

MAY 2019

# PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

FRANKLIN COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

2019-2028



# Acknowledgments

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*Riverbend Park*

## Executive Summary

In 1999, a Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan was prepared for Franklin County. This planning document was a collaborative effort by the Franklin County Recreation Department and Advisory Board, and various committees to develop a 15-year vision plan for parks and recreation needs. The 2000-2015 Plan established goals for park development, land acquisition, agency partnerships, etc. It also recommended numerous projects, programs and other action items (see Appendix E).

In the twenty years since the Parks and Recreation Master Plan was prepared much has happened in Franklin County. During much of the period since the adoption of the Master Plan, the County has worked to recover from the nation's worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. Even through those trying times, the County's population has increased; resulting in more need for recreation and open space opportunities. During this period, there have been some new parks and greenways developed and some land preserved, but many of the proposed improvements and actions recommended in the 2000-2015 Plan have not been implemented.

Recognizing the need for updating the Plan, elected officials funded a new planning study in 2018. Over the course of the past ten months, County staff, municipalities and community stakeholders have been working with the planning consultant on a new Parks and Recreation Master Plan specifically for the County's Parks and Recreation Department.

This Parks and Recreation Master Plan will help ensure that elected officials, parks and recreation staff, and citizen leaders have a road map to guide decision-making and actions as the County moves toward 2020, and beyond. It will provide a ten-year vision (2019-2028) for the Department. This guide was carefully crafted by staff and Master Plan Committee and with the help of outside experts to ensure that future generations will have adequate parks, community centers, trails, and open space.



The Plan starts with a description of existing facilities. Section One is a detailed description of current parks and recreational facilities. Section Two describes the service population - The People of Franklin County. Section Three covers accepted recreation standards and park needs. Section Four describes proposed improvements to facilities and parks. Finally, the Plan makes recommendations about a way forward. The Plan is comprehensive, and our best thinking in 2019 about how to proceed over the next 10 years.

## PUBLIC INPUT

An important aspect of the planning study was identifying the public's desire for parks, recreation facilities and programming. The public was offered the opportunity to participate through:

- Two community workshops
- Meetings with the Master Plan Committee
- County-wide survey

Over 500 people participated in this planning process. Findings from these public outreach efforts, as well as a summary of methodology, can be found in Section Two: The People of Franklin County.

## GROWTH & POPULATION

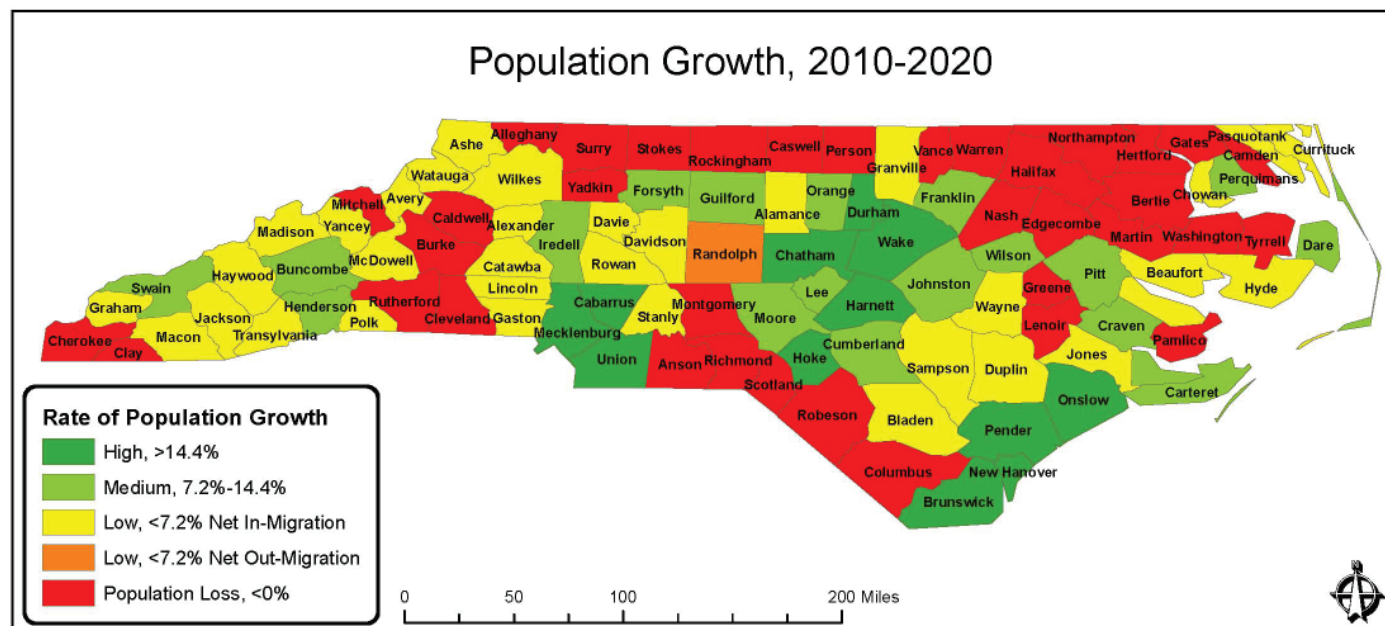
In addition to gathering public input, a critical step

in developing this plan is understanding the demographic and population changes that are occurring in the county. The 2010 census data provides very good information on population and demographics for use in this planning study. Likewise, the data prepared by ESRI provides valuable demographic, income and projected population information for this plan.

### Service Population

As noted in the graphic below, Franklin County is one of North Carolina's moderately growing counties. ESRI identified the County's 2018 population at  $\pm 67,011$ . This population figure has been rounded down to 67,000 for purposes of this planning report. ESRI projects the County's 2023 population to be  $\pm 71,882$ . As a 10-year plan, this figure has been projected to 76,700 as the County's 2028 population. This study uses these population levels as the basis of its Needs Assessment.

An important aspect of any parks and recreation Master Plan is determining the service population of the county or municipality the plan is designed to serve. While the overall service population of this plan is all Franklin County residents, the primary focus of plan recommendations is providing more parks, greenways, and community center services in underserved areas of the county as well as joint-use facilities with the municipalities.



## PARKS, RECREATION FACILITY & COMMUNITY CENTER NEEDS

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

- Mini Parks
- Neighborhood Parks
- Community Parks
- District Parks
- Regional Parks
- Greenways
- School Parks
- Special Use Facilities
  - Gymnasiums
  - Community Centers
  - Aquatics Facilities

Each of these parks/facilities provides recreation opportunities that meet citizens' recreational needs. A number of public and private agencies/entities provide leisure services in the community. Municipal agencies typically focus on Mini Parks, Neighborhood Parks, Community Parks, Greenways, School Parks, and special use facilities. County and state agencies often address larger park facilities (Community, District, and Regional Parks) and Greenways. Likewise, some County park agencies also have responsibility for community and senior centers. Schools, universities, churches, and private entities usually provide additional recreation facilities. This comprehensive plan addresses all recreation providers in the county with particular emphasis on Franklin County's role.

### Park Needs

In the next ten years, Franklin County's Parks and Recreation Department, working with local partners, should focus its efforts in the following areas. We begin our discussion with the largest park types:

#### Regional Parks

Citizens of Franklin County are very fortunate to have two outstanding State Parks within easy driving distance. Medoc Mountain State Park and Falls Lake State Recreation Area are valuable natural and recreational resources, located just outside the County.

These existing State Parks meet the needs of Regional Parks for the citizens of Franklin County.

#### District Parks

There is one new District Park serving county residents. Owens Recreational Park at Bull Creek is operated by Franklin County.

Even with this one existing District Park, there is the need for an additional District Park in the county.

A District Park is needed to serve residents in the southwestern area of the county. This area of the county around Youngsville and Franklinton is experiencing growth from Wake County which will place greater demand on finding and protecting some parkland for future generations.

Development of District Parks should be a priority for Franklin County. This includes the expansion of its existing District Park, as well as development of a new District Park in the southwestern area of the county.



*Louisburg Skatepark Shelter*

#### Community Parks

There are six Community Parks in Franklin County. Community Parks are provided by the town of Louisburg, as well as Franklin County. With almost 183 acres of existing Community Park land throughout the county, new Community Park development should still be a priority for the Department, but could be developed with partnerships with the municipalities.

## Neighborhood & Mini Parks

These parks are the smallest park types and are typically developed and operated by municipal agencies. Currently, there are no existing Neighborhood Parks within the county. Some of the Community Parks would normally by size be considered Neighborhood Parks, but by the importance through the facilities they provide and users they serve have been classified as Community Parks in Franklin County.

There is a need for Neighborhood Parks throughout the county and Franklin County should focus on some Neighborhood Park development, especially in the north and northeast areas of the County. However, local agencies should take the lead in Neighborhood Park development.

Mini Parks are the smallest park type. These parks (often less than an acre) usually provide a playground, shelter, etc. There are two Mini Parks located in the county (Youngsville and Bunn). Additional Mini Parks are needed, but as a county agency, development of these small parks should not be a departmental priority.

## Greenways

The most popular outdoor recreational activity in the nation is walking. This popularity was reflected in the survey and in comments made at the public workshops. One of the most popular recreational facilities to promote active lifestyles and help reduce obesity are Greenways. Greenways provide avenues for walking, jogging and biking. They also connect people with points of interest (parks, schools, housing, etc.).

Though an action item from the 2000-2015 plan, Franklin County has not been actively involved in the planning and implementation of greenways in the past. In partnership with its municipalities, the County should prepare a county-wide greenway master plan. In the next ten years the County should work collaboratively with municipal agencies in the development of this important resource.

## Recreational Facility Needs

The Level of Service (LOS) for recreational facilities (i.e. athletic fields, courts, picnic shelters, etc.)

proposed for county residents were developed from a review of LOS used by other counties similar to Franklin County, and from input gathered during the public input process. The LOS, identified in Table 3A-Facilities, and discussed in greater detail in Section Four: Proposals and Recommendations, are the minimum recreation facility LOS recommended for Franklin County.

Based on these LOS, the number of public facilities needed in the park system through the planning period (2019 to 2028) are identified in Table 3B-Facilities, “Recreation Facilities Needs Assessment” and summarized on the following chart. A more detailed discussion of each of the facility needs is provided in Section Four: Proposals & Recommendations.

In the following table, the “Existing Facilities” column indicates the number of existing recreation facilities currently available in the county. Existing facilities include facilities found in county and municipal parks. While the County and its municipalities also use school facilities, the school facilities are not always readily available for program use, so are not included in the chart at this time. The “Current Need” column identifies the total number of additional facilities currently needed. The “2028 Need” reflects the total number of additional facilities that will be needed by 2028.

As an example of how the Needs Assessment is presented, consider playgrounds. Currently, there are 8 existing public playgrounds throughout the county. Based on the Standards for Facility Development that have been recommended for the County (one playground for every 4,000 people in the service population), there is a current demand for 17 playgrounds ( $67,000 \div 4,000 = 16.75$ ). Since there are 8 playgrounds currently serving county residents, there is a current need to construct 9 additional playgrounds (demand of 17 – 8 existing playgrounds) to meet the demand. By 2028, with an increased population of 76,700, there will be a demand for 19 playgrounds ( $76,700 \div 4,000 = 19$ ); or a need for 3 additional playgrounds.



	Existing Facilities	Current Need	2028 Need
Baseball/Softball Fields	10	4	3
Multi-Purpose Fields	4	12	3
Basketball Courts (Outdoor)	2	1	1
Tennis Courts	0	7	1
Volleyball Courts	0	3	1
Horseshoes	0	1	0
Shuffleboard Courts	0	1	1
Playground	8	9	3
Picnic Shelters	9	4	2
Hiking/Jogging/Walking			
Trails (miles)	±7	±10	±3
Amphitheater	1	2	1
Community Garden	0	3	1
Swimming Pool	0	2	0
Rec. Center w/Gym	0	2	1
Dog Park	0	2	0
Skate Park	1	0	.5
Disc Golf	1	1	1
Sprayground	0	1	1

Current and future needs listed above are county wide needs. Franklin County is not responsible for meeting all the needs. Many of these facility needs will be met by the municipal parks and recreation departments currently operating in the county. Meeting the needs of all county residents will require a collaborative effort. See Section Four for specific recommendations on facility needs to be met by Gaston County's Parks and Recreation Department.

## Community Centers & Gymnasiums

Currently, the County does not offer its citizens a community center with any gymnasiums. Youth basketball programs are conducted by municipal agencies and youth athletic associations using school facilities when available. The lack of adequate indoor space greatly restricts the opportunity for fitness equipment, exercise programming, volleyball, free play, etc.

Based on the responses from both the survey and the public workshops, there is much community support for an indoor recreation center with gymnasium space. This was also an action item from the 2000-

2015 plan. Unfortunately, the cost of constructing and (more importantly) operating an indoor recreation center is extremely high. The County should explore options for providing indoor facilities. The most viable option is to partner with the municipalities and perhaps Louisburg College in development of joint use indoor facilities.

## Swimming Pools and Spraygrounds

In the past, NRPA and NCDENR provided a standard for pool development of one pool for every 20,000 people. This standard was based on the concept of multi-neighborhood or community pools. Today, with the high cost of operation and construction of swimming pools, very few agencies develop neighborhood/community pools to that old standard. Instead agencies typically provide more centralized facilities where one pool may serve a greater population or consider development of a sprayground as an alternative in multiple areas.

Based on input received during the public participation, there is demand for aquatic facilities. This was also an action item in the 2000-2015 plan. The development and operation of a swimming pool is expensive and should be highly considered. The County should explore options for providing aquatics facilities, perhaps as part of a community center. The most viable option is to partner with the municipalities and other agencies in the development of joint use aquatics facilities



*Lineberger Park Pool in Gastonia*

Spraygrounds are growing in popularity across the country. In addition to offering a water-based play experience, the play structures, sprays, etc. afford children of all ages a total play environment and are much more economical to operate than a standard swimming pool. A properly designed, large water park sprayground can serve as a regional draw, provide revenue to the Department, and provide a beneficial economic impact to the surrounding area. Based on the popularity of these facilities, the Department should consider developing spraygrounds in other existing or future parks.

## IMPROVING/EXPANDING EXISTING PARKS

An important component of this comprehensive planning effort was an assessment of the existing facilities currently serving county residents. Section One: Inventory describes improvements needed at each park. An order of magnitude cost estimate for the proposed improvements identifies over \$1.2 million dollars in potential improvements/renovations. Improvements to the following parks should be a priority for future development:

- Franklinton Park
- Moose Lodge Park
- Pilot Lions Park
- Owens Recreational Park at Bull Creek (Phase 2)

The County should also conduct an ADA audit for all county facilities. Recommendations from this audit should be used to guide ADA access improvements to all county parks.

## OPERATIONAL NEEDS

The expansion of park facilities described in this document will greatly improve the park and recreation offerings in the county, but will come with a cost; capital and operational. Expanding parks and adding facilities as outlined in this plan will increase operational and maintenance costs 15-20%. The County should consider the increased operational cost of any capital improvement before expanding facilities.

Section Five: Action Plan Implementation provides some general guidelines on anticipated staff needs, as well as program and maintenance costs.

## JOINT USE OPPORTUNITIES

The public is best served when government agencies work together. There are a number of public agencies operating in the county that have facilities and programs that potentially serve the public's need for parks and recreation. The County should continue to explore ways to work with other agencies to provide services and attain common goals.

The following agencies have missions that may be in alignment with the County's Parks and Recreation Department:

- Franklin County Schools
- Franklin County Dept. of Aging
- Duke LifePoint Healthcare (Maria Parham Health)
- Town of Louisburg
- Town of Franklinton
- Town of Youngsville
- Town of Bunn
- Louisburg College

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

## CAPITAL NEEDS

The development of a new District and Neighborhood Parks, development of community center and aquatics facilities, construction of greenways, and significant park renovations will require a substantial financial commitment from all the county over the next 10+ years. As noted in Table 5-1 Capital Improvement Plan, the anticipated cost of the recommendations found in this planning report will be over \$23 million. Recognizing that this is a Vision Plan for a county wide park system, County staff and elected officials must prioritize the recommendations in this document based on the public's input and staff

review. The following park development initiatives should be considered the highest priorities:

- Renovations/upgrades to all existing parks
- ADA improvements to existing parks
- Development of a multi-use community center
- Acquisition of land and planning for Parks in the southwestern, north and northeastern areas of the county
- Construction of 3-5 miles of new greenways
- Development of a dog park
- Development of a sprayground

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

It should be noted that in 2007/2008 our country experienced the greatest economic downturn since the Great Depression. Unemployment rates were higher than those experienced since the 1930s. The housing bubble burst, resulting in millions of foreclosures and falling home prices. The failing economy resulted in significant reductions in government funds. Budget cuts in Washington and Raleigh have placed even greater stress on municipal and county agencies.

While the economy has improved in recent years, public budgets are still challenged. Franklin County, like counties across the country, is faced with difficult decisions. Parks and recreation services are an important component of community life. Studies show that recreation resources add to the quality of life in communities that support parks. Even with this understanding, elected officials must carefully consider how to allocate funds for day to day operation and facility expansion.

The park, recreation, and community center services needs identified in this planning document are significant, and it is understood that not all recommendations will be acted upon in the next ten years. Instead, it is the intent of this plan to identify

a vision for the County's park system and provide recommendations for reaching that vision. Parks and recreation staff, working with community leaders and elected officials, will implement the recommendations as financial conditions allow.



**Table 5-1**  
**Franklin County Parks & Recreation Department**  
**Parks and Recreation Master Plan**  
**Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) (10 Years)**

<b><u>Capital Improvement &amp; Land Acquisition</u></b>	<b><u>10-Year Total</u></b>	<b><u>2019-2023</u></b>	<b><u>2024-2028</u></b>
<b>Existing Parks Renovations/Improvements</b>			
Franklinton Park	\$500,000	\$300,000	\$200,000
Pilot Lions Park	\$375,000	\$375,000	\$0
Moose Lodge Park	\$125,000	\$50,000	\$75,000
Owens Recreation Park (Phase 2)	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$0
Planning & Design (10%)	\$110,000	<u>\$82,500</u>	<u>\$27,500</u>
<b>Renovations/Improvements Total</b>	<b>\$1,210,000</b>	<b>\$907,500</b>	<b>\$302,500</b>
<b>Land Acquisition</b>			
Northeast Area Park	\$650,000	\$375,000	\$275,000
Epsom Park (3 AC)	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$0
De Hart Greenway Corridor	\$200,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
Community Center (Central)	\$650,000	\$150,000	\$500,000
Community Center (West)	\$500,000	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$500,000</u>
<b>Land Acquisition Total</b>	<b>\$2,500,000</b>	<b>\$1,125,000</b>	<b>\$1,375,000</b>
<b>Park/Facility Development</b>			
Epsom Park (North)	\$2,200,000	\$2,200,000	\$0
Northeast Area Park	\$1,500,000	\$0	\$1,500,000
Southwest Area Park	\$3,000,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000
Community Center (Central)	\$7,000,000	\$3,500,000	\$3,500,000
Community Center (West)	\$0	\$0	\$0
Planning & Design (10%)	<u>\$1,370,000</u>	<u>\$720,000</u>	<u>\$650,000</u>
<b>Park/Facility Development Total</b>	<b>\$15,070,000</b>	<b>\$7,920,000</b>	<b>\$7,150,000</b>
<b>Greenway Development</b>			
De Hart Greenway	\$1,000,000	\$750,000	\$200,000
Louisburg/Franklinton Rail Trail	\$1,500,000	\$750,000	\$750,000
Natural Trail Development	\$70,000	\$35,000	\$35,000
Planning & Design (10%)	<u>\$252,000</u>	<u>\$153,500</u>	<u>\$98,500</u>
<b>Greenway Development Total</b>	<b>\$2,772,000</b>	<b>\$1,688,500</b>	<b>\$1,083,500</b>
<b>Special Use Facilities</b>			
New Dog Park	\$50,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
New Splash Pad	\$1,000,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
Planning & Design (10%)	<u>\$105,000</u>	<u>\$52,500</u>	<u>\$52,500</u>
<b>Special Use Facilities Total</b>	<b>\$1,155,000</b>	<b>\$577,500</b>	<b>\$577,500</b>
<b>Comprehensive Greenway Master Plan</b>	<b>\$65,000</b>	<b>\$65,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Total Capital Improvement Budget Cost</b>	<b>\$22,772,000</b>	<b>\$12,283,500</b>	<b>\$10,488,500</b>



*Franklinton Town Park*

## Section One

# Department Overview/Inventory

## INTRODUCTION

The current Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan has been the guiding force for the County's Parks and Recreation Department since 2000. The 2000-2015 Plan has served the County well as facilities and programs have developed over the past 19 years. Franklin County and its planning partners, the Towns of Louisburg and Franklinton embarked on an updated Parks and Recreation Master Plan to continue guiding parks and recreation offerings and opportunities for 2019-2028. The first step in the master planning process is to inventory and assess the existing parks and recreation facilities currently serving Franklin County residents. With the current demand on County resources, it is extremely important to identify and utilize existing facilities to their fullest potential. This section identifies all existing parks and recreation facilities found in the county.

Some of the publicly owned parks located in Franklin County are owned and operated by municipalities. These facilities include park and facilities located in Louisburg and Youngsville. The majority of these parks fall into the Community Park (20-40 acres), Neighborhood Park (5-20 acres), and Specialty Parks classification, including the Louisburg Bike Trail and the Miracle League Field of Franklin County. These existing municipal parks provide a good platform for recreational activities for citizens living within the municipalities. The towns of Louisburg and Youngsville have parks and recreation departments.

Franklin County Parks and Recreation Department operates two Community Parks (Franklinton Park, Pilot Lions Park), one neighborhood park (Moose Lodge Park) and will soon open and operate a new district park (Owens Park).

Franklin County Schools (FCS) is another major provider of recreation facilities throughout the county. The County's Parks and Recreation Department has joint use agreements with FCS and offers programs within school's gymnasiums and on the recreation fields and tracks. This collaborative effort is critical to meeting the recreational needs of the citizens.

The Franklin County Department of Aging organizes and provides activities for seniors with participation by Franklin County Parks and Recreation. Franklin County Parks and Recreation also coordinates with Special Olympics in Franklin County.

Another important open space provider in Franklin County is Louisburg College, which operates De Hart Botanical Gardens south of Louisburg.

Finally, the private sector offers recreational activities throughout the county. These private sector options range from golf courses, swim clubs and residential amenity areas operated by homeowner associations. These non-governmental provided recreation opportunities are an important component in meeting recreational needs of county residents.

This section identifies the existing parks and recreation facilities currently serving the citizens of Franklin County. Special attention is provided for parks owned and operated by Franklin County as well some of the other municipal parks providing recreation for the region; including a list of recommended improvements for each park.

## FRANKLIN COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

### Mission Statements

The mission of Franklin County Parks and Recreation is to provide recreational facilities and open space that promotes the general well-being of the citizens of Franklin County; and provides natural areas for conservation of scenic and undeveloped lands and contributes to the economic, social and environmental health of Franklin County.

The County Parks and Recreation Department plans, develops, and maintains parks, and provides an array of organized activities to help meet the leisure needs of the citizens of the county.

At the present time, the Department maintains and manages the four (4) parks noted previously: Franklinton Park (Franklinton), Pilot Lions Park (Bunn area), and Moose Lodge Park and Owens Recreational Park at Bull Creek (Louisburg).

The Department also provides technical assistance to municipalities and other organized groups throughout the county in the development and provision of recreational programs. The County's park and recreational programs are open to all citizens of the county regardless of age, sex, race, or economic status. Recreation is an important contributor to building sound physical and mental health, to molding good citizenship and character, and to reducing crime and delinquency. The parks system makes Franklin County a more attractive and desirable place for homeowners, business, and industry.

