

**BLACK MOUNTAIN RECREATION AND PARKS DEPARTMENT  
2025 MASTER PLAN**

**Presented to:**

**THE TOWN OF BLACK MOUNTAIN, NORTH CAROLINA**

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**Recreation Commission, 1998 – 2003  
Town of Black Mountain**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Master Plan Purpose

Black Mountain prepared a recreation study in 1992; however, it was not a “comprehensive recreation and park master plan”. In order to assist the department in meeting their mission statement, the current Recreation Commission recognized the need to develop an updated master plan to assess current and future recreational needs of the community and develop a strategy for the provision of recreational services (see Mission Statement, Appendix A). The Board of Aldermen of the Town of Black Mountain supported this need for a plan through a resolution approved in May, 1998 (see Resolution, Appendix B). The first Master plan was adopted in March of 2004.

The objective of the planning process is to provide the Town of Black Mountain with an accurate, usable plan to guide its actions and decisions concerning the improvements and development of its parks and recreation system for the next 10 years. This plan, which will take us through the year 2025, will be reviewed and updated annually.

### Goals and Objectives

Identifying goals and objectives assists in developing a basic framework for formulating and implementing the Master Plan. Goals and objectives also represent the Master Plan’s understanding of the community’s desires, and it serves as a basis for developing recreation policies and planning decisions.

Goal: To provide the citizens, elected officials, and staff of Black Mountain with a 10-year plan for parks, recreation, and open space that adequately addresses the recreational needs of all citizens within the community, regardless of age, sex, race, disability, or income.

#### Objectives:

- To involve the public throughout the planning and implementation process by soliciting input regarding their recreational wants and needs.
- To develop a Master Plan that is responsive to the town’s projected population characteristics and is flexible to meet changing needs of the public. An annual review will be conducted by the Recreation Commission who will report findings to the Aldermen. The Master Plan will be updated and revised as needed.
- To sufficiently assess and analyze the town’s existing, proposed, and potential recreation and park facilities.
- To develop a Master Plan that provides a structure for orderly and consistent policy development and decision making as related to park, recreation, and open space issues.
- To develop a Master Plan that can be utilized as a management tool for administering resources for programs and facilities.
- To identify mechanisms for the funding of existing and proposed recreational facilities and programs.
- To develop alternative methods for joint use of public land including right-of-ways, reservoirs, buildings, etc.
- To ensure the Master Plan recommendations are developed to protect and enhance the quality of life for present and future citizens of Black Mountain and surrounding areas.

### **Evaluation of Facility Needs**

The numbers of public facilities needed in Black Mountain through the planning period (2015-2025) are identified in Table 6 of the Needs Assessment. Based upon the standards, needs for additional facilities include:

- More Sidewalks and Walking Trails
- Picnic Pavilions
- Year Round Restroom Facilities
- Greenways
- More Community Garden Space
- Bike Trails and Bike Lanes
- Another Dog Park
- Fishing Facilities
- Greenhouse
- Outdoor Basketball Courts
- Outdoor Kitchen
- Campground
- Tennis Courts
- Indoor Basketball Courts
- Baseball Fields

### **Park Proposals and Recommendations**

Sections 3 and 4 of this plan summarize the existing and future needs of Black Mountain. The following proposals and recommendations are aimed at meeting those park needs.

1. A regional park should not be provided by the Town of Black Mountain.
2. The Town needs to provide a district park for residents. A district park is 75 or more acres in size and should provide picnic area with group shelters, campground with at least 30 individual sites and 1 group campsite, nature trails, outdoor amphitheater, and possibly an outdoor environmental education center.

A feasibility study should be made to determine if the Town's watershed property can be developed into a park without affecting the wells located on the property. This property should only be considered as a developed park if it is revenue producing.

At a minimum, this property should be opened up as a low-impact nature park with nature trails and hiking trails. This type of park could also be revenue producing by issuing season passes for the right to use the property.

If this property cannot be developed, the Town should look for another large tract of land that can be developed.

3. The Town currently owns two community parks (Lake Tomahawk and Recreation Park) and needs a third. A community park is approximately 25 acres and should include, at a minimum, 2 softball/baseball fields, 1 soccer field, and a group picnic shelter.
4. A total of four neighborhood parks are needed. The Town currently has two, Carver and Cragmont. Two additional neighborhood parks are needed.

The Carver property includes several acres that are not developed. A feasibility study should be conducted of the building and property to determine the best plan for its use as a recreation and park facility. This site could be the site for additional indoor and/or outdoor basketball courts. This site

also has a need to be better connected to the surrounding neighborhood by greenways, walking trails or sidewalks.

The Cragmont property includes an outdoor basketball court and tennis court. The park needs a restroom. Complaints have been received about the basketball court being too close to the tennis court and about gravel from the parking lot being thrown onto the tennis courts. In keeping with the recreational activities found in a neighborhood park, this park should be considered for re-design and could include additional tennis courts, lighted for night-time use, a fitness trail, and a large playground to turn it into more of a destination park.

Since the above parks are relatively close together, one of the new parks should be north of downtown and one should be located east of NC 9/Montreat Road.

5. The Town needs five mini-parks. A Mini-park includes playgrounds, tot lots, and personal play or reflection spaces. These parks should be located within a ¼ mile radius of the population they serve. They usually do not include parking spaces, although one or two spaces may be appropriate. Generally, they should be accessible by sidewalk or a greenway system. BMRP currently maintains one mini-park, RiverWalk Park. The Town has recently acquired a mini-park sized property along Flat Creek. This property should be considered as a potential park for seniors or others for reflective/quiet space and possibly for a fishing station for use by physically challenged citizens.
6. A playground should be located in each park, both currently owned and those to be developed.
7. A greenway system should be developed that connects all parks and that connects Black Mountain and Montreat. With the development of the In-the-Oaks property by Montreat College, the Town should partner with the college to develop a greenway/walking path between the Recreation Park and Cragmont and Lake Tomahawk Parks.

The adopted Greenway Master Plan formulated by the Greenways Commission provides detailed information on the need for linear parks and the paths proposed are recommended in this plan.

8. A new recreation center is needed. This center would be for all citizens, but especially for our youth and senior populations. This center should include a gymnasium with one or two basketball courts, an indoor tennis court, two or three classrooms, a meeting room with adjacent kitchen, and an auditorium/performance theater.

### **Priorities for development**

The needs as listed in the previous section will not be met within the framework of this ten year plan. However, even if a need cannot be met, preliminary studies or planning can begin. Based on the input received through public meetings and through discussion with recreation and parks professionals, and through discussion with town staff, the following needs are listed in priority order:

1. Land acquisition to begin positioning for future needs within the Town of Black Mountain. Land acquisition should include areas both large and small to fill voids in service as suggested in the prior section. Land acquisition should be considered for expanding existing parks as well as development of new ones.
2. Continue to develop the greenway system to tie all of the town's parks together through a series of walking and biking paths. This will enable our youth to access all facilities without having to travel along vehicular pathways.
3. Develop mini-parks and put playgrounds at each existing park. Five mini-parks are needed. A mini-park should be located within ¼ mile of each town resident. Playgrounds are currently needed at Recreation Park and Cragmont Park.

These top priority items need to be completed as soon as possible and certainly within the next five years. Planning for the following items should begin within the next five years and be accomplished within fifteen years.

Develop existing town owned properties into neighborhood parks. These undeveloped park properties include the Black Mountain Recreation Park and the under-developed Cragmont Park property. These parks should include open play spaces, picnic shelters, playground, reflective spaces, and walking paths.

**Action Plan Implementation**

This Master Plan is based upon an inventory of background information, an analysis of the existing system, the identification of user needs, and national and state recreation standards. Instrumental to implementation of the recommendations of this plan is the identification of adequate funding. Funding estimates are listed below. Estimates for items in the current capital improvement plan (Appendix D) are based upon today’s dollar value. Estimates for items in the proposed recommendations are based on a Class C engineering estimate or a planning stage estimate.

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

**For Existing & Proposed Programs/Parks (2014-2025):**

Facilities Renovation	\$ 300,000
Equipment Needs	\$ 110,000
Greenways	\$1,400,000
New Construction	<u>\$2,100,000</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,900,000</b>

In addition to the above, there is a current need for additional staff, a supervisor of community programs/cultural resources, a park and recreation maintenance division, and one evening park rangers with law enforcement authority. The plan proposal, if fully implemented, will also increase staffing. However, this cannot adequately be determined until it is known exactly what facilities and programs will be developed. Some aspects of the plan can be accomplished without additional staffing.

**Summary – Economic Impact of Recreation and Parks**

Research concerning the economic importance of public recreation has not been well documented. These services can be difficult to measure on a monetary basis and seldom receive much attention in terms of their impact on a community. Public recreation is not bought and sold in the same manner as the services provided by private resorts and clubs. As such, there are no formal indices for measuring the volume of trade generated at public parks.

In a Fortune magazine study, nearly 50 % of the largest 1000 US corporations look at recreational opportunities in an area before deciding on relocation.

Recent surveys have concluded that parks provide a positive economic impact within a community. The US Forest Service has conducted a study in North Carolina that indicates parks do contribute considerably to the economic conditions of a region. In addition, outdoor recreation, including open space areas, is an especially attractive economic development alternative. In addition to creating new jobs and income, the impacts of park and recreation enriches the quality of life by providing leisure opportunities.

## 1. MASTER PLAN PURPOSE STATEMENT WITH GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### Introduction

Black Mountain Recreation and Parks Department has had a prepared recreation facilities and programs master plan since March of 2004. Many changes have occurred over that time in terms of expanded development and increased population. The area has had little population growth during the past decade. Statistics show that the area has grown 40% since 1980. New development has created more demand for public services such as new sewer, water, schools, roads, and recreation opportunities. Demand for recreational opportunities has also increased throughout the State of North Carolina, dramatically changing the role of county and municipal governments as providers of recreational services.

Planning for recreational services and open space is as significant for a community as planning for transportation systems, utilities, and education. The continued development of Black Mountain, Black Mountain Township, and surrounding townships will make it increasingly difficult to acquire new “community” properties and open space for recreational purposes. The major benefits of planning ahead include:

- Promotion of civic pride and sense of community unity.
- Enhancement of the community’s ability to attract new business and industry. In turn, the expanding tax base will assist in supporting recreation.
- Identification of quality recreational facilities and programs that will enhance the well being for all citizens in an era marked with increased stress at home and at work.
- Identification of and protection for open spaces and environmentally sensitive areas.
- Promotion of social interaction among diverse individuals and groups through like interests in recreation.
- Competitiveness in acquiring grant funding. The push for lower taxes and decreased funding for municipalities has made the competition for grants and state funding extremely competitive. Approved master plans are now required for funding consideration by outside providers.

