

**BLACK MOUNTAIN  
RECREATION AND PARKS**

**2016 Black Mountain  
Veterans Park  
Master Plan**

**Presented to:**

**THE TOWN OF BLACK MOUNTAIN  
NORTH CAROLINA**

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# ***Black Mountain Veterans Park***

## **1.0 Introduction**

Parks are defined as areas of land set aside for public use, often preserving the natural characteristics of that land, meant for recreation and enjoyment. Recreation is defined as the refreshment of one's mind and body through activity that amuses or stimulates (play, if you will). Few parks are able to truly serve a wide cross-section of the local public and provide the setting and facilities necessary to rejuvenate their users. It takes a unique mix of elements to create such a rare and special place. If you ask anyone in Black Mountain, North Carolina, they will tell you, Black Mountain Veterans Park is one such special place.

Black Mountain Veterans Park provides its users a place to play, walk, fish, gather, exercise and relax within a 27.2-acre parcel situated on the southwest side of the Town of Black Mountain. The development of such a park didn't happen overnight. The Park was created in 1991, was flooded and rebuilt in 1996. However, time is catching up with Black Mountain Veterans Park. Facilities that have been maintained for many years are beginning to show their age. Major renovations have been difficult to fund. The maintenance and upkeep that has sustained the park for so many years is beginning to affect the level of service that Black Mountain Veterans Park can provide the Town of Black Mountain.

The Town of Black Mountain is committed to preserving, restoring and enhancing Black Mountain Veterans Park for many years to come. The Black Mountain Veterans Park Master Plan establishes a thorough vision of improvement and development for the next 10 years.

## ***Black Mountain Recreation and Parks:***

### **1.1 Vision Statement**

Building a strong and healthy community for all through programs and places.

### **1.2 Mission Statement**

The Black Mountain Recreation & 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.

## 2.0 Community Outreach

### 2.1 Public Input

Public input meetings for Black Mountain Veterans Park were held on March 14, 2016 11:00am at the Lakeview Center; March 19, 2016 at 11:30 am @ Veterans Park; March 24, 2016 6:30 pm at the Carver Community Center; March 28, 2016 5:00 pm at Town Hall. The goal of these meetings was to get input from local residents on what enhancements they feel are needed in the park. Because of the size of the park and its numerous user groups several meetings were held on varying days and times to get input from a broader cross section of users. User groups and town residents were notified of meetings via social media, news releases, and flyers posted on public bulletin boards. In addition, predetermined focus groups were personally invited to participate. Some of the ideas proposed for consideration included: a playground, a picnic area, an outdoor kitchen, and land acquisition for park expansion.

Ninety-nine responses were received through public meetings. In each meeting, each respondent was asked to rank the proposed ideas on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being the project that they would most like to see. The rankings are in the table below.

|                          | 1's | 2's | 3's | 4's | Points |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------|
| Playground               | 51  | 18  | 19  | 11  | 307    |
| Ballfield Pavilion       | 11  | 35  | 27  | 21  | 224    |
| Outdoor Kitchen          | 20  | 20  | 24  | 25  | 213    |
| Land Acquisition         | 17  | 19  | 17  | 26  | 185    |
| Year Round Bathrooms     | 25  | 14  | 18  | 14  | 192    |
| Stream Restoration       | 23  | 16  | 15  | 9   | 179    |
| Trail Improvements       | 16  | 13  | 17  | 17  | 154    |
| Shade for the Ballfields | 13  | 10  | 7   | 8   | 104    |
| Fishing Pier             | 6   | 16  | 8   | 10  | 98     |
| Educational Wetlands     | 7   | 10  | 8   | 9   | 83     |
| Outdoor Exercise Area    | 5   | 6   | 9   | 11  | 67     |
| Basketball Court         | 7   | 5   | 6   | 7   | 62     |
| Disc Golf Improvements   | 1   | 4   | 2   | 10  | 30     |
| Bike Station             | 1   | 5   | 4   | 2   | 29     |
| Dog Park                 | 1   | 2   | 4   | 5   | 23     |
| Pickleball               | 0   | 0   | 2   | 2   | 6      |

Each item that received a first place vote was translated to four (4) points, second place received three (3) points, third place received two (2) points, and fourth place received one (1) point.

