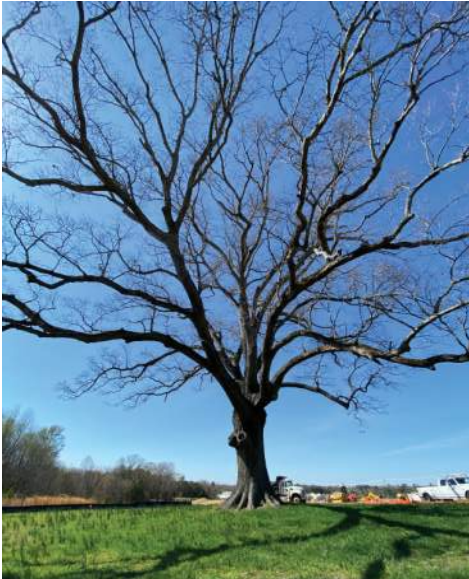


Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2023

City of Locust, North Carolina



August 28, 2023



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Benesch would like to acknowledge those individuals that have provided input to assist in the data collection and development of this Parks & Recreation Master Plan for the City of Locust.

Locust City Council

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SECTION ONE

PARKS & RECREATION OVERVIEW/INVENTORY

INTRODUCTION

The first step in the master planning process is to inventory and assess the existing parks and recreation facilities currently serving City of Locust residents. With the current demand on City resources, it is extremely important to identify and utilize existing facilities to their fullest potential, as well as opportunities for growth. This section identifies all existing parks and recreation facilities found within the City of Locust, as well as locations under consideration for parks and recreation development.

The City of Locust (through the Parks and Recreation Department) operates one Community Park: Locust City Park. Locust City Park is 30.72 ac, located 1.0 mile from the City Center adjacent to Locust Elementary School. Locust City Park is primarily a sports venue, with four(4) youth baseball fields and two(2) soccer fields, along with facilities for tennis, football & basketball. Along with two playground areas the park also provides two(2) restrooms and three(3) picnic shelters. There is also a 0.70 mile walking loop around the ballfields and a Memorial Garden area for Officer Jeff Shelton. See additional information in the existing Park Inventory section at the end of this section.

The open greenspace behind the City Hall, while not an official park and recreation facility, is currently used for special events such as movie nights and fireworks. It is included in the existing park inventories as a location that is currently used for recreational activities.

Area parks include Stanfield Barn Park and Pete Henkel Park in Stanfield. The West Stanly Community Pool is also located in Stanfield. Located approximately 7 miles East of Locust is Oakboro NC, which has the Town of Oakboro District Park, Disc Golf course and Blueway. Rob Wallace Park is located 7 miles west in Cabarrus County. Reed Gold Mine is located 6 miles northwest of Locust, with The Pharr Family Preserve trail, which is part of the Carolina Thread Trail, located just west of the gold mine across the Little Meadow Creek. Buffalo Creek Preserve is located the furthest away and is 10 miles north of Locust, just south of Mt. Pleasant, NC.

This section identifies the existing park and recreation facility as



well as several potential properties that may be considered for park and recreation acquisitions in the future. An overview of each park or site is included in each inventory as well as a list of recommended issues and opportunities for each location.

CITY OF LOCUST PARKS & RECREATION OFFERINGS

Parks and Recreation Facilities

The Parks and Recreation department for the City of Locust is responsible for Locust City Park, including running the thriving youth sports leagues for the citizens of Locust as well as neighboring communities. They also facilitate other community events, either at Locust City Park or other locations in the city.

Events/Programs

The City of Locust provides a variety of community events throughout the year. The following community events have been held in the past or are scheduled:

Community Events

- Family Movie Nights
- Locust City Cinema Parties
- End-of-Summer Concert Celebration
- Hands on Locust (touch-a-truck) Event
- Breakfast with Santa
- Christmas Parade



City of Locust Inventory of Existing Facilities

Type	Name	Acreage	Adult Baseball Fields	Youth Baseball Fields	Men's Softball Fields	Women's Softball Fields	Soccer Fields	Football Fields	Multi-purpose Fields	Basketball Courts (Outdoors)	Tennis Courts	Volleyball Courts (Sand)	Shuffleboard Courts	Horseshoe Pits	Swing Areas	Playgrounds	Picnic Shelters	Gazebo	Trail/Greenway (Miles)	Mountain Bike Trail (Miles)	Picnic Areas (No Shelter)	Picnic Tables	Grills	Dog Park	Skate Park	Grass Area/Open Space	Gardens/Passive Areas	Amphitheater	Fitness Equipment	Fishing Piers	Pickle Ball	Parking Spaces	Restrooms						
Mini-Parks																																							
		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Neighborhood Parks																																							
		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
	Locust City Park	30.72		4			2	1	3	1	2			1	1	2	3	1	0.7		2	11		1			1								202	2			
		30.72	0	4	0	0	2	1	3	1	2	0	0	1	1	2	3	1	0.7	0	2	11	0	1	0	0	1	0	4	0	0	0	202	2					
District Parks																																							
		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Greenways																																							
	Carolina Thread Trail*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Special Use Facilities																																							
		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Undeveloped Park Land																																							
		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Totals		30.72	0	4	0	0	2	1	3	1	2	0	0	1	1	2	3	1	0.7	0	2	11	0	1	0	1	0	4	0	0	0	202	2						

City of Locust | Existing Community Park Inventory

Locust, North Carolina

City of Locust Parks and Recreation | 05.09.2023

0 1000 2000
Feet



Locust City Park (2884 Park Drive)

COMMUNITY PARK

DESCRIPTION

Locust City Park (30.72 acres) is the only existing park in Locust, with many different amenities and uses. There are two entrances to the park, the primary entrance being off of E Main St with a secondary entrance at Lions Club Dr (off of N Central Ave). The primary entrance also serves as an entrance to the neighboring Locust Elementary School. The site is also home to the Locust Historical Society, Officer Jeff Shelton Memorial Park, and the Locust Parks and Recreation Office.

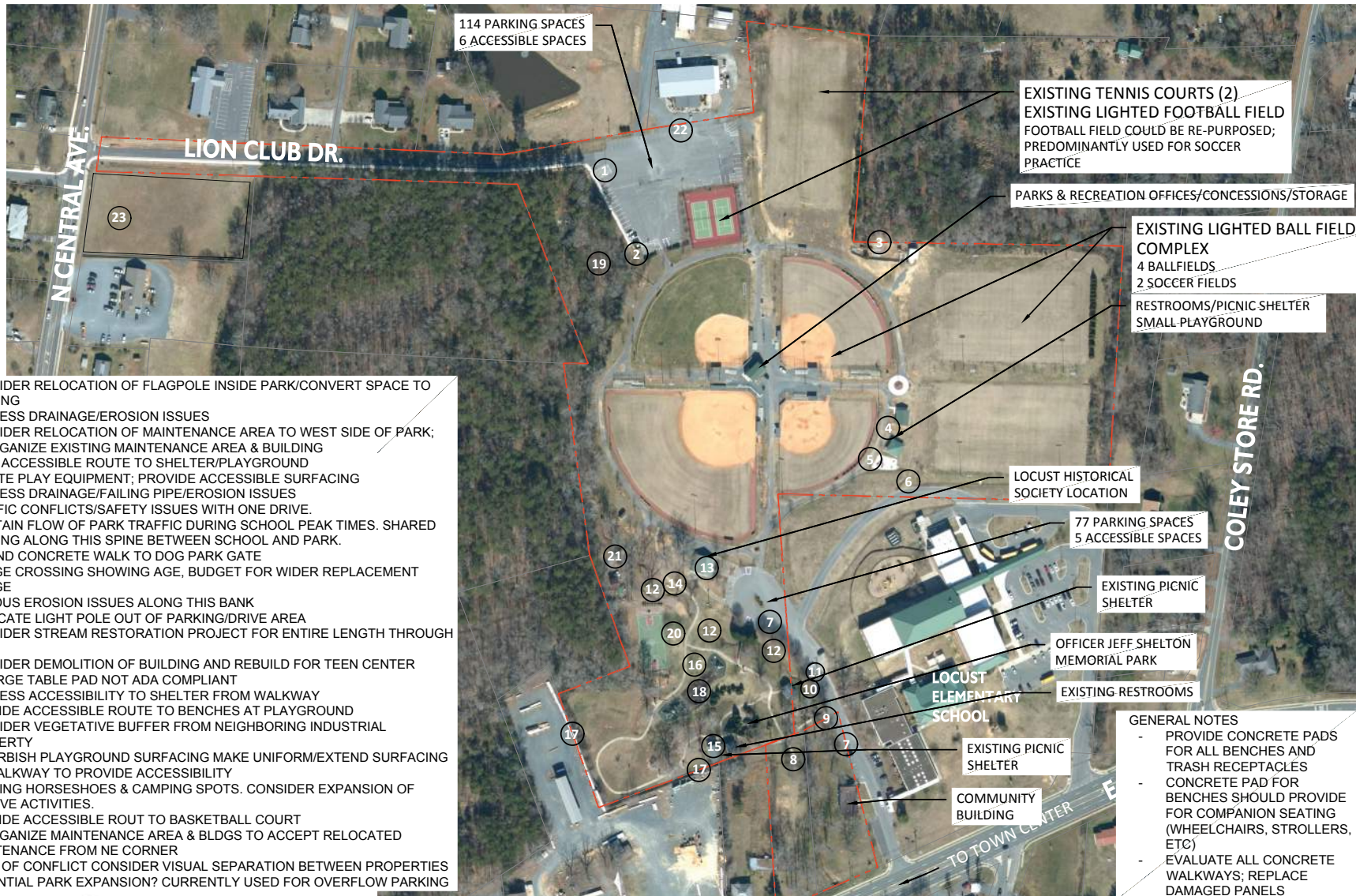
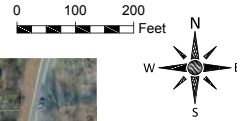
Amenities located within facility:

- 4 Baseball Fields (Lighted)
- 2 Soccer Fields (Lighted)
- 1 Football Field (Lighted)
- 2 Tennis Courts (Lighted)
- 1 Basketball Court
- 2 Playgrounds
- Horseshoes
- Camping Spaces
- Picnic Shelters (3)
- Restrooms (2)
- Concessions/ Parks and Recreation Office
- Memorial Garden
- Community Building
- Locust Historical Society Museum
- Dog Park with Agility Course
- Walking Loops (Paved)
- 2 Parking Lots (191 spaces & 11 accessible spaces total)

Challenges and opportunities

- Provide ADA Accessibility for all amenities
- Evaluating stormwater plan & addressing erosion/drainage issues
- Providing vehicular access that does not conflict with elementary school needs
- Adjacent lots provide opportunities for expansion; park has no additional acreage to expand





PIN #557503447681 (Lions Club Drive & North Central Avenue)

POTENTIAL ACQUISITION

DESCRIPTION

This available parcel is a 1.70 acre property located on the southeast corner of Lions Club Dr and N Central Ave (NC-200) in Locust, NC. The property abuts Locust City Park on the north side along Lions Club Dr. It is a vacant lot that is currently cleared and used as overflow parking for Locust City Park during special events.

There are no built amenities on the property, but there is access to utilities (water, sewer, & overhead electric). The parcel is connected by sidewalks on the north and west sides along the streets. There is an accessible ramp and pedestrian crosswalk with a median across N Central Ave. The property's topography is relatively flat, making the site favorable for development of a community/recreation center.

Challenges and opportunities

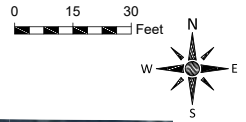
- Lighted sidewalk connectivity
- Cleared vacant lot
- Relatively flat topography
- Existing wooden fence on one side along N Central Ave
- Distance from Locust City Park (0.2 miles from the site to the Park's north parking lot)
- Could be considered too far from the park for a regular connection
- Access to and from the site
- ADA accessibility will not be too much of a problem due to topography
- Located on a busy corner with high visibility



Inventory Analysis | Corner Lot PIN# 557503447681 - 1.70 AC

Locust, North Carolina

City of Locust Parks and Recreation | 08.15.2023



DESCRIPTION

This available parcel is an 8.80 acre vacant lot adjacent to Locust City Park. The lot is located adjacent to the other undeveloped lots and is heavily wooded.

There are no built amenities on the site, but there may be limited access to utilities (water, sewer, & overhead electric) due to its location. The topography across the site is also relatively sloping, with an approximate slope between 5-8%.

Challenges and opportunities:

- Limited connection to utilities (water, sewer, & overhead electric)
- Location adjacent to Locust City Park and between other undeveloped parcels
- Heavily wooded site with steep slope, limiting use in its current state
- No independent access to the property (would have to be through the adjacent properties or Locust City Park)
- Visually appealing wooded backdrop for Locust City Park
- Would provide environment for passive recreation activities and/or trail development



DESCRIPTION

This available parcel along Lions Club Dr is a 6.17 acre vacant property. It is heavily wooded and located adjacent to Locust City Park and the “corner property.”

There are no built amenities on the site, but there is access to utilities (water, sewer, & overhead electric). The property is connected to Locust City Park by a sidewalk along Lions Club Dr. The topography across the site is also relatively sloping, with an approximate slope between 5-8%.

Challenges and opportunities:

- Utilities (sewer, water, overhead electric)
- Lighted sidewalk connectivity
- Location adjacent to Locust City Park and the “corner property”
- Heavily wooded site with moderate slopes, limiting use in its current state
- Single family residential homes face the property across Lions Club Drive
- Visually appealing wooded backdrop for Locust City Park
- Would provide environment for passive recreation activities and/or trail development



DESCRIPTION

This available parcel is a 10.72 acre interior lot adjacent to one of the other undeveloped lots. It is also heavily wooded.

There are no built amenities on the site, but there may be limited access to utilities (water, sewer, & overhead electric) due to its location. The topography across the lot appears to be less steep than some of the neighboring lots with an approximate slope of 3-6%.