### Master Plan Purpose

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### Location

The Town of Black Mountain is located within the Township of Black Mountain and comprises approximately 64% of the township’s population of 12,599 residents. The Town of Montreat also lies within the township and comprises an additional 723 residents. Black Mountain is the eastern most incorporated town in Buncombe County and is surrounded by Montreat to the North and Swannanoa to the West, with a population of 10,381. The county seat of Asheville is located 15 miles to the west. The county provides an outdoor swimming pool within the Owen School District and two small community parks in Swannanoa. With only intermittent monetary support from the county through grants, the Town of Black Mountain is the main provider of recreational services for eastern Buncombe County and its 23,260 recorded residents.

## Goals and Objectives

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## 2. CURRENT AND PROJECTED COMMUNITY FACTORS

### Introduction

The current and projected community factors pertinent to Black Mountain are divided into two categories: natural factors and cultural factors. Natural factors take into consideration physiographic features, water resources, and unique natural areas. Cultural factors include existing land use, future land use, transportation, economy, and population trends and projections.

### Natural Factors

#### Physiographic Features

Black Mountain is located in the upper Swannanoa River Valley and is surrounded to the east, south, and north by mountain ranges. The topographic character of the area is composed of wide and often abrupt variations due to ravines created by drainage courses that lead from the higher elevations to the river and its major tributaries. The mountainous nature of the area makes the flatter lands most desirable for all types of development including residential, commercial, industrial, and recreational development.

The soils found along major streams and rivers can accommodate recreational facilities if design allows for flood control. These soils cannot accommodate residential or commercial development. Soils in the rolling interior basin (between the floodplain and the mountain slopes) can accommodate recreational development as well as residential and commercial development. The slopes can accommodate recreational development that is low impact in nature such as hiking trails. The slopes can accommodate residential development up to the point where slopes exceed 25%. [Source: APRD Master Plan]

#### Water Resources

Water resources fall into two categories: that which is used for drinking water and that which can be used for recreational purposes. In many areas, these are often one and the same.

In North Carolina, watershed regulations for the protection of drinking water are state-mandated. Watersheds are classified based upon the amount of development allowed. The essence of these regulations is to maintain or increase the quality of potable water supplies by limiting development of impervious areas within a particular area of the watershed. The amount of built upon area allowed varies with the watershed classification and the distance the development is from the reservoir site. Although Black Mountain still has a reservoir, the water is not used as a source of potable water. Potable water is obtained from fifteen wells that are scattered throughout the town.

The watershed lands surrounding the reservoir contain ten of the town's wells. Regional and state water authorities have indicated that these lands might also be used for recreational purposes ranging from low impact fishing, picnicking, and hiking to more moderate impact of rental cabins and camp sites.

Other watersheds within the township include the Montreat watershed and the Asheville watershed. The Montreat watershed is available in certain areas for low impact recreation such as hiking. The Asheville watershed is not available for recreational purposes.

The major stream running through town is Flat Creek. Flat Creek arises in the Montreat area of the township and flows southward into Black Mountain proper where it makes a westerly turn. It joins the North Fork of the Swannanoa just west of the town limits to form the Swannanoa River. Flat Creek is available for recreational purposes in many areas. It is accessible for fishing. A path in Recreation Park runs along the stream allowing access for fishing, picnicking, quiet reflection/meditation, and play within the waters.

A major recreational water source within Black Mountain is Lake Tomahawk, the central feature of Lake Tomahawk Park. This 4.5 acre lake is surrounded by a walking path which includes fishing docks,

benches, and other recreational amenities. The lake is available on a limited basis for non-motorized boating.

Another recreational water source within Black Mountain Township is located within the Town of Montreat and is known as Lake Susan. Lake Susan also has a walking path around it with benches and is available for limited, non-motorized boating. Lake Susan impounds one-half acre.

### Environment Open Spaces

Concern for protecting the environment is increasingly important to the general public as information on preservation, conservation, and protection is more readily available and understood. More people are concerned with the physical and aesthetic issues that demand attention in order to provide the commodities we need to survive comfortably: clean air and water, adequate food and shelter, and space to recreate and release from everyday life. The amount of open land for protection of plant and animal habitats has become more important to our society and our personal well being as we have urbanized. The public has awakened to these needs and their demand for more open space for passive recreation and aesthetic enjoyment will continue to grow. The demand has initiated a trend by local governments to acquire open space for watershed protection, regional parks, and greenways. The public demands have also propelled local governments to require developers to incorporate open space areas as part of a project's plan. The start of open space initiatives is an attempt to link parks, environmental features, and other "people spaces" to form a diverse network of green space that will benefit the entire region. [Source: APRD Master Plan]

Black Mountain has continued an initiative to make the community a walk able community. Recent additions of sidewalks in two neighborhoods, the current and the first completed section of the greenway are evidence of this initiative. The town's two major parks and its recreation center are now or will soon be connected by a walk able path. These paths not only provide for the recreational needs of walkers but also provide a safer transportation route for children and youth to access these facilities.

### Unique Natural Areas

The Land of Sky Regional Council has prepared an Analysis of Sensitive Natural Areas for a four county area including Buncombe County. Three of these areas are located within our study area. They are Montreat Watershed, Craggy Pinnacle, and Asheville Watershed. All of these are protected by other governmental entities. Low impact recreation is allowed on the Montreat Watershed and Craggy Pinnacle area but not on the Asheville Watershed. Craggy Pinnacle is not accessible from the study area by vehicle. The other two areas are.

## **Cultural Factors**

### Population Trends and Projections

A study by the Buncombe County Planning office indicates that Black Mountain is the fastest growing municipality within the county. Current population estimates for Black Mountain, Montreat, and Swannanoa Townships total approximately 23,260 according to American Fact Finder through the US Census Bureau. Of this, the US Census Bureau estimated that 8,080 lived within the Town of Black Mountain in 2013. The population of the townships is projected to increase by fifteen percent within the next ten years. This trend will also be reflected within the town.

Eighteen percent of the population is younger than 18. Twenty-three percent is age 65 or older. Another 8.5percent is found in the 18-24 age group.

Of adults, age 25 or older, 87% have completed high school and 30% have completed a bachelor's degree or higher.

Average household income is \$40,185. Eighteen percent of households live below the poverty level, according to the US Census Bureau.

### Existing Land Use

The geographic formation of the area is a raised basin surrounded by mountains that has historically provided for growth in the gentle terrain of the valley bottom. Historic paths utilizing the river bottoms became the obvious locations for roads and were, and continue to be, the easiest place to build. Commercial development continues to follow the trend for locating along the major transportation corridors.

Residences have historically been located in the valleys or on gently sloping terrain. Single family residences account for the majority of home in the area. Typically, these have been built by private landowners or by developers in small sub-divisions. The lack of amenities, such as water and sewer service, has kept development off of the steeper mountain slopes. Multi-family residences exist within the area but not in large concentration. Most multi-family units consist of ten or fewer units. Several group living facilities, serving our senior population exist in the area. The largest group living facility is Highland Farms.

Black Mountain and the immediate area are home to a unique transient population. This population is served primarily by religiously oriented camp and conference centers. These centers expand the population of the area by 5000 per week during the summer months and up to 1000 per week during the remaining months. This population also needs access to appropriate recreational opportunities that are not always provided by the respective conference centers.

### Future Land Use

Land use practices are changing. Competition for prime building sites, those located in the valleys and on the gentle slopes, has increased. New construction practices are allowing for development on mountains in excess of twenty percent slope. The decline in agriculture is freeing up large plots of land that is being developed into large sub-divisions. Open spaces within the valley are diminishing. Population statistical projections indicate the trend is toward growth and is expected to increase by fifteen percent within the next decade.

### Transportation

Two major transportation corridors run through Black Mountain and the upper Swannanoa Valley. These are US 70 and Interstate 40, which parallel one another, running east to west. A secondary transportation corridor is NC 9, which runs north to south, beginning in Montreat and running through the Broad River Township. Asheville, the county seat, is located fifteen miles west of Black Mountain.

## **3. INVENTORY OF CURRENT RECREATION AND PARK FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS**

All of Black Mountain Township's recreation and park facilities and programs were inventoried. Facilities are classified based on their provider and fall into one of three categories. Categories are public, quasi-public, and private. Public facilities are owned by governmental agencies. Private facilities are owned privately and are for use by private members or their invitees. Quasi-public facilities are owned privately but can be used by the public under certain conditions. Quasi-public facilities are associated with churches, religious conference centers, camps, or other non-profit organizations. Use by the public is usually restricted to having a member or employee accompanying the recreator(s) while the facility is being used.

Programs may be offered by any of the providers mentioned above and may be offered either on a fee basis or are free of charge. Programs include classes in arts and crafts, exercise classes, personal defense classes, drama and dance classes, and creative learning classes. Programs also include events such as holiday celebrations, drama presentations, concerts, festivals, foot races, event walks, sports tournaments, and youth and adult league sports.

## Facilities

### Private sector facilities located in Black Mountain Township include:

Camp Rockmont. Privately owned camp. Facilities are available by invitation only. Rental fees are charged to most users. Facilities include a lake with swimming, beach, canoes, paddleboats, and fishing. Tennis courts, soccer field, play field, and gymnasium are also available.

Camp Merrimac and Camp Timberlake. Privately owned camp.

Ascending Fitness – Privately owned fitness center.

Cheshire Fitness Center – Privately owned fitness center.

Mini Golf at Phil's BBQ – 18 holes of mini golf located at Phil's BBQ pit restaurant.

Black Mountain Pilates – Offers healthy and nurturing environment to learn and practice Pilates with an emphasis on core strength and long lean muscles.

Black Mountain Yoga – Committed to bringing flexibility, strength and balance to the whole person, mind, body and spirit. Offer classes for everyone – beginner through advanced levels.

Grey Eagle CrossFit – Core and strength conditioning program. The Broad design of this program includes elements of track and field, gymnastics, weightlifting and strongman. Elements are combined in short intense daily workouts.

Black Mountain Running Company – Locally owned specialty running shop. BMRC focuses on needs of beginners to serious adventure runners. Personal training available and weekly group runs through town are offered utilizing greenways and trails.

Black Mountain Neuro Medical Center – Therapeutic activities include a greenhouse, pet therapy and an aquatics program for residents. Also has an easy to walk to campus for the community.

