into the unused land behind Clyde Campbell Elementary School which abuts St. Stephens.

Citizen Input

- Sand volleyball was a “write-in” request, and the most desired amenity with 36 picks.
- The dog park was the next most popular amenity with 12 picks.
- Trails were also ranked as very popular, with 11 choosing natural surface trails, and 10 wanting paved trails.

This existing 9.1 acre park facility had traditionally been operated by the City of Hickory as an active recreation facility. However, Catawba County assumed operation in 2008 and staffs it as a passive facility with a dog park. The dog park is highly used, with patrons and their dogs coming to the park every day the park is open. Due to the dog park and being a community park in a highly populated area, most patrons use the park every day that it is open. It is recommended that the unused land behind Clyde Campbell Elementary School which abuts St. Stephens become part of the park. Discussions should be held with school personnel to consider the possibility of forming an educational partnership. Proximity of the two establishments would facilitate using the park as an outdoor lab for science classes while doing nature hikes which could help fulfill the physical activity requirements for students. Sand volleyball was a desired amenity; however, Catawba County Parks mission is to provide passive recreation so a sand volleyball court is most likely not possible. Space and topography restraints would make installing a court difficult.

Bunker Hill Park (future)

Staff/PAC Recommendation Summary

- Multi-use building providing educational and community meeting space for a minimum of 50 occupants, restrooms, office facility;
- Paved trails meeting ADA requirements and natural surface walking trails designed to be compatible with topographical constraints;
- Install additional park benches along trails;
- Picnic facilities; and
- An outdoor amphitheater.

Facilities must be designed to ADA standards with sensitivity to the environmental and historic nature of the site.

Citizen Input

- Paved trails were the most desired amenity with 43 requests, and natural surface trails at 29 picks;
- Educational programs/guided tours/historical interpretation was the next most popular at 40 picks;
- Educational requests were very popular, wanting a community meeting/education center (18 picks) for educational programming, and interpretative signage (14 picks); and
- Restrooms, picnic facilities, and an outdoor amphitheater were also requested.

Catawba County Parks Division is working with the Catawba County Historical Association to continue developing and improving a passive park to provide an expanded park with historical and environmental opportunities. The historic covered bridge, historic roadbeds, and rare plant species are attractions of the park. The County and Historical Association have been working together in promoting and enhancing the historic bridge, through the provision of improved access and the development of facilities for the park. In addition, the master plan proposes a one-mile, multi-use trail from the park to connect to the I-40 rest area along Lyle Creek. This connection would

allow visitors from across the nation (who stop at the rest area) the opportunity to visit 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 7 - Bunker Hill Covered Bridge Park Concept Plan*)

To develop this vision, there is collaboration between Catawba County Parks, Catawba County Historical Association and the State of North Carolina. In addition to potential funding possibilities, this partnership allows the Parks to assist with the maintenance and development of park amenities and facilities, therefore allowing the historical society to dedicate their efforts to educational programming and maintaining the historical structures.

Murray's Mill Park (future)

Staff/PAC Recommendation Summary

- Provide educational and community meeting space for a minimum of 50 occupants, restrooms, office facility;
- Paved trails meeting ADA requirements and natural surface walking trails designed to be compatible with topographical constraints;
- Install additional park benches along trails; and
- Picnic facilities.

Facilities must be designed to ADA standards with sensitivity to the environmental and historic nature of the site.

Citizen Input Summary

- Guided tours/historical interpretation were the most desired amenity with 28 picks.
- Trails paved greenways (20 picks) and natural surface trails (16 picks) were the next most popular option.
- A community garden and picnic shelters were also very popular options.

Catawba County Parks Division will work with the Catawba County Historical Association to provide an expanded park with historical and environmental opportunities at Murray's Mill. Some natural surface trails are being constructed by the County, Historical Association and Carolina Thread Trail. There are currently no paved trails, a garden or picnic facilities. Trail development has already begun with the help of CTT volunteers. This partnership would also allow 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 to educational programming and preservation of the historical structures.