Challenges and opportunities:

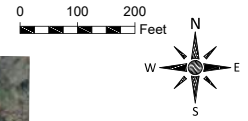
- Limited connection to utilities (water, sewer, & overhead electric)
- Location adjacent to another undeveloped parcel
- Heavily wooded site with limited uses due to existing slopes
- Access to E Main St but no access to Locust City Park except through a separate parcel
- Visually appealing wooded backdrop for Locust City Park
- A stub out to the parcel has already been constructed at Art Lane and E Market St providing access to both E Main St and N Central Ave
- Potential access from N Central Ave could also be made available via Dixon Rd which currently dead ends



Inventory + Analysis | Undeveloped Lots PINs : 557504542552 - 6.17 AC, 557504543087 - 8.8 AC, 557504531228 - 10.27 AC 557503447681 - 1.70 AC

Locust, North Carolina

City of Locust Parks and Recreation | 08.15.2023



PIN #557503228806 (Ray Kennedy Drive & Harrison Lane)

POTENTIAL ACQUISITION

DESCRIPTION

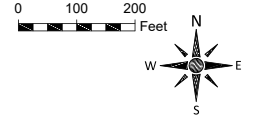
This small, 0.10 acre parcel is located on Ray Kennedy Dr and Harrison Ln in downtown Locust, behind an office/retail mixed use building and across the road from City Hall. On the west side of the parcel there are on-street parallel parking spaces (Ray Kennedy Dr), and on the east side there is a parking lot driveway.

The only amenity would be a connecting sidewalk through the parcel. Utility connections (water, sewer, & underground electric) would be available. It has level topography and is covered in mown grass. This lot is not a high priority to acquire.

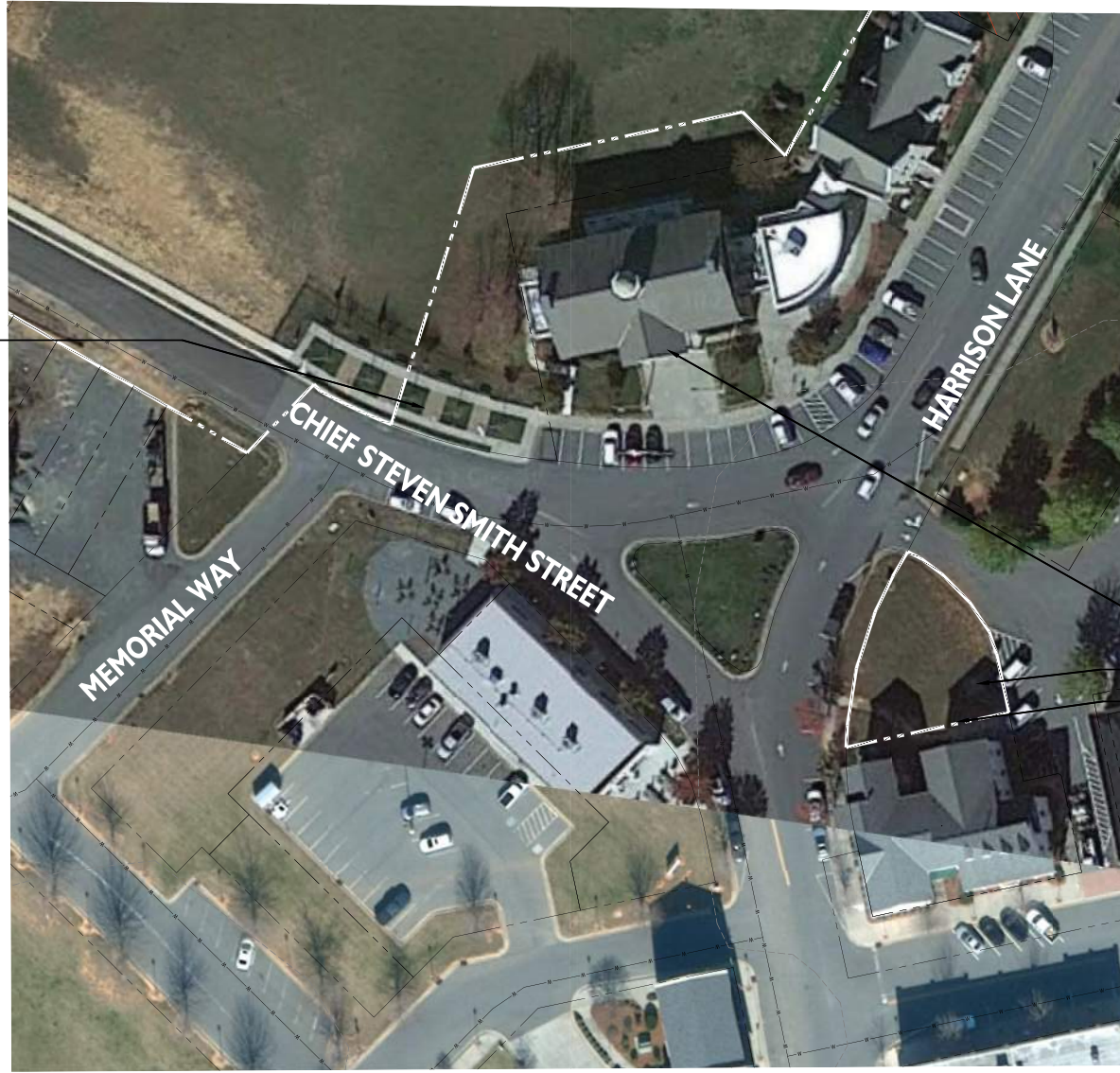
Challenges and opportunities:

- Connection to utilities (underground electric, water, & sewer)
- Level topography
- Sidewalk connection
- Very small site, but well connected to the rest of the downtown area
- Opportunity to add visual interest in the form of a garden/fountain due to its prominent location
- Opportunity to add pedestrian activities such as seating, a shade structure, or plaza area to support adjacent eateries





VETERANS MEMORIAL



CITY HALL BUILDING

TRANSFORMER & PHONE BOX

WOULD NEED TO
SCREEN HVAC UNITS

PIN #557503138320 (Kiser Lane & Kerri Dawn Lane)

POTENTIAL ACQUISITION

DESCRIPTION

This 38 acre parcel, sometimes referred to as the “Locust City Hall Backyard,” is located directly behind City Hall and the Veterans Memorial site, occupying the entire block between Kiser Ln and Kerri Dawn Ln. A new residential neighborhood is directly opposite from the site. It is currently operating as a grassed open space, but has also been used as an event space for movie nights and fireworks. The property slopes away from City Hall at approximately 3-5%.

There are no built amenities on the property, but there is access to utilities (water, sewer, and underground electric). Stormwater infrastructure also exists on the property. The parcel is connected by sidewalks along the City Hall sides, but not the residential sides. There is minimal pedestrian lighting. An accessible ramp sits at each end of the sidewalk. Both hardwood and evergreen trees exist along the edges of the site, preventing it from being considered an open space.

Challenges and opportunities:

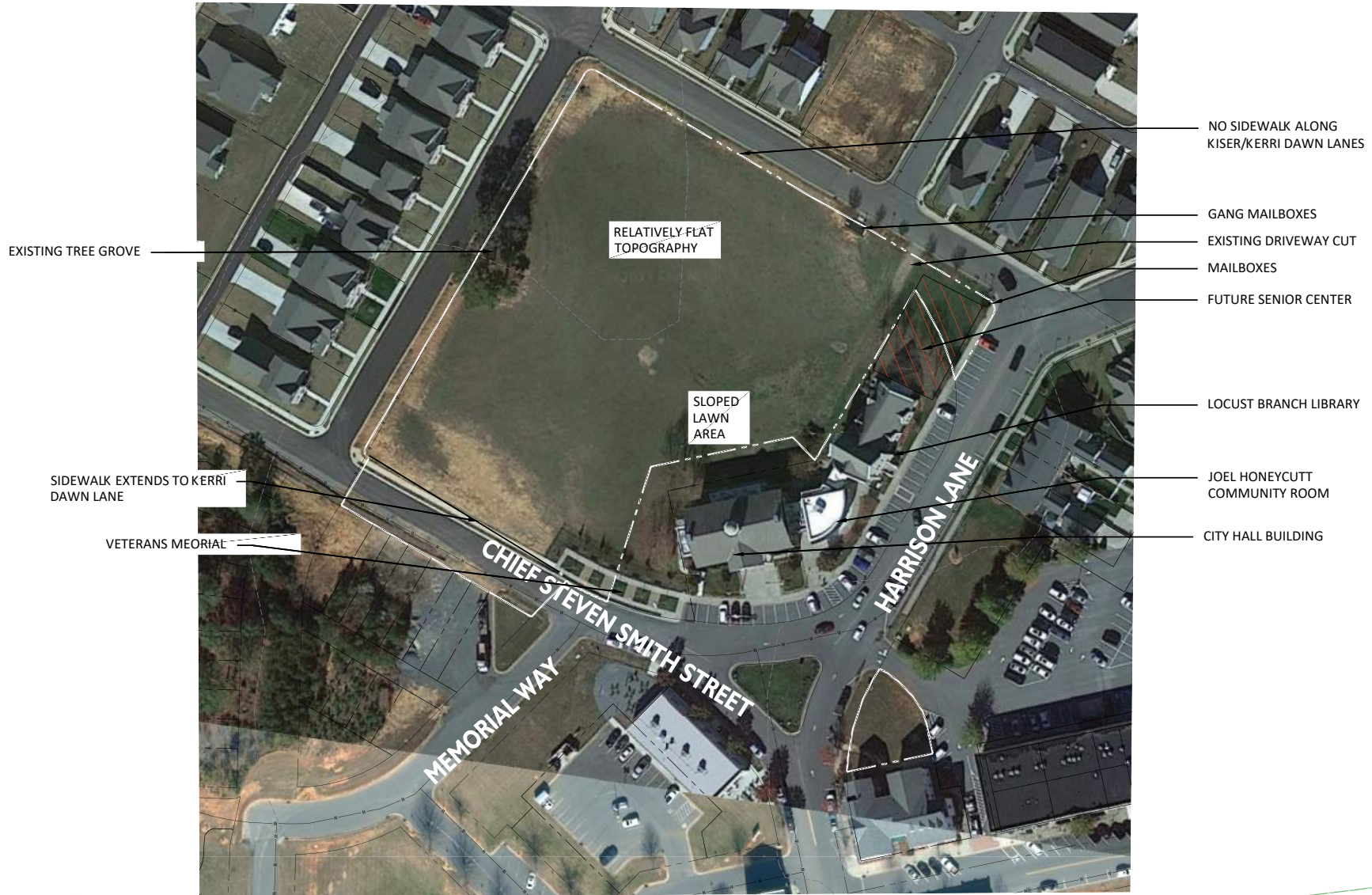
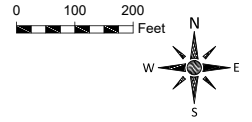
- Connection to utilities (underground electric, sewer, & water)
- Stormwater infrastructure
- Sidewalk connections on City Hall side
- Location behind City Hall & Veterans Memorial gives the site high visibility in the downtown corridor
- Intensity of proposed use will require careful consideration due to the proximity of the residential neighborhood
- An attractive open space with mature trees on site
- Future location of the Locust Senior Center (adjacent to the library) makes this an attractive green space for flexing senior activities



Inventory + Analysis | City Hall Backyard PIN # 55750313320 - 38.01 AC

Locust, North Carolina

City of Locust Parks and Recreation | 08.15.2023



PIN #556504504174 (Commercial Boulevard & James Ave)

POTENTIAL ACQUISITION

DESCRIPTION

This 1 acre parcel is located on Commercial Boulevard & James Ave near the intersection of W Main St. It is a portion of a much larger development property (97.95 acres) to be protected. There is an iconic tree located on the property that is important to the City of Locust, and even represents the tree on the city logo.

There are no built amenities on the site, but there would be access to utilities (water, sewer, & overhead electric) due to its location within the development. The topography across the site is relatively flat; its position being a knoll to the surrounding landscape.

Challenges and opportunities:

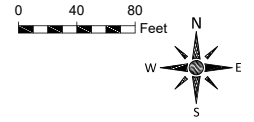
- Connection to utilities (water, sewer, & overhead electric)
- Iconic tree
- Small site with limited areas for development due to the location and the presence of the tree
- Potential for a picnic area partnership since the site is adjacent to a Burger King and other eateries
- Any development on this parcel will need to be done with careful consideration due to its importance to the community



Inventory & Analysis | 'The Tree': 556504504174 - ±1 AC

Locust, North Carolina

City of Locust Parks and Recreation | 08.15.2023



OTHER AREA FACILITIES

Town of Stanfield

Stanfield Barn Park – 101 W Stanly St, Stanfield, NC 28163

Size: +/- 0.70 AC
Offerings: Historic Community Building
Picnic Shelter

Comments: Facility is available for rental through The Town of Stanfield

Pete Henkel Park – 103-101 Park Rd, Stanfield, NC 28163

Size: +/- 21 AC
Offerings: 2 baseball/softball fields
Basketball court
Tennis court
Playground area
Picnic shelter

Comments: Park is open daily from 7am to 8pm and is available for rental.

West Stanley Community Pool – 221 Big Lick Rd, Stanfield, NC 28163

Size: N/A
Offerings: Outdoor Pool

Comments: Recreation Facility is open during the summer and offers open swim, lessons and special events.

Town of Oakboro

Oakboro District Park – 523 S Main St, Oakboro, NC 28129

Size: 40 AC
Offerings: Disc Golf
4 large picnic shelters (six picnic tables & grill each)
1 medium shelter
3 mini picnic shelters
Fitness stations
Horseshoe pits
Stocked fishing pond
1 mile walking trail
Restrooms
Amphitheater
2 lighted baseball/softball fields
Football/soccer field
Nature trail

Cabarrus County

Rob Wallace Park – 12900 Bethel School Road, Midland, NC 28107

Size: 143 AC
Offerings: Boardwalk
Fishing Pond
Mountain and bike trails
Playground
Picnic areas

Comments: Park is open year-round.