Tarwheels – Roller skating – Family skating for all ages. Available to rent for birthday parties and private parties.

Asheville Christian Academy – Campus offers running trial and athletic summer camps to community.

### Quasi-public sector facilities include:

Blue Ridge Assembly. Conference center operated by YMCA. Facilities are generally unavailable to the public. Facilities include outdoor pool, outdoor covered basketball courts, ropes course, playground, and trails.

Ridgecrest Conference Center. Conference center and youth camps operated by the Southern Baptist Convention. Facilities can be used by the public on a limited case-by-case basis. This use is generally limited to the winter and spring months. Facilities include gymnasium, tennis courts, two ball fields (in poor condition), playground, two lakes with canoeing and fishing, and trails.

Christmount Christian Assembly. Conference center operated by the Disciples of Christ Church. Facilities can be used by the public on a limited basis. Facilities include two outdoor pools, a play field, tennis courts (in poor condition), outdoor basketball court (in poor condition), horseshoe pits, playground, and trails.

Cragmont Assembly. Conference center owned by the Free Will Baptist Church. Facility use is generally unavailable to the public. Swings and playground equipment are available but do not meet current code.

Camp Dorothy Walls. Conference center of the AME Zion Church. Facilities are not generally available to the public and include a gymnasium, outdoor pool, tennis courts (in poor condition), and outdoor basketball courts (in poor condition).

Mountain Retreat Association. Conference center owned by the Presbyterian Church. Facilities are open to the public but public use is limited in the summer and fall months by the large number of conference attendees. Facilities include outdoor swimming pool, gymnasium, tennis courts, a small lake with paddle boat rentals, play field, playground, nature hut and trails, greenway trails, multipurpose building for basketball and volleyball, and a campground. The campground has 29 sites and includes bathhouses and a small playground. In addition 2760 acres has been set aside as wilderness under a conservation trust. The wilderness area includes numerous hiking trails.

Black Mountain Center for the Arts. This center provides a forum for artists to display their works. This includes a variety of media including watercolor, oils, photography, etc.

Black Mountain History Museum. This museum displays the history of the Swannanoa Valley.

Presbyterian Home for Children. Home for displaced children run by the Presbyterian Church. A gymnasium is available and is readily made available to local groups who want to use it.

First Baptist Church. Facilities include playground and outdoor basketball court (half-court) available on a limited basis.

Meadowbrook Free Will Baptist Church. Facilities include an indoor gymnasium available on a limited basis.

Swannanoa Missionary Baptist Church. Facilities include an outdoor basketball court available on a limited basis.

Black Mountain Presbyterian Church – Playground facility available during limited hours

Highland Farms Retirement Community – Offers level walking trails through retirement community for public use.

Warren Wilson College - walking/hiking trails throughout campus for public use. Scenic environment. Pool available for limited use to groups.

Montreat College. This college shares facilities with the Mountain Retreat Association mentioned above. In addition, the college has a baseball field located in Montreat and a softball field and a soccer field located on the property of the Presbyterian Home for Children also mentioned above. The college owns the property known as In the Oaks, a former conference center and youth camps operated by the Episcopal church. Facility use is limited and includes an historic home used for meetings and classes, a picnic pavilion, a softball field and multisport field and an indoor pool. Future development will turn this property into a typical college campus with facilities that should be available for public use on a limited basis.

Black Mountain Elementary School. Facilities include two T-ball size baseball fields, a playground, and a gymnasium. Facilities are available to the public.

Black Mountain Primary School. Facilities include one regulation softball field, two T-ball softball fields, a playground, and a small gymnasium. Facilities are available to the public.

Owen Middle School. Located on the western edge of the township, four miles from downtown Black Mountain. Facilities available to the public include tennis courts, football/soccer field, softball/baseball field, and gymnasium.

Owen High School. Also located on the western edge of the township, facilities include two gymnasiums, baseball field, softball field, track, and soccer practice field.

Public facilities include:

Buncombe County. The county recently built a public swimming pool adjacent to the middle school. This pool opened in the summer of 2000. Charles D. Owen Park is located eight miles from downtown Black Mountain and includes three ball fields, walking path, two medium size picnic shelters, a small lake, and an outdoor basketball court.

Town of Montreat. Montreat shares facilities with the Mountain Retreat Association, mentioned above. The town shares maintenance of the greenway trails with the association.

US Forest Service. The Forest Service provides a trailhead on the eastern edge of the township. The Kitasuma Trail runs from Ridgecrest to Old Fort. The trail is popular with both hikers and mountain bikers. Many hikers only hike the short distance from the trailhead to Kitasuma Peak, which offers spectacular views of Ridgecrest, Black Mountain, and the Swannanoa Valley.

Town of Black Mountain. Black Mountain provides a variety of facilities, which are listed below.

Carver Community Center. This 15,200 square foot facility has classroom space, aerobics studio, kitchen, and conference room. It houses the Recreation and Parks Department offices and the Children and Friends Daycare. Outdoor facilities include a beach volleyball court and the daycare has a playground (which is not built to code). Improvements needed are:

- Energy efficiency upgrade; air conditioner, new windows, etc.
- Restroom rehabilitation

Cragmont Park. This four acre park has an open playfield, most often used for youth league practice, an outdoor basketball court, and two tennis courts. Improvements needed are:

- Expansion of Tennis Courts
- Restrooms
- Playground

Lake Tomahawk Park. This nineteen acre park has a 1700 square foot shelter used for group picnics, parties, and other events. The park includes a 4.5 acre lake, which is surrounded by a .55 mile walking path. A playground is available as well as benches and 4 individual picnic tables and grills. Fishing is allowed and a fishing dock for use by individuals with disabilities is provided. There are two lighted tennis courts, one horseshoe court, a gazebo, and an outdoor swimming pool. Parking is available for 73 cars. An open area serves as the amphitheater for the summer outdoor music concerts. A new year-round restroom building opened in 2001. Improvements needed are:

- Rehabilitation of amenities such as benches, picnic sites, etc.

Lakeview Center. This center is located within Lake Tomahawk Park and is a 6500 square foot two story building that is used as the senior citizens activity center. The facility includes a kitchen, meeting area, and restrooms. The facility is used for community meetings and is frequently rented for private meetings and parties. Improvements needed include:

- Repair fire-damaged ceiling and remove false ceiling.
- Rehabilitate upstairs to its historic condition.

Golf Course. This is one of the few municipally owned golf courses in the area. The course is 18 holes and is open to membership as well as the public. The golf course is not currently under the jurisdiction of the Recreation and Parks Department. Needed improvements are not discussed here.

Croquet Court. Even fewer municipally owned croquet courts are available in the country. The croquet court is built to tournament standards and is also available by membership or open for public play. Although under the jurisdiction of the Recreation and Parks Department, the facility is managed by the Black Mountain Croquet Association. Needed improvements are not discussed here.

Recreation Park. The Recreation Park includes four lighted ball fields. Two fields are regulation size for both adult baseball and softball. Two fields are regulation size for youth league play, age 12 and under. One of these fields has an expanded outfield that can be used as a football or soccer practice field. The ball fields are clustered around a two-story concession stand, scoring/press box, and restroom facility. The park includes two picnic areas; one is a group picnic area with small shelter and tables for 8; the other consists of several clusters of picnic tables and will hold a total of 24 picnickers. Grills are available for each table or cluster. A .6 mile walking path surrounds the park. About one-half of the walking paths follow Flat Creek which forms the eastern and northern boundaries of the park. Benches are available along the path, as are two viewing or fishing platforms. The western terminus of the first section of greenway is located in the park. This greenway, known as Oaks Trail is a one-half mile connector between the park and Vance Avenue. This connector gives walking access from Lake Tomahawk Park through downtown Black Mountain to Recreation Park. Black Mountain Recreation Park also extends just south of Interstate 40. It is connected by a greenway underneath I-40 and through one of the river overflow passages. On the south side of Recreation Park we have the Dr. John Wilson Community Garden, .55 miles of paved greenway, nine holes of our disc golf course, and home to Grey Eagle Arena. Grey Eagle Arena is a 14,000 sq. ft. indoor soccer facility that houses our youth indoor soccer programs, dodgeball, and bounces house party rentals as well as many other programs and uses. Needed improvements include:

- Additional Parking
- Outdoor Kitchen
- Picnic Pavilion
- Playground
- Improved Drainage

## **Programs**

### Private Sector

Velo Girl Rides – Is a Black Mountain based company that produces several bike rides throughout North Carolina. They produce the Cycle to Farm biking event to benefit the Black Mountain Greenways Commission.

Black Mountain Running Company – Programs several different running groups throughout the year. These groups vary from beginning running programs to training for marathons.

### Quasi-Public Sector

Black Mountain – Swannanoa Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber of Commerce holds several festival type events each year. The largest of these is the Sourwood Festival. There is no charge for attendance.

Black Mountain Center for the Arts. Programming includes instruction in a variety of art media, musical programs, storytelling, and other artistic endeavors.

Black Mountain History Museum. Programming includes historical talks and hikes as well as history of this area.

Mountain Retreat Association. The association provides weekly classes in arts and crafts during the summer. Most participants are conferees and participation by the public is limited.

#### Public

Town of Black Mountain. The Recreation and Parks Department provides recreational activities for the area, including all three townships. Some activities are geared toward special population groups, such as seniors and youth. Programs include sports, concerts, fitness classes, arts and crafts classes, other types of classes, such as creative writing, and special events. Special events include foot races, Easter egg hunt, trips for seniors, trips to Atlanta Braves games, etc. Some classes and events are offered free of charge and others are funded by user fees or grants. Some are sponsored by corporations. Most programs are well attended and are very well received by the community.

## 4. RECREATION STANDARDS AND COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

### Introduction

The quantity and distribution of recreation land and facilities within a community or for a specific user group is determined by standards established by the recreation and park industry. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), in their publication Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines, edited by R.A. Lancaster, defines recreation and park standards in this manner:

“Community recreation and park standards are the means by which an agency can express recreation and park goals and objectives in quantitative terms, which in turn, can be translated into spatial requirements for land and water resources. Through the budget, municipal ordinances, cooperative or joint public-private efforts, these standards are translated into a system for acquisition, development and management of recreation and park resources.”

The publication further describes the role standards have in establishing a baseline or minimum for the amount of land required for various types of park and recreation facilities. Additionally, standards correlate recreational needs into spatial requirements and provide justification for recreational expectations and needs.