Mountain Creek Park (future)

Staff/PAC Recommendation Summary

- Water amenities including swimming, boat canoe, kayak access fishing areas;
- Trails: natural surface, mountain biking trails and paved trails;

- Install additional park benches along trails;
- Picnic facilities;
- Multi-purpose building;
- Primitive camping; and
- Playground equipment: natural or conventional facilities which fit into the environment.

Citizen Recommendation Summary

- Water related amenities were the most desired choices with swimming at 32 picks, boat canoe, kayak access at 28 picks and fishing areas at 12 picks;
- Trail amenities were the second most popular with natural surface trails at 24 picks, mountain biking natural surface trails at 23 picks, and paved trails at 19 picks;
- Picnic facilities were very popular with shelters at 17 picks, picnic tables at 11 picks; and
- Dog park, equestrian trails, and primitive camping were also desired amenities.

As shown on Map 4 *Service Area Proposals and Recommendations*, a park is needed to service the southeastern area of the County. Catawba County has obtained 598 acres to create Mountain Creek Park; however, the park has not been developed to date. This is the first Catawba County Park that could offer swimming access to the Catawba River. Primitive camping is desired, particularly by scouting groups, as this amenity is currently not offered in Catawba County. (See Appendix Map 8 – *Proposed Conceptual Mountain Creek Park*)

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 while minimizing and preserving the existing resources.

Primitive camping was listed as a need by community survey respondents. It is recommended that 20 primitive camping sites be included in the proposed park. A 24-hour park staff presence would be needed when facilities are in use.

Mountain View Recreation Center

Staff/PAC Recommendation Summary

- Meet with the Recreation Resources Services (RRS) representative to review grant obligations and render an opinion on priorities, accessibility requirements, and possible functionally obsolete amenities; and
- Periodically review contractual agreement for maintenance and operations with Mountain View Recreation Association.

Catawba County owns 5.05 acres of Mountain View Recreation Center, 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 facility infra-structure.

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

Survey

To gather more in-depth data from both park users and non-park users, a survey was created. Each forum participant was encouraged to fill out a survey while at the forum, and take hard copies for other family members. A handout was given to each attendee with the web address to follow the progress of the plan, and advertise the date of a fifth open house to view data from the four input sessions and preview the recommendations of the draft plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

A detailed listing of “choice sheet” responses can be seen in *Sec. 5.4 Community Meeting Data Collection*.

A summary of Community Survey responses can be found in *Section 5.5 Executive Summary – Community Survey*. A detailed listing of responses can be seen in *Sec. 5.6 Community Survey Data Collection*.

An overall Parks Executive Summary can be found at the beginning of this Master Plan.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – COMMUNITY SURVEY

A survey was created to gather more in-depth data from both park users and non-park users. Each person who attended one of the five open house forums was encouraged to full out a survey while at the event, and take hard copies for other friends and family members.

This survey was made available on-line after the public forums took place, and was advertised as a second event, in the same manner as the open house sessions were promoted. Surveys were advertised through area newspapers (Charlotte Observer, Hickory Daily Record, Observer News Enterprise); the County public e-newsletter; the County employee newsletter; County, Planning, and Parks website pages; County and Parks social media; and e-mail blasts to County employees. Surveys were sent to area non-profit group officers who were encouraged to forward them to their members. These non-profit groups included: Catawba County Historical Association, Lions Club, Garden Club, Friends of the Library, Rotary Club, and Optimist Club. Surveys were distributed by Parks Advisory Committee members in their local neighborhoods, churches, workplaces, libraries, civic organizations, businesses, contacts, friends and family. The survey could be completed on-line, or hard copies could be obtained through Catawba County Planning; Riverbend, Mountain Creek, and St. Stephens Parks, and Catawba County Historical Association, or any Parks Committee member. The Parks Advisory Committee is a diverse group of men/women, with varied ages, affiliations, and ethnicity.