Reed Gold Mine – 9621 Reed Mine Rd. Midland, N.C. 28107

Size: N/A
Offerings: 1800's mine with gold panning & tours
Visitors Center
Nature Trails, monuments & outdoor exhibits
Picnic Area

Pharr Family Preserve Trail – 9111 Mt Pleasant Rd S, Midland, NC 28107

Size: 66 AC Preserve
Offerings: 1.7 mile out-and-back walking and biking trail, part of Carolina Thread Trail system
Start of the Rocky River Blueway with flatwater kayaking & canoeing opportunities
Picnic shelter

Buffalo Creek Preserve – 7911 Malibu Rd, Mt Pleasant, NC 28124

Size: 130 AC Preserve
Offerings: Natural surface 2.1 mile trail for walking & biking
Restrooms



SECTION TWO - THE HISTORY AND PEOPLE OF LOCUST

An important step in understanding the park and recreational needs for the City of Locust is to develop an understanding of the context and the people that make up the community. This section includes an overview of the City's history, population and demographics and looks at changes that are occurring throughout the community.

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

- Community-Wide Survey
- Community Workshop
- Staff Input

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

Town History and Context

Located on the border of Stanly County and Cabarrus County, the City limits encompass areas of both counties. Locust City Center is located in Stanly County. Locust is situated between the City of Charlotte and the City of Albemarle along US 27. The City currently has an estimated population of 4,789 (2022). The City of Locust has started to see some additional residential growth coming from Charlotte, NC as well as transplants looking for the small town feel.

A brief history of Locust is summarized on the front page of the Locust Historical Society & Museum website:

"The City of Locust was established in western Stanly County in the late 1860s by German, Scotch Irish and

English immigrants. The community was known as the ‘Crossroads.’ Many travelers came through on the way to Cabarrus, Anson, and Mecklenburg Counties.

A central well was dug close to the locust tree to serve the citizens of the community as well as travelers and their livestock as they were traveling through. As many as 25 families would do their washing there in a single day, since it was the only source of water.

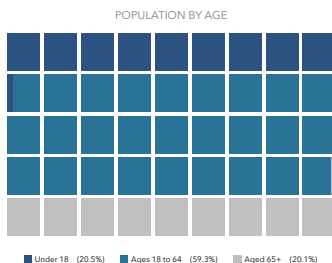
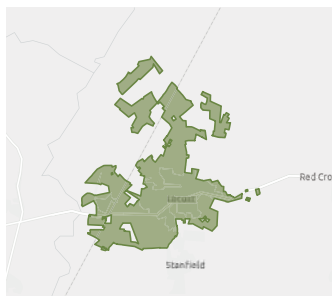
In 1869 population in the ‘Crossroads’ community had increased enough to warrant an application for the establishment of a post office. There was a meeting held to decide on a new name and a young girl in the community, Miss Maggie Howell, was present at a meeting to decide a proper name. Maggie happened to look out at a wooded plot where a large locust tree was in full bloom. Beyond the locust tree, plowed fields laid flat and the reddish clay dirt of the Charlotte Road stretched out level. Miss Howell suggested the name ‘Locust Level.’ And so it was called until May 29, 1894. The Level was dropped and it was simply called Locust.”

The People of Locust

An important aspect of this planning process is understanding the people who make up the City’s Service Population. To better understand the park and recreational needs of Locust, a review of demographic and income data prepared by the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, World Population Review, and ESRI provides valuable information on the demographic makeup of the City.

The US Census Bureau’s estimated 2022 population of 4,789 for Locust, based on projections from the 2020 US Census estimates reflects 4.48% growth from the 2020 US census that showed 4,556. Current annual growth rate is around 1.47%. Current Annual Growth rate for the state of North Carolina is 1.13%. The City of Locust’s population reflects an estimated age distribution as follows:

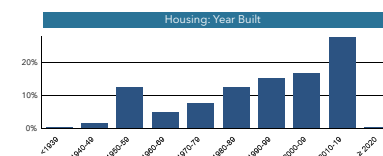
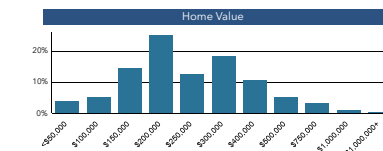
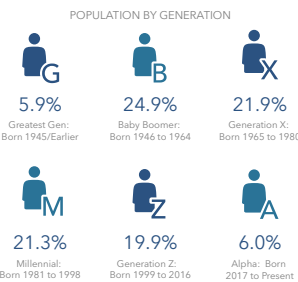
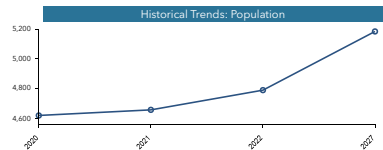
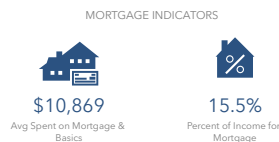
- Under 18** **20.5%**
- 18-64** **59.3%**
- Over 65** **20.1%**



Source: Esri, Esri-UK, S. BLS, ACS Esri Forecasts for 2022, 2027, 2017-2021 © 2023 Esri

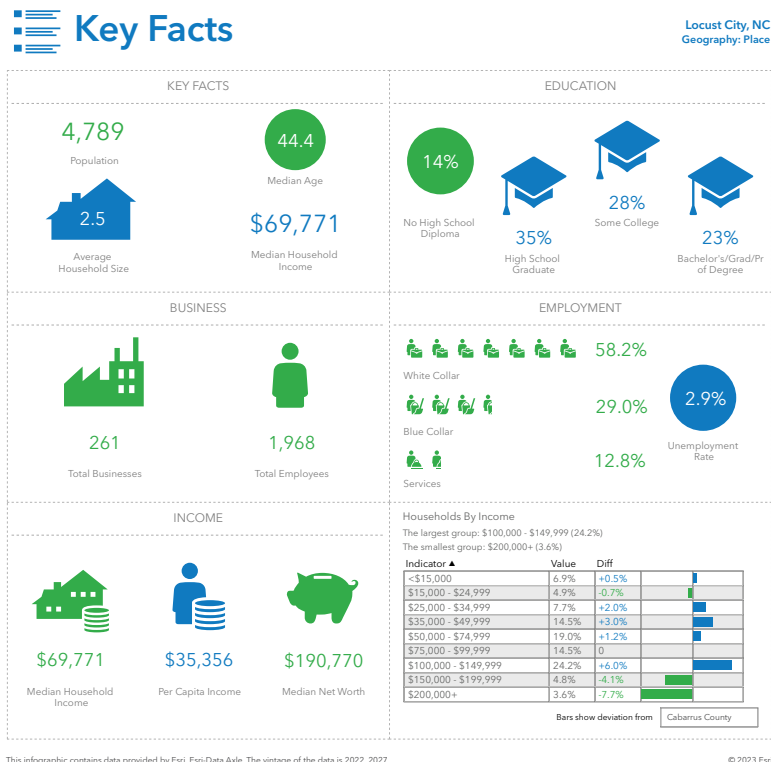
POPULATION TRENDS AND KEY INDICATORS

Population	Households	Avg Size Household	Median Age	Median Household Income	Median Home Value	Wealth Index	Housing Affordability	Diversity Index
4,789	1,928	2.48	44.4	\$69,771	\$204,534	75	172	36



Information from ESRI reflects the following demographics for City of Locust in comparison with the State of North Carolina.

20.1% of Locust’s population is 65 years or older while the State’s senior population represents 16.7 % of the total population. The City’s youth (persons under 18 years of age) represents around 20.5% of the overall population which is lower than the State’s youth population (27.7%). While the State’s average household contains 2.53 persons, the average household in Locust in 2023 is comprised of 2.48 persons Currently, the rate of home ownership in Locust is around 79.5%.



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

- The percentage of the population for the ‘over 65’ and the ‘under 18’ cohorts are both at 20% of the total population. Frequently, parks and recreation development focuses on facilities for the ‘under 18’ cohort, such as sports fields and playgrounds. The City should also look at providing facilities and programs that meet the desires and interest of this senior age group. Likewise, facilities and programs should be aimed at aiding the senior population in living active and healthier lifestyles.
- While the senior segment of the population is important, the Department should also be sensitive to the needs of its younger citizens, recognizing that 20% of the population are youth (persons under 18 years of age).
- The City’s location provides opportunities for partnerships with both Stanly and Cabarrus counties and surrounding municipalities, including the town of Stanfield to the south. Partnerships could help provide a broader range and more inclusivity of parks and recreation facilities and programming.

Service Population

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

For the City of Locust the current annual population growth rate is around 1.47%. This increase in population should be accommodated in future plans for recreational development. Locust is striving to be a vibrant community and provide a wonderful quality of life indicating a future with continued positive economic activity and a reasonable expectation of future growth. Using the current annual growth rate of 1.47% yields a projected 2032 population of around 5,542 residents. Note that these numbers could adjust pending future town population data collected.

Based on the above data this master plan will use the City's estimated 2023 population of 4,789 as the service population for this study. For ease of calculations, the plan will slightly round up this population figure to 4,790.

As a ten-year plan, recommendations in this plan will be designed to meet the need of the City's population in 2032. For planning purposes, it is assumed the City will increase annually in population similarly to the projected population growth; approximately 1.47%. Again, for ease of discussion and calculation, the projected population for the City (the projected service population) for 2032 has been rounded down to 5,540 from 5,542.

Community Input - Public Workshop #1

The first community workshop was held to receive input on May 9, 2023 at Locust City Park during a peak time for youth sporting events (soccer & baseball) (6:00 – 8:00 pm)

The workshop was held as an outdoor informal drop in where people could stop and ask questions and review materials. Fifty-seven (57) citizens signed in and completed the voting, but it was a busy night at the sports complex and the Parks and Recreation department also got a lot of exposure and positive feedback. Visitors were genuinely interested in the presentation materials and several commented that they had completed the survey that was mailed out.

The workshop was held to gather citizen input on parks and recreation needs within Locust. After signing in, attendees were invited to review several display boards that:

- showed a current map of the City of Locust town limits and highlighted the current park facility, Locust City Park. The map also showed other areas of interest such as Locust Elementary School, the Locust City Hall backyard, Reed Gold Mine and 'The Tree.'
- offered images of recreation activities typically found in a municipal park system, and were allowed to vote on activities that they currently participate in and activities they would like to see offered.
- provided images of the existing recreation opportunities found in Locust City Park. Voting dots were given to each person to indicate on the board which amenities they currently use at Locust City Park.
- provided images of potential recreational amenities that could be offered in Locust and allowed people to vote.

Following the information sharing displays, attendees were invited to share their opinions on existing parks,

facilities & programs, recreational needs, and ideas for improving parks and recreation facilities in Locust. These opinions were collected directly by writing on a comments sheet or through discussion with staff.

Community Input - Public Workshop #2

A second community meeting was held on May 9, 2023 at Locust City Hall before a council meeting. (4:30 – 6:00 pm)

The workshop was held as an indoor informal drop in where people could stop and ask questions and review materials before the council meeting began. Then a brief presentation was made on the status and goals of the master plan. Fifteen (15) citizens signed in and completed the voting.

It should be noted that while sixty-two (62) people signed in as attending these community workshops, not every attendee signed in, and not every attendee answered every question or voted on the boards. However, a large portion of attendees did take the time and effort to review and provide the requested feedback. The following is a summary of the participant’s responses. A full tally and listing of the responses can be found in the Appendix.

Note: The following results are compiled from both community meetings.

Attendees reviewed images of the park amenities that can be found in Locust City Park and asked to identify the activities in which they currently use:

- Baseball/Softball Fields – 20%
- Community Building – 5%
- Dog Park – 5%
- Memorial Park – 4%
- Fitness Equipment – 1%
- Football Field – 5%
- Horseshoes – 1%
- History Museum – 7%
- Basketball – 7%
- Tennis – 3%
- Park Shelters – 9%
- Playgrounds – 21%
- Soccer Fields – 8%
- Walking Paths – 11%

Attendees reviewed images of recreational activities and asked to select ones that they currently participate in:

- Preschool Sports Introduction – 3%
- Youth Summer Camps – 5%
- Community Events/Special Events – 19%
- Swimming (Lessons/Water Fitness) – 5%
- Birthday Parties – 10%
- Adventure Sports (Kayaking, Rock Climbing) – 1%
- Mountain Biking – 2%

Nature Programs – 13%
Parent/Child Programs – 2%
Youth Fitness – 0%
Preschool Programs (Arts & Crafts, Storytime, Movement, Socialization) – 7%
Adult Educational Workshops (Wellness, Skill Development) – 1%
Esports – 0%
Adult Performing Arts/Dance – 1%
Adult Special Interest Classes – 0%
Adult Fitness and Wellness – 4%
Adult Team Sports Leagues – 3%
Adult Individual Sports – 3%
Senior Programs (55+) – 0%
Teen Programs– 0%
Youth Gymnastics/Tumbling – 5%
Youth Performing Arts/Dance – 1%
Tennis – 2%
Youth Sports Leagues – 17%
Youth Individual Sports – 2%

Attendees were then asked to review the same images and select ones they would like to see offered in Locust:

Participants were invited to vote for up to 3. The activities most often listed as “most important” included:

Youth Individual Sports (Tennis, Archery, Golf, Fishing) – 10%
Adventure Sports (Kayaking, Rock Climbing) – 11%
Swimming (Lessons, Fitness) – 10%

The activities most often listed as “important” included*:

Nature Programs – 8%
Adult Individual Sports – 7%
Adult Team Sports Leagues – 5%
Adult Fitness and Wellness – 6%

Before leaving the workshop, attendees were invited to leave comments on their park and recreational needs or anything they wanted to share as the plan is developed. These following issues/comments were shared on specific recreational needs in the City of Locust:

- Larger parking lot at Locust City Park
- What will the Park look like in 10 years when my kids play here?
- Summer concert series
- Preschool aged nature programs!
- Plan sport events that don't coincide with school events to help with parking
- Growing needs for a growing City

- More shady spots and baby friendly play areas
- Summer sports
- Need clean park bathrooms
- More meeting space for large crowds
- Water fountains around the park
- Park needs about a dozen trees for shade, some around the loop by the playground
- Water park
- Water/splash pad (+1)
- Need recycle bins around the park (+4)
- More programs for toddlers, family engagement, sports for younger children, increase in mommy & me group activities
- Recreation Center (+2)
- Needs places to walk, greenways and trails (+1)
- Walkability to recreation sites as growth/expansion continues.
- Need a city pool at City Center
- Need a YMCA (+1)
- Would like a playground or splash pad in City Center (+1)
- Need the bathrooms at Jeff Shelton playground to be open (+2)

These following issues/comments were shared as a response to ‘What do you like about Locust City Park and what improvements could be made?’