The top four items were on a separate voting board from the board with the remaining items. The top four items were separated because they had been identified in previous forums as priority improvements.

Each respondent, in both the online survey and the public meetings, were also given the opportunity to further elaborate on their selection by giving comments. Some of the comments that were worth noting from the responses are as follows:

|                              | <b>Other Ideas</b>               |                    |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Better Lighting in Underpass | Ballfield sprinklers             | more indoor soccer |
| Pave Parking Lot             | bigger skate park                |                    |
| Signs for visually impaired  | golf area                        |                    |
| Plaque for veterans          | alcohol permits in public places |                    |
| Better signage from us 70    | soccer fields                    |                    |

The original public meeting to gather input for the Black Mountain Veterans Park (known as Black Mountain Recreation Park at the time) was held on December 4, 2014. From this meeting and from previous discussions with the Recreation Commission it was determined that land acquisition, playground, pavilion, and outdoor kitchen were ongoing priorities, with year round restrooms and ADA improvements to be done if funding allowed.

In summary, the turnout for these events and the amount of feedback received, indicates the value that residents place on the park and its future. Most, acknowledged that several of the higher scoring items could be cost prohibitive and may take longer to achieve than some items that scored lower but have other potential sources of funding, such as grants or donations.

## **2.2 Black Mountain Needs Assessment**

During the spring of 2015 Black Mountain Recreation and Parks (BMRP) conducted a Needs Assessment.

The objectives of this Needs Assessment were:

- To assess awareness regarding healthy living through recreation
- To gauge the attitudes, needs, interests and behavior of the people of Black Mountain with respect to leisure, health, and recreation

The Needs Assessment was conducted by mailing, via USPS, 3000 questionnaires to a random sample of addresses in Black Mountain. The response rate was just over 10%. The data was analyzed using standard statistical software to develop the recommendations presented here. It should be noted that the data presented in this report is based on the responses obtained from the Needs Assessment and the descriptive and narrative information collected in the focus group meetings.

## 2.3 Results Of The Study: Demographics

### *Description of the Population*

A set of questions was designed to elicit demographic information such as age, marital status, gender, etc. These questions can provide information about a community's makeup and therefore its possible recreation needs. It is useful to note that the percentages reported have been rounded.

#### Gender

The sample was made up of 32% male and 68% female respondents. While this is different from the Census information, at this point, the data will be accepted with a certain amount of bias towards female respondents.

#### Age

The questionnaire provided different age categories that placed the median age in the 55-64 age groups which is higher than the Census median age reported as 48 years.

#### Income

The household income distribution varied from under \$50,000 to over \$150,000 per year, with the median income being in the \$50,000 to \$75,000 range which is higher than the median income of \$37,000 described in the 2012 Census.

#### Household composition

The respondents indicated that 57% were married. Nearly 97% of the respondents claimed to be white, with the rest being African-American and Hispanic. Nearly 90% of the respondents claimed to have a high-school diploma or a higher educational degree. The people who responded to the questionnaire approximate the population of Black Mountain with some over- and under-representations. Additionally, the majority of the respondents claimed to pay property taxes in Black Mountain and the average length of residence in Black Mountain was 21 years. These limitations can be corrected by applying appropriate statistical weights to the data, however, this report is based on the analysis of the un-weighted data.

#### Findings of Needs Assessment

The table on the next page are the findings from the needs assessment. The needs were presented and respondents either agreed (yes) or disagreed (no) whether or not the item was needed and whether or not they would likely use the item if developed.