The recreation needs of Black Mountain have been ascertained through public comment, an inventory of existing land and facilities, and a formal survey of randomly selected recipients conducted by an outside consultant, as well as a review of typical and generally accepted park, recreation, and open space standards. While national standards can serve as a guide in determining minimum requirements, Black Mountain must establish standards of its own in consideration of expressed needs and the town’s economic, administrative, operational, and maintenance capabilities.

In preparing the master plan, standards developed by organizations including the NRPA, the North Carolina Department of Environmental Health and Natural Resources, and master plans from other public entities have been reviewed. Other master plans reviewed include those of Asheville and Union County, NC. One of the most important aspects in preparing a comprehensive master plan is the solicitation of public comment on the perceived recreation and park needs of the community. The input gathered from the community involvement process and surveys can then be cross-checked with the recreation standards.

### State and National Trends in Recreation

Surveys designed to determine the demand for outdoor recreation have been conducted on a national and state level by the US Census, State of NC, and the Physical Activity Council.

According to the 2010 Census - Participation in Selected Sports Activities:

1. Exercise - Walking
2. Exercising with Equipment
3. Camping
4. Swimming
5. Bowling
6. Bike Riding
7. Weightlifting
8. Hiking
9. Aerobic Exercising

This is a report from the Physical Activity Council and the data is from 2014:

1. Swimming
2. Biking
3. Hiking
4. Camping
5. Working out with Weights
6. Running
7. Working out with Machines
8. Trail Running
9. Fitness Classes
10. Fishing
11. Birding/Wildlife Viewing

Based on the Division of Parks and Recreation - N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources the top 10 trends in NC (as of 2006)

1. Walking for pleasure
2. Family gathering outdoors
3. Visiting nature centers
4. Sightseeing
5. Picnicking
6. Attend outdoor sports events
7. Visit historic sites
8. Viewing wildlife
9. Swimming (Pools or Lakes/Rivers, etc.) - They had this as two separate categories but the numbers were almost identical.
10. Yard games (croquet, corn hole, etc.)

### **Park Classification and Land Requirements**

The following recommended standards for park classifications and land area requirements are described below and summarized in Table 1. The park types described conform to one of three general categories: places for active recreation, resource-oriented areas, and specialized facilities. Space requirements, typical facilities and programs, and unique environmental features define the park types.

#### Regional Park

A regional park is a park within a fifty-mile service radius, which serves several communities or a multi-county region. Approximately 10 acres per 1,000 population served and generally 1,000 acres are required for developing a regional park. The regional park is an area of natural ornamental quality that provides diverse and unique natural resources for nature-oriented outdoor recreation including nature viewing and study, wildlife habitat conservation, hiking, camping, canoeing, and fishing. Generally 80% of the land is reserved for conservation and natural resource management, with less than 20% developed for recreation. The recreation areas consist of play areas and open fields or meadows for informal use.

#### District Park

A district park provides more diverse recreational opportunities than a regional park and on a much smaller scale. The district park emphasizes passive recreational opportunities similar to a regional park, yet also includes limited active recreational facilities. A district park is easily accessible by the population it serves

and is within a 5-10 mile service radius. The park contains a minimum of 5 acres per 1,000 population. A district park should be a minimum of 200 acres in size. A district park will generally include an indoor recreation building or an interpretive center that reflects the character of the park. Active recreational facilities may include active play areas, ball fields, hard surface courts, multi-purpose play fields, picnicking, and various types of trails.

#### Community Park

The community park is easily accessible to a single, or several, neighborhoods depending on local needs and population distribution at the time the park is developed. This type of park provides recreational opportunities for the entire family and contains areas suited for intense recreational purposes such as a recreation center building, athletic fields, swimming, tennis, and walking or jogging trails. The park may also possess areas of natural quality for outdoor recreation such as viewing, sitting, and picnicking. Community parks should be within two miles of their service area and require 2.5 acres per 1,000 population served. They should be at least 25 acres in size.

#### Neighborhood Park

The neighborhood park is designed to serve a population of up to 5,000, but in many instances may serve more. The park requires 2.5 acres per 1,000 population served and should be a 5 to 15 acres. This type park is typically characterized by recreational activities for each member of the family, such as court games, crafts, playground, picnicking, and space for quiet/passive activities. Where feasible, the activity areas are equally divided between quiet/passive play areas and active play areas. The service radius is one-half to one mile and is easily accessible to the neighborhood population through safe walking and biking access. Parking may or may not be provided.

#### Mini Park

Mini parks are characterized by their relatively small size, usually 1 to 4 acres. This type of park is specialized to serve a specific segment of the population such as a tot lot or quiet space for senior citizens. The service area is less than one-fourth mile. Parking is usually not provided.

#### Linear Park

A linear park is an area developed for one or more varying modes of recreational travel such as walking, hiking, biking, horseback riding, and canoeing. Usually, linear parks are developed to provide a safe route to connect recreational facilities, schools, and residential neighborhoods.

The acreage and service area of a linear park is variable and subject to existing natural and man-made features, the existence of public right-of-way, and the public demand for this type of park. In some cases, a linear park is developed within a large land area designated for protection and management of a natural feature, such as a stream or river, and the recreational use is a secondary objective.

#### Special or Unique Areas or Facilities

Special or unique areas are park types that exist to enhance or utilize a special man-made or natural feature. They can include beaches, aquatic facilities, museums, golf facilities, parkways, historical sites, conservation easements, flood plains, river access, etc. Minimum standards relating to acreage or population have not been established by the park and recreation industry. A size that is sufficient to protect and interpret the resource while providing optimum use is considered desirable for special sites that are natural in character. Other specialized facilities, such as an amphitheater or outdoor classroom, require space sufficient to accommodate the program planned for the site.

## **Evaluation of Park Land Needs**

### Total Acreage Per Park Classification

The minimum park land requirements or acreage needed based on the population of Black Mountain Township is found in Table 2. Township population figures are used because the Town of Black Mountain's Recreation and Parks Department serves a community broader than just the citizens of the Town itself. This situation will be discussed in the recommendation section of this master plan. The acreage requirement is based upon the population ratio method which indicates "acres of park land per 1,000 population" as established for each park classification.

Because of Black Mountain's unique location in an area with abundant federal recreational lands, acreage standards have been relaxed to better meet the situation. Park and recreation lands must meet the needs of the local population, especially the needs of individuals or families who have economic or time-restraints that prevent them from traveling to these federal recreational areas. A regional park, although needed, is not a park requirement that needs to be met by Black Mountain.

The types of parks needed by the end of the planning period, year 2015, based upon acreage standards are also shown in Table 2. This table indicates a minimum need of 99 acres of park land plus an adequate acreage of linear parks to connect facilities and neighborhoods. The minimum number of parks needed is 10. These parks should include 5 mini-parks, 2 neighborhood parks, 1 community park, and 1 district park. In addition, one special or unique park is needed.

### **Open Space**

While it is feasible and appropriate to adopt population-based standards for park land and facilities, it is not quite as clear to calculate open space standards. Perhaps the most appropriate standard is a determination by the community that certain open space areas are necessary to protect perceived significant natural areas or the aesthetics that make living in the area valuable to the residents.

Public open space is defined as any land acquired for the purpose of keeping it in a permanent undeveloped state. The functions of such land include: a) protection of drainage areas for water supplies (watersheds); b) protection of areas that are particularly well suited for growing crops (farmland preservation); c) protection of attractive waterways (wild and scenic rivers); d) preservation of spaces between communities to prevent urban sprawl (greenbelts); e) protection of wildlife habitat (sanctuaries); f) protection of approach and take-off areas near airports (clear zones); and, g) protection of undevelopable land (landfills). While these are some of the more common open space functions, many others exist.

### **Facility Standards**

Minimum standards for recreational facilities (i.e., ball fields, courts, outdoor areas, etc.) have been developed for Black Mountain in accordance with industry guidelines established by the NRPA and the NCDEHNR. Table 3 identifies the minimum recreation facility standards that may be used to compare Black Mountain with other public entities in North Carolina and the United States.

**Evaluation of Facility Needs**

The number of public facilities needed in Black Mountain through the planning period (2015-2025) are identified in Table 6 of the Needs Assessment. Based upon the standards, needs for additional facilities include:

- More Sidewalks and Walking Trails
- Picnic Pavilions
- Year Round Restroom Facilities
- Greenways
- More Community Garden Space
- Bike Trails and Bike Lanes
- Another Dog Park
- Fishing Facilities
- Greenhouse
- Outdoor Basketball Courts
- Outdoor Kitchen
- Campground
- Tennis Courts
- Indoor Basketball Courts
- Baseball Fields

**Community Input Needs Assessment**

A comprehensive community Needs Assessment was conducted during the summer of 2014. The complete report can be found as Appendix E.

## 5. MASTER PLAN PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Introduction

As previously discussed, some recreational facilities in the Black Mountain area are owned and operated by the local conference centers. These centers do not, as a rule, allow for these facilities to be used by the local public. Numerous recreational opportunities are available on federal lands but most of these are located more than twenty miles from Black Mountain. Buncombe County provides only an outdoor swimming pool and small ballpark in the area and both of these are located in Swannanoa and are 5-10 miles from Black Mountain. Black Mountain offers three developed properties with a variety of activities in place.

Even with all of these recreation facilities in place, Black Mountain remains deficient in available recreation and park land. The school sites are available after school hours and in off months and school security issues are making it increasingly difficult to use these facilities. Conference center facilities are only available during the winter months and only on a limited basis then. Use of church facilities is also restricted. The analysis of the national and state standards as presented in the previous chapter shows the town to be deficient in the amount of facilities provided for recreation and parks. This is especially true in the category of mini-parks and neighborhood parks. Existing community and district parks are smaller in size than recommended. Linear parks are needed to provide safe transportation routes for walkers, joggers, and bicyclists. Quiet spaces are needed. A large public gathering space is needed.

Need for public land will increase as the population increases. The increased population base will demand additional recreational facilities. Funds available for acquisition and development of park land will also continue to become more difficult to obtain due to competing needs in the community.

In preparing this plan, there was extensive discussion regarding the future roles of all the recreational providers in the county. Opinions were obtained from staff, the Recreation Commission, and the general public. It was determined that in order to meet the challenges of the future, there will need to be a sharing of responsibilities among all the recreational providers in Black Mountain, surrounding towns and townships, and the county. Therefore, the proposals and recommendations of this Master Plan begin with identifying the specific roles of each provider, from the public, quasi-public, and private sectors.

### Roles of Recreation Providers

Meeting all the recreational needs of the community will require a joint effort between the various government agencies and the private sector. No one group can be held solely responsible for providing all the programs and facilities for the community. The following recommendations describe the roles that each recreational provider should take over the planning period.