- Shade and splashpad
- We like the walking path and convenient location
- I love Locust Park but Disc golf would be great (+1)
- Like the convenience of location, improvements could be made to take care of current facilities (new paint, cleanliness, etc)
- We need better fields, turf fields to help with rain and year round play
- Would love to see an indoor facility
- Would like to see frisbee golf and bike riding trails
- Additions to the dog park area are great
- We love the playground, well maintained and safe, would like to see additional playground/equipment for climbing
- Great place to live
- We need bike trails and desperately need a splash pad. Our community has very little/no water activities.
- Sand volleyball courts
- I like that the park is accessible 24 hours- this is great for busy lives & allows individuals to get their exercise in
- Need a larger building for Locust Museum
- Trails for walking and running
- Trails, splash pad, general town beautification

These following issues/comments were shared as a response to ‘What do you see as barriers, obstacles, or challenges:

- Land purchases being more than the Locust City Council is willing to spend (+2)
- Physical space, current park and future park land (+2)

- Long time residents are resistant to growth and change
- Need more parking during sports activities (+2)
- Land acquisition (+3)
- Land, parking and non-govt entities/businesses to fuel the growth in population needed to keep park usage going, like grocery stores

These following issues/comments were shared as a response to ‘Do you have a favorite recreation destination outside of Locust?’ and what recreational opportunities would you like to see offered in Locust City Park?’

- Like Crooked Creek Park & Oakboro walking trails
- We walk 4 Mile Creek in Matthews
- Natural Trails at Rob Wallace Park
- I like Oakboro fields for soccer
- We frequent Kannapolis Cannonballers area often
- We play frisbee golf and ride bike trails in Midland.
- Pharr Mill Park is a favorite with walking trails and nature setting
- Need something similar to Harrisburg Park



Community Input - Community Survey

To better understand the community's perception of existing parks and recreation facilities, and to gather input of recreational needs, a four-page community survey was conducted. The survey was prepared and distributed by mail and online to all City households. The survey took approximately 8-10 minutes to complete. The sample size goal for completed surveys was 100 which was exceeded with 151 completed surveys being returned. The full Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey can be found in the Appendix.

Top takeaways from the survey include:

- The community's attitude towards living in Locust is very high, with 96% of surveys rated good & excellent.
- City of Locust residents use (or have used within the past year) the walking pathway around the athletic complex, Officer Jeff Shelton Memorial Park, and Playgrounds the most.
- Improving nature walking trails, improving existing playgrounds, and adding a Community building with gathering space garner the most support from the community.
- When asked about using tax dollars for improvements the residents were most supportive of nature walking trails, a splash pad, and a community building with space for gatherings.
- Based on residents' needs, unmet needs, and feeling of importance the list below show the facilities and amenities with Priority Investment Ratings that are considered "High Priority" for investment.

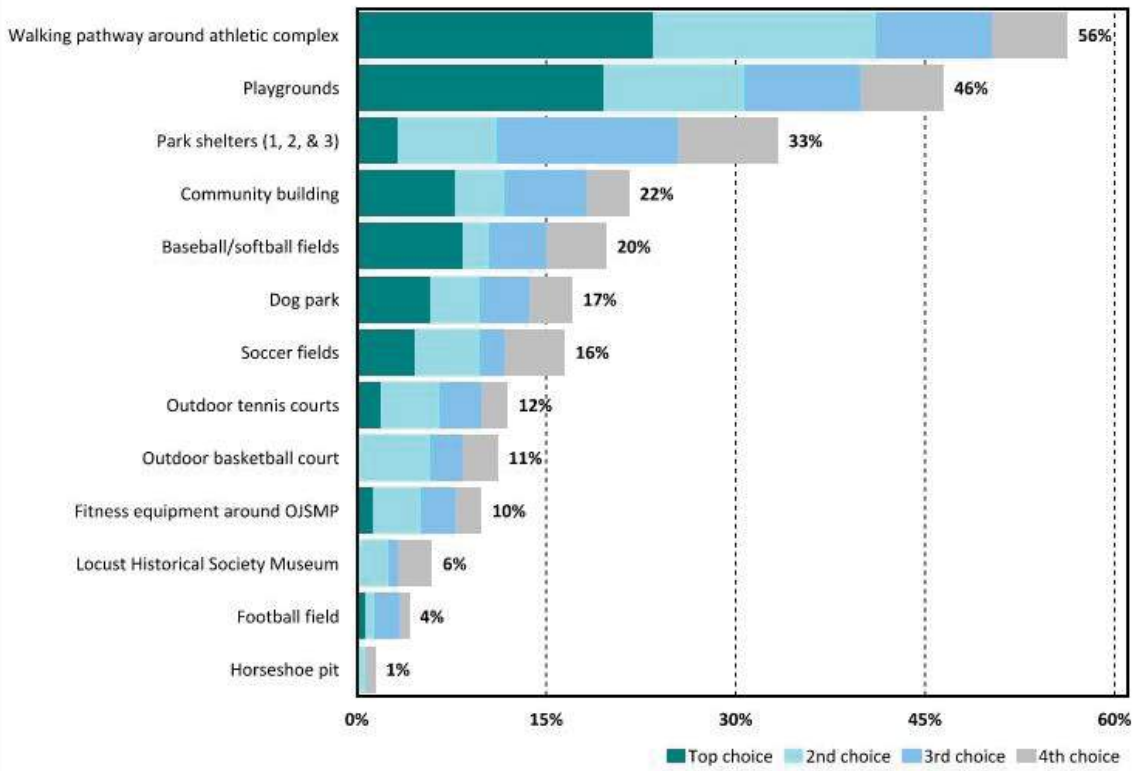
<u>Parks and Recreation Facility/Amenity</u>	<u>Rating</u>
Walking Pathway around athletic complex	195.0
Playgrounds	144.0
Community Building	138.0
Dog Park	120.0
Park Shelters	111.0

- The following show the "High Priority" Program investment.

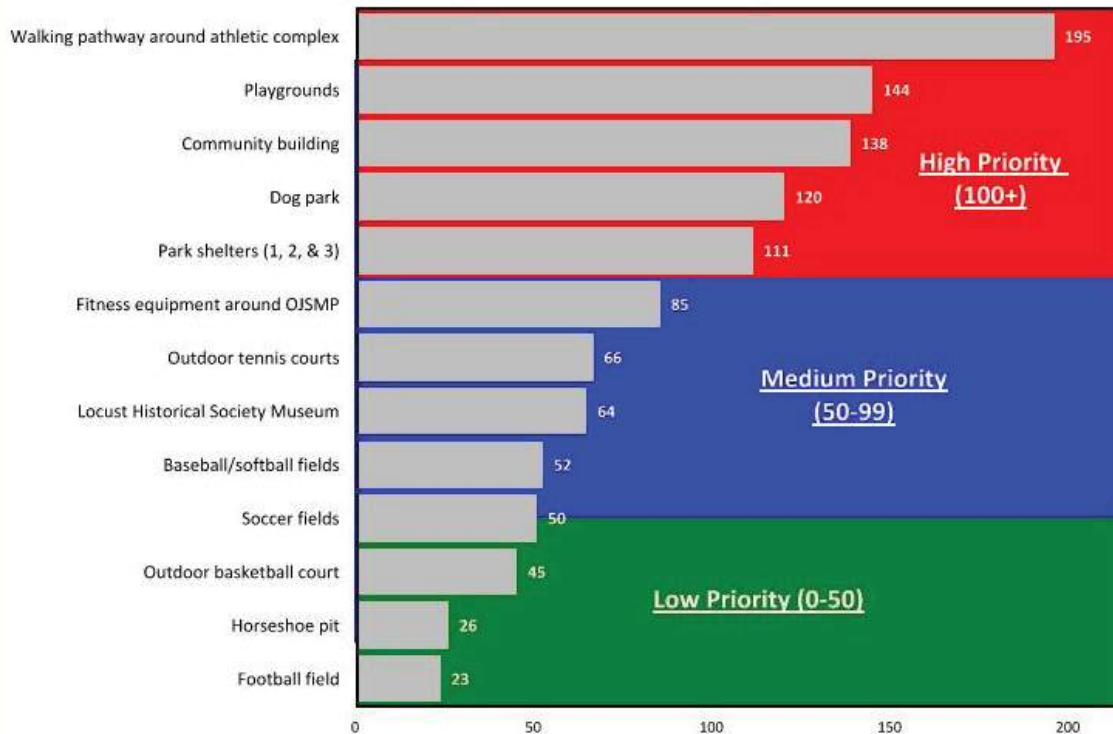
<u>Parks and Recreation Programs</u>	<u>Rating</u>
Walking/jogging/biking	200.0
General Fitness	165.0
General visitation of parks	157.0
Special Events	114.0

Q6. Facilities/Amenities Most Important to Households

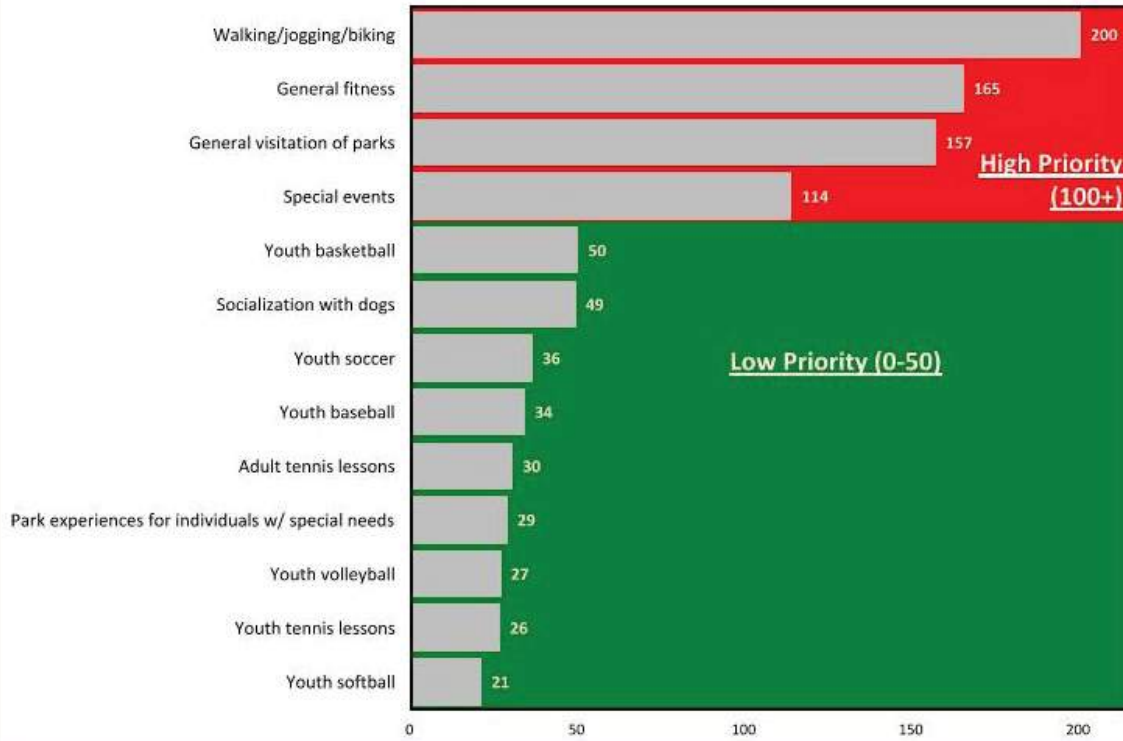
by percentage of respondents who selected the items as one of their top four choices



Top Priorities for Investment for Facilities/Amenities Based on Priority Investment Rating

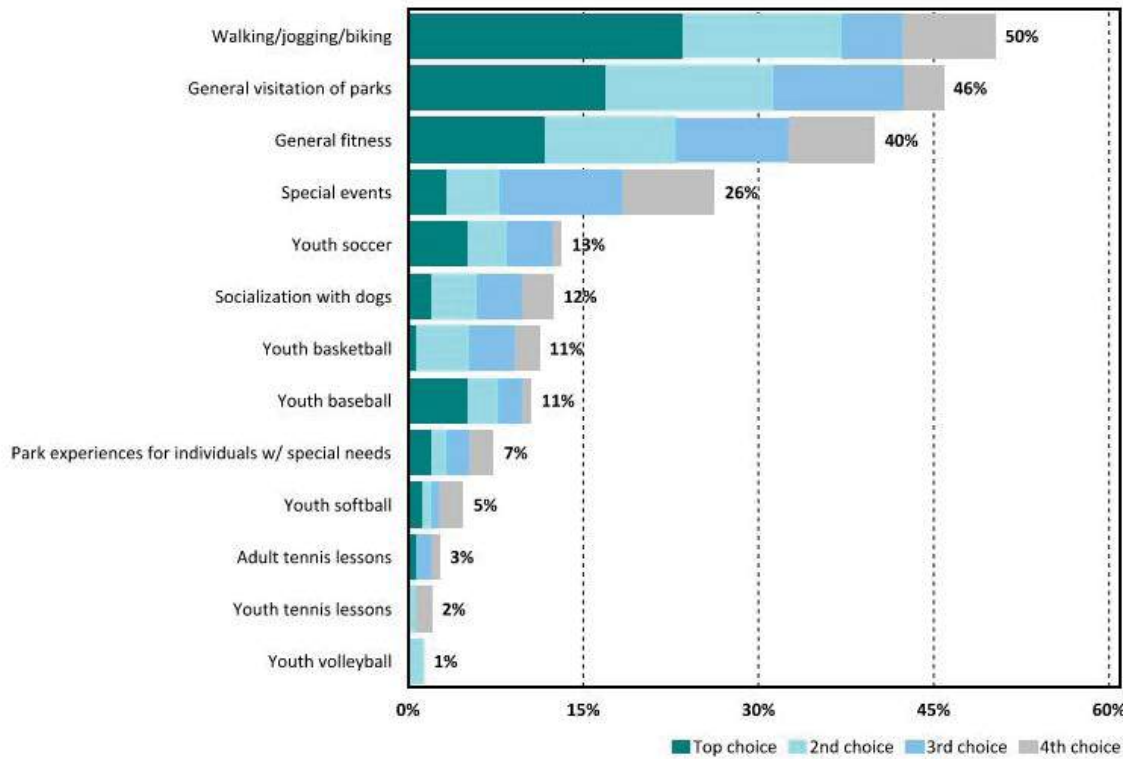


Top Priorities for Investment for Programs Based on Priority Investment Rating



Q9. Programs Most Important to Households

by percentage of respondents who selected the items as one of their top four choices





SECTION THREE - RECREATION STANDARDS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

ESTABLISHING A COMMUNITY WIDE LEVEL OF SERVICE FOR PARKS & RECREATION FACILITIES

Introduction

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

It should be noted that the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) has determined there are no “national standards” for park development. The latest NRPA study recommends that each community is unique, and that standards reflecting the local “uniqueness” should be established, with an eye toward other communities of similar size. This section utilizes input from the community workshop and the community-wide survey, as well as a comprehensive review of other North Carolina municipalities as well as the North Carolina Outdoor Recreation Plan (2020-2025) to develop LOS specifically for Locust.