### Events/Programs

The Franklin County Parks and Recreation Department provides a wide variety of community events and programs throughout the year. The following events have been held or are scheduled for 2018-2019:



## **Franklin County**

### Youth Programs Offered:

#### Jan-Apr

- Youth Winter Volleyball (Jan-Mar) Ages-7-18
- Flag Football (Jan-Mar) Ages 6-16
- Father Daughter Dance (February) K - 5th Grade
- Easter Egg Hunt (Two Weeks before Easter) Toddler thru 5th Grade
- Jr. Golf Day (April) Ages 7-18

#### May-Sept

- Basketball Camp (June) Ages 5-18
- Volleyball Camp (June) Ages 5-18
- Cheerleading Camp (July) Ages 5-18
- Golf Camp (July) Ages 5-18
- Wrestling Camp (July) Ages 5-18
- Soccer Camp (July) Ages 5-18
- Art Camp(July) Ages 5-14
- Basketball League (June-August) Ages 5-18
- Volleyball League (June-August) Ages 5-18
- Fourth of July Celebration

### Adult Programs Offered

For Adult Programs, participants need to be at least 18 and out of high school

- Adult Dodge Ball (January-March)
- Adult Men Softball (March-April)
- Adult Coed Kickball (May-July)
- Adult Coed Softball (July-September)
- Adult Coed Volleyball (October-December)

## **Town of Franklinton**

### Youth Programs Offered (Ages 3-14):

- Baseball/T-ball/Softball (March - June)
- Soccer (September - November)
- Basketball (December - February)
- Volleyball

### Adult Programs Offered

- Softball (Spring)

## **Town of Louisburg**

### Youth Programs Offered:

- T-ball(Ages 3-4)
- Coach pitch (Ages 5-6)
- Baseball
- Softball

Franklin County Inventory of Existing Facilities

	Type	Name	Acreage	Adult Baseball Fields	Youth Baseball Fields	Men's Softball Fields	Women's Softball Fields	Soccer Fields	Football Fields	Multi-purpose Fields	Basketball Courts (Outdoors)	Tennis Courts	Volleyball Courts	Shuffleboard Courts	Horseshoe Pits	Bocee Ball Courts	Playgrounds	Picnic Shelters	Gazebo	Trail/Greenway (Miles)	Mountain Bike Trail (Miles)	Water Access	Community Garden	Swimming Pool/Splash Pad	Dog Park	Skate Park	Grass Area/Open Space	Gardens/Passive Areas	Amphitheater	Disc Golf Course	Gymnasium	Pickle Ball	Fishing	Restrooms	
Mini-Parks																			1								1								
		Irene Mitchell Park (Youngsville)	1.22																																
Neighborhood Parks			1.22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Community Parks			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
		Franklinton Park	25.24			2				1							1	1		0.25														1	
		Moose Lodge Park	11.7			1											1	1																1	
		Pilot Lions Park	18.38			2				1							1	1		0.5														1	
		Joyner Park (Louisburg)	90		1			1									1	2		2.3										1			1		
		Riverbend Park (Louisburg)	27														2	1				1													
		Luddy Recreational Facility (Youngsville)	10.32		3					1	1						2	2		0.5														1	
		Bunn Community Park (Bunn)	0.2														1	1																	
			182.84	0	4	5	0	1	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	8	9	0	3.55	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	4	
District Parks																																			
		Owens Recreational Park at Bull Creek	167														1	1		0.5													1	1	
			167	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	
Greenways																																			
		Louisburg Bike Trail (Louisburg)																		2.24															
			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2.74	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Special Use Facilities																																			
		Louisburg Skateboard Park (Louisburg)	0.51																							1							1		
		Miracle League of Franklin County			1															0.8															
			0.51	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.8	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	
Franklin County Totals			351.57	0	5	5	0	1	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	9	10	1	7.09	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	2	5	

## Franklinton Park (Franklin County)

### COMMUNITY PARK



### DESCRIPTION

Franklinton Park is a 25.24 acre Community Park which serves as a local sports destination for the western part of the county. It is currently home to 2 lighted & irrigated baseball diamonds with bleacher seating and 1 Running Track and Open Play Field. The site includes a large children's playground and large picnic shelter and loop trail for a broad demographic, but generally the park targets adult co-ed softball and kickball.

Franklinton Park is one of the most used parks in Franklin County. The shelter has seating for 80 and has 4 grills.

Current challenges and opportunities for Franklinton Park include drainage issues, pedestrian circulation restrictions, lack of ADA accessible sidewalk to track and inclusive play components.

Typical amenities located within the park:

- 2 baseball diamonds
- 1 Open Play Field
- Picnic tables and bleacher seating
- Walking Track
- Concession Stand w/Restrooms

Challenges and opportunities for development:

- Drainage and ADA accessibility
- Opportunities for playground improvements (Inclusive Play), etc.
- Pedestrian Connectivity to the Neighborhood





## Pilot Lions Park (Franklin County)

### COMMUNITY PARK



Typical amenities located within the park:

### DESCRIPTION

Pilot Lions Park is an 18.38 acre Community Park in Pilot which serves as a local sports destination that targets adult-co-ed softball. It is currently home to 2 lighted baseball diamonds with bleacher seating and Batting Cages. The site also contains a playground, walking trail and shelter located beside the Pilot Lions club house.

Current challenges and opportunities for Pilot Lions Park include: Dead plant material at entrance, erosion in and around parking lot, and lack of accessible route to club house.

- 2 baseball diamonds w/ Covered Dugouts, Bleacher Seating
- 1 Multi-Purpose Field (Grassed Lot)
- Batting Cages
- Picnic Shelter w/ Grill, 3 Picnic Tables
- Concessions/Restrooms
- Playground
- 1/2 Mile Walking Trail

### Challenges and opportunities for development:

- Fence extension along backside of walking trail
- Bathroom Signage
- Opportunities for new plant material at entrance, relocated benches at concessions, and repaired gravel parking to combat erosion and drainage issues.
- Parking upgrades, including paving



## Moose Lodge Park (Franklin County)

COMMUNITY PARK



### DESCRIPTION

Moose Lodge Park is an 11.7 acre Community Park which serves as a local sports destination. It is currently home to 1 lighted baseball/softball diamond with bleacher seating accented by a man-made pond to the rear of the site. Moose Lodge is currently one of three Parks in the Franklin County System and is targeted at adult co-ed softball and kickball.

Current challenges and opportunities for Moose Lodge Park include Erosion Control issues and a need for ADA accessible sidewalks and seating areas. Concession Stand Decking and Picnic table are also in need of replacement.

Typical amenities located within the park:

- 1 Baseball/Softball Field
- Dugouts w/ team benches
- Concessions/Announcer's Booth
- Picnic table (1) and bleacher seating (4 Sets)

Challenges and opportunities for development:

- ADA accessibility
- Accessibility to field from parking lot
- Accessibility to concessions from bleachers.
- Opportunities for improved amenities and drainage.





# V.E. & Lydia H. Owens Recreational Park at Bull Creek (Franklin County)

DISTRICT PARK



## DESCRIPTION

Owens Recreational Park is a 167 acre Franklin County District Park redeveloped on the former Bull Creek Golf Course. In addition to the golf course, the property has 4 ponds, a 3,200 square foot clubhouse and two other 4,000 sf buildings on the property.

Current challenges and opportunities for Owens Park include the possible renovations and/or re-use of the clubhouse and buildings; Address best uses for existing ponds & pond edges.



Amenities located within the park:

- Paved Trails (1/2 mile)
- Playground
- Picnicking w/ shelter
- Restrooms
- Fishing Pier

Challenges and opportunities for development:

- Funding for future expansion?
- Disc golf
- X-country
- Volleyball



## Joyner Park (Town of Louisburg)

### COMMUNITY PARK



#### DESCRIPTION

Joyner Park is a 90+ acre Community Park which will serve as a local sports destination. The soccer field is being renovated and the new baseball field is under construction. Passive recreation currently dominates with the Cypress Scout Trail, a 1.5 mile natural trail with a 2200 feet walking loop all of which is situated next to the Tar River.

Current challenges and opportunities for Joyner Park include the need of pedestrian connectivity and asphalt trail renovations. Playground surfacing needs replenishment and to be outfitted with a sub-drainage system to eliminate pooling water.

Typical amenities located within the park:

- 1 Soccer Field (lighted)
- 1 Baseball Field (Under Construction)
- Playground
- (2) Shelters with Picnic Tables
- Electric Car Charging Station
- 1.5 Mile Natural Walking Trail
- 0.40 Mile Paved Walking Trail
- 2200 If River View Loop

Challenges and opportunities for development:

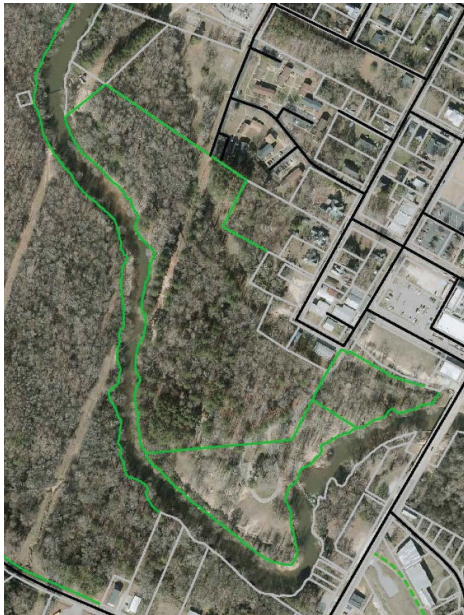
- Opportunities for Improved Accessibility (Sidewalks are narrow)
- Playground surfacing inadequate per current standards
- Porta-Johns serve as restroom facilities





## Riverbend Park (Town of Louisburg)

COMMUNITY PARK



### DESCRIPTION

Riverbend Park is a 27+ acre community park that sits in a conservation area along the Tar River. Located within walking distance of downtown, Riverbend Park provides fishing access, Canoe access, 9-hole disc golf course, playgrounds, and shaded picnic groves throughout the site.

Current challenges and opportunities for Riverbend Park include lack of accessibility to picnic tables, playgrounds, shelters and entrance into park. Park is often flooded by major rain events due to its location in a special flood hazard area. There is no pedestrian circulation route/connection to the Tar River.

Typical amenities located within the park:

- 2 playgrounds + stand-alone equipment
- 9-Hole disc golf course
- Picnic tables (8)
- Shelter (w/ 6 tables)

Challenges and opportunities for development:

- Low spots/ sediment traps
- Lack of accessible circulation in and at entrance of park; Amenities are non ADA-compliant
- Need to update/replace play equipment & site furnishings
- Need pedestrian connection over the Tar River to Joyner Park





# Louisburg Bike Trail (Town of Louisburg)

GREENWAY



## DESCRIPTION

Louisburg Bike Trail is a 2.24 mile trail that starts at South Main Street (Between Seaboard & Commerce) and ends at Vance-Granville Community College. The trail re-uses part of the abandoned Seaboard Rail corridor and also uses roads from Harris St to Edgerton Pl to NC 56.

## Trail Features:

- 2.24 miles of paved Trail
- Downtown connected via sidewalk
- Trail crossings well marked

## Challenges and opportunities for development:

- Additional Trail Amenities and rest zones
- Seeking Funding for trail expansion towards Franklinton
- Need to develop an identifiable trailhead with parking





## Louisburg Skateboard Park (Town of Louisburg) SPECIALTY PARK



### DESCRIPTION

Louisburg Skateboard Park is a 0.51 acre Specialty Park located off Spring Street serves as a local skateboard destination. It is currently home to a skate ramp, concrete skid rails, and pickle ball court. Bench seating is provided on the outer perimeter of the fenced in park.

A community amphitheater is located adjacent to skate park and is used for many community events like “Friday Nights on the Tar,” “BBQ in the Burg” and movie nights.

Typical amenities located within the park:

- Skateboard Ramps and Skid Rails
- Bench Seating
- Pickle Ball Court painted at one end
- Amphitheater and stage

Challenges and opportunities for development:

- ADA accessibility and Connectivity
- Opportunities for additional amenities: Hydration Station/Water Fountain, shelter



## Miracle League Field @ Long Mill Elementary (Miracle League of Franklin County)

Special Needs



### DESCRIPTION

Located at Long Mill Elementary School in Youngsville, the Miracle League Field is home to the Miracle League of Franklin County. The baseball league is for children with physical and/or emotional disabilities. The site also includes a wheelchair accessible playground, 1600 square foot field house, and a 0.8 mile walking trail.

Current challenges and opportunities for the Miracle League Field include lack of accessible routing from the field to the Playground except from the road.

Typical amenities located within the park:

- T-Ball Sized Baseball Field with Rubberized turf Surface
- 1600 sf Field House
- 0.8 mile Walking Trail

Challenges and opportunities for development:

- Lack of ADA accessibility from Field to Playground





## Bill & Angie Luddy Recreational Facility (Town of Youngsville) COMMUNITY PARK



### DESCRIPTION

The Bill and Angie Luddy Recreational Facility (Luddy Park) is a 10+ acre Community Park which serves as a local sports destination. The size of the park would typically fall into the Neighborhood Park category, but due to its location and offerings to the Youngsville community, it serves as a Community Park. Primary focus of this facility is baseball and is able to offer fields for Dixie Youth baseball, adult softball, and middle and high school baseball and softball.

Except for the covered area by the restrooms, the facility does not have any shelters or other shade structures. Erosion is an issue around the large field while the two lower fields have drainage issues.

Typical amenities located within the park:

- 1 regulation size Dixie Youth Baseball Field (lighted)
- 1 Full size Baseball Field (300' outfield)
- (2) Smaller Youth Baseball Fields
- (2) Playgrounds
- Concessions/Restrooms with Picnic Tables
- 1 Basketball Court
- 0.50 Mile Paved Walking Trail
- Batting Cages

Challenges and opportunities for development:

- Opportunities for Improved Accessibility
- Playground surfacing inadequate per current standards
- Need picnic shelters







## DESCRIPTION

Irene E. Mitchell Park is a 1.22-acre Mini Park located across from Youngsville Elementary School. Primary focus of this park is towards passive recreation with its primary greenspace.

Typical amenities located within the park:

- 1 gazebo
- Paved walking paths with benches and memorials
- Greenspace
- Large shade trees

Challenges and opportunities for development:

- Opportunities for Improved accessibility
- Opportunity for small area of play equipment





## Bunn Community Park (Town of Bunn)

MINI PARK



### DESCRIPTION

Bunn Community Park is an 0.2 acre Mini Park, the Town's first park. It is anticipated to open in June 2019. The park was developed with the assistance of a PARTF grant. The park is across the parking lot from Town Hall.

Amenities to be located within the park:

- Playground
- Fitness Equipment
- Picnic Shelter
- Seating

Challenges and opportunities for development:

- Provide additional shade opportunities
- Development of a walking trail
- Additional play equipment
- Additional parking





## De Hart Botanical Gardens (Louisburg College) SPECIALTY PARK



### DESCRIPTION

The De Hart Botanical Gardens are located on 90+ acres just south of Louisburg on US 401. Named after Mr. Allen De Hart, a long time professor at Louisburg College, the gardens were given to the college in 2012. The botanical gardens are maintained by the college and open to the public year-round.

The focus of the gardens is on preserved forests, natural springs and streams, habitat for numerous species of flora and fauna, granite rock outcroppings and as a bird sanctuary. According to their website, the Gardens are open to the public for visitation, hiking, weddings, educational sessions, 5K track, community concerts, and picnicking.

Typical amenities located within the park:

- Environmental education
- Natural trails
- 1.5-acre lake
- Streams and waterfalls
- Open space

Challenges and opportunities for development:

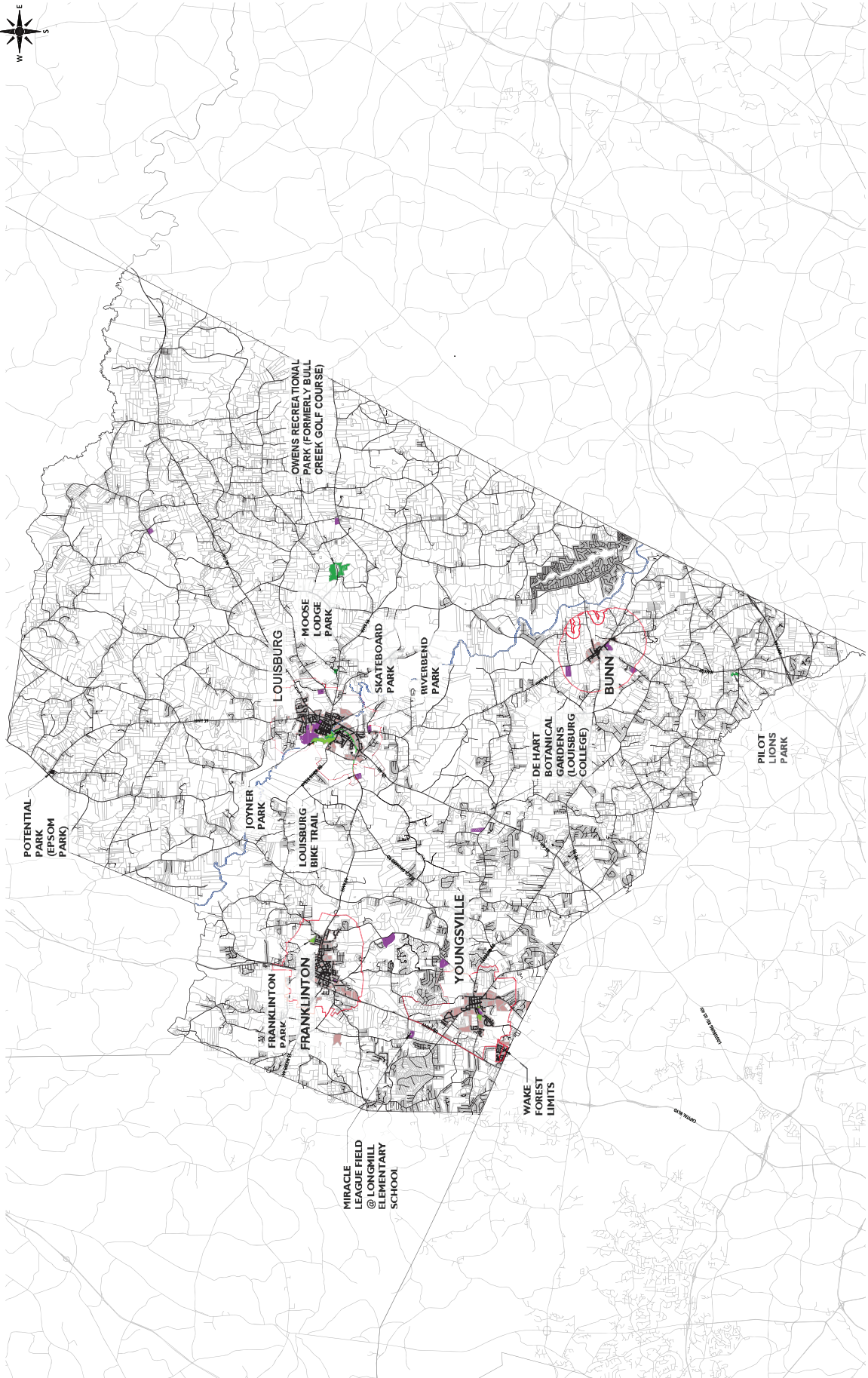
- ADA accessibility
- Opportunities for partnerships with Parks & Recreation for programming
- Potential for greenway connectivity into Louisburg
- Add shelters for picnicking/shade





# Franklin County Parks & Recreation Master Plan | Existing Parks Inventory

05.02.2019

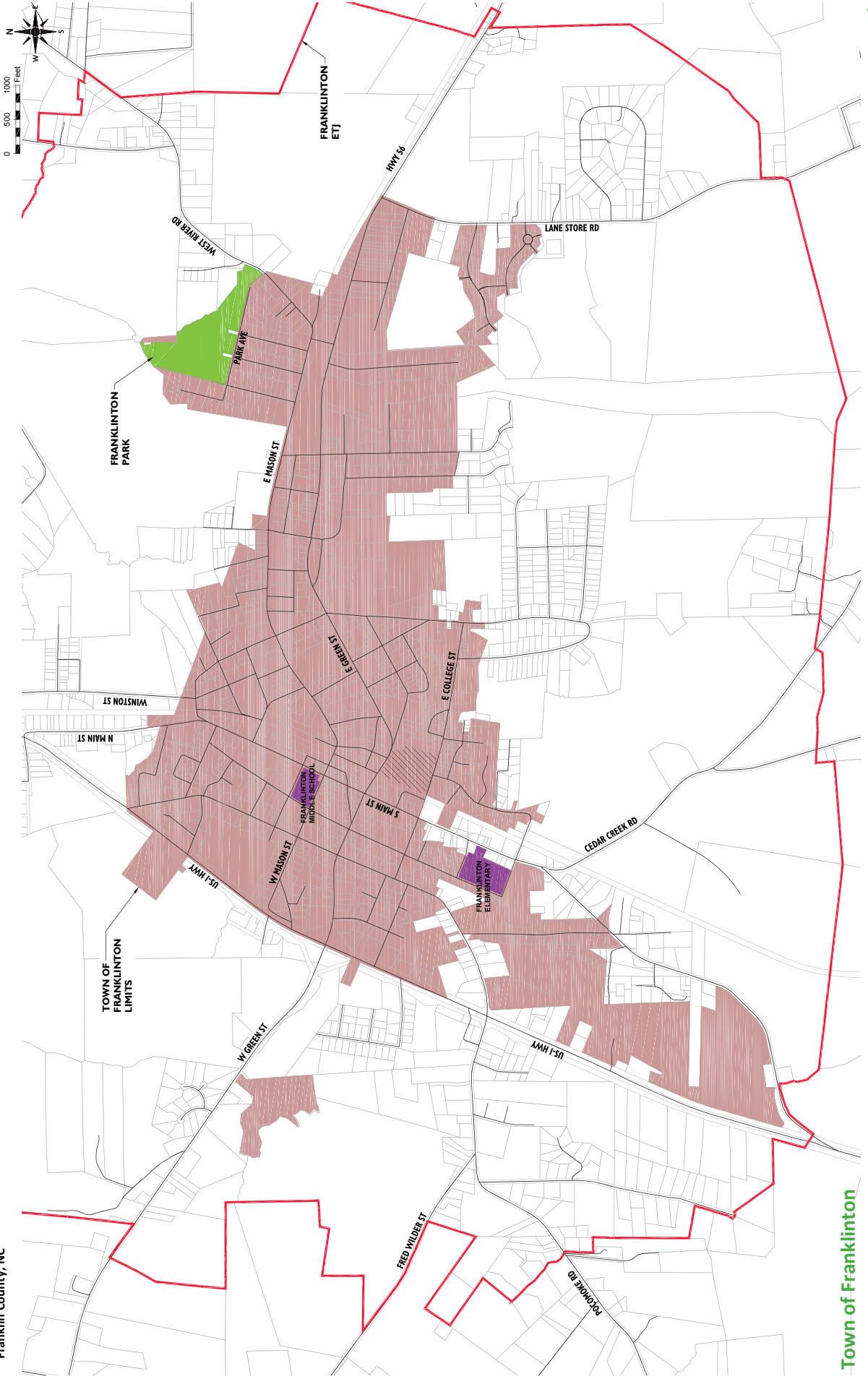


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# Franklin County Parks & Recreation Master Plan | Existing Parks Inventory