#### Federal Government

The United States provides national park and forest facilities within twenty miles of Black Mountain. The facilities include hiking trails, a few picnic sites, a major arts and crafts museum/store, and one campground with 98 sites. Little is done within the twenty mile radius in terms of nature trails, fitness trails, bicycling trails, picnic shelters and sites, or campsites. No group campsite is located within this area. Although open lands are available, national trends show that the general public will only access open lands if "invited" through developed facilities.

#### State of North Carolina

The State of North Carolina should take the lead in offering a variety of recreational facilities found in a regional park. The nearest state park is Mt. Mitchell State Park which offers hiking, some nature study, viewing of wildlife, scenic viewing, and a few picnic and camp sites. However, participation in these activities in this park is limited to those who are hardier and can endure the strenuous trails found here. It

is not truly a regional park as defined in the previous chapter. This park is forty miles away by automobile and is accessed by curvy, mountainous roads that are often closed during winter.

North Carolina also provides several special or unique facilities within twenty-five miles of Black Mountain. These include Vance Birthplace Historic Site, Thomas Wolfe House Historic Site, University of North Carolina Botanical Gardens, and North Carolina Arboretum. These unique sites, although several miles distant, should meet the needs of Black Mountain residents for these types of facilities and should not be duplicated here.

The state should financially assist Black Mountain with acquiring lands for parks and recreational facilities, in developing new facilities, and renovating existing facilities through the NC PARTF grant programs, NC DOT Bikeways Program, and Community Development Block Grants.

### Buncombe County

Currently, Buncombe County Parks and Recreation (BCPR) provides parkland at locations throughout the county. The agency currently manages and operates 27 separate facilities. BCPR provides facilities such as athletic fields, pools, recreation centers, and river access points. Although, BCPR maintains and programs their facilities for use by all county residents, including citizens of Black Mountain, only two of these 27 facilities are located within the Swannanoa Valley. Owen Park, which loosely fits the definition of a neighborhood park and is, located ten miles from Black Mountain. The park is mainly used by the residents of Swannanoa Township for their youth athletic programs. The park includes a walking path around a small lake, two picnic shelters, an outdoor basketball court, one adult regulation softball/baseball field, and two other ball fields. Public restrooms are available only if a ballgame is in progress. And, an outdoor swimming pool located three miles from downtown Black Mountain opened in 2000.

The county and the Town of Black Mountain should work together to accommodate the needs of all county residents. However, the county should first recognize the need for providing for 30,000 residents in eastern Buncombe County that live outside the city limits of Black Mountain. If BCPR can provide for the recreation needs of these residents, then the Town should work with them and avoid providing a duplication of services. If BCPR continues to be unable to meet the needs of Swannanoa Valley residents, then Black Mountain should seek funding from the county to help in providing recreational opportunities for residents from outside the town limits.

Buncombe County schools have cooperated in the past in making school property available for recreational use where possible. Currently, most of the recreational programs taking place at school sites are associated with programs offered through Black Mountain Recreation and Parks or local non-profit youth sports programs. BMRP needs to work with the local schools to attain an overall formal joint use agreement. The schools and BMRP should work closely together in identifying additional programs that may take place on school or park properties.

Key issues that need to be considered in developing an agreement are outlined under “Partnership Opportunities” within this section of the report.

### City of Asheville

The City of Asheville’s park and recreation program has as its primary focus the recreational needs of its own citizens. Therefore, its facilities are not discussed here. We have worked with the City of Asheville Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources on multiple occasions to provide programming, transportation, and fulfill other needs of both organizations.

### Town of Montreat

The Town of Montreat is a small incorporated municipality located approximately two miles from Black Mountain and within Black Mountain Township. It is unique in character and its residents are unique. Black Mountain recognizes that Montreat’s citizens participate in and use Black Mountain’s recreational

programs and facilities. The two municipalities should partner in providing recreational services to residents.

#### Town of Black Mountain

As its primary focus, the Town of Black Mountain needs to offer recreation programs and facilities for its own citizens. Historically, the Town has been serving Black Mountain residents, as well as, county residents of Black Mountain, Broad River, and Swannanoa Townships and residents of the Town of Montreat. Through the planning period, it will be increasingly more difficult to follow this trend. It is anticipated that the Town will not be in a financial position to offer recreation programs and facilities to other than Town residents. The needs of non-residents might continue to be met if the County and Montreat provide additional funding or if a non-resident fee is charged.

In the future, BMRP's role should continue to offer a variety of recreational activities that meet the diverse needs of the community. The Town should also continue being the provider of community, neighborhood, mini, special use, and linear parks and also of open spaces. The extent of programming and offering recreation facilities will ultimately be determined by what Black Mountain can afford. Revenue producing recreation should be examined. The Town should search for teaming opportunities with other governmental agencies, such as the county and the private sector in sharing of programs and facility development.

#### Quasi-Public Sector

BMRP should meet with local churches and conference centers and develop partnerships which allow for use of facilities during the off-season or at specified times for special programs, such as youth basketball. Discussions should also be held on whether these partnerships could include a joint use of an indoor recreational facility.

#### Private Sector

The private sector should be encouraged to take on a much greater role over the next twenty years if the recreational needs of the town are to be fully met. Commercial recreation providers should provide facilities and programs that the public and quasi-public sectors cannot offer due to economic, legal, or ethical reasons. The private sector could provide for specialty recreation such as equestrian centers, shooting ranges, archery areas, x-sports parks, etc. The town should be supportive and encourage the private sector to develop these special use facilities.

Land developers should be responsible for the dedication of open space when associated with development of new residential, commercial, or industrial properties. Dedication, or compensation in lieu, should be administered through the town Planning Department and coordinated with Recreation and Parks. Requirements should be placed in the future updates of the town's subdivision regulations and/or zoning ordinances.

#### **Partnership Opportunities**

All types of partnerships can be formed with local public, private, or quasi-public entities. To get started a direct request should be made of an organization to meet and evaluate the mutual benefits possible through a partnership. Eventually a concrete description of responsibilities will be needed, but the important step is to make an initial contact and promote interest that can solidify an agreement to provide recreational services for the community.

Partnerships with the private sector can be beneficial to all participants. Typically, a private developer can use private funds to develop a facility on town property with the town leasing it to the developer on a long-term basis. During the period of the lease the developer returns a portion of the revenues to the county and at the end of the lease the facility reverts to town ownership. This type of arrangement would be appropriate for any revenue producing facility that requires a large capital investment.

## Park Proposals and Recommendations

Sections 3 and 4 of this plan summarize the existing and future needs of Black Mountain. The following proposals and recommendations are aimed at meeting those park needs.

1. A regional park should not be provided by the Town of Black Mountain.
2. The Town needs to provide a district park for residents. A district park is 75 or more acres in size and should provide picnic area with group shelters, campground with at least 30 individual sites and 1 group campsite, nature trails, outdoor amphitheater, and possibly an outdoor environmental education center.

A feasibility study should be made to determine if the Town's watershed property can be developed into a park without affecting the wells located on the property. This property should only be considered as a developed park if it is revenue producing.

At a minimum, this property should be opened up as a low-impact nature park with nature trails and hiking trails. This type of park could also be revenue producing by issuing season passes for the right to use the property.

If this property cannot be developed, the Town should look for another large tract of land that can be developed.

3. The Town currently owns two community parks (Lake Tomahawk and Recreation Park) and needs a third. A community park is approximately 25 acres and should include, at a minimum, 2 softball/baseball fields, 1 soccer field, and a group picnic shelter.
4. A total of four neighborhood parks are needed. The Town currently has two, Carver and Cragmont. Two additional neighborhood parks are needed.

The Carver property includes several acres that are not developed. A feasibility study should be conducted of the building and property to determine the best plan for its use as a recreation and park facility. This site could be the site for additional indoor and/or outdoor basketball courts. This site also has a need to be better connected to the surrounding neighborhood by greenways, walking trails or sidewalks.

The Cragmont property includes an outdoor basketball court and tennis court. The park needs a restroom. Complaints have been received about the basketball court being too close to the tennis court and about gravel from the parking lot being thrown onto the tennis courts. In keeping with the recreational activities found in a neighborhood park, this park should be considered for re-design and could include additional tennis courts, lighted for night-time use, a fitness trail, and a large playground to turn it into more of a destination park.

Because of the relatively close proximity of these two parks a new park should be north of downtown and one should be located east of NC 9/Montreat Road.

5. The Town needs five mini-parks. Mini-parks includes playgrounds, tot lots, and personal play or reflection spaces. These parks should be located within a ¼ mile radius of the population they serve. They usually do not include parking spaces, although one or two spaces may be appropriate. Generally, they should be accessible by sidewalk or a greenway system. BMRP currently maintains one mini-park, RiverWalk Park. The Town has recently acquired a mini-park sized property along Flat Creek. This property should be considered as a potential park for seniors or others for reflective/quiet space and possibly for a fishing station for use by physically challenged citizens.

6. A playground should be located in each park, both currently owned and those to be developed.
7. A greenway system should be developed that connects all parks and that connects Black Mountain and Montreat. With the development of the In-the-Oaks property by Montreat College, the Town should partner with the college to develop a greenway/walking path between the Recreation Park and Cragmont and Lake Tomahawk Parks.

The adopted Greenway Master Plan formulated by the Greenways Commission provides detailed information on the need for linear parks and the paths proposed are recommended in this plan.

A new recreation center is needed. This center would be for all citizens, but especially for our youth and senior populations. This center should include a gymnasium with one or two basketball courts, an indoor tennis court, two or three classrooms, a meeting room with adjacent kitchen, and an auditorium/performance theater.

### **Priorities for development**

The needs as listed in the previous section will not be met within the framework of this ten year plan. However, even if a need cannot be met, preliminary studies or planning can begin. Based on the input received through public meetings and through discussion with recreation and parks professionals, and through discussion with town staff, the following needs are listed in priority order:

1. Land acquisition to begin positioning for future needs within the Town of Black Mountain. Land acquisition should include areas both large and small to fill voids in service as suggested in the prior section. Land acquisition should be considered for expanding existing parks as well as development of new ones.
2. Continue to develop the greenway system to tie all of the town's parks together through a series of walking and biking paths. This will enable our youth to access all facilities without having to travel along vehicular pathways.
3. Develop mini-parks and put playgrounds at each existing park. Five mini-parks are needed. A mini-park should be located within ¼ mile of each town resident. Playgrounds are currently needed at Recreation Park and Cragmont Park.

