



Tab 7

RECOMMENDATIONS

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

GENERAL STRATEGIES

Through inventory and analysis of the City of Concord Parks and Recreation System and review and interpretation of public input, a series of recommendations were developed, divided into six categories; General Strategies, Parks & Facilities, Programs, Policy, Public Relations, and Funding.

GENERAL STRATEGY RECOMMENDATION 1

Promote the Benefits of the City's Parks and Recreation Facilities and Programs



Parks are healthy places. Obesity and sedentary lifestyles are linked to a host of chronic diseases, including diabetes, heart disease, cancer, hypertension, arthritis, stroke, depression, and sleep disorders, which account for more than 20% of total US health care costs. Projections indicate that millions of Americans will be newly diagnosed with a preventable chronic disease over the next 20 years at an estimated cost of \$48 billion to \$66 billion per year. Physical activity is a proven strategy to prevent, manage, and reduce this burden, but only an estimated 50% of the US population gets enough exercise. Access to outdoor space is linked to initiating and maintaining physical activity, especially when that space is well maintained, safe, and accessible and is available for user participation in active programs. (Haskell WL, Blair SN, Hill JO). Key steps to promote health benefits or parks may include:

- Work with health care providers to provide recreation facilities that benefit the population.
- Work with the schools to provide access to open space and facilities for active programming.
- Promote the benefits of physical activity on the website, highlighting City provided recreation options that people can take advantage of.



Parks are good for the environment. Park land acquisition is one of the most effective methods of preserving natural habitat. With the rise in population and development in North Carolina it is important that land is preserved to conserve the diverse habitats and environmental features that make North Carolina such a desirable place to live. Water resources should be a priority because all healthy ecosystems are dependent on clean water for viability. A variety of threatened and endangered species could be present within the parks. Parks are where these species can be protected and provided with much needed natural habitat.

- Acquire and preserve unique and environmentally sensitive lands for open space preservation.



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Parks are good for the economy. Parks have been a proven vehicle to boost economic development. The Parks and Recreation Departments should continue to Partner with the Economic Development and Planning and Neighborhood Development Departments to cross promote the City’s Park System to create and encourage growth and tourism opportunities.

GENERAL STRATEGY RECOMMENDATION 2

Consider Ordinance Updates & Development of Regulations Which Promote the Success of Parks and Recreation within the City



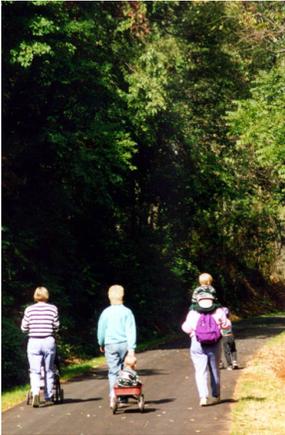
The City of Concord has in place an excellent policy within its land development ordinances which will help the city meet the challenge of providing the recreational needs of its population as it continues to grow. The current policy requires subdivided land provide for future residents by contributing to the parks, recreation, greenways, open space, and cultural resource needs of this community. The Concord Development Ordinance (CDO) outlines land dedication, or fee in lieu, when a residential development is submitted for approval. The policy is written to add recreation acreage to the parks system in order to meet the needs of the population caused by new development of residential communities.



The policy should remain in place as it exists today. However, some additions to the policy should be considered moving forward to address the greenway dedications which will be needed in the future to complete the expansive greenway system. Trails and greenways are the highest priority for Concord residents. Therefore, strengthened language added to the park dedication ordinance should be added to detail how this greenway land may be dedicated in the future. The policy should address both residential and commercial land uses where future greenways are proposed. As a by-product, this policy would also help to strengthen the City’s transportation needs. The City should therefore continue to work with state, regional, and local agencies in order to identify corridors and connections that are a part of the City’s improvements, but also a part of the overall City-wide transportation plan and vision.

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Greenway connections between key destinations like residential communities, business parks, commercial centers, and public facilities are essential to meeting these transportation needs. These destinations and locations were highlighted by residents in the needs assessment as key locations for pedestrian and bicycle connectivity. The town should evaluate commercial site design requirements to include comprehensive trail connections and support facilities.

Additionally, the CDO should be updated to reference this new Parks and Recreation Master Plan for all future dedications of park land and greenways. Generally, the smaller land dedications which an individual development may attempt to dedicate for use as park space may not be the most suitable resource, due to size, location or quality. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan should continue to be used as a resource for determining where new parks are needed and for leveraging larger future developments and or areas plans in locating quality parks in places they are needed.



GENERAL STRATEGIES

GENERAL STRATEGY RECOMMENDATION 3

Adopt System Wide Accessibility Standards for Facilities

- **Perform park specific accessibility audits & inventories.** Doing so would help flush out current accessibility issues at facilities and help plan future renovations. The goal of providing accessible recreation should focus on building facilities and/or adapting existing facilities to meet the unique needs of users with physical and developmental disabilities. It may not be feasible to make all activities completely accessible due to the nature of the activity, but standards should be met in areas that are reasonably applicable.
- **Adopt a system-wide standard based on Universal Design Principles.** Doing so could help guide design to better accommodate all user types. These principles are as follows:
 1. **Equitable Use:** The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.
 2. **Flexibility in use:** The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
 3. **Simple and intuitive use:** Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.
 4. **Perceptible information:** The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory ability.
 5. **Tolerance for error:** The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.
 6. **Low physical effort:** The design can be efficiently and comfortably traversed with minimum fatigue.
 7. **Size and space for approach and use:** Appropriate size and space provided for approach, reach, manipulation and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.



Using this design approach helps provide spaces that are safer and more accessible to all users. Many of these principles are standards that can be met at a low cost to the Parks Department.

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PARKS & FACILITIES RECOMMENDATION 1: Continued Upgrades and Maintenance of Existing Facilities

Concord has built a core system of parks and open spaces containing 7 parks, 3 recreation centers, 7 special purpose facilities, and 8.1 miles of greenways and trails. Through this system, along with other partnering facilities within County parks and schools, the City has delivered most of its programs and services. Keeping these existing facilities maintained and updated to meet the current and future demands will be key to maintaining a high satisfaction level.

One of the first steps in providing this ongoing update for existing resources is to produce master plans for each park or site. Below is a list of points that should be addressed when creating master plans. This criterion has been referenced from the PARTF grant application. As plans are developed, it is important to consult the most up to date application and work with the local Recreation Resource Services agent.

- Site analysis- Describe and evaluate the site's natural, historic, and man-made features. These include items such as topography, soils, vegetation, hydrology, significant natural communities, wetlands, existing structures, and public access.
- Recreational needs- Identify the recreational opportunities that the public prefers using meetings or surveys. Describe how the recreational opportunities being proposed by the master plan relate to existing recreational facilities and services in the jurisdiction.
- Program description- Identify the main purposes of the park including a description of how the local government will design the park to be used by the public.
- Physical needs- Identify the physical needs of the park's site. Include any land the local government will acquire and any capital improvements (buildings, recreation facilities, roads, utilities). All land and capital improvements proposed in the PARTF application must be included in the master plan.

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- Project costs for property acquisition and capital improvements, divided into phases if necessary. The cost information can be provided in a separate document that is submitted with the master plan.
- Site plans and illustrations depicting the boundaries of land to be acquired and the location of facilities.
- Public Involvement- Describe how the local government involved a broad range of the citizens in its jurisdiction as the master plan was being developed. Examples include public meetings or advisory committee meetings. This description can also be provided in a separate document that is submitted with the master plan.
- Meet outstanding needs and renovations for existing parks. Below is a bulleted list of needs itemized by park that could be a starting point for programming individual park master plans. These needs and updates were identified during the analysis of each park.



Academy Recreation Center

1. Upgrade HVAC system to incorporate air conditioning in the gym
2. Renovate restroom and locker room facilities
3. Upgrade gym and fitness equipment
4. Expand Administration wing of building to add more offices
5. Relocate existing work spaces behind the gym to the proposed addition and reuse that space for indoor activity rooms
6. General exterior enhancements: landscape, bike parking



Hartsell Recreation Center

1. Upgrade HVAC system to incorporate air conditioning in the gym
2. Install artificial turf at multi-use field along Swink St.
3. Renovate field behind the building into baseball/softball training and practice facility
4. General exterior enhancements: landscape, tree trimming, streetscape, asphalt resurfacing, bike parking
5. Replace exterior lighting with energy efficient fixtures

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Logan Multi-Purpose Center

1. Upgrade HVAC system to incorporate air conditioning in the gym
2. Upgrade weight and fitness equipment



Propst House Community Center

1. Full interior renovation to accommodate cultural art programming
2. Exterior renovations to include:
 - Parking expansion and ADA accommodation
 - Provide energy efficient lighting
3. Provide nature based, passive use, outdoor facilities- outdoor classrooms, shelters, trails, etc.



John F. McInnis Aquatic Center

1. Upgrade bathhouse and locker room facilities
2. Consider providing a splash pad at the current fenced in seating area (see Facility Recommendation 4: Develop New Special Purpose Facilities)
3. Relocate seating area along the back side of the bath house
4. Provide provisions to install a bubble for winter use to maximize programming in fall, winter, and spring (swim lessons, competitive swimming, rentals, etc.)
5. General exterior enhancements: landscape, bike parking, seating



Hartsell Field Complex

1. Upgrade backstops- replace netting with backstop fencing
2. Provide provisions for ADA accessibility
3. Convert unused field into infield practice facility (see Hartsell Rec Center)
4. Provide bleachers at southern most field along 1st base line and provide shade structures at all uncovered bleachers
5. Upgrade wood light poles
6. General press box and restroom upgrades
7. Convert gravel surfaces to concrete and extend sidewalks as necessary
8. General exterior enhancements: landscape, tree trimming
9. Repaint outfield foul-line markers



PARKS & FACILITIES



McAllister Field

1. Upgrade backstops- replace netting with backstop fencing
2. Provide provisions for ADA accessibility
3. General press box and restroom upgrades
4. Convert gravel surfaces to concrete
5. General exterior enhancements: landscape, bike parking



Webb Field

1. Upgrade backstops- replace netting with backstop fencing
2. Provide provisions for ADA accessibility
3. Upgrade wood light poles
4. General press box and restroom upgrades
5. Convert gravel and bare dirt surfaces to concrete
6. General exterior enhancements: landscape, bike parking
7. Celebrate the rich history of Webb Field through signage, historically relevant architecture, etc.



Gibson Field

1. Upgrade backstops- replace netting with backstop fencing
2. Provide provisions for ADA accessibility
3. Upgrade wood light poles
4. General press box and restroom upgrades
5. Convert bare dirt surfaces to concrete or gravel/crushed fines
6. General exterior enhancements: landscape, bike parking



Lake Fisher

1. Install individual boat slips for easier access and preservation of shoreline
2. Expand watercraft offering to canoes and kayaks
3. Provide provisions for ADA accessibility to water's edge
4. General upgrades to rental office



Weddington Road Bark Park

1. Consider K9 Grass (artificial turf) surfacing
2. Consider more permanent dog wash station setup
3. Consider dog water play/splash pad as expansion opportunity
4. Need more shaded spaces (trees, shade structures, shelters, etc.)