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

The second analysis in this section looks at recreation activities and the facilities required to program these

activities. By establishing a population-based LOS for various recreation activities, this study establishes the type and quantity of facilities the City should develop in the future.

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

The City of Locust strives to meet the park and recreation needs of residents by providing one Community Park (Locust City Park) that offers active and passive recreation venues.

The City of Locust is undertaking its first Parks and Recreation Master Plan. This plan is designed to consider and work in conjunction with other regional planning efforts including,

- City of Locust Land Use Plan - 2014
- Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan for the City of Locust – 2010
- Stanly County Comprehensive Land Use Plan for 2040
- Stanly County Comprehensive Recreation Master Plan - 2014
- North Carolina Outdoor Recreation Plan 2020-2025 (SCORP)
- Carolina Thread Trail Master Plan for Stanly County Communities – August 2010
- Carolina Thread Trail Master Plan for Cabarrus County Communities – August 2009

It is important to recognize that while the plan utilizes a dual approach in assessing the park and recreational needs of the community; ultimately this plan must develop recommendations that will improve the recreational opportunities for all citizens of Locust..

It should also be noted that the LOS for development established for Locust are consistent with other municipalities in North Carolina. The needs that are identified in this plan are based on a conservative approach. Even taking this conservative approach, the recommendations in this document should lead the City to develop parks and facilities comparable to most other communities of similar size.

PREVIOUS PLANNING STUDIES

There have not been many long range/system-wide plans developed for the City in the past that are directly related to developing a Parks and Recreation Master Plan for Locust. Below is a brief listing/summary of plans that were considered in the development of the recommendations found in this plan.

City of Locust Land Use Plan 2014

In 2014, the City of Locust adopted a Land Use Plan in order to guide the future physical growth and development.

Recreation was considered an important part of this plan, and was included in the Vision Statement.

‘...The City will continue to be known for its extensive youth athletic programs and tournaments; construction

of a small hotel will accommodate incoming players and guests and contribute to the area's unique tourism opportunities, such as the Reed Gold Mine and local farm and vineyards. Recreation will continue to be a community focus, enhanced by expansions to Officer Jeff Shelton Memorial Park and the development of new parks and facilities. The fully realized City Center development will serve as the focal point of community life and will be connected to neighborhoods, the school, and the main retail and business corridors through a system of greenways, sidewalks, and golf cart paths.'

The main issues cited by the Land Use Plan apply specifically to Locust City park and are listed below:

- **Increasing use of current athletic fields has complicated scheduling for the various youth leagues and tournaments**
- Stormwater drainage issue from runoff on Highway 200 in Officer Jeff Shelton Memorial Park
- Facilities in need of upgrade at Officer Jeff Shelton Memorial Park (restrooms, concession stands, etc.)
- Officer Jeff Shelton Memorial Park is not fully connected to water and sewer service

The plan focuses on the following planning goals and strategies as related to both Locust City Park and future recreational development City-wide:

Goals and Strategies

Goal 1: Improve and expand facilities at Officer Jeff Shelton Memorial Park

Strategy 1.1: Expand the passive use of the park through installation of new facilities, such as walking trails, picnic shelters, and an amphitheater.

Strategy 1.2: Upgrade restroom facilities and connect the park to full water and sewer service.

Strategy 1.3: Conserve the natural features of the site by routing the trails around wetlands and installing raised walkways.

Strategy 1.4: Address the stormwater drainage problem through the installation of rain gardens or drainage ponds and stream channel definition.

Strategy 1.5: Require additional stormwater control features on new development located adjacent to the park.

Goal 2: Enhance the City's recreational offerings through the acquisition of new park lands and expansion of recreational programs.

Strategy 2.1: Identify property best suited to a passive use park, connected to neighborhoods, the school, and other community facilities through a system of sidewalks and greenways, and pursue acquisition.

Strategy 2.2: Establish facilities that will draw visitors to the area and generate economic gain (i.e. equestrian facilities, campgrounds, etc.).

Strategy 2.3: Expand the city's sports league program by providing additional playing fields to accommodate increasing youth league needs and to provide playing space for new adult leagues.

Strategy 2.4: Include such features as a community garden, Farmer's Market, and event center in park designs and seek funding for future construction.

Goal 3: Support the recreational programs offered by other city, county, and private entities.

Strategy 3.1: Coordinate with the West Stanly Senior Center to offer recreational and cultural programming for the city's elderly population.

Strategy 3.2: Require new residential subdivisions to build and maintain recreational areas including, at

minimum, playground facilities.

Strategy 3.3: Continue to coordinate with the school system on the sharing of athletic facilities.

City of Locust Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan 2010

In 2010, the City of Locust commissioned a Pedestrian Plan to help guide future development as it relates to pedestrian connectivity. One of the goals of this plan was to ‘Encourage healthy lifestyles through walking’ by developing walking programs with Locust City Parks and Recreation. The goals also included providing ADA access at all pedestrian facilities as well as ‘pleasant walking areas with the introduction of shade trees and landscaping.’

Stanly County Comprehensive Recreation Master Plan - 2014

Recommendations from the county-wide recreation master plan include a need for one (1) District Park, four (4) Community Parks, and one (1) Civic Park located within the Subdistrict IV, which includes Locust, Oakboro and Stanfield. Included in this report are facility recommendations as well, including the needs for basketball, football, multi-use trails playgrounds, racquetball/tennis and a swimming pool.

Carolina Thread Trail Master Plan for Stanly County Communities

The City of Locust was included in the 2010 Carolina Thread Trail Master Plan for Stanly County Communities but was not listed as a destination or connection point at the time of the plan.

LEVEL OF SERVICE

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

The LOS for both park acreage and recreation facilities is expressed in a population-based format. For example, a community may decide to provide Neighborhood Parks to its residents at a LOS of 2.5 acres of Neighborhood Park land for every 1,000 people that live in the municipality. If the community has a population of 10,000 there will be a demand for 25 acres of park land dedicated to Neighborhood Parks (2.5 acres x 10 = 25 acres). If that same community currently has a Neighborhood Park with 10 acres, there is a community wide need for 15 acres of additional park land dedicated to Neighborhood Park(s) [demand (25 acres) – supply (10 acres) = need (15 acres)].

The same process is used to determine recreational facility needs. If the same community determines that soccer/multi-purpose fields should be available to its residents at a LOS of 1 field for every 5,000 people, there is a demand for 2 soccer/multi-purpose fields in the community (10,000 population ÷ 5,000 LOS = 2 fields). If the community has 1 existing soccer/multi-purpose field serving the recreational needs of community residents, there is a need for 1 additional soccer/multi-purpose field [demand (2 fields) – supply (1 field) = need (1 field)].

PARK NEEDS

Table 3A-Park Acreage provides a summary of acreage standards used by other communities. The final column on Table 3A-Park Acreage (in yellow) provides the recommended acreage standard to be used by Locust for each park type. Table 3B-Park Acreage Needs Assessment uses the new standards to identify community-wide park needs. The following descriptions provide insight on how the standards were chosen, what needs are identified and the responsible agency for each park type.

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

The acreage listed in the Classifications for Parks, Open Space and Greenways provide a general range for desired size of facilities. The recommended acreage for each of the parks is not intended as hard and fast rule of size. The acreages included in the guidelines are not sequential. A 50-acre park could serve as a Community Park or a District Park; depending on the facilities offered, the programming provided and the availability of other parks in the system.

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

Mini Parks

Mini Parks are the smallest park type and typically include a playground, shelter and possibly a play court. Typically, Mini Parks are operated and maintained by local municipal agencies, however, there is a trend occurring where mini-parks are constructed by a developer to serve their neighborhoods with management through a homeowners association.

An LOS of mini-park development for Locust has been set at 0.25 acres per 1,000 people. It reflects a trend in park development away from Mini Parks because their small size limits their recreational use and makes them expensive to maintain and operate. Based on this service level, there is still a not need for development of a Mini Park by the City.

Neighborhood Parks

Like Mini Parks, Neighborhood Parks are typically developed by local municipal agencies. The service level set for Neighborhood Parks established by this Master Plan is 7-15 acres at 2 acres per 1,000 people. Utilizing this level of development there is a need 7-15 acres of Neighborhood Park land within the City.

Community Parks

Currently, Locust provides one (1) Community Park, Locust City Park, on 30.7 acres of park land. Based on a park land/population ratio of 2.5 acres per 1,000 population the need for Community Parks in Locust has been met. However, since Locust City Park also serves a larger regional population, park expansion or development of another community park could be warranted. The development of future Community Parks could still occur if the opportunity presents itself in the next ten years.

District Parks

District Parks are large parks (usually greater than 100 acres) that provide both active and passive recreation. Typically, county agencies are the primary source for funding, developing, and operating these large parks. Although there are none in Locust, there is one District Park, Rob Wallace Park, located nearby in Cabarrus County. Located just 7 miles from Locust, Rob Wallace Park meets the District Park requirement.

Regional Parks

One Regional Park is within easy driving distance of Locust and located in Stanly County. Morrow Mountain State Park, managed by NC Division of Parks & Recreation, is within a 30-minute drive at 22 miles away. This large Regional Park meets the passive recreation needs of the town and the area. Development of a Regional Park should not be a priority for Locust.

FUTURE LAND/OPEN SPACE NEEDS

As Locust continues to experience a growth spurt, the City should remain open to opportunities for preserving land for open space and recreation. As noted in previous sections on specific park needs, there is a community-wide need for additional park land. As Locust's population grows, finding undeveloped property for parks will become more difficult.

FACILITY NEEDS

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

Based on these LOS, the number of public facilities needed in the park system through the planning period (2023 to 2032), are identified in Table 3B-Facilities, "Recreation Facilities Needs Assessment" and summarized on the following table.

In the following table, the "Existing Facilities" column indicates the number of existing recreation facilities currently available in Locust. The "Current Need" column identifies the total number of additional facilities currently needed. The "2032 Need" column reflects the total number of additional facilities that will be needed by 2032.

As an example of how the Needs Assessment is presented, consider volleyball. Currently, there are no existing volleyball courts within the City. Based on the Standards for Facility Development that have been recommended for Locust (one volleyball court for every 5,000 people in the service population), there is a current demand for 1 volleyball court ($5,300 \div 5,000 = 0.62$, rounded up = 1). Since there are no volleyball courts currently serving town residents, there is a current need to develop 1 volleyball court (demand of 1 - 0 existing volleyball court) to meet the demand.

	Existing Facilities	Current Need	2032 Need
Baseball/Softball Fields	4	0	0
Soccer/Multi-Use Fields	2	0	0
Basketball Courts	1	0	0
Tennis Courts	2	0	0
Volleyball Courts	0	1	0
Pickleball	0	1	0
Shuffleboard Courts	0	1	0
Horseshoes	1	0	0
Picnic Shelters	3	0	0
Playgrounds/Equipment	2	1	0
Walking/Jogging Trails (miles)	±0.68	1.23	0.24
Bicycling Trails (miles)	±0.68	1.23	0.24
Community Center	0	1	0
Gymnasium	0	1	0
Swimming Pool	0	1	0
Sprayground	0	1	0
Amphitheater	0	1	0
Disc Golf	0	1	0
Skate Park	0	1	0
Outdoor Fitness	1	0	0
Dog Park	1	0	0

Current and future needs listed above are community-wide needs. The City of Locust is not responsible for meeting all needs. Some of these facility needs could be met by Stanly County or NC Division of Parks and Recreation. Meeting the needs of all City residents will require a collaborative effort. See Section Four for specific recommendations on facility needs to be met by the City of Locust.

**Table 3-A Park Acreage
City of Locust
Standards for Park Acreage
By Park Classification**

NRPA Guidelines & Communities of Similar Size

Park Types	NRPA Guidelines	Waxhaw	Marshville	Mount Holly	Waynesville	Belmont	Locust
Mini Parks	1-3 acres .25 acres/1,000	1-2 acres .25 acres/1,000	1-2 acres .25 acres/1,000	1-3 acres .25 acres/1,000	1-2 acres .25 acres/1,000	1-2 acres 0.5 acres/1,000	1-2 acres .25 acres/1,000
Neighborhood Parks	7-15 acres 2 acres/1,000	7-15 acres 2 acres/1,000	7-15 acres 3 acres/1,000	7-15 acres 2 acres/1,000	7-15 acres 2 acres/1,000	10-15 acres 2 acres/1,000	7-15 acres 2 acres/1,000
Community Parks	40-100 acres 5 acres/1,000	20-30 acres 5 acres/1,000	25-75 acres 6 acres/1,000	30-50 acres 4 acres/1,000	20-30 acres 5.0 acres/1,000	20-30 acres 2.5 acres/1,000	20-30 acres 2.5 acres/1,000
District Parks*		200+ acres 2.5 acres/1,000	+ 200 acres 5 acres/1,000	200-400 acres 10 acres/1,000	200 acres 2.5 acres/1,000	200 acres 5 acres/1,000	NA
Regional Parks**	100-250 acres 10 acres/1,000	+1,000 acres 10 acres/1,000	1,000 acres 10 acres/1,000	+1,000 acres 10 acres/1,000	100-250 acres 10 acres/1,000	1,000 acres 10 acres/1,000	NA

Park Type/Typical Acreage (Acres per 1,000 Population)

* District Parks are typically provided by county agencies.