These top priority items need to be completed as soon as possible and certainly within the next five years. Planning for the following items should begin within the next five years and be accomplished within fifteen years.

Develop existing town owned properties into neighborhood parks. These undeveloped park properties include the Black Mountain Recreation Park and the under-developed Cragmont Park property. These parks should include open play spaces, picnic shelters, playground, reflective spaces, and walking paths.

**6. ACTION PLANS AND IMPLEMENTATION**

**Introduction**

The Black Mountain Comprehensive Recreation and Parks Master Plan is based upon a review of the entire community, an analysis of the existing park system, the identification of user needs, the development of recreation standards, and an adherence to stated proposals and recommendations. The plan is intended to be “action-oriented”, designed to provide a framework from which the Town can enhance its recreation and parks system.

Instrumental to implementation of the Master Plan is the identification of adequate funding at a time when balancing municipal budgets throughout the state has become increasingly difficult. The North Carolina Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan identified inadequate funding for park facilities and recreation programs as a key issue needing to be addressed in the next five years if government is to maintain basic minimum services. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, per capita funding for parks and recreation services throughout the State of North Carolina, including local government is 33% below the national average. Even though funding is currently low statewide, it does not appear to reflect the high value Black Mountain citizens place on recreation and parks.

Implementing the Master Plan will result in meeting the future needs for recreation and park services, as well as preserving some transitional open space in Black Mountain. The Town will need to continue to establish annual budgets for the Recreation and Parks Department based on projected capital improvement costs, staffing needs, and operations and maintenance costs. The action plan is formatted into two funding periods covering a period of time from 2015 to 2025 and is designed to give Black Mountain a realistic approach to finance the proposals and recommendations of the Master Plan.

**Capital Improvement Program**

The capital improvement program for the acquisition development, and renovation of parks for the next five years was prepared with input from Recreation staff and the planning committee team. Instrumental to implementation of the recommendations of this plan is the identification of adequate funding. Funding estimates are listed below. Estimates for items in the current capital improvement plan (Appendix D) are based upon today’s dollar value. Estimates for items in the proposed recommendations are based on a Class C engineering estimate or a planning stage estimate.

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

**For Existing & Proposed Programs/Parks (2014-2025):**

Facilities Renovation	\$ 300,000
Equipment Needs	\$ 110,000
Greenways	\$1,400,000
New Construction	<u>\$2,100,000</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,900,000</b>

## **Operations and Maintenance Needs**

Operations and maintenance needs are determined based on the total park acreage that the Recreation and Parks Department will be maintaining through the year 2025. It will be necessary for Black Mountain to evaluate operational and maintenance needs of individual facilities as they are being planned. An initial evaluation of operational needs for a project must be made prior to going forward with construction drawings. Maintenance and operational expenses can be identified early in the planning process during the development of site specific schematic plans. At this stage of the planning process a project's size, shape and character is determined at an exact scale. Thus, enabling decisions to be made concerning maintenance and operations procedures which may affect the final design. During the development of final design and construction drawings, more detailed operational and maintenance needs are identified so that a maintenance program can be prepared for the facility.

The best approach to operations and maintenance control is to set up a program that schedules activities that provide for the minimum amount of care necessary to maintain a facility. An appropriately staffed maintenance crew should support a preventive maintenance program. If successfully implemented it will reduce drains on budgets and staff time spent responding to emergencies that always seem to deviate from routine maintenance tasks at hand. Certain maintenance intensive facilities, such as playgrounds, restrooms, and pools, require repair/or replacement of critical parts annually. Costs can be contained by anticipating their occurrence, rather than responding to them as an emergency.

A preventative maintenance program will result in longer-lived facilities that will provide safe attractive and functional use with reduced costs. Preventive maintenance should also reduce liability risks that often occur with abused or neglected facilities and increase a facility's overall use by making it more available.

In planning for new development, operational and maintenance costs must be carefully considered prior to approving a project for construction. Often operational demands require reducing the quantity of items of facilities to be built for a project. It is better to reduce quantities than to lessen quality of construction. Reducing construction quality may in time place a tremendous burden on maintenance/repair budgets and eventually render the facility unusable. In addition, designs for new parks and facilities should attempt to be vandal resistant and able to withstand appreciable wear and tear. Many times it is easier to obtain money to develop parks than to maintain them, yet the public is more likely to respond to a park's condition, than to the initial cost.

## **Staffing Needs**

Black Mountain Recreation and Parks Department's structure and number of personnel is consistent with similar sized town recreation departments in the State. Black Mountain Recreation and Parks currently manage facilities and programs.

All existing positions within the Department are warranted but responsibilities are recommended to become more focused as the department grows over the next ten years. In addition to the above, there is a current need for additional staff, a supervisor of community programs/cultural resources, a park and recreation maintenance division, and one evening park rangers with law enforcement authority.

The following lists existing and needed staff positions and their general duties:

- Recreation and Parks Director (1-existing). Reports to Town Manger and acts as liaison with Recreation and Parks Recreation Commission and Board of Aldermen. Responsible for overall administration of department and long term planning.
- Administrative Assistant (1-existing). Accountable to the Director and provides general administrative functions for the department.

- Clerk/Secretary (1-needed) by the year 2020. To report to Administrative Assistant and be responsible for general clerical/receptionist functions. This position would be needed if the Carver Community Center was to become a full functioning Recreation Center with evening and weekend hours.
- Recreation Supervisor (1-needed). To report to Director and be responsible for planning, coordinating and administration of all community events and programs for Town of Black Mountain; coordinates all Recreation Department publicity and coordinates with local organizations. Professional with 3-5 years experience.
- Recreation Coordinator (2-existing). Reports to Director and responsible for planning, organizing and managing a combination of recreation programs and facilities to include community center programs, summer recreation programs, athletics, aquatics and senior programs.
- Health Program Services Administrator (1-existing). This position is responsible for coordination of Greenways projects, Health Initiative programs, also responsible for coordinating, developing and implementing the Town's employee wellness program.
- Park Operations Superintendent (1 – existing). Combines the park maintenance and operation responsibilities with park planning and safety. Responsible for planning and development of maintenance programs.
- Maintenance Staff (3 – existing). Provides maintenance assistance to Park Superintendent on an individual park basis. Reports to the Park Operations Superintendent.
- Park Rangers (1 needed/part time). Provides security functions on an individual park basis. Reports to Director of Recreation and Parks. Professional with 0-7 years experience. Currently use off duty police officers – seems to work well.
- Recreation Center – Aide (2 – existing, 1 additional needed). Performs a variety of duties in operation of community recreation center. Works with youth and adults; does related work as requested.

Staffing needed based on new facilities is not discussed here. That discussion is incumbent upon the approval of this plan and the actions taken. The development of a recreation center and indoor pool would require additional staffing as would the development of any fee-use park or facility.

### **Pricing Recommendations**

The pricing policy should reflect three levels of pricing for services. Recreation by its nature is a consumptive service. It is within this mindset that services are broken down into a public service, merit service, and a private benefit service.

A public service is a service that has high public benefit (equal benefit to everyone) and should be free and supported by taxes. An example of this is a playground in a park.

A merit service provides some public service and some private benefit not afforded to other users of the Town. An example of this type of service is reserving a pavilion in a park for a person's exclusive use or a program that provides a product that a user gets to keep like a tee shirt.

A private service is where the person receiving the service benefits totally and the general taxpayer benefits are not existent. Therefore, the user should pay the total cost of providing the service. An example of this is private lessons for a program service.

Black Mountain provides mainly public and merit type services. Across the United States, communities have different levels of tax subsidy based on the value and importance they place on recreational services. In Black Mountain, the current pricing practice is to support non-athletic, youth programs 100% of direct and indirect cost. This same practice is applied to services for seniors as well. For fee based programs, including youth athletic programs, there is no price differentiation for residents and non-residents.

The recommendations for pricing for Black Mountain Recreation and Parks' services follow:

- In the future, establish a costing program that evaluates direct and indirect cost for each aspect of program and park services. Once these costs have been identified, evaluate the merit or private benefit, if any that is being provided and determine at what level of public subsidy support the Town wants to contribute for each activity reviewed. The Town then can determine if they would like to find a sponsor or grant to support the program cost or to bring down the cost to a minimum level. If so, establish a strategy to seek out those opportunities through a formal request process.
- Depending on whether the Town seeks to find outside private or public sources to fund a portion of the program, they will need to communicate to the users what percentage of monies the Town is contributing to the experience and what level the outside sources are contributing. From this strategy the Department, over time, can make appropriate adjustments according to willingness to pay and market elasticity in the Black Mountain area.
- All new program services provided in the future should be priced at appropriate levels of public subsidy that is in tune with the Town's value system for the program provided. This would include consideration of whether to charge an additional fee for non-residents.

#### Pricing Elasticity

Pricing elasticity is established by seeking out the highest related price in the area for a service and the lowest price of the same service. An example of this would be golfing/green fees whereby the highest fee in the area might be \$30 dollars and the lowest fee would be \$15. The elasticity is then \$15 dollars, which allows the Department to establish a niche in the market place through effective marking and positioning the value of the service to the community.

Determining pricing elasticity for recreation services begins with identifying what a typical recreation hour is worth in the United States today. A recreation hour is typically worth \$3.00 to \$3.50 per hour for recreation services. People are generally willing to pay for recreation pursuits, which demonstrates an elasticity level. As an example, a movie for an adult typically costs \$6.00 to \$7.00 per movie for prime time and most movies are typically 2 hours in length which amounts to \$3.00 to \$3.50 per hour. Another example is a lane/game of bowling costs \$3.00 to \$3.50 per lane and a game of bowling usually lasts one hour if you are bowling with four people. If a person goes to a theme park it typically costs about \$30.00 to \$35.00 for a 10-hour experience or \$3.00 to \$3.50 per hour. A recreation user's willingness to pay demonstrates the value a user sees in a particular activity. In Black Mountain there are examples of willingness to pay in similar cases if you compare to the YMCA or other recreation suppliers. Sometimes a user's willingness to pay is publicly subsidized because of the value the activity brings to the community as a whole.

Nationally, the recreational cost for like kinds of service that Black Mountain offers demonstrates the elasticity value people are willing to pay. In most situations the Town of Black Mountain subsidizes recreation programs to some level depending on the value the town sees in supporting that specific program. The following is a typical list of program fees and subsidy levels to demonstrate price elasticity in the recreation market place. This does not mean Black Mountain should follow this example, but only demonstrates the value and willingness to pay for recreation programs across the country.