Franklin County, NC

| 05.02.2019

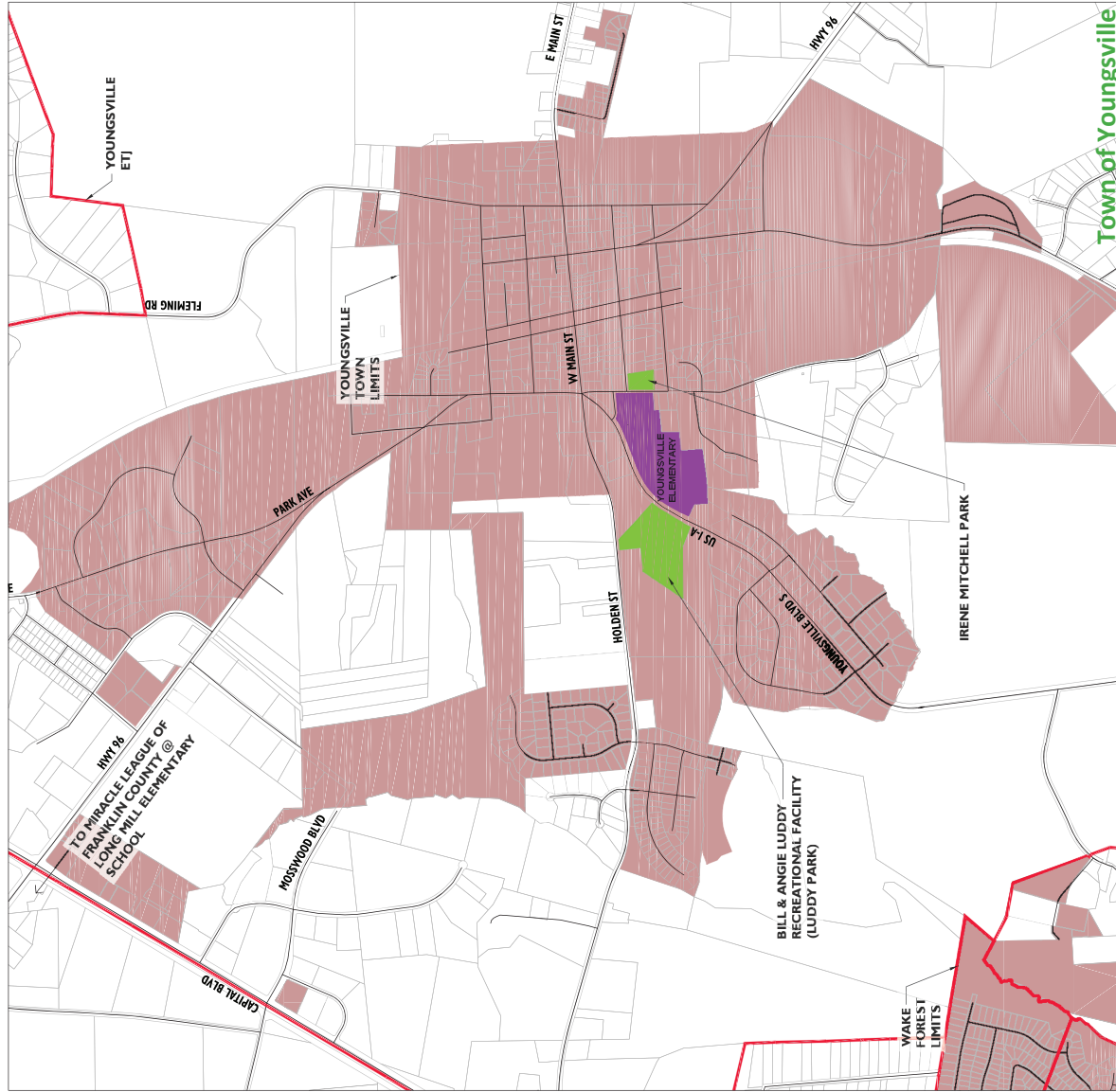


Town of Franklinton

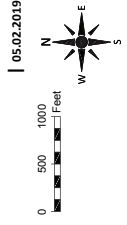


# Franklin County Parks & Recreation Master Plan| Existing Parks Inventory

Franklin County, NC



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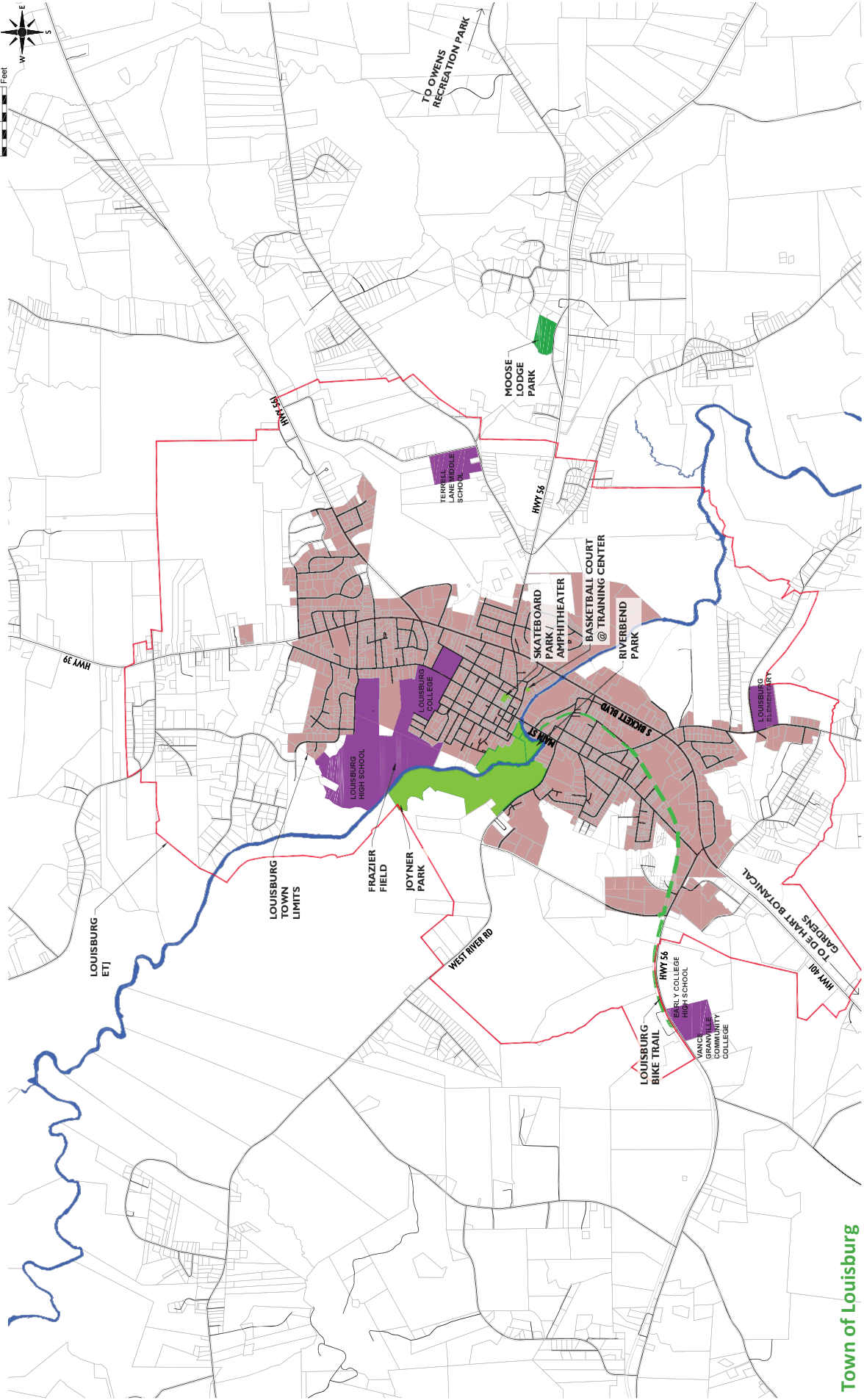




# Franklin County Parks & Recreation Master Plan | Existing Parks Inventory

Franklin County, NC

05.02.2019



Town of Louisburg



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*Luddy Recreational Facility (Youngsville)*

## Section Two

# The History and People of Franklin County

## INTRODUCTION

An important step in understanding the park and recreational needs of Franklin County is to develop an understanding of the context and the people that make up the county. Section Two includes an overview of the County's history, population and demographics and looks at changes that are occurring throughout the County.

In addition to reviewing the County's projected growth and demographic changes, the Needs Assessment included community engagement initiatives to gather information on public demand/expectations for current and future parks and recreation facilities. These initiatives included:

- County-Wide Survey
- Community Workshops
- Master Plan Committee Meetings
- Staff Input

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

## County History and Context

Located to the northeast of Wake County, Franklin County is still located within the Research Triangle Region of North Carolina. Therefore, Franklin County is also located in the Raleigh NC Metropolitan Statistical Area as well as the Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill Combined Statistical Area. This ideal location, along with its small County feel and friendly people, make Franklin County a favorite residential destination with easy commuting, especially into Wake County.

While ranking 45th of North Carolina's 100 counties by size, Franklin County is the state's 42nd largest county based on population (1.13% of the State's population as of 2018). The majority of the county's 2018 population (approximately 67,011) reside outside of one of the county's five (5) incorporated areas. The municipalities within the county include (in order of population based on the Franklin County website):

Louisburg (County Seat) - 3700

Franklinton - 2012

Youngsville - 1250

Bunn - 425

Named for Benjamin Franklin, Franklin County was formed in 1779, establishing the County as the 38th oldest in North Carolina. Franklin, who was serving as foreign minister to France during the American Revolution, named the town of Louisburg in honor of Louis XVI of France. The Louisburg Historic District can be found on the National Register of Historic Places and showcases many examples of historic residential architecture. A historical landmark within Franklin County, The Person Place, is an iconic Georgian/Federal style house which is unique among historic structures in Louisburg. The oldest portion of the structure dates from 1789. The first junior college in the United States was also established in Louisburg in 1805, now known as Louisburg College.

The Town of Franklinton was established in 1839 and was originally known as Franklin Depot. After the town was incorporated in 1842 it was renamed Franklinton. Franklinton is also home to several

former cotton and textile mills. Sterling Cotton Mill is located on the Historic Register and is being renovated into apartments.

Several of the other municipalities within Franklin County are also home to historic properties, such as the Williams A. Jeffreys House in Youngsville and the Andrews-Moore Plantation house in Bunn. Historically, the main industry in the region was farming, which can still be found today.

There are news articles and an historical marker that discuss the discovery and history of gold and a gold mine in the northeast corner of the county. History says that gold was discovered on the farm/land of John and Isaac Portis in the 1830's. Mining is said to have occurred until the 1930's, but no great amounts of gold were ever extracted. (See Appendix G)

Instrumental in the growth of Franklin County, the railroad was located through the center of County with Louisburg and Franklinton being developed along the rail line. Today, Franklin County's connections to Highways 401, 1, 64, 56 are more important than its physical connection to the railroad. Through the roadways systems, Franklin County is easily connected to Wake Forest, Henderson, Zebulon, and Rocky Mount and Raleigh, making it a very convenient location for both business and personal use.



*De Hart Botanical Garden*



## The People of Franklin County

An important aspect of this planning process is understanding the people who make up the Department's Service Population. To better understand the park and recreational needs of the Franklin County, a review of demographic and income data prepared by ESRI provides valuable information on the demographic makeup of the County from the 2010 census as well as projections for 2018 and 2023.

Franklin County's 2018 estimated population of 67,011 is somewhat similar to the state's population. 16.0% of Franklin County's population is 65 years or older while the State's senior population represents 15.9 % of the total population. Veterans comprise around 5% of the County's population. The County's youth (persons under 19 years of age) represents a quarter of the overall population. While a slight decrease from 27.3% in 2010, the 25% youth population is just a bit lower as just over a fourth (28.3%) of the state's population is made up of youth. This larger percentage of youth is also reflected in the slightly larger household size found in Franklin County. While the State's average household contains 2.53 persons, the average household in Franklin County in 2018 is comprised of 2.59 persons; indicating many households with one or more children. Currently, the number of estimated occupied homes in Franklin County is around 24,287.

Franklin County is very homogeneous. Whites comprise 66.2% of the County's population while whites make up 70.8% of the State's population. Conversely, Franklin County has a similar percentage of Blacks or African Americans (25.7%) or Hispanics/Latinos (8.3%) than the State; 22.2% and 9.5% respectively. American Indian, Alaska Native, Asian and "Two or more races" comprise about 8.1% of the County's population compared to 6.9% of the State's population.

Franklin County has just under the State's percentage of female residents. While North Carolina's female population represents 51.3% of the State's population, females comprise 50% of the County's population.

Economically, Franklin County residents are just below in the State with regard to median household

income. Franklin County's median household income (in 2018) was \$50,159, while the State's median income was \$50,320. Likewise, the County's per capita income (\$24,777) is slightly lower than the State's per capita income (\$28,123). A little over a half (56.1%) of the County's population 16 years and older were in the civilian workforce. This is slightly above that of the state's percentage of population in the workforce (61.4%). The median value of an owner occupied home in Franklin County is much lower than the median value of an owner occupied home from across the state (\$150,466 versus \$161,000).

Finally, the County has a relatively lower percentage of residents under 65 years of age with a disability. Almost 5.2% of the County's population has a disability, while less than one tenth (9.6%) of North Carolinians have a disability. Likewise, only 14.4% of the County's population under the age of 65 reported not having health insurance, slightly above the 12.6% of North Carolinians who indicated a lack of health insurance.

These demographic statistics on the County's population provide some valuable information to consider in determining park and recreational needs for the community. Several characteristics that could affect park and recreation facility needs include:

- It is obvious from the age demographics, that while the County doesn't have a very high percentage of residents that are seniors (65 and older), many attended the community workshops and/or participated in the community survey and expressed their passion for recreation. The County should provide facilities and programs that meet the desires and interest of this senior population as well as the 50+ population. Likewise, facilities and programs should be aimed at aiding the senior population in living active and healthier lifestyles.
- While the senior segment of the population is important, the Department should also be sensitive to the needs of its younger citizens, recognizing that almost 25% of the population are youth (persons under 19 years of age).
- Another important finding from this review is that the median age has increased slightly from 39.0 in

2010 to 40.9 in 2018 and is projected to be 41.8 in 2023.

- The County's location provides opportunities for partnerships with adjacent County agencies, the municipalities within the County and other organizations on providing parks and recreation facilities and programming.

## Service Population

An important aspect of developing a comprehensive plan for parks and recreation facilities is determining the service population of the study. Ultimately, it is impossible to determine the acres of park land or the number of ball fields a community needs unless you know the number of people you are planning to serve.

Based on ESRI data, Franklin County's 2018 population was 67,011. This population figure was 9.5% more than the County's 2010 census population of 60,619; indicating a slightly higher increase in population compared to the State's population change of 7.7%. This increase in population should be noted as the County continues to be very a vibrant community with a wonderful quality of life; indicating a future with continued positive economic activity and a reasonable expectation of future growth. Further, population projection data from ESRI indicates that Franklin County's population will grow over the next 5 years by approximately 6.8%; projecting a 2023 population of around 71,882 people.

Based on the above data this report will use the County's 2018 population of 67,011 as the service population for this study. For ease of calculations, the report will slightly round down this population figure to 67,000.

As a ten-year plan, recommendations in this report will be designed to meet the needs of the County's population in 2028. For planning purposes, it is assumed the County will increase in population similarly to the projected population of the county's population; approximately 7%. Again, for ease of discussion and calculation, the projected population for the County (the projected service population) has been rounded up to 76,700.

There are two other factors that influence the community's need for parks and recreation facilities and indirectly impact the Service Population. First, projected growth around Franklinton over the next 2-5 years will more than double its current population. This comes from the current desire of people moving out of Wake County to a more rural lifestyle, but still wanting to easily commute to work.

A second factor that impacts the need for parks and recreation facilities is the number of County residents living in the non-urban areas of the County, particularly in the north and northeast parts of the County where recreation facilities are lacking.

## Community Input - Public Workshops

Two community workshops to receive input on park and recreation needs were held on different days and in different locations in December 2018. Workshops were held as follows:

- December 4, 2018 – Franklinton High School (5:30 – 7:30 pm)
- December 5, 2018 – Louisburg Training Center (5:30 – 7:30 pm)

The workshops were held as informal drop-in sessions. Twenty citizens participated in the events to discuss comprehensive needs.

After signing in, attendees were invited to review several display boards that:

- showed a current map of the County limits with municipal areas (to understand where participants live);
- identified existing parks and recreation facilities within the County limits and the local region;
- offered images of recreation facilities/activities typically found in a County park system.
- provided information on existing recreation opportunities typically found in municipal parks;

Following the information sharing displays, attendees were invited to share their opinions on existing parks, facilities & programs, recreational needs, and ideas for improving parks and recreation facilities in Franklin County. Many of the questions asked

were very similar to questions asked on the community survey.

It should be noted that while 20 people signed in as attending these public workshops, not every attendee signed in, and not every attendee answered every question. Many of those in attendance were focused on voicing opinions on one or two specific issues or facilities and did not respond to all questions. The following is a summary of the public's responses. A full tally and listing of the responses can be found in the Appendix.

Attendees were given a list of 24 indoor and outdoor recreation activities and asked to identify the activities in which they currently participate within or outside of Franklin County. Participants were allowed to vote for their top 3. The following are the most popular activities based on those that responded:

Community Events  
Youth Sports Leagues  
Adult Fitness and Wellness  
Youth Summer Camp Programs

Attendees were then asked to identify activities they would like to see offered within the Franklin County parks and recreation system. Participants were allowed to vote for their top 3. The activities most often listed included:

Senior/Adult Programs 50+  
Water Fitness Programs  
Adult Fitness and Wellness  
Outdoor Challenge/Adventure Course  
Youth Art, Dance, Performing Arts  
Community Events

Attendees were given a list of 32 indoor and outdoor recreation amenities and asked to identify the amenities which they currently use within or outside of Franklin County. Participants were allowed to vote for their top 3. The following are the most popular amenities based on those that responded:

Walking/Biking/Fitness Trails  
Outdoor Amphitheater

Picnic Shelters  
Greenway Trail System  
Weights and Fitness Machines

Attendees were then asked to identify amenities they would like to see offered within the Franklin County parks and recreation system. Participants were allowed to vote for their top 3. The amenities most often listed included:

Indoor Aquatic Facilities  
Weights and Fitness Machines  
Outdoor Basketball  
Walking/Biking/Fitness Trails  
Baseball & Softball Fields  
Community Center/Indoor Multi-purpose Space  
Arts Center/Gallery Space  
Skate Park

Before leaving the workshops, attendees were invited to leave comments on their park and recreational needs or anything they wanted to share as the plan is developed. Nineteen (19) comments cards were collected during that time period. Some of the comments had similar themes. These following issues/comments were shared:

- Good idea to have community input, ...
- Need multi-purpose indoor center
- Need multi-purpose field on west side of County
- Community Pool
- Strive for excellence instead of mediocrity
- Wake County park model: school system & municipal partnerships
- Tournament ready facilities for softball, baseball, volleyball, basketball
- Large swim pool
- Community organic garden
- Future park site at the old gold mine in the Wood community
- Create mini-parks in northeast Franklin County, i.e. Centerville, White Level, Wood
- Need Facility for art classes for kids as well as adults
- Art classes for kids!

Ages 3-5 / 4:00-5:00

Ages 6-8 / 5:00-6:00



Ages 9-12 / 6:00-7:00

One-two days a week

4:00-7:00pm (after school)

- Summer art program also - \$35 / 6 wk session
- Horse trails
- Expand sites to outside of city limits of Bunn, Louisburg & Franklinton
- Aycock-type center south of Louisburg
- Turn old Rite Aid building corner of Nash & Bickett and vacant lot on Bickett/Williamson into a YMCA/YWCA
- History Talks & Events – I think some people really enjoy learning about local, state and Native American history. The Tar River Center for History & Culture has good lectures along these lines.
- Nature Walks – Learn about birds and nature in our county along the Tar River or in the woodlands, etc. Medoc Mountain State Park did seasonal guided walks along this line, even studying mushrooms.

imity to their residence and enjoyment of the outdoors

The highest priorities for facilities/amenities include:

- Aquatics/swimming facility (outdoors)
- Natural trails
- Indoor fitness and exercise facilities
- Greenway trail system
- Dog Park

The highest priorities for programs/activities include:

- Adult fitness and wellness programs
- Aquatic programs
- Outdoor music/concerts
- Seniors citizen programs
- Special events/family festivals

The survey results were categorized into six topics as summarized below.

## Community Input - Community Survey

To better understand the public's perception of existing parks and recreation facilities, and to gather input of recreational needs, a seven-page community survey was conducted. The survey was prepared and distributed by mail and online to a randomly selected sample of County households. The survey took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. The sample size goal for completed surveys was 450 which was exceeded with 469 completed surveys being returned. The full Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey can be found in the Appendix.

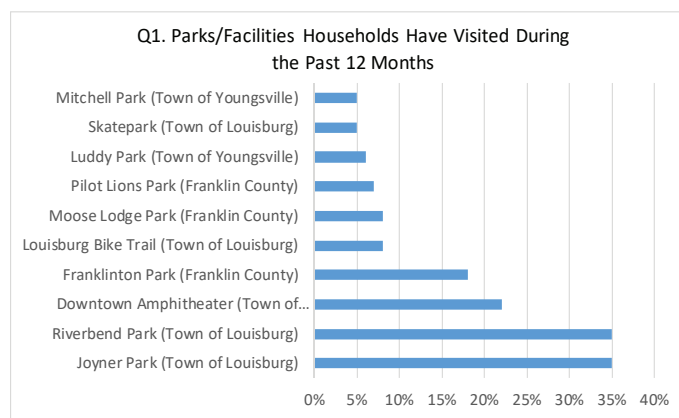
Top takeaways from the survey include:

- Most residents surveyed believe parks and recreation adds quality of life in the community and is an essential service to the County
- Lack of awareness is top barrier to usage of facilities/programs
- Top source of information about facilities/programs is word of mouth
- Top reasons for using facilities/programs is prox-

## Topic #1 - Usage of Parks, Facilities and Programs

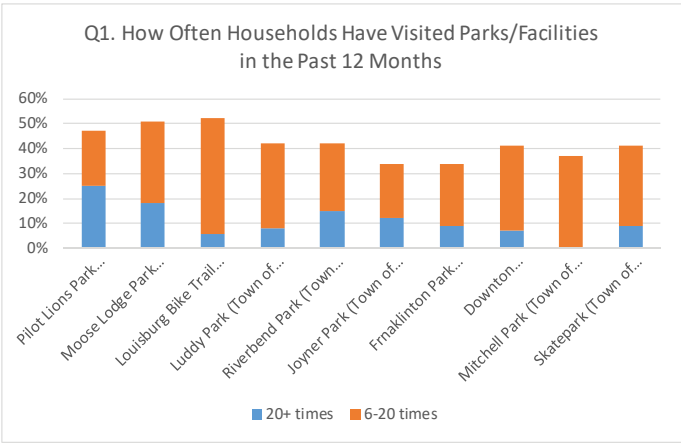
### Q1. Parks/Facilities Households Have Visited During the Past 12 Months:

66% of households have used at least one park/facility in the past 12 months; slightly below the national average of 78%.



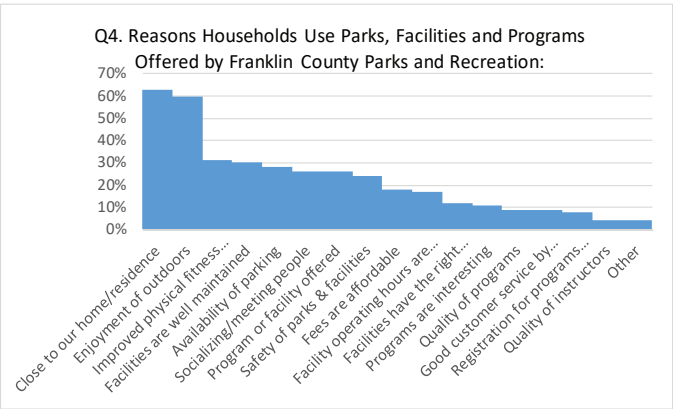
**Q1. How Often Households Have Visited Parks/Facilities in the Past 12 Months:**

Overall the parks/facilities used in the past 12 months received high ratings. Pilot Lions Park and Moose Lodge Park were visited most often.



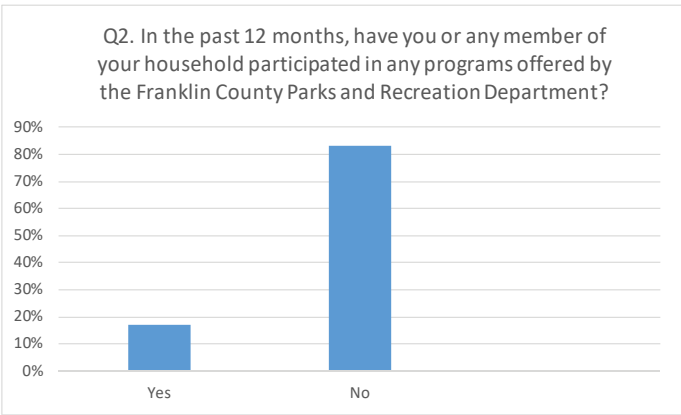
**Q4. Reasons Households Use Parks, Facilities and Programs Offered by Franklin County Parks and Recreation:**

Proximity to Residence and Enjoyment of Outdoors Were the Top Reasons for Using Parks, Facilities and Programs.