** Regional Parks are typically provided by state or federal agencies.

Table 3A – Facility Standards
City of Locust
Parks and Recreation Master Plan
Recreation Facility Standards for Development

Recreation Facilities	National Recreation and Park Association	N.C. Dept. of Environment & Natural Resources	Waxhaw	Marshville	Mount Holly	Waynesville	Belmont	Locust
Fields								
Adult Baseball	1/12,000	1/5,000	1/20,000	1/15,000	1/15,000	1/20,000	1/10,000	1/20,000
Youth Baseball	1/10,000	1/10,000	1/10,000	1/10,000	1/5,000	1/10,000	1/2,000	1/5,000
Softball	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/5,000
Football	1/10,000	1/20,000	1/20,000	1/20,000	1/10,000	1/20,000	1/5,000	1/20,000
Soccer/Multi-Use	1/10,000	1/20,000	1/5,000	1/10,000	1/7,500	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/5,000
Courts								
Basketball	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/10,000	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/5,000
Tennis	1/2,000	1/2,000	1/5,000	1/4,000	1/2,500	1/2,000	1/2,000	1/5,000
Pickleball	-	-	-	1/10,000	-	-	-	1/5,000
Volleyball	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/10,000	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/5,000
Shuffleboard	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/10,000	1/10,000	1/5,000	1/10,000	1/5,000	1/10,000
Horseshoe	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/10,000	1/10,000	1/5,000	1/10,000	1/5,000	1/10,000
Outdoor Areas								
Picnic Shelter	N/A	1/3,000	1/3,000	1/3,000	1/2,500	1/2,000	1/3,000	1/2,000
Playground Activities	N/A	1/1,000	1/2,000	1/1,000	1/2,000	1/2,000	1/1,000	1/2,000
Trails								
Walking Fitness/Jogging	1/region	0.4 mile/1,000	0.4 mile/1,000	0.4 mile/1,000	0.8 mile/1,000	0.6 mile/1,000	0.4 mile/1,000	0.4 mile/1,000
Bicycling	N/A	1 mile/1,000	0.4 mile/1,000	1 mile/1,000	1 mile/1,000	N/A	1 mile/1,000	0.4 mile/1,000
Specialized								
Community Center	1/20,000	1/20,000	1/10,000	1/10,000	1/15,000	1/10,000	1/20,000	1/10,000
Gymnasium	1/20,000	1/20,000	1/10,000	1/10,000		1/10,000		1/10,000
Swimming Pool	1/20,000	1/20,000	1/10,000	1/20,000	1/20,000	1/10,000	1/20,000	1/20,000
Sprayground	-	-	-	1/10,000	-	-	-	1/10,000
Amphitheater	1/20,000-	-	-	1/25,000	-	-	-	1/20,000
Disc Golf	-	-	-	1/25,000	-	-	-	1/25,000
Skate Park	-	-	-	1/20,000	-	-	-	1/20,000
Outdoor Fitness	-	-	-	1/10,000	-	-	-	1/10,000
Dog Park	-	-	-	1/5,000	-	-	-	1/5,000

**Table 3B – Park Needs
City of Locust
Parks and Recreation Master Plan
Park Needs Assessment**

Park Types	Locust Standards	Existing Parks	2023 Demand 4,790 Population	2023 Need	2032 Demand 5,540 Population	2032 Need
Mini Parks	1-2 acres .25 acres/1,000	0 Mini-Parks	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Neighborhood Parks	7-15 acres 2 acres/1,000	0 Neighborhood Parks	1 park 10 acres	1 park 10 acres	Needs Met if Park Built	Needs Met if Park Built
Community Parks	20-30 acres 2.5 acres/1,000	1 Park 30 acres	Needs Met	Needs Met	Needs Met	Needs Met
District Park*	N/A	N/A		Responsibility of County		Responsibility of County
Regional Parks**	N/A	N/A		Needs met by State Parks		Needs met by State Parks

*District Park needs are typically met by county agencies. Small municipal agencies rarely provide District Parks.

**Regional Park needs are typically met by state parks. Small municipal agencies rarely provide Regional Park facilities.

**Table 3B - Facility Needs
City of Locust
Parks and Recreation Master Plan
Recreation Facility Needs Assessment**

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

Recreation Facilities	Existing Facilities	2021 Standards	2023 Demand Population 4,790	2021 Need	2030 Demand Population 5,300	2030 Need
Fields						
Adult Baseball	0	1/20,000	1	1	1	0
Youth Baseball	4	1/5,000	1	0	2	0
Softball	0	1/5,000	1	1	2	1
Football	1	1/20,000	1	0	1	0
Soccer/Multi-Use	2	1/5,000	1	0	2	0
Courts						
Basketball	1	1/5,000	1	0	2	1
Tennis	2	1/5,000	1	0	2	0
Pickleball	0	1/5,000	1	1	2	1
Volleyball	0	1/5,000	1	1	2	1
Shuffleboard	0	1/10,000	1	1	2	1
Horseshoes	1	1/10,000	1	0	2	1
Outdoor Areas						
Picnic Shelter	3	1/2,000	2	0	3	0
Playground	2	1/2,000	2	0	3	1
Trails						
Walking/Biking	0.6	0.4 mile/1,000	1.9	1.3	2.12	0.82
Bicycling	0.6	0.4 mile/1,000	1.9	1.3	2.12	0.82
Specialized						
Community Center	0	1/10,000	1	1	2	1
Gymnasium	0	1/10,000	1	1	2	1
Swimming Pool	0	1/20,000	1	1	1	0
Sprayground	0	1/10,000	1	1	2	1
Amphitheater	0	1/25,000	0	0	1	1
Disc Golf	0	1/25,000	1	1	1	0
Skate Park	0	1/20,000	1	1	1	0
Outdoor Fitness	1	1/10,000	1	1	2	1
Dog Park	1	1/5,000	1	1	2	1



SECTION FOUR - PROPOSALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Community leaders in Locust have long recognized the importance of parks and recreation facilities in the quality of life in the community and have historically invested in parks.

Currently, there is one City park facility and one City-used green space (Not currently owned but expected to be transferred over). Locust City Park and the City Hall Backyard serve as the primary locations for the City's recreation programs and activities. There is still a need and community desire to plan and develop additional park facilities within the City and there is a heavy community desire, to develop walking trails and greenway connectivity throughout the community.

Identification of these recreational needs/opportunities comes at a time when Locust (like most communities in North Carolina) strive to grow out of a global pandemic and continued uncertainty on many fronts. Parks have become the top destination for people to go during the pandemic. It is very important for the City to invest the resources allocated for park improvements wisely while planning for future growth and demand.

Locust is not alone in its mission to provide parks and recreational facilities to its citizens. There are a number of public and private agencies and organizations in the region that could share in that role.

Although Stanly County does not have a Parks and Recreation Department, the County is a supporter of Parks, as evident in the 2014 County Recreation Master Plan. Most Parks and Recreation ventures are led by local municipalities or volunteers. Wherever possible, Locust should work collaboratively with other local municipalities to improve park and recreation opportunities.

To determine specific park and recreation recommendations for Locust, it is essential to clearly understand how the City will partner with the other recreational providers in the community and region. This cooperative effort will eliminate duplication of facilities and services. The proposals in this Master Plan are based on what each recreational provider is anticipated to offer through the ten-year planning period (2023-2032).

State of North Carolina

The State of North Carolina does have one State Park (Morrow Mountain) within reasonable driving distance of Locust. This large regional park helps to meet the passive recreation needs of the City residents. The State should be the provider of regional parks that include opportunities for camping, fishing, biking, and special facilities of regional and statewide interest.

Locust School District

As the City moves to add additional park space and improve its existing parks partnerships with local schools could be to an advantage. Locust City Park already shares space and amenities with Locust Elementary School. It is important that the City and the local school district communicate (and work together) as they both strive to provide recreation opportunities to students and the local community.

City of Locust Parks & Recreation

The City of Locust maintains a very active Parks and Recreation department. Between the sports leagues and programs offered and the community events throughout the year the department seeks to engage and respond to the local community, and has been successful in these endeavors.

Based on input from the community through the Community Survey, and discussions with Citizens of Locust and City staff, the following goals and objectives have been created that formulate the foundations of this Parks and Recreation Master plan for the City of Locust:

Facilities & Programming

- A. Seek new park & recreation facility opportunities within the City of Locust
 - Expand/master-plan Locust City Park to increase functionality of the site and optimize use
 - Seek opportunities for development of a senior center
 - Seek location for development of a neighborhood park with a playground facility
 - Seek opportunities for development of a community center building
 - Master plan wooded properties for a passive/nature-based recreation destination
 - Expand sidewalks & greenways for walking
 - Upgrade existing playgrounds to provide more inclusivity through equipment and surfacing
 - Finalize transfer of ownership of Locust City Hall Backyard to the City
- B. Trail connectivity - destinations / regional greenways & trail systems
 - In partnership with Stanly County, other local municipalities, and property developers seek land/corridors to develop greenway connectivity
 - Provide better connectivity between the City Park, residential neighborhoods, schools, and the downtown businesses, as well as between any additional proposed park facilities
- C. Make sure all parks & facilities are accessible
 - Conduct ADA assessment at Locust City Park
 - All facilities shall be accessible to each other & parking
 - All facilities should be connected to adjacent neighborhoods, schools, downtown businesses, sidewalk systems, where possible

- D. Create programming for Locust City Park and future facilities
- Provide educational, healthy & active living programs & opportunities for all ages & abilities, especially fitness and exercise facilities
 - Offer excellent opportunities throughout the City of Locust for all to use.
 - Seek new recreation opportunities or other new recreation trends
 - Expand programming beyond adult and small children to include teen youth
 - Provide a venue for community center programs and small gatherings
 - Relocate the Nutrition Program from the community building to the Senior Center; repurpose space

Operations

- A. Strive to provide funding to maintain or exceed minimum level of service standards & create a sustainable economic base for Parks & Recreation in the City of Locust
- Maintain quality park management, operations & maintenance throughout
 - Create vision, goals, and responsibilities for establishment of a Parks & Recreation Advisory Board/ Friends of the Parks organization
- B. Seek & develop partnerships with other area recreation providers
- Seek funding/programming partnerships with area stakeholders
- C. Increase community outreach / parks & recreation marketing
- Provide better wayfinding between all park and recreation facilities
 - Offer a facility and programming guide for residents
 - Display QR codes in the parks to direct users to the City's website for park information, maps, upcoming events, etc.
 - Ensure park & recreation master plan is coordinated with other municipal plans, ordinances & policies
 - Hold regular community conversations to check in with City residents on the level of service provided by the City of Locust

PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As previously discussed, the City of Locust is the primary provider of parks and recreation programs to City residents. Locust has continuously worked to provide quality facilities and programs to local residents.

The one existing park in the City, Locust City Park, would be considered a larger-sized park (Community Park). While this park space provides a foundation of recreational facilities and green space, there are still recreational needs that are not adequately being met. In addition, this existing park needs some improvements, updates and expansions.

Locust should also work with other agencies in the region to provide the park land and facilities whenever possible. This collaborative effort should include working with the local school district and neighboring municipalities, as well as private entities such as the YMCA.

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

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

While the tables provide “numbers” of the needs assessment, this section will define the reasoning behind the numbers and a description of how the numbers are used to provide recommendations that will ultimately guide the City in the coming decade.

We begin with an overview of the different park types and how these parks will be developed in the future.

Regional Parks

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

As previously noted, Locust is very fortunate to be proximate to one State Park located approximately 20 miles north-east. This outstanding park (Morrow Mountain State Park) provides a wide variety of nature based recreational activities. The facilities at Morrow Mountain provide valuable recreation opportunities for Locust and Stanly County residents and attracts visitors from across the region.

This excellent State Park meets the needs of a Regional Park for the citizens of Locust and allows the City to focus on the development of other park types.

District Parks

District Parks are another large park type often provided by county agencies or larger municipalities. These parks are typically in the 100-200 acre range and provide a wide variety of recreational opportunities.

The closest District Park to Locust is Rob Wallace Park, a Cabarrus County park, just west of the City. The park's close proximity to Locust meets the needs for a District Park for the City.

Community Parks

Community Parks are an important component in most municipal park systems. These parks are usually large enough (25-75 acres) to provide both valuable active recreation opportunities and preservation of undeveloped open space and passive recreation areas.

The one existing park in Locust is currently serving as Community Park: Locust City Park. The size of the park and the recreational options offered categorize it as a Community Park. Park master planning should occur for this park to address expansion opportunities, accessibility and functional circulation, and opportunities for new and updated facilities, at a minimum.

The City has a great opportunity to further expand on community recreation offerings with potential properties located adjacent to Locust City Park. The character of the properties and wooded condition lend well to passive recreation activity development.

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood Parks play an important role in providing both active and passive recreation in most municipal park systems. These parks, usually in the 7-15 acre range, are large enough to include both active and passive recreation opportunities. Most Community Parks also serve as Neighborhood Parks to those citizens living within a mile radius such as Locust City Park.

Currently, Locust does not have a smaller neighborhood park. Since Neighborhood Parks typically serve as the primary building block of most municipal park systems, there is a need for at least one (1) Neighborhood Park.

In the future, the City should seek land and develop a site-specific master plan for a new Neighborhood Park(s).

Mini Parks

Mini Parks are the smallest park type and typically include a playground, shelter and possibly a play court. There are currently no parks that could fit into the Mini Park classification.

In the future, the City may continue to encourage private developers to construct small amenity areas (playgrounds, shelters, etc.) when building single family residential and/or mixed-use developments. A proposed acquisition or donation of one (1) acre at James Avenue and Commercial Blvd., where “The Tree” is located would be considered a mini-park.