## 2.4 Areas of Importance

### From Needs Assessment

| NEE                              | Ye | No | Will use |
|----------------------------------|----|----|----------|
| Sidewalks                        | 90 | 10 | 93       |
| Walking trails                   | 87 | 13 | 94       |
| Year-round restroom facilities   | 87 | 13 | 90       |
| Special events                   | 85 | 15 | 86       |
| Neighborhood parks               | 83 | 18 | 83       |
| Connected greenways              | 80 | 20 | 84       |
| Picnic pavilions                 | 80 | 20 | 75       |
| Parking                          | 79 | 21 | 85       |
| Greenways                        | 77 | 23 | 82       |
| Upgrading of existing facilities | 76 | 24 | 64       |
| Designated bike lanes            | 74 | 26 | 65       |
| Community garden                 | 73 | 27 | 43       |
| Swim time for adults             | 71 | 29 | 56       |
| Bicycle trails                   | 70 | 30 | 66       |
| Disabled access                  | 68 | 32 | 37       |
| Bicycle lanes                    | 68 | 32 | 69       |
| Accessible facilities            | 67 | 33 | 54       |
| Deal with water runoff           | 66 | 34 | 65       |
| Water exercise classes           | 65 | 35 | 58       |
| Dog park                         | 58 | 42 | 46       |
| Fishing facilities               | 56 | 44 | 41       |
| Restrooms at tennis complex      | 53 | 47 | 40       |
| Greenhouse                       | 53 | 47 | 48       |
| Bike borrowing programs          | 51 | 49 | 39       |
| Outdoor basketball courts        | 51 | 49 | 34       |
| Aerobics                         | 48 | 52 | 34       |
| Community kitchen                | 48 | 52 | 29       |
| Summer camp                      | 45 | 55 | 22       |
| Campgrounds                      | 44 | 56 | 39       |
| Rental spaces                    | 39 | 61 | 23       |
| Tennis courts                    | 37 | 63 | 22       |
| Indoor basketball courts         | 36 | 64 | 15       |
| Tennis facilities                | 33 | 67 | 24       |
| Tennis clinics support           | 30 | 70 | 9        |
| Baseball fields                  | 29 | 71 | 13       |

## **3.0 Research and Analysis**

In addition to the Needs Assessment, the park was studied and evaluated to determine existing issues. Proper site analysis is crucial in determining each issue that exists on a project site. The following sections describe the current setting of Black Mountain Veterans Park.

### **3.1 Black Mountain Veterans Park History**

- 1991 the Town purchased 17 acres
- 1992 ball field construction, soccer field and concession stand.
- 1993 fencing installed
- 1993 park is named Black Mountain Recreation Park
- 1994-1995 flooding severely damaged fields, trails, and concession stand area and was repaired March 1995, after consultation with Army Corps of Engineers
- 1997 - Lighting for fields added
- 1998 River Loop Trail was added
- 1999 The Oaks trail that connects the park to Vance Avenue was completed in
- 1999 The Bridge at the Oaks trail was also added
- 2000 First 9 holes of disc golf added
- 2003 The Clevenger Sock Mill Property (10 acres) was purchased
- 2004 Community Garden developed
- 2006 Underpass to connect the north and south sides of the park were completed in
- 2008 Back 9 of disc golf added
- 2011 The Garden loop trail was added
- 2012 Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation Track Trail was added
- 2016 Black Mountain Recreation Park was renamed Black Mountain Veterans Park in March.

### **3.2 Site Features**

Black Mountain Veterans Park is located in a wide, flat valley that borders the Swannanoa River. Approximately 1/3 of the park lies within the FEMA 100-year Floodplain. A protective berm was constructed within the park to protect from repetitive flooding while maintaining the integrity of the river and the surrounding properties. The only major utility of note found in the park is a supply power line for Duke Progress Power Company. There is only one small area on the north-west corner of the park that contains wetlands.