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Beverly Hills Park

1. Replace safety surface to poured in place rubber and eliminate curb to allow for accessible play equipment
2. Replace damaged sidewalk along slope with an elevated boardwalk to eliminate conflicts with existing trees and provide ADA accessibility (handrails)
3. Add section of sidewalk to provide ADA access to tennis court
4. General restroom upgrades
5. Upgrade wood light poles and replace lighting with energy efficient fixtures
6. General landscape improvements and replacement of foot bridge
7. Provide sidewalk connection to future McEachern Greenway Extension



Hartsell Park

1. Re-purpose concrete skating rink- add basketball goals or pickleball court
2. Replace safety surface to poured in place rubber and eliminate curb to allow for accessible play equipment
3. Provide provisions for ADA accessibility to swings, drinking fountain
4. General restroom upgrades
5. Replace exterior lighting with energy efficient fixtures
6. Repaint stair handrail



J. W. "Mickey" McGee Park

1. Expand parking (where possible) and stripe existing parking for better efficiency
2. General restroom upgrades
3. Expand ADA accessibility to remainder of play equipment through additional poured in place rubber safety surface



James L. Dorton Park

1. Replace safety surface to poured in place rubber and eliminate curb to allow for accessible play equipment
2. General exterior enhancements: tree trimming, stump removal, bike parking
3. Consider converting walking trail to asphalt for greater, multi-use and accessibility
4. General restroom upgrades



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Marvin Caldwell Park

1. Replace safety surface to poured in place rubber and eliminate curb to allow for accessible play equipment
2. Provide shade structures at all uncovered bleachers
3. Upgrade wood light poles and replace lighting with energy efficient fixtures
4. Re-purpose empty space into sand volleyball court
5. General Community Building and restroom upgrades
6. Re-purpose skating rink to splash pad (see Facility Recommendation 4: Develop New Special Purpose Facilities)
7. Softball infields need general maintenance



Les Myers Park

1. Finish environmental study to determine full extent of contamination (landfill)
2. Provide shade structures at all uncovered bleachers
3. Provide landscape buffer between parking and western court seating
4. Replace safety surface to poured in place rubber and eliminate curb to allow for accessible play equipment
5. General restroom upgrades
6. Resurface / repaint game courts (shuffleboard, 4 square, hopscotch)
7. General exterior enhancements: landscape, tree trimming, asphalt resurfacing, bike parking
8. Upgrade wood light poles at baseball/softball field (see Facilities Recommendation 5: Maximize Resources to Create Centralized Athletic Complex)
9. Consider dog park in expansion/open space area at rear of park

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W.W. Flowe Park

1. Increase active recreation space with expansion of new ball fields / multi use fields (to accommodate soccer, football, lacrosse, rugby) in open space area north of existing fields.
2. Work with the County to evaluate the best athletic field options for the undeveloped acreage (+/-50 AC) across Central Heights Drive.
3. Upgrade backstops- replace netting with backstop fencing
4. Provide provisions for ADA accessibility to playground, shelters, ball field seating
5. General press box and restroom upgrades
6. Convert bare dirt surfaces at field nucleus to concrete or gravel/crushed fines
7. Convert crushed fines walking trail to asphalt
8. Provide a bigger shelter for large group gatherings
9. Provide shade at playground (trees, shade structure)



Harold B. McEachern Greenway

1. Consider incorporating public art along the greenway- sculpture along trail and/or mural in pedestrian tunnel
2. Consider installing additional rest stops
3. Continue with proposed plans to extend Greenway



The Village Greenway

1. Consider installing a few rest stops
2. Consider installation of environmental education displays to enhance the greenway experience



Downtown Greenway Loop

1. Consider installing a few rest stops
2. Consider installation of environmental education displays to enhance the greenway experience



Hector H. Henry II Greenway (Moss Creek Phase)

1. Consider incorporating public art along the greenway
2. Consider installing additional rest stops
3. Continue with proposed plans to extend Greenway





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Hector H. Henry II Greenway (Weddington Road Phase)

1. Consider incorporating public art along the greenway
2. Consider installing additional rest stops
3. Consider installation of environmental education displays to enhance the greenway experience
4. Continue with proposed plans to extend Greenway

PARKS & FACILITIES RECOMMENDATION 2: Strengthen School Partnerships & “School Park” Facilities

County schools have been able to provide some recreation opportunities for City residents, local communities and neighborhoods. The State established the Community Schools Act in 1977 giving a way for local communities to have more access to the facilities built at schools for a variety of activities, including both programmed and non-programmed recreation. In certain schools within the City, such as Cox Mill Elementary School for example, the local neighborhood school is more convenient than a City park for access to recreation fields, open space or a playground. However, gaining access to these facilities for both the outdoor and indoor recreation facilities can be a challenge. Schools have very busy schedules during the school year and keeping up with the scheduling needs of the school can be a challenge for anyone desiring access to facilities during non-use hours.

Maximizing these facilities could be a way to help ease recreation demands at peak times for key events and programs, especially athletic events and programs. Per the North Carolina Division of Public Health in 2014, the primary barrier preventing more shared use of school property is concern about liability. North Carolina currently provides clear statutory liability protection to schools that enter into agreements with community groups to use school facilities for recreation. On the other hand, protection for schools that allow community residents to use their facilities for unorganized recreational activities is not explicitly addressed by statute.

Cabarrus County, embraces the Community Schools concept entirely and utilizes a foundation for joint planning to look at each school park opportunity. What they have found is that through joint administration and joint financing of recreation facilities that will serve both the schools and the community, 45 quality playgrounds and parks have been built at existing schools.

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A school campus with a park, typically has more facilities for its students and the community to use than what the school system alone can afford. The community, the school system, and the Parks Department all benefit from the school park concept. Leveraging the County's excellent relationship with the local schools will be an advantage as the City assists citizens with understanding access as well as setting up more shared use facilities for existing and new schools. Strategies for increasing access to schools include:

- Identification of existing, key schools where local neighborhood and communities could benefit from access as well as gaining additional access for departmental programs.
- Working with County parks and recreation to assist with working out agreements for access under the County's community schools program.
- Work with the County to determine if any unused school property could be re-purposed for parks or other facilities which can serve the needs of the local community. Properties could be land banked for future development if expansion financing or capital was immediately unavailable.
- Participate in the planning of any new or expanding schools to help plan the appropriate facilities which could be shared in the future. Per the County, +/- 10 new schools will be built during this next cycle of school building and some will be built to be a community school. Having a seat at the planning table to acquire just a bit more property for a community school will pay off.



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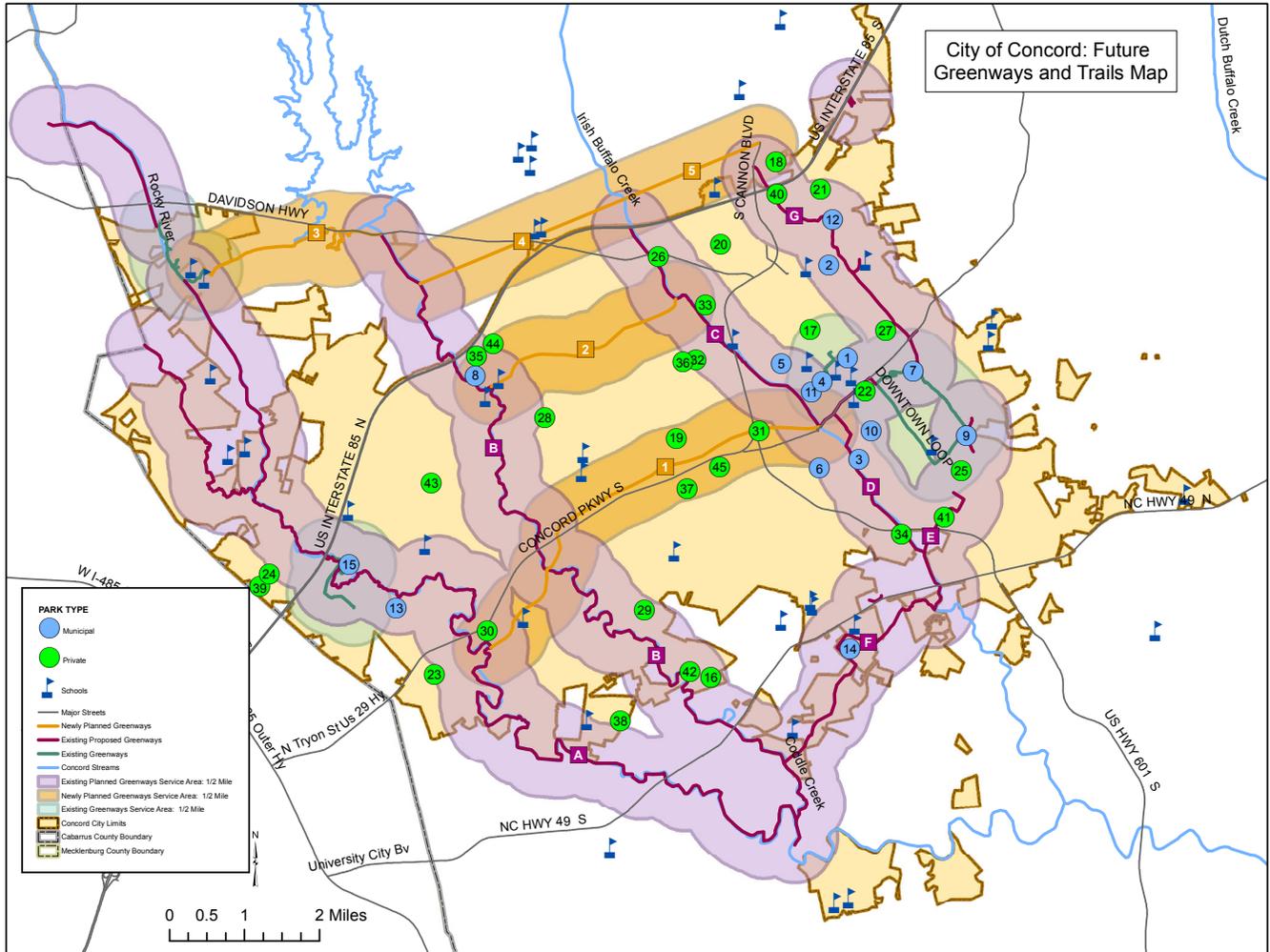
FACILITIES RECOMMENDATION 3: Expansion of the City Greenway System



The existing greenways and trails within the City receive heavy use and are an important asset within the parks system. During the master plan process, it became evident that the public desired to have new trails throughout the City. Development of a City-wide greenways system will provide new connections and resources for pedestrians, bicyclists, and others. Several miles of planned trails have already been identified through the Carolina Thread Trail master plan as well as planned by the City of Concord Parks and Recreation staff. Most of these trails follow drainage patterns and parallel existing streams and creeks which run primarily north to south. New corridors are identified within this plan which attempt to bring more connections east and west to create a trail network linking additional communities, urban areas, parks and other destinations.

There was significant interest in greenways and trails within the public input gathered with more than two-thirds of the respondents suggesting a need for these. Focusing on the development of new trails and walking opportunities both within existing parks and within the City-wide system will help satisfy this unmet need. All seven existing parks have some walking opportunities, with Hartsell, Dorton, Les Myers, and Flowe Parks having the greatest ability to expand walking facilities. These new trails can be a combination of hard and natural surface trails to provide a variety of walking surfaces and trail environments.





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The County-wide trails system identified in the Carolina Thread Trail Master Plan will also satisfy needed trails as well as connect communities with new alternative transportation links. The system, once complete, will bring +/-74 miles of new trail corridors to serve both recreation and transportation needs. It is important to keep in mind however, that planning and building such an ambitious network will take time and a concentrated effort. Therefore, it is recommended that some key strategies be considered to help advance the project.

- Create a City of Concord greenway and trails commission to provide input on greenway and trails planning. Group should be made up of volunteers from both the public and private sectors with a passion for making the trails system a success.
- Work to establish greenway corridor priorities which will link key elements within the overall parks system as well as serve a broad population. This first segment is key in gaining support for future phases.
- Set a goal for completing +/-15 miles of new greenway trails in the next +/- 15 years. Breaking the larger goal into smaller segments which can be accomplished will help to gain momentum.
- Consider hiring a dedicated greenway trails planning coordinator. This new staff person would take on the responsibility of identifying and securing the easements required for building the trails as well as assisting with the design, permitting and construction aspects of the new trails.
- Identify key partnerships with land owners, public and private, who are also interested in seeing the expanded City-wide system in place.