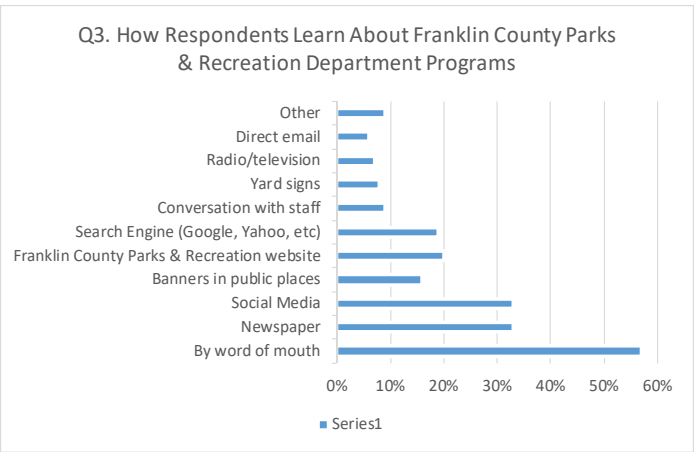


**Q2. In the past 12 months, have you or any member of your household participated in any programs offered by the Franklin County Parks and Recreation Department?**

17% of households have participated in at least one program in the past 12 months; slightly below the national average of 32%.

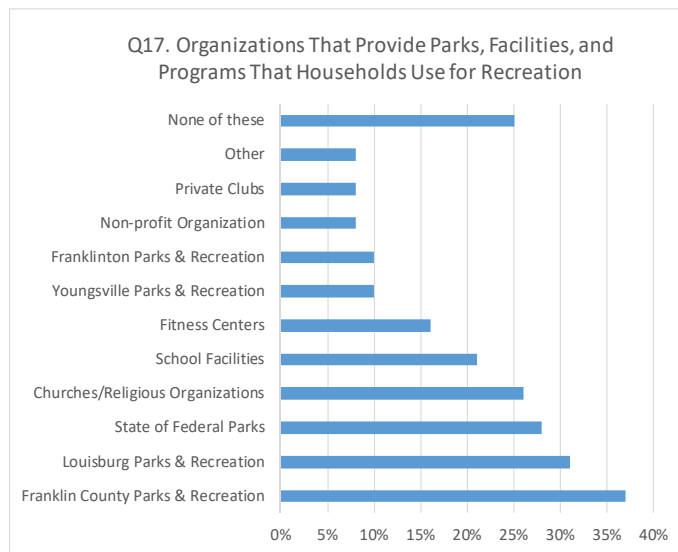


**Q3. How Respondents Learn About Franklin County Parks and Recreation Department Programs.**





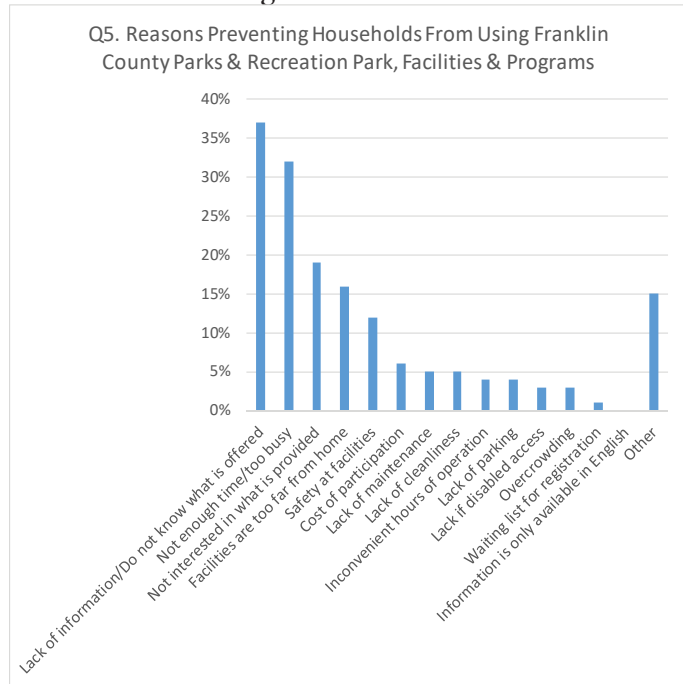
## Q17. Organizations That Provide Parks, Facilities, and Programs That Households Use for Recreation.



## Topic #2 - Barriers to Participation

### Q5. Reasons Preventing Households from Using Franklin County Parks and Recreation Parks, Facilities and Programs:

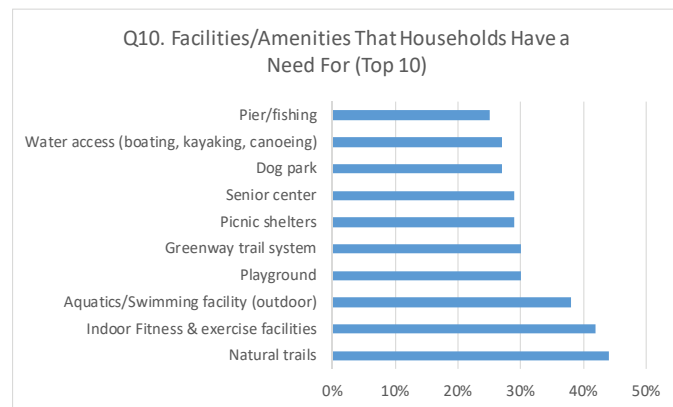
Lack of awareness is the biggest barrier to usage of Parks/Facilities/Programs.



## Topic #3 - Unmet Needs and Priorities for Facilities/Amenities

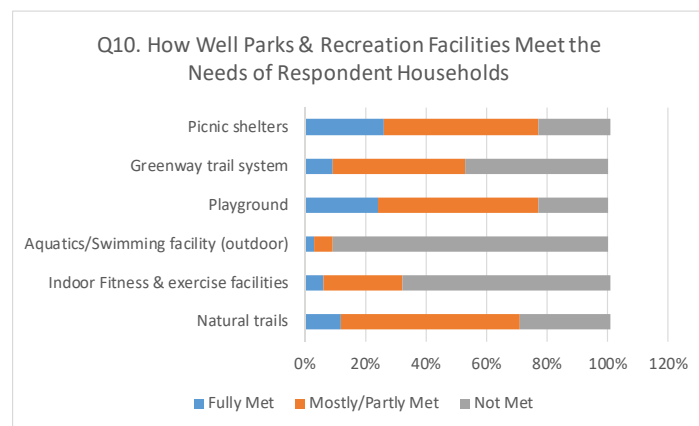
### Q10. Facilities/Amenities That Households Have a Need for:

Natural trails continue to be desired by the residents of Franklin County (44%) along with indoor fitness and exercise facilities (59%). The next eight unmet needs and priorities noted in the survey were in order:



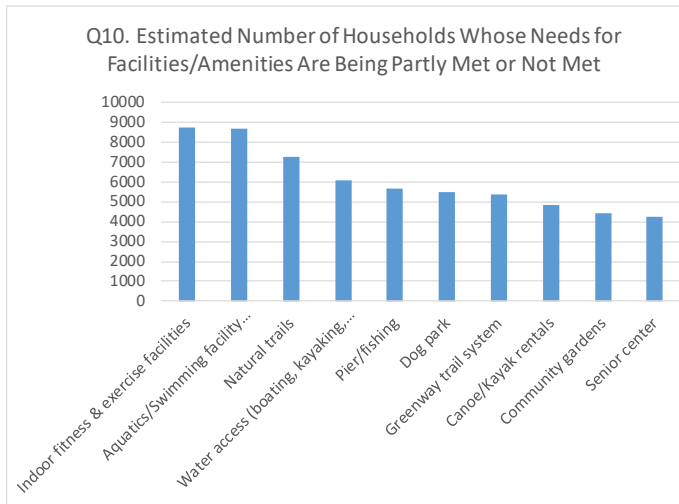
### Q10. How Well Parks and Recreation Facilities/Amenities Are Meeting the Needs of Households:

Survey respondents noted that their needs were (fully/mostly/partly) met for the following top ten facilities:

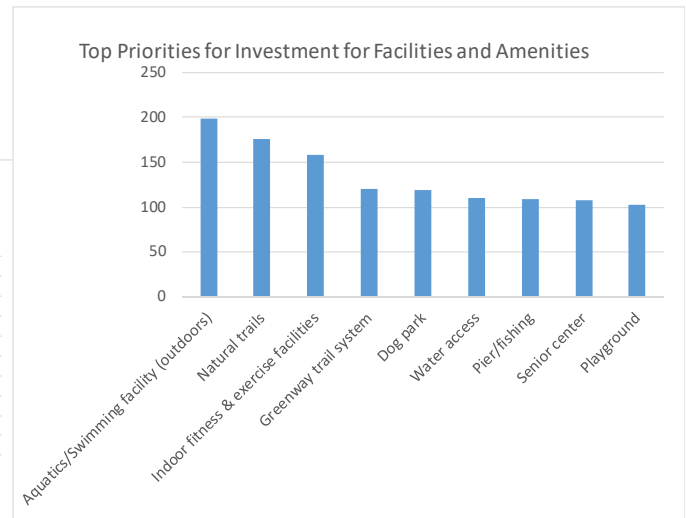


### Q10. Estimated Number of Households Whose Needs for Facilities/Amenities Are Being Partly Met or Not Met:

The following facilities ranked by number of projected households (24,287) in the top ten for being partly met or not met:

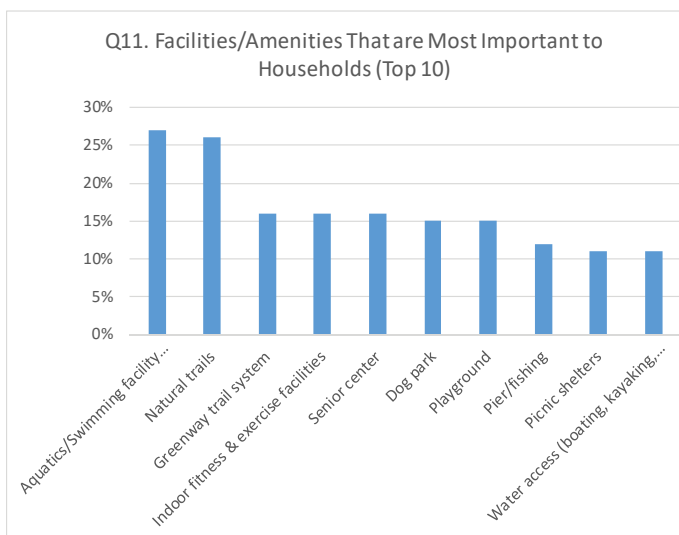


The high priorities for investment for facilities and amenities based on the priority investment rating include:



### Q11. Facilities/Amenities That Are Most Important to Households:

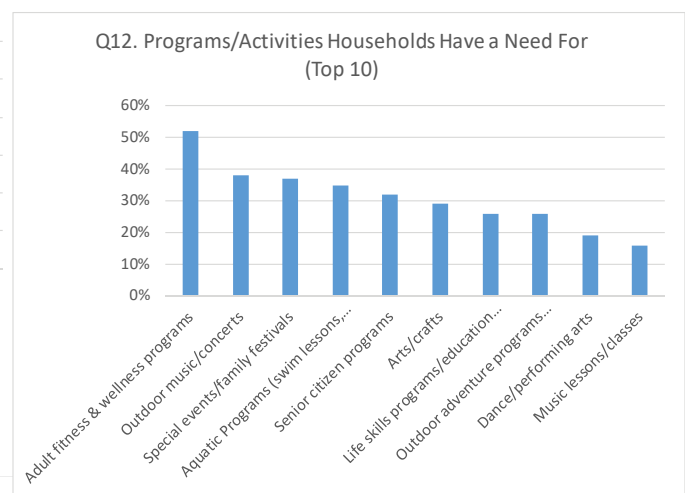
The top ten most important facilities to respondents based on their top four choices include:



## Topic #4 - Unmet Needs and Priorities for Programs/Activities

### Q12. Programs/Activities That Households Have a Need For:

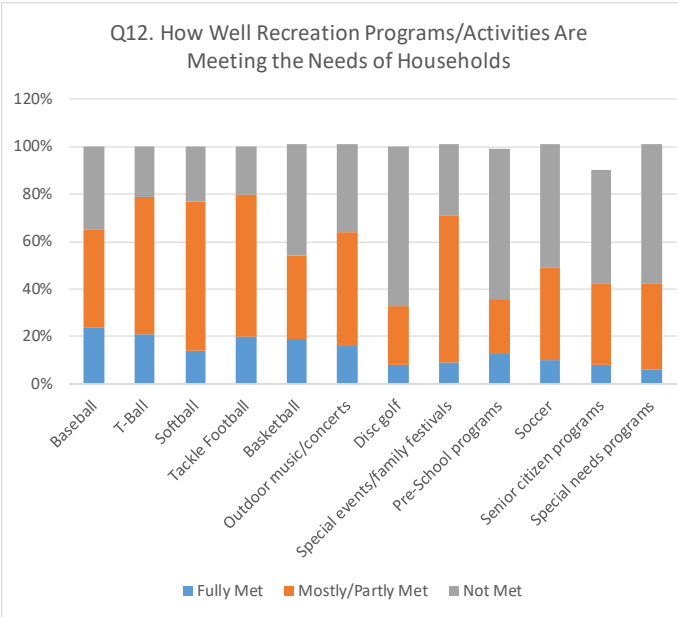
Adult fitness & wellness programs overwhelmingly have the most needs (52%). The next nine include:





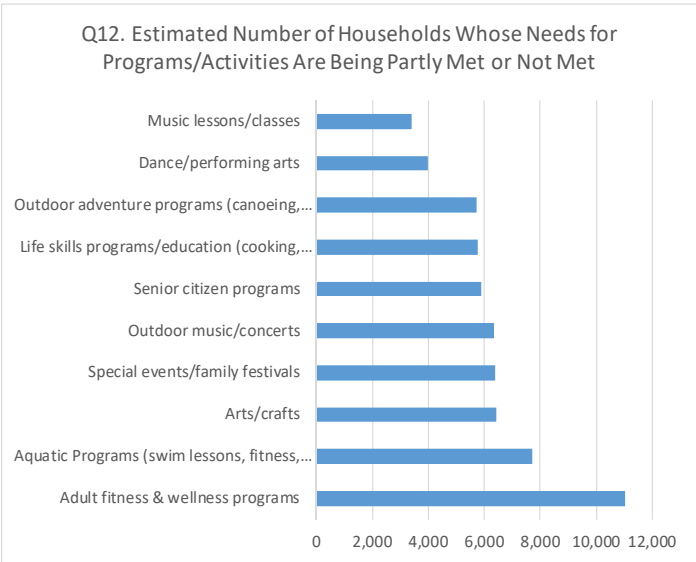
### Q12. How Well Recreation Programs/Activities Are Meeting the Needs of Households:

Survey respondents noted that their needs were (fully/mostly/partly) met for the following top twelve programs:



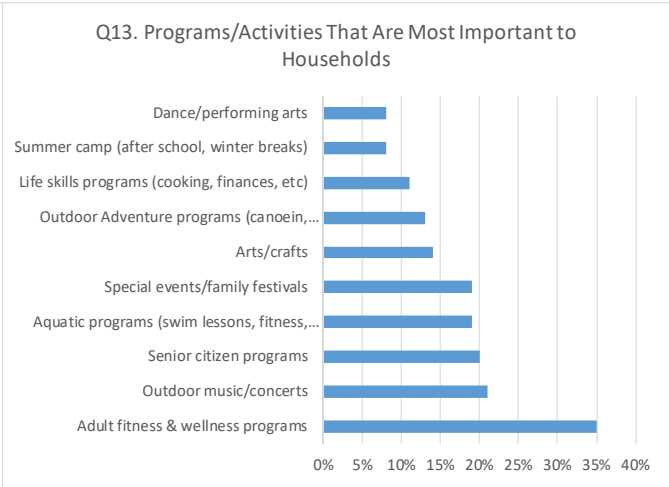
### Q12. Estimated Number of Households Whose Needs for Programs/Amenities Are Being Partly Met or Not Met:

The following programs/amenities ranked by number of projected households (24,287) in the top ten for being partly met or not met

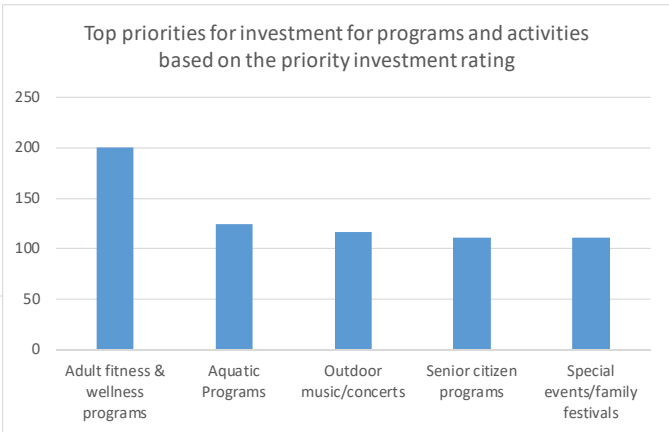


### Q13. Programs/Activities That Are Most Important to Households:

The top ten most important programs to respondents based on their top four choices include:

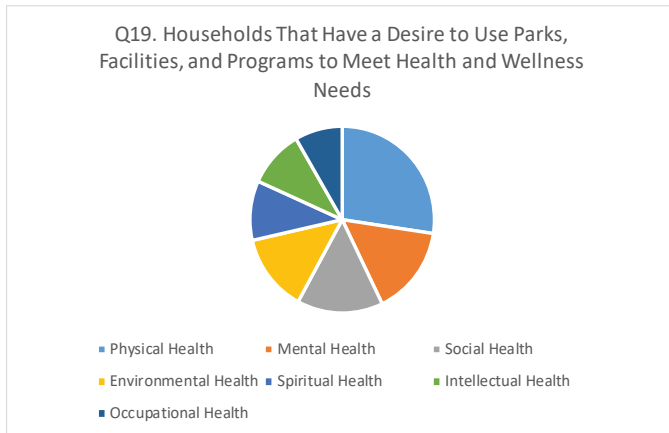


The high priorities for investment for recreation programs based on the priority investment rating include:

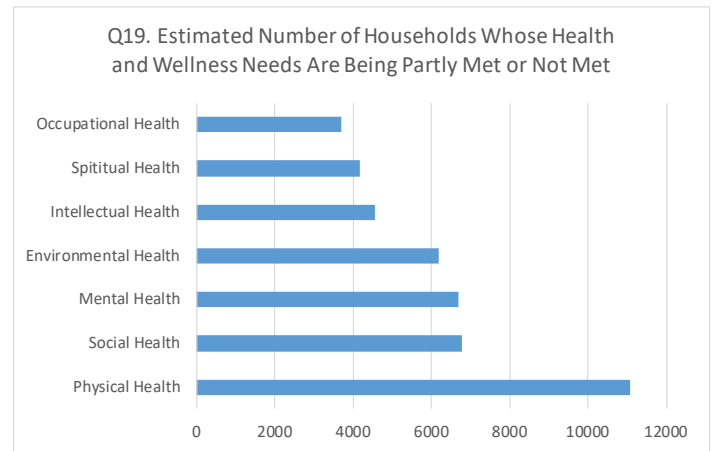


## Topic #5 - Unmet Needs and Priorities for Health and Wellness

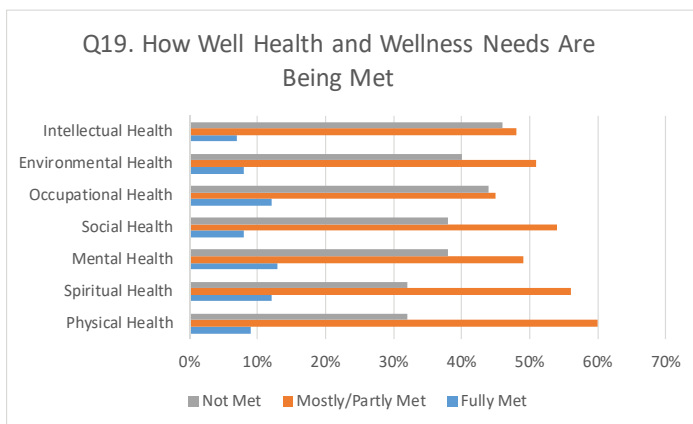
### Q19. Households That Have a Desire to Use Parks, Facilities, and Programs to Meet Health and Wellness Needs



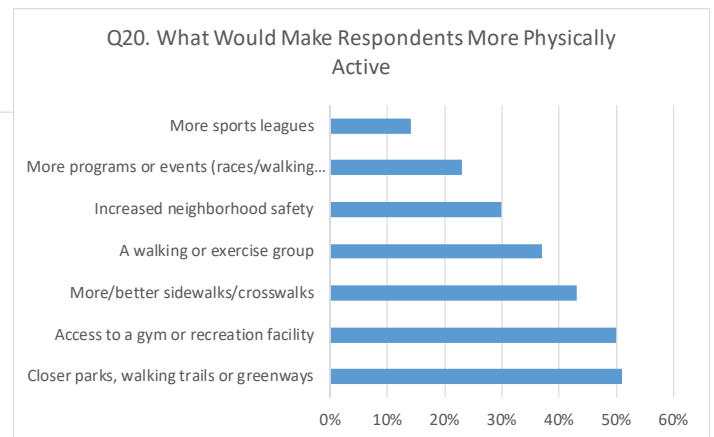
### Q19. Estimated Number of Households Whose Health and Wellness Needs Are Being Partly Met or Not Met:



### Q19. How Well Health and Wellness Needs Are Being Met



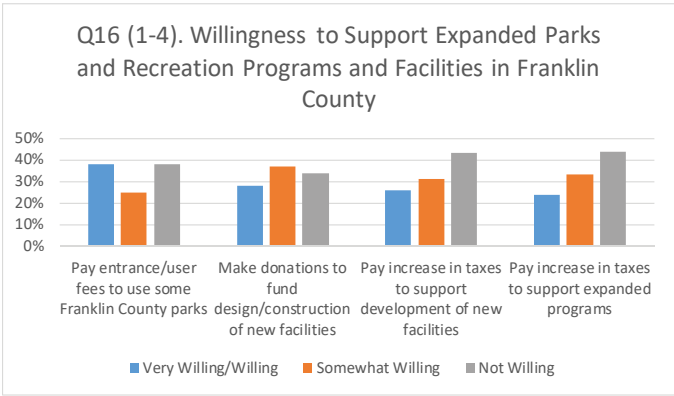
### Q20. What would make respondents more physically active?



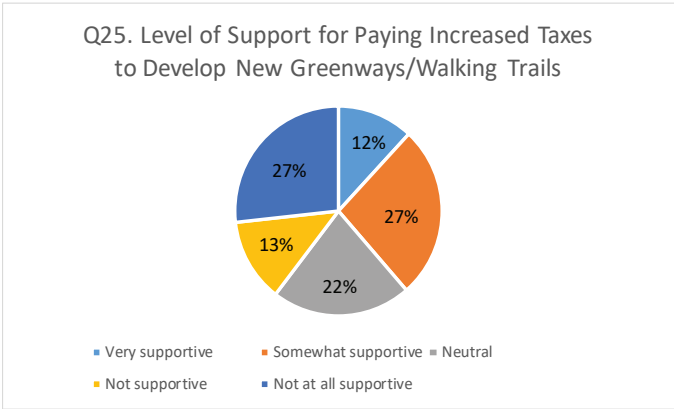


# Topic #6 - Improvements to the Parks and Recreation System

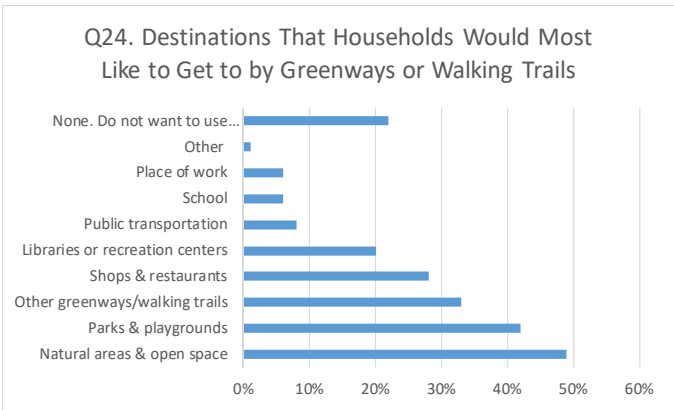
Q16 (1-4). Willingness to Support Expanded Parks and Recreation Programs and Facilities in Franklin County:



Q25 (1-5). Level of Support for Paying Increased Taxes to Develop New Greenways/Walking Trails:



Q24. Destinations That Households Would Most Like to Get to by Greenways or Walking Trails:





*Pilot Lions Park*

## **Section Three - Recreation Standards and Needs Assessment**

### **Establishing a County Wide Level of Service for Parks and Recreation Facilities**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This section contains the analysis and assessment on which the recommendations of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan is based. This section begins with a review of previous plans that have been developed that are relevant to the recommendations for this planning study. The planning process also includes a review of other North Carolina counties and the Level of Service (LOS) they use to provide park and recreation facilities to their constituents. As part of this review, national and state trends in park and recreation preferences are considered. This review of service levels is based on a description of the park classifications that typically make up a park system (Appendix D). Using these park classifications as a backdrop, we establish a desired LOS for park and recreation facilities specifically for Franklin County. This LOS is then used as a basis for establishing a park and recreation facility needs assessment for the County.