### **3.3 Facility Inventory**

Black Mountain Veterans Park is located within an industrial area of Black Mountain, North Carolina. Existing park facilities include:

- Four Baseball/Softball Fields
- Concession Stand
- Score booth
- Multi-Sport Fields
- Walking/Jogging Path (1.6 miles)
- 18 Hole Disc Golf Course
- Picnic Areas
- Dr. John Wilson Community Garden
- 1 Covered Picnic Table
- Grey Eagle Arena Indoor Soccer Facility
- 1 Fishing Platform
- Outdoor Restroom Building
- Maintenance Building
- Benches
- Bike Rack

#### **Program Inventory**

- Fishing
- Walking
- Cross Country Running
- Track Trail
- Geocaching
- Youth Indoor Soccer
- Community Gardening
- Owen District Youth Football
- Owen Babe Ruth Baseball and Softball
- Disc Golf Tournaments hosted by WNC Disc Golf Assoc.
- Adult Softball League
- Facility Rentals
- Special Events
- Track Trail

### **3.4 Site Description & Observations**

#### **Black Mountain Veterans Park Parking Area**

- Most visitors see the Veterans Park parking area before they experience any other feature of the park. There is no clear main entrance to this parking area. The existing parking area is difficult to navigate, especially for first time visitors, when the park is busy. This parking area is the larger of the two parking areas at the park and contains approximately 200 unmarked spaces.

#### **Grey Eagle and Community Garden Parking Area**

- This building was constructed circa 1963 and currently has 10,000 square feet of heated space. The building was used as a sock factory until the early 2000's. The building was used for storage for several years and finally remodeled into an indoor soccer facility in 2005 and opened in March 2006. The arena has parking for approximately 40 cars in the front of the building and shares parking in the back with the community garden for another 40 spots.

### **3.5 Opportunities & Constraints**

Black Mountain Veterans Park is highly used and visited by a variety of Black Mountain's residents and visitors, which is testament to the park's service to the community. Existing vegetation, primarily hardwoods, creates a green belt around the park. The ball field complex holds functions March-November.

A park that serves such a large number of residents and visitors is bound to have a number of issues and constraints. Drainage issues throughout the park contribute to the granite screenings from the River Loop Trail washing away and into the river. Stream banks continue to change and erode in sections. Relationships between the two main parking lots and the uses that surround them are not compatible. The past absence of a park master plan is evident as well. Recent additions to the park facilities have been placed in the closest open area, without regard to future uses. Furnishings within the park, which are used daily, have been added haphazardly and without forethought. The site inventory counted three different styles of benches within the park.

Though Black Mountain Veterans Park is a thriving space, it is not without its flaws and imperfections. It is key to plan for the future of the park, so that it may serve future citizens and visitors as it serves those today.

## 4.0 Recreational Needs

The stated goal of the Black Mountain Recreation & Parks 2025 Master Plan is to provide the Town of Black Mountain with an accurate, usable plan to guide its action for improvements and development of park facilities and programs for the future. The following excerpts from the Department Master Plan pertain directly to Black Mountain Veterans Park and the role it plays within the overall park system. A copy of the 2025 BMRP Master Plan is available upon request from the Black Mountain Recreation and Parks Department.

### **BMRP 2025 Master Plan**

- Indicates that the total park system needs additional:
  - Picnic Shelters
  - Picnic Sites
  - Jogging/Fitness Trail
  - Playgrounds
  
- Black Mountain Veterans Park needs:
  - Year Round Restrooms
  - ADA Improvements
  - Additional Parking
  - Playground
  - Improved Drainage
  - Picnic Pavilion
  - Outdoor Kitchen

### Priorities for Development for Black Mountain Veterans Park

Based on all studies and assessments the Recreation Commission has prioritized the park needs below:

1. ADA Improvements
2. Playground
3. Picnic Pavilion
4. Year Round Restrooms
5. Land Acquisition
6. Stream Restoration
7. Trail Improvements
8. Shade
9. Fishing Pier

## 5.0 Recommendation

The following recommendations represent a culmination of an extensive information gathering, public participation and professional assessment process. This process involved hours of on-site investigation, the assessment of site features, the analysis of those features, input from the public in various forums, the recommendations of previous studies and conversations with town staff and the Board of Aldermen. The process leaves the project team with a clear understanding of the needs within Black Mountain Veterans Park.

Recommendations for improvements within Black Mountain Veterans Park are broken into two categories:

- **Immediate Needs:**
  - These recommendations include those mentioned time after time through the public input process, as well as those which are referred to in previous studies. These recommendations will have a definite impact on the recreational opportunities available to the citizens of Black Mountain.
- **Future Needs:**
  - These recommendations represent more broad improvements to Black Mountain Veterans Park aimed at enhancing the existing uses within the park while maximizing the arrangement of those uses.