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PARKS & FACILITIES RECOMMENDATION 4: Look for New Park Expansion Opportunities in Under-Served Areas

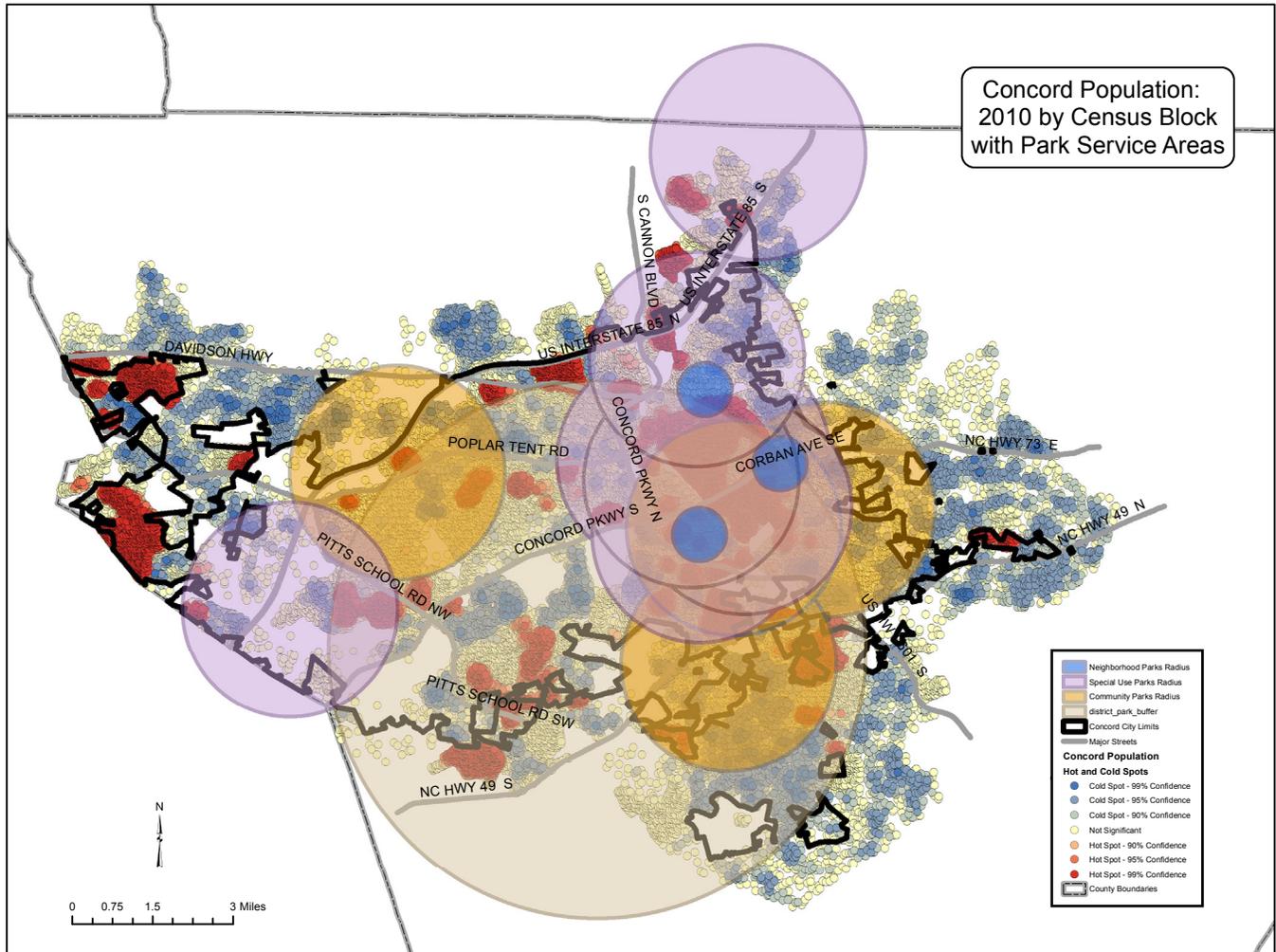
Expand the City park system by acquiring and planning for new parks in areas lacking access to convenient parks. The City's existing parks are mostly located near the historic center of Concord and were built several decades ago, prior to the city's expansion over the last 20 years.

Currently, over 300 acres of new parkland are recommended for acquisition/development. Four distinct areas are identified as key areas to search for land to serve as dedicated parks in the future. Two (2) new community parks, one (1) new neighborhood park and a one (1) new district park have been identified based on a variety of factors including the current level of service relative to total acres per capita, level of service for specific facilities and geographic location. These new facilities would serve residents in much the same way that the existing parks within the City do, in providing a variety of facilities, activities and services for surrounding communities and the entire City.

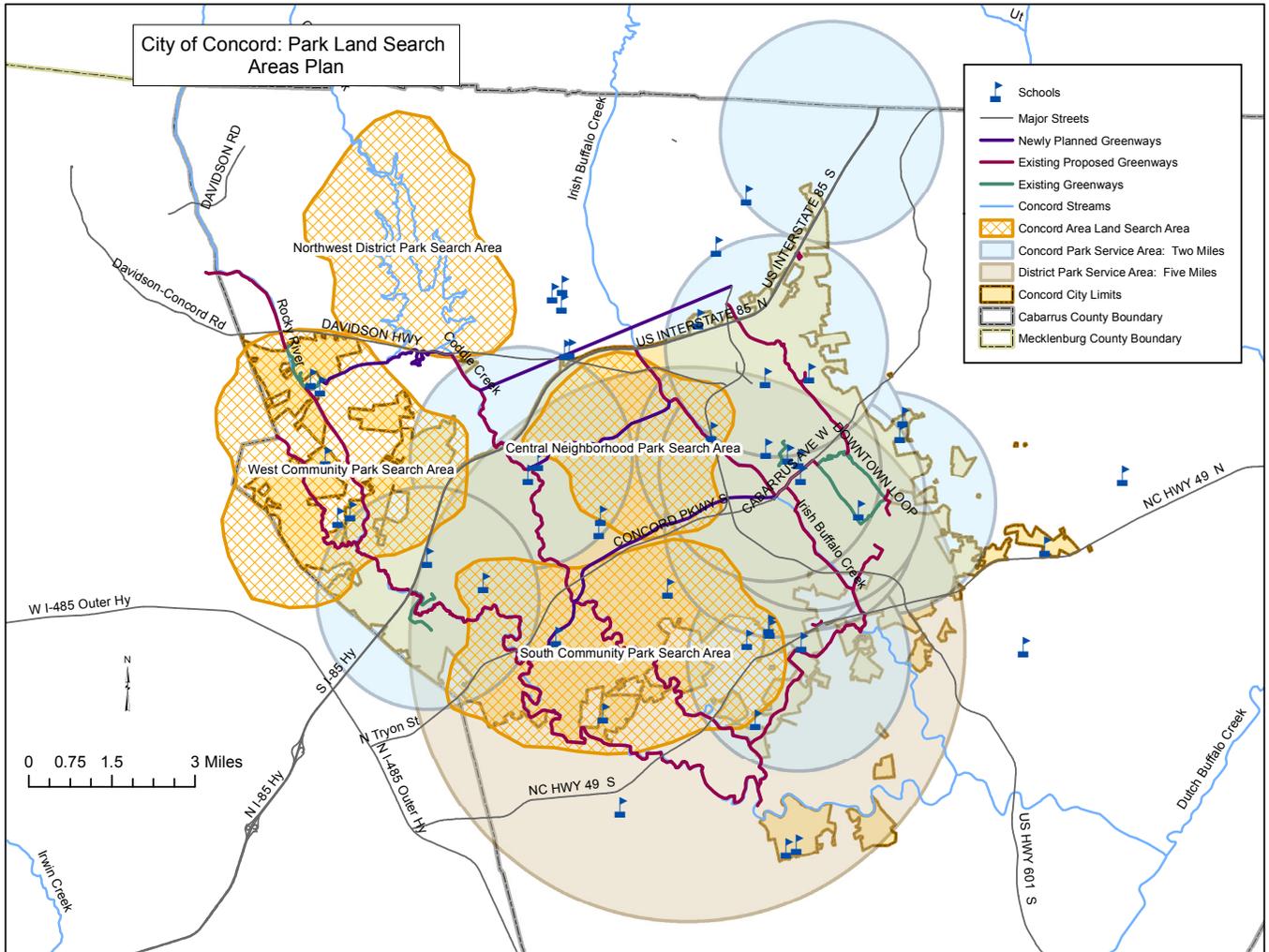
The master plan map on the following page highlights these search areas and the park types anticipated within each area.

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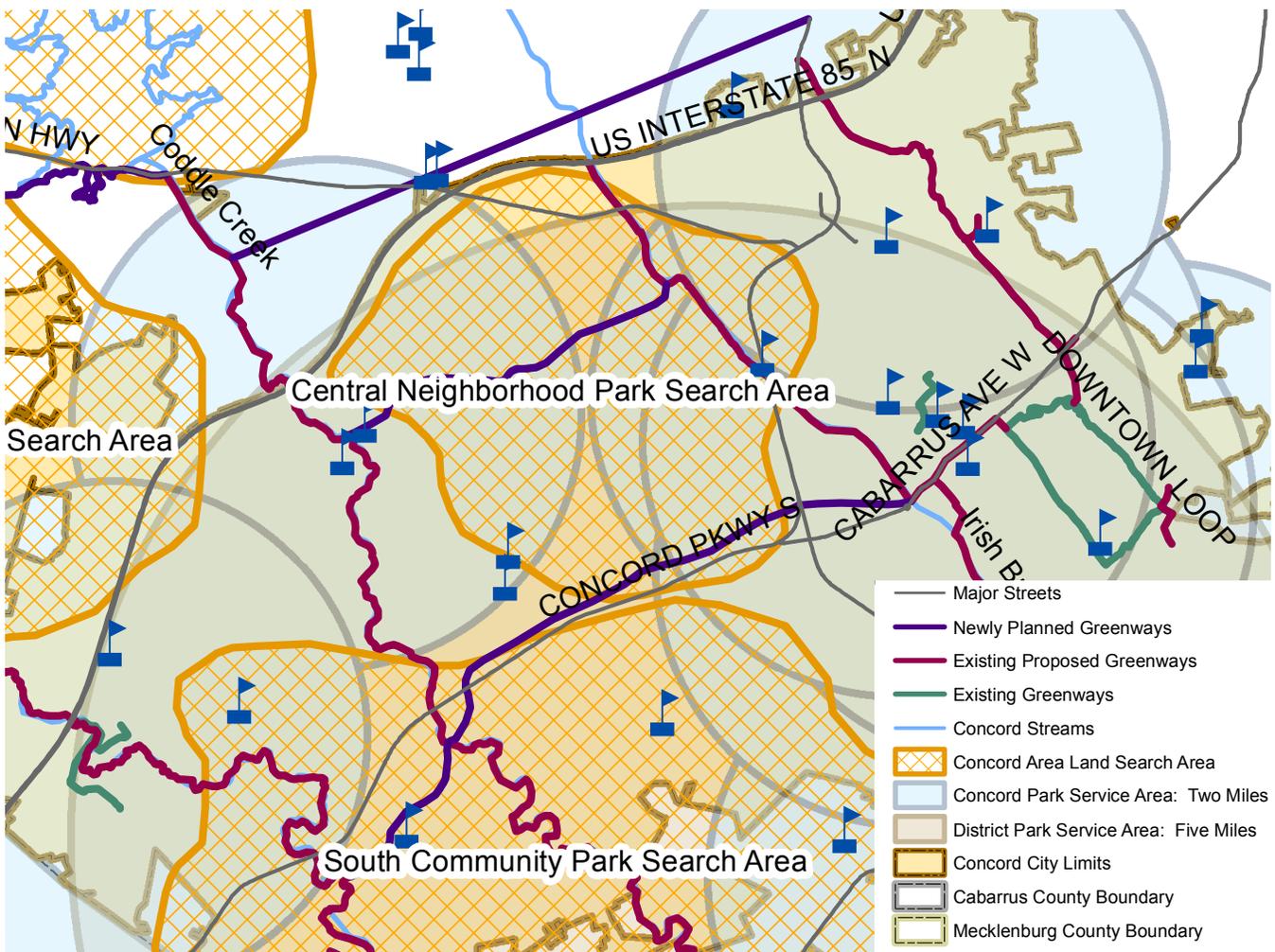