- ◆ Youth sports programs (basketball \$45.00 for 8 game schedules) are typically 50% publicly subsidized.
- ◆ Aquatic programs (4 lessons @ \$35.00) are not publicly supported

Typical subsidy levels for recreation program activities are as follows:

- ◆ Senior Programs – Up to 40%
- ◆ Fitness Programs – 0%
- ◆ Youth Programs – Up to 50%
- ◆ Adult Programs – 0%

### **Earned Income Opportunities**

The Town of Black Mountain has a good history of developing earned income opportunities to supplement the Town's budget for special events. In developing earned income opportunities the Town should consider these earned income opportunities.

Resident/non-resident fees are an earned income area where non-Town residents pay a higher rate than Town residents. The rate is typically 15 to 20% more than the Town resident rate. The price should be established as a base market rate with Black Mountain residents receiving the program for this price.

Sponsorship opportunities within the Department will need to be coordinated to not confuse sponsors by sending two or three requests to the same businesses. Sponsorships typically come in the form of product sponsors, event sponsors, program sponsors, cause-related sponsors, and in-kind sponsors.

Grants 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 Town to create a quality submittal. Grants also require extensive tracking of expenditures and outcomes for attaining future funding.

Partnerships are the new area of earned income that many cities are seeking to share cost in providing services to the community. Many times the partners are two or more government agencies. This earned income requires both agencies to have common vision, values, and goals for the partnership to be successful. Typically, partnerships follow some of these general trends:

- Church partnership in providing neighborhood park or recreation services.
- Youth sports associations where volunteers help the Town in providing the service to the community for the sports that they represent.
- Trail sponsors that adopt sections of trails for maintenance and cleanup.
- Adopt-a-park partners that help maintain parklands. These sponsors are typically in the form of neighborhood associations and businesses that are next to parks.
- School partnerships whereby both partners invest in the development of facilities and programs based on shared use of facilities and staff.
- Special Event partners that assist with the development of community wide events.
- Program partners that assist each other in providing services to the community.

Park foundation development is another earned income opportunity that towns have embraced to achieve added dollars to the budget. Park foundations help the town seek out individuals who would like to invest in the town by providing donations of land, cash, or in-kind related services. These donations can add value to Black Mountain.

Advertising and licensing in programs, facilities, and events the Town provides. This earned income allows the town to leverage highly exposed advertising space where businesses will pay a premium for the right to advertise.

Volunteer development programs are highly valued earned income opportunities the Town can create through effective recruitment. Volunteers can create advocacy and bring down the cost of programs and services.

Privatization of the development of facilities or services is an earned income opportunity that is used in most towns when they are unable to control the cost of labor and are unable to find the needed capital to develop a recreation facility or a concession operation. This gives the town a management tool to create an asset or improve a service without tapping the town's resources.

### **Funding/Revenue Sources**

The Black Mountain Recreation and Parks Department has a long history of good public support for funding of parks, programs and services. However, existing funding sources have not been able to keep up with the needs of the community and the management of park assets. The proposed additional facilities and expanded operations will only add to the need for additional dollars from a variety of sources. The Town needs to create a combination of new revenue sources to meet the future needs of Black Mountain residents.

Upon adoption of the Master Plan, the Town of Black Mountain needs to continue with establishing a revenue plan. A revenue plan incorporates all available funding resources in a community and prioritizes them. The following listing of funding sources is provided to help the Town evaluate all options:

- ◆ General Tax Revenues - General tax revenues traditionally provide the principle sources of funds for general operations and maintenance of a municipal recreation and parks system. Recreation as a public service is scheduled along with roadways, health, public safety, schools, etc. in regular budgets established by the municipality. Assessed valuation of real and personal property provides the framework for this major portion of the tax base for the Town. The Town of Black Mountain currently (FY00-01) has a property tax valuation of .375/\$100 valuation. General tax revenues typically cover park services a whole. Recreation facilities such as game fields, recreation centers, and cemeteries are covered by a combination of general tax revenues and user fees. All towns have different values in place for how they fund various portions of a recreation experience. Tax subsidies vary by activity.

The Town will need to update its current revenues and pricing policy as part of the revenue plan based on the values and guiding funding principals of the Town. Refer to this section of the report for potential subsidy goals and pricing strategies.

- ◆ General Obligation Bonds – General tax revenue for parks and recreation is usually devoted to current operation and maintenance of existing facilities. In view of the recommended capital improvements suggested in this plan, borrowing of funds to acquire new lands and develop facilities will be necessary. The State of North Carolina gives municipal 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 the purpose of paying the debt on these bonds the Town is empowered to levy a special tax. Total bonding capacities for local government is limited for parks and recreation to a maximum percentage of assessed property valuation.

The real value of a municipality's bonding authority and capacity is not necessarily the funds made available for capital improvement program alone (in terms of local monies). Bonding enables the Town to utilize local 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. At this time the feedback received from the 2014 Needs Assessment does not support a bond referendum.

- ◆ Revenue Bonds – Revenue bonds have become a popular funding method for financing high use specialty facilities like aquatic centers, ice rinks, tennis centers, golf courses, and complexes for softball and soccer. The user and other on-site revenue sources pay revenue bonds. This revenue source would only be of use to the Town of Black Mountain if they choose to change their tax subsidy policy for using this type of funding. Based on the Town’s current pricing practices it most likely would not seek out this option. If the Town decided to move in this direction, this type of funding could be used to finance projects such as an indoor aquatic center or large recreation center.
- ◆ Federal and State Assistance – Federal funding sources necessary to help finance the Master Plan have historically been available from the National Park Service’s Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Potential funding through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program is also available given certain conditions. Other potential sources for recreational funding are available through the National Foundation of Arts and Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).

During the 1980s, the Black Mountain Recreation and Parks Department used LWCF and state administered Community Development funds to develop parks within the system. These include Lake Tomahawk Park, the Croquet Court and Black Mountain Recreation Park.

The North Carolina General Assembly passed a bill in 1995 creating a consistent source of funds for parks and recreation in the state. The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) will provide money for capital improvements, repairs, renovations, and land acquisition in state and local parks. Revenues from the State’s portion of the real estate deed transfer tax support the Fund and are estimated to be \$18 million annually. The percentage dedicated to PARTF varies from year to year. The maximum matching grant is limited to \$500,000 for a single project.

- ◆ Limited Option or Special Use Tax – Limited option or special use taxes can be established in various ways. A town or county can establish the tax source from property valuation, transfer taxes, or sales tax. The proposal will require legislative approval if it is structured on sales tax or transfers. A local governing body can approve a tax that is identified or earmarked on existing property valuation. 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 the accomplishment of the purpose or projects.
- ◆ Black Mountain Parks and Greenways Foundation – The Foundation uses individual and corporate philanthropic donations to develop and maintain parks, grounds, programs, and facilities throughout town.
- ◆ General Foundations – Another source of revenue is the direct contribution of money from General Foundations within the state or nation. A listing of appropriate foundations can be found in the text entitled Grant Seeking in North Carolina, made available through the North Carolina Center of Public Policy Research, P.O. Box 430, Raleigh, North Carolina 27602.

Foundation funds should be sought for both development and construction of facilities as well as providing programs. They should include general-purpose foundations that have relatively few restrictions, special program foundations for specific activities and corporate foundations found with few limitations and typically from local sources.

- ◆ Partnership Structures – All types of partnerships can be formed with local public, private, or quasi-public entities. To get started a direct request should be made of an organization to meet and evaluate the mutual benefits possible through a partnership. Eventually a concrete description of responsibilities will be needed, but the important step is to make an initial contact and promote interest that can solidify an agreement to provide recreational services for the community.

Partnerships with the private sector can be beneficial to all participants. Typically, a private developer can use private funds to develop a facility on town property with the town leasing it to the developer on a long-term basis. During the period of the lease the developer returns a portion of the revenues to the town and at the end of the lease the facility reverts to town ownership. This type of arrangement would be appropriate for an improvement such as a pool, golf course or other facility requiring a large capital investment.

### **Other Methods for Acquisition and Development**

Other methods available to the Town of Black Mountain for acquiring and developing parks as recommended in the Master Plan include the following.

- ◆ Fee Simple Purchase - The outright purchase is perhaps the most widely used method of obtaining parkland. However, this method is the most difficult to reconcile with limited public resources. Fee simple purchase has the advantage of being relatively simple to administer and to explain to the general public in terms of justifying a particular public expenditure.
- ◆ Fee Simple with Lease-Back or Resale – This technique of land acquisition enables the Town to purchase land to either 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 that 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 sale with a lease-back option.
- ◆ Long-Term Option – A long-term option is frequently used when a particular piece of land is seen as having potential future value though it is not desired or affordable to the Town at the time. Under the terms of a long-term option, the Town agrees with the landowner on a selling price for the property and a time period over which the Town has the right to exercise its option. The first benefit of this protective method is that the land use of the property is stabilized because its future is in doubt and an expenditure of money for the property would be lost in the previously agreed upon selling price. Secondly, the Town does not have to expend large sums of money until the land is purchased. Thirdly, the purchase price of the land is settled upon. The disadvantage of this method lies in 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 parkland eliminates the need for fixing the selling price of a parcel of land yet alerts the Town of any impending purchase which might disrupt the parkland acquisition goals. The Town 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 parkland 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 Black Mountain with interests in recreation, historic, conservation, preservation, land development, and environment. Their goals and responsibilities are to work with landowners to acquire parkland for current and future generations. The individuals appointed to the Land Trust must have a good knowledge of land acquisition methods and tools to entice land owners to sell, donate, provide easements, life estates, irrevocable trusts, or a combination of all. This includes seeking out a good 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 the comprehensive Master Plan.
- ◆ Local Gifts – a significant and yet often untapped source of providing funds for acquisition and development of local park projects is through a well-organized local gifts program. The pursuit of land, money, construction funds, or donated labor can have a meaningful impact on the development of a well-rounded system.

The most frequently used type of gift involves the giving of land (through a full gift of agreed upon below market value sale) 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 familiar 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 also be used to match non-local grant funds. When not tied into a grant, such donations of land, labor, or materials can play an important role in reducing the demand for local capital expenditures.