### 5.1 Black Mountain Veterans Park Immediate Needs (Phase I):

#### Playground

- A new playground would be constructed in the current cul-de-sac and parking area adjacent to the ballfield pavilion. This playground would be constructed to meet all playground safety.

#### Ballfield Pavilion

- The ballfield pavilion will also be constructed in the current cul-de-sac and parking area. This facility will be available for rental by groups of up to 25 to 30 people.

#### Trail

- The old trail in the northwest corner of the park will be rehabilitated
- The loop trail around the park will be rehabilitated with some redesign and reconstruction to make the trail ADA compliant.

### Landscape Beautification

- Volunteers are willing to work with BMRP to enhance the beauty of the park. These groups, along with other members of the community, will assist the department in small maintenance projects and park beautification projects throughout the year. These projects are aimed at using landscape materials to increase the park's natural beauty and soften the impact of elements both inside and around the park. 'Park Sweep' events can be held once or twice a year. These events will allow citizens and groups in Black Mountain to actively give back to a place that many of them use on a regular basis. Plantings will be used to "soften and clarify" the entrance from Veterans Park Drive.

### Streambank Restoration

- Streambank Restoration has been identified as a need from the community and the Recreation & Parks Department. Due to the increased number of high water events in the recent past there has been substantial degradation of several of the streambanks in the park. BMRP will explore opportunities for grant funding for this project, as well as partnering with other local organizations such as RiverLink.

### Year Round Restrooms

- Currently we are only able to provide restrooms nine months of the year while the park is used year round. Either the current restrooms will be upgraded or non-flush toilets installed for winter use only, with current flush toilets used during warmer months.

### Parking

- Phase I will include a study of existing parking to determine the best plan for improvements. An engineering study of the current design is needed. This study should also include an analysis of need to additional land purchases to improve parking. Land acquisition and/or design changes would be a future phase, as discussed below. Short term improvements could include scheduling of ballgames so that all 4 fields are not used at once and educating players and families on the benefit of carpooling to games.

## 5.2 Black Mountain Recreation Park Future Needs:

### Parking

- Based on design study conducted in Phase I, parking will be improved, through redesign or land purchases.

### Outdoor Kitchen

- The outdoor kitchen/pavilion will be a partly covered area for gatherings and an outdoor uncovered area that will be used for gardening and cooking demonstrations. It could also be used as an outdoor classroom for environmental education, food preservation classes, garden gatherings, or home to one of the many other classes that are currently held in relation to the garden. It might also be rented for special events.

### Fishing Pier

- A new large fishing pier will be built on the garden side of Veterans Park. The exact location of this is yet to be determined.

### Grey Eagle Arena

- Turf repair/replacement. The current turf was installed in 2006 and probably will not need to be upgraded until 2026.

### Dr. John Wilson Community Garden

- A greenhouse built somewhere near the current community garden would be a beneficial facility. This could be used to grow and sell starts which could help fund the garden in the future. Space could also be rented to gardeners.

### Drainage

- An upgrade to the park drainage will allow for better usage through the lack of less down time due to flooding and water damage.

### Rebuilding of Ballfields

- At some point in the future the actual ball fields will need to be redone. The fields suffer from wear and tear each year and slow degradation of underlying structure. This may require some down time for baseball and softball but it is an upgrade that will be necessary

### Fencing

- The ball field backstops and fencing will need to be replaced. The backstops and fencing also suffer from wear and tear each year and must be upgraded at some point in the future. We would also like to create a safer facility for the spectators which would include netting to prevent errant balls from entering the spectator area.

#### Concession Stand

- Upgrading the scoreboards and concession stand area will need to be done at some point. The scoreboards are old and should be replaced. The concession stand could use some modern day upgrades including countertops, hot water tank, appliances, etc.