It should be noted that the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), in its 1995 report “Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines”, determined there are no “national standards” for park development. NRPA is currently working to develop a national data base of recreation facility LOS for communities throughout the United States. The latest NRPA study recommends that each community is unique, and that standards reflecting the local “uniqueness” should be established, with an eye toward other counties/communities of similar size. This section utilizes input from the public workshops and the county-wide survey, as well as a comprehensive review of other North Carolina counties to develop LOS specifically for Franklin County.

This study looks at several types of service levels. First, we evaluate total acreage of park land within the service area and how this acreage is broken into park types. From this analysis it is possible to compare the parks in Franklin County with other counties, both in overall park acreage and park types within this overall acreage.

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

A third analysis of service in this section is an assessment of special use facility needs. The level of information on these special use facilities is somewhat more limited than the other park and recreation facilities, and more complicated because of the cost of construction and operation. This section includes a discussion of county wide needs for special use facilities.

The service levels established in this study were also derived from a review of the County's 2000 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, guidance from staff, and (most importantly) public input.

As we begin the assessment process, it is important to realize there are two different conditions in Franklin County. There are four municipalities in Franklin County that include Bunn, Franklinton, Louisburg and Youngsville. Two of these municipalities (Louisburg and Youngsville) provide park and recreation services to their citizens and provide staff to program and maintain their parks and recreation facilities. Elected officials in these communities have invested wisely in parks and recreation facilities. In the past decade, economic conditions have made it difficult to maintain and improve existing facilities, so there are important park needs within these municipal departments. Even within these limitations, citizens living in incorporated communities of the county have reasonably good access to parks and recreation facilities.

On the other side of the coin, the small towns and

unincorporated areas of Franklin County have more limited access to parks and facilities. The county's small towns (Bunn and Franklinton) for the most part are underserved with traditional park and recreation facilities. Therefore, these smaller municipalities rely more heavily on County facilities. Bunn received a PARTF grant in 2019 to develop its first park. Both Bunn and Franklinton are considering creating parks and recreation departments.

Franklin County strives to meet the park and recreation needs of residents by providing Neighborhood Park (Moose Lodge Park), Community Parks (Franklinton and Pilot Lions Park) that offer primarily active recreation, a new District Park (Owens Recreational Park) that offers primarily passive recreation, and working with Franklin County Schools in joint-use efforts at a number of school facilities. Franklin County Department of Aging currently provides facilities for seniors.

None of the towns with parks and recreation departments have developed comprehensive park plans for their service populations, however, both Louisburg and Franklinton are currently developing master plans. The development of this county-wide comprehensive plan is not meant to negate or override the standards and guidelines established by the local agencies. Instead, this plan is designed to incorporate and work in conjunction with those local plans.

It is important to recognize that while the plan utilizes a dual approach in assessing the park and recreational needs of the county; ultimately this plan must develop recommendations that will improve the recreational opportunities of all Franklin County citizens, regardless of where they reside.

It should also be noted that the LOS for development established for Franklin County are consistent with other counties in North Carolina. In many cases, the development standards used in this plan are lower/less than the standards used in the 2000 Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The needs that are identified in this plan are based on a conservative approach. Even taking this conservative approach, the recommendations in this document should lead the County



to develop parks and facilities comparable to most other counties of similar size.

## PREVIOUS PLANNING STUDIES

There have not been many community/countywide plans developed in the past in Franklin County that are directly related to developing a Parks and Recreation Master Plan for the County's Parks and Recreation Department. Below is a brief listing/summary of plans that were considered in the development of the recommendations found in this plan.

### 2000-2015 Franklin County Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan

In 1999, the County completed a Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan to provide a 15-year vision for the Parks and Recreation Department. In the 20 years since this plan was developed, there have been many changes in the county. The population has grown (population in 2000 was 46,216), county demographics have changed, there are new trends in park development, and improvements have been made to parks within the county parks over the past 20 years. With all of that said, an important starting point for this current plan is a review of the 2000 Plan. It is important to understand the vision that was established in 2000 in order to determine the vision for the next 10 years.

The planning process for the 2000-2015 plan was very similar to the current process. The plan was developed with considerable public engagement. Focus groups, a public workshops and a recreation survey were conducted to gather input from county residents.

The plan contained a list of proposed recommendations and an action plan. Proposed recommendations included:

1. The direction of the Department should primarily be resourced based:
    - a. Local recreation service providers such as parent-run sports leagues and municipal parks and recreation departments should be encouraged and supported by the Department,
  2. The Department should provide coordination of Countywide sports programs through the establishment of a Sports Council but should not take over and operate local special interest programs,
  3. The County should build and maintain facilities that permit municipalities and local community groups to concentrate on program administration and operation of their own programs,
  4. The Department should set up an incentive grant program designed to stimulate community interest and involvement to provide matching grant monies to encourage municipalities and community based non-profit community and school groups to assist in improvement or construction of more adequate special interest recreation and park facilities in their communities in compliance with the needs of the Master Plan and in particular to the specific needs of their community,
  5. The County should focus its resources on facility development especially concentrating on development that adds diversity to the recreation resources of Franklin County,
  6. The County should only offer programs that provide a service on a Countywide basis.
1. The Department should maximize use of resources that already exist in the County and develop new relationships for partnerships:
    - a. Establish a partnership with the Franklin County Schools to co-develop parks on existing facilities and plan new facilities in concert to serve both educational and recreational needs,
    - b. Master plan existing recreation resources in the County,
    - c. Form partnerships with municipalities in the county to co-develop facilities,
    - d. Develop partnerships and enter into joint use

agreements with private non-profit groups for utilization of their facilities as public parks to serve the recreational needs of the County.

3. Provide facility needs through a comprehensive phasing plan (listed in priority order)
  - a. Develop a new park in the Franklinton Recreation Service Area that provides for aggressively meeting the unmet needs of that Recreation Service Area,
  - b. Upgrade facilities at Edward Best Middle School and add missing park elements needed by that community,
  - c. Develop a new park in the Bunn Recreation Service Area that provides facility for unmet needs of that area; preferably to be developed at the site of the new Bunn Middle School, but also to incorporate additional adjacent acreage,
  - d. Develop a park in the Youngsville area that provides facility for unmet needs of that area in conjunction with the business community and local municipal government,
  - e. Develop a centralized aquatics facility in the Louisburg Recreation Service Area to meet the overall Countywide need to provide access to a public swimming facility and to address issues to assure public safety,
  - f. Create a County Park in the Laurel Mill Recreation Service Area that incorporates the preservation of Laurel Mill and adds unique environmental elements to the County's recreation program. This particular park should serve all the residents of Franklin County in a unique way and serve as an attraction for local tourism from the Triangle Area. Planning should be done in conjunction with local historical interest groups,
  - g. Perform an engineer evaluation on Perry School/Old Gold Sand Elementary School to Determine its usefulness as a Recreation Resource.
4. Identify and plan for greenways and open space:
  - a. Implement planning strategies to identify trail corridors and greenway links throughout Franklin County in particular paying attention to abandoned rail corridors, utility easements and the State Bike Trail,
  - b. Identify and preserve open space,
  - c. Establish a strategic greenway planning team
5. Market recreation resources of Franklin County:
  - a. Develop brochures, maps and flyers to provide public awareness of the recreation resources in the County,
  - b. Serve as the central point for providing information concerning recreation services and resources in the County.
6. Develop funding sources and implement ordinances to support recreation efforts:
  - a. Develop partnerships with the business and industrial community to provide recreational opportunities to their employees and to provide assistance in park development,
  - b. Change or modify existing planning ordinances to incorporate park development guidelines and park definitions,
  - c. Develop a park dedication ordinance that includes a fee-in-lieu option and seek legislative action to ensure its legality,
  - d. Adopt a reasonable fee schedule for recreation services keeping in mind the economic conditions that may exist in the County,
  - e. Apply for grant funding from federal, state and private sources in order to maximize County tax dollars.
7. The County should embark on a program of land acquisition to ensure that sufficient properties are available for future recreational needs:
  - a. The County should review all properties that they currently own and evaluate their recreation potential,
  - b. Prior to the sale of acquired properties from tax lien, the County should evaluate their potential for recreational uses,
  - c. The County should seek donations of property for recreational purposes,

- d. The County should enter into agreements and contracts for the use of land for recreational purposes,
  - e. The County should provide general funding to recreation in keeping with funding levels in the surrounding area,
  - f. The County should seek grant funding from federal, state and private sources in order to defray the costs of land acquisition and facility development.
8. The County should develop countywide programs:
- a. That provide opportunities for fitness and wellness,
  - b. To foster family interaction,
  - c. To provide for lifetime skills development,
  - d. Programs that would be difficult for individual areas to do on their own, but where countywide involvement would assure sufficient numbers to have program success,
  - e. Operate a countywide summer day camp program,
  - f. Seek partnerships with the Council on Aging to expand recreational opportunities to senior citizens and provide senior recreational services in each Recreation Service Area,
  - g. Youth recreational programs should provide an expansion of horizons and serve as a means of juvenile crime prevention.
9. The following recommendations are non-prioritized and meeting these recommendations should be based upon opportunities that may arise, cooperation among diverse agencies and funding available to pursue implementation:
- a. Due to the recent loss of recreational soccer facilities on school grounds because of the expansion of other athletic facilities and due to the rapidly increasing popularity of soccer as a recreational activity, in the Louisburg Township, develop a soccer complex composed of 6 soccer fields.
  - b. Develop bikeways and walking trails along the old CSX rail corridor from Louisburg to Franklinton that would run from the site of the Old Louisburg Depot to Vance-Granville Community College to the newly proposed park in Franklinton and on to the Old Depot in Franklinton.
  - c. Continue to develop greenway along the Tar River from Riverbend Park to the intersection of the Tar River with the Montgomery Lumber Company Railroad. Develop a canoe trail along the Tar River with put-in sites as four locations along this route.
  - d. Develop a trail along the Old Montgomery Lumber Railroad from the Nash County line across the Tar River through Bunn to the end of the rail line just northwest of Bunn.
  - e. Develop a park with a campground in the vicinity where the Tar River and Montgomery Lumber Company Railroad intersect.
  - f. Provide access to Clifton Pond for fishing via a boat ramp where Clifton Pond Road crosses Clifton Pond. Acquire land for a small park adjacent to this area.
  - g. Acquire land along major ponds and streams in the county for future recreational uses such as Perry Pond, Mitchners Pond and Jackson Pond.
  - h. Acquire land where there are unique geological and natural formations for future park development.
  - i. Provide enhancements to the State Bike Trail that runs from Nash County across southern Franklin County through Youngsville to Wake County.
  - j. Develop a trail system from Franklinton to Youngsville to Bunn tying together park elements and schools in those areas.
  - k. Develop a community school recreation center and park in conjunction with establishment of a new elementary school in south central Franklin County.
  - l. Develop trails and picnic areas at Louisburg High School and Louisburg College in conjunction with greenway development that ties these areas with other parks and greenways in the County.
  - m. Develop mini-parks with the playgrounds throughout the county in order to provide



recreational facilities close to where people live.

- n. Based upon the willingness of several Recreation Service Areas (RSA) to trade off needs with each other, develop a centralized recreation facility. (In general, this will mean that if a RSA is not in a position to provide a delivery system for recreational services for that area, the services and facility needs those services require shall default to the current provider). The ability of a variety of agencies to work cooperatively and to develop consensus shall determine the manner and extent to which these needs shall be addressed:
  - i. In Louisburg Township and conjunction with the Town of Louisburg, Teamwork 2000, Louisburg College, Franklin Regional Medical Center and the YMCA develop a centralized indoor-outdoor county recreational/athletic/wellness complex in phases:
    1. Phase 1: Acquisition of 80 to 120 acres of land in order to complete the remaining phases.
    2. Phase 2: Walking trails, playground, picnic shelters, picnic tables, parking and restrooms.
    3. Phase 3: Two each 200' baseball fields, two each 150' T-ball sized baseball fields, concession stand/restroom facility and parking.
    4. Phase 4: One each 300' youth 13-14 age division baseball field. One each regulation 15-18 age division baseball field, batting cages, and parking.
    5. Phase 5: Two each multi-purpose football practice fields, two each adult softball fields and parking.
    6. Phase 6: County Recreation/Wellness Center with indoor swimming facility, classrooms, activity rooms and indoor athletic facilities.

## **V.E. and Lydia H. Owens Recreational Park Master Plan**

In 2016, a master plan was developed for the purposes of transitioning the former 167-acre Bull Creek Golf and Country Club into Franklin County's first District/Regional Park. Unlike Franklin County's other three park facilities, the focus at Owens Park is more towards passive recreation or "outdoor enjoyment" activities. Once the park reaches build out, it will become a destination park for Franklin County.

## **2014 Franklin County & Louisburg Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP)**

In 2014, NCDOT's Transportation Planning Branch prepared a long-range multi-modal transportation plan for Franklin County which also incorporated the Louisburg CTP study as well. While focused primarily on highway, public transportation and rail modes, the study does include bicycle and pedestrian modes as well.

In addition to the on-road bicycle and sidewalk oriented pedestrian recommendations, the study also considers the development of several multi-use paths within Franklin County. Multi-use path facility recommendations include:

### **Northern Franklin County**

**NCDOT Inactive Rail Corridor (Franklinton to Louisburg), Multi-use Path, Local ID FRAN0001-M:** From East Mason Street to May Road (SR 1224). This is an accepted interim use of the inactive rail corridor.

**Vance County Line/Tar River, Multi-use Path, Local ID FRAN0006-M:** From the multi-purpose trail (TIP No. EB-5128) near the CSX Rail line to Granville County.

### **Western Franklin County**

**CSX S-Line, Multi-purpose Trail, TIP No. EB-5128 and Local ID FRAN0009-M:** From Wake County to Vance County. The TIP project No. EB-5128 is only for rural areas; it does not include areas within municipal limits. The CTP project proposal (Local ID FRAN0009-M) is for the areas within municipal lim-

its. The description that follows reflects a trail concept for the entire railroad corridor in this CTP county study. The multi-use, bicycle and pedestrian use, trail concept is a separate project from the SEHSR project study; however, the trail concept would follow the SEHSR study corridor, generally parallel to but outside the railroad right-of-way (ROW) within the rural areas. The TIP project No. EB-5128 is currently only programmed in the STIP for a planning and environmental study. See the SEHSR website ([www.sehsr.org/faq.html](http://www.sehsr.org/faq.html)) or the NCDOT Rail Division for more details on this trail concept.

Even though the TIP project No. EB-5128 is only for rural areas, the recommended multi-use path from Wake County to Vance County on the CTP maps represents the concept and desire for a multi-use pathway that connects Wake County, Youngsville, Franklinton and Vance County. Within the municipalities, future recommended alignments and facility types will be determined based on what works best for the area. Youngsville and Franklinton will need to determine the best routes and facility types (bicycle lanes, off-road bicycle trails, sidewalks, etc.) for bicycle and pedestrian use within their town limits. Recommended alignments and facility types for the CTP project proposal (Local ID FRAN0009-M) are yet to be determined.

#### **Franklinton**

**NCDOT Inactive Rail Corridor (Franklinton), Multi-use Path, Local ID FRAN0002-M:** From Front Street to East Mason Street. This recommendation would be a complete connection from West Mason Street to East Mason Street when provided in conjunction with FRAN00011-B and FRAN0009-P. This path and railroad crossing was desired by the CTP committee, but the location of the crossing has potential stream impacts and drainage issues that would not make an underpass crossing feasible. The recommended alternate path and crossing of the railroad is along Mason Street following the bicycle path (FRAN0015-B) or sidewalk with the multi-use grade-separated crossing (TIP No. P-3819, see Rail Recommendations Section) at the railroad.

#### **Louisburg**

**Bunn Road (SR 1230), Multi-use Path, Local ID FRAN0003-M:** From US 401 (South Bickett Boulevard) to South Main Street (SR 1229).

**South Main Street (SR 1229) and NC 56, Multi-use Path, Local ID FRAN0004-M:** From US 401 (South Bickett Boulevard) to Bunn Road (SR 1230).

**West River Road (SR 1211), Multi-use Path, Local ID FRAN0007-M:** From T. Kemp Road (SR 1264) to South Main Street (SR 1229).

#### **Wake Forest**

**Richland Creek, Multi-use Path, Local ID FRAN0005-M:** From Wake County to US 1 Alternate.

**Smith Creek and Young Forest Drive, Multi-use Path, Local ID FRAN0008-M:** From Wake County line to the CSX S-Line Multipurpose Trail (TIP No. EB-5128 and Local ID FRAN0009-M).

### **NC Lakes District Bike Plan**

The NC Lakes District Plan is being developed by the Kerr-Tar Regional Transportation Planning Organization (KTRPO) as an economic development tool for the lakes (Hyco, Mayo, Kerr and Lake Gaston) districts in the Kerr-Tar region of north central North Carolina of which Franklin County is one of the five counties it encompasses (Person, Granville, Franklin, Vance, Warren). The plan focuses on three main outdoor recreation opportunities including, bikeways, blueways and pedways.

The blueways and pedways components of the plan are still underway. However, the bikeway component has been mapped with a route through Franklin County as follows:

From the Warren County line down NC 58 to Centerville following Leonard Road, Greys Mill Road, Firetower Road, Ronald Tharrington Road to NC 56/ NC 581 into Downtown Louisburg. Route runs north out of Louisburg on Main Street to 401/39 then follows Dyking Road, Warner Winn Road, Sims Bridge Road, Rocky Ford Road to the Vance County line for an approximate 30-mile bikeway route.

## LEVEL OF SERVICE

The first step in developing a County-wide Park Master Plan is to establish a Level of Service (LOS) analysis for both park land and recreation facilities. Typically, this process begins with a review of previously used LOS and the LOS other counties are using as they provide park and recreation facilities (benchmarking). We have included a review of other county standards as part of this planning process.

The LOS for both park acreage and recreation facilities is expressed in a population based format. For example, a county may decide to provide District Parks to its residents at a LOS of 2.5 acres of District Park land for every 1,000 people that live in the county. If the county has a population of 100,000 there will be a demand for 250 acres of park land dedicated to District Parks ( $2.5 \text{ acres} \times 100 = 250 \text{ acres}$ ). If that same county currently has a District Park with 100 acres, there is a county wide need for 150 acres of additional park land dedicated to District Park(s) [ $\text{demand (250 acres)} - \text{supply (100 acres)} = \text{need (150 acres)}$ ].

The same process is used to determine recreational facility needs. If the same county determines that softball fields should be available to its residents at a LOS of 1 field for every 10,000 people, there is a demand for 10 softball fields in the county ( $100,000 \text{ population} \div 10,000 \text{ LOS} = 10 \text{ fields}$ ). If the county has 7 existing softball fields serving the recreational needs of county residents, there is a need for 3 additional softball fields [ $\text{demand (10 fields)} - \text{supply (7 fields)} = \text{need (3 fields)}$ ].

## PARK NEEDS

Table 3A-Park Acreage provides a summary of acreage standards used by other counties and the standards adopted in the 2000 Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The final column on Table 3A-Park Acreage (in yellow) provides the recommended acreage standard to be used by Franklin County for each park type. Table 3B-Park Acreage Needs Assessment uses the new standards to identify county wide park

needs. The following descriptions provide insight on how the standards were chosen, what needs are identified and the responsible agency for each park type.

A general description of the different park classifications typically serving a community is provided in Appendix D. In reviewing these park needs, it is important to remember that the classification and description of the park types are fluid and often reflect the specific needs/use of the county and the particular park. Park classification may be based on size, facilities offered, community demand, or lack of other viable options in the service area.

An example of a park's role varying from the park classification guidelines is Moose Lodge Park. At 11 acres, this park is much smaller than the typical Community Park, but because of its use, the area it serves, and the role it plays in the Department's system it is functioning as a Community Park and not a Neighborhood Park. Likewise, the acreage listed in the Classifications for Parks, Open Space and Greenways (Appendix D) provide a general range for desired size of facilities. The recommended acreage for each of the parks is not intended as hard and fast rule of size. The acreages included in the guidelines are not sequential. A 50-acre park could serve as a Community Park or a District Park; depending on the facilities offered, the programming provided and the availability of other parks in the system.

The following is a county wide assessment of the park needs for the next ten years.

### Mini Parks

Mini Parks are the smallest park type and typically include a playground, shelter and possibly a play court. There are currently two parks (Irene Mitchell Park – Youngsville and Bun Community Park - Bunn) that fits into the Mini Park classification in the county. Typically, Mini Parks are operated and maintained by municipal agencies.

A standard of 2 acres for every 1,000 people in the service population was established in the 2000 Master Plan for Mini Parks. This LOS of mini-park develop-



ment for the 2019 master plan has been set at 0.1 acre per 1,000 people. It reflects a trend in park development away from Mini Parks because their small size limits their recreational use and makes them expensive to maintain and operate. Based on this service level, there is still a need for development of Mini Parks, but not by the county. As a county agency, Franklin County should not focus its efforts on the development of these smaller parks, but should let municipal agencies meet this park need.



### Neighborhood Parks

*Irene Mitchell Park*

Like Mini Parks, Neighborhood Parks are typically developed by municipal agencies. Currently, there are no neighborhood parks in Franklin County.

The service level set for Neighborhood Parks established by this Master Plan is 5-15 acres per 1,000 people. Utilizing this level of development, there is a need for 67 acres of Neighborhood Park land throughout the county. By 2028 this need will reach 77 acres. Assuming most Neighborhood Parks are in the 5-15 acre range, by 2028 there will be a need for 8 additional Neighborhood Parks.

The responsibility of developing these future parks should be on both the County and municipal agencies. The County may consider working with local agencies in some form of assistance, but development of Neighborhood Parks should not be a priority for

the County within the municipal areas. The priority for the County should be development of neighborhood parks in the outlying portions of the County, especially to the north and northeast.

### Community Parks

Both Franklin County and its municipal agencies (currently Louisburg and Youngsville) are the primary provider of Community Parks in Franklin County. Municipal agencies provide 3 Community Parks on almost 127 acres of park land. The County also offers 3 Community Parks on 55 acres of park land.

Based on a park land/population ratio of 4.0 acres per 1,000 population (the standard set for the 2019 Parks and Recreation Master Plan), the need for Community Parks is still short by 1-2 parks. The development of future Community Parks should still be a priority for the County, although in the future it is possible that some of the municipalities in the County could develop additional Community Parks.

### District Parks

District Parks are large parks (usually greater than 100 acres) that provide both active and passive recreation. Typically, county agencies are the primary source for funding, developing, and operating these large parks. There is one District Park in the county. Owens Recreational Park provides 167 acres of District Park land.

Utilizing a standard of 3.5 acres per 1,000 (the standard established in the 2019 Parks and Recreation Master Plan) for District Park development, the need for District Park land in the county has been met. By 2028, with the anticipated increase in county population (9,700 new citizens), the need for one additional District Park of 100+ acres is projected. Based on the growth in the western area of the county, the new District Park should be located in the western area. Finding and acquiring land for this future park should be a priority.