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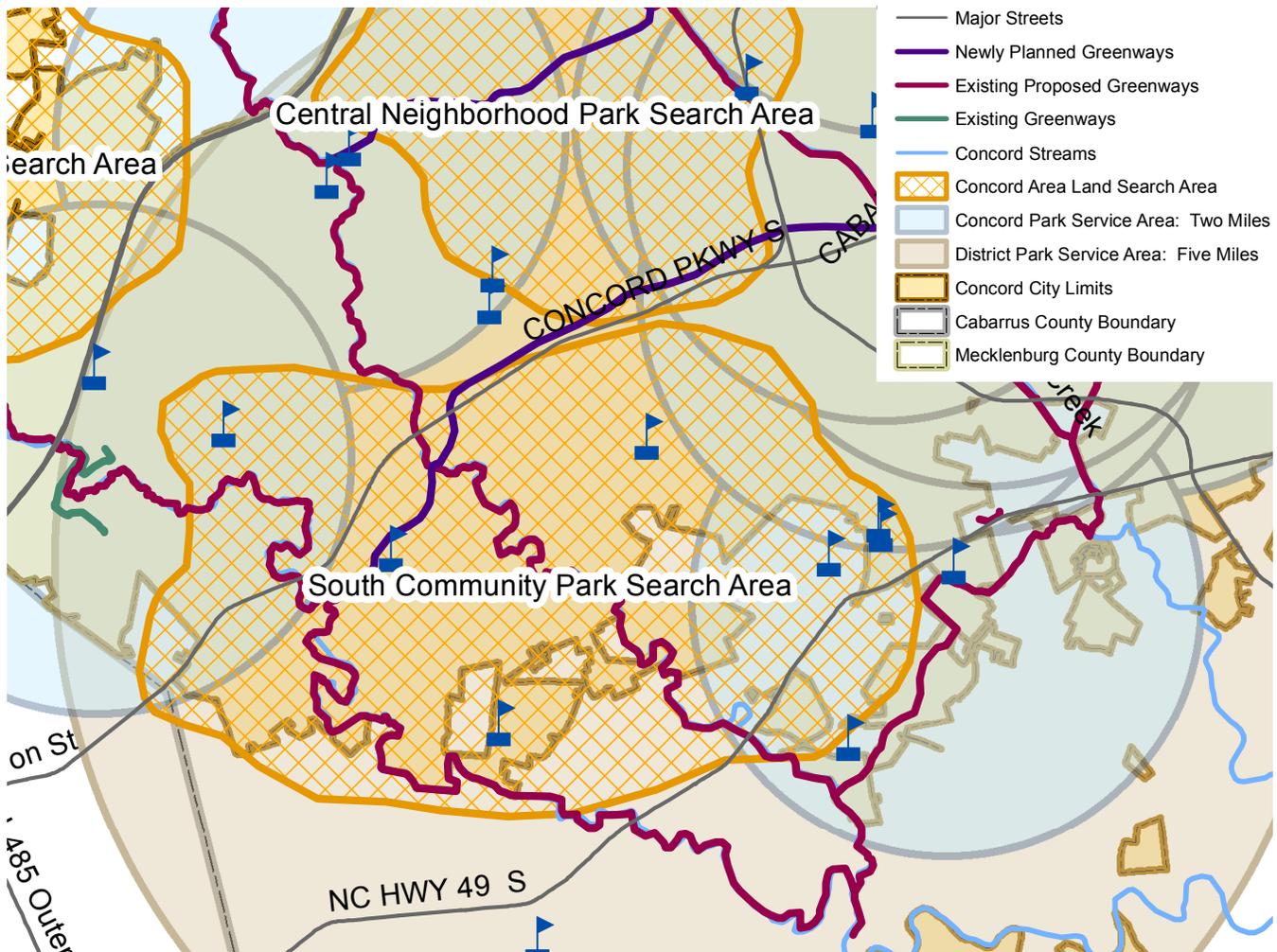
The four park areas are as follows:

- 1. New Central Neighborhood Park**- During the analysis phase of the project, it was determined that portions of the City were underserved with conveniently located parks. A large service gap exists from central Concord (west of the city center) to the furthest points west. This also represents the direction which the City is growing with new residences and commercial developments. Providing a new park in this area would help provide for the existing residents needs as well as planned expansion. Facilities within this area park might include a playground, ball fields and/ or a multi-purpose field (soccer), basketball or tennis court, picnic shelters, and/or walking trails.



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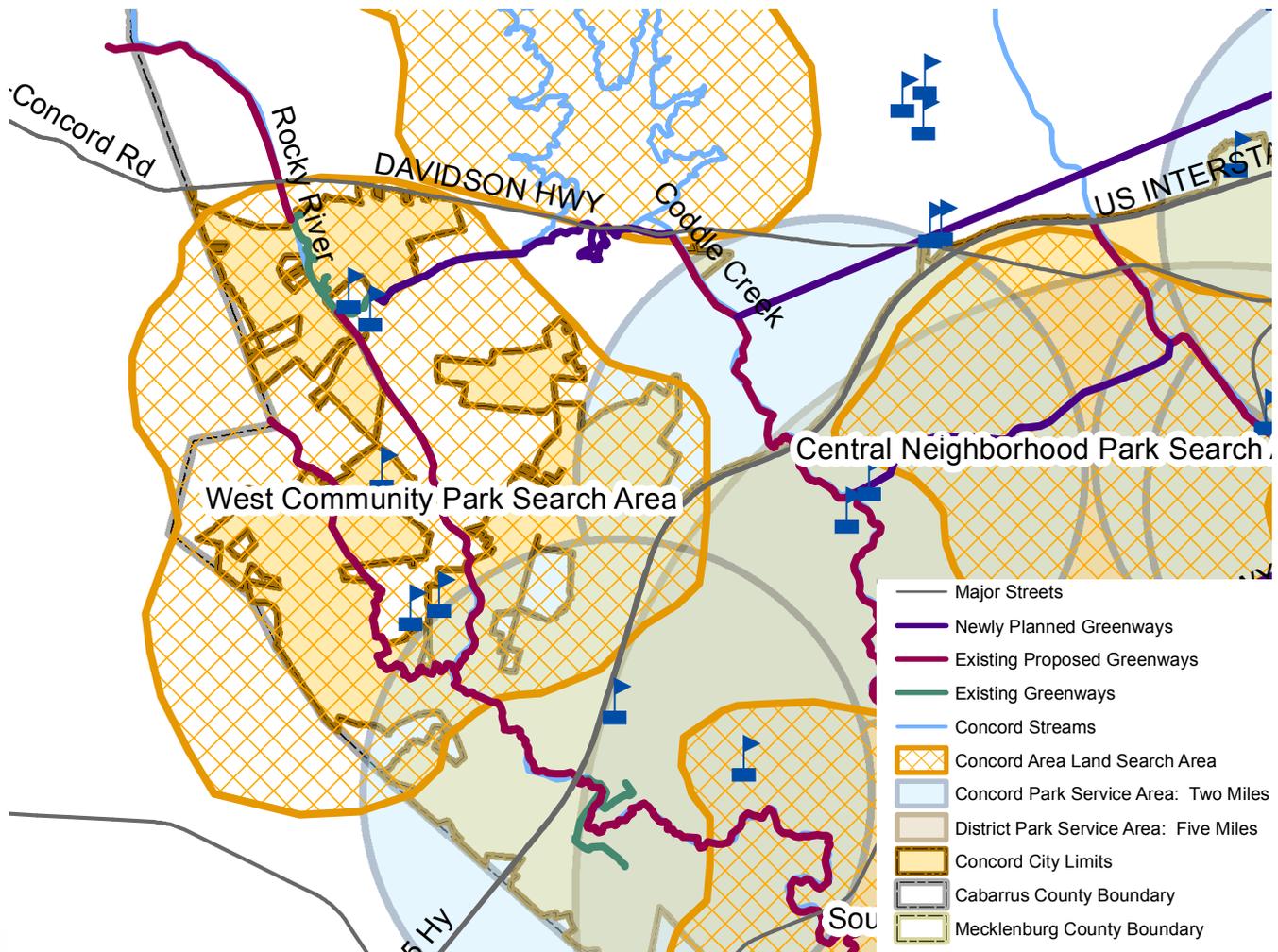
2. New South Community Park – It was also determined that south-central Concord is underserved with existing park opportunities. Existing homes as well as potential future growth in this area will further increase the need for park land and recreation facilities in this area. Currently, many of the residents will travel outside of this area to seek recreation opportunities which are more conveniently located within the City and County. To continue to provide services for this portion of the City, it is recommended that a new community park (30-50 acres) in this area be added to the system in the future. The program for a community park may include active and passive recreation opportunities that may include fields, courts, trails, playgrounds, and open space. Community parks may also include a municipal swimming pool or community center.



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3. New West Community Park – Concord’s rapid growth towards Charlotte, which has increased the footprint of the City’s boundary, is most likely to continue. It has been evident in the many meetings and community outreach that this western territory is under-served with park land and resources supporting recreation. As additional land is annexed and more residential development continues, opportunities for park land acquisition will be a priority. To continue to provide services for this portion of the City, it is recommended that a new community park (30-50 acres) in this area be added to the system in the future. The program for a community park may include active and passive recreation opportunities that may include fields, courts, trails, playgrounds, and open space. Community parks may also include a municipal swimming pool or community center.



4. New District Park – District Parks have typically been delivered by Cabarrus County. In reviewing the County’s Comprehensive Plan for Active Living and Parks Department, it was clear that additional district parks should be planned and developed. The western district park identified to be placed near Concord’s northern boundary will be a future park resource that would serve many residents of Concord, Kannapolis and Cabarrus County and perhaps beyond. The Don T. Howell Lake, a 1,300-acre reservoir impoundment that provides water to Concord and Kannapolis, is an excellent location for a district park resource. It has been discussed within the County’s plan that such a park could be a partnership with Concord, Kannapolis and the County. The program for this park, as with the other planned parks, should carefully consider the overall unmet needs within the City. Possible program elements for this district park may include large areas for passive recreation use such as nature trails, picnicking, boating, fishing, camping, interpretive center, and large open spaces. Facilities for active games (i.e. softball, basketball, tennis) may also be provided. Typical district parks range in size from 76 – 200 acres. During the input sessions and community engagement, there was a strong desire to add unique outdoor facilities (nature based and outdoor fitness focus) to the parks system which would accommodate adventure activities such as climbing, mountain biking, and trails, for example. The typical service radius for a district park is 5 miles. These types of facilities would fit well into a district park serving the broader community and could become a larger destination for the surrounding region.

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PARKS & FACILITIES RECOMMENDATION 5: Develop New Special Purpose Facilities



Swimming / Aquatics Facility- Swimming and related activities were ranked as top priorities per public input gathered. Within the public input questionnaire, year-round pool was the number one preferred facility and an aquatic facility was number four. Outdoor swimming facilities, both public and private, are only operational during the warm months of the year. Through the development of an indoor aquatics facility, programs, activities, and self-guided participation could be run throughout the year and offer an excellent resource for Concord and the region.

Existing indoor facilities do exist at private facilities such as the West Cabarrus YMCA, Sports Center Fitness and Athletic Club, Great Wolf Lodge, (a destination resort hotel), as well as a few other smaller hotels. The closest public indoor pool facilities are located in Mecklenburg County (Mecklenburg County Aquatic Center, Marion Diehl) and Huntersville (HFFA). The indoor aquatics facility should be placed on the west side of town, considering the location of the existing John F. McInnis Aquatic Center.

The Aquatics facility should consist of a 50m indoor swimming pool with approximately 24,800 sf. This would be the main pool and suitable for competition swimming as well as handle general lap swimming. Other factors for the programming of the pool should consider the overall type of pool, or combination of types for a variety of participation.

- Pool for children and families – maximum depth of water should not exceed +/-36” and contain a variety of features such as zero entry, splash area, play apparatus, and possible lazy river components. Deck space around this pool should be sized for parents and groups watching. This facility would be separated from other pools for safety considerations and from older swimmers.
- General swimming pool for older children and adults – any size or shape, usually rectangular. Minimum of 500 sf. Depth varies between 3-5 feet. Pool activities such as volleyball, swim aerobics or swim therapy should be considered when planning the pool.



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- Seasonal outdoor pool – Often, outdoor pools are paired with indoor facilities to help maximize the swimming needs of the community. Many pool attendees prefer to be outdoors when the weather is favorable. Several models of this type of facility can be observed at the local YMCAs.