Civic Parks

Civic Parks are community spaces that often provide a sense of place for a town or city. The size and form of Civic Parks may vary considerably. Likewise, how the spaces are used and programmed varies. Civic Parks may include urban plazas, community green spaces and lawns, memorials, etc.

Locust City Hall Backyard is the closest type of facility that could also be classified as a Civic Park given its passive environment and open greenspace. There may be other opportunities for the development of civic parks as part of downtown or streetscape improvements.

Greenways

The most popular form of outdoor recreation in the nation is walking. This popularity was reflected in the survey that was conducted as part of this planning study and in comments made during the community workshops. Greenways are typically off-road trails that meander through neighborhoods and natural areas providing transportation corridors and recreational opportunities for walkers, joggers, rollerbladers, and cyclists. The trail surface can either be natural or paved. Paved trails are normally eight to ten feet in width. Natural surface trail widths can vary based on conditions. In addition to providing environmental protection and recreation opportunities, greenways and bike trails can produce economic development.

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

The City was included in the planning process for the 2010 Carolina Thread Trail Master Plan for Stanly County Communities, but no specific local recommendations were made in the report for Locust. Development and connection of a greenway system within Locust should be considered, as well as making

further connections to neighboring municipalities through the Carolina Thread Trail system.

Development of this greenway system should be a focus not only in procurement of land and/or easements, but design and implementation of trail to connect to more neighborhoods and destinations. Most residents, who took the survey, desire for more natural surface trails and off-road greenways.

A City of Locust Pedestrian Master Plan was completed 2010 and identifies a series of pedestrian/bicycle connectivity types around the community including intersection improvements, sidewalks, shared use paths, pedestrian lanes, advisory shoulders, paved shoulders, festival streets and shared lane markings. This plan should be updated, referenced and connections made to any future park or recreational amenities developed in the City.

Recommendations from these valuable studies should be used to guide implementation of a community-wide greenway system. Greenways should be developed in conjunction with other park and recreation providers in the area to ensure they are coordinated with other planning efforts and that there is continuity between plans.

On Road Bikeways

The need for bikeable roads and the development of greenways for biking was mentioned in the public meeting. The City should encourage the State to include bike lanes whenever roadway improvements occur, or new roads constructed. The City should also address their development process to ensure developers provide bicycle (and pedestrian) routes in the roadway improvements they construct as part of a new development.

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

Bicycle facilities in the area could serve as an important attraction to tourists visiting the region. Investments in bicycle facilities could improve the safety of the area's transportation system. Bicycle activities provide benefits of health, fitness, quality of life, and the environment.

FACILITY PROPOSALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This report also recommends the City acquire additional park land, construct some new community and neighborhood parks, expand greenways, and make improvements to existing parks and facilities by the year 2032. The improvements that will be made as part of these renovations and expansions will add new facilities and offerings to the Locust City Park inventory. The City should consider the list of facility needs established in Section Three and described in greater detail in this section as it makes park and recreation improvements:

Baseball/Softball

The City currently provides four (4) ballfields at Locust City Park. Although the need is met per the Benchmarking standards, the City may still want to consider additional facilities. Locust's Parks and Recreation Department sports leagues are very popular within the area and have been increasing each year. Based on the current rate of program registration the City may need to consider additional facilities beyond the Benchmarking standard, either at Locust City Park or a different location.

Football

Football's popularity as a community-based youth sport has been reduced by the emergence of soccer and (more recently) lacrosse. The standard for development of football fields is one field for every 20,000 people within the service community (a standard used by many municipal agencies). This standard indicates there is not a need for any additional football fields in Locust, and there could be opportunity to repurpose the existing football field and/or combine field use with an additional sport.

Soccer/Lacrosse/Multi-use

Soccer continues to be a fast-growing sport in America. This master plan reflects this demand by establishing a standard of one field for every 5,000 people within the service population. Utilizing this standard for development, the City provides more than recommended by the standards.

The demand for multi-purpose or multi-use fields will be made more intense by the new interest in lacrosse. Played on a field very similar to a soccer field (they are slightly larger than soccer fields), lacrosse will likely increase in popularity and should be considered as the City reviews its field needs. This new sport should be taken into consideration since play for both sports can be programmed on similar fields. One method to accommodate the variety of field games (soccer, lacrosse, rugby, football) is to develop larger multi-use fields that can be used for a variety of field games.

Basketball

Basketball remains an extremely popular sport in the United States. Played by a variety of ages, and increasingly by females, this sport can be played either indoors or out. Currently, the City provides one basketball court at Locust City Park. Based on national and state standards of development of one outdoor basketball court per 5,000 people, there is a need for one additional court by 2032. Basketball scored as a low priority in the needs assessment. There may not be a need to add anymore basketball courts, but should a neighborhood park be constructed in the future, the placement of a half court basketball facility could be located in this park.

Tennis

Based on input received in the public workshops, tennis is not currently a popular sport in Locust and there does not appear to be demand for additional tennis courts. Tennis came in at the bottom of the needs assessment. Currently, the Town has two lighted tennis courts at Locust City Park, which should suffice for the current and future needs.

Pickleball

Pickleball received some support in the survey, and nationally and regionally, the popularity of the sport continues to grow. While the City has temporarily used the tennis courts for pickleball, this plan recommends the construction of one standalone pickleball court now. One additional court would be needed for 2032. Depending on the frequency of continued use of the tennis courts for tennis, one end court could be converted to a standalone pickleball court.

Volleyball

There are no existing volleyball courts in Locust City Park and support for volleyball on the community survey was very low. Per the benchmark one court could be constructed in 2023 with an additional one by 2032. Because of the lack of support from the local community this plan recommends that the need for a volleyball court be considered but is not a critical need.

Shuffleboard

There has been no expressed demand for outdoor shuffleboard courts from citizens. This activity does provide a recreational outlet and opportunities for social interaction, particularly for seniors. However, until there is demand, shuffleboard courts should not be a priority.

Horseshoes

One horseshoe pit is provided at Locust City park and meets the current need. Horseshoes did not rank very high on the survey but if demand increases an additional pit may be needed in 2032.

Picnicking/Picnic Shelters

Picnicking was one of the more popular recreational activities listed by respondents in the survey (scored 3rd as a high priority) and from responses at the community workshop. There are currently three shelters at Locust City Park. Based on a standard of one shelter per 2,000 people and the feedback from the survey, while the picnic shelters may need updating, the amount meets the benchmark standard. When/if a neighborhood park is constructed or Locust City Park expanded a shelter(s) may be considered as an amenity due to its popularity as a recreation activity and/or rental revenue opportunity.

Playgrounds/Play Equipment

There are two playgrounds at Locust City Park. As parks are improved, these existing playgrounds should be improved, but the City should also look for locations for additional playgrounds. All Neighborhood Parks should have a playground. Safety inspections and ADA accessibility audits should be conducted at all existing playgrounds. An all-inclusive playground should be considered which can also serve as a regional destination for special populations. Playgrounds and equipment scored within the high priority segment of the needs assessment.

A popular trend in playground development is natural play areas. These relatively new play areas are designed on the concept of providing opportunities for children to interact with the natural environment when playing. Instead of relying on plastic and steel play structures, these play areas use natural features (creeks, rocks, trees, dirt, etc.) to provide play opportunities. Inspired by the book *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children*, this new trend in playground development seeks to re-introduce our youth to the natural environment. This type of playground could be introduced if Locust City Park was expanded into adjacent woodlands.

As new playgrounds are completed and existing playgrounds renovated, the City should replace wood fiber and sand surfaces with poured-in-place (PIP) safety surfacing. PIP surfaces provide wheelchair accessibility and reduces maintenance and lifecycle costs of the playgrounds.

Pedestrian/Biking Trails

Walking is still the number one outdoor recreational activity in the United States. Walking or biking trail use scored at the top in the needs assessment and at the community workshop. During the pandemic, trails became the go to activity for individuals and families in getting out of the house.

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

Biking is a rapidly growing outdoor recreational activity. The City should expand opportunities for biking

through the development of a greenway trail system, including paths suitable for biking in existing and future parks, and through encouraging NCDOT to develop roads with bike lanes or wider shoulders to accommodate bikers. The City should work with other stakeholders to help promote and facilitate new bikeways throughout the community.

SPECIAL USE FACILITIES

Community Centers and Gymnasiums

The City does not have a community center or gymnasium of the size to offer quality recreation programming.

Multi-use indoor space, fitness and wellness programs, teen programs and activities scored in the middle in the community survey and during the community workshop. Based on the City's estimated future population of 5,540, there is a need to find a location that could support an indoor community center to allow flexible recreation space and classrooms to serve the City's residents, with an additional space needed by 2032.

The construction and operation of a multi-use recreation center is a significant undertaking, but it is a recommendation this master plan to seek a partnership and/or plan for construction of a center. The City should seek a partnership with the County, or private entity towards developing an indoor facility that would benefit City residents. The above Community/Recreation Center would be in addition to the proposed Senior Center to be developed at City Center.

Swimming Pools and Spraygrounds

In the past, NRPA and NCDENR provided a standard for pool development of one pool for every 20,000 people. This standard was based on the concept of multi-neighborhood or community pools. Today, with the high cost of operation and construction of swimming pools, very few agencies develop neighborhood/community pools to that old standard. Instead, municipalities typically provide more centralized facilities where one pool may serve a greater population. For the City of Locust, although it would be convenient to the community to offer a pool in the City, the need is met by the public pool offered in Stanfield, just south of the City.

Spraygrounds are growing in popularity across the country. In addition to offering a water-based play experience, the play structures, sprays, etc. afford children of all ages and abilities a total play environment and are much more economical to operate than a standard swimming pool. A properly designed sprayground can serve as a regional draw, provide revenue, and provide a beneficial economic impact to the surrounding areas. Development of a sprayground scored well in the survey and in the community workshop. The City could seek a location, plan, and develop a sprayground facility in a central location.

Amphitheaters and Performance Areas

Currently, there are no amphitheater/outdoor performance areas currently serving residents. The Locust City Hall Backyard serves as a place to sit and gather more so than an events shelter. With community events scoring high with most survey and community workshop participants, and as continued structure for the City there is a need to expand opportunities for an amphitheater and performance area for the City. A master plan should be conducted for the Locust City Hall Backyard to see if an amphitheater or similar facility should be accommodated.

Senior Center

Based on the City's potential growth a senior center would be a welcome recreation amenity for the Locust City Community. Currently, plans are underway to design and construct a Senior Center adjacent to the library overlooking the Locust City Hall Backyard. This new facility should be sized to allow relocation of the Nutrition Program currently housed at the Locust City Park Community Building.

TRENDS IN PARK & RECREATION FACILITIES

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

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

Disc Golf

The popularity of disc golf continues to grow both nationally and regionally. Interest in the sport did not surface during the community engagement or the survey. At this time the City should not make disc golf a priority for development, but possibly reach out to users in the future to see if their needs are being met.

Skateboard Parks

Skateboarding has been popular for several decades. In the past decade, many communities have recognized its popularity and have tried to provide a safe and vandal resistant setting for this creative sport. Many municipal agencies have developed skateboard parks to provide a recreational outlet for preteens and teens. The City should reach out to and survey those users to see if their needs are being met.

Outdoor Fitness

Outdoor fitness has regained popularity especially when installed as equipment clusters rather than being spread out along a trail or walkway system. General fitness and walking scored high on both the community survey and the engagement meetings. Outdoor fitness areas should be considered as an addition to any developed walking areas.

Off-leash Dog Areas

Off-leash dog areas are one of the more recent trends in park development. The popularity of these facilities (also known as dog parks), is a response to the nation's love of pets. Communities throughout North Carolina are now constructing dog parks.

Dog parks take many forms but are primarily a place within a park where park users can bring their dogs to run, walk, and recreate. They usually include a fenced open area where dogs, accompanied by their owner, are allowed to run free. Often the off-leash dog area is divided into sections for large and small dogs. The current dog park was ranked highly in the survey.

Based on comments made at the community workshop and the survey, an additional dog park in another location would be a welcome amenity.

SITE SPECIFIC PARK RECOMMENDATIONS

RENOVATION & EXPANSION OF EXISTING PARKS & RECREATION FACILITIES

There is a need to improve and expand the City's existing park and civic open space. Recommended projects which should be considered include:

Locust City Park

- Master plan for facility expansion, improvements, and better accessibility and connectivity
- Conduct an engineering review to address drainage issues in the park as well as existing stream restoration.
- Evaluate parking and vehicular circulation throughout the park in conjunction with the Elementary School
- Evaluate and address the need for additional baseball facilities, either at Locust City Park or a different location to relieve some of the current scheduling and programming issues.
- Upgrade play equipment and play areas; provide inclusive equipment, surfacing as one amenity
- Update picnic shelters and restroom facilities.
- Consider acquiring an adjacent property(ies) to provide more passive or nature-oriented activities, such as nature trails and mountain biking.
- Consider relocated the Locust Historical Society and redeveloping space as a Teen Center.
- Consider relocating Nutrition Program from the community building to the future Senior Center; move Park & Recreation offices to community building with development of a community flexspace.

General

- Coordinate bicycle/pedestrian planning efforts with this plan especially for opportunities to create more greenway, bicycle and pedestrian connectivity.

PLANNING & LAND ACQUISITION FOR FUTURE PARK & RECREATION FACILITIES

There are opportunities to expand the City's existing parks and recreation offerings. Recommended opportunities which should be considered include:

Locust City Hall Backyard

- Complete land ownership transfer to the City
- Master plan the green space to enhance it's current uses as a gathering space
- Consider providing an amphitheater space
- Provide perimeter walking loop with new garden-like landscaping
- Consider outdoor amenities for the proposed Senior Center

The Corner Property(Lions Club Drive & N. Central Avenue)

- Master plan property for consideration as a Neighborhood Park with splashpad, Community Recreation

Center location to expand Locust City Park offerings

- Consider acquiring the wooded property adjacent to the corner property along Lions Club Drive as well to create connectivity with Locust City Park.