## Regional Parks

While there are currently no State parks physically located within Franklin County, two State Parks (Medoc Mountain and Falls Lake) are within easy driving distance of Franklin County. These large Regional Parks meet the passive recreation needs of county citizens. Development of a Regional Park should not be a priority for the County.

## FUTURE LAND/OPEN SPACE NEEDS

As a rapidly urbanizing county, Franklin County should always be open to opportunities for preserving land for open space and recreation. As noted in previous sections on specific park needs, there is a county-wide need for additional park land. As the county's population grows, finding undeveloped property for parks will become more difficult. As noted in Section Five, acquiring property for future parks should be a priority.

## FACILITY NEEDS

The level of service for recreational facilities (i.e. ballfields, courts, picnic shelters, etc.) proposed in this plan was developed from a review of LOS used by other counties similar to Franklin County, and from input gathered during the public input process. The LOS, identified in Table 3A-Facilities, and discussed in greater detail in Section Four: Proposals and Recommendations, are used in the developing of the recreational facility needs assessment.

Based on these LOS, the number of public facilities needed in the park system through the planning period (2019 to 2028), are identified in Table 3B-Facilities, "Recreation Facilities Needs Assessment" and summarized on the following table. A more detailed discussion of each of the facility needs is provided in Section Four: Proposals & Recommendations.

In the following table, the "Existing Facilities" column indicates the number of existing recreation

facilities currently available in the county. The "Current Need" column identifies the total number of additional facilities currently needed. The "2028 Need" column reflects the total number of additional facilities that will be needed by 2028.

As an example of how the Needs Assessment is presented, consider playgrounds. Currently, there are 7 existing public playgrounds throughout the county. Based on the Standards for Facility Development that have been recommended for the County (one playground for every 4,000 people in the service population), there is a current demand for 16 playgrounds ( $67,000 \div 4,000 = 16$ ). Since there are 7 playgrounds currently serving county residents, there is a current need to construct 9 additional playgrounds (demand of 16 – 7 existing playgrounds) to meet the demand. By 2028, with an increased population of 76,700, there will be a demand for 19 playgrounds ( $76,700 \div 4,000 = 19$ ); or a need for 3 additional playgrounds.

	*Existing Facilities	Current Need	2028 Need
Baseball/Softball Fields	10	11	13
Soccer/Multi-Use Fields	4	12	15
Basketball Courts	2	3	4
Tennis Courts	0	7	8
Volleyball Courts	0	3	4
Horseshoe	0	1	2
Shuffleboard Courts	0	1	1
Playground	8	16	19
Picnic Shelters	9	13	15
Hiking/Jogging Trails (miles)	±7	+16	19
Amphitheater	1	3	4
Community Garden	0	3	4
Swimming Pool	0	2	2
Rec. Center w/Gym	0	2	2
Dog Park	0	2	2
Skate Park	1	1	1.5
Disc Golf	1	2	3
Sprayground	0	1	2
Pickleball	1	2	3

Current and future needs listed above are county wide needs. Franklin County is not responsible for meeting all needs. Many of these facility needs will be met by the municipal parks and recreation departments. Meeting the needs of all county residents will require a collaborative effort. See Section Four for specific recommendations on facility needs to be met by Franklin County's Parks and Recreation Department.

- \* The numbers listed in this chart reflect public park facilities only in Franklin County, including municipalities. While both the County and municipalities use Franklin County School fields and gymnasium, there is no guarantee these facilities are always available for use for programmed activities by the County and the municipalities.



**Table 3A-Park Acreage**  
**Franklin County**  
**Standards for Acreage by Park Classification**  
**Comparison of Level of Service Used by Other NC Agencies**

Park Types	Currituck County	Elizabeth/Pasquotank County	Gaston County	Iredell County	Cabarrus County	Yadkin County	Old NRPA Standards	Franklin County 2000 Master Plan	Franklin County 2019 Proposed Standards
<b>Mini Parks*</b>	NA*	1-3 Acres/Park (.25 Acres/ 1,000)	1-5 Acres/Park (.1 Acres/ 1,000)	1-2 Acres/Park (.25-.5 Acres/ 1,000)	.25-3 Acres/Park (.1 Acres/ 1,000)	NA*	.25-1 Acres/ Park (.25-.5 Acres/ 1,000)	1-2 acres/Park (2 Acres/1,000)	1-3 Acres/Park* (.1 Acres/1,000)
<b>Neighborhood Parks</b>	5- 10 Acres/ Park (1 Acres/ 1,000)	7-15 Acres/ Park (1 Acres/ 1,000)	1-5 Acres/Park (.1 Acres/ 1,000)	10-15 Acres/Park (1-2 Acres/ 1,000)	3-25 Acres/Park (1 Acres/ 1,000)	NA*	5-10 Acres/ Park (1-2 Acres/ 1,000)	5-15 Acres/Park (5 Acres/ 1,000)	5-15 Acres/Park (2 Acres/ 1,000)
<b>Community Parks</b>	30-50 Acres/ Park (3 Acres/ 1,000)	40-100 Acres/ Park (5 Acres/ 1,000)	40+ Acres/Park (4 Acres/ 1,000)	30-50 Acres/Park (5-8 Acres/ 1,000)	25-70 Acres/ Park (2.5 Acres/ 1,000)	30-50 Acres/ Park (1.5 Acres/ 1,000)	30-50 Acres/ Park (5-8 Acres/ 1,000)	40+ Acres/Park (9.5 Acres/ 1,000)	40+ Acres/Park (4 Acres/ 1,000)
<b>District Parks</b>	50 -100 Acres/ Park (3 Acres/ 1,000)	±60-100 Acres/Park (2.5 Acres/ 1,000)	100+ Acres/ Park (3.5 Acres/ 1,000)	100-200 Acres/Park (5-10 Acres/ 1,000)	100-300 Acres/Park (3 Acres/ 1,000)	100-150 Acres/Park (2.5 Acres/ 1,000)	+75 Acres/ Park (5-10 Acres/ 1,000)	NA	100+ Acres/Park (3.5 Acres/ 1,000)
<b>Regional Parks**</b>	150-1,000 Acres/Park (3 Acres/ 1,000)	NA**	1000+ Acres/Park (10 Acres/ 1,000)	NA**	750 Acres/Park (5 Acres/ 1,000))	150-1,000 Acres/Park (5 Acres/ 1,000)	NA**	NA**	NA**

\*Most county parks and recreation agencies do not provide Mini Parks.

\*\*Regional Parks typically provided by State/National Agencies.

Table 3B-Park Acreage  
Franklin County

## Park Sites and Acreage Needs Assessment

Park Types	2019 Existing Facilities*	Standard for Development	Current Demand 67,000	Current Need	2028 Demand 76,700	2028 Need
<b>Mini Parks*</b>	1 Park 1.2 Acres	1-3 Acres/Park (.1 Acres/ 1,000)	4 Parks 6.7 Acres	3 Parks* 4.5 Acres	5 Parks 8 Acres	1-2 Parks* 3 Acres
<b>Neighborhood Parks*</b>	0 Parks 0 Acres	5-15 Acres/Park (1 Acres/ 1,000)	7 Parks 67 Acres	7 Parks* 67 Acres	8 Parks 77 Acres	1 Park* 10-15 Acres
<b>Community Parks*</b>	6 Parks 183 Acres	±40 Acres/Park (4 Acres/ 1,000)	6-8 Parks 268 Acres	1-2 Parks** 85 Acres	9 Parks 307 Acres	1 Park** 40 Acres
<b>District Parks</b>	1 Park 167 Acres	±100 Acres/Park (3.5 Acres/ 1,000)	1 Park 234.5 Acres	Needs Met	1 Park 268 Acres	1 Park 101 Acres
<b>Regional Parks</b>	0 Parks 0 Acres	1,000 Acres/Park (10 Acres/ 1,000)	1 Park 670 Acres	Needs Met by State Parks***	1 Park 767 Acres	Needs Met by State Parks***

\* There is a need for additional Mini Parks and Neighborhood Parks in Franklin County, but typically these smaller parks are built and operated by municipal departments. However, with no municipal agencies in the north and northeast portions of the County, Franklin County may need to take the lead on developing some neighborhood parks in those underserved areas

\*\*There is still a need for additional Community Parks to be developed by the County. There could be the need for municipal agencies to develop additional Community Parks based on local needs.

\*\*\* While there are currently no State Parks located in Franklin County Falls Lake State Park and Medoc Mountain State Park are within reasonable driving distance to serve this need.

**Table 3A-Facilities**  
**Franklin County**  
**Recreation Facilities Standards**  
**Comparison of Level of Service Used by Other NC Agencies**

	NRPA Guidelines	State Standard	Currituck County	Elizabeth/ Pasquotank County	Gaston County	Iredell County	Cabarrus County	Yadkin County	Franklin County 2000 Standards	Franklin County 2019 Standards
<b>Fields</b>										
Adult Baseball	1/20,000	1/15,000	1/10,000	1/15,000	1/20,000	1/20,000	1/15,000	1/30,000	1/20,000	1/30,000
Youth Baseball	N/A	N/A	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/6,000	1/6,000	1/5,000	1/12,000	1/4,000	1/12,000
Softball	N/A	N/A	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/6,000	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/20,000	1/2,500	1/10,000
Football	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/20,000	1/20,000	1/3,500	1/20,000	1/10,000	1/40,000	1/5,000	1/20,000
Soccer/Multi-Use	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/3,500	1/8,000	1/4,500	1/10,000	1/3,000	1/7,000
<b>Courts</b>										
Basketball	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/10,000	1/5,000	1/7,000	1/10,000	1/7,500	1/20,000	1/2,000	1/20,000
Tennis	1/2,000	1/2,000	1/10,000	1/3,000	1/3,500	1/10,000	1/4,000	1/10,000	1/5,000	1/10,000
Volleyball	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/10,000	1/20,000	1/20,000	1/7,500	1/10,000	1/5,000	1/20,000
Horseshoe	1/5,000	N/A	1/5,000	1/10,000	1/60,000	1/20,000	1/7,500	1/20,000	-	1/60,000
Shuffleboard	1/2,000	N/A	1/10,000	1/10,000	1/40,000	1/20,000	1/1,000	1/20,000	-	1/40,000
<b>Outdoor Areas</b>										
Picnic Shelters	1/2,000	N/A	1/2,000	1/3,000	1/4,000	1/5,000	1/3,000	1/5,000	-	1/5,000
Playground Activities	N/A	1/1,000	1/3,000	1/2,000	1/4,000	1/5,000	1/3,000	1/5,000	1/1,000	1/4,000
<b>Trails</b>										
Hiking/Fitness/Jogging	1/region	.4 mile/1,000	.4 mile/1,000	.4 mile/1,000	1 mile/4,000	-	1 mile/4,000	.3 mile/1,000	2 miles/1,000	1 mile/4,000
<b>Specialized</b>										
Community Center	1/25,000		1/20,000	1/20,000	1/25,000	-	1/50,000	1/40,000	1/25,000	1/25,000
Gymnasium	1/10,000		1/20,000	1/20,000	1/50,000	-	1/50,000	-	1/25,000	1/25,000
Outdoor Pool	1/20,000	1/20,000	1/20,000	1/20,000	1/20,000	-	1/50,000	1/30,000	1/25,000	1/30,000
Bicycling/Urban	1 mile/2,000	1 mile/1,000	1 mile/1,000	1 mile/1,000	1 mile/2,000	1 mile/2,000	1 mile/1,000	1 mile/1,000	-	1 mile/2,000
Amphitheater	1/20,000		-	-	1/20,000	-	1/20,000	-	1/20,000	1/20,000
Disc Golf			-	1/20,000	1/25,000	-	1/15,000	-	-	1/25,000
Skateboard Park			-	1/20,000	1/50,000	-	1/50,000	-	1/50,000	1/50,000
Dog Park			-	1,20,000	1/35,000	-	1/50,000	-	-	1/35,000
Community Garden			-	1/20,000	1/20,000	-	1/20,000	-	-	1/20,000
Water Access			-	-	-	-	-	-	1/10 miles of shoreline	1/10 miles of shoreline
Spravground			-	1/40,000	1/40,000	-	1/50,000	-	-	1/40,000



**Table 3B - Facility Needs**  
**Franklin County**  
**Parks and Recreation Master Plan**  
**Recreation Facility Needs Assessment**

Based on a Benchmarking Analysis of national, state, and other similar agencies standards, and with input from the community, the following table reflects the recreational facility needs for Franklin County.

Facilities	Existing Facilities	2019 Standards	2019 Demand Population 67,000	2019 Need	2028 Demand Population 76,700	2028 Need
<b>Fields</b>						
Adult Baseball	0	1/30,000	2	2	3	1
Youth Baseball	5	1/12,000	6	1	6	0
Softball	5	1/10,000	6	1	8	2
Football	0	1/20,000	3	3	4	1
Soccer/Multi-Purpose	4	1/7,000	9	5	11	2
<b>Courts</b>						
Basketball	2	1/20,000	3	3	4	1
Tennis	0	1/10,000	7	7	8	1
Volleyball	0	1/20,000	3	3	4	1
Shuffleboard	0	1/40,000	1	1	2	1
Horseshoes	0	1/60,000	1	1	1	0
<b>Outdoor Areas</b>						
Picnic Shelter	9	1/5,000	13	4	15	2
Playground	8	1/4,000	17	9	19	3
<b>Trails</b>						
Walking	7.1	1 mile/ 4,000	16.75	9.65	19	2.4
<b>Specialized</b>						
Community Center	0	1/25,000	2	2	3	1
Gymnasium	0	1/25,000	2	2	3	1
Swimming Pool	0	1/30,000	2	2	2	0
Pickleball	1	1/25,000	2	1	3	1
Water Access	1	1/10 mi. shoreline	0	0	0	0
Skate Board	1	1/50,000	1	0	1.5	.5
Disc Golf	1	1/25,000	2	1	3	1
Dog Park	0	1/35,000	2	2	2	0
Splash Pad	0	1/40,000	1	1	2	1
Community Garden	0	1/20,000	3	3	4	1
Amphitheater	1	1/20,000	3	2	4	1





*Shelter at Riverbend Park*

## Section Four

# Proposals & Recommendations

### INTRODUCTION

Many county agencies in North Carolina's urban areas focus on providing parks and recreation facilities/programs/services to county residents that live in unincorporated areas or small towns (without parks and recreation departments). Franklin County's primary mission falls within that parameter: To provide recreational facilities and open space that promotes the general well-being of the citizens of Franklin County; and provide natural areas for conservation of scenic and undeveloped lands and contributes to the economic, social and environmental health of Franklin County. In support of the County's mission are six goals developed by Franklin County Parks and Recreation:

Goal 1: Provide parks, facilities and open space

- Ensure that adequate land is available for public parks, facilities and open space in the future
- Develop parks and facilities that will meet the current and future needs of Franklin County
- Develop facilities that are accessible to all citizens of Franklin County

Goal 2: Promote diversity within facilities and programs

- Provide opportunity for a variety of programs and participants
- Provide various facilities that promote the diversity of the community



### Goal 3: Encourage public involvement

- Invite the public during park and recreation planning events
- Encourage leadership and active participation in various programs
- Provide public awareness for all programs, services, events, etc.

### Goal 4: Embrace unity and relationships

- Encourage the potential relationships that can exist between private sectors as well as municipalities and other government agencies
- Maintain and expand the various committees to reach out to, and develop relationships with others

### Goal 5: Embrace creative resources

- Find solutions for acquiring the needed facilities and resources to develop parks and recreation facilities for the citizens of Franklin County
- Promote the reutilization of existing facilities
- Continue to pursue opportunities with Franklin County Public Schools, the private sector, the State and the Federal government in order to provide necessary parks and facilities

### Goal 6: Preserve and protect the environment

- Design parks, open space and facilities that are sensitive to the environment
- Promote programs and activities that embrace the healthy and natural environment

There are two municipalities in Franklin County that offer their citizens parks and recreation facilities and programs through departmental services. These two municipal departments are Louisburg and Youngsville. Franklinton offers some recreational programming through volunteer efforts. These two departments along with Franklinton only serve approximately 10% of the entire county population and provide a limited variety of facilities and programs.

Franklin County's Parks and Recreation Department focuses its efforts on providing parks and recreation facilities to the ±64,000 citizens living in the rural

areas of the county that are not served by a parks and recreation department. In addition to serving the unincorporated areas and smaller towns, the Parks and Recreation Department also focuses on working with the municipal agencies throughout the county where opportunities exist.

## NEEDS IDENTIFIED IN SECTION THREE:

Establishing a County wide Level of Service for Parks and Recreation facilities were established within this organizational framework between County and Municipal Departments.

Identification of these recreational needs/opportunities comes at a time when Franklin County (like many counties in North Carolina) has finally grown out of the nation's worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. While the county's economy is once again vibrant, County staff and elected officials must carefully plan for park and recreation needs.

Franklin County should not approach the task of providing parks, recreational opportunities and senior centers alone. There are a number of public and private agencies and organizations throughout the county that can share in that role.

School facilities are often used to meet community recreational needs during non-school hours. Franklin County Schools have historically been an important resource for county recreation programs. The indoor and outdoor facilities of the school system play an instrumental role in meeting recreational needs of all county residents. The continued exploration and development of joint use opportunities with the school system is critical to the success of this parks and recreation master plan.

The Towns of Louisburg and Youngsville are major providers of parks and recreation facilities in the county. In addition, the county's smaller communities (Franklinton and Bunn) provide limited recreation programming. The development of county wide parks and recreation facilities should be coor-

minated with the facilities and services offered by all of these municipalities. There is great value in collaboration of all park and recreation agencies. Financial and human resources are too valuable to duplicate. Where possible, the municipal agencies should work with the County for the betterment of parks and recreation programming.

Another major player with the mission of improving community health and the quality of life is the Department of Aging. The County should continue to look for opportunities to partner with the Department of Aging and other health organizations in the promotion of healthy lifestyles, especially for the senior population.

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

It is essential to clearly understand how the County will interface with these other recreational and health providers. This cooperative effort will eliminate duplication of facilities and services. The proposals in this Master Plan are based on what each recreational provider is anticipated to offer through the ten year planning period (2019-2028).

### State of North Carolina

The State of North Carolina, through its State Parks, Division of Parks & Recreation offer people of Franklin County a variety of parks and recreational experiences.

There are two outstanding State Parks within easy driving distance of county residents. Falls Lake State Recreation Area is located in southwest of Franklin County in Wake Forest. This very popular park provides over 12,000 acres of open space with a wide variety of water based recreation as well as hiking

and camping opportunities. The Mountains-To-Sea Trail also winds through the recreation area. Likewise, Medoc Mountain State Park in Halifax County also provides a wide variety of passive oriented recreation, like fishing, paddling trails, camping, and open space. While not located in Franklin County, this wonderful regional facility is also within easy driving distance of all county residents to the northeast.

It is anticipated that the State of North Carolina will continue to maintain and operate these outstanding facilities. The County, along with other nearby government agencies, should express their desire to see these resources used to their utmost potential. This may include the expansion of facilities and recreational opportunities. The State should continue to offer a variety of recreational facilities and programs on a regional basis. In addition, the State should be the provider of regional State Parks that include opportunities for camping, fishing, biking, and special facilities of regional and statewide interest.

### Franklin County Schools

Historically, the Franklin County School Board has been a significant partner with the County in providing recreational opportunities to county residents. As noted in Section One: Inventory, the County relies heavily on school facilities for athletics. Currently, the County and its municipalities are programming facilities at six schools for youth athletic programs. In return, the County provides maintenance on school park facilities.

Going forward, the County and the School Board should look for adding opportunities to work together. An important area of collaboration would be the joint planning of future schools. By working together in the early stages of planning, opportunities for joint development of both indoor and outdoor recreation facilities could be identified.

As noted in the Needs Assessment, there is continued demand for gymnasium space for public recreational use. Partnering with the school system as new schools are constructed is the most economical means of developing indoor recreational space.

Examples of joint use of indoor recreational space can be seen in counties throughout North Carolina (Onslow County, Cumberland County, New Hanover and many others).

## Franklin County Department of Aging

The seniors of Franklin County have access to several opportunities offered by the Department of Aging. Two facilities, Franklinton Senior Center and Louisburg Senior Center provide access to several activities including:

- Speaker Programs
- Senior games
- Fun Day in the Park
- Bingo
- Dance Classes
- Cards
- Bible Study
- Craft Classes
- Senior Trips
- Parties, Tours
- Exercise programs
- Fitness Centers

Recent studies on seniors and active/healthy lifestyles have made it apparent that senior community's health is linked to regular social and physical activity.

The County's Parks and Recreation Department, working in conjunction with the Department of Aging, should continue to look for programs and facilities that can improve community health.

## FRANKLIN COUNTY PROPOSALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The County, through its Parks and Recreation Department, currently affords its citizens a variety of recreation opportunities through its parks and recreational facilities. These facilities provide opportunities for both active and passive recreation. The County's park system is primarily oriented toward larger parks (District and Community Parks), while the municipal departments in the county focus on

Community, Neighborhood, and Mini Parks. The Department also relies heavily on use of six school/park locations across the county.

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

In addition to its parks, the County's Parks and Recreation Department also programs indoor recreation activities and partners with the Department of Aging to provide senior programming.

The Parks and Recreation Department must work with other agencies in the county to provide the park land and facilities that will be required to meet the park and recreational needs identified in the planning report. This collaborative effort should include working with the school board, surrounding counties, and the municipal departments to minimize duplication of facilities by developing and maintaining joint use agreements wherever possible.

The following is a list of proposed recommendations for Franklin County to consider as the County prepares for the next 10 years.

### Facilities and Programming

- **Develop location & plan for two indoor multi-purpose community centers;**
  - Seek land for (1) centralized center to include aquatics facilities, gymnasium(s), classrooms; seek partnerships to develop
  - Seek land for (1) center in western part of county with gymnasium(s), classrooms and community room
  - Seek new park development opportunities in areas underserved by parks
- **Seek locations to develop neighborhood or community parks in the north and northeast areas of Franklin County**
  - Complete facilities at Pilot Lions Park
  - Revisit Epsom Park master plan; seek funding and construct park
  - Provide destination facilities that could also



serve as a revenue source (disc golf, pickleball, X-country, inclusive playground)

- **Trail connectivity - destinations / regional greenways & trail systems**
  - Create a county-wide greenway master plan
  - Seek land along the rail corridor to continue development of the Louisburg/Franklinton Rail Trail.
  - Seek land/corridors to plan and develop greenway from Louisburg to Dehart Botanical Garden
- **Make sure all parks & facilities are accessible**
  - Conduct ADA assessment at each park/facility
  - All facilities within each park shall be accessible to each other & parking
  - All facilities shall be accessible
  - All facilities should be connected to adjacent neighborhoods, sidewalk systems, where possible
- **Create programming for each Franklin County park & facility**
  - Provide educational, healthy & active programs & opportunities for all ages & abilities
  - Offer excellent opportunities throughout the Franklin County parks system for all to use.
  - Seek new opportunities such as disc golf, pickleball, fitness stations or clusters or other new sports trends
  - Provide venues for Senior Olympics events

#### Operations

- **Ensure park & recreation master plan is coordinated with other municipal plans, ordinances & policies**
- **Increase community outreach / parks & recreation marketing**
- **Seek & develop partnerships with other recreation providers**
  - Hold quarterly meetings, at a minimum with other municipal park & recreation depart-

ments (towns, adjacent counties), public schools, Dept. of Aging, Library, Coop. Extension, Veteran Affairs; Rotate meeting locations

- Seek partnership with Louisburg College with programming for De Hart Botanical Garden
- Expand programming partnerships with municipalities; assign responsibilities
- **Maintain quality park management, operations & maintenance**
- **Each County resident should live within a 15-20 minute walk or drive to a greenspace, trail, park, amenity**
- **Strive to provide funding to maintain or exceed minimum level of service standards & create a sustainable economic base for Franklin County Parks & Recreation**
- **Establish role, vision, goals and responsibilities of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board**

We will begin our discussion of recommendations with parks and the outdoor facilities typically found in them. We will then turn our attention to special use facilities (aquatics, gymnasiums, fitness equipment, etc.). Lastly, there is a review of trends in the parks and recreation fields.