#### Lighting

- The lighting for the ball fields will need to be upgraded to a more modern system. Many of the new systems today provide lights that use less energy and are much more efficient and inexpensive to upkeep. A lighting system where the lights could be turned on and off remotely using the internet could save time and money used for staffing facility.

#### Site Furnishings

- As existing site furnishings (benches, trash receptacles, grills, and picnic tables) deteriorate, new site furnishings will be added. The design of the new site furnishings will relate to one another and reflect the natural character of the park and the architectural elements of the structures in the park.

#### Pedestrian Park Entrances

- Pedestrian entrances into Black Mountain Veterans Park will be treated as gateways into the park. Entrance features, such as low walls, fences, signs and/or bollards, will create a formal focused entrance for pedestrians and cyclists. These features will be designed to allow maintenance vehicles to access the park where necessary.

## **6.0 Action Plan and Implementation**

The Black Mountain Veterans Park Master Plan is based upon a review of the entire community, an analysis of the existing park, and, the identification of user needs. The plan is intended to be “action-oriented”, designed to provide a framework from which the Town can enhance the park and its programs.

Instrumental to implementation of the recommendations of this plan is the identification of adequate funding. Input provided by town residents and various park user groups appear to reflect the high value placed on this park.

Implementing the plan will result in meeting the future needs for this park and its users, as well as preserving 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. Along with Town provided improvements and operating costs, the following potential sources of funding have been identified.

## **6.1 Alternative Funding Sources**

### **Bond Referendums**

A bond referendum can be placed on a ballot to finance land acquisition and site development costs for parks and/or greenways. Voters must approve a bond. Because of this fact, it would be critical to educate the public on the mission and intent of the bond in order to gain necessary support.

### **Impact Fees**

Impact fees are one-time monetary charges levied by a state or local government on new development. A local government can go through the process to change state statutes if impact fees are needed in the community. Unlike dedication fees required through development, one-time impact fees can be applied to finance nearby recreation facilities.

### **Taxation**

Communities can vote to raise tax money in support of Town-wide recreation efforts. These small taxes can be made temporary, lasting only for a predetermined period of time, or permanent.

### **Private Funding Sources**

Town of Black Mountain has many local businesses, regional offices, and industries located within the county. The Town should establish a list of business owners through the Chamber of Commerce to seek financial and volunteer support for local events and park improvements.

### **User Fees**

Municipalities typically charge a variety of user fees for recreational services and facilities within a park system. These fees are usually associated with special program participation and facility use. The Town of Black Mountain could review, update and impose small user fees for the use and upkeep of these specialty facilities and programs.

### **Volunteer Work**

Local and regional volunteers can help with park and greenway development, maintenance, and monetary donations. Local organizations looking for a public service project, like Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts or conservation groups, would be ideal for this type of participation. All groups and organizations would require prior approval and would be supervised by a representative from the Town.



### ***AmeriCorp's National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC)***

One type of project NCCC volunteers can participate in is trail construction. They have been involved in trail projects in 50 states and have worked in some of North Carolina's state parks. These groups have experience in trail clearing, construction to comply with federal standards, and the implementation of erosion control measures.

### **Grants:**

Town of Black Mountain should continue to apply for county, state and federal grant programs as another method of financing recreation facility acquisition and development.

### **Other Grant Programs**

For more information on Federal Grants go to: [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)  
Other grants can be identified through a variety of sources.

### **Sponsorships:**

#### ***"Adopt-A" Series:***

Town of Black Mountain can promote parks and greenways and generate interest by developing a local Adopt-A-Park, Adopt-A-Trail, Adopt-A-Greenway or Adopt-A-Playground program that identifies the organization for providing a walk-through cleanup four times a year. Some local communities have constructed community playgrounds with its primary funds coming from private donations and volunteer labor. Donators can be identified with plaques and recognition markers.

### ***Athletic Programs:***

Successful programs can be made by donations of time, in-kind gifts, and cash donations.

### ***Annual Programs and Special Events:***

Underwriting, in-kind gifts, and financial support help keep these popular Special Events going. Private local companies partner with the Recreation and Parks Department to bring free or low-cost events to the public. This allows the Department to offer more activities and save tax dollars.