The Corner Property(Lions Club Drive & N. Central Avenue)

- Master plan these properties (10.72 AC, 1.70 AC , 6.17 AC & 8.80 AC) for consideration for passive recreation opportunities to serve as an expansion of Locust City Park.
- Consider acquiring multiple adjacent properties to increase connectivity

The Tree Property – Commercial Blvd & James Ave.

- Master plan this property to incorporate passive recreation use such as a walking path, benches etc.
- Coordinate master planning with site developer and adjacent commercial uses.

Strategies for implementing these recommendations are part of the Action Plan in Section Five.



SECTION FIVE - ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

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

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

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

This section will look at a Capital Improvements Plan for addressing recommendations found in Section Four and provide a strategy for raising funds to construct the proposed improvements and new facilities. Implementing the recommendations made in this Master Plan will result in meeting the future needs

for parks, recreation services, and facilities. If the needs identified in this report are to be met, the City must establish adequate budgets for projected staffing, operations, and maintenance costs, and for capital improvements for parks and recreation facilities. This Action Plan is designed to give City staff viable options to help finance the proposals and recommendations of this Master Plan.

REVENUE PLAN

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

KEY FUNDING/REVENUE SOURCES

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

General Tax Revenues (operational & capital)

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

General Foundations (operational & capital)

Another source of revenue is the direct contribution of money from State and National General Foundations. Foundation funds should be sought for both development and construction of facilities as well as providing programs. Funding sources should include general-purpose foundations that have relatively few restrictions, special program foundations for specific activities, and corporate foundations with local connections.

Foundations with Emphasis on Conservation, Healthy Lifestyles & Parks

Locust is in a position to receive grant funding from a wide variety of public and private foundations and trusts. Below is a list of funding sources that are particularly applicable and available for the community:

The Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust has been instrumental in funding projects in North Carolina. Their focus is to improve the quality of life and health.

The **Trust for Public Land and NC Rails-to-Trails Conservancy** have been instrumental in providing financial and technical assistance for open space conservation and development of greenways in North Carolina.

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) is the nation's largest philanthropic organization devoted specifically to the public's health. RWJF promotes change through partnerships and collaboration, with the goal of building a culture of health for all Americans. RWJF generally supports public agencies, universities, and public charities that are tax-exempt.

W.K. Kellogg Foundation places optimal development of children at the center of all their grants. They concentrate on early childhood development within the context of families and communities. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation's areas of focus: educated kids, healthy kids, secure families, community and civic engagement, and racial equity.

KaBOOM! is a national non-profit dedicated to providing play opportunities for America's children. They envision a place to play within walking distance of every child. KaBOOM! works with communities, volunteers, and funding partners to build playgrounds throughout the country.

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

Carolina Thread Trail (CTT) through their regional trail implementation help communities within the Carolina Thread Trail network plan and implement trail projects with a focus on planning and constructing trail in key corridors.

Playworks Grants Database is a good resource for grants. Examples found within this database are: The philanthropic arm of Safeway Groceries which established the Safeway Foundation to support non-profits whose mission is aligned with the company's priority areas; hunger relief, education, health and human services and assisting people with disabilities.

Cigna Health through its **Cigna Foundation** supports organizations that enhance health in individuals, families and communities. They offer grants up to \$5,000.

Home Depot, through its Community Impact Grants Program, and **Lowe's** through its Lowe's Foundation offer grants to improve community health.

People For Bikes provides a community grant program that provides grants up to \$10,000 to improve infrastructure and programs that make it easier and safer for people of all ages and abilities to bike.

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

The City should actively pursue grants from foundation and trust sources on a regional and national level. Information on trusts and foundations can be found through the Foundation Center, 79 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10003-3076 (<http://fconline.foundationcenter.org/>).

General Obligation Bonds (capital)

General tax revenue for parks and recreation are usually devoted to current operations and maintenance

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

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

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

Revenue Bonds (capital)

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

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

Limited Option or Special Use Tax (capital)

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

Federal and State Assistance (capital)

Federal funding sources are available to assist financing capital improvement recommendations found in this plan. One of the oldest park funding sources has been available from the U.S. Park Service's Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Funding through this program has been sporadic over the past few years, but through recent legislation action has infused new stream of continual funding into the program. Locust has received a total of \$26,246 in LWCF funding through two grants awarded for Locust City Park.

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

The North Carolina General Assembly passed a bill in 1994 creating a consistent source of funds for parks

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

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

The City of Locust has received two PARTF grants in 2004 (\$54,875) and in 2006 (\$494,994) for Locust City Park. In the future, the City should consider applying for funds through this program on a regular basis.

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

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

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

- Community Development
- Environment
- Health
- Natural Resources
- Transportation

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

User Fees (operational)

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

been used to finance construction of facilities.

Currently, the City charges rental fees for the shelters, Fields and Community Room at Locust City Park.

Ultimately, the City may consider a change in user fees that will help offset more of the cost of some activities. Based on elected officials' direction, the revenue generated by increased fees could then be used to offset impacts on the general fund and possibly be used for capital improvement funding to help make park improvements.

Many of the proposed facilities in this Master Plan are outdoors (playgrounds, trails, greenway, new recreation facilities, etc.) and offer only limited opportunity for cost recovery. There may be some areas where greater cost recovery could be achieved. Examples may include rental fees for additional shelters, fields, etc. or for Community Center programming and facilities.

Revenue Opportunities

User fees are not the only means of generating revenue. The City may consider using some other revenue generating opportunities which could include:

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

Grant applications from local foundations, state and federal agencies, or individuals. Most grants take time to prepare and require coordination effort with other agencies or departments from within the community to create a quality submittal. Grants also require extensive tracking of expenditures and outcomes for attaining future funding.

Partnerships are a relatively recent method of sharing funding resources to provide services. These partnerships can be formed with a wide variety of other public or private agencies. Often partnerships are two or more government agencies. Through these partnerships, a municipality receives direct benefit in either facility use, programming assistance, or volunteer man-hours. These benefits add value and help offset cost thus creating earned income. This earned income requires both agencies to have common visions, values, and goals for the partnership to be successful. Some examples of partnerships include:

- Church facilities for recreation services. Some churches or religious organizations in the region are providing recreation facilities.
- Youth sports associations are an important partner in organizing and programming many youth sports in the region.
- Trail sponsors that adopt sections of trails for maintenance and cleanup.
- Adopt-a-park or adopt-a-greenway partners that help maintain park lands and greenway corridors. These sponsors are typically in the form of scout units, neighborhood associations and businesses that are in proximity to parks.
- School partnerships where both partners invest in the development of facilities and programs based on shared use of facilities and staff. This investment may be financial or may include other means of support.
- Municipal partnerships with Stanly County to share in land acquisition, development funding for park and recreation development as well as staffing.

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

METHODS FOR LAND ACQUISITION & DEDICATION

In order to meet the needs identified in this report, the City should consider expanding its park and recreational lands which would lead to a need for future land acquisition. Methods available for acquiring the land include the following:

Fee Simple Purchase

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

Fee Simple Purchase with Lease-Back or Resale

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

Long-term option

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

First Right of Purchase

This approach to acquiring land eliminates the need for fixing the selling price of a parcel of land yet alerts

the City of any impending purchase which might disrupt the land acquisition goals. The City would be notified that a purchase is pending and would have the right to purchase the property before it is sold to the party requesting the purchase.

Land Trust

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

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

Donations

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

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

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

To aid this type of gift program, a strategy for contacting potential donors (individuals, businesses, foundations, service clubs, etc.) should be developed. An important part of this strategy should include contacting the local Bar Association, trust departments of lending institutions, and the Probate Court. Communicating with these groups regularly will make them aware of the potential for individuals to include a gift to the City 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 their land during their lifetime and relinquishes title to such land upon their death. In return for this gift, the owner is usually relieved of the

property tax burden on the donated land.

Easement

The most common type of less-than-fee interest in land is an easement. Property ownership may be viewed as a combination of rights. With this understanding, it is possible to purchase any one or several of these rights. An easement seeks either to compensate the landholder for the right to use their land in some manner or to compensate them for the loss of one of their privileges to use the land. One advantage of this less-than-fee interest in the land is the private citizen continues to use the land while the land remains on the tax records continuing as a source of revenue for the City. Perhaps the greatest benefit lies in the fact that the City purchases only those rights that it specifically needs to execute its park land objectives. By purchasing only rights that are needed, the City is making more selective and efficient use of its limited financial resources.

Zoning/Subdivision Regulations

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

PARK FACILITIES AS ECONOMIC DEVELOPERS

Historically, there have been four economic development benefits that a community may derive from park and recreation services. These benefits include:

Attracting Tourists: The features and programs that attract tourism to a community include parks, beaches, historic sites, museums, special events and festivals, and athletic tournaments. The majority of features are provided by public agencies (national, state, local park agencies, etc.).

Enhancing Real Estate Values: Research shows people will pay more to live close to natural park areas. These higher property values result in owners paying higher property taxes, which in turn offsets some of the cost for the development of parks and preservation of open space.

Attracting Business: Quality of life issues influence where businesses locate. Parks, recreation, open space, and senior services are an important component of the “quality of life” equation. Good parks help municipalities and counties attract and retain businesses.

Attracting Retirees: A new growth industry for American communities is the retirement population. The decision to relocate by this segment of our population is primarily governed by climate and recreation opportunities. This segment of the population is extremely attractive to local governments because retirees are unlikely to have grandchildren enrolled in the local school system and therefore are less of a burden on the community’s tax base.

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

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

An important aspect of these planning recommendations is to develop a vision for the Department to improve park and recreation facilities for City residents. Ultimately, the provision of better parks and recreational programs includes both facility improvements and establishing a method of delivery of services. Currently, the City is limited in the resources it directs to this mission. If the City is to improve the quality of parks and recreation facilities offered, it will be required to add staff to manage/operate facilities and provide services.

Staff Needs

Action on the recommendations found in this Master Plan will expand the City's parks and facilities. The development of new parks, the construction of a new recreation facilities, and the expansion of trails will require additional staff to maintain, operate and program these new facilities. Currently, park maintenance is overseen through Parks and Recreation staff. While the development of a true operation and maintenance program for these future facilities is beyond the scope of this Master Plan, it is important that the City plan and budget for adequate staff positions for any new facilities that are constructed.

Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee/Friends of the Parks

In addition to a Parks and Recreation Department, Locust should also have a committee with a focus on the park and recreation offerings of the City. This plan recommends that the City establish a Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC) or a Friends of the Parks (FOTP) organization that can provide more focus on the mission, goals and objectives listed at the beginning of Section Four. The purpose of a committee is typically to promote, advise and assist a Parks and Recreation Department. For Locust, an established PRAC or FOTP would work with the City Manager and Parks and Recreation Department to assist with making sure these ideals are met. Advisory committee assistance can include, but not be limited to:

- Assisting with development of new funding sources for the City relating to parks, recreation, and greenways
- Assisting with review and making recommendations towards proposed park, recreation, and greenway projects
- Assisting with review and making recommendations on potential land acquisition related to parks, recreation, and greenway projects.
- Assisting in the development of long-range plans
- Assisting in the promotion and facilitation of community or special events
- Assisting with promotion of community awareness on needs for parks, recreation, and greenways towards making Locust a healthier place to live.

It is recommended that the PRAC or FOTP prepare an annual work plan from which the PRAC/FOTP can work with staff to meet future and recreational development and services. An example work plan is provided in the Appendix. Recreation Resources Service, a partnership of the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation, the Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism Management, and North Carolina State University, works with many municipalities in providing services and can provide guidance towards an

operational PARC or FOTP for Locust.

Operational Costs

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

Greener Operation

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

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

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

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

The 10 Year Capital Improvement Plan can be summarized into the following components:

Existing Parks Renovations/Improvements	\$ 1,500,000
Senior Center	\$ 3,000,000
Land Acquisition	\$ 600,000
New Park Facility Development	\$ 1,000,000
Greenway Development	\$ 1,000,000
Special Use Facilities	\$ 500,000
<u>Site Specific Park Master Planning</u>	<u>\$ 95,000</u>
Total Capital Improvement Budget	\$ 7,695,000

Table 5-1 "Capital Improvement Plan" shows the costs associated with the capital improvement program. The table reflects the proposals and recommendations as outlined in Section Four of this Master Plan.

RECOMMENDED TEN-YEAR PRIORITY PROJECTS

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

- Master plan Locust City Park with a focus on park upgrades and expansion
- Design and construct a new Senior Center
- Master plan the Locust City Hall Backyard with a focus on community events and senior center amenities
- Acquire and master plan the corner lot as a potential community building and/or splashpad site.
- Acquire and master plan the lot between the Corner lot and Locust City Park, with a focus on connectivity between the Park and the developed corner lot.
- Master Plan and potentially acquire the interior lots for passive recreation and/or nature activities (nature trails, mountain biking, adventure sports, ropes course, etc.)
- Master Plan and potentially acquire the lot with connections to N. Central and Main St as a connected facility/amenity; also a potential community building and/or splashpad site.
- Seek out potential greenway connections within the City to improved pedestrian connectivity
- Seek locations for at least one neighborhood park with a playground facility
- Establish a Parks Recreation Advisory Committee/Friends of the Parks; develop a work plan
- Seek partnerships with area businesses that focus on health and wellness to expand programming within the parks

MASTER PLAN FUNDING STRATEGY

This Master Plan identifies a Vision Plan for park and recreation development and services in Locust. It is understood that not all the recommendations will be acted upon over the next decade. The City and elected officials will ultimately have to prioritize the steps they will take to meet some of these park and recreation needs.

To assist with the prioritization, the following items should be considered by both City Staff and the elected officials:

- Clearly delineate capital expenses vs. operational expenses.
- Identify any additional staff requirements as a result of proposed projects.
- Identify and evaluate areas of future development
- Prepare potential risk assessments associated with all elements.
- Prepare proforma and cost benefit analysis demonstrating each project's value to Locust.
- Revenue sources must be identified and verified - Projected tax base growth, Land sales, User fees, Partnerships, Sponsors, Grants, General Fund, Bond Referenda, etc.
- Project timelines for each project and tasks involved.
- Identify the degree of difficulty involved for each project.
- Indicate the apparent "ripeness" of each project.
- Demonstrate the Public's interest (as expressed in our surveys) for each project / element.



APPENDICES

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