#### **Park Needs**

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

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

While the tables provide "the numbers" of the Needs

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

We begin with an overview of the different park types found in most counties, and how these parks should be developed in the future.

## Regional Parks

Regional Parks are typically large, passive oriented parks that highlight, utilize and protect a unique feature. These parks, as the name implies, serve people from across a region; therefore, most people have to travel to enjoy these park types. As noted in Section Three, Regional Parks are typically offered by national, state, or county agencies. Occasionally, municipalities with populations of 100,000 or more may provide a Regional Park.

As previously noted, Franklin County is very fortunate to be proximate to two State Parks located to the southwest and northeast of the County. These outstanding parks (Falls Lake State Recreation Area and Medoc Mountain State Park) provide a wide variety of nature based recreational activities. The facilities in this park provide valuable recreation opportunities for county residents and attracts visitors from across the region.

These excellent State Parks meet the needs of a Regional Park for the citizens of Franklin County and allows the Department to focus on the development of other park types.

## District Parks

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

There is one District Park currently serving county residents. The County has Owens Recreational Park at Bull Creek in the central area of the county.

This park provides 167 acres of District Park land, but even with this park there will be a need for an additional District Park in the county by 2028. Utilizing a relatively conservative standard for District Park development (3.5 acres/1,000 people), there will be a need for over 100 acres of additional District Park land in the county. Based on the centralized location of the county's new District Park and the projected growth in the western region of the county, the best location for this future park will be in the western area of the county between Franklinton and Youngsville.

The development of a District Park in this area will provide park and recreation facilities in a growing area of the county, and will provide many of the needed recreation facilities that are discussed later in the section.

## Community Parks

Community Parks are an important component in many county park systems. These parks are usually large enough (30-100 acres) to provide both valuable active recreation opportunities and preservation of undeveloped open space and passive recreation areas. There are six Community Parks located throughout the county. Three of these Community Parks are located and operated in the municipal jurisdictions of Louisburg and Youngsville. Franklin County operates the other three Community Parks located throughout the county.

With the six Community Parks covering almost 183 acres of park land. The development of additional Community Parks is still a priority for Franklin County. In the future, additional Community Parks could be needed by any of the county's growing municipalities and any future Community Park development could be a partnership with local agencies and Franklin County. A Master Plan was prepared for Epsom Park to the north in 2008. This plan, which showed a regulation soccer field flexed with a 300' baseball field, playground, 9 hole disc golf and a 1/4 mile paved walking trail, should be reconsidered for funding and development.

## Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood Parks play an important role in providing both active and passive recreation in most municipal park systems. These parks, usually in the 7-15 acre range, are large enough to include both active and passive recreation opportunities. Typically, county park departments do not focus on development of Neighborhood Parks. Instead, Neighborhood Parks are typically constructed and operated by municipal agencies.

There are no Neighborhood Parks located in Franklin County. Two parks, Moose Lodge Park and Luddy Recreational Facility would normally be considered Neighborhood Parks based on acreage, but due to the activities they offer and their place in the community they have been classified as Community Parks in this plan. This is an extremely low number of Neighborhood Parks to serve the 67,000 plus people living in the County.

Based on a conservative LOS for Neighborhood Park development (5-15 acres/1,000 population), there is a current need for seven new Neighborhood Parks throughout the county. By 2028, that need will increase to by one to eight Neighborhood Parks. As with Community Parks, development of Neighborhood Parks should be a joint effort between the municipalities and the County. However, the County should focus on seeking neighborhood park opportunities especially in the underserved areas of the county to the north and the northeast.

## Mini Parks

Mini Parks are the smallest of the park types. These parks typically are less than an acre to 3 acres and provide a limited range of activities (playground, picnic shelter, benches, etc.). Mini Parks, like Neighborhood Parks, provide relatively limited recreation facilities, but are located in close proximity to the service population they serve. County agencies typically do not develop Mini Parks.

Utilizing a very conservative LOS for development (0.1 acre/1,000 population), there is a need for additional Mini Parks in the county, but these smaller

parks are typically developed by municipal agencies.

## Greenways/Trails

The most popular outdoor recreation activity in the nation is walking. This popularity was reflected in the survey that was conducted as part of this planning study and in comments made during the public workshops.

The importance of providing trails and greenways has heightened over the past decade with the increase in obesity. Walking has become an important activity in the mission to improve community health.

Greenways are typically off-road trails that meander through neighborhoods and natural areas providing transportation corridors and recreational opportunities for walkers, joggers, roller bladers, and cyclists. The trail surface can either be natural or paved. Paved trails are normally eight to ten feet in width. Natural surface trail widths can vary based on conditions.

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

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

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



Trail segments identified during this planning process as highest priority include:

- Continuing development of the Louisburg/Franklinton Rail Trail between Downtown Franklinton and the Louisburg Bike Trail
- Development of greenway along US 401 from Louisburg to the De Hart Botanical Gardens

## Bikeways

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

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

The County should consider applying for federal SAFETEA program non-vehicular transportation funds that encourage alternative means of transportation. These funds have been used to construct bike lanes and Greenways and trails in communities throughout North Carolina.

Through careful planning, the County should encourage development of bike routes that will connect all of the county's towns and points of interest and will provide both a tourist attraction and a valuable resource for active recreation for county residents.

## Water Access and Blueways

Franklin County is blessed with a wonderful water resource the Tar River. The desire for water access was heard throughout the public participation process.

The value of water resources has become more evi-

dent over the past few years. The County should market these resources, along with trails and parks, as a travel and tourism attraction.

The value of water resources has been recognized by many citizens and a number of organizations are at work to preserve these valuable resources and enhance their appearance and use.

## RENOVATION & EXPANSION OF EXISTING PARKS

While the focus of the previous recommendations has been on the acquisition and development of new parks, there is also a need to improve and expand facilities at all of the County's existing parks. As part of the ongoing planning and budgeting process, the Parks and Recreation Department annually establishes a list of capital improvement projects. This list of capital improvements needs is then used by the Department and elected officials to establish yearly capital improvement budgets.

Important County (owned) renovation/upgrade projects which should be considered include:

Franklinton Park  
Moose Lodge Park  
Pilot Lions Park  
Owens Recreation Park – Phase 2

As part of the planning and renovations, the County should develop an ADA Transition Plan for all of its facilities. Through that study, each of the Department's parks should be assessed with regard to ADA (accessibility) and recommendations have been made with regard to needed renovations and upgrades.

As a public entity, it is very important for the County to make all of its parks and recreation facilities accessible. Once the ADA Transition Plan is completed, the Department should use the recommendations from this plan to improve accessibility.

## MASTER PLANS FOR FUTURE PARK IMPROVEMENTS

Master Plans should be developed for all of the County's existing parks and future parks. Parks and recreation facilities that warrant special study include:

- County-wide Greenway Master Plan
- Detailed Facility Assessments and master plans for all County Parks

## FACILITY PROPOSALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This planning report recommends the County should develop new Parks, renovate its existing parks, and expand trails. The improvements that will be made as part of these expansions and renovations will add many new facilities to the Department's inventory. The County should consider the list of facility needs established in Section Three and described in greater detail in this section as it builds new parks and renovates existing facilities. It should be noted the facility needs listed here are county wide needs. Meeting all of these needs will require a coordinated effort by all park and recreation providers.

### Adult Baseball

Over the past five to ten years, the popularity of adult baseball has waned, both locally and across the nation. Based on this trend, a LOS of one field per 30,000 people for the development of adult baseball fields is recommended. Utilizing this standard of field development, there is slight need for two adult baseball fields. Additional fields could be constructed in the future if demand arises.

### Youth Baseball

Youth baseball is a very popular sport in North Carolina and that popularity is evident in Franklin County. The County, utilizing school fields, has access to a large number of youth fields. Utilizing a LOS of one field for every 12,000 people (LOS similar to other NC counties), there is a need for an additional field. As the county's population grows, the

need for fields will grow as well. These needed fields could be constructed at future County Parks or be constructed as municipal agencies build new parks in the future.



In addition to the local demand for youth baseball fields, the development of facilities for youth baseball could also provide valuable economic benefit to the county. Economic impact studies indicate tournament level baseball facilities successfully create a venue for youth tournaments that would bring tens of thousands of tourist to the county; creating economic impact through restaurants, hotels and shopping. See Section Five on Park Facilities as Economic Developers.

### Softball

Adult softball has traditionally been a popular sport in North Carolina. NRPA and NCDENR standards (one field per 5,000 people) reflect that popularity. This plan recommends a LOS development of one field per 10,000 people (similar to other more rural North Carolina counties). Based on this standard, the County currently has a need for a few additional softball fields. These fields, as the well as the little league fields, could be located in new parks or through expansion of parks in municipalities.

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

## Multipurpose Fields (see also Soccer)

Many park and recreation agencies are moving towards the development of multipurpose fields to provide play space for football, soccer, lacrosse, and rugby. The development of these multipurpose fields, sometimes simply called rectangle fields, provides the most program flexibility. Based on input from staff, stakeholders, and the public, there is a need for five additional rectangle/multipurpose fields in the county. By 2028, this need will grow to 11 rectangle/multi-purpose fields.

## Football

Football's popularity as a community based youth sport has been reduced by the emergence of soccer and (most recently) lacrosse. However, based on input received during the public workshops, there appears to be a need for "game day" fields and opportunities to work with youth football associations to improve underutilized fields.

## Soccer

Soccer is one of the fastest growing sports in America. Some local demand for the sport was expressed in the survey and during stakeholder meetings. This Master Plan reflects this demand by establishing a LOS of one field for every 7,000 people (combined with multipurpose fields) within the service population.

The County should consider updated lighting on athletic fields, which effectively doubles their use. Likewise, the development of synthetic turf fields could greatly increase playing time on existing fields and reduce the number of fields needed.

A final note on soccer, the demand for multi-purpose fields will be made more intense by the new interest in lacrosse, field hockey and rugby. Played on a field very similar to a soccer field (they are slightly larger than soccer fields), these sports will likely increase in popularity and should be considered as the County reviews its multi-purpose field needs. These new sports should be taken into consideration since play for both sports can be programmed on similar fields. One method to accommodate the variety of field

games (soccer, lacrosse, rugby, football) is to develop larger multi-use fields that can be used for a variety of field games.

## Basketball (Outdoor)

Basketball remains an extremely popular sport in the United States. Played by a variety of ages, and increasingly by females, this sport can be played either indoors or out. Currently there are two public outdoor basketball courts located throughout the county (1 half court in Louisburg and 1 full size in Youngsville). Based on a LOS of one outdoor basketball court per 20,000 people, the County currently has a need for three new outdoor courts, by 2028 the need will increase to four courts.

In addition to outdoor courts, there is a need for indoor basketball, as well. See the section on Community Centers and Gymnasiums for the community's need for indoor courts.

## Tennis

Based on input received in stakeholders interviews and the public workshops, tennis is not a relatively popular sport in Franklin County. Currently there are no public courts in the county.

Utilizing a relatively conservative LOS of facility development (one court per 10,000 people) there is a current need for 6-7 tennis courts throughout the county. These courts could be added as new parks are developed.

The demand for tennis courts is also impacted by the recent emergence of pickleball. As noted under the section on Trends in Parks and Recreation Facilities, pickleball is one of the region's fastest growing recreation activities. Pickleball can be played on a realigned tennis court; this increases the demand for tennis courts.

## Volleyball

There are no outdoor volleyball courts in any of the parks. The standards reflect a slight need for three courts. Volleyball courts are relatively small, complement shelter rental and can easily be added to exist-



ing parks.

## Horseshoes

There are currently no horseshoe courts within the public facilities in the county. Based on a conservative LOS (one court per 60,000 people) there will be a need for one court in the future. This activity provides a recreational outlet and opportunities for social interaction, particularly for older citizens.

The County may consider building horseshoe courts in parks or in conjunction with its senior centers if there is a demand for this activity in the future. Like volleyball courts, horseshoe courts are relatively small and can easily be added to existing parks in conjunction with rentable picnic shelters.

## Shuffleboard

There are no public shuffleboard courts in Franklin County. This activity provides a recreation outlet for social interaction, particularly for seniors. The County may consider building shuffleboard courts if there is demand for this activity in the future. Like horseshoe pits, shuffleboard courts are relatively small and can easily be added to existing parks, especially as a venue for senior olympics.

## Picnic Shelters

Picnicking was one of the most popular recreational activities listed by respondents in the County's survey. There are currently nine (9) picnic shelters located throughout the county. Based on a LOS of one shelter per 5,000 people, there is a need for five additional shelters. By 2028, there will be a need for fifteen shelters. Picnic shelters can be added to existing parks, and should be included in any new parks built throughout the county.

## Playgrounds

There are eight (8) public (park) playgrounds serving county residents. This does not include playgrounds located on school property. Playgrounds were listed as a popular recreational facility in the survey and public workshops. Additional playgrounds are needed. As new parks are developed, the County

should look for locations for additional playgrounds. Larger parks may warrant more than one playground.

Safety inspections and ADA accessibility audits should be conducted at all existing playgrounds. As new playgrounds are completed and existing playgrounds renovated, wood fiber and sand surfaces should be replaced with poured in place (PIP) safety surfacing. PIP surfaces provide wheelchair accessibility and reduces maintenance and lifecycle costs of the playgrounds. In addition, inclusive play equipment should be introduced in all locations.

A popular trend in playground development is natural play areas. These relatively new play areas are designed on the concept of providing opportunities for children to interact with the natural environment when playing. Instead of relying on plastic and steel play structures, these play areas use natural features (creeks, rocks, trees, dirt, etc.) to provide play opportunities. Inspired by the book Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children, this new trend in playground development seeks to re-introduce our youth to the natural environment. The County should consider development of nature based playgrounds in one of its parks.

## Pedestrian Trails

Walking is the number one outdoor recreational activity in the United States. Walking or biking trail use scored high in the public survey ( $\pm 44\%$  indicated they are interested in using natural trails while 35% indicated they are interested in using greenways). Survey respondents stated their need for natural trails (50%) and greenways (30%) were not being met.

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

also include natural trails for passive recreation and access to undeveloped open space within the parks.

Pedestrian trails should be included in all parks as the County improves its park system. In addition to park trails, the County should look for opportunities to work with partner agencies/organizations to explore opportunities for trail development along the Tar River and along the abandoned rail line between Louisburg and Franklinton to provide pedestrian connections between parks, schools, and other public spaces.

### Biking Trails

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

In addition to paved bike trails, the County should look for opportunities with its existing or future parks to develop mountain bike trails. Based on the popularity of these facilities, the County should consider development of mountain bike trails.



### Amphitheaters and Outdoor Performing Areas

There is one existing amphitheater (Louisburg) in Franklin County. There seems to be demand for outdoor special events in the public workshops. Amphitheaters should be considered as potential outdoor amenity areas as future parks are developed.

### SENIOR CENTER & SERVICES

The National Council on Aging now classifies older adults or seniors as age 60 and above. There are 10,000 Americans turning age 65 every year. “As the population ages, older Americans will play an increasingly important role in our economy.” – National Council on Aging. According to Franklin County Census Bureau 2010 data numbers, persons 65 years and over account for almost 16% of the County population. Percentage numbers were not available for age 60 and above.

Franklin County currently have senior centers located in Franklinton and Louisburg operated by the Franklin County Department of Aging.

### Healthy Aging

By investing in and expanding services for Franklin County’s senior citizens, proactivity and prevention can offset significantly more costly medical treatments and expenses. Chronic health conditions are, unfortunately, often a part of the aging process. Ninety-two percent of people over age 65 live with at least one chronic health condition, such as diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, or cancer. Seventy-seven percent live with two or more such conditions. (Source: National Association of Area Agencies on Aging). Today, senior center professionals and staff are assisting their clients in the management of these conditions, helping seniors remain healthy and active in their communities.

### Recommendations

The continued growth in the county’s senior population, coupled with nationally recognized aging-focused research and data, indicates a need for

expanded services for seniors in Franklin County. This can be achieved by partnering with other agencies, but will ultimately require re-purposed, renovated, or new facilities at the existing senior centers, but can also be incorporated in a new multi-use community center.

There may be a financial benefit to partner municipal and county funds for these facilities as they expand their reach.

### Services

Seniors can benefit by community based programs planned to meet their special needs. Diverse groups of active adults require multiple functions and a comprehensive array of services. The NCOA lists the following recommended programs and services:

- Meal and nutrition programs
- Information and assistance
- Health, fitness, and wellness programs
- Transportation services
- Public benefits counseling
- Employment assistance
- Volunteer and civic engagement opportunities
- Social and recreational activities
- Educational and arts programs
- Intergenerational programs

Noticeably, there is a strong alignment between Franklin County's needs and the Nation's trends. While the County's senior services offered through the Department of Aging cannot address all of the programs/needs, it is important for the Department to identify partnerships and program priorities and focus on those priorities.

## SPECIAL USE FACILITIES

### Community Centers & Gymnasiums

Based on input received at the public workshops and from the county wide survey, many Franklin County residents would like to have better access to indoor recreation facilities. The survey respondents indicated the need for high priority investment for indoor fitness and recreation.

The construction and operation of a multi-use recreation center is a significant undertaking, but it is the recommendation of this report that the County explore this option. Many of the stakeholders discussed the importance of providing parks and recreation facilities and programs that will enhance the quality of life of Franklin citizens and attract people and business to the county. The development of better indoor recreation facilities will help give the County the type of park system that will reach that goal.

A recreation center also provides space for classes and programs that can promote healthy lifestyles.

The County should explore all options and partnerships for providing indoor recreation opportunities. The joint use of school facilities may be the best option for providing indoor facilities.

Counties and municipal park and recreation agencies across North Carolina work with school boards to partner in the development of school facilities to be used jointly. Under this scenario, the parks and recreation agency may work jointly with the local school board to develop larger gymnasiums or additional gymnasiums at schools to accommodate non-school recreational use of the facilities. By partnering, both agencies are allowed to realize savings in development cost. Onslow County, Cumberland County, New Hanover County, and many other North Carolina counties have used this approach to build indoor facilities.

### Swimming Pools, Therapy Pools & Spraygrounds

In the past, NRPA and NCRPA provided a standard for pool development of one pool for every 20,000 people. This standard was based on the concept of multi-neighborhood or community pools. Today, with the high cost of operation and construction of swimming pools, very few agencies develop neighborhood/community pools to that old standard. Instead, agencies typically provide more centralized facilities where one pool may serve a greater population.



There are no existing swimming pools in municipal parks; there is a need for 1-2 swimming pools in the county.

Many county Departments in North Carolina do not provide pools or aquatic programs, but instead rely on municipal departments to provide these facilities and programs. Based on the cost of building and operating aquatic facilities, it is recommended the County partner with other municipal agencies to develop swimming pools and aquatic facilities.

Spraygrounds are growing in popularity across the country. In addition to offering a water-based play experience, the play structures, sprays, etc. afford children of all ages a total play environment and are much more economical to operate than a standard swimming pool. A properly designed, large water park sprayground can serve as a regional draw, provide revenue to the County, and provide a beneficial economic impact to the surrounding areas. Based on the popularity of this relatively new recreation facility, the County should consider adding a sprayground at Owens Recreational Park with other spraygrounds being developed by municipalities.

## TRENDS IN PARK & RECREATION FACILITIES

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

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

### Skateboard Parks and Extreme Sports

Skateboarding has been popular for several decades. In the past decade, many communities have recognized its popularity and have tried to provide a safe and vandal resistant setting for this creative sport. There is currently one Skateboard Park in the county (Louisburg). There was little interest in developing additional Skateboard Parks expressed in the survey or the public workshops. At this time, the development of this type of facility does not appear to be a priority.

### Disc Golf

Disc golf received some demand in the survey. Likewise, nationally the popularity of the sport continues to grow. There is currently one disc golf course in the county (Riverbend Park) which is often out of operation when the Tar River floods. Disc golf courses are inexpensive and have minimal impact on the land. The County should consider development of additional disc golf courses in the future in more upland areas like Owens Recreational Park. Disc golf is also gaining popularity for regional tournaments, thus becoming an economic driver as well.

### Off-leash Dog Areas

Off-leash dog areas are one of the newest trends in park development. The popularity of these facilities (also known as Dog Parks), is a response to the nation's love of pets and the increase in apartment/condo living. Communities throughout North Carolina are now constructing Dog Parks.

Dog Parks take many forms, but are primarily a place within a park where park users can bring their dogs to run, walk, and recreate. They usually include a fenced open area (1-5 acres) where dogs, accompanied by their owner, are allowed to run free. Often the off-leash dog area is divided into sections for large and small dogs or in runs that can be rented.

Based on the success of these new facilities, the County may consider development of 1-3 Dog Parks in its parks in the future.



## Community Gardens

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

There are currently no community gardens in public parks within Franklin County.

With the many benefits provided by community gardens, many parks and recreation agencies are implementing community garden programs. Community gardens should be considered in the future.



## Pickleball

One of the fastest growing sports in the region is pickleball. Played on a court similar (but smaller) to a tennis court, this sport uses a paddle and plastic ball. The smaller court and plastic ball makes the sport attractive to seniors, but youth and teenagers are also attracted to the quickness of the game. One pickleball court has been developed in Louisburg. With the rapid increase in popularity of this sport, many recreation departments are encountering community demand to build additional pickleball courts or develop multi-use tennis courts to also accommodate pickleball.







*There is a county-wide need for rectangle fields*

## Section Five

# Action Plan Implementation

### INTRODUCTION

In the previous sections, the County's needs for parks and recreational facilities have been identified. Careful planning and strategic thinking will be required if these needs are to be met. This section will identify funding sources for implementing some of the recommendations of this plan and identify possible strategies for funding the proposed recommendations.

Instrumental to the implementation of this Master Plan is the identification of adequate funding for facility development and improvements. Finding adequate funding for parks and recreation is often difficult with the many financial demands most counties face. Limited budgets place even greater importance on careful planning to meet projected needs.

While the primary focus of previous sections has been on park and facility improvements, physical improvements are only part of the issue as the County strives to offer its citizens quality parks and recreation services. As County leaders plan for the future, they should also consider a number of operational and management issues that will position them to meet county wide needs. This section reviews some of those issues.

This section will look at a Capital Improvements Plan for addressing recommendations found in Section Four and provide a strategy for raising funds to construct the proposed improvements and new facilities. Implementing the recommendations made in this Master Plan will result in meeting the future needs for parks, recreation services, and facilities. If the needs identified in this report are to be met, the County must

establish adequate budgets for projected staffing, operations and maintenance costs, and for capital improvements for parks, recreation, and senior centers. This Action Plan is designed to give County staff viable options to help finance the proposals and recommendations of this Master Plan.

## REVENUE PLAN

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



## KEY FUNDING/REVENUE SOURCES

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

### General Tax Revenues (operational & capital)

General tax revenues traditionally provide the prin-

cipal source of funds for general operations and maintenance of municipal and county parks and recreation departments. Recreation, as a public service, is scheduled along with health, public safety, schools, etc. in annual budgets established by the governing authority. Assessed valuation of real and personal property provides the framework for this major portion of the tax base. This tax base is then used to fund the majority of county services. Currently, funding for parks and recreation services is a relatively small portion of the County's overall budget. If the County wishes to enhance the quality of life and healthy lifestyle opportunities for its residents, the current level of funding for parks and recreation should be increased.

### Park Foundation (operational & capital)

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

As an example, Partners for Parks, a Mecklenburg County based foundation, is committed to the development of Regional Parks; including parks in the Mecklenburg County region. Partners for Parks is a good example of a foundation developed to support a facility or project. The County should explore ways to work with a Partners for Parks or a similar organization should be established specifically for Franklin County.

### General Foundations (operational & capital)

Another source of revenue is the direct contribution of money from state and national General Foundations. Foundation funds should be sought for both development and construction of facilities as well as providing programs. Funding sources should include general-purpose foundations that have relatively few restrictions, special program foundations for spe-

cific activities, and corporate foundations with local connections.