Downtown Civic Park - City residents desire a place to have special events such as outdoor concerts and outdoor movies. Performing arts events as well as travel and tourism were also recreation activities of interest to residents. Also, over 60% of survey respondents desire more activities where the whole family can participate. City staff provided the plans for the new urban park on Spring St., along with a connecting greenway and lake area. This plan, adopted by the City Council, is a vision for enhanced public urban spaces suitable for a variety of activities. These types of civic improvements to the downtown will help create spaces in the urban core where citizens can gather for special events as well as enjoy passive use space. These spaces are fundamentally important for strengthening the downtown “Main Street” environment by providing a venue for the many festivals and events throughout the year. As a national trend, more and more people are desiring to live close to walkable areas where they can live, work, eat and play all close to home. Downtown Concord is the perfect place to make this type of investment as more individuals look to live close to urban areas as well as travel to these areas in search of entertainment and travel activities. The Park and Recreation Department should play an active role in planning these spaces as well as their future programming.



Splash Pad - Another trend for the City to explore relative to access to water is a community splash pad. This facility could be built to provide a water related activity to address some of the access to water needs expressed during the public input phase. A good place to locate this would be at the existing John F. McInnis Aquatic Center or Caldwell Park. Typically, a community splash pad would include a concrete pad with in-ground spray nozzles and interactive water play features for children and families.



Dog Park – The existing dog park has been a huge success. Additional parks for dogs should be considered. A need was expressed for a new dog park somewhere close to downtown Concord. The existing Bark Park is an excellent example of a large area for large and small dogs with shade and stabilized surfacing suitable for dog use. Locating the facility at an existing park may be a possibility and help put underutilized resources back in service. However, work closely with the community with this re-purposing.

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PARKS & FACILITIES

Indoor Recreation Center – The existing indoor recreation centers have been the workhorse for the City’s system for many years. These facilities provide gymnasium space, fitness areas, weight rooms, community space, classrooms, and support facilities. A need for additional indoor recreation was identified throughout the process. This new facility could be planned to serve the needs for the entire community by including flexible programming space. The basic program may include the following spaces:

- Studio / Fitness Rooms (2 @ 150 SF)
- Fitness / dance / aerobics (30 x 45’)
- Crafts rooms (30 x 45’)
- Meeting rooms (100 people at 10 sf per person)
- Television / central space with game room, pool, media area, etc.
- Vending / snack
- 4 – 6 administrative offices
- Restrooms / Lockers
- Maintenance / service (janitor’s closets, mechanical room, electrical room)

Total space needed = +/-10,000 SF

PARKS & FACILITIES

PARKS & FACILITIES RECOMMENDATION 6: Maximize Resources to Create Centralized Athletic Complex



Expand W.W. Flowe Park to become an Athletic Complex – Throughout the master plan process it became very evident that the current resources in place for athletics were being fully maximized. For example, it was discovered that the City’s programs for recreational soccer is limited to very specific hours on fields that do not have lighting. Adult recreation leagues have also formed within the City with great interest and have very limited places to play. Also, pick up soccer games on certain fields in the city have worn out the surfacing. New fields sports are gaining in popularity, such as lacrosse, and will also have multi-sport field needs. Also, in looking at the youth baseball and softball, the existing facilities within the city are spread out and require maintenance personnel to spend extra time traveling between facilities. Finally, the users’ experience from both parent and player is enhanced when the facilities can be consolidated and include warm up areas, batting cages, concessions, etc. at a single complex.

W.W. Flowe park offers an excellent area to expand to the north of the existing park’s facilities with additional baseball / softball fields. The +/-50 acers to the south would be able to serve multisport needs as well as offer other sports such as tennis, basketball and volleyball. Careful site due diligence should be applied to this site and evaluated for its suitability for sports field development. Other considerations for this expanded complex include sports field lighting, adequate parking, restroom and concessions as well as a playground. Having a complex in this location works very well coupled with Frank Liske Park in creating a region rich in facilities suitable for hosting large tournaments in a small destination city.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

PROGRAMS

These program recommendations are the by-product of analysis, public input and development of the parks and facilities recommendations. Programs are the heart and soul of the system and they support and enhance facilities, both new and existing. It is the positive experiences had through programs that influence and improve the quality of life for participants. Value is added to programs when they are successfully delivered, convenient, and appropriately designed and marketed. Program offerings are initiated as a result of identified community needs or demands and their success is dependent on the availability of City resources: physical (facilities), human (staff, volunteers, participants), financial (revenue sources), technological and natural.

Since programming is based on the needs of the population to which they serve, their demand is time-specific in nature. Therefore the majority of the program recommendations are considered to be high priority and should be provided as soon as necessary resources become available.

PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION 1 **Enhance & Expand Existing Programs**

Enhance and expand existing program offerings to broaden recreation opportunities to a deeper pool of Concord residents. It is understood that staffing resources or availability of space may hinder some of the program growth efforts, but it is essential that the staff commit to a concerted effort towards expanding these program areas in the coming years as new facilities and resources become available. In most instances, the expansion of programs rely on the development of new or expanded facilities as outlined in the Parks and Facilities Recommendations. Existing programs that should be enhanced or expanded include:

- Special Events
- Outdoor and Indoor Fitness
- Nature Based Activities
- Family Programs
- Environmental Programs
- Performing Arts
- Aquatics
- Travel & Tourism



PROGRAMS

Aquatics

In the instance of Aquatics, the expansion of those programs are contingent upon the installation of a pool dome at John F. McInnis Aquatic Center to expand its availability beyond summer months (recommendation #1) and the development of an indoor aquatic facility (recommendation #5). Both scenarios allow for expansion of aquatic programming (swim lessons, water aerobics, lap swim, special events, etc.) beyond the summer months and provides more space to accommodate projected growth in participation levels as population continues to increase.



Outdoor Programming

The same is true for outdoor programs, both athletics and general recreation. With facility expansion at existing parks or the development of new parks, these new facilities offer the space needed to grow existing outdoor programs. Programs that should be expanded with the onset of additional outdoor facility space include:

- Tennis
- Youth recreation leagues (baseball, softball, soccer)
- Additional water based offerings at Lake Fisher (more boats, canoe and kayak rentals)



Also, with expanded ball fields at W.W. Flowe, tournament facilities become available for both recreation leagues as well as private groups (for rent).



Indoor Programming

Indoor activities are currently limited by the amount of space available. Again, with the expansion of indoor space, more programs could be offered. Recreation programs that should be expanded with the onset of additional indoor facility space include:

- Youth and Adult basketball
- Pickleball
- Indoor fitness
- Arts and crafts classes (with dedicated spaces designed for those activities)
- Arts and Performing arts classes (with dedicated spaces designed for those activities, i.e. pottery and painting studios, acoustic spaces for performing arts classes. etc.)



7

RECOMMENDATIONS

PROGRAMS



Environmental Programming

With the substantial popularity of the greenways, the Department should provide expanded environmental activities that are centered around the greenways, offering the community opportunities to participate in more in-depth nature based programming. A director of environmental education programs should be hired and housed in an environmental education center. There is also the opportunity to expand the travel offerings to connect with more nature-based activities like hiking, viewing fall foliage, canoeing, etc..



Family and Multi-Generational Programming

The Department should make sure there are sufficient opportunities for programs and special events that would attract the whole family. The survey indicated that family-oriented activities, as well as other programming that can address specific recreation needs of all the different age groups was desired. While there are several seasonal special events, more recurring events not associated with a holiday should take place throughout the year. Taking advantage of the newly planned civic park space in downtown will help to provide a home for more gathering spaces for regularly scheduled events during the spring, summer and fall months.



And lastly, the Department needs to provide opportunities for mainstreaming individuals with special needs into existing programs. These individuals are often overlooked and allocating provisions for them to participate in existing programs provides a place to engage and participate in activities that meet their needs.



PROGRAMS

PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION 2

Develop New Programs

Develop new programming. In order to better serve the needs of a growing population the development of new programming is necessary. After examining current trends and the results of the public opinion survey, suggested new programs are listed below. Again, in most instances, the creation of new programs rely on the development of new or expanded facilities. Thought must also be given to the location of these new programs, as they, along with existing programs, should be distributed across different facilities throughout the City to appeal to a wider range of participants.



For Adults

- Tennis leagues
- Soccer leagues
- Drop-in programs (i.e. lunchtime basketball)
- Senior recreational programs (providing transportation will be key to this program's success)
- Training and Education Courses
- Sport safety courses (for coaches, umpires, referees, athletes, parents)
- Adventure Programming (rock climbing, canoeing, kayaking, dirt biking, driving off-road vehicles, mud runs)
- Clubs / planned activities for Moms and Dads

For Youth

- Toddler and Pre-K classes (ages 1-3)
- After school programs
- Lacrosse and Rugby
- Non-traditional sports programs (X-games style activities like skateboarding, BMX biking, mountain biking, wake boarding, water-skiing, etc.)
- Shooting sports (archery/ trap and skeet shooting, target shooting)
- Safety programs- playground safety, water safety, bicycle safety (based on parent and community needs)
- Teen Programs – both active and social focused
- Adventure Programming (rock climbing, canoeing, kayaking, dirt biking, driving off-road vehicles, mud runs)
- Develop an environmental ethics program in cooperation with schools and local environmental and conservation organizations

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

PROGRAMS

For Families / Multi-generational

- Health, wellness, and safety programs (water safety, bicycle safety, boat safety)
- Family fitness classes
- Cultural based programs
- Therapeutic recreation (special needs families)
- Friday Night Concert series
- Movies in the Park

Strategies

Occasionally a new program may require expertise from outside the Department. Where possible, work collaboratively with existing organizations in the development of these new programs, especially where a joint effort might lead to greater success (i.e. cultural programs, environmental education, therapeutic recreation). Seek out local individuals and groups with a strong interest in specific cultural and community activities that might serve as a theme for instructional programs, special events, and festivals.

PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION 3

Develop a Set of Financial Performance Measures for Programs

Financial performance data suggests that the department operates at a much lower level to comparable parks and recreation agencies for a variety of measures. The goal should be to price services correctly based on cost and incorporate a good policy to achieve greater fiscal sustainability and provide operational money to hire staff and pay for equipment and supplies. Making responsible adjustments to keep up with the cost of service delivery will be important as the department grows to bring on new programs. It is recommended that a full fees and charges review be provided to help make the appropriate changes moving forward.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

PUBLIC RELATIONS RECOMMENDATION 1

Development of a Service System Review Process

It is important for the Department to manage service as an overall system in which all program areas consistently apply similar service standards. This is crucial when attempting to continuously improve overall service excellence. One method to achieve this is to follow established standards for customer satisfaction. This can be accomplished through a cross functional 'voice-of-the-customer' team. The following are best practices for system review.

Top management commitment is demonstrated by allocating resources to continuously improve services, such as technology, registration system improvements, staffing to support excellent service, development of overall service training, and recognizing staff for excellent service. Part-time staffing recruitment, retention, salary and benefits are all typical areas to focus on for delivering excellent service. Top management should regularly review data relating to customer satisfaction. This can be achieved by including customer feedback as a regular discussion item in staff meetings.

Implementation of customer feedback strategies

1. The Needs Assessment surveys are a good starting point in determining customer needs. This formalized approach should be completed approximately every five years. In interim years, it is helpful to do less formal approaches in determining customer needs by core program areas through program evaluations, consumer advisory panels, and focus groups. Good service systems identify future customer needs as well as current needs.
2. Customer satisfaction rates should be included as part of a performance measurement system. Results should be shared with Elected Officials, staff, and the public. It is important to ensure that the evaluation criteria match the key customer requirements which should be established for each program area. Customer satisfaction processes should occur not only with recreation programs, but also with general park maintenance and athletic field quality, any new park design, and community events.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

PUBLIC RELATIONS

3. Another best-practice suggestion for enhancing the customer satisfaction process is to use the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) score criteria, developed at the University of Michigan. Their customer satisfaction index includes three overall satisfaction scores:
 - How satisfied are customers with the Department overall?
 - How likely will the customer repurchase the program or service?
 - How likely will the customer refer the service to a friend?

The averages of all three percentages are then included as one overall score. These questions should be included on all surveys and program evaluations. Survey questions need to correlate with the most important customer requirements. No standardized process exists for determining customer requirements. The most effective method to determine important customer requirements is through interviews/focus groups with customers. Staff input into the process is valuable as well; particularly staff who interface with customers on a regular basis.