Surveys became available to all County residents in hard copy and on-line at the first public forum on 2/18/14 and remained available until 3/31/14. A total of 655 completed surveys were received making results statically valid.

The following is an analysis of survey responses:

- 65% of respondents were female, 35% were male.
- 90% were residents of Catawba County.
- The majority of respondents were County residents; however, 20 people were from other areas within the County, and five came from other states.
- 41% were between ages 18 and 44, 46% were between 45 and 64, 12% were 65 and older. Only 1% was under 17. Preferences by age group have planning implications since demographics in *Section 2 Population Trends and Projections* indicate a growth in the senior population. The mix was representative of the County population.
- 92% of respondents were of Caucasian/European descent. Respondents of African, Asian Hispanic or other descent, each accounted for 2% of respondents.
- With parks open 4 days a week 36% of respondents visit Riverbend daily, weekly, or bi-weekly. 29% of respondents visit Bakers Mountain daily, weekly, or bi-weekly. 15% of respondents visit St. Stephens daily, weekly, or bi-weekly.

- When asked which days respondents would likely visit the parks between 8:00am and 12:00 noon, 52% said Sunday, approximately 25% said Monday through Friday, and 86% said Saturday. This shows a demand for more park availability in the morning.
- When asked which days respondents would likely visit the parks between 12:00 noon and 5:00 pm, 81% said Sunday, approximately 26% said Monday through Friday, and 80% said Saturday. This shows a demand for more afternoon park availability.
- When asked which days respondents would likely visit the parks between after 5:00 pm, 50% said they would like to visit Monday through Thursday, 71% said Friday, and 65% said Saturday. This shows a demand for more park availability during evening hours.
- When asked which improvements should be made to existing parks, most chose increased hours of operations (55%) 50% chose enhanced/expanded trails, 32% said camping facilities, 32% said expanded picnic and sitting areas. Other requests and comments included educational meeting facilities, restrooms, and more programs and events.
- The five favorite amenities were: natural trails, paved trails, mountain biking, picnicking, dog parks, and water activities.
- People wanted special events in the park to include musical events, wellness/fitness sessions, science programs, historical events and astronomy events.
- Of the three future parks, Bunker Hill, Mountain Creek and Murray's Mill, respondents said they would like to see Bunker Hill Covered Bridge developed first (43%), followed by Mountain Creek (33%) and Murray's Mill (24%).
- When asked the main reasons people go the park, 69% listed the outdoor nature experience, 56% said wellness/physical fitness/exercise, and 34% said wellness /emotional health/relaxation.
- Fifty-eight individuals said they might be willing to volunteer at the parks indicating a need for a structured volunteer program.

Survey Input Summary

- Most people come to the parks for health reasons: outdoor experience and exercise/wellness opportunities;
- All parks need to operate on a six-day per week schedule. Four-day weeks impede daily health hikes, ability of schools to use parks, and grant possibilities;
- Bunker Hill is requested as the first future park to be built;
- Favorite amenities were trails, with canoeing/kayaking, educational events, and picnicking also important;
- Continue to staff all parks during open hours to enhance both safety and park maintenance. Hikers and dog park patrons appreciate staff for safety reasons;
- Add more trails; maintain trails to a higher degree;
- Expand picnic and sitting areas;
- Add a community meeting/education center at Bakers Mountain and other sites as appropriate;

- Add events featuring music, astronomy, art, and physical fitness sessions in the parks;
- Increase interpretative signage to identify environmental, natural, or historical features;
- Develop a consistent guided environmental education program for individuals and families.

Responses to each survey question can be found in *Section 5.6 Community Survey Data Collection*.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

A detailed listing of Survey responses can be seen in Sec. 5.6 Community Survey Data Collection.

A summary of Community Forum “choice sheets” responses can be found in *Section 5.3 Executive Summary – Community Meetings*. A detailed listing of responses can be seen in Sec. 5.4 Community Meeting Data Collection.

An overall Parks Executive Summary can be found at the beginning of this Master Plan.