### **Foundations with Emphasis on Conservation, Healthy Lifestyles & Parks**

Franklin County is in a position to receive grant funding from a wide variety of public foundations and trusts. Below is a list of funding sources that are particularly applicable and available in the county:

- The Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust has been instrumental in funding projects in North Carolina. Their focus is to improve the quality of life and health.
- The Trust for Public Land and NC Rails-Trail have been instrumental in providing financial and technical assistance for open space conservation and development of greenways in North Carolina.
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) is the nation's largest philanthropic organization devoted specifically to the public's health. RWJF promotes change through partnerships and collaboration, with the goal of building a culture of health for all Americans. RWJF generally supports public agencies, universities, and public charities that are tax-exempt.
- W.K. Kellogg Foundation places optimal development of children at the center of all of their grants. They concentrate on early childhood development within the context of families and communities. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation's areas of focus are: educated kids, healthy kids, secure families, community and civic engagement, and racial equity.
- KaBOOM! is a national non-profit dedicated to providing play opportunities for America's children. 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.
- 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.

- Playworks Grants Database is a good resource for grants. Examples found within this database are:
- The philanthropic arm of Safeway Groceries which established the Safeway Foundation to support non-profits whose mission is aligned with the company's priority areas; hunger relief, education, health and human services and assisting people with disabilities. The Safeway Foundation offers grants up to \$25,000.
- Cigna Health through its Cigna Foundation supports organizations that enhance health in individuals, families and communities. They offer grants up to \$5,000.
- Home Depot, through its Community Impact Grants Program, offers grants up to \$5,000 to non-profits that use volunteers to improve community health.
- People For Bikes provides a community grant program that provides grants up to \$10,000 to improve infrastructure and programs that make it easier and safer for people of all ages and abilities to bike.

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

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

### **General Obligation Bonds (capital)**

General tax revenue for parks and recreation are usually devoted to current operations and maintenance of existing facilities. General obligation bonds are often used to finance capital improvements in



parks. The State of North Carolina gives municipal and county governments the authority to accomplish this borrowing of funds for parks and recreation through the issuance of bonds not to exceed the total cost of improvements (including land acquisition). For purposes of paying the debt service on the sale of these bonds, government bodies are often required to increase property taxes. Total bonding capacities for these government agencies are limited to a maximum percentage of assessed property valuation.

Franklin County has not used this method of financing park improvements in the past. In view of the recommended capital improvements suggested in this plan, borrowing of funds to acquire new land and develop facilities may be a consideration. Response from the county wide survey indicated there may be support for additional spending to develop parks.

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

### **Revenue Bonds (capital)**

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

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

### **Limited Option or Special Use Tax (capital)**

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

The County currently levies an occupancy tax on hotel rooms and other rental accommodations to help fund travel and tourism operation and promote local tourism. Many travel and tourism authorities throughout North Carolina utilize this funding source to make improvements to recreation facilities that attract tourists. This funding source could be considered in the development of athletic fields, trails and river access, or equestrian facilities that might enhance tourism.

### **Federal and State Assistance (capital)**

Federal funding sources are available to assist financing capital improvement recommendations found in this plan. One of the oldest park funding sources has been available from the U.S. Park Service's Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Unfortunately, funding through this program has been sporadic over the past few years.

Other potential federal funding sources are the National Foundation of Arts and Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).

The North Carolina General Assembly passed a bill in 1994 creating a consistent source of funds for parks and recreation in the state. The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) provides money for

capital improvements, repairs, renovations, and land acquisition of state and local parks. Originally, revenues from the state's portion of the real estate deed transfer tax support the fund. Revenues vary from year to year. The structure of this funding source has recently gone through changes based on legislative action. While the funding structure for this fund has changed, it appears PARTF will continue to fund park and recreation facilities in North Carolina.

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

PARTF and LWCF funds have been used by the County and their municipalities to build parks. Franklin County, Louisburg, Youngsville and Bunn have all been recipients of PARTF grants since 2000.

- Franklin County – Franklinton Park (2000)
- Franklin County – Pilot Lions Park (2007)
- Franklin County – Pilot Lions Park (2008)
- Louisburg – Joyner Park (2001)
- Louisburg – Joyner Park Phase II (2016)
- Youngsville – Luddy Recreational Facility (2007)
- Bunn – Bunn Community Park (2019)

In the future, the County should consider applying for funds through this program on a regular basis.

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

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

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

An excellent source to find government grants is on the website [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). This website clearing house provides information for all federal grants. Grant opportunities exist in the following categories:

Community Development  
Environment  
Health  
Natural Resources  
Transportation

Any of these categories could have grants that could be used to develop programs and facilities for parks.



## User Fees (operational)

User fees are often charged by departments to offset operational cost, and (occasionally) provide funding for the construction of facilities. Every agency must establish its philosophy with regard to cost recovery through the use of fees. The County has historically charged fees for some facilities and programs, but these fees have typically not been set to cover the total operational cost of the program and have never been used to finance construction of facilities.

Currently, Franklin County Parks and Recreation charges the following fees:

• Youth Leagues	\$30 (per player)
• Youth Camps	\$30 (per camper)
• Adults Softball	\$350 (per team)
• Adult Kickball	\$250 (per team)
• Adult Volleyball	\$250 (per team)
• Ball Field Rental	\$10 (per hour)
• Shelter Rental	\$10 (per hour)

Ultimately, the County 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.

Many of the proposed facilities in this Master Plan are outdoors (playgrounds, open space, athletic facilities, etc.) and offer only limited opportunity for cost recovery. There may be some areas where greater cost recovery could be achieved. Examples may include rental fees for shelters, fields, etc. or for requiring permits for dog parks, disc golf, etc.

## Revenue Opportunities

- User fees are not the only means of generating revenue. The County is currently utilizing many revenue generating opportunities, but should always be looking for new ways to generate revenue. Some of these opportunities include:
- Sponsorships from local private businesses.

Sponsorships typically come in the form of products, events, programs, cause-related, and in-kind. Sponsorships can also take the form of naming rights for a facility or program. Sponsorship or naming agreements should include very specific details related to sponsorship cost, duration, use of promotional materials, etc.

- Grant applications from local foundations, state and federal agencies, or individuals are typically created by staff. Most grants take time to prepare and require coordination effort with other agencies or departments from within the community to create a quality submittal. Grants also require extensive tracking of expenditures and outcomes for attaining future funding.
- Partnerships are a relatively new method of sharing funding resources to provide services. These partnerships can be formed with a wide variety of other public or private agencies. Many times the partners are two or more government agencies. Through these partnerships, the County receives direct benefit in either facility use, programming assistance, or volunteer man hours. All of these benefits add value and help offset cost; thus creating earned income. This earned income requires both agencies to have common visions, values, and goals for the partnership to be successful. Examples of partnerships include:
- Church facilities for recreation services. Several churches or religious organizations in the county are providing recreation facilities and programs.
- Youth sports associations are an important partner in organizing and programming many youth sports in the county.
- Trail sponsors that adopt sections of trails for maintenance and cleanup.
- Adopt-a-park partners that help maintain park lands. These sponsors are typically in the form of neighborhood associations and businesses that are in proximity to parks.
- School partnerships where both partners invest in the development of facilities and programs based on shared use of facilities and staff. This investment may be financial, or may include other means of support. A partnership with Louisburg College could be very advantageous



to both parties in terms of recreational space and programming.

- Municipal partnerships with Louisburg, Franklinton, Youngsville, and Bunn as well as adjacent County agencies to share in land acquisition, development funding for park and recreation development as well as staffing.
- Special event partners that assist with the development of community-wide events.
- Program partners who assist in providing services to the community.
- Advertising and licensing in programs, facilities, and events sponsored by the County. The County could leverage highly exposed advertising space to businesses willing to pay a fee for the right to advertise.
- Volunteer development programs can reduce staff costs. Volunteers can create advocacy and bring down the cost of programs and services.
- Privatizing the development of facilities or services is an opportunity that is used by some departments when they are unable to control the cost of labor and are unable to find the needed capital to develop a recreational facility or a concession operation. This gives the government agency a management tool to create an asset or improve a service without tapping into their own resources. Facilities that are typically considered for privatization include golf courses, marinas, camping and RV facilities, boat rentals, bike rentals, equipment rentals, and other forms of concessions.
- Marketing strategies are an important component in developing untapped revenue opportunities. Promotional activities improve awareness of the activities provided by the County and assist in bringing more revenue to the system by filling programs and facilities.

## METHODS FOR LAND ACQUISITION & DEDICATION

In order to meet the needs identified in this report, the County will need to expand its park and recre-

ational lands, and there will be a need for future land acquisition. Methods available for acquiring the land include the following:

### Fee Simple Purchase

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

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

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

### Long-Term Option

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

### First Right of Purchase

This approach to acquiring land eliminates the need

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

## Land Trust

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

The County does not have to go through the time and expense of setting up a land trust to utilize this vehicle for land donation or conservation. The Tar River Land Conservancy is the established land trust in the county. The County could partner with them to provide protection of valuable open space without creating a new entity.

## Donations

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

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

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

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

## Life Estate

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

## Easement

The most common type of less-than-fee interest in land is an easement. Property ownership may be viewed as a combination of rights. With this under-

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

### Zoning/Subdivision Regulations

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

A detailed evaluation of all subdivision ordinances for each of the municipalities in the county, as well as the County's subdivision regulations, should be made. Wherever feasible, subdivision regulations should include some provisions for the dedication of land for open space or recreational use. Care should be taken in developing any regulation requiring such dedication. Subdivision requirements should include terminology to ensure the permitting agency has the authority to review and approve any land dedicated as public open space or for recreational use to ensure it is usable for such purposes. Likewise, dedication ordinances should have a provision for payment in lieu to eliminate the dedication of property too small to provide community benefits or unsuitable for park development.

## PARK FACILITIES AS ECONOMIC DEVELOPERS

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

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

Through investing in parks and recreation facilities, county officials can ensure that Franklin County provides the quality of life that helps attract new businesses, enhances real estate values, and provides an attractive option to the retirement community.

There are many opportunities for economic impact in Franklin County through tourism. Community



leaders have recognized the potential for this economic impact by establishing the Franklin County Tourism Development Authority. This organization is actively engaged in bringing visitors to Franklin County.

John Crompton lists the following opportunities for tourist attractions:

### ***Tournament Sports***

Softball  
Soccer  
Baseball  
Basketball

### ***Arts***

Theaters  
Art Galleries  
Museums  
Performing groups, Music  
Concerts

### ***Heritage Places***

Ethnic cultural places  
Shrines/churches  
Historical sites and structures  
Educational institutions  
Industry factory tours

### ***Parks***

National  
State  
Regional  
Local  
Beaches  
Theme parks  
Recreation  
Events and festivals  
Aquatic and coastal areas  
Outdoor recreation (e.g., camping, fishing, hunting)

### ***Arenas***

College sports  
Professional franchises  
Concerts and exhibitions

Some of these activities and facilities are already found within the County. Many of these potential tourism attractions are in the public realm or are a public/private venture.



*Athletic tournaments attract tourism*

## **OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

County leadership must also address some of the operational issues that will face the Department in the coming decade. These issues relate to the manpower and organizational changes that will be required as the County adds new parks/facilities. These recommendations address some of the critical operational issues the Department needs to identify as it expands the facilities and services it provides.

An important aspect of these planning recommendations is to develop a vision for the Department to improve park, recreation, and senior opportunities for county residents. Ultimately, the provision of better parks and recreational programs includes both facility improvements and establishing a method of delivery of services. Currently, the County is lim-

ited in the resources it directs to this mission. If the County is to improve the quality of parks, recreation, and senior services offered, it will be required to add staff to manage/operate facilities and provide services.

### Staff Needs

Action on the recommendations found in this Master Plan will expand the County's parks and facilities. The development of a new park, the construction of a new recreation facilities, and the expansion of trails will require additional staff to maintain, operate and program these new facilities. While the development of a true operation and maintenance program for these future facilities is beyond the scope of this Master Plan, the County should plan to add the following positions to effectively operate the future facilities:

Assistant Director  
Park Supervisor  
Program/Events Coordinator  
New grounds crews (1 foreman, 2 laborers)  
Seasonal park staff  
Community Center staff

It is important that the County plan and budget for adequate staff positions for any new facilities that are constructed. Likewise, as these new facilities come on line, the County should actively seek the highest level of programming staff with strong educational experience in the various areas of park and recreation administration.

### Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

Franklin County currently has a 7-member Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB) that meets every other month to discuss issues pertaining to parks and recreation. Using the mission, goals and objectives listed at the beginning of Section Four, the PRAB should work with the Parks and Recreation Department to assist with making sure these ideals are met. It is recommended that the PRAB prepare an annual work plan from which the PRAB can work with staff to meet future and recreational development and services. An example work plan is provided in Appendix C.

### Operational Costs

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

### Greener Operation

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

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

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



Promoting recycling is one initiative to reduce waste

## CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

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

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

	10-Year Total
Existing Parks Renovations/Improvements	\$1,210,000
Land Acquisition	\$2,500,000
New Park/Facility Development	\$15,070,000
Greenway Development	\$2,772,000
Special Use Facilities	\$1,155,000
Greenway Master Plan	\$65,000
Total Capital Improvement Budget	\$22,772,000

Table 5-1 “Capital Improvements Plan” shows the costs associated with the capital improvement program. The table reflects the proposals and recommendations as outlined in Section Four of this Master Plan. (See Table 5-1 at the end of the section)

## TEN YEAR PRIORITY PROJECTS

Recognizing that this is a vision plan for a county wide park system, County staff and elected officials must prioritize the recommendations in this document based on the public’s input and staff review. The following park development initiatives should be considered as a priority in the next ten years:

- Renovations/upgrades to existing parks
- ADA improvements to existing parks
- Development of multi-use Community Center
- Acquisition of land for a new Park(s) in the southwest, north and northeast areas of the County
- Construction of 3-5 miles of greenway
- Development of a dog park
- Development of a sprayground

## MASTER PLAN FUNDING STRATEGY

This Master Plan identifies a Vision Plan for park development in Franklin County. It is understood that not all of the recommendations will be acted upon over the next decade. The County will ultimately have to prioritize the steps they will take to meet some of these park and recreation needs. It will require a combination of revenue sources to accomplish the recommendations of the Master Plan. There are numerous combinations of funding strategies that can be explored and implemented. Upon careful analysis of past budget documents, current practices, available resources, and national trends, an example of a funding strategy is presented as one possible strategy.

### General Funds

Allocations from the General Fund will need to



increase to pay for operation of future facilities and programs. As noted previously in this section, the proposed facility improvements will require a number of added staff positions. As new staff positions are required, the annual operating budget must be increased. This additional per capita funding could fund the majority of future operational costs, but will not provide the funding required for capital improvements.

In addition to this increased operational spending, the County should begin budgeting for capital improvements projects on an annual basis. Annual allocations of \$500,000 to capital improvements over the next ten years could provide \$5 million in funds for capital projects and provide valuable matching funds for grants.

### General Obligation Bonds

General Obligation Bonds could be used for major renovations and to acquire and develop new parks and recreation facilities. A successful bond campaign for park improvements in the next ten years could generate \$5-10 million for construction and acquisitions. This would represent a significant portion of funds needed for the proposed capital improvements budget. These funds can be dedicated to funding the larger park development and making major park improvements. As noted earlier in this section (General Obligation Bonds, page 5-3), this level of bond sales will likely result in the need for additional tax revenues to pay for the debt service created by the sale of these bonds.

### Revenues & User Charges

One strategy to accomplish the goals of this plan is to price services based on the value and benefits received by the participants beyond those of all taxpayers. Increasing the number of participants using the facilities and programs will increase revenue opportunities. A good time to price services to their value and benefits is after new facilities are constructed or when facilities have been renovated to enhance a participant's recreational experience. A proposed user charge revenue strategy designed

to recoup a good percentage of program cost could be considered. This will create more revenue and capacity opportunities for the program needs of the County.

Currently, revenues and user charges account for a portion of the operating budget. As facilities are developed, the County should consider a fee structure that will allow greater net revenue to be realized. Assuming the level of funding can increase, it could generate \$75,000 to \$100,000 annually, providing as much as a million dollars in increased income over the next ten years that can be used for operating new facilities developed as recommended in this plan.

### Partnerships & Gifts

The County should work to develop a park foundation to explore ways to raise sponsorships and gifts. This non-profit organization can engage private citizens and corporations to donate money and in-kind services for use for parks and recreational services. Through active involvement with a park foundation, the County may be able to raise \$75,000 - \$100,000 in funds annually. This could result in donations of as much as a million dollars over the next ten years. This level of funding would require the creation of a park foundation to become an active organization within the county.

### Sponsorships & Naming Rights

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

### Grants

As noted previously, grant funding has been an important resource for funding parks throughout the county. The County will need to renew those efforts to explore grants such as LWCF, PARTF, SAFTEA, clean water grants, etc. In addition to the grants focused on typical park development, the County

should explore grants offered by foundations to improve and expand facilities. Active pursuit of these funding sources could provide several million dollars in funds for capital improvements over the next ten years.

## Overview

Together, these funding options could be used to raise millions of dollars of development capital over the next decade. It may be unrealistic to assume the County can fund ±\$23 million of park improvements in the next ten years, but actively pursuing the options that are available should provide funding for many of the needs listed in this Master Plan. Through the continued use of this document, County staff and elected officials can identify and prioritize community needs and actively seek funds to meet those needs over the next ten (or more) years.

**Table 5-1**  
**Franklin County Parks & Recreation Department**  
**Parks and Recreation Master Plan**  
**Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) (10 Years)**

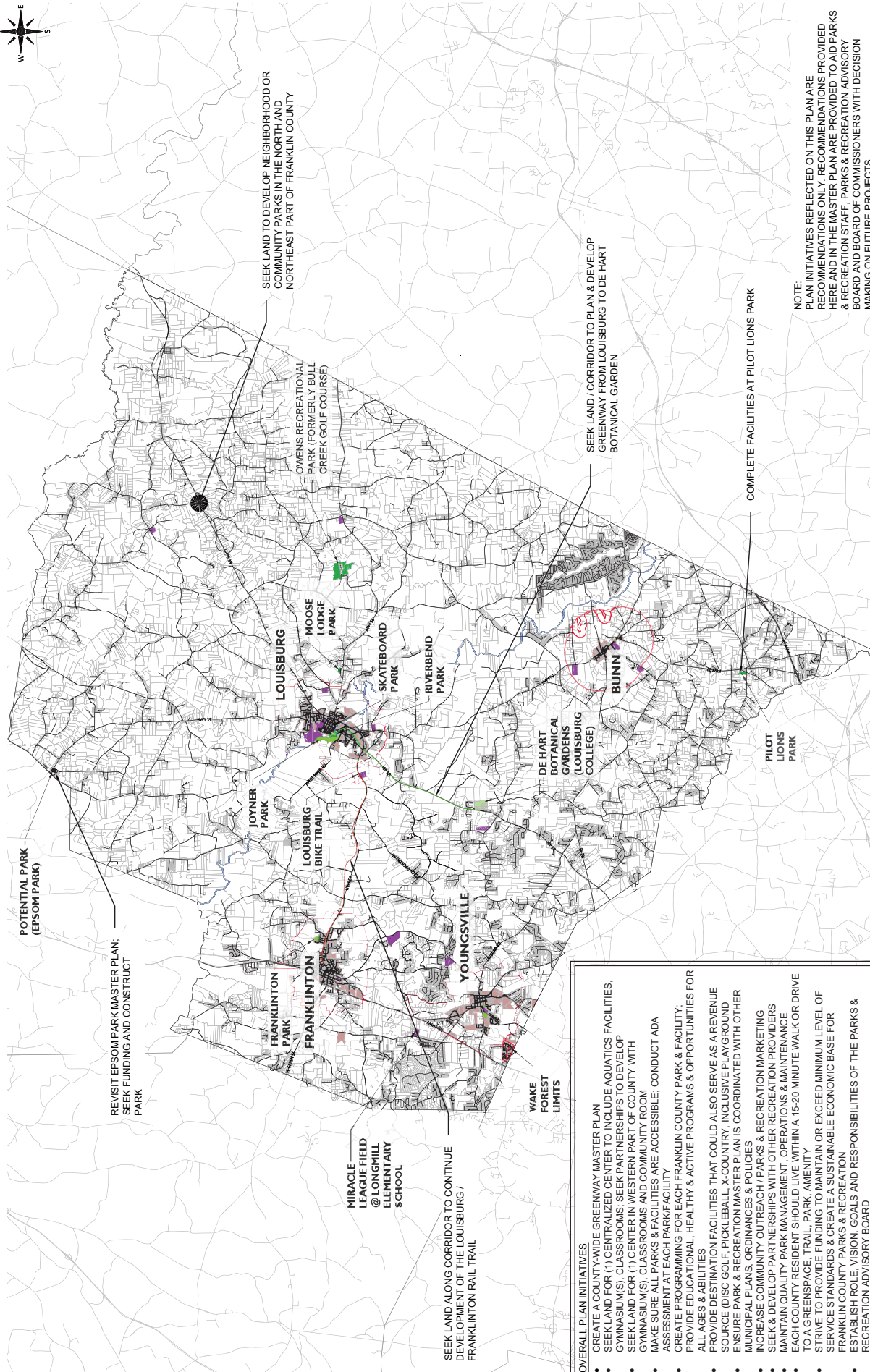
<b><u>Capital Improvement &amp; Land Acquisition</u></b>	<b><u>10-Year Total</u></b>	<b><u>2019-2023</u></b>	<b><u>2024-2028</u></b>
<b>Existing Parks Renovations/Improvements</b>			
Franklinton Park	\$500,000	\$300,000	\$200,000
Pilot Lions Park	\$375,000	\$375,000	\$0
Moose Lodge Park	\$125,000	\$50,000	\$75,000
Owens Recreation Park (Phase 2)	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$0
Planning & Design (10%)	\$110,000	<u>\$82,500</u>	<u>\$27,500</u>
<b>Renovations/Improvements Total</b>	<b>\$1,210,000</b>	<b>\$907,500</b>	<b>\$302,500</b>
<b>Land Acquisition</b>			
Northeast Area Park	\$650,000	\$375,000	\$275,000
Epsom Park (3 AC)	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$0
De Hart Greenway Corridor	\$200,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
Community Center (Central)	\$650,000	\$150,000	\$500,000
Community Center (West)	\$500,000	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$500,000</u>
<b>Land Acquisition Total</b>	<b>\$2,500,000</b>	<b>\$1,125,000</b>	<b>\$1,375,000</b>
<b>Park/Facility Development</b>			
Epsom Park (North)	\$2,200,000	\$2,200,000	\$0
Northeast Area Park	\$1,500,000	\$0	\$1,500,000
Southwest Area Park	\$3,000,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000
Community Center (Central)	\$7,000,000	\$3,500,000	\$3,500,000
Community Center (West)	\$0	\$0	\$0
Planning & Design (10%)	<u>\$1,370,000</u>	<u>\$720,000</u>	<u>\$650,000</u>
<b>Park/Facility Development Total</b>	<b>\$15,070,000</b>	<b>\$7,920,000</b>	<b>\$7,150,000</b>
<b>Greenway Development</b>			
De Hart Greenway	\$1,000,000	\$750,000	\$200,000
Louisburg/Franklinton Rail Trail	\$1,500,000	\$750,000	\$750,000
Natural Trail Development	\$70,000	\$35,000	\$35,000
Planning & Design (10%)	<u>\$252,000</u>	<u>\$153,500</u>	<u>\$98,500</u>
<b>Greenway Development Total</b>	<b>\$2,772,000</b>	<b>\$1,688,500</b>	<b>\$1,083,500</b>
<b>Special Use Facilities</b>			
New Dog Park	\$50,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
New Splash Pad	\$1,000,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
Planning & Design (10%)	<u>\$105,000</u>	<u>\$52,500</u>	<u>\$52,500</u>
<b>Special Use Facilities Total</b>	<b>\$1,155,000</b>	<b>\$577,500</b>	<b>\$577,500</b>
<b>Comprehensive Greenway Master Plan</b>	<b>\$65,000</b>	<b>\$65,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Total Capital Improvement Budget Cost</b>	<b>\$22,772,000</b>	<b>\$12,283,500</b>	<b>\$10,488,500</b>





# Franklin County Parks & Recreation| Parks and Recreation Recommended Priorities (2019-2028)

05.02.2019







# Appendices