Some cities have developed a gift catalog as a tool for emphasizing an organized 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 local program needs. The gifts catalog should be prepared in a format that can be distributed effectively and inexpensively and should employ 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 Recreation and Parks Department 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. Since property ownership may be envisioned as a bundle of rights, it is possible for the Town 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. On 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 Town. Perhaps the greatest benefit lies in the fact that the community purchases only those rights that it specifically needs to execute its parkland objectives. By purchasing only rights that are necessary to the system and on the land itself, the Town is making more selective and efficient use of its limited financial resources.
- ◆ Zoning/Subdivision Regulations/Mandatory Dedication – Zoning ordinances, subdivision regulation, and mandatory dedications may be utilized to create new parkland at no cost to the community. This must be approved through special state legislation in Raleigh.

Subdivision regulations can be revised to contain written provisions making allowance for both “cluster and planned united development.” Design standards relating to tree cover, drainage ways, and other natural features can be instrumental in the preservation of the natural setting. Regulations can require that land is dedicated and/or compensation made to the Town for the development of parkland.

Black Mountain should reserve the right to review all preliminary development plans to verify acceptance of required dedicated parkland. All too often, developers attempt to dedicate unusable land to local governments. Scattered and unplanned pockets of open space are of no use to the overall recreation and park system. Payment in lieu of dedicated land for facility development at other park sites is recommended as an alternative.

A variation of the mandatory land dedication is payment of a fee in lieu of land dedication. The fee payment for dwelling unit construction goes directly into a special fund earmarked for park acquisition and development. The benefits of this method for park development in newly evolving neighborhoods are many.

- \* The Town of Black Mountain is financially able to purchase parks in accordance with a predetermined set of plans.
- \* The money is available when needed.
- \* The residents involved directly feel the benefit of the park fee.

### **Summary – Economic Impact of Recreation and Parks**

Research concerning the economic importance of public recreation has not been well documented. These services can be difficult to measure on a monetary basis and seldom receive much attention in terms of their impact on a community. Public recreation is not bought and sold in the same manner as the services provided by private resorts and clubs. As such, there are no formal indices for measuring the volume of trade generated at public parks.

In a Fortune magazine study, nearly 50 % of the largest 1000 US corporations look at recreational opportunities in an area before deciding on relocation.

Recent surveys have concluded that parks provide a positive economic impact within a community. The US Forest Service has conducted a study in North Carolina that indicates parks do contribute considerably to the economic conditions of a region. In addition, outdoor recreation, including open space areas, is an especially attractive economic development alternative. In addition to creating new jobs and income, the impacts of park and recreation enriches the quality of life by providing leisure opportunities.

**Maps**

<b>Park Type</b>	<b>Acres/1000 Population</b>	<b>Minimum Size in Acreage</b>	<b>Service Area</b>
Regional Park	10	1000	50 mile radius
District Park	5	200	5 mile radius
Community Park	2.5	25	2 mile radius
Neighborhood Park	2.5	5	1 mile radius
Mini Park	.5	1	.25 mile radius
Linear Park (State Standard)	30	Varies	Varies
Special or Unique	Varies	Varies	Varies

**Table 2: Public Facilities Needs Analysis**

**Black Mountain Park Classification and Land Area Requirements**

<b>Park Type</b>	<b>Number Needed in Year 2025</b>	<b>Recommended Minimum Size in Acreage</b>
Regional Park	0	0
District Park	1	70
Community Park	1	15
Neighborhood Park	2	3
Mini Park	5	1
Linear Park (State Standard)	Adequate to connect all parks	Adequate to connect all parks
Special or Unique	1	3

**Table 3: Standards for Public Facilities**

Facility	National Standard for Population 10,000 and Under	National Standard for Population 10,000 to 20,000	Currently Have
District Park *1	50acres	75 acres	0 acres
Community Park *2	2 or 3 @ 25 acres each	3 or 4 @ 25 acres each	19 acres (Lake) 17 acres (Rec Park)
Neighborhood Park *3	3 @ 12.5 acres each	4 @ 12.5 acres each	7 acres (Carver) 4 acres (Cragmont)
Recreational Center *4	1	1	0
Neighborhood Center (no gym)	1	1 to 2	1
Softball/Baseball Fields *5	3 to 6	6 to 11	6
Swimming Pool 25 yard Or 50 Meter Pool	1 0	1 or 2 1	1 or 2 1
Tennis Courts	5	7	4 @ Black Mtn 8 @ Owen Middle 6 @ Montreat
Basketball, Outdoor	2	3	6
Volleyball, Outdoor	2	3	1
Shuffleboard	2	3	0
Football/Soccer	1	2	2
Picnic Shelter	3	5	1
Picnic Sites	20 to 40	40 to 60	8
Camping Sites	25	38	0
Bicycling Trail	10 to 20 miles	15 to 30 miles	½ mile
Jogging/Fitness Trail	1	1	0
Nature Trail	2	3	0
Playgrounds	10	15	3
Outdoor Amphitheater	1	1	0
Handball/Racquet Ball	1 to 2	1 to 2	0

\*1 A district park consists of an indoor recreational facility, ballfields, hard surface courts, multi-purpose play fields, picnicking, and various types of trails.

\*2 A community park consists of a community center, athletic fields, swimming, tennis, walking/jogging trails, wildlife viewing area, quiet sitting area, and picnicking.

\*3 A neighborhood park contains passive recreational areas for sitting, picnicking, walking, and, adjacent, yet removed, active play areas with one or two tennis courts, playground, and a multi-purpose play field.

\*4 A multi-purpose recreational center includes an indoor pool, indoor courts (tennis and racquetball), classrooms/activity rooms, and meeting space such as a small auditorium/theatre.

\*5 Rec park includes 4 fields, 3 of which are suitable for baseball and 4 of which are suitable for softball. Two softball only fields are located at the Primary School and are not controlled by the Town. Currently, adult leagues and youth leagues cannot be scheduled at the same time due to lack of fields.

Source: [National Park, Recreation and Open Space Standards](#). National Recreation & Park Association.

**Mission**

The Black Mountain Recreation and Parks Department, in partnership with our citizens and with respect to our environment, will provide community-based recreation programs, wellness opportunities, facilities, and services to enrich the quality of life in Black Mountain. Black Mountain provides programming for children, adolescents, adults, and senior citizens.

**Appendix C: Excerpts from Black Mountain Greenway Master Plan**

**Appendix D: Capital Improvement Plan – 6190 Recreation and Parks Department Summary**

**Appendix E: Comments From Public Meetings**

June 4, 1998. Meeting held at Lakeview Center. Attendees: 14.

Comments received:

- Need more bike paths.
- Need indoor pool.
- Need trips to bowling alley.
- Need lawn bowling facility.
- Need covered basketball court.
- Need staffing at Recreation Park to encourage pickup games and to hand out equipment.
- Need to modernize Lakeview Center.
  
- Current facilities are good.
- Now have good activities for seniors.
- Planning is now good, Black Mountain always does a lot already.
- The downstairs of this building is too cramped for exercise classes.
  
- What is the status of greenways?
- The croquet group is a “closed” society; Need to open up for newcomers, new players.
- Lawn bowling and croquet often use the same court.
- Be sure to count in the population increase from “summer” folk.

June 9, 1998. Meeting held at Public Building. Attendees: 4.

Comments received:

- Need place for skateboarders (2 comments received).
- Need bicycling paths.
- Need indoor pool.
- Need to provide for youth.
- Need “co-op” programs.
- Need shuffleboard courts.
- Need Monday night covered dish suppers (now being done).
- Need canoes/paddle boat rentals on the lake; this would produce revenue.
  
- Plan based on demand.
- Keep up water exercise classes.
- Delighted with summer concert series.
- Don’t put carpet in Lakeview upstairs; leave the dance floor.

July 7, 1998. Meeting held at Lakeview Center. Attendees: 12.

Comments received:

- Need lights on lower tennis courts.
- Need indoor pool for seniors and for swimming classes for youth.
- Need indoor tennis courts; now have to travel to Asheville.
- Need more lighted tennis courts; now have to travel to Asheville.
- Need soft, “clay” tennis courts.
- Need practice area at golf course.
- Need square dancing.
- Need weekend square dances/street dances.

- Need to pave parking at lower tennis courts so rocks don't get thrown onto courts.
- Need fitness trail.
- Need sliding board at playgrounds.
- Need power digger in playgrounds.
- Need bicycle trails.
  
- I like to use the tennis courts.
- I like to go to the concerts.
- I like to use swings with my grandchildren.
- I like to use the picnic tables.
- I'm willing to pay to use tennis courts.
- I enjoy the community garden.
  
- Do more maintenance inspections of your facilities.
- Educate the kids at the pool about sunburn.
- Don't raise taxes to pay for "this".
- Don't make me pay for facilities that I don't use; I will pay a use fee for tennis but I don't want to pay for ballfields.

## Appendix F: Comments From Comprehensive Plan Meeting

April 11, 2002. Community Planning Meeting held at Lakeview Center. Attendees for recreation and parks planning: 8.

Comments received:

- Need community parks.
- Need bike paths.
- Need “beauty” spots; quiet spots to sit and think.
- Need public transportation.
- Need to utilize school facilities.
- Need to cover pool we now have (person was referring to County pool).
- Need neighborhood playgrounds.
- Need to develop indoor/year-round activities, such as, tennis, racquetball.
- Establish a natural park at Dunsmore Cove.
  
- Planning/zoning needs to consider recreation areas in all future development.
- Need creative funding to support recreation and parks.
- Need pro-active zoning.
- Establish a non-profit support group for recreation and parks to hold land and to provide financial support.
- Setup intergenerational activities/programs.
- Involve youth in planning and implementation.
- Setup a pro-active tax policy for open space easements.
- Increase the visibility of the Recreation Commission.
- Approach land owners about donating land.
  
- We have good facilities to start with.
- Citizens have positive attitude for outdoor recreational activities.
- Community leaders favorably support recreation and parks.
- We have good recreation and parks staff.
- Public is hesitant to pay fees.
- Public lacks education to value parks and recreation.
- Coordinate greenways plan with Riverlink.
- Coordinate with Conference Centers to use facilities.
- Recruit with schools, churches, non-profits to donate time/facilities.
  
- We have a good existing base of private recreational facilities.
- We have an abundance of open space.
- We have an absence of senior recreation.
- We have a lack of facilities/programs for teens “on-the-edge”.
- Where do we get land?
- Our topography works against us.
- Present zoning is anti-open space.
- Require town officials to enforce rules on recreational properties.
- Control speeding in recreational areas.

**Reference Material**

Documents, reports, and maps were referenced in preparation of the Master Plan which provided background information pertaining to land use, demographics, and recreation planning. These documents include:

*Black Mountain Greenway Master Plan*, 2003.

*Union County Parks and Recreation Master Plan*, Union County North Carolina, May 1992.

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