4. Devise a system wide approach for handling customer dissatisfaction. Another component of excellent standards for customer satisfaction is the development of a system wide approach to handling customer dissatisfaction. Standards should exist for handling complaints and inquiries. Furthermore, if one does not already, then a database should exist that tracks all of the inquiries or comments about needed improvements. This information should be reviewed on a quarterly basis by the staff. Consistent suggestions for improvements or dissatisfaction areas should become a focus for the following year's strategic objectives.

As mentioned previously, a voice-of-the-customer team can be responsible for overseeing the service system. This is a cross-functional team comprised of several staff interested in service quality and they assume responsibility for overseeing the organization's service system.

This process ensures consistency in the customer experience throughout the entire organization. This team should have the responsibility of developing an overall customer satisfaction measurement system, the development of standards, and the development of customer requirements for core program areas. The team should also monitor customer service training. The voice-of-the-customer team can develop a Department-wide approach to service, supplemented by site-specific individual training and orientation.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

PUBLIC RELATIONS RECOMMENDATION 2

Further Development of Partnerships

Create partnership policies. Official policies define relationships between specific entities that the Parks and Recreation Department partners with. This helps clearly define what is expected from each party and how the relationship will function. Policies should be written to outline the following relationships:

- Public/Public: This includes other parks and recreation departments, schools, municipalities and other publicly funded agencies that the City may partner with.
- Public/Non Profit: This category includes nonprofit organizations such as the YMCA, The Carolina Thread Trail or other similar recreation advocacy groups.
- Public/Private: Any private donor or corporate sponsorship.

Develop new partnerships. This could become a catalyst for additional programming, funding, and facilities for the City. There are many groups that the City could utilize to develop the parks system further. A possible list is detailed below.

- Local Health Organizations: Novant Health, VA Medical Center, Cabarrus Health Alliance. With the nation's current health crisis of obesity, many health organizations have allocated funds to partner with local recreation departments to start programs that promote physical activity as well as to provide facilities for these activities. Partnering with health groups could help fund trail expansion and wellness programs that have been defined as a system need.
- Municipalities: County, neighboring Cities, Schools, Planning and Economic Development Departments. Working together to provide recreation and programming is a great way to be good stewards of facilities and resources. A strong group of administrators with one common goal can more easily bridge gaps towards creating a complete parks and recreation system for Concord residents.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

PUBLIC RELATIONS

- YMCA: The YMCA provides gymnasiums, a pool, and fitness facilities in Concord. Programming for active recreation has been successfully provided through this non-profit organization. The Parks and Recreation department should explore partnering with the YMCA to meet needs for aquatics and indoor, multi-purpose space. Partnering with the YMCA could also help sustain facility needs for existing and suggested programming.
- Corporate: Shoe Show, Celgard, Roush Fenway Racing, S&D Coffee, and ACN Inc. are a few examples of national and international corporations in Concord. Many of these types of companies have budgets for community investment and desire partnerships with local Parks and Recreation Departments as a type of marketing and philanthropy for the company.
- Higher Education Providers: Catawba College (has a parks & recreation degree program), UNC Charlotte, Davidson College, Livingstone College, and Rowan Cabarrus Community College are all possible partners that could help with programming, design and funding of the parks system. Many college students intern with local parks departments and help run many programs within the recreation system as part of their curriculum. Creating partnerships with Universities outside of the area could also produce intern help with programming. Appalachian State University, East Carolina University, Elon University, Mount Olive College, NC Central University, NC State University, UNC Greensboro, UNC Wilmington University, Western Carolina University, and Winston-Salem State University all have parks and recreation degree programs.
- Private Sector: Highlighting park successes and needs in the media and through public gatherings is a good way to create interest from private donors who may be unaware of park needs and feel moved to donate time, land, or funding.
- Advocacy Groups: Partnering with local groups like the Girl and Boy Scouts, Junior Charity League of Concord, The Arc of Union/Cabarrus, 4-H, and numerous other local grass roots initiatives helps create investment in Parks as well as a sense of ownership from residents. Many philanthropy and special interest groups have both volunteer power and funding to help with creation of recreation facilities, programming and marketing. Many of these groups have wide reaching influences that could be a great resource to the City.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

- Cabarrus County Convention and Visitor's Bureau: As a destination marketing organization, the Cabarrus County Convention & Visitors Bureau's primary objective is to promote and market Cabarrus County as a visitor destination. They also represent and support the interests of the local tourism industry and promote public awareness of the importance of tourism. Partnering with this group could provide funds and help with programming and development of future recreation.

Creation of a sponsorship recognition program. In order to truly sell the uniqueness of Concord and the potential benefits of partnering with the system, there is a need to develop a sponsorship policy, brochure and a proposal for tiered sponsorship levels. By detailing an event calendar, participation metrics and user demographics, the Department will provide potential sponsors an opportunity to identify how well the park system participants align with the sponsor's target market and choose the right fit for them. These metrics will also help the Department evaluate its return on investment (ROI) for sponsorships / partnerships for various events. Some other recommendations would be to publish these metrics on the website and promote them aggressively.

- Sponsor Recognition- Recognizing all existing or past sponsors for their support would certainly help build goodwill. The brochure's images could provide some sample images of promotions that may have been done or could be done. The images should also focus on reflecting the diversity of the participant base in the City as well.
- Tiered Sponsorship Levels- It is essential to create tiered levels of sponsorship in order to allow all potential sponsors the ability to choose the level of support they wish to exhibit. Another area to evaluate is that of Naming Rights for special-use facilities or complexes.
- Package Offerings- It has been seen that the greater the opportunities to package the offerings, the more the likelihood of selling sponsorship. Providing sample packaging options that tie-in some signature special events such as festivals with some of the less popular events would ensure that the staff up-sells events that may not get sold otherwise, while the partner gets more bang for their buck. The ability to offer a potential partner / sponsor the chance to maximize the experiential marketing opportunities they offer is a huge plus.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

PUBLIC RELATIONS

- Develop and implement a partnership plan for the next five years to maximize existing resources and serve the community's needs. Identify potential partners, reasons for involvements and desired strategic outcomes from the given partnerships are important steps to bear in mind as the Department embarks on expanding the partner / sponsor base. Additionally, teaching and training staff to negotiate and manage partnerships will assist in empowering them and helping ensure the successful implementation of partnership / sponsorship agreements.

Develop a volunteer program. The Department has a great resource in the Youth Council when it comes to volunteering, but should still seek to enhance the desirability of volunteering for the Department's programs from the City at large, especially as population and programs grow. This can be done by developing a good reward and recognition system, similar to Frequent Flier airline programs.

Volunteers can use their volunteer hours to obtain early registration at programs or be rewarded with discounted pricing for certain programs, rentals, or events. Other avenues include creating a volunteer section on the website to help manage volunteer efforts. Staff should also quantify the labor dollars and operational cost savings that volunteers provide to the Department and this should be communicated to all partners, stakeholders and community members as well as used for in-kind support in grants.

PUBLIC RELATIONS RECOMMENDATION 3

Develop a Marketing Strategy

Expand communications / publicity to include multimedia strategies for identified target markets. The Department should make efforts to promote the less-known facilities and programs in the Community to attract attention to these offerings.

Cross Promotions. It is imperative that the Department take advantage of the presence of high numbers of a relative captive audience in a special event environment, youth sports event or adult senior event to promote its other offerings, programs, amenities and rentals.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

‘On-hold pre-programmed messages’ are another underutilized but effective and affordable means of promotion that highlight upcoming classes, events or key registration dates for everyone who calls in to the Department. These do not cost anything and can be changed periodically as required by seasons, events or even programs.

Social Media. There is a need to develop a strategy to maximize community engagement and solidify the Department’s brand on social media. The Department should aggressively develop the use of social media to disseminate information regularly about recreation opportunities to all residents of Concord.

- Facebook – Teens used to be the main target of this medium but it has rapidly moved on to middle aged adults and even older adults. The Department could utilize Facebook to:
 1. Provide constantly updated information, including weekly calendar updates with events and programs
 2. Control the message and identify how the target market responds to it.
 3. Allow controlled ‘user generated content’ by encouraging users to send in their pictures from the Department special events or programs they participated in.
 4. Introduce Facebook-only promotions to drive greater visitation to Facebook.
 5. Use of volunteers to manage the Facebook should be considered.
- Twitter – can be updated daily/hourly with promo codes and special events.
- Blogs – This could be written by alternating staff members or could be ‘from the Director’s desk’ where upcoming events, past successes or community outreach could be undertaken. This is a very personalized form of communication and helps build an affinity for the staff and Department as a whole.

Website Development. The Department has its own Website as part of the overall City’s website. Overall, the website needs to focus on the value and benefits of the services provided. Greater opportunities for call to action and driving user behavior would be useful in that regard. Use of volunteers to manage the web-site should be considered.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Balance between new and old media. The Department should allocate resources to find a balance between new and old media to get the attention of multi-generational participants. The Department should continue using direct mail to disseminate information regularly about recreation opportunities to all residents of Concord and supplement that by sending messages by e-mail and via social media.

Branding. Further development of the Parks “Brand” could be conducted alongside website development and be further cultivated with Cabarrus County Convention & Visitors Bureau. Creating a positive park image that is marketable to all ages could create future partnerships, funding and help with staffing programs.

Development of a pricing policy for programs. The program staff should classify services as core essential, important and value added and incorporate strategies factoring in Cost Recovery Goals based on direct and indirect cost of delivering a program service. A pricing policy needs to be established for the Department for services provided based on costs that follow these classification methods. The Department should contract with instructors to provide programs and services at 60% to the instructor and 40% to the City to market the service, register individuals and cover space costs.

Maintain positive public perceptions. The Department should strive to maintain the positive public perceptions by continuing its dedication to customer service and quality programming. Continuing to evaluate safety levels at its facilities and programs, as well as continuing to make efforts to ensure the public perceives their offerings as safe make great strides to maintain the positive perception.

FUNDING

FUNDING RECOMMENDATION 1

Identify Money Available Through Grants, Charitable Donors, & Other Foundations

Grants

The North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) (STATE):

Provides dollar-for-dollar matching grants to local governments for parks and recreational projects to serve the public. PARTF is the primary source of funding to build and renovate facilities as well as to buy land for new and existing parks.

The North Carolina Trails Program (STATE): Is dedicated to helping citizens, organizations and agencies plan, develop and manage all types of trails ranging from greenways and trails for hiking, biking and horseback riding to river trails and off-highway vehicle trails. Program duties include administration of federal Recreational Trails Program grants. These grants help to fund trails and trail-related recreational needs.

Connect NC Grant Program (STATE): The Connect NC Bond package, approved in March 2016, included one-time funding of \$3 million for parks and recreation grants to benefit children and/or veterans with disabilities. Local governments, including some public authorities, are eligible to apply for the matching grants. The program is administered through the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation and the N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund. The matching grants can be used to build special facilities or adapt existing facilities that meet the unique needs of children and/or veterans with physical and developmental disabilities. Local governments can request a maximum of \$500,000 with each application and must match the grant with at least one dollar of local funds for every four dollars in grant funds.

NCDOT Regional Bicycles Plans (STATE): NCDOT's Bicycle and Pedestrian Division provides funding and technical assistance to develop comprehensive regional bicycle plans. The plans may focus on both on-road and off-road bicycle connections between origins and destinations, such as municipal jurisdictions, recreational resources and other points of interest, within a defined multi-county region. These connections identify improvements primarily to existing roadways, but may potentially locate preferred alignments through public lands or new developments for greenways and rail trails.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

FUNDING

NCDOT Planning Grant Initiative (STATE): The NCDOT Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation and the Transportation Planning Branch created an annual matching grant program to encourage municipalities to develop comprehensive bicycle plans and pedestrian plans. This program was initiated in January 2004 and is currently administered through NCDOT-DBPT.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (FEDERAL): The Land and Water Conservation Fund was established by Congress in 1964 to fulfill a bipartisan commitment to safeguard our natural areas, water resources and cultural heritage, and to provide recreation opportunities to all Americans. Using zero taxpayer dollars, the fund invests earnings from offshore oil and gas leasing to help strengthen communities, preserve our history and protect our national endowment of lands and waters. The LWCF program can be divided into the “State Side” which provides grants to State and local governments, and the “Federal Side” which is used to acquire lands, waters, and interests therein necessary to achieve the natural, cultural, wildlife, and recreation management objectives of federal land management agencies.

Transportation Enhancement Fund (FEDERAL): The Transportation Enhancement (TE) Activities offer funding opportunities to help expand transportation choices and enhance the transportation experience through 12 eligible TE activities related to surface transportation, including pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and safety programs, scenic and historic highway programs, landscaping, historic preservation, and environmental mitigation. TE projects must relate to surface transportation and must qualify under one or more of the 12 eligible categories.

Outdoor Recreational Grant Program (FEDERAL): The National Park Service (NPS) sponsors the Outdoor Recreational Grant program through the Land & Water Conservation Fund. Grants are used to acquire land and plan and develop recreational areas such as playgrounds, tennis courts, outdoor swimming pools, hiking trails, picnic areas, campgrounds, and boat-launching ramps. Funds are also used to build restrooms, water systems, and other support facilities for the general public. States, cities, counties, and park districts are eligible to apply for these grants, and over the course of NPS’s history, more than \$5 billion has been awarded for preservation and recreation grants. Funds are allocated as matching with state grants.

FUNDING

NRPA (NATIONAL): NRPA's Partnership and Business Development department works with funders and like-minded organizations to make an impact through local parks across NRPA's pillars: conservation, health and wellness, and social equity. The NRPA offers a myriad of grants and program resources that provide funding to parks and recreation departments. A list of programs can be found on their website.

The Kodak American Greenway Program (NATIONAL): The Kodak American Greenways Awards Program, a partnership project of the Eastman Kodak Company, the Conservation Fund and the National Geographic Society, provides small grants to stimulate the planning and design of greenways in communities throughout America. The organization is interested in funding activities such as mapping, ecological assessments, surveying, conferences and design activities; developing brochures, interpretative displays, audio-visual productions or public opinion surveys; hiring consultants; incorporating land trusts; and/or building footbridges, planning bike paths or other creative projects. In general, grants can be used for all appropriate expenses needed to complete a greenway project, including planning, technical assistance, legal and other costs.

Charitable Donations / Foundations - Greenways/Trails

The Carolina Thread Trail (REGIONAL): It is a comprehensive effort aimed at preserving and enhancing our region's natural resources for the enjoyment of future generations. It is about collaboration, connectivity, and leverage: collaborating to promote and protect the region's quality of life; connecting communities and people, and leveraging catalytic private capital with public capital to protect and create local and regional assets. It seeks to accomplish its objectives by inviting and encouraging communities to participate in a regional effort through their local actions. All communities within the 15-county region described below are eligible to participate, regardless of their current level of trail development. Counties include Anson, Cabarrus, Catawba, Cleveland, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Stanly and Union.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

FUNDING

NC Rails-Trail (REGIONAL): NCRT monitors the state’s rail system, actively pursues corridor preservation, retrieval and conversion to public trails. NCRT fosters local leadership and currently supports local rail-trail initiatives throughout the state. NCRT provides coordination between local, state and federal agencies, allied state and national organizations, and project funding sources. The members of the Board represent bicycling, hiking, equestrian, historic, conservation, preservation and economic development interests.

Greenway Foundations: Greenway foundations focus on developing and maintaining trails and green corridors on a County-wide basis. The City could seek land leases along their trails as a funding source, in addition to selling miles of trails to community corporations and nonprofits in the City. The development rights along the trails can also be sold to local utilities for water, sewer, fiber optic, and cable lines on a per mile basis to support development and management of these corridors. Some greenway foundations have created its own specific Greenway Trail license plate to help support the development, maintenance, and expansion of trails in their city. The cities get \$45 dollars from each greenway tag sold. This could really be expanded if promoted on trails, in publications and on the city’s website.

Greenways Conservation Groups: Conservation groups adopt green corridors to support the operations and capital costs for specific greenway corridors. These groups raise needed money for designated greenways for capital and operations costs.

Greenway Trust Fund: Another strategy used by several communities is the creation of a trust fund for land acquisition and facility development that is administered by a private greenway advocacy group, or by a local greenway commission. A trust fund can aid in the acquisition of large parcels of high-priority properties that may be lost if not acquired by private sector initiative. Money may be contributed to the trust fund from a variety of sources, including municipal and county general funds, private grants, and gifts.

Floodway Funding Sources: Many cities and counties have used floodway funding sources to support development and operations of greenways.

FUNDING

Charitable Donations / Foundations - Public Health

The Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust has been instrumental in funding projects in North Carolina. Opportunities to improve the quality of life and health for North Carolinians remain abundant. The Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust has a unique mandate and perspective that honors the wishes of Mrs. Reynolds' whereby 75% of the Trust's funding is dedicated to improving health and wellness in North Carolina. The Trust is also committed to making a difference by existing to protect and improve the lives of those who need it most—vulnerable populations, the underserved, and the economically disadvantaged. They invest where they believe they can make the greatest difference today and in the future.

W.K. Kellogg Foundation The (WKKF) places the optimal development of children at the center of all they do and calls for healing the profound racial gaps and inequities that exist in our communities. We believe in supporting and building upon the mindsets, methods and modes of change that hold promise to advance children's best interests generally, and those of vulnerable children in particular. Concentrating resources on early childhood (prenatal to age 8), within the context of families and communities, offers the best opportunity to dramatically reduce the vulnerability caused by poverty and racial inequity over time. There is strong evidence that optimal child development means providing children with the stimulus, tools and support necessary for their emotional, intellectual, physical and cultural growth

BlueCross BlueShield of North Carolina Foundation has invested millions of dollars in communities across the state. They support opportunities that impact the health of our state. Their areas of focus are: health of vulnerable populations, healthy active communities, and community impact through non-profit excellence.

Charitable Donations / Foundations - Athletics

Dick's Sporting Goods Sponsorship and Donation. DICK'S Sporting Goods' Community Program proudly supports leagues, teams, athletes and outdoors enthusiasts. They support thousands of youth sports and outdoor recreation organizations in communities surrounding their stores.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

FUNDING

Finish Line Youth Foundation: Finish Line Youth Foundation focuses funding on organizations that provide opportunities for youth participation in the following areas:

1. Youth athletic programs- Community-based programs addressing active lifestyle and team building skills.
2. Camps- Established camps with an emphasis on sports and active lifestyle, especially programs serving disadvantaged and special needs kids.

Charitable Donations / Foundations - General Recreation

KaBOOM! is a national non-profit dedicated to bringing balanced and active play into the daily lives of all kids, particularly those growing up in poverty in America. They envision a place to play within walking distance of every child. KaBOOM! works with communities, volunteers and funding partners to build playgrounds throughout the country.

The Tony Hawk Foundation seeks to foster lasting improvements in society, with an emphasis on supporting and empowering youth. Through special events, grants, and technical assistance, the Foundation supports recreational programs focusing on the creation of public skateboard parks in low-income communities.

Adopt-A-Foot Program: These are typically small grant programs that fund new construction, repair/renovation, maps, trail brochures, facilities (bike racks, picnic areas, birding equipment) as well as provide maintenance support. The Adopt-A-Foot program is in the form of cash contributions that range from \$2,640 to \$26,400 over a five-year period.

Private Charitable donations. Efforts to maintain and nurture new partnerships should continue to be fostered to supplement land and funds not provided by grants, park revenue, and governmental assistance. A list of possible partners is discussed in Public Relations Recommendation 2.

Conservancy or Friends Organization: This type of nonprofit is devoted to supporting a specific park. These Park Conservancies or Friends Groups are a major funding source for parks in the United States and should be considered.

FUNDING

FUNDING RECOMMENDATION 2 Maximizing Self-Generated Funding

Fees & Charges Study. It is recommended that an annual fee study should be performed to ensure that revenue generation is offsetting costs at a market rate. Prices do not have to be raised in large increments but should reflect the market value of costs that are comparative to other recreation providers in the area. Ultimately, the City may consider a change in user fees that will help offset more of the cost of some activities. Based on elected officials' direction, the revenue generated by increased fees could then be used to offset impacts on the general fund and possibly be used for capital improvement funding to help make park improvements.

Look for new revenue opportunities. With the suggested creation of new parks, it is important to look for new opportunities to generate revenue to help offset the initial cost of providing the new park.

FUNDING RECOMMENDATION 3 City Generated Funds to Assist with Financing Improvements

Tax generation. Below is a list of tax strategies that other government agencies across the country have used to levy funds.

- Tax increment financing districts. A state constitution amendment in 2004 was approved to allow TIF's to capture increases in property tax revenue within a designated geographic area and allocate the funds for specific public improvement purposes. Examples of fund use include, park acquisition, maintenance, and improvements.
- Sales and Use Taxes. Governing bodies can choose to allocate a percentage of local or state wide sales taxes specifically for parks.
- Levy on Property Tax. Public agencies receive funding through property tax revenues. In North Carolina Chapter 153A of the general statute allows for each county to levy property taxes for: (23) Open Space.- To acquire open space land and easements in accordance with Article 19, Part 4, Chapter 160A of the General Statutes. *“(25) Parks and Recreation. - To establish, support and maintain public parks and programs of supervised recreation.”*

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

FUNDING

Bonds. As stated in NC General Statutes the City cannot borrow money in excess of 15% of the City's General fund operating budget. City leadership should consider a bond to include City recreation improvements. See the strategies for bonding below:

1. Capacity Building: This builds a larger base of community based leadership to assist with the development of the bond. It is important to identify local leadership and communicate with interested parties.
2. Feasibility Research: Information is gathered that informs the development of public opinion polling and measure design. It is critical to consider fiscal issues such as current funding, bond ratings, revenue trends, and debt burden. Political circumstances, key community issues, and results of past elections should also be considered.
3. Polling: This step should identify voter priorities. The poll should quantify the number of voters willing to pay for the bond's improvements and test ballot language. Polling should also help narrow down compelling arguments for the bond.
4. Measure Design: This strategy focuses on the development of ballot language that would appeal to voters and clearly explain how the measure addresses the particular issues being targeted by the bond and meets community needs.
5. Campaigning: Publicize the proposed ballot measure and encourage voter turnout. Steps include; direct mailings, promoting the cause via other means (website, social media, etc.), and soliciting media coverage
6. Implementation: This assumes that the bond passes. It is important to start the process of implanting the bond smoothly and quickly so that voters are rewarded with timely tangible results.

FUNDING

FUNDING RECOMMENDATION 4

Partnerships to Assist with Financing New Facilities

As previously discussed in the Public Relations Recommendation #2, partnerships are critical to the success of a parks and recreation system. Relative to implementing a capital improvements plan, these partnerships are especially important.

Concord should continue strengthening their existing partnership with Cabarrus County (including Cabarrus County Schools) and foster opportunities to partner with the adjacent municipalities of Kannapolis and Harrisburg. One such example of a strong potential partnership to obtain new facilities is the development of the recommended district park by partnering with the County and Kannapolis. The private sector is also a partnership funding source that should be explored and supported. The YMCA is an organization where needs in the future may be met for citizens as they expand their facilities and offerings.

Agreements between the Concord Parks and Recreation Department and their partners should be documented via memorandums of understanding, memorandums of agreement, intergovernmental agreements, or other similar contractual documentation such that each party clearly understands their specific roles and responsibilities. When developing partnerships, it is imperative that benefits formed from these partnerships be reciprocal to all parties involved.

Tab 8

ACTION PLAN



8 ACTION PLAN

1-5

YEAR ACTION PLAN

GENERAL STRATEGIES

- Update existing open space and parkland acquisition ordinance and add greenway acquisition and dedication language
- Advance accessibility audits and inventories of existing parks and facilities
- Adopt a system wide accessibility standard

PROGRAMMING

- Work collaboratively with existing organizations in the development of expanded programs
- Seek out local individuals and groups with a strong interest in specific cultural and community activities that might serve as a theme for instructional programs, special events, and festivals
- Mainstream individuals with special needs into existing programs
- Expand arts and crafts classes with the addition of Propst House space and current Hartsell Recreation renovations
- Expand indoor fitness with the addition of Propst House space and current Hartsell Recreation renovations
- Expand aquatic offerings (swim lessons, water aerobics, lap swim, special events) with McInnis pool dome installation
- Provide additional water based offerings at Lake Fisher- more boats and canoe/kayak rentals and places for fishing
- Expand and enhance youth recreation leagues (baseball, softball, soccer, lacrosse, rugby) with W.W. Flowe expansion and a new community park on the west side of the City.
- Expand travel offerings to include more nature-based activities like hiking, fall foliage, canoeing, etc.
- Expand youth and adult basketball with partnerships with County Schools
- Consider the position of Director of environmental education programs
- Expand environmental activities with assistance from Environmental Education Director and expansion of the greenway system
- Provide after school programs with the current Hartsell Rec Center renovation and addition of Propst House space
- Develop an environmental ethics program in cooperation with schools and local environmental and conservation organizations
- Provide senior recreational programs and provide transportation for participants as needed



- Create Training and Education Courses (adult and youth) – health, wellness, safety
- Create clubs and/or planned activities for Moms and Dads to socialize
- Develop teen Programs
- Develop therapeutic recreation for special needs families and participants
- Offer a Friday Night Concert series on a recurring basis (i.e. 1x/month)
- Offer “Movie in the Park” events on a recurring basis (i.e. 1x/month)

FACILITIES

- Create Master Plans for each existing park
- Meet outstanding needs and renovations for existing parks including
 - New walkways to address minimum accessibility at Hartsell Field Complex, McAllister Field, Webb Field, Gibson Field, and Hartsell Park
 - Propst House Community Center renovations
 - John McInnis Aquatic Center updates and renovations
 - Lake Fisher updates and renovations
 - Beverly Hills Park updates and renovations
 - J.W. “Mickey” McGee Park updates and renovations
 - James Dorton Park updates and renovations
 - Marvin Caldwell Park updates and renovations
 - W.W. Flowe Park updates and renovations
- Map a strategy for increased access to County owned school facilities and work with County on future community school park plans
- Expansion of greenway trails and connections including 5 miles of new constructed trails.
- Serve the City with a new Community Park (West Concord)
- Design and construct new splash pad

FUNDING

- Identify money available through grants, charitable donors, and other foundations
- Work with City finance office to find ways for increasing yearly operations budget
- Submit PARTF grant for new park or park improvements
- Maximize self-generated funding through revenue at parks and events
- Update the fees and charges levels for current programs and special events
- Utilize the City’s park fund for acquisition of new land for new parks
- Continue to look for partnership opportunities

8 ACTION PLAN

ACTION PLAN - FACILITIES COST SUMMARY

1-5 YEAR PRIORITIES (2017-2022)

NO.	DESCRIPTION	QUANTITY	UNIT	UNIT COST	SUBTOTAL
1	IMPROVEMENTS TO EXISTING PARKS				
A	Propst House Community Center	1	LS @	\$233,750.00	\$233,750
B	John McInnis Aquatic Center	1	LS @	\$291,500.00	\$291,500
C	Hartsell Field Complex (Accessibility)	1	LS @	\$20,000.00	\$20,000
D	McAllister Field (Accessibility)	1	LS @	\$3,750.00	\$3,750
E	Webb Field (Accessibility)	1	LS @	\$3,750.00	\$3,750
F	Gibson Field (Accessibility)	1	LS @	\$4,000.00	\$4,000
G	Lake Fisher	1	LS @	\$173,250.00	\$173,250
H	Beverly Hills Park	1	LS @	\$159,500.00	\$159,500
I	Hartsell Park (Accessibility)	1	LS @	\$3,750.00	\$3,750
J	J.W. "Mickey" McGee Park	1	LS @	\$62,975.00	\$62,975
K	James Dorton Park	1	LS @	\$40,000.00	\$40,000
L	Marvin Caldwell Park	1	LS @	\$82,500.00	\$82,500
M	W.W. Flowe Park	1	LS @	\$901,850.00	\$901,850
	SUBTOTAL				\$1,980,575
2	GREENWAYS				
A	Harold B. McEachern Greenway	1	LS @	\$199,650.00	\$199,650
B	The Village Greenway	1	LS @	\$14,300.00	\$14,300
C	Downtown Greenway Loop	1	LS @	\$30,800.00	\$30,800
D	Hector Henry II Greenway (Moss Creek Phase)	1	LS @	\$149,213.00	\$149,213
E	Hector Henry II Greenway (Weddington Road Phase)	1	LS @	\$208,450.00	\$208,450
F	5 Miles of New Greenway*	5	MI @	\$1,400,000.00	\$7,000,000
	SUBTOTAL				\$7,602,413
3	NEW PARKS AND FACILITIES				
A	New West Community Park	1	LS @	\$4,141,500.00	\$4,141,500
B	Splash Pad	1	EA @	\$440,000.00	\$440,000
	SUBTOTAL				\$4,581,500

TOTAL 1-5 YEAR PRIORITY SUMMARY **\$14,164,488**

*Greenway unit Cost based on current City of Concord greenway budget numbers



5-10

YEAR ACTION PLAN

PROGRAMMING

- Expand youth and adult basketball with partnerships with recreation center renovations
- Create after school programs with recreation center renovations
- Create toddler and Pre-K classes (ages 1-3) with recreation center renovations
- Expand environmental activities with expansion of the greenway system
- Expand and enhance youth recreation leagues (baseball, softball, soccer, lacrosse, rugby) with new central area neighborhood park and W.W. Flowe athletic complex
- Adventure Programming (rock climbing, canoeing, kayaking, para-gliding, dirt/mountain biking, driving off-road vehicles, mud runs) with development of district park at Lake Howell
- Develop shooting sports programming (archery/ trap and skeet shooting, target shooting)
- Develop non-traditional sports programs (X-games style activities like skateboarding, BMX biking, mountain biking, wake boarding, water-skiing, etc.)
- Expand arts and performing arts classes with dedicated spaces designed for those activities (i.e. pottery and painting studios, acoustic spaces for performing arts classes. etc.) with development of the new indoor facility
- Develop drop-in programs (i.e. lunchtime basketball) at recreation centers
- Expand arts and crafts classes with new indoor facility availability
- Expand indoor fitness with new indoor facility availability
- Offer more tournament space with W.W. Flowe expansion
- Create an adult Soccer league
- Expand pickleball with new indoor facility availability
- Create family fitness classes with new indoor facility availability

8 ACTION PLAN

FACILITIES

- Meet outstanding needs and renovations for existing parks including
 - Academy Recreation Center
 - Hartsell Recreation Center
 - Hartsell Field Complex
 - Logan Multi Purpose Center
 - McAllister Field
 - Webb Field
 - Gibson Field
 - Hartsell Park
 - W.W. Flowe Park (Planning)
- Expansion of greenway trails and connections including 5 miles of new constructed trails.
- Serve the City with a New Neighborhood Park (Central Concord)
- Partner with County and others on a New District Park at Lake Howell
- Design and Construct new Indoor Recreation Center (West Concord)
- Design and Construct new Athletic Complex (County owned land (50 AC) adjacent to W.W. Flowe)

FUNDING

- Continue to identify money available through grants, charitable donors, and other foundations
- Partner with County on projects such as the new district park at Lake Howell and the new athletic complex at W.W. Flowe Park
- Continue to evaluate operations budget with City finance office based on City growth and expansion of service to increased population
- Submit PARTF grant for new park or park improvements
- Continue to expand revenue opportunities at parks and events
- Utilize the City's park fund for acquisition of new land for new parks
- Continue to look for partnership opportunities

5-10 YEAR PRIORITIES (2022 - 2027)

NO.	DESCRIPTION	QUANTITY	UNIT	UNIT COST	SUBTOTAL	
1	IMPROVEMENTS TO EXISTING PARKS					
A	Academy Recreation Center	1	LS	@	\$836,000.00	\$836,000
B	Hartsell Recreation Center	1	LS	@	\$187,500.00	\$187,500
C	Hartsell Field Complex	1	LS	@	\$255,925.00	\$255,925
D	Logan Multi Purpose Center	1	LS	@	\$52,000.00	\$52,000
E	McAllister Field	1	LS	@	\$41,625.00	\$41,625
F	Webb Field	1	LS	@	\$107,900.00	\$107,900
G	Gibson Field	1	LS	@	\$121,675.00	\$121,675
H	Hartsell Park	1	LS	@	\$105,975.00	\$105,975
I	W.W. Flowe Park (Planning)	1	LS	@	\$15,000.00	\$15,000
	SUBTOTAL					\$1,723,600
2	GREENWAYS					
A	5 Miles of New Greenway*	5	MI	@	\$1,400,000.00	\$7,000,000
	SUBTOTAL					\$7,000,000
3	NEW PARKS AND FACILITIES					
A	New Central Neighborhood Park	1	LS	@	\$2,173,500.00	\$2,173,500
B	New District Park (Contribution)	1	LS	@	\$1,650,000.00	\$1,650,000
C	Indoor Recreation Center	1	LS	@	\$3,300,000.00	\$3,300,000
D	Athletic Complex (Near W.W. Flowe)	1	LS	@	\$5,115,000.00	\$5,115,000
	SUBTOTAL					\$12,238,500
TOTAL 5-10 YEAR PRIORITY SUMMARY						\$20,962,100

*Greenway unit Cost based on current City of Concord greenway budget numbers

8 ACTION PLAN

10+

YEAR ACTION PLAN

PROGRAMMING

- Expand environmental activities with expansion of the greenway system
- Expand aquatic offerings (swim lessons, water aerobics, lap swim, special events) with new indoor aquatic center
- Expand and enhance youth recreation leagues (baseball, softball, soccer, lacrosse, rugby) with new school park
- Create an adult tennis leagues with new school park

FACILITIES

- Meet outstanding needs and renovations for existing parks including
 - Logan Multi Purpose Center
 - Gibson Field
 - Weddington Road Bark Park
 - James L. Dorton Park
 - Marvin Caldwell
 - Les Myers
- Expansion of greenway trails and connections including 5 miles of new constructed trails.
- Work with County on new school expansion plan and partner on a new School Park / Community School
- Serve the City with a new Community Park (South Concord)
- Design and construct a new Aquatic Center (Central Concord)
- Design and construct a new Dog Park (near Downtown Concord)

FUNDING

- Continue to identify money available through grants, charitable donors, and other foundations
- Partner with County on projects such as a new School Park / Community School
- Continue to evaluate operations budget with City finance office based on City growth and expansion of service to increased population
- Submit PARTF grant for new park or park improvements
- Continue to expand revenue opportunities at parks and events
- Utilize the City's park fund for acquisition of new land for new parks
- Continue to look for partnership opportunities

10-15 YEAR PRIORITIES (2027-2032)

NO.	DESCRIPTION	QUANTITY	UNIT	UNIT COST	SUBTOTAL	
1	IMPROVEMENTS TO EXISTING PARKS					
A	Logan Multi Purpose Center	1	LS	@	\$25,000.00	\$25,000
B	Gibson Field	1	AC	@	\$121,675.00	\$121,675
C	Weddington Road Bark Park	1	AC	@	\$390,500.00	\$390,500
D	James L. Dorton Park	1	LS	@	\$126,650.00	\$126,650
E	Marvin Caldwell	1	AC	@	\$261,505.00	\$261,505
F	Les Myers	1	LS	@	\$194,150.00	\$194,150
	SUBTOTAL					\$1,119,480
2	GREENWAYS					
A	5 Miles of New Greenway*	5	MI	@	\$1,400,000.00	\$7,000,000
	SUBTOTAL					\$7,000,000
3	NEW PARKS AND FACILITIES					
A	School Park (Contribution)	1	EA	@	\$440,000.00	\$440,000
B	South Community Park	1	MI	@	\$4,141,500.00	\$4,141,500
C	Aquatic Center	1	EA	@	\$5,500,000.00	\$5,500,000
D	Dog Park	1	EA	@	\$1,454,470.00	\$1,454,470
	SUBTOTAL					\$11,535,970
TOTAL 10-15 YEAR PRIORITY SUMMARY						\$19,655,450

*Greenway unit Cost based on current City of Concord greenway budget numbers

Note: Cost data was derived by average market prices determined during the development of this master plan.

Prices may vary due to local market